CHRISTOF SIELECKI

Keep it Simple for Black



A Solid and Straightforward Chess Opening Repertoire for Black

- [ ] Introduction
- [x] Introduction

1.e4 Hello and Welcome to Keep it Simple for Black! This opening course provides a complete repertoire for the black pieces against all White's opening moves. It includes suggestions against White's main moves 1.e4 and 1.d4, but that's not all. I also cover all the minor opening moves that you may meet. To be confident with the back pieces, you only need this single course, consisting of about 350 trainable lines. This course is the third one bearing the 'Keep It Simple' title. It all began in 2018 when Keep it Simple 1.e4 was released; Keep it Simple 1.d4 followed one year later. Now you are about to dive into Keep it Simple for Black. Before we discuss what 'Keep it Simple' stands for, I'd like to give you some information about myself. My name is Christof Sielecki, I am an International Master and professional chess teacher and content creator. I started this profession in 2014 when my focus was teaching chess. I offered lessons to individual students and groups, online and over the board. Nowadays, in 2021, I am working on Chessable courses almost exclusively. A key reason for this change of focus was the course Keep It Simple: 1. e4. It was the first course on Chessable that featured videos and was the first one converted into a printed book. The reception of KIS 1.e4 was phenomenal, which encouraged me to create more Chessable courses. It's my goal to become a better author with each new course and give you a great learning experience. Compared to the earlier KIS courses, this one has fewer trainable lines but more explanations and guidance. In many cases, I streamlined the content and made it easier to learn. KIS for Black has fewer trainable lines than the two White KIS repertoires. This does not mean it is in any way 'light-weight' or cuts corners. I would call it 'lean and mean', focusing on the essential information and using the Chessable platform to the fullest. Let's talk about the 'Keep It Simple' philosophy. Here is a list of essential points to consider. The chosen lines are simple to learn or the most practical available. I want to follow simple recipes, if possible. In some cases, I suggest more ambitious lines or moves that pose more problems for our opponent. Some of the lines are sharp and tactical. In particular, with Black, the spirit of the game is often determined by our opponents' choices. Simple does not mean 'boring'! It must be possible to find your way even if you forgot your lines. The course provides guidelines and rules of thumb to understand the concepts better. This makes it easier to find your way, even if you have forgotten your move-by-move preparation. All chosen opening lines are fully sound and playable for a wide range of players. I know that players up to the GM level use KIS 1.e4 and KIS 1.d4, as all the lines are well-founded on sound principles and not 'refutable', even by very strong opponents that prepare for the game. The same approach applies to KIS for Black. I suggest mainstream openings that can be played on all levels: from your local town championships to online speed chess to classical time control games against titled opponents. The material is organized in four major sections: 1CCEndBracketCC Defence against 1. e4 2CCEndBracketCC Defence against 1.d4 3CCEndBracketCC Defence against

1.Nf3/1.c4 4CCEndBracketCC Defence against rare moves The course has 17 dedicated chapters in total. 6 chapters cover the Caro-Kann, 7 chapters are about the QGD and the other 1.d4 lines 4 chapters cover other first moves, mostly 1.c4 and 1. Nf3. In addition, I have created three Quickstarter guides that provide you with the most crucial lines of the repertoire. I suggest starting with these guides to get started quickly and learn the key ideas. Later, you can study chapter-by-chapter or expand your knowledge in the areas you are most interested in. Chessable and its MoveTrainer are flexible tools and usable in many ways. I have used the repertoire in my online blitz games for a while now, since the very beginning of the writing and analyzing process. My usual approach is to compare my blitz games to my courses or in this case, before the release, analysis files. This way, you plug knowledge holes one by one. Just take your games and compare when you deviated from the course and perfect your knowledge step-by-step. Alright, I suggest you turn your attention to the Quickstarter Guides now! Let's learn some moves and score with Black!

- ☐ Introduction
- ■ Applying the KIS Philosophy to

So how to apply our ‘Keep it Simple’ philosophy and cut down the workload as much as possible without sacrificing too much quality? Here are my repertoire choices: 1. The Caro-Kann 1.e4 c6 The Caro-Kann is an ideal choice in many ways. Black plays ...c6 and ...d5, fighting to control the light squares in the centre. For me, the most compelling feature of the Caro-Kann is: it leads to non-symmetrical, exciting positions, but does not require much study of concrete, tactical lines. White does not have many aggressive continuations or tricky gambits that they may throw at us. This is a considerable advantage compared to 1.e4 e5, for example. White has dozens of tricky lines that you should know, from the King's Gambit to Italian sidelines to whatnot. The Caro-Kann has the charm of being no-nonsense but still preserving fighting chances. This quality has led to a revival of the Caro-Kann on all levels. If the new World No.2 CCStartBracketCCDec. 2021CCEndBracketCC, Alireza Firouzja, wants to win with Black, he often chooses the Caro-Kann. Within the realms of this opening, Black retains some flexibility. I have selected reliable and interesting lines that keep our workload low to keep it simple. We'll fight the Two Knights Variation CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp1ppppp/2p5/8/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Nc3 d5 3.Nf3 with 3...dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 , using the same approach as in the Classical after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp1ppppp/2p5/8/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 , both lines that your opponents might be less familiar with. Against the Advance variation CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp1ppppp/2p5/8/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.d4 d5 3.e5 I suggest 3...c5 , which is simpler to learn than CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3pP3/3P4/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3...Bf5 and will often catch your

opponents wrong-footed. At a later stage, you can easily modify parts of the repertoire. One way would be to integrate parts of Erwin l'Ami's LTR Caro-Kann, mixing our recommendations as you like. 2. The symmetrical 1.d4 d5, intending 2.c4 e6 CCStartBracketCCQueen’s Gambit DeclinedCCEndBracketCC My recommendation against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 is the classical reply 1...d5 . We immediately place a pawn in the centre and stop White from building a full pawn centre with e4. When you consider playing 1...d5, you need first to decide how to answer White's main option 2.c4 , the Queen's Gambit. I suggest playing 2...e6 , the Queen's Gambit Declined CCStartBracketCCQGDCCEndBracketCC. Let me explain why I think this concept fits well within the 'Keep it Simple' framework. Playing 1...d5, based on the QGD, is considered one of the best replies to 1.d4 and is regularly played by the best players in the world. Black fights for the centre and after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1...d5 2.c4 e6 prepares kingside castling. We develop the kingside quickly and play on the queenside in most cases. It is possible to play interesting sidelines that have surprise value based on a solid foundation. The lines CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6!? or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 are examples for this approach. It is possible to easily modify and develop the repertoire, as there are reliable alternatives everywhere. 3. Defence against 1.c4/1.Nf3 based on Queen’s Gambit Declined If you master the QGD, you have a ready-made foundation to answer 1.c4 and 1.Nf3, White's third- and fourth most popular starting moves. Against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 , we'll play 1...e6 and 2.-- d5 , which will often transpose to the QGD, for example after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 . We only need to learn lines that avoid such a transposition, which is manageable. It requires less effort than studying CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e5 , for example. A similar story is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 . We don't mind that White can play a quick d4 to transpose to 1.d4 d5 territory. If they decide to play without d4, we only have a small workload to learn these options. 4. Defence against rare moves While this point is less important, it's still useful to consider how to answer White's rare options. Some are easily dealt with, but some CCStartBracketCC1.b3 and 1.g3 in particularCCEndBracketCC need attention regarding correct move order. White might still transpose back into 1.Nf3 or 1.c4 territory, and we want to avoid getting move-ordered. Some words about these parts of the repertoire in context. The defences against 1.d4/1.c4/1.Nf3 fit well to the Caro-Kann, but can still be used independently. Similar to the Caro-Kann, Black employs a 'light-squared strategy'

placing the centre pawns on this colour complex. This frequently leads to similar themes and structures. Good examples are Isolated Queen Pawn (IQP) positions or the 'Carlsbad Structure', which arises after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 . We play both sides of this interesting pawn formation in our repertoire. Despite these structural overlaps, it is possible only to use parts of our repertoire. If you only look for a weapon against 1.d4, you can employ the suggested lines without learning the entire Caro-Kann in addition. It's also possible to only adopt the Caro-Kann, ignore the rest of the course altogether, or use parts of the QGD concept. This is a huge practical advantage, compared to a repertoire approach based on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 e6 , for example. In this case, you'd always need to learn the full French Defence if you want to employ the suggestion against 1.d4. In KIS for Black, you are more flexible. 1.--

- ☐ Quickstarter vs. 1.e4
- ■ Quickstarter Guide: Caro-Kann

1.e4 c6 Welcome to the Quickstarter Guide vs 1.e4. The QuickstarterCCStartBracketCCQSCCEndBracketCC will provide you with an overview of the essential lines to start playing The Caro-Kann in your games. I recommend studying the QS thoroughly and then proceeding with the dedicated chapters. In the QS, we will focus on the lines that you are most likely to face. We'll ignore most early sidelines and examine White's most popular lines. ACCEndBracketCC TheAdvance Variation: 2.d4 d5 3.e5 BCCEndBracketCC TheClassical Variation: 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 / 3.Nd2 CCCEndBracketCC TheTwo Knights Variation: 2.Nc3 d5 3.Nf3 DCCEndBracketCC TheExchange Variation: 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 ECCEndBracketCC ThePanov Variation: 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 In addition to these main options for White, we'll also have a brief look at theFantasy Variation, 2.d4 d5 3.f3 , as it could be tricky to meet if you have never seen it before. Let's look at the most important lines of the Caro-Kann now. 2..xc3 In the Quickstarter, we will examine the Two Knights variation after 2.Nc3 . White does not play d2-d4 early on but develops the knights first. I have chosen the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.Nc3 d5 3.Nf3 , but of course CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp1ppppp/2p5/8/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Nf3 d5 3.Nc3 leads to the same position. There are some possible deviations, like CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp1ppppp/2p5/8/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Nf3 d5 3.d3 or 3.exd5 , but these are examined in theCaro Kann Sidelines chapter. 2...d5 After our standard

move 2...d5 White usually plays 3.Nf3 for theTwo Knights or 3.d4 to transpose to theClassical Variation, both of which have their dedicated chapter in this course. Another possible transposition is the dubious 3.exd5 cxd5 4.d4 , which leads to anExchange Variation with a misplaced knight on c3. This leaves the moves 3.f4 CCStartBracketCCwe examine this move briefly via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp1pppp/2p5/8/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.f4 d5 3.Nc3 in the current chapterCCEndBracketCC and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3p4/4P3/2N5/PPPP1PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Qf3 , which sets a little trap. 3..xf3 dxe4 I suggest answering theTwo Knights in the same way as theClassical Variation - by taking on e4 and playing ...Nf6 next. If you like to expand your repertoire later, I'd recommend looking at 3...Bg4 . This line has a solid reputation and was thoroughly analysed by Erwin l'Ami in his Lifetime Repertoire on Chessable. 4..xxe4 .xf6 We go for the same concept as we do against theClassical Variation CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 . Using a similar approach makes a lot of sense to reach familiar middlegames in many cases. I'd like to emphasise an important point: in the Classical Variation, White often plays 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.Nf3 , which is known to give Black a comfortable game. In the Two Knights, White already has their knight on f3. This means that the very natural continuation CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/ 8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.Nc3 d5 3. Nf3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.d4 is a transposition to a harmless line of the Classical. You'll face this line very often, in particular in online or club level games. Currently, theoreticians agree that White's best bet against 4...Nf6 is the move 5. Qe2 , which we will focus on here. 5.O&e2 White's most challenging move. 5....xxe4 The best move, it seems. Against a move like 5...Bf5 White plays 6.Nxf6+ when we are forced to recapture with the g-pawn. 5...Nbd7 avoids a doubled pawn but has the slight drawback of allowing checkmate with 6.Nd6# . This has happened hundreds of times... 6.O&xe4 .xd7 This move leads to the most interesting play, in my opinion. White's queen is currently dominating in the middle of the board, which makes it difficult for us to develop the c8-bishop. We want to attack the queen with ... Nf6 next and force it to a worse square. Black's main alternative is 6...Qd5 , but after 7.Qh4 or 7.Qf4 White has good chances for a slight pull without taking any risks. After 6...Nd7 , the play may get quite sharp, but we have good counterplay. White now needs to decide between playing 7.d4 , or 7.Bc4 , which lead to very different positions: The main point is that 7.Bc4 Nf6 is answered by 8.Ne5 , which forces us to play 8...e6 and lock in the c8-bishop temporarily. Instead, after 7.d4 Nf6 White needs to move their queen and allow a bishop development to g4 or f5, depending on the circumstances. 7.Kc4 This is the most popular move by far, White usually intends 7.Bc4 Nf6 8.Ne5 , forcing us to play 8...e6 . 7....xf6 Now White usually plays 8.Ne5 , forcing 8...e6 . This looks attractive for White at first sight, but we'll see that the passive position of the c8-bishop is only a temporary concern. White rarely plays 8.Qe2 because it allows us to develop with 8...Bf5 ,

placing the bishop on an active post. 8..xe5 White does not have to move the queen immediately but may insert this intermediate move. The checkmate threat leaves us little choice. 8...e6 We needed to stop the mate on f7. At first, you'd think that 8...e6 is a serious concession. Black gives up on the concept to play ...Bf5 or ...Bg4 but instead has to lock the bishop inside the pawn chain. f5 or g4 are the desirable spots for the c8-bishop in the Caro-Kann, but an excellent alternative deployment will give us fair chances. After 9.Qe2 , we'll play 9...b5! , preparing ...Bb7 or ...Ba6, according to circumstances. 9.O&e2 The natural choice and almost exclusively played by White. e2 is a good spot for the queen, keeping the knight and bishop protected. 9...b5 Our c8-bishop needs a good spot, so we immediately clear the way with a gain of tempo. It is crucial to play this move right away and ignore that the c6-pawn is hanging. This is not a problem, as grabbing on c6 is dubious for White. Therefore, White has to choose between the more natural and popular 10.Bb3 , or the less explored 10.Bd3 , which we cover in thefull chapter. 10.Kb3 White retreats to the most natural square. They'll continue with a quick d2-d4, classically developing the c1-bishop to f4 or g5. Note that White can't play 10.Nxc6? due to 10...Qc7 11.Bxb5 a6 12.Ba4 Bd7 13.Qc4 Nd5 , which wins material for Black. 10...O&c7 We cover the pawn and prepare ...Bd6. to increase the pressure on the knight. 11.d4 White usually starts with this move, but 11.O-O Bd6 12.d4 leads to the same position and is frequently seen, too. 11...Kd6 The natural follow-up to our previous move. Our general strategy is quite simple: we'd like to castle kingside and finally manage to get the c8-bishop into play. ...c5 and ...Bb7 often accomplish this, but a6 might be a good post, too. 12.0-0 0-0 No rocket science: we need to get the king out of the centre. Now White's most popular move is the universally helpful 13. c3 . White has some alternatives, like 13.Bf4 or 13.Bg5 . They would often later transpose to 13.c3 , as the move is usually needed anyway. White wants to support d4 and prepare Bc2. This bishop retreat to c2 is often helpful for White, given our strategy. So what are we going for? Well, we have played ...b5 already and want to continue with our play on the queenside. We need the move ...c6-c5 soon, attacking White's centre and undermining the control of e5, too. White's knight on e5 is strong, but after ...c5, they can't capture on c5, as the knight is under pressure from our queen+bishop battery. The move ...c5 is not so easy to play, though. We need to watch for our b-pawn, as White's queen might take it after the c-pawn moves. We have a good solution for this issue, though. It's possible to play ...a5 first and follow with ...c5. With ...a5 on the board, White can't take b5 due to ...Ba6. So if White plays a combination of the moves c3, Bf4, Re1 on the next moves, the ...a5+ ...c5 plan is the way to go. White has an alternative way to develop, playing Bg5. We need to handle this move differently, as they threaten to take the knight and weaken our kingside. 13.c3 White plays this move most of the time. 13...a5 According to plan: we play ...a5 first. Now we'll have a look at 14.Bf4 c5 , while CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/2q2ppp/2pbpn2/pp2N3/3P4/1BP5/PP2QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.Bg5 needs to be answered with 14...Nd5 . 14.Kf4 White supports the knight, anticipating our move ...c5. Having protected the knight,

White can answer our ...c5-break with the capture. 14...c5 15.dxc5 White may also hold the tension in the centre with 15.Rac1 , which was tested in yet another Vincent Keymer online Blitz game. His opponent, Konstantinos Markidis, went for the rook move. Keymer played 15...Bb7 , and after 16.Rfd1 faced an interesting decision: His move, 16...cxd4?! , was dubious. After 17.cxd4 Qb6 18.Bg5! he would have been in trouble, as White threatens Bxf6, followed by Nd7. You should carefully consider if you want to open the c-file or not. It isolates White's d-pawn but gives White lots of temporary activity. I am sure that Keymer wouldn't play 16... cxd4?! in a longer time control game, but rather opt for an alternative. The ideas CCStartFENCCr4rk1/1bq2ppp/3bpn2/ppp1N3/3P1B2/1BP5/PP2QPPP/2RR2K1 b - - 3 16CCEndFENCC 16...a4 17.Bc2 a3 or CCStartFENCCr4rk1/1bq2ppp/3bpn2/ ppp1N3/3P1B2/1BP5/PP2QPPP/2RR2K1 b - - 3 16CCEndFENCC 16...c4 come to mind, keeping the c-file closed. In these two lines, Black is getting excellent chances on the queenside. 15...O&xc5 You have to avoid 15...Bxc5?? 16.Ng6 . 16.Qad1 Again, White is thinking about a tactic on the d-file. Our best reply avoids all possible trouble. 16...Kc7 #6 White was hoping for 16...Bb7? 17.Nd7! - our careful move stops this idea. It's the final point to know in this line, as we are now ready to complete our development with ...Bb7. A tense middlegame is ahead. We have chances on the queenside, having already gained some space on this side of the board. We also have a potential strong square on d5. White is well-centralised and enjoys a strong knight on e5. An idea to be aware of is a possible knight sacrifice on f7. Here's a fun line to show the point: CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/2b2ppp/4pn2/ ppq1N3/5B2/1BP5/PP2QPPP/3R1RK1 w - - 2 17CCEndFENCC 17.Rfe1 Bb7 18. Nxf7?? Now taking the knight loses, as 18...Bxf4! 19.Qxe6 Qh5 sees Black on top and refutes the knight sac. Also, note that CCStartFENCCr4rk1/1bb2Npp/4pn2/ppq5/ 5B2/1BP5/PP2QPPP/3RR1K1 b - - 0 18CCEndFENCC 18...Qc6 is a good move, too. This threat of an 'intermediate' mate is an essential tactical idea to keep in mind. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 3: Caro-Kann Two-Knights Variation: 5.Qe2 Nxe4 6.Qxe4 Nd7 7.Bc4 Nf6 8.Ne5 e6 9.Qe2 b5 10.Bb3

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d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 E**CC**EndBracket**CC** ThePanov Variation: 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 In addition to these main options for White, we'll also have a brief look at theFantasy Variation, 2.d4 d5 3.f3 , as it could be tricky to meet if you have never seen it before. Let's look at the most important lines of the Caro-Kann now. 2.d4 The most obvious and popular move on all levels. White establishes the perfect pawn centre duo e4 + d4. 2...d5 3..xc3 After 2...d5 White needs to decide how to handle the threat to the e4-pawn. In themain chapter, we will examine the consequences of 3.Nc3 and 3.Nd2 . Both lead to the same position after our reply 3...dxe4 and the natural recapture 4.Nxe4 . Let's talk about the arising pawn structure and possible options for Black once we have reached the position on move four. 3...dxe4 4..xxe4 After 4.Nxe4, we have reached a crucial parting of the ways. We now have a choice between three well-explored and sound moves. I'll briefly overview Black's options and make a case for my repertoire choice, which is 4...Nf6 . A**CC**EndBracket**CC** 4...Nd7 is currently out of fashion. It was Karpov's favourite way to play the Caro-Kann, but nowadays, the alternatives 4...Bf5 and 4...Nf6 make a more attractive impression. My main argument against 4...Nd7 is that Black does not manage to develop the c8-bishop easily in many lines. A sample line is 5.Bd3 Ngf6 6.Ng5 , when it seems like Black needs to play 6...e6 . Black is not in terrible shape in this line, but I felt our play is much easier to handle after 4...Nf6. B**CC**EndBracket**CC** 4...Bf5 is the traditional mainline for Black. In recent years, 4...Nf6 has gained popularity, but 4...Bf5 remains a solid choice for Black. By playing 4...Bf5, Black attacks the knight and develops with a gain of tempo. This way, the bishop enters the game before ...e6 is played. A sample variation like 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.Nf3 Nd7 7.Bc4 e6 demonstrates Black's basic idea: get the bishop out, play ...e6 next. Later, Black may castle and attack the d4-pawn with the pawn break ...c5. White's best try against 4...Bf5 is the line 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.h4 , gaining some space on the kingside. This continuation is well-explored and requires some theoretical knowledge, as move orders play a crucial role. C**CC**EndBracket**CC** 4...Nf6 is my repertoire choice. After White's natural reply 5.Nxf6+ I suggest 5...exf6 , capturing away from the centre. At first glance, this line may look odd; why does Black accept doubled pawns? Aren't doubled pawns to be avoided? Well, it's not so simple. One possible problem of doubled pawns is that they might be easy targets for the opponent's pieces and fall in the long run. However, this only applies if the pawns are not only doubled but also isolated. After 5...exf6, this is not the case, as the g-pawn supports f6. The four kingside pawns are a so-called 'pawn island', protecting one another. Imagine this position without a g-pawn, so just pawns on f6 and f7. These pawns would be easy targets **CC**StartBracket**CC**f6 can't be protected by a pawn anymore**CC**EndBracket**CC** and create additional weaknesses, in particular the f5-square. Doubled pawns are not a serious weakness, if they are part of a pawn island and not isolated - they need neighbours to support them. Is there some other possible drawback of a doubled pawn? Yes, a doubled pawn might make it difficult to utilize a pawn majority and create a passed pawn. After 5...exf6 White has a long-term plan to play c4 and d5, which creates a passed pawn on the d-file. This idea is

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target setup now. We'll play ...Nd7, ...Qc7 and centralize rooks. 9.h3 White usually inserts this useful move. 9...Kh5 We want to keep the bishop and maintain the pin. 10.Qe1 .xd7 Here 10...Re8 is a good alternative. 11.c4 A more enterprising approach, compared to 11.c3 . How do we fight White's pawn duo? The key point is that d4 has been weakened, so we need to target this pawn. 11...Qe8 The first step. We threaten ...Rxe1+ now, followed by ...Bxf3. The rook move also frees up the f8-square to allow ...Nf8-e6, putting pressure on d4. 12.Qxe8+ This looks best, avoinding the mentioned ...Rxe1+ idea. Against 12.Be3 I suggest playing 12...Nf8 , intending ...Ne6. We need to put more pressure on d4. 12...O&xe8 13.Ke3 Qd8 #3 It's also possible to start with 13...Nf8 , but getting the undeveloped rook involved first makes sense. After 13...Rd8 , we continue to build up against the d4-pawn. This includes the ...Nf8-e6 plan, but there are other options, depending on White's choices. If White decides to play 14.Be2 , playing 14...f5 is an interesting idea, intending ...Nf6 and ...f5-f4 in some cases. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 2: Caro-Kann Classical Variation: 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.Nf3 Bd6 7.Bd3

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CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp3ppp/2pb1p2/8/3P4/2PB4/PP3PPP/R1BQK1NR w KQ - 3 8CCEndFENCC 8.Ne2 Re8 9.Qc2 h5 quickly merge. 8.O&c2 White realizes the idea of 6.c3 and attacks h7. 8...Qe8+ Getting to the only open file with a check on move eight shows an attractive point of our chosen line 5...exf6: Black can quickly castle and develop easily. 9..xe2 h5 As mentioned in the notes to 6.c3, this move brought the entire 5...exf6 branch of the Caro-Kann back to life. White now has the fundamental choice between kingside and queenside castling - they are about equally popular. 10.0-0 h4 The main point of playing 9...h5 is this idea. We stop Ng3 and gain valuable space on the kingside. White's main reply is 11.h3 , even though it is unclear if we want to play ...h3 next. We'll check 11.Bf4 , when 11...h3?! is dubious. It is more important to control g3 than trying to put a dent in White's kingside. 11.h3 White plays this move most of the time. We don't necessarily want to play ...h4-h3 right away, but our option of the pawn push is a constant nuisance for White. Ruling it out completely makes sense, for sure. 11....xd7 We continue with our common knight tour ...Nd7-f8. Now White has two important options. They can play 12.Be3 or 12.Bd2 . The latter intends to play f4 soon, which is the main difference. White has also tried 12.Bf4 , when 12...Nf8 leads to a fairly standard position and no problems for Black. 12.Kd2 This bishop development hints at White's intention to play f2-f4 soon. 12....xf8 13.Qae1 Again, a preparation move for f2-f4. After 13.f4? f5! Black is better. We will analyze 13.Rae1 g6 14.f4? f5! in a moment, which leads to the same advantageous structure for Black. 13...g6 I like this move, as it directly addresses White's f4 idea. Now 14.f4?! f5! is good for Black. 14.f4 I'd like to show why this is a bad choice. Better would be 14.Nf4 , when I like 14...Be6!? 15.Nxe6 Nxe6 . We have given up the bishop pair, but ...Nf4 is a valuable resource now. Chances are about even in this unexplored line. 14...f5 #2 White should play f4 if they are sure to manage f4-f5 next. A line to illustrate this point is CCStartFENCCr1bqrnk1/pp3pp1/2pb1p2/8/3P3p/2PB3P/PPQBNPP1/4RRK1 b - - 4 13CCEndFENCC 13...Bc7 14.f4 g6 15.f5 , which leads to interesting complications. After 14.f4?! f5! Black is already better, as White has pretty awful pieces. The f4-pawn restricts their bishop and knight. A noteworthy idea for Black is improving the f8-knight. It would be well-positioned on f6 or h5, connecting with weaknesses in White's camp. Therefore ...Ne6-g7-h5 or ...Be6, followed by ...Nd7-f6 come to mind. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 2: Caro-Kann Classical Variation: 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.c3 Bd6 7.Bd3 O-O 8.Qc2

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square. Doubled pawns are not a serious weakness, if they are part of a pawn island and not isolated - they need neighbours to support them. Is there some other possible drawback of a doubled pawn? Yes, a doubled pawn might make it difficult to utilize a pawn majority and create a passed pawn. After 5...exf6 White has a long-term plan to play c4 and d5, which creates a passed pawn on the d-file. This idea is tough to realize in practice, as we will see. Still, we don't have an obvious way to create a passed pawn, which is a structural disadvantage. Now, after this lengthy discussion about possible problems, let's discuss the multiple upsides of the 4...Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 variation. 1CCEndBracketCC Black's pawns on the kingside provide excellent cover for our king. We have a pawn shield of four pawns, which is tough to attack. 2CCEndBracketCC As a consequence of the first point, it is often possible for us to push one or more of the kingside pawns forward without seriously weakening our king safety. We'll often play moves like ...h5 or ...f5 as attacking devices. These don't weaken our king at all, as it still has enough pawn cover. 3CCEndBracketCC The f6-pawn covers the squares g5 and, in particular, e5! Have you ever lost a game against a knight jumping to e5 or g5? We all have, I guess. Our f6-pawn makes this idea impossible. 4CCEndBracketCC Black has no structurally bad piece or piece that is difficult to activate. We can easily develop all our pieces and a setup with ...Bd6, ...O-O, ...Re8 and often ...Nd7-f8 can be played almost regardless of White's moves. 5CCEndBracketCC While the ...exf6 Variation is now very well respected on the top level, it often hits players by surprise on lower levels. If White doesn't know any theory, they'll hardly be able to challenge us at all. 4....xf6 We immediately challenge the central knight and force a reaction. If you like to learn more about possible alternatives and the merits of 4...Nf6, please see the detailed discussion after White's move 4.Nxe4. Now White's only challenging option is the capture, but you'll meet 5.Ng3 occasionally. It is answered by the powerful 5...h5 , which isdiscussed in thededicated chapter. 5..xxf6+ Taking is the only serious option for White, creating doubled pawns on the f-file. 5...exf6 After 5...exf6 , we have reached the 'real' starting position of the current chapter. A massive upside of our repertoire choice is that White now almost needs to know some concrete lines, as many 'natural' moves and setups pose no problems at all. White's best try for an advantage is 6.c3 Bd6 7.Bd3 O-O 8.Qc2 Re8+ 9.Ne2 , which is unlikely to happen against an unprepared player. White's most frequently played move is 6. Nf3 , which is a strategic mistake. The knight is misplaced on f3, as it only looks at well-protected squares. Black is not better after 6.Nf3, but we have no problems at all and some hopes for more. 6.Nf3 suggests that White is unfamiliar with the demands of the unusual pawn structure. So 6.c3 is the mainline, and 6.Nf3 is harmless. What else? In the full chapter, we will also examine alternatives, but we don't need to look at them at the moment. You will always be OK with the standard setup of ...Bd6 and ...O-O next. Our king is safe, and we have an easy development. 6.c3 The move 6.c3 is considered to be the critical test of the 5...exf6 Caro-Kann. What is White's idea? They have a particular piece setup in mind: Bishop to d3 and queen to c2. This battery exerts pressure on our kingside, attacking the h7-pawn.

The following sequence looks very natural: 6.c3 Bd6 7.Bd3 O-O 8.Qc2 Re8+ 9. Ne2 , when we have reached a key position. Now Black needs to react to the threat Bxh7+... what to do? Up until about 2015, Black reacted with the moves 9...h6 or 9...g6 , but White always maintained an advantage in these positions. This assessment was why 5...exf6 was considered an inferior line; Black never managed to equalize the game against 6.c3. The surprising solution is the move 9...h5! , which suddenly led to a re-evaluation of Black's chances and got 5...exf6 into the limelight. What's the point of 9...h5? It's best explained as a comparison with 9...h6: After 9...h6 10.O-O White will continue with the idea Ng3-f5, which is annoying for Black and usually will cost the bishop pair, as Black can't tolerate the knight on f5. Now, after CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp3ppp/2pb1p2/8/3P4/2PB4/PPQ1NPPP/ R1B1K2R b KQ - 6 9CCEndFENCC 9...h5 10.O-O , we play 9...h4! and stop this idea. Not only that but advancing the h-pawn often gives Black some attacking ideas against White's king. More often than not, White will not castle kingside against 9... h5 but prefer to hide the king on the other side of the board. This leads to a fascinating struggle that is considered to be fine for Black, too. Let's have a closer look now. 6...Kd6 We'll play ...Bd6 and ...O-O almost always, and the mainline is no exception. 7.Kd3 0-0 Now White chooses between 8.Qc2 and 8.Ne2 . They often lead to the same positions as 8.Qc2 Re8+ 9.Ne2 h5 and CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp3ppp/2pb1p2/8/3P4/2PB4/PP3PPP/R1BQK1NR w KQ - 3 8CCEndFENCC 8.Ne2 Re8 9.Qc2 h5 quickly merge. 8.O&c2 White realizes the idea of 6.c3 and attacks h7. 8...Qe8+ Getting to the only open file with a check on move eight shows an attractive point of our chosen line 5...exf6: Black can quickly castle and develop easily. 9..xe2 h5 As mentioned in the notes to 6.c3, this move brought the entire 5...exf6 branch of the Caro-Kann back to life. White now has the fundamental choice between kingside and queenside castling - they are about equally popular. 10.Ke3 White's usual choice if they intend to castle queenside. 10....xd7 We go for ...Nd7-f8, as usual. The knight is well-placed on f8, as it defends the kingside but is also ready to join the action via e6 later. Now, 11.O-O-O is the logical follow-up, but 11.O-O h4! is possible, too. These positions we examine via CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp3pp1/2pb1p2/7p/3P4/2PB4/PPQ1NPPP/R1B1K2R w KQ - 0 10CCEndFENCC 10.O-O h4 . 11.0-0-0 Here we go, opposite-side castling! After our natural reply, we'll talk about both sides' strategies more. 11....xf8 We complete our knight tour. Black's knight is an essential defender on the kingside. 12.Elb1 There is this joke that long castling is called 'long', because it always takes two moves: playing O-O-O and Kb1. White usually plays 12.Kb1 , recognizing that it will be difficult to skip this prophylactic move in the long run. 12...Ke6 Now White's best bet seems to be 13.c4 , which takes control of d5 and makes ...b5 more difficult to play. 13.c4 The main continuation for White. The move controls d5, makes ...b5 more challenging to play and prepares Nc3, improving the knight. An alternative is 13.h3 b5 14.g4 , when we should play 14...h4! , keeping the position closed on the kingside. 13...Qc8 The immediate 13...b5? doesn't work well due to 14.d5 , but CCStartFENCCr2qrnk1/pp3pp1/2pbbp2/7p/2PP4/3BB3/PPQ1NPPP/1K1R3R b - - 0

13CCEndFENCC 13...Rc8 prepares the b-pawn advance. Our rook is placed on the same file as White's queen, allowing tactical tricks. 14..xc3 White prevents our ... b5 push again. They could try 14.h3 , but the antidote is well-known from earlier instances that we have already examined. The sequence 14...b5! 15.c5 Bb8 16.g4 h4! keeps the position closed on the kingside and gives Black good play, similar to other h3 + g4 scenarios we have already analyzed. Back to 14.Nc3 : we can't play 14...b5? 15.cxb5 cxb5 16.Bxb5 now, but we have a good way to prepare ...b5 once more. 14...Kb4 Our intention is ...Bxc3, followed by ...b5. If we can provoke White into moving the c-pawn, our e6-bishop will become a monster. 15..xe4 White avoids our idea. The line 15.a3 Bxc3 16.Qxc3 b5 shows the point of ...Bb4 and is undesirable for White. We have given up the bishop pair but gained the light-squared play we aimed for. After 15.Ne4 we need to find/remember one more precise move. 15...Ke7 #9 The move to avoid is 15...b5? 16.c5! , when all of a sudden we face the deadly threat of Nd6. We need to retreat the bishop first, avoiding this possibility. The position after 15...Be7 has been tested multiple times in practice. Black is doing fine, as some sample lines show: ACCEndBracketCC 16.Nc3 is unambitious, as 16...Bb4 already repeats. We can also play 16...Qa5 and play for a win. BCCEndBracketCC 16.h3 b5! 17.c5 f5 16.Nc3 b4 19.Ne2 Rb8 leads to a sharp position with chances for both sides. CCCEndBracketCC 16.Nc5 is a forcing move but leads to nothing after 16...Bxc5 17.dxc5 Qe7 . Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 2: Caro-Kann Classical Variation: 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5. Nxf6+ exf6 6.c3 Bd6 7.Bd3 O-O 8.Qc2

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■ Quickstarter Guide: Caro-Kann

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plays 5...g6 . Against an IQP formation, playing with a kingside fianchetto makes a lot of sense. The king's bishop is nicely placed, directly aimed at the d4-pawn. This sounds good, but Black has an annoying problem in one particular line. After 5...g6 White's best continuation is 6.Qb3! , when Black's best bet is 6...Bg7 7.cxd5 O-O , but after 8.Be2 and Bf3 next White keeps the d5-pawn. I found no way to gain equal chances in this line. BCCEndBracketCC Black plays 5...e6 . This move shares the mainline status with 5...Nc6; both are about equally popular. There is nothing theoretically wrong about 5...e6; Black gets fair chances with precise play, as you would expect from a well-established mainline. I only have one objection to it: it lacks some flexibility. This is the main attraction of 5...Nc6 , as we don't commit to a central pawn setup up. CCCEndBracketCC Therefore I suggest 5...Nc6 , which develops the knight to a good square and remains flexible in many ways. According to circumstances, you may choose between a later setup based on ...e6 or g6. You may develop the ...c8-bishop and only then play ...e6; there are just more possible ideas compared to 5...e6. Let's talk about concrete moves now. After 5...Nc6 White has two main continuations. One is 6.Bg5 , which increases the pressure on d5, the other option is the natural 6.Nf3 . They lead to very different scenarios, underlining the flexible nature of our choice. 1CCEndBracket 6.Bg5 White increases the pressure on d5 immediately. We now need to worry about Bxf6, followed by the capture on d5. I suggest 6...dxc4 , clarifying the central tension. 2CCEndBracket Against 6.Nf3 my recommendation is the move 6...a6!? , which only recently has become popular among Caro-Kann specialists. It is a tricky waiting move that leads to less explored play and will likely surprise your opponent. I'll discuss the exact reasoning behind the surprising 6...a6 in the notes to the move. Are there other important ideas on move six for White? White can play 6.cxd5 , but after 6...Nxd5 will likely play 7.Nf3 when 7...a6 transposes to the line CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nf3 a6 7.cxd5 Nxd5 . There is some independent value in 6.Bf4 , which has Nb5 in mind. A simple answer is 6...a6 , in the spirit of our line 6.Nf3 a6. We'll continue with ...g6 and have a good position, very similar to the 6.Nf3 a6 line. 6.Kg5 White increases the pressure on d5 immediately. We now need to worry about Bxf6, followed by the capture on d5. 6...dxc4 I suggest taking on c4. We needed to react to the threat against d5, and capturing the pawn is a well-respected mainline. Black has a good alternative at this point, the move 6...Be6!? We play a similar line in our repertoire, which goes CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nf3 a6!? 7.Bg5 Be6 . The main difference is that here White has not yet determined their knight position, which allows a range of fairly complicated lines. I felt that 6...dxc4 is a simpler solution and more appropriate for this repertoire. Still, the move 6...Be6 is a fully sound and interesting later addition to your repertoire if desired. After the capture, White has to worry about the d-pawn. It turns out that White's most challenging option is 7.Bxc4 , which offers the pawn on d4. We'll also check the harmless 7.Nf3 and 7.d5 , which is still a popular choice for White, even though Black is doing fine. 7.d5

We'll examine this move in the QS, as you should know one particular line that could be troublesome. The move 7.Bxc4 is White's mainline, but for the moment it is enough to know that we don't take the d-pawn but play 7...e6 to start kingside development. After 8.Nf3 Be7 9.O-O O-O we reach an IQP position that gives Black fair chances. In the full chapter, this is discussed in more detail. 7....xe5 Jumping to e5 feels more natural than 7...Na5 , even though I couldn't find an advantage in this line for White, either. After 7...Ne5 White goes for 8.Qd4 most of the time, but we'll also check 8.Bxc4 , which already looks better for Black. 8.O&d4 White's main move and understandably so. The alternatives, like 8.Bxc4 , aren't great, and 8.Qd4 is scoring quite well for White. Black might not know the best reply and play the bad move 8...Nd3+ , which loses too much time. We have a much better move and an essential resource to remember. 8...h6 We play a counterattack on the bishop! 9.Kf4 The move 9.Bh4 will often lead to the same lines, as 9...Ng6 10.Bg3 is a natural transposition. After 9.Qxe5 hxg5 we reach an unusual position that is fine for Black. Our rook has already been activated! 9....xg6 10.Kg3 Or 10.Bxc4 Nxf4 11.Qxf4 , when Black's bishop will be mighty on the long diagonal. 10...e6 #4 In the full chapter, my main recommendation is 10...e5! However, this move can lead to messy complications. It looks good for Black, but it's a lot to study. For the moment, I suggest the calmer alternative 10...e6 , which equalises easily after 11.Bxc4 exd5 . Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 5: Caro-Kann Panov Variation: 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6. Bg5

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plays 5...g6 . Against an IQP formation, playing with a kingside fianchetto makes a lot of sense. The king's bishop is nicely placed, directly aimed at the d4-pawn. This sounds good, but Black has an annoying problem in one particular line. After 5...g6 White's best continuation is 6.Qb3! , when Black's best bet is 6...Bg7 7.cxd5 O-O , but after 8.Be2 and Bf3 next White keeps the d5-pawn. I found no way to gain equal chances in this line. BCCEndBracketCC Black plays 5...e6 . This move shares the mainline status with 5...Nc6; both are about equally popular. There is nothing theoretically wrong about 5...e6; Black gets fair chances with precise play, as you would expect from a well-established mainline. I only have one objection to it: it lacks some flexibility. This is the main attraction of 5...Nc6 , as we don't commit to a central pawn setup up. CCCEndBracketCC Therefore I suggest 5...Nc6 , which develops the knight to a good square and remains flexible in many ways. According to circumstances, you may choose between a later setup based on ...e6 or g6. You may develop the ...c8-bishop and only then play ...e6; there are just more possible ideas compared to 5...e6. Let's talk about concrete moves now. After 5...Nc6 White has two main continuations. One is 6.Bg5 , which increases the pressure on d5, the other option is the natural 6.Nf3 . They lead to very different scenarios, underlining the flexible nature of our choice. 1CCEndBracket 6.Bg5 White increases the pressure on d5 immediately. We now need to worry about Bxf6, followed by the capture on d5. I suggest 6...dxc4 , clarifying the central tension. 2CCEndBracket Against 6.Nf3 my recommendation is the move 6...a6!? , which only recently has become popular among Caro-Kann specialists. It is a tricky waiting move that leads to less explored play and will likely surprise your opponent. I'll discuss the exact reasoning behind the surprising 6...a6 in the notes to the move. Are there other important ideas on move six for White? White can play 6.cxd5 , but after 6...Nxd5 will likely play 7.Nf3 when 7...a6 transposes to the line CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nf3 a6 7.cxd5 Nxd5 . There is some independent value in 6.Bf4 , which has Nb5 in mind. A simple answer is 6...a6 , in the spirit of our line 6.Nf3 a6. We'll continue with ...g6 and have a good position, very similar to the 6.Nf3 a6 line. 6..xf3 The natural move 6.Nf3 is White's most popular move. 6...a6 A surprising choice. Don't we have a more powerful move than moving the a-pawn? And what's the idea of the move in the first place? Let's have a closer look. The key point is best explained by examining Black's most popular moves 6...Bg4 and 6...g6 . In both lines, White's best reply is the capture on d5, followed by Qb3, for example, 6...Bg4 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Qb3 . Now, d5 and b7 are attacked, leading to forced, tactical play. Against 6...g6 White's best is 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Qb3 , when after 8...Nxc3 9.Bc4! White has a slight advantage. This particular variation is why I am not recommending 6...g6. We have seen that cxd5 and Qb3 is an essential idea for White. Here's a great point of 6...a6: against this standard reply against the usual moves is toothless, as 6...a6 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Qb3 Be6! is possible. Black is in good shape, not just after 9.Qxb7?? Na5! , trapping the queen! Note how the a6-pawn takes away the square a6 for the queen and covers b5 to prevent checks. This means that 7.cxd5

does not pose a severe threat to 6...a6. But if the capture is satisfactory for Black, what could be a critical test? Other moves are slower and allow Black an easy development, for example, 7.h3 g6 , when we finally manage to fianchetto the bishop under favourable circumstances. Let's have a look at some possible replies to 6...a6. Note that this line is a very recent discovery, and therefore, your opponents will likely be surprised. In many cases, you'll face 7.cxd5 Nxd5, as mentioned. 7.cxd5 The most likely move to happen. Against Black's main lines 6...Bg4 and 6...g6, the capture is critical, so many opponents will continue in the same fashion. In thefull chapter, we'll also examine possible deviations. 7....xxd5 Now 8.Bc4 looks like White's best bet, as 8.Qb3 is harmless. If White plays a slow move like 8.Be2 or 8. Bd3 , we are happy to play 8...g6 and put some pressure on d4, using the fianchettoed bishop. 8.Kc4 White most active and popular continuation. As mentioned before, 8.Qb3 is met by 8...Be6! , when White can't capture on b7. 8...Ke6 After 8...Be6 we threaten ...Nxc3, so White has nothing better than retreating the bishop to a safe spot on b3. 9.Kb3 .xa5 It makes sense to push the bishop back first. I also examined 9...g6 , which seems fine, too. The practical drawback of 9... g6 is 10.Ng5 , which starts wild complications that are tough to assess for a human player. Stockfish likes Black, but you still have to find good moves yourselves. Our move is simpler to handle. 10.Kc2 g6 Finally, we get to develop the kingside. 11.0-0 Now 11.Ng5?! is pointless due to 11...Nxc3 12.bxc3 Bc4 , when White can't castle. 11...Kg7 #6 Rasmus Svane, whose games inspired me to examine the 6...a6 line, has twice reached this position in 2021 in online Blitz. We should have a look at them to get a better impression of the ideas we have. ACCEndBracketCC Svane's opponent V.Durarbayli played 12.Ne4 , avoiding the trade on c3. This turned out to be harmless after 12...O-O 13.h3 Nb4 14.Bb1 Nbc6 , when Rasmus was already much better, but later spoiled his winning position. Black has tremendous pressure against the weak d4-pawn. BCCEndBracketCC Logman Guliev tried 12.Ng5 , when 12...Nxc3 13.bxc3 led to a pawn structure change. White's c-pawn is backward, and Black has good control of d5 and c4, blockading the pawns. Now after 13...Bd5 White played 14.Be4? , when 14...h6! 15.Bxd5 Qxd5 would have been much better for Black. The bishop trade is a dream scenario for Black, as it weakens the light squares in White's camp. White will likely never move the c- and d-pawn again, giving us easy targets. White has other moves than the two we looked at, but our general strategy will be similar: taking on c3, then using the squares d5 and c4 and putting pressure on the c3-pawn. White will seek play on the e-file and has active pieces, which makes it a balanced position that is interesting to play. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 5: Caro-Kann Panov Variation: 2. d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Nf3

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to repetition. 14.O&h5 White has no good alternative to this move. We threatened ... Bh2+ and White needed to watch out for ...Bxh3 ideas, too. After, for example, 14. Qa5 Bxh3! is possible. 14...b5 #3 We intend to play ...Bb7 next, using the long diagonal for our bishop. It is possible to play 14...g6!? here, too. This move would already more or less force a draw with the best play after 15.Qxh6 Bf4 16.Qh4 g5 17.Qh5 Kg7 18.Nd4 Rh8 19.Qe2 Bxh3 . There is no need for this line, as 14...b5 offers good compensation for the pawn at little risk. Our bishops are powerful in this wide-open position. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 4: Caro-Kann Exchange Variation: 4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.h3

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kingside initiative. They'll play a rook to e1, trying to play Ne5. White may go for Re1-e3 or play the f-pawn after Ne5 is on the board. Black: We want to play on the queenside. A minority attack with ...b5-b4 and ...Na5-c4 is a key idea. At the same time, we need to make sure nothing bad happens on the kingside. Now, after 11...O-O , White has the decision between playing 12.Rfe1 or 12.Rae1 . Both moves prepare Ne5. With Rae1, White intends to play f2-f4 after the knight jump, while Rfe1 focuses more on piece play. Our reply will be quite similar. In both cases, I suggest exchanging on f3 and employing a prophylactic strategy against Ne5. Let's have a look. 12.Qfe1 This rook move prepares Ne5, just as 12.Rae1 does. 12...Kxf3 I suggest trading on f3 after both 12.Rae1 and 12.Rfe1. I like to reduce White's attacking potential on the kingside and feel that the knights are doing a good job in this pawn structure. 13..xxf3 O&c7 A critical concept that is directed against Ne5. Black would like to capture on e5, but this is not possible as long as dxe5 would be a fork on the queen and the f6-knight. If we'd play, for example, 13...Rab8 , White would play 14.Ne5 , and we can't take the knight. This wouldn't be the end of the world, but still. 14.O&c2 The knight jump to e5 is less pointed here, compared to the version with rooks on f1 and e1 CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCr4rk1/ pp3ppp/2nqpn2/3p4/3P2b1/1QPB1N2/PP1N1PPP/R4RK1 w - - 2 12CCEndFENCC 12.Rae1 Bxf3 13.Nxf3 Qc7 14.Ne5 CCEndBracketCC. After 14.Ne5 Nxe5 15. dxe5 Nd7 it makes little sense to continue with 16.f4?! , as White's rooks are misplaced for this advance. White can play 16.Qc2 g6 17.Qe2 to cover the e-pawn, instead. I think White's play on the kingside is relatively slow, for example, after 17... Kg7 18.h4 h5 , I see no way forward for White. Ultimately, our queenside play with ...b5 will start rolling. 14...Qab8 We prepare ...b5. 15.O&e2 After 15.Ne5 we have 15...g6 CCStartBracketCCpreparing the capture on e5CCEndBracketCC or 15... Rfc8 with the threat of ...Nxd4. 15...a6 We renew the idea of ...b5. 16.a4 Qfc8 #7 We prepare ...Na5-c4 with this move, starting our queenside play. A setup with ...g6 and ...Kg7 should reliably defend against White's ideas on the kingside. The Exchange variation leads to an interesting battle, as both sides have 'their part of the board' and need to combine active and defensive moves. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 4: Caro-Kann Exchange Variation: 4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.Bf4

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1.e4 c6 Welcome to the Quickstarter Guide vs 1.e4. The QuickstarterCCStartBracketCCQSCCEndBracketCC will provide you with an overview of the essential lines to start playing The Caro-Kann in your games. I recommend studying the QS thoroughly and then proceeding with the dedicated chapters. In the QS, we will focus on the lines that you are most likely to face. We'll ignore most early sidelines and examine White's most popular lines.

A**CC**EndBracket**CC** TheAdvance Variation: 2.d4 d5 3.e5 B**CC**EndBracket**CC** TheClassical Variation: 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 / 3.Nd2 C**CC**EndBracket**CC** TheTwo Knights Variation: 2.Nc3 d5 3.Nf3 D**CC**EndBracket**CC** TheExchange Variation: 2. d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 E**CC**EndBracket**CC** ThePanov Variation: 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 In addition to these main options for White, we'll also have a brief look at theFantasy Variation, 2.d4 d5 3.f3 , as it could be tricky to meet if you have never seen it before. Let's look at the most important lines of the Caro-Kann now. 2.d4 The most obvious and popular move on all levels. White establishes the perfect pawn centre duo e4 + d4. 2...d5 3.f3 White goes for the 'Fantasy Variation'. I tried to determine the origin of the name but wasn't successful. Fortunately, I had more success in finding good antidotes against it. Let's have a look. 3...O&b6 Black has some choice of reasonable lines against the Fantasy Variation. I am not a huge fan of 3...dxe4 4.fxe4 e5 , as I feel that White is getting the type of game they were hoping for. The move 3.f3 often leads to complex and unusual positions and is preferred by dynamic, tactical players. I don't want to open the f-file, thinking that my opponent rather likes this course of action. A good, popular option is 3...e6 , often combined with ...Bb4. This line is fine for Black, but it takes considerable work to master. I felt that my solution 3...Qb6 is simpler to learn and tricky for White to handle. It is not the most obvious choice, so let's discuss why I think it's a good move. The move 3.f3 has weakened the dark squares in White's camp, in particular e3. With ...Qb6, we prepare the strike ...e5! to attack and open the centre, exploiting these dark squares. The mainline of 3...Qb6 is 4.Nc3 dxe4 5.fxe4 e5! , illustrating this concept. We'll focus on 4.Nc3 , as this move is almost always played. In themain chapter I'll also check 4.c3 and 4.a4 briefly, which are rare but instructive to study. 4..xc3 White develops the knight and attacks d5. Very natural and by far the most popular move. 4...dxe4 It's essential to remember that you need to take on d4 first. The move 4...e5?! is dubious because 5.dxe5 Bc5 6.Na4! works well for White. After 6...Bf2+ 7.Ke2 , we don't have a good queen move. After our capture on e4, White's usual reply is 5.fxe4 . We'll also check 5.Nxe4 and 5.Bc4 briefly. 5.fxe4 The natural recapture and almost always played. The move 5.Nxe4 is not bad, though - it's like aClassical Caro-Kann with the moves f3 and Qb6 inserted. You can play 5...Nf6 , in the style of our recipe in the Classical, or 5...Bf5 . It's unnecessary to drill any deeper, as this is a very rare line and normal moves are enough to get a good position. It's more important to focus on 5.fxe4 , as this is far more popular, and some precision helps. 5...e5 As planned, we strike against d4. 6..xf3 White's best move, for sure. 6...exd4 7..xxd4 That's the challenging move. After 7.Qxd4 Black has many good options. I like 7...Qxd4 8.Nxd4 Bd6 , but **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnb1kbnr/pp3ppp/1qp5/8/3QP3/2N2N2/PPP3PP/R1B1KB1R b KQkq - 0 7**CC**EndFEN**CC** 7...Nd7 is fine, too. In general, I am happy to have traded queens while having a better pawn structure. 7...h5 I have played 7...Bc5 and 7... Nf6 in my online games, without knowing any theory. While analysing this line for the first time, I see that Black has this fun move available. Black's idea is ...Bg4 and a quick ...O-O-O, if possible. As far as I know, the move has not been tested in a

game. I am looking forward to playing it, but maybe you get the chance first. After 7... h5 , I'd expect the moves 8.Bc4 or 8.Be2 and will check them now. 8.Kc4 White's most aggressive looking move. It looks scary for us, as our development is lagging. White could also try 8.Be2 , when we'll respond 8...Bg4 , as intended. After 9.Bxg4 hxg4 White can't take the g-pawn, as our queen attacks the d4-knight. I think this position is interesting to play and offers about equal chances. Maybe White's best is 10.Qd3 , when 10...Nd7 11.Bf4 Nc5 12.Qc4 Qa6 leads to an endgame with much to play for both. 8...Kg4 Catching up in development. 9..xf3 Ke7 #5 I like this small but mean move! White would like to play 10.h3 , but 10...Bh4+! shows the point. Better is a move like 10.Qd3 , when we play 10...Nd7 and prepare queenside castling. I like Black's position and would assess chances to be about equal. White still has an isolated e-pawn, and we have chances to control e5 in the long run. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 6: Caro-Kann Sidelines Variation: 3.f3 - Fantasy Variation

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bishop from f5 to g4, intending ...Ne7-f5 later. Compared to this already fine line, we are a full tempo up! 8.0-0 .xge7 Here 8...Bxf3 9.Bxf3 Qb6 looks good, but 10.Be3 Qxb2 11.Nd2 is not clear at all. White has some compensation for the lost pawn. I prefer to continue with development. 9..xc3 .xf5 #3 Here we go. Black has obtained an ideal formation to attack White's d-pawn. White can keep equality with the move sequence 10.Ne1 Bxe2 11.Nxe2 h5 , but I'd rather be Black here. The move 11... h5 is played to make the knight on f5 more stable, preventing g4 by White. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 1: Caro-Kann Advance Variation: 4.c3

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with a quick ...f6. CCCEndBracketCCC 5.a3 A sophisticated move. White introduces the idea b4 into the position and might have concrete ideas like 5...Bxc5 6.Qg4 in mind. These lines can turn out to be very sharp and tactical. I'd mostly expect master-level players or strong theory-buffs to play this way. 5.Ke3 White hangs on to the c5-pawn for the moment. Before 5.a3 gained mainline status some years ago, this move was White's most popular choice. Nowadays, it is clear that Black has fair chances, as we will see. Studying the following lines thoroughly is advisable, as you'll still face the move frequently. People like extra pawns! We need to be precise to regain it or obtain compensation. 5....xd7 We attack both pawns. White now has to play 6.Bb5 or return the pawn immediately. 6.Kb5 White pins the knight and thus keeps both pawns. White sometimes plays 6.b4 , but 6...a5 or 6... Nxe5 are fine for Black. 6....xe7 Our second knight joins the action, intending to jump to f5, in most cases. Going to c6 is a significant idea in some lines, too. The general idea is to increase the pressure on the c5- and e5-pawn. At some point, White either needs to return one of them or give up at least one of the bishops for a knight. There are even some variations in which we get both bishops, guaranteeing excellent play. After 6...Ne7 White's main tries are 7.c3 , and 7.Nf3 . Other moves don't look dangerous. For example, 7.Bxd7+ is a capture that we don't mind provoking after 7.c3 a6 . The engine suggests 7.Bd4 as an alternative, but 7... Nc6 8.Bxc6 bxc6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 Ba6 gives Black excellent compensation for the pawn. 7.c3 White prepares b2-b4, but also prevents a possible ...Qa5+ in some lines. White's alternative is 7.Nf3 , when 7...Nf5 8.Bd4 Qa5+ 9.Nc3 a6 is a line that is included in thefull chapter. 7...a6 We should play this move first. It is more precise than 7...Nc6 8.b4 Ndxe5 9.f4 , when 9...Nc4? is answered with 10.Bxc4 . Pushing White's bishop to a4 prevents the capture after 7...a6 8.Ba4 Nc6 9.b4 Ndxe5 10.f4 Nc4 , when White's expansion has created weaknesses. Instead of my recommendation 7...a6, the move 7...Nf5 is possible, but Black's task is not easy after 8.Bd4 . Note the difference to CCCStartFENCCCr1bqkb1r/pp1nnppp/4p3/ 1BPpP3/8/4B3/PPP2PPP/RN1QK1NR w KQkq - 4 7CCCEndFENCCC 7.Nf3 , when 7...Nf5 is a strong move. In this line 8.Bd4 is answered by 8...Qa5+ , which forces 9.Nc3 and leads to good play for Black. (A good way to remember if you should play ...a6 or ...Nf5 is that 7.Nf3 is answered by a knight move 7...Nf5, and 7.c3 with the pawn move 7...a6. So it's 'knight vs knight and pawn vs pawn'.) 8.Kxd7+ White gives up the bishop pair but will keep the extra pawn for a while. This is nothing to worry about, as our compensation is compelling. Let's have a look at the most natural continuation. 8...Kxd7 9..xf3 White's most natural move, for sure. They cover the e5-pawn and prepare kingside castling. 9....xf5 We threaten ... Nxe3, followed by ... Bxc5. 10.Kd4 White stops ...Nxe3 with this natural move. Now, how do we get the pawn back? Well, we don't need to! My suggested reply gives Black great play for a pawn. 10....xxd4 Let's take the second bishop. We now have two bishops against two knights, but the position is closed. The key idea to remember is that a quick ...b6 will give our long-range bishops some scope. 11.cxd4 Here 11.Qxd4 Rc8 12.b4 b6! 13.cxb6 Rc4! gives Black excellent play. 11...b6 As mentioned, the key idea we

need to remember. We open the position for our bishops. The move 11...Bb5? looks attractive at first, but 12.Nc3 Bc4 13.b3 refutes this idea. 12.cxb6 The capture must be critical. The greedy 12.b4? a5 looks awful for White, while 12. c6 is a conservative answer. After 12...Bxc6 , we are happy to have the bishop pair and plan ...b5-b4 and ...Bb5 in the long run. 12...O&xb6 #4 We have excellent compensation for the pawn. White has many ways to go wrong now. Lines like 13. Qd2 Rb8 14.b3 Bb4 15.Nc3 Qa5 or CCStartFENCCr3kb1r/3b1ppp/pq2p3/3pP3/ 3P4/5N2/PP3PPP/RN1QK2R w KQkq - 0 13CCEndFENCC 13.Qc2 Rb8 14.b3 Bb4 15.Nbd2 Rc8 are desastrous for White. Stockfish suggests 13.Qb3 is the only playable move for White when we have a wide choice of good replies. We can allow a queen trade with 13...Rb8 , or play 13...Bb4+ 14.Nc3 a5 , which keeps more pieces on the board. In any case, the position is more than satisfactory for Black. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 1: Caro-Kann Advance Variation: 4.dxc5 e6 5.Be3

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attractive. In many lines, I suggest playing a quick ...f6 to attack and possibly remove the e5-pawn. These lines lead to exciting and often less explored play. What are White's main options after 4...e6? ACCEndBracketCC 5.Be3 is a principled move, hanging on to the pawn. It is not considered critical nowadays, but Black needs to know what to do - we are a pawn down for the moment. BCCEndBracketCC 5.Nf3 White focuses on development. We'll recapture the pawn and attack the White centre with a quick ...f6. CCCEndBracketCC 5.a3 A sophisticated move. White introduces the idea b4 into the position and might have concrete ideas like 5...Bxc5 6.Qg4 in mind. These lines can turn out to be very sharp and tactical. I'd mostly expect master-level players or strong theory-buffs to play this way. 5..xf3 White doesn't try to defend the c5-pawn but instead focuses on natural development. This healthy approach can't be wrong, but it does not put too much pressure on Black. 5...Kxc5 Alright, that recovery mission wasn't too tricky. 6.Kd3 White's logical and most popular move. The alternative 6.a3 is also played frequently, but the resulting position often arises via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/4p3/2PpP3/8/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.a3 Bxc5 6.Nf3 . Please seethis move order for more information. 6...f6 I suggest playing ...f6 as quickly as possible. We attack the e5-pawn immediately and will remove it by taking on e5 or provoking the capture on f6. 7.0-0 White may also play 7.Qe2 Nc6 8.O-O , which leads to the same positions. 7....xc6 We increase the pressure on e5. Now White has to decide whether to take on f6 or lend more support to the e5-pawn. 8.O&e2 This looks very natural and is White's most frequently played move. After 8.exf6 Nxf6 Black gets active play, as examined in thefull chapter. 8...fxe5 This looks best to me. We exchange twice on e5, ensuring that the white queen captures at the end. The square e5 is weak, and we like to see the queen there. It is easier to expel than a minor piece. I also examined the alternative 8...Qc7 , when 9.Bf4 lends additional protection to the e5-pawn. This is a sharper option than 8...fxe5, but it looks less trustworthy. 9..xxe5 .xxe5 10.O&xe5 .xf6 The logical continuation. Our dream scenario is to expel the queen from e5 and ultimately manage e6-e5, setting our centre pawns in motion. White needs to be very concerned about this idea. We'll check 11.Nd2 CCStartBracketCCplanning Nf3CCEndBracketCC and 11.Bb5+ , which is the most popular choice. The check forces our king to f7, but this is less of a worry, as we will see. 11.Kb5+ The bishop check is White's most popular move. It's tempting to force 11...Kf7 , but we'll see that it is not the end of the world. 11...Elf7 White was hoping for 11...Bd7?? 12.Qxe6+ , of course. 12.Kf4 The only real test of Black's concept. After 12.Nd2 Bd6 13.Qe2 a6 14.Bd3 we are taking over the initiative already. 12...O&b6 A strong move. We attack the b5-bishop and get ...Bd4 on the map. 13.O&e2 This looks best. A continuation like 13.Nc3 Bd4 14.Qd6 Qxd6 15.Bxd6 Bd7 does not scare us - we already have the better endgame due to the central pawns and play down the c-file. 13...a6 14.Kd3 When playing 13.Qe2, White needs to evaluate that 14...Qxb2 is rather risky now. I suggest a different approach. 14...e5 An attractive move that activates our c8-bishop. White can capture e5 in two ways, but we are fine in both cases. 15.Kxe5 White can try 15.Qxe5 ,

when after 15...Bd4 16.Qg5 Bxb2 17.Be5 is possible. We should avoid grabbing more material and instead play 17...Bxe5 to trade the active bishop. We have equal chances in this case. 15...Qe8 White has placed the bishop in an awkward pin. 16.Elh1 The only move! White needed to enable f2-f4 badly. 16...Kg4 Developing with tempo is always a tempting option. 17.f3 White can't play 17.Qe1? and allow 17...Ne4 18.Bxe4 Rxe5 . 17...Kh5 #5 I'll stop the already long line here. Black has good play, based on the e-file pin. White's best bet is 18.Qe1 , when 18...Rxe5 19. Qxe5 Bd4 regains the sacrificed material. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 1: Caro-Kann Advance Variation: 4.dxc5 e6 5.Nf3

- ☐ Quickstarter vs. 1.e4
- ■ Quickstarter Guide: Caro-Kann

1.e4 c6 Welcome to the Quickstarter Guide vs 1.e4. The QuickstarterCCStartBracketCCQSCCEndBracketCC will provide you with an overview of the essential lines to start playing The Caro-Kann in your games. I recommend studying the QS thoroughly and then proceeding with the dedicated chapters. In the QS, we will focus on the lines that you are most likely to face. We'll ignore most early sidelines and examine White's most popular lines. ACCEndBracketCC TheAdvance Variation: 2.d4 d5 3.e5 BCCEndBracketCC TheClassical Variation: 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 / 3.Nd2 CCCEndBracketCC TheTwo Knights Variation: 2.Nc3 d5 3.Nf3 DCCEndBracketCC TheExchange Variation: 2. d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 ECCEndBracketCC ThePanov Variation: 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 In addition to these main options for White, we'll also have a brief look at theFantasy Variation, 2.d4 d5 3.f3 , as it could be tricky to meet if you have never seen it before. Let's look at the most important lines of the Caro-Kann now. 2.d4 The most obvious and popular move on all levels. White establishes the perfect pawn centre duo e4 + d4. 2...d5 3.e5 White advances the e-pawn, the starting point of theAdvance Variation. Nowadays, this line is considered the main battleground of the Caro-Kann. Top players most often go for the Advance and their preference influences players on all levels. You'll meet 3.e5 frequently in your games, no matter what level you compete on. However, I'd like to point out an essential factor. While the Advance Variation might be regarded as most testing for Black by pros, it is a line that is difficult to play for BOTH sides. To challenge Black, White needs to know concrete theoretical lines. The ideas that pose problems for Black are not something that people would find over the board, but something they would have studied at home. If White plays 'natural moves', Black will often have no problems and be better out of the opening. What happens if White is well prepared? Well, these lines can become very sharp. Of all the chapters in the course, this one is the most tactically complex. Depending on your level of opposition, you might never get a 'Main Line' of the Advance on the board. This disclaimer is important to me, as you might look at the lines, the first one of the course, and get discouraged by the complexities of

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White focuses on development. We'll recapture the pawn and attack the White centre with a quick ...f6. CCEndBracketCC 5.a3 A sophisticated move. White introduces the idea b4 into the position and might have concrete ideas like 5...Bxc5 6.Qg4 in mind. These lines can turn out to be very sharp and tactical. I'd mostly expect master-level players or strong theory-buffs to play this way. 5.a3 In recent years, this little pawn move has become the main try amongst professionals to fight for an advantage. White prepares the move b4, which gains a tempo on our bishop after capturing the c5-pawn. 5...Kxc5 Black's main alternative is 5...Nc6 6.Nf3 Bxc5 , which prevents CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/4p3/2PpP3/8/P7/1PP2PPP/ RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5...Bxc5 6.Qg4 . There is a drawback to 5...Nc6, though. We commit the knight to c6 early on, which is not always ideal CCStartBracketCCthink of b4-b5CCEndBracketCC. I suggest playing 5...Bxc5 to be more flexible against non-Qg4 approaches. We need to be ready for 6.Qg4 , but the resulting positions are interesting to play for both sides. 6.b4 White's mainline and very natural. Playing b4 is the main idea of 5.a3, after all. White's main alternative is 6.Qg4 . This move was played in November 2020 by Wesley So in an online Rapid game against the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen. Some weeks later, Wesley recommended the move in his Lifetime Repertoire for White. Even though it is more likely to meet other lines, it is a significant move to check. The analysis of 6. Qg4 is included in thefull chapter; in the QS, we focus on the most popular move, 6. b4 . 6...Ke7 After 6...Be7 White's main choice is between 7.Qg4 and the moves 7. Nf3 / 7.Bb2 , which will often lead to the same positions. After 7.Nf3 f6 8.Bb2 and CCStartFENCCrnbqk1nr/pp2bppp/4p3/3pP3/1P6/P7/2P2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7.Bb2 f6 8.Nf3 , the lines quickly merge. I'll examine 7.Nf3 as the main move order, as 7.Bb2 has no independent value. 7..xf3 A natural development move, and probably White's best choice. After 7.Qg4 g6 8. Nf3 a5 we get interesting play, as analysed in thefull chapter. 7...f6 Here we go - we directly chip away at White's centre. It's also possible to play 7...a5 8.b5 f6 , which will likely lead to the same lines. 8.Kb2 White fianchettoes the bishop and lends additional cover to e5, a key idea of the queenside expansion. 8...a5 Inserting the move pair 8...a5 9.b5 proves useful, as we will see. We gain control of c5, which comes in handy later. 9.b5 .xd7 It's all about the pressure on e5. Now White's most challenging move is probably 10.c4 CCStartBracketCCcovered in thededicated chapterCCEndBracketCC, but you'll more often face 10.Bd3 Nh6 11. Nbd2 / CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/1p1nb1pp/4pp2/pP1pP3/8/P4N2/1BP2PPP/ RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 1 10CCEndFENCC 10.Nbd2 Nh6 11.Bd3 , which is easier to handle and rather requires precision from White to avoid trouble. 10.Kd3 The sequence 10.Nbd2 Nh6 11.Bd3 would lead to the same position. 10....xh6 On the way to f7: maximum pressure on White's centre is the goal. 11..xbd2 Much better than 11.O-O . The difference will become clearer in a moment. 11....xf7 Maximum pressure. 12.exf6 Kxf6 13.Kxf6 O&xf6 14.c4 That's the key difference to 11.O-O. White is just in time to play c4, preventing us from building a full e5/d5 pawn centre. After CCStartFENCCr1bqk2r/1p1nb1pp/4pp1n/pP1pP3/8/P2B1N2/

1BP2PPP/RN1QK2R w KQkq - 3 11CCEndFENCC 11.O-O? Nf7 12.exf6 Bxf6 13. Bxf6 Qxf6 14.Nbd2 e5 or CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/1p1n1npp/4pq2/pP1p4/8/ P2B1N2/2P2PPP/RN1Q1RK1 w kq - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.c3 e5 Black would be in great shape. 14....xc5 15.Kc2 a4 #3 I like this move, taking control of b3. It's also possible to play 15...b6 or 15...O-O first. We'd like to play all three, and the order is not particularly relevant. I am happy with Black's chances after 15...a4 CCStartBracketCCor the other mentioned movesCCEndBracketCC. We have good central control, and our bishop will have a good spot on b7. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 1: Caro-Kann Advance Variation: 4.dxc5 e6 5.a3 Bxc5 6.b4

- ☐ Quickstarter vs. 1.d4
- ■ Quickstarter Guide: The London

1.d4 d5 Welcome to the Quickstarter Guide vs 1.d4. The Quickstarter CCStartBracketCCQSCCEndBracketCC will provide you with an overview of the essential lines to start playing 1.d4 d5 in your games. I recommend studying the QS thoroughly and then proceeding with the dedicated chapters. In the QS, we will mostly focus on the Queen's Gambit, White's most popular and frequently played option. The second important line is the London System, which you'll frequently meet, too. In addition to these two main sections, we'll examine the Colle/Zukertort CCStartBracketCCearly e3CCEndBracketCC and the Jobava System CCStartBracketCC 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCEndBracketCC briefly. 2.Kf4 White's most popular and important alternative to the Queen's Gambit is the London System. In the London, White usually doesn't play a quick pawn push c2-c4 to attack our d5-pawn; they develop their pieces first and focus on controlling the e5-square. Often White will almost automatically follow Bf4 with the moves e3, Nf3, Nbd2, Bd3 and c3, in various move orders. Due to this rather schematic approach, the London 'enjoys' the reputation of being a dull and unambitious opening: 'It's always the same, how boring!' Well, if it's so dull, why do strong players like the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, play it quite often? As it is with many openings, it all depends on mindset and intention. If you want to play boring chess, the London is certainly a good way to start - it has its reputation for a reason. However, playing the London ambitiously and aggressively is possible; don't fall into the trap of believing your opponent is playing Bf4 to bore you to death. They might only wait for the moment to play Nf3-e5 and rush their kingside pawns up the board, just to mention one not-so-boring idea they might have in mind. How do we fight the London System? White's key idea in the London is the control of the central square e5. I suggest to develop with ...Nf6 and quickly challenge White's bishop with ...e6 and ...Bd6. In most cases, we'll play ...O-O, ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nbd7 to increase our influence on e5. It is often possible to accomplish the move ...e6-e5, opening up our c8-bishop. Let's have a quick look at what we are aiming for: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/

PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Bd3 Nbd7 is a widespread sequence and the mainline of the current chapter. We are ready to play ...e6-e5, which gives us equal chances and a comfortable game. White has other options along the way, but this is our 'standard' plan against the London. Let's talk about move orders. I cover all London lines via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 , but White has other possible move orders. There is the very popular CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCStartBracketCCcovered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 CCEndBracketCC and the rare CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c3 e6 4.Bf4 , which all lead to similar/identical positions. Alright, London Calling! 2....xf6 A natural development move. Now, most of the time, White plays 3.e3, but we will also examine 3.Nf3, as this particular position frequently arises from CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 . It will almost always transpose to 3.e3, as White's moves e3 and Nf3 are both very natural and obvious. 3.e3 White may also play 3.Nf3 . This leads to a position that often arises after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 . After our reply 3...e6 , most of the time While plays 4.e3 , which transposes to our coverage via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 . 3...e6 We prepare ...Bd6, challenging the London bishop. Now organising the material is not easy, as White has about a million different move orders. However, we can split the lines into two sections. ACCEndBracketCC White plays a quick Nf3, usually right now on move four. BCCEndBracketCC White delays/omits the move Nf3, often trying to use the f-pawn after the f4-bishop has moved/has been traded. If White is going for B, they usually start with 4.Nd2 , but you also meet 4.Bd3 or 4.c3 with similar intentions. We don't need to worry about these move orders, as we'll play ...Bd6, ...O-O and ...c5, basically on 'auto pilot'. 4..xd2 Whites delays the move Ngf3. One point can be a possible f-pawn push after the f4-bishop has moved or has been exchanged. We stick with our standard play of playing ...Bd6 and ...O-O. 4...Kd6 After 4...Bd6 White has various options. If they play 5.Ngf3 O-O , we transpose to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P1B2/4P3/PPP2PPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Nbd2 O-O . The most popular choice is CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4P3/PPPN1PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 , but this will also most likely transpose after 5...O-O 6.Bd3 c5 7.c3 Qc7 , when 8.Ngf3 finally leads to lines that we cover via 4.Nf3. 5.Kxd6 As mentioned, the move 5.Bg3 is more popular. I decided to cover 5.Bxd6 in the QS, because the following sequence of

moves showcases instructive ideas that you should know. 5...O&xd6 It's not bad to recapture with the pawn, but it is sometimes difficult to generate some play with the doubled d-pawn. My general advice: CCStartBlockQuoteCCThe bishop trade should be answered with ...Qxd6 - here and in similar cases.CCEndBlockQuoteCC 6.f4 One way for White of trying to benefit from delaying Nf3. We are happy to see the move, though. White's Stonewall creates multiple weaknesses, like the square e4 and the whole central/kingside area. 6...c5 We threaten ...cxd4, so White's reply is forced. 7.c3 cxd4 A very typical idea. White would very much prefer to see this capture at a moment when exd4 is a possible reply. This is impossible here, as the f4-pawn is under attack by our queen. After the forced opening of the c-file, White suffers from the misplaced knight on d2. Let's continue for a moment to show Black's most important plan. 8.cxd4 0-0 9.Kd3 b6 A matter of trading a worse piece for a better one. Our bishop on c8 is passive, and ...b6 prepares the crucial trade against White's attacking bishop on d3. 10.O&e2 White stops ...Ba6 for the moment, but we can 'reload'. 10...a5 #1 And we have ...Ba6 next. Note that after a later ...Nxa6, our knight is not so badly placed. It might jump to b4, but the route a6-c7-e8-d6 is a common idea, too. We can use White's weakened e4-square, while a white knight jumping to e5 can later be kicked away with ...f6. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 12: The London System Variation: 3.e3 e6 4.Nd2

☐ Quickstarter vs. 1.d4
■ Quickstarter Guide: The London

1.d4 d5 Welcome to the Quickstarter Guide vs 1.d4. The Quickstarter CCStartBracketCCQSCCEndBracketCC will provide you with an overview of the essential lines to start playing 1.d4 d5 in your games. I recommend studying the QS thoroughly and then proceeding with the dedicated chapters. In the QS, we will mostly focus on the Queen's Gambit, White's most popular and frequently played option. The second important line is the London System, which you'll frequently meet, too. In addition to these two main sections, we'll examine the Colle/Zukertort CCStartBracketCCearly e3CCEndBracketCC and the Jobava System CCStartBracketCC 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCEndBracketCC briefly. 2.Kf4 White's most popular and important alternative to the Queen's Gambit is the London System. In the London, White usually doesn't play a quick pawn push c2-c4 to attack our d5-pawn; they develop their pieces first and focus on controlling the e5-square. Often White will almost automatically follow Bf4 with the moves e3, Nf3, Nbd2, Bd3 and c3, in various move orders. Due to this rather schematic approach, the London 'enjoys' the reputation of being a dull and unambitious opening: 'It's always the same, how boring!' Well, if it's so dull, why do strong players like the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, play it quite often? As it is with many openings, it all depends on mindset and intention. If you want to play boring chess, the London is certainly a good way to start - it has its reputation for a reason. However, playing the London

ambitiously and aggressively is possible; don't fall into the trap of believing your opponent is playing Bf4 to bore you to death. They might only wait for the moment to play Nf3-e5 and rush their kingside pawns up the board, just to mention one not-so-boring idea they might have in mind. How do we fight the London System? White's key idea in the London is the control of the central square e5. I suggest to develop with ...Nf6 and quickly challenge White's bishop with ...e6 and ...Bd6. In most cases, we'll play ...O-O, ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nbd7 to increase our influence on e5. It is often possible to accomplish the move ...e6-e5, opening up our c8-bishop. Let's have a quick look at what we are aiming for: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Bd3 Nbd7 is a widespread sequence and the mainline of the current chapter. We are ready to play ...e6-e5, which gives us equal chances and a comfortable game. White has other options along the way, but this is our 'standard' plan against the London. Let's talk about move orders. I cover all London lines via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 , but White has other possible move orders. There is the very popular CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCStartBracketCCcovered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 CCEndBracketCC and the rare CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c3 e6 4.Bf4 , which all lead to similar/identical positions. Alright, London Calling! 2....xf6 A natural development move. Now, most of the time, White plays 3.e3, but we will also examine 3.Nf3, as this particular position frequently arises from CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 . It will almost always transpose to 3.e3, as White's moves e3 and Nf3 are both very natural and obvious. 3.e3 White may also play 3.Nf3 . This leads to a position that often arises after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 . After our reply 3...e6 , most of the time While plays 4.e3 , which transposes to our coverage via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 . 3...e6 We prepare ...Bd6, challenging the London bishop. Now organising the material is not easy, as White has about a million different move orders. However, we can split the lines into two sections. ACCEndBracketCC White plays a quick Nf3, usually right now on move four. BCCEndBracketCC White delays/omits the move Nf3, often trying to use the f-pawn after the f4-bishop has moved/has been traded. If White is going for B, they usually start with 4.Nd2 , but you also meet 4.Bd3 or 4.c3 with similar intentions. We don't need to worry about these move orders, as we'll play ...Bd6, ...O-O and ...c5, basically on 'auto pilot'. 4..xf3 White plays the knight to its best square, which is unsurprisingly the most popular way to play. We'll also reach

this position frequently via other moves orders, particularly CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 e6 4.e3 is very common. We already know our reply: challenge the London bishop with ...Bd6. 4...Kd6 According to our plan. White has a whole range of options now. They need to decide what to do about the bishop vis-a-vis. Let's make an overview of the various ideas. ACCEndBracketCC The main move is 5.Bg3 . White retreats the bishop and argues that Black doesn't want to trade on g3, as this capture opens the h-file now. Against 5.Bg3, we continue with our standard plan of 5...O-O and ...c5 next. BCCEndBracketCC White can continue with moves like 5.Nbd2 , 5.Bd3 or 5.c3 and allow us to capture the bishop on f4. I suggest declining this invitation for the moment and continuing with our usual approach of playing ...O-O and ...c5 first. The three moves mentioned usually lead to the same positions. We'd play in the same way against all three, so it's easy to remember. CCCEndBracketCC White can play 5.Ne5 , occupying their outpost immediately. We'll fight for control over e5 with the moves ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nc6. DCCEndBracketCC White can simply trade on d6. This move is rather toothless and answered by 5.Bxd6 Qxd6 . In the Quickstarter we'll focus on the most popular option, line A. 5.Kg3 0-0 According to plan: we castle first, then ...c5 next. While most of the time plays either 6.Nbd2 or 6.Bd3, which likely leads to the same positions, as both moves fit into White's setup. 6..xbd2 White's most popular move. They also play 6.Bd3 , which will more or less always just transpose to 6.Nbd2 . Our job is easy, as we follow the same plan against both moves. 6...c5 7.c3 O&c7 That's an important move for our recipe against the London. Why precisely this move? We want to fight for the control of the e5-square. Our ideal scenario is to gain enough control to play ...e6-e5 and gain a space advantage in the centre. Well, we need a knight to control e5 and the queen's support to accomplish that, so 7...Nc6 and 7...Qc7 are moves to consider. The move 7...Nc6 is not bad at all, but it is fundamentally different to 7...Qc7, as after 7...Nc6 8.Bd3 Black can't play 8...Qc7 because of 9.dxc5 . Black usually continues with CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/pp3ppp/2nbpn2/2pp4/3P4/2PBPNB1/PP1N1PPP/R2QK2R b KQ - 2 8CCEndFENCC 8...b6 , when 9.e4 is possible to start early complications. I prefer 7...Qc7 - it is not only simpler to play but very likely objectively stronger. I don't see a shade of an advantage for White after 7...Qc7, which is less clear after 7...Nc6 , when White has plenty of interesting options. Back to 7...Qc7 . What do we need to check now? I think 8.Ne5 is probably White's most ambitious try, preparing f4 to cement White's control of e5. We'll also have a look at the harmless move 8.Bd3 , because it is still very frequently played. 8.Kd3 A routine move that allows us to take control of e5. 8....xbd7 Don't play 8...Nc6? 9.dxc5! , when Black has blundered a pawn. Now we are ready to play ...e6-e5, the whole point of our opening concept. It's safe to say that we have won the opening battle, which is also confirmed by White's miserable score from this position. 9.0-0 White has played this move most of the time. The alternatives give us no headache, either. Lines like 9.Qe2 e5 or CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/ppqn1ppp/3bpn2/2pp4/3P4/2PBPNB1/PP1N1PPP/R2QK2R

w KQ - 3 9CCEndFENCC 9.e4?! cxd4 10.cxd4 dxe4 11.Nxe4 Nxe4 12.Bxe4 Nf6 13.Bd3 Qa5+ can only be better for Black. 9...Kxg3 The immediate 9...e5 is also fine, of course. I prefer to take first, creating the doubled pawn. The pawn itself is not a substantial weakness, but at a later stage, it can be beneficial to have ...Bg4 or ...Ng4 without White being able to play h3. 10.hxg3 e5 I love the smell of ...e5 in the London System... smells like... victory! 11.dxe5 .xxe5 12..xxe5 O&xe5 #3 Black is slightly better here, enjoying a nice space advantage. We have some good plans available, while it is unclear how White is making any progress. Ideas to consider for Black are: ACCEndBracketCC First, centralise with moves like ...Bd7, ...Rfe8, ...Rad8. This is useful in many scenarios and could be followed by plans B or C. BCCEndBracketCC Play ...g6, ...Kg7, ...h5-h4. It is a slow attack, but it can be very effective. CCCEndBracketCC Place the knight on the squares g4 or e4, which can be annoying for White. There is no obvious way to expel this intruder. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 12: The London System Variation: 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3

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White may also strike with 12.g4 immediately. We play 12...Nd6 13.g5 Nfe4 14. Qf3 b5! , when White can win a pawn on e4. After multiple captures, we'd have ... Bb7, which is rather embarrassing for White. We see a similar situation after 12. Qf3 , but with Black having played ...b6 instead of ...b5. 12...b6 This move has two points. Placing the bishop on b7 CCStartBracketCCor having this possibility in some linesCCEndBracketCC is one, continuing with ...a5 and ...Ba6 the other. 13.g4 .xd6 14.g5 .xfe4 #5 Yes, we don't need to retreat! Now White can't grab a pawn, as 15.Nxe4?? dxe4 16.Bxe4 Nxe4 17.Qxe4 Bb7 demonstrates. I like Black's chances after 14...Nfe4. We have a safe king position with no weaknesses, and White's pawn advances are far from creating any serious threats. On the other hand, we managed to occupy the weakened e4-square and have chances on the queenside. The move ...a5 will potentially prepare ...Ba6 and be part of a pawn storm involving all queenside pawns. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 12: The London System Variation: 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3

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CCStartBracketCC...Nc6, ...Bg4, ...e6, for exampleCCEndBracketCC. DCCEndBracketCC 3.e4? The Blackmar Diemer. We play 3...dxe4 and transpose to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.e4? dxe4 3.Nc3 Nf6 . In the QS, we'll focus on line A, the Jobava System. The Blackmar-Diemer and the Veresov are included in thededicated chapter on 1.d4 d5 Sidelines. 3.Kf4 c5 As usual, we attack the d4-pawn with ...c5. 4.e3 We don't need to worry about 4.Nb5?? due to 4...Qa5+ . 4...cxd4 We immediately clarify the pawn structure and open the c-file, leading to a pawn structure that we know well - it's a Caro-Kann Exchange with an oddly placed c3-knight. White now needs to recapture with the pawn, leading to the mentioned structure. Note that you can't wait with 4...Nc6? , as 5.Nb5 is killing. 5.exd4 Here 5.Nb5? Qa5+! leads to complications that are excellent for Black. This is analysed in the full chapter. 5...Kg4 A strong move, in my opinion. Black more frequently plays 5...a6 , but I don't like the arising positions that much. In some cases, the move ...a6 feels like a loss of time. 6.f3 White has tried this move most of the time. Black has an easy game after 6.Be2 Bxe2 7.Qxe2 a6 or CCStartFENCCrn1qkb1r/pp2pppp/5n2/3p4/3P1Bb1/2N5/PPP2PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nf3 Nc6 , when we reach favourable versions of a Caro-Kann Exchange, due to the misplaced c3-knight. In the first case, White even lacks their best piece, the d3-bishop. Finally, White may try 6.Qd2 , but after 6... Nc6 , they will probably play 7.f3 anyway, which transposes to 6.f3 after all. 6...Kd7 It's crucial to avoid 6...Bh5? 7.g4 or CCStartFENCCrn1qkb1r/pp2pppp/5n2/3p4/3P1Bb1/2N2P2/PPP3PP/R2QKBNR b KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6...Bf5? 7.g4 . We don't mind retreating the bishop and placing it behind our pawn chain, as we'll have enough counterplay on the queenside. 7.O&d2 Our setup will be ...Nc6, ...e6, ...a6 and ...b5, for queenside counterplay. White has to think twice about castling on this side of the board. Alternatively, they could try 7.Nb5 , when the simple 7... Bxb5 8.Bxb5+ Nc6 is comfortable for Black. Note that provoking f3 was a huge gain for us, as White has a hard time using the e5-square with the knight. 7....xc6 8.g4 e6 9.0-0-0 a6 #5 That's our setup. We'll have good attacking chances, based on the open c-file and ideas like ...Bb4, but also ...b5. Our king is quite safe in the centre for the moment, but we have no weaknesses on the kingside and will often be able to castle kingside. We already have an open file against the white king - our opponent still needs to find a way to open the game similarly. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 13: 1.d4 d5 Sidelines Variation: 2.Nc3

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thoroughly and then proceeding with the dedicated chapters. In the QS, we will mostly focus on the Queen's Gambit, White's most popular and frequently played option. The second important line is the London System, which you'll frequently meet, too. In addition to these two main sections, we'll examine the Colle/Zukertort CCStartBracketCCearly e3CCEndBracketCC and the Jobava System CCStartBracketCC 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCEndBracketCC briefly. 2.e3 Playing an early e2-e3, with the bishop still at home on c1, is a rather modest opening concept by White. However, there are some lines worth studying, particularly after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 , when I suggest the ambitious move 3...c5 . 2....xf6 After our natural move 2...Nf6 White's most important move is 3.Nf3 , which leads to a position reached commonly via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I suggest answering with the active move 3...c5 . 3..xf3 What's the point of White's modest setup? There are primarily two ideas that White is going for. 1CCEndBracketCC A setup based on playing a quick e3-e4. They play Bd3, Nbd2, often c3, and finally e3-e4. This formation is called the 'Colle System'. It was employed frequently by Belgian master player Edgard Colle in the early 20th century and since bears his name. 2CCEndBracketCC They plan to develop the c1-bishop to b2. The target formation includes bishops on d3 and b2, knights usually on f3 and d2. This setup is named after Johannes Zukertort, who was Steinitz's rival in the first official World Championship match in 1886. Black has a wide choice now, which is not a surprise. White's play is relatively slow, so we have some leeway. I suggest being ambitious now. 3...c5 The move 3...c5 is Black's most ambitious choice here. We are essentially playing White in the Queen's Gambit, a tempo down - compared to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 , which we play with Black. The huge upside of 3...c5 is that both the Colle and Zukertort formations are completely toothless now and often lead to a Black advantage in practice. If you compete in club games or play online speed chess, this will frequently happen in your games. At this level, players often study one setup and don't appreciate the difference between 3... c5 and 3...e6 . If a master level player is on the white side, they will often know that this 'auto-pilot' play doesn't suffice and opt for 4.dxc5!? , discussed in thefull chapter. For the QS, we'll have a look at the less critical, but common replies 4.c3 and 4.b3 . Before we continue, a word about 4.c4 . It is a good move for White but has no independent value for us, as 4...cxd4 5.exd4 Nc6 takes us to a line of theCaro-Kann Panov, which is part of our repertoire - quite an unexpected transposition! 4.c3 White usually chooses this move if they are after a Colle setup. If they want to play the Zukertort formation, the move is 4.b3 . It is well met by 4... cxd4 5.exd4 Nc6 , when Black is in good shape after only five moves. A good way to think about this position: consider the move sequence CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.b3 Nf6 . The move 5.b3 looks ridiculous... why

would White want to place the bishop on b2, looking at their pawn on d4? Well, we have exactly this position on the board right now! White will suffer from queenside weaknesses for the whole game, as we easily pressure on the c-file. Moves like ...Bf5 and ....Rc8 come to mind. 4....xbd7 It's important to remember this move. I'd like to avoid ...e6 setups and play for more. However, after 4...Bf5?! or 4...Bg4?! White can advantageously take on c5. We play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 with Black, and an extra tempo is very relevant. Therefore I suggest 4...Nbd7 , which covers the c5-pawn. 5.Kd3 g6 That's the plan. We fianchetto the bishop and prepare to castle. 6.0-0 Kg7 7..xbd2 0-0 #2 This is the formation we are aiming for. I'd like to show you a line of the Catalan Opening that is well known to be comfortable for White: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 c6 5.Bg2 Nbd7 6.O-O Bd6 7.Nbd2 O-O . We have reached this position with colours reversed and, of course, a tempo down. This tempo is not that relevant, as the position is rather closed. We can continue with ...b6 and ...Bb7 and play for the central ...e5-break. After just seven moves, Black has a space advantage and the easier game. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 13: 1.d4 d5 Sidelines Variation: 2.e3

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Nf6 4.g3 Whenever White combines the moves d4, c4 and g3 against Black's ...e6/...d5-formation, we reach a Catalan. By far the most common move order is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 , but we will also briefly examine CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 in the full chapter. Alright, what is our antidote against the Catalan? Black has a wide choice of reliable lines but, there is no clear picture of what might be best. I recommend building the repertoire based on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 , so the basic concept is to take the c-pawn and quickly attack White's centre with ...c5. This approach is similar to other lines that we use in our repertoire. This is a key branch of our anti-1.c4 repertoire: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . We use the same general strategy in this line, making it easier to remember. ECCEndBracketCCSidelines: The only sideline worth checking in the Quickstarter is White playing a quick e3, even before the c1-bishop is developed. This slow setup may occur via 3.e3 or 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 , but mostly via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 . There is no fundamental difference between these move orders, and we will react in the same way against all versions. I suggest playing an early ...a6, which is a tricky move order for White to handle. 3..xf3 White develops the kingside first. 3....xf6 After 3...Nf6, White has some options. ACCEndBracketCC 4.Nc3 is examined via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 in the QS. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.g3 leads to the Catalan. CCCEndBracketCC 4.e3 is a quiet sideline. DCCEndBracketCC 4.cxd5 exd5 leads to a Carlsbad structure discussed in the QS via the CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 move order. ECCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bg5 and 4.Bf4 are answered with 4...dxc4 . I cover these lines in thededicated chapter, but don't include them in the QS, as they are fairly rare. 4.e3 A solid choice for White. They cover the c-pawn and prepare the kingside development. The e-pawn now obstructs the queen's bishop, so White usually aims for a fianchetto on the queenside. Their usual setup involves bishops on d3 and b2, while the placement of the knight is not yet clear. White may opt for Nc3, putting more pressure on d5, or for Nbd2, which emphasises control of e5. 4...a6 Playing ...a6 is not the most obvious thing to do first. What's the point of this move? We gain the option of taking the c-pawn and immediately follow with ...b5 for a queenside expansion. This is particularly effective if White decides to develop the f1-bishop when this piece takes two moves to capture

c4. A sample variation is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Bd3?! dxc4! 6.Bxc4 b5 , which is very comfortable for Black. We are one tempo up on the Queen's Gambit Accepted mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 e6 5.Bxc4 a6 , which is already satisfactory for Black. An extra tempo makes a significant difference, as the position opens up quickly. A knowledgeable opponent will anticipate our idea and avoid this scenario. The way to go for White is an early b2-b3, which makes the capture on c4 unattractive, as White would recapture with the b-pawn, strengthening their central control. The move b2-b3 is the signal move for us to abandon the idea of capturing on c4. How do we develop the queenside then? I suggest aiming for a development scheme that involves the moves ...Nbd7, ...b6, ...Bb7 and ...Bd6. This harmonious formation we also use against the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 / CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 , which may often transpose into lines of the current chapter if White opts for a later d2-d4 pawn push. 5.b3 White immediately covers c4 and defuses our idea to take on c4 at a favourable moment, like after 5.Bd3?! dxc4! . Once White has committed to b3, we switch to the development plan with ...Nbd7, ...b6, ...Bb7 and ...Bd6. Let's discuss why it is a good setup. First of all, the bishops will be well placed on d6 and b7. The square d6 is a natural spot for our king's bishop, and we play this move frequently against many of the slower lines that White may play CCStartBracketCCe.g. London SystemCCEndBracketCC. The queen's bishop's placement is less obvious. Using it on the long diagonal makes a lot of sense, though. From b7, our bishop supports our centre pawn on d5 and helps control e4, which might enable a later knight to jump to e4. Our queen's knight is best placed on d7. On d7, it won't obstruct our bishop on b7 and still allows a later push of the c-pawn to attack White's d-pawn. 5....xbd7 6.Kb2 b6 Now we'll have the split between Nc3 and Nd2 setups. White could also play 7.Bd3 first, and after 7...Bb7 decide on 8.Nbd2 or 8.Nc3 . Or... you maybe guessed it... they could play 7.Bd3 Bb7 8.O-O Bd6 and then either knight move. We can play our 'setup moves'; White's move order doesn't matter. Before we continue, a word about possible trades on d5. At any point, White might exchange on d5. We'd always recapture with the e-pawn, keeping the strong central d5-pawn. The trade on d5 is generally unpromising for White, as it helps us increase our control of e4. With the e-pawn gone, moves like ...Re8 or ...Qe7 connect with the crucial squares e4 and e5. Therefore we don't have to fear the trade, as it's rather Black who benefits. White gets the half-open c-file, but the c7-pawn is safely protected. 7..xc3 White's more popular setup involves Nc3. There are many game samples with this move because White often plays the move early on and only later decides on playing with e2-e3 and b2-b3. A possible sequence is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3

Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.b3 b6 7.Bb2 , leading to the current position. Instead of 7.Nc3 , White may also play 7.Nbd2 . We'll continue with our standard setup of ...Bb7 and ...Bd6, just like after 7.Nc3. 7...Kb7 8.Kd3 Kd6 9.0-0 0-0 #3 Both sides have completed their intended setup, time to think about further action. All pawns and pieces are on the board, and there are many possible ways to continue. I'd like to point your attention towards two ideas for Black: Occupying the e4-square with our knight and a timely capture on c4, which opens the long diagonal for our b7-bishop. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 11: Queen's Gambit Sidelines Variation: 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.b3 #2 Variation: 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.b3

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chapter features more sophisticated ideas to exploit White's move orders. For the time being, I recommend just playing like in the mainline and later studying the additional finesses in the full chapter. BCCEndBracketCCThe Tricky 4...a6: Against 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 I recommend the tricky line 4...a6!? . This surprising move serves a concrete purpose: we are enforcing the idea to take the c4-pawn and supporting it with the move ...b5. This comes into play after the natural move 5.Bg5 dxc4! , when 6.e3 b5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/6B1/2pP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e4 b5 demonstrates our idea. In these lines, White is already fighting for equality! While this will regularly happen in your games, White's best is probably 5.cxd5 exd5 , when we reach the familiar Carlsbad structure. This pawn formation always leads to an interesting fight and is a main battleground of our repertoire. CCCEndBracketCCCQueen's Gambit with Bg5/Bf4: White develops their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various move orders that White can try. Here's a list: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 So there are a ton of different lines - that sounds complicated. But here's the good news: absolutely ALL of the lines are answered with the same move, which is ...d5xc4! Therefore we can follow a simple rule of thumb: every early queen's bishop move in the QGD is answered by the capture. What's the point of the capture? Actually, there are two: We keep the pawn in the best case! This can easily happen if White is careless or doesn't know any theory at all. You'll often meet opponents who never studied the capture seriously and handle it poorly, giving you a simple extra pawn. The secondary objective is to gain time, as White needs to invest moves to get the pawn back. In the QS, we'll focus on the most important sequence 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 , as it is most likely to happen in your games. DCCEndBracketCCThe Catalan: 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 Whenever White combines the moves d4, c4 and g3 against Black's ...e6/...d5-formation, we reach a Catalan. By far the most common move order is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 , but we will also briefly examine CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 in the full chapter. Alright, what is our antidote against the Catalan? Black has a wide choice of reliable lines but, there is no clear picture of what might be best. I recommend building the repertoire based on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 , so

the basic concept is to take the c-pawn and quickly attack White's centre with ...c5. This approach is similar to other lines that we use in our repertoire. This is a key branch of our anti-1.c4 repertoire: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . We use the same general strategy in this line, making it easier to remember. ECCEndBracketCCSidelines: The only sideline worth checking in the Quickstarter is White playing a quick e3, even before the c1-bishop is developed. This slow setup may occur via 3.e3 or 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 , but mostly via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 . There is no fundamental difference between these move orders, and we will react in the same way against all versions. I suggest playing an early ...a6, which is a tricky move order for White to handle. 3..xf3 White develops the kingside first. 3....xf6 After 3...Nf6, White has some options. ACCEndBracketCC 4.Nc3 is examined via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 in the QS. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.g3 leads to the Catalan. CCCEndBracketCC 4.e3 is a quiet sideline. DCCEndBracketCC 4.cxd5 exd5 leads to a Carlsbad structure discussed in the QS via the CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/ PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 move order. ECCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/ 2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bg5 and 4.Bf4 are answered with 4...dxc4 . I cover these lines in thededicated chapter, but don't include them in the QS, as they are fairly rare. 4.g3 The main starting position of the Catalan. As explained in the notes on move two: I suggest taking the c-pawn after White has committed to the fianchetto. 4...dxc4 Alright, let's take the pawn. The main point of the capture is not to win and keep a pawn but to accomplish two things. 1CCEndBracketCC White has played g3, which makes regaining the pawn more difficult. You many compare to e.g. CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 dxc4 , when 4.e3 or 4.e4 prepares the convenient Bxc4. In the Catalan, the bishop belongs to g2, so White needs a different take. As we will see, manoeuvres like Qa4xc4 take time and give Black ideas for counterplay. 2CCEndBracketCC The second point of 4...dxc4 is to open the scope of our queen and put some pressure on d4. We'll increase the pressure with a quick ...c5. After 4...dxc4 White's mainline (by a mile) is 5.Bg2 , but we need to examine 5.Qa4+ , too. Against this move, Black has multiple good options. 5.Kg2 White's main move and certainly the most dangerous one. After the conservative 5.Qa4+ , I don't see any challenges for Black. We play 5...Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 , as discussed in thefull chapter. 5...c5 Black has a vast choice in this position. I suggest playing 5...c5 , but at a later stage, you have plenty of options to expand your repertoire at this point. 6.0-0 White's mainline by a mile. After 6.Qa4+ I suggest 6...Bd7 7.Qxc4 b5 , which we

examine via the move order [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2pP4/5NP1/PP2PP1P/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5[EndFEN] 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 7. Bg2 b5 . Black has good chances in this line. 6....xc6 We develop the knight and increase the pressure on d4. After this logical move, White has three main moves: 7. Qa4 , 7.dxc5 and 7.Ne5 . In the QS, I will focus on the first two, while 7.Ne5 is covered in thefull chapter. Against 7.Ne5 , just avoid the blunder 7...Nxd4?? 8.e3! and the strategically bad 7...Nxe5? . Best is 7...Bd7 , avoiding these pitfalls. Before we go into details, I'd like to add that the current position may also occur via other move orders that did not start as a Catalan. The most important one is [StartFEN]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[EndFEN] 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.d4 Nf6 5.O-O e6 6.c4 dxc4 , which is a key part of our concept against 1.Nf3/2.g3. Thechapter on 1.Nf3 provides more detail on the moves that lead to this surprising transformation. A less common way is [StartFEN]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[EndFEN] 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , when 3...e6 4.Bg2 c5 5.O-O Nc6 6.c4 dxc4 again transposes to the current line. I have suggested this move order for White in my Chessable course Keep it Simple: 1. d4' and now will examine Black's perspectives in this interesting variation. 7.dxc5 This line has gained some popularity in recent years. After it was established that the more 'maximalist' moves 7.Qa4 and 7.Ne5 don't yield much, White began to search for slight advantages in the arising endgame. The whole concept is based on the Catalan bishop on g2 being better than its counterpart on c8. This is true, but it is just one factor of the position. After studying this line for a while, I concluded that Black obtains fair chances with precise play. Let's have a look. 7...O&xd1 Trading on d1 and capturing the c5-pawn is natural and best. 8.Qxd1 Kxc5 White needs to get the c4-pawn back at some point. Now the natural move 9.Nbd2 is the overwhelming mainline, but White has also tried 9.Nfd2 , when we should cover the pawn with 9...Na5 for a while. 9..xbd2 c3 Against [StartFEN]r1b1k2r/pp3ppp/2n1pn2/2b5/2p5/5NP1/PP2PPBP/RNBR2K1 w kq - 0 9[EndFEN] 9.Nfd2 , we should keep the pawn with 9... Na5! After [StartFEN]r1b1k2r/pp3ppp/2n1pn2/2b5/2p5/5NP1/PP2PPBP/RNBR2K1 w kq - 0 9[EndFEN] 9.Nbd2 the move 9...Na5? is flawed due to 10.Ne5 , when the c-pawn drops under much worse circumstances. It is best to play 9...c3 to damage White's pawn structure a bit. Now White enjoys the more active pieces, but our position has no weaknesses and offers long term chances to exploit White's split pawns on the queenside. We need to coordinate our position over the next moves and know some ideas - let's get to work. 10.bxc3 0-0 I advise to go for a setup with ...O-O, Be7 and ...Bd7, connecting the rooks quickly. 11..xb3 While's almost universal choice. The knight move gains time and opens up both the d1-rook and the c1-bishop. 11...Ke7 The best and safest square. We have to avoid 11...Bb6? 12.Ba3 . That is why, after 11...Be7 , White has tried different approaches. They can play 12.c4 or go for 12.Nfd4 , which starts concrete play and will change the pawn structure immediately. Currently, the move 12.Nfd4 is viewed as the more promising choice for White. 12..xfd4 The knight jump is

considered White's primary try for an advantage nowadays. White puts pressure on our knight and forces a decision: taking on d4 or allowing White to capture on c6? 12....xxd4 I suggest taking on d4. The alternative is 12...Bd7 , which seems to be about equal, too. I prefer 12...Nxd4 because after 12...Bd7 White will often capture twice on c6 soon, reaching a fully symmetrical position. After 12...Nxd4 13.cxd4 , the arising pawn structure is more interesting to play. 13.cxd4 White managed to improve their pawn structure, but now the d-file is closed, and we have the opportunity to play the following manoeuvre. 13....xd5 Taking a look at the c3-square and blocking the view of the g2-bishop. Now we'll take a look at White's main try 14. Bd2 . The move 14.e4?! is harmless due to 14...Nc3 . 14.Kd2 It's undoubtedly very natural to cover the square c3 and connect rooks for White. They have also tried the similarly minded 14.Bb2 , but it looks like a slightly worse version of 14. Bd2 . We'd fight 14.Bb2 in the same way as 14.Bd2, playing ...f5 to support our centralised knight. 14...f5 An essential piece of the puzzle. The f-pawn helps secure the knight on the attractive d5-outpost. We want to develop by playing ...b6 and ... Bb7 or ...Ba6 next, connecting our rooks. 15..xa5 This is White's main try in the current position. It is also the recommended continuation in a popular Chessable repertoire, S.Narayanan's Lifetime Repertoire based on the Catalan. White may also play 15.Rac1 , when we'll play 15...b6 . White's main idea behind 15.Na5 is to get the knight to a more active spot. As we'll see, we don't mind it appearing on c6. 15...b6 16..xc6 Instead 16.Nc4 Ba6 is comfortable for Black. 16...Kf6 17.e3 Kb7 #8 Here, my fellow Chessable author concludes his analysis and assesses the position as slightly better for White. Narayanan argues that White wants to play a4-a5 and enjoys the better pawn structure after a trade on b6. White has a chain of 5 pawns, while Black has an isolated b6-pawn. His point certainly makes sense, but I don't see any serious problem for Black. In this scenario, the b-pawn is an outside passer, which may become a factor, too. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 10: The Catalan Variation: 4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7.dxc5

- Quickstarter vs. 1.d4
- Quickstarter Guide: The Catala

1.d4 d5 Welcome to the Quickstarter Guide vs 1.d4. The Quickstarter CCStartBracketCCQSCCEndBracketCC will provide you with an overview of the essential lines to start playing 1.d4 d5 in your games. I recommend studying the QS thoroughly and then proceeding with the dedicated chapters. In the QS, we will mostly focus on the Queen's Gambit, White's most popular and frequently played option. The second important line is the London System, which you'll frequently meet, too. In addition to these two main sections, we'll examine the Colle/Zukertort CCStartBracketCCearly e3CCEndBracketCC and the Jobava System CCStartBracketCC 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCEndBracketCC briefly. 2.c4 The Queen's Gambit is White's most popular and likely most promising opening after 1.d4 d5.

2...e6 We play 2...e6, supporting our centre and preparing kingside development. Here are White's options against the QGD. Each option has a dedicated chapter. ACCEndBracketCCThe Carlsbad: White exchanges on d5. The Carlsbad refers to the pawn structure after the trade on d5. White can capture on d5 at various moments. By far the most popular and best is 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . Other early captures on d5 are possible but less precise CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/ 2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCEndBracketCC. In the dedicated chapter, I'll explain why these move orders are helping Black. For the QS, I focus on the main move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . If you meet the other move orders before studying the full Carlsbad chapter, there is no problem. A setup with ...c6, ... Be7 and ...h6, just as in the mainline, will always work and likely transpose into the mainline, for example, CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/ PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 Nf6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 Be7 . The full chapter features more sophisticated ideas to exploit White's move orders. For the time being, I recommend just playing like in the mainline and later studying the additional finesses in the full chapter. BCCEndBracketCCThe Tricky 4...a6: Against 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 I recommend the tricky line 4...a6!? . This surprising move serves a concrete purpose: we are enforcing the idea to take the c4-pawn and supporting it with the move ...b5. This comes into play after the natural move 5.Bg5 dxc4! , when 6.e3 b5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/6B1/2pP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/ R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e4 b5 demonstrates our idea. In these lines, White is already fighting for equality! While this will regularly happen in your games, White's best is probably 5.cxd5 exd5 , when we reach the familiar Carlsbad structure. This pawn formation always leads to an interesting fight and is a main battleground of our repertoire. CCCEndBracketCCQueen's Gambit with Bg5/Bf4: White develops their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various move orders that White can try. Here's a list: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/ 8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 So there are a ton of different lines - that sounds complicated. But here's the good news: absolutely ALL of

the lines are answered with the same move, which is ...d5xc4! Therefore we can follow a simple rule of thumb: every early queen's bishop move in the QGD is answered by the capture. What's the point of the capture? Actually, there are two: We keep the pawn in the best case! This can easily happen if White is careless or doesn't know any theory at all. You'll often meet opponents who never studied the capture seriously and handle it poorly, giving you a simple extra pawn. The secondary objective is to gain time, as White needs to invest moves to get the pawn back. In the QS, we'll focus on the most important sequence 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 , as it is most likely to happen in your games. DCCEndBracketCCThe Catalan: 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 Whenever White combines the moves d4, c4 and g3 against Black's ...e6/ ...d5-formation, we reach a Catalan. By far the most common move order is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 , but we will also briefly examine CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 in the full chapter. Alright, what is our antidote against the Catalan? Black has a wide choice of reliable lines but, there is no clear picture of what might be best. I recommend building the repertoire based on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 , so the basic concept is to take the c-pawn and quickly attack White's centre with ...c5. This approach is similar to other lines that we use in our repertoire. This is a key branch of our anti-1.c4 repertoire: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . We use the same general strategy in this line, making it easier to remember. ECCEndBracketCCSidelines: The only sideline worth checking in the Quickstarter is White playing a quick e3, even before the c1-bishop is developed. This slow setup may occur via 3.e3 or 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 , but mostly via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 . There is no fundamental difference between these move orders, and we will react in the same way against all versions. I suggest playing an early ...a6, which is a tricky move order for White to handle. 3..xf3 White develops the kingside first. 3....xf6 After 3...Nf6, White has some options. ACCEndBracketCC 4.Nc3 is examined via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 in the QS. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.g3 leads to the Catalan. CCCEndBracketCC 4.e3 is a quiet sideline. DCCEndBracketCC 4.cxd5 exd5 leads to a Carlsbad structure discussed in the QS via the CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/ PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 move order. ECCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/ 2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bg5 and 4.Bf4 are answered with 4...dxc4 . I cover these lines in thededicated chapter, but don't

include them in the QS, as they are fairly rare. 4.g3 The main starting position of the Catalan. As explained in the notes on move two: I suggest taking the c-pawn after White has committed to the fianchetto. 4...dxc4 Alright, let's take the pawn. The main point of the capture is not to win and keep a pawn but to accomplish two things. 1CCEndBracketCC White has played g3, which makes regaining the pawn more difficult. You many compare to e.g. 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 dxc4 , when 4.e3 or 4.e4 prepares the convenient Bxc4. In the Catalan, the bishop belongs to g2, so White needs a different take. As we will see, manoeuvres like Qa4xc4 take time and give Black ideas for counterplay. 2CCEndBracketCC The second point of 4...dxc4 is to open the scope of our queen and put some pressure on d4. We'll increase the pressure with a quick ...c5. After 4...dxc4 White's overwhelming main line is 5.Bg2 , but we need to examine 5.Qa4+ , too. Against this move, Black has multiple good options. 5.Kg2 White's main move and certainly the most dangerous one. After the conservative 5.Qa4+ , I don't see any challenges for Black. We play 5...Bd7 6. Qxc4 c5 , as discussed in thefull chapter. 5...c5 Black has a vast choice in this position. I suggest playing 5...c5 , but at a later stage, you have plenty of options to expand your repertoire at this point. 6.0-0 White's mainline by a mile. After 6.Qa4+ I suggest 6...Bd7 7.Qxc4 b5 , which we examine via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2pP4/5NP1/PP2PP1P/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 7.Bg2 b5 . Black has good chances in this line. 6....xc6 We develop the knight and increase the pressure on d4. After this logical move, White has three main moves: 7.Qa4 , 7.dxc5 and 7.Ne5 . In the QS, I will focus on the first two, while 7.Ne5 is covered in thefull chapter. Against 7.Ne5 , just avoid the blunder 7...Nxd4?? 8.e3! and the strategically bad 7...Nxe5? . Best is 7...Bd7 , avoiding these pitfalls. Before we go into details, I'd like to add that the current position may also occur via other move orders that did not start as a Catalan. The most important one is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/ 8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 c5 3. Bg2 Nc6 4.d4 Nf6 5.O-O e6 6.c4 dxc4 , which is a key part of our concept against 1.Nf3/2.g3. Thechapter on 1.Nf3 provides more detail on the moves that lead to this surprising transformation. A less common way is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , when 3...e6 4.Bg2 c5 5.O-O Nc6 6.c4 dxc4 again transposes to the current line. I have suggested this move order for White in my Chessable course Keep it Simple: 1. d4' and now will examine Black's perspectives in this interesting variation. 7.O&a4 This queen move is White's traditional mainline, but nowadays the focus of top players and theoreticians has shifted more towards other lines, in particular 7.dxc5 . Against 7.Qa4 Black's resources look perfectly fine at the moment, often allowing exciting play on the queenside. As mentioned, 7.Qa4 is not very fashionable at the top level, but still an essential line that you'll meet regularly. 7...Kd7 The only good reply. We break the pin on our knight and threaten to capture d4, which leaves White with only two sensible replies. They can play 8.dxc5 or capture c4 with the queen. After 8.dxc5 , I recommend playing 8...Na5! , which is

better than the simple recapture. 8.O&xc4 White captures the pawn and hopes for a slight pull after 8...cxd4 9.Nxd4 when the Catalan bishop indeed makes a strong impression. We don't comply! 8...b5 A powerful move, gaining space on the queenside. This variation offers Black good counter chances and more exciting chess than 8...cxd4 . Currently, White is struggling to set any problems against 8...b5, which is a key reason why 7.Qa4 has fallen out of fashion on the top level. After 8... b5 , White usually retreats with 9.Qd3 . I've also faced the blunder 9.Qxb5?? in Blitz, which loses after 9...Nxd4 . 9.O&d3 Going back to d3 is White's most frequently played move, but it invites the further advance of our c-pawn. 9...c4 We are happy to advance the pawn with a tempo gain. We now reach an interesting, double-edged position. White usually plays for a central breakthrough with pawns to e4 and d5, while we have created an advanced three vs two pawn majority on the queenside. The c4-pawn also allows a vital resource for Black: after White's e2-e4 pawn push the knight tour ...Nc6-b4-d3 becomes an option but needs to be correctly timed. First of all, White now needs to decide on a queen move. 10.O&c2 The primary purpose of 10.Qc2 is to keep an eye on e4 to support the e-pawn push. Boris Avrukh recommended this move in his book on the Catalan. 10...Ke7 Black's choice here is mainly between 10...Rc8 and 10...Be7 . Both moves seem fine, but I concluded that we don't need the rook move just yet. There is a difference compared to CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/p2b1ppp/2n1pn2/1p6/2pP4/3Q1NP1/PP2PPBP/RNB2RK1 w kq - 0 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qd1 , when White sets up the idea Ne5, prompting the prophylactic rook move. After CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/p2b1ppp/2n1pn2/1p6/2pP4/3Q1NP1/PP2PPBP/RNB2RK1 w kq - 0 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qc2 Be7 White's most active move is 11.e4 , which Avrukh recommended. 11.e4 The most active and natural move. After 11.Ne5 , we play 11...Rc8 . You can't play 11...Nxd4? , as 12.Qd1 is a double attack that costs Black material. 11...0-0 We can't play against a possible d4-d5 breakthrough with a king on e8, so we need to castle. 12.O&e2 Avrukh recommended this move, and it is by far the most commonly played one. White removes the queen from the ...Nb4 tempo before any further action. 12....xb4 I suggest this move, directly aiming at the d3-square. Avrukh only examines 12...Qb6 in his book, which is not bad for Black, either. I still feel that 12...Nb4 makes a lot of sense, as we immediately try to make use of the c4-pawn to establish a strong outpost. 13..xe5 This looks sensible. White covers d3 with an active move. Our reply is not obvious, but a strong move! 13...Ke8 We attack the d4-pawn and prepare ...Nd7, challenging the intruder on e5. If we manage to remove the e5-knight, we finally have access to d3! Please note that 13... Bc8!? has the same idea and works well, too. 14.Qd1 Or 14.a3 Qxd4! , which looks fine after 15.axb4 Qxe5 . 14....xd7 #7 Again, I like Black's position after 15. Nxd7 Bxd7 or CCStartFENCCr2qbrk1/p2nbppp/4p3/1p2N3/1npPP3/6P1/PP2QPBP/RNBR2K1 w - - 7 15CCEndFENCC 15.Nf3 Nd3 16.Be3 Nb6 . Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 10: The Catalan Variation: 4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7.Qa4

- Quickstarter vs. 1.d4
- Quickstarter Guide: Queen's Ga

1.d4 d5 Welcome to the Quickstarter Guide vs 1.d4. The Quickstarter CCStartBracketCCQSCCEndBracketCC will provide you with an overview of the essential lines to start playing 1.d4 d5 in your games. I recommend studying the QS thoroughly and then proceeding with the dedicated chapters. In the QS, we will mostly focus on the Queen's Gambit, White's most popular and frequently played option. The second important line is the London System, which you'll frequently meet, too. In addition to these two main sections, we'll examine the Colle/Zukertort CCStartBracketCCearly e3CCEndBracketCC and the Jobava System CCStartBracketCC 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCEndBracketCC briefly. 2.c4 The Queen's Gambit is White's most popular and likely most promising opening after 1.d4 d5. 2...e6 We play 2...e6, supporting our centre and preparing kingside development. Here are White's options against the QGD. Each option has a dedicated chapter. ACCEndBracketCCThe Carlsbad: White exchanges on d5. The Carlsbad refers to the pawn structure after the trade on d5. White can capture on d5 at various moments. By far the most popular and best is 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . Other early captures on d5 are possible but less precise CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/ 2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCEndBracketCC. In the dedicated chapter, I'll explain why these move orders are helping Black. For the QS, I focus on the main move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . If you meet the other move orders before studying the full Carlsbad chapter, there is no problem. A setup with ...c6, ... Be7 and ...h6, just as in the mainline, will always work and likely transpose into the mainline, for example, CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/ PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 Nf6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 Be7 . The full chapter features more sophisticated ideas to exploit White's move orders. For the time being, I recommend just playing like in the mainline and later studying the additional finesses in the full chapter. BCCEndBracketCCThe Tricky 4...a6: Against 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 I recommend the tricky line 4...a6!? . This surprising move serves a concrete purpose: we are enforcing the idea to take the c4-pawn and supporting it with the move ...b5. This comes into play after the natural move 5.Bg5 dxc4! , when 6.e3 b5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/6B1/2pP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/ R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e4 b5 demonstrates our idea. In these lines, White is already fighting for equality! While this will regularly happen in your games, White's best is probably 5.cxd5 exd5 , when we reach the familiar Carlsbad structure. This pawn formation always leads to an interesting fight and is a main

battleground of our repertoire. CCEndBracketCCQueen's Gambit with Bg5/Bf4: White develops their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various move orders that White can try. Here's a list: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 So there are a ton of different lines - that sounds complicated. But here's the good news: absolutely ALL of the lines are answered with the same move, which is ...d5xc4! Therefore we can follow a simple rule of thumb: every early queen's bishop move in the QGD is answered by the capture. What's the point of the capture? Actually, there are two: We keep the pawn in the best case! This can easily happen if White is careless or doesn't know any theory at all. You'll often meet opponents who never studied the capture seriously and handle it poorly, giving you a simple extra pawn. The secondary objective is to gain time, as White needs to invest moves to get the pawn back. In the QS, we'll focus on the most important sequence 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 , as it is most likely to happen in your games. DCCEndBracketCCThe Catalan: 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 Whenever White combines the moves d4, c4 and g3 against Black's ...e6/...d5-formation, we reach a Catalan. By far the most common move order is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 , but we will also briefly examine CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 in the full chapter. Alright, what is our antidote against the Catalan? Black has a wide choice of reliable lines but, there is no clear picture of what might be best. I recommend building the repertoire based on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 , so the basic concept is to take the c-pawn and quickly attack White's centre with ...c5. This approach is similar to other lines that we use in our repertoire. This is a key branch of our anti-1.c4 repertoire: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . We use the same general strategy in this line, making it easier to remember. ECCEndBracketCCSidelines: The only sideline worth checking in the Quickstarter is White playing a quick e3, even before the c1-bishop is developed. This slow setup may occur via 3.e3 or 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 , but mostly via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 . There is no fundamental difference between these move orders, and we will react in the same

way against all versions. I suggest playing an early ...a6, which is a tricky move order for White to handle. 3..xc3 White develops the knight and increases the pressure on the d5-pawn. It's White's most popular move and the start of most lines in the QGD: 3....xf6 A very natural move. We develop the knight and get one move closer to kingside castling. It is also Black's most flexible move, because f6 looks like the knight's best square, while other decisions are not as obvious. This flexibility is particularly apparent after White's response 4.Nf3 , when Black has many good options to choose from. 4.Kg5 White pins our knight and thus again increases the pressure on the d5-pawn. In the early days of the Queen's Gambit, White almost always played this move, for example in the famous Capablanca-Alekhine World Championship Match in 1927. The move has remained popular to the present day, but it is not as frequently seen on the top level anymore. Strong GMs usually prefer the Carlsbad/Exchange Variation 4.cxd5 or play 4.Nf3 , waiting with the development of the c1-bishop. So why is 4.Bg5 regarded as less critical on the top level? The main reason is that White is getting nowhere in the classical continuation 4...Be7 . The lines that White has little success against: A**CC**EndBracket**CC** 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 Ne4 **CC**StartBracket**CC**the Lasker Variation**CC**EndBracket**CC** B**CC**EndBracket**CC** 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 b6 **CC**StartBracket**CC**the Tartakower Variation**CC**EndBracket**CC** C**CC**EndBracket**CC** 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 Nbd7 , as popularised by Kramnik. Well, I am still not recommending any of them in this course :-**CC**EndBracket**CC** The reason is not the quality of the lines; they are all excellent choices. At a later stage, you may consider adding them to your repertoire, exploring new ground. However, I concluded that 4...dxc4!? is a much simpler solution and gives Black equal chances, too. Therefore it is a great pick for this course. Let's have a look at this less explored but interesting option for Black. 4...dxc4 Again, we take the pawn on c4. In the notes to 4.Bg5, I already mentioned that Black has many reasonable alternatives to the capture. Being flexible is always useful if you intend to use your repertoire framework for a long time. You can keep your core variations but make small adjustments if you wish. Let's explore White's options after the capture now. For many opponents, our move will come as a surprise. We'll examine 5.e3 and 5.e4 in the QS, while 5.Nf3 is well met by 5...a6! , which we examine via the more common move order **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.Bg5 dxc4! , which gives Black good play. 5.e4 c5 I recommend 5...c5 here. This fits very well with the line **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 c5 6.Nc3 , which ispart of our repertoire. Now the natural move 6.Nf3 would transpose to the mentioned line, when 6...cxd4 7.Nxd4 Bc5 is fine for Black. This is very likely to happen, but we'll have a look at other options for White, too. 6.d5 Advancing the attacked pawn is White's main move. As mentioned before, 6.Nf3 leads to a position that we examine via the move order **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6

4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 c5 6.Nc3 . In faster time controls, White often plays the blunder 6.e5? , when 6...cxd4 7.exf6 gxf6 leads to a winning position for Black. We are three pawns up and will regain the sacrificed piece due to the double attack. It's best to break the pin with the bishop now. We'd like to take on d5, opening our c8-bishop. After 6...exd5 7.Bxf6 Qxf6 8.Nxd5 we are losing time with queen moves. (Playing the bishop to e7 first prepares the capture under more favourable circumstances.) 6...Ke7 7.Kxc4 exd5 Black also has 7...Nxd5!? , which may lead to 8.Bb5+ Bd7 9.exd5 Bxg5 10.dxe6 . It looks messy, but it will be about equal at the end of the hacking. Taking with the pawn on d5 looks more combative to me, but this is primarily a matter of taste. 8.exd5 Here 8.Bxf6 Bxf6 leads to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/pp2bppp/4pn2/2pP2B1/2p1P3/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7.Bxf6 Bxf6 8.Bxc4 exd5 and is fine for Black. 8...0-0 A normal looking move, but it is clearly best! You shouldn't play 8...h6 , as 9.Bf4 Bd6 CCStartBracketCCotherwise d5-d6 is the problemCCEndBracketCC 10. Qe2+! is awkward for Black. 9..xf3 h6 A precise move, asking the bishop about its intentions. 10.Kf4 This looks like the most logical move. After 10.Bh4?! Nxd5! 11. Qxd5 Bxh4 Black wins a pawn, so retreats along the c1-f4 diagonal are the options. 10...Kd6 White was threatening d5-d6. 11.Kxd6 O&xd6 It is also possible to play 11...Re8+!? , when 12.Be5 Nbd7 will regain the piece. Both moves lead to equal chances. 12.0-0 .xbd7 #2 Our intended setup involves ...Nb6, followed by ...Bg4 or ...Bd7. Clearly, this position is all about the d-pawn. Our queen is not an ideal blockading piece, but a later ...Nb6-c8-d6 is a noteworthy idea to change that. White also needs to be careful to hold onto the pawn in the first place, as we will attack it multiple times CCStartBracketCC...Nb6 and ...Rd8 are coming soonCCEndBracketCC. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 8: Queen's Gambit Bg5/Bf4 Lines Variation: 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4

☐ Quickstarter vs. 1.d4
■ Quickstarter Guide: Queen's Ga

1.d4 d5 Welcome to the Quickstarter Guide vs 1.d4. The Quickstarter CCStartBracketCCQSCCEndBracketCC will provide you with an overview of the essential lines to start playing 1.d4 d5 in your games. I recommend studying the QS thoroughly and then proceeding with the dedicated chapters. In the QS, we will mostly focus on the Queen's Gambit, White's most popular and frequently played option. The second important line is the London System, which you'll frequently meet, too. In addition to these two main sections, we'll examine the Colle/Zukertort CCStartBracketCCearly e3CCEndBracketCC and the Jobava System CCStartBracketCC 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCEndBracketCC briefly. 2.c4 The Queen's Gambit is White's most popular and likely most promising opening after 1.d4 d5. 2...e6 We play 2...e6, supporting our centre and preparing kingside development. Here are White's options against the QGD. Each option has a dedicated chapter.

ACCEndBracketCCThe Carlsbad: White exchanges on d5. The Carlsbad refers to the pawn structure after the trade on d5. White can capture on d5 at various moments. By far the most popular and best is 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . Other early captures on d5 are possible but less precise CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCEndBracketCC. In the dedicated chapter, I'll explain why these move orders are helping Black. For the QS, I focus on the main move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . If you meet the other move orders before studying the full Carlsbad chapter, there is no problem. A setup with ...c6, ... Be7 and ...h6, just as in the mainline, will always work and likely transpose into the mainline, for example, CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 Nf6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 Be7 . The full chapter features more sophisticated ideas to exploit White's move orders. For the time being, I recommend just playing like in the mainline and later studying the additional finesses in the full chapter. BCCEndBracketCCThe Tricky 4...a6: Against 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 I recommend the tricky line 4...a6!? . This surprising move serves a concrete purpose: we are enforcing the idea to take the c4-pawn and supporting it with the move ...b5. This comes into play after the natural move 5.Bg5 dxc4! , when 6.e3 b5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/6B1/2pP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e4 b5 demonstrates our idea. In these lines, White is already fighting for equality! While this will regularly happen in your games, White's best is probably 5.cxd5 exd5 , when we reach the familiar Carlsbad structure. This pawn formation always leads to an interesting fight and is a main battleground of our repertoire. CCCEndBracketCCQueen's Gambit with Bg5/Bf4: White develops their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various move orders that White can try. Here's a list: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 So there are a ton of different lines - that sounds complicated. But here's the good news: absolutely ALL of the lines are answered with the same move, which is ...d5xc4! Therefore we can follow a simple rule of thumb: every early queen's bishop move in the QGD is

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4...Be7 . The lines that White has little success against: ACCEndBracketCC 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 Ne4 CCStartBracketCCthe Lasker VariationCCEndBracketCC BCCEndBracketCC 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 b6 CCStartBracketCCthe Tartakower VariationCCEndBracketCC CCCEndBracketCC 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 Nbd7 , as popularised by Kramnik. Well, I am still not recommending any of them in this course :-CCEndBracketCC The reason is not the quality of the lines; they are all excellent choices. At a later stage, you may consider adding them to your repertoire, exploring new ground. However, I concluded that 4...dxc4!? is a much simpler solution and gives Black equal chances, too. Therefore it is a great pick for this course. Let's have a look at this less explored but interesting option for Black. 4...dxc4 Again, we take the pawn on c4. In the notes to 4.Bg5, I already mentioned that Black has many reasonable alternatives to the capture. Being flexible is always useful if you intend to use your repertoire framework for a long time. You can keep your core variations but make small adjustments if you wish. Let's explore White's options after the capture now. For many opponents, our move will come as a surprise. We'll examine 5.e3 and 5.e4 in the QS, while 5.Nf3 is well met by 5...a6! , which we examine via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.Bg5 dxc4! , which gives Black good play. 5.e3 c5 Here the move 5...c5 is the only sensible choice. After 5...b5? 6.Nxb5 Black doesn't get enough compensation for the pawn. Now, after 5...c5 White usually plays 6.Bxc4 , when 6...cxd4 leads to an Isolated Queen's pawn CCStartBracketCCIQPCCEndBracketCC. 6.Kxc4 cxd4 We create the famous Isolated Queen's pawn CCStartBracketCCIQPCCEndBracketCC, setting the stage for the arising middle game. 7.exd4 .xc6 #8 And, just like magic, we have transposed to theCaro Kann Panov! Wait... how did this happen? In the Caro-Kann the sequence is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Bg5 dxc4 7.Bxc4 e6 , reaching exactly the same position. This 'merge' of two lines into one is a nice way of reducing workload. On a general note: it's a remarkable transposition, but it shows that our defences against 1.e4 and 1.d4 are somewhat related. We also have the interesting case that we essentially play the Carlsbad structure from both sides, as the Exchange Caro-Kann and the QGD Exchange are the same structure. Back to the position at hand. I examinethis position in detail in the Caro-Kann Chapter, as it is more commonly reached via this move order. Please continue your study in the Panov chapter if you'd like more information about it. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 8: Queen's Gambit Bg5/Bf4 Lines Variation: 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 #4 Chapter 5: Caro-Kann Panov Variation: 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Bg5 #5 Variation: 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Bg5 #6 Variation: 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Bg5 #7 Variation: 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Bg5

- Quickstarter vs. 1.d4
- Quickstarter Guide: The Tricky

1.d4 d5 Welcome to the Quickstarter Guide vs 1.d4. The Quickstarter CCStartBracketCCQSCCEndBracketCC will provide you with an overview of the essential lines to start playing 1.d4 d5 in your games. I recommend studying the QS thoroughly and then proceeding with the dedicated chapters. In the QS, we will mostly focus on the Queen's Gambit, White's most popular and frequently played option. The second important line is the London System, which you'll frequently meet, too. In addition to these two main sections, we'll examine the Colle/Zukertort CCStartBracketCCearly e3CCEndBracketCC and the Jobava System CCStartBracketCC 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCEndBracketCC briefly. 2.c4 The Queen's Gambit is White's most popular and likely most promising opening after 1.d4 d5. 2...e6 We play 2...e6, supporting our centre and preparing kingside development. Here are White's options against the QGD. Each option has a dedicated chapter. ACCEndBracketCCThe Carlsbad: White exchanges on d5. The Carlsbad refers to the pawn structure after the trade on d5. White can capture on d5 at various moments. By far the most popular and best is 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . Other early captures on d5 are possible but less precise CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/ 2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCEndBracketCC. In the dedicated chapter, I'll explain why these move orders are helping Black. For the QS, I focus on the main move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . If you meet the other move orders before studying the full Carlsbad chapter, there is no problem. A setup with ...c6, ... Be7 and ...h6, just as in the mainline, will always work and likely transpose into the mainline, for example, CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/ PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 Nf6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 Be7 . The full chapter features more sophisticated ideas to exploit White's move orders. For the time being, I recommend just playing like in the mainline and later studying the additional finesses in the full chapter. BCCEndBracketCCThe Tricky 4...a6: Against 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 I recommend the tricky line 4...a6!? . This surprising move serves a concrete purpose: we are enforcing the idea to take the c4-pawn and supporting it with the move ...b5. This comes into play after the natural move 5.Bg5 dxc4! , when 6.e3 b5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/6B1/2pP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/ R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e4 b5 demonstrates our idea. In these lines, White is already fighting for equality! While this will regularly happen in your games, White's best is probably 5.cxd5 exd5 , when we reach the familiar Carlsbad structure. This pawn formation always leads to an interesting fight and is a main

battleground of our repertoire. CCEndBracketCCQueen's Gambit with Bg5/Bf4: White develops their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various move orders that White can try. Here's a list: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 So there are a ton of different lines - that sounds complicated. But here's the good news: absolutely ALL of the lines are answered with the same move, which is ...d5xc4! Therefore we can follow a simple rule of thumb: every early queen's bishop move in the QGD is answered by the capture. What's the point of the capture? Actually, there are two: We keep the pawn in the best case! This can easily happen if White is careless or doesn't know any theory at all. You'll often meet opponents who never studied the capture seriously and handle it poorly, giving you a simple extra pawn. The secondary objective is to gain time, as White needs to invest moves to get the pawn back. In the QS, we'll focus on the most important sequence 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 , as it is most likely to happen in your games. DCCEndBracketCCThe Catalan: 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 Whenever White combines the moves d4, c4 and g3 against Black's ...e6/...d5-formation, we reach a Catalan. By far the most common move order is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 , but we will also briefly examine CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 in the full chapter. Alright, what is our antidote against the Catalan? Black has a wide choice of reliable lines but, there is no clear picture of what might be best. I recommend building the repertoire based on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 , so the basic concept is to take the c-pawn and quickly attack White's centre with ...c5. This approach is similar to other lines that we use in our repertoire. This is a key branch of our anti-1.c4 repertoire: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . We use the same general strategy in this line, making it easier to remember. ECCEndBracketCCSidelines: The only sideline worth checking in the Quickstarter is White playing a quick e3, even before the c1-bishop is developed. This slow setup may occur via 3.e3 or 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 , but mostly via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 . There is no fundamental difference between these move orders, and we will react in the same

way against all versions. I suggest playing an early ...a6, which is a tricky move order for White to handle. 3..xc3 White develops the knight and increases the pressure on the d5-pawn. It's White's most popular move and the start of most lines in the QGD: 3....xf6 A very natural move. We develop the knight and get one move closer to kingside castling. It is also Black's most flexible move, because f6 looks like the knight's best square, while other decisions are not as obvious. This flexibility is particularly apparent after White's response 4.Nf3 , when Black has many good options to choose from. 4..xf3 After 4.Nf3, we have reached a key position. It's Black's move, and there is an unbelievable range of options to choose from. It's remarkable how many fully viable lines Black can play. This abundance of possibilities makes it difficult for White to be adequately prepared, as they have to consider so many options. When I started constructing this repertoire, one goal of mine was to include this position. Being able to play into it as Black gives you enormous flexibility for a long time. You can play the system I recommend, but you'll have tons of alternatives if ever desired. Alright, what do I recommend for Black now? It is the move 4...a6!? , which is probably not the first move you thought of. Black is playing a small flank pawn move; isn't there something more pressing to do? Well, I see the point, but hang on! In the notes to 4...a6 , I'll make my case why I think it is an excellent choice. 4...a6 Constructing a complete repertoire for Black usually works like this: you know that you like certain lines and ideas, and then you construct the rest around these cornerstones. In the case of this course, I knew straight away that I wanted to include the main crossroads position after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 and that 4...a6 would be my pick. Why? I became aware of the move while watching Magnus Carlsen playing online Blitz/Rapid games. Magnus has played the line often, with great success. He scored seven wins and nine draws with Black in my database - zero losses! That caught people's attention, and many players followed suit. The line has gained in popularity and has been employed successfully by many strong players. But now, let's talk about what the little pawn move does. Clearly, it does not contribute to development, but it rather serves a more concrete purpose: we are enforcing the idea to take the c4-pawn and supporting it with the move ...b5. This comes into play after the natural move 5.Bg5 dxc4! , when 6.e3 b5 or 6.e4 b5 demonstrates our idea. In these lines, White is already fighting for equality! Let's have an overview of White's possible replies worth checking. ACCEndBracketCC 5.e3 - A conservative move that covers the c-pawn, but it's rather passive. I suggest answering it with 5...Nbd7 . This transposes to the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Nc3 Nbd7 , which is examined in theQueen's Gambit Sidelines Chapter. BCCEndBracketCC 5.Bg5 and 5.Bf4 fail to react to our threat of taking c4! We grab the pawn, starting fun complications. In those lines, it's often White who needs to be careful. CCCEndBracketCC 5.c5 seeks to gain space on the queenside. As usual, we attack this advanced pawn with 5...b6 . This line is interesting, but Black

is holding their own nicely. DCCEndBracketCC 5.cxd5 exd5 leads to a Carlsbad structure and is White's most popular and likely best move. This overview already hints at why I like the 4...a6 variation. Line A is harmless, B scores heavily for Black and is fun to play, C is fine for Black and does not require much effort to learn. Finally, line D leads to the Carlsbad structure, a pawn formation that is a cornerstone of our repertoire anyway, as we can reach it in various versions. The move 4...a6 will often come as a surprise for White, mainly if you play at the club level or compete in online speed chess. For titled players or pros, the move 4...a6 has become a mainline in recent years, and White will know how to meet it. At lower levels, you'll have a massive knowledge gap: you know the course contents presented here, while White often won't know a thing! 5.Kg5 A very natural move and a very common reply to other 4th moves by Black. Here are some examples: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 Be7 5.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 Nbd7 5.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 c6 5.Bg5 Often, White players might not appreciate that 4...a6 is precisely directed against 5.Bg5, and they'll just play the move they would go for in other cases. A great point of our line 4...a6 is that 5.Bg5 is now met with a powerful answer. 5...dxc4 We grab the pawn and are ready to cover it with ...b5, the point of playing ...a6 that early. After 5...dxc4 White needs to be careful to avoid serious trouble, as many natural-looking continuations are dubious. One example is the line 6.e4 b5 7.e5 , which might easily net us a quick win if White is not careful. After the capture, White has mostly tried the moves 6.a4 , 6.e4 and 6.e3 . We'll check 6.e4 in the QS, the most popular move. Note that we answer 6.a4 with 6...Nc6! , intending ...Na5 next. 6.e4 White grabs as much central space as possible. The arising positions look a lot like the Botvinnik System of the Semi-Slav, but with Black having played ...a6 instead of ...c6. The Botvinnik arises after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 c6 5.Bg5 dxc4 , when 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Nxg5 hxg5 10. Bxg5 Nbd7 is the mainline. It turns out that our version is essentially an 'Enhanced Botvinnik', as ...a6 does a similar job as ...c6 CCStartBracketCCcovering b5CCEndBracketCC, but ...Bb7 will be much more powerful, as the long diagonal is open. These general observations are useful, but the position will turn very sharp soon, so we need to check concrete variations. 6...b5 We cover the pawn and ask White: what now? Their choice is minimal. If we get to play ...Be7 and ...Bb7, we are just a pawn up and have pressure on e4, as ...b4 is a constant worry. The only moves to check now are the critical 7.e5 and 7.a4 , which attacks our queenside pawn chain. 7.e5 The critical move, utilising the pin. 7...h6 The counterattack on the bishop is the only way to save material. We enter some fascinating complications now that are not exactly 'simple'. Given the course title, entering lines like that is always a tough decision for an author. In this specific case, there are good

arguments in favour of allowing this line CCStartBracketCCby playing 4...a6, you have already 'signed up' for it, by the wayCCEndBracketCC. First of all, it's objectively good for Black. White might equalise with perfect play, but it's tough. We know the line; White most likely doesn't. If they'd known it, they wouldn't enter it in the first place. Finally, a good chess player needs to be somewhat versatile. Yes, it's OK to like positional and strategic chess, but having some sharp sound lines in your repertoire is fun and beneficial for general chess improvement. 8.Kh4 No choice, as 8.Bxf6 gxf6 gives Black the bishop pair on top of the extra pawn. 8...g5 Again, a forced move. 9..xxg5 Here 9.exf6 gxh4 is fantastic for Black. We'll pick up f6 and are material up, and White has nothing to show for the losses. 9...hxg5 10.Kxg5 .xbd7 This whole sequence after 7.e5 was more or less forced. Now it's a good moment for a comparison to the Botvinnik System. In the Botvinnik a similar position is reached: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 c6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Nxg5 hxg5 10.Bxg5 Nbd7 . The only difference is that we have ...a6 played instead of ...c6. This difference is substantial, as our bishop on b7 will enjoy an open diagonal. In the Botvinnik, White has two main moves: 11.exf6 and 11.g3. In our line, the move 11.g3? is just awful, as 11...Bb7 clearly shows. The only good moves for White are 11.exf6 or 11.Be2 , intending Bf3. I had a look at online games that reached the current position and found that 11.Ne4?? has been frequently played by White. Black can refute it in many ways, but 11...Bb4+ is good enough... White has no good reply. The move 11.Qf3?! is not as bad, but still dubious because of 11...Rb8 12.exf6 Bb7 , which gains a useful tempo. 11.Ke2 White can't play 11.g3? Bb7 , so they try to reach the diagonal by different means. After 11.exf6 Bb7 12.d5 Nc5! , Black is better, too. 11...Kb7 We have reached a critical position for the whole 5.Bg5 dxc4! variation. Now White's best move is 12.exf6 , which is still keeping them in the game. I'd rather be Black, but objectively speaking, White seems to be alright. However, White played 11.Be2 to continue with 12.Bf3 and this move is met by a tremendous blow. 12.Kf3 This is the position you want to get on the board after 5.Bg5 dxc4 - now we get to play a cool move! 12....xxe5 Boom! That's a fun move to play... and it will certainly come as a nasty surprise! Black is now much better in all lines, but the only one worth exploring further is 13.Bxb7 . Objectively speaking, 13.dxe5 is White's best move, but our advantage against it is rather simple to prove. 13.Kxb7 By engine standards, White is probably lost after this move. For Humans, however, things remain complicated. 13....xd3+ 14.Elf1 It's fascinating to analyse this position. In ultra-sharp situations, very often, there is only one playable move. Here this is not the case; Black has many tempting options. 14...Qb8 This move looks like it's the most manageable for a human player, and it gives Black a large advantage. Stockfish actually evaluates 14...Bh6 as even slightly stronger, but the complications after this move are mind-boggling. I didn't want to flood you with lines up to move 20 but wanted a simpler solution - and 14...Rb8 is good enough. Still, it's a lot of fun to analyse 14...Bh6 - if you are interested, give it a go on your own.

15.Kc6+ Ele7 Our king is surprisingly safe on e7. The main feature of the position is our monster knight on d3, which is a terrible nuisance for White. 16.O&e2 This looks best, as White threatens Nd5+. Against other moves, we often have ...Bh6, getting the passive bishop in play, for example after 16.Be3 Bh6 . 16...Kg7 17.O&e3 Elf8 #6 Now we are ready to unpin with ...Qd6 and have a substantial advantage, thanks to the d3-octopus. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 9: The Tricky 4...a6 Variation: 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4

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natural 7.e3 , leading to less concrete play than early queen sorties. 7.O&b3
A critical try, but quite easily defused. We can simply ignore the attack on the pawn and offer a pawn sacrifice. 7....xbd7 The exclam is not just for the right pawn sacrifice but also for avoiding 7...Ra7? , which does not work due to the surprising blow 8.e4 . We don't need to know the details, but remember that CCStartFENCCrn1qkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3bn2/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 2 7CCEndFENCC 7.Qb3 is different to 7.Bxf6 Qxf6 8.Qb3 , when 8... Ra7! is correct. 8.O&xb7 White's greedy response needs to be checked. If they play 8.e3 , the simple 8...Rb8 is fine for Black. We cover the pawn and are ready to complete development next. White's queen is not well-placed on b3, which renders the whole operation rather pointless. 8...Qb8 9.O&xa6 Qxb2
We have excellent compensation for the pawn. Strictly speaking, you don't need to know much more than that, as it's clear that White's position is unenviable. Still, I'd like to show one line that I find instructive. After 10.a3 we simply continue with our development and don't do anything too hectic. Our development advantage and active rook will always be enough to regain the pawn, at least. After 10...Be7 11.e3 O-O 12.Be2 Rb3 13.Na4 we can take a3, but 13...Qa8 is strong, too. Again, we easily regain the a-pawn and have an active piece placement. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 9: The Tricky 4...a6 Variation: 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 Be6 7.Qb3

☐ Quickstarter vs. 1.d4
■ Quickstarter Guide: The Tricky

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it is most likely to happen in your games. DCCEndBracketCCThe Catalan: 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 Whenever White combines the moves d4, c4 and g3 against Black's ...e6/ ...d5-formation, we reach a Catalan. By far the most common move order is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 , but we will also briefly examine CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 in the full chapter. Alright, what is our antidote against the Catalan? Black has a wide choice of reliable lines but, there is no clear picture of what might be best. I recommend building the repertoire based on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 , so the basic concept is to take the c-pawn and quickly attack White's centre with ...c5. This approach is similar to other lines that we use in our repertoire. This is a key branch of our anti-1.c4 repertoire: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . We use the same general strategy in this line, making it easier to remember. ECCEndBracketCCSidelines: The only sideline worth checking in the Quickstarter is White playing a quick e3, even before the c1-bishop is developed. This slow setup may occur via 3.e3 or 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 , but mostly via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 . There is no fundamental difference between these move orders, and we will react in the same way against all versions. I suggest playing an early ...a6, which is a tricky move order for White to handle. 3..xc3 White develops the knight and increases the pressure on the d5-pawn. It's White's most popular move and the start of most lines in the QGD: 3....xf6 A very natural move. We develop the knight and get one move closer to kingside castling. It is also Black's most flexible move, because f6 looks like the knight's best square, while other decisions are not as obvious. This flexibility is particularly apparent after White's response 4.Nf3 , when Black has many good options to choose from. 4..xf3 After 4.Nf3, we have reached a key position. It's Black's move, and there is an unbelievable range of options to choose from. It's remarkable how many fully viable lines Black can play. This abundance of possibilities makes it difficult for White to be adequately prepared, as they have to consider so many options. When I started constructing this repertoire, one goal of mine was to include this position. Being able to play into it as Black gives you enormous flexibility for a long time. You can play the system I recommend, but you'll have tons of alternatives if ever desired. Alright, what do I recommend for Black now? It is the move 4...a6!? , which is probably not the first move you thought of. Black is playing a small flank pawn move; isn't there something more pressing to do? Well, I see the point, but hang on! In the notes to 4...a6 , I'll make my case why I think it is an excellent choice. 4...a6 Constructing a complete repertoire for Black usually works like this: you know that you like certain lines and ideas, and then you construct the rest around these cornerstones. In the case of this course, I knew

straight away that I wanted to include the main crossroads position after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 and that 4...a6 would be my pick. Why? I became aware of the move while watching Magnus Carlsen playing online Blitz/Rapid games. Magnus has played the line often, with great success. He scored seven wins and nine draws with Black in my database - zero losses! That caught people's attention, and many players followed suit. The line has gained in popularity and has been employed successfully by many strong players. But now, let's talk about what the little pawn move does. Clearly, it does not contribute to development, but it rather serves a more concrete purpose: we are enforcing the idea to take the c4-pawn and supporting it with the move ...b5. This comes into play after the natural move 5.Bg5 dxc4! , when 6.e3 b5 or 6.e4 b5 demonstrates our idea. In these lines, White is already fighting for equality! Let's have an overview of White's possible replies worth checking. ACCEndBracketCC 5.e3 - A conservative move that covers the c-pawn, but it's rather passive. I suggest answering it with 5...Nbd7 . This transposes to the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf3 4.e3 a6 5. Nc3 Nbd7 , which is examined in theQueen's Gambit Sidelines Chapter. BCCEndBracketCC 5.Bg5 and 5.Bf4 fail to react to our threat of taking c4! We grab the pawn, starting fun complications. In those lines, it's often White who needs to be careful. CCCEndBracketCC 5.c5 seeks to gain space on the queenside. As usual, we attack this advanced pawn with 5...b6 . This line is interesting, but Black is holding their own nicely. DCCEndBracketCC 5.cxd5 exd5 leads to a Carlsbad structure and is White's most popular and likely best move. This overview already hints at why I like the 4...a6 variation. Line A is harmless, B scores heavily for Black and is fun to play, C is fine for Black and does not require much effort to learn. Finally, line D leads to the Carlsbad structure, a pawn formation that is a cornerstone of our repertoire anyway, as we can reach it in various versions. The move 4...a6 will often come as a surprise for White, mainly if you play at the club level or compete in online speed chess. For titled players or pros, the move 4...a6 has become a mainline in recent years, and White will know how to meet it. At lower levels, you'll have a massive knowledge gap: you know the course contents presented here, while White often won't know a thing! 5.cxd5 Taking on d5 is White's major move by a mile. They recognise that ...dxc4 is a serious idea and solve the issue by capturing on d5. 5...exd5 We have reached a familiar pawn structure: the Carlsbad! If you have already studied theCarlsbad chapter, you probably remember that we mostly examined lines that featured Nge2 by White, as Nf3-setups are less critical. Here White has already committed the knight to f3, but we have played the move ...a6, which is less useful than ...c6 CCStartBracketCCCompare to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 , which is easy for Black to handleCCEndBracketCC. The difference between the two moves is so major that we need to play an entirely different setup than the one we use

against the standard Exchange Variation. Different does not mean worse, though. The arising lines are interesting to play and offer chances for both sides. As mentioned, White's main move is 6.Bg5 now, but we'll also check 6.Bf4 , which is also played quite frequently. 6.Kg5 Setting up the pin is White's usual choice. 6...Ke6 This is the way to go. We need a different approach with ...a6 on the board instead of ...c6 as in theCarlsbad mainline. There we go for a setup involving ...Be7, ...h6 and play for a quick ...Ne4 if White has decided to place the knight on f3. The same concept wouldn't work as well here, as the move ...a6 is more or less pointless. So what about 6...Be6? What's the point of the move? Well, we try to do without ...c6 for the moment and use the bishop to cover the d5-pawn. A typical drawback of early bishop moves is the weakness of the b7-pawn. We need to check if White has dangerous ideas based on a quick Qb3. We'll see that lines like 7.Qb3 or 7.Bxf6 Qxf6 8.Qb3 are fine for Black if we know what to do. By far, the main move is the natural 7.e3 , leading to less concrete play than early queen sorties. 7.e3 Very natural and White's main move by a mile. 7....xbd7 No surprise. We develop our knight and are now less concerned about Qb3, as the simple move ...Rb8 would be a fine answer. 8.Kd3 White sometimes starts with 8.h3 , when 8...Bd6 9.Bd3 transposes to CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/1ppn1ppp/p3bn2/3p2B1/3P4/2N1PN2/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 8CCEndFENCC 8.Bd3 Bd6 9.h3 . 8...Kd6 After our natural development 8...Bd6, it's a good moment to talk about the position. We have reached a Carlsbad structure, a familiar guest in our repertoire. Afull chapter is dedicated to the lines starting with CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . In this variation, White can elect to play a similar setup as he does here, involving the move Nf3. A sample line goes 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Nf3 , when we play 9...Ne4! While White's setup is almost the same in the current position, our piece placement is completely different. There is no way for us to achieve ...Ne4, for example. This is not a problem; it just means that we need to play differently, as one counterplay device CCStartBracketCC... Ne4!CCEndBracketCC is off the table. In general, the outpost square e4 is currently not well controlled by us, which we'll try to improve in the middlegame. Placing a knight on e4 is certainly a long-term goal. One key point to discuss is our light-squared bishop. Currently, the bishop mostly looks at its own pawns on f7 and d5 and has little scope for activity. It's tough for us to find a target to attack with the bishop, so usually, the best solution is to seek a trade of the piece, ideally against White's counterpart on d3. The way to work towards the trade is to get control of f5 and then play ...Bf5 at the end. A typical idea would be ...g6, followed by a manoeuvre of a knight to g7 or d6, usually the more active and better option. Once we have traded the bishops, we have better chances to control e4 and place a knight on the outpost. After our move 8...Bd6 White has tried many moves. As the position does not have a forcing character, there is a wide scope for various move orders. White's main move is 9.O-O , but I'd like to talk about 9.Bf4 and 9.h3 for a moment. The move 9.Bf4 shows an idea that White can play for. They allow trading

on f4, accepting a doubled pawn after 9.Bf4 Bxf4 10.exf4 . After this sequence White all of a sudden has a huge threat: f4-f5 would win a piece, as our bishop has no available squares. We have a good reply, though. The move 10...Bg4! leads to a good game for Black, as we manage to get rid of our problem bishop and have damaged White's pawn structure in the process. This variation explains why White has tried the move 9.h3 , stopping a possible ...Bg4. Therefore, we need to reckon with Bf4 on the next move, coming with a more significant effect. The way to play is 9...c6! , when we are ready to answer 10.Bf4 with 10...Qc7 , avoiding the issues after ...Bxf4. In general, playing ...c6 next is almost always a good idea, as it allows ...Qc7 as a universal answer to Bf4 ideas at a later stage. 9.0-0 White's most flexible move in a way. Castling queenside is no serious option, so you might as well get the king out of the centre right away and keep flexible otherwise. 9...c6 Just play this first to be ready to answer Bf4 with ...Qc7. 10.Kf4 White's most popular move, trying to trade our strong bishop. 10...O&c7 The move we prepared with 9...c6. Now White trades on d6, in most cases. They have also tried to keep the tension and played 11.Qd2 in some games. We'll examine both options now. 11.Kxd6 O&xd6 12.h3 White is concerned about ...Bg4. 12...0-0 #5 We have reached a very standard Carlsbad structure. At this point, I am going to stop the trainable, as there are many possible moves for White. Instead of thinking along the lines of 'What moves can they play?', the better approach is to understand general plans. The chapter on theCarlsbad features the primary coverage in this regard, but here's the essence of it. White has their chances on the queenside, most using the so-called minority attack. The minority attack features the idea of playing b4-b5 and ultimately creating a weakness on Black's queenside. From the current position, a dream scenario for White would look like the following line, which features awful play by Black to illustrate matters: After 13.a3 Rfe8 14.b4 h6 15.Rb1 Re7 16.a4 Rae8 17.b5 axb5 18.axb5 Rc8 19.bxc6 bxc6 Black has a weak, backward c-pawn and little to show for it. Black has played multiple stupid moves in this sequence, but it was just to showcase what a good outcome for White looks like. How should we battle the minority attack? Here's a key concept: after 13.a3 Rfe8 14.b4 we play 14...b5! . We stop a further advance and prepare the knight tour ...Nb6-c4. When considering the ...b7-b5-block, it is crucial to check if you manage to place the knight on b6 or not. The c-pawn will be a constant worry on a half-open file if you don't. A knight on c4 plugs the c-file and is an annoying intruder. If White captures a knight on c4, we will establish a protected passed pawn on c4. In a recent CCStartBracketCC2021CCEndBracketCC online rapid game between Aleksandra Goryachkina and Michael Adams, Black's chances were demonstrated. After 14...b5 , the game continued 15.Nd2 Nb6 16.Nb3 Nc4 , when Black has established the knight on the desired c4-outpost. Now White played 17.Nc5 , which looks perfectly normal, but lightning struck with 17...Bxh3! 18.gxh3 Nxe3! , when White had to defend carefully, which turned out to be too difficult with limited time. Sacrifices on e3 and h3 are not that uncommon once you have established the knight on c4. Black has additional ideas, though. The pawn play ...a6-a5 is pretty obvious, trying to open

the a-file. Let's talk about one crucial plan that Black should know: we should try to trade our light-squared bishops. Our bishop is not a 'bad bishop' in the true sense of the word. Sometimes, it can be used as an attacker CCStartBracketCCsee the Adams game aboveCCEndBracketCC. However, trading it against White's d3-bishop is still very desirable. Without the bishops, the squares e4 and c4 are much weaker, which helps a lot. We have seen above that getting a knight to c4 is a good idea, and it's even more attractive if the knight can't be taken. How do we trade the bishops? Here's a prime example: After 13.Qc2 g6 14.Na4 Qe7 15.Rfc1 Ne8 16. Nc5 Nd6 17.Nxd7 Bxd7 18.Rab1 Bf5 19.Bxf5 Nxf5 20.Ne5 Nd6 Black has reached his goal in the online Blitz game Sanan Sjugirov vs. Fabiano Caruana. The main takeaway is remembering the idea of ...g6 and the following knight tour to d6, which allowed ...Bf5 at the end. This may also be possible with a knight on g7, but d6 is the far better and active square. The position reached in the Caruana game is very similar to one of the classic games that demonstrates Black's chances in the Carlsbad, the gameBobotsov-Petrosian. We discuss the game and the crucial role of a knight on d6 in the introduction to the Carlsbad chapter. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 9: The Tricky 4...a6 Variation: 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 Be6 7.e3

- ☐ Quickstarter vs. 1.d4
- ■ Quickstarter Guide: Queen's Ga

1.d4 d5 Welcome to the Quickstarter Guide vs 1.d4. The Quickstarter CCStartBracketCCQSCCEndBracketCC will provide you with an overview of the essential lines to start playing 1.d4 d5 in your games. I recommend studying the QS thoroughly and then proceeding with the dedicated chapters. In the QS, we will mostly focus on the Queen's Gambit, White's most popular and frequently played option. The second important line is the London System, which you'll frequently meet, too. In addition to these two main sections, we'll examine the Colle/Zukertort CCStartBracketCCearly e3CCEndBracketCC and the Jobava System CCStartBracketCC 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCEndBracketCC briefly. 2.c4 The Queen's Gambit is White's most popular and likely most promising opening after 1.d4 d5. 2...e6 We play 2...e6, supporting our centre and preparing kingside development. Here are White's options against the QGD. Each option has a dedicated chapter. ACCEndBracketCCThe Carlsbad: White exchanges on d5. The Carlsbad refers to the pawn structure after the trade on d5. White can capture on d5 at various moments. By far the most popular and best is 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . Other early captures on d5 are possible but less precise CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/ 2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCEndBracketCC. In the dedicated chapter, I'll explain why these move

orders are helping Black. For the QS, I focus on the main move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . If you meet the other move orders before studying the full Carlsbad chapter, there is no problem. A setup with ...c6, ...Be7 and ...h6, just as in the mainline, will always work and likely transpose into the mainline, for example, CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 Nf6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 Be7 . The full chapter features more sophisticated ideas to exploit White's move orders. For the time being, I recommend just playing like in the mainline and later studying the additional finesses in the full chapter. BCCEndBracketCCThe Tricky 4...a6: Against 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 I recommend the tricky line 4...a6!? . This surprising move serves a concrete purpose: we are enforcing the idea to take the c4-pawn and supporting it with the move ...b5. This comes into play after the natural move 5.Bg5 dxc4! , when 6.e3 b5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/6B1/2pP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e4 b5 demonstrates our idea. In these lines, White is already fighting for equality! While this will regularly happen in your games, White's best is probably 5.cxd5 exd5 , when we reach the familiar Carlsbad structure. This pawn formation always leads to an interesting fight and is a main battleground of our repertoire. CCCEndBracketCCQueen's Gambit with Bg5/Bf4: White develops their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various move orders that White can try. Here's a list: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 So there are a ton of different lines - that sounds complicated. But here's the good news: absolutely ALL of the lines are answered with the same move, which is ...d5xc4! Therefore we can follow a simple rule of thumb: every early queen's bishop move in the QGD is answered by the capture. What's the point of the capture? Actually, there are two: We keep the pawn in the best case! This can easily happen if White is careless or doesn't know any theory at all. You'll often meet opponents who never studied the capture seriously and handle it poorly, giving you a simple extra pawn. The secondary objective is to gain time, as White needs to invest moves to get the pawn back. In the QS, we'll focus on the most important sequence 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 , as it is most likely to happen in your games. DCCEndBracketCCThe Catalan: 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 Whenever White combines the moves d4, c4 and g3 against Black's ...e6/

...d5-formation, we reach a Catalan. By far the most common move order is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 , but we will also briefly examine CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 in the full chapter. Alright, what is our antidote against the Catalan? Black has a wide choice of reliable lines but, there is no clear picture of what might be best. I recommend building the repertoire based on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 , so the basic concept is to take the c-pawn and quickly attack White's centre with ...c5. This approach is similar to other lines that we use in our repertoire. This is a key branch of our anti-1.c4 repertoire: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . We use the same general strategy in this line, making it easier to remember. ECCEndBracketCCSidelines: The only sideline worth checking in the Quickstarter is White playing a quick e3, even before the c1-bishop is developed. This slow setup may occur via 3.e3 or 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 , but mostly via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 . There is no fundamental difference between these move orders, and we will react in the same way against all versions. I suggest playing an early ...a6, which is a tricky move order for White to handle. 3..xc3 White develops the knight and increases the pressure on the d5-pawn. It's White's most popular move and the start of most lines in the QGD: 3....xf6 A very natural move. We develop the knight and get one move closer to kingside castling. It is also Black's most flexible move, because f6 looks like the knight's best square, while other decisions are not as obvious. This flexibility is particularly apparent after White's response 4.Nf3 , when Black has many good options to choose from. 4.cxd5 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. We have a look at this line in the QS. What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/

pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6.Bxf6 Qxf6 7. Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/ 5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8.Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/ R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6

4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see aboveCCEndBracketCC or no particular achievement CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for WhiteCCEndBracketCC. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ... h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC 6.Bg5 h6 . In the Quickstarter, we focus on White's best line CCStartBracketCCC aboveCCEndBracketCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 . The full chapter on the Carlsbad includes more information on the less critical versions A and B. Against these, you can still play in the style of C CCStartBracketCC...c6, ...Be7, ...h6 etc. CCEndBracketCC without any problem. It will very likely lead to a transposition to lines that we have in the QS, arising from C. 4...exd5 5.Kg5 White almost always plays this natural pinning move. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 right after the trade. 6.e3 White's main move by far. They want to develop their bishop to d3 and are aware that 6...Bf5 is favourably answered by 7.Qf3! . After 6.e3, Black needs to decide what piece setup to go for. The main decisions are: ACCEndBracketCC Do we place our f8-bishop on e7 or d6? BCCEndBracketCC Do we play ...h6 or not? I have studied the various options and concluded that Black is currently doing fine

with combining ...h6 and ...Be7. This setup has been tested extensively in practice, and Black has good results. 6...h6 I suggest starting with 6...h6, as per Rule 4. Playing6...Be7 first and ...h6 next is no mistake, though - we should reach the same positions. We already talked about 6...Bf5?! 7.Qf3! , which we need to avoid. 7.Kh4 Ke7 Breaking the annoying bishop pin is important. 8.Kd3 White can start with 8. Qc2 instead of 8.Bd3, but it will lead to the same positions. We play 8...O-O , when both 9.Bd3 Re8 or CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2N1P3/PPQ2PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Re8 10.Bd3 Ne4 transpose to lines that we reach via 8.Bd3, too. Why does White play 8.Qc2 or 8.Bd3 , by the way? After 7...Be7 we are ready to play ...Bf5! next, which White is eager to prevent. 8...0-0 Let's discuss some important general ideas. Now White has two decisions to make: Whether to play Ng1-f3 or Ng1-e2 and if Qc2 should be included or not. Qc2 lends additional cover to the e4-square, which is often useful. The first key point is that 9.Nf3 Ne4! and CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! are two similar lines that pose no problem for Black. The ...Ne4-idea pretty much takes any sting out of the Nf3-setups, which is good news. More often than not, White will opt for a Nge2-formation. Against Nge2, we need to stay flexible for a moment and wait if White continues with f2-f3 or not. If they do, the prescribed antidote is a quick queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5!, which gives us good chances. White can avoid f2-f3, though, and focus attention on the queenside. Against these slower plans, Black has some choice. I suggest playing actively on the queenside in this case, too. 9..xf3 .xe4 We play in the same way after CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! , so this is easy to remember: answer Nf3 with ...Ne4! 10.Kxe7 O&xe7 11.O&c2 Qe8 This position is also frequently reached via CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 . White now has the major decision whether to capture the knight or not. 12.0-0 A more flexible continuation than 12.Bxe4 dxe4 13.Nd2 f5 , when Black continues with ...Be6 and ...Nd7 and is fine. Our pawn structure is changed now, but we don't mind having a pawn on e4. We have a space advantage in the centre, and our pieces can use the d5-square. 12...Kf5 We support our star piece. It's also fine to play 12...Nd7 instead. After our move 12...Bf5 , White has mostly tried two ideas: Preparing b4-b5 with 13.Rab1 , and 13.Ne5 , which puts more pressure on the knight. It doesn't make much sense for White to take our knight right away, as the sample line 13.Bxe4 Bxe4 14.Nxe4 dxe4! 15.Nd2 Na6 16.a3 c5 shows. It's important to note that on move 14, we take with a pawn, keeping the queens on the board. The advanced e-pawn gives us a space advantage, which prompts us to keep more pieces on the board. 13.Qab1 White prepares the minority attack b4-b5. 13....xd7 We complete our development. 14.b4 White's idea, but it leads to less than nothing. 14....xxc3 Black is also doing well with 14...Nb6 , but the capture is simple and good. 15.O&xc3 Kxd3 16.O&xd3 a6 #5 Black is in good shape here and

already to be preferred. We plan to transfer the knight to its ideal square d6. This can easily happen after 17.a4 Nb6 18.Qb3 Nc4 19.Rfc1 Nd6 . This type of position is essential to the understanding of the pawn structure. We discuss this favourable scenario in the intro to theCarlsbad structure chapter, based on the game Bobotsov vs Petrosian. Here's a summary of the key points of the knight placement. Black has managed to trade the light-squared bishops. This helps Black a lot, as it makes is more difficult/impossible for White to engineer a minority attack. The move b4 fatally weakens the c4-square, allowing the black knight to use it. If White still had a bishop on d3 or e2, the c4-square would enjoy additional cover. Black's knight on d6 is ideally placed. It is connected to many crucial squares, in addition to the already mentioned c4-square. If needed, the knight is also looking at e4 and is ready to switch to the kingside. It also covers b6 reliably and makes b4-b5 very tough/ impossible to play for White. It combines active and prophylactic duties perfectly. These points show that it is difficult for White to come up with an active plan or idea. On the other hand, Black has no problem to make progress: there is plenty of play on the kingside. We have learned that this scenario - light-squared bishops traded and a knight on d6 - is comfortable for Black. This helps a lot in finding the right plans: Trading the light-squared bishops is desirable, in general. This particularly applies if you can accomplish the trade without a serious loss of time. In some versions of the Carlsbad, this is possible. The current position is an example. At a later stage, it can still be a good idea. Often, the combination of ...g6 and ...Nd6 enables ...Bf5 in the middlegame and is worth considering. The knight has an excellent square on d6. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 7: Queen's Gambit Carlsbad Variation: 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3

☐ Quickstarter vs. 1.d4
■ Quickstarter Guide: Queen's Ga

1.d4 d5 Welcome to the Quickstarter Guide vs 1.d4. The Quickstarter CCStartBracketCCQSCCEndBracketCC will provide you with an overview of the essential lines to start playing 1.d4 d5 in your games. I recommend studying the QS thoroughly and then proceeding with the dedicated chapters. In the QS, we will mostly focus on the Queen's Gambit, White's most popular and frequently played option. The second important line is the London System, which you'll frequently meet, too. In addition to these two main sections, we'll examine the Colle/Zukertort CCStartBracketCCearly e3CCEndBracketCC and the Jobava System CCStartBracketCC 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCEndBracketCC briefly. 2.c4 The Queen's Gambit is White's most popular and likely most promising opening after 1.d4 d5. 2...e6 We play 2...e6, supporting our centre and preparing kingside development. Here are White's options against the QGD. Each option has a dedicated chapter. ACCEndBracketCCThe Carlsbad: White exchanges on d5. The Carlsbad refers to the pawn structure after the trade on d5. White can capture on d5 at various

moments. By far the most popular and best is 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . Other early captures on d5 are possible but less precise CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCEndBracketCC. In the dedicated chapter, I'll explain why these move orders are helping Black. For the QS, I focus on the main move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . If you meet the other move orders before studying the full Carlsbad chapter, there is no problem. A setup with ...c6, ... Be7 and ...h6, just as in the mainline, will always work and likely transpose into the mainline, for example, CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 Nf6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 Be7 . The full chapter features more sophisticated ideas to exploit White's move orders. For the time being, I recommend just playing like in the mainline and later studying the additional finesses in the full chapter. BCCEndBracketCCThe Tricky 4...a6: Against 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 I recommend the tricky line 4...a6!? . This surprising move serves a concrete purpose: we are enforcing the idea to take the c4-pawn and supporting it with the move ...b5. This comes into play after the natural move 5.Bg5 dxc4! , when 6.e3 b5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/6B1/2pP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e4 b5 demonstrates our idea. In these lines, White is already fighting for equality! While this will regularly happen in your games, White's best is probably 5.cxd5 exd5 , when we reach the familiar Carlsbad structure. This pawn formation always leads to an interesting fight and is a main battleground of our repertoire. CCCEndBracketCCQueen's Gambit with Bg5/Bf4: White develops their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various move orders that White can try. Here's a list: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 So there are a ton of different lines - that sounds complicated. But here's the good news: absolutely ALL of the lines are answered with the same move, which is ...d5xc4! Therefore we can follow a simple rule of thumb: every early queen's bishop move in the QGD is answered by the capture. What's the point of the capture? Actually, there are two: We keep the pawn in the best case! This can easily happen if White is careless or

doesn't know any theory at all. You'll often meet opponents who never studied the capture seriously and handle it poorly, giving you a simple extra pawn. The secondary objective is to gain time, as White needs to invest moves to get the pawn back. In the QS, we'll focus on the most important sequence 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 , as it is most likely to happen in your games. D[CC]EndBracket[CC]The Catalan: 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 Whenever White combines the moves d4, c4 and g3 against Black's ...e6/ ...d5-formation, we reach a Catalan. By far the most common move order is [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 , but we will also briefly examine [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 in the full chapter. Alright, what is our antidote against the Catalan? Black has a wide choice of reliable lines but, there is no clear picture of what might be best. I recommend building the repertoire based on [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 , so the basic concept is to take the c-pawn and quickly attack White's centre with ...c5. This approach is similar to other lines that we use in our repertoire. This is a key branch of our anti-1.c4 repertoire: [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . We use the same general strategy in this line, making it easier to remember. E[CC]EndBracket[CC]Sidelines: The only sideline worth checking in the Quickstarter is White playing a quick e3, even before the c1-bishop is developed. This slow setup may occur via 3.e3 or 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 , but mostly via [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3[CC]EndFEN[CC] 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 . There is no fundamental difference between these move orders, and we will react in the same way against all versions. I suggest playing an early ...a6, which is a tricky move order for White to handle. 3..xc3 White develops the knight and increases the pressure on the d5-pawn. It's White's most popular move and the start of most lines in the QGD: 3....xf6 A very natural move. We develop the knight and get one move closer to kingside castling. It is also Black's most flexible move, because f6 looks like the knight's best square, while other decisions are not as obvious. This flexibility is particularly apparent after White's response 4.Nf3 , when Black has many good options to choose from. 4.cxd5 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. A[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 B[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 C[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 D[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6

5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. We have a look at this line in the QS. What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6.Bxf6 Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8.Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter:

1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see aboveCCEndBracketCC or no particular achievement CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for WhiteCCEndBracketCC. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ... h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC 6.Bg5 h6 . In the Quickstarter, we focus on White's best line CCStartBracketCCC aboveCCEndBracketCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 . The full chapter on the Carlsbad includes more information on the less critical versions A and B. Against these, you can still play in the style of C CCStartBracketCC...c6, ...Be7, ...h6 etc. CCEndBracketCC without any problem. It will very likely lead to a transposition to lines that we have in the QS, arising from C. 4...exd5 5.Kg5 White almost always

plays this natural pinning move. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 right after the trade. 6.e3 White's main move by far. They want to develop their bishop to d3 and are aware that 6...Bf5 is favourably answered by 7.Qf3! . After 6.e3, Black needs to decide what piece setup to go for. The main decisions are: AĊĊEndBracketĊĊ Do we place our f8-bishop on e7 or d6? BĊĊEndBracketĊĊ Do we play ...h6 or not? I have studied the various options and concluded that Black is currently doing fine with combining ...h6 and ...Be7. This setup has been tested extensively in practice, and Black has good results. 6...h6 I suggest starting with 6...h6, as per Rule 4. Playing6...Be7 first and ...h6 next is no mistake, though - we should reach the same positions. We already talked about 6...Bf5?! 7.Qf3! , which we need to avoid. 7.Kh4 Ke7 Breaking the annoying bishop pin is important. 8.Kd3 White can start with 8. Qc2 instead of 8.Bd3, but it will lead to the same positions. We play 8...O-O , when both 9.Bd3 Re8 or ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2N1P3/PPQ2PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 4 9ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 9.Nf3 Re8 10.Bd3 Ne4 transpose to lines that we reach via 8.Bd3, too. Why does White play 8.Qc2 or 8.Bd3 , by the way? After 7...Be7 we are ready to play ...Bf5! next, which White is eager to prevent. 8...0-0 Let's discuss some important general ideas. Now White has two decisions to make: Whether to play Ng1-f3 or Ng1-e2 and if Qc2 should be included or not. Qc2 lends additional cover to the e4-square, which is often useful. The first key point is that 9.Nf3 Ne4! and ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! are two similar lines that pose no problem for Black. The ...Ne4-idea pretty much takes any sting out of the Nf3-setups, which is good news. More often than not, White will opt for a Nge2-formation. Against Nge2, we need to stay flexible for a moment and wait if White continues with f2-f3 or not. If they do, the prescribed antidote is a quick queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5!, which gives us good chances. White can avoid f2-f3, though, and focus attention on the queenside. Against these slower plans, Black has some choice. I suggest playing actively on the queenside in this case, too. 9..xge2 Qe8 We play this universally useful move first. Now White can try various move orders. They may start with 10.Qc2 or 10.O-O , but it makes no substantial difference for our setup. We'll play ...Nbd7 and start play on the queenside, involving the moves ...a5 and ...b5. 10.O&c2 A popular move at this particular point, but the resulting position is often reached via different move orders. White frequently plays Qc2 at an earlier stage, for example ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.Qc2 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.e3 O-O 9.Bd3 Re8 10.Nge2 leads to the same position. 10....xbd7 Finally, it's time to develop our knight. Note that 10...Ne4?! is questionable here, as 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 12.Bxe4 dxe4 13.Ng3 f5 14.O-O , followed by f3, is better for White. After the much better move 10...Nbd7 , White has to make some decisions. First of all, they can castle queenside. Against our setup, this approach is bad and gives us a strong attack - we simply throw the kitchen sink with ...b5, ...a5 etc. and enjoy life. It's much better to castle kingside for White, avoiding a direct attack.

White may castle kingside immediately or start with the move 11.f3, which is also popular. After 11.f3 , we play the crucial move 11...b5! , starting our queenside play. 11.0-0 White castles kingside and delays the question of 'playing f2-f3 or not' for a move. 11...a5 The position before 11...a5 has been reached hundreds of times in master practice. Black has tried many moves, as the position is not tactical, and you have some flexibility. Black has done alright with the move 11...Nh5 , for example. I was quite satisfied with this line when I wondered if it was possible to play it differently. Against f3-setups, we play a quick ...b5 - is it possible to play this idea even without White having played f3 before? I checked 11...b5?! , but this is questionable due to 12.a4! b4 13.Na2 , when the c6-pawn is attacked, we'd have no fully satisfactory reply. Well, what about 11...a5 then, and wait with ...b5 for a moment? It turned out to work well, so here we go. 12.Qae1 White plays without the move f3. The main move 12.f3 needs to be answered with 12...b5! , which we cover via the move order CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R3K2R w KQ - 8 11CCEndFENCC 11.f3 b5 12.O-O a5 . Of course, White could play other moves besides 12.Rae1. We'd still be able to play the ...b5 plan; White's concrete move does not matter all that much. 12...b5 We play ...b5 anyway, even without the 'signal' move f3 being on the board. Discovering this idea was a true revelation for me, as it shows that Black has a 'universal setup'. We can aim for ...a5, ...b5 and start a queenside play, more or less ignoring what White does. Don't get me wrong: I am not saying White is worse or anything of the sort, just that we have a rather easy life, as our concept has a universal character and there are no subtle move order points to consider. 13.f3 I don't see a way forward for White without f2-f3. What constructive plan does White have besides preparing e3-e4? I don't see it, really. In any case, Black can play ...Ba6 next and then consider further action. You can think about preparing ...c5, for example. 13...Ka6 #12
We have discussed the f3-style positions already via 11.f3. The current position is certainly not a bad version of it. White can't successfully play 14.e4?! , because 14...dxe4 15.fxe4 Ng4 is good for Black, a common idea. White probably needs a preparational move like 14.Bf2 , but it is slow. We'd have a choice between the forcing 14...b4 and something like 14...Qb6 CCStartBracketCCthere are plenty of optionsCCEndBracketCC to keep the tension. It's a position full of pieces that gives Black good chances, in my opinion. Main Chapter and Extended Variations
Chapter 7: Queen's Gambit Carlsbad Variation: 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3

- ☐ Quickstarter vs. 1.d4
- ■ Quickstarter Guide: Queen's Ga

1.d4 d5 Welcome to the Quickstarter Guide vs 1.d4. The Quickstarter CCStartBracketCCQSCCEndBracketCC will provide you with an overview of the essential lines to start playing 1.d4 d5 in your games. I recommend studying the QS

thoroughly and then proceeding with the dedicated chapters. In the QS, we will mostly focus on the Queen's Gambit, White's most popular and frequently played option. The second important line is the London System, which you'll frequently meet, too. In addition to these two main sections, we'll examine the Colle/Zukertort CCStartBracketCCearly e3CCEndBracketCC and the Jobava System CCStartBracketCC 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCEndBracketCC briefly. 2.c4 The Queen's Gambit is White's most popular and likely most promising opening after 1.d4 d5. 2...e6 We play 2...e6, supporting our centre and preparing kingside development. Here are White's options against the QGD. Each option has a dedicated chapter. ACCEndBracketCCThe Carlsbad: White exchanges on d5. The Carlsbad refers to the pawn structure after the trade on d5. White can capture on d5 at various moments. By far the most popular and best is 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . Other early captures on d5 are possible but less precise CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/ 2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCEndBracketCC. In the dedicated chapter, I'll explain why these move orders are helping Black. For the QS, I focus on the main move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . If you meet the other move orders before studying the full Carlsbad chapter, there is no problem. A setup with ...c6, ... Be7 and ...h6, just as in the mainline, will always work and likely transpose into the mainline, for example, CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/ PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 Nf6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 Be7 . The full chapter features more sophisticated ideas to exploit White's move orders. For the time being, I recommend just playing like in the mainline and later studying the additional finesses in the full chapter. BCCEndBracketCCThe Tricky 4...a6: Against 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 I recommend the tricky line 4...a6!? . This surprising move serves a concrete purpose: we are enforcing the idea to take the c4-pawn and supporting it with the move ...b5. This comes into play after the natural move 5.Bg5 dxc4! , when 6.e3 b5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/6B1/2pP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/ R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e4 b5 demonstrates our idea. In these lines, White is already fighting for equality! While this will regularly happen in your games, White's best is probably 5.cxd5 exd5 , when we reach the familiar Carlsbad structure. This pawn formation always leads to an interesting fight and is a main battleground of our repertoire. CCCEndBracketCCQueen's Gambit with Bg5/Bf4: White develops their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various move orders that White can try. Here's a list: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/ 8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq -

0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 So there are a ton of different lines - that sounds complicated. But here's the good news: absolutely ALL of the lines are answered with the same move, which is ...d5xc4! Therefore we can follow a simple rule of thumb: every early queen's bishop move in the QGD is answered by the capture. What's the point of the capture? Actually, there are two: We keep the pawn in the best case! This can easily happen if White is careless or doesn't know any theory at all. You'll often meet opponents who never studied the capture seriously and handle it poorly, giving you a simple extra pawn. The secondary objective is to gain time, as White needs to invest moves to get the pawn back. In the QS, we'll focus on the most important sequence 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 , as it is most likely to happen in your games. DCCEndBracketCCThe Catalan: 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 Whenever White combines the moves d4, c4 and g3 against Black's ...e6/...d5-formation, we reach a Catalan. By far the most common move order is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 , but we will also briefly examine CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 in the full chapter. Alright, what is our antidote against the Catalan? Black has a wide choice of reliable lines but, there is no clear picture of what might be best. I recommend building the repertoire based on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 , so the basic concept is to take the c-pawn and quickly attack White's centre with ...c5. This approach is similar to other lines that we use in our repertoire. This is a key branch of our anti-1.c4 repertoire: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . We use the same general strategy in this line, making it easier to remember. ECCEndBracketCCSidelines: The only sideline worth checking in the Quickstarter is White playing a quick e3, even before the c1-bishop is developed. This slow setup may occur via 3.e3 or 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 , but mostly via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 . There is no fundamental difference between these move orders, and we will react in the same way against all versions. I suggest playing an early ...a6, which is a tricky move order for White to handle. 3..xc3 White develops the knight and increases the pressure on the d5-pawn. It's White's most popular move and the start of most lines in the QGD: 3....xf6 A very natural move. We develop the knight and get one move closer to kingside castling. It is also Black's most flexible move, because f6 looks like the knight's best square, while other decisions are not as obvious. This flexibility is

particularly apparent after White's response 4.Nf3 , when Black has many good options to choose from. 4.cxd5 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. We have a look at this line in the QS. What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6.Bxf6 Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8.Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.

c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see aboveCCEndBracketCC or no particular achievement CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for WhiteCCEndBracketCC. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ... h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/

pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC 6.Bg5 h6 . In the Quickstarter, we focus on White's best line CCStartBracketCCC aboveCCEndBracketCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 . The full chapter on the Carlsbad includes more information on the less critical versions A and B. Against these, you can still play in the style of C CCStartBracketCC...c6, ...Be7, ...h6 etc. CCEndBracketCC without any problem. It will very likely lead to a transposition to lines that we have in the QS, arising from C. 4...exd5 5.Kg5 White almost always plays this natural pinning move. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 right after the trade. 6.e3 White's main move by far. They want to develop their bishop to d3 and are aware that 6...Bf5 is favourably answered by 7.Qf3! . After 6.e3, Black needs to decide what piece setup to go for. The main decisions are: ACCEndBracketCC Do we place our f8-bishop on e7 or d6? BCCEndBracketCC Do we play ...h6 or not? I have studied the various options and concluded that Black is currently doing fine with combining ...h6 and ...Be7. This setup has been tested extensively in practice, and Black has good results. 6...h6 I suggest starting with 6...h6, as per Rule 4. Playing6...Be7 first and ...h6 next is no mistake, though - we should reach the same positions. We already talked about 6...Bf5?! 7.Qf3! , which we need to avoid. 7.Kh4 Ke7 Breaking the annoying bishop pin is important. 8.Kd3 White can start with 8. Qc2 instead of 8.Bd3, but it will lead to the same positions. We play 8...O-O , when both 9.Bd3 Re8 or CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2N1P3/ PPQ2PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Re8 10.Bd3 Ne4 transpose to lines that we reach via 8.Bd3, too. Why does White play 8.Qc2 or 8.Bd3 , by the way? After 7...Be7 we are ready to play ...Bf5! next, which White is eager to prevent. 8...0-0 Let's discuss some important general ideas. Now White has two decisions to make: Whether to play Ng1-f3 or Ng1-e2 and if Qc2 should be included or not. Qc2 lends additional cover to the e4-square, which is often useful. The first key point is that 9.Nf3 Ne4! and CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/ 3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! are two similar lines that pose no problem for Black. The ...Ne4-idea pretty much takes any sting out of the Nf3-setups, which is good news. More often than not, White will opt for a Nge2-formation. Against Nge2, we need to stay flexible for a moment and wait if White continues with f2-f3 or not. If they do, the prescribed antidote is a quick queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5!, which gives us good chances. White can avoid f2-f3, though, and focus attention on the queenside. Against these slower plans, Black has some choice. I suggest playing actively on the queenside in this case, too. 9..xge2 Qe8 We play this universally useful move first. Now White can try various move orders. They may start with 10.Qc2 or 10.O-O , but it makes no substantial difference for our setup. We'll play ...Nbd7 and start play on the queenside, involving the moves ...a5 and ...b5. 10.O&c2 A popular move at

this particular point, but the resulting position is often reached via different move orders. White frequently plays Qc2 at an earlier stage, for example CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.Qc2 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.e3 O-O 9.Bd3 Re8 10.Nge2 leads to the same position. 10....xbd7 Finally, it's time to develop our knight. Note that 10...Ne4?! is questionable here, as 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 12.Bxe4 dxe4 13.Ng3 f5 14.O-O , followed by f3, is better for White. After the much better move 10...Nbd7 , White has to make some decisions. First of all, they can castle queenside. Against our setup, this approach is bad and gives us a strong attack - we simply throw the kitchen sink with ...b5, ...a5 etc. and enjoy life. It's much better to castle kingside for White, avoiding a direct attack. White may castle kingside immediately or start with the move 11.f3, which is also popular. After 11.f3 , we play the crucial move 11...b5! , starting our queenside play. 11.f3 b5 A crucial moment. If White plays f2-f3, replying with ...b7-b5! is a MUST. The pawn push secures counterplay on the queenside and indirectly against the centre. I'd like to mention that I advocate playing ...b5 even if White has not played f2-f3, for example, after CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R3K2R w KQ - 8 11CCEndFENCC 11.O-O Black has the idea 11...Nh5!? , but I suggest 11...a5 , when 12.f3 b5! would transpose to CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R3K2R w KQ - 8 11CCEndFENCC 11.f3 b5! 12.O-O a5 , the position we are about to examine. If White plays CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/1p1nbpp1/2p2n1p/p2p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R4RK1 w - - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12.Rae1 , I'd still play 12...b5!? , even though White has not played f2-f3. In such a case, the ...b5-plan is just one good option for Black - you have alternatives. Against f2-f3, however, playing ...b7-b5! is the best antidote. 12.0-0 There is not much else. White needs to castle and get the king to safety. 12.e4? fails to 12...b4 13.Na4 dxe4 14.fxe4 Nxe4 , when White is crushed. 12...a5 Continuing our queenside buildup. We can also reach this position via different move orders, in particular, 11.O-O or 10.O-O Nbd7, if White plays a quick Qc2. In general, the line CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.O-O Nbd7 11.f3 b5! is very similar to the position we have on the board; many ideas apply to both. We'll go ...Ba6 next in most cases and continue our play on the queenside. I'd like to check one sharper line now, the direct 13.e4. 13.e4 b4 14..xa4 This is better than 14.Nd1 , when 14...Qb6 is a good reply. 14...dxe4 15.fxe4 c5 This leads to immense complications, but the move is actually strategically founded. White has the full centre d4/e4, and 15...c5! hits at the centre to gain squares for our pieces. If White takes on c5, we'll get the e5 square and excellent dark-squared control. Did you wonder if 15...Nxe4 is possible here? It actually is possible, and if you ask Stockfish it leads to a draw! No joke, it's suggesting the following line 16.Bxe7 Qxe7 17.Qxc6 Nd2 18.Qxa8 Qe3+ 19.Rf2 Nf6 , just to give the first moves of this mess. I prefer 15...c5! because it shows the strategic idea of hitting at the centre and fighting for squares. The shot 15...Nxe4 works tactically for an engine, but knowing

about 15...c5 as a strategic idea will help you in other similar positions. 16.e5 This looks critical. With 15...c5, we hit at the d-pawn, hoping that White would move it. AccEndBracketcc 16.dxc5? Ng4 is great for Black. We dominate on the dark squares. ccStartFENcc r1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/5n1p/p1p5/Np1PP2B/3B4/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 w - - 0 16ccEndFENcc 16.Nxc5 Nxc5 17.dxc5 Ng4 is the same story. BccEndBracketcc 16.d5?? Nxe4 is just a straight refutation. 16....xd5 #9 Note that 16.e5 allowed this knight jump. With 15...c5, we fought for central squares and got one. The position is very sharp and tactical now. Frequently, this reduces options for both sides, as concrete calculation proves that only one move works, while others would lose the game. Here, this is not the case. White has many possibilities, which is why I will stop the trainable line here and give you an illustrative overview. AccEndBracketcc ccStartFENcc r1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/7p/p1pnP3/Np1P3B/3B4/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 w - - 1 17ccEndFENcc 17.Bh7+? is bad after 17...Kh8 18.Bxe7 Rxe7 , when White's bishop on h7 and the knight on a4 are offside. We also threaten ...Ne3, of course. Note that ccStartFENcc r1bqr1k1/3nbppB/7p/p1pnP3/Np1P3B/8/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 b - - 2 17ccEndFENcc 17...Kf8?? not only looks wrong, but loses to 18.Rxf7+! . BccEndBracketcc ccStartFENcc r1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/7p/p1pnP3/Np1P3B/3B4/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 w - - 1 17ccEndFENcc 17.Bxe7 Rxe7! Taking with the rook is vital to lend additional cover to f7. Now 18.Bc4 Ne3 19.Qe4 Nxf1 20.Qxa8 Ne3 is a fun line that keeps the game complicated but balanced. CccEndBracketcc ccStartFENcc r1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/7p/p1pnP3/Np1P3B/3B4/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 w - - 1 17ccEndFENcc 17.Bc4 Bxh4 18.Bxd5 Nxe5! 19.Bxa8 cxd4 gives Black good play. Stockfish finds a way to equality for White after 20.Nf4 Ba6 21.Bd5 , but we are very deep down the rabbit hole. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 7: Queen's Gambit Carlsbad Variation: 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3

- ☐ Quickstarter vs. Other Moves
- ■ Quickstarter Guide: The Flexib

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there is the rare CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/2pp4/8/5NP1/PPPPPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.c4 , which I suggest to answer with 4...dxc4 . 4.d4 White's best and most challenging move, aiming for a Grünfeld CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 CCEndBracketCC with an extra tempo. We won't give White the pleasure to play this dynamic line - it scores very heavily for White. 4....xf6 We simply develop the knight and keep the tension in the centre. 5.0-0 e6 Again we avoid 5...cxd4 and keep the tension. After 5...e6 White's main and only critical move is 6.c4 , when 6...dxc4 leads to the chapter on theCatalan. We'll have a brief look at slower moves for White, like 6.b3 or 6.c3 . 6.c4 The critical move, prompting the transposition to the Catalan after 6...dxc4 . Other moves, like 6.b3 or 6.c3 , are no theoretical challenge. I suggest continuing with 6...Be7 and preparing to castle in both cases. Thefull chapter has some more information, but these slow moves don't pose a threat, anyway. 6...dxc4 #5 And we have transposed to ourmainline against the Catalan, which arises after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 - quite a cunning transposition. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 16: The Flexible 1.Nf3 Variation: 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.d4

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CCStartBracketCCseethis lineCCEndBracketCC. 5.d3 White plays the typical King's Indian pawn move and prepares e2-e4 next. Now Black has to choose their setup. 5...Ke7 Giving this move an exclamation mark is a bit strong, but I believe it is a powerful move and will score heavily. What's the point of it? Black anticipates that White will play e2-e4, which we will answer with ...d5-d4, establishing a central space advantage. In this pawn structure a key plan for White is moving the f3-knight and preparing the push of the f-pawn to attack our e5-pawn. Now, the point of ...Be7 is twofold: to prepare ...g5 and/or ...h5, which makes pushing f2-f4 very difficult for White. We don't ever intend to castle kingside, giving White attacking play on this side of the board. Our king can stay in the centre for the moment but will often castle queenside. Let's have a look at some lines to illustrate the play. 6.e4 Played most of the time. We happily close the centre after this move. White often avoids the immediate 6.e4 but develops the knight first. After 6.Nbd2 , or the similar but much rarer 6.Na3 , we need to play a move that fits well with our concept of kingside expansion. It is crucial to understand that we only want to push ...g5/...h5 when the centre is closed, and e4 and ...d4 is on the board. Playing 6.Nbd2 h5?! is dicey, as White still may play 7.c4! d4 8.b4!? , which sets the board on fire and even looks good for White. Instead, we need a good move that is more versatile. I suggest 6. Nbd2 Be6 , when after 7.e4 d4 we can still play with ...h5, for example after 8. Nc4 Qc7 9.a4 h5 . 6...d4 7.a4 White may also play 7.Na3 or 7.Nbd2 , when you have the comfortable choice between playing 7...Be6 CCStartBracketCCtransposing to CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/pp2bppp/2n5/2ppp3/8/ 3P1NP1/PPP1PPBP/RNBQ1RK1 w kq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nbd2 Be6 7.e4 d4 CCEndBracketCC or the immediate CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/pp2bppp/2n5/2p1p3/ 3pP3/3P1NP1/PPPN1PBP/R1BQ1RK1 b kq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7...g5 or 7...h5 . It's a tough call between them. For the sake of simplicity, I'd just recommend playing 7...Be6 . 7...h5 We are spoilt for choice here. The alternatives 7...g5 or 7...Be6 are also nice for Black. I like the direct nature of 7...h5 , though. White immediately needs to decide what to do about our h-pawn advance. 8..xa3 White can play 8.h4 , but a setup with ...f6 and ...Nh6-f7 is a good reply. We prepare ...g5 with this formation. 8...h4 Here we go! 9..xc4 hxg3 The computer also likes 9...h3 , but taking on g3 is simpler. 10.hxg3 Not an easy decision for White to make. We have the open h-file now. 10.fxg3 is also fine for Black. We'll play ...Qc7, ...Be6 and ...O-O-O, when White has little to play for. We have more space and various ideas, like playing on the h-file. 10...O&c7 I suggest this more strategic approach, compared to 10...Bg4 11.c3 f6 12.cxd4 cxd4 13.Qb3 Qd7 , which tries to win on the h-file. White has good defensive resources, though. The counterplay on the queenside is real. 11.c3 Ke6 12.cxd4 cxd4 13.a5 Stockfish suggests this setup for White. It indeed looks like a good way to generate some play. Now Black has more than one good plan to choose from. 13...Kxc4 Stockfish suggests this move, and I agree that it is an interesting concept. We capture the knight and start emphasizing play on the dark squares. It's, of course, possible to play 13...Nf6 , completing development first. 14.dxc4 .xf6 #6 We have excellent control of c5 and b4, and intend ...Nd7-c5

next. The engine also points out the idea to play ...Rd8 and hide the king on g7 after ...Kf8 and ...g6 first. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 16: The Flexible 1.Nf3 Variation: 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.O-O

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PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.b3 , too. If you answer 1.b3 with 1...d5, you have a consistent setup against all versions of the queenside fianchetto. After 1.b3 d5 , White's almost automatic response is the natural 2.Bb2 . 2.Kb2 c5 Let's grab more centre space. Against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 , we follow a similar approach with 2...c5 . After 2...c5 White's best move is 3.e3 , while 3.Nf3?! is a common move order slip that we should exploit with 3...f6! , when Black manages to play ...e5 next. 3.e3 This is White's most accurate move order, avoiding 3.Nf3?! f6! , which gives Black excellent chances in the centre. 3....xf6 I suggest playing a setup with ...Nf6 and ...g6, countering White's fianchettoed bishop. I want to avoid an early ...Nc6, as I feel that White is happy about playing Bb5, pinning our knight and strengthening the control of e5. After 3...Nf6 White has the fundamental decision between 4.f4 , mixing in some ideas from the Bird CCStartBracketCC1.f4CCEndBracketCC or 4.Nf3 , which is better, in my opinion. 4..xf3 White develops the knight to its best square and avoids weakening their structure with 4.f4 , which I recommend answering with 4...g6 . The position after 4.Nf3 can also be reached via different move orders, particularly those featuring an earlier Nf3. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.b3 c5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Bb2 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.b3 c5 4.Bb2 These move orders are a key reason for selecting CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 2.Bb2 c5 3.e3 Nf6 as our weapon against 1.b3 - it's one system that can be used against all possible early queenside fianchettos. Let's discuss an additional point. This position was covered from the white side in two Chessable courses. The first one is, of course, Adhiban's Lifetime Repertoire 1.b3, the second one is Lifetime Repertoire: 1.c4/1.Nf3, written by FM Carsten Hansen and yours truly! Yes, I have covered this position for White, reaching it via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 c5 3.b3 Nf6 4.Bb2 . So what am I recommending against my suggestion now... and against Adhiban's? 4...g6 I think this is a good option for Black. It doesn't require any deep study and gives Black fair chances. White has two main ideas now. GM Adhiban recommended 5.Bb5+ for White, while I went for 5.c4 in my course. 5.Kb5+ This check is Ahdiban's recommendation for White. After 5.c4 , I suggest 5...dxc4 6.Bxc4 Bg7 7.O-O O-O , when 8.d4 cxd4 9.Nxd4 a6!? , intending ...b5. When white plays 10.a4 , we go 10...Bd7 and ...Nc6 next. I recommended this line in my course for White, going for a minimal risk option. Indeed the chances are close to equal due to the symmetrical pawn structure. 5....xbd7 As usual, I want to avoid 5...Nc6 , creating an unpleasant pin/doubled pawn. This leaves 5...Bd7 or 5...Nbd7 , leading to equal chances. I prefer 5...Nbd7 because I agree with Adhiban about 5...Bd7 6.Bxf6!? exf6 7.Bxd7+ Qxd7 8.d4 . He likes this unbalanced position and

thinks it is easier to play for White. 6.0-0 Here, taking on f6 would make much less sense, as Black would keep the bishop pair. For comparison, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2pp1p/5np1/1Bpp4/8/1P2PN2/PBPP1PPP/RN1QK2R b KQkq - 1 5CCEndFENCC 5...Bd7 6.Bxf6 exf6 7.Bxd7+ this asset is immediately gone. With 6.O-O , we follow Adhiban's recommendation for White. 6...Kg7 7.c4 White has to use their pawns in the fight for the centre. 7...dxc4 Similar to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2pp1p/5np1/2pp4/8/1P2PN2/PBPP1PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.c4 dxc4 , this capture is best. 8.bxc4 Certainly more interesting than 8.Bxc4 , when 8...O-O and ...b6 next looks like an easy game for Black. 8...0-0 I think this is a small improvement on 8...a6 , which Adhiban considered in his course. There is no need for Black to play ...a6, as after castling, White will probably need to move the bishop anyway. 9.Ka4 White needs to be aware of our idea ...Nb6, after which the white bishop has no good way back into its own camp. 9...b6 #7 This is the final move to know, in my mind. We'll play ...Bb7 next and finish our development. The position is interesting to play for both sides, but White has no advantage. A key point will be White's decision about the central pawn structure. They can play d2-d4 at some point, when we have the option to take on d4 and create the pawn duo c4 and d4 for White, the so-called 'Hanging Pawns'. These pawns can be handy targets, but White has good central control due to the pawns and active pieces. To summarize, 1.b3 leads to interesting positions with equal chances for both sides. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 17: Other First Moves Variation: 1.b3

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- ■ Quickstarter Guide: English Li

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CCStartBracketCCno commonly accepted nameCCEndBracketCC: 1...d5 2.e4 d4 is fine for Black. GCCEndBracketCC 1.g4 Grob Opening: 1...d5 2.Bg2 Bxg4 refutes the Grob. HCCEndBracketCC 1.b4 Orangutan Opening: 1...d5 , followed by ...Nf6 and ...Bg4 is a good reply. If White plays something bizarre, just stick to sound, general principles: control the centre with pawns and develop pieces, get castled quickly. Let's have a look at some moves now. 1.c4 White plays 1.c4, the English Opening. In fact, it is a bit too early to attach a name to the opening, as there are plenty of options to transpose to other openings after our reply. 1...e6 How to answer 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two main ways to do that. ACCEndBracketCC Playing a quick g3, like 2.g3 or 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 . White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly in some cases. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan', by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 . In both cases, we'd answer with ...dxc4, which is our weapon against the Catalan. The second scenario is quite different: White could play an early b3 to cover the c-pawn. Possible sequences are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . I recommend playing ...d4 in response, gaining central space in all these cases. We argue that b3 is rather pointless when a black pawn appears on d4, as Bb2 is not attractive anymore - staring at an enemy pawn on d4 is not what the bishop wants to do. Therefore we have a fairly straightforward move order concept: Against g3-setups, we'll play 1...e6, 2...d5, 3...Nf6 and capture on c4 next, unless White plays b3 along the way when we will advance the d-pawn immediately in

response. An interesting case is the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . White plays b3 even before g3 is on the board. In this case, playing 3...d4 is a good option, too. BCCEndBracketCC White avoids playing with g3. In the Quickstarter, we'll briefly check 2.e4 , which surprisingly transposes to a rare line of the French Defence. Black is in good shape after 2...d5 , as we will see. A theoretically more challenging setup is based on e3, most commonly employed via the move order 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 . White often plays a quick b3 next, which leads to complex and not yet fully explored positions. 2.e4 An unexpected change of gears! White suddenly transposes to a rare line of the French Defence: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 e6 2.c4 is the move order used there. The move 2.e4 is unpopular but sometimes played if White wants to avoid mainstream theory and transpositions like 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 , which amounts to half a dozen chapters in this course. For us, 2.e4 is not much of a concern: After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppp1ppp/4p3/8/2P1P3/8/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2...d5 White usually plays 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2P1P3/8/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.exd5 exd5 4.cxd5 , which both lead to IQP positions. They are slightly different from the ones we meet in the Caro-Kann CCStartBracketCCsee the chapter on thePanov and Steiner variationsCCEndBracketCC, as we still have a c-pawn, but the e-pawn is gone. Still, the type of position and strategy is rather familiar, and there aren't any pitfalls to be aware of. Let's have a look at some variations now. 2...d5 3.exd5 exd5 Now White can choose between taking on d5 or playing 4.d4 , which does not immediately create an IQP in the centre. We will usually get to this structure later, though. 4.d4 This position frequently arises from CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.c4 , starting as an Exchange Variation of the French Defence. In Keep It Simple: 1.e4 I advocated playing the Exchange French for White but suggested playing 4.Nf3 instead. One point of the move is to answer 4...Bd6 with 5.c4 , claiming that the bishop on d6 is not ideal in the arising IQP positions. I dismissed 4.c4 because of the lines that I am now recommending for Black. The main point to remember for Black is: we want to develop our pieces as actively as possible and start with ...Nf6 and ...Bb4 and avoid a more passive setup with ...Be7, for example. We'll check the concrete lines now, but remembering this general concept is an excellent guideline. A second point to remember: we want to capture on c4 at some point, but only after White has spent a tempo on moving the f1-bishop. The usual procedure is to wait for Bd3 when we capture c4 to create the IQP. 4....xf6 5..xc3 White usually starts with this move, but 5.Nf3 Bb4+ 6.Nc3 might lead to the same positions. 5...Kb4 As mentioned in the notes to 4.d4: we should develop as actively as possible. Placing the bishop on b4 is Black's best setup, in my mind. After 5...Bb4 White usually chooses between 6.Nf3 or 6.Bd3 , but they will often lead to the same positions. After 6.Nf3 O-O 7.Bd3 dxc4 8.Bxc4 and

CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/1bPP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 O-O 8.Nf3 we see two natural sequences that quickly merge to the same variation. 6.Kd3 White often starts with the bishop move to still have Nge2 available in case of a quick ...Re8+. If they start with 6.Nf3 , there is the line 6...O-O 7.Bd3 Re8+ , which many players on the white side are concerned about. It is nothing special for Black CCStartBracketCCwe play 7...dxc4 in this particular move orderCCEndBracketCC, but it still might look annoying at first sight. Therefore CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/1bPP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 O-O 7.Nge2 is a common continuation to avoid this scenario from White's perspective. 6...dxc4 I like the simple concept of taking on c4 right after White has played the bishop to d3. It's possible to play 6...O-O first, but it makes no substantial difference, as we would still take on c4 soon after. 7.Kxc4 0-0 Now, there is a split between White's knight placement on f3 and e2. This decision also influences our setup fundamentally. 8..xf3 White chooses the active knight placement on f3 and is not afraid of the rook check. What about 8.Nge2? In this case, playing 8...Nbd7! is the right choice. A setup with ...Nc6 and ...Bg4 CCStartBracketCCas after 8. Nf3CCEndBracketCC is less promising, as White has the option to play f3 to break the pin. 8....xc6 Let's talk about Black's best setup against White's development of the knight to f3. In this scenario, contrary to the Nge2-setups, Black has the attractive option to exert pressure on d4 by developing the knight to c6 and pinning the f3-knight with ...Bg4. Not only do we attack d4, but we also make it very difficult for White ever to play Ne5 and possibly build some pressure against f7. So we should play ...Nc6 and ...Bg4. Does the move order matter? Not that much; you may also start with 8...Bg4 here. Surprisingly, inserting the check is not helpful for Black. After 8...Re8+ 9.Be3 Nc6 10.O-O Bg4 the move 11.Qb3 highlights a problem of ...Re8, as the pawn on f7 is under attack. 9.0-0 Here 9.h3?! is very slow and may already be answered with 9...Ne4 . 9...Kg4 The pressure on d4 is quite severe already. We threaten to take the knight and capture the d-pawn. 10.Ke3 If White plays 10.a3 , we just play 10...Ba5 and keep the bishop. On b6, it might put additional pressure on d4. 10...O&d6 This move scores incredibly well for Black, which shows that White's game is not easy. We connect rooks and avoid the premature 10...Bxf3? 11.Qxf3 Nxd4 12.Qxb7 , when White regains the pawn with a significant advantage. 11.Ke2 White has played this move in the majority of games that I found. The pin is annoying, so White decided to break it. It's not the only move, though. Instead of looking at many lines, just some general points: ACCEndBracketCC If they play a2-a3, the move ...Ba5 is usually a good idea, going to b6 later. BCCEndBracketCC Against h2-h3, keeping the tension with ...Bh5 also makes sense. I'd only take on f3 if I am winning material or see something special. CCCEndBracketCC Nb5 is just answered with ...Qd7 when the knight has not accomplished much. DCCEndBracketCC Centralizing rooks is the next step CCStartBracketCCe8 and d8CCEndBracketCC. 11...Qad8 #5 Or 11...Rfe8 , which is just as good. I think we can conclude that Black has a rather comfortable

game in this type of IQP. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 15: English Lines Without g3 Variation: 2.e4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4

- ☐ Quickstarter vs. Other Moves
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Catalan', by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 . In both cases, we'd answer with ...dxc4, which is our weapon against the Catalan. The second scenario is quite different: White could play an early b3 to cover the c-pawn. Possible sequences are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . I recommend playing ...d4 in response, gaining central space in all these cases. We argue that b3 is rather pointless when a black pawn appears on d4, as Bb2 is not attractive anymore - staring at an enemy pawn on d4 is not what the bishop wants to do. Therefore we have a fairly straightforward move order concept: Against g3-setups, we'll play 1...e6, 2...d5, 3...Nf6 and capture on c4 next, unless White plays b3 along the way when we will advance the d-pawn immediately in response. An interesting case is the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . White plays b3 even before g3 is on the board. In this case, playing 3...d4 is a good option, too. BCCEndBracketCC White avoids playing with g3. In the Quickstarter, we'll briefly check 2.e4 , which surprisingly transposes to a rare line of the French Defence. Black is in good shape after 2...d5 , as we will see. A theoretically more challenging setup is based on e3, most commonly employed via the move order 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 . White often plays a quick b3 next, which leads to complex and not yet fully explored positions. 2..xf3 White stays flexible and does not yet commit to the development of the King's bishop. They can play 2.g3 , when 2...d5 3.Bg2 Nf6 4.Nf3 dxc4 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2P5/6P1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK1NR w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.b3 d4 will transpose to lines that we cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppp1ppp/4p3/8/2P5/8/PP1PPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Nf3 d5 . 2...d5 After 2...d5 White can transpose to a Queen's Gambit by playing 3.d4 or 3.cxd5 exd5 4.d4 . More often than not, they will avoid this transposition and play without a quick d4. Instead, White has the following options. ACCEndBracketCC 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , which is the most popular continuation. BCCEndBracketCC 3.b3 d4 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2P5/5N2/PP1PPPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 d4 , leading to a space advantage for

Black. CCCEndBracketCCC 3.e3 Nf6 , usually followed by a quick b3 by White. We have a look at all three options in the Quickstarter now. 3.e3 White covers the c-pawn, a seemingly modest move. Still, this line has gained considerable popularity and was recommended for White by yours truly in Lifetime Repertoire 1.c4/1.Nf3. White's main idea is playing a quick b2-b3 and staying flexible. According to Black's setup, White may play a later d2-d4 or not. What's our plan with Black against it? I'd like to discuss it right after our natural reply. 3....xf6 Our knight is best on f6, so let's start with this natural move. The position after 3...Nf6 may also arise after CCCStartFENCCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCCEndFENCCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 , which is a popular move order that I have employed countless times with the white pieces. Now White's choice is mostly between 4.Nc3 and 4.b3 , while 4.d4 would immediately transpose to a sideline of theQueen's Gambit. The difference between 4.b3 and 4.Nc3 is minor, as White usually combines both moves quickly. 4..xc3 White develops the knight first and then decides if they want to continue with d2-d4 or play a quick b2-b3 to fianchetto the queen's bishop. This is a flexible approach for White that I also recommend in my Lifetime Repertoire: 1.c4/1.Nf3CCCEndBracketCCC. In most cases, White will continue with b2-b3 next and avoid the move d2-d4, keeping the long diagonal a1-h8 open for the bishop. If they decide to play d2-d4 anyway, the game transposes to a sideline of the Queen's Gambit Declined that usually starts with CCCStartFENCCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCCEndFENCCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 . Now, before we return to the current position on the board, we need to discuss this QGD line for a moment. In this line, play usually evolves like the following sequence: 4...a6 CCCStartBracketCCChoping for 5.Bd3?! dxc4! 6.Bxc4 b5 , thus provoking b2-b3CCCEndBracketCCC CCCStartFENCCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/4PN2/PP3PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCCEndFENCCC 5.b3 Nbd7 6.Bb2 b6 7.Nc3 Bb7 8.Bd3 Bd6 . We provoke the move b2-b3 and then go for a setup with ...Nbd7, ...Bd6, ...b6 and ...Bb7. This setup makes a very harmonious impression. We can also use it in the line that we a currently studying after CCCStartFENCCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCCEndFENCCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 . If we play the same setup here, we also don't have to worry about White ever playing d2-d4, as this would simply transpose to the lines of QGD that we have in our repertoire anyway. So, we'd like to play the b8-knight to d7, play ...Bd6 and ...Bb7, prepared by ...b6. What's the best move order? And what about the move ...a6, that we play early on in the QGD? In the QGD, we play this move to provoke b2-b3. Here it is part of White's concept to play this move anyway, so there is no need for ...a6 at the moment. I suggest a different approach: we should play the order ...Nbd7, ...Bd6 and ...O-O. Not playing ...a6 or ...b6 early gives us the best possible options against offbeat tries by White. Let's have a look. 4....xbd7 I suggest the move order ...Nbd7, ...Bd6 and ...O-O, as already mentioned in the notes to 4.Nc3. 5.b3 That's White's concept behind the whole line: fianchetto the queen's bishop and keep flexibility in the centre. If White plays 5.d4 instead,

we immediately transpose to the QGD, when 5...a6 is my recommendation. 5...Kd6 There is nothing particularly wrong about starting with 5...a6 or 5...b6 , but I like this move order. One reason is that White has some ideas after we have played ...b6. A possible line could be 5...b6 6.Bb2 Bb7 7.Rc1 a6 CCStartBracketCCpreparing ...Bd6CCEndBracketCC 8.cxd5 exd5 9.Ne2!? , which I recommended for White in my LTR 1.c4/1.Nf3 on Chessable. White has ideas like Ne2-d4, exploiting the squares c6 and f5. Starting with 5...Bd6 eliminates this option. 6.Kb2 White's normal choice. They can play 6.d4 to go the QGD route, but we'd be fine as we use the same setup there. After, for example, 6.d4 b6 7.Bb2 Bb7 8.Bd3 a6 9. O-O O-O we'd reach the main part of theQGD sidelines chapter. I advise playing 6... b6 first to avoid a possible c4-c5 with a tempo on the d6-bishop. 6...0-0 Now what? It's decision time for White. One option is 7.d4 , when 7...b6 8.Bd3 Bb7 9.O-O a6 would again transpose to theQGD Sidelines chapter. 7.O&c2 White does not commit the pawn structure just yet and stays flexible. We now need to be cautious, as a natural-looking move now fails. In thefull chapter, we also examine 7.Rc1 a6! , which stops possibly annoying Nb5 ideas by White. 7...a6 We must avoid 7...b6? 8. cxd5 exd5 9.Nb5 , which highlights a point of White's Qc2. After the better move 7...a6! , we reach a comparably unexplored position. White now has to decide if they want to play aggressively CCStartBracketCCideas like 8.O-O-O , 8.g4 or 8.Rg1 CCEndBracketCC, or play more conservatively. Against moves like 8.Rd1 or 8.d4 we'd simply continue with ...b6 and ...Bb7, completing our standard setup. 8.Ke2 A flexible move. White does not yet commit to a kingside attack, but still keeps this option. White can commit to kingside action with 8.Rg1 , when 8...dxc4 9.bxc4 b5! leads to wild complications. 8...Qe8 We still don't play 8...b6 . The move is possible, but there is a tactical issue, as White can play 9.cxd5 exd5 10.Nxd5!? Nxd5 11. Qc6 . This seems to be OK for Black after 11...Nb4 12.Qxa8 c6 , but it's awfully complicated. 9.0-0 The calm option. The move 9.g4 is possible, when you have a choice between 9...dxc4 10.bxc4 Nxg4 11.Rg1 f5 and CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/ 1ppn1ppp/p2bpn2/3p4/2P3P1/1PN1PN2/PBQPBP1P/R3K2R b KQ - 0 9CCEndFENCC 9...e5 10.cxd5 e4 . Both lines are tough to assess. The computer evaluation is 'equal chances', but it's anything but drawish. I don't think a deeper exploration is warranted, as we are already rather deep down the rabbit hole. 9...b6 Finally, we get to play the b-pawn. Now I'd like to show you a trap that White may fall for. 10.cxd5 It's better to play 10.d4 , when 10...Bb7 leads to a familiar setup that we have talked about before. 10...exd5 11..xxd5 White tries to be clever, but it backfires terribly. 11....xxd5 12.O&c6 White attacks both knight and rook. What now? 12...Kb7 13.O&xb7 .xc5 14.O&c6 Or 14.Qxd5 Bxh2+ , winning the queen. 14....xb4 #4 And the white queen is trapped! Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 15: English Lines Without g3 Variation: 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4. Nc3

- Quickstarter vs. Other Moves
- Quickstarter Guide: English Li

Welcome to the third Quickstarter of Keep It Simple for Black, which covers our replies to moves other than 1.e4 or 1.d4. The course features four chapters for these moves, and this Quickstarter guide provides an overview to get you started against White's less common starting moves. I decided to cover 1.c4, 1.Nf3, 1.b3 with trainable lines, while for even rarer moves, I'll make a quick summary right here in the introduction to the QS. Here's a list of the moves and our reply. A-C have more information with trainable lines in the Quickstarter. AEndBracket 1.c4 English Opening: We answer with 1...e6 , preparing ...d5. BEndBracket 1.Nf3 d5 invites a transposition to 1.d4 d5 openings, but White has some other options that we will check, mostly 2.g3 . CEndBracket 1.b3 Larsen Opening: We play 1...d5 and 2...c5. DEndBracket 1.g3 Benko Opening: We play 1...d5 , intending to build a full centre with ...e5 and ...c5, if allowed. White's best is 2.Nf3 , which we cover via StartFENrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1EndFEN 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 . EEndBracket 1.f4 Bird Opening: 1...d5 , usually followed by quick ...Bg4 and ...Nd7, trying to play for the move ...e5. FEndBracket 1.Nc3 StartBracketno commonly accepted nameEndBracket: 1...d5 2.e4 d4 is fine for Black. GEndBracket 1.g4 Grob Opening: 1...d5 2.Bg2 Bxg4 refutes the Grob. HEndBracket 1.b4 Orangutan Opening: 1...d5 , followed by ...Nf6 and ...Bg4 is a good reply. If White plays something bizarre, just stick to sound, general principles: control the centre with pawns and develop pieces, get castled quickly. Let's have a look at some moves now. 1.c4 White plays 1.c4, the English Opening. In fact, it is a bit too early to attach a name to the opening, as there are plenty of options to transpose to other openings after our reply. 1...e6 How to answer 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is StartFENrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1EndFEN 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two main ways to do that. AEndBracket Playing a quick g3, like 2.g3 or 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 . White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan StartBracket StartFENrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1EndFEN 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 EndBracket, and it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly in some cases. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan', by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is StartFENrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0

1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 . In both cases, we'd answer with ...dxc4, which is our weapon against the Catalan. The second scenario is quite different: White could play an early b3 to cover the c-pawn. Possible sequences are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . I recommend playing ...d4 in response, gaining central space in all these cases. We argue that b3 is rather pointless when a black pawn appears on d4, as Bb2 is not attractive anymore - staring at an enemy pawn on d4 is not what the bishop wants to do. Therefore we have a fairly straightforward move order concept: Against g3-setups, we'll play 1...e6, 2...d5, 3...Nf6 and capture on c4 next, unless White plays b3 along the way when we will advance the d-pawn immediately in response. An interesting case is the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . White plays b3 even before g3 is on the board. In this case, playing 3...d4 is a good option, too. BCCEndBracketCC White avoids playing with g3. In the Quickstarter, we'll briefly check 2.e4 , which surprisingly transposes to a rare line of the French Defence. Black is in good shape after 2...d5 , as we will see. A theoretically more challenging setup is based on e3, most commonly employed via the move order 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 . White often plays a quick b3 next, which leads to complex and not yet fully explored positions. 2..xf3 White stays flexible and does not yet commit to the development of the King's bishop. They can play 2.g3 , when 2...d5 3.Bg2 Nf6 4.Nf3 dxc4 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2P5/6P1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK1NR w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.b3 d4 will transpose to lines that we cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppp1ppp/4p3/8/2P5/8/PP1PPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Nf3 d5 . 2...d5 After 2...d5 White can transpose to a Queen's Gambit by playing 3.d4 or 3.cxd5 exd5 4.d4 . More often than not, they will avoid this transposition and play without a quick d4. Instead, White has the following options. ACCEndBracketCC 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , which is the most popular continuation. BCCEndBracketCC 3.b3 d4 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2P5/5N2/PP1PPPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 d4 , leading to a space advantage for Black. CCCEndBracketCC 3.e3 Nf6 , usually followed by a quick b3 by White. We have a look at all three options in the Quickstarter now. 3.b3 White covers the c-pawn and prepares the fianchetto of the c1-bishop. Against this move, I recommend advancing the d-pawn and gaining central space. 3...d4 I like this pawn advance for

several reasons: 1CCEndBracketCC In general, gaining central space is desirable. 2CCEndBracketCC It is easier to learn than the alternatives. We instantly clarify the pawn structure in the centre and have a fairly clear plan afterwards. 3CCEndBracketCC There is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 d4 , which is not part of our repertoire. It is not bad at all, but fairly complicated for Black after 3.b4 . Here, the moves ...e6 and b3 are added, which prevents this option for White. In general, the move b2-b3 turns out to be rather pointless after the advance. 4CCEndBracketCC A practical point: if you play online games and/or face lower-rated opposition, a common reply will be 4.Bb2?! , which is just a conceptual mistake and immediately gives Black an advantage. The bishop is misplaced on b2, only staring at a well-protected pawn. This is illustrated by the line 4.Bb2 Nc6 5.e3 e5 , when White's bishop is passive. A better choice for White would be 4.e3 , when 4...Nc6 5.exd4 Nxd4 6.Bb2 Bc5 7.Na3 Ne7 leads to equal chances. 4.g3 White often combines 1.c4 with a kingside fianchetto, trying to initiate play on the long diagonal. Here the central pawn advantage matters more, though. 4....xc6 In this repertoire, I like to avoid Reversed Modern Benoni or Reversed Benko Gambit structures, as they are tricky to play for Black. In particular, if you don't have experience on the White side against these openings. If you are a 1.e4 player, you might have zero games fighting the Benko, for example. Therefore I opted for 4...Nc6 here, avoiding lines like 4...c5 5.e3 Nc6 6.exd4 cxd4 , reaching a Reversed Modern Benoni CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.Nc3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 CCEndBracketCC. The characteristics of the 'Modern Benoni', compared to the 'Benoni' CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 c5 2.d5 Nf6 3.Nc3 d6 4.e4 g6 CCEndBracketCC, is the trade of the e-pawn vs. the c-pawn. This trade sharpens the game and leads to more tactical possibilities, favouring the side with more experience. Instead, I advise playing without ...c5 and reaching a Benoni structure that is easier to handle. With the c- and e-pawn still on the board, White is less likely to manage a queenside expansion with a3 and b4, to mention a key point. 5.Kg2 e5 Now the move ...e5-e4 is a serious threat. White should prevent it with 6.d3 , as 6.O-O e4 7.Ne1 h5! leads to a strong attack. 6.d3 Kb4+ Here 6...Nf6 would likely transpose to a different line of the current chapter. We play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 d4 5.Bg2 Nc6 6.O-O e5 , which leads to a similar pawn structure. Due to the different move orders in this version, we don't manage to give the check on b4. Here the distracting check is possible and should be played. Both replies, 7.Nbd2 and 7.Bd2 , have their drawbacks. Let's have a look. 7..xbd2 a5 We play the same move after 7.Bd2, too. Otherwise, a3 + b4 is on the agenda... we better prevent this idea. 8.a3 Kc5 A bit more active than the more usual 8...Be7 , which is fine, too. 9.0-0 .xf6 10.Qb1 O&d6 #3 The reason why ...Bc5 is more active than ...Be7. We

stop b3-b4, asking White about other plans that they have. They can play Ne1-c2, but this still would not threaten b3-b4. In the meantime, we have ...O-O, ...Re8 and ... Bf5 to centralize and prepare ...e5-e4. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 14: English Lines With g3 Variation: 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 4.g3

- ☐ Quickstarter vs. Other Moves
- ■ Quickstarter Guide: English Li

Welcome to the third Quickstarter of Keep It Simple for Black, which covers our replies to moves other than 1.e4 or 1.d4. The course features four chapters for these moves, and this Quickstarter guide provides an overview to get you started against White's less common starting moves. I decided to cover 1.c4, 1.Nf3, 1.b3 with trainable lines, while for even rarer moves, I'll make a quick summary right here in the introduction to the QS. Here's a list of the moves and our reply. A-C have more information with trainable lines in the Quickstarter. A**CC**EndBracket**CC** 1.c4 English Opening: We answer with 1...e6 , preparing ...d5. B**CC**EndBracket**CC** 1. Nf3 d5 invites a transposition to 1.d4 d5 openings, but White has some other options that we will check, mostly 2.g3 . C**CC**EndBracket**CC** 1.b3 Larsen Opening: We play 1...d5 and 2...c5. D**CC**EndBracket**CC** 1.g3 Benko Opening: We play 1...d5 , intending to build a full centre with ...e5 and ...c5, if allowed. White's best is 2.Nf3 , which we cover via **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/ 8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 . E**CC**EndBracket**CC** 1.f4 Bird Opening: 1...d5 , usually followed by quick ...Bg4 and ...Nd7, trying to play for the move ...e5. F**CC**EndBracket**CC** 1.Nc3 **CC**StartBracket**CC**no commonly accepted name**CC**EndBracket**CC**: 1...d5 2.e4 d4 is fine for Black. G**CC**EndBracket**CC** 1.g4 Grob Opening: 1...d5 2.Bg2 Bxg4 refutes the Grob. H**CC**EndBracket**CC** 1.b4 Orangutan Opening: 1...d5 , followed by ...Nf6 and ...Bg4 is a good reply. If White plays something bizarre, just stick to sound, general principles: control the centre with pawns and develop pieces, get castled quickly. Let's have a look at some moves now. 1.c4 White plays 1.c4, the English Opening. In fact, it is a bit too early to attach a name to the opening, as there are plenty of options to transpose to other openings after our reply. 1...e6 How to answer 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/ 8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two main ways to do that. A**CC**EndBracket**CC** Playing a quick g3, like 2.g3 or 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 . White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan **CC**StartBracket**CC** **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6

4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly in some cases. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan', by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 . In both cases, we'd answer with ...dxc4, which is our weapon against the Catalan. The second scenario is quite different: White could play an early b3 to cover the c-pawn. Possible sequences are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . I recommend playing ...d4 in response, gaining central space in all these cases. We argue that b3 is rather pointless when a black pawn appears on d4, as Bb2 is not attractive anymore - staring at an enemy pawn on d4 is not what the bishop wants to do. Therefore we have a fairly straightforward move order concept: Against g3-setups, we'll play 1...e6, 2...d5, 3...Nf6 and capture on c4 next, unless White plays b3 along the way when we will advance the d-pawn immediately in response. An interesting case is the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . White plays b3 even before g3 is on the board. In this case, playing 3...d4 is a good option, too. BCCEndBracketCC White avoids playing with g3. In the Quickstarter, we'll briefly check 2.e4 , which surprisingly transposes to a rare line of the French Defence. Black is in good shape after 2...d5 , as we will see. A theoretically more challenging setup is based on e3, most commonly employed via the move order 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 . White often plays a quick b3 next, which leads to complex and not yet fully explored positions. 2..xf3 White stays flexible and does not yet commit to the development of the King's bishop. They can play 2.g3 , when 2...d5 3.Bg2 Nf6 4.Nf3 dxc4 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2P5/6P1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK1NR w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.b3 d4 will transpose to lines that we cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppp1ppp/4p3/8/2P5/8/PP1PPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Nf3 d5 . 2...d5 After 2...d5 White can transpose to a Queen's Gambit by playing 3.d4 or 3.cxd5 exd5 4.d4 . More often than not, they will avoid this transposition and play without a quick d4. Instead, White has the following options. ACCEndBracketCC 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , which is the most popular continuation. BCCEndBracketCC 3.b3 d4 or

CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2P5/5N2/PP1PPPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 d4 , leading to a space advantage for Black. CCCEndBracketCC 3.e3 Nf6 , usually followed by a quick b3 by White. We have a look at all three options in the Quickstarter now. 3.g3 Combining 1.c4 with a later kingside Fianchetto is White's most popular choice. 3....xf6 I suggest playing 3...Nf6 first. This is consistent with our approach against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 when 3...Nf6 is the most precise move to reach our preferred lines. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 taking on c4 immediately would also be fine to reach our desired lines, but there is no advantage in doing it right away. To keep it consistent, just remember to play ... Nf6 first and take the c-pawn on move four. If you compare with the Catalan and many Queen's Gambit lines, you'll see that we'll usually take on move four, after ...d5, ...e6 and ...Nf6 are already played. 4.Kg2 White's most natural popular move. After 4.d4 dxc4 , we'd transpose to amainline Catalan. White also has 4.b3 , which it is similar to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 , with the small difference that after 4.b3 d4 5.Bg2 Nc6 6.O-O e5 7.d3 we are too late to give a bishop check on b4 CCStartBracketCCcompare to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/ 3p4/2P5/5N2/PP1PPPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.b3 d4 4.g3 Nc6 5.Bg2 e5 6.d3 Bb4+ CCEndBracketCC. The important move to play is CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/ppp2ppp/2n2n2/4p3/2Pp4/1P1P1NP1/P3PPBP/ RNBQ1RK1 b kq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7...a5! , avoiding the trap 7...Bc5?! 8.b4! . 4...dxc4 Similar to a Catalan, we take on c4 and argue that White needs to spend time to regain the pawn. After 4...dxc4, we will check some moves that White may play. The most popular choice is 5.Qa4+ , which quickly regains the pawn with the queen. The queen loses some time in the process, which gives us time to gain a foothold in the centre. White has also tried various versions of Na3 to get c4 back, but Black is in fine shape everywhere. Before we get to concrete variations, let's discuss some pointers that help to navigate the various tries that White has. ACCEndBracketCC They can play an early queen move. 5.Qa4+ is the most common, but 5.Qc2 and 5.O-O and Qc2 next is played, too. Against all these, we go for a setup based on ...c5 and, if allowed, ...Nc6. We aim to control the d4-square and prevent White from advancing d2-d4. The pointer is that White's queen moves away from supporting d2-d4. Thus we get the chance to play against, and often completely prevent, this idea. BCCEndBracketCC Against an early Ne5 jump, the answer ...Qd4! is strong if White can't immediately answer with Ne5xc4. Examples are 5.Ne5 Qd4! and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/ PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.O-O a6 6.Ne5 Qd4! , but not CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 c5 6.Ne5 when 6...Qd4? is pointless due to 7. Nxc4 . CCCEndBracketCC We shouldn't allow Nb1-a3xc4, unless White has

played Qc2 already. Allowing the knight capture while the white queen is still on d1 is bad, as the sample line 5.Na3 c5?! 6.Nxc4 Nc6 7.O-O Be7 8.b3 O-O 9.Bb2 demonstrates. We can't prevent d2-d4, which opens up the game in White's favour. Their bishops will be mighty once the centre is cleared of pawns. To compare with scenario A: 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 Nc6 7.Nxc4 is fine for Black, as we control d4. However, if White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 , the only good move is 5...Bxa3 , stopping Nxc4 in its tracks. After 5.O-O a6 6.Na3 , we also should stop Nxc4, in this case with 6...b5 . In the Quickstarter, we'll now focus on 5.Qa4+ . Thededicated chapter includes more information about White's other moves. For the moment, the pointers above are enough to know. 5.O&a4+ White makes sure to get the pawn back immediately. The queen check is by far the most popular move. 5...Kd7 Black has good chances to equalise with 5...c6 or 5...Nbd7 , too. I prefer 5...Bd7 , though. The resulting positions after 6.Qxc4 c5 are fine for Black and more straightforward to learn, compared to the alternatives. They also fit well with our repertoire choices in the Catalan CCStartBracketCCSeethis line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 , for exampleCCEndBracketCC. 6.O&xc4 c5 According to our pointer that early queen moves are answered with ...c5-based setups. Now 7.Ne5 is by far the main move. 7..xe5 White's main move, and indeed very logical. They attack b7 and are ready to take our d7-bishop, netting the bishop pair. 7...O&c8 The only reasonable way to cover b7. Playing 7...Qc7 looks more natural, but 8.d4 is annoying for Black, intending Bf4. After 7...Qc8 White has tried various move orders and subtleties, but at the end, we'll get the same type of position: White will take our bishop and gain the bishop pair, but we'll play ...Nc6 and set up a strong bind on the d4-square and enjoy good central control. Black has a standard setup to go for: knights on f6 and c6, the bishop on e7, queen on d7, kingside castling, rooks to d8 and c8. This setup is very reliable and easy to play, as we will see. In my opinion, the move 8. Qd3!? is the trickiest to handle, as we need a bit of time to get to the standard setup, but eventually, we'll reach the same scenario. Besides 8.Qd3 , White has tried 8. Nxd7 and 8.O-O most of the time. Both usually lead to the same position via CCStartFENCCrnq1kb1r/pp1b1ppp/4pn2/2p1N3/2Q5/6P1/PP1PPPBP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 2 8CCEndFENCC 8.Nxd7 Qxd7 9.O-O Nc6 or CCStartFENCCrnq1kb1r/pp1b1ppp/4pn2/2p1N3/2Q5/6P1/PP1PPPBP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 2 8CCEndFENCC 8.O-O Nc6 9.Nxd7 Qxd7 . In these lines, we will reach our standard setup quite quickly. 8.O&d3 A somewhat odd-looking move, but we'll see the point in a moment. 8....xc6 9..xxd7 .xxd7 The point of 8.Qd3 is that 9...Qxd7?! is dubious, as 10.Qxd7 Kxd7 is surprisingly awkward for Black to handle. It is not surprising that trading queens is desirable for White. They have less central space, so trading makes sense. I was still surprised to see how awkward it is. In any case, just playing 9...Nxd7! works fine. After our correct move, White now has to decide how to organise. The queen is not ideal on d3 in the long run. They usually choose

to play with a quick b2-b3, either immediately or after going Nc3/O-O first. The move order does not matter all that much, as we'll play ...Be7, ...O-O, ...Rd8 and ...Nf6 anyway, ultimately aiming for the standard setup again. The only move that requires special attention is 10.Qb5 , when White threatens to destroy our pawn structure. We should play 10...Nd4! , stopping this idea. 10..xc3 I'll use this move order for the slow setups that White may go for. They can also start with 10.O-O or 10.b3 , it will all lead to pretty much the same scenario, as we'll play ...Be7, ...O-O, ...Rd8 and ... Nf6. Let's just have a quick look at these possible sequences. A**CC**EndBracket**CC** 10.b3 Be7 11.Bb2 O-O 12.O-O Rd8 13.Nc3 Nf6 B**CC**EndBracket**CC** 10.O-O Be7 11.Nc3 O-O 12.b3 Rd8 13.Bb2 Nf6 It all leads to the same scenario which we are about to examine via 10.Nc3. 10...Ke7 11.0-0 Or 11.b3 O-O 12.O-O Rd8 , leading to the same positions. As mentioned, the move orders don't matter that much here. 11...0-0 12.b3 Qd8 13.Kb2 .xf6 14.O&c2 O&d7 15.Qfd1 Qac8 #6
We have completed our well-known standard setup. I'd like to show you an interesting idea that I wasn't aware of before I checked this position with the help of Stockfish. Let's assume White plays 16.Rac1 , as it happened in a 2021 Blitz game between Ian Nepomniachtchi and Jan-Krzysztof Duda. In the notes tothis line after 8. O-O, which also led to our standard setup, I already mentioned the plan ...Ne8-d6, possibly ...Bf6 later. This plan would be possible here, as well. However, there is an entirely different option that I would never have considered without the engine pointing at it: What about 16...h5!? , arguing that White has only one piece defending the white king. A**CC**EndBracket**CC** White has to be careful, as a line like 17.h4 Ng4 18.d3 f5! demonstrates. B**CC**EndBracket**CC** They could play **CC**StartFEN**CC**2rr2k1/pp1qbpp1/2n1pn2/2p4p/8/1PN3P1/PBQPPPBP/2RR2K1 w - - 0 17**CC**EndFEN**CC** 17.h3 , but 17...h4 18.g4 Nd5 looks like a good reply. C**CC**EndBracket**CC** Finally, a scenario like **CC**StartFEN**CC**2rr2k1/pp1qbpp1/ 2n1pn2/2p4p/8/1PN3P1/PBQPPPBP/2RR2K1 w - - 0 17**CC**EndFEN**CC** 17.d3 h4 18.Qd2 hxg3 19.hxg3 is possible when Black slightly benefits from the structure change on the kingside. For example, after 19...b6 20.e3 Nb4 21.Bf1 e5 , Black gets chances on the kingside **CC**StartBracket**CC**...Qf6, ...Nh7-g5 ideas**CC**EndBracket**CC**. This is not a deep analysis but rather an overview of ideas. Pushing the h-pawn is an interesting strategy to keep in mind, setting unexpected problems for White. Main Chapter and Extended Variations Chapter 14: English Lines With g3 Variation: 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5.Qa4+

☐ 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6
■ 4.c3 #1

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 White advances the e-pawn, the starting point of the 'Advance Variation'. Nowadays, this line is considered to be the main battleground of the Caro-Kann. Top players most often go for the Advance and their preference influences players on all levels. You'll meet 3.e5 frequently in your games, no matter

what level you compete on. However, I'd like to point out one essential factor: while the Advance Variation might be regarded as the most testing for Black by pros, it is a line that is difficult to play for BOTH sides. To challenge Black, White needs to know concrete theoretical lines. The ideas that pose problems for Black are not something that people would find over the board, but something they would have studied at home. If White plays 'natural moves', Black will often have no problems and be better out of the opening. What happens if White is well prepared? Well, these lines can become very sharp. Of all the chapters in the whole course, the current one is the most tactically complex. Depending on your level of opposition, you might never get a 'Main Line' of this chapter on the board. This disclaimer is important to me, as you might look at this chapter, the first one in the course, and get discouraged by the complexities of some variations. They ARE difficult, but unlikely to happen if you feel overwhelmed by them. If you think your opponents are so strong that you might face these lines CCStartBracketCCmaster level and aboveCCEndBracketCC, you'll appreciate that I include all you need to know to battle those people. Alright, let's see what we play against the Advance! 3...c5 My recommendation is 3...c5, the Arkell-Khenkin Variation. It's named after two GMs that played and analyzed it a lot, Keith Arkell and Igor Khenkin. After 3.e5, Black has two possible good options. Black's most popular move is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3pP3/3P4/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3...Bf5 , while CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3pP3/3P4/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3...c5 is considered a sound alternative. It was a tough choice to make, but I think I have some excellent arguments in favour of 3...c5. First of all, the move is strategically well-founded. Black wants to attack White's central pawn and does so right away. It might look odd that we move the c-pawn again, but its life story doesn't matter all that much if the move works fine. In lines that start with CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3pP3/3P4/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3...Bf5 , Black usually plays ...c5 a bit later, for example after 4. Nf3 e6 5.Be2 c5 . We start with the pawn break right on the third move. In the notes to 3.e5, I mentioned that White needs to know some sophisticated lines and concepts to set problems. The first crucial moment for White comes right after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3pP3/3P4/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3...c5 . A logical move for White is 4.c3 , but after this move, Black has no problems and often will even gain better chances if White is not careful. The move 4.c3 will happen a lot in our games if you face players below master level. This is a huge upside of 3...c5, of course. In a large portion of games, Black will win the opening battle early on. The more critical moves are 4.Nf3 and, in particular, 4. dxc5. 4.c3 This is White's most popular move below master level. We can be happy to face it, as Black gets a good position without any particular effort. 4....xc6 A natural development move, increasing the pressure on d4. Now White's most popular move is 5.Nf3 , but I'll check some alternatives to give you a better picture about the arising positions. We want to pose as many problems as possible, exploiting White's meek fourth move. 5.Ke3 This looks better than 5.Nf3, as it avoids

the immediate pin. 5....xh6 This looks like a good reply. There is nothing wrong about 5...cxd4 6.cxd4 Bf5 , but 5...Nh6 tries to exploit the early bishop move with ... Nf5 or ...Ng4 ideas. 6..xf3 We don't mind 6.Bxh6?! gxh6 , as White moves the bishop twice to capture our knight. We'll play ...Qb6 next, putting pressure on d4 and b2. 6....xf5 The idea of ...Nh6. 7.Kd3 .xxe3 8.fxe3 g6 We have a good spot on h6 for the bishop, putting pressure on e3. Combined with ...Qb6, ...O-O and a later ...f6, our play on the dark squares looks attractive. White can't win a pawn with 9.dxc5 , as 9...Bg7 quickly picks up e5 in return.

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■ 4.c3 #2

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 White advances the e-pawn, the starting point of the 'Advance Variation'. Nowadays, this line is considered to be the main battleground of the Caro-Kann. Top players most often go for the Advance and their preference influences players on all levels. You'll meet 3.e5 frequently in your games, no matter what level you compete on. However, I'd like to point out one essential factor: while the Advance Variation might be regarded as the most testing for Black by pros, it is a line that is difficult to play for BOTH sides. To challenge Black, White needs to know concrete theoretical lines. The ideas that pose problems for Black are not something that people would find over the board, but something they would have studied at home. If White plays 'natural moves', Black will often have no problems and be better out of the opening. What happens if White is well prepared? Well, these lines can become very sharp. Of all the chapters in the whole course, the current one is the most tactically complex. Depending on your level of opposition, you might never get a 'Main Line' of this chapter on the board. This disclaimer is important to me, as you might look at this chapter, the first one in the course, and get discouraged by the complexities of some variations. They ARE difficult, but unlikely to happen if you feel overwhelmed by them. If you think your opponents are so strong that you might face these lines CCStartBracketCCmaster level and aboveCCEndBracketCC, you'll appreciate that I include all you need to know to battle those people. Alright, let's see what we play against the Advance! 3...c5 My recommendation is 3...c5, the Arkell-Khenkin Variation. It's named after two GMs that played and analyzed it a lot, Keith Arkell and Igor Khenkin. After 3.e5, Black has two possible good options. Black's most popular move is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3pP3/3P4/8/ PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3...Bf5 , while CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3pP3/3P4/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3...c5 is considered a sound alternative. It was a tough choice to make, but I think I have some excellent arguments in favour of 3...c5. First of all, the move is strategically well-founded. Black wants to attack White's central pawn and does so right away. It might look odd that we move the c-pawn again, but its life story doesn't matter all that much if the move works fine. In lines that start with

CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3pP3/3P4/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3...Bf5 , Black usually plays ...c5 a bit later, for example after 4. Nf3 e6 5.Be2 c5 . We start with the pawn break right on the third move. In the notes to 3.e5, I mentioned that White needs to know some sophisticated lines and concepts to set problems. The first crucial moment for White comes right after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3pP3/3P4/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3...c5 . A logical move for White is 4.c3 , but after this move, Black has no problems and often will even gain better chances if White is not careful. The move 4.c3 will happen a lot in our games if you face players below master level. This is a huge upside of 3...c5, of course. In a large portion of games, Black will win the opening battle early on. The more critical moves are 4.Nf3 and, in particular, 4. dxc5. 4.c3 This is White's most popular move below master level. We can be happy to face it, as Black gets a good position without any particular effort. 4....xc6 A natural development move, increasing the pressure on d4. Now White's most popular move is 5.Nf3 , but I'll check some alternatives to give you a better picture about the arising positions. We want to pose as many problems as possible, exploiting White's meek fourth move. 5.f4 White's central structure is imposing, but the pawn on d4 will become a prime target for our pieces. Playing f4 does not help support d4 in any way. 5...cxd4 We should take first. After 5...Bf5?! 6.dxc5 it's not clear how to recover the pawn. 6.cxd4 h5 There is nothing wrong with 6...Bf5 , either. The move 6...h5 is trickier, though. We want to wait for Nf3 and play ...Bg4 in reply, leaving f5 as a potential outpost for our g-knight. 7..xf3 Alternatively, White could try 7.Nc3 Bg4 or CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2ppp1/2n5/3pP2p/3P1P2/8/PP4PP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Be3 Nh6 , which also look better for Black. 7...Kg4 Mission accomplished. 8.Ke2 e6 9.Ke3 .xh6 Or 9...Nge7 , which is just as good. White is struggling here, as they need to defend the weak d-pawn against our attacks. Next, we have ...Nf5, placing the knight on a dream square.

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■ 4.c3 #3

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good one to demonstrate why White's opening play is harmless. Let's compare the position on the board to the following sequence. CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 Bf5 4.Nf3 e6 5.Be2 c5 6.c3 considered rather harmless 6...Nc6 7.O-O cxd4 8.cxd4 Bg4 . Black plays the bishop from f5 to g4, intending ...Ne7-f5 later. Compared to this already fine line, we are a full tempo up! 8.0-0 .xge7 Here 8...Bxf3 9.Bxf3 Qb6 looks good, but 10.Be3 Qxb2 11.Nd2 is not clear at all. White has some compensation for the lost pawn. I prefer to continue with development. 9..xc3 .xf5 Here we go. Black has obtained an ideal formation to attack White's d-pawn. 10..xe1 This looks like White's best try. 10...Kxe2 11..xxe2 h5 The move 11...h5 is played to make the knight on f5 more stable, preventing g4 by White. I already prefer Black here, as we have some valuable assets: Better minor pieces, notably the dark-squared bishop. Strong control over the light squares. Pressure over the weak d4-pawn. Easy development with ...Be7, ...O-O, ...Rc8, ...Qb6 and so on.

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6...e6 There is no way to get the c8-bishop out first, so 6...e6 it is. We now have reached a pretty similar structure to the Advance Variation of the French Defence, but some points make it different to a regular French. The early trade of the d-pawn for the c-pawn is unusual in the French, and White's queen sits on f4. This point will be very relevant, as ...Nb4 is a key resource for Black. We'll answer 7.Bd3 and 7. Nc3 this way: jumping to b4 and going for the bishop pair. White can stop this plan with 7.c3, but it's too slow and poses no problems at all. 7.c3 O&c7 Or 7...f6 , which similar ideas. We quickly attack White's e5-pawn, as the queen is not well-placed on f4 to help support it. 8.Kd3 f6 Mission accomplished. White can't hold e5 now. 9.exf6 O&xf4 10.Kxf4 gxf6 Much better than taking with the knight. Now ...e5 is the idea, giving Black a huge centre and the advantage.

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setup, compared to allowing h4-h5 from White, which gains too much space for my taste. Giving up control of g5 is no big deal, as a single piece coming to this square doesn't hurt us. Note that we will delay casting for a while now, focusing on the queenside action first. After 10...h5, White has many options. I'd expect a sequence like 11.Bd2 Bd7 12.Ne2 Ng6 13.Qg3 Qb6 , which seems about equal to me. White has more space, but our position is solid, and we have play on the queenside. Ideas like ...Bb5 or ...Qa6 come to mind.

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intending the same idea of 9.Re1 e5 , returning the pawn. 9.Qe1 e5 That's the way to go. We return the pawn and coordinate our position. 10.Kxc6 bxc6 11.Qxe5 Kg7 White has regained the pawn, but in the resulting position, only Black can be better. White doesn't have control of e5, and we have a monster bishop on g7. After 12.Re1 we should play 12...Nf6 , because 12...e5? 13.Bf4 looks too dangerous for Black.

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■ 4.Nf3 cxd4 5.Nxd4 #3

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12.Qg4 with a passive move, as White is not threatening to take g7. After 12...Bd7! 13.Qxg7? Qe4+ 14.Be2 Rg8 15.Qh6 Rxg2 leads to a disaster for White. They should instead develop with CCStartFENCCr3k2r/pp1bnppp/2q1p3/4P3/6Q1/2B5/PP3PPP/R3KB1R w KQkq - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.Be2 or CCStartFENCCr3k2r/pp1bnppp/2q1p3/4P3/6Q1/2B5/PP3PPP/R3KB1R w KQkq - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.Bd3 . In both cases, Black has some exciting options, for example, CCStartFENCCr3k2r/pp1bnppp/2q1p3/4P3/6Q1/2B5/PP3PPP/R3KB1R w KQkq - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.Be2 Qa4!? is possible. We still don't mind a capture on g7 in these lines, as our light-squared play is strong. A sample line is 14.Qxg7 Rg8 15.Qxh7 Rxg2 , when White has to defend carefully. Our pieces are active and White has no safe place for their king. White should probably prefer CCStartFENCCr3k2r/pp1bnppp/4p3/4P3/q5Q1/2B5/PP2BPPP/R3K2R w KQkq - 5 14CCEndFENCC 14.Qxa4 Bxa4 , but such an endgame is acceptable for Black, as we'll have great pieces on the light squares d5 and c6. White's c3-bishop will often point into thin air and never attack anything, as all the play is on light squares.

☐ 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6
■ 4.Nf3 cxd4 5.Nxd4 #4

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- 0 9CCEndFENCC 9...exd5 or CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/p4ppp/2p1p3/3PP3/1b6/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 0 9CCEndFENCC 9...Qxd5 , though. 9.Kd3 A solid development move, but it leads to exciting complications, too. 9....xe7 We not only develop the knight and prepare to castle, but we also make ...Ba6 possible by defending the c6-pawn. The immediate 9...Ba6?? fails to the typical 10.Qa4 , when too much is hanging at the same time. 10.0-0 The most likely move to happen. After 10.cxd5 Qxd5! CCStartBracketCC avoid CCStartFENCCr1bqk2r/p3nppp/2p1p3/3pP3/1bP5/2NB4/PP3PPP/R1BQ1RK1 b kq - 3 10CCEndFENCC 10...cxd5?? 11.Qa4+ CCEndBracketCC White is forced to sacrifice a pawn, as both g2 and e5 are attacked. CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/p3nppp/2p1p3/3qP3/1b6/2NB4/PP3PPP/R1BQK2R w KQkq - 0 11CCEndFENCC 11.O-O Qxe5 Tasty! Well, White has compensation, but I am happy to take the centre pawn. 10...Ka6 Now this move is possible, as 11.Qa4? Qa5! is excellent for Black. 11.cxd5 As mentioned, 11.Qa4? Qa5 is great for us. The capture on d5 leads to a surprisingly long, forced line. 11...Kxd3 12.O&xd3 Kxc3 The best move, as again 12...cxd5?? 13.Qb5+ blunders the bishop, while CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/p3nppp/2p1p3/3PP3/1b6/2NQ4/PP3PPP/R1B2RK1 b kq - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12...exd5?! looks strategically dubious. The c-pawn and the c5-square are long-term problems. After 12...Bxc3! 13.bxc3 CCStartBracketCCWhite wants to use their bishop on a3CCEndBracketCC 13...cxd5 we can finish development and consider piling up on the weak c-pawn. If White plays c4 too quickly, we'll get the marvelous d5-square for our knight. CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/p3nppp/2p1p3/3PP3/8/2PQ4/P4PPP/R1B2RK1 b kq - 0 13CCEndFENCC 13...Qxd5 is also possible and leads to equal chances. It's an interesting position with a knight vs bishop imbalance in both cases.

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■ 4.Nf3 cxd4 5.Nxd4 #6

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■ 4.dxc5 e6 5.Be3 #1

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which we took two moves to play the pawn to c5? This is the initial impression, but you need to look deeper to understand why this view is only half of the story. Let's compare to the French Advance: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.dxc5 . Compared to this line, we are a tempo down, as in the Caro-Kann it is White to move, while in the French, it is Black's turn. Now, the issue is that this particular line of the French is just bad for White. Black plays 4...Bxc5 and later attacks White's centre with a quick ...f6 break, which gives Black the better game. We claim: yes, we might be a tempo down on this line, but it won't change the evaluation from 'bad for White' to 'good for White'. A key difference to many other lines in the French is that White has captured on c5. This weakens White's control of e5, which makes the break ...f6 more attractive. In many lines, I suggest playing a quick ...f6 to attack and possibly remove the e5-pawn. These lines lead to exciting and often less explored play. What are White's main options after 4...e6? ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/4p3/2PpP3/8/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Be3 is a principled move, hanging on to the pawn. It is not considered critical nowadays, but Black needs to know what to do - we are a pawn down for the moment. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/4p3/2PpP3/8/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 White focuses on development. We'll recapture the pawn and attack the White centre with a quick ...f6. CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/4p3/2PpP3/8/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.a3 A sophisticated move. White introduces the idea b4 into the position and might have concrete ideas like 5...Bxc5 6.Qg4 in mind. These lines can turn out to be very sharp and tactical. I'd mostly expect master-level players or strong theory-buffs to play this way. 5.Ke3 White hangs on to the c5-pawn for the moment. Before 5.a3 gained mainline status some years ago, this move was White's most popular choice. Nowadays, it is clear that Black has fair chances, as we will see. It's advisable to study the following lines thoroughly, as you'll still face the move frequently. People like extra pawns! We need to be precise to regain it or obtain compensation. 5....xd7 We attack both pawns. White now has to play 6.Bb5 or return the pawn immediately. 6..xf3 White returns the pawn without a fight. We have no problems with this unambitious approach. 6...Kxc5 We are happy to get back the pawn and trade a pair of minor pieces. We still have a disadvantage in space and don't mind trades. 7.Kxc5 .xxc5 8.O&d4 White has tried this move most of the time in this rather rare line. Centralizing the queen with a gain of tempo certainly looks reasonable. Against other moves, we'd also play ...Qb6 just as after 8.Qd4 and go for ...Ne7 and ...Bd7 next. In some cases, we'll get to play ...Bb5 to trade our bishop. If this idea is not possible, we should consider playing ...f6 to undermine the e5-pawn. 8...O&b6 We cover the knight and have ...Ne7-c6 next. 9..xbd2 .xe7 10..xb3 White forces the action, but Black is in good shape. 10....xxb3 10...Ne4 leads to equal chances, too. 11.axb3 11.Qxb6?! axb6 forces 12.cxb3 , when Black will have a wonderful initiative on the a and c-files. 11...O&xd4 12..xxd4 .xg6 We are ready to play ...f6 to tear down White's

centre. In anybody, White needs to be concerned about equality here. 13.Nb5 is just answered with 13...Ke7 , when we'd trade our a-pawn for the mighty e-pawn. A great deal.

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■ 4.dxc5 e6 5.Be3 #2

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Bxc5. 10.Kd4 White stops ...Nxe3 with this natural move. Now, how do we get the pawn back? Well, we don't need to! My suggested reply gives Black great play for a pawn. 10....xxd4 Let's take the second bishop. We now have two bishops against two knights, but the position is closed. The key idea to remember is that a quick ...b6 will give our long-range bishops some scope. 11.cxd4 b6 As mentioned, the key idea we need to remember. We open the position for our bishops. The move 11... Bb5? looks attractive at first, but 12.Nc3 Bc4 13.b3 refutes this idea. 12.cxb6 The capture must be critical. The greedy 12.b4? a5 looks awful for White, while CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/3b1ppp/pp2p3/2PpP3/3P4/5N2/PP3PPP/RN1QK2R w KQkq - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12.c6 is a conservative answer. After 12...Bxc6, we are happy to have the bishop pair and plan ...b5-b4 and ...Bb5 in the long run. 12...O&xb6 We have excellent compensation for the pawn. The concrete lines work nicely, but just the two bishops against two knights would be fine. White has many ways to go wrong now. Lines like 13.Qd2 Rb8 14.b3 Bb4 15.Nc3 Qa5 or CCStartFENCCr3kb1r/3b1ppp/pq2p3/3pP3/3P4/5N2/PP3PPP/RN1QK2R w KQkq - 0 13CCEndFENCC 13.Qc2 Rb8 14.b3 Bb4 15.Nbd2 Rc8 are desastrous for White. Stockfish suggests 13.Qb3 is the only playable move for White when we have a wide choice of good replies. We can allow a queen trade with 13...Rb8 , or play CCStartFENCCr3kb1r/3b1ppp/pq2p3/3pP3/3P4/1Q3N2/PP3PPP/RN2K2R b KQkq - 1 13CCEndFENCC 13...Bb4+ 14.Nc3 a5 , which keeps more pieces on the board. In any case, the position is more than satisfactory for Black.

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10.c3 Ke7 We'll play ...O-O and ...Qc7, putting pressure on the weak e5-pawn. White likely will play ...Bxd7 soon to secure this pawn, but a later ...b6 opens up the position for our great bishop pair. Stockfish assesses the position as equal, but Black's game is easier to play in my mind.

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☐ 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6
■ 4.dxc5 e6 5.Nf3 #2

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fighting for the centre, as we intend to push ...g4 in some lines to undermine White's control over e5 and d4. Now White can easily get into trouble... Where to move the bishop? 9.Ke3 This looks best, but not an obvious choice. After CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/pp5p/2n1pp2/2bpP1p1/5B2/3B1N2/PPP2PPP/RN1Q1RK1 w kq - 0 9CCEndFENCC 9.Bg3 f5 Black threatens ...f5-f4, while CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/pp5p/2n1pp2/2bpP1p1/5B2/3B1N2/PPP2PPP/RN1Q1RK1 w kq - 0 9CCEndFENCC 9.Bd2 g4 pushes away the final defender of e5. White also can't play 9.Nxg5 fxg5 10.Qh5 , as ...Kd7-c7 secures our king position. 9...Kxe3 10.fxe3 f5 White still has to be concerned about the weak e5-pawn, but it seems that 11.c4 dxc4 12.Bxc4 Qxd1 13.Rxd1 Ke7 14.Bb5 just about holds the balance for White.

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13...a6 14.Kd3 When playing 13.Qe2, White needs to evaluate that 14...Qxb2 is rather risky now. I suggest a different approach. 14...e5 An attractive move that activates our c8-bishop. White can capture e5 in two ways, but we are fine in both cases. 15.Kxe5 White can try 15.Qxe5 , when after 15...Bd4 16.Qg5 Bxb2 17. Be5 is possible. We should avoid grabbing more material and instead play 17... Bxe5 to trade the active bishop. We have equal chances in this case. 15...Qe8 White has placed the bishop in an awkward pin. 16.Elh1 The only move! White needed to enable f2-f4 badly. 16...Kg4 Developing with tempo is always a tempting option. 17.f3 White can't play 17.Qe1? and allow 17...Ne4 18.Bxe4 Rxe5 , winning a piece . 17...Kh5 I'll stop the already long line here. Black has good play, based on the e-file pin. White's best bet is 18.Qe1 , when 18...Rxe5 19.Qxe5 Bd4 regains the sacrificed material. After 18.g4?! Bd6! White is already struggling.

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mostly expect master-level players or strong theory-buffs to play this way. 5.O&g4 The queen jump is rare but worth checking. White has an eye on g7, so we can't just play ...Bxc5 to regain the pawn. 5...h5 We'd like to distract the queen from g7, so this makes a lot of sense. 6.O&f4 Or 6.Qg3 h4 7.Qg4 Nh6 , which already looks nice for Black. 6...Kxc5 7.Kd3 Or 7.Nf3 Nc6 8.Bd3 , leading to the same position. 7....xc6 Black can also start with 7...f6 . I suggest playing this sharp move after 7... Nc6 8.Nf3. Both lines look equally satisfactory for Black. 8..xf3 f6 A very tough move to make if you don't know the idea. We immediately attack e5 and don't mind 9.Bg6+. It's important to understand that it is difficult to play slow moves instead of 8...f6. The move...h5 has weakened the kingside, so castling to this side of the board is unadvisable. 9.O&g3 Probably White's best try. We'd love to see 9.Bg6+ Kf8 , when White's bishop is not doing anything. A later ...Rh6 or ...Nge7 may gain a useful tempo. 9...O&c7 Putting more pressure on e5. The whole line 5.Qg4 is very rare, so I'll stop the trainable here. Black has interesting play and equal chances after 10.O-O g5!? 11.exf6 Qxg3 12.hxg3 g4 14.Nh4 Nxf6 or CCStartFENCCr1b1k1nr/ppq3p1/2n1pp2/2bpP2p/8/3B1NQ1/PPP2PPP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 2 10CCEndFENCC 10.exf6 Qxg3 11.hxg3 gxf6 . In both cases we enjoy excellent central control and development.

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sharpest and best. Black also has 7...Ng6 , when 8.Bd3 Bf8 9.Qf6 Be7 10.Qg7 Bf8 leads to a draw. We shouldn't let White get away with a draw, though. 8.O&xh7 .xbc6 We are two pawns down but have a fantastic lead in development. This position has been reached in online Blitz games dozens of times when White almost exclusively played 9.Nf3. 9..xf3 That's a mistake, but still the most likely move to happen. I think it is pointless to analyze more possible defences for White. Best seems to be a line like 9.Nc3 Qb6 10.Na4 Qa5+ 11.b4 Qxa4 12.bxc5 Nb4 or 12...Nxe5 . It's quite unlikely that someone would play a rather sophisticated line like 5.a3 Bxc5 6.Qg4, then incorrectly grab the pawn to draw the fire on themselves and proceed to defend perfectly. 9...O&b6 Ouch! White can't defend f2 now, as 10.Qh4 Nf5 fails.

☐ 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6
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more likely to meet other lines. I have tested the Caro-Kann and our whole repertoire a lot in online games and, more often than not, faced CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/4p3/2PpP3/8/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.a3 Bxc5 6.b4 or lines like CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/4p3/2PpP3/8/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 Bxc5 6.Bd3 . 6....xe7 Ignoring the attack is by far the best reply. It's crucial to not confuse this position with CCStartFENCCrnbqk1nr/pp3ppp/4p3/2bpP3/8/P7/1PP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.b4 Be7 7.Qg4 , when we need to play 7...g6 . We don't have the ...Ne7 idea and need to cover the pawn in this line. We can also afford the passive defence because White has weakened the queenside with b4, which gives us good play with a timely ...a5 advance. Now back to 6.Qg4 , when 6...g6? is bad. We badly lack the ...a5 strike on the queenside and have weakened the kingside with ...g6. There are two ways to tell the two situations apart: 1CCEndBracketCC Play ...Ne7, if possible, otherwise play ...g6 or 2CCEndBracketCC You can allow weakening your kingside with ...g6 only if White has weakened their queenside before. Alright, what is White going to do after 6...Ne7? We need to check 7.Qxg7, but this is not considered critical. We get great activity in this line. More popular and better are 7.Nf3 and 7.Bd3, which usually lead to the same position after CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/pp2nppp/4p3/2bpP3/6Q1/P7/1PP2PPP/RNB1KBNR w KQkq - 2 7CCEndFENCC 7.Nf3 O-O 8.Bd3 . I'll examine 7.Nf3 as the move order and point to possible ways to reach the same position from 7.Bd3. 7..xf3 Very natural play and White's most popular move. They can also start with 7.Bd3, which will reliably transpose to 7.Nf3. After 7.Bd3 O-O 8.Nf3 , we reach the same position. 7...0-0 8.Kd3 Wesley So's recommendation in his course and the only move White has tried in the position. It certainly is very natural and logical to develop the bishop and prepare to castle. Now I suggest playing the sharpest move, which Wesley also analyzed and couldn't find an advantage against. 8...f5 I prefer this move to slower approaches, like 8...Ng6 , for example. The reasoning is that White more or less has to take en passant, which removes the annoying e5-pawn. I always like to get rid of the pawn, as this gives our pieces more scope. 9.exf6 White's opens the position. 9...Qxf6 We have removed the e5-pawn and activated our rook. White also has to worry about ...e6-e5, which attacks the queen and threatens ...e5-e4 at the same time. We'll now focus on 10.Qh5, which looks best. 10.O&h5 White removes the queen from the possible ...e6-e5-e4 idea and threatens Qxh7+. 10...h6 It's a good moment to take stock. Black has a full pawn centre and the potential to move it forward. We'd need to get more control of e5 to accomplish this goal. Move like ...Nbc6/Nd7 and ...Bd6 would bring us closer to it. White has to play actively and stop this idea. 11.0-0 Kd6 A precise move and final one that I want to include in the trainable line. This move is strong because the bishop is well-placed on d6, but it is not clear where the b8-knight belongs. After 11...Nbc6? 12.b4 Bd6 13.b5 or 13.Bb2 , things have gone wrong. After CCStartFENCCrnbq2k1/pp2n1p1/3bpr1p/3p3Q/8/P2B1N2/1PP2PPP/RNB2RK1 w - - 2 12CCEndFENCC 12.b4 we have the strong move 12...Nd7! , which allows 13.

Bb2 e5! 14.Nxe5 Nxe5 15.Bxe5 g6 16.Qe2 Re6 17.f4 Nc6 , when Black is much better. Finally, we get to Wesley's recommendation, which is CCStartFENCCrnbq2k1/pp2n1p1/3bpr1p/3p3Q/8/P2B1N2/1PP2PPP/RNB2RK1 w - - 2 12CCEndFENCC 12.Bd2 . The idea is Bc3 to use the long diagonal without pushing the b-pawn. His line continues 12...Nbc6 13.Bc3 e5! 14.Nxe5 d4 15.Nxc6 Nxc6 16.Bb4 Bxb4 17.axb4 Nxb4 18.Be4 Qf8! , when Black retains equal chances. This is an intense line for a 'Keep It Simple' course. I still felt obliged to include it, as questions about how my course handles Wesley's suggestions will arise. I think he made a good case for White's chances, as Black's play is far from easy and almost impossible to get right without any preparation. You are now equipped well against someone who studied Wesley's course and can navigate the pitfalls successfully. Note that White has many ways to go wrong along the way, too.

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of it. The move 7...g6 is much better and gives Black good play. After securing our kingside, we'll attack White's pawns on b4 and e5 next. 8..xf3 a5 It's good to insert this move, attacking b4. White needs to react and give us some additional options. 9.b5 A substantial accomplishment for Black. We have gained control of c5. 9....xd7 We attack e5 and connect the knight to the c5-square. Currently, our c8-bishop looks bad, but this is only a temporary factor, as we will see. 10.Kd3 This move is slightly better than 10.Bb2. The problem of 10.Bb2 is the following: just as after 10.Bd3, we'll play 10...h5 and attack the queen. Now White's queen has to go to d4, which is not the most comfortable square for the queen. The alternatives are worse and give Black superb, active play. ACGEndBracketCG CGStartFENCGr1bqk1nr/1p1nbp2/4p1p1/pP1pP2p/6Q1/P4N2/1BP2PPP/RN2KB1R w KQkq - 0 11CGEndFENCG 11.Qf4 g5 12.Qe3 g4 13.Nd4 Bg5 14.Qe2 Nb6 BCGEndBracketCG CGStartFENCGr1bqk1nr/1p1nbp2/4p1p1/pP1pP2p/6Q1/P4N2/1BP2PPP/RN2KB1R w KQkq - 0 11CGEndFENCG 11.Qg3 Nh6 12.Bd3 h4 14.Qf4 g5 In these lines, you see the drawback of 10.Bb2: it neglects control of the dark squares on the kingside, particularly g5. So after CGStartFENCGr1bqk1nr/1p1nbp1p/4p1p1/pP1pP3/6Q1/P4N2/2P2PPP/RNB1KB1R w KQkq - 1 10CGEndFENCG 10.Bb2 h5 11.Qd4 is more or less forced when we'll play in the same way as after CGStartFENCGr1bqk1nr/1p1nbp1p/4p1p1/pP1pP3/6Q1/P4N2/2P2PPP/RNB1KB1R w KQkq - 1 10CGEndFENCG 10.Bd3 h5 11.Qf4 . Our setup involves ...Nh6, ...Qc7, ...b6,...Bb7 and ...O-O-O. 10...h5 It's important to avoid 10...f6? , as 11.Qh3! is a strong response. White threatens Bxg6+!. 11.O&f4 White keeps the queen connected to the g5-square and thus prevents the advance of the g-pawn. Pushing the g-pawn is a key device to undermine White's centre. This can be illustrated by a funny line: 11.Qd4 g5 12.Bb2 g4 13.Nfd2 Nxe5! - mission accomplished! Admittedly far away from optimal play, but a good demonstration of Black's concept. 11....xh6 We have the following setup in mind: ...Nh6, ...Qc7, ...b6, ...Bb7 and ...O-O-O. It's also possible to start with 11...b6 or 11...Qc7. 12.a4 White has other moves, of course. But it doesn't matter that much, as our setup would work fine anyway. The move 12.a4 was tested in a the game M.Haubro vs J.Thybo, Svendborg 2021, which nicely illustrated Black's chances. 12...b6 13.0-0 Kb7 14..xc3 O&c7 This position was reached in the mentioned game. White's c3-knight is attacked, and Haubro now played 15.Ne2 , when 15...g5!? 16.Nxg5 Qxe5 changed the character of the game. Black has traded the g-pawn for the e-pawn and was in good shape. One positive point about the trade is that it breaks down White's central control and makes sure our b7-bishop gets active later. Our two central pawns are mobile after White's e-pawn is gone. It was also possible to play CGStartFENCGr3k2r/1bqnbp2/1p2p1pn/pP1pP2p/P4Q2/3B1N2/2P1NPPP/R1B2RK1 b kq - 5 15CGEndFENCG 15...O-O-O and keep the tension. Our knights have good squares on c5 and f5. Note how safe our king is, while we still might start action on the kingside with ...g5 at a later stage.

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1 7CCEndFENCC 7.Bb2 f6 8.Nf3 , the lines quickly merge. I'll examine 7.Nf3 as the main move order, as 7.Bb2 has no independent value. 7..xf3 A natural development move, and probably White's best choice. 7...f6 Here we go - we directly chip away at White's centre. It's also possible to play 7...a5 8.b5 f6 , which will likely lead to the same lines. 8.Kb2 White fianchettos the bishop and lends additional cover to e5, a key idea of the queenside expansion. 8...a5 Inserting the move pair 8...a5 9.b5 proves useful, as we will see. We gain control of c5, which comes in handy later. 9.b5 .xd7 It's all about the pressure on e5. Now White's most challenging move is probably 10.c4 , but you'll also face CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/1p1nb1pp/4pp2/pP1pP3/8/P4N2/1BP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 1 10CCEndFENCC 10.Bd3 Nh6 11.Nbd2 or CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/1p1nb1pp/4pp2/pP1pP3/8/P4N2/1BP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 1 10CCEndFENCC 10.Nbd2 Nh6 11.Bd3 , which is easier to handle and rather requires precision from White to avoid trouble. 10.Kd3 The sequence 10.Nbd2 Nh6 11.Bd3 would lead to the same position. 10....xh6 On the way to f7: maximum pressure on White's centre is the goal. 11.0-0 Yes, this natural move is a substantial mistake. 11....xf7 White can't hold the centre now. 12.exf6 It's too late to cover e5, as 12.Re1 fxe5 13.Nxe5 Ndxe5 14.Bxe5 Nxe5 15.Rxe5 Bf6 shows. 12...Kxf6 13.Kxf6 Here 13.Qc1 e5 or CCStartFENCCr1bqk2r/1p1n1npp/4pb2/pP1p4/8/P2B1N2/1BP2PPP/RN1Q1RK1 w kq - 0 13CCEndFENCC 13.Nc3 Nc5 are great for Black, too. 13...O&xf6 Black is in fantastic shape here. I have faced 14.Nbd2 in an online Blitz game, when 14...e5 already leads to an overwhelming position for Black. A bit better is 14.c3 , but we have a full centre and a significant advantage after 14...e5 or the calmer 14...O-O , intending ...Nb6, ...Bd7 and ...Rc8. White's c-pawn is a handy target, while our e6-pawn is solid as a rock.

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in a moment. 11....xf7 Maximum pressure. 12.exf6 Kxf6 13.Kxf6 O&xf6 14.c4 That's the key difference to 11.O-O. White is just in time to play c4, preventing us from building a full e5/d5 pawn centre. 14....xc5 15.Kc2 a4 I like this move, taking control of b3. It's also possible to play 15...b6 or 15...O-O first, we'd like to play all three, and the order is not particularly relevant. I am happy with Black's chances after 15...a4 CCStartBracketCCor the other mentioned movesCCEndBracketCC. We have good central control, and our bishop will have a good spot on b7. Black can think about some action on the kingside, too. The half-open f-file and the strong bishop on b7 can be a powerful combination.

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pP1Pp3/8/P7/1B3PPP/RN1QKB1R b KQkq - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12...Qxd5 are also fine and give us equal chances. 13.Kxe5 White has to avoid 13.dxe6? Qxd1+ 14.Kxd1 Bxe6 , when Black has a strong attack against White's king. 13...O&xd5 14.O&xd5 exd5 This position is a bit better for Black already. White's queenside is weakened, and we are faster on the c-file to possibly invade.

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15...0-0 Now White has to be very careful. The only move that keeps them in the game is 16.d6, as otherwise, we'd play ...exd5 and open the e-file with a crushing effect. 16.d6 Bxb2 17.Qxb2 Ng4 still gives Black an attack, but White seems to hold.

☐ 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6
■ 4.dxc5 e6 5.a3 Bxc5 6.b4 #6

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☐ 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4
■ 4.f3

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3..xc3 After 2...d5 White needs to decide how to handle the threat to the e4-pawn. In this chapter, we will examine the consequences of 3.Nc3 and 3. Nd2 . Both lead to the same position after our reply 3...dxe4 and the natural recapture 4.Nxe4 . Let's talk about the arising pawn structure and possible options for Black once we have reached the position on move four. 3...dxe4 4.f3
A rare gambit line that will transpose to the dubious Blackmar-Diemer Gambit CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e4? dxe4 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.f3 CCEndBracketCC. White's compensation for the pawn is not sufficient. 4...exf3 5..xxf3 .xf6 6.Kc4 Kf5 And we have transposed to the Blackmar-Diemer, which we cover via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e4 dxe4 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.f3 exf3 5.Nxf3 c6 6.Bc4 Bf5 . By the way: in our Caro-Kann move order, White may also play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Bc4 , when the natural sequence 4...Nf6 5.f3 exf3 6.Nxf3 Bf5 leads to the same position.

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■ 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Ng3 #1

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After 4.Nxe4, we have reached a crucial parting of the ways. We now have a choice between three well-explored and sound moves. I'll briefly overview Black's options and make a case for my repertoire choice, which is 4...Nf6 . ACCEndBracketCC 4...Nd7 is currently out of fashion. It was Karpov's favourite way to play the Caro-Kann, but nowadays, the alternatives 4...Bf5 and 4...Nf6 make a more attractive

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☐ 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4
■ 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Ng3 #2

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3..xc3 After 2...d5 White needs to decide how to handle the threat to the e4-pawn. In this chapter, we will examine the consequences of 3.Nc3 and 3. Nd2 . Both lead to the same position after our reply 3...dxe4 and the natural recapture 4.Nxe4 . Let's talk about the arising pawn structure and possible options for Black once we have reached the position on move four. 3...dxe4 4..xxe4 After 4.Nxe4, we have reached a crucial parting of the ways. We now have a choice between three well-explored and sound moves. I'll briefly overview Black's options and make a case for my repertoire choice, which is 4...Nf6 . ACCEndBracketCC 4...Nd7 is currently out of fashion. It was Karpov's favourite way to play the Caro-Kann, but nowadays, the alternatives 4...Bf5 and 4...Nf6 make a more attractive

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☐ 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4
■ 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Ng3 #3

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Kg4 Here we have some good alternative options, for example, 9...Qc7 or 9...Qa5+ . The bishop move gains a tempo on the white queen. 10.O&d2 White avoids the weakening 10.f3 , when we have multiple options, 10...Qb8!? being a fun one. 10...O&c7 We have a fine position. White can't quickly castle queenside, and we have some annoying ideas, for example ...Nd5, intending to capture the bishop. White may play Nb5, but we have ...Qb8 and can kick the knight with ...a6 soon.

☐ 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4
■ 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.Bd3

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6.Kd3 Looks like a standard move, but there is a catch... 6...O&xd4 Yes, White has blundered the d4-pawn! This line is unlikely to happen in a classical time control game, but I found a huge count of online games with 6.Bd3 and Black did NOT capture. The reason is probably that Black more or less always plays 6...Bd6 against White's frequent moves and did not pay any attention. Well, you should grab the pawn! White gets some tempi, but it is not enough to justify the loss of a centre pawn. I decided to stop the line here. The reason is that after White's natural move CCStartFENCCrnb1kb1r/pp3ppp/2p2p2/8/3q4/3B4/PPP2PPP/R1BQK1NR w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Nf3 , all reasonable queen moves are fine, like 7...Qd8 , 7...Qd6 , 7...Qd5 and 7...Qb6 . White has a hard time drumming up full compensation because our pawn block on the kingside is so solid. Without the f6-pawn, White would often start an attack based on Ne5 or Ng5, which will never happen here.

☐ 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4
■ 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.Be3

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3..xc3 After 2...d5 White needs to decide how to handle the threat to the e4-pawn. In this chapter, we will examine the consequences of 3.Nc3 and 3. Nd2 . Both lead to the same position after our reply 3...dxe4 and the natural recapture 4.Nxe4 . Let's talk about the arising pawn structure and possible options for Black once we have reached the position on move four. 3...dxe4 4..xxe4 After 4.Nxe4, we have reached a crucial parting of the ways. We now have a choice between three well-explored and sound moves. I'll briefly overview Black's options and make a case for my repertoire choice, which is 4...Nf6 . ACCEndBracketCC 4...Nd7 is currently out of fashion. It was Karpov's favourite way to play the Caro-Kann, but nowadays, the alternatives 4...Bf5 and 4...Nf6 make a more attractive impression. My main argument against 4...Nd7 is that Black does not manage to develop the c8-bishop easily in many lines. A sample line is 5.Bd3 Ngf6 6.Ng5 , when it seems like Black needs to play 6...e6 . Black is not in terrible shape in this line, but I felt our play is much easier to handle after 4...Nf6. BCCEndBracketCC 4...Bf5 is the traditional mainline for Black. In recent years, 4...Nf6 has gained popularity, but 4...Bf5 remains a solid choice for Black. By playing 4...Bf5, Black attacks the knight and develops with a gain of tempo. This way, the bishop enters the game before ...e6 is played. A sample variation like 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.Nf3 Nd7 7.Bc4 e6 demonstrates Black's basic idea: get the bishop out, play ...e6 next. Later, Black may castle and attack the d4-pawn with the pawn break ...c5. White's best try against 4...Bf5 is the line 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.h4 , gaining some space on the kingside. This continuation is well-explored and requires some theoretical knowledge, as move orders play a crucial role. CCCEndBracketCC 4...Nf6 is my repertoire choice. After White's natural reply 5.Nxf6+ I suggest 5...exf6 , capturing away from the centre. At first glance, this line may look odd; why does Black accept doubled pawns? Aren't doubled pawns to be avoided? Well, it's not so simple. One possible

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choices. If White decides to play 14.Be2 , playing 14...f5 is an interesting idea, intending ...Nf6 and ...f5-f4 in some cases.

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1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3..xc3 After 2...d5 White needs to decide how to handle the threat to the e4-pawn. In this chapter, we will examine the consequences of 3.Nc3 and 3. Nd2 . Both lead to the same position after our reply 3...dxe4 and the natural recapture 4.Nxe4 . Let's talk about the arising pawn structure and possible options for Black once we have reached the position on move four. 3...dxe4 4..xxe4 After 4.Nxe4, we have reached a crucial parting of the ways. We now have a choice between three well-explored and sound moves. I'll briefly overview Black's options and make a case for my repertoire choice, which is 4...Nf6 . A**CC**EndBracket**CC** 4...Nd7 is currently out of fashion. It was Karpov's favourite way to play the Caro-Kann, but nowadays, the alternatives 4...Bf5 and 4...Nf6 make a more attractive impression. My main argument against 4...Nd7 is that Black does not manage to develop the c8-bishop easily in many lines. A sample line is 5.Bd3 Ngf6 6.Ng5 , when it seems like Black needs to play 6...e6 . Black is not in terrible shape in this line, but I felt our play is much easier to handle after 4...Nf6. B**CC**EndBracket**CC** 4...Bf5 is the traditional mainline for Black. In recent years, 4...Nf6 has gained popularity, but 4...Bf5 remains a solid choice for Black. By playing 4...Bf5, Black attacks the knight and develops with a gain of tempo. This way, the bishop enters the game before ...e6 is played. A sample variation like 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.Nf3 Nd7 7.Bc4 e6 demonstrates Black's basic idea: get the bishop out, play ...e6 next. Later, Black may castle and attack the d4-pawn with the pawn break ...c5. White's best try against 4...Bf5 is the line 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.h4 , gaining some space on the kingside. This continuation is well-explored and requires some theoretical knowledge, as move orders play a crucial role. C**CC**EndBracket**CC** 4...Nf6 is my repertoire choice. After White's natural reply 5.Nxf6+ I suggest 5...exf6 , capturing away from the centre. At first glance, this line may look odd; why does Black accept doubled pawns? Aren't doubled pawns to be avoided? Well, it's not so simple. One possible problem of doubled pawns is that they might be easy targets for the opponent's pieces and fall in the long run. However, this only applies if the pawns are not only doubled but also isolated. After 5...exf6, this is not the case, as the g-pawn supports f6. The four kingside pawns are a so-called 'pawn island', protecting one another. Imagine this position without a g-pawn, so just pawns on f6 and f7. These pawns would be easy targets **CC**StartBracket**CC**f6 can't be protected by a pawn anymore**CC**EndBracket**CC** and create additional weaknesses, in particular the f5-square. Doubled pawns are not a serious weakness, if they are part of a pawn island and not isolated - they need neighbours to support them. Is there some other possible drawback of a doubled pawn? Yes, a doubled pawn might make it difficult to

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...Bg7 soon to unpin our knight. In both cases, Black has good play on the light squares and controls d5 and e4. The notable point is that our e6-bishop attacks the a2-pawn. If White reacts with b3, ...a5-a4 is a good plan.

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position. Black has gained some space on the kingside and has ...c5 to open the d-file at leisure.

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and ...f5 next, advancing on the kingside. 13...bxa6 A truly odd pawn structure, but we are completely fine. The reason is the badly positioned knight on e2. It has no good square to go to, making it difficult for White to fight for the e-file. A possible like to demonstrate matters is 14.h3 a5 15.Rfe1 Ba6 16.Rad1 Qe6 , when e2 and a2 are attacked. White's position is a bit uncomfortable and not easy to coordinate.

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at White's intention to play f2-f4 soon. 12....xf8 13.Qae1 Again, a preparation move for f2-f4. After 13.f4? f5! Black is better. We will analyze 13.Rae1 g6 14.f4? f5! in a moment, which leads to the same advantageous structure for Black. 13...g6 I like this move, as it directly addresses White's f4 idea. Now 14.f4?! f5! is good for Black. 14.f4 I'd like to show why this is a bad choice. Better would be 14.Nf4 , when I like 14...Be6!? 15.Nxe6 Nxe6 . We have given up the bishop pair, but ...Nf4 is a valuable resource now. Chances are about even in this unexplored line. 14...f5 White should play f4 if they are sure to manage f4-f5 next. A line to illustrate this point is CCStartFENCCr1bqrnk1/pp3pp1/2pb1p2/8/3P3p/2PB3P/PPQBNPP1/4RRK1 b - - 4 13CCEndFENCC 13...Bc7 14.f4 g6 15.f5 , which leads to interesting complications. After 14.f4?! f5! Black is already better, as White has pretty awful pieces. The f4-pawn restricts their bishop and knight. A noteworthy idea for Black is improving the f8-knight. It would be well-positioned on f6 or h5, connecting with weaknesses in White's camp. Therefore ...Ne6-g7-h5 or ...Be6, followed by ...Nd7-f6 come to mind.

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stop Ng3 and gain valuable space on the kingside. White's main reply is 11.h3 , even though it is unclear if we want to play ...h3 next. We'll check 11.Bf4 , when 11...h3?! is dubious. It is more important to control g3 than trying to put a dent in White's kingside. 11.h3 White plays this move most of the time. We don't necessarily want to play ...h4-h3 right away, but our option of the pawn push is a constant nuisance for White. Ruling it out completely makes sense, for sure. 11....xd7 We continue with our common knight tour ...Nd7-f8. Now White has two important options. They can play 12.Be3 or 12.Bd2 . The latter intends to play f4 soon, which is the main difference. White has also tried 12.Bf4 , when 12...Nf8 leads to a fairly standard position and no problems for Black. 12.Ke3 This move is usually connected with a central strategy by White. They intent to play Rad1 and c4 next, most of the time. 12....xf8 13.Qad1 Or 13.c4 Be6 14.Rad1 , which leads to the same position. 13...Ke6 14.c4 Qc8 We have completed our setup, and I am happy about Black's chances. There is room for some creativity, as multiple ideas look feasible. After 15. Rfe1 , you could play 15...b5 or the similar 15...Bb8 16.b3 b5 . Alternatively 16... Bd7!? is interesting, intending ...Qc7.

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more detailed coverage. 10.Ke3 White's usual choice if they intend to castle queenside. 10....xd7 We go for ...Nd7-f8, as usual. The knight is well-placed on f8, as it defends the kingside but is also ready to join the action via e6 later. Now, 11.O-O-O is the logical follow-up, but 11.O-O h4! is possible, too. These positions we examine via CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp3pp1/2pb1p2/7p/3P4/2PB4/PPQ1NPPP/R1B1K2R w KQ - 0 10CCEndFENCC 10.O-O h4 . There is one independent possibility, the move 11.Ng3 . It is harmless, but the best reply is not so obvious - that's why we'll check the move, too. 11..xg3 This move could be tricky to meet if you are not prepared for it. White attacks our h-pawn, and 11...h4 12.Nf5 looks awkward. What is the best reply? 11....xb6 A strong reply! We don't need to save the h-pawn. 12..xxh5 The pawn grab has to be checked. Instead 12.O-O-O Nd5 13. Bd2 Nf4 is just nice for Black. 12....xd5 White has to be very careful now to avoid disaster. 13.0-0-0 This loses on the spot. White needs to play 13.O-O , when 13... Bg4 14.Ng3 leads to a position where Black has multiple ways to play. Possible is 14...Nxe3 15.fxe3 Bxg3 16.hxg3 Rxe3 , CCStartFENCCr2qr1k1/pp3pp1/2pb1p2/3n4/3P2b1/2PBB1N1/PPQ2PPP/R4RK1 b - - 4 14CCEndFENCC 14...Bxg3 15. hxg3 Nxe3 16.fxe3 Rxe3 and even CCStartFENCCr2qr1k1/pp3pp1/2pb1p2/3n4/3P2b1/2PBB1N1/PPQ2PPP/R4RK1 b - - 4 14CCEndFENCC 14...Rxe3 , which all work for Black and lead to equal chances. 13...Kg4 Attacking both rook and knight. 14.Ke2 Kxe2 15.O&xe2 g6 16..xg3 f5 A completely forced line so far... and White has no way to stop ...f4, winning a piece.

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CCCEndBracketCCC 15.Be4 Rc8 16.d5 cxd5 17.Bxd5 Qc7 could be White's best and is a sharp battle with attacking chances for both sides.

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1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3..xc3 After 2...d5 White needs to decide how to handle the threat to the e4-pawn. In this chapter, we will examine the consequences of 3.Nc3 and 3. Nd2 . Both lead to the same position after our reply 3...dxe4 and the natural recapture 4.Nxe4 . Let's talk about the arising pawn structure and possible options for Black once we have reached the position on move four. 3...dxe4 4..xxe4 After 4.Nxe4, we have reached a crucial parting of the ways. We now have a choice between three well-explored and sound moves. I'll briefly overview Black's options and make a case for my repertoire choice, which is 4...Nf6 . ACCEndBracketCCC 4...Nd7 is currently out of fashion. It was Karpov's favourite way to play the Caro-Kann, but nowadays, the alternatives 4...Bf5 and 4...Nf6 make a more attractive impression. My main argument against 4...Nd7 is that Black does not manage to develop the c8-bishop easily in many lines. A sample line is 5.Bd3 Ngf6 6.Ng5 , when it seems like Black needs to play 6...e6 . Black is not in terrible shape in this line, but I felt our play is much easier to handle after 4...Nf6. BCCEndBracketCCC 4...Bf5 is the traditional mainline for Black. In recent years, 4...Nf6 has gained popularity, but 4...Bf5 remains a solid choice for Black. By playing 4...Bf5, Black attacks the knight and develops with a gain of tempo. This way, the bishop enters the game before ...e6 is played. A sample variation like 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.Nf3 Nd7 7.Bc4 e6 demonstrates Black's basic idea: get the bishop out, play ...e6 next. Later, Black may castle and attack the d4-pawn with the pawn break ...c5. White's best try against 4...Bf5 is the line 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.h4 , gaining some space on the kingside. This continuation is well-explored and requires some theoretical knowledge, as move orders play a crucial role. CCCEndBracketCCC 4...Nf6 is my repertoire choice. After White's natural reply 5.Nxf6+ I suggest 5...exf6 , capturing away from the centre. At first glance, this line may look odd; why does Black accept doubled pawns? Aren't doubled pawns to be avoided? Well, it's not so simple. One possible problem of doubled pawns is that they might be easy targets for the opponent's pieces and fall in the long run. However, this only applies if the pawns are not only doubled but also isolated. After 5...exf6, this is not the case, as the g-pawn supports f6. The four kingside pawns are a so-called 'pawn island', protecting one another. Imagine this position without a g-pawn, so just pawns on f6 and f7. These pawns would be easy targets CCStartBracketCCf6 can't be protected by a pawn anymoreCCEndBracketCCC and create additional weaknesses, in particular the f5-square. Doubled pawns are not a serious weakness, if they are part of a pawn island and not isolated - they need neighbours to support them. Is there some other possible drawback of a doubled pawn? Yes, a doubled pawn might make it difficult to

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1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3..xc3 After 2...d5 White needs to decide how to handle the threat to the e4-pawn. In this chapter, we will examine the consequences of 3.Nc3 and 3. Nd2 . Both lead to the same position after our reply 3...dxe4 and the natural recapture 4.Nxe4 . Let's talk about the arising pawn structure and possible options for Black once we have reached the position on move four. 3...dxe4 4..xxe4 After 4.Nxe4, we have reached a crucial parting of the ways. We now have a choice between three well-explored and sound moves. I'll briefly overview Black's options and make a case for my repertoire choice, which is 4...Nf6 . ACCEndBracketCC 4...Nd7 is currently out of fashion. It was Karpov's favourite way to play the Caro-Kann, but nowadays, the alternatives 4...Bf5 and 4...Nf6 make a more attractive impression. My main argument against 4...Nd7 is that Black does not manage to develop the c8-bishop easily in many lines. A sample line is 5.Bd3 Ngf6 6.Ng5 , when it seems like Black needs to play 6...e6 . Black is not in terrible shape in this line, but I felt our play is much easier to handle after 4...Nf6. BCCEndBracketCC 4...Bf5 is the traditional mainline for Black. In recent years, 4...Nf6 has gained popularity, but 4...Bf5 remains a solid choice for Black. By playing 4...Bf5, Black attacks the knight and develops with a gain of tempo. This way, the bishop enters the game before ...e6 is played. A sample variation like 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.Nf3 Nd7 7.Bc4 e6 demonstrates Black's basic idea: get the bishop out, play ...e6 next. Later, Black may castle and attack the d4-pawn with the pawn break ...c5. White's best try against 4...Bf5 is the line 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.h4 , gaining some space on the kingside. This continuation is well-explored and requires some theoretical knowledge, as move orders play a crucial role. CCCEndBracketCC 4...Nf6 is my repertoire choice. After White's natural reply 5.Nxf6+ I suggest 5...exf6 , capturing away from the centre. At first glance, this line may look odd; why does Black accept doubled pawns? Aren't doubled pawns to be avoided? Well, it's not so simple. One possible problem of doubled pawns is that they might be easy targets for the opponent's pieces and fall in the long run. However, this only applies if the pawns are not only doubled but also isolated. After 5...exf6, this is not the case, as the g-pawn supports f6. The four kingside pawns are a so-called 'pawn island', protecting one another. Imagine this position without a g-pawn, so just pawns on f6 and f7. These pawns

would be easy targets CCStartBracketCCf6 can't be protected by a pawn anymoreCCEndBracketCC and create additional weaknesses, in particular the f5-square. Doubled pawns are not a serious weakness, if they are part of a pawn island and not isolated - they need neighbours to support them. Is there some other possible drawback of a doubled pawn? Yes, a doubled pawn might make it difficult to utilize a pawn majority and create a passed pawn. After 5...exf6 White has a long-term plan to play c4 and d5, which creates a passed pawn on the d-file. This idea is tough to realize in practice, as we will see. Still, we don't have an obvious way to create a passed pawn, which is a structural disadvantage. Now, after this lengthy discussion about possible problems, let's discuss the multiple upsides of the 4...Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 variation. 1CCEndBracketCC Black's pawns on the kingside provide excellent cover for our king. We have a pawn shield of four pawns, which is tough to attack. 2CCEndBracketCC As a consequence of the first point, it is often possible for us to push one or more of the kingside pawns forward without seriously weakening our king safety. We'll often play moves like ...h5 or ...f5 as attacking devices. These don't weaken our king at all, as it still has enough pawn cover. 3CCEndBracketCC The f6-pawn covers the squares g5 and, in particular, e5! Have you ever lost a game against a knight jumping to e5 or g5? We all have, I guess. Our f6-pawn makes this idea impossible. 4CCEndBracketCC Black has no structurally bad piece or piece that is difficult to activate. We can easily develop all our pieces and a setup with ...Bd6, ...O-O, ...Re8 and often ...Nd7-f8 can be played almost regardless of White's moves. 5CCEndBracketCC While the ...exf6 variation is now very well respected on the top level, it often hits players by surprise on lower levels. If White doesn't know any theory, they'll hardly be able to challenge us at all. 4....xf6 We immediately challenge the central knight and force a reaction. If you like to learn more about possible alternatives and the merits of 4...Nf6, please see the detailed discussion after White's move 4.Nxe4. Now White's only challenging option is the capture, but you'll meet 5.Ng3 or 5.Ng5 occasionally. 5..xxf6+ Taking is the only serious option for White, creating doubled pawns on the f-file. 5...exf6 After 5...exf6 , we have reached the 'real' starting position of the current chapter. A massive upside of our repertoire choice is that White now almost needs to know some concrete lines, as many 'natural' moves and setups pose no problems at all. White's best try for an advantage is 6.c3 Bd6 7.Bd3 O-O 8.Qc2 Re8+ 9.Ne2 , which is unlikely to happen against an unprepared player. White's most frequently played move is 6. Nf3 , which is a strategic mistake. The knight is misplaced on f3, as it only looks at well-protected squares. Black is not better after 6.Nf3, but we have no problems at all and some hopes for more. 6.Nf3 suggests that White is unfamiliar with the demands of the unusual pawn structure. So 6.c3 is the mainline, and 6.Nf3 is harmless. What else? The move 6.Bc4 is White's best alternative to 6.c3 and needs to be examined carefully. The idea of the early bishop is the line 6...Bd6 7. Qe2+ , which is slightly annoying, but not the end of the world. Besides these three main moves, we will also look at two rare moves, 6.Be3 and 6.Bd3 . If White goes for something even more exotic, don't worry. You will always be OK with the standard

setup of ...Bd6 and ...O-O next. Our king is safe, and we have easy development. 6.c3 The move 6.c3 is considered to be the critical test of the 5...exf6 Caro-Kann. What is White's idea? They have a particular piece setup in mind: Bishop to d3 and queen to c2. This battery exerts pressure on our kingside, attacking the h7-pawn. The following sequence looks very natural: 6.c3 Bd6 7.Bd3 O-O 8.Qc2 Re8+ 9. Ne2 , when we have reached a key position. Now Black needs to react to the threat Bxh7+... what to do? Up until about 2015, Black reacted with the moves 9...h6 or 9...g6 , but White always maintained an advantage in these positions. This assessment was why 5...exf6 was considered an inferior line; Black never managed to equalize the game against 6.c3. The surprising solution is the move 9...h5! , which suddenly led to a re-evaluation of Black's chances and got 5...exf6 into the limelight. What's the point of 9...h5? It's best explained as a comparison with 9...h6: After 9...h6 10.O-O White will continue with the idea Ng3-f5, which is annoying for Black and usually will cost the bishop pair, as Black can't tolerate the knight on f5. Now, after CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp3ppp/2pb1p2/8/3P4/2PB4/PPQ1NPPP/ R1B1K2R b KQ - 6 9CCEndFENCC 9...h5 10.O-O , we play 9...h4! and stop this idea. Not only that but advancing the h-pawn often gives Black some attacking ideas against White's king. More often than not, White will not castle kingside against 9... h5 but prefer to hide the king on the other side of the board. This leads to a fascinating struggle that is considered to be fine for Black, too. Let's have a closer look now. 6...Kd6 We'll play ...Bd6 and ...O-O almost always, and the mainline is no exception. 7.Kd3 0-0 Now White chooses between 8.Qc2 and 8.Ne2 . They often lead to the same positions as 8.Qc2 Re8+ 9.Ne2 h5 and CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp3ppp/2pb1p2/8/3P4/2PB4/PP3PPP/R1BQK1NR w KQ - 3 8CCEndFENCC 8.Ne2 Re8 9.Qc2 h5 quickly merge. The only noteworthy independent possibility is 8.Ne2 Re8 9.O-O , when White goes for kingside castling without provoking ...h5 first. 8.O&c2 White realizes the idea of 6.c3 and attacks h7. 8...Qe8+ Getting to the only open file with a check on move eight shows an attractive point of our chosen line 5...exf6: Black can quickly castle and develop easily. 9..xe2 h5 As mentioned in the notes to 6.c3, this move brought the entire 5... exf6 branch of the Caro-Kann back to life. White now has the fundamental choice between kingside and queenside castling - they are about equally popular. They usually prepare O-O-O with 10.Be3 , but 10.Bd2 is possible, too. I think we should play against 10.Bd2 in the same way as against 10.Be3 , so I decided against more detailed coverage. 10.Ke3 White's usual choice if they intend to castle queenside. 10....xd7 We go for ...Nd7-f8, as usual. The knight is well-placed on f8, as it defends the kingside but is also ready to join the action via e6 later. Now, 11.O-O-O is the logical follow-up, but 11.O-O h4! is possible, too. These positions we examine via CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp3pp1/2pb1p2/7p/3P4/2PB4/PPQ1NPPP/ R1B1K2R w KQ - 0 10CCEndFENCC 10.O-O h4 . There is one independent possibility, the move 11.Ng3 . It is harmless, but the best reply is not so obvious - that's why we'll check the move, too. 11.0-0-0 Here we go, opposite-side castling! After our natural reply, we'll talk about both sides' strategies a bit more. 11....xf8

We complete our knight tour. Black's knight is an essential defender on the kingside. 12.Elb1 There is this joke that long castling is called 'long', because it always takes two moves: playing O-O-O and Kb1. White usually plays 12.Kb1 , recognizing that it will be difficult to skip this prophylactic move in the long run. In some cases, White plays it on move 13: Examples are 12.c4 Be6 13.Kb1 or CCStartFENCCr1bqrnk1/pp3pp1/2pb1p2/7p/3P4/2PBB3/PPQ1NPPP/2KR3R w - - 4 12CCEndFENCC 12.h3 Be6 13.Kb1 . We will examine these cases via the 12.Kb1 move order. Our reply is easy: we complete development. 12...Ke6 Now White's best bet seems to be 13.c4 , which takes control of d5 and makes ...b5 more difficult to play. 13.c4 The main continuation for White. The move controls d5, makes ...b5 more challenging to play and prepares Nc3, improving the knight. 13...Qc8 The immediate 13...b5? doesn't work well due to 14.d5 , but CCStartFENCCr2qrnk1/pp3pp1/2pbbp2/7p/2PP4/3BB3/PPQ1NPPP/1K1R3R b - - 0 13CCEndFENCC 13...Rc8 prepares the b-pawn advance. Our rook is placed on the same file as White's queen, allowing tactical tricks. 14..xc3 White prevents our ...b5 push again. They could try 14.h3 , but the antidote is well-known from earlier instances that we have already examined. The sequence 14...b5! 15.c5 Bb8 16.g4 h4! keeps the position closed on the kingside and gives Black good play, similar to other h3 + g4 scenarios we have already analyzed. Back to 14.Nc3 : we can't play 14...b5? 15.cxb5 cxb5 16.Bxb5 now, but we have a good way to prepare ...b5 once more. 14...Kb4 Our intention is ...Bxc3, followed by ...b5. If we can provoke White into moving the c-pawn, our e6-bishop will become a monster. 15..xe4 White avoids our idea. The line 15.a3 Bxc3 16.Qxc3 b5 shows the point of ...Bb4 and is undesirable for White. We have given up the bishop pair but gained the light-squared play we aimed for. After 15.Ne4 we need to find/remember one more precise move. 15...Ke7 The move to avoid is 15...b5? 16.c5! , when all of a sudden we face the deadly threat of Nd6. We need to retreat the bishop first, avoiding this possibility. The position after 15...Be7 has been tested multiple times in practice. Black is doing fine, as some sample lines show: ACCEndBracketCC 16.Nc3 is unambitious, as 16...Bb4 already repeats. We can also play 16...Qa5 and play for a win. BCCEndBracketCC 16.h3 b5! 17.c5 f5 16.Nc3 b4 19.Ne2 Rb8 leads to a sharp position with chances for both sides. CCCEndBracketCC 16.Nc5 is a forcing move but leads to nothing after 16...Bxc5 17.dxc5 Qe7 .

☐ 3. Caro-Kann: Two Knights (1.e
■ 5.Nxf6+

1.e4 c6 2..xc3 In this chapter, we will examine the Two Knights variation. White does not play d2-d4 early on but develops the knights first. I have chosen the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.Nc3 d5 3.Nf3 , but of course CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp1ppppp/2p5/8/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq -

0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Nf3 d5 3.Nc3 leads to the same position. There are some possible deviations, like CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp1ppppp/2p5/8/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Nf3 d5 3.d3 or 3.exd5 , but these are examined in the Caro KannSidelines chapter. The same applies for the rare cases that White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp1ppppp/2p5/8/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Nc3 , but after 2...d5 avoids 3.Nf3 and 3.d4 - please have a look at theSidelines chapter. 2...d5 3..xf3 dxe4 I suggest answering the Two Knights in the same way as the Classical variation - by taking on e4 and playing ...Nf6 next. If you like to expand your repertoire later, I'd recommend looking at 3...Bg4 . This line has a solid reputation and was thoroughly analyzed by Erwin l'Ami in his Lifetime Repertoire on Chessable. 4..xxe4 .xf6 We go for the same concept as we do against the Classical Variation CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 . Using a similar approach makes a lot of sense, as to reach familiar middlegames in many cases. I'd like to emphasize an important point: in the Classical Variation White often plays 5. Nxf6+ exf6 6.Nf3 , which is known to give Black a comfortable game. In the Two Knights, White already has their knight on f3. This means that the very natural continuation CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.Nc3 d5 3.Nf3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.d4 is a transposition to a harmless line of the Classical. You'll face this line very often, in particular in online or club level games. Currently, theoreticians agree that White's best bet against 4...Nf6 is the move 5.Qe2 , which we will focus on in this chapter. You'll see that the alternatives are all nice for us or transpose into lines of the Classical that are part of the repertoire anyway. 5..xxf6+ By far the most popular move, but it is rather unchallenging. 5...exf6 6.Kc4 White's only interesting try. After 6.d4 Bd6 , we transpose to an already mentioned comfortable line of the Classical. 6...Kd6 I suggest playing the standard move and agreeing to transpose to the Classical. It is possible to be creative here with other moves, but there is no need. 7.O&e2+ White goes for the same approach as in the Classical after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.Bc4 Bd6 7.Qe2+ . We will transpose into precisely this variation now. 7...Ke7 Playing 7...Qe7 is possible, but not an attractive option. 8.0-0 Or 8.d4 O-O 9.O-O Bd6 , leading to the same transpostion to the Classical. 8...0-0 9.d4 Kd6 And we have transposed to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.Bc4 Bd6 7.Qe2+ Be7 8.Nf3 O-O 9.O-O Bd6 . The important move to remember is 10.Re1 a5! , which is discussed in the chapter on theClassical variation.

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■ 5.Ng3

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- [ ] 3. Caro-Kann: Two Knights (1.e
- [x] 5.Qe2 Nxe4 6.Qxe4 Nd7 7.d4

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playing 7.d4 , or 7.Bc4 , which lead to very different positions. The main point is that 7.Bc4 Nf6 is answered by 8.Ne5 , which forces us to play 8...e6 and lock in the c8-bishop temporarily. Instead, after 7.d4 Nf6 White needs to move their queen and allow a bishop development to g4 or f5, depending on the circumstances. 7.d4 A natural move, but it is less challenging than 7.Bc4 . We get equal chances without the need for deep theoretical knowledge. 7....xf6 8.O&d3 This is White's most popular move for a reason. We'd like to develop our bishop to f5, so White keeps an eye on this square. The move 8.Qh4 allows 8...Bf5 , or 8...Bg4 , with an easy game for us. We quickly develop, and White's queen is misplaced given a future ...e6 and ...Be7 idea. 8...Kg4 Here 8...g6 is not bad, either. Black prepares the fianchetto and ...Bf5. Still, I suggest the bishop move. This style of development is more common in our repertoire: we place the bishop actively and intend ...e6 next. 9..xe5 The knight jump must be critical. A line like 9.c3 e6 10.Be2 Bf5 11.Qd1 Bd6 is just too harmless. We quickly develop and attack the centre with ...c5 soon. 9...Kh5 10.c3 Against this move we need to be precise. White covers the d-pawn and therefore make the queen more mobile again. The move Qh3 could be an annoying idea, planning g4. 10...e6 11.O&h3 Kd6 Not just played on general grounds, but necessary to stop 12.g4 , which is now met by 12...Bxe5 , when 13. dxe5?? Bxg4 wins for Black and 13.gxh5 Bd6 leads to interesting play with equal chances. Probably White's best bet is 12.Bg5 , but a precise sequence gives Black equal chances after 12...Bxe5 13.dxe5 Qd5 14.Bxf6 Qe4+ 15.Qe3 Qxe3+ 16. fxe3 gxf6 17.exf6 Rg8 18.Rg1 Rg6 . In the end, Black will regain the f6-pawn and is fine.

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complications, as White will feel tempted to start a queenside pawn storm. I prefer the quieter option of ...O-O, but it's good to be flexible. 10...O&a5+ There is nothing wrong with other sensible moves, like 10...Be7 , for example. However, the move 10...Qa5+ is very clever and involves some instructive points. Let's check what they are. 11.c3 This looks perfectly normal, but there is a catch. White should play the modest retreat 11.Bd2 , when 11...Qc7 , followed by ...Bd6, gives us a good position. 11...Kg4 This is a strong reply. We pin the knight, and this way attack White's g5-bishop with our queen. The threat is ...Bxf3, followed by ...Qxg5. 12.Kd2 O&h5 Very nice! Now White has no way to avoid the destruction of their kingside pawn structure. Black is already slightly better here and has the easier game. Note that you don't need to take on f3 right on the next move, but wait until White spends a tempo on a queen move. It's precise to keep the pin as long as possible and squeeze out this tempo.

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enough compensation for the pawn. Far better and more popular than the pawn grab is 11.b3 or 11.a4 , which are in line with the plans I described earlier. 11.a4 White is putting a lot of pressure on the b5-pawn. What to do about it? Black is fine, but the following sequence is the only one that gives us good chances. 11...Kd6 Exactly, this move is right. We attack the knight and force White to grab the c-pawn. 12..xxc6 b4 We have seen similar positions before. Black has good compensation for the pawn, as White's position is not well-coordinated. There is only one challenging continuation now. 13..xd4 A tempo move, because we need to stop Nb5. 13...a6 No choice, Nb5 was too annoying to stand. 14..xf5 This is the move that keeps White out of trouble. If they play 14.b3? O-O 15.Nf3 e5 , our initiative may quickly become overwhelming. 14...Kb7 Black has tried two moves here, and both work fine. The alternative is 14...Be5 , but 14...Bb7 is a more straightforward solution. 15..xxd6+ White has to avoid 15.Nxg7+ Kf8 16.Nh5 Nxh5 17.Qxh5 Rg8 , when Black has a fantastic position. White is uncoordinated, and all of Black's pieces have commanding posts. 15...O&xd6 16.0-0 h5 The final move a long line. Black has good compensation for the pawn now, based on the active pieces and, of course, the concrete idea ...Ng4. If White stops it with 17.h3 , we'll go 17...g5! and attack. Note how difficult it is for White to develop. If they play 17.b3?? , we immediately win with 17...Ng4 18.g3 Qd5 19.f3 Qd4+ .

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slightly odd at first but has its points, as we will see. 10..xxc6 Snatching the pawn is far too risky! 10...O&c7 It's important to go to c7 and avoid 10...Qb6? Our queen is best on c7, keeping an eye on the important e5-square. This point will become clearer on move twelve. Now White needs to play 11.Bd3 , as 11.Bxb5?? would lose decisive material. 11.Kxb5 Well, we didn't just blunder two pawns, right? It's a bit naive to take on b5, but we still need to check how to refute it. 11...a6 After 11... Bd7?? White can just move the c6-knight and keep the extra material. Instead, we need to play 11...a6 first, forcing the bishop to an unprotected square. 12.Ka4 Kd7 Now White can't move the knight, as the bishop on a4 would be lost. 13.O&c4 Or 13.Qf3 Rc8 , which wins the piece, too. 13....xd5 Even better than 13...Rc8 . White has no defence against our crushing threat ...Nb6.

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the pawn. 12...Kd6 The setup of Qc7 + Bd6 is important to fight the strong e5-knight. White has to retreat or play 13.f4 , which creates serious weaknesses. In both cases, we complete development with ...Bb7 and ...0-0. According to circumstances, a good idea to remember is ...Nd5, intending ...Nb4 or Nf4. Black has excellent compensation for the pawn and the much easier practical task.

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CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/p1q2ppp/2pbpn2/1p2N3/3P4/1B6/PPP1QPPP/R1B1K2R w KQkq - 1 12CCEndFENCC 12.O-O O-O 13.Bf4 . It's just very natural for both sides to castle kingside - delaying it for longer makes little sense. 12.a4 This move is uncommon but worth checking for conceptual reasons. White attacks our b5-pawn twice - how to cover it? 12...0-0 We don't cover it at all! The more conservative 12... a6 is not terrible, but this more dynamic choice is more attractive. Instead of 12...O-O , Black also has the interesting 12...c5!? , which is even sharper. 13.axb5 We need to check the pawn grab. White can play more cautiously with 13.O-O , but we are fine after 13...a5 or 13...b4 . Our play on the queenside makes good progress, while the merit of a4 is questionable for White. 13...cxb5 14.O&xb5 a5 Black has great play for the pawn. We threaten ...Ba6 and a line like 15.Qe2 Nd7 16.Nxd7 Bxd7 17.c3 a4 18.Bc2 Bc6 looks like fun. White probably should play 15. Qc6 , but 15...Qxc6 16.Nxc6 Bb7 wins back the pawn on g2.

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As mentioned in the notes to 11...Bd6: castling kingside is a natural choice for White. 12...0-0 No rocket science: we need to get the king out of the centre. Now White's most popular move is the universally helpful 13.c3 . White has some alternatives, like 13.Bf4 or 13.Bg5 . They would often later transpose to 13.c3, as the move is usually needed anyway. White wants to support d4 and prepare Bc2. This bishop retreat to c2 is often helpful for White, given our strategy. So what are we going for? Well, we have played ...b5 already and want to continue with our play on the queenside. We need the move ...c6-c5 soon, attacking White's centre and undermining the control of e5, too. White's knight on e5 is strong, but after ...c5, they can't capture on c5, as the knight is under pressure from our queen + bishop battery. The move ...c5 is not so easy to play, though. We need to watch for our b-pawn, as White's queen might take it after the c-pawn moves. We have a good solution for this issue, though. It's possible to play ...a5 first and follow with ...c5. With ...a5 on the board, White can't take b5 due to ...Ba6. So if White plays a combination of the moves c3, Bf4, Re1 on the next moves, the ...a5 + ...c5 plan is the way to go. White has an alternative way to develop, playing Bg5. We need to handle this move differently, as they threaten to take the knight and weaken our kingside. 13.Kf4 a5 We answer White's mainline CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/p1q2ppp/2pbpn2/1p2N3/3P4/1B6/PPP1QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.c3 with 13...a5 , too. The threat is ...a4, which forces White to create a square for the b3-bishop. 14.a3 Instead, 14.c3 c5 would transpose to CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/p1q2ppp/2pbpn2/1p2N3/3P4/1B6/PPP1QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.c3 a5 14.Bf4 c5 . 14...c5 Following our standard approach of ...a5 + ...c5. Now White can't play 15.Qxb5 due to 15...Ba6 , winning material. The position is very similar to CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/p1q2ppp/2pbpn2/1p2N3/3P4/1B6/PPP1QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.c3 a5 14.Bf4 c5 , so I don't think a further investigation is warranted.

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move. The checkmate threat leaves us little choice. 8...e6 We needed to stop the mate on f7. At first, you'd think that 8...e6 is a serious concession. Black gives up on the concept to play ...Bf5 or ...Bg4 but instead has to lock the bishop inside the pawn chain. f5 or g4 are the desirable spots for the c8-bishop in the Caro-Kann, but an excellent alternative deployment will give us fair chances. After 9.Qe2 , we'll play 9...b5! , preparing ...Bb7 or ...Ba6, according to circumstances. 9.O&e2 The natural choice and almost exclusively played by White. e2 is a good spot for the queen, keeping the knight and bishop protected. 9...b5 Our c8-bishop needs a good spot, so we immediately clear the way with a gain of tempo. It is crucial to play this move right away and ignore that the c6-pawn is hanging. This is not a problem, as grabbing on c6 is dubious for White. Therefore, White has to choose between the more natural and popular 10.Bb3 , or the less explored 10.Bd3 . Playing the bishop to d3 looks slightly odd at first but has its points, as we will see. 10.Kb3 White retreats to the most natural square. They'll continue with a quick d2-d4, classically developing the c1-bishop to f4 or g5. This is an entirely different approach than 10.Bd3 , when White aims for the b3 + Bb2 setup. 10...O&c7 We cover the pawn and prepare ...Bd6. to increase the pressure on the knight. 11.d4 White usually starts with this move, but 11.O-O Bd6 12.d4 leads to the same position and is frequently seen, too. 11...Kd6 The natural follow-up to our previous move. Our general strategy is quite simple: we'd like to castle kingside and finally manage to get the c8-bishop into play. ...c5 and ...Bb7 often accomplish this, but a6 might be a good post, too. After 11...Bd6 White's main reply is 12.O-O , but we'll have a brief look at 12.a4 , which has some independent value. White has also tried 12.c3 , but after the natural 12...O-O 13.O-O it's a transposition to CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/p1q2ppp/2pbpn2/1p2N3/3P4/1B6/PPP1QPPP/R1B1K2R w KQkq - 1 12CCEndFENCC 12.O-O O-O 13.c3 , which is the mainline of the 10.Bb3 variation. Similarly, 12.Bf4 O-O 13.O-O transposes to CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/p1q2ppp/2pbpn2/1p2N3/3P4/1B6/PPP1QPPP/R1B1K2R w KQkq - 1 12CCEndFENCC 12.O-O O-O 13.Bf4 . It's just very natural for both sides to castle kingside - delaying it for longer makes little sense. 12.0-0 As mentioned in the notes to 11...Bd6: castling kingside is a natural choice for White. 12...0-0 No rocket science: we need to get the king out of the centre. Now White's most popular move is the universally helpful 13.c3 . White has some alternatives, like 13.Bf4 or 13.Bg5 . They would often later transpose to 13.c3, as the move is usually needed anyway. White wants to support d4 and prepare Bc2. This bishop retreat to c2 is often helpful for White, given our strategy. So what are we going for? Well, we have played ...b5 already and want to continue with our play on the queenside. We need the move ...c6-c5 soon, attacking White's centre and undermining the control of e5, too. White's knight on e5 is strong, but after ...c5, they can't capture on c5, as the knight is under pressure from our queen + bishop battery. The move ...c5 is not so easy to play, though. We need to watch for our b-pawn, as White's queen might take it after the c-pawn moves. We have a good solution for this issue, though. It's possible to play ...a5 first and follow with ...c5. With ...a5 on the board, White can't take b5 due to ...Ba6. So if White plays a

combination of the moves c3, Bf4, Re1 on the next moves, the ...a5 + ...c5 plan is the way to go. White has an alternative way to develop, playing Bg5. We need to handle this move differently, as they threaten to take the knight and weaken our kingside. 13.c3 White plays this move most of the time. 13...a5 According to plan: we play ...a5 first. Now we'll have a look at 14.Bf4 c5 and CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/2q2ppp/2pbpn2/pp2N3/3P4/1BP5/PP2QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.Re1 c5 , while CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/2q2ppp/2pbpn2/pp2N3/3P4/1BP5/PP2QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.Bg5 needs to be answered by 14...Nd5 . This is very similar to CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/p1q2ppp/2pbpn2/1p2N3/3P4/1B6/PPP1QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.Bg5 Nd5 CCStartBracketCCseethis lineCCEndBracketCC, so we don't need to study it separately. 14.Qe1 An interesting move to consider. White removes the rook from the a6-f1 diagonal. This is relevant because of our ...c5 idea. Compared to a variation like 14.Bf4 c5 15.Qxb5? Ba6 , now CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/2q2ppp/2pbpn2/pp2N3/3P4/1BP5/PP2QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.Re1 c5 15.Qxb5 is a possible move for White. 14...c5 Our b-pawn is hanging, but we can play the move regardless and allow 15.Qxb5 . The pawn grab is a mistake for White, though. We'll also check the much better move 15.Bg5 , which looks natural for White. An alternative is 15.dxc5 , which we should answer with 15...Qxc5 , similarly to lines like CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/2q2ppp/2pbpn2/pp2N3/3P4/1BP5/PP2QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.Bf4 c5 15.dxc5 Qxc5 . 15.Kg5 We need to check this move. If White plays it earlier, before ...c5 is on the board, we answer with ...Nd5. One example is CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/p1q2ppp/2pbpn2/1p2N3/3P4/1B6/PPP1QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.Bg5 Nd5 . Here, the situation is slightly different, as 15...Nd5 can be answered with 16.dxc5 , which seems to be slightly better for White. 15...c4 I suggest this move, but Black has some alternatives, primarily 15...Bb7 . The move 15...Nd5 is less precise here, as after 16.dxc5 Qxc5 17.Rad1 White seems to have a slight pull. Here 17...f6?? fails to 18.Rxd5! exd5 19.Be3 , a neat tactic. After 15...c4 , we have a fundamental split between 16.Bc2 Nd5 , with a complicated fight ahead, and CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/2q2ppp/3bpn2/pp2N1B1/2pP4/1BP5/PP2QPPP/R3R1K1 w - - 0 16CCEndFENCC 16.Bxf6 gxf6 , when White has ways to continue, but may also force a draw with 17.Qg4+ Kh8 18.Qh4 fxe5 19.Qf6+ and so on.

☐ 3. Caro-Kann: Two Knights (1.e
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solution for this issue, though. It's possible to play ...a5 first and follow with ...c5. With ...a5 on the board, White can't take b5 due to ...Ba6. So if White plays a combination of the moves c3, Bf4, Re1 on the next moves, the ...a5 + ...c5 plan is the way to go. White has an alternative way to develop, playing Bg5. We need to handle this move differently, as they threaten to take the knight and weaken our kingside. 13.c3 White plays this move most of the time. 13...a5 According to plan: we play ...a5 first. Now we'll have a look at 14.Bf4 c5 and CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/2q2ppp/2pbpn2/pp2N3/3P4/1BP5/PP2QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.Re1 c5 , while CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/2q2ppp/2pbpn2/pp2N3/3P4/1BP5/PP2QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.Bg5 needs to be answered by 14...Nd5 . This is very similar to CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/p1q2ppp/2pbpn2/1p2N3/3P4/1B6/PPP1QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.Bg5 Nd5 CCStartBracketCCseethis lineCCEndBracketCC, so we don't need to study it separately. 14.Kf4 White supports the knight, anticipating our move ...c5. With the knight protected, White can answer our ...c5-break with the capture. 14...c5 15.dxc5 White may also hold the tension in the centre with 15.Rac1 , which was tested in yet another Vincent Keymer online Blitz game. His opponent, Konstantinos Markidis, went for the rook move. Keymer played 15...Bb7 , and after 16.Rfd1 faced an interesting decision. His move, 16...cxd4?! , was dubious. After 17.cxd4 Qb6 18.Bg5! he would have been in trouble, as White threatens Bxf6, followed by Nd7. You should carefully consider if you want to open the c-file or not. It isolates White's d-pawn but gives White lots of temporary activity. I am sure that Keymer wouldn't play 16...cxd4?! in a longer time control game, but rather opt for an alternative. The ideas CCStartFENCCr4rk1/1bq2ppp/3bpn2/ppp1N3/3P1B2/1BP5/PP2QPPP/2RR2K1 b - - 3 16CCEndFENCC 16...a4 17.Bc2 a3 or CCStartFENCCr4rk1/1bq2ppp/3bpn2/ppp1N3/3P1B2/1BP5/PP2QPPP/2RR2K1 b - - 3 16CCEndFENCC 16...c4 come to mind, keeping the c-file closed. In these two lines, Black is getting excellent chances on the queenside. 15...O&xc5 You have to avoid 15...Bxc5?? 16.Ng6 . 16.Qad1 Again, White is thinking about a tactic on the d-file. Our best reply avoids all possible trouble. 16...Kc7 White was hoping for 16...Bb7? 17.Nd7! - our careful move stops this idea. It's the final point to know in this line, as we are now ready to complete our development with ...Bb7. A tense middlegame is ahead. We have chances on the queenside, having already gained some space on this side of the board. We also have a potential strong square on d5. White is well-centralized and enjoys a strong knight on e5. An idea to be aware of is a possible knight sacrifice on f7. Here's a fun line to show the point: CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/2b2ppp/4pn2/ppq1N3/5B2/1BP5/PP2QPPP/3R1RK1 w - - 2 17CCEndFENCC 17.Rfe1 Bb7 18.Nxf7?? Now taking the knight loses, but 18...Bxf4! 19.Qxe6 Qh5 sees Black on top and refuting the knight sac. Also, note that 18...Qc6 is a good move, too. This threat of an 'intermediate' mate is an essential tactical idea to keep in mind. This is illustrated by 18.Nd7?? Nxd7 19.Rxd7 Qc6! , when Black wins on the spot.

☐ 4. Caro-Kann: Exchange (1.e4 c
■ 4.Nf3

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 After the trade on d5, White has the fundamental choice between the move 4.c4, the Panov Variation, and avoiding this pawn push. In the Panov, White seeks to open the position quickly and frequently plays with an isolated pawn CCStartBracketCCIQPCCEndBracketCC. We examine the Panov in adedicated chapter, as the character of the play is entirely different from lines that arise if White avoids 4.c4. If White trades and avoids 4.c4, this is the 'Exchange Variation of the Caro-Kann, our chapter title. Let's discuss the strategic outline after the exchange on d5. White has traded their e-pawn for our c-pawn, leading to a non-symmetrical pawn formation. Contrary to some other 'Exchange Variations', such as in the French CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 CCEndBracketCC or Slav CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.cxd5 cxd5 CCEndBracketCC it does not open a file early on, which could lead to more trades. The Caro-Kann Exchange is not a drawish variation but usually leads to interesting battles. What are both sides aiming for? Well, you could just pause studying the current chapter and read the introduction to the one about the 'Queen's Gambit Carlsbad'! Let's explain: I recommend playing CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 for Black. One option for White there is 3.cxd5 exd5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 , which leads to the so-called 'Carlsbad Structure'. White trades their c-pawn for Black's e-pawn. Sounds and looks familiar? The Caro-Kann Exchange leads to the same pawn structure with reversed colours. Compared to the Queen's Gambit Exchange, White has an extra tempo, of course. This tempo does not change the overall strategy, but it helps White achieve an active piece placement. Lets compare two move sequences: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 In A, White has pinned the black knight, which makes playing ...Bd6 quite difficult. I advise quickly unpin with ...Be7, which makes it easier to coordinate Black's position. In line B, White plays 4.Bd3 and places the bishop on its most active diagonal. After 4...Nc6 the most precise move is 5.c3 , as CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/3p4/3P4/3B4/PPP2PPP/RNBQK1NR w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 Bg4! allows the annoying pin, as in line A. Let's talk about some concrete moves now. White's absolute main line and probably only critical try CCStartBracketCCexcluding 4.c4, of courseCCEndBracketCC is the following sequence: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP2PPP/

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are at best a transposition but mostly lead to worse versions of the mainline for White. Let's have a look. 4..xc3 This dubious move is surprisingly popular in online chess, which is the reason why I decided to cover it. White develops the knight in front of the c-pawn and forfeits the possibility to play c2-c3 to support the central pawn. While playing 4.Nc3 is a conceptual mistake, it is not bad enough to give Black an instant advantage. 4....xc6 This looks best. We stop Bd3 for the moment and are ready to play ...Bf5 or ...Bg4 next. 5..xf3 Kf5 Here 5...Bg4 6.h3 is not bad for White, as we can't play 6...Bh5 due to 7.g4 Bg6 8.h4 . 6.Kb5 This is the move that keeps equal chances for White, in my opinion. Now we need to be aware of the idea Ne5, which would be quite annoying after 6...e6?! 7.Ne5 . The f5-bishop is in trouble due to g2-g4 ideas. 6...a6 A simple and good solution, getting rid of the pin. 7.Kxc6+ bxc6 We have won the bishop pair, but White has a healthy development and no particular weakness. I'd still rather take Black in this position, but White is not in terrible shape if they are careful.

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leads to an easier endgame for Black to play. White's king is in the centre, and they don't have any pressure against our IQP. 8.O&e2 This move can lead to cool complications after our enterprising reply. 8....xe4 This is not Black's simplest option. I know it's all called 'Keep it Simple', but this move is fully sound and sets some cool traps! The actually 'simpler' option is 8...Qe7 , which often leads to a later queen trade on the e-file and is fine for Black. Back to 8...Ne4: can't White take twice on e4? And what about those knights on the e-file? Isn't there some problem with f2-f3 at some point? Hang on! 9.Kxe4 dxe4 10.O&xe4 White has snatched a pawn and now attacks our knight. 10...Kd6 Wait, didn't White threaten f2-f4? 11.f4 This is a blunder and one of the traps that White may fall into. White should play a sane development move, like 11.Nf3 , when Black still has excellent play for the sacrificed pawn. We'd continue 11...O-O 12.Nxe5 Bxe5 13.O-O Re8 , when our pieces are very actively placed. White has to defend now carefully, and it's easy to stumble quickly. 14.Qf3 Bd7 15.Qxb7 Rb8 16.Qxa7 Bb5 is one quick way to a disaster for White. 11...O&h4+ 12.Elf1 0-0 That's the problem for White; we manage to castle, and they can't take our knight because ...Qh4+ created a pin on the fourth rank. Now Black has a devastating attack, for example, after 13.Nf3 Nxf3 14.Qxf3 b6 , intending ...Ba6+. If White plays 13.g3 , the simple 13...Qf6 is possible, but the knight sac 13...Qxg3 also wins already.

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■ 4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.h3 #2

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the bishop is not well placed on g7, looking at the well-protected d4-pawn. Still, you could play ...g6 if you look for something different to vary your play. 7.dxe5 .xxe5 Now we need to check two moves. White's best is probably 8.Nf3, but 8.Qe2 can lead to interesting complications. White also has the move 8.Bc2 , but 8...Bc5 is an attractive reply when 9.Nf3 Nxf3+ 10.Qxf3 Qe7+ 11.Qe2 Qxe2+ 12.Kxe2 O-O leads to an easier endgame for Black to play. White's king is in the centre, and they don't have any pressure against our IQP. 8.O&e2 This move can lead to cool complications after our enterprising reply. 8....xe4 This is not Black's simplest option. I know it's all called 'Keep it Simple', but this move is fully sound and sets some cool traps! The actually 'simpler' option is 8...Qe7 , which often leads to a later queen trade on the e-file and is fine for Black. Back to 8...Ne4: can't White take twice on e4? And what about those knights on the e-file? Isn't there some problem with f2-f3 at some point? Hang on! 9.Kb5+ This looks very tempting for White. 9...Kd7 The only move, as 9...Nc6?? 10.f3 wins for White. 10.Kxd7+ White has calculated that after 10...Qxd7 the move 11.f3 wins a piece on the e-file. This looks extremely promising for White and is likely to happen. White has an alternative here in 10.Nf3 , when 10...Bxb5+ 11.Qxb5+ Qd7 gives Black equal chances. 10...O&xd7 Here's a fun story. I became aware of this line while watching the 2021 World Cup, when the move 10...Kxd7? was played in the game Jesse February-Valentina Gunina. White was much better, as Black's king is in the centre, and her pieces are badly coordinated. Gunina escaped with a draw at the end, but the main story is that she got the same line again two months later, this time in the online Olympiad against Michal Lahav. She had done her homework and improved with 10...Qxd7! , which allows 11.f3 . Let's check what happens if White wants to win the piece. 11.f3 Two question marks are harsh, but the move loses! White has to play the modest 11. Nf3 and keep equal chances after 11...Ng6 . 11...0-0-0 12.fxe4 dxe4 Black has a winning attack now. The immediate threat is ...Nd3+, and White has no way to deal with it. Gunina's game in the Online Olympiad concluded 13.Be3 Nd3+ 14.Kf1 Qf5+ 15.Nf3 exf3 16.gxf3 Bc5 17.Bxc5 Nxc5 18.Na3 Rhe8 19.Qg2 Re6 20. Qg4 Qd3+ 21.Kg2 f5 and White resigned.

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This position offers equal chances for both sides. White has a good blockade of the IQP, as d4 is reliably under control. This means we won't manage ...d5-d4 any time soon. Black has the bishop pair and easy development, which is the balancing factor to compensate for the static weakness of the IQP. We want to keep minor pieces on the board and play as actively as possible - the standard strategy you want to employ when you have an IQP. I want to continue from this position to demonstrate an important idea. 11.Kg5 h6 A much more active continuation than 11...Be6?! . We can offer a pawn sacrifice instead. 12.Kxf6 White grabs the pawn. After 12.Bh4 , we'd continue to offer the d5-pawn with 12...Re8 . The sequence 13. Nbd2 Bd7 14.Bxf6 Qxf6 15.Qxd5 Bc6 16.Qd4 Qg6 17.Qg4 Qxg4 18.hxg4 Bf4 18.Nb3 Bd7 nicely illustrates the power of the two bishops. Losing the pawn on d5 opened diagonals for the light-squared bishop. 12...O&xf6 13.O&xd5 Qd8
Not the only move for Black. 13...Qg6 is also fine, but 14.Nh4 Qf6 15.Nf3 leads to a repetition. 14.O&h5 White has no good alternative to this move. We threatened ... Bh2+ and White needed to watch out for ...Bxh3 ideas, too. After, 14.Qa5 for example, 14...Bxh3! is possible. 14...b5 We intend to play ...Bb7 next, using the long diagonal for our bishop. It is possible to play 14...g6!? here, too. This move would already more or less force a draw with the best play after 15.Qxh6 Bf4 16. Qh4 g5 17.Qh5 Kg7 18.Nd4 Rh8 19.Qe2 Bxh3 . There is no need for this line, as 14...b5 offers good compensation for the pawn at little risk. Our bishops are powerful in this wide-open position.

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☐ 4. Caro-Kann: Exchange (1.e4 c
■ 4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.Bf4 #2

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■ 4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.Bf4 #3

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■ 4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.Bf4 #4

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☐ 4. Caro-Kann: Exchange (1.e4 c
■ 4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.Bf4 #5

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☐ 4. Caro-Kann: Exchange (1.e4 c
■ 4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.Bf4 #7

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 After the trade on d5, White has the fundamental choice between the move 4.c4, the Panov Variation, and avoiding this pawn push. In the Panov, White seeks to open the position quickly and frequently plays with an isolated pawn CCStartBracketCCIQPCCEndBracketCC. We examine the Panov in adedicated chapter, as the character of the play is entirely different from lines that arise if White avoids 4.c4. If White trades and avoids 4.c4, this is the 'Exchange Variation of the Caro-Kann, our chapter title. Let's discuss the strategic outline after the exchange on d5. White has traded their e-pawn for our c-pawn, leading to a non-symmetrical pawn formation. Contrary to some other 'Exchange Variations', such as in the French CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 CCEndBracketCC or Slav CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.cxd5 cxd5 CCEndBracketCC it does not open a file early on, which could lead to more trades. The Caro-Kann Exchange is not a drawish variation but usually leads to interesting battles. What are both sides aiming for? Well, you could just pause studying the current chapter and read the introduction to the one about the 'Queen's Gambit Carlsbad'! Let's explain: I recommend playing CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 for Black. One option for White there is 3.cxd5 exd5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 , which leads to the so-called 'Carlsbad Structure'. White trades their c-pawn for Black's e-pawn. Sounds and looks familiar? The Caro-Kann Exchange leads to the same pawn structure with reversed colours. Compared to the Queen's Gambit Exchange, White has an extra tempo, of course. This tempo does not change the overall strategy, but it helps White achieve an active piece placement. Lets compare two move sequences: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 In A, White has pinned the black knight, which makes playing ...Bd6 quite difficult. I advise quickly unpin with ...Be7, which makes it easier to coordinate Black's position. In line B, White plays 4.Bd3 and places the bishop on its most active diagonal. After 4...Nc6 the most precise move is 5.c3 , as CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/3p4/3P4/3B4/PPP2PPP/RNBQK1NR w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 Bg4! allows the annoying pin, as in line A. Let's talk about some concrete moves now. White's absolute main line and probably only critical try CCStartBracketCCexcluding 4.c4, of courseCCEndBracketCC is the following sequence: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP2PPP/

RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bd3 CCStartBracketCCstopping ... Bf5CCEndBracketCC 4...Nc6 5.c3 CCStartBracketCCbetter than CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/3p4/3P4/3B4/PPP2PPP/RNBQK1NR w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 Bg4 CCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/3p4/3P4/2PB4/PP3PPP/RNBQK1NR b KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5...Nf6 6.Bf4 , when 6...Bg4 7.Qb3 leads to the main lines of this chapter. Deviations from this sequence, such as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pp2pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nf3 , are at best a transposition but mostly lead to worse versions of the mainline for White. Let's have a look. 4.Kd3 White's main move and a very logical choice. White develops their bishop to the best square and stops ...Bf5 simultaneously. 4....xc6 5.c3 It makes little sense for White to allow 5.Nf3 Bg4 , a position that we briefly examine via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.Bd3 Bg4 . 5....xf6 We develop the knight, but also prepare ...Bg4 next. Now White's main move is 6.Bf4, but 6.h3 and 6. Nf3 are also frequently seen. 6.Kf4 Kg4 Realizing the idea of ...Nf6. We develop the bishop first and only then play ...e6. 7.O&b3 White's only serious try. 7.Nf3 is a transposition to CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/3P4/2PB4/PP3PPP/ RNBQK1NR w KQkq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nf3 and CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/ pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/3P1Bb1/2PB4/PP3PPP/RN1QK1NR w KQkq - 3 7CCEndFENCC 7.f3 makes no sense at all, weakening the kingside for no reason. We'll play ...Bh5-g6 and have some advantage. 7...O&d7 Black's main move and the most reliable one, in my mind. White attacked the b7-pawn, we covered it. 8..xd2 White plays this move almost exclusively. It makes a lot of sense, as it prepares Ngf3 next. I also found some games in which 8.h3 Bh5 9.Nd2 was tried, but the insertion of the h-pawn moves doesn't make a substantial difference. 8...e6 No rocket science: we need to develop the bishop. 9..xgf3 Kd6 We go for the bishop trade. I think that the f4-bishop is strong and should be exchanged. 10.Kxd6 White goes for the trade, which is by far the most popular move. 10...O&xd6 What about the b-pawn? Did we just blunder it? 11.0-0 The best move for White, ignoring the b-pawn. After 11.O-O, we still don't need to worry about the b-pawn, as 11...O-O 12.Qxb7 Rab8 13.Qa6 Rb6 transposes to theline that we have examined via CCStartFENCCr3k2r/pp3ppp/2nqpn2/3p4/3P2b1/1QPB1N2/PP1N1PPP/R3K2R w KQkq - 0 11CCEndFENCC 11.Qxb7 Rb8 12.Qa6 O-O 13.O-O Rb6 . So we can castle. 11...0-0 We are on move twelve, already fairly deep for opening study. However, this position has been reached in hundreds of games, both in over-the-board chess and online games. The reason is that both sides have played natural and logical moves. Even if White didn't know it was a well-known sequence, they might still arrive here by playing moves that feel right. What are both sides aiming for? White: Their main idea is starting a kingside initiative. They'll play a rook to e1, trying to play Ne5. White may go for Re1-e3 or play the f-pawn after Ne5 is on the board. Black: We want to play on the queenside. A minority attack with ...b5-b4 and ... Na5-c4 are key ideas. At the same time, we need to make sure nothing bad happens

on the kingside. Now, after 11...O-O, White has the decision between playing 12. Rfe1 or 12.Rae1. Both moves prepare Ne5. With Rae1, White intends to play f2-f4 after the knight jump, while Rfe1 focuses more on piece play. Our reply will be quite similar. In both cases, I suggest exchanging on f3 and employing a prophylactic strategy against Ne5. Let's have a look. 12.Qfe1 This rook move prepares Ne5, just as 12.Rae1 does. 12...Kxf3 I suggest trading on f3 after both 12.Rae1 and 12.Rfe1. I like to reduce White's attacking potential on the kingside and feel that the knights are doing a good job in this pawn structure. 13..xxf3 O&c7 An important concept that is directed against Ne5. Black would like to capture on e5, but this is not possible as long as dxe5 would be a fork on the queen and the f6-knight. If we'd play, for example, 13...Rab8 , White would play 14.Ne5 and we can't take the knight. This wouldn't be the end of the world, but still. 14.O&c2 The knight jump to e5 is less pointed here, compared to the version with rooks on f1 and e1 CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCr4rk1/pp3ppp/2nqpn2/3p4/3P2b1/1QPB1N2/PP1N1PPP/R4RK1 w - - 2 12CCEndFENCC 12.Rae1 Bxf3 13.Nxf3 Qc7 14.Ne5 CCEndBracketCC. After 14.Ne5 Nxe5 15.dxe5 Nd7 it makes little sense to continue with 16.f4?! , as White's rooks are misplaced for this advance. White can play 16.Qc2 g6 17.Qe2 to cover the e-pawn, instead. I think White's play on the kingside is rather slow, for example, after 17...Kg7 18.h4 h5 , I see no way forward for White. Ultimately, our queenside play with ...b5 will start rolling. 14...Qab8 We prepare ...b5. 15.O&e2 After 15.Ne5 we have 15...g6 preparing the capture on e5 or 15...Rfc8 with the threat of ...Nxd4. 15...a6 We renew the idea of ...b5. 16.a4 Qfc8 We prepare ...Na5-c4 with this move, starting our queenside play. A setup with ...g6 and Kg7 should reliably defend against White's ideas on the kingside. The Exchange variation leads to an interesting battle, as both sides have 'their part of the board' and need to combine active and defensive moves .

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1.e4 c6 In this chapter, we will examine two variations for White that involve an early opening of the centre, based on the exchange on d5 and a following c2-c4 pawn push. The more common of the two is the Panov Attack, which arises after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 . The second line featured in the current chapter is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.c4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.cxd5 , which is called Accelerated Panov or Steiner Variation. 2.c4 White goes for the Accelerated Panov, sometimes also called 'Steiner Variation'. We'll see that Black has good chances against it, but you need to know some concrete lines. Let's have a closer look at the situation on move 4. The next moves are more or less mandatory. 2...d5 3.exd5 Of course White can also start with 3.cxd5, which leads to the same

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KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Nf3 Bg7 8.Bc4 CCEndBracketCC or g2 CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp1npp1p/5np1/3P4/Q7/2N5/ PP1P1PPP/R1B1KBNR w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.g3 and Bg2 nextCCEndBracketCC. 7.Kc4 Or 7.Nf3 Bg7 8.Bc4 , leading to the same positions. 7...Kg7 8..xf3 Or 8.d3 O-O 9.Nf3 , leading to the same positions. 8...0-0 9.d3 White covers the c4-bishop to allow dxc4 after a possible capture. This is relevant after 9.O-O? Nb6 10.Qb3 Nxc4 11.Qxc4 b6 12.Ne5 Bb7 13.Nc6 Qd7 , when Black is much better. Without the dxc4 option, White is forced to recapture with the queen, leaving the d5-pawn without proper protection. 9...a6 Now 9...Nb6 10. Qb3 is less convincing, as the capture on c4 is pointless due 10...Nxc4 11.dxc4 . Instead, the move 9...a6 is much better, as we now threaten ...b5! 10.O&a3 White needed to address the ...b7-b5 push. After 10.O-O?? b5 we win, as 10.Bxb5 Nb6! is the important point. 10...b6 We want to play ...b5, but need to realize it more slowly. First ...b6, ...Bb7 and only then ...b5. 11.0-0 Kb7 12.Qe1 White has some pressure down the e-file. 12...b5 13.Kb3 Qe8 We cover the attacked e7-pawn and reach a balanced position. White has kept their extra pawn, but their structure is not ideal. Often, White will play d5-d6 to return their extra pawn. Chances are equal in this complex position.

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chances. 8..xf3 White returns the pawn, which looks more sensible than 8.Qb3 . 8....xxd5 Mission accomplished! We have a good position now, but there is one important idea to remember on the next move. 9.0-0 The immediate 9.Ne5? was bad due to 9...Qe6 , but now the knight jump is a more serious idea for White. 9...f6 No Ne5 for you! 9...f6 is a somewhat unnatural but strong move! Playing ...f6 early on is often a mistake CCStartBracketCC'Never play ...f6', according to Ben FinegoldCCEndBracketCC, so why is it good here? The huge issue with ...f6 in other positions is the weakening of the light squares, particularly around the king. Here this is no issue at all because White had given up their light-squared bishop earlier. Our king is perfectly safe on the light squares, as the following line shows. 10.O&b3 e6 11.Qe1 Elf7 We have good control of d5 and the bishop pair. Next, we want to play ...Be7 and ...Rd8. Of course, ...b5 and ...Bb7 is an option, too.

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good game with simpler meansCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/5ppp/p2b1n2/1p1P4/Q2p2q1/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R1B2K1R w kq - 0 13CCEndFENCC 13. Nxb5 axb5 14.Qxa8 O-O White's defence is tough to conduct here. The computers manage to defend, but it's like walking on a tight rope. 15.Qc6 Ne4 16.h3 Qf5 17. Kg1 Bd7 18.Qc2 Qxd5 and Black's position looks menacing. It is not necessary to remember these lines that deeply, but good to see them illustrate matters.

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d6!? or CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp1npp1p/5np1/1B1P4/8/2N5/PP1P1PPP/R1BQK1NR w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.d4 Bg7 8.d6!? are annoying to face. Black is not in bad shape in these lines, but it's tricky to play. I suggest 6...a6!, which often nets Black the bishop pair, as we will see. 7.O&a4 White doesn't want to give up the bishop pair just yet and continues with tactically based, ambitious play. Instead, they could play 7.Be2 , but Black has no problems after this move. The simple 7...Nb6 regains the pawn, but 7...b5 is possible, too. 7...g6 We continue with this natural way to prepare to castle. Once our king is out of the pin, White's pieces on b5 and a4 look a bit silly. 8..xf3 Kg7 9.0-0 0-0 Finally, we have left the centre and now threaten ...Nb6xd5. 10.Kxd7 White has to try this, as 10.Be2 Nb6 11.Qb3 Nfxd5 is very comfortable for Black. We can play against the Isolated d-pawn, while White has no dangerous piece play to speak of. 10....xxd7 I suggest playing this recapture. In my mind, aiming for ...b5, ...Nb6 and ...Bb7 looks very harmonious. The two alternative moves look fine, too - it's mostly a matter of taste. 11.d4 b5 12.O&b3 12.Nxb5?? is a blunder due to 12...Nb6! , winning a piece. 12....xb6 We are ready to play ...Bb7 and ...Nxd5 next, giving us at least equal chances. We have the long term assets CCStartBracketCCbetter pawn structure and bishop pairCCEndBracketCC, so it's White who needs to be concerned about equality here. With active play involving a quick a2-a4, White gets enough to compensate for the mentioned deficits. A sample line is 13.a4 bxa4 14.Nxa4 Nxd5 15.Nc5 , when the active knight on c5 gives White some play. I'd still rather be Black, but this might be a matter of taste.

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piece play in return. 4....xf6 A natural move, allowing to recapture on d5 with the knight. 5..xc3 Developing the knight and putting more pressure on d5 - a very logical move. You'll also meet 5.Nf3 regularly, when 5...Nc6 6.Nc3 a6 will transpose to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2pppp/5n2/3p4/2PP4/8/PP3PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 1 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Nf3 a6 . I suggest simply allowing this transposition, even though you could also consider 5...g6, a good alternative. 5....xc6 Let's work out why I recommend playing 5...Nc6. A closer look at Black's alternatives on move five helps to understand it better. ACCEndBracketCC Black plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2pppp/5n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR b KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5...g6 . Against an IQP formation, playing with a kingside fianchetto makes a lot of sense. The king's bishop is nicely placed, directly aimed at the d4-pawn. This sounds good, but Black has an annoying problem in one particular line. After 5...g6 White's best continuation is 6.Qb3! , when Black's best bet is 6... Bg7 7.cxd5 O-O , but after 8.Be2 and Bf3 next White keeps the d5-pawn. I found no way to gain equal chances in this line. BCCEndBracketCC Black plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2pppp/5n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR b KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5...e6 . This move shares the mainline status with 5...Nc6; both are about equally popular. There is nothing theoretically wrong about 5...e6; Black gets fair chances with precise play, as you would expect from a well-established mainline. I only have one objection to it: it lacks some flexibility. This is the main attraction of 5... Nc6, as we don't commit to a central pawn setup up. CCCEndBracketCC Therefore I suggest 5... Nc6, which develops the knight to a good square and remains flexible in many ways. You may choose between a later setup based on ...e6 or ...g6 - according to circumstances. You may develop the ...c8-bishop and only then play ...e6; there are just more possible ideas compared to 5...e6. Let's talk about concrete moves now. After 5...Nc6 White has two main continuations. One is 6.Bg5, which increases the pressure on d5, the other option is the natural 6. Nf3. They lead to very different scenarios, underlining the flexible nature of our choice. 1CCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bg5 White increases the pressure on d5 immediately. We now need to worry about Bxf6, followed by the capture on d5. I suggest 6...dxc4 , clarifying the central tension. 2CCEndBracketCC Against CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nf3 my recommendation is the move 6...a6!? , which only recently has become popular among Caro-Kann specialists. It is a tricky waiting move that leads to less explored play and will likely surprise your opponent. I'll discuss the exact reasoning behind the surprising 6...a6 in the notes to the move. Are there other important ideas on move six for White? White can play CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.cxd5 , but after 6...Nxd5 will likely play 7.Nf3 when 7...a6 transposes to the line CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nf3 a6 7.cxd5 Nxd5 . There is some independent value in CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/

2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bf4 , which has Nb5 in mind. A simple answer is 6...a6 , in the spirit of our line CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nf3 a6 . We'll continue with ...g6 and have a good position, very similar to the6.Nf3 a6 line. 6.Kg5 White increases the pressure on d5 immediately. We now need to worry about Bxf6, followed by the capture on d5. 6...dxc4 I suggest taking on c4. We needed to react to the threat against d5, and capturing the pawn is a well-respected mainline. Black has a good alternative at this point, the move 6...Be6!? We play a similar line in our repertoire, which goes CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nf3 a6!? 7.Bg5 Be6 . The main difference is that here White has not yet determined their knight position, which allows a range of fairly complicated lines. I felt that 6...dxc4 is a simpler solution and more appropriate for this repertoire. Still, the move 6...Be6 is a fully sound and interesting later addition to your repertoire if desired. After the capture, White has to worry about the d-pawn. It turns out that White's most challenging option is 7.Bxc4, which offers the pawn on d4. We'll also check the harmless 7.Nf3 and 7.d5, which is still a popular choice for White, even though Black is doing fine. 7..xf3 White covers d4 and intends to regain c4 conveniently on the next move. There is a problem, though. 7...h6 This is better than 7...e6 , which would allow a transposition to CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/6B1/2pP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Bxc4 e6 . Not a bad line, obviously, but after 7...h6! Black already has an advantage. 8.Kxf6 A sad necessity. After 8.Bh4 g5 9.Bg3 Be6 or 8.Be3 Be6 , we keep the pawn on c4 and are material up for the moment. White will probably get the pawn back, but we'll easily fianchetto our f8-bishop and enjoy pressure on the IQP. 8...exf6 We are familiar with this recapture in the Caro-Kann. Capturing away from the centre helps our development and leads to a slight advantage for Black. 9.Kxc4 Kd6 10.0-0 0-0 Black is slightly better already. We enjoy the bishop pair, and White's IQP is rather a weakness than a strength. We'll develop with ...Bf5 or ...Bg4 and consider ... Qa5 and a rook to d8 next.

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8...h6 We counterattack the bishop! 9.O&xe5 This leads to a quite unusual pawn structure that is favourable for Black. 9...hxg5 Say hello to the rook! 10.Kxc4 g4 Just one of many good moves. We save the g-pawn and plan ...a6 and ...Qd6 next. 11..xb5 A bad move, but the one that can be irritating to meet. Against something slow like 11.Nge2 a6 12.Ng3 Qd6 13.Qd4 e5 Black is better already. 11...O&a5+ 12.Elf1 Eld8 The only move, but it is tough to see beforehand how good it is for Black. We now threaten ...Bd7 and ...Rc8, all with tempo. Black also has ...Rh5 in some lines. It turns out that the king is perfectly safe on d8! After 13.d6 Black has a winning advantage with the cool move 13...Rh5! , when 14.dxe7+ Bxe7 15.Rd1+ Bd7 shows how safe the king is. White is playing without the kingside pieces and is completely lost.

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13.Qd2 , we'll continue with 13...Rd8 and put pressure on d4. Critical is 13.d5. 13.d5 This leads to sharp tactics. I think that 13.d5 is not very likely to happen, as 13. d5 Rd8 looks difficult for White to play over the board. 13...Qd8 Don't play into 13... exd5? 14.Bxf6 Bxf6 15.Nxd5 , which is awkward for Black. After 13...Rd8, we have a very tense situation. The most likely to happen is probably CCStartFENCCr1br2k1/1p2bpp1/p1n1pn1p/q2P4/P1B4B/2N2N2/1P3PPP/ R2QR1K1 w - - 1 14CCEndFENCC 14.Qe2 , as White's queen can't stay on the d-file forever. After 14...exd5 15.Bxf6 it's possible to play 15...gxf6 , but I'd prefer 15...Bxf6 16.Nxd5 Rxd5 17.Qe8+ Kh7 18.Qe4+ Rf5 19.g4 g6 20.gxf5 Bxf5 , with a mess and equal chances, objectively. I think the ...Qa5 and ...Rd8 idea leads to exciting play and has substantial surprise value. If the play looks too messy for your taste, CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/1p2bpp1/p1n1pn1p/8/P1BP3B/2N2N2/1P3PPP/ R2QR1K1 b - - 1 12CCEndFENCC 12...Nh5 is an excellent alternative that I mentioned.

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CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2pppp/5n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR b KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5...g6 . Against an IQP formation, playing with a kingside fianchetto makes a lot of sense. The king's bishop is nicely placed, directly aimed at the d4-pawn. This sounds good, but Black has an annoying problem in one particular line. After 5...g6 White's best continuation is 6.Qb3! , when Black's best bet is 6... Bg7 7.cxd5 O-O , but after 8.Be2 and Bf3 next White keeps the d5-pawn. I found no way to gain equal chances in this line. BCCEndBracketCC Black plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2pppp/5n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR b KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5...e6 . This move shares the mainline status with 5...Nc6; both are about equally popular. There is nothing theoretically wrong about 5...e6; Black gets fair chances with precise play, as you would expect from a well-established mainline. I only have one objection to it: it lacks some flexibility. This is the main attraction of 5... Nc6, as we don't commit to a central pawn setup up. CCCEndBracketCC Therefore I suggest 5... Nc6, which develops the knight to a good square and remains flexible in many ways. You may choose between a later setup based on ...e6 or ...g6 - according to circumstances. You may develop the ...c8-bishop and only then play ...e6; there are just more possible ideas compared to 5...e6. Let's talk about concrete moves now. After 5...Nc6 White has two main continuations. One is 6.Bg5, which increases the pressure on d5, the other option is the natural 6. Nf3. They lead to very different scenarios, underlining the flexible nature of our choice. 1CCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bg5 White increases the pressure on d5 immediately. We now need to worry about Bxf6, followed by the capture on d5. I suggest 6...dxc4 , clarifying the central tension. 2CCEndBracketCC Against CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nf3 my recommendation is the move 6...a6!? , which only recently has become popular among Caro-Kann specialists. It is a tricky waiting move that leads to less explored play and will likely surprise your opponent. I'll discuss the exact reasoning behind the surprising 6...a6 in the notes to the move. Are there other important ideas on move six for White? White can play CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.cxd5 , but after 6...Nxd5 will likely play 7.Nf3 when 7...a6 transposes to the line CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nf3 a6 7.cxd5 Nxd5 . There is some independent value in CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bf4 , which has Nb5 in mind. A simple answer is 6...a6 , in the spirit of our line CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nf3 a6 . We'll continue with ...g6 and have a good position, very similar to the6.Nf3 a6 line. 6..xf3 The natural move 6.Nf3 is White's most popular move. 6...a6 A surprising choice. Don't we have a more powerful move than moving the a-pawn? And what's the idea of the move in the first place? Let's have a closer look. The key point is best explained by examining Black's most

popular moves 6...Bg4 and 6...g6. In both lines, White's best reply is the capture on d5, followed by Qb3, for example, CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6...Bg4 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Qb3 . Now, d5 and b7 are attacked, leading to forced, tactical play. Against CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6...g6 White's best is 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Qb3 , when after 8...Nxc3 9.Bc4! White has a slight advantage. This particular variation is the reason why I am not recommending 6...g6. We have seen that cxd5 and Qb3 is an important idea for White. Here's a great point of 6...a6: this standard reply against the usual moves is toothless, as CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6...a6 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Qb3 Be6! is possible. Black is in good shape, not just after 9.Qxb7?? Na5! , winning the queen! Note how the a6-pawn takes away the square a6 for the queen and covers b5 to prevent checks. This means that CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/1p2pppp/p1n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.cxd5 does not pose a severe threat to 6...a6. But if the capture is satisfactory for Black, what could be a critical test? Other moves are slower and allow Black an easy development, for example, CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/1p2pppp/p1n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.h3 g6 , when we finally manage to fianchetto the bishop under favourable circumstances. Let's have a look at some possible replies to 6...a6. Note that this line is a very recent discovery, and therefore, your opponents will likely be surprised. In many cases, you'll face cxd5 Nxd5, as mentioned. 7.Kg5 While plays in the spirit ofthe 6.Bg5 line. Compared to this variation, White has the added move Nf3, while we have played ...a6. At first, you might think this is a bad deal for Black... shouldn't the knight development be more valuable than the small flank pawn move? A closer look reveals that this is not the case at all. The knight is often slightly misplaced on f3, making taking on f6 less attractive for White. Provoking a pawn to f6 makes the knight look silly, as it would stare at the protected squares e5 and g5. The second drawback of the knight placement is that ...Ne4 gets more powerful for Black in some cases. A knight on e4 can be annoying for White, and taking it is less attractive if ... dxe4 come with a gain of tempo on the f3-knight. We have established that Nf3 is not that useful for White, but what about ...a6 for Black? Covering the square b5 is useful in more than one way. There are some concrete tactical benefits like 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Qb3 Be6 , but preventing Bb5 at a later stage is a factor, too. After a possible c4-c5 advance, the idea Bb5 would make some sense but is now off the table. 7...Ke6 8.Ke2 The position after 7...Be6 is still relatively unexplored. White has tried various combinations of Bxf6, c4-c5 and Be2, which often lead to the same positions or similar situations. I have picked 8.Be2 as the main move, as it was often played, but 8.c5 g6 9.Bxf6 exf6 10.Be2 or CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/1p2pppp/p1n1bn2/3p2B1/2PP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 2 8CCEndFENCC 8.Bxf6 exf6 9.c5 g6 10.Be2 may easily lead to the same outcome. Our approach is fairly clear: we'd like to play ...g6, ...Bg7 and ...O-O. Once ...Bg7 is on the board,

White's capture on f6 loses any point. This is why White usually takes the knight quickly. 8...g6 According to plan. Now we'll have a look at the capture on f6 and one sample line with 9.O-O, when White keeps the tension. 9.0-0 White avoids the capture on f6 and simply develops. 9...Kg7 Now we are ready to castle, but not only that. The more concrete idea is to capture on c4 finally. This was not possible earlier, as Bxf6 and d4-d5 would have won a piece for White. Now White has to worry about the c-pawn. 10.Qc1 Let's have a look at this move, which allows the capture on c4. Instead of 10.Rc1, White has some other options, of course. It's good to note that 10.c5?! Ne4! looks very comfortable for Black. We exert some pressure on d4 and are ready to play ...O-O and ...b6 soon to attack the white pawn chain. 10...dxc4 The capture leads to equal chances. It is possible to play 10...O-O , but it's interesting to examine the complications after taking on c4. 11.Kxf6 Kxf6 12.d5 Kxc3 The critical difference to the earlier pawn grabs on c4. We need this move to remove the defender of d5. We enter a forced line that leads to equal play after 13. dxe6 Qxd1 14.exf7+ Kxf7 15.Bxc4+ Kg7 16.Rfxd1 Bxb2 17.Rb1 Bf6 18.Rxb7 Na5 . You don't need to know this long line by heart, but it's good to remember that the capture on c4 is an option once we have the bishop on the long diagonal to allow ...Bxc3.

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same position. Now Black has a strong move that you should remember. 8....xe4 A strong move. After the routine 8...Bg7 9.Bd3 the desirable moves ...Ne4 and ...Bf5 are impossible/ harder to play. 9.Kd3 Kf5 We managed an active development of knight and queen's bishop. Now ...Bg7 and ...O-O will follow, putting some pressure on d4. Later the move ...b6 is a key point to attack White's pawn chain. Here's a typical continuation: 10.O-O Bg7 11.Be3 O-O 12.Re1 Nxc3 13.bxc3 Bxd3 14.Qxd3 b6 , which gives Black equal chances due to our play against the white c-pawn.

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happen. Against Black's main lines 6...Bg4 and 6...g6, the capture is critical, so many opponents will continue in the same fashion. 7....xxd5 Now 8.Bc4 looks like White's best bet, as 8.Qb3 is harmless. If White plays a slow move like 8.Be2 or 8. Bd3 , we are happy to play 8...g6 and put some pressure on d4, using the fianchettoed bishop. 8.O&b3 White continues with this natural move, but we have an excellent reply. 8...Ke6 The key point of 6...a6! Now White can't take on b7, as 9. Qxb7?? Na5! traps the queen. The other active move, CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/ 1p2pppp/p1n1b3/3n4/3P4/1QN2N2/PP3PPP/R1B1KB1R w KQkq - 2 9CCEndFENCC 9.Bc4?? , also fails to 9...Na5 10.Qa4+ Bd7 11.Qc2 Nxc3 12. Qxc3 Rc8 , winning a piece. White now only has one move to avoid a clear disadvantage, the less than obvious 9.Ng5, sacrificing the d-pawn. We'll also have a quick look at 8.Be2 to demonstrate an important idea for Black. 9..xg5 The best move, according to Stockfish, but not an easy decision for a human player. White gives up their central pawn. 9....xxd4 Well, you should take a centre pawn unless you see a terrifying response. Here White gets some compensation for the lost pawn, but not more. 10.O&a4+ .xc6 11..xxe6 fxe6 Our extra pawn is not pretty but still on the board. More importantly, after ...g6 and ...Bg7, we'll have excellently placed pieces, for example, after the following moves. 12.Ke2 g6 13.0-0 Kg7 Black has equal chances. Our pieces are very active and ...O-O and ...Qb6 are good moves to play next. After castling ...Nd4 is possible, too.

☐ 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2
■ 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5

1.e4 c6 In this chapter, we will examine two variations for White that involve an early opening of the centre, based on the exchange on d5 and a following c2-c4 pawn push. The more common of the two is the Panov Attack, which arises after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 . The second line featured in the current chapter is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.c4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.cxd5 , which is called Accelerated Panov or Steiner Variation. 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 The starting move of the Panov Attack. White uses the c-pawn to attack our pawn on d5, opening up the game at an early stage. In some openings, for example in the Ruy Lopez, there is a 'Closed Variation' and an 'Open Variation', named after the character of the pawn structure. If you'd apply this naming scheme to the Caro-Kann, the Panov would be the 'Open Variation', while the Advance would be the 'Closed Variation'. In the Panov, we'll frequently meet a classic pawn structure, the Isolated Queen's Pawn CCStartBracketCClQPCCEndBracketCC on White's side. White accepts the structural weakness of the isolated pawn and hopes to get enough active piece play in return. 4....xf6 A natural move, allowing to recapture on d5 with the knight. 5..xc3 Developing the knight and putting more pressure on d5 - a very logical

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them to get a better impression of the ideas we have. ACCEndBracketCC Svane's opponent Vasif Durabayli played CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1p2ppbp/p3b1p1/n2n4/3P4/2N2N2/PPB2PPP/R1BQ1RK1 w kq - 2 12CCEndFENCC 12.Ne4 , avoiding the trade on c3. This turned out to be harmless after 12...O-O 13.h3 Nb4 14.Bb1 Nbc6 , when Rasmus was already much better, but later spoiled his winning position. Black has tremendous pressure against the weak d4-pawn. BCCEndBracketCC Logman Guliev tried CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1p2ppbp/p3b1p1/n2n4/3P4/2N2N2/PPB2PPP/R1BQ1RK1 w kq - 2 12CCEndFENCC 12.Ng5 , when 12...Nxc3 13.bxc3 led to a pawn structure change. White's c-pawn is backward, and Black has good control of d5 and c4, blockading the pawns. Now after 13...Bd5 White played 14.Be4? , when 14...h6! 15.Bxd5 Qxd5 would have been much better for Black. The bishop trade is a dream scenario for Black, as it weakens the light squares in White's camp. White will likely never move the c- and d-pawn again, giving us easy targets. White has other moves than the two we looked at, but our general strategy will be similar: taking on c3, then using the squares d5 and c4 and putting pressure on the c3-pawn. White will seek play on the e-file and has active pieces, which makes it a balanced position that is interesting to play.

☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 2.Nc3

1.e4 c6 Welcome to the final chapter on the Caro-Kann. This chapter will examine all the sidelines that White may throw at us. Most of them are pretty harmless or dubious but still regularly played, particularly at the club level or in online games. Let's have a look at the Odds and Ends of the Caro-Kann now! 2..xc3 Still a regular choice for White and very popular. 2...d5 After our standard move 2...d5 White usually plays 3.Nf3 for theTwo Knights or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3p4/4P3/2N5/PPPP1PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.d4 to transpose to theClassical Variation. Another possible transposition is the dubious CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3p4/4P3/2N5/PPPP1PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.exd5 cxd5 4.d4 , which leads to an Exchange Variation with a misplaced knight on c3. This leaves the moves CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3p4/4P3/2N5/PPPP1PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.f4 CCStartBracketCCwe examine this move briefly via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp1ppppp/2p5/8/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.f4 d5 3.Nc3 in the current chapterCCEndBracketCC and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3p4/4P3/2N5/PPPP1PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Qf3 , which sets a little trap. 3.O&f3 White gets the queen out and puts some pressure on d5, threatening to take the central pawn. 3...dxe4 The trap I was hinting at occurs after 3...d4 4.Bc4 , when Black can't capture the knight, as 4...dxc3?? 5.Qxf7+ Kd7 6.dxc3 won't end well for the black king. The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/

2p5/3p4/4P3/2N2Q2/PPPP1PPP/R1B1KBNR b KQkq - 1 3CCEndFENCC 3...d4 is an acceptable alternative to my recommendation, but you need to play 4.Bc4 e6 . This leads to an interesting position of a more closed nature. Black has equal chances in this line, too. After my suggestion 3...dxe4 we reach a position more typical of the Caro-Kann. 4..xxe4 .xf6 We play in the same vein as in the Two Knights and Classical Variation. Starting with 4...Nd7 and ...Ngf6 next is also fine, but we don't mind a doubled f-pawn in our repertoire concept. 5.Kc4 White rarely captures on f6, as 5.Nxf6+ exf6 is a good version of the Classical Variation for Black. 5....xbd7 This is not a routine development, but also sets up the threat ...Ne5. 6.d4 This looks dubious, but 6.Nxf6+ can't trouble Black. We are in good shape with all recaptures - you may choose according to your taste. 6...Nxf6 looks 'tidy', but the pawn recaptures unbalance the position nicely. 6....xb6 This highlights the problem of 6.d4. Our knight jump sets up a double attack on the d-pawn and the bishop. 7.Kd3 Here 7.Nxf6+ gxf6! wins the d-pawn with a more or less winning position. Note that 7...exf6 is worse due to 8.Qe4+ , which saves the pawn. 7...O&xd4 A central pawn is worth taking for some tempi. 8..xe2 O&e5 9.Kf4 O&e6 White has a nice development, but our position has no weaknesses. The queen on e6 also prevents queenside castling, as a2 would be the next pawn to take! Black is better here, but it's still a bit murky.

☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 2.Nf3 #1

1.e4 c6 Welcome to the final chapter on the Caro-Kann. This chapter will examine all the sidelines that White may throw at us. Most of them are pretty harmless or dubious but still regularly played, particularly at the club level or in online games. Let's have a look at the Odds and Ends of the Caro-Kann now! 2..xf3 White usually plays this move to enter theTwo Knights after 2.Nf3 d5 3.Nc3 , but we'll examine some alternatives now. 2...d5 Now 3.Nc3 is the main move, entering theTwo Knights. A good alternative for White is 3.d3 , which we examine in the current chapter via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp1ppppp/2p5/8/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.d3 d5 3.Nf3 . This leaves the moves 3.e5 and 3.exd5 to examine. 3.e5 White goes for an odd version of the Advance Variation. Instead of the move d4, White has played Nf3 instead. This allows a development that is not possible in the Advance Variation, where CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 leaves Black with the choice between 3...Bf5 and 3...c5. 3...Kg4 I like this pinning move. It is stronger than 3...Bf5 4.d4 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3pP3/8/5N2/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R b KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3...c5 4.d4 , which would allow transpositions to a 'proper' Advance Variation. 4.d4 If White plays 4.h3 , we need to make sure to take on f3 and avoid 4...Bh5? 5.e6! , which is very dangerous to meet. We don't mind

capturing on f3, as White will miss the knight as a defender of e5 and d4. A line like CCStartFENCCrn1qkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3pP3/6b1/5N2/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4.h3 Bxf3 5.Qxf3 e6 , followed by ...c5 and ...Nc6 is nice for Black. 4...e6 5.Ke2 c5 6.c3 .xc6 We have comfortably developed the queenside and established pressure on d4. We'll continue to increase this pressure with moves like ...Nge7-f5 and ...Qb6. White needs to be careful to keep central control. Black will often end up winning d4 against sloppy play. which is underlined by the excellent score that Black enjoys after 3.Nf3 Bg4.

☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 2.Nf3 #2

1.e4 c6 Welcome to the final chapter on the Caro-Kann. This chapter will examine all the sidelines that White may throw at us. Most of them are pretty harmless or dubious but still regularly played, particularly at the club level or in online games. Let's have a look at the Odds and Ends of the Caro-Kann now! 2..xf3 White usually plays this move to enter theTwo Knights after 2.Nf3 d5 3.Nc3 , but we'll examine some alternatives now. 2...d5 Now 3.Nc3 is the main move, entering theTwo Knights. A good alternative for White is 3.d3 , which we examine in the current chapter via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp1ppppp/2p5/8/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.d3 d5 3.Nf3 . This leaves the moves 3.e5 and 3.exd5 to examine. 3.exd5 cxd5 4..xe5 This knight jump gives 2.Nf3 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 its own flavor. White's alternative is 4.d4 , which immediately transposes to the Exchange Variation, where this position is reached via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.Nf3 . Alright, back to 4.Ne5 - what's the point. White's idea is to prevent the development of the light-square bishop. We need to avoid CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/8/3pN3/8/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R b KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4...Bf5?? 5.Bb5+ Nd7 6.Qf3 when White is winning on the spot! 4....xc6 I suggest challenging the e5-knight immediately. The alternative 4...Nf6 is also fine. 5.d4 White also has 5.Bb5 , when 5...Bd7 6.Nxd7 Qxd7 7.d4 e6 transposes to CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/3pN3/8/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.d4 e6 6.Bb5 Bd7 7.Nxd7 Qxd7 , which we will examine shortly. 5...e6 Shutting in our bishop looks odd, but it is fine for Black Here, a key factor is the knight on e5. We quickly pressure this piece with moves like ...Bd6 and ...Qc7, which forces concessions. Now we'll examine 6.Bb5 and 6.c3, which prepares Bd3. 6.c3 White wants to develop with Bd3 but needs to cover the d-pawn first. 6...Kd6 We increase pressure on the knight. Now White has no entirely satisfactory move. 7.f4 This looks relatively best, but ask the c1-bishop what it thinks about it. The move is still better than 7.Bf4 Qf6! , which is awkward for White, or CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/pp3ppp/2nbp3/3pN3/3P4/2P5/PP3PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7.Bb5 Nge7 . We continue

with ...O-O and ...f6 and are much better. 7....xge7 8.Kd3 0-0 9.0-0 f6 Black is fine in this position. If White captures on c6, we'd happily recapture with the b-pawn. A later plan with ...a5 and ...Ba6 comes to mind. 10.O&h5 We need to examine the aggressive queen jump. 10....xf5 The best move. After 10...g6?? White has 11. Nxg6! , destroying our king position. After 10...Nf5 Black is fine, for example, after CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/pp4pp/2nbpp2/3pNn1Q/3P1P2/2PB4/PP4PP/RNB2RK1 w - - 2 11CCEndFENCC 11.g4 Nh6 12.Nxc6 bxc6 13.f5 e5 14.Bxh6 gxh6 15.Qxh6 e4 , when Black has excellent play for the pawn.

☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 2.Nf3 #3

1.e4 c6 Welcome to the final chapter on the Caro-Kann. This chapter will examine all the sidelines that White may throw at us. Most of them are pretty harmless or dubious but still regularly played, particularly at the club level or in online games. Let's have a look at the Odds and Ends of the Caro-Kann now! 2..xf3 White usually plays this move to enter theTwo Knights after 2.Nf3 d5 3.Nc3 , but we'll examine some alternatives now. 2...d5 Now 3.Nc3 is the main move, entering theTwo Knights. A good alternative for White is 3.d3 , which we examine in the current chapter via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp1ppppp/2p5/8/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.d3 d5 3.Nf3 . This leaves the moves 3.e5 and 3.exd5 to examine. 3.exd5 cxd5 4..xe5 This knight jump gives 2.Nf3 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 its own flavor. White's alternative is 4.d4 , which immediately transposes to the Exchange Variation, where this position is reached via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.Nf3 . Alright, back to 4.Ne5 - what's the point. White's idea is to prevent the development of the light-square bishop. We need to avoid CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/8/3pN3/8/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R b KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4...Bf5?? 5.Bb5+ Nd7 6.Qf3 when White is winning on the spot! 4....xc6 I suggest challenging the e5-knight immediately. The alternative 4...Nf6 is also fine. 5.d4 White also has 5.Bb5 , when 5...Bd7 6.Nxd7 Qxd7 7.d4 e6 transposes to CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/3pN3/8/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.d4 e6 6.Bb5 Bd7 7.Nxd7 Qxd7 , which we will examine shortly. 5...e6 Shutting in our bishop looks odd, but it is fine for Black Here, a key factor is the knight on e5. We quickly pressure this piece with moves like ...Bd6 and ...Qc7, which forces concessions. Now we'll examine 6.Bb5 and 6.c3, which prepares Bd3. 6.Kb5 This looks like White's best line. Pinning the knight provokes 6...Bd7 , which allows 7.Nxd7 , netting the bishop pair. 6...Kd7 7..xxd7 O&xd7 White has gained the bishop pair, but it was a time-consuming affair. The resulting pawn structure is identical to the Exchange Variation, with the same basic strategy in play. White seeks to play on the kingside, while we try to engineer a minority attack on the queenside with a later ...b5-b4 pawn

push. 8.c3 Kd6 We go for development with ...Bd6, ...Nf6 and ...O-O, a very natural approach. 9.0-0 .xf6 10..xd2 0-0 This position has been reached quite frequently. White's development is lagging CCStartBracketCCNf3-e5xd7 took some timeCCEndBracketCC and 11.Nf3 looks very natural to open the c1-bishop. This neglects control of e4, though, which gives us good play after 11...a6 12.Bd3 Ne4 . We'll also examine 11.Re1, when White tries to increase control over e4 and only then play Nf3. 11..xf3 A natural move, but it allows an attractive setup for Black. 11...a6 Getting rid of the pin first. 12.Kd3 .xe4 Black has some flexibility here, but I like this central approach. We'll play ...f5 next. 13.O&e2 f5 Our idea is: playing ... Rae8 next, then ...Qf7-h5 and starting an attack. White's play was rather time-consuming, so this aggressive stance looks warranted.

☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 2.Nf3 #4

1.e4 c6 Welcome to the final chapter on the Caro-Kann. This chapter will examine all the sidelines that White may throw at us. Most of them are pretty harmless or dubious but still regularly played, particularly at the club level or in online games. Let's have a look at the Odds and Ends of the Caro-Kann now! 2..xf3 White usually plays this move to enter theTwo Knights after 2.Nf3 d5 3.Nc3 , but we'll examine some alternatives now. 2...d5 Now 3.Nc3 is the main move, entering theTwo Knights. A good alternative for White is 3.d3 , which we examine in the current chapter via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp1ppppp/2p5/8/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.d3 d5 3.Nf3 . This leaves the moves 3. e5 and 3.exd5 to examine. 3.exd5 cxd5 4..xe5 This knight jump gives 2.Nf3 d5 3. exd5 cxd5 its own flavor. White's alternative is 4.d4 , which immediately transposes to the Exchange Variation, where this position is reached via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.Nf3 . Alright, back to 4.Ne5 - what's the point. White's idea is to prevent the development of the light-square bishop. We need to avoid CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/8/3pN3/8/8/PPPP1PPP/ RNBQKB1R b KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4...Bf5?? 5.Bb5+ Nd7 6.Qf3 when White is winning on the spot! 4....xc6 I suggest challenging the e5-knight immediately. The alternative 4...Nf6 is also fine. 5.d4 White also has 5.Bb5 , when 5...Bd7 6.Nxd7 Qxd7 7.d4 e6 transposes to CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/ 2n5/3pN3/8/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.d4 e6 6.Bb5 Bd7 7.Nxd7 Qxd7 , which we will examine shortly. 5...e6 Shutting in our bishop looks odd, but it is fine for Black Here, a key factor is the knight on e5. We quickly pressure this piece with moves like ...Bd6 and ...Qc7, which forces concessions. Now we'll examine 6.Bb5 and 6.c3, which prepares Bd3. 6.Kb5 This looks like White's best line. Pinning the knight provokes 6...Bd7Š , which allowsÐ 7.Nxd7Š , netting the bishop pair. 6...Kd7 7..xxd7 O&xd7 White has gained the bishop pair, but it was

a time-consuming affair. The resulting pawn structure is identical to the Exchange Variation, with the same basic strategy in play. White seeks to play on the kingside, while we try to engineer a minority attack on the queenside with a later ...b5-b4 pawn push. 8.c3 Kd6 We go for development with ...Bd6, ...Nf6 and ...O-O, a very natural approach. 9.0-0 .xf6 10..xd2 0-0 This position has been reached quite frequently. White's development is lagging CCStartBracketCCNf3-e5xd7 took some timeCCEndBracketCC and 11.Nf3 looks very natural to open the c1-bishop. This neglects control of e4, though, which gives us good play after 11...a6 12.Bd3 Ne4 . We'll also examine 11.Re1, when White tries to increase control over e4 and only then play Nf3. 11.Qe1 White wants to play Re1, Bd3 and only then Nf3, preventing the idea ...Ne4. 11...O&c7 Black has some other ideas here, like 11...Rae8 . You could argue that White doesn't have a great move, as 12.Nf3 Ne4 would still work nicely. I like the straightforward nature of 11...Qc7, though. 12.g3 After 12.Nf3 we have 12...Ne4 again. 12...a6 I have the following direct solution in mind: after 13. Bd3 I want to play 13...e5 . If you'd like to keep the tension, playing 12...Rae8 is still an option. 13.Kd3 e5 14.dxe5 .xxe5 Black has equal chances here. We are well-developed, and White has no pressure on the IQP.

☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 2.d3 d5 3.Nd2 #1

1.e4 c6 Welcome to the final chapter on the Caro-Kann. This chapter will examine all the sidelines that White may throw at us. Most of them are pretty harmless or dubious but still regularly played, particularly at the club level or in online games. Let's have a look at the Odds and Ends of the Caro-Kann now! 2.d3 A modest-looking move, but it leads to some interesting lines. An important spilt happens on the next move when we'll discuss the possible ideas of the early d2-d3 move. 2...d5 After our natural 2... d5, White has a fundamental choice. They can play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pp2pppp/2p5/3p4/4P3/3P4/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3. Nd2 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3p4/4P3/3P4/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 , which allows an early simplification with 3... dxe4 4.dxe4 Qxd1+ 5.Kxd1 . The resulting endgame offers interesting strategic possibilities and is only a recent discovery of the engine age. It was rarely played before 2018/2019, when modern engines pointed it out as a viable way to play for White. We'll see that Black gets good chances, but it's good to know some ideas. In contrast, the move 3.Nd2 has been around forever and does not trouble Black. We get equal chances without any particular problem. 3..xd2 White wants to avoid the queen trade that would happen after 3.Nf3 dxe4 4.dxe4 Qxd1+ . 3...e5 Sure, why not? We rarely get to play an early ...e5 in the Caro-Kann, but here it's possible. 4..xgf3 Kd6 We cover the centre pawn. Now there is a split between two completely different lines. The first one is 5.d4!? , which starts direct play in the centre and leads to some complications. The second approach is the more popular

move 5.g3 , playing for a reversed King's Indian setup. This line leads to a closed position with the board full of pieces. We don't mind facing this line: Black has a space advantage and is well equipped for the strategic battle. 5.d4 It looks odd to move the d-pawn again, but it is not a bad line for White. 5...exd4 A forced move, as 5...dxe4 6.Nxe4 is bad for Black. 6.exd5 That's the idea. White now expects 6... cxd5 when we have an isolated pawn on d5. This is not bad at all for Black, but we have a better alternative. 6....xf6 I prefer this move, as after 7.dxc6 Nxc6 , we'll play the Isolated Pawn structure with a pawn on d4. This is more active, compared to having a d5-pawn. 7.dxc6 This is the principled move. Against 7.Nxd4 , you may just play 7...Nxd5 or try 7...O-O!? to tempt White into 8.dxc6 Bc5 . They'll likely just play CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp3ppp/2pb1n2/3P4/3N4/8/PPPN1PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQ - 1 8CCEndFENCC 8.Be2 when 8...Nxd5 will lead to similar play as 7...Nxd5. The position is quite symmetrical and about equal. 7....xxc6 8..xb3 Here 8.Be2 O-O 9.Nb3 will lead to the same lines. 8...0-0 We can't cover the d-pawn, but there is no need anyway. We'd be delighted if White grabs it. 9..xbxd4 White is losing too much time with pawn-hunting. They still have the king in the centre of the board, and the e-file is already opened. 9...Qe8+ 10.Ke2 .xxd4 11..xxd4 They can also play 11.Qxd4 , when many moves give Black great compensation. I'd suggest 11...Re4 12.Qd3 Be6 , but CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp3ppp/3b1n2/8/3Q4/5N2/PPP1BPPP/R1B1K2R b KQ - 0 11CCEndFENCC 11... Qc7 also looks fine. It's difficult for White to coordinate, given the large lag in development. 11....xg4 Black is in good shape here. White can't castle, and we have easy attacking moves like ...Bc5 or ...Qh4 lined up.

☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 2.d3 d5 3.Nd2 #2

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☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 2.d3 d5 3.Nd2 #3

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☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 2.d3 d5 3.Nd2 #4

1.e4 c6 Welcome to the final chapter on the Caro-Kann. This chapter will examine all the sidelines that White may throw at us. Most of them are pretty harmless or dubious but still regularly played, particularly at the club level or in online games. Let's have a look at the Odds and Ends of the Caro-Kann now! 2.d3 A modest-looking move, but it leads to some interesting lines. An important spilt happens on the next move when we'll discuss the possible ideas of the early d2-d3 move. 2...d5 After our natural 2... d5, White has a fundamental choice. They can play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pp2pppp/2p5/3p4/4P3/3P4/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3. Nd2 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3p4/4P3/3P4/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 , which allows an early simplification with 3... dxe4 4.dxe4 Qxd1+ 5.Kxd1 . The resulting endgame offers interesting strategic possibilities and is only a recent discovery of the engine age. It was rarely played before 2018/2019, when modern engines pointed it out as a viable way to play for White. We'll see that Black gets good chances, but it's good to know some ideas. In contrast, the move 3.Nd2 has been around forever and does not trouble Black. We get equal chances without any particular problem. 3..xd2 White wants to avoid the queen trade that would happen after 3.Nf3 dxe4 4.dxe4 Qxd1+ . 3...e5 Sure, why not? We rarely get to play an early ...e5 in the Caro-Kann, but here it's possible. 4..xgf3 Kd6 We cover the centre pawn. Now there is a split between two completely different lines. The first one is 5.d4!? , which starts direct play in the centre and leads to some complications. The second approach is the more popular move 5.g3 , playing for a reversed King's Indian setup. This line leads to a closed position with the board full of pieces. We don't mind facing this line: Black has a space advantage and is well equipped for the strategic battle. 5.g3 White stays on track for a Reversed King's Indian. 5....xf6 Let's castle first and then see what's next. 6.Kg2 0-0 7.0-0 Qe8 We lend additional cover to the e5-pawn, a universally helpful move. The position on the board is not forcing or tactical at all. Both sides have plenty of options, making it less beneficial to think in concrete lines but rather think of plans and piece placement. White does not have any particularly aggressive ideas. The c1-bishop is not yet developed and does not have an obvious destination. White sometimes opts for a quick b3, but you'll also meet plans with c3, intending b4. In both cases, Black should play ...a5. We gain space on the queenside, and our rook fulfils a role on a8, supporting the push of the a-pawn. Most often, White starts with 8.Re1 and only after 8...Nbd7 plays a pawn move when I continue with ...a5. White may also start with CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp3ppp/2pb1n2/3pp3/4P3/3P1NP1/ PPPN1PBP/R1BQ1RK1 w - - 5 8CCEndFENCC 8.b3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/ pp3ppp/2pb1n2/3pp3/4P3/3P1NP1/PPPN1PBP/R1BQ1RK1 w - - 5 8CCEndFENCC 8.c3 , when it's again 8...a5 . 8.Qe1 .xbd7 9.c3 White's most popular setup. 9...a5 We stop b4 and gain space. The move c3 weakened d3 considerably, which makes a later ...Nc5 an attractive idea. White has many slow moves now, like 10.Qc2, for

instance. I suggest improving our position with slow moves, too. Playing moves like ... h6 and ...Qc7 helps a bit, and White has no clear plan anyway. I'll show a sample line: 10.Qc2 Qc7 11.Nf1 dxe4 12.dxe4 h6 CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1b1r1k1/1pqn1ppp/2pb1n2/p3p3/4P3/2P2NP1/PPQ2PBP/R1B1RNK1 b - - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12...Nc5 13.Bg5 is annoyingCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1b1r1k1/1pqn1pp1/2pb1n1p/p3p3/4P3/2P2NP1/PPQ2PBP/R1B1RNK1 w - - 0 13CCEndFENCC 14.Nh4 Nc5 , with a nice advantage for Black. We have ...a4, ...b5 next, while I don't see anything active for White.

☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 2.d3 d5 3.Nf3

1.e4 c6 Welcome to the final chapter on the Caro-Kann. This chapter will examine all the sidelines that White may throw at us. Most of them are pretty harmless or dubious but still regularly played, particularly at the club level or in online games. Let's have a look at the Odds and Ends of the Caro-Kann now! 2.d3 A modest-looking move, but it leads to some interesting lines. An important spilt happens on the next move when we'll discuss the possible ideas of the early d2-d3 move. 2...d5 After our natural 2... d5, White has a fundamental choice. They can play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3p4/4P3/3P4/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3. Nd2 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3p4/4P3/3P4/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 , which allows an early simplification with 3... dxe4 4.dxe4 Qxd1+ 5.Kxd1 . The resulting endgame offers interesting strategic possibilities and is only a recent discovery of the engine age. It was rarely played before 2018/2019, when modern engines pointed it out as a viable way to play for White. We'll see that Black gets good chances, but it's good to know some ideas. In contrast, the move 3.Nd2 has been around forever and does not trouble Black. We get equal chances without any particular problem. 3..xf3 The 'endgame invitation' variation. 3...dxe4 White invited this simplification. I see no reason to decline it, as the resulting endgame offers enough complexity to create an interesting battle. 4.dxe4 O&xd1+ 5.Elxd1 .xf6 A natural choice, attacking the unprotected e4-pawn. 6..xfd2 This is the most popular move. The whole concept looks odd; what is White's idea? In a way, White sets a strategic trap. It looks very natural for Black to play the move 6...e5 , but this is a mistake. White would protect their e-pawn with f3 and play Nc4 next. This move attacks the e5-pawn and connects the knight to the glaring weakness d6. Ultimately, White will increase the pressure on the queenside even more with Be3. So, we shouldn't play ...e5; how do we develop the f8-bishop then? 6...g6 This is the way to get the bishop out. The plan is not ...Bg7, but playing ...Bh6! to get it on an active diagonal. I'd like to add that Black has alternatives here. I have played 6...h5 , then ...g6 and ... Bh6. This plan is very similar, of course. Finally, there is also 6...g5!? , with the idea ...g4 and ... Bh6 later. Some funky things are

possible! In any case, the main thing to remember is: in the endgame line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp1ppppp/2p5/8/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.d3 d5 3.Nf3 dxe4 4.dxe4 Qxd1+ , we want to avoid moving our e-pawn and develop our bishop on the h6-c1 diagonal. 7.f3 Kh6 Now the next steps are ...Be6 and ...Nbd7 to complete our development. Chances are about equal, as both sides have no weaknesses to speak of. We have successfully avoided ...e5? before, and should still be very careful about this pawn move. It's almost always bad; this is particularly true as long as knights are on the board.

☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 2.Bc4 #1

1.e4 c6 Welcome to the final chapter on the Caro-Kann. This chapter will examine all the sidelines that White may throw at us. Most of them are pretty harmless or dubious but still regularly played, particularly at the club level or in online games. Let's have a look at the Odds and Ends of the Caro-Kann now! 2.Kc4 Well, we announced that ... d5 would be our next move... and White just ignores it. 2...d5 In internet terms, this is a 'premove' - we'll always play 2...d5 and are happy if our opponents walk right into a tempo loss. The bishop has to move again now. 3.Kb3 This line, the 'Hillbilly Gambit', is the only continuation worth checking. White's alternative is playing 3.exd5 cxd5 and then moving the bishop. This is very comfortable for Black, though. Here's a sample line: 4.Bb3 Nc6 5.d4 Nf6 6.Nf3 Bg4 , when we have an excellent version of the Exchange variation. White's bishop is misplaced on b3. 3...dxe4 According to the principle that we should take centre pawns, if possible. 4.O&h5 White is not wasting any time. 4...g6 We don't play a kingside fianchetto often, but here it makes perfect sense. We stop the threats on f7 and avoid 4...e6?!, which is unnecessarily passive. 5.O&h4 a5 A strong move that immediately addresses one drawback of White's play: the bishop on b3 is not that well-placed. It is on an open diagonal but can easily run out of squares, as we will see. Now ...a4 is the threat, so White has to do something about it. 6.O&xe4 White regains the pawn, but it leads to trouble. 6...a4 7.Kxa4 This will lead to a disaster for White. 7.Bc4 Bf5 8.Qf3 Nf6 avoids immediate defeat but is much better for Black. White has lost time and allowed Black to gain space. The following line probably should not be in this course, objectively speaking, as it's likely never going to happen in a real game. I have still included it because it's such a funny sequence of moves. 7....xf6 8.O&f4 The queen has to keep the a4-bishop protected. 8...g5 9.O&g3 A good resource. After 9.Qb4 e5! White already loses the a4-bishop. Now CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1p2pp1p/2p2n2/6p1/B7/6Q1/PPPP1PPP/RNB1K1NR b KQkq - 1 9CCEndFENCC 9...Rxa4 10. Qxb8 regains the lost piece. 9....xh5 We keep attacking the queen. 10.O&xg5 10.Qe5 or 10.Qc3 are answered by 10...Bg7 . 10...Qa5 Hah! This is how to protect our knight! 11.O&h4 Qg8 Here comes the other rook! We attack g2, but also threaten ...Rg4! 12.Kb3 White saves the bishop, but there is a catch. 12...Qg4

13.O&h3 Qe4+ And we win the queen! This is just such a crazy line, with two raging rooks, that I had to include it.

☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 2.Bc4 #2

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☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 2.f4

1.e4 c6 Welcome to the final chapter on the Caro-Kann. This chapter will examine all the sidelines that White may throw at us. Most of them are pretty harmless or dubious but still regularly played, particularly at the club level or in online games. Let's have a look at the Odds and Ends of the Caro-Kann now! 2.f4 Some people play f4-based systems 'against everything', so you might meet this move. Our reply is no surprise.

2...d5 3.e5 This will happen most of the time. White wants to gain central space and pushes the pawn forward. An alternative is 3.Nc3 , when 3...dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 is a good reply in the style of our weapon against the Classical. 3...c5 Against the Advance Variation we play a quick ...c5, too. This is my main argument of recommending 3...c5, but 3...Bf5 certainly works well, too. First ...Bf5, then ...e6 and ...c5 next is very natural. 4..xf3 .xc6 5.Kb5 If White plays a more passive move, like 5.Be2 , we'd go ...Bg4, then ... e6. Our g8-knight has an excellent future spot on f5. 5...O&b6 I wanted to show this move. It makes our lives easier if we don't allow a doubled pawn. Next, we'll play ...Bg4 and ...e6 and enjoy a good position. White has difficulty getting d2-d4 in, which gives us an excellent grip in the centre. Later, you can choose between an ...f7-f6 play or expansion on the queenside.

☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 3.f3 - Fantasy Variation #1

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a5! first, make sure that our queen stays on the best square. Now, White has a hard time organizing their forces. The king is stuck in the centre and tough to protect. Our simple plan is ...Bc5, ...Ne7 and ...O-O. We don't mind the small material deficit, as development and king safety are more important. 6.exd5 Let's check the pawn grab. 6...Kc5 7..xh3 The only move, as 7.Ne2?? Bf2+ 8.Kd2 Qe3# is an early finish. 7...Kxh3 8.gxh3 Kf2+ 9.Ele2 cxd5 10.O&xd5 A forced sequence after 7. Nh3. 10....xc6 We should avoid 10...Ne7 10.Qb5+ , allowing a queen trade. After 10...Nc6 Black has great play for the material and the better practical chances, for sure.

☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 3.f3 - Fantasy Variation #2

1.e4 c6 Welcome to the final chapter on the Caro-Kann. This chapter will examine all the sidelines that White may throw at us. Most of them are pretty harmless or dubious but still regularly played, particularly at the club level or in online games. Let's have a look at the Odds and Ends of the Caro-Kann now! 2.d4 2.d4 is White's main move, of course. In the Sidelines chapter, we'll talk about rare deviations on move three, in particular 3.f3, the 'Fantasy Variation'. 2...d5 3.f3 White goes for the 'Fantasy Variation'. I tried to determine the origin of the name but wasn't successful. Fortunately, I had more success in finding good antidotes against it. Let's have a look. 3...O&b6 Black has some choice of reasonable lines against the Fantasy Variation. I am not a huge fan of 3...dxe4 4.fxe4 e5 , as I feel that White is getting the type of game they were hoping for. The move 3.f3 often leads to complex and unusual positions and is preferred by dynamic, tactical players. I don't want to open the f-file, thinking that my opponent rather likes this course of action. A good, popular option is 3...e6 , often combined with ...Bb4. This line is fine for Black, but it takes considerable work to master. I felt that my solution 3...Qb6 is simpler to learn and tricky for White to handle. It is not the most obvious choice, so let's discuss why I think it's a good move. The move 3.f3 has weakened the dark squares in White's camp, in particular e3. With ...Qb6, we prepare the strike ...e5! to attack and open the centre, exploiting these dark squares. The main line of 3...Qb6 is CCStartFENCCrnb1kbnr/pp2pppp/1qp5/3p4/3PP3/5P2/PPP3PP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nc3 dxe4 5.fxe4 e5! , illustrating this concept. We'll focus on 4.Nc3, as this move is almost always played. I'll also check 4.c3 and 4.a4 briefly, which are rare but instructive to study. 4.c3 White anticipates our central strike and lends additional protection to d4. 4...e5 4.c3 has not changed our strategy, of course. We attack White's centre with ...e5. 5.exd5 This is played most of the time. It's worse for White to play 5.dxe5?! Bc5 , when there is no good continuation in sight. 6.Ne2 Bf2+ or 6.Nh3 Bxh3 look awful for White. 5...cxd5 6.O&e2 Again 6.dxe5?! Bc5 is awful for White. 6.Qe2 is not much better, though. 6....xc6 7.Ke3 I know, broken record: 7.dxe5? Bc5! is great for Black. 7.Be3 at least

demands some precision. 7...Ke6 8.dxe5 d4 We want to open the position as much as possible. 9.cxd4 .xge7 This is the strongest, but 9...O-O-O also works. White is in awful shape after 9...Nge7 and unable to defend against ...Nf5, followed by ...Nxd4. A sample line is 10.Nc3 Nf5 11.Qd2 O-O-O 12.Nge2 Ncxd4 , when White is in deep trouble.

☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 3.f3 - Fantasy Variation #3

1.e4 c6 Welcome to the final chapter on the Caro-Kann. This chapter will examine all the sidelines that White may throw at us. Most of them are pretty harmless or dubious but still regularly played, particularly at the club level or in online games. Let's have a look at the Odds and Ends of the Caro-Kann now! 2.d4 2.d4 is White's main move, of course. In the Sidelines chapter, we'll talk about rare deviations on move three, in particular 3.f3, the 'Fantasy Variation'. 2...d5 3.f3 White goes for the 'Fantasy Variation'. I tried to determine the origin of the name but wasn't successful. Fortunately, I had more success in finding good antidotes against it. Let's have a look. 3...O&b6 Black has some choice of reasonable lines against the Fantasy Variation. I am not a huge fan of 3...dxe4 4.fxe4 e5 , as I feel that White is getting the type of game they were hoping for. The move 3.f3 often leads to complex and unusual positions and is preferred by dynamic, tactical players. I don't want to open the f-file, thinking that my opponent rather likes this course of action. A good, popular option is 3...e6 , often combined with ...Bb4. This line is fine for Black, but it takes considerable work to master. I felt that my solution 3...Qb6 is simpler to learn and tricky for White to handle. It is not the most obvious choice, so let's discuss why I think it's a good move. The move 3.f3 has weakened the dark squares in White's camp, in particular e3. With ...Qb6, we prepare the strike ...e5! to attack and open the centre, exploiting these dark squares. The main line of 3...Qb6 is CCStartFENCCrnb1kbnr/pp2pppp/1qp5/3p4/3PP3/5P2/PPP3PP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nc3 dxe4 5.fxe4 e5! , illustrating this concept. We'll focus on 4.Nc3, as this move is almost always played. I'll also check 4.c3 and 4.a4 briefly, which are rare but instructive to study. 4..xc3 White develops the knight and attacks d5. Very natural and by far the most popular move. 4...dxe4 It's essential to remember that you need to take on d4 first. The move 4...e5?! is dubious because 5.dxe5 Bc5 6.Na4! works well for White. After 6...Bf2+ 7.Ke2 , we don't have a good queen move. After our capture on e4, White's usual reply is 5.fxe4. We'll also check 5.Nxe4 and 5.Bc4 briefly. 5.Kc4 A rare move, but not bad at all. White tries to make a gambit out of it, in the style of the Blackmar-Diemer CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e4? dxe4 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.f3 exf3 5.Nxf3 CCEndBracketCC. 5....xf6 This is the key moment already. We should avoid 5... exf3?! 6.Nxf3 , as White gets too much compensation for the pawn. 6.fxe4

White finally takes the pawn. It's tough to suggest an alternative, as both Bc1 and Ng1 are not easy to develop. 6...e5 No surprise, this strike is the key to our concept. This position resembles CCStartFENCCrnb1kbnr/pp2pppp/1qp5/8/3Pp3/2N2P2/PPP3PP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.fxe4 e5 , but with Bc4 and Nf6 inserted. 7.dxe5 A difference to CCStartFENCCrnb1kbnr/pp2pppp/1qp5/8/3Pp3/2N2P2/PPP3PP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.fxe4 e5 6.dxe5 , is now our knight is attacked. 7....xg4 We threaten mate and attack the e5-pawn. 8.O&e2 .xxe5 9.Kb3 Kg4 10..xf3 .xbd7 This position offers about equal chances, according to Stockfish. I have to admit that I'd rather be Black, as I am happy with the excellent e5-square. White has active pieces, which probably balances chances.

☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 3.f3 - Fantasy Variation #4

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played. The move 5.Nxe4 is not bad, though - it's like a Classical Caro-Kann with the moves f3 and Qb6 inserted. You can play 5...Nf6 , in the style of our recipe in the Classical, or 5...Bf5 . It's unnecessary to drill any deeper, as this is a very rare line and normal moves are enough to get a good position. It's more important to focus on 5.fxe4, as this is far more popular, and some precision helps. 5...e5 As planned, we strike against d4. 6.dxe5 This is bad but still played quite often. 6...Ke6 It's important to avoid 6...Bc5?! , which has tactical drawbacks CCStartBracketCC 7.Na4 or even CCStartFENCCrnb1k1nr/pp3ppp/1qp5/2b1P3/4P3/2N5/PPP3PP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7.Qf3! work against usCCEndBracketCC. After 6...Be6, we already have an advantage. The simple plan is recouping the e5-pawn. with ...Nd7, ...Qc7, ...Ne7-g6 and castle queenside. White has the worse pawn structure and weak squares, like e3, to worry about. 7..xf3 .xd7 8.Kd3 .xe7 One of my Blitz games shows a typical course of the game: 9.Qe2 Ng6 10.Bd2 Ngxe5 11.O-O-O O-O-O , and Black had a comfortable advantage.

☐ 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline
■ 3.f3 - Fantasy Variation #5

1.e4 c6 Welcome to the final chapter on the Caro-Kann. This chapter will examine all the sidelines that White may throw at us. Most of them are pretty harmless or dubious but still regularly played, particularly at the club level or in online games. Let's have a look at the Odds and Ends of the Caro-Kann now! 2.d4 2.d4 is White's main move, of course. In the Sidelines chapter, we'll talk about rare deviations on move three, in particular 3.f3, the 'Fantasy Variation'. 2...d5 3.f3 White goes for the 'Fantasy Variation'. I tried to determine the origin of the name but wasn't successful. Fortunately, I had more success in finding good antidotes against it. Let's have a look. 3...O&b6 Black has some choice of reasonable lines against the Fantasy Variation. I am not a huge fan of 3...dxe4 4.fxe4 e5 , as I feel that White is getting the type of game they were hoping for. The move 3.f3 often leads to complex and unusual positions and is preferred by dynamic, tactical players. I don't want to open the f-file, thinking that my opponent rather likes this course of action. A good, popular option is 3...e6 , often combined with ...Bb4. This line is fine for Black, but it takes considerable work to master. I felt that my solution 3...Qb6 is simpler to learn and tricky for White to handle. It is not the most obvious choice, so let's discuss why I think it's a good move. The move 3.f3 has weakened the dark squares in White's camp, in particular e3. With ...Qb6, we prepare the strike ...e5! to attack and open the centre, exploiting these dark squares. The main line of 3...Qb6 is CCStartFENCCrnb1kbnr/pp2pppp/1qp5/3p4/3PP3/5P2/PPP3PP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nc3 dxe4 5.fxe4 e5! , illustrating this concept. We'll focus on 4.Nc3, as this move is almost always played. I'll also check 4.c3 and 4.a4 briefly, which are rare but instructive to study. 4..xc3 White develops the knight and attacks d5. Very natural and by far the most popular move. 4...dxe4 It's essential to

remember that you need to take on d4 first. The move 4...e5?! is dubious because 5.dxe5 Bc5 6.Na4! works well for White. After 6...Bf2+ 7.Ke2 , we don't have a good queen move. After our capture on e4, White's usual reply is 5.fxe4. We'll also check 5.Nxe4 and 5.Bc4 briefly. 5.fxe4 The natural recapture and almost always played. The move 5.Nxe4 is not bad, though - it's like a Classical Caro-Kann with the moves f3 and Qb6 inserted. You can play 5...Nf6 , in the style of our recipe in the Classical, or 5...Bf5 . It's unnecessary to drill any deeper, as this is a very rare line and normal moves are enough to get a good position. It's more important to focus on 5.fxe4, as this is far more popular, and some precision helps. 5...e5 As planned, we strike against d4. 6..xf3 White's best move, for sure. 6...exd4 7..xxd4 That's the challenging move. After 7.Qxd4 Black has many good options. I like 7...Qxd4 8.Nxd4 Bd6 , but CCStartFENCCrnb1kbnr/pp3ppp/1qp5/8/3QP3/2N2N2/PPP3PP/R1B1KB1R b KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7...Nd7 is fine, too. In general, I am happy to have traded queens while having a better pawn structure. 7...h5 I have played 7...Bc5 and 7...Nf6 in my online games, without knowing any theory. While analyzing this line for the first time, I see that Black has this fun move available instead. Black's idea is ...Bg4 and a quick ...O-O-O, if possible. As far as I am aware, the move has not been tested in a game. I am looking forward to playing it, but maybe you get the chance first. After 7...h5, I'd expect the moves 8.Bc4 or 8.Be2 and will check them now. 8.Kc4 White's most aggressive-looking move. It looks scary for us, as our development is lagging. White could also try 8.Be2 , when we'll respond 8...Bg4 , as intended. After 9.Bxg4 hxg4 White can't take the g-pawn, as our queen attacks the d4-knight. I think this position is interesting to play and offers about equal chances. Maybe White's best is 10.Qd3 , when 10...Nd7 11.Bf4 Nc5 12.Qc4 Qa6 leads to an endgame with much to play for both. 8...Kg4 Catching up in development. 9..xf3 Ke7 I like this small but mean move! White would like to play 10.h3 , but 10...Bh4+! shows the point. Better is a move like CCStartFENCCrn2k1nr/pp2bpp1/1qp5/7p/2B1P1b1/2N2N2/PPP3PP/R1BQK2R w KQkq - 4 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qd3 , when we play 10...Nd7 and prepare queenside castling. I like Black's position and would assess chances to be about equal. White still has an isolated e-pawn, and we have chances to control e5 in the long run.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ Carlsbad Structure: Intro

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 One important option for White in the Queen's Gambit Declined is the exchange on d5, which leads to the so-called Carlsbad Structure. White can trade right now, but there are various possible moments for the exchange on d5 - we'll discuss the differences between these versions later. Let's have a look at the basic pawn structure after the trade. 3.cxd5 exd5 We have reached the Carlsbad structure now, which you will frequently reach in our repertoire. In addition to the Queen's

Gambit lines, we may also face CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 , which is a Carlsbad structure, too. In this case, the roles are switched: we play the side with the missing c-pawn for the opponent's e-pawn. Playing both sides of the Carlsbad is no problem at all. The non-symmetrical nature of the positions makes it interesting to play for both sides. The Carlsbad features some plans and ideas that are useful to know, even outside of the current chapter CCStartBracketCCsee above for the example of the Caro-Kann Exchange Variation, but there are moreCCEndBracketCC. Therefore I decided to start the chapter with some typical positions, discussing key ideas for both sides. These ideas are also included in the trainable lines, but I wanted to make them easier to find and therefore added some informational lines to start with. I suggest looking at them first and then continuing with the study of the trainable variations.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ Carlsbad Structure: Minority A

The first example features the game L.Van Wely-N.Short, Wijk aan Zee 2010. White started a minority attack and successfully realized his objective: creating a weak c-pawn and putting Black on the defensive. The concrete opening moves are less relevant for us, as we play a different move order. It's about the general strategic ideas. 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3..xf3 .xf6 4..xc3 c6 5.Kg5 .xbd7 6.cxd5 exd5
We have reached the Carlsbad pawn structure. A difference to our concept against the Carlsbad is that Black has already played the move ...Nbd7. We delay this move for a while, which is helpful in many lines, as ...Bf5 might still be possible. 7.O&c2 Ke7 8.e3 0-0 9.Kd3 Qe8 10.h3 .xf8 Nigel Short is going for the traditional way to fight the Carlsbad, placing the knight on f8. The modern treatment often features more active ideas, using the knight on the queenside. 11.Kf4 a5 12.0-0 .xg6 13.Kh2 Kd6 14.Kxd6 O&xd6 15.Qfe1 Ke6 16.a3 The start of the Minority Attack. White wants to play b4-b5 and take on c6, creating a weak pawn on c6. In this game, White realized his plan on move 21. I don't want to focus on suggesting improvements for Black, but rather simply show how a bad outcome against the Minority Attack looks like. We'll focus on good defensive techniques later. 16...Qe7 17.Qab1 Qae8 18.b4 axb4 19.axb4 Kd7 20.b5 .xe4 21.bxc6 bxc6
Mission accomplished: Black has a weak pawn on c6 and no relevant counterplay. 22.Qb6 .xxc3 23.O&xc3 O&f6 24.Kxg6 A strong move. White reduces any potential counterplay by trading off pieces. 24...O&xg6 25.Elf1 f6 26.Qa1 O&h5 27..xe1 O&f5 28.Elg1 O&g5 29.Elh2 O&f5 30..xd3 O&e6 31.Elg1 Qc8 32.Qb7 Qf7 33.Qaa7 A nightmarish position for Black! 33...Ke8 34.O&b4 Qd8 35..xc5 O&c8 36.O&b6 h5 37.Qc7 Qxc7 38.Qxc7 O&a8 39.Qa7 O&c8 40.Qb7 Kf7 41.O&a7 Qf8 42..xd7 Qe8 43..xxf6+ gxf6 44.Qxf7 O&f5 45.Qg7+ Elh8 46.O&f7
And Black resigned.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ Carlsbad Structure: Minority A

We follow the game N.Maatman-S.Ernst, Netherlands 2017. In this game Black demonstrated a key manouvre against the Minority attack. 1.d4 .xf6 2.c4 e6 3..xf3 d5 4..xc3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Kg5 Ke6 7.e3 .xbd7 8.Kd3 h6 We play the slighly more accurate move 8...Bd6 , as covered in the chapter on theTricky 4...a6. Nevertheless, the current game reaches a very typical position for this line. 9.Kh4 The move 9.Bf4 would be the way to exploit Black's 8...h6 move order. 9...Kd6 10.0-0 c6 11.Kg3 Kxg3 12.hxg3 O&c7 13.b4 If White had played 13.Qc2 here, we'd reach a position that is part of our repertoire. We usually reach it via the sequence CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/1ppn1ppp/p3bn2/3p2B1/3P4/2NBPN2/PP3PPP/R2QK2R b KQkq - 2 8CCEndFENCC 8...Bd6 9.O-O c6 10.Qc2 h6 11.Bh4 Qc7 12.Bg3 Bxg3 13.hxg3 . This small difference does not change the situation at all. 13...0-0 14.a4 b5 Blocking White's advance with ...b5. Black stops a further advance and prepares the knight tour ...Nb6-c4. When considering the ...b5-block, it is crucial to check if you manage to place the knight on c4 or not. If you don't, the c-pawn will be a constant worry on a half-open file. A knight on c4 plugs the c-file is an annoying intruder. If White captures the knight on c4, we will establish a protected passed pawn on c4. This is perfectly illustrated in the game. 15.O&b3 A slightly imprecise move, as it allows the ...Nb6-c4 plan. After 15.a5! White controls b6 and prevents it for the moment. Has Black's idea failed? No, because 15...Ne8! is the way to go. The route via d6 to c4 is also a viable option, but it takes longer. It is important that Black has this route, as otherwise the knight won't arrive on c4. 15....xb6 Here we go, off to greener pastures. 16.Qa2 .xc4 17.Qfa1 Qab8 18.axb5 axb5 19.Qa7 We have reached a position with about equal chances. We like our knight on c4, but White controls the open a-file. Black's goal is to slowly start an initiative on the kingside, while keeping matters on the queenside under control. 19...O&d6 20..xe2 Kg4 21..xh2 Qbe8 22.O&c3 Kxe2 23.Kxe2 .xe4 24.O&e1 Qe6 Black is trying to provoke weaknesses on White's kingside. 25..xf1 g6 A later ...h5-h4 pawn push is possible. Note that White has the a-file, but attacks nothing. 26.Kf3 .xg5 27.Kg4 Qe7 28.Ke2 h5 29.Q1a6 Qfe8 30.Qxe7 Qxe7 Black has a slight advantage in this position. White doesn't have a clear active plan and has to defend. Still, after 31.Nh2 White holds on and Black has to look for new ideas. 31.Kxc4 White can't stand the knight any longer and takes it. It's a huge mistake, though, giving Black a strong passed pawn. 31...bxc4 A strange decision, as 31...dxc4! is much stronger. Black would continue with ...Ne4-f6-d5 and win easily. 32.f3 This phase of the game is rather mysterious, as 32.b5 is not rocket science. 32....xe6 Again odd, as 32...Rb7 would have stopped the b-pawn. 33.O&c3 White had 33.b5 , again. 33....xc7 Now it's over, as the white b-pawn is finally stopped. White has too many weaknesses to defend now. 34.Qa4 .xb5 35.O&d2 Elg7 36.Elf2 O&f6 37.Elg1 O&f5 38.Qa1 O&f6 39.Qa4 g5 40.Qa1 O&g6 41.Qe1 c3 42.O&d1 O&f6 43.g4 h4 44.Elh1 Elg8 45.O&d3 Qe6 46.Qa1 O&e7 47.Qb1 Elg7 48.O&f5 .xa3

49.Qc1 c2 50.O&d3 O&xb4 51.e4 dxe4 52.fxe4 O&b2 53.O&d2 Elf8 54.d5 cxd5 55.exd5 Qe2 56.O&xg5 O&e5 57.O&h6+ Elg8 58.d6 h3 59.d7 hxg2+ 60.Elg1 gxf1O&+ 61.Elxf1 O&b5 A funny final position, as 62.d8Q+ is answered by the 62...Re8+ , a counter-check. White resigned.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ Carlsbad Structure: Minority A

We'll examine the game H.Ilieva-B.Deac, Varna 2014, to illustrate a less common way to deal with the minority attack. It's still worth knowing, as it might not be immediately obvious that Black has this option. Let's have a look at the position on move 14. 1.d4 .xf6 2..xf3 e6 3.c4 d5 4..xc3 .xbd7 5.Kg5 c6 6.cxd5 exd5 7.e3 Ke7 8.O&c2 .xh5 9.Kxe7 O&xe7 10.Kd3 g6 11.0-0 0-0 12.Qab1 .xdf6 13.b4 a6 14.a4 .xg7 Preparing ...Bf5. Still, White is ready to continue the minority attack now. 15.b5 axb5 16.axb5 c5 The exclamation mark is a bit much, as other moves lead to a substantial disadvantage. Black shouldn't allow the capture on c6, as this leads to the scenario that we studied in the first sample. Instead, playing 16...c5 is a good option. 17.dxc5 O&xc5 The b5-pawn is now a cause of concern for White. Black may get some pressure against this pawn, while our isolated d5-pawn is quite easy to defend. Note that in the endgame, the king often has the route f8-e7-d6-c5 directly attacking the b5-pawn. 18..xd4 .xe6 The position is about equal, but White makes a mistake now. 19.Qfd1 That's a slight strategic mistake. White shouldn't allow the transformation after 19...Nxd4 20.exd4 , when White's d-pawn is a weakness. Instead, 19.Nxe6 would have kept the game in balance. 19....xxd4 20.exd4 O&a3 21.Qb3 O&d6 22.b6 It looks like an active move, but the b-pawn is weaker on b6 than on b5. 22...Kg4 23.f3 Kd7 24.O&f2 Qfc8 25.O&g3 This helps Black, but White's game was difficult already. The pieces on c3 and b3 are not well-placed, as the continuation after 25.Qg3 shows. 25...O&xg3 26.hxg3 Ka4 Black forced the trade. 27..xxa4 Qxa4 The pawns on d4 and b6 are much weaker than Black's pawns on d5 and b7. 28.Kb5 Qa2 29.Kd3 Qa4 30.Kb5 Qa5 31.Qe1 Elf8 32.Qe2 h5 33.Elf2 Qc1 34.Qbb2 Qc3 35.Ele1 Qaa3 36.Eld1 Qab3 37.Qec2 Qxc2 38.Elxc2 Qxb2+ 39.Elxb2 Ele7 40.Elc3 .xd7 41.Elb4 .xxb6 As mentioned: the b-pawn can turn out to be weak! 42.Elc5 .xa8 43.Ka4 .xc7 44.Kb3 g5 45.Ka2 h4 46.gxh4 gxh4 47.Kb1 .xe6+ 48.Elxd5 .xf4+ 49.Ele5 .xxg2 50.f4 h3 51.Ke4 f6+ 52.Elf5 .xe3+ 53.Elg6 b5 54.Elh5 f5 And White resigned.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ Carlsbad Structure: Light-squa

We follow the classic game M.Bobotsov-T.Petrosian, Lugano Olympiad 1968. 1.d4 .xf6 2.c4 e6 3..xf3 d5 4.cxd5 In the theoretical section of this chapter we will

discuss that this move order is less challenging for Black. 4...exd5 5..xc3 c6 6.Kg5 Ke7 7.O&c2 g6 Black prepares the move Bf5. In the Carlsbad, the trade of the light-squared bishops is desirable. Most of Black's pawns are on light squares, which limits the scope of the bishop. In this game, we'll see an additional benefit of the bishop trade. 8.e3 Kf5 9.Kd3 Kxd3 10.O&xd3 .xbd7 11.Kh6 .xg4 12.Kf4 0-0 13.0-0 Qe8 14.h3 .xgf6 15..xe5 .xb6 16.Kg5 .xe4 Petrosian does not mind further trades. He is aiming for the position that arises after move 18. 17.Kxe7 O&xe7 18.O&c2 .xd6 Black's knight is ideally placed on d6. Let's talk about this in detail on move 21, when it becomes simpler to explain why d6 is the perfect spot for the knight. 19..xa4 .xbc4 Just taking on a4 was a simpler way, but Petrosian's move works, too. 20..xxc4 .xxc4 21..xc5 .xd6 This position is a true Carlsbad classic and essential to the understanding of the pawn structure. Here are two key points: 1. Black has managed to trade the light-squared bishops. This helps Black a lot, as it makes it more difficult/ impossible for White to engineer a minority attack. The move b4 would fatally weaken the c4-square, allowing the black knight to use it. If White still had a bishop on d3 or e2, the c4-square would enjoy additional cover. 2. Black's knight on d6 is ideally placed. It is connected to many crucial squares, in addition to the already mentioned c4-square. The knight is also looking at e4 and is ready to switch to the kingside, if needed. It also covers b6 reliably and makes b4-b5 very tough/impossible to play for White. These points show that it is difficult for White to come up with an active plan or idea. On the other hand, Black has no problem making progress: there is plenty of play on the kingside. We have learned that this scenario - light-squared bishops traded and a knight on d6 - is comfortable for Black. This helps a lot in finding the right plans: 1. Trading the light-squared bishops is desirable, in general. This particularly applies if you can accomplish the trade without a serious loss of time. In some versions of the Carlsbad, this is possible. The current game is an example. At a later stage, it can still be a good idea. Often, the combination of ...g6 and ...Nd6 enables ...Bf5 in the middlegame and is worth considering. 2. The knight has an excellent square on d6. it combines active and prophylactic duties perfectly. 22.Qac1 O&g5 23.O&d1 h5 24.Elh1 Qe7 25..xd3 .xe4 26..xc5 .xd6 27..xd3 O&f5 28..xe5 This regrouping helps Black, but it is tough to give White any good advice. 28...f6 29..xf3 Qg7 30..xh2 Qe8 31.Elg1 .xe4 32.O&f3 O&e6 33.Qfd1 g5 Petrosian gives up a pawn to speed up the attack. 34.O&xh5 f5 35.Qe1 g4 36.hxg4 fxg4 37.f3 gxf3 38..xxf3 Qh7 39.O&e5 O&c8 40.O&f4 Qf8 41.O&e5 Qf5 The queen is trapped and White resigned.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1

■ Carlsbad Structure: The Botvin

1.d4 We follow the game M.Botvinnik-P.Keres, played at the 1952 USSR Championships. It is a perfect example of the Botvinnik plan, which involves the moves f3 and e4, building a powerful centre. 1....xf6 2.c4 e6 3..xc3 d5 4.cxd5

exd5 5.Kg5 Ke7 6.e3 0-0 7.Kd3 .xbd7 8.O&c2 Qe8 9..xge2 .xf8 Keres opts for the passive ...Nf8 plan, which was the usual approach at the time. We handle the defence differently, keeping the knight on d7. After 9...c6 10.O-O h6 11.Bh4 a5 it was still possible to transpose to a line that is part of our repertoire. In this sequence, 12.f3 is answered with 12...b5! , starting a quick counterplay once White has revealed their intentions with f3. Our setup, without ...Nf8, is specifically designed to fight the Botvinnik plan. 10.0-0 c6 11.Qab1 Kd6 Keres threatens ...Bxh2+ now, but Botvinnik's reply is an excellent defence. 12.Elh1 Stepping out of the check which enables 12...Bxh2?? 13.Bxf6 , winning a piece. 12....xg6 13.f3 The start of the Botvinnik plan. White wants to expand with e4, building the perfect centre. 13...Ke7 A sad move, but what else?! 14.Qbe1 .xd7 15.Kxe7 Qxe7 16..xg3 .xf6 17.O&f2 Ke6 18..xf5 Kxf5 19.Kxf5 O&b6 20.e4 Here it comes. Black has no counterplay at all against White's central steamroller. 20...dxe4 21.fxe4 Qd8 22.e5 .xd5 23..xe4 Heading to d6, which is a great square for White's knight. 23....xf8 24..xd6 O&c7 25.Ke4 .xe6 26.O&h4 g6 27.Kxd5 cxd5 28.Qc1 O&d7 29.Qc3 Qf8 30..xf5 Qfe8 31..xh6+ Elf8 32.O&f6 .xg7 33.Qcf3 Qc8 34..xxf7 Qe6 35.O&g5 .xf5 36..xh6 O&g7 37.g4 And Keres resigned. The Botvinnik plan is a dangerous idea and difficult to meet for Black, as we have seen. Our approach against the Carlsbad allows a much more active counterplay against the Botvinnik plan, based on quick queenside counterplay - see the notes to move nine.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.cxd5 #1

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. AĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After

CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/

PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise - CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see above - or no particular achievement as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for White. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ...h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 See Rule 1. 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3.cxd5 As already stated in the Chapter intro: this early exchange is slightly less precise than White's main move order 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 . Let's have a closer look at why this is the case. 3...exd5 4..xc3 White usually starts with this move, as the knight is best on c3, putting pressure on the centre. They can play 4.Nf3 instead, but after 4...c6 CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC 5.Nc3 will usually follow, transposing to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 , which we will examine shortly. Another rare option is 4.Bf4 when 4...c6 CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC and ... Bd6 CCStartBracketCCRule 3CCEndBracketCC work well. This leads to positions that we will examine via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bd6 . 4...c6 As per Rule 1. We play ...c6 right after the trade to support d5. Now we will examine three moves for White. After 5.Nf3 , we can apply rule 2 and develop our bishop to

f5. With 5.Qc2 , White can stop this idea in its tracks, but 5...Bd6! is a good reply. Finally, there is 5.Bf4 , which we answer with 5...Bd6 , applying Rule 3. 5.O&c2 A clever idea: White stops ...Bf5, but the move has a drawback. It is slow and neglects the development of the queen's bishop. 5...Kd6 I like this move a lot for conceptual reasons. Black has other options, like ...g6 to insist on ...Bf5, but simply preventing White from developing the c1-bishop is tempting. It's fun to compare this line to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.Bd3 , which follows the same principle. 6..xf3 White prepares Bg5 with this logical move. It's tough to suggest anything else, really. 6...h6 'No Bg5 for you!' We plan ...Nf6 next, followed by ...O-O and ...Re8 - very natural play. White can't play Bf4, and I don't see any active option besides 7.e4, which we will check now. 7.e4 The active choice. A sequence like 7.e3 Nf6 8.Bd3 O-O 9.O-O Re8 is a much better version of this chapter's mainline. White's c1-bishop is not a happy camper! 7...dxe4 8..xxe4 .xf6 Speeding up our development. In this position, we don't mind giving up the bishop pair, as White's knight is a strong piece on e4, too. 9..xxd6+ O&xd6 We have equal chances in this position. White has an Isolated Queen's pawn, which is a handy long-term target. We enjoy good control of d5, too. White, on the other hand, has the bishop pair and easy development, which makes the game about even.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.cxd5 #2

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0

1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6

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Finally, there is 5.Bf4 , which we answer with 5...Bd6 , applying Rule 3. 5..xf3 Our Rule 2 applies here, so here we go! 5...Kf5 Black is also fine with other moves. One example is 5...Nf6 , which would transpose to a variation of the current chapter that arises after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 . Still, if we get the opportunity to develop the bishop to f5 without any problems, we should go for it. 6.Kf4 Kd6 Rule 3 in play. 7.Kxd6 O&xd6 Again Black has easily obtained equal chances. 8.e3 .xf6 9.Kd3 Kxd3 10.O&xd3 .xbd7 If you have studied the chapter intro, you have seen the famous gameM. Bobotsov vs. T.Petrosian, Lugano Olympiad 1968. Petrosian outplayed his opponent in an exemplary fashion, demonstrating the knight's strength on d6 later on. The structure and material distribution on the board is identical to the mentioned game. If you have not studied it yet, I suggest doing it right away. It helps to understand the strategy much better.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.cxd5 #3

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active,

connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/ 8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The

move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise - CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see above - or no particular achievement as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for White. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ...h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 See Rule 1. 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3.cxd5 As already stated in the Chapter intro: this early exchange is slightly less precise than White's main move order 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 . Let's have a closer look at why this is the case. 3...exd5 4..xc3 White usually starts with this move, as the knight is best on c3, putting pressure on the centre. They can play 4.Nf3 instead, but after 4...c6 CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC 5.Nc3 will usually follow, transposing to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 , which we will examine shortly. Another rare option is 4.Bf4 when 4...c6 CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC and ... Bd6 CCStartBracketCCRule 3CCEndBracketCC work well. This leads to positions that we will examine via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bd6 . 4...c6 As per Rule 1. We play ...c6 right after the trade to support d5. Now we will examine three moves for White. After 5.Nf3 , we can apply rule 2 and develop our bishop to f5. With 5.Qc2 , White can stop this idea in its tracks, but 5...Bd6! is a good reply. Finally, there is 5.Bf4 , which we answer with 5...Bd6 , applying Rule 3. 5.Kf4 Kd6 6.Kxd6 Or 6.Bg3 Bf5 . when we successfully have developed the bishop. 6...O&xd6 7.O&c2 White stops ...Bf5 for the moment. After 7.e3 Bf5 , we again have accomplished the comfortable development of the bishop. 7....xe7 A nice move,

again preparing ...Bf5. 8.e3 Kf5 Here we go again. We managed to get the bishop out quickly and have accomplished an important opening goal in this line.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
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RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for White. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ...h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 See Rule 1. 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3..xf3 .xf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5..xc3 The knight's natural place is c3, so White usually starts with this move. Of course, developing the c1-bishop first is possible. After 5.Bf4 , we play 5...Bd6 , as usual. We cover this scenario in the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 Bd6 . More common is CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5. Bg5 , when I suggest playing 5...c6 CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC. Now 6.Nc3 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 . White could try CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/2p2n2/3p2B1/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Qc2 , which follows a similar idea as CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nc3 c6 6.Qc2 does . In both cases, I recommend 6... g6! , preparing ...Bf5. The move 5.Bg5 only has transpositional value, at best. Stockfish actually points out 5.Bg5 h6!? as an interesting independent idea, but I don't think it's worth having something special prepared against this rare move order. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 first. Now White's choice is mostly between 6.Bg5 and 6.Qc2. Against both moves, it is possible to simply play in the style of the mainlines of the current chapter. We could play ...Be7, ...h6 in reply to Bg5, ...O-O and ...Re8. This approach would simply transpose to the mentioned mainline. However, White's chosen move order is not precise, as mentioned in the intro. Black has various alternatives to the 'mainline style' approach that either improve our chances or lead to interesting, independent play. Besides 6.Qc2 and 6.Bg5, the move 6.Bf4 is also played frequently. As usual, I suggest playing 6...Bd6 against it. We cover this scenario in the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 Bd6 . A transposition is likely, as Nf3 and ...c6 are very natural moves, for example, 6.Bxd6 Qxd6 7.Nf3 c6 is a direct transposition. 6.g3 White goes for a kingside Fianchetto, a rarely played setup for a reason. Placing the bishop against the d5-c6-b7 pawn wall does not look too dangerous for Black, indeed. 6...Ke7 There is nothing wrong with developing this bishop to d6 or b4. I am going for 6...Be7

in my recommendation, playing in the same style as in the main lines: ...Be7, ...O-O and ...Re8. 7.Kg2 0-0 8.0-0 Qe8 We have castled and played ...Re8. One of our assets in the position is control of e4, so connecting the rook to it makes a lot of sense. I am stopping the trainable line here, as White can play many different moves, but they don't need to be learned by heart. We should rather consider some general ideas. We can play for the occupation of the e4-square. A manoeuvre like ... Nb8-d7-b6-c4-d6 takes a while but makes perfect sense. If White ever pushes the b-pawn for a minority attack, we look at the juicy square c4. We can also consider trading the g2-bishop later, trying to initiate play against the white king. Ideas like ... Be6, ...Qc8 and ...Bh3 are possible. We also need to consider that we'll need to react to whatever White is doing, and some plans by our opponent present us with new opportunities. I have some experience on the black side of this structure, and some ideas for White might easily backfire - they all happened in my games. - they play Ne5 and f4: weakens the square e4 CCStartBracketCCNote again how great a knight is on d6! - would be ideal in this caseCCEndBracketCC - they play e4 to open the position: White creates an IQP that we can play against - they play for b4-b5, which weakens the square c4. A minority attack is more promising if a bishop on d3 covers the c4-square.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
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Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/

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don't think it's worth having something special prepared against this rare move order. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 first. Now White's choice is mostly between 6.Bg5 and 6.Qc2. Against both moves, it is possible to simply play in the style of the mainlines of the current chapter. We could play ...Be7, ...h6 in reply to Bg5, ...O-O and ...Re8. This approach would simply transpose to the mentioned mainline. However, White's chosen move order is not precise, as mentioned in the intro. Black has various alternatives to the 'mainline style' approach that either improve our chances or lead to interesting, independent play. Besides 6.Qc2 and 6.Bg5, the move 6.Bf4 is also played frequently. As usual, I suggest playing 6...Bd6 against it. We cover this scenario in the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 Bd6 . A transposition is likely, as Nf3 and ...c6 are very natural moves, for example, 6.Bxd6 Qxd6 7.Nf3 c6 is a direct transposition. 6.Kg5 White pins our knight, similar to the current chapter's mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 . 6...h6 As per Rule 4: gain a tempo on the g5-bishop. However, Rule 2: if you can play ...Bf5, go for it. The move 6...Bf5 is fine in this position, but inserting 6...h6 7.Bh4 and only then 7...Bf5! is a little finesse worth knowing. The key difference is that 8.Qb3 can be answered with the powerful 8...g5! 9.Bg3 Qb6 , which already looks slightly better for Black and scores very well. Whereas if you'd play 6...Bf5 instead, 7.Qb3 is not easy to answer. You can play 7...Qb6 , but White can take on f6 and destroy our pawn structure. The gambit move 7...Nbd7!? seems to work, but it's not worth exploring, as CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/2p2n2/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R b KQkq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6...h6! 7.Bh4 Bf5! is the superior way of implementing ...Bf5. 7.Kh4 Kf5 Mission accomplished! Now we will examine 8.e3 and 8.Qb3, often a critical reply to ...Bf5, hitting the b7-pawn. In this particular case, we are well-prepared to meet the move. 8.O&b3 Whenever you play ...Bf5, you need to be sure that this move does no damage. We are now perfectly set to meet it. 8...g5 The point of inserting ...h6. After the forced 9.Bg3 , we can play 9...Qb6 , covering b7 comfortably. 9.O&xb7 A huge mistake, as the white queen, will end up trapped on a8. 9...gxh4 10.O&xa8 O&b6 Black is winning already. White's queen is trapped, and we just need to complete development with ...Bd6 and ...O-O to threaten ...Nbd7, winning her majesty. White may try 11.Na4 , but 11...Bb4+ is a good reply.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
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exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3..xf3 .xf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5..xc3 The knight's natural place is c3, so White usually starts with this move. Of course, developing the c1-bishop first is possible. After 5.Bf4 , we play 5...Bd6 , as usual. We cover this scenario in the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 Bd6 . More common is CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , when I suggest playing 5...c6 CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC. Now 6.Nc3 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 . White could try CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/2p2n2/3p2B1/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Qc2 , which follows a similar idea as CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nc3 c6 6.Qc2 does . In both cases, I recommend 6...g6! , preparing ...Bf5. The move 5.Bg5 only has transpositional value, at best. Stockfish actually points out 5.Bg5 h6!? as an interesting independent idea, but I don't think it's worth having something special prepared against this rare move order. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 first. Now White's choice is mostly between 6.Bg5 and 6.Qc2. Against both moves, it is possible to simply play in the style of the mainlines of the current chapter. We could play ...Be7, ...h6 in reply to Bg5, ...O-O and ...Re8. This approach would simply transpose to the mentioned mainline. However, White's chosen move order is not precise, as mentioned in the intro. Black has various alternatives to the 'mainline style' approach that either improve our chances or lead to interesting, independent play. Besides 6.Qc2 and 6.Bg5, the move 6.Bf4 is also played frequently. As usual, I suggest playing 6...Bd6 against it. We cover this scenario in the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 Bd6 . A transposition is likely, as Nf3 and ...c6 are very natural moves, for example, 6.Bxd6 Qxd6 7.Nf3 c6 is a direct transposition. 6.Kg5 White pins our knight, similar to the current chapter's mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 . 6...h6 As per Rule 4: gain a tempo on the g5-bishop. However, Rule 2: if you can play ...Bf5, go for it. The move 6...Bf5 is fine in this position, but inserting 6...h6 7.Bh4 and only then 7...Bf5! is a little finesse worth knowing. The key difference is that 8.Qb3 can be answered with the powerful 8...g5! 9.Bg3 Qb6 , which already looks slightly better for Black and scores very well. Whereas if you'd play 6...Bf5 instead, 7.Qb3 is not easy to answer. You can play 7...Qb6 , but White can take on f6 and destroy our pawn structure. The gambit move 7...Nbd7!? seems to work, but it's not worth exploring, as CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/2p2n2/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R b KQkq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6...h6! 7.Bh4 Bf5! is the superior way of implementing ...Bf5. 7.Kh4 Kf5 Mission accomplished! Now we will examine 8.e3 and 8.Qb3, often a critical reply to ...Bf5, hitting the b7-pawn. In this particular case, we are well-prepared to meet the

move. 8.O&b3 Whenever you play ...Bf5, you need to be sure that this move does no damage. We are now perfectly set to meet it. 8...g5 The point of inserting ...h6. After the forced 9.Bg3 , we can play 9...Qb6 , covering b7 comfortably. 9.Kg3 O&b6 Black already has the easier game and scores excellently from this position. The problem for White is that exchanging the queen on b6 is a terrible idea, while our exchange on b3 is fine, as White's doubled pawns are isolated and weak in the long run. We welcome the trade on b6, as it opens up the a-file, and b6-b5-b4 is a great resource to have. White, on the other hand, can't move their b-pan after a trade on b3. 10..xd2 Maybe this is best. White retreats the knight but allows Nxb3 in response to the queen trade. White's worst option CCStartBracketCCexcluding silly blundersCCEndBracketCC is 10.Qxb6? axb6 . We have b6-b5-b4 ideas, ...Nd7-b6-c4 comes to mind, as well. We attack the queenside, while White has no counterplay. After 10.e3 Qxb3 11.axb3 Nbd7 Black has a long-term edge due to White's doubled pawns. They can't be attacked quickly, but White has no obvious way to get rid of them. In the long run, often in the endgame, Black gets chances to exploit the weaknesses. 10....xbd7 11.e3 If White takes on b6, we recapture with the pawn! 11. Qxb6 axb6! is great for Black. We can use the b6-pawn and push it forward while the base pawn chain b7-c6-d5 remains sound. 11....xh5 And Black picks us the bishop pair. After ...Nxg3, we can even consider ...O-O-O. Our king is safe on this side of the board. Black has the better chances, as White has no compensation for giving up the bishop pair.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this

is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.

c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise - CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see above - or no particular achievement as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for White. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ...h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 See Rule 1. 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3..xf3 .xf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5..xc3 The knight's natural place is c3, so White usually starts with this move. Of course, developing the c1-bishop first is possible. After 5.Bf4 , we play 5...Bd6 , as usual. We cover this scenario in the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 Bd6 . More common is CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5. Bg5 , when I suggest playing 5...c6 CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC. Now 6.Nc3 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 . White could try CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/2p2n2/3p2B1/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Qc2 , which follows a similar idea as CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w

KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nc3 c6 6.Qc2 does . In both cases, I recommend 6... g6! , preparing ...Bf5. The move 5.Bg5 only has transpositional value, at best. Stockfish actually points out 5.Bg5 h6!? as an interesting independent idea, but I don't think it's worth having something special prepared against this rare move order. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 first. Now White's choice is mostly between 6.Bg5 and 6.Qc2. Against both moves, it is possible to simply play in the style of the mainlines of the current chapter. We could play ...Be7, ...h6 in reply to Bg5, ...O-O and ...Re8. This approach would simply transpose to the mentioned mainline. However, White's chosen move order is not precise, as mentioned in the intro. Black has various alternatives to the 'mainline style' approach that either improve our chances or lead to interesting, independent play. Besides 6.Qc2 and 6.Bg5, the move 6.Bf4 is also played frequently. As usual, I suggest playing 6...Bd6 against it. We cover this scenario in the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 Bd6 . A transposition is likely, as Nf3 and ...c6 are very natural moves, for example, 6.Bxd6 Qxd6 7.Nf3 c6 is a direct transposition. 6.Kg5 White pins our knight, similar to the current chapter's mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 . 6...h6 As per Rule 4: gain a tempo on the g5-bishop. However, Rule 2: if you can play ...Bf5, go for it. The move 6...Bf5 is fine in this position, but inserting 6...h6 7.Bh4 and only then 7...Bf5! is a little finesse worth knowing. The key difference is that 8.Qb3 can be answered with the powerful 8... g5! 9.Bg3 Qb6 , which already looks slightly better for Black and scores very well. Whereas if you'd play 6...Bf5 instead, 7.Qb3 is not easy to answer. You can play 7...Qb6 , but White can take on f6 and destroy our pawn structure. The gambit move 7...Nbd7!? seems to work, but it's not worth exploring, as CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/2p2n2/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R b KQkq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6...h6! 7.Bh4 Bf5! is the superior way of implementing ...Bf5. 7.Kh4 Kf5 Mission accomplished! Now we will examine 8.e3 and 8.Qb3, often a critical reply to ...Bf5, hitting the b7-pawn. In this particular case, we are well-prepared to meet the move. 8.e3 White's relatively best move, because the more ambitious 8.Qb3 leads to less than nothing. 8....xbd7 9.Kd3 Kxd3 10.O&xd3 Ke7 And again, we can conclude that Black is fine after the bishop managed to get to f5 early on.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0

1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays

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The knight's natural place is c3, so White usually starts with this move. Of course, developing the c1-bishop first is possible. After 5.Bf4 , we play 5...Bd6 , as usual. We cover this scenario in the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 Bd6 . More common is CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5. Bg5 , when I suggest playing 5...c6 CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC. Now 6.Nc3 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 . White could try CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/2p2n2/3p2B1/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Qc2 , which follows a similar idea as CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nc3 c6 6.Qc2 does . In both cases, I recommend 6... g6! , preparing ...Bf5. The move 5.Bg5 only has transpositional value, at best. Stockfish actually points out 5.Bg5 h6!? as an interesting independent idea, but I don't think it's worth having something special prepared against this rare move order. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 first. Now White's choice is mostly between 6.Bg5 and 6.Qc2. Against both moves, it is possible to simply play in the style of the mainlines of the current chapter. We could play ...Be7, ...h6 in reply to Bg5, ...O-O and ...Re8. This approach would simply transpose to the mentioned mainline. However, White's chosen move order is not precise, as mentioned in the intro. Black has various alternatives to the 'mainline style' approach that either improve our chances or lead to interesting, independent play. Besides 6.Qc2 and 6.Bg5, the move 6.Bf4 is also played frequently. As usual, I suggest playing 6...Bd6 against it. We cover this scenario in the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 Bd6 . A transposition is likely, as Nf3 and ...c6 are very natural moves, for example, 6.Bxd6 Qxd6 7.Nf3 c6 is a direct transposition. 6.O&c2 White tries to prevent ...Bf5, realizing that after 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! we manage this desirable bishop development. 6...g6 This is the way to make use of White's move order. We insist on playing ...Bf5 and invest a tempo in realizing this idea. We don't intend to play ...Bg7 later, as the bishop is misplaced on g7. An additional point to mention: if you forget that 6...g6 is a good option here and continue with 6...Be7 , nothing terrible will happen. After the natural sequence 7.Bg5 h6 8.Bh4 O-O 9.e3 Re8 we transpose to the mainline of the current chapter. The mainline gives Black about equal chances, but 6...g6 makes our job easier. 7.Kg5 After 7.Bg5 , we need to be careful, as two typical moves don't work. 7...Ke7 First of all, we need to avoid the following disasters: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3p1p/2p2np1/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PPQ1PPPP/R3KB1R b KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7...Bf5? 8. Qb3 Very annoying, as we have no good way to defend b7. Our f6-knight is loose, which ties the queen to its defence. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3p1p/2p2np1/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PPQ1PPPP/R3KB1R b KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7...h6? is a blunder due to 8.Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Nxd5 . We have Rule

4 stating that after Bg5, we should include ...h6. Here's the exception to the general rule - concrete tactics beat abstract concepts. After the correct 7...Be7, we need to check two entirely different approaches by White. Most of the time, White plays 8.e3, but we need to check the aggressive move 8.e4, too. Playing 7...Be7 avoids these troubles and breaks the pin. As mentioned, we don't want to play 7...Bg7, as the bishop is not well-placed on g7. It stares at the protected d4 pawn, without an adequate way to improve its scope. 8.e4 An aggressive move, trying to open up the position quickly. Black is fine against it, but you need to remember one point. 8...dxe4 Black should take with the pawn, as 8...Nxe4 9.Bxe7 forces 9...Kxe7 CCStartBracketCC 9...Qxe7 10.Nxd5 loses!CCEndBracketCC. After 9...Kxe7 Black is not in deep trouble, but 8...dxe4 makes our job a lot easier. 9.Kxf6 Kxf6 10.O&xe4+ O&e7 Here 10...Kf8 is not bad, either. Still, trading queens looks very logical. We have the bishop pair, and our opponent's d-pawn is isolated. This sounds like Black is much better, but White has good development and active pieces. This should balance matters roughly. I'd rather be on the black side, but objectively speaking, it must be about even. 11.Kc4 Kf5 Let's get the queens off the board. 12.O&xe7+ Elxe7 We take with the king to quickly connect rooks. After 13.O-O-O Nd7 14.Rhe1 Kf8 , this connection is temporarily broken, but our king will be placed well on g7 soon. In the variation starting with 8.e4, Black is in good shape. We have the long-term assets, so White has to drum up something to disturb us. With a bit of care, Black should coordinate nicely.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this

is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.

c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise - CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see above - or no particular achievement as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for White. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ...h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 See Rule 1. 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3..xf3 .xf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5..xc3 The knight's natural place is c3, so White usually starts with this move. Of course, developing the c1-bishop first is possible. After 5.Bf4 , we play 5...Bd6 , as usual. We cover this scenario in the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 Bd6 . More common is CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5. Bg5 , when I suggest playing 5...c6 CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC. Now 6.Nc3 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 . White could try CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/2p2n2/3p2B1/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Qc2 , which follows a similar idea as CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w

KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nc3 c6 6.Qc2 does . In both cases, I recommend 6... g6! , preparing ...Bf5. The move 5.Bg5 only has transpositional value, at best. Stockfish actually points out 5.Bg5 h6!? as an interesting independent idea, but I don't think it's worth having something special prepared against this rare move order. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 first. Now White's choice is mostly between 6.Bg5 and 6.Qc2. Against both moves, it is possible to simply play in the style of the mainlines of the current chapter. We could play ...Be7, ...h6 in reply to Bg5, ...O-O and ...Re8. This approach would simply transpose to the mentioned mainline. However, White's chosen move order is not precise, as mentioned in the intro. Black has various alternatives to the 'mainline style' approach that either improve our chances or lead to interesting, independent play. Besides 6.Qc2 and 6.Bg5, the move 6.Bf4 is also played frequently. As usual, I suggest playing 6...Bd6 against it. We cover this scenario in the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 Bd6 . A transposition is likely, as Nf3 and ...c6 are very natural moves, for example, 6.Bxd6 Qxd6 7.Nf3 c6 is a direct transposition. 6.O&c2 White tries to prevent ...Bf5, realizing that after 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! we manage this desirable bishop development. 6...g6 This is the way to make use of White's move order. We insist on playing ...Bf5 and invest a tempo in realizing this idea. We don't intend to play ...Bg7 later, as the bishop is misplaced on g7. An additional point to mention: if you forget that 6...g6 is a good option here and continue with 6...Be7 , nothing terrible will happen. After the natural sequence 7.Bg5 h6 8.Bh4 O-O 9.e3 Re8 we transpose to the mainline of the current chapter. The mainline gives Black about equal chances, but 6...g6 makes our job easier. 7.Kg5 After 7.Bg5 , we need to be careful, as two typical moves don't work. 7...Ke7 First of all, we need to avoid the following disasters: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3p1p/2p2np1/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PPQ1PPPP/R3KB1R b KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7...Bf5? 8.Qb3 Very annoying, as we have no good way to defend b7. Our f6-knight is loose, which ties the queen to its defence. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3p1p/2p2np1/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PPQ1PPPP/R3KB1R b KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7...h6? is a blunder due to 8.Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Nxd5 . We have Rule 4 stating that after Bg5, we should include ...h6. Here's the exception to the general rule - concrete tactics beat abstract concepts. After the correct 7...Be7, we need to check two entirely different approaches by White. Most of the time, White plays 8.e3, but we need to check the aggressive move 8.e4, too. Playing 7...Be7 avoids these troubles and breaks the pin. As mentioned, we don't want to play 7...Bg7, as the bishop is not well-placed on g7. It stares at the protected d4 pawn, without an adequate way to improve its scope. 8.e3 Kf5 Mission accomplished! 9.Kd3 Kxd3 10.O&xd3 .xbd7 Looking good so far. We have traded the bishop via f5, but there is one small idea to check. 11.Kh6 We haven't castled yet, so this move is worth checking. 11....xg4 A good solution to clarify the situation. 12.Kf4 After 12.Bg7? Rg8 13.Be5 Ngxe5 White will end up with a weak e-pawn, so they have to return. 12...0-0 And we have castled, completing our first development phase. If you have

studied the Chapter intro, you have seen the famous gameM.Bobotsov vs T. Petrosian, Lugano Olympiad 1968. Petrosian outplayed his opponent in an exemplary fashion, demonstrating the knight's strength on d6 later on. The current position on the board was also reached in the game. If it doesn't ring a bell or you have skipped the intro: study this game next - understanding the concepts is the key to success in the Carlsbad.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. A[[EndBracket]] [[StartFEN]]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[[EndFEN]] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 B[[EndBracket]] [[StartFEN]]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[[EndFEN]] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 C[[EndBracket]] [[StartFEN]]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[[EndFEN]] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 D[[EndBracket]] [[StartFEN]]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[[EndFEN]] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on [[StartFEN]]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[[EndFEN]] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After [[StartFEN]]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[[EndFEN]] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After [[StartFEN]]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5[[EndFEN]] 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8.

Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/ 8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing

...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise - CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see above - or no particular achievement as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for White. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ...h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 See Rule 1. 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3..xc3 .xf6 4.cxd5 exd5 After 4...exd5 White almost always plays 5.Bg5, pinning our knight. A less testing alternative is 5.Nf3 when we play 5...c6 , transposing to a line we cover via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 . 5.Kf4 After 5.Bf4, we can apply one of the move order rules discussed in the intro text. 5...Kd6 'Always play ...Bd6!'. Well, it's not the ONLY move, but a good reply to White's Bf4 development. It wouldn't be wrong to start with 5... c6 , either. However, after White has committed to Bf4, the move ...c6 is not as pressing. After Bg5, there is immediate pressure on the d5-pawn. 6.Kxd6 O&xd6 7.e3 A natural move, but it does nothing about ...Bf5. White may also try 7.Nf3 , but this is predictably toothless. The lines 7...c6 8.e3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnb1k2r/ppp2ppp/3q1n2/3p4/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R b KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7...c6 8.Qc2 g6 9.e3 Bf5 all lead to comfortable scenarios for Black, similar to the lines after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 . It would even be possible to play 7...Bf5 straight away, as 8.Qb3 O-O! works well, similar to CCStartFENCCrnb1k2r/ppp2ppp/3q1n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.e3 Bf5 8.Qb3 O-O , which we will examine now. 7...Kf5 This is a case where it makes sense to play ...Bf5, even without Black having played ...c6 first. We need to check if the immediate 8.Qb3 is a problem. If not, then 7...Bf5 is a good move. 8.O&b3 The only critical try. If White plays something slow, we'll complete our development easily and are happy about the f5-bishop and a possible trade of it after White might opt for Bd3 later. Back to 8. Qb3 - is there a problem with the b7-pawn. 8...0-0 A very attractive solution: we can ignore hanging the pawn. Even the simple move 8...Qb6 would have been fine, but clearly, castling is a great solution if White can't take b7. 9.O&xb7 That's a huge blunder. White needs to be cautious and play something like 9.Nf3 when 9...Nbd7

is fine for Black. White still shouldn't take on b7: 10.Qxb7 Rfb8 11.Qa6 Rxb2 is excellent for Black, enjoying the active rook. 9....xc6 Black has an overwhelming attack already. We threaten ...Nb4, and White has no reasonable defence. Here are two lines to illustrate matters: A**CC**EndBracket**CC** 10.a3 Nxd4!! 11.exd4 Rfb8 12.Qa6 Re8+ 13.Kd1 Qf4 White is completely helpless against Black's attack. Material is irrelevant, as White has no development at all. In such a case, you don't need to calculate all lines and try to figure out if there is a checkmate or material win at the end. White just can't survive with a king in the centre, all their pieces at home, and Black's forces invading already. B**CC**EndBracket**CC** **CC**StartFEN**CC**r4rk1/pQp2ppp/2nq1n2/3p1b2/3P4/2N1P3/PP3PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 1 10**CC**EndFEN**CC** 10.Qa6 Rab8 11.Bb5 Rb6 12.Qa4 Nb4 13.Rc1 and now many moves win, but 13...Rxb5 looks simple and good, as the knight fork on d3 will be murderous.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
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1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. A**CC**EndBracket**CC** **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 B**CC**EndBracket**CC** **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 C**CC**EndBracket**CC** **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 D**CC**EndBracket**CC** **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because

of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/ 8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule

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OCCEndBracketCC , and reach the same positions reliably. 6...h6 Against 6.e3, we start with this move as well. The move order 6.Qc2 Be7 has no drawback, but I am going for ...h6 first for consistency reasons. 7.Kxf6 It's vital to check this move, as we are forced to recapture with the queen, which allows the sequence 7.Bxf6 Qxf6 8. Nxd5 . It is fine for Black, but we should have a look. 7...O&xf6 8..xxd5 The only move worth checking. We are happy about the bishop pair advantage after a slow move like 8.e3. Note that after 8.e3 the d5-pawn is still attacked, so we need to avoid 8.e3 Bd6?? 9.Nxd5 . Playing a move like 8...Nd7, or even 8...Qd8 is fine to avoid this blunder. 8...O&xd4 That's the point. White now can't play 9.Nc7+?? , as 9... Kd8 10.Nxa8 Bb4+ wins the house. 9.Qd1 This is the only move for White to keep in the game. 9...Kb4+ The only move available. 10..xxb4 O&xb4+ We have easily obtained equal chances in this position. The moves ...Be6 and ...Nd7 are comfortable development moves, and White still needs some time to castle kingside.

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right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/ 8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6

played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise - CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see above - or no particular achievement as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for White. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ...h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 See Rule 1. 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3..xc3 .xf6 4.cxd5 exd5 After 4...exd5 White almost always plays 5.Bg5, pinning our knight. A less testing alternative is 5.Nf3 when we play 5...c6 , transposing to a line we cover via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 . 5.Kg5 White almost always plays this natural pinning move. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 right after the trade. Now White has two main moves, 6.e3 and 6.Qc2. There is also 6.Nf3 , when our recommended reply is 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . This sequence is covered in detail via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . 6.O&c2 After 6.e3 Black has the option to play 6...Bf5 . As I already mentioned in the intro to the current chapter, this move is somewhat dubious due to 7.Qf3! , when Black gets an unattractive doubled pawn after 7...Bg6 8.Bxf6 Qxf6 9. Qxf6 gxf6 . The evaluation of this endgame line has changed over the years. It seemed fine for Black for a while, which prompted some players on the white side to switch to 6.Qc2, which puts a stop to ...Bf5. In the 6.e3 line, playing the queen to c2 later is very common, so switching the move order to playing 6.Qc2 first was an easy decision to make. Does it matter much to us if White starts with 6.e3 or 6.Qc2? Fortunately not, we will eventually get the same positions. After 6.e3 , I suggest playing 6...h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.Bd3 O-O , when 9.Qc2 is the main continuation.

Against 6.Qc2, we can play the same setup CCStartBracketCC...h6, ...Be7, ...O-OCCEndBracketCC , and reach the same positions reliably. 6...h6 Against 6.e3, we start with this move as well. The move order 6.Qc2 Be7 has no drawback, but I am going for ...h6 first for consistency reasons. 7.Kh4 Maintaining the pin is the most challenging move. 7...Ke7 I suggest fighting the Carlsbad main line with ... Be7 setups, Black's most popular way of playing. 8.e3 Very natural and played in almost all of the games that I found. 8...0-0 9.Kd3 Again, an extremely natural move and White's almost exclusive choice at this point. 9...Qe8 Finally, we have transposed to the main lines of the current chapter that occur after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/2p2n2/3p2B1/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Qc2 Re8 . Please seethese lines for more information.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
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1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because

of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/ 8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule

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and ran into troubles in this particular variation. 6...h6 I suggest starting with 6...h6, as per Rule 4. Playing 6...Be7 first and ...h6 next is no mistake, though - we should reach the same positions. We already talked about 6...Bf5?! 7.Qf3! , which we need to avoid. 7.Kh4 Ke7 Breaking the annoying bishop pin is important. As mentioned in the notes to 6.e3, I also checked 7...Bd6 , but found my final recommendation to be more reliable and simpler to handle. 8.Kd3 White can start with 8.Qc2 instead of 8.Bd3, but it will lead to the same positions. We play 8...O-O , when both 9.Bd3 Re8 or CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2N1P3/PPQ2PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Re8 10.Bd3 Ne4 transpose to lines that we reach via 8.Bd3, too. Why does White play 8.Qc2 or 8.Bd3, by the way? After 7...Be7 we are ready to play ...Bf5! next, which White is eager to prevent. 8...0-0 Let's discuss some important general ideas. Now White has two decisions to make: Whether to play Ng1-f3 or Ng1-e2 and if Qc2 should be included or not. Qc2 lends additional cover to the e4-square, which is often useful. The first key point is that CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Ne4! and CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! are two similar lines that pose no problem for Black. The ...Ne4-idea pretty much takes any sting out of the Nf3-setups, which is good news. More often than not, White will opt for a Nge2-formation. Against Nge2, we need to stay flexible for a moment and wait if White continues with f2-f3 or not. If they do, the prescribed antidote is a quick queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5!, which gives us good chances. White can avoid f2-f3, though, and focus attention on the queenside. Against these slower plans, Black has some choice. I suggest playing actively on the queenside in this case. too. Let's talk move orders. I decided to organize the various options: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 - White usually continues with 10.Nf3 or 10.Nge2 , which transposes to B or C BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 is answered by 9...Ne4! CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nge2 is White's mainline, often reached by 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 . 9.O&c2 Very frequently played and leading to a position that is often reached via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.Qc2 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.e3 O-O 9.Bd3 . 9...Qe8 It is important to play this move before ... Nbd7. The point is to lend additional cover to the e4-square, so that 10.Nf3 Ne4! is possible. Now White has a key decision to make: knight to f3 or e2? If they play 10.Nge2 , we reply 10...Nbd7 and transpose to CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nge2 Re8 10.Qc2 Nbd7 . 10..xf3 We already know the right antidote to Nf3-setups - jump to e4. As mentioned before, 10.Nge2 has no independent value, as 10...Nbd7

CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC transposes to 9.Nge2 Re8 10.Qc2 Nbd7 . 10....xe4 The outpost e4 is one of the key assets of our position. We are happy to occupy it right away. 11.Kxe7 O&xe7 And again, we have transposed to a different move order, CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Ne4! 10.Bxe7 Qxe7 11.Qc2 Re8 .

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8.

Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/ 8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing

...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise - CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see above - or no particular achievement as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for White. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ...h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 See Rule 1. 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3..xc3 .xf6 4.cxd5 exd5 After 4...exd5 White almost always plays 5.Bg5, pinning our knight. A less testing alternative is 5.Nf3 when we play 5...c6 , transposing to a line we cover via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 . 5.Kg5 White almost always plays this natural pinning move. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 right after the trade. Now White has two main moves, 6.e3 and 6.Qc2. There is also 6.Nf3 , when our recommended reply is 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . This sequence is covered in detail via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . 6.e3 White's main move by far. They want to develop their bishop to d3 and are aware that 6...Bf5 is favourably answered by 7.Qf3! . After 6.e3, Black needs to decide what piece setup to go for. The main decisions are: ACCEndBracketCC Do we place our f8-bishop on e7 or d6? BCCEndBracketCC Do we play ...h6 or not? I have studied the various options and concluded that Black is currently doing fine with combining ...h6 and ...Be7. This setup has been tested extensively in practice, and Black has good results. A quick word about ...Bd6 setups: I have analyzed 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bd6 , but discovered some issues for Black. One line, in particular, proved to be problematic, which is 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Nf3 Re8 10. O-O . White never plays Qc2, inviting 10...Bg4 11.Qb3 , which is awkward for Black. The popular Chess streamer IM Eric Rosen has played the ...Bd6 setups a lot and ran into troubles in this particular variation. 6...h6 I suggest starting with 6...h6, as per Rule 4. Playing 6...Be7 first and ...h6 next is no mistake, though - we should reach the same positions. We already talked about 6...Bf5?! 7.Qf3! , which we need to avoid. 7.Kh4 Ke7 Breaking the annoying bishop pin is important. As mentioned in the notes to 6.e3, I also checked 7...Bd6 , but found my final recommendation to be more reliable and simpler to handle. 8.Kd3 White can start

with 8.Qc2 instead of 8.Bd3, but it will lead to the same positions. We play 8...O-O , when both 9.Bd3 Re8 or CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2N1P3/PPQ2PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Re8 10.Bd3 Ne4 transpose to lines that we reach via 8.Bd3, too. Why does White play 8.Qc2 or 8.Bd3, by the way? After 7...Be7 we are ready to play ...Bf5! next, which White is eager to prevent. 8...0-0 Let's discuss some important general ideas. Now White has two decisions to make: Whether to play Ng1-f3 or Ng1-e2 and if Qc2 should be included or not. Qc2 lends additional cover to the e4-square, which is often useful. The first key point is that CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Ne4! and CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! are two similar lines that pose no problem for Black. The ...Ne4-idea pretty much takes any sting out of the Nf3-setups, which is good news. More often than not, White will opt for a Nge2-formation. Against Nge2, we need to stay flexible for a moment and wait if White continues with f2-f3 or not. If they do, the prescribed antidote is a quick queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5!, which gives us good chances. White can avoid f2-f3, though, and focus attention on the queenside. Against these slower plans, Black has some choice. I suggest playing actively on the queenside in this case. too. Let's talk move orders. I decided to organize the various options: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 - White usually continues with 10.Nf3 or 10.Nge2 , which transposes to B or C BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 is answered by 9...Ne4! CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nge2 is White's mainline, often reached by 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 . 9..xf3 .xe4 We play in the same way after CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! , so this is easy to remember: answer Nf3 with ...Ne4! 10.Kxe7 O&xe7 11.O&c2 Qe8 This position is also frequently reached via CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 . White now has the major decision of whether to capture the knight or not. 12.Kxe4 White doesn't want to tolerate our knight and captures it. 12...dxe4 Our pawn structure is changed now, but we don't mind having a pawn on e4. We have a space advantage in the centre, and our pieces can use the d5-square. 13..xd2 White almost always plays this move. 13.Ne5 is harmless due to 13...Nd7 or 13...c5 , which also works. 13...f5 Black has also successfully employed 13...Bf5 here. I prefer 13...f5, thinking that Black's job is a bit easier. We'll play ...Be6 and ...Nd7-f6 next and enjoy a good position. Here's a possible sample continuation. 14.0-0 Ke6 White has two plans that I can see: attacking our centre with f3 and b4-b5. Let's have a look at both options. 15.Qab1 Going for b4-b5 in this position is slow and unpromising for White. 15....xd7 16.b4 b5 This key idea

is worth nothing. We stop b4-b5 and readily accept that c6 looks like a backward pawn on the half-open c-file. The problem for White is: it's impossible to exert any tangible pressure on the pawn. We play ...Nb6-d5 next, enjoying the excellently placed knight on the safe central square.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. AccEndBracketcc ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BccEndBracketcc ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CccEndBracketcc ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DccEndBracketcc ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After ccStartFENccrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5ccEndFENcc 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in

under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/ 8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise - CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.

c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see above - or no particular achievement as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for White. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ...h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 See Rule 1. 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3..xc3 .xf6 4.cxd5 exd5 After 4...exd5 White almost always plays 5.Bg5, pinning our knight. A less testing alternative is 5.Nf3 when we play 5...c6 , transposing to a line we cover via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 . 5.Kg5 White almost always plays this natural pinning move. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 right after the trade. Now White has two main moves, 6.e3 and 6.Qc2. There is also 6.Nf3 , when our recommended reply is 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . This sequence is covered in detail via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . 6.e3 White's main move by far. They want to develop their bishop to d3 and are aware that 6...Bf5 is favourably answered by 7.Qf3! . After 6.e3, Black needs to decide what piece setup to go for. The main decisions are: ACCEndBracketCC Do we place our f8-bishop on e7 or d6? BCCEndBracketCC Do we play ...h6 or not? I have studied the various options and concluded that Black is currently doing fine with combining ...h6 and ...Be7. This setup has been tested extensively in practice, and Black has good results. A quick word about ...Bd6 setups: I have analyzed 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bd6 , but discovered some issues for Black. One line, in particular, proved to be problematic, which is 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Nf3 Re8 10. O-O . White never plays Qc2, inviting 10...Bg4 11.Qb3 , which is awkward for Black. The popular Chess streamer IM Eric Rosen has played the ...Bd6 setups a lot and ran into troubles in this particular variation. 6...h6 I suggest starting with 6...h6, as per Rule 4. Playing 6...Be7 first and ...h6 next is no mistake, though - we should reach the same positions. We already talked about 6...Bf5?! 7.Qf3! , which we need to avoid. 7.Kh4 Ke7 Breaking the annoying bishop pin is important. As mentioned in the notes to 6.e3, I also checked 7...Bd6 , but found my final recommendation to be more reliable and simpler to handle. 8.Kd3 White can start with 8.Qc2 instead of 8.Bd3, but it will lead to the same positions. We play 8...O-O , when both 9.Bd3 Re8 or CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/

2N1P3/PPQ2PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Re8 10.Bd3 Ne4 transpose to lines that we reach via 8.Bd3, too. Why does White play 8.Qc2 or 8. Bd3, by the way? After 7...Be7 we are ready to play ...Bf5! next, which White is eager to prevent. 8...0-0 Let's discuss some important general ideas. Now White has two decisions to make: Whether to play Ng1-f3 or Ng1-e2 and if Qc2 should be included or not. Qc2 lends additional cover to the e4-square, which is often useful. The first key point is that CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/ PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Ne4! and CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! are two similar lines that pose no problem for Black. The ...Ne4-idea pretty much takes any sting out of the Nf3-setups, which is good news. More often than not, White will opt for a Nge2-formation. Against Nge2, we need to stay flexible for a moment and wait if White continues with f2-f3 or not. If they do, the prescribed antidote is a quick queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5!, which gives us good chances. White can avoid f2-f3, though, and focus attention on the queenside. Against these slower plans, Black has some choice. I suggest playing actively on the queenside in this case. too. Let's talk move orders. I decided to organize the various options: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 - White usually continues with 10.Nf3 or 10. Nge2 , which transposes to B or C BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 is answered by 9...Ne4! CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nge2 is White's mainline, often reached by 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 . 9..xf3 .xe4 We play in the same way after CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/ 2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! , so this is easy to remember: answer Nf3 with ...Ne4! 10.Kxe7 O&xe7 11.O&c2 Qe8 This position is also frequently reached via CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/ 2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 . White now has the major decision of whether to capture the knight or not. 12.Kxe4 White doesn't want to tolerate our knight and captures it. 12...dxe4 Our pawn structure is changed now, but we don't mind having a pawn on e4. We have a space advantage in the centre, and our pieces can use the d5-square. 13..xd2 White almost always plays this move. 13.Ne5 is harmless due to 13...Nd7 or 13...c5 , which also works. 13...f5 Black has also successfully employed 13...Bf5 here. I prefer 13...f5, thinking that Black's job is a bit easier. We'll play ...Be6 and ...Nd7-f6 next and enjoy a good position. Here's a possible sample continuation. 14.0-0 Ke6 White has two plans that I can see: attacking our centre with f3 and b4-b5. Let's have a look at both options. 15.f3 White does not want to wait until we might drum up an attack on the kingside and opens up the game in the centre. 15...exf3 16..xxf3 .xd7 Black has equal chances in this position. Next, we should involve the a8-rook with ...Rad8 and consider ... Nd7-f6-d5.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. AccEndBracketcc ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BccEndBracketcc ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CccEndBracketcc ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DccEndBracketcc ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After ccStartFENccrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5ccEndFENcc 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning

move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise - CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see above - or no particular achievement as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for White. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the

bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ...h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 See Rule 1. 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3..xc3 .xf6 4.cxd5 exd5 After 4...exd5 White almost always plays 5.Bg5, pinning our knight. A less testing alternative is 5.Nf3 when we play 5...c6 , transposing to a line we cover via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 . 5.Kg5 White almost always plays this natural pinning move. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 right after the trade. Now White has two main moves, 6.e3 and 6.Qc2. There is also 6.Nf3 , when our recommended reply is 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . This sequence is covered in detail via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . 6.e3 White's main move by far. They want to develop their bishop to d3 and are aware that 6...Bf5 is favourably answered by 7.Qf3! . After 6.e3, Black needs to decide what piece setup to go for. The main decisions are: ACCEndBracketCC Do we place our f8-bishop on e7 or d6? BCCEndBracketCC Do we play ...h6 or not? I have studied the various options and concluded that Black is currently doing fine with combining ...h6 and ...Be7. This setup has been tested extensively in practice, and Black has good results. A quick word about ...Bd6 setups: I have analyzed 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bd6 , but discovered some issues for Black. One line, in particular, proved to be problematic, which is 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Nf3 Re8 10. O-O . White never plays Qc2, inviting 10...Bg4 11.Qb3 , which is awkward for Black. The popular Chess streamer IM Eric Rosen has played the ...Bd6 setups a lot and ran into troubles in this particular variation. 6...h6 I suggest starting with 6...h6, as per Rule 4. Playing 6...Be7 first and ...h6 next is no mistake, though - we should reach the same positions. We already talked about 6...Bf5?! 7.Qf3! , which we need to avoid. 7.Kh4 Ke7 Breaking the annoying bishop pin is important. As mentioned in the notes to 6.e3, I also checked 7...Bd6 , but found my final recommendation to be more reliable and simpler to handle. 8.Kd3 White can start with 8.Qc2 instead of 8.Bd3, but it will lead to the same positions. We play 8...O-O , when both 9.Bd3 Re8 or CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2N1P3/PPQ2PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Re8 10.Bd3 Ne4 transpose to lines that we reach via 8.Bd3, too. Why does White play 8.Qc2 or 8. Bd3, by the way? After 7...Be7 we are ready to play ...Bf5! next, which White is eager to prevent. 8...0-0 Let's discuss some important general ideas. Now White has two decisions to make: Whether to play Ng1-f3 or Ng1-e2 and if Qc2 should be included or not. Qc2 lends additional cover to the e4-square, which is often useful. The first

key point is that CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Ne4! and CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! are two similar lines that pose no problem for Black. The ...Ne4-idea pretty much takes any sting out of the Nf3-setups, which is good news. More often than not, White will opt for a Nge2-formation. Against Nge2, we need to stay flexible for a moment and wait if White continues with f2-f3 or not. If they do, the prescribed antidote is a quick queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5!, which gives us good chances. White can avoid f2-f3, though, and focus attention on the queenside. Against these slower plans, Black has some choice. I suggest playing actively on the queenside in this case. too. Let's talk move orders. I decided to organize the various options: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 - White usually continues with 10.Nf3 or 10.Nge2 , which transposes to B or C BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 is answered by 9...Ne4! CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nge2 is White's mainline, often reached by 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 . 9..xf3 .xe4 We play in the same way after CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! , so this is easy to remember: answer Nf3 with ...Ne4! 10.Kxe7 O&xe7 11.O&c2 Qe8 This position is also frequently reached via CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 . White now has the major decision of whether to capture the knight or not. 12.0-0 A more flexible continuation than 12.Bxe4. 12...Kf5 We support our star piece. It's also fine to play 12...Nd7 instead. After our move 12...Bf5, White has mostly tried two ideas: Preparing b4-b5 with 13.Rab1, and 13.Ne5, which puts more pressure on the knight. It doesn't make much sense for White to take our knight right away, as the sample line 13.Bxe4 Bxe4 14.Nxe4 dxe4! 15.Nd2 Na6 16.a3 c5 shows. It's important to note that on move 14, we take with a pawn, keeping the queens on the board. The advanced e-pawn gives us a space advantage, which prompts us to keep more pieces on the board. 13..xe5 White puts more pressure on e4, but it is easily defused. 13....xd7 14.f3 The only interesting try for White. After 14.Nxd7 Qxd7 15.Nxe4 Bxe4 or CCStartFENCCr3r1k1/pp1nqpp1/2p4p/3pNb2/3Pn3/2NBP3/PPQ2PPP/R4RK1 w - - 6 14CCEndFENCC 14.Bxe4 Bxe4 15.Nxe4 Nxe5 16.dxe5 dxe4 17.Qxe4 Qxe5 Black has no problems at all. Note that these positions still offer some play, as they are not symmetrical. In particular, the first one offers chances to play ...f7-f5 and pose some problems on the kingside. 14....xxc3 We enter a forced sequence now. 15.Kxf5 .xxe5 16.dxe5 Of course not 16.bxc3?? Nc4 , when Black wins. 16....xb5 17.f4 f6 We attack White's central pawn quickly, which leads to interesting play. Our knight has a safe

retreat to c7, and White needs to be careful about overextending. The pawn construction e3-f4-e5 gains space, but it is also vulnerable - thus our move 17...f6.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. AccEndBracketcc ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BccEndBracketcc ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CccEndBracketcc ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DccEndBracketcc ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After ccStartFENccrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5ccEndFENcc 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move

orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/ 8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise - CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see above - or no particular achievement as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/

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Bd3, by the way? After 7...Be7 we are ready to play ...Bf5! next, which White is eager to prevent. 8...0-0 Let's discuss some important general ideas. Now White has two decisions to make: Whether to play Ng1-f3 or Ng1-e2 and if Qc2 should be included or not. Qc2 lends additional cover to the e4-square, which is often useful. The first key point is that CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Ne4! and CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! are two similar lines that pose no problem for Black. The ...Ne4-idea pretty much takes any sting out of the Nf3-setups, which is good news. More often than not, White will opt for a Nge2-formation. Against Nge2, we need to stay flexible for a moment and wait if White continues with f2-f3 or not. If they do, the prescribed antidote is a quick queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5!, which gives us good chances. White can avoid f2-f3, though, and focus attention on the queenside. Against these slower plans, Black has some choice. I suggest playing actively on the queenside in this case. too. Let's talk move orders. I decided to organize the various options: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 - White usually continues with 10.Nf3 or 10.Nge2 , which transposes to B or C BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 is answered by 9...Ne4! CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nge2 is White's mainline, often reached by 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 . 9..xf3 .xe4 We play in the same way after CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! , so this is easy to remember: answer Nf3 with ...Ne4! 10.Kxe7 O&xe7 11.O&c2 Qe8 This position is also frequently reached via CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 . White now has the major decision of whether to capture the knight or not. 12.0-0 A more flexible continuation than 12.Bxe4. 12...Kf5 We support our star piece. It's also fine to play 12...Nd7 instead. After our move 12...Bf5, White has mostly tried two ideas: Preparing b4-b5 with 13.Rab1, and 13.Ne5, which puts more pressure on the knight. It doesn't make much sense for White to take our knight right away, as the sample line 13.Bxe4 Bxe4 14.Nxe4 dxe4! 15.Nd2 Na6 16.a3 c5 shows. It's important to note that on move 14, we take with a pawn, keeping the queens on the board. The advanced e-pawn gives us a space advantage, which prompts us to keep more pieces on the board. 13.Qab1 White prepares the minority attack b4-b5. 13....xd7 We complete our development. Here I also examined 13...Nxc3 , which is already sufficient for equality. after 14.Qxc3 Bxd3 15.Qxd3 Nd7 16.b4?! a6 we transpose to CCStartFENCCrn2r1k1/pp2qpp1/2p4p/3p1b2/3Pn3/2NBPN2/PPQ2PPP/1R3RK1 b - - 5 13CCEndFENCC 13...Nd7 14.b4?! and are in good shape. White should avoid 16.b4, but nothing is challenging instead. Alternatively CCStartFENCCrn2r1k1/pp2qpp1/2p4p/3p1b2/

3P4/2nBPN2/PPQ2PPP/1R3RK1 w - - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.bxc3 Bxd3 15.Qxd3 b5 is possible but also fine for Black. White has no play on the queenside, while ... Nd7-b6-c4 is on for us. My main argument in favour of 13...Nd7 is that it keeps more tension and sets a little trap, as 14.b4 is not at all great for White but very natural. 14.b4 White's idea, but it leads to less than nothing. 14....xxc3 Black is also doing well with 14...Nb6 , but the capture is simple and good. 15.O&xc3 Kxd3 16.O&xd3 a6 Black is in good shape here and already to be preferred. We plan to transfer the knight to its ideal square d6. We are set to enter the favourable scenario of Bobotsov vs Petrosian, examined in the intro to this chapter. Please have a look at this game to understand better how to play this type of position.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After

CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/ 8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5

exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise - CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see above - or no particular achievement as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for White. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ...h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 See Rule 1. 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3..xc3 .xf6 4.cxd5 exd5 After 4...exd5 White almost always plays 5.Bg5, pinning our knight. A less testing alternative is 5.Nf3 when we play 5...c6 , transposing to a line we cover via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 . 5.Kg5 White almost always plays this natural pinning move. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 right after the trade. Now White has two main moves, 6.e3 and 6.Qc2. There is also 6.Nf3 , when our recommended reply is 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . This sequence is covered in detail via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . 6.e3 White's main move by far. They want to develop their bishop to d3 and are aware that 6...Bf5 is favourably answered by 7.Qf3! . After 6.e3, Black needs to decide what piece setup to go for. The main decisions are: ACCEndBracketCC Do we place our f8-bishop on e7 or d6? BCCEndBracketCC Do we play ...h6 or not? I have studied the various options and concluded that Black is currently doing fine with combining ...h6 and ...Be7. This setup has been tested extensively in practice, and Black has good results. A quick word about ...Bd6 setups: I have analyzed 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bd6 , but discovered some issues for Black. One line, in particular, proved to be problematic, which is 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Nf3 Re8 10. O-O . White never plays Qc2, inviting 10...Bg4 11.Qb3 , which is awkward for Black. The popular Chess streamer IM Eric Rosen has played the ...Bd6 setups a lot and ran into troubles in this particular variation. 6...h6 I suggest starting with 6...h6, as per Rule 4. Playing 6...Be7 first and ...h6 next is no mistake, though - we should

reach the same positions. We already talked about 6...Bf5?! 7.Qf3! , which we need to avoid. 7.Kh4 Ke7 Breaking the annoying bishop pin is important. As mentioned in the notes to 6.e3, I also checked 7...Bd6 , but found my final recommendation to be more reliable and simpler to handle. 8.Kd3 White can start with 8.Qc2 instead of 8.Bd3, but it will lead to the same positions. We play 8...O-O , when both 9.Bd3 Re8 or CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2N1P3/PPQ2PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Re8 10.Bd3 Ne4 transpose to lines that we reach via 8.Bd3, too. Why does White play 8.Qc2 or 8.Bd3, by the way? After 7...Be7 we are ready to play ...Bf5! next, which White is eager to prevent. 8...0-0 Let's discuss some important general ideas. Now White has two decisions to make: Whether to play Ng1-f3 or Ng1-e2 and if Qc2 should be included or not. Qc2 lends additional cover to the e4-square, which is often useful. The first key point is that CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Ne4! and CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! are two similar lines that pose no problem for Black. The ...Ne4-idea pretty much takes any sting out of the Nf3-setups, which is good news. More often than not, White will opt for a Nge2-formation. Against Nge2, we need to stay flexible for a moment and wait if White continues with f2-f3 or not. If they do, the prescribed antidote is a quick queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5!, which gives us good chances. White can avoid f2-f3, though, and focus attention on the queenside. Against these slower plans, Black has some choice. I suggest playing actively on the queenside in this case. too. Let's talk move orders. I decided to organize the various options: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 - White usually continues with 10.Nf3 or 10.Nge2 , which transposes to B or C BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 is answered by 9...Ne4! CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nge2 is White's mainline, often reached by 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 . 9..xge2 Qe8 We play this universally useful move first. Now White can try various move orders. They may start with CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qc2 or CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.O-O , but it makes no substantial difference for our setup. We'll play ...Nbd7 and start play on the queenside, involving the moves ...a5 and ... b5. 10.0-0 White also frequently plays 10.Qc2 , which transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 . Another possible transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.f3 Nbd7 11.O-O , which we'll reach in a moment via CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w

KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.O-O Nbd7 11.f3 . 10....xbd7 A good development move, completing our setup. It is premature to play 10...Ne4?! , as 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 12.Bxe4 dxe4 13.Ng3 f5 14.f3 exf3 15.Rxf3 is better for White. We have some weaknesses, like f5, and are lacking development. After the flexible 10...Nbd7 , White frequently plays 11.Qc2 , which after 11...Nh5 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 Nbd7 11.O-O Nh5 . Two other logical moves are 11.f3 and 11.Rb1, which we will examine now. 11.Qb1 Most of the time, White prefers the Botvinnik plan CCStartBracketCCf2-f3 to prepare e3-e4CCEndBracketCC, but we should check what happens if White plays for the minority attack. 11...a5 We stop White's b2-b4 idea. 12.a3 b5 Why not? We simply gain space on the queenside and prepare the idea ...Nb6-c4. At first glance, you might think c6 is a backward pawn, but White has no way to build any pressure on it. 13.O&c2 The move 13.b4? is rather naive because of 13...Nb6 , heading to c4. Black is calling the shots on the queenside, so weakening this side of the board is bad for White. 13....xb6 I think Black has equal chances here. The position is rather similar to one of the main lines of this chapter, which starts with CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qc2 Nbd7 11.O-O a5 12.Rae1 b5 . I discuss this type of position more in the notes tothis line, so please have a look there.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After

CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/

PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise - CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see above - or no particular achievement as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for White. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ...h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 See Rule 1. 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3..xc3 .xf6 4.cxd5 exd5 After 4...exd5 White almost always plays 5.Bg5, pinning our knight. A less testing alternative is 5.Nf3 when we play 5...c6 , transposing to a line we cover via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 . 5.Kg5 White almost always plays this natural pinning move. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 right after the trade. Now White has two main moves, 6.e3 and 6.Qc2. There is also 6.Nf3 , when our recommended reply is 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . This sequence is covered in detail via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . 6.e3 White's main move by far. They want to develop their bishop to d3 and are aware that 6...Bf5 is favourably answered by 7.Qf3! . After 6.e3, Black needs to decide what piece setup to go for. The main decisions are:

ACCEndBracketCC Do we place our f8-bishop on e7 or d6? BCCEndBracketCC Do we play ...h6 or not? I have studied the various options and concluded that Black is currently doing fine with combining ...h6 and ...Be7. This setup has been tested extensively in practice, and Black has good results. A quick word about ...Bd6 setups: I have analyzed 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bd6 , but discovered some issues for Black. One line, in particular, proved to be problematic, which is 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Nf3 Re8 10. O-O . White never plays Qc2, inviting 10...Bg4 11.Qb3 , which is awkward for Black. The popular Chess streamer IM Eric Rosen has played the ...Bd6 setups a lot and ran into troubles in this particular variation. 6...h6 I suggest starting with 6...h6, as per Rule 4. Playing 6...Be7 first and ...h6 next is no mistake, though - we should reach the same positions. We already talked about 6...Bf5?! 7.Qf3! , which we need to avoid. 7.Kh4 Ke7 Breaking the annoying bishop pin is important. As mentioned in the notes to 6.e3, I also checked 7...Bd6 , but found my final recommendation to be more reliable and simpler to handle. 8.Kd3 White can start with 8.Qc2 instead of 8.Bd3, but it will lead to the same positions. We play 8...O-O , when both 9.Bd3 Re8 or CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2N1P3/PPQ2PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Re8 10.Bd3 Ne4 transpose to lines that we reach via 8.Bd3, too. Why does White play 8.Qc2 or 8.Bd3, by the way? After 7...Be7 we are ready to play ...Bf5! next, which White is eager to prevent. 8...0-0 Let's discuss some important general ideas. Now White has two decisions to make: Whether to play Ng1-f3 or Ng1-e2 and if Qc2 should be included or not. Qc2 lends additional cover to the e4-square, which is often useful. The first key point is that CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Ne4! and CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! are two similar lines that pose no problem for Black. The ...Ne4-idea pretty much takes any sting out of the Nf3-setups, which is good news. More often than not, White will opt for a Nge2-formation. Against Nge2, we need to stay flexible for a moment and wait if White continues with f2-f3 or not. If they do, the prescribed antidote is a quick queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5!, which gives us good chances. White can avoid f2-f3, though, and focus attention on the queenside. Against these slower plans, Black has some choice. I suggest playing actively on the queenside in this case. too. Let's talk move orders. I decided to organize the various options: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 - White usually continues with 10.Nf3 or 10. Nge2 , which transposes to B or C BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 is answered by 9...Ne4! CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nge2 is White's mainline, often reached by 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 . 9..xge2 Qe8 We play this universally useful move first. Now White can try various move orders. They may start with CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/

PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qc2 or CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.O-O , but it makes no substantial difference for our setup. We'll play ...Nbd7 and start play on the queenside, involving the moves ...a5 and ... b5. 10.0-0 White also frequently plays 10.Qc2 , which transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 . Another possible transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.f3 Nbd7 11.O-O , which we'll reach in a moment via CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.O-O Nbd7 11.f3 . 10....xbd7 A good development move, completing our setup. It is premature to play 10...Ne4?! , as 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 12.Bxe4 dxe4 13.Ng3 f5 14.f3 exf3 15.Rxf3 is better for White. We have some weaknesses, like f5, and are lacking development. After the flexible 10...Nbd7 , White frequently plays 11.Qc2 , which after 11...Nh5 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 Nbd7 11.O-O Nh5 . Two other logical moves are 11.f3 and 11.Rb1, which we will examine now. 11.f3 White goes for the Botvinnik plan: expansion in the centre with e3-e4 is on White's agenda. 11...b5 A crucial moment. If White plays f2-f3, replying with b7-b5! is a MUST. The pawn push secures counterplay on the queenside and indirectly against the centre. The line 12.e4? b4 13.Na4 dxe4 14.fxe4 Nxe4! nicely demonstrates this point. I want to mention that I advocate playing ...b5 even if White has not played f2-f3, for example, after CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 8 11CCEndFENCC 11.Rb1 a5 12.a3 b5!? . In such a case, the ...b5-plan is just one good option for Black - you have alternatives. Against f2-f3, however, playing ...b7-b5! is the best antidote. 12.Kf2 White recognizes that 12.e4? is a blunder due to 12...b4 13.Na4 dxe4 14.fxe4 Nxe4! , which exploits the undefended bishop on h4. The prophylactic bishop retreat seeks to play e3-e4 at a more appropriate moment. White has also tried 12.a3 when 12...a5 is the logical reply. Playing 12...a5 has a quick ...Ba6 in mind. With ...Ba6 on the board, the move ...b4 will be possible again. After 12...a5, White will likely play 13.Bf2 , with similar ideas as 12.Bf2 has in mind. In general, there are many possible move orders, but they are not especially relevant. You need to remember the general ideas and then will find good solutions, should you meet a move order that you are not familiar with. 12...a5 Part of the plan. We gain more space and prepare ...Ba6. This time, the move 13.e4 is still dubious due to another noteworthy idea. 13.e4 Again a mistimed advance. 13...dxe4 14.fxe4 .xg4 An important idea to keep in mind. Now White has no way to keep the bishop, an important piece that helps cover the dark squares. We will not necessarily take the bishop on the next move but will preserve this option for a good moment. There are plenty of exciting tactics hidden in this position. An incredible line is 15.h3 Nxf2 16.Rxf2 Nc5! , which is excellent

for Black after 17.dxc5 Bxc5 . We'll get enough material CCStartBracketCCthe rook can't escapeCCEndBracketCC and have a great play on the dark squares.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move

orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/ 8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise - CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see above - or no particular achievement as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/

RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for White. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ...h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 See Rule 1. 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3..xc3 .xf6 4.cxd5 exd5 After 4...exd5 White almost always plays 5.Bg5, pinning our knight. A less testing alternative is 5.Nf3 when we play 5...c6 , transposing to a line we cover via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 . 5.Kg5 White almost always plays this natural pinning move. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 right after the trade. Now White has two main moves, 6.e3 and 6.Qc2. There is also 6.Nf3 , when our recommended reply is 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . This sequence is covered in detail via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . 6.e3 White's main move by far. They want to develop their bishop to d3 and are aware that 6...Bf5 is favourably answered by 7.Qf3! . After 6.e3, Black needs to decide what piece setup to go for. The main decisions are: ACCEndBracketCC Do we place our f8-bishop on e7 or d6? BCCEndBracketCC Do we play ...h6 or not? I have studied the various options and concluded that Black is currently doing fine with combining ...h6 and ...Be7. This setup has been tested extensively in practice, and Black has good results. A quick word about ...Bd6 setups: I have analyzed 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bd6 , but discovered some issues for Black. One line, in particular, proved to be problematic, which is 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Nf3 Re8 10. O-O . White never plays Qc2, inviting 10...Bg4 11.Qb3 , which is awkward for Black. The popular Chess streamer IM Eric Rosen has played the ...Bd6 setups a lot and ran into troubles in this particular variation. 6...h6 I suggest starting with 6...h6, as per Rule 4. Playing 6...Be7 first and ...h6 next is no mistake, though - we should reach the same positions. We already talked about 6...Bf5?! 7.Qf3! , which we need to avoid. 7.Kh4 Ke7 Breaking the annoying bishop pin is important. As mentioned in the notes to 6.e3, I also checked 7...Bd6 , but found my final recommendation to be more reliable and simpler to handle. 8.Kd3 White can start with 8.Qc2 instead of 8.Bd3, but it will lead to the same positions. We play 8...O-O , when both 9.Bd3 Re8 or CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2N1P3/PPQ2PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Re8 10.Bd3 Ne4 transpose to lines that we reach via 8.Bd3, too. Why does White play 8.Qc2 or 8.

Bd3, by the way? After 7...Be7 we are ready to play ...Bf5! next, which White is eager to prevent. 8...0-0 Let's discuss some important general ideas. Now White has two decisions to make: Whether to play Ng1-f3 or Ng1-e2 and if Qc2 should be included or not. Qc2 lends additional cover to the e4-square, which is often useful. The first key point is that CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Ne4! and CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! are two similar lines that pose no problem for Black. The ...Ne4-idea pretty much takes any sting out of the Nf3-setups, which is good news. More often than not, White will opt for a Nge2-formation. Against Nge2, we need to stay flexible for a moment and wait if White continues with f2-f3 or not. If they do, the prescribed antidote is a quick queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5!, which gives us good chances. White can avoid f2-f3, though, and focus attention on the queenside. Against these slower plans, Black has some choice. I suggest playing actively on the queenside in this case. too. Let's talk move orders. I decided to organize the various options: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 - White usually continues with 10.Nf3 or 10. Nge2 , which transposes to B or C BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 is answered by 9...Ne4! CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nge2 is White's mainline, often reached by 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 . 9..xge2 Qe8 We play this universally useful move first. Now White can try various move orders. They may start with CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qc2 or CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.O-O , but it makes no substantial difference for our setup. We'll play ...Nbd7 and start play on the queenside, involving the moves ...a5 and ... b5. 10.0-0 White also frequently plays 10.Qc2 , which transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 . Another possible transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.f3 Nbd7 11.O-O , which we'll reach in a moment via CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.O-O Nbd7 11.f3 . 10....xbd7 A good development move, completing our setup. It is premature to play 10...Ne4?! , as 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 12.Bxe4 dxe4 13.Ng3 f5 14.f3 exf3 15.Rxf3 is better for White. We have some weaknesses, like f5, and are lacking development. After the flexible 10...Nbd7 , White frequently plays 11.Qc2 , which after 11...Nh5 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 Nbd7 11.O-O Nh5 . Two other logical moves are 11.f3 and 11.Rb1, which we will examine now. 11.f3 White goes

for the Botvinnik plan: expansion in the centre with e3-e4 is on White's agenda. 11...b5 A crucial moment. If White plays f2-f3, replying with b7-b5! is a MUST. The pawn push secures counterplay on the queenside and indirectly against the centre. The line 12.e4? b4 13.Na4 dxe4 14.fxe4 Nxe4! nicely demonstrates this point. I want to mention that I advocate playing ...b5 even if White has not played f2-f3, for example, after CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 8 11CCEndFENCC 11.Rb1 a5 12.a3 b5!? . In such a case, the ...b5-plan is just one good option for Black - you have alternatives. Against f2-f3, however, playing ...b7-b5! is the best antidote. 12.Kf2 White recognizes that 12.e4? is a blunder due to 12...b4 13.Na4 dxe4 14.fxe4 Nxe4! , which exploits the undefended bishop on h4. The prophylactic bishop retreat seeks to play e3-e4 at a more appropriate moment. White has also tried 12.a3 when 12...a5 is the logical reply. Playing 12...a5 has a quick ...Ba6 in mind. With ...Ba6 on the board, the move ...b4 will be possible again. After 12...a5, White will likely play 13.Bf2 , with similar ideas as 12.Bf2 has in mind. In general, there are many possible move orders, but they are not especially relevant. You need to remember the general ideas and then will find good solutions, should you meet a move order that you are not familiar with. 12...a5 Part of the plan. We gain more space and prepare ...Ba6. This time, the move 13.e4 is still dubious due to another noteworthy idea. 13.Qc1 A good move for White, placing the rook on a half-open file. White can't go for any direct play CCStartBracketCC 13.e4?! is still dubiousCCEndBracketCC and improves first. 13...Ka6 Black has some reasonable alternatives here. The moves CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/2p2n1p/pp1p4/3P4/2NBPP2/PP2NBPP/2RQ1RK1 b - - 1 13CCEndFENCC 13...Nb6 , or CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/2p2n1p/pp1p4/3P4/2NBPP2/PP2NBPP/2RQ1RK1 b - - 1 13CCEndFENCC 13...a4 certainly can be played, too. What I really like about these positions: we have all the pieces on the board and many possible ideas. It's not a forcing position that may dry out soon but will lead to an interesting fight for sure. White has many possible moves now. I think it's best to look at some sample ideas and cut the trainable line here. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr2qr1k1/3nbpp1/b1p2n1p/pp1p4/3P4/2NBPP2/PP2NBPP/2RQ1RK1 w - - 2 14CCEndFENCC 14.e4 dxe4 15.fxe4 Ng4 still looks fine for Black. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr2qr1k1/3nbpp1/b1p2n1p/pp1p4/3P4/2NBPP2/PP2NBPP/2RQ1RK1 w - - 2 14CCEndFENCC 14.b3 White is concerned about ...a4, but it works anyway. 14...a4 CCStartBracketCCyou don't need to play this, waiting is also fineCCEndBracketCC, when 15.bxa4? is wrong due to 15...b4! 16.Bxa6 Rxa6 17.Nb1 Qa8 , showing a nice trick to be aware of. CCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr2qr1k1/3nbpp1/b1p2n1p/pp1p4/3P4/2NBPP2/PP2NBPP/2RQ1RK1 w - - 2 14CCEndFENCC 14.Ng3 Bf8 is again, not forced. But good to show an idea 15.e4 b4 16.Bxa6 Rxa6 17.Na4 dxe4 18.fxe4 c5! An important idea! We attack White's centre, seeing that lines like 19.dxc5 Rc6 or 19.Nxc5 Nxc5 20.dxc5 Rc6 work well. White's remaining pawns are targets, and we'll easily get one back and have a good game.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. AccEndBracketcc ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BccEndBracketcc ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CccEndBracketcc ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DccEndBracketcc ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After ccStartFENccrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5ccEndFENcc 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After ccStartFENccrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ccEndFENcc 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning

move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise - CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see above - or no particular achievement as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for White. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the

bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ...h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 See Rule 1. 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3..xc3 .xf6 4.cxd5 exd5 After 4...exd5 White almost always plays 5.Bg5, pinning our knight. A less testing alternative is 5.Nf3 when we play 5...c6 , transposing to a line we cover via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 . 5.Kg5 White almost always plays this natural pinning move. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 right after the trade. Now White has two main moves, 6.e3 and 6.Qc2. There is also 6.Nf3 , when our recommended reply is 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . This sequence is covered in detail via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . 6.e3 White's main move by far. They want to develop their bishop to d3 and are aware that 6...Bf5 is favourably answered by 7.Qf3! . After 6.e3, Black needs to decide what piece setup to go for. The main decisions are: ACCEndBracketCC Do we place our f8-bishop on e7 or d6? BCCEndBracketCC Do we play ...h6 or not? I have studied the various options and concluded that Black is currently doing fine with combining ...h6 and ...Be7. This setup has been tested extensively in practice, and Black has good results. A quick word about ...Bd6 setups: I have analyzed 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bd6 , but discovered some issues for Black. One line, in particular, proved to be problematic, which is 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Nf3 Re8 10. O-O . White never plays Qc2, inviting 10...Bg4 11.Qb3 , which is awkward for Black. The popular Chess streamer IM Eric Rosen has played the ...Bd6 setups a lot and ran into troubles in this particular variation. 6...h6 I suggest starting with 6...h6, as per Rule 4. Playing 6...Be7 first and ...h6 next is no mistake, though - we should reach the same positions. We already talked about 6...Bf5?! 7.Qf3! , which we need to avoid. 7.Kh4 Ke7 Breaking the annoying bishop pin is important. As mentioned in the notes to 6.e3, I also checked 7...Bd6 , but found my final recommendation to be more reliable and simpler to handle. 8.Kd3 White can start with 8.Qc2 instead of 8.Bd3, but it will lead to the same positions. We play 8...O-O , when both 9.Bd3 Re8 or CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2N1P3/PPQ2PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Re8 10.Bd3 Ne4 transpose to lines that we reach via 8.Bd3, too. Why does White play 8.Qc2 or 8. Bd3, by the way? After 7...Be7 we are ready to play ...Bf5! next, which White is eager to prevent. 8...0-0 Let's discuss some important general ideas. Now White has two decisions to make: Whether to play Ng1-f3 or Ng1-e2 and if Qc2 should be included or not. Qc2 lends additional cover to the e4-square, which is often useful. The first

key point is that CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Ne4! and CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! are two similar lines that pose no problem for Black. The ...Ne4-idea pretty much takes any sting out of the Nf3-setups, which is good news. More often than not, White will opt for a Nge2-formation. Against Nge2, we need to stay flexible for a moment and wait if White continues with f2-f3 or not. If they do, the prescribed antidote is a quick queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5!, which gives us good chances. White can avoid f2-f3, though, and focus attention on the queenside. Against these slower plans, Black has some choice. I suggest playing actively on the queenside in this case. too. Let's talk move orders. I decided to organize the various options: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 - White usually continues with 10.Nf3 or 10. Nge2 , which transposes to B or C BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 is answered by 9...Ne4! CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nge2 is White's mainline, often reached by 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 . 9..xge2 Qe8 We play this universally useful move first. Now White can try various move orders. They may start with CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qc2 or CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.O-O , but it makes no substantial difference for our setup. We'll play ...Nbd7 and start play on the queenside, involving the moves ...a5 and ... b5. 10.O&c2 A popular move at this particular point, but the resulting position is often reached via different move orders. White frequently plays Qc2 at an earlier stage, for example CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.Qc2 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.e3 O-O 9.Bd3 Re8 10.Nge2 leads to the same position. 10....xbd7 Finally, it's time to develop our knight. Note that 10... Ne4?! is questionable here, as 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 12.Bxe4 dxe4 13.Ng3 f5 14.O-O , followed by f3, is better for White. After the much better move 10...Nbd7, White has to make some decisions. First of all, they can castle queenside. Against our setup, this approach is bad and gives us a strong attack - we simply throw the kitchen sink at them with ...b5, ...a5 etc. and enjoy life. It's much better to castle kingside for White, avoiding a direct attack. White may castle kingside immediately or start with the move 11.f3, which is also popular. After CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R3K2R w KQ - 8 11CCEndFENCC 11.f3 , we play the crucial move 11...b5! , starting our queenside play. 11.f3 b5 A crucial moment. If White plays f2-f3, replying with b7-b5! is a MUST. The pawn push secures counterplay on the queenside and indirectly against the centre. I'd like to mention that I advocate playing ...b5 even if White has not played f2-f3, for

example, after [CC]StartFEN[CC]r1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R3K2R w KQ - 8 11[CC]EndFEN[CC] 11.O-O Black has the idea 11...Nh5!? , but I suggest 11...a5 , when 12.f3 b5! would transpose to [CC]StartFEN[CC]r1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R3K2R w KQ - 8 11[CC]EndFEN[CC] 11.f3 b5! 12.O-O a5 , the position we are about to examine. If White plays [CC]StartFEN[CC]r1bqr1k1/1p1nbpp1/2p2n1p/p2p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R4RK1 w - - 0 12[CC]EndFEN[CC] 12.Rae1 , I'd still play 12...b5!? , even though White has not played f2-f3. In such a case, the ...b5-plan is just one good option for Black - you have alternatives. Against f2-f3, however, playing ...b7-b5! is the best antidote. 12.0-0 There is not much else. White needs to castle and get the king to safety. 12.e4? fails to 12...b4 13.Na4 dxe4 14.fxe4 Nxe4 , when White is crushed. 12...a5 Continuing our queenside buildup. We can also reach this position via different move orders, in particular, 11.O-O or 10.O-O Nbd7, if White plays a quick Qc2. In general, the line [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10[CC]EndFEN[CC] 10.O-O Nbd7 11.f3 b5! is very similar to the position we have on the board; many ideas apply to both. We'll go ...Ba6 next in most cases and continue our play on the queenside. I'd like to check one sharper line now, the direct 13.e4. 13.e4 b4 14..xa4 This is better than 14.Nd1 , when 14...Qb6 is a good reply. 14...dxe4 15.fxe4 c5 This leads to immense complications, but the move is actually strategically founded. White has the full centre d4/e4, and 15...c5! hits at the centre to gain squares for our pieces. If White takes on c5, we'll get the e5 square and excellent dark-squared control. Did you wonder if 15...Nxe4 is possible here? It actually is possible, and if you ask Stockfish it leads to a draw! No joke, it's suggesting the following line 16.Bxe7 Qxe7 17.Qxc6 Nd2 18.Qxa8 Qe3+ 19.Rf2 Nf6 , just to give the first move of this mess. I prefer 15...c5! because it shows the strategic idea of hitting at the centre and fighting for squares. The shot 15...Nxe4 works tactically for an engine, but knowing about 15...c5 as a strategic idea will help you in other similar positions. 16.e5 This looks critical. With 15...c5, we hit at the d-pawn, hoping that White would move it. A[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]r1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/5n1p/p1p5/Np1PP2B/3B4/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 w - - 0 16[CC]EndFEN[CC] 16.dxc5? Ng4 is great for Black. We dominate on the dark squares. [CC]StartFEN[CC]r1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/5n1p/p1p5/Np1PP2B/3B4/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 w - - 0 16[CC]EndFEN[CC] 16.Nxc5 Nxc5 17.dxc5 Ng4 is the same story. B[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]r1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/5n1p/p1p5/Np1PP2B/3B4/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 w - - 0 16[CC]EndFEN[CC] 16.d5?? Nxe4 is just a straight refutation. 16....xd5 Note that 16.e5 allowed this knight jump. With 15...c5, we fought for central squares and got one. The position is very sharp and tactical now. Frequently, this reduces options for both sides, as concrete calculation proves that only one move works, while others would lose the game. Here, this is not the case. White has many possibilities, which is why I will stop the trainable line here and give you an illustrative overview. A[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]r1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/7p/p1pnP3/Np1P3B/3B4/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 w - - 1 17[CC]EndFEN[CC] 17.Bh7+? is bad after 17...Kh8 18.Bxe7 Rxe7 , when White's

bishop on h7 and the knight on a4 are offside. We also threaten ...Ne3, of course. Note that CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/3nbppB/7p/p1pnP3/Np1P3B/8/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 b - - 2 17CCEndFENCC 17...Kf8?? not only looks wrong, but loses to 18.Rxf7+! . BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/7p/p1pnP3/Np1P3B/3B4/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 w - - 1 17CCEndFENCC 17.Bxe7 Rxe7! Taking with the rook is vital to lend additional cover to f7. Now 18.Bc4 Ne3 19.Qe4 Nxf1 20.Qxa8 Ne3 is a fun line that keeps the game complicated but balanced. CCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/7p/p1pnP3/Np1P3B/3B4/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 w - - 1 17CCEndFENCC 17.Bc4 Bxh4 18.Bxd5 Nxe5! 19.Bxa8 cxd4 gives Black good play. Stockfish finds a way to equality for White after 20.Nf4 Ba6 21.Bd5 , but we are very deep down the rabbit hole.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is: where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an

unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/ 8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/

PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise - CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see above - or no particular achievement as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for White. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ...h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 See Rule 1. 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3..xc3 .xf6 4.cxd5 exd5 After 4...exd5 White almost always plays 5.Bg5, pinning our knight. A less testing alternative is 5.Nf3 when we play 5...c6 , transposing to a line we cover via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 . 5.Kg5 White almost always plays this natural pinning move. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 right after the trade. Now White has two main moves, 6.e3 and 6.Qc2. There is also 6.Nf3 , when our recommended reply is 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . This sequence is covered in detail via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . 6.e3 White's main move by far. They want to develop their bishop to d3 and are aware that 6...Bf5 is favourably answered by 7.Qf3! . After 6.e3, Black needs to decide what piece setup to go for. The main decisions are: ACCEndBracketCC Do we place our f8-bishop on e7 or d6? BCCEndBracketCC Do we play ...h6 or not? I have studied the various options and concluded that Black is currently doing fine with combining ...h6 and ...Be7. This setup has been tested extensively in practice, and Black has good results. A quick word about ...Bd6 setups: I have analyzed 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bd6 , but discovered some issues for Black. One line, in particular, proved to be problematic, which is 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Nf3 Re8 10. O-O . White never plays Qc2, inviting 10...Bg4 11.Qb3 , which is awkward for Black. The popular Chess streamer IM Eric Rosen has played the ...Bd6 setups a lot and ran into troubles in this particular variation. 6...h6 I suggest starting with 6...h6,

as per Rule 4. Playing 6...Be7 first and ...h6 next is no mistake, though - we should reach the same positions. We already talked about 6...Bf5?! 7.Qf3! , which we need to avoid. 7.Kh4 Ke7 Breaking the annoying bishop pin is important. As mentioned in the notes to 6.e3, I also checked 7...Bd6 , but found my final recommendation to be more reliable and simpler to handle. 8.Kd3 White can start with 8.Qc2 instead of 8.Bd3, but it will lead to the same positions. We play 8...O-O , when both 9.Bd3 Re8 or CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2N1P3/PPQ2PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Re8 10.Bd3 Ne4 transpose to lines that we reach via 8.Bd3, too. Why does White play 8.Qc2 or 8.Bd3, by the way? After 7...Be7 we are ready to play ...Bf5! next, which White is eager to prevent. 8...0-0 Let's discuss some important general ideas. Now White has two decisions to make: Whether to play Ng1-f3 or Ng1-e2 and if Qc2 should be included or not. Qc2 lends additional cover to the e4-square, which is often useful. The first key point is that CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Ne4! and CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! are two similar lines that pose no problem for Black. The ...Ne4-idea pretty much takes any sting out of the Nf3-setups, which is good news. More often than not, White will opt for a Nge2-formation. Against Nge2, we need to stay flexible for a moment and wait if White continues with f2-f3 or not. If they do, the prescribed antidote is a quick queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5!, which gives us good chances. White can avoid f2-f3, though, and focus attention on the queenside. Against these slower plans, Black has some choice. I suggest playing actively on the queenside in this case. too. Let's talk move orders. I decided to organize the various options: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 - White usually continues with 10.Nf3 or 10.Nge2 , which transposes to B or C BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 is answered by 9...Ne4! CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nge2 is White's mainline, often reached by 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 . 9..xge2 Qe8 We play this universally useful move first. Now White can try various move orders. They may start with CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qc2 or CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.O-O , but it makes no substantial difference for our setup. We'll play ...Nbd7 and start play on the queenside, involving the moves ...a5 and ... b5. 10.O&c2 A popular move at this particular point, but the resulting position is often reached via different move orders. White frequently plays Qc2 at an earlier stage, for example CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.Qc2 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.e3 O-O 9.Bd3 Re8 10.Nge2 leads to

the same position. 10....xbd7 Finally, it's time to develop our knight. Note that 10... Ne4?! is questionable here, as 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 12.Bxe4 dxe4 13.Ng3 f5 14.O-O , followed by f3, is better for White. After the much better move 10...Nbd7, White has to make some decisions. First of all, they can castle queenside. Against our setup, this approach is bad and gives us a strong attack - we simply throw the kitchen sink at them with ...b5, ...a5 etc. and enjoy life. It's much better to castle kingside for White, avoiding a direct attack. White may castle kingside immediately or start with the move 11.f3, which is also popular. After CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R3K2R w KQ - 8 11CCEndFENCC 11.f3 , we play the crucial move 11...b5! , starting our queenside play. 11.0-0-0 Castling queenside is a huge mistake here. It's easy to explain why this is the case. If White plays 11.O-O a5 12.Rfe1 , I recommend starting queenside action with 12...b5 and conclude that Black has fair chances. 11.O-O-O? castles right into our queenside attack and leads White into trouble. 11...b5 We have the simplest plan ever: ...b5, ...Nb6, ...a5 - throwing the kitchen sink at our opponent! 12.f3 White has tried this move most of the time. It covers e4 but also prepares g4 to storm on the kingside. We are much faster, though. A different way of going for g4 would be 12. h3 . We have the same plan in any case. Here's a sample sequence: 12...Nb6 13. g4 a5 14.g5 hxg5 15.Bxg5 b4 16.Na4 Nxa4 17.Qxa4 Ne4 and Black is much better. We have the much safer king and the better pawn structure on top. 12....xb6 13.g4 White can also switch to the central plan with e3-e4, but it is much too slow. 13.Bf2 a5 14.e4 b4 15.Nb1 dxe4 16.fxe4 Ng4 was more or less winning for Black in a GM game between Ernesto Inarkiev and Michail Saltaev, a former team mate of my Bundesliga days. 13...a5 Chess can be easy sometimes! 14.g5 This is wrong, but it's good to know why. Better for White would be a slower move, but we have an automatic attack based on ...a4, ...b4 and so on. By computer standards, the move 11.O-O-O already loses for White. We don't need to prove that, of course. Black has all the fun. 14....xh5 That's an important point. We don't take on g5 but rather keep the file closed. White is getting nowhere against our king, while our pawn storm will hit with tremendous force.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DCCEndBracketCC

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0 5[C][C]EndFEN[C][C] 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1[C][C]EndBracket[C][C] We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are [C][C]StartFEN[C][C]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[C][C]EndFEN[C][C] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , [C][C]StartFEN[C][C]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[C][C]EndFEN[C][C] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common [C][C]StartFEN[C][C]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[C][C]EndFEN[C][C] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing ...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2[C][C]EndBracket[C][C] The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case [C][C]StartBracket[C][C]rule 1[C][C]EndBracket[C][C]. Examples are [C][C]StartFEN[C][C]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[C][C]EndFEN[C][C] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or [C][C]StartFEN[C][C]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[C][C]EndFEN[C][C] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 [C][C]StartBracket[C][C]inserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained later[C][C]EndBracket[C][C]. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise - [C][C]StartFEN[C][C]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[C][C]EndFEN[C][C] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see above - or no particular achievement as [C][C]StartFEN[C][C]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[C][C]EndFEN[C][C] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for White. 3[C][C]EndBracket[C][C] White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4[C][C]EndBracket[C][C] If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ...h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline [C][C]StartFEN[C][C]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[C][C]EndFEN[C][C] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 See Rule 1. 6.e3 h6 or [C][C]StartFEN[C][C]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[C][C]EndFEN[C][C] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3..xc3 .xf6 4.cxd5 exd5 After 4...exd5 White almost always plays 5.Bg5, pinning our knight. A less testing alternative is 5.Nf3 when we play 5...c6 , transposing to a line we cover via the more common move order [C][C]StartFEN[C][C]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/

RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 . 5.Kg5 White almost always plays this natural pinning move. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 right after the trade. Now White has two main moves, 6.e3 and 6.Qc2. There is also 6.Nf3 , when our recommended reply is 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . This sequence is covered in detail via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . 6.e3 White's main move by far. They want to develop their bishop to d3 and are aware that 6...Bf5 is favourably answered by 7.Qf3! . After 6.e3, Black needs to decide what piece setup to go for. The main decisions are: ACCEndBracketCC Do we place our f8-bishop on e7 or d6? BCCEndBracketCC Do we play ...h6 or not? I have studied the various options and concluded that Black is currently doing fine with combining ...h6 and ...Be7. This setup has been tested extensively in practice, and Black has good results. A quick word about ...Bd6 setups: I have analyzed 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bd6 , but discovered some issues for Black. One line, in particular, proved to be problematic, which is 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Nf3 Re8 10. O-O . White never plays Qc2, inviting 10...Bg4 11.Qb3 , which is awkward for Black. The popular Chess streamer IM Eric Rosen has played the ...Bd6 setups a lot and ran into troubles in this particular variation. 6...h6 I suggest starting with 6...h6, as per Rule 4. Playing 6...Be7 first and ...h6 next is no mistake, though - we should reach the same positions. We already talked about 6...Bf5?! 7.Qf3! , which we need to avoid. 7.Kh4 Ke7 Breaking the annoying bishop pin is important. As mentioned in the notes to 6.e3, I also checked 7...Bd6 , but found my final recommendation to be more reliable and simpler to handle. 8.Kd3 White can start with 8.Qc2 instead of 8.Bd3, but it will lead to the same positions. We play 8...O-O , when both 9.Bd3 Re8 or CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2N1P3/PPQ2PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Re8 10.Bd3 Ne4 transpose to lines that we reach via 8.Bd3, too. Why does White play 8.Qc2 or 8. Bd3, by the way? After 7...Be7 we are ready to play ...Bf5! next, which White is eager to prevent. 8...0-0 Let's discuss some important general ideas. Now White has two decisions to make: Whether to play Ng1-f3 or Ng1-e2 and if Qc2 should be included or not. Qc2 lends additional cover to the e4-square, which is often useful. The first key point is that CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Ne4! and CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! are two similar lines that pose no problem for Black. The ...Ne4-idea pretty much takes any sting out of the Nf3-setups, which is good news. More often than not, White will opt for a Nge2-formation. Against Nge2, we need to stay flexible for a moment and wait if White continues with f2-f3 or not. If they do, the prescribed antidote is a quick queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5!, which gives us good chances. White can avoid f2-f3, though, and focus attention on the queenside. Against these slower plans, Black has some choice. I suggest playing actively on the queenside in this case. too. Let's talk move orders. I

decided to organize the various options: A[]EndBracket[] []StartFEN[]rnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9[]EndFEN[] 9.Qc2 Re8 - White usually continues with 10.Nf3 or 10. Nge2 , which transposes to B or C B[]EndBracket[] []StartFEN[]rnbq1rk1/ pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9[]EndFEN[] 9.Nf3 is answered by 9...Ne4! C[]EndBracket[] []StartFEN[]rnbq1rk1/ pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9[]EndFEN[] 9.Nge2 is White's mainline, often reached by 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 . 9..xge2 Qe8 We play this universally useful move first. Now White can try various move orders. They may start with []StartFEN[]rnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/ PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10[]EndFEN[] 10.Qc2 or []StartFEN[]rnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10[]EndFEN[] 10.O-O , but it makes no substantial difference for our setup. We'll play ...Nbd7 and start play on the queenside, involving the moves ...a5 and ... b5. 10.O&c2 A popular move at this particular point, but the resulting position is often reached via different move orders. White frequently plays Qc2 at an earlier stage, for example []StartFEN[]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[]EndFEN[] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.Qc2 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.e3 O-O 9.Bd3 Re8 10.Nge2 leads to the same position. 10....xbd7 Finally, it's time to develop our knight. Note that 10... Ne4?! is questionable here, as 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 12.Bxe4 dxe4 13.Ng3 f5 14.O-O , followed by f3, is better for White. After the much better move 10...Nbd7, White has to make some decisions. First of all, they can castle queenside. Against our setup, this approach is bad and gives us a strong attack - we simply throw the kitchen sink at them with ...b5, ...a5 etc. and enjoy life. It's much better to castle kingside for White, avoiding a direct attack. White may castle kingside immediately or start with the move 11.f3, which is also popular. After []StartFEN[]r1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/ 2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R3K2R w KQ - 8 11[]EndFEN[] 11.f3 , we play the crucial move 11...b5! , starting our queenside play. 11.0-0 White castles kingside and delays the question of 'playing f2-f3 or not' for a move. 11...a5 The position before 11...a5 has been reached hundreds of times in master practice. Black has tried many moves, as the position is not tactical, and you have some flexibility. Black has also done alright with the move 11...Nh5 , for example. I was quite satisfied with this line when I wondered if it was possible to play it differently. Against f3-setups, we play a quick ...b5 - is it possible to play this idea even without White having played f3 before? I checked 11...b5?! , but this is questionable due to 12.a4! b4 13.Na2 , when the c6-pawn is attacked, we'd have no fully satisfactory reply. Well, what about 11...a5 then, and wait with ...b5 for a moment? It turned out to work well, so here we go. 12.Qae1 White plays without the move f3. The main move 12.f3 needs to be answered with 12...b5! , which we cover via the move order []StartFEN[]r1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/ 2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R3K2R w KQ - 8 11[]EndFEN[] 11.f3 b5 12.O-O a5 . Of course, White could play other moves besides 12.Rae1. We'd still be able to play the

...b5 plan; White's concrete move does not matter all that much. 12...b5 We play ... b5 anyway, even without the 'signal' move f3 being on the board. Discovering this idea was a true revelation for me, as it shows that Black has a 'universal setup'. We can aim for ...a5, ...b5 and start a queenside play, more or less ignoring what White does. Don't get me wrong: I am not saying White is worse or anything of the sort, just that we have a rather easy life, as our concept has a universal character and there are no subtle move order points to consider. 13.a4 This is not great, but I want to show why. The move CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R4RK1 b - - 9 11CCEndFENCC 11...b5 didn't work so well before because of 12.a4 , we want to check the difference. 13...b4 14..xb1 Worse is 14.Na2 c5 , when 15.dxc5 Nxc5 16.Bxf6 fails due to 16...Nxd3 , when the rook e1 is attacked. This is different to CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R4RK1 b - - 9 11CCEndFENCC 11...b5 12. a4 , as there is no rook on e1 in this line. 14...O&b6 We are ready to play ...c5 next, with a pleasant initiative on the queenside.

☐ 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1
■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 White may choose to capture on d5 at various moments. In our repertoire framework, there are four possible moments. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.cxd5 exd5 Let's examine the differences and how to evaluate each version. I'd like to start with D, as this type of Carlsbad has some specific points due to the early ...a6 move that we have played. This line is not covered in the current chapter but in thededicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . What about the other three versions? Well, the only version considered to be challenging for Black is C, while A and B are considered to be less critical. Let's work out why this is the case. I suggest looking at C first and then comparing. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 we reach the Carlsbad structure. After the exchange on d5, a major issue in the QGD for Black has improved dramatically. Our c8-bishop is not staring at the e6-pawn but now enjoys an open diagonal c8-g4. We are happy about this change, but now the question is:

where to develop the bishop? Placing it on f5 looks very natural and active, connecting it with the square e4, a potential outpost for Black. So let's play ...Bf5, right? The issue is: after White's best move, 5.Bg5 , we can't play 5...Bf5? because of 6.Bxf6 . After 6...Qxf6 7.Nxd5 we've lost the d-pawn, while 6...gxf6 results in an unacceptable pawn structure. Alright, let's prepare ...Bf5 then. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , we could play 5...c6 , protecting d5 reliably. Now White's most common reply is 6.e3 , preparing Bd3 next. Can we play 6...Bf5 now? Well, it's possible, but White has the strong reply 7.Qf3! , when 7...Bg6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 leads to an endgame that is more comfortable for White to play. It turns out that after White's most precise move order, we don't get ...Bf5 in under favourable circumstances. We will see that this is not the End of the World, but preventing ...Bf5 is an achievement for White. Now, let's compare to the other move orders that are less precise. Let's have a look at move order B. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 White usually continues 5.Nc3 , when 5...c6! is the most precise move. We anticipate the pinning move 6.Bg5 , when 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5! is possible without a problem. In move order A, White exchanges very early on, right on move three. The key difference to the other move orders is that Black has not played Nf6 yet, so it's impossible for White to pin the knight with Bg5. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 White usually opts for 4.Nc3 , when 4...c6! is precise. We cover the d5-pawn and prepare the move ...Bd6. White can't develop their bishop with a Bg5 pin - what else to do? After 5.Bf4 , we have the simple reply 5...Bd6 . If White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 , we manage 5...Bf5 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/2p5/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 stops ...Bf5, but after 5...Bd6! White can't develop their c1-bishop at all. I think I've gotten my point across. Move orders A and B give Black some additional options, usually regarding an early ...Bf5 or hindering White's desired development. Whenever different move orders are possible, it is easy to be confused. Therefore I'd like to give you some rules of thumb for this chapter: 1CCEndBracketCC We need the move ...c6 to support the d5-pawn and construct the reliable pawn chain b7-c6-d5. Rule of thumb: After White exchanges on d5, our next move should be ...c6 right away. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 or the most common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/ 8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 . Starting with ...c6 is not the ONLY way, but it works all the time and is never wrong. If White has already committed to Bf4, playing

...c6 is less urgent. No pin increases the pressure on d5. 2CCEndBracketCC The move ...Bf5 works well if White has already committed to Nf3 and we have ...c6 played. The latter should almost always be the case CCStartBracketCCrule 1CCEndBracketCC. Examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Nf3 Bf5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCCinserting ...h6 is a small finesse explained laterCCEndBracketCC. A point to remember is that playing ...Bf5 before Nf3 is on the board is either imprecise - CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qf3! , see above - or no particular achievement as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 allows 6.f3 , which is interesting for White. 3CCEndBracketCC White usually aims for a bishop development to g5 but sometimes elects to play Bf4 instead. Against all cases of an early Bf4, I advise playing Bd6, challenging the bishop and offering a trade. White's bishop is well-placed on f4, and exchanging it is a good option and always works. 4CCEndBracketCC If White pins our f6-knight, we should attack the bishop with ...h6, gaining a useful tempo. This happens in the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 See Rule 1. 6.e3 h6 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 Again, see Rule1. 6.Bg5 h6 . 3..xc3 .xf6 4.cxd5 exd5 After 4...exd5 White almost always plays 5.Bg5, pinning our knight. A less testing alternative is 5.Nf3 when we play 5...c6 , transposing to a line we cover via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 . 5.Kg5 White almost always plays this natural pinning move. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 right after the trade. Now White has two main moves, 6.e3 and 6.Qc2. There is also 6.Nf3 , when our recommended reply is 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . This sequence is covered in detail via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . 6.e3 White's main move by far. They want to develop their bishop to d3 and are aware that 6...Bf5 is favourably answered by 7.Qf3! . After 6.e3, Black needs to decide what piece setup to go for. The main decisions are: ACCEndBracketCC Do we place our f8-bishop on e7 or d6? BCCEndBracketCC Do we play ...h6 or not? I have studied the various options and concluded that Black is currently doing fine with combining ...h6 and ...Be7. This setup has been tested extensively in practice, and Black has good results. A quick word about ...Bd6 setups: I have analyzed 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bd6 , but discovered some issues for Black.

One line, in particular, proved to be problematic, which is 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Nf3 Re8 10. O-O . White never plays Qc2, inviting 10...Bg4 11.Qb3 , which is awkward for Black. The popular Chess streamer IM Eric Rosen has played the ...Bd6 setups a lot and ran into troubles in this particular variation. 6...h6 I suggest starting with 6...h6, as per Rule 4. Playing 6...Be7 first and ...h6 next is no mistake, though - we should reach the same positions. We already talked about 6...Bf5?! 7.Qf3! , which we need to avoid. 7.Kh4 Ke7 Breaking the annoying bishop pin is important. As mentioned in the notes to 6.e3, I also checked 7...Bd6 , but found my final recommendation to be more reliable and simpler to handle. 8.Kd3 White can start with 8.Qc2 instead of 8.Bd3, but it will lead to the same positions. We play 8...O-O , when both 9.Bd3 Re8 or CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2N1P3/PPQ2PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Re8 10.Bd3 Ne4 transpose to lines that we reach via 8.Bd3, too. Why does White play 8.Qc2 or 8. Bd3, by the way? After 7...Be7 we are ready to play ...Bf5! next, which White is eager to prevent. 8...0-0 Let's discuss some important general ideas. Now White has two decisions to make: Whether to play Ng1-f3 or Ng1-e2 and if Qc2 should be included or not. Qc2 lends additional cover to the e4-square, which is often useful. The first key point is that CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Ne4! and CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! are two similar lines that pose no problem for Black. The ...Ne4-idea pretty much takes any sting out of the Nf3-setups, which is good news. More often than not, White will opt for a Nge2-formation. Against Nge2, we need to stay flexible for a moment and wait if White continues with f2-f3 or not. If they do, the prescribed antidote is a quick queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5!, which gives us good chances. White can avoid f2-f3, though, and focus attention on the queenside. Against these slower plans, Black has some choice. I suggest playing actively on the queenside in this case. too. Let's talk move orders. I decided to organize the various options: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 - White usually continues with 10.Nf3 or 10. Nge2 , which transposes to B or C BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 is answered by 9...Ne4! CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nge2 is White's mainline, often reached by 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 . 9..xge2 Qe8 We play this universally useful move first. Now White can try various move orders. They may start with CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qc2 or CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.O-O , but it makes no substantial difference for our setup. We'll play ...Nbd7 and start play on the queenside, involving the moves ...a5 and ... b5. 10.O&c2 A popular move at this particular point, but the resulting position

is often reached via different move orders. White frequently plays Qc2 at an earlier stage, for example CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.Qc2 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.e3 O-O 9.Bd3 Re8 10.Nge2 leads to the same position. 10....xbd7 Finally, it's time to develop our knight. Note that 10...Ne4?! is questionable here, as 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 12.Bxe4 dxe4 13.Ng3 f5 14.O-O , followed by f3, is better for White. After the much better move 10...Nbd7, White has to make some decisions. First of all, they can castle queenside. Against our setup, this approach is bad and gives us a strong attack - we simply throw the kitchen sink at them with ...b5, ...a5 etc. and enjoy life. It's much better to castle kingside for White, avoiding a direct attack. White may castle kingside immediately or start with the move 11.f3, which is also popular. After CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R3K2R w KQ - 8 11CCEndFENCC 11.f3 , we play the crucial move 11...b5! , starting our queenside play. 11.0-0
White castles kingside and delays the question of 'playing f2-f3 or not' for a move. 11...a5 The position before 11...a5 has been reached hundreds of times in master practice. Black has tried many moves, as the position is not tactical, and you have some flexibility. Black has also done alright with the move 11...Nh5 , for example. I was quite satisfied with this line when I wondered if it was possible to play it differently. Against f3-setups, we play a quick ...b5 - is it possible to play this idea even without White having played f3 before? I checked 11...b5?! , but this is questionable due to 12.a4! b4 13.Na2 , when the c6-pawn is attacked, we'd have no fully satisfactory reply. Well, what about 11...a5 then, and wait with ...b5 for a moment? It turned out to work well, so here we go. 12.Qae1 White plays without the move f3. The main move 12.f3 needs to be answered with 12...b5! , which we cover via the move order CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R3K2R w KQ - 8 11CCEndFENCC 11.f3 b5 12.O-O a5 . Of course, White could play other moves besides 12.Rae1. We'd still be able to play the ...b5 plan; White's concrete move does not matter all that much. 12...b5 We play ...b5 anyway, even without the 'signal' move f3 being on the board. Discovering this idea was a true revelation for me, as it shows that Black has a 'universal setup'. We can aim for ...a5, ...b5 and start a queenside play, more or less ignoring what White does. Don't get me wrong: I am not saying White is worse or anything of the sort, just that we have a rather easy life, as our concept has a universal character and there are no subtle move order points to consider. 13.f3 I don't see a way forward for White without f2-f3. What constructive plan does White have besides preparing e3-e4? I don't see it, really. In any case, Black can play ...Ba6 next and then consider further action. You can think of preparing ...c5, for example. 13...Ka6
We have discussed the f3-style positions already via 11.f3. The current position is certainly not a bad version of it. White can't successfully play 14.e4?! , because 14...dxe4 15.fxe4 Ng4 is good for Black, a common idea. White probably needs a preparational move like 14.Bf2 , but it is slow. We'd have a choice between the forcing 14...b4 and something like 14...Qb6 CCStartBracketCCthere are plenty of

optionsCCEndBracketCC to keep the tension. It's a position full of pieces that give Black good chances, in my opinion.

☐ 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B
■ 3.Bf4

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 In this Chapter, we will examine lines that follow the pattern of White trying to develop their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various move orders that White can try. Here's a list: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 White can also develop the bishops after the sequence CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 , when 5.Bf4 and 5.Bg5 are possible. The line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 is covered in a dedicated chapter, though. So there are a ton of different lines - that sounds complicated. But here's the good news: absolutely ALL of the lines are answered with the same move, which is ...d5xc4! Therefore we can follow a simple rule of thumb: every early queen's bishop move CCStartBracketCCmove 3, 4, 5CCEndBracketCC in the QGD is answered by the capture. What's the point of the capture? There are two, actually: in the best case, we just keep the pawn! This can easily happen if White is careless or doesn't know any theory at all. You'll often meet opponents who never studied the capture seriously and handle it poorly, giving you a simple extra pawn. The secondary objective is to gain time, as White needs to invest moves to get the pawn back. This approach is similar to our line against the Catalan, which also involves an early ...d5xc4 CCStartBracketCCCCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 CCEndBracketCC. White regularly plays ...Qd1-a4xc4 in these lines, which allows us to gain time on the queen, for example, with a timely ...b5. As listed above, there are various versions of Bf4/Bg5 that we will examine in this Chapter. While our reply ...dxc4 will be the same against all of them, there are still differences between the lines, and it's useful to know some pointers to understand the concepts better. ACCEndBracketCC After the capture, White often plays e2-e3, intending to capture c4 with the bishop. If you can answer this move with ...b5 CCStartBracketCCwithout allowing Nxb5CCEndBracketCC, it will be good for Black. Examples are:

CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 dxc4 4.e3 b5! CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 dxc4 4.e3 b5! CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 4.e3 b5! Note that after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 the move 5... b5? allows 6.Nxb5 and is wrong. Instead, playing 5...c5 is the correct move, attacking the d-pawn. BCCEndBracketCC White can try to regain the pawn with the more aggressive move e2-e4. This is possible in the two Bg5-lines, as our f6-knight is pinned and therefore pushing e2-e4 becomes an option for White. In both cases, CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 , the move 5... b5!? is possible but leads to murky complications that are tough to navigate. Instead, I advise playing ...c5, attacking White's d-pawn. To summarize: there are clear cases where ...b5 is the best option and should be played, described in A - otherwise, we play ...c5 to attack the d-pawn and give up on the idea of holding the c-pawn. 3.Kf4 This very early bishop move is extremely rare because Black has a multitude of good replies. 3...dxc4 One of the good answers and consistent with our approach of taking on c4 whenever White plays the c1-bishop. Black is also in good shape after 3...c5 and 3...Bd6, which explains the rarity of 3.Bf4 - there are too many drawbacks for White. 4.e3 b5 In the Queen's Gambit Accepted an early ...b5 is a mistake. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e3 b5? 4.a4 c6 5.axb5 cxb5? 6.Qf3 is a well-known way to a quick win for White. Here, however, the moves Bf4 and ...e6 are added. This heavily works in Black's favour, as ...e6 is a crucial move, while Bf4 is quite irrelevant in the battle for the captured c-pawn. 5.a4 c6 6.axb5 After 6.Nc3 , we cover the b-pawn with 6...Qb6 and are just a pawn up! We develop with ...Nf6, ...Bb4,...Nbd7, ...Bb7 and have an advantage. 6...cxb5 7.O&f3 O&d5 That's the difference to the Queen's Gambit Accepted. This answer is possible due to the additional move ...e6. 8..xc3 O&xf3 Don't play 8...Bb4?? 9.Qg3! , when White attacks both g7 and the b8-knight, winning material! This is the only essential trick to know after 3.Bf4 dxc4. 9..xxf3 Kb4 10..xd2 Kd7 We keep the pawn for the moment. White can play 11.Bxb8 Rxb8 12.Rxa7 , but the bishop pair gives us a nice advantage. White should try 11.Be2 , but it's White rather than Black who needs to be concerned about equalizing.

☐ 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B
■ 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 #1

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■ 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 #2

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we play ...c5 to attack the d-pawn and give up on the idea of holding the c-pawn. 3..xf3 .xf6 4.Kg5 White sometimes employs this move order to avoid lines that arise after 4.Nc3 , particularly 4...dxc4 and 4...c6 . We don't mind the move, as our standard answer, capturing on c4, is considered to be the best reply. 4...dxc4 After the capture, White's best replies are 5.Qa4+ and 5.e4, while 5.Nc3 is best answered by 5...a6 , which transposes toChapter 9 on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3. Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 , when 5.Bg5 dxc4! is the move order. 5.e4 Certainly White's most aggressive option. 5...c5 In the intro notes to this Chapter, I mentioned that 5...b5 is possible in this position, but not my recommended move. I prefer 5...c5 for practical reasons, as it gives Black equal chances without any particular theoretical workload. Still, I'd like to point out the consequences of 5...b5, as it can be a good later addition to the repertoire, sharpening the play. After 5...b5 , White's best is 6. a4 c6 7.Nc3 , when Black has a range of options. All of them lead to complications, like in the following sequence: 7...Qb6 8.Bxf6 gxf6 keeps the extra pawn but makes you wonder where Black's king will find a safe place in the long run. I don't think a murky line like this should be part of our core KIS repertoire, but it's a good option to have. Let's examine 5...c5 now. White's best replies are 6.Bxc4 and 6.Nf3, while the tempting move 6.e5?! is dubious. 6.e5 A tempting move, but it turns out to be dubious. 6...h6 Well, we didn't just walk into a deadly pin 😀. This counterattack on the bishop gives Black good play. 7.Kh4 White would like to make this move work, but we are in good shape against it. There is no convincing alternative, though. After 7.exf6 hxg5 or 7.Bxf6 gxf6 , we'll have a tremendously strong bishop pair and already torn down White's centre. White can play CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3pp1/4pn1p/2p1P1B1/2pP4/5N2/PP3PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7. Be3 , but we are slightly better after 7...cxd4 8.Bxd4 Ne4 9.Bxc4 Nc6 , when both ...Nxd4 and ...Bb4+ are annoying for White. 7...g5 8.Kg3 Unfortunately for White, this is the only move. 8.Nxg5?? is answered with 8...Qa5+! , keeping the extra piece! while after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3p2/4pn1p/2p1P1p1/2pP3B/5N2/PP3PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 8CCEndFENCC 8.exf6 gxh4 Black is much better. We'll pick up f6 and enjoy the bishop pair and at least one extra pawn to boot! 8....xh5 Now I don't see a good move for White. On a general note, White's centre is crumbling away. A combination of ...Nc6, ...Nxg3 and ...g4 will likely tear down both the d- and e-pawn of our opponent.

☐ 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B
■ 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 #2

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 In this Chapter, we will examine lines that follow the pattern of White trying to develop their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various move orders that White can try. Here's a list: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/

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☐ 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B
■ 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 #3

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move the bishop again, and there is no ideal square. 10.Kd2 This looks best. It's wrong to give up the bishop pair by taking on f6, while 10.Bh4 g5 11.Bg3 b5 , followed by ...Bb7, gives Black some active play. Finally, CCStartFENCCrnb1kb1r/1p3pp1/p3pn1p/6B1/2BNP3/2N5/PP3PPP/R3K2R w KQkq - 0 10CCEndFENCC 10.Be3 Ng4 and CCStartFENCCrnb1kb1r/1p3pp1/p3pn1p/6B1/2BNP3/2N5/PP3PPP/R3K2R w KQkq - 0 10CCEndFENCC 10.Bf4 Nbd7 look awkward for White, too. 10...Kc5 Developing with a gain of tempo looks good. 11..xb3 The most natural move. The knight looks more passive on c3, while 11.Nf3 looks odd. White would like to have the option to move the f-pawn, which is impossible after the retreat to f3. 11...Ka7 This position offers equal chances, and it is not dead boring. Our bishop is nicely positioned on a7, and we have ideas based on the squares d4 and e5. Playing ...Nc6-e5 comes to mind, if possible. White can stop this idea with 12.f4 , when 12...Bd7 is a good setup. 12.f4 As already mentioned, this is White's most active option. 12...Kd7 The move f2-f4 is active but weakens the e4-pawn. We prepare ...Bc6, putting some pressure on the central pawn. Alternatives like 12...b5 13.Bd3 e5!? or CCStartFENCCrnb1k2r/bp3pp1/p3pn1p/8/2B1PP2/1NN5/PP1B2PP/R3K2R b KQkq - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12...Ng4 are interesting, as well.

☐ 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B
■ 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 #4

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 In this Chapter, we will examine lines that follow the pattern of White trying to develop their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various move orders that White can try. Here's a list: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 White can also develop the bishops after the sequence CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 , when 5.Bf4 and 5.Bg5 are possible. The line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 is covered in a dedicated chapter, though. So there are a ton of different lines - that sounds complicated. But here's the good news: absolutely ALL of the lines are answered with the same move, which is ...d5xc4! Therefore we can follow a simple rule of thumb: every early queen's bishop move CCStartBracketCCmove 3, 4, 5CCEndBracketCC in the QGD is answered by the capture. What's the point of the capture? There are two, actually: in the best case,

we just keep the pawn! This can easily happen if White is careless or doesn't know any theory at all. You'll often meet opponents who never studied the capture seriously and handle it poorly, giving you a simple extra pawn. The secondary objective is to gain time, as White needs to invest moves to get the pawn back. This approach is similar to our line against the Catalan, which also involves an early ...d5xc4 CCStartBracketCCCCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 CCEndBracketCC. White regularly plays ...Qd1-a4xc4 in these lines, which allows us to gain time on the queen, for example, with a timely ...b5. As listed above, there are various versions of Bf4/Bg5 that we will examine in this Chapter. While our reply ...dxc4 will be the same against all of them, there are still differences between the lines, and it's useful to know some pointers to understand the concepts better. ACCEndBracketCC After the capture, White often plays e2-e3, intending to capture c4 with the bishop. If you can answer this move with ...b5 CCStartBracketCCwithout allowing Nxb5CCEndBracketCC, it will be good for Black. Examples are: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 dxc4 4.e3 b5! CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 dxc4 4.e3 b5! CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 4.e3 b5! Note that after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 the move 5... b5? allows 6.Nxb5 and is wrong. Instead, playing 5...c5 is the correct move, attacking the d-pawn. BCCEndBracketCC White can try to regain the pawn with the more aggressive move e2-e4. This is possible in the two Bg5-lines, as our f6-knight is pinned and therefore pushing e2-e4 becomes an option for White. In both cases, CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 , the move 5... b5!? is possible but leads to murky complications that are tough to navigate. Instead, I advise playing ...c5, attacking White's d-pawn. To summarize: there are clear cases where ...b5 is the best option and should be played, described in A - otherwise, we play ...c5 to attack the d-pawn and give up on the idea of holding the c-pawn. 3..xf3 .xf6 4.Kg5 White sometimes employs this move order to avoid lines that arise after 4.Nc3 , particularly 4...dxc4 and 4...c6 . We don't mind the move, as our standard answer, capturing on c4, is considered to be the best reply. 4...dxc4 After the capture, White's best replies are 5.Qa4+ and 5.e4, while 5.Nc3 is best answered by 5...a6 , which transposes toChapter 9 on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3. Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 , when 5.Bg5 dxc4! is the move order. 5.e4 Certainly White's most aggressive option. 5...c5 In the intro notes to this Chapter, I mentioned that 5...

b5 is possible in this position, but not my recommended move. I prefer 5...c5 for practical reasons, as it gives Black equal chances without any particular theoretical workload. Still, I'd like to point out the consequences of 5...b5, as it can be a good later addition to the repertoire, sharpening the play. After 5...b5 , White's best is 6. a4 c6 7.Nc3 , when Black has a range of options. All of them lead to complications, like in the following sequence: 7...Qb6 8.Bxf6 gxf6 keeps the extra pawn but makes you wonder where Black's king will find a safe place in the long run. I don't think a murky line like this should be part of our core KIS repertoire, but it's a good option to have. Let's examine 5...c5 now. White's best replies are 6.Bxc4 and 6.Nf3, while the tempting move 6.e5?! is dubious. 6..xc3 This looks like White's best move. The position after 6.Nc3 may also arise via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 c5 6.Nf3 , which is a move order we cover in the current Chapter, too. 6...cxd4 7..xxd4 This is the more ambitious move for White, keeping the queens on the board. 7...Kc5 White's e2-e4 push looks active, but it weakens the control over d4. The knight on d4 becomes unstable, allowing us to develop with a gain of tempo. I think Black has good chances now, as White's position is not easy to handle. First of all, what to do with the attacked knight? 8.Ke3 Covering the knight is probably most in line with 7.Nxd4, which avoided the queen trade. Some alternatives are downright bad for White, like 8.Ndb5 Qb6 , when we not only threaten ...Bxf2+ but ...a6 as well. A similar idea occurs after CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2b3B1/2pNP3/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 8CCEndFENCC 8.Qa4+ Bd7 9.Qxc4 Qb6 , when the knight is under pressure. The relatively best option is CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2b3B1/2pNP3/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 8CCEndFENCC 8.Nf3 , but the endgame after 8...Qxd1+ is comfortable for Black, too. After 9.Rxd1 , many setups are good, like 9...h6 10.Bf4 a6 10.Bxc4 b5 , which gives us an active position and play against the e4-pawn. 8...O&b6 Increasing the pressure on d4 and b2. 9.O&d2 White covers b2 and threatens Na4. The immediate 9.Na4? fails due to 9...Bb4+ . 9...Kd7 We stop Na4 and are now ready to play ...Ng4 with full effect. After 9...Ng4?! White still has 10.Na4 to solve the immediate problems. 10..xc2 Or 10.f3 e5 , which looks good for Black, too. We have an excellent play on the dark squares and get a good spot for the bishop on e6. 10...0-0 There is nothing wrong with other moves, like CCStartFENCCrn2k2r/pp1b1ppp/1q2pn2/2b5/2p1P3/2N1B3/PPNQ1PPP/R3KB1R b KQkq - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10...Nc6 or CCStartFENCCrn2k2r/pp1b1ppp/1q2pn2/2b5/2p1P3/2N1B3/PPNQ1PPP/R3KB1R b KQkq - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10...Na6 . I like castling best, as ...Rd8 is certainly a move that will be annoying for White to face. In any case, Black is in good shape here and has the easier game, as White suffers from some weaknesses CCStartBracketCCd4, dark squaresCCEndBracketCC and is not well coordinated to cover them.

- [ ] 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B
- [x] 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.Qa4+ #1

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 In this Chapter, we will examine lines that follow the pattern of White trying to develop their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various move orders that White can try. Here's a list: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 White can also develop the bishops after the sequence CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 , when 5.Bf4 and 5.Bg5 are possible. The line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 is covered in a dedicated chapter, though. So there are a ton of different lines - that sounds complicated. But here's the good news: absolutely ALL of the lines are answered with the same move, which is ...d5xc4! Therefore we can follow a simple rule of thumb: every early queen's bishop move CCStartBracketCCmove 3, 4, 5CCEndBracketCC in the QGD is answered by the capture. What's the point of the capture? There are two, actually: in the best case, we just keep the pawn! This can easily happen if White is careless or doesn't know any theory at all. You'll often meet opponents who never studied the capture seriously and handle it poorly, giving you a simple extra pawn. The secondary objective is to gain time, as White needs to invest moves to get the pawn back. This approach is similar to our line against the Catalan, which also involves an early ...d5xc4 CCStartBracketCCCCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 CCEndBracketCC. White regularly plays ...Qd1-a4xc4 in these lines, which allows us to gain time on the queen, for example, with a timely ...b5. As listed above, there are various versions of Bf4/Bg5 that we will examine in this Chapter. While our reply ...dxc4 will be the same against all of them, there are still differences between the lines, and it's useful to know some pointers to understand the concepts better. ACCEndBracketCC After the capture, White often plays e2-e3, intending to capture c4 with the bishop. If you can answer this move with ...b5 CCStartBracketCCwithout allowing Nxb5CCEndBracketCC, it will be good for Black. Examples are: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 dxc4 4.e3 b5! CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 dxc4 4.e3 b5!

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☐ 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B
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1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 In this Chapter, we will examine lines that follow the pattern of White trying to develop their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various

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☐ 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B
■ 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.Qa4+ #3

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Nxc4?? and 9.Bxc4?? run into 9...b5 , winning a piece. This leaves 9.Qxc4 and 9. Bxf6. Let's have a look. 9.Kxf6 Kxf6 We still threaten ...b5, so White needs to grab the c-pawn. 10..xxc4 Ke7 We cover d6 and renew the ...b5 threat. 11.O&c2 b5 12..xcd2 Here 12.Nce5 Bb4+ is rather embarrassing for White. 12...Kb7 And Black is in great shape. We have the bishop pair, and White can't stop ...a6 and ...c5, activating both pieces.

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against it, as the queen is vulnerable on c4. 6.e3 This looks like White's best try. We already know that Black would like to expand with ...a6, ...b5 and ...c5. Still, we need to develop our kingside and castle at some point. What move to start with? After checking it for a while, I concluded that the move order is not very relevant. You can play 6...Be7 first, but also 6...a6 or 6...c5 are fine. I decided to recommend 6...Be7, mainly because this is the move that we play against 6.e4, too. 6...Ke7
As mentioned, starting with 6...a6 or 6...c5 is fine, too. 7.Kxc4 0-0 As before, the move order is flexible. You may also start with 7...a6 or insert the move 7...h6. They are both equally good alternatives. 8.Ke2 White is concerned about ...Nb6 and moves the bishop to a safe spot. 8...a6 9.0-0 b5 Here 9...c5 first also works fine. 10.O&c2 c5 And we have completed the queenside expansion. Black has a fine position and at least equal chances with natural moves like ...Bb7 and ...Qb6 next.

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■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 #1

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pawn. 6.f3 Not a happy move, but that's what White played most of the time when they had stumbled into this dubious line. Stockfish recommends playing 6.Bxc4 Nxe4 7.Qd3 Nxc3 8.bxc3 Bd6 , when Black is a clean pawn up. If this is best, you know that White is in trouble! If you look at some other options, like CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/1bpPPB2/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6.e5 Ne4 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/1bpPPB2/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6.Qa4 Nc6 , when d4 and e4 is hanging, you tend to believe that being a pawn down is the lesser evil for White. 6...b5 Make sure to cover the pawn! Now White is in terrible shape. We are not only a pawn up, but the pawn on f3 severely hampers our opponent's development. 7.a4 c6 We'll continue with a setup of ...O-O, ...Nbd7, ...Qb6 and are more or less winning already.

☐ 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B

■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 #2

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5...c6 This is a strong move. Now White needs to take on c4; otherwise, we'd play ... b5. After White's forced reply 6.Qxc4, the point of 5...c6! is revealed. 6.O&xc4 b5 Again forcing the action. 7.O&d3 White needs to go to the clumsy d3-square, as 7. Qb3? Qxd4 loses a pawn. 7...Ka6 That's the important point about this line. We threaten ...b4 now, winning a piece! White is in an awkward spot now. What to do about this simple threat? The comp suggests 8.Bxb8, but Black is much better after this move. Still, an alternative like 8.Qd1 b4 9.Na4 Qa5 is excellent for Black, too. We just have a strong initiative because White has lost a lot of time with queen moves. It is useful to compare this line to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.Qa4+ . I recommend 5...Nbd7, as 5...c6 6.Qxc4 b5 can be comfortably answered with 7.Qc2 . White's d-pawn is covered, and ...b5-b4 won't hit a knight on c3.

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KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 c5 . As mentioned on the note to the previous move, Black has a whole list of good moves. You may also play 5...Bd6 , which gives equal chances after 6.Bxd6 Qxd6 7.Bxc4 O-O 8.Nf3 c5 , or examine the quirky CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2pP1B2/2N1P3/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR b KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5...b5!? . This invites complications after 6.Nxb5 Bb4+ 7.Nc3 Nd5 , which seems fine for Black, too. It's always good to have alternatives, and 5...b5 looks like good fun to irritate your opponent. I went for 5...c5 because it gives equal chances without having to know any additional tactical lines. 6.Kxc4 cxd4 7.exd4 .xc6 We play in exactly the same way against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 c5 6.Bxc4 cxd4 7.exd4 Nc6 . As we will see, transposing into this variation is quite likely - hang on! 8..xf3 Kd6 We have created an isolated pawn in our opponent's camp and would like to trade as many minor pieces as possible to exploit this weakness in a simplified position or an endgame. 9.Kg5 White's best try. After 9.Bxd6?! Qxd6 10.O-O O-O we are ready to play ...Rd8 next, which puts serious pressure on the weak d-pawn. 9...Ke7 And we have indeed transposed to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 c5 6.Bxc4 cxd4 7.exd4 Nc6 . This is a simple and good solution, but a quick note that Stockfish also suggests 9...h6 , intending 10.Bh4 g5!? 11.Bg3 Bxg3 12.fxg3 g4 , snatching the pawn on d4 next. After some complications, this seems to lead to equal chances, too. As this course is called 'Keep it Simple' and not 'Make it murky', I decided against this line. It is still fun to explore if you are interested.

☐ 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B

■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 #1

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popular move. Putting additional pressure on d5 certainly looks very natural. 3....xf6 Very natural play. We develop our knight to a good square and then decide how to continue. 4.Kg5 White pins our knight and thus again increases the pressure on the d5-pawn. In the early days of the Queen's Gambit, White almost always played this move, for example in the famous Capablanca-Alekhine World Championship Match in 1927. The move has remained popular to the present day, but it is not as frequently seen on the top level anymore. Strong GMs usually prefer the Carlsbad/ Exchange Variation 4.cxd5 or play 4.Nf3, waiting with the development of the c1-bishop. So why is 4.Bg5 regarded as less critical at the top level? The main reason is that White is getting nowhere in the Classical continuation 4...Be7 . White has little success against: AĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqk2r/ppp1bppp/ 4pn2/3p2B1/2PP4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 4 5ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 Ne4 ĊĊStartBracketĊĊthe Lasker VariationĊĊEndBracketĊĊ BĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqk2r/ppp1bppp/4pn2/3p2B1/2PP4/2N5/ PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 4 5ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 b6 ĊĊStartBracketĊĊthe Tartakower VariationĊĊEndBracketĊĊ CĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqk2r/ppp1bppp/4pn2/3p2B1/2PP4/2N5/ PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 4 5ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 Nbd7 , as popularized by Kramnik. Yet, I am not recommending any of them in this course 😀. The reason is not the quality of the lines; they are all excellent choices. At a later stage, you may consider adding them to your repertoire, exploring new ground. However, I concluded that 4...dxc4!? is a much simpler solution and gives Black equal chances, too. Therefore it is a great pick for this course. Let's have a look at this less explored but interesting option for Black. 4...dxc4 Again, we take the pawn on c4. In the notes to 4.Bg5, I already mentioned that Black has many reasonable alternatives to the capture. Being flexible is always useful if you intend to use your repertoire framework for a long time. You can keep your core variations but make small adjustments if you wish. Let's explore White's options after the capture now. For many opponents, our move will come as a surprise. We'll examine 5.e3 and 5.e4 in the current Chapter, while 5.Nf3 is well met by 5...a6! , which we examine via the more common move order ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.Bg5 dxc4! , which is covered in a dedicated Chapter and gives Black good play. 5.e4 After 5.e4, we have a choice between 5...c5 and 5...b5. What to play? 5...c5 I recommend 5...c5 here. This fits very well with the line ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 c5 6.Nc3 , which is also part of our repertoire. Now the natural move 6.Nf3 would transpose to the mentioned line. This is very likely to happen, but we'll have a look at other options for White, too. Before we get into this, a quick word about the move ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/6B1/ 2pPP3/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR b KQkq - 0 5ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 5...b5!? . This is a playable move! The pawn on b5 is hanging, but 6.Nxb5 Bb4+ 7.Nc3 c5 leads to more or less unexplored complications. I decided against this line for conceptual

reasons CCStartBracketCCKISCCEndBracketCC, not because I regard it as dubious. It can be fun to explore and add to your repertoire at a later stage. 6.d5 Advancing the attacked pawn is White's main move. As mentioned before, 6.Nf3 leads to a position that we examine via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 c5 6.Nc3 . In faster time controls, White often plays the blunder CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p3B1/2pPP3/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e5? , when 6...cxd4 7.exf6 gxf6 leads to a winning position for Black. We are three pawns up and will regain the sacrificed piece due to the double attack. 6...Ke7 It's best to break the pin with the bishop now. We'd like to take on d5, opening our c8-bishop. However, after 6...exd5 7.Bxf6 Qxf6 8.Nxd5 we are losing time with queen moves. Playing the bishop to e7 first prepares the capture under more favourable circumstances. Now we'll have a look at 7.Bxc4 and 7.Bxf6. 7.Kxf6 White gives up the bishop pair. This does not look very logical, but our opponent might fear lines like 7.Bxc4 Nxd5!? . We are not going to play this particular variation, but it can be irritating for White. 7...Kxf6 8.Kxc4 exd5 9.Kxd5 Or 9.Qxd5 Qe7 , when I'd rather be Black, too. After 9.Nxd5 Bxb2 , White has no adequate compensation. 9...0-0 I prefer Black in this position. Our f6-bishop is tremendous, and ...Nc6 and ...Be6 are natural moves to play next.

☐ 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B

■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 #2

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 In this Chapter, we will examine lines that follow the pattern of White trying to develop their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various move orders that White can try. Here's a list: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 White can also develop the bishops after the sequence CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 , when 5.Bf4 and 5.Bg5 are possible. The line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 is covered in a dedicated chapter, though. So there are a ton of different lines - that sounds complicated. But here's the good news: absolutely ALL of the lines are answered with the same move, which is ...d5xc4! Therefore we can follow a simple rule of thumb: every early queen's bishop move

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c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 c5 6.Nc3 . In faster time controls, White often plays the blunder CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p3B1/2pPP3/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e5? , when 6...cxd4 7.exf6 gxf6 leads to a winning position for Black. We are three pawns up and will regain the sacrificed piece due to the double attack. 6...Ke7 It's best to break the pin with the bishop now. We'd like to take on d5, opening our c8-bishop. However, after 6...exd5 7.Bxf6 Qxf6 8.Nxd5 we are losing time with queen moves. Playing the bishop to e7 first prepares the capture under more favourable circumstances. Now we'll have a look at 7.Bxc4 and 7.Bxf6. 7.Kxc4 The move 7.Nf3 is very similar to 7.Bxc4, as CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/pp2bppp/4pn2/2pP2B1/2p1P3/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7.Nf3 exd5 8.exd5 O-O 9.Bxc4 h6 is a very natural way to transpose to 7.Bxc4. 7...exd5 Black also has 7...Nxd5!? , which may lead to 8.Bb5+ Bd7 9.exd5 Bxg5 10.dxe6 . It looks messy, but at the end of the hacking, it will be about equal. Taking with the pawn on d5 looks more combative to me, but this is primarily a matter of taste. 8.exd5 Here 8.Bxf6 Bxf6 leads to theprevious trainable and is fine for Black. 8...0-0 A normal-looking move, but it is clearly best! You shouldn't play 8...h6 , as 9.Bf4 Bd6 CCStartBracketCCotherwise d5-d6 is the problemCCEndBracketCC 10.Qe2+! is awkward for Black. 9..xf3 h6 A precise move, asking the bishop about its intentions. 10.Kf4 This looks like the most logical move. After 10.Bh4?! Nxd5! 11.Qxd5 Bxh4 Black wins a pawn, so retreats along the c1-f4 diagonal are the options. 10...Kd6 White was threatening d5-d6. 11.Kxd6 O&xd6 It is also possible to play 11...Re8+!? , when 12.Be5 Nbd7 will regain the piece. Both moves lead to equal chances. 12.0-0 .xbd7 Our intended setup involves ...Nb6, followed by ...Bg4 or ...Bd7. Clearly, this position is all about the d-pawn. Our queen is not an ideal blockading piece, but a later ...Nb6-c8-d6 is a noteworthy idea to change that. White also needs to be careful to hold the pawn in the first place, as we will attack it multiple times CCStartBracketCC...Nb6 and ... Rd8 are coming soonCCEndBracketCC.

☐ 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B
■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 #1

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 In this Chapter, we will examine lines that follow the pattern of White trying to develop their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various move orders that White can try. Here's a list: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0

1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 White can also develop the bishops after the sequence CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 , when 5.Bf4 and 5.Bg5 are possible. The line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 is covered in a dedicated chapter, though. So there are a ton of different lines - that sounds complicated. But here's the good news: absolutely ALL of the lines are answered with the same move, which is ...d5xc4! Therefore we can follow a simple rule of thumb: every early queen's bishop move CCStartBracketCCmove 3, 4, 5CCEndBracketCC in the QGD is answered by the capture. What's the point of the capture? There are two, actually: in the best case, we just keep the pawn! This can easily happen if White is careless or doesn't know any theory at all. You'll often meet opponents who never studied the capture seriously and handle it poorly, giving you a simple extra pawn. The secondary objective is to gain time, as White needs to invest moves to get the pawn back. This approach is similar to our line against the Catalan, which also involves an early ...d5xc4 CCStartBracketCCCCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 CCEndBracketCC. White regularly plays ...Qd1-a4xc4 in these lines, which allows us to gain time on the queen, for example, with a timely ...b5. As listed above, there are various versions of Bf4/Bg5 that we will examine in this Chapter. While our reply ...dxc4 will be the same against all of them, there are still differences between the lines, and it's useful to know some pointers to understand the concepts better. ACCEndBracketCC After the capture, White often plays e2-e3, intending to capture c4 with the bishop. If you can answer this move with ...b5 CCStartBracketCCwithout allowing Nxb5CCEndBracketCC, it will be good for Black. Examples are: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 dxc4 4.e3 b5! CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 dxc4 4.e3 b5! CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 4.e3 b5! Note that after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 the move 5... b5? allows 6.Nxb5 and is wrong. Instead, playing 5...c5 is the correct move, attacking the d-pawn. BCCEndBracketCC White can try to regain the pawn with the more aggressive move e2-e4. This is possible in the two Bg5-lines, as our f6-knight is pinned and therefore pushing e2-e4 becomes an option for White. In both cases, CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 , the move 5... b5!? is possible but leads to murky complications that are tough to navigate. Instead,

I advise playing ...c5, attacking White's d-pawn. To summarize: there are clear cases where ...b5 is the best option and should be played, described in A - otherwise, we play ...c5 to attack the d-pawn and give up on the idea of holding the c-pawn. 3..xc3 White starts their development with the queen's knight, which is the most popular move. Putting additional pressure on d5 certainly looks very natural. 3....xf6 Very natural play. We develop our knight to a good square and then decide how to continue. 4.Kg5 White pins our knight and thus again increases the pressure on the d5-pawn. In the early days of the Queen's Gambit, White almost always played this move, for example in the famous Capablanca-Alekhine World Championship Match in 1927. The move has remained popular to the present day, but it is not as frequently seen on the top level anymore. Strong GMs usually prefer the Carlsbad/ Exchange Variation 4.cxd5 or play 4.Nf3, waiting with the development of the c1-bishop. So why is 4.Bg5 regarded as less critical at the top level? The main reason is that White is getting nowhere in the Classical continuation 4...Be7 . White has little success against: AĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqk2r/ppp1bppp/ 4pn2/3p2B1/2PP4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 4 5ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 Ne4 ĊĊStartBracketĊĊthe Lasker VariationĊĊEndBracketĊĊ BĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqk2r/ppp1bppp/4pn2/3p2B1/2PP4/2N5/ PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 4 5ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 b6 ĊĊStartBracketĊĊthe Tartakower VariationĊĊEndBracketĊĊ CĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqk2r/ppp1bppp/4pn2/3p2B1/2PP4/2N5/ PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 4 5ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 Nbd7 , as popularized by Kramnik. Yet, I am not recommending any of them in this course 😃. The reason is not the quality of the lines; they are all excellent choices. At a later stage, you may consider adding them to your repertoire, exploring new ground. However, I concluded that 4...dxc4!? is a much simpler solution and gives Black equal chances, too. Therefore it is a great pick for this course. Let's have a look at this less explored but interesting option for Black. 4...dxc4 Again, we take the pawn on c4. In the notes to 4.Bg5, I already mentioned that Black has many reasonable alternatives to the capture. Being flexible is always useful if you intend to use your repertoire framework for a long time. You can keep your core variations but make small adjustments if you wish. Let's explore White's options after the capture now. For many opponents, our move will come as a surprise. We'll examine 5.e3 and 5.e4 in the current Chapter, while 5.Nf3 is well met by 5...a6! , which we examine via the more common move order ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.Bg5 dxc4! , which is covered in a dedicated Chapter and gives Black good play. 5.e3 c5 Here the move 5...c5 is the only sensible choice. After 5...b5? 6.Nxb5 Black doesn't get enough compensation for the pawn. After 5...c5 White usually plays 6.Bxc4 , when 6...cxd4 leads to an Isolated Queen's pawn ĊĊStartBracketĊĊIQPĊĊEndBracketĊĊ. Sometimes they also play ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p3B1/2pP4/2N1P3/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 6ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 6.Nf3 , intending to answer 6...cxd4 with 7.Nxd4 ,

which avoids the IQP. 6..xf3 White intends to recapture on d4 with the knight, avoiding the IQP. 6...cxd4 7..xxd4 Instead, 7.exd4 Nc6 8.Bxc4 Be7 would lead to the IQP position usually reached via CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p3B1/2pP4/2N1P3/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bxc4 cxd4 7.exd4 Nc6 8.Nf3 Be7 . White may play CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/6B1/2pp4/2N1PN2/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Qxd4 , but it's very harmless after 7...Qxd4 8.Nxd4 , when - amongst others 8...Bd7 9.Bxc4 Bb4 gives Black an easy game. The move ...Bb4 introduces the idea ...Bxc3+, unbalancing the pawn structure. 7...e5 I suggest playing this active move, attacking the knight immediately. It is also possible to play more slowly. The alternative 7...Be7 8.Bxc4 O-O 9.O-O Bd7 and ...Nc6 next is fine, too. White only has a marginal edge in this type of position. However, White's choice of 7.Nxd4 suggests that they are after a slower, positional game. After our reply 7...e5 it's getting a bit sharper, avoiding this type of position. Now 8.Bxf6 and 8.Ndb5 are the critical moves to check. 8..xf3 A solid move, but it's harmless. 8...O&xd1+ 9.Qxd1 .xc6 10.Kxc4 We don't need to fear 10.Nb5 , as 10...Bb4+ gives us the crucial tempo to play ...O-O and avoid the fork. 10...Kb4 A very natural sequence of moves. Black has an easy game, intending ...Bxc3 next. This increases the control over d5 and avoids a possible Nd5 after White's O-O. After taking on c3, we'll have ...Bf5 and ...Rc8 next, giving us a harmonious position. White has the bishop pair, but we have the better pawn structure. Note that a possible white doubled c-pawn would be much easier for us to attack, than a doubled f-pawn on our end. The c-pawn would be on an open file, our f-pawns are not.

☐ 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B

■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 #2

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 In this Chapter, we will examine lines that follow the pattern of White trying to develop their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various move orders that White can try. Here's a list: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 White can also develop the bishops after the sequence CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 , when 5.Bf4 and 5.Bg5 are possible. The line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.

Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 is covered in a dedicated chapter, though. So there are a ton of different lines - that sounds complicated. But here's the good news: absolutely ALL of the lines are answered with the same move, which is ...d5xc4! Therefore we can follow a simple rule of thumb: every early queen's bishop move CCStartBracketCCmove 3, 4, 5CCEndBracketCC in the QGD is answered by the capture. What's the point of the capture? There are two, actually: in the best case, we just keep the pawn! This can easily happen if White is careless or doesn't know any theory at all. You'll often meet opponents who never studied the capture seriously and handle it poorly, giving you a simple extra pawn. The secondary objective is to gain time, as White needs to invest moves to get the pawn back. This approach is similar to our line against the Catalan, which also involves an early ...d5xc4 CCStartBracketCCCCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 CCEndBracketCC. White regularly plays ...Qd1-a4xc4 in these lines, which allows us to gain time on the queen, for example, with a timely ...b5. As listed above, there are various versions of Bf4/Bg5 that we will examine in this Chapter. While our reply ...dxc4 will be the same against all of them, there are still differences between the lines, and it's useful to know some pointers to understand the concepts better. ACCEndBracketCC After the capture, White often plays e2-e3, intending to capture c4 with the bishop. If you can answer this move with ...b5 CCStartBracketCCwithout allowing Nxb5CCEndBracketCC, it will be good for Black. Examples are: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 dxc4 4.e3 b5! CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 dxc4 4.e3 b5! CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 4.e3 b5! Note that after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 the move 5... b5? allows 6.Nxb5 and is wrong. Instead, playing 5...c5 is the correct move, attacking the d-pawn. BCCEndBracketCC White can try to regain the pawn with the more aggressive move e2-e4. This is possible in the two Bg5-lines, as our f6-knight is pinned and therefore pushing e2-e4 becomes an option for White. In both cases, CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 , the move 5... b5!? is possible but leads to murky complications that are tough to navigate. Instead, I advise playing ...c5, attacking White's d-pawn. To summarize: there are clear cases where ...b5 is the best option and should be played, described in A - otherwise, we play ...c5 to attack the d-pawn and give up on the idea of holding the c-pawn. 3..xc3 White starts their development with the queen's knight, which is the most popular move. Putting additional pressure on d5 certainly looks very natural. 3....xf6

Very natural play. We develop our knight to a good square and then decide how to continue. 4.Kg5 White pins our knight and thus again increases the pressure on the d5-pawn. In the early days of the Queen's Gambit, White almost always played this move, for example in the famous Capablanca-Alekhine World Championship Match in 1927. The move has remained popular to the present day, but it is not as frequently seen on the top level anymore. Strong GMs usually prefer the Carlsbad/ Exchange Variation 4.cxd5 or play 4.Nf3, waiting with the development of the c1-bishop. So why is 4.Bg5 regarded as less critical at the top level? The main reason is that White is getting nowhere in the Classical continuation 4...Be7 . White has little success against: A[-]EndBracket[-] [-]StartFEN[-]rnbqk2r/ppp1bppp/ 4pn2/3p2B1/2PP4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 4 5[-]EndFEN[-] 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 Ne4 [-]StartBracket[-]the Lasker Variation[-]EndBracket[-] B[-]EndBracket[-] [-]StartFEN[-]rnbqk2r/ppp1bppp/4pn2/3p2B1/2PP4/2N5/ PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 4 5[-]EndFEN[-] 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 b6 [-]StartBracket[-]the Tartakower Variation[-]EndBracket[-] C[-]EndBracket[-] [-]StartFEN[-]rnbqk2r/ppp1bppp/4pn2/3p2B1/2PP4/2N5/ PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 4 5[-]EndFEN[-] 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 Nbd7 , as popularized by Kramnik. Yet, I am not recommending any of them in this course 😐. The reason is not the quality of the lines; they are all excellent choices. At a later stage, you may consider adding them to your repertoire, exploring new ground. However, I concluded that 4...dxc4!? is a much simpler solution and gives Black equal chances, too. Therefore it is a great pick for this course. Let's have a look at this less explored but interesting option for Black. 4...dxc4 Again, we take the pawn on c4. In the notes to 4.Bg5, I already mentioned that Black has many reasonable alternatives to the capture. Being flexible is always useful if you intend to use your repertoire framework for a long time. You can keep your core variations but make small adjustments if you wish. Let's explore White's options after the capture now. For many opponents, our move will come as a surprise. We'll examine 5.e3 and 5.e4 in the current Chapter, while 5.Nf3 is well met by 5...a6! , which we examine via the more common move order [-]StartFEN[-]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[-]EndFEN[-] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.Bg5 dxc4! , which is covered in a dedicated Chapter and gives Black good play. 5.e3 c5 Here the move 5...c5 is the only sensible choice. After 5...b5? 6.Nxb5 Black doesn't get enough compensation for the pawn. After 5...c5 White usually plays 6.Bxc4 , when 6...cxd4 leads to an Isolated Queen's pawn [-]StartBracket[-]IQP[-]EndBracket[-]. Sometimes they also play [-]StartFEN[-]rnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p3B1/2pP4/2N1P3/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 6[-]EndFEN[-] 6.Nf3 , intending to answer 6...cxd4 with 7.Nxd4 , which avoids the IQP. 6..xf3 White intends to recapture on d4 with the knight, avoiding the IQP. 6...cxd4 7..xxd4 Instead, 7.exd4 Nc6 8.Bxc4 Be7 would lead to the IQP position usually reached via [-]StartFEN[-]rnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p3B1/ 2pP4/2N1P3/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 6[-]EndFEN[-] 6.Bxc4 cxd4 7. exd4 Nc6 8.Nf3 Be7 . White may play [-]StartFEN[-]rnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/

6B1/2pp4/2N1PN2/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Qxd4 , but it's very harmless after 7...Qxd4 8.Nxd4 , when - amongst others 8...Bd7 9.Bxc4 Bb4 gives Black an easy game. The move ...Bb4 introduces the idea ...Bxc3+, unbalancing the pawn structure. 7...e5 I suggest playing this active move, attacking the knight immediately. It is also possible to play more slowly. The alternative 7...Be7 8.Bxc4 O-O 9.O-O Bd7 and ...Nc6 next is fine, too. White only has a marginal edge in this type of position. However, White's choice of 7.Nxd4 suggests that they are after a slower, positional game. After our reply 7...e5 it's getting a bit sharper, avoiding this type of position. Now 8.Bxf6 and 8.Ndb5 are the critical moves to check. 8.Kxf6 White removes the defender of the light squares, in particular of d5. We now need to be alert! 8...gxf6 A crucial move! after 8...Qxf6? 9.Nd5 or 9.Ndb5 White's knights invade with devastating effect. 9..xdb5 Our development is lacking, and White threatens Nd5. We are still fine with precise play, though. 9...a6 That's the problem for White. The b5-knight is attacked, and there is only one way to continue now. 10.O&a4 The only move available. 10.Na3? b5 is awful and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1p3p1p/p4p2/1N2p3/2p5/2N1P3/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qxd8+ Kxd8 11.O-O-O+ Nd7 12.Nd6 Bxd6 13. Rxd6 Ke7 14.Rd2 b5 is a simple sequence that secures Black's extra pawn and a clear advantage. 10...Kd7 Or 10...Nc6 11.Rd1 Bd7 , which leads to the same position. 11.0-0-0 .xc6 I know this is a rather long sequence of moves, but it is quite forced. That makes it easier to remember. 12..xd6+ Again, a forced move. 12...Kxd6 13.Qxd6 b5 We keep our extra pawn with a tempo gain. This material advantage is only temporary, though. 14.O&d1 O&c7 This move is the reason why we needed to continue to move 14. Only 14...Qc7 gives Black good chances, as now CCStartFENCCr3k2r/2qb1p1p/p1nR1p2/1p2p3/2p5/2N1P3/PP3PPP/2KQ1B1R w kq - 2 15CCEndFENCC15.Nd5?? Qxd6 and CCStartFENCCr3k2r/2qb1p1p/p1nR1p2/1p2p3/2p5/2N1P3/PP3PPP/2KQ1B1R w kq - 2 15CCEndFENCC 15.Ne4? O-O-O! is possible. White can regain the pawn with 15.Rxf6 , but after 15...Be6 , we are fine with ...Nb4 to come.

☐ 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B
■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 #3

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 In this Chapter, we will examine lines that follow the pattern of White trying to develop their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various move orders that White can try. Here's a list: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. Bf4 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5

[CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 White can also develop the bishops after the sequence [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 , when 5.Bf4 and 5.Bg5 are possible. The line [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 is covered in a dedicated chapter, though. So there are a ton of different lines - that sounds complicated. But here's the good news: absolutely ALL of the lines are answered with the same move, which is ...d5xc4! Therefore we can follow a simple rule of thumb: every early queen's bishop move [CC]StartBracket[CC]move 3, 4, 5[CC]EndBracket[CC] in the QGD is answered by the capture. What's the point of the capture? There are two, actually: in the best case, we just keep the pawn! This can easily happen if White is careless or doesn't know any theory at all. You'll often meet opponents who never studied the capture seriously and handle it poorly, giving you a simple extra pawn. The secondary objective is to gain time, as White needs to invest moves to get the pawn back. This approach is similar to our line against the Catalan, which also involves an early ...d5xc4 [CC]StartBracket[CC][CC][CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 [CC]EndBracket[CC]. White regularly plays ...Qd1-a4xc4 in these lines, which allows us to gain time on the queen, for example, with a timely ...b5. As listed above, there are various versions of Bf4/Bg5 that we will examine in this Chapter. While our reply ...dxc4 will be the same against all of them, there are still differences between the lines, and it's useful to know some pointers to understand the concepts better. A[CC]EndBracket[CC] After the capture, White often plays e2-e3, intending to capture c4 with the bishop. If you can answer this move with ...b5 [CC]StartBracket[CC]without allowing Nxb5[CC]EndBracket[CC], it will be good for Black. Examples are: [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 dxc4 4.e3 b5! [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 dxc4 4.e3 b5! [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 4.e3 b5! Note that after [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 the move 5... b5? allows 6.Nxb5 and is wrong. Instead, playing 5...c5 is the correct move, attacking the d-pawn. B[CC]EndBracket[CC] White can try to regain the pawn with the more aggressive move e2-e4. This is possible in the two Bg5-lines, as our f6-knight is pinned and therefore pushing e2-e4 becomes an option for White. In both cases, [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 and [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 , the move 5...

b5!? is possible but leads to murky complications that are tough to navigate. Instead, I advise playing ...c5, attacking White's d-pawn. To summarize: there are clear cases where ...b5 is the best option and should be played, described in A - otherwise, we play ...c5 to attack the d-pawn and give up on the idea of holding the c-pawn. 3..xc3 White starts their development with the queen's knight, which is the most popular move. Putting additional pressure on d5 certainly looks very natural. 3....xf6 Very natural play. We develop our knight to a good square and then decide how to continue. 4.Kg5 White pins our knight and thus again increases the pressure on the d5-pawn. In the early days of the Queen's Gambit, White almost always played this move, for example in the famous Capablanca-Alekhine World Championship Match in 1927. The move has remained popular to the present day, but it is not as frequently seen on the top level anymore. Strong GMs usually prefer the Carlsbad/ Exchange Variation 4.cxd5 or play 4.Nf3, waiting with the development of the c1-bishop. So why is 4.Bg5 regarded as less critical at the top level? The main reason is that White is getting nowhere in the Classical continuation 4...Be7 . White has little success against: A‡‡EndBracket‡‡ ‡‡StartFEN‡‡rnbqk2r/ppp1bppp/ 4pn2/3p2B1/2PP4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 4 5‡‡EndFEN‡‡ 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 Ne4 ‡‡StartBracket‡‡the Lasker Variation‡‡EndBracket‡‡ B‡‡EndBracket‡‡ ‡‡StartFEN‡‡rnbqk2r/ppp1bppp/4pn2/3p2B1/2PP4/2N5/ PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 4 5‡‡EndFEN‡‡ 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 b6 ‡‡StartBracket‡‡the Tartakower Variation‡‡EndBracket‡‡ C‡‡EndBracket‡‡ ‡‡StartFEN‡‡rnbqk2r/ppp1bppp/4pn2/3p2B1/2PP4/2N5/ PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 4 5‡‡EndFEN‡‡ 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 Nbd7 , as popularized by Kramnik. Yet, I am not recommending any of them in this course 😃. The reason is not the quality of the lines; they are all excellent choices. At a later stage, you may consider adding them to your repertoire, exploring new ground. However, I concluded that 4...dxc4!? is a much simpler solution and gives Black equal chances, too. Therefore it is a great pick for this course. Let's have a look at this less explored but interesting option for Black. 4...dxc4 Again, we take the pawn on c4. In the notes to 4.Bg5, I already mentioned that Black has many reasonable alternatives to the capture. Being flexible is always useful if you intend to use your repertoire framework for a long time. You can keep your core variations but make small adjustments if you wish. Let's explore White's options after the capture now. For many opponents, our move will come as a surprise. We'll examine 5.e3 and 5.e4 in the current Chapter, while 5.Nf3 is well met by 5...a6! , which we examine via the more common move order ‡‡StartFEN‡‡rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1‡‡EndFEN‡‡ 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.Bg5 dxc4! , which is covered in a dedicated Chapter and gives Black good play. 5.e3 c5 Here the move 5...c5 is the only sensible choice. After 5...b5? 6.Nxb5 Black doesn't get enough compensation for the pawn. After 5...c5 White usually plays 6.Bxc4 , when 6...cxd4 leads to an Isolated Queen's pawn ‡‡StartBracket‡‡IQP‡‡EndBracket‡‡. Sometimes they also play ‡‡StartFEN‡‡rnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p3B1/2pP4/2N1P3/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w

KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nf3 , intending to answer 6...cxd4 with 7.Nxd4 , which avoids the IQP. 6..xf3 White intends to recapture on d4 with the knight, avoiding the IQP. 6...cxd4 7..xxd4 Instead, 7.exd4 Nc6 8.Bxc4 Be7 would lead to the IQP position usually reached via CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p3B1/2pP4/2N1P3/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bxc4 cxd4 7.exd4 Nc6 8.Nf3 Be7 . White may play CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/6B1/2pp4/2N1PN2/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Qxd4 , but it's very harmless after 7...Qxd4 8.Nxd4 , when - amongst others 8...Bd7 9.Bxc4 Bb4 gives Black an easy game. The move ...Bb4 introduces the idea ...Bxc3+, unbalancing the pawn structure. 7...e5 I suggest playing this active move, attacking the knight immediately. It is also possible to play more slowly. The alternative 7...Be7 8.Bxc4 O-O 9.O-O Bd7 and ...Nc6 next is fine, too. White only has a marginal edge in this type of position. However, White's choice of 7.Nxd4 suggests that they are after a slower, positional game. After our reply 7...e5 it's getting a bit sharper, avoiding this type of position. Now 8.Bxf6 and 8.Ndb5 are the critical moves to check. 8..xdb5 Certainly more critical than 8.Nf3. White intends to play Bxf6 and Nd5, which is a serious threat. We only have one good reply! 8...a6 By far the best move. 9.O&a4 Here 9.Bxf6 gxf6! would transpose to the8.Bxf6 gxf6 9.Ndb5 a6 line. White needs to avoid 9.Qxd8+? Kxd8 , when they have to move the b5-knight soon, allowing ...b5 with a clear advantage for Black. 9...Kd7 10.0-0-0 Again 10.Bxf6 gxf6 would transpose to8.Bxf6. 10...Ke7 A crucial difference to the similar position after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/5n2/4p1B1/2pN4/2N1P3/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 8CCEndFENCC 8.Bxf6 gxf6 9.Ndb5 a6 10.Qa4 Bd7 11.O-O-O , when 11...Nc6 12.Nd6+ Bxd6 13.Rxd6 b5 14.Qd1 Qc7! is fine for Black. The same approach wouldn't work here, as CCStartFENCCrn1qkb1r/1p1b1ppp/p4n2/1N2p1B1/Q1p5/2N1P3/PP3PPP/2KR1B1R b kq - 3 10CCEndFENCC 10...Nc6? 11.Nd6+ Bxd6 12.Rxd6 b5 13.Qd1 leads to insurmountable problems. After 13...Qc7 White kills with 14.Rxf6! , showing a crucial difference. All this pain is avoided with 10...Be7! when it is instead White who needs to be precise. 11.Kxf6 White has to take now. If we manage ...O-O, White's initiative will come to a halt, and the queenside situation blows up in their face. The knight on b5 is pinned and has no good square to go to. 11...gxf6 We need to avoid 11...Bxf6? 12.Nd6+ , of course. Now White is struggling to find a way to resolve the queenside tension. Stockfish points out that CCStartFENCCrn1qk2r/1p1bbp1p/p4p2/1N2p3/Q1p5/2N1P3/PP3PPP/2KR1B1R w kq - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12.Be2 is the only good move, but Black has equal chances in several ways. Moves like 12...f5!? or 12...Qb6!? come to mind. This is still interesting to check, but we are quite deep down the rabbit hole.

☐ 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B
■ 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 #4

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 In this Chapter, we will examine lines that follow the pattern of White trying to develop their queen's bishop without trading on d5 CCStartBracketCCCarlsbad structureCCEndBracketCC first. There are various move orders that White can try. Here's a list: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 White can also develop the bishops after the sequence CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 , when 5.Bf4 and 5.Bg5 are possible. The line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 is covered in a dedicated chapter, though. So there are a ton of different lines - that sounds complicated. But here's the good news: absolutely ALL of the lines are answered with the same move, which is ...d5xc4! Therefore we can follow a simple rule of thumb: every early queen's bishop move CCStartBracketCCmove 3, 4, 5CCEndBracketCC in the QGD is answered by the capture. What's the point of the capture? There are two, actually: in the best case, we just keep the pawn! This can easily happen if White is careless or doesn't know any theory at all. You'll often meet opponents who never studied the capture seriously and handle it poorly, giving you a simple extra pawn. The secondary objective is to gain time, as White needs to invest moves to get the pawn back. This approach is similar to our line against the Catalan, which also involves an early ...d5xc4 CCStartBracketCCCCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 CCEndBracketCC. White regularly plays ...Qd1-a4xc4 in these lines, which allows us to gain time on the queen, for example, with a timely ...b5. As listed above, there are various versions of Bf4/Bg5 that we will examine in this Chapter. While our reply ...dxc4 will be the same against all of them, there are still differences between the lines, and it's useful to know some pointers to understand the concepts better. ACCEndBracketCC After the capture, White often plays e2-e3, intending to capture c4 with the bishop. If you can answer this move with ...b5 CCStartBracketCCwithout allowing Nxb5CCEndBracketCC, it will be good for Black. Examples are: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Bf4 dxc4 4.e3 b5! CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 dxc4 4.e3 b5!

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repertoire framework for a long time. You can keep your core variations but make small adjustments if you wish. Let's explore White's options after the capture now. For many opponents, our move will come as a surprise. We'll examine 5.e3 and 5.e4 in the current Chapter, while 5.Nf3 is well met by 5...a6! , which we examine via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.Bg5 dxc4! , which is covered in a dedicated Chapter and gives Black good play. 5.e3 c5 Here the move 5...c5 is the only sensible choice. After 5...b5? 6.Nxb5 Black doesn't get enough compensation for the pawn. After 5...c5 White usually plays 6.Bxc4 , when 6...cxd4 leads to an Isolated Queen's pawn CCStartBracketCCIQPCCEndBracketCC. Sometimes they also play CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p3B1/2pP4/2N1P3/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nf3 , intending to answer 6...cxd4 with 7.Nxd4 , which avoids the IQP. 6.Kxc4 cxd4 We create the famous Isolated queen's pawn CCStartBracketCCIQPCCEndBracketCC, setting the stage for the arising middle game. 7.exd4 .xc6 And, just like magic, we have transposed to the Caro Kann Panov! Wait... how did this happen? In the Caro-Kann the sequence is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Bg5 dxc4 7.Bxc4 e6 , reaching exactly the same position. This 'merge' of two lines into one is a nice way of reducing workload. On a general note: it's a remarkable transposition, but it shows that our defences against 1.e4 and 1.d4 are somewhat related. We also have the interesting case that we essentially play the Carlsbad structure from both sides, as the Exchange Caro-Kann and the QGD Exchange are the same structure. Back to the position at hand. I examine this position in detail in the Caro-Kann Chapter, as it is more commonly reached via this move order. Please continue your study in the Panov chapter if you'd like more information about it.

☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 #1

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3..xc3 .xf6 4..xf3 After 4.Nf3, we have reached a key position. It's Black's move, and there is an unbelievable range of options to choose from. It's remarkable how many fully viable lines Black can play. This abundance of possibilities makes it difficult for White to be adequately prepared, as they have to consider so many options. When I started constructing this repertoire, one goal of mine was to include this position. Being able to play into it as Black gives you enormous flexibility for a long time. You can play the system I recommend, but you'll have tons of alternatives if ever desired. Alright, what do I recommend for Black now? It is the move 4...a6!?, which is probably not the first move you thought of. Black's is playing a small flank pawn move; isn't there something more pressing to do? Well, I see the point, but hang on! In the notes to 4...a6, I'll make my case why I

think it is an excellent choice. Before we put the move on the board, I'll quickly want to give you an overview of possible alternatives that you may consider at a later stage, with a brief description. A[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[CC]EndFEN[CC] 4...Be7 - The Classical line. Safe, sound, solid B[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[CC]EndFEN[CC] 4...Bb4 - The Ragozin. A Nimzo-Queen's Gambit Hybrid. Together with FM Daniel Barrish, I created a Chessable LTR on it. C[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[CC]EndFEN[CC] 4...Nbd7 - A flexible move that still may transpose to A or B. D[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[CC]EndFEN[CC] 4...c6 - The Semi-Slav. A mix of solid and dynamic lines, quite flexible. E[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[CC]EndFEN[CC] 4...c5 - The Semi-Tarrasch. A super-safe line that may lead to early simplifications. F[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[CC]EndFEN[CC] 4...dxc4 - The Vienna. Black takes the pawn and starts more concrete play. Considered to be primarily tactical and requires good memorization. Most of the lines are covered on Chessable or might be in the future. Now let's check why I like the move 4...a6. 4...a6 Constructing a complete repertoire for Black usually works like this: you know that you like certain lines and ideas, and then you construct the rest around these cornerstones. In the case of this course, I knew straight away that I wanted to include the main crossroads position after [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 and that 4...a6 would be my pick. Why? I became aware of the move while watching Magnus Carlsen playing online Blitz/Rapid games. Magnus has played the line often, with great success. In my database, he scored seven wins and nine draws with Black - zero losses! That caught people's attention, and many players followed suit. The line has gained in popularity and has been employed successfully by many strong players. But now, let's talk about what the little pawn move does. Clearly, it does not contribute to development, but it rather serves a more concrete purpose: we are enforcing the idea to take the c4-pawn and supporting it with the move ...b5. This comes into play after the natural move 5.Bg5 dxc4! , when 6.e3 b5 or [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/6B1/2pP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6[CC]EndFEN[CC] 6.e4 b5 demonstrate our idea. In these lines, White is already fighting for equality! Let's have an overview of White's possible replies worth checking. A[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5[CC]EndFEN[CC] 5.e3 - A conservative move that covers the c-pawn, but it's rather passive. I suggest answering it with 5...Nbd7 . This transposes to the line [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.

Nc3 Nbd7 , which is examined in the Queen's Gambit Sidelines Chapter. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bf4 fail to react to our threat of taking c4! We grab the pawn, starting fun complications. In those lines, it's often White instead of Black who needs to be careful. CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.c5 seeks to gain space on the queenside. As usual, we attack this advanced pawn with 5...b6 . This line is interesting, but Black is holding their own nicely. DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.cxd5 exd5 leads to a Carlsbad structure and is White's most popular and likely best move. This overview already hints at why I like the 4...a6 variation. Line A is harmless, B scores heavily for Black and is fun to play, C is fine for Black and does not require much effort to learn. Finally, line D leads to the Carlsbad structure, a pawn formation that is a cornerstone of our repertoire anyway, as we can reach it in various versions. This part of the current chapter will have some comparisons and references to the Carlsbad chapter CCStartBracketCC'We have reached a position similar to X' or a 'favourable version of Y'CCEndBracketCC. I, therefore, recommend that you have had a look at the Carlsbad chapter before studying line D, as it makes it easier to understand. The move 4...a6 will often come as a surprise for White, mainly if you play at the club level or compete in online speed chess. For titled players or Pros, the move 4...a6 has become a mainline in recent years, and White will know how to meet it. At lower levels, you'll have a massive knowledge gap: you know the course contents presented here, while White often won't know a thing! 5.Kg5 A very natural move and a very common reply to other 4th moves by Black. Here are some examples: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 Be7 5.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 Nbd7 5.Bg5 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 c6 5.Bg5 Often, White players might not appreciate that 4...a6 is precisely directed against 5.Bg5, and they'll just play the move they would go for in other cases. A great point of our line 4...a6 is that 5.Bg5 is now met with a powerful answer. 5...dxc4 We grab the pawn and are ready to cover it with ...b5, the point of playing ...a6 that early. After 5...dxc4 White needs to be careful to avoid serious trouble, as many natural-looking continuations are dubious. One example is the line 6.e4 b5 7.e5 , which might easily net us a quick win if White is not careful. After the capture, White has mostly tried the moves 6. a4, 6.e4 and 6.e3. Let's have a look. 6.e4 White grabs as much central space as possible. The arising positions look a lot like the Botvinnik System of the Semi-Slav, but with Black having played ...a6 instead of ...c6. The Botvinnik arises after

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☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 #2

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3..xc3 .xf6 4..xf3 After 4.Nf3, we have reached a key position. It's Black's move, and there is an unbelievable range of options to choose from. It's remarkable how many fully viable lines Black can play. This abundance of possibilities makes it difficult for White to be adequately prepared, as they have to consider so many options. When I started constructing this repertoire, one goal of mine was to include this position. Being able to play into it as Black gives you enormous flexibility for a long time. You can play the system I recommend, but you'll have tons of alternatives if ever desired. Alright, what do I recommend for Black now? It is the move 4...a6!?, which is probably not the first move you thought of. Black's is playing a small flank pawn move; isn't there something more pressing to do? Well, I see the point, but hang on! In the notes to 4...a6, I'll make my case why I think it is an excellent choice. Before we put the move on the board, I'll quickly want to give you an overview of possible alternatives that you may consider at a later stage,

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■ 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 #3

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c6 CCStartBracketCCcovering b5CCEndBracketCC, but ...Bb7 will be much more powerful, as the long diagonal is open. These general observations are useful, but the position will turn very sharp soon, so we need to check concrete variations. 6...b5 We cover the pawn and ask White: what now? Their choice is minimal. If we get to play ...Be7 and ...Bb7, we are just a pawn up and have pressure on e4, as ...b4 is a constant worry. The only moves to check now are the critical 7.e5 and 7.a4, which attack our queenside pawn chain. 7.e5 The critical move, utilizing the pin. 7...h6 The counterattack on the bishop is the only way to save material. We enter some fascinating complications now that are not exactly 'Simple'. Given the course title, entering lines like that is always a tough decision for an author. In this specific case, there are good arguments in favour of allowing this line CCStartBracketCCwhen playing 4...a6, you already 'have signed up' for it, by the wayCCEndBracketCC. First of all, it's objectively good for Black. White might equalize with perfect play, but it's tough. We know the line; White most likely doesn't. If they'd known it, they wouldn't enter it in the first place. Finally, a good chess player needs to be somewhat versatile. Yes, it's OK to like positional and strategic chess, but having some sharp sound lines in your repertoire is fun and beneficial for general chess improvement. 8.Kh4 No choice, as 8.Bxf6 gxf6 gives Black the bishop pair on top of the extra pawn. 8...g5 Again, a forced move. 9..xxg5 Here 8.exf6 gxh4 is fantastic for Black. We'll pick up f6 and are material up, and White has nothing to show for the losses. 9...hxg5 10.Kxg5 .xbd7 This whole sequence after 7.e5 was more or less forced. This is a good moment for a comparison to the Botvinnik System. In the Botvinnik a similar position is reached: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 c6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Nxg5 hxg5 10.Bxg5 Nbd7 . The only difference is that we have ...a6 played instead of ...c6. This difference is substantial, as our bishop on b7 will enjoy an open diagonal. In the Botvinnik, White has two main moves: 11.exf6 and 11.g3. In our line, the move CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1p2/p3pn2/1p2P1B1/2pP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 11CCEndFENCC 11.g3? is just awful, as 11...Bb7 clearly shows. The only good moves for White are 11.exf6 or 11.Be2, intending Bf3 . I had a look at online games that reached the current position and found that CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1p2/p3pn2/1p2P1B1/2pP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 11CCEndFENCC 11.Ne4?? has been frequently played by White. Black can refute it in many ways, but 11...Bb4+ is good enough... White has no good reply. The move CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1p2/p3pn2/1p2P1B1/2pP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 11CCEndFENCC 11.Qf3?! is not quite as bad, but still dubious because of 11...Rb8 12.exf6 Bb7 , which gains a useful tempo. 11.exf6 White regains the piece, a very natural choice. 11...Kb7 12.d5 Here 12.Be2 looks best, whichwe cover via CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1p2/p3pn2/1p2P1B1/2pP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 11CCEndFENCC 11.Be2 Bb7 12.exf6 . The move 12.d5 tries to exploit the absence of a c6-pawn, but ultimately only leads to trouble for White. 12....xc5 We attack the d5-pawn and cover e6, enabling us to answer 13.

dxe6 with 13...Nxe6 . 13.dxe6 .xxe6 14.O&xd8+ Qxd8 This endgame is great for Black. Our pieces are extremely active, and White's extra pawn on f6 is not relevant. Very likely, it will drop at some point due to lack of support.

☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 #4

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☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 #5

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3..xc3 .xf6 4..xf3 After 4.Nf3, we have reached a key position. It's Black's move, and there is an unbelievable range of options to choose from. It's remarkable how many fully viable lines Black can play. This abundance of possibilities makes it difficult for White to be adequately prepared, as they have to consider so many options. When I started constructing this repertoire, one goal of mine was to include this position. Being able to play into it as Black gives you enormous flexibility for a long time. You can play the system I recommend, but you'll have tons of alternatives if ever desired. Alright, what do I recommend for Black now? It is the move 4...a6!?, which is probably not the first move you thought of. Black's is playing a small flank pawn move; isn't there something more pressing to do? Well, I see the point, but hang on! In the notes to 4...a6, I'll make my case why I think it is an excellent choice. Before we put the move on the board, I'll quickly want to give you an overview of possible alternatives that you may consider at a later stage, with a brief description. A CCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...Be7 - The Classical line. Safe, sound, solid BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...Bb4 - The Ragozin. A Nimzo-Queen's Gambit Hybrid. Together with FM Daniel Barrish, I created a Chessable LTR on it. CCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...Nbd7 - A flexible move that still may transpose to A or B. DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...c6 - The Semi-Slav. A mix of solid and dynamic lines, quite flexible. ECCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...c5 - The Semi-Tarrasch. A super-safe line that may lead to early simplifications. FCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...dxc4 - The Vienna. Black takes the pawn and starts more concrete play. Considered to be primarily tactical and requires good memorization. Most of the lines are covered on Chessable or might be in the future. Now let's check why I like the move 4...a6. 4...a6 Constructing a complete repertoire for Black usually works like this: you know that you like certain lines and ideas, and then you construct the rest around these cornerstones. In the case of this course, I knew straight away that I wanted to include the main crossroads position after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 and that 4...a6 would be my pick. Why? I became aware of the move while watching Magnus Carlsen playing online Blitz/Rapid games. Magnus has played the line often, with great success. In my database, he scored seven wins and nine draws with Black - zero losses! That

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■ 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 #6

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do? Well, I see the point, but hang on! In the notes to 4...a6, I'll make my case why I think it is an excellent choice. Before we put the move on the board, I'll quickly want to give you an overview of possible alternatives that you may consider at a later stage, with a brief description. A[EndBracket] [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[EndFEN] 4...Be7 - The Classical line. Safe, sound, solid B[EndBracket] [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[EndFEN] 4...Bb4 - The Ragozin. A Nimzo-Queen's Gambit Hybrid. Together with FM Daniel Barrish, I created a Chessable LTR on it. C[EndBracket] [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[EndFEN] 4...Nbd7 - A flexible move that still may transpose to A or B. D[EndBracket] [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[EndFEN] 4...c6 - The Semi-Slav. A mix of solid and dynamic lines, quite flexible. E[EndBracket] [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[EndFEN] 4...c5 - The Semi-Tarrasch. A super-safe line that may lead to early simplifications. F[EndBracket] [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[EndFEN] 4...dxc4 - The Vienna. Black takes the pawn and starts more concrete play. Considered to be primarily tactical and requires good memorization. Most of the lines are covered on Chessable or might be in the future. Now let's check why I like the move 4...a6. 4...a6 Constructing a complete repertoire for Black usually works like this: you know that you like certain lines and ideas, and then you construct the rest around these cornerstones. In the case of this course, I knew straight away that I wanted to include the main crossroads position after [StartFEN]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[EndFEN] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 and that 4...a6 would be my pick. Why? I became aware of the move while watching Magnus Carlsen playing online Blitz/Rapid games. Magnus has played the line often, with great success. In my database, he scored seven wins and nine draws with Black - zero losses! That caught people's attention, and many players followed suit. The line has gained in popularity and has been employed successfully by many strong players. But now, let's talk about what the little pawn move does. Clearly, it does not contribute to development, but it rather serves a more concrete purpose: we are enforcing the idea to take the c4-pawn and supporting it with the move ...b5. This comes into play after the natural move 5.Bg5 dxc4! , when 6.e3 b5 or [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/6B1/2pP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6[EndFEN] 6.e4 b5 demonstrate our idea. In these lines, White is already fighting for equality! Let's have an overview of White's possible replies worth checking. A[EndBracket] [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5[EndFEN] 5.e3 - A conservative move that covers the c-pawn, but it's rather passive. I suggest answering it with 5...Nbd7 . This transposes to the line [StartFEN]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/

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but with Black having played ...a6 instead of ...c6. The Botvinnik arises after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 c6 5.Bg5 dxc4 , when 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Nxg5 hxg5 10.Bxg5 Nbd7 is the mainline. It turns out that our version is essentially an 'Enhanced Botvinnik', as ...a6 does a similar job as ...c6 CCStartBracketCCcovering b5CCEndBracketCC, but ...Bb7 will be much more powerful, as the long diagonal is open. These general observations are useful, but the position will turn very sharp soon, so we need to check concrete variations. 6...b5 We cover the pawn and ask White: what now? Their choice is minimal. If we get to play ...Be7 and ...Bb7, we are just a pawn up and have pressure on e4, as ...b4 is a constant worry. The only moves to check now are the critical 7.e5 and 7.a4, which attack our queenside pawn chain. 7.e5 The critical move, utilizing the pin. 7...h6 The counterattack on the bishop is the only way to save material. We enter some fascinating complications now that are not exactly 'Simple'. Given the course title, entering lines like that is always a tough decision for an author. In this specific case, there are good arguments in favour of allowing this line CCStartBracketCCwhen playing 4...a6, you already 'have signed up' for it, by the wayCCEndBracketCC. First of all, it's objectively good for Black. White might equalize with perfect play, but it's tough. We know the line; White most likely doesn't. If they'd known it, they wouldn't enter it in the first place. Finally, a good chess player needs to be somewhat versatile. Yes, it's OK to like positional and strategic chess, but having some sharp sound lines in your repertoire is fun and beneficial for general chess improvement. 8.Kh4 No choice, as 8.Bxf6 gxf6 gives Black the bishop pair on top of the extra pawn. 8...g5 Again, a forced move. 9..xxg5 Here 8.exf6 gxh4 is fantastic for Black. We'll pick up f6 and are material up, and White has nothing to show for the losses. 9...hxg5 10.Kxg5 .xbd7 This whole sequence after 7.e5 was more or less forced. This is a good moment for a comparison to the Botvinnik System. In the Botvinnik a similar position is reached: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 c6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Nxg5 hxg5 10.Bxg5 Nbd7 . The only difference is that we have ...a6 played instead of ...c6. This difference is substantial, as our bishop on b7 will enjoy an open diagonal. In the Botvinnik, White has two main moves: 11.exf6 and 11.g3. In our line, the move CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1p2/p3pn2/1p2P1B1/2pP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 11CCEndFENCC 11.g3? is just awful, as 11...Bb7 clearly shows. The only good moves for White are 11.exf6 or 11.Be2, intending Bf3 . I had a look at online games that reached the current position and found that CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1p2/p3pn2/1p2P1B1/2pP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 11CCEndFENCC 11.Ne4?? has been frequently played by White. Black can refute it in many ways, but 11...Bb4+ is good enough... White has no good reply. The move CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1p2/p3pn2/1p2P1B1/2pP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 11CCEndFENCC 11.Qf3?! is not quite as bad, but still dubious because of 11...Rb8 12.exf6 Bb7 , which gains a useful tempo. 11.Ke2 White can't play 11.

g3? Bb7 , so they try to reach the diagonal by different means. 11...Kb7
We have reached a critical position for the whole 5.Bg5 dxc4! Variation. Now White's best move is 12.exf6, which still keeps them in the game. I'd rather be Black, but objectively speaking, White seems to be alright. However, if White plays 11.Be2 to continue with 12.Bf3, this move is met by a tremendous blow. 12.Kf3 This is the position you want to get on the board after 5.Bg5 dxc4 - now we get to play a cool move! 12....xxe5 Boom! That's a fun move to play... and it will certainly come as a nasty surprise! Black is now much better in all lines, but the only one worth exploring further is 13.Bxb7, which we cover in thefollowing trainable. Objectively speaking, 13. dxe5 is White's best move, but our advantage against it is rather simple to prove. 13.Kxb7 By engine standards, White is probably lost after this move. For Humans, however, things remain complicated. 13....xd3+ 14.Elf1 It's fascinating to analyze this position. In ultra-sharp situations, very often, there is only one playable move. Here this is not the case; Black has many tempting options. 14...Qb8 This move looks like it's the most manageable for a human player, and it gives Black a large advantage. Stockfish actually evaluates 14...Bh6 as even slightly stronger, but the complications after this move are mind-boggling. I didn't want to flood you with lines up to move 20 but wanted a simpler solution - and 14...Rb8 is good enough. Still, it's a lot of fun to analyze 14...Bh6 - if you are interested, give it a go on your own. 15.Kc6+ Ele7 Our king is surprisingly safe on e7. The main feature of the position is our monster knight on d3, which is a terrible nuisance for White. 16.O&e2
This looks best, as White threatens Nd5+. Against other moves, we often have ...Bh6, getting the passive bishop in play, for example after 16.Be3 Bh6 . 16...Kg7 17.O&e3 Elf8 Now we are ready to unpin with ...Qd6 and have a substantial advantage, thanks to the d3-octopus.

☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e3 #1

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3..xc3 .xf6 4..xf3 After 4.Nf3, we have reached a key position. It's Black's move, and there is an unbelievable range of options to choose from. It's remarkable how many fully viable lines Black can play. This abundance of possibilities makes it difficult for White to be adequately prepared, as they have to consider so many options. When I started constructing this repertoire, one goal of mine was to include this position. Being able to play into it as Black gives you enormous flexibility for a long time. You can play the system I recommend, but you'll have tons of alternatives if ever desired. Alright, what do I recommend for Black now? It is the move 4...a6!?, which is probably not the first move you thought of. Black's is playing a small flank pawn move; isn't there something more pressing to do? Well, I see the point, but hang on! In the notes to 4...a6, I'll make my case why I think it is an excellent choice. Before we put the move on the board, I'll quickly want to give you an overview of possible alternatives that you may consider at a later stage,

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Bxf6 , which we answer with 7...gxf6! The doubled pawn is no weakness and helps to cover the important e5-square. We also need the queen in the centre and on the queenside. Throughout the next moves, White may always insert Bxf6, which we always answer with ...gxf6! 7...c6 At first, you'd think that White now can take twice on b5, as there is a pin on the a-file. Well, we have a cunning idea prepared against this... 8.axb5 cxb5 Now we'll check 9.Nxb5 and 9.Bxf6 - both will be answered with a powerful exchange sacrifice. 9.Kxf6 gxf6 We always take with the pawn. Here 9... Qxf6?? is particularly off due to 10.Nxb5 , when we can't sacrifice the exchange and are more or less lost. 10..xxb5 axb5 That's the big point of our concept. We give up the exchange in return for a powerful initiative. 11.Qxa8 Kb4+ Starting with 11... Bb7 and ...Bb4+ next is just as good and transposes. 12..xd2 Kb7 13.Qa1 e5 Black has great compensation for the exchange. It's tough to play White's position, as the knight is stuck in an annoying pin and Black's bishops are monsters. 14.O&h5 This move can be irritating. In some games, Black players didn't find the best reply. Here is some info about possible alternatives to illustrate the ideas. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCC1n1qk2r/1b3p1p/5p2/1p2p3/1bpP4/4P3/ 1P1N1PPP/R2QKB1R w Kk - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.dxe5? fxe5 is awful for White. The simple plan ...Nd7-c5-b3 is crushing CCStartBracketCCamongst others... CCEndBracketCC BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCC1n1qk2r/1b3p1p/5p2/ 1p2p3/1bpP4/4P3/1P1N1PPP/R2QKB1R w Kk - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.Be2 exd4 15.O-O dxe3 16.Nf3 exf2+ 17.Kh1 is the engine's best try at defence for White. We have three pawns for the exchange and are not concerned about this scenario. White has avoided Checkmate, though! 14...Kc6 Not exactly an intuitive move, but quickly pointed out by Stockfish. We couldn't take d4, as b5 was hanging with check - the bishop move renews the threat, and White has no great way to continue. White probably has to try 15.Qh4 , when 15...exd4 16.Qxd4 Qxd4! 17.exd4 O-O 18. Be2 Rd8 19.Rd1 Rxd4 gives Black a substantial advantage. It is instructive to see that our initiative persists even after the queen trade. The pin is just an incredible nuisance for White!

☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e3 #2

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3..xc3 .xf6 4..xf3 After 4.Nf3, we have reached a key position. It's Black's move, and there is an unbelievable range of options to choose from. It's remarkable how many fully viable lines Black can play. This abundance of possibilities makes it difficult for White to be adequately prepared, as they have to consider so many options. When I started constructing this repertoire, one goal of mine was to include this position. Being able to play into it as Black gives you enormous flexibility for a long time. You can play the system I recommend, but you'll have tons of alternatives if ever desired. Alright, what do I recommend for Black now? It is the move 4...a6!?, which is probably not the first move you thought of.

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response remains the same: cover the pawn with ...b5! 6...b5 7.a4 White needs to get some concrete play on the road and attacks our b5-pawn. Against slow moves, we develop CCStartBracketCC...Bb7, ...Nbd7 and ultimately ... c5CCEndBracketCC and are much better. Instead of 7.a4, White could also play 7. Bxf6 , which we answer with 7...gxf6! The doubled pawn is no weakness and helps to cover the important e5-square. We also need the queen in the centre and on the queenside. Throughout the next moves, White may always insert Bxf6, which we always answer with ...gxf6! 7...c6 At first, you'd think that White now can take twice on b5, as there is a pin on the a-file. Well, we have a cunning idea prepared against this... 8.axb5 cxb5 Now we'll check 9.Nxb5 and 9.Bxf6 - both will be answered with a powerful exchange sacrifice. 9..xxb5 axb5 That's the big point of our concept. We give up the exchange in return for a powerful initiative. 10.Qxa8 Kb4+ Starting with 10...Bb7 and ...Bb4+ next is just as good and transposes. 11..xd2 Kb7 12.Qa1 White could insert 12.Bxf6 gxf6 , transposing to 9.Bxf6 in thecurrent chapter. 12...e5 Black has huge compensation for the material. How should White defend? It's very tricky to navigate. After 13.Bxf6 , both 13...Qxf6 and CCStartFENCC1n1qk2r/1b3ppp/5B2/1p2p3/1bpP4/4P3/1P1N1PPP/R2QKB1R b Kk - 0 13CCEndFENCC 13...gxf6 are fine. Taking with the pawn transposes to9.Bxf6, when the capture on f6 happened earlier. 13.Ke2 This move loses straight away, but the refutation is not obvious at all. A more obvious line is 13.dxe5 Bxd2+ 14.Qxd2 Qxd2+ 15.Kxd2 Ne4+ , when we pick up the g5-bishop. 13...O&d5 This move is amazingly strong! We threaten ...Qxg2 and ...exd4 at the same time - the queen on d5 has an eye on the g5-bishop, too! 14.Kf3 e4 And Black is crashing through. After 15.Bxf6 exf3 16.Bxg7 fxg2 17.Rg1 Rg8 White's position is hopelessly discombobulated CCStartBracketCCyes, I needed to get this word in once!CCEndBracketCC.

☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
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there is a method to this madness. We plan to play ...Na5!, covering the c4-pawn, and later still have ...c5 available. The knight on a5 is not just covering c4 but also having an eye on the weak b3-square, which is an important bonus. 7.e4
I am tempted to even use the question mark here instead of '?!'. White plays actively, but after 7...Na5 Black is better. 7....xa5 8.e5 Compared to 7.e3, White has no way to regain the pawn. They can't play 8.Ne5? , as 8...Nb3 highlights a key issue of 7. e4 - the d4-pawn is weak and falls. Pushing 8.e5 is the only interesting try, as otherwise we'd just break the pin with ...Be7 and would be a pawn up for nothing. 8...h6 Just as after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/6B1/2pP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 , this counterattacking idea defuses the pin. 9.Kh4 g5 10..xxg5 .xd5 This move is even stronger than the routine 10...hxg5 . If you don't remember 10...Nd5!, but play 10... hxg5 instead, nothing bad will happen. After 11.Bxg5 Be7 12.exf6 Bxf6 13.Bxf6 Qxf6 Black is still in good shape but won't have the chance to win quickly, as it might happen after 10...Nd5!. 11..xf3 White has to retreat. After 11.Nxf7?? Qxh4 12.Nxh8 Bb4 , we get a smashing attack and will pick up the stranded knight in the process. The following sequence shows this point: 13.Rc1 Bd7 14.Be2 O-O-O 15. Nf7 Rf8 and the knight has no way out. 11...Ke7 12.Kxe7 O&xe7 Black has a great position. We have the simple plan ...Bd7-c6 and ...O-O-O, putting enormous pressure on White. If they play Nd2 to attack the c-pawn, ...Qb4 will lend additional cover. 13.Ke2 Kd7 14.0-0 Kc6 Black is much better due to a range of factors. We can point to the weaknesses along the d-file CCStartBracketCC...O-O-O is coming soonCCEndBracketCC, or possible attacking chances on the g-file.

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☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.a4 #3

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reasonable shape, as 9...Nxc4 10.Nxc4 is not easy to meet. 9..xxc4 The move White wants to play, but it has a surprising drawback. 9...O&d5 An unusual double attack! 10.Kxf6 The only move. After 10.Nxa5 Bxc3+ 11.bxc3 Qxa5 , we attack both the bishop and the pawn on c3, which wins instantly. 10....xxc4 11.O&b3 After 11.Bxg7 Rg8 12.Bf6 Rg6 White is also struggling. 11....xxe3 A fun tactic! I stop the trainable here, as the next moves are all completely forced. Now the only way to continue for both sides is 12.Qxb4 Nc2+ 13.Kd2 Nxb4 14.Nxd5 Nxd5 15. Bxg7 Rg8 16.Bh6 Bd7 , when Black is much better. We have targets on d4 and a4, and White's king is unsafe after we will have castled queenside.

☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.Bf4

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☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.c5 #1

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3..xc3 .xf6 4..xf3 After 4.Nf3, we have reached a key position. It's Black's move, and there is an unbelievable range of options to choose from. It's remarkable how many fully viable lines Black can play. This abundance of possibilities makes it difficult for White to be adequately prepared, as they have to consider so many options. When I started constructing this repertoire, one goal of mine was to include this position. Being able to play into it as Black gives you enormous flexibility for a long time. You can play the system I recommend, but you'll have tons of alternatives if ever desired. Alright, what do I recommend for Black now? It is the move 4...a6!?, which is probably not the first move you thought of. Black's is playing a small flank pawn move; isn't there something more pressing to do? Well, I see the point, but hang on! In the notes to 4...a6, I'll make my case why I think it is an excellent choice. Before we put the move on the board, I'll quickly want

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which sets the trap 8.b7? Bxb7 9.Qxb7?? Na5! , winning the queen. The real test is 8.Na4 , when Black has to play 8...Na5 , which leads to somewhat strange positions. Black seems to be alright, but I felt it is an unnecessarily complicated solution. 8.e4 This must be the critical test. 8.b7 Ra7 is pointless, and CCStartFENCCrn1qkb1r/3b1ppp/pP2pn2/2pp4/3P4/1QN2N2/PP2PPPP/R1B1KB1R w KQkq - 2 8CCEndFENCC 8.e3 c4 9.Qc2 Qxb6 looks comfortable for Black. 8...c4 Don't play 8...dxe4?? 9.Bf4! , when White is winning on the spot. 9.O&c2 O&xb6 We have regained the pawn and reached an interesting yet unexplored position. 10.e5 At first, this move looks awkward for Black. What to do with the attacked knight? Before we look at the correct reply, a word about 10.exd5 , when 10...exd5 11.Bg5 Bb4 gives Black equal chances due to the ...Ne4 idea that the pin has prepared. 10....xg8 Returning home looks odd, but it's no problem at all for Black. We have ...Nc6 and ... Ne7CCStartBracketCCh6CCEndBracketCC-f5 ideas to put pressure on d4, which gives us fine play. The current lack in development is no issue, as the position is completely closed.

☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.c5 #2

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3..xc3 .xf6 4..xf3 After 4.Nf3, we have reached a key position. It's Black's move, and there is an unbelievable range of options to choose from. It's remarkable how many fully viable lines Black can play. This abundance of possibilities makes it difficult for White to be adequately prepared, as they have to consider so many options. When I started constructing this repertoire, one goal of mine was to include this position. Being able to play into it as Black gives you enormous flexibility for a long time. You can play the system I recommend, but you'll have tons of alternatives if ever desired. Alright, what do I recommend for Black now? It is the move 4...a6!?, which is probably not the first move you thought of. Black's is playing a small flank pawn move; isn't there something more pressing to do? Well, I see the point, but hang on! In the notes to 4...a6, I'll make my case why I think it is an excellent choice. Before we put the move on the board, I'll quickly want to give you an overview of possible alternatives that you may consider at a later stage, with a brief description. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...Be7 - The Classical line. Safe, sound, solid BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...Bb4 - The Ragozin. A Nimzo-Queen's Gambit Hybrid. Together with FM Daniel Barrish, I created a Chessable LTR on it. CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...Nbd7 - A flexible move that still may transpose to A or B. DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC

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crazy sequence 13.e5 Qb4 14.Nxd4! Nxd4 15.O-O-O Nf5 16.Qf3 Nd5 17.Nxd5 exd5 18.Qxd5 O-O 19.Qxa8 Black is saved by the miracle move 19...Ne3!! , when 20.fxe3 Qc5+ 21.Kd2 Qb4+ 22.Kc1 Qc5+ could end in a draw, but 23.Kb1 Bf5+ 24.Bd3 would continue the game. I checked this deep into the endgame, and it should end in a draw. It's very impractical to learn this many moves and only have a draw in the end. Taking on e4 is a much simpler solution. 13..xd2 After 13.Nxe4 Qb4+ we'll easily recoup the b-pawn, for example after 14.Nc3 Nd5 . 13....xb4 This looks like the cleanest solution. We threaten ...Nc2+ and ...Nbd5, taking aim at the b-pawn. 14.Qc1 .xbd5 Black is fine, as White has no good way to keep the b-pawn. A possible continuation is 15.Ndxe4 Nxe4 16.Qxe4 O-O , when we'll pick up the pawn soon.

☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.c5 #3

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3..xc3 .xf6 4..xf3 After 4.Nf3, we have reached a key position. It's Black's move, and there is an unbelievable range of options to choose from. It's remarkable how many fully viable lines Black can play. This abundance of possibilities makes it difficult for White to be adequately prepared, as they have to consider so many options. When I started constructing this repertoire, one goal of mine was to include this position. Being able to play into it as Black gives you enormous flexibility for a long time. You can play the system I recommend, but you'll have tons of alternatives if ever desired. Alright, what do I recommend for Black now? It is the move 4...a6!?, which is probably not the first move you thought of. Black's is playing a small flank pawn move; isn't there something more pressing to do? Well, I see the point, but hang on! In the notes to 4...a6, I'll make my case why I think it is an excellent choice. Before we put the move on the board, I'll quickly want to give you an overview of possible alternatives that you may consider at a later stage, with a brief description. A[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[CC]EndFEN[CC] 4...Be7 - The Classical line. Safe, sound, solid B[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[CC]EndFEN[CC] 4...Bb4 - The Ragozin. A Nimzo-Queen's Gambit Hybrid. Together with FM Daniel Barrish, I created a Chessable LTR on it. C[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[CC]EndFEN[CC] 4...Nbd7 - A flexible move that still may transpose to A or B. D[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[CC]EndFEN[CC] 4...c6 - The Semi-Slav. A mix of solid and dynamic lines, quite flexible. E[CC]EndBracket[CC] [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[CC]EndFEN[CC] 4...c5 - The Semi-Tarrasch. A super-safe line that may lead to early simplifications. F[CC]EndBracket[CC]

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is more similar to other variations in the 5.c4 complex. 12.Ke2 .xbd7 13..xa4 Giri played 13.O-O , when 13...e5 14.Qd2 Nxb6 was fine for Black. The material balance is restored, and Black enjoys an attractive centre. 13...Qb8 We'll get the pawn back and have no problems at all. A key idea to know is that the c8-bishop will often get into the game via a6 after ...a6-a5 has been played first.

☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bf4 #1

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☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bf4 #2

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6CCEndFENCC 6.e4 b5 demonstrate our idea. In these lines, White is already fighting for equality! Let's have an overview of White's possible replies worth checking. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.e3 - A conservative move that covers the c-pawn, but it's rather passive. I suggest answering it with 5...Nbd7 . This transposes to the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Nc3 Nbd7 , which is examined in the Queen's Gambit Sidelines Chapter. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bf4 fail to react to our threat of taking c4! We grab the pawn, starting fun complications. In those lines, it's often White instead of Black who needs to be careful. CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.c5 seeks to gain space on the queenside. As usual, we attack this advanced pawn with 5...b6 . This line is interesting, but Black is holding their own nicely. DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.cxd5 exd5 leads to a Carlsbad structure and is White's most popular and likely best move. This overview already hints at why I like the 4...a6 variation. Line A is harmless, B scores heavily for Black and is fun to play, C is fine for Black and does not require much effort to learn. Finally, line D leads to the Carlsbad structure, a pawn formation that is a cornerstone of our repertoire anyway, as we can reach it in various versions. This part of the current chapter will have some comparisons and references to the Carlsbad chapter CCStartBracketCC'We have reached a position similar to X' or a 'favourable version of Y'CCEndBracketCC. I, therefore, recommend that you have had a look at the Carlsbad chapter before studying line D, as it makes it easier to understand. The move 4...a6 will often come as a surprise for White, mainly if you play at the club level or compete in online speed chess. For titled players or Pros, the move 4...a6 has become a mainline in recent years, and White will know how to meet it. At lower levels, you'll have a massive knowledge gap: you know the course contents presented here, while White often won't know a thing! 5.cxd5 Taking on d5 is White's major move by a mile. They recognize that ...dxc4 is a serious idea and solve the issue by capturing on d5. 5...exd5 We have reached a familiar pawn structure: the Carlsbad! If you have already studied the Carlsbad chapter, you probably remember that we mostly examined lines that featured Nge2 by White, as Nf3-setups are less critical. Here White has already committed the knight to f3, but we have played the move ...a6, which is less useful than ...c6. Compare this to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 , which is easy for Black to handle. The difference between the two moves is so major that we need to play an entirely different setup than the one we use against the Standard

Exchange variation. Different does not mean worse, though. The arising lines are interesting to play and offer chances for both sides. As mentioned, White's main move is 6.Bg5 now, but we'll also check 6.Bf4 and, which is also played quite frequently. 6.Kg5 Setting up the pin is White's usual choice. 6...Ke6 This is the way to go. We need a different approach with ...a6 on the board instead of ...c6 of the Carlsbad mainline. In this case, we go for a setup involving ...Be7, ...h6 and play for a quick ...Ne4 if White has decided to place the knight on f3. Here's a concrete sequence of moves to illustrate: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! , which gives Black equal chances. The same concept wouldn't work as well here, as the move ...a6 is more or less pointless, and we'd still need to play ...c6 early on to cover the d5-pawn. I looked at lines like CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p4n2/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R b KQkq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6...Be7 7.e3 h6 8.Bh4 O-O 9.Bd3 c6 10.O-O Ne4 11.Bxe4 dxe4 12.Bxe7 Qxe7 13.Nd2 , when we see a drawback of ...a6. Not only did it cost a tempo, but we also have created severe weaknesses on the queenside. This line is not completely terrible for Black, but not the most desirable option. So what about 6...Be6? What's the point of the move? Well, we try to do without ...c6 for the moment and use the bishop to cover the d5-pawn. A typical drawback of early bishop moves is the weakness of the b7-pawn. We need to check if White has dangerous ideas based on a quick Qb3. We'll see that lines like CCStartFENCCrn1qkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3bn2/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 2 7CCEndFENCC 7.Qb3 or 7.Bxf6 Qxf6 8.Qb3 are fine for Black if we know what to do. By far, the main move is the natural 7.e3, leading to less concrete play than early queen sorties. 7.Kxf6 Giving up the bishop unprovoked makes little sense strategically, but it has a concrete tactical idea. After 7...Qxf6 8.Qb3 , both pawns on b7 and d5 are attacked. The following lines are all fine for Black but note that we are significantly behind in development in some cases. This makes it a tricky line to face, so studying it carefully is recommended. 7...O&xf6 8.O&b3 The only move that makes any sense in connection with the voluntary capture. How do we save our pawns now? 8...Qa7 This funny move covers b7, but what about d5? We need to examine this move, of course. After 9.Nxd5 Qd8 10.e4 c6 we set up a pin, but 11.Qb6 leads to further complications that are fine for Black. White has also tested slower moves, like 9.a3 or 9.g3. 9.g3 White has tried three slow moves in the position after 8...Qxf6: 9.g3, 9.e3 and 9.a3. We'll examine 9.g3, as it is the most popular among the three, and it has a pitfall to avoid. The common point of all three is that we should simply play ...Qd8 in reply, supporting the pawn on d5 again. Next on the agenda is ...c6 and ...Nd7, catching up in development. We'll examine this scenario for 9.g3, but Black's setup would be essentially the same against 9.e3 or 9.a3. 9...O&d8 Back home! We not only cover d5 but also prepare ...c6. The immediate 9...c6?? fails to 10.Qb6 . 10.h4 Now we get to the pitfall I mentioned earlier. White has just played the move 10.h4, which introduces the idea Ng5 into the position. How to react? 10...c6

This precise move is better than 10...h6 , when 11.e4! dxe4 12.d5! leads to a dangerous initiative for White. 11..xg5 Kc8 The retreat looks a bit crazy, but White has no way to benefit from our backward moves. Ultimately we'll play ...h6 and evict the knight on g5. After the sequence 12.e4 h6 13.Nf3 dxe4 14.Nxe4 Qa5+ 15. Nc3 Bd6 , we are finally ready to castle and coordinate our position. In the long run, we are fine due to the bishop pair.

☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 Be6 7.Bxf6 #

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3..xc3 .xf6 4..xf3 After 4.Nf3, we have reached a key position. It's Black's move, and there is an unbelievable range of options to choose from. It's remarkable how many fully viable lines Black can play. This abundance of possibilities makes it difficult for White to be adequately prepared, as they have to consider so many options. When I started constructing this repertoire, one goal of mine was to include this position. Being able to play into it as Black gives you enormous flexibility for a long time. You can play the system I recommend, but you'll have tons of alternatives if ever desired. Alright, what do I recommend for Black now? It is the move 4...a6!?, which is probably not the first move you thought of. Black's is playing a small flank pawn move; isn't there something more pressing to do? Well, I see the point, but hang on! In the notes to 4...a6, I'll make my case why I think it is an excellent choice. Before we put the move on the board, I'll quickly want to give you an overview of possible alternatives that you may consider at a later stage, with a brief description. AĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/ 4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 4...Be7 - The Classical line. Safe, sound, solid BĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 4...Bb4 - The Ragozin. A Nimzo-Queen's Gambit Hybrid. Together with FM Daniel Barrish, I created a Chessable LTR on it. CĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/ PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 4...Nbd7 - A flexible move that still may transpose to A or B. DĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkb1r/ ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 4...c6 - The Semi-Slav. A mix of solid and dynamic lines, quite flexible. EĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/ PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 4...c5 - The Semi-Tarrasch. A super-safe line that may lead to early simplifications. FĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 4...dxc4 - The Vienna. Black takes the pawn and starts more concrete play. Considered to be primarily tactical and requires good memorization. Most of the lines are covered on Chessable or might be in the future. Now let's check why I like the move 4...a6. 4...a6 Constructing a complete repertoire

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remarkable how many fully viable lines Black can play. This abundance of possibilities makes it difficult for White to be adequately prepared, as they have to consider so many options. When I started constructing this repertoire, one goal of mine was to include this position. Being able to play into it as Black gives you enormous flexibility for a long time. You can play the system I recommend, but you'll have tons of alternatives if ever desired. Alright, what do I recommend for Black now? It is the move 4...a6!?, which is probably not the first move you thought of. Black's is playing a small flank pawn move; isn't there something more pressing to do? Well, I see the point, but hang on! In the notes to 4...a6, I'll make my case why I think it is an excellent choice. Before we put the move on the board, I'll quickly want to give you an overview of possible alternatives that you may consider at a later stage, with a brief description. A[EndBracket] [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[EndFEN] 4...Be7 - The Classical line. Safe, sound, solid B[EndBracket] [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[EndFEN] 4...Bb4 - The Ragozin. A Nimzo-Queen's Gambit Hybrid. Together with FM Daniel Barrish, I created a Chessable LTR on it. C[EndBracket] [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[EndFEN] 4...Nbd7 - A flexible move that still may transpose to A or B. D[EndBracket] [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[EndFEN] 4...c6 - The Semi-Slav. A mix of solid and dynamic lines, quite flexible. E[EndBracket] [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[EndFEN] 4...c5 - The Semi-Tarrasch. A super-safe line that may lead to early simplifications. F[EndBracket] [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4[EndFEN] 4...dxc4 - The Vienna. Black takes the pawn and starts more concrete play. Considered to be primarily tactical and requires good memorization. Most of the lines are covered on Chessable or might be in the future. Now let's check why I like the move 4...a6. 4...a6 Constructing a complete repertoire for Black usually works like this: you know that you like certain lines and ideas, and then you construct the rest around these cornerstones. In the case of this course, I knew straight away that I wanted to include the main crossroads position after [StartFEN]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[EndFEN] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 and that 4...a6 would be my pick. Why? I became aware of the move while watching Magnus Carlsen playing online Blitz/Rapid games. Magnus has played the line often, with great success. In my database, he scored seven wins and nine draws with Black - zero losses! That caught people's attention, and many players followed suit. The line has gained in popularity and has been employed successfully by many strong players. But now, let's talk about what the little pawn move does. Clearly, it does not contribute to development, but it rather serves a more concrete purpose: we are enforcing the idea to take the c4-pawn and supporting it with the move ...b5. This comes into play after

the natural move 5.Bg5 dxc4! , when 6.e3 b5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/6B1/2pP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e4 b5 demonstrate our idea. In these lines, White is already fighting for equality! Let's have an overview of White's possible replies worth checking. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.e3 - A conservative move that covers the c-pawn, but it's rather passive. I suggest answering it with 5...Nbd7 . This transposes to the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Nc3 Nbd7 , which is examined in the Queen's Gambit Sidelines Chapter. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bf4 fail to react to our threat of taking c4! We grab the pawn, starting fun complications. In those lines, it's often White instead of Black who needs to be careful. CCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.c5 seeks to gain space on the queenside. As usual, we attack this advanced pawn with 5...b6 . This line is interesting, but Black is holding their own nicely. DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.cxd5 exd5 leads to a Carlsbad structure and is White's most popular and likely best move. This overview already hints at why I like the 4...a6 variation. Line A is harmless, B scores heavily for Black and is fun to play, C is fine for Black and does not require much effort to learn. Finally, line D leads to the Carlsbad structure, a pawn formation that is a cornerstone of our repertoire anyway, as we can reach it in various versions. This part of the current chapter will have some comparisons and references to the Carlsbad chapter CCStartBracketCC'We have reached a position similar to X' or a 'favourable version of Y'CCEndBracketCC. I, therefore, recommend that you have had a look at the Carlsbad chapter before studying line D, as it makes it easier to understand. The move 4...a6 will often come as a surprise for White, mainly if you play at the club level or compete in online speed chess. For titled players or Pros, the move 4...a6 has become a mainline in recent years, and White will know how to meet it. At lower levels, you'll have a massive knowledge gap: you know the course contents presented here, while White often won't know a thing! 5.cxd5 Taking on d5 is White's major move by a mile. They recognize that ...dxc4 is a serious idea and solve the issue by capturing on d5. 5...exd5 We have reached a familiar pawn structure: the Carlsbad! If you have already studied the Carlsbad chapter, you probably remember that we mostly examined lines that featured Nge2 by White, as Nf3-setups are less critical. Here White has already committed the knight to f3, but we have played the move ...a6, which is less useful than ...c6. Compare this to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 , which is

easy for Black to handle. The difference between the two moves is so major that we need to play an entirely different setup than the one we use against the Standard Exchange variation. Different does not mean worse, though. The arising lines are interesting to play and offer chances for both sides. As mentioned, White's main move is 6.Bg5 now, but we'll also check 6.Bf4 and, which is also played quite frequently. 6.Kg5 Setting up the pin is White's usual choice. 6...Ke6 This is the way to go. We need a different approach with ...a6 on the board instead of ...c6 of the Carlsbad mainline. In this case, we go for a setup involving ...Be7, ...h6 and play for a quick ...Ne4 if White has decided to place the knight on f3. Here's a concrete sequence of moves to illustrate: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! , which gives Black equal chances. The same concept wouldn't work as well here, as the move ...a6 is more or less pointless, and we'd still need to play ...c6 early on to cover the d5-pawn. I looked at lines like CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p4n2/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R b KQkq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6...Be7 7.e3 h6 8.Bh4 O-O 9.Bd3 c6 10.O-O Ne4 11.Bxe4 dxe4 12.Bxe7 Qxe7 13.Nd2 , when we see a drawback of ...a6. Not only did it cost a tempo, but we also have created severe weaknesses on the queenside. This line is not completely terrible for Black, but not the most desirable option. So what about 6...Be6? What's the point of the move? Well, we try to do without ...c6 for the moment and use the bishop to cover the d5-pawn. A typical drawback of early bishop moves is the weakness of the b7-pawn. We need to check if White has dangerous ideas based on a quick Qb3. We'll see that lines like CCStartFENCCrn1qkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3bn2/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 2 7CCEndFENCC 7.Qb3 or 7.Bxf6 Qxf6 8.Qb3 are fine for Black if we know what to do. By far, the main move is the natural 7.e3, leading to less concrete play than early queen sorties. 7.O&b3 A critical try, but quite easily defused. We can simply ignore the attack on the pawn and offer a pawn sacrifice. 7....xbd7 The exclam is not just for the right pawn sacrifice but also for avoiding 7...Ra7? , which does not work due to the surprising blow 8.e4 . We don't need to know the details, but remember that 7.Qb3 is different from CCStartFENCCrn1qkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3bn2/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 2 7CCEndFENCC 7.Bxf6 Qxf6 8.Qb3 , when 8...Ra7! is correct. 8.O&xb7 White's greedy response needs to be checked. If they play 8.e3 , the simple 8...Rb8 is fine for Black. We cover the pawn and are ready to complete development next. White's queen is not well-placed on b3, which renders the whole operation rather pointless. 8...Qb8 9.O&xa6 Qxb2 We have excellent compensation for the pawn. Strictly speaking, you don't need to know much more than that, as it's clear that White's position is unenviable. Still, I'd like to show one line that I find instructive. After 10.a3 we simply continue with our development and don't do anything too hectic. Our development advantage and active rook will always be enough to regain the pawn, at least. After 10...Be7 11.e3 O-O 12.Be2 Rb3 13.

Na4 we can take a3, but 13...Qa8 is strong, too. Again, we easily regain the a-pawn and have an active piece placement.

☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 Be6 7.e3 #1

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3..xc3 .xf6 4..xf3 After 4.Nf3, we have reached a key position. It's Black's move, and there is an unbelievable range of options to choose from. It's remarkable how many fully viable lines Black can play. This abundance of possibilities makes it difficult for White to be adequately prepared, as they have to consider so many options. When I started constructing this repertoire, one goal of mine was to include this position. Being able to play into it as Black gives you enormous flexibility for a long time. You can play the system I recommend, but you'll have tons of alternatives if ever desired. Alright, what do I recommend for Black now? It is the move 4...a6!?, which is probably not the first move you thought of. Black's is playing a small flank pawn move; isn't there something more pressing to do? Well, I see the point, but hang on! In the notes to 4...a6, I'll make my case why I think it is an excellent choice. Before we put the move on the board, I'll quickly want to give you an overview of possible alternatives that you may consider at a later stage, with a brief description. A CCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...Be7 - The Classical line. Safe, sound, solid BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...Bb4 - The Ragozin. A Nimzo-Queen's Gambit Hybrid. Together with FM Daniel Barrish, I created a Chessable LTR on it. CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...Nbd7 - A flexible move that still may transpose to A or B. DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...c6 - The Semi-Slav. A mix of solid and dynamic lines, quite flexible. ECCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...c5 - The Semi-Tarrasch. A super-safe line that may lead to early simplifications. FCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...dxc4 - The Vienna. Black takes the pawn and starts more concrete play. Considered to be primarily tactical and requires good memorization. Most of the lines are covered on Chessable or might be in the future. Now let's check why I like the move 4...a6. 4...a6 Constructing a complete repertoire for Black usually works like this: you know that you like certain lines and ideas, and then you construct the rest around these cornerstones. In the case of this course, I knew straight away that I wanted to include the main crossroads position after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0

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chapter is dedicated to the lines starting with CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . In this variation, White can elect to play a similar setup as he does here, involving the move Nf3. A sample line goes 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Nf3 , when we play 9...Ne4! while White's setup is almost the same, our piece placement is completely different. There is no way for us to achieve ...Ne4, for example. This is not a problem; it just means that we need to play differently, as one counterplay device CCStartBracketCC...Ne4!CCEndBracketCC is off the table. In general, the outpost square e4 is currently not well controlled by us, which we'll try to improve in the middlegame. Placing a knight on e4 is certainly a long-term goal. One key point to discuss is our light-squared bishop. Currently, the bishop mostly looks at its own pawns on f7 and d5 and has little scope for activity. It's tough for us to find a target to attack with the bishop, so usually, the best solution is to seek a trade of the piece, ideally against White's counterpart on d3. The way to work towards the trade is to get control of f5 and then play ...Bf5 at the end. A typical idea would be ...g6, followed by a manoeuvre of a knight to g7 or d6, usually the more active and better option. Once we have traded the bishops, we have better chances to control e4 and place a knight on the outpost. After our move 8...Bd6 White has tried many moves. As the position does not have a forcing character, there is a wide scope for various move orders. White's main move is 9.O-O, but I'd like to talk about 9.Bf4 and 9.h3 for a moment. The move 9.Bf4 shows an idea that White can play for. They allow trading on f4, accepting a doubled pawn after CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1ppn1ppp/p2bbn2/3p2B1/3P4/2NBPN2/PP3PPP/R2QK2R w KQkq - 3 9CCEndFENCC 9.Bf4 Bxf4 10.exf4 . After this sequence White, all of a sudden has a huge threat: f4-f5 would win a piece, as our bishop has no available squares. We have a good reply, though. The move 10...Bg4! leads to a good game for Black, as we manage to get rid of our problem bishop and have damaged White's pawn structure in the process. This variation explains why White has tried the move 9.h3, stopping a possible ...Bg4. Therefore, we need to reckon with Bf4 on the next move, coming with a more significant effect. The way to play is CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1ppn1ppp/p2bbn2/3p2B1/3P4/2NBPN2/PP3PPP/R2QK2R w KQkq - 3 9CCEndFENCC 9.h3 c6! , when we are ready on answer 10.Bf4 with 10...Qc7 , avoiding the issues after ...Bxf4. In general, playing ... c6 next is almost always a good idea, as it allows ...Qc7 as a universal answer to Bf4 ideas at a later stage. 9.h3 c6 We want to be ready to answer Bf4 with ...Qc7. 10.Kf4 O&c7 Now White has the key decision whether to take on d6 or play 11.Qd2 to still keep the bishop on f4. We won't examine it any further, as ourmainline CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1ppn1ppp/p2bbn2/3p2B1/3P4/2NBPN2/PP3PPP/R2QK2R w KQkq - 3 9CCEndFENCC 9.O-O c6 10.Bf4 Qc7 gets to the same crossroads when we'll discuss those two options.

☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 Be6 7.e3 #2

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Be7 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Nf3 , when we play 9...Ne4! while White's setup is almost the same, our piece placement is completely different. There is no way for us to achieve ...Ne4, for example. This is not a problem; it just means that we need to play differently, as one counterplay device CCStartBracketCC...Ne4!CCEndBracketCC is off the table. In general, the outpost square e4 is currently not well controlled by us, which we'll try to improve in the middlegame. Placing a knight on e4 is certainly a long-term goal. One key point to discuss is our light-squared bishop. Currently, the bishop mostly looks at its own pawns on f7 and d5 and has little scope for activity. It's tough for us to find a target to attack with the bishop, so usually, the best solution is to seek a trade of the piece, ideally against White's counterpart on d3. The way to work towards the trade is to get control of f5 and then play ...Bf5 at the end. A typical idea would be ...g6, followed by a manoeuvre of a knight to g7 or d6, usually the more active and better option. Once we have traded the bishops, we have better chances to control e4 and place a knight on the outpost. After our move 8...Bd6 White has tried many moves. As the position does not have a forcing character, there is a wide scope for various move orders. White's main move is 9.O-O, but I'd like to talk about 9.Bf4 and 9.h3 for a moment. The move 9.Bf4 shows an idea that White can play for. They allow trading on f4, accepting a doubled pawn after CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1ppn1ppp/p2bbn2/3p2B1/3P4/2NBPN2/PP3PPP/R2QK2R w KQkq - 3 9CCEndFENCC 9.Bf4 Bxf4 10.exf4 . After this sequence White, all of a sudden has a huge threat: f4-f5 would win a piece, as our bishop has no available squares. We have a good reply, though. The move 10...Bg4! leads to a good game for Black, as we manage to get rid of our problem bishop and have damaged White's pawn structure in the process. This variation explains why White has tried the move 9.h3, stopping a possible ...Bg4. Therefore, we need to reckon with Bf4 on the next move, coming with a more significant effect. The way to play is CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1ppn1ppp/p2bbn2/3p2B1/3P4/2NBPN2/PP3PPP/R2QK2R w KQkq - 3 9CCEndFENCC 9.h3 c6! , when we are ready on answer 10.Bf4 with 10...Qc7 , avoiding the issues after ...Bxf4. In general, playing ... c6 next is almost always a good idea, as it allows ...Qc7 as a universal answer to Bf4 ideas at a later stage. 9.Kf4 We already talked about this move in the notes to 8...Bd6. 9...Kxf4 10.exf4 Kg4 A crucial resource, otherwise our bishop would be in serious trouble. 11.O&e2+ Elf8 We have to avoid 11...Qe7? 12.Qxe7+ Kxe7 13.Ne5 , when White is much better. After 11...Kf8, we have navigated all the pitfalls and are in good shape. Our bishop can trade on f3, and the king position on f8 is no substantial problem, as ...g6 and ...Kg7 are an easy fix.

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which we'll try to improve in the middlegame. Placing a knight on e4 is certainly a long-term goal. One key point to discuss is our light-squared bishop. Currently, the bishop mostly looks at its own pawns on f7 and d5 and has little scope for activity. It's tough for us to find a target to attack with the bishop, so usually, the best solution is to seek a trade of the piece, ideally against White's counterpart on d3. The way to work towards the trade is to get control of f5 and then play ...Bf5 at the end. A typical idea would be ...g6, followed by a manoeuvre of a knight to g7 or d6, usually the more active and better option. Once we have traded the bishops, we have better chances to control e4 and place a knight on the outpost. After our move 8...Bd6 White has tried many moves. As the position does not have a forcing character, there is a wide scope for various move orders. White's main move is 9.O-O, but I'd like to talk about 9.Bf4 and 9.h3 for a moment. The move 9.Bf4 shows an idea that White can play for. They allow trading on f4, accepting a doubled pawn after CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1ppn1ppp/p2bbn2/3p2B1/3P4/2NBPN2/PP3PPP/R2QK2R w KQkq - 3 9CCEndFENCC 9.Bf4 Bxf4 10.exf4 . After this sequence White, all of a sudden has a huge threat: f4-f5 would win a piece, as our bishop has no available squares. We have a good reply, though. The move 10...Bg4! leads to a good game for Black, as we manage to get rid of our problem bishop and have damaged White's pawn structure in the process. This variation explains why White has tried the move 9.h3, stopping a possible ...Bg4. Therefore, we need to reckon with Bf4 on the next move, coming with a more significant effect. The way to play is CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1ppn1ppp/p2bbn2/3p2B1/3P4/2NBPN2/PP3PPP/R2QK2R w KQkq - 3 9CCEndFENCC 9.h3 c6! , when we are ready on answer 10.Bf4 with 10...Qc7 , avoiding the issues after ...Bxf4. In general, playing ... c6 next is almost always a good idea, as it allows ...Qc7 as a universal answer to Bf4 ideas at a later stage. 9.0-0 White's most flexible move in a way. Castling queenside is no serious option, so you might as well get the king out of the centre right away and keep flexible otherwise. 9...c6 Just play this first to be ready to answer Bf4 with ...Qc7. 10.O&c2 White stops 10...O-O? , as 11.Bxh7+ would be a cold shower. 10...O&c7 A good solution. We move the queen out of the pin and allow ...O-O, if desired. That's not the only point, though. White also needs to worry about their h2-pawn, as ... Bg4 is a serious idea. 11.Kh4 White prepares Bg3, trading our strong bishop. 11...h6 A useful move, covering the g5-square. At some point, Ng5 would be annoying, so we stop the move straight away. 12.Kg3 Kxg3 13.hxg3 0-0 A good moment to take stock and discuss some ideas. White's primary idea is the minority attack, based on b4-b5. How do we react to it? After 14.b4 I see two good ways for Black. ACCEndBracketCC Allowing b4-b5 and reacting with c6-c5. This can be accomplished with CCStartFENCCr4rk1/1pqn1pp1/p1p1bn1p/3p4/3P4/2NBPNP1/PPQ2PP1/R4RK1 w - - 1 14CCEndFENCC 14.b4 a5 15.b5 c5 or CCStartFENCCr4rk1/1pqn1pp1/2p1bn1p/p2p4/1P1P4/2NBPNP1/P1Q2PP1/R4RK1 w - - 0 15CCEndFENCC 15.a3 axb4 16.axb4 Qd6 17.b5 c5 . In this scenario, White's b5-pawn is a cause of concern for White. We may get some pressure against this pawn, while our isolated d5-pawn is quite easy to defend. Note that in the

endgame, the king often has the route f8-e7-d6-c5 directly attacking the b5-pawn. I know that it's a long while until this may happen, but I have won a fair share of games with precisely this plan! BCCEndBracketCC Blocking White's advance with ...b5. After CCStartFENCCr4rk1/1pqn1pp1/p1p1bn1p/3p4/3P4/2NBPNP1/PPQ2PP1/R4RK1 w - - 1 14CCEndFENCC 14.b4 Qd6 15.Rab1 b5 we stop a further advance and prepare the knight tour ...Nb6-c4. When considering the ... b5-block, it is crucial to check if you manage to place the knight on b6 or not. If you don't, the c-pawn will be a constant worry on a half-open file. A knight on c4 plugs the c-file and is an annoying intruder. If White captures a knight on c4, we will establish a protected passed pawn on c4. Note that in both cases, we have a plan on the queenside. It is not a given that we play defensively on this side of the board if White decides to start a minority attack.

☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 Be6 7.e3 #4

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3..xc3 .xf6 4..xf3 After 4.Nf3, we have reached a key position. It's Black's move, and there is an unbelievable range of options to choose from. It's remarkable how many fully viable lines Black can play. This abundance of possibilities makes it difficult for White to be adequately prepared, as they have to consider so many options. When I started constructing this repertoire, one goal of mine was to include this position. Being able to play into it as Black gives you enormous flexibility for a long time. You can play the system I recommend, but you'll have tons of alternatives if ever desired. Alright, what do I recommend for Black now? It is the move 4...a6!?, which is probably not the first move you thought of. Black's is playing a small flank pawn move; isn't there something more pressing to do? Well, I see the point, but hang on! In the notes to 4...a6, I'll make my case why I think it is an excellent choice. Before we put the move on the board, I'll quickly want to give you an overview of possible alternatives that you may consider at a later stage, with a brief description. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...Be7 - The Classical line. Safe, sound, solid BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...Bb4 - The Ragozin. A Nimzo-Queen's Gambit Hybrid. Together with FM Daniel Barrish, I created a Chessable LTR on it. CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...Nbd7 - A flexible move that still may transpose to A or B. DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...c6 - The Semi-Slav. A mix of solid and dynamic lines, quite flexible. ECCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...c5 - The Semi-Tarrasch. A

super-safe line that may lead to early simplifications. FCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...dxc4 - The Vienna. Black takes the pawn and starts more concrete play. Considered to be primarily tactical and requires good memorization. Most of the lines are covered on Chessable or might be in the future. Now let's check why I like the move 4...a6. 4...a6 Constructing a complete repertoire for Black usually works like this: you know that you like certain lines and ideas, and then you construct the rest around these cornerstones. In the case of this course, I knew straight away that I wanted to include the main crossroads position after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 and that 4...a6 would be my pick. Why? I became aware of the move while watching Magnus Carlsen playing online Blitz/Rapid games. Magnus has played the line often, with great success. In my database, he scored seven wins and nine draws with Black - zero losses! That caught people's attention, and many players followed suit. The line has gained in popularity and has been employed successfully by many strong players. But now, let's talk about what the little pawn move does. Clearly, it does not contribute to development, but it rather serves a more concrete purpose: we are enforcing the idea to take the c4-pawn and supporting it with the move ...b5. This comes into play after the natural move 5.Bg5 dxc4! , when 6.e3 b5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/6B1/2pP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e4 b5 demonstrate our idea. In these lines, White is already fighting for equality! Let's have an overview of White's possible replies worth checking. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.e3 - A conservative move that covers the c-pawn, but it's rather passive. I suggest answering it with 5...Nbd7 . This transposes to the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Nc3 Nbd7 , which is examined in the Queen's Gambit Sidelines Chapter. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bf4 fail to react to our threat of taking c4! We grab the pawn, starting fun complications. In those lines, it's often White instead of Black who needs to be careful. CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.c5 seeks to gain space on the queenside. As usual, we attack this advanced pawn with 5...b6 . This line is interesting, but Black is holding their own nicely. DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.cxd5 exd5 leads to a Carlsbad structure and is White's most popular and likely best move. This overview already hints at why I like the 4...a6 variation. Line A is harmless, B scores heavily for Black and is fun to play, C is fine for Black and does not require much effort to learn.

Finally, line D leads to the Carlsbad structure, a pawn formation that is a cornerstone of our repertoire anyway, as we can reach it in various versions. This part of the current chapter will have some comparisons and references to the Carlsbad chapter CCStartBracketCC'We have reached a position similar to X' or a 'favourable version of Y'CCEndBracketCC. I, therefore, recommend that you have had a look at the Carlsbad chapter before studying line D, as it makes it easier to understand. The move 4...a6 will often come as a surprise for White, mainly if you play at the club level or compete in online speed chess. For titled players or Pros, the move 4...a6 has become a mainline in recent years, and White will know how to meet it. At lower levels, you'll have a massive knowledge gap: you know the course contents presented here, while White often won't know a thing! 5.cxd5 Taking on d5 is White's major move by a mile. They recognize that ...dxc4 is a serious idea and solve the issue by capturing on d5. 5...exd5 We have reached a familiar pawn structure: the Carlsbad! If you have already studied the Carlsbad chapter, you probably remember that we mostly examined lines that featured Nge2 by White, as Nf3-setups are less critical. Here White has already committed the knight to f3, but we have played the move ...a6, which is less useful than ...c6. Compare this to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 , which is easy for Black to handle. The difference between the two moves is so major that we need to play an entirely different setup than the one we use against the Standard Exchange variation. Different does not mean worse, though. The arising lines are interesting to play and offer chances for both sides. As mentioned, White's main move is 6.Bg5 now, but we'll also check 6.Bf4 and, which is also played quite frequently. 6.Kg5 Setting up the pin is White's usual choice. 6...Ke6 This is the way to go. We need a different approach with ...a6 on the board instead of ...c6 of the Carlsbad mainline. In this case, we go for a setup involving ...Be7, ...h6 and play for a quick ...Ne4 if White has decided to place the knight on f3. Here's a concrete sequence of moves to illustrate: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! , which gives Black equal chances. The same concept wouldn't work as well here, as the move ...a6 is more or less pointless, and we'd still need to play ...c6 early on to cover the d5-pawn. I looked at lines like CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/ p4n2/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R b KQkq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6...Be7 7.e3 h6 8.Bh4 O-O 9.Bd3 c6 10.O-O Ne4 11.Bxe4 dxe4 12.Bxe7 Qxe7 13. Nd2 , when we see a drawback of ...a6. Not only did it cost a tempo, but we also have created severe weaknesses on the queenside. This line is not completely terrible for Black, but not the most desirable option. So what about 6...Be6? What's the point of the move? Well, we try to do without ...c6 for the moment and use the bishop to cover the d5-pawn. A typical drawback of early bishop moves is the weakness of the b7-pawn. We need to check if White has dangerous ideas based on a quick Qb3. We'll see that lines like CCStartFENCCrn1qkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3bn2/

3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 2 7CCEndFENCC 7.Qb3 or 7. Bxf6 Qxf6 8.Qb3 are fine for Black if we know what to do. By far, the main move is the natural 7.e3, leading to less concrete play than early queen sorties. 7.e3 Very natural and White's main move by a mile. 7....xbd7 No surprise. We develop our knight and are now less concerned about Qb3, as the simple move ...Rb8 would be a fine answer. 8.Kd3 White sometimes starts with 8.h3 , when 8...Bd6 9.Bd3 transposes to CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/1ppn1ppp/p3bn2/3p2B1/3P4/2N1PN2/ PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 8CCEndFENCC 8.Bd3 Bd6 9.h3 . 8...Kd6 After our natural development 8...Bd6, it's a good moment to talk about the position. We have reached a Carlsbad structure, a familiar guest in our repertoire. A full chapter is dedicated to the lines starting with CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/ 8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . In this variation, White can elect to play a similar setup as he does here, involving the move Nf3. A sample line goes 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Nf3 , when we play 9...Ne4! while White's setup is almost the same, our piece placement is completely different. There is no way for us to achieve ...Ne4, for example. This is not a problem; it just means that we need to play differently, as one counterplay device CCStartBracketCC...Ne4!CCEndBracketCC is off the table. In general, the outpost square e4 is currently not well controlled by us, which we'll try to improve in the middlegame. Placing a knight on e4 is certainly a long-term goal. One key point to discuss is our light-squared bishop. Currently, the bishop mostly looks at its own pawns on f7 and d5 and has little scope for activity. It's tough for us to find a target to attack with the bishop, so usually, the best solution is to seek a trade of the piece, ideally against White's counterpart on d3. The way to work towards the trade is to get control of f5 and then play ...Bf5 at the end. A typical idea would be ...g6, followed by a manoeuvre of a knight to g7 or d6, usually the more active and better option. Once we have traded the bishops, we have better chances to control e4 and place a knight on the outpost. After our move 8...Bd6 White has tried many moves. As the position does not have a forcing character, there is a wide scope for various move orders. White's main move is 9.O-O, but I'd like to talk about 9.Bf4 and 9.h3 for a moment. The move 9.Bf4 shows an idea that White can play for. They allow trading on f4, accepting a doubled pawn after CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1ppn1ppp/p2bbn2/3p2B1/3P4/2NBPN2/PP3PPP/R2QK2R w KQkq - 3 9CCEndFENCC 9.Bf4 Bxf4 10.exf4 . After this sequence White, all of a sudden has a huge threat: f4-f5 would win a piece, as our bishop has no available squares. We have a good reply, though. The move 10...Bg4! leads to a good game for Black, as we manage to get rid of our problem bishop and have damaged White's pawn structure in the process. This variation explains why White has tried the move 9.h3, stopping a possible ...Bg4. Therefore, we need to reckon with Bf4 on the next move, coming with a more significant effect. The way to play is CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1ppn1ppp/p2bbn2/3p2B1/3P4/2NBPN2/PP3PPP/R2QK2R w KQkq - 3 9CCEndFENCC 9.h3 c6! , when we are ready on answer 10.Bf4 with 10...Qc7 , avoiding the issues after ...Bxf4. In general, playing ... c6 next is almost

always a good idea, as it allows ...Qc7 as a universal answer to Bf4 ideas at a later stage. 9.0-0 White's most flexible move in a way. Castling queenside is no serious option, so you might as well get the king out of the centre right away and keep flexible otherwise. 9...c6 Just play this first to be ready to answer Bf4 with ...Qc7. 10.Kf4 White's most popular move, trying to trade our strong bishop. 10...O&c7 The move we prepared with 9...c6. Now White trades on d6, in most cases. They have also tried to keep the tension and played 11.Qd2 in some games. We'll examine both options now. 11.O&d2 White maintains the tension and hopes that we'll take on f4. This is just hope, though. We have plenty of good moves to play instead, starting with ...O-O and ...Rfe8. At some point, White will probably take on d6 after all. 11...0-0 12.h3 Qfe8 Now, it's not clear how White intends to make any headway. They have tried to play somewhat helpful waiting moves, like 13.Rfe1. In any case, I suggest playing ...g6 and ...Nh5 next to resolve the bishop trading issue. You can try to be 'more sophisticated' here, but I think this plan works fine. 13.Qfe1 g6 Here 13...Nb6 is interesting, too. White might feel provoked to play 14.b3 , which we wouldn't mind seeing on the board. Still, let's have a look at the simple plan. 14.Qac1 .xh5 15.Kxd6 O&xd6 16.a3 .xhf6 We have reached a fairly standard Carlsbad position, similar to the mainline of this chapter. I discuss the strategy in the notes there and don't want to copy-paste the text. Please see the notes there for more information.

☐ 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky
■ 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 Be6 7.e3 #5

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3..xc3 .xf6 4..xf3 After 4.Nf3, we have reached a key position. It's Black's move, and there is an unbelievable range of options to choose from. It's remarkable how many fully viable lines Black can play. This abundance of possibilities makes it difficult for White to be adequately prepared, as they have to consider so many options. When I started constructing this repertoire, one goal of mine was to include this position. Being able to play into it as Black gives you enormous flexibility for a long time. You can play the system I recommend, but you'll have tons of alternatives if ever desired. Alright, what do I recommend for Black now? It is the move 4...a6!?, which is probably not the first move you thought of. Black's is playing a small flank pawn move; isn't there something more pressing to do? Well, I see the point, but hang on! In the notes to 4...a6, I'll make my case why I think it is an excellent choice. Before we put the move on the board, I'll quickly want to give you an overview of possible alternatives that you may consider at a later stage, with a brief description. AĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 4...Be7 - The Classical line. Safe, sound, solid BĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 4...Bb4 - The Ragozin. A Nimzo-Queen's Gambit Hybrid.

Together with FM Daniel Barrish, I created a Chessable LTR on it. CCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...Nbd7 - A flexible move that still may transpose to A or B. DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...c6 - The Semi-Slav. A mix of solid and dynamic lines, quite flexible. ECCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...c5 - The Semi-Tarrasch. A super-safe line that may lead to early simplifications. FCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...dxc4 - The Vienna. Black takes the pawn and starts more concrete play. Considered to be primarily tactical and requires good memorization. Most of the lines are covered on Chessable or might be in the future. Now let's check why I like the move 4...a6. 4...a6 Constructing a complete repertoire for Black usually works like this: you know that you like certain lines and ideas, and then you construct the rest around these cornerstones. In the case of this course, I knew straight away that I wanted to include the main crossroads position after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 and that 4...a6 would be my pick. Why? I became aware of the move while watching Magnus Carlsen playing online Blitz/Rapid games. Magnus has played the line often, with great success. In my database, he scored seven wins and nine draws with Black - zero losses! That caught people's attention, and many players followed suit. The line has gained in popularity and has been employed successfully by many strong players. But now, let's talk about what the little pawn move does. Clearly, it does not contribute to development, but it rather serves a more concrete purpose: we are enforcing the idea to take the c4-pawn and supporting it with the move ...b5. This comes into play after the natural move 5.Bg5 dxc4! , when 6.e3 b5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/6B1/2pP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e4 b5 demonstrate our idea. In these lines, White is already fighting for equality! Let's have an overview of White's possible replies worth checking. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.e3 - A conservative move that covers the c-pawn, but it's rather passive. I suggest answering it with 5...Nbd7 . This transposes to the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Nc3 Nbd7 , which is examined in the Queen's Gambit Sidelines Chapter. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bf4 fail to react to our threat of taking c4! We grab the pawn, starting fun complications. In those lines, it's often White instead of Black who needs to be careful. CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/

p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.c5 seeks to gain space on the queenside. As usual, we attack this advanced pawn with 5...b6 . This line is interesting, but Black is holding their own nicely. DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.cxd5 exd5 leads to a Carlsbad structure and is White's most popular and likely best move. This overview already hints at why I like the 4...a6 variation. Line A is harmless, B scores heavily for Black and is fun to play, C is fine for Black and does not require much effort to learn. Finally, line D leads to the Carlsbad structure, a pawn formation that is a cornerstone of our repertoire anyway, as we can reach it in various versions. This part of the current chapter will have some comparisons and references to the Carlsbad chapter CCStartBracketCC'We have reached a position similar to X' or a 'favourable version of Y'CCEndBracketCC. I, therefore, recommend that you have had a look at the Carlsbad chapter before studying line D, as it makes it easier to understand. The move 4...a6 will often come as a surprise for White, mainly if you play at the club level or compete in online speed chess. For titled players or Pros, the move 4...a6 has become a mainline in recent years, and White will know how to meet it. At lower levels, you'll have a massive knowledge gap: you know the course contents presented here, while White often won't know a thing! 5.cxd5 Taking on d5 is White's major move by a mile. They recognize that ...dxc4 is a serious idea and solve the issue by capturing on d5. 5...exd5 We have reached a familiar pawn structure: the Carlsbad! If you have already studied the Carlsbad chapter, you probably remember that we mostly examined lines that featured Nge2 by White, as Nf3-setups are less critical. Here White has already committed the knight to f3, but we have played the move ...a6, which is less useful than ...c6. Compare this to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 , which is easy for Black to handle. The difference between the two moves is so major that we need to play an entirely different setup than the one we use against the Standard Exchange variation. Different does not mean worse, though. The arising lines are interesting to play and offer chances for both sides. As mentioned, White's main move is 6.Bg5 now, but we'll also check 6.Bf4 and, which is also played quite frequently. 6.Kg5 Setting up the pin is White's usual choice. 6...Ke6 This is the way to go. We need a different approach with ...a6 on the board instead of ...c6 of the Carlsbad mainline. In this case, we go for a setup involving ...Be7, ...h6 and play for a quick ...Ne4 if White has decided to place the knight on f3. Here's a concrete sequence of moves to illustrate: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! , which gives Black equal chances. The same concept wouldn't work as well here, as the move ...a6 is more or less pointless, and we'd still need to play ...c6 early on to cover the d5-pawn. I looked at lines like CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p4n2/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R b KQkq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6...Be7

7.e3 h6 8.Bh4 O-O 9.Bd3 c6 10.O-O Ne4 11.Bxe4 dxe4 12.Bxe7 Qxe7 13. Nd2 , when we see a drawback of ...a6. Not only did it cost a tempo, but we also have created severe weaknesses on the queenside. This line is not completely terrible for Black, but not the most desirable option. So what about 6...Be6? What's the point of the move? Well, we try to do without ...c6 for the moment and use the bishop to cover the d5-pawn. A typical drawback of early bishop moves is the weakness of the b7-pawn. We need to check if White has dangerous ideas based on a quick Qb3. We'll see that lines like CCStartFENCCrn1qkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3bn2/ 3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 2 7CCEndFENCC 7.Qb3 or 7. Bxf6 Qxf6 8.Qb3 are fine for Black if we know what to do. By far, the main move is the natural 7.e3, leading to less concrete play than early queen sorties. 7.e3 Very natural and White's main move by a mile. 7....xbd7 No surprise. We develop our knight and are now less concerned about Qb3, as the simple move ...Rb8 would be a fine answer. 8.Kd3 White sometimes starts with 8.h3 , when 8...Bd6 9.Bd3 transposes to CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/1ppn1ppp/p3bn2/3p2B1/3P4/2N1PN2/ PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 8CCEndFENCC 8.Bd3 Bd6 9.h3 . 8...Kd6 After our natural development 8...Bd6, it's a good moment to talk about the position. We have reached a Carlsbad structure, a familiar guest in our repertoire. A full chapter is dedicated to the lines starting with CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/ 8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . In this variation, White can elect to play a similar setup as he does here, involving the move Nf3. A sample line goes 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Nf3 , when we play 9...Ne4! while White's setup is almost the same, our piece placement is completely different. There is no way for us to achieve ...Ne4, for example. This is not a problem; it just means that we need to play differently, as one counterplay device CCStartBracketCC...Ne4!CCEndBracketCC is off the table. In general, the outpost square e4 is currently not well controlled by us, which we'll try to improve in the middlegame. Placing a knight on e4 is certainly a long-term goal. One key point to discuss is our light-squared bishop. Currently, the bishop mostly looks at its own pawns on f7 and d5 and has little scope for activity. It's tough for us to find a target to attack with the bishop, so usually, the best solution is to seek a trade of the piece, ideally against White's counterpart on d3. The way to work towards the trade is to get control of f5 and then play ...Bf5 at the end. A typical idea would be ...g6, followed by a manoeuvre of a knight to g7 or d6, usually the more active and better option. Once we have traded the bishops, we have better chances to control e4 and place a knight on the outpost. After our move 8...Bd6 White has tried many moves. As the position does not have a forcing character, there is a wide scope for various move orders. White's main move is 9.O-O, but I'd like to talk about 9.Bf4 and 9.h3 for a moment. The move 9.Bf4 shows an idea that White can play for. They allow trading on f4, accepting a doubled pawn after CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1ppn1ppp/p2bbn2/3p2B1/3P4/2NBPN2/PP3PPP/R2QK2R w KQkq - 3 9CCEndFENCC 9.Bf4 Bxf4 10.exf4 . After this sequence White, all of a sudden has a huge threat: f4-f5 would win a piece, as our bishop has no available

squares. We have a good reply, though. The move 10...Bg4! leads to a good game for Black, as we manage to get rid of our problem bishop and have damaged White's pawn structure in the process. This variation explains why White has tried the move 9.h3, stopping a possible ...Bg4. Therefore, we need to reckon with Bf4 on the next move, coming with a more significant effect. The way to play is CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1ppn1ppp/p2bbn2/3p2B1/3P4/2NBPN2/PP3PPP/R2QK2R w KQkq - 3 9CCEndFENCC 9.h3 c6! , when we are ready on answer 10.Bf4 with 10...Qc7 , avoiding the issues after ...Bxf4. In general, playing ... c6 next is almost always a good idea, as it allows ...Qc7 as a universal answer to Bf4 ideas at a later stage. 9.0-0 White's most flexible move in a way. Castling queenside is no serious option, so you might as well get the king out of the centre right away and keep flexible otherwise. 9...c6 Just play this first to be ready to answer Bf4 with ...Qc7. 10.Kf4 White's most popular move, trying to trade our strong bishop. 10...O&c7 The move we prepared with 9...c6. Now White trades on d6, in most cases. They have also tried to keep the tension and played 11.Qd2 in some games. We'll examine both options now. 11.Kxd6 O&xd6 12.h3 White is concerned about ...Bg4. 12...0-0 We have reached a very standard Carlsbad structure. At this point, I am going to stop the trainable, as there are many possible moves for White. Instead of thinking along the lines of 'What moves can they play?', the better approach is to understand general plans. The Chapter on the Carlsbad features the primary coverage in this regard, but here's the essence of it. White has their chances on the queenside, most using the so-called Minority Attack. The minority attack features the idea of playing b4-b5 and ultimately creating a weakness on Black's queenside. From the current position, a dream scenario for White would look like the following line, which features awful play by Black to illustrate matters. After CCStartFENCCr4rk1/1p1n1ppp/p1pqbn2/3p4/3P4/2NBPN1P/PP3PP1/R2Q1RK1 w - - 1 13CCEndFENCC 13.a3 Rfe8 14.b4 h6 15.Rb1 Re7 16.a4 Rae8 17.b5 axb5 18.axb5 Rc8 19.bxc6 bxc6 Black has a weak, backward c-pawn and little to show for it. Black has played multiple stupid moves in this sequence, but it was just to showcase what a good outcome for White looks like. How should we battle the minority attack? Here's a key concept: after 13.a3 Rfe8 14.b4 we play 14...b5! We stop a further advance and prepare the knight tour ...Nb6-c4. When considering the ...b7-b5-block, it is crucial to check if you manage to place the knight on b6 or not. If you don't, the c-pawn will be a constant worry on a half-open file. A knight on c4 plugs the c-file and is an annoying intruder. If White captures a knight on c4, we will establish a protected passed pawn on c4. In a recent CCStartBracketCC2021CCEndBracketCC online rapid game between Aleksandra Goryachkina and Michael Adams, Black chances were demonstrated. After 14...b5, the game continued 15.Nd2 Nb6 16.Nb3 Nc4 , when Black has established the knight on the desired c4-outpost. Now White played 17.Nc5 , which looks perfectly normal, but lightning struck with 17...Bxh3! 18.gxh3 Nxe3! , when White had to defend carefully, which turned out to be too difficult with limited time. Sacrifices on e3 and h3 are not that uncommon once you have established the knight on c4. Black

has additional ideas, though. The pawn play ...a6-a5 is pretty obvious, trying to open the a-file. Let's talk about one crucial plan that Black should know: we should try to trade our light-squared bishops. Our bishop is not a 'bad bishop' in the true sense of the word. Sometimes, it can be used as an attacker CCStartBracketCCsee the Adams game aboveCCEndBracketCC. However, trading it against White's d3-bishop is still very desirable. Without the bishops, the squares e4 and c4 are much weaker, which helps a lot. We have seen above that getting a knight to c4 is a good idea, and it's even more attractive if the knight can't be taken. How do we trade the bishops? Here's a prime example. After 13.Qc2 g6 14.Na4 Qe7 15.Rfc1 Ne8 16. Nc5 Nd6 17.Nxd7 Bxd7 18.Rab1 Bf5 19.Bxf5 Nxf5 20.Ne5 Nd6 Black has reached his goal in the online blitz game Sanan Sjugirov vs. Fabiano Caruana. The main takeaway is remembering the idea of ...g6 and the following knight tour to d6, which allowed ...Bf5 at the end. This may also be possible with a knight on g7, but d6 is the far better and active square. The position reached in the Caruana game is very similar to one of the classic games that demonstrates Black's chances in the Carlsbad, the gameBobotsov-Petrosian. We discuss the game and the crucial role of a knight on d6 in the introduction to the Carlsbad chapter. If you haven't read this chapter already, now is a perfect moment to start.

☐ 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala
■ 3.g3 #1

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 This Chapter deals with a branch of the Queen's Gambit, the Catalan opening. What exactly is the Catalan? Whenever White combines the moves d4, c4 and g3 against Black's ...e6/...d5-formation, we reach the Catalan. There are some possible move orders that White may go for. By far the most common one is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 , but we will also examine CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 . Besides these move orders after 1.d4, there are various ways to reach the Catalan via 1.c4 or 1.Nf3. Against both moves, I recommend a ...e6/...d5-based concept, when a quick g3 and d4 by White may quickly transpose to the Catalan, too. Alright, what is our antidote against the Catalan? Black has a wide choice of reliable lines but, there is no clear picture of what might be best. I recommend building the repertoire based on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 , so the basic concept is to take the c-pawn and quickly attack White's centre with ...c5. White has alternatives on the way, but they will be met in similar fashion, like CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 dxc4 4.Nf3 c5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0

1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . We also use this general approach CCStartBracketCCtake c4, play ... c5CCEndBracketCC in the English Opening/Reti: after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2. g3 d5 3.Bg2 Nf6 4.Nf3 I recommend playing 4...dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . In all these lines, we usually will follow up the move ...c5 with ...Nc6, increasing the pressure on d4. 3.g3 White's main way to go for the Catalan is the move order 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 . Playing g3 on move three is considered slightly imprecise, but it's not leading to trouble for White if they are careful after our principled reply. 3...dxc4 A good move order rule of thumb: after White plays g3, we will take on c4. This applies to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 and the current position after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 dxc4 . 4.Kg2 Or 4.Nf3 c5 5. Bg2 , which leads to the same position. Against the move 4.Qa4+ we are spoilt for choice, as 4...Bd7 5.Qxc4 Bc6 6.Nf3 Bxf3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/ 4p3/8/Q1pP4/6P1/PP2PP1P/RNB1KBNR b KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4...c6 5. Qxc4 Qd5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/8/Q1pP4/6P1/PP2PP1P/ RNB1KBNR b KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4...Qd7 5.Qxc4 b5 are all nice for Black. 4...c5 5..xf3 Again 5.Qa4+ leads nowhere. Black is fine will 5...Nd7, 5...Bd7 and the move I suggest, 5...Qd7 . White has nothing better than 6.Qxd7+ , when Black is in good shape. The check on a4 was designed to regain the c4-pawn, which failed. 5....xc6 We follow the same approach as after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/ 4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4. g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 , but here our pressure on d4 is coming a bit faster. We have not yet played ...Nf6, while White has not castled yet. This difference is favourable for Black, as we will see. White now usually tries 6.Qa4 , but the pawn sacrifice 6.O-O has seen some outings, too. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3. Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 White has the interesting move 7.Ne5 . This idea fails here, as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/ PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.g3 dxc4 4.Bg2 c5 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.Ne5? Nge7! highlights the advantage of not having played ...Nf6 yet. 6.0-0 This pawn sacrifice is not quite sufficient, but the alternative 6.Qa4 is not very inspiring, either. 6...cxd4 You should take a central pawn if you don't see a clear refutation. This is such a case. White may regain c4, but we can be pleased with the outcome of the opening. 7.O&a4 Kd7 8.O&xc4 e5 Black enjoys a healthy extra pawn. We will prepare kingside castling with ...Nf6 and ...Be7, completing our development.

☐ 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala
■ 3.g3 #2

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 This Chapter deals with a branch of the Queen's Gambit, the Catalan opening. What exactly is the Catalan? Whenever White combines the moves d4, c4 and g3 against Black's ...e6/...d5-formation, we reach a Catalan. There are some possible move orders that White may go for. By far the most common one is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 , but we will also examine CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 . Besides these move orders after 1.d4, there are various ways to reach the Catalan via 1.c4 or 1.Nf3. Against both moves, I recommend a ...e6/...d5-based concept, when a quick g3 and d4 by White may quickly transpose to the Catalan, too. Alright, what is our antidote against the Catalan? Black has a wide choice of reliable lines but, there is no clear picture of what might be best. I recommend building the repertoire based on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 , so the basic concept is to take the c-pawn and quickly attack White's centre with ...c5. White has alternatives on the way, but they will be met in similar fashion, like CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 dxc4 4.Nf3 c5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . We also use this general approach CCStartBracketCCtake c4, play ... c5CCEndBracketCC in the English Opening/Reti: after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 Nf6 4.Nf3 I recommend playing 4...dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . In all these lines, we usually will follow up the move ...c5 with ...Nc6, increasing the pressure on d4. 3.g3 White's main way to go for the Catalan is the move order 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 . Playing g3 on move three is considered slightly imprecise, but it's not leading to trouble for White if they are careful after our principled reply. 3...dxc4 A good move order rule of thumb: after White plays g3, we will take on c4. This applies to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 and the current position after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 dxc4 . 4.Kg2 Or 4.Nf3 c5 5. Bg2 , which leads to the same position. Against the move 4.Qa4+ we are spoilt for choice, as 4...Bd7 5.Qxc4 Bc6 6.Nf3 Bxf3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/8/Q1pP4/6P1/PP2PP1P/RNB1KBNR b KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4...c6 5. Qxc4 Qd5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/8/Q1pP4/6P1/PP2PP1P/RNB1KBNR b KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4...Qd7 5.Qxc4 b5 are all nice for Black. 4...c5 5..xf3 Again 5.Qa4+ leads nowhere. Black is fine will 5...Nd7, 5...Bd7 and the

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KQkq - 2 8CCEndFENCC 8.dxc5 Qa5+ is not scary for Black at all. I still suggest 7...b5, as it gives more chances to gain the initiative on the queenside. 8.O&c2 Or 8.Qd3 c4 9.Qc2 Nc6 , which is quite similar to this chapter's mainline CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2pP4/5NP1/PP2PP1P/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7.Qa4 Bd7 8.Qxc4 b5 9.Qd3 c4 CCEndBracketCC . These positions after ...c4 are fun to play, as Black may exploit the advanced queenside pawns. 8....xa6 Usually, we hop to c6, but here covering c5 and preparing ...Rc8 is more to the point. 9.0-0 Qc8 Black has an active position and easy moves to play. Stockfish now thinks White's best is 10.Qd1 , which does not look too scary 😉. Against this move, we could play 10...cxd4 11.Nxd4 Nc5 . Moves like ...Be7, ...Qb6 and ...O-O are a natural way to complete development and give us good play on the open files.

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1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 This Chapter deals with a branch of the Queen's Gambit, the Catalan opening. What exactly is the Catalan? Whenever White combines the moves d4, c4 and g3 against Black's ...e6/...d5-formation, we reach a Catalan. There are some possible move orders that White may go for. By far the most common one is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 , but we will also examine CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 . Besides these move orders after 1.d4, there are various ways to reach the Catalan via 1.c4 or 1.Nf3. Against both moves, I recommend a ...e6/...d5-based concept, when a quick g3 and d4 by White may quickly transpose to the Catalan, too. Alright, what is our antidote against the Catalan? Black has a wide choice of reliable lines but, there is no clear picture of what might be best. I recommend building the repertoire based on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 , so the basic concept is to take the c-pawn and quickly attack White's centre with ...c5. White has alternatives on the way, but they will be met in similar fashion, like CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 dxc4 4.Nf3 c5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . We also use this general approach CCStartBracketCCtake c4, play ... c5CCEndBracketCC in the English Opening/Reti: after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2. g3 d5 3.Bg2 Nf6 4.Nf3 I recommend playing 4...dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . In all these lines, we usually will follow up the move ...c5 with ...Nc6, increasing the pressure on d4. 3..xf3 Playing 3.Nf3 is White's best move order to reach a Catalan. 3....xf6 4.g3 The main starting position of the Catalan. As explained in the notes on move two: I suggest taking the c-pawn after White has committed to the fianchetto. 4...dxc4 Alright, let's take the pawn. The main point of the capture is not to win and keep a pawn but to accomplish two things. 1CCEndBracketCC White has played g3, which makes regaining the pawn more difficult. You many compare to e.g. CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 dxc4 , when 4.e3 or 4.e4 prepare the convenient Bxc4. In the Catalan, the bishop belongs to g2, so White needs a different take. As we will see, manoeuvres like Qa4xc4 take time and give Black ideas for counterplay. 2CCEndBracketCC The second point of 4...dxc4 is to open the scope of our queen and put some pressure on d4. We'll increase the pressure with a quick ...c5. After 4...dxc4 White's overwhelming main line is 5.Bg2, but we need to examine 5.Qa4+ , too. Against this move, Black has multiple good options. 5.Kg2

White's main move and certainly the most dangerous one. After the conservative 5. Qa4+, I don't see any challenges for Black. 5...c5 Black has a vast choice in this position. I suggest playing 5...c5, but at a later stage, you have plenty of options to expand your repertoire at this point. 6.0-0 White's mainline by a mile. After 6.Qa4+ I suggest 6...Bd7 7.Qxc4 b5 , which we examine via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2pP4/5NP1/PP2PP1P/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 7.Bg2 b5 . Black has good chances in this line. 6....xc6 We develop the knight and increase the pressure on d4. After this logical move, White has three main moves – 7.Qa4, 7.dxc5, and 7. Ne5 – that I will examine. Before we go into details, I'd like to add that the current position may also occur via other move orders that did not start as a Catalan. The most important one is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.d4 Nf6 5.O-O e6 6.c4 dxc4 , which is a key part of our concept against 1.Nf3/2.g3. The chapter on 1.Nf3 provides more detail on the moves that lead to this surprising transformation. A less common way is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , when 3...e6 4.Bg2 c5 5.O-O Nc6 6.c4 dxc4 again transposes to the current line. I have suggested this move order for White in my Chessable course Keep it Simple: 1.d4 and now will examine Black's perspectives in this interesting variation. 7..xe5 This knight jump is my recommendation in Keep it Simple: 1.d4. My main argument favouring the move is that Black needs to be precise to equalize, and it is easy to wrong right away. After 7.Ne5, we need to avoid 7...Nxd4?? 8.e3! , which loses on the spot. Better than losing a piece, but still awful, is 7...Nxe5? . I'll spare you the details, but rather show what I recommend playing. 7...Kd7 By far the best move, covering the knight. Now White's best try is 8.Na3, as I also stated in Keep it Simple 1.d4. We'll also have a look at the harmless 8.Nxc6 and the pawn sacrifice 8.Nxc4, which is more ambitious but ultimately not scary for Black. 8..xxc6 White damages our pawn structure but loses a lot of time in the process. We easily obtain equal chances in this line. 8...Kxc6 9.Kxc6+ bxc6 The tripled pawns look funny, but we are a pawn up, and d4 is attacked. We were also able to trade our problem bishop on c8 for White's star piece on g2. 10.dxc5 White has also tried 10.Qa4 , but 10... cxd4 11.Qxc6+ Nd7 is a simple and good response. After 12.Qxc4 White restores material equality, but we get equal chances with any normal move, like 12...e5 or 12...Qb6 . We have a fair share of space CCStartBracketCCd4-pawnCCEndBracketCC and open files on the queenside. In the long run, White's king could also feel a bit insecure, as the g2-bishop is missing. 10...O&xd1 11.Qxd1 Kxc5 Alright, we have kept the extra pawn for the moment. How can White try to recover it? It is important to note that a possible ...Rb8 will attack b2, which makes developing the c1-bishop problematic. The c4-pawn prevents a pawn move to b3, too. 12..xd2 This looks best but is met by an attractive answer. 12...0-0-0 Sometimes, it's easy to forget that queenside castling is still possible after there has been that much action already on the queenside. It is a strong move, connecting

rooks and covering the c4-pawn due to the pin. Now White only has one playable move! 13.Qf1 The only move that White has available. Otherwise, we'd play ...Bb4 or ...Ne4, putting deadly pressure on the pinned knight. 13...c3 Finally, we return the pawn on our terms. There was no way to keep it, as 13...Rd5 14.e3 shows. I decided to stop the trainable line here, as after 14.bxc3 Black is fine with many moves. The pawn structure is symmetrical, but our pieces are slightly more active. White's position is very solid, though - chances are equal.

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line comes into consideration. My choice is 9...Be7, which has a different approach. 10..xd6+ Elf8 We give up the b-pawn, but gain valuable time. 11..xxb7 O&b6 12..xd6 O&c5 This looks best. We can't play 12...e5?? , as 13.Nc4 Qc5 14.Nxe5 wins for White. The position after 12...Qc5 has been reached in several games, all between GM-level players. The whole line of 7.Ne5 and 8.Nxc4 is not something you'd meet in your local club tournament. Therefore I cut the trainable line here and show some possible ideas to illustrate matters. White can play CCStartFENCCr4k1r/p2bbppp/2nNpn2/2q5/3p1B2/6P1/PP2PPBP/RN1Q1RK1 w - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.Ne4 , but 13...Nxe4 14.Bxe4 e5 15.Bd2 f5 gives us many valuable moves with the gain of tempo. A much more sophisticated try is CCStartFENCCr4k1r/p2bbppp/2nNpn2/2q5/3p1B2/6P1/PP2PPBP/RN1Q1RK1 w - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.Qb3!? , when 13...Bxd6 14.Rc1 Qb4 gives us equal chances, too. Finally, White could try to make a draw with CCStartFENCCr4k1r/p2bbppp/2nNpn2/2q5/3p1B2/6P1/PP2PPBP/RN1Q1RK1 w - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.Nb7 , but we can avoid a repetition with 13...Qb4 or 13...Qf5 if we want to fight for the win.

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1.d4. We'll also have a look at the harmless 8.Nxc6 and the pawn sacrifice 8.Nxc4, which is more ambitious but ultimately not scary for Black. 8..xa3 A very logical move, getting the knight out to capture on c4. White can also play 8.Nd2 with the same idea, when 8...cxd4 9.Ndxc4 leads to the same positions. 8...cxd4 Alright, we have two extra pawns... 9..xaxc4 Well, the second extra pawns didn't stay on the board for very long, but we still have d4. White has compensation for the material loss, seeing that White's pieces are very active. Quite often, this pressure is enough to win back d4. Our job is to neutralize White's activity and use the extra pawn or return it under favourable or at least fair circumstances. 9...Ke7 I recommend playing this move. Black's primary choice is between my suggestion and 9...Bc5 . I think 9..Be7 is reliable and a bit less effort to study, in comparison. White's typical moves to increase the pressure are Bf4 and Qb3. After 9...Be7, these two moves are the ones to check, leading to different scenarios. Black is fine, but it helps a lot to know the following lines, in particular after 10.Qb3 , which is what I recommended in KIS 1.d4 . We reply 10...Qc7 , which leads to interesting tactical play. The move CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/pp1bbppp/2n1pn2/4N3/2Np4/6P1/PP2PPBP/R1BQ1RK1 w kq - 1 10CCEndFENCC 10.Bf4 is different, as it prepares to play Qb3 next when ... Qc7 is not possible anymore. We need to play the most precise move to address Qb3, which is 10...Rc8. Let's have a look at the details. 10.Kf4 White prepares to play Qb3 next, when ...Qc7 is not possible anymore. 10...Qc8 We need to play the most precise move to address Qb3, which is 10...Rc8. Our idea is to answer Qb3 with ...Nd5, which works best with the rook already on c8. It's helpful to see the difference after 10...O-O 11.Qb3 Nd5? , when 12.Qxb7 Nxe5 13.Nxe5 leads to a deadly double attack on our bishop and rook. After 10...Rc8, we'll examine 11.Nxd7 and 11.Qb3. White will win back the pawn in both cases, but we'll equalize without any problems. 11..xxd7 White starts an immediate operation to regain the pawn. 11...O&xd7 This is a lot safer than 11...Nxd7 12.Nd6+ Bxd6 13.Bxd6 . In this line, White has too much compensation for my taste. It is a playable option if you want to up the stakes. 11...Qxd7 is more reliable but does not offer many winning chances against good play. 12..xe5 White removes the c6-knight, the key defender of the d4-pawn. 12....xxe5 13.Kxe5 O&b5 It's useful to remember this move, as it is not so easy to prove equal chances with other moves. Now White can't play 14.Bxd4?? , as 14...Rd8! creates a deadly pin. 14.O&xd4 0-0 We have equal chances here. White's bishop pair looks great, but it is not well organized. We currently attack the e2-pawn and have ideas like: ...Rfd8, ...Rc4 and knight moves to d7 and even g4 in store. White's setup of Qd4 and Be5 is not stable, giving us many tactical chances. One line to illustrate matters is 15.Bf3 Rfd8 16.Qf4 Rc4 17.Qe3 Nd5 , when our pieces are very active. White could try CCStartFENCC2r2rk1/pp2bppp/4pn2/1q2B3/3Q4/6P1/PP2PPBP/R4RK1 w - - 1 15CCEndFENCC 15.e3 , but 15...Rfd8 or the even more forcing 15...Ng4 are fine for us.

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Qc7 is not possible anymore. We need to play the most precise move to address Qb3, which is 10...Rc8. Let's have a look at the details. 10.Kf4 White prepares to play Qb3 next, when ...Qc7 is not possible anymore. 10...Qc8 We need to play the most precise move to address Qb3, which is 10...Rc8. Our idea is to answer Qb3 with ...Nd5, which works best with the rook already on c8. It's helpful to see the difference after 10...O-O 11.Qb3 Nd5? , when 12.Qxb7 Nxe5 13.Nxe5 leads to a deadly double attack on our bishop and rook. After 10...Rc8, we'll examine 11.Nxd7 and 11.Qb3. White will win back the pawn in both cases, but we'll equalize without any problems. 11.O&b3 A key element of White's play, but we are perfectly set to meet this move now. 11....xd5 We return the b7-pawn with this move but get equal chances in the resulting positions. 12.O&xb7 After 12.Nxd7 it's best to play 12... Nxf4 . Getting the strong bishop on f4 is a nice accomplishment. 12....xxe5 13..xxe5 Qc7 It's best to start with this move. We'd like to take on f4, but after 13...Nxf4 14. gxf4 Rc7 White has 15.Qe4 , which is a more attractive scenario for White than after 13...Rc7, when the queen has to choose a worse square. 14.O&a6 Or 14.Qb3 Nxf4 15.gxf4 O-O , with similar play. 14....xxf4 15.gxf4 0-0 We have equal chances in this position. White's minor pieces are active, but we have the bishops and White's pawn structure is not ideal. White has the option to take on d7 and create a scenario with opposite-coloured bishops. This could be rather drawish if queens are exchanged, but with queens on the board, there are some chances for Black to create some play on the dark squares CCStartBracketCCattacking the pawn on f4, for exampleCCEndBracketCC.

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☐ 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala
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main reason for going that deep is my background story of writing about this line from White's perspective. You are unlikely ever to reach the final positions, as opponents will deviate earlier.

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Again attacking c4. 10...Kxa3 There is no reason to return the pawn with 10...c3?!. After taking on a3 and keeping the pawn, we get equal chances in an interesting position. 11.bxa3 Kd7 The start of an instructive manouver. White has pressure on the long diagonal, so it makes perfect sense to 'empty' this diagonal. After ...Bd7, ... Rc8 and ...b6, we will have a harmonious setup and manage to 'play around' the scope of the Catalan bishop. White has enough play to compensate for the lost pawn, but not more. White will likely need to play something along the lines of ...Bb2-c3 and later capture a5 and c4 to restore material equality. I'll continue the line a bit to illustrate the key moves of the setup. 12.Kb2 Qc8 The rook leaves the long diagonal. 13.Kc3 b6 And we are just in time to cover the knight. 14.Qdc1 White threatens Bxa5, followed by Nxc4. 14...Kb5 Again, we are insisting on keeping the pawn. Black has fair chances in this position, as there is no way in sight for White to increase the pressure. Probably they should consider a line like 15.Rab1 Ba6 16. Bxa5 bxa5 17.Bb7 Bxb7 18.Rxb7 , but after 18...c3 , the c-pawn stays on the board and always gives Black good play.

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...Nd7. 15..xfd2 Or 15.Ne5 Nxe5 16.Bxe5 Bc6 , giving Black equal chances. You can always play ...b7-b6 in this type of position to simplify matters if you like. 15...b6 We should play this move before White manages ...Nd2-c4-d6. After 16.cxb6 axb6 17.Nc4 Rab8 18.Nd6 Bxd6 19.Rxd6 Na5 20.Nxa5 bxa5 21.Be5 Rb4 White's bishop pair is not to be feared, as the pawn structure is too simplified.

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move 15...Nc3? leads to nothing after 16.Rd2 . Instead, we connect rooks but also allow ...Ba4, which could be quite annoying for White to meet. 16.Qb1 This move looks a bit odd, allowing ...Nc3. It is the only interesting move to check, though. After 16.Bd2 , we play the mentioned 16...Ba4 and activate our bishop nicely. Alright, what about the knight jump to c3 now? We'll see that the following complications are fine for Black. 16....xc3 Fork! Now White has two moves that we need to check, but we are fine against both of them. Here are some sample lines to demonstrate that Black has equal chances. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr4rk1/pp1b1ppp/4p3/8/1bNP4/2n3P1/P3PPBP/1RBR2K1 w - - 7 17CCEndFENCC 17.Rxb4 Nxd1 18.Bxb7 Nc3 19.Bxa8 Nxe2+ 20.Kf1 Nxc1 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr4rk1/pp1b1ppp/4p3/8/1bNP4/2n3P1/P3PPBP/1RBR2K1 w - - 7 17CCEndFENCC 17.Bd2 Nxe2+ 18.Kf1 Bxd2 19.Rxb7 Nc3 20.Rxd2 Bb5 CCStartBracketCCor 20...Rab8 as a fancier solutionCCEndBracketCC CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr4rk1/pp1b1ppp/4p3/8/1bNP4/2n3P1/P3PPBP/1RBR2K1 w - - 7 17CCEndFENCC 17.Bd2 Nxe2+ 18.Kf1 Bxd2 19.Rxb7 Nc3 20.Rxd7 Nxd1 21.Bxa8 Rxa8 22.Nxd2 Nc3

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Rab8 20.Bf3 Nd5 , which gives us equal chances. White has the bishop pair, but the weaker pawn structure.

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And we have successfully evacuated our knight, giving us good play after 15.Nxc4 Rxc4 16.Qxa7 O-O , when White still has to worry about the b4-pawn.

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After 10.Rd1?! Qb6 Black is better already. 10...0-0 The alternative 10...Rc8 is just as good. You need to avoid the tempting 10...Bb5?? , however. After 11.b4! Bxb4 12.Qb2 Black is dead lost! 11.Qd1 White can easily fall into a trap here. After 11.Nxc4?? Rc8! we are winning on the spot, as we threaten ...Nxc4 and ...Bxf2+. White has no way to avoid this type of disaster on the c-file! The same trick works after 11.Bg5 h6 12.Bxf6 gxf6 13.Nxc4?? Rc8 , which wins for the same reason. Of course, White does not need to take on c4 in this line, but they won't have more than compensation for the pawn. Our position is sound, and our pieces work well. Back to the current position after 11.Rd1 - White increases the pressure on the d-file, which makes Bg5 a far more dangerous threat on the next move. After a careless move like 11...Rc8?? 12.Bg5 , the pins already cost us the game. 11...h6 'No Bg5 for you!' After this precise move, I don't see any problems for Black. White is active enough to regain the pawn, for example, after 12.Nc3 Qe7 13.Nxd7 Nxd7 14.Qa4 Nc6 15.Qxc4 Nde5 , when our active pieces easily compensate for the loss of the bishop pair.

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with only two sensible replies. They can play 8.dxc5 or capture c4 with the queen. 8.O&xc4 White captures the pawn and hopes for a slight pull after 8...cxd4 9.Nxd4 when the Catalan bishop indeed makes a strong impression. We don't comply! 8...b5 A powerful move, gaining space on the queenside. This variation offers Black good counter chances and more exciting chess than 8...cxd4. Currently, White is struggling to set any problems against 8...b5, which is a key reason why 7.Qa4 has fallen out of fashion at the top level. After 8...b5, White usually retreats with 9.Qd3, but recently the less natural 9.Qc3 has been tried, too. I've also faced the blunder 9.Qxb5?? in Blitz, which loses after 9...Nxd4 . 9.O&c3 Not the most obvious move, as the queen is placed on the natural square for the Queen's knight. White's idea is to discourage 9...c4?! , which is answered by 10.a4 , which gives White good chances. We must avoid this pawn push, which works well after CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/p2b1ppp/2n1pn2/1pp5/2QP4/5NP1/PP2PPBP/RNB2RK1 w kq - 0 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qd3 c4! , as it gains a tempo and White has no time to play a2-a4. 9...b4 As mentioned, 9...c4?! 10.a4 is to be avoided. 10.O&d3 Qc8 We have gained some ground on the queenside with tempo and now remove the rook from the long diagonal. Black has an active position and equal chances. White now usually captures on c5. 11.dxc5 White doesn't have a beneficial move that keeps the tension. If they play a move like 11.Bg5 , both 11...cxd4 and 11...h6 12. Bxf6 Qxf6 is fine for Black. 11...Kxc5 12.Ke3 White wants to get rid of our active bishop. I also examined 12.Bg5 h6 13.Bxf6 Qxf6 14.Nbd2 , when 14...Ne5 15. Nxe5 Qxe5 is fine for Black. 12...Kxe3 13.O&xe3 O&b6 I like this clean solution. The queen trade is not to be feared, as it would even allow us to place our king on e7, ready to help in the centre of the board. The doubled pawns are no problem at all, as White has no way to attack them.

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I have reached this position in an online Blitz game and continued with 11...Rc8? , after which 12.Nxa7 was not that clear at all. White's a-pawn turned out to be very strong, supported by the monster bishop on g2. 11...O&b6 This is much better than my 11...Rc8?, as is 11...Nd5 . 12.Kxa8 O&xb5 We have returned some material but avoided practical problems. With a queen against rook and bishop, we have a huge material advantage and should win.

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the d4-pawn is attacked for real. We couldn't play 11...Nxd4?? , as 12.Qd1 is a double attack on the d4-knight and the a8-rook. 12.Qd1 White covers d4 and develops the rook. This move certainly makes the most sense. Now Black has a good choice of moves. Slower ones like 12...O-O would work fine, but there is a straightforward solution that I wanted to show. 12....xxe5 This capture needs to be carefully considered. The complications work out well for Black, as we will see. 13.dxe5 .xg4 We attack the e5-pawn, and White has no comfortable way to cover it. Here are two lines to show the problem: 14.f4?? Qb6+ is terrible for White, while CCStartFENCC2rqk2r/p2bbppp/4p3/1p2P3/2p3n1/6P1/PPQ1PPBP/RNBR2K1 w k - 1 14CCEndFENCC 14.Bf4? Qb6 doesn't close immediately but is unconvincing. This leaves 14.Qe4 to save the pawn. 14.O&e4 f5 This is the move that Black needed to see before taking on e5. 15.exf6 .xxf6 Now we are in good shape, enjoying an active position. The two advance queenside pawns are an asset, but also now the half-open f-file, which we may also make use of.

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and regain the b-pawn. I decided to stop the trainable here, as after 15.Ra2 Black has various move orders that are all fine. The main point of this line is to remember the idea 12.a4 Na5!

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quite deep, beyond move 15. However, after 11.Re1 all the moves are straightforward to recall. 15...Kxd6 16.O&xd6 .xc2 We will win the rook, but our knight won't get out easily from a1. Even if we'd lose the knight for nothing, we'd still be OK from a material point of view. I decided to cut the trainable here, but you are welcome to explore further, as some interesting complications are ahead. Black can try to use some tactics to save the knight, like 17.Na3 Nxa1 18.Be3 b4 19.Qxb4 Nd5 20.Qd2 Nxe3 21.fxe3 c3 22.bxc3 Bc6 and some others. Black is fine after 11.Re1, and it leads to fun complications.

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☐ 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines
■ 3.c5?

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 In this Chapter, we will examine all lines of the Queen's Gambit Declined that don't merit a dedicated Chapter. We have dedicated Chapters on: ACCEndBracketCCThe Carlsbad. This includes CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 , but other early captures on d5, too CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5

exd5 CCEndBracketCC . BCCEndBracketCCThe line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3. Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . CCCEndBracketCCLines where White develops with Bf4 or Bg5. DCCEndBracketCCThe Catalan CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.g3 . In the current chapter, we examine rare and mostly dubious attempts, but also the sound concept of a quick e3, even before the c1-bishop is developed. This slow setup may occur via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.e3 , but also CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 . There is no fundamental difference between these move orders, and we will react in the same way against all versions. I suggest playing an early ...a6, which is a tricky move order for White to handle. The e3-systems should be taken seriously, as White follows sound principles. Still, we get fluent development and fair chances; let's have a look at the sidelines of the Queen's Gambit Declined. 3.c5 Advancing the c-pawn so early is unwarranted and a conceptual mistake. White can consider this pawn advance in other cases when it is possible to support the pawn and keep it on c5 for a while. This does not apply here, as we quickly gain good chances by attacking the advanced pawn with 3...b6!. I'll only examine 3.c5? b6! in the repertoire to demonstrate the idea, but White may also mistakenly advance the pawn in other early cases in the QGD. Our answer is always ...b6!, for example after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.c5? b6! or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.c5? b6! . 3...b6 4.b4 Relatively best is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/p1p2ppp/1p2p3/2Pp4/3P4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.cxb6 axb6 , when White has lost time and traded a c-pawn against an a-pawn, which is very welcome, of course. We'll have a c-pawn to push and control the centre, while White is lacking this idea. Playing 4.b4 seeks to keep the pawn, but it fails. 4...a5 Now we see the problem for White. They'd need to be able to play 5.a3 here to support the pawn chain, but this fails to 5...axb4 when White can't recapture. Therefore White's advance has failed, losing at least a pawn with a rotten position. A line like 5.cxb6 Bxb4+ seems relatively best, which says a lot.

☐ 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines
■ 3.Nc3

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 In this Chapter, we will examine all lines of the Queen's Gambit Declined that don't merit a dedicated Chapter. We have dedicated Chapters on: ACCEndBracketCCThe Carlsbad. This includes CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 , but other early captures on d5, too CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCEndBracketCC . BCCEndBracketCCThe line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . CCCEndBracketCCLines where White develops with Bf4 or Bg5. DCCEndBracketCCThe Catalan CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.g3 . In the current chapter, we examine rare and mostly dubious attempts, but also the sound concept of a quick e3, even before the c1-bishop is developed. This slow setup may occur via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.e3 , but also CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 . There is no fundamental difference between these move orders, and we will react in the same way against all versions. I suggest playing an early ...a6, which is a tricky move order for White to handle. The e3-systems should be taken seriously, as White follows sound principles. Still, we get fluent development and fair chances; let's have a look at the sidelines of the Queen's Gambit Declined. 3..xc3 White's most popular move. We'll have a look at possible sidelines on the next move. 3....xf6 After 3...Nf6 we examine the moves 4.cxd5, 4.Bg5/4.Bf4, 4.g3 and 4.Nf3 in dedicated chapters, while the wrong move 4.c5? is answered with 4...b6! , asalready discussed via 3.c5? b6! in the current chapter. That leaves the move 4.e3, which covers the c4-pawn. It has almost no independent value, though, as White will play Nf3 shortly, and this transposes to positions that we examine in the current chapter via the more popular move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 . 4.e3 a6 Not the most obvious move, but it makes a lot of sense once you look at the details. We wait if White decides to move the f1-bishop when we'd happily take on c4 and follow up with ...b5. This concept is explained in more detail inthe notes to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 , which is the central part

of this chapter and a far more common way to reach the e3-setups. 5..xf3 This transposes to the mainline of the current chapter. There is not much else to look at. After 5.Bd3?! dxc4 6.Bxc4 b5 we are in great shape, very similarly to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Bd3?! dxc4 . 5....xbd7 With 5...Nbd7, we continue with our waiting strategy, tempting White to move the f1-bishop. This position is far more commonly reached via the CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 a6 5.Nc3 Nbd7 move order, which is the mainline of the current chapter. Please see these variations to learn more about the further play.

☐ 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines
■ 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Qc2

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 In this Chapter, we will examine all lines of the Queen's Gambit Declined that don't merit a dedicated Chapter. We have dedicated Chapters on: ACCEndBracketCCThe Carlsbad. This includes CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 , but other early captures on d5, too CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCEndBracketCC . BCCEndBracketCCThe line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . CCCEndBracketCCLines where White develops with Bf4 or Bg5. DCCEndBracketCCThe Catalan CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.g3 . In the current chapter, we examine rare and mostly dubious attempts, but also the sound concept of a quick e3, even before the c1-bishop is developed. This slow setup may occur via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.e3 , but also CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 . There is no fundamental difference between these move orders, and we will react in the same way against all versions. I suggest playing an early ...a6, which is a tricky move order for White to handle. The e3-systems should be taken seriously, as White follows sound principles. Still, we get fluent development and fair chances; let's have a look at the sidelines of the Queen's Gambit Declined. 3..xf3 .xf6 After 3...Nf6, we examine White's main lines in

dedicated chapters. There is CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.cxd5 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nc3 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bg5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bf4 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.g3 , which each have their chapter. In the current chapter about sidelines, our main focus is 4.e3, but we'll have a quick look at the rare moves 4.Qc2 and 4.Nbd2, as well. 4.O&c2 White covers the c-pawn with the queen. This idea is far more popular and better in variations that feature an early ...c6, for example CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Qc2 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Qc2 . In those lines Black's usual approach is to capture on c4 and follow with ...b5, ...a6 and ultimately ...c5, expanding on the queenside. Looking at this concept already hints at why the queen move is unpopular in our version of the Queen's Gambit. We have not yet played ...c6, so the later queenside expansion is one move quicker, which gives us a comfortable situation. Before we look at this line, a quick word about 4.Nbd2 , which is even rarer than 4.Qc2. White covers c4 with the knight, but the knight is not well-placed on d2. It's on a rather passive square and obstructs the c1-bishop. Black has more than one good reply to 4.Nbd2. I suggest 4...dxc4 5.Nxc4 c5 6.e3 Nc6 , which is a natural way to develop and will likely lead to an IQP for our opponent. There is also nothing wrong about CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP1NPPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...c5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP1NPPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...b6 , but taking on c4 is more in line with similar concepts that we employ. Alright, now back to 4.Qc2. 4...dxc4 A familiar concept: we take on c4 to gain time on the queen with a later ...a6 and ...b5. 5.O&xc4 a6 6.Kg5 Or 6.Bf4 Bd6 , when ...b5 will come next. 6...b5 7.O&c2 White can also play 7.Bxf6 , when we need to play 7...gxf6 to keep c7 covered. The doubled pawn is no problem, as we will see in the following line that features the same pawn structure. 7...Kb7 8..xbd2 .xbd7 We are ready for ...c5 now. 9.Kxf6 gxf6 White expected 9...Nxf6 when ... c5 is more difficult to play. We don't mind the doubled pawn at all, as it covers the important e5-square and can't be attacked by White in any way. Keeping the knight on d7 helps with playing ...c5. 10.e3 c5 Black has an excellent position. We have a strong initiative on the queenside already.

- [ ] 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines
- [x] 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Nc3 #1

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 In this Chapter, we will examine all lines of the Queen's Gambit Declined that don't merit a dedicated Chapter. We have dedicated Chapters on: A**CC**EndBracket**CC**The Carlsbad. This includes **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3**CC**EndFEN**CC** 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 , but other early captures on d5, too **CC**StartBracket**CC** **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3**CC**EndFEN**CC** 3.cxd5 exd5 or **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3**CC**EndFEN**CC** 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 **CC**EndBracket**CC** . B**CC**EndBracket**CC**The line **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3**CC**EndFEN**CC** 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . C**CC**EndBracket**CC**Lines where White develops with Bf4 or Bg5. D**CC**EndBracket**CC**The Catalan **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3**CC**EndFEN**CC** 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 and **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3**CC**EndFEN**CC** 3.g3 . In the current chapter, we examine rare and mostly dubious attempts, but also the sound concept of a quick e3, even before the c1-bishop is developed. This slow setup may occur via **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3**CC**EndFEN**CC** 3.e3 , but also **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3**CC**EndFEN**CC** 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 or **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3**CC**EndFEN**CC** 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 . There is no fundamental difference between these move orders, and we will react in the same way against all versions. I suggest playing an early ...a6, which is a tricky move order for White to handle. The e3-systems should be taken seriously, as White follows sound principles. Still, we get fluent development and fair chances; let's have a look at the sidelines of the Queen's Gambit Declined. 3..xf3 .xf6 After 3...Nf6, we examine White's main lines in dedicated chapters. There is **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4**CC**EndFEN**CC** 4.cxd5 , **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4**CC**EndFEN**CC** 4.Nc3 , **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4**CC**EndFEN**CC** 4.Bg5 or **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4**CC**EndFEN**CC** 4.Bf4 , **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4**CC**EndFEN**CC** 4.g3 , which each have their chapter. In the current chapter about sidelines, our main focus is 4.e3, but we'll have a quick look at the rare moves 4.Qc2 and 4.Nbd2, as well. 4.e3
A solid choice for White. They cover the c-pawn and prepare the kingside development. The e-pawn now obstructs the queen's bishop, so White usually aims for a fianchetto on the queenside. Their usual setup involves bishops on d3 and b2,

while the placement of the knight is not yet clear. White may opt for Nc3, putting more pressure on d5, or for Nbd2, which emphasizes control of e5. 4...a6 Playing ...a6 is not the most obvious thing to do first. What's the point of this move? We gain the option of taking the c-pawn and immediately follow with ...b5 for a queenside expansion. This is particularly effective if White decides to develop the f1-bishop when this piece takes two moves to capture c4. A sample variation is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Bd3?! dxc4! 6.Bxc4 b5 , which is very comfortable for Black. We are one tempo up on the Queen's Gambit Accepted mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 e6 5.Bxc4 a6 , which is already satisfactory for Black. An extra tempo makes a significant difference, as the position opens up quickly. A knowledgeable opponent will anticipate our idea and avoid this scenario. The way to go for White is an early b2-b3, which makes the capture on c4 unattractive, as White would recapture with the b-pawn, strengthening their central control. The move b2-b3 is the signal move for us to abandon the idea of capturing on c4. How do we develop the queenside then? I suggest aiming for a development scheme that involves the moves ...Nbd7, ...b6, Bb7 and ...Bd6. This harmonious formation we also use against the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 / CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 , which may often transpose into lines of the current chapter if White opts for a later d2-d4 pawn push. 5..xc3 A very natural continuation. the current position after 5.Nc3 may also arise via different move orders, for example CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.e3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 a6 5.d4 . 5....xbd7 We continue our strategy of waiting for an untimely bishop move. most of the time, White now plays CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/1ppn1ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N1PN2/ PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 2 6CCEndFENCC 6.b3 to stop any ...dxc4 plans and prepare Bb2. We'll still have a look at CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/1ppn1ppp/ p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N1PN2/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 2 6CCEndFENCC 6. Bd3?! dxc4! and CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/1ppn1ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N1PN2/ PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 2 6CCEndFENCC 6.cxd5 exd5 , which leads to a harmless version of the Carlsbad structure. 6.Kd3 This is the worst version of the untimely Bd3 for White. We not only gain time on the bishop, but a later ...b5-b4 might kick the knight on c3, too. 6...dxc4 7.Kxc4 b5 8.Kd3 c5 Or 8...Bb7 first and ...c5 on the next move. 9.0-0 Kb7 Black is better already. We have ...Bd6 and ...O-O next, completing our development. White has no clear way to activate the bishop on c1, to just name one key problem of our opponent.

☐ 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines
■ 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Nc3 #2

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 In this Chapter, we will examine all lines of the Queen's Gambit Declined that don't merit a dedicated Chapter. We have dedicated Chapters on: A©©EndBracket©©The Carlsbad. This includes ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3©©EndFEN©© 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 , but other early captures on d5, too ©©StartBracket©© ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3©©EndFEN©© 3.cxd5 exd5 or ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3©©EndFEN©© 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 ©©EndBracket©© . B©©EndBracket©©The line ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3©©EndFEN©© 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . C©©EndBracket©©Lines where White develops with Bf4 or Bg5. D©©EndBracket©©The Catalan ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3©©EndFEN©© 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 and ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3©©EndFEN©© 3.g3 . In the current chapter, we examine rare and mostly dubious attempts, but also the sound concept of a quick e3, even before the c1-bishop is developed. This slow setup may occur via ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3©©EndFEN©© 3.e3 , but also ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3©©EndFEN©© 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 or ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3©©EndFEN©© 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 . There is no fundamental difference between these move orders, and we will react in the same way against all versions. I suggest playing an early ...a6, which is a tricky move order for White to handle. The e3-systems should be taken seriously, as White follows sound principles. Still, we get fluent development and fair chances; let's have a look at the sidelines of the Queen's Gambit Declined. 3..xf3 .xf6 After 3...Nf6, we examine White's main lines in dedicated chapters. There is ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4©©EndFEN©© 4.cxd5 , ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4©©EndFEN©© 4.Nc3 , ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4©©EndFEN©© 4.Bg5 or ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4©©EndFEN©© 4.Bf4 , ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4©©EndFEN©© 4.g3 , which each have their chapter. In the current chapter about sidelines, our main focus is 4.e3, but we'll have a quick look at the rare moves 4.Qc2 and 4.Nbd2, as well. 4.e3
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stop the trainable line here. We have a comfortable version of the Carlsbad and a good range of options next. We can play a setup based on ...c6 and ...Nf8-g6, aiming for kingside play. A different idea is playing for ...c7-c5 or ...b6, followed by ...c5. White's setup is rather slow, which gives us some leeway.

☐ 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines
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idea to take on c4 at a favourable moment, like after 6.Bd3?! dxc4! . Once White has committed to b3, we switch to the development plan with ...Nbd7, ...b6, ...Bb7 and ...Bd6. 6...b6 A good way to remember our setup is: If they go b3, we go ...b6. The move b3 is the signal to start our fianchetto. I decided to cover the lines involving b3 and b6 based on the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.b3 Nbd7 6.Bb2 b6 . We'll transpose to these lines now after a natural sequence like CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1ppp/pp2pn2/3p4/2PP4/1PN1PN2/P4PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Bb2 Bb7 or CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1ppp/pp2pn2/3p4/2PP4/1PN1PN2/P4PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Bd3 Bb7 8.O-O Bd6 9.Bb2 O-O , which is a key position of the current chapter's mainline.

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advancing the pawn. It is also possible to play 9...c4 , but taking away the c3-square for the knight makes sense. Next, we may even consider ...Nc6, putting some pressure on the d4-pawn. All our pieces are active and easy to develop.

☐ 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines
■ 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Nbd2

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 In this Chapter, we will examine all lines of the Queen's Gambit Declined that don't merit a dedicated Chapter. We have dedicated Chapters on: ACCEndBracketCCThe Carlsbad. This includes CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 , but other early captures on d5, too CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.cxd5 exd5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 CCEndBracketCC . BCCEndBracketCCThe line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . CCCEndBracketCCLines where White develops with Bf4 or Bg5. DCCEndBracketCCThe Catalan CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.g3 . In the current chapter, we examine rare and mostly dubious attempts, but also the sound concept of a quick e3, even before the c1-bishop is developed. This slow setup may occur via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.e3 , but also CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 . There is no fundamental difference between these move orders, and we will react in the same way against all versions. I suggest playing an early ...a6, which is a tricky move order for White to handle. The e3-systems should be taken seriously, as White follows sound principles. Still, we get fluent development and fair chances; let's have a look at the sidelines of the Queen's Gambit Declined. 3..xf3 .xf6 After 3...Nf6, we examine White's main lines in dedicated chapters. There is CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.cxd5 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nc3 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bg5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bf4 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.g3 , which each

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☐ 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines
■ 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.b3 #1

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Bc6CCEndBracketCC 7...Bb7 8.Ne5 , when Bc6 and Nc6 are extremely annoying threats. This is a particularly horrific example of what could go wrong. What is the best move order to choose? In the end, I decided to recommend the following sequence: 1. play ...Nbd7, 2. play ...b6, 3. play ...Bb7, 4. play ...Bd6. Having this move order guide makes the whole line easier to remember. 5....xbd7 After 5...Nbd7 White has a fundamental choice to make. White will develop the bishops to b2 and d3, but what about the b1-knight? White needs to decide between playing it to c3 or d2. The difference between the two is quite significant, as we will see. White has a ton of different move orders now. They can start with either bishop move and either knight move. It doesn't make a difference which one they choose, as we'll continue with ...b6, ...Bb7 and ...Bd6. I decided to use the move order 6.Bb2 b6 7.Nc3 and 7.Nbd2 to organize the lines. 6.Kb2 b6 Now we'll have the split between Nc3 and Nd2 setups. White could also play 7.Bd3 first , and after 7... Bb7 decide on 8.Nbd2 8.Nc3 . Or... you maybe guessed it... they could play CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1ppp/pp2pn2/3p4/2PP4/1P2PN2/PB3PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Bd3 Bb7 8.O-O Bd6 and then either knight move. We can play our 'setup moves'; White's move order doesn't matter. Before we continue, a word about possible trades on d5. At any point, White might exchange on d5. We'd always recapture with the e-pawn, keeping the strong central d5-pawn. The trade on d5 is generally unpromising for White, as it helps us to increase our control of e4. With the e-pawn gone, moves like ...Re8 or ...Qe7 connect with the crucial squares e4 and e5. Therefore we don't have to fear the trade, as it's rather Black who benefits. White gets the half-open c-file, but the c7-pawn is safely protected. 7..xbd2 White goes for the Nbd2-setup. The main difference to the Nc3-version is best explained after move 9, so hang on. The next moves happen more or less all the time. 7...Kb7 8.Kd3 Kd6 9.0-0 0-0 Very natural moves led us to this position. It is very similar to CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1ppp/pp2pn2/3p4/2PP4/1P2PN2/PB3PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Nc3 Bb7 8.Bd3 Bd6 9.O-O O-O , only the knight placement differs. This is a rather important difference, though. In the Nc3-lines, we often resort to the capture on c4 to open our bishop. This option is far less attractive because White has the reply Nxc4, which is undesirable for Black. The knight is powerful on c4, looking at important squares like e5 and d6. Therefore, You should avoid the capture on c4 unless you have a compelling concrete case for it. One idea is shared between the two versions, though: the knight-jump to e4. If White plays, for example, 10.Rc1 or CCStartFENCCr2q1rk1/1bpn1ppp/pp1bpn2/3p4/2PP4/1P1BPN2/PB1N1PPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qe2 , the reply 10...Ne4 works well. 10.O&e2 White's most popular choice, when we can use a standard plan mentioned before. 10....xe4 Here we go. Before we continue, I'd like to remind you again that taking on c4 is bad in Nbd2-setups due to Nxc4. This even applies in the case of CCStartFENCCr2q1rk1/1bpn1ppp/pp1bpn2/3p4/2PP4/1P1BPN2/PB1N1PPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qc2 , when 10... dxc4? 11.Nxc4 is great for White. Not even the capture on f3 would be a good option in this case. What do we play against 10.Qc2, by the way? The move is rare,

but our two standard ideas don't work well. I suggest playing some improving moves first and then consider playing a6-a5-a4, nibbling at White's queenside. A possible line is CCStartFENCCr2q1rk1/1bpn1ppp/pp1bpn2/3p4/2PP4/1P1BPN2/PB1N1PPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qc2 Qe7 11.Rfe1 h6 12.Rad1 a5 . White can play 13.e4 , but we don't mind the trades, as we have slightly less space. After e3-e4, we also get a possible target to attack d4. 11.Qfd1 O&e7 Or 11...f5 , which also works well. The move 11...Qe7 is more flexible, as we still can play ...f5, but the 'queenside nibble' a6-a5-a4 is a possible option, too. I generally ...like f5, as it comes with attacking chances against White's king. 12.Qac1 f5 Or 12...a5 , as mentioned. 13..xe5 White is annoyed by our e4-knight and prepares f2-f3. 13....xxe5 Taking on d2 first is an alternative of equal value. 14.dxe5 Kb4 Black is fine here. We get to take on c4 next, which activates our bishop nicely. A sample line is 15.Nf3 dxc4 16.Bxc4 b5 17.Bd3 c5 , which looks attractive for Black.

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fluent development and fair chances; let's have a look at the sidelines of the Queen's Gambit Declined. 3..xf3 .xf6 After 3...Nf6, we examine White's main lines in dedicated chapters. There is CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.cxd5 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nc3 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bg5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bf4 , CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.g3 , which each have their chapter. In the current chapter about sidelines, our main focus is 4.e3, but we'll have a quick look at the rare moves 4.Qc2 and 4.Nbd2, as well. 4.e3 A solid choice for White. They cover the c-pawn and prepare the kingside development. The e-pawn now obstructs the queen's bishop, so White usually aims for a fianchetto on the queenside. Their usual setup involves bishops on d3 and b2, while the placement of the knight is not yet clear. White may opt for Nc3, putting more pressure on d5, or for Nbd2, which emphasizes control of e5. 4...a6 Playing ...a6 is not the most obvious thing to do first. What's the point of this move? We gain the option of taking the c-pawn and immediately follow with ...b5 for a queenside expansion. This is particularly effective if White decides to develop the f1-bishop when this piece takes two moves to capture c4. A sample variation is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Bd3?! dxc4! 6.Bxc4 b5 , which is very comfortable for Black. We are one tempo up on the Queen's Gambit Accepted mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 e6 5.Bxc4 a6 , which is already satisfactory for Black. An extra tempo makes a significant difference, as the position opens up quickly. A knowledgeable opponent will anticipate our idea and avoid this scenario. The way to go for White is an early b2-b3, which makes the capture on c4 unattractive, as White would recapture with the b-pawn, strengthening their central control. The move b2-b3 is the signal move for us to abandon the idea of capturing on c4. How do we develop the queenside then? I suggest aiming for a development scheme that involves the moves ...Nbd7, ...b6, Bb7 and ...Bd6. This harmonious formation we also use against the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 / CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 , which may often transpose into lines of the current chapter if White opts for a later d2-d4 pawn push. 5.b3 White immediately covers c4 and defuses our idea to take on c4 at a favourable moment, like after 5.Bd3?! dxc4! . Once White has committed to b3, we switch to the development plan with ...Nbd7, ...b6, Bb7 and ...Bd6. Let's discuss why it is a good setup. First of all, the bishops will be well placed on d6 and b7. The square d6 is a natural spot for our king's bishop,

and we play this move frequently against many of the slower lines that White may play CCStartBracketCCe.g. London SystemCCEndBracketCC. The queen's bishop's placement is less obvious. Using it on the long diagonal makes a lot of sense, though. From b7, our bishop supports our centre pawn on d5 and helps control e4, which might enable a later knight to jump to e4. Our queen's knight is best placed on d7. On d7, it won't obstruct our bishop on b7 and still allows a later push of the c-pawn to attack White's d-pawn. Finally, a word about the move ...a6 being part of our setup. This move turns out to be very useful for two reasons: 1CCEndBracketCC Most of the time, White plays Nc3 when our move ...Bd6 might be answered with Nb5, which could be annoying. Including ...a6 stops this idea in its tracks. 2CCEndBracketCC If you don't play an early ...a6, some irritating lines feature a trade on d5, followed by Bb5+ in response to ...b6. An example best illustrates this. Consider the following sequence: CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.e3 Nbd7 5.Nc3 b6? 6.cxd5 exd5 7.Bb5! CCStartBracketCCthreatening Bc6CCEndBracketCC 7...Bb7 8.Ne5 , when Bc6 and Nc6 are extremely annoying threats. This is a particularly horrific example of what could go wrong. What is the best move order to choose? In the end, I decided to recommend the following sequence: 1. play ...Nbd7, 2. play ...b6, 3. play ...Bb7, 4. play ...Bd6. Having this move order guide makes the whole line easier to remember. 5....xbd7 After 5...Nbd7 White has a fundamental choice to make. White will develop the bishops to b2 and d3, but what about the b1-knight? White needs to decide between playing it to c3 or d2. The difference between the two is quite significant, as we will see. White has a ton of different move orders now. They can start with either bishop move and either knight move. It doesn't make a difference which one they choose, as we'll continue with ...b6, ...Bb7 and ...Bd6. I decided to use the move order 6.Bb2 b6 7.Nc3 and 7.Nbd2 to organize the lines. 6.Kb2 b6 Now we'll have the split between Nc3 and Nd2 setups. White could also play 7.Bd3 first , and after 7...Bb7 decide on 8.Nbd2 8.Nc3 . Or... you maybe guessed it... they could play CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1ppp/pp2pn2/3p4/2PP4/1P2PN2/PB3PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Bd3 Bb7 8.O-O Bd6 and then either knight move. We can play our 'setup moves'; White's move order doesn't matter. Before we continue, a word about possible trades on d5. At any point, White might exchange on d5. We'd always recapture with the e-pawn, keeping the strong central d5-pawn. The trade on d5 is generally unpromising for White, as it helps us to increase our control of e4. With the e-pawn gone, moves like ...Re8 or ...Qe7 connect with the crucial squares e4 and e5. Therefore we don't have to fear the trade, as it's rather Black who benefits. White gets the half-open c-file, but the c7-pawn is safely protected. 7..xc3 White's more popular setup involves Nc3. There are many game samples with this move because White often plays the move early on and only later decides on playing with e2-e3 and b2-b3. A possible sequence is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.b3 b6 7.Bb2 , leading to the current

position. 7...Kb7 8.Kd3 Kd6 9.0-0 0-0 Both sides have completed their intended setup, time to think about further action. All pawns and pieces are on the board, and there are many possible ways to continue. I'd like to point your attention towards two ideas for Black: Occupying the e4-square with our knight and a timely capture on c4, which opens the long diagonal for our b7-bishop. I'll show some possible lines to demonstrate these ideas. 10.O&c2 White stops our ...Ne4 idea, but it comes at a price. 10...dxc4 a perfect moment to take, as the white queen has left its post on d1. Now ...Bxf3 becomes an option, as it would damage White's pawn structure considerably. 11.bxc4 Kxf3 I suggest taking on f3 immediately. It is also possible to play 11...c5 first. 12.gxf3 c5 The funny move 12...Nd5!? is possible, too. It's not a blunder of a knight, as 13.cxd5 Qg5+ 14.Kh1 Qh5 15.f4 Qf3+ leads to a perpetual check and a draw. The knight jump works well but accepts that White may take the knight and shut the game down to a draw. Instead, the move 12...c5 keeps the game alive. White's kingside is damaged; in return, they have the bishop pair. This balances the chances, with an interesting fight ahead.

☐ 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines
■ 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.b3 #3

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 In this Chapter, we will examine all lines of the Queen's Gambit Declined that don't merit a dedicated Chapter. We have dedicated Chapters on: A𝐶𝐶EndBracket𝐶𝐶The Carlsbad. This includes 𝐶𝐶StartFEN𝐶𝐶rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3𝐶𝐶EndFEN𝐶𝐶 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 , but other early captures on d5, too 𝐶𝐶StartBracket𝐶𝐶 𝐶𝐶StartFEN𝐶𝐶rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3𝐶𝐶EndFEN𝐶𝐶 3.cxd5 exd5 or 𝐶𝐶StartFEN𝐶𝐶rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3𝐶𝐶EndFEN𝐶𝐶 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 𝐶𝐶EndBracket𝐶𝐶 . B𝐶𝐶EndBracket𝐶𝐶The line 𝐶𝐶StartFEN𝐶𝐶rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3𝐶𝐶EndFEN𝐶𝐶 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 . C𝐶𝐶EndBracket𝐶𝐶Lines where White develops with Bf4 or Bg5. D𝐶𝐶EndBracket𝐶𝐶The Catalan 𝐶𝐶StartFEN𝐶𝐶rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3𝐶𝐶EndFEN𝐶𝐶 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 and 𝐶𝐶StartFEN𝐶𝐶rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3𝐶𝐶EndFEN𝐶𝐶 3.g3 . In the current chapter, we examine rare and mostly dubious attempts, but also the sound concept of a quick e3, even before the c1-bishop is developed. This slow setup may occur via 𝐶𝐶StartFEN𝐶𝐶rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3𝐶𝐶EndFEN𝐶𝐶 3.e3 , but also 𝐶𝐶StartFEN𝐶𝐶rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3𝐶𝐶EndFEN𝐶𝐶 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 or 𝐶𝐶StartFEN𝐶𝐶rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3𝐶𝐶EndFEN𝐶𝐶 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 . There is no fundamental difference between these move orders, and we will react in the same way against all versions. I suggest

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pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.b3 b6 7.Bb2 , leading to the current position. 7...Kb7 8.Kd3 Kd6 9.0-0 0-0 Both sides have completed their intended setup, time to think about further action. All pawns and pieces are on the board, and there are many possible ways to continue. I'd like to point your attention towards two ideas for Black: Occupying the e4-square with our knight and a timely capture on c4, which opens the long diagonal for our b7-bishop. I'll show some possible lines to demonstrate these ideas. 10.Qc1 The rook move is White's most popular choice. It has two ideas: opening the c-file with cxd5 or supporting c4-c5 under the right circumstance. This becomes relevant in lines like 10...Qe7 11.Na4 , when c4-c5 is more likely to happen. I recommend a different move, though. 10....xe4
Let's centralize the knight, a good strategy. As mentioned before, you can almost always consider 10...dxc4 11.bxc4 c5 , too. Instead of 10.Rc1, White has tried some other moves that allow ...Ne4, like 10.Qe2 or 10.Re1. I'd always go ...Ne4 in these cases, too. 11..xe2 A good move. White anticipated that we might want to continue with ...f7-f5 and prepares both Ne2-f4 and Nf3-e5 in return. If they play 11. Qc2 , we'd indeed play 11...f5 . I like Black's chances here, as we have the potential for an attack on White's king. After ...f5, the rook lift ...Rf8-f6 gets on the agenda. 11...dxc4 A good solution. Now the move 11...f5 is slightly dubious, as 12. Nf4 Qe7 13.Ne5 is annoying for Black. 12.bxc4 f5 Now this move works much better than on move 11. 13..xf4 O&e7 An interesting and combative position is on the board. White has some central advantage after our trade on c4, but we have an excellent knight on e4, and our pieces are actively placed and geared towards White's kingside. It's also possible to play with ...Rad8 and a later ...e5 or ...c5. A great feature of our setup against White's e3 formation is the flexibility. You can play various interesting ideas and be creative. We need to check one more move, though. 14..xe5 In the line CCStartFENCCr2q1rk1/1bpn1ppp/pp1bp3/3p4/2PPn3/1P1BPN2/ PB2NPPP/2RQ1RK1 b - - 9 11CCEndFENCC 11...f5?! 12.Nf4 Qe7 13.Ne5 , this knight jump was the problem. Here we can deal with it easily. 14....xxe5 15.dxe5 Kc5 And Black is fine, as White c-pawn can't capture on d5, showing why the trade on c4 was crucial.

☐ 12. The London System
■ 3.e3 e6 4.Nd2 #1

1.d4 d5 2.Kf4 White's most popular and important alternative to the Queen's Gambit is the London System. In the London, White usually doesn't play a quick pawn push c2-c4 to attack our d5-pawn; they develop their pieces first and focus on controlling the e5-square. Often White will almost automatically follow Bf4 with the moves e3, Nf3, Nbd2, Bd3 and c3, in various move orders. Due to this rather schematic approach, the London 'enjoys' the reputation of being a dull and unambitious opening: 'It's always the same, how boring!' Well, if it's so dull, why do strong

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generate some play with the doubled d-pawn. My general advice: the bishop trade should be answered with ...Qxd6 - here and in similar cases. 6.f4 One way for White of trying to benefit from delaying Nf3. We are happy to see the move, though. White's Stonewall creates multiple weaknesses, like the square e4 and the whole central/kingside area. 6...c5 We threaten ...cxd4, so White's reply is forced. 7.c3 cxd4 A very typical idea. White would very much prefer to see this capture at a moment when exd4 is a possible reply. Here this is impossible, as the f4-pawn is under attack by our queen. After the forced opening of the c-file, White suffers from the misplaced knight on d2. Let's continue for a moment to show Black's most important plan. 8.cxd4 0-0 9.Kd3 b6 A matter of trading a worse piece for a better one. Our bishop on c8 is passive, and ...b6 prepares the crucial trade against White's attacking bishop on d3. 10.O&e2 White stops ...Ba6 for the moment, but we can 'reload'. 10...a5 And we have ...Ba6 next. Note that after a later ...Nxa6, our knight is not so badly placed. It might jump to b4, but the route a6-c7-e8-d6 is a common idea, too. We can use White's weakened e4-square, while a white knight jumping to e5 can later be kicked away with ...f6.

☐ 12. The London System
■ 3.e3 e6 4.Nd2 #2

1.d4 d5 2.Kf4 White's most popular and important alternative to the Queen's Gambit is the London System. In the London, White usually doesn't play a quick pawn push c2-c4 to attack our d5-pawn; they develop their pieces first and focus on controlling the e5-square. Often White will almost automatically follow Bf4 with the moves e3, Nf3, Nbd2, Bd3 and c3, in various move orders. Due to this rather schematic approach, the London 'enjoys' the reputation of being a dull and unambitious opening: 'It's always the same, how boring!' Well, if it's so dull, why do strong players like the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, play it quite often? As it is with many openings, it all depends on mindset and intention. If you want to play boring Chess, the London is certainly a good way to start - it has its reputation for a reason. However, playing the London ambitiously and aggressively is possible; don't fall into the trap of believing your opponent is playing Bf4 to bore you to death. They might only wait for the moment to play Nf3-e5 and rush their kingside pawns up the board, just to mention one not-so-boring idea they might have in mind. How do we fight the London System? White's key idea in the London is the control of the central square e5. I suggest to develop with ...Nf6 and quickly challenge White's bishop with ...e6 and ...Bd6. In most cases, we'll play ...O-O, ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nbd7 to increase our influence on e5. It is often possible to accomplish the move ...e6-e5, opening up our c8-bishop. Let's have a quick look at what we are aiming for:
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soo, trying to trade off White's strong bishop. We are in good shape here, and it's rather White who needs to be concerned.

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a real mistake due to 8...Ne4! , when the idea ...c5-c4, followed by f7-f6, is very awkward for White. 8....xc6 In the variation CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Bd3 we need to play 8...Nbd7 , because 8...Nc6? fails to 9.dxc5 . When given a choice, I prefer the more active ...Nc6. We play in the same way after CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Ne5 Nc6 , which leads to the rule of thumb that ...Nc6 answers Ne5 jumps adequately. 9..xdf3 White covers e5; there wasn't any good alternative. Now Black has a wide range of options. 9...cxd4 The point of the capture will become clearer after 10. exd4 Ne4, when ...f6 is the idea. As mentioned, Black has some good moves here, but it's good to know that the strategically logical move 9...Nd7? is wrong due to 10. Ng5! , When Black has no good reply. 10.exd4 .xe4 This point of the capture on e4. We jump to e4 and now threaten ...f6. This position has been reached in dozens of games, with some remarkable players on the black side. It was fun to see that both the 7th World Champion, Mikhail Botvinnik and a possible future World Champion, Alireza Firouzja, had played into this position, 95 years apart! 11.Kg3 White needed to address the ...f6 threat. 11....xe7 We follow Botvinnik's example from 1925, which is also the favourite move of 2021 Stockfish 😀. It is better than 11...f6 , which was, amongst others, played by Alireza Firouzja in a Blitz game. The drawback there is 12. Nxc6 bxc6 13.Qc2 f5 14.Bxd6 Qxd6 15.b4 , which leaves Black with long-term weaknesses on the dark squares. Botvinnik's move is better, as it removes the knight from the potential capture and intends to play ...f6 with greater effect. 12.O&e2 f6 This is an improvement on Botvinnik's 12...Nxc3 , which allowed 13.Bxh7+ . This is not as bad as it looks because Botvinnik still found 13...Kh8 , which was objectively fine for him. The computer suggestion 12...f6 is much easier to handle, though. 13..xg4 Kd7 It's important to recognise that White is not threatening to take twice on e4, as ...f5 would be a fork on queen and knight. With 13...Bd7, we connect rooks and prepare ...Rae8, followed by ...Ng6. I like Black's centralised position and harmonious piece setup.

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■ 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Nbd2 #1

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players like the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, play it quite often? As it is with many openings, it all depends on mindset and intention. If you want to play boring Chess, the London is certainly a good way to start - it has its reputation for a reason. However, playing the London ambitiously and aggressively is possible; don't fall into the trap of believing your opponent is playing Bf4 to bore you to death. They might only wait for the moment to play Nf3-e5 and rush their kingside pawns up the board, just to mention one not-so-boring idea they might have in mind. How do we fight the London System? White's key idea in the London is the control of the central square e5. I suggest to develop with ...Nf6 and quickly challenge White's bishop with ...e6 and ...Bd6. In most cases, we'll play ...O-O, ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nbd7 to increase our influence on e5. It is often possible to accomplish the move ...e6-e5, opening up our c8-bishop. Let's have a quick look at what we are aiming for: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Bd3 Nbd7 is a widespread sequence and the mainline of the current chapter. We are ready to play ...e6-e5, which gives us equal chances and a comfortable game. White has other options along the way, but this is our 'standard' plan against the London. Let's talk about move orders. I cover all London lines via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 , but White has other possible move orders. There is the very popular CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/ 8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCStartBracketCCcovered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 CCEndBracketCC and finally the rare CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c3 e6 4.Bf4 CCStartBracketCCcovered briefly via 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 e6 4.c3 CCEndBracketCC. In almost all cases, the different move orders lead to exactly the same positions, but there are some nuances we will discuss. Before we start, I'd like to mention that Black has many satisfactory replies against the London. I had never seriously studied any theory against it, so I didn't immediately know what to recommend. While doing the initial research for the Caro-Kann part of this course, I learned to appreciate the opening play of German GM Rasmus Svane. I liked the positions he was aiming for and decided it is worth checking what he is playing against other openings. The setup that I am suggesting against the London is Svane's choice. He has played it numerous times, in particular in online games. Later I discovered that GM Michael Prusikin recommends the same general approach in his excellent book based on the Queen's Gambit for Black. Alright, London Calling! 2....xf6 A natural development move. Now, most of the time, White plays 3.e3, but we will also examine 3.Nf3, as this particular position frequently arises from CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 . It will almost always transpose to 3.e3, as White's moves e3 and Nf3 are both very natural and obvious. Still, one

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this capture opens the h-file now. Against CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 , we continue with our standard plan of 5...O-O and ...c5 next. BCCEndBracketCC White can continue with moves like CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nbd2 , CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bd3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.c3 and allow us to capture the bishop on f4. I suggest declining this invitation for the moment and continuing with our usual approach of playing ...O-O and ...c5 first. The three moves mentioned usually lead to the same positions. Therefore I decided to cover White's 'double f-pawn invitation' idea only via 5.Nbd2 and mention the possible alternative routes in the notes to this move. We'd play in the same way against all three, so it's easy to remember. CCCEndBracketCC White can play CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Ne5 , occupying their outpost immediately. We'll fight for control over e5 with the moves ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nc6. DCCEndBracketCC White can simply trade on d6. This move is rather toothless and answered by 5.Bxd6 Qxd6 . 5..xbd2 White keeps the tension and allows us to capture on f4. As discussed in the notes to 4...Bd6, I advise avoiding or delaying this capture for a better moment. Our standard move sequence of ...O-O and ...c5 next works well here. 5...0-0 6.Kd3 Developing the bishop is certainly logical and the most popular move for White. There are, as usual, many alternatives, but they will transpose to other move orders. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bg3 c5 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.Ne5 c5 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Ne5 O-O 6.Nd2 c5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.c3 c5 7.Bd3 Bxf4 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 c5 7.c3 Bxf4 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.c3 c5 7.Bg3 Qc7 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 ECCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.c3 c5 7.Ne5 Nc6 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Ne5 O-O 6.Nd2 c5 7.c3 Nc6 . 6...c5 Our usual

move order again: we play ...Bd6, ...O-O and ...c5 as our general concept against the London. Now White has a fundamental choice to make. We have not captured on f4 yet, but we might still opt for this trade under the right circumstances. After White's main continuation 7.c3 , I advise to take on f4 finally. In the notes to this line I'll explain why I believe this is the right moment to take, compared to earlier opportunities. White's main alternative is a completely different approach, the move 7.dxc5 . After 7...Bxc5 8.O-O Nc6 White opts for 9.c4 or 9.e4, opening the position. 7.dxc5 White captures on c5, leading to an entirely different structure than 7.c3 , when we finally would play 7...Bxf4 . 7...Kxc5 I also investigated the continuation 7...Bxf4 8.exf4 Qc7 9.g3 a5 10.O-O Nbd7 , which leads to a more unsymmetrical structure. It's an interesting alternative if you like to get a different position type. I prefer White slightly in this line CCStartBracketCCcontrol of e5 and d4CCEndBracketCC, but it's nothing special. 8.0-0 .xc6 Now White has the choice between 9.c4 and 9.e4, trying to open the centre in different ways. If they play something slow, taking control of e5 by playing ...Bd6 is the way to go. A sample line would be 9.c3 Bd6 when we are ready to go ...e6-e5 soon. 9.e4 dxe4 Stockfish also points out 9...Nh5!? as an interesting try, but the more classical approach that I suggest is fine, too. 10..xxe4 .xxe4 11.Kxe4 f6 The important point. We would be somewhat worse without this move, but managing e6-e5 gives us equal chances and good central control. 12.c3 e5 We'll develop easily with ...Be6 and connect rooks with ...Qc7 or ...Qe7.

☐ 12. The London System
■ 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Nbd2 #2

1.d4 d5 2.Kf4 White's most popular and important alternative to the Queen's Gambit is the London System. In the London, White usually doesn't play a quick pawn push c2-c4 to attack our d5-pawn; they develop their pieces first and focus on controlling the e5-square. Often White will almost automatically follow Bf4 with the moves e3, Nf3, Nbd2, Bd3 and c3, in various move orders. Due to this rather schematic approach, the London 'enjoys' the reputation of being a dull and unambitious opening: 'It's always the same, how boring!' Well, if it's so dull, why do strong players like the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, play it quite often? As it is with many openings, it all depends on mindset and intention. If you want to play boring Chess, the London is certainly a good way to start - it has its reputation for a reason. However, playing the London ambitiously and aggressively is possible; don't fall into the trap of believing your opponent is playing Bf4 to bore you to death. They might only wait for the moment to play Nf3-e5 and rush their kingside pawns up the board, just to mention one not-so-boring idea they might have in mind. How do we fight the London System? White's key idea in the London is the control of the central square e5. I suggest to develop with ...Nf6 and quickly challenge White's bishop with ...e6 and ...Bd6. In most cases, we'll play ...O-O, ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nbd7 to increase our

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mentioned usually lead to the same positions. Therefore I decided to cover White's 'double f-pawn invitation' idea only via 5.Nbd2 and mention the possible alternative routes in the notes to this move. We'd play in the same way against all three, so it's easy to remember. CCEndBracketCC White can play CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Ne5 , occupying their outpost immediately. We'll fight for control over e5 with the moves ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nc6. DCCEndBracketCC White can simply trade on d6. This move is rather toothless and answered by 5.Bxd6 Qxd6 . 5..xbd2 White keeps the tension and allows us to capture on f4. As discussed in the notes to 4...Bd6, I advise avoiding or delaying this capture for a better moment. Our standard move sequence of ...O-O and ...c5 next works well here. 5...0-0 6.Kd3 Developing the bishop is certainly logical and the most popular move for White. There are, as usual, many alternatives, but they will transpose to other move orders. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bg3 c5 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.Ne5 c5 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Ne5 O-O 6.Nd2 c5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.c3 c5 7.Bd3 Bxf4 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 c5 7.c3 Bxf4 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.c3 c5 7.Bg3 Qc7 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 ECCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.c3 c5 7.Ne5 Nc6 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Ne5 O-O 6.Nd2 c5 7.c3 Nc6 . 6...c5 Our usual move order again: we play ...Bd6, ...O-O and ...c5 as our general concept against the London. Now White has a fundamental choice to make. We have not captured on f4 yet, but we might still opt for this trade under the right circumstances. After White's main continuation 7.c3 , I advise to take on f4 finally. In the notes to this line I'll explain why I believe this is the right moment to take, compared to earlier opportunities. White's main alternative is a completely different approach, the move 7.dxc5 . After 7...Bxc5 8.O-O Nc6 White opts for 9.c4 or 9.e4, opening the position. 7.dxc5 White captures on c5, leading to an entirely different structure than 7.c3 , when we finally would play 7...Bxf4 . 7...Kxc5 I also investigated the continuation 7...Bxf4 8.exf4 Qc7 9.g3 a5 10.O-O Nbd7 , which leads to a more

unsymmetrical structure. It's an interesting alternative if you like to get a different position type. I prefer White slightly in this line CCStartBracketCCcontrol of e5 and d4CCEndBracketCC, but it's nothing special. 8.0-0 .xc6 Now White has the choice between 9.c4 and 9.e4, trying to open the centre in different ways. If they play something slow, taking control of e5 by playing ...Bd6 is the way to go. A sample line would be 9.c3 Bd6 when we are ready to go ...e6-e5 soon. 9.c4 Kd6 Again we fight for the e5-square. White currently has the more active bishops, as our c8-bishop is still at home. We don't need to be worried, though, as White has a problem piece, too: the knight on d2 is passive and doesn't put any pressure on the centre. 10.Kg5 Maybe the most interesting try for White. Lines like 10.Bg3 Bxg3 11. hxg3 dxc4 12.Nxc4 Qe7 or CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/pp3ppp/2nbpn2/3p4/2P2B2/ 3BPN2/PP1N1PPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 1 10CCEndFENCC 10.Bxd6 Qxd6 11.cxd5 Qxd5 amount to nothing for White. In these symmetrical structures, we can always play ...Bd7 and connect the rooks. Later the bishop often appears on c6, getting a more active post. 10...Ke7 This is a good move to remember. We should break the annoying pin and, at the same time, we prepare the move d5-d4. Now a likely continuation is 11.Rc1 h6 12.Bh4 , when we have a good choice between the interesting move 12...d4!? and 12...Qb6 , which prepares the move ...Rd8, but accepts an IQP after 13.cxd5 exd5 . I think Black is fine in both scenarios, giving you some choice.

☐ 12. The London System
■ 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Nbd2 #3

1.d4 d5 2.Kf4 White's most popular and important alternative to the Queen's Gambit is the London System. In the London, White usually doesn't play a quick pawn push c2-c4 to attack our d5-pawn; they develop their pieces first and focus on controlling the e5-square. Often White will almost automatically follow Bf4 with the moves e3, Nf3, Nbd2, Bd3 and c3, in various move orders. Due to this rather schematic approach, the London 'enjoys' the reputation of being a dull and unambitious opening: 'It's always the same, how boring!' Well, if it's so dull, why do strong players like the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, play it quite often? As it is with many openings, it all depends on mindset and intention. If you want to play boring Chess, the London is certainly a good way to start - it has its reputation for a reason. However, playing the London ambitiously and aggressively is possible; don't fall into the trap of believing your opponent is playing Bf4 to bore you to death. They might only wait for the moment to play Nf3-e5 and rush their kingside pawns up the board, just to mention one not-so-boring idea they might have in mind. How do we fight the London System? White's key idea in the London is the control of the central square e5. I suggest to develop with ...Nf6 and quickly challenge White's bishop with ...e6 and ...Bd6. In most cases, we'll play ...O-O, ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nbd7 to increase our influence on e5. It is often possible to accomplish the move ...e6-e5, opening up our

c8-bishop. Let's have a quick look at what we are aiming for: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Bd3 Nbd7 is a widespread sequence and the mainline of the current chapter. We are ready to play ...e6-e5, which gives us equal chances and a comfortable game. White has other options along the way, but this is our 'standard' plan against the London. Let's talk about move orders. I cover all London lines via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 , but White has other possible move orders. There is the very popular CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCStartBracketCCcovered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 CCEndBracketCC and finally the rare CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c3 e6 4.Bf4 CCStartBracketCCcovered briefly via 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 e6 4.c3 CCEndBracketCC. In almost all cases, the different move orders lead to exactly the same positions, but there are some nuances we will discuss. Before we start, I'd like to mention that Black has many satisfactory replies against the London. I had never seriously studied any theory against it, so I didn't immediately know what to recommend. While doing the initial research for the Caro-Kann part of this course, I learned to appreciate the opening play of German GM Rasmus Svane. I liked the positions he was aiming for and decided it is worth checking what he is playing against other openings. The setup that I am suggesting against the London is Svane's choice. He has played it numerous times, in particular in online games. Later I discovered that GM Michael Prusikin recommends the same general approach in his excellent book based on the Queen's Gambit for Black. Alright, London Calling! 2....xf6 A natural development move. Now, most of the time, White plays 3.e3, but we will also examine 3.Nf3, as this particular position frequently arises from CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 . It will almost always transpose to 3.e3, as White's moves e3 and Nf3 are both very natural and obvious. Still, one interesting line can only arise via the 3.Nf3 move order: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 e6 4.Nbd2 . This is relevant to our 'standard setup', as it won't work as well in this case. It is nothing to worry about, just a nuance to be aware of. There are other moves besides 3.e3 and 3.Nf3, but they are harmless or purely transpositional at best. ACCEndBracketCC White can play CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P1B2/8/PPP1PPPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 , which we cover via the far more common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bf4 . BCCEndBracketCC The moves CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P1B2/8/PPP1PPPP/RN1QKBNR w

KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.c3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P1B2/8/PPP1PPPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.h3 are slow and can be answered with our standard plan of ...e6 and ...Bd6. CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P1B2/8/PPP1PPPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.c4?! is a dubious and rare attempt to play a delayed Queen's Gambit. You can even play 3...dxc4 and keep the pawn with ...b5. White's bishop is entirely misplaced on f4 and often later hit with ...Nd5. 3.e3 e6 We prepare ...Bd6, challenging the London bishop. Now organising the material is not easy, as White has about a million different move orders. However, we can split the lines into two sections. ACCEndBracketCC White plays a quick Nf3, usually right now on move four BCCEndBracketCC White delays/omits the move Nf3, often trying to use the f-pawn after the f4-bishop has moved/has been traded. If White is going for B, they usually start with 4.Nd2, but you also meet 4.Bd3 or 4.c3 with similar intentions. We don't need to worry about these move orders, as we'll play ...Bd6, ...O-O and ...c5, basically on 'auto pilot'. Lines like CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P1B2/4P3/PPP2PPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bd3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nd2 c5 CCStartBracketCCcovered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P1B2/4P3/PPP2PPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nd2 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Bd3 c5 CCEndBracketCC or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P1B2/4P3/PPP2PPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.c3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nd2 c5 7.Ngf3 Qc7 CCStartBracketCCcovered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P1B2/4P3/PPP2PPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 CCEndBracketCC are purely transpositional. 4..xf3 White plays the knight to its best square, which is unsurprisingly the most popular way to play. We'll also reach this position frequently via other moves orders, particularly CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 e6 4.e3 is very common. We already know our reply: challenge the London bishop with ...Bd6. 4...Kd6 According to our plan. White has a whole range of options now. They need to decide what to do about the bishop vis-a-vis. Let's make an overview of the various ideas. ACCEndBracketCC The main move is 5.Bg3. White retreats the bishop and argues that Black doesn't want to trade on g3, as this capture opens the h-file now. Against CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 , we continue with our standard plan of 5...O-O and ...c5 next. BCCEndBracketCC White can continue with moves like CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nbd2 , CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bd3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.c3 and allow us to capture the bishop on f4. I suggest declining this invitation for the moment and continuing with our usual approach of playing ...O-O and ...c5 first. The three moves mentioned usually lead to the same positions. Therefore I decided to cover White's

'double f-pawn invitation' idea only via 5.Nbd2 and mention the possible alternative routes in the notes to this move. We'd play in the same way against all three, so it's easy to remember. CCEndBracketCC White can play CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Ne5 , occupying their outpost immediately. We'll fight for control over e5 with the moves ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nc6. DCCEndBracketCC White can simply trade on d6. This move is rather toothless and answered by 5.Bxd6 Qxd6 . 5..xbd2 White keeps the tension and allows us to capture on f4. As discussed in the notes to 4...Bd6, I advise avoiding or delaying this capture for a better moment. Our standard move sequence of ...O-O and ...c5 next works well here. 5...0-0 6.Kd3 Developing the bishop is certainly logical and the most popular move for White. There are, as usual, many alternatives, but they will transpose to other move orders. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bg3 c5 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.Ne5 c5 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Ne5 O-O 6.Nd2 c5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.c3 c5 7.Bd3 Bxf4 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 c5 7.c3 Bxf4 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.c3 c5 7.Bg3 Qc7 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 ECCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.c3 c5 7.Ne5 Nc6 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Ne5 O-O 6.Nd2 c5 7.c3 Nc6 . 6...c5 Our usual move order again: we play ...Bd6, ...O-O and ...c5 as our general concept against the London. Now White has a fundamental choice to make. We have not captured on f4 yet, but we might still opt for this trade under the right circumstances. After White's main continuation 7.c3 , I advise to take on f4 finally. In the notes to this line I'll explain why I believe this is the right moment to take, compared to earlier opportunities. White's main alternative is a completely different approach, the move 7.dxc5 . After 7...Bxc5 8.O-O Nc6 White opts for 9.c4 or 9.e4, opening the position. 7.c3 White keeps the tension and again allows us to capture the bishop on f4. This position may arise via various move orders, as you can imagine. White easily could have played CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bd3 O-O 6.c3 c5 7.Nbd2

or CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.c3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.Bd3 . 7...Kxf4 Exactly now! I think this is the best moment to capture. Let's discuss and compare. White has already committed to c3 and Bd3. If you take on f4 earlier, they might skip one of the moves and use this tempo differently. One line that shows this point is CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nbd2 Bxf4 6.exf4 O-O 7.c3 b6 8.h4!? , which starts a dangerous kingside initiative. In this sequence, Black could play CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P1P2/2P2N2/PP1N1PPP/R2QKB1R b KQ - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7...c5 , when 8.Bd3 would transpose to the position we are about to analyse and have in our repertoire. However, I think that 8.dxc5 looks slightly better for White. It's not terrible for Black, but I'd prefer White slightly. So our concept is to wait with the capture on f4 until we already have ...c5 played so that White can't enter this line. Before we check the details of 7...Bxf4, one word about possible alternatives. The move 7...Nc6 is possible but after 8.Bg3 transposes to a different main line of the London. Note that 7...Qc7?! is bad, as after 8.Bxd6 Qxd6 we are a full tempo down on the 5.Bg3 lines, and White has the chance to play 9.Ne5 with an advantage. 8.exf4 b6 This move is the most combative choice, in my mind. Black can already equalise convincingly with CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp3ppp/4pn2/2pp4/3P1P2/2PB1N2/PP1N1PPP/R2QK2R b KQ - 0 8CCEndFENCC 8...cxd4 9.Nxd4 Qc7 10.g3 e5 11.fxe5 Qxe5+ 12.Qe2 Qd6 , but such a position might be difficult to play for a win. Still, it's a good alternative if you like a clearer structure. 9.O&e2 White stops ...Ba6 for the moment. 9...O&d6 Inserting the moves ...Qd6 and g3 looks fine to me. 10.g3 a5 We insist on exchanging our bishop. 11.0-0 Ka6 12.Kxa6 .xxa6 We have reached an interesting and combative position. White has a good grip on the e5-square, but we have no weaknesses and chances on the queenside. I suggest playing ...Nb8-c6 next, getting more pressure on the d4-pawn. It's a bad idea to advance with c5-c4, as this would release the central tension and incentivise White to play more aggressively on the kingside. As long as we put pressure on d4, they won't be able to organise an idea like Ne5, followed by g4-g5, for example.

☐ 12. The London System
■ 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 #1

1.d4 d5 2.Kf4 White's most popular and important alternative to the Queen's Gambit is the London System. In the London, White usually doesn't play a quick pawn push c2-c4 to attack our d5-pawn; they develop their pieces first and focus on controlling the e5-square. Often White will almost automatically follow Bf4 with the moves e3, Nf3, Nbd2, Bd3 and c3, in various move orders. Due to this rather schematic approach, the London 'enjoys' the reputation of being a dull and unambitious opening: 'It's always the same, how boring!' Well, if it's so dull, why do strong

players like the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, play it quite often? As it is with many openings, it all depends on mindset and intention. If you want to play boring Chess, the London is certainly a good way to start - it has its reputation for a reason. However, playing the London ambitiously and aggressively is possible; don't fall into the trap of believing your opponent is playing Bf4 to bore you to death. They might only wait for the moment to play Nf3-e5 and rush their kingside pawns up the board, just to mention one not-so-boring idea they might have in mind. How do we fight the London System? White's key idea in the London is the control of the central square e5. I suggest to develop with ...Nf6 and quickly challenge White's bishop with ...e6 and ...Bd6. In most cases, we'll play ...O-O, ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nbd7 to increase our influence on e5. It is often possible to accomplish the move ...e6-e5, opening up our c8-bishop. Let's have a quick look at what we are aiming for: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Bd3 Nbd7 is a widespread sequence and the mainline of the current chapter. We are ready to play ...e6-e5, which gives us equal chances and a comfortable game. White has other options along the way, but this is our 'standard' plan against the London. Let's talk about move orders. I cover all London lines via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 , but White has other possible move orders. There is the very popular CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/ 8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCStartBracketCCcovered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 CCEndBracketCC and finally the rare CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c3 e6 4.Bf4 CCStartBracketCCcovered briefly via 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 e6 4.c3 CCEndBracketCC. In almost all cases, the different move orders lead to exactly the same positions, but there are some nuances we will discuss. Before we start, I'd like to mention that Black has many satisfactory replies against the London. I had never seriously studied any theory against it, so I didn't immediately know what to recommend. While doing the initial research for the Caro-Kann part of this course, I learned to appreciate the opening play of German GM Rasmus Svane. I liked the positions he was aiming for and decided it is worth checking what he is playing against other openings. The setup that I am suggesting against the London is Svane's choice. He has played it numerous times, in particular in online games. Later I discovered that GM Michael Prusikin recommends the same general approach in his excellent book based on the Queen's Gambit for Black. Alright, London Calling! 2....xf6 A natural development move. Now, most of the time, White plays 3.e3, but we will also examine 3.Nf3, as this particular position frequently arises from CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 . It will almost always transpose to 3.e3, as White's moves e3 and Nf3 are both very natural and obvious. Still, one

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this capture opens the h-file now. Against CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 , we continue with our standard plan of 5...O-O and ...c5 next. BCCEndBracketCC White can continue with moves like CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nbd2 , CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bd3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.c3 and allow us to capture the bishop on f4. I suggest declining this invitation for the moment and continuing with our usual approach of playing ...O-O and ...c5 first. The three moves mentioned usually lead to the same positions. Therefore I decided to cover White's 'double f-pawn invitation' idea only via 5.Nbd2 and mention the possible alternative routes in the notes to this move. We'd play in the same way against all three, so it's easy to remember. CCCEndBracketCC White can play CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Ne5 , occupying their outpost immediately. We'll fight for control over e5 with the moves ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nc6. DCCEndBracketCC White can simply trade on d6. This move is rather toothless and answered by 5.Bxd6 Qxd6 . 5.Kg3 0-0 According to plan: we castle first, then ...c5 next. While most of the time plays either 6.Nbd2 or 6.Bd3, which likely leads to the same positions, as both moves fit into White's setup. There is an independent possibility in 6.c4, which acknowledges that White has little to hope for in the other lines. This move was tested in some higher-level games, concluding that Black is fine but needs to show some precision. 6.c4 White gives the game more of a QGD flavour. This move has not been tested as extensively yet, compared to the other more London-style moves. 6...c5 This seems to be best. We often react to c2-c4 by taking the pawn and playing ...c5, but this approach is slightly imprecise after 6...dxc4 7.Bxc4 c5 8.dxc5 , when I don't see how Black can get equal chances. After 6...c5 White has tried 7.Nc3 most of the time. Less common are the captures on c5 or d5. 7.cxd5 After the capture, Black is fine after one of the two moves that I am suggesting but should avoid 7... Nxd5?! , as 8.dxc5 Bxc5 9.Bc4 gives White some pressure on the open files. 7...Kxg3 I think Black gets equal chances with this move, but also with 7...exd5 , when 8.Bxd6 Qxd6 9.dxc5 Qxc5 leads to a position with an IQP for us. In this repertoire, we rarely play with an IQP, quite the contrary. Therefore I suggest 7... Bxg3, which is more in line with our general approach. Still a word about the position after 9...Qxc5. Black is fine because White does not manage to control the d4-square properly. We'd play ...Nc6 and ...Rd8 quickly, trying to play ...d5-d4 ultimately. Black has a relatively easy job here. 8.hxg3 cxd4 9.dxe6 Instead, 9.Qxd4 Qxd5 is uncritical and leads to equality. 9...O&a5+ The start of a forced line. 10.O&d2 O&xd2+ 11..xbxd2 dxe3 12.exf7+ Qxf7 13.fxe3 Qe7 White has won a pawn, but their structure is completely shattered. Black has equal chances here, as White has no way to make the extra pawn count. If we manage to win one of White's pawns, the remaining ones would stay weak, and we'd be even better.

☐ 12. The London System
■ 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 #2

1.d4 d5 2.Kf4 White's most popular and important alternative to the Queen's Gambit is the London System. In the London, White usually doesn't play a quick pawn push c2-c4 to attack our d5-pawn; they develop their pieces first and focus on controlling the e5-square. Often White will almost automatically follow Bf4 with the moves e3, Nf3, Nbd2, Bd3 and c3, in various move orders. Due to this rather schematic approach, the London 'enjoys' the reputation of being a dull and unambitious opening: 'It's always the same, how boring!' Well, if it's so dull, why do strong players like the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, play it quite often? As it is with many openings, it all depends on mindset and intention. If you want to play boring Chess, the London is certainly a good way to start - it has its reputation for a reason. However, playing the London ambitiously and aggressively is possible; don't fall into the trap of believing your opponent is playing Bf4 to bore you to death. They might only wait for the moment to play Nf3-e5 and rush their kingside pawns up the board, just to mention one not-so-boring idea they might have in mind. How do we fight the London System? White's key idea in the London is the control of the central square e5. I suggest to develop with ...Nf6 and quickly challenge White's bishop with ...e6 and ...Bd6. In most cases, we'll play ...O-O, ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nbd7 to increase our influence on e5. It is often possible to accomplish the move ...e6-e5, opening up our c8-bishop. Let's have a quick look at what we are aiming for: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Bd3 Nbd7 is a widespread sequence and the mainline of the current chapter. We are ready to play ...e6-e5, which gives us equal chances and a comfortable game. White has other options along the way, but this is our 'standard' plan against the London. Let's talk about move orders. I cover all London lines via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 , but White has other possible move orders. There is the very popular CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/ 8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCStartBracketCCcovered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 CCEndBracketCC and finally the rare CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c3 e6 4.Bf4 CCStartBracketCCcovered briefly via 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 e6 4.c3 CCEndBracketCC. In almost all cases, the different move orders lead to exactly the same positions, but there are some nuances we will discuss. Before we start, I'd like to mention that Black has many satisfactory replies against the London. I had never seriously studied any theory against it, so I didn't immediately know what to recommend. While doing the initial research for the Caro-Kann part of this course, I learned to appreciate the opening play of German GM Rasmus Svane. I liked the

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The bishop on g3 is far away from the queenside, which validates this strategy. 7...cxd4 8..xxd4 Here, 8.exd4 would lead to a fairly harmless IQP position after 8... dxc4 . You can easily compare this to lines we analyse in theBf4/Bg5 Chapter as part of our QGD section. 8...Kb4 I like this move, setting up a pin on the knight. White's bishop is far away on the queenside and does not help to break the pin. We have reached a reasonably unexplored position now, so I'll give you two possible sample lines to illustrate the play. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ pp3ppp/4pn2/3p4/1bPN4/2N1P1B1/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 1 9CCEndFENCC 9.Bd3 dxc4 10.Bxc4 Ne4 11.Qc2 Qa5 looks fine for Black. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp3ppp/4pn2/3p4/1bPN4/2N1P1B1/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 1 9CCEndFENCC 9.Rc1 Nc6 10.Be2 Ne4 might lead to simplifications after 11.O-O Nxd4 , but there are plenty of possibilities for both sides along the way.

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■ 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 #3

1.d4 d5 2.Kf4 White's most popular and important alternative to the Queen's Gambit is the London System. In the London, White usually doesn't play a quick pawn push c2-c4 to attack our d5-pawn; they develop their pieces first and focus on controlling the e5-square. Often White will almost automatically follow Bf4 with the moves e3, Nf3, Nbd2, Bd3 and c3, in various move orders. Due to this rather schematic approach, the London 'enjoys' the reputation of being a dull and unambitious opening: 'It's always the same, how boring!' Well, if it's so dull, why do strong players like the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, play it quite often? As it is with many openings, it all depends on mindset and intention. If you want to play boring Chess, the London is certainly a good way to start - it has its reputation for a reason. However, playing the London ambitiously and aggressively is possible; don't fall into the trap of believing your opponent is playing Bf4 to bore you to death. They might only wait for the moment to play Nf3-e5 and rush their kingside pawns up the board, just to mention one not-so-boring idea they might have in mind. How do we fight the London System? White's key idea in the London is the control of the central square e5. I suggest to develop with ...Nf6 and quickly challenge White's bishop with ...e6 and ...Bd6. In most cases, we'll play ...O-O, ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nbd7 to increase our influence on e5. It is often possible to accomplish the move ...e6-e5, opening up our c8-bishop. Let's have a quick look at what we are aiming for: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Bd3 Nbd7 is a widespread sequence and the mainline of the current chapter. We are ready to play ...e6-e5, which gives us equal chances and a comfortable game. White has other options along the way, but this is our 'standard' plan against the London. Let's talk about move orders. I cover all London lines via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/

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White has about a million different move orders. However, we can split the lines into two sections. A[CC]EndBracket[CC] White plays a quick Nf3, usually right now on move four B[CC]EndBracket[CC] White delays/omits the move Nf3, often trying to use the f-pawn after the f4-bishop has moved/has been traded. If White is going for B, they usually start with 4.Nd2, but you also meet 4.Bd3 or 4.c3 with similar intentions. We don't need to worry about these move orders, as we'll play ...Bd6, ...O-O and ...c5, basically on 'auto pilot'. Lines like [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P1B2/4P3/PPP2PPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 0 4[CC]EndFEN[CC] 4.Bd3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nd2 c5 [CC]StartBracket[CC]covered via [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P1B2/4P3/PPP2PPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 0 4[CC]EndFEN[CC] 4.Nd2 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Bd3 c5 [CC]EndBracket[CC] or [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P1B2/4P3/PPP2PPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 0 4[CC]EndFEN[CC] 4.c3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nd2 c5 7.Ngf3 Qc7 [CC]StartBracket[CC]covered via [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P1B2/4P3/PPP2PPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 0 4[CC]EndFEN[CC] 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 [CC]EndBracket[CC] are purely transpositional. 4..xf3 White plays the knight to its best square, which is unsurprisingly the most popular way to play. We'll also reach this position frequently via other moves orders, particularly [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[CC]EndFEN[CC] 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 e6 4.e3 is very common. We already know our reply: challenge the London bishop with ...Bd6. 4...Kd6 According to our plan. White has a whole range of options now. They need to decide what to do about the bishop vis-a-vis. Let's make an overview of the various ideas. A[CC]EndBracket[CC] The main move is 5.Bg3. White retreats the bishop and argues that Black doesn't want to trade on g3, as this capture opens the h-file now. Against [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5[CC]EndFEN[CC] 5.Bg3 , we continue with our standard plan of 5...O-O and ...c5 next. B[CC]EndBracket[CC] White can continue with moves like [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5[CC]EndFEN[CC] 5.Nbd2 , [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5[CC]EndFEN[CC] 5.Bd3 or [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5[CC]EndFEN[CC] 5.c3 and allow us to capture the bishop on f4. I suggest declining this invitation for the moment and continuing with our usual approach of playing ...O-O and ...c5 first. The three moves mentioned usually lead to the same positions. Therefore I decided to cover White's 'double f-pawn invitation' idea only via 5.Nbd2 and mention the possible alternative routes in the notes to this move. We'd play in the same way against all three, so it's easy to remember. C[CC]EndBracket[CC] White can play [CC]StartFEN[CC]rnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5[CC]EndFEN[CC] 5.Ne5 , occupying their outpost immediately. We'll fight for control over e5 with the moves ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nc6. D[CC]EndBracket[CC] White can simply trade on d6. This move is rather toothless and answered by 5.Bxd6 Qxd6 . 5.Kg3 0-0 According to plan: we castle first, then ...c5 next. While most of the time

plays either 6.Nbd2 or 6.Bd3, which likely leads to the same positions, as both moves fit into White's setup. There is an independent possibility in 6.c4, which acknowledges that White has little to hope for in the other lines. This move was tested in some higher-level games, concluding that Black is fine but needs to show some precision. 6..xbd2 White's most popular move. They also play 6.Bd3, which will more or less always just transpose to 6.Nbd2. Our job is easy, as we follow the same plan against both moves. Here are the two logical transpositions. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P4/4PNB1/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Nbd2 Nbd7 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P4/4PNB1/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Ne5 Nc6 9.f4 Ne7 10.Nd2 In the further coverage of 6.Nbd2 I'll explain the exact rationale behind these lines, particularly why we should play ...Nbd7 in one case and ...Nc6 in the other. Hang on! 6...c5 7.c3 O&c7 That's an important move for our recipe against the London. Why precisely this move? We want to fight for the control of the e5-square. Our ideal scenario is to gain enough control to play ...e6-e5 and gain a space advantage in the centre. Well, we need a knight to control e5 and the queen's support to accomplish that, so 7...Nc6 and 7...Qc7 are moves to consider. The move 7...Nc6 is not bad at all, but it is fundamentally different to 7...Qc7, as after 7...Nc6 8.Bd3 Black can't play 8...Qc7 because of 9.dxc5 . Black usually continues with CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/pp3ppp/2nbpn2/2pp4/3P4/2PBPNB1/PP1N1PPP/R2QK2R b KQ - 2 8CCEndFENCC 8...b6 , when 9.e4 is possible to start early complications. I prefer 7...Qc7 - it is not only simpler to play but very likely objectively stronger. I don't see a shade of an advantage for White after 7...Qc7, which is less clear after 7...Nc6, when White has plenty of interesting options. Back to 7...Qc7. What do we need to check now? I think 8.Ne5 is probably White's most ambitious try, preparing f4 to cement White's control of e5. We'll also check 8.Bd3 and 8.dxc5, which feel pretty harmless to me. Another harmless move is CCStartFENCCrnb2rk1/ppq2ppp/3bpn2/2pp4/3P4/2P1PNB1/PP1N1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 1 8CCEndFENCC 8.Bxd6 Qxd6 , which leads to a scenario that we discuss in the 5.Bxd6 Qxd6variation. 8.Kd3 A routine move that allows us to take control of e5. 8....xbd7 Don't play 8...Nc6? 9.dxc5! , when Black has blundered a pawn. Now we are ready to play ...e6-e5, the whole point of our opening concept. It's safe to say that we have won the opening battle, which is also confirmed by White's miserable score from this position. 9.0-0 White has played this move most of the time. The alternatives give us no headache, either. Lines like 9.Qe2 e5 or CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/ppqn1ppp/3bpn2/2pp4/3P4/2PBPNB1/PP1N1PPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 3 9CCEndFENCC 9.e4?! cxd4 10.cxd4 dxe4 11.Nxe4 Nxe4 12.Bxe4 Nf6 13.Bd3 Qa5+ can only be better for Black. 9...Kxg3 The immediate 9...e5 is also fine, of course. I prefer to take first, creating the doubled pawn. The pawn itself is not a substantial weakness, but at a later stage, it can be beneficial to have ...Bg4 or ...Ng4 without White being able to play h3. 10.hxg3 e5 I love the smell of ...e5 in the London System... smells like... Victory! 11.dxe5 After 11.e4 White keeps equal

chances with careful play. We reply 11...dxe4 12.Nxe4 Nxe4 13.Bxe4 Nf6 , when 14.Qc2 is the engine's choice to keep it about equal. White shouldn't be too ambitious, as 14.Bc2 e4 only gives Black chances. 11....xxe5 12..xxe5 O&xe5 Black is slightly better here, enjoying a nice space advantage. We have some good plans available, while it is unclear how White is making any progress. Ideas to consider for Black are: AĊĊEndBracketĊĊ First, centralise with moves like ...Bd7, ...Rfe8, ...Rad8. This is useful in many scenarios and could be followed by plans B or C. BĊĊEndBracketĊĊ Play ...g6, ... Kg7, ...h5-h4. It is a slow attack, but it can be very effective CĊĊEndBracketĊĊ Place the knight on the squares g4 or e4, which can be annoying for White. There is no obvious way to expel this intruder.

☐ 12. The London System
■ 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 #4

1.d4 d5 2.Kf4 White's most popular and important alternative to the Queen's Gambit is the London System. In the London, White usually doesn't play a quick pawn push c2-c4 to attack our d5-pawn; they develop their pieces first and focus on controlling the e5-square. Often White will almost automatically follow Bf4 with the moves e3, Nf3, Nbd2, Bd3 and c3, in various move orders. Due to this rather schematic approach, the London 'enjoys' the reputation of being a dull and unambitious opening: 'It's always the same, how boring!' Well, if it's so dull, why do strong players like the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, play it quite often? As it is with many openings, it all depends on mindset and intention. If you want to play boring Chess, the London is certainly a good way to start - it has its reputation for a reason. However, playing the London ambitiously and aggressively is possible; don't fall into the trap of believing your opponent is playing Bf4 to bore you to death. They might only wait for the moment to play Nf3-e5 and rush their kingside pawns up the board, just to mention one not-so-boring idea they might have in mind. How do we fight the London System? White's key idea in the London is the control of the central square e5. I suggest to develop with ...Nf6 and quickly challenge White's bishop with ...e6 and ...Bd6. In most cases, we'll play ...O-O, ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nbd7 to increase our influence on e5. It is often possible to accomplish the move ...e6-e5, opening up our c8-bishop. Let's have a quick look at what we are aiming for: ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Bd3 Nbd7 is a widespread sequence and the mainline of the current chapter. We are ready to play ...e6-e5, which gives us equal chances and a comfortable game. White has other options along the way, but this is our 'standard' plan against the London. Let's talk about move orders. I cover all London lines via the move order ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 , but White has other possible move orders. There is the very popular ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/

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☐ 12. The London System
■ 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 #5

1.d4 d5 2.Kf4 White's most popular and important alternative to the Queen's Gambit is the London System. In the London, White usually doesn't play a quick pawn push c2-c4 to attack our d5-pawn; they develop their pieces first and focus on controlling the e5-square. Often White will almost automatically follow Bf4 with the moves e3, Nf3, Nbd2, Bd3 and c3, in various move orders. Due to this rather schematic approach, the London 'enjoys' the reputation of being a dull and unambitious opening: 'It's always the same, how boring!' Well, if it's so dull, why do strong players like the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, play it quite often? As it is with many openings, it all depends on mindset and intention. If you want to play boring Chess, the London is certainly a good way to start - it has its reputation for a reason. However, playing the London ambitiously and aggressively is possible; don't fall into the trap of believing your opponent is playing Bf4 to bore you to death. They might only wait for the moment to play Nf3-e5 and rush their kingside pawns up the board, just to mention one not-so-boring idea they might have in mind. How do we fight the London System? White's key idea in the London is the control of the central square e5. I suggest to develop with ...Nf6 and quickly challenge White's bishop with ...e6 and ...Bd6. In most cases, we'll play ...O-O, ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nbd7 to increase our influence on e5. It is often possible to accomplish the move ...e6-e5, opening up our c8-bishop. Let's have a quick look at what we are aiming for: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Bd3 Nbd7 is a widespread sequence and the mainline of the current chapter. We are ready to play ...e6-e5, which gives us equal chances and a comfortable game. White has other options along the way, but this is our 'standard' plan against the London. Let's talk about move orders. I cover all London lines via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 , but White has other possible move orders. There is the very popular CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/ 8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCStartBracketCCcovered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 CCEndBracketCC and finally the rare CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c3 e6 4.Bf4 CCStartBracketCCcovered briefly via 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 e6 4.c3 CCEndBracketCC. In almost all cases, the different move orders lead to exactly the same positions, but there are some nuances we will discuss. Before we start, I'd like to mention that Black has many satisfactory replies against the London. I had never seriously studied any theory against it, so I didn't immediately know what to recommend. While doing the initial research for the Caro-Kann part of this course, I learned to appreciate the opening play of German GM Rasmus Svane. I liked the

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☐ 12. The London System
■ 3.Nf3 e6 4.Nbd2 #1

1.d4 d5 2.Kf4 White's most popular and important alternative to the Queen's Gambit is the London System. In the London, White usually doesn't play a quick pawn push c2-c4 to attack our d5-pawn; they develop their pieces first and focus on controlling the e5-square. Often White will almost automatically follow Bf4 with the moves e3, Nf3, Nbd2, Bd3 and c3, in various move orders. Due to this rather schematic approach, the London 'enjoys' the reputation of being a dull and unambitious opening: 'It's always the same, how boring!' Well, if it's so dull, why do strong players like the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, play it quite often? As it is with many openings, it all depends on mindset and intention. If you want to play boring Chess, the London is certainly a good way to start - it has its reputation for a reason. However, playing the London ambitiously and aggressively is possible; don't fall into the trap of believing your opponent is playing Bf4 to bore you to death. They might only wait for the moment to play Nf3-e5 and rush their kingside pawns up the board, just to mention one not-so-boring idea they might have in mind. How do we fight the London System? White's key idea in the London is the control of the central square e5. I suggest to develop with ...Nf6 and quickly challenge White's bishop with ...e6 and ...Bd6. In most cases, we'll play ...O-O, ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nbd7 to increase our influence on e5. It is often possible to accomplish the move ...e6-e5, opening up our c8-bishop. Let's have a quick look at what we are aiming for: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Bd3 Nbd7 is a widespread sequence and the mainline of the current chapter. We are ready to play ...e6-e5, which gives us equal chances and a comfortable game. White has other options along the way, but this is our 'standard' plan against the London. Let's talk about move orders. I cover all London lines via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 , but White has other possible move orders. There is the very popular CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/ 8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCStartBracketCCcovered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 CCEndBracketCC and finally the rare CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c3 e6 4.Bf4 CCStartBracketCCcovered briefly via 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 e6 4.c3 CCEndBracketCC. In almost all cases, the different move orders lead to exactly the same positions, but there are some nuances we will discuss. Before we start, I'd like to mention that Black has many satisfactory replies against the London. I had never seriously studied any theory against it, so I didn't immediately know what to recommend. While doing the initial research for the Caro-Kann part of this course, I learned to appreciate the opening play of German GM Rasmus Svane. I liked the

positions he was aiming for and decided it is worth checking what he is playing against other openings. The setup that I am suggesting against the London is Svane's choice. He has played it numerous times, in particular in online games. Later I discovered that GM Michael Prusikin recommends the same general approach in his excellent book based on the Queen's Gambit for Black. Alright, London Calling! 2....xf6 A natural development move. Now, most of the time, White plays 3.e3, but we will also examine 3.Nf3, as this particular position frequently arises from CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 . It will almost always transpose to 3.e3, as White's moves e3 and Nf3 are both very natural and obvious. Still, one interesting line can only arise via the 3.Nf3 move order: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 e6 4.Nbd2 . This is relevant to our 'standard setup', as it won't work as well in this case. It is nothing to worry about, just a nuance to be aware of. There are other moves besides 3.e3 and 3.Nf3, but they are harmless or purely transpositional at best. ACCEndBracketCC White can play CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P1B2/8/PPP1PPPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 , which we cover via the far more common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bf4 . BCCEndBracketCC The moves CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P1B2/8/PPP1PPPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.c3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P1B2/8/PPP1PPPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.h3 are slow and can be answered with our standard plan of ...e6 and ...Bd6. CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P1B2/8/PPP1PPPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.c4?! is a dubious and rare attempt to play a delayed Queen's Gambit. You can even play 3...dxc4 and keep the pawn with ...b5. White's bishop is entirely misplaced on f4 and often later hit with ...Nd5. 3..xf3 This position more often than not arises after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 . After our reply 3...e6 , most of the time White plays 4.e3 , which transposes to our coverage via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 . 3...e6 Our move to prepare ...Bd6, fighting for control of the e5-square. Now White's overwhelming main move is 4.e3, which just transposes to the mainline London that we cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 . Our reply is 4...Bd6 . This move would also follow against slow moves like 4.h3?! or 4.c3, which at best transposes to the mainline after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P1B2/5N2/PPP1PPPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.c3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.e3 c5 7.Nbd2 Qc7 . White also has the slightly dubious move 4.c4?! , which transposes to a line of the Queen's Gambit that we cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/

RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4?! , which is strongly answered by 4...dxc4! , giving Black good play. There is one interesting independent move for White, though. We need to check 4.Nbd2!?, which does not commit the c- and e-pawn. 4..xbd2 A curious move order that we need to answer precisely. 4...c5 The exclamation mark is a bit strong, but it's important to remember this finesse. Our routine move 4...Bd6 is not a mistake here, but there is an issue. White has the annoying reply 5.Bg5 , intending e2-e4, which is surprisingly tricky to meet. It looks like 5...Be7 is a sensible choice, but then White has tricked us into the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bg5 e6 4.Nbd2 Be7 , which is not part of our repertoire. In this move, order 3...Ne4! is our choice, avoiding the pin altogether. In the position after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/ 8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 e6 4.Nbd2 Bd6 5.Bg5 , I checked other moves but didn't like these lines that much. Finally, I found that 4...c5! leads to a simpler task for Black, as we will see. It is somewhat annoying that you can't 'play ...Bd6 against everything' and need to remember one exception, but opponents that play such a tricky move order need to be fought with some finesse on our side. 5.c3 This move is less popular than 5.e3, as it is desirable for White to avoid the opening of the c-file after 5.c3 cxd4. White much prefers to recapture with the e-pawn, which explains why 5.e3 is the usual choice. 5...cxd4 This is the simplest solution, leading to good play. A more complicated way is 5...Bd6 when 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 cxd4 8.cxd4 Qb6 is possible. Here White could take on f6 and sacrifice the b-pawn, which leads to murky play. Black is probably better, but it's messy. I prefer the KIS style method, which gives us good chances and not much to worry about. 6.cxd4 .xc6 White's problem in this position: the knight on d2 is misplaced. If you'd imagine the knight being on c3, you'd easily assume that White has a small advantage, while here White has nothing at all. I'll demonstrate an additional idea worth knowing. 7.e3 O&b6 We gain a tempo on the b2-pawn and prepare the following idea. 8.Qb1 After 8.Qb3 Qxb3 9.Nxb3 Nh5 employ the same idea as after 8.Rb1 Nh5! 8....xh5 We are fighting for the bishop pair with this interesting move. 9.Kg5 Instead, 9.Bg3 Nxg3 or 9.Be5 f6 10.Bg3 Nxg3 11.hxg3 e5 , when Black gets the bishop pair under even better circumstances. 9...h6 10.Kh4 g5 Black is in good shape here. After 11.Bg3 Nxg3 12.hxg3 g4 13.Nh4 e5! White is in some trouble already. The best seems to be far from obvious 11.Ne5 , which leads to fun complications after 11...Nxe5 12.Qxh5 gxh4 . I'll stop here, as this line is rather rare anyway.

☐ 12. The London System
■ 3.Nf3 e6 4.Nbd2 #2

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c2-c4 to attack our d5-pawn; they develop their pieces first and focus on controlling the e5-square. Often White will almost automatically follow Bf4 with the moves e3, Nf3, Nbd2, Bd3 and c3, in various move orders. Due to this rather schematic approach, the London 'enjoys' the reputation of being a dull and unambitious opening: 'It's always the same, how boring!' Well, if it's so dull, why do strong players like the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, play it quite often? As it is with many openings, it all depends on mindset and intention. If you want to play boring Chess, the London is certainly a good way to start - it has its reputation for a reason. However, playing the London ambitiously and aggressively is possible; don't fall into the trap of believing your opponent is playing Bf4 to bore you to death. They might only wait for the moment to play Nf3-e5 and rush their kingside pawns up the board, just to mention one not-so-boring idea they might have in mind. How do we fight the London System? White's key idea in the London is the control of the central square e5. I suggest to develop with ...Nf6 and quickly challenge White's bishop with ...e6 and ...Bd6. In most cases, we'll play ...O-O, ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nbd7 to increase our influence on e5. It is often possible to accomplish the move ...e6-e5, opening up our c8-bishop. Let's have a quick look at what we are aiming for: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Bd3 Nbd7 is a widespread sequence and the mainline of the current chapter. We are ready to play ...e6-e5, which gives us equal chances and a comfortable game. White has other options along the way, but this is our 'standard' plan against the London. Let's talk about move orders. I cover all London lines via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 , but White has other possible move orders. There is the very popular CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 CCStartBracketCCcovered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 CCEndBracketCC and finally the rare CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c3 e6 4.Bf4 CCStartBracketCCcovered briefly via 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 e6 4.c3 CCEndBracketCC. In almost all cases, the different move orders lead to exactly the same positions, but there are some nuances we will discuss. Before we start, I'd like to mention that Black has many satisfactory replies against the London. I had never seriously studied any theory against it, so I didn't immediately know what to recommend. While doing the initial research for the Caro-Kann part of this course, I learned to appreciate the opening play of German GM Rasmus Svane. I liked the positions he was aiming for and decided it is worth checking what he is playing against other openings. The setup that I am suggesting against the London is Svane's choice. He has played it numerous times, in particular in online games. Later I discovered that GM Michael Prusikin recommends the same general approach in his excellent book based on the Queen's Gambit for Black. Alright, London Calling!

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remember this finesse. Our routine move 4...Bd6 is not a mistake here, but there is an issue. White has the annoying reply 5.Bg5 , intending e2-e4, which is surprisingly tricky to meet. It looks like 5...Be7 is a sensible choice, but then White has tricked us into the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bg5 e6 4.Nbd2 Be7 , which is not part of our repertoire. In this move, order 3...Ne4! is our choice, avoiding the pin altogether. In the position after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 e6 4.Nbd2 Bd6 5.Bg5 , I checked other moves but didn't like these lines that much. Finally, I found that 4...c5! leads to a simpler task for Black, as we will see. It is somewhat annoying that you can't 'play ...Bd6 against everything' and need to remember one exception, but opponents that play such a tricky move order need to be fought with some finesse on our side. 5.e3 O&b6 Yet another little finesse. After 5...Bd6 the move 6.Bb5+ is slightly annoying. In the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 we play 5...O-O first, and only after 6.Nbd2 we play 6...c5 . Castling first avoids the irritating lines involving Bb5CCStartBracketCC+CCEndBracketCC. 6.Qb1 It's tough to suggest anything else for White. The b-pawn needs some cover, as it does not look like a sacrifice could be working. 6...cxd4 Here 6...Bd6 is a fine alternative, similar to our 'standard plan'. I suggest 6...cxd4, as it looks like a simple and good solution. 7.exd4 Kd7 The key idea behind the whole concept. We'll play ...Bb5 next to activate our bishop, which gives us equal chances. The structure is similar to an Exchange Caro, which is a familiar sight in our repertoire.

☐ 12. The London System

■ 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c3

1.d4 d5 2..xf3 White often starts with 2.Nf3 but transposes to a London System later. 2....xf6 The natural reply. We develop our knight to the best square and are ready to transpose to the Queen's Gambit Declined after 3.c4 e6 , the most common continuation. White has a ton of alternatives, though. In the current chapter, we only discuss the London System. In contrast, the chapter on1.d4 d5 sidelines covers other options, like 3.g3 or 3.Bg5. 3.c3 White usually plays 3.Bf4 to reach a London System, which we cover via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 . This leaves 3.c3 to examine, as White may still play Bf4 next. 3...e6 We prepare ...c5 without having to worry about a possible dxc5 pawn grab. Now White's best move is probably 4.Bf4 , transposing to a London. The London is covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 in the current chapter. Other options are 4.e3 or 4.Bg5, which are both covered in the1.d4 d5 sidelines chapter.

☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.g3

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.c4 and on theLondon System CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two move orders by White. They can choose the direction on move two or on move three, including 2.Nf3 Nf6. Common examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I decided to cover all these cases the same way, having the lines split already on the second move. So in this chapter, I use the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 to cover all early e3 systems. 2.g3 The move 2.g3 or the related line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 usually signals White's intention to steer the game into a type of Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, but wanting to avoid lines the Queen's Gambit accepted CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 or lines of the Slav Defence CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 CCEndBracketCC. In Keep it Simple: 1.d4, I advocated this approach and suggested the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 . Now, what to do as Black against this setup? I suggest being pragmatic and simply allowing a transposition to the Catalan and play lines that are part of our repertoire anyway. This fits well with the 'Keep it Simple' approach: reduce the workload where it is possible. Let's have a look at how to transpose. 2....xf6 I suggest playing ...Nf6 and ...e6. 3.Kg2 White also has 3.Nf3 , which after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/6P1/PPP1PPBP/RNBQK1NR b KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3...e6 4.Nf3 c5 leads to the same positions. 3...e6 This is the 'simple solution', allowing a transposition to the Catalan. If Black follows a maximalist approach, you'd need to play 3...c5 4.Nf3 cxd4 5.O-O and now learn some other theory with sophisticated ideas like 5...h6!? or 5...e6 6.

Nxd4 e5 , which will still 'only' lead to about equal chances. 4..xf3 Here 4.c4 dxc4 directly transposes to ourAnti-Catalan Chapter. 4...c5 This is the way to transpose our lines against the Catalan 5.0-0 Or 5.c4 dxc4 , which again directly transposes to theCatalan Chapter. 5....xc6 Now White's only try for an advantage is 6.c4 , when 6....dxc4 againtransposes to the Catalan. I need to mention that this position may also arise from CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.d4 Nf6 5.O-O e6 , and this is a more common move order. In thechapter on 1.Nf3, I talk a bit more about the harmless alternatives for White on the sixth move. Please see this chapter if you want to learn more.

☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.e4 #1

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.c4 and on theLondon System CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two move orders by White. They can choose the direction on move two or on move three, including 2.Nf3 Nf6. Common examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I decided to cover all these cases the same way, having the lines split already on the second move. So in this chapter, I use the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 to cover all early e3 systems. 2.e4 The Blackmar-Diemer Gambit. It is objectively incorrect, but knowing a good reply is helpful. The first step is easy: grab the centre pawn. 2...dxe4
In a significant portion of games, Black opts for 2...e6 or 2...c6, which lets White off the hook. You should take a free centre pawn! 3..xc3 White's idea is to follow up CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/8/3Pp3/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 with 4.f3 . It is worse for White to play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/8/3Pp3/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.f3 right away, as 3...e5! is very effective. After 4.dxe5 Qxd1+ 5.Kxd1 exf3 White's king is stuck in the centre, and the e5-pawn is terminally weak. 3....xf6 We need to cover the captured pawn. The setup we aim for includes ...Bf5, ...

e6 and often ...c6 to stabilize the centre. Now White, most of the time, plays 4.f3, but we'll have a quick look at 4.Bg5, too. 4.Kg5 Kf5 Lending additional cover to the extra pawn. 5.O&e2 White sets a trap: what about the d4-pawn now? Can we take it? Before we examine Black's best reply, a quick note about 5.f3 . We should answer it with 5...Nbd7 . After 6.Bc4 exf3 Nxf3 e6 we reach positions similar to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/8/3Pp3/2N5/PPP2PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.f3 coveredelsewhere. White does not have enough play for the pawn. 5....xbd7 Don't take on d4! After 5...Qxd4?? 6.Qb5+ Bd7 7. Qxb7 Bc6 8.Bb5 White is winning on the spot. Instead, we continue with our development, and White does not have enough for the pawn. 6.0-0-0 We are already a full centre pawn up. If White plays 6.Qb5? , we are happy to give up b7 for more development with 6...e6 7.Qxb7 Bd6 , when Black has a fantastic position. 6...c6 The bishop on g5 makes it a bit more difficult to play ...e6, so we should start with ... c6. Our f8-bishop can be developed with ...g6 later. 7.f3 Or 7.d5 Nxd5 8.Nxd5 cxd5 9.Rxd5 g6 , when Black will be the one doing all the attacking soon. The bishop arriving on g7 will be a monster. 7...exf3 8..xxf3 g6 Black has a clear advantage. White can try the direct 9.d5 Nxd5 10.Nxd5 cxd5 11.Rxd5 Bg7 12. Nd4 , but 12...Bxd4! 13.Rxd4 Rc8 is excellent for Black.

☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.e4 #2

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/ PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.c4 and on theLondon System CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two move orders by White. They can choose the direction on move two or on move three, including 2.Nf3 Nf6. Common examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/ 8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/ 8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I decided to cover all these cases the same way, having the lines split already on the second move. So in this chapter, I use the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 to cover all early e3 systems. 2.e4 The Blackmar-Diemer Gambit. It is objectively incorrect, but knowing a good reply is helpful. The first step is easy: grab the centre pawn. 2...dxe4

In a significant portion of games, Black opts for 2...e6 or 2...c6, which lets White off the hook. You should take a free centre pawn! 3..xc3 White's idea is to follow up CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/8/3Pp3/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 with 4.f3 . It is worse for White to play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/8/3Pp3/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.f3 right away, as 3...e5! is very effective. After 4.dxe5 Qxd1+ 5.Kxd1 exf3 White's king is stuck in the centre, and the e5-pawn is terminally weak. 3....xf6 We need to cover the captured pawn. The setup we aim for includes ...Bf5, ...e6 and often ...c6 to stabilize the centre. Now White, most of the time, plays 4.f3, but we'll have a quick look at 4.Bg5, too. 4.f3 exf3 Playing 4...Bf5 is a good alternative here. We think that taking is a bit simpler to handle, though. 5..xxf3 Occasionally White has tried 5.Qxf3? , but we can just play 5...Qxd4 and are two pawns up. After 6.Be3 Qg4 7.Qf2 Qf5 CCStartBracketCCthere are other good lines, tooCCEndBracketCC White has no compensation. 5...c6 Our target setup involves the moves ...Bf5, ...e6 and ...c6. You can either start with 5...c6 or 5...Bf5, leading to the same lines. 6.Kc4 White's normal development, putting pressure on f7. After 6. Bd3 we have 6...Bg4 , again leaving White with zero compensation for the pawn. 6...Kf5 The bishop will be very useful on g6, covering the f7-pawn. We'll now check two attacking attempts by White. 7..xe5 White goes for f7 immediately. 7...e6 8.g4 We need to be precise against this crude attack. White may also play 8.O-O when 8...Bg6! is the typical reply. We secure f7 with this important move, leading to positions similar to theline with 7.O-O. 8....xfd7 Very important! After 8...Bg6? 9.h4 things are not clear at all. 9.gxf5 White has no good move here. We were threatening both ...Qh4+ and ...Nxe5. 9....xxe5 10.Ke2 Here 10.dxe5? Qh4+ immediately loses for White. 10...O&h4+ 11.Elf1 O&h3+ 12.Ele1 Ke7 Who's doing the attacking now? White's gambit has backfired badly, with ...Bh4+ looming. After 13.dxe5 Qg2 14.Rf1 Bh4+ 15.Kd2 Na6 Black wins quickly.

☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.e4 #3

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.c4 and on theLondon System CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two move orders by White. They can choose the direction on move two or on move three, including 2.Nf3 Nf6. Common examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0

1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I decided to cover all these cases the same way, having the lines split already on the second move. So in this chapter, I use the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 to cover all early e3 systems. 2.e4 The Blackmar-Diemer Gambit. It is objectively incorrect, but knowing a good reply is helpful. The first step is easy: grab the centre pawn. 2...dxe4 In a significant portion of games, Black opts for 2...e6 or 2...c6, which lets White off the hook. You should take a free centre pawn! 3..xc3 White's idea is to follow up CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/8/3Pp3/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 with 4.f3 . It is worse for White to play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/8/3Pp3/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.f3 right away, as 3...e5! is very effective. After 4.dxe5 Qxd1+ 5.Kxd1 exf3 White's king is stuck in the centre, and the e5-pawn is terminally weak. 3....xf6 We need to cover the captured pawn. The setup we aim for includes ...Bf5, ...e6 and often ...c6 to stabilize the centre. Now White, most of the time, plays 4.f3, but we'll have a quick look at 4.Bg5, too. 4.f3 exf3 Playing 4...Bf5 is a good alternative here. We think that taking is a bit simpler to handle, though. 5..xxf3 Occasionally White has tried 5.Qxf3? , but we can just play 5...Qxd4 and are two pawns up. After 6.Be3 Qg4 7.Qf2 Qf5 CCStartBracketCCthere are other good lines, tooCCEndBracketCC White has no compensation. 5...c6 Our target setup involves the moves ...Bf5, ...e6 and ...c6. You can either start with 5...c6 or 5...Bf5, leading to the same lines. 6.Kc4 White's normal development, putting pressure on f7. After 6.Bd3 we have 6...Bg4 , again leaving White with zero compensation for the pawn. 6...Kf5 The bishop will be very useful on g6, covering the f7-pawn. We'll now check two attacking attempts by White. 7.0-0 A sensible move. White wants to create some play on the opened f-file, which is the only upside of the pawn sacrifice. 7...e6 8..xe5 Or 8.Ng5 Bg6 , when White's attack is going nowhere. 8...Kg6 White was threatening Nxf7 and Rxf5, so this is a necessary retreat. The ...Bg6 setup is the main point to remember. Now we have the simple development scheme involving ...Be7, ...O-O and...Nbd7. White has no compensation for the pawn.

☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.Nc3 #1

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.c4 and on theLondon System CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features

everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two move orders by White. They can choose the direction on move two or on move three, including 2.Nf3 Nf6. Common examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I decided to cover all these cases the same way, having the lines split already on the second move. So in this chapter, I use the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 to cover all early e3 systems. 2..xc3 White develops the knight in front of their c-pawn, which is a strategically risky decision in 1.d4 d5 structures. Attacking the centre with c2-c4 and then using the knight afterward is the play according to classical principles. The main line of the QGD CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 shows exactly this school of thought. 2.Nc3 ignores these principles but instead focuses on a fast queenside development. Our approach against 2.Nc3 should be focused on playing a quick c7-c5 break ourselves, generating play on the queenside and, in particular, on the c-file. After our natural reply 2...Nf6, we have an essential split. 2....xf6 White has the choice between some ideas now. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.Bf4 The Jobava Variation, probably White's best line. I suggest 3...c5 , according to the general outline of playing the c-pawn quickly. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.Bg5 The Veresov Attack, which we answer with 3...h6 4.Bh4 c5 , again using the c-pawn to attack White's centre. CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 , which is toothless after 3...c5 , our usual approach. There is no need to memorize lines. Natural central play will be fine CCStartBracketCC...Nc6, ...Bg4,...e6, for exampleCCEndBracketCC. DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.e4? The Blackmar Diemer. We play 3...dxe4 and transpose to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.e4? dxe4 3.Nc3 Nf6 . 3.Kg5 The Veresov Attack. White develops their bishop to an active square and often has Bxf6 in mind, followed by a central pawn push e2-e4. 3...h6 I suggest this move, encouraging the capture on f6. It was already recommended in the Lifetime Repertoire on the Nimzo-Ragozin, which Daniel Barrish and yours truly wrote. I see no reason to change the line, as Black is doing fine, and it's easy to learn. White now quite often captures on f6; it's about a

50-50 split between 4.Bh4 and 4.Bxf6. We'll have a look at both moves. 4.Kxf6 The capture on f6 is a common procedure in the Veresov and one reason why it is not regarded as fully sound. Blocking the c-pawn with Nc3 and giving up the bishop pair for nothing special is frowned upon. 4...exf6 The correct way to recapture. We keep our pawn structure sound with two pawn islands. Taking away from the centre also helps with development, as both bishops are now ready for action. It is important to keep in mind that after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1ppp1/5n1p/3p2B1/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bh4 c5 5.Bxf6 it is correct to play 5...gxf6! , because having played ...c5 changes the pawn structure fundamentally. The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2ppp1/5B1p/2pp4/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R2QKBNR b KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5...exf6?! would be dubious, as it isolates the d-pawn. 5.e3 White's main move. We'd be happy to see 5.e4 , as 5...dxe4 6.Nxe4 f5 looks a lot like the Classical Caro Kann with ...exf6, but we have been granted the bishop pair on top. 5...c6 In the mentioned LTR course, we suggested 5...Bb4 , which is also completely fine. I suggest 5...c6 now, as I like the following setup: Black could play ...f5 and then transfer the b8-knight via d7-f6-e4 at the end. 6.Kd3 f5 7.O&f3 g6 8..xge2 .xd7 The knight tour to e4 is very annoying for White. Black is already for choice, as White has no relevant pawn break CCStartBracketCCmisplaced knight on c3!CCEndBracketCC, and we have more space.

☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.Nc3 #2

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.c4 and on theLondon System CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two move orders by White. They can choose the direction on move two or on move three, including 2.Nf3 Nf6. Common examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I decided to cover all these cases the same way, having the lines split already on the second move. So in this chapter, I use the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 to cover all early e3

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7.exd4 .xc6 Black has the better position already. Our central control is fine, and we have the bishop pair. It is even possible to consider playing for a huge centre with ... e7-e5, after due preparation. In some cases, even an immediate central strike is on. Stockfish points out the remarkable line 8.Qh5 e5! 9.dxe5 Rg8! 10.exf6 Rg5 11. Qh4 d4 12.O-O-O Qb6 , with a huge attack for Black!

☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.Nc3 #3

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.c4 and on theLondon System CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two move orders by White. They can choose the direction on move two or on move three, including 2.Nf3 Nf6. Common examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I decided to cover all these cases the same way, having the lines split already on the second move. So in this chapter, I use the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 to cover all early e3 systems. 2..xc3 White develops the knight in front of their c-pawn, which is a strategically risky decision in 1.d4 d5 structures. Attacking the centre with c2-c4 and then using the knight afterward is the play according to classical principles. The main line of the QGD CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 shows exactly this school of thought. 2.Nc3 ignores these principles but instead focuses on a fast queenside development. Our approach against 2.Nc3 should be focused on playing a quick c7-c5 break ourselves, generating play on the queenside and, in particular, on the c-file. After our natural reply 2...Nf6, we have an essential split. 2....xf6 White has the choice between some ideas now. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.Bf4 The Jobava Variation, probably White's best line. I suggest 3...c5 , according to the general outline of playing the c-pawn quickly. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.Bg5 The Veresov Attack,

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☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.Nc3 #4

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Bb4+ 15.Kf2 Bc3 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCN1bk1b1r/pp3ppp/2n2n2/3pB3/1q6/4P3/P1pQ1PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 1 12CCEndFENCC 12.Bc3 Qb1+ 13.Qc1 Bf5 14.Nf3 Ba3 I am perfectly aware that these lines are not 'Simple', but these complications are winning for Black, and we have all the fun, being the attacker!

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■ 2.Nc3 #5

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.c4 and on theLondon System CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two move orders by White. They can choose the direction on move two or on move three, including 2.Nf3 Nf6. Common examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I decided to cover all these cases the same way, having the lines split already on the second move. So in this chapter, I use the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 to cover all early e3 systems. 2..xc3 White develops the knight in front of their c-pawn, which is a strategically risky decision in 1.d4 d5 structures. Attacking the centre with c2-c4 and then using the knight afterward is the play according to classical principles. The main line of the QGD CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 shows exactly this school of thought. 2.Nc3 ignores these principles but instead focuses on a fast queenside development. Our approach against 2.Nc3 should be focused on playing a quick c7-c5 break ourselves, generating play on the queenside and, in particular, on the c-file. After our natural reply 2...Nf6, we have an essential split. 2....xf6 White has the choice between some ideas now. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.Bf4 The Jobava Variation, probably White's best line. I suggest 3...c5 , according to the general outline of playing the c-pawn quickly. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.Bg5 The Veresov Attack,

which we answer with 3...h6 4.Bh4 c5 , again using the c-pawn to attack White's centre. CCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 , which is toothless after 3...c5 , our usual approach. There is no need to memorize lines. Natural central play will be fine CCStartBracketCC...Nc6, ...Bg4,...e6, for exampleCCEndBracketCC. DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3.e4? The Blackmar Diemer. We play 3...dxe4 and transpose to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.e4? dxe4 3.Nc3 Nf6 . 3.Kf4 c5 As usual, we attack the d4-pawn with ...c5. 4.e3 We don't need to worry about 4.Nb5?? due to 4...Qa5+ . 4...cxd4 We immediately clarify the pawn structure and open the c-file, leading to a pawn structure that we know well - it's a Caro-Kann Exchange with an oddly placed c3-knight. White now needs to recapture with the pawn, leading to the mentioned structure. Note that you can't wait with 4...Nc6? , as 5.Nb5 is killing. 5.exd4 Kg4 A strong move, in my opinion. Black more frequently plays 5...a6 , but I don't like the arising positions that much. In some cases, the move ...a6 feels like a loss of time. 6.f3 White has tried this move most of the time. Black has an easy game after 6.Be2 Bxe2 7.Qxe2 a6 or CCStartFENCCrn1qkb1r/pp2pppp/5n2/3p4/3P1Bb1/2N5/PPP2PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nf3 Nc6 , when we reach favourable versions of a Caro-Kann Exchange, due to the misplaced c3-knight. In the first case, White even lacks their best piece, the d3-bishop. Finally, White may try 6.Qd2 , but after 6...Nc6 , they will probably play 7.f3 anyway, which transposes to 6.f3 after all. 6...Kd7 It's crucial to avoid 6...Bh5? 7.g4 or 6...Bf5? 7.g4 . We don't mind retreating the bishop and placing it behind our pawn chain, as we'll have enough counterplay on the queenside. 7.O&d2 Our setup will be ...Nc6, ...e6, ...a6 and ...b5, for queenside counterplay. White has to think twice about castling on this side of the board. Alternatively, they could try 7.Nb5 , when the simple 7...Bxb5 8.Bxb5+ Nc6 is comfortable for Black. Note that provoking f3 was a huge gain for us, as White has a hard time ever using the e5-square with the knight. 7....xc6 8.g4 e6 9.0-0-0 a6 That's our setup. We'll have good attacking chances, based on the open c-file and ideas like ...Bb4, but also ...b5. Our king is quite safe in the centre for the moment, but we have no weaknesses on the kingside and will often be able to castle kingside. We already have an open file against the white king - our opponent still needs to find a way to open the game similarly.

☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.Bg5

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.c4 and on theLondon

System CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two move orders by White. They can choose the direction on move two or on move three, including 2.Nf3 Nf6. Common examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I decided to cover all these cases the same way, having the lines split already on the second move. So in this chapter, I use the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 to cover all early e3 systems. 2.Kg5 White plays in the spirit of the Trompowsky CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 CCEndBracketCC, but without a knight on f6 that could be captured or pinned. Black has a good choice against this sideline. I suggest playing in the same style as against the Veresov CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bg5 CCEndBracketCC, by playing ...h6 and a quick ...c5 to attack White's d-pawn. 2...h6 Here 2...f6!? is a funky alternative that is worth mentioning. I didn't like it so much in the 'Keep It Simple' context, but it seems like a fine line for Black, too. 3.Kh4 c5 4.dxc5 White's usual choice at this point. Alternatives like 4.e3 cxd4 5.exd4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCC or 5...Qb6 CCEndBracketCC or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2ppp1/7p/2pp4/3P3B/8/PPP1PPPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nc3 Nf6 , transposing to the Veresov, are easy to handle. After the capture on c5, we need to know a concrete line. 4...g5 That's the idea to remember. We gain lots of time with ...g5 and ...Bg7 next. 5.Kg3 Kg7 Gaining time on the b-pawn. 6.c3 .xa6 This is the crucial sequence to remember after 4.dxc5. We are now set to regain the c-pawn and enjoy an active position. White can try to hang on to the pawn with 7.Qa4+ Bd7 8.Qa3 , but 8...Qc8 9.b4 Nc7 prepares ...a5 to attack White's queenside construction. We have annoying pressure on the white pawns and a good game.

☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.e3 #1

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.c4 and on theLondon

System CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two move orders by White. They can choose the direction on move two or on move three, including 2.Nf3 Nf6. Common examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I decided to cover all these cases the same way, having the lines split already on the second move. So in this chapter, I use the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 to cover all early e3 systems. 2.e3 Playing an early e2-e3, with the bishop still at home on c1, is a rather modest opening concept by White. However, there are some lines worth studying, particularly after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 , when I suggest the ambitious move 3...c5 . 2....xf6 After our natural move 2...Nf6 White's most important move is 3.Nf3 , which leads to a position more commonly reached via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I suggest answering with the active move 3...c5 . There are two other options for White. They can also play CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/4P3/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 1 3CCEndFENCC 3.c4 , after which 3...e6 transposes to a sideline of the QGD. The other rather dubious idea is to play for a Stonewall setup with an early f4. 3.Kd3 This is White's best move order if they are after a Stonewall setup with f4. They could also play 3.f4?! right away, but this move order allows 3...Bf5 when Black reaches the best possible formation against the Stonewall. What's the best formation? White has weakened the e4-square. Placing a knight on f6 and a bishop on f5 makes a lot of sense. This is best complemented by pawns on d5/c5 and knights on f6 and c6, a very natural setup. At least, 3.Bd3 prevents the early bishop placement on f5, making it more challenging to reach the best formation. I'll discuss the merits of it at the end of this variation. 3...c5 Attacking d4 with the c-pawn is our reply to 3.Nf3, as well. Here it is even more effective, as capturing c5 makes a lot less sense for White than CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 c5 4.dxc5 . In these lines, Bb5+ is a crucial idea. 4.c3 .xc6 5.f4 White sets up the Stonewall. We are happy to see this formation, as Black is instantly better. White creates multiple weaknesses, in particular the square e4. Instead of 5.f4, White could still play the less weakening 5.Nf3 , when 5...Bg4 is a good reply. The pin is annoying, and White might think of playing Be2 at some point to break it. Black is already more

comfortable here, too. 5...Kg4 It's essential to develop the bishop actively and avoid the unnecessarily modest 5...e6 . 6..xf3 e6 7.0-0 Kd6 Now it's easy for White to make things even worse. 8.O&e1 This move looks reasonable, unpinning and preparing Qg3/Qh4. It's better than 8.Nbd2 , when 8...cxd4 opens the c-file for us, as White can't recapture with the e-pawn. If White plays 8.h3 , our reply is 8...Bf5! . We'll play the move even unprovoked after 8.Qe1, so it's an easy decision after 8. h3. 8...Kf5 And we have reached the best formation against the Stonewall. We trade White's best piece, the d3-bishop and further weaken the light squares in White's camp. 9.Kxf5 White may also allow the trade on d3. After 9.Qe2 Bxd3 10.Qxd3 O-O Black has a comfortable advantage. In the long run, we have good chances on the queenside, using a pawn storm CCStartBracketCCplaying ...c4, ...b5,...b4 CCEndBracketCC, while maintaining a grip on the e4-square. It's often a good idea to connect the c6-knight to the e4-square, too. A typical regrouping to accomplish that is playing ...Nc6-e7-f5, ...Bd6-e7 and finally ...Nf5-d6. It looks prolonged, but it's a closed position. The quality of the manoeuvring matters much more than the speed. White's bishop on c1 is a problem piece, of course. It is severely limited by its own pawns and has a tough time improving. Our dream scenario is: the bad c1-bishop stays on the board while we keep a knight on e4. I have won countless games by reaching this exact position type! 9...exf5 We have a doubled f-pawn, but there is no need to worry at all. A doubled pawn always means you get open files. Here we enjoy a half-open e-file against White's e3-pawn, which is good news. I already described Black's general strategy in the notes to 9.Bxf5, and the same points apply here. I want to jump back to the situation after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 when White could have played 3.f4 , an even earlier Stonewall setup. In this case, 3...Bf5! is great, as we'd get our ideal formation even quicker, for example, after 4.Bd3 e6! 5.Nf3 c5 6.O-O Nc6 . Note that CCStartFENCCrn1qkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p1b2/3P1P2/3BP3/PPP3PP/RNBQK1NR b KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4...Bxd3?! can be answered with 5.cxd3 , when White plugs the hole on e4. I only want to trade on d3 when White needs to recapture with a piece.

☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.e3 #2

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.c4 and on theLondon System CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two move orders by White. They can choose the direction on move two or on move three,

including 2.Nf3 Nf6. Common examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I decided to cover all these cases the same way, having the lines split already on the second move. So in this chapter, I use the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 to cover all early e3 systems. 2.e3 Playing an early e2-e3, with the bishop still at home on c1, is a rather modest opening concept by White. However, there are some lines worth studying, particularly after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 , when I suggest the ambitious move 3...c5 . 2....xf6 After our natural move 2...Nf6 White's most important move is 3.Nf3 , which leads to a position more commonly reached via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I suggest answering with the active move 3...c5 . There are two other options for White. They can also play CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/4P3/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 1 3CCEndFENCC 3.c4 , after which 3...e6 transposes to a sideline of the QGD. The other rather dubious idea is to play for a Stonewall setup with an early f4. 3..xf3 What's the point of White's modest setup? There are primarily two ideas that White is going for 1CCEndBracketCC A setup based on playing a quick e3-e4. They play Bd3, Nbd2, often c3, and finally e3-e4. This formation is called the 'Colle System'. It was employed frequently by Belgian master player Edgard Colle in the early 20th century and since bears his name. 2CCEndBracketCC They plan to develop the c1-bishop to b2. The target formation includes bishops on d3 and b2, knights usually on f3 and d2. This setup is named after Johannes Zukertort, who was Steinitz's rival in the first official World Championship match in 1886. Black has a wide choice now, which is not a surprise. White's play is relatively slow, so we have some leeway. I suggest being ambitious now. 3...c5 The move 3...c5 is Black's most ambitious choice here. We are essentially playing White in the Queen's Gambit, a tempo down - compared to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 , which we play with Black. The huge upside of 3...c5 is that both the Colle and Zukertort formations are completely toothless now and often lead to a Black advantage in practice. This will frequently happen in your games if you compete in club games or play online speed chess. At this level, players often study one setup and don't appreciate the difference between 3...c5 and 3...e6, for instance. If a master-level player is on the white side, they will often know that this 'auto-pilot' play doesn't suffice and opt for 4. dxc5!?, which is the mainline I'll discuss. Black is fine after this move, but it's good to know some details. Before we continue, a word about 4.c4 .

It is a good move for White but has no independent value for us, as 4...cxd4 5.exd4 Nc6 takes us to a line of the Caro-Kann Panov, which is part of our repertoire - quite an unexpected transposition! 4.c3 White usually chooses this move if they are after a Colle setup. 4....xbd7 It's important to remember this move. I'd like to avoid ...e6 setups and play for more. However, after 4...Bf5?! or 4...Bg4?! White can advantageously take on c5. We play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 with Black and an extra tempo is very relevant. Therefore I suggest 4...Nbd7, which covers the c5-pawn. 5.Kd3 g6 That's the plan. We fianchetto the bishop and prepare to castle. 6.0-0 Kg7 7..xbd2 0-0 This is the formation we are aiming for. I'd like to show you a line of the Catalan Opening that is well known to be comfortable for White: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 c6 5.Bg2 Nbd7 6.O-O Bd6 7.Nbd2 O-O . We have reached this position with colours reversed and, of course, a tempo down. This tempo is not that relevant, as the position is rather closed. We can continue with ...b6 and ...Bb7 and play for the central ...e5-break. After just seven moves, Black has a space advantage and the easier game.

☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.e3 #3

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.c4 and on theLondon System CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two move orders by White. They can choose the direction on move two or on move three, including 2.Nf3 Nf6. Common examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I decided to cover all these cases the same way, having the lines split already on the second move. So in this chapter, I use the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 to cover all early e3 systems. 2.e3 Playing an early e2-e3, with the bishop still at home on c1, is a rather modest opening concept by White. However, there are some lines worth studying,

particularly after [StartFEN]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[EndFEN] 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 , when I suggest the ambitious move 3...c5 . 2....xf6 After our natural move 2...Nf6 White's most important move is 3.Nf3 , which leads to a position more commonly reached via [StartFEN]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[EndFEN] 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I suggest answering with the active move 3...c5 . There are two other options for White. They can also play [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/4P3/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 1 3[EndFEN] 3.c4 , after which 3...e6 transposes to a sideline of the QGD. The other rather dubious idea is to play for a Stonewall setup with an early f4. 3..xf3 What's the point of White's modest setup? There are primarily two ideas that White is going for [EndBracket] A setup based on playing a quick e3-e4. They play Bd3, Nbd2, often c3, and finally e3-e4. This formation is called the 'Colle System'. It was employed frequently by Belgian master player Edgard Colle in the early 20th century and since bears his name. 2[EndBracket] They plan to develop the c1-bishop to b2. The target formation includes bishops on d3 and b2, knights usually on f3 and d2. This setup is named after Johannes Zukertort, who was Steinitz's rival in the first official World Championship match in 1886. Black has a wide choice now, which is not a surprise. White's play is relatively slow, so we have some leeway. I suggest being ambitious now. 3...c5 The move 3...c5 is Black's most ambitious choice here. We are essentially playing White in the Queen's Gambit, a tempo down - compared to [StartFEN]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[EndFEN] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 , which we play with Black. The huge upside of 3...c5 is that both the Colle and Zukertort formations are completely toothless now and often lead to a Black advantage in practice. This will frequently happen in your games if you compete in club games or play online speed chess. At this level, players often study one setup and don't appreciate the difference between 3...c5 and 3...e6, for instance. If a master-level player is on the white side, they will often know that this 'auto-pilot' play doesn't suffice and opt for 4. dxc5!?, which is the mainline I'll discuss. Black is fine after this move, but it's good to know some details. Before we continue, a word about 4.c4 . It is a good move for White but has no independent value for us, as 4...cxd4 5.exd4 g6 takes us to a harmless line of the Caro-Kann Panov, which is part of our repertoire - quite an unexpected transposition! 4.b3 White has the Zukertort setup in mind, but we are well equipped to meet this move. 4...cxd4 5.exd4 .xc6 Black is in good shape after only five moves. A good way to think about this position: consider the move sequence [StartFEN]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[EndFEN] 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.b3 Nf6 . The move 5.b3 looks ridiculous... why would White want to place the bishop on b2, looking at their pawn on d4? Well, we have exactly this position on the board right now! White will suffer from queenside weaknesses for the whole game, as we easily pressure on the c-file. Moves like ...Bf5 and ...Rc8 come to mind.

☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.e3 #4

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.c4 and on theLondon System CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two move orders by White. They can choose the direction on move two or on move three, including 2.Nf3 Nf6. Common examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I decided to cover all these cases the same way, having the lines split already on the second move. So in this chapter, I use the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 to cover all early e3 systems. 2.e3 Playing an early e2-e3, with the bishop still at home on c1, is a rather modest opening concept by White. However, there are some lines worth studying, particularly after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 , when I suggest the ambitious move 3...c5 . 2....xf6 After our natural move 2...Nf6 White's most important move is 3.Nf3 , which leads to a position more commonly reached via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I suggest answering with the active move 3...c5 . There are two other options for White. They can also play CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/4P3/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 1 3CCEndFENCC 3.c4 , after which 3...e6 transposes to a sideline of the QGD. The other rather dubious idea is to play for a Stonewall setup with an early f4. 3..xf3 What's the point of White's modest setup? There are primarily two ideas that White is going for 1CCEndBracketCC A setup based on playing a quick e3-e4. They play Bd3, Nbd2, often c3, and finally e3-e4. This formation is called the 'Colle System'. It was employed frequently by Belgian master player Edgard Colle in the early 20th century and since bears his name. 2CCEndBracketCC They plan to develop the c1-bishop to b2. The target formation includes bishops on d3 and b2, knights usually on f3 and d2. This setup is named after Johannes Zukertort, who was Steinitz's rival in the first official World Championship match in 1886. Black has a wide choice now, which is not a surprise. White's play is relatively slow, so we have some leeway. I suggest being ambitious now. 3...c5 The move 3...c5 is Black's most

ambitious choice here. We are essentially playing White in the Queen's Gambit, a tempo down - compared to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 , which we play with Black. The huge upside of 3...c5 is that both the Colle and Zukertort formations are completely toothless now and often lead to a Black advantage in practice. This will frequently happen in your games if you compete in club games or play online speed chess. At this level, players often study one setup and don't appreciate the difference between 3...c5 and 3...e6, for instance. If a master-level player is on the white side, they will often know that this 'auto-pilot' play doesn't suffice and opt for 4. dxc5!?, which is the mainline I'll discuss. Black is fine after this move, but it's good to know some details. Before we continue, a word about 4.c4 . It is a good move for White but has no independent value for us, as 4...cxd4 5.exd4 g6 takes us to a harmless line of the Caro-Kann Panov, which is part of our repertoire - quite an unexpected transposition! 4.dxc5 The capture is the move that we need to study a bit, as White grabs a pawn and can hold on to it for a moment. White is playing a Queen's Gambit Accepted CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.Nf3 Nf6 CCEndBracketCC with an extra tempo, but it is not enough to fight for an advantage. 4...e6 5.b4 White's ambitious move. If we just manage to play ...Bxc5, no particular knowledge is needed. Black will be fine with normal development. 5...a5 Black has various ways to attack White's chain. I like this sequence best. 6.c3 axb4 Playing 6...b6 here is no mistake, either. Our choice is a bit more forcing. 7.cxb4 b6 Now it's clear that White can't hold on to pawn anymore. 8.Kb5+ This looks best. White has also tried 8.a4 bxc5 9.b5 , with a similar pawn structure as after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/5ppp/1p2pn2/2Pp4/1P6/4PN2/P4PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 8CCEndFENCC 8.Bb5+ Bd7 9.Bxd7+ Nbxd7 10.a4 bxc5 11.b5 , but with bishops still on the board. This changes the situation considerably. In case of 8.a4 bxc5 9.b5 , the move 9...c4 looks good. We gain control of some important squares, like d3 and b3, but also free c5 for our pieces. It's a tense position, but Black has good chances. White's outside passers don't go anywhere shortly. 8...Kd7 9.Kxd7+ .xbxd7 10.a4 bxc5 11.b5 Reaching this peculiar pawn structure is the whole point of the 4.dxc5 operation. Note that this sequence is long CCStartBracketCCwe are on move 11 alreadyCCEndBracketCC, but quite forced. Now I will suggest a bit of a shocking move, but it is strong! 11...g5 This move was first played by Wesley So in a crucial game against Le Quang Liem in the Chessable Masters 2021, an online tournament I was doing the live broadcast for. I was deeply impressed by the idea and am now happy to recommend it in this course. What's the idea of 11...g5? White can't take the pawn, 12.Nxg5 Rg8 easily regains the pawn when Black is more active due to the rook invading g2. The best seems to be 12.Bb2 Bd6 13.Qe2 , when 13...g4 reveals the idea of ...g5: pushing the knight back to a passive position. After 14.Nfd2 Qc7 Wesley had an attractive position and went on to win a fine game.

☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.Nf3 #1

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.c4 and on theLondon System CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two move orders by White. They can choose the direction on move two or on move three, including 2.Nf3 Nf6. Common examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I decided to cover all these cases the same way, having the lines split already on the second move. So in this chapter, I use the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 to cover all early e3 systems. 2..xf3 White's most popular move if they want to avoid the QGD. The knight move is flexible. White may still play for a Queen's Gambit or play various sidelines on the next move. 2....xf6 The natural reply. We develop our knight to the best square and are ready to transpose to the Queen's Gambit Declined. This transposition would happen after 3.c4 e6 , which is the most common continuation. You'll also meet 3.Bf4 often, the London System. I decided to cover the London in a dedicatedChapter, as it is so frequently played. White has a ton of alternatives, though. As already discussed in the notes to the first move, I decided to distinguish between White's setups already on move two. This means that CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 is covered via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 , when 2...Nf6 3.Nf3 transposes. Here's a list of these transpositions: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 is covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 is covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nc3?! is very rare and briefly covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/

8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nc3 This leaves two non-transpositional moves to consider: 3.Bg5 and 3.c3 . The move 3.c3 might still transpose elsewhere, but 4.Bg5 has some independent value. 3.c3 This move doesn't look particularly threatening, but it has some points against Black's more ambitious replies. If Black plays 3...c5 , White has 4.dxc5 , which leads to interesting complications. Black is not getting back the pawn easily in this line. After 3...Bf5 , White intends 4.Qb3 , which turns out to be slightly annoying for Black, too. I suggest a simpler solution that only has a minor move order drawback. 3...e6 We prepare ...c5 without having to worry about a possible dxc5 pawn grab. Now White's best move is probably 4.Bf4 , transposing to a London. The London is covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 in thededicated chapter. What's left? ACCEndBracketCC White can play CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P4/2P2N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bg5 , pinning our knight. BCCEndBracketCC White rarely plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P4/2P2N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.e3 , which leads to a Colle formation. Here we get to the minor move order issue that I mentioned in the notes to 3.c3. Our main weapon against the Colle is not based on an early ...e6, as we play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 c5 , when 4.c3 is answered with 4...Nbd7 and ...g6 next. Here, we are already committed to the move ...e6, which requires a different antidote. 4.e3 A rare move order by White, but they manage to transpose into a Colle setup when we are already forced to play with ...e6. It's not a major problem because White also has made a concession: the early move c3!. Now, we need to compare to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 . We play 3...c5 , avoiding 3...e6 in favour of a more ambitious approach. Still, 3...e6 is not a bad move, of course. After 3...e6 White would not play 4.c3?! , but the more flexible move 4.Bd3 . In the Colle, White usually plays the moves Bd3, Nbd2 and aims for e3-e4, opening the centre. The move c3 is usually only played in response to Black playing ...c5, not that early on. This means that in the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c3 e6 4.e3 , we face a particularly harmless version of the Colle, which allows us an easy game. Let's check how to proceed. 4....xbd7 I suggest a setup with ...Nbd7, ...Bd6, ...b6 and ...Bb7, which you might already know if you have studied the QGD sidelines. Against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 we aim for a similar setup. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c3 e6 4.e3 , I suggest starting with 4...Nbd7 , because 4...b6 5.Bb5+ is a bit irritating. 5.Kd3 b6 We'll take control of the e4-square now. 6.0-0 Kb7 7..xbd2 Kd6 And we have completed our setup. Our pieces are harmonious, and we have a range

of ideas. We can attack the centre with both ...c5 and ...e5, but ...Ne4 is an idea, too. A final point to make: If our setup is comfortable, why not play it all the time against the Colle, even in the CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 move order? Well, after 3...e6 White won't play an early c3, but rather 4.Bd3 . Now you can go for something like 4...Nbd7 , but White has far more options now; for example, they could play 5.b3 , copying our setup! Or they could play an early c2-c4, changing the pawn structure completely. These options are off the table with the very early c3, which makes our life a lot easier.

☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.Nf3 #2

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.c4 and on theLondon System CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two move orders by White. They can choose the direction on move two or on move three, including 2.Nf3 Nf6. Common examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I decided to cover all these cases the same way, having the lines split already on the second move. So in this chapter, I use the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 to cover all early e3 systems. 2..xf3 White's most popular move if they want to avoid the QGD. The knight move is flexible. White may still play for a Queen's Gambit or play various sidelines on the next move. 2....xf6 The natural reply. We develop our knight to the best square and are ready to transpose to the Queen's Gambit Declined. This transposition would happen after 3.c4 e6 , which is the most common continuation. You'll also meet 3.Bf4 often, the London System. I decided to cover the London in a dedicatedChapter, as it is so frequently played. White has a ton of alternatives, though. As already discussed in the notes to the first move, I decided to distinguish between White's setups already on move two. This means that CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 is covered via the move order

CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 , when 2...Nf6 3.Nf3 transposes. Here's a list of these transpositions: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 is covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 is covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nc3?! is very rare and briefly covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nc3 This leaves two non-transpositional moves to consider: 3.Bg5 and 3.c3 . The move 3.c3 might still transpose elsewhere, but 4.Bg5 has some independent value. 3.c3 This move doesn't look particularly threatening, but it has some points against Black's more ambitious replies. If Black plays 3...c5 , White has 4.dxc5 , which leads to interesting complications. Black is not getting back the pawn easily in this line. After 3...Bf5 , White intends 4.Qb3 , which turns out to be slightly annoying for Black, too. I suggest a simpler solution that only has a minor move order drawback. 3...e6 We prepare ...c5 without having to worry about a possible dxc5 pawn grab. Now White's best move is probably 4.Bf4 , transposing to a London. The London is covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 in thededicated chapter. What's left? ACCEndBracketCC White can play CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P4/2P2N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bg5 , pinning our knight. BCCEndBracketCC White rarely plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P4/2P2N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.e3 , which leads to a Colle formation. Here we get to the minor move order issue that I mentioned in the notes to 3.c3. Our main weapon against the Colle is not based on an early ...e6, as we play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 c5 , when 4.c3 is answered with 4...Nbd7 and ...g6 next. Here, we are already committed to the move ...e6, which requires a different antidote. 4.Kg5 White pins our knight. There are other cases of Bg5 in the current chapter, but this is the only one that involves a pin. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bg5 we have 3...Ne4 , while after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bg5 I suggest an entirely different approach, as I think that Black has better options than 2...Nf6. 4...h6 Let's address the pin right away. 5.Kh4 White almost always plays this natural move, keeping the bishop. It is possible to play 5.Bxf6 Qxf6 6.Nbd2 , but after 6...c5 7. e3 Nc6 Black enjoys the bishop pair and has a sound position. 5...g5 Ambitious and strong! 6.Kg3 .xe4 The important follow-up to 5...g5!. Our main idea is not to take

the bishop, but rather go for ...h5! next and try to win it! The threat of ...h5! is so strong that White now only has one‡‡StartBracket‡‡!‡‡EndBracket‡‡ good move to avoid severe trouble. 7..xbd2 This is wrong, but let's have a look at why it is so bad. The move White has to play is the less than obvious 7.Nfd2 , which keeps them in the game after 7...Nxg3 8.hxg3 c5 . Black is already slightly better due to the bishop pair. Our bishop will find a good spot on g7, using the extended fianchetto formation on the kingside. 7...h5 The threat is ...h4, trapping the bishop. 8.O&c2 Moving the h-pawn is disastrous after 8.h3 Nxg3 9.fxg3 Bd6 . White's structure and king position are just too much to bear. The move 8.Qc2 poses a ‡‡StartBracket‡‡minor‡‡EndBracket‡‡ challenge, at least. 8...h4 9.Ke5 f6 10..xxe4 dxe4 11.O&xe4 What about Qg6+ now? 11...Qh6 This is the point you need to know. The bishop is still trapped and can be captured on the next move with a winning position for Black.

☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.Nf3 #3

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit ‡‡StartFEN‡‡rnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2‡‡EndFEN‡‡ 2.c4 and on theLondon System ‡‡StartFEN‡‡rnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2‡‡EndFEN‡‡ 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two move orders by White. They can choose the direction on move two or on move three, including 2.Nf3 Nf6. Common examples are ‡‡StartFEN‡‡rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1‡‡EndFEN‡‡ 1.d4 d5 2.g3 and ‡‡StartFEN‡‡rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1‡‡EndFEN‡‡ 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , or ‡‡StartFEN‡‡rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1‡‡EndFEN‡‡ 1.d4 d5 2.e3 and ‡‡StartFEN‡‡rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1‡‡EndFEN‡‡ 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I decided to cover all these cases the same way, having the lines split already on the second move. So in this chapter, I use the move order ‡‡StartFEN‡‡rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1‡‡EndFEN‡‡ 1.d4 d5 2.e3 to cover all early e3 systems. 2..xf3 White's most popular move if they want to avoid the QGD. The knight move is flexible. White may still play for a Queen's Gambit or play various sidelines on the next move. 2....xf6 The natural reply. We develop our knight to the best square and are ready to transpose to the Queen's Gambit Declined. This transposition would happen after 3.c4 e6 , which is the most common continuation. You'll also meet 3.Bf4 often, the London System. I decided to cover the London in a dedicatedChapter, as it is so frequently played. White has a ton of alternatives,

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☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.Nf3 #4

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/ PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.c4 and on theLondon System CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two

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b2, using our queen. A similar scenario would arise after 5.c3 , when 5...cxd4 6. cxd4 Nc6 , followed by ...Qb6 or ...Qa5 gives Black great play. White's bishop is misplaced on h4, being completely disconnected from the queenside action. 5...O&b6 There is nothing wrong with a simpler solution like 5...cxd4 6.exd4 Nc6 when we have a good version of a Caro-Kann Exchange. The move 5...Qb6 is stronger, though. It sets a very dangerous trap that many strong players have already fallen for. 6.O&c1 White has to play 6.Nc3 to limit the damage. Black is fine after 6... Nxc3 or 6...Qa5 , but this is golden for White compared to the coming disaster! 6...cxd4 7.exd4 g5 Not an easy move to spot! 8.Kxg5 The alternatives 8.Nxg5 Qh6! , and CCStartFENCCrnb1kb1r/pp2pp1p/1q6/3p2p1/3Pn2B/5N2/PPP2PPP/ RNQ1KB1R w KQkq - 0 8CCEndFENCC 8.Bg3 Bh6 or CCStartFENCCrnb1kb1r/ pp2pp1p/1q6/3p2p1/3Pn2B/5N2/PPP2PPP/RNQ1KB1R w KQkq - 0 8CCEndFENCC 8.Bg3 g4 9.Ne5 Bh6 are even more depressing for White. Black is winning straight away in these lines. 8....xxg5 9..xxg5 Kh6 10.f4 No choice, we were threatening ...f6, winning the knight. 10...O&xd4 Black has a huge advantage. White's dark squares are weak, and their pieces are badly coordinated. A fantastic opening result for Black.

☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.Nf3 #5

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square and are ready to transpose to the Queen's Gambit Declined. This transposition would happen after 3.c4 e6 , which is the most common continuation. You'll also meet 3.Bf4 often, the London System. I decided to cover the London in a dedicatedChapter, as it is so frequently played. White has a ton of alternatives, though. As already discussed in the notes to the first move, I decided to distinguish between White's setups already on move two. This means that CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 is covered via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 , when 2...Nf6 3.Nf3 transposes. Here's a list of these transpositions: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 is covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 is covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/ 8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3. Nc3?! is very rare and briefly covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/ 8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nc3 This leaves two non-transpositional moves to consider: 3.Bg5 and 3.c3 . The move 3.c3 might still transpose elsewhere, but 4.Bg5 has some independent value. 3.Kg5 .xe4 This active move is the reason why 3.Bg5 is a rather unpopular option for White. Our knight occupies the central spot and gains a tempo on the bishop. 4.Kf4 c5 5.dxc5 .xc6 It's crucial to avoid 5...Nxc5? 6.Nc3 e6 7.e4 , which is surprisingly strong for White. The better move 5...Nc6, however, gives Black the better chances! We are ready to play ...f6 and ...e5 now, taking control of the centre. 6..xbd2 Lines like 6.e3 f6! are much better for Black already. 6....xxc5 Black is already slightly better. We have an extra central pawn and both ...f6-e5 and ...g6-Bg7 are good ways to continue.

☐ 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5
■ 2.Nf3 #6

1.d4 d5 In this Chapter, we examine the sidelines after 1.d4 d5. We have dedicated Chapters on theQueen's Gambit CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/ PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.c4 and on theLondon System CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Bf4 - the chapter you are looking at now features everything you need to know about White's more offbeat tries. A word about move orders: some of the variations discussed in the current chapter can be played in two move orders by White. They can choose the direction on move two or on move three,

including 2.Nf3 Nf6. Common examples are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I decided to cover all these cases the same way, having the lines split already on the second move. So in this chapter, I use the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 to cover all early e3 systems. 2..xf3 White's most popular move if they want to avoid the QGD. The knight move is flexible. White may still play for a Queen's Gambit or play various sidelines on the next move. 2....xf6 The natural reply. We develop our knight to the best square and are ready to transpose to the Queen's Gambit Declined. This transposition would happen after 3.c4 e6 , which is the most common continuation. You'll also meet 3.Bf4 often, the London System. I decided to cover the London in a dedicatedChapter, as it is so frequently played. White has a ton of alternatives, though. As already discussed in the notes to the first move, I decided to distinguish between White's setups already on move two. This means that CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 is covered via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 , when 2...Nf6 3.Nf3 transposes. Here's a list of these transpositions: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 is covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 is covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nc3?! is very rare and briefly covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nc3 This leaves two non-transpositional moves to consider: 3.Bg5 and 3.c3 . The move 3.c3 might still transpose elsewhere, but 4.Bg5 has some independent value. 3.Kg5 .xe4 This active move is the reason why 3.Bg5 is a rather unpopular option for White. Our knight occupies the central spot and gains a tempo on the bishop. 4.Kf4 c5 5.e3 This looks best. 5.c3 cxd4 6.cxd4 Qb6 gives us some early pressure on the queenside and already the easier game. 5...O&b6 A stronger move than 5...cxd4 6.exd4 Nc6 , which leads to a refined version of the Caro-Kann Exchange structure. 6..xc3 After 6.Qc1 Nc6 7.c3 f6! , Black is in good shape, too. It's interesting to compare to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/8/3p2B1/3Pn3/5N2/PPP1PPPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 4 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bh4 c5 5.e3 Qb6 6.Qc1? , when 6...

cxd4 7.exd4 g5!! is on. Here this strike doesn't work, and Black needs to be more modest. Still, after CCStartFENCCr1b1kb1r/pp2pppp/1qn5/2pp4/3PnB2/2P1PN2/PP3PPP/RNQ1KB1R b KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7...f6! Black is doing well, as ...cxd4, followed by ...e5 is a strong idea. Our queen and knight work against f2. 6...O&a5 Playing 6...Nxc3 can't be wrong, either. Now White needs to worry about the capture on c3. Stockfish assesses 7.Bb5+ Bd7 8.Bxd7+ Nxd7 9.O-O Nxc3 10.bxc3 Rc8 as equal, but I am happy with Black's chances. We are slightly behind in development but have wrecked White's pawn structure beyond repair.

☐ 14. English Lines with g3
■ 2.Nf3 d5 3.cxd5

1.c4 e6 How to answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two basic ways to do that. In the current chapter, we will examine g3-based setups, while in the second chapter on 1.c4 e6 , we focus on other setups, mostly involving an early e3 by White. Alright, how do we fight the g3-setups? White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and in some cases, it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan' by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . I think that Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: 1CCEndBracketCC White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 . In both cases, we'd answer with ...dxc4, which is our weapon against the Catalan. 2CCEndBracketCC The second scenario is quite different: White could play an early b3 to cover the c-pawn. Possible sequences are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/

8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3. b3 or 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . In all these cases, I recommend playing ...d4 in response, gaining central space. We argue that the move b3 is rather pointless when a black pawn appears on d4, as Bb2 is not attractive anymore - staring at an enemy pawn on d4 is not what the bishop wants to do. Therefore we have a fairly straightforward move order concept: Against g3-setups, we'll play 1...e6, 2...d5, 3...Nf6 and capture on c4 next, unless White plays b3 along the way, when we will advance the d-pawn immediately in response. An interesting case is the move order 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . White plays b3 even before g3 is on the board. In this case, playing 3...d4 is a good option, too. White will very likely continue with g3 soon, which is why this particular move order is also covered in the current chapter. 2..xf3 d5 After 2...d5 White can transpose out of this chapter by playing 3. d4 for a Queen's Gambit, or opt for 3.e3 , which we cover in the other dedicated chapter on 1.c4 e6. Our main topic in the current chapter is the move 3.g3 , but we'll also examine 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 and 3.b3 , as after our reply 3...d4! White will almost always play with a quick g3 after all - the immediate 4.g3 is the most popular move. 3.cxd5 White takes on d5 at the first possible opportunity, preventing any possible capture on c4. 3...exd5 4.g3 That's the way for White to play if they want to avoid a transposition to a harmless Queen's Gambit Declined Carlsbad with 4.d4 when 4...Nf6 CCStartBracketCCor 4...c6 CCEndBracketCC would take us to the chapter on theCarlsbad. 4....xf6 5.Kg2 Ke7 Giving 5...Be7 an exclam is a bit strong, but I'll do so anyway to emphasise that it helps to know this finesse. I think it's more precise to play 5...Be7 than 5...Bd6 , or 5...c6 , moves that look natural, too. The reason is one particular setup that White may have in mind. I'll show a line to demonstrate: 5...Bd6 6.O-O O-O 7.Nc3 c6 8.d3! to play e4 next. This even works after 8...Re8 9.e4! , as Black can't grab the e-pawn due to 9...dxe4 10.dxe4 Nxe4 11.Nxe4 Rxe4 12.Ng5 , when White wins. In my experience, White has a far more enjoyable game if they achieve e2-e4 in such a pawn structure. With White, I have played lines like CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 c6 3.Bg2 Nf6 4.O-O Bg4 5.c4 e6 6.cxd5 exd5 7.d3 and scored very well, using a similar plan. Now, by playing 5...Be7! we make it much more difficult for White to accomplish d3 + e4, as we will see. 6.0-0 0-0 7.d3 White has also tried 7.d4 c6 when we enter a harmless Carlsbad structure. The bishop is misplaced on g2, which looks at a pawn wall CCStartBracketCCthus ...c6 makes a lot of senseCCEndBracketCC. We check this line briefly in the dedicated chapter on theCarlsbad, where it arises from a CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 move order. 7...Qe8 A clever move. The rook is always useful on the half-open file, but we don't know how to develop the queenside best. This way, we are best prepared for White's d3 + e4 plan. 8..xc3 d4 With the bishop on e7, instead of d6, this pawn push is possible. After 9.Nb5 Black has the convenient choice between 9...c5 , 9...Nc6 and 9...Bc5 . All moves are perfectly fine and of about equal strength, which is why I stop the trainable line here.

Black is fine after 8...d4 , as we have established an early space advantage and have chances to play against the e-pawn in the long run. The move ...d4 also clears the square d5 for a piece. In particular, the knight would have an excellent post right in the centre.

☐ 14. English Lines with g3
■ 2.g3

1.c4 e6 How to answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two basic ways to do that. In the current chapter, we will examine g3-based setups, while in the second chapter on 1.c4 e6 , we focus on other setups, mostly involving an early e3 by White. Alright, how do we fight the g3-setups? White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and in some cases, it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan' by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . I think that Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: 1CCEndBracketCC White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 . In both cases, we'd answer with ...dxc4, which is our weapon against the Catalan. 2CCEndBracketCC The second scenario is quite different: White could play an early b3 to cover the c-pawn. Possible sequences are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 or 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . In all these cases, I recommend playing ...d4 in response, gaining central space. We argue that the move b3 is rather pointless when a black pawn appears on d4, as Bb2 is not attractive anymore -

staring at an enemy pawn on d4 is not what the bishop wants to do. Therefore we have a fairly straightforward move order concept: Against g3-setups, we'll play 1...e6, 2...d5, 3...Nf6 and capture on c4 next, unless White plays b3 along the way, when we will advance the d-pawn immediately in response. An interesting case is the move order 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . White plays b3 even before g3 is on the board. In this case, playing 3...d4 is a good option, too. White will very likely continue with g3 soon, which is why this particular move order is also covered in the current chapter. 2.g3 White immediately starts the kingside fianchetto. If White intends this setup, they have the option to start right away with 2.g3 , or play 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 , which is more common and often arises from the alternative move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 . The move orders 2.g3 and 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 will often lead to the same positions, but we'll briefly check if there are possible alternatives along the way. 2...d5 3.Kg2 Almost an automatic move at this point. When White goes 2.g3, playing the bishop next is very natural. There are some other transpositional possibilities: ACCEndBracketCC 3.Nf3 would transpose to the main move order of the current chapter. BCCEndBracketCC 3.d4 leads to a Catalan, covered in thededicated chapter on this opening. CCCEndBracketCC You'll also meet the harmless move 3.cxd5 , which frees our bishop immediately after 3...exd5 . In the current Chapter we examine the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 , which amounts to the same thing. Please checkthis line for more information. DCCEndBracketCC Finally, there is the even rarer move 3.b3 , which we answer with 3...d4 , gaining space. This will lead to lines that we examine via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . 3....xf6 It is important to play 3...Nf6 first and not prematurely capture on c4. The move 3...dxc4 is not a mistake in itself, but it is imprecise if you aim to play our main setup, which is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . Compare this to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 dxc4 4.Qa4+ Bd7 5.Qxc4 . Now the pawn on b7 is attacked, which makes 5...c5?? a blunder. Black has other options, but it makes no sense to learn an additional setup here. Just play 3...Nf6 first and take on the next move after 4.Nf3 is played. CCStartBlockQuoteCCThe move order rule of thumb is to capture on move four, after ...e6, ...d5, ...Nf6 have been played.CCEndBlockQuoteCC 4.b3 White covers the pawn, prompting our standard reply 4...d4 . This will ultimately transpose to a line we cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 d4 . There are more possible transpositions, as you might have already suspected. After 4.d4 , we'd get aCatalan, while 4.Nf3 dxc4 leads to the main lines of the current chapter. Finally, White can take on d5, a structure that we cover via the move order

CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 . 4...d4 This is the standard response to b3 in this complex of lines. In this case, Black has the fun alternative 4...dxc4 5.bxc4 Qd4 , going for a pawn hunt after 6.Nc3 Bc5! 7.e3 Qxc4 , with unclear consequences. I'd advise you to still play 4...d4 , as this particular move order by White is very rare. If they want to play with b3, they usually play Nf3 earlier to have the square d4 covered, like CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . Now, after 4...d4 , we'll transpose to lines that we cover precisely via this move order.

☐ 14. English Lines with g3
■ 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 4.e3

1.c4 e6 How to answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two basic ways to do that. In the current chapter, we will examine g3-based setups, while in the second chapter on 1.c4 e6 , we focus on other setups, mostly involving an early e3 by White. Alright, how do we fight the g3-setups? White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and in some cases, it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan' by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . I think that Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: 1CCEndBracketCC White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 . In both cases, we'd answer with ...dxc4, which is our weapon against the Catalan.

2CCEndBracketCC The second scenario is quite different: White could play an early b3 to cover the c-pawn. Possible sequences are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 or 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . In all these cases, I recommend playing ...d4 in response, gaining central space. We argue that the move b3 is rather pointless when a black pawn appears on d4, as Bb2 is not attractive anymore - staring at an enemy pawn on d4 is not what the bishop wants to do. Therefore we have a fairly straightforward move order concept: Against g3-setups, we'll play 1...e6, 2...d5, 3...Nf6 and capture on c4 next, unless White plays b3 along the way, when we will advance the d-pawn immediately in response. An interesting case is the move order 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . White plays b3 even before g3 is on the board. In this case, playing 3...d4 is a good option, too. White will very likely continue with g3 soon, which is why this particular move order is also covered in the current chapter. 2..xf3 d5 After 2...d5 White can transpose out of this chapter by playing 3.d4 for a Queen's Gambit, or opt for 3.e3 , which we cover in the other dedicated chapter on 1.c4 e6. Our main topic in the current chapter is the move 3.g3 , but we'll also examine 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 and 3.b3 , as after our reply 3...d4! White will almost always play with a quick g3 after all - the immediate 4.g3 is the most popular move. 3.b3 White covers the c-pawn and prepares the fianchetto of the c1-bishop. Against this move, I recommend advancing the d-pawn and gaining central space. 3...d4 I like this pawn advance for several reasons: 1CCEndBracketCC In general, gaining central space is desirable. 2CCEndBracketCC It is easier to learn than the alternatives. We instantly clarify the pawn structure in the centre and have a fairly clear plan afterwards. 3CCEndBracketCC There is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 d4 , which is not part of our repertoire. It is not bad at all, but fairly complicated for Black after 3.b4 . Here, the moves ...e6 and b3 are added, which prevents this option for White. In general, the move b2-b3 turns out to be rather pointless after the advance. 4CCEndBracketCC A practical point: if you play online games and/or face lower-rated opposition, a common reply will be 4.Bb2?! , which is just a conceptual mistake and immediately gives Black an advantage. The bishop is misplaced on b2, only staring at a well-protected pawn. Before we examine some moves, a word about the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 d4! . This is a very similar case, but not the same as we are committed to ...Nf6 already. Black has a good game in these lines, too. Now, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 , we need to examine 4.g3 , 4.e3 and the already mentioned ill-advised 4.Bb2 . 4.e3 This direct play against our pawn might be White's best option. 4....xc6 I always suggest playing the ...d4 structures without ...c5, but instead develop the knight quickly CCStartBracketCCcompare to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/8/2Pp4/1P3N2/P2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w

KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.g3 Nc6 inthis lineCCEndBracketCC. 5.exd4 White should take before we manage ...e5, like after 5.Bb2?! e5 , which transposes to a line we cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/8/2Pp4/1P3N2/P2PPPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bb2?! Nc6 5.e3 e5 CCStartBracketCCseethis lineCCEndBracketCC. 5....xxd4 6.Kb2 Both sides fight for control of the d4-square. We have a good way to lend support d4: by playing ...Bc5 and ...Ne7-c6 next. 6...Kc5 7..xa3 White could try 7.b4!? , but a simple and good reply is 7...Nxf3+ 8.Qxf3 Bd4 , keeping control and a good position. 7....xe7 8..xc2 .xec6 We maintain our grip on d4 and have a good position. Stockfish now suggests 9.Nfxd4 Nxd4 10.b4!? for White, when 10...Nxc2+ 11.Qxc2 Bd4 is a good continuation. I'd rather be Black here, having the better pawn structure. White still has long term worries about the weaknesses on the d-file, d4 and d3.

☐ 14. English Lines with g3
■ 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 4.Bb2 #1

1.c4 e6 How to answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two basic ways to do that. In the current chapter, we will examine g3-based setups, while in the second chapter on 1.c4 e6 , we focus on other setups, mostly involving an early e3 by White. Alright, how do we fight the g3-setups? White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and in some cases, it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan' by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . I think that Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: 1CCEndBracketCC White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/

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☐ 14. English Lines with g3
■ 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 4.Bb2 #2

1.c4 e6 How to answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two basic ways to do that. In the current chapter, we will examine g3-based setups, while in the second chapter on 1.c4 e6 , we focus on other setups, mostly involving an early e3 by White. Alright, how do we fight the g3-setups? White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and in some cases, it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan' by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . I think that Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: 1CCEndBracketCC White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 .

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reasoning behind this choice more in the notes to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/8/2Pp4/1P3N2/P2PPPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.g3 Nc6 inthis line. 5.g3 The following notes will be rather brief, as we reach the same structures as after 4.g3, but with a misplaced white bishop on b2. 5...e5 We have a massive space advantage with Black after five moves - nice! 6.d3 Kb4+ We play in a similar fashion after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/8/2Pp4/1P3N2/P2PPPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.g3 Nc6 5.Bg2 e5 6.d3 Bb4+ CCStartBracketCCseethis lineCCEndBracketCC. It is also possible to play 6...Nf6 first, and after 7.Bg2 give the check. 7..xbd2 a5 The typical follow up, stopping White's queenside expansion CCStartBracketCCa3, b4CCEndBracketCC. 8.a3 Ke7 9.Kg2 .xf6 10.0-0 0-0 Black has a comfortable advantage in this position. We have much more space and the long term plan to breakthrough in the centre with ...e5-e4. A good setup for us is: ...Bf5, ...Nd7-c5, ...Re8, trying to play ...e5-e4. White can't do much in the meantime, as there is no meaningful pawn break to change the structure.

☐ 14. English Lines with g3
■ 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 4.g3 #1

1.c4 e6 How to answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two basic ways to do that. In the current chapter, we will examine g3-based setups, while in the second chapter on 1.c4 e6 , we focus on other setups, mostly involving an early e3 by White. Alright, how do we fight the g3-setups? White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and in some cases, it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan' by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . I think that Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: 1CCEndBracketCC White can play

d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 . In both cases, we'd answer with ...dxc4, which is our weapon against the Catalan. 2CCEndBracketCC The second scenario is quite different: White could play an early b3 to cover the c-pawn. Possible sequences are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 or 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . In all these cases, I recommend playing ...d4 in response, gaining central space. We argue that the move b3 is rather pointless when a black pawn appears on d4, as Bb2 is not attractive anymore - staring at an enemy pawn on d4 is not what the bishop wants to do. Therefore we have a fairly straightforward move order concept: Against g3-setups, we'll play 1...e6, 2...d5, 3...Nf6 and capture on c4 next, unless White plays b3 along the way, when we will advance the d-pawn immediately in response. An interesting case is the move order 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . White plays b3 even before g3 is on the board. In this case, playing 3...d4 is a good option, too. White will very likely continue with g3 soon, which is why this particular move order is also covered in the current chapter. 2..xf3 d5 After 2...d5 White can transpose out of this chapter by playing 3.d4 for a Queen's Gambit, or opt for 3.e3 , which we cover in the other dedicated chapter on 1.c4 e6. Our main topic in the current chapter is the move 3.g3 , but we'll also examine 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 and 3.b3 , as after our reply 3...d4! White will almost always play with a quick g3 after all - the immediate 4.g3 is the most popular move. 3.b3 White covers the c-pawn and prepares the fianchetto of the c1-bishop. Against this move, I recommend advancing the d-pawn and gaining central space. 3...d4 I like this pawn advance for several reasons: 1CCEndBracketCC In general, gaining central space is desirable. 2CCEndBracketCC It is easier to learn than the alternatives. We instantly clarify the pawn structure in the centre and have a fairly clear plan afterwards. 3CCEndBracketCC There is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 d4 , which is not part of our repertoire. It is not bad at all, but fairly complicated for Black after 3.b4 . Here, the moves ...e6 and b3 are added, which prevents this option for White. In general, the move b2-b3 turns out to be rather pointless after the advance. 4CCEndBracketCC A practical point: if you play online games and/or face lower-rated opposition, a common reply will be 4.Bb2?! , which is just a conceptual mistake and immediately gives Black an advantage. The bishop is misplaced on b2, only staring at a well-protected pawn. Before we examine some moves, a word about the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 d4! . This is a very similar case, but not the same as we are committed to ...Nf6 already. Black has a good game in these lines, too. Now, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.

Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 , we need to examine 4.g3 , 4.e3 and the already mentioned ill-advised 4.Bb2 . 4.g3 White often combines 1.c4 with a kingside fianchetto, trying to initiate play on the long diagonal. Here the central pawn advantage matters more, though. 4....xc6 In this repertoire, I like to avoid Reversed Modern Benoni or Reversed Benko Gambit structures, as they are tricky to play for Black. In particular, if you don't have experience on the White side against these openings. If you are a 1. e4 player, you might have zero games fighting the Benko, for example. Therefore I opted for 4...Nc6 here, avoiding lines like 4...c5 5.e3 Nc6 6.exd4 cxd4 , reaching a Reversed Modern Benoni CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3. d5 e6 4.Nc3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 CCEndBracketCC. The characteristics of the 'Modern Benoni', compared to the 'Benoni' CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 c5 2.d5 Nf6 3.Nc3 d6 4.e4 g6 CCEndBracketCC, is the trade of the e-pawn vs. the c-pawn. This trade sharpens the game and leads to more tactical possibilities, favouring the side with more experience. Instead, I advise playing without ...c5 and reaching a Benoni structure that is easier to handle. With the c- and e-pawn still on the board, White is less likely to manage a queenside expansion with a3 and b4, to mention a key point. 5.Kg2 e5 Now the move ...e5-e4 is a serious threat. White should prevent it with 6.d3 , as 6.O-O e4 7.Ne1 h5! leads to a strong attack. 6.0-0 White ignores ...e5-e4, which is asking for trouble. 6...e4 7..xe1 h5 Yes, we can even sacrifice the e-pawn and throw the kitchen sink at White! 8.Kxe4 Kh3 We'll get a great attack with simple means: playing ...Qd7, ...O-O-O, ...h5-h4 is not exactly rocket science. 9.Kg2 It seems that 9.Ng2 is even worse. Let's look at a possible sample line. After 9...Qd7 10.b4 CCStartBracketCCdesperationCCEndBracketCC 10...Nf6 CCStartBracketCCno need to take the pawn, better attack!CCEndBracketCC 11.Bf3 h4 12.Nxh4 g5 13. Ng2 Ne5 Black has a winning attack. 9...O&d7 White is in deep trouble here. I want to show one attacking idea that you should know in this scenario. 10..xf3 White can't stop ...h5-h4 in this way. There are better defences for White, but our play is much simpler anyway: hack away for checkmate. 10...h4 It works anyway. 11..xxh4 Qxh4 12.gxh4 O&g4 And it's mate next move.

☐ 14. English Lines with g3
■ 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 4.g3 #2

1.c4 e6 How to answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0

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and 7.Bd2 , have their drawbacks. Let's have a look. 7.Kd2 a5 An important move. We support the bishop on b4 and make a generally useful move, as it helps to stop White's possible queenside expansion with a3 and b4. Now, with the bishop sitting on d2, White can't develop with Na3-c2, which would otherwise be an option to support these pawn pushes. 8.a3 Or 8.O-O Nf6 9.a3 Be7! , which leads to the same thing. 8...Ke7 Trading on d2 would only help White to organise. They have less space and welcome trades. We go to e7, as we anticipate that a future ...Nf6 will be answered with Bg5. We unpin before even being pinned, so to say. 9.0-0 .xf6 Black's general strategy now is based on playing for a central breakthrough with ...e5-e4, while at the same time preventing White's play on the queenside. 10.Kg5 The bishop is misplaced on d2, due to our earlier check, and decides it's best to leave the board by trading on f6. 10...h6 Give me the bishop, please. 11.Kxf6 Kxf6 12..xbd2 Ke7 A good positional move, prophylaxis against the queenside play. White has a hard time ever playing b4 now, while we enjoy our central space and may prepare ...e5-e4 in the long run, maybe even supported by ...f7-f5.

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☐ 14. English Lines with g3
■ 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 #1

1.c4 e6 How to answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is

CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two basic ways to do that. In the current chapter, we will examine g3-based setups, while in the second chapter on 1.c4 e6 , we focus on other setups, mostly involving an early e3 by White. Alright, how do we fight the g3-setups? White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and in some cases, it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan' by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . I think that Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: 1CCEndBracketCC White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 . In both cases, we'd answer with ...dxc4, which is our weapon against the Catalan. 2CCEndBracketCC The second scenario is quite different: White could play an early b3 to cover the c-pawn. Possible sequences are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 or 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . In all these cases, I recommend playing ...d4 in response, gaining central space. We argue that the move b3 is rather pointless when a black pawn appears on d4, as Bb2 is not attractive anymore - staring at an enemy pawn on d4 is not what the bishop wants to do. Therefore we have a fairly straightforward move order concept: Against g3-setups, we'll play 1...e6, 2...d5, 3...Nf6 and capture on c4 next, unless White plays b3 along the way, when we will advance the d-pawn immediately in response. An interesting case is the move order 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . White plays b3 even before g3 is on the board. In this case, playing 3...d4 is a good option, too. White will very likely continue with g3 soon, which is why this particular move order is also covered in the current chapter. 2..xf3 d5 After 2...d5 White can transpose out of this chapter by playing 3. d4 for a Queen's Gambit, or opt for 3.e3 , which we cover in the other dedicated chapter on 1.c4 e6. Our main topic in the current chapter is the move 3.g3 , but we'll also examine 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 and 3.b3 , as after our reply 3...d4! White will almost always play with a quick g3 after all - the immediate 4.g3 is the most popular move. 3.g3 If White does not want to fianchetto the bishop, 3.e3 is the main alternative to avoid a direct QGD transposition. This possibility is examined in

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☐ 14. English Lines with g3
■ 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 #2

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1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 when 3...Nf6 is the most precise move to reach our preferred lines. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 taking on c4 immediately would also be fine to reach our desired lines, but there is no advantage in doing it right away. To keep it consistent, just remember to play ...Nf6 first and take the c-pawn on move four. If you compare with the Catalan and many Queen's Gambit lines, you'll see that we'll usually take on move four, after ...d5, ...e6 and ...Nf6 are already played. 4.b3 A similar setup as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 , only with the moves g3 and ...Nf6 inserted. We answer with the same concept. 4...d4 Going for a reversed Benoni. I explain why I go for this particular structure in the notes to thementioned line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4! . Now White has to decide if they want to play with e2-e3 or not. 5.Kg2 White usually continues with 5.Bg2 . You also meet the bad 5.Bb2?! , when 5...Nc6 is excellent for Black. We examine this scenario via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 4.Bb2?! , which misplaces the bishop just as badly and may easily lead to the same positions. 5....xc6 6.0-0 Here 6.e3 e5 is still possible, transposing to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2Pp4/1P3NP1/P2PPP1P/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.e3 Nc6 6.Bg2 e5 . 6...e5 7.d3 Now we need to pay attention and play the correct move. 7...a5 It is essential to play this move first and avoid the trick 7...Bc5 8.b4 , intending 8...Bxb4 9.Nxe5 . We'd like to restrain White's queenside ambitions, and 7...a5 is the way to slow down White. 8..xa3 White has a setup with Nc2, a3 and b4 in mind. This is not the only move, of course. They can also play 8.e3 when 8...Bc5 is a good reply. We have studied CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2Pp4/1P3NP1/P2PPP1P/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.e3 Nc6 6.Bg2 e5 7.O-O Bc5 , which is similar. 8...Kc5 9..xc2 0-0 10.a3 We have developed the bishop to its usual square and castled. Now we need to combine our central play with prophylaxis against White's queenside expansion. 10...Qe8 We'd like to play ...e5-e4, which explains the rook move. 11.Qb1 Finally, White is ready to play b3-b4. 11...O&e7 Again, we make b3-b4 tough to play. I like Black's position here, preferring the space advantage.

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allowed, ...Nc6. We aim to control the d4-square and prevent White from advancing d2-d4. The pointer is that White's queen moves away from supporting d2-d4. Thus we get the chance to play against, and often completely prevent, this idea. BCCEndBracketCC Against an early Ne5 jump, the answer ...Qd4! is strong if White can't immediately answer with Ne5xc4. Examples are 5.Ne5 Qd4! and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.O-O a6 6.Ne5 Qd4! , but not CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 c5 6.Ne5 when 6...Qd4? is pointless due to 7. Nxc4 . CCCEndBracketCCC We shouldn't allow Nb1-a3xc4, unless White has played Qc2 already. Allowing the knight capture while the white queen is still on d1 is bad, as the sample line 5.Na3 c5?! 6.Nxc4 Nc6 7.O-O Be7 8.b3 O-O 9.Bb2 demonstrates. We can't prevent d2-d4, which opens up the game in White's favour. Their bishops will be mighty once the centre is cleared of pawns. To compare with scenario A: CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/ RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 Nc6 7.Nxc4 is fine for Black, as we control d4. However, if White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/ 4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 , the only good move is 5...Bxa3 , stopping Nxc4 in its tracks. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.O-O a6 6.Na3 , we also should stop Nxc4, in this case with 6...b5 . Let's check White's various options, move by move. 5..xe5 This knight jump is rarely played but worth checking. Black has ONE excellent reply, while other moves are unchallenging and might even concede a small advantage to White. 5...O&d4 It's important to remember this move! We attack the knight and cover the c4-pawn at the same time. 6.f4 White has nothing better. 6.Qa4+?! is pointless due to 6...c6 , when White can't get the pawn back, as 7.Nxc4?? fails to 7...b5 . They can play 6.Nf3 , but this is an admission of failure. We have the choice between returning to d8 to repeat, but there is nothing wrong with 6...Qc5 , keeping the extra pawn. 6....xbd7 We develop and challenge White's most active piece. 7.O&a4 White is understandably concerned about not getting back the c-pawn. Again, there is no good alternative for White at this point. 7...O&c5 This engine suggestion looks most challenging. White is now fighting for equality, as far as I can see. 5.Ne5 is rare, and therefore I don't think it is worth expanding the trainable line any further. Still, here are some possible continuations for White: ACCEndBracketCC 8.Qxc4? Nxe5 9.Qxc5 Nd3+! , with a huge advantage for Black. BCCEndBracketCC 8.Nxc4 Ng4! 9.e3 Rb8 , planning ...b5 next. Black is for choice here. CCCEndBracketCCC 8.Na3 Rb8 , when ...b5 is on the agenda again. White does not have a compelling way to continue here.

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1.c4 e6 How to answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two basic ways to do that. In the current chapter, we will examine g3-based setups, while in the second chapter on 1.c4 e6 , we focus on other setups, mostly involving an early e3 by White. Alright, how do we fight the g3-setups? White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and in some cases, it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan' by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . I think that Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: 1CCEndBracketCC White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 . In both cases, we'd answer with ...dxc4, which is our weapon against the Catalan. 2CCEndBracketCC The second scenario is quite different: White could play an early b3 to cover the c-pawn. Possible sequences are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 or 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . In all these cases, I recommend playing ...d4 in response, gaining central space. We argue that the move b3 is rather pointless when a black pawn appears on d4, as Bb2 is not attractive anymore - staring at an enemy pawn on d4 is not what the bishop wants to do. Therefore we have a fairly straightforward move order concept: Against g3-setups, we'll play 1...e6, 2...d5, 3...Nf6 and capture on c4 next, unless White plays b3 along the way, when we will advance the d-pawn immediately in response. An interesting case is the move order 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . White plays b3 even before g3 is on the board. In this case, playing 3...d4 is a good option, too. White will very likely continue with

g3 soon, which is why this particular move order is also covered in the current chapter. 2..xf3 d5 After 2...d5 White can transpose out of this chapter by playing 3. d4 for a Queen's Gambit, or opt for 3.e3 , which we cover in the other dedicated chapter on 1.c4 e6. Our main topic in the current chapter is the move 3.g3 , but we'll also examine 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 and 3.b3 , as after our reply 3...d4! White will almost always play with a quick g3 after all - the immediate 4.g3 is the most popular move. 3.g3 If White does not want to fianchetto the bishop, 3.e3 is the main alternative to avoid a direct QGD transposition. This possibility is examined in thededicated chapter on 1.c4 e6 that focuses on setups without g3. 3....xf6 I suggest playing 3...Nf6 first. This is consistent with our approach against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 when 3...Nf6 is the most precise move to reach our preferred lines. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 taking on c4 immediately would also be fine to reach our desired lines, but there is no advantage in doing it right away. To keep it consistent, just remember to play ... Nf6 first and take the c-pawn on move four. If you compare with the Catalan and many Queen's Gambit lines, you'll see that we'll usually take on move four, after ...d5, ...e6 and ...Nf6 are already played. 4.Kg2 White's most natural popular move. There are some transpositional alternatives, though. ACCEndBracketCC After 4.d4 dxc4 , we'd transpose to a mainline Catalan, covered in a separatechapter. BCCEndBracketCC White has 4.b3 , which is answered by 4...d4 . It will transpose to lines that we cover in the current chapter via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4! . A common and sensible way to transpose is 4.b3 d4 5.Bg2 c5 6.e3 Nc6 7.exd4 cxd4 , which gives Black equal chances CCStartBracketCCat leastCCEndBracketCC. CCCEndBracketCC An uncommon way to play is 4.cxd5 exd5 , leading to a structure/position that we cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 Nf6 . 4...dxc4 Similar to a Catalan, we take on c4 and argue that White needs to spend time to regain the pawn. A good alternative for Black is 4...d4 , which gains space. There are obvious similarities to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 , which is part of our repertoire and examined in the current chapter. However, pushing the d-pawn is particularly attractive after White has already played the move b3, which is a slow setup in the Reversed Benoni structure. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2. Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 d4 , this is not the case. White will find a better way to spend a tempo than b3, which is still not enough to give White a pull. Still, I feel this version of the Reversed Benoni is trickier for Black to handle than my recommended line 4...dxc4 , which is more in spirit with the rest of the repertoire. After 4...dxc4 , we will check some moves that White may play. The most popular choice is 5.Qa4+ ,

which quickly regains the pawn with the queen. The queen loses some time in the process, which gives us time to gain a foothold in the centre. White has also tried various versions of Na3 to get c4 back, but Black is in fine shape everywhere. Before we get to concrete variations, let's discuss some pointers that help to navigate the various tries that White has. A[-]EndBracket[-] They can play an early queen move. 5.Qa4+ is the most common, but 5.Qc2 and 5.O-O and Qc2 next is played, too. Against all these, we go for a setup based on ...c5 and, if allowed, ...Nc6. We aim to control the d4-square and prevent White from advancing d2-d4. The pointer is that White's queen moves away from supporting d2-d4. Thus we get the chance to play against, and often completely prevent, this idea. B[-]EndBracket[-] Against an early Ne5 jump, the answer ...Qd4! is strong if White can't immediately answer with Ne5xc4. Examples are 5.Ne5 Qd4! and [-]StartFEN[-]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5[-]EndFEN[-] 5.O-O a6 6.Ne5 Qd4! , but not [-]StartFEN[-]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5[-]EndFEN[-] 5.Qc2 c5 6.Ne5 when 6...Qd4? is pointless due to 7.Nxc4 . C[-]EndBracket[-] We shouldn't allow Nb1-a3xc4, unless White has played Qc2 already. Allowing the knight capture while the white queen is still on d1 is bad, as the sample line 5.Na3 c5?! 6.Nxc4 Nc6 7.O-O Be7 8.b3 O-O 9.Bb2 demonstrates. We can't prevent d2-d4, which opens up the game in White's favour. Their bishops will be mighty once the centre is cleared of pawns. To compare with scenario A: 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 Nc6 7.Nxc4 is fine for Black, as we control d4. However, if White plays [-]StartFEN[-]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5[-]EndFEN[-] 5.Na3 , the only good move is 5...Bxa3 , stopping Nxc4 in its tracks. After 5.O-O a6 6.Na3 , we also should stop Nxc4, in this case with 6...b5 . Let's check White's various options, move by move. 5..xa3 With the clear intention to play Nxc4 next - not on our watch! 5...Kxa3 This is best. We simply stop White's idea and often manage to keep the pawn. It is interesting to compare 5.Na3 withthe line [-]StartFEN[-]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5[-]EndFEN[-] 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 , when we don't have the ...Bxa3 option. The key difference is the queen placement on c2: After [-]StartFEN[-]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5[-]EndFEN[-] 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 Nc6 we firmly control the d4-square, while after [-]StartFEN[-]rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5[-]EndFEN[-] 5.Na3 c5?! 6.Nxc4 Nc6 7.O-O Be7 8.b3 O-O 9.Bb2 Black can't stop White's d2-d4 advance, which favourably opens up the position. Taking the a3-knight is a much better solution. White usually just recaptures with the pawn, but we'll have a brief look at [-]StartFEN[-]rnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/b4NP1/PP1PPPBP/R1BQK2R w KQkq - 0 6[-]EndFEN[-] 6.Qa4+ , too. 6.O&a4+ A rare line, and for more than one reason. Black is fine with multiple answers. 6....xc6 This looks best, but 6...b5 isn't bad, either. 7..xe5 Not exactly obvious, but White's best try. After 7.Qxa3 e5 White has no compensation for the pawn deficit. We can play ...Be6 to cover c4 and ...Qd6 to allow castling. 7...Kd6 This bishop already thought today's job was done on move

five, but suddenly it's back in the game again! 8..xxc6 O&d7 This is the funny point. We set up a counter-pin, forcing White to take on c4. 9.O&xc4 Against other moves, our reply ...Nd5 would have already won material. 9....xd5 White needs to move the c6-knight now. The issue for White is that we'll gain lots of tempi now, for example, after 10.Nd4 O-O 11.a4 b6 12.O-O c5 , when we have the better development and central control.

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particularly attractive after White has already played the move b3, which is a slow setup in the Reversed Benoni structure. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 d4 , this is not the case. White will find a better way to spend a tempo than b3, which is still not enough to give White a pull. Still, I feel this version of the Reversed Benoni is trickier for Black to handle than my recommended line 4...dxc4 , which is more in spirit with the rest of the repertoire. After 4...dxc4 , we will check some moves that White may play. The most popular choice is 5.Qa4+ , which quickly regains the pawn with the queen. The queen loses some time in the process, which gives us time to gain a foothold in the centre. White has also tried various versions of Na3 to get c4 back, but Black is in fine shape everywhere. Before we get to concrete variations, let's discuss some pointers that help to navigate the various tries that White has. ACCEndBracketCC They can play an early queen move. 5.Qa4+ is the most common, but 5.Qc2 and 5.O-O and Qc2 next is played, too. Against all these, we go for a setup based on ...c5 and, if allowed, ...Nc6. We aim to control the d4-square and prevent White from advancing d2-d4. The pointer is that White's queen moves away from supporting d2-d4. Thus we get the chance to play against, and often completely prevent, this idea. BCCEndBracketCC Against an early Ne5 jump, the answer ...Qd4! is strong if White can't immediately answer with Ne5xc4. Examples are 5.Ne5 Qd4! and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.O-O a6 6.Ne5 Qd4! , but not CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 c5 6.Ne5 when 6...Qd4? is pointless due to 7.Nxc4 . CCCEndBracketCC We shouldn't allow Nb1-a3xc4, unless White has played Qc2 already. Allowing the knight capture while the white queen is still on d1 is bad, as the sample line 5.Na3 c5?! 6.Nxc4 Nc6 7.O-O Be7 8.b3 O-O 9.Bb2 demonstrates. We can't prevent d2-d4, which opens up the game in White's favour. Their bishops will be mighty once the centre is cleared of pawns. To compare with scenario A: 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 Nc6 7.Nxc4 is fine for Black, as we control d4. However, if White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 , the only good move is 5...Bxa3 , stopping Nxc4 in its tracks. After 5.O-O a6 6.Na3 , we also should stop Nxc4, in this case with 6...b5 . Let's check White's various options, move by move. 5..xa3 With the clear intention to play Nxc4 next - not on our watch! 5...Kxa3 This is best. We simply stop White's idea and often manage to keep the pawn. It is interesting to compare 5.Na3 withthe line CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 , when we don't have the ...Bxa3 option. The key difference is the queen placement on c2: After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 Nc6 we firmly control the d4-square, while after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 c5?! 6.Nxc4 Nc6 7.O-O Be7 8.b3 O-O 9.Bb2 Black can't stop White's d2-d4 advance, which

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1.c4 e6 How to answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two basic ways to do that. In the current chapter, we will examine g3-based setups, while in the second chapter on 1.c4 e6 , we focus on other setups, mostly involving an early e3 by White. Alright, how do we fight the g3-setups? White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and in some cases, it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan' by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . I think that Black has equal

chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: 1CCEndBracketCC White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 . In both cases, we'd answer with ...dxc4, which is our weapon against the Catalan. 2CCEndBracketCC The second scenario is quite different: White could play an early b3 to cover the c-pawn. Possible sequences are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 or 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . In all these cases, I recommend playing ...d4 in response, gaining central space. We argue that the move b3 is rather pointless when a black pawn appears on d4, as Bb2 is not attractive anymore - staring at an enemy pawn on d4 is not what the bishop wants to do. Therefore we have a fairly straightforward move order concept: Against g3-setups, we'll play 1...e6, 2...d5, 3...Nf6 and capture on c4 next, unless White plays b3 along the way, when we will advance the d-pawn immediately in response. An interesting case is the move order 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . White plays b3 even before g3 is on the board. In this case, playing 3...d4 is a good option, too. White will very likely continue with g3 soon, which is why this particular move order is also covered in the current chapter. 2..xf3 d5 After 2...d5 White can transpose out of this chapter by playing 3.d4 for a Queen's Gambit, or opt for 3.e3 , which we cover in the other dedicated chapter on 1.c4 e6. Our main topic in the current chapter is the move 3.g3 , but we'll also examine 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 and 3.b3 , as after our reply 3...d4! White will almost always play with a quick g3 after all - the immediate 4.g3 is the most popular move. 3.g3 If White does not want to fianchetto the bishop, 3.e3 is the main alternative to avoid a direct QGD transposition. This possibility is examined in thededicated chapter on 1.c4 e6 that focuses on setups without g3. 3....xf6 I suggest playing 3...Nf6 first. This is consistent with our approach against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 when 3...Nf6 is the most precise move to reach our preferred lines. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 taking on c4 immediately would also be fine to reach our desired lines, but there is no advantage in doing it right away. To keep it consistent, just remember to play ...Nf6 first and take the c-pawn on move four. If you compare with the Catalan and many Queen's Gambit lines, you'll see that we'll usually take on move four, after ...d5, ...e6 and ...Nf6 are already played. 4.Kg2 White's most natural popular move. There are some transpositional alternatives, though. ACCEndBracketCC After 4.d4 dxc4 , we'd transpose to a mainline Catalan, covered in a separatechapter. BCCEndBracketCC White has 4.b3 , which is answered by 4...d4 . It will transpose to lines that we cover in the current chapter via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0

1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4! . A common and sensible way to transpose is 4.b3 d4 5.Bg2 c5 6.e3 Nc6 7.exd4 cxd4 , which gives Black equal chances CCStartBracketCCat leastCCEndBracketCC. CCCEndBracketCC An uncommon way to play is 4.cxd5 exd5 , leading to a structure/position that we cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 Nf6 . 4...dxc4 Similar to a Catalan, we take on c4 and argue that White needs to spend time to regain the pawn. A good alternative for Black is 4...d4 , which gains space. There are obvious similarities to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 , which is part of our repertoire and examined in the current chapter. However, pushing the d-pawn is particularly attractive after White has already played the move b3, which is a slow setup in the Reversed Benoni structure. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2. Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 d4 , this is not the case. White will find a better way to spend a tempo than b3, which is still not enough to give White a pull. Still, I feel this version of the Reversed Benoni is trickier for Black to handle than my recommended line 4...dxc4 , which is more in spirit with the rest of the repertoire. After 4...dxc4 , we will check some moves that White may play. The most popular choice is 5.Qa4+ , which quickly regains the pawn with the queen. The queen loses some time in the process, which gives us time to gain a foothold in the centre. White has also tried various versions of Na3 to get c4 back, but Black is in fine shape everywhere. Before we get to concrete variations, let's discuss some pointers that help to navigate the various tries that White has. ACCEndBracketCC They can play an early queen move. 5.Qa4+ is the most common, but 5.Qc2 and 5.O-O and Qc2 next is played, too. Against all these, we go for a setup based on ...c5 and, if allowed, ...Nc6. We aim to control the d4-square and prevent White from advancing d2-d4. The pointer is that White's queen moves away from supporting d2-d4. Thus we get the chance to play against, and often completely prevent, this idea. BCCEndBracketCC Against an early Ne5 jump, the answer ...Qd4! is strong if White can't immediately answer with Ne5xc4. Examples are 5.Ne5 Qd4! and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/ 4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.O-O a6 6. Ne5 Qd4! , but not CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/ PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 c5 6.Ne5 when 6... Qd4? is pointless due to 7.Nxc4 . CCCEndBracketCC We shouldn't allow Nb1-a3xc4, unless White has played Qc2 already. Allowing the knight capture while the white queen is still on d1 is bad, as the sample line 5.Na3 c5?! 6.Nxc4 Nc6 7. O-O Be7 8.b3 O-O 9.Bb2 demonstrates. We can't prevent d2-d4, which opens up the game in White's favour. Their bishops will be mighty once the centre is cleared of pawns. To compare with scenario A: 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 Nc6 7.Nxc4 is fine for Black, as we control d4. However, if White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/ 4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 , the only good move is 5...Bxa3 , stopping Nxc4 in its tracks. After 5.O-O a6 6.Na3 ,

we also should stop Nxc4, in this case with 6...b5 . Let's check White's various options, move by move. 5..xa3 With the clear intention to play Nxc4 next - not on our watch! 5...Kxa3 This is best. We simply stop White's idea and often manage to keep the pawn. It is interesting to compare 5.Na3 withthe line CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5. Qc2 c5 6.Na3 , when we don't have the ...Bxa3 option. The key difference is the queen placement on c2: After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/ PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 Nc6 we firmly control the d4-square, while after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/ 2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 c5?! 6.Nxc4 Nc6 7.O-O Be7 8.b3 O-O 9.Bb2 Black can't stop White's d2-d4 advance, which favourably opens up the position. Taking the a3-knight is a much better solution. White usually just recaptures with the pawn, but we'll have a brief look at CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/b4NP1/PP1PPPBP/R1BQK2R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Qa4+ , too. 6.bxa3 Not the prettiest pawn structure ever, but White clears the b2-square for the bishop. 6...b5 Playing ...b5 against the g2-bishop is always a tad scary, but here it works well. We not only cover c4 but prepare ...Bb7 at the same time. White has two ideas against our concept now. They can try 7.Ne5 , immediately using the diagonal, or attack b5 by playing 7.Rb1 a6 8.a4 . 7..xe5 .xd5 The only good move is to close the long diagonal. We not only accomplished this goal but also prepared ...f6 to evict the e5-knight. This is also the reason why White now should start concrete play with 8.d3 , as something like 8.O-O f6 9.Nf3 is a bit lame and does not give sufficient compensation for the pawn. 8.d3 O&f6 Stockfish suggests the yet untested move 8...c3 , but I like 8...Qf6 more. The following line looks like the best play, and Black is comfortable at the end. 9.Kf4 This looks best for White. Instead, 9.d4? c5 is downright bad, while CCStartFENCCrnb1k2r/p1p2ppp/4pq2/1p1nN3/2p5/P2P2P1/P3PPBP/R1BQK2R w KQkq - 1 9CCEndFENCC 9.f4 Nd7 weakens White's kingside for no particular reason. 9....xd7 We can't play 9...g5? due to 10.Ng4 . Our move is much stronger and gives us good play. White can't keep the knight on e5 now. 10.dxc4 A logical choice, getting rid of the c-pawn. After 10.Nxd7 Bxd7 11.dxc4 bxc4 12.O-O O-O White can capture on d5, but giving up the light-squared bishop is a tough decision. I'd rather be Black in this line. 10...bxc4 11..xxc4 O&c3+ Forcing the knight back to d2 makes sense, but 11...O-O or 11...Ba6 are fine for Black, too. 12..xd2 0-0 Black has equal chances here. We'll develop with ...Ba6 and have active pieces. We'll likely win the CCStartBracketCCadmittedly not very importantCCEndBracketCC a3-pawn, too.

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1.c4 e6 How to answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two basic ways to do that. In the current chapter, we will examine g3-based setups, while in the second chapter on 1.c4 e6 , we focus on other setups, mostly involving an early e3 by White. Alright, how do we fight the g3-setups? White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and in some cases, it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan' by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . I think that Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: 1CCEndBracketCC White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 . In both cases, we'd answer with ...dxc4, which is our weapon against the Catalan. 2CCEndBracketCC The second scenario is quite different: White could play an early b3 to cover the c-pawn. Possible sequences are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 or 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . In all these cases, I recommend playing ...d4 in response, gaining central space. We argue that the move b3 is rather pointless when a black pawn appears on d4, as Bb2 is not attractive anymore - staring at an enemy pawn on d4 is not what the bishop wants to do. Therefore we have a fairly straightforward move order concept: Against g3-setups, we'll play 1...e6, 2...d5, 3...Nf6 and capture on c4 next, unless White plays b3 along the way, when we will advance the d-pawn immediately in response. An interesting case is the move order 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . White plays b3 even before g3 is on the board. In this case, playing 3...d4 is a good option, too. White will very likely continue with

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which quickly regains the pawn with the queen. The queen loses some time in the process, which gives us time to gain a foothold in the centre. White has also tried various versions of Na3 to get c4 back, but Black is in fine shape everywhere. Before we get to concrete variations, let's discuss some pointers that help to navigate the various tries that White has. A CCEndBracketCC They can play an early queen move. 5.Qa4+ is the most common, but 5.Qc2 and 5.O-O and Qc2 next is played, too. Against all these, we go for a setup based on ...c5 and, if allowed, ...Nc6. We aim to control the d4-square and prevent White from advancing d2-d4. The pointer is that White's queen moves away from supporting d2-d4. Thus we get the chance to play against, and often completely prevent, this idea. B CCEndBracketCC Against an early Ne5 jump, the answer ...Qd4! is strong if White can't immediately answer with Ne5xc4. Examples are 5.Ne5 Qd4! and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.O-O a6 6.Ne5 Qd4! , but not CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 c5 6.Ne5 when 6...Qd4? is pointless due to 7.Nxc4 . CCEndBracketCC We shouldn't allow Nb1-a3xc4, unless White has played Qc2 already. Allowing the knight capture while the white queen is still on d1 is bad, as the sample line 5.Na3 c5?! 6.Nxc4 Nc6 7.O-O Be7 8.b3 O-O 9.Bb2 demonstrates. We can't prevent d2-d4, which opens up the game in White's favour. Their bishops will be mighty once the centre is cleared of pawns. To compare with scenario A: 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 Nc6 7.Nxc4 is fine for Black, as we control d4. However, if White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 , the only good move is 5...Bxa3 , stopping Nxc4 in its tracks. After 5.O-O a6 6.Na3 , we also should stop Nxc4, in this case with 6...b5 . Let's check White's various options, move by move. 5.O&c2 White's most popular queen move is 5.Qa4+ when we play 5...Bd7 , forcing 6.Qxc4 . The move 5.Qc2 is slightly different, as White may still play Na3 or Ne5 to regain the pawn. I suggest fighting 5.Qc2 with the same concept that we use against 5.Qa4+ , though: playing ...c5 and controlling the d4-square. 5...c5 The queen placement on c2 makes it more difficult for White to play d2-d4, thus controlling the crucial d4-square with ...c5 and ideally ...Nc6 looks logical. Now White has the choice between 6.Na3 CCStartBracketCCor 6.O-O Nc6 7.Na3 CCEndBracketCC and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p5/2p5/5NP1/PPQPPPBP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Ne5 to regain the pawn. Playing 6.Qxc4 is possible, but 6...Nc6 is very comfortable for Black. Let's compare with CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p5/2p5/5NP1/PPQPPPBP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Na3 Nc6 7.Nxc4 : we reach the same good structure, but White's queen looks somewhat misplaced on c4. 6..xe5 In this line, we have to be aware of one pitfall to avoid. White opens the long diagonal, which is relevant. 6...Ke7 We prepare castling. 7..xxc4 0-0 8..xc3 Now we reach the important moment, the mentioned pitfall. 8....xd5 We need to avoid the natural move 8...Nc6 , as White has 9.Bxc6! , which destroys our pawn structure. White might be reluctant to give up the beautiful bishop, but Black should avoid this scenario objectively

speaking. Just remember to play ...Nd5 first, and only then ...Nc6 on the next move. After staying clear of this trap, Black is fine. The resulting structure is comfortable, as White has no way to get in d2-d4, which gives us a space advantage. I discuss this type of scenario a bit more in the mainline of this chapter CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 CCEndBracketCC.

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1.c4 e6 How to answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two basic ways to do that. In the current chapter, we will examine g3-based setups, while in the second chapter on 1.c4 e6 , we focus on other setups, mostly involving an early e3 by White. Alright, how do we fight the g3-setups? White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and in some cases, it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan' by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . I think that Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: 1CCEndBracketCC White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 . In both cases, we'd answer with ...dxc4, which is our weapon against the Catalan. 2CCEndBracketCC The second scenario is quite different: White could play an early b3 to cover the c-pawn. Possible sequences are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 or 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . In all these cases, I recommend playing

...d4 in response, gaining central space. We argue that the move b3 is rather pointless when a black pawn appears on d4, as Bb2 is not attractive anymore - staring at an enemy pawn on d4 is not what the bishop wants to do. Therefore we have a fairly straightforward move order concept: Against g3-setups, we'll play 1...e6, 2...d5, 3...Nf6 and capture on c4 next, unless White plays b3 along the way, when we will advance the d-pawn immediately in response. An interesting case is the move order 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . White plays b3 even before g3 is on the board. In this case, playing 3...d4 is a good option, too. White will very likely continue with g3 soon, which is why this particular move order is also covered in the current chapter. 2..xf3 d5 After 2...d5 White can transpose out of this chapter by playing 3. d4 for a Queen's Gambit, or opt for 3.e3 , which we cover in the other dedicated chapter on 1.c4 e6. Our main topic in the current chapter is the move 3.g3 , but we'll also examine 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 and 3.b3 , as after our reply 3...d4! White will almost always play with a quick g3 after all - the immediate 4.g3 is the most popular move. 3.g3 If White does not want to fianchetto the bishop, 3.e3 is the main alternative to avoid a direct QGD transposition. This possibility is examined in thededicated chapter on 1.c4 e6 that focuses on setups without g3. 3....xf6 I suggest playing 3...Nf6 first. This is consistent with our approach against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 when 3...Nf6 is the most precise move to reach our preferred lines. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 taking on c4 immediately would also be fine to reach our desired lines, but there is no advantage in doing it right away. To keep it consistent, just remember to play ... Nf6 first and take the c-pawn on move four. If you compare with the Catalan and many Queen's Gambit lines, you'll see that we'll usually take on move four, after ...d5, ...e6 and ...Nf6 are already played. 4.Kg2 White's most natural popular move. There are some transpositional alternatives, though. ACCEndBracketCC After 4.d4 dxc4 , we'd transpose to a mainline Catalan, covered in a separatechapter. BCCEndBracketCC White has 4.b3 , which is answered by 4...d4 . It will transpose to lines that we cover in the current chapter via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4! . A common and sensible way to transpose is 4.b3 d4 5.Bg2 c5 6.e3 Nc6 7.exd4 cxd4 , which gives Black equal chances CCStartBracketCCat leastCCEndBracketCC. CCCEndBracketCC An uncommon way to play is 4.cxd5 exd5 , leading to a structure/position that we cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 Nf6 . 4...dxc4 Similar to a Catalan, we take on c4 and argue that White needs to spend time to regain the pawn. A good alternative for Black is 4...d4 , which gains space. There are obvious similarities to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 , which is part of our repertoire and examined in the current chapter. However, pushing the d-pawn is

particularly attractive after White has already played the move b3, which is a slow setup in the Reversed Benoni structure. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 d4 , this is not the case. White will find a better way to spend a tempo than b3, which is still not enough to give White a pull. Still, I feel this version of the Reversed Benoni is trickier for Black to handle than my recommended line 4...dxc4 , which is more in spirit with the rest of the repertoire. After 4...dxc4 , we will check some moves that White may play. The most popular choice is 5.Qa4+ , which quickly regains the pawn with the queen. The queen loses some time in the process, which gives us time to gain a foothold in the centre. White has also tried various versions of Na3 to get c4 back, but Black is in fine shape everywhere. Before we get to concrete variations, let's discuss some pointers that help to navigate the various tries that White has. ACCEndBracketCC They can play an early queen move. 5.Qa4+ is the most common, but 5.Qc2 and 5.O-O and Qc2 next is played, too. Against all these, we go for a setup based on ...c5 and, if allowed, ...Nc6. We aim to control the d4-square and prevent White from advancing d2-d4. The pointer is that White's queen moves away from supporting d2-d4. Thus we get the chance to play against, and often completely prevent, this idea. BCCEndBracketCC Against an early Ne5 jump, the answer ...Qd4! is strong if White can't immediately answer with Ne5xc4. Examples are 5.Ne5 Qd4! and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.O-O a6 6.Ne5 Qd4! , but not CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 c5 6.Ne5 when 6...Qd4? is pointless due to 7.Nxc4 . CCCEndBracketCC We shouldn't allow Nb1-a3xc4, unless White has played Qc2 already. Allowing the knight capture while the white queen is still on d1 is bad, as the sample line 5.Na3 c5?! 6.Nxc4 Nc6 7.O-O Be7 8.b3 O-O 9.Bb2 demonstrates. We can't prevent d2-d4, which opens up the game in White's favour. Their bishops will be mighty once the centre is cleared of pawns. To compare with scenario A: 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 Nc6 7.Nxc4 is fine for Black, as we control d4. However, if White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 , the only good move is 5...Bxa3 , stopping Nxc4 in its tracks. After 5.O-O a6 6.Na3 , we also should stop Nxc4, in this case with 6...b5 . Let's check White's various options, move by move. 5.O&c2 White's most popular queen move is 5.Qa4+ when we play 5...Bd7 , forcing 6.Qxc4 . The move 5.Qc2 is slightly different, as White may still play Na3 or Ne5 to regain the pawn. I suggest fighting 5.Qc2 with the same concept that we use against 5.Qa4+ , though: playing ...c5 and controlling the d4-square. 5...c5 The queen placement on c2 makes it more difficult for White to play d2-d4, thus controlling the crucial d4-square with ...c5 and ideally ...Nc6 looks logical. Now White has the choice between 6.Na3 CCStartBracketCCor 6.O-O Nc6 7.Na3 CCEndBracketCC and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p5/2p5/5NP1/PPQPPPBP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Ne5 to regain the pawn. Playing 6.Qxc4 is possible, but 6...Nc6 is very comfortable for Black. Let's compare

with CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p5/2p5/5NP1/PPQPPPBP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Na3 Nc6 7.Nxc4 : we reach the same good structure, but White's queen looks somewhat misplaced on c4. 6..xa3 White's most popular move. They can also start with 6.O-O , when 6...Nc6 7.Na3 will transpose quickly. 6....xc6 Playing ...Nc6, ...Be7 and ...O-O is very natural. Control d4, complete kingside castling. 7..xxc4 Ke7 8.0-0 0-0 9.b3 This looks best. White wants to play Bb2, a rook to d1 and d2-d4 next. We have a strong reply, though! 9...b5 You always need to be careful with playing ...b5 against a g2-bishop. Here there is no tactical problem, and we manage a quick queenside development. 10..xfe5 This looks scary at first, but the vulnerable queen position on c2 helps to justify our 9...b5 move. 10....xd4 A crucial tempo. 11.O&d1 Qb8 We are much better, as White has to move the c4-knight to a bad square and suffers from lack of space and development.

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8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 . In both cases, we'd answer with ...dxc4, which is our weapon against the Catalan. 2CCEndBracketCC The second scenario is quite different: White could play an early b3 to cover the c-pawn. Possible sequences are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 or 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . In all these cases, I recommend playing ...d4 in response, gaining central space. We argue that the move b3 is rather pointless when a black pawn appears on d4, as Bb2 is not attractive anymore - staring at an enemy pawn on d4 is not what the bishop wants to do. Therefore we have a fairly straightforward move order concept: Against g3-setups, we'll play 1...e6, 2...d5, 3...Nf6 and capture on c4 next, unless White plays b3 along the way, when we will advance the d-pawn immediately in response. An interesting case is the move order 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . White plays b3 even before g3 is on the board. In this case, playing 3...d4 is a good option, too. White will very likely continue with g3 soon, which is why this particular move order is also covered in the current chapter. 2..xf3 d5 After 2...d5 White can transpose out of this chapter by playing 3. d4 for a Queen's Gambit, or opt for 3.e3 , which we cover in the other dedicated chapter on 1.c4 e6. Our main topic in the current chapter is the move 3.g3 , but we'll also examine 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 and 3.b3 , as after our reply 3...d4! White will almost always play with a quick g3 after all - the immediate 4.g3 is the most popular move. 3.g3 If White does not want to fianchetto the bishop, 3.e3 is the main alternative to avoid a direct QGD transposition. This possibility is examined in thededicated chapter on 1.c4 e6 that focuses on setups without g3. 3....xf6 I suggest playing 3...Nf6 first. This is consistent with our approach against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 when 3...Nf6 is the most precise move to reach our preferred lines. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 taking on c4 immediately would also be fine to reach our desired lines, but there is no advantage in doing it right away. To keep it consistent, just remember to play ... Nf6 first and take the c-pawn on move four. If you compare with the Catalan and many Queen's Gambit lines, you'll see that we'll usually take on move four, after ...d5, ...e6 and ...Nf6 are already played. 4.Kg2 White's most natural popular move. There are some transpositional alternatives, though. ACCEndBracketCC After 4.d4 dxc4 , we'd transpose to a mainline Catalan, covered in a separatechapter. BCCEndBracketCC White has 4.b3 , which is answered by 4...d4 . It will transpose to lines that we cover in the current chapter via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4! . A common and sensible way to transpose is 4.b3 d4 5.Bg2 c5 6.e3 Nc6 7.exd4 cxd4 , which gives Black equal chances CCStartBracketCCat leastCCEndBracketCC. CCCEndBracketCC An uncommon way to play is 4.cxd5 exd5 , leading to a structure/position that we cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0

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square. 5...c5 The queen placement on c2 makes it more difficult for White to play d2-d4, thus controlling the crucial d4-square with ...c5 and ideally ...Nc6 looks logical. Now White has the choice between 6.Na3 CCStartBracketCCor 6.O-O Nc6 7. Na3 CCEndBracketCC and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p5/2p5/5NP1/ PPQPPPBP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Ne5 to regain the pawn. Playing 6.Qxc4 is possible, but 6...Nc6 is very comfortable for Black. Let's compare with CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p5/2p5/5NP1/PPQPPPBP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Na3 Nc6 7.Nxc4 : we reach the same good structure, but White's queen looks somewhat misplaced on c4. 6..xa3 White's most popular move. They can also start with 6.O-O , when 6...Nc6 7.Na3 will transpose quickly. 6....xc6 Playing ...Nc6, ...Be7 and ...O-O is very natural. Control d4, complete kingside castling. 7..xxc4 Ke7 8.0-0 0-0 9.b3 This looks best. White wants to play Bb2, a rook to d1 and d2-d4 next. We have a strong reply, though! 9...b5 You always need to be careful with playing ...b5 against a g2-bishop. Here there is no tactical problem, and we manage a quick queenside development. 10..xce5 Kb7 Black enjoys a harmonious development and good central control. I'd like to continue a bit to show a typical trick. Let's say White continues 11.Nxc6 Bxc6 12.Bb2 . What should Black play? This is an important moment, as White has just set up a serious threat! The threat is Ng5!, which attacks the b7-bishop but also prepares Bxf6 and the mate on h7! This is easily overlooked and can prove fatal. If you'd play, for example, the careless 12...a6?? , 13.Ng5! is killing. The alarm bells should go off once you see a setup with Qc2, Bb2 and a knight on f3. Always check if Ng5 is a threat or not! Here Black is okay with a move like CCStartFENCCr2q1rk1/p3bppp/ 2b1pn2/1pp5/8/1P3NP1/PBQPPPBP/R4RK1 b - - 1 12CCEndFENCC 12...Rc8 , which covers the bishop.

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1.c4 e6 How to answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two basic ways to do that. In the current chapter, we will examine g3-based setups, while in the second chapter on 1.c4 e6 , we focus on other setups, mostly involving an early e3 by White. Alright, how do we fight the g3-setups? White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/ 8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3

Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and in some cases, it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan' by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . I think that Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: 1CCEndBracketCC White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 . In both cases, we'd answer with ...dxc4, which is our weapon against the Catalan. 2CCEndBracketCC The second scenario is quite different: White could play an early b3 to cover the c-pawn. Possible sequences are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 or 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . In all these cases, I recommend playing ...d4 in response, gaining central space. We argue that the move b3 is rather pointless when a black pawn appears on d4, as Bb2 is not attractive anymore - staring at an enemy pawn on d4 is not what the bishop wants to do. Therefore we have a fairly straightforward move order concept: Against g3-setups, we'll play 1...e6, 2...d5, 3...Nf6 and capture on c4 next, unless White plays b3 along the way, when we will advance the d-pawn immediately in response. An interesting case is the move order 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . White plays b3 even before g3 is on the board. In this case, playing 3...d4 is a good option, too. White will very likely continue with g3 soon, which is why this particular move order is also covered in the current chapter. 2..xf3 d5 After 2...d5 White can transpose out of this chapter by playing 3. d4 for a Queen's Gambit, or opt for 3.e3 , which we cover in the other dedicated chapter on 1.c4 e6. Our main topic in the current chapter is the move 3.g3 , but we'll also examine 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 and 3.b3 , as after our reply 3...d4! White will almost always play with a quick g3 after all - the immediate 4.g3 is the most popular move. 3.g3 If White does not want to fianchetto the bishop, 3.e3 is the main alternative to avoid a direct QGD transposition. This possibility is examined in thededicated chapter on 1.c4 e6 that focuses on setups without g3. 3....xf6 I suggest playing 3...Nf6 first. This is consistent with our approach against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 when 3...Nf6 is the most precise move to reach our preferred lines. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 taking on c4 immediately would also be fine to reach our desired lines, but there is no advantage in doing it right away. To keep it consistent, just remember to play ...

Nf6 first and take the c-pawn on move four. If you compare with the Catalan and many Queen's Gambit lines, you'll see that we'll usually take on move four, after ...d5, ...e6 and ...Nf6 are already played. 4.Kg2 White's most natural popular move. There are some transpositional alternatives, though. ACCEndBracketCC After 4.d4 dxc4 , we'd transpose to a mainline Catalan, covered in a separatechapter. BCCEndBracketCC White has 4.b3 , which is answered by 4...d4 . It will transpose to lines that we cover in the current chapter via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4! . A common and sensible way to transpose is 4.b3 d4 5.Bg2 c5 6.e3 Nc6 7.exd4 cxd4 , which gives Black equal chances CCStartBracketCCat leastCCEndBracketCC. CCCEndBracketCC An uncommon way to play is 4.cxd5 exd5 , leading to a structure/position that we cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 Nf6 . 4...dxc4 Similar to a Catalan, we take on c4 and argue that White needs to spend time to regain the pawn. A good alternative for Black is 4...d4 , which gains space. There are obvious similarities to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 , which is part of our repertoire and examined in the current chapter. However, pushing the d-pawn is particularly attractive after White has already played the move b3, which is a slow setup in the Reversed Benoni structure. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2. Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 d4 , this is not the case. White will find a better way to spend a tempo than b3, which is still not enough to give White a pull. Still, I feel this version of the Reversed Benoni is trickier for Black to handle than my recommended line 4...dxc4 , which is more in spirit with the rest of the repertoire. After 4...dxc4 , we will check some moves that White may play. The most popular choice is 5.Qa4+ , which quickly regains the pawn with the queen. The queen loses some time in the process, which gives us time to gain a foothold in the centre. White has also tried various versions of Na3 to get c4 back, but Black is in fine shape everywhere. Before we get to concrete variations, let's discuss some pointers that help to navigate the various tries that White has. ACCEndBracketCC They can play an early queen move. 5.Qa4+ is the most common, but 5.Qc2 and 5.O-O and Qc2 next is played, too. Against all these, we go for a setup based on ...c5 and, if allowed, ...Nc6. We aim to control the d4-square and prevent White from advancing d2-d4. The pointer is that White's queen moves away from supporting d2-d4. Thus we get the chance to play against, and often completely prevent, this idea. BCCEndBracketCC Against an early Ne5 jump, the answer ...Qd4! is strong if White can't immediately answer with Ne5xc4. Examples are 5.Ne5 Qd4! and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/ 4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.O-O a6 6. Ne5 Qd4! , but not CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/ PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 c5 6.Ne5 when 6... Qd4? is pointless due to 7.Nxc4 . CCCEndBracketCC We shouldn't allow

Nb1-a3xc4, unless White has played Qc2 already. Allowing the knight capture while the white queen is still on d1 is bad, as the sample line 5.Na3 c5?! 6.Nxc4 Nc6 7. O-O Be7 8.b3 O-O 9.Bb2 demonstrates. We can't prevent d2-d4, which opens up the game in White's favour. Their bishops will be mighty once the centre is cleared of pawns. To compare with scenario A: 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 Nc6 7.Nxc4 is fine for Black, as we control d4. However, if White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/ 4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 , the only good move is 5...Bxa3 , stopping Nxc4 in its tracks. After 5.O-O a6 6.Na3 , we also should stop Nxc4, in this case with 6...b5 . Let's check White's various options, move by move. 5.0-0 The move 5.O-O is one of the trickier options that White has available. If you remember the three pointers in the notes to 4...dxc4, you'll notice that castling does not tell us if White wants to move their queen next CCStartBracketCC...c5! is our conceptCCEndBracketCC or maybe play Na3, after which we don't want to allow Na3xc4. Alright, what do we play? Some moves don't fit our concept and are dubious, for example, 5...c5?! 6.Na3! or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQ1RK1 b kq - 1 5CCEndFENCC 5...Be7?! 6.Na3! , when we don't want to move the bishop again to capture the knight, being a full tempo down on CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/ 4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 Bxa3! . The solution is not apparent but makes perfect sense once you see it and check some moves. 5...a6 A surprisingly effective move. It fits into our framework well, as 6.Qc2 c5! still works well. After 6.Na3 , we have 6...b5 to cover the pawn, realising the basic idea of ...a6. After 5...a6, White's most popular move is 6.a4 , which changes the position considerably and allows an entirely different reply, as we will see. 6..xe5 We have already examined CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/ 8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Ne5 Qd4! , so our reply to this similar idea won't be a surprise. 6...O&d4 Already the refutation is the sense that White is now forced to return to f3. 7..xf3 O&c5 Returning to d8 repeats and would be fine if you are after a draw. Still, Black is a pawn up, and there is no reason to concede a draw just yet. Playing 7...Qc5 keeps the extra pawn and asks White to prove some compensation.

☐ 14. English Lines with g3
■ 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5

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g3 soon, which is why this particular move order is also covered in the current chapter. 2..xf3 d5 After 2...d5 White can transpose out of this chapter by playing 3. d4 for a Queen's Gambit, or opt for 3.e3 , which we cover in the other dedicated chapter on 1.c4 e6. Our main topic in the current chapter is the move 3.g3 , but we'll also examine 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 and 3.b3 , as after our reply 3...d4! White will almost always play with a quick g3 after all - the immediate 4.g3 is the most popular move. 3.g3 If White does not want to fianchetto the bishop, 3.e3 is the main alternative to avoid a direct QGD transposition. This possibility is examined in thededicated chapter on 1.c4 e6 that focuses on setups without g3. 3....xf6 I suggest playing 3...Nf6 first. This is consistent with our approach against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 when 3...Nf6 is the most precise move to reach our preferred lines. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 taking on c4 immediately would also be fine to reach our desired lines, but there is no advantage in doing it right away. To keep it consistent, just remember to play ... Nf6 first and take the c-pawn on move four. If you compare with the Catalan and many Queen's Gambit lines, you'll see that we'll usually take on move four, after ...d5, ...e6 and ...Nf6 are already played. 4.Kg2 White's most natural popular move. There are some transpositional alternatives, though. ACCEndBracketCC After 4.d4 dxc4 , we'd transpose to a mainline Catalan, covered in a separatechapter. BCCEndBracketCC White has 4.b3 , which is answered by 4...d4 . It will transpose to lines that we cover in the current chapter via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4! . A common and sensible way to transpose is 4.b3 d4 5.Bg2 c5 6.e3 Nc6 7.exd4 cxd4 , which gives Black equal chances CCStartBracketCCat leastCCEndBracketCC. CCCEndBracketCC An uncommon way to play is 4.cxd5 exd5 , leading to a structure/position that we cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 Nf6 . 4...dxc4 Similar to a Catalan, we take on c4 and argue that White needs to spend time to regain the pawn. A good alternative for Black is 4...d4 , which gains space. There are obvious similarities to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 , which is part of our repertoire and examined in the current chapter. However, pushing the d-pawn is particularly attractive after White has already played the move b3, which is a slow setup in the Reversed Benoni structure. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2. Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 d4 , this is not the case. White will find a better way to spend a tempo than b3, which is still not enough to give White a pull. Still, I feel this version of the Reversed Benoni is trickier for Black to handle than my recommended line 4...dxc4 , which is more in spirit with the rest of the repertoire. After 4...dxc4 , we will check some moves that White may play. The most popular choice is 5.Qa4+ ,

which quickly regains the pawn with the queen. The queen loses some time in the process, which gives us time to gain a foothold in the centre. White has also tried various versions of Na3 to get c4 back, but Black is in fine shape everywhere. Before we get to concrete variations, let's discuss some pointers that help to navigate the various tries that White has. A CCEndBracketCC They can play an early queen move. 5.Qa4+ is the most common, but 5.Qc2 and 5.O-O and Qc2 next is played, too. Against all these, we go for a setup based on ...c5 and, if allowed, ...Nc6. We aim to control the d4-square and prevent White from advancing d2-d4. The pointer is that White's queen moves away from supporting d2-d4. Thus we get the chance to play against, and often completely prevent, this idea. B CCEndBracketCC Against an early Ne5 jump, the answer ...Qd4! is strong if White can't immediately answer with Ne5xc4. Examples are 5.Ne5 Qd4! and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.O-O a6 6.Ne5 Qd4! , but not CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 c5 6.Ne5 when 6...Qd4? is pointless due to 7.Nxc4 . CCEndBracketCC We shouldn't allow Nb1-a3xc4, unless White has played Qc2 already. Allowing the knight capture while the white queen is still on d1 is bad, as the sample line 5.Na3 c5?! 6.Nxc4 Nc6 7.O-O Be7 8.b3 O-O 9.Bb2 demonstrates. We can't prevent d2-d4, which opens up the game in White's favour. Their bishops will be mighty once the centre is cleared of pawns. To compare with scenario A: 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 Nc6 7.Nxc4 is fine for Black, as we control d4. However, if White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 , the only good move is 5...Bxa3 , stopping Nxc4 in its tracks. After 5.O-O a6 6.Na3 , we also should stop Nxc4, in this case with 6...b5 . Let's check White's various options, move by move. 5.0-0 The move 5.O-O is one of the trickier options that White has available. If you remember the three pointers in the notes to 4...dxc4, you'll notice that castling does not tell us if White wants to move their queen next CCStartBracketCC...c5! is our conceptCCEndBracketCC or maybe play Na3, after which we don't want to allow Na3xc4. Alright, what do we play? Some moves don't fit our concept and are dubious, for example, 5...c5?! 6.Na3! or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQ1RK1 b kq - 1 5CCEndFENCC 5...Be7?! 6.Na3! , when we don't want to move the bishop again to capture the knight, being a full tempo down on CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 Bxa3! . The solution is not apparent but makes perfect sense once you see it and check some moves. 5...a6 A surprisingly effective move. It fits into our framework well, as 6.Qc2 c5! still works well. After 6.Na3 , we have 6...b5 to cover the pawn, realising the basic idea of ...a6. After 5...a6, White's most popular move is 6.a4 , which changes the position considerably and allows an entirely different reply, as we will see. 6.O&c2 c5 The concept of answering Qc2 with ...c5 still works here - we also answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 with 5...c5! Before we explore

further, a quick word about 6...b5 . This is not a bad move, but not as effective here as it is against 6.Na3. After 7.Ne1! c6 8.d3 cxd3 9.Nxd3 White gets good compensation for the pawn and the easier game to play. 7..xe5 The most challenging move. After 7.Qxc4 b5 8.Qc2 Bb7 , we have an easy game with more space and no bad pieces. Realising ...b5 and ...Bb7 quickly is an excellent accomplishment. After 7.Ne5 , we get to one of the more difficult moments in the current chapter. In other cases, the move Ne5 can be answered with ...Qd4. Here this makes no sense, as White can simply take our c4-pawn. 7...Qa7 Not exactly the most obvious move, but it works well. We remove the rook from the long diagonal and prepare the move of the b-pawn. The rook also helps with the later ...Bb7, aiming to trade off White's start piece on g2. 8.a4 White stops ...b5, but the smaller b-pawn move will do just fine for us. Stockfish suggests the interesting move 8.Rd1 , intending 8...Nbd7 9.d4 cxd3 10.Rxd3 . Black should play 10...Nd5! , when 11. Bxd5 Nxe5 12.Bc6+ Bd7 13.Bxd7+ Nxd7 gives White some compensation for the pawn. It's enough to give our opponent equal chances, but not more. 8...b6 We have navigated the opening phase successfully. Our next move will be ...Bb7, and I see no problems at all for Black. White can't easily play d2-d4 and has a weakness on b4. Chances are equal, but I like Black in this position.

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popular move. 3.g3 If White does not want to fianchetto the bishop, 3.e3 is the main alternative to avoid a direct QGD transposition. This possibility is examined in thededicated chapter on 1.c4 e6 that focuses on setups without g3. 3....xf6 I suggest playing 3...Nf6 first. This is consistent with our approach against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 when 3...Nf6 is the most precise move to reach our preferred lines. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 taking on c4 immediately would also be fine to reach our desired lines, but there is no advantage in doing it right away. To keep it consistent, just remember to play ... Nf6 first and take the c-pawn on move four. If you compare with the Catalan and many Queen's Gambit lines, you'll see that we'll usually take on move four, after ...d5, ...e6 and ...Nf6 are already played. 4.Kg2 White's most natural popular move. There are some transpositional alternatives, though. ACCEndBracketCC After 4.d4 dxc4 , we'd transpose to a mainline Catalan, covered in a separatechapter. BCCEndBracketCC White has 4.b3 , which is answered by 4...d4 . It will transpose to lines that we cover in the current chapter via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4! . A common and sensible way to transpose is 4.b3 d4 5.Bg2 c5 6.e3 Nc6 7.exd4 cxd4 , which gives Black equal chances CCStartBracketCCat leastCCEndBracketCC. CCCEndBracketCC An uncommon way to play is 4.cxd5 exd5 , leading to a structure/position that we cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 Nf6 . 4...dxc4 Similar to a Catalan, we take on c4 and argue that White needs to spend time to regain the pawn. A good alternative for Black is 4...d4 , which gains space. There are obvious similarities to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 , which is part of our repertoire and examined in the current chapter. However, pushing the d-pawn is particularly attractive after White has already played the move b3, which is a slow setup in the Reversed Benoni structure. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2. Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 d4 , this is not the case. White will find a better way to spend a tempo than b3, which is still not enough to give White a pull. Still, I feel this version of the Reversed Benoni is trickier for Black to handle than my recommended line 4...dxc4 , which is more in spirit with the rest of the repertoire. After 4...dxc4 , we will check some moves that White may play. The most popular choice is 5.Qa4+ , which quickly regains the pawn with the queen. The queen loses some time in the process, which gives us time to gain a foothold in the centre. White has also tried various versions of Na3 to get c4 back, but Black is in fine shape everywhere. Before we get to concrete variations, let's discuss some pointers that help to navigate the various tries that White has. ACCEndBracketCC They can play an early queen move. 5.Qa4+ is the most common, but 5.Qc2 and 5.O-O and Qc2 next is played,

too. Against all these, we go for a setup based on ...c5 and, if allowed, ...Nc6. We aim to control the d4-square and prevent White from advancing d2-d4. The pointer is that White's queen moves away from supporting d2-d4. Thus we get the chance to play against, and often completely prevent, this idea. BCCEndBracketCC Against an early Ne5 jump, the answer ...Qd4! is strong if White can't immediately answer with Ne5xc4. Examples are 5.Ne5 Qd4! and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.O-O a6 6.Ne5 Qd4! , but not CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 c5 6.Ne5 when 6...Qd4? is pointless due to 7.Nxc4 . CCCEndBracketCC We shouldn't allow Nb1-a3xc4, unless White has played Qc2 already. Allowing the knight capture while the white queen is still on d1 is bad, as the sample line 5.Na3 c5?! 6.Nxc4 Nc6 7.O-O Be7 8.b3 O-O 9.Bb2 demonstrates. We can't prevent d2-d4, which opens up the game in White's favour. Their bishops will be mighty once the centre is cleared of pawns. To compare with scenario A: 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 Nc6 7.Nxc4 is fine for Black, as we control d4. However, if White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 , the only good move is 5...Bxa3 , stopping Nxc4 in its tracks. After 5.O-O a6 6.Na3 , we also should stop Nxc4, in this case with 6...b5 . Let's check White's various options, move by move. 5.0-0 The move 5.O-O is one of the trickier options that White has available. If you remember the three pointers in the notes to 4...dxc4, you'll notice that castling does not tell us if White wants to move their queen next CCStartBracketCC...c5! is our conceptCCEndBracketCC or maybe play Na3, after which we don't want to allow Na3xc4. Alright, what do we play? Some moves don't fit our concept and are dubious, for example, 5...c5?! 6.Na3! or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQ1RK1 b kq - 1 5CCEndFENCC 5...Be7?! 6.Na3! , when we don't want to move the bishop again to capture the knight, being a full tempo down on CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 Bxa3! . The solution is not apparent but makes perfect sense once you see it and check some moves. 5...a6 A surprisingly effective move. It fits into our framework well, as 6.Qc2 c5! still works well. After 6.Na3 , we have 6...b5 to cover the pawn, realising the basic idea of ...a6. After 5...a6, White's most popular move is 6.a4 , which changes the position considerably and allows an entirely different reply, as we will see. 6.a4 White stops any plans of ...b5, but the move comes at a price tag: it doesn't help development and weakens the queenside. The idea Qa4CCStartBracketCC+CCEndBracketCC is also off the table. 6....xc6 I am using the exclam not because it is a brilliant move, but because it is a bit uncommon in our repertoire to play ...Nc6 with the c-pawn still resting on c7. There are some cases, though, related to the moves ...a6 and a4. In the Queen's Gambit, we play the following line: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.a4 Nc6! , which shares some ideas with the current position. With ...Nc6, we

connect with the weak square b4, which applies to both lines. A difference to the QGD line is that White's d-pawn is still on d2, which leads to a second and crucial point of ...Nc6: we prepare ...e5, which gains central space and allows an easy development. 7.O&c2 This natural move leads to some trouble for White. 7...e5 It's possible to hang on to the pawn with 7...Na5 , but 7...e5! is a lot stronger. 8.O&xc4 Here 8.Na3 might be better, but 8...Bxa3 , followed by ...Be6 secures the extra pawn. There are tempting alternatives, like 8...e4 , but we are spoilt for choice. 8...Ke6 White is more or less lost in this position, as we will see. 9.O&c2 After 9. Qh4 , White's queen is quickly running out of squares. The moves 9...h6 , or 9... Be7 are strong and get us close to winning already. 9...e4 That's the issue. We drive away the f3-knight and clear d4 for our knight to jump to. 10..xg5 .xd4 11..xxe6 .xxc2 12..xxd8 .xxa1 And we are an exchange up and should win easily.

☐ 14. English Lines with g3

■ 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5

1.c4 e6 How to answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two basic ways to do that. In the current chapter, we will examine g3-based setups, while in the second chapter on 1.c4 e6 , we focus on other setups, mostly involving an early e3 by White. Alright, how do we fight the g3-setups? White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and in some cases, it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan' by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . I think that Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: 1CCEndBracketCC White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2. Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/

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to learn, compared to the alternatives. They also fit well with our repertoire choices in the Catalan CCStartBracketCCSeethis line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 , for exampleCCEndBracketCC. 6.O&xc4 c5 According to our pointer that early queen moves are answered with ...c5-based setups. Now White has three main possibilities, but 7.Ne5 is by far the main move and most testing. We will also examine 7.O-O in the current chapter, while 7.d4 b5 is an immediate CCStartBracketCCharmlessCCEndBracketCC transposition to aCatalan and discussed in the dedicated chapter on this opening. 7.0-0 This move is less forcing than 7.Ne5 , so we have a choice now. 7....xc6 There is nothing wrong about 7...Bc6 or 7...b5 , either. Playing 7...Nc6 looks easiest, though. We invite a transposition to a mainline Catalan after 8.d4 b5! , which is fine for Black and part of our repertoire. What else is there for White? Well, nothing scary as far as I can see. 8..xc3 If they want to avoid 8.d4 , this looks reasonable. 8...Ke7 I like this move. The strategically desirable move is 8...e5?! , building a Maroczy formation in the centre. The problem of the move is 8...e5 9.Ng5 , which is awkward for Black. After 8...Be7 we prepare ...O-O and ...e5, so White needs to reconsider: to play d2-d4 or not? 9.d4 If White continues to wait, we'll play ...e5. After 9.Rd1 e5! we'll gain an additional tempo with ...Be6 and have a comfortable space advantage after just nine moves - happy times! Alright, but what to do after the move 9.d4? 9...b5 Very nice! In theCatalan, we playthe line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7.Qa4 Bd7 8.Qxc4 b5 , so this concept looks familiar. 10..xxb5 This loses instantly. 10.Qxb5? cxd4 11.Nb1 Rb8 12.Qd3 e5 does not lose but is unadvisable for White. 10....xa5 11.O&a4 Or 11.Qd3 c4 , another embarrassing moment. 11...a6 And Black wins a piece and the game.

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Qd4? is pointless due to 7.Nxc4 . CCCEndBracketCCC We shouldn't allow Nb1-a3xc4, unless White has played Qc2 already. Allowing the knight capture while the white queen is still on d1 is bad, as the sample line 5.Na3 c5?! 6.Nxc4 Nc6 7. O-O Be7 8.b3 O-O 9.Bb2 demonstrates. We can't prevent d2-d4, which opens up the game in White's favour. Their bishops will be mighty once the centre is cleared of pawns. To compare with scenario A: 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 Nc6 7.Nxc4 is fine for Black, as we control d4. However, if White plays CCCStartFENCCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/ 4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCCEndFENCCC 5.Na3 , the only good move is 5...Bxa3 , stopping Nxc4 in its tracks. After 5.O-O a6 6.Na3 , we also should stop Nxc4, in this case with 6...b5 . Let's check White's various options, move by move. 5.O&a4+ White makes sure to get the pawn back immediately. The queen check is by far the most popular move. 5...Kd7 Black has good chances to equalise with 5...c6 or 5...Nbd7 , too. I prefer 5...Bd7 , though. The resulting positions after 6.Qxc4 c5 are fine for Black and more straightforward to learn, compared to the alternatives. They also fit well with our repertoire choices in the Catalan CCCStartBracketCCCSeethis line CCCStartFENCCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/ 8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCCEndFENCCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 , for exampleCCCEndBracketCCC. 6.O&xc4 c5 According to our pointer that early queen moves are answered with ...c5-based setups. Now White has three main possibilities, but 7.Ne5 is by far the main move and most testing. We will also examine 7.O-O in the current chapter, while 7.d4 b5 is an immediate CCCStartBracketCCCharmlessCCCEndBracketCCC transposition to aCatalan and discussed in the dedicated chapter on this opening. 7.0-0 This move is less forcing than 7.Ne5 , so we have a choice now. 7....xc6 There is nothing wrong about 7...Bc6 or 7...b5 , either. Playing 7...Nc6 looks easiest, though. We invite a transposition to a mainline Catalan after 8.d4 b5! , which is fine for Black and part of our repertoire. What else is there for White? Well, nothing scary as far as I can see. 8..xc3 If they want to avoid 8.d4 , this looks reasonable. 8...Ke7 I like this move. The strategically desirable move is 8...e5?! , building a Maroczy formation in the centre. The problem of the move is 8...e5 9.Ng5 , which is awkward for Black. After 8...Be7 we prepare ...O-O and ...e5, so White needs to reconsider: to play d2-d4 or not? 9.d4 If White continues to wait, we'll play ...e5. After 9.Rd1 e5! we'll gain an additional tempo with ...Be6 and have a comfortable space advantage after just nine moves - happy times! Alright, but what to do after the move 9.d4? 9...b5 Very nice! In theCatalan, we playthe line CCCStartFENCCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCCEndFENCCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7.Qa4 Bd7 8.Qxc4 b5 , so this concept looks familiar. 10.O&d3 The only playable move for White. 10...c4 The move 10...b4 also looks fine. I suggest 10...c4 , as we play in the same way in the Catalan CCCStartBracketCCCwithout the moves Nc3 and ...Be7 insertedCCCEndBracketCCC. 11.O&d1 White may also play other queen moves, but we'd play in the same way: ... b4 and ...Rc8, with active play on the queenside, for example after 11.Qc2 b4 12. Ne4 Rc8 . 11...b4 12..xe5 More interesting than 12.Na4 Rc8 , for sure. Still,

Black is completely fine in the following line. 12...Qc8 13..xxd7 White has to play this move, as 13.Na4? Nxe5 14.dxe5 Nd5 is awful due to the offside a4-knight. 13...O&xd7 14.d5 .xe5 And Black is fine after 15.dxe6 fxe6 16.Qxd7+ Nexd7 17. Nb5 Bc5 18.a3 b3 . White has gained the bishop pair, but we are much better developed and have established the advanced pawns on the queenside. Ideas like ... Nb6-a4 and pressure on f2 are possible, too.

☐ 14. English Lines with g3
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1.c4 e6 How to answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two basic ways to do that. In the current chapter, we will examine g3-based setups, while in the second chapter on 1.c4 e6 , we focus on other setups, mostly involving an early e3 by White. Alright, how do we fight the g3-setups? White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and in some cases, it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan' by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . I think that Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: 1CCEndBracketCC White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2. Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 . In both cases, we'd answer with ...dxc4, which is our weapon against the Catalan. 2CCEndBracketCC The second scenario is quite different: White could play an early b3 to cover the c-pawn. Possible sequences are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3. b3 or 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . In all these cases, I recommend playing

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second chapter on 1.c4 e6 , we focus on other setups, mostly involving an early e3 by White. Alright, how do we fight the g3-setups? White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and in some cases, it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan' by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . I think that Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: 1CCEndBracketCC White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 . In both cases, we'd answer with ...dxc4, which is our weapon against the Catalan. 2CCEndBracketCC The second scenario is quite different: White could play an early b3 to cover the c-pawn. Possible sequences are CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 or 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . In all these cases, I recommend playing ...d4 in response, gaining central space. We argue that the move b3 is rather pointless when a black pawn appears on d4, as Bb2 is not attractive anymore - staring at an enemy pawn on d4 is not what the bishop wants to do. Therefore we have a fairly straightforward move order concept: Against g3-setups, we'll play 1...e6, 2...d5, 3...Nf6 and capture on c4 next, unless White plays b3 along the way, when we will advance the d-pawn immediately in response. An interesting case is the move order 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . White plays b3 even before g3 is on the board. In this case, playing 3...d4 is a good option, too. White will very likely continue with g3 soon, which is why this particular move order is also covered in the current chapter. 2..xf3 d5 After 2...d5 White can transpose out of this chapter by playing 3. d4 for a Queen's Gambit, or opt for 3.e3 , which we cover in the other dedicated chapter on 1.c4 e6. Our main topic in the current chapter is the move 3.g3 , but we'll also examine 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 and 3.b3 , as after our reply 3...d4! White will almost always play with a quick g3 after all - the immediate 4.g3 is the most popular move. 3.g3 If White does not want to fianchetto the bishop, 3.e3 is the main alternative to avoid a direct QGD transposition. This possibility is examined in thededicated chapter on 1.c4 e6 that focuses on setups without g3. 3....xf6 I suggest playing 3...Nf6 first. This is consistent with our approach against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 when 3...Nf6 is the most precise move

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tried 10.Qa4 , when 10...Rc8! is best to avoid doubled-pawns. 10...Ke7 Here starting with 10...Rc8 is also fine. 11.d3 Qc8 This is slightly more accurate than 11...O-O , when 12.Bg5 is a bit annoying. White threatens Bxf6 and Ne4 ideas, which are unnecessary to allow. Playing 11...Rc8 first avoids any trouble. Black will now reach the standard setup, for example, after 12.Bg5 b6 13.Qa4 O-O 14.Rfc1 h6 15.Bd2 Rfd8 . I'd like to continue this sequence to show an interesting plan for Black: 16.Rab1 Ne8!? 17.a3 Nd6 . The knight has improved to d6, where it has more than one role: First of all, we support c5-c4, if allowed. This is very relevant after 18.b4?! when 18...c4! is strong. The move 18.b4 allowed ...c4 under very favourable circumstances. If White played a slow move like CCStartFENCC2rr2k1/p2qbpp1/1pnnp2p/2p5/Q7/P1NP2P1/1P1BPPBP/1RR3K1 w - - 1 18CCEndFENCC 18.Be1 , we could try 18...b5 19.Qd1 CCStartBracketCC 19.Nxb5?? Nd4! winsCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCC2rr2k1/p2qbpp1/2nnp2p/1pp5/8/P1NP2P1/1P2PPBP/1RRQB1K1 b - - 1 19CCEndFENCC 19...a5 , gaining more space on the queenside. The knight tour to d6 also clears f6 for the bishop, which may come in handy. In general, I like Black's chances in these structures. We have a good share of space, and it's difficult for White to make their bishop pair count.

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10....xd4 The active way to stop White's idea. 11.O&a4 Ke7 11...b5 is possible, but it's not clear to me that we want to advance our pawns that early on. It can't be bad to continue with our development, so 11...Be7 is fine. 12..xc3 After 12.e3 , we have the choice between 12...b5 and 12...Nc6 , when I am less concerned about 13.Bxc6 bxc6 , as White has played the very weakening move e2-e3, giving us the light squares, like d3. The same point applies after 12.Nc3 O-O 13.e3 Nc6 14. Bxc6 bxc6 , as we will see. 12...0-0 13.e3 .xc6 Here 13...Nb6 14.Qd1 Nc6 avoids the doubled pawn, but I am not worried too much about the capture now. It's a huge factor that White has played e2-e3, weakening the light squares. 14.Kxc6 bxc6 We have the better chances here, as ...Rd8 and ...Ne5 is an excellent plan to exploit the weaknesses that White has created after taking on c6.

☐ 14. English Lines with g3
■ 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5

1.c4 e6 How to answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4? If you have the Queens's Gambit Declined in your repertoire, there is an easy solution. You play 1...e6 and 2...d5, asking White if they have anything better than playing d2-d4 and transposing to a traditional Queen's Gambit or a Catalan. A very common transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 , when 3.d4 leads to the mainline Queen's Gambit. If White wants to avoid this kind of transposition, they have two basic ways to do that. In the current chapter, we will examine g3-based setups, while in the second chapter on 1.c4 e6 , we focus on other setups, mostly involving an early e3 by White. Alright, how do we fight the g3-setups? White's opening bears some similarities to a Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, and in some cases, it is possible to transpose to this opening quickly. Our approach against the combination of c4 + g3, often called the 'Neo-Catalan' by the way, is quite similar to our Anti-Catalan concept: quickly taking on c4 and then staking a claim in the centre with ...c5, while White is still busy regaining the c-pawn. The line that arises most of the time and shows the basic concept is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 , when White's primary try is 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . I think that Black has equal chances in this line and not much to worry about. But what could happen along the way? There are mostly two different scenarios: 1CCEndBracketCC White can play d4 and transpose into a regular Catalan, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2. Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.d4 or the less common CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.d4 .

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Catalan, we take on c4 and argue that White needs to spend time to regain the pawn. A good alternative for Black is 4...d4 , which gains space. There are obvious similarities to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 , which is part of our repertoire and examined in the current chapter. However, pushing the d-pawn is particularly attractive after White has already played the move b3, which is a slow setup in the Reversed Benoni structure. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 d4 , this is not the case. White will find a better way to spend a tempo than b3, which is still not enough to give White a pull. Still, I feel this version of the Reversed Benoni is trickier for Black to handle than my recommended line 4...dxc4 , which is more in spirit with the rest of the repertoire. After 4...dxc4 , we will check some moves that White may play. The most popular choice is 5.Qa4+ , which quickly regains the pawn with the queen. The queen loses some time in the process, which gives us time to gain a foothold in the centre. White has also tried various versions of Na3 to get c4 back, but Black is in fine shape everywhere. Before we get to concrete variations, let's discuss some pointers that help to navigate the various tries that White has. ACCEndBracketCC They can play an early queen move. 5.Qa4+ is the most common, but 5.Qc2 and 5.O-O and Qc2 next is played, too. Against all these, we go for a setup based on ...c5 and, if allowed, ...Nc6. We aim to control the d4-square and prevent White from advancing d2-d4. The pointer is that White's queen moves away from supporting d2-d4. Thus we get the chance to play against, and often completely prevent, this idea. BCCEndBracketCC Against an early Ne5 jump, the answer ...Qd4! is strong if White can't immediately answer with Ne5xc4. Examples are 5.Ne5 Qd4! and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.O-O a6 6.Ne5 Qd4! , but not CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 c5 6.Ne5 when 6...Qd4? is pointless due to 7.Nxc4 . CCEndBracketCC We shouldn't allow Nb1-a3xc4, unless White has played Qc2 already. Allowing the knight capture while the white queen is still on d1 is bad, as the sample line 5.Na3 c5?! 6.Nxc4 Nc6 7.O-O Be7 8.b3 O-O 9.Bb2 demonstrates. We can't prevent d2-d4, which opens up the game in White's favour. Their bishops will be mighty once the centre is cleared of pawns. To compare with scenario A: 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 Nc6 7.Nxc4 is fine for Black, as we control d4. However, if White plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 , the only good move is 5...Bxa3 , stopping Nxc4 in its tracks. After 5.O-O a6 6.Na3 , we also should stop Nxc4, in this case with 6...b5 . Let's check White's various options, move by move. 5.O&a4+ White makes sure to get the pawn back immediately. The queen check is by far the most popular move. 5...Kd7 Black has good chances to equalise with 5...c6 or 5...Nbd7 , too. I prefer 5...Bd7 , though. The resulting positions after 6.Qxc4 c5 are fine for Black and more straightforward to learn, compared to the alternatives. They also fit well with our repertoire choices in

the Catalan CCStartBracketCCSeethis line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 , for exampleCCEndBracketCC. 6.O&xc4 c5 According to our pointer that early queen moves are answered with ...c5-based setups. Now White has three main possibilities, but 7.Ne5 is by far the main move and most testing. We will also examine 7.O-O in the current chapter, while 7.d4 b5 is an immediate CCStartBracketCCharmlessCCEndBracketCC transposition to aCatalan and discussed in the dedicated chapter on this opening. 7..xe5 White's main move, and indeed very logical. They attack b7 and are ready to take our d7-bishop, netting the bishop pair. 7...O&c8 The only reasonable way to cover b7. Playing 7...Qc7 looks more natural, but 8.d4 is annoying for Black, intending Bf4. After 7...Qc8 White has tried various move orders and subtleties, but at the end, we'll get the same type of position: White will take our bishop and gain the bishop pair, but we'll play ...Nc6 and set up a strong bind on the d4-square and enjoy good central control. Black has a standard setup to go for: knights on f6 and c6, the bishop on e7, queen on d7, kingside castling, rooks to d8 and c8. This setup is very reliable and easy to play, as we will see. In my opinion, the move 8.Qd3!? is the trickiest to handle, as we need a bit of time to get to the standard setup, but eventually, we'll reach the same scenario. Besides 8.Qd3 , White has tried 8.Nxd7 and 8.O-O most of the time. Both usually lead to the same position via CCStartFENCCrnq1kb1r/pp1b1ppp/4pn2/2p1N3/2Q5/6P1/PP1PPPBP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 2 8CCEndFENCC 8.Nxd7 Qxd7 9.O-O Nc6 or CCStartFENCCrnq1kb1r/pp1b1ppp/4pn2/2p1N3/2Q5/6P1/PP1PPPBP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 2 8CCEndFENCC 8.O-O Nc6 9.Nxd7 Qxd7 . In these lines, we will reach our standard setup quite quickly. 8.O&d3 A somewhat odd-looking move, but we'll see the point in a moment. 8....xc6 9..xxd7 .xxd7 The point of 8.Qd3 is that 9...Qxd7?! is dubious, as 10.Qxd7 Kxd7 is surprisingly awkward for Black to handle. It is not surprising that trading queens is desirable for White. They have less central space, so trading makes sense. I was still surprised to see how awkward it is. In any case, just playing 9...Nxd7! works fine. After our correct move, White now has to decide how to organise. The queen is not ideal on d3 in the long run. They usually choose to play with a quick b2-b3, either immediately or after going Nc3/O-O first. The move order does not matter all that much, as we'll play ...Be7, ...O-O, ...Rd8 and ...Nf6 anyway, ultimately aiming for the standard setup again. The only move that requires special attention is 10.Qb5 , when White threatens to destroy our pawn structure. 10..xc3 I'll use this move order for the slow setups that White may go for. They can also start with 10.O-O or 10.b3 , it will all lead to pretty much the same scenario, as we'll play ...Be7, ...O-O, ...Rd8 and ...Nf6. Let's just have a quick look at these possible sequences. ACCEndBracketCC 10.b3 Be7 11.Bb2 O-O 12.O-O Rd8 13.Nc3 Nf6 BCCEndBracketCC 10.O-O Be7 11.Nc3 O-O 12.b3 Rd8 13.Bb2 Nf6 It all leads to the same scenario which we are about to examine via 10.Nc3. 10...Ke7 11.0-0 Or 11.b3 O-O 12.O-O Rd8 , leading to the same positions. As mentioned, the move orders don't matter that much here. 11...0-0 12.b3 Qd8

13.Kb2 .xf6 14.O&c2 O&d7 15.Qfd1 Qac8 We have completed our well-known standard setup. I'd like to show you an interesting idea that I wasn't aware of before I checked this position with the help of Stockfish. Let's assume White plays 16.Rac1 , as it happened in a 2021 Blitz game between Ian Nepomniachtchi and Jan-Krzysztof Duda. In the notes tothis line after 8.O-O, which also led to our standard setup, I already mentioned the plan ...Ne8-d6, possibly ...Bf6 later. This plan would be possible here, as well. However, there is an entirely different option that I would never have considered without the engine pointing at it: What about 16...h5!? , arguing that White has only one piece defending the white king. ACCEndBracketCC White has to be careful, as a line like 17.h4 Ng4 18.d3 f5! demonstrates. BCCEndBracketCC They could play CCStartFENCC2rr2k1/pp1qbpp1/2n1pn2/2p4p/8/1PN3P1/PBQPPPBP/2RR2K1 w - - 0 17CCEndFENCC 17.h3 , but 17...h4 18.g4 Nd5 looks like a good reply. CCCEndBracketCC Finally, a scenario like CCStartFENCC2rr2k1/pp1qbpp1/2n1pn2/2p4p/8/1PN3P1/PBQPPPBP/2RR2K1 w - - 0 17CCEndFENCC 17.d3 h4 18.Qd2 hxg3 19.hxg3 is possible when Black slightly benefits from the structure change on the kingside. For example, after 19...b6 20.e3 Nb4 21.Bf1 e5 , Black gets chances on the kingside CCStartBracketCC... Qf6, ...Nh7-g5 ideasCCEndBracketCC. This is not a deep analysis but rather an overview of ideas. Pushing the h-pawn is an interesting strategy to keep in mind, setting unexpected problems for White.

☐ 15. English Lines without g3
■ 2.Nc3

1.c4 e6 In this chapter, we'll examine all relevant lines after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 in which White avoids an early kingside fianchetto. There is adedicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 . 2..xc3 The knight move is White's most popular move, but it will transpose to other variations/chapters most of the time. Let's have a look. 2...d5 After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 you can safely 'premove' 2...d5 in online chess. Now, after 2.Nc3 d5 , we see why a transposition to a Queen's Gambit is the most common outcome. We are threatening d5-d4, attacking White's knight. White needs to react to this threat, and usually, they do by playing 3.d4 , directly transposing to a Queen's Gambit Declined. We play 3...Nf6 and transpose to one of the dedicated chapters about the QGD. There are other transpositions, too: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 Nf6 -main line GQD. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/

RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.cxd5 exd5 4.d4 c6 -QGD Carlsbad. CCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nf3 - leads to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 , examined in the current chapter. We'll now have a brief look at White ignoring our d5-d4 idea. 3.g3 White ignores our ...d5-d4 threat. Alright, here we go. 3...d4 4..xb1 Centralization is a fine concept, but 4.Ne4?? f5 still fails. They can play 4.Na4 and NOT lose the knight, but what is the knight doing on the edge of the board? 4...e5 An easy way to evaluate this position is to compare it with CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.g3 d5 2.Bg2 e5 3.c4 d4 , which is part of our repertoire. We are a full tempo up on a variation that tends to be slightly better for Black anyway - case closed.

☐ 15. English Lines without g3
■ 2.e4 d5 3.cxd5

1.c4 e6 In this chapter, we'll examine all relevant lines after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 in which White avoids an early kingside fianchetto. There is adedicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 . 2.e4 An unexpected change of gears! White suddenly transposes to a rare line of the French Defence: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 e6 2.c4 is the move order used there. The move 2.e4 is unpopular but sometimes played if White wants to avoid mainstream theory and transpositions like 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 , which amounts to half a dozen chapters in this course. For us, 2.e4 is not much of a concern: After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppp1ppp/4p3/8/2P1P3/8/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2... d5 White usually plays 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2P1P3/8/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.exd5 exd5 4.cxd5 , which both lead to IQP positions. They are slightly different from the ones we meet in the Caro-Kann CCStartBracketCCsee the chapter on thePanov and Steiner variationsCCEndBracketCC, as we still have a c-pawn, but the e-pawn is gone. Still, the type of position and strategy is rather familiar, and there aren't any pitfalls to be aware of. Let's have a look at some variations now. 2...d5 3.cxd5 exd5 Now White usually continues with 4.exd5 , which we examine via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2P1P3/8/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.exd5 exd5 4.cxd5 . Besides this normal continuation,

White also has an odd gambit available that I want to check briefly. 4.O&b3 This line is called Orthoschnapp Gambit. I just found out that it was invented in the early 1980s by German FM Stefan Bücker, who has an enormous track record of creative opening ideas. This gambit has gained some CCStartBracketCCrelativeCCEndBracketCC popularity due to the online chess streaming scene. IM Eric Rosen has played it many times. One of his videos is the reason that I know that this line exists... I wasn't aware of it at all before watching it. Let's have a look now at how to refute the Orthoschnapp CCStartBracketCCno, I have no idea about the origin of the nameCCEndBracketCC. 4...dxe4 Let's take the centre pawn first. 5.Kc4 This is White's basic idea. They sacrifice the e-pawn to allow this attack on the f7-pawn. 5...O&e7 We need to play a queen move to cover f7. Going to e7 is stronger than d7, as we will see. 6..xc3 .xf6 Now it becomes clear that it is difficult for White to develop the queenside. White's best try is to move the d-pawn now and give up a second pawn. 7.d3 Or 7.d4 exd3+ , leading to the same position. 7...exd3+ Check! The point why it was better to play ...Qe7 and not ...Qd7 earlier. 8.Ke3 d2+ Check! The e-pawn has already done a remarkable job. It started on e7, then to e6, to d5, to e4, to d3 and now d2 with a check! Black is better now in the following lines: ACCEndBracketCC 9.Kxd2 Qd7+ 10.Ke2 Nc6 11.Rd1 Bd6 - we are ready to castle next and remain a pawn up, looking forward to playing against White's 'centralized' king. BCCEndBracketCC 9.Kf1 Nc6 10.Nf3 Bd7! is strong. We threaten ...O-O-O, and 11.Qxb7 Rb8 12.Qxc7 Rxb2 is wild but great for Black.

☐ 15. English Lines without g3
■ 2.e4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.cxd5

1.c4 e6 In this chapter, we'll examine all relevant lines after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 in which White avoids an early kingside fianchetto. There is adedicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 . 2.e4 An unexpected change of gears! White suddenly transposes to a rare line of the French Defence: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 e6 2.c4 is the move order used there. The move 2.e4 is unpopular but sometimes played if White wants to avoid mainstream theory and transpositions like 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 , which amounts to half a dozen chapters in this course. For us, 2.e4 is not much of a concern: After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppp1ppp/4p3/8/2P1P3/8/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2...d5 White usually plays 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2P1P3/8/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.exd5

exd5 4.cxd5 , which both lead to IQP positions. They are slightly different from the ones we meet in the Caro-Kann CCStartBracketCCsee the chapter on thePanov and Steiner variationsCCEndBracketCC, as we still have a c-pawn, but the e-pawn is gone. Still, the type of position and strategy is rather familiar, and there aren't any pitfalls to be aware of. Let's have a look at some variations now. 2...d5 3.exd5 exd5 Now White can choose between taking on d5 or playing 4.d4 , which does not immediately create an IQP in the centre. We will usually get to this structure later, though. 4.cxd5 .xf6 Similar to the Steiner Variation of the Caro-Kann CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.c4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.cxd5 Nf6 CCEndBracketCC we want to capture on d5 with the knight and avoid losing time with early queen moves. 5.Kb5+ This looks like White's most interesting try. After 5.Nc3 Nxd5 , I don't see the need to dig deeper, as normal development moves should suffice to get good chances. It's rather White who needs to worry about being equal. 5....xbd7 In the Caro-Kann, we play in the same way, answering the check with ...Nbd7 CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/ 8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.c4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.cxd5 Nf6 5.Bb5+ Nbd7 CCEndBracketCC. 6..xc3 a6 I like to get rid of the pin, allowing ...Nb6. 7.Ke2 White plays this move most of the time. After 7.Ba4 b5 , we'll eventually win the d5-pawn and have reasonable control of d5, the important square in front of the IQP. 7....xb6 8..xf3 Kd6 We are now sure to get the d5-pawn and don't need to take it right away. One good point to remember is that playing with ...Bd6 is more active, but White might have Bg5, pinning our knight at a later stage. This can be easily prevented with ...h6, though. So the way to go is: If White plays d2-d4, we respond with ...h6! to stop the pin. 9.0-0 0-0 10.d4 h6 Without the pin White loses an important active possibility. Next, we'll regain d5 and aim for a setup with ...c6 and ...Be6, completing our development.

☐ 15. English Lines without g3
■ 2.e4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4 #1

1.c4 e6 In this chapter, we'll examine all relevant lines after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 in which White avoids an early kingside fianchetto. There is adedicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 . 2.e4 An unexpected change of gears! White suddenly transposes to a rare line of the French Defence: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 e6 2.c4 is the move order used there. The move 2.e4 is unpopular but sometimes played if White wants to avoid mainstream theory and

transpositions like 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 , which amounts to half a dozen chapters in this course. For us, 2.e4 is not much of a concern: After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppp1ppp/4p3/8/2P1P3/8/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2...d5 White usually plays 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2P1P3/8/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.exd5 exd5 4.cxd5 , which both lead to IQP positions. They are slightly different from the ones we meet in the Caro-Kann CCStartBracketCCsee the chapter on thePanov and Steiner variationsCCEndBracketCC, as we still have a c-pawn, but the e-pawn is gone. Still, the type of position and strategy is rather familiar, and there aren't any pitfalls to be aware of. Let's have a look at some variations now. 2...d5 3.exd5 exd5 Now White can choose between taking on d5 or playing 4.d4 , which does not immediately create an IQP in the centre. We will usually get to this structure later, though. 4.d4 This position frequently arises from CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.c4 , starting as an Exchange Variation of the French Defence. In Keep It Simple: 1.e4 I advocated playing the Exchange French for White but suggested playing 4.Nf3 instead. One point of the move is to answer 4...Bd6 with 5.c4 , claiming that the bishop on d6 is not ideal in the arising IQP positions. I dismissed 4.c4 because of the lines that I am now recommending for Black. The main point to remember for Black is: we want to develop our pieces as actively as possible and start with ...Nf6 and ...Bb4 and avoid a more passive setup with ...Be7, for example. We'll check the concrete lines now, but remembering this general concept is an excellent guideline. A second point to remember: we want to capture on c4 at some point, but only after White has spent a tempo on moving the f1-bishop. The usual procedure is to wait for Bd3 when we capture c4 to create the IQP. 4....xf6 5..xf3 Kb4+ After 6.Nc3 we transpose to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/2PP4/8/PP3PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 1 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nc3 Bb4 6.Nf3 . White can play 6.Bd2 , but this is welcome. 6.Kd2 Kxd2+ We are happy about minor piece trades. The general strategy against an IQP is to trade off as many minor pieces as possible and keep the heavy pieces to build pressure against the weak pawn. After the trade on d2, I already prefer Black. We can develop our pieces quickly and have a clear target on d4 in the long run.

☐ 15. English Lines without g3
■ 2.e4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4 #2

1.c4 e6 In this chapter, we'll examine all relevant lines after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 in which White avoids an early kingside fianchetto. There is adedicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0

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CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/1bPP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 O-O 8.Nf3 Nc6 . The simple concept is: capture immediately after White has moved the bishop. 7...dxc4 8.0-0 White should play 8.Bxc4 , when again 8...Nc6 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/1bPP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 O-O 8.Nf3 Nc6 . White sometimes plays 8.O-O to avoid 8.Bxc4 Re8+ , but this concern is unwarranted. 8...Kxc3 A simple solution would be 8...Nc6 9.Bxc4 Bg4 , which transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/1bPP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 dxc4 again. However, taking on c3 is stronger, as we manage to keep an extra pawn and White's compensation seems insufficient. 9.bxc3 Ke6 I like this better than 9...b5 , which is also possible to keep the pawn. 10..xe5 White attacks c4 a second time. How do we keep the pawn now? 10....xd5 Much better than 10...b5?! 11.Bg5 . We attack c3 first and then cover the c4-pawn. 11.O&c2 .xb6 We keep the pawn and have good control of the d5-square. With ... N8d7, we'll complete development and fight White's e5-knight. White does not have enough for the pawn.

☐ 15. English Lines without g3
■ 2.e4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4 #3

1.c4 e6 In this chapter, we'll examine all relevant lines after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 in which White avoids an early kingside fianchetto. There is adedicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 . 2.e4 An unexpected change of gears! White suddenly transposes to a rare line of the French Defence: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 e6 2.c4 is the move order used there. The move 2.e4 is unpopular but sometimes played if White wants to avoid mainstream theory and transpositions like 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 , which amounts to half a dozen chapters in this course. For us, 2.e4 is not much of a concern: After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppp1ppp/4p3/8/2P1P3/8/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2...d5 White usually plays 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2P1P3/8/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.exd5 exd5 4.cxd5 , which both lead to IQP positions. They are slightly different from the ones we meet in the Caro-Kann CCStartBracketCCsee the chapter on thePanov and Steiner variationsCCEndBracketCC, as we still have a c-pawn, but the e-pawn is gone. Still, the type of position and strategy is rather familiar, and there aren't any pitfalls to be aware of. Let's have a look at some variations now. 2...d5 3.exd5 exd5

Now White can choose between taking on d5 or playing 4.d4 , which does not immediately create an IQP in the centre. We will usually get to this structure later, though. 4.d4 This position frequently arises from CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.c4 , starting as an Exchange Variation of the French Defence. In Keep It Simple: 1.e4 I advocated playing the Exchange French for White but suggested playing 4.Nf3 instead. One point of the move is to answer 4...Bd6 with 5.c4 , claiming that the bishop on d6 is not ideal in the arising IQP positions. I dismissed 4.c4 because of the lines that I am now recommending for Black. The main point to remember for Black is: we want to develop our pieces as actively as possible and start with ...Nf6 and ...Bb4 and avoid a more passive setup with ...Be7, for example. We'll check the concrete lines now, but remembering this general concept is an excellent guideline. A second point to remember: we want to capture on c4 at some point, but only after White has spent a tempo on moving the f1-bishop. The usual procedure is to wait for Bd3 when we capture c4 to create the IQP. 4....xf6 5..xc3 White usually starts with this move, but 5.Nf3 Bb4+ 6.Nc3 might lead to the same positions. 5...Kb4 As mentioned in the notes to 4.d4: we should develop as actively as possible. Placing the bishop on b4 is Black's best setup, in my mind. After 5...Bb4 White usually chooses between 6.Nf3 or 6.Bd3 , but they will often lead to the same positions. After 6.Nf3 O-O 7.Bd3 dxc4 8.Bxc4 and CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/1bPP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 O-O 8.Nf3 we see two natural sequences that quickly merge to the same variation. An independent but dubious move is 6.a3?! , which loses too much time. 6.a3 White wins the bishop pair but loses a lot of time and weakens the queenside. 6...Kxc3+ 7.bxc3 0-0 We have an excellent lead in development and are ready to play ...Re8 next. One point to realize is that after the capture on c3, the pawn structure has changed significantly. In an IQP scenario, I advise developing our b8-knight to c6, putting pressure on the isolated pawn. After taking on c3, there is no IQP to pressurize, so ...Nc6 makes a lot less sense. Let's have a look at a possible line to illustrate this point. 8..xf3 Qe8+ 9.Ke3 .xbd7 Here 9...Ng4 is possible, but it loses a lot of time. With ...Nbd7, we plan to play ...Nb6 and ...Nbd5. This gives Black a great position, as the following line shows. 10.Kd3 dxc4 11.Kxc4 .xb6 12.Kb3 .xbd5 Black is much better here, as White has no good way to defend both c3 and e3.

☐ 15. English Lines without g3
■ 2.e4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4 #4

1.c4 e6 In this chapter, we'll examine all relevant lines after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 in which White avoids an early kingside fianchetto. There is adedicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/

RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 . 2.e4 An unexpected change of gears! White suddenly transposes to a rare line of the French Defence: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 e6 2.c4 is the move order used there. The move 2.e4 is unpopular but sometimes played if White wants to avoid mainstream theory and transpositions like 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 , which amounts to half a dozen chapters in this course. For us, 2.e4 is not much of a concern: After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppp1ppp/4p3/8/2P1P3/8/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2... d5 White usually plays 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2P1P3/8/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.exd5 exd5 4.cxd5 , which both lead to IQP positions. They are slightly different from the ones we meet in the Caro-Kann CCStartBracketCCsee the chapter on thePanov and Steiner variationsCCEndBracketCC, as we still have a c-pawn, but the e-pawn is gone. Still, the type of position and strategy is rather familiar, and there aren't any pitfalls to be aware of. Let's have a look at some variations now. 2...d5 3.exd5 exd5 Now White can choose between taking on d5 or playing 4.d4 , which does not immediately create an IQP in the centre. We will usually get to this structure later, though. 4.d4 This position frequently arises from CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.c4 , starting as an Exchange Variation of the French Defence. In Keep It Simple: 1.e4 I advocated playing the Exchange French for White but suggested playing 4.Nf3 instead. One point of the move is to answer 4...Bd6 with 5.c4 , claiming that the bishop on d6 is not ideal in the arising IQP positions. I dismissed 4.c4 because of the lines that I am now recommending for Black. The main point to remember for Black is: we want to develop our pieces as actively as possible and start with ...Nf6 and ...Bb4 and avoid a more passive setup with ...Be7, for example. We'll check the concrete lines now, but remembering this general concept is an excellent guideline. A second point to remember: we want to capture on c4 at some point, but only after White has spent a tempo on moving the f1-bishop. The usual procedure is to wait for Bd3 when we capture c4 to create the IQP. 4....xf6 5..xc3 White usually starts with this move, but 5.Nf3 Bb4+ 6.Nc3 might lead to the same positions. 5...Kb4 As mentioned in the notes to 4.d4: we should develop as actively as possible. Placing the bishop on b4 is Black's best setup, in my mind. After 5...Bb4 White usually chooses between 6.Nf3 or 6.Bd3 , but they will often lead to the same positions. After 6.Nf3 O-O 7.Bd3 dxc4 8.Bxc4 and CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/1bPP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 O-O 8.Nf3 we see two natural sequences that quickly merge to the same variation. An independent but dubious move is 6.a3?! , which loses too much time. 6.Kd3 White often starts with the bishop move to still have Nge2 available in case of a quick ...Re8+. If they start with 6.Nf3 , there is the line 6...O-O 7.Bd3 Re8+ , which many players on the white

side are concerned about. It is nothing special for Black CCStartBracketCCwe play 7...dxc4 in this particular move orderCCEndBracketCC, but it still might look annoying at first sight. Therefore CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/1bPP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 O-O 7.Nge2 is a common continuation to avoid this scenario from White's perspective. 6...dxc4 I like the simple concept of taking on c4 right after White has played the bishop to d3. It's possible to play 6...O-O first, but it makes no substantial difference, as we would still take on c4 soon after. 7.Kxc4 0-0 Now, there is a split between White's knight placement on f3 and e2. This decision also influences our setup fundamentally. 8..xge2 White wants to avoid the check on e8 and develops the knight to a less aggressive square. This decision leads to quite a different scenario compared to 8.Nf3 . 8....xbd7 At first, I thought that playing ...Nc6 is a 'universal' setup that Black can play against both Nf3 and Nge2. However, after some closer inspection, I found that ...Nc6 is less convincing against Nge2. The point is that a future ...Bg4 is not an effective pin and can easily be broken with f2-f3. Without the pin, we don't get as much pressure on the d4-pawn. Long story short: it's possible to play 8...Nc6 here, but it is not as effective. Instead, I found 8...Nbd7 to be much simpler to handle. Let's have a look. 9.0-0 .xb6 10.Kb3 c6 The idea of 8...Nbd7 is this setup, which controls d5 reliably. If allowed, we'd like to play ...Re8 and ...Be6 next. 11.Kg5 Black has quite often reacted to this pin with the retreat ...Be7, which is unnecessarily passive. 11...h6 Gaining a useful tempo. 12.Kh4 Qe8 We are now ready for ...Be6, completing development. I found one game with 13.Nf4!? now, which is an amazing idea. White hopes for 13...g5? 14.Qd3! , when the threat Qg6+ is a cold shower! Black is fine, however. An excellent way to counter is CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp3pp1/1np2n1p/8/1b1P1N1B/1BN5/PP3PPP/R2Q1RK1 b - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13...Qd6 , when 14.Bg3 Bxc3 15.bxc3 Ne4 leads to equal chances.

☐ 15. English Lines without g3
■ 2.e4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4 #5

1.c4 e6 In this chapter, we'll examine all relevant lines after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 in which White avoids an early kingside fianchetto. There is adedicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 . 2.e4 An unexpected change of gears! White suddenly transposes to a rare line of the French Defence: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 e6 2.c4 is the move order used there. The move 2.e4 is unpopular but sometimes played if White wants to avoid mainstream theory and

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would still take on c4 soon after. 7.Kxc4 0-0 Now, there is a split between White's knight placement on f3 and e2. This decision also influences our setup fundamentally. 8..xf3 White chooses the active knight placement on f3 and is not afraid of the rook check. 8....xc6 Let's talk about Black's best setup against White's development of the knight to f3. In this scenario, contrary to the Nge2-setups, Black has the attractive option to exert pressure on d4 by developing the knight to c6 and pinning the f3-knight with ...Bg4. Not only do we attack d4, but we also make it very difficult for White ever to play Ne5 and possibly build some pressure against f7. So we should play ...Nc6 and ...Bg4. Does the move order matter? Not that much; you may also start with 8...Bg4 here. Surprisingly, inserting the check is not helpful for Black. After 8...Re8+ 9.Be3 Nc6 10.O-O Bg4 the move 11.Qb3 highlights a problem of ...Re8, as the pawn on f7 is under attack. 9.0-0 Here 9.h3?! is very slow and may already be answered with 9...Ne4 . 9...Kg4 The pressure on d4 is quite severe already. We threaten to take the knight and capture the d-pawn. 10.Ke3 If White plays 10.a3 , we just play 10...Ba5 and keep the bishop. On b6, it might put additional pressure on d4. 10...O&d6 This move scores incredibly well for Black, which shows that White's game is not easy. We connect rooks and avoid the premature 10...Bxf3? 11.Qxf3 Nxd4 12.Qxb7 , when White regains the pawn with a significant advantage. 11.Ke2 White has played this move in the majority of games that I found. The pin is annoying, so White decided to break it. It's not the only move, though. Instead of looking at many lines, just some general points: AEndBracket If they play a2-a3, the move ...Ba5 is usually a good idea, going to b6 later. BEndBracket Against h2-h3, keeping the tension with ...Bh5 also makes sense. I'd only take on f3 if I am winning material or see something special. CEndBracket Nb5 is just answered with ...Qd7 when the knight has not accomplished much. DEndBracket Centralizing rooks is the next step StartBrackete8 and d8EndBracket. 11...Qad8 Or 11...Rfe8 , which is just as good. I think we can conclude that Black has a rather comfortable game in this type of IQP.

☐ 15. English Lines without g3
■ 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.b3

1.c4 e6 In this chapter, we'll examine all relevant lines after StartFENrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1EndFEN 1.c4 e6 in which White avoids an early kingside fianchetto. There is adedicated chapter on StartFENrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1EndFEN 1.c4 e6 2.g3 and StartFENrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1EndFEN 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 . 2..xf3 White's most flexible move at this point. 2...d5 After our 'premove' 2...d5 White has many options that we discuss in other Chapters. Here's the overview. AEndBracket 3.d4 Nf6 leads

toQueen's Gambit orCatalan BCCEndBracketCC 3.cxd5 exd5 4.d4 leads to Queen's Gambit Carlsbad CCCEndBracketCC 3.g3 leads toEnglish Lines with g3 DCCEndBracketCC 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 leads toEnglish Lines With g3 ECCEndBracketCC 3.b3 d4 leads toEnglish Lines With g3 CCStartBracketCCWhite is almost always playing g3 soon; therefore, it's in this chapterCCEndBracketCC Alright, so what's left? The move 3.e3 is the one to check, and it's White's most serious option in the current chapter. 3.e3 White covers the c-pawn, a seemingly modest move. Still, this line has gained considerable popularity and was recommended for White by yours truly in Lifetime Repertoire 1.c4/ 1.Nf3. White's main idea is playing a quick b2-b3 and staying flexible. According to Black's setup, White may play a later d2-d4 or not. What's our plan with Black against it? I'd like to discuss it right after our natural reply. 3....xf6 Our knight is best on f6, so let's start with this natural move. The position after 3...Nf6 may also arise after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 , which is a popular move order that I have employed countless times with the white pieces. Now White's choice is mostly between 4.Nc3 and 4.b3 , while 4.d4 would immediately transpose to a sideline of theQueen's Gambit. The difference between 4.b3 and 4.Nc3 is minor, as White usually combines both moves quickly. I'll discuss our approach in the notes to 4.Nc3, while 4.b3 is briefly covered to show the transpositions to 4.Nc3. 4.b3 This move has little independent value, compared to 4.Nc3 . After 4.Nc3, White's next moves will usually be 5.b3 and 6.Bb2, which makes a transposition almost certain. Here we'll look at how to transpose and talk about possible ways for White to deviate. 4....xbd7 I suggest playing a setup with ...Nbd7, ...Bd6 and ...O-O, played in that order. The merits of this approach are discussed in the notes to 4.Nc3 inthis line. 5.Kb2 Here 5.Nc3 Bd6 would already transpose to 4.Nc3. 5.d4 is rare, but a possible transposition to a Queen's Gambit Declined. In the QGD after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 , we play the move 4...a6 first, trying to provoke an untimely bishop move by White. If White plays 5.b3 , we aim for a setup involving ...Nbd7, ...Bd6, ...b6 and ...Bb7. Here, in the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.b3 Nbd7 5.d4 we'd transpose directly with 5...a6 , but it's easier to think about it as a setup. Both sides develop rather slowly, so the precise move order is not very critical. Here 5...b6 would work, too. A scenario to avoid is 5.d4 Bd6?! , allowing 6.c5 for no reason. Once d2-d4 is on the board, it's best to have ...b6 played first, only then ...Bd6. 5...Kd6 6..xc3 Again, 6.d4 would transpose to a sideline of the Queen's Gambit. Here 6...b6 is precise so that we don't have to worry about c4-c5. After 7.Nc3 a6 8.Bd3 Bb7 9.O-O O-O we have transposed to one of the main positions of this particular variation of the QGD. White rarely plays 6.d4 here, but we want to understand and master possible transpositions. In closed games, move order tricks are abundant. Back to the position after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/

RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.b3 Nbd7 5.Bb2 Bd6 . White usually plays 6.Nc3 , but this transposes to 4.Nc3 in the current chapter. Anything else? Maybe they could start with 6.Qc2 , but after 6...O-O , it's tough to suggest anything else than 7.Nc3 , which again takes us to 4.Nc3 Nbd7 5. b3 Bd6 6.Bb2 O-O 7.Qc2 CCStartBracketCCseethis lineCCEndBracketCC. 6...0-0 And we have transposed to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2P5/ 4PN2/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nc3 Nbd7 5.b3 Bd6 6.Bb2 O-O CCStartBracketCCseethis lineCCEndBracketCC.

☐ 15. English Lines without g3
■ 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 #1

1.c4 e6 In this chapter, we'll examine all relevant lines after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 in which White avoids an early kingside fianchetto. There is adedicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 . 2..xf3 White's most flexible move at this point. 2...d5 After our 'premove' 2...d5 White has many options that we discuss in other Chapters. Here's the overview. ACCEndBracketCC 3.d4 Nf6 leads toQueen's Gambit orCatalan BCCEndBracketCC 3.cxd5 exd5 4.d4 leads to Queen's Gambit Carlsbad CCCEndBracketCC 3.g3 leads toEnglish Lines with g3 DCCEndBracketCC 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 leads toEnglish Lines With g3 ECCEndBracketCC 3.b3 d4 leads toEnglish Lines With g3 CCStartBracketCCWhite is almost always playing g3 soon; therefore, it's in this chapterCCEndBracketCC Alright, so what's left? The move 3.e3 is the one to check, and it's White's most serious option in the current chapter. 3.e3 White covers the c-pawn, a seemingly modest move. Still, this line has gained considerable popularity and was recommended for White by yours truly in Lifetime Repertoire 1.c4/ 1.Nf3. White's main idea is playing a quick b2-b3 and staying flexible. According to Black's setup, White may play a later d2-d4 or not. What's our plan with Black against it? I'd like to discuss it right after our natural reply. 3....xf6 Our knight is best on f6, so let's start with this natural move. The position after 3...Nf6 may also arise after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 , which is a popular move order that I have employed countless times with the white pieces. Now White's choice is mostly between 4.Nc3 and 4.b3 , while 4.d4 would immediately transpose to a sideline of theQueen's Gambit. The difference between 4.b3 and 4.Nc3 is minor, as White usually combines both moves quickly. I'll discuss our approach in the notes to 4.Nc3, while 4.b3 is briefly covered to show the transpositions to 4.Nc3. 4..xc3 White develops the knight first and then decides if they want to continue with d2-d4 or

play a quick b2-b3 to fianchetto the queen's bishop. This is a flexible approach for White that I also recommend in my Lifetime Repertoire: 1.c4/1.Nf3CCEndBracketCC. In most cases, White will continue with b2-b3 next and avoid the move d2-d4, keeping the long diagonal a1-h8 open for the bishop. If they decide to play d2-d4 anyway, the game transposes to a sideline of the Queen's Gambit Declined that usually starts with CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 . Now, before we return to the current position on the board, we need to discuss this QGD line for a moment. In this line, play usually evolves like the following sequence: 4...a6 CCStartBracketCChoping for 5.Bd3?! dxc4! 6.Bxc4 b5 , thus provoking b2-b3CCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/4PN2/PP3PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.b3 Nbd7 6.Bb2 b6 7.Nc3 Bb7 8.Bd3 Bd6 . We provoke the move b2-b3 and then go for a setup with ...Nbd7, ...Bd6, ...b6 and ...Bb7. This setup makes a very harmonious impression. We can also use it in the line that we a currently studying after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 . If we play the same setup here, we also don't have to worry about White ever playing d2-d4, as this would simply transpose to the lines of QGD that we have in our repertoire anyway. So, we'd like to play the b8-knight to d7, play ...Bd6 and ...Bb7, prepared by ...b6. What's the best move order? And what about the move ...a6, that we play early on in the QGD? In the QGD, we play this move to provoke b2-b3. Here it is part of White's concept to play this move anyway, so there is no need for ...a6 at the moment. I suggest a different approach: we should play the order ...Nbd7, ...Bd6 and ...O-O. Not playing ...a6 or ...b6 early gives us the best possible options against offbeat tries by White. Let's have a look. 4....xbd7 I suggest the move order ...Nbd7, ...Bd6 and ...O-O, as already mentioned in the notes to 4.Nc3. 5.b3 That's White's concept behind the whole line: fianchetto the queen's bishop and keep flexibility in the centre. If White plays 5.d4 instead, we immediately transpose to the QGD, when 5...a6 is my recommendation. 5...Kd6 There is nothing particularly wrong about starting with 5...a6 or 5...b6 , but I like this move order. One reason is that White has some ideas after we have played ...b6. A possible line could be 5...b6 6.Bb2 Bb7 7.Rc1 a6 CCStartBracketCCpreparing ...Bd6CCEndBracketCC 8.cxd5 exd5 9.Ne2!? , which I recommended for White in my LTR 1.c4/1.Nf3 on Chessable. White has ideas like Ne2-d4, exploiting the squares c6 and f5. Starting with 5...Bd6 eliminates this option. 6.Kb2 White's normal choice. They can play 6.d4 to go the QGD route, but we'd be fine as we use the same setup there. After, for example, 6.d4 b6 7.Bb2 Bb7 8.Bd3 a6 9.O-O O-O we'd reach the main part of theQGD sidelines chapter. I advise playing 6...b6 first to avoid a possible c4-c5 with a tempo on the d6-bishop. 6...0-0 Now what? It's decision time for White. One option is 7.d4 , when 7...b6 8.Bd3 Bb7 9.O-O a6 would again transpose to theQGD sidelines chapter. Let's have a look at the independent possibilities. We'll examine 7.g3 and the less committal moves 7.Qc2 and 7.Rc1 . 7.g3 A creative idea that worked much better if we had played ...b6

already. Now we have a good opportunity to change the pawn structure, demonstrating the flexibility of our move order. 7...dxc4 The alternative 7...c6!? , intending ...e5, is also fine for Black. 8.bxc4 e5 That's the point of the capture on c4. We manage e6-e5 and will develop our c8-bishop on its starting diagonal. We also have ideas based on the weakened light square's in our opponent's camp. 9.Kg2 Let's have a look at this move to show the weaknesses I was talking about. 9...e4 10..xg5 .xc5 And the juicy square d3 is in sight. Black is in good shape here. An instructive line is 11.O-O Bf5 12.Qc2 Be5! 13.Ba3 Nfd7 , when Black holds the important e-pawn.

☐ 15. English Lines without g3
■ 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 #2

1.c4 e6 In this chapter, we'll examine all relevant lines after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 in which White avoids an early kingside fianchetto. There is adedicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 . 2..xf3 White's most flexible move at this point. 2...d5 After our 'premove' 2...d5 White has many options that we discuss in other Chapters. Here's the overview. ACCEndBracketCC 3.d4 Nf6 leads toQueen's Gambit orCatalan BCCEndBracketCC 3.cxd5 exd5 4.d4 leads to Queen's Gambit Carlsbad CCCEndBracketCC 3.g3 leads toEnglish Lines with g3 DCCEndBracketCC 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 leads toEnglish Lines With g3 ECCEndBracketCC 3.b3 d4 leads toEnglish Lines With g3 CCStartBracketCCWhite is almost always playing g3 soon; therefore, it's in this chapterCCEndBracketCC Alright, so what's left? The move 3.e3 is the one to check, and it's White's most serious option in the current chapter. 3.e3 White covers the c-pawn, a seemingly modest move. Still, this line has gained considerable popularity and was recommended for White by yours truly in Lifetime Repertoire 1.c4/ 1.Nf3. White's main idea is playing a quick b2-b3 and staying flexible. According to Black's setup, White may play a later d2-d4 or not. What's our plan with Black against it? I'd like to discuss it right after our natural reply. 3....xf6 Our knight is best on f6, so let's start with this natural move. The position after 3...Nf6 may also arise after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 , which is a popular move order that I have employed countless times with the white pieces. Now White's choice is mostly between 4.Nc3 and 4.b3 , while 4.d4 would immediately transpose to a sideline of theQueen's Gambit. The difference between 4.b3 and 4.Nc3 is minor, as White usually combines both moves quickly. I'll discuss our approach in the notes to 4.Nc3, while 4.b3 is briefly covered to show the transpositions to 4.Nc3. 4..xc3

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and 7.Rc1 . 7.Qc1 I recommend this move in Lifetime Repertoires 1.c4/1.Nf3. White is toying with the idea cxd5, followed by Nc3-b5. We need to take this into account. 7...a6 A familiar idea. The move is part of our target setup, and it stops White's Nb5 ideas. 8.Ke2 Again the move I suggested in my course for White. I didn't explore this position any deeper, as Black's particular move order is rare. About one year later, I figured out that Black's move order is quite clever - which is why I am now featuring it for Black. What does White have instead of 8.Be2? After 8.d4 b6 , we'd transpose to a QGD type of position again CCStartBracketCCRc1 early on is uncommon for White, but logical enoughCCEndBracketCC. The move 8.g3 could again be answered with 8...dxc4 9.bxc4 e5 . We have seen the same idea after 7.g3 instead of 7.Rc1 CCStartBracketCCseethis lineCCEndBracketCC. 8...b6 Sticking with our concept to develop with ...b6 and ...Bb7. We are rather flexible, though. There is nothing wrong with moves like 8...Re8 or 8...Qe7 , for example. 9.cxd5 We should check the capture because 9...exd5 10.Nd4 looks a bit scary at first. White can continue their development with 9.O-O , when 9...Bb7 completes our setup. White does not have many active ideas in this scenario. After 10.d4 , we can play 10... Qe7 and ...Ne4 next, just in the spirit of the lines that we play in the QGD with an early e3. White can try to avoid d2-d4, but I see no pointed way to do it. We are well developed and have a harmonious setup. An idea worth noting is ...d5xc4 at some point, opening up our b7-bishop. d6 and b7 are pointing to the white king, after all! 9...exd5 10..xd4 A tad scary at first, as c6 and f5 are good spots for the knight. We are alright, though. 10....xc5 We cover the f5-square. Now 11.Nc6 Qd7 leads nowhere, and White's Nd4-jump didn't net any concrete benefit. We can continue with ...Re8, ...Bb7 and ...Qd7 to complete our development and connect rooks.

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■ 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 #3

1.c4 e6 In this chapter, we'll examine all relevant lines after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 in which White avoids an early kingside fianchetto. There is adedicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 . 2..xf3 White's most flexible move at this point. 2...d5 After our 'premove' 2...d5 White has many options that we discuss in other Chapters. Here's the overview. ACCEndBracketCC 3.d4 Nf6 leads toQueen's Gambit orCatalan BCCEndBracketCC 3.cxd5 exd5 4.d4 leads to Queen's Gambit Carlsbad CCCEndBracketCC 3.g3 leads toEnglish Lines with g3 DCCEndBracketCC 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 leads toEnglish Lines With g3 ECCEndBracketCC 3.b3 d4 leads toEnglish Lines With g3 CCStartBracketCCWhite is almost always playing g3 soon; therefore, it's in this

chapterCCEndBracketCC Alright, so what's left? The move 3.e3 is the one to check, and it's White's most serious option in the current chapter. 3.e3 White covers the c-pawn, a seemingly modest move. Still, this line has gained considerable popularity and was recommended for White by yours truly in Lifetime Repertoire 1.c4/ 1.Nf3. White's main idea is playing a quick b2-b3 and staying flexible. According to Black's setup, White may play a later d2-d4 or not. What's our plan with Black against it? I'd like to discuss it right after our natural reply. 3....xf6 Our knight is best on f6, so let's start with this natural move. The position after 3...Nf6 may also arise after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 , which is a popular move order that I have employed countless times with the white pieces. Now White's choice is mostly between 4.Nc3 and 4.b3 , while 4.d4 would immediately transpose to a sideline of theQueen's Gambit. The difference between 4.b3 and 4.Nc3 is minor, as White usually combines both moves quickly. I'll discuss our approach in the notes to 4.Nc3, while 4.b3 is briefly covered to show the transpositions to 4.Nc3. 4..xc3 White develops the knight first and then decides if they want to continue with d2-d4 or play a quick b2-b3 to fianchetto the queen's bishop. This is a flexible approach for White that I also recommend in my Lifetime Repertoire: 1.c4/1.Nf3CCEndBracketCC. In most cases, White will continue with b2-b3 next and avoid the move d2-d4, keeping the long diagonal a1-h8 open for the bishop. If they decide to play d2-d4 anyway, the game transposes to a sideline of the Queen's Gambit Declined that usually starts with CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 . Now, before we return to the current position on the board, we need to discuss this QGD line for a moment. In this line, play usually evolves like the following sequence: 4...a6 CCStartBracketCChoping for 5.Bd3?! dxc4! 6.Bxc4 b5 , thus provoking b2-b3CCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/4PN2/ PP3PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.b3 Nbd7 6.Bb2 b6 7.Nc3 Bb7 8.Bd3 Bd6 . We provoke the move b2-b3 and then go for a setup with ...Nbd7, ...Bd6, ...b6 and ...Bb7. This setup makes a very harmonious impression. We can also use it in the line that we a currently studying after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2. Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 . If we play the same setup here, we also don't have to worry about White ever playing d2-d4, as this would simply transpose to the lines of QGD that we have in our repertoire anyway. So, we'd like to play the b8-knight to d7, play ...Bd6 and ...Bb7, prepared by ...b6. What's the best move order? And what about the move ...a6, that we play early on in the QGD? In the QGD, we play this move to provoke b2-b3. Here it is part of White's concept to play this move anyway, so there is no need for ...a6 at the moment. I suggest a different approach: we should play the order ...Nbd7, ...Bd6 and ...O-O. Not playing ...a6 or ...b6 early gives us the best possible options against offbeat tries by White. Let's have a look. 4....xbd7 I suggest the move order ...Nbd7, ...Bd6 and ...O-O, as already mentioned in the notes to 4.Nc3. 5.b3 That's White's concept behind the whole line: fianchetto

the queen's bishop and keep flexibility in the centre. If White plays 5.d4 instead, we immediately transpose to the QGD, when 5...a6 is my recommendation. 5...Kd6 There is nothing particularly wrong about starting with 5...a6 or 5...b6 , but I like this move order. One reason is that White has some ideas after we have played ...b6. A possible line could be 5...b6 6.Bb2 Bb7 7.Rc1 a6 CCStartBracketCCpreparing ...Bd6CCEndBracketCC 8.cxd5 exd5 9.Ne2!? , which I recommended for White in my LTR 1.c4/1.Nf3 on Chessable. White has ideas like Ne2-d4, exploiting the squares c6 and f5. Starting with 5...Bd6 eliminates this option. 6.Kb2 White's normal choice. They can play 6.d4 to go the QGD route, but we'd be fine as we use the same setup there. After, for example, 6.d4 b6 7.Bb2 Bb7 8.Bd3 a6 9. O-O O-O we'd reach the main part of theQGD sidelines chapter. I advise playing 6... b6 first to avoid a possible c4-c5 with a tempo on the d6-bishop. 6...0-0 Now what? It's decision time for White. One option is 7.d4 , when 7...b6 8.Bd3 Bb7 9.O-O a6 would again transpose to theQGD sidelines chapter. Let's have a look at the independent possibilities. We'll examine 7.g3 and the less committal moves 7.Qc2 and 7.Rc1 . 7.O&c2 White does not commit the pawn structure just yet and stays flexible. We now need to be cautious, as a natural-looking move now fails. 7...a6 We must avoid 7...b6? 8.cxd5 exd5 9.Nb5 , which highlights a point of White's Qc2. After the better move 7...a6! , we reach a comparably unexplored position. White now has to decide if they want to play aggressively CCStartBracketCCideas like 8.O-O-O , 8.g4 or 8.Rg1 CCEndBracketCC, or play more conservatively. 8.Qg1 If White wants to play aggressively, this is probably the best bet. Clearly wrong is 8.O-O-O? as 8...dxc4 9.bxc4 b5! opens up files at lightning speed. White could also throw the kitchen sink immediately with 8.g4 , after which 8...Nxg4 9.Rg1 Nde5 10.Nxe5 Nxe5 11.Be2 dxc4 12.bxc4 Ng6 is a possible line. We are a pawn up, but often ...b5! will be a good idea to open lines if White castles queenside. Objectively speaking, White's attack is probably premature but certainly leading to interesting play. 8...dxc4 Playing passively against such an ambitious move as 8.Rg1 is wrong. I like this suggestion of Stockfish, opening up the position immediately. 9.bxc4 b5 Fighting fire with fire! White's king will be in the centre for a while... let's open up the position as much as possible. 10.cxb5 e5 11.bxa6 Kxa6 Black has good compensation for the pawn. White's main issue is that the king won't have a safe place in the foreseeable future. I also like the fact that White's aggressive intentions have not been realized, and they are now put into the defensive - a role they certainly did not intend to be in.

☐ 15. English Lines without g3
■ 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 #4

1.c4 e6 In this chapter, we'll examine all relevant lines after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 in which White avoids an early kingside fianchetto. There

is adedicated chapter on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.g3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 . 2..xf3 White's most flexible move at this point. 2...d5 After our 'premove' 2...d5 White has many options that we discuss in other Chapters. Here's the overview. ACCEndBracketCC 3.d4 Nf6 leads toQueen's Gambit orCatalan BCCEndBracketCC 3.cxd5 exd5 4.d4 leads to Queen's Gambit Carlsbad CCCEndBracketCC 3.g3 leads toEnglish Lines with g3 DCCEndBracketCC 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 leads toEnglish Lines With g3 ECCEndBracketCC 3.b3 d4 leads toEnglish Lines With g3 CCStartBracketCCWhite is almost always playing g3 soon; therefore, it's in this chapterCCEndBracketCC Alright, so what's left? The move 3.e3 is the one to check, and it's White's most serious option in the current chapter. 3.e3 White covers the c-pawn, a seemingly modest move. Still, this line has gained considerable popularity and was recommended for White by yours truly in Lifetime Repertoire 1.c4/1.Nf3. White's main idea is playing a quick b2-b3 and staying flexible. According to Black's setup, White may play a later d2-d4 or not. What's our plan with Black against it? I'd like to discuss it right after our natural reply. 3....xf6 Our knight is best on f6, so let's start with this natural move. The position after 3...Nf6 may also arise after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 , which is a popular move order that I have employed countless times with the white pieces. Now White's choice is mostly between 4.Nc3 and 4.b3 , while 4.d4 would immediately transpose to a sideline of theQueen's Gambit. The difference between 4.b3 and 4.Nc3 is minor, as White usually combines both moves quickly. I'll discuss our approach in the notes to 4.Nc3, while 4.b3 is briefly covered to show the transpositions to 4.Nc3. 4..xc3 White develops the knight first and then decides if they want to continue with d2-d4 or play a quick b2-b3 to fianchetto the queen's bishop. This is a flexible approach for White that I also recommend in my Lifetime Repertoire: 1.c4/1.Nf3CCEndBracketCC. In most cases, White will continue with b2-b3 next and avoid the move d2-d4, keeping the long diagonal a1-h8 open for the bishop. If they decide to play d2-d4 anyway, the game transposes to a sideline of the Queen's Gambit Declined that usually starts with CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 . Now, before we return to the current position on the board, we need to discuss this QGD line for a moment. In this line, play usually evolves like the following sequence: 4...a6 CCStartBracketCChoping for 5.Bd3?! dxc4! 6.Bxc4 b5 , thus provoking b2-b3CCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/4PN2/PP3PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.b3 Nbd7 6.Bb2 b6 7.Nc3 Bb7 8.Bd3 Bd6 . We provoke the move b2-b3 and then go for a setup with ...Nbd7, ...Bd6, ...b6 and ...Bb7. This setup makes a very harmonious impression. We can also use it in the line that we a currently studying after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.

Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 . If we play the same setup here, we also don't have to worry about White ever playing d2-d4, as this would simply transpose to the lines of QGD that we have in our repertoire anyway. So, we'd like to play the b8-knight to d7, play ...Bd6 and ...Bb7, prepared by ...b6. What's the best move order? And what about the move ...a6, that we play early on in the QGD? In the QGD, we play this move to provoke b2-b3. Here it is part of White's concept to play this move anyway, so there is no need for ...a6 at the moment. I suggest a different approach: we should play the order ...Nbd7, ...Bd6 and ...O-O. Not playing ...a6 or ...b6 early gives us the best possible options against offbeat tries by White. Let's have a look. 4....xbd7 I suggest the move order ...Nbd7, ...Bd6 and ...O-O, as already mentioned in the notes to 4.Nc3. 5.b3 That's White's concept behind the whole line: fianchetto the queen's bishop and keep flexibility in the centre. If White plays 5.d4 instead, we immediately transpose to the QGD, when 5...a6 is my recommendation. 5...Kd6 There is nothing particularly wrong about starting with 5...a6 or 5...b6 , but I like this move order. One reason is that White has some ideas after we have played ...b6. A possible line could be 5...b6 6.Bb2 Bb7 7.Rc1 a6 CCStartBracketCCpreparing ...Bd6CCEndBracketCC 8.cxd5 exd5 9.Ne2!? , which I recommended for White in my LTR 1.c4/1.Nf3 on Chessable. White has ideas like Ne2-d4, exploiting the squares c6 and f5. Starting with 5...Bd6 eliminates this option. 6.Kb2 White's normal choice. They can play 6.d4 to go the QGD route, but we'd be fine as we use the same setup there. After, for example, 6.d4 b6 7.Bb2 Bb7 8.Bd3 a6 9. O-O O-O we'd reach the main part of theQGD sidelines chapter. I advise playing 6... b6 first to avoid a possible c4-c5 with a tempo on the d6-bishop. 6...0-0 Now what? It's decision time for White. One option is 7.d4 , when 7...b6 8.Bd3 Bb7 9.O-O a6 would again transpose to theQGD sidelines chapter. Let's have a look at the independent possibilities. We'll examine 7.g3 and the less committal moves 7.Qc2 and 7.Rc1 . 7.O&c2 White does not commit the pawn structure just yet and stays flexible. We now need to be cautious, as a natural-looking move now fails. 7...a6 We must avoid 7...b6? 8.cxd5 exd5 9.Nb5 , which highlights a point of White's Qc2. After the better move 7...a6! , we reach a comparably unexplored position. White now has to decide if they want to play aggressively CCStartBracketCCideas like 8.O-O-O , 8.g4 or 8.Rg1 CCEndBracketCC, or play more conservatively. 8.Ke2 A flexible move. White does not yet commit to a kingside attack, but still keeps this option. 8...Qe8 We still don't play 8...b6 . The move is possible, but there is a tactical issue, as White can play 9.cxd5 exd5 10.Nxd5!? Nxd5 11.Qc6 . This seems to be OK for Black after 11...Nb4 12.Qxa8 c6 , but it's awfully complicated. 9.0-0 The calm option. The move 9.g4 is possible, when you have a choice between 9...dxc4 10.bxc4 Nxg4 11.Rg1 f5 and CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/1ppn1ppp/p2bpn2/ 3p4/2P3P1/1PN1PN2/PBQPBP1P/R3K2R b KQ - 0 9CCEndFENCC 9...e5 10.cxd5 e4 . Both lines are tough to assess. The computer evaluation is 'equal chances', but it's anything but drawish. I don't think a deeper exploration is warranted, as we are already rather deep down the rabbit hole. 9...b6 Finally, we get to play the b-pawn. Now I'd like to show you a trap that White may fall for. 10.cxd5 It's better to play 10.

d4 , when 10...Bb7 leads to a familiar setup that we have talked about before. 10...exd5 11..xxd5 White tries to be clever, but it backfires terribly. 11....xxd5 12.O&c6 White attacks both knight and rook. What now? 12...Kb7 13.O&xb7 .xc5 14.O&c6 Or 14.Qxd5 Bxh2+ , winning the queen. 14....xb4 And the white queen is trapped!

☐ 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3
■ 2.c4

1..xf3 d5 Playing 1...d5 is a natural choice if you have the Queen's Gambit Declined in your repertoire. A very common reply is 2.d4 , when 2...Nf6 3.c4 would quickly transpose intomainline QGD orCatalan theory. A second immediate transposition happens after 2.c4 when 2...e6 leads to lines that I examine via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 , covered in thededicated chapters on 1.c4 e6. In the current chapter, we'll examine White's alternatives to these moves, most importantly 2.g3 , 2.b3 and 2.e3 . Other moves are very rare and don't warrant any deep preparation - playing according to common sense is fine and sufficient. 2.c4 The Reti System or Reti Opening; I think both names are used frequently. Black now has to make a key decision about which pawn structure to go for. You can take c4, advance the d-pawn or cover it with either c-pawn our e-pawn. 2...e6 I recommend playing 2...e6 . We transpose to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 , which is covered in thechapters on 1.c4 e6. Black's principled alternative is 2...d4 , gaining space. If you want to expand your repertoire and play in a less simplified but rather maximalist fashion, this is the way to go. I think that Black is fine after 2...d4, but White has some tricky ideas, like playing for a reversed Benko CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 d4 3.b4 c5 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC or Blumenfeld Gambit CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 d4 3.b4 c5 4.e3 CCEndBracketCC. If you have some experience with these openings from the white side, adding 2...d4 to your repertoire is an easier task. In the KIS context, just playing 2...e6 is a good solution. I need to add that after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.b3 I advise to play 3...d4! after all. At first, this might look odd, but the move ...e6 is far more useful than b3 for White. Benko or Blumenfeld style play with a quick b4 is out of the picture, making it easier to handle for Black, compared to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 d4 3.b4 . The sequence CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0

1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.b3 d4! is covered in the chapter on theEnglish with g3.

☐ 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3
■ 2.e3

1..xf3 d5 Playing 1...d5 is a natural choice if you have the Queen's Gambit Declined in your repertoire. A very common reply is 2.d4 , when 2...Nf6 3.c4 would quickly transpose intomainline QGD orCatalan theory. A second immediate transposition happens after 2.c4 when 2...e6 leads to lines that I examine via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 , covered in thededicated chapters on 1.c4 e6. In the current chapter, we'll examine White's alternatives to these moves, most importantly 2.g3 , 2.b3 and 2.e3 . Other moves are very rare and don't warrant any deep preparation - playing according to common sense is fine and sufficient. 2.e3 This seemingly modest move is the main pillar of my White repertoire that I have covered in LTR 1.c4/1.Nf3. In most cases, White intends c4 on the next move. 2....xf6 Black has an important decision at this point. I suggest 2...Nf6, as this will reliably transpose to lines that are part of our repertoire anyway. The transpositions are: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/8/4PN2/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 1 3CCEndFENCC 3.d4 c5 leads to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 c5 . BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/8/4PN2/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 1 3CCEndFENCC 3.c4 e6 leads to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 . CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/8/4PN2/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 1 3CCEndFENCC 3.b3 c5 leads to lines covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 . An interesting alternative for Black is 2...c5 , intending to answer 3.c4 with 3...d4 . This is a more maximalist approach, given that you like to play these types of positions. Inthe notes to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 I explain my rationale for playing 2...e6 and avoiding 2...d4. This is a similar story: let's play familiar structures and try to avoid setups that the opponent might have much more experience in.

☐ 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3
■ 2.b3

1..xf3 d5 Playing 1...d5 is a natural choice if you have the Queen's Gambit Declined in your repertoire. A very common reply is 2.d4 , when 2...Nf6 3.c4 would quickly transpose intomainline QGD orCatalan theory. A second immediate transposition happens after 2.c4 when 2...e6 leads to lines that I examine via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 , covered in thededicated chapters on 1.c4 e6. In the current chapter, we'll examine White's alternatives to these moves, most importantly 2.g3 , 2.b3 and 2.e3 . Other moves are very rare and don't warrant any deep preparation - playing according to common sense is fine and sufficient. 2.b3 White goes for a queenside fianchetto. I suggest answering CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 with 1...d5 and 2...c5, which already hints towards our move now. 2...c5 And we will transpose to lines that I cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 in the chapter onrare first moves.

☐ 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3
■ 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.d4 #1

1..xf3 d5 Playing 1...d5 is a natural choice if you have the Queen's Gambit Declined in your repertoire. A very common reply is 2.d4 , when 2...Nf6 3.c4 would quickly transpose intomainline QGD orCatalan theory. A second immediate transposition happens after 2.c4 when 2...e6 leads to lines that I examine via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 , covered in thededicated chapters on 1.c4 e6. In the current chapter, we'll examine White's alternatives to these moves, most importantly 2.g3 , 2.b3 and 2.e3 . Other moves are very rare and don't warrant any deep preparation - playing according to common sense is fine and sufficient. 2.g3 The kingside fianchetto 2.g3 is the main subject of this chapter, as it leads to independent lines. The alternatives like 2.d4 , 2.e3 , 2.c4 will usually transpose to lines that are covered in different chapters CCStartBracketCCQueen's Gambit or1. c4/EnglishCCEndBracketCC. After 2.g3 , we know that White wants to play Bg2, but we don't know their intended central pawn formation. White may play a Reversed King's Indian and go for d3, but a Reversed Grünfeld CCStartBracketCCquick d4CCEndBracketCC or Benoni attempt CCStartBracketCCquick c4CCEndBracketCC are possible, too. 2...c5 I suggest this ambitious move. We intend to play ...Nc6 and ...e5, building a huge centre. 3.Kg2 The move 3.Bg2 is almost an automatic decision for White. A very rare move worth mentioning is 3.c4 , when I suggest taking the pawn. In a moment, we will look at 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.c4 ,

when I suggest 4...dxc4 , too. Both 3.c4 and 4.c4 lead to the same type of position. 3....xc6 Alright, now we are ready to occupy the centre with ...e5, aiming for a Reversed King's Indian. What should White do about our ambitious idea? The general theoretical assessment is that White should play 4.d4 here, steering the game into a Reversed Grünfeld. Against this idea, we have a good antidote, though. After 4.d4 Nf6 5.O-O e6 White's best is 6.c4 , when 6...dxc4 transposes to our mainline against theCatalan! Playing exactly this line against the Catalan enables us to play this ambitious setup against 1.Nf3 2.g3. In many games, however, you won't face 4.d4 at all. If White intended to play a Reversed King's Indian CCStartBracketCCor King's Indian Attack, as it is also calledCCEndBracketCC, they will often allow ...e5 and instantly give up any hope for an opening advantage. Besides 4.d4 Nf6 and CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/2pp4/8/5NP1/PPPPPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.O-O e5 , we'll also have a brief look at CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/2pp4/8/5NP1/PPPPPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.c4 , which I suggest to answer with 4...dxc4 . 4.d4 White's best and most challenging move, aiming for a Grünfeld CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 CCEndBracketCC with an extra tempo. We won't give White the pleasure to play this dynamic line - it scores very heavily for White. 4....xf6 We simply develop the knight and keep the tension in the centre. 5.0-0 e6 Again we avoid 5...cxd4 and keep the tension. Now White's main and only critical move is 6.c4 , when 6...dxc4 leads to the chapter on theCatalan. We'll have a brief look at slower moves for White, like CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp3ppp/2n1pn2/2pp4/3P4/5NP1/PPP1PPBP/RNBQ1RK1 w kq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.b3 or 6.c3 . 6.b3 This move is not theoretically challenging, like 6.c4 , but rather an attempt by White to 'get a game' without the need for serious preparation. White argues that after 6...cxd4 7.Nxd4 , the pawn structure resembles a Reversed Grünfeld in which b2-b3 is not a great move, but Black's e7-e6 isn't either. I prefer to avoid ...cxd4 and suggest developing instead. 6...Ke7 We develop the bishop and prepare castling. 7.Kb2 0-0 We keep the tension and wait for White to decide about the central pawn structure. Currently, we argue that ...cxd4 only helps White, so we make good moves first without any pawn structure commitment. Now White, most of the time, develops with 8.Nbd2 , but 8.dxc5 also looks reasonable. 8.dxc5 Kxc5 White opens up the long diagonal and intends to attack our d5-pawn with c2-c4 soon. A good setup for Black involves ...Qe7 and ...Rd8, making c2-c4 more difficult to achieve. 9..xbd2 White prepares c2-c4 under better circumstances. After the immediate 9.c4 , we'd play 9...dxc4 , damaging White's pawn structure. 9...O&e7 10.c4 White may also start with 11.a3 , when we should stop White's expansion idea with 11...a5 . 10...d4 The best way to handle the pawn structure. Advancing the pawn is particularly attractive against the bishop on b2, which looks misplaced now. 11.a3 a5 We are ready to play ...e6-e5, increasing our space advantage. Black is comfortable now, prompting Stockfish to suggest the radical 12.b4 axb4 13.axb4 Rxa1 14.

Bxa1 Bxb4 15.Nxd4 Nxd4 16.Bxd4 e5 , which keeps the game about even for White.

☐ 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3
■ 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.d4 #2

1..xf3 d5 Playing 1...d5 is a natural choice if you have the Queen's Gambit Declined in your repertoire. A very common reply is 2.d4 , when 2...Nf6 3.c4 would quickly transpose intomainline QGD orCatalan theory. A second immediate transposition happens after 2.c4 when 2...e6 leads to lines that I examine via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 , covered in thededicated chapters on 1.c4 e6. In the current chapter, we'll examine White's alternatives to these moves, most importantly 2.g3 , 2.b3 and 2.e3 . Other moves are very rare and don't warrant any deep preparation - playing according to common sense is fine and sufficient. 2.g3 The kingside fianchetto 2.g3 is the main subject of this chapter, as it leads to independent lines. The alternatives like 2.d4 , 2.e3 , 2.c4 will usually transpose to lines that are covered in different chapters CCStartBracketCCQueen's Gambit or1. c4/EnglishCCEndBracketCC. After 2.g3 , we know that White wants to play Bg2, but we don't know their intended central pawn formation. White may play a Reversed King's Indian and go for d3, but a Reversed Grünfeld CCStartBracketCCquick d4CCEndBracketCC or Benoni attempt CCStartBracketCCquick c4CCEndBracketCC are possible, too. 2...c5 I suggest this ambitious move. We intend to play ...Nc6 and ...e5, building a huge centre. 3.Kg2 The move 3.Bg2 is almost an automatic decision for White. A very rare move worth mentioning is 3.c4 , when I suggest taking the pawn. In a moment, we will look at 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.c4 , when I suggest 4...dxc4 , too. Both 3.c4 and 4.c4 lead to the same type of position. 3....xc6 Alright, now we are ready to occupy the centre with ...e5, aiming for a Reversed King's Indian. What should White do about our ambitious idea? The general theoretical assessment is that White should play 4.d4 here, steering the game into a Reversed Grünfeld. Against this idea, we have a good antidote, though. After 4.d4 Nf6 5.O-O e6 White's best is 6.c4 , when 6...dxc4 transposes to our mainline against theCatalan! Playing exactly this line against the Catalan enables us to play this ambitious setup against 1.Nf3 2.g3. In many games, however, you won't face 4.d4 at all. If White intended to play a Reversed King's Indian CCStartBracketCCor King's Indian Attack, as it is also calledCCEndBracketCC, they will often allow ...e5 and instantly give up any hope for an opening advantage. Besides 4.d4 Nf6 and CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/2pp4/8/5NP1/PPPPPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.O-O e5 , we'll also have a brief look at CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/2pp4/8/5NP1/PPPPPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.c4 , which I suggest to answer with 4...dxc4 . 4.d4 White's best and most challenging move, aiming for a Grünfeld

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☐ 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3
■ 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.d4 #3

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conceptual mistakes. We need to establish why; let's have a look. 7..xbd2
This move is met with an instructive reply. 7...cxd4 We open up the c-file, correctly arguing that our knight is much more helpful on c6 compared to its colleague on d2. The additional point is that after the trade on d4, White has no c-pawn that could be used to attack our d5-pawn. There is a reason why 6.c4! is the only critical idea: the pawn is used to pressurize our centre and make use of the Catalan bishop. 8.cxd4 0-0 Or 8...Qb6 , which is also acceptable. We have slightly better chances here. Moves like ...Qb6, ...Bd7 and playing on the c-file are easy to play and understand. White's d2-knight is clogging up their development and tough to improve. Stockfish suggests 9.Nb1 here, which is an indication of White's problems.

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☐ 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3
■ 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.d4 #5

1..xf3 d5 Playing 1...d5 is a natural choice if you have the Queen's Gambit Declined in your repertoire. A very common reply is 2.d4 , when 2...Nf6 3.c4 would quickly transpose intomainline QGD orCatalan theory. A second immediate transposition

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transposed to ourmainline against the Catalan, which arises after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 - quite a cunning transposition.

☐ 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3
■ 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.c4 #1

1..xf3 d5 Playing 1...d5 is a natural choice if you have the Queen's Gambit Declined in your repertoire. A very common reply is 2.d4 , when 2...Nf6 3.c4 would quickly transpose intomainline QGD orCatalan theory. A second immediate transposition happens after 2.c4 when 2...e6 leads to lines that I examine via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 , covered in thededicated chapters on 1.c4 e6. In the current chapter, we'll examine White's alternatives to these moves, most importantly 2.g3 , 2.b3 and 2.e3 . Other moves are very rare and don't warrant any deep preparation - playing according to common sense is fine and sufficient. 2.g3 The kingside fianchetto 2.g3 is the main subject of this chapter, as it leads to independent lines. The alternatives like 2.d4 , 2.e3 , 2.c4 will usually transpose to lines that are covered in different chapters CCStartBracketCCQueen's Gambit or1. c4/EnglishCCEndBracketCC. After 2.g3 , we know that White wants to play Bg2, but we don't know their intended central pawn formation. White may play a Reversed King's Indian and go for d3, but a Reversed Grünfeld CCStartBracketCCquick d4CCEndBracketCC or Benoni attempt CCStartBracketCCquick c4CCEndBracketCC are possible, too. 2...c5 I suggest this ambitious move. We intend to play ...Nc6 and ...e5, building a huge centre. 3.Kg2 The move 3.Bg2 is almost an automatic decision for White. A very rare move worth mentioning is 3.c4 , when I suggest taking the pawn. In a moment, we will look at 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.c4 , when I suggest 4...dxc4 , too. Both 3.c4 and 4.c4 lead to the same type of position. 3....xc6 Alright, now we are ready to occupy the centre with ...e5, aiming for a Reversed King's Indian. What should White do about our ambitious idea? The general theoretical assessment is that White should play 4.d4 here, steering the game into a Reversed Grünfeld. Against this idea, we have a good antidote, though. After 4.d4 Nf6 5.O-O e6 White's best is 6.c4 , when 6...dxc4 transposes to our mainline against theCatalan! Playing exactly this line against the Catalan enables us to play this ambitious setup against 1.Nf3 2.g3. In many games, however, you won't face 4.d4 at all. If White intended to play a Reversed King's Indian CCStartBracketCCor King's Indian Attack, as it is also calledCCEndBracketCC, they will often allow ...e5 and instantly give up any hope for an opening advantage. Besides 4.d4 Nf6 and CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/2pp4/8/5NP1/ PPPPPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.O-O e5 , we'll also have a brief look at CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/2pp4/8/5NP1/PPPPPPBP/

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■ 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.c4 #2

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which sets the board on fire and even looks good for White. Instead, we need a good move that is more versatile. 6...Ke6 I suggest this move, speeding up our queenside development. A good alternative is 6...Bg4 , with similar intentions. 7.e4 White almost always plays this move. White can play 7.c4 , but the choice between 7...d4 CCStartBracketCCwe don't usually play this structure, but it is still goodCCEndBracketCC and 7...Nf6 is very comfortable. After 7...Nf6 8.cxd5 Nxd5 , we reach a Maroczy bind in which White's knight is misplaced on d2 - on top of all the usual Maroczy problems. 7...d4 8..xc4 White gains a tempo on the e5-pawn, a very logical choice. 8...O&c7 This position was reached in two Blitz games of the highest level. In 2021 Richard Rapport played the White side against none other than Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana! In both games, Rapport opted for 9.Ng5 . We'll also have a look at 9.a4 , which secures the knight against a possible ...b7-b5 push. 9.a4 White is concerned about ...b5, but we have other ideas. 9...h5 This move is very irritating for White. Allowing ...h4 is unattractive, but stopping it with 10.h4 also has drawbacks. 10.h4 This looks relatively best. Here are two examples of White allowing ...h4. ACCEndBracketCC 10.Ng5 Bxg5 11.Bxg5 f6 12.Bd2 h4 gives Black a strong attack, with ...O-O-O next. BCCEndBracketCC 10.Bd2 h4 11. Qe2 O-O-O 12.a5 hxg3 13.fxg3 f6 looks dreadful for White. They have no pawn lever left, and we have much more space. In the long run, we are even able to advance on the queenside after due preparation. After the trade on g3, White has no dynamic play on the kingside and is just passively defending. 10...f6 First 10...O-O-O is also fine. The move 10...f6 is very versatile. It covers g5, prepares the pawn push ...g7-g5 and allows ...Nh6-f7. It's now challenging for White to get activity. White could try 11.Nh2 , aiming for the push of the f-pawn. 11..xh2 0-0-0 Or 11...g5 , but castling is even stronger. 12.f4 Kxc4 Black is also better after 12... Nh6 , but this is a good, direct approach. 13.dxc4 Kd6 Black has a large advantage. White has no good way to make any progress, and their kingside is weakened. A great plan for Black is ...Qf7, attacking c4. This clears the way for ...Bd6-c7-a5 to activate the bishop. Finally, White needs to be alert about ...d4-d3 breakthroughs, opening up the centre.

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recapture on d5. 7.cxd5 Now reach the so-called Maroczy Bind. Black has a nice space advantage and is already better. 7....xxd5 8..xc3 Ke6 Our general plan is to support the pawn centre CCStartBracketCCmoves like ...f6 or ... b6CCEndBracketCC and expand further. A key idea is a later ...Nd4, which is annoying for White to meet.

☐ 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3
■ 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.O-O #4

1..xf3 d5 Playing 1...d5 is a natural choice if you have the Queen's Gambit Declined in your repertoire. A very common reply is 2.d4 , when 2...Nf6 3.c4 would quickly transpose intomainline QGD orCatalan theory. A second immediate transposition happens after 2.c4 when 2...e6 leads to lines that I examine via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 , covered in thededicated chapters on 1.c4 e6. In the current chapter, we'll examine White's alternatives to these moves, most importantly 2.g3 , 2.b3 and 2.e3 . Other moves are very rare and don't warrant any deep preparation - playing according to common sense is fine and sufficient. 2.g3 The kingside fianchetto 2.g3 is the main subject of this chapter, as it leads to independent lines. The alternatives like 2.d4 , 2.e3 , 2.c4 will usually transpose to lines that are covered in different chapters CCStartBracketCCQueen's Gambit or1. c4/EnglishCCEndBracketCC. After 2.g3 , we know that White wants to play Bg2, but we don't know their intended central pawn formation. White may play a Reversed King's Indian and go for d3, but a Reversed Grünfeld CCStartBracketCCquick d4CCEndBracketCC or Benoni attempt CCStartBracketCCquick c4CCEndBracketCC are possible, too. 2...c5 I suggest this ambitious move. We intend to play ...Nc6 and ...e5, building a huge centre. 3.Kg2 The move 3.Bg2 is almost an automatic decision for White. A very rare move worth mentioning is 3.c4 , when I suggest taking the pawn. In a moment, we will look at 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.c4 , when I suggest 4...dxc4 , too. Both 3.c4 and 4.c4 lead to the same type of position. 3....xc6 Alright, now we are ready to occupy the centre with ...e5, aiming for a Reversed King's Indian. What should White do about our ambitious idea? The general theoretical assessment is that White should play 4.d4 here, steering the game into a Reversed Grünfeld. Against this idea, we have a good antidote, though. After 4.d4 Nf6 5.O-O e6 White's best is 6.c4 , when 6...dxc4 transposes to our mainline against theCatalan! Playing exactly this line against the Catalan enables us to play this ambitious setup against 1.Nf3 2.g3. In many games, however, you won't face 4.d4 at all. If White intended to play a Reversed King's Indian CCStartBracketCCor King's Indian Attack, as it is also calledCCEndBracketCC, they will often allow ...e5 and instantly give up any hope for an opening advantage. Besides 4.d4 Nf6 and CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/2pp4/8/5NP1/ PPPPPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.O-O e5 , we'll also have a

brief look at CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/2pp4/8/5NP1/PPPPPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.c4 , which I suggest to answer with 4...dxc4 . 4.0-0 e5 According to plan. We played 3...Nc6 to establish a full centre... mission accomplished! Now White almost always plays 5.d3 , but 5.c4 is possible, too. I suggest answering 5.c4 with 5...dxc4 , which leads to positions that we already have checked via the similar CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/2pp4/8/5NP1/PPPPPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.c4 dxc4 CCStartBracketCCseethis lineCCEndBracketCC. 5.d3 White plays the typical King's Indian pawn move and prepares e2-e4 next. Now Black has to choose their setup. 5...Ke7 Giving this move an exclamation mark is a bit strong, but I believe it is a powerful move and will score heavily. What's the point of it? Black anticipates that White will play e2-e4, which we will answer with ...d5-d4, establishing a central space advantage. In this pawn structure a key plan for White is moving the f3-knight and preparing the push of the f-pawn to attack our e5-pawn. Now, the point of ...Be7 is twofold: to prepare ...g5 and/or ...h5, which makes pushing f2-f4 very difficult for White. We don't ever intend to castle kingside, giving White attacking play on this side of the board. Our king can stay in the centre for the moment but will often castle queenside. Let's have a look at some lines to illustrate the play. 6.e4 Played most of the time. We happily close the centre now. 6...d4 7.a4 White may also play 7.Na3 or 7.Nbd2 , when you have the comfortable choice between playing 7...Be6 CCStartBracketCCtransposing to CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/pp2bppp/2n5/2ppp3/8/3P1NP1/PPP1PPBP/RNBQ1RK1 w kq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nbd2 Be6 7.e4 d4 CCEndBracketCC or the immediate CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/pp2bppp/2n5/2p1p3/3pP3/3P1NP1/PPPN1PBP/R1BQ1RK1 b kq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7...g5 or 7...h5 . It's a tough call between them. For the sake of simplicity, I'd just recommend playing 7...Be6 . 7...h5 We are spoilt for choice here. The alternatives 7...g5 or 7...Be6 are also nice for Black. I like the direct nature of 7...h5 , though. White immediately needs to decide what to do about our h-pawn advance. 8.h4 White stops Harry but makes it difficult for Freddy to advance later. Pushing the f-pawn will weaken the whole kingside after h4 is already on the board. 8....xh6 We'd like to play ...f6 and ...Nh6. The order is not that relevant, so starting with 8...f6 also works fine. 9..xa3 f6 Now it's very tough for White to get active. After 10.Nc4 Be6 they can't decently prepare f2-f4. For example, 11.Nh2 Nf7 12.f4 g5! is a disaster for White.

☐ 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3
■ 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.O-O #5

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☐ 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3
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I suggest this more strategic approach, compared to 10...Bg4 11.c3 f6 12.cxd4 cxd4 13.Qb3 Qd7 , which tries to win on the h-file. White has good defensive resources, though. The counterplay on the queenside is real. 11.c3 Ke6 12.cxd4 cxd4 13.a5 Stockfish suggests this setup for White. It indeed looks like a good way to generate some play. Now Black has more than one good plan to choose from. 13...Kxc4 Stockfish suggests this move, and I agree that it is an interesting concept. We capture the knight and start emphasizing play on the dark squares. It's, of course, possible to play 13...Nf6 , completing development first. 14.dxc4 .xf6
We have excellent control of c5 and b4, and intend ...Nd7-c5 next. The engine also points out the idea to play ...Rd8 and hide the king on g7 after ...Kf8 and ...g6 first.

☐ 17. Other First Moves
■ 1.g3 #1

Welcome to the final chapter of this course. In this chapter, we will examine White's rare first moves. We have covered 1.e4 , 1.d4 , 1.c4 and 1.Nf3 in a total of sixteen chapters. What is left? I'll make a list now and already add that against all of them I suggest playing 1...d5, sticking to our general course theme of a light-squared setup: AĊĊEndBracketĊĊ 1.b3 Larsen Opening BĊĊEndBracketĊĊ 1.g3 Benko Opening CĊĊEndBracketĊĊ 1.f4 Bird Opening DĊĊEndBracketĊĊ 1. Nc3 ĊĊStartBracketĊĊno commonly accepted nameĊĊEndBracketĊĊ EĊĊEndBracketĊĊ 1.g4 Grob Opening FĊĊEndBracketĊĊ 1.b4 Orangutan Opening Some more rare moves mostly transpose elsewhere and need no dedicated coverage. An example is 1.e3 , when after 1...d5 White will likely play a move to transpose, for example, 2.c4 e6 to transpose to the English Opening. If White plays something bizarre, just stick to sound, general principles: control the centre with pawns and develop pieces, get castled quickly. Let's have a look at the moves now. 1.g3 Aside from 1.b3 , the move 1.g3 is the best and most respectable one in this chapter. We don't need to examine many lines, though. White's best options, in particular 1...d5 2.Nf3 ĊĊStartBracketĊĊ!ĊĊEndBracketĊĊ, transpose to other openings that we cover in other chapters. 1...d5 No surprise, as we play ...d5-based setups in this course. The moves 1...e5 or 1...c5 wouldn't be bad, but lead to lines that are not part of our repertoire: After 1...e5 2.c4 transposes to an English Opening/Reversed Sicilian, while ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/6P1/PPPPPP1P/ RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 1ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 1...c5 2.e4 or 2.c4 lead to other openings not covered in this course. 2.Kg2 The move to keep the game away from a transposition. Here are some possible moves that transpose elsewhere: AĊĊEndBracketĊĊ 2.Nf3 is maybe the best move ĊĊStartBracketĊĊstopping ... e5ĊĊEndBracketĊĊ and transposes to ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 , covered here in ourchapter on 1.Nf3. BĊĊEndBracketĊĊ 2.f4? h5! is excellent for Black

and covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.f4 d5 2.g3? h5! in the current chapter. CCCCEndBracketCCC 2.d4 Nf6 leads to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 Nf6 , covered here in the 1.d4 d5sidelines chapter. 2...e5 I suggest this natural move, occupying the centre. It's indeed very natural, but not the only good move. There is nothing objectively wrong about 2...Nf6 or 2...c5 , but we might get move-ordered into lines that we don't usually play. One example is 2...c5 3.f4 , when we are in a Bird's Opening CCStartBracketCC1.f4CCEndBracketCC, that I suggest fighting differently. After 2...e5 White most often goes for 3.d3 , but we'll also check 3.c4 . 3.c4 White attacks our centre, and we need to determine how to handle the threat to our d-pawn. 3...d4 This looks best. We grab a lot of space, without any drawback. There is an additional argument favouring 3...d4: we play a very similar line in a different chapter. I'll get back to this point in the notes to the 5th move, when this similarity is easier to explain. 4.d3 White can't play 4.Nf3?! e4 , which explains the move 4.d3 . 4....xc6 5..xf3 I mentioned before that we'd reach a familiar position. I'd like to show you a line that is part of our repertoire: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 4.g3 Nc6 5.Bg2 e5 6.d3 . This looks very similar. In the 1.c4 e6 line, we take two moves to play ...e5, while here we manage to push ...e5 in one go and White has not played the move b2-b3. This doesn't change all that much; we'll play in the same way as in the 1.c4 e6 version of this setup. 5...Kb4+ This check is an important resource. After 6.Bd2 a5 or CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/ppp2ppp/2n5/4p3/1bPp4/3P1NP1/PP2PPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nbd2 a5 we manage to slow down White's progress on the queenside. I examine this position type in more detail inthis chapter on 1.c4 e6 - g3 setups. If you study these lines, you are well equipped to meet this slightly different CCStartBracketCCwithout b3CCEndBracketCC line.

☐ 17. Other First Moves
■ 1.g3 #2

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move to transpose, for example, 2.c4 e6 to transpose to the English Opening. If White plays something bizarre, just stick to sound, general principles: control the centre with pawns and develop pieces, get castled quickly. Let's have a look at the moves now. 1.g3 Aside from 1.b3 , the move 1.g3 is the best and most respectable one in this chapter. We don't need to examine many lines, though. White's best options, in particular 1...d5 2.Nf3 CCStartBracketCC!CCEndBracketCC, transpose to other openings that we cover in other chapters. 1...d5 No surprise, as we play ...d5-based setups in this course. The moves 1...e5 or 1...c5 wouldn't be bad, but lead to lines that are not part of our repertoire: After 1...e5 2.c4 transposes to an English Opening/Reversed Sicilian, while CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/6P1/PPPPPP1P/ RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1...c5 2.e4 or 2.c4 lead to other openings not covered in this course. 2.Kg2 The move to keep the game away from a transposition. Here are some possible moves that transpose elsewhere: ACCEndBracketCC 2.Nf3 is maybe the best move CCStartBracketCCstopping ... e5CCEndBracketCC and transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 , covered here in ourchapter on 1.Nf3. BCCEndBracketCC 2.f4? h5! is excellent for Black and covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.f4 d5 2.g3? h5! in the current chapter. CCCEndBracketCC 2.d4 Nf6 leads to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 Nf6 , covered here in the 1.d4 d5sidelines chapter. 2...e5 I suggest this natural move, occupying the centre. It's indeed very natural, but not the only good move. There is nothing objectively wrong about 2...Nf6 or 2...c5 , but we might get move-ordered into lines that we don't usually play. One example is 2...c5 3.f4 , when we are in a Bird's Opening CCStartBracketCC1.f4CCEndBracketCC, that I suggest fighting differently. After 2...e5 White most often goes for 3.d3 , but we'll also check 3.c4 . 3.d3 White plays this move most of the time. Now Black needs to decide how to continue the central build-up. 3...c5 The maximalist approach: put more pawns in the centre. I recommend this move because now a transposition to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.O-O e5 5.d3 Be7 is likely. If White continues with 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.O-O Be7 , we will transpose intothis line immediately. This is White's most commonly played sequence after 3...c5. We'll have a look at a possible alternative, the move 4.Nd2 . 4..xd2 A way to avoid a transposition after 4.Nf3 Nc6 . White prepares e4 but might want to skip the move Nf3. 4....xc6 5.e4 White tries to play in the style of the King's Indian attack, but omits the move Nf3. 5...d4 We play in a similar way against the King's Indian Attack. Ourmain line is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.O-O e5 5.d3 Be7! 6.e4 d4 . 6..xe2 This is what White had in mind. They want to play a quick f4, starting an attack on the kingside. If you have already studied our lines

against the King's Indian Attack, you might be able to guess how we punish White's concept. 6...h5 A very annoying move for White. We push the h-pawn forward, and White has no knight on f3 to stop it. As the following line shows, the h-pawn advance makes it very difficult for White to organize the position. 7.f4 h4 White is in an awkward spot. The h-file is about to open, and they have multiple weaknesses around the king. The manoeuvre ...Nf6-g4 comes to mind, amongst others. By the way: instead of CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/8/2ppp3/8/3P2P1/PPP1PPBP/RNBQK1NR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nd2 White could have played the move 4.e4 . Against it, I'd suggest 4...d4 , when 5.Ne2 h5! leads to a very similar situation.

☐ 17. Other First Moves
■ 1.Nc3

Welcome to the final chapter of this course. In this chapter, we will examine White's rare first moves. We have covered 1.e4 , 1.d4 , 1.c4 and 1.Nf3 in a total of sixteen chapters. What is left? I'll make a list now and already add that against all of them I suggest playing 1...d5, sticking to our general course theme of a light-squared setup: ACCEndBracketCC 1.b3 Larsen Opening BCCEndBracketCC 1.g3 Benko Opening CCCEndBracketCC 1.f4 Bird Opening DCCEndBracketCC 1. Nc3 CCStartBracketCCno commonly accepted nameCCEndBracketCC ECCEndBracketCC 1.g4 Grob Opening FCCEndBracketCC 1.b4 Orangutan Opening Some more rare moves mostly transpose elsewhere and need no dedicated coverage. An example is 1.e3 , when after 1...d5 White will likely play a move to transpose, for example, 2.c4 e6 to transpose to the English Opening. If White plays something bizarre, just stick to sound, general principles: control the centre with pawns and develop pieces, get castled quickly. Let's have a look at the moves now. 1..xc3 While 1.Nf3 is a mainstream opening move CCStartBracketCCmy main move for agesCCEndBracketCC, the move 1.Nc3 is a rare guest in practice. Why? Is it that bad? Bad is too strong a word, but it is unchallenging. Black has many ways to obtain a position that is at least equal. 1...d5 Not a surprise at all. We play ...d5-based defences against 1.e4 and 1.d4, so starting with 1...d5 works well. 2.e4 White plays this move most of the time. An alternative is 2.d4 , when 2...Nf6 transposes to the 1.d4 d5sidelines chapter. Objectively speaking, this is probably White's best move and keeps equal chances. After the more popular 2.e4 , I think White might be worse already. 2...d4 I think that we should advance the pawn and play for an immediate opening advantage. Of course, 2...c6 is possible, transposing to a Caro-Kann. This would be well in line with 'Keep It Simple, ' but not so much with 'Make them suffer'. 3..xce2 e5 After only three moves, we have a substantial space advantage. 4..xg3 Or 4.Nf3 f6 5.Ng3 Be6 , leading to the same CCStartBracketCCtype ofCCEndBracketCC position. 4...Ke6 It's crucial to play this first. We want to prevent Bc4. 5..xf3 f6 The second concept to

remember is: don't play ...Nc6 when it allows Bb5. By avoiding the pin, we ask White's bishop about its plans. Where does it want to go? 6.Kb5+ Agains 6.c3? we have 6...d3 , burying White's bishop. With 6.Bb5+ White wants to develop the bishop outside of the pawn chain and then continue with d3. 6...c6 7.Ka4 .xd7 The move 7...Na6 is just as good, with the same idea as 7...Nd7: jumping to c5. 8.Kb3 .xc5 9.Kxe6 .xxe6 Black has a large advantage in space and the much easier game. We can castle queenside and push our pawns on the kingside, gaining even more space.

☐ 17. Other First Moves
■ 1.f4 #1

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☐ 17. Other First Moves
■ 1.f4 #2

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☐ 17. Other First Moves
■ 1.f4 #3

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control of e5 and is usually started with the move 2.Nf3 , but they could try 2.b3 or 2.e3 . We'll have a brief look at those move orders. After the most likely sequence 2. Nf3 Bg4 3.e3 Nd7 , we are prepared for ...e5, which heavily disturbs White's plans. 2..xf3 By far White's most popular move. 2...Kg4 That's our signature move against the Bird. We fight for control of f3 by attacking the knight. After White's usual reply 3.e3 , we have set up a pin. 3.e3 White has no good alternative at this point. After moves like 3.g3? or 3.b3? we are happy to take on f3 and worsen White's structure considerably. The doubled pawn formation near their king is a long term problem. Note that White's pawns are on f3 and f4, not on f2 and f3. In our line of the Caro-Kann CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 the doubled f-pawns provide additional king safety, as they are still closer to the king. You'd think twice about ever moving both f-pawns in this line... which is exactly the structure White gets when they allow us to inflict the doubled pawns in the Bird. Finally, White could play 3.Ne5 , when I suggest 3...Bf5 . The knight is not stable on e5, and we can quickly attack it with ...Nd7. 3....xd7 This setup against the Bird was recommended in one of the first chess opening books that I owned, Kasparows Schacheröffnungen CCStartBracketCCKasparov's Chess OpeningsCCEndBracketCC, written by German IM Otto Borik in 1989. I have always liked the idea and recommended it myself in a 2016 video on my Youtube Channel. Our idea is playing a quick ...e7-e5 push to open the centre. White now plays 4.Be2 most of the time, but 4.h3 is worth a look, too. 4.h3 White invites us to take on f3. 4...Kxf3 5.O&xf3 Our d-pawn is attacked now. 5...c6 We cover the pawn and threaten to play ...e5 next. In my mentioned Youtube video, I suggested the pawn sacrifice 5...e5?! , when 6.Qxd5 Qh4+ 7.Kd1 O-O-O leads to a wild position. This might be worth a punt in Blitz, but I am sceptical about it in a long time control game. I was more optimistic about it at the time, but 2021-Me suggests a more solid move. I guess we all get older and wiser :-CCEndBracketCC 6.d4 Otherwise we'd play ...e5, realizing our plan. The resulting positions are rather similar to the ones after CCStartFENCCr2qkbnr/pppnpppp/8/3p4/5Pb1/4PN2/ PPPP2PP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4.Be2 Ngf6 5.O-O Bxf3 6. Bxf3 e5 . 6...e6 7.Kd3 This is an interesting moment. If Black plays 7...Ngf6 now, White could start an early attack with 8.g4 . I didn't like this at all for Black, but there is a good antidote to this concept. 7...f5 We go for a counter-Stonewall! Note that we have traded our light-squared bishop already, so we don't have to worry about a bad bishop sitting on c8. White still has the guy on c1, which stares at its own pawns. 8.g4 g6 We keep the wall intact. If they continue to advance with 9.h4 , we have 9...Ngf6 to clarify the situation. The whole line, starting with 4.h3, is fairly obscure. I still included it in the course, as I wanted to show the improvement on my 2016 video.

☐ 17. Other First Moves
■ 1.f4 #4

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control of e5 and is usually started with the move 2.Nf3 , but they could try 2.b3 or 2.e3 . We'll have a brief look at those move orders. After the most likely sequence 2. Nf3 Bg4 3.e3 Nd7 , we are prepared for ...e5, which heavily disturbs White's plans. 2..xf3 By far White's most popular move. 2...Kg4 That's our signature move against the Bird. We fight for control of f3 by attacking the knight. After White's usual reply 3.e3 , we have set up a pin. 3.e3 White has no good alternative at this point. After moves like 3.g3? or 3.b3? we are happy to take on f3 and worsen White's structure considerably. The doubled pawn formation near their king is a long term problem. Note that White's pawns are on f3 and f4, not on f2 and f3. In our line of the Caro-Kann CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 the doubled f-pawns provide additional king safety, as they are still closer to the king. You'd think twice about ever moving both f-pawns in this line... which is exactly the structure White gets when they allow us to inflict the doubled pawns in the Bird. Finally, White could play 3.Ne5 , when I suggest 3...Bf5 . The knight is not stable on e5, and we can quickly attack it with ...Nd7. 3....xd7 This setup against the Bird was recommended in one of the first chess opening books that I owned, Kasparows Schacheröffnungen CCStartBracketCCKasparov's Chess OpeningsCCEndBracketCC, written by German IM Otto Borik in 1989. I have always liked the idea and recommended it myself in a 2016 video on my Youtube Channel. Our idea is playing a quick ...e7-e5 push to open the centre. White now plays 4.Be2 most of the time, but 4.h3 is worth a look, too. 4.Ke2 White's main move, breaking the pin. 4....xgf6 We'd like to capture on f3 and continue with ...e5, but 4...Bxf3 5.Bxf3 e5 fails to 6.Bxd5 . Therefore we cover d5 first and prepare this sequence. The move 4...c6 is also possible, following the same logic. 5.0-0 White sometimes plays 5.b3 or even 5.h3?! , when we also happily take on f3 and continue with ...e5. 5...Kxf3 6.Kxf3 e5 Mission accomplished. 7.fxe5 .xxe5 This is the structure we are aiming for. We'll continue with ...c6 and ...Bd6, completing our development. A typical sequence is 8.b3 c6 9.Bb2 Bd6 , when we have developed our minor pieces. It is possible to castle kingside next, but you may also consider playing more aggressively with the ideas of ...h5 and ...Ng4. Queenside castling is an option and will lead to fun play.

☐ 17. Other First Moves

■ 1.g4

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Nc3 CCStartBracketCCno commonly accepted nameCCEndBracketCC ECCEndBracketCC 1.g4 Grob Opening FCCEndBracketCC 1.b4 Orangutan Opening Some more rare moves mostly transpose elsewhere and need no dedicated coverage. An example is 1.e3 , when after 1...d5 White will likely play a move to transpose, for example, 2.c4 e6 to transpose to the English Opening. If White plays something bizarre, just stick to sound, general principles: control the centre with pawns and develop pieces, get castled quickly. Let's have a look at the moves now. 1.g4 Grob's Opening is just bad for White. It weakens the kingside for no reason and does not contribute to development. 1...d5 Our standard move anyway, but here it even attacks a pawn! 2.Kg2 That's the move White usually plays, and the one against which you want to learn the line I suggest. If they play 2.h3 or 2.g5 , just play 2...e5 and enjoy life. You'll get by just fine with normal opening principles. 2...Kxg4 Nice, It's not easy to be a pawn up that early, but here this is the case. White's gambit is based on a little trick, hang on. 3.c4 c6 This is the strongest move. I have played and recommended 3...dxc4!? , when 4.Bxb7 Nd7 5.Bxa8 Qxa8 gives Black great compensation. Black is better in this line, but 3...c6 is even better. 4.cxd5 White usually takes on d5, but they can also start with 4.Qb3 , when we'll play along with the same concept as against 4.cxd5 cxd5 5.Qb3: return the b-pawn with 4...Nf6 5.Qxb7 Nbd7 . White has a severe lack of development and weakened their kingside. 4...cxd5 5.O&b3 Attention: here's the little trick that I hinted at before. Now 5...e6?? 6.Qa4+ blunders the g4-bishop! 5....xf6 Trick avoided! 6.O&xb7 .xbd7 Alright, we have returned the pawn. It's good to have an extra pawn, but having some extra development moves and the white queen as a target is more important. It's hard to believe that White should survive the opening phase of the game, given all the problems.

☐ 17. Other First Moves
■ 1.b4

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moves now. 1.b4 The 'Orangutan' is better than the less hairy counterpart on the kingside, the Grob. Compared to the Grob, White only weakens the queenside and not the immediate vicinity around their king. It's still a bit dubious, but not an opening you can refute straight away. 1...d5 I suggest sticking with a ...d5-based setup, as usual. The most principled move against 1.b4 is 1...e5 , but I think that these lines can turn out to be somewhat tricky for Black to handle in practice. I suggest using a simple setup that easily equalizes and exploits the weak white queenside more patiently. 2.Kb2 .xf6 I suggest a setup based on ...Nf6, ...Bg4 and ...e6. 3.e3 Or 3.Nf3 Bg4 , with similar play. 3...Kg4 4..xf3 Or 4.Be2 Bxe2 5.Qxe2 Nbd7 , as it happened in a 2021 online rapid game between Magnus Carlsen and Wesley So. Yes, the World Champion has played the Orangutan in rapid chess occasionally, not without success. In the position after 5...Nbd7, Black's plan is ...e6 and ...Bd6, completing a harmonious setup. 4...e6 Gaining a tempo on the b-pawn. 5.a3 Kd6 We are ready to castle next. We'll play ...Nbd7 and try to play ...e5, if possible. Black has an easy game with no pitfalls, which is welcome against an opening that you might never face in a classical time control game CCStartBracketCCI met it once in more than 30 years of chessCCEndBracketCC.

☐ 17. Other First Moves
■ 1.b3 #1

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Sicilian, for example, after 2.Bb2 Nc6 3.c4 . This is not advantageous for White but can prove challenging to play for Black if you don't have any experience on the White side of the Siclian. CCEndBracketCC You need to have an answer to lines like CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.b3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.b3 , too. If you answer 1.b3 with 1...d5, you have a consistent setup against all versions of the queenside fianchetto. After 1.b3 d5 , White's almost automatic response is the natural 2.Bb2 . I'll also look at 2.Nf3 to demonstrate the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.b3 , which is far more common. It's going to transpose to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 2.Bb2 , as you can imagine. 2..xf3 This position is more commonly reached by CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 b3 . 2...c5 We play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 2.Bb2 c5 , so this is a consistent approach. 3.e3 The move 3.Bb2?! is very common, but imprecise due to 3...f6! . We cover this line via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 2.Bb2 c5 3.Nf3 f6! 3....xf6 I suggest avoiding an early ...Nc6, as White is happy to play Bb5 and pin our knight. The position after 3...Nf6 may also arise via the unusual move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.b3 c5 . 4.Kb2 g6 And we have transposed to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 2.Bb2 c5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nf3 g6 .

☐ 17. Other First Moves
■ 1.b3 #2

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centre with pawns and develop pieces, get castled quickly. Let's have a look at the moves now. 1.b3 Here we go, #b3Cowboys! Of course, we need to cover an antidote to 1.b3 , which has been covered on Chessable by GM Adhiban in his Lifetime Repertoire 1.b3. 1...d5 As usual in this chapter, I suggest a ...d5-based setup. Against 1.b3, Black's main decision is to play 1...e5 or 1...d5 . I think 1...d5 is the more practical choice for our purposes. Here's why: ACCEndBracketCC 1.b3 e5 requires more effort to learn for Black. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 e5 frequently leads to positions that resemble a Reversed Sicilian, for example, after 2.Bb2 Nc6 3.c4 . This is not advantageous for White but can prove challenging to play for Black if you don't have any experience on the White side of the Siclian. CCCEndBracketCC You need to have an answer to lines like CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.b3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.b3 , too. If you answer 1.b3 with 1...d5, you have a consistent setup against all versions of the queenside fianchetto. After 1.b3 d5 , White's almost automatic response is the natural 2.Bb2 . I'll also look at 2.Nf3 to demonstrate the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.b3 , which is far more common. It's going to transpose to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 2.Bb2 , as you can imagine. 2.Kb2 c5 Let's grab more centre space. Against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 , we follow a similar approach with 2...c5 . After 2...c5 White's best move is 3.e3 , while 3. Nf3?! is a common move order slip that we should exploit with 3...f6! . 3..xf3 This move is known to be imprecise since a famous game between two World Champions. Tigran Petrosian played it against Bobby Fischer in their 1971 Match. Fischer played the best reply, 3...f6! , and went on to win the game. 3...f6 A strong move. The simple intention is ...e5, building a huge centre and making the b2-bishop look stupid. If White had played the better CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pp2pppp/8/2pp4/8/1P6/PBPPPPPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.e3 , the reply 3...f6?! is unconvincing due to CCStartBracketCCamongst othersCCEndBracketCC 4.c4 d4 5.Qh5+ , when Black loses the c-pawn in an unusual way. 4.e3 White's usual reply. The mentioned Petrosian-Fischer game continued 4.c4 d4 when Black had a large space advantage, and White's b2-bishop looked silly. We'll continue with ...Nc6 and ...e5 and are much better. If White plays 4.d4 , we go for 4...cxd4 5.Nxd4 e5 . Black is better again, based on the large centre. White loses time with multiple knight moves. 4...e5 5.d4 White wants to fight for the centre, which is very understandable. 5...cxd4 This is much better than starting with 5...e4 , as after 6.Nfd2 cxd4 7.Bxd4 is possible. 6.exd4 e4 7..xfd2 f5 Lots of pawn moves! But we have accomplished a lot, building a massive centre. The move 7...f5 allows ...Nf6 next. 8.c4 .xf6 9..xc3 Kd6 This move is stronger

than 9...Be6 , which I played in a 2019 classical time control game against Erik Hartz. The point is that Black doesn't need to lend additional cover to d5, as we shouldn't be worried about the capture in the first place. After 9...Bd6 10.cxd5 O-O Black will regain the pawn anyway. Ideas like ...Nbd7-b6 come to mind. Black is better after 9...Bd6 , as White's b2-bishop remains a bad piece, and they have to be worried about our space advantage in the centre and kingside, too. Black may quickly drum up a quick attack if White goes for kingside castling.

☐ 17. Other First Moves
■ 1.b3 #3

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☐ 17. Other First Moves
■ 1.b3 #4

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ECCEndBracketCC 1.g4 Grob Opening FCCEndBracketCC 1.b4 Orangutan Opening Some more rare moves mostly transpose elsewhere and need no dedicated coverage. An example is 1.e3 , when after 1...d5 White will likely play a move to transpose, for example, 2.c4 e6 to transpose to the English Opening. If White plays something bizarre, just stick to sound, general principles: control the centre with pawns and develop pieces, get castled quickly. Let's have a look at the moves now. 1.b3 Here we go, #b3Cowboys! Of course, we need to cover an antidote to 1.b3 , which has been covered on Chessable by GM Adhiban in his Lifetime Repertoire 1.b3. 1...d5 As usual in this chapter, I suggest a ...d5-based setup. Against 1.b3, Black's main decision is to play 1...e5 or 1...d5 . I think 1...d5 is the more practical choice for our purposes. Here's why: ACCEndBracketCC 1.b3 e5 requires more effort to learn for Black. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 e5 frequently leads to positions that resemble a Reversed Sicilian, for example, after 2.Bb2 Nc6 3.c4 . This is not advantageous for White but can prove challenging to play for Black if you don't have any experience on the White side of the Siclian. CCCEndBracketCC You need to have an answer to lines like CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.b3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.b3 , too. If you answer 1.b3 with 1...d5, you have a consistent setup against all versions of the queenside fianchetto. After 1.b3 d5 , White's almost automatic response is the natural 2.Bb2 . I'll also look at 2.Nf3 to demonstrate the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.b3 , which is far more common. It's going to transpose to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 2.Bb2 , as you can imagine. 2.Kb2 c5 Let's grab more centre space. Against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 , we follow a similar approach with 2...c5 . After 2...c5 White's best move is 3.e3 , while 3. Nf3?! is a common move order slip that we should exploit with 3...f6! . 3.e3 This is White's most accurate move order, avoiding 3.Nf3?! f6! . 3....xf6 I suggest playing a setup with ...Nf6 and ...g6, countering White's fianchettoed bishop. I want to avoid an early ...Nc6, as I feel that White is happy about playing Bb5, pinning our knight and strengthening the control of e5. After 3...Nf6 White has the fundamental decision between 4.f4 , mixing in some ideas from the Bird CCStartBracketCC1. f4CCEndBracketCC or 4.Nf3 , which is better in my opinion. 4..xf3 White develops the knight to its best square and avoids weakening their structure with 4.f4 . We can also reach this position via different move orders, particularly those that featured an earlier Nf3. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.b3 c5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Bb2 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.b3 c5

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☐ 17. Other First Moves
■ 1.b3 #5

Welcome to the final chapter of this course. In this chapter, we will examine White's rare first moves. We have covered 1.e4 , 1.d4 , 1.c4 and 1.Nf3 in a total of sixteen chapters. What is left? I'll make a list now and already add that against all of them I suggest playing 1...d5, sticking to our general course theme of a light-squared setup: ACCEndBracketCC 1.b3 Larsen Opening BCCEndBracketCC 1.g3 Benko Opening CCCEndBracketCC 1.f4 Bird Opening DCCEndBracketCC 1.

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☐ 17. Other First Moves
■ 1.b3 #6

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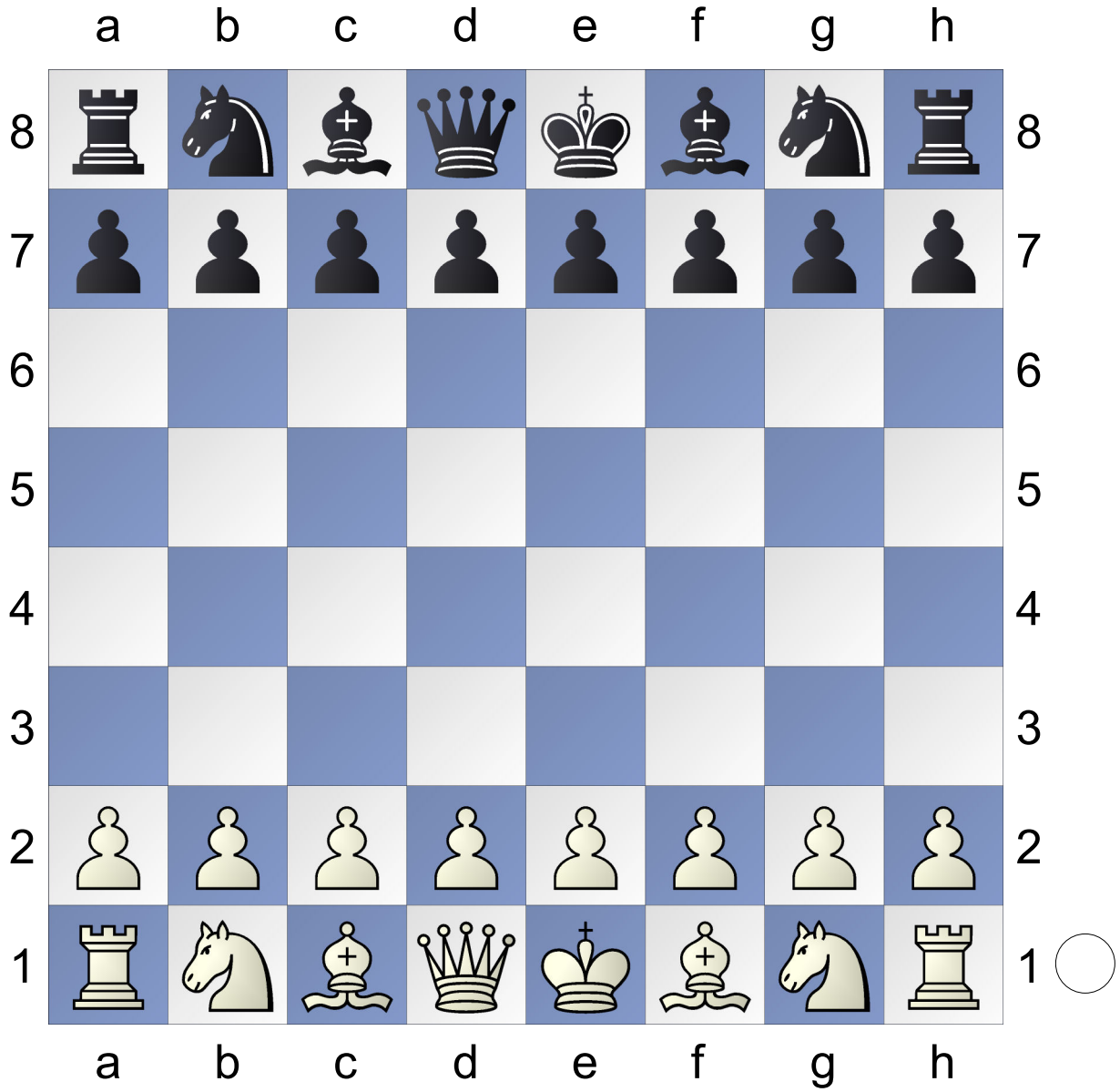
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☐ 17. Other First Moves
■ 1.b3 #7

Welcome to the final chapter of this course. In this chapter, we will examine White's rare first moves. We have covered 1.e4 , 1.d4 , 1.c4 and 1.Nf3 in a total of sixteen chapters. What is left? I'll make a list now and already add that against all of them I suggest playing 1...d5, sticking to our general course theme of a light-squared setup: ACCEndBracketCC 1.b3 Larsen Opening BCCEndBracketCC 1.g3 Benko Opening CCCEndBracketCC 1.f4 Bird Opening DCCEndBracketCC 1.

Nc3 CCStartBracketCCno commonly accepted nameCCEndBracketCC ECCEndBracketCC 1.g4 Grob Opening FCCEndBracketCC 1.b4 Orangutan Opening Some more rare moves mostly transpose elsewhere and need no dedicated coverage. An example is 1.e3 , when after 1...d5 White will likely play a move to transpose, for example, 2.c4 e6 to transpose to the English Opening. If White plays something bizarre, just stick to sound, general principles: control the centre with pawns and develop pieces, get castled quickly. Let's have a look at the moves now. 1.b3 Here we go, #b3Cowboys! Of course, we need to cover an antidote to 1.b3 , which has been covered on Chessable by GM Adhiban in his Lifetime Repertoire 1.b3. 1...d5 As usual in this chapter, I suggest a ...d5-based setup. Against 1.b3, Black's main decision is to play 1...e5 or 1...d5 . I think 1...d5 is the more practical choice for our purposes. Here's why: ACCEndBracketCC 1.b3 e5 requires more effort to learn for Black. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 e5 frequently leads to positions that resemble a Reversed Sicilian, for example, after 2.Bb2 Nc6 3.c4 . This is not advantageous for White but can prove challenging to play for Black if you don't have any experience on the White side of the Siclian. CCCEndBracketCC You need to have an answer to lines like CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.b3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.b3 , too. If you answer 1.b3 with 1...d5, you have a consistent setup against all versions of the queenside fianchetto. After 1.b3 d5 , White's almost automatic response is the natural 2.Bb2 . I'll also look at 2.Nf3 to demonstrate the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.b3 , which is far more common. It's going to transpose to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 2.Bb2 , as you can imagine. 2.Kb2 c5 Let's grab more centre space. Against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 , we follow a similar approach with 2...c5 . After 2...c5 White's best move is 3.e3 , while 3. Nf3?! is a common move order slip that we should exploit with 3...f6! . 3.e3 This is White's most accurate move order, avoiding 3.Nf3?! f6! . 3....xf6 I suggest playing a setup with ...Nf6 and ...g6, countering White's fianchettoed bishop. I want to avoid an early ...Nc6, as I feel that White is happy about playing Bb5, pinning our knight and strengthening the control of e5. After 3...Nf6 White has the fundamental decision between 4.f4 , mixing in some ideas from the Bird CCStartBracketCC1. f4CCEndBracketCC or 4.Nf3 , which is better in my opinion. 4..xf3 White develops the knight to its best square and avoids weakening their structure with 4.f4 . We can also reach this position via different move orders, particularly those that featured an earlier Nf3. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.b3 c5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Bb2 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/

PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.b3 c5 4.Bb2 These move orders are a key reason for selecting CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 2.Bb2 c5 3.e3 Nf6 as our weapon against 1.b3 - it's one system that can be used against all possible early queenside fianchettos. Let's discuss an additional point. This position was covered from the white side in two Chessable courses. The first one is, of course, Adhiban's Lifetime Repertoire 1.b3 , the second one is Lifetime Repertoire: 1.c4/1.Nf3, written by FM Carsten Hansen and yours truly! Yes, I have covered this position for White, reaching it via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 c5 3.b3 Nf6 4.Bb2 . So what am I recommending against my suggestion now... and against Adhiban's? 4...g6 I think this is a good option for Black. It doesn't require any deep study and gives Black fair chances. White has two main ideas now. GM Adhiban recommended 5.Bb5+ for White, while I went for 5.c4 in my course. We'll also check 5.Be2 and 5.d4 because I'd like to demonstrate some strategic ideas worth knowing. 5.Kb5+ This check is Ahdiban's recommendation for White. 5....xbd7 As usual, I want to avoid 5...Nc6 , creating an unpleasant pin/doubled pawn. This leaves 5...Bd7 or 5...Nbd7 , which both lead to equal chances. I prefer 5...Nbd7 because I agree with Adhiban about 5...Bd7 6.Bxf6!? exf6 7.Bxd7+ Qxd7 8.d4 . He likes this unbalanced position and thinks it is easier to play for White. 6.0-0 Here, taking on f6 would make much less sense, as Black would keep the bishop pair. For comparison, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2pp1p/5np1/1Bpp4/8/1P2PN2/PBPP1PPP/RN1QK2R b KQkq - 1 5CCEndFENCC 5...Bd7 6.Bxf6 exf6 7.Bxd7+ this asset is immediately gone. With 6.O-O , we follow Adhiban's recommendation for White. 6...Kg7 7.c4 White has to use their pawns in the fight for the centre. 7...dxc4 Similar to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2pp1p/5np1/2pp4/8/1P2PN2/PBPP1PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.c4 dxc4 , this capture is best. 8.bxc4 Certainly more interesting than 8.Bxc4 , when 8...O-O and ...b6 next looks like an easy game for Black. 8...0-0 I think this is a small improvement on 8...a6 , which Adhiban considered in his course. There is no need for Black to play ...a6, as after castling, White will probably need to move the bishop anyway. 9.Ka4 White needs to be aware of our idea ...Nb6, after which the white bishop has no good way back into its own camp. 9...b6 This is the final move to know, in my mind. We'll play ...Bb7 next and finish our development. The position is interesting to play for both sides, but White has no advantage. A key point will be White's decision about the central pawn structure. They can play d2-d4 at some point, when we have the option to take on d4 and create the pawn duo c4 and d4 for White, the so-called 'Hanging Pawns'. These pawns can be handy targets, but White has good central control due to the pawns and active pieces. To summarize, 1.b3 leads to interesting positions with equal chances for both sides.



B12

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	c4[1] e6	.xf3[2] d5	g3[3] .xf6	Kg2 dxc4	.xe5[4] O&d4	f4 .xbd7	O&a4 [5]O&c5	
2	. . . . . .	. . . . . .	. . . . . .	b3 d4	e3[6] .xc6	Kg2 e5	0-0 Kc5	b4 [7]xxb4
3	. . . . . .	. . . . . .	cxd5 exd5	g3 .xf6	Kg2 Ke7	0-0 0-0	d3 Qe8	.xc3 [8]d4

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
4	d4	c4	.xc3	cxd5[9]	Kg5[10]	e3	Kd3	O&c2
	.xf6	e6	d5	exd5	Ke7[11]	0-0	.xbd7	Qe8[12]
5	. . .	Kf4[13]	e3[14]	.xd2[15]	Kxd6[16]	f4	c3	cxd4
	d5	.xf6	e6	Kd6	O&xd6	c5	cxd4	0-0[17]
6	. . .	c4	.xf3[18]	g3[19]	Kg2	0-0	.xe5[20]	.xxc6[21]
	. . .	e6	.xf6	dxc4	c5	.xc6	Kd7	Kxc6[22]
7	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .	O&a4+	O&xc4	Kg2[23]	O&c2
	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .	Kd7	c5	b5	.xa6[24]
8	. . .	. . .	. . .	.xc3	Kg5[25]	e4[26]	a4[27]	axb5
	. . .	. . .	. . .	a6	dxc4	b5	Kb7	axb5[28]
9	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .	cxd5	Kg5[29]	e3[30]	Kd3
	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .	exd5	Ke6	.xbd7	h6[31]
10	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .	Kg5	cxd5	O&c2	e3
	. . .	. . .	. . .	c6	.xbd7	exd5	Ke7	0-0[32]
11	. . .	. . .	cxd5	.xc3	O&c2[33]	.xf3	e4	.xxe4
	. . .	. . .	exd5	c6	Kd6	h6	dxe4	.xf6[34]
12	e4	.xc3[35]	.xf3[36]	.xxe4	.xg3[37]	h4	Ke2	d4
	c6	d5	dxe4	.xf6	h5	Kg4	e6	Kd6[38]
13	. . .	d4	exd5[39]	c4[40]	.xc3	Kg5[41]	.xf3[42]	Kxf6
	. . .	d5	cxd5	.xf6	.xc6	dxc4	h6	exf6[43]
14	. . .	. . .	. . .	.xf3	Kd3	c3		
	. . .	. . .	. . .	.xc6	Kg4	O&c7[44]		
15	. . .	. . .	.xc3	.xxe4	.xg3[45]	.xf3[46]	.xe2	.xe5
	. . .	. . .	dxe4	.xf6	h5	h4	Kg4	Kf5[47]
16	. . .	. . .	. . .	f3	.xxf3	Kc4	.xe5[48]	g4
	. . .	. . .	. . .	exf3	.xf6	Kf5	e6	.xfd7[49]
17	. . .	. . .	e5	dxc5[50]	Ke3[51]	.xf3[52]	Kxc5	O&d4
	. . .	. . .	c5	e6	.xd7	Kxc5	.xxc5	O&b6[53]

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
18	. . .	. . .	. . .	c3	Ke3[54]	.xf3	Kd3	fxe3
	. . .	. . .	. . .	.xc6	.xh6	.xf5	.xxe3	g6[55]

[1] **1..xf3** d5 Playing 1...d5 is a natural choice if you have the Queen's Gambit Declined in your repertoire. A very common reply is 2.d4 , when 2...Nf6 3.c4 would quickly transpose intomainline QGD orCatalan theory. A second immediate transposition happens after 2.c4 when 2...e6 leads to lines that I examine via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 , covered in thededicated chapters on 1.c4 e6. In the current chapter, we'll examine White's alternatives to these moves, most importantly 2.g3 , 2.b3 and 2.e3 . Other moves are very rare and don't warrant any deep preparation - playing according to common sense is fine and sufficient. 2.e3 This seemingly modest move is the main pillar of my White repertoire that I have covered in LTR 1.c4/1.Nf3. In most cases, White intends c4 on the next move.

[2.b3 White goes for a queenside fianchetto. I suggest answering CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 with 1...d5 and 2...c5, which already hints towards our move now. This position is more commonly reached by CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 b3 . c5 And we will transpose to lines that I cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 in the chapter onrare first moves. 16. The Flexible 1. Nf3-2.b3 We play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 2.Bb2 c5 , so this is a consistent approach. 3.e3 The move 3.Bb2?! is very common, but imprecise due to 3...f6! . We cover this line via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 2.Bb2 c5 3.Nf3 f6! .xf6 I suggest avoiding an early ...Nc6, as White is happy to play Bb5 and pin our knight. The position after 3...Nf6 may also arise via the unusual move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.b3 c5 . 4.Kb2 White develops the knight to its best square and avoids weakening their structure with 4.f4 . We can also reach this position via different move orders, particularly those that featured an earlier Nf3. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.b3 c5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Bb2 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.b3 c5 4.Bb2 These move orders are a key reason for selecting CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 2.Bb2 c5 3.e3 Nf6 as our weapon against 1.b3 - it's

one system that can be used against all possible early queenside fianchettos. Let's discuss an additional point. This position was covered from the white side in two Chessable courses. The first one is, of course, Adhiban's Lifetime Repertoire 1.b3 , the second one is Lifetime Repertoire: 1.c4/1.Nf3, written by FM Carsten Hansen and yours truly! Yes, I have covered this position for White, reaching it via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 c5 3.b3 Nf6 4.Bb2 . So what am I recommending against my suggestion now... and against Adhiban's? g6 And we have transposed to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 2.Bb2 c5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nf3 g6 . 17. Other First Moves-1.b3 #1 I think this is a good option for Black. It doesn't require any deep study and gives Black fair chances. White has two main ideas now. GM Adhiban recommended 5.Bb5+ for White, while I went for 5.c4 in my course. We'll also check 5.Be2 and 5.d4 because I'd like to demonstrate some strategic ideas worth knowing. 5.c4 I recommended this move in my course for the white side. *(5.Ke2* White continues with kingside development and prepares castling. *Kg7 6.0-0 0-0* Now I'd like to talk about possible pawn formations in the centre. White can't play small moves forever and will likely play either 7.c4 or 7.d4 now. After 7.d4 cxd4 we'll reach positions that I discuss via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2pp1p/5np1/2pp4/8/1P2PN2/PBPP1PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.d4 cxd4 . *7.c4 d4* We would equalize with other moves, but the pawn advance gives Black good prospects. This is comparable to the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 2.Bb2 c5 3.e3 Nf6 4.f4 g6 5.Nf3 Bg7 6.Be2 O-O 7.O-O d4 , which features a similar concept. *8.exd4 .xh5* The point of 7...d4!. We are now ready to regain the pawn, and our knight might even find a great spot on f4. Relatively best for White seems 9.Ne5 cxd4 10.Bxh5 Bxe5 , but Black is still a bit better here. White has less space and a passive bishop on b2. 17. Other First Moves-1.b3 #5*; 5.d4* White can play the move d4 here or a bit later. Sequences like 5.Be2 Bg7 6.d4 or 5.Be2 Bg7 6.O-O O-O 7.d4 are possible and would be handled in the same way as 5.d4. *cxd4* We should capture immediately and rule out a line like 5...Bg7 6.dxc5 , when we'd need to lose time to regain the pawn. Instead, taking on d4 clarifies the central situation. *6..xxd4* After 6.exd4 , we reach a comfortable structure for Black. White's b2-bishop is passive, and we have the long term plan to build up pressure on the c-file. The move 6.Nxd4 is a more dynamic choice for White, keeping the diagonal a1-h8 open. *Kg7 7.Ke2 0-0 8.0-0* This position also could be reached via CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2pp1p/5np1/2pp4/8/1P2PN2/PBPP1PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Be2 Bg7 6.O-O O-O 7.d4 cxd4 8.Nxd4 . It's instructive to see Black's best move now. *Qe8* Nimzowitsch coined the term: 'mysterious rook move'. Does 8...Re8 make any sense? It does, and it is related to central control. Black has two centre pawns, and White only has one. We'd like to play ...e5, but after 8...e5?! 9.Nf3 White attacks e5 twice.

We'd have nothing better than 9...e4 10.Nd4 , when White's knight sits pretty on d4. The move 8...Re8 seeks to play ...e5 in an improved version. *9.c4 e5 10..xf3 .xc6* Now we manage to cover e5 and don't need to move it forward. Black is already better in this position, enjoying more space. White has lost some time with their knight, too. 17. Other First Moves-1.b3 #6*; 5.Kb5*+ This check is Ahdiban's recommendation for White. *.xbd7* As usual, I want to avoid 5...Nc6 , creating an unpleasant pin/doubled pawn. This leaves 5...Bd7 or 5...Nbd7 , which both lead to equal chances. I prefer 5...Nbd7 because I agree with Adhiban about 5...Bd7 6.Bxf6!? exf6 7.Bxd7+ Qxd7 8.d4 . He likes this unbalanced position and thinks it is easier to play for White. *6.0-0* Here, taking on f6 would make much less sense, as Black would keep the bishop pair. For comparison, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2pp1p/5np1/1Bpp4/8/1P2PN2/PBPP1PPP/RN1QK2R b KQkq - 1 5CCEndFENCC 5...Bd7 6.Bxf6 exf6 7.Bxd7+ this asset is immediately gone. With 6.O-O , we follow Adhiban's recommendation for White. *Kg7 7.c4* White has to use their pawns in the fight for the centre. *dxc4* Similar to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2pp1p/5np1/2pp4/8/1P2PN2/PBPP1PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.c4 dxc4 , this capture is best. *8.bxc4* Certainly more interesting than 8.Bxc4 , when 8...O-O and ...b6 next looks like an easy game for Black. *0-0* I think this is a small improvement on 8...a6 , which Adhiban considered in his course. There is no need for Black to play ...a6, as after castling, White will probably need to move the bishop anyway. *9.Ka4* White needs to be aware of our idea ...Nb6, after which the white bishop has no good way back into its own camp. *b6* This is the final move to know, in my mind. We'll play ...Bb7 next and finish our development. The position is interesting to play for both sides, but White has no advantage. A key point will be White's decision about the central pawn structure. They can play d2-d4 at some point, when we have the option to take on d4 and create the pawn duo c4 and d4 for White, the so-called 'Hanging Pawns'. These pawns can be handy targets, but White has good central control due to the pawns and active pieces. To summarize, 1.b3 leads to interesting positions with equal chances for both sides. 17. Other First Moves-1.b3 #7 *)* 5...dxc4 Black's best move. 5...Bg7 looks natural, but after 6.cxd5 we can't capture with the knight and 6...Qxd5 7.Nc3 is not ideal, either. Taking on c4 is a simple and good solution. 6.Kxc4 Kg7 7.0-0 0-0 8.d4 White doesn't get anywhere without this pawn push. Slow moves don't make much sense and exert no pressure. Black can simply develop with ...Nc6 and later use the d-file against White's backward d-pawn. cxd4 9..xxd4 We have followed the line that I recommend for White in LTR: 1.c4/1.Nf3. a6 Black usually plays 9...Bd7 , intending ...Nc6 next. This gets Black very close to equality, as I conceded in my course for White. The pawn structure is symmetrical, and White can only hope to make something of a slight lead in development. The move 9...a6!? is mostly designed to unbalance the situation a bit. If White reacts with 10.a4 , we will play 10...Bd7 and ...Nc6 next, arguing that a4 is slightly weakening the queenside. Against 10.Nd2 , we can play 10...b5 11.Be2 Bb7 , which keeps the game

more complicated. It involves a bit more risk, as our queenside expansion may also prove to be weakening. One idea for Black is demonstrated after 12.a4 b4 , creating a possible invasion square on c3 CCStartBracketCCthink of ...Nd5-c3 at some pointCCEndBracketCC. 17. Other First Moves-1.b3 #4]
[2.g3 The kingside fianchetto 2.g3 is the main subject of this chapter, as it leads to independent lines. The alternatives like 2.d4 , 2.e3 , 2.c4 will usually transpose to lines that are covered in different chapters CCStartBracketCCQueen's Gambit or1.c4/EnglishCCEndBracketCC. After 2.g3 , we know that White wants to play Bg2, but we don't know their intended central pawn formation. White may play a Reversed King's Indian and go for d3, but a Reversed Grünfeld CCStartBracketCCquick d4CCEndBracketCC or Benoni attempt CCStartBracketCCquick c4CCEndBracketCC are possible, too. c5 I suggest this ambitious move. We intend to play ...Nc6 and ...e5, building a huge centre. 3.Kg2 The move 3.Bg2 is almost an automatic decision for White. A very rare move worth mentioning is 3.c4 , when I suggest taking the pawn. In a moment, we will look at 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.c4 , when I suggest 4...dxc4 , too. Both 3.c4 and 4.c4 lead to the same type of position. .xc6 Alright, now we are ready to occupy the centre with ...e5, aiming for a Reversed King's Indian. What should White do about our ambitious idea? The general theoretical assessment is that White should play 4. d4 here, steering the game into a Reversed Grünfeld. Against this idea, we have a good antidote, though. After 4.d4 Nf6 5.O-O e6 White's best is 6.c4 , when 6...dxc4 transposes to our mainline against theCatalan! Playing exactly this line against the Catalan enables us to play this ambitious setup against 1.Nf3 2.g3. In many games, however, you won't face 4.d4 at all. If White intended to play a Reversed King's Indian CCStartBracketCCor King's Indian Attack, as it is also calledCCEndBracketCC, they will often allow ...e5 and instantly give up any hope for an opening advantage. Besides 4.d4 Nf6 and CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/ pp2pppp/2n5/2pp4/8/5NP1/PPPPPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.O-O e5 , we'll also have a brief look at CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/ 2pp4/8/5NP1/PPPPPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.c4 , which I suggest to answer with 4...dxc4 .

A) 4.0-0 e5 According to plan. We played 3...Nc6 to establish a full centre... mission accomplished! Now White almost always plays 5.d3 , but 5.c4 is possible, too. I suggest answering 5.c4 with 5...dxc4 , which leads to positions that we already have checked via the similar CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/ pp2pppp/2n5/2pp4/8/5NP1/PPPPPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.c4 dxc4 CCStartBracketCCseethis lineCCEndBracketCC. 5.d3 White plays the typical King's Indian pawn move and prepares e2-e4 next. Now Black has to choose their setup. Ke7 Giving this move an exclamation mark is a bit strong, but I believe it is a powerful move and will score heavily. What's the point of it? Black anticipates that White will play e2-e4, which we will answer with ...d5-d4, establishing a central space advantage. In this pawn structure a key plan for White is moving the f3-knight

and preparing the push of the f-pawn to attack our e5-pawn. Now, the point of ...Be7 is twofold: to prepare ...g5 and/or ...h5, which makes pushing f2-f4 very difficult for White. We don't ever intend to castle kingside, giving White attacking play on this side of the board. Our king can stay in the centre for the moment but will often castle queenside. Let's have a look at some lines to illustrate the play.

A1) 6.c4 A late moment to play c4. Now 6...dxc4 is nothing for Black, as 7. dxc4 is possible. We have a much better reply. .xf6 I suggest this simple development, allowing the knight to recapture on d5. 7.cxd5 Now reach the so-called Maroczy Bind. Black has a nice space advantage and is already better. .xxd5 8..xc3 Ke6 Our general plan is to support the pawn centre CCStartBracketCCmoves like ...f6 or ...b6CCEndBracketCC and expand further. A key idea is a later ...Nd4, which is annoying for White to meet. 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3-2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.O-O #3;

A2) 6.e4 Played most of the time. We happily close the centre now. d4 7.a4 White may also play 7.Na3 or 7.Nbd2 , when you have the comfortable choice between playing 7...Be6 CCStartBracketCCtransposing to CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/pp2bppp/2n5/2ppp3/8/3P1NP1/PPP1PPBP/RNBQ1RK1 w kq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nbd2 Be6 7.e4 d4 CCEndBracketCC or the immediate CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/pp2bppp/2n5/2p1p3/3pP3/3P1NP1/PPPN1PBP/R1BQ1RK1 b kq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7...g5 or 7...h5 . It's a tough call between them. For the sake of simplicity, I'd just recommend playing 7...Be6 . h5 We are spoilt for choice here. The alternatives 7...g5 or 7...Be6 are also nice for Black. I like the direct nature of 7...h5 , though. White immediately needs to decide what to do about our h-pawn advance.

A2a) 8..xa3 h4 Here we go! 9..xc4 hxg3 The computer also likes 9...h3 , but taking on g3 is simpler. 10.fxg3 *(10.hxg3* Not an easy decision for White to make. We have the open h-file now. *O&c7* I suggest this more strategic approach, compared to 10...Bg4 11.c3 f6 12.cxd4 cxd4 13. Qb3 Qd7 , which tries to win on the h-file. White has good defensive resources, though. The counterplay on the queenside is real. *11.c3 Ke6 12.cxd4 cxd4 13.a5* Stockfish suggests this setup for White. It indeed looks like a good way to generate some play. Now Black has more than one good plan to choose from. *Kxc4* Stockfish suggests this move, and I agree that it is an interesting concept. We capture the knight and start emphasizing play on the dark squares. It's, of course, possible to play 13... Nf6 , completing development first. *14.dxc4 .xf6* We have excellent control of c5 and b4, and intend ...Nd7-c5 next. The engine also points out the idea to play ...Rd8 and hide the king on g7 after ...Kf8 and ...g6 first. 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3-2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.O-O #6 *)* 10...O&c7 In this pawn structure, White has very little to play for. The f-file doesn't do much for White, and I don't see much activity that they can generate. We'll just play

...Be6, ...O-O-O and are much better. We can play on the h-file, but are also better in any endgame - much more space. 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3-2. g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.O-O #5;

A2b) 8.h4 White stops Harry but makes it difficult for Freddy to advance later. Pushing the f-pawn will weaken the whole kingside after h4 is already on the board. 8....xh6 We'd like to play ...f6 and ...Nh6. The order is not that relevant, so starting with 8...f6 also works fine. 9..xa3 f6 Now it's very tough for White to get active. After 10.Nc4 Be6 they can't decently prepare f2-f4. For example, 11.Nh2 Nf7 12.f4 g5! is a disaster for White. 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3-2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.O-O #4;

A3) 6..xbd2 White quite often avoids the immediate 6.e4 but develops the knight first. Maybe they don't want to allow 6.e4 dxe4 7.dxe4 Qxd1 , but this was never our intention anyway. After 6.Nbd2 , or the similar but much rarer 6.Na3 , we need to play a move that fits well with our concept of kingside expansion. It is crucial to understand that we only want to push ...g5/ ...h5 when the centre is closed, and e4 and ...d4 are on the board. A main line of the current chapter runs 6.e4 d4 7.a4 h5! , showing the idea. On the other hand, playing 6.Nbd2 h5?! is dicey, as White still may play 7.c4! d4 8.b4!? , which sets the board on fire and even looks good for White. Instead, we need a good move that is more versatile. White quite often avoids the immediate 6.e4 but develops the knight first. Maybe they don't want to allow 6.e4 dxe4 7.dxe4 Qxd1 , but this was never our intention anyway. After 6. Nbd2 , or the similar but much rarer 6.Na3 , we need to play a move that fits well with our concept of kingside expansion. It is crucial to understand that we only want to push ...g5/...h5 when the centre is closed, and e4 and ...d4 are on the board. A main line of the current chapter runs 6.e4 d4 7.a4 g5! , showing the idea. On the other hand, playing 6.Nbd2 g5?! is dicey, as White still may play 7.c4! d4 8.b4!? , which sets the board on fire and even looks good for White. Instead, we need a good move that is more versatile. 6...Ke6 I suggest this move, speeding up our queenside development. A good alternative is 6...Bg4 , with similar intentions. 7.e4 White almost always plays this move. White can play 7.c4 , but the choice between 7... d4 CCStartBracketCCwe don't usually play this structure, but it is still goodCCEndBracketCC and 7...Nf6 is very comfortable. After 7...Nf6 8. cxd5 Nxd5 , we reach a Maroczy bind in which White's knight is misplaced on d2 - on top of all the usual Maroczy problems. d4 8..xc4 White gains a tempo on the e5-pawn, a very logical choice. O&c7 This position was reached in two Blitz games of the highest level. In 2021 Richard Rapport played the White side against none other than Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana! In both games, Rapport opted for 9.Ng5 . We'll also have a look at 9.a4 , which secures the knight against a possible ...b7-b5 push. 9.a4 White is concerned about ...b5, but we have other ideas. *(9..xg5* Rapport played this twice, and was worse in both games. *Kxg5 10.Kxg5 f6*

Fabiano Caruana played 10...b5 , which is also very tempting. The knight has to retreat to a3, which is not ideal. I still prefer 10...f6 , as played by Magnus Carlsen. Playing on the kingside is more in the spirit of our line. *11.Kd2 h5* Our typical preemptive strike on the kingside. *12.f4* Rapport went for the f-pawn advance. After 12.h4 O-O-O 13.f4 Nh6 I also prefer Black. We have much more space, and our king is safe on the queenside. *h4* I think we can stop here, as it is clear that Black's opening play was a success. We will castle queenside and have good play down the h-file. 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3-2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.O-O #2 *)* 9...h5 This move is very irritating for White. Allowing ...h4 is unattractive, but stopping it with 10.h4 also has drawbacks. 10.h4 This looks relatively best. Here are two examples of White allowing ...h4. A**CC**EndBracket**CC** 10.Ng5 Bxg5 11.Bxg5 f6 12. Bd2 h4 gives Black a strong attack, with ...O-O-O next. B**CC**EndBracket**CC** 10.Bd2 h4 11.Qe2 O-O-O 12.a5 hxg3 13.fxg3 f6 looks dreadful for White. They have no pawn lever left, and we have much more space. In the long run, we are even able to advance on the queenside after due preparation. After the trade on g3, White has no dynamic play on the kingside and is just passively defending. f6 First 10...O-O-O is also fine. The move 10...f6 is very versatile. It covers g5, prepares the pawn push ... g7-g5 and allows ...Nh6-f7. It's now challenging for White to get activity. White could try 11.Nh2 , aiming for the push of the f-pawn. 11..xh2 0-0-0 Or 11...g5 , but castling is even stronger. 12.f4 Kxc4 Black is also better after 12...Nh6 , but this is a good, direct approach. 13.dxc4 Kd6 Black has a large advantage. White has no good way to make any progress, and their kingside is weakened. A great plan for Black is ...Qf7, attacking c4. This clears the way for ...Bd6-c7-a5 to activate the bishop. Finally, White needs to be alert about ...d4-d3 breakthroughs, opening up the centre. 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3-2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.O-O #1;

B) 4.c4 A rare move, but it leads to a different pawn structure, and we should be consistent with what structures to aim for and what to avoid. 4...dxc4 I suggest taking the pawn. Black's principled alternative is 4...d4 , leading to a Reversed Benoni. Inthe notes to **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 , I explain my rationale behind avoiding this type of structure in most cases. Here the capture on c4 is a strong move and gives Black chances to be better. How does White gets the pawn back? 5.O&a4 A standard way to get the pawn back for White. *(5..xa3* Probably the best move. White wants the pawn back but avoids multiple queen moves. *e5* Let's take more space. *6..xxc4 f6* Black is happy about the central space advantage. An excellent way to continue is a setup with ...Be6 and ...Nge7-d5. Ultimately we'll try to gain more space, for example, with ...b5 or placing a knight on d4. 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3-2.g3 c5 3. Bg2 Nc6 4.c4 #2 *)* 5...Kd7 We break the pin and threaten knight discoveries, so White should grab c4. 6.O&xc4 e5 Black is in excellent shape here. We have a

central space advantage, the so-called Maroczy Bind. We'll continue developing with ...Nf6, ...Bd6 and ...O-O, supporting our centre. Ultimately we'll try to gain more space, for example, with ...b5 or placing a knight on d4. White's queen is not ideally placed, either, allowing us to gain time by attacking it. 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3-2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.c4 #1]

2....xf6 Black has an important decision at this point. I suggest 2...Nf6, as this will reliably transpose to lines that are part of our repertoire anyway. The transpositions are: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/8/4PN2/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 1 3CCEndFENCC 3.d4 c5 leads to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 c5 . BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/8/4PN2/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 1 3CCEndFENCC 3.c4 e6 leads to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 . CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/8/4PN2/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 1 3CCEndFENCC 3.b3 c5 leads to lines covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 . An interesting alternative for Black is 2...c5 , intending to answer 3.c4 with 3...d4 . This is a more maximalist approach, given that you like to play these types of positions. Inthe notes to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 I explain my rationale for playing 2...e6 and avoiding 2...d4. This is a similar story: let's play familiar structures and try to avoid setups that the opponent might have much more experience in. 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3-2.e3

1.g3 Aside from 1.b3 , the move 1.g3 is the best and most respectable one in this chapter. We don't need to examine many lines, though. White's best options, in particular 1...d5 2.Nf3 CCStartBracketCC!CCEndBracketCC, transpose to other openings that we cover in other chapters. 1...d5 No surprise, as we play ... d5-based setups in this course. The moves 1...e5 or 1...c5 wouldn't be bad, but lead to lines that are not part of our repertoire: After 1...e5 2.c4 transposes to an English Opening/Reversed Sicilian, while CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/6P1/PPPPPP1P/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1...c5 2.e4 or 2.c4 lead to other openings not covered in this course. 2.Kg2 The move to keep the game away from a transposition. Here are some possible moves that transpose elsewhere: ACCEndBracketCC 2.Nf3 is maybe the best move CCStartBracketCCstopping ...e5CCEndBracketCC and transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 , covered here in ourchapter on 1.Nf3. BCCEndBracketCC 2.f4? h5! is excellent for Black and covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq -

0 1CCEndFENCC 1.f4 d5 2.g3? h5! in the current chapter. CCEndBracketCC 2.d4 Nf6 leads to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 Nf6 , covered here in the 1.d4 d5sidelines chapter. 2...e5 I suggest this natural move, occupying the centre. It's indeed very natural, but not the only good move. There is nothing objectively wrong about 2...Nf6 or 2...c5 , but we might get move-ordered into lines that we don't usually play. One example is 2...c5 3.f4 , when we are in a Bird's Opening CCStartBracketCC1.f4CCEndBracketCC, that I suggest fighting differently. After 2...e5 White most often goes for 3.d3 , but we'll also check 3.c4 . 3.c4 White attacks our centre, and we need to determine how to handle the threat to our d-pawn.

[3.d3 White plays this move most of the time. Now Black needs to decide how to continue the central build-up. c5 The maximalist approach: put more pawns in the centre. I recommend this move because now a transposition to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.O-O e5 5.d3 Be7 is likely. If White continues with 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.O-O Be7 , we will transpose intothis line immediately. This is White's most commonly played sequence after 3...c5. We'll have a look at a possible alternative, the move 4.Nd2 . 4..xd2 A way to avoid a transposition after 4.Nf3 Nc6 . White prepares e4 but might want to skip the move Nf3. .xc6 5.e4 White tries to play in the style of the King's Indian attack, but omits the move Nf3. d4 We play in a similar way against the King's Indian Attack. Ourmain line is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.O-O e5 5.d3 Be7! 6.e4 d4 . 6..xe2 This is what White had in mind. They want to play a quick f4, starting an attack on the kingside. If you have already studied our lines against the King's Indian Attack, you might be able to guess how we punish White's concept. h5 A very annoying move for White. We push the h-pawn forward, and White has no knight on f3 to stop it. As the following line shows, the h-pawn advance makes it very difficult for White to organize the position. 7.f4 h4 White is in an awkward spot. The h-file is about to open, and they have multiple weaknesses around the king. The manoeuvre ...Nf6-g4 comes to mind, amongst others. By the way: instead of CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/8/2ppp3/8/3P2P1/PPP1PPBP/RNBQK1NR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nd2 White could have played the move 4.e4 . Against it, I'd suggest 4...d4 , when 5.Ne2 h5! leads to a very similar situation. 17. Other First Moves-1.g3 #2]

3...d4 This looks best. We grab a lot of space, without any drawback. There is an additional argument favouring 3...d4: we play a very similar line in a different chapter. I'll get back to this point in the notes to the 5th move, when this similarity is easier to explain. 4.d3 White can't play 4.Nf3?! e4 , which explains the move 4.d3 . 4....xc6 5..xf3 I mentioned before that we'd reach a familiar position. I'd like to show you a line that is part of our repertoire: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq -

0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 4.g3 Nc6 5.Bg2 e5 6.d3 . This looks very similar. In the 1.c4 e6 line, we take two moves to play ...e5, while here we manage to push ...e5 in one go and White has not played the move b2-b3. This doesn't change all that much; we'll play in the same way as in the 1.c4 e6 version of this setup. 5...Kb4+ This check is an important resource. After 6.Bd2 a5 or CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/ppp2ppp/2n5/4p3/1bPp4/3P1NP1/PP2PPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nbd2 a5 we manage to slow down White's progress on the queenside. I examine this position type in more detail inthis chapter on 1.c4 e6 - g3 setups. If you study these lines, you are well equipped to meet this slightly different CCStartBracketCCwithout b3CCEndBracketCC line. 17. Other First Moves-1.g3 #1

1..xc3 While 1.Nf3 is a mainstream opening move CCStartBracketCCmy main move for agesCCEndBracketCC, the move 1.Nc3 is a rare guest in practice. Why? Is it that bad? Bad is too strong a word, but it is unchallenging. Black has many ways to obtain a position that is at least equal. 1...d5 Not a surprise at all. We play ...d5-based defences against 1.e4 and 1.d4, so starting with 1...d5 works well. 2.e4 White plays this move most of the time. An alternative is 2.d4 , when 2...Nf6 transposes to the 1.d4 d5sidelines chapter. Objectively speaking, this is probably White's best move and keeps equal chances. After the more popular 2.e4 , I think White might be worse already. 2...d4 I think that we should advance the pawn and play for an immediate opening advantage. Of course, 2...c6 is possible, transposing to a Caro-Kann. This would be well in line with 'Keep It Simple, ' but not so much with 'Make them suffer'. 3..xce2 e5 After only three moves, we have a substantial space advantage. 4..xg3 Or 4.Nf3 f6 5.Ng3 Be6 , leading to the same CCStartBracketCCtype ofCCEndBracketCC position. 4...Ke6 It's crucial to play this first. We want to prevent Bc4. 5..xf3 f6 The second concept to remember is: don't play ...Nc6 when it allows Bb5. By avoiding the pin, we ask White's bishop about its plans. Where does it want to go? 6.Kb5+ Agains 6.c3? we have 6...d3 , burying White's bishop. With 6.Bb5+ White wants to develop the bishop outside of the pawn chain and then continue with d3. 6...c6 7.Ka4 .xd7 The move 7...Na6 is just as good, with the same idea as 7...Nd7: jumping to c5. 8.Kb3 .xc5 9.Kxe6 .xxe6 Black has a large advantage in space and the much easier game. We can castle queenside and push our pawns on the kingside, gaining even more space. 17. Other First Moves-1.Nc3

1.f4 The move 1.f4 is known as the 'Bird Opening'. Every opening named after an animal is bad, but this one is actually named after Henry Bird, an English master player of the 19th century. Therefore we need to treat it with a little more respect. Our first move is an easy one, as we play 1...d5 against all of the sidelines. 1...d5 Our standard move. After 1...d5, we see that the Bird is a Dutch Defence CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 f5 CCEndBracketCC with an extra tempo for White. This extra tempo is not very

relevant, as the game has a slower pace and is usually not opened quickly. If you are a 1.d4 player and fight 1.d4 f5 with 2.g3 or 2.c4 , then just playing in the same way a tempo down is a fine option. You could play 1...d5, 2...g6, 3...Bg7, 4...Nf6, basically no matter what White plays. This is an approach that I have used, too. However, the resulting middlegames are often not that easy to handle. If you have no experience on the white side against the Dutch, this could prove to be tricky. Therefore I suggest fighting 1.f4 differently, using an approach that I had already recommended in 2016 in a video on my Youtube channel. It is based on a quick ...Bg4 and trying to fight for the e5-square with ... Nbd7. Let's examine what setups White might be after: ACCEndBracketCC The Stonewall - White plays e3 and d4. This setup is covered in the 1.d4 d5sidelines chapter. We fight it with an early ...Bf5 or ...Bg4, like CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.f4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.d4 Bf5 or 3...Bg4 . BCCEndBracketCC The Leningrad - White plays with g3. The move order 2. g3? h5! is bad CCStartBracketCCwe'll check the detailsCCEndBracketCC, so they start with CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/5P2/8/PPPPP1PP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Nf3 to reach it. Our move 2...Bg4 is aimed against the Fianchetto and more or less forces White to play differently, as 3.g3?! Bxf3 is great for Black. CCCEndBracketCC White combines f4 with b3. This setup emphasizes control of e5 and is usually started with the move 2.Nf3 , but they could try 2.b3 or 2.e3 . We'll have a brief look at those move orders. After the most likely sequence 2.Nf3 Bg4 3.e3 Nd7 , we are prepared for ...e5, which heavily disturbs White's plans. 2.b3 If White intends to combine f4 with b3, they usually start with 2.Nf3 , but 2.e3 or 2.b3 are possible. Against 2.e3 , we can start with 2...Nf6 and play ...Bg4 next, which should transpose to 2.Nf3. What to do against 2.b3 , though?

[2.g3 Yes, it warrants a question mark - let's see why. h5 A powerful move that refutes White's opening. White has no good way to stop ...h5-h4. 3..xf3 After 3.Bg2 h4 White is in trouble, too. We not only have ...hxg3, but White also needs to worry about h4-h3. A dreadful situation. h4 Well, 3.Nf3 didn't stop our pawn! 4..xxh4 This more or less loses the game, but we need to see why. Better is 4.Bg2 when you have a nice choice between 4...h3 or keeping the tension with 4...Nc6 , asking what White's next move is. Qxh4 5.gxh4 e5 Threatening the Fool's Mate: Qxh4#. White won't allow that, but they are in deep trouble anyway. 6.d3 O&xh4+ 7.Eld2 O&xf4+ 8.e3 O&h6 We have sacrificed the exchange for a pawn and White's eternally terrible king position in the centre. We'll develop quickly with ...Nc6, ...Be6 and ...O-O-O and enjoy a great attacking position. 17. Other First Moves-1.f4 #2]

[2..xf3 By far White's most popular move. Kg4 That's our signature move against the Bird. We fight for control of f3 by attacking the knight. After White's usual reply 3.e3 , we have set up a pin. 3.e3 White has no good alternative at this point. After moves like 3.g3? or 3.b3? we are happy to take on f3 and worsen White's

structure considerably. The doubled pawn formation near their king is a long term problem. Note that White's pawns are on f3 and f4, not on f2 and f3. In our line of the Caro-Kann CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 the doubled f-pawns provide additional king safety, as they are still closer to the king. You'd think twice about ever moving both f-pawns in this line... which is exactly the structure White gets when they allow us to inflict the doubled pawns in the Bird. Finally, White could play 3.Ne5 , when I suggest 3... Bf5 . The knight is not stable on e5, and we can quickly attack it with ...Nd7. .xd7 This setup against the Bird was recommended in one of the first chess opening books that I owned, Kasparows Schacheröffnungen CCStartBracketCCKasparov's Chess OpeningsCCEndBracketCC, written by German IM Otto Borik in 1989. I have always liked the idea and recommended it myself in a 2016 video on my Youtube Channel. Our idea is playing a quick ...e7-e5 push to open the centre. White now plays 4.Be2 most of the time, but 4.h3 is worth a look, too. 4.h3 White invites us to take on f3. *(4.Ke2* White's main move, breaking the pin. *.xgf6* We'd like to capture on f3 and continue with ...e5, but 4... Bxf3 5.Bxf3 e5 fails to 6.Bxd5 . Therefore we cover d5 first and prepare this sequence. The move 4...c6 is also possible, following the same logic. *5.0-0* White sometimes plays 5.b3 or even 5.h3?! , when we also happily take on f3 and continue with ...e5. *Kxf3 6.Kxf3 e5* Mission accomplished. *7.fxe5 .xxe5* This is the structure we are aiming for. We'll continue with ...c6 and ...Bd6, completing our development. A typical sequence is 8.b3 c6 9.Bb2 Bd6 , when we have developed our minor pieces. It is possible to castle kingside next, but you may also consider playing more aggressively with the ideas of ...h5 and ...Ng4. Queenside castling is an option and will lead to fun play. 17. Other First Moves-1. f4 #4 *)* 4...Kxf3 5.O&xf3 Our d-pawn is attacked now. c6 We cover the pawn and threaten to play ...e5 next. In my mentioned Youtube video, I suggested the pawn sacrifice 5...e5?! , when 6.Qxd5 Qh4+ 7.Kd1 O-O-O leads to a wild position. This might be worth a punt in Blitz, but I am sceptical about it in a long time control game. I was more optimistic about it at the time, but 2021-Me suggests a more solid move. I guess we all get older and wiser :-CCEndBracketCC 6.d4 Otherwise we'd play ...e5, realizing our plan. The resulting positions are rather similar to the ones after CCStartFENCCr2qkbnr/pppnpppp/8/3p4/5Pb1/4PN2/ PPPP2PP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4.Be2 Ngf6 5.O-O Bxf3 6. Bxf3 e5 . e6 7.Kd3 This is an interesting moment. If Black plays 7...Ngf6 now, White could start an early attack with 8.g4 . I didn't like this at all for Black, but there is a good antidote to this concept. f5 We go for a counter-Stonewall! Note that we have traded our light-squared bishop already, so we don't have to worry about a bad bishop sitting on c8. White still has the guy on c1, which stares at its own pawns. 8.g4 g6 We keep the wall intact. If they continue to advance with 9. h4 , we have 9...Ngf6 to clarify the situation. The whole line, starting with 4.h3, is fairly obscure. I still included it in the course, as I wanted to show the

improvement on my 2016 video. 17. Other First Moves-1.f4 #3]
2...Kg4 We can still play ...Bg4. 3.h3 This move could be irritating, as after 3...Bh5 4.g4 it looks like our bishop could get in trouble. 3...Kh5 4.g4 e6 We have this important intermediate move, threatening checkmate. 5..xf3 Kg6 6.e3 h5 We attack White's pawns quickly. Our plan in this position is to castle queenside, as our king will be much safe on this side of the board. 17. Other First Moves-1. f4 #1

1.g4 Grob's Opening is just bad for White. It weakens the kingside for no reason and does not contribute to development. 1...d5 Our standard move anyway, but here it even attacks a pawn! 2.Kg2 That's the move White usually plays, and the one against which you want to learn the line I suggest. If they play 2.h3 or 2.g5 , just play 2...e5 and enjoy life. You'll get by just fine with normal opening principles. 2...Kxg4 Nice, It's not easy to be a pawn up that early, but here this is the case. White's gambit is based on a little trick, hang on. 3.c4 c6 This is the strongest move. I have played and recommended 3...dxc4!? , when 4.Bxb7 Nd7 5.Bxa8 Qxa8 gives Black great compensation. Black is better in this line, but 3...c6 is even better. 4.cxd5 White usually takes on d5, but they can also start with 4.Qb3 , when we'll play along with the same concept as against 4.cxd5 cxd5 5.Qb3: return the b-pawn with 4...Nf6 5.Qxb7 Nbd7 . White has a severe lack of development and weakened their kingside. 4...cxd5
5.O&b3 Attention: here's the little trick that I hinted at before. Now 5...e6?? 6.Qa4+ blunders the g4-bishop! 5....xf6 Trick avoided! 6.O&xb7 .xbd7 Alright, we have returned the pawn. It's good to have an extra pawn, but having some extra development moves and the white queen as a target is more important. It's hard to believe that White should survive the opening phase of the game, given all the problems. 17. Other First Moves-1.g4

1.b4 The 'Orangutan' is better than the less hairy counterpart on the kingside, the Grob. Compared to the Grob, White only weakens the queenside and not the immediate vicinity around their king. It's still a bit dubious, but not an opening you can refute straight away. 1...d5 I suggest sticking with a ...d5-based setup, as usual. The most principled move against 1.b4 is 1...e5 , but I think that these lines can turn out to be somewhat tricky for Black to handle in practice. I suggest using a simple setup that easily equalizes and exploits the weak white queenside more patiently. 2.Kb2 .xf6 I suggest a setup based on ...Nf6, ...Bg4 and ...e6. 3.e3 Or 3.Nf3 Bg4 , with similar play. 3...Kg4 4..xf3 Or 4.Be2 Bxe2 5.Qxe2 Nbd7 , as it happened in a 2021 online rapid game between Magnus Carlsen and Wesley So. Yes, the World Champion has played the Orangutan in rapid chess occasionally, not without success. In the position after 5...Nbd7, Black's plan is ...e6 and ...Bd6, completing a harmonious setup.
4...e6 Gaining a tempo on the b-pawn. 5.a3 Kd6 We are ready to castle next. We'll play ...Nbd7 and try to play ...e5, if possible. Black has an easy game with no pitfalls, which is welcome against an opening that you might never face in a classical time control game CCStartBracketCCI met it once in more than 30

years of chessCCEndBracketCC. 17. Other First Moves-1.b4
1.b3 Here we go, #b3Cowboys! Of course, we need to cover an antidote to 1.b3 , which has been covered on Chessable by GM Adhiban in his Lifetime Repertoire 1.b3. 1...d5 As usual in this chapter, I suggest a ...d5-based setup. Against 1.b3, Black's main decision is to play 1...e5 or 1...d5 . I think 1...d5 is the more practical choice for our purposes. Here's why: ACCEndBracketCC 1. b3 e5 requires more effort to learn for Black. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 e5 frequently leads to positions that resemble a Reversed Sicilian, for example, after 2.Bb2 Nc6 3.c4 . This is not advantageous for White but can prove challenging to play for Black if you don't have any experience on the White side of the Siclian. CCEndBracketCC You need to have an answer to lines like CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.b3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.b3 , too. If you answer 1.b3 with 1... d5, you have a consistent setup against all versions of the queenside fianchetto. After 1.b3 d5 , White's almost automatic response is the natural 2.Bb2 . I'll also look at 2.Nf3 to demonstrate the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.b3 , which is far more common. It's going to transpose to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.b3 d5 2.Bb2 , as you can imagine. 2.Kb2 c5
Let's grab more centre space. Against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/ 8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 , we follow a similar approach with 2...c5 . After 2...c5 White's best move is 3.e3 , while 3.Nf3?! is a common move order slip that we should exploit with 3...f6! . 3..xf3 This move is known to be imprecise since a famous game between two World Champions. Tigran Petrosian played it against Bobby Fischer in their 1971 Match. Fischer played the best reply, 3...f6! , and went on to win the game.
[3.e3 This is White's most accurate move order, avoiding 3.Nf3?! f6! . .xf6
I suggest playing a setup with ...Nf6 and ...g6, countering White's fianchettoed bishop. I want to avoid an early ...Nc6, as I feel that White is happy about playing Bb5, pinning our knight and strengthening the control of e5. After 3...Nf6 White has the fundamental decision between 4.f4 , mixing in some ideas from the Bird CCStartBracketCC1.f4CCEndBracketCC or 4.Nf3 , which is better in my opinion. 4.f4 Going for a Bird style setup. g6 I suggest countering White's b2-bishop with a fianchetto of our own king's bishop. As mentioned before, I don't want to allow 4...Nc6 5.Bb5 , which White usually welcomes. 5..xf3 If White checks us here on the next move, we should play 5.Bb5+ Bd7 or 5...Nbd7 and again avoid 5...Nc6 , which could lead to somewhat dodgy doubled pawns. Kg7 6.Ke2 0-0 7.0-0 Now Black is doing fine with many moves, like 7...Nc6 or 7...b6

. I'd like to suggest a different option, though. d4 This pawn push is the most aggressive idea, immediately gaining space in the centre and trying to make the b-bishop look passive. The only catch is: White can take the pawn! 8.exd4 .xd5 That's the idea. We'd like to regain the pawn by using the pin. At the same time, we attack the f4-pawn. 9..xe5 That's White's active way of playing. but it has a tactical flaw. If they'd play 9.Nc3 , we are better after 9...cxd4 10.Nxd5 Qxd5 . We have more space and play on the c-file against the backward c-pawn. This is the type of scenario the move 7...d4 tries to create. cxd4 10.Kxd4 Now we have a funny tactic! .xxf4 11.Qxf4 g5 12.Qe4 f5 And White's rook has no good square to go! The relatively best for White is 13.Bc4+ e6 14.c3 fxe4 , but they don't have enough compensation for the exchange. This line is a bit long for this rare opening, but I thought it was fun to include it. If you'd like to avoid these complications, there are good alternatives on move seven. 17. Other First Moves-1. b3 #3]

3...f6 A strong move. The simple intention is ...e5, building a huge centre and making the b2-bishop look stupid. If White had played the better CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/8/2pp4/8/1P6/PBPPPPPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.e3 , the reply 3...f6?! is unconvincing due to CCStartBracketCCamongst othersCCEndBracketCC 4.c4 d4 5.Qh5+ , when Black loses the c-pawn in an unusual way. 4.e3 White's usual reply. The mentioned Petrosian-Fischer game continued 4.c4 d4 when Black had a large space advantage, and White's b2-bishop looked silly. We'll continue with ...Nc6 and ...e5 and are much better. If White plays 4.d4 , we go for 4...cxd4 5. Nxd4 e5 . Black is better again, based on the large centre. White loses time with multiple knight moves. 4...e5 5.d4 White wants to fight for the centre, which is very understandable. 5...cxd4 This is much better than starting with 5... e4 , as after 6.Nfd2 cxd4 7.Bxd4 is possible. 6.exd4 e4 7..xfd2 f5 Lots of pawn moves! But we have accomplished a lot, building a massive centre. The move 7...f5 allows ...Nf6 next. 8.c4 .xf6 9..xc3 Kd6 This move is stronger than 9...Be6 , which I played in a 2019 classical time control game against Erik Hartz. The point is that Black doesn't need to lend additional cover to d5, as we shouldn't be worried about the capture in the first place. After 9... Bd6 10.cxd5 O-O Black will regain the pawn anyway. Ideas like ...Nbd7-b6 come to mind. Black is better after 9...Bd6 , as White's b2-bishop remains a bad piece, and they have to be worried about our space advantage in the centre and kingside, too. Black may quickly drum up a quick attack if White goes for kingside castling. 17. Other First Moves-1.b3 #2

[2] **2.g3** White immediately starts the kingside fianchetto. If White intends this setup, they have the option to start right away with 2.g3 , or play 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 , which is more common and often arises from the alternative move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 . The move orders 2.g3 and 2.

Nf3 d5 3.g3 will often lead to the same positions, but we'll briefly check if there are possible alternatives along the way. 2...d5 3.Kg2 Almost an automatic move at this point. When White goes 2.g3, playing the bishop next is very natural. There are some other transpositional possibilities: A**CC**EndBracket**CC** 3.Nf3 would transpose to the main move order of the current chapter. B**CC**EndBracket**CC** 3.d4 leads to a Catalan, covered in thededicated chapter on this opening. C**CC**EndBracket**CC** You'll also meet the harmless move 3. cxd5 , which frees our bishop immediately after 3...exd5 . In the current Chapter we examine the line **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3. cxd5 exd5 4.g3 , which amounts to the same thing. Please checkthis line for more information. D**CC**EndBracket**CC** Finally, there is the even rarer move 3. b3 , which we answer with 3...d4 , gaining space. This will lead to lines that we examine via **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 . 3....xf6 It is important to play 3...Nf6 first and not prematurely capture on c4. The move 3...dxc4 is not a mistake in itself, but it is imprecise if you aim to play our main setup, which is **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 . Compare this to **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 dxc4 4.Qa4+ Bd7 5.Qxc4 . Now the pawn on b7 is attacked, which makes 5...c5?? a blunder. Black has other options, but it makes no sense to learn an additional setup here. Just play 3...Nf6 first and take on the next move after 4.Nf3 is played. **CC**StartBlockQuote**CC**The move order rule of thumb is to capture on move four, after ...e6, ...d5, ...Nf6 have been played.**CC**EndBlockQuote**CC** 4.b3 White covers the pawn, prompting our standard reply 4...d4 . This will ultimately transpose to a line we cover via **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 d4 . There are more possible transpositions, as you might have already suspected. After 4.d4 , we'd get aCatalan, while 4.Nf3 dxc4 leads to the main lines of the current chapter. Finally, White can take on d5, a structure that we cover via the move order **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.cxd5 exd5 4.g3 . 4...d4 This is the standard response to b3 in this complex of lines. In this case, Black has the fun alternative 4...dxc4 5.bxc4 Qd4 , going for a pawn hunt after 6.Nc3 Bc5! 7. e3 Qxc4 , with unclear consequences. I'd advise you to still play 4...d4 , as this particular move order by White is very rare. If they want to play with b3, they usually play Nf3 earlier to have the square d4 covered, like **CC**StartFEN**CC**rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1**CC**EndFEN**CC** 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 . Now, after 4...d4 , we'll transpose to lines that we cover precisely via this move order. 14. English

Lines with g3-2.g3

2..xc3 The knight move is White's most popular move, but it will transpose to other variations/chapters most of the time. Let's have a look. 2...d5 After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 you can safely 'premove' 2...d5 in online chess. Now, after 2.Nc3 d5 , we see why a transposition to a Queen's Gambit is the most common outcome. We are threatening d5-d4, attacking White's knight. White needs to react to this threat, and usually, they do by playing 3.d4 , directly transposing to a Queen's Gambit Declined. We play 3...Nf6 and transpose to one of the dedicated chapters about the QGD. There are other transpositions, too: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 Nf6 -main line GQD. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.cxd5 exd5 4.d4 c6 -QGD Carlsbad. CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nf3 - leads to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 , examined in the current chapter. We'll now have a brief look at White ignoring our d5-d4 idea.

3.g3 White ignores our ...d5-d4 threat. Alright, here we go. 3...d4 4..xb1 Centralization is a fine concept, but 4.Ne4?? f5 still fails. They can play 4.Na4 and NOT lose the knight, but what is the knight doing on the edge of the board?

4...e5 An easy way to evaluate this position is to compare it with CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.g3 d5 2.Bg2 e5 3.c4 d4 , which is part of our repertoire. We are a full tempo up on a variation that tends to be slightly better for Black anyway - case closed. 15. English Lines without g3-2.Nc3

2.e4 An unexpected change of gears! White suddenly transposes to a rare line of the French Defence: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 e6 2.c4 is the move order used there. The move 2.e4 is unpopular but sometimes played if White wants to avoid mainstream theory and transpositions like 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 , which amounts to half a dozen chapters in this course. For us, 2.e4 is not much of a concern: After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppp1ppp/4p3/8/2P1P3/8/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2...d5 White usually plays 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2P1P3/8/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.exd5 exd5 4.cxd5 , which both lead to IQP positions. They are slightly different from the ones we meet in the Caro-Kann CCStartBracketCCsee the chapter on thePanov and Steiner variationsCCEndBracketCC, as we still have a c-pawn, but the e-pawn is gone. Still, the type of position and strategy is rather familiar, and there aren't any pitfalls to be aware of. Let's have a look at some variations now. 2...d5 3.cxd5

[3.exd5 exd5 Now White can choose between taking on d5 or playing 4.d4 , which does not immediately create an IQP in the centre. We will usually get to this structure later, though.

A) 4.d4 This position frequently arises from CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.c4 , starting as an Exchange Variation of the French Defence. In Keep It Simple: 1.e4 I advocated playing the Exchange French for White but suggested playing 4.Nf3 instead. One point of the move is to answer 4...Bd6 with 5.c4 , claiming that the bishop on d6 is not ideal in the arising IQP positions. I dismissed 4.c4 because of the lines that I am now recommending for Black. The main point to remember for Black is: we want to develop our pieces as actively as possible and start with ...Nf6 and ...Bb4 and avoid a more passive setup with ...Be7, for example. We'll check the concrete lines now, but remembering this general concept is an excellent guideline. A second point to remember: we want to capture on c4 at some point, but only after White has spent a tempo on moving the f1-bishop. The usual procedure is to wait for Bd3 when we capture c4 to create the IQP. .xf6

A1) 5..xc3 White usually starts with this move, but 5.Nf3 Bb4+ 6.Nc3 might lead to the same positions. Kb4 As mentioned in the notes to 4.d4: we should develop as actively as possible. Placing the bishop on b4 is Black's best setup, in my mind. After 5...Bb4 White usually chooses between 6.Nf3 or 6.Bd3 , but they will often lead to the same positions. After 6.Nf3 O-O 7. Bd3 dxc4 8.Bxc4 and CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/1bPP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 O-O 8.Nf3 we see two natural sequences that quickly merge to the same variation. An independent but dubious move is 6.a3?! , which loses too much time.

A1a) 6.a3 White wins the bishop pair but loses a lot of time and weakens the queenside. Kxc3+ 7.bxc3 0-0 We have an excellent lead in development and are ready to play ...Re8 next. One point to realize is that after the capture on c3, the pawn structure has changed significantly. In an IQP scenario, I advise developing our b8-knight to c6, putting pressure on the isolated pawn. After taking on c3, there is no IQP to pressurize, so ... Nc6 makes a lot less sense. Let's have a look at a possible line to illustrate this point. 8..xf3 Qe8+ 9.Ke3 .xbd7 Here 9...Ng4 is possible, but it loses a lot of time. With ...Nbd7, we plan to play ...Nb6 and ...Nbd5. This gives Black a great position, as the following line shows. 10.Kd3 dxc4 11.Kxc4 .xb6 12.Kb3 .xbd5 Black is much better here, as White has no good way to defend both c3 and e3. 15. English Lines without g3-2.e4 d5 3. exd5 exd5 4.d4 #3;

A1b) 6.Kd3 White often starts with the bishop move to still have Nge2 available in case of a quick ...Re8+. If they start with 6.Nf3 , there is the line 6...O-O 7.Bd3 Re8+ , which many players on the white side are

concerned about. It is nothing special for Black CCStartBracketCCwe play 7...dxc4 in this particular move orderCCEndBracketCC, but it still might look annoying at first sight. Therefore CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/1bPP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6. Bd3 O-O 7.Nge2 is a common continuation to avoid this scenario from White's perspective. dxc4 I like the simple concept of taking on c4 right after White has played the bishop to d3. It's possible to play 6...O-O first, but it makes no substantial difference, as we would still take on c4 soon after. 7.Kxc4 0-0 Now, there is a split between White's knight placement on f3 and e2. This decision also influences our setup fundamentally. 8..xge2 White wants to avoid the check on e8 and develops the knight to a less aggressive square. This decision leads to quite a different scenario compared to 8.Nf3 . *(8..xf3* White chooses the active knight placement on f3 and is not afraid of the rook check. *.xc6* Let's talk about Black's best setup against White's development of the knight to f3. In this scenario, contrary to the Nge2-setups, Black has the attractive option to exert pressure on d4 by developing the knight to c6 and pinning the f3-knight with ...Bg4. Not only do we attack d4, but we also make it very difficult for White ever to play Ne5 and possibly build some pressure against f7. So we should play ...Nc6 and ...Bg4. Does the move order matter? Not that much; you may also start with 8...Bg4 here. Surprisingly, inserting the check is not helpful for Black. After 8...Re8+ 9.Be3 Nc6 10.O-O Bg4 the move 11.Qb3 highlights a problem of ...Re8, as the pawn on f7 is under attack. *9.0-0* Here 9.h3?! is very slow and may already be answered with 9...Ne4 . *Kg4* The pressure on d4 is quite severe already. We threaten to take the knight and capture the d-pawn. *10.Ke3* If White plays 10.a3 , we just play 10...Ba5 and keep the bishop. On b6, it might put additional pressure on d4. *O&d6* This move scores incredibly well for Black, which shows that White's game is not easy. We connect rooks and avoid the premature 10...Bxf3? 11.Qxf3 Nxd4 12.Qxb7 , when White regains the pawn with a significant advantage. *11.Ke2* White has played this move in the majority of games that I found. The pin is annoying, so White decided to break it. It's not the only move, though. Instead of looking at many lines, just some general points: ACCEndBracketCC If they play a2-a3, the move ...Ba5 is usually a good idea, going to b6 later. BCCEndBracketCC Against h2-h3, keeping the tension with ...Bh5 also makes sense. I'd only take on f3 if I am winning material or see something special. CCCEndBracketCC Nb5 is just answered with ...Qd7 when the knight has not accomplished much. DCCEndBracketCC Centralizing rooks is the next step CCStartBracketCCe8 and d8CCEndBracketCC. *Qad8* Or 11...Rfe8 , which is just as good. I think we can conclude that Black has a rather comfortable game in this type of IQP. 15. English Lines without g3-2.e4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4 #5 *)* 8....xbd7 At first, I thought that playing ...Nc6 is a

'universal' setup that Black can play against both Nf3 and Nge2. However, after some closer inspection, I found that ...Nc6 is less convincing against Nge2. The point is that a future ...Bg4 is not an effective pin and can easily be broken with f2-f3. Without the pin, we don't get as much pressure on the d4-pawn. Long story short: it's possible to play 8...Nc6 here, but it is not as effective. Instead, I found 8...Nbd7 to be much simpler to handle. Let's have a look. 9.0-0 .xb6 10.Kb3 c6 The idea of 8...Nbd7 is this setup, which controls d5 reliably. If allowed, we'd like to play ...Re8 and ...Be6 next. 11.Kg5 Black has quite often reacted to this pin with the retreat ... Be7, which is unnecessarily passive. h6 Gaining a useful tempo. 12.Kh4 Qe8 We are now ready for ...Be6, completing development. I found one game with 13.Nf4!? now, which is an amazing idea. White hopes for 13... g5? 14.Qd3! , when the threat Qg6+ is a cold shower! Black is fine, however. An excellent way to counter is CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp3pp1/1np2n1p/8/1b1P1N1B/1BN5/PP3PPP/R2Q1RK1 b - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13...Qd6 , when 14.Bg3 Bxc3 15.bxc3 Ne4 leads to equal chances. 15. English Lines without g3-2.e4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4 #4;

A1c) 6..xf3 White doesn't develop the f1-bishop just yet, but can't wait forever with castling. Speaking of castling: we are ready to evacuate our king from the open e-file, so let's do it. 6...0-0 7.Ke2 White needs to get their king out of the centre soon, so developing the bishop makes a lot of sense. After 7.Bd3 , I suggest 7...dxc4 8.Bxc4 Nc6 , transposing to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/1bPP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 O-O 8. Nf3 Nc6 . The simple concept is: capture immediately after White has moved the bishop. dxc4 8.0-0 White should play 8.Bxc4 , when again 8...Nc6 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/1bPP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 dxc4 7. Bxc4 O-O 8.Nf3 Nc6 . White sometimes plays 8.O-O to avoid 8.Bxc4 Re8+ , but this concern is unwarranted. Kxc3 A simple solution would be 8...Nc6 9.Bxc4 Bg4 , which transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/1bPP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 3 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 dxc4 again. However, taking on c3 is stronger, as we manage to keep an extra pawn and White's compensation seems insufficient. 9.bxc3 Ke6 I like this better than 9...b5 , which is also possible to keep the pawn. 10..xe5 White attacks c4 a second time. How do we keep the pawn now? .xd5 Much better than 10...b5?! 11.Bg5 . We attack c3 first and then cover the c4-pawn. 11.O&c2 .xb6 We keep the pawn and have good control of the d5-square. With ...N8d7, we'll complete development and fight White's e5-knight. White does not have enough for the pawn. 15. English Lines without g3-2.e4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4 #2;

A2) 5..xf3 Kb4+ After 6.Nc3 we transpose to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/2PP4/8/PP3PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 1

5CCEndFENCC 5.Nc3 Bb4 6.Nf3 . White can play 6.Bd2 , but this is welcome. 6.Kd2 Kxd2+ We are happy about minor piece trades. The general strategy against an IQP is to trade off as many minor pieces as possible and keep the heavy pieces to build pressure against the weak pawn. After the trade on d2, I already prefer Black. We can develop our pieces quickly and have a clear target on d4 in the long run. 15. English Lines without g3-2.e4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.d4 #1;

B) 4.cxd5 .xf6 Similar to the Steiner Variation of the Caro-Kann CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.c4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.cxd5 Nf6 CCEndBracketCC we want to capture on d5 with the knight and avoid losing time with early queen moves. 5.Kb5+ This looks like White's most interesting try. After 5.Nc3 Nxd5 , I don't see the need to dig deeper, as normal development moves should suffice to get good chances. It's rather White who needs to worry about being equal. .xbd7 In the Caro-Kann, we play in the same way, answering the check with ...Nbd7 CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.c4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.cxd5 Nf6 5.Bb5+ Nbd7 CCEndBracketCC. 6..xc3 a6 I like to get rid of the pin, allowing ...Nb6. 7.Ke2 White plays this move most of the time. After 7.Ba4 b5 , we'll eventually win the d5-pawn and have reasonable control of d5, the important square in front of the IQP. .xb6 8..xf3 Kd6 We are now sure to get the d5-pawn and don't need to take it right away. One good point to remember is that playing with ...Bd6 is more active, but White might have Bg5, pinning our knight at a later stage. This can be easily prevented with ...h6, though. So the way to go is: If White plays d2-d4, we respond with ...h6! to stop the pin. 9.0-0 0-0 10.d4 h6 Without the pin White loses an important active possibility. Next, we'll regain d5 and aim for a setup with ...c6 and ...Be6, completing our development. 15. English Lines without g3-2.e4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.cxd5]

3...exd5 Now White usually continues with 4.exd5 , which we examine via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2P1P3/8/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.exd5 exd5 4.cxd5 . Besides this normal continuation, White also has an odd gambit available that I want to check briefly.

4.O&b3 This line is called Orthoschnapp Gambit. I just found out that it was invented in the early 1980s by German FM Stefan Bücker, who has an enormous track record of creative opening ideas. This gambit has gained some CCStartBracketCCrelativeCCEndBracketCC popularity due to the online chess streaming scene. IM Eric Rosen has played it many times. One of his videos is the reason that I know that this line exists... I wasn't aware of it at all before watching it. Let's have a look now at how to refute the Orthoschnapp CCStartBracketCCno, I have no idea about the origin of the nameCCEndBracketCC. 4...dxe4 Let's take the centre pawn first. 5.Kc4 This is White's basic idea. They sacrifice the e-pawn to allow this attack on the

f7-pawn. 5...O&e7 We need to play a queen move to cover f7. Going to e7 is stronger than d7, as we will see. 6..xc3 .xf6 Now it becomes clear that it is difficult for White to develop the queenside. White's best try is to move the d-pawn now and give up a second pawn. 7.d3 Or 7.d4 exd3+ , leading to the same position. 7...exd3+ Check! The point why it was better to play ...Qe7 and not ...Qd7 earlier. 8.Ke3 d2+ Check! The e-pawn has already done a remarkable job. It started on e7, then to e6, to d5, to e4, to d3 and now d2 with a check! Black is better now in the following lines: A©©EndBracket©© 9. Kxd2 Qd7+ 10.Ke2 Nc6 11.Rd1 Bd6 - we are ready to castle next and remain a pawn up, looking forward to playing against White's 'centralized' king. B©©EndBracket©© 9.Kf1 Nc6 10.Nf3 Bd7! is strong. We threaten ...O-O-O, and 11.Qxb7 Rb8 12.Qxc7 Rxb2 is wild but great for Black. 15. English Lines without g3-2.e4 d5 3.cxd5

[3] **3.b3** White covers the c-pawn and prepares the fianchetto of the c1-bishop. Against this move, I recommend advancing the d-pawn and gaining central space. 3...d4 I like this pawn advance for several reasons: 1©©EndBracket©© In general, gaining central space is desirable. 2©©EndBracket©© It is easier to learn than the alternatives. We instantly clarify the pawn structure in the centre and have a fairly clear plan afterwards. 3©©EndBracket©© There is ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1©©EndFEN©© 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 d4 , which is not part of our repertoire. It is not bad at all, but fairly complicated for Black after 3.b4 . Here, the moves ...e6 and b3 are added, which prevents this option for White. In general, the move b2-b3 turns out to be rather pointless after the advance. 4©©EndBracket©© A practical point: if you play online games and/or face lower-rated opposition, a common reply will be 4.Bb2?! , which is just a conceptual mistake and immediately gives Black an advantage. The bishop is misplaced on b2, only staring at a well-protected pawn. Before we examine some moves, a word about the move order ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1©©EndFEN©© 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 d4! . This is a very similar case, but not the same as we are committed to ...Nf6 already. Black has a good game in these lines, too. Now, after ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1©©EndFEN©© 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 , we need to examine 4.g3 , 4.e3 and the already mentioned ill-advised 4.Bb2 . 4.e3 This direct play against our pawn might be White's best option.

[4.Kb2 I am very tempted even to call this a mistake and give a '?'. The bishop is misplaced on b2, staring at a well-protected pawn. I am very tempted even to call it a mistake and give a '?'. The bishop is misplaced on b2, staring at a well-protected pawn. .xc6 I suggest playing the ...d4 structures with ...Nc6, avoiding the move ... c5. I discuss the reasoning behind this choice more in the notes to ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/8/2Pp4/1P3N2/P2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w

KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.g3 Nc6 inthis line. 5.e3 *(5.g3* The following notes will be rather brief, as we reach the same structures as after 4.g3, but with a misplaced white bishop on b2. *e5* We have a massive space advantage with Black after five moves - nice! *6.d3 Kb4+* We play in a similar fashion after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/8/2Pp4/1P3N2/P2PPPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.g3 Nc6 5.Bg2 e5 6.d3 Bb4+ CCStartBracketCCseethis lineCCEndBracketCC. It is also possible to play 6... Nf6 first, and after 7.Bg2 give the check. *7..xbd2 a5* The typical follow up, stopping White's queenside expansion CCStartBracketCCa3, b4CCEndBracketCC. *8.a3 Ke7 9.Kg2 .xf6 10.0-0 0-0* Black has a comfortable advantage in this position. We have much more space and the long term plan to breakthrough in the centre with ...e5-e4. A good setup for us is: ...Bf5, ...Nd7-c5, ... Re8, trying to play ...e5-e4. White can't do much in the meantime, as there is no meaningful pawn break to change the structure. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 4.Bb2 #2 *)* 5...e5 It's important to avoid 5...Bc5? 6.b4! , when White manages to exchange their b-pawn for our d-pawn. After 5...e5 , our advanced pawn is safely protected. 6.exd4 exd4 7.d3 Kc5 Black has other good options CCStartBracketCCmy Stockfish likes the funky 7...a5 8.Be2 g5!? , for exampleCCEndBracketCC, but I like this development. The bishop safely covers c5 and is developed before the King's knight, for reasons that will become clear on the next move. 8.Ke2 .xge7 I wanted to show this interesting idea. White's misplaced bishop on b2 neglects control of f4, so playing ...Ne7-g6 makes a lot of sense. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 4.Bb2 #1]
[4.g3 White often combines 1.c4 with a kingside fianchetto, trying to initiate play on the long diagonal. Here the central pawn advantage matters more, though. .xc6 In this repertoire, I like to avoid Reversed Modern Benoni or Reversed Benko Gambit structures, as they are tricky to play for Black. In particular, if you don't have experience on the White side against these openings. If you are a 1.e4 player, you might have zero games fighting the Benko, for example. Therefore I opted for 4...Nc6 here, avoiding lines like 4...c5 5.e3 Nc6 6.exd4 cxd4 , reaching a Reversed Modern Benoni CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.Nc3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 CCEndBracketCC. The characteristics of the 'Modern Benoni', compared to the 'Benoni' CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 c5 2.d5 Nf6 3.Nc3 d6 4.e4 g6 CCEndBracketCC, is the trade of the e-pawn vs. the c-pawn. This trade sharpens the game and leads to more tactical possibilities, favouring the side with more experience. Instead, I advise playing without ...c5 and reaching a Benoni structure that is easier to handle. With the c- and e-pawn still on the board, White is less likely to manage a queenside expansion with a3 and b4, to mention a key point. 5.Kg2 e5 Now the move ...e5-e4 is a serious threat. White should prevent it with 6. d3 , as 6.O-O e4 7.Ne1 h5! leads to a strong attack.

A) 6.d3 Kb4+ Here 6...Nf6 would likely transpose to a different line of the current chapter. We play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 d4 5.Bg2 Nc6 6.O-O e5 , which leads to a similar pawn structure. Due to the different move orders in this version, we don't manage to give the check on b4. Here the distracting check is possible and should be played. Both replies, 7.Nbd2 and 7.Bd2 , have their drawbacks. Let's have a look. 7.Kd2 *(7..xbd2 a5* We play the same move after 7.Bd2, too. Otherwise, a3 + b4 is on the agenda... we better prevent this idea. *8.a3 Kc5* A bit more active than the more usual 8...Be7 , which is fine, too. *9.0-0 .xf6 10.Qb1 O&d6* The reason why ...Bc5 is more active than ...Be7. We stop b3-b4, asking White about other plans that they have. They can play Ne1-c2, but this still would not threaten b3-b4. In the meantime, we have ...O-O, ...Re8 and ...Bf5 to centralize and prepare ...e5-e4. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 4.g3 #3 *)* 7...a5 An important move. We support the bishop on b4 and make a generally useful move, as it helps to stop White's possible queenside expansion with a3 and b4. Now, with the bishop sitting on d2, White can't develop with Na3-c2, which would otherwise be an option to support these pawn pushes. 8.a3 Or 8.O-O Nf6 9.a3 Be7! , which leads to the same thing. Ke7 Trading on d2 would only help White to organise. They have less space and welcome trades. We go to e7, as we anticipate that a future ...Nf6 will be answered with Bg5. We unpin before even being pinned, so to say. 9.0-0 .xf6 Black's general strategy now is based on playing for a central breakthrough with ...e5-e4, while at the same time preventing White's play on the queenside. 10.Kg5 The bishop is misplaced on d2, due to our earlier check, and decides it's best to leave the board by trading on f6. h6 Give me the bishop, please. 11.Kxf6 Kxf6 12..xbd2 Ke7 A good positional move, prophylaxis against the queenside play. White has a hard time ever playing b4 now, while we enjoy our central space and may prepare ...e5-e4 in the long run, maybe even supported by ...f7-f5. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 4.g3 #2;

B) 6.0-0 White ignores ...e5-e4, which is asking for trouble. 6...e4 7..xe1 h5 Yes, we can even sacrifice the e-pawn and throw the kitchen sink at White! 8.Kxe4 Kh3 We'll get a great attack with simple means: playing ...Qd7, ...O-O-O, ...h5-h4 is not exactly rocket science. 9.Kg2 It seems that 9.Ng2 is even worse. Let's look at a possible sample line. After 9...Qd7 10.b4 CCStartBracketCCdesperationCCEndBracketCC 10...Nf6 CCStartBracketCCno need to take the pawn, better attack!CCEndBracketCC 11.Bf3 h4 12.Nxh4 g5 13.Ng2 Ne5 Black has a winning attack. O&d7 White is in deep trouble here. I want to show one attacking idea that you should know in this scenario. 10..xf3 White can't stop ...h5-h4 in this way. There are better defences for White, but our play is much simpler anyway: hack away for checkmate. h4 It works anyway. 11..xxh4 Qxh4 12.gxh4 O&g4 And it's mate next move. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 4.g3 #1]

4....xc6 I always suggest playing the ...d4 structures without ...c5, but instead develop the knight quickly CCStartBracketCCcompare to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/8/2Pp4/1P3N2/P2PPPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.g3 Nc6 inthis lineCCEndBracketCC. 5.exd4 White should take before we manage ...e5, like after 5.Bb2?! e5 , which transposes to a line we cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/8/2Pp4/1P3N2/P2PPPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bb2?! Nc6 5.e3 e5 CCStartBracketCCseethis lineCCEndBracketCC. 5....xxd4 6.Kb2 Both sides fight for control of the d4-square. We have a good way to lend support d4: by playing ...Bc5 and ...Ne7-c6 next. 6...Kc5 7..xa3 White could try 7.b4!? , but a simple and good reply is 7...Nxf3+ 8.Qxf3 Bd4 , keeping control and a good position. 7....xe7 8..xc2 .xec6 We maintain our grip on d4 and have a good position. Stockfish now suggests 9.Nfxd4 Nxd4 10.b4!? for White, when 10...Nxc2+ 11.Qxc2 Bd4 is a good continuation. I'd rather be Black here, having the better pawn structure. White still has long term worries about the weaknesses on the d-file, d4 and d3. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 4.e3

3.e3 White covers the c-pawn, a seemingly modest move. Still, this line has gained considerable popularity and was recommended for White by yours truly in Lifetime Repertoire 1.c4/1.Nf3. White's main idea is playing a quick b2-b3 and staying flexible. According to Black's setup, White may play a later d2-d4 or not. What's our plan with Black against it? I'd like to discuss it right after our natural reply. 3....xf6 Our knight is best on f6, so let's start with this natural move. The position after 3...Nf6 may also arise after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 , which is a popular move order that I have employed countless times with the white pieces. Now White's choice is mostly between 4. Nc3 and 4.b3 , while 4.d4 would immediately transpose to a sideline of theQueen's Gambit. The difference between 4.b3 and 4.Nc3 is minor, as White usually combines both moves quickly. I'll discuss our approach in the notes to 4. Nc3, while 4.b3 is briefly covered to show the transpositions to 4.Nc3. 4.b3 This move has little independent value, compared to 4.Nc3 . After 4.Nc3, White's next moves will usually be 5.b3 and 6.Bb2, which makes a transposition almost certain. Here we'll look at how to transpose and talk about possible ways for White to deviate. 4....xbd7 I suggest playing a setup with ...Nbd7, ...Bd6 and ...O-O, played in that order. The merits of this approach are discussed in the notes to 4.Nc3 inthis line. 5.Kb2 Here 5.Nc3 Bd6 would already transpose to 4.Nc3. 5.d4 is rare, but a possible transposition to a Queen's Gambit Declined. In the QGD after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 , we play the move 4...a6 first, trying to provoke an untimely bishop move by White. If White plays 5.b3 , we aim for a setup involving ...Nbd7, ...Bd6, ...b6 and ...Bb7. Here, in the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/

PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3. e3 Nf6 4.b3 Nbd7 5.d4 we'd transpose directly with 5...a6 , but it's easier to think about it as a setup. Both sides develop rather slowly, so the precise move order is not very critical. Here 5...b6 would work, too. A scenario to avoid is 5. d4 Bd6?! , allowing 6.c5 for no reason. Once d2-d4 is on the board, it's best to have ...b6 played first, only then ...Bd6. 5...Kd6 6..xc3 Again, 6.d4 would transpose to a sideline of the Queen's Gambit. Here 6...b6 is precise so that we don't have to worry about c4-c5. After 7.Nc3 a6 8.Bd3 Bb7 9.O-O O-O we have transposed to one of the main positions of this particular variation of the QGD. White rarely plays 6.d4 here, but we want to understand and master possible transpositions. In closed games, move order tricks are abundant. Back to the position after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.b3 Nbd7 5.Bb2 Bd6 . White usually plays 6.Nc3 , but this transposes to 4.Nc3 in the current chapter. Anything else? Maybe they could start with 6.Qc2 , but after 6...O-O , it's tough to suggest anything else than 7.Nc3 , which again takes us to 4.Nc3 Nbd7 5.b3 Bd6 6.Bb2 O-O 7.Qc2 CCStartBracketCCseethis lineCCEndBracketCC. White's normal choice. They can play 6.d4 to go the QGD route, but we'd be fine as we use the same setup there. After, for example, 6.d4 b6 7.Bb2 Bb7 8.Bd3 a6 9.O-O O-O we'd reach the main part of theQGD sidelines chapter. I advise playing 6...b6 first to avoid a possible c4-c5 with a tempo on the d6-bishop. 6...0-0 And we have transposed to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2P5/4PN2/ PP1P1PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nc3 Nbd7 5.b3 Bd6 6.Bb2 O-O CCStartBracketCCseethis lineCCEndBracketCC. 15. English Lines without g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.b3 Now what? It's decision time for White. One option is 7.d4 , when 7...b6 8.Bd3 Bb7 9.O-O a6 would again transpose to theQGD sidelines chapter. Let's have a look at the independent possibilities. We'll examine 7.g3 and the less committal moves 7.Qc2 and 7. Rc1 . 7.g3 A creative idea that worked much better if we had played ...b6 already. Now we have a good opportunity to change the pawn structure, demonstrating the flexibility of our move order.

[7.Qc1 I recommend this move in Lifetime Repertoires 1.c4/1.Nf3. White is toying with the idea cxd5, followed by Nc3-b5. We need to take this into account. a6 A familiar idea. The move is part of our target setup, and it stops White's Nb5 ideas. 8.Ke2 Again the move I suggested in my course for White. I didn't explore this position any deeper, as Black's particular move order is rare. About one year later, I figured out that Black's move order is quite clever - which is why I am now featuring it for Black. What does White have instead of 8.Be2? After 8.d4 b6 , we'd transpose to a QGD type of position again CCStartBracketCCRc1 early on is uncommon for White, but logical enoughCCEndBracketCC. The move 8.g3 could again be answered with 8...dxc4 9.bxc4 e5 . We have seen the same idea after 7.g3 instead of 7.Rc1 CCStartBracketCCseethis lineCCEndBracketCC. b6

Sticking with our concept to develop with ...b6 and ...Bb7. We are rather flexible, though. There is nothing wrong with moves like 8...Re8 or 8...Qe7 , for example. 9.cxd5 We should check the capture because 9...exd5 10.Nd4 looks a bit scary at first. White can continue their development with 9.O-O , when 9...Bb7 completes our setup. White does not have many active ideas in this scenario. After 10.d4 , we can play 10...Qe7 and ...Ne4 next, just in the spirit of the lines that we play in the QGD with an early e3. White can try to avoid d2-d4, but I see no pointed way to do it. We are well developed and have a harmonious setup. An idea worth noting is ...d5xc4 at some point, opening up our b7-bishop. d6 and b7 are pointing to the white king, after all! exd5 10..xd4 A tad scary at first, as c6 and f5 are good spots for the knight. We are alright, though. .xc5 We cover the f5-square. Now 11.Nc6 Qd7 leads nowhere, and White's Nd4-jump didn't net any concrete benefit. We can continue with ...Re8, ...Bb7 and ...Qd7 to complete our development and connect rooks. 15. English Lines without g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4. Nc3 #2]

[7.O&c2 White does not commit the pawn structure just yet and stays flexible. We now need to be cautious, as a natural-looking move now fails. a6 We must avoid 7...b6? 8.cxd5 exd5 9.Nb5 , which highlights a point of White's Qc2. After the better move 7...a6! , we reach a comparably unexplored position. White now has to decide if they want to play aggressively CCStartBracketCCideas like 8.O-O-O , 8.g4 or 8.Rg1 CCEndBracketCC, or play more conservatively. 8.Qg1

If White wants to play aggressively, this is probably the best bet. Clearly wrong is 8.O-O-O? as 8...dxc4 9.bxc4 b5! opens up files at lightning speed. White could also throw the kitchen sink immediately with 8.g4 , after which 8...Nxg4 9. Rg1 Nde5 10.Nxe5 Nxe5 11.Be2 dxc4 12.bxc4 Ng6 is a possible line. We are a pawn up, but often ...b5! will be a good idea to open lines if White castles queenside. Objectively speaking, White's attack is probably premature but certainly leading to interesting play. *(8.Ke2* A flexible move. White does not yet commit to a kingside attack, but still keeps this option. *Qe8* We still don't play 8...b6 . The move is possible, but there is a tactical issue, as White can play 9.cxd5 exd5 10. Nxd5!? Nxd5 11.Qc6 . This seems to be OK for Black after 11...Nb4 12.Qxa8 c6 , but it's awfully complicated. *9.0-0* The calm option. The move 9.g4 is possible, when you have a choice between 9...dxc4 10.bxc4 Nxg4 11.Rg1 f5 and CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/1ppn1ppp/p2bpn2/3p4/2P3P1/1PN1PN2/ PBQPBP1P/R3K2R b KQ - 0 9CCEndFENCC 9...e5 10.cxd5 e4 . Both lines are tough to assess. The computer evaluation is 'equal chances', but it's anything but drawish. I don't think a deeper exploration is warranted, as we are already rather deep down the rabbit hole. *b6* Finally, we get to play the b-pawn. Now I'd like to show you a trap that White may fall for. *10.cxd5* It's better to play 10.d4 , when 10...Bb7 leads to a familiar setup that we have talked about before. *exd5 11..xxd5* White tries to be clever, but it backfires terribly. *.xxd5 12.O&c6* White attacks both knight and rook. What now? *Kb7 13.O&xb7 .xc5 14.O&c6* Or 14.Qxd5 Bxh2+ , winning the queen. *.xb4* And the white queen is trapped! 15.

English Lines without g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 #4 *)* 8...dxc4 Playing passively against such an ambitious move as 8.Rg1 is wrong. I like this suggestion of Stockfish, opening up the position immediately. 9.bxc4 b5 Fighting fire with fire! White's king will be in the centre for a while... let's open up the position as much as possible. 10.cxb5 e5 11.bxa6 Kxa6 Black has good compensation for the pawn. White's main issue is that the king won't have a safe place in the foreseeable future. I also like the fact that White's aggressive intentions have not been realized, and they are now put into the defensive - a role they certainly did not intend to be in. 15. English Lines without g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 #3]

7...dxc4 The alternative 7...c6!? , intending ...e5, is also fine for Black. 8.bxc4 e5 That's the point of the capture on c4. We manage e6-e5 and will develop our c8-bishop on its starting diagonal. We also have ideas based on the weakened light square's in our opponent's camp. 9.Kg2 Let's have a look at this move to show the weaknesses I was talking about. 9...e4 10..xg5 .xc5 And the juicy square d3 is in sight. Black is in good shape here. An instructive line is 11.O-O Bf5 12. Qc2 Be5! 13.Ba3 Nfd7 , when Black holds the important e-pawn. 15. English Lines without g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 #1

[4] **5..xa3** With the clear intention to play Nxc4 next - not on our watch! 5...Kxa3 This is best. We simply stop White's idea and often manage to keep the pawn. It is interesting to compare 5.Na3 withthe line CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 , when we don't have the ...Bxa3 option. The key difference is the queen placement on c2: After CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 c5 6.Na3 Nc6 we firmly control the d4-square, while after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/ PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 c5?! 6.Nxc4 Nc6 7.O-O Be7 8.b3 O-O 9.Bb2 Black can't stop White's d2-d4 advance, which favourably opens up the position. Taking the a3-knight is a much better solution. White usually just recaptures with the pawn, but we'll have a brief look at CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/b4NP1/PP1PPPBP/R1BQK2R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Qa4+ , too. 6.O&a4+ A rare line, and for more than one reason. Black is fine with multiple answers.

[6.bxa3 Not the prettiest pawn structure ever, but White clears the b2-square for the bishop. b5 Playing ...b5 against the g2-bishop is always a tad scary, but here it works well. We not only cover c4 but prepare ...Bb7 at the same time. White has two ideas against our concept now. They can try 7.Ne5 , immediately using the diagonal, or attack b5 by playing 7.Rb1 a6 8.a4 . 7.Qb1 White can also start with 7.a4 , when 7...a6 8.Rb1 leads to the same situation. *(7..xe5 .xd5* The only good move is to close the long diagonal. We not only accomplished this goal but also prepared ...f6 to evict the e5-knight. This is also the reason why White now should start concrete play with 8.d3 , as something like 8.O-O f6 9.

Nf3 is a bit lame and does not give sufficient compensation for the pawn. *8.d3 O&f6* Stockfish suggests the yet untested move 8...c3 , but I like 8...Qf6 more. The following line looks like the best play, and Black is comfortable at the end. *9.Kf4* This looks best for White. Instead, 9.d4? c5 is downright bad, while CCStartFENCCrnb1k2r/p1p2ppp/4pq2/1p1nN3/2p5/P2P2P1/P3PPBP/R1BQK2R w KQkq - 1 9CCEndFENCC 9.f4 Nd7 weakens White's kingside for no particular reason. *.xd7* We can't play 9...g5? due to 10.Ng4 . Our move is much stronger and gives us good play. White can't keep the knight on e5 now. *10.dxc4* A logical choice, getting rid of the c-pawn. After 10.Nxd7 Bxd7 11.dxc4 bxc4 12. O-O O-O White can capture on d5, but giving up the light-squared bishop is a tough decision. I'd rather be Black in this line. *bxc4 11..xxc4 O&c3+* Forcing the knight back to d2 makes sense, but 11...O-O or 11...Ba6 are fine for Black, too. *12..xd2 0-0* Black has equal chances here. We'll develop with ...Ba6 and have active pieces. We'll likely win the CCStartBracketCCadmittedly not very importantCCEndBracketCC a3-pawn, too. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5 *)* 7...a6 It's important to avoid ...c6, as we intend to use our bishop actively on b7. 8.a4 Or 8.Ne5 Nd5 , similar to 7.Ne5. Kb7 A strong move. We don't need to cover the b5-pawn. 9.axb5 This fails, but I don't see anything better. White can try 9.Ba3 , but 9...Nbd7 prepares ...c5 to allow castling soon. Ke4 The all-important Zwischenzug, gaining a tempo. 10.Qb2 axb5 11.Qxb5 Here we see the point of ...Be4 - there is no bishop on b7 to attack. Therefore we have time to grab a2. Qxa2 Black is a pawn up and has some pressure on top. The bishop has fantastic posts on e4 or d5, and our rook is active, too. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5]

6....xc6 This looks best, but 6...b5 isn't bad, either. 7..xe5 Not exactly obvious, but White's best try. After 7.Qxa3 e5 White has no compensation for the pawn deficit. We can play ...Be6 to cover c4 and ...Qd6 to allow castling. 7...Kd6 This bishop already thought today's job was done on move five, but suddenly it's back in the game again! 8..xxc6 O&d7 This is the funny point. We set up a counter-pin, forcing White to take on c4. 9.O&xc4 Against other moves, our reply ...Nd5 would have already won material. 9....xd5 White needs to move the c6-knight now. The issue for White is that we'll gain lots of tempi now, for example, after 10.Nd4 O-O 11.a4 b6 12.O-O c5 , when we have the better development and central control. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4. Bg2 dxc4 5

5.O&c2 White's most popular queen move is 5.Qa4+ when we play 5...Bd7 , forcing 6.Qxc4 . The move 5.Qc2 is slightly different, as White may still play Na3 or Ne5 to regain the pawn. I suggest fighting 5.Qc2 with the same concept that we use against 5.Qa4+ , though: playing ...c5 and controlling the d4-square. 5...c5 The queen placement on c2 makes it more difficult for White to play d2-d4, thus controlling the crucial d4-square with ...c5 and ideally ...Nc6 looks logical. Now White has the choice between 6.Na3 CCStartBracketCCor 6.O-O Nc6 7.Na3 CCEndBracketCC and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/

4pn2/2p5/2p5/5NP1/PPQPPPBP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6. Ne5 to regain the pawn. Playing 6.Qxc4 is possible, but 6...Nc6 is very comfortable for Black. Let's compare with CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p5/2p5/5NP1/PPQPPPBP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6. Na3 Nc6 7.Nxc4 : we reach the same good structure, but White's queen looks somewhat misplaced on c4. 6..xe5 In this line, we have to be aware of one pitfall to avoid. White opens the long diagonal, which is relevant.

[6..xa3 White's most popular move. They can also start with 6.O-O , when 6... Nc6 7.Na3 will transpose quickly. .xc6 Playing ...Nc6, ...Be7 and ...O-O is very natural. Control d4, complete kingside castling. 7..xxc4 Ke7 8.0-0 0-0 9.b3 This looks best. White wants to play Bb2, a rook to d1 and d2-d4 next. We have a strong reply, though! b5 You always need to be careful with playing ...b5 against a g2-bishop. Here there is no tactical problem, and we manage a quick queenside development. 10..xfe5 This looks scary at first, but the vulnerable queen position on c2 helps to justify our 9...b5 move. *(10..xce5 Kb7* Black enjoys a harmonious development and good central control. I'd like to continue a bit to show a typical trick. Let's say White continues 11.Nxc6 Bxc6 12.Bb2 . What should Black play? This is an important moment, as White has just set up a serious threat! The threat is Ng5!, which attacks the b7-bishop but also prepares Bxf6 and the mate on h7! This is easily overlooked and can prove fatal. If you'd play, for example, the careless 12...a6?? , 13.Ng5! is killing. The alarm bells should go off once you see a setup with Qc2, Bb2 and a knight on f3. Always check if Ng5 is a threat or not! Here Black is okay with a move like CCStartFENCCr2q1rk1/p3bppp/2b1pn2/1pp5/8/1P3NP1/PBQPPPBP/R4RK1 b - - 1 12CCEndFENCC 12...Rc8 , which covers the bishop. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5 *)* 10....xd4 A crucial tempo. 11.O&d1 Qb8 We are much better, as White has to move the c4-knight to a bad square and suffers from lack of space and development. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5]

6...Ke7 We prepare castling. 7..xxc4 0-0 8..xc3 Now we reach the important moment, the mentioned pitfall. 8....xd5 We need to avoid the natural move 8... Nc6 , as White has 9.Bxc6! , which destroys our pawn structure. White might be reluctant to give up the beautiful bishop, but Black should avoid this scenario objectively speaking. Just remember to play ...Nd5 first, and only then ...Nc6 on the next move. After staying clear of this trap, Black is fine. The resulting structure is comfortable, as White has no way to get in d2-d4, which gives us a space advantage. I discuss this type of scenario a bit more in the mainline of this chapter CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6. Qxc4 c5 CCEndBracketCC. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4. Bg2 dxc4 5

5.0-0 The move 5.O-O is one of the trickier options that White has available. If you remember the three pointers in the notes to 4...dxc4, you'll notice that castling does not tell us if White wants to move their queen next

CCStartBracketCC...c5! is our conceptCCEndBracketCC or maybe play Na3, after which we don't want to allow Na3xc4. Alright, what do we play? Some moves don't fit our concept and are dubious, for example, 5...c5?! 6.Na3! or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQ1RK1 b kq - 1 5CCEndFENCC 5...Be7?! 6.Na3! , when we don't want to move the bishop again to capture the knight, being a full tempo down on CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 Bxa3! . The solution is not apparent but makes perfect sense once you see it and check some moves. 5...a6 A surprisingly effective move. It fits into our framework well, as 6.Qc2 c5! still works well. After 6.Na3 , we have 6...b5 to cover the pawn, realising the basic idea of ...a6. After 5...a6, White's most popular move is 6.a4 , which changes the position considerably and allows an entirely different reply, as we will see. 6..xe5 We have already examined CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Ne5 Qd4! , so our reply to this similar idea won't be a surprise.

[6..xa3 Attention: don't allow Na3xc4 when White's queen is still on d1. b5 We want to stop Nxc4 and 6...b5 accomplishes this goal nicely. It is even better than 6...Bxa3 , which is a slightly worse version of CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Na3 Bxa3! , as White's additional move is more valuable than ours. 7..xe5 This must be critical and is answered by an instructive reply. c6 Not the only playable move, but a strong one and good to know. White is now able to regain the pawn on c6 and is more or less forced to go for this option. 8..xxc6 There isn't much else. If we manage to protect c6 with ...Bb7, White's knight is not doing much on e5. O&c7 Or 8...Qb6 , which is just as good. 9..xxb8 Or 9.Nd4 Bb7 , which already looks better for Black. Qxb8 We have returned the extra pawn for a good position. We are ready to challenge White's strong bishop with ...Bb7, have gained some space on the queenside and have no weaknesses to speak of. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5]

[6.O&c2 c5 The concept of answering Qc2 with ...c5 still works here - we also answer CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2p5/5NP1/PP1PPPBP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qc2 with 5...c5! Before we explore further, a quick word about 6...b5 . This is not a bad move, but not as effective here as it is against 6.Na3. After 7.Ne1! c6 8.d3 cxd3 9.Nxd3 White gets good compensation for the pawn and the easier game to play. 7..xe5 The most challenging move. After 7.Qxc4 b5 8.Qc2 Bb7 , we have an easy game with more space and no bad pieces. Realising ...b5 and ...Bb7 quickly is an excellent accomplishment. After 7.Ne5 , we get to one of the more difficult moments in the current chapter. In other cases, the move Ne5 can be answered with ...Qd4. Here this makes no sense, as White can simply take our c4-pawn. Qa7 Not exactly the most obvious move, but it works well. We remove the rook from the long diagonal and prepare the move of the b-pawn. The rook also helps with the later ...Bb7,

aiming to trade off White's start piece on g2. 8.a4 White stops ...b5, but the smaller b-pawn move will do just fine for us. Stockfish suggests the interesting move 8.Rd1 , intending 8...Nbd7 9.d4 cxd3 10.Rxd3 . Black should play 10... Nd5! , when 11.Bxd5 Nxe5 12.Bc6+ Bd7 13.Bxd7+ Nxd7 gives White some compensation for the pawn. It's enough to give our opponent equal chances, but not more. b6 We have navigated the opening phase successfully. Our next move will be ...Bb7, and I see no problems at all for Black. White can't easily play d2-d4 and has a weakness on b4. Chances are equal, but I like Black in this position. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5]
[6.a4 White stops any plans of ...b5, but the move comes at a price tag: it doesn't help development and weakens the queenside. The idea Qa4CCStartBracketCC+CCEndBracketCC is also off the table. .xc6 I am using the exclam not because it is a brilliant move, but because it is a bit uncommon in our repertoire to play ...Nc6 with the c-pawn still resting on c7. There are some cases, though, related to the moves ...a6 and a4. In the Queen's Gambit, we play the following line: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.a4 Nc6! , which shares some ideas with the current position. With ...Nc6, we connect with the weak square b4, which applies to both lines. A difference to the QGD line is that White's d-pawn is still on d2, which leads to a second and crucial point of ...Nc6: we prepare ...e5, which gains central space and allows an easy development. 7..xa3 After 7.Na3 , we shouldn't allow Nxc4, which prompts the usual capture. *(7.O&c2* This natural move leads to some trouble for White. *e5* It's possible to hang on to the pawn with 7...Na5 , but 7... e5! is a lot stronger. *8.O&xc4* Here 8.Na3 might be better, but 8...Bxa3 , followed by ...Be6 secures the extra pawn. There are tempting alternatives, like 8... e4 , but we are spoilt for choice. *Ke6* White is more or less lost in this position, as we will see. *9.O&c2* After 9.Qh4 , White's queen is quickly running out of squares. The moves 9...h6 , or 9...Be7 are strong and get us close to winning already. *e4* That's the issue. We drive away the f3-knight and clear d4 for our knight to jump to. *10..xg5 .xd4 11..xxe6 .xxc2 12..xxd8 .xxa1* And we are an exchange up and should win easily. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5 *)* 7...Kxa3 This is a simpler solution than 7...Na5 , which is also possible. After the capture, we continue with ...e5, which allows a swift development. 8.Qxa3 Or 8.bxa3 e5 , which follows the same idea. e5 I think Black is in good shape here. We still have the extra pawn CCStartBracketCC...Be6 might lend some additional coverCCEndBracketCC and are ready to castle next. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5]

6...O&d4 Already the refutation is the sense that White is now forced to return to f3.

7..xf3 O&c5 Returning to d8 repeats and would be fine if you are after a draw. Still, Black is a pawn up, and there is no reason to concede a draw just yet. Playing 7...Qc5 keeps the extra pawn and asks White to prove some compensation. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5

5.O&a4+ White makes sure to get the pawn back immediately. The queen check is by far the most popular move. 5...Kd7 Black has good chances to equalise with 5...c6 or 5...Nbd7 , too. I prefer 5...Bd7 , though. The resulting positions after 6.Qxc4 c5 are fine for Black and more straightforward to learn, compared to the alternatives. They also fit well with our repertoire choices in the Catalan CCStartBracketCCSeethis line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qxc4 c5 , for exampleCCEndBracketCC. 6.O&xc4 c5 According to our pointer that early queen moves are answered with ...c5-based setups. Now White has three main possibilities, but 7.Ne5 is by far the main move and most testing. We will also examine 7.O-O in the current chapter, while 7.d4 b5 is an immediate CCStartBracketCCharmlessCCEndBracketCC transposition to aCatalan and discussed in the dedicated chapter on this opening. 7.0-0 This move is less forcing than 7.Ne5 , so we have a choice now.

[7..xe5 White's main move, and indeed very logical. They attack b7 and are ready to take our d7-bishop, netting the bishop pair. O&c8 The only reasonable way to cover b7. Playing 7...Qc7 looks more natural, but 8.d4 is annoying for Black, intending Bf4. After 7...Qc8 White has tried various move orders and subtleties, but at the end, we'll get the same type of position: White will take our bishop and gain the bishop pair, but we'll play ...Nc6 and set up a strong bind on the d4-square and enjoy good central control. Black has a standard setup to go for: knights on f6 and c6, the bishop on e7, queen on d7, kingside castling, rooks to d8 and c8. This setup is very reliable and easy to play, as we will see. In my opinion, the move 8.Qd3!? is the trickiest to handle, as we need a bit of time to get to the standard setup, but eventually, we'll reach the same scenario. Besides 8.Qd3 , White has tried 8.Nxd7 and 8.O-O most of the time. Both usually lead to the same position via CCStartFENCCrnq1kb1r/pp1b1ppp/4pn2/2p1N3/2Q5/6P1/PP1PPPBP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 2 8CCEndFENCC 8.Nxd7 Qxd7 9.O-O Nc6 or CCStartFENCCrnq1kb1r/pp1b1ppp/4pn2/2p1N3/2Q5/6P1/PP1PPPBP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 2 8CCEndFENCC 8.O-O Nc6 9.Nxd7 Qxd7 . In these lines, we will reach our standard setup quite quickly.

A) 8.0-0 .xc6 9..xxd7 O&xd7 10..xc3 White has also tried 10.Qa4 , when 10...Rc8! is best to avoid doubled-pawns. Ke7 Here starting with 10...Rc8 is also fine. 11.d3 Qc8 This is slightly more accurate than 11...O-O , when 12. Bg5 is a bit annoying. White threatens Bxf6 and Ne4 ideas, which are unnecessary to allow. Playing 11...Rc8 first avoids any trouble. Black will now reach the standard setup, for example, after 12.Bg5 b6 13.Qa4 O-O 14.Rfc1 h6 15.Bd2 Rfd8 . I'd like to continue this sequence to show an interesting plan for Black: 16.Rab1 Ne8!? 17.a3 Nd6 . The knight has improved to d6, where it has more than one role: First of all, we support c5-c4, if allowed. This is very relevant after 18.b4?! when 18...c4! is strong. The move 18.b4 allowed ...c4 under very favourable circumstances. If White played a slow move like

CCStartFENCC2rr2k1/p2qbpp1/1pnnp2p/2p5/Q7/P1NP2P1/1P1BPPBP/1RR3K1 w - - 1 18CCEndFENCC 18.Be1 , we could try 18...b5 19.Qd1 CCStartBracketCC 19.Nxb5?? Nd4! winsCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCC2rr2k1/p2qbpp1/2nnp2p/1pp5/8/P1NP2P1/1P2PPBP/1RRQB1K1 b - - 1 19CCEndFENCC 19...a5 , gaining more space on the queenside. The knight tour to d6 also clears f6 for the bishop, which may come in handy. In general, I like Black's chances in these structures. We have a good share of space, and it's difficult for White to make their bishop pair count. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5;

B) 8.O&d3 A somewhat odd-looking move, but we'll see the point in a moment. .xc6 9..xxd7 .xxd7 The point of 8.Qd3 is that 9...Qxd7?! is dubious, as 10. Qxd7 Kxd7 is surprisingly awkward for Black to handle. It is not surprising that trading queens is desirable for White. They have less central space, so trading makes sense. I was still surprised to see how awkward it is. In any case, just playing 9...Nxd7! works fine. After our correct move, White now has to decide how to organise. The queen is not ideal on d3 in the long run. They usually choose to play with a quick b2-b3, either immediately or after going Nc3/O-O first. The move order does not matter all that much, as we'll play ...Be7, ...O-O, ...Rd8 and ...Nf6 anyway, ultimately aiming for the standard setup again. The only move that requires special attention is 10.Qb5 , when White threatens to destroy our pawn structure. 10.O&b5 Attention: White wants to capture on c6, destroying our pawn structure. *(10..xc3* I'll use this move order for the slow setups that White may go for. They can also start with 10.O-O or 10.b3 , it will all lead to pretty much the same scenario, as we'll play ...Be7, ...O-O, ...Rd8 and ...Nf6. Let's just have a quick look at these possible sequences. ACCEndBracketCC 10.b3 Be7 11.Bb2 O-O 12.O-O Rd8 13.Nc3 Nf6 BCCEndBracketCC 10.O-O Be7 11.Nc3 O-O 12.b3 Rd8 13.Bb2 Nf6 It all leads to the same scenario which we are about to examine via 10.Nc3. *Ke7 11.0-0* Or 11.b3 O-O 12.O-O Rd8 , leading to the same positions. As mentioned, the move orders don't matter that much here. *0-0 12.b3 Qd8 13.Kb2 .xf6 14.O&c2 O&d7 15.Qfd1 Qac8* We have completed our well-known standard setup. I'd like to show you an interesting idea that I wasn't aware of before I checked this position with the help of Stockfish. Let's assume White plays 16.Rac1 , as it happened in a 2021 Blitz game between Ian Nepomniachtchi and Jan-Krzysztof Duda. In the notes tothis line after 8.O-O, which also led to our standard setup, I already mentioned the plan ...Ne8-d6, possibly ...Bf6 later. This plan would be possible here, as well. However, there is an entirely different option that I would never have considered without the engine pointing at it: What about 16...h5!? , arguing that White has only one piece defending the white king. ACCEndBracketCC White has to be careful, as a line like 17.h4 Ng4 18.d3 f5! demonstrates. BCCEndBracketCC They could play CCStartFENCC2rr2k1/pp1qbpp1/2n1pn2/2p4p/8/1PN3P1/PBQPPPBP/2RR2K1 w - - 0 17CCEndFENCC 17.h3 , but 17...h4 18.g4

Nd5 looks like a good reply. CCCEndBracketCCC Finally, a scenario like CCCStartFENCCC2rr2k1/pp1qbpp1/2n1pn2/2p4p/8/1PN3P1/PBQPPPBP/2RR2K1 w - - 0 17CCCEndFENCCC 17.d3 h4 18.Qd2 hxg3 19.hxg3 is possible when Black slightly benefits from the structure change on the kingside. For example, after 19...b6 20.e3 Nb4 21.Bf1 e5 , Black gets chances on the kingside CCCStartBracketCCC...Qf6, ...Nh7-g5 ideasCCCEndBracketCCC. This is not a deep analysis but rather an overview of ideas. Pushing the h-pawn is an interesting strategy to keep in mind, setting unexpected problems for White. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5 *)* 10....xd4 The active way to stop White's idea. 11.O&a4 Ke7 11...b5 is possible, but it's not clear to me that we want to advance our pawns that early on. It can't be bad to continue with our development, so 11...Be7 is fine. 12..xc3 After 12.e3 , we have the choice between 12...b5 and 12...Nc6 , when I am less concerned about 13. Bxc6 bxc6 , as White has played the very weakening move e2-e3, giving us the light squares, like d3. The same point applies after 12.Nc3 O-O 13.e3 Nc6 14.Bxc6 bxc6 , as we will see. 0-0 13.e3 .xc6 Here 13...Nb6 14.Qd1 Nc6 avoids the doubled pawn, but I am not worried too much about the capture now. It's a huge factor that White has played e2-e3, weakening the light squares. 14.Kxc6 bxc6 We have the better chances here, as ...Rd8 and ...Ne5 is an excellent plan to exploit the weaknesses that White has created after taking on c6. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5;

C) 8..xxd7 White grabs the bishop pair at the first chance. Most of the time, we will transpose to the line 8.O-O Nc6 9.Nxd7 Qxd7 , but I'd like to show one instructive moment. 8...O&xd7 9..xc3 Here 9.O-O Nc6 is the mentioned transposition. .xc6 10.O&a4 Again, 10.O-O would transpose to 8.O-O, of course. Qc8 We should prevent Bxc6, which destroys our pawn structure. The move ...Rc8 is sensible anyway and should be played first, avoiding the sloppy 10...Be7 11.Bxc6! After the correct 10...Rc8 White has nothing better than castling, which again leads to the line CCCStartFENCCCrnq1kb1r/pp1b1ppp/4pn2/2p1N3/2Q5/6P1/PP1PPPBP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 2 8CCCEndFENCCC 8.O-O Nc6 9.Nxd7 Qxd7 . 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5]

7....xc6 There is nothing wrong about 7...Bc6 or 7...b5 , either. Playing 7...Nc6 looks easiest, though. We invite a transposition to a mainline Catalan after 8.d4 b5! , which is fine for Black and part of our repertoire. What else is there for White? Well, nothing scary as far as I can see. 8..xc3 If they want to avoid 8.d4 , this looks reasonable. 8...Ke7 I like this move. The strategically desirable move is 8...e5?! , building a Maroczy formation in the centre. The problem of the move is 8...e5 9.Ng5 , which is awkward for Black. After 8...Be7 we prepare ...O-O and ...e5, so White needs to reconsider: to play d2-d4 or not?

9.d4 If White continues to wait, we'll play ...e5. After 9.Rd1 e5! we'll gain an additional tempo with ...Be6 and have a comfortable space advantage after just nine moves - happy times! Alright, but what to do after the move 9.d4? 9...b5 Very nice! In theCatalan, we playthe line CCCStartFENCCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/

8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7.Qa4 Bd7 8.Qxc4 b5 , so this concept looks familiar. 10..xxb5 This loses instantly. 10.Qxb5? cxd4 11.Nb1 Rb8 12.Qd3 e5 does not lose but is unadvisable for White.

[10.O&d3 The only playable move for White. c4 The move 10...b4 also looks fine. I suggest 10...c4 , as we play in the same way in the Catalan CCStartBracketCCwithout the moves Nc3 and ...Be7 insertedCCEndBracketCC. 11.O&d1 White may also play other queen moves, but we'd play in the same way: ...b4 and ...Rc8, with active play on the queenside, for example after 11.Qc2 b4 12.Ne4 Rc8 . b4 12..xe5 More interesting than 12.Na4 Rc8 , for sure. Still, Black is completely fine in the following line. Qc8 13..xxd7 White has to play this move, as 13.Na4? Nxe5 14.dxe5 Nd5 is awful due to the offside a4-knight. O&xd7 14.d5 .xe5 And Black is fine after 15.dxe6 fxe6 16.Qxd7+ Nexd7 17. Nb5 Bc5 18.a3 b3 . White has gained the bishop pair, but we are much better developed and have established the advanced pawns on the queenside. Ideas like ...Nb6-a4 and pressure on f2 are possible, too. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5]

10....xa5 11.O&a4 Or 11.Qd3 c4 , another embarrassing moment. 11...a6 And Black wins a piece and the game. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5

[5] This engine suggestion looks most challenging. White is now fighting for equality, as far as I can see. 5.Ne5 is rare, and therefore I don't think it is worth expanding the trainable line any further. Still, here are some possible continuations for White: ACCEndBracketCC 8.Qxc4? Nxe5 9.Qxc5 Nd3+! , with a huge advantage for Black. BCCEndBracketCC 8.Nxc4 Ng4! 9.e3 Rb8 , planning ...b5 next. Black is for choice here. CCCEndBracketCC 8.Na3 Rb8 , when ...b5 is on the agenda again. White does not have a compelling way to continue here. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4 5

[6] **5.Kg2** White usually continues with 5.Bg2 . You also meet the bad 5.Bb2?! , when 5...Nc6 is excellent for Black. We examine this scenario via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 d4 4.Bb2?! , which misplaces the bishop just as badly and may easily lead to the same positions. 5....xc6 6.0-0 Here 6.e3 e5 is still possible, transposing to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2Pp4/1P3NP1/P2PPP1P/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.e3 Nc6 6.Bg2 e5 . 6...e5 7.d3 Now we need to pay attention and play the correct move. 7...a5 It is essential to play this move first and avoid the trick 7...Bc5 8.b4 , intending 8...Bxb4 9.Nxe5 . We'd like to restrain White's queenside ambitions, and 7...a5 is the way to slow down White. 8..xa3 White has a setup with Nc2, a3 and b4 in mind. This is not the only move, of course. They can also play 8.e3 when 8...Bc5 is a good reply.

We have studied CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2Pp4/1P3NP1/P2PPP1P/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.e3 Nc6 6.Bg2 e5 7.O-O Bc5 , which is similar. 8...Kc5 9..xc2 0-0 10.a3 We have developed the bishop to its usual square and castled. Now we need to combine our central play with prophylaxis against White's queenside expansion. 10...Qe8 We'd like to play ...e5-e4, which explains the rook move. 11.Qb1 Finally, White is ready to play b3-b4. 11...O&e7 Again, we make b3-b4 tough to play. I like Black's position here, preferring the space advantage. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 #2

[7] **9..xxe5** 0-0 10.a3 .xc6 I wanted to show this instructive idea. It is better to fight/remove the e5-knight at the cost of a pawn than retreating to a6. 11..xxc6 bxc6 We have a beautiful position already, with attacking chances on the kingside. Ideas like ...Bg4/...Qd7/...Bh3 come to mind. If White now plays the greedy 12. Bxc6? Rb8 13.Bg2 the move 13...Ng4 is strong, which immediately threatens the brutal ...Nxf2!!. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.b3 #1

[8] With the bishop on e7, instead of d6, this pawn push is possible. After 9.Nb5 Black has the convenient choice between 9...c5 , 9...Nc6 and 9...Bc5 . All moves are perfectly fine and of about equal strength, which is why I stop the trainable line here. Black is fine after 8...d4 , as we have established an early space advantage and have chances to play against the e-pawn in the long run. The move ...d4 also clears the square d5 for a piece. In particular, the knight would have an excellent post right in the centre. 14. English Lines with g3-2.Nf3 d5 3.cxd5

[9] **4.Kf4** Similar to other early Bf4 lines, this move is slightly premature. Black has many good replies, and we already know what to do against ALL the early Bf4/Bg5 sorties. 4...dxc4 Just take it! We follow our 'rule of thumb', but for the sake of completeness I'd like to add that 4...c5 and 4...Bd6 work well, too. After our capture, White's best reply is 5.e3, trying to get the pawn back in the most natural way. We won't make it easy for White, though! 5.e4 White wants to get the pawn back and build a full centre. They also stop any ...Nd5 ideas, so there is some logic to the move. Still, concrete play always beats abstract considerations. We have a strong reply which proves 5.e4 is dubious. [5.O&a4+ A rare move, but I'd like to cover it briefly. This Chapter also features the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 , when 5. Qa4 is answered with 5...Nbd7 . Playing the knight to d7 would not be a mistake in the current position, but we have a much better reply. c6 This is a strong move. Now White needs to take on c4; otherwise, we'd play ...b5. After White's forced reply 6.Qxc4, the point of 5...c6! is revealed. 6.O&xc4 b5 Again forcing the action. 7.O&d3 White needs to go to the clumsy d3-square, as 7.Qb3? Qxd4 loses a

pawn. Ka6 That's the important point about this line. We threaten ...b4 now, winning a piece! White is in an awkward spot now. What to do about this simple threat? The comp suggests 8.Bxb8, but Black is much better after this move. Still, an alternative like 8.Qd1 b4 9.Na4 Qa5 is excellent for Black, too. We just have a strong initiative because White has lost a lot of time with queen moves. It is useful to compare this line to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.Qa4+ . I recommend 5...Nbd7, as 5...c6 6.Qxc4 b5 can be comfortably answered with 7.Qc2 . White's d-pawn is covered, and ...b5-b4 won't hit a knight on c3. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 #2]

5...Kb4 Now White is struggling to find a good reply. We attack the e4-pawn due to the pin, but also prepare ...b5 to cover our c-pawn. 6.f3 Not a happy move, but that's what White played most of the time when they had stumbled into this dubious line. Stockfish recommends playing 6.Bxc4 Nxe4 7.Qd3 Nxc3 8.bxc3 Bd6 , when Black is a clean pawn up. If this is best, you know that White is in trouble! If you look at some other options, like CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/1bpPPB2/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6.e5 Ne4 , or CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/1bpPPB2/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6.Qa4 Nc6 , when d4 and e4 is hanging, you tend to believe that being a pawn down is the lesser evil for White. 6...b5 Make sure to cover the pawn! Now White is in terrible shape. We are not only a pawn up, but the pawn on f3 severely hampers our opponent's development. 7.a4 c6 We'll continue with a setup of ...O-O, ...Nbd7, ...Qb6 and are more or less winning already. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bf4 #1

4.Kg5 White pins our knight and thus again increases the pressure on the d5-pawn. In the early days of the Queen's Gambit, White almost always played this move, for example in the famous Capablanca-Alekhine World Championship Match in 1927. The move has remained popular to the present day, but it is not as frequently seen on the top level anymore. Strong GMs usually prefer the Carlsbad/ Exchange Variation 4.cxd5 or play 4.Nf3, waiting with the development of the c1-bishop. So why is 4.Bg5 regarded as less critical at the top level? The main reason is that White is getting nowhere in the Classical continuation 4...Be7 . White has little success against: ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp1bppp/4pn2/3p2B1/2PP4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 4 5CCEndFENCC 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 Ne4 CCStartBracketCCthe Lasker VariationCCEndBracketCC BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp1bppp/4pn2/3p2B1/2PP4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 4 5CCEndFENCC 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 b6 CCStartBracketCCthe Tartakower VariationCCEndBracketCC CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp1bppp/4pn2/3p2B1/2PP4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 4 5CCEndFENCC 5.e3 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Nf3 Nbd7 , as popularized by Kramnik. Yet, I am not recommending any of them in

this course 😀. The reason is not the quality of the lines; they are all excellent choices. At a later stage, you may consider adding them to your repertoire, exploring new ground. However, I concluded that 4...dxc4!? is a much simpler solution and gives Black equal chances, too. Therefore it is a great pick for this course. Let's have a look at this less explored but interesting option for Black.

4...dxc4 Again, we take the pawn on c4. In the notes to 4.Bg5, I already mentioned that Black has many reasonable alternatives to the capture. Being flexible is always useful if you intend to use your repertoire framework for a long time. You can keep your core variations but make small adjustments if you wish. Let's explore White's options after the capture now. For many opponents, our move will come as a surprise. We'll examine 5.e3 and 5.e4 in the current Chapter, while 5.Nf3 is well met by 5...a6! , which we examine via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.Bg5 dxc4! , which is covered in a dedicated Chapter and gives Black good play. 5.e4 After 5.e4, we have a choice between 5...c5 and 5...b5. What to play?

[5.e3 c5 Here the move 5...c5 is the only sensible choice. After 5...b5? 6.Nxb5 Black doesn't get enough compensation for the pawn. After 5...c5 White usually plays 6.Bxc4 , when 6...cxd4 leads to an Isolated Queen's pawn CCStartBracketCCIQPCCEndBracketCC. Sometimes they also play CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p3B1/2pP4/2N1P3/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nf3 , intending to answer 6...cxd4 with 7.Nxd4 , which avoids the IQP. 6..xf3 White intends to recapture on d4 with the knight, avoiding the IQP. cxd4 7..xxd4 Instead, 7.exd4 Nc6 8.Bxc4 Be7 would lead to the IQP position usually reached via CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p3B1/2pP4/2N1P3/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bxc4 cxd4 7.exd4 Nc6 8.Nf3 Be7 . White may play CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/6B1/2pp4/2N1PN2/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Qxd4 , but it's very harmless after 7...Qxd4 8.Nxd4 , when - amongst others 8...Bd7 9.Bxc4 Bb4 gives Black an easy game. The move ...Bb4 introduces the idea ...Bxc3+, unbalancing the pawn structure. e5 I suggest playing this active move, attacking the knight immediately. It is also possible to play more slowly. The alternative 7...Be7 8.Bxc4 O-O 9.O-O Bd7 and ...Nc6 next is fine, too. White only has a marginal edge in this type of position. However, White's choice of 7.Nxd4 suggests that they are after a slower, positional game. After our reply 7... e5 it's getting a bit sharper, avoiding this type of position. Now 8.Bxf6 and 8.Ndb5 are the critical moves to check. 8..xf3 A solid move, but it's harmless. *(8.Kxf6* White removes the defender of the light squares, in particular of d5. We now need to be alert! *gxf6* A crucial move! after 8...Qxf6? 9.Nd5 or 9.Ndb5 White's knights invade with devastating effect. *9..xdb5* Our development is lacking, and White threatens Nd5. We are still fine with precise play, though. *a6* That's the problem for White. The b5-knight is attacked, and there is only one way to continue

now. *10.O&a4* The only move available. 10.Na3? b5 is awful and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1p3p1p/p4p2/1N2p3/2p5/2N1P3/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qxd8+ Kxd8 11.O-O-O+ Nd7 12.Nd6 Bxd6 13. Rxd6 Ke7 14.Rd2 b5 is a simple sequence that secures Black's extra pawn and a clear advantage. *Kd7* Or 10...Nc6 11.Rd1 Bd7 , which leads to the same position. *11.0-0-0 .xc6* I know this is a rather long sequence of moves, but it is quite forced. That makes it easier to remember. *12..xd6+* Again, a forced move. *Kxd6 13.Qxd6 b5* We keep our extra pawn with a tempo gain. This material advantage is only temporary, though. *14.O&d1 O&c7* This move is the reason why we needed to continue to move 14. Only 14...Qc7 gives Black good chances, as now CCStartFENCCr3k2r/2qb1p1p/p1nR1p2/1p2p3/2p5/2N1P3/PP3PPP/ 2KQ1B1R w kq - 2 15CCEndFENCC15.Nd5?? Qxd6 and CCStartFENCCr3k2r/ 2qb1p1p/p1nR1p2/1p2p3/2p5/2N1P3/PP3PPP/2KQ1B1R w kq - 2 15CCEndFENCC 15.Ne4? O-O-O! is possible. White can regain the pawn with 15.Rxf6 , but after 15...Be6 , we are fine with ...Nb4 to come. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 #2*; 8..xdb5* Certainly more critical than 8. Nf3. White intends to play Bxf6 and Nd5, which is a serious threat. We only have one good reply! *a6* By far the best move. *9.O&a4* Here 9.Bxf6 gxf6! would transpose to the8.Bxf6 gxf6 9.Ndb5 a6 line. White needs to avoid 9.Qxd8+? Kxd8 , when they have to move the b5-knight soon, allowing ...b5 with a clear advantage for Black. *Kd7 10.0-0-0* Again 10.Bxf6 gxf6 would transpose to8. Bxf6. *Ke7* A crucial difference to the similar position after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/5n2/4p1B1/2pN4/2N1P3/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 8CCEndFENCC 8.Bxf6 gxf6 9.Ndb5 a6 10.Qa4 Bd7 11.O-O-O , when 11...Nc6 12.Nd6+ Bxd6 13.Rxd6 b5 14.Qd1 Qc7! is fine for Black. The same approach wouldn't work here, as CCStartFENCCrn1qkb1r/1p1b1ppp/p4n2/ 1N2p1B1/Q1p5/2N1P3/PP3PPP/2KR1B1R b kq - 3 10CCEndFENCC 10...Nc6? 11.Nd6+ Bxd6 12.Rxd6 b5 13.Qd1 leads to insurmountable problems. After 13...Qc7 White kills with 14.Rxf6! , showing a crucial difference. All this pain is avoided with 10...Be7! when it is instead White who needs to be precise. *11.Kxf6* White has to take now. If we manage ...O-O, White's initiative will come to a halt, and the queenside situation blows up in their face. The knight on b5 is pinned and has no good square to go to. *gxf6* We need to avoid 11...Bxf6? 12.Nd6+ , of course. Now White is struggling to find a way to resolve the queenside tension. Stockfish points out that CCStartFENCCrn1qk2r/1p1bbp1p/p4p2/1N2p3/Q1p5/ 2N1P3/PP3PPP/2KR1B1R w kq - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12.Be2 is the only good move, but Black has equal chances in several ways. Moves like 12...f5!? or 12... Qb6!? come to mind. This is still interesting to check, but we are quite deep down the rabbit hole. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 #3 *)* 8...O&xd1+ 9.Qxd1 .xc6 10.Kxc4 We don't need to fear 10.Nb5 , as 10...Bb4+ gives us the crucial tempo to play ...O-O and avoid the fork. Kb4 A very natural sequence of moves. Black has an easy game, intending ...Bxc3 next. This increases the control over d5 and avoids a possible Nd5 after White's O-O. After

taking on c3, we'll have ...Bf5 and ...Rc8 next, giving us a harmonious position. White has the bishop pair, but we have the better pawn structure. Note that a possible white doubled c-pawn would be much easier for us to attack, than a doubled f-pawn on our end. The c-pawn would be on an open file, our f-pawns are not. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 #1]

5...c5 I recommend 5...c5 here. This fits very well with the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 c5 6.Nc3 , which is also part of our repertoire. Now the natural move 6.Nf3 would transpose to the mentioned line. This is very likely to happen, but we'll have a look at other options for White, too. Before we get into this, a quick word about the move CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/6B1/2pPP3/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR b KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5...b5!? . This is a playable move! The pawn on b5 is hanging, but 6.Nxb5 Bb4+ 7.Nc3 c5 leads to more or less unexplored complications. I decided against this line for conceptual reasons CCStartBracketCCKISCCEndBracketCC, not because I regard it as dubious. It can be fun to explore and add to your repertoire at a later stage. 6.d5 Advancing the attacked pawn is White's main move. As mentioned before, 6. Nf3 leads to a position that we examine via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 c5 6.Nc3 . In faster time controls, White often plays the blunder CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p3B1/2pPP3/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e5? , when 6...cxd4 7.exf6 gxf6 leads to a winning position for Black. We are three pawns up and will regain the sacrificed piece due to the double attack. 6...Ke7 It's best to break the pin with the bishop now. We'd like to take on d5, opening our c8-bishop. However, after 6...exd5 7.Bxf6 Qxf6 8.Nxd5 we are losing time with queen moves. Playing the bishop to e7 first prepares the capture under more favourable circumstances. Now we'll have a look at 7.Bxc4 and 7.Bxf6. 7.Kxf6 White gives up the bishop pair. This does not look very logical, but our opponent might fear lines like 7.Bxc4 Nxd5!? . We are not going to play this particular variation, but it can be irritating for White. [7.Kxc4 The move 7.Nf3 is very similar to 7.Bxc4, as CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/pp2bppp/4pn2/2pP2B1/2p1P3/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7.Nf3 exd5 8.exd5 O-O 9.Bxc4 h6 is a very natural way to transpose to 7.Bxc4. exd5 Black also has 7...Nxd5!? , which may lead to 8.Bb5+ Bd7 9.exd5 Bxg5 10.dxe6 . It looks messy, but at the end of the hacking, it will be about equal. Taking with the pawn on d5 looks more combative to me, but this is primarily a matter of taste. 8.exd5 Here 8.Bxf6 Bxf6 leads to theprevious trainable and is fine for Black. 0-0 A normal-looking move, but it is clearly best! You shouldn't play 8...h6 , as 9.Bf4 Bd6 CCStartBracketCCotherwise d5-d6 is the problemCCEndBracketCC 10.Qe2+! is awkward for Black. 9..xf3 h6 A precise move, asking the bishop about its intentions. 10.Kf4 This looks like the

most logical move. After 10.Bh4?! Nxd5! 11.Qxd5 Bxh4 Black wins a pawn, so retreats along the c1-f4 diagonal are the options. Kd6 White was threatening d5-d6. 11.Kxd6 O&xd6 It is also possible to play 11...Re8+!? , when 12.Be5 Nbd7 will regain the piece. Both moves lead to equal chances. 12.0-0 .xbd7 Our intended setup involves ...Nb6, followed by ...Bg4 or ...Bd7. Clearly, this position is all about the d-pawn. Our queen is not an ideal blockading piece, but a later ...Nb6-c8-d6 is a noteworthy idea to change that. White also needs to be careful to hold the pawn in the first place, as we will attack it multiple times CCStartBracketCC...Nb6 and ...Rd8 are coming soonCCEndBracketCC. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 #2]

7...Kxf6 8.Kxc4 exd5 9.Kxd5 Or 9.Qxd5 Qe7 , when I'd rather be Black, too. After 9.Nxd5 Bxb2 , White has no adequate compensation. 9...0-0 I prefer Black in this position. Our f6-bishop is tremendous, and ...Nc6 and ...Be6 are natural moves to play next. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 #1

4.e3 a6 Not the most obvious move, but it makes a lot of sense once you look at the details. We wait if White decides to move the f1-bishop when we'd happily take on c4 and follow up with ...b5. This concept is explained in more detail inthe notes to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 , which is the central part of this chapter and a far more common way to reach the e3-setups. 5..xf3 This transposes to the mainline of the current chapter. There is not much else to look at. After 5.Bd3?! dxc4 6.Bxc4 b5 we are in great shape, very similarly to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Bd3?! dxc4 . A very natural continuation. the current position after 5.Nc3 may also arise via different move orders, for example CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.e3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 a6 5.d4 . 5....xbd7 With 5...Nbd7, we continue with our waiting strategy, tempting White to move the f1-bishop. This position is far more commonly reached via the CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 a6 5.Nc3 Nbd7 move order, which is the mainline of the current chapter. Please see these variations to learn more about the further play. 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines-3.Nc3 We continue our strategy of waiting for an untimely bishop move. most of the time, White now plays CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/1ppn1ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N1PN2/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 2 6CCEndFENCC 6.b3 to stop any ...dxc4 plans and prepare Bb2. We'll still have a look at CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/1ppn1ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N1PN2/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 2 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3?! dxc4! and CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/1ppn1ppp/

p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N1PN2/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 2 6CCEndFENCC 6. cxd5 exd5 , which leads to a harmless version of the Carlsbad structure. 6.Kd3 This is the worst version of the untimely Bd3 for White. We not only gain time on the bishop, but a later ...b5-b4 might kick the knight on c3, too.

[6.cxd5 White exchanges on d5 and enters a Carlsbad structure. In the Carlsbad, White usually enjoys an active bishop post on f4 or g5 CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 CCEndBracketCC , but here the move e3 is already on the board, which locks in the queen's bishop. exd5 Black's next moves are easy. We play ...Bd6 and castle kingside. 7.Kd3 Kd6 8.0-0 0-0 9.O&c2 Qe8 I decided to stop the trainable line here. We have a comfortable version of the Carlsbad and a good range of options next. We can play a setup based on ...c6 and ...Nf8-g6, aiming for kingside play. A different idea is playing for ...c7-c5 or ...b6, followed by ...c5. White's setup is rather slow, which gives us some leeway. 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Nc3 #2]

[6.b3 White covers c4 and defuses our idea to take on c4 at a favourable moment, like after 6.Bd3?! dxc4! . Once White has committed to b3, we switch to the development plan with ...Nbd7, ...b6, ...Bb7 and ...Bd6. b6 A good way to remember our setup is: If they go b3, we go ...b6. The move b3 is the signal to start our fianchetto. I decided to cover the lines involving b3 and b6 based on the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.b3 Nbd7 6.Bb2 b6 . We'll transpose to these lines now after a natural sequence like CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1ppp/pp2pn2/3p4/2PP4/1PN1PN2/P4PPP/ R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Bb2 Bb7 or CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1ppp/pp2pn2/3p4/2PP4/1PN1PN2/P4PPP/ R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Bd3 Bb7 8.O-O Bd6 9.Bb2 O-O , which is a key position of the current chapter's mainline. 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Nc3 #3]

6...dxc4 7.Kxc4 b5 8.Kd3 c5 Or 8...Bb7 first and ...c5 on the next move. 9.0-0 Kb7 Black is better already. We have ...Bd6 and ...O-O next, completing our development. White has no clear way to activate the bishop on c1, to just name one key problem of our opponent. 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Nc3 #1

[10] **5.Kf4** After 5.Bf4, we can apply one of the move order rules discussed in the intro text. 5...Kd6 'Always play ...Bd6!'. Well, it's not the ONLY move, but a good reply to White's Bf4 development. It wouldn't be wrong to start with 5...c6 , either. However, after White has committed to Bf4, the move ...c6 is not as pressing. After Bg5, there is immediate pressure on the d5-pawn. 6.Kxd6 O&xd6 7.e3 A natural move, but it does nothing about ...Bf5. White may also try 7. Nf3 , but this is predictably toothless. The lines 7...c6 8.e3 Bf5 or

CCStartFENCCrnb1k2r/ppp2ppp/3q1n2/3p4/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R b KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7...c6 8.Qc2 g6 9.e3 Bf5 all lead to comfortable scenarios for Black, similar to the lines after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 . It would even be possible to play 7...Bf5 straight away, as 8.Qb3 O-O! works well, similar to CCStartFENCCrnb1k2r/ppp2ppp/3q1n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.e3 Bf5 8.Qb3 O-O , which we will examine now. 7...Kf5 This is a case where it makes sense to play ...Bf5, even without Black having played ...c6 first. We need to check if the immediate 8.Qb3 is a problem. If not, then 7...Bf5 is a good move. 8.O&b3 The only critical try. If White plays something slow, we'll complete our development easily and are happy about the f5-bishop and a possible trade of it after White might opt for Bd3 later. Back to 8.Qb3 - is there a problem with the b7-pawn. 8...0-0 A very attractive solution: we can ignore hanging the pawn. Even the simple move 8...Qb6 would have been fine, but clearly, castling is a great solution if White can't take b7. 9.O&xb7 That's a huge blunder. White needs to be cautious and play something like 9.Nf3 when 9...Nbd7 is fine for Black. White still shouldn't take on b7: 10.Qxb7 Rfb8 11.Qa6 Rxb2 is excellent for Black, enjoying the active rook. 9....xc6 Black has an overwhelming attack already. We threaten ...Nb4, and White has no reasonable defence. Here are two lines to illustrate matters: ACCEndBracketCC 10.a3 Nxd4!! 11.exd4 Rfb8 12.Qa6 Re8+ 13.Kd1 Qf4 White is completely helpless against Black's attack. Material is irrelevant, as White has no development at all. In such a case, you don't need to calculate all lines and try to figure out if there is a checkmate or material win at the end. White just can't survive with a king in the centre, all their pieces at home, and Black's forces invading already. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr4rk1/pQp2ppp/2nq1n2/3p1b2/3P4/2N1P3/PP3PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 1 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qa6 Rab8 11.Bb5 Rb6 12.Qa4 Nb4 13.Rc1 and now many moves win, but 13...Rxb5 looks simple and good, as the knight fork on d3 will be murderous. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5. Bf4

11 **5...c6** As per Rule 1: play ...c6 right after the trade. Now White has two main moves, 6.e3 and 6.Qc2. There is also 6.Nf3 , when our recommended reply is 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . This sequence is covered in detail via the more common move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 Bf5 . 6.O&c2 After 6.e3 Black has the option to play 6...Bf5 . As I already mentioned in the intro to the current chapter, this move is somewhat dubious due to 7.Qf3! , when Black gets an unattractive doubled pawn after 7...Bg6 8.Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 . The evaluation of this endgame line has changed over the years. It seemed fine for

Black for a while, which prompted some players on the white side to switch to 6. Qc2, which puts a stop to ...Bf5. In the 6.e3 line, playing the queen to c2 later is very common, so switching the move order to playing 6.Qc2 first was an easy decision to make. Does it matter much to us if White starts with 6.e3 or 6.Qc2? Fortunately not, we will eventually get the same positions. After 6.e3 , I suggest playing 6...h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.Bd3 O-O , when 9.Qc2 is the main continuation. Against 6.Qc2, we can play the same setup CCStartBracketCC... h6, ...Be7, ...O-OCCEndBracketCC , and reach the same positions reliably.

[6.e3 White's main move by far. They want to develop their bishop to d3 and are aware that 6...Bf5 is favourably answered by 7.Qf3! . After 6.e3, Black needs to decide what piece setup to go for. The main decisions are: ACCEndBracketCC Do we place our f8-bishop on e7 or d6? BCCEndBracketCC Do we play ...h6 or not? I have studied the various options and concluded that Black is currently doing fine with combining ...h6 and ...Be7. This setup has been tested extensively in practice, and Black has good results. A quick word about ...Bd6 setups: I have analyzed 6...h6 7.Bh4 Bd6 , but discovered some issues for Black. One line, in particular, proved to be problematic, which is 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Nf3 Re8 10.O-O . White never plays Qc2, inviting 10...Bg4 11.Qb3 , which is awkward for Black. The popular Chess streamer IM Eric Rosen has played the ...Bd6 setups a lot and ran into troubles in this particular variation. h6 I suggest starting with 6...h6, as per Rule 4. Playing 6...Be7 first and ...h6 next is no mistake, though - we should reach the same positions. We already talked about 6...Bf5?! 7.Qf3! , which we need to avoid. 7.Kh4 Ke7 Breaking the annoying bishop pin is important. As mentioned in the notes to 6.e3, I also checked 7...Bd6 , but found my final recommendation to be more reliable and simpler to handle. 8.Kd3 White can start with 8.Qc2 instead of 8.Bd3, but it will lead to the same positions. We play 8...O-O , when both 9. Bd3 Re8 or CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2N1P3/ PPQ2PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Re8 10.Bd3 Ne4 transpose to lines that we reach via 8.Bd3, too. Why does White play 8.Qc2 or 8. Bd3, by the way? After 7...Be7 we are ready to play ...Bf5! next, which White is eager to prevent. 0-0 Let's discuss some important general ideas. Now White has two decisions to make: Whether to play Ng1-f3 or Ng1-e2 and if Qc2 should be included or not. Qc2 lends additional cover to the e4-square, which is often useful. The first key point is that CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/ 2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Ne4! and CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! are two similar lines that pose no problem for Black. The ...Ne4-idea pretty much takes any sting out of the Nf3-setups, which is good news. More often than not, White will opt for a Nge2-formation. Against Nge2, we need to stay flexible for a moment and wait if White continues with f2-f3 or not. If they do, the prescribed antidote is a quick queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5!, which gives us good chances. White can avoid f2-f3, though, and focus attention on the queenside. Against these slower plans, Black

has some choice. I suggest playing actively on the queenside in this case. too. Let's talk move orders. I decided to organize the various options: A[]EndBracket[][] []StartFEN[]rnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9[]EndFEN[] 9.Qc2 Re8 - White usually continues with 10.Nf3 or 10.Nge2 , which transposes to B or C B[]EndBracket[][] []StartFEN[]rnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9[]EndFEN[] 9.Nf3 is answered by 9...Ne4! C[]EndBracket[][] []StartFEN[]rnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9[]EndFEN[] 9.Nge2 is White's mainline, often reached by 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 . 9..xge2 Qe8 We play this universally useful move first. Now White can try various move orders. They may start with []StartFEN[]rnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10[]EndFEN[] 10.Qc2 or []StartFEN[]rnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10[]EndFEN[] 10.O-O , but it makes no substantial difference for our setup. We'll play ...Nbd7 and start play on the queenside, involving the moves ...a5 and ...b5.

A) 10.O&c2 A popular move at this particular point, but the resulting position is often reached via different move orders. White frequently plays Qc2 at an earlier stage, for example []StartFEN[]rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1[]EndFEN[] 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.Qc2 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.e3 O-O 9.Bd3 Re8 10.Nge2 leads to the same position. .xbd7 Finally, it's time to develop our knight. Note that 10...Ne4?! is questionable here, as 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 12.Bxe4 dxe4 13.Ng3 f5 14.O-O , followed by f3, is better for White. After the much better move 10...Nbd7, White has to make some decisions. First of all, they can castle queenside. Against our setup, this approach is bad and gives us a strong attack - we simply throw the kitchen sink at them with ...b5, ...a5 etc. and enjoy life. It's much better to castle kingside for White, avoiding a direct attack. White may castle kingside immediately or start with the move 11.f3, which is also popular. After []StartFEN[]r1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R3K2R w KQ - 8 11[]EndFEN[] 11.f3 , we play the crucial move 11...b5! , starting our queenside play.

A1) 11.0-0-0 Castling queenside is a huge mistake here. It's easy to explain why this is the case. If White plays 11.O-O a5 12.Rfe1 , I recommend starting queenside action with 12...b5 and conclude that Black has fair chances. 11.O-O-O? castles right into our queenside attack and leads White into trouble. b5 We have the simplest plan ever: ...b5, ...Nb6, ...a5 - throwing the kitchen sink at our opponent! 12.f3 White has tried this move most of the time. It covers e4 but also prepares g4 to storm on the kingside. We are much faster, though. A different way of going for g4 would be 12.h3 . We have the same plan in any case. Here's a sample sequence: 12...Nb6 13.g4 a5 14.g5 hxg5 15.Bxg5 b4 16.Na4 Nxa4 17.Qxa4 Ne4 and Black is much

better. We have the much safer king and the better pawn structure on top. .xb6 13.g4 White can also switch to the central plan with e3-e4, but it is much too slow. 13.Bf2 a5 14.e4 b4 15.Nb1 dxe4 16.fxe4 Ng4 was more or less winning for Black in a GM game between Ernesto Inarkiev and Michail Saltaev, a former team mate of my Bundesliga days. a5 Chess can be easy sometimes! 14.g5 This is wrong, but it's good to know why. Better for White would be a slower move, but we have an automatic attack based on ...a4, ... b4 and so on. By computer standards, the move 11.O-O-O already loses for White. We don't need to prove that, of course. Black has all the fun. .xh5 That's an important point. We don't take on g5 but rather keep the file closed. White is getting nowhere against our king, while our pawn storm will hit with tremendous force. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5. Bg5 c6;

A2) 11.0-0 White castles kingside and delays the question of 'playing f2-f3 or not' for a move. a5 The position before 11...a5 has been reached hundreds of times in master practice. Black has tried many moves, as the position is not tactical, and you have some flexibility. Black has also done alright with the move 11...Nh5 , for example. I was quite satisfied with this line when I wondered if it was possible to play it differently. Against f3-setups, we play a quick ...b5 - is it possible to play this idea even without White having played f3 before? I checked 11...b5?! , but this is questionable due to 12.a4! b4 13. Na2 , when the c6-pawn is attacked, we'd have no fully satisfactory reply. Well, what about 11...a5 then, and wait with ...b5 for a moment? It turned out to work well, so here we go. 12.Qae1 White plays without the move f3. The main move 12.f3 needs to be answered with 12...b5! , which we cover via the move order CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/ 2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R3K2R w KQ - 8 11CCEndFENCC 11.f3 b5 12.O-O a5 . Of course, White could play other moves besides 12.Rae1. We'd still be able to play the ...b5 plan; White's concrete move does not matter all that much. b5 We play ...b5 anyway, even without the 'signal' move f3 being on the board. Discovering this idea was a true revelation for me, as it shows that Black has a 'universal setup'. We can aim for ...a5, ...b5 and start a queenside play, more or less ignoring what White does. Don't get me wrong: I am not saying White is worse or anything of the sort, just that we have a rather easy life, as our concept has a universal character and there are no subtle move order points to consider. 13.a4 This is not great, but I want to show why. The move CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/ 2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R4RK1 b - - 9 11CCEndFENCC 11...b5 didn't work so well before because of 12.a4 , we want to check the difference. *(13.f3* I don't see a way forward for White without f2-f3. What constructive plan does White have besides preparing e3-e4? I don't see it, really. In any case, Black can play ...Ba6 next and then consider further action. You can think of preparing ...c5, for example. *Ka6* We have discussed the f3-style positions

already via 11.f3. The current position is certainly not a bad version of it. White can't successfully play 14.e4?! , because 14...dxe4 15.fxe4 Ng4 is good for Black, a common idea. White probably needs a preparational move like 14.Bf2 , but it is slow. We'd have a choice between the forcing 14...b4 and something like 14...Qb6 CCStartBracketCCthere are plenty of optionsCCEndBracketCC to keep the tension. It's a position full of pieces that give Black good chances, in my opinion. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 *)* 13...b4 14..xb1 Worse is 14.Na2 c5 , when 15.dxc5 Nxc5 16.Bxf6 fails due to 16...Nxd3 , when the rook e1 is attacked. This is different to CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R4RK1 b - - 9 11CCEndFENCC 11...b5 12.a4 , as there is no rook on e1 in this line. O&b6 We are ready to play ...c5 next, with a pleasant initiative on the queenside. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3. Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6;

A3) 11.f3 b5 A crucial moment. If White plays f2-f3, replying with b7-b5! is a MUST. The pawn push secures counterplay on the queenside and indirectly against the centre. I'd like to mention that I advocate playing ...b5 even if White has not played f2-f3, for example, after CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R3K2R w KQ - 8 11CCEndFENCC 11.O-O Black has the idea 11...Nh5!? , but I suggest 11...a5 , when 12.f3 b5! would transpose to CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R3K2R w KQ - 8 11CCEndFENCC 11.f3 b5! 12.O-O a5 , the position we are about to examine. If White plays CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/1p1nbpp1/2p2n1p/p2p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PPQ1NPPP/R4RK1 w - - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12.Rae1 , I'd still play 12...b5!? , even though White has not played f2-f3. In such a case, the ...b5-plan is just one good option for Black - you have alternatives. Against f2-f3, however, playing ...b7-b5! is the best antidote. 12.0-0 There is not much else. White needs to castle and get the king to safety. 12. e4? fails to 12...b4 13.Na4 dxe4 14.fxe4 Nxe4 , when White is crushed. a5 Continuing our queenside buildup. We can also reach this position via different move orders, in particular, 11.O-O or 10.O-O Nbd7, if White plays a quick Qc2. In general, the line CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.O-O Nbd7 11.f3 b5! is very similar to the position we have on the board; many ideas apply to both. We'll go ...Ba6 next in most cases and continue our play on the queenside. I'd like to check one sharper line now, the direct 13.e4. 13.e4 b4 14..xa4 This is better than 14.Nd1 , when 14...Qb6 is a good reply. dxe4 15.fxe4 c5 This leads to immense complications, but the move is actually strategically founded. White has the full centre d4/e4, and 15...c5! hits at the centre to gain squares for our pieces. If White takes on c5, we'll get the e5 square and excellent dark-squared control. Did you wonder if 15... Nxe4 is possible here? It actually is possible, and if you ask Stockfish it leads

to a draw! No joke, it's suggesting the following line 16.Bxe7 Qxe7 17.Qxc6 Nd2 18.Qxa8 Qe3+ 19.Rf2 Nf6 , just to give the first move of this mess. I prefer 15...c5! because it shows the strategic idea of hitting at the centre and fighting for squares. The shot 15...Nxe4 works tactically for an engine, but knowing about 15...c5 as a strategic idea will help you in other similar positions. 16.e5 This looks critical. With 15...c5, we hit at the d-pawn, hoping that White would move it. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/5n1p/p1p5/Np1PP2B/3B4/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 w - - 0 16CCEndFENCC 16.dxc5? Ng4 is great for Black. We dominate on the dark squares. CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/5n1p/p1p5/Np1PP2B/3B4/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 w - - 0 16CCEndFENCC 16.Nxc5 Nxc5 17.dxc5 Ng4 is the same story. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/5n1p/p1p5/Np1PP2B/3B4/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 w - - 0 16CCEndFENCC 16.d5?? Nxe4 is just a straight refutation. .xd5 Note that 16.e5 allowed this knight jump. With 15...c5, we fought for central squares and got one. The position is very sharp and tactical now. Frequently, this reduces options for both sides, as concrete calculation proves that only one move works, while others would lose the game. Here, this is not the case. White has many possibilities, which is why I will stop the trainable line here and give you an illustrative overview. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/7p/p1pnP3/Np1P3B/3B4/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 w - - 1 17CCEndFENCC 17.Bh7+? is bad after 17...Kh8 18.Bxe7 Rxe7 , when White's bishop on h7 and the knight on a4 are offside. We also threaten ...Ne3, of course. Note that CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/3nbppB/7p/p1pnP3/Np1P3B/8/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 b - - 2 17CCEndFENCC 17...Kf8?? not only looks wrong, but loses to 18.Rxf7+! . BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/7p/p1pnP3/Np1P3B/3B4/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 w - - 1 17CCEndFENCC 17.Bxe7 Rxe7! Taking with the rook is vital to lend additional cover to f7. Now 18.Bc4 Ne3 19.Qe4 Nxf1 20.Qxa8 Ne3 is a fun line that keeps the game complicated but balanced. CCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/7p/p1pnP3/Np1P3B/3B4/PPQ1N1PP/R4RK1 w - - 1 17CCEndFENCC 17.Bc4 Bxh4 18.Bxd5 Nxe5! 19.Bxa8 cxd4 gives Black good play. Stockfish finds a way to equality for White after 20.Nf4 Ba6 21.Bd5 , but we are very deep down the rabbit hole. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6;

B) 10.0-0 White also frequently plays 10.Qc2 , which transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 . Another possible transposition is CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.f3 Nbd7 11.O-O , which we'll reach in a moment via CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.O-O Nbd7 11.f3 . 10....xbd7 A good development move, completing our setup. It is

premature to play 10...Ne4?! , as 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 12.Bxe4 dxe4 13.Ng3 f5 14.f3 exf3 15.Rxf3 is better for White. We have some weaknesses, like f5, and are lacking development. After the flexible 10...Nbd7 , White frequently plays 11.Qc2 , which after 11...Nh5 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nge2 Nbd7 11.O-O Nh5 . Two other logical moves are 11.f3 and 11.Rb1, which we will examine now.

B1) 11.f3 White goes for the Botvinnik plan: expansion in the centre with e3-e4 is on White's agenda. b5 A crucial moment. If White plays f2-f3, replying with b7-b5! is a MUST. The pawn push secures counterplay on the queenside and indirectly against the centre. The line 12.e4? b4 13.Na4 dxe4 14.fxe4 Nxe4! nicely demonstrates this point. I want to mention that I advocate playing ...b5 even if White has not played f2-f3, for example, after CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1nbpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 8 11CCEndFENCC 11.Rb1 a5 12.a3 b5!? . In such a case, the ...b5-plan is just one good option for Black - you have alternatives. Against f2-f3, however, playing ...b7-b5! is the best antidote. 12.Kf2 White recognizes that 12.e4? is a blunder due to 12...b4 13.Na4 dxe4 14.fxe4 Nxe4! , which exploits the undefended bishop on h4. The prophylactic bishop retreat seeks to play e3-e4 at a more appropriate moment. White has also tried 12.a3 when 12...a5 is the logical reply. Playing 12...a5 has a quick ...Ba6 in mind. With ...Ba6 on the board, the move ...b4 will be possible again. After 12...a5, White will likely play 13.Bf2 , with similar ideas as 12.Bf2 has in mind. In general, there are many possible move orders, but they are not especially relevant. You need to remember the general ideas and then will find good solutions, should you meet a move order that you are not familiar with. a5 Part of the plan. We gain more space and prepare ...Ba6. This time, the move 13.e4 is still dubious due to another noteworthy idea. 13.e4 Again a mistimed advance. *(13.Qc1* A good move for White, placing the rook on a half-open file. White can't go for any direct play CCStartBracketCC 13.e4?! is still dubiousCCEndBracketCC and improves first. *Ka6* Black has some reasonable alternatives here. The moves CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/2p2n1p/pp1p4/3P4/2NBPP2/PP2NBPP/2RQ1RK1 b - - 1 13CCEndFENCC 13...Nb6 , or CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/3nbpp1/2p2n1p/pp1p4/3P4/2NBPP2/PP2NBPP/2RQ1RK1 b - - 1 13CCEndFENCC 13...a4 certainly can be played, too. What I really like about these positions: we have all the pieces on the board and many possible ideas. It's not a forcing position that may dry out soon but will lead to an interesting fight for sure. White has many possible moves now. I think it's best to look at some sample ideas and cut the trainable line here. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr2qr1k1/3nbpp1/b1p2n1p/pp1p4/3P4/2NBPP2/PP2NBPP/2RQ1RK1 w - - 2 14CCEndFENCC 14.e4 dxe4 15.fxe4 Ng4 still looks fine for Black. BCCEndBracketCC

CCStartFENCCr2qr1k1/3nbpp1/b1p2n1p/pp1p4/3P4/2NBPP2/PP2NBPP/2RQ1RK1 w - - 2 14CCEndFENCC 14.b3 White is concerned about ...a4, but it works anyway. 14...a4 CCStartBracketCCyou don't need to play this, waiting is also fineCCEndBracketCC, when 15.bxa4? is wrong due to 15...b4! 16.Bxa6 Rxa6 17.Nb1 Qa8 , showing a nice trick to be aware of. CCCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr2qr1k1/3nbpp1/b1p2n1p/pp1p4/3P4/2NBPP2/PP2NBPP/2RQ1RK1 w - - 2 14CCEndFENCC 14.Ng3 Bf8 is again, not forced. But good to show an idea 15.e4 b4 16.Bxa6 Rxa6 17.Na4 dxe4 18.fxe4 c5! An important idea! We attack White's centre, seeing that lines like 19.dxc5 Rc6 or 19.Nxc5 Nxc5 20.dxc5 Rc6 work well. White's remaining pawns are targets, and we'll easily get one back and have a good game. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 *)* 13...dxe4 14.fxe4 .xg4 An important idea to keep in mind. Now White has no way to keep the bishop, an important piece that helps cover the dark squares. We will not necessarily take the bishop on the next move but will preserve this option for a good moment. There are plenty of exciting tactics hidden in this position. An incredible line is 15.h3 Nxf2 16.Rxf2 Nc5! , which is excellent for Black after 17.dxc5 Bxc5 . We'll get enough material CCStartBracketCCthe rook can't escapeCCEndBracketCC and have a great play on the dark squares. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6;

B2) 11.Qb1 Most of the time, White prefers the Botvinnik plan CCStartBracketCCf2-f3 to prepare e3-e4CCEndBracketCC, but we should check what happens if White plays for the minority attack. 11...a5 We stop White's b2-b4 idea. 12.a3 b5 Why not? We simply gain space on the queenside and prepare the idea ...Nb6-c4. At first glance, you might think c6 is a backward pawn, but White has no way to build any pressure on it. 13.O&c2 The move 13.b4? is rather naive because of 13...Nb6 , heading to c4. Black is calling the shots on the queenside, so weakening this side of the board is bad for White. .xb6 I think Black has equal chances here. The position is rather similar to one of the main lines of this chapter, which starts with CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP2NPPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qc2 Nbd7 11.O-O a5 12.Rae1 b5 . I discuss this type of position more in the notes tothis line, so please have a look there. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6]

6...h6 Against 6.e3, we start with this move as well. The move order 6.Qc2 Be7 has no drawback, but I am going for ...h6 first for consistency reasons. 7.Kxf6 It's vital to check this move, as we are forced to recapture with the queen, which allows the sequence 7.Bxf6 Qxf6 8.Nxd5 . It is fine for Black, but we should have a look.

[7.Kh4 Maintaining the pin is the most challenging move. Ke7 I suggest fighting the Carlsbad main line with ... Be7 setups, Black's most popular way of playing.

8.e3 Very natural and played in almost all of the games that I found. 0-0 9.Kd3 Again, an extremely natural move and White's almost exclusive choice at this point. Very frequently played and leading to a position that is often reached via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.Qc2 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.e3 O-O 9.Bd3 . Qe8 Finally, we have transposed to the main lines of the current chapter that occur after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/2p2n2/3p2B1/3P4/2N5/PP2PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Qc2 Re8 . Please seethese lines for more information. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 It is important to play this move before ...Nbd7. The point is to lend additional cover to the e4-square, so that 10.Nf3 Ne4! is possible. Now White has a key decision to make: knight to f3 or e2? If they play 10.Nge2 , we reply 10...Nbd7 and transpose to CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nge2 Re8 10.Qc2 Nbd7 . 10..xf3 We already know the right antidote to Nf3-setups - jump to e4. As mentioned before, 10.Nge2 has no independent value, as 10...Nbd7 CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC transposes to 9.Nge2 Re8 10.Qc2 Nbd7 . .xe4 The outpost e4 is one of the key assets of our position. We are happy to occupy it right away. 11.Kxe7 O&xe7 And again, we have transposed to a different move order, CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nf3 Ne4! 10.Bxe7 Qxe7 11.Qc2 Re8 . 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 This position is also frequently reached via CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp2bpp1/2p2n1p/3p4/3P3B/2NBP3/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 4 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qc2 Re8 10.Nf3 Ne4! 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 . White now has the major decision of whether to capture the knight or not.

A) 12.0-0 A more flexible continuation than 12.Bxe4. Kf5 We support our star piece. It's also fine to play 12...Nd7 instead. After our move 12...Bf5, White has mostly tried two ideas: Preparing b4-b5 with 13.Rab1, and 13.Ne5, which puts more pressure on the knight. It doesn't make much sense for White to take our knight right away, as the sample line 13.Bxe4 Bxe4 14.Nxe4 dxe4! 15.Nd2 Na6 16.a3 c5 shows. It's important to note that on move 14, we take with a pawn, keeping the queens on the board. The advanced e-pawn gives us a space advantage, which prompts us to keep more pieces on the board. 13..xe5 White puts more pressure on e4, but it is easily defused. *(13.Qab1* White prepares the minority attack b4-b5. *.xd7* We complete our development. Here I also examined 13...Nxc3 , which is already sufficient for equality. after 14.Qxc3 Bxd3 15.Qxd3 Nd7 16.b4?! a6 we transpose to CCStartFENCCrn2r1k1/pp2qpp1/2p4p/3p1b2/3Pn3/2NBPN2/PPQ2PPP/1R3RK1 b - - 5 13CCEndFENCC 13...Nd7 14.b4?! and are in good shape. White should avoid 16.b4, but nothing is challenging instead. Alternatively

CCStartFENCCrn2r1k1/pp2qpp1/2p4p/3p1b2/3P4/2nBPN2/PPQ2PPP/1R3RK1 w - - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.bxc3 Bxd3 15.Qxd3 b5 is possible but also fine for Black. White has no play on the queenside, while ...Nd7-b6-c4 is on for us. My main argument in favour of 13...Nd7 is that it keeps more tension and sets a little trap, as 14.b4 is not at all great for White but very natural. *14.b4* White's idea, but it leads to less than nothing. *.xxc3* Black is also doing well with 14...Nb6 , but the capture is simple and good. *15.O&xc3 Kxd3 16.O&xd3 a6* Black is in good shape here and already to be preferred. We plan to transfer the knight to its ideal square d6. We are set to enter the favourable scenario of Bobotsov vs Petrosian, examined in the intro to this chapter. Please have a look at this game to understand better how to play this type of position. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 *)* 13....xd7 14.f3 The only interesting try for White. After 14.Nxd7 Qxd7 15.Nxe4 Bxe4 or CCStartFENCCr3r1k1/pp1nqpp1/2p4p/3pNb2/3Pn3/2NBP3/PPQ2PPP/R4RK1 w - - 6 14CCEndFENCC 14.Bxe4 Bxe4 15.Nxe4 Nxe5 16.dxe5 dxe4 17. Qxe4 Qxe5 Black has no problems at all. Note that these positions still offer some play, as they are not symmetrical. In particular, the first one offers chances to play ...f7-f5 and pose some problems on the kingside. .xxc3 We enter a forced sequence now. 15.Kxf5 .xxe5 16.dxe5 Of course not 16. bxc3?? Nc4 , when Black wins. .xb5 17.f4 f6 We attack White's central pawn quickly, which leads to interesting play. Our knight has a safe retreat to c7, and White needs to be careful about overextending. The pawn construction e3-f4-e5 gains space, but it is also vulnerable - thus our move 17...f6. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6;

B) 12.Kxe4 White doesn't want to tolerate our knight and captures it. 12...dxe4 Our pawn structure is changed now, but we don't mind having a pawn on e4. We have a space advantage in the centre, and our pieces can use the d5-square. 13..xd2 White almost always plays this move. 13.Ne5 is harmless due to 13...Nd7 or 13...c5 , which also works. f5 Black has also successfully employed 13...Bf5 here. I prefer 13...f5, thinking that Black's job is a bit easier. We'll play ...Be6 and ...Nd7-f6 next and enjoy a good position. Here's a possible sample continuation. 14.0-0 Ke6 White has two plans that I can see: attacking our centre with f3 and b4-b5. Let's have a look at both options. 15.Qab1 Going for b4-b5 in this position is slow and unpromising for White. *(15.f3* White does not want to wait until we might drum up an attack on the kingside and opens up the game in the centre. *exf3 16..xxf3 .xd7* Black has equal chances in this position. Next, we should involve the a8-rook with ...Rad8 and consider ... Nd7-f6-d5. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5. Bg5 c6 *)* 15....xd7 16.b4 b5 This key idea is worth nothing. We stop b4-b5 and readily accept that c6 looks like a backward pawn on the half-open c-file. The problem for White is: it's impossible to exert any tangible pressure on the pawn. We play ...Nb6-d5 next, enjoying the excellently placed knight on the safe central square. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5

c6]
7...O&xf6 8..xxd5 The only move worth checking. We are happy about the bishop pair advantage after a slow move like 8.e3. Note that after 8.e3 the d5-pawn is still attacked, so we need to avoid 8.e3 Bd6?? 9.Nxd5 . Playing a move like 8...Nd7, or even 8...Qd8 is fine to avoid this blunder. 8...O&xd4 That's the point. White now can't play 9.Nc7+?? , as 9...Kd8 10.Nxa8 Bb4+ wins the house.
9.Qd1 This is the only move for White to keep in the game. 9...Kb4+ The only move available. 10..xxb4 O&xb4+ We have easily obtained equal chances in this position. The moves ...Be6 and ...Nd7 are comfortable development moves, and White still needs some time to castle kingside. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6

[12] **9..xge2** .xf8 Keres opts for the passive ...Nf8 plan, which was the usual approach at the time. We handle the defence differently, keeping the knight on d7. After 9...c6 10.O-O h6 11.Bh4 a5 it was still possible to transpose to a line that is part of our repertoire. In this sequence, 12.f3 is answered with 12... b5! , starting a quick counterplay once White has revealed their intentions with f3. Our setup, without ...Nf8, is specifically designed to fight the Botvinnik plan.
10.0-0 c6 11.Qab1 Kd6 Keres threatens ...Bxh2+ now, but Botvinnik's reply is an excellent defence. 12.Elh1 Stepping out of the check which enables 12... Bxh2?? 13.Bxf6 , winning a piece. 12....xg6 13.f3 The start of the Botvinnik plan. White wants to expand with e4, building the perfect centre. 13...Ke7 A sad move, but what else?! 14.Qbe1 .xd7 15.Kxe7 Qxe7 16..xg3 .xf6
17.O&f2 Ke6 18..xf5 Kxf5 19.Kxf5 O&b6 20.e4 Here it comes. Black has no counterplay at all against White's central steamroller. 20...dxe4 21.fxe4 Qd8
22.e5 .xd5 23..xe4 Heading to d6, which is a great square for White's knight.
23....xf8 24..xd6 O&c7 25.Ke4 .xe6 26.O&h4 g6 27.Kxd5 cxd5 28.Qc1 O&d7
29.Qc3 Qf8 30..xf5 Qfe8 31..xh6+ Elf8 32.O&f6 .xg7 33.Qcf3 Qc8 34..xxf7 Qe6
35.O&g5 .xf5 36..xh6 O&g7 37.g4 And Keres resigned. The Botvinnik plan is a dangerous idea and difficult to meet for Black, as we have seen. Our approach against the Carlsbad allows a much more active counterplay against the Botvinnik plan, based on quick queenside counterplay - see the notes to move nine. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-Carlsbad Structure: The Botvin

[13] **2..xf3** White often starts with 2.Nf3 but transposes to a London System later. White's most popular move if they want to avoid the QGD. The knight move is flexible. White may still play for a Queen's Gambit or play various sidelines on the next move. 2....xf6 The natural reply. We develop our knight to the best square and are ready to transpose to the Queen's Gambit Declined after 3.c4 e6 , the most common continuation. White has a ton of alternatives, though. In the current chapter, we only discuss the London System. In contrast, the chapter on1.d4 d5 sidelines covers other options, like 3.g3 or 3.Bg5. The natural reply. We develop our knight to the best square and are ready to transpose to

the Queen's Gambit Declined. This transposition would happen after 3.c4 e6 , which is the most common continuation. You'll also meet 3.Bf4 often, the London System. I decided to cover the London in a dedicatedChapter, as it is so frequently played. White has a ton of alternatives, though. As already discussed in the notes to the first move, I decided to distinguish between White's setups already on move two. This means that CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 is covered via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 , when 2...Nf6 3.Nf3 transposes. Here's a list of these transpositions: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 is covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.g3 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 is covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nc3?! is very rare and briefly covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nc3 This leaves two non-transpositional moves to consider: 3.Bg5 and 3.c3 . The move 3.c3 might still transpose elsewhere, but 4.Bg5 has some independent value. 3.c3 White usually plays 3.Bf4 to reach a London System, which we cover via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 . This leaves 3.c3 to examine, as White may still play Bf4 next. This move doesn't look particularly threatening, but it has some points against Black's more ambitious replies. If Black plays 3...c5 , White has 4.dxc5 , which leads to interesting complications. Black is not getting back the pawn easily in this line. After 3... Bf5 , White intends 4.Qb3 , which turns out to be slightly annoying for Black, too. I suggest a simpler solution that only has a minor move order drawback.

[3.Kg5 .xe4 This active move is the reason why 3.Bg5 is a rather unpopular option for White. Our knight occupies the central spot and gains a tempo on the bishop.

A) 4.Kf4 c5 5.dxc5 *(5.e3* This looks best. 5.c3 cxd4 6.cxd4 Qb6 gives us some early pressure on the queenside and already the easier game. *O&b6* A stronger move than 5...cxd4 6.exd4 Nc6 , which leads to a refined version of the Caro-Kann Exchange structure. *6..xc3* After 6.Qc1 Nc6 7.c3 f6! , Black is in good shape, too. It's interesting to compare to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/8/3p2B1/3Pn3/5N2/PPP1PPPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 4 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bh4 c5 5.e3 Qb6 6.Qc1? , when 6...cxd4 7.exd4 g5!! is on. Here this strike doesn't work, and Black needs to

be more modest. Still, after CCStartFENCCr1b1kb1r/pp2pppp/1qn5/2pp4/3PnB2/2P1PN2/PP3PPP/RNQ1KB1R b KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7...f6! Black is doing well, as ...cxd4, followed by ...e5 is a strong idea. Our queen and knight work against f2. *O&a5* Playing 6...Nxc3 can't be wrong, either. Now White needs to worry about the capture on c3. Stockfish assesses 7.Bb5+ Bd7 8.Bxd7+ Nxd7 9.O-O Nxc3 10.bxc3 Rc8 as equal, but I am happy with Black's chances. We are slightly behind in development but have wrecked White's pawn structure beyond repair. 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.Nf3 #6 *)* 5....xc6 It's crucial to avoid 5...Nxc5? 6.Nc3 e6 7.e4 , which is surprisingly strong for White. The better move 5...Nc6, however, gives Black the better chances! We are ready to play ...f6 and ...e5 now, taking control of the centre. 6..xbd2 Lines like 6.e3 f6! are much better for Black already. .xxc5 Black is already slightly better. We have an extra central pawn and both ...f6-e5 and ...g6-Bg7 are good ways to continue. 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.Nf3 #5;

B) 4.Kh4 c5 Attacking White's centre with ...c5 is a very logical choice. Stockfish also points out the wacky-looking move 4...h5!?! , which intends ...f6 and ...g5, trapping the bishop! It looks like a cool move, but the resulting complications were too crazy for this course. Feel free to check them out yourselves; it's fun. 5.dxc5 Against the capture, we need to be alert for a moment, as a natural reply is bad. *(5.e3* White supports the centre. Against this move, we get a good play by combining pressure against d4 and b2, using our queen. A similar scenario would arise after 5.c3 , when 5...cxd4 6.cxd4 Nc6 , followed by ...Qb6 or ...Qa5 gives Black great play. White's bishop is misplaced on h4, being completely disconnected from the queenside action. *O&b6* There is nothing wrong with a simpler solution like 5...cxd4 6.exd4 Nc6 when we have a good version of a Caro-Kann Exchange. The move 5...Qb6 is stronger, though. It sets a very dangerous trap that many strong players have already fallen for. *6.O&c1* White has to play 6.Nc3 to limit the damage. Black is fine after 6...Nxc3 or 6...Qa5 , but this is golden for White compared to the coming disaster! *cxd4 7.exd4 g5* Not an easy move to spot! *8.Kxg5* The alternatives 8.Nxg5 Qh6! , and CCStartFENCCrnb1kb1r/pp2pp1p/1q6/3p2p1/3Pn2B/5N2/PPP2PPP/RNQ1KB1R w KQkq - 0 8CCEndFENCC 8.Bg3 Bh6 or CCStartFENCCrnb1kb1r/pp2pp1p/1q6/3p2p1/3Pn2B/5N2/PPP2PPP/RNQ1KB1R w KQkq - 0 8CCEndFENCC 8.Bg3 g4 9.Ne5 Bh6 are even more depressing for White. Black is winning straight away in these lines. *.xxg5 9..xxg5 Kh6 10.f4* No choice, we were threatening ...f6, winning the knight. *O&xd4* Black has a huge advantage. White's dark squares are weak, and their pieces are badly coordinated. A fantastic opening result for Black. 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.Nf3 #4 *)* 5....xc6 We have to avoid 5...Nxc5 , as 6.Nc3 is very annoying. The pawn on d5 is attacked, and ...e6 is impossible to play. We have to wait a moment until we get the pawn back. 6.e3 g6 We can't play ...e6, so the fianchetto is a good solution. 7..xbd2 .xxc5 And finally, we have regained the pawn and enjoy a good position. We have two centre pawns, and our bishop

will be strong on g7, supporting future play in the centre and on the queenside. 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.Nf3 #3]

3...e6 We prepare ...c5 without having to worry about a possible dxc5 pawn grab. Now White's best move is probably 4.Bf4 , transposing to a London. The London is covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 in the current chapter. Other options are 4.e3 or 4.Bg5, which are both covered in the1.d4 d5 sidelines chapter. 12. The London System-2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c3 We prepare ...c5 without having to worry about a possible dxc5 pawn grab. Now White's best move is probably 4.Bf4 , transposing to a London. The London is covered via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 in thededicated chapter. What's left? ACCEndBracketCC White can play CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P4/2P2N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bg5 , pinning our knight. BCCEndBracketCC White rarely plays CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P4/2P2N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.e3 , which leads to a Colle formation. Here we get to the minor move order issue that I mentioned in the notes to 3.c3. Our main weapon against the Colle is not based on an early ...e6, as we play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 c5 , when 4.c3 is answered with 4...Nbd7 and ...g6 next. Here, we are already committed to the move ...e6, which requires a different antidote. 4.e3
A rare move order by White, but they manage to transpose into a Colle setup when we are already forced to play with ...e6. It's not a major problem because White also has made a concession: the early move c3!. Now, we need to compare to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 . We play 3...c5 , avoiding 3...e6 in favour of a more ambitious approach. Still, 3...e6 is not a bad move, of course. After 3...e6 White would not play 4.c3?! , but the more flexible move 4.Bd3 . In the Colle, White usually plays the moves Bd3, Nbd2 and aims for e3-e4, opening the centre. The move c3 is usually only played in response to Black playing ...c5, not that early on. This means that in the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c3 e6 4.e3 , we face a particularly harmless version of the Colle, which allows us an easy game. Let's check how to proceed.

[4.Kg5 White pins our knight. There are other cases of Bg5 in the current chapter, but this is the only one that involves a pin. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bg5 we have 3...Ne4 , while after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bg5 I suggest an entirely different approach, as I think that Black has better

options than 2...Nf6. h6 Let's address the pin right away. 5.Kh4 White almost always plays this natural move, keeping the bishop. It is possible to play 5.Bxf6 Qxf6 6.Nbd2 , but after 6...c5 7.e3 Nc6 Black enjoys the bishop pair and has a sound position. g5 Ambitious and strong! 6.Kg3 .xe4 The important follow-up to 5...g5!. Our main idea is not to take the bishop, but rather go for ...h5! next and try to win it! The threat of ...h5! is so strong that White now only has oneCCStartBracketCC!CCEndBracketCC good move to avoid severe trouble. 7..xbd2 This is wrong, but let's have a look at why it is so bad. The move White has to play is the less than obvious 7.Nfd2 , which keeps them in the game after 7...Nxg3 8.hxg3 c5 . Black is already slightly better due to the bishop pair. Our bishop will find a good spot on g7, using the extended fianchetto formation on the kingside. h5 The threat is ...h4, trapping the bishop. 8.O&c2 Moving the h-pawn is disastrous after 8.h3 Nxg3 9.fxg3 Bd6 . White's structure and king position are just too much to bear. The move 8.Qc2 poses a CCStartBracketCCminorCCEndBracketCC challenge, at least. h4 9.Ke5 f6 10..xxe4 dxe4 11.O&xe4 What about Qg6+ now? Qh6 This is the point you need to know. The bishop is still trapped and can be captured on the next move with a winning position for Black. 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.Nf3 #2]

4....xbd7 I suggest a setup with ...Nbd7, ...Bd6, ...b6 and ...Bb7, which you might already know if you have studied the QGD sidelines. Against CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 we aim for a similar setup. Here, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c3 e6 4.e3 , I suggest starting with 4...Nbd7 , because 4...b6 5.Bb5+ is a bit irritating.

5.Kd3 b6 We'll take control of the e4-square now. 6.0-0 Kb7 7..xbd2 Kd6 And we have completed our setup. Our pieces are harmonious, and we have a range of ideas. We can attack the centre with both ...c5 and ...e5, but ...Ne4 is an idea, too. A final point to make: If our setup is comfortable, why not play it all the time against the Colle, even in the CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 move order? Well, after 3...e6 White won't play an early c3, but rather 4.Bd3 . Now you can go for something like 4...Nbd7 , but White has far more options now; for example, they could play 5.b3 , copying our setup! Or they could play an early c2-c4, changing the pawn structure completely. These options are off the table with the very early c3, which makes our life a lot easier. 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.Nf3 #1

2.g3 The move 2.g3 or the related line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 usually signals White's intention to steer the game into a type of Catalan CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 CCEndBracketCC, but wanting to avoid lines the Queen's Gambit accepted

CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 or lines of the Slav Defence CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 CCEndBracketCC. In Keep it Simple: 1.d4, I advocated this approach and suggested the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 . Now, what to do as Black against this setup? I suggest being pragmatic and simply allowing a transposition to the Catalan and play lines that are part of our repertoire anyway. This fits well with the 'Keep it Simple' approach: reduce the workload where it is possible. Let's have a look at how to transpose. 2....xf6 I suggest playing ...Nf6 and ...e6. 3.Kg2 White also has 3.Nf3 , which after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/6P1/PPP1PPBP/RNBQK1NR b KQkq - 2 3CCEndFENCC 3...e6 4.Nf3 c5 leads to the same positions.

3...e6 This is the 'simple solution', allowing a transposition to the Catalan. If Black follows a maximalist approach, you'd need to play 3...c5 4.Nf3 cxd4 5.O-O and now learn some other theory with sophisticated ideas like 5...h6!? or 5...e6 6.Nxd4 e5 , which will still 'only' lead to about equal chances. 4..xf3 Here 4.c4 dxc4 directly transposes to ourAnti-Catalan Chapter. 4...c5 This is the way to transpose our lines against the Catalan 5.0-0 Or 5.c4 dxc4 , which again directly transposes to theCatalan Chapter. 5....xc6 Now White's only try for an advantage is 6.c4 , when 6....dxc4 againtransposes to the Catalan. I need to mention that this position may also arise from CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.d4 Nf6 5.O-O e6 , and this is a more common move order. In thechapter on 1.Nf3, I talk a bit more about the harmless alternatives for White on the sixth move. Please see this chapter if you want to learn more. 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.g3 Again we avoid 5...cxd4 and keep the tension. Now White's main and only critical move is 6.c4 , when 6...dxc4 leads to the chapter on theCatalan. We'll have a brief look at slower moves for White, like CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp3ppp/2n1pn2/2pp4/3P4/5NP1/PPP1PPBP/RNBQ1RK1 w kq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.b3 or 6.c3 . 6.b3 This move is not theoretically challenging, like 6.c4 , but rather an attempt by White to 'get a game' without the need for serious preparation. White argues that after 6...cxd4 7.Nxd4 , the pawn structure resembles a Reversed Grünfeld in which b2-b3 is not a great move, but Black's e7-e6 isn't either. I prefer to avoid ...cxd4 and suggest developing instead.

[6.c3 This move is played surprisingly often. White goes for the Schlechter Variation of the Slav with an extra tempo. The Schlechter goes CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 g6 5.Nc3 Bg7 and is considered to be comfortably better for White. An extra tempo does not change the assessment by much. Ke7 Again, keeping the tension and asking White about

their plans. White's opening setup is unambitious and rarely employed by ambitious players. Relatively best might be 7.dxc5 now, with equal chances. We can recapture, castle kingside and be OK with healthy moves. Instead of 7.dxc5, White's most popular moves are 7.Nbd2 and 7.Bg5 , and they are both typical conceptual mistakes. We need to establish why; let's have a look. 7..xbd2 This move is met with an instructive reply. *(7.Kg5* Calling this move a mistake is a bit harsh, but it is undoubtedly imprecise. *cxd4* Playing 7...Qb6 first is not bad, either. Taking d4 first is more precise, though, as after 7...cxd4 8.cxd4 Qb6 White can't even reply 9.Qb3 , as 9...Nxd4 is possible. *8.cxd4 O&b6* An annoying move for White to face. The b2-pawn is hanging, and 9.Qb3 loses the d-pawn after 9...Nxd4 . White probably needs to play 9.b3 , when we are happy to see the multiple queenside weaknesses this move creates. The common problem is that occupying the c-file is difficult for White due to ...Ba3 ideas. We are slightly better after 9.b3 with normal moves like 9...O-O or 9...h6 first. 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3-2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.d4 #4 *)* 7...cxd4 We open up the c-file, correctly arguing that our knight is much more helpful on c6 compared to its colleague on d2. The additional point is that after the trade on d4, White has no c-pawn that could be used to attack our d5-pawn. There is a reason why 6.c4! is the only critical idea: the pawn is used to pressurize our centre and make use of the Catalan bishop. 8.cxd4 0-0 Or 8...Qb6 , which is also acceptable. We have slightly better chances here. Moves like ...Qb6, ...Bd7 and playing on the c-file are easy to play and understand. White's d2-knight is clogging up their development and tough to improve. Stockfish suggests 9.Nb1 here, which is an indication of White's problems. 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3-2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.d4 #3]

6...Ke7 We develop the bishop and prepare castling. 7.Kb2 0-0 We keep the tension and wait for White to decide about the central pawn structure. Currently, we argue that ...cxd4 only helps White, so we make good moves first without any pawn structure commitment. Now White, most of the time, develops with 8. Nbd2 , but 8.dxc5 also looks reasonable. 8.dxc5

[8..xbd2 White keeps the tension again. b6 Not the only move, but consistent with our strategy to keep the central tension. 9.c4 White provokes a clash in the centre. There are many possible ways to handle this tense situation. Should we wait for White to make a pawn move, or should we take ourselves? cxd4 I like this the best. You can't play 9...dxc4 due to 10.Ne5! , and White wins the house. It's possible to play 9...Bb7 or 9...Ba6 , though, with equal chances. 10..xxd4 .xxd4 11.Kxd4 Ka6 Placing the bishop on a6 looks better than 11...Bb7 . We plan ... Rc8 next, after which c4 would be finally attacked. White's setup with b3, Bb2 and Nbd2 is solid and sound, but we should get equal chances pretty quickly. 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3-2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.d4 #2]

8...Kxc5 White opens up the long diagonal and intends to attack our d5-pawn with c2-c4 soon. A good setup for Black involves ...Qe7 and ...Rd8, making c2-c4 more difficult to achieve. 9..xbd2 White prepares c2-c4 under better circumstances. After the immediate 9.c4 , we'd play 9...dxc4 , damaging White's pawn

structure. 9...O&e7 10.c4 White may also start with 11.a3 , when we should stop White's expansion idea with 11...a5 . 10...d4 The best way to handle the pawn structure. Advancing the pawn is particularly attractive against the bishop on b2, which looks misplaced now. 11.a3 a5 We are ready to play ...e6-e5, increasing our space advantage. Black is comfortable now, prompting Stockfish to suggest the radical 12.b4 axb4 13.axb4 Rxa1 14.Bxa1 Bxb4 15.Nxd4 Nxd4 16.Bxd4 e5 , which keeps the game about even for White. 16. The Flexible 1.Nf3-2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.d4 #1

2.e4 The Blackmar-Diemer Gambit. It is objectively incorrect, but knowing a good reply is helpful. The first step is easy: grab the centre pawn. 2...dxe4 In a significant portion of games, Black opts for 2...e6 or 2...c6, which lets White off the hook. You should take a free centre pawn! 3..xc3 White's idea is to follow up CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/8/3Pp3/8/PPP2PPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 with 4.f3 . It is worse for White to play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/8/3Pp3/8/PPP2PPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.f3 right away, as 3...e5! is very effective. After 4.dxe5 Qxd1+ 5.Kxd1 exf3 White's king is stuck in the centre, and the e5-pawn is terminally weak. 3....xf6 We need to cover the captured pawn. The setup we aim for includes ...Bf5, ...e6 and often ...c6 to stabilize the centre. Now White, most of the time, plays 4.f3, but we'll have a quick look at 4. Bg5, too. 4.Kg5 Kf5 Lending additional cover to the extra pawn. 5.O&e2 White sets a trap: what about the d4-pawn now? Can we take it? Before we examine Black's best reply, a quick note about 5.f3 . We should answer it with 5...Nbd7 . After 6.Bc4 exf3 Nxf3 e6 we reach positions similar to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/8/3Pp3/2N5/PPP2PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.f3 coveredelsewhere. White does not have enough play for the pawn. 5....xbd7 Don't take on d4! After 5...Qxd4?? 6.Qb5+ Bd7 7.Qxb7 Bc6 8.Bb5 White is winning on the spot. Instead, we continue with our development, and White does not have enough for the pawn. 6.0-0-0 We are already a full centre pawn up. If White plays 6.Qb5? , we are happy to give up b7 for more development with 6...e6 7.Qxb7 Bd6 , when Black has a fantastic position. 6...c6 The bishop on g5 makes it a bit more difficult to play ... e6, so we should start with ...c6. Our f8-bishop can be developed with ...g6 later. 7.f3 Or 7.d5 Nxd5 8.Nxd5 cxd5 9.Rxd5 g6 , when Black will be the one doing all the attacking soon. The bishop arriving on g7 will be a monster. 7...exf3 8..xxf3 g6 Black has a clear advantage. White can try the direct 9.d5 Nxd5 10.Nxd5 cxd5 11.Rxd5 Bg7 12.Nd4 , but 12...Bxd4! 13.Rxd4 Rc8 is excellent for Black. 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.e4 #1

2..xc3 White develops the knight in front of their c-pawn, which is a strategically risky decision in 1.d4 d5 structures. Attacking the centre with c2-c4 and then using the knight afterward is the play according to classical principles. The main line of the QGD CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 shows

exactly this school of thought. 2.Nc3 ignores these principles but instead focuses on a fast queenside development. Our approach against 2.Nc3 should be focused on playing a quick c7-c5 break ourselves, generating play on the queenside and, in particular, on the c-file. After our natural reply 2...Nf6, we have an essential split. 2....xf6 White has the choice between some ideas now. A[EndBracket] [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 2 3[EndFEN] 3.Bf4 The Jobava Variation, probably White's best line. I suggest 3...c5 , according to the general outline of playing the c-pawn quickly. B[EndBracket] [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 2 3[EndFEN] 3.Bg5 The Veresov Attack, which we answer with 3...h6 4.Bh4 c5 , again using the c-pawn to attack White's centre. C[EndBracket] [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 2 3[EndFEN] 3.Nf3 , which is toothless after 3...c5 , our usual approach. There is no need to memorize lines. Natural central play will be fine [StartBracket]...Nc6, ...Bg4,...e6, for example[EndBracket]. D[EndBracket] [StartFEN]rnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 2 3[EndFEN] 3.e4? The Blackmar Diemer. We play 3...dxe4 and transpose to [StartFEN]rnbqkbnr/ppp1pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP1PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2[EndFEN] 2.e4? dxe4 3.Nc3 Nf6 . 3.Kg5 The Veresov Attack. White develops their bishop to an active square and often has Bxf6 in mind, followed by a central pawn push e2-e4.

[3.Kf4 c5 As usual, we attack the d4-pawn with ...c5. 4.e3 We don't need to worry about 4.Nb5?? due to 4...Qa5+ . cxd4 We immediately clarify the pawn structure and open the c-file, leading to a pawn structure that we know well - it's a Caro-Kann Exchange with an oddly placed c3-knight. White now needs to recapture with the pawn, leading to the mentioned structure. Note that you can't wait with 4...Nc6? , as 5.Nb5 is killing. 5..xb5 White goes for the Nc7+ fork, but this move does not work against best play. How do we refute the move? *(5.exd4 Kg4* A strong move, in my opinion. Black more frequently plays 5...a6 , but I don't like the arising positions that much. In some cases, the move ...a6 feels like a loss of time. *6.f3* White has tried this move most of the time. Black has an easy game after 6.Be2 Bxe2 7.Qxe2 a6 or [StartFEN]rn1qkb1r/pp2pppp/5n2/3p4/3P1Bb1/2N5/PPP2PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 1 6[EndFEN] 6.Nf3 Nc6 , when we reach favourable versions of a Caro-Kann Exchange, due to the misplaced c3-knight. In the first case, White even lacks their best piece, the d3-bishop. Finally, White may try 6.Qd2 , but after 6...Nc6 , they will probably play 7.f3 anyway, which transposes to 6.f3 after all. *Kd7* It's crucial to avoid 6...Bh5? 7.g4 or 6...Bf5? 7.g4 . We don't mind retreating the bishop and placing it behind our pawn chain, as we'll have enough counterplay on the queenside. *7.O&d2* Our setup will be ...Nc6, ...e6, ...a6 and ...b5, for queenside counterplay. White has to think twice about castling on this side of the board. Alternatively, they could try

7.Nb5 , when the simple 7...Bxb5 8.Bxb5+ Nc6 is comfortable for Black. Note that provoking f3 was a huge gain for us, as White has a hard time ever using the e5-square with the knight. *.xc6 8.g4 e6 9.0-0-0 a6* That's our setup. We'll have good attacking chances, based on the open c-file and ideas like ...Bb4, but also ...b5. Our king is quite safe in the centre for the moment, but we have no weaknesses on the kingside and will often be able to castle kingside. We already have an open file against the white king - our opponent still needs to find a way to open the game similarly. 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.Nc3 #5 *)* 5...O&a5+ Very important! Don't play 5...Na6? , when 6.exd4 is excellent for White. We would be stuck with a terrible knight on a6. The move 5...Qa5+! is more or less winning for Black, but it's a crazy ride. 6.b4 The move 6.c3 just transposes to 6.b4 or loses differently. We have the following lines. AGGEndBracketGG GGStartFENGGrnb1kb1r/pp2pppp/5n2/qN1p4/3p1B2/4P3/PPP2PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 2 6GGEndFENGG 6.c3 dxc3 7.b4 Qxb4 leads to GGStartFENGGrnb1kb1r/pp2pppp/5n2/qN1p4/3p1B2/4P3/PPP2PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 2 6GGEndFENGG 6.b4 Qxb4+ 7.c3 dxc3 BGGEndBracketGG GGStartFENGGrnb1kb1r/pp2pppp/5n2/qN1p4/3p1B2/4P3/PPP2PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 2 6GGEndFENGG 6.c3 dxc3 7.Nc7+ Kd8 8.b4 Qxb4 also transposes to 6.b4. CGGEndBracketGG GGStartFENGGrnb1kb1r/pp2pppp/5n2/qN1p4/3p1B2/4P3/PPP2PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 2 6GGEndFENGG 6.c3 dxc3 7.Bc7 c2+ 8.Bxa5 cxd1=Q+ 9.Rxd1 Na6 , and Black wins. O&xb4+ 7.c3 dxc3 By now we are three GGStartBracketGG!GGEndBracketGG pawns up and have a huge c-pawn. White is ready to fork us, though - a crazy situation. It's clear White has to act now. They need to play the fork or attack our queen. It's important to note that you don't need to analyze and learn these complications by heart. Black is objectively winning, but it's not something that a human player can easily calculate. However, it is clear that we already have three pawns and a huge attack for a possible loss of the rook. In addition, we'll pick up the knight that is stranded on a8. 8..xc7+ White goes for the a8-rook, which is the most obvious try. Here are some alternatives to illustrate the possibilities. AGGEndBracketGG GGStartFENGGrnb1kb1r/pp2pppp/5n2/1N1p4/1q3B2/2p1P3/P4PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 8GGEndFENGG 8.a3 Qb2 9.Rb1 Qd2+ 10.Qxd2 cxd2+ 11.Kxd2 Ne4+ 12.Ke1 Na6 is simple. BGGEndBracketGG GGStartFENGGrnb1kb1r/pp2pppp/5n2/1N1p4/1q3B2/2p1P3/P4PPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 8GGEndFENGG 8.Qb3 Nc6 8...e5 also leads to winning chaos 9.Nc7+ Kd8 10.Nxa8 e5 11.Bg5 c2+ 12.Ke2 Qxb3 13.axb3 Na5 and Black wins. All those lines are fun to study. It's unlikely you'll get them on the board, but it's a great tactical training to use positions like that for exercise games. Eld8 9..xxa8 Or 9.a3 Qb2 10.Rb1 Qd2+ 11.Qxd2 cxd2+ 12.Kxd2 e5 13.Bxe5 Ne4+ 14.Ke1 Nc6 15.Bf4 g5 , when again Black wins. c2+ 10.O&d2 e5 11.Kxe5 .xc6 Black has a killing attack, for example in the following lines. AGGEndBracketGG GGStartFENGGN1bk1b1r/pp3ppp/2n2n2/3pB3/1q6/4P3/P1pQ1PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 1 12GGEndFENGG 12.Bc7+ Kd7 13.f3 Qb2 14.

Qc1 Bb4+ 15.Kf2 Bc3 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCN1bk1b1r/pp3ppp/2n2n2/3pB3/1q6/4P3/P1pQ1PPP/R3KBNR w KQ - 1 12CCEndFENCC 12.Bc3 Qb1+ 13.Qc1 Bf5 14.Nf3 Ba3 I am perfectly aware that these lines are not 'Simple', but these complications are winning for Black, and we have all the fun, being the attacker! 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.Nc3 #4]

3...h6 I suggest this move, encouraging the capture on f6. It was already recommended in the Lifetime Repertoire on the Nimzo-Ragozin, which Daniel Barrish and yours truly wrote. I see no reason to change the line, as Black is doing fine, and it's easy to learn. White now quite often captures on f6; it's about a 50-50 split between 4.Bh4 and 4.Bxf6. We'll have a look at both moves. 4.Kxf6 The capture on f6 is a common procedure in the Veresov and one reason why it is not regarded as fully sound. Blocking the c-pawn with Nc3 and giving up the bishop pair for nothing special is frowned upon.

[4.Kh4 White keeps the bishop for the moment. c5 Attacking d4 with the desired pawn break. White now has the choice again: taking on f6 or not? 5.Kxf6 The capture is the most interesting try for White. If they avoid the trade, we develop without any problems and have a strategically superior position. A sample line is 5.e3 cxd4 6.exd4 Nc6 7.Qd2 Bf5 . The structure is somewhat similar to an Exchange Caro-Kann, but White's setup with Nc3 and Qd2 looks odd and gives us good chances on the c-file and queenside. gxf6 After ...c5 is on the board, the g-pawn capture is my choice. After 5...exf6 , we'd have a potentially weak d5-pawn. If you compare to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1ppp1/5n1p/3p2B1/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bxf6 exf6 5.e3 c6 , you'll see the difference. After 5...gxf6 White has the fundamental choice between the hacking move 6.e4 and the more restrained 6.e3. 6.e3 More solid than 6.e4, but it poses no problems. *(6.e4* White wants to open the centre while being ahead in development. *dxe4 7.dxc5* The only good try. A line like 7.d5 f5 is terrible for White. They are a pawn down, and the bishop on g7 will be a monster. *f5* This is the most important move to remember in the whole Veresov. We secure the e4-pawn and are not worried about Qxd8+, which spoils our castling rights. *8.O&xd8+* Keeping the queen on with 8.Qh5 leads nowhere for White. After 8... Bg7 9.Bb5+ Nc6 10.Nge2 e6 , we are much better. Note that ...Qg5 can be an important resource in such a variation. *Elxd8 9.0-0-0+ Kd7* The move 9...Nd7 is not bad, either. After 9...Bd7 White is fighting for equality. If nothing bad happens to our king on d8 CCStartBracketCCand it's rather safe on the dark squaresCCEndBracketCC, our bishop pair advantage is significant. Stockfish now suggests the drastic 10.g4!? as the best solution for White, when 10...fxg4 11.h3 Bg7 12.Nxe4 Kc7 leads to a position that is slightly better for Black, but remains complicated. 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.Nc3 #3 *)* 6...cxd4 7.exd4 .xc6 Black has the better position already. Our central control is fine, and we have the bishop pair. It is even possible to consider playing for a huge centre with ...e7-e5, after due preparation. In some cases, even an immediate central strike is on. Stockfish points out the remarkable line 8.Qh5 e5! 9.dxe5 Rg8! 10.exf6 Rg5

11.Qh4 d4 12.O-O-O Qb6 , with a huge attack for Black! 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.Nc3 #2]

4...exf6 The correct way to recapture. We keep our pawn structure sound with two pawn islands. Taking away from the centre also helps with development, as both bishops are now ready for action. It is important to keep in mind that after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1ppp1/5n1p/3p2B1/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R2QKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bh4 c5 5.Bxf6 it is correct to play 5...gxf6! , because having played ...c5 changes the pawn structure fundamentally. The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2ppp1/5B1p/2pp4/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R2QKBNR b KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5...exf6?! would be dubious, as it isolates the d-pawn. 5.e3 White's main move. We'd be happy to see 5.e4 , as 5...dxe4 6.Nxe4 f5 looks a lot like the Classical Caro Kann with ...exf6, but we have been granted the bishop pair on top. 5...c6
In the mentioned LTR course, we suggested 5...Bb4 , which is also completely fine. I suggest 5...c6 now, as I like the following setup: Black could play ...f5 and then transfer the b8-knight via d7-f6-e4 at the end. 6.Kd3 f5 7.O&f3 g6

8..xge2 .xd7 The knight tour to e4 is very annoying for White. Black is already for choice, as White has no relevant pawn break CCStartBracketCCmisplaced knight on c3!CCEndBracketCC, and we have more space. 13. Sidelines after 1. d4 d5-2.Nc3 #1
2.Kg5 White plays in the spirit of the Trompowsky CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 CCEndBracketCC, but without a knight on f6 that could be captured or pinned. Black has a good choice against this sideline. I suggest playing in the same style as against the Veresov CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bg5 CCEndBracketCC, by playing ...h6 and a quick ...c5 to attack White's d-pawn.

2...h6 Here 2...f6!? is a funky alternative that is worth mentioning. I didn't like it so much in the 'Keep It Simple' context, but it seems like a fine line for Black, too.

3.Kh4 c5 4.dxc5 White's usual choice at this point. Alternatives like 4.e3 cxd4 5. exd4 Bf5 CCStartBracketCC or 5...Qb6 CCEndBracketCC or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2ppp1/7p/2pp4/3P3B/8/PPP1PPPP/RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nc3 Nf6 , transposing to the Veresov, are easy to handle. After the capture on c5, we need to know a concrete line. 4...g5
That's the idea to remember. We gain lots of time with ...g5 and ...Bg7 next.

5.Kg3 Kg7 Gaining time on the b-pawn. 6.c3 .xa6 This is the crucial sequence to remember after 4.dxc5. We are now set to regain the c-pawn and enjoy an active position. White can try to hang on to the pawn with 7.Qa4+ Bd7 8.Qa3 , but 8...Qc8 9.b4 Nc7 prepares ...a5 to attack White's queenside construction. We have annoying pressure on the white pawns and a good game. 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.Bg5
2.e3 Playing an early e2-e3, with the bishop still at home on c1, is a rather

modest opening concept by White. However, there are some lines worth studying, particularly after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 , when I suggest the ambitious move 3...c5 . 2....xf6 After our natural move 2...Nf6 White's most important move is 3.Nf3 , which leads to a position more commonly reached via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 . I suggest answering with the active move 3...c5 . There are two other options for White. They can also play CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/4P3/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 1 3CCEndFENCC 3.c4 , after which 3...e6 transposes to a sideline of the QGD. The other rather dubious idea is to play for a Stonewall setup with an early f4. 3.Kd3 This is White's best move order if they are after a Stonewall setup with f4. They could also play 3.f4?! right away, but this move order allows 3...Bf5 when Black reaches the best possible formation against the Stonewall. What's the best formation? White has weakened the e4-square. Placing a knight on f6 and a bishop on f5 makes a lot of sense. This is best complemented by pawns on d5/c5 and knights on f6 and c6, a very natural setup. At least, 3.Bd3 prevents the early bishop placement on f5, making it more challenging to reach the best formation. I'll discuss the merits of it at the end of this variation.

[3..xf3 What's the point of White's modest setup? There are primarily two ideas that White is going for 1CCEndBracketCC A setup based on playing a quick e3-e4. They play Bd3, Nbd2, often c3, and finally e3-e4. This formation is called the 'Colle System'. It was employed frequently by Belgian master player Edgard Colle in the early 20th century and since bears his name. 2CCEndBracketCC They plan to develop the c1-bishop to b2. The target formation includes bishops on d3 and b2, knights usually on f3 and d2. This setup is named after Johannes Zukertort, who was Steinitz's rival in the first official World Championship match in 1886. Black has a wide choice now, which is not a surprise. White's play is relatively slow, so we have some leeway. I suggest being ambitious now. c5 The move 3...c5 is Black's most ambitious choice here. We are essentially playing White in the Queen's Gambit, a tempo down - compared to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 , which we play with Black. The huge upside of 3...c5 is that both the Colle and Zukertort formations are completely toothless now and often lead to a Black advantage in practice. This will frequently happen in your games if you compete in club games or play online speed chess. At this level, players often study one setup and don't appreciate the difference between 3...c5 and 3...e6, for instance. If a master-level player is on the white side, they will often know that this 'auto-pilot' play doesn't suffice and opt for 4. dxc5!?, which is the mainline I'll discuss. Black is fine after this move, but it's good to know some details. Before we continue, a word about 4.c4 . It is a good move for White but has no independent value for us, as 4...cxd4 5.exd4 Nc6 takes us to a

line of the Caro-Kann Panov, which is part of our repertoire - quite an unexpected transposition! The move 3...c5 is Black's most ambitious choice here. We are essentially playing White in the Queen's Gambit, a tempo down - compared to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 , which we play with Black. The huge upside of 3...c5 is that both the Colle and Zukertort formations are completely toothless now and often lead to a Black advantage in practice. This will frequently happen in your games if you compete in club games or play online speed chess. At this level, players often study one setup and don't appreciate the difference between 3...c5 and 3...e6, for instance. If a master-level player is on the white side, they will often know that this 'auto-pilot' play doesn't suffice and opt for 4. dxc5!?, which is the mainline I'll discuss. Black is fine after this move, but it's good to know some details. Before we continue, a word about 4.c4 . It is a good move for White but has no independent value for us, as 4...cxd4 5.exd4 g6 takes us to a harmless line of the Caro-Kann Panov, which is part of our repertoire - quite an unexpected transposition! 4.c3 White usually chooses this move if they are after a Colle setup. *(4.b3* White has the Zukertort setup in mind, but we are well equipped to meet this move. *cxd4 5.exd4 .xc6* Black is in good shape after only five moves. A good way to think about this position: consider the move sequence CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.b3 Nf6 . The move 5.b3 looks ridiculous... why would White want to place the bishop on b2, looking at their pawn on d4? Well, we have exactly this position on the board right now! White will suffer from queenside weaknesses for the whole game, as we easily pressure on the c-file. Moves like ...Bf5 and ...Rc8 come to mind. 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.e3 #3*; 4.dxc5* The capture is the move that we need to study a bit, as White grabs a pawn and can hold on to it for a moment. White is playing a Queen's Gambit Accepted CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.Nf3 Nf6 CCEndBracketCC with an extra tempo, but it is not enough to fight for an advantage. *e6 5.b4* White's ambitious move. If we just manage to play ...Bxc5, no particular knowledge is needed. Black will be fine with normal development. *a5* Black has various ways to attack White's chain. I like this sequence best. *6.c3 axb4* Playing 6...b6 here is no mistake, either. Our choice is a bit more forcing. *7.cxb4 b6* Now it's clear that White can't hold on to pawn anymore. *8.Kb5+* This looks best. White has also tried 8.a4 bxc5 9.b5 , with a similar pawn structure as after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/5ppp/1p2pn2/2Pp4/1P6/4PN2/P4PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 8CCEndFENCC 8.Bb5+ Bd7 9.Bxd7+ Nbxd7 10.a4 bxc5 11.b5 , but with bishops still on the board. This changes the situation considerably. In case of 8.a4 bxc5 9.b5 , the move 9...c4 looks good. We gain control of some important squares, like d3 and b3, but also free c5 for our pieces. It's a tense position, but Black has good chances. White's outside passers don't go anywhere shortly. *Kd7 9.Kxd7+ .xbxd7 10.a4 bxc5 11.b5* Reaching

this peculiar pawn structure is the whole point of the 4.dxc5 operation. Note that this sequence is long CCStartBracketCCwe are on move 11 alreadyCCEndBracketCC, but quite forced. Now I will suggest a bit of a shocking move, but it is strong! *g5* This move was first played by Wesley So in a crucial game against Le Quang Liem in the Chessable Masters 2021, an online tournament I was doing the live broadcast for. I was deeply impressed by the idea and am now happy to recommend it in this course. What's the idea of 11...g5? White can't take the pawn, 12.Nxg5 Rg8 easily regains the pawn when Black is more active due to the rook invading g2. The best seems to be 12.Bb2 Bd6 13. Qe2 , when 13...g4 reveals the idea of ...g5: pushing the knight back to a passive position. After 14.Nfd2 Qc7 Wesley had an attractive position and went on to win a fine game. 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.e3 #4 *)* 4....xbd7 It's important to remember this move. I'd like to avoid ...e6 setups and play for more. However, after 4...Bf5?! or 4...Bg4?! White can advantageously take on c5. We play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 with Black and an extra tempo is very relevant. Therefore I suggest 4...Nbd7, which covers the c5-pawn. 5.Kd3 g6 That's the plan. We fianchetto the bishop and prepare to castle. 6.0-0 Kg7 7..xbd2 0-0 This is the formation we are aiming for. I'd like to show you a line of the Catalan Opening that is well known to be comfortable for White: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 c6 5.Bg2 Nbd7 6.O-O Bd6 7.Nbd2 O-O . We have reached this position with colours reversed and, of course, a tempo down. This tempo is not that relevant, as the position is rather closed. We can continue with ...b6 and ...Bb7 and play for the central ...e5-break. After just seven moves, Black has a space advantage and the easier game. 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.e3 #2]

3...c5 Attacking d4 with the c-pawn is our reply to 3.Nf3, as well. Here it is even more effective, as capturing c5 makes a lot less sense for White than CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 c5 4.dxc5 . In these lines, Bb5+ is a crucial idea. 4.c3 .xc6 5.f4 White sets up the Stonewall. We are happy to see this formation, as Black is instantly better. White creates multiple weaknesses, in particular the square e4. Instead of 5.f4, White could still play the less weakening 5.Nf3 , when 5...Bg4 is a good reply. The pin is annoying, and White might think of playing Be2 at some point to break it. Black is already more comfortable here, too. 5...Kg4 It's essential to develop the bishop actively and avoid the unnecessarily modest 5...e6 . 6..xf3 e6 7.0-0 Kd6 Now it's easy for White to make things even worse. 8.O&e1 This move looks reasonable, unpinning and preparing Qg3/Qh4. It's better than 8.Nbd2 , when 8...cxd4 opens the c-file for us, as White can't recapture with the e-pawn. If White plays 8.h3 , our reply is 8...Bf5! . We'll play the move even unprovoked after 8.Qe1, so it's an easy decision after 8.h3. 8...Kf5 And we have reached the best

formation against the Stonewall. We trade White's best piece, the d3-bishop and further weaken the light squares in White's camp. 9.Kxf5 White may also allow the trade on d3. After 9.Qe2 Bxd3 10.Qxd3 O-O Black has a comfortable advantage. In the long run, we have good chances on the queenside, using a pawn storm CCStartBracketCCplaying ...c4, ...b5,...b4 CCEndBracketCC, while maintaining a grip on the e4-square. It's often a good idea to connect the c6-knight to the e4-square, too. A typical regrouping to accomplish that is playing ...Nc6-e7-f5, ...Bd6-e7 and finally ...Nf5-d6. It looks prolonged, but it's a closed position. The quality of the manoeuvring matters much more than the speed. White's bishop on c1 is a problem piece, of course. It is severely limited by its own pawns and has a tough time improving. Our dream scenario is: the bad c1-bishop stays on the board while we keep a knight on e4. I have won countless games by reaching this exact position type! 9...exf5 We have a doubled f-pawn, but there is no need to worry at all. A doubled pawn always means you get open files. Here we enjoy a half-open e-file against White's e3-pawn, which is good news. I already described Black's general strategy in the notes to 9.Bxf5, and the same points apply here. I want to jump back to the situation after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 when White could have played 3.f4 , an even earlier Stonewall setup. In this case, 3...Bf5! is great, as we'd get our ideal formation even quicker, for example, after 4.Bd3 e6! 5.Nf3 c5 6.O-O Nc6 . Note that CCStartFENCCrn1qkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p1b2/3P1P2/3BP3/PPP3PP/RNBQK1NR b KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4... Bxd3?! can be answered with 5.cxd3 , when White plugs the hole on e4. I only want to trade on d3 when White needs to recapture with a piece. 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.e3 #1

14 **3..xf3** This position more often than not arises after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 . After our reply 3...e6 , most of the time White plays 4.e3 , which transposes to our coverage via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 . 3...e6 Our move to prepare ...Bd6, fighting for control of the e5-square. Now White's overwhelming main move is 4.e3, which just transposes to the mainline London that we cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 . Our reply is 4...Bd6 . This move would also follow against slow moves like 4.h3?! or 4.c3, which at best transposes to the mainline after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P1B2/5N2/PPP1PPPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.c3 Bd6 5.Bg3 O-O 6.e3 c5 7.Nbd2 Qc7 . White also has the slightly dubious move 4.c4?! , which transposes to a line of the Queen's Gambit that we cover via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/

PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4?! , which is strongly answered by 4...dxc4! , giving Black good play. There is one interesting independent move for White, though. We need to check 4.Nbd2!?, which does not commit the c- and e-pawn. 4..xbd2 A curious move order that we need to answer precisely. 4...c5 The exclamation mark is a bit strong, but it's important to remember this finesse. Our routine move 4...Bd6 is not a mistake here, but there is an issue. White has the annoying reply 5.Bg5 , intending e2-e4, which is surprisingly tricky to meet. It looks like 5...Be7 is a sensible choice, but then White has tricked us into the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bg5 e6 4.Nbd2 Be7 , which is not part of our repertoire. In this move, order 3...Ne4! is our choice, avoiding the pin altogether. In the position after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3. Nf3 e6 4.Nbd2 Bd6 5.Bg5 , I checked other moves but didn't like these lines that much. Finally, I found that 4...c5! leads to a simpler task for Black, as we will see. It is somewhat annoying that you can't 'play ...Bd6 against everything' and need to remember one exception, but opponents that play such a tricky move order need to be fought with some finesse on our side. 5.c3 This move is less popular than 5.e3, as it is desirable for White to avoid the opening of the c-file after 5.c3 cxd4. White much prefers to recapture with the e-pawn, which explains why 5.e3 is the usual choice.

[5.e3 O&b6 Yet another little finesse. After 5...Bd6 the move 6.Bb5+ is slightly annoying. In the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 we play 5...O-O first, and only after 6.Nbd2 we play 6...c5 . Castling first avoids the irritating lines involving Bb5CCStartBracketCC+CCEndBracketCC. 6.Qb1 It's tough to suggest anything else for White. The b-pawn needs some cover, as it does not look like a sacrifice could be working. cxd4 Here 6...Bd6 is a fine alternative, similar to our 'standard plan'. I suggest 6...cxd4, as it looks like a simple and good solution. 7.exd4 Kd7 The key idea behind the whole concept. We'll play ...Bb5 next to activate our bishop, which gives us equal chances. The structure is similar to an Exchange Caro, which is a familiar sight in our repertoire. 12. The London System-3.Nf3 e6 4. Nbd2 #2]

5...cxd4 This is the simplest solution, leading to good play. A more complicated way is 5...Bd6 when 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 cxd4 8.cxd4 Qb6 is possible. Here White could take on f6 and sacrifice the b-pawn, which leads to murky play. Black is probably better, but it's messy. I prefer the KIS style method, which gives us good chances and not much to worry about. 6.cxd4 .xc6 White's problem in this position: the knight on d2 is misplaced. If you'd imagine the knight being on c3, you'd easily assume that White has a small advantage, while here White has nothing at all. I'll demonstrate an additional idea worth knowing. 7.e3 O&b6

We gain a tempo on the b2-pawn and prepare the following idea. 8.Qb1 After 8.Qb3 Qxb3 9.Nxb3 Nh5 employ the same idea as after 8.Rb1 Nh5! 8....xh5 We are fighting for the bishop pair with this interesting move. 9.Kg5 Instead, 9.Bg3 Nxg3 or 9.Be5 f6 10.Bg3 Nxg3 11.hxg3 e5 , when Black gets the bishop pair under even better circumstances. 9...h6 10.Kh4 g5 Black is in good shape here. After 11.Bg3 Nxg3 12.hxg3 g4 13.Nh4 e5! White is in some trouble already. The best seems to be far from obvious 11. Ne5 , which leads to fun complications after 11...Nxe5 12.Qxh5 gxh4 . I'll stop here, as this line is rather rare anyway. 12. The London System-3.Nf3 e6 4. Nbd2 #1

15 **4..xf3** White plays the knight to its best square, which is unsurprisingly the most popular way to play. We'll also reach this position frequently via other moves orders, particularly CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 e6 4.e3 is very common. We already know our reply: challenge the London bishop with ... Bd6. 4...Kd6 According to our plan. White has a whole range of options now. They need to decide what to do about the bishop vis-a-vis. Let's make an overview of the various ideas. ACCEndBracketCC The main move is 5.Bg3. White retreats the bishop and argues that Black doesn't want to trade on g3, as this capture opens the h-file now. Against CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5. Bg3 , we continue with our standard plan of 5...O-O and ...c5 next. BCCEndBracketCC White can continue with moves like CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nbd2 , CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bd3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.c3 and allow us to capture the bishop on f4. I suggest declining this invitation for the moment and continuing with our usual approach of playing ...O-O and ...c5 first. The three moves mentioned usually lead to the same positions. Therefore I decided to cover White's 'double f-pawn invitation' idea only via 5.Nbd2 and mention the possible alternative routes in the notes to this move. We'd play in the same way against all three, so it's easy to remember. CCCEndBracketCC White can play CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Ne5 , occupying their outpost immediately. We'll fight for control over e5 with the moves ...c5, ...Qc7 and ...Nc6. DCCEndBracketCC White can simply trade on d6. This move is rather toothless and answered by 5.Bxd6 Qxd6 . 5..xe5 White immediately occupies their outpost square and avoids a bishop trade. Our usual approach is playing 5...O-O and 6...c5 'against everything'... and it works well here, too.

[5.Kxd6 Taking on d6 looks a bit anaemic, but it's not a bad move for White if

followed up by showing some ambition. O&xd6 6.c4 This is the way for White to try for something. If they continue in a more Londonesque style with 6.c3 or 6. Nbd2, we'd go for the ... c5, ...Nbd7 and ...e5 plan we are familiar with. A sample line runs 6.Nbd2 O-O 7.Bd3 c5 8.c3 Nbd7 , when ...e5 will give us an easy game, similar to the lines after CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 O-O 6. Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Bd3 Nbd7 , when Black has gained enough control of e5 to push the e-pawn to e5. 0-0 It looks best to castle first and only then decide about action in the centre. 7..xc3 dxc4 I suggest this simple approach. We take on c4 and play ...c5 to attack White's central pawn. 8.Kxc4 c5 This structure leads to about equal chances. Our queen will find a safe square on e7, while ...Nc6, ...Bd7 and rooks to d8 and c8 are logical follow-ups. White's pieces make a more active impression, but in reality, there is no advantage for White. 12. The London System-3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bxd6]

[5..xbd2 White keeps the tension and allows us to capture on f4. As discussed in the notes to 4...Bd6, I advise avoiding or delaying this capture for a better moment. Our standard move sequence of ...O-O and ...c5 next works well here. 0-0 6.Kd3 Developing the bishop is certainly logical and the most popular move for White. There are, as usual, many alternatives, but they will transpose to other move orders. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bg3 c5 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.Ne5 c5 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Ne5 O-O 6.Nd2 c5 CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.c3 c5 7.Bd3 Bxf4 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 c5 7.c3 Bxf4 DCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.c3 c5 7.Bg3 Qc7 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7. c3 Qc7 ECCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPPN1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.c3 c5 7.Ne5 Nc6 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Ne5 O-O 6.Nd2 c5 7.c3 Nc6 . c5 Our usual move order again: we play ...Bd6, ...O-O and ...c5 as our general concept against the London. Now White has a fundamental choice to make. We have not captured on f4 yet, but we might still opt for this trade under the right circumstances. After White's main continuation 7.c3 , I advise to take

on f4 finally. In the notes to this line I'll explain why I believe this is the right moment to take, compared to earlier opportunities. White's main alternative is a completely different approach, the move 7.dxc5 . After 7...Bxc5 8.O-O Nc6 White opts for 9.c4 or 9.e4, opening the position. 7.dxc5 White captures on c5, leading to an entirely different structure than 7.c3 , when we finally would play 7... Bxf4 . *(7.c3* White keeps the tension and again allows us to capture the bishop on f4. This position may arise via various move orders, as you can imagine. White easily could have played CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/ 3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bd3 O-O 6. c3 c5 7.Nbd2 or CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/ PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.c3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7. Bd3 . *Kxf4* Exactly now! I think this is the best moment to capture. Let's discuss and compare. White has already committed to c3 and Bd3. If you take on f4 earlier, they might skip one of the moves and use this tempo differently. One line that shows this point is CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/ PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nbd2 Bxf4 6.exf4 O-O 7. c3 b6 8.h4!? , which starts a dangerous kingside initiative. In this sequence, Black could play CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P1P2/2P2N2/ PP1N1PPP/R2QKB1R b KQ - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7...c5 , when 8.Bd3 would transpose to the position we are about to analyse and have in our repertoire. However, I think that 8.dxc5 looks slightly better for White. It's not terrible for Black, but I'd prefer White slightly. So our concept is to wait with the capture on f4 until we already have ...c5 played so that White can't enter this line. Before we check the details of 7...Bxf4, one word about possible alternatives. The move 7... Nc6 is possible but after 8.Bg3 transposes to a different main line of the London. Note that 7...Qc7?! is bad, as after 8.Bxd6 Qxd6 we are a full tempo down on the 5.Bg3 lines, and White has the chance to play 9.Ne5 with an advantage. *8.exf4 b6* This move is the most combative choice, in my mind. Black can already equalise convincingly with CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp3ppp/4pn2/2pp4/3P1P2/ 2PB1N2/PP1N1PPP/R2QK2R b KQ - 0 8CCEndFENCC 8...cxd4 9.Nxd4 Qc7 10.g3 e5 11.fxe5 Qxe5+ 12.Qe2 Qd6 , but such a position might be difficult to play for a win. Still, it's a good alternative if you like a clearer structure. *9.O&e2* White stops ...Ba6 for the moment. *O&d6* Inserting the moves ...Qd6 and g3 looks fine to me. *10.g3 a5* We insist on exchanging our bishop. *11.0-0 Ka6 12.Kxa6 .xxa6* We have reached an interesting and combative position. White has a good grip on the e5-square, but we have no weaknesses and chances on the queenside. I suggest playing ...Nb8-c6 next, getting more pressure on the d4-pawn. It's a bad idea to advance with c5-c4, as this would release the central tension and incentivise White to play more aggressively on the kingside. As long as we put pressure on d4, they won't be able to organise an idea like Ne5, followed by g4-g5, for example. 12. The London System-3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Nbd2 #3 *)* 7...Kxc5 I also investigated the continuation 7...Bxf4 8.exf4 Qc7 9.g3 a5 10.O-O Nbd7 , which leads to a more unsymmetrical structure. It's an interesting alternative if you

like to get a different position type. I prefer White slightly in this line CCStartBracketCCcontrol of e5 and d4CCEndBracketCC, but it's nothing special. 8.0-0 .xc6 Now White has the choice between 9.c4 and 9.e4, trying to open the centre in different ways. If they play something slow, taking control of e5 by playing ...Bd6 is the way to go. A sample line would be 9.c3 Bd6 when we are ready to go ...e6-e5 soon. 9.e4 *(9.c4 Kd6* Again we fight for the e5-square. White currently has the more active bishops, as our c8-bishop is still at home. We don't need to be worried, though, as White has a problem piece, too: the knight on d2 is passive and doesn't put any pressure on the centre. *10.Kg5* Maybe the most interesting try for White. Lines like 10.Bg3 Bxg3 11.hxg3 dxc4 12.Nxc4 Qe7 or CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/pp3ppp/2nbpn2/3p4/2P2B2/3BPN2/PP1N1PPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 1 10CCEndFENCC 10.Bxd6 Qxd6 11.cxd5 Qxd5 amount to nothing for White. In these symmetrical structures, we can always play ...Bd7 and connect the rooks. Later the bishop often appears on c6, getting a more active post. *Ke7* This is a good move to remember. We should break the annoying pin and, at the same time, we prepare the move d5-d4. Now a likely continuation is 11.Rc1 h6 12.Bh4 , when we have a good choice between the interesting move 12...d4!? and 12...Qb6 , which prepares the move ...Rd8, but accepts an IQP after 13.cxd5 exd5 . I think Black is fine in both scenarios, giving you some choice. 12. The London System-3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Nbd2 #2 *)* 9...dxe4 Stockfish also points out 9...Nh5!? as an interesting try, but the more classical approach that I suggest is fine, too. 10..xxe4 .xxe4 11.Kxe4 f6 The important point. We would be somewhat worse without this move, but managing e6-e5 gives us equal chances and good central control. 12.c3 e5 We'll develop easily with ... Be6 and connect rooks with ...Qc7 or ...Qe7. 12. The London System-3.e3 e6 4. Nf3 Bd6 5.Nbd2 #1]

[5.Kg3 0-0 According to plan: we castle first, then ...c5 next. While most of the time plays either 6.Nbd2 or 6.Bd3, which likely leads to the same positions, as both moves fit into White's setup. There is an independent possibility in 6.c4, which acknowledges that White has little to hope for in the other lines. This move was tested in some higher-level games, concluding that Black is fine but needs to show some precision.

A) 6..xbd2 White's most popular move. They also play 6.Bd3, which will more or less always just transpose to 6.Nbd2. Our job is easy, as we follow the same plan against both moves. Here are the two logical transpositions. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P4/4PNB1/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8. Nbd2 Nbd7 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P4/4PNB1/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bd3 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Ne5 Nc6 9.f4 Ne7 10.Nd2 In the further coverage of 6.Nbd2 I'll explain the exact rationale behind these lines, particularly why we should play ... Nbd7 in one case and ...Nc6 in the other. Hang on! White's most popular move. They also play 6.Bd3, which will more or less always just transpose to 6.Nbd2.

Our job is easy, as we follow the same plan against both moves. Here are the two logical transpositions. A[[EndBracket[[[[StartFEN[[rnbq1rk1/ ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P4/4PNB1/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQ - 4 6[[EndFEN[[6.Bd3 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Nbd2 Nbd7 B[[EndBracket[[[[StartFEN[[rnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P4/4PNB1/PPP2PPP/ RN1QKB1R w KQ - 4 6[[EndFEN[[6.Bd3 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Ne5 Nc6 9.f4 Ne7 10.Nd2 In the further coverage of 6.Nbd2 I'll explain why I'll explain the exact rationale behind these lines, particularly why we should play ...Nbd7 in one case and ...Nc6 in the other. Hang on! c5 7.c3 O&c7 That's an important move for our recipe against the London. Why precisely this move? We want to fight for the control of the e5-square. Our ideal scenario is to gain enough control to play ...e6-e5 and gain a space advantage in the centre. Well, we need a knight to control e5 and the queen's support to accomplish that, so 7...Nc6 and 7...Qc7 are moves to consider. The move 7...Nc6 is not bad at all, but it is fundamentally different to 7...Qc7, as after 7...Nc6 8.Bd3 Black can't play 8... Qc7 because of 9.dxc5 . Black usually continues with [[StartFEN[[r1bq1rk1/pp3ppp/2nbpn2/2pp4/3P4/2PBPNB1/PP1N1PPP/ R2QK2R b KQ - 2 8[[EndFEN[[8...b6 , when 9.e4 is possible to start early complications. I prefer 7...Qc7 - it is not only simpler to play but very likely objectively stronger. I don't see a shade of an advantage for White after 7... Qc7, which is less clear after 7...Nc6, when White has plenty of interesting options. Back to 7...Qc7. What do we need to check now? I think 8.Ne5 is probably White's most ambitious try, preparing f4 to cement White's control of e5. We'll also check 8.Bd3 and 8.dxc5, which feel pretty harmless to me. Another harmless move is [[StartFEN[[rnb2rk1/ppq2ppp/3bpn2/2pp4/3P4/ 2P1PNB1/PP1N1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 1 8[[EndFEN[[8.Bxd6 Qxd6 , which leads to a scenario that we discuss in the 5.Bxd6 Qxd6variation. 8.Kd3 A routine move that allows us to take control of e5. *(8.dxc5 O&xc5 9.Kd3 .xbd7* Don't play 9...Nc6?? 10.Nb3 , please! *10.e4 dxe4* You may also start with 10...Bxg3 11.hxg3 and then take on e4, it's just a different move order leading to the same position. *11..xxe4 .xxe4 12.Kxe4 Kxg3 13.hxg3 .xf6* At first, it looks a bit scary that we opened the h-file for White, but they have no serious threats at all. h7 is safely protected now, and a later ...h6 is still possible if needed. We have traded the dark-squared bishops, which makes a setup with ...Nf6 and ...h6 quite stable, as there are no possible bishop sacrifices on h6 or attacks on the knight. *14.O&e2 Qd8* A final precise move. With 14...Rd8 we even stop White's O-O-O, which removes all concerns about a possible attack on our king via the h-file. 12. The London System-3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 #4*; 8..xe5* This is the way to go for White if they want to stop ...e6-e5. *.xc6* Black has some alternatives here, but I particularly like the manoeuvre 9.f4 Ne7! , which makes 8...Nc6 an attractive choice for me. Also, note the line [[StartFEN[[rnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/ RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5[[EndFEN[[5.Ne5 when our antidote is 5...O-O

6.Nd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Bd3 Nc6 , following a similar concept. You can use the rule of thumb: if they play with Ne5, going for ...Nc6 is the way. *9.f4* White is setting up the Stonewall, the idea of 8.Ne5. *.xe7* I've always been a fan of this regrouping. We have the following setup in mind: we want to play ...Nf5, ...Be7. and ...Nd6, connecting both knights to the weak e4 square. Let's have a look at how this unfolds. *10.Kd3 .xf5 11.Kf2 Ke7 12.O&f3* White may also strike with 12.g4 immediately. We play 12...Nd6 13.g5 Nfe4 14.Qf3 b5! , when White can win a poisoned pawn on e4. After multiple captures, we'd have ...Bb7, which is rather embarrassing for White. We see a similar situation after 12.Qf3, but with Black having played ...b6 instead of ...b5. *b6* This move has two points. Placing the bishop on b7 CCStartBracketCCor having this possibility in some linesCCEndBracketCC is one, continuing with ...a5 and ...Ba6 the other. *13.g4 .xd6 14.g5 .xfe4* Yes, we don't need to retreat! Now White can't grab a pawn, as 15.Nxe4?? dxe4 16.Bxe4 Nxe4 17.Qxe4 Bb7 demonstrates. I like Black's chances after 14...Nfe4. We have a safe king position with no weaknesses, and White's pawn advances are far from creating any serious threats. On the other hand, we managed to occupy the weakened e4-square and have chances on the queenside. The move ...a5 will potentially prepare ... Ba6 and be part of a pawn storm involving all queenside pawns. 12. The London System-3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 #5 *)* 8....xbd7 Don't play 8...Nc6? 9.dxc5! , when Black has blundered a pawn. Now we are ready to play ...e6-e5, the whole point of our opening concept. It's safe to say that we have won the opening battle, which is also confirmed by White's miserable score from this position. 9.0-0 White has played this move most of the time. The alternatives give us no headache, either. Lines like 9.Qe2 e5 or CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/ppqn1ppp/ 3bpn2/2pp4/3P4/2PBPNB1/PP1N1PPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 3 9CCEndFENCC 9. e4?! cxd4 10.cxd4 dxe4 11.Nxe4 Nxe4 12.Bxe4 Nf6 13.Bd3 Qa5+ can only be better for Black. Kxg3 The immediate 9...e5 is also fine, of course. I prefer to take first, creating the doubled pawn. The pawn itself is not a substantial weakness, but at a later stage, it can be beneficial to have ...Bg4 or ...Ng4 without White being able to play h3. 10.hxg3 e5 I love the smell of ...e5 in the London System... smells like... Victory! 11.dxe5 After 11.e4 White keeps equal chances with careful play. We reply 11...dxe4 12.Nxe4 Nxe4 13.Bxe4 Nf6 , when 14.Qc2 is the engine's choice to keep it about equal. White shouldn't be too ambitious, as 14.Bc2 e4 only gives Black chances. .xxe5 12..xxe5 O&xe5 Black is slightly better here, enjoying a nice space advantage. We have some good plans available, while it is unclear how White is making any progress. Ideas to consider for Black are: ACCEndBracketCC First, centralise with moves like ...Bd7, ...Rfe8, ...Rad8. This is useful in many scenarios and could be followed by plans B or C. BCCEndBracketCC Play ...g6, ... Kg7, ...h5-h4. It is a slow attack, but it can be very effective CCCEndBracketCC Place the knight on the squares g4 or e4, which can be annoying for White. There is no obvious way to expel this intruder. 12. The London System-3.e3 e6 4.Nf3

Bd6 5.Bg3 #3;
B) 6.c4 White gives the game more of a QGD flavour. This move has not been tested as extensively yet, compared to the other more London-style moves. 6...c5 This seems to be best. We often react to c2-c4 by taking the pawn and playing ...c5, but this approach is slightly imprecise after 6...dxc4 7.Bxc4 c5 8. dxc5 , when I don't see how Black can get equal chances. After 6...c5 White has tried 7.Nc3 most of the time. Less common are the captures on c5 or d5. This seems to be best. We often react to c2-c4 by taking the pawn and playing ... c5, but this approach is slightly imprecise after 6...dxc4 7.Bxc4 c5 8.dxc5 , when I don't see how Black can get equal chances. After 6...c5 White has tried 7.Nc3 move most of the time. Less common are the captures on c5 or d5. 7.cxd5 After the capture, Black is fine after one of the two moves that I am suggesting but should avoid 7...Nxd5?! , as 8.dxc5 Bxc5 9.Bc4 gives White some pressure on the open files. *(7..xc3* A healthy development move that I suggest answering with 7...cxd4 8.Nxd4 Bb4 , aiming for some counterplay on the a5-e1 diagonal. The same idea is possible after CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ pp3ppp/3bpn2/2pp4/2PP4/4PNB1/PP3PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQ - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.dxc5 Bxc5 8.Nc3 Bb4 , so it's a concept worth noting. The bishop on g3 is far away from the queenside, which validates this strategy. *cxd4 8..xxd4* Here, 8.exd4 would lead to a fairly harmless IQP position after 8...dxc4 . You can easily compare this to lines we analyse in theBf4/Bg5 Chapter as part of our QGD section. *Kb4* I like this move, setting up a pin on the knight. White's bishop is far away on the queenside and does not help to break the pin. We have reached a reasonably unexplored position now, so I'll give you two possible sample lines to illustrate the play. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp3ppp/4pn2/3p4/1bPN4/2N1P1B1/PP3PPP/ R2QKB1R w KQ - 1 9CCEndFENCC 9.Bd3 dxc4 10.Bxc4 Ne4 11.Qc2 Qa5 looks fine for Black. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp3ppp/ 4pn2/3p4/1bPN4/2N1P1B1/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 1 9CCEndFENCC 9. Rc1 Nc6 10.Be2 Ne4 might lead to simplifications after 11.O-O Nxd4 , but there are plenty of possibilities for both sides along the way. 12. The London System-3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 #2 *)* 7...Kxg3 I think Black gets equal chances with this move, but also with 7...exd5 , when 8.Bxd6 Qxd6 9.dxc5 Qxc5 leads to a position with an IQP for us. In this repertoire, we rarely play with an IQP, quite the contrary. Therefore I suggest 7...Bxg3, which is more in line with our general approach. Still a word about the position after 9...Qxc5. Black is fine because White does not manage to control the d4-square properly. We'd play ...Nc6 and ...Rd8 quickly, trying to play ...d5-d4 ultimately. Black has a relatively easy job here. 8.hxg3 cxd4 9.dxe6 Instead, 9.Qxd4 Qxd5 is uncritical and leads to equality. O&a5+ The start of a forced line. 10.O&d2 O&xd2+ 11..xbxd2 dxe3 12.exf7+ Qxf7 13.fxe3 Qe7 White has won a pawn, but their structure is completely shattered. Black has equal chances here, as White has no way to make the extra pawn count. If we manage to win one of

White's pawns, the remaining ones would stay weak, and we'd be even better. 12. The London System-3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bg3 #1]

5...0-0 6..xd2 White may also start with 6.Bd3 , when 6...c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Nd2 Nc6 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3pN3/3P1B2/4P3/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQ - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Bd3 Nc6 , which we are about to examine in a moment. 6...c5 7.c3 O&c7 We are fighting for control of the e5-square. 8.Kd3 White's main move and probably best. After 8.Bg3 Nc6 we have transposed to CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Ne5 , while CCStartFENCCrnb2rk1/ppq2ppp/3bpn2/2ppN3/3P1B2/2P1P3/PP1N1PPP/R2QKB1R w KQ - 1 8CCEndFENCC 8.Ndf3? is a real mistake due to 8...Ne4! , when the idea ...c5-c4, followed by f7-f6, is very awkward for White. 8....xc6 In the variation CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Bd3 we need to play 8...Nbd7 , because 8...Nc6? fails to 9.dxc5 . When given a choice, I prefer the more active ...Nc6. We play in the same way after CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/ppp2ppp/3bpn2/3p4/3P1B2/4PN2/PPP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg3 O-O 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Ne5 Nc6 , which leads to the rule of thumb that ...Nc6 answers Ne5 jumps adequately. 9..xdf3 White covers e5; there wasn't any good alternative. Now Black has a wide range of options. 9...cxd4 The point of the capture will become clearer after 10. exd4 Ne4, when ...f6 is the idea. As mentioned, Black has some good moves here, but it's good to know that the strategically logical move 9...Nd7? is wrong due to 10.Ng5! , When Black has no good reply. 10.exd4 .xe4 This point of the capture on e4. We jump to e4 and now threaten ...f6. This position has been reached in dozens of games, with some remarkable players on the black side. It was fun to see that both the 7th World Champion, Mikhail Botvinnik and a possible future World Champion, Alireza Firouzja, had played into this position, 95 years apart! 11.Kg3 White needed to address the ...f6 threat. 11....xe7 We follow Botvinnik's example from 1925, which is also the favourite move of 2021 Stockfish 😃. It is better than 11...f6 , which was, amongst others, played by Alireza Firouzja in a Blitz game. The drawback there is 12.Nxc6 bxc6 13.Qc2 f5 14.Bxd6 Qxd6 15.b4 , which leaves Black with long-term weaknesses on the dark squares. Botvinnik's move is better, as it removes the knight from the potential capture and intends to play ...f6 with greater effect. 12.O&e2 f6 This is an improvement on Botvinnik's 12...Nxc3 , which allowed 13.Bxh7+ . This is not as bad as it looks because Botvinnik still found 13...Kh8 , which was objectively fine for him. The computer suggestion 12...f6 is much easier to handle, though. 13..xg4 Kd7 It's important to recognise that White is not threatening to take twice on e4, as ... f5 would be a fork on queen and knight. With 13...Bd7, we connect rooks and prepare ...Rae8, followed by ...Ng6. I like Black's centralised position and

harmonious piece setup. 12. The London System-3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Ne5

16 **5.Kg3** 0-0 6.Kd3 White still avoids 6.Ngf3 c5 , which would transpose to 4. Nf3 lines. 6...c5 7.c3 O&c7 We play in the same way as we would with Nf3 already played. The move 7...Qc7 is the preparation for ...Nbd7 and ultimately ... e5, if allowed. Now I don't see anything better for White than transposing to the Nf3 lines, as 8.Ngf3 Nbd7 or CCStartFENCCrnb2rk1/ppq2ppp/3bpn2/2pp4/ 3P4/2PBP1B1/PP1N1PPP/R2QK1NR w KQ - 1 8CCEndFENCC 8.dxc5 Qxc5 9.Ngf3 Nbd7 immediately transpose to variations that we examine via the 4.Nf3 move order. 8.f4 Going for a Stonewall without trading first on d6. If they play 8.Bxd6 Qxd6 9.f4 we play 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 b6 , transposing to the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/3P1B2/4P3/PPP2PPP/ RN1QKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nd2 Bd6 5.Bxd6 Qxd6 6.f4 , which we already have examined. 8...b5 A very attractive computer suggestion! We immediately start an attack and are not worried about 9.Bxb5? , as 9...Qb6 is very awkward for White to meet. We threaten ...a6 and ...c4. 9..xgf3 White can't capture the b-pawn and continues with development. 9...b4 Our queenside attack is making excellent progress. We are also ready to play ... Ba6 soo, trying to trade off White's strong bishop. We are in good shape here, and it's rather White who needs to be concerned. 12. The London System-3.e3 e6 4.Nd2 #2

17 **9.Kd3** b6 A matter of trading a worse piece for a better one. Our bishop on c8 is passive, and ...b6 prepares the crucial trade against White's attacking bishop on d3. 10.O&e2 White stops ...Ba6 for the moment, but we can 'reload'. 10...a5 And we have ...Ba6 next. Note that after a later ...Nxa6, our knight is not so badly placed. It might jump to b4, but the route a6-c7-e8-d6 is a common idea, too. We can use White's weakened e4-square, while a white knight jumping to e5 can later be kicked away with ...f6. 12. The London System-3.e3 e6 4.Nd2 #1

18 **3.Kf4** This very early bishop move is extremely rare because Black has a multitude of good replies. 3...dxc4 One of the good answers and consistent with our approach of taking on c4 whenever White plays the c1-bishop. Black is also in good shape after 3...c5 and 3...Bd6, which explains the rarity of 3.Bf4 - there are too many drawbacks for White. 4.e3 b5 In the Queen's Gambit Accepted an early ...b5 is a mistake. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3. e3 b5? 4.a4 c6 5.axb5 cxb5? 6.Qf3 is a well-known way to a quick win for White. Here, however, the moves Bf4 and ...e6 are added. This heavily works in Black's favour, as ...e6 is a crucial move, while Bf4 is quite irrelevant in the battle for the captured c-pawn. 5.a4 c6 6.axb5 After 6.Nc3 , we cover the b-pawn with 6...Qb6 and are just a pawn up! We develop with ...Nf6, ...Bb4,... Nbd7, ...Bb7 and have an advantage. 6...cxb5 7.O&f3 O&d5 That's the

difference to the Queen's Gambit Accepted. This answer is possible due to the additional move ...e6. 8..xc3 O&xf3 Don't play 8...Bb4?? 9.Qg3! , when White attacks both g7 and the b8-knight, winning material! This is the only essential trick to know after 3.Bf4 dxc4. 9..xxf3 Kb4 10..xd2 Kd7 We keep the pawn for the moment. White can play 11.Bxb8 Rxb8 12.Rxa7 , but the bishop pair gives us a nice advantage. White should try 11.Be2 , but it's White rather than Black who needs to be concerned about equalizing. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Bf4

3.g3 White's main way to go for the Catalan is the move order 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 . Playing g3 on move three is considered slightly imprecise, but it's not leading to trouble for White if they are careful after our principled reply. 3...dxc4

A good move order rule of thumb: after White plays g3, we will take on c4. This applies to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 and the current position after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 dxc4 .

4.Kg2 Or 4.Nf3 c5 5.Bg2 , which leads to the same position. Against the move 4. Qa4+ we are spoilt for choice, as 4...Bd7 5.Qxc4 Bc6 6.Nf3 Bxf3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/8/Q1pP4/6P1/PP2PP1P/RNB1KBNR b KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4...c6 5.Qxc4 Qd5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/8/Q1pP4/6P1/PP2PP1P/RNB1KBNR b KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4...Qd7 5.Qxc4 b5 are all nice for Black. 4...c5 5..xf3 Again 5.Qa4+ leads nowhere. Black is fine will 5...Nd7, 5...Bd7 and the move I suggest, 5...Qd7 . White has nothing better than 6.Qxd7+ , when Black is in good shape. The check on a4 was designed to regain the c4-pawn, which failed. 5....xc6

We follow the same approach as after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4. g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 , but here our pressure on d4 is coming a bit faster. We have not yet played ...Nf6, while White has not castled yet. This difference is favourable for Black, as we will see. White now usually tries 6.Qa4 , but the pawn sacrifice 6.O-O has seen some outings, too. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 White has the interesting move 7.Ne5 . This idea fails here, as CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.g3 dxc4 4.Bg2 c5 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.Ne5? Nge7! highlights the advantage of not having played ...Nf6 yet. 6.0-0 This pawn sacrifice is not quite sufficient, but the alternative 6.Qa4 is not very inspiring, either.

[6.O&a4 This looks like White's best bet. cxd4 This move equalizes the game quickly. If you'd like an alternative, I'd suggest 6...Bd7 7.Qxc4 Nf6 , when 8.O-O transposes to the mainline of this chapter. This continuation is sharper than 6... cxd4, but also gives White more fighting chances. 7..xxd4 White needs to get the

material back. O&xd4 8.Kxc6+ Kd7 9.Ke3 The only move for White to avoid trouble. 9.Bxd7+ Qxd7 10.Qxc4 Rc8 is better for Black already . Kxc6 9...Qd6 10.Bxd7+ Qxd7 11.Qxc4 Rc8 is also fine. 10.O&xc6+ bxc6 11.Kxd4 Kb4+ An important tempo move. Black is fine now after lines like 12.Kf1 Nf6 13. Kg2 O-O-O or CCStartFENCCr3k2r/p4ppp/2p1pn2/8/1bpB4/6P1/PP2PP1P/ RN3K1R w kq - 0 13CCEndFENCC 13.Bc3 Rb8 . White will likely regain the pawn, but we have active play on the open files, which leads to equal chances in the endgame. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-3.g3 #2]

6...cxd4 You should take a central pawn if you don't see a clear refutation. This is such a case. White may regain c4, but we can be pleased with the outcome of the opening. 7.O&a4 Kd7 8.O&xc4 e5 Black enjoys a healthy extra pawn. We will prepare kingside castling with ...Nf6 and ...Be7, completing our development. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-3.g3 #1

3.c5 Advancing the c-pawn so early is unwarranted and a conceptual mistake. White can consider this pawn advance in other cases when it is possible to support the pawn and keep it on c5 for a while. This does not apply here, as we quickly gain good chances by attacking the advanced pawn with 3...b6!. I'll only examine 3.c5? b6! in the repertoire to demonstrate the idea, but White may also mistakenly advance the pawn in other early cases in the QGD. Our answer is always ...b6!, for example after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/ 2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.c5? b6! or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.c5? b6! . 3...b6 4.b4 Relatively best is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/p1p2ppp/1p2p3/2Pp4/3P4/8/ PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.cxb6 axb6 , when White has lost time and traded a c-pawn against an a-pawn, which is very welcome, of course. We'll have a c-pawn to push and control the centre, while White is lacking this idea. Playing 4.b4 seeks to keep the pawn, but it fails.

4...a5 Now we see the problem for White. They'd need to be able to play 5.a3 here to support the pawn chain, but this fails to 5...axb4 when White can't recapture. Therefore White's advance has failed, losing at least a pawn with a rotten position. A line like 5.cxb6 Bxb4+ seems relatively best, which says a lot. 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines-3.c5?

[19] **4.cxd5** In the theoretical section of this chapter we will discuss that this move order is less challenging for Black. 4...exd5 5..xc3 The knight's natural place is c3, so White usually starts with this move. Of course, developing the c1-bishop first is possible. After 5.Bf4 , we play 5...Bd6 , as usual. We cover this scenario in the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/ RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4. cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 Bd6 . More common is CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/ 5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 , when I suggest playing 5...c6 CCStartBracketCCRule 1CCEndBracketCC.

Now 6.Nc3 transposes to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 . White could try CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/2p2n2/3p2B1/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Qc2 , which follows a similar idea as CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/3p4/3P4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nc3 c6 6.Qc2 does . In both cases, I recommend 6...g6! , preparing ...Bf5. The move 5.Bg5 only has transpositional value, at best. Stockfish actually points out 5.Bg5 h6!? as an interesting independent idea, but I don't think it's worth having something special prepared against this rare move order. 5...c6 As per Rule 1: play ...c6 first. Now White's choice is mostly between 6.Bg5 and 6.Qc2. Against both moves, it is possible to simply play in the style of the mainlines of the current chapter. We could play ...Be7, ...h6 in reply to Bg5, ...O-O and ...Re8. This approach would simply transpose to the mentioned mainline. However, White's chosen move order is not precise, as mentioned in the intro. Black has various alternatives to the 'mainline style' approach that either improve our chances or lead to interesting, independent play. Besides 6.Qc2 and 6.Bg5, the move 6.Bf4 is also played frequently. As usual, I suggest playing 6...Bd6 against it. We cover this scenario in the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 Bd6 . A transposition is likely, as Nf3 and ...c6 are very natural moves, for example, 6.Bxd6 Qxd6 7.Nf3 c6 is a direct transposition. 6.Kg5 White pins our knight, similar to the current chapter's mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 .

[6.g3 White goes for a kingside Fianchetto, a rarely played setup for a reason. Placing the bishop against the d5-c6-b7 pawn wall does not look too dangerous for Black, indeed. Ke7 There is nothing wrong with developing this bishop to d6 or b4. I am going for 6...Be7 in my recommendation, playing in the same style as in the main lines: ...Be7, ...O-O and ...Re8. 7.Kg2 0-0 8.0-0 Qe8 We have castled and played ...Re8. One of our assets in the position is control of e4, so connecting the rook to it makes a lot of sense. I am stopping the trainable line here, as White can play many different moves, but they don't need to be learned by heart. We should rather consider some general ideas. We can play for the occupation of the e4-square. A manoeuvre like ...Nb8-d7-b6-c4-d6 takes a while but makes perfect sense. If White ever pushes the b-pawn for a minority attack, we look at the juicy square c4. We can also consider trading the g2-bishop later, trying to initiate play against the white king. Ideas like ...Be6, ...Qc8 and ...Bh3 are possible. We also need to consider that we'll need to react to whatever White is doing, and some plans by our opponent present us with new opportunities. I have some experience on the black side of this structure, and some ideas for White might easily backfire - they all happened in my games. - they play Ne5 and f4: weakens the square e4

CCStartBracketCCNote again how great a knight is on d6! - would be ideal in this caseCCEndBracketCC - they play e4 to open the position: White creates an IQP that we can play against - they play for b4-b5, which weakens the square c4. A minority attack is more promising if a bishop on d3 covers the c4-square. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6]

6...Ke7

[6...h6 As per Rule 4: gain a tempo on the g5-bishop. However, Rule 2: if you can play ...Bf5, go for it. The move 6...Bf5 is fine in this position, but inserting 6...h6 7.Bh4 and only then 7...Bf5! is a little finesse worth knowing. The key difference is that 8.Qb3 can be answered with the powerful 8...g5! 9.Bg3 Qb6 , which already looks slightly better for Black and scores very well. Whereas if you'd play 6...Bf5 instead, 7.Qb3 is not easy to answer. You can play 7...Qb6 , but White can take on f6 and destroy our pawn structure. The gambit move 7...Nbd7!? seems to work, but it's not worth exploring, as CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/2p2n2/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R b KQkq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6...h6! 7.Bh4 Bf5! is the superior way of implementing ...Bf5. 7.Kh4 Kf5 Mission accomplished! Now we will examine 8.e3 and 8.Qb3, often a critical reply to ...Bf5, hitting the b7-pawn. In this particular case, we are well-prepared to meet the move. 8.O&b3 Whenever you play ...Bf5, you need to be sure that this move does no damage. We are now perfectly set to meet it. *(8.e3* White's relatively best move, because the more ambitious 8.Qb3 leads to less than nothing. *.xbd7 9.Kd3 Kxd3 10.O&xd3 Ke7* And again, we can conclude that Black is fine after the bishop managed to get to f5 early on. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 *)* 8...g5 The point of inserting ...h6. After the forced 9.Bg3 , we can play 9...Qb6 , covering b7 comfortably. 9.O&xb7 A huge mistake, as the white queen, will end up trapped on a8. *(9.Kg3 O&b6* Black already has the easier game and scores excellently from this position. The problem for White is that exchanging the queen on b6 is a terrible idea, while our exchange on b3 is fine, as White's doubled pawns are isolated and weak in the long run. We welcome the trade on b6, as it opens up the a-file, and b6-b5-b4 is a great resource to have. White, on the other hand, can't move their b-pawn after a trade on b3. *10..xd2* Maybe this is best. White retreats the knight but allows Nxb3 in response to the queen trade. White's worst option CCStartBracketCCexcluding silly blundersCCEndBracketCC is 10.Qxb6? axb6 . We have b6-b5-b4 ideas, ...Nd7-b6-c4 comes to mind, as well. We attack the queenside, while White has no counterplay. After 10.e3 Qxb3 11.axb3 Nbd7 Black has a long-term edge due to White's doubled pawns. They can't be attacked quickly, but White has no obvious way to get rid of them. In the long run, often in the endgame, Black gets chances to exploit the weaknesses. *.xbd7 11.e3* If White takes on b6, we recapture with the pawn! 11.Qxb6 axb6! is great for Black. We can use the b6-pawn and push it forward while the base pawn chain b7-c6-d5 remains sound. *.xh5* And Black picks us the bishop pair. After ...Nxg3, we can even consider ...O-O-O. Our king is safe on this side of the board. Black has the better chances, as White

has no compensation for giving up the bishop pair. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 *)* 9...gxh4 10.O&xa8 O&b6 Black is winning already. White's queen is trapped, and we just need to complete development with ...Bd6 and ...O-O to threaten ...Nbd7, winning her majesty. White may try 11.Na4 , but 11...Bb4+ is a good reply. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6]

7.O&c2 g6 Black prepares the move Bf5. In the Carlsbad, the trade of the light-squared bishops is desirable. Most of Black's pawns are on light squares, which limits the scope of the bishop. In this game, we'll see an additional benefit of the bishop trade. First of all, we need to avoid the following disasters: AĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkb1r/pp3p1p/2p2np1/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PPQ1PPPP/R3KB1R b KQkq - 1 7ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 7...Bf5? 8.Qb3 Very annoying, as we have no good way to defend b7. Our f6-knight is loose, which ties the queen to its defence. BĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkb1r/pp3p1p/2p2np1/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PPQ1PPPP/R3KB1R b KQkq - 1 7ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 7...h6? is a blunder due to 8.Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Nxd5 . We have Rule 4 stating that after Bg5, we should include ...h6. Here's the exception to the general rule - concrete tactics beat abstract concepts. After the correct 7...Be7, we need to check two entirely different approaches by White. Most of the time, White plays 8.e3, but we need to check the aggressive move 8.e4, too. Playing 7...Be7 avoids these troubles and breaks the pin. As mentioned, we don't want to play 7...Bg7, as the bishop is not well-placed on g7. It stares at the protected d4 pawn, without an adequate way to improve its scope. 8.e3

[8.e4 An aggressive move, trying to open up the position quickly. Black is fine against it, but you need to remember one point. dxe4 Black should take with the pawn, as 8...Nxe4 9.Bxe7 forces 9...Kxe7 ĊĊStartBracketĊĊ 9...Qxe7 10. Nxd5 loses!ĊĊEndBracketĊĊ. After 9...Kxe7 Black is not in deep trouble, but 8... dxe4 makes our job a lot easier. 9.Kxf6 Kxf6 10.O&xe4+ O&e7 Here 10...Kf8 is not bad, either. Still, trading queens looks very logical. We have the bishop pair, and our opponent's d-pawn is isolated. This sounds like Black is much better, but White has good development and active pieces. This should balance matters roughly. I'd rather be on the black side, but objectively speaking, it must be about even. 11.Kc4 Kf5 Let's get the queens off the board. 12.O&xe7+ Elxe7 We take with the king to quickly connect rooks. After 13.O-O-O Nd7 14.Rhe1 Kf8 , this connection is temporarily broken, but our king will be placed well on g7 soon. In the variation starting with 8.e4, Black is in good shape. We have the long-term assets, so White has to drum up something to disturb us. With a bit of care, Black should coordinate nicely. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6]

8...Kf5 Mission accomplished! 9.Kd3 Kxd3 10.O&xd3 .xbd7 Looking good so far. We have traded the bishop via f5, but there is one small idea to check. 11.Kh6 We haven't castled yet, so this move is worth checking. 11....xg4

A good solution to clarify the situation. 12.Kf4 After 12.Bg7? Rg8 13.Be5 Ngxe5 White will end up with a weak e-pawn, so they have to return. 12...0-0 And we have castled, completing our first development phase. If you have studied the Chapter intro, you have seen the famous gameM.Bobotsov vs T. Petrosian, Lugano Olympiad 1968. Petrosian outplayed his opponent in an exemplary fashion, demonstrating the knight's strength on d6 later on. The current position on the board was also reached in the game. If it doesn't ring a bell or you have skipped the intro: study this game next - understanding the concepts is the key to success in the Carlsbad. 13.0-0 Qe8 14.h3 .xgf6 15..xe5 .xb6 16.Kg5 .xe4 Petrosian does not mind further trades. He is aiming for the position that arises after move 18. 17.Kxe7 O&xe7 18.O&c2 .xd6 Black's knight is ideally placed on d6. Let's talk about this in detail on move 21, when it becomes simpler to explain why d6 is the perfect spot for the knight. 19..xa4 .xbc4 Just taking on a4 was a simpler way, but Petrosian's move works, too. 20..xxc4 .xxc4 21..xc5 .xd6 This position is a true Carlsbad classic and essential to the understanding of the pawn structure. Here are two key points: 1. Black has managed to trade the light-squared bishops. This helps Black a lot, as it makes it more difficult/ impossible for White to engineer a minority attack. The move b4 would fatally weaken the c4-square, allowing the black knight to use it. If White still had a bishop on d3 or e2, the c4-square would enjoy additional cover. 2. Black's knight on d6 is ideally placed. It is connected to many crucial squares, in addition to the already mentioned c4-square. The knight is also looking at e4 and is ready to switch to the kingside, if needed. It also covers b6 reliably and makes b4-b5 very tough/impossible to play for White. These points show that it is difficult for White to come up with an active plan or idea. On the other hand, Black has no problem making progress: there is plenty of play on the kingside. We have learned that this scenario - light-squared bishops traded and a knight on d6 - is comfortable for Black. This helps a lot in finding the right plans: 1. Trading the light-squared bishops is desirable, in general. This particularly applies if you can accomplish the trade without a serious loss of time. In some versions of the Carlsbad, this is possible. The current game is an example. At a later stage, it can still be a good idea. Often, the combination of ...g6 and ...Nd6 enables ...Bf5 in the middlegame and is worth considering. 2. The knight has an excellent square on d6. it combines active and prophylactic duties perfectly. 22.Qac1 O&g5 23.O&d1 h5 24.Elh1 Qe7 25..xd3 .xe4 26..xc5 .xd6 27..xd3 O&f5 28..xe5 This regrouping helps Black, but it is tough to give White any good advice. 28...f6 29..xf3 Qg7 30..xh2 Qe8 31.Elg1 .xe4 32.O&f3 O&e6 33.Qfd1 g5 Petrosian gives up a pawn to speed up the attack. 34.O&xh5 f5 35.Qe1 g4 36.hxg4 fxg4 37.f3 gxf3 38..xxf3 Qh7 39.O&e5 O&c8 40.O&f4 Qf8 41.O&e5 Qf5 The queen is trapped and White resigned. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-Carlsbad Structure: Light-squa

4.Kf4 Early Bf4 lines work best for White if Black has already played ...Be7, for example, after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/

RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 Be7 , when 5.Bf4 has been a part of my White repertoire for ages. In the intro to the current Chapter, I already introduced the 'rule of thumb' for early Bf4s... so no bonus points for guessing my recommended reply. 4...dxc4 Again we grab on c4. Now White usually starts worrying about the material balance and plays 5. Qa4+ or 5.e3. After 5.Nc3 we simply play 5...a6 , transposing to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.Bf4 dxc4 . The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/8/2pP1B2/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R b KQkq - 1 5CCEndFENCC 5...c6 is also fine, but we don't need to learn an additional line to battle 5.Nc3. 5.e3 Chess is not that simple. White will be in trouble after our simple reply.

[5.O&a4+ .xbd7 I also checked 5...Bd7 , which gives Black equal chances after 6.Qxc4 c5 7.dxc5 Qc8 , but 5...Nbd7 is more ambitious and will often lead to an advantage for Black. We intend ...a6 and ...b5, expanding on the queenside. The move ...Nd5 is an additional annoyance for White, hitting the bishop. 6.e3 After 6.Qxc4 c5 we'll continue with ...a6 and ...b5, getting good play on the queenside. .xd5 7.Kg3 This is dubious, but we need to be aware of a trap. Objectively better is 7.Bxc4 , when 7...Nxf4 8.exf4 Bd6 is fine for Black. We continue with ...a6 and ...b5 and have good chances, thanks to the bishop pair and good pawn structure. Kb4+ 8..xbd2 c6 Here we get to the mentioned trap: surprisingly, the tempting move 8...c3? is answered by 9.bxc3 Bxc3 10.Rc1 , when White gets promising play for the pawn. Much better is 8...c6!, which prepares ...b5 to keep the c4-pawn. Here White's compensation is insufficient. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 #2]

5...b5 We not only keep the pawn but also have the idea ...Bb4+, often combined with ...Nd5. The f4-bishop is misplaced and a target for our knight. Here's a line to illustrate matters. 6.Ke2 Kb4+ 7..xc3 .xd5 Black has a clear advantage. We threaten on c3 and are ready to take on f4. On top of everything, we are a pawn up. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bf4 #1

4.Kg5 White sometimes employs this move order to avoid lines that arise after 4.Nc3 , particularly 4...dxc4 and 4...c6 . We don't mind the move, as our standard answer, capturing on c4, is considered to be the best reply. 4...dxc4 After the capture, White's best replies are 5.Qa4+ and 5.e4, while 5.Nc3 is best answered by 5...a6 , which transposes toChapter 9 on CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 , when 5.Bg5 dxc4! is the move order. 5.e3 A slow move that we'll make use of in typical fashion.

[5.e4 Certainly White's most aggressive option. c5 In the intro notes to this Chapter, I mentioned that 5...b5 is possible in this position, but not my recommended move. I prefer 5...c5 for practical reasons, as it gives Black equal chances without any particular theoretical workload. Still, I'd like to point out the consequences of 5...b5, as it can be a good later addition to the repertoire,

sharpening the play. After 5...b5 , White's best is 6.a4 c6 7.Nc3 , when Black has a range of options. All of them lead to complications, like in the following sequence: 7...Qb6 8.Bxf6 gxf6 keeps the extra pawn but makes you wonder where Black's king will find a safe place in the long run. I don't think a murky line like this should be part of our core KIS repertoire, but it's a good option to have. Let's examine 5...c5 now. White's best replies are 6.Bxc4 and 6.Nf3, while the tempting move 6.e5?! is dubious.

A) 6.Kxc4 An interesting move, playing in gambit style. After our reply 6...cxd4 White will be a pawn down but have some compensation for it. cxd4 7.0-0 As usual, 7.e5?! h6 leads nowhere for White. Even more dubious would be 7. Nxd4? Qa5+ 8.Bd2 Qc5 , when we attack two minor pieces and the e4-pawn simultaneously. .xc6 We happily cover our extra pawn. We are still not worried about 8.e5 , as 8...h6 is a fine reply. 8..xbd2 h6 It's important to avoid the greedy 8...e5?! , as 9.Qb3 gives White dangerous threats. Instead my recommendation 8...h6 9.Bh4 Be7 or the immediate 8...Be7 are more circumspect and fine for Black. 9.Kh4 Ke7 Finally, we are breaking the pin. Now playing ...e5 is more sensible than on move 8, as we are ready to answer Qb3 with ...O-O now. 10.e5 A line like 10.Rc1? e5 is good for Black, as 11. Qb3 O-O leads nowhere for White. .xd7 Here 10...Nd5 is no mistake, either. I prefer to put more pressure on the e5-pawn, though. 11.Kxe7 O&xe7 12.Qe1 0-0 I like Black's position. We are still a pawn up, and White has no serious attack going. A good way to continue is ...Rd8 and ...Nf8, clearing the way for ... Bd7. The knight is a good defender of the kingside but may also jump to g6 soon to attack the e5-pawn again. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nf3 Nf6 4. Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 #2;

B) 6..xc3 This looks like White's best move. The position after 6.Nc3 may also arise via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 c5 6.Nf3 , which is a move order we cover in the current Chapter, too. cxd4 7.O&xd4 A solid choice for White, but it can't cause any trouble for us. We now reach an endgame/queenless middlegame with equal chances. *(7..xxd4* This is the more ambitious move for White, keeping the queens on the board. *Kc5* White's e2-e4 push looks active, but it weakens the control over d4. The knight on d4 becomes unstable, allowing us to develop with a gain of tempo. I think Black has good chances now, as White's position is not easy to handle. First of all, what to do with the attacked knight? *8.Ke3* Covering the knight is probably most in line with 7.Nxd4, which avoided the queen trade. Some alternatives are downright bad for White, like 8.Ndb5 Qb6 , when we not only threaten ...Bxf2+ but ...a6 as well. A similar idea occurs after CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2b3B1/2pNP3/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 8CCEndFENCC 8.Qa4+ Bd7 9.Qxc4 Qb6 , when the knight is under pressure. The relatively best option is CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/pp3ppp/ 4pn2/2b3B1/2pNP3/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 8CCEndFENCC 8.

Nf3 , but the endgame after 8...Qxd1+ is comfortable for Black, too. After 9. Rxd1 , many setups are good, like 9...h6 10.Bf4 a6 10.Bxc4 b5 , which gives us an active position and play against the e4-pawn. *O&b6* Increasing the pressure on d4 and b2. *9.O&d2* White covers b2 and threatens Na4. The immediate 9.Na4? fails due to 9...Bb4+ . *Kd7* We stop Na4 and are now ready to play ...Ng4 with full effect. After 9...Ng4?! White still has 10.Na4 to solve the immediate problems. *10..xc2* Or 10.f3 e5 , which looks good for Black, too. We have an excellent play on the dark squares and get a good spot for the bishop on e6. *0-0* There is nothing wrong with other moves, like CCStartFENCCrn2k2r/pp1b1ppp/1q2pn2/2b5/2p1P3/2N1B3/PPNQ1PPP/R3KB1R b KQkq - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10...Nc6 or CCStartFENCCrn2k2r/pp1b1ppp/1q2pn2/2b5/2p1P3/2N1B3/PPNQ1PPP/R3KB1R b KQkq - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10...Na6 . I like castling best, as ...Rd8 is certainly a move that will be annoying for White to face. In any case, Black is in good shape here and has the easier game, as White suffers from some weaknesses CCStartBracketCCd4, dark squaresCCEndBracketCC and is not well coordinated to cover them. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 #4 *)* 7...O&xd4 8..xxd4 a6 It makes sense to play this first, stopping any possible knight jumps to b5. 9.Kxc4 At first glance, this position does not look particularly exciting. An early queen trade... is this going to be a boring draw? Hang on; we have an interesting idea now. h6 A useful move to insert. White needs to move the bishop again, and there is no ideal square. 10.Kd2 This looks best. It's wrong to give up the bishop pair by taking on f6, while 10. Bh4 g5 11.Bg3 b5 , followed by ...Bb7, gives Black some active play. Finally, CCStartFENCCrnb1kb1r/1p3pp1/p3pn1p/6B1/2BNP3/2N5/PP3PPP/R3K2R w KQkq - 0 10CCEndFENCC 10.Be3 Ng4 and CCStartFENCCrnb1kb1r/1p3pp1/p3pn1p/6B1/2BNP3/2N5/PP3PPP/R3K2R w KQkq - 0 10CCEndFENCC 10.Bf4 Nbd7 look awkward for White, too. Kc5 Developing with a gain of tempo looks good. 11..xb3 The most natural move. The knight looks more passive on c3, while 11.Nf3 looks odd. White would like to have the option to move the f-pawn, which is impossible after the retreat to f3. Ka7 This position offers equal chances, and it is not dead boring. Our bishop is nicely positioned on a7, and we have ideas based on the squares d4 and e5. Playing ...Nc6-e5 comes to mind, if possible. White can stop this idea with 12.f4 , when 12...Bd7 is a good setup. 12.f4 As already mentioned, this is White's most active option. Kd7 The move f2-f4 is active but weakens the e4-pawn. We prepare ...Bc6, putting some pressure on the central pawn. Alternatives like 12...b5 13.Bd3 e5!? or CCStartFENCCrnb1k2r/bp3pp1/p3pn1p/8/2B1PP2/1NN5/PP1B2PP/R3K2R b KQkq - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12...Ng4 are interesting, as well. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 #3;

C) 6.e5 A tempting move, but it turns out to be dubious. 6...h6 Well, we didn't just walk into a deadly pin 😃. This counterattack on the bishop gives Black good play. 7.Kh4 White would like to make this move work, but we are in good

shape against it. There is no convincing alternative, though. After 7.exf6 hxg5 or 7.Bxf6 gxf6 , we'll have a tremendously strong bishop pair and already torn down White's centre. White can play CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3pp1/4pn1p/2p1P1B1/2pP4/5N2/PP3PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Be3 , but we are slightly better after 7...cxd4 8.Bxd4 Ne4 9.Bxc4 Nc6 , when both ...Nxd4 and ...Bb4+ are annoying for White. g5 8.Kg3 Unfortunately for White, this is the only move. 8.Nxg5?? is answered with 8...Qa5+! , keeping the extra piece! while after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3p2/4pn1p/2p1P1p1/2pP3B/5N2/PP3PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 8CCEndFENCC 8.exf6 gxh4 Black is much better. We'll pick up f6 and enjoy the bishop pair and at least one extra pawn to boot! .xh5 Now I don't see a good move for White. On a general note, White's centre is crumbling away. A combination of ...Nc6, ...Nxg3 and ...g4 will likely tear down both the d- and e-pawn of our opponent. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e4 #1]

[5.O&a4+ .xbd7 There are many cases in this repertoire where Qa4+ is met with ...Bd7. Here 5...Nbd7 is a better choice. We'll regularly manage to play a quick ...a6 and ...b5, setting up an extended queenside fianchetto for our bishop. After 5...Nbd7, White mostly tries 6.e3 or 6.e4, aiming for Bxc4. We'll also check 6.Qxc4, but we quickly obtain good play against it, as the queen is vulnerable on c4.

A) 6.e4 White plays aggressively and occupies the centre with both pawns. Now we need to be aware of e4-e5, exploiting the pin. Ke7 It is actually possible to play 6...c5 , as 7.e5? h6 is fine for Black. Still, breaking the pin with 6...Be7 is a simple and effective reply. Now White's e-pawn is attacked. Advancing with 7.e5 Nd5 looks awkward for White, as we get the excellent square d5. Therefore 7.Nc3 and 7.Nbd2 are White's options. Against both moves, I like the Stockfish suggestion of 7...h6 , a move that is rarely played for no apparent reason. It is actually possible to play 6...c5 , as 7.e5? h6 is fine for Black. Still, breaking the pin is a simple and effective reply as it immediately creates a threat against the e4-pawn. Advancing with 7.e5 Nd5 looks awkward for White, as we get the excellent square d5. Therefore (7.Nc3 and 7.Nbd2 are White's options. Against both moves, I like the Stockfish suggestion of 7...h6, a move that is rarely played for no apparent reason.)

A1) 7..xbd2 h6 Similar to CCStartFENCCr1bqk2r/pppnbppp/4pn2/6B1/Q1pPP3/5N2/PP3PPP/RN2KB1R w KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7.Nc3 h6 , I suggest inserting the h-pawn move first. 8.Kh4 This is bad, but the reason is not so obvious. Better moves are 8.Be3 or 8.Bxf6, but we can play against them in the same way as after CCStartFENCCr1bqk2r/pppnbppp/4pn2/6B1/Q1pPP3/5N2/PP3PPP/RN2KB1R w KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7.Nc3 h6 - play for queenside expansion and hit at White's centre with ...c5. c6 This looks odd at first, but it is a strong move! Now White is in some trouble, as a closer look reveals. We are threatening ...b5, so White needs to take the c4-pawn... but how? Clearly 9.Nxc4?? and 9.Bxc4?? run into 9...b5 , winning a piece. This leaves 9.Qxc4 and 9. Bxf6. Let's have a look. 9.Kxf6

(9.O&xc4 .xxe4 This can be easily overlooked. There is a similar tactic after CCStartFENCCr1bqk2r/pppnbppp/4pn2/6B1/Q1pPP3/5N2/PP3PPP/RN2KB1R w KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7.Nc3 h6 8.Bh4 Nxe4! , but this tactical pattern is rarely seen with a knight on d2. The queen needs to be on c4 for it to work. *10.Kxe7 .xxd2* And Black has won a pawn and enjoys a huge advantage. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5. Qa4+ #4 *)* 9...Kxf6 We still threaten ...b5, so White needs to grab the c-pawn. 10..xxc4 Ke7 We cover d6 and renew the ...b5 threat. 11.O&c2 b5 12..xcd2 Here 12.Nce5 Bb4+ is rather embarrassing for White. Kb7 And Black is in great shape. We have the bishop pair, and White can't stop ...a6 and ...c5, activating both pieces. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.Qa4+ #3;

A2) 7..xc3 h6 Stockfish insists that this is best, and it looks like a strong move. White needs to decide about the bishop now, and 8.Bh4? Nxe4! is a typical trick that wins a pawn for Black! 8.Ke3 As mentioned 8.Bh4? Nxe4! is a blunder. If White wants to keep the bishop, going to e3 or f4 is the only option. In both cases, we'll get good play with the standard expansion on the queenside. White can play 8.Bxf6 Bxf6 , but it is a substantial concession. A later ...c5 will open up the position nicely for our dark-squared bishop. a6 9.Kxc4 0-0 Now ...b5 is a real threat. We couldn't play it right away, as 9... b5? 10.Bxb5 is possible. 10.O&c2 After 10.O-O?? b5! 11.Bxb5 Nb6 , we win a piece. b5 11.Kd3 c5 We are tearing down White's centre now. Note that ...h6 is a useful move here, as e4-e5 is less dangerous CCStartBracketCCattack on h7CCEndBracketCC. Black is in great shape now, for example after 12.dxc5 Ng4 . 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.Qa4+ #2;

B) 6.e3 This looks like White's best try. We already know that Black would like to expand with ...a6, ...b5 and ...c5. Still, we need to develop our kingside and castle at some point. What move to start with? After checking it for a while, I concluded that the move order is not very relevant. You can play 6...Be7 first, but also 6...a6 or 6...c5 are fine. I decided to recommend 6...Be7, mainly because this is the move that we play against 6.e4, too. Ke7 As mentioned, starting with 6...a6 or 6...c5 is fine, too. 7.Kxc4 0-0 As before, the move order is flexible. You may also start with 7...a6 or insert the move 7...h6. They are both equally good alternatives. 8.Ke2 White is concerned about ...Nb6 and moves the bishop to a safe spot. a6 9.0-0 b5 Here 9...c5 first also works fine. 10.O&c2 c5 And we have completed the queenside expansion. Black has a fine position and at least equal chances with natural moves like ...Bb7 and ...Qb6 next. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.Qa4+ #5;

C) 6.O&xc4 A harmless move. Our queenside play is even faster against the queen on c4. 6...c5 We'd like to play ...c5, ...a6 and ...b5. You may also start with 6...a6 here. 7..xc3 a6 We are ready to strike with ...b5 next. 8.a4 An instructive mistake. Black is also fine against other moves, like 8.dxc5 Bxc5

, with ...b5 and ...Bb7 next. b5 It's good to know this tactical trick! We can play ... b5 anyway, as 9.axb5? axb5 wins the house! 9.axb5 Retreating 9.Qb3 is just busted for White after 9...cxd4 10.Nxd4 Nc5 . axb5 And White is completely lost on move nine! 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5. Qa4+ #1]

5...b5 We keep the pawn. White's setup is too tame to generate serious play for the invested material. If you 'accidentally' play 5...c5 6.Bxc4 cxd4 7.exd4 , you will likely transpose to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/ppp2ppp/4p3/3p4/2PP4/8/ PP2PPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 c5 6.Bxc4 cxd4 7.exd4 - Still, playing 5...b5! is the way to go. 6.a4 c6 Or 6...Bb4+ 7.Nc3 c6 , leading to the same position. 7..xc3 Kb4 Stockfish also loves the crazier option 7...a6!? , when 8.Bxf6 gxf6 9.axb5? cxb5 10. Nxb5 axb5 11.Rxa8 Bb4+ gives Black more than enough compensation. White shouldn't take on b5, but Black is fine in any case. After my suggestion 7... Bb4, I don't see enough play for White to justify the pawn deficit. We play ... Nbd7, ...Bb7 and ...O-O next and enjoy the extra pawn. The moves ...a6 and/or ...Qb6 will help protecting b5. 8. Queen's Gambit: Early Bg5/B-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3

4.O&c2 White covers the c-pawn with the queen. This idea is far more popular and better in variations that feature an early ...c6, for example CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Qc2 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Qc2 . In those lines Black's usual approach is to capture on c4 and follow with ...b5, ...a6 and ultimately ...c5, expanding on the queenside. Looking at this concept already hints at why the queen move is unpopular in our version of the Queen's Gambit. We have not yet played ...c6, so the later queenside expansion is one move quicker, which gives us a comfortable situation. Before we look at this line, a quick word about 4. Nbd2 , which is even rarer than 4.Qc2. White covers c4 with the knight, but the knight is not well-placed on d2. It's on a rather passive square and obstructs the c1-bishop. Black has more than one good reply to 4.Nbd2. I suggest 4...dxc4 5. Nxc4 c5 6.e3 Nc6 , which is a natural way to develop and will likely lead to an IQP for our opponent. There is also nothing wrong about CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP1NPPPP/ R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...c5 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP1NPPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 3 4CCEndFENCC 4...b6 , but taking on c4 is more in line with similar concepts that we employ. Alright, now back to 4.Qc2. 4...dxc4 A familiar concept: we take on c4 to gain time on the queen with a later ...a6 and ...b5. 5.O&xc4 a6 6.Kg5 Or 6.Bf4 Bd6 , when ...b5 will come next. 6...b5 7.O&c2 White can also play 7.Bxf6 , when we need to play 7...gxf6 to keep c7 covered. The doubled pawn is no problem, as we will see in the following line that features the same

pawn structure. 7...Kb7 8..xbd2 .xbd7 We are ready for ...c5 now. 9.Kxf6 gxf6 White expected 9...Nxf6 when ... c5 is more difficult to play. We don't mind the doubled pawn at all, as it covers the important e5-square and can't be attacked by White in any way. Keeping the knight on d7 helps with playing ...c5. 10.e3 c5 Black has an excellent position. We have a strong initiative on the queenside already. 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Qc2

4.e3 A solid choice for White. They cover the c-pawn and prepare the kingside development. The e-pawn now obstructs the queen's bishop, so White usually aims for a fianchetto on the queenside. Their usual setup involves bishops on d3 and b2, while the placement of the knight is not yet clear. White may opt for Nc3, putting more pressure on d5, or for Nbd2, which emphasizes control of e5.

4...a6 Playing ...a6 is not the most obvious thing to do first. What's the point of this move? We gain the option of taking the c-pawn and immediately follow with ...b5 for a queenside expansion. This is particularly effective if White decides to develop the f1-bishop when this piece takes two moves to capture c4. A sample variation is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Bd3?! dxc4! 6.Bxc4 b5 , which is very comfortable for Black. We are one tempo up on the Queen's Gambit Accepted mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 e6 5.Bxc4 a6 , which is already satisfactory for Black. An extra tempo makes a significant difference, as the position opens up quickly. A knowledgeable opponent will anticipate our idea and avoid this scenario. The way to go for White is an early b2-b3, which makes the capture on c4 unattractive, as White would recapture with the b-pawn, strengthening their central control. The move b2-b3 is the signal move for us to abandon the idea of capturing on c4. How do we develop the queenside then? I suggest aiming for a development scheme that involves the moves ...Nbd7, ...b6, Bb7 and ...Bd6. This harmonious formation we also use against the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 / CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 , which may often transpose into lines of the current chapter if White opts for a later d2-d4 pawn push. 5.Kd3 That's the move we've been hoping for.

[5..xbd2 White develops the knight first and avoids the premature bishop move 5. Bd3. .xbd7 We are still waiting if White is going for a bishop move, so that we can play ...dxc4 and ...b5. Now White, most of the time, will play 6.b3 when we transpose tolines that we examine via 5.b3. 6.Kd3 As mentioned, 6.b3 b6 transposes tolines that are covered via 5.b3. dxc4 Taking on c4 still works well here. White can recapture with the knight, but ...b5 gains valuable time again and starts our queenside expansion. 7..xxc4 Activating the knight makes a lot of sense. Of course, 7.Bxc4 would be answered with ...b5 and ...c5, too. b5 8..xce5 c5

And we have managed our desired queenside setup, this time gaining time by pushing the white knight around. 9.0-0 Kb7 I like Black's position and don't see a good way forward for White. After 10.a4 , the only direct attempt at an attack, Black can play 10...c4 11.Be2 Nxe5 12.dxe5 Nd5 , giving us a strong knight in the centre and equal chances. 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5. Nbd2]
[5.b3 White immediately covers c4 and defuses our idea to take on c4 at a favourable moment, like after 5.Bd3?! dxc4! . Once White has committed to b3, we switch to the development plan with ...Nbd7, ...b6, Bb7 and ...Bd6. Let's discuss why it is a good setup. First of all, the bishops will be well placed on d6 and b7. The square d6 is a natural spot for our king's bishop, and we play this move frequently against many of the slower lines that White may play CCStartBracketCCe.g. London SystemCCEndBracketCC. The queen's bishop's placement is less obvious. Using it on the long diagonal makes a lot of sense, though. From b7, our bishop supports our centre pawn on d5 and helps control e4, which might enable a later knight to jump to e4. Our queen's knight is best placed on d7. On d7, it won't obstruct our bishop on b7 and still allows a later push of the c-pawn to attack White's d-pawn. Finally, a word about the move ...a6 being part of our setup. This move turns out to be very useful for two reasons: 1CCEndBracketCC Most of the time, White plays Nc3 when our move ...Bd6 might be answered with Nb5, which could be annoying. Including ...a6 stops this idea in its tracks. 2CCEndBracketCC If you don't play an early ...a6, some irritating lines feature a trade on d5, followed by Bb5+ in response to ...b6. An example best illustrates this. Consider the following sequence: CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/4pn2/3p4/2PP4/5N2/PP2PPPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 4CCEndFENCC 4.e3 Nbd7 5.Nc3 b6? 6.cxd5 exd5 7.Bb5! CCStartBracketCCthreatening Bc6CCEndBracketCC 7...Bb7 8.Ne5 , when Bc6 and Nc6 are extremely annoying threats. This is a particularly horrific example of what could go wrong. What is the best move order to choose? In the end, I decided to recommend the following sequence: 1. play ...Nbd7, 2. play ...b6, 3. play ...Bb7, 4. play ...Bd6. Having this move order guide makes the whole line easier to remember. .xbd7 After 5...Nbd7 White has a fundamental choice to make. White will develop the bishops to b2 and d3, but what about the b1-knight? White needs to decide between playing it to c3 or d2. The difference between the two is quite significant, as we will see. White has a ton of different move orders now. They can start with either bishop move and either knight move. It doesn't make a difference which one they choose, as we'll continue with ...b6, ...Bb7 and ...Bd6. I decided to use the move order 6.Bb2 b6 7.Nc3 and 7.Nbd2 to organize the lines. 6.Kb2 b6 Now we'll have the split between Nc3 and Nd2 setups. White could also play 7.Bd3 first , and after 7...Bb7 decide on 8.Nbd2 8.Nc3 . Or... you maybe guessed it... they could play CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1ppp/pp2pn2/3p4/2PP4/1P2PN2/PB3PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Bd3 Bb7 8.O-O Bd6 and then either knight move. We can play our 'setup

moves'; White's move order doesn't matter. Before we continue, a word about possible trades on d5. At any point, White might exchange on d5. We'd always recapture with the e-pawn, keeping the strong central d5-pawn. The trade on d5 is generally unpromising for White, as it helps us to increase our control of e4. With the e-pawn gone, moves like ...Re8 or ...Qe7 connect with the crucial squares e4 and e5. Therefore we don't have to fear the trade, as it's rather Black who benefits. White gets the half-open c-file, but the c7-pawn is safely protected.

A) 7..xc3 White's more popular setup involves Nc3. There are many game samples with this move because White often plays the move early on and only later decides on playing with e2-e3 and b2-b3. A possible sequence is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 a6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.b3 b6 7.Bb2 , leading to the current position. Kb7 8.Kd3 Kd6 9.0-0 0-0
Both sides have completed their intended setup, time to think about further action. All pawns and pieces are on the board, and there are many possible ways to continue. I'd like to point your attention towards two ideas for Black: Occupying the e4-square with our knight and a timely capture on c4, which opens the long diagonal for our b7-bishop. I'll show some possible lines to demonstrate these ideas. 10.O&c2 White stops our ...Ne4 idea, but it comes at a price. *(10.Qc1* The rook move is White's most popular choice. It has two ideas: opening the c-file with cxd5 or supporting c4-c5 under the right circumstance. This becomes relevant in lines like 10...Qe7 11.Na4 , when c4-c5 is more likely to happen. I recommend a different move, though. *.xe4*
Let's centralize the knight, a good strategy. As mentioned before, you can almost always consider 10...dxc4 11.bxc4 c5 , too. Instead of 10.Rc1, White has tried some other moves that allow ...Ne4, like 10.Qe2 or 10.Re1. I'd always go ...Ne4 in these cases, too. *11..xe2* A good move. White anticipated that we might want to continue with ...f7-f5 and prepares both Ne2-f4 and Nf3-e5 in return. If they play 11.Qc2 , we'd indeed play 11...f5 . I like Black's chances here, as we have the potential for an attack on White's king. After ...f5, the rook lift ...Rf8-f6 gets on the agenda. *dxc4* A good solution. Now the move 11...f5 is slightly dubious, as 12.Nf4 Qe7 13.Ne5 is annoying for Black. *12.bxc4 f5*
Now this move works much better than on move 11. *13..xf4 O&e7*
An interesting and combative position is on the board. White has some central advantage after our trade on c4, but we have an excellent knight on e4, and our pieces are actively placed and geared towards White's kingside. It's also possible to play with ...Rad8 and a later ...e5 or ...c5. A great feature of our setup against White's e3 formation is the flexibility. You can play various interesting ideas and be creative. We need to check one more move, though. *14..xe5* In the line CCStartFENCCr2q1rk1/1bpn1ppp/pp1bp3/3p4/2PPn3/1P1BPN2/PB2NPPP/2RQ1RK1 b - - 9 11CCEndFENCC 11...f5?! 12.Nf4 Qe7 13.Ne5 , this knight jump was the problem. Here we can deal with it easily. *.xxe5 15.dxe5 Kc5* And Black is fine, as White c-pawn can't capture on d5,

showing why the trade on c4 was crucial. 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.b3 #3 *)* 10...dxc4 a perfect moment to take, as the white queen has left its post on d1. Now ...Bxf3 becomes an option, as it would damage White's pawn structure considerably. 11.bxc4 Kxf3 I suggest taking on f3 immediately. It is also possible to play 11...c5 first. 12.gxf3 c5 The funny move 12...Nd5!? is possible, too. It's not a blunder of a knight, as 13.cxd5 Qg5+ 14.Kh1 Qh5 15.f4 Qf3+ leads to a perpetual check and a draw. The knight jump works well but accepts that White may take the knight and shut the game down to a draw. Instead, the move 12...c5 keeps the game alive. White's kingside is damaged; in return, they have the bishop pair. This balances the chances, with an interesting fight ahead. 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.b3 #2;

B) 7..xbd2 White goes for the Nbd2-setup. The main difference to the Nc3-version is best explained after move 9, so hang on. The next moves happen more or less all the time. 7...Kb7 8.Kd3 Kd6 9.0-0 0-0 Very natural moves led us to this position. It is very similar to CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1ppp/pp2pn2/3p4/2PP4/1P2PN2/PB3PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Nc3 Bb7 8.Bd3 Bd6 9.O-O O-O , only the knight placement differs. This is a rather important difference, though. In the Nc3-lines, we often resort to the capture on c4 to open our bishop. This option is far less attractive because White has the reply Nxc4, which is undesirable for Black. The knight is powerful on c4, looking at important squares like e5 and d6. Therefore, You should avoid the capture on c4 unless you have a compelling concrete case for it. One idea is shared between the two versions, though: the knight-jump to e4. If White plays, for example, 10.Rc1 or CCStartFENCCr2q1rk1/1bpn1ppp/pp1bpn2/3p4/2PP4/1P1BPN2/PB1N1PPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qe2 , the reply 10...Ne4 works well. 10.O&e2 White's most popular choice, when we can use a standard plan mentioned before. .xe4 Here we go. Before we continue, I'd like to remind you again that taking on c4 is bad in Nbd2-setups due to Nxc4. This even applies in the case of CCStartFENCCr2q1rk1/1bpn1ppp/pp1bpn2/3p4/2PP4/1P1BPN2/PB1N1PPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qc2 , when 10...dxc4? 11.Nxc4 is great for White. Not even the capture on f3 would be a good option in this case. What do we play against 10.Qc2, by the way? The move is rare, but our two standard ideas don't work well. I suggest playing some improving moves first and then consider playing a6-a5-a4, nibbling at White's queenside. A possible line is CCStartFENCCr2q1rk1/1bpn1ppp/pp1bpn2/3p4/2PP4/1P1BPN2/PB1N1PPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 6 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qc2 Qe7 11.Rfe1 h6 12.Rad1 a5 . White can play 13.e4 , but we don't mind the trades, as we have slightly less space. After e3-e4, we also get a possible target to attack d4. 11.Qfd1 O&e7 Or 11...f5 , which also works well. The move 11...Qe7 is more flexible, as we still can play ...f5, but the 'queenside nibble' a6-a5-a4 is a possible option, too. I generally ...like f5, as it comes with attacking chances against White's king. 12.Qac1 f5 Or 12...a5 , as

mentioned. 13..xe5 White is annoyed by our e4-knight and prepares f2-f3. .xxe5 Taking on d2 first is an alternative of equal value. 14.dxe5 Kb4 Black is fine here. We get to take on c4 next, which activates our bishop nicely. A sample line is 15.Nf3 dxc4 16.Bxc4 b5 17.Bd3 c5 , which looks attractive for Black. 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.b3 #1]

5...dxc4 6.Kxc4 b5 7.Kd3 White may also play 7.Be2 or 7.Bb3, of course. It makes no difference in regards to our reply. We'll play in the same way as after 7.Bd3: expand on the queenside with ...c5, ... Bb7, and usually ...Nbd7. 7...c5 Starting with 7...Bb7 is also acceptable. 8.0-0 Kb7 9.a4 About the only active plan that White has available. What to do with the attacked b-pawn? 9...b4 I suggest advancing the pawn. It is also possible to play 9...c4 , but taking away the c3-square for the knight makes sense. Next, we may even consider ...Nc6, putting some pressure on the d4-pawn. All our pieces are active and easy to develop. 11. Queen's Gambit: Sidelines-3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Bd3

[20] **7.dxc5** This line has gained some popularity in recent years. After it was established that the more 'maximalist' moves 7.Qa4 and 7.Ne5 don't yield much, White began to search for small advantages in the arising endgame. The whole concept is based on the Catalan bishop on g2 being better than its counterpart on c8. This is true, but it is just one factor of the position. After studying this line for a while, I concluded that Black obtains fair chances with precise play. Let's have a look. 7...O&xd1 Trading on d1 and capturing the c5-pawn is natural and best. 8.Qxd1 Kxc5 White needs to get the c4-pawn back at some point. Now the natural move 9.Nbd2 is the overwhelming mainline, but White has also tried 9.Nfd2. 9..xfd2 Similar to the more obvious 9.Nbd2, White wants to capture c4 with a knight. The main point of using the f3-knight is best explained when looking at CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/pp3ppp/2n1pn2/2b5/2p5/5NP1/PP2PPBP/RNBR2K1 w kq - 0 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nbd2 c3! , when we return the pawn while damaging White's pawn structure. After CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/pp3ppp/2n1pn2/2b5/2p5/5NP1/PP2PPBP/RNBR2K1 w kq - 0 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nfd2 the move 9...c3? makes no sense, as White simply plays 10.Nxc3 . On the other hand, we don't want to allow Nxc4 that easily, which leaves the principled move 9...Na5.

[9..xbd2 c3 Against CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/pp3ppp/2n1pn2/2b5/2p5/5NP1/PP2PPBP/RNBR2K1 w kq - 0 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nfd2 , we should keep the pawn with 9...Na5! , while here the move CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/pp3ppp/2n1pn2/2b5/2p5/5NP1/PP2PPBP/RNBR2K1 w kq - 0 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nbd2 Na5? is flawed due to 10.Ne5 , when the c-pawn drops under much worse circumstances. It is best to play 9...c3 to damage White's pawn structure a bit. Now White enjoys the more active pieces, but our position has no weaknesses and offers long-term chances to exploit White's split pawns on the queenside. We need to coordinate our position over the next moves and know some ideas - let's get to work. 10.bxc3 0-0 I advise going for a setup with ...O-O, ...Be7 and ...Bd7,

connecting the rooks quickly. 11..xb3 White's almost universal choice. The knight move gains time and opens up both the d1-rook and the c1-bishop. Ke7 The best and safest square. We have to avoid 11...Bb6? 12.Ba3 . Now White has tried different approaches. They can play 12.c4 or go for 12.Nfd4, which starts concrete play and will change the pawn structure immediately. Currently, the move 12.Nfd4 is viewed as the more promising choice for White.

A) 12..xfd4 The knight jump is considered to be White's primary try for an advantage nowadays. White puts pressure on our knight and forces a decision: taking on d4 or allowing White to capture on c6? .xxd4 I suggest taking on d4. The alternative is 12...Bd7 , which seems to be about equal, too. I prefer 12... Nxd4 because after 12...Bd7 White will often capture twice on c6 soon, reaching a fully symmetrical position. After 12...Nxd4 13.cxd4, the arising pawn structure is more interesting to play. 13.cxd4 White managed to improve their pawn structure, but now the d-file is closed, and we have the opportunity to play the following manoeuvre. .xd5 Taking a look at the c3-square and blocking the view of the g2-bishop. Now we'll take a look at the principled but harmless move 14. e4, and White's main tries 14.Na5 and 14.Bd2.

A1) 14..xa5 White correctly considers the b3-knight misplaced and tries to relocate it to c4. At the same time, b7 is attacked and 14...b6? fails to 15. Nc6 . It's best to force the action by attacking the knight immediately with our bishop. Kb4 The best move, starting concrete play. We now need to consider 15.Nc4 and 15.Bd2. Both lead to complications that we need to examine. 15..xc4 *(15.Kd2 .xc3* This active move leads to equal chances for Black. Stockfish also points out 15...Bxa5!? 16.Bxa5 f5 and assesses this position as about equal. Black has a good blockade on the light squares, but it looks like a purely defensive endeavour. *16..xxb7* This looks best. White's knight was hanging, and now 16...Nxd1? is actually worse due to 17.Bxb4 , when White is much better. *.xxe2+* As mentioned, we need to avoid 16...Nxd1? 17.Bxb4 , but this move looks reliable. *17.Elf1 .xc3* We just return after having snatched a pawn. We still don't threaten ...Nxd1, but the simple ... Bxb7, followed by ...Rab8, coordinates our position nicely. A possible line is 18.Rdc1 Bxb7 19.Bxb7 Rab8 20.Bf3 Nd5 , which gives us equal chances. White has the bishop pair, but the weaker pawn structure. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7 *)* 15...Kd7 This looks best. The move 15...Nc3? leads to nothing after 16.Rd2 . Instead, we connect rooks but also allow ...Ba4, which could be quite annoying for White to meet. 16.Qb1 This move looks a bit odd, allowing ...Nc3. It is the only interesting move to check, though. After 16.Bd2 , we play the mentioned 16...Ba4 and activate our bishop nicely. Alright, what about the knight jump to c3 now? We'll see that the following complications are fine for Black. .xc3 Fork! Now White has two moves that we need to check, but we are fine against both of them. Here are some sample lines to demonstrate that Black has equal chances. AĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊr4rk1/pp1b1ppp/

4p3/8/1bNP4/2n3P1/P3PPBP/1RBR2K1 w - - 7 17CCEndFENCC 17.Rxb4 Nxd1 18.Bxb7 Nc3 19.Bxa8 Nxe2+ 20.Kf1 Nxc1 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr4rk1/pp1b1ppp/4p3/8/1bNP4/2n3P1/P3PPBP/1RBR2K1 w - - 7 17CCEndFENCC 17.Bd2 Nxe2+ 18.Kf1 Bxd2 19.Rxb7 Nc3 20.Rxd2 Bb5 CCStartBracketCCor 20...Rab8 as a fancier solutionCCEndBracketCC CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr4rk1/ pp1b1ppp/4p3/8/1bNP4/2n3P1/P3PPBP/1RBR2K1 w - - 7 17CCEndFENCC 17.Bd2 Nxe2+ 18.Kf1 Bxd2 19.Rxb7 Nc3 20.Rxd7 Nxd1 21.Bxa8 Rxa8 22.Nxd2 Nc3 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7;

A2) 14.Kd2 It's undoubtedly very natural to cover the square c3 and connect rooks for White. They have also tried the similarly minded 14.Bb2 , but it looks like a slightly worse version of 14.Bd2. We'd fight 14.Bb2 in the same way as 14.Bd2, playing ...f5 to support our centralized knight. f5 An important piece of the puzzle. The f-pawn helps secure the knight on the attractive d5-outpost. We want to develop by playing ...b6 and ...Bb7 or ...Ba6 next, connecting our rooks. 15..xa5 This is White's main try in the current position. It is also the recommended continuation in a popular Chessable repertoire, S.Narayanan's Lifetime Repertoire based on the Catalan. White may also play 15.Rac1 , when we'll play 15...b6 . White's main idea behind 15.Na5 is to get the knight to a more active spot. As we'll see, we don't mind it appearing on c6. b6 16..xc6 Instead 16.Nc4 Ba6 is comfortable for Black. Kf6 17.e3 Kb7 Here, my fellow Chessable author concludes his analysis and assesses the position as slightly better for White. Narayanan argues that White wants to play a4-a5 and enjoys the better pawn structure after a trade on b6. White has a chain of 5 pawns, while Black has an isolated b6-pawn. His point certainly makes sense, but I don't see any serious problem for Black. In this scenario, the b-pawn is an outside passer, which may become a factor, too. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7;

A3) 14.e4 It's important to check what happens after this principled move. Our knight is happy to jump into action, though. 14....xc3 15.Qd2 After 15. Rd3 Ne2+ we are happy to get the bishop pair and easily obtain good chances. Now the knight check is covered, but White's position lacks harmony. Kd7 We connect the rooks and are ready to play a rook to c8 next. I am happy with Black's chances here. The c3-knight is an annoying intruder for White: b5 and a4 are good squares for us. The move ...Bb5 would renew our idea to check on e2. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7;

B) 12.c4 The main point of 12.c4 is opening the long diagonal for the Queen's bishop, which will appear on b2 on the next move. 12...Kd7 We continue with our planned setup and connect rooks. 13.Kb2 Qfc8 This precise move is an improvement over the more popular rook move 13...Rfd8. It was played in some

high-level games in 2021 and is the preference of Stockfish. At first, 13...Rfc8 looks odd because White may go for 14.Bxf6 Bxf6 15.Rxd7 , but this sequence turns out to be acceptable for Black due to some attractive tactics. So 14.Bxf6 is no problem at all; what else is there for White? Our rook is well-placed on c8, looking at the c-pawn. We are also ready to play ...Be8, preparing ...Nd7-c5. If White can't make use of their activity, we'll have chances against their weakened queenside. 14.Kxf6 We need to check this forcing move, of course. *(14.c5* This looks like a logical move. White clears the c4-square to allow Nf3-d2-c4. *Ke8* An idea that I already mentioned before. We remove the bishop from the scope of the d1-rook and prepare ...Nd7. *15..xfd2* Or 15.Ne5 Nxe5 16.Bxe5 Bc6 , giving Black equal chances. You can always play ...b7-b6 in this type of position to simplify matters if you like. *b6* We should play this move before White manages ...Nd2-c4-d6. After 16.cxb6 axb6 17.Nc4 Rab8 18.Nd6 Bxd6 19.Rxd6 Na5 20.Nxa5 bxa5 21.Be5 Rb4 White's bishop pair is not to be feared, as the pawn structure is too simplified. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7 *)* 14...Kxf6 15.Qxd7 Kxa1 16..xxa1 After the series of captures, White has two minor pieces for a rook, but it's too early to take stock. Our next two moves are the justification of 13...Rfc8!, so hang on. Qd8 We must fight for the d-file immediately. If White is given time to organize, the two minor pieces would be much better than a rook. 17.Rxb7?? Rd1+ is wrong, so White needs to retreat along the d-file or trade. 17.Qxd8+ After the rook trade, we will easily invade White's position on the d-file and be able to attack the queenside pawns. *(17.Qd2* The most challenging retreat. After 17.Rd3 Nb4 Black forces the rook trade and has good chances on the queenside. It's not easy for White to keep the pawns, in particular in a practical game. *.xe5* a beautiful move to play! White can't take our knight, and we threaten both ...Nxf3+ and ...Nxc4. The strong 17...Ne5! is the final important move to know, so I'll stop the trainable here. After 18.Nd4 Nxc4 or CCStartFENCCr2r2k1/pp3ppp/4p3/4n3/2P5/5NP1/P2RPPBP/N5K1 w - - 3 18CCEndFENCC 18.Nb3 Nxc4 we pick up the c-pawn, while CCStartFENCCr2r2k1/pp3ppp/4p3/4n3/2P5/5NP1/P2RPPBP/N5K1 w - - 3 18CCEndFENCC 18.Rxd8+ Rxd8 19.Ne1 Rd1 20.Nac2 b6 21.Be4 Nxc4 is a long line that leads to the same scenario. In all cases, only Black has winning chances. The rook+pawn duo is dangerous and much easier to play. An outside passed pawn on the queenside will be very powerful. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7 *)* 17...Qxd8 18..xb3 White needs to rescue the knight. Qd1+ 19.Kf1 Qb1 We want to play ...Rb2 next, attacking the a-pawn. I'll stop the trainable line here, as we are already very deep. Black has the much easier job here, as White needs to defend their queenside pawns. Computers find a draw for White, but from an opening preparation perspective, we are happy with the outcome. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7]

9....xa5 This is the best move. We keep c4 for the moment, but also prepare ...Bd7-

c6, activating our problem piece on c8. 10..xa3 Again attacking c4. 10...Kxa3 There is no reason to return the pawn with 10...c3?!. After taking on a3 and keeping the pawn, we get equal chances in an interesting position. 11.bxa3 Kd7 The start of an instructive manouver. White has pressure on the long diagonal, so it makes perfect sense to 'empty' this diagonal. After ...Bd7, ...Rc8 and ...b6, we will have a harmonious setup and manage to 'play around' the scope of the Catalan bishop. White has enough play to compensate for the lost pawn, but not more. White will likely need to play something along the lines of ...Bb2-c3 and later capture a5 and c4 to restore material equality. I'll continue the line a bit to illustrate the key moves of the setup. 12.Kb2 Qc8 The rook leaves the long diagonal. 13.Kc3 b6 And we are just in time to cover the knight. 14.Qdc1 White threatens Bxa5, followed by Nxc4. 14...Kb5 Again, we are insisting on keeping the pawn. Black has fair chances in this position, as there is no way in sight for White to increase the pressure. Probably they should consider a line like 15.Rab1 Ba6 16.Bxa5 bxa5 17.Bb7 Bxb7 18.Rxb7 , but after 18...c3 , the c-pawn stays on the board and always gives Black good play. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7

7.O&a4 The queen move is White's traditional mainline, but nowadays, the focus of top players and theoreticians has shifted more towards other lines, in particular 7.dxc5. Against 7.Qa4 Black's resources look perfectly fine at the moment, often allowing exciting play on the queenside. As mentioned, 7.Qa4 is not very fashionable at the top level, but still, an essential line that you'll meet regularly. 7...Kd7 The only good reply. We break the pin on our knight and threaten to capture d4, which leaves White with only two sensible replies. They can play 8.dxc5 or capture c4 with the queen. 8.dxc5 White usually plays this move to avoid the complications after 8.Qxc4 b5 and intends to play for a small edge after CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/pp1b1ppp/2n1pn2/2p5/Q1pP4/5NP1/PP2PPBP/RNB2RK1 w kq - 4 8CCEndFENCC 8.dxc5 Bxc5 9.Qxc4 , based on the powerful Catalan bishop. While this line should ultimately equalize for Black, I still prefer the quirkier 8...Na5, which is more challenging for White.

[8.O&xc4 White captures the pawn and hopes for a slight pull after 8...cxd4 9. Nxd4 when the Catalan bishop indeed makes a strong impression. We don't comply! b5 A powerful move, gaining space on the queenside. This variation offers Black good counter chances and more exciting chess than 8...cxd4. Currently, White is struggling to set any problems against 8...b5, which is a key reason why 7.Qa4 has fallen out of fashion at the top level. After 8...b5, White usually retreats with 9.Qd3, but recently the less natural 9.Qc3 has been tried, too. I've also faced the blunder 9.Qxb5?? in Blitz, which loses after 9...Nxd4 .

A) 9.O&xb5 Taking the pawn is somewhat naive, but it happened in my Blitz games. There is a minor point worth checking. .xxd4 Now White's queen is attacked twice, but we also threaten ...Nc2. The move 10.Qd3 fails to 10...Bb5 , so what's left for White? Not much, but let's have a brief look at the desperate 10.Nxd4. 10..xxd4 White gives up the queen for only two minor pieces. It is not

enough, but hang on. Kxb5 11..xxb5 I have reached this position in an online Blitz game and continued with 11...Rc8? , after which 12.Nxa7 was not that clear at all. White's a-pawn turned out to be very strong, supported by the monster bishop on g2. O&b6 This is much better than my 11...Rc8?, as is 11... Nd5 . 12.Kxa8 O&xb5 We have returned some material but avoided practical problems. With a queen against rook and bishop, we have a huge material advantage and should win. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7;

B) 9.O&d3 Going back to d3 is White's most frequently played move, but it invites the further advance of our c-pawn. c4 We are happy to advance the pawn with a tempo gain. We now reach an interesting, double-edged position. White usually plays for a central breakthrough with pawns to e4 and d5, while we have created an advanced three vs two - pawn majority on the queenside. The c4-pawn also allows a vital resource for Black: after White's e2-e4 pawn push the knight tour...Nc6-b4-d3 becomes an option but needs to be correctly timed. First of all, White now needs to decide on a queen move.

B1) 10.O&d1 Qc8 The prophylactic rook move is stronger than 10...Be7 11. Ne5 , which is surprisingly awkward for Black. It can be confusing that CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/p2b1ppp/2n1pn2/1p6/2pP4/3Q1NP1/PP2PPBP/ RNB2RK1 w kq - 0 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qc2 is answered by 10...Be7 , while 10.Qd1 is answered by 10...Rc8. A way to remember this difference is that 10.Qd1 is a slower approach, which allows us to play a slower, prophylactic move, too. With 10.Qc2 White goes for a more aggressive play, with e4 in mind. Therefore we shouldn't invest time on a move that is not strictly necessary at the moment. Alright, back to 10.Qd1 Rc8: this position has been reached dozens of times in master games, without a clear mainline emerging. White has tried numerous moves but couldn't prove any advantage. We'll have a look at some of them to illustrate the possibilities for both sides better. 11.b3 White tries to generate some play on the queenside. We need to decide how to react. To take or not to take? *(11..xe5* Against this knight jump, Black has more than one good reply, but I'd like to show an instructive idea. *.xxe5* A direct solution. As mentioned before, there are good alternatives, like 11...Be7. *12.dxe5 .xd5* That's the point of the capture on e5. We just jump to d5 and don't mind that White can win a pawn, as the Catalan bishop on g2 is a high price to pay for White. *13.Kxd5* The principled move. If White doesn't take, we'll have ...Bc6 next to contest the long diagonal. *exd5 14.O&xd5 Ke7* We calmly finish development and castle next. White can try to stop ...O-O with 15.Rd1 , but after 15...Bc6 16.Qxd8+ Rxd8 17.Rxd8 Kxd8 Black has good play for the pawn, even in the endgame. We have two bishops and the dangerous majority on the queenside. I'd rather be Black here, but chances are probably objectively equal. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7*; 11.Qe1* White prepares the move e2-e4, which makes a lot of sense. Against this direct idea, we should know the

following line. *Ke7 12.e4* Now the pawn push to d6 looks like a serious threat. It turns out that we don't need to be worried that much. *0-0* Alright, what is the idea against 13.d5 now? Let's have a look. *13.d5* We need to check this critical move. *exd5 14.exd5 .xb4 15.d6* White has realized the idea of 11.Re1, but we are in fine shape due to ...Nc2 in the end. We are now digging quite deep, beyond move 15. However, after 11.Re1 all the moves are straightforward to recall. *Kxd6 16.O&xd6 .xc2* We will win the rook, but our knight won't get out easily from a1. Even if we'd lose the knight for nothing, we'd still be OK from a material point of view. I decided to cut the trainable here, but you are welcome to explore further, as some interesting complications are ahead. Black can try to use some tactics to save the knight, like 17.Na3 Nxa1 18.Be3 b4 19.Qxb4 Nd5 20.Qd2 Nxe3 21.fxe3 c3 22. bxc3 Bc6 and some others. Black is fine after 11.Re1, and it leads to fun complications. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7*; 11.Kg5* It's not easy for White to find a good job for the dark-squared bishop. The move 11.Bg5 is played quite often but doesn't pose a problem. In many cases, we'll get the bishop pair and good chances. Here's a typical sequence that may happen. *Ke7* Developing and unpinning, a very natural move. *12..xc3 b4* Now what for White? The knight has no good square, so capturing on f6 is their way to go. *13.Kxf6 gxf6* I am showing this line mostly because of this move. Playing 13...Bxf6 14.Ne4 Be7 is no mistake but less convincing than creating the doubled pawn. The key idea is ...f6-f5, taking good control of e4. At the same time, ...Bf6 becomes a possibility. Black has excellent chances after 13...gxf6!, which more or less refuted the whole concept of playing Bg5xf6 to continue with Ne4. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7 *)* 11...Ke7 I suggest allowing the capture on c4 and avoiding 11...cxb3. Taking b3 is not a mistake, but I prefer to keep the passed pawn. Currently, I see little danger of losing the pawn, so I advise you to continue developing. That being said, Black has an interesting alternative to 11...Be7 in 11...Na5 , which intends to establish the knight on c4 if White decides to capture c4. It's good to see that there are multiple possibilities for Black, which underlines the viability of the general approach. 12.a4 White has also tried 12.bxc4 bxc4 13.Nc3 , when 13...O-O 14.Bd2 Nb4 looks like a sensible continuation. We have equal chances in this interesting position, based on the strong c-pawn. .xa5 This is stronger than the routine answer 12...a6 . Now we enter a forced line that gives us good chances. 13.axb5 .xxb3 14.Qxa7 O&b6 We push back the rook first, then proceed to castle and regain the b-pawn. I decided to stop the trainable here, as after 15.Ra2 Black has various move orders that are all fine. The main point of this line is to remember the idea 12.a4 Na5! 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7;

B2) 10.O&c2 The primary purpose of 10. Qc2 is to keep an eye on e4 to support the e-pawn push. Boris Avrukh recommended this move in his book

on the Catalan. 10...Ke7 Black's choice here is mainly between 10...Rc8 and 10...Be7. Both moves seem fine, but I concluded that we don't need the rook move just yet. There is a difference compared to 10.Qd1, when White sets up the idea Ne5, prompting the prophylactic rook move. After CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/p2b1ppp/2n1pn2/1p6/2pP4/3Q1NP1/PP2PPBP/RNB2RK1 w kq - 0 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qc2 Be7 White's most active move is 11.e4 , which Avrukh recommended. We'll also have a quick look at CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/p2bbppp/2n1pn2/1p6/2pP4/5NP1/PPQ1PPBP/RNB2RK1 w kq - 2 11CCEndFENCC 11.Nc3 and CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/p2bbppp/2n1pn2/1p6/2pP4/5NP1/PPQ1PPBP/RNB2RK1 w kq - 2 11CCEndFENCC 11.Ne5 . 11..xe5 We want to make sure the knight jump is harmless. *(11..xc3* A natural development move, attacking our b5-pawn. *b4* Surprisingly, this move seems to be yet untested in Mega Database 2021. It looks natural to me, gaining time on the c3-knight. *12..xe4* White may also go back to b1 or play 12.Nd1 , intending Ne3 next. In both cases, I like Black's prospects on the queenside after 12...Na5 , which covers the c-pawn for the moment. *Qc8* A good way to support the c4-pawn. White can't play 13.Nxf6+ Bxf6 14.Qxc4?? due to 14...Nxd4 . *13.Qd1 0-0* White still can't grab c4 for the same reason as on the move before. I like Black's position, as White does not have any dangerous play in the centre, while we have already made good progress on the queenside. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7*; 11.e4* The most active and natural move. *0-0* We can't play against a possible d4-d5 breakthrough with a king on e8, so we need to castle. *12.O&e2* Avrukh recommended this move, and it is by far the most commonly played one. White removes the queen from the ...Nb4 tempo before any further action. *.xb4* I suggest this move, directly aiming at the d3-square. Avrukh only examines 12...Qb6 in his book, which is not bad for Black either. Nevertheless, I feel that 12...Nb4 makes a lot of sense, as we immediately try to make use of the c4-pawn to establish a strong outpost. *13..xe5* This looks sensible. White covers d3 with an active move. Our reply is not obvious, but a strong move! *Ke8* We attack the d4-pawn and prepare ... Nd7, challenging the intruder on e5. If we manage to remove the e5-knight, we finally have access to d3! Please note that 13...Bc8!? has the same idea and works well, too. *14.Qd1* Or 14.a3 Qxd4! , which looks fine after 15. axb4 Qxe5 . *.xd7* Again, I like Black's position after 15.Nxd7 Bxd7 or CCStartFENCCr2qbrk1/p2nbppp/4p3/1p2N3/1npPP3/6P1/PP2QPBP/RNBR2K1 w - - 7 15CCEndFENCC 15.Nf3 Nd3 16.Be3 Nb6 . 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7 *)* 11...Qc8 We cover c6, and now the d4-pawn is attacked for real. We couldn't play 11...Nxd4?? , as 12.Qd1 is a double attack on the d4-knight and the a8-rook. 12.Qd1 White covers d4 and develops the rook. This move certainly makes the most sense. Now Black has a good choice of moves. Slower ones like 12...O-O would work fine, but there is a straightforward solution that I

wanted to show. .xxe5 This capture needs to be carefully considered. The complications work out well for Black, as we will see. 13.dxe5 .xg4 We attack the e5-pawn, and White has no comfortable way to cover it. Here are two lines to show the problem: 14.f4?? Qb6+ is terrible for White, while CCStartFENCC2rqk2r/p2bbppp/4p3/1p2P3/2p3n1/6P1/PPQ1PPBP/RNBR2K1 w k - 1 14CCEndFENCC 14.Bf4? Qb6 doesn't close immediately but is unconvincing. This leaves 14.Qe4 to save the pawn. 14.O&e4 f5 This is the move that Black needed to see before taking on e5. 15.exf6 .xxf6 Now we are in good shape, enjoying an active position. The two advance queenside pawns are an asset, but also now the half-open f-file, which we may also make use of. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5. bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7;

C) 9.O&c3 Not the most obvious move, as the queen is placed on the natural square for the Queen's knight. White's idea is to discourage 9...c4?! , which is answered by 10.a4 , which gives White good chances. We must avoid this pawn push, which works well after CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/p2b1ppp/2n1pn2/1pp5/2QP4/5NP1/PP2PPBP/RNB2RK1 w kq - 0 9CCEndFENCC 9.Qd3 c4! , as it gains a tempo and White has no time to play a2-a4. 9...b4 As mentioned, 9...c4?! 10.a4 is to be avoided. 10.O&d3 Qc8 We have gained some ground on the queenside with tempo and now remove the rook from the long diagonal. Black has an active position and equal chances. White now usually captures on c5. 11.dxc5 White doesn't have a beneficial move that keeps the tension. If they play a move like 11.Bg5 , both 11...cxd4 and 11...h6 12.Bxf6 Qxf6 is fine for Black. Kxc5 12.Ke3 White wants to get rid of our active bishop. I also examined 12.Bg5 h6 13.Bxf6 Qxf6 14.Nbd2 , when 14...Ne5 15.Nxe5 Qxe5 is fine for Black. Kxe3 13.O&xe3 O&b6 I like this clean solution. The queen trade is not to be feared, as it would even allow us to place our king on e7, ready to help in the centre of the board. The doubled pawns are no problem at all, as White has no way to attack them. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7]

8....xa5 I like this knight jump to the edge of the board. We cover c4 for the moment and still have c5 to pick up. I don't see the slightest advantage for White in this line. They now have to decide where to retreat the queen. 9.O&a3 White hangs on to the c5-pawn for the moment but places the queen on a somewhat uncomfortable spot.

[9.O&c2 Placing the queen on the unstable a3-square is not everybody's cup of tea. After 9.Qc2, White intends to play on the open d-file and exert some pressure with moves like Rd1 and Ne5. We'll win c5 right away, but White has enough compensation for the pawn. Kxc5 10..xe5 White needs to be precise to generate enough play for the pawn. After 10.Rd1?! Qb6 Black is better already. 0-0 The alternative 10...Rc8 is just as good. You need to avoid the tempting 10...Bb5?? , however. After 11.b4! Bxb4 12.Qb2 Black is dead lost! 11.Qd1 White can easily fall into a trap here. After 11.Nxc4?? Rc8! we are winning on

the spot, as we threaten ...Nxc4 and ...Bxf2+. White has no way to avoid this type of disaster on the c-file! The same trick works after 11.Bg5 h6 12.Bxf6 gxf6 13. Nxc4?? Rc8 , which wins for the same reason. Of course, White does not need to take on c4 in this line, but they won't have more than compensation for the pawn. Our position is sound, and our pieces work well. Back to the current position after 11.Rd1 - White increases the pressure on the d-file, which makes Bg5 a far more dangerous threat on the next move. After a careless move like 11...Rc8?? 12.Bg5 , the pins already cost us the game. h6 'No Bg5 for you!' After this precise move, I don't see any problems for Black. White is active enough to regain the pawn, for example, after 12.Nc3 Qe7 13.Nxd7 Nxd7 14.Qa4 Nc6 15.Qxc4 Nde5 , when our active pieces easily compensate for the loss of the bishop pair. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7]

9...b6 Here, the move 9...Rc8 follows a similar idea and work, too. It leads to wacky complications after 10.b4 cxb3 11.axb3 Rxc5 12.b4 Rb5 , which seem to end in equality after further adventures. I felt that 9...b6 is a simpler solution for a sideline and decided to recommend the pawn move instead. 10.b4 White can also cover c5 with the bishop, which leads to a similar play. After 10. Be3 Rc8 11.b4 cxb3 12.axb3 Bxc5 13.Bxc5 Rxc5 14.b4 Nc4 15.Qxa7 Rc7 we obtain equal chances, too. 10...cxb3 11.axb3 Kxc5 Snatching the pawn is the most obvious move, seeing that 12.b4 Be7 is fine for Black and gives us equal chances. It is important to avoid excessive ambition at this point, as other tries are too dangerous. I checked, for example, 11...Nb7? 12.Ne5 Bxc5 13.b4 Bd6 14.Qb2 , which ends horribly for our cause. 12.b4 Ke7 The pin keeps our knight safe. Still, living on the edge is dangerous in the long run. The way back to more central grounds will usually be via c4 - let's have a look. 13..xe5 Or 13.Rd1 Rc8 14.Ne5 Nc4 , leading to the same variation.

13...Qc8 The rook leaves the vulnerable diagonal and covers the crucial c4-square for our adventurous knight. 14.Qd1 .xc4 And we have successfully evacuated our knight, giving us good play after 15.Nxc4 Rxc4 16.Qxa7 O-O , when White still has to worry about the b4-pawn. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4. g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7

[21] **8..xxc4** White's idea behind this move is to play Bf4 and Nd6 quickly. During my research for Keep it Simple 1.d4*, I examined this line but quickly found that Black only needs to know one key point to defuse this plan. 8...cxd4 We grab the important centre pawn first. 9.Kf4 Ke7 Here Black has a good alternative in 9...Nd5 , after which 10.Nd6+ Bxd6 11.Bxd6 Nde7 will enable castling after all. However, White has reasonable compensation for the pawn in this line. If you don't mind defending for a pawn, this line comes into consideration. My choice is 9...Be7, which has a different approach. 10..xd6+

Elf8 We give up the b-pawn, but gain valuable time. 11..xxb7 O&b6 12..xd6 O&c5 This looks best. We can't play 12...e5?? , as 13.Nc4 Qc5 14.Nxe5 wins for White. The position after 12...Qc5 has been reached in several games, all

between GM-level players. The whole line of 7.Ne5 and 8.Nxc4 is not something you'd meet in your local club tournament. Therefore I cut the trainable line here and show some possible ideas to illustrate matters. White can play CCStartFENCCr4k1r/p2bbppp/2nNpn2/2q5/3p1B2/6P1/PP2PPBP/RN1Q1RK1 w - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.Ne4 , but 13...Nxe4 14.Bxe4 e5 15.Bd2 f5 gives us many valuable moves with the gain of tempo. A much more sophisticated try is CCStartFENCCr4k1r/p2bbppp/2nNpn2/2q5/3p1B2/6P1/PP2PPBP/RN1Q1RK1 w - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.Qb3!? , when 13...Bxd6 14.Rc1 Qb4 gives us equal chances, too. Finally, White could try to make a draw with CCStartFENCCr4k1r/p2bbppp/2nNpn2/2q5/3p1B2/6P1/PP2PPBP/RN1Q1RK1 w - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.Nb7 , but we can avoid a repetition with 13...Qb4 or 13...Qf5 if we want to fight for the win. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7

8..xa3 A very logical move, getting the knight out to capture on c4. White can also play 8.Nd2 with the same idea, when 8...cxd4 9.Ndxc4 leads to the same positions. 8...cxd4 Alright, we have two extra pawns... 9..xaxc4 Well, the second extra pawns didn't stay on the board for very long, but we still have d4. White has compensation for the material loss, seeing that White's pieces are very active. Quite often, this pressure is enough to win back d4. Our job is to neutralize White's activity and use the extra pawn or return it under favourable or at least fair circumstances. 9...Ke7 I recommend playing this move. Black's primary choice is between my suggestion and 9...Bc5 . I think 9..Be7 is reliable and a bit less effort to study, in comparison. White's typical moves to increase the pressure are Bf4 and Qb3. After 9...Be7, these two moves are the ones to check, leading to different scenarios. Black is fine, but it helps a lot to know the following lines, in particular after 10.Qb3 , which is what I recommended in KIS 1.d4 . We reply 10...Qc7 , which leads to interesting tactical play. The move CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/pp1bbppp/2n1pn2/4N3/2Np4/6P1/PP2PPBP/R1BQ1RK1 w kq - 1 10CCEndFENCC 10.Bf4 is different, as it prepares to play Qb3 next when ...Qc7 is not possible anymore. We need to play the most precise move to address Qb3, which is 10...Rc8. Let's have a look at the details. 10.Kf4 White prepares to play Qb3 next, when ...Qc7 is not possible anymore.

[10.O&b3 This is the move I recommended in Keep it Simple: 1.d4. Black needs to be precise against it, so it's advisable to study the complications that now arise. O&c7 The first point to remember is that 10...Qc7 is best, as 11.Bf4 is answered with 11...Nh5! , when 12.Nxc6 Nxf4! is the point.

A) 11.Kf4 White's sharpest move. .xh5 The start of fun complications. We want to eliminate the bishop on f4 and invite the capture on c6. 12..xxc6 .xxf4 13..xxe7 .xxg2 A cool sequence. Now BOTH knights are trapped in the enemy camp. As you can imagine, this whole line is not going to happen often in your games. It has occurred on the master level, but only extremely well-prepared opponents would get that far. So why do we need to check it? Well, I have

written Keep It Simple: 1.d4, and I recommend going into this line for White there! I couldn't find an advantage for White, but I felt it is a good line to allow, as Black will rarely know the theory up to the current position, let alone even further. Black is fine here, but it's good to know some details. Maybe you'll play against someone who knows Keep It Simple: 1.d4 and tests your knowledge - better be ready! I'd like to add that it can be much fun to analyze crazy-looking positions like this. This is not just about opening knowledge but about improving calculation and understanding dynamics. Alright, so what's going on here? We have to check some moves now, but two general ideas first: ACCEndBracketCC We are ready to take the knight on e7 with the king, but the reply Qa3+ or Qb4+ may be annoying. It is an idea to play ...Qc5 first and only then take on e7 on the next move. This comes into play after CCStartFENCCr3k2r/ppqbNppp/4p3/8/2Np4/1Q4P1/PP2PPnP/R4RK1 w kq - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.Kxg2?! Qc5! It's possible just to take the knight, but CCStartFENCCr3k2r/ppqbNppp/4p3/8/2Np4/1Q4P1/PP2PPKP/R4R2 b kq - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14...Kxe7 15.Qa3+ Kf6 16.Qf3 is an immediate draw. After 14...Qc5! we get to take e7 next and can play for an advantage. BCCEndBracketCC Our knight on g2 won't get out anyway. It is an idea to play ...Nf4, forcing White to take it. This fun idea comes into play when White moves a rook to the c-file now. 14.Qac1 White plays a helpful move and just ignores the knight on g2. The following idea against 14.Rac1 would also work against 14. Rfc1. *(14.Qfd1* That's the move I recommended in Keep it Simple 1.d4. If forces Black to know/find the best reply. *O&c5* The idea of White's move is revealed after 14...Kxe7? 15.Qb4+ Kf6 16.Rxd4 , which gives White a strong attack. We already know the ...Qc5 resource from CCStartFENCCr3k2r/ ppqbNppp/4p3/8/2Np4/1Q4P1/PP2PPnP/R4RK1 w kq - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14. Kxg2?! Qc5! , when it is the most precise move. *15.O&xb7* This is the move I recommended in Keep it Simple 1.d4. It keeps the game going, but White has alternatives that often end in draws. ACCEndBracketCC 15.Rac1 Kxe7 16. Nd2 Qb6 17.Qa3+ Qd6 18.Rc5 Qa6 19.Ra5+ Qd6 with a repetition. BCCEndBracketCC 15.Rxd4 Qxd4 16.Rd1 Qc5 17.Rxd7 I mentioned this line in Keep it Simple: 1. d4 and continued with 17...Kxd7 , which is an easy draw for White. Here 17...b5! forces White to find some tough moves to make the draw. *Elxe7* Let's stop the trainable here. I think Black has equal chances here, but it has been a fun ride! Of course, it is possible to analyze even further from here, but I feel it is too much in the context of our repertoire. The main reason for going that deep is my background story of writing about this line from White's perspective. You are unlikely ever to reach the final positions, as opponents will deviate earlier. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7 *)* 14....xf4 This is not the only good move available, but the line I like most. We give up the stranded knight but activate the queen in the process. 15.gxf4 O&xf4 The point of the ...Nf4!-operation is that now we threaten ...Qg5+ and taking the e7-knight next. It looks like White now needs to go for 16.Qb4

Qg5+ 17.Kh1 Qxe7 18.Nd6+ Kf8 19.Qxb7 Rd8 , when Black is still a pawn up, but White seems to have enough play to compensate for the material deficit. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7;

B) 11..xxc6 This is White's alternative to 11.Bf4. The following sequence of moves is quite forced. 11...Kxc6 12.Kf4 O&d8 This is the best square for the queen. If 12...Qc8? then 13.Rac1 is annoying to face. 13.Kxc6+ bxc6 14..xe5 c5 We want to keep our extra pawn. Now White can spoil our castling rights, but it is not enough to claim more than compensation for the pawn. 15.O&a4+ Elf8 The move 15...Nd7 is not terrible, but a bit passive. We don't mind the temporary inconvenience of the king on f8, as we get some active ideas in return CCStartBracketCCcompared to 15...Nd7CCEndBracketCC . Now ...Qd5/...Qe8 or ...Nd5 are options for us. We can improve our king position with ideas like ...h6 and ...g5, or ...h5 and ...g6, freeing the g7-square for the king. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7]

10...Qc8 We need to play the most precise move to address Qb3, which is 10...Rc8. Our idea is to answer Qb3 with ...Nd5, which works best with the rook already on c8. It's helpful to see the difference after 10...O-O 11.Qb3 Nd5? , when 12.Qxb7 Nxe5 13.Nxe5 leads to a deadly double attack on our bishop and rook. After 10...Rc8, we'll examine 11.Nxd7 and 11.Qb3. White will win back the pawn in both cases, but we'll equalize without any problems. 11..xxd7 White starts an immediate operation to regain the pawn.

[11.O&b3 A key element of White's play, but we are perfectly set to meet this move now. .xd5 We return the b7-pawn with this move but get equal chances in the resulting positions. 12.O&xb7 After 12.Nxd7 it's best to play 12...Nxf4 . Getting the strong bishop on f4 is a nice accomplishment. .xxe5 13..xxe5 Qc7 It's best to start with this move. We'd like to take on f4, but after 13...Nxf4 14.gxf4 Rc7 White has 15.Qe4 , which is a more attractive scenario for White than after 13...Rc7, when the queen has to choose a worse square. 14.O&a6 Or 14.Qb3 Nxf4 15.gxf4 O-O , with similar play. .xxf4 15.gxf4 0-0 We have equal chances in this position. White's minor pieces are active, but we have the bishops and White's pawn structure is not ideal. White has the option to take on d7 and create a scenario with opposite-coloured bishops. This could be rather drawish if queens are exchanged, but with queens on the board, there are some chances for Black to create some play on the dark squares CCStartBracketCCattacking the pawn on f4, for exampleCCEndBracketCC. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7]

11...O&xd7 This is a lot safer than 11...Nxd7 12.Nd6+ Bxd6 13.Bxd6 . In this line, White has too much compensation for my taste. It is a playable option if you want to up the stakes. 11...Qxd7 is more reliable but does not offer many winning chances against good play. 12..xe5 White removes the c6-knight, the key defender of the d4-pawn. 12....xxe5 13.Kxe5 O&b5 It's useful to remember this move, as it is not so easy to prove equal chances with other moves. Now White can't play 14.Bxd4?? , as 14...Rd8! creates a deadly pin. 14.O&xd4

0-0 We have equal chances here. White's bishop pair looks great, but it is not well organized. We currently attack the e2-pawn and have ideas like: ...Rfd8, ...Rc4 and knight moves to d7 and even g4 in store. White's setup of Qd4 and Be5 is not stable, giving us many tactical chances. One line to illustrate matters is 15. Bf3 Rfd8 16.Qf4 Rc4 17.Qe3 Nd5 , when our pieces are very active. White could try CCStartFENCC2r2rk1/pp2bppp/4pn2/1q2B3/3Q4/6P1/PP2PPBP/R4RK1 w - - 1 15CCEndFENCC 15.e3 , but 15...Rfd8 or the even more forcing 15...Ng4 are fine for us. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5. bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7

22 **9.Kxc6+** bxc6 The tripled pawns look funny, but we are a pawn up, and d4 is attacked. We were also able to trade our problem bishop on c8 for White's star piece on g2. 10.dxc5 White has also tried 10.Qa4 , but 10...cxd4 11.Qxc6+ Nd7 is a simple and good response. After 12.Qxc4 White restores material equality, but we get equal chances with any normal move, like 12...e5 or 12... Qb6 . We have a fair share of space CCStartBracketCCd4-pawnCCEndBracketCC and open files on the queenside. In the long run, White's king could also feel a bit insecure, as the g2-bishop is missing.
10...O&xd1 11.Qxd1 Kxc5 Alright, we have kept the extra pawn for the moment. How can White try to recover it? It is important to note that a possible ...Rb8 will attack b2, which makes developing the c1-bishop problematic. The c4-pawn prevents a pawn move to b3, too. 12..xd2 This looks best but is met by an attractive answer. 12...0-0-0 Sometimes, it's easy to forget that queenside castling is still possible after there has been that much action already on the queenside. It is a strong move, connecting rooks and covering the c4-pawn due to the pin. Now White only has one playable move! 13.Qf1 The only move that White has available. Otherwise, we'd play ...Bb4 or ...Ne4, putting deadly pressure on the pinned knight. 13...c3 Finally, we return the pawn on our terms. There was no way to keep it, as 13...Rd5 14.e3 shows. I decided to stop the trainable line here, as after 14.bxc3 Black is fine with many moves. The pawn structure is symmetrical, but our pieces are slightly more active. White's position is very solid, though - chances are equal. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.bg2 c5 6.O-O Nc6 7

23 **7.dxc5** Taking the pawn is probably more interesting for White than 7.Bg2. Still, we have more than one good option against it. 7...O&c7 It's also possible to play 7...Nc6. Black intends to play ...Qa5+ next, regaining the pawn. It's tough to decide between 7...Nc6 and 7...Qc7; both look perfectly acceptable. I went for the queen move because it is a bit more combative. In the ...Qa5xc5 lines, you often have to trade queens, leading to less exciting play. With 7...Qc7, we tempt White into playing 8.b4. 8.b4 Critical, but risky. More circumspect is 8.Bg2 Bxc5 9.Be3 Na6 , leading to equal chances. 8...b5 Not obvious at all, but it is a strong move! We gain a tempo and want to play ...a5 next to attack the b4-

pawn. 9.Kf4 A fun reply! A lame move like 9.Qd3 Nc6 10.a3 a5 poses no problems and sees White on the defensive. 9...bxc4 Stockfish also suggest the unreal 9...a5!?! , but the simple capture is good enough. 10.Kxc7 a5 Breaking up White's queenside. 11.Kxa5 Kxc5 Black is in good shape here, with ...Nc6 coming next. We will regain a pawn on the queenside and have equal chances. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.Qa4+ #2

24 **9.0-0** Qc8 Black has an active position and easy moves to play. Stockfish now thinks White's best is 10.Qd1 , which does not look too scary 😉. Against this move, we could play 10...cxd4 11.Nxd4 Nc5 . Moves like ...Be7, ...Qb6 and ... O-O are a natural way to complete development and give us good play on the open files. 10. Queen's Gambit: The Catala-4.g3 dxc4 5.Qa4+ #1

25 **5.Kf4** A fairly rare move at this point. If White wants to develop their bishop, they usually go for 5.Bg5. Our reply to 5.Bf4 is no surprise. 5...dxc4 That was the idea of 4...a6. 6.e3 The only good move. After 6.a4 Nc6! Black is in good shape, which is very similar tothe line CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.a4 Nc6! . 6...b5 7.a4 White needs to get something on the queenside quickly. We are a pawn up, and we have a large advantage if we manage to consolidate it. 7...b4 As mentioned, the move 5.Bf4 is very rare. Therefore I like to have a good but not too complex solution. After 7...b4, Black has a good position without any hassle or further moves to learn. There is a more exciting alternative in 7...c6!? , when 8.axb5 cxb5 9.Nxb5 axb5 10.Rxa8 Bb4+ gives Black ample compensation. This is, of course, similar to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e3 b5 , but with the bishop on f4 instead. You can analyze the exchange sacrifice for fun if you are interested, but it's not practical for a repertoire to learn it - you might never get it on the board. Briefly back to 7...b4. White may move the knight to a2 or b1. In both cases, we will attack the centre with ...c5 and develop easily with ...Bb7. White has lost time with multiple knight moves. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky - 5.Bf4

5.c5 The pawn advance looks like White's best try besides the main move 5.cxd5 . White uses the fact that we can't capture with the a-pawn after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/2Pp4/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5...b6 6.cxb6 . This is a key difference to the naive CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.c5? when 3...b6 4.cxb6 axb6 is possible and excellent for Black. 5...b6 Attacking the advanced pawn is best. We can't waste time and give White time to possibly support the pawn. After 5...b6, White has to capture, as 6.b4? a5 fails. 6.cxb6 c5 A better move than 6...cxb6, after which we'd be forced to play a symmetrical

pawn structure CCStartBracketCCSlav Exchange typeCCEndBracketCC with a somewhat passive c8-bishop. Playing 6...c5 is better, as we argue that we'll get the b6-pawn anyway. Note that we won't take the pawn with the queen most of the time but rather play ...Nbd7xb6 to get the job done. This will happen if White plays an unambitious move like 7.e3 when 7...Nbd7 looks best. Instead 7...Qxb6?! 8.Na4 is an unnecessary concession. The two critical moves that we have to check now are 7.Bf4 and 7.Qb3. 7.O&b3 White covers the pawn and threatens b6-b7, winning a piece.

[7.Kf4 Maybe the most testing move. White develops the bishop to an active square and threatens Bc7. Kd6 The best way to stop Bc7. 8.Kxd6 O&xd6 9.dxc5 White has a concrete idea in mind. After our forced recapture 9...Qxc5 the move 10.Qd4 is planned. O&xc5 10.O&d4 A strong move. White centralizes the queen with a tempo gain. We only have one good reply. O&d6 More or less forced. GM Michael Prusikin already analyzed this position in his book, released in early 2021. There was no game sample at the time, but now, some months later, it occurred at least twice. White has an aggressive and a more conservative idea now. Let's check 11.e4!? and 11.e3. 11.e4 The sharp alternative, but it leads to nothing for White. The following line is complicated but necessary to know to fight 11.e4 correctly. *(11.e3* White's more conservative option. Black now has two satisfactory ways to regain the b6-pawn. *0-0* This was played in the online rapid game between Anish Giri and Le Quang Liem. Black castles first, then intends to get the pawn back with ...Nbd7 and ...Nxb6, assisted by ...Rb8, if needed. Starting with CCStartFENCCrnb1k2r/5ppp/pP1qpn2/3p4/3Q4/2N1PN2/PP3PPP/R3KB1R b KQkq - 0 11CCEndFENCC 11...Nbd7 is also possible and likely will lead to the same positions. Another possibility is Prusikin's CCStartFENCCrnb1k2r/5ppp/pP1qpn2/3p4/3Q4/2N1PN2/PP3PPP/R3KB1R b KQkq - 0 11CCEndFENCC 11...Nc6 12.Qd2 O-O , with ...Bd7 and ...Rfb8 coming next. The choice is probably a matter of taste. I like ...Nbd7 more, as it is more similar to other variations in the 5.c4 complex. *12.Ke2 .xbd7 13..xa4* Giri played 13.O-O , when 13...e5 14.Qd2 Nxb6 was fine for Black. The material balance is restored, and Black enjoys an attractive centre. *Qb8* We'll get the pawn back and have no problems at all. A key idea to know is that the c8-bishop will often get into the game via a6 after ...a6-a5 has been played first. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.c5 #3 *)* 11....xc6 12.O&e3 The critical move. 12. Qd2 d4 is fine for Black, as White lacks the idea CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/5ppp/pPnqpn2/3p4/3QP3/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R3KB1R w KQkq - 1 12CCEndFENCC 12. Qe3 d4 13.e5! . dxe4 The move 12...d4 is very tempting, but it doesn't win material. After the crazy sequence 13.e5 Qb4 14.Nxd4! Nxd4 15.O-O-O Nf5 16.Qf3 Nd5 17.Nxd5 exd5 18.Qxd5 O-O 19.Qxa8 Black is saved by the miracle move 19...Ne3!! , when 20.fxe3 Qc5+ 21.Kd2 Qb4+ 22.Kc1 Qc5+ could end in a draw, but 23.Kb1 Bf5+ 24.Bd3 would continue the game. I checked this deep into the endgame, and it should end in a draw. It's very impractical to learn this many moves and only have a draw in the end. Taking on

e4 is a much simpler solution. 13..xd2 After 13.Nxe4 Qb4+ we'll easily recoup the b-pawn, for example after 14.Nc3 Nd5 . .xb4 This looks like the cleanest solution. We threaten ...Nc2+ and ...Nbd5, taking aim at the b-pawn. 14.Qc1 .xbd5 Black is fine, as White has no good way to keep the b-pawn. A possible continuation is 15.Ndxe4 Nxe4 16.Qxe4 O-O , when we'll pick up the pawn soon. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.c5 #2]

7...Kd7 A reliable solution, avoiding the b6-b7 fork and threatening ...c5-c4, which pushes White's queen away. Stockfish also likes the funny move 7...Nc6 , which sets the trap 8.b7? Bxb7 9.Qxb7?? Na5! , winning the queen. The real test is 8.Na4 , when Black has to play 8...Na5 , which leads to somewhat strange positions. Black seems to be alright, but I felt it is an unnecessarily complicated solution. 8.e4 This must be the critical test. 8.b7 Ra7 is pointless, and CCStartFENCCrn1qkb1r/3b1ppp/pP2pn2/2pp4/3P4/1QN2N2/PP2PPPP/R1B1KB1R w KQkq - 2 8CCEndFENCC 8.e3 c4 9.Qc2 Qxb6 looks comfortable for Black. 8...c4 Don't play 8...dxe4?? 9.Bf4! , when White is winning on the spot. 9.O&c2 O&xb6 We have regained the pawn and reached an interesting yet unexplored position. 10.e5 At first, this move looks awkward for Black. What to do with the attacked knight? Before we look at the correct reply, a word about 10.exd5 , when 10...exd5 11.Bg5 Bb4 gives Black equal chances due to the ...Ne4 idea that the pin has prepared. 10....xg8 Returning home looks odd, but it's no problem at all for Black. We have ...Nc6 and ...Ne7CCStartBracketCCh6CCEndBracketCC-f5 ideas to put pressure on d4, which gives us fine play. The current lack in development is no issue, as the position is completely closed. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.c5 #1

[26] **6.e3** Clearly less testing than 6.e4. Our response remains the same: cover the pawn with ...b5! 6...b5 7.a4 White needs to get some concrete play on the road and attacks our b5-pawn. Against slow moves, we develop CCStartBracketCC... Bb7, ...Nbd7 and ultimately ...c5CCEndBracketCC and are much better. Instead of 7.a4, White could also play 7.Bxf6 , which we answer with 7...gxf6! The doubled pawn is no weakness and helps to cover the important e5-square. We also need the queen in the centre and on the queenside. Throughout the next moves, White may always insert Bxf6, which we always answer with ...gxf6!

7...c6 At first, you'd think that White now can take twice on b5, as there is a pin on the a-file. Well, we have a cunning idea prepared against this... 8.axb5 cxb5 Now we'll check 9.Nxb5 and 9.Bxf6 - both will be answered with a powerful exchange sacrifice. 9.Kxf6

[9..xxb5 axb5 That's the big point of our concept. We give up the exchange in return for a powerful initiative. 10.Qxa8 Kb4+ Starting with 10...Bb7 and ...Bb4+ next is just as good and transposes. 11..xd2 Kb7 12.Qa1 White could insert 12. Bxf6 gxf6 , transposing to 9.Bxf6 in thecurrent chapter. e5 Black has huge compensation for the material. How should White defend? It's very tricky to navigate. After 13.Bxf6 , both 13...Qxf6 and CCStartFENCC1n1qk2r/1b3ppp/

5B2/1p2p3/1bpP4/4P3/1P1N1PPP/R2QKB1R b Kk - 0 13CCEndFENCC 13... gxf6 are fine. Taking with the pawn transposes to9.Bxf6, when the capture on f6 happened earlier. 13.Ke2 This move loses straight away, but the refutation is not obvious at all. A more obvious line is 13.dxe5 Bxd2+ 14.Qxd2 Qxd2+ 15.Kxd2 Ne4+ , when we pick up the g5-bishop. O&d5 This move is amazingly strong! We threaten ...Qxg2 and ...exd4 at the same time - the queen on d5 has an eye on the g5-bishop, too! 14.Kf3 e4 And Black is crashing through. After 15.Bxf6 exf3 16. Bxg7 fxg2 17.Rg1 Rg8 White's position is hopelessly discombobulated CCStartBracketCCyes, I needed to get this word in once!CCEndBracketCC. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e3 #2]

9...gxf6 We always take with the pawn. Here 9...Qxf6?? is particularly off due to 10. Nxb5 , when we can't sacrifice the exchange and are more or less lost. 10..xxb5 axb5 That's the big point of our concept. We give up the exchange in return for a powerful initiative. 11.Qxa8 Kb4+ Starting with 11...Bb7 and ...Bb4+ next is just as good and transposes. 12..xd2 Kb7 13.Qa1 e5 Black has great compensation for the exchange. It's tough to play White's position, as the knight is stuck in an annoying pin and Black's bishops are monsters. 14.O&h5 This move can be irritating. In some games, Black players didn't find the best reply. Here is some info about possible alternatives to illustrate the ideas. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCC1n1qk2r/1b3p1p/5p2/1p2p3/1bpP4/4P3/1P1N1PPP/R2QKB1R w Kk - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.dxe5? fxe5 is awful for White. The simple plan ...Nd7-c5-b3 is crushing CCStartBracketCCamongst others...CCEndBracketCC BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCC1n1qk2r/1b3p1p/5p2/1p2p3/1bpP4/4P3/1P1N1PPP/R2QKB1R w Kk - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.Be2 exd4 15.O-O dxe3 16.Nf3 exf2+ 17.Kh1 is the engine's best try at defence for White. We have three pawns for the exchange and are not concerned about this scenario. White has avoided Checkmate, though! 14...Kc6 Not exactly an intuitive move, but quickly pointed out by Stockfish. We couldn't take d4, as b5 was hanging with check - the bishop move renews the threat, and White has no great way to continue. White probably has to try 15.Qh4 , when 15...exd4 16.Qxd4 Qxd4! 17.exd4 O-O 18.Be2 Rd8 19.Rd1 Rxd4 gives Black a substantial advantage. It is instructive to see that our initiative persists even after the queen trade. The pin is just an incredible nuisance for White! 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e3 #1 **6.a4** White is concerned about ...b5 and invests a move to stop it. We have a strong reply that is rather non-typical in our repertoire, so it's worth particular notice. 6....xc6 In almost all cases, we want to play ...c5 at some point to attack the d-pawn. Here we place the knight in front of the c-pawn, but there is a method to this madness. We plan to play ...Na5!, covering the c4-pawn, and later still have ...c5 available. The knight on a5 is not just covering c4 but also having an eye on the weak b3-square, which is an important bonus. 7.e4 I am tempted to even use the question mark here instead of '?!'. White plays actively, but after 7...Na5 Black is better.

[7.e3 White's best way to restore material equality. .xa5 According to plan. Now White's choice is between 8.Nd2 and 8.Ne5, attacking the c-pawn once more. 8..xe5 White also has the similarly minded move 8.Nd2 , which we'll answer with 8...Bb4 and ...c5 next. The play often transposes to 8.Ne5 after White captures on c4 later. Kb4 The pin is even better than 8...c5 . Surprisingly, after 9.Bxc4!? White is in reasonable shape, as 9...Nxc4 10.Nxc4 is not easy to meet. The pin is even better than 8...c5. Surprisingly, after 9.Bxc4!? White is in reasonable shape, as 9...Nxc4 10.Nxc4 is not easy to meet. 9.Ke2 This is better than 9. Nxc4, which we cover inthe following trainable, but it can't trouble Black, of course. *(9..xxc4* The move White wants to play, but it has a surprising drawback. *O&d5* An unusual double attack! *10.Kxf6* The only move. After 10.Nxa5 Bxc3+ 11.bxc3 Qxa5 , we attack both the bishop and the pawn on c3, which wins instantly. *.xxc4 11.O&b3* After 11.Bxg7 Rg8 12.Bf6 Rg6 White is also struggling. *.xxe3* A fun tactic! I stop the trainable here, as the next moves are all completely forced. Now the only way to continue for both sides is 12.Qxb4 Nc2+ 13.Kd2 Nxb4 14. Nxd5 Nxd5 15.Bxg7 Rg8 16.Bh6 Bd7 , when Black is much better. We have targets on d4 and a4, and White's king is unsafe after we will have castled queenside. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.Bg5 dxc4 6.a4 #3 *)* 9...c5 10.dxc5 This is not the best move, but our best reply is not intuitive at all. After the better 10.O-O cxd4 11.exd4 I suggest avoiding ...Nb3 and rather focus on development with a quick ...O-O. White has a rather weak IQP, which gives us good chances. O&d5 An odd move, but it is very strong! White is in terrible shape now, as everything but 11.Bf4 loses instantly... and 11.Bf4 is still much better for Black! 11.Kf4 This is relatively best. After 11.Bxf6 gxf6 12.Nf3 Nb3 13.Rb1 Nxc5 or CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/1p3ppp/p3pn2/n1PqN1B1/Pbp5/2N1P3/1P2BPPP/ R2QK2R w KQkq - 1 11CCEndFENCC 11.Qxd5 Nxd5 Black is more or less winning on the spot. g5 12.Kg3 .xe4 And Black is a lot better. White can hang on with 13.Ng4 , but 13...Qxd1+ 14.Rxd1 Nxc3 15.bxc3 Bxc3+ wins some material, and White does not have enough compensation. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.Bg5 dxc4 6.a4 #2]

7....xa5 8.e5 Compared to 7.e3, White has no way to regain the pawn. They can't play 8.Ne5? , as 8...Nb3 highlights a key issue of 7.e4 - the d4-pawn is weak and falls. Pushing 8.e5 is the only interesting try, as otherwise we'd just break the pin with ...Be7 and would be a pawn up for nothing. 8...h6 Just as after CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3pn2/6B1/2pP4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/ R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 , this counterattacking idea defuses the pin. 9.Kh4 g5 10..xxg5 .xd5 This move is even stronger than the routine 10...hxg5 . If you don't remember 10...Nd5!, but play 10...hxg5 instead, nothing bad will happen. After 11.Bxg5 Be7 12.exf6 Bxf6 13.Bxf6 Qxf6 Black is still in good shape but won't have the chance to win quickly, as it might happen after 10...Nd5!. 11..xf3 White has to retreat. After 11.Nxf7?? Qxh4 12.Nxh8 Bb4 , we get a smashing attack and will pick up the stranded knight in the process. The following sequence shows this point:

13.Rc1 Bd7 14.Be2 O-O-O 15.Nf7 Rf8 and the knight has no way out.
11...Ke7 12.Kxe7 O&xe7 Black has a great position. We have the simple plan ...Bd7-c6 and ...O-O-O, putting enormous pressure on White. If they play Nd2 to attack the c-pawn, ...Qb4 will lend additional cover. 13.Ke2 Kd7 14.0-0 Kc6 Black is much better due to a range of factors. We can point to the weaknesses along the d-file CCStartBracketCC...O-O-O is coming soonCCEndBracketCC, or possible attacking chances on the g-file. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5. Bg5 dxc4 6.a4 #1

[27] **7.e5** The critical move, utilizing the pin. 7...h6 The counterattack on the bishop is the only way to save material. We enter some fascinating complications now that are not exactly 'Simple'. Given the course title, entering lines like that is always a tough decision for an author. In this specific case, there are good arguments in favour of allowing this line CCStartBracketCCwhen playing 4...a6, you already 'have signed up' for it, by the wayCCEndBracketCC. First of all, it's objectively good for Black. White might equalize with perfect play, but it's tough. We know the line; White most likely doesn't. If they'd known it, they wouldn't enter it in the first place. Finally, a good chess player needs to be somewhat versatile. Yes, it's OK to like positional and strategic chess, but having some sharp sound lines in your repertoire is fun and beneficial for general chess improvement. 8.Kh4 No choice, as 8.Bxf6 gxf6 gives Black the bishop pair on top of the extra pawn. 8...g5 Again, a forced move. 9..xxg5 Here 8.exf6 gxh4 is fantastic for Black. We'll pick up f6 and are material up, and White has nothing to show for the losses. 9...hxg5 10.Kxg5 .xbd7 This whole sequence after 7.e5 was more or less forced. This is a good moment for a comparison to the Botvinnik System. In the Botvinnik a similar position is reached: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 c6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Nxg5 hxg5 10.Bxg5 Nbd7 . The only difference is that we have ...a6 played instead of ...c6. This difference is substantial, as our bishop on b7 will enjoy an open diagonal. In the Botvinnik, White has two main moves: 11.exf6 and 11.g3. In our line, the move CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1p2/p3pn2/1p2P1B1/2pP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 11CCEndFENCC 11.g3? is just awful, as 11...Bb7 clearly shows. The only good moves for White are 11.exf6 or 11.Be2, intending Bf3 . I had a look at online games that reached the current position and found that CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1p2/p3pn2/1p2P1B1/2pP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 11CCEndFENCC 11.Ne4?? has been frequently played by White. Black can refute it in many ways, but 11...Bb4+ is good enough... White has no good reply. The move CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1p2/p3pn2/1p2P1B1/2pP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 11CCEndFENCC 11.Qf3?! is not quite as bad, but still dubious because of 11...Rb8 12.exf6 Bb7 , which gains a useful tempo. 11.exf6 White regains the

piece, a very natural choice.
[11.Ke2 White can't play 11.g3? Bb7 , so they try to reach the diagonal by different means. Kb7 We have reached a critical position for the whole 5.Bg5 dxc4! Variation. Now White's best move is 12.exf6, which still keeps them in the game. I'd rather be Black, but objectively speaking, White seems to be alright. However, if White plays 11.Be2 to continue with 12.Bf3, this move is met by a tremendous blow.

A) 12.Kf3 This is the position you want to get on the board after 5.Bg5 dxc4 - now we get to play a cool move! .xxe5 Boom! That's a fun move to play... and it will certainly come as a nasty surprise! Black is now much better in all lines, but the only one worth exploring further is 13.Bxb7, which we cover in thefollowing trainable. Objectively speaking, 13.dxe5 is White's best move, but our advantage against it is rather simple to prove. 13.dxe5 White objectively best defence, but we are comfortably better against it, too. *(13.Kxb7* By engine standards, White is probably lost after this move. For Humans, however, things remain complicated. *.xd3+ 14.Elf1* It's fascinating to analyze this position. In ultra-sharp situations, very often, there is only one playable move. Here this is not the case; Black has many tempting options. *Qb8* This move looks like it's the most manageable for a human player, and it gives Black a large advantage. Stockfish actually evaluates 14...Bh6 as even slightly stronger, but the complications after this move are mind-boggling. I didn't want to flood you with lines up to move 20 but wanted a simpler solution - and 14...Rb8 is good enough. Still, it's a lot of fun to analyze 14...Bh6 - if you are interested, give it a go on your own. *15.Kc6+ Ele7* Our king is surprisingly safe on e7. The main feature of the position is our monster knight on d3, which is a terrible nuisance for White. *16.O&e2* This looks best, as White threatens Nd5+. Against other moves, we often have ...Bh6, getting the passive bishop in play, for example after 16.Be3 Bh6 . *Kg7 17.O&e3 Elf8* Now we are ready to unpin with ...Qd6 and have a substantial advantage, thanks to the d3-octopus. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 #6 *)* 13...O&xd1+ 14.Qxd1 Kxf3 15.gxf3 Here 15.Bxf6 Bxg2 doesn't help White, either. .xd7 16.f4 .xc5 We have a great endgame due to the monstrous knight that will land on d3. Our pawn majority on the queenside is much more dangerous than White's h-pawn. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 #5;

B) 12.exf6 White's best move, but not very likely to happen. If they play 11.Be2, the next move will be 12.Bf3, the consistent move. A more probable way to reach this position is CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/2pn1p2/p3pn2/1p2P1B1/2pP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 11CCEndFENCC 11.exf6 Bb7 12.Be2 , which feels more natural. 12...Kh6 Black has a ton of interesting alternatives, like 12...b4, 12...Bxg2 or 12...Nxf6. I think 12...Bh6 is a good solution and easy to play. After the trade on h6, we regain f6 and reach an interesting position with chances for both sides. 13.Kxh6 Qxh6 14.Kf3 There's no reasonable alternative for White, as we attacked g3. Kxf3 15.O&xf3 Qxf6

We have regained the pawn with a tempo. 16.O&e3 .xb6 Connecting the knight to the great d5-square. White needed to navigate a minefield to get here, so I am happy to play this unconventional position. We control d5 and will often castle queenside. We have advanced pawns on this side of the board, but White is far from engineering any attack on our king. In fact, White will likely castle kingside, and we have plenty of open files there for our own attacking ambitions. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 #4]

11...Kb7 12.d5 Here 12.Be2 looks best, whichwe cover via ¢¢StartFEN¢¢r1bqkb1r/2pn1p2/p3pn2/1p2P1B1/2pP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 1 11¢¢EndFEN¢¢ 11.Be2 Bb7 12.exf6 . The move 12.d5 tries to exploit the absence of a c6-pawn, but ultimately only leads to trouble for White. 12....xc5 We attack the d5-pawn and cover e6, enabling us to answer 13.dxe6 with 13...Nxe6 . 13.dxe6 .xxe6 14.O&xd8+ Qxd8 This endgame is great for Black. Our pieces are extremely active, and White's extra pawn on f6 is not relevant. Very likely, it will drop at some point due to lack of support. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 #3

[28] **9.Qxa8** Kxa8 10..xxb5 White wants to get the pawn back, but the resulting position is excellent for Black.

[10.e5 h6 11.Kd2 The typical sequence 11.Bh4 g5 is fine for Black, as usual in this line. The move 11.Bd2 is stronger, as White will regain the b5-pawn. .xd5 12..xxb5 .xb6 The final move to keep in mind. We cover the c4-pawn and enjoy a good position. Our a8-bishop is powerful, and we will have eternal control of the d5-square. Also, note that we can build up pressure against d4, for example, with ... Nc6-e7-f5. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 #2]

10...Kxe4 11.Kxc4 Kb4+ We develop the bishop with a tempo and castle next.

12..xc3 0-0 White is in some trouble here, as 13.O-O Bxf3 14.Qxf3 Qxd4 loses a pawn. The pressure on d4 is awkward and can easily be increased with ...Nc6, for example, after 13.Be2 Nc6 14.Be3 Nd5 15.Qc1 Nde7 , when the d4-pawn is doomed. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 #1

[29] **6.Kf4** Against Bf4 lines in the Carlsbad, we have a standard reaction. 6...Kd6 I always recommend playing ...Bd6 against early Bf4 moves in the Carlsbad structure. A similar line we examine is ¢¢StartFEN¢¢rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1¢¢EndFEN¢¢ 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 Bd6 . After 6... Bd6 White mostly plays 7.Bxd6 or 7.Bg3, but we'll also have a quick look at the slightly odd 7.Be5. 7.Ke5 This slightly odd move is not frequently played, but it can be irritating if it hits you by surprise. White is threatening Bxf6, so we need to cover d5.

[7.Kg3 This move is not dangerous, but it asks a question that we should talk about. Should we take on g3 or not? White has not castled yet, so we'd open the h-file. Before discussing further, I'd like to briefly mention 7.Bxd6 , which is easy to handle. After 7...Qxd6 8.e3 O-O , we can easily develop with ...Bf5 or ...Bg4,

reaching a comfortable version of the Carlsbad structure. Kxg3 It's possible to delay the capture and play 7...c6 first, for example. My main point is to show that opening the h-file is no big deal, which is why I feature the capture right away on move 7. 8.hxg3 c6 It's possible to play 8...O-O , as White has no real attack. Still, I suggest delaying kingside castling and first play moves that are useful anyway. In the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1pp2ppp/p4n2/3p4/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bg5 Be6 7.e3 Nbd7 8.Bd3 Bd6 , we use the formation of a bishop on e6 and the knight on d7. This works well here, too. 9.e3 Ke6 10.Kd3 .xbd7 11.O&c2 After 11.Qb3 we have 11...Qb6 , while CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1p1n1ppp/p1p1bn2/3p4/3P4/2NBPNP1/PP3PP1/R2QK2R w KQkq - 3 11CCEndFENCC 11.Ng5 Qe7 leads nowhere for White. O&e7 We have plenty of useful moves to play instead of castling kingside. If White goes queenside, we can do the same! 12.0-0-0 0-0-0 Why not? We'll place the king on b8 and later operate with the idea to prepare ...Bf5 by ...g6 and getting a knight to d6. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bf4 #2]

7...Ke6 I like this move, which is more ambitious than 7...c6. This wouldn't be a bad choice, either. 8.e3 We'll answer this move with 8...Nc6, putting more pressure on e5. If White goes CCStartFENCCrn1qk2r/1pp2ppp/p2bbn2/3pB3/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 4 8CCEndFENCC 8.Qb3 , the reply 8...Nc6! is still possible and strong, as 9.Qxb7?? Na5 traps the queen! 8....xc6 A slightly unusual setup, but it makes sense to put pressure on the bishop. The knight is not well-placed on c6 in the long run but can be re-routed via e7 later. A knight on e7 helps to prepare...Bf5 and may switch to the square d6 later, where it has an excellent spot. 9.Ke2 0-0 10.0-0 .xe4 Black has equal chances in this position. After 11.Bxd6 Nxd6 , our knight is well-positioned on d6. White can take on e4, but CCStartFENCCr2q1rk1/1pp2ppp/p1nbb3/3pB3/3Pn3/2N1PN2/PP2BPPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 5 11CCEndFENCC 11.Nxe4 dxe4 12.Bxd6 Qxd6 13.Nd2 f5 gives us an interesting game, too. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bf4 #1

30 **7.Kxf6** Giving up the bishop unprovoked makes little sense strategically, but it has a concrete tactical idea. After 7...Qxf6 8.Qb3 , both pawns on b7 and d5 are attacked. The following lines are all fine for Black but note that we are significantly behind in development in some cases. This makes it a tricky line to face, so studying it carefully is recommended. 7...O&xf6 8.O&b3 The only move that makes any sense in connection with the voluntary capture. How do we save our pawns now? 8...Qa7 This funny move covers b7, but what about d5? We need to examine this move, of course. After 9.Nxd5 Qd8 10.e4 c6 we set up a pin, but 11.Qb6 leads to further complications that are fine for Black. White has also tested slower moves, like 9.a3 or 9.g3. 9.g3 White has tried three slow moves in the position after 8...Qxf6: 9.g3, 9.e3 and 9.a3. We'll examine 9.g3, as it is the most popular among the three, and it has a pitfall to avoid. The common point of all three is that we should simply play ...Qd8 in

reply, supporting the pawn on d5 again. Next on the agenda is ...c6 and ...Nd7, catching up in development. We'll examine this scenario for 9.g3, but Black's setup would be essentially the same against 9.e3 or 9.a3.

[9..xxd5 White rarely dares taking this pawn, but we need to check why it might be dubious. The following sequence of moves is extremely long, but forced for both sides. O&d8 We attack the knight and force White's reply. 10.e4 c6 This is probably the position that White envisioned while thinking about 9.Nxd5, discarding the pawn grab. It looks like Black is winning a piece, but that's not the end of the story. 11.O&b6 This saves the material, but White won't have an easy life after the best reply. cxd5 We sacrifice the exchange for excellent compensation. 12.O&xa7 dxe4 13..xd2 No choice for White. Kb4 The best move. We quickly develop and prepare castling. White needs to be very precise now, as our attack is very dangerous. 14.O&xb7 The only move that does not lose instantly! Here are some moves that give Black a quick win: AĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊ1n1qk2r/Qp3ppp/p3b3/8/1b1Pp3/8/PP1N1PPP/R3KB1R w KQk - 2 14ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 14.O-O-O Qc7+ 15.Kb1 O-O We threaten ...Nc6, and 16. Rc1 Bxa2+ doesn't help. BĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊ1n1qk2r/Qp3ppp/p3b3/8/1b1Pp3/8/PP1N1PPP/R3KB1R w KQk - 2 14ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 14.Rd1 O-O 15.Qxb7 Qxd4 16.a3 e3 gives Black a winning attack, too. Kxd2+ 15.Elxd2 0-0 Better than 15...Qxd4+ 15.Ke1 , when Black does not have a promising check. It's better to castle first. After 15...O-O Black's attack is promising and tough to defend against. I'd like to show three possible lines to illustrate matters. AĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊ1n1q1rk1/1Q3ppp/p3b3/8/3Pp3/8/PP1K1PPP/R4B1R w - - 1 16ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 16.Qxe4 Qa5+ 17.Kd1 Bb3+ 18. axb3 Qxa1+ 19.Ke2 Qxb2+ wins back the sacrificed material. There are alternatives along the way, though - many interesting attacking ideas to try. BĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊ1n1q1rk1/1Q3ppp/p3b3/8/3Pp3/8/PP1K1PPP/R4B1R w - - 1 16ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 16.Be2 Qa5+ 17.b4 Qg5+ 18.Ke1 Qxg2 also looks fine for Black. White's king will never be safe. CĊĊEndBracketĊĊ ĊĊStartFENĊĊ1n1q1rk1/1Q3ppp/p3b3/8/3Pp3/8/PP1K1PPP/R4B1R w - - 1 16ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 16.Qb4 Nc6 17.Qc3 Nxd4 also looks promising. I don't think it's necessary to look at more. Black has a promising attack after White's greedy pawn grab 9.Nxd5. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5. cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 Be6 7.Bxf6 #]

9...O&d8 Back home! We not only cover d5 but also prepare ...c6. The immediate 9...c6?? fails to 10.Qb6 . 10.h4 Now we get to the pitfall I mentioned earlier. White has just played the move 10.h4, which introduces the idea Ng5 into the position. How to react? 10...c6 This precise move is better than 10...h6 , when 11.e4! dxe4 12.d5! leads to a dangerous initiative for White. 11..xg5 Kc8 The retreat looks a bit crazy, but White has no way to benefit from our backward moves. Ultimately we'll play ...h6 and evict the knight on g5. After the sequence 12.e4 h6 13.Nf3 dxe4 14.Nxe4 Qa5+ 15.Nc3 Bd6 , we are finally ready to castle and coordinate our position. In the long run, we are fine due to the bishop

pair. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 Be6 7.Bxf6 # **7.O&b3** A critical try, but quite easily defused. We can simply ignore the attack on the pawn and offer a pawn sacrifice. 7....xbd7 The exclam is not just for the right pawn sacrifice but also for avoiding 7...Ra7? , which does not work due to the surprising blow 8.e4 . We don't need to know the details, but remember that 7.Qb3 is different from CCStartFENCCrn1qkb1r/1pp2ppp/p3bn2/3p2B1/3P4/2N2N2/PP2PPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 2 7CCEndFENCC 7.Bxf6 Qxf6 8.Qb3 , when 8...Ra7! is correct. 8.O&xb7 White's greedy response needs to be checked. If they play 8.e3 , the simple 8...Rb8 is fine for Black. We cover the pawn and are ready to complete development next. White's queen is not well-placed on b3, which renders the whole operation rather pointless. 8...Qb8 9.O&xa6 Qxb2 We have excellent compensation for the pawn. Strictly speaking, you don't need to know much more than that, as it's clear that White's position is unenviable. Still, I'd like to show one line that I find instructive. After 10.a3 we simply continue with our development and don't do anything too hectic. Our development advantage and active rook will always be enough to regain the pawn, at least. After 10...Be7 11.e3 O-O 12.Be2 Rb3 13.Na4 we can take a3, but 13...Qa8 is strong, too. Again, we easily regain the a-pawn and have an active piece placement. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 Be6 7.Qb3

[31] **8...Kd6** After our natural development 8...Bd6, it's a good moment to talk about the position. We have reached a Carlsbad structure, a familiar guest in our repertoire. A full chapter is dedicated to the lines starting with CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 . In this variation, White can elect to play a similar setup as he does here, involving the move Nf3. A sample line goes 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.Bd3 O-O 9.Nf3 , when we play 9...Ne4! while White's setup is almost the same, our piece placement is completely different. There is no way for us to achieve ...Ne4, for example. This is not a problem; it just means that we need to play differently, as one counterplay device CCStartBracketCC...Ne4!CCEndBracketCC is off the table. In general, the outpost square e4 is currently not well controlled by us, which we'll try to improve in the middlegame. Placing a knight on e4 is certainly a long-term goal. One key point to discuss is our light-squared bishop. Currently, the bishop mostly looks at its own pawns on f7 and d5 and has little scope for activity. It's tough for us to find a target to attack with the bishop, so usually, the best solution is to seek a trade of the piece, ideally against White's counterpart on d3. The way to work towards the trade is to get control of f5 and then play ...Bf5 at the end. A typical idea would be ...g6, followed by a manoeuvre of a knight to g7 or d6, usually the more active and better option. Once we have traded the bishops, we have better chances to control e4 and place a knight on the outpost. After our move 8...Bd6 White has tried many

moves. As the position does not have a forcing character, there is a wide scope for various move orders. White's main move is 9.O-O, but I'd like to talk about 9.Bf4 and 9.h3 for a moment. The move 9.Bf4 shows an idea that White can play for. They allow trading on f4, accepting a doubled pawn after CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1ppn1ppp/p2bbn2/3p2B1/3P4/2NBPN2/PP3PPP/R2QK2R w KQkq - 3 9CCEndFENCC 9.Bf4 Bxf4 10.exf4 . After this sequence White, all of a sudden has a huge threat: f4-f5 would win a piece, as our bishop has no available squares. We have a good reply, though. The move 10...Bg4! leads to a good game for Black, as we manage to get rid of our problem bishop and have damaged White's pawn structure in the process. This variation explains why White has tried the move 9.h3, stopping a possible ...Bg4. Therefore, we need to reckon with Bf4 on the next move, coming with a more significant effect. The way to play is CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1ppn1ppp/p2bbn2/3p2B1/3P4/2NBPN2/PP3PPP/R2QK2R w KQkq - 3 9CCEndFENCC 9.h3 c6! , when we are ready on answer 10.Bf4 with 10...Qc7 , avoiding the issues after ...Bxf4. In general, playing ... c6 next is almost always a good idea, as it allows ... Qc7 as a universal answer to Bf4 ideas at a later stage. 9.h3

[9.Kf4 We already talked about this move in the notes to 8...Bd6. Kxf4 10.exf4 Kg4 A crucial resource, otherwise our bishop would be in serious trouble. 11.O&e2+ Elf8 We have to avoid 11...Qe7? 12.Qxe7+ Kxe7 13.Ne5 , when White is much better. After 11...Kf8, we have navigated all the pitfalls and are in good shape. Our bishop can trade on f3, and the king position on f8 is no substantial problem, as ...g6 and ...Kg7 are an easy fix. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 Be6 7.e3 #2]

[9.0-0 White's most flexible move in a way. Castling queenside is no serious option, so you might as well get the king out of the centre right away and keep flexible otherwise. c6 Just play this first to be ready to answer Bf4 with ...Qc7.

A) 10.Kf4 White's most popular move, trying to trade our strong bishop. O&c7 The move we prepared with 9...c6. Now White trades on d6, in most cases. They have also tried to keep the tension and played 11.Qd2 in some games. We'll examine both options now. 11.O&d2 White maintains the tension and hopes that we'll take on f4. This is just hope, though. We have plenty of good moves to play instead, starting with ...O-O and ...Rfe8. At some point, White will probably take on d6 after all. *(11.Kxd6 O&xd6 12.h3* White is concerned about ...Bg4. *0-0* We have reached a very standard Carlsbad structure. At this point, I am going to stop the trainable, as there are many possible moves for White. Instead of thinking along the lines of 'What moves can they play?', the better approach is to understand general plans. The Chapter on the Carlsbad features the primary coverage in this regard, but here's the essence of it. White has their chances on the queenside, most using the so-called Minority Attack. The minority attack features the idea of playing b4-b5 and ultimately creating a weakness on Black's queenside. From the current position, a dream scenario for White would look like the following line, which features awful play by Black to

illustrate matters. After CCStartFENCCr4rk1/1p1n1ppp/p1pqbn2/3p4/3P4/2NBPN1P/PP3PP1/R2Q1RK1 w - - 1 13CCEndFENCC 13.a3 Rfe8 14.b4 h6 15.Rb1 Re7 16.a4 Rae8 17.b5 axb5 18.axb5 Rc8 19.bxc6 bxc6 Black has a weak, backward c-pawn and little to show for it. Black has played multiple stupid moves in this sequence, but it was just to showcase what a good outcome for White looks like. How should we battle the minority attack? Here's a key concept: after 13.a3 Rfe8 14.b4 we play 14...b5! We stop a further advance and prepare the knight tour ...Nb6-c4. When considering the ...b7-b5-block, it is crucial to check if you manage to place the knight on b6 or not. If you don't, the c-pawn will be a constant worry on a half-open file. A knight on c4 plugs the c-file and is an annoying intruder. If White captures a knight on c4, we will establish a protected passed pawn on c4. In a recent CCStartBracketCC2021CCEndBracketCC online rapid game between Aleksandra Goryachkina and Michael Adams, Black chances were demonstrated. After 14...b5, the game continued 15.Nd2 Nb6 16.Nb3 Nc4 , when Black has established the knight on the desired c4-outpost. Now White played 17.Nc5 , which looks perfectly normal, but lightning struck with 17... Bxh3! 18.gxh3 Nxe3! , when White had to defend carefully, which turned out to be too difficult with limited time. Sacrifices on e3 and h3 are not that uncommon once you have established the knight on c4. Black has additional ideas, though. The pawn play ...a6-a5 is pretty obvious, trying to open the a-file. Let's talk about one crucial plan that Black should know: we should try to trade our light-squared bishops. Our bishop is not a 'bad bishop' in the true sense of the word. Sometimes, it can be used as an attacker CCStartBracketCCsee the Adams game aboveCCEndBracketCC. However, trading it against White's d3-bishop is still very desirable. Without the bishops, the squares e4 and c4 are much weaker, which helps a lot. We have seen above that getting a knight to c4 is a good idea, and it's even more attractive if the knight can't be taken. How do we trade the bishops? Here's a prime example. After 13.Qc2 g6 14.Na4 Qe7 15. Rfc1 Ne8 16.Nc5 Nd6 17.Nxd7 Bxd7 18.Rab1 Bf5 19.Bxf5 Nxf5 20.Ne5 Nd6 Black has reached his goal in the online blitz game Sanan Sjugirov vs. Fabiano Caruana. The main takeaway is remembering the idea of ...g6 and the following knight tour to d6, which allowed ...Bf5 at the end. This may also be possible with a knight on g7, but d6 is the far better and active square. The position reached in the Caruana game is very similar to one of the classic games that demonstrates Black's chances in the Carlsbad, the gameBobotsov-Petrosian. We discuss the game and the crucial role of a knight on d6 in the introduction to the Carlsbad chapter. If you haven't read this chapter already, now is a perfect moment to start. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.cxd5 exd5 6. Bg5 Be6 7.e3 #5 *)* 11...0-0 12.h3 Qfe8 Now, it's not clear how White intends to make any headway. They have tried to play somewhat helpful waiting moves, like 13.Rfe1. In any case, I suggest playing ...g6 and ...Nh5 next to resolve the bishop trading issue. You can try to be 'more sophisticated' here, but I think this

plan works fine. 13.Qfe1 g6 Here 13...Nb6 is interesting, too. White might feel provoked to play 14.b3 , which we wouldn't mind seeing on the board. Still, let's have a look at the simple plan. 14.Qac1 .xh5 15.Kxd6 O&xd6 16.a3 .xhf6 We have reached a fairly standard Carlsbad position, similar to the mainline of this chapter. I discuss the strategy in the notes there and don't want to copy-paste the text. Please see the notes there for more information. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 Be6 7.e3 #4;

B) 10.O&c2 White stops 10...O-O? , as 11.Bxh7+ would be a cold shower. 10...O&c7 A good solution. We move the queen out of the pin and allow ...O-O, if desired. That's not the only point, though. White also needs to worry about their h2-pawn, as ...Bg4 is a serious idea. 11.Kh4 White prepares Bg3, trading our strong bishop. h6 A useful move, covering the g5-square. At some point, Ng5 would be annoying, so we stop the move straight away. 12.Kg3 Kxg3 13.hxg3 0-0 A good moment to take stock and discuss some ideas. White's primary idea is the minority attack, based on b4-b5. How do we react to it? After 14.b4 I see two good ways for Black. A**CC**EndBracket**CC** Allowing b4-b5 and reacting with c6-c5. This can be accomplished with **CC**StartFEN**CC**r4rk1/1pqn1pp1/p1p1bn1p/3p4/3P4/2NBPNP1/PPQ2PP1/R4RK1 w - - 1 14**CC**EndFEN**CC** 14.b4 a5 15.b5 c5 or **CC**StartFEN**CC**r4rk1/1pqn1pp1/2p1bn1p/p2p4/1P1P4/2NBPNP1/P1Q2PP1/R4RK1 w - - 0 15**CC**EndFEN**CC** 15.a3 axb4 16.axb4 Qd6 17.b5 c5 . In this scenario, White's b5-pawn is a cause of concern for White. We may get some pressure against this pawn, while our isolated d5-pawn is quite easy to defend. Note that in the endgame, the king often has the route f8-e7-d6-c5 directly attacking the b5-pawn. I know that it's a long while until this may happen, but I have won a fair share of games with precisely this plan! B**CC**EndBracket**CC** Blocking White's advance with ...b5. After **CC**StartFEN**CC**r4rk1/1pqn1pp1/p1p1bn1p/3p4/3P4/2NBPNP1/PPQ2PP1/R4RK1 w - - 1 14**CC**EndFEN**CC** 14.b4 Qd6 15.Rab1 b5 we stop a further advance and prepare the knight tour ...Nb6-c4. When considering the ... b5-block, it is crucial to check if you manage to place the knight on b6 or not. If you don't, the c-pawn will be a constant worry on a half-open file. A knight on c4 plugs the c-file and is an annoying intruder. If White captures a knight on c4, we will establish a protected passed pawn on c4. Note that in both cases, we have a plan on the queenside. It is not a given that we play defensively on this side of the board if White decides to start a minority attack. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 Be6 7.e3 #3]

9...c6 We want to be ready to answer Bf4 with ...Qc7. 10.Kf4 O&c7 Now White has the key decision whether to take on d6 or play 11.Qd2 to still keep the bishop on f4. We won't examine it any further, as ourmainline **CC**StartFEN**CC**r2qk2r/1ppn1ppp/p2bbn2/3p2B1/3P4/2NBPN2/PP3PPP/R2QK2R w KQkq - 3 9**CC**EndFEN**CC** 9.O-O c6 10.Bf4 Qc7 gets to the same crossroads when we'll discuss those two options. 9. Queen's Gambit: The Tricky -5.cxd5 exd5 6. Bg5 Be6 7.e3 #1

9.Kh4 The move 9.Bf4 would be the way to exploit Black's 8...h6 move order. 9...Kd6 10.0-0 c6 11.Kg3 Kxg3 12.hxg3 O&c7 13.b4 If White had played 13.Qc2 here, we'd reach a position that is part of our repertoire. We usually reach it via the sequence ƇƇStartFENƇƇr2qkb1r/1ppn1ppp/p3bn2/3p2B1/3P4/2NBPN2/PP3PPP/R2QK2R b KQkq - 2 8ƇƇEndFENƇƇ 8...Bd6 9.O-O c6 10.Qc2 h6 11.Bh4 Qc7 12.Bg3 Bxg3 13.hxg3 . This small difference does not change the situation at all. 13...0-0 14.a4 b5 Blocking White's advance with ...b5. Black stops a further advance and prepares the knight tour ...Nb6-c4. When considering the ...b5-block, it is crucial to check if you manage to place the knight on c4 or not. If you don't, the c-pawn will be a constant worry on a half-open file. A knight on c4 plugs the c-file is an annoying intruder. If White captures the knight on c4, we will establish a protected passed pawn on c4. This is perfectly illustrated in the game. 15.O&b3 A slightly imprecise move, as it allows the ...Nb6-c4 plan. After 15.a5! White controls b6 and prevents it for the moment. Has Black's idea failed? No, because 15...Ne8! is the way to go. The route via d6 to c4 is also a viable option, but it takes longer. It is important that Black has this route, as otherwise the knight won't arrive on c4. 15....xb6 Here we go, off to greener pastures. 16.Qa2 .xc4 17.Qfa1 Qab8 18.axb5 axb5 19.Qa7 We have reached a position with about equal chances. We like our knight on c4, but White controls the open a-file. Black's goal is to slowly start an initiative on the kingside, while keeping matters on the queenside under control. 19...O&d6 20..xe2 Kg4 21..xh2 Qbe8 22.O&c3 Kxe2 23.Kxe2 .xe4 24.O&e1 Qe6 Black is trying to provoke weaknesses on White's kingside. 25..xf1 g6 A later ...h5-h4 pawn push is possible. Note that White has the a-file, but attacks nothing. 26.Kf3 .xg5 27.Kg4 Qe7 28.Ke2 h5 29.Q1a6 Qfe8 30.Qxe7 Qxe7 Black has a slight advantage in this position. White doesn't have a clear active plan and has to defend. Still, after 31.Nh2 White holds on and Black has to look for new ideas. 31.Kxc4 White can't stand the knight any longer and takes it. It's a huge mistake, though, giving Black a strong passed pawn. 31...bxc4 A strange decision, as 31...dxc4! is much stronger. Black would continue with ...Ne4-f6-d5 and win easily. 32.f3 This phase of the game is rather mysterious, as 32.b5 is not rocket science. 32....xe6 Again odd, as 32...Rb7 would have stopped the b-pawn. 33.O&c3 White had 33.b5 , again. 33....xc7 Now it's over, as the white b-pawn is finally stopped. White has too many weaknesses to defend now. 34.Qa4 .xb5 35.O&d2 Elg7 36.Elf2 O&f6 37.Elg1 O&f5 38.Qa1 O&f6 39.Qa4 g5 40.Qa1 O&g6 41.Qe1 c3 42.O&d1 O&f6 43.g4 h4 44.Elh1 Elg8 45.O&d3 Qe6 46.Qa1 O&e7 47.Qb1 Elg7 48.O&f5 .xa3 49.Qc1 c2 50.O&d3 O&xb4 51.e4 dxe4 52.fxe4 O&b2 53.O&d2 Elf8 54.d5 cxd5 55.exd5 Qe2 56.O&xg5 O&e5 57.O&h6+ Elg8 58.d6 h3 59.d7 hxg2+ 60.Elg1 gxf1O&+ 61.Elxf1 O&b5 A funny final position, as 62.d8Q+ is answered by the 62...Re8+ , a counter-check. White resigned. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-Carlsbad Structure: Minority A

[32] **8....xh5** 9.Kxe7 O&xe7 10.Kd3 g6 11.0-0 0-0 12.Qab1 .xdf6 13.b4 a6 14.a4 .xg7 Preparing ...Bf5. Still, White is ready to continue the minority attack now. 15.b5 axb5 16.axb5 c5 The exclamation mark is a bit much, as other moves lead to a substantial disadvantage. Black shouldn't allow the capture on c6, as this leads to the scenario that we studied in the first sample. Instead, playing 16...c5 is a good option. 17.dxc5 O&xc5 The b5-pawn is now a cause of concern for White. Black may get some pressure against this pawn, while our isolated d5-pawn is quite easy to defend. Note that in the endgame, the king often has the route f8-e7-d6-c5 directly attacking the b5-pawn. 18..xd4 .xe6 The position is about equal, but White makes a mistake now. 19.Qfd1 That's a slight strategic mistake. White shouldn't allow the transformation after 19...Nxd4 20.exd4 , when White's d-pawn is a weakness. Instead, 19.Nxe6 would have kept the game in balance. 19....xxd4 20.exd4 O&a3 21.Qb3 O&d6 22.b6 It looks like an active move, but the b-pawn is weaker on b6 than on b5. 22...Kg4 23.f3 Kd7 24.O&f2 Qfc8 25.O&g3 This helps Black, but White's game was difficult already. The pieces on c3 and b3 are not well-placed, as the continuation after 25.Qg3 shows. 25...O&xg3 26.hxg3 Ka4 Black forced the trade. 27..xxa4 Qxa4 The pawns on d4 and b6 are much weaker than Black's pawns on d5 and b7. 28.Kb5 Qa2 29.Kd3 Qa4 30.Kb5 Qa5 31.Qe1 Elf8 32.Qe2 h5 33.Elf2 Qc1 34.Qbb2 Qc3 35.Ele1 Qaa3 36.Eld1 Qab3 37.Qec2 Qxc2 38.Elxc2 Qxb2+ 39.Elxb2 Ele7 40.Elc3 .xd7 41.Elb4 .xxb6 As mentioned: the b-pawn can turn out to be weak! 42.Elc5 .xa8 43.Ka4 .xc7 44.Kb3 g5 45.Ka2 h4 46.gxh4 gxh4 47.Kb1 .xe6+ 48.Elxd5 .xf4+ 49.Ele5 .xxg2 50.f4 h3 51.Ke4 f6+ 52.Elf5 .xe3+ 53.Elg6 b5 54.Elh5 f5 And White resigned. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-Carlsbad Structure: Minority A

9.Kd3 Qe8 10.h3 .xf8 Nigel Short is going for the traditional way to fight the Carlsbad, placing the knight on f8. The modern treatment often features more active ideas, using the knight on the queenside. 11.Kf4 a5 12.0-0 .xg6 13.Kh2 Kd6 14.Kxd6 O&xd6 15.Qfe1 Ke6 16.a3 The start of the Minority Attack. White wants to play b4-b5 and take on c6, creating a weak pawn on c6. In this game, White realized his plan on move 21. I don't want to focus on suggesting improvements for Black, but rather simply show how a bad outcome against the Minority Attack looks like. We'll focus on good defensive techniques later. 16...Qe7 17.Qab1 Qae8 18.b4 axb4 19.axb4 Kd7 20.b5 .xe4 21.bxc6 bxc6 Mission accomplished: Black has a weak pawn on c6 and no relevant counterplay. 22.Qb6 .xxc3 23.O&xc3 O&f6 24.Kxg6 A strong move. White reduces any potential counterplay by trading off pieces. 24...O&xg6 25.Elf1 f6 26.Qa1 O&h5 27..xe1 O&f5 28.Elg1 O&g5 29.Elh2 O&f5 30..xd3 O&e6 31.Elg1 Qc8 32.Qb7 Qf7 33.Qaa7 A nightmarish position for Black! 33...Ke8 34.O&b4 Qd8 35..xc5 O&c8 36.O&b6 h5 37.Qc7 Qxc7 38.Qxc7 O&a8 39.Qa7 O&c8 40.Qb7 Kf7 41.O&a7 Qf8 42..xd7 Qe8 43..xxf6+ gxf6 44.Qxf7 O&f5 45.Qg7+ Elh8 46.O&f7 And Black resigned. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-Carlsbad Structure: Minority A

33 **5..xf3** Our Rule 2 applies here, so here we go! 5...Kf5 Black is also fine with other moves. One example is 5...Nf6 , which would transpose to a variation of the current chapter that arises after CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 . Still, if we get the opportunity to develop the bishop to f5 without any problems, we should go for it. 6.Kf4 Kd6 Rule 3 in play. 7.Kxd6 O&xd6 Again Black has easily obtained equal chances. 8.e3 .xf6 9.Kd3 Kxd3 10.O&xd3 .xbd7 If you have studied the chapter intro, you have seen the famous gameM. Bobotsov vs. T.Petrosian, Lugano Olympiad 1968. Petrosian outplayed his opponent in an exemplary fashion, demonstrating the knight's strength on d6 later on. The structure and material distribution on the board is identical to the mentioned game. If you have not studied it yet, I suggest doing it right away. It helps to understand the strategy much better. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.cxd5 #2

5.Kf4 Kd6 6.Kxd6 Or 6.Bg3 Bf5 . when we successfully have developed the bishop. 6...O&xd6 7.O&c2 White stops ...Bf5 for the moment. After 7.e3 Bf5 , we again have accomplished the comfortable development of the bishop. 7....xe7 A nice move, again preparing ...Bf5. 8.e3 Kf5 Here we go again. We managed to get the bishop out quickly and have accomplished an important opening goal in this line. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.cxd5 #3

34 **9..xxd6+** O&xd6 We have equal chances in this position. White has an Isolated Queen's pawn, which is a handy long-term target. We enjoy good control of d5, too. White, on the other hand, has the bishop pair and easy development, which makes the game about even. 7. Queen's Gambit: Carlsbad (1-3.cxd5 #1

35 **2.c4** White goes for the Accelerated Panov, sometimes also called 'Steiner Variation'. We'll see that Black has good chances against it, but you need to know some concrete lines. Let's have a closer look at the situation on move 4. The next moves are more or less mandatory. 2...d5 3.exd5 Of course White can also start with 3.cxd5, which leads to the same positions after 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.exd5 Nf6 . 3...cxd5 4.cxd5 Here 4.d4 is a transposition to the Panov, discussed via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 in the current chapter. 4....xf6 After 4...Qxd5?! 5.Nc3 , we'd lose time with queen moves. It's much better to regain the pawn with the knight, if possible. Let's discuss the strategic outline of this position for a moment. White has weakened their pawn structure considerably CCStartBracketCCtwo isolated d-pawnsCCEndBracketCC but will get some rapid development in return. The struggle will usually be between White's active pieces and our long-term static advantages. Besides these general considerations, there is a very concrete issue: we have not yet regained the pawn on d5. White has two lines now, 5.Qa4+ and 5.Bb5+ , which make it difficult to restore material equality

quickly. It's well worth studying the details of these variations, not only to avoid trouble but to play for an advantage if White is imprecise. Besides the two checks, White may also continue with 5.Nc3 , returning the pawn and playing for rapid development. 5.O&a4+ Check! White's idea is very concrete: after the sensible replies 5...Nbd7 6.Nc3 and CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2pppp/5n2/3P4/Q7/8/PP1P1PPP/RNB1KBNR b KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5...Bd7 6.Qb3 White keeps the extra pawn for a while.

[5..xc3 White simply develops and returns the d5-pawn. .xxd5 6..xf3 White delays the move d2-d4 for a while in favour of rapid development. If White plays 6.d4, we will transpose to lines covered via the Panov move order. For example after 6.d4 Nc6 7.Nf3 a6 we'd transpose to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Nf3 a6 7.cxd5 Nxd5 . .xc6 A natural move. It is also possible to play 6...g6 first, as we'd like to fianchetto our bishop in any case. Against the IQP, this setup is almost always the best, as the bishop puts direct pressure on the pawn. I suggest starting with 6...Nc6, as we play in the same order in the Panov. After CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 we play 5...Nc6! , which is more precise than 5...g6. Now, after 6...Nc6, White may still transpose to the Panov with 7.d4. Most of the time, however, they develop the bishop to c4 or b5. 7.Kb5 White tries to exploit the pin on our knight. The other bishop move 7.Bc4 is also possible but presents no problem at all. After 7.Bc4 Nb6 8.Bb3 g6 9.O-O Bg7 10.d4 O-O we have developed harmoniously and have a clear target on d4. White has active pieces, so chances are about even. g6 We stick to our preferred fianchetto setup. 8.O&a4 We need to check this direct idea. Against slower moves like 8.O-O or CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp1npp1p/5np1/3P4/Q7/2N5/PP1P1PPP/R1B1KBNR w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 8.d4 , we continue with ...Bg7 and ...O-O. A general note: we are unconcerned about Bxc6+, as we'd get the bishop pair in return for our light pawn weakness on c6. O&d6 Just covering c6 to address White's threat. Stockfish suggests that 8...Nb6!? 9.Bxc6+ bxc6 10.Qxc6+ Bd7 gives Black sufficient compensation for the pawn. The bishop pair in an open position is often enough, so I tend to agree. Still, there is no need for a sacrifice at this point. 9..xe4 We need to look at this move, as there is a little trap to avoid. White may also play 9.O-O , when 9...Bg7 10.Ne4 Qc7 leads to a position that we will examine via 9.Ne4, too. O&e6 It is crucial to avoid 9...Qc7?! , when 10.Qd4! is an irritating reply. 10.0-0 Kg7 11.d4 White can play 11.Nc5 , but 11...Qd6 12.Ne4 Qc7 avoids repetition. 0-0 Please avoid 11...Qxe4?? 12.Bxc6+ , when White is winning. After 11...O-O, Black is in good shape. We have a good setup against the d4-pawn, with ...Rd8 next. In many cases, White will take on c6 to reduce the pressure against d4. This gives us another long-term asset: the pair of bishops. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.c4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.cxd5 Nf6]

[5.Kb5+ White plays this check to make it more difficult for us to regain the pawn.

.xbd7 Similar to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2pppp/5n2/3P4/8/8/PP1P1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 1 5CCEndFENCC 5.Qa4+ Nbd7 , interposing with the knight looks best. 6..xc3 White covers their extra pawn. a6 The exclam is not so much for objective strength of the move, but for making our life simpler by avoiding 6...g6 , when 7.d6!? or CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp1npp1p/5np1/1B1P4/8/2N5/PP1P1PPP/R1BQK1NR w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.d4 Bg7 8.d6!? are annoying to face. Black is not in bad shape in these lines, but it's tricky to play. I suggest 6...a6!, which often nets Black the bishop pair, as we will see. 7.Kxd7+ White surrenders the bishop pair immediately. *(7.O&a4* White doesn't want to give up the bishop pair just yet and continues with tactically based, ambitious play. Instead, they could play 7.Be2 , but Black has no problems after this move. The simple 7...Nb6 regains the pawn, but 7...b5 is possible, too. *g6* We continue with this natural way to prepare to castle. Once our king is out of the pin, White's pieces on b5 and a4 look a bit silly. *8..xf3 Kg7 9.0-0 0-0* Finally, we have left the centre and now threaten ...Nb6xd5. *10.Kxd7* White has to try this, as 10.Be2 Nb6 11.Qb3 Nfxd5 is very comfortable for Black. We can play against the Isolated d-pawn, while White has no dangerous piece play to speak of. *.xxd7* I suggest playing this recapture. In my mind, aiming for ...b5, ...Nb6 and ...Bb7 looks very harmonious. The two alternative moves look fine, too - it's mostly a matter of taste. *11.d4 b5 12.O&b3* 12.Nxb5?? is a blunder due to 12...Nb6! , winning a piece. *.xb6* We are ready to play ...Bb7 and ...Nxd5 next, giving us at least equal chances. We have the long term assets CCStartBracketCCbetter pawn structure and bishop pairCCEndBracketCC, so it's White who needs to be concerned about equality here. With active play involving a quick a2-a4, White gets enough to compensate for the mentioned deficits. A sample line is 13.a4 bxa4 14.Nxa4 Nxd5 15.Nc5 , when the active knight on c5 gives White some play. I'd still rather be Black, but this might be a matter of taste. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.c4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.cxd5 Nf6 *)* 7...O&xd7 Talking with the bishop might look more natural, but now we immediately threaten ...Nxd5. Also, note that ...b5 and Bb7 is s far more attractive prospect for the bishop than being on its starting diagonal. Now White should finally return the pawn with 8.Nf3 , as 8.Qb3?! already gives us better chances.

A) 8.O&b3 A principled move, clinging to the pawn... But it is risky. Let's have a look. O&g4 We would be perfectly fine after 8...b5 , but this queen sortie is even stronger. White has no convenient way to cover the g-pawn. 9.Elf1 Instead 9.g3 b5 looks even more uncomfortable for White. Our bishop will be excellently placed on the long diagonal. e5 I like this surprising move! Black has a good alternative in 9...b5 , which looks natural but is not as tricky for White to handle. 10.dxe6 Far too greedy! *(10..xf3* A sensible developing move. *Kd6* Our idea is simple: castling next and playing for an attack. White also has to reckon with ...e4 soon. Now we could look at many possible moves for White, but I feel that Black's game is much easier to conduct here in any case. I will show one fun line that illustrates our attacking chances. After 11.d4 exd4 12.

Qa4+ b5!? CCStartBracketCCinstead CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/1p3ppp/p2b1n2/3P4/Q2p2q1/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R1B2K1R b kq - 1 12CCEndFENCC 12...Bd7 13.Qxd4 Qxd4 14.Nxd4 Be5 gives Black a good game with simpler meansCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/5ppp/p2b1n2/1p1P4/Q2p2q1/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R1B2K1R w kq - 0 13CCEndFENCC 13.Nxb5 axb5 14.Qxa8 O-O White's defence is tough to conduct here. The computers manage to defend, but it's like walking on a tight rope. 15.Qc6 Ne4 16.h3 Qf5 17.Kg1 Bd7 18.Qc2 Qxd5 and Black's position looks menacing. It is not necessary to remember these lines that deeply, but good to see them illustrate matters. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.c4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.cxd5 Nf6 *)* 10...Kxe6 Black has fantastic play for the pawn. White has too many problems at once: lack of development, bad king position, weak light squares. Stockfish manages to defend White, but a human player would struggle mightily. 11.O&xb7 A huge blunder, but I wanted to include this fun line as a trainable 😁. White's best defence, according to Stockfish, is 11.h3 Qc4+ 12.Qxc4 Bxc4+ 13.Ke1 , when Black has a huge initiative by simply developing with a move like 13...Bd6 . Kd5 Ouch! White's queen is attacked, and g2 is threatened, too! 12..xxd5 Oh no, my bishop! O&d1# Oh no, the king! 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.c4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.cxd5 Nf6;

B) 8..xf3 White returns the pawn, which looks more sensible than 8.Qb3 . 8....xxd5 Mission accomplished! We have a good position now, but there is one important idea to remember on the next move. 9.0-0 The immediate 9.Ne5? was bad due to 9...Qe6 , but now the knight jump is a more serious idea for White. f6 No Ne5 for you! 9...f6 is a somewhat unnatural but strong move! Playing ...f6 early on is often a mistake CCStartBracketCC'Never play ...f6', according to Ben FinegoldCCEndBracketCC, so why is it good here? The huge issue with ...f6 in other positions is the weakening of the light squares, particularly around the king. Here this is no issue at all because White had given up their light-squared bishop earlier. Our king is perfectly safe on the light squares, as the following line shows. 10.O&b3 e6 11.Qe1 Elf7 We have good control of d5 and the bishop pair. Next, we want to play ...Be7 and ...Rd8. Of course, ...b5 and ...Bb7 is an option, too. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.c4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.cxd5 Nf6]

5....xbd7 This looks best. After 5...Bd7 6.Qb3 , our bishop is misplaced, and the b7-pawn is attacked. 6..xc3 White covers their extra pawn. 6...g6 As often in this chapter, we play for a kingside fianchetto. Here it is more or less forced, as it's impossible to move the e-pawn. Our plan is quite straightforward now. We want to complete kingside castling, which unpins the d7-knight. Finally, we play ... Nd7-b6 and regain the d5-pawn. Once completed, this scenario should give us at least equal chances. White now has two ways to lend additional support to the d5-pawn: playing the bishop to c4 CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp1npp1p/5np1/3P4/Q7/2N5/PP1P1PPP/R1B1KBNR w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Bc4 or CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp1npp1p/

5np1/3P4/Q7/2N5/PP1P1PPP/R1B1KBNR w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Nf3 Bg7 8.Bc4 CCEndBracketCC or g2 CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp1npp1p/5np1/3P4/Q7/2N5/PP1P1PPP/R1B1KBNR w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.g3 and Bg2 nextCCEndBracketCC. 7.g3 White wants to support the d5-pawn with a kingside fianchetto.

[7.Kc4 Or 7.Nf3 Bg7 8.Bc4 , leading to the same positions. Kg7 8..xf3 Or 8.d3 O-O 9.Nf3 , leading to the same positions. 0-0 9.d3 White covers the c4-bishop to allow dxc4 after a possible capture. This is relevant after 9.O-O? Nb6 10.Qb3 Nxc4 11.Qxc4 b6 12.Ne5 Bb7 13.Nc6 Qd7 , when Black is much better. Without the dxc4 option, White is forced to recapture with the queen, leaving the d5-pawn without proper protection. a6 Now 9...Nb6 10.Qb3 is less convincing, as the capture on c4 is pointless due 10...Nxc4 11.dxc4 . Instead, the move 9...a6 is much better, as we now threaten ...b5! 10.O&a3 White needed to address the ...b7-b5 push. After 10.O-O?? b5 we win, as 10.Bxb5 Nb6! is the important point. b6 We want to play ...b5, but need to realize it more slowly. First ...b6, ...Bb7 and only then ...b5. 11.0-0 Kb7 12.Qe1 White has some pressure down the e-file. b5 13.Kb3 Qe8 We cover the attacked e7-pawn and reach a balanced position. White has kept their extra pawn, but their structure is not ideal. Often, White will play d5-d6 to return their extra pawn. Chances are equal in this complex position. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.c4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.cxd5 Nf6]

7...Kg7 We continue with our logical plan of preparing kingside castling. 8.Kg2 0-0

9..xge2 .xb6 Here, we have two exciting alternatives, but I didn't want to make this rare line too complicated. The moves are 9...b5!? and 9...e6!? , which look fine but would involve some more profound study. In my mind, 9...Nb6 is the simplest solution. 10.O&b3 Kf5 This is the final idea to know. Our idea is ...Bd3-c4 to regain the pawn. We have a better pawn structure and an active piece placement. White has to be concerned about maintaining equality in this position. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.c4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.cxd5 Nf6

2..xf3 White usually plays this move to enter theTwo Knights after 2.Nf3 d5 3. Nc3 , but we'll examine some alternatives now. 2...d5 Now 3.Nc3 is the main move, entering theTwo Knights. A good alternative for White is 3.d3 , which we examine in the current chapter via the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp1ppppp/2p5/8/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2.d3 d5 3.Nf3 . This leaves the moves 3.e5 and 3.exd5 to examine. 3.e5 White goes for an odd version of the Advance Variation. Instead of the move d4, White has played Nf3 instead. This allows a development that is not possible in the Advance Variation, where CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 leaves Black with the choice between 3...Bf5 and 3...c5.

[3.exd5 cxd5 4..xe5 This knight jump gives 2.Nf3 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 its own flavor. White's alternative is 4.d4 , which immediately transposes to the Exchange Variation, where this position is reached via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/

8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3. exd5 cxd5 4.Nf3 . Alright, back to 4.Ne5 - what's the point. White's idea is to prevent the development of the light-square bishop. We need to avoid CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/8/3pN3/8/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R b KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4...Bf5?? 5.Bb5+ Nd7 6.Qf3 when White is winning on the spot! .xc6 I suggest challenging the e5-knight immediately. The alternative 4...Nf6 is also fine. 5.d4 White also has 5.Bb5 , when 5...Bd7 6.Nxd7 Qxd7 7.d4 e6 transposes to CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2pppp/2n5/3pN3/8/8/PPPP1PPP/ RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 2 5CCEndFENCC 5.d4 e6 6.Bb5 Bd7 7.Nxd7 Qxd7 , which we will examine shortly. e6 Shutting in our bishop looks odd, but it is fine for Black Here, a key factor is the knight on e5. We quickly pressure this piece with moves like ...Bd6 and ...Qc7, which forces concessions. Now we'll examine 6.Bb5 and 6.c3, which prepares Bd3.

A) 6.Kb5 This looks like White's best line. Pinning the knight provokes 6...Bd7 , which allows 7.Nxd7 , netting the bishop pair. This looks like White's best line. Pinning the knight provokes 6...Bd7Š , which allowsÐ 7.Nxd7Š , netting the bishop pair. Kd7 7..xxd7 O&xd7 White has gained the bishop pair, but it was a time-consuming affair. The resulting pawn structure is identical to the Exchange Variation, with the same basic strategy in play. White seeks to play on the kingside, while we try to engineer a minority attack on the queenside with a later ...b5-b4 pawn push. 8.c3 Kd6 We go for development with ...Bd6, ...Nf6 and ... O-O, a very natural approach. 9.0-0 .xf6 10..xd2 0-0 This position has been reached quite frequently. White's development is lagging CCStartBracketCCNf3-e5xd7 took some timeCCEndBracketCC and 11.Nf3 looks very natural to open the c1-bishop. This neglects control of e4, though, which gives us good play after 11...a6 12.Bd3 Ne4 . We'll also examine 11. Re1, when White tries to increase control over e4 and only then play Nf3. 11..xf3 A natural move, but it allows an attractive setup for Black. *(11.Qe1* White wants to play Re1, Bd3 and only then Nf3, preventing the idea ...Ne4. *O&c7* Black has some other ideas here, like 11...Rae8 . You could argue that White doesn't have a great move, as 12.Nf3 Ne4 would still work nicely. I like the straightforward nature of 11...Qc7, though. *12.g3* After 12.Nf3 we have 12...Ne4 again. *a6* I have the following direct solution in mind: after 13.Bd3 I want to play 13...e5 . If you'd like to keep the tension, playing 12...Rae8 is still an option. *13.Kd3 e5 14.dxe5 .xxe5* Black has equal chances here. We are well-developed, and White has no pressure on the IQP. 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline-2.Nf3 #4 *)* 11...a6 Getting rid of the pin first. 12.Kd3 .xe4 Black has some flexibility here, but I like this central approach. We'll play ...f5 next. 13.O&e2 f5 Our idea is: playing ...Rae8 next, then ...Qf7-h5 and starting an attack. White's play was rather time-consuming, so this aggressive stance looks warranted. 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline-2.Nf3 #3;

B) 6.c3 White wants to develop with Bd3 but needs to cover the d-pawn first. 6...Kd6 We increase pressure on the knight. Now White has no entirely

satisfactory move. 7.f4 This looks relatively best, but ask the c1-bishop what it thinks about it. The move is still better than 7.Bf4 Qf6! , which is awkward for White, or CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/pp3ppp/2nbp3/3pN3/3P4/2P5/PP3PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7.Bb5 Nge7 . We continue with ...O-O and ...f6 and are much better. .xge7 8.Kd3 0-0 9.0-0 f6 Black is fine in this position. If White captures on c6, we'd happily recapture with the b-pawn. A later plan with ...a5 and ...Ba6 comes to mind. 10.O&h5 We need to examine the aggressive queen jump. .xf5 The best move. After 10...g6?? White has 11. Nxg6! , destroying our king position. After 10...Nf5 Black is fine, for example, after CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/pp4pp/2nbpp2/3pNn1Q/3P1P2/2PB4/PP4PP/RNB2RK1 w - - 2 11CCEndFENCC 11.g4 Nh6 12.Nxc6 bxc6 13.f5 e5 14. Bxh6 gxh6 15.Qxh6 e4 , when Black has excellent play for the pawn. 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline-2.Nf3 #2]

3...Kg4 I like this pinning move. It is stronger than 3...Bf5 4.d4 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3pP3/8/5N2/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R b KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3...c5 4.d4 , which would allow transpositions to a 'proper' Advance Variation. 4.d4 If White plays 4.h3 , we need to make sure to take on f3 and avoid 4...Bh5? 5.e6! , which is very dangerous to meet. We don't mind capturing on f3, as White will miss the knight as a defender of e5 and d4. A line like CCStartFENCCrn1qkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3pP3/6b1/5N2/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4.h3 Bxf3 5.Qxf3 e6 , followed by ...c5 and ...Nc6 is nice for Black. 4...e6 5.Ke2 c5 6.c3 .xc6 We have comfortably developed the queenside and established pressure on d4. We'll continue to increase this pressure with moves like ...Nge7-f5 and ...Qb6. White needs to be careful to keep central control. Black will often end up winning d4 against sloppy play. which is underlined by the excellent score that Black enjoys after 3.Nf3 Bg4. 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline-2.Nf3 #1

2.d3 A modest-looking move, but it leads to some interesting lines. An important spilt happens on the next move when we'll discuss the possible ideas of the early d2-d3 move. 2...d5 After our natural 2...d5, White has a fundamental choice. They can play CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3p4/4P3/3P4/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nd2 or CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3p4/4P3/3P4/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 3CCEndFENCC 3.Nf3 , which allows an early simplification with 3... dxe4 4.dxe4 Qxd1+ 5.Kxd1 . The resulting endgame offers interesting strategic possibilities and is only a recent discovery of the engine age. It was rarely played before 2018/2019, when modern engines pointed it out as a viable way to play for White. We'll see that Black gets good chances, but it's good to know some ideas. In contrast, the move 3.Nd2 has been around forever and does not trouble Black. We get equal chances without any particular problem.

3..xd2 White wants to avoid the queen trade that would happen after 3.Nf3 dxe4 4. dxe4 Qxd1+ .

[3..xf3 The 'endgame invitation' variation. dxe4 White invited this simplification. I

see no reason to decline it, as the resulting endgame offers enough complexity to create an interesting battle. 4.dxe4 O&xd1+ 5.Elxd1 .xf6 A natural choice, attacking the unprotected e4-pawn. 6..xfd2 This is the most popular move. The whole concept looks odd; what is White's idea? In a way, White sets a strategic trap. It looks very natural for Black to play the move 6...e5 , but this is a mistake. White would protect their e-pawn with f3 and play Nc4 next. This move attacks the e5-pawn and connects the knight to the glaring weakness d6. Ultimately, White will increase the pressure on the queenside even more with Be3. So, we shouldn't play ...e5; how do we develop the f8-bishop then? g6 This is the way to get the bishop out. The plan is not ...Bg7, but playing ...Bh6! to get it on an active diagonal. I'd like to add that Black has alternatives here. I have played 6...h5 , then ...g6 and ... Bh6. This plan is very similar, of course. Finally, there is also 6...g5!? , with the idea ...g4 and ... Bh6 later. Some funky things are possible! In any case, the main thing to remember is: in the endgame line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp1ppppp/2p5/8/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 2CCEndFENCC 2. d3 d5 3.Nf3 dxe4 4.dxe4 Qxd1+ , we want to avoid moving our e-pawn and develop our bishop on the h6-c1 diagonal. 7.f3 Kh6 Now the next steps are ...Be6 and ...Nbd7 to complete our development. Chances are about equal, as both sides have no weaknesses to speak of. We have successfully avoided ...e5? before, and should still be very careful about this pawn move. It's almost always bad; this is particularly true as long as knights are on the board. 6. Caro-Kann: 1. e4 c6 Sideline-2.d3 d5 3.Nf3]

3...e5 Sure, why not? We rarely get to play an early ...e5 in the Caro-Kann, but here it's possible. 4..xgf3 Kd6 We cover the centre pawn. Now there is a split between two completely different lines. The first one is 5.d4!? , which starts direct play in the centre and leads to some complications. The second approach is the more popular move 5.g3 , playing for a reversed King's Indian setup. This line leads to a closed position with the board full of pieces. We don't mind facing this line: Black has a space advantage and is well equipped for the strategic battle. 5.d4 It looks odd to move the d-pawn again, but it is not a bad line for White.

[5.g3 White stays on track for a Reversed King's Indian. .xf6 Let's castle first and then see what's next. 6.Kg2 0-0 7.0-0 Qe8 We lend additional cover to the e5-pawn, a universally helpful move. The position on the board is not forcing or tactical at all. Both sides have plenty of options, making it less beneficial to think in concrete lines but rather think of plans and piece placement. White does not have any particularly aggressive ideas. The c1-bishop is not yet developed and does not have an obvious destination. White sometimes opts for a quick b3, but you'll also meet plans with c3, intending b4. In both cases, Black should play ...a5. We gain space on the queenside, and our rook fulfils a role on a8, supporting the push of the a-pawn. Most often, White starts with 8.Re1 and only after 8...Nbd7 plays a pawn move when I continue with ...a5. White may also start with CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp3ppp/2pb1n2/3pp3/4P3/3P1NP1/PPPN1PBP/

R1BQ1RK1 w - - 5 8CCEndFENCC 8.b3 or CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp3ppp/2pb1n2/3pp3/4P3/3P1NP1/PPPN1PBP/R1BQ1RK1 w - - 5 8CCEndFENCC 8.c3 , when it's again 8...a5 . 8.Qe1 .xbd7 9.b3 *(9.c3* White's most popular setup. *a5* We stop b4 and gain space. The move c3 weakened d3 considerably, which makes a later ...Nc5 an attractive idea. White has many slow moves now, like 10. Qc2, for instance. I suggest improving our position with slow moves, too. Playing moves like ...h6 and ...Qc7 helps a bit, and White has no clear plan anyway. I'll show a sample line: 10.Qc2 Qc7 11.Nf1 dxe4 12.dxe4 h6 CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1b1r1k1/1pqn1ppp/2pb1n2/p3p3/4P3/2P2NP1/PPQ2PBP/R1B1RNK1 b - - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12...Nc5 13.Bg5 is annoyingCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1b1r1k1/1pqn1pp1/2pb1n1p/p3p3/4P3/2P2NP1/PPQ2PBP/R1B1RNK1 w - - 0 13CCEndFENCC 14.Nh4 Nc5 , with a nice advantage for Black. We have ...a4, ...b5 next, while I don't see anything active for White. 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline-2.d3 d5 3.Nd2 #4 *)* 9...a5 We gain some space and intend to disturb White with ...a5-a4. If White now plays 10.a4 , we'd have 9...Bb4!? or 9...d4 , trying to exploit the dark-squared weaknesses that White has. They more often react with 10.a3 , intending to answer 10...a4?! with 11.b4 . We shouldn't push the a-pawn further, but rather gain space in the centre with CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/1p1n1ppp/2pb1n2/p2pp3/4P3/PP1P1NP1/2PN1PBP/R1BQR1K1 b - - 0 10CCEndFENCC 10...d4 . In such a situation, only Black can be better. 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline-2.d3 d5 3.Nd2 #3]

5...exd4 A forced move, as 5...dxe4 6.Nxe4 is bad for Black. 6.exd5 That's the idea. White now expects 6...cxd5 when we have an isolated pawn on d5. This is not bad at all for Black, but we have a better alternative. 6....xf6 I prefer this move, as after 7.dxc6 Nxc6 , we'll play the Isolated Pawn structure with a pawn on d4. This is more active, compared to having a d5-pawn. 7.dxc6 This is the principled move. Against 7.Nxd4 , you may just play 7...Nxd5 or try 7...O-O!? to tempt White into 8.dxc6 Bc5 . They'll likely just play CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp3ppp/2pb1n2/3P4/3N4/8/PPPN1PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQ - 1 8CCEndFENCC 8.Be2 when 8...Nxd5 will lead to similar play as 7... Nxd5. The position is quite symmetrical and about equal. 7....xxc6 8..xb3 Here 8.Be2 O-O 9.Nb3 will lead to the same lines. 8...0-0 We can't cover the d-pawn, but there is no need anyway. We'd be delighted if White grabs it.

9..xbxd4 White is losing too much time with pawn-hunting. They still have the king in the centre of the board, and the e-file is already opened.

[9.Ke2 White makes sure to get the king out of the centre. Qe8 10.0-0 Taking on d4 would lead to positions that we examine via CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/pp3ppp/2nb1n2/8/3p4/1N3N2/PPP2PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQ - 2 9CCEndFENCC 9.Nbxd4 - it is too risky for White. Kg4 And we have completed our development. The pawn on d4 gives us a space advantage, which is rare after ten moves, playing Black. Some sample lines to illustrate ACCEndBracketCC If White plays 11.Nbxd4 now, we have 11...Nxd4 12.Nxd4

Bxe2 13.Nxe2 Bxh2+ 14.Kxh2 Qxd1 15.Rxd1 Rxe2 , recouping the pawn. BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr2qr1k1/pp3ppp/2nb1n2/8/3p2b1/1N3N2/PPP1BPPP/R1BQ1RK1 w - - 6 11CCEndFENCC 11.h3 Bxf3 12.Bxf3 Ne4 13.Qd3 f5 will lead to a complicated fight CCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr2qr1k1/pp3ppp/2nb1n2/8/3p2b1/1N3N2/PPP1BPPP/R1BQ1RK1 w - - 6 11CCEndFENCC 11.Re1 Re4! is an unusual and strong idea. The rook helps cover the d-pawn. 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline-2.d3 d5 3.Nd2 #2]

9...Qe8+ 10.Ke2 .xxd4 11..xxd4 They can also play 11.Qxd4 , when many moves give Black great compensation. I'd suggest 11...Re4 12.Qd3 Be6 , but CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp3ppp/3b1n2/8/3Q4/5N2/PPP1BPPP/R1B1K2R b KQ - 0 11CCEndFENCC 11...Qc7 also looks fine. It's difficult for White to coordinate, given the large lag in development. 11....xg4 Black is in good shape here. White can't castle, and we have easy attacking moves like ...Bc5 or ...Qh4 lined up. 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline-2.d3 d5 3.Nd2 #1

2.Kc4 Well, we announced that ...d5 would be our next move... and White just ignores it. 2...d5 In internet terms, this is a 'premove' - we'll always play 2...d5 and are happy if our opponents walk right into a tempo loss. The bishop has to move again now. 3.Kb3 This line, the 'Hillbilly Gambit', is the only continuation worth checking. White's alternative is playing 3.exd5 cxd5 and then moving the bishop. This is very comfortable for Black, though. Here's a sample line: 4.Bb3 Nc6 5.d4 Nf6 6.Nf3 Bg4 , when we have an excellent version of the Exchange variation. White's bishop is misplaced on b3. 3...dxe4 According to the principle that we should take centre pawns, if possible. 4.O&h5 White is not wasting any time. 4...g6 We don't play a kingside fianchetto often, but here it makes perfect sense. We stop the threats on f7 and avoid 4...e6?!, which is unnecessarily passive. 5.O&h4 a5 A strong move that immediately addresses one drawback of White's play: the bishop on b3 is not that well-placed. It is on an open diagonal but can easily run out of squares, as we will see. Now ...a4 is the threat, so White has to do something about it. 6.O&xe4 White regains the pawn, but it leads to trouble.

[6..xc3 The best try. Kg7 We continue with our fianchetto and don't mind that White takes on e4. We are in good shape against both captures. 7.O&xe4 Better than 7.Nxe4? a4 8.Bc4 b5 , when White is obviously on the back foot. They have lost time, which we used to gain a lot of space on the queenside. The move 7.f3? is refuted by 7...exf3 8.Nxf3 Nh6 when ...Nf5 will be strong. .xf6 8.O&h4 b5 We'd play the same move after other queen moves, like 8.Qe2. I think we can conclude that Black has a good position in any case. We have gained space on the queenside and White's bishop can get into trouble easily. Our opponent played an aggressive gambit, but it's rather Black having the fun here. 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline-2.Bc4 #2]

6...a4 7.Kxa4 This will lead to a disaster for White. 7.Bc4 Bf5 8.Qf3 Nf6 avoids immediate defeat but is much better for Black. White has lost time and allowed Black to gain space. The following line probably should not be in this course,

objectively speaking, as it's likely never going to happen in a real game. I have still included it because it's such a funny sequence of moves. 7....xf6 8.O&f4 The queen has to keep the a4-bishop protected. 8...g5 9.O&g3
A good resource. After 9.Qb4 e5! White already loses the a4-bishop. Now CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/1p2pp1p/2p2n2/6p1/B7/6Q1/PPPP1PPP/RNB1K1NR b KQkq - 1 9CCEndFENCC 9...Rxa4 10.Qxb8 regains the lost piece. 9....xh5 We keep attacking the queen. 10.O&xg5 10.Qe5 or 10.Qc3 are answered by 10...Bg7 . 10...Qa5 Hah! This is how to protect our knight! 11.O&h4 Qg8 Here comes the other rook! We attack g2, but also threaten ...Rg4! 12.Kb3 White saves the bishop, but there is a catch. 12...Qg4 13.O&h3 Qe4+ And we win the queen! This is just such a crazy line, with two raging rooks, that I had to include it. 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline-2.Bc4 #1
2.f4 Some people play f4-based systems 'against everything', so you might meet this move. Our reply is no surprise. 2...d5 3.e5 This will happen most of the time. White wants to gain central space and pushes the pawn forward. An alternative is 3.Nc3 , when 3...dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 is a good reply in the style of our weapon against the Classical. 3...c5 Against the Advance Variation we play a quick ...c5, too. This is my main argument of recommending 3...c5, but 3...Bf5 certainly works well, too. First ...Bf5, then ...e6 and ...c5 next is very natural.
4..xf3 .xc6 5.Kb5 If White plays a more passive move, like 5.Be2 , we'd go ...Bg4, then ... e6. Our g8-knight has an excellent future spot on f5. 5...O&b6
I wanted to show this move. It makes our lives easier if we don't allow a doubled pawn. Next, we'll play ...Bg4 and ...e6 and enjoy a good position. White has difficulty getting d2-d4 in, which gives us an excellent grip in the centre. Later, you can choose between an ...f7-f6 play or expansion on the queenside. 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline-2.f4

[36] **3.O&f3** White gets the queen out and puts some pressure on d5, threatening to take the central pawn. 3...dxe4 The trap I was hinting at occurs after 3...d4 4. Bc4 , when Black can't capture the knight, as 4...dxc3?? 5.Qxf7+ Kd7 6.dxc3 won't end well for the black king. The move CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/2p5/3p4/4P3/2N2Q2/PPPP1PPP/R1B1KBNR b KQkq - 1 3CCEndFENCC 3...d4 is an acceptable alternative to my recommendation, but you need to play 4. Bc4 e6 . This leads to an interesting position of a more closed nature. Black has equal chances in this line, too. After my suggestion 3...dxe4 we reach a position more typical of the Caro-Kann. 4..xxe4 .xf6 We play in the same vein as in the Two Knights and Classical Variation. Starting with 4...Nd7 and ...Ngf6 next is also fine, but we don't mind a doubled f-pawn in our repertoire concept.
5.Kc4 White rarely captures on f6, as 5.Nxf6+ exf6 is a good version of the Classical Variation for Black. 5....xbd7 This is not a routine development, but also sets up the threat ...Ne5. 6.d4 This looks dubious, but 6.Nxf6+ can't trouble Black. We are in good shape with all recaptures - you may choose according to your taste. 6...Nxf6 looks 'tidy', but the pawn recaptures

unbalance the position nicely. 6....xb6 This highlights the problem of 6.d4. Our knight jump sets up a double attack on the d-pawn and the bishop. 7.Kd3 Here 7.Nxf6+ gxf6! wins the d-pawn with a more or less winning position. Note that 7...exf6 is worse due to 8.Qe4+ , which saves the pawn. 7...O&xd4 A central pawn is worth taking for some tempi. 8..xe2 O&e5 9.Kf4 O&e6 White has a nice development, but our position has no weaknesses. The queen on e6 also prevents queenside castling, as a2 would be the next pawn to take! Black is better here, but it's still a bit murky. 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline-2. Nc3

37 **5.O&e2** White's most challenging move. 5....xxe4 The best move, it seems. Against a move like 5...Bf5 White plays 6.Nxf6+ when we are forced to recapture with the g-pawn. 5...Nbd7 avoids a doubled pawn but has the slight drawback of allowing Checkmate with 6.Nd6# . This has happened hundreds of times... 6.O&xe4 .xd7 This move leads to the most interesting play, in my opinion. White's queen is currently in a dominating position in the middle of the board, which makes it difficult for us to develop the c8-bishop. We want to attack the queen with ....Nf6 next and force it to a worse square. Black's main alternative is 6...Qd5 , but after 7.Qh4 or 7.Qf4 White has good chances for a slight pull without taking any risks. After 6...Nd7 , the play may get quite sharp, but we have good counterplay. White now needs to decide between playing 7.d4 , or 7.Bc4 , which lead to very different positions. The main point is that 7.Bc4 Nf6 is answered by 8.Ne5 , which forces us to play 8...e6 and lock in the c8-bishop temporarily. Instead, after 7.d4 Nf6 White needs to move their queen and allow a bishop development to g4 or f5, depending on the circumstances. 7.d4 A natural move, but it is less challenging than 7.Bc4 . We get equal chances without the need for deep theoretical knowledge.

[7.Kc4 This is the most popular move by far, White usually intends 7.Bc4 Nf6 8. Ne5 , forcing us to play 8...e6 . .xf6 Now White usually plays 8.Ne5 , forcing 8...e6 . This looks attractive for White at first sight, but we'll see that the passive position of the c8-bishop is only a temporary concern. White rarely plays 8.Qe2 because it allows us to develop with 8...Bf5 , placing the bishop on an active post.

A) 8..xe5 White does not have to move the queen immediately but may insert this intermediate move. The checkmate threat leaves us little choice. e6 We needed to stop the mate on f7. At first, you'd think that 8...e6 is a serious concession. Black gives up on the concept to play ...Bf5 or ...Bg4 but instead has to lock the bishop inside the pawn chain. f5 or g4 are the desirable spots for the c8-bishop in the Caro-Kann, but an excellent alternative deployment will give us fair chances. After 9.Qe2 , we'll play 9...b5! , preparing ...Bb7 or ...Ba6, according to circumstances. 9.O&e2 The natural choice and almost exclusively played by White. e2 is a good spot for the queen, keeping the knight and bishop protected. b5 Our c8-bishop needs a good spot, so we immediately clear the way with a gain of tempo. It is crucial to play this move right away and ignore

that the c6-pawn is hanging. This is not a problem, as grabbing on c6 is dubious for White. Therefore, White has to choose between the more natural and popular 10.Bb3 , or the less explored 10.Bd3 . Playing the bishop to d3 looks slightly odd at first but has its points, as we will see.

A1) 10..xxc6 Snatching the pawn is far too risky! O&c7 It's important to go to c7 and avoid 10...Qb6? Our queen is best on c7, keeping an eye on the important e5-square. This point will become clearer on move twelve. Now White needs to play 11.Bd3 , as 11.Bxb5?? would lose decisive material. 11.Kxb5 Well, we didn't just blunder two pawns, right? It's a bit naive to take on b5, but we still need to check how to refute it. *(11.Kd3* White avoids the blunder 11.Bxb5?? , but they still have a very unpleasant defensive task ahead. *a6* By covering b5, we now threaten to take the knight. White has to retreat it. *12..xe5* Here 12.Nd4 leads to a similar play. We develop with ... Bb7 and ...Bd6 and enjoy fantastic compensation for the pawn. *Kd6* The setup of Qc7 + Bd6 is important to fight the strong e5-knight. White has to retreat or play 13.f4 , which creates serious weaknesses. In both cases, we complete development with ...Bb7 and ...0-0. According to circumstances, a good idea to remember is ...Nd5, intending ...Nb4 or Nf4. Black has excellent compensation for the pawn and the much easier practical task. 3. Caro-Kann: Two Knights (1.e-5.Qe2 Nxe4 6.Qxe4 Nd7 7.Bc4 Nf *)* 11...a6 After 11...Bd7?? White can just move the c6-knight and keep the extra material. Instead, we need to play 11...a6 first, forcing the bishop to an unprotected square. 12.Ka4 Kd7 Now White can't move the knight, as the bishop on a4 would be lost. 13.O&c4 Or 13.Qf3 Rc8 , which wins the piece, too. .xd5 Even better than 13...Rc8 . White has no defence against our crushing threat ...Nb6. 3. Caro-Kann: Two Knights (1.e-5.Qe2 Nxe4 6.Qxe4 Nd7 7.Bc4 Nf;

A2) 10.Kb3 White retreats to the most natural square. They'll continue with a quick d2-d4, classically developing the c1-bishop to f4 or g5. This is an entirely different approach than 10.Bd3 , when White aims for the b3 + Bb2 setup. O&c7 We cover the pawn and prepare ...Bd6. to increase the pressure on the knight. 11.d4 White usually starts with this move, but 11.O-O Bd6 12.d4 leads to the same position and is frequently seen, too. Kd6 The natural follow-up to our previous move. Our general strategy is quite simple: we'd like to castle kingside and finally manage to get the c8-bishop into play. ...c5 and ...Bb7 often accomplish this, but a6 might be a good post, too. After 11...Bd6 White's main reply is 12.O-O , but we'll have a brief look at 12.a4 , which has some independent value. White has also tried 12. c3 , but after the natural 12...O-O 13.O-O it's a transposition to CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/p1q2ppp/2pbpn2/1p2N3/3P4/1B6/PPP1QPPP/ R1B1K2R w KQkq - 1 12CCEndFENCC 12.O-O O-O 13.c3 , which is the mainline of the 10.Bb3 variation. Similarly, 12.Bf4 O-O 13.O-O transposes to CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/p1q2ppp/2pbpn2/1p2N3/3P4/1B6/PPP1QPPP/

R1B1K2R w KQkq - 1 12CCEndFENCC 12.O-O O-O 13.Bf4 . It's just very natural for both sides to castle kingside - delaying it for longer makes little sense.

A2a) 12.0-0 As mentioned in the notes to 11...Bd6: castling kingside is a natural choice for White. 0-0 No rocket science: we need to get the king out of the centre. Now White's most popular move is the universally helpful 13.c3 . White has some alternatives, like 13.Bf4 or 13.Bg5 . They would often later transpose to 13.c3, as the move is usually needed anyway. White wants to support d4 and prepare Bc2. This bishop retreat to c2 is often helpful for White, given our strategy. So what are we going for? Well, we have played ...b5 already and want to continue with our play on the queenside. We need the move ...c6-c5 soon, attacking White's centre and undermining the control of e5, too. White's knight on e5 is strong, but after ...c5, they can't capture on c5, as the knight is under pressure from our queen + bishop battery. The move ...c5 is not so easy to play, though. We need to watch for our b-pawn, as White's queen might take it after the c-pawn moves. We have a good solution for this issue, though. It's possible to play ...a5 first and follow with ...c5. With ...a5 on the board, White can't take b5 due to ...Ba6. So if White plays a combination of the moves c3, Bf4, Re1 on the next moves, the ...a5 + ...c5 plan is the way to go. White has an alternative way to develop, playing Bg5. We need to handle this move differently, as they threaten to take the knight and weaken our kingside.

A2a1) 13.Kg5 White wants to weaken our kingside structure by taking on f6. We have a simple and good reply. .xd5 We avoid the capture and threaten ...f6 at the same time. The move 13...c5!? also works, but is more complicated to handle. 14..xf3 Peter Svidler played this move in an online Blitz game against the new German No.1 player CCStartBracketCCDecember 2021CCEndBracketCC, Vincent Keymer. Retreating looks like an admission of failure, but it's tough to suggest anything better. It's funny to see that Vincent reached the same position after 13...Nd5 twice. In another online Blitz game, his opponent L. Krysa went for 14.Bh4 , when 14...a5 started the typical queenside play. a5 In the mentioned Blitz game, Keymer played 14...Bb7 , which is just as good. For consistency reasons, I'd still advise going for 14...a5 . 15.c4 The most interesting reply. Alternatives like 15.a4 Ba6 or CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/2q2ppp/2pbp3/pp1n2B1/3P4/1B3N2/PPP1QPPP/R4RK1 w - - 0 15CCEndFENCC 15.c3 h6 16.Bd2 Bb7 , followed by ...c5, already see Black having a pull. a4 A good resource that is worth knowing. 15...bxc4 is not a mistake, but 15...a4 is better. Now 16.cxd5 axb3 or CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/2q2ppp/2pbp3/1p1n2B1/p1PP4/1B3N2/PP2QPPP/R4RK1 w - - 0 16CCEndFENCC 16.c5 Bxh2+ 17.Nxh2 axb3 already look a bit better for Black. In the

latter case, we'll play ...Bd7 and ...f6, which controls e5 and prevents the white knight from getting active again. At the same time, we have a monster knight on d5. 3. Caro-Kann: Two Knights (1.e-5.Qe2 Nxe4 6. Qxe4 Nd7 7.Bc4 Nf;

A2a2) 13.c3 White plays this move most of the time. a5 According to plan: we play ...a5 first. Now we'll have a look at 14.Bf4 c5 and CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/2q2ppp/2pbpn2/pp2N3/3P4/1BP5/PP2QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.Re1 c5 , while CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/2q2ppp/2pbpn2/pp2N3/3P4/1BP5/PP2QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.Bg5 needs to be answered by 14...Nd5 . This is very similar to CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/p1q2ppp/2pbpn2/1p2N3/3P4/1B6/PPP1QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.Bg5 Nd5 CCStartBracketCCseethis lineCCEndBracketCC, so we don't need to study it separately. 14.Qe1 An interesting move to consider. White removes the rook from the a6-f1 diagonal. This is relevant because of our ...c5 idea. Compared to a variation like 14.Bf4 c5 15.Qxb5? Ba6 , now CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/2q2ppp/2pbpn2/pp2N3/3P4/1BP5/PP2QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.Re1 c5 15.Qxb5 is a possible move for White. *(14.Kf4* White supports the knight, anticipating our move ...c5. With the knight protected, White can answer our ...c5-break with the capture. *c5 15.dxc5* White may also hold the tension in the centre with 15.Rac1 , which was tested in yet another Vincent Keymer online Blitz game. His opponent, Konstantinos Markidis, went for the rook move. Keymer played 15...Bb7 , and after 16.Rfd1 faced an interesting decision. His move, 16...cxd4?! , was dubious. After 17.cxd4 Qb6 18.Bg5! he would have been in trouble, as White threatens Bxf6, followed by Nd7. You should carefully consider if you want to open the c-file or not. It isolates White's d-pawn but gives White lots of temporary activity. I am sure that Keymer wouldn't play 16...cxd4?! in a longer time control game, but rather opt for an alternative. The ideas CCStartFENCCr4rk1/1bq2ppp/3bpn2/ppp1N3/3P1B2/1BP5/PP2QPPP/2RR2K1 b - - 3 16CCEndFENCC 16...a4 17.Bc2 a3 or CCStartFENCCr4rk1/1bq2ppp/3bpn2/ppp1N3/3P1B2/1BP5/PP2QPPP/2RR2K1 b - - 3 16CCEndFENCC 16...c4 come to mind, keeping the c-file closed. In these two lines, Black is getting excellent chances on the queenside. *O&xc5* You have to avoid 15...Bxc5?? 16.Ng6 . *16.Qad1* Again, White is thinking about a tactic on the d-file. Our best reply avoids all possible trouble. *Kc7* White was hoping for 16...Bb7? 17.Nd7! - our careful move stops this idea. It's the final point to know in this line, as we are now ready to complete our development with ...Bb7. A tense middlegame is ahead. We have chances on the queenside, having already gained some space on this side of the board. We also have a

potential strong square on d5. White is well-centralized and enjoys a strong knight on e5. An idea to be aware of is a possible knight sacrifice on f7. Here's a fun line to show the point: CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/ 2b2ppp/4pn2/ppq1N3/5B2/1BP5/PP2QPPP/3R1RK1 w - - 2 17CCEndFENCC 17.Rfe1 Bb7 18.Nxf7?? Now taking the knight loses, but 18...Bxf4! 19.Qxe6 Qh5 sees Black on top and refuting the knight sac. Also, note that 18...Qc6 is a good move, too. This threat of an 'intermediate' mate is an essential tactical idea to keep in mind. This is illustrated by 18.Nd7?? Nxd7 19.Rxd7 Qc6! , when Black wins on the spot. 3. Caro-Kann: Two Knights (1.e-5.Qe2 Nxe4 6.Qxe4 Nd7 7. Bc4 Nf *)* 14...c5 Our b-pawn is hanging, but we can play the move regardless and allow 15.Qxb5 . The pawn grab is a mistake for White, though. We'll also check the much better move 15.Bg5 , which looks natural for White. An alternative is 15.dxc5 , which we should answer with 15...Qxc5 , similarly to lines like CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/2q2ppp/ 2pbpn2/pp2N3/3P4/1BP5/PP2QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 0 14CCEndFENCC 14.Bf4 c5 15.dxc5 Qxc5 . 15.O&xb5 This turns out to be far too greedy. *(15.Kg5* We need to check this move. If White plays it earlier, before ...c5 is on the board, we answer with ...Nd5. One example is CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/p1q2ppp/2pbpn2/1p2N3/3P4/1B6/ PPP1QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.Bg5 Nd5 . Here, the situation is slightly different, as 15...Nd5 can be answered with 16. dxc5 , which seems to be slightly better for White. *c4* I suggest this move, but Black has some alternatives, primarily 15...Bb7 . The move 15...Nd5 is less precise here, as after 16.dxc5 Qxc5 17.Rad1 White seems to have a slight pull. Here 17...f6?? fails to 18.Rxd5! exd5 19. Be3 , a neat tactic. After 15...c4 , we have a fundamental split between 16.Bc2 Nd5 , with a complicated fight ahead, and CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/2q2ppp/3bpn2/pp2N1B1/2pP4/1BP5/PP2QPPP/ R3R1K1 w - - 0 16CCEndFENCC 16.Bxf6 gxf6 , when White has ways to continue, but may also force a draw with 17.Qg4+ Kh8 18.Qh4 fxe5 19.Qf6+ and so on. 3. Caro-Kann: Two Knights (1.e-5.Qe2 Nxe4 6. Qxe4 Nd7 7.Bc4 Nf *)* 15...cxd4 It's important to take on d4 first. After 15...Ba6? 16.Qa4 cxd4 White has 17.Qxd4! , showing the difference to our correct move order. 16.cxd4 Ka6 17.O&a4 The only move, as 17.Qc6?? Bxe5 blunders a piece. Kb4 That's the problem for White! We attack the rook, and it has no good squares. 18.Qe3 After 18.Rd1 Be2 , we win the exchange. Qac8 I know it's a really long line now, but hang on. It's fun to threaten ...Qxc1+! now, going for a back rank mate. At the same time, the white queen is now out of squares. We have ... Qb6, threatening to trap the queen. White is in huge trouble here. 3. Caro-Kann: Two Knights (1.e-5.Qe2 Nxe4 6.Qxe4 Nd7 7.Bc4 Nf; **A2a3)** 13.Kf4 a5 We answer White's mainline CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/

p1q2ppp/2pbpn2/1p2N3/3P4/1B6/PPP1QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.c3 with 13...a5 , too. The threat is ...a4, which forces White to create a square for the b3-bishop. 14.a3 Instead, 14.c3 c5 would transpose to CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/p1q2ppp/2pbpn2/1p2N3/3P4/1B6/PPP1QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.c3 a5 14.Bf4 c5 . c5 Following our standard approach of ...a5 + ...c5. Now White can't play 15.Qxb5 due to 15...Ba6 , winning material. The position is very similar to CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/p1q2ppp/2pbpn2/1p2N3/3P4/1B6/PPP1QPPP/R1B2RK1 w - - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.c3 a5 14.Bf4 c5 , so I don't think a further investigation is warranted. 3. Caro-Kann: Two Knights (1.e-5.Qe2 Nxe4 6.Qxe4 Nd7 7.Bc4 Nf;

A2b) 12.a4 This move is uncommon but worth checking for conceptual reasons. White attacks our b5-pawn twice - how to cover it? 12...0-0 We don't cover it at all! The more conservative 12...a6 is not terrible, but this more dynamic choice is more attractive. Instead of 12...O-O , Black also has the interesting 12...c5!? , which is even sharper. 13.axb5 We need to check the pawn grab. White can play more cautiously with 13.O-O , but we are fine after 13...a5 or 13...b4 . Our play on the queenside makes good progress, while the merit of a4 is questionable for White. cxb5 14.O&xb5 a5 Black has great play for the pawn. We threaten ...Ba6 and a line like 15.Qe2 Nd7 16.Nxd7 Bxd7 17.c3 a4 18.Bc2 Bc6 looks like fun. White probably should play 15.Qc6 , but 15...Qxc6 16.Nxc6 Bb7 wins back the pawn on g2. 3. Caro-Kann: Two Knights (1.e-5.Qe2 Nxe4 6.Qxe4 Nd7 7.Bc4 Nf;

A3) 10.Kd3 A less natural retreat, compared to 10.Bb3 . It's connected to two ideas: playing with b3 and Bb2 or playing a quick a4. Our reply is the same as after 10.Bb3 . 10...O&c7 Strictly speaking, we are not covering the c-pawn with this move, as White could very well take it now. It's very risky for White, though. After 11.Nxc6? a6! we have transposed to a different line! The same position arises after CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/p4ppp/2p1pn2/1p2N3/2B5/8/PPPPQPPP/R1B1K2R w KQkq - 0 10CCEndFENCC 10.Nxc6 Qc7 11.Bd3 a6! , when Black has more than enough compensation for the pawn. Far better and more popular than the pawn grab is 11.b3 or 11.a4 , which are in line with the plans I described earlier. 11.b3 A slower continuation than 11.a4 . *(11.a4* White is putting a lot of pressure on the b5-pawn. What to do about it? Black is fine, but the following sequence is the only one that gives us good chances. *Kd6* Exactly, this move is right. We attack the knight and force White to grab the c-pawn. *12..xxc6 b4* We have seen similar positions before. Black has good compensation for the pawn, as White's position is not well-coordinated. There is only one challenging continuation now. *13..xd4* A tempo move, because we need to stop Nb5. *a6* No choice, Nb5 was too annoying to stand. *14..xf5* This is the move that keeps White out of trouble. If they play 14.b3? O-O 15.Nf3 e5 ,

our initiative may quickly become overwhelming. *Kb7* Black has tried two moves here, and both work fine. The alternative is 14...Be5 , but 14...Bb7 is a more straightforward solution. *15..xxd6+* White has to avoid 15.Nxg7+ Kf8 16.Nh5 Nxh5 17.Qxh5 Rg8 , when Black has a fantastic position. White is uncoordinated, and all of Black's pieces have commanding posts. *O&xd6 16.0-0 h5* The final move a long line. Black has good compensation for the pawn now, based on the active pieces and, of course, the concrete idea ...Ng4. If White stops it with 17.h3 , we'll go 17...g5! and attack. Note how difficult it is for White to develop. If they play 17.b3?? , we immediately win with 17...Ng4 18.g3 Qd5 19.f3 Qd4+ . 3. Caro-Kann: Two Knights (1.e-5.Qe2 Nxe4 6.Qxe4 Nd7 7.Bc4 Nf *)* 11...Kd6 Black can also start with 11... Nd5 , which will likely lead to the same lines after 12.Bb2 Bd6 . 12.Kb2 Here 12.Nxc6 a6 again leads to a position with excellent compensation for Black. .xd5 A good move, and the final one to know. We have ...Nf4 or ...Nb4 in mind, which gives us a good game. A likely continuation is 13.O-O Nf4 14. Qe3 Nxd3 15.Nxd3 f6 or 15...O-O , with equal chances. Black needs to avoid 15...Bxh2+ 16.Kh1 here, as there is the double threat of Bxg7 and g3, which is awkward. 3. Caro-Kann: Two Knights (1.e-5.Qe2 Nxe4 6.Qxe4 Nd7 7. Bc4 Nf;

B) 8.O&e2 White usually plays the move 8.Ne5 . It's fun to leave the queen hanging for a move, and it looks logical to force ...e6. Still, you might also meet 8.Qe2 , which isn't bad, either. 8...Kf5 It's essential to see the difference to ƇƇStartFENƇƇr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2p2n2/8/2B1Q3/5N2/PPPP1PPP/R1B1K2R w KQkq - 3 8ƇƇEndFENƇƇ 8.Ne5 , when we have to play 8...e6 to stop the mate. Here, we have the opportunity to develop the bishop first. Note that 8... Bg4?? fails to the standard tactic 9.Bxf7+ . 9.d4 e6 10.Kg5 White's most popular move. A line like 10.O-O Bd6 11.c3 Qc7 is comfortable for Black. We have the choice of castling kingside and playing for ...c5 to attack White's d-pawn, or playing ...O-O-O, which is a bit risky but will lead to complications, as White will feel tempted to start a queenside pawn storm. I prefer the quieter option of ...O-O, but it's good to be flexible. O&a5+ There is nothing wrong with other sensible moves, like 10...Be7 , for example. However, the move 10... Qa5+ is very clever and involves some instructive points. Let's check what they are. 11.c3 This looks perfectly normal, but there is a catch. White should play the modest retreat 11.Bd2 , when 11...Qc7 , followed by ...Bd6, gives us a good position. Kg4 This is a strong reply. We pin the knight, and this way attack White's g5-bishop with our queen. The threat is ...Bxf3, followed by ...Qxg5. 12.Kd2 O&h5 Very nice! Now White has no way to avoid the destruction of their kingside pawn structure. Black is already slightly better here and has the easier game. Note that you don't need to take on f3 right on the next move, but wait until White spends a tempo on a queen move. It's precise to keep the pin as long as possible and squeeze out this tempo. 3. Caro-Kann: Two Knights (1.e-5. Qe2 Nxe4 6.Qxe4 Nd7 7.Bc4 Nf]

7....xf6 8.O&d3 This is White's most popular move for a reason. We'd like to develop our bishop to f5, so White keeps an eye on this square. The move 8.Qh4 allows 8...Bf5 , or 8...Bg4 , with an easy game for us. We quickly develop, and White's queen is misplaced given a future ...e6 and ...Be7 idea. 8...Kg4 Here 8...g6 is not bad, either. Black prepares the fianchetto and ...Bf5. Still, I suggest the bishop move. This style of development is more common in our repertoire: we place the bishop actively and intend ...e6 next. 9..xe5 The knight jump must be critical. A line like 9.c3 e6 10.Be2 Bf5 11.Qd1 Bd6 is just too harmless. We quickly develop and attack the centre with ...c5 soon. 9...Kh5 10.c3 Against this move we need to be precise. White covers the d-pawn and therefore make the queen more mobile again. The move Qh3 could be an annoying idea, planning g4. 10...e6 11.O&h3 Kd6 Not just played on general grounds, but necessary to stop 12.g4 , which is now met by 12...Bxe5 , when 13.dxe5?? Bxg4 wins for Black and 13.gxh5 Bd6 leads to interesting play with equal chances. Probably White's best bet is 12.Bg5 , but a precise sequence gives Black equal chances after 12...Bxe5 13.dxe5 Qd5 14.Bxf6 Qe4+ 15.Qe3 Qxe3+ 16.fxe3 gxf6 17.exf6 Rg8 18.Rg1 Rg6 . In the end, Black will regain the f6-pawn and is fine. 3. Caro-Kann: Two Knights (1.e-5.Qe2 Nxe4 6.Qxe4 Nd7 7.d4

[38] **9.Kg5** O&c7 We have a nice position and the better game already. White needs to lose time due to the threat ...Bxg3, and we are ready to attack the centre with ...Nbd7 and ...c5 to follow. 3. Caro-Kann: Two Knights (1.e-5.Ng3

[39] **3.f3** White goes for the 'Fantasy Variation'. I tried to determine the origin of the name but wasn't successful. Fortunately, I had more success in finding good antidotes against it. Let's have a look. 3...O&b6 Black has some choice of reasonable lines against the Fantasy Variation. I am not a huge fan of 3...dxe4 4.fxe4 e5 , as I feel that White is getting the type of game they were hoping for. The move 3.f3 often leads to complex and unusual positions and is preferred by dynamic, tactical players. I don't want to open the f-file, thinking that my opponent rather likes this course of action. A good, popular option is 3...e6 , often combined with ...Bb4. This line is fine for Black, but it takes considerable work to master. I felt that my solution 3...Qb6 is simpler to learn and tricky for White to handle. It is not the most obvious choice, so let's discuss why I think it's a good move. The move 3.f3 has weakened the dark squares in White's camp, in particular e3. With ...Qb6, we prepare the strike ...e5! to attack and open the centre, exploiting these dark squares. The main line of 3...Qb6 is CCStartFENCCrnb1kbnr/pp2pppp/1qp5/3p4/3PP3/5P2/PPP3PP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 1 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nc3 dxe4 5.fxe4 e5! , illustrating this concept. We'll focus on 4.Nc3, as this move is almost always played. I'll also check 4.c3 and 4.a4 briefly, which are rare but instructive to study. 4.a4 A rare move, but there is one interesting and instructive point that I wanted to show.

[4.c3 White anticipates our central strike and lends additional protection to d4. e5 4.c3 has not changed our strategy, of course. We attack White's centre with ...e5. 5.exd5 This is played most of the time. It's worse for White to play 5.dxe5?! Bc5 , when there is no good continuation in sight. 6.Ne2 Bf2+ or 6.Nh3 Bxh3 look awful for White. cxd5 6.O&e2 Again 6.dxe5?! Bc5 is awful for White. 6.Qe2 is not much better, though. .xc6 7.Ke3 I know, broken record: 7.dxe5? Bc5! is great for Black. 7.Be3 at least demands some precision. Ke6 8.dxe5 d4
We want to open the position as much as possible. 9.cxd4 .xge7 This is the strongest, but 9...O-O-O also works. White is in awful shape after 9...Nge7 and unable to defend against ...Nf5, followed by ...Nxd4. A sample line is 10.Nc3 Nf5 11.Qd2 O-O-O 12.Nge2 Ncxd4 , when White is in deep trouble. 6. Caro-Kann: 1. e4 c6 Sideline-3.f3 - Fantasy Variation #2]
[4..xc3 White develops the knight and attacks d5. Very natural and by far the most popular move. dxe4 It's essential to remember that you need to take on d4 first. The move 4...e5?! is dubious because 5.dxe5 Bc5 6.Na4! works well for White. After 6...Bf2+ 7.Ke2 , we don't have a good queen move. After our capture on e4, White's usual reply is 5.fxe4. We'll also check 5.Nxe4 and 5.Bc4 briefly.

A) 5.fxe4 The natural recapture and almost always played. The move 5.Nxe4 is not bad, though - it's like a Classical Caro-Kann with the moves f3 and Qb6 inserted. You can play 5...Nf6 , in the style of our recipe in the Classical, or 5... Bf5 . It's unnecessary to drill any deeper, as this is a very rare line and normal moves are enough to get a good position. It's more important to focus on 5.fxe4, as this is far more popular, and some precision helps. e5 As planned, we strike against d4. 6.dxe5 This is bad but still played quite often. *(6..xf3* White's best move, for sure. *exd4 7..xxd4* That's the challenging move. After 7.Qxd4 Black has many good options. I like 7...Qxd4 8.Nxd4 Bd6 , but CCStartFENCCrnb1kbnr/pp3ppp/1qp5/8/3QP3/2N2N2/PPP3PP/R1B1KB1R b KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7...Nd7 is fine, too. In general, I am happy to have traded queens while having a better pawn structure. *h5* I have played 7...Bc5 and 7...Nf6 in my online games, without knowing any theory. While analyzing this line for the first time, I see that Black has this fun move available instead. Black's idea is ...Bg4 and a quick ...O-O-O, if possible. As far as I am aware, the move has not been tested in a game. I am looking forward to playing it, but maybe you get the chance first. After 7...h5, I'd expect the moves 8.Bc4 or 8. Be2 and will check them now. *8.Kc4* White's most aggressive-looking move. It looks scary for us, as our development is lagging. White could also try 8.Be2 , when we'll respond 8...Bg4 , as intended. After 9.Bxg4 hxg4 White can't take the g-pawn, as our queen attacks the d4-knight. I think this position is interesting to play and offers about equal chances. Maybe White's best is 10. Qd3 , when 10...Nd7 11.Bf4 Nc5 12.Qc4 Qa6 leads to an endgame with much to play for both. *Kg4* Catching up in development. *9..xf3 Ke7* I like this small but mean move! White would like to play 10.h3 , but 10...Bh4+! shows the point. Better is a move like CCStartFENCCrn2k1nr/pp2bpp1/1qp5/7p/

2B1P1b1/2N2N2/PPP3PP/R1BQK2R w KQkq - 4 10CCEndFENCC 10.Qd3 , when we play 10...Nd7 and prepare queenside castling. I like Black's position and would assess chances to be about equal. White still has an isolated e-pawn, and we have chances to control e5 in the long run. 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline-3.f3 - Fantasy Variation #5 *)* 6...Ke6 It's important to avoid 6...Bc5?! , which has tactical drawbacks CCStartBracketCC 7.Na4 or even CCStartFENCCrnb1k1nr/pp3ppp/1qp5/2b1P3/4P3/2N5/PPP3PP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7.Qf3! work against usCCEndBracketCC. After 6...Be6, we already have an advantage. The simple plan is recouping the e5-pawn. with ...Nd7, ...Qc7, ...Ne7-g6 and castle queenside. White has the worse pawn structure and weak squares, like e3, to worry about. 7..xf3 .xd7 8.Kd3 .xe7 One of my Blitz games shows a typical course of the game: 9.Qe2 Ng6 10.Bd2 Ngxe5 11.O-O-O O-O-O , and Black had a comfortable advantage. 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline-3.f3 - Fantasy Variation #4;

B) 5.Kc4 A rare move, but not bad at all. White tries to make a gambit out of it, in the style of the Blackmar-Diemer CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.e4? dxe4 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.f3 exf3 5.Nxf3 CCEndBracketCC. 5....xf6 This is the key moment already. We should avoid 5...exf3?! 6.Nxf3 , as White gets too much compensation for the pawn. 6.fxe4 White finally takes the pawn. It's tough to suggest an alternative, as both Bc1 and Ng1 are not easy to develop. e5 No surprise, this strike is the key to our concept. This position resembles CCStartFENCCrnb1kbnr/pp2pppp/1qp5/8/3Pp3/2N2P2/PPP3PP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.fxe4 e5 , but with Bc4 and Nf6 inserted. 7.dxe5 A difference to CCStartFENCCrnb1kbnr/pp2pppp/1qp5/8/3Pp3/2N2P2/PPP3PP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.fxe4 e5 6.dxe5 , is now our knight is attacked. .xg4 We threaten mate and attack the e5-pawn. 8.O&e2 .xxe5 9.Kb3 Kg4 10..xf3 .xbd7 This position offers about equal chances, according to Stockfish. I have to admit that I'd rather be Black, as I am happy with the excellent e5-square. White has active pieces, which probably balances chances. 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline-3.f3 - Fantasy Variation #3]

4...e5 Here we go! You should play this move immediately and avoid 4...dxe4 5.a5! , which pushed the queen away from its great spot. 5.dxe5 a5 A very important and instructive move. We'd love to play 5...Bc5 , but 6.a5! throws a spanner in the works. We need to play 5...a5! first, make sure that our queen stays on the best square. Now, White has a hard time organizing their forces. The king is stuck in the centre and tough to protect. Our simple plan is ...Bc5, ...Ne7 and ...O-O. We don't mind the small material deficit, as development and king safety are more important. 6.exd5 Let's check the pawn grab. 6...Kc5 7..xh3 The only move, as 7.Ne2?? Bf2+ 8.Kd2 Qe3# is an early finish. 7...Kxh3 8.gxh3 Kf2+ 9.Ele2 cxd5 10.O&xd5 A forced sequence after 7.Nh3. 10....xc6 We should avoid 10...Ne7 10.Qb5+ , allowing a queen trade. After 10...Nc6

Black has great play for the material and the better practical chances, for sure. 6. Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 Sideline-3.f3 - Fantasy Variation #1

40 **4..xc3** This dubious move is surprisingly popular in online chess, which is the reason why I decided to cover it. White develops the knight in front of the c-pawn and forfeits the possibility to play c2-c3 to support the central pawn. While playing 4.Nc3 is a conceptual mistake, it is not bad enough to give Black an instant advantage. 4....xc6 This looks best. We stop Bd3 for the moment and are ready to play ...Bf5 or ...Bg4 next. 5..xf3 Kf5 Here 5...Bg4 6.h3 is not bad for White, as we can't play 6...Bh5 due to 7.g4 Bg6 8.h4 . 6.Kb5 This is the move that keeps equal chances for White, in my opinion. Now we need to be aware of the idea Ne5, which would be quite annoying after 6...e6?! 7.Ne5 . The f5-bishop is in trouble due to g2-g4 ideas. 6...a6 A simple and good solution, getting rid of the pin. 7.Kxc6+ bxc6 We have won the bishop pair, but White has a healthy development and no particular weakness. I'd still rather take Black in this position, but White is not in terrible shape if they are careful. 4. Caro-Kann: Exchange (1.e4 c-4.Nc3

4.Kd3 White's main move and a very logical choice. White develops their bishop to the best square and stops ...Bf5 simultaneously. 4....xc6 5.c3 It makes little sense for White to allow 5.Nf3 Bg4 , a position that we briefly examine via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/8/3p4/3P4/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.Bd3 Bg4 . 5....xf6 We develop the knight, but also prepare ...Bg4 next. Now White's main move is 6.Bf4, but 6.h3 and 6.Nf3 are also frequently seen. 6.h3 White stops our ...Bg4 idea. How to develop now?

[6..xf3 This is less popular than the mainline 6.Bf4, but it leads to very similar positions. The small differences favour Black slightly, which explains why 6.Bf4 is considered to be more challenging. Kg4 7.h3 It's useful for White to insert this move, but they can also play 7.Bf4 immediately, when we'd continue in the same fashion: ...e6, ...Bd6 and ...O-O. Kh5 8.Kf4 White should take this opportunity and play Bf4 before we manage to prevent it with ...Qc7. e6 9..xbd2 Kd6 I generally advise going for this trade. White's bishop is a strong piece on f4 and should go. 10.Kxd6 O&xd6 11.0-0 0-0 A good moment to take stock and compare this position with the mainline. What's the difference, compared to CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/3P4/2PB4/PP3PPP/RNBQK1NR w KQkq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6.Bf4 Bg4 7.Qb3 Qd7 8.Nd2 e6 9.Ngf3 Bd6 10. Bxd6 Qxd6 11.O-O O-O - ? Well, White has an extra tempo in the mainline, as we needed to spend two moves with the queen to get to d6. White has gotten Qb3 for free, which is useful. White connects rooks and unpins the queen, which allows Ne5. This is the reason why 6.Bf4 is slightly more precise than 6.Nf3. We don't need to examine 6.Nf3 any further, as Black's strategy is just the same as in the mainline, we just have a better version of the same structure. 4. Caro-Kann: Exchange (1.e4 c-4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.Nf3]

[6.Kf4 Kg4 Realizing the idea of ...Nf6. We develop the bishop first and only then play ...e6. 7.O&b3 White's only serious try. 7.Nf3 is a transposition to CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/3P4/2PB4/PP3PPP/RNBQK1NR w KQkq - 1 6CCEndFENCC 6.Nf3 and CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/3P1Bb1/2PB4/PP3PPP/RN1QK1NR w KQkq - 3 7CCEndFENCC 7.f3 makes no sense at all, weakening the kingside for no reason. We'll play ...Bh5-g6 and have some advantage. O&d7 Black's main move and the most reliable one, in my mind. White attacked the b7-pawn, we covered it. 8..xd2 White plays this move almost exclusively. It makes a lot of sense, as it prepares Ngf3 next. I also found some games in which 8.h3 Bh5 9.Nd2 was tried, but the insertion of the h-pawn moves doesn't make a substantial difference. e6 No rocket science: we need to develop the bishop. 9..xgf3 Kd6 We go for the bishop trade. I think that the f4-bishop is strong and should be exchanged.

A) 10.Kxd6 White goes for the trade, which is by far the most popular move. O&xd6 What about the b-pawn? Did we just blunder it?

A1) 11.0-0 The best move for White, ignoring the b-pawn. After 11.O-O, we still don't need to worry about the b-pawn, as 11...O-O 12.Qxb7 Rab8 13. Qa6 Rb6 transposes to theline that we have examined via CCStartFENCCr3k2r/pp3ppp/2nqpn2/3p4/3P2b1/1QPB1N2/PP1N1PPP/R3K2R w KQkq - 0 11CCEndFENCC 11.Qxb7 Rb8 12.Qa6 O-O 13.O-O Rb6 . So we can castle. 0-0 We are on move twelve, already fairly deep for opening study. However, this position has been reached in hundreds of games, both in over-the-board chess and online games. The reason is that both sides have played natural and logical moves. Even if White didn't know it was a well-known sequence, they might still arrive here by playing moves that feel right. What are both sides aiming for? White: Their main idea is starting a kingside initiative. They'll play a rook to e1, trying to play Ne5. White may go for Re1-e3 or play the f-pawn after Ne5 is on the board. Black: We want to play on the queenside. A minority attack with ...b5-b4 and ...Na5-c4 are key ideas. At the same time, we need to make sure nothing bad happens on the kingside. Now, after 11...O-O, White has the decision between playing 12.Rfe1 or 12.Rae1. Both moves prepare Ne5. With Rae1, White intends to play f2-f4 after the knight jump, while Rfe1 focuses more on piece play. Our reply will be quite similar. In both cases, I suggest exchanging on f3 and employing a prophylactic strategy against Ne5. Let's have a look. 12.Qae1 The rook placement of f1 and e1 hints at White's intention to play Ne5 and f4 soon after. *(12.Qfe1* This rook move prepares Ne5, just as 12. Rae1 does. *Kxf3* I suggest trading on f3 after both 12.Rae1 and 12.Rfe1. I like to reduce White's attacking potential on the kingside and feel that the knights are doing a good job in this pawn structure. *13..xxf3 O&c7* An important concept that is directed against Ne5. Black would like to capture on e5, but this is not possible as long as dxe5 would be a fork on the queen and the f6-knight. If we'd play, for example, 13...Rab8 , White would play

14.Ne5 and we can't take the knight. This wouldn't be the end of the world, but still. *14.O&c2* The knight jump to e5 is less pointed here, compared to the version with rooks on f1 and e1 CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCr4rk1/ pp3ppp/2nqpn2/3p4/3P2b1/1QPB1N2/PP1N1PPP/R4RK1 w - - 2 12CCEndFENCC 12.Rae1 Bxf3 13.Nxf3 Qc7 14.Ne5 CCEndBracketCC. After 14.Ne5 Nxe5 15.dxe5 Nd7 it makes little sense to continue with 16. f4?! , as White's rooks are misplaced for this advance. White can play 16. Qc2 g6 17.Qe2 to cover the e-pawn, instead. I think White's play on the kingside is rather slow, for example, after 17...Kg7 18.h4 h5 , I see no way forward for White. Ultimately, our queenside play with ...b5 will start rolling. *Qab8* We prepare ...b5. *15.O&e2* After 15.Ne5 we have 15...g6 preparing the capture on e5 or 15...Rfc8 with the threat of ...Nxd4. *a6* We renew the idea of ...b5. *16.a4 Qfc8* We prepare ...Na5-c4 with this move, starting our queenside play. A setup with ...g6 and Kg7 should reliably defend against White's ideas on the kingside. The Exchange variation leads to an interesting battle, as both sides have 'their part of the board' and need to combine active and defensive moves . 4. Caro-Kann: Exchange (1.e4 c-4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6. Bf4 #7 *)* 12...Kxf3 I suggest trading on f3 after both 12.Rae1 and 12.Rfe1. I like to reduce White's attacking potential on the kingside and feel that the knights are doing a good job in this pawn structure. 13..xxf3 O&c7 An important concept that is directed against Ne5. Black would like to capture on e5, but this is not possible as long as dxe5 would be a fork on the queen and the f6-knight. If we'd play, for example, 13...Rab8 , White would play 14.Ne5 and we can't take the knight. This wouldn't be the end of the world, but still. 14.O&c2 White gets the queen closer to the kingside. *(14..xe5* White prepared this move with 12.Rae1, it is the logical continuation. *.xxe5* Our previous queen move has prepared the capture. We don't mind trades, as it reduces White's attacking potential on the kingside. *15.dxe5* White may also play 15.Rxe5 , when 15...Rab8 prepares ...b5. Chances are equal in this interesting position. White has attacking chances, but we have a clear play on the queenside, too. *.xd7 16.O&c2* White avoids 16.f4?! Nc5 , when we manage to trade White's active bishop. *g6* I am happy with Black's prospects here. White does not have a dangerous attack, and we have queenside play with ...Rab8, ...b5. The move ...Nc5 is also on our agenda, as trading the bishop would further reduce any possible danger to our king. 4. Caro-Kann: Exchange (1.e4 c-4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.Bf4 #6 *)* 14...Qab8 We prepare ...b5, the start of our queenside play. 15.O&e2 After 15.Ne5 I suggest 15...Rfc8 , which threatens ...Nxd4! After 16.Qe2 Nxe5 17.dxe5 Nd7 , we reach a similar position as after CCStartFENCCr4rk1/ppq2ppp/ 2n1pn2/3p4/3P4/1QPB1N2/PP3PPP/4RRK1 w - - 1 14CCEndFENCC 14. Ne5 Nxe5 15.dxe5 . a6 16.a4 Qfc8 We can't play ...b5 quickly, but ...Na5-c4 is a good idea. With 16...Rfc8 we prepare this manoeuvre. 4. Caro-Kann: Exchange (1.e4 c-4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.Bf4 #5;

A2) 11.O&xb7 White grabs our b-pawn. It's difficult to understand White's motivation behind the move, as only Black can be better if we play it correctly. Still, it is played from time to time and knowing the best reply pays off. 11...Qb8 12.O&a6 0-0 Maybe White is hoping for 12...Rxb2?? 13.Bb5 , when Black is busted. The move 12...O-O! is important to remember. Often you erroneously feel compelled to prove that you have compensation for the pawn quickly. Here the key is to make this calm move first. White has to be precise now to stay out of trouble. 13.Kb5 Maybe this is White's most interesting try. Even here, it's rather Black who's better. *(13.b4* White is too greedy! This move fails, as do 13.b3?? or 13.Rb1?? . The refutation is the same in all cases. *Qb6* We need to break the pin on the sixth rank first. *14.O&a3 e5* White never took time to castle, and now it's too late. We threaten ...e4, and taking e5 doesn't save our opponent. After 15.dxe5 Nxe5 16.Be2 Nxf3+ 17.Nxf3 Re8 Black has a deadly attack against White's king. 4. Caro-Kann: Exchange (1.e4 c-4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.Bf4 #3*; 13.0-0* White recognizes the danger and evacuates their king. *Qb6* We still can't play 13...Rxb2?? 14.Bb5 . Inserting 13...Rb6 is a good solution and leads to a comfortable game. *14.O&a3* After 14.Qa4 Rxb2 , we'd get the pawn back immediately. *O&xa3 15.bxa3 Qc8* Playing 15...Rc8 makes sense, as does taking on f3 first and then the rook move. Black is a pawn down, but obviously this is not important. I already prefer Black because of the targets on the white queenside, in particular the backward c-pawn. 4. Caro-Kann: Exchange (1.e4 c-4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.Bf4 #4 *)* 13...Qb6 We need to unpin, no question. 14.O&a4 Now Black has a wide choice of good options. The first move that comes to mind is probably 14...Rfb8 , when 15.Bxc6 Rxc6 16.Ne5 Ra6 17.Qc2 Bf5 gives Black good play for the pawn. My suggestion tries to improve on this line. .xe7 It's a bit odd to move the knight back, but it makes perfect sense for a concrete reason. After 14...Rfb8 White has 15.Bxc6 and gains a tempo to play Qc2 next and cover the b-pawn. With 14...Ne7 , we remove the knight from the bishop's scope and now threaten ...Rfb8 or ...Qb8 with greater effect. Now White should return the pawn with 15.O-O Qb8 16.Bd3 Rxb2 , or a similar sequence. Hanging on to the material is very risky. 15..xe5 Another risky and even worse attempt is 15.b3? Ng6 16.O-O a6 17.Bd3 Nf4 , when White is in serious trouble. .xg6 Black is better now, and only machine-like precision will save White. This position was reached in a rapid game between Levon Aronian and Fabiano Caruana, which continued 16.Nxg4 Nxg4 17.h3 , when 17...Nxf2! already would have crushed White. I think it's clear that White is struggling here, and we don't need to look at more sample lines. 4. Caro-Kann: Exchange (1.e4 c-4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.Bf4 #2;

B) 10..xe5 The knight jump leads to nothing after our precise reply. 10...O&c7 Putting pressure on e5. 11.0-0 That's White's idea. After 11.Nxg4?! Bxf4 12. Nxf6+ gxf6 Black already is for choice. We have improved our central control

and can conveniently castle queenside later. .xd7 This rarely played move is suggested by Stockfish and gives Black good chances. We need to avoid 11... Nxe5? 12.dxe5 Bxe5 13.Bxe5 Qxe5 14.Qb5+ , when White has an advantage. 12..xxg4 Maybe White should prefer 12.Rfe1 , when 12...Bxe5 13. Bxe5 Ndxe5 14.dxe5 O-O still leads a comfortable game for us. The manoeuvre ...Bg4-h5-g6 comes next, trading White's bishop. Kxf4 13..xf3 h5 14..xe3 g5 We have a promising attack, with ...g4 and ...O-O-O next. 4. Caro-Kann: Exchange (1.e4 c-4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.Bf4 #1]

6...e5 This is the correct decision. White has played the rather slow move 6.h3 and neglected control of e5, which allows the pawn push. After 6...e5, we create an IQP but can develop comfortably and get equal chances. In our repertoire, we play against an IQP quite frequently. Here we should take the other side, as it's the objectively best solution. The only reasonable alternative that I see is 6... g6 , with the later idea of playing ...Bf5. It looks like White is slightly better in these lines, as the bishop is not well placed on g7, looking at the well-protected d4-pawn. Still, you could play ...g6 if you look for something different to vary your play. 7.dxe5 .xxe5 Now we need to check two moves. White's best is probably 8.Nf3, but 8.Qe2 can lead to interesting complications. White also has the move 8.Bc2 , but 8...Bc5 is an attractive reply when 9.Nf3 Nxf3+ 10. Qxf3 Qe7+ 11.Qe2 Qxe2+ 12.Kxe2 O-O leads to an easier endgame for Black to play. White's king is in the centre, and they don't have any pressure against our IQP. 8.O&e2 This move can lead to cool complications after our enterprising reply.

[8..xf3 I think this is White's best move, emphasizing development. They allow ... Nxd3+, though. .xxd3+ Alright, let's grab the bishop pair. 9.O&xd3 Kd6 The best square, as 9...Bc5 10.Be3 looks desirable for White. We want to keep the two bishops and avoid trades. 10.0-0 0-0 This position offers equal chances for both sides. White has a good blockade of the IQP, as d4 is reliably under control. This means we won't manage ...d5-d4 any time soon. Black has the bishop pair and easy development, which is the balancing factor to compensate for the static weakness of the IQP. We want to keep minor pieces on the board and play as actively as possible - the standard strategy you want to employ when you have an IQP. I want to continue from this position to demonstrate an important idea. 11.Kg5 h6 A much more active continuation than 11...Be6?! . We can offer a pawn sacrifice instead. 12.Kxf6 White grabs the pawn. After 12.Bh4 , we'd continue to offer the d5-pawn with 12...Re8 . The sequence 13.Nbd2 Bd7 14. Bxf6 Qxf6 15.Qxd5 Bc6 16.Qd4 Qg6 17.Qg4 Qxg4 18.hxg4 Bf4 18.Nb3 Bd7 nicely illustrates the power of the two bishops. Losing the pawn on d5 opened diagonals for the light-squared bishop. O&xf6 13.O&xd5 Qd8 Not the only move for Black. 13...Qg6 is also fine, but 14.Nh4 Qf6 15.Nf3 leads to a repetition. 14.O&h5 White has no good alternative to this move. We threatened ...Bh2+ and White needed to watch out for ...Bxh3 ideas, too. After, 14.Qa5 for example, 14... Bxh3! is possible. b5 We intend to play ...Bb7 next, using the long diagonal for

our bishop. It is possible to play 14...g6!? here, too. This move would already more or less force a draw with the best play after 15.Qxh6 Bf4 16.Qh4 g5 17. Qh5 Kg7 18.Nd4 Rh8 19.Qe2 Bxh3 . There is no need for this line, as 14...b5 offers good compensation for the pawn at little risk. Our bishops are powerful in this wide-open position. 4. Caro-Kann: Exchange (1.e4 c-4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.h3 #3]

8....xe4 This is not Black's simplest option. I know it's all called 'Keep it Simple', but this move is fully sound and sets some cool traps! The actually 'simpler' option is 8...Qe7 , which often leads to a later queen trade on the e-file and is fine for Black. Back to 8...Ne4: can't White take twice on e4? And what about those knights on the e-file? Isn't there some problem with f2-f3 at some point? Hang on! 9.Kxe4

[9.Kb5+ This looks very tempting for White. Kd7 The only move, as 9...Nc6?? 10. f3 wins for White. 10.Kxd7+ White has calculated that after 10...Qxd7 the move 11.f3 wins a piece on the e-file. This looks extremely promising for White and is likely to happen. White has an alternative here in 10.Nf3 , when 10...Bxb5+ 11. Qxb5+ Qd7 gives Black equal chances. O&xd7 Here's a fun story. I became aware of this line while watching the 2021 World Cup, when the move 10...Kxd7? was played in the game Jesse February-Valentina Gunina. White was much better, as Black's king is in the centre, and her pieces are badly coordinated. Gunina escaped with a draw at the end, but the main story is that she got the same line again two months later, this time in the online Olympiad against Michal Lahav. She had done her homework and improved with 10...Qxd7! , which allows 11.f3 . Let's check what happens if White wants to win the piece. 11.f3 Two question marks are harsh, but the move loses! White has to play the modest 11.Nf3 and keep equal chances after 11...Ng6 . 0-0-0 12.fxe4 dxe4 Black has a winning attack now. The immediate threat is ...Nd3+, and White has no way to deal with it. Gunina's game in the Online Olympiad concluded 13.Be3 Nd3+ 14.Kf1 Qf5+ 15. Nf3 exf3 16.gxf3 Bc5 17.Bxc5 Nxc5 18.Na3 Rhe8 19.Qg2 Re6 20.Qg4 Qd3+ 21.Kg2 f5 and White resigned. 4. Caro-Kann: Exchange (1.e4 c-4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.h3 #2]

9...dxe4 10.O&xe4 White has snatched a pawn and now attacks our knight. 10...Kd6 Wait, didn't White threaten f2-f4? 11.f4 This is a blunder and one of the traps that White may fall into. White should play a sane development move, like 11. Nf3 , when Black still has excellent play for the sacrificed pawn. We'd continue 11...O-O 12.Nxe5 Bxe5 13.O-O Re8 , when our pieces are very actively placed. White has to defend now carefully, and it's easy to stumble quickly. 14. Qf3 Bd7 15.Qxb7 Rb8 16.Qxa7 Bb5 is one quick way to a disaster for White.

11...O&h4+ 12.Elf1 0-0 That's the problem for White; we manage to castle, and they can't take our knight because ...Qh4+ created a pin on the fourth rank. Now Black has a devastating attack, for example, after 13.Nf3 Nxf3 14.Qxf3 b6 , intending ...Ba6+. If White plays 13.g3 , the simple 13...Qf6 is possible, but the knight sac 13...Qxg3 also wins already. 4. Caro-Kann: Exchange (1.e4 c-4.

Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.h3 #1

41 **6..xf3** The natural move 6.Nf3 is White's most popular move. 6...a6 A surprising choice. Don't we have a more powerful move than moving the a-pawn? And what's the idea of the move in the first place? Let's have a closer look. The key point is best explained by examining Black's most popular moves 6...Bg4 and 6...g6. In both lines, White's best reply is the capture on d5, followed by Qb3, for example, CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6...Bg4 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Qb3 . Now, d5 and b7 are attacked, leading to forced, tactical play. Against CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6...g6 White's best is 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Qb3 , when after 8...Nxc3 9.Bc4! White has a slight advantage. This particular variation is the reason why I am not recommending 6...g6. We have seen that cxd5 and Qb3 is an important idea for White. Here's a great point of 6...a6: this standard reply against the usual moves is toothless, as CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 4 6CCEndFENCC 6...a6 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Qb3 Be6! is possible. Black is in good shape, not just after 9.Qxb7?? Na5! , winning the queen! Note how the a6-pawn takes away the square a6 for the queen and covers b5 to prevent checks. This means that CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/1p2pppp/p1n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.cxd5 does not pose a severe threat to 6...a6. But if the capture is satisfactory for Black, what could be a critical test? Other moves are slower and allow Black an easy development, for example, CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/1p2pppp/p1n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.h3 g6 , when we finally manage to fianchetto the bishop under favourable circumstances. Let's have a look at some possible replies to 6...a6. Note that this line is a very recent discovery, and therefore, your opponents will likely be surprised. In many cases, you'll face cxd5 Nxd5, as mentioned. 7.Kg5 While plays in the spirit ofthe 6.Bg5 line. Compared to this variation, White has the added move Nf3, while we have played ...a6. At first, you might think this is a bad deal for Black... shouldn't the knight development be more valuable than the small flank pawn move? A closer look reveals that this is not the case at all. The knight is often slightly misplaced on f3, making taking on f6 less attractive for White. Provoking a pawn to f6 makes the knight look silly, as it would stare at the protected squares e5 and g5. The second drawback of the knight placement is that ...Ne4 gets more powerful for Black in some cases. A knight on e4 can be annoying for White, and taking it is less attractive if ...dxe4 come with a gain of tempo on the f3-knight. We have established that Nf3 is not that useful for White, but what about ...a6 for Black? Covering the square b5 is useful in more than one way. There are some concrete tactical benefits like 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Qb3 Be6 , but preventing Bb5 at

a later stage is a factor, too. After a possible c4-c5 advance, the idea Bb5 would make some sense but is now off the table.

[7.h3 White stops ...Bg4, but a slow move like this doesn't bother us much. I suggest the reply 7...g6 and would play in the same way against 7.c5 , 7.Be2 or 7.Be3 , all of which don't put any direct pressure on us. g6 I like to stick with the fianchetto. As usual, Black has some alternatives. Here 7...dxc4 also looks fine, as h3 is a rather pointless move in an IQP position, while ...a6 is useful for Black. 8.c5 White's most interesting try. White could have played CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/1p2pppp/p1n2n2/3p4/2PP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.c5 g6 CCStartBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/1p2pppp/p1n2n2/2Pp4/3P4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7...Bg4 is a possible alternative in this move orderCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/1p2pp1p/p1n2np1/2Pp4/3P4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 8CCEndFENCC 8.h3 , leading to the same position. Now Black has a strong move that you should remember. .xe4 A strong move. After the routine 8...Bg7 9.Bd3 the desirable moves ...Ne4 and ...Bf5 are impossible/ harder to play. 9.Kd3 Kf5 We managed an active development of knight and queen's bishop. Now ...Bg7 and ...O-O will follow, putting some pressure on d4. Later the move ...b6 is a key point to attack White's pawn chain. Here's a typical continuation: 10.O-O Bg7 11.Be3 O-O 12.Re1 Nxc3 13.bxc3 Bxd3 14.Qxd3 b6 , which gives Black equal chances due to our play against the white c-pawn. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5]

[7.cxd5 The most likely move to happen. Against Black's main lines 6...Bg4 and 6...g6, the capture is critical, so many opponents will continue in the same fashion. .xxd5 Now 8.Bc4 looks like White's best bet, as 8.Qb3 is harmless. If White plays a slow move like 8.Be2 or 8.Bd3 , we are happy to play 8...g6 and put some pressure on d4, using the fianchettoed bishop. 8.O&b3 White continues with this natural move, but we have an excellent reply. *(8.Kc4* White most active and popular continuation. *Ke6* After 8...Be6 we threaten ...Nxc3, so White has nothing better than retreating the bishop to a safe spot on b3. *9.Kb3 .xa5* It makes sense to push the bishop back first. I also examined 9...g6, which seems fine, too. The practical drawback of 9...g6 is 10.Ng5 , which starts wild complications that are tough to assess for a human player. Stockfish likes Black, but you still have to find good moves yourselves. Our move is simpler to handle. *10.Kc2 g6* Finally, we get to develop the kingside. *11.0-0* Now 11.Ng5?! is pointless due to 11...Nxc3 12. bxc3 Bc4 , when White can't castle. *Kg7* Rasmus Svane, whose games inspired me to examine the 6...a6 line, has twice reached this position in 2021 in online Blitz. We should have a look at them to get a better impression of the ideas we have. ACCEndBracketCC Svane's opponent Vasif Durabayli played CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1p2ppbp/p3b1p1/n2n4/3P4/2N2N2/PPB2PPP/R1BQ1RK1 w kq - 2 12CCEndFENCC 12.Ne4 , avoiding the trade on c3. This turned out to be harmless after 12...O-O 13.h3 Nb4 14.Bb1 Nbc6 , when Rasmus was

already much better, but later spoiled his winning position. Black has tremendous pressure against the weak d4-pawn. BCCEndBracketCC Logman Guliev tried CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/1p2ppbp/p3b1p1/n2n4/3P4/2N2N2/PPB2PPP/R1BQ1RK1 w kq - 2 12CCEndFENCC 12.Ng5 , when 12...Nxc3 13.bxc3 led to a pawn structure change. White's c-pawn is backward, and Black has good control of d5 and c4, blockading the pawns. Now after 13...Bd5 White played 14.Be4? , when 14...h6! 15.Bxd5 Qxd5 would have been much better for Black. The bishop trade is a dream scenario for Black, as it weakens the light squares in White's camp. White will likely never move the c- and d-pawn again, giving us easy targets. White has other moves than the two we looked at, but our general strategy will be similar: taking on c3, then using the squares d5 and c4 and putting pressure on the c3-pawn. White will seek play on the e-file and has active pieces, which makes it a balanced position that is interesting to play. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5 *)* 8...Ke6 The key point of 6...a6! Now White can't take on b7, as 9.Qxb7?? Na5! traps the queen. The other active move, CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/1p2pppp/p1n1b3/3n4/3P4/1QN2N2/PP3PPP/R1B1KB1R w KQkq - 2 9CCEndFENCC 9.Bc4?? , also fails to 9...Na5 10.Qa4+ Bd7 11. Qc2 Nxc3 12.Qxc3 Rc8 , winning a piece. White now only has one move to avoid a clear disadvantage, the less than obvious 9.Ng5, sacrificing the d-pawn. We'll also have a quick look at 8.Be2 to demonstrate an important idea for Black. 9.Ke2 *(9..xg5* The best move, according to Stockfish, but not an easy decision for a human player. White gives up their central pawn. *.xxd4* Well, you should take a centre pawn unless you see a terrifying response. Here White gets some compensation for the lost pawn, but not more. *10.O&a4+ .xc6 11..xxe6 fxe6* Our extra pawn is not pretty but still on the board. More importantly, after ...g6 and ...Bg7, we'll have excellently placed pieces, for example, after the following moves. *12.Ke2 g6 13.0-0 Kg7* Black has equal chances. Our pieces are very active and ...O-O and ...Qb6 are good moves to play next. After castling ...Nd4 is possible, too. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5 *)* 9....xxc3 I like this move even more than 9...Ndb4 10.Qd1 Nxd4 11.Nxd4 Qxd4 12.O-O , which wins a pawn for Black, but gives White some compensation. 10.O&xc3 Kd5 Black has an excellent position. We continue with either ...e6 or our more common approach ...g6. White's IQP is safely blockaded, and the queen on c3 is misplaced because of the idea ...Rc8. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4. c4 Nf6 5]

7...Ke6 8.Ke2 The position after 7...Be6 is still relatively unexplored. White has tried various combinations of Bxf6, c4-c5 and Be2, which often lead to the same positions or similar situations. I have picked 8.Be2 as the main move, as it was often played, but 8.c5 g6 9.Bxf6 exf6 10.Be2 or CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/ 1p2pppp/p1n1bn2/3p2B1/2PP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 2 8CCEndFENCC 8.Bxf6 exf6 9.c5 g6 10.Be2 may easily lead to the same outcome. Our approach is fairly clear: we'd like to play ...g6, ...Bg7 and ...O-O. Once ...Bg7 is on the board, White's capture on f6 loses any point. This is why

White usually takes the knight quickly. 8...g6 According to plan. Now we'll have a look at the capture on f6 and one sample line with 9.O-O, when White keeps the tension. 9.0-0 White avoids the capture on f6 and simply develops.

[9.Kxf6 exf6 10.0-0 After 10.c5 , you can play the simple 10...Bg7 CCStartBracketCClikely transposing to positions that we are about to examine in a momentCCEndBracketCC or consider the sharper 10...g5!? to set the board on fire. You may follow with ...f5 and ...Bg7, getting ...g5-g4 on the map. This idea puts enormous pressure on the d4-pawn, but involves some risk. Kg7 11.O&b3 White increases the pressure on d5, which forces matters. They could also play 11.Qd2 , when 11...O-O , followed by a setup with ...Re8 and ...f5 looks reasonable. Note that the move c4-c5 can often favourably answered with a pawn storm on the kingside to push away the f3-knight and attack the d4-pawn will full effect. A sample line could be 11.Rc1 O-O 12.c5? g5! , which is very strong. We'll play ...f5 and threaten ... g5-g4 to win d4! 0-0 Instead, 11...dxc4 is possible, but I prefer castling. Now White has to be careful to keep equal chances. 12..xxd5 After 12.cxd5 Na5 13.Qa4 Bxd5 14.Nxd5 Qxd5 , we might reach the same positions. .xa5 13.O&a4 Kxd5 Or 13...Nxc4 , which is also fine. 14.cxd5 O&xd5 White's d-pawn is weak CCStartBracketCC...Nc6 and ...f5 are on the agendaCCEndBracketCC, but White can keep equal chances with precise play. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5]

9...Kg7 Now we are ready to castle, but not only that. The more concrete idea is to capture on c4 finally. This was not possible earlier, as Bxf6 and d4-d5 would have won a piece for White. Now White has to worry about the c-pawn. 10.Qc1 Let's have a look at this move, which allows the capture on c4. Instead of 10. Rc1, White has some other options, of course. It's good to note that 10.c5?! Ne4! looks very comfortable for Black. We exert some pressure on d4 and are ready to play ...O-O and ...b6 soon to attack the white pawn chain. 10...dxc4 The capture leads to equal chances. It is possible to play 10...O-O , but it's interesting to examine the complications after taking on c4. 11.Kxf6 Kxf6 12.d5 Kxc3 The critical difference to the earlier pawn grabs on c4. We need this move to remove the defender of d5. We enter a forced line that leads to equal play after 13.dxe6 Qxd1 14.exf7+ Kxf7 15.Bxc4+ Kg7 16.Rfxd1 Bxb2 17.Rb1 Bf6 18. Rxb7 Na5 . You don't need to know this long line by heart, but it's good to remember that the capture on c4 is an option once we have the bishop on the long diagonal to allow ...Bxc3. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5

[42] **7.d5** .xe5 Jumping to e5 feels more natural than 7...Na5 , even though I couldn't find an advantage in this line for White, either. After 7...Ne5 White goes for 8.Qd4 most of the time, but we'll also check 8.Bxc4, which already looks better for Black. 8.Kxc4 White wants to regain the pawn asap but gives up the bishop pair in the process.

[8.O&d4 White's main move and understandably so. The alternatives aren't great,

and 8.Qd4 is scoring quite well for White because Black might not know the best reply and play the bad move 8...Nd3+ , which loses too much time. We have a much better move and an essential resource to remember. h6 We counterattack the bishop! 9.O&xe5 This leads to a quite unusual pawn structure that is favourable for Black. *(9.Kf4* The move 9.Bh4 will often lead to the same lines, as 9...Ng6 10.Bg3 is a natural transposition. *.xg6 10.Kg3* Or 10.Bxc4 Nxf4 11. Qxf4 g5 , when Black's Bishop will be mighty on the long diagonal. *e5* A nice pawn sacrifice that you should remember. Black is better after this move, but it gets quite messy in one line. A calmer alternative is 10...e6 , which equalizes easily after 11.Bxc4 exd5 . *11.Kxe5* Here 11.Qxc4 Bd6 is very nice for Black. We have great central control, better development, and the Bg3 is offside. *.xxe5 12.O&xe5+ Ke7 13.0-0-0* This is bad, but a move worth knowing something about. After 13.Bxc4 O-O , we are down a pawn but have tremendous compensation. Our dark-squared bishop has no counterpart anymore, and White's king is still in the centre. Here's a sample line to illustrate Black's chances: 14.Nge2 Ng4 15.Qd4 Bf6 16.Qd2 Qb6 17.Ne4 Bg5 18.f4 Bh4+ 19. g3 Bf5 and Black has a winning attack. *.xg4* White was threatening d5-d6, so there was a need for direct action. After 13...Ng4! Black is better in the following melee. *14.O&xg7 Kg5+ 15.Elb1* We don't mind 15.Rd2 Bxd2+ 16.Kxd2 Qg5+ , of course. *Kf5+* And now there is still a split: A**C**C**C**EndBracket**C**C**C** 16.Ka1 is better for Black after the cool line 16...Bf6 17.Re1+ Qe7 18.Rxe7+ Kxe7 , when White's queen is trapped, and we emerge with an advantage. B**C**C**C**EndBracket**C**C**C** **C**C**C**StartFEN**C**C**C**r2qk2r/pp3pQ1/7p/3P1bb1/2p3n1/2N5/ PP3PPP/1K1R1BNR w kq - 3 16**C**C**C**EndFEN**C**C**C** 16.Bd3 is critical when 16... Bxd3+ 17.Rxd3 Bf6 18.Qxg4 cxd3 19.Nf3 Qb6 leads to extra material for Black, but our king position is vulnerable. Objectively, Black is much better. It still requires some care, as our king has no obvious safe spot. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2- 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5 *)* 9...hxg5 Say hello to the rook! 10.Kxc4 g4 Just one of many good moves. We save the g-pawn and plan ...a6 and ...Qd6 next. 11..xb5 A bad move, but the one that can be irritating to meet. Against something slow like 11.Nge2 a6 12.Ng3 Qd6 13.Qd4 e5 Black is better already. O&a5+ 12.Elf1 Eld8 The only move, but it is tough to see beforehand how good it is for Black. We now threaten ...Bd7 and ...Rc8, all with tempo. Black also has ...Rh5 in some lines. It turns out that the king is perfectly safe on d8! After 13.d6 Black has a winning advantage with the cool move 13...Rh5! , when 14.dxe7+ Bxe7 15.Rd1+ Bd7 shows how safe the king is. White is playing without the kingside pieces and is completely lost. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2- 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5]

8....xxc4 9.O&a4+ Kd7 10.O&xc4 Now Black seems to be doing fine with many continuations, and it's tough to say what's best. 10...h6 This looks like a good solution, forcing a decision by White. 11.Kh4 This looks like the desirable move, making it more difficult for Black to play ...e7-e6. This would happen after 11. Bf4 e6! , when we manage to give our f8-bishop some scope finally. Black will

enjoy the bishop pair in an open position. 11...b5 A very tempting move! White can't take the pawn and should retreat with 12.Qb3 , when 12...Qa5 is a good reply CCStartBracketCCamongst other good movesCCEndBracketCC.
12..xxb5 That's a huge mistake! 12...Qc8 13.O&d3 O&b6 And White collapses. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5 **7.Kxc4** A strong theoretician will likely play this move, as White does not need to worry about the hanging d-pawn. I don't even suggest grabbing the d-pawn, but White doesn't know that 😀 7...e6 Wait, what about the d4-pawn? Can't we take the pawn? Well, yes. But it's not a practical solution for our purpose. First of all, 7...Nxd4? is wrong due to 8.Nf3 , when White gets too much development. The only good way to grab d4 is CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/6B1/2BP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR b KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7...h6 8.Bh4 Qxd4 , which leads to tactical play after 9. Qxd4 Nxd4 10.O-O-O e5 11.f4 . These complications are well analyzed and assessed as fine for Black, for example, in Erwin l'Ami's Lifetime Repertoire on the Caro-Kann. I suggest a different approach. By playing 7...e6, we reach a classical structure, fighting against the IQP. It massively reduces our need to learn tactical variations, and it has a bonus. In the Queen's Gambit Declined, our choice against 1.d4, we face the line CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 . After 4...dxc4 5.e3 c5 6.Bxc4 cxd4 7.exd4 Nc6 , we reach the same position! This way, we manage to address two parts of our repertoire with just one defence - awesome! And, just like magic, we have transposed to the Caro Kann Panov! Wait... how did this happen? In the Caro-Kann the sequence is CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Bg5 dxc4 7.Bxc4 e6 , reaching exactly the same position. This 'merge' of two lines into one is a nice way of reducing workload. On a general note: it's a remarkable transposition, but it shows that our defences against 1.e4 and 1.d4 are somewhat related. We also have the interesting case that we essentially play the Carlsbad structure from both sides, as the Exchange Caro-Kann and the QGD Exchange are the same structure. Back to the position at hand. I examine this position in detail in the Caro-Kann Chapter, as it is more commonly reached via this move order. Please continue your study in the Panov chapter if you'd like more information about it. 8..xf3 Ke7 We need to break the pin and prepare to castle. And we have indeed transposed to CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxc4 5.e3 c5 6.Bxc4 cxd4 7.exd4 Nc6 . This is a simple and good solution, but a quick note that Stockfish also suggests 9...h6 , intending 10.Bh4 g5!? 11.Bg3 Bxg3 12.fxg3 g4 , snatching the pawn on d4 next. After some complications, this seems to lead to equal chances, too. As this course is called 'Keep it Simple' and not 'Make it murky', I decided against this line. It is still fun to

explore if you are interested. 9.0-0 0-0 This sequence of moves felt very natural. Now White has some choice and various move orders available, but a closer examination shows that Black's setup will be the same in all cases. We want to play ...a6, ...b5 and ...Bb7. This setup completes our development and gains some space on the queenside. White can either allow the queenside expansion or stop it by playing a4 in reply to ...a6. In this case, I recommend an interesting plan, based on a quick ...Qa5, followed by ...Rd8, which puts direct pressure on the d-pawn. We'll examine some examples for those two scenarios now. 10.a3 The move a2-a3 is frequently played in IQP positions, and it's a popular choice here. The point of the move is twofold: White prepares Bc4-a2, securing the bishop on a safe square. It is often attacked by a move like ...b7-b5 or ...Nc6-a5, so having the retreat square comes in handy. The second point is controlling the b4-square. The move ...Nc6-b4 could be an annoying reply to Qd3, for example. Our strategy involves the queenside expansion with ...a6 and ...b5. White's move a3 changes the scenario on the queenside a bit, as a later ...b5-b4 will open files on this side of the board. Let's have a look.

[10.Qc1 After 10.Rc1 we need to pay attention to the c-file. Our plan is ...a6 and ...b5, which leaves the c6-knight unprotected for a moment. This theme is the point to remember about 10.Rc1. a6 No surprise. 11.Kb3 Attention! Now we can't play 11...b5 , as the rook on c1 changes the situation. *(11.Qe1* We can reach this position via CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/pp2bppp/2n1pn2/6B1/2BP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 4 10CCEndFENCC 10.Re1 a6 11.Rc1 , too. *b5 12.Kd3* White can try 12.d5!? , but 12...Nb4 is a good reply. *Kb7*

We have completed our queenside development. *13.Kb1* They go for the Bb1/Qd3 battery, setting up threats on the kingside. It's tough to suggest anything else for White. We have a good blockade of the d-pawn, so d4-d5 is difficult to engineer. White needs to do something active, as we have natural moves to improve our position, like ...Rc8 and ...Na5-c4. *Qc8 14.a3* The immediate 14.Qd3 runs into 14...Nb4 . *.xa5* The move 14...b4 is a good choice, too. Moving the knight to c4 is more ambitious. It puts pressure on White's queenside. *15.O&d3 g6*

Alright, we have stopped the mate and can be happy about our position. The next move will be ...Nc4, for example: 16.Ne5 Nc4 17.Nxc4 , when both 17...bxc4 and 17...Rxc4 look already slightly better for Black. White still has to worry about the d-pawn. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5 *)* 11....xa5 You can't play 11...b5? due to 12.Nxb5 CCStartBracketCC 12.d5 is even betterCCEndBracketCC. The solution is simple: we play ...Na5 first, only then ...b5. 12.Kc2 b5 13.O&d3 Alright, we don't need to spend much time on our reply to this one. g6 No mate on h7, please. White will try drumming up an attack, but there is no reason to be afraid. All our pieces work well, and we have the long-term asset of a better pawn structure. A typical line could be 14.Ne5 Bb7 15.Bh6 Re8 16.Rfe1 Rc8 , when both sides have all their pieces in play. One idea that you should be aware of is a possible sacrifice on f7. If White plays 17.Qh3 , the alarm bells should start ringing! Now a careless move like 17...b4?? 18.Nxf7

is lights out. Instead, covering e6 with 17...Qd6 is fine CCStartBracketCCamongst othersCCEndBracketCC. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5]
[10.Qe1 10.Re1 looks like a natural move, and it's White's most popular choice. We need to pay particular attention to d4-d5 ideas after Re1, as the e-file is opened for the rook. a6 Our move against all of White's various tries. Now White has the usual question to answer: Do you want to allow ...b7-b5 or not. I'll examine 11.a4 here, as the alternatives CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/1p2bppp/p1n1pn2/6B1/2BP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R2QR1K1 w - - 0 11CCEndFENCC 11.a3 b5 and CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/1p2bppp/p1n1pn2/6B1/2BP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R2QR1K1 w - - 0 11CCEndFENCC 11.Rc1 b5 transpose to positions that we examine via CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/pp2bppp/2n1pn2/6B1/2BP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 4 10CCEndFENCC 10.a3 and CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/pp2bppp/2n1pn2/6B1/2BP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 4 10CCEndFENCC 10.Rc1 . 11.a4 Now we have reached an important moment. After 11.a4 it's time for 11...Qa5 , right? Not so fast! h6 It's vital to understand that 10.Re1 has changed the evaluation of the tactics after CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/pp2bppp/2n1pn2/6B1/2BP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R2QR1K1 b - - 5 10CCEndFENCC 10...a6 11.a4 Qa5? 12.d5! , as 12...exd5 13.Bxf6 Bxf6 14.Nxd5 is great for White. What about CCStartFENCCr1b2rk1/1p2bppp/p1n1pn2/q2P2B1/P1B5/2N2N2/1P3PPP/R2QR1K1 b - - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12...Rd8? Here 13.Bd2! is the cold shower when Black is already busted! This is different from CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/pp2bppp/2n1pn2/6B1/2BP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 4 10CCEndFENCC 10.Rc1 a6 11.a4 Qa5 , when 12.d5 exd5 13.Bxf6 dxc4! is possible, giving Black an extra pawn. We can solve the issue easily, though. Inserting the move 11...h6! is the solution. 12.Kh4 White's usual choice, keeping the pressure along the h4-d8 diagonal. Of course, going to f4 or e3 is possible, too. In both cases, our setup with ...Qa5 and ...Rd8 works well, for example after 12.Be3 Qa5 13.Qd2 Rd8 . White's formation of Be3 and Qd2 always hints at possible sacrifices on h6. Our queen is ready to switch to the kingside in such a case, completely defusing the idea. O&a5 Sticking to our concept. A different idea worth noting is 12...Nh5 , playing in the style of the classic anti-IQP game between Viktor Kortschnoj and Anatoly Karpov, from their 1981 World Championship Match. Here's how this game started: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 Be7 4.Nf3 Nf6 5.Bg5 h6 6.Bh4 O-O 7.Rc1 dxc4 8.e3 c5 9.Bxc4 cxd4 10.exd4 Nc6 11.O-O Nh5 12.Bxe7 Nxe7 13.Bb3 Nf6 . Black established a tight blockade on the d5-square and later won in exemplary fashion - trade all the minor pieces, win the IQP with the heavy pieces. It's a close call between 12...Nh5 and 12...Qa5. I recommend the queen move because it's our answer to other bishop retreats and works in other cases, like CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/pp2bppp/2n1pn2/6B1/2BP4/2N2N2/PP3PPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 4 10CCEndFENCC 10.Rc1 a6 11.a4 Qa5 . Now, If White plays

a slow move like 13.Qd2 , we'll continue with 13...Rd8 and put pressure on d4. Critical is 13.d5. 13.d5 This leads to sharp tactics. I think that 13.d5 is not very likely to happen, as 13.d5 Rd8 looks difficult for White to play over the board. Qd8 Don't play into 13...exd5? 14.Bxf6 Bxf6 15.Nxd5 , which is awkward for Black. After 13...Rd8, we have a very tense situation. The most likely to happen is probably CCStartFENCCr1br2k1/1p2bpp1/p1n1pn1p/q2P4/P1B4B/2N2N2/1P3PPP/R2QR1K1 w - - 1 14CCEndFENCC 14.Qe2 , as White's queen can't stay on the d-file forever. After 14...exd5 15.Bxf6 it's possible to play 15...gxf6 , but I'd prefer 15...Bxf6 16.Nxd5 Rxd5 17.Qe8+ Kh7 18.Qe4+ Rf5 19.g4 g6 20.gxf5 Bxf5 , with a mess and equal chances, objectively. I think the ...Qa5 and ...Rd8 idea leads to exciting play and has substantial surprise value. If the play looks too messy for your taste, CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/1p2bpp1/p1n1pn1p/8/P1BP3B/2N2N2/1P3PPP/R2QR1K1 b - - 1 12CCEndFENCC 12...Nh5 is an excellent alternative that I mentioned. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.d4 d5 3. exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5]

10...a6 11.O&d3 One point of 10.a3 was to prepare this move. White may also play 11.Ba2 b5 12.Qd3 , which leads to the same thing. White has other moves, but we'll play the same plan: ...b5, ...Bb7 and ...b4 to open the queenside.

11...b5 12.Ka2 Kb7 13.Qad1 White has the idea of Bb1 in mind, setting up threats against our king. Playing 13.Bb1 immediately shuts out the rook on a1, so it makes sense to play the rook to a good central square. 13...b4 14.Kb1 White does not need to react to 13...b4 directly but can play this intermediate move first. The intention is clear: taking on f6, checkmate on h7! 14...g6 Alright, let's not get mated just yet! I'll stop the trainable here, being happy about Black's prospects. We have good play on the queenside, while White's threats on the kingside have been stopped for the time being. An interesting situation arises after 15.Na4 bxa3 16.bxa3 , when White plans Nc5, which could be annoying. We don't want to take the knight with our bishop, which would weaken the dark squares too much. One issue is that after Nc5, our b7-bishop is attacked and has no good squares. A good solution to the whole issue is moving the c6-knight, opening up the diagonal for the bishop. Both 16...Na7!? 17.Nc5 Bxf3 18.Qxf3 Nb5 or the surprising CCStartFENCCr2q1rk1/1b2bp1p/p1n1pnp1/6B1/N2P4/P2Q1N2/5PPP/1B1R1RK1 b - - 0 16CCEndFENCC 16...Nb8 17.Nc5 Bd5 , followed by ...Nbd7, work well. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5

[43] **9.Kxc4** Kd6 10.0-0 0-0 Black is slightly better already. We enjoy the bishop pair, and White's IQP is rather a weakness than a strength. We'll develop with ...Bf5 or ...Bg4 and consider ...Qa5 and a rook to d8 next. 5. Caro-Kann: Panov (1.e4 c6 2-2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5

[44] An important finesse. We managed to prevent the move Bf4, which is a small accomplishment compared to the mainline CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/8/

3p4/3P4/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.Bd3 Nc6 5. c3 Nf6 6.Bf4 , when White manages to develop the bishop to an active square. 4. Caro-Kann: Exchange (1.e4 c-4.Nf3

45 **5..xxf6+** Taking is the only serious option for White, creating doubled pawns on the f-file. 5...exf6 After 5...exf6 , we have reached the 'real' starting position of the current chapter. A massive upside of our repertoire choice is that White now almost needs to know some concrete lines, as many 'natural' moves and setups pose no problems at all. White's best try for an advantage is 6.c3 Bd6 7.Bd3 O-O 8.Qc2 Re8+ 9.Ne2 , which is unlikely to happen against an unprepared player. White's most frequently played move is 6.Nf3 , which is a strategic mistake. The knight is misplaced on f3, as it only looks at well-protected squares. Black is not better after 6.Nf3, but we have no problems at all and some hopes for more. 6.Nf3 suggests that White is unfamiliar with the demands of the unusual pawn structure. So 6.c3 is the mainline, and 6.Nf3 is harmless. What else? The move 6.Bc4 is White's best alternative to 6.c3 and needs to be examined carefully. The idea of the early bishop is the line 6...Bd6 7.Qe2+ , which is slightly annoying, but not the end of the world. Besides these three main moves, we will also look at two rare moves, 6.Be3 and 6.Bd3 . If White goes for something even more exotic, don't worry. You will always be OK with the standard setup of ...Bd6 and ...O-O next. Our king is safe, and we have easy development. 6.Kd3 Looks like a standard move, but there is a catch...

[6.Ke3 I found a considerable amount of games that featured this move. White sometimes intends to castle queenside quickly. We don't mind this plan at all. Kd6 7.O&d2 Played with a wrong intention. *(7.Kd3* This looks better than 7.Qd2 . White may go for a Ne2 setup, similar to CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp3ppp/2p2p2/8/3P4/8/PPP2PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.c3 Bd6 7.Bd3 O-O 8.Ne2 . *0-0* Our standard approach, based on ...O-O, ...Re8 and ...Nd7 works well here, too. *8..xe2 Qe8 9.0-0 .xd7* All very standard moves. I think Black has equal chances in this position. The line 6.Be3 and 7.Bd3 is very rare, so I'll stop the trainable line here and show some sample lines to illustrate ideas. ACCEndBracketCC 10.Ng3 g6! , intending ...f5 next. This idea makes the g3-knight look a bit silly. We have ...Nd7-f6 and chances to get an initiative on the kingside. BCCEndBracketCC 10.c4 Nf8 We park the knight on f8 and later relocate to g6 or e6. We'll play ...Be6 and ...Qc7 next to connect rooks. As usual, we try to put some pressure on the white centre after c2-c4 has been played. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.Be3 *)* 7...0-0 8.0-0-0 White should play a modest move like 8.Bd3 , still with equal chances. Ke6 9.Elb1 Or 9.a3 b5 , with similar play. b5 We have a simple and strong plan: attack on the queenside, with ideas like ...Nd7-b6-c4 to come. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.Be3]

[6..xf3 White develops the knight and prepares kingside castling. A very logical idea, but we will see that 6.Nf3 is easy to meet for us. The knight is not well-placed

on f3, as it looks at two well-protected squares: e5 and g5. Black enjoys fluent development and has no problems. Let's have a look and discuss some ideas. Kd6 We start with ...Bd6 and castling, as usual. 7.Kd3 By far White's most popular move. White needs to get their kingside developed before we manage to play ...O-O and ...Re8+, catching the king with an unpleasant check. 0-0 8.0-0 Kg4 Pin and win! Well, it's not like we are winning now... but ...Bg4 is a nice move to play. We have an easy target setup now. We'll play ...Nd7, ...Qc7 and centralize rooks. 9.h3 White usually inserts this useful move. Kh5 We want to keep the bishop and maintain the pin. 10.Qe1 .xd7 Here 10...Re8 is a good alternative. 11.c3 White maintains a solid pawn chain b2-c3-d4, but it lacks punch. What is White's plan now? *(11.c4* A more enterprising approach, compared to 11.c3 . How do we fight White's pawn duo? The key point is that d4 has been weakened, so we need to target this pawn. *Qe8* The first step. We threaten ...Rxe1+ now, followed by ...Bxf3. The rook move also frees up the f8-square to allow ...Nf8-e6, putting pressure on d4. *12.Qxe8+* This looks best, avoinding the mentioned ... Rxe1+ idea. Against 12.Be3 I suggest playing 12...Nf8 , intending ...Ne6. We need to put more pressure on d4. *O&xe8 13.Ke3 Qd8* It's also possible to start with 13...Nf8 , but getting the undeveloped rook involved first makes sense. After 13...Rd8 , we continue to build up against the d4-pawn. This includes the ...Nf8-e6 plan, but there are other options, depending on White's choices. If White decides to play 14.Be2 , playing 14...f5 is an interesting idea, intending ...Nf6 and ...f5-f4 in some cases. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.Nf3 *)* 11...O&c7 12.Ke3 Qfe8 Black's position is easier to play already. The pin is annoying for White, and we have good plans available. Doubling rooks on the e-file comes to mind, as does ...Nb6-d5. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5. Nxf6+ exf6 6.Nf3]

[6.Kc4 This move seems to be White's second-best option after the main line 6.c3. White's idea is to meet 6...Bd6 with 7.Qe2+ , which is somewhat annoying. GM Erwin l'Ami disliked this possibility so much that he decided to avoid 6...Bd6 and recommend 6...Na6!? in his Lifetime Repertoire on Chessable. I agree that 6... Na6 is a fine move, but I don't see Black's prospects after 6...Bd6 being so dire. If you know a key plan, later on, Black's chances are satisfactory. All in all, I think it is easier to remember to 'always' play ...Bd6 on move six. Let's have a look. Kd6 As mentioned before, Erwin l'Ami's 6...Na6 is a fine alternative. 7.O&e2+ This queen check is White's idea. What now? We are not enthusiastic about 7... Qe7 , while moving the d6-bishop again is not ideal, either. Ke7 This costs some time, but this is not a big deal. 8..xf3 0-0 9.0-0 Kd6 The bishop needs to be on its ideal square. Shuffling back and forth between d6 and e7 and back was not ideal, but is it a real issue? I don't think so. Let's consider after White's natural next move. And we have transposed to ĊĊStartFENĊĊrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/ PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1ĊĊEndFENĊĊ 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.Bc4 Bd6 7.Qe2+ Be7 8.Nf3 O-O 9.O-O Bd6 . The important move to remember is 10.Re1 a5! , which is discussed in the

chapter on theClassical variation. 10.Qe1 White occupies the e-file, a scenario that Erwin intended to avoid in his course. I'd like to suggest an interesting plan now. a5 It takes a moment to appreciate the idea of this move. We'd like to play ... Na6-c7. This manoeuvre prepares ...Re8 and ...Be6. The immediate 10...Na6 is less attractive, as White may take the knight and weaken our pawn structure. It is not the end of the world, but playing ...a5 first avoids it easily. It's important to realize that 'more usual' looking moves don't work well. After 10...Bg4?! White has the annoying reply 11.Qe4! Bh5 12.Nh4 . I also investigated 10...Nd7?! , but it is unclear what we are doing after a continuation like 11.h3 Nb6 12.Bd3 and c2-c4 next. We can't challenge the e-file and thus didn't manage to position the knight properly against the c-pawn advance. If White plays c4 , we'd like to get the knight to e6 - it's entirely misplaced on b6. It is, therefore, crucial to remember 10...a5! Now I'll examine two possible approaches for White: playing for c2-c4 quickly or going for a more restrained setup with c2-c3. 11.c3 The slow approach. Move orders for White are not that crucial here; they might also start with 11.h3 and c3 on the next move. We'll play ...Na6-c7 in any case. *(11.Kd3* White retreats the bishop to prepare c2-c4. *.xa6* We not only prepare ... Nc7, but we are also ready for ...Nb4, if White is not careful. *12.c4* Certainly the most principled move for White. After 12.c3 Nc7 , we reach similar positions to CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/1p3ppp/2pb1p2/p7/2BP4/5N2/PPP1QPPP/R1B1R1K1 w - - 0 11CCEndFENCC 11.c3 , of course. White could play 12.a3 , but again 12...Nc7 and ...Re8 next is fine for Black. After a careless move like 12.h3?! we even have 12...Nb4 , which is awkward for White to meet. *Kg4* Pinning the knight looks very logical after c2-c4. In the long run, we'd like to gain pressure on d4. Pinning the defending knight is an excellent first step towards this goal. Note that 12...Nb4?! makes little sense, as 13.Bb1 secures the bishop and leaves our knight without a clear purpose on b4. Going 12...Nc7 is possible, but 12...Bg4 looks stronger. *13.a3* Controlling b4 is certainly an idea for White. Of course, this is not the only move. Stockfish suggest the less obvious 13.h3 Bh5 14.Bf5 , but concedes that Black is OK after both 14...Bc7 or the simpler 14...Re8 . If White goes for 13.Bd2 , the reply 13...Bb4 looks good CCStartBracketCCamongst some other ideasCCEndBracketCC. *O&d7* The move 13...Nc7 is also possible, but there are some surprising complications involved. After 14.h3 Bh5 15.c5 Re8 16.Qc2 Bxf3 17.Rxe8+ Qxe8 18.cxd6 Qe1+ 19.Kh2 Ne6 , this mess should end in a draw. I suggest 13...Qd7 to keep things a bit simpler. Still, there is an important point to know on the next move. *14.O&c2* A critical try by White, attacking the pawn on h7. Now we need to be precise and play correctly. *Kc7* Here Black has three good moves: my suggestion 14...Bc7! , 14...Rfe8 and 14... Rae8 . In all cases, we allow the capture on h7. The important point to realize is that 14...g6? is bad due to 15.Nd2! , which is surprisingly strong. Let's check why Bxh7+ is no problem now. *15.Kxh7+ Elh8* Now White needs to be careful. We threaten ...Bxf3, followed by ...g6. At the same time, our queen is eyeing d4. We are in good shape now. Let's have a look at two possible sample lines. In both

cases, we regain the game and have equal chances in an interesting position. A❝❝EndBracket❞❞ 16.Nh4 Qxd4 17.Be3 Qe5 18.g3 Qh5 B❝❝EndBracket❞❞ 16.Be4 f5 17.Bd3 Bxf3 18.gxf3 Qxd4 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.Bc4 *)* 11....xa6 12.h3 A good move for White. ...Bg4 will be on the agenda at some point, so preventing it makes a lot of sense. .xc7 Our knight has completed the journey to c7. Now I don't see a good way forward for White. 13.Kd2 Stockfish suggests the prophylactic queen move 13.Qc2 , but we are fine against it, too. One possible continuation is 13...g6 , preparing ...Bf5. After 14.Bh6 Bf5 15.Qd2 Re8 , we have equal chances, too. Qe8 14.O&f1 Qxe1 15.Qxe1 Kf5 I like Black's position. We have ...Qd7 next and good control of the light squares. Our knight often will find a good spot on d5. Note that ...b5 is an idea, as well. The pawn on b5 can be helpful to secure the knight post on d5. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.Bc4] [6.c3 The move 6.c3 is considered to be the critical test of the 5...exf6 Caro-Kann. What is White's idea? They have a particular piece setup in mind: Bishop to d3 and queen to c2. This battery exerts pressure on our kingside, attacking the h7-pawn. The following sequence looks very natural: 6.c3 Bd6 7.Bd3 O-O 8.Qc2 Re8+ 9.Ne2 , when we have reached a key position. Now Black needs to react to the threat Bxh7+... what to do? Up until about 2015, Black reacted with the moves 9...h6 or 9...g6 , but White always maintained an advantage in these positions. This assessment was why 5...exf6 was considered an inferior line; Black never managed to equalize the game against 6.c3. The surprising solution is the move 9...h5! , which suddenly led to a re-evaluation of Black's chances and got 5...exf6 into the limelight. What's the point of 9...h5? It's best explained as a comparison with 9...h6: After 9...h6 10.O-O White will continue with the idea Ng3-f5, which is annoying for Black and usually will cost the bishop pair, as Black can't tolerate the knight on f5. Now, after ❝❝StartFEN❞❞rnbqr1k1/pp3ppp/2pb1p2/8/3P4/2PB4/PPQ1NPPP/R1B1K2R b KQ - 6 9❝❝EndFEN❞❞ 9...h5 10.O-O , we play 9...h4! and stop this idea. Not only that but advancing the h-pawn often gives Black some attacking ideas against White's king. More often than not, White will not castle kingside against 9...h5 but prefer to hide the king on the other side of the board. This leads to a fascinating struggle that is considered to be fine for Black, too. Let's have a closer look now. Kd6 We'll play ...Bd6 and ...O-O almost always, and the mainline is no exception. 7.Kd3 0-0 Now White chooses between 8.Qc2 and 8.Ne2 . They often lead to the same positions as 8.Qc2 Re8+ 9.Ne2 h5 and ❝❝StartFEN❞❞rnbq1rk1/pp3ppp/2pb1p2/8/3P4/2PB4/PP3PPP/R1BQK1NR w KQ - 3 8❝❝EndFEN❞❞ 8.Ne2 Re8 9.Qc2 h5 quickly merge. The only noteworthy independent possibility is 8.Ne2 Re8 9.O-O , when White goes for kingside castling without provoking ...h5 first.

A) 8.O&c2 White realizes the idea of 6.c3 and attacks h7. Qe8+ Getting to the only open file with a check on move eight shows an attractive point of our chosen line 5...exf6: Black can quickly castle and develop easily. 9..xe2 h5 As mentioned in the notes to 6.c3, this move brought the entire 5...exf6 branch

of the Caro-Kann back to life. White now has the fundamental choice between kingside and queenside castling - they are about equally popular. They usually prepare O-O-O with 10.Be3 , but 10.Bd2 is possible, too. I think we should play against 10.Bd2 in the same way as against 10.Be3 , so I decided against more detailed coverage.

A1) 10.Ke3 White's usual choice if they intend to castle queenside. .xd7 We go for ...Nd7-f8, as usual. The knight is well-placed on f8, as it defends the kingside but is also ready to join the action via e6 later. Now, 11.O-O-O is the logical follow-up, but 11.O-O h4! is possible, too. These positions we examine via CCStartFENCCrnbqr1k1/pp3pp1/2pb1p2/7p/3P4/2PB4/PPQ1NPPP/R1B1K2R w KQ - 0 10CCEndFENCC 10.O-O h4 . There is one independent possibility, the move 11.Ng3 . It is harmless, but the best reply is not so obvious - that's why we'll check the move, too.

A1a) 11.0-0-0 Here we go, opposite-side castling! After our natural reply, we'll talk about both sides' strategies a bit more. .xf8 We complete our knight tour. Black's knight is an essential defender on the kingside.

A1a1) 12..xg3 White goes for an alternative plan, different to the ones described in the notes to move 11. After provoking ...g6, they want to centralize the knight. This plan is rather harmless, as we will see. g6 We played ...Nf8 not only on general grounds CCStartBracketCC'We'll never get mated with a knight on f8!'CCEndBracketCC, but for some concrete reasons. This is one of them. Bad is 12...h4? 13.Nf5 , when we'd have to surrender the c8-bishop with 13...Bxf5 , which is a huge concession. 13..xe4 The idea behind 12.Ng3 is the centralization of the knight. Ke7 We keep the bishop and prepare/threaten ...f5 now. White should react to this idea with 14.h4 , as 14.Kb1 f5 15.Nd2 Be6 looks fine for Black. After 14.h4 f5 15.Ng5 b5 we have reached a sharp position with chances for both sides. I'd rather be Black, as I'd evaluate my king position a bit safer than White's in the long run. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.c3 B;

A1a2) 12.Elb1 There is this joke that long castling is called 'long', because it always takes two moves: playing O-O-O and Kb1. White usually plays 12.Kb1 , recognizing that it will be difficult to skip this prophylactic move in the long run. In some cases, White plays it on move 13: Examples are 12.c4 Be6 13.Kb1 or CCStartFENCCr1bqrnk1/pp3pp1/2pb1p2/7p/3P4/2PBB3/PPQ1NPPP/2KR3R w - - 4 12CCEndFENCC 12.h3 Be6 13.Kb1 . We will examine these cases via the 12.Kb1 move order. Our reply is easy: we complete development. Ke6 Now White's best bet seems to be 13.c4 , which takes control of d5 and makes ...b5 more difficult to play. 13.h3 White is hinting at the g4-plan, but I don't think it's that dangerous. *(13..xf4* Far too slow. *Kxf4* We'll start our attack on light squares. We happily exchange our bishop to emphasize our control of these squares.

14.Kxf4 b5 We have ...Qd5 next and will push the a-pawn soon. White has no obvious counterplay against our attack. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.c3 B*; 13.c4* The main continuation for White. The move controls d5, makes ...b5 more challenging to play and prepares Nc3, improving the knight. *Qc8* The immediate 13...b5? doesn't work well due to 14.d5 , but CCStartFENCCr2qrnk1/pp3pp1/2pbbp2/7p/2PP4/3BB3/PPQ1NPPP/1K1R3R b - - 0 13CCEndFENCC 13...Rc8 prepares the b-pawn advance. Our rook is placed on the same file as White's queen, allowing tactical tricks. *14..xc3* White prevents our ...b5 push again. They could try 14.h3 , but the antidote is well-known from earlier instances that we have already examined. The sequence 14...b5! 15.c5 Bb8 16.g4 h4! keeps the position closed on the kingside and gives Black good play, similar to other h3 + g4 scenarios we have already analyzed. Back to 14.Nc3 : we can't play 14...b5? 15.cxb5 cxb5 16.Bxb5 now, but we have a good way to prepare ...b5 once more. *Kb4* Our intention is ...Bxc3, followed by ...b5. If we can provoke White into moving the c-pawn, our e6-bishop will become a monster. *15..xe4* White avoids our idea. The line 15.a3 Bxc3 16.Qxc3 b5 shows the point of ...Bb4 and is undesirable for White. We have given up the bishop pair but gained the light-squared play we aimed for. After 15.Ne4 we need to find/remember one more precise move. *Ke7* The move to avoid is 15...b5? 16.c5! , when all of a sudden we face the deadly threat of Nd6. We need to retreat the bishop first, avoiding this possibility. The position after 15...Be7 has been tested multiple times in practice. Black is doing fine, as some sample lines show: ACCEndBracketCC 16.Nc3 is unambitious, as 16...Bb4 already repeats. We can also play 16...Qa5 and play for a win. BCCEndBracketCC 16.h3 b5! 17.c5 f5 16.Nc3 b4 19.Ne2 Rb8 leads to a sharp position with chances for both sides. CCCEndBracketCC 16.Nc5 is a forcing move but leads to nothing after 16...Bxc5 17.dxc5 Qe7 . 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.c3 B *)* 13...b5 Taking control of d5. Now, d5 is a safe square for our bishop. 14.g4 h4 We keep it as closed as possible on the kingside. I'd rather be Black in this sharp position. Here are some possible ideas to consider: ACCEndBracketCC 15.Rhg1?! Bd5 16. g5? Bh2 is just bad for White. BCCEndBracketCC 15.c4 bxc4 16. Bxc4 Rc8 also looks comfortable for Black. After a bishop trade our knight gets nicely activated via e6. CCCEndBracketCC 15.Be4 Rc8 16.d5 cxd5 17.Bxd5 Qc7 could be White's best and is a sharp battle with attacking chances for both sides. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4. Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.c3 B;

A1a3) 12.h3 White goes for the h3 + g4 plan, it seems. The main decision for White is on after our normal reply. 12...Ke6 Now 13.Kb1 is

a transposition to CCStartFENCCr1bqrnk1/pp3pp1/2pb1p2/7p/3P4/2PBB3/PPQ1NPPP/2KR3R w - - 4 12CCEndFENCC 12.Kb1 Be6 13.h3 . 13.g4 Having said 'h', White also says 'g'! This must be the critical move, but Black seems to be in good shape. h4 We keep the kingside closed. Stockfish also likes 13...Bd5 or 13...Qa5 , but I prefer the more human decision to play 13...h4 . After 13...h4, we still have the idea ...Bd5, which can be very annoying for White. 14.c4 White stops ...Bd5. Allowing the move doesn't look right, for example after 14.Rhg1? Bd5 15.g5 Bh2! Black is much better/winning. b5 Fight fire with fire! White now needs to move the c-pawn, which gives us squares CCStartBracketCCd5CCEndBracketCC and possibly open lines. Best for White is 15.c5 Bc7 with a complex position and a great fight ahead. The move 15.cxb5? is even worse than it looks. After 15...Bxa2! 16.b3 Qa5 Black is winning quickly. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.c3 B;

A1b) 11..xg3 This move could be tricky to meet if you are not prepared for it. White attacks our h-pawn, and 11...h4 12.Nf5 looks awkward. What is the best reply? 11....xb6 A strong reply! We don't need to save the h-pawn. 12..xxh5 The pawn grab has to be checked. Instead 12.O-O-O Nd5 13.Bd2 Nf4 is just nice for Black. .xd5 White has to be very careful now to avoid disaster. 13.0-0-0 This loses on the spot. White needs to play 13.O-O , when 13...Bg4 14.Ng3 leads to a position where Black has multiple ways to play. Possible is 14...Nxe3 15.fxe3 Bxg3 16.hxg3 Rxe3 , CCStartFENCCr2qr1k1/pp3pp1/2pb1p2/3n4/3P2b1/2PBB1N1/PPQ2PPP/R4RK1 b - - 4 14CCEndFENCC 14...Bxg3 15.hxg3 Nxe3 16.fxe3 Rxe3 and even CCStartFENCCr2qr1k1/pp3pp1/2pb1p2/3n4/3P2b1/2PBB1N1/PPQ2PPP/R4RK1 b - - 4 14CCEndFENCC 14...Rxe3 , which all work for Black and lead to equal chances. Kg4 Attacking both rook and knight. 14.Ke2 Kxe2 15.O&xe2 g6 16..xg3 f5 A completely forced line so far... and White has no way to stop ...f4, winning a piece. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.c3 B;

A2) 10.0-0 h4 The main point of playing 9...h5 is this idea. We stop Ng3 and gain valuable space on the kingside. White's main reply is 11.h3 , even though it is unclear if we want to play ...h3 next. We'll check 11.Bf4 , when 11...h3?! is dubious. It is more important to control g3 than trying to put a dent in White's kingside.

A2a) 11.h3 White plays this move most of the time. We don't necessarily want to play ...h4-h3 right away, but our option of the pawn push is a constant nuisance for White. Ruling it out completely makes sense, for sure. .xd7 We continue with our common knight tour ...Nd7-f8. Now White has two important options. They can play 12.Be3 or 12.Bd2 . The latter intends to play f4 soon, which is the main difference. White has also tried 12.Bf4 , when 12...Nf8 leads to a fairly standard position and no

problems for Black. 12.Kd2 This bishop development hints at White's intention to play f2-f4 soon. *(12.Ke3* This move is usually connected with a central strategy by White. They intent to play Rad1 and c4 next, most of the time. *.xf8 13.Qad1* Or 13.c4 Be6 14.Rad1 , which leads to the same position. *Ke6 14.c4 Qc8* We have completed our setup, and I am happy about Black's chances. There is room for some creativity, as multiple ideas look feasible. After 15.Rfe1 , you could play 15...b5 or the similar 15...Bb8 16.b3 b5 . Alternatively 16...Bd7!? is interesting, intending ...Qc7. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6. c3 B *)* 12....xf8 13.Qae1 Again, a preparation move for f2-f4. After 13.f4? f5! Black is better. We will analyze 13.Rae1 g6 14.f4? f5! in a moment, which leads to the same advantageous structure for Black. g6 I like this move, as it directly addresses White's f4 idea. Now 14.f4?! f5! is good for Black. 14.f4 I'd like to show why this is a bad choice. Better would be 14. Nf4 , when I like 14...Be6!? 15.Nxe6 Nxe6 . We have given up the bishop pair, but ...Nf4 is a valuable resource now. Chances are about even in this unexplored line. f5 White should play f4 if they are sure to manage f4-f5 next. A line to illustrate this point is CCStartFENCCr1bqrnk1/pp3pp1/ 2pb1p2/8/3P3p/2PB3P/PPQBNPP1/4RRK1 b - - 4 13CCEndFENCC 13... Bc7 14.f4 g6 15.f5 , which leads to interesting complications. After 14. f4?! f5! Black is already better, as White has pretty awful pieces. The f4-pawn restricts their bishop and knight. A noteworthy idea for Black is improving the f8-knight. It would be well-positioned on f6 or h5, connecting with weaknesses in White's camp. Therefore ...Ne6-g7-h5 or ...Be6, followed by ...Nd7-f6 come to mind. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.c3 B;

A2b) 11.Kf4 .xa6 The move 11...Na6! gets an exclam for more than one reason: ACCEndBracketCC You need to avoid the tempting 11...Rxe2? 12.Qxe2 Bxf4 13.Qe4! , when Black is busted! BCCEndBracketCC The second tempting move is 11...h3?! , but this is a strategic mistake. After 12.Bxd6 Qxd6 13.Rfe1 or 12.Rfe1 White is better. They have Ng3 soon, which is now possible again. Pushing the h-pawn to h3 needs to be well considered. Here it's too early. CCCEndBracketCC We can't play 11... Nd7 and go for the alternative route a6-c7, recognizing that Bxa6 is no problem at all. 12.Kxd6 O&xd6 13.Kxa6 This doesn't lead to anything for White. An alternative would be a slow move like 13.h3 when 13...Nc7 gets the knight closer to the action. I suggest aiming for a setup with ...g6 and ...f5 next, advancing on the kingside. bxa6 A truly odd pawn structure, but we are completely fine. The reason is the badly positioned knight on e2. It has no good square to go to, making it difficult for White to fight for the e-file. A possible like to demonstrate matters is 14.h3 a5 15.Rfe1 Ba6 16. Rad1 Qe6 , when e2 and a2 are attacked. White's position is a bit uncomfortable and not easy to coordinate. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.

Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.c3 B;

B) 8..xe2 Qe8 9.0-0 White decides to do without Qc2 and immediately castles. Instead, 9.Qc2 h5 would lead to the main lines of the current chapter. .xd7 Transferring the knight to the kingside via f8 is a common setup. Playing 9... Be6?! is wrong due to 10.Nf4 , when we don't have a good reply. You don't want to give up the bishop pair for no good reason, so neither 10...Bxf4 nor 10...Nd7 11.Nxe6 are acceptable. Relatively best would be 10...Bc8 , showing that something was wrong with 9...Be6?! to begin with. After the much better 9...Nd7 , we'll examine 10.Bf4 and 10.Ng3 . 10..xg3 White has spotted the good square f5 for the knight. *(10.Kf4* White wants to trade our strong bishop, a logical move. *.xf8* This looks best, but 10...Bxf4 11.Nxf4 Nf8 is not bad, either. Black continues with ...Qd6 and gets the same type of position as after 10...Nf8. White's general approach is just too harmless to bother us. *11.O&d2* Or 11.Bxd6 Qxd6 12.Ng3 g6 , which gives us equal chances. This is a similar idea as inthe line CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1n1ppp/2pb1p2/8/3P4/2PB4/PP2NPPP/R1BQ1RK1 w - - 7 10CCEndFENCC 10.Ng3 g6 , controlling the f5-square reliably and possibly playing ...f5 later. *.xg6* Black has some flexibility here. 11...Be6 or 11...Bxf4 are just as good. *12.Kxd6 O&xd6* Black has equal chances here. We can develop easily and have no weaknesses to worry about. I am always attracted to expanding on the kingside with ...g6 and ...f5 in these positions. I'd like to illustrate this idea with a sample sequence from the game K.Arjun-P.Maghsoodloo, Abu Dhabi 2017. It continued 13.Rfe1 Be6 14. Ng3 b6 15.Qc2 Nf8 16.Bf5 g6 16.Bxe6 Nxe6 18.Ne4 Qe7 19.Re3 f5 , when Black had a good position. Black has gained some space on the kingside and has ...c5 to open the d-file at leisure. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.c3 B *)* 10...g6 Not on my watch! The move 10...g6 is not the only good move in this position, but I still award the exclam for instructive value. We prevent Nf5 and prepare ...f5 to gain some space and control of e4. It is instructive to compare this position to the line CCStartFENCCrnbq1rk1/pp3ppp/2pb1p2/8/3P4/2PB4/PP3PPP/R1BQK1NR w KQ - 3 8CCEndFENCC 8.Qc2 Re8+ 9.Ne2 h6?! CCStartBracketCCwe play 9...h5!CCEndBracketCC 10.O-O Nd7 11.Ng3 , when Black never manages to play ...g6 due to Bxg6 sacrifices. In such a situation, Black always has to worry about Nf5. 11.Kh6 f5 I like this pawn setup, making both the g3-knight and the d3-bishop looking stupid. You may point at our c8-bishop, but it will find a good square on e6 soon. 12.O&d2 White can't sacrifice on f5, as we have too many defenders around our king. 12.Nxf5 gxf5 13.Qh5 Nf8 or CCStartFENCCr1bqr1k1/pp1n1p1p/2pb2pB/5p2/3P4/2PB2N1/PP3PPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12. Bxf5 gxf5 13.Nxf5 Nf6 illustrate the issue. Kf8 We want to get rid of the intruder on h6. The line 12...Nf6? 13.Nxf5! Bxf5 14.Bxf5 gxf5?? 15.Qg5+ illustrate the possible problems if we don't address this issue. After 12...Bf8 Black is in fine shape. Here are two possible scenarios to look at: ACCEndBracketCC 13.Bxf8 Nxf8 14.Rfe1 Rxe1+ 15.Rxe1 Be6

BCCEndBracketCC 13.Bg5 Nf6 14.Rfe1 Rxe1+ 15.Rxe1 Be6 - we want to play ...Bg7 soon to unpin our knight. In both cases, Black has good play on the light squares and controls d5 and e4. The notable point is that our e6-bishop attacks the a2-pawn. If White reacts with b3, ...a5-a4 is a good plan. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.c3 B]

6...O&xd4 Yes, White has blundered the d4-pawn! This line is unlikely to happen in a classical time control game, but I found a huge count of online games with 6. Bd3 and Black did NOT capture. The reason is probably that Black more or less always plays 6...Bd6 against White's frequent moves and did not pay any attention. Well, you should grab the pawn! White gets some tempi, but it is not enough to justify the loss of a centre pawn. I decided to stop the line here. The reason is that after White's natural move CCStartFENCCrnb1kb1r/pp3ppp/2p2p2/8/3q4/3B4/PPP2PPP/R1BQK1NR w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Nf3 , all reasonable queen moves are fine, like 7...Qd8 , 7...Qd6 , 7...Qd5 and 7...Qb6 . White has a hard time drumming up full compensation because our pawn block on the kingside is so solid. Without the f6-pawn, White would often start an attack based on Ne5 or Ng5, which will never happen here. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.Bd3

[46] **6.h4** This looks relatively best. White stops our h-pawn, but in turn, weakens some squares on the kingside. The knight on g3 is only protected by the f-pawn now, which makes a later ...Bd6xg3-idea a serious issue. In addition, it is more difficult now for White to deal with one of our pieces coming to g4, as the reply f3 would leave the g3-knight unprotected and weakened. 6...c5 The modern solution. The more traditional move is 6...Bg4 , provoking 7.f3 . This line is fine, but CCStartFENCCrnbqkb1r/pp2ppp1/2p2n2/7p/3P3P/6N1/PPP2PP1/R1BQKBNR b KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6...c5 looks like an even simpler solution. By pushing the c-pawn, we immediately attack d4 and prepare ...Nc6 soon. It looks a bit odd to move the c-pawn again, but imagine it would be on c7 instead of c6. You'd certainly consider pushing it to c5 in one go, so why not here? 7.dxc5 This capture does not look too attractive for White, but we need to sacrifice a pawn for a while. Therefore it is worth studying in more detail. [7..xf3 .xc6 8.Ke3 Here, the capture 8.dxc5 is easily answered by 8...Qxd1+ 9.Kxd1 e5 , when we threaten to develop a dangerous initiative against White's uncastled king. cxd4 Here 8...Bg4 is a good alternative, but after 9.dxc5 you need to play a pawn down for a while. Taking on d4 is a simpler solution. 9..xxd4 Kg4 Here we have some good alternative options, for example, 9...Qc7 or 9...Qa5+ . The bishop move gains a tempo on the white queen. 10.O&d2 White avoids the weakening 10.f3 , when we have multiple options, 10...Qb8!? being a fun one. O&c7 We have a fine position. White can't quickly castle queenside, and we have some annoying ideas, for example ...Nd5, intending to capture the bishop. White may play Nb5, but we have ...Qb8 and can kick the knight with ...a6 soon. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Ng3 #3]

7...O&xd1+ Instead 7...Qa5 would regain the pawn, but it loses some time. Taking on d1 and spoiling White's castling rights is better. 8.Elxd1 e6 We need to try to regain the pawn. White can keep it for a while but needs to weaken their position considerably. 9.b4 Keeping the pawn. The move 9.Be3? does not help due to 9...Ng4 or 9...Nd5 . 9...a5 We keep the pressure on the queenside. 10.c3 axb4 The most straightforward way to open the queenside. There are some good alternatives, but this looks simplest. 11.cxb4 Kd7 I like this idea. We are ready for ...Ba4+ now. 12..xf3 Ka4+ 13.Ele1 b6 Black is in good shape here. Here's a sample line to illustrate: 14.cxb6 Bxb4+ 15.Bd2 Bxd2+ 16.Nxd2 Nbd7 17.b7 Ra7 18.Rb1 Ke7 and Black will pick up the b-pawn to restore material equality. In the end, White's a-pawn is rather a weakness than a strength. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Ng3 #2

47 **9..xc3** White is making a ton of knight moves, but there is little choice. They need to complete development in some way, and the knight on e2 blocks the f1-bishop. 9....xbd7 Instead 9...e6 is also reasonable. 10.Kd3 White wants to get rid of our strong bishop. 10...Kxd3 11..xxd3 e6 We have an excellent position after eleven moves. Our bishop will often find a good spot on d6, while ...Qa5 and ...O-O-O is a tempting option. 2. Caro-Kann: Classical (1.e4 -4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Ng3 #1

48 **7.0-0** A sensible move. White wants to create some play on the opened f-file, which is the only upside of the pawn sacrifice. 7...e6 8..xe5 Or 8.Ng5 Bg6 , when White's attack is going nowhere. 8...Kg6 White was threatening Nxf7 and Rxf5, so this is a necessary retreat. The ...Bg6 setup is the main point to remember. Now we have the simple development scheme involving ...Be7, ...O-O and...Nbd7. White has no compensation for the pawn. 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.e4 #3

49 **9.gxf5** White has no good move here. We were threatening both ...Qh4+ and ... Nxe5. 9....xxe5 10.Ke2 Here 10.dxe5? Qh4+ immediately loses for White. 10...O&h4+ 11.Elf1 O&h3+ 12.Ele1 Ke7 Who's doing the attacking now? White's gambit has backfired badly, with ...Bh4+ looming. After 13.dxe5 Qg2 14.Rf1 Bh4+ 15.Kd2 Na6 Black wins quickly. 13. Sidelines after 1.d4 d5-2.e4 #2

50 **4.c4** White throws the c-pawn forward and makes sure that the centre opens up quickly. This line is closely related to 4.Nf3, as White often combines it with c4. Our response to 4.c4 will usually transpose to 4.Nf3, as deviations look worse for White. Let's have a look. 4...cxd4 5.O&xd4 It looks best for White to play 5. Nf3 when 5...Nc6 6.Nxd4 e6 is the mentioned transposition to ©©StartFEN©©rnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/8/2ppP3/3P4/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 4©©EndFEN©© 4.Nf3 cxd4 5.Nxd4 Nc6 6.c4 e6 . 5...e6 A good and simple solution. Black has also tried the gambit line 5...Nc6 6.Qxd5

Bf5 , which looks satisfactory, too. 6.cxd5 This at least enables White to play 6...Nc6 7.Bb5 , but it doesn't pose any problems for us. 6....xc6 7.Kb5 O&xd5 White's queen is not badly placed on d4 after 7...exd5?! , so trading it makes sense. The resulting endgame is comfortable for Black. 8.O&xd5 exd5 9..xc3 Kb4 The position offers equal chances, but I'd rather be Black here. This is not a biased opinion, but rather the experience that it's not so easy for White to play with the advanced e5-pawn. We have a rapid development with ...Nge7, ...Be6/ ...Bf5 and after 10.a3 Bxc3+ would have a weak c-pawn to play against. Of course, White has the bishop par in that case, so it remains objectively balanced. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.c4

4..xf3 White continues their development, a healthy approach. This variation is White's other try in search for an advantage, besides 4.dxc5. 4...cxd4 After our capture, White has the fundamental decision between 5.Nxd4 and 5. Qxd4, which lead to quite different positions. 5.O&xd4 The queen move is less popular than 5.Nxd4 , but not bad. It leads to complex positions with chances for both sides.

[5..xxd4 White goes for this recapture most of the time. .xc6 We challenge White's knight and attack e5 at the same time.

A) 6.Kb5 A rare move, but it's worth looking at one line that could be irritating if you face it unprepared. Kd7 7.e6 That's the possibly irritating move. We have nothing to fear, but it could hit you by surprise. fxe6 White has weakened our pawn structure, and the f8-bishop is tough to develop. The main point to remember is that we should be ready to return the e6-pawn. 8.0-0 g6 The move 8...Nf6 would also work, intending the same idea of 9.Re1 e5 , returning the pawn. 9.Qe1 e5 That's the way to go. We return the pawn and coordinate our position. 10.Kxc6 bxc6 11.Qxe5 Kg7 White has regained the pawn, but in the resulting position, only Black can be better. White doesn't have control of e5, and we have a monster bishop on g7. After 12.Re1 we should play 12...Nf6 , because 12...e5? 13.Bf4 looks too dangerous for Black. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.Nf3 cxd4 5.Nxd4 #2;

B) 6.c4 Attacking d5 is White's primary try. This position may also arise from a different move order: CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp2pppp/8/2ppP3/3P4/8/ PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 4CCEndFENCC 4.c4 cxd4 5.Nf3 Nc6 6. Nxd4 leads here, too. e6 This is best. We cover d5 and prepare our kingside development. Taking on e5 terrible due to 6...Nxe5? 7.cxd5 Qxd5 8.Nc3 Qa5 9.Ndb5 , which gives White a deadly attack. 7..xc3 White's whole strategy is about putting pressure on our central pawn d5, which makes 7.Nc3 a very natural choice. Now Black has two good lines, 7...Bb4 and 7...Bc5. I decided to recommend 7...Bb4, as I felt it was easier to play. One difference between the two lines is 7...Bc5 8.Nxc6 bxc6 9.Qg4 , when 9...Ne7 10.Qxg7 Rg8 11. Qxh7 Rb8 leads to a position with compensation for two pawns, while after CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp3ppp/2n1p3/3pP3/2PN4/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7...Bb4 8.Nxc6 bxc6 9.Qg4 Ne7 10.Qxg7 Rg8

11.Qxh7 we have 11...d4 . Kb4 As mentioned, 7...Bc5 is a reasonable alternative. After our 7...Bb4 pin, White's choice is limited. They usually capture on c6, while 8.cxd5 is a lesser-explored alternative.

B1) 8..xxc6 White's main move by far. bxc6 Now White has two aggressive queen moves, 9.Qa4 CCStartBracketCCthe most popular moveCCEndBracketCC and 9.Qg4. A calmer alternative is 9.Bd3, which we'll also check. White also has 9.cxd5 , when you need to avoid 9...cxd5?? 10. Qa4+ , dropping a piece. Black is fine after CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/p4ppp/2p1p3/3PP3/1b6/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 0 9CCEndFENCC 9...exd5 or CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/p4ppp/2p1p3/3PP3/1b6/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 0 9CCEndFENCC 9...Qxd5 , though. 9.Kd3 A solid development move, but it leads to exciting complications, too. *(9.O&g4* A common sight in many lines of this chapter. White goes for an early queen sortie to put pressure on the kingside. *.xe7* As usual, we need to ignore the threat and make a pawn sacrifice out of it. *10.O&xg7 Qg8 11.O&xh7 d4* This sequence already would persuade many players on the white side to avoid the Qg4xg7 adventure, as it looks like Black is winning a piece. White has a saving move, though. *12.a3* This saves the piece. Now Black has some interesting moves. *Ka5* It's also possible to investigate CCStartFENCCr1bqk1r1/p3np1Q/2p1p3/4P3/1bPp4/P1N5/1P3PPP/R1B1KB1R b KQq - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12...Bxc3 13.bxc3 Qa5 or CCStartFENCCr1bqk1r1/p3np1Q/2p1p3/4P3/1bPp4/P1N5/1P3PPP/R1B1KB1R b KQq - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12...Qa5 . They are both playable and lead to fun complications. *13.b4 dxc3 14.bxa5 O&xa5* I am cutting the trainable line here, as we are already fairly deep in this line. White is a pawn up, but that hardly matters in such a wild position. I have analyzed a bit further, of course, but I don't think it's helpful to learn the lines any deeper. Stockfish evaluates 15.Qe4 as White's only playable move, covering e5. Then there are plenty of possibilities for Black, like 15...Rb8!? , intending ...c5 and ...Bb7. Black has great play for the pawn and all the fun, in my mind. All the pieces are active and White's king is still in the centre. While this is the case for our king, too, there is a difference. White has no developed pieces to attack our monarch, but we are fully mobilized. Stockfish evaluates the position as 0.00, but it defends PERFECTLY, which is a different story for a human being playing White. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.Nf3 cxd4 5. Nxd4 #5*; 9.O&a4* A tempting move and by far the most popular. White attacks both the bishop and the c6-pawn and hopes for 9...Bxc3+? , which would be a substantial mistake. We have a much better move that gives us good play. *a5* We don't need to cover c6 at all! *10.cxd5* After 10.Qxc6+? Bd7 11.Qb7 Ne7 White's queen is in mortal danger. *O&xd5* Now 10...exd5?? 11.Qxc6+ would work for White, as 11...Bd7 12.Qxd5 is possible. After the correct queen capture, we are attacking the e5-pawn, which prompts the following funny sequence. *11.O&xb4 axb4 12..xxd5 exd5* Much better

than 12...cxd5? 13.Bd2 , when we have no good move to cover the b-pawn, as 13...Rb8 is very passive. After 12...exd5 13.Bd2 c5! the difference is apparent. Better for White seems to be CCStartFENCCr1b1k1nr/5ppp/2p5/3pP3/1p6/8/PP3PPP/R1B1KB1R w KQkq - 0 13CCEndFENCC 13.Be3 , when Black is fine after both 13...f6 or CCStartFENCCr1b1k1nr/5ppp/2p5/3pP3/1p6/4B3/PP3PPP/R3KB1R b KQkq - 1 13CCEndFENCC 13...Ne7 . The key is not to defend the b-pawn but go for active play instead. A sample line to illustrate is CCStartFENCCr1b1k1nr/5ppp/2p5/3pP3/1p6/4B3/PP3PPP/R3KB1R b KQkq - 1 13CCEndFENCC 13...f6 14.f4 Bf5 15.Bc5 Kd7 16.Bxb4 fxe5 17.fxe5 Nh6 , when Black regains the e5-pawn with equal chances. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.Nf3 cxd4 5.Nxd4 #6) 9....xe7 We not only develop the knight and prepare to castle, but we also make ...Ba6 possible by defending the c6-pawn. The immediate 9...Ba6?? fails to the typical 10.Qa4 , when too much is hanging at the same time. 10.0-0 The most likely move to happen. After 10.cxd5 Qxd5! CCStartBracketCC avoid CCStartFENCCr1bqk2r/p3nppp/2p1p3/3pP3/1bP5/2NB4/PP3PPP/R1BQ1RK1 b kq - 3 10CCEndFENCC 10...cxd5?? 11.Qa4+ CCEndBracketCC White is forced to sacrifice a pawn, as both g2 and e5 are attacked. CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/p3nppp/2p1p3/3qP3/1b6/2NB4/PP3PPP/R1BQK2R w KQkq - 0 11CCEndFENCC 11.O-O Qxe5 Tasty! Well, White has compensation, but I am happy to take the centre pawn. Ka6 Now this move is possible, as 11.Qa4? Qa5! is excellent for Black. 11.cxd5 As mentioned, 11.Qa4? Qa5 is great for us. The capture on d5 leads to a surprisingly long, forced line. Kxd3 12.O&xd3 Kxc3 The best move, as again 12...cxd5?? 13.Qb5+ blunders the bishop, while CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/p3nppp/2p1p3/3PP3/1b6/2NQ4/PP3PPP/R1B2RK1 b kq - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12...exd5?! looks strategically dubious. The c-pawn and the c5-square are long-term problems. After 12...Bxc3! 13.bxc3 CCStartBracketCCWhite wants to use their bishop on a3CCEndBracketCC 13...cxd5 we can finish development and consider piling up on the weak c-pawn. If White plays c4 too quickly, we'll get the marvelous d5-square for our knight. CCStartFENCCr2qk2r/p3nppp/2p1p3/3PP3/8/2PQ4/P4PPP/R1B2RK1 b kq - 0 13CCEndFENCC 13...Qxd5 is also possible and leads to equal chances. It's an interesting position with a knight vs bishop imbalance in both cases. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.Nf3 cxd4 5.Nxd4 #4;

B2) 8.cxd5 Not too common, but it leads to interesting play. 8...O&xd5 A much simpler solution than 8...exd5 , keeping the pawn structure intact and activating the queen. 9..xxc6 O&xc6 The alternative 9...bxc6 is also perfectly fine. The pawn structure is weakened, but White's e5-pawn is attacked. After 10.Qe2 Qc5 11.Bd2 Ne7 Black has equal chances. I suggest 9...Qxc6 as it avoids any structural concessions and therefore is a bit easier to handle. 10.Kd2 Attention: White is not only breaking our pin but

also setting up Bb5!, which would pin our queen! Kxc3 Alright, let's make sure not to get pinned! We give up the bishop pair but get good play on the light squares. It is also possible to play 10...Bd7 first, when 11.Qg4 Bxc3 12.Bxc3 Ne7 is a possible transposition to the line we are about to examine. 11.Kxc3 .xe7 Our idea is to use d5, f5 and c6 for our minor pieces. A setup with ...Bd7-c6 comes to mind. 12.O&g4 The critical test. The whole line is unexplored, but the position after 12.Qg4 could easily appear on the board, even if White were not prepared for it. The sequence after 7...Bb4 8.Nxd5 is rather natural. Kd7 We don't need to react to 12.Qg4 with a passive move, as White is not threatening to take g7. After 12...Bd7! 13.Qxg7? Qe4+ 14.Be2 Rg8 15.Qh6 Rxg2 leads to a disaster for White. They should instead develop with CCStartFENCCr3k2r/pp1bnppp/2q1p3/4P3/6Q1/2B5/PP3PPP/R3KB1R w KQkq - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.Be2 or CCStartFENCCr3k2r/pp1bnppp/2q1p3/4P3/6Q1/2B5/PP3PPP/R3KB1R w KQkq - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.Bd3 . In both cases, Black has some exciting options, for example, CCStartFENCCr3k2r/pp1bnppp/2q1p3/4P3/6Q1/2B5/PP3PPP/R3KB1R w KQkq - 3 13CCEndFENCC 13.Be2 Qa4!? is possible. We still don't mind a capture on g7 in these lines, as our light-squared play is strong. A sample line is 14.Qxg7 Rg8 15.Qxh7 Rxg2 , when White has to defend carefully. Our pieces are active and White has no safe place for their king. White should probably prefer CCStartFENCCr3k2r/pp1bnppp/4p3/4P3/q5Q1/2B5/PP2BPPP/R3K2R w KQkq - 5 14CCEndFENCC 14.Qxa4 Bxa4 , but such an endgame is acceptable for Black, as we'll have great pieces on the light squares d5 and c6. White's c3-bishop will often point into thin air and never attack anything, as all the play is on light squares. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.Nf3 cxd4 5.Nxd4 #3;

C) 6..xxc6 The trade on c6 is a simple option for White. There is one key idea for Black to remember - hang on. 6...bxc6 7.Kd3 e6 We build a solid pawn block in the centre. What about our c8-bishop, though? The solution comes on the next move. 8.0-0 a5 The exclam is for the importance of the idea. You may also start with 8...Ne7 and play ...a5 next. This move order is more popular but has no advantage over ours. We prepare ...Ba6, activating/trading our bishop. Let's have a look at how this unfolds. 9..xd2 .xe7 It's crucial to play ...Ba6 at the right moment. After 9...Ba6?! White has 10.c4 , when we don't realize the desired trade because the c4-pawn is defended twice. 10..xf3 White's knight can't stay on d2 forever, also because of ...Ne7-g6, when e5 and f4 are targeted. Ka6 Finally, we play ...Ba6 to trade our currently worst piece for White's best. I'd assess chances as about equal. An interesting moment occurs after 11.Bxa6 Rxa6 12.c4!? , when Black can consider taking on c4. It looks terrible for the pawn structure, but our knight would get a fantastic d5-square. The c6-pawn can be defended well. A weakness is only a weakness if it can be exploited, which looks difficult to do here. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.Nf3 cxd4 5.Nxd4 #1]

5....xc6 6.O&f4 It's pointless to play 6.Bb5 , as White has no interest in ever taking on c6. 6...e6 There is no way to get the c8-bishop out first, so 6...e6 it is. We now have reached a pretty similar structure to the Advance Variation of the French Defence, but some points make it different to a regular French. The early trade of the d-pawn for the c-pawn is unusual in the French, and White's queen sits on f4. This point will be very relevant, as ...Nb4 is a key resource for Black. We'll answer 7.Bd3 and 7.Nc3 this way: jumping to b4 and going for the bishop pair. White can stop this plan with 7.c3, but it's too slow and poses no problems at all. 7.c3

[7.Kd3 White's most popular choice. After 7.Bd3 Nc6 , White frequently plays 8.Nc3 . This position may also arise via CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp3ppp/2n1p3/3pP3/5Q2/5N2/PPP2PPP/RNB1KB1R w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Nc3 Nb4 8.Bd3 . Our approach is rather simple: go ...Nb4, unless White completely rules it out CCStartBracketCC7.c3 is such a move, but very harmlessCCEndBracketCC. .xb4 Here we go. We get the bishop pair, but more importantly, remove White's attacker on d3. The King's bishop is often a formidable attacker, and trading it makes a lot of sense. 8..xc3 White has also tried 8.O-O here, but it leads to the same type of position. We would take on d3 and then choose the same piece formation as after 8.Nc3 Nxd3+. .xxd3+ 9.cxd3 .xe7 The first move of our setup. I suggest playing the knight to e7 first then the bishop to d7. Often the knight will switch to g6 or f5 when ...Be7 becomes possible. Finally, we can think about starting action on the queenside. Let's have a look at a possible sequence. 10.h4 An important moment. I think we should stop the h-pawn now. If While plays something line 10.Bd2 Bd7 11.h4 , I'd advocate 11...h5 , too. h5 We stop not only White's h-pawn but also secure g6 and f5 for our knight. In return, White gets control of g5, though. I still prefer this setup, compared to allowing h4-h5 from White, which gains too much space for my taste. Giving up control of g5 is no big deal, as a single piece coming to this square doesn't hurt us. Note that we will delay casting for a while now, focusing on the queenside action first. After 10...h5, White has many options. I'd expect a sequence like 11.Bd2 Bd7 12.Ne2 Ng6 13. Qg3 Qb6 , which seems about equal to me. White has more space, but our position is solid, and we have play on the queenside. Ideas like ...Bb5 or ...Qa6 come to mind. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.Nf3 cxd4 5.Qxd4 #2]

7...O&c7 Or 7...f6 , which similar ideas. We quickly attack White's e5-pawn, as the queen is not well-placed on f4 to help support it. 8.Kd3 f6

Mission accomplished. White can't hold e5 now. 9.exf6 O&xf4 10.Kxf4 gxf6 Much better than taking with the knight. Now ...e5 is the idea, giving Black a huge centre and the advantage. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.Nf3 cxd4 5. Qxd4 #1

[51] **5..xf3** White doesn't try to defend the c5-pawn but instead focuses on natural development. This healthy approach can't be wrong, but it does not put too much pressure on Black. 5...Kxc5 Alright, that recovery mission wasn't too

tricky. 6.Kd3 White's logical and most popular move. The alternative 6.a3 is also played frequently, but the resulting position often arises via CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/4p3/2PpP3/8/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.a3 Bxc5 6.Nf3 . Please see thismove order for more information. 6...f6 I suggest playing ...f6 as quickly as possible. We attack the e5-pawn immediately and will remove it by taking on e5 or provoking the capture on f6. 7.0-0 White may also play 7.Qe2 Nc6 8.O-O , which leads to the same positions. 7....xc6 We increase the pressure on e5. Now White has to decide whether to take on f6 or lend more support to the e5-pawn. 8.exf6 The capture does not look very threatening, but we need to examine the position after 8...Nxf6 9.c4 , which is still an interesting try for White.

[8.Kf4 White hopes for 8...fxe5, when the bishop is nicely placed. But we have a much better alternative! g5 Aggressive and strong. This flank advance is actually fighting for the centre, as we intend to push ...g4 in some lines to undermine White's control over e5 and d4. Now White can easily get into trouble... Where to move the bishop? 9.Ke3 This looks best, but not an obvious choice. After CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/pp5p/2n1pp2/2bpP1p1/5B2/3B1N2/PPP2PPP/RN1Q1RK1 w kq - 0 9CCEndFENCC 9.Bg3 f5 Black threatens ...f5-f4, while CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/pp5p/2n1pp2/2bpP1p1/5B2/3B1N2/PPP2PPP/RN1Q1RK1 w kq - 0 9CCEndFENCC 9.Bd2 g4 pushes away the final defender of e5. White also can't play 9.Nxg5 fxg5 10.Qh5 , as ...Kd7-c7 secures our king position. Kxe3 10.fxe3 f5 White still has to be concerned about the weak e5-pawn, but it seems that 11.c4 dxc4 12.Bxc4 Qxd1 13.Rxd1 Ke7 14.Bb5 just about holds the balance for White. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5. Nf3 #2]

[8.O&e2 This looks very natural and is White's most frequently played move. fxe5 This looks best to me. We exchange twice on e5, making sure that the white queen captures at the end. The square e5 is weak, and we like to see the queen there. It is easier to expel than a minor piece. I also examined the alternative 8... Qc7 , when 9.Bf4 lends additional protection to the e5-pawn. This is a sharper option than 8...fxe5, but it looks less trustworthy. 9..xxe5 .xxe5 10.O&xe5 .xf6 The logical continuation. Our dream scenario is to expel the queen from e5 and ultimately manage e6-e5, setting our centre pawns in motion. White needs to be very concerned about this idea. We'll check 11.Nd2 CCStartBracketCCplanning Nf3CCEndBracketCC and 11.Bb5+, which is the most popular choice. The check forces our king to f7, but this is less of a worry, as we will see. 11..xd2 White intends Nf3, connecting the knight with the crucial e5-square. The following line is rather deep but very logical and easy to follow. *(11.Kb5+* The bishop check is White's most popular move. It's tempting to force 11...Kf7, but we'll see that it is not the end of the world. *Elf7* White was hoping for 11...Bd7?? 12.Qxe6+ , of course. *12.Kf4* The only real test of Black's concept. After 12.Nd2 Bd6 13.Qe2 a6 14.Bd3 e5 we are taking over the initiative already. *O&b6* A strong move. We attack the b5-bishop and get ...Bd4 on the map. *13.O&e2* This looks best. A

continuation like 13.Nc3 Bd4 14.Qd6 Qxd6 15.Bxd6 Bd7 does not scare us - we already have the better endgame due to the central pawns and play down the c-file. *a6 14.Kd3* When playing 13.Qe2, White needs to evaluate that 14...Qxb2 is rather risky now. I suggest a different approach. *e5* An attractive move that activates our c8-bishop. White can capture e5 in two ways, but we are fine in both cases. *15.Kxe5* White can try 15.Qxe5 , when after 15...Bd4 16.Qg5 Bxb2 17. Be5 is possible. We should avoid grabbing more material and instead play 17... Bxe5 to trade the active bishop. We have equal chances in this case. *Qe8* White has placed the bishop in an awkward pin. *16.Elh1* The only move! White needed to enable f2-f4 badly. *Kg4* Developing with tempo is always a tempting option. *17.f3* White can't play 17.Qe1? and allow 17...Ne4 18.Bxe4 Rxe5 , winning a piece . *Kh5* I'll stop the already long line here. Black has good play, based on the e-file pin. White's best bet is 18.Qe1 , when 18...Rxe5 19.Qxe5 Bd4 regains the sacrificed material. After 18.g4?! Bd6! White is already struggling. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.Nf3 #5 *)* 11...0-0 12..xf3 Kd6 We want to fight for control of e5. 13.O&e2 O&c7 Again, it's about e5. We are now threatening e6-e5, which forces*CC*StartBracket*CC*!*CC*EndBracket*CC* White's reply. 14.Qe1 Mandatory, as White can't allow ...e5. After 14.Re1 we have a crucial decision. I think that Black has more than one good reply; let's have a look. .xg4 I suggest this move, which you could call the 'tactical proof' that Black is doing alright. Before we have a closer look at it, I'd like to mention that the less forcing move 14...Bd7 is possible, too. If White replies 15.Ne5 the nice move 15...Be8 is possible. Now let's have a look at the sharp move 14...Ng4. White is faced with the threats ...Bc5 and ...e5, so there is a limited choice. 15.h3 White's only alternative to 15.Bxh7+ . *(15.Kxh7+* At first, this doesn't look very good for Black, but the tactics work out fine for us. After White's only alternative 15.h3 , we have 15...Nxf2! *Elxh7 16..xg5+ Elg8 17.O&xg4 O&xc2* The reason why 15.Bxh7+ is not as scary as it looks at first. We not only regain the pawn but place the queen on a great square. It attacks f2 and defends h7. We are also ready for ...e6-e5, activating the c8-bishop. Black is in fine shape. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.Nf3 #4 *)* 15....xxf2 Well, we didn't plan to retreat! The knight move is not a real piece sacrifice, as we get the piece back quickly. 16.O&xf2 Or 16.Kxf2 e5 , which is very similar. White has to return the piece, which gives us good play. e5 The threat e5-e4 regains the pieces. White can try 17.Qe2 e4 18.Bxe4 dxe4 19.Qxe4 , but after 19...Bd7 , we have good play for the pawn. Our bishop will be excellent on c6. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4. dxc5 e6 5.Nf3 #3]

8....xxf6 9.c4 This looks critical. If White plays slow moves, we may easily take over the initiative. We have two centre pawns, and after ...O-O, enjoy the half-open f-file, which can turn to be scary for White quickly. 9...dxc4 The cleanest way to play. You may also venture 9...O-O , which can lead to complicated play, for example, after 10.Nc3 Kh8 11.Bg5 dxc4 12.Bxc4 Qe8 . 10.Kxc4 O&xd1 11.Qxd1 .xe4 It's important to have this knight jump, forcing a defensive move.

12.Qf1 Here 12.Be3 Bxe3 13.fxe3 Ke7 immediately gives Black equal chances in the endgame. 12....xd4 Black is threatening to double pawns on the f-file and 13.Nxd4 will just activate our bishop. Again, we choose the active way, but CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/pp4pp/2n1p3/2b5/2B1n3/5N2/PP3PPP/RNB2RK1 b kq - 2 12CCEndFENCC 12...O-O is not bad, either. 13..xbd2 .xxd2 14..xxd2 b5 Our isolated pawn on e6 is easily defended, and our pieces get active positions. Chances are equal in this endgame. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.Nf3 #1

5.O&g4 The queen jump is rare but worth checking. White has an eye on g7, so we can't just play ...Bxc5 to regain the pawn. 5...h5 We'd like to distract the queen from g7, so this makes a lot of sense. 6.O&f4 Or 6.Qg3 h4 7.Qg4 Nh6 , which already looks nice for Black. 6...Kxc5 7.Kd3 Or 7.Nf3 Nc6 8.Bd3 , leading to the same position. 7....xc6 Black can also start with 7...f6 . I suggest playing this sharp move after 7...Nc6 8.Nf3. Both lines look equally satisfactory for Black. 8..xf3 f6 A very tough move to make if you don't know the idea. We immediately attack e5 and don't mind 9.Bg6+. It's important to understand that it is difficult to play slow moves instead of 8...f6. The move...h5 has weakened the kingside, so castling to this side of the board is unadvisable. 9.O&g3 Probably White's best try. We'd love to see 9.Bg6+ Kf8 , when White's bishop is not doing anything. A later ...Rh6 or ...Nge7 may gain a useful tempo.

9...O&c7 Putting more pressure on e5. The whole line 5.Qg4 is very rare, so I'll stop the trainable here. Black has interesting play and equal chances after 10.O-O g5!? 11.exf6 Qxg3 12.hxg3 g4 14.Nh4 Nxf6 or CCStartFENCCr1b1k1nr/ppq3p1/2n1pp2/2bpP2p/8/3B1NQ1/PPP2PPP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 2 10CCEndFENCC 10.exf6 Qxg3 11.hxg3 gxf6 . In both cases we enjoy excellent central control and development. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.Qg4

5.a3 In recent years, this little pawn move has become the main try amongst professionals to fight for an advantage. White prepares the move b4, which gains a tempo on our bishop after capturing the c5-pawn. 5...Kxc5 Black's main alternative is 5...Nc6 6.Nf3 Bxc5 , which prevents CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/4p3/2PpP3/8/P7/1PP2PPP/RNBQKBNR b KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5...Bxc5 6.Qg4 . There is a drawback to 5...Nc6, though. We commit the knight to c6 early on, which is not always ideal CCStartBracketCCthink of b4-b5CCEndBracketCC . I suggest playing 5...Bxc5 to be more flexible against non-Qg4 approaches. We need to be ready for 6.Qg4, but the resulting positions are interesting to play for both sides. 6.O&g4 White goes for an early queen jump and attacks our g7-pawn. This move was played in November 2020 by Wesley So in an online Rapid game against the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen. Some weeks later, Wesley recommended the move in his Lifetime Repertoire for White. It is a significant move to check, even though it is more likely to meet other lines. I have tested the Caro-Kann and our whole repertoire a lot in online games and, more often than not, faced CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/

pp3ppp/4p3/2PpP3/8/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5. a3 Bxc5 6.b4 or lines like CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/4p3/2PpP3/8/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5.Nf3 Bxc5 6.Bd3 .

[6..xf3 This position often arises from the move order CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pp3ppp/4p3/2PpP3/8/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 5CCEndFENCC 5. Nf3 Bxc5 6.a3 . White will almost always play b4 on the next move, when we'll transpose to lines that we examine via 6.b4. Let's check how we'll transpose. f6 According to the general approach to quickly attack and ideally destroy White's centre. Now I don't see a compelling way for White to avoid 7.b4, which would be odd anyway. If you play a3, going b4 is the intention. I've met the move 7.Bd3 in online Blitz, which we'll briefly check. 7.Kd3 White's most logical move is 7.b4 , when 7...Be7 leads us CCStartFENCCrnbqk1nr/pp3ppp/4p3/2bpP3/8/P7/1PP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC to 6.b4 Be7 7.Nf3 f6 . I've faced 7.Bd3 in online Blitz games, but it doesn't challenge us at all. fxe5 This move can look a bit scary, as we invite the white knight to the centre. This concern is unwarranted, though. We'll quickly challenge it and prove that White does not have enough control of e5. 8..xxe5 .xf6 No Qh5+, please! 9.0-0 .xc6 I suggest attacking the knight immediately. It's also possible to play 9...O-O first; it also leads to equal chances. 10.Kf4 Kd6 Each move relates to the e5-square. 11.O&e2 O&c7 Now we see that White lacks time to support the knight conveniently. The move a3 does not contribute to the central struggle. Best for White is 12.Re1 now, as 12.Nxc6?? Bxf4 is a blunder, when we attack h2 and the c6-knight. After CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/ppq3pp/2nbpn2/3pN3/5B2/P2B4/1PP1QPPP/RN3RK1 w kq - 7 12CCEndFENCC 12.Re1 we have the choice between 12...Nd4 , which after 13.Qd1 Nc6 could easily lead to draw, and CCStartFENCCr1b1k2r/ppq3pp/2nbpn2/3pN3/5B2/P2B4/1PP1QPPP/RN2R1K1 b kq - 8 12CCEndFENCC 12...O-O to continue in a complicated position. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.a3 Bxc5 6.Nf3]

[6.b4 White's mainline and very natural. Playing b4 is the main idea of 5.a3, after all. Ke7 After 6...Be7 White's main choice is between 7.Qg4 and the moves 7.Nf3/7.Bb2, which will often lead to the same positions. After 7.Nf3 f6 8.Bb2 and CCStartFENCCrnbqk1nr/pp2bppp/4p3/3pP3/1P6/P7/2P2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 1 7CCEndFENCC 7.Bb2 f6 8.Nf3 , the lines quickly merge. I'll examine 7.Nf3 as the main move order, as 7.Bb2 has no independent value.

A) 7..xf3 A natural development move, and probably White's best choice. f6 Here we go - we directly chip away at White's centre. It's also possible to play 7...a5 8.b5 f6 , which will likely lead to the same lines. 8.Kb2 White fianchettos the bishop and lends additional cover to e5, a key idea of the queenside expansion. a5 Inserting the move pair 8...a5 9.b5 proves useful, as we will see. We gain control of c5, which comes in handy later. 9.b5 .xd7 It's all about the pressure on e5. Now White's most challenging move is probably 10.c4 , but you'll also face CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/1p1nb1pp/4pp2/pP1pP3/8/P4N2/1BP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 1 10CCEndFENCC 10.Bd3

Nh6 11.Nbd2 or CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/1p1nb1pp/4pp2/pP1pP3/8/P4N2/1BP2PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 1 10CCEndFENCC 10.Nbd2 Nh6 11.Bd3 , which is easier to handle and rather requires precision from White to avoid trouble.

A1) 10.c4 White immediately attacks our d5-pawn. I feel this is more challenging than 10.Bd3, but we are still in fine shape. .xxe5 This looks best and most reliable. There is a fun alternative, though. You can also consider 10...fxe5!? , when 11.Nxe5 Bf6! 12.Nxd7 Bxb2 13.Ra2 Bxa3!? is a funky line. More critical is CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/1p1nb1pp/4p3/pP1pp3/2P5/P4N2/1B3PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 0 11CCEndFENCC 11.cxd5 exd5 12.Qxd5 Ngf6 , when White has to find the only good move 13.Qa2! This is not a simple task and feels unlikely to happen in a faster time control game. The problem is that after 13.Qa2! I am not sure Black is doing fine. Stockfish recommends 13...Nb6 , which could lead to 14.Bxe5 Ng4 15.Bxg7 Bc5 , with complete craziness! Somewhat predictably, the engine calls it 0.00. It is incredibly tough to assess what's going on after 13...Nb6, and I didn't want to drill this down to move 20 and beyond. Black is in fine shape after 10...Nxe5, and there is no need to go crazy. Still, 10...fxe5 could be fun to explore and play, in particular, if you want to set the board on fire in speed chess. 11..xxe5 fxe5 Now we have a final split between 12.Bxe5, 12.cxd5 and 12.Qh5+. I think that 12.Bxe5 is best, but the other moves are certainly logical, too. 12.cxd5 This move doesn't challenge us much. Both recaptures on d5 are fine, but there is even a third option. *(12.O&h5+* This is a lot less scary than it looks at first. *g6 13.O&xe5 Kf6 14.O&e2* That's White's problem: they have to place the queen on e2, which is hampering the development. *.xh6* We are now ready to castle and have reached a tense and interesting position. White should probably play 15.Qd2 now, or CCStartFENCCr1bqk2r/1p5p/4pbpn/pP1p4/2P5/P7/1B2QPPP/RN2KB1R w KQkq - 3 15CCEndFENCC 15.g3 to work on kingside development. Instead, I want to have a look at 15.cxd5. *15.cxd5* This looks irritating at first, but we have a good reply. *0-0* Now White has to be very careful. The only move that keeps them in the game is 16.d6, as otherwise, we'd play ...exd5 and open the e-file with a crushing effect. 16.d6 Bxb2 17.Qxb2 Ng4 still gives Black an attack, but White seems to hold. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.a3 Bxc5 6.b4 #5*; 12.Kxe5 .xf6* The move 12...Bf6?! is less convincing, as White has the strong reply 13.Nd2! Bxe5 13.Qh5+ g6 14.Qxe5 , covering the bishop by tactical means. 12...Nf6 is stronger and leads to a rather new position. Here's an overview of two possible lines to get a feel for the position. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqk2r/1p2b1pp/4pn2/pP1pB3/2P5/P7/5PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 1 13CCEndFENCC 13.Be2 O-O 14.O-O Nd7 15.Bg3 Nc5 16.Nd2 b6 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqk2r/1p2b1pp/4pn2/pP1pB3/2P5/P7/5PPP/RN1QKB1R w KQkq - 1 13CCEndFENCC 13.Nd2 O-O 14.Bd3 b6 CCStartBracketCC

CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/1p2b1pp/4pn2/pP1pB3/2P5/P2B4/3N1PPP/R2QK2R b KQ - 4 14CCEndFENCC 14...Nd7?? 15.Qh5! CCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bq1rk1/4b1pp/1p2pn2/pP1pB3/2P5/P2B4/3N1PPP/R2QK2R w KQ - 0 15CCEndFENCC 15.O-O b6 In both cases Black manages ...b6 and ...Bb7 next at the end. The position is complex, with chances for both sides. My own experience with the whole line is positive, as the extended white queenside often gives us valuable targets and outposts, like the c5-square. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.a3 Bxc5 6.b4 #6 *)* 12....xf6 A fun move, instead of taking. The alternatives 12...exd5 13.Qh5+ Kf8 14.Qxe5 Bf6 or CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/1p2b1pp/4p3/pP1Pp3/8/P7/1B3PPP/RN1QKB1R b KQkq - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12...Qxd5 are also fine and give us equal chances. 13.Kxe5 White has to avoid 13.dxe6? Qxd1+ 14.Kxd1 Bxe6 , when Black has a strong attack against White's king. O&xd5 14.O&xd5 exd5 This position is a bit better for Black already. White's queenside is weakened, and we are faster on the c-file to possibly invade. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1. e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.a3 Bxc5 6.b4 #4;

A2) 10.Kd3 The sequence 10.Nbd2 Nh6 11.Bd3 would lead to the same position. 10....xh6 On the way to f7: maximum pressure on White's centre is the goal. 11.0-0 Yes, this natural move is a substantial mistake. *(11..xbd2* Much better than 11.O-O . The difference will become clearer in a moment. *.xf7* Maximum pressure. *12.exf6 Kxf6 13.Kxf6 O&xf6 14.c4* That's the key difference to 11.O-O. White is just in time to play c4, preventing us from building a full e5/d5 pawn centre. *.xc5 15.Kc2 a4* I like this move, taking control of b3. It's also possible to play 15...b6 or 15...O-O first, we'd like to play all three, and the order is not particularly relevant. I am happy with Black's chances after 15...a4 CCStartBracketCCor the other mentioned movesCCEndBracketCC. We have good central control, and our bishop will have a good spot on b7. Black can think about some action on the kingside, too. The half-open f-file and the strong bishop on b7 can be a powerful combination. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.a3 Bxc5 6.b4 #3 *)* 11....xf7 White can't hold the centre now. 12.exf6 It's too late to cover e5, as 12.Re1 fxe5 13.Nxe5 Ndxe5 14.Bxe5 Nxe5 15.Rxe5 Bf6 shows. Kxf6 13.Kxf6 Here 13.Qc1 e5 or CCStartFENCCr1bqk2r/1p1n1npp/4pb2/pP1p4/8/P2B1N2/1BP2PPP/RN1Q1RK1 w kq - 0 13CCEndFENCC 13.Nc3 Nc5 are great for Black, too. O&xf6 Black is in fantastic shape here. I have faced 14.Nbd2 in an online Blitz game, when 14...e5 already leads to an overwhelming position for Black. A bit better is 14.c3 , but we have a full centre and a significant advantage after 14...e5 or the calmer 14...O-O , intending ...Nb6, ...Bd7 and ...Rc8. White's c-pawn is a handy target, while our e6-pawn is solid as a rock. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5. a3 Bxc5 6.b4 #2;

B) 7.O&g4 At first glance, you might think this is similar to

CCStartFENCCrnbqk1nr/pp3ppp/4p3/2bpP3/8/P7/1PP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.Qg4 , but a closer look reveals that this assumption is flawed. After 6.Qg4 we can play 6...Ne7 , temporarily leaving the g-pawn en prise. Such a concept doesn't work here; we need to prevent Qxg7. 7...g6 In many areas, 'retro' is in fashion, but 7...Bf8?! would a bit too much of it. The move 7...g6 is much better and gives Black good play. After securing our kingside, we'll attack White's pawns on b4 and e5 next. 8..xf3 a5 It's good to insert this move, attacking b4. White needs to react and give us some additional options. 9.b5 A substantial accomplishment for Black. We have gained control of c5. .xd7 We attack e5 and connect the knight to the c5-square. Currently, our c8-bishop looks bad, but this is only a temporary factor, as we will see. 10.Kd3 This move is slightly better than 10.Bb2. The problem of 10.Bb2 is the following: just as after 10.Bd3, we'll play 10...h5 and attack the queen. Now White's queen has to go to d4, which is not the most comfortable square for the queen. The alternatives are worse and give Black superb, active play. ACCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/1p1nbp2/4p1p1/pP1pP2p/6Q1/P4N2/1BP2PPP/RN2KB1R w KQkq - 0 11CCEndFENCC 11.Qf4 g5 12.Qe3 g4 13.Nd4 Bg5 14.Qe2 Nb6 BCCEndBracketCC CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/1p1nbp2/4p1p1/pP1pP2p/6Q1/P4N2/1BP2PPP/RN2KB1R w KQkq - 0 11CCEndFENCC 11.Qg3 Nh6 12.Bd3 h4 14.Qf4 g5 In these lines, you see the drawback of 10.Bb2: it neglects control of the dark squares on the kingside, particularly g5. So after CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/1p1nbp1p/4p1p1/pP1pP3/6Q1/P4N2/2P2PPP/RNB1KB1R w KQkq - 1 10CCEndFENCC 10.Bb2 h5 11.Qd4 is more or less forced when we'll play in the same way as after CCStartFENCCr1bqk1nr/1p1nbp1p/4p1p1/pP1pP3/6Q1/P4N2/2P2PPP/RNB1KB1R w KQkq - 1 10CCEndFENCC 10.Bd3 h5 11.Qf4 . Our setup involves ...Nh6, ...Qc7, ...b6,...Bb7 and ...O-O-O. h5 It's important to avoid 10...f6? , as 11.Qh3! is a strong response. White threatens Bxg6+!. 11.O&f4 White keeps the queen connected to the g5-square and thus prevents the advance of the g-pawn. Pushing the g-pawn is a key device to undermine White's centre. This can be illustrated by a funny line: 11.Qd4 g5 12.Bb2 g4 13.Nfd2 Nxe5! - mission accomplished! Admittedly far away from optimal play, but a good demonstration of Black's concept. .xh6 We have the following setup in mind: ...Nh6, ...Qc7, ...b6, ...Bb7 and ...O-O-O. It's also possible to start with 11...b6 or 11...Qc7. 12.a4 White has other moves, of course. But it doesn't matter that much, as our setup would work fine anyway. The move 12.a4 was tested in a the game M.Haubro vs J.Thybo, Svendborg 2021, which nicely illustrated Black's chances. b6 13.0-0 Kb7 14..xc3 O&c7 This position was reached in the mentioned game. White's c3-knight is attacked, and Haubro now played 15.Ne2 , when 15...g5!? 16.Nxg5 Qxe5 changed the character of the game. Black has traded the g-pawn for the e-pawn and was in good shape. One positive point about the trade is that it breaks down White's central control and makes sure our b7-bishop gets active later. Our two central pawns are mobile

after White's e-pawn is gone. It was also possible to play CCStartFENCCr3k2r/1bqnbp2/1p2p1pn/pP1pP2p/P4Q2/3B1N2/2P1NPPP/R1B2RK1 b kq - 5 15CCEndFENCC 15...O-O-O and keep the tension. Our knights have good squares on c5 and f5. Note how safe our king is, while we still might start action on the kingside with ...g5 at a later stage. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.a3 Bxc5 6.b4 #1]

6....xe7 Ignoring the attack is by far the best reply. It's crucial to not confuse this position with CCStartFENCCrnbqk1nr/pp3ppp/4p3/2bpP3/8/P7/1PP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.b4 Be7 7.Qg4 , when we need to play 7...g6 . We don't have the ...Ne7 idea and need to cover the pawn in this line. We can also afford the passive defence because White has weakened the queenside with b4, which gives us good play with a timely ...a5 advance. Now back to 6.Qg4 , when 6...g6? is bad. We badly lack the ...a5 strike on the queenside and have weakened the kingside with ...g6. There are two ways to tell the two situations apart: 1CCEndBracketCC Play ...Ne7, if possible, otherwise play ...g6 or 2CCEndBracketCC You can allow weakening your kingside with ...g6 only if White has weakened their queenside before. Alright, what is White going to do after 6...Ne7? We need to check 7.Qxg7, but this is not considered critical. We get great activity in this line. More popular and better are 7.Nf3 and 7.Bd3, which usually lead to the same position after CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/pp2nppp/4p3/2bpP3/6Q1/P7/1PP2PPP/RNB1KBNR w KQkq - 2 7CCEndFENCC 7.Nf3 O-O 8.Bd3 . I'll examine 7.Nf3 as the move order and point to possible ways to reach the same position from 7.Bd3. Ignoring the attack is by far the best reply. It's crucial to not confuse this position with CCStartFENCCrnbqk1nr/pp3ppp/4p3/2bpP3/8/P7/1PP2PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 6CCEndFENCC 6.b4 Be7 7.Qg4 , when we need to play 7...g6 . We don't have the ...Ne7 idea and need to cover the pawn in this line. We can also afford the passive defence because White has weakened the queenside with b4, which gives us good play with a timely ...a5 advance. Now back to 6.Qg4 , when 6...g6? is bad. We badly lack the ...a5 strike on the queenside and have weakened the kingside with ...g6. There are two ways to tell the two situations apart: 1CCEndBracketCC Play ...Ne7, if possible, otherwise play ...g6 or 2CCEndBracketCC You can allow weakening your kingside with ...g6 only if White has weakened their queenside before. Alright, what is White going to do after 6...Ne7? We need to check 7.Qxg7, but this is not considered critical. We get great activity in this line. More popular and better are 7.Nf3 and 7.Bd3, which usually lead to the same position after CCStartFENCCrnbqk2r/pp2nppp/4p3/2bpP3/6Q1/P7/1PP2PPP/RNB1KBNR w KQkq - 2 7CCEndFENCC 7.Nf3 O-O 8.Bd3 . I'll examine 7.Nf3 as the main move order and point to possible ways to reach the same position from 7.Bd3. 7.O&xg7 White is greedy and takes g7. Only playing pawn and queen moves is a risky business, though.

[7.b4 I have found a fair amount of online blitz games with this move, but it's a move we are happy to see. h5 8.O&xg7 Best is probably the sad move 8.Qd1 ,

but this is easy to handle. by 8...Bb6 and putting pressure on e5 next. White has no development at all. Qg8 9.O&h7 Kd4 That's the point of dislodging the queen away from the fourth rank: we win the e5-pawn and have a great position. We enjoy a full pawn centre while White has no development. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.a3 Bxc5 6.Qg4 #2]

[7..xf3 Very natural play and White's most popular move. They can also start with 7.Bd3, which will reliably transpose to 7.Nf3. After 7.Bd3 O-O 8.Nf3 , we reach the same position. 0-0 8.Kd3 Wesley So's recommendation in his course and the only move White has tried in the position. It certainly is very natural and logical to develop the bishop and prepare to castle. Now I suggest playing the sharpest move, which Wesley also analyzed and couldn't find an advantage against. f5 I prefer this move to slower approaches, like 8...Ng6 , for example. The reasoning is that White more or less has to take en passant, which removes the annoying e5-pawn. I always like to get rid of the pawn, as this gives our pieces more scope.

A) 9.exf6 White's opens the position. Qxf6 We have removed the e5-pawn and activated our rook. White also has to worry about ...e6-e5, which attacks the queen and threatens ...e5-e4 at the same time. We'll now focus on 10.Qh5, which looks best. 10.Kg5 White attacks our rook, but ignores our idea of ...e5. *(10.O&h5* White removes the queen from the possible ...e6-e5-e4 idea and threatens Qxh7+. *h6* It's a good moment to take stock. Black has a full pawn centre and the potential to move it forward. We'd need to get more control of e5 to accomplish this goal. Move like ...Nbc6/Nd7 and ...Bd6 would bring us closer to it. White has to play actively and stop this idea. *11.0-0 Kd6* A precise move and final one that I want to include in the trainable line. This move is strong because the bishop is well-placed on d6, but it is not clear where the b8-knight belongs. After 11...Nbc6? 12.b4 Bd6 13.b5 or 13.Bb2 , things have gone wrong. After CCStartFENCCrnbq2k1/pp2n1p1/3bpr1p/3p3Q/8/P2B1N2/1PP2PPP/RNB2RK1 w - - 2 12CCEndFENCC 12.b4 we have the strong move 12...Nd7! , which allows 13.Bb2 e5! 14.Nxe5 Nxe5 15.Bxe5 g6 16.Qe2 Re6 17.f4 Nc6 , when Black is much better. Finally, we get to Wesley's recommendation, which is CCStartFENCCrnbq2k1/pp2n1p1/3bpr1p/3p3Q/8/P2B1N2/1PP2PPP/RNB2RK1 w - - 2 12CCEndFENCC 12.Bd2 . The idea is Bc3 to use the long diagonal without pushing the b-pawn. His line continues 12...Nbc6 13.Bc3 e5! 14.Nxe5 d4 15.Nxc6 Nxc6 16.Bb4 Bxb4 17.axb4 Nxb4 18.Be4 Qf8! , when Black retains equal chances. This is an intense line for a 'Keep It Simple' course. I still felt obliged to include it, as questions about how my course handles Wesley's suggestions will arise. I think he made a good case for White's chances, as Black's play is far from easy and almost impossible to get right without any preparation. You are now equipped well against someone who studied Wesley's course and can navigate the pitfalls successfully. Note that White has many ways to go wrong along the way, too. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.a3 Bxc5 6.Qg4 #5 *)* 10...e5 Here we go, that was the idea. 11.O&h4 e4 A crazy position. We stop the

threat on h7 and fork White's pieces at the same time. 12.Kxf6 White has to take some material. There is no reasonable alternative for White. gxf6 We still attack two pieces, so White has a limited choice. It looks like White has to pull the emergency brake and play 13.Qxf6 now. 13.O&xf6 exd3 14.O&g5+ Elh8 15.O&f6+ Elg8 And it's a perpetual/repetition. I think this line is very unlikely to happen, though. The variation 6.Qg4 is rare and only received some attention due to Wesley's course. Someone who studied Wesley's course won't be happy with a draw but rather continue ambitiously. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1. e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.a3 Bxc5 6.Qg4 #4;

B) 9.O&g3 This is not a mistake, but it doesn't challenge us either. 9....xg6 Our target is the e5-pawn. We can put more pressure on it with ...Nbc6 and possibly ...Bb6-c7. Also, note that ...f5-f4 can be an idea to remove the queen from the defence of the pawn. In the sample line 10.h4 Qc7 11.h5? f4! this idea is demonstrated in full effect. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5. a3 Bxc5 6.Qg4 #3]

7...Qg8 I suggest this move, which is the sharpest and best. Black also has 7...Ng6 , when 8.Bd3 Bf8 9.Qf6 Be7 10.Qg7 Bf8 leads to a draw. We shouldn't let White get away with a draw, though. 8.O&xh7 .xbc6 We are two pawns down but have a fantastic lead in development. This position has been reached in online Blitz games dozens of times when White almost exclusively played 9.Nf3.

9..xf3 That's a mistake, but still the most likely move to happen. I think it is pointless to analyze more possible defences for White. Best seems to be a line like 9. Nc3 Qb6 10.Na4 Qa5+ 11.b4 Qxa4 12.bxc5 Nb4 or 12...Nxe5 . It's quite unlikely that someone would play a rather sophisticated line like 5.a3 Bxc5 6. Qg4, then incorrectly grab the pawn to draw the fire on themselves and proceed to defend perfectly. 9...O&b6 Ouch! White can't defend f2 now, as 10.Qh4 Nf5 fails. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.a3 Bxc5 6.Qg4 #1

[52] **6.Kb5** White pins the knight and thus keeps both pawns. White sometimes plays 6.b4 , but 6...a5 or 6...Nxe5 are fine for Black. 6....xe7 Our second knight joins the action, intending to jump to f5, in most cases. Going to c6 is a significant idea in some lines, too. The general idea is to increase the pressure on the c5- and e5-pawn. At some point, White either needs to return one of them or give up at least one of the bishops for a knight. There are even some variations in which we get both bishops, guaranteeing excellent play. After 6... Ne7 White's main tries are 7.c3, and 7.Nf3. Other moves don't look dangerous. For example, 7.Bxd7+ is a capture that we don't mind provoking. The engine suggests 7.Bd4 as an alternative, but 7...Nc6 8.Bxc6 bxc6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 Ba6 gives Black excellent compensation for the pawn. 7.c3 White prepares b2-b4, but also prevents a possible ...Qa5+ in some lines.

[7..xf3 A natural choice for White. .xf5 It's important to discuss the difference between 7.c3 and 7.Nf3. Here 7... Nf5 is a strong move because 8.Bd4 is answered by 8...Qa5+ , which forces 9.Nc3 and leads to good play for Black -

we'll examine this next. If White plays CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp1nnppp/4p3/1BPpP3/8/4B3/PPP2PPP/RN1QK1NR w KQkq - 4 7CCEndFENCC 7.c3 , however, the move 7...Nf5 is less effective due to 8.Bd4 , when we don't have a check on a5. A good way to remember if you should play ...a6 or ...Nf5 is that 7.Nf3 is answered by a knight move 7...Nf5, and 7.c3 with the pawn move 7...a6. So it's 'knight vs knight and pawn vs pawn'. It's important to discuss the difference between 7.c3 and 7.Nf3. Here 7... Nf5 is a strong move because 8.Bd4 is answered by 8...Qa5+ , which forces 9.Nc3 and leads to good play for Black. If White plays CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp1nnppp/4p3/1BPpP3/8/4B3/PPP2PPP/RN1QK1NR w KQkq - 4 7CCEndFENCC 7.c3 , however, the move 7...Nf5 is less effective due to 8.Bd4 , when we don't have a check on a5. A good way to remember if you should play ...a6 or ...Nf5 is that 7.Nf3 is answered by a knight move 7...Nf5, and 7.c3 with the pawn move 7...a6. So it's 'knight vs knight and pawn vs pawn'. 8.b4 The more desirable 8.Bd4 is no problem for Black. We need to check this ambitious move as a possible alternative for White. *(8.Kd4* By far the most popular move, but not threatening at all for Black, quite the opposite. *O&a5+* A key difference to the line 7.c3, when this check is prevented. *9..xc3* Now White can't support the c5-pawn with c3&b4 anymore. *a6 10.Kxd7+* Relatively best. 10.Ba4?! Nxd4 11.Nxd4 Qxc5 is already much better for Black. *Kxd7* White has no way to keep c5. We'll take on d4 next and regain the pawn comfortably, for example, in the following sequence. *11.0-0 .xxd4 12..xxd4 O&xc5* We have two bishops against two knights, which is already a large long-term asset. White has some play with f4-f5, but our position is solid. Note that f4-f5 weakens the e5-pawn a lot and is risky for White. We can either play ...Qc7 and ...Bc5 to castle kingside, or play the more controversial ...O-O-O. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.Be3 #6 *)* 8....xxe3 We also have 8...a6 9.Ba4 a5 or CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp1n1ppp/4p3/1BPpPn2/1P6/4BN2/P1P2PPP/RN1QK2R b KQkq - 0 8CCEndFENCC 8...a5 , combined with ...Nxe3 later. Black always obtains good play on the dark squares after the capture on e3. 9.fxe3 a5 A useful move to provoke more weaknesses on the queenside. We also add some scope for our rook, which might come in handy. A sample line is 10.c6 when 10...bxc6 11.Bxc6 Ra7 is possible CCStartBracketCCthere are many good alternatives on move 11CCEndBracketCC. 10.c3 Ke7 We'll play ...O-O and ...Qc7, putting pressure on the weak e5-pawn. White likely will play ...Bxd7 soon to secure this pawn, but a later ...b6 opens up the position for our great bishop pair. Stockfish assesses the position as equal, but Black's game is easier to play in my mind. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.Be3 #5]

7...a6 We should play this move first. It is more precise than 7...Nc6 8.b4 Ndxe5 9. f4 , when 9...Nc4? is answered with 10.Bxc4 . Pushing White's bishop to a4 prevents the capture after CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp1nnppp/4p3/1BPpP3/8/2P1B3/PP3PPP/RN1QK1NR b KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7...a6 8.Ba4 Nc6 9. b4 Ndxe5 10.f4 Nc4 , when White's expansion has created weaknesses. Instead of my recommendation 7...a6, the move 7...Nf5 is possible, but Black's

task is not easy after 8.Bd4 . Note the difference to CCStartFENCCr1bqkb1r/pp1nnppp/4p3/1BPpP3/8/4B3/PPP2PPP/RN1QK1NR w KQkq - 4 7CCEndFENCC 7.Nf3 , when 7...Nf5 is a strong move. In this line 8.Bd4 is answered by 8...Qa5+ , which forces 9.Nc3 and leads to good play for Black. A good way to remember if you should play ...a6 or ...Nf5 is that 7.Nf3 is answered by a knight move 7...Nf5, and 7.c3 with the pawn move 7...a6. So it's 'knight vs knight and pawn vs pawn'. 8.Ka4 White likes to preserve the bishop, but after our precise reply, they need to return the pawn.

[8.Kxd7+ White gives up the bishop pair but will keep the extra pawn for a while. This is nothing to worry about, as our compensation is compelling. Let's have a look at the most natural continuation. Kxd7 9..xf3 White's most natural move, for sure. They cover the e5-pawn and prepare kingside castling. .xf5 We threaten ... Nxe3, followed by ...Bxc5. 10.Kd4 White stops ...Nxe3 with this natural move. Now, how do we get the pawn back? Well, we don't need to! My suggested reply gives Black great play for a pawn. .xxd4 Let's take the second bishop. We now have two bishops against two knights, but the position is closed. The key idea to remember is that a quick ...b6 will give our long-range bishops some scope. 11.O&xd4 *(11.cxd4 b6* As mentioned, the key idea we need to remember. We open the position for our bishops. The move 11...Bb5? looks attractive at first, but 12.Nc3 Bc4 13.b3 refutes this idea. *12.cxb6* The capture must be critical. The greedy 12. b4? a5 looks awful for White, while CCStartFENCCr2qkb1r/3b1ppp/pp2p3/2PpP3/3P4/5N2/PP3PPP/RN1QK2R w KQkq - 0 12CCEndFENCC 12.c6 is a conservative answer. After 12...Bxc6, we are happy to have the bishop pair and plan ...b5-b4 and ...Bb5 in the long run. *O&xb6* We have excellent compensation for the pawn. The concrete lines work nicely, but just the two bishops against two knights would be fine. White has many ways to go wrong now. Lines like 13.Qd2 Rb8 14.b3 Bb4 15.Nc3 Qa5 or CCStartFENCCr3kb1r/3b1ppp/pq2p3/3pP3/3P4/5N2/PP3PPP/RN1QK2R w KQkq - 0 13CCEndFENCC 13.Qc2 Rb8 14.b3 Bb4 15.Nbd2 Rc8 are desastrous for White. Stockfish suggests 13.Qb3 is the only playable move for White when we have a wide choice of good replies. We can allow a queen trade with 13...Rb8 , or play CCStartFENCCr3kb1r/3b1ppp/pq2p3/3pP3/3P4/1Q3N2/PP3PPP/RN2K2R b KQkq - 1 13CCEndFENCC 13...Bb4+ 14. Nc3 a5 , which keeps more pieces on the board. In any case, the position is more than satisfactory for Black. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.Be3 #4 *)* 11...Qc8 We need to provoke b4 first, and only then ...b6! 12.b4 b6 13.cxb6 White needs to take on b6, otherwise ...bxc5 would be excellent for Black. Qc4 The important 'Zwischenzug'. White can't cover b6, as 14.Qe3?? fails to 14...Re4 . 14.O&d1 O&xb6 We have good compensation for the pawn. White's queenside is seriously weakened and can't advance easily. We'll play ...a5, ... Be7 and ...O-O next, keeping the idea ...f6 in mind to open up the position even more. White's pawn on c3 is an obvious target, while White's game is not easy to conduct. I'd like to mention that 14...Re4+ 15.Kf1 Qxb6 is also fine, of course. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.Be3 #3]

8....xc6 Stronger than 9...Nf5 10.Bd4 . Now both e5 and c5 are attacked, and we regain our sacrificed pawn. 9.b4 The only move to make it interesting. We have no problems after 9.Nf3 Bxc5 , when we are ready to play on the queenside with ...b5 next. 9....xdxe5 We are in good shape. Black has two central pawns and ...Be7-f6 will place our bishop on a good diagonal soon. White can play 10. f4 , but 10...Nc4 is an attractive reply, showing the importance of playing ...a6 earlier. White has overextended, and their position is not easy to play. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.Be3 #2

[53] **9..xbd2** .xe7 10..xb3 White forces the action, but Black is in good shape.
10....xxb3 10...Ne4 leads to equal chances, too. 11.axb3 11.Qxb6?! axb6 forces 12.cxb3 , when Black will have a wonderful initiative on the a and c-files.
11...O&xd4 12..xxd4 .xg6 We are ready to play ...f6 to tear down White's centre. In anybody, White needs to be concerned about equality here. 13.Nb5 is just answered with 13...Ke7 , when we'd trade our a-pawn for the mighty e-pawn. A great deal. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.dxc5 e6 5.Be3 #1

[54] **5.f4** White's central structure is imposing, but the pawn on d4 will become a prime target for our pieces. Playing f4 does not help support d4 in any way.
5...cxd4 We should take first. After 5...Bf5?! 6.dxc5 it's not clear how to recover the pawn. 6.cxd4 h5 There is nothing wrong with 6...Bf5 , either. The move 6...h5 is trickier, though. We want to wait for Nf3 and play ...Bg4 in reply, leaving f5 as a potential outpost for our g-knight. 7..xf3 Alternatively, White could try 7.Nc3 Bg4 or CCStartFENCCr1bqkbnr/pp2ppp1/2n5/3pP2p/3P1P2/8/PP4PP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 7CCEndFENCC 7.Be3 Nh6 , which also look better for Black. 7...Kg4 Mission accomplished. 8.Ke2 e6 9.Ke3 .xh6 Or 9...Nge7 , which is just as good. White is struggling here, as they need to defend the weak d-pawn against our attacks. Next, we have ...Nf5, placing the knight on a dream square. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.c3 #2
5..xf3 White plays this move most of the time, allowing a pin. 5...cxd4
It is best to capture on d4 first, and only then play ...Bg4. After the immediate 5...Bg4?! White has 6.dxc5 , which is annoying to meet. 6.cxd4 Kg4
Setting up an annoying pin and again increasing the pressure on d4. Our target is the d-pawn, which can turn out to be very weak. 7.Ke2 This is played most of the time. Against other moves, like 7.Be3 , for instance, our strategy would be the same as against 7.Be2 - go for the d-pawn with ...Ne7-f5. 7...e6
This position is a good one to demonstrate why White's opening play is harmless. Let's compare the position on the board to the following sequence. CCStartFENCCrnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1CCEndFENCC 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 Bf5 4.Nf3 e6 5.Be2 c5 6.c3 considered rather harmless 6...Nc6 7.O-O cxd4 8.cxd4 Bg4 . Black plays the bishop from f5 to g4, intending ...Ne7-f5 later. Compared to this already fine line, we are a full tempo up! 8.0-0 .xge7 Here 8...Bxf3 9.Bxf3 Qb6 looks good, but

10.Be3 Qxb2 11.Nd2 is not clear at all. White has some compensation for the lost pawn. I prefer to continue with development. 9..xc3 .xf5 Here we go. Black has obtained an ideal formation to attack White's d-pawn. 10..xe1 This looks like White's best try. 10...Kxe2 11..xxe2 h5 The move 11...h5 is played to make the knight on f5 more stable, preventing g4 by White. I already prefer Black here, as we have some valuable assets: Better minor pieces, notably the dark-squared bishop. Strong control over the light squares. Pressure over the weak d4-pawn. Easy development with ...Be7, ...O-O, ...Rc8, ...Qb6 and so on. 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.c3 #3

55 We have a good spot on h6 for the bishop, putting pressure on e3. Combined with ...Qb6, ...O-O and a later ...f6, our play on the dark squares looks attractive. White can't win a pawn with 9.dxc5 , as 9...Bg7 quickly picks up e5 in return. Line 1. Caro-Kann: Advance (1.e4 c6-4.c3 #1