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3 Advance Variation

Lesson 13: Arkell/Khenkin Introduction

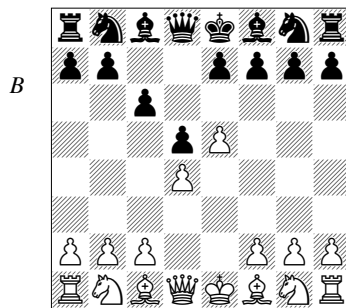
By: TRH

Chess is a fighting game which is purely intellectual and includes chance.

RICHARD RÉTI

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 (D)

White doesn't develop or threaten anything and gives Black access to the f5-square. Yet this strange move is currently White's most popular choice.



3...c5

For an inexperienced player, Black's last move might seem mysterious. Why is it OK to move the c-pawn for a second time, as early as move three? It's not really a loss of tempo compared to standard lines, because Black usually ends up playing ...c5 anyway. Black's most common choice is 3...♟f5, but by delaying this move Black hopes to develop the bishop all the way to g4. To avoid this, White has to play accurately.

One reason for the Advance Variation's popularity is the fact that Black has only two replies that have stood the test of time. This, the Arkell/Khenkin Variation, is one of them. It's arguably a gambit, but definitely of the healthier variety and in my opinion the easier line to prepare for Black. While 3...♟f5 seems to be in excellent theoretical shape, a practical difficulty

is the number and variety of White's replies, ranging from the raving 4 g4 via 4 h4 to the quiet 4 ♞d2, but with Van der Wiel's 4 ♞c3 e6 5 g4 and Short's 4 ♞f3 as the most respected systems.

Q: Is there really no third option? Maybe a tricky tactical line that will work as a surprise weapon?

It's not particularly tactical but if you desperately need a surprise weapon, you could try the experimental 3...♟c7!?. See Lesson 18 for some preliminary analysis.

Model Game 13

Perez Candelario – Delchev

Spanish Team Ch, Melilla 2011

1 e4 c6

Up to the Olympiad in 2014, I was training with grandmaster Aleksander Delchev and achieved my best result ever. Delchev is a great fighter, and has won a lot of open tournaments. To do so, he has to win as Black, and the Caro-Kann can be the perfect weapon.

2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 ♞f3

4 dxc5 is by far White's most popular move and will be the subject of Lessons 14 to 17. Among the quite numerous alternatives, the text-move is in my opinion the most critical. You will find some analysis of 4 c3 in 13B and of White's other 4th moves in 13A.

4...♟g4

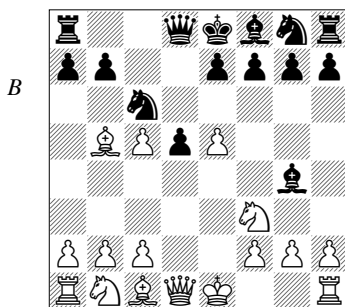
4...♞c6 is a good alternative, and even more popular. However, this pin normally leads to much sharper play, where White also has real chances to go wrong.

5 dxc5

For the interesting 5 c4 and some less critical moves, see 13C.

5...♞c6 6 ♟b5 (D)

Intending b4. For 6 c3, see 13D.

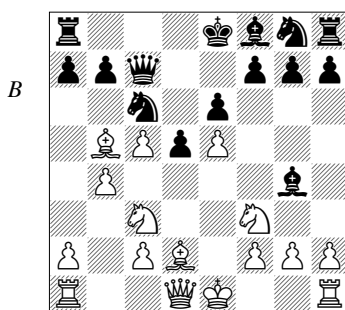


6...♙a5+

This forces White to place his knight on c3.

7 ♘c3 e6 8 ♖e3

White can also play 8 ♖d2 ♙c7 9 b4 (D), with which he scores rather well.

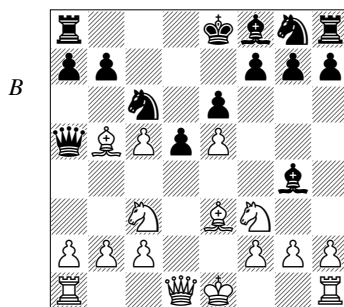


However, with some accuracy over the next few moves, Black should be OK. After 9...a5 10 a3 ♖xf3 11 gxf3 (11 ♙xf3? is refuted by the simple 11...axb4, when White's rook on a1 is hanging) 11...♙xe5+ 12 ♙e2 Black has a choice:

a) With White's compromised structure it is natural to want to take the game a step closer to an endgame with 12...♙xe2+?! 13 ♖xe2 ♘e7 14 ♘a4, as in Pijpers-Nabaty, European Ch, Batumi 2018, but this queenless middlegame turns out to be treacherous for Black.

b) So 12...♙f5 seems a better option; e.g., 13 ♖d3 (13 ♖xc6+ bxc6 14 ♘b5 must be answered with 14...♖d7!, when Black is OK) 13...♙f6 14 ♖d1 ♖e7 15 ♘b5 ♖f8 16 h4 h5 17 c4 (17 ♖f1 ♙e5 reoffers the queen exchange now that Black's game is more stable) 17...axb4 18 cxd5 exd5 19 axb4 (Castro Salguero-E.Ramos, corr. 2017) and now 19...b6 (or even 19...♖a2 20 ♙e3 ♖xd2 21 ♖xd2 ♘xb4) looks playable.

We return to 8 ♖e3 (D):



8...♘e7 9 a3

After 9 h3?! ♖xf3 10 ♙xf3 a6 11 ♖a4? (11 ♖xc6+ ♘xc6 ♖ J.Gyimesi-Gierth, corr. 2008) 11...0-0! Black is threatening ...d4 and is much better.

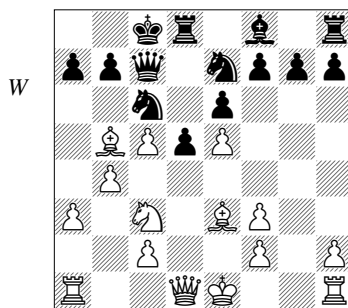
9...0-0-0

Black has alternatives, but I like this direct move.

10 b4 ♖xf3 11 gxf3

11 ♙xf3 ♘xb4 12 0-0 ♘xc2 13 ♖ac1 was played in Mekhitarian-M.Santos, Campinas 2010. The position is very sharp, but Black is probably to be preferred after 13...♘xe3 14 fxe3 ♘f5.

11...♙c7 (D)



White has an extra pawn and the bishop-pair, but also has problems with his king safety and weak pawn-structure.

12 ♖xc6

The immediate 12 ♖f4?! g5 13 ♖g3 ♘xe5 is better for Black.

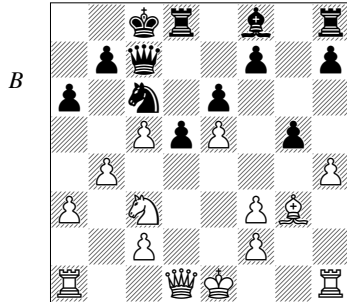
12...♘xc6 13 ♖f4 a6

Not 13...g5? 14 ♘b5! ±. In the previous variation, the b5-square was not available to the white knight.

14 ♖g3 g5 15 h4 (D)

Alternatively:

- a) 15 0-0 h5 is very dangerous for White, Edouard-Fridman, European Ch, Plovdiv 2012.
- b) 15 ♖e2 ♘d4 16 ♗d3 ♙f5 is at least equal for Black, Pijpers-Admiraal, Leiden tt 2017.
- c) 15 ♗d2 h5 and Black has no problems, Tiglon-Ostrovsky, Charlotte 2018.



15...♙g7 16 hxg5 ♙xe5 17 ♘e2 f6!

By opening up the position, Black will give White's king a hard time.

18 gxf6 ♗f7

18...h5 has been played in a few games, but I like Delchev's interpretation.

19 ♖b1

19 ♙xe5 ♘xe5 20 f4 ♙f3+ 21 ♙f1 ♗xf6 22 ♖b1 e5 23 ♘g1 ♘d4 24 fxe5 ♗xe5 is equal according to the engine, but Black is much more active. Black prevailed in Neusch-Desquiens, corr. 2011.

19...♙xg3 20 fxg3 ♗xf6

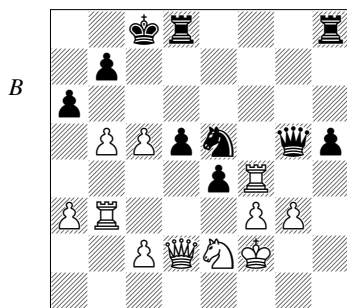
White's position is very dangerous as there is no way to exchange pieces or to find a safe place for the king.

21 ♖b3 e5 22 ♗d2 h5 23 ♖h4 e4 24 ♙f2?

24 ♖f4 keeps White in the game.

24...♘e5 25 ♖f4 ♗g5 26 b5 (D)

This is White's only chance – a counter-attack on Black's king.



From now on you will see a lot of mistakes by both players, but don't judge them too harshly.

26...h4 27 g4 h3?

It is getting amazingly complicated, but 27...♘c4 brings Black close to victory: 28 ♗d4 h3 29 bxa6? e3+ 30 ♖xe3 h2 31 a7 ♗h4+ 32 ♘g3 and now Black wins by promoting to a knight: 32...h1♘+!

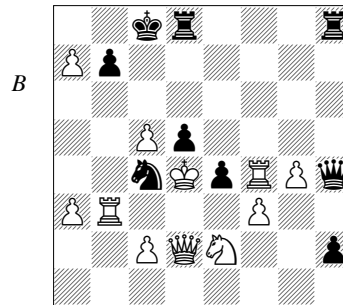
28 bxa6

Suddenly White is winning!

28...h2 29 a7 ♗h4+ 30 ♙e3?

Once again, the tables turn! 30 ♘g3! h1♘+ 31 ♙e3 ♘c4+ 32 ♙d4 and incredibly, now that White has escaped the checks, it's Black who is mated.

30...♘c4+ 31 ♙d4 (D)



31...♙c7?

The position is so complicated that it's almost impossible to navigate. The engine says Black is winning after 31...♙d7 32 ♖xb7+ ♙c6 but I dare you to continue successfully after 33 ♖ff7.

32 ♖xb7+?

After this there are no more adventures – Black is winning! White could have forced mate with a difficult line starting 32 ♖f7+! ♙c6 33 ♙c3!!.

32...♙xb7 33 ♗b4+ ♙a8 0-1

Theory Magnifiers

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 (4 ♘f3 ♙g4 5 dxc5 ♘c6 6 c3)

13A: (4 ♘e2)	124
13B: 4 c3	125
13C: 5 c4	127
13D: 6 c3	128

13A is significant mainly due to the transposition from the 2 ♘e2 line (see 30A). The quiet

4 c3 of 13B isn't theoretically challenging, but not as innocent as it might appear, so do take a look at it. Finally, 13C and 13D are sharp and principled lines, so a look at the main lines should come quite high on your list of priorities.

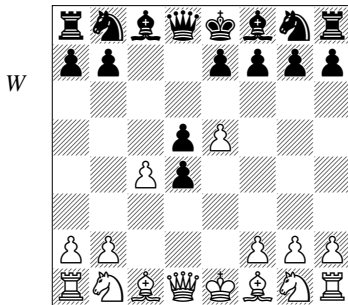
13A: Rare 4th Moves

(1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5)

4 ♖e2

This has been played by quite a few strong grandmasters (frequently from the move-order 2 ♖e2 d5 3 e5 c5 4 d4).

White has also tried 4 c4, and after 4...cxd4 (D) there is a split:



a) 5 ♗f3 ♕g4 transposes to the line 4 ♗f3 ♕g4 5 c4 cxd4 of 13C.

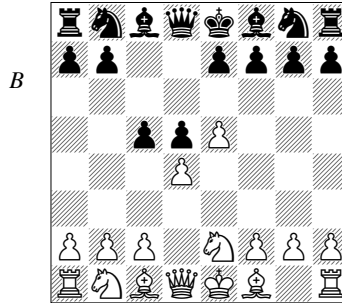
b) 5 ♖xd4 is unproblematic for Black. Simplest and probably strongest is 5...e6, when I start to wonder what the queen is doing on d4. After 6 cxd5 ♗c6 7 ♕b5 ♖xd5 8 ♖xd5 exd5 9 ♗f3, instead of 9...♗e7, as in Nevednichy-Dobre, Romanian Ch, Baile Olanesti 2013, I suggest 9...a6 10 ♕a4 (after 10 ♕xc6+ bxc6, Black's bishop-pair compensates for his slightly weakened structure) 10...♕g4 11 0-0 ♕c5 12 ♗bd2 ♗e7 = Milde-V.Khan, corr. 2013.

c) 5 ♖e2 is a rare line, but played by Gawain Jones twice. The idea is to recapture with the knight on d4, and getting there via e2 means that the pin with ...♕g4 is no longer an issue. Surprisingly, 5...dxc4!? has never been tried. Taking the pawn demonstrates the downside of having the knight on e2. Then:

c1) 6 ♖xd4?! is strongly met by 6...♕d7, when Black is already better. For instance, 7 ♖xc4 ♗c6 8 ♕f4 ♖c8 and the white queen is misplaced, leaving Black at least slightly better.

c2) After 6 ♗xd4 ♖a5+ 7 ♗c3 ♖xe5+ Black wins a pawn, but is behind in development. I believe chances are balanced. A possible continuation is 8 ♕e2 ♗f6 9 0-0 e6 10 ♖e1 ♕e7. Engines surely are party poopers sometimes; here they say '0.00', but the position is by no means boring.

We now return to 4 ♗e2 (D):



4...♗c6

Black has some other good options but I like this move.

5 c3

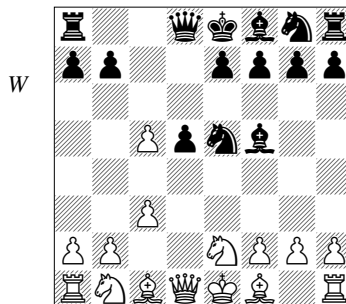
White isn't active enough to open the centre.

5...♕f5 6 dxc5

After 6 ♗g3 ♕g6 the always creative grandmaster played 7 e6 and went on to win in Shirov-Plazuelo Pascual, Roquetas de Mar 2019 after Black accepted the sacrifice, but after 7...cxd4 8 cxd4 I suggest 8...♖d6, when it looks like Black is doing fine.

6...♗xe5 (D)

In general, exchanging the c-pawn for the e-pawn can be considered a small success for Black.



7 ♗d4

7 ♗g3 contains a little trap, so you should be careful: 7...♕c8 (it turns out 7...♕g6?? drops a