

# About the Author

**Cyrus Lakdawala** is an International Master, a former National Open and American Open Champion, and a six-time State Champion. He has been teaching chess for over 30 years, and coaches some of the top junior players in the U.S.

## **Also by the Author:**

*Play the London System*

*A Ferocious Opening Repertoire*

*The Slav: Move by Move*

*1...d6: Move by Move*

*The Caro-Kann: Move by Move*

*The Four Knights: Move by Move*

*Capablanca: Move by Move*

*The Modern Defence: Move by Move*

*Kramnik: Move by Move*

*The Colle: Move by Move*

*The Scandinavian: Move by Move*

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*The Nimzo-Larsen Attack: Move by Move*

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*The Alekhine Defence: Move by Move*

*The Trompowsky Attack: Move by Move*

*Carlsen: Move by Move*

*The Classical French: Move by Move*

*1...b6: Move by Move*

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# Series Foreword

*Move by Move* is a series of opening books which uses a question-and-answer format. One of our main aims of the series is to replicate – as much as possible – lessons between chess teachers and students.

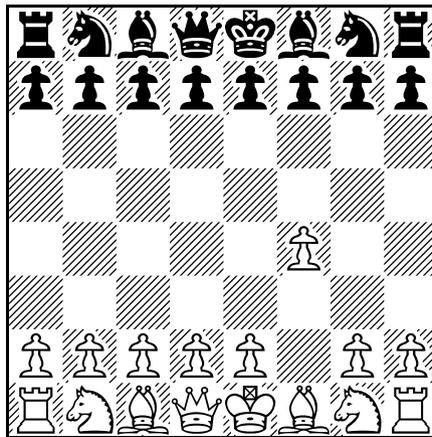
All the way through, readers will be challenged to answer searching questions and to complete exercises, to test their skills in chess openings and indeed in other key aspects of the game. It's our firm belief that practising your skills like this is an excellent way to study chess openings, and to study chess in general.

Many thanks go to all those who have been kind enough to offer inspiration, advice and assistance in the creation of *Move by Move*. We're really excited by this series and hope that readers will share our enthusiasm.

John Emms  
Everyman Chess

# Introduction

When it comes to chess openings, your writer tends toward an abysmally low tolerance to routine. Some of us play one set of openings our entire lives, taking up the Ruy Lopez at age eight and passing from this world at age 90, still essaying the Spanish Game. I, on the other hand, change openings like articles of clothing.



Every opening variation has its distinctive aroma and feel. With 1 f4! initiating the Bird's Opening, the flavour and smell of course is of the Dutch Defence (whose intellectual property we openly violate... or is it the Dutch which violates *our* intellectual property?), but a tempo up, since we play it as White.

The Chinese classical text, the *Tao Te Ching*, commences with the phrase "*The Tao that can be explained is not the eternal Tao*". Some positions are more about 'sense and feeling' than about 'analysis'. The Bird's is not an opening suited for corporate tastes. A friend at the San Diego Chess Club, after hearing that I was writing a book on Bird's Opening, told me (with a degree of malicious glee!) that Henry Bird, the opening's founder, only managed a 47% score with his line as White. With our first move, we seize control over the e5-square, in the hope of later occupying it with a piece. In any experimental opening line like Bird's, we have the stock horror movie character: the mad scientist, who risks tampering with the forces of nature to satisfy scientific curiosity. When our opponents refuse to believe a non-standard opening contains hidden potential – when it actually does – they are

like a person born blind, who is unable to grasp even the concept of the existence of colour. Now very few of us play Bird's exclusively as White, and I hereby suggest we play it as a side line or a surprise weapon. Opening theory, as we all know, can be either a weapon or a crutch. Why not stick to a mainstream, theoretical line, you may ask? The answer is: frequent habitual repetition of an opening variation, played *ad nauseam*, while allowing you to know it well, may also empty the variation of all its adventure – and therefore its fun, which in turn deadens us to its subtleties.

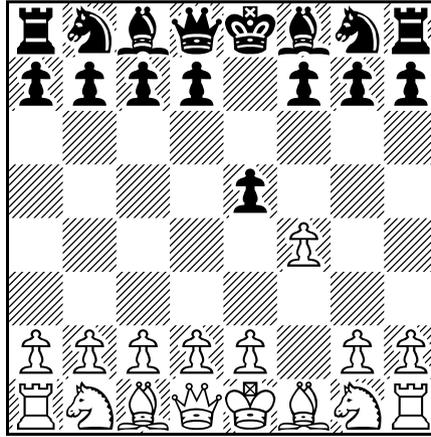
Each time we agree to enter a theoretical opening duel (which is really a duel of homework), our hands shake like a nervous vegan ninth grade kid (whose parents are PETA members) who is forced to dissect a frog in biology class. With 1 f4, this is unlikely to happen simply because the theory remains rather stable, mainly since so few of us play the opening. I'm an intuitive player at heart, and I deeply resent it when my opponent forces me into that unpleasant task: Homework! With 1 f4, we operate on moods and feelings, not hard variations, as most believe (though the From's Gambit would be the sole exception). Because of the blessing/curse of constantly developing technology, we all find ourselves struggling not to fall behind in a frantic opening theory arms race. Our variations, played just yesterday by some GM across the globe, are now instantly transferred to us to absorb and memorize. Some of us try to avoid this techno-rat race by sub-specializing in just a few positions. If you open with 1 f4! as White and meet all Queen's pawn openings with 1...f5 with Black (for example, 1 ♘f3 f5; 1 d4 f5; 1 c4 f5; 1 g3 f5), we manage to cover 66.66% of *all* our openings with a single Bird's/Dutch overall structure.

Evolutionary mutations of a major opening line producing a playable offshoot are uncommon in chess. In the case of the Bird's, its offshoot – the Dutch – is oddly, far more popular than its intellectual creator. We can use the Bird's unpopularity and weaponize it. In essence, we chant a spell of theoretical concealment when we open with 1 f4!, which tends to offend theory's officialdom. If we play the opening regularly, our eyes slowly grow accustomed to the Dutch-like murk, while we hope to lure opponents from their familiar world of rationality, into our world of confused disassociation and illogic, where both sides must play almost by inference, rather than direct decree. Your opponent can even study and prep for your coming Bird's and still not play it very well, since when we play an unfamiliar opening line, we can study it diligently at home, but on another level, the play is tempered by experience, and our opponents are in a sense, infants to the line – even when armed with theoretical knowledge.

Let's take a look at some of our key battlegrounds. We must sort through the thicket of Dutch expectations (played a move up), retaining some lines, while perhaps choosing to discard others.

## From's Gambit

**“The time to hesitate is through. No time to wallow in the mire.”**

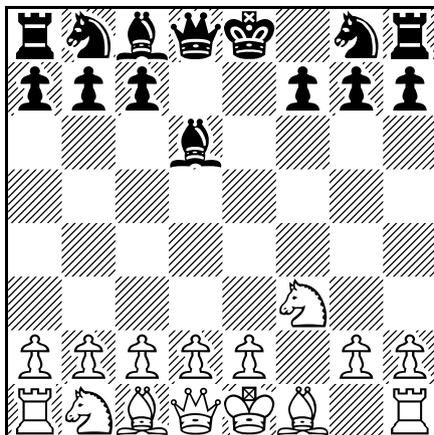


Our first diagram is that of From's Gambit, where we sense apocalyptic warning signs everywhere. The learning of such a complex line is not simply an affectation of the theoretically affluent. This isn't a wing-it style chapter and we must know our theory as if our lives depend on it – because over the board, they do. From's originates from 1 f4 e5!?, where Black's e-pawn insolently looks in our direction and makes a neck-slicing gesture by dragging a finger across its throat. So the opening choice to wilfully enter such a position is for those with a contentious disposition, since Black in essence declares war on us on move one with an immediate pawn sacrifice!

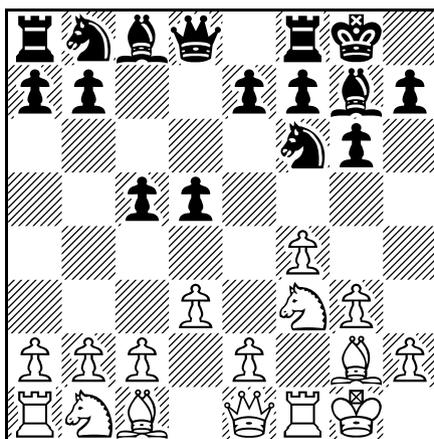
My feeling is that we should accept (and this too is backed up by the comps' evaluations) Black gambit, with the philosophies:

1. If we are unable to unlock a door, then the next best thing is to kick it down.
2. By declining the gambit, we tend to transpose into an open game fight (1 f4 e5 2 e4) rather than a strategic tussle, and the former is exactly what the opponent wants.

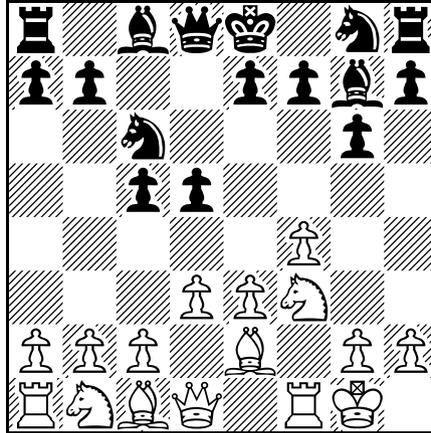
Don't be intimidated by this chapter. No position – no matter how ludicrously irrational – is beyond our competence to comprehend with the help of books, chess computers and databases. Black overharvests his or her dark squares in exchange for a pawn, which under the comp's gaze, risks diminishing returns.



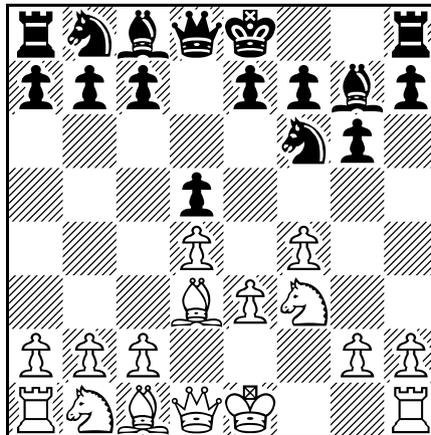
In the diagrammed position, Black's most common move is 5...g5!?, threatening ...g4, when we note Black's quickly degrading environmental stewardship when it comes to structure, all in the name of attack.



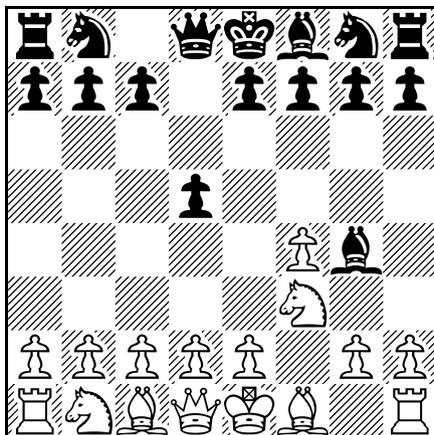
The next diagram is the Reversed Leningrad Dutch-Bird. We concentrate on the ♖e1 line, where White tries to implement e2-e4. The resulting positions are subtle and your growing experience in the line will become a greater and greater asset as time passes.



This is the Classical Bird's Opening, which is difficult to understand and even more difficult to play skilfully. It is the nature of 1 f4 lines to be devoid of neat, snug-fastening variations on either side. When we study this chapter, we note a seemingly endless series of back-and-forths, to divert attention to true intent.



Next come the Stonewall lines, where the e4-hole is the stigmata we bear. We give something (control over e4) and we get something (increased central influence). This blocked position often leads to a dense jungle of disorder, with Black's and White's doctrines mutually contradictory. Our serpentine structure is designed to intimidate as White usually builds on the kingside for an attack. Conversely, we may regard Black's future queenside expansion with indulgent tolerance, as we refuse to intervene.

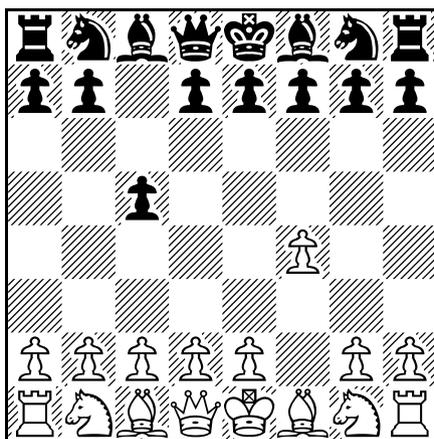


Black's plan in the early ...♗g4 lines is monochromatic – pursuing a light-square central pawn array with the following plans:

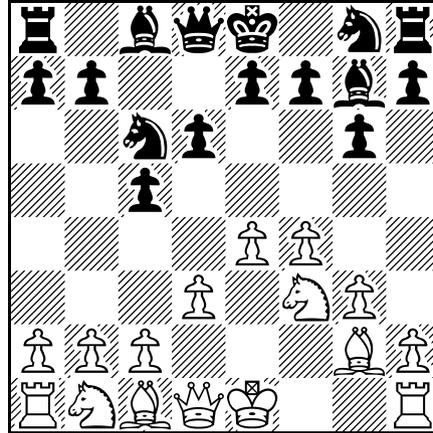
1) Hand over the bishop pair by playing ...♗g4 and ...♗xf3.

2) Play ...c7-c6, ...♞d7 and ...e7-e5, or play ...c7-c6 and ...e7-e6, which switches the structure to favour Black's remaining bishop.

In the resulting positions, the concept of equilibrium is virtually non-existent, since our position tends to either rise or sag.



This is Bird's versus an English setup. Such unstructured positions can be played with a wide degree of latitude from both parties, with free associative interpretations.



Transposing into the Sicilian, we look at both the ♘c3 Closed Sicilian setups, as well as the c2-c3 build-up – aka The Clamp – where White hopes to erect a kind of super centre with an eventual d3-d4.

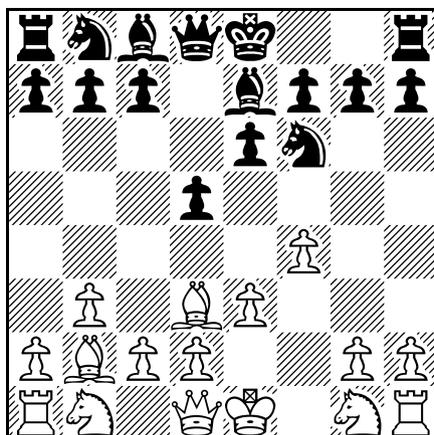
### A brief history of Bird's Opening

Our founding father, British Master Henry Bird, took up his pet line in the mid-1850s and played it faithfully for four decades. The Bird's popularity never quite caught on, the way the Dutch Defence did.

The following game, with the famous double bishop sacrifice, probably propagated the Bird's Opening more than any other chess game by appearing in publications time and time again.

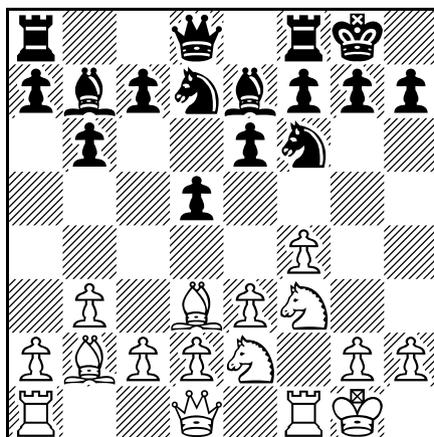
*Example 1*  
**Em.Lasker – J.Bauer**  
 Amsterdam 1889

**1 f4 d5 2 e3 ♘f6 3 b3 e6 4 ♙b2 ♙e7 5 ♙d3**



Posting the bishop on d3 is probably a bit too barbaric for the modern era. Safer is 5  $\text{Bf3}$  0-0 6  $\text{e2}$  b6 7 0-0  $\text{b7}$  8  $\text{Qe1}$   $\text{d4}$  9  $\text{Bc3}$   $\text{d6}$  10  $\text{Kg3}$   $\text{d5}$  11  $\text{Wh3}$   $\text{c6}$ . Jobava now punts in 12  $\text{d3}$ !?. Wait a minute. I take that back. Even today's GMs can't resist the d3-posting! The game followed 12... $\text{b4}$  13  $\text{exf5}$   $\text{exf5}$  14  $\text{Wxf5}$  g6 (Black regains his sacrificed pawn, at the cost of weakening the dark squares around his king) 15  $\text{Wh3}$   $\text{dxc2}$ , B.Jobava-P.Tregubov, Warsaw 2013. I like White's kingside chances after 16  $\text{Ac1}$   $\text{b4}$  17  $\text{Wh6}$ ! when the naive 17... $\text{d3}$ ?? is met with 18  $\text{d4}$ !  $\text{dxb2}$  19  $\text{deg5}$   $\text{exg5}$  20  $\text{dxc5}$  and Black must give up his queen in order to avoid mate.

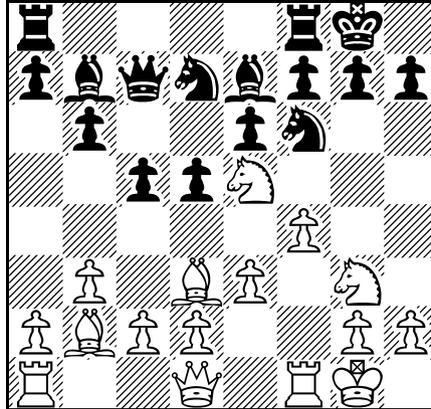
5...b6 6  $\text{Bf3}$   $\text{b7}$  7  $\text{Bc3}$   $\text{bd7}$  8 0-0 0-0 9  $\text{d4}$



9...c5

Most players today would immediately eliminate the light squared menace with 9... $\text{c5}$ !

10  $\text{d3}$   $\text{c7}$  11  $\text{d5}$



**11...♞e5?!**

Black should counter White's kingside attack with the central counter 11...d4!

**12 ♖xe5 ♞c6 13 ♞e2 a6?**

13...g6 was necessary.

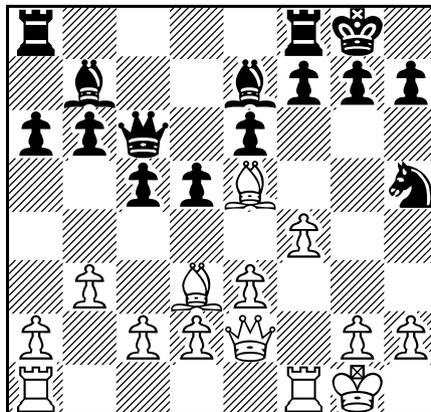
**14 ♞h5! ♞xh5??**

A look at the alternatives:

a) 14...♞e8?? is met with 15 ♖xg7!

b) 14...d4 15 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 16 ♞g4 ♜h8 (16...e5 17 ♖e4!) 17 ♜f3 ♞g8 and 18 ♖xh7!

c) 14...♜fd8 is Black's best chance. After 15 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 16 ♞xf6+ gxf6 17 ♜f3 c4 18 ♖xh7+! ♜f8 (the bishop is poison for Black) 19 ♞g3, White is a clean extra pawn up.



**Exercise (combination alert):** Lasker's combination, now almost a rote piece of geometrical lore, was at the time a completely original sacrificial attacking plan.

White to play and force the win. Note that 15 ♞xh5 f5 achieves nothing.

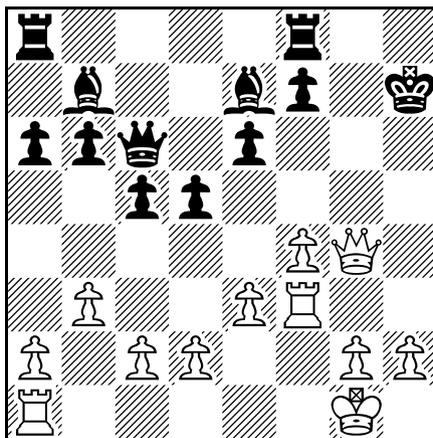
**Answer:** Annihilation of king's cover.

15 ♖xh7+!!

**Question:** Come on! Two exclams for this rote combination which I would probably find in a blitz game?

**Answer:** The combination is rote, mainly since players like Lasker were the (great!) predecessors who showed us the way. I got a recent email from my longtime friend IM Jack Peters, who wrote the following: "I recently went over the article about Labourdonnais vs. McDonnell in the *March 2011 Chess Life*. Three of McDonnell's wins were annotated, separately, by Morphy, Anderssen and Paulsen. By modern standards, their annotations were awful! Do you know if annotators had different customs then? For example, were they reluctant to give tactical variations? Was it considered impolite to point out errors? All three annotators mentioned beginner-level stuff and ignored the critical moments of the games. I found Morphy's fulsome praise for ordinary moves irritating. When he did try to pinpoint some mistakes, he was often wrong! If I had to guess his strength based on his notes, I would not consider him a great player." The answer to Jack's question is the same as the answer to yours: That which is rote to the modern day club player, was all new to the old guard. So we shouldn't judge them by modern day standards. Even basic ideas like developing quickly and fighting for the centre were arcane secrets, known only to a select few in the romantic era.

15...♔xh7 16 ♚xh5+ ♕g8 17 ♖xg7 ♔xg7 18 ♚g4+ ♔h7 19 ♖f3!

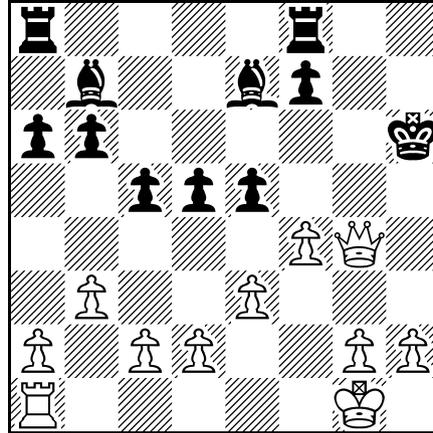


Lasker's devastating point: he lifts a second attacker, after which Black's king is unable to cope.

19...e5

Black's only move.

20 ♖h3+ ♚h6 21 ♖xh6+ ♔xh6



Black got two bishops and a rook for a queen and two pawns – seemingly not so bad. However, the combination isn't over!

**Question:** It is Lasker's next move which clearly shows that Black is busted. What did he play?

**Answer:** Double attack.

22 ♖d7!

Winning a piece and the rest is a mopping up exercise.

22...♙f6 23 ♖xb7 ♙g7 24 ♖f1 ♖ab8 25 ♖d7 ♖fd8 26 ♖g4+ ♙f8 27 fxe5 ♙g7 28 e6 ♖b7 29 ♖g6 f6 30 ♖xf6+ ♙xf6 31 ♖xf6+ ♙e8 32 ♖h8+ ♙e7 33 ♖g7+ ♙xe6 34 ♖xb7 ♖d6 35 ♖xa6 d4 36 exd4 cxd4 37 h4 d3 38 ♖xd3 1-0

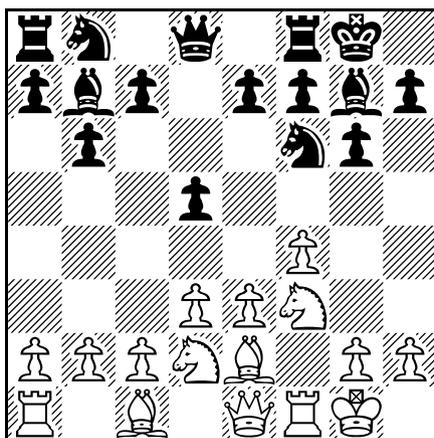
**Summary:** The famous double bishop sacrifice unleashed by the future world champion Emanuel Lasker at the beginning of his chess career did the Bird's Opening a big favour in getting the opening featured in chess publications up till today.

Free-thinking GMs continued Bird's idea, like Nimzowitsch, Tartakower, Larsen, and current GMs Lars Karlsson, Mikhail Gurevich, Henrik Danielsen and Artur Jakubiec. In recent years, the top exponents of the Bird's are Nakamura, Nepomniachtchi and Rapport. I think Larsen did more than any other GM to popularize the opening (it probably should be called the Bird-Larsen Attack). Here is an example of Larsen's deviously subtle understanding of the opening.

Example 2  
B.Larsen-S.Gligoric  
Havana Olympiad 1966

Great players – both living and dead – leave indelible imprints upon our minds, and by default, our play. Add to this our own uniqueness and we have a constantly changing chess entity. This soft lump of clay alters and shifts form throughout our chess lives. Bent Larsen's handling of 1 f4! had just such an effect upon your writer. This is my favourite game in the book. I originally placed it in Chapter 3 as a model example for the Classical Bird. However, I liked it so much that I yanked it away and it thus got promoted to the Introduction.

1 f4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 g6 3 d3 d5 4 e3 ♙g7 5 ♙e2 0-0 6 0-0 b6 7 ♚e1 ♙b7 8 ♘bd2



**Question:** What is White's intent behind this move?

**Answer:** White plans a Nimzowitchian overprotection strategy of e5, with ♘e5 and then ♘df3, backing up e5.

8... ♘bd7 9 ♚g3!?

When we engage in a flight of fancy at the board, we should also attempt a kind of purposeful dreaming which is functional, as well as aesthetically pleasing. A move which appears self-evidently obvious to one player may look bizarrely idiosyncratic to another. This kind of move was perfectly "normal" for Larsen. Already, this is a new move in the position, though a typically odd Larsonian opening idea which hasn't been repeated since.

**Question:** Why would a player so acquainted with opening theory proceed to spit in its face by rejecting conformity? What exactly does the queen do on g3?

**Answer:** To answer your first question: Larsen veers from theory to de-book and confuse opponents, forcing them to play on their own, rather than rely on homework. To answer your second question, 9 ♖g3 suppresses Black's ...e5 break. Also, the queen can easily transfer to h3, as it normally does in ♖h4 lines, so White isn't really giving up anything by playing his queen to g3. A look at other options:

a) The caveman attack is also available after 9 ♖h4 e6 10 g4 ♘e8 11 ♖h3 ♗d6 12 c3, J.Pelikan-J, Behrensen, Mar del Plata 1958. Now Black can strike back in the centre with 12...e5 and if 13 f5? gxf5 14 gxf5 ♕h8, White's king looks far more compromised than Black's.

b) White is perhaps aiming for the e4 break after 9 ♗d1 though after 9...♗e8, Black sets up ...e5 too. Following 10 ♗e5 (White correctly avoids 10 e4?! e5 11 f5 gxf5 12 exf5 e4 13 dxe4 dxe4 14 ♗g5 e3 15 ♗b3 c5 when White's queenside pieces are badly bottled up) 10...♗xe5 11 fxe5 ♗d7 12 d4 (I don't trust White's compensation if he speculates with 12 e6!? fxe6 13 ♗g4 ♗f8) 12...e6, T.Grumb-K.Hilmer, Deggendorf 2006, White should play the freeing break 13 e4 c5 14 c3 when he stands no worse.

### 9...e6

Preparing to play ...♖e7 later on.

**Question:** Didn't Larsen's queen lose a potential tempo on his last move?

**Answer:** Not at all, for several reasons:

1) ...♗h5 actually misplaces the knight.

2) White reacts with ♖h3, where he kind of wants to go to anyway, and then gains a useful tempo himself with g4 in booting the knight off the h5-square.

### 10 ♗e5 ♗e8

This move opens the possibility of ...f6 ejecting White's knight but this is exactly what Larsen wanted to provoke!

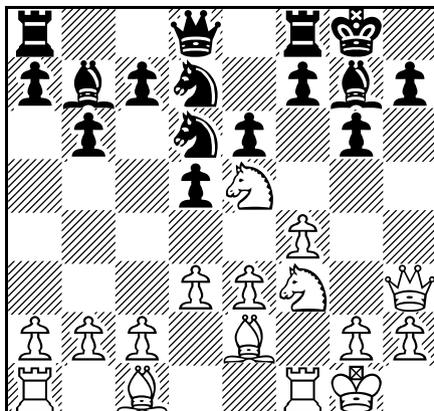
**Question:** Why would he do that? Doesn't ...f6 kick White's knight out of its advanced post?

**Answer:** The point is it also loosens Black's king cover, a side-effect which Larsen later uses to his benefit. Conversely 10...♗xe5 (one of those moves we all hate to play) looks fine after 11 fxe5 ♗d7 12 ♗f3 c5 13 b3 ♖c8 and if 14 ♗b2?! (14 c3! is correct), Black has 14...d4 15 exd4 cxd4 and better since the c2- and e5-pawns fall under attack.

### 11 ♗df3 ♗d6

With hindsight, maybe Black should toss in the immediate 11...f6 so that White doesn't get a chance to build as he did in the game.

### 12 ♖h3



A silent menace creeps up on Black, seemingly inconspicuous and non-threatening. Both g4 and ♖g5 are contemplated.

**12...♙e7**

Perhaps intending ...f6 next, but Larsen keeps Black busy.

**13 ♖g5!?**

Larsen, who is a stranger to self-doubt, doesn't mind losing a tempo to provoke the weakening ...h7-h6.

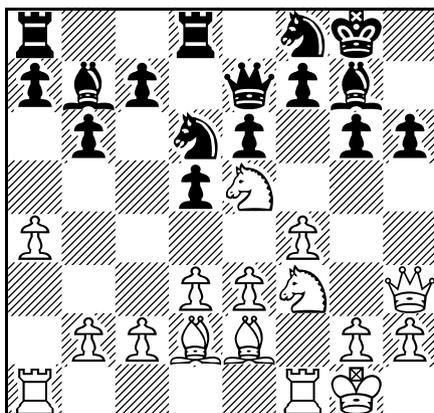
**13...h6**

Pretty much necessary, since after 13...♗f6 14 ♔d2, White can continue to mass up on the kingside.

**14 ♗gf3 ♜fd8**

Clearing the f8-square to continue with ...♗f8 and ...f7-f6, which of course further loosens the black king's pawn front.

**15 ♔d2 ♗f8 16 a4**



**Question:** Larsen was famous for marching his rook pawns up the board. However, here, he has a specific piece setup in mind when he pushed a4. What is it?

**Answer:** The idea is to cover the b5-square, so that White can play ♖c3 without worrying about ...♗b5.

16...f6

Another necessary evil.

17 ♖g4 ♗f7

Covering the h6-pawn.

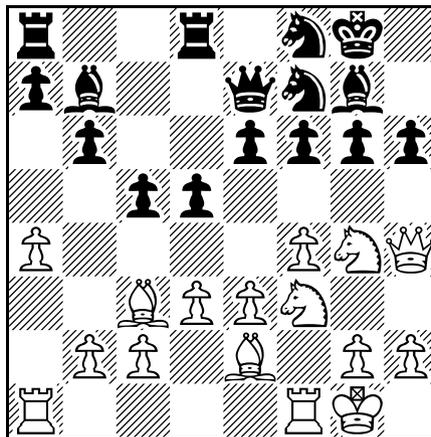
**Question:** Shouldn't Black just go ahead and push forward with 17...h5?

**Answer:** I think your suggestion may be Black's best move. Following 18 ♗f2 e5 19 fxe5 fxe5 20 e4! ♖g5 tricks are in the air. 20...♗f6 21 ♜fe1 ♖c8 22 g4!? dxe4 23 dxe4 h4, the position submerges into strategic murk – absolutely perfect for Larsen's style, while Gligoric, who preferred positional clarity would undoubtedly have been out of his natural element.

18 ♖c3

White is continually probing and pressing on the black king's cover and now he takes aim at the f6-pawn.

18...c5 19 ♗h4!



White attackers glide about, propelled by the hands of the master conjurer Larsen, their gaze firmly fixed upon f6. It's instructive to watch how he methodically pokes and prods his opponent, goading fresh weaknesses on the black king's front. What is really striking about this game is the alarming pace in which Black's position decayed.

19...g5?!

Gligoric has had enough of the affronts and pushes back, at the substantial cost of

## Bird's Opening: Move by Move

weakening his king. The passive 19...♖h7! should be played, although it allows White weird tricks like 20 ♖fe5! g5 21 ♖g6! ♖e8 22 fxg5 hxg5 23 ♖h3 f5 24 ♜f2! d4! (Black can't accept the gift with 24...fxg4? 25 ♙xg4 ♙c8 26 ♙xg7 ♙xg7 27 ♜af1 ♜d7 28 ♙h5 e5 29 ♖g3 ♖e6 as White has 30 ♖f8! ♖xf8 31 ♜xf7+ with a winning attack) 25 exd4 cxd4 26 ♙b4 a5 27 ♙a3 ♜a7 28 ♖e7+ ♙h8 29 ♖g6+ with perpetual check.

### 20 fxg5 fxg5?!

The wrong recapture, which makes matters worse and violates the principle: *recapture toward – and not away – from the centre*. However, capturing toward the centre was no picnic for Black either after 20...hxg5 21 ♖h5 e5 22 h4! (continuing to chip away at the black king's pawn front) 22...d4 23 ♙d2 ♖e6 24 hxg5 fxg5 25 exd4 cxd4 26 ♜ae1 ♖f4 27 ♙xf4 gxf4 28 ♖h4 ♖g5 29 ♖xg5 ♖xg5 30 ♖f5 ♜e8 31 ♙d1 ♖f7 32 c3, introducing the threat of ♙b3. Having written a book on Larsen, I came to the conclusion that he was more of a strategist than a tactician. In this game, after his 20th move, Black finds himself in deep trouble, and it isn't obvious that he even went wrong – even with the comp's help! If this isn't strategic magic, I don't know what is.

### 21 ♖h5

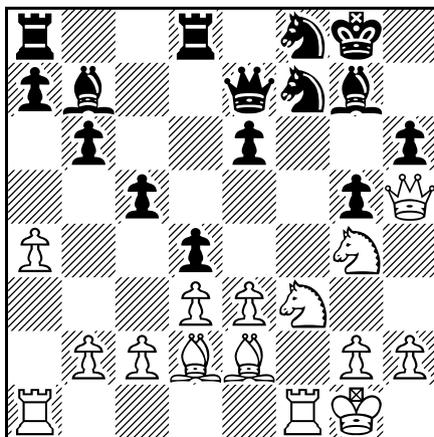
Attackers creep forward ominously. Black, despite having played natural and principled moves, is in deep trouble.

### 21...d4

Black must retain his dark-squared bishop.

### 22 ♙d2

Alternatively, 22 ♙e1 ♖d7 23 e4 ♖f6 24 ♖xf6+ ♙xf6 25 h4 allows White to continue chipping away at the black king's cover.



### 22...dxe3?

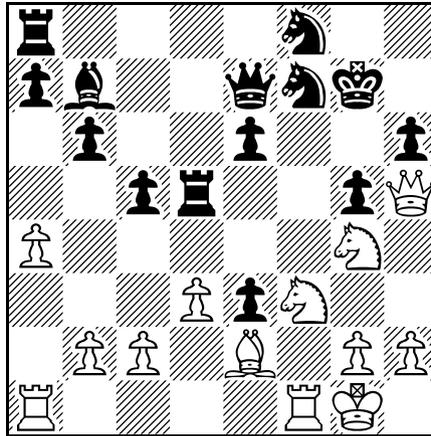
A mistake in an already very difficult situation. Black has to try 22...e5 23 e4 ♖e6 24 g3 when White can contemplate both the doubling of rooks on the f-file, and also the h2-h4 lunge.

**23 ♗c3!**

The bishop, unsatisfied with mere reverence from his followers, now demands outright worship from his g7-brother. The hermetic seal of Black's defence finally opens a crack, just enough to allow infiltration. Larsen recognized that Black's position was bound to collapse with the swap of dark-squared bishops. Less accurate is 23 ♗xe3?! ♗d5 when Black can resist better.

**23...♗d5**

Futile is 23...e5 as it enables 24 ♗fxe5! ♗xe5 25 ♗xe5 and if 25...♗xe5?, White has 26 ♗xh6+ ♖h8 27 ♗f7 ♗e6 28 ♗f5+ ♖g8 29 ♗e7+ and Black can resign.

**24 ♗xg7 ♖xg7**

**Exercise (combination alert):** White attackers exchange sly nods of complicity. Our intuition screams that a hidden combination exists. How did Larsen win the queen?

**Answer:** Clearance/deflection/removal of the guard/queen trap.

**25 ♗h4!**

The knight drives around the problem, rather than through it.

Step 1: Offer a knight to open the f-file.

**25...gxf4 26 ♗xf7+!**

Step 2: Clearance/removal of a key defender/annihilation of a defensive barrier/queen trap. This shot hits Black with the sickening ‘thud’ sound of a sledgehammer crashing through the rotten timber.

**26...♗xf7 27 ♗xh6+ ♖g8**

Sherlock Holmes said that in life-threatening emergencies, we tend to “save the object dearest to our hearts.” In the case of the black king, the “dearest” object happens to be himself. He has little choice but to forgive his h6-sister her trespasses – mainly since she has the power to arbitrarily order his immediate execution if the mood comes upon her.

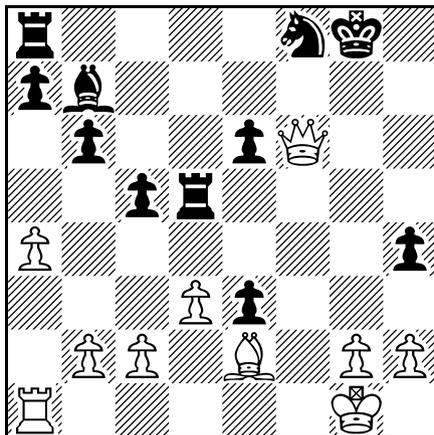
## Bird's Opening: Move by Move

28 ♖f6+

Step 3: Black must hand over his queen.

28...♔xf6 29 ♕xf6

Black's mere rook and knight (coupled with his scattered position) does not quite measure up to the White queen. This means he is completely lost though he did make a fight out of the dire situation.



29...♖f5!

Gligoric seizes upon his only hope: Infiltration to f2, after which the rook hits g2, the e2-bishop and also c2 if the bishop moves.

30 ♕xh4

Larsen picks off the h4-straggler, realizing that he can deal with the ...♖f2 threat.

30...♖f2 31 ♕g3+

The comp found 31 ♕g5+! ♖h8 32 ♖f3 ♖xf3 33 gxf3 ♖h7 34 ♕e5+ ♖g8 35 ♕xe6+ ♖g7 36 ♕e7+ ♖h8 37 ♕xe3 ♖xc2 38 ♕e5+ ♖g8 39 ♖h1! which is even stronger than the queen check on d5, which picks off the loose a8-rook. White forces mate.

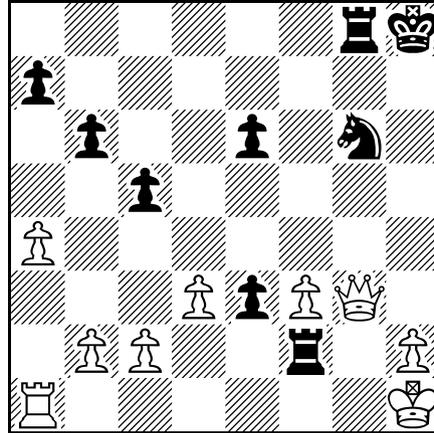
31...♖h8 32 ♖f3

Resolving his g2 problem.

32...♖xf3 33 gxf3 ♖g6

Gligoric cuts off the ♕e5+ threat. Of course his knight isn't hanging due to the g-file pin.

34 ♖h1 ♖g8



**Exercise (combination alert):** Larsen missed a forcing variation which wins Black's knight. Can you find it?

**35 a5**

A slight smear on a once pristine work of art.

**Answer:** Larsen missed 35 ♖g1! ♜xc2 (35...♜g7 is met with 36 h4! intending h5) 36 ♜h3+ ♙g7 37 ♜xe6 ♙h7 38 ♜h3+ ♙g7 39 ♜f5! and White wins the knight, since 39...♙h6 is met with 40 ♜g5+ ♙h7 41 ♜h5+ forcing mate.

**35...bxa5 36 ♜g5?!**

This move prolongs the game. Larsen misses the immediate win once again as 36 ♖g1! still works just like on the last move.

**36...♙g7 37 ♜xe3 ♜xc2 38 ♜c1?!**

Just because a move looks logical doesn't guarantee that it's the best one. Larsen, perhaps worried about his king, underestimates his own attack. He missed another winning line in 38 ♜xe6! ♜h8 39 h3 ♜xb2 40 ♖g1 ♜h6 41 ♜xg6+! ♜xg6 42 ♜e5+ which picks off the b2-rook and wins.

**38...♜xb2 39 ♜xc5 ♙f7!**

Black's forces finally begin to coordinate and White's win is no longer a simple matter.

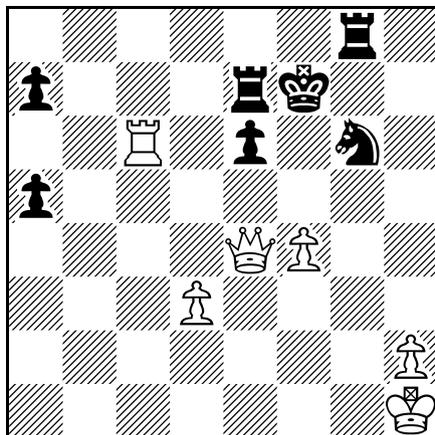
**40 ♜d4!**

The pair of black a-pawns are up for grabs, yet Larsen correctly declines, fearing Black's initiative after 40 ♜xa7+ ♙e7 41 ♜xa5 ♜g2 42 ♜e5 ♜ge2 when the win won't be so easy for White.

**40...♜b7 41 ♜e4 ♜d7 42 ♜c6**

A new enemy is identified: the e6-pawn.

**42...♜e7 43 f4!**



The threat of f4-f5 is in the air and now Black's king is in greater danger than White's.

**43...♖f8 44 d4**

There was no reason to hold off on 44 f5! ♖g5 45 fxe6+ ♗xe6 46 h4 ♖g6 47 d4 ♗f8 48 ♗f5+ ♖g7 49 ♖xg6+ ♗xg6 50 h5 with a straightforward win for White after 50...♗f8 51 h6+! ♖g8 52 ♗g5+ ♖f7 53 d5 ♖d7 54 ♗g7+ ♖e8 55 ♗e5+ and if 55...♖f7, White completes the rout with 56 h7! ♗xh7 57 ♗e6+.

**44...♖g6 45 ♖c5 a4 46 d5**

Stripping Black's king of pawn protection.

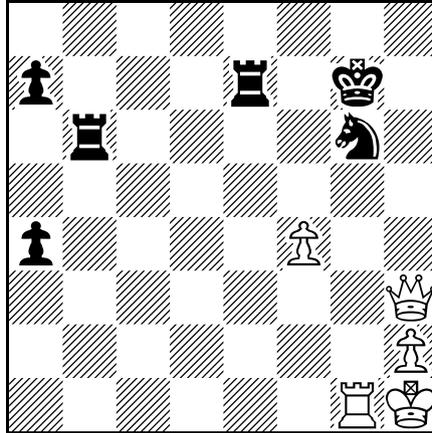
**46...exd5 47 ♗xd5+ ♖g7 48 ♗d4+ ♖h6 49 ♗c3!**

When we set up a cheapo, in the back of our mind lurks the sinister thought: "I want something for nothing!"

**49...♖b6!**

Gligoric alertly sidesteps the trap 49...♖b7?? which will be met by 50 ♖h5+! ♖xh5 51 ♗h3 mate!

**50 ♗h3+ ♖g7 51 ♖g5+ ♗g6 52 ♖g1!**



Great wealth doesn't immunize us from fear, since even the rich die. This prudent rook retreat secures the win. White's position requires conflicting demands:

1. White seeks to attack.
2. White's own king requires protection.

In this instance, defence takes precedence. He correctly avoids the tempting line 52 f5? as after 52...♖e1+ 53 ♖g1 ♖xg1+ 54 ♔xg1 ♘e5, White's win is no longer an easy matter.

**52...♔f7 53 ♖h5!**

Threat: f4-f5. White continues to move the ball forward, if only by a few centimetres. The computer found 53 f5! ♘e5 54 ♖h5+ ♔f6 55 ♖g5+ ♔f7 56 f6! ♖e8 (not 56...♖xf6? as 57 ♖g8 is mate!) 57 ♖h5+! ♔xf6 58 ♖xe8 and White wins.

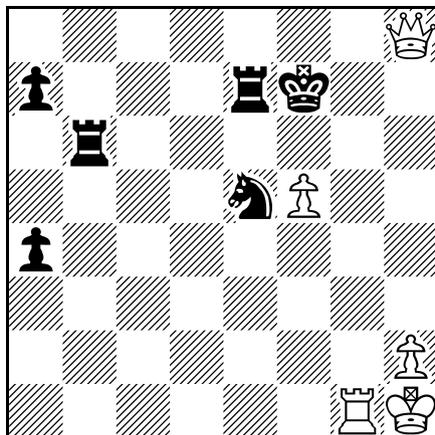
**53...♔f8**

Black's king may have acquired a few battle scars yet still retains his life. Of course, giving away the knight is the equivalent of resignation, but when our plans go awry from their original intent, what else is there to do but improvise?

**54 f5!?**

"No thanks, I couldn't possibly accept such a gift!" Here we see an extreme example of Larsen's somewhat impractical artistic streak. The comps say this is actually stronger than simply taking the knight, which your writer and every club player in the world would pounce on in a nanosecond, with 54 ♖xg6 ♖xg6 55 ♖xg6 and Black can resign.

**54...♘e5 55 ♖h8+ ♔f7**



**Exercise (combination alert):** Black's king reminds us of a psychologically tormented victim in an Edgar Allan Poe story. White to play and force mate:

56 ♔g7+?

Fatigue has an awful way of tightening attention's aperture, so that you see and understand less and less as the game goes on. White's last move is in violation of the principle: *when hunting the opponent's king, don't chase it. Instead, cut off avenues of escape.*

**Answer:** There is no cure to 56 ♔g8! with the mating threat of ♔f7. For example, after 56...♖b1+ 57 ♔g2 ♖b2+ 58 ♔g3 ♖b3+ 59 ♔h4 ♖b4+ 60 ♔h5, the checks run out.

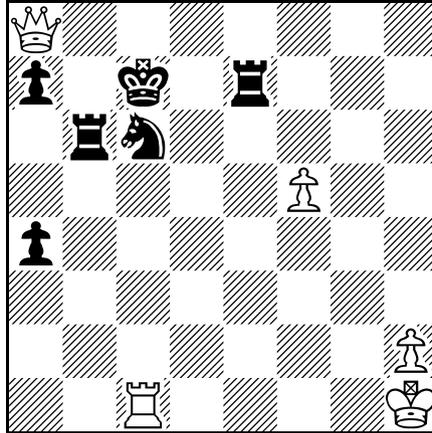
56...♔e8 57 ♔g8+ ♔d7 58 ♔a8

The queen broods long, hateful thoughts concerning her d7-brother, who continues to slip out from her grasp.

58...♘c6 59 ♖d1+ ♔c7

Exit stage right: Black's king seeks shelter on the queenside.

60 ♖c1!



Threat: ♖xa7+. Black's position, fragile as a water bubble, may burst with the slightest flick of a finger.

**60...♔d7**

Black may trap the White queen after 60...♖e1+ 61 ♖xe1 ♖b8 but this still loses after 62 ♖xb8+ ♗xb8 63 ♗f6 ♔d7 64 ♗f7 ♖a3 65 ♖c1+ ♔b7 66 ♖a1.

**61 ♗f6 ♖f7 62 ♖d1+ ♔c7 63 ♖e8! ♖h7**

Not 63...♖xf6 as 64 ♖d7 mates!

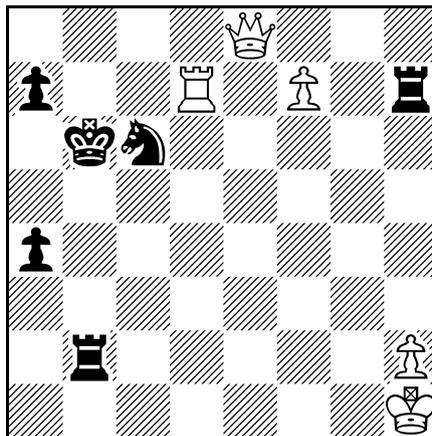
**64 ♗f7**

Not only threatening to queen, but also ♖d7 mating again!

**64...♖b2**

Black's threats come far too late.

**65 ♖d7+ ♔b6**



**Exercise (combination alert):** Find one powerful shot and you first win heavy material, then force mate.

**Answer:** Skewer. Black's king has no good squares.

66 ♖e3+! 1-0

“So now you recognize – much too late – the degree to which my power overwhelms yours,” the queen tells her unfortunate b6-rival. After 66 ♖e3+! ♔b5 (66...♔a5 67 ♖c5+ ♚b5 68 ♜xa7+ ♞xa7 69 ♖xa7+ ♚b4 70 f8♖+ forces mate) 67 ♖d3+, White wins the h7-rook.

**Summary:** You may want to try Larsen's 8 ♞bd2 plan against Black's passive ...b6 plan. White fights for control over the e5-square with ♖g3!?, ♞e5 and ♞df3. This idea needs more testing and you can be sure it will take your opponents by surprise.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks, to editor GM John Emms, and to CM Junior Tay for the final edit. Thanks also to Nancy for her proofreading and punctuation gerrymandering. May our opponents' brows knit in worried concentration upon seeing us open with 1 f4!.