

Lorin D'Costa

The Queen's Indian

move by move

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About the Author

Lorin D'Costa is an International Master and a full-time chess teacher. He coaches some of the top chess schools in the UK, some of England's very strongest juniors, and also the England team at World and European Youth Championships.

Also by the Author:

Who Dares Wins!

The Sicilian Scheveningen: Move by Move

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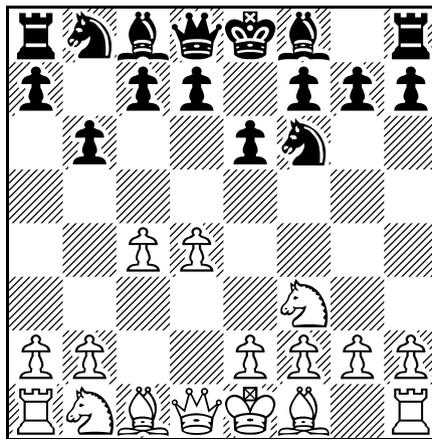
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Introduction

The Queen's Indian Defence is characterised by the moves:

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗f3 b6



It is important to note that the Queen's Indian is a sister opening to the Nimzo-Indian Defence which occurs after 3 ♗c3 ♗b4, and for details on the Nimzo I refer you to the excellent book on the subject by GM John Emms in this Move By Move series.

One of the key strategic ideas in Queen's Indian (and the Nimzo-Indian) is the battle for the crucial e4- and d5-squares. Much of the early play revolves around these squares and this theme will recur throughout the book. So why does White play 3 ♗f3, rather than 3 ♗c3? With 3 ♗f3, White plays an important developing move, avoids the 3...♗b4 pin and retains the flexibility of playing ♗b1-c3 later. Meanwhile, Black's move 3...b6 prepares the development of the c8-bishop, either as a fianchetto on the b7-square or sometimes, to the a6-square in order to attack the c4-pawn. While Black has other 3rd move alternatives, such as 3...♗b4+ (the Bogo-Indian Defence), I personally prefer the Queen's Indian since pieces are kept on the board and Black, in my view, has greater winning chances. For us lower down the chess pyramid, we should be trying to play for a win with both colours!

As an introduction to the Queen's Indian Defence, in Chapter One I have analysed five

games by World Champions playing the opening from the Black side.

The main line over the years has been 4 g3. White intends to fianchetto his light-squared bishop, which from the g2-square fights for the e4- and d5-squares and goes head-to-head with its counterpart should Black's c8-bishop land on b7. I have decided, after much deliberation, to go with 4...♗a6 as my main line recommendation against the Fianchetto Variation, but am demonstrating two relatively unexplored and much underrated lines against 4 g3. Chapters Two, Three and Four see our discussion on that topic. Additionally, I felt that the reader should know something about 4...♗b7, so Chapter Five presents a sideline that you can surprise your well prepared opponent with.

The Petrosian Variation is introduced by 4 a3 or 4 ♖c3 ♗b7 5 a3. By playing an early a2-a3, White prevents ...♗b4, thus keeping the c3-knight on the board to maximise influence over those important e4- and d5-squares, and aiming to build a big pawn centre with e2-e4. It was no less a player than the 13th World Champion, Garry Kasparov, who championed this line from the 1980s onwards. We will be examining this variation in detail in Chapters Six and Seven of this book.

Chapters Eight and Nine cover a number of less popular but respectable systems that White can adopt to counter the Queen's Indian. Finally, Chapter Ten shows how a Queen's Indian player can respond to Flank Openings such as the King's Indian Attack and Réti.

As a professional coach, I am always trying to extol the virtues of really understanding what you are doing and the plans available, rather than just learning rote moves. The Queen's Indian has many plans available, to both sides, and by and large these tend to be of a positional nature. This somewhat disappointed a friend of mine, I'll call him 'Dave' (rated around the 2000 mark) when I told him this, since he wants to attack at all costs. However, to improve as a player I think it is important to understand how to play positionally as well as aggressively. In addition, I am not for one moment stating that you cannot attack in the Queen's Indian, with either colour – a number of the games in this book involve both attacking and sacrificial play. It is no coincidence that some of the world's most aggressive attacking players have added the Queen's Indian to their opening repertoires.

By holding this book you have already taken the first step towards adding the Queen's Indian to your armoury, and I hope that by reading the notes and playing through the games you will be able to play this opening confidently in your own games.

Lorin D'Costa,
London, October 2015

Chapter Seven

Petrosian Variation: 4 c3 b7 5 a3

1 d4  f6 2 c4 e6 3  f3 b6 4  c3

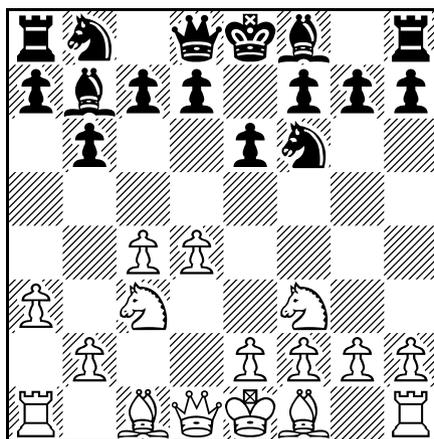
With this move order White more or less obliges Black to develop his light-squared bishop on b7.

4...  b7

4...  a6 makes no sense here, as White could simply occupy the centre with 5 e4. Meanwhile 4...  b4 transposes to the Nimzo-Indian, so 4...  b7 is Black's main move if he wants to stay within Queen's Indian territory.

5 a3

Chapter Eight will cover the independent lines starting here with 5  g5 and 5  c2.



With 5 a3, White enters the Petrosian Variation, having prompted Black to play 4...  b7. Of course this position could also be reached after 4 a3  b7. In the previous chapter we

examined 4 a3 ♙a6, and I believe that system is completely viable and solid. However, to broaden your horizons on the Queen's Indian and the variety of pawn structures on offer, it is a good idea to be familiar with more than one main line chosen by Grandmasters at the highest level. This gives you a choice but more importantly, these games highlight the instructive Queen's Indian middlegames that arise and so they are certainly worth taking a look at. Black must understand what he is doing here, as he can be steamrolled very fast if he doesn't play carefully.

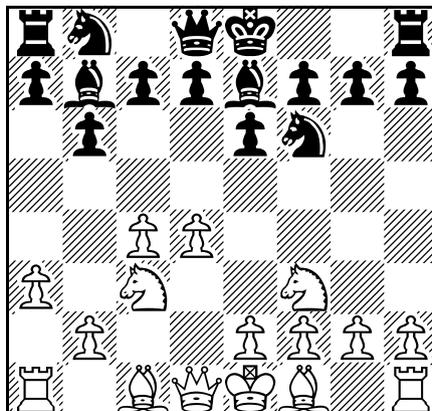
5...d5

This is the key move to play here for Black. Black argues that 5 a3 was not the most useful move and thus a transposition to a Queen's Gambit Declined (QGD) structure is the way to go. Note that the other typical move ...c5 transposes to a Benoni structure after d4-d5. This is not a pawn sacrifice (as in similar situations where the White queen is on the c2-square) because the queen is still on d1 and defends the d-pawn. If you are willing to play a QGD type of setup, and wish for a line a little more solid, then 5...d5 should probably be your weapon of choice.

In Game 46, we look at what happens if Black doesn't occupy the centre but continues development with 5...♙e7?! which is answered by 6 d5!. The remaining games in the chapter examine 5...d5. Before getting into the main line with 6 cxd5, we look at Carlsen's choice of 6 ♙g5 in Game 47. My recommendation after 6 cxd5 is 6...♘xd5 and here White's key 7th move alternatives are 7 ♖c2 (Game 48), 7 e3 (Game 49) and finally 7 ♙d2 (Games 50-51).

Game 46
A.Gupta-Dao Thien Hai
 Asian Team Championship, Vishakapatnam 2008

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 ♖c3 ♙b7 5 a3 ♙e7?!



The Queen's Indian: Move by Move

Such a natural move, as the f8-bishop cannot go to b4 or any other decent square on this turn. However, it fails to meet the demands of the position – it is crucial that Black occupies the centre with a pawn on the 5th move, for reasons this game will demonstrate.

6 d5!

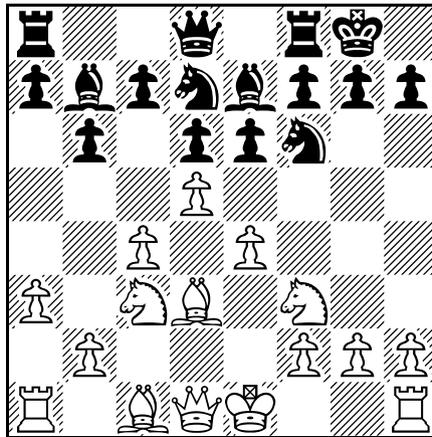
Question: What is the reasoning behind this?

Answer: Just watch the game and you will see! We know the e4- and d5-squares are critical. How can Black now prevent e2-e4 on the next move, or stop White building up a huge centre? This game is a lesson on how to use that central space advantage to great effect.

6...0-0 7 e4 d6

7...c6 8 d6 would be a disaster!

8 ♖d3 ♞bd7



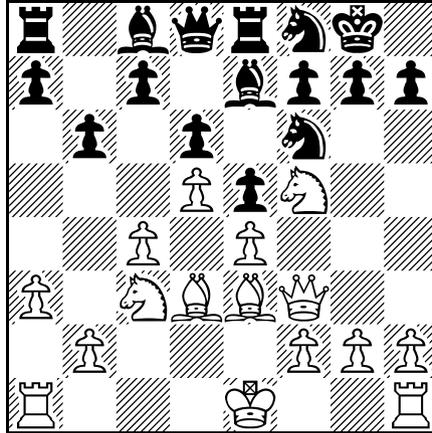
9 ♞d4

9 0-0 was a good alternative, but Gupta realises that with such a big space advantage in the centre he can delay castling to build up an attack.

9...e5

9...♞c5 10 ♖c2 with a space advantage, the general rule is: do not exchange pieces, as this allows the side with the more cramped position to reduce the pressure.

10 ♞f5 ♜e8 11 ♖e3 ♞f8 12 ♜f3 ♖c8



Exercise: Think of what you would do here as White.

Answer: Almost anything sensible is good, but Gupta decides that with the centre closed he can go all aggressive with:

13 g4! ♖d7 14 h4 ♖c5 15 ♙c2 a5

15...♙a6 16 b4 ♖cd7 17 ♙d3 Black can hardly move, and must await his fate on the kingside.

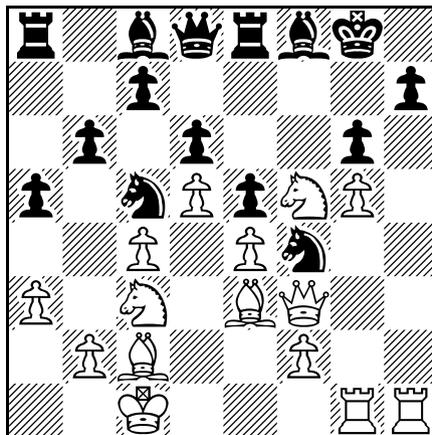
16 0-0-0 ♖g6 17 g5 ♙f8 18 ♖dg1

The rook is not needed in the centre.

18...♖f4 19 h5

19 ♙xf4 exf4 20 ♖xf4 is just a safe pawn advantage.

19...g6 20 hxg6 fxg6



Exercise: Calculate what you would do here (tip: very difficult to calculate the whole variation to the end).

Answer: White crashes through with:

21 ♖xf4 exf4 22 ♖xh7!! ♖xf5

Or 22...♖xh7 23 ♖h1+ ♖g8 24 ♗h3 and the attack down the h-file is decisive, for example 24...♞e7 25 ♗h8+ ♖f7 26 ♖h7+ ♖e8 27 ♞xe7+ ♗xe7 28 ♜xe7 ♖xe7 29 ♗f6+ ♖d7 30 e5 with an overwhelming position.

23 exf5

23 ♖gh1 ♖d7 24 ♖h8+ ♖f7 25 ♗xf4+ was also crushing.

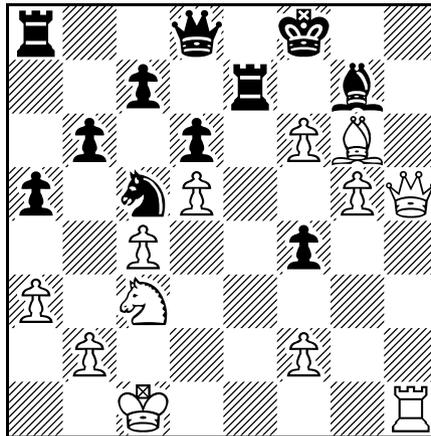
23...♖xh7 24 f6

So calm, despite being a rook down! The black king will not escape.

24...♖g8 25 ♖xg6 ♞e7 26 ♗h5 ♖g7 27 ♖h1

The f6-pawn is worth more than either of the pieces it can capture.

27...♖f8



Exercise: Calculate the mate from here.

Answer: With the queen sacrifice:

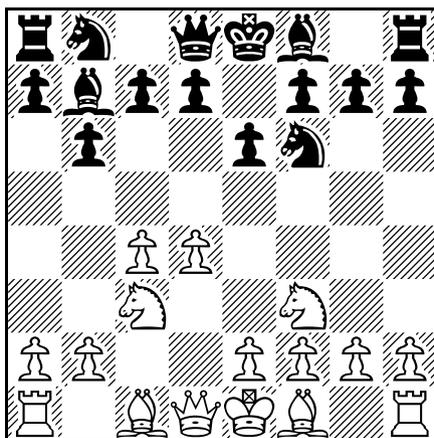
28 ♗h8+! 1-0

A crushing attack. We saw how a lack of central control, and allowing the white pawns to occupy the d5- and e4-squares with a big space advantage, can almost end Black's game before it has started. Do not let this happen!

Chapter Eight

4 ♘c3 ♖b7: Other Fifth Moves

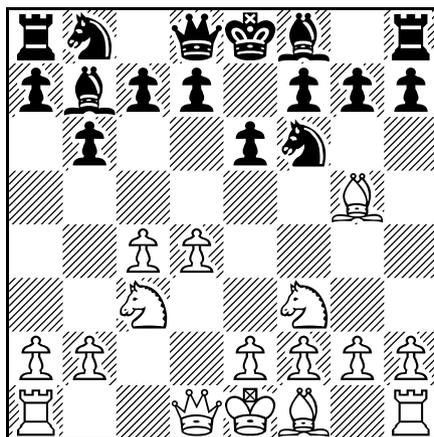
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 ♘c3 ♖b7



In the previous chapter, we looked at 5 a3, when White takes the game into the Petrovian Variation. In this chapter we focus on two of White's 5th move alternatives namely 5 ♗g5, which is covered in Games 52-54, and 5 ♖c2, which is reviewed in Games 55-58. In the latter line, after 5 ♖c2 Black has a choice between 5...c5 (Games 55-56), staying within pure Queen's Indian territory, and 5...♗b4 (Games 57-58) which transposes to a line of the Nimzo-Indian. In these games I give details of both approaches so you can make an informed repertoire choice.

Game 52
J.Menadue-P.Wells
Penarth 2011

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 ♘c3 ♙b7 5 ♙g5



Here White is trying to do without a3 and fight for the e4-square by pinning the f6-knight.

5...♙e7

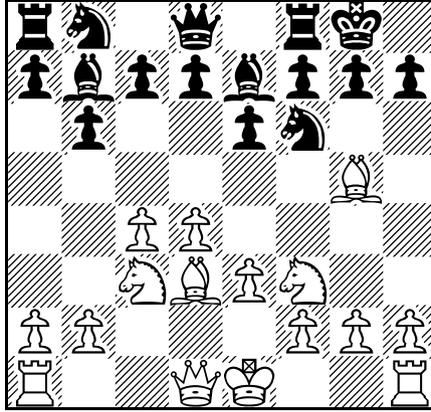
Question: This doesn't make sense. Surely if we can play the bishop to b4, we should?

Answer: Yes 5...♙b4 is fine, but this move breaks the pin and in some lines allows Black to play ...♘e4 like in the Piket-Anand game (Game 5 in Chapter One). In fact 5...♙b4 transposes to the main lines of the Nimzo-Indian and for this reason I have opted to recommend a Queen's Indian style line instead.

6 e3

6 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 7 e4 gaining a big centre looks impressive, but giving up the dark-squared bishop might be too much to ask given the position is likely to open up soon enough. After 7...d6 8 ♚c2 g6 9 ♙e2 0-0 10 h4 c5! White played 11 dxc5 dxc5 12 e5 ♙g7 13 ♘b5 but this is far too ambitious. A.Czebe-Z.Szabo, Budapest 1998 continued 13...♘d7 14 ♚d1 ♚e7 15 ♚c3 ♙xf3 16 ♙xf3 ♚ad8 17 ♚e3 ♘xe5 and Black took over.

6...0-0 7 ♙d3



Exercise: It's about time Black challenged the centre. Which pawn move to play?

Answer: Either of the usual two, 7...c5 or 7...d5 are playable, but I like the way Wells goes for a Hedgehog style setup and leaves the d-pawn on the modest d6-square.

7...c5

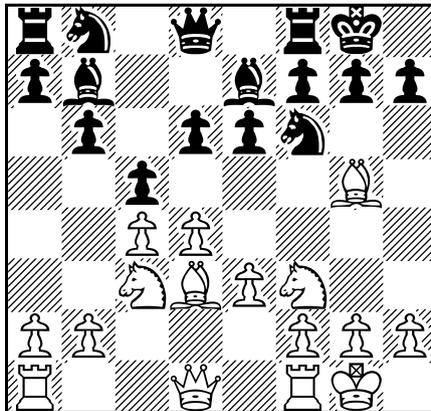
7...d5 8 0-0 ♖bd7 9 ♖c1 h6 10 ♘h4 c5 11 ♚e2 transposes to the Tartakower Variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined, which unfortunately is outside the scope of this book (but sound nonetheless).

8 0-0

8 d5? ♗xd5! is the trick. Remember this one when the bishops are on e7 and g5!

8...d6

8...cxd4 9 exd4 d5 will likely give White an IQP on d4, but again I prefer the Hedgehog setup which offers more winning chances for Black.



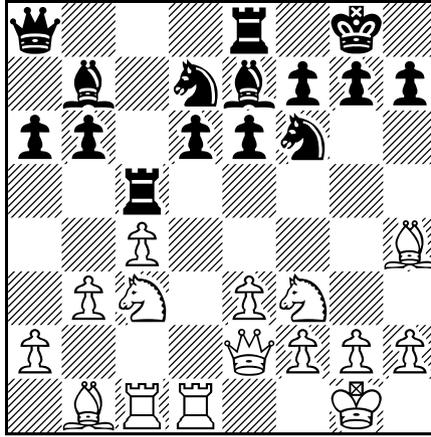
9 ♖e2 ♘bd7 10 ♖fd1 ♖c8 11 ♖ac1 ♖e8 12 b3 a6

A useful move, it prevents ♘c3-b5 and at some point Black will aim for the ...b5 break.

13 dxc5

13 e4 cxd4 14 ♘xd4 ♖c7 would lead to a standard Hedgehog vs. Maroczy Bind setup.

13...♖xc5 14 ♘h4 ♖a8 15 ♘b1



Exercise: Black has a fine position, but how to proceed further?
Decide between the pawn breaks ...b5 and ...d5.

Answer: As usual, both are acceptable but if playing for a win, it is a good idea to try and unbalance the position a bit. Therefore ...b5 will be the one to aim for, as it exchanges off a wing pawn for a more central pawn.

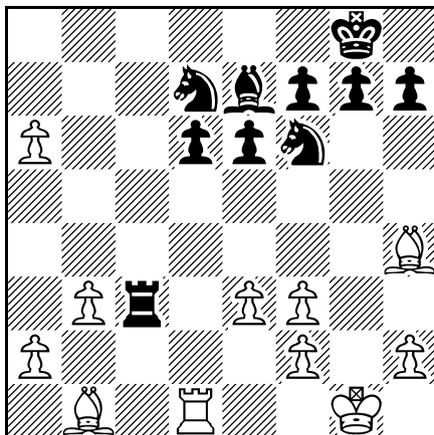
15...b5!

15...d5 16 cxd5 ♘xd5 17 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 18 ♘xe7 ♖xe7 19 ♖xc5 ♘xc5 is no problem, and a good alternative to have, but if you want to play for a win (and I am sure you do) then unbalancing the position is what is required.

16 cxb5?! ♖ec8

This is the crucial follow up. Since White played b2-b3 earlier, the c3-knight is now very unstable.

17 bxa6 ♘xf3 18 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 19 gxf3 ♖xc3 20 ♖xc3 ♖xc3



So Black has won a piece, and it now is a question of whether he can hold back the queenside passed pawns.

21 ♙xf6 gxf6 22 ♖d4 d5 23 a7 ♜c8 24 ♜g4+ ♚h8 25 ♜a4 ♜a8 26 b4

Preventing ...♙c5 winning the a7-pawn, but with care from Black the pawns should drop now anyway.

26...♘b6 27 ♜a6 ♘c8 28 b5 ♙d8

Avoiding the last trick. Black should not go for 28...♜xa7 29 b6 ♜b7 (29...♜xa6? 30 b7 ♜c6 31 b8♚) 30 ♜a8 which gets White out of jail.

29 ♜c6 ♘b6

Not 29...♘xa7 30 ♜a6! ♜c8 31 ♜xa7 ♜c1+ 32 ♚g2 ♜xb1 33 ♜a8 and White regains the piece with approximate equality.

30 ♜d6 ♙c7 31 ♜c6 ♜xa7

Now it should be game over. The tricks are all gone!

32 ♙c2 ♚g7 33 a4 ♘c4 34 ♚g2 ♘e5 35 ♜c3 ♙a5 36 ♜b3 ♜c7 37 ♙d1 ♜c1 38 ♙e2 ♜c2 39 ♚f1 ♘c4 40 ♙xc4 dxc4 41 ♜b1 c3 42 b6 ♜b2 0-1

Great play from Peter Wells who understands these Nimzo and Queen's Indian structures in great detail.

Game 53

Y.Yakovich-B.Jobava

Russian League 2007

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 ♘c3 ♙b7 5 ♙g5 ♙e7 6 ♚c2