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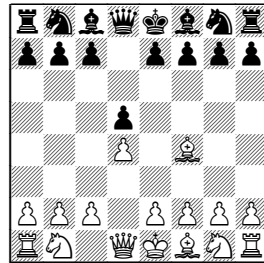
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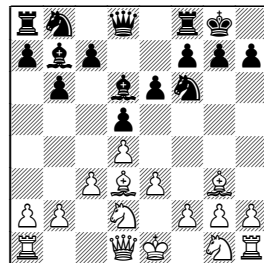
Preface

Are you still curious what are the best openings for White? I have an answer for you: almost any normal development! At depth 50, modern engines evaluate most main lines as 0.00! Suppose that I want to build a repertoire against the Slav. I have tried everything against it and I assure you that the Meran is 0.00. I have also tested the Botvinnik Variation. The most principled lines follow a very narrow path, reaching 0.00 well after move 40. The same applies to the Queen's Gambit etc. Thus any strong player faces the same question before every White game: **how to throw the opponent out of his home preparation as early as possible** without crossing the red line? Sharp openings mean **more** narrow paths, therefore less to memorise. Even a master would be able to hold to a draw a super GM in the Botvinnik. Lately the chess elite solves the problem by adopting the following **anti-computer strategy**: they choose openings without narrow paths. The more candidate-moves of equal worth on every split, the better! Nobody can memorise at home a variation tree with a huge crown of branches. Even better would be to find systems where the computer tends to underestimate White's chances. One of the most serious candidates for the title

“Opening of the future” is the London System, more precisely, the Accelerated London System. It arises after 1.d4 d5 (1...♘f6) 2.♙f4.



It has been played by world champion Carlsen, Kasparov, Kramnik, So, Nakamura... the list could go on several pages. The computer is almost useless if you ask it what is the best answer to it. My favourite example is the following position:



Would you believe that Stockfish 8 at depth 41 offers as best the following line: 8.♖c1!?! ♘e4 9.♘e2 ♘f6!?! 10.♘g1!?!, evaluating it at 0.00!! The closed centre and virtually no threats make such positions diffi-

cult for computer analysis. On any turn both sides have at least 4-5 candidate-moves of equal worth. It is a laborious task to encompass the maze of branches and transpositions that arise. You could easily drown into the sea of variations.

I have endeavoured to select several systems for Black so you could pick out something that suits your taste. My task was to offer clear plans and answers in the “Main Ideas” sections, and a tree-like presentation in the “Step by Step” sections. The annotated games often present back-up lines or additional information which would only distract you from the more important lines.

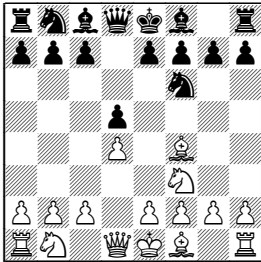
Note that I’m not biased towards Black’s cause. I started playing the London about 10 years ago with White and I have hundreds of blitz and rapid games on the ICC server at highest level (3300+ Elo).

Practical experience shows that many Black players at some point begin testing the London System with White, too. That is possible because this opening counts on understanding the plans and structures. If you feel confident with Black, you should perform well with the other colour, too.

Kiril Georgiev
July 2017

Introduction

I'll start by defining the terms. The classical treatment of the London System is the move sequence 1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♙f4.

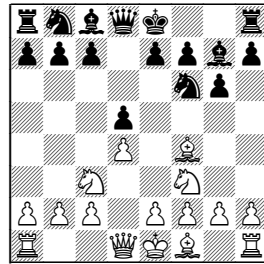


I devote Chapter 7 to this particular order of moves (and to 3.c3). In the rest of the book I assume that White delays ♘f3 in favour of the more flexible and trendy approach 2.♙f4, followed up by e3 or c3. It is called the Accelerated London System. In most cases the lines interweave and I try to point out the pros and cons of the different move orders.

I also pay attention to schemes with an early 3.♘c3. I have not separated them in an independent chapter, since the character of play greatly depends on Black's choice. For instance, 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♙f4 d5 3.♘c3 is commonly called the Jobava Attack. I analyse in detail 3...e6 in Chapter 4, **Game 14** Sheng-So, rapid, chess.com 2017. However, Black has another good answer, 3...g6, and it

is covered in Chapter 2, which deals with the Grünfeld approach.

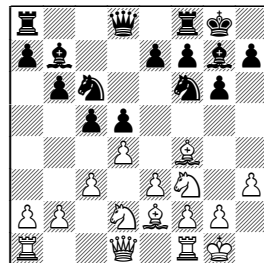
A special case of the Jobava Attack is the Barry Attack – 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.♙f4 g6 4.♘c3 ♙g7 – Chapter 2.



In it the white knight is already on f3. Knowing this system is indispensable if you prefer a repertoire based on the Grünfeld approach.

For the same reason I consider 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.♙f4 g6 4.c4 (Chapter 3) – it is a pure Grünfeld, but you cannot not skip it. Thus the first three chapters provide you with everything you would need to meet ♙f4 by ...g6.

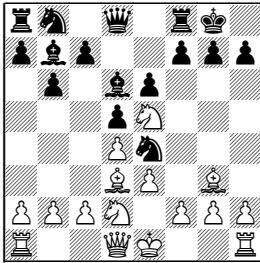
Black's main set-up with ...g6 is shown on the following diagram.



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It is easy to play as he has a clear plan – to trade light-squared bishops with ...♖c8 and advance on the queenside. The bishop on g7 secures Black’s castling position against any sharp attack White could attempt. The Grünfeld approach is not currently in the limelight, but it is very solid and easy to learn.

Chapter 4 presents another rare antidote to the London System – 1.d4 d5 2.♘f4 ♖f6 3.e3 e6 4.♗d2 ♘d6 5.♙g3 b6 (or 5...0-0 6.♘d3 b6). Its main feature is that Black refrains from early ...c5 in favour of the queen’s fianchetto. That neutralises practically all the trendy plans White is accustomed to employ. Our typical set-up is:



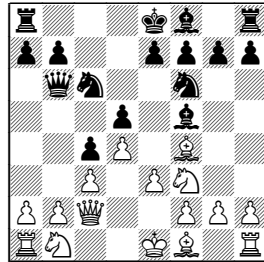
We have avoided both Carlsen’s ♘b5 and e3-e4 from White, and ♗e5 is not of any concern to us, as we always have ...f6 or ...f5. We do not have to worry about dxc5, followed by c4, either.

This is my favourite way to play for a win against the London System! It leads to safe, but tangled positions with a lot of pieces. White’s strategic tasks are significantly more complex than in the set-ups with ...♘f5. And White is

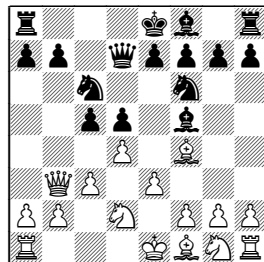
usually completely surprised when facing it!

Chapter 5 delves deeper in the same direction, but this time I consider move orders with ...c5 before ...b6. In my opinion, they have no advantages over the lines from Chapter 4, but they are very hot, as all the elite plays them. My “little” trick here is to delay ...♗c6. That effectively sidesteps ♘b5.

The forth plan against the London is too popular to be omitted. It is based on early ...c5, followed by ...♘f5 or ...♘g4. In Chapter 6 I focus on the move order 1.d4 d5 2.♘f4 c5. Black’s play is straightforward and it does not require a lot of learning. Basically, he must be acquainted with the following two positions:



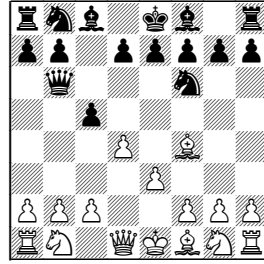
and



Introduction

The first one could arise if White used the classical move order with ♞f3 , while the second is typical for the Accelerated London. In all events, Black does not experience any theoretical problems. In my opinion, play is more boring, compared to the previously mentioned plans.

Finally, Chapter 8 deals with $1.\text{d4}$ $2.\text{♙f4}$ c5 . Of course, Black has an enormous choice of other plans – such as the Queen’s Indian approach with $\dots\text{b6}$ without $\dots\text{d5}$, or the King’s Indian set-up with $\dots\text{d6}$ with further $\dots\text{e5}$. However, I prefer to exploit White’s moves more concretely by hitting his sore point – b2 by $2.\dots\text{c5}$ $3.\text{e3}$ ♞b6 . In all the events this queen sortie hampers the enemy normal development.



After $4.\text{♞c3}$ we can either capture the pawn, allowing repetition of moves, or demonstrate a strong determination with $\dots\text{4}\dots\text{d6}$.

You can start by picking out one of the plans I consider, and then enrich your arsenal with others. In all cases you should be obtaining decent positions in the opening, but you’ll play some of them more confidently, depending on your personal style.