

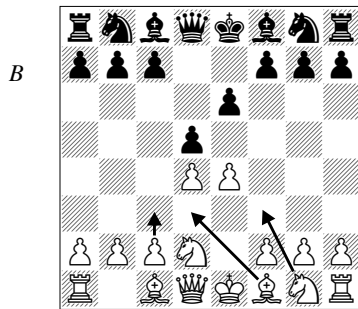
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5 French

1 e4 e6

White has a range of options against the French, but many of the positions reached are quite unique (especially those from the Winawer, 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖c3 ♗b4). French players often have more experience in these structures than their opponents do. Accordingly, it is particularly attractive to lure them into structures with which they are unfamiliar, which White can try to do with 2 d4 d5 3 ♗d2 (*D*) followed by ♗gf3, ♗d3 and c3, aiming to keep the pawn on e4 and meet ...cxd4 with cxd4.



This option frequently gives rise to an IQP where Black has gained time over standard lines. This gain of time means that Black generally should be able to achieve a fully satisfactory game, but needs to be able to handle a new structure.

My coverage in this chapter has been firstly to cover the standard IQP lines, such as those reached after the following move-orders: 3...♗f6 4 ♗d3 c5 5 c3 ♗c6 6 ♗gf3 cxd4 7 cxd4 dxe4 8 ♗xe4; 3...c5 4 c3 ♗c6 5 ♗gf3 cxd4 6 cxd4 dxe4 7 ♗xe4; 3...♗e7 4 ♗gf3 c5 5 c3 ♗f6 6 ♗d3 ♗c6 7 0-0 cxd4 8 cxd4 dxe4 9 ♗xe4. In these lines, there isn't much theory and, as mentioned above, Black should, objectively, be fine. Accordingly, I have relied on the general knowledge gained about IQP positions in this and other chapters to equip you better than your opponents for the resulting middle-games.

I have devoted particular attention to attempts at early simplification which have been recommended in recent popular repertoire works. White actually needs to know some theory here to avoid being worse right out of the opening, but the simplified positions retain scope for the better player to win.

More specifically, the chapter is organized as follows: Games 30-32 examine the 'IQP' lines (following 3...♗e7, 3...♗f6 and 3...c5), while 3...dxe4 is the subject of Game 33, and we examine all other moves (most notably 3...♗c6) in Game 34. It is worth

noting that against the variety of semi-waiting moves such as 3...a6 and 3...h6 that have become quite topical in recent years, the IQP system works rather well, as these little pawn moves do little to disrupt our development plan.

Game 30
Collins – Teeuwen
Kilkenny 2013

To start things off, let's look at a nice (if rather lightweight) game of mine. This was played in the legendary weekend tournament at Kilkenny. Over the years this event has attracted dozens of strong GMs including Michael Adams, Luke McShane, Ivan Cheparinov and Gawain Jones, who relish the chance to play entertaining chess in a highly informal setting.

This game was played in round 4, during a tournament which wasn't going especially well for me. Round 4 is played on Saturday night, the third round of that day, and I had White against a less experienced opponent. Rather than going for lines where he might be well prepared, I decided that the IQP system would be the perfect choice.

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 ♙e7

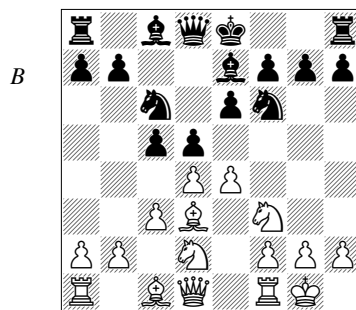
It can hardly be claimed that the IQP system leads to an advantage after this move, but the system becomes more attractive in my view since Black's options of early simplification with ...♙b4+ (such as we examine in Game 32) are ruled out. The lines after

3...♘f6 4 ♙d3 c5 5 c3 and 3...c5 4 c3 ♘f6 5 ♙d3 are covered in the next two games.

4 ♘gf3 ♘f6 5 ♙d3 c5 6 c3

White has set up his pieces in the standard fashion, refusing to release the tension on either the e4-pawn (with e5) or the d4-pawn (with dxc5).

6...♗c6 7 0-0 (D)



7...cxd4

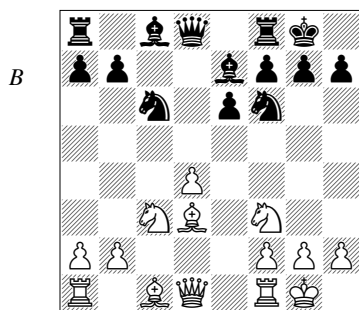
Black finally decides to clarify the position in the centre. Continuing to wait would have resulted in some risk of confusing himself and ending up in a line for which he wasn't prepared. After 7...0-0, while White can stubbornly insist on maintaining the tension with something like 8 ♖e1 (or even 8 a3!?), he can also choose 8 e5, when after 8...♗d7 we have transposed into a variation of the Korchnoi Gambit, which begins with 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 ♘f6 4 e5 ♘fd7 5 ♙d3 c5 6 c3 ♗c6 7 ♘gf3 (instead of the standard 7 ♗e2). Black has several systems against this gambit (including accepting it with 7...cxd4 8 cxd4 ♖b6 9 0-0 ♗xd4), but the line with 7...♙e7

8 0-0 0-0 isn't one of the most popular systems (although it has been tried by French experts like Lputian and Shirov). If this isn't your opponent's preferred response to the Korchnoi Gambit, he is unlikely to want to allow it via this move-order either.

8 cxd4 dxe4

8...0-0 leads to similar considerations as outlined in the note to Black's 7th move. White can continue with 9 ♖e1 or 9 a3 (maybe more logical here than on the last move, since the b4-square is undefended and Black can't respond with ...c4), but the move that would probably put Black off castling is 9 e5.

9 ♖xe4 0-0 10 ♖c3 (D)

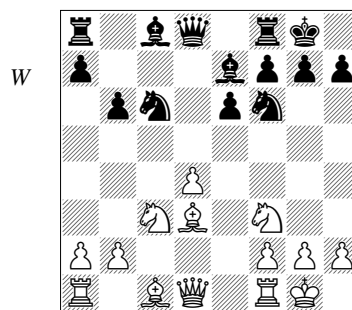


So we have a standard IQP position, but which lines can it be compared to?

White is actually a full tempo down compared to some well-established main lines (including ones from the Nimzo-Indian and the Semi-Tarrasch). For example, Sadler-Ortiz, Tromsø Olympiad 2014 went 1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♖b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♖d3 d5 6 ♖f3

c5 7 0-0 dxc4 8 ♖xc4 ♖c6 9 ♖d3 cxd4 10 exd4 ♖e7, where we have reached the game position with White to move. Another example is Babula-Illescas, Istanbul Olympiad 2012: 1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖f3 d5 4 ♖c3 c5 5 cxd5 ♖xd5 6 e3 ♖c6 7 ♖d3 ♖e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♖e1 ♖f6!? 10 a3 cxd4 11 exd4, and we have the text position with the extra a3 for White (which, as will appear, is a very useful move).

10...b6 (D)



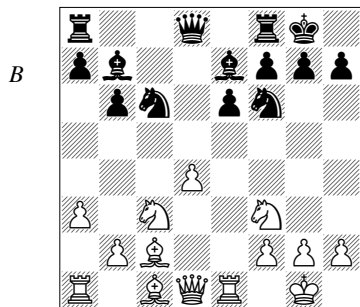
It should be noted that White sometimes obtains this position (with an 'extra' a3) from our chosen system, in particular where Black plays an early ...♖b4+ and later retreats to e7. As we have seen above, this manoeuvre is known from some lines of the Nimzo-Indian (and the Panov-Botvinnik Attack against the Caro-Kann), but it is hardly the most accurate here.

For instance: Sermek-Bukal, Croatian Team Ch, Pula 2001 went 1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 e6 3 c3 ♖c6 4 d4 cxd4 5 cxd4 d5 6 ♖c3 dxe4 7 ♖xe4 ♖b4+ 8 ♖c3 ♖f6 9 ♖d3 0-0 10 0-0 ♖e7; A.Kornev-Gleizerov, Kaluga 2003 went 1 e4

e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 ♗f6 4 ♕d3 c5 5 c3 ♗c6 6 ♗gf3 cxd4 7 cxd4 dxe4 8 ♗xe4 ♕b4+ 9 ♗c3 0-0 10 0-0 ♕e7. A. Kislinsky-Fröwis, Moscow 2012 went 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 c5 4 c3 ♗c6 5 ♗gf3 cxd4 6 cxd4 dxe4 7 ♗xe4 ♕b4+ 8 ♗c3 ♗f6 9 ♕d3 0-0 10 0-0 ♕e7.

All of the black players in the three games given above were rated over 2400 (Gleizerov is a strong GM and a French specialist) and, frankly, I find the game from 2012 particularly surprising, since this line has been known for a while. However, it does demonstrate that it is possible for players to become confused when facing this system, especially since it gives rise to a structure that is highly unusual for the French.

Incidentally, the three quoted games gave rise to interesting and thematic attacking play, which we shall now examine. 11 a3 b6 12 ♖e1 ♕b7 13 ♕c2 (D) and then:



a) 13...♖c8 14 ♗d3 and here:

a1) The naïve 14...♖e8? runs into the absolutely standard 15 d5!. This motif (with the black rook on c8 or a8)

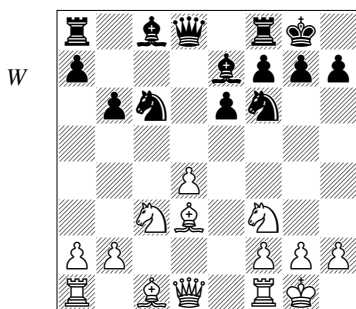
has been known for decades – the earliest and most famous example I know of is Petrosian-Balashov, USSR 1974. However, this doesn't stop experienced players from regularly falling for this idea (either in this exact position, or in similar ones); for instance, Karpov has fallen for it more than once.

a2) 14...g6 15 ♕h6 ♖e8 16 ♖ad1 ♗d5 17 h4 ♗xc3 18 bxc3 ♗a5 (the alternative 18...♗d5 is a good multipurpose move, directed against h5 and defending e6) 19 h5?! (19 ♕a4 is better, and at least avoids a disadvantage after 19...♕c6 20 ♕xc6 ♗xc6 21 h5) 19...♗c4? (Black falls for a simple shot; 19...♗d5 was necessary and good) 20 hxg6 hxg6 21 ♖xe6 ♕f6 (there's no time for 21...♗b2 since 22 ♖xg6+ will follow) 22 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 23 ♖e1 ♗d7 (Kislinsky-Fröwis, Moscow 2012) and now 24 ♕b3 is best, with the better game since a3 is immune as g6 would hang.

b) 13...♗a5 14 ♕g5 h6 15 ♕f4 ♗c4 16 ♗e5 ♗d6?! 17 ♗d3 ♗f5 18 ♖ad1 (White has put all his pieces on good squares while Black has achieved nothing – in particular, he hasn't exchanged any minor pieces) 18...♗d5 19 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 (after 19...♕xd5? 20 g4 ♕g5 21 gxf5 White wins a piece, since 21...♕xf4 22 f6 g6 23 ♗xg6 is mate in a few moves) 20 ♗h3! ♗xd4? (Black should try to change the character of the game with 20...♖ad8 21 ♕e4 ♗xe4 22 ♖xe4 ♕xe4, although his compensation for the queen doesn't appear to be fully sufficient) 21 ♕xh6!

(a thematic shot, which works perfectly in this position) 21...♖fd8 (after 21...gxf6 22 ♖g4+ followed by 23 ♜xd4 White wins material) 22 ♜xd4! ♖xd4 and now 23 ♙g5 was enough for a large advantage in Kornev-Gleizerov, Kaluga 2003, but 23 ♖h5!! wins on the spot; for instance, 23...♖f8 24 ♙h7+ ♗h8 25 ♙e4 ♖xe4 26 ♜xe4 ♙xe4 27 ♙g5+ ♗g8 28 ♙xe7 and White wins.

We now return to the position after 10...b6 (D):



11 a3 ♙b7 12 ♙c2 ♖d7

Teeuwen's lack of experience in IQP structures begins to show. d7 is an unusual square for the black queen, as it is potentially exposed to ♖e5 (perhaps in combination with ♙b5) and, importantly, finds it difficult to vacate the central files. d6 would be a better square, when the queen can drop back to b8 once the a8-rook has been developed to c8 or d8.

13 ♖d3

Setting up the standard line-up on the b1-h7 diagonal.

13...♜ad8

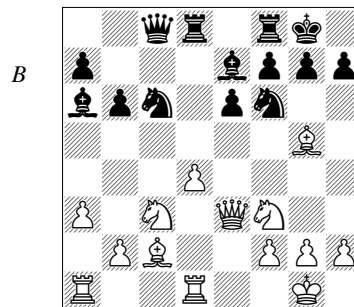
13...a5! would be a more efficient version of the ...♙a6 idea that was used in the game. After 14 ♜d1 ♙a6 15 ♖e3 the game is balanced.

Interestingly, going back to move 12, 12...♙a6 13 ♜e1 has been used with success by some strong GMs as Black.

14 ♜d1 ♖c8

Already I was becoming optimistic.

15 ♙g5 ♙a6 16 ♖e3 (D)



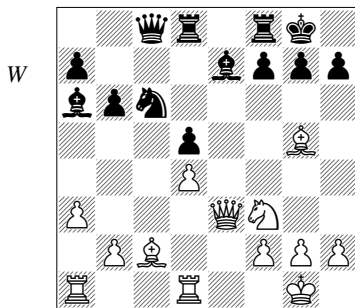
16...♙d5

16...h6 is critical, but Black is no longer able to equalize. After 17 ♙xf6! (the standard offer 17 ♙xh6?!, which would lead to a winning attack after 17...gxf6?? 18 ♖xh6, here fails to the simple 17...♗g4 →) 17...♙xf6 18 ♜ac1 it might seem as though Black has the bishop-pair and no weaknesses, but White's space advantage and more active pieces are more important here. White has strong pressure; for instance, 18...♙b7 19 ♗e4 ♙e7 20 b4 ♜d7 21 ♙b1 ♖e8 22 ♗g3 ♙d6 23 ♖d3 f5 (23...g6 24 ♗e4 is also promising for White) 24 ♜e1 and the pawn on e6 is weaker than the pawn on d4.

A neutral move such as 16...♖fe8 should be met simply with 17 ♖ac1, developing the last piece and retaining all the advantages of the white position.

17 ♜xd5 ♝xd5?

The symmetrical structure arising after 17...exd5 (D) favours the side with better-placed pieces, which tends to be White. Then:



a) 18 ♖ac1 f6 (18...♙xg5 19 ♜xg5 g6 20 ♙a4 and Black is struggling to hold his weaknesses together) 19 ♙f4 ♖fe8 20 ♜h4 ♙d6 (20...g5? loses to 21 ♙f5!, based on the beautiful point 21...gx4 22 ♖xf4 ♖b7 23 ♖xc6!! ♖xc6 24 ♖h6 followed by mate) 21 ♙f5 ♖c7 22 ♙xd6 ♖xd6 23 ♖c3 and Black should equalize with precise play.

b) 18 ♙xe7 ♖fe8 19 ♙xd8 ♖xe3 20 fxe3 ♖xd8 21 ♙d3 gives White good chances – the rooks will be able to penetrate on the c-file and it is hard for Black to generate an attack since his minor pieces are so far from the kingside.

18 ♙e4! ±

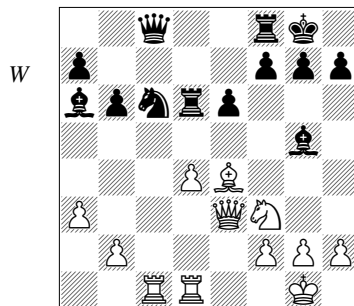
Black's scattered pieces are targets for White's attack, and White's initiative is already decisive.

18...♝d6

18...♙xg5 19 ♜xg5 forks d5 and h7, and so wins material.

19 ♖ac1 ♙xg5 (D)

This move walks into a nice version of the Greek Gift sacrifice, but there were no good options; for instance, after 19...f6 20 ♙f4 e5 21 dxe5 White wins a pawn while retaining much more active pieces.



20 ♙xh7+!

Not especially difficult, but I'll permit myself an exclamation mark since it was the third game of the day! Instead, 20 ♜xg5? h6 gives White nothing special.

20...♙xh7 21 ♜xg5+ ♙g8

21...♙g6 22 ♖g3 ♙h6 23 ♖xd6, taking a rook and winning the knight on c6, is one of the tactical points.

22 ♖h3 ♖fd8 23 ♖h7+ ♙f8 24 ♖h8+ ♙e7 25 ♖xg7 ♖f8

There is more than one winning continuation here, but the line I chose is quite thematic.