

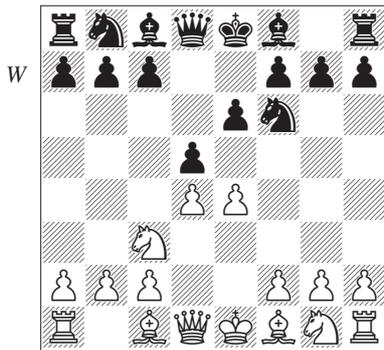
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6 Steinitz Variation

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 (D)

By playing 3... Nf6 Black again attacks the e4-pawn, forcing its advance or exchange. The Winawer Variation, 3... Bb4 , is the main alternative, and has the same initial goal.



In this chapter we shall examine 4 e5, but White can also maintain the status quo in the centre by 4 Bg5 (Chapter 7).

Besides these two main possibilities, the rarely played 4 Bd3 should be briefly mentioned. However, in this case Black easily secures a comfortable game: 4...c5 5 exd5 (5 Nf3 cxd4 6 Nxd4 e5 7 Nf3 Bb4) 5...cxd4 6 Nxb5 (6 Bb5+ Bd7 and now 7 Bxd7+ Kxd7 8 Kxd4 Nc6 9 Kd1 exd5 or 7 Kxd4 Bxb5 8 Nxb5 Nxd5) 6... Nxd5 7 Nf3 Bb4+ .

We should also note that the pawn exchange 4 exd5 exd5 transposes to Section 3.3.

4 e5 Nfd7

White can now decide among several schemes of development:

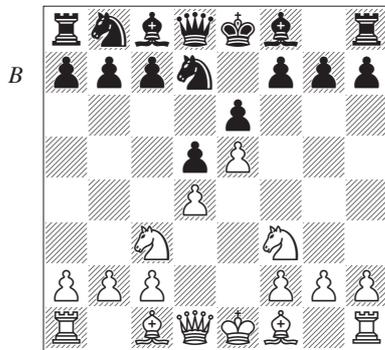
- 5 Nf3 (Section 6.1) is an idea of a type we have seen before: White seeks to establish piece control over the central squares. Although this variation enjoys some popularity, Black has no real trouble.
- In the line 5 Nce2 (Section 6.2) White demonstrates diametrically opposite intentions – he is going to support his pawn-centre with the moves c3 and f4. This leads to a very complicated opening battle with chances for both sides.
- 5 f4 c5 6 Nf3 Nc6 7 Bc3 (Section 6.3) is the most dangerous continuation for Black. He has quite a wide choice of possibilities, of which I have elected to focus on 7...cxd4 8 Nxd4 Bc5 (usually very sharp), 7...cxd4 8 Nxd4 Bb6 (the most forcing) and the calmer 7... Bc7 .

6.1

5 Nf3 (D)

5 Kh5 ?! is a speculative move without any real substance. 5...c5 6 Nf3 cxd4 (6... Nc6 ? allows White to demonstrate the one idea behind his queen

move: 7 g5 g6 8 f3 f5 9 xe6 dxe5 10 xd5 gives White the advantage) 7 xd4 (7 b5 is met by 7... c6) 7... b6 (7... g6 plans 8 $\text{g4}!$ xe5 9 g3 bc6 , but 8 $\text{g5}!$ is a better try) 8 b3 c6 leaves Black with the initiative.



White is willing to allow the exchange of his pawns on d4 and e5.

5...c5 6 dxc5

Black has no difficulty after 6 b5 c6 ; e.g., 7 dxc5 xc5 8 0-0 0-0, 7 xc6 bxc6 8 0-0 e7 (or 8... cxd4) or 7 0-0 cxd4 8 e2 (8 xd4 is well met by 8... $\text{dxe5}!$ 9 e1 d6) 8... a6 9 xc6 bxc6 10 xd4 $\text{c5}!$? (10... c7 is unclear, Barle-Pcola, London 2009) 11 f4 and now Black can choose 11... b7 or 11... h6 .

The active development of the other white bishop by 6 g5 also has little impact: 6... b6 (6... $\text{a5}!$?) 7 dxc5 xc5 8 d2 c6 (Black can also try 8... $\text{h6}!$?) 9 h4 g5 10 g3 xb2) 9 0-0-0 (9 a4 is met by 9... xf2+ 10 xf2 b4+ , and 9 b5 by 9... d4 10 xc6 xb2) 9... a5 10 a3 0-0 11

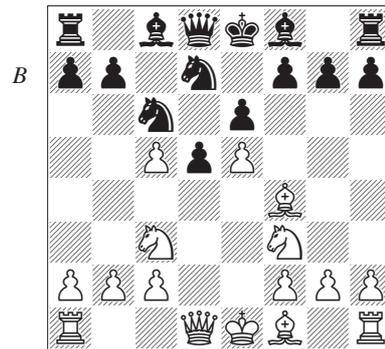
f6 e7 (11... $\text{h6}!$?) 12 xe7 xe7 led to equality in Zdebskaya-E.Danielian, Romanian Women's Team Ch, Eforie Nord 2009.

6...c6

Before taking on c5, Black wants to provoke 7 f4 , although 6... xc5 and 6... xc5 are viable too.

7 f4 (D)

Approximate equality arises after 7 $\text{g5}!$? e7 (7... $\text{a5}!$?) 8 a3 xc5 9 b5 allows White the initiative) 8 xe7 xe7 9 b5 xc5 10 0-0 0-0 11 e1 a6 , as in Haik-Eingorn, Metz 1997.



We have reached the basic position of this line. The standard variation now runs 7... xc5 8 d3 f6 9 xf6 , with Black choosing between 9... xf6 and 9... xf6 . However, other methods of seeking counterplay are also possible, in which Black is in no hurry to liquidate the e5-pawn by playing ... f6 , or even avoids it altogether. These alternative plans feature activity on the queenside or (given the opportunity) on the kingside with ... g5 . The e5-pawn

can prove a useful target; not only can the white pieces become tied to its defence, but it also blocks lines that they would like to use. Thus we shall examine the following moves:

6.1.1: 7...a6 68

6.1.2: 7...♞xc5 68

6.1.3: 7...♙xc5 69

6.1.1

7...a6

This preliminary move is useful for Black in practically all cases, and keeps the possibility of taking on c5 with either knight or bishop. Then:

a) 8 ♙d3 ♞xc5 9 0-0 ♙e7 is considered in note 'b' to White's 8th move in Section 6.1.2.

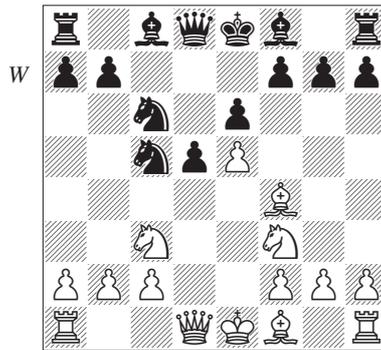
b) After 8 a3 ♙xc5 9 ♙d3 f6 (9...h6!?) 10 exf6 ♞xf6, the inclusion of the moves a3 and ...a6 turns out not to be in White's favour.

c) 8 ♖d2 ♙xc5 9 ♙d3 (9 a3 0-0) 9...b5 (9...h6!?) 10 h4 ♙b4 11 a3 ♙a5 12 b4 ♙c7, Zakharov-V.Gapriendashvili, Moscow 1997) 10 h4 (10 0-0 h6 is unclear) 10...♖b6 11 ♙f1 f6 12 exf6 ♞xf6 gave Black the initiative in the game Nepomniashchy-Volkov, Novokuznetsk 2008.

d) 8 ♞a4!? is more of a challenge to Black's idea. After 8...♞xc5 9 ♞xc5 ♙xc5 10 ♖d2 (or 10 c3 0-0 11 ♖d2, but 10 ♙d3?! is weaker in view of 10...♖b6 11 0-0 ♖xb2) the game is approximately equal, but the exchange of the passive c3-knight is nevertheless to White's benefit.

6.1.2

7...♞xc5 (D)



Now White faces a major decision.

8 h4

Making use of the fact that he has not yet castled, White makes an aggressive advance on the kingside. This is a risky plan that can easily rebound on White. Other moves:

a) 8 ♙e2 is too meek. After 8...♙e7 9 0-0 Black can choose 9...a6 or 9...0-0.

b) The standard continuation is 8 ♙d3 ♙e7 9 0-0, but it does not promise White an advantage. One move is 9...a6, when 10 ♚e1 g5 11 ♙g3 h5 12 h3 ♖b6 gives Black the initiative, while 10 ♖d2 0-0 11 a3 f5 12 exf6 ♙xf6 was satisfactory for Black in I.Schneider-Ivanchuk, European Clubs Cup, Ohrid 2009. The simple 9...0-0 10 ♚e1 ♞xd3 11 ♖xd3 ♙d7 is fine for Black too, while 9...g5!? is interesting; then 10 ♙e3 (10 ♙g3 h5 11 h3 ♖b6 gives Black the initiative, Huerga Leache-Jerez Perez, Barcelona 2006) 10...♞xd3 11 ♖xd3 is unclear.

c) 8 ♖d2 a6 (8...♙e7!?) 9 0-0 b5 10 ♖e3 is similar to our main line below, and indeed White should probably prefer precisely this move-order.

d) Attacking the c5-knight by 8 a3 e7 (8...a6!?) 9 d2 (after 9 b4?! d7, 10 b5 a5 11 d3 c7 12 e2 c4 gives Black the initiative, while 10 b5 0-0 11 c4?! a5 is also pleasant for him, Aronian-Lputian, Erevan 2001) 9...a6 10 b4 d7 does not provide any benefit for White and only weakens his position.

8...e7

Black brings the idea of liquidating White's e-pawn by ...f6 back into the picture. He can also be quite happy after 8...a6, which practically rules out queenside castling by White. 9 h5?! and 9 d2?! are both well met by 9...d4, but 9 a3 is more natural. After 9...b5 10 h5 h6 11 b4 (White should avoid 11 h4? d4 and 11 h3?! c7, while 11 d4!? e7 leads to unclear play) 11...d7 12 d3 Black can choose 12...e7 or 12...c7. Black can also combine the two ideas by 9...e7!?, meeting 10 b4 by 10...d7 and 10 h3 with 10...0-0.

9 d2

Whether he likes it or not, it is best to evacuate the king from the centre. After 9 h5 (or 9 h3?! b6) 9...f5 (9...0-0! and 9...b6! are also interesting) 10 h6 g6 Black takes the initiative.

9...a6

The beginning of a pawn advance. Piece-play by 9...0-0 10 0-0 b6 (or 10...f5!? 11 exf6 xf6) may even be more effective.

10 0-0 b5 11 e3

The careless 11 d3?! b4 12 e2 b3 13 cxb3 b4 leads to hardship for White.

11...b4 12 e2 0-0 13 ed4 d7 14 h5

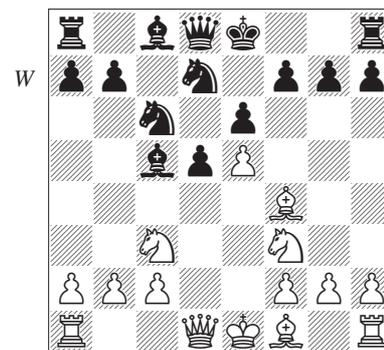
Or 14 g5 xd4 15 xd4 a5 16 b1 a4, as in de Firmian-Raičević, Lone Pine 1980.

14...xd4 15 xd4 a5 16 b1 a4

Black's chances are preferable in this double-edged position, G.Guseinov-Monin, St Petersburg 2000.

6.1.3

7...xc5 (D)



8 d3 h6!? 9 h3

White must take Black's ...g5 idea seriously; for example, 9 0-0 g5!? 10 g3 h5 11 h4 g4 12 g5 dxe5 13 e1?! (13 b5 is unclear) 13...f6 14 xe5 xe5 15 xe5 fxe5 16 g6+ f8 17 ce4 (Faizrahmanov-Yuzhakov, Belgorod 2008) 17...b6 with an advantage for Black. The prophylactic retreat 9 g3 does not completely solve this problem: 9...a6 10 0-0 (10 a3 a7 11 b4?! d4) 10...g5!? (10...b5 is also possible) 11 e1 g4 12 d2 g5 is unclear. The attempt to castle queenside by 9 e2 a6 10 0-0-0 (10