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My Opening Questions

I use the following questions to structure my thinking process systematically:

- What pawn-structures and position-types can arise?
- What positional plans and tactical ideas do White and Black have?
- What do White's and Black's dream positions and advantageous standard positions look like?
- Which are the key positions and key moves? (Here I add concrete variations that illustrate the critical positions.)
- What are the most common combinative themes?
- What types of ending can arise from the opening? When are they good for White and when for Black?
- What variations do I have to learn by heart? (Often it is sharp forced lines with aggressive themes.)
- What variations are critical for the opening? (These are the variations that theory judges the most difficult to face.)

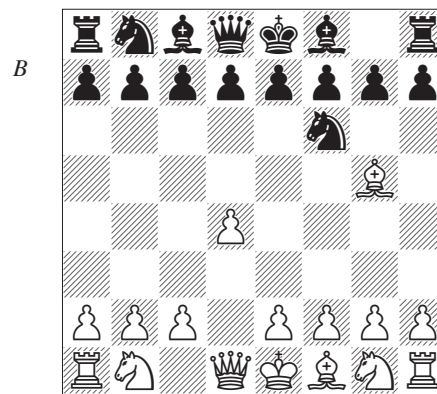
Trompowsky – A Blank Area on the Map?

There is an explanation for my embarrassing opening play in the games of Chapter 2. The temptation is to play an opening where theory is still in its childhood and where I have several of my own ideas and novelties. But the answer to the question is nevertheless "No!". Since Anand played the variation against Karpov in the final of the FIDE World Championship in 1998 a lot has happened, as the popularity of a variation is connected to whether the world elite are playing it. Probably there is no uncharted area on the chess map, only areas that are rather less explored.

I have always liked the feeling of being an explorer in the opening and have tried to find exciting and playable openings that have not been analysed to death. Some are in my normal repertoire and some I use as a surprise weapon. To you and to my opponents in the games of Chapter 2, my love for the Trompowsky is no secret.

Time to prepare with a chessboard, pen and paper.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♙g5 (D)



This is the initial position of the Trompowsky. Immediately you notice that Black has several moves to choose from, which give rise to various pawn-structures, plans and ideas. White's opening is often played to avoid the thoroughly analysed variations of the King's Indian and the Grünfeld. White therefore normally meets 2...g6 with 3 ♙xf6. This gives a position where Black has doubled pawns but the bishop-pair. Black wants to open up the centre to let his bishops come to life, and White wants a more solid structure in the centre to play against the bishops and the weakened pawn-structure. A totally different idea is to play 3 e3 followed by f4 and a type of Stonewall position, where the dark-squared bishop is outside the pawn-chain.

Probably you have already written down on your piece of paper that a characteristic of the Trompowsky is that it can give rise to several different types of game. To understand and to be ready to play various position-types is therefore a prerequisite for playing the Trompowsky. In addition to the 2...g6 variation, there are three common ways to meet it. I will now try to give you the basic ideas by showing three of my own games. To the comments I add the notes that I wrote down after the games. Don't believe my comments blindly, but try to draw your own conclusions.

Jesper Hall – Igor Khenkin

La Coruña 1992

The reasons why you play a certain opening can have an almost banal history; perhaps a friend once showed you a trap five minutes before an important game. However, the reason that some openings stay with you throughout your career is linked to a feeling of being at home in the positions that arise, and of course to successes.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♙g5

I was not even an IM when this game was played and the strong Russian grandmaster glanced up quickly before he delivered the well-known theoretical moves.

2...♗e4

This set-up became especially popular after the game Van der Wiel-Kasparov, Interzonal tournament, Moscow 1982, where White got crushed.

3 ♙f4

3 ♙h4 is not so popular any more. Black seems to have at least equal play in the sharp variations after 3...c5 4 f3 g5 5 fxe4 gxh4 6 e3 when he can continue with ...♙h6 or ...♙g7 and exert pressure on the centre with ...♗c6 and ...♞b6. 3 h4 was once a speciality

of Julian Hodgson, but my opinion is that the move is only effective if Black takes the bishop. After normal development, h4 might easily become a weakness.

3...c5 4 f3 ♞a5+

With the idea of destroying the coordination of the white pieces. 4...♗f6 5 dxc5 ♞a5+ 6 ♗c3 ♞xc5 7 ♞d2 gives a position from which I have won many games. White continues with e4, castles queenside, and has good attacking prospects whether Black fianchettoes the bishop with ...g6 or tries some other structure.

5 c3

After 5 ♗d2 ♗f6, Black threatens both the d4-pawn and to play ...♗d5.

5...♗f6 6 d5

6 ♗d2 cxd4 7 ♗b3 ♞b6 (7...♞f5 8 ♙xb8 ♞xb8 9 ♞xd4 gives White a dangerous initiative as e5 is about to follow) 8 ♞xd4 ♗c6 9 ♞xb6 axb6 10 ♗d4 e5 11 ♗xc6 exf4 12 ♗d4 gives a sharp ending where the question is whether Black's activity, open files for the rooks, bishop-pair and the strong e3-square compensate for his miserable pawn-structure.

6...♞b6 7 b3

This was my own move and a novelty when the game was played. Now, some years later, I believe that White should play 7 ♙c1.

7...e6 8 e4!?

Hitherto, only 8 dxe6 fxe6 had been suggested, giving Black a good game with ...d5, ...♙e7/d6, ...♗c6 and ...0-0.

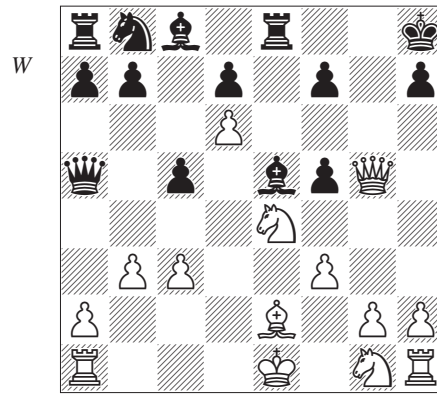
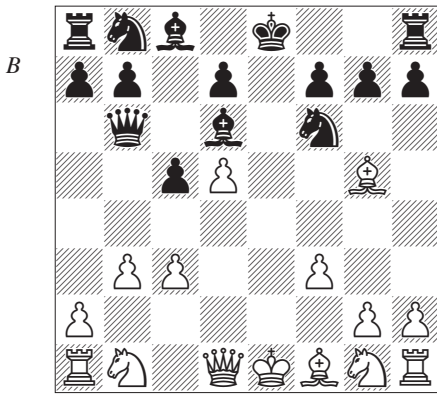
8...exd5 9 exd5 ♙d6!

To gain a tempo and prevent d6. Black wants to exchange the dark-squared bishops as the squares f2, e3 and c3 will lose their defender.

10 ♙g5 (D)

10...0-0?

My opponent played this move quickly, but it is a mistake as he unnecessarily gives



himself a bad pawn-structure. He thought that the attacking chances on the dark squares compensated for this. However, the pieces on the queenside are so crippled that the attack fades out before it has even started. Current theory says that Black is supposed to have the better chances after 10...♙e7 as White has problems with development. The pawns on d5 and c3 are weak, while Black has natural moves like ...0-0 and ...d6 at his disposal.

11 ♙xf6 ♜e8+ 12 ♙e2 gxf6 13 ♘d2!

After this move Black's position is already critical. White threatens ♘c4, and the even more dangerous ♘e4.

13...♞c7 14 ♘e4 ♙e5

After 14...♙g7 15 ♘h3 it is hard to see how Black will be able to get his queenside pieces out. If the d6-bishop moves, I will play d6, and on ...f5 White takes on d6 and plays ♞d2 with a more or less winning position.

15 d6 ♞a5 16 ♞d2

White threatens f4. Black therefore makes a last desperate effort to attack.

16...f5 17 ♞g5+ ♙h8? (D)

17...♙f8 is better, though White retains a strong attack.

18 ♞xf5!

This counterattack decides the game. ♘g5 is a move to take seriously.

18...♙xc3+ 19 ♙f1 ♞xe4

19...♙xa1 20 ♘g5 ♙g7 21 ♞xh7+ ♙f6 22 f4! ♞e7 23 ♘e4+ ♞xe4 24 ♞h6+ ♙f5 25 g4#.

20 ♞xe4 ♙xa1 21 ♙d3 ♙g7 22 ♞xh7+ ♙f8

This move both surprised and pleased me as I had been absorbed in analysing the consequences of 22...♙f6 23 ♞f5+ ♙g7 24 ♞g5+ ♙f8 25 ♞e7+ ♙g7 26 ♙c4; I came to the conclusion that White won after 26...♞d2 27 ♞xf7+ ♙h6 28 g4 ♙d4 29 ♘e2 with h4 and g5+ to follow.

23 ♙c4 1-0

The end could have been 23...♙g7 24 ♞h5 ♙g8 25 ♞xf7+ ♙h7 26 ♙d3+ ♙h8 27 ♞e8+ and mate next move.

My Notes

In this variation Black avoids the doubled pawns by playing ...♘e4 and wants to put the d4-pawn under pressure by means of ...c5 and ...♞b6. The check on a5 is played to disturb White's development and create weaknesses. White wants to coordinate his pieces and exploit Black's lost tempi with the queen. If White succeeds in this then he can start a