

Contents

Symbols	4
Bibliography	5
Introduction	6
1 Rare Second Moves for White	8
2 The Centre Game and the Danish Gambit	12
3 The Vienna Game (and the Bishop's Opening)	17
4 The King's Gambit: Introduction and Rare 3rd Moves for White	36
5 The King's Gambit: The Bishop's Gambit	45
6 The King's Gambit: The Knight's Gambit	56
7 2 ♘f3 ♘c6: Rare Third Moves for White	79
8 The Ponziani Opening	81
9 The Göring Gambit	91
10 The Scotch Game	99
11 The Belgrade Gambit	121
12 The Scotch Four Knights Game	127
13 The Spanish Four Knights Game	142
14 The Two Knights Defence: Introduction	159
15 The Two Knights Defence: 4 d4 exd4 Introduction	174
16 The Two Knights Defence: 4 d4 exd4 5 0-0 ♘xe4	190
17 The Two Knights Defence: The Max Lange Attack	198
18 The Two Knights Defence: 4 ♘g5	207
Index of Variations	221

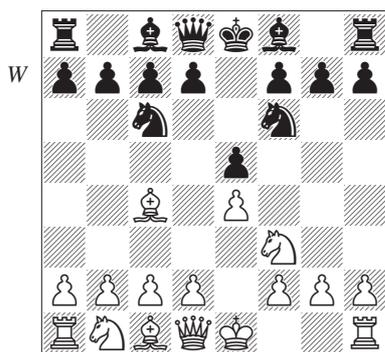
14 The Two Knights Defence: Introduction

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙c4

We now move on to the traditional Italian Game. Throughout history this opening has always been very popular, although at the very highest levels the Ruy Lopez has gradually superseded it. Nevertheless, at all other levels, White's directness has a very appealing quality. With 3 ♙c4 White prepares to castle and puts his bishop on an ideal diagonal, where it bears down on Black's Achilles Heel on f7. The Italian Game is attractive to all types of players as it can lead to both attacking and sacrificial play, as well as slow, positional, manoeuvring games.

I'm recommending the Two Knights Defence:

3...♘f6 (D)



This is probably the most combative way of meeting the Italian Game. Black immediately counterattacks by hitting the e4-pawn, but in doing so allows White some enticing possibilities including 4 ♘g5 and 4 d4. In this chapter we consider all other moves.

A Quick Summary of the Recommended Lines

By far the most important of White's alternatives to the main lines (4 ♘g5 and 4 d4) is 4 d3 (Line C), which is the modern positional approach against the Two Knights. White defends the e4-pawn and plans to play the position in a similar way to the slow d3 lines of the Ruy Lopez. While not being immediately threatening to Black, these lines at least give White positions rich in possibilities, where the stronger player has a good chance of outplaying his opponent. Lines C1, C2 and C3 are all of about equal importance. In Lines C2 and C3, Black's main decision seems to be whether to lunge out with ...d5, or whether to restrict himself to ...d6. In lines with ...d5 Black can often try to claim the initiative, but must always be careful about attacks on his e5-pawn. Lines with ...d6 are

safer, but are less likely to cause White immediate problems.

The Theory of the Two Knights Defence: 4th Move Alternatives for White

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♘c6 3 ♙c4 ♗f6

As well as 4 d4 (Chapters 15-17) and 4 ♗g5 (Chapter 18), White has:

A: 4 ♗c3 160

B: 4 0-0 162

C: 4 d3 163

Less important moves include:

a) 4 c3? (with good intentions of building a centre, but there are more pressing concerns, like the defence of the e4-pawn) 4...♗xe4 (naturally!) 5 ♖e2 d5 and now:

a1) 6 ♙xd5?! ♖xd5 7 c4 ♗d4 8 cxd5 ♗xe2 9 ♖xe2 ♙d6 and White's opening has been a disaster, Hennes-Kaestner, Hauenstein 1991.

a2) 6 ♙b5 tries to make the best of a bad job, but Black still retains everything after 6...f6 7 d4 ♖d6 8 dxe5 fxe5, as 9 ♗bd2 ♗xd2 10 ♖xe5+? loses to 10...♖xe5+ 11 ♗xe5 ♗e4 12 ♗xc6 a6 13 ♙a4 ♙d7.

b) 4 ♖e2 isn't a bad move, but it does commit the queen to e2 rather early. That said, e2 can be a reasonable square for the white queen, especially after ♖fd1, c3 and d4, so this plan must be treated with some respect. 4...♙e7 5 c3 0-0 6 0-0 and now:

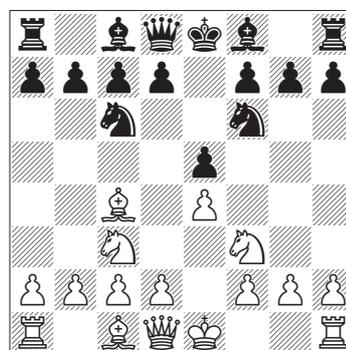
b1) After 6...d6, Barua-Smejkal, Novi Sad OL 1990 continued 7 d3?! ♗a5! 8 ♗bd2 ♗xc4 9 ♗xc4 ♖e8 10 h3 ♙e6 and Black was absolutely fine. I don't really understand why White would want to give away the light-squared bishop so easily. Surely 7 d4 ♙g4 8 ♖d1 is more testing.

b2) Black could attempt to play a Marshall-style gambit with 6...d5!?. The early white queen move, coupled with c3, means that there is certainly some justification to Black's pawn offer. Following 7 exd5 ♗xd5 8 ♗xe5 ♗f4 9 ♖e3 ♗xe5 10 ♖xf4 ♙d6 Black has reasonable compensation.

A)

4 ♗c3 (D)

B



4...♗xe4!

Once again, the fork trick can be used to good effect.

5 ♗xe4

5 ♙xf7+?! just plays into Black's hands. The slight discomfort felt by the black king is easily outweighed by

the acquisition of the pawn-centre after 5...♟xf7 6 ♞xe4 d5. White is worse following both 7 ♞eg5+ ♟g8 8 d3 h6 9 ♞h3 ♟g4 and 7 ♞g3 e4 8 ♞g1 ♟c5.

5 0-0 is playable, and it transposes to 4 0-0 ♞xe4 5 ♞c3 (Line B).

5...d5 6 ♟d3

Other moves do not impress:

a) 6 ♟b5? dxe4 7 ♞xe5 ♟g5! and Black is clearly better.

b) 6 d4?! dxc4 7 d5 ♞d4! (much stronger than *ECO*'s 7...♞e7 8 ♞c3 c6 9 0-0 ♞xd5 10 ♞xe5 ♞xc3 11 ♟f3 ♟e6 12 ♟xc3, which was only equal in Cordel-Scupli, 1905) 8 ♞xd4 ♟xd5! 9 ♟f3 ♟xd4 10 ♟g5 f5! (West-Flear, British Ch (Edinburgh) 1985) and now Flear gives White's best try as 11 ♞c3 ♟g4 12 ♟xg4 fxg4 13 0-0-0 ♟d7 14 ♟he1 ♟d6 15 ♞e4 0-0 16 ♞xd6 cxd6 17 ♟xd6 ♟c6, although Black still holds the significant advantage of the extra pawn.

6...dxe4 7 ♟xe4 ♟d6 8 d4

After 8 ♟xc6+ bxc6 9 d4 Black can transpose into the main line with 9...exd4, or try 9...e4!?. Also possible is 8 0-0 0-0, after which we have transposed to the note to White's 8th move in Line B, Chapter 13 (with colours reversed).

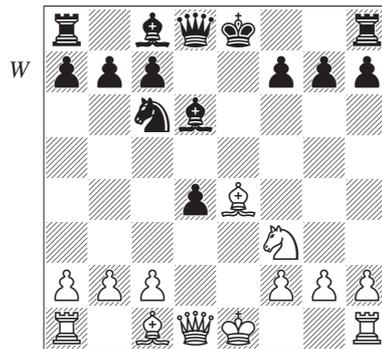
8...exd4 (D)

8...♞xd4 is a very solid alternative. The variation continues 9 ♞xd4 exd4 10 ♟xd4 0-0 11 ♟e3 (not 11 0-0?? ♟xh2+!) 11...♟e7 12 0-0-0 and now:

a) 12...♟e8 13 ♟he1 ♟e6 14 ♟d3?! (*ECO* gives 14 ♟d5 as equal, while 14 ♟xb7!? ♟ab8 15 ♟c6 ♟a3!? 16 ♟xe8

♟xb2+ 17 ♟xb2 ♟xb2 18 ♟xb2 ♟xe8 looks quite unclear) 14...♟ad8 15 ♟e2 ♟f6 16 ♟h5 h6 17 ♟a5 ♟g4 18 f3 ♟xe4 19 fx4 ♟xd1 20 ♟xd1 a6 21 e5 ♟f5 22 ♟c3 ♟e7 23 ♟xd8+ ♟xd8 and Black is slightly better due to White's isolated e-pawn, Tarrasch-Marshall, Breslau 1912.

b) 12...♟e5 13 ♟c4 ♟f6 14 ♟d4 ♟e6 15 ♟c3 ♟xd4 16 ♟xd4 ♟g5+ 17 ♟b1 ♟ad8 with an equal position, Tartakower-Szabo, Groningen 1946.



9 ♟xc6+

9 ♞xd4 is less accurate. For a start Black can consider the admittedly cheeky pawn-grab 9...♟e7!? 10 0-0 ♟xh2+ 11 ♟xh2 ♟d6+ 12 ♟g1 ♞xd4, against which I can't find anything really troubling. Alternatively Black can seize the initiative with 9...0-0!?:

a) 10 ♞xc6 bxc6 can become very dangerous for White; e.g. 11 ♟h5? g6 12 ♟f3 ♟e8 13 ♟e3 ♟h4 14 ♟xc6 ♟g4! wins for Black. Even after the stronger 11 ♟e3 ♟b8 12 ♟b1 ♟e7 13 ♟xc6 ♟d8 Black has menacing threats.

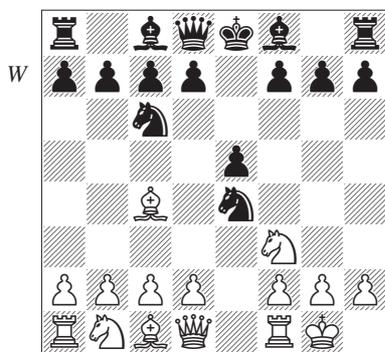
b) 10 ♖e3 ♗h4! 11 ♙xc6 bxc6 and now 12 g3?! ♗h3 13 ♗e2 c5 14 ♗b3 ♙g4 15 ♗f1 ♗h5 16 ♗d2 ♗fe8 was extremely grim for White in Tarrasch-Lasker, Berlin (3) 1916. Even after Lasker's suggested improvement of 12 ♗d2 ♗b8 13 0-0-0 c5 14 ♗f3 ♗a4 15 a3 I'd still take Black and the two bishops.

9...bxc6 10 ♗xd4 0-0 11 0-0 c5 12 ♗c3 ♙b7 13 b3 ♗d7 14 ♙b2 f6 15 ♗ad1 ♗f5 16 ♗c4+ ♗h8

Black's bishop-pair on an open board fully compensates for his slight structural defects, Tartakower-Bogoljubow, Bad Pistyan 1922.

B)

4 0-0 ♗xe4 (D)



Why not grab a central pawn?

5 ♗c3

This move, which introduces the Boden-Kieseritzky Gambit, is probably White's most promising choice here. In fact other moves see White struggling to equalize:

a) 5 ♗e1? d5 6 ♙b5 ♙c5 7 d4 exd4 8 ♗xd4 0-0, with a clear advantage to Black, who is simply a pawn up.

b) 5 ♙d5 ♗f6 6 ♙xc6 dxc6 7 ♗xe5 ♙d6 and Black develops smoothly, with the bishop-pair in the bank.

c) 5 ♗e2 d5 6 ♙b5 ♙g4 7 d3 ♙xf3 8 gxf3 ♗f6 9 ♗xe5+ ♙e7 10 ♙xc6+ bxc6 11 ♗e1 ♗d6 12 ♙f4 0-0! 13 ♗d2 ♗h5 14 ♙g3 ♗xg3 15 ♗xd6 cxd6 16 hxg3 ♙f6 17 c3 ♗fb8 18 ♗ab1 ♗b7 and Black has a slight pull, Djurhuus-Gausel, Asker 1997.

d) 5 d4!? d5 (5...exd4 leads us to Chapter 16) 6 ♙b5 and now Black has a choice:

d1) 6...♙d7 7 ♙xc6 bxc6 8 ♗xe5 ♙d6 9 f3 ♙xe5 10 dxe5 ♗c5 11 b3 ♗e6 12 f4 f5 was roughly level in Gunsberg-Chigorin, Havana 1890.

d2) 6...exd4 7 ♗xd4 ♙d7 8 ♗e1 ♙d6 (8...♗xd4 9 ♙xd7+ ♗xd7 10 ♗xd4 c5 11 ♗e5+ is annoying for Black) 9 ♙xc6 bxc6 10 f3 ♙xh2+ 11 ♗xh2 ♗h4+ 12 ♗g1 ♗f2+ with a perpetual check.

d3) 6...♙g4!? looks reasonable, intending to meet 7 dxe5 by 7...♙c5, with active play.

5...♗xc3

The safest move. After 5...♗f6, 6 ♗e1 ♙e7 7 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 8 ♗xe5 d6 leads to equality, while 6 d4!? e4 7 ♙g5 d5 8 ♗xd5 ♙e6 (8...♗a5!?) 9 ♗xf6+ gxf6 10 ♙xe6 fxe6 11 ♗d2 fxg5 12 ♗h5+ ♗d7 13 ♗xe4 gave White some attacking chances for the piece in Z.Bašagić-Gligorić, Yugoslav Ch 1984.

6 dxc3 f6!?