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9 The King’s Indian Formation

In this chapter we shall look at kingside fianchetto lines where Black leaves his d-pawn at d6 (or even d7). Illustrative Games 17–19 are all typical examples of pressure against the c7/d6-pawns after Black has played ...e5. Game 20 is an example of play against a temporarily disorganized queenside, while Games 21 and 22 demonstrate play against queenside pawn weaknesses. Game 23 illustrates the extra queenside pressure provided by a semi-open a-file.

Chapter Outline

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9C: 2...g6 3 e3 Ïg7 (4 Ïf3 d6) 132

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9E: 2...g6 3 e3 Ïg7 4 Ïf3 0-0 5 Ïe2 133

9F: 2...g6 3 e3 Ïg7 4 Ïf3 0-0 5 Ïe2 d6 6 0-0 c5 7 e3 Ïb6 134

9G: 2...g6 3 e3 Ïg7 4 Ïf3 0-0 5 Ïe2 d6 6 0-0 Ïfd7/Ïc6 137

9H: 2...g6 3 e3 Ïg7 4 Ïf3 0-0 5 Ïe2 138

9I: 2...g6 3 e3 Ïg7 4 Ïf3 0-0 5 Ïe2 d6 6 0-0 Ïbd7 7 h3 3 Ïe4

9J: 2...g6 3 e3 Ïg7 4 Ïf3 0-0 5 Ïe2 d6 6 0-0 Ïbd7 7 h3 Ïe8 8 c4 e5 9 Ïh2 Ïe4 140

9A: 2...g6 Introduction

(1 d4 Ïf6)

2 Ïf4

As will soon become clear, there are certain advantages to this move against most of Black’s opening systems, including the King’s Indian. However, it isn’t all glory. The main drawback is that by declaring his intention to play the London so early, White allows Black to design his set-up solely to meet the typical London strategy.

2...g6 (D)

Most likely this is the move of a King’s Indian player. And probably an optimistic one too – expecting sooner or later to gain a tempo on the exposed f4-bishop by playing ...e5. He of course realizes (and probably expects) that White can enter orthodox London lines with 3 Ïf3. We shall have a closer look at that position below, but we shall concentrate on 3 e3. Please note that 2...d6 followed by a quick ...g6 is an alternative and in some ways more precise path to the King’s Indian.

3 Ïf3

In this section we shall only examine positions that couldn’t normally occur after 3 e3 followed by 4 Ïf3.

3 Ïd2 may be imprecise as in some lines White should play c4 and Ïc3 rather than Ïbd2. It’s sometimes played in the hope that Black will respond to the ‘threat’ of e4 by 3...d5, leading to a Grünfeld formation. We consider that an insufficient motivation – partly because the Grünfeld formation is one of the hardest to prove an advantage against, but primarily because the Pirc-like formation with pawns at e4 and d4, a knight at d2 and a bishop at f4 isn’t attractive for White; compare with 3 Ïf3 Ïg7 4 Ïbd2 below.
This somewhat strange-looking move may be a reason to prefer 3 e3 over 3 g3. The alternatives will mostly transpose:

a) 3...d6 4 e3 – 3 e3 d6 4 g3.

b) 3...g7 4 gbd2?! (4 e3 – 3 e3 g7 4 g3) 4...0-0 5 e4 d6 is rather similar to the Pirc, but the knight is passive at d2 and without the possibility to play wd2 and wh6, the bishop will probably be more vulnerable than menacing on f4. There is a little tactical trick worth noting: 6 d3? (the modest 6 c3 c6 7 c2 is better) 6...c6 7 0-0 (7 c3 e5 8 c3 c6 9 c3 exd4 10 exd4 gxe4 11 xg7 xg2 12 fxe8 xh1 13 xh6 (13 xh6 xd6 14 xd1 =) 13...wh4 !

c) 3...c5 may remain independent. After 4 e3 (D) we have:

\[
\begin{align*}
&c1) 4...g7 – 3 e3 g7 4 g3 c5. \\
&c2) 4...xd4 5 exd4 g7 6 c3 0-0 7 h3 d6 8 c3 e6 9 0-0 xd6 10 e2 c6 11 c3 c8 12 c4 wc7 13 c3 = Pacleszka-Wojtkiewicz, Bydgoszcz 2001. \\
&c3) 4...wh6? 5 c3 and then: \\
&c31) 5...d6 6 b5+ c7 7 a4 a6 8 a5 wc7 9 c2 g7 10 0-0 0-0 11 d5 = Vera-Popović, Lucerne Wcht 1989 (see Illustrative Game 20). \\
&c32) 5...xb2? 6 c5 and now: \\
&c321) 6...a6 7 a3! d4 8 b1 wb2 9 c5 wc6 10 f3 c6 (10...d6 11 c4 d5 12 xfx6 dxc4 13 d5 wc6 14 0-0 +) 11 dxc5 wc5 12 c4 xd1+ 13 xd1 e6 14 d6+ xd6 15 exd6 and although material is even, White is obviously winning – mainly because of Black’s dark-square weaknesses and missing development. \\
&c322) 6...c5 7 d2! also seems a close to forced win for White: 7...a6 (7...d6 8 b1 wa2 9 c4 wa5 10 a1 wb6 11 c5 f6 12 dxc5 xc5 13 d4 wc6 14 xd5 xb5 15 c4 wb4 16 a4 wd6 17 c4 wc7 18 xf6+! ++) \\

4...e5?!

4...c1 is no answer, unless White intends to answer 4...f6 with 5 f4 and a draw offer (or leave London territory altogether). And in the pseudo-Dutch after 4 d2 f5 the knight may be better placed at h5 than the bishop at d2. That leaves us with 4 g5 h6 5 h4 g5 6 g3 g7 as the most promising alternative. The position is unbalanced; Black has kingside weaknesses but can work up pressure on the dark squares. The move e5 is a long-term power source for Black, and is very popular. 4...c5 and ...wh6. Most likely, play will transpose to Line 9C. White may try to play for e4 with extra central activity, but that is likely to make Black’s dark-squared bishop more influential.

4...f6 5 g4?!

This is Soltis’s suggestion. Gallagher adorns it with an ‘!', claiming that Black is in trouble without giving any variations. After 5 g3 xg3 6 hxg3 g7, White has activity but Black’s dark-squared bishop will be a long-term power source. 7 e4! will be quite double-edged as White will become more active, but it will be easier for Black to activate his bishop-pair.

5...fxe5 6 gxe5 (D)

This messy position never seems to have been tested in tournament play. A possible continuation is 6...e4 7 c5 d6 8 e4 g7, when our impression is that Black’s dark-squared play may be the dominant positional feature. However, in a practical game his insecure king position will give White excellent chances.
Conclusions:
There are certain problems with the immediate $\text{d}f3$ move-order, but nothing that should worry White too much.Correspondingly it seems $2 \text{d} f3 \text{g}6 3 \text{d} f4$ is a fully valid move-order.

9B: 3 e3

1 $d4 \text{d}f6 2 \text{d}f4 \text{g}6$

3 e3 $\text{d}6$ (!)

There may not be much to be gained by holding back $\text{d}f3$ for long in the King’s Indian, but occasionally it stops $\ldots \text{h}5$ followed by $\ldots \text{h}6$ and $\ldots \text{g}5$.

There are certain problems with the immediate $\text{d}f3$ move-order, but nothing that should worry White too much. Correspondingly it seems $2 \text{d} f3 \text{g}6 3 \text{d} f4$ is a fully valid move-order.

4 $\text{d} f5$!

Kupreichik has repeatedly preferred the less direct $5 \ldots \text{g}7$?, when White has to be careful so the exchange at g3 doesn’t take place under unfavourable circumstances. After $6 \text{d} e2 \text{h}6 7 \text{d} h4 \text{f}5$ White should probably play $8 \text{h}3$ (8 $\text{g}4$?) $8 \ldots \text{c}5 9 \text{c}3 \text{w}6 10 \text{d}a3 \text{e}6 11 \text{d}d2 \text{d}f6 12 \text{d}d4 \text{w}d8 13 \text{d}xc5 \text{d}xc5 14 \text{w}d8+ \text{d}xc8 15 \text{d}f3 \pm$ M.Berg-Kupreichik, Stockholm 1992.

6 $\text{d}h4 \text{g}5$

Or $6 \ldots \text{d}d7 7 \text{d}e4 \text{d}f6 8 \text{d}bd2 \text{g}5 9 \text{d}g3 \text{d}g7 10 \text{c}3 \text{a}6 11 \text{e}4 \text{b}5 12 \text{b}3 \text{d}xg3 13 \text{h}xg3 \text{e}6 14 \text{w}e2 \text{b}7 15 \text{e}5 \text{d}7 16 \text{d}5 \text{d}xg5 17 \text{d}e6+ \text{f}8 18 \text{d}xc7 \text{w}xc7 19 0-0 \text{g}8$ and Black’s piece-play and bishop-pair compensated for his pawn weaknesses in S.Ledger-Bronstein, Hastings 1995/6.

7 $\text{d}f2$ $\text{d}g7$

After $7 \ldots \text{d}f6$? (or $7 \ldots \text{f}4$? $8 \text{d}g3 \pm$) Black has weakened his kingside for very little in return: $8 \text{d}g3 \text{d}g7 9 \text{d}c3 \text{d}b7 10 \text{d}d3 \text{c}5 11 \text{w}e2 \text{b}6 12 \text{d}5 \text{f}8 13 \text{h}4 \text{h}7 14 \text{e}4 \text{a}6 15 \text{a}4 \text{d}g6 16 \text{h}xg5 \text{hxg5} 17 0-0-0 \pm$ Koziat-Kazmin, Voronezh 1999.

8 $\text{d}g3 \text{d}f5 9 \text{d}d3 \text{d}g7$ (D)

Chances were balanced after $9 \ldots \text{d}xg3 10 \text{h}xg3 \text{d}g7 11 \text{c}3 \text{d}d7 12 \text{d}f3 \text{d}f6 13 \text{d}bd2 \text{c}6 14 \text{w}c2 \text{w}c7 15 \text{f}5 (15 \text{d}e4 planning $\text{d}f1-\text{e}3$ is better) 15 \ldots \text{f}5 16 \text{w}xf5 \text{e}6 17 \text{w}c2 in Franklin-Gligorić, Hastings 1971/2.