

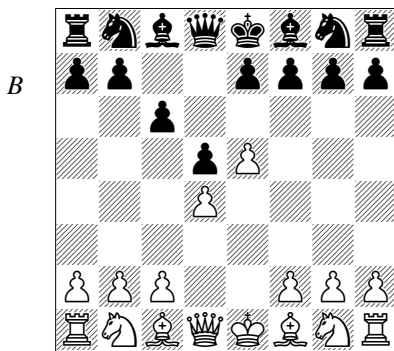
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10 Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 (D)

This is the characteristic move of the Advance Variation. White claims a slight space advantage and avoids an early exchange of centre pawns by advancing in the centre. Top players have been increasingly attracted to this line over the past few years because there is more of an opportunity to outplay an opponent with creative middlegame play instead of proceeding down long, forcing variations in the main lines beginning with 3 dxc3.



Black must now choose between breaking up White's central pawn-chain with ...c5, or developing his light-squared bishop outside his own pawns.

A: 3...c5 128
B: 3...f5 133

Another idea is 3...c7!?, which was analysed in *Win with the Caro-Kann* (Johnsen and Hansen) as a secondary option (after their main choice, 3...c5). With 4 c4 White seeks to exploit the position of the black queen on c7. 4...f5 (4...dxc4? 5 fxc4 f5 6 e6! fxe6 7 fxe6 fxe6 8 f3 gives White excellent compensation for the pawn) 5 dxc3 e6 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 f3 e3 dxc6 8 c1 a6 and now:

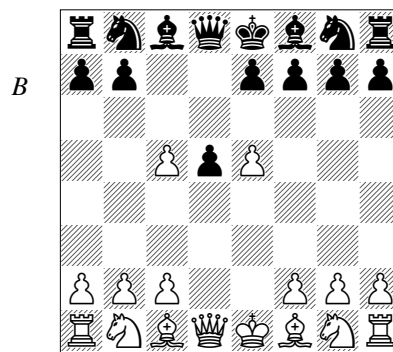
a) 9 f3 h6!? 10 e2 ge7 11 0-0 fh7 is a line given by Johnsen. Now White could consider the provocative 12 h4!? intending to play f4. Then 12...g5 13 f3 gives White an

advantage as the black king will not be safe on either side of the board.

b) 9 g4!? fg6 10 ge2 h5 11 f4 ge7 12 gxh5 ff5 13 a3 also looks attractive for White as he can generate pressure on both sides of the board.

A)

3...c5 4 dxc5 (D)



4...e6

Black can also attack White's e5-pawn by 4...c6 5 f4, and now:

a) 5...a5+? 6 c3 xc5 7 b4! b6 8 xd5 ff5 9 f3 with an extra pawn for White, Alonso Moyano-Gonzalez Aguirre, Mislata 2009.

b) 5...h6 6 f3 e6 7 f3 (White develops a piece and protects the c5-pawn) and then:

b1) 7...e7 8 bd2 f6 9 fb5 0-0 10 xc6 bxc6 11 b3 leaves White a pawn up, Gross-Winter – David-Bordier, corr. 2017.

b2) 7...f5 8 f2 a5+ 9 d2 xc5 10 xa5 xf2+ 11 xf2 xa5 12 d3 e7 13 bd2 favours White thanks to his control over the d4-square and superior bishop, S.Grover-Gschnitzer, London 2019.

b3) The pawn advance 7...d4 is the most challenging continuation, but it awaits a practical trial. 8 xd4 xc5 9 c3 0-0 10 d2 b6 11 c2 xe3 12 xe3 d8 13 c4! c7 (13...xd2?? 14 xb6 costs Black material)

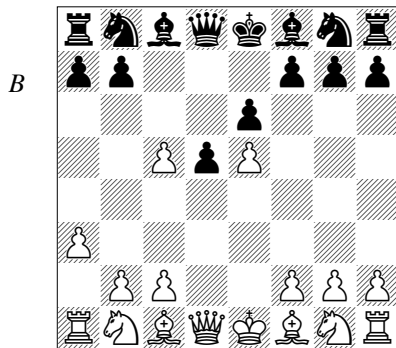
14 ♖d3 b5 15 ♜d6 f6 16 ♜xb5 ♖b6 (16...♗b8?! 17 exf6 e5 18 0-0! with a development advantage for White) 17 ♜d6 fxe5 18 ♜c4 ♖c5 19 ♗e2 exf4 20 ♜bd2 gives White a favourable middlegame since his pieces can use the e4-square.

c) 5...e6 6 ♗e3 d4 (Black recovers his pawn at the cost of conceding the e4-square to White's pieces; 6...♜h6 7 ♜f3 transposes to line 'b') 7 ♗f2 ♗xc5 8 ♜d2 and now:

c1) 8...♜h6 9 a3! (White prepares ♜e4 without allowing ...♗b4+ in response) 9...0-0 10 ♜e4 ♗e7 11 ♜f3 favours White thanks to the powerful centralized knight on e4, Sherwood-Markus, corr. 2019.

c2) 8...♜ge7 9 a3! ♜d5 (9...0-0?! 10 ♗d3 ♜d5 11 ♗h5! g6 12 ♗h6 with kingside pressure, Samolins-Bolsakovs, Latvian Ch, Riga 2018) 10 ♗g4 0-0 11 ♗d3 f5 (11...f6?! 12 ♜gf3 fxe5 13 fxe5 ♜f4 14 0-0 favours White's superior development) 12 ♗g3 ♗a5 13 ♖b1 b5 14 ♜f3 (14 b4?! ♗xa3 15 bxc5 ♜c3 gives Black counterplay) 14...♗b6 15 0-0 ♗d7 (Hohlbein-L.Andersen, corr. 2018) 16 ♖a1! is pleasant for White as Black's queen is misplaced.

5 a3 (D)



5...♗xc5

Declining to recapture the c-pawn immediately entails some risk for Black:

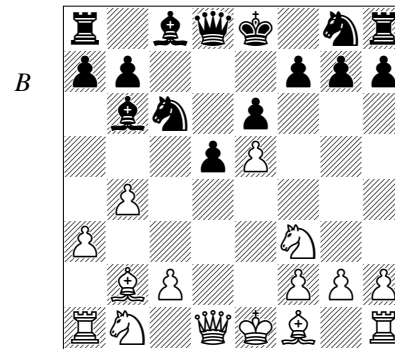
a) 5...♜e7 6 ♜f3 ♜g6 (J.Lindholm-Järvenpää, Helsinki 2018) 7 h4! ♜c6 8 b4 ♜gxe5 9 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 10 ♗b2 ♜c6 11 h5 with kingside pressure for White.

b) 5...a5 prevents White from expanding on the queenside with b4 at the cost of weakening the b5-square. 6 ♜c3 ♗xc5 7 ♗g4 ♜f8 8 ♗d3 ♜c6 9 ♜f3 ♜ge7 10 0-0 ♜g6 11 ♖e1 gives White an obvious advantage as he has protected

his e5-pawn and Black has lost the right to castle.

c) 5...♜d7 leaves White's c-pawn alone and hunts down his e-pawn. 6 b4 ♜xe5 7 ♗b2 ♜c6 8 ♜f3 ♜f6 9 c4 a5 (V.Novikov-Arkell, World Senior Team Ch, Vilnius 2014) 10 b5! ♜b8 11 ♗d4! ♜bd7 (11...♜e4 12 ♜c3 ♜xc3 13 ♗xc3 ♜d7 14 c6! bxc6 15 bxc6 ♜f6 16 ♗e2 ♗d6 17 0-0 0-0 18 a4 with an advantage for White) 12 c6! ♜c5 13 ♜c3 gives White some pressure.

d) 5...♜c6 6 ♜f3 ♗xc5 7 b4 ♗b6 (after 7...♗e7 8 b5 ♜a5 9 ♗d3 ♗d7 10 0-0 ♜c4?! 11 ♗xc4 dxc4 12 ♜c3 White has superior development and a space advantage, Sveshnikov-J.Petrov, Nova Gorica 1999) 8 ♗b2 (D).



Now Black can either continue to develop his pieces or challenge White's centre:

d1) 8...♜ge7 9 ♜bd2 and then:

d11) 9...0-0 10 ♗d3 ♜g6 11 b5 ♜a5 12 g3 f6 (after 12...♗c5, as in Morozov-Macchiagodena, corr. 2018, 13 h4 gives White a kingside initiative) 13 0-0 ♗d7 14 a4 ♖c8 15 ♗e2 with an obvious plus for White as his pieces have more scope.

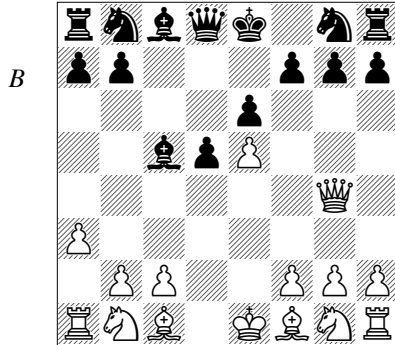
d12) 9...♜g6 10 h4! h5 11 g3 ♗c7 12 ♗e2 f6 13 exf6 gxf6 14 ♗g2 favours White because of the looseness of Black's pawn-structure, Melia-Gvantseladze, European Women's Ch, Stry Smokovec 2018.

d2) 8...f6 9 ♜bd2 fxe5 10 ♜xe5 ♜f6 11 ♗d3 0-0 12 ♜df3 ♜h5 13 0-0 ♜f4 (Begliy-Rüfenacht, corr. 2016) 14 ♜h1 with just an edge for White thanks to his control over the e5-square.

6 ♗g4!?! (D)

The queen foray is White's third most popular choice behind 6 ♜f3 and 6 b4, but it has

been played by So, Kariakin, Topalov and Morozevich.



Note that we have reached a position from the Advance French (1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 dxc5 ♗xc5 5 ♖g4) with the extra move a3 for White, which makes the line more appealing.

6...♞e7!

The knight development is clearly Black's strongest reply although it has been chosen in only half the games that have reached this position. Other moves:

a) 6...g6?! preserves the right to castle, but now Black's kingside dark squares are vulnerable. 7 ♠f3 ♞c6 8 ♞c3 (Schmidt-Schäffer – T.Pähtz, Vienna 1996) 8...f6 9 ♗b5 fxe5 10 ♞xe5 ♞e7 11 ♗h6 gives White an advantage as Black's position is full of weaknesses.

b) 6...♗f8?! avoids weaknesses at the cost of forfeiting castling rights. 7 ♠f3 ♞c6 8 b4 ♗b6 (Black leaves the e7-square free for his knight) 9 b5 (Beveridge-Louro, corr. 2018) 9...f5 10 ♖f4 ♞ce7 11 a4 with an obvious advantage for White as he has a spatial plus and Black has difficulty completing his development.

c) 6...♗f8 avoids the drawbacks of lines 'a' and 'b', but the bishop retreat is very slow. 7 ♠f3 ♞c6 8 ♗d3 h5 9 ♖g3 h4 10 ♖f4 gives White a development advantage, Morozevich-I.Popov, Moscow Ch rapid 2014.

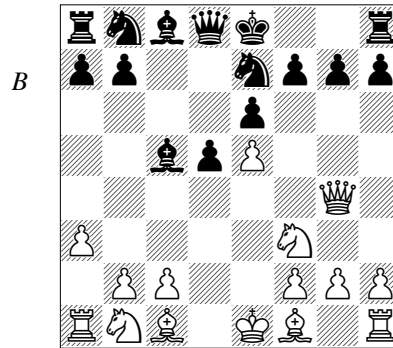
7 ♠f3 (D)

White should avoid the greedy 7 ♖xg7? ♗g8 8 ♖xh7 ♞bc6 with a huge lead in development for Black, Tadić-Predojević, Serbian Team Ch 2020.

Now there are four main lines:

A1: 7...♖b6 130

A2: 7...♞g6 131



A3: 7...♞bc6 132

A4: 7...0-0 132

Minor options:

a) 7...♖c7 8 b4 (gaining a tempo for ♗b2 by attacking Black's bishop) 8...♗b6 9 ♗d3 ♞g6 10 ♗b2 0-0 11 ♞bd2 ♞c6 12 ♖g3 f6!? (Black sacrifices a pawn to free his position as 12...♗d7?! 13 h4! is very strong for White; e.g., 13...f5 14 h5 ♞h8 15 c4 a6 16 ♖c1 with a large space advantage and superior development) 13 ♗xg6 hxg6 14 ♖xg6 ♖f7 15 ♖xf7+ ♖xf7 16 0-0 ♗c7 17 exf6 gxf6 18 c4 gives Black insufficient compensation for the pawn.

b) 7...♞f5 8 ♗d3 h5 9 ♖f4 ♞c6 (Bartel-Vaibhav, Biel 2018) 10 ♞c3 is pleasant for White as Black has not interfered with the smooth development of White's pieces.

A1)

7...♖b6

Black takes advantage of White's momentary lag in development to attack the f2-pawn. This is Black's most challenging plan.

8 ♗d3! ♗xf2+

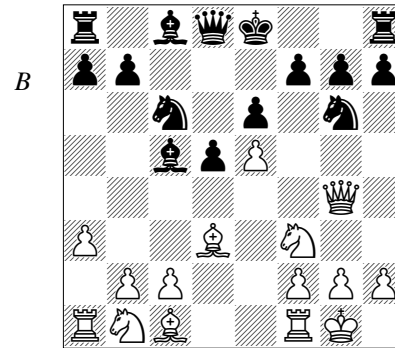
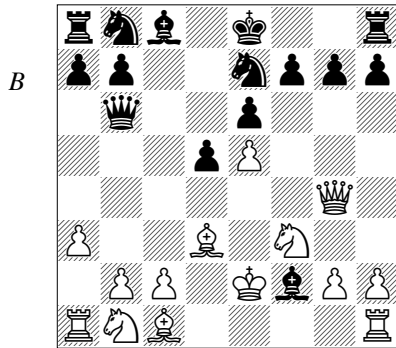
Black might as well grab the pawn since 8...♞bc6?! 9 0-0 ♞g6 10 ♞c3 ♖c7 (Topalov-Navara, Shamkir 2019) 11 ♞b5! ♖b8 12 b4 ♗e7 13 ♖e1 leaves White obviously better.

9 ♗e2 (D)

9...a5!

Restricting White from expanding on the queenside with b4. This is better than 9...♞bc6?! 10 ♖f1:

a) 10...♞d4+ 11 ♞xd4 ♗xd4 (11...♖xd4? 12 ♖f3 is winning for White) 12 ♖xg7 ♗g8 13 ♖xf7+ ♗d8 14 ♞c3 with a clear advantage for White.



b) 10...d4 11 c3 Nxe5 (Black is forced to sacrifice a piece for two pawns) 12 Bxd4 Nxd3 13 Bxd3 d7 14 a4 leaves Black with insufficient compensation for the piece.

c) 10...d4 11 b4 d4 12 c3 Nxe5 13 Bxd4 Nxd3 14 Bxd3 d7 15 e3 c7 16 f2 e5 17 Bd2 and White will consolidate his extra piece.

10 Nc3

White continues to develop and keeps Bf1 in reserve as Black's queen is tied to the defence of his bishop.

10...d7

Seeking to control the a4-square. 10...Nbc6?! runs into 11 Bf1 d4 (11...c5 12 Na4 Bb7 13 Nxc5 Bxc5 14 b4! with a strong initiative for White) 12 Na4 Bb7 13 c3 b6 14 b4 Ng6 15 b5 Nce7 16 Bh5! with an attack – Rambaldi.

11 Bxg7 Bg8 12 Bf6! Nbc6 13 Na4 Bb7 14 g3 0-0-0 15 Bf1 b6 16 Nc3

Now:

a) 16...c7 17 Nb5 Bb6 18 e4 with some advantage for White – Rambaldi.

b) 16...f5 17 Nb5 Ncd4+ 18 Nfxd4 Nxd4+ 19 Nxd4 exd4 20 Bb1 (White prepares to expand on the queenside) 20...h5 21 b4 axb4 22 Bxb4 c5 23 Bb4 b8 (Black improves his king position and seeks counterplay along the c-file) 24 Bxh5 Bc8 25 Bb7 e8 with roughly level chances.

A2)

7...Ng6

Black immediately puts pressure on the e5-pawn.

8 d3 Nc6 9 0-0 (D)

9...0-0

Another reasonable option is 9...Bc7 10 Bc1. Then:

a) The e5-pawn is immune from capture as 10...Ngxe5?? 11 Nxe5 Nxe5 12 Bxg7 costs Black a piece.

b) 10...Nce7? 11 b4 b6 (Darini-Zahedifar, Tehran 2019) 12 h4! h5 13 Bg5 d7 14 a4 gives White a strong initiative.

c) 10...0-0 11 Bb5 d7 12 Nbd2 b6 13 Nb3 e8 14 Bh3 h6 (threatening to take on e5, and more effective than 14...f6?!, which is a typical method to obtain counterplay like in the French, but here 15 exf6 Bxf6 16 e5 17 exf6 gxf6 18 exg6 hxg6 19 c4! dxc4 20 Nbd2 gives Black insufficient compensation for the exchange) 15 Bg3 (15 exg6 fxg6 16 Bxe6+ e7 17 Bg4 g5 followed by ...e6 offers Black very reasonable counterplay) 15...f5 16 d2 e7 (16...d4!?) 17 h4 Bh8 18 h5 Nge7 19 Bh4 leaves White with a space advantage.

10 Bb5 Bc7 11 b4!?

Now:

a) 11...d4! is a relatively safe option. 12 Nxd4 Nxd4 13 d2 Nf5 (13...Nxc2?? loses to 14 Bc1, and 13...Bxe5?? to 14 exg6) 14 f4 with a complex middlegame.

b) 11...e7 12 b2 d7 13 Be1 (13 Nc3!?) and then:

b1) 13...e8?! 14 Nc3 Bb7 15 Bh3 f6 (Black sacrifices a pawn to seek counterplay) 16 exf6 exf6 17 Bxe6 Nce7?! (So-Carlsen, Internet rapid 2020) 18 Bae1! e7 19 Bxf6! Bxh3 20 Bxg6! and White's rampaging rook is unstoppable; e.g., 20...Bxf3 21 Bxg7+! Nxe7 21...Nxe7 22 Bxh7+ Nxe7 23 Bxh8 24 Nxd5+ mates) 22 Nxd5+ Nxe7 23 Nxe7 (the black queen has no safe squares) 23...Bf4 24 g3 Bf3 25 Nf5+ Ng5 26 h4+ Ng4 27 Ne3+ Nh5 28 e2 Bxe2 29 Bxe2 and White's knight and three pawns are superior to Black's rook.