Kotronias on the King’s Indian 5

Sämisch & The Rest

By

Vassilios Kotronias

To Dimitrios-Athanasi, Athanasia, Antonia-Eleutheria

“When a journey ends, another one always starts”

Quality Chess
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Dear readers,

A few years ago, we started a fascinating journey to the King’s Indian Defence, and I use the plural for several reasons.

By “we”, I firstly refer to all of you who shared my thirst for knowledge about an opening that has its own rules and its own undeniable magic, and either incorporate it into your repertoire or simply derive pleasure from its unique grace. I want to thank you for your interest and patience.

By “we”, I also refer to the Quality Chess editorial staff, whose insightful remarks and pointed questions helped me to provide the best recommendations and highest quality of analysis I could muster. Many personal thanks to Andrew, Jacob, John, Colin, Nikos and all others involved.

Lastly, I include myself, for whom I can only say that completing this five-volume series was an arduous task, but I guess that dropping 125 Elo points during the process was a worthy sacrifice. I am proud of the result and I can now return to pure chess-playing with the satisfaction of knowing I have contributed something worthwhile to future generations.

This fifth volume completes the series by dealing with a range of systems. The first six chapters deal with assorted lines where White refrains from occupying the centre with e2-e4. Chapters 7-14 cover various systems involving 3.\(\text{\underline{c}}3\) and 4.e4, where White proceeds without an early \(\text{\underline{f}}3\). We then move on to the ultra-ambitious Four Pawns Attack, before tackling the fearsome Sämisch System.

Despite my obsessive efforts to uncover the truth of the King’s Indian in these five volumes, it was inevitable that some mistakes would occur. Fortunately, the publisher granted my request to conclude this final volume with four appendices, detailing any errors and oversights which I became aware of since the previous four books were published. No chess book is perfect, but with these additions I am now satisfied that the series as a whole is as close to perfection as I could have achieved.

My final remarks concern the chess content of the Kotronias on the King’s Indian series. While writing these five volumes, I came to understand that I knew practically nothing about chess tactics. My constant research has enriched my chess knowledge and added many new motifs to my arsenal, but the King’s Indian is inexhaustible. You should strive to enhance your feeling for its complexities by taking as many ‘screen-shots’ as possible from the ever-illuminating screen of this great opening, but you will never acquire complete control. Therein lies the key to the fascination of the King’s Indian, as well as its Achilles’ Heel.

Regarding the weighting of the systems at White’s disposal, I can only say four names: Mar del Plata, Makogonov, Gligoric, Sämisch. My research indicates that these are White’s most poisonous options, and the ones where the biggest developments should be expected.

I wish you the best, and – who knows? – I might even see you at the chess board!

Vassilios Kotronias
Thessaloniki, April 2017
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Variation Index

1.d4 d5 2.c4 g6 3.c3 g7 4.e4 d6 5.g5 h6 6.h4

6...c5!

A) 7.dxc5 a5
   A1) 8.d2
   A2) 8.d3

B) 7.d5 g5!? 8.g3 a5
   B1) 9.d2 h5!
      B11) 10.e2
      B12) 10.d3
   B2) 9.d3 xe4! 10.xe4 xc3† 11.bxc3 xc3† 12.f1 f5!
      B21) 13.e2!
      B22) 13.c1 f6! 14.h4 g4!
         B221) 15.d3
         B222) 15.e2

A1) note to 8...dxc5!!

B11) after 14.f4

B222) after 21.f1
1.d4 Ɣf6 2.c4 Ɣg6 3.Ɣc3 Ɣg7 4.e4 Ɣd6 5.Ɣg5 Ɣh6! 6.Ɣh4

This move abandons the queenside for the sake of doubtful attacking chances and, as practice has shown, allows Black too much counterplay.

6...c5!

I believe that Black is already at least equal after this thematic challenge to White’s centre. The evidence will be revealed after both the prudent A) 7.dxc5 and the more ambitious B) 7.d5.

7.Ɣf3?! is an error due to 7...Ɣg5 8.Ɣg3, as in Suimanov – Rakhmatulaev, Uljanovsk 2015, when 8...Ɣa5† would have been problematic for White.

Another inferior continuation is 7.e5?! Ɣh5† and the white centre crumbles: 8.dxc5 (8.exd6 Ɣxd6 also gives Black the upper hand, since 9.Ɣb5? Ɣb6 10.dxc5 Ɣa5† 11.Ɣd2 Ɣxd2† 12.Ɣxd2 Ɣa6† only makes things worse for White) 8...Ɣxe5 9.cxd6 Ɣxd6 10.Ɣxd6 Ɣe6† Black’s superiority on the dark squares gives him the better chances in the endgame.

A) 7.dxc5

With this move White relinquishes any ambitious plans of a substantial space advantage, and instead tries to gain some time to complete his development efficiently.

7...Ɣa5

Thanks to this move, Black recovers his pawn and creates promising counterplay on the dark squares, as their main guardian (the Ɣh4-bishop) is a long way from the queenside. Still, the position is pretty balanced at this stage, so Black shouldn’t become overambitious.

We will consider A1) 8.Ɣd2 and A2) 8.Ɣd3.

A1) 8.Ɣd2 dxc5!!

This is the engines’ top recommendation and a principled move, as Black secures the d4-outpost for his pieces.

A reliable alternative is:
8...Ɣxc5 9.Ɣf3??

Dejan Mozetic suggests this move, with the plan of Ɣf2, Ɣd3, Ɣge2 and 0–0.

The inferior 9.f4?! 0–0 10.Ɣf3 Ɣc6 11.Ɣc1 was played in Otero Acosta – De la Paz Perdomo, Santa Clara 2008, when 11...Ɣg4N 12.Ɣf2 Ɣa5 13.Ɣc2 e5! Ɣxe4† would have given Black an excellent game.

A) 7.dxc5

With this move White relinquishes any ambitious plans of a substantial space advantage, and instead tries to gain some time to complete his development efficiently.
Finally, I will briefly mention that 8...g5!? 9.\text{\textgreek{g}}3 \text{\textw}{x}c5 is another interesting idea, intending to open up the g7-bishop later with ...\text{\textd}{f}6-h5, while gaining time by threatening to exchange the precious g3-bishop. Demakov – Ananskikh, corr. 2012, was a well-played game which ended in a draw, but I won't go into any further detail as we already have two good options!

\textbf{A2) 8.\text{\textd}{d}3}

8...\text{\textw}{x}c5?!N

Mozetic calls this move inferior but I do not agree with his assessment.

A decent alternative is:
8...\text{\textw}{x}c5 9.\text{\textd}{ge}2

Better was 9.f3!? \text{\textd}{c}6 10.\text{\textd}{ge}2 according to Mozetic, yet after 10...\text{\textd}{d}7 11.\text{\textf}{f}2 \text{\textw}{a}5= I see nothing wrong with Black’s position.

9...g5 10.\text{\textg}{g}3 \text{\textd}{h}5 11.\text{\textf}{f}1! \text{\textd}{c}6 12.a3

The chances were balanced in Bakic – Mozetic, Yugoslavia 1992, and the best way to continue would have been pulling the queen back:
12...\textipa{a}5N 13.0–0 0–0 14.h3 \textipa{c}xg3 15.\textipa{c}xg3 e6 16.\textipa{h}5 \textipa{c}e5 17.g3
17.f4?! \textipa{g}x\textipa{f}4 18.\textipa{c}xf4 \textipa{d}d8++
17.h4 \textipa{d}d8\# with a dynamic kingside equilibrium.
17...\textipa{h}8 18.\textipa{h}1 \textipa{d}d8 19.\textipa{c}e2 \textipa{g}8∞

9.f4! 
Mozetic gives this move, planning to develop a central initiative with h2-h3 and \textipa{f}3. However, White is falling too far behind in development. He should settle for a more modest scheme, but in that case it is obvious that Black's opening has been a success, in view of his active pieces and control over the d4-square.

9.\textipa{c}c6 10.\textipa{c}ge2
Already it is clear that the aforementioned plan is too optimistic for White, as both 10.\textipa{c}f3? \textipa{h}5++ and 10.h3? \textipa{c}e6++ lead to big problems for him.

10...\textipa{g}5! 11.\textipa{x}g5 \textipa{g}4↑
Black has standard dark-square compensation and is already better.

### B) 7.d5

This is the more ambitious and critical move, but at the same time White burns some bridges, as now the g7-bishop has free play along the a1-h8 diagonal.

7...\textipa{g}5? 8.\textipa{g}3 \textipa{a}5
This active continuation has served Black well over the years.

We will analyse B1) 9.\textipa{d}2 and B2) 10.\textipa{d}3. The former is more solid but allows Black to eliminate the g3-bishop. The latter is the move White would like to play, but it allows a strong tactical operation.

9.f3 led to a nice win for me in the following game: 9...\textipa{h}5 10.\textipa{d}2 \textipa{x}g3 11.hxg3 \textipa{d}7 12.\textipa{d}3?! \textipa{e}5 13.f4 \textipa{x}d3↑ 14.\textipa{x}d3
14...b5! 15.cxb5 a6 16.a4 b4 17.ge2 axb5 18.axb5 d7 19.axb5 cxb5 20.d1 0–0
21.c1 xa4

B1) 9.d2 h5!

B11) 10.e2

This is the top engine recommendation, seeking to clarify matters on the kingside as quickly as possible.

10...xg3 11.hxg3

11.d7

Black has a solid position with good queenside prospects, an evaluation that the following analysis and examples confirm.

12.e1?

A logical move, removing a potential target from the long diagonal and overprotecting c3.

12.f3 has a catastrophic record, with White scoring only 1/6 from this position (interestingly, most of those games arose via a different move order). One example continued: 12...b6 13.0–0 d7

Black terminates White’s potentially dangerous dark-squared bishop and drastically enhances the radius of his own. White’s two main tries are B11) 10.e2 and B12) 10.d3.

10.ge2 is best answered with 10...f5! (the more conservative 10...d7 is also promising) and Black was already better in J. Nielsen – Lane, Penrith 2003.
14.e5? (14...e3?) 14...g4 15.e6 fxe6 16.h4 exd5 17.cxd5 0–0–0 18.g6 hXe8 19.f4 b8
20.fxe1 b4 21.a3 d4 22.c2

This occurred in Pedersen – Jakobsen, Naestved 1985, and now 22...c4!N would have created an unassailable post on c5 for the black queen, with much the better game for the second player.

I also checked:
12.f4 b6
12...a6!?N 13.f3 b5∞ also deserves attention.
13.c1 a4
Once again, Black has more than one good option.
13...d7!? 14.b3 0–0–0∞ was a more fighting continuation seen in Fortuny – Olano Aizpurua, corr. 2010.

Black was doing fine in Cyborowski – M. Roos, Germany 2008.

12...a6 13.a3 b8! 14.f4

From this position, 14...gxf4 15.gxf4 b5 16.f3 occurred in Milov – Kazhgaleyev, France 2002, when 16...b4!N would have led to a dynamically balanced game. However, there is no real need to exchange on f4 so soon. Instead Black should prefer:

14...b5!Ne7

Black has an improved version of the aforementioned game. For example:

15.f3

After 15.fxg5 hxg5 16.xh8+ xh8 17.xg5 f8+ White’s extra pawn is virtually meaningless, while Black has a powerful initiative on the queenside and on the dark squares.

15...b4 16.d1 a4?

White is still not really threatening to take on g5, and the additional tension on the kingside favours Black. One reason is that White must take into account the possibility of ...g4 at any moment; another is that Black can consider ...f8-g6, putting pressure on the f4-pawn in a way that stops White from defending with g2-g3.
It looks most natural to develop the bishop to this square; the only drawback is that Black does not have to exchange on g3 yet, so White will not get the open h-file and support for f2–f4.

10...\(\text{d7}\) 11.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{e}5\) 12.\(\text{x}e5?!\)

This looks best, trying to prove the h5-knight a liability.

12.0–0?! allows Black to build a powerful attack: 12...\(\text{x}g3\) 13.\(\text{x}g3\) h5! 14.\(\text{c}2\) g4

13...\(\text{f}4!\)

Black gets ready to trade the knight before it becomes a problem.

14.\(\text{hxg5}\) \(\text{hxg5}\) 15.\(\text{h8}+\) \(\text{xh8}\) 16.0–0–0 \(\text{d7}\)

17.\(\text{h1}\) 0–0–0

Black has equalized and perhaps a bit more than that. A correspondence game continued:

18.\(\text{h7}\) \(\text{f8}\) 19.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{x}e2\)+

19...\(\text{xd}3+?!N\) 20.\(\text{xd}3\) f5 could be a slightly better way to create problems.

20.\(\text{xe}2\) \(\text{d}4\) 21.a3 f5 22.\(\text{exf5}\) \(\text{x}f5\) 23.\(\text{h5}\) \(\text{d}7\) 24.f3 \(\text{f6}=\)

Black kept the more pleasant position, although White was able to hold the draw in Demakov – V. Ivanov, corr. 2010.
Chapter 8 – 6.\hbox{h}4

B2) 9.\hbox{d}3

The two main tries are B21) 13.\hbox{e}2?! and B22) 13.\hbox{c}1.

13.\hbox{d}3 f4 14.\hbox{c}1 \hbox{f}6 15.\hbox{h}5\hbox{d}8 16.\hbox{c}2 fxg3 17.\hbox{x}g3?! \hbox{d}7\hbox{d} Gyurkovics – Feher, Hungary 1993.

13.h4?! won’t make any headlines in view of:
13...fxe4 14.\hbox{c}1 \hbox{d}3\hbox{d} 15.\hbox{x}d3 exd3 16.hxg5

Having seen that the alternative is rather harmless for Black, it’s time to consider the move White would ideally like to play. It certainly seems natural to protect the e4-pawn while developing a piece, but it allows an impressive tactical shot.

9...\hbox{e}4!

A brilliant idea which fully justifies Black’s preceding play. It bears the stamp of approval of such legendary players as Fischer and Geller.

10.\hbox{x}e4 \hbox{x}c3\hbox{d} 11.bxc3 \hbox{x}c3\hbox{f} 12.\hbox{f}1 \hbox{f}5!

That’s the point! Black is going to recover his piece and the only question is whether White can exploit the situation of the king on e8; apparently, he can’t.

15...\hbox{x}g3!N

Surprisingly, this has not been tried in any of the three games so far.
15...\(\text{f8}\)!?

Despite Black’s fine results with this move, the evaluation is not so clear after:

16.hxg5 hxg5

17.\(\text{d}1\)!

As played against me by Jean-Pierre Le Roux. The alternatives are grim for White:

a) 17.\(\text{xf4}\) refuses to admit that White should strive to defend rather than attack; after 17...\(\text{xf4}\) 18.\(\text{h2}\) (18.\(\text{h4}\? \text{h8}!–+) 18...\(\text{d7}\) 19.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{c5}\) 20.\(\text{h5}\uparrow \text{d8}\) 21.\(\text{xf4}\) \(\text{g4}\) 22.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{h8}\) 23.\(\text{h7}\) \(\text{g7}\) White had to resign in Stein – Geller, Moscow 1966.

b) 17.\(\text{h2}\)? is even worse, and it leads to immediate capitulation after 17...\(\text{f3}\)–+.

17...\(\text{fxg3N}\)

White will get good compensation for his pawn as he had added an open h-file to his assets, but there is nothing better.

After 17...\(\text{d7}\)?! 18.\(\text{h2}\) \(\text{c5}\) 19.\(\text{c3}\)! (19.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{h8}\)) 19...\(\text{xc4}\) 20.\(\text{e4}\uparrow \text{I was worse in Le Roux – Kotronias, France 2005, and only a combination of miracles allowed me to turn the game around and eventually win it.}\)

18.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{d8}\)?!

The black king should seek safety on the queenside.

19.\(\text{g1}\) \(\text{d7}\)

20.\(\text{h7}\)

White has ongoing compensation for his pawn in a complicated position.

16.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{g4}\)!

This move is the key point, which apparently everyone has missed. Black closes the h-file, making the h1-rook passive, but there is a further tactical justification.

17.\(\text{b1}\) \(\text{d7}\)!

Here it is! The g-pawn is offered to accelerate Black’s development.

18.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{e5}\) 19.\(\text{e2}\)
Black clearly has the better game, so we may dismiss 13.\( \text{c2?!} \) as absolutely ineffective from White's point of view.

B22) 13.\( \text{c1} \)

13...\( \text{f6!} \)

That said, 13...\( \text{b2?!} \) is an interesting alternative.

14.\( \text{h4} \)

This was Spassky's attempt to breathe life into White's position – although it had also occurred in a couple of relatively unknown games beforehand.

Misplacing the queen by 14.\( \text{h5?!} \) proved insufficient after 14...\( \text{d8} \) 15.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{g4} \) 16.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{f4} \) 17.\( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 18.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{f6} \) 19.\( \text{g1} \) \( \text{g8} \) 20.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 21.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{e5} \) in Radomsky – Timoschenko, Novosibirsk 1976.

14...\( \text{g4!} \)

Keeping the h-file closed. At this point White has a choice, but I can't get over the impression that he is struggling to maintain equality. We will focus on B221) 15.\( \text{d3} \), as tried by Spassky, followed by B222) 15.\( \text{e2} \).

15.\( \text{xf5} \)

15.\( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{d7} \) 17.\( \text{g1} \) (17.\( \text{f4} \) 0–0 18.\( \text{h5} \) \( \text{g5} \) favours Black in view of his extra pawn) 17...\( \text{b5} \!) 18.\( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{a6} \) 19.\( \text{a4} \) \( \text{a5} \) 20.\( \text{xa5} \) \( \text{f6} \)

Black's pieces are more active and the pawns on b5 and d5 are weak.

15.\( \text{c2} \)

This results in a typically cramped position for White after:

15...\( \text{f4} \) 16.\( \text{a4!} \)
16.\textit{h}2?! \textit{g}3 17.\textit{f}3 \textit{g}xh2 18.\textit{h}5 \textit{d}8 19.\textit{g}6 \textit{c}7 20.\textit{b}3 \textit{d}7 21.\textit{x}h2 \textit{b}6\textsuperscript{\textperthousand} is much better for Black.

16...\textit{d}8

17.\textit{x}f4N

17.\textit{h}2?! \textit{g}3\textsuperscript{\textperthousand} did not help White in Chilingirova – Brendel, Wuppertal 1990.

17...\textit{x}f4 18.\textit{e}2 \textit{f}6 19.\textit{g}3 \textit{d}7

20.\textit{x}d7! \textit{f}3 21.\textit{g}1 \textit{f}8 22.\textit{h}2 \textit{x}d7 23.\textit{d}2 \textit{c}7 24.\textit{f}4 \textit{ae}8 25.\textit{e}1 \textit{a}3\textsuperscript{\textperthousand}

White’s position may be tenable, as he has kept a good knight for defensive purposes, shielding the f-file. That said, he still faces a tough battle for a draw: he is a pawn down with a clumsily placed rook on h2, and he will constantly have to be on guard against possible exchange sacrifices on f4.

It is obvious to me that White is already facing serious difficulties.

16.\textit{c}2?!

Spassky’s choice in his 1992 match against Fischer is clearly not a solution to White’s problems, but it is hard to suggest anything constructive.

I looked at 16.\textit{h}2, yet after 16...\textit{g}3 17.\textit{f}3 \textit{g}xh2 18.\textit{b}3 \textit{d}8 19.\textit{x}h2 \textit{c}7 Black has a safer king and an extra pawn, making the position clearly favourable for him.

Perhaps Matanovic’s suggestion of 16.\textit{x}f4?! \textit{xf}4 17.\textit{g}3, with the idea of \textit{c}2-f4, is White’s best attempt:
Nevertheless, after 17...\textit{\texttt{f6}} 18.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{c2}}} \textit{\texttt{d7}}
19.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{f4}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{e5}}} 20.\textit{\texttt{g2}} \textit{\texttt{d7}} I do not believe White
has enough compensation for the pawn. The
fortress created by the knight along the f-file is
rather flimsy; Black can try to tear it apart with
an exchange sac or improve his own knight by
...\textit{\texttt{f3}}-d4, planning ...\textit{\texttt{e7}}-e5.

16...\textit{\texttt{fxg3}} 17.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{xg3}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{f8}}}

We can safely end our opening analysis here,
but I will include the remaining moves of the
historically significant game.

18.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{c2}}}?!
18.\textit{\texttt{c2}} had to be tried, although White still
does not have the slightest compensation for the
missing pawn.

18...\textit{\texttt{d7}}!
Fischer is happy to return the extra pawn in
order to seize the initiative.

19.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{xg4}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{e5}}} 20.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{e4}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{d7}}} 21.\textit{\texttt{g1}} 0–0–0
22.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{xg8}}} 23.\textit{\texttt{f4}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{xc4}}} 24.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{h5}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{f7}}} 25.\textit{\texttt{xc4}}
\textit{\texttt{\texttt{hxg5}}} 26.\textit{\texttt{b2}}

Ten years after the aforementioned game,
Vadim Milov attempted to improve White’s play
with this move. However, it doesn’t change the
overall assessment of the position as good for
Black.

15...\textit{\texttt{f6}}
Black is temporarily two pawns up. Even
though White will recover one of them in the
near future, Black’s preponderance on the light
squares means that the white centre is going to
crumble.

16.\textit{\texttt{g1}} \textit{\texttt{f5}} 17.\textit{\texttt{c3}}?!
17.\textit{\texttt{h2N}} \textit{\texttt{d7}} 18.\textit{\texttt{c1}} is a better attempt to
untangle, but White still faces some problems
after:

26...\textit{\texttt{g3}}! 27.\textit{\texttt{e2}} \textit{\texttt{f7}} 28.\textit{\texttt{f3}} \textit{\texttt{Edg8}} 29.\textit{\texttt{b3}}
\textit{\texttt{b6}} 30.\textit{\texttt{e3}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{f6}}}! 31.\textit{\texttt{e2}} \textit{\texttt{b5}}! 32.\textit{\texttt{Ed2}} \textit{\texttt{e5}}!
33.\textit{\texttt{dxe6}} \textit{\texttt{c6}} 34.\textit{\texttt{Ef1}} \textit{\texttt{xf3}} 0–1
Spassky – Fischer, Sveti Stefan/Belgrade (16)
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Conclusion

In this chapter we continued our examination of the Sokolov System by investigating 6.\( \text{h}4 \) \( c5! \). If I had to play this position with White, I would be inclined to choose the unambitious 7.dxc5, in order to avoid giving Black a free hand on the queenside. 7...\( \text{a}5! \) is a good reply which ensures the recovery of our pawn, but I would like to remind you of an important point: I generally prefer to recapture on c5 with the d-pawn rather than the queen, in order to establish an outpost on d4. Probably 8.\( \text{d}2 \) is a better choice than 8.\( \text{d}3 \), but objectively there is nothing for White.

7.d5 is the most popular and ambitious move, and thus the main line of the chapter, but it leads to generally unpleasant positions for White. Several games, including a famous encounter between Spassky and Fischer, have demonstrated that Black has rich tactical play and better chances overall. Summing up, this was a most pleasant chapter from Black’s perspective, with many chances to play for a win after either of White’s options on move 7.

21...\( \text{e}6! \)N 22.\( \text{h}2 \)

22.\( \text{c}3 \) is well met by 22...\( \text{d}3! \).

22...\( \text{b}5! \) 23.\( \text{cxb}5 \) \( \text{xd}5! \)

Black has a serious advantage; White will find it hard to deal with the mobile pawn mass in the centre.