

# Playing 1.d4

## The Queen's Gambit

*– a grandmaster guide*

By

# Lars Schandorff



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# Preface

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This is the first of a two-volume complete repertoire for White with 1.d4. In this book I offer an ambitious repertoire against 1...d5 with 2.c4. In the second volume, *Playing 1.d4 – The Indian Defences*, I complete the repertoire.

In addition to being part of a new repertoire, this is also the second edition of my 2009 book *Playing the Queen's Gambit*. It is natural for the reader to wonder – what has changed? The short answer is that the core of the repertoire remains the same, but a multitude of details have been updated and improved within the lines.

As I explained in the first edition, the repertoire is based entirely on big mainlines, which guarantees its reliability and strength. Firstly, you cannot expect to get anything against well-respected openings like the Queen's Gambit Declined and the Slav by trying a little sideline or just by playing safe. The main lines, on the other hand, have not become main lines by chance. They have slowly but surely evolved and proved their strength over the years, so by choosing main lines you gain reliable weapons.

Secondly, the main lines are sharp and put the maximum pressure on the opponent, both theoretically and in practice. This corresponds perfectly with the philosophy behind this work, which is that White should strive for the initiative and show that moving first matters. Developing the pieces fluidly to active squares and trying to take the centre with pawns to seize space – these are key elements in the various White set-ups presented here.

Playing White is like serving in tennis – with a good serve you either win directly or, if the opponent manages to return the ball, at least you get the chance to take the initiative and dictate the rest of the duel. In this book I offer you an excellent first serve. But every tennis player knows that it is important to have a decent second serve as well. This may also be true in chess, especially in this computer age, so having a safe alternative is a good idea. Thus, throughout the book I offer hints of where you could devote some of your further investigations.

In the first edition I chose well-respected mainlines so it is pleasing but not so surprising that they have generally stood the test of time. It was also inevitable that a few years of practice and analysis would reveal parts that required strengthening. Thus every chapter has been updated, but some needed more work than others.

To be more specific, the greatest changes have been made in the sharpest lines, particularly the Semi-Slav and the Noteboom variations.

The Semi-Slav remains one of the greatest challenges a 1.d4-player must face. Accordingly I have not only updated my previous answer to it but also offered as an alternative a new sharp but slightly less theoretical answer. This new line has the bonus that it can be played against both the Botvinnik and Moscow variations.

My original recommendation against the Noteboom was one of the most 'controversial' parts of my repertoire. Sadly, the doubters may have been right! I have updated my old line, but this 'Triangle' line remains troublesome. So I also offer a completely new antidote to the Noteboom.

If you studied my first edition then much will feel familiar – the text I wrote about the lines' positional features is still valid. The devil is always in the details and that is where I concentrated my attention. I am confident this updated and improved repertoire will be an effective weapon now and for years to come. I hope it brings you many aces!

Lars Schandorff  
Denmark, June 2012

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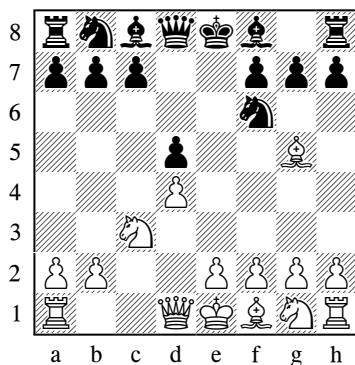
# Introduction to the Repertoire

I have explained the principles of the repertoire – aggressive reliable mainlines that seize space – but after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 how does that translate into moves? Against some openings the choice seems obvious, in others there are several possible lines that could fit the bill. Where there was a real choice I have used my judgment to select the most principled continuation – no compromises!

Let's take it one opening at a time in the order I have arranged the chapters:

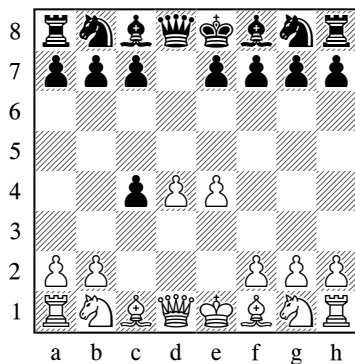
## Chapter 1: Queen's Gambit Declined

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 Against the **Queen's Gambit Declined** my choice is: 4.cxd5 exd5 Critical, yes, but how does it take space? The answer is that in many of my lines White will later play f3 and e4. 5.Qg5 The great Botvinnik will be our guide of how to play this line.



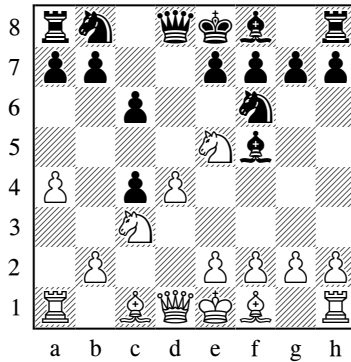
## Chapter 2: Queen's Gambit Accepted

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 The **Queen's Gambit Accepted** is a tough opening to meet, but it is obvious my space-gaining choice must be: 3.e4 Black has various ways to challenge White's central dominance, so we will leave the details till later.



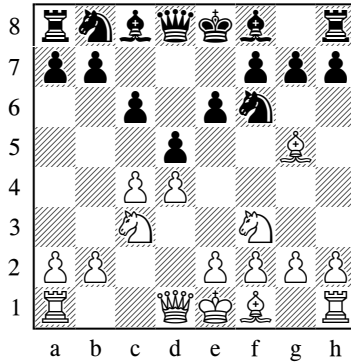
## Chapter 3: The Slav

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♗c3 dxc4 5.a4 ♕f5 Naturally, Black also has moves such as 5...♗g4, 5...♗a6 and 5...e6, and I cover them all. But 5...♕f5 is the mainline of the **Slav**, and I answer with the mainline: 6.♗e5 As against the Queen's Gambit Declined, I will usually build my centre with f3 and e4.



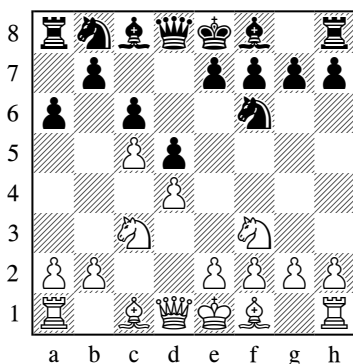
## Chapter 4: The Semi-Slav

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♗c3 e6 The **Semi-Slav** will be met by the most aggressive reply: 5.♗g5 Naturally if Black takes on c4 then White seizes the centre with e2-e4.



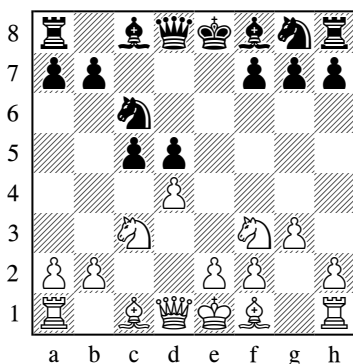
## Chapter 5: The a6-Slav

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♗c3 a6 Against the **a6-Slav** achieving e2-e4 is more difficult (though it will happen in one of my key lines!). This time I claim a space advantage by playing: 5.c5 At this point Black has a choice, so we will leave further explanation to the chapter itself.



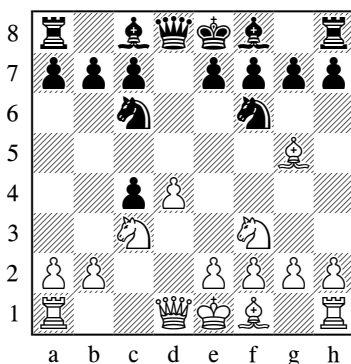
## Chapter 6: The Tarrasch

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 c5 The **Tarrasch** is the joker in our pack: White will not have a space advantage but we will have easy development and the sounder pawn structure by following the main line: 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.g3 White's play will be more about control, whereas the rest of the repertoire is more attacking.



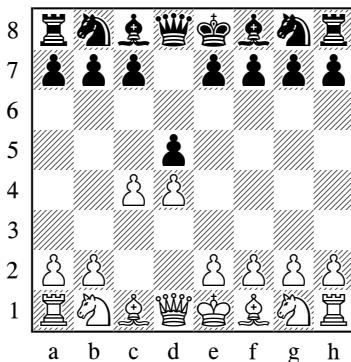
## Chapter 7: The Chigorin

1.d4 d5 2.c4 ♘c6 In the **Chigorin** Black chooses piece-play over supporting his centre, so it is relatively easy for us to secure a space advantage – the trick is to find an accurate move order that limits Black’s counterplay. My solution is: 3.♘c3 ♗f6 4.♗f3 dxc4 Now 5.e4 looks like our kind of move, but it allows Black to play 5...♗g4, so I opt to develop first with: 5.♗g5 This is an old favourite of mine, and I will show how to use it as an effective weapon.



## Chapter 8: Minor Lines

The final chapter is a hotchpotch of minor lines.



The lines covered include the Triangle Variation (1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c6), the Albin Counter-Gambit (1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5) and the Von Hennig-Schara Gambit (1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c5 4.cxd5 cxd4). Naturally this chapter also covers many other lines, as this is a complete repertoire.

I have explained the ideas behind the repertoire and shown a few moves, so it’s time to dive into the details.



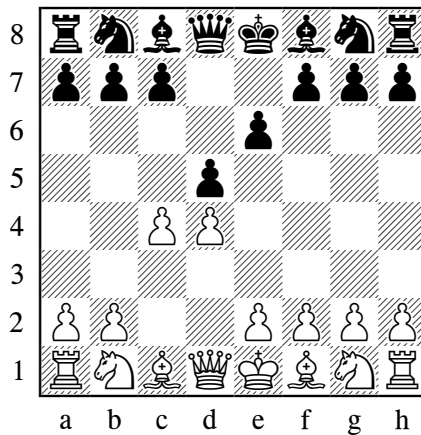
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# Chapter 1

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## Queen's Gambit Declined

*And did we tell you the name of the game, boy  
We call it Riding the Gravy Train  
– Pink Floyd*



**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6**

Follow the Patriarch

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The 3...♗e7 move order

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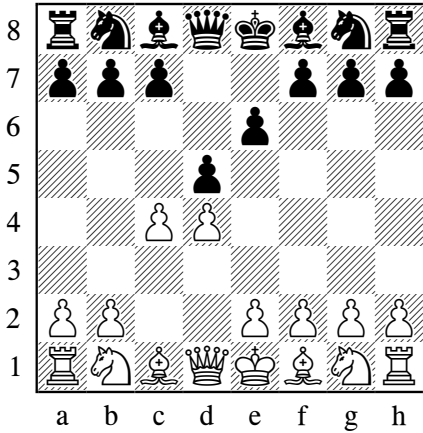
The Mainline

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3...♗e7

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## 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6



The real Queen's Gambit: Black defends d5 and stays solid. It is one of the most respected openings in all chess theory and has been used by every World Champion. Fortunately, they have also had to face it, so we will have some of the greatest guides possible.

## 3.♘c3 ♗f6

Black plays according to the old philosophy: first equalize, and then play for a win. Black's choice of opening should not be thought of as unambitious, but rather as realistic. After all it is White who must come up with something. It is only fair: he has the serve, remember.

Translated to moves, Black will continue ...♗e7 and ...0-0 with a safe king. Afterwards the queenside can be attended to. Here the bishop on c8 needs special care. It is the real problem child of the entire Queen's Gambit Declined, because its natural route to freedom was blocked by 2...e6. Often it can come fully alive on b7. The knight on b8 can go to d7 and help Black to increase his influence in the centre with ...c5.

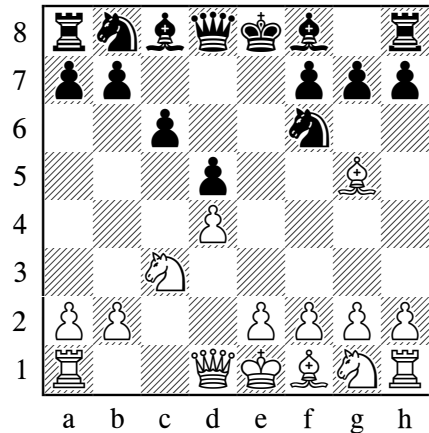
One mainline is 4.♗f3 ♗e7 5.♗g5 0-0 6.e3 and now instead of the ancient masters' solid but rather passive 6...♗bd7, the modern elite throws in the little move 6...h6. Then 7.♗xf6 does not do much for White other than lose

the bishop pair, while after the standard 7.♗h4 Black can either release the tension with the Lasker variation 7...♗e4 or play the flexible Tartakower system with 7...b6. Generally speaking, White's pieces quickly get to good squares and he has a slight positional initiative, but Black has no real weaknesses, so it is difficult to gain anything tangible. In the new century White has had some success with 5.♗f4. Even so, after 5...0-0 6.e3 both the old move 6...c5 and the popular 6...♗bd7 seem viable. Fortunately there is a third option. One that immediately changes the nature of the battle.

## 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♗g5

The Exchange Variation. White fixes the pawn structure in a way that gives him a slight but long-lasting positional edge. Usually Black safeguards d5 with ...c6 and we have the typical Carlsbad structure.

## 5...c6



White has tried to play on both flanks. Usually he begins with 6.♖c2 to prevent Black's problem bishop from going to the great square f5, then White continues with e3, ♗d3, ♗f3 and either castles long and launches an offensive on the kingside with h3 and g4, or castles short and begins positional play on the

queenside with ♖b1 followed by b2-b4-b5, the so-called minority attack.

It is true that Black does not have immediate counterplay. For example, the natural strike in the centre with c6-c5 will most likely lead to severe problems if White just takes it and isolates the black d-pawn. But you don’t play the Queen’s Gambit with Black to get active piece-play, do you? No, you play it to get a firm position, and that is exactly what you get after the normal moves ...♗e7, ...0–0 and ...♝bd7 followed by the clever regrouping ...♞e8 and ...♜f8. The king’s position is well defended and, although placed on the last few ranks, the black pieces are ready to counter any aggression. In the early days of this variation White often ran headfirst into a wall.

However, the legendary World Champion Mikhail Botvinnik found, almost by accident, an interesting set-up for White based on his flair for dynamic pawn play. After the moves ♖c2, e3, ♔d3 he developed the knight more flexibly with ♞ge2 and after 0–0 came the key move f3! preparing the break e3-e4. So White could also play in the centre. This strategy is very promising and was also a favourite of Botvinnik’s pupil, the brilliant attacking player Garry Kasparov.

As an appetizer, let’s see three famous Botvinnik wins that show White’s prospects in full bloom.

## Follow the Patriarch

Botvinnik was well known for his deep opening preparation, but you can’t work out everything in the lab: chess is a practical game. Even in our computer age you still have to make your own decisions at the board – at least sometimes! In the following masterpiece Botvinnik was provoked by the creative Estonian, Paul Keres, and had to come up with something new. In fact, he came up with the foundation for our whole system.

## GAME 1

### Botvinnik – Keres

Moscow 1952

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 exd5  
5.♗g5 ♗e7 6.e3 0–0 7.♗d3 ♝bd7 8.♞c2  
♞e8 9.♞ge2 ♜f8 10.0–0 c6 11.♞ab1

Preparing the typical minority attack.

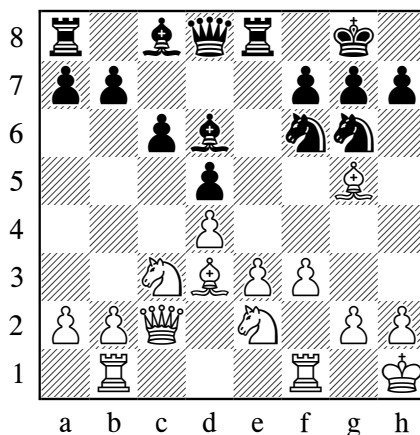
11...♗d6?!

This threatens 12...♗xh2† 13.♜xh2 ♝g4† and ...♞xg5, but the move is inaccurate.

12.♜h1

Now on ...♗xh2 White has the intermediate move ♗xf6 winning instantly.

12...♞g6 13.f3!



We are witnessing the birth of a profound strategy. Black was ready to gain the bishop pair with ...h6, so White needed an active continuation. 13.f3 prepares play in the centre with e3-e4.

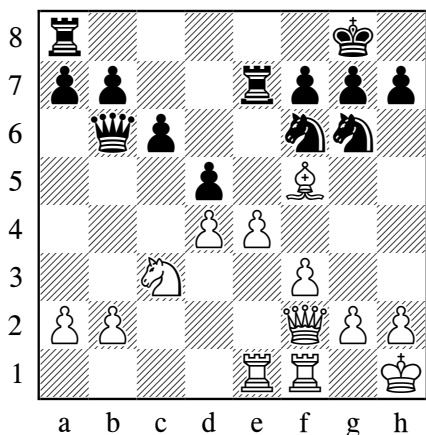
13...♗e7

Black admits his failure. After 13...h6 14.♗xf6 ♞xf6 15.e4 White already has a serious initiative.

**14. ♖be1**

Botvinnik adapts to the new situation. No minority attack today! The plan is to play e3-e4, but first he improves his pieces and at the same time prevents any counterplay: prophylactic play in its very essence. The break will come eventually and with extra force if it is properly backed up. Too hasty was 14.e4 dxe4 15.fxe4 ♗g4 when Black gets good counterplay.

14... ♗d7 15. ♕xe7 ♖xe7 16. ♗g3 ♗f6 17. ♖f2 ♕e6 18. ♗f5 ♕xf5 19. ♕xf5 ♖b6 20.e4!



Finally.

**20... dxe4 21. fxe4±**

White has strong pressure. The further advance e4-e5 is in the air, gaining more space and establishing an outpost on d6 for the knight.

**21... ♖d8 22.e5 ♗d5 23. ♗e4**

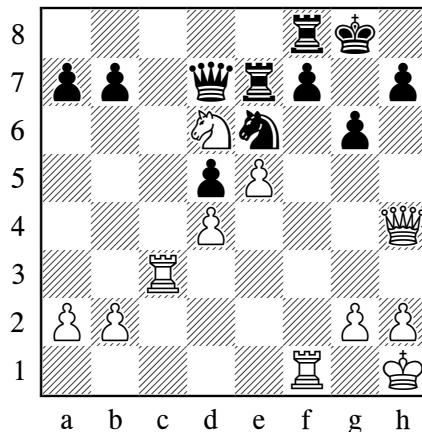
Simple stuff: the knight is going to d6.

**23... ♗f8 24. ♗d6 ♖c7 25. ♕e4**

Botvinnik wants to eliminate the strong knight on d5 and at the same he vacates f5 for his own knight.

**25... ♗e6 26. ♖h4 g6 27. ♕xd5 cxd5 28. ♖c1 ♖d7 29. ♖c3+–**

The positional dominance transforms into a strong attack. Black is beyond salvation.

**29... ♖f8****30. ♗f5! ♖fe8**

Or 30... gxf5 31. ♖g3† ♗g7 32. ♖f6 and mate on g7.

**31. ♗h6†**

Even stronger than taking the exchange. Soon Black will lose everything.

31... ♗f8 32. ♖f6 ♗g7 33. ♖c3 ♖c8 34. ♗xf7 ♖e6 35. ♖g5 ♗f5 36. ♗h6 ♖g7 37.g4  
1–0

After this game Botvinnik refined the system, so when the opportunistic Danish fighter Bent Larsen allowed it some years later, the Patriarch was more than ready.

**GAME 2****Botvinnik – Larsen**

Noordwijk 1965

1.c4 e6 2. ♗c3 d5 3.d4 ♗f6 4.cxd5 exd5  
5. ♕g5 c6 6.e3 ♕e7 7. ♖c2 0–0 8. ♕d3 ♗bd7  
9. ♗ge2 h6

This looks natural but it is a small weakening