

THE COMPLETE HEDGEHOG

VOLUME 1

Foreword by
Garry Kasparov



SERGEY SHIPOV

Sergey Shipov



The Complete Hedgehog

Volume I



BOSTON

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Foreword

The Hedgehog came into prominence in the 1970's, around the same time I also made my entry into the world of what we call "big chess" in Russian. I learned it from my Baku peer Elmar Magerramov as a youth and eventually added it to my repertoire. Thanks to the early black successes of Ljubojevic and Andersson, the Hedgehog was also adopted and promoted by other members of the new wave, such as Psakhis and Ftacnik. Black takes a lot of strategic risks, but the many possibilities of the Hedgehog well represented the coming era of flexibility.

It's notable that my teacher, former world champion Mikhail Botvinnik, never weighed in on this new-fangled system. As someone who often went against the current of the day's opening trends when he was in his prime, he likely recognized the Hedgehog's value despite the unattractive and cramped character that appalled many veterans. And of course, the Patriarch knew practical results counted for something!

In 1981 a pair of wins and a near miss showed me that not only could the Hedgehog be played against anything – e4, d4, or c4 – but it could also be played successfully against anyone. In the same Soviet team event in April I scored a 27-move win against Smyslov and was tantalizingly close to victory against my future world champion rival Karpov. Later that year in Tilburg I beat Robert Huebner employing the classic Hedgehog breaks b6-b5 and d6-d5 on consecutive moves. (And the trajectory of his queen's bishop, ♖b2-♗c1-♗g5-♗c1-♗b2, was extravagant even against the Hedgehog!)

From the beginning, the Hedgehog has been about concepts and plans, not concrete variations and memorized lines. Sergey Shipov's profound interest in these underlying ideas are what make his approach, and this book, so valuable. We had countless "discussions" over the board in blitz in this opening while Sergey was working with me in the late 90's and 2000. He's not just a strong practical player, but someone who likes to study and to pursue the truth.

I highly recommend this book because it investigates strategic concepts instead of being limited to mere reactions. Knowing what to do and when to do it might allow for a degree of success. But to achieve mastery of anything, you must also understand WHY. With Grandmaster Shipov's expert guidance, the reader has every opportunity to do exactly that.

Garry Kasparov
Moscow, June 2009

Introduction

Hedgehog – a haircut where the hair accumulates dry leaves, apples, and darkness.

What is a hedgehog? A woodland creature, of course, spiny all over, with a sharp, funny little face.

When threatened, it rolls itself into a little spiny loaf, which larger beasts are unable to get through. It rolls off in a rough little ball, and gets away unimpeded.

The hedgehog may be small, but it's quite ill-tempered. Despite the common misconception, it's a carnivore that will eat anything it can. Now, of course, it can't chow down a big animal. But a snake, ordinarily a dangerous predator itself, may fall victim to the hedgehog – and other small animals would be even more toothsome. This awkward and clumsy-looking little creature also can, in extreme circumstances, demonstrate fantastic speed and alertness. Let's recall the short but pithy lines of the classicist:



“The Brave Hedgehog”

There was a box lying out-of-doors.

Wild beasts came up to the box, looked it over, sniffed it, and licked it.

And then the box went one, two, three – and it opened.

Out of the box – one, two, three – came a snake.

The beasts were scared, and ran away.

Only the hedgehog was not afraid. He bent down to the snake and one, two, three – ate it all up. And then he sat on the box, and cried out, “Cu-curu-curu!”

No, that's not it – the hedgehog cried out, “Honk! Honk! Honk!”

No, that's not it either! The hedgehog cried out, “Meow! Meow! Meow!”

No, that's not it either! I don't know what a hedgehog sounds like.

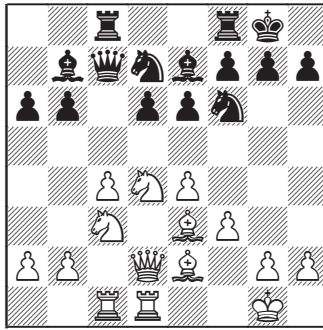
Who knows what a hedgehog says?”

Daniil Kharms, 1935

Indeed, a most serious question; I don't know the answer to it, either. No doubt, the hedgehog howls silently....

For a human, as may be understood from the difference in size, it's not dangerous. On the other hand, I have it from people who keep hedgehogs as household pets that it has a foul temperament, and never misses a chance to bite whomever is closest with its small, sharp teeth.

In chess, the word "hedgehog" refers to a pawn structure with the black pawns arranged on the 6th rank, or the white pawns on the third rank (which, understandably, occurs far less frequently). Here's a typical "hedgehog" position:



Observe: four of Black's pawns have lined up along the sixth rank (sometimes they are joined by the g- and h-pawns), and with their short, strong spines (thus "hedgehog," and not "porcupine"!), they control the fifth rank in front of them. The hostile armies complete their reorganizations inside the space set aside for them. White has four ranks, Black three. The appearance of a pawn or a piece on the fifth rank usually signals the start of sharp conflict, in which the winner will be the one who is better prepared.

Besides the outward resemblance, these kinds of setups also resemble the woodland creature in the way they deal with an enemy who is superior to them in spatial measurement: Black spends a great deal of time in strictly defensive maneuvers, under cover of his pawn-spines, in order to find the right moment to leap out suddenly and bite White.

In this book, I shall be using the words "hedgehog," "hedgehog-like," "quill," "spiny," etc., so often that I'm going to stop using quotation marks around them for simplicity's sake. The reader should understand these words in the chess sense, and not the zoological. Meanwhile, out of deference both to the system and to the critter, I will write the main word with a starting capital letter, and without quotes, as follows: Hedgehog.

The possible permutations of the Hedgehog position are huge, many of them without any real theoretical significance. Thus, for example, I remember that in my school days, when facing weak opposition, I used to play the weirdest Hedgehog positions in blitz games. For instance, I might open a game as White with 1. a3, followed by 2. b3, 3. c3, 4. d3, 5. e3, 6. f3, 7. g3, 8. ♔g2, 9. ♖a2, etc., regardless of what Black played, reaching a very strange and non-viable version

of the Hedgehog. As the years passed, the beasts on my half of the board grew ever stouter and more dangerous for my opponents.

In this book, we shall be examining the generally used setups in which the white d-pawn is exchanged for the black c-pawn, and in which White's pawn is on c4, facing the Hedgehog shield of pawns at e6, d6, and b6. Black's e-pawn must be on e6, and not on e7! Frequently, with White's pawn at c4 after the aforementioned exchange, Black will develop the king's bishop at g7, move the d-pawn to d6 (and sometimes, the queenside pawns will come to the sixth rank), but leave its neighboring pawn at e7. Without this spiny element, Black's pawn structure looks like a dragon – which is a completely different animal. On the other hand, if this pawn eventually does arrive on e6, warding off the white pieces from the last available fifth-rank square, then the Dragon turns into a Hedgehog (note to zoologists – of the same size!), and falls by transposition within our zone of attention.

How should White array his pieces against the Hedgehog? We already have the pawn at c4, nailing down potential Black weaknesses at b6 and d6. The white light-squared bishop could go to g2, to counter the black bishop on b7; in this case, White's e-pawn could be at either e2 or e4. Such a Hedgehog would be labeled “English,” since it arises most often out of the English Opening.

Other types of Hedgehog come about when White's e-pawn goes immediately to e4 and his bishop to e2 (in this case, the e4-pawn is supported by its neighbor on f3 or by the queen from c2), or d3 or c2. Such Hedgehogs are hard to give a name to, arising as they do from many different openings. Sometimes, as we shall see illustrated later on, completely identical positions can arise from fundamentally different means, plus or minus a few tempi – even though, from the initial moves, one might never expect it.

The Hedgehog is a garden of branching paths that suddenly can come back together as one. The problem of transposing or combining variations prevents us from describing these Hedgehog setups in encyclopedic fashion – that is, move after move. So the logical approach is to divide them up, not according to openings, but by the pawn structure that exists after the development of the pieces is completed.

The point of this book is not just to describe the opening phase of the Hedgehog, but also to make a detailed study of the ideas for both sides in the middlegame, using the examples of selected best games.

To show a separate opening stage of a game, and at the end of a variation to trot out some useless assessment, such as “with chances for both sides,” or “with some advantage to White,” is to stop halfway down the road. (And to dismember our Hedgehog!) Here, of course, one is tempted to make the grisly analogy about separating the head from the body.... But look at the photo of our woodland beastie! He's so compact; it's hard to tell where the head ends and the rest of his body begins. The analogy is quite accurate: in the Hedgehog that lives on the chess board, the line between the opening and the middlegame is very fine; and learning the right moves to play in the opening variations doesn't mean that you've learned to play the Hedgehog. What are you going to do in the

middlegame? What sort of plans will you execute? What are you going to aim for – and what are you going to avoid? This is very important, because the Hedgehog is a very specific kind of battle and requires specific habits.

Besides, the process of studying many variations of the opening has, in our day, stretched out right to a spot deep in the endgame. The Hedgehog has not escaped this, either: many of its lines have been analyzed all the way to the end.

So I shall be annotating many of these games right to the finish, also.

I must warn you right off that not all of the examples in this book will be of top-grandmaster quality. And for the beginning stages of your acquaintance with the Hedgehog, this is even a good thing. It is precisely against weaker players that the key strategic and tactical ideas are executed quickly and easily. It follows, then, that such “one-sided” games are the most valuable flash material for study. On the other hand, this book you hold in your hand certainly is not one of those cheap commercial volumes with a title like, “Play the Hedgehog and Win!” Here you will find the key ideas for both sides; that means not just the plus sides, but the minus sides of the system as well.

The book is written for both amateurs and skilled players who want to expand their opening and playing repertoire. I, grandmaster Sergey Shipov, will attempt – based on the study of thousands of games by other players and of hundreds of my own, in addition to analyses I myself have done – to offer as objective a study of the Hedgehog as I can muster.

The Hedgehog

Its Birth and Development

There's a little story, which has Capablanca stealthily letting a hedgehog out of his sleeve onto the chess table; the creature then tells Alekhine, in perfect Russian, "Have atcha!" – and the outcome of the battle was never in doubt.

In both content and philosophy, the Hedgehog is a child of Chess Hypermodernism, which rose to the level of a conscious strategy at the beginning of the twentieth century. Indeed, just as in both the Reti Opening (from the first strong hypermodernist) and the Gruenfeld Defense (from another of the First Pleiad), in the Hedgehog one side gives up the center to his opponent in the opening, with the intention of utilizing the middlegame to attack it. Before the arrival of Richard Reti and his followers on the chess stage, the role of the center and an advantage in space had been overstated somewhat by the representatives of the orthodox school of positional play.

The Hypermodernists, who clearly did not suffer from claustrophobia, demonstrated by their analyses, but chiefly by their tournament successes, that a lack of space could be compensated for by harmonious piece placement and clever exploitation of weaknesses in the enemy camp – and most of all, in the center.

The first Hedgehog games appeared in the Twenties. Of course, from a modern academic standpoint, their quality was far from finished; but some talented forerunners by then had discovered intuitively promising piece placements and methods of counterplay. Here's the clearest example from those days. Notice what Black does here. This was a breakthrough – a step into the future.

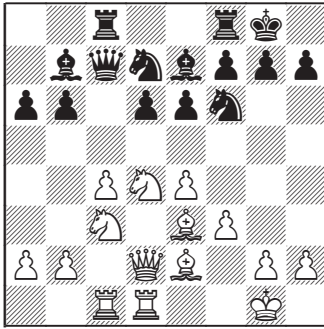
K. Opocensky – F. Saemisch

Bad Pistyan 1922

1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♗xd4 a6 5. c4 ♖c7 6. ♗c3 ♗f6 7. ♙e2 b6

We won't let ourselves be distracted by examining the subtleties of the opening; all we care about is the outcome.

8. ♙e3 ♙b7 9. f3 d6 10. ♖d2 ♗bd7 11. 0-0 ♙e7 12. ♜fd1 0-0 13. ♞ac1 ♞ac8



Recognize this? It's a contemporary Hedgehog position – the same typical position from the previous chapter. Black has set out his pieces accurately, and continues with some very good maneuvers.

14. ♙f1 ♖b8 15. ♖f2 ♗h8

Bravo!

16. ♗c2 ♙d8!

Another notable maneuver, whose full power the Hedgehog experts were to acknowledge only some 60 years later!

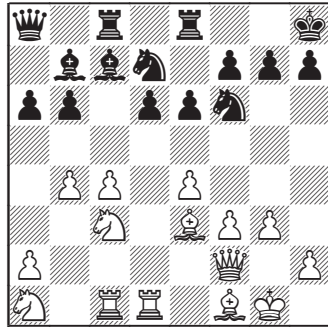
17. ♗a1

Creatively played! Inscrutable are the paths of talented chessplayers' knights.

17...♙c7! 18. g3

Even back then, people understood that the black pawn at d6 was capable of taking a suicidal step forward.

18...♖a8 19. b4 ♜fe8



Too bad it didn't go to g8! On the other hand, just the fact that Friedrich Saemisch put the rook on e8, and not on d8, speaks volumes for his fine positional sense.

20. ♗b3

Karel Opocensky also is on top of things: White's pieces gradually assume ideal positions.

20...♖b8

Black is searching – what to do once all the pieces have been set out? It's a task that every Hedgehog player must resolve...

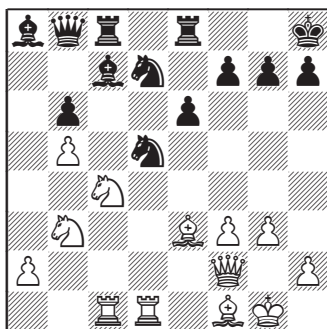
21. ♗a4 ♙c6 22. b5

White is the first to begin active operations, and he does so in the proper direction, and with reasonable means.

22...axb5 23. cxb5 ♖a8 24. ♘b2 d5!

The ...d6-d5 break is the main weapon of the Hedgehog – for all time.

25. exd5 ♜xd5 26. ♜c4



And with this completely modern Hedgehog position, we should end our examination of this first-ever source game, because further on, its creators did not play quite so well. After a tense struggle, the game ended in a draw.

Examples of modern Hedgehog ideas may be found in dozens of our predecessors' games. These were discoveries of genius over the board, moments of inspiration from talented experimenters.

But, despite successes in disparate games, the Hedgehog as a goal of the opening and a style of play remained a rare guest in practice for half a century; consequently, it was not studied by theoreticians. The main reason this happened was because none of the

strongest chessplayers of the world, whom chess fashion always follows, would play the Hedgehog. A second reason was that the usual, classical openings had not been worked out so deeply yet. Those who wished to discover new and fruitful ideas had plenty of unexplored fields to work in already.

The situation only changed in the '70s, when the time was ripe for a new appearance by the Hedgehog: there was a burning need to vary the opening palette with original setups. A whole constellation of notable grandmasters and masters, headed by Ljubomir Ljubojevic, Ulf Andersson, Florin Gheorghiu, Zoltan Ribli, Lajos Portisch, Robert Huebner, Anatoly Karpov (yes indeed, the World Champion!), Lev Polugaevsky, and Mihai Suba, began to make active use of Hedgehog formations against many different openings, and to achieve outstanding results with them. Closer to the '80s, they were joined by a wave of younger experts, such as Lev Psakhis, Andras Adorjan, Lubomir Ftacnik, and, finally, by Garry Kasparov as he ascended to the Champion's rank.

The games grew more numerous, which in conjunction with the analysts' work led to the detailing of fine-tuned opening variations, leading to viable Hedgehogs and also to the examination of middlegame ideas for counterplay, creating a whole unified strategy of Hedgehog setups.

This comprised the second, and essentially the main, birthing of the chess Hedgehog, which this author believes can be expected to live forever – or as long as people continue to play chess.

Getting to the Hedgehog Opening Structure

Once upon a time, there lived some mice, and everyone harassed them. They took counsel of a wise old owl:

“Everyone harasses us. What shall we do?”

The owl thought awhile, and gave them some advice:

“Become little hedgehogs. They have spines, so no one bothers them.”

And the mice were glad. But the cleverest of the mice asked him:

“Just how do we become little hedgehogs?”

And the wise old owl replied:

“Don’t distract me with trifles: I only do STRATEGY.”

Like many other typical middlegame positions (the classic example would be the isolani), the Hedgehog may arise from a great many variations of different openings.

In order to reach the required structure, one only needs to exchange Black’s c-pawn for White’s d-pawn and allow White to occupy the center. So when you play Black, play ...c7-c5 as quickly as you can, and at the first opportunity trade pawns on d4. And don’t move any of your other pawns beyond the sixth rank – otherwise you’ll never get your Hedgehog.

I should warn my young and impressionable readers that **Hedgehog structures can occur only if both sides are willing**; so there’s no point in studying the Hedgehog with the aim of making it your principal system for Black, because “wicked” opponents might not allow you to set it up at the board.

If you just have to have a setup in your Black repertoire that your opponent cannot prevent, I advise you to put your pawn on d5. After 1. d4, this may be done immediately; after 1. e4 or 1. c4, you can begin with the preparatory moves 1...e6 or 1...c6.

You also may fianchetto your bishop at g7, intending a King’s Indian or a Pirc-Ufimtsev Defense. But I am not going to write about these openings. They’re for different books.

And so, obtaining the Hedgehog depends first of all on White’s desire to attack Black’s apparently passive and vulnerable position.

But if it appears that White has such a desire, then seize your chance: become a Hedgehog! So as not to become like the wise old owl, I will be absolutely concrete about this, and show you how it is done.

To illustrate the “high birthrate” of the Hedgehog, I will show a few very correct opening variations, just in the Sicilian Defense. We shall leave aside the possible transpositions when pieces are developed without coming into contact, as they are innumerable and have no meaning for us.

For particularly unusual ways of reaching the Hedgehog, I will give the names of the players who invented them.

Examples:

No. 1

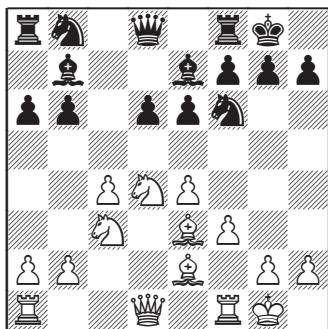
1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♗xd4 ♗f6 5. f3

The idea behind this move is to allow White's pawn to go to c4 before the knight comes out to c3.

5...e6

A humble response. 5...d5 is poor, in view of 6. e5 ♗fd7 7. f4, when Black has gotten into an inferior French Defense. Thus, 5...e6 6. ♗b3 d5 is played more often.

6. c4 b6 7. ♗c3 ♗b7 8. ♖e3 ♖e7 9. ♖e2 0-0 10. 0-0 a6



This is a Hedgehog with the pawn at f3.

No. 2

1. e4 c5 2. ♗f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♗xd4 ♗f6 5. f3 ♗c6

This is playable, too.

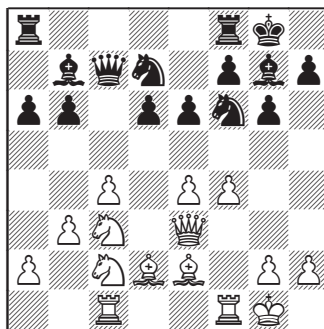
6. c4 ♗b6 7. ♗c2 g6 8. ♗c3 ♖g7 9. ♗d3 ♗e5 10. ♗e3

Otherwise Black's queen prevents White from castling.

10...♗c7 11. b3 a6 12. ♖d2 0-0 13. ♗c1 e6

Black occupies the e6 square, thereby changing the great reptile into a Hedgehog.

14. f4 ♗ed7 15. ♖e2 b6 16. 0-0 ♖b7



This is the basic structure, and a reasonable setup of the black pieces. I. Yagupov – G. Timoshenko, St. Petersburg 1996.

No. 3

1. e4 c5 2. ♗f3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♗xd4 a6

The Paulsen Variation.

5. c4 ♗f6 6. ♗c3 d6

The Complete Hedgehog

Consciously striving toward the goal.

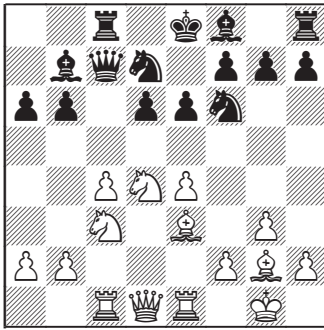
7. g3

7. ♖e2 b6 8. 0-0 ♗b7 9. f3 ♜bd7, etc., leads us back to the Hedgehog with pawn at f3 that we already know.

7...b6

If we hesitate, the queen's bishop will not get fianchettoed.

8. ♖g2 ♗b7 9. 0-0 ♜c7 10. ♖e3 ♜bd7 11. ♝c1 ♝c8 12. ♝e1



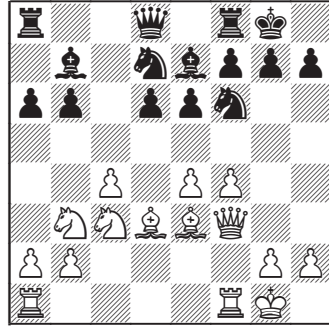
Here we have – an English Hedgehog, to which we shall devote the bulk of this book.

No. 4

1. e4 c5 2. ♜f3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♜xd4 a6 5. ♖d3 ♖c5 6. ♜b3 ♖e7

A standard bishop maneuver – driving the white knight from the center, and then returning to a safe square.

7. c4 d6 8. ♜c3 ♜f6 9. 0-0 0-0 10. ♖e3 b6 11. f4 ♜bd7 12. ♜f3 ♗b7



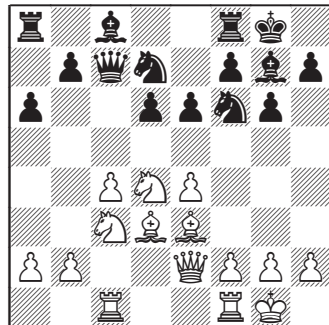
The Hedgehog with White's bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal, to which we also shall devote a great deal of study.

No. 5

1. e4 c5 2. ♜f3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♜xd4 a6 5. ♖d3 ♜f6 6. 0-0 ♜c7 7. ♜e2 d6 8. c4 g6

In this variation, Black frequently develops his dark-squared bishop, not to e7, but to g7. White having placed too many minor pieces on the d-file, the d6 square is safe for the immediate future.

9. ♜c3 ♖g7 10. ♖e3 0-0 11. ♝ac1 ♜bd7



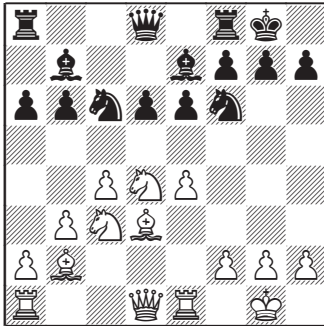
– and Black follows up with ...b7-b6 and ...c8-b7 to reach the basic structure.

No. 6

**1. e4 c5 2. f3 e6 3. d4 cxd4
4. xd4 a6 5. d3 f6 6. 0-0 d6
7. e1**

How many, many piece setups there are here! It's impossible to list them all...

7...e7 8. c4 b6 9. c3 b7 10. b3 0-0 11. b2 c6



Once again, the familiar landscape.
E. Geller – L. Popov, Skopje 1967.

No. 7

1. e4 c5 2. f3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. xd4 d6

A passive move, granting White complete freedom to choose whatever piece setup he wishes.

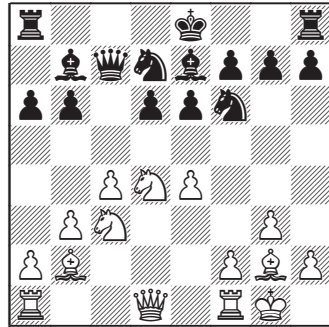
5. c4 b6 6. c3 b7 7. g3 d7 8. g2 a6 9. b3 gf6

A rare situation in the Hedgehog, where the king's knight is brought out later than the queen's knight. It's unusual, for a professional, to see ...d7 and ...gf6 instead of the more common ...f6 and ...bd7.

10. 0-0 c7!

It's been a long time since anybody playing Black has fallen for the trap 10...e7? 11. e5!

11. b2 e7



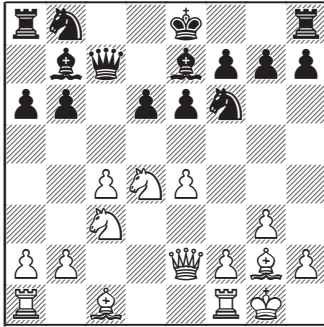
It's done: M. Quinteros – M. Najdorf, Manila 1973.

No. 8

1. e4 c5 2. f3 e6 3. c4

An immediate attempt to seize the center. By transposing White's first and third moves, one may also reach the same position out of the English Opening. Such chameleon-like transformations from one opening into another are commonplace in chess.

3...b6 4. c3 b7 5. g3 f6 6. e2 d6 7. g2 a6 8. d4 cxd4 9. xd4 e7 10. 0-0 c7



And, just as we expected, it's an English Hedgehog.

No. 9

1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6 3. ♙b5+

In this game, White first develops his kingside, and only then begins fighting for the center.

3...♘d7 4. 0-0 ♘gf6 5. ♖e1 a6 6. ♙f1 b6 7. d4 cxd4 8. ♘xd4 ♙b7 9. f3!?

White refrains from the immediate development of his knight to c3, so as not to block the c-pawn's advance.

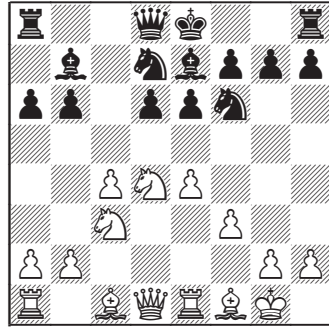
9...e6 10. c4! ♙e7 11. ♘c3

Three examples out of the King's Indian Defense:

No. 1

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♘c3 ♙g7 4. e4 d6 5. f3 0-0 6. ♙e3 ♘bd7

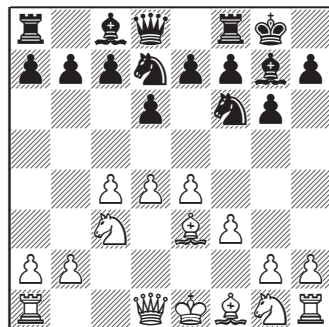
A standard position from the Saemisch Variation; no spiny beasts are visible on this horizon...



Once again, unexpectedly, the Hedgehog is born. T. Oral – R. Ruck, Rimavska Sobota 1992.

Among other openings that give rise to the Hedgehog structure fairly frequently, we of course must single out the English Opening, the Queen's Indian Defense, and the Nimzo-Indian. We will see concrete variations when we get into the detailed part of this book.

In other openings, the likelihood of a Hedgehog formation is lessened dramatically, especially when Black's pawns "mistakenly" advance two squares from their starting position. But if the leader of the black pieces is not in a hurry to occupy the center with his pawns, the Hedgehog can appear suddenly, even in the most "un-Hedgehog-like" of openings. Here, have a look.



7. ♖ge2 c5 8. ♚d2 a6 9. ♜d1 ♚a5
10. ♜c1

Black waited a few moves for his opponent to close up the center by d4-d5, so that he could execute the ...b7-b5 counterstroke and obtain play along the lines of the Volga Gambit. But White is stubborn.

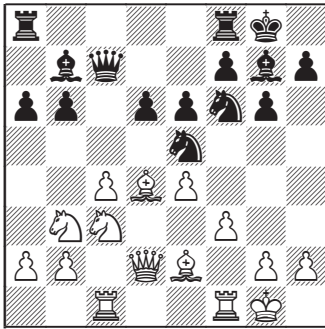
10...cxd4

He couldn't wait any longer!

11. ♙xd4 ♜e5

And now, after the center is opened up, Black finally can continue his development.

12. ♜b3 ♚c7 13. ♞c1 e6 14. ♙e2
b6 15. 0-0 ♙b7



There's your Hedgehog: J. Christiansen – J. Nunn, Germany 1989.

Another variation on the same theme:

No. 2

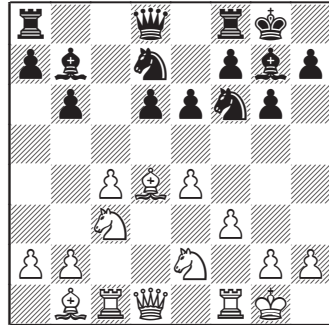
1. d4 ♜f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♜c3 ♙g7 4.
e4 d6 5. f3 0-0 6. ♙e3 ♜bd7

The first six moves as in the preceding game.

7. ♙d3 c5 8. ♜ge2 e6 9. 0-0 b6
10. ♞c1

The same restrained movements.

10...♙b7 11. ♙b1 cxd4 12. ♙xd4

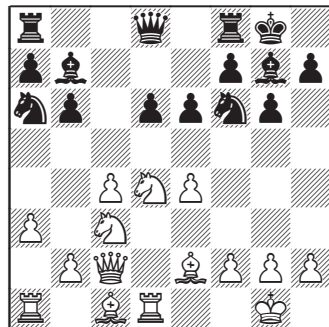


And again, it appears, but in an unusual format: J. Lautier – J. Nunn, Wijk aan Zee 1991.

In the following game, Black, a great expert in the Modern Benoni, attempted in vain to entice his opponent onto "his" territory.

No. 3

1. c4 g6 2. ♜c3 c5 3. e3 ♙g7 4.
d4 ♜f6 5. ♜f3 0-0 6. ♙e2 b6 7. 0-0
d6 8. a3 ♜a6 9. ♚c2 e6 10. ♜d1 ♙b7
11. e4 cxd4 12. ♜xd4



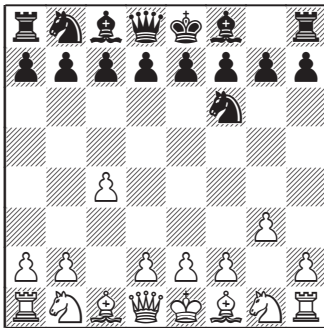
And again, this time as a sort of compromise between the two sides' interests, the woodland creature rises on the board. A. Eller – A. Kapengut, Riga 1968.

Let me emphasize once again that the Hedgehog is not a universal system: it cannot be achieved unless the opponent cooperates. And you should not persist stubbornly in your efforts. There's danger there...

Unfortunately (and how could I not know this?), often enough, the player of the white pieces, knowing that his opponent loves to play the Hedgehog, and is quite skilled at it, consciously chooses different opening paths. In such case, the stubborn insistence on setting up your favorite opening decorations can be quite dangerous to Black's health. Here's an example from my own experience.

A. Lisenko – S. Shipov
Hungary 1991

1. c4 ♖f6 2. g3!



The Anti-Hedgehog! White quickly brings his bishop to g2, to prevent its opposite number from getting to b7.

2...c5

Later on, I started playing 2...c6! followed by 3...d5 in this position, in order to discomfit White with an unbreakable wall at d5. Let the fianchettoed bishop crack its teeth on that.

3. ♙g2 e6 4. ♜f3 a6?!

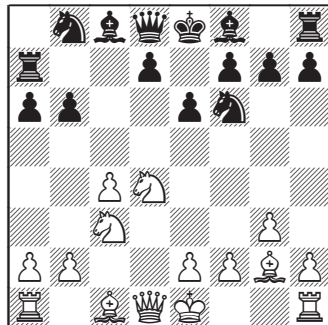
With this order of moves, Black can't put the bishop on b7 immediately, so 4...b6 is bad: 5. ♜e5 d5 6. cxd5 ♜xd5 7. ♜c3 ♙b7 8. ♚a4+! (a most unpleasant check!) 8...♜d7 9. ♜xd5 ♙xd5 10. ♙xd5 exd5 11. ♚c6 ♙e7 12. ♜xd7 ♜c8 13. ♜f6+ ♜f8 14. ♜d7+ ♜e8 15. ♜f6+ ♜f8 16. ♚xd5, with a healthy extra pawn for White. Y. Seirawan – L. Ftacnik, New York 1987.

"If I can't play it right away, maybe I can make it happen eventually," I thought.

5. ♜c3

On 5. d4 cxd4 6. ♜xd4, Black has a good reply: 6...♚c7! – by attacking the c-pawn, Black prevents his opponent from comfortably completing his development.

5...b6 6. d4 cxd4 7. ♜xd4 ♚a7



Truly, what won't we do to accomplish a task we've set out for ourselves? By this unsanctioned approach, I succeeded in setting up the desired structure. But the objective assessment of the position as very difficult for Black served as decent compensation to my opponent for this creative "misfortune." And if he had been more decisively inclined, I might not have escaped whole. As it was...

8. ♖f4 ♗b7

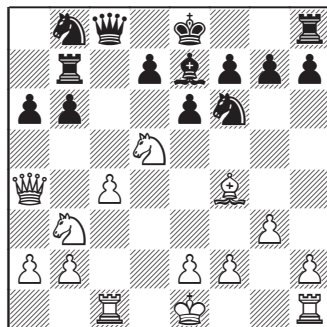
On 8...d6, I disliked the continuation 9. ♗a4+ ♗d7 10. ♗db5!?

9. ♗xb7 ♞xb7 10. ♖a4 ♖c8 11. ♞c1 ♗c5

In those ancient times, I was an alert tactician, which is why I saw that 11...♗e7 would run into the powerful blow 12. ♗d5!, when accepting the knight sacrifice leads to a very strong attack for White.

12. ♗b3 ♗e7 13. ♗d5!

No, my friends – one should not make a fetish out of the Hedgehog, striving to set it up in every situation regardless of the consequences. Only a fool learns only from his mistakes – smart people also learn from the mistakes of others. If, as a result of logical play, you can set up your Hedgehog out of the opening – great! If not, don't despair – play some other scheme, some other structure. Chess is rich in possibilities, and can't be restricted to a catechism of spiny little beasties.



Anyway! Black's queen comes under attack.

13...♗c6!

After calculating such pretty variations as 13...exd5 14. cxd5 ♗c5 15. ♗d6! ♞c7 16. ♗xc5 ♞xc5 17. ♞xc5 bxc5 18. ♖b3!, or 14...♖d8 15. d6 ♗f8 16. ♞c7!, with a quick win for White in either case, I preferred not to capture the Trojan horse.

14. ♖xc6 ♗xc6 15. ♗xe7 ♗xe7

Ending up in an inferior endgame – which I still tried to play for a win, before finally saving it.

The Hedgehog Philosophy

Before we immerse ourselves in opening variations and middlegame planning, let's formulate a few general ideas about the Hedgehog. And although these may sound a little dry and even philosophical, later on we shall see concrete mechanisms for putting them into practice.

In the Hedgehog, Black operates in guerrilla style: avoiding direct contact, he hides in the bushes, observes his foe, waits, and then attacks at the most unexpected moment. The image of the forest guerrilla, warlike and merciless, is quite suited to the Hedgehog. After all, the spiny beast does live in the woods...

The Hedgehog has a number of exceptional features that distinguish it from many other systems. It has its own rules and laws, which differ considerably from those of normal chess.

For example, every player familiar with the basics of chess knows that in cramped positions, exchanges are good because they make it easier for the rest of the pieces on the board to maneuver. In the Hedgehog, however, it's exactly the opposite. More often, exchanges are bad for Black, because they decrease his fighting potential. It's especially important to keep the queens on the board, so that after the game is opened up the white king can get what's coming to him. We shall have many opportunities to observe this curious paradox in the course of this book.

More: Right away, and with no regrets, I will tell you that, in the larger sense, the Hedgehog is a risky opening.

In any chess book, you will read a pack of rules, chief of which are the principles of developing as quickly as possible and of fighting for the center. So there you have it: both principles are trashed in the Hedgehog, and in the most disturbing fashion. Black practically refuses to fight for the center, allowing his opponent the unhindered opportunity to occupy it with pawns. In return, not only does he not outstrip White in development – in fact, he's more likely to fall behind. Constructing the beast along the sixth rank requires spending a minimum of 3-4 tempi just on pawn moves. Indeed, if you think about it, the move ...a7-a6, with a board full of undeveloped pieces, looks mighty strange from the viewpoint of the classical school of, say, the end of the nineteenth century.

So, what's good about the Hedgehog? Here it is: Black – here and for the rest of the book, I will assume that it is Black who is setting up the Hedgehog, although it could also be White – sets up a solid wall of pawns, behind whose protection he can arrange a universal piece placement that's guaranteed to be a good one. Each piece has its own ideal spot; each fighter knows his maneuver. Black quickly can reel off a long series of moves, which saves thinking time.

There won't be too much space along the seventh and eighth ranks, of course; but it will be quite enough to allow the construction of a sort of trampoline of pieces, harboring great striking power. Let White carelessly expose himself, lose the coordination of his pieces, just for a second, and the potential energy of the black pieces will be converted forcefully into the kinetic state, as they leap out sharply from behind their pawn cover into White's ranks. It's important to note that White, in seizing greater space, also takes on greater responsibilities.

Here it would be useful to draw an analogy with wartime action. When an army occupies a large swath of territory, it acquires communication problems: lines of contact, roads, trying to coordinate forces scattered over great distances. Every place within the controlled territory needs to have small garrisons posted. And therefore, when a large detachment of the enemy army breaks out of its deep rear echelon, it will be hard to resist; bringing all one's forces together quickly in one place might not be possible. Such counterattacking raids into the enemy rear area occur frequently throughout the history of warfare and always have been a strong tactical weapon in the hands of good generals. Napoleon Bonaparte won many battles precisely because he knew how to concentrate his forces very quickly and in the most important direction, which his opponents did not.

But let us return to the chessboard. Often one may hear the opinion that the Hedgehog is too passive a system, in which one cannot, by looking at the position, tell what to do. There's no well laid plan. But here it's important to take the psychological factor into consideration. When the player of White takes over the center without a struggle, he gets a feeling of superiority, regardless of his rating. He feels that his position is superior – and in fact, this feeling would be entirely correct – and he wants to enlarge upon his success. Black putters about on the last two ranks, with a very cramped position and no active plans. The feeling immediately rises up: he must be punished for this. It's a drive that frequently leads to an unprepared attack. While he's storming Black's position, White easily can overstep the bounds of risk, miscalculate, or just make a mistake – and Black's counterattack will destroy him. So the outward passivity of the Hedgehog is deceiving – it just knows how to hide its teeth!

In large tournaments, I am paired often with players considerably lower ranked than myself. When this happens, the Hedgehog helps me win almost every game. Practically speaking, it never has entered the head of any of them just to sit and wait, undertaking nothing (well, even this takes some level of mastery), even though before the game started they dreamed only of making a draw. After all, we've reached a position where Black has no dangerous ideas to pursue. Any breaks must lead, in the best case, to simplification and complete

equality. All of Black's attacking ideas appear only when White has undertaken some activity of his own.

In such "standoff" positions, I make it appear that I want to play some advance or other. I feint at active play, bluff – and my opponents can't stand it. "If I sit and wait, he's bound to break through somewhere," is what they're thinking. "And my position is just so good, there's every basis for playing to win." So they begin their attack, which in fact turns out to be the beginning of mine.

I have observed this psychological effect many times. And when I face an opponent who is not one bit less strong than I, then there's nothing to be gained by avoiding the draw. White is justified in taking a risk and playing for the win, especially from such a "sweet" position. Thus, the Hedgehog means playing for the win.

The chess Hedgehog is a lot like an iceberg. Don't laugh; for all the apparent incomparability between the little beast and the vast ice mountain, they do share a remarkable similarity. It's a well-known fact that, in the ocean, the iceberg hides most of its bulk (about five-sixths) in watery darkness. So, too, the Hedgehog, in game after game, displays only an insignificant part of its possibilities. Its handlers must calculate many variations during the course of a game, and consider many nuances, the vast bulk of which never will turn into actual moves.

Why is this? Because the very character of the game requires it. Literally at every move, the players must examine Black's possible breaks with ...b6-b5 and ...d6-d5, as well as White's active possibilities, which also vary depending on which setup is being employed. There are times when 10, 15, or even more moves will pass by without any apparent change in the position before one of these possibilities can be carried out. So time scrambles are an objective necessity for those who play the Hedgehog. In the majority of cases only the most advanced experts in the system, its patron saints, can decide, without calculating variations, when is the right time to open up the game for either side, which thus allows them to save thinking time. Less skilled players must spend time and energy on every move.

Garry Kasparov once noted properly that those who play White against the Hedgehog turn out to be "out of form" with suspicious regularity. That is, one regularly must hear them tell stories of how successfully he fought the Hedgehog, what a huge advantage he had, how close he was to the win – but then, suddenly, he made a terrible blunder and lost, alas. Even grandmasters – even solid, experienced fighters. For some reason, it is precisely when fighting against the Hedgehog that they don't feel at their best, make stupid miscalculations in level positions, etc.

And in fact, this all is merely a consequence of the complexities of playing the Hedgehog. The price of a mistake in this system is very high, not just for Black, but also for White.

There is an important point that must be sensed by those who would play the Hedgehog, and that is the sense of space. Those who feel uncomfortable in close quarters – in elevators, for example – should not be playing the Hedgehog. For once you sink seriously into the study of this position, you literally begin to live

at the board, to feel the pieces, their problems and their power. And, naturally, when all the pieces are crammed into the edge of the board, a claustrophobe will find it hard to maintain his composure over a long period of time. And this is something he must have. The blood of the Hedgehogger must run cold as ice – at least, until a certain moment arrives...

The Hedgehog is a system with a broken rhythm of battle. In the middlegame, behind the cover of the pawn chains, one may maneuver at leisure, wasting tempi right and left, making puzzling – sometimes even senseless – moves. Meanwhile, one's hardworking opponent will spend a lot of energy and minutes in the vain hope of figuring out the Hedgehog handler's plans. Such extended cat-and-mouse play, when done right, will end with a sharp blow from Black in the center – preferably close to time pressure – after which the game takes a completely different turn. Time, which has been trickling slowly on, now speeds up sharply. Meanwhile, Black enlarges his linear measurements, with the chess clocks and the spectators playing the roles of unmoving witnesses. In general, the actions on the board provide a sort of original means of illustrating Einstein's special theory of relativity. Everything's relative; everything is altered: the passivity of the Hedgehog, the White space advantage, the slowness of play... And one needs to be prepared ahead of time for these sharp changes.

From the side, it might seem that the Hedgehog is a system for the born tactician. In fact, the number and depth of the most complex variations, occurring as a consequence of sharp blows from both sides, sometimes can overwhelm the imagination. To calculate all the consequences accurately is practically impossible. But, in fact, what's important in the Hedgehog is not accuracy but positional understanding.

The most important thing in the Hedgehog is to set out the pieces properly. In this, the consequence of these complex variations turns out to be good for Black. That is true even if you don't see them and can't calculate them all. In the heart of the thickest variations of the Hedgehog, in the depths of the deepest complications, the correct setup for the game will help you to achieve success – like a life preserver, which even can save someone who doesn't know how to swim from drowning. If the pieces stand properly and support one another well, then sometimes even oversights can prove useful – and miscalculations less than fatal.

Of course, in a greater sense, the concept of "proper" is an idea we get precisely from many complicated variations. But on the basis of the playing experience of Hedgehog practitioners, and of analyses made, one may formulate a set of fairly simple recommendations for playing the Hedgehog. Knowing these, the player can select the exact move order in the opening in order to reach the "proper" piece setup. And that, without calculating a thing.

In the middlegame, there also are a few principles that, if followed, will allow you to put up sufficient resistance to White's assault. For example, significant weakening in the enemy camp will serve as a sure sign that it's time to begin a sharp counterattack. And if there are none, then it's better to hold your fire and continue to play with your muscles under your pawn skin.

Of course, you really can't get along completely without calculations. In a

normal chess game, it's pretty much impossible to win without complications, provided of course that your opponent isn't too weak. But the proper piece placement allows you to minimize the pressure on your "calculating machinery" – the thing resting on a player's shoulders.

But enough physics – let's get to the lyrics. Right here, at the beginning of the book, I will formulate its main theme:

The Hedgehog – Ya Gotta Love It!

In order to feel every nuance and trick, you need to get into it seriously. Playing the Hedgehog according to a rote-memorized setup, without feeling or passion in the soul, is just like playing a good piece of music as if it were nothing more than mechanically picking out the notes: it won't sing.

So, I don't advise that you play the Hedgehog if the only thing that you love about chess is winning, if the result of the game is the thing that matters most to you. There's no point in your reading this book.

Of course, everyone loves differently. For me, the Hedgehog is a brother in arms, at whose side I fear nothing. We are blood brothers, he and I.

These are the basic ideas of the Hedgehog. The nuances, you will learn gradually. Along with the chess commentaries to the games, I will illustrate and expand upon the accompanying philosophical themes.

Space and Order

There are general rules in life which also find a useful place in chess. If a person doesn't have enough of something important, what he has, he undoubtedly values, protects, and employs most properly. Examples might be health, time, money, and – pay attention now – space!

As a man who, in his younger days, lived with a wife and daughter in a communal apartment nine meters square, I can attest to this truism. Those who live in McMansions probably will find this impossible to believe, but I can assure you: even in so small a room, one can live quite comfortably and even enjoy life.

Note that the smaller the quarters, the more accurate and well thought-out will be the arrangements therein. The owners value every centimeter of their apartment and carefully plan their interior usage. The home can contain nothing superfluous; every item must have a purpose. Again – a smaller space is more easily picked up and kept clean than a larger one. This leads us to the following simple formula: the less space, the more order!

The formula is simple and clear: $S \times O = C$. Any product of the two variables always yields a constant, which of course will be different in each case. Is the house half as large? Then it will be twice as orderly.

This is a Law of the Hedgehog, for the connection here is a most direct one. The player of Black must set up a little cave, covered with pawns, ideally constructed so that he does not suffocate and can prepare himself for the fight. Once again, let me emphasize that in the Hedgehog, Black generally avoids exchanging pieces. In the beginning, his burrow has nothing that he doesn't need. All he trades off is the c7-pawn – to create an airhole as well as open lines from c8 to c1 and from a8 to h1 for sniper control of White's camp. Places will be found for all the other fighters, and nobody gets in anyone else's way.

White can lay out his own pieces however he likes, and scatter them all over his big ol' apartment – he even can allow himself the luxury of not seeing the dirt and mess in the corners – while Black's place is much better kept. For him, every little corner is most valuable.

Filling up space is a relative concept. For the present, we can't even think how much so.

Let's try a simple example from life. Sometimes we say that a bus is full to bursting; but if we were to add up the sizes of all the people within it, and compare that with the overall size of the interior space of the bus, then we would find a great difference. The passengers occupy only a tenth of the inside of the bus. And yet they complain loudly of overcrowding. Of course, people aren't ball bearings: you can't pack them in hermetically (legs up, or sideways, or lying on the floor). Nor do we have to.

(Besides, you can't even pack ball bearings without wasting some space – even in the ideal arrangement, they occupy less than 78 percent of the space, and no more than that. Only cubes can attempt to reach 100 percent packed, if you make them perfectly and squeeze them in just so...)

But pieces on the chessboard can, if need be, stand shoulder to shoulder, with no spaces, using the space allotted to them with 100 percent effectiveness. Of course, I don't mean two-dimensional space in the physical sense, but in the chess sense: squares on the board. In the Hedgehog, Black's pieces take up their positions ideally close to one another, forming a tightly knit mechanism. Hey – the more, the merrier.

To realize this, it's useful to compare squares and pieces. For his eight pieces and seven pawns – 15 men in all – Black has 24 squares on three ranks, or nine vacancies. The pawns form a hard carapace in front, and cannot move backward. But the pieces can be arrayed and moved about in the available living space however you like. Once you have acquired experience and get a feeling for this system, you will see that, in the Hedgehog, your pieces really aren't cramped at all. You always have six or seven squares available to you for maneuvering. That's plenty for a lot of accurate regroupings.

In chess, impregnability is not an end in itself. Pieces, unlike ball bearings or cubes, are not all equal: each has its own peculiarities. They also must protect one another, compensating for their neighbors' shortcomings and working well together in case the position opens up. The inner structure of any piece setup must be flexible, ready for quick redeployment and sharp movement. The functionality of a living organism – that's the best analogy. Once again, we arrive at a comparison with a wild little forest creature.

Those who employ the Hedgehog must command a sharpened sense of space and the ability to use it to maximum effect – a heightened attention to detail, accuracy in movement, and faultless internal order. The Hedgehog develops all of these characteristics. It's a useful opening to play.

Evaluating a Position

*“Trust, but verify!”
Russian proverb*

While playing or analyzing, chess players constantly assess the positions that arise and, on the basis of these assessments, they make their decisions, discarding unfavorable variations and selecting the best ones.

The assessment of a position is a complicated concept. Each annotator has a little of himself invested in it. There not only are objective, but also subjective, aspects to a position’s assessment. For this is, above all, a point of view – whether from the standpoint of a concrete individual, concrete program, or an entire cohort.

In essence, an assessment of a position mainly is the likelihood of a particular result of the game. For example, “great advantage for White” (\pm) means that a win for White is more likely than a draw, and that a win for Black is extremely unlikely. An assessment of a “small advantage for White” (\pm) may be treated as choosing the draw as the most likely outcome. But in the meantime, White winning is substantially more likely than the opposite result. And so forth...

In my view, there are three major ways of dealing with this generally accepted term.

1. An absolute (or objective) assessment of the position

This shows the most likely outcome of the game, with best, ideal play from both sides. **The result of careful analysis.**

If Garry Kasparov and Vladimir Kramnik sat down together to analyze some abstract position, unrelated to either of them, with the aid of powerful computers and the finest programs, setting aside their personal likes and dislikes, and attempted to get to the very bottom, and then worked on a little further still – this is what I would call an absolute assessment. Even if they could not prove a win for either side, or an unavoidable draw, with variations, still they would be able to establish a very exact assessment of the position: absolute and objective.

This is the sort of assessment of a position that annotators most often assume in their work.

2. Statistical assessment of a position

This is the outcome of a trial by average statistical results for both sides. Let's take a complex position that we're supposed to assess. To do this, we carry out a large number of **practical tests**. We randomly select N (in mathematics, this letter means, not just many, but a very great many) pairs of players, who are given equal time to play out this position – unknown to them both – to the end.

The results: in W number of pairs White wins; in D number of pairs the game is a draw; and in B number of pairs, Black is the winner. Adding all these numbers together gives the total number of pairs, thus: $W + D + B = N$. Then the likelihood of a White win is W/N , the likelihood of a draw is D/N , and the likelihood of a Black win is, correspondingly, B/N . The total of all these numbers will, understandably, equal 1; and this means that the game inevitably must end in one of these three results. This procedure is called the defining of probability.

If your number of tests is great enough, it becomes completely immaterial precisely which players were involved in the given position – that is, of course, assuming we did, indeed, select them at random. For example, in order to achieve the “needed” result, we could have had the black pieces played by only grandmasters in a row of contests, with the white pieces taken by novices. This would result in even a very good position for White yielding a bad statistical result, because of a dishonest statistical procedure...

3. Individual assessment of a position

Now we come to the most interesting part. Chess players differ in rating, depth of preparation, style, sporting qualities, character, and so forth. Each has his own preferences, which meld together to form his chessic taste. At bottom, it's all habits. And therefore, each approaches a position to study in different ways, and plays it differently as well. Each individual component dictates a difference in play. These can be examined separately.

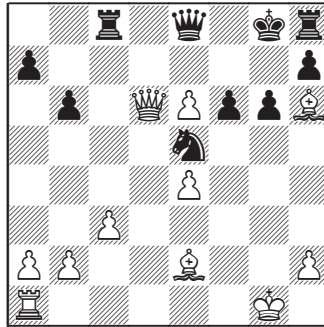
Style: One and the same position may be evaluated differently by a wild attacker or a careful player with a defensive plan – and yet, there would be no contradiction in these evaluations. What we have here is the theory of relativity itself, as applied to chess. Everything depends on the point of view, on a particular set of coordinates. Indeed, in a complex, irrational position, the attacker would have more winning chances, while the defender would have only a few chances to save himself. And it would be easy to think up a reversed scenario.

Attitude: People are very emotional. Depending on circumstances, someone may play different positions at differing strengths. If a player just does not like a certain position, he will find it very hard to stick to it and create something. Inspiration is lacking, the desire to examine nuances is just not there. Playing strength ebbs away...

Knowledge: Many players are narrow specialists: they study well their own favorite variations, isolated setups, and specific pawn structures – and orient poorly in others. Thus, we have a sharp divergence between known and unknown positions. A player either knows, or does not know, how to play it at the required level of understanding. For example, a sharp nineteenth-century master, who had played the King's Gambit with both colors all his life, easily sacrificing pieces and dropping pawns, would in all likelihood be unable to shine in the Orthodox Queen's Gambit Declined. But if you were to take a contemporary positional player, who plays closed openings, and put him in the milieu of the good old gambits, he would be at least unconvincing!

Thus, the aforementioned three different types of positional assessment – the absolute, the statistical and the individual – do differ frequently.

Here's a clear example:



It's Black to move.

The absolute assessment of the position is: 1-0. Exactly! No half-tones possible here.

We need only find the pretty and fruitful reply to $1... \text{♞c6}$ (try to find it yourself, before looking at the answer located at the end of this chapter), and analyze it with a good, strong computer. The very same computer which cannot calculate the majority of other positions to the end, and which will give only approximate evaluations – those can roughly be taken as absolute.

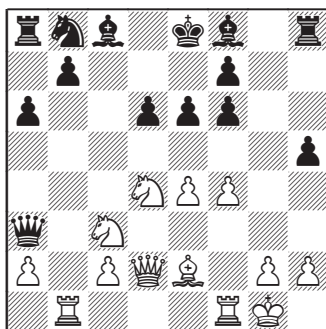
Now, the statistical assessment of our position would be completely different. In principle, people are not able to calculate like powerful machines, especially under a time limit. And they also frequently overlook fruitful ideas. Thus, in the diagrammed position, the 0-1 result will be met more often than 1-0. And draws also most likely will come more often than White wins.

So it happens that this absolutely **winning position for White** will, in human encounters, **be more successful for Black!** – that is, of course, if the two sides are unfamiliar with it.

Of course, this has been an extreme example, deliberately tossed out. I presented it to make the problem itself more understandable.

In the majority of positions in play, there does not yet exist an absolute assessment, nor yet such a clear deviation from the statistical. But there is an obvious one, which does come up frequently. Everything depends, first of all, on **the cost of a mistake**. People are prone to make mistakes, and they must pay for their errors.

For example, let's take a typical and very popular position, where one side has an extra pawn, but is behind in development and has an unsafe king. Perhaps this one:



Let's ask: whose error will carry the greater price tag? Of course, it will be Black's error, since he's the one who risks coming under a mating attack. During the battle, he may overlook a lot, up to and including mate. White, meanwhile, in the course of his attack, may lose another pawn, or even a piece – such losses are not yet fatal. He still would retain chances for a favorable outcome.

But in analysis, when calculating the absolute assessment of a position, by definition there are no serious errors – in principle! The analyst with his computer confidently refutes all threats by force, warding off every possible dangerous line. Thus, in this position, the absolute assessment will not coincide with the statistical. It's far easier to defend in analysis than over the board. So the absolute assessment will favor Black, while the practical results – as you may see for yourself in the database – tend to favor White. So even if the theoreticians tell you that Black has the better chances in this position, don't believe them. Play it bravely for White. The statistical evaluation is more important for the practical player.

And when, in a hundred pages or so, you read my words saying that White has the better chances in this Hedgehog variation or that one, while in practice the players of Black have managed to take a high percentage of points – that will mean that the variation is a hardy one, and you can keep on using it. The absolute assessment of these positions will have been relegated to secondary importance...

The character of a position has a very powerful influence, not only on the quality of play, but also on the manner of playing it out, which the usual (that is, middling) player will show. For example, it's obvious that, in complex, unstable positions with many pieces on the board, living persons will make more errors,

because they are physically incapable of calculating variations through to the end. And, mostly, they will consciously try to find ways to stabilize the position, to find a positional foundation in the storm of complications, even at the cost of concrete oversights or material sacrifice. Thus, the statistical assessment of truly dangerous positions from the human point of view will be considerably lower when compared with the absolute.

For an individual practitioner, his personal, individual assessment of these positions will be even more important than the statistical.

When you choose a system that you intend to use in practice, you must pay attention to your own style – does the one correspond to the other? For example, look at the diagrams scattered throughout this book, and pay heed to your own feelings. Do you like this kind of game, or not? Do you have the patience for accurate maneuvers behind the protection of your pawn wall? Do you have the coolheadedness to endure and bluff? Do you have the hunter’s endurance, to choose the best possible moment for your counterattack? And most of all – do you enjoy a well-timed blow in the center?

If you do, and you feel you have an interest in such an unusual method of play, then let’s try it out. From there, it’s but a small step to Hedgehog Love...

It’s your style that should determine your choice of opening repertoire, with no regard to the theoretical evaluations of strict analysts. And the same style also should dictate the optimal strategy for dealing with unknown positions.

For instance, Tal, Shirov, and other hugely talented attackers were able to achieve great results because they managed to make use of their own best qualities, rather than striving to meet standards and prejudgments. For instance, along with completely correct combinations, they often bluffed – and that, too, often won for them.

Sometimes, their opponents knew or felt that these wizards’ sacrifices were incorrect, that they could be refuted. Post-game analysis, which laid bare the absolute assessments of the position, supported this. But to what end?

At the board, with their clocks running in objectively better or even winning positions, their opponents erred and lost – in the majority of cases. In dry, positional, “correct” play, they would have had the better chances. And here we have a paradox: attackers, by means of a conscious **worsening** of their position, achieve an **improvement** in their results. And this is normal, because the absolute assessment of a position is not an end in itself.

By contrast, delicate masters of position, such as Petrosian or Kramnik, sometimes feel that the position objectively requires sacrifices, combinations, or other special effects. But knowing their own shortcomings, they deliberately dry up the game – strictly speaking, they **worsen** their position, but in this manner they **increase the likelihood** of a positive result, while practically eliminating the possibility of losing – by eliminating the possibility of a grievous blunder

Statistics argue in favor of such a practical approach.

So players regularly choose that type of position in which the likelihood of their own errors is less than the likelihood of their opponents' errors – in accordance with their own style and sometimes (although this happens much less frequently) in accordance with their opponent's style. Meanwhile, **the absolute assessment of the positions which arise takes a back seat** – this is what's truly important.

In the course of this book, I will stop and evaluate positions many times. Naturally, I will try to be objective, to write down my analytical, "absolute" assessments. But they should not under any circumstances be taken as verdicts, as a sharp restriction on the readers' choice of variations to play. The readers may rightly choose to play whatever they like – contrary to the analyses and opinions of any authority. Even contrary to mine...

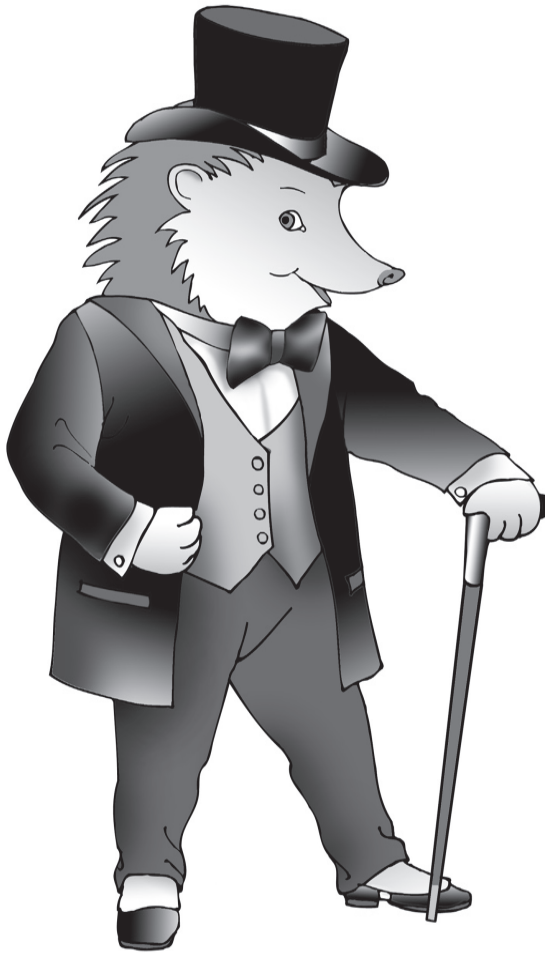
For example, I shall stubbornly continue to play a few objectively difficult Hedgehog positions for Black, which however do give good results statistically. The absolute assessment of these positions is that Black's in bad shape. The statistical assessment is that there are chances for both sides. But my own, individual assessment is – that Black is better! I like playing them; I experience a definite rush, a pleasure in the ongoing process – and therefore my results are amazingly positive.

We shall see concrete demonstrations of the hypotheses laid down herein as we lay out our material.

P.S. Here's a rough variation to show the White win from the first diagram in this chapter.

1...♖c6 2. ♔xe5! fxe5 3. ♖f1 (White has only two bishops for queen plus rook, but Black still is unable to stop him) **3...♗e7 4. ♙d1 ♖c4 5. ♙b3 b5 6. h4! a6** (6...a5 7. a4!) **7. a4 ♗e8 8. axb5 axb5 9. ♙a2! ♗e7 10. b4 ♗e8 11. ♙xc4 bxc4 12. b5!**, and the White passed pawn successfully decoys the black queen away from protecting its king. After b5-b6-b7, there follows e6-e7 and the white rook invades at f8. Black is lost.

The English Hedgehog



Preface

The English Opening version of the Hedgehog is like home to me. A lot of games played, as well as long hours spent analyzing the system, make me feel confident with this setup. One author's understanding of the English Hedgehog certainly should not be considered absolute, but I venture to hope that my understanding will dovetail with that of others in a number of places. In the process of examination, I shall try to uncover and illustrate all of its fundamental ideas, regardless of my own attitude toward them.

But as a man of honor, I shall not pretend to absolute objectivity; instead, I will describe my personal sympathies and antipathies with utter honesty. I trust that this will make the material more interesting, as well as easier to absorb. I hope that my personal point of view will not hinder you from drawing your own conclusions about the Hedgehog.

And finally, instead of complete faith, you may, in fact, attempt to refute every one of my variations, and every conclusion. This would be a useful exercise, allowing you to delve most deeply into the Hedgehog and to come to understand many hidden nuances of the system. However, I do hope that none of you will be able to destroy all my evaluations and analyses...

How does the English Hedgehog arise? Let's take a detailed look over the board:

Example 1

You must study this one! It's the foundation, the cornerstone, the base.

1. c4 ♖f6

The most accurate move order. After 1...c5 2. g3!, Black no longer can develop the bishop at b7.

2. ♖c3

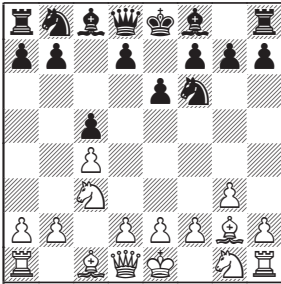
In the English Opening, White ostentatiously refrains from d2-d4, and also develops the king's bishop to g2.

2...c5

Another popular move, 2...e5, removes any possibility of the Hedgehog's appearance. In order to remain within our enchanted wood with its fairytale creatures, the pawns must be advanced more cautiously.

3. ♖f3

On 3. g3 e6!, White risks falling into a positional trap. There is the temptation to prevent the development of Black's bishop at b7 by 4. ♕g2?!



– but then, White cannot blockade the d4 square after 4...d5!. This position has occurred dozens of times in my blitz games against amateurs – and will many more times, too.

A possible continuation is 5. cxd5 exd5 6. d4 (6. ♖f3 d4!) 6...cxd4 7. ♖xd4 ♖c6 8. ♖a4 d4!, and White must retreat the knight cravenly from c3, since capturing twice at c6 leads to the loss of a piece.

White can play better: 5. ♖f3 d4 6. ♖a4!? – there have been a number of games in which the knight proved to be placed usefully at a4. But my view is that this could only happen through an error by Black.

For example, in the game B. Jobava – L. Ftacnik, Istanbul 2003, the continuation was: 6...♖c6 7. d3 ♕d7 8. 0-0 ♕e7 9. e3 e5 10. exd4 exd4 11. ♕g5, and here, instead of 11...0-0, allowing an unpleasant exchange at f6, Black should have played 11...b6! with (at least) equal chances.

Allow me to point out that I do not give the move 4. g3 a question mark. White, after all, can answer 4...e6 by

5. ♖f3!, bringing the game back to the main line via a simple transposition of moves.

3...e6!

The safest path.

The attempt to wheel Black's armament immediately up into firing position by 4...b6 has the serious drawback 5. e3!, by which White sets up the d-pawn's dash from d2 to d5. Black can stop this by 5...e6 6. d4 cxd4 7. exd4 d5, but then White gets an initiative on the light squares. I shall not get involved in analyzing this position. At every move, we would have to analyze White's knight jump to e5, followed by a check to the black king from the b5 or a4 squares. In order to exclude the move 4...b6 from our opening repertoire, we need only to see the short variation 8. cxd5 ♖xd5 9. ♕b5+ ♕d7 10. ♕d3!, when we have reached a standard isolated-pawn structure, but with a stupid move combination for Black: ...b7-b6 combined with ...♕c8-d7. Attempting to rectify this disharmony would lead to the loss of some valuable tempi. I can't recommend it!

4. g3

This move indicates White's agreement to play against the Hedgehog.

Here, on 4. e3, Black can switch to a fight in the center: 4...d5, or 4...♕e7 5. d4 cxd4 6. exd4 d5.

The 4. d4 line leads to a Nimzo-Indian Defense by 4...cxd4 5. ♖xd4 ♕b4, or else a Semi-Tarrasch Defense by 4...d5.

After 4. e4, Black generally plays 4...♖c6, which leads to completely different positions – some of them even out of the Sicilian Defense! And Hedgehog

maniacs still can obtain one, by 4...d6. Of course, this gives White too many options. I'm not going to go into the details yet – just trust me on this.

You can see that White has many ways of avoiding the Hedgehog. There's nothing to be afraid of! I would ask the burning fanatics of the Little Woodsy Creature to bank their fires and give a little attention to the accompanying "non-Hedgehog" pawn structures. It's just something you've gotta do.

4...b6!

Black cannot transpose moves: on 4...e7 5. g2 b6?!, White plays 6. e5! d5 7. cxd5 exd5 8. a4+; and now, in order to save the d5-pawn, Black must move his king to f8.

5. g2

The continuation 5. e4 b7 6. d3 (6. e5 g4!) 6...d6 also leads to the Hedgehog, but a little later.

5...b7

Black's bishop makes a timely appearance on the long diagonal.

6. 0-0 e7

Black also can continue constructing the Hedgehog by either 6...d6 or 6...a6. Most often, this just leads to a transposition of moves. But there also are some differences, which we shall be discussing later.

7. d4

At last, White begins to occupy the center with his pawns.

A somewhat different Hedgehog

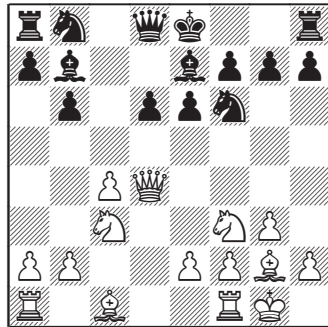
arises after 7. e1 followed by 8. e4 and 9. d4.

7...cxd4!

This, in fact, is the only move here! The pawn must be taken on d4 since White was threatening d4-d5, not just to occupy more space, but also to deal a moral trauma to the fianchettoed bishop. Why develop it to the long diagonal, if it's just going to stare at a white pawn on d5!?

For example, 7...e4 looks bad after 8. d5! cxc3 9. bxc3 f6 10. e4!? cxc3 (as they say in such cases: if you're gonna suffer, might as well not do it for free!) 11. g5 f6 12. c1, when White has a strong initiative.

8. xd4 d6



Here it is – have a look! – the English Hedgehog in the flesh. Three black pawns already stand on the sixth rank, soon to be joined by a fourth, on a6. The distinguishing feature of the English form of the beastie is the placement of the white bishop at g2; the e-pawn can be at e2, as well as at e4.

Let's spend some time looking at this position, and assess its particulars.

The pawns at e6 and d6 control vital central squares, keeping White's pieces from occupying them. Black's

minor pieces – his knight at f6 and light-squared bishop – control the key platform e4. If a white pawn should appear there, it would come under pressure instantly.

The only central square that Black leaves unattended is d4. This, by the way, is a common feature of nearly all versions of the Hedgehog! This comfortable central spot always is left at White's disposal (and much good may it do him!).

And now for a word about weaknesses.

Black, of course, has a vulnerable spot at d6. White will put pressure on this with his heavy pieces along the d-file, with his bishop from either f4 or a3 and, if he can manage it, with a knight from either b5 or e4. If Black fails to get his defense together, fails to set out his pieces **properly**, he either will lose the pawn at d6 or be forced to advance it one square forward, leading to complications. In the early part of the game, open warfare almost always favors White, because he is ahead of Black in development and better centralized.

But White also has a clear weakness in this position: the pawn at c4! This pawn, in tandem with the knight at c3, fulfills a vital function: namely, controlling the d5 and b5 squares, restricting Black's position, and not allowing him to increase his influence. It's precisely this White guard pawn that quickly finds itself under the fire of the black rook on c8. At first, it's supported by the queen – but she cannot remain in the center forever. Nor is it a duty fit for the queen, to be protecting a pawn! Therefore, quite frequently, White supports the weakling by b2-b3, which also prepares the develop-

ment of his queen's bishop to b2 or to a3. However, this move also has a serious drawback: the knight loses its support. And the knight also is within the range of Black's rook on c8. This circumstance creates the possibility for Black to launch central pawn strikes by ...b6-b5 or ...d6-d5.

But the main factor to which I should like to draw your attention in the position we're examining is this:

The light-squared bishops' opposition along the long diagonal!

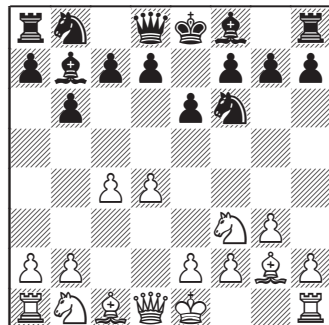
Not just in the English Hedgehog, but in many other openings as well, this opposition is the main underlying factor of the position. For example, in the Queen's Indian Defense, there are several variations in which the light-squared bishops come face to face – across a barricade.

Example 2

1. d4 ♖f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♗f3 b6 4. g3 ♙b7

Or 4...♙a6 5. b3, and then Black pulls his bishop back to b7.

5. ♙g2



Here, we also may get the English Hedgehog structure if Black succeeds in executing ...c7-c5, while avoiding the possibility of d4-d5!, and exchanging pawns on d4.

The Catalan Opening also features a battle of the bishops:

Example 3

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. ♘f3 ♘f6 4. g3

My old love, still with me...

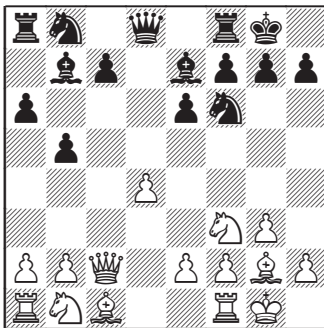
4...♗e7 5. ♗g2 0-0 6. 0-0 dxc4 7. ♛c2 a6!

Preparing a fianchetto in response.

8. ♛xc4

In reply to 8. a4, Black could bring his bishop out into the daylight by 8...♗d7! 9. ♛xc4 ♗c6.

8...b5 9. ♛c2 ♗b7



Similar oppositions occur in the Sicilian Defense as well. Here's just one of a multitude of possibilities:

Example 4

1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♘xd4 ♘f6 5. ♘c3 a6

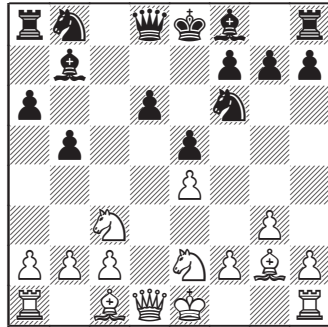
The Najdorf Variation.

One may also fill up the long diagonal with bishops in Keres's Variation: 5...e6 6. g4 a6 7. g5 ♘fd7 8. f4 b5 9. ♗g2 ♘b6 10. a3 ♗b7, etc.

6. g3 e5

On 6...e6 7. ♗g2, Black cannot play ...b7-b5 because of the e4-e5! shot. But he has a different way to bring the bishop out onto the long diagonal: ...♗c8-d7 and ...♘b8-c6!.

7. ♘de2 b5 8. ♗g2 ♗b7



There also are less popular openings in which one may see the same opposition:

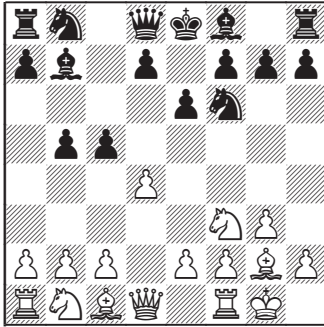
Example 5

1. ♘f3 ♘f6 2. d4 e6 3. g3 b5!?

Exploiting an opportunity: White's pawn still is back on c2, so Black seizes space on the queenside. I don't know what this opening is called, even

though I've played it myself more than once.

4. ♖g2 ♗b7 5. 0-0 c5



And, finally:

Example 6

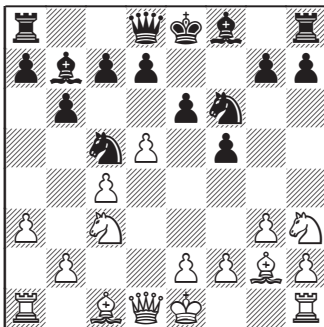
1. d4 b6 2. c4 e6

This opening goes by different names. I'm partial to the folk-name: The "e6-b6 Opening."

3. a3 ♗b7 4. d5!?

Black got his bishop out first, so White hurries to close off the long diagonal long enough to develop his own bishop.

4...f5 5. ♘c3 ♙f6 6. g3 ♗a6 7. ♖g2 (it's out!) 7...♘c5 8. ♘h3



And once again the arrows are pointing at one another.

What do we find in the characteristic of setups in which the light-squared bishops stand in opposition along the long diagonal? Let me posit three main ideas.

1. Each side strives to secure for his own bishop the greatest possible number of squares along the diagonal – in other words, to "expand his bishop." This consequently results in the restriction of the opposing bishop. Thus, Black most often **will not develop his queen's knight to c6**; this way it does not interfere with the bishop at b7. This is very important. He also may send his king's knight out to e4 and even support it with a pawn at f5, setting up a solid central construct and assuring his bishop the control of the squares c6 and d5. This occurs in the "e6-b6 Opening" if White starts out by developing his king's knight to f3.

For his part, White tries to set up a pawn or knight on d5 to restrict the black bishop and thereby occupy key central squares. In the Queen's Indian Defense, we find White sacrificing a pawn by d4-d5; after it is taken, White's knight leaves f3, setting up a pin against Black's pawn at d5. If he succeeds in recovering it, White obtains a serious positional advantage; if not, he still has some initiative.

2. The exchange of light-squared bishops usually is considered to be **unfavorable for White**, since it simplifies the position and lessens the tension. It also increases the likelihood of a draw. Of course, if Black's light squares become seriously weakened, then such an exchange works in

White's favor; but this would be more of an exception than the rule. So Black's bishop nearly always is open to peace negotiations – that is, looking to make an exchange, while his opponent avoids one – behind a knight at f3 or a pawn at e4 or, finally, behind a pawn or a knight at d5.

3. The exchange of either of the opposing bishops for a knight is considered unfavorable. For then the opposing bishop will be left in control of the long diagonal, in happy solitude – and this will become a vital positional factor. If the center is not barricaded by pawns, then the light-squared monopolist will assure his army a real advantage. True, there is one exception to this rule. Occasionally Black, after exchanging his bishop on b7 for the white knight, then can **ignore** the light squares on the long diagonal. We shall see this technique used in one of the variations of the English Hedgehog.

These points we have enumerated are characteristic of the general theory of opposing bishops; but they also have great and immediate resonance for the English Hedgehog – a fact we shall see demonstrated as we examine the games to follow.

We shall be examining this prickly system as follows:

We shall define White's major plans in separate books and chapters. In each of these, we shall look for ways for Black to survive. This seems to me the optimal way to lay out the material. Black, in the Hedgehog, mainly finds himself playing second fiddle, reacting to his opponent's concrete steps. Of course, there will be some

awkwardness to this, since many of White's attacking or besieging setups will be usable across a variety of move orders. Thus, I am unable to make a flawlessly beautiful knowledge base; at some point, I shall have to repeat myself, and also stop occasionally to enlarge upon something that was said earlier. Well, *c'est la vie!*

I highly recommend that those readers who have no special skill in playing blindfolded play out the variations I write down, using a board and pieces. The positions we shall be examining are pretty complex and meaty, in the sense that they contain lots of ideas; so it's going to take some effort to grasp them. The second reason: Before trying to put your new knowledge to use in your games, it's most useful to execute them in some visible manner. When you sit down to play at the board, your memory will remind you of the right moves.

And for the professionals, I have placed many diagrams throughout the text, so they can read this book comfortably without overexerting themselves.

A few words to describe our course of action: We should identify the two main thrusts of White's struggle against the English Hedgehog.

In the first section, we will study the classical continuation, 7. d4, which White was playing as far back as the '20s – of the twentieth century – when the English Hedgehog barely was being born. After half a century of general indifference, it leapt onto the stage once again, and once again White's main reply was 7. d4. There it remained for the next twenty years, giving rise to many

classic, exemplary, instructive games, which in fact we shall be studying.

In the second section, we shall study White's new, modern weapon – 7. ♖e1 followed by 8. e4 and 9. d4 – the idea being to recapture on d4 with the knight. It became quite popular in the '90s, and it is in this direction that recent theory has developed.

At first I had planned to write a third section, devoted to a restrained strategy for White. I'm talking about the move 7. b3, with the idea of gradually taking over the center by e2-e3 and d2-d4, while avoiding the sharp

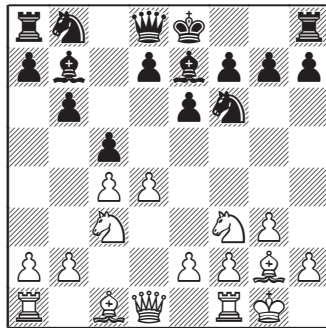
variations. In this case, we could see the usual Hedgehog structures, or something totally different, more akin to other openings. But in the course of working on the book, it became clear that such a wide-ranging approach, with its excursions into “non-Hedgehog”-type structures, would require too much effort, as well as adding immeasurably to the size of this book.

We shall consider that something to hold for the future. After all, I'm going to need something to do in retirement. And when that time comes, they'll have learned to make really thin paper, and a thousand-page tract will weigh less in your hands than a kids' spelling book.

Part 1



Classical Continuation 7. d4



Chapter 1-1

History and Pioneers

The Knight Capture on d4

Let's begin by reviewing the origins of the English Hedgehog. We will learn who really "invented the wheel" and make sure that this brilliant discovery is not credited to others who came later.

S. Tarrasch – A. Nimzowitsch
Gothenburg 1920

The famous players of this game, as well as other classicists, created the theory of positional play. They formulated and tested in practice the principles that aspiring chess novices study today.

These days many positional rules seem self-evident. Yet only a hundred years ago things were very different. Every discovery, every step was a major achievement of the pioneers.

For example, today every child knows that the Earth is round and it revolves around the Sun. A few hundred years ago Nicolaus Copernicus and Giordano Bruno, people who were far ahead of their time, spent the best years of their lives reaching these conclusions. What's more, even under threat of death, Bruno refused to renounce his discovery and was executed by the Inquisition. And today we all enjoy the fruits of the work done by the geniuses of the past.

We observe similar trends in chess. The most basic opening principles, elementary laws of the game, were delivered, under torture, by pathfinders. These pioneers fought the skeptics over the board and in the press arguing their case; a lot of ideas received recognition only after their creators' passing.

Tarrasch and Nimzowitsch, however, became respected and honored during their lifetimes. And, thankfully, nobody got burned at the stake for the principle of blockade or the "knight on the rim is grim" rule.

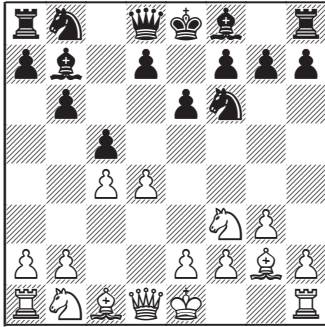
1.d4 ♖f6 2.♗f3 e6 3.c4 b6

The Queen's Indian Defense. Black is postponing attacking the center with pawns in favor of developing his pieces. From b7 the bishop will control the all-important e4 square. It is precisely the fight over this square that is the key to this opening – and also of the Nimzo-Indian Defence (named after Nimzowitsch) where the dark-squared bishop comes to b4 to pin the knight on c3.

4.g3 ♖b7 5.♗g2

Now, pay attention!

5...c5!?



Having achieved control over the light squares in the center, Black switches over to the dark squares. A pawn trade in the center will make Black's development easier.

6.0-0

Tarrasch is acting on fundamental principles – castling is certainly useful for White. Yet modern theory disapproves of Black's last move, since in the diagrammed position White could improve with 6. d5!, with the idea 6...exd5 7. ♖h4.

Thanks to the pin on the long diagonal, White will recover the pawn on d5. What's more, there is a pleasant choice of capturing either with the c-pawn or with the knight on c3. Either way, White would gain space, while locking out the bishop on b7.

6...cxd4! 7.♖xd4

Reaching the English Hedgehog structure.

7...♗xg2

The bishop exchange is unavoidable.

8.♙xg2 ♚c7!

Very precise. Nimzowitsch immediately attacks the pawn on c4 to limit his opponent's options. Later on the queen could replace the fallen bishop on b7.

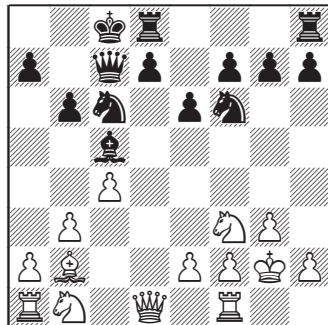
9.b3 ♗c5

This is not true Hedgehog style. Hedgehog experts leave the bishop under cover of the spines. The classicist is following his own principles. In those days leading players were highly suspicious of cramped positions, and tried to expand at every opportunity.

10.♘f3

Let's just call this what it was: an unforced retreat from the center.

10...♘c6 11.♗b2 0-0-0!?



Interesting play! Castling short probably didn't appeal to Nimzowitsch because of the pressure by the strong bishop on b2.

12. ♖c3 d5

This is the idea behind Black's plan. Black manages to execute a breakthrough in the center. One of the advantages of castling long is it brings your rook to a central file on the same move. Another possible plan in this position will be shown later, in a game by the genius from India.

13. cxd5 ♖xd5 14. ♖xd5 ♗xd5 15. ♖c2

Black still has a few problems: his kingside pawns are weak and his king is not yet comfortable.

15... ♖d4

Black is banking on immediate exchanges, which works out well. But perhaps 15...f6 was more accurate.

16. ♗xd4

16. ♖e4! f5 17. ♖e3 leads to more complicated play – in some lines the pawn on e6 is taken with check and because of that the white queen is not afraid of the knight jump from d4 – 17...e5 18. ♗xd4 ♗xd4 19. ♖xd4 exd4 20. ♖f3, and White preserves the initiative.

16... ♗xd4 17. ♖xd4 ♗xd4 18. ♖b2 ♖e5 19. ♖g1 ♗d5

Full equality has been reached.

20. ♖ac1+ ♖b8 21. ♖c2 g6 22. ♗fd1 ♗xd1+ 23. ♗xd1

Draw agreed.

It is interesting that in those long-gone days White always captured on d4

with the knight. At that level of chess development, it never occurred to anybody to bring out the queen to the center of the board under potential fire from the black pieces. In ancient times, players rigidly followed the teachings of the orthodox school. The concrete approach to setting up the opening was not yet in full sway.

Thus, I think it's appropriate to dedicate this first chapter to the knight capture on d4, followed by the exchange of the light-squared bishops.

Another important game in this line came seven years later.

J. Capablanca – M. Vidmar

New York 1927

The world champion was in his prime, winning all his tournaments without any losses. Yet in this game he encountered a beast perhaps unknown in Cuba...

1.d4 ♖f6 2. ♖f3 e6 3.c4 b6 4.g3 ♗b7 5. ♗g2 c5

Just as in the previous example, Black achieves the Hedgehog setup from the Queen's Indian.

6. 0-0 cxd4 7. ♖xd4 ♗xg2 8. ♖xg2 ♗e7

An acceptable move order.

9. ♖c3 0-0 10.e4

Capablanca gains more space, with the idea of playing e4-e5 at the right moment.

10... ♖c8

The queen is going to b7. At the same time, Vidmar dares his opponent to continue advancing in the center. White would have had fewer options after 10...♖c7!.

It is key that the advance 10...d5?! doesn't work because of 11. cxd5 exd5 12. e5! ♖fd7 13. ♖e1, with a strategically winning position for White. One must remember that the white pawn's advance to e5 is the most dangerous response to Black's attempt at a breakthrough with ...d6-d5 (or ...d7-d5).

11.b3

Cautiously played. In case of 11.e5 ♗e8 Black could obtain counterplay by undermining the pawn on e5 with ...d7-d6.

Another good option here is 11.♖e2.

11...♖b7

A fianchetto of the black queen. From b7, the queen puts pressure on the long diagonal, as well as supporting potential pawn advances on the queenside.

White is not afraid of 11...♗b4 here, since after 12.♗de2! ♖b7 13.f3 he maintains his center.

12.f3

A characteristic pawn setup. After exchanging the light-squared bishops the champion puts his pawns on light squares, assuring the surviving dark-squared bishop of a bright future. Thanks to this separation of responsibilities, the entire center remains under control.

12...♗c6

Another reasonable way of developing the knight is 12...d6 and 13...♗bd7.

13.♗b2 ♖fd8

Black hasn't yet decided what to do about the d-pawn. There are two options — actually, even three!

14.♖e1

White awaits ...d7-d5. In that case, he would trade pawns and after cxd5 exd5 play e4-e5! with advantage, as indicated above.

14...♗xd4 15.♖xd4 ♗c5

Naturally, it is appealing to drive away the white queen, but in reality the bishop sortie turns out to be a waste of time.

Better was 15...d6, setting up the Hedgehog pawn structure.

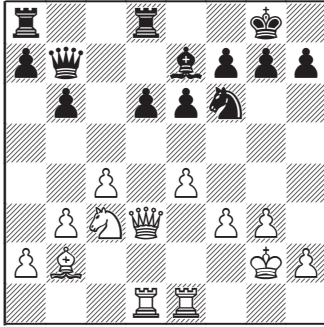
16.♖d3 ♗e7

Black admits his earlier mistake. Apparently, after 16...d6, the bishop is in a tough spot. White can either try to capture it with pawns or trade it for a knight. Plus, the knight on f6 would end up undefended and White could weaken Black's kingside by ♗b2xf6. In other words, the bishop really belongs on e7.

17.♖ad1

As before, Black doesn't have to fear 17.e5 because of 17...♗e8 followed by d7-d6.

17...d6



We now have a perfect Hedgehog on the board.

18. ♖e2 ♜d7

Way too passive. Vidmar is building up a sturdy defense, without any thought for counterplay. To be consistent with the spirit of the Hedgehog, Black should play 18...a6, with the idea of pushing ...b6-b5.

19. ♜ed2 ♜ad8 20. ♘e2

Such as now! – if only the black pawn were on a6. Black's passivity gives White a lot of options. The knight, free from the necessity of watching over b5, goes to join the attack.

20... ♖a8 21. ♖e3 h6

The Hedgehog has shrunk into its prickly ball. The big animal hovers over it, wondering how to get at this warm little creature and sink his teeth into it.

22. h4!

The great Cuban realizes that one weakness on d6 is not sufficient to win. Therefore, he shifts his attention to preparing an attack on the kingside.

22... ♖b7 23. a4

The idea of ...b6-b5 was already in the air, so White prevents it.

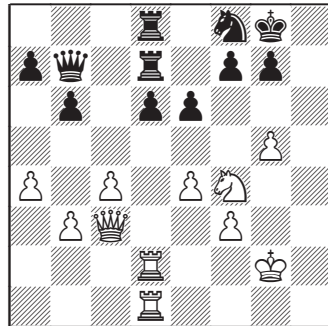
23... ♘e8 24. ♘f4 ♙f6

Vidmar wants to get rid of White's strong bishop, because of its unpleasant pressure against his king's position. Unfortunately for him, after the exchange, d6 gets even weaker.

25. ♙xf6 ♘xf6 26. g4! ♘h7 27. ♖c3 ♘f8

After 27...♖c8, the powerful 28.e5! d5 29.♖e3 leaves Black hurting.

28. g5 hxg5 29. hxg5



Opening the h-file allows White to create mating threats.

29... ♘g6!

A good defensive resource.

30. ♘xg6

Capablanca decides to win by purely technical means, but fails. His long-standing habit of minimizing risk and effort lets the Champion down this time.

After 30.♔h5! the black king is on its way to the gallows. For example, 30...e5 (there's nothing else) 31.♖h1 a6 32.♙d5! ♜c8 33.f4 b5 34.axb5 axb5 35.f5 bxc4 36.b4!, and to avoid getting mated Black has to give up his knight. A couple of pawns is hardly enough compensation.

If White wants a knight trade, then the best way to do this was 30.♙e3, when after 30...♔xf4+ 31.♙xf4, White's major pieces would quickly arrive at h8.

30...fxg6

It is very important that the black king now has f7 open. There are no longer any mating threats against His Majesty.

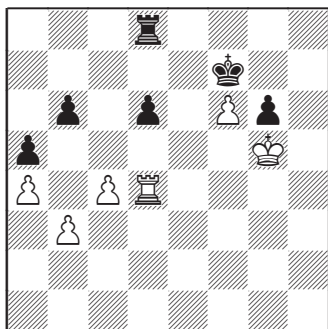
31.♙d4 ♜c6 32.♔g3 ♜c5! 33.f4 ♔f7

Black has consolidated.

34.♔g4 a5 35.♖h2 ♙xd4 36.♖xd4 ♜e7 37.♖hd2 ♙ed7 38.f5

A last-ditch attacking effort.

38...gxf5+ 39.exf5 exf5+ 40.♔xf5 g6+! 41.♔g4 ♔f8 42.♖f2+ ♖f7 43.♖f6 ♖xf6 44.gxf6 ♔f7 45.♔g5



The position on the board is probably the most important study of my life. Black to move and draw. In the now-distant year 1979, I was given this problem by Mikhail Yudovich Jr. as an entrance exam question for entry into Moscow's Sports School #9. I solved the puzzle, got admitted, and became a professional chessplayer.

45...♜e8!

Time to activate the rook. Everything else loses quickly. For example, 45...♙d7? 46.♖h4!

46.♖xd6 ♜e5+ 47.♔f4 ♜e6!

This is the point! Black can afford to go into a pawn endgame a pawn down.

48.♙d5!

If he plays 48.♖xe6 ♔xe6 49.♔g5 ♔f7 White finds himself in zugzwang and loses.

48...♔xf6 49.♖b5 ♔e7 50.♔g5 ♜c6 51.♔h6 ♔f8 52.♖g5 ♔f7

The draw is unavoidable.

53.♖g3 ♜e6 54.♙d3 ♜e5 55.♙d7+ ♔f6 56.♙d6+ ♔f7

And here the opponents signed a peace treaty.

This was a real Hedgehog! The middlegame plans for both sides were quite typical for this setup. The opening, however, wasn't strictly canonical. White could have achieved more by 7.d5! Those who followed after learned from these mistakes and improved the Hedgehog-building plans.

S. Takacs – M. Sultan Khan
 Hamburg 1930

1.c4 ♖f6 2.♗f3 c5

Naturally, the English Opening is where English Hedgehogs are born.

3.♗c3 b6

As previously mentioned, 3...e6 is more precise, since in the game, White could have played 4.e3! and 5.d4, with advantage.

4.g3 ♗b7 5.♗g2 e6 6.0-0 ♗e7

Absolutely correct. Black's play looks modern, even for the 21st Century.

7.d4 cxd4 8.♗xd4 ♗xg2 9.♗xg2 a6

Just in case White has ideas about ♗d4-b5.

10.b3 ♖c7 11.♗b2

The aggressive lunge 11.♗f4? fails because of 11...e5.

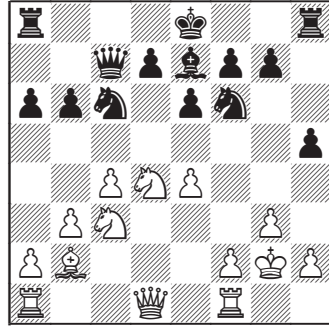
11...♗c6 12.e4

After 12.♗xc6 ♖xc6+ 13.f3 Black would begin expanding on the queenside right away with 13...b5!

12...h5!?

An interesting way to develop the rook at h8: Black starts an attack on the white king, much as in the Paulsen Sicilian. At the same time, the black

king is quite comfortable staying in the center: it has lots of pawn cover, and it can still castle either way if necessary.



13.♗c1

White comes up with a threat of his own: ♗c3-d5!. If Black were to accept the sacrifice, the knight on c6 would be pinned, and White would end up with a positional advantage. It is a concept common to many other openings as well.

How would Sultan Khan have replied to 13.♗f3? I suspect with 13...h4!.

13...♗xd4! 14.♖xd4 ♗c5 15.♖d3 h4!

Black continues to execute his plan; in fact, his position is already better! Notice that the pawn is still on d7 – this allows the black queen to participate in the kingside attack from afar.

16.♗a4 hxg3 17.hxg3 ♗g4

Here come the first real threats.

18.♗d4

Quite sensibly White avoids drawing

the black queen into the action. After 18. ♖xc5 ♜xc5 19. ♙d4 (the rook is tied up defending the pawn on f2, and cannot be moved to h1) 19... ♞h2+ 20. ♔g1 ♜g5, the white king would have been in trouble.

18... 0-0-0

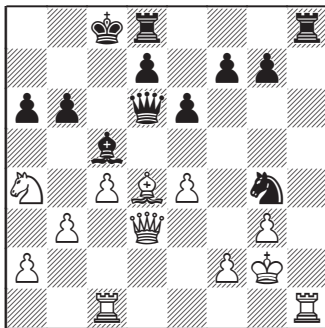
The queen's rook joins the attack. Still, 18... ♞h2+! 19. ♔g1 0-0-0 was probably stronger.

19. ♞h1

White has managed to prevent the intrusion of the black rook, but his problems are not over.

19... ♜d6!

An unpleasant pin.



20. ♞cd1 ♞xh1!

White's pieces are overloaded: any recapture on h1 loses something.

21. ♔xh1 ♗xf2+ 22. ♙xf2 ♜xd3 23. ♞xd3 ♙xf2

In the end, Black managed to win a pawn. However, in the endgame he lost the initiative and the game was drawn.

Forward!

Its first appearances on the chess scene did not succeed in making the Hedgehog into a popular opening. Well-known players (or directors!) wouldn't take it seriously and cast it in big roles. The Hedgehog was just a way to avoid the main lines. It was new, uncharted territory – a springboard for creativity!

Yet even in the early games the main set of canonical ideas was developed, without which the scheme could not be played. There is no doubt that the inventors were creating right at the board, devising plans and concrete combinations on the fly.

One can't help but admire these classicists! They saw further than they could see, did more than they were capable of...

The one thing they could not do was to play the middlegame in true Hedgehog style. Thanks to their orthodox upbringing, chessplayers of the early 20th Century always strove to simplify the game as quickly as possible. They did not believe, they did not understand that fully equal play could be generated out of such a cramped position! Most commonly, while transitioning from the opening into the middlegame, Black would prematurely open up the center, giving White a small but stable advantage in the sort of open positions, drained of suspense, that come with such an alteration in structure.

It was precisely because they were afraid of blundering into such a position that the late 20th-Century adherents of the Hedgehog will not play ...d7-d5 or ...d6-d5 so early, until their development is complete.

But let's keep this to ourselves – the enemies of the Hedgehog don't need to know about it! Let them think that

Black's highest aspiration is to open the position quickly and simplify the game. Let them try to prevent this plan, and create weaknesses in their own camp. Let them enjoy their spatial advantage – and then...

Let's return to olden times. The theory of capturing the knight on d4 developed slowly but steadily. The first simple but effective conclusions were being reached.

The most reliable plan for Black here is exchanging knights via ...♞b8-c6. Besides developing the queenside, this also reduces White's pressure on b5. This, in turn, makes the breakthrough ...b6-b5 possible. The preventive a2-a4 has its own drawbacks, such as weakening the b3 pawn. And there is another way for Black to force a break...

* * *

V. Hort – M. Tal

La Habana 1966

Starting here and further on in the book * * * will mark the most important and memorable Hedgehog games – a mark of the highest quality: the finest restaurants for the woodland epicures, worth a special journey!

Readers unwilling to commit to reading this whole book can limit themselves to scanning these three-star games, which will allow them to understand the main ideas of the Hedgehog and perhaps grow to love it a little bit! This may provide sufficient stimulus to read the rest...

1.♠f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.♞c3 e6

Here it is, the perfect move order – at least, as I understand it.

**4.g3 b6 5.♙g2 ♞b7 6.0-0 ♙e7
7.d4 cxd4 8.♞xd4**

Studying the history of the opening, I realized that White can capture on d4...with the other knight, too. Not right away, of course – we don't need to break the rules. But sometimes, in this position, White has played 8.♞b5!? 0-0 9.♞bxd4. The source of this idea was the game H. Golombek – R. Combe, Nottingham 1946 – a novelty which, however, did not catch on. Black can simply go on with his business: ...d7-d6 and ...♞b8-d7, without experiencing any special problems. And the white knight is better on c3 than on d4.

8...♙xg2 9.♙xg2 ♚c8

The most precise solution is an immediate transfer of the queen to b7 – or even c4!

10.♚d3

A solid reply.

The natural 10 b3 would leave the knight on c3 unsupported for a brief moment, which Black could exploit by means of 10...d5!?. The pawn on d5 cannot be taken, meaning that Black could take on c4, which most often leaves White with a weakness there.

“Most often” means: in this general type of position. In the present concrete situation, however, things would not be so rosy. White could sacrifice the pawn for initiative by 11.♚d3 dxc4 12.♙f3!. This is much stronger than 12.bxc4, as played in several games with pitiful results for White. The white queen would be excellently placed on f3. A possible continuation might be 12...♞bd7 13.♞c6 (an ideal square for

the knight) 13...♖b7 14.♟xe7 (14.♟b5 a6!) 14...♗xf3+ 15.exf3 ♞xe7 16.♙a3+ ♟c5 17.bxc4, reaching a position that could be called roughly even.

Meanwhile, I note that the lunge 10.♗a4 promises White nothing. The apparent activity of the white queen is purely temporary. Ultimately, Black's pressure on c4 will force b2-b3, locking the white queen out. An example was the important game N. Spiridonov – B. Gurgenzidze, Tbilisi 1969, which continued 10...0-0 11.♞d1 ♖b7+ 12.♟f3 (hardly better is 12.f3 ♞c8 13.e4 ♟c6 14.♙e3 ♟e5 15.b3 a6 with better prospects for Black) 12...♞c8! 13.♙f4 ♟c6 14.♙d6 ♙xd6 15.♞xd6 ♟e5! 16.b3 (what else is there?) 16...♞c5!, when Black developed a dangerous initiative. The difference in power between the respective queens is quite obvious.

10...♟c6!

The most forceful. Black threatens to win a pawn by ...♟c6-e5.

11.♟xc6

Very low key. We will discuss the principled 11. b3 a bit later.

11...♗xc6+ 12.e4

Hort sets up his center pawns according to Capablanca's recipe. White fixes the pawn structure in the center, effectively ruling out ...d6-d5. But this ambitious structure has some minuses, though they are tiny: the pawn on e4 needs defending, and White's rear area is somewhat weakened.

12... 0-0

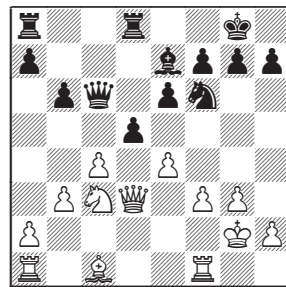
This important position has been

arrived at in many games through several different move orders.

13.♙d2!?

Developing a piece, while defending the knight on c3; visually, this move looks unimpressive. The bishop on a central file gets in the way of White's heavy pieces.

In a historically important game V. Menchik – G. Lisitsin, Moscow 1935, White didn't pay enough attention to Black's threats and got rolled up in the center: 13.f3 ♞fd8 14.b3? (a slip-up that costs White the game; 14.♞d1! was safer.) 14...d5!



A patented Hedgehog poke! There followed 15.cxd5 exd5 16.e5 (looks reasonable, but all of Menchik's hopes were shattered by an unpleasant zwischenzug) 16...d4! 17.♟d1 (also bad is 17.♟e4 ♟xe4 18.fxe4 ♖c3, or 17.exf6 dxc3 18.♖c2 ♙xf6) 17...♟d7 18.♙f4 (White should have settled for 18.♗xd4, to which Black would have replied 18...♟xe5! 19.♗e4 ♗xe4 20.fxe4 ♞ac8, retaining the advantage) 18...g5! (with this left hook, Black wins an all-important pawn) 19.♞c1 ♖e6 20.♙d2 ♟xe5 21.♗e4 f5! 22.♗e2 ♖d5 23.♟g1 ♙c5 – Black had an overwhelming advantage, and soon won.

13...♞ac8 14.b3 ♞fd8

Simple and strong. White cannot stop Black's center break.

15. ♖f3

Solidly played.

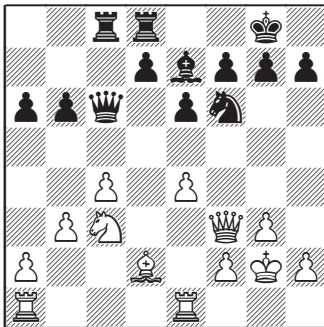
If White targets the black bishop via 15. ♖fe1, there is still 15...d5! 16.exd5 exd5, and 17. ♖xe7? dxc4+ 18. ♖f3 ♖xf3+ 19. ♔xf3 ♖xd2 would be major trouble for White.

15...a6!?

Black is playing for a win now. Tal is preparing the other possible breakthrough.

15...d5 leads to peaceable simplifications: 16.cxd5 (16.e5? dxc4!) 16...exd5 17. ♖xd5 (17.e5? ♖e4!) 17...♖xd5 18. ♖ac1 ♖c5 19.exd5 ♖xd5 20. ♖xd5 ♖xd5 21. ♖e3, and White's hope of getting the better endgame with pawns on a2 and b3 against a7 and c5 are dashed by 21...a5 22.a3 ♖b8!, with an absolutely equal position...

16. ♖fe1



16...d6!

Spiny beast on the board! Why did Tal pass up the opportunity to push ...b6-b5? There was, indeed, a very good reason.

After 16...b5 17.e5 ♖e8 White could play 18. ♖e4!, not fearing 18...bxc4 because of 19. ♖a5! ♖c7 (the rook must be saved) 20.bxc4, and Black cannot capture the pawn on c4, as it loses the knight. White would therefore achieve a serious advantage due to the miserable position of the knight on c7.

In contrast, after the text, Black fully intends to shoot off his bullet at b6.

17. ♖ac1 Defending.

17... ♖b7 Renewing the threat.

18. ♖e2 Defending again.

18... ♖b8 Threatening again!

19.a4

By now, this is the only way to keep the b6-pawn in its place. Now, was it really that dangerous? For example, after 19. ♖ed1 b5 20.cxb5 axb5, Black is planning ...b5-b4 to win the pawn on e4. Playing 21.b4 weakens c4 – either the black rook or the knight could go there. After 21.f3, Black could strengthen his position in the center thanks to the absence of a white pawn at c4. Look: 21...b4 (Tal might also have chosen the sharper continuation: 21...d5!? 22.exd5 b4, though most likely this would have been a simple transposition of moves) 22. ♖a4 d5! 23.e5 (White would regret letting the black knight onto d5) 23... ♖d7, leading to a known structure where chances are about even.

On the other hand, Black doesn't have to rush with ...d6-d5: he could prepare for it.

Instead of the text, White could have played 19.g4, starting his own