

Website to Watch

January has one of the tournaments I enjoy most. The website for the Corus Chess event is excellent (see www.coruschess.com) and you will be able to follow the live action from 16th January to 1st February.

The popular open congress in Gibraltar overlaps with the end of the above grandmaster tournament. It runs from 27th January to 5th February and will be reported on www.gibraltarchesscongress.com.

Match of the Month

The New Year is a time to think of new beginnings and that put me in mind of the following game when I started playing chess in Peterborough.

R Ilett v P Hanks

Peterborough v Perkins, c 1981

1 d4 e6
2 c4 f5

I think this was my second game in Peterborough and I was a little tentative because I was unsure about my opponent's style. We came to know each other's game very well over the years!

3 g3 Nf6
4 Bg2 Be7
5 Nc3 0-0
6 Nf3 d6

So far, this looks to be a traditional Dutch Defence but I was beginning to worry. In previous games, I had come off second best if White chose to fianchetto and build up quietly before breaking the centre open with e2-e4.

7 0-0 Bd7

This development is not in favour as it hardly increases the scope of the bishop. I find it handy preparation for Qd8-e8 as insurance against White playing Nc3-b5.

8 Ng5

This could be the refutation! White unmask the threat to b7 while simultaneous supporting the advance e2-e4. The disadvantage is that it provokes the melee prematurely which is to Black's advantage.

8 ... c6
9 e4

Fritz agrees with me and recommends 9 Qb3 to maintain an edge for White.

9 ... h6

Now, the retreat Nf3 loses time and an important central pawn. White, however, can choose 10 e5 dxe5 11 dxe5 hxg5 12 exf6 Bxf6 which again parts with material but gains prospects against the weak black pawns.

10 Nh3 fxe4

A superior option would be to reverse moves with 10 ... Nxe4 threatening to exchange on c3 and double the pawns. Now, White could delay recapture with 11 Nf4.

11 Nxe4 Nxe4

12 Bxe4 e5

Black seems to be seizing the initiative with an attack on the Nh3 which has nowhere to go!

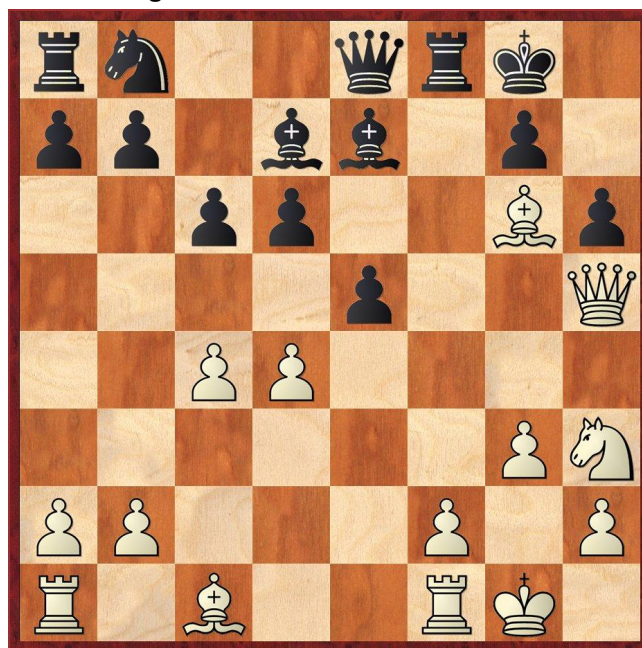
13 Qh5

This came as something of a surprise. Obviously, White has aggressive intentions but I felt he may sleepwalk into a trap. The alternative 13 Kg2 Qc8 14 Ng1 is passive and Black has a satisfactory game with free piece play (e.g. the latent threat Bh3 if the backward Ng1 tries to re-enter the game).

13 ... Qe8

If White exchanges on e8, the hanging Nh3 will cost a tempo and cause the d4 pawn to fall. The alternative 14 Bg6 springs the trap...

14 Bg6



14 ... Qc8

White again has to cope with the threat to Nh3 but this time, 15 Kg2 is insufficient because 15 ... Bg4 traps the white queen.

15 Ng5

This looks an impressive kingside foray but there is little substance to it – provided I avoid 15 ... hxg5?? It does, however, need confidence in your defensive analysis!

15 ... Bg4

16 Qh4

Move 16 and White was already getting into time trouble. One line to consider was 16 Bf7+ Kh8 17 Qg6 Bxg5 (17 ... hxg5? 18 f3 regains the material) 18 Bxg5 Qd7 or 18 ... Qf5 when the white pieces are hanging. By dislodging the white queen, White has too much en prise and it only remains to diffuse the counterchances on the white squares.

16 ... Bf5 0-1

White realises a piece is lost e.g. 17 Bxf5 Qxf5 and the knight is beyond saving. A short, tense and very satisfying game.

Serious Study

Before launching into looking into the depths of opening theory, I need to make some comments about the study method I intend to use. I have limited capacity to memorise a maze of variations (I am possibly not alone!) and therefore, have to adopt a simpler approach which also has to include an element of enjoyment. After all, we play chess for pleasure, don't we?

For each opening under consideration, the basic steps are :

- I) identify some short games which highlight in an extreme form the potential tactics and positional weaknesses that can be exploited either in the opening or later in the game
- II) play through a number of games judged in the literature to be examples of high quality play. This stage will typically use Informator as a source but could also include collections of "Best Games" where the content has been subject to similar grandmaster scrutiny
- III) evaluate the opening stage in terms of advantage to either side, examine the statistics to determine successful strategies and reconcile the resulting type of game with your preferred style of play
- IV) focus on one line of play which you would be happy to be the mainstay of your repertoire (and hopefully is satisfactory from your side of the board!) noting the principal points of divergence that your opponent may attempt.

Without diminishing the effort required in II) and III), the aim has been to reach the situation by point IV) where you know what you want to play against each opening without making excessive demands on your memory. You should still understand enough about offshoots and later strategies so that you do not succumb to an opening surprise and can conduct the game following a harmonious plan.

Let's start with an example.

The Grunfeld Defence, Exchange Variation

1	d4	Nf6
2	c4	g6
3	Nc3	d5

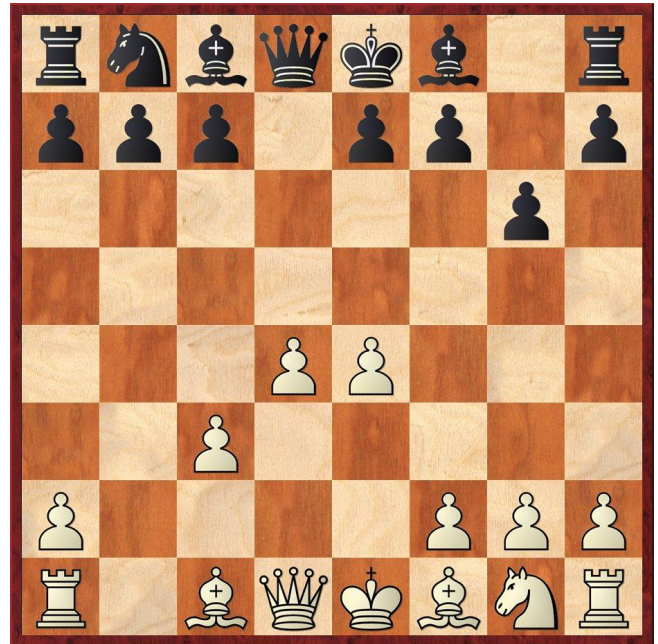
For anyone who does not know, there is a standardised classification for opening variations devised by the authors of the Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings (ECO). The openings are divided into 5 families A, B, C, D, E each with a further hundred subdivisions A00–A99, B00–B99 etc. – 500 variations in all! The Grunfeld Defence is covered by D80–D99. (See <http://www.sahovski.com> for further information.)

In my school days. When I first encountered the Grunfeld Defence, I thought my opponent intended playing the King's Indian and had accidentally pushed the pawn too far. I almost offered to let him take the move back and correct it! Over the years, I came to have a lot of trouble when playing the White side (see

NEW ENGLANDER January 2008) and may even consider experimenting with it as Black.

At this point, White has a number of tries including 4 Qb3 and 4 Bf5 as well as these lines after 4 Nf3 Bg7. These may be the subject of later articles because this one will look exclusively at the Exchange Variation (D85–D89) :-

4	cxd5	Nxd5
5	e4	Nxc3
6	bxc3	



The attraction of the Grunfeld is that it is Black that makes the early running. The absence of the white queen's knight leaves a weak pawn on c3 which would cause a loss in material if it were captured by the bishop on the long diagonal. It is shielded by the pawn on d4 but this becomes a static target. Black has a natural development plan :

- pressure against d4 with Bg7, c5, Nc6
- further undermining the pawn chain with Qa5 and Rfd8 after 0–0
- attacking White's supporting king's knight on f3 with Bg4 and leaving a vacant square for Rac8.

T Shaked (2500) v G Kasparov (2820)

Tilburg, 1997

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Be3 c5 8 Qd2 Qa5 9 Rb1 b6 10 Bb5+ Bd7 11 Be2 Bc6 12 Bd3 Nd7 13 Ne2 Rd8! 14 f3 0–0 15 h4 h5 16 Bg5 Rfe8 17 Rc1 Bb7 18 d5? Ne5 19 Bb1 Nc4 20 Qf4?? Be5 0–1

White has to develop keeping an intact pawn structure with Be3, Nf3 or Ne2, Qd2 and maybe Rc1, and guard against Black centralising his pieces. In the longer term, the centre pawns confer greater space and mobility. They may roll forward or be a barrier which prevents disruption of the white forces as they organise an attack against Black's kingside.

Y Razuvaev, v Mareosian
USSR, 1973

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 c5 7 Bc4 Bg7 8 Ne2 0-0 9 0-0 Nc6 10 Be3 Qc7 11 Rc1 Rd8 12 f4 Bg4 13 f5 gxf5 14 h3 cxd4 15 cxd4 Bxe2 16 Qxe2 Qb6 17 Qh5 Nxd4 18 Bxf7+ Kh8 19 exf5 h6 20 f6 exf6 21 Bxh6 1-0

With correct play, White should have nothing to fear but it is hard to be confident when confronted with practical problems over the board unless you have some knowledge of the opening. Hence this article aims to allow you to reach move 15 with a playable game and an outline understanding of what is to follow.

First, a few catastrophes.

I Polovodin v L Maslov
USSR, 1984

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 c5 8 Rb1 Qa5 9 Rb5 Qxc3+ 10 Bd2 Qa3 11 Qc2 Nc6 12 Rb3 1-0

I Polovodin v I Kalinski
USSR, 1982

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 c5 8 Rb1 0-0 9 Be2 Qa5 10 0-0 Qxa2 11 Bg5 Qe6 12 e5 Rd8 13 Qa4 Nc6 14 d5 Rxd5 15 Bc4 Qd7 16 Bxd5 Qxd5 17 Rfd1 Qe6 18 Rd8+ 1-0

H Leyva (2300) v V Ramon (2175)
La Habana, 1994

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 0-0 8 Be2 c5 9 Rb1 cxd4 10 cxd4 Qa5+ 11 Bd2 Qxa2 12 0-0 a5 13 d5 e6 14 Bg5! exd5 15 exd5 Qa3 16 d6 Nd7 17 Bb5! Qc5 18 Be7 Re8 19 Qd3 a4 20 Rbc1 Qb6 21 Qd5! Ra5 22 Qxf7+! 1-0

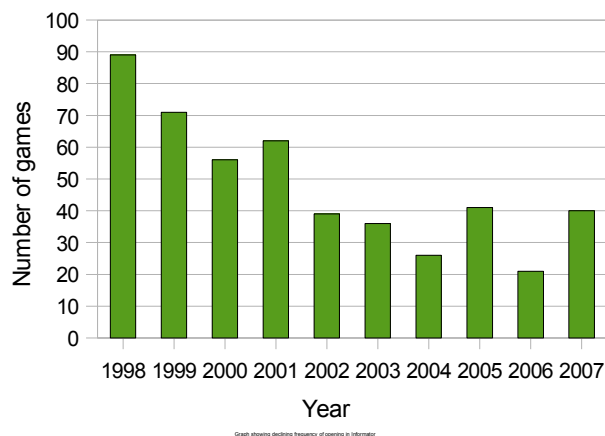
So what have we learned so far?

- White can usefully play Rb1 at an early stage. This removes it from the dangerous diagonal, creates tactical possibilities if the black queen wanders too far and attacks b7 though a2 becomes vulnerable.
- The check Bb5 can be used to interfere with Black's queenside development.
- If Black fritters away his lead in development by ill-advised pawn-grabbing, White's advantage is probably irresistible.

In common with other openings, the Exchange Variation of the Grunfeld is subject as much to fashion as objective playing criteria. After Kasparov gave up the King's Indian in 1997, the Grunfeld came to the fore in his games until setbacks caused him to diversify further in 2001. The popularity of the defence has since waned to judge from the frequency of its appearance in Informator but Svidler still champions its cause. In recent years, the games of the Israeli grandmaster Sutovsky have been important to the development of the theory and as I believe he is part of the support team for Kamsky's attempt on the world title, is the Grunfeld due for a revival?

Games in Informator

Grunfeld Defence, Exchange Variation



From the previous position diagram, Black almost invariably plays

6 ... Bg7

and any alternative probably transposes. The main choice comes with White's next move. Using the frequency of games being reported in Informator over the last 10 years, the principal options are **7 Bc4**, **7 Nf3**, **7 Be3**, **7 Bb5** while **7 Qa4**, **7 Ba3** and **7 Bg5** will have some surprise value. Let's see if we can discover differences in their strategic fingerprints.

	Bc4	Nf3	Be3	Bb5
Frequency in Informator	31%	51%	9.2%	8.8%
White wins	45%	44%	24%	40%
Black wins	17%	16%	24%	20%
Transposition	0%	0%	45%	3%
Opening advantage	0.09	0.19	-0.16	0.27
Evaluation variability	0.46	0.41	0.37	0.52

Line A : 7 Bc4

This is the traditional continuation and includes the famous encounter in which Spassky beat Fischer at the Siegen Olympiad 1970 to set the scene for the big match.

White scores well (45% wins) but when evaluating the positions that arise around move 20 on a scale of +1 (White winning) to -1 (Black winning), the average is only 0.09 with a range of ±0.46. This shows that the variation favours patient positional play rather than a quick knock-out. From the variability though, there is also considerable scope for both sides.

From the transposition percentages above, Bc4 is played on move 7 or not at all so it is natural to consider it in isolation. The most typical continuation is **7 ... c5 8 Ne2 Nc6 9 Be3 0-0 10 0-0** and now either **10 ... Bg4 11 f3** or **10 ... Bd7 11 Rb1**. There are obvious variations such as Black throwing in c5xd4 or White preferring Ra1-c1 but the main lines will feature strongly in the following game examples.

There seem to be several strategic plans :-

A1) If Black omits c7-c5, White does not have to contend with much pressure on his centre. White can throw caution to the winds and goes for an early kingside pawn storm.

B Spassky v J Timman
Amsterdam (m3), 1977

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Bc4 0-0 8 Ne2 b6 9 h4 Nc6 10 Bd5 Qd7 11 h5 Ba6 12 hxg6 hxg6 13 Nf4 e6 14 Qg4 Rfd8 15 Bxe6 fxe6 16 Qxg6 Bc4 17 Qh7+ Kf7 18 Nh5 Rg8 19 Rh3 Raf8 20 Nxg7 Rh8 21 Rf3+ Ke7 22 Ba3+ Nb4 23 Bxb4+ c5 24 dxc5 Rxh7 25 cxb6+ 1-0

The opportunities to play like this are probably rare.

A2) White initiates exchanges with the aid on the temporary sacrifice Bxf7. White gains a pawn but Black generates sufficient counterplay on the kingside dark squares to hold the balance.

V Kramnik (2751) v G Kasparov (2812)
Linares, 1999

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Bc4 c5 8 Ne2 Nc6 9 Be3 0-0 10 0-0 Bg4 11 f3 Na5 12 Bxf7+ Rxf7 13 fxg4 Rxf1+ 14 Kxf1 cxd4 15 cxd4 e5 16 d5 Nc4 17 Qd3 Nxe3+ 18 Qxe3 Qh4 19 h3 Bh6 20 Qd3 Rf8+ 21 Kg1 Qf2+ 22 Kh1 Qe3 23 Qc4 b5 24 Qxb5 Rf2 25 Qe8+ Bf8 26 Qe6+ Kh8 27 d6 Qxe2 28 Qxe5+ Bg7 29 Qe8+ Rf8 30 d7 Qd3 31 e5 h6 32 e6 Kh7 33 Rg1 Rf3 34 Qb8 Rxh3+ 1/2-1/2

Generally, this line is rarely this exciting and many games degenerate into rather sterile endgames particularly if White preserves his dark-squared bishop to cut down Black's counterplay. To avoid this, Black may have to make a significant material investment and be happy to calculate tactical variations (e.g. 19 Kg1 Bxe5 20 Rc1 Bb2 21 Rc2 Nf3+ below).

Van Wely (2661) v Sutovsky (2639)
Rethymnon, 2003

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Bc4 c5 8 Ne2 Nc6 9 Be3 0-0 10 0-0 Bg4 11 f3 Na5 12 Bxf7+ Rxf7 13 fxg4 Rxf1+ 14 Kxf1 Qd7 15 h3 Nc4 16 Bf2 cxd4 17 cxd4 e5 18 dxe5 Nd2+ 19 Ke1 Bh6 20 Nd4 Rf8 21 Qe2 Qc7 22 Qd3 Qxe5 23 Rd1 Qa5 24 Ke2 Qxa2 25 Nc2 Qf7 26 Bh4 Nxe4 27 Qxe4 Re8 28 Rd8 Qc4+ 0-1

A3) White should not be afraid to give up the exchange for Black's dark-squared bishop and go for an all-out attack.

H Rau (2348) v Markl (2222)
Germany, 2003

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Bc4 c5 8 Ne2 cxd4 9 cxd4 Nc6 10 Be3 0-0 11 0-0 Bg4 12 f3 Na5 13 Bd3 Be6 14 d5 Bxa1 15 Qxa1 f6 16 Bh6 Re8 17 Kh1 Rc8 18 Nf4 Bd7 19 e5 Nc4 20 e6 Bb5 21 Qe1 Qb6 22 Nxg6 hxg6 23 Qg3 Ne5 24 Bxg6 winning

There is a large body of theory to support this variation with some lines going far beyond the end of this game. The latest tries improve with 21 ... Bb5 or 21 ... Ba4 when chances are balanced. This is an

instance where superior practical chances may outweigh the theoretical assessment but are your nerves strong enough to play like this?

C Hansen (2610) v McShane (2592)
Malmo/Copenhagen, 2003

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Bc4 c5 8 Ne2 0-0 9 0-0 Nc6 10 Be3 Bg4 11 f3 Na5 12 Bd3 cxd4 13 cxd4 Be6 14 d5 Bxa1 15 Qxa1 f6 16 Kh1 Rc8 17 Bh6 Re8 18 Nf4 Bd7 19 e5 Nc4 20 e6 Ba4 21 Nxg6 hxg6 22 Bxg6 Ne5 23 Be4 Bc2 24 Bxc2 Rxc2 25 Qd1 Kh7 26 f4 Kxh6 27 fxe5 Rc4 28 Qd3 b5 29 exf6 exf6 30 d6

where Informator leaves the game here with the cryptic remark "White has compensation"!

At club level, this variation is very promising as it gives White a strong initiative that is relatively obvious for the attacker over the board and it will be very rare to come across an opponent who is well-prepared with the tricky defence.

A4) Both A2 and A3 rely on the tempi that White can gain when Black develops his light-squared bishop on g4. The game tends to be a lot quieter if the piece stays closer to home. White counts on natural development and the potential of the strong pawn centre.

Gulko (2583) v Pierrot (2417)
Buenos Aires, 2003

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Bc4 c5 8 Ne2 Nc6 9 Be3 0-0 10 0-0 Bd7 11 Rb1 a6 12 d5 Na5 13 Bd3 Qc7 14 c4 Rab8 15 Bf4 Be5 16 Bxe5 Qxe5 17 f4 Qc7 18 Nc3 b5 19 e5 Qd8 20 cxb5 c4 21 Bc2 axb5 22 a3 Qb6+ 23 Kh1 Rfd8 24 Qe1 f5 25 Qh4 Qc5 26 Rf3 Be8 27 Rh3 h5 28 Bxf5 b4 29 Be6+ Kg7 30 axb4 Rxb4 31 Rf1 Rdb8 32 f5 1-0

I think it is pity that Black did not play on to show just how overwhelming White's position really is – Fritz predicts a forced mate e.g. 32 ... Qac7 33 Qg5 R4b7 34 Rxh5 Qxe5 36 Qh6+ Kf6 37 Qh8# but many other variations are unnecessarily lengthy due to irrelevant checks.

Black can hit back at the centre pawn roller with e7-e5 and/or f7-f5

Elsness (2430) v Predojevic (2549)
Pula, 2005

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Bc4 0-0 8 Ne2 c5 9 Be3 Nc6 10 Rc1 cxd4 11 cxd4 Qa5+ 12 Kf1 Qa3 13 Rc3 Qd6 14 h4 h5 15 Qd2 e5 16 d5 Na5 17 Bd3 b6 18 Bh6 Bd7 19 g3 Nb7 20 Kg2 Nc5 21 Be3 Nxd3 22 Rxd3 f5 23 Nc3 Rac8 24 f3 Rc4 25 Rc1 Rfc8 26 Qb2 b5 27 Ne2 fxe4 28 fxe4 b4 29 Rdd1 Rxe4 30 Rxc8+ Bxc8 31 Qb3 Ba6 32 Kf3 Qf6+ 33 Nf4 exf4 34 Kxe4 Qf5+ 35 Kf3 Qg4+ 36 Ke4 fxe3+ 37 Kxe3 Qe2+ 0-1

This game is unusual in that White fails to castle. In fact, in games where this happens, Black tends to score very well.

A5) The restrained development Bc8-d7 takes the pressure off the centre and it becomes much easier

for White to defend the pawn on c3. As a result, he occasionally accepts the pawn offered on c5 and the play centres on exploiting White's shattered pawn structure.

Sulava (2477) v Sutovsky (2666)

Geneva, 2004

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Bc4 c5 8 Ne2 Nc6 9 Be3 0-0 10 0-0 Bd7 11 Rb1 a6 12 dxc5 Na5 13 Bd3 Be6 14 Qc2 Nc4 15 Bxc4 Bxc4 16 Rfd1 Qc7 17 Rb4 Bxe2 18 Qxe2 Bxc3 19 Rb3 Be5 20 g3 Rfd8 21 Rdb1 Bd4 22 Rxb7 Qxc5 23 Rc1 Qa3 24 Rb3 Qa5 25 Bf4 Kg7 26 Bc7 Qg5 27 Rc6 Bxf2+ 28 Kf1 Rd2 29 h4 Rxe2 30 hxg5 Rxa2 31 Be5+ Kf8 32 Bb8 Bd4 33 Rc8+ Kg7 34 Rb7 Rf2+ 35 Ke1 Rb2 36 Rxb2 Bxb2 37 Be5+ Bxe5 38 Rxa8 Bxg3+ 39 Ke2 Bf4 40 Rxa6 Bxg5 41 Kf3 Bf6 42 Ra7 h5 0-1

In this game, White appears to be using the open queenside files to advantage until Black comes up with the hidden resource 27 ... Bxf2 which is justified by 28 Qxf2 Rd1+ 29 Kg2 Rd7.

Line B : 7 Nf3

The transposition percentages indicate that lines with 7 Be3 regularly continue 7 ... c5 8 Nf3 so that the two variations are closely linked. Surprisingly, however, the evaluation of the opening in games with 7 Be3 is significantly worse than 7 Nf3 so the two moves possibly do not sit well together.

The variation with 7 Nf3 is certainly flexible. For instance, Kramnik's games often feature the move order 1 Nf3 c5 2 c4 Nf6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 d4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 g6 7 e4 Bg7. Bear this in mind for when you play him next! Even over the next three moves or so, Nf3, Be3, Qd2, 0-0, Rc1/b1 and cxd4 can occur in almost any feasible order.

B1) Without the Bc4, the pawn on a2 can be lost. In return, White often gets a passed d pawn and Black often has to obtain compensation with his queenside majority.

Bacrot (2545) v Illescas Cordoba (2585)

Pamplona, 1997

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 c4 Bg7 4 Nc3 d5 5 cxd5 Nxd5 6 e4 Nxc3 7 bxc3 c5 8 Rb1 0-0 9 Be2 cxd4 10 cxd4 Qa5+ 11 Bd2 Qxa2 12 0-0 Bg4 13 Be3 Nc6 14 d5 Bxf3 15 Bxf3 Ne5 16 Rxb7 a5 17 Rxe7 a4 18 Bd4 Nxf3+ 19 gxf3 Bxd4 20 Qxd4 a3 21 Kg2 Qb2 22 Qxb2 axb2 23 Rb1 Rfb8 24 d6 Kf8 25 Rc7 Ra1 26 Rxb2 Rxb2 27 Rc8+ Kg7 28 d7 Rd2 29 d8Q Rxd8 30 Rxd8 Re1 31 Rd3 f5 32 Rd7+ Kh6 33 Re7 Kg5 34 Rxh7 fxe4 35 h4+ Kf6 36 Rc7 exf3+ 37 Kxf3 Ra1 38 Kg4 Ra4+ 39 f4 Ra6 1/2-1/2

An example of the third rank defence that Chris Ross explained during this year's masterclass sessions!

The potential of the advancing pawns does not override the principles of normal development.

J Sulman (2480) v Oral (2455)

Ostrava, 1998

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 c5 8 Rb1 0-0 9 Be2 cxd4 10 cxd4

Qa5+ 11 Bd2 Qxa2 12 0-0 a5 13 Bg5 a4 14 Re1 Bg4 15 Bxe7 Re8 16 Ra1 Qe6 17 Ba3 Qxe4 18 Ng5 Qf4 19 Bc4 Nc6 20 Nxf7 Rxe1+ 21 Qxe1 Bxd4 22 Bc1 Qf6 23 Nh6+ Kh8 24 Nxg4 Bxf2+ 25 Qxf2 Qxa1 26 Qb2+ 1-0

One of the compensations from Ra1-b1 and sacrificing the pawn on a2 is the pressure against b7 which could dissuade Black from developing his light-squared bishop. Sometimes, Black makes a determined effort to shield the pawn with Nb8-d7-b6 and retain the material.

Anand (2769) v Leko (2725)

Linares, 2000

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 c4 Bg7 4 Nc3 d5 5 cxd5 Nxd5 6 e4 Nxc3 7 bxc3 c5 8 Rb1 0-0 9 Be2 cxd4 10 cxd4 Qa5+ 11 Bd2 Qxa2 12 0-0 Nd7 13 Re1 Nb6 14 Ra1 Qb2 15 h3 f5 16 Rb1 Qa2 17 Qc1 Kh8 18 Ra1 Qg8 19 Ba5 fxe4 20 Bxb6 exf3 21 Bxf3 Bxh3 22 Rxa7 Bxg2 23 Kxg2 Qb3 24 Qd1 Qxb6 25 Rxb7 Qf6 26 Rxe7 Ra1 27 Rxg7 Rxd1 28 Rxh7+ Kg8 29 Bd5+ Rf7 30 Rbxf7 Qg5+ 31 Kh3 Qxd5 32 Rhg7+ Kh8 1/2-1/2

B2) Black plays into White's hands if he is not prepared to stir up trouble. If White plays quietly and is undisturbed, he slowly builds an attack that often stretches the defensive resources beyond their limit.

Kruppa (2561) v R Bagirov (2481)

St Petersburg, 2000

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 c5 8 Rb1 0-0 9 Be2 cxd4 10 cxd4 Qa5+ 11 Bd2 Qxa2 12 0-0 b6 11 Qd2 cxd4 12 cxd4 Bb7 13 Rd1 Na5 14 d5 Rc8 15 Bd4 Nc4 16 Bxc4 Rxc4 17 0-0 Qd6 18 Bxg7 Kxg7 19 Nd4 Qb4 20 Qe3 Rd8 21 f4 Qd6 22 f5 Kh8 23 fxg6 Qxg6 24 Rf4 Bc8 25 Qf3 f6 26 Nc6 Re8 27 Rf1 Bd7 28 Nxe7 Rxe7 29 Rxf6 Qg5 30 Rf8+ Kg7 31 Rg8+ 1-0

If you want an antidote to this plan, you might consider the following tactics.

V Belov (2470) v Dvoirys (2562)

Ano Liosia, 2000

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 c5 8 h3 0-0 9 Be2 Nc6 10 Be3 cxd4 11 cxd4 Qa5+ 12 Bd2 Qa3 13 d5 Ne5 14 0-0 Bxh3 when the continuation may be 15 gxh3 Nxf3 16 Bxf3 Bxa1 17 Qxa1 Qxf3.

B3) Sometimes, the play leaves the normal character of the Grunfeld behind as Black gives up the fianchetto by shifting his bishop to the queenside. The play often gets very tactical and Black can get strong attacking chances.

Krivoshey (2451) v Ftacnik (2585)

Slovensko, 1999

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 cxd5 Nxd5 6 e4 Nxc3 7 bxc3 c5 8 Rb1 0-0 9 Be2 Nc6 10 d5 Ne5 11 Nxe5 Bxe5 12 Qd2 e6 13 f4 Bc7 14 0-0 exd5 15 exd5 Ba5 16 Ba3 b6 17 Bb5 Qd6 18 Rbc1 Bf5 19 Qd1 a6 20 Bc6 Ra7 21 c4 Re7 22 Bb2 Re3 23 Be5 Qd8 24 Rf3 Re1+ 25 Qxe1 Bxe1 26 Rxe1 b5 27 Rfe3 f6 28 Bc3 bxc4 29 Re7 Qd6 30 g3 Rf7 31 Re8+ Kg7 32 Be5 fxe5 33 fxe5 Qc7 34 e6 Rf8 35 e7 Rxe8 36

Bxe8 Qa5 37 Re2 Bd3 38 Re6 Qd2 39 Bc6 Qd1+ 40 Kf2 Qf1+ 41 Ke3 g5 0-1

B4) The other weakness in White's structure is that there is no knight to protect the pawn on e4. Black can probe this point with a queenside fianchetto and White can only respond with Qd1-d3 or e4-e5 (though I can find no instances of the latter). This gives Black the option of exchanging light-squared bishops with Bb7-a6.

Najer (2590) v Yuferov (2436)
St Petersburg, 2000

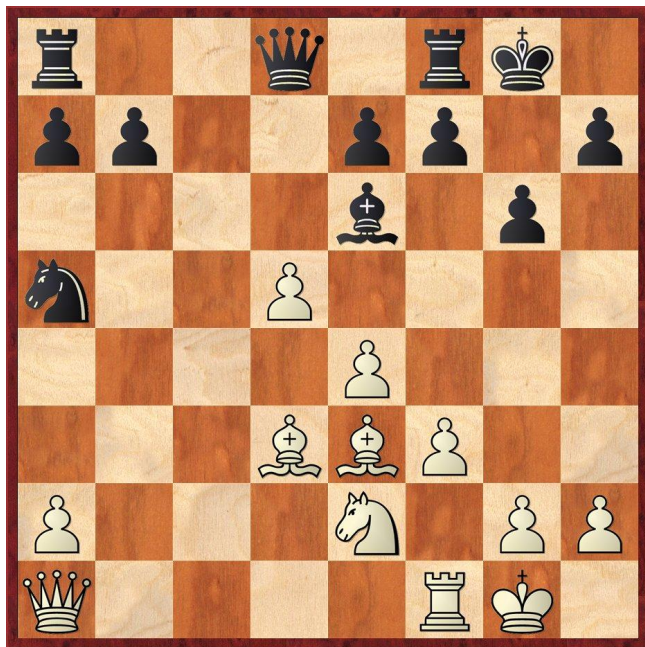
1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 c5 8 Rb1 0-0 9 Be2 b6 10 0-0 Bb7 11 Qd3 Ba6 12 Qe3 Qd7 13 Bxa6 Nxa6 14 Qe2 Qa4 15 d5 Bxc3 16 Rb3 Bb4 (16 ... Bg7 17 Ra3) 17 Ne5 Rac8 18 Rh3 c4 19 Qe3 1-0

You should enjoy checking the tactics of the final position starting 19 ... h5 (19 ... f6 20 Rxh7) 20 Qh6 (threatening 21 Nxg6) Qe8 21 g4.

Conclusion

So what would I recommend? Obviously, I like the practical chances that arise from the variation A3. The strategy is simple – White attacks the black king. The drawback is that the play is wholly tactical and well suited to computer analysis.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Bc4 c5 8 Ne2 cxd4 9 cxd4 Nc6 10 Be3 0-0 11 0-0 Bg4 12 f3 Na5 13 Bd3 Be6 14 d5 Bxa1 15 Qxa1



This is the basic position and some of the variations seen at grandmaster level are as follows :

15 ... f6

This is invariably played to prevent 16 Bh6 recouping the exchange immediately.

16 Bh6

16 Qd4 Bd7 (16 ... Bf7 17 Bh6 Re8 18 Bb5 e5 19 Qf2 Re7 20 f4 exf4 21 Qxf4 Qb6+ 22 Kh1 Bxd5 23 exd5 Qxb5 24 Qxf6) 17 e5

16 ... Re8

16 ... Qb6+ 17 Kh1 Bd7 18 Rb1 Qd6 19 Bxf8

17 Kh1

17 Re1 Bf7 18 Bb5 Qb6+ 19 Nd4 Rec8 20 Be3 Qd6 21 Bf2 Nc4 22 Bg3 Qb6 23 Bd7 Rd8 24 Rb1 Nb2 25 Bf2

17 ... Rc8

17 ... Bd7 18 e5 Rc8 19 Ng3 Nc4 20 Bxc4 Rxc4 21 Ne4 Qb6 22 Rd1 Rxe4

18 Nf4 Bd7 19 e5 Nc4 20 e6 Bb5

20...Ba4 21 Nxg6 - see featured game

21 Qe1 Nd6 22 Bxg6

22 Bb1 Bxf1 23 Nxg6 Qc7

a) 23 ... Qb6 24 Qg3 Bxg2+ 25 Kxg2 Qb2+ 26 Kh3 f5 27 Ne5+ 1-0

b) 23 ... Bd3 24 Bxd3 Qc7 25 Nh4 (25 h3 hxg6 26 Bxg6 Nf5 1/2-1/2) 25 ... Kh8 26 h3 Qc3 27 Qe2 Qa1+ 28 Kh2 Qd4 29 f4 Rc1 30 Nf3 Qa1 31 Qf2 Rh1+ 32 Kg3 Rg8+ 33 Kh4 Qd1 34 Qe3 Rxd2 0-1

24 Qg3 Nf5 25 Nxe7+ Kh8 26 Nxf5 Qxg3 27 hxg3 Bc4 28 Be4

22 ... hxg6 23 Qg3 Bd3 24 Nxd3 Kh7 25 Nf4 g5 26 Bxg5 fxg5 27 Qxg5 Qc7 28 Qh4+ Kg8 29 Ng6 Kg7 30 Qg5 Kh7 31 Qh5+ Kg7 32 Qg5 Kh7 1/2-1/2
Skatchkov(2475) v Smikovski (2489), Russia 2003

The problem with opening preparation is that it can never be conclusive. If it were possible to prove an advantage in all variations, your opponent would avoid the opening altogether! What you need to do is

- make your own evaluations of the game data and any continuations you reckon are probable at the standard of competition you play
- step back and decide whether on balance, you are achieving the level of advantage you expect
- determine whether the style of game that arises is one you prefer. Adding an opening to your repertoire is a considerable undertaking and you must be happy that you are prepared to sit many hours at the board battling with the complications of your own making
- test out your new opening in a few friendly games. Sadly, everyone in our club will now be thoroughly prepared... though this has the advantage that your ideas will be given a stern work-out
- unleash your updated repertoire on an unsuspecting chess world. Good luck!