

# The French Defense...

*...Properly Played*

Wolfgang  
Uhlmann



JBV Chess Books

Wolfgang Uhlmann

# **The French Defense ...Properly Played**

A Life Long French

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## Dear chess friends!

After having published the book 'The French Defense – Properly Played' in 1991, I would like to complement that part of my lifework concerning opening theory. Since the first edition of the book is out of print, I would like to meet the wish of many chess friends by explaining more details about this fight-oriented opening. I have revised the book, added more games and included the latest theoretical findings.

Since at my actual age of 82 years I could not contribute any current game of my own, I have included five up to date games from other specialists of the French Defense. When I wrote the annotations for the selected games, I paid special attention to the correct evaluation of the theoretical insights. However, my main concern is still to give you practical hints about the positional evaluation in the variety of lines, as this enables you to find the right plan in a given position.

It's an accepted fact among my colleagues that for the best part of my long chess career I've been one of the best connoisseurs of this opening. I was lucky enough to compete against the absolute best in the world (among them most prominent players, like world champions Botvinnik, Smyslov, Tal, Fischer and Karpov) and to achieve many nice successes with this opening. As a result, it's not surprising that in my tournament practice I almost always answered 1.e2-e4 with 1...e7-e6. In this context I would like to mention that my love for this opening was due to my great respect and admiration for my role model Mikhail Botvinnik.

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Since I've chosen only my best French games, it was, of course, inevitable that this collection contains many older games from my long career. I wanted to show you the unconditional fight which starts right in the opening. You will witness creative opening treatment and courageous risk-taking with fantastic combinations, but also valuable positional games in which the right strategy leads to success. And finally the comments are enriched by skillful endgames.

I have always considered it right to learn from my own mistakes, and to draw conclusions from them. Playing the French Defense brings joy, is highly interesting, and leads to games which are about life or death. Even in lines considered rather toothless (e.g. the Exchange Variation) there are still ways to play for a win.

When choosing my best French games from the past 40 years, I've also done some statistical research in order to determine how many times I've applied my pet defense, and I was surprised by the result. From the roughly 700 serious games I've played with this opening, I've scored about 420 points, and thus 60%. If you consider that this result was achieved as Black and primarily against strong opponents, it is just fantastic. It also explains my passion for this opening and the fact that I never had to fear even the best prepared opponent.

Dear chess friends, I wish that you enjoy the often complicated lines and recommend you always consider the pawn structure when creating an opening plan. The skillful handling of the transition from the opening to the middle game is also an important part on the way to victory. I wish you a lot of fun and many eventful hours when you study the following games. And I hope that you will also become a fan of the battle-oriented French Defense.

Grandmaster Wolfgang Uhlmann

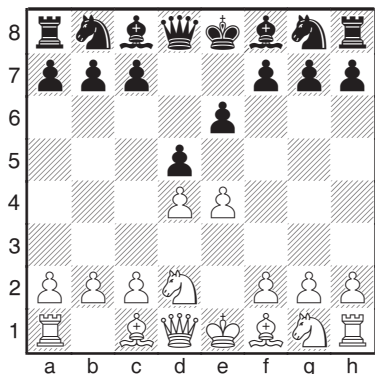
**Siegbert Tarrasch** was born in Breslau in 1863 and died in Munich in 1934. He was a grandmaster who lived for many years in Nuremberg and later on in Munich. He gave the teachings of Wilhelm Steinitz a scientific framework. He was respectfully called the 'Praeceptor Germaniae' (teacher of Germany). His main works 'Das Schachspiel' (The Chess Game), '300 Schachpartien' (300 Chess Games) and 'Die moderne Schachpartie' (The Modern Chess Game), were pioneering landmarks for entire generations.



*Siegbert Tarrasch*

### The Tarrasch Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2



This setup is characterized by the move 3.♘d2. Its pioneer was Dr. Siegbert Tarrasch, who introduced the system to the tournament practice in 1880. As an ardent advocat

of solid pawn positions he favored this move, which is considered one of the safest approaches against the French Defense. White doesn't intend to exert immediate pressure on the center but instead relies on long-term strategic play. As a rule, sharp lines can be avoided, which are typical, for example, in the Nimzowitsch Variation after 3.♘c3 ♙b4 due to the pin of White's knight.

After 3.♘d2 Black has three completely different answers at his disposal. First of all the move 3...♞f6 which provokes the further advance 4.e5 and leaves White



some space advantage. Little material is exchanged, and White can keep his center stable by f2–f4 and c2–c3, whereas Black tries to counter-attack by means of the levers c7–c5 and f7–f6. This leads to battle-oriented lines and thus to considerably more decided games than draws.

The second answer to 3.♘d2 is the classic move 3...c7–c5 which tries to profit from the relatively passive position of White's knight by immediately initiating the fight for the center, which in most cases leads to the dissolution of the central tension. However, Black has to accept that after swapping pawns on c5 and d5 he remains with an isolated pawn on d5. In an endgame this is often an easy target object, although it can be compensated by active piece play.

And the third possible reply is 3...dxe4. This more draw-oriented approach is currently booming, and top players like Anand, Bareyev, Ponomarev, Shirov and Radjabov have significantly enriched its theory.

### Game 1 Bialas – Uhlmann Leipzig 1951

In 1951 I achieved my first big success as a 16-year-old at the German Youth Championship in Leipzig. I clearly won 1.5 points ahead of the runner-up, a result that provided me with the necessary stimulation for further tournament successes. Already at that time, the French Defense was my favorite weapon against the opening move 1.e4. Although the following sensational game is not free of mistakes, I still consider it a small tactical gem in my collection.

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♘f6 4.e5  
♘fd7 5.♙d3 c5 6.c3 ♘c6 7.♘e2  
♙b6 8.♘f3 cxd4 9.cxd4 f6 10.exf6  
♙b4+?!**

From a later point of view, this move should better be replaced by the immediate 10...♘xf6.

**11.♙d2 ♘xf6 12.0-0 0-0 13.a3**

After the preferable 13.♙xb4 Black would face long term difficulties to activate his light squared bishop, which is, however, a general problem of the French Defense.

**13...♙d6 14.b4**

Instead of this inaccuracy 14.♘c3 was the right approach, as 14...♙xb2 would run into 15.♘a4.

**14...e5!**

By opening the position, Black obtains promising piece play even

before the opponent's troops have reached a halfway harmonious setup.

**15.dxe5 ♖xe5 16.♗xe5 ♙xe5**

In this sharp position 17.♖c1 fails to 17...♗g4 with a double attack on f2 and h2. And 17.♙e3 could not solve the problems either, as after 17...♖c7 18.♖c1 ♙xh2+ 19.♔g1 ♗e5 20.g3 ♙g4! White cannot ward off the threat 21...♙f3. That's why the textmove is forced.

**17.♙c3 ♙xh2+**

In youthful exuberance Black launches an attack according to well known patterns. However, the combination has a hole, as I had to recognize several decades later.

**18.♔xh2 ♗g4+ 19.♔g3**

This is forced, as after 19.♔g1 ♗h6 only the return sacrifice 20.♙e5 could have prevented the mate. Only by bringing his king out into the open, White can hope to survive and maybe even refute Black's sacrifice combination.

**19...♖xf2**

That's the real point of the bishop sacrifice, as without the pawn on f2 White's king lacks protection and the attacking queen can come closer by means of decisive moves like 20...♗e3+ or 20...♗d6+. And 20.♖xf2 fails to 20...♗xf2+ 21.♔h3 ♗e3 and mate in a few moves.

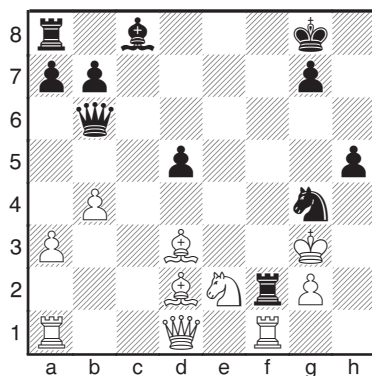
**20.♙d2**

The best defense, as 20.♖c1 is followed by 20...♖c7+ 21.♗f4 ♖xf1

22.♙xf1 (22.♖xf1 ♖xc3) 22...g5 23.♙d2 ♗d6 24.♖c5 gxf4+ 25.♙xf4 ♖xc5 26.bxc5 ♙f5 with a small edge for Black.

**20...♗e3?**

When I made this move, I was so much focussed on winning the queen that I didn't properly evaluate the overall consequences. The right move was 20...h5!.



It was 60 years later that a German chess friend pointed out to me this move which gives Black winning chances in the following lines:

**1)** After 21.♙f4 and only now 21...♗e3!, the line 22.♙e3? ♗xe3+ 23.♔h2 ♗h3+ ends with a mate, and after 22...h4+ 23.♔xh4 ♗xd1 White loses a piece.

**2)** 21.♗f4 h4+ 22.♔xh4 ♗h6+ 23.♗h5 ♖xd2-+

**3)** 21.♖e1 ♗f6 22.♖xf2 (22.♖h1 g5 23.♖xh5 ♗e5+ 24.♔h3 ♗h2#) 22...h4+ 23.♔h3 ♗xf2+ followed by ♗xd3.

**4)** After extensive analysis I found a line that probably rescues White

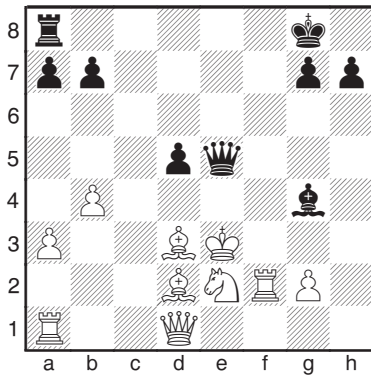
in the sense that while Black still has better chances there's no immediate win: 21.♔c1! ♕d6+ 22.♙f4 h4+ 23.♖xh4 g5+!! 24.♖g3 (24.♙xg5? ♕h2# or 24.♖xg5 ♕h6#) 24...gxf4+ 25.♗xf4 ♖xf1 with a small edge after 26.♙xf1 ♙f5 or 26.♕xf1 ♙d7.

**21.♖xf2 ♕d6+ 22.♖f3??**

Only this decisive mistake leads to defeat. After the correct 22.♗f4! ♗xd1 23.♖xd1 g5 24.♖h1 Black would have to fight for a draw.

**22...♙g4+ 23.♖xe3 ♕e5+**

The final position deserves a diagram.



White resigned. A tragicomic picture: The white king dies surrounded by too many of its men, which, instead of helping, form a coffin.

## Game 2

### Govedarica – Uhlmann

Vrbas 1977

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♗d2 ♗f6 4.e5 ♗fd7 5.♙d3 c5 6.c3 ♗c6 7.♗e2 ♕b6 8.♗f3 cxd4 9.cxd4 f6 10.exf6 ♗xf6 11.0-0 ♙d6 12.a3**

The main moves are 12.♗c3, 12.♗f4, 12.♙f4 and 12.♗g3.

**12...0-0 13.b4?**

At this stage, the pawn advance is a mistake, and should be replaced by the correct move 13.♗c3. This game was played 26 years after the first one, in a grandmaster tournament in Yugoslavia, which I won in a sovereign manner. I was at the height of my chess career concerning perfected positional and tactical skills. I vaguely remembered my first attempt against Bialas where the small but essential difference consisted in the fact that the white bishop was already on d2, a detail that turns out to be in Black's favor.

**13...e5!**

This central liberation action at the same time is the beginning of an attack on the kingside.

**14.dxe5 ♗xe5 15.♗xe5**

This move already leads to serious difficulties for White. The alternative 15.♗ed4 would have kept the position in balance.

**15...♙xe5 16.♖a2**

16.♙e3 loses very quickly in view of 16...♕c7 17.♖c1 ♙xh2+ 18.♖h1

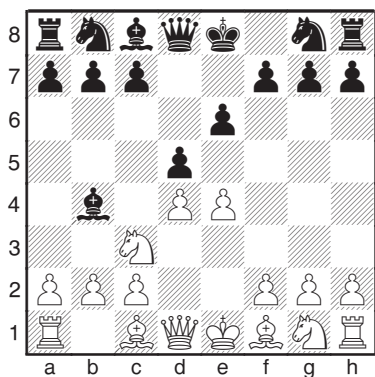
**Aaron Nimzowitsch** was born in Riga in 1886 and died in Copenhagen in 1935. From 1925-1930 he was one of the strongest players in the world. His biggest success was the first place in Karlovy Vary in 1929. In a field of 22 strong masters he won 1.5 points ahead of Capablanca and Spielmann. His 'immortal zugzwang game' shows an example of his skills. However, in the chess world Nimzowitsch also remains immortal because of his opening systems: the Nimzo-Indian Defense and the Nimzowitsch variation of the French Defense.



*Aaron Nimzowitsch*

## The Nimzowitsch Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4



The bishop's sally to b4, which bears the name of Nimzowitsch, is undoubtedly the most dangerous line in the French Defense. (The other main lines are 3...♘f6 and 3...dxe4.) White has a variety of

answers at his disposal (like e.g. 4.e5, 4.♗d2, 4.♗d3, 4.♘ge2) which all lead to different positions. The move 4.e5 is the most common, and 4...c5 or 4...♗e7 are the normal responses.

The main move 4...c5 leads to a fight around the pawn on d4. After 4...c5 or 4...♗e7, the game mostly continues 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 which leads to different pawn structures and thus a dynamic position. Now White can choose the sharp 7.Qg4 or one of the positional approaches 7.Nf3 or 7.a4. Complicated and often dangerous games can arise, with high success rates for both sides.

Game 26  
**Kramnik – Buhmann**  
 Dortmund 2016

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5  
 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♕e7 7.♕e3 b6

This trend line has been introduced to tournament practice by the German players Blühbaum and Svane. Black wants to play 8...♕a6 and to prevent 8...dxc5 at the same time, as 8...bxc5 would strengthen his center. The usual line is 7...a6 and 8...b5 gaining space on the queenside.

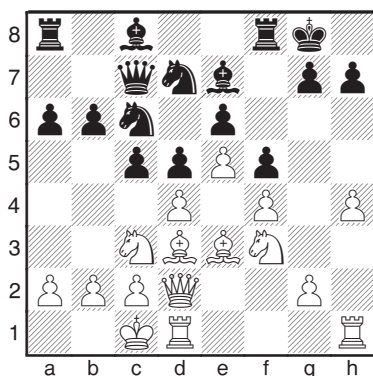
8.♞d2 0-0

Now Black waives the intended 8...♕a6, as White could play 9.♕xa6 in *one* move without losing a tempo for ♕e2 or ♕d3.

9.h4!

Kramnik is miserly with every single tempo, and leaves no doubt that he's preparing an attack on the kingside.

9...♘c6 10.♕b5 ♞c7 11.0-0-0 a6  
 12.♕d3! f5



The newcomer at the traditional Dortmund elite tournament spent 45 minutes for this move, as the position requires utmost precision.

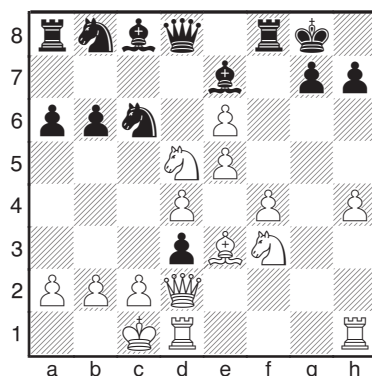
1) So for example 12...c4 could very well be followed by 13.♕xh7+ ♖xh7 14.♘g5+ ♖g8 15.♞e2 g6 16.♞g4 with a strong attack; e.g. 16...♞e8 17.h5 ♘f8 18.hxg6 fxg6 19.♞h4 ♕xg5 20.♞h8+ ♖f7 21.♞h7+ ♘xh7 22.♞xh7+ ♖f8 23.♞xc7+.

2) Probably 12...♞d8!? was a better defense, to parry 13.♘g5 with 13...♘f8. After 12...♞d8!? the sacrifice 13.♕xh7+ ♖xh7 14.♘g5+ ♖g8 15.♞e2 ♕xe5 16.hxg5 cxd4 17.♞h5 ♖f8 would be incorrect. However, after 12...♞d8 White is not obliged to sacrifice a piece, as he could reinforce the attack by 13.♘g5.

13.g4!

Kramnik wants to demolish the protective pawn wall with all force and full risk, so that major material sacrifices can already be expected.

13...c4 14.gxf5!? cxd3 15.fxe6  
 ♘7b8 16.♘xd5 ♞d8

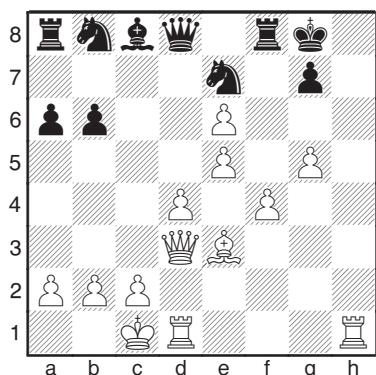


**17. ♖xe7+ ♜xe7 18. ♜g5**

By playing 18.c4 White could have protected the outpost on e6 indirectly, whereafter the best reply would have been the immediate 18...♙xe6 19.d5 ♙xd5! 20.♖xd3 ♖c8!; 20.cxd5 ♖xd5 with advantage.

**18...h6 19.♖xd3**

As if it were the most natural thing in the world, Kramnik sacrifices a second piece to reinforce the attack.

**19...hxcg5 20.hxcg5**

As a result, White has five pawns and an ongoing attack for the two sacrificed pieces. Now Black is seemingly helpless against the threats in the h-file, but he finds the best defense.

**20...♙xe6**

20...g6 21.♖h6 ♙xe6 22.♖xg6+ ♔f7 23.♖f6+ would lose.

**21.♖h7+ ♔f7 22.d5! ♙f5! 23.e6+ ♔e8**

A position has arisen in which every single move decides about

life or death. After e.g. 22...♙xd5 23.e6+ ♔xe6 24.♖xg7 or 22...♜xd5 23.f5 White's attack would be devastating.

**24.♖xg7 ♖c7!**

The mating threat on c2 wins a precious tempo and allows the following tactical blow. Here Kramnik also thought for a longer time to assess the complicated position.

**25.♖h2?**

After the more precise 25.c3 ♜xd5 26.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 27.♖xd5 ♙e4! 28.♖h8+ ♔e7 White would have had the phantastic move 29.f5!

(After the mistake 29.♖e5 ♜c6! 30.♖xa8 ♜xe5 Black would win.)

29...♙xd5 30.♖h7+ ♔d8 31.♖h8+ ♔e7 32.♖h7 with a perpetual.

**25...♜xd5 26.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 27.♖xd5 ♙h7?!**

This is no easy decision in time trouble. Originally Buhmann wanted to play the winning move 27...♙g6! which is also preferred by the engines. However, he didn't foresee the winning point in the line 28.♖h8+ ♔e7 29.f5 ♖g3!! etc.

**28.b3**

Despite his huge material plus Black cannot win.

**28...♔e8?!**

Moves like 28...♖a7 or 28...a5 were also on offer.

**29.g6!?**

In view of the fact that he has already once gotten away with a

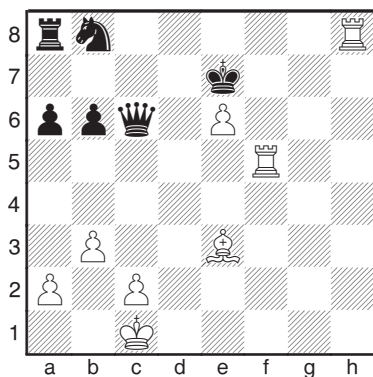


black eye, Kramnik avoids overstepping the mark. However, the waiting move 29.♖b2! would have been okay.

**29...♙xg6 30.♖h8+ ♔e7 31.f5! ♙xf5**

31...♞g3 fails to 32.♖d3! ♞e1 33.♖b2 ♙xf5 34.♙g5+ ♔xe6 35.♖e8+ losing the queen.

**32.♖xf5**



**32...♞c3!**

This only move forces White to play for a draw.

**33.♙g5+ ♔xe6 34.♖f6+ ♞xf6 35.♙xf6 ♔xf6 36.♖h6+ ♔e5 37.♖xb6 ♔d5 38.♖b2 ♙c6 39.a3 ♔c5 40.♖b7 ♖g8 41.♖h7 ♖g2 42.♖h5+ ♔d6 43.♖c3 ♖g3+ 44.♖b2 ♖g2**

Here a draw was agreed which can be considered as the fair result of an incredible game for which especially our young grandmaster Buhmann deserves the highest praise, although he missed the winning move in time trouble. I'm

happy that several young German grandmasters like and trust the French Defense and enrich it with their new ideas.

## Game 27

### J. Polgar – Korchnoi

Buenos Aires 2001

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g5 dxe4 5.♘xe4 ♘bd7**

Both opponents are renowned connoisseurs of this line. Korchnoi achieved very good results with it, among others many draws against top players.

Meanwhile, Morozevich prefers another line: 5...♙e7 6.♙xf6 gxf6 7.♘f3 a6 8.g3 b5 9.♙g2 ♙b7 10.♞e2 ♘d7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♖a-d1 ♙d5 13.♖f-e1 ♔h8 14.♘fd2 c6 15.c4 bxc4 16.♘xc4 a5 17.♘c3 ♖e8 18.♘e3 f5 19.♘c4 ♞b8 20.♘a4 ♞b4 21.b3 ♙f6 with black initiative in the game Polgar – Morozevich, Wijk aan Zee 2000.

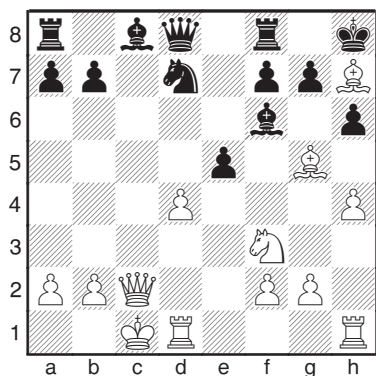
**6.♘f3 ♙e7 7.♘xf6+ ♙xf6 8.h4**

With this declaration of war, Polgar leaves no doubt that she is going to attack on the kingside.

**8...0-0 9.♙d3 c5 10.c3 cxd4 11.cxd4 e5**

Black immediately ensures that his queen bishop can join the fighting troops.

12. ♖c2 h6 13. ♕h7+ ♔h8 14. 0-0-0



This was White's idea in order to offer the king some sort of safety.

14... ♗a5!

This novelty leads to a small edge for Black, as the white king is still slightly more endangered than his black colleague. The alternative 14... exd4 would have been weak in view of 15. ♖xd4.

15. ♔b1 exd4 16. ♕d2?!

It was difficult to find a sufficient alternative. After 16. ♕f5 (16. ♕e4 ♖e8! with advantage) 16... ♖b6 17. ♕xc8 ♖axc8 18. ♗d3 ♘d5 Black is a little bit better. And also 18... ♕d8 19. ♗xd4 ♘c4 leaves him some advantage, as 20. ♕xh6 would fail to 20... ♕f6.

16... ♗c5 17. ♕f4 a5 18. ♖he1 ♖a6 19. ♕d3 ♗xc2+ 20. ♕xc2 ♘c5 21. ♗e5

Another difficult decision. Should you play 21. ♗xd4 with the possible continuation 21... ♕xh4 22. g3 ♕f6 23. ♗b5 in order to initiate some

counterplay on the dark squares on the queenside? However, the text move is probably the better choice.

21... ♔g8 22. ♕g3 ♖d8 23. ♗d3 ♖c6 24. ♖e2 ♕f5

Korchnoi has defended his extra pawn and found better places for his light pieces. From my own experience I can say that nothing was more difficult than preventing him from winning once he was a healthy pawn up.

25. ♗xc5 ♖xc5 26. ♕xf5 ♖xf5 27. ♔c2 ♖c5+ 28. ♔d3 a4 29. ♖de1 ♔h7 30. ♖e8 ♖xe8 31. ♖xe8 ♖b5 32. ♖e2 ♔g6 33. f3 ♖c5 34. ♕f2 ♖c1 35. ♖e1

Black has managed to increase the pressure by bringing his rook to White's back rank, whereas White is facing a difficult defensive task. For example 35. g4 fails to 35... ♖d1+ 36. ♔c2 d3+ 37. ♔d2 dxe2 38. ♔xe2 ♕xb2 with a lost bishop ending.

35... ♖xe1 36. ♕xe1 ♔f5 37. ♕f2 ♔f4

There's no defense any more, as after 38. ♕xd4 ♕xd4 39. ♔xd4 Black's king penetrates on g3.

38. b3 axb3 39. axb3 h5! 40. ♔e2 ♔e5 41. ♔d3 ♔d5 42. ♕e1

After 42. f4 g6 43. g3 ♕g7 44. ♕g1 f5 45. ♕f2 ♔c5 46. ♕e1 ♕f6 47. ♕d2 ♕d8 48. ♕e1 ♕b6 49. ♕d2 ♔b5 50. ♕e1 ♕a5! Black would have reached his goal. After 51. ♕xa5 ♔xa5 52. ♔xd4 ♔b4 53. ♔e5 ♔xb3

## Miscellaneous Lines

This chapter covers only a few games which, however, are all theoretically significant. It's essential in the French Defense to never give rise to stereotyped thinking. Only then it's possible to penetrate into any given position, recognize its peculiarities and thus get the chance to achieve a high score.

### Game 73 Kovacs – Uhlmann Sarajevo 1969

**1.e4 e6 2.♖e2**

Although this early queen move (in connection with the following 3.f4) leads to a different type of position, it's not recommendable, as the queen should only be deployed with a concrete purpose.

**2...c5 3.f4 ♘c6 4.♘f3 ♙e7 5.g3**

Another disadvantage of this setup becomes obvious. This time-consuming development of the bishop is necessary, although it creates no significant pressure in diagonal h1-a8.

**5...d5! 6.d3**

After 6.e5 ♘h6 the knight moves on to the strong square on f5.

**6...♘f6 7.♙g2 0-0 8.0-0 b5!**

This is an effective recipe from the line 1.e4 e6 2.d3. However, the move f4 has caused an important difference, as the closure of the diagonal c1-h6 has diminished White's attacking chances.

**9.e5 ♘d7 10.c3 ♘b6 11.d4?**

This push only meets Black's intentions which consist in the opening of the queenside.

**11...b4! 12.dxc5 ♙xc5+ 13.♔h1**

The alternative 13.♙e3 was the lesser evil, although Black would obtain some advantage after 13...♙xe3+ 14.♖xe3 ♙a6 15.♖c1 (or 15.♖d1) 15...♘c4 16.♖f2 ♖b6.

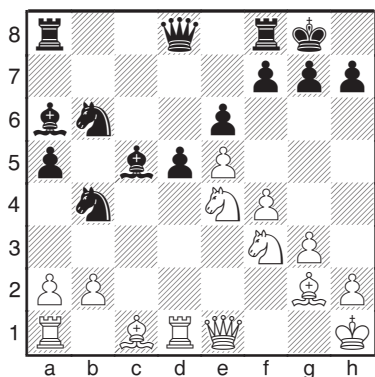
**13...a5 14.♖fd1**

The attempt to win a piece by means of 14.♖b5 would lose the queen after the further moves 14...♖e7! 15.♖xc6 ♙b7 16.♖b5 ♙a6 17.♖c6 ♖fc8. Looking at the position and White's development, it becomes clear already now that a catastrophe is going to happen soon.

**14...♙a6 15.♖e1 bxc3 16.♘xc3**

White can only choose between different evils. For example, 16.bxc3 would prevent the immediate penetration after ♘b4, but only at the cost of a significant weakening of the pawn structure.

**16...♘b4 17.♘e4**



29...h5 30.♔g1 ♖b2 31.♙d3 ♜e3  
32.♙d8+ ♜h7 33.♙a8 ♖g2+  
34.♙xg2 ♜xg2 35.♔xg2 ♜d4

White resigned.

Now White obviously hoped to consolidate after a retreat of the bishop. However, he is surprised by a nice queen sacrifice which leads to all Black's pieces penetrating White's camp.

**17...dxe4!! 18.♖xd8 ♖xd8 19.♙e3**

This is the only move, as 19.♙xe4 fails to 19...♖d1+ and 19.♘d2 to 19...♜c2 and ♜xa1.

**19...♙xe3**

After the tempting 19...♜c2 the continuation 20.♙xc5 exf3 21.♙xa5 fxg2+ 22.♔xg2 would still have offered some tricky chances.

**20.♙xe3 exf3 21.♙xf3 ♖d2! 22.a3 ♜d5 23.b4 a4 24.♖c1 ♖c8**

This is the simplest way to victory, as the weakness of the back rank is beyond repair.

**25.♖xc8+ ♜xc8 26.h4 ♜e7**

The approach of the second knight cannot be parried.

**27.♙f1 ♙xf1 28.♙xf1 ♜f5 29.♙f3**

29.♙c1 loses the queen after 29...♜xg3+ and ♜e2+.

## Game 74

### Lendwai – Uhlmann

Graz 1991

**1.e4 e6 2.♙e2 c5 3.f4 ♜c6 4.♜f3 ♙e7 5.♜c3 d5 6.d3 ♜f6 7.e5 ♜d7 8.g3**

It comes into consideration to hamper the push b7–b5 by means of 8.a4.

**8...b5!**

Since this gain of space has been allowed, it will lead to the future opening of the b-file or c-file. And 9.♜xb5 would lose a piece after 9...♙a5+ 10.♜c3 d4.

**9.♙g2 ♙b6 10.0-0 b4!**

This is an important intermediate move to ensure that after the disclosed check 11...c4+ the queen bishop can be placed on a6 most effectively.

**11.♜d1 c4+ 12.♙e3 ♙c5**

It's essential to prevent White from blocking the diagonal h1–a7 by means of d3–d4.

**13.♔h1 ♕a6!**

Now White already faces the serious problem how to diminish the pressure on the pawn on d3. And in the background his queen and rook are also in danger.

**14.♕xc5 cxd3**

This intermediate exchange is important to increase the pressure on d3.

**15.cxd3 ♘xc5**

Black has solved the opening problems in his favor. White has no attack on the kingside at all, the bishop on g2 is passive, and both knights will soon be obliged to defend the weaknesses on d3 and d4. On the other hand, after castling Black will occupy the open c-file and create threats on the first and second rank.

**16.♞f2 0-0 17.b3**

It was better to play 17.♖fc1 and opt for the defensive maneuver ♕f1 and ♖d2.

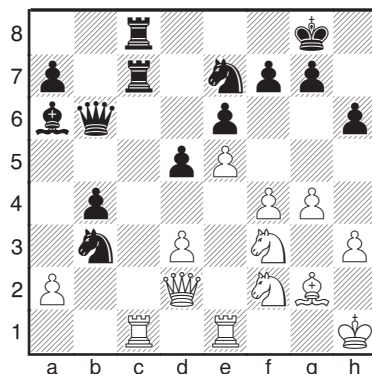
**17...♖ac8 18.♖ac1 ♞e7 19.♖fe1 ♖c7**

This plan is good and simple, as there's no sufficient defense against the doubling of the rooks in the c-file.

**20.♖d2 ♖fc8 21.g4 h6**

Black's position is so good that there's even enough time to make an airhole, as White can hardly make a reasonable move at all. However, Black might immediately have played 21...♞xb3 22.axb3

♖xc1 23.♖xc1 ♖xc1+ 24.♖xc1 ♖xf2 25.♖c7 ♞g6 with a clear edge.

**22.h3 ♞xb3**

In view of the fact that Black's king has already an airhole, this pseudo-sacrifice is even stronger now. After swapping the rooks, Black's queen will decisively penetrate on f2. And as White remains with the pawn weaknesses on d3 and f4, his immediate defeat is unavoidable.

**23.axb3 ♖xc1 24.♖xc1 ♖xc1+ 25.♖xc1 ♖xf2 26.♖c7 ♞g6 27.♖b8+ ♔h7 28.♖xb4 ♕xd3**

Now White's fate is definitely sealed.

**29.f5 exf5 30.gxf5 ♕xf5 31.♖d4 ♖g3**

White resigned without waiting for 32.♖xd5 ♖xg2+ 33.♔xg2 ♞f4+.

Game 75  
**Santa Cruz – Uhlmann**  
 Havana 1964

**1.e4 e6 2.b3**

Many players have reasons (psychological or other) to avoid the main lines. However, due to this phenomenon they often choose suspicious piece or pawn formations. And the seasoned French player will not be impressed by this or that improvisation but just make reasonable and typical moves instead.

**2...d5 3.♘b2**

White offers his central pawn, a sacrifice which could, of course, be accepted, although that's exactly what the weaker player expects in order to create tactical complications. My experience has taught me that it's often better to choose a quiet continuation and to force the opponent to play a game in which strategic skills prevail.

**3...♗f6 4.e5 ♗fd7 5.f4 c5**

With his next moves Black plans to degrade the bishop on b2 to what might be called a 'tall pawn'.

**6.♗c3 ♗c6 7.♗f3 ♘e7 8.h4 f6**

Tackling the center with this lever is appropriate here, as White has left no doubt that he's planning to launch an attack on the kingside early on. Beside the text move, the development b6 and ♘b7 came into consideration.

**9.♞e2 fxe5 10.fxe5 a6**

Black wants to play ♞c7 without being disturbed by ♗b5.

**11.0-0-0 ♞c7 12.♞de1**

White already has obvious difficulties to keep the pawn on e5 protected.

**12...♗f8!**

Black prepares to follow up with ♘d7 and 0-0-0.

**13.h5 ♘d7 14.♞f2**

It's not easy for White to find a reasonable plan. After the intended 14.h6 the reply 14...gxh6 15.♞xh6 0-0-0 would have been good enough. White's pieces lack harmonic cooperation.

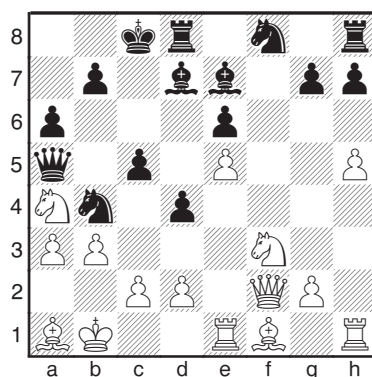
**14...0-0-0 15.♗a4?**

This move is dubious, not only because the knight is placed at the rim, but even more, because Black's reply entails the threat to conquer it by means of b7–b5.

**15...d4 16.♘a1**

This is a sad necessity to vacate a retreat square for the endangered knight.

**16...♞a5 17.♗b1 ♗b4! 18.a3**





1) There's no time for the knight sacrifice 18.♘xd4, as the intermediate move 18...♙xa4 leads to victory after 19.bxa4 cxd4 20.♙xd4 ♖xa4.

2) So, beside the text move only 18.c3 came seriously into consideration. After 18...♙xa4 19.bxa4 (19.cxb4 ♖xb4) Black's best reply is 19...dxc3; e.g. 20.bxc3 (20.♙xc3 ♖xa4 with a clear advantage) 20...♞d5 (20...♞d3 is also in Black's favor) 21.♖c2 ♞d7 and there's no defense against ♞b6 winning a pawn on a4.

**18...♙xa4 19.bxa4 ♞d5 20.♙c4 ♖xa4**

Although Black has won an important pawn, his positional advantage is much more essential. You only have to look at the awkward bishop on a1.

**21.♙xd5 ♖xd5 22.♙b2 ♞d7**

After even the passive knight can join the fighting troops, the defeat is only a matter of time.

**23.♖g3 ♖g8 24.♞g5 ♙xg5 25.♖xg5 c4**

The end is near. There's no defense against the transfer of the rook to the queenside and the pawn duo on c4 and d4.

**26.♖h3 ♖b5 27.♖g4 d3! 28.cxd3**

After 28.♖xd3 ♖xb2+! 29.♙xb2 ♖b5+ 30.♙a2 cxd3 31.♖xe6 ♖f8 the win of a piece reduces the rest to just a technical problem.

**28...♖xb2+**

White resigned, as after 29.♙xb2 c3+ followed by ♖xg4 he will lose his queen.

## Game 76 Eskandary – Uhlmann Dresden 2002

**1.e4 e6 2.♞e2**

This unusual move (obviously planned as an opening surprise) is strictly speaking a loss of tempo, as the knight will have to move again. However, it needs to be said that wasting the opening tempo must not necessarily lead to any disadvantage.

**2...d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.♞g3 ♙d6 5.d4 ♖h4**

This interesting move strives for initiative on the kingside. Unusual opening moves require unusual answers.

**6.♞c3 c6 7.♖d3**

This is already a small success for Black, as the normal development 7.♙d3 would fail to 7...♖xd4.

**7...♞f6 8.♞f5**

It seems logical that moving the knight for a third time should give Black a slight edge. However, after the normal move 8.♙e2 followed by 8...0-0 9.0-0 ♞e4! Black has the better play.

**8...♙xf5 9.♖xf5 0-0**

Of course not 9...♖xd4 in view of 10.♖c8+.

**10.♘e3 ♖e8**

As usual the open file is an important positional factor. And White has to watch out for the small threat 10...♗xd4.

**11.0-0 ♖g4**

Now Black must react to prevent any threats against his queen.

**12.♘d3 ♞bd7 13.h3 ♖xf5 14.♘xf5 g6 15.♘d3**

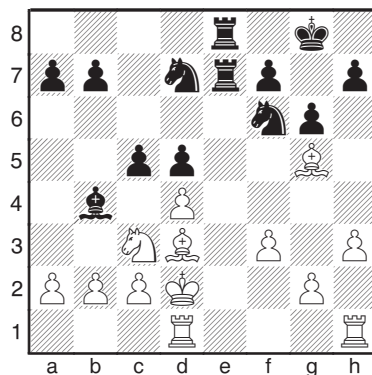
White has somehow managed the transposition from the opening to the middlegame, whereas Black has already collected some small positional advantages. He will be the first to occupy the only open file, his knights are more agile, and the bishop on d6 is ideally placed, as it can be deployed very quickly on both sides. These minor details combined with the fact that Black is the stronger player, lead to the conclusion that he has good chances.

**15...♖e7 16.♘g5 ♖ae8 17.♗d2**

White's plan is understandable: to reach complete equality by swapping all rooks in the e-file.

**17...♘b4!**

This is the adequate countermeasure. Now the intended move 18.♖ae1 would be suspicious in view of 18...♞e4+ 19.♘xe4 ♖xe4 20.♖xe4 dxe4, whereafter the threat 21...♞b6 with the possibilities ♞c4+ or ♞d5 would give Black the better play.

**18.f3 c5!**

All of a sudden tactical opportunities turn up out of the blue – for the moment the double threat 19...cxd4 and 19...c4. And as 19.dxc5 fails to 19...d4, White's king is forced to retreat.

**19.♗c1 c4**

An important side effect of this significant gain of space consists in the fact that the exchange of rooks in the e-file is not possible any more.

**20.♘f1 ♘xc3**

This is the right moment to weaken White's pawn structure on the queenside. The ensuing and impressive fight of two knights against two bishops is clearly in Black's favor, as, on top of everything else, he dominates the e-file.

**21.bxc3 ♖e6!**

This move not only unpins the rook but also prepares it for being transferred to the queenside.

**22.g4 ♖a6 23.♗b1 ♖8e6!**

The second rook follows in the footsteps of its colleague.

**24.♔c1**

It's already difficult to come up with a useful plan. The alternative 24.♔g2 was still the best choice, although Black can reinforce his attack and finally win a pawn by means of 24...♖eb6+ 25.♔a1 ♖a3 26.♖b1 ♖ba6 27.♖b2 ♖xc3.

**24...♞b6 25.♖h2 ♞a4 26.d2 ♞e8!**

The finale maneuver is also executed by a knight, whereafter there's no defense against ♞c7 and eventually ♞b5.

**27.♔a1 ♞c7 28.♖b1 ♖ab6**

In view of the passive bishops it's okay to swap rooks now.

**29.♖xb6 ♖xb6 30.♖e2**

Finally a white rook reaches the e-file but, of course, it's way too late.

**30...♞b5! 31.♖e3**

After 31.♔h6 f6! White has just a few revenge checks before the deadly double threat ♞xc3 and ♞a3 comes to effect.

**31...♞a3!**

White resigned. In this substantial game a nice mating attack was initiated with minimal means. Black's victory was based on the open e-file, the active knights and the opponent's weakened pawn structure.

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