

# Contents

Bibliography	6
Introduction: The “Wojo System”	7
<b>Part I: The Closed Catalan</b>	<b>11</b>
Chapter 1: An Introduction to the Closed Catalan	12
Chapter 2: The Closed Catalan with 4...♗b4+	47
Chapter 3: Assembling the Repertoire	70
<b>Part II: The Open Catalan</b>	<b>77</b>
Chapter 4: The Delayed Open Catalan with 7.♗e5!? ♗c6	78
Chapter 5: The Delayed Open Catalan with 7.♗e5!? c5 (and others)	110
Chapter 6: The Early Open Catalan with 5...♗c6	121
Chapter 7: The Early Open Catalan with 5...c5	162
Chapter 8: The Early Open Catalan with 5...a6 6.♗e5 ♗b4+	185
Chapter 9: The Early Open Catalan with 5...a6 6.♗e5 c5	193
Chapter 10: The Early Open Catalan with 5...b5 or 5...c6	220
Chapter 11: The Early Open Catalan – Others (5...♗b4+, 5...♗bd7, 5...♗d7)	231
<b>Part III: The Slav Defense</b>	<b>253</b>
Chapter 12: The Slav Defense with 4.♖c2 dxc4	254
Chapter 13: The Slav Defense with 4.♖c2 g6	281
Chapter 14: Semi-Slav Hybrids with 1.♗f3 d5 2.d4 c6	297
<b>Part IV: Black’s Other Defenses</b>	<b>305</b>
Chapter 15: The Queen’s Gambit Accepted	306
Chapter 16: The Tarrasch	332
Chapter 17: Systems with 2...♗f5	360
Chapter 18: The Chigorin	373
Chapter 19: The Austrian Defense	387

# Introduction

During the eight years that the late Aleksander Wojtkiewicz (1963-2006) lived in the United States, he won or tied for first place in more than 240 tournaments. He averaged over thirty tournament victories a year – or nearly three per month. “Wojo,” as he was affectionately called by his fans, was arguably the most successful tournament player in the United States, winning the Grand Prix six years in a row from 1999 to 2004. During that time, however, he was not considered one of the best players in the world. Although his name was sporadically on the FIDE “Top 100” rating list, his official ELO rating – which peaked at 2595 – never made it past the magic 2600 mark. How, then, did he achieve such success?

The answer is this: Wojtkiewicz was ruthlessly pragmatic in his approach to tournament chess. His opening repertoire was designed in such a way that he could essentially play his games on “auto-pilot.” He considered his games against non-masters to be trivial, and he rarely expended precious brainpower on them. Between moves, he could often be seen outside the tournament hall – usually at the nearest bar. Wojo would then return to the board after having been away, look at the position for five or ten seconds, and throw out a move. After scrawling on his score sheet, he would turn around and leave again. Other grandmasters devoted their full attention to beating weaker players, but Wojo played as if he already had everything worked out to mate.

This style of devil-may-care chess was possible for Wojo because he had – like a professional playing multiple poker games at once – a “system” for winning chess tournaments. Wojo realized that all he needed to do as a chess professional was to win his games against amateurs *a certain percentage of the time*. To this end he designed a repertoire that would deliver the necessary winning percentage while requiring the least effort. In order for an opening line to be incorporated into Wojo’s “system,” it had to meet certain criteria:

- **It must have “surprise value.”**  
Wojo didn’t mind if his opponents had seen a particular line before, or even if they knew some of the theory. Instead, it was more important to him that they not have a great deal of experience in handling the resulting middlegame or endgame positions. This gave Wojo a “home-field” advantage, forcing his opponents to fight on his turf.

## WOJO'S WEAPONS

- **It must be relatively sound.**

Particularly when playing Black, Wojo had no objections to playing “risky” or “experimental” lines. But if the refutation could simply be looked up in a book, it was off limits.

- **It must be disconcerting to play against.**

Wojo understood the psychology of the average “weekend warrior” tournament player, and he knew the fastest way to beat him: *force him to play a type of position that makes him uncomfortable*. With this in mind, Wojo would steer for quiet endgame advantages against “sharp” openings, but would play to “mix things up” against more docile ones. If the nature of the resulting middlegame or endgame position turned out not to be to the opponent’s taste, Wojo’s system had done its job.

- **It must fit in with the rest of the repertoire.**

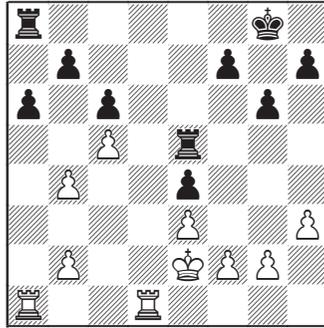
Wojo’s openings were designed to reach certain types of positions. For example, lines leading to queenless middlegames were commonly incorporated into his system. By using lines that complemented one another, Wojo was able to increase his advantage in experience over his opponents, maintaining his “home-field” advantage.

At the time of Wojo’s death in 2006, he had nearly perfected his system. Between 1998 and 2006, he defeated over 1,000 master-level players in U.S. tournaments. But – more importantly – he was able to consistently beat players rated between 2200 and 2400 an incredible 80% of the time. Draws made up 16%, and the remaining 4% were losses. Thus, his overall score against masters was 88%. Against those rated between 2000 and 2200, Wojo won 88%, drew 8%, and lost 4% for an overall score of 92%.

This book focuses on the opening lines Wojo decided to use in his system with White, specifically those occurring after 1.♭f3 d5. Throughout the work, the reader will certainly notice opportunities Black has to play for “drawn” endgames. This is because Wojo did *not* require that his system be able to defeat other grandmasters a large percentage of the time. For that, Wojo sometimes used a different set of openings – for instance, against the Slav with 1.♭f3 d5 2.d4 c6 3.c4 ♭f6, Wojo claimed only that 4.♖c2 was a great weapon for beating “weaker players.” By this, he meant players rated under 2400. Against other top players, Wojo was far more likely to play 4.♭c3 if he truly needed to win.

The fact that the repertoire we present allows Black to suffer to a draw in some spots does not bother us. Here is one example. In our recommended Wojo repertoire against the Slav Defense, the following position is reached after 1.♭f3 d5 2.d4 ♭f6 3.c4 c6 4.♖c2 g6 5.♙f4 ♙f5 6.♖b3 ♖b6 7.c5 ♖xb3 8.axb3 ♙xb1 9.♙xb1 ♭bd7 10.b4 ♙g7 11.h3 0–0 12.e3 a6 13.♙d3 ♭e4 14.♙e2 ♖fe8 15.♙a1 e5 16.dxe5 ♭xe5 17.♙xe4 dxe4 18.♭xe5 ♙xe5 19.♙xe5 ♖xe5 20.♙hd1:

## INTRODUCTION



As we explain in Chapter 13, this position is only marginally better for White, and should be drawn with accurate play. Yet the fact that this endgame is reached does not invalidate our choice of 4.♞c2, as in practice White manages to win this type of endgame at least 1 in every 3 games – or, if White is the stronger player, perhaps even 1 in every 2 games. That means White is scoring between 66% and 75%. Considering that even most master-level players will have made a mistake with Black prior to this point (for instance, the defensive 8...♙b1! is a difficult move to play), White can still manage to win the required percentage of games with 4.♞c2 to meet Wojo’s standards.

Now, on to the work itself. The book is divided into four parts, with each part covering one significant aspect of Wojo’s repertoire. Part I focuses on the Closed Catalan, which is really the heart and soul of the “Wojo system.” Because understanding the themes found in the Closed Catalan is so essential to the rest of the book, we have devoted the first two chapters of Part I entirely to the ideas behind the Closed Catalan opening. Only once the reader has grasped the key concepts do we attempt to outline a theoretical framework for that portion of the repertoire. This meant devoting more space to the Closed Catalan than even most “Catalan” books do, but it was well worth it: if you, the reader, are attracted to the example games presented in Part I, you will undoubtedly be interested in the rest of Wojo’s repertoire with White. And since so many games at club level feature the Closed Catalan, it is not hard for you to start applying the knowledge learned in Chapters 1 and 2 immediately.

Part II of the book focuses on the Open Catalan. This is by far the largest part of the book. It deals with both Black’s more traditional methods of development (such as ...♙f8-e7 and ...0-0) and his other ways of bringing his pieces into the game. We have organized the chapters in this part of the book more or less in order of their importance. The material in chapters 4 through 7 deals with Black’s most popular responses; the remaining chapters cover tries seen somewhat less frequently. Although we have struggled to highlight ideas and themes, some sections of Part II get quite theoretical. In our efforts to make this work an important contribution to the body of theory surrounding Wojo’s lines, we have included much of both existing theory and our own analysis, which we hope will not be too burdensome to the average reader.

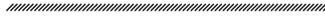
## WOJO'S WEAPONS

Part III deals with the Slav Defense, and in particular, Wojo's special treatment with 4.♖c2. For those who enjoyed Part I of the book, this part should also prove to be a good read. Themes, ideas, plans, and strategies once again reassert their predominance over theory, so there is really nothing at all in this part to scare away anyone with a fear of theoretical variations. Even someone playing well above master level should be able to get by without committing any variations to memory. That said, theory has largely ignored Wojo's interpretation of the 4.♖c2 Slav – it certainly isn't mentioned in many works – so we have tried to fill that gap in the existing chess literature. If the reader is looking for extensive coverage of the move 4.♖c2, he will certainly find it.

Finally, Part IV deals with Black's miscellaneous defenses – the Queen's Gambit Accepted, the Tarrasch Defense, the Chigorin, and a few other openings. Wojo's treatments of these openings should appeal to players who play the Catalan and want to force Black to play on their "home turf." With the exception of Chapter 16, which covers the Tarrasch Defense, these sections do not contain quite as much theory. We could easily have chosen to include less theoretical material in the Tarrasch chapter, but we felt that Wojo's systems with b2-b3 have gotten less than their fair share of attention in the past and we wanted to make up for it.

We sincerely hope that this book proves useful to those looking to explore Wojo's white opening repertoire. We also hope that, through this project, we are able to preserve some of the vast legacy left to the chess world by the genius that was Aleksander Wojtkiewicz.

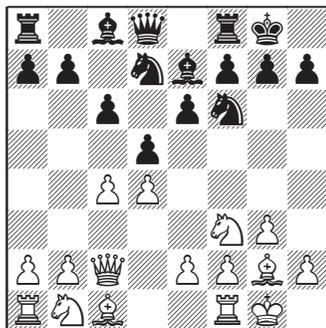
Part I



# **The Closed Catalan**

## Chapter 1

# An Introduction to the Closed Catalan



1.  $\text{d}3$   $\text{d}5$  2.  $\text{d}4$   $\text{f}6$  3.  $\text{c}4$   $\text{e}6$  4.  $\text{g}3$   $\text{e}7$   
5.  $\text{g}2$  0-0 6. 0-0  $\text{c}6$  7.  $\text{c}2$   $\text{b}d7$   
(give or take)

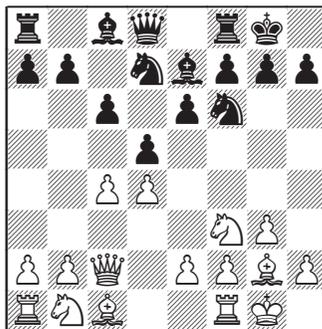
## Getting Started

Playing the Catalan appears simple at first. For Wojo, beating experts and class players in the Catalan Declined – known officially as the “Closed Catalan” – was a routine part of everyday life as he played in small “Grand Prix” tournaments around the United States. The storyline of these Closed Catalan games was nearly always the same: Wojo’s Catalan squeeze was the positional equivalent of Fischer’s famous “sac, sac, mate” in the Dragon Sicilian. We’ll delve into a deeper theoretical discussion of the Closed Catalan later in this chapter. But first, in order to better understand the current theory, we will examine the ideas behind it. Let’s start with one example of a typical Wojo victory over a club player. At the time of this match-up, Peter Langdon’s USCF rating was 1964, making him a “Class A” player.

### Wojtkiewicz, Aleksander (2595) Langdon, Peter

[E08] U.S. Open 1998

1.  $\text{d}3$   $\text{f}6$  2.  $\text{c}4$   $\text{e}6$  3.  $\text{g}3$   $\text{d}5$  4.  $\text{d}4$   
 $\text{c}6$  5.  $\text{g}2$   $\text{e}7$  6. 0-0 0-0 7.  $\text{c}2$   
 $\text{b}d7$



This is one typical starting position for the Closed Catalan. White spends

his next few moves preparing the thematic e2-e4 thrust.

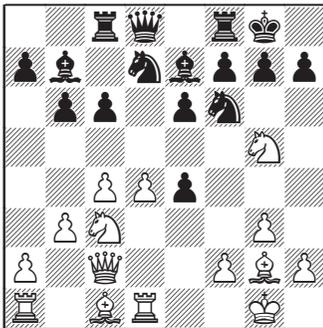
**8.♖d1 b6 9.b3**

White plays b2-b3 not only to fianchetto his queen's bishop, but also to defend his c4-pawn. He wants to put his queen's knight on c3 to add to the pressure on d5.

**9...♗b7 10.♘c3 ♝c8 11.e4 dxe4**

As we'll discuss later, "conceding" the center with ...d5xe4 isn't considered Black's most testing idea. Over the next several games, however, we'll be focusing on the structures that occur when Black plays ...d5xe4. The central capture is obvious and therefore natural, so it is little wonder that Black plays it more frequently than, say, 11...c5!?

**12.♘g5**



This is a promising alternative to 12.♘xe4, the main move here.

**12...♞e8?!**

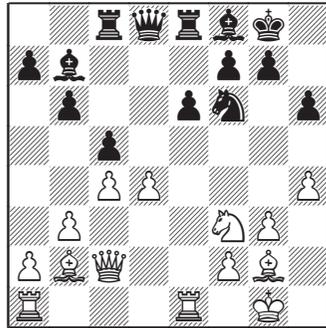
This kind of move often wastes time for Black, who should be focusing on making the ...c6-c5 break. As

we'll learn later, 12...h6 and 12...c5 are two stronger moves.

**13.h4**

This kingside thrust was often part of the "formula." White is simply gaining space on the kingside by securing the g5 square. The simple 13.♘gxe4 is perhaps an improvement.

**13...♗f8!? 14.♘cxe4 h6 15.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 16.♘f3 ♖e7 17.♞e1 ♜d8 18.♗b2 c5**



White has locked down the e5 square, so striving for ...e6-e5 is out of the question. This typical ...c6-c5 break gives White open lines for his pieces, but surprisingly, Black is still doing fine.

**19.♞ad1 cxd4 20.♘xd4 ♖e7??**

A costly oversight. Black could have instead played 20...♗xg2 21.♙xg2 ♜c7, when he is not in any real trouble.

**21.♘f5**

Now, White is just winning a piece.

**21...♜c7 22.♗e5 ♜c5 23.♗xb7 exf5 24.♗xc8 ♞xe5 25.♞xe5 ♜xe5**

26. ♖xf5 g6 27. ♗d3 ♗c5 28. ♕g2  
 ♕g7 29. ♖e2 ♖c7 30. ♗e4 h5 31. ♗f3  
 1–0

This kind of game was all in a day's work for Wojo. The “clean” feel surrounding such Closed Catalan positions – and the efficiency with which he won them – constitute a large part of why so many players over the past decade have desired to emulate Wojo's style. Ironically, many strong players have now come to regard the Closed Catalan (particularly those lines in which Black exchanges with ...d5xe4) as a “weak player's” opening, and so they desire to stay away from it. In reality, however, Black often has plenty of equalizing chances in the Closed Catalan. Note that in the above game, Black actually had to make several mistakes before he was clearly worse.

As indicated in the note to Black's move 20, he could have simply played 20... ♗xg2 21. ♕xg2 ♖c7 with a roughly level game. White's position looks somewhat prettier, but with decent play, Black should not have too many problems reaching a draw by exchanging down the d-file. White's pawn majority on the queenside is not a particularly important factor here.

In fact, many lines in the Closed Catalan for Black are far better than their reputations. Thus no amount of purely theoretical knowledge is going to allow players of White to “win like Wojo.” In order to start scoring points, what is needed is a thorough understanding of the entire Closed Catalan system. We'll begin to build this understanding by first examining the essence of the Closed Catalan setup.

## Black's Defensive Formation: Semi-Slav, or Queen's Gambit Declined?

Wojo's move order to reach any opening position almost always started with 1. ♗f3 and then either c2-c4 or d2-d4. When asked why he didn't play 1.d4 as his first move instead, he was occasionally known to say, “I'm too lazy!” It's true that by playing 1. ♗f3 first, Wojo avoided having to face several unpleasant openings, such as the Benko, Benoni, Albin Countergambit, and so on, but there are other reasons why 1. ♗f3 was a practical weapon for someone who made a living off handily winning local tournaments. At the club level, Black players who

have a system worked out against 1.d4 will generally try to use some adaptation of that system against 1. ♗f3 as well. Unfortunately for them, however, this is easier said than done. Two of the most popular defenses, the Semi-Slav Defense and the Queen's Gambit Declined, lead to unpleasant positions for Black if he insists on trying to play them against the Catalan. Once we have examined why White scores so well with the Catalan against these two systems, we will be able to appreciate why Black sets up the formation he does in the “real” Closed Catalan.

## The Semi-Slav: Why Black's Bishop Belongs on e7

In reaction to White's Catalan setup, diehard Semi-Slav players will tend to play ...d7-d5, ...e7-e6, ...♘g8-f6, ...c7-c6, and ...♙f8-d6. There are seemingly many good reasons for putting the bishop on the natural d6 square, chief among them Black's increased ability to play ...e6-e5 early on. Against a normal Queen's Gambit setup by White – which places White's light-squared bishop on e2 – this plan makes sense. If Black can break through in the center with ...e6-e5, he may well be able to free his own trapped bishop back on c8. The problem with attempting this plan against the Catalan, however, is that White's bishop is developed to the long h1-a8 diagonal. Rather than trying to prevent Black's break in the center, White welcomes it. After the central exchanges are made, Black will be slightly behind in development and under fire on the d5 square. Thus he will have to make some kind of concession, such as giving himself an isolated queen's pawn.

All of this doesn't, unfortunately, guarantee White a large advantage; in fact, Black has shown that he does have a few precise ways to steer the game towards equality. Regardless, the notes to the following game demonstrate why Black generally does not aim to play ...♙f8-d6 and ...e6-e5 early on in the Closed Catalan.

**Wojtkiewicz, Aleksander (2575)  
Bhat, Vinay (2235)**

[E01] San Francisco 1997

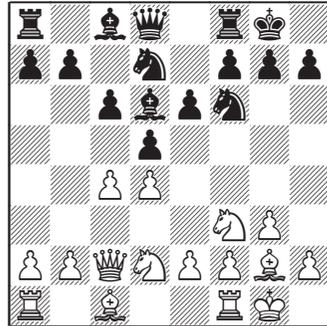
1.♠f3 d5 2.d4 c6 3.c4 e6 4.♘bd2

Wojtkiewicz often used this move order against an early ...c6 by Black so as to avoid any line where the second player might attempt ...d5xc4 and ...b7-b5, holding on to his pawn. The main disadvantage of this approach is that, should Black adopt the Closed Catalan setup, White can no longer develop his knight to c3, as in the previous game.

4...♘f6 5.g3 ♘bd7 6.♙g2 ♙d6!?

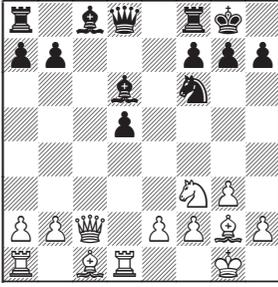
This move signals Black's intent to play the Semi-Slav.

7.0-0 0-0 8.♙c2



8...♗e8

Black is preparing to play his ...e6-e5 break. Surprisingly, 8...e5?! immediately is inferior, because after 9.cxd5 cxd5 (on 9...♘xd5, White gets the bishop pair with 10.♘c4 ♗e7 11.♘xd6 ♗xd6 12.♗d1 exd4 13.♗xd4, granting him active play) 10.dxe5 ♘xe5 11.♘xe5 ♙xe5 12.♘f3 ♙d6 13.♗d1, White has not yet spent a tempo on the move b2-b3:



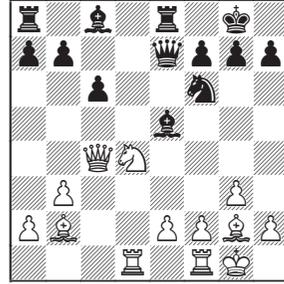
Thus White can effectively develop his bishop to g5 rather than b2. For instance, in Rogers-Handoko, Jakarta Zonal 1993, play continued 13... $\text{B}e8$  (13... $\text{B}e6$  14. $\text{W}b3$ , hitting b7, was strong in Damljanović-Tadić, Yugoslav Chp. 2001, after 14... $\text{W}b6$  15. $\text{W}xb6$  axb6 16. $\text{B}d4$ ) 14. $\text{B}g5$   $\text{B}e6$  15. $\text{B}d4$   $\text{B}e5$  16. $\text{B}xe6$  fxe6 17.e4 (a typical idea, momentarily giving Black the center to gain the bishop pair and then immediately breaking it up again) 17... h6 18. $\text{B}xf6$   $\text{W}xf6$  19.exd5  $\text{B}ac8$  20. $\text{W}d3$   $\text{B}xb2$  21. $\text{B}ab1$  exd5 22. $\text{B}xd5+$   $\text{K}h8$  23. $\text{B}xb7$   $\text{B}cd8$  24. $\text{W}f3$ , when White was safely up a pawn and managed to win.

### 9.b3 e5

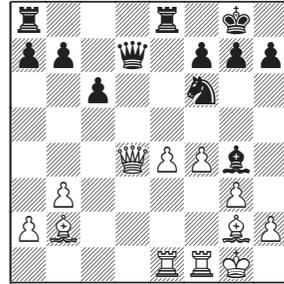
If even now Black feels uncomfortable playing ...e6-e5, he may elect to wait one more move with 9... $\text{W}e7$ . This continuation is probably Black's strongest, as with accurate play he gets fair chances. After 10. $\text{B}b2$  e5 11.dxe5  $\text{B}xe5$ , the "old" way to get a slight edge against this line is 12.cxd5  $\text{B}xd5$  13. $\text{B}d4$ , since White has his eye on the f5 square. The thinking is that after 13... $\text{B}b4$  14. $\text{W}b1$ , White should be able to neutralize Black's activity.

More recently, however, strong players have favored playing the immediate 12. $\text{B}d4$ . One game in this line is Petrosian-Kozhuharov, European

Chp. 2008, which continued 12...dxc4 13. $\text{B}xc4$   $\text{B}xc4$  14. $\text{W}xc4$   $\text{B}e5$  15. $\text{B}ad1$ :



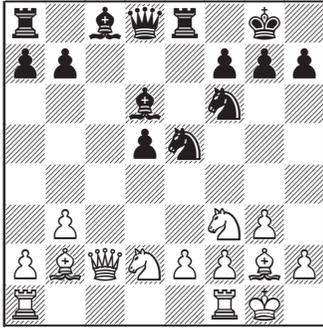
15... $\text{B}g4$  16.f3  $\text{B}d7$  17.f4  $\text{B}xd4+$  (17... $\text{B}d6$  18.e4 is good for White) 18. $\text{W}xd4$   $\text{B}g4$  (18... $\text{W}xe2$  leaves White with full compensation, for instance 19. $\text{B}f3$   $\text{W}b5$  20.g4 h6 21.f5  $\text{B}ad8$  22. $\text{B}f2$ , and Black is under heavy pressure) 19. $\text{B}de1$   $\text{W}d7$  20.e4:



White has a comfortable advantage thanks to his bishop pair and extra space.

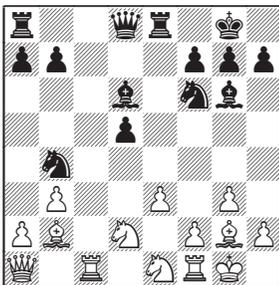
Backtracking to 12. $\text{B}d4$ , if instead of 12...dxc4, Black plays 12... $\text{B}b4$ , White should play 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.a3 as in Timman-Cifuentes, Dutch Chp. 1997. Play continued 14... $\text{B}a5$  and here 15. $\text{B}2f3$   $\text{B}xf3+$  16. $\text{B}xf3$   $\text{B}e4$  17. $\text{B}fd1$  would have left White with a comfortable position. Instead, Timman played the overambitious 15.b4  $\text{B}b6$  16.e4? dxe4 17. $\text{B}xe4$   $\text{B}xe4$  18. $\text{B}xe4$   $\text{B}h3$ , when Black's initiative was powerful.

10.cxd5 cxd5 11.dxe5 ♖xe5  
12.♗b2



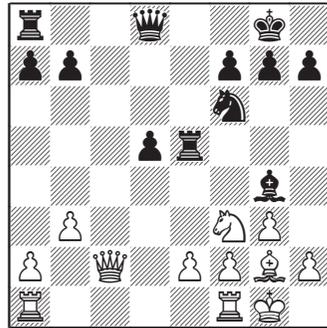
12...♗g4

Although this position has been reached a number of times in practice, it is not hard to see that Black now has a deflated version of a Tarrasch Defense. Anand once tried this position as Black and played 12...♖c6!?, but few other players picked up the torch and followed him. White gets a slight advantage by way of 13.e3 ♗g4 14.♞ac1 ♗h5 (or 14...♞e7 15.♖d4 ♖xd4 16.♗xd4 ♗a3 17.♗c5 ♗xc5 18.♞xc5 ♞xc5 19.♞xc5 ♞ac8 20.♞fc1 ♞xc5 21.♞xc5 ♞c8 22.♞xc8+ ♗xc8 23.♖b1 ♗d7 24.♖c3 was agreed drawn in Bareev-Anand, Biel 1993, though White could easily have played on if he had wanted to) 15.♞b1! ♗g6 16.♞a1 ♖b4 17.♖e1, when White defends everything and is threatening ♗xf6:



Now Black played 17...♗e7 18.a3 ♖c6 19.♖ef3 a5, when the simple 20.♞fd1 (rather than the more forcing 20.♖e5!?) would have given White the edge in Mochalov-Linauskas, Polanica Zdroj 1995.

13.♗xe5 ♗xe5 14.♖xe5 ♞xe5  
15.♖f3



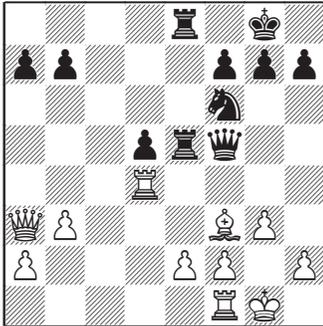
15...♗xf3

15...♞e7! is Black's best move. Although White retains a slight pull after something like 16.♖d4 (or 16.♞ac1 ♞c8 17.♞b2 ♞ec7 18.♖d4, transposing) 16...♞c8 17.♞b2 ♞ec7 18.♞ac1, in practice White has failed to convert his advantage and most games eventually wind up drawn. Alternatively, 15...♗f5!? 16.♞d2 ♞e7 17.♖d4 ♗e4 18.♗h3 ♞d6 19.♞f4 ♞b6 20.♞fd1 ♞ae8 21.♞ac1 h6 22.♞d2 ♞e5 23.♞c3 ♞h5 24.♗f1 left White better in Ehlvest-Fernández, Lake George 2005.

Finally, 15...♞h5!? is interesting but not very dangerous for White. Black lost miserably in M.Grabarczyk-Janiszewski, Polish U20 Chp. 2003: 16.♞ac1 ♞c8 17.♞d2 ♞c6 18.♖d4 ♞a6 19.♞c5 ♞d7 20.♞fc1 ♖e8 21.f3 ♗h3 22.g4 ♗g6 23.♞c8 ♗xg4 24.fxg4 ♞xg4 25.♞e3. Such rash attempts by Black to checkmate White's well-defended king are rarely effective. After

the peaceful text move, White has a slight but secure advantage. His first task will be to once again secure the d4 square, this time using his major, rather than minor, pieces.

**16. ♖xf3 ♗d7 17. ♜ad1 ♝c8 18. ♛b2 ♜ce8 19. ♞d4 ♜f5 20. ♛a3!**

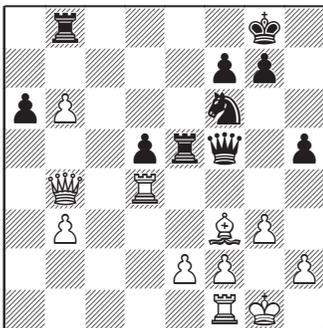


White “tickles” Black’s a-pawn. From this point onward, White’s advantage only increases.

**20...a6 21. ♛b4 b5 22. a4 h5!?**

22...bxa4 23. ♛xa4 would allow White to continue building pressure. It is difficult for Black to defend both the a6- and the d5-pawns at the same time, as White’s next move will likely be ♜f1-d1.

**23. axb5 ♜b8 24. b6**



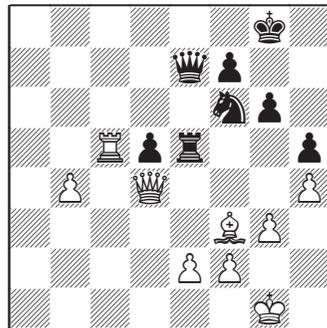
**24...♜e6?**

A costly inaccuracy. Black should play 24...♛e6 25. b7 ♛c6, when he can regain the pawn. White can then play 26. ♜a1 ♜xb7 27. ♛a3 ♜e6 28. b4, when Black is growing increasingly uncomfortable: both of his queenside pawns are isolated and blockaded.

**25. b7 ♜e5 26. ♜a1 ♛e6 27. ♞d3 ♛c6 28. ♜c3 ♜xb7 29. ♛d4 ♜e8 30. ♜xa6**

Black has managed to capture White’s b-pawn only to see his a-pawn fall. White now will try again to march a b-pawn down the board.

**30...♛e7 31. ♜b6 ♜e6 32. ♜c8+ ♜h7 33. ♜xb7 ♛xb7 34. ♛c3 ♜e7 35. ♜c5 ♜g8 36. ♛d3 ♜e5 37. ♛d4 ♛e7 38. h4 g6 39. b4**



Now that his position on the kingside and in the center is fully secure, White decides that it is time to start pushing his passed pawn.

**39...♜h7 40. b5 ♜e6 41. e3 ♞d6 42. ♜xd5 ♛d7 43. e4 ♜b6 44. ♛c4 ♜e8 45. e5 1-0**

Black’s resistance is ending swiftly. After 45...♜g7 46. ♜c6 ♛d1+ 47. ♜g2 ♜b8 (or 47...♜c7 48. ♜f3) 48. b6, White is completely winning.

**Summary:** *Playing the “Semi-Slav” setup with ...c7-c6 and ...♟f8-d6 isn’t popular at the top levels for a good reason. By aiming for ...e6-e5, Black is giving White active piece play and saddling himself with an isolated d-pawn. Black’s position is, of course, playable, but White should score well.*

## The Queen’s Gambit Declined: Why Black Plays ...c7-c6

Those who play the traditional Queen’s Gambit Declined are often used to playing the maneuver ...♞b8-d7, ...b7-b6, ...♙c8-b7, and then eventually ...d5xc4 followed by a liberating ...c7-c5 break. Against the Catalan, however, an early ...b7-b6 can land Black in an unfavorable version of the Queen’s Indian. There are a few different ways for White to play for the advantage, but we will be focusing on Wojo’s most direct weapon, exchanging with c4xd5.

**Wojtkiewicz, Alex (2669)**  
**Morrison, William (2385)**

[E18] National Chess Congress 1999

1.♞f3 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.d4  
 ♟e7 5.♟g2 0-0 6.♞c2

Played slightly earlier than usual. Castling with 6.0-0 was more typical for Wojo, who would then meet 6...b6!? with 7.cxd5 exd5 8.♞c3 ♟b7 9.♟f4 c6 10.♞e5 and so on. Wojo’s idea with 6.♞c2 was that after 6...dxc4, trying to enter the so-called “Open Catalan,” he could play 7.♞bd2! and 8.♞xc4, with advantage. The downside of playing 6.♞c2 so early, however, is that Black can (and should) now respond with

6...c5! immediately. The queen on c2 feels slightly uncomfortable in the ensuing complications in the center.

### 6...b6!?

When Black plays this, he makes it clear that his light-squared bishop is headed for b7. This gives White a free pass to play the c4xd5 exchange, since the opening of the c8-h3 diagonal is no longer of use to Black’s light-squared bishop. If Black had played ...c7-c6 first, he could meet c4xd5 with ...c6xd5, more or less equalizing by creating a symmetrical pawn structure.

### 7.0-0 ♟b7

7...c6 was still possible here.

### 8.cxd5 exd5

8...♞xd5 9.a3 followed by e2-e4 and ♞b1-c3 allows White to establish a nice-looking center, so this kind of recapture with a piece on d5 is unusual, despite being a common theme in the Queen’s Gambit Declined and Semi-Tarrasch.

### 9.♞c3