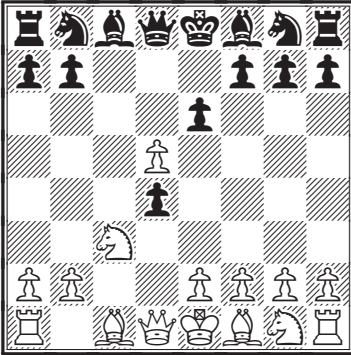


# QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED

## • SCHARA GAMBIT •



<u>OPENING MOVES</u>	
1.d4	e6
2.c4	d5
3.Nc3	c5
4.cxd5	cxd4

### OVERVIEW

This is the **Schara Gambit**, an interesting opening which leads to wild complications. In most circumstances, our d- and e-pawns will depart quickly, with White giving up the pawn at d5. We remain a pawn down, but develop with tempo to quickly build up a strong kingside attack.

Traditionally, Black has carried out the attack after castling on the queenside. Then a pawnstorm can be used on the kingside. In recent games, however, Black has often chosen to castle on the kingside and use pieces to mount the attack. This strategy has proved successful, because in addition to the kingside, there are open lines on the queenside which can be used to annoy the enemy pieces. In particular, it is hard for the White queen to find refuge. The combination of kingside and queenside threats is worth a pawn, and most authorities evaluate the situation as rather unclear.

### QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED

#### *Schara Gambit*

<b>5.Qxd4 Nc6; 6.Qd1 exd5; 7.Qxd5 Bd7; 8.Nf3</b>	
<i>Options at move 8</i>	<b>105</b>
Option 1: 8.Bg5	106
Option 2: 8.e3	108
Option 3: 8.Bd2	109
Option 4: 8.a3	110
<i>Options at move 11</i>	<b>115</b>
Option 1: 11.Bb5	115
Option 2: 11.a3	116
Option 3: 11.Bc4	117
Option 4: 11.Bd3	118

## QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED • SCHARA GAMBIT

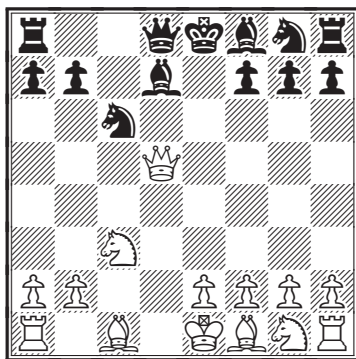
### 5.Qxd4.

5.Qa4+ Bd7; 6.Qxd4 exd5; 7.Qxd5 Nc6 is the normal move order, used to avoid the endgame gambit option at move 7. If White fails to capture at d5, then Black can continue with normal development, protecting the pawn with ...Nf6.

### 5...Nc6; 6.Qd1 exd5; 7.Qxd5 Bd7.

White has an extra pawn, but Black is developing quickly, and will soon drive the enemy queen back with...Nf6.

The Endgame Gambit 7...Be6; 8.Qxd8+ Rxd8; 9.e3 Nb4; 10.Bb5+ Ke7; 11.Kf1 is still considered a little better for White. See *Unorthodox Chess Openings* if you are interested in trying that line.



### 8.Nf3.

Of course there are other moves, and we will examine them before we continue our examination of the main lines. White can bring the bishop to g5, but it may be needed for defense of the queenside, in which case d2 is a better square. If ...Nb4 is a concern, then 8.a3 is available. The quiet 8.e3 is at best a transposition to the main lines.

### SCHARA GAMBIT - OPTIONS FOR WHITE AT MOVE 8

1.d4 e6; 2.c4 d5; 3.Nc3 c5; 4.cxd5 cxd4; 5.Qxd4 Nc6;  
6.Qd1 exd5; 7.Qxd5 Bd7; 8.Nf3

Option 1: 8.Bg5

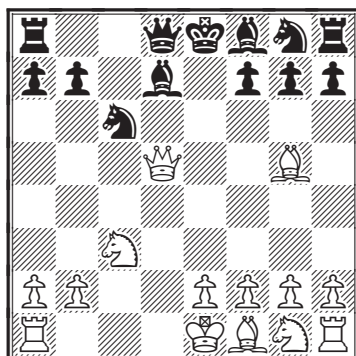
Option 2: 8.e3

Option 3: 8.Bd2

Option 4: 8.a3

SCHARA GAMBIT, MOVE 8

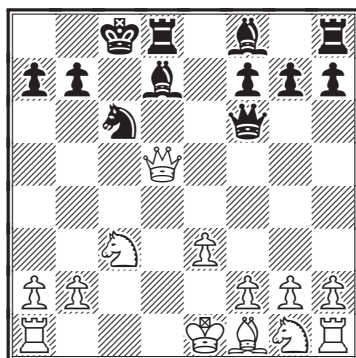
Option 1: 8.Bg5



For some reason, this move is popular with computers.

8...Nf6 is the correct reply. White has a choice of three plans: capturing at f6, retreating the queen to d2, or sending the queen off to other duties at b5. 9.Qd2 is the main line. Let's pause to look at the other two possibilities.

A) 9.Bxf6 Qxf6; 10.e3 (10.Qe4+ Be6; 11.e3 Bb4; 12.Rc1 0-0; 13.Bd3 g6; 14.a3 Ba5; 15.Nge2 Rad8; 16.Bb1 Rfe8; 17.0-0 Bc7; 18.Rfd1 Ne5; 19.Nd5 Bxd5; 20.Rxd5 Rxd5; 21.Qxd5 Ng4; 22.f3 Bxh2+; 23.Kh1 Qh4; 24.fxg4 Bf4+ brought an end to White's game in Zbinden - Jenni, Switzerland 1982.) 10...0-0-0.



You can already feel the threats along the d-file, and the remaining Black forces are ready to enter the game quickly.

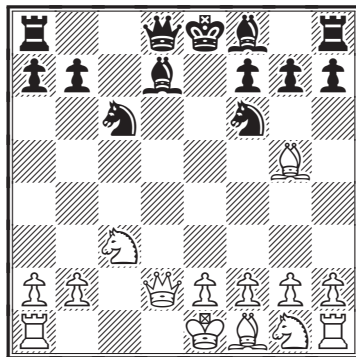
## QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED • SCHARA GAMBIT

A1) 11.Nf3 Bb4; 12.Qb3 Qg6!; 13.Ne5 Nxe5; 14.Qxb4 Bc6; 15.Nb5 a6; 16.Na7+ (16.Nd4 Kb8! and White is already in trouble, Arakhamia–Voiska, The Hague 1989.) 16...Kb8; 17.Nxc6+ Nxc6; 18.Qc3 Rhe8 and the inability of White to get his kingside developed is critical. 19.g3 Ne5; with a clear advantage for Black.

A2) 11.Qb3 Be6; 12.Qa4 Bb4; 13.Rc1 Rd2!!; 14.Kxd2 Qxf2+; 15.Nge2 (15.Be2 Bf5 amounts to the same thing.) 15...Bf5; 16.Qxb4 Rd8+; 17.Qd4 Nxd4; 18.Nb5+ (18.exd4 Rxd4#) 18...Nc6+; 19.Nbd4 Kb8; 20.Kd1 Qxe3 and White resigned in Geister – Zaitsev, Moscow 1960.

B) 9.Qb5 looks strong at first, but is not mentioned in the books. 9...Nb4; 10.Qe5+ Qe7!; 11.Qxe7+ Bxe7 leaves Black a pawn down, but with threats. After 12.Rc1 Bf5 White can try 13.e4, but then on 13...Nxe4!; 14.Bxe7+ Kxe7; 15.Nxe4 Bxe4; 16.Rc7, Black boldly plays 16...Kd6! and the endgame is more troublesome for White.

After the retreat to d2 we have the following picture.



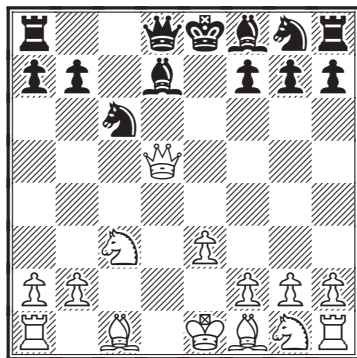
Black must do something about the annoying pin at f6. It is possible to kick the bishop with ...h6. Opinions vary as to the merit of that move. The normal line is 9...Qa5; 10.Bxf6. 10.Qe3+ Be7; 11.Bxf6 gxf6; 12.Nf3 Nb4; 13.Rc1 Nd5; 14.Qd2 Rc8; 15.Rd1 Nb6 and Black is slightly better, Lilienthal – Aramanovich, Moscow 1959.

10...gxf6; 11.Nf3. The quiet 11.e3 0–0–0; 12.Qc1 can lead to similar play, or Black can try the more aggressive 12...Bf5; 13.Nf3 Nb4; 14.Nd4 Rxd4; 15.exd4 Nc2+; 16.Kd1 Nxa1; 17.Qxa1 Bh6; 18.b3 Rd8; 19.d5 Rxd5+; 20.Ke2 Rd2+; 21.Kf3 Qe5; 22.g3 Rc2 and Black won, Rubtsova – Volpert, Soviet Women's Championship 1955. 11...0–0–0; 12.Qc1 Bc5; 13.e3 Kb8. Black can be satisfied with the position. Here is a representative continuation. 14.a3 Bb6; 15.Bb5 Bc7; 16.b4

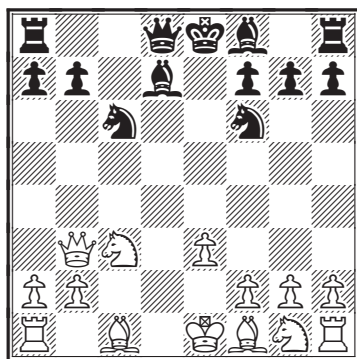
Qb6; 17.Be2 Ne7; 18.Qb2 Rhg8; 19.Ne4 Bc6; 20.Qxf6 Nd5; 21.Qd4 Nf4; 22.Qxb6 Nxc2+; 23.Kf1 axb6; 24.Ng3 Nh4; 25.e4 Ng6; 26.b5 Bd7; 27.Nf5 Rge8; 28.Ng5 Nf4; 29.Bc4 f6; 30.Ng7 Re7; 31.Nxh7 Bh3+. White resigned in Forintos – Hector, Budapest 1986.

### SCHARA GAMBIT, MOVE 8

Option 2: 8.e3



This has won consistently for White but Black has some fresh ideas. This move is needed now or at the next turn because Black intends to play...Nf6,...Bc5 and then the pawn at f2 can become vulnerable. 8...Nf6; 9.Qb3!?



If Hector was trying to catch Karpov by surprise, he must have forgotten that Karpov has worked for years with Igor Zaitsev, who plays the gambit as Black.

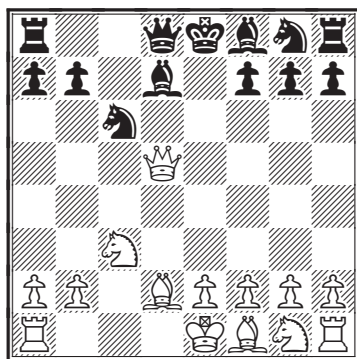
9...Bc5!; 10.Nf3 0-0!? In evaluating this game it is important to

## QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED • SCHARA GAMBIT

keep in mind that Black chooses to castle kingside. An obvious alternative is to go the other way. 11.a3 (11.Be2 Be6; 12.Qd1 Qe7; 13.0-0 Rfd8; 14.Bd2 a6; 15.a3 b5; 16.b4 Bb6; 17.Qc2 Rac8; 18.Rfd1 Bg4 is even, according to Smith & Hall.) 11...Be6; 12.Qc2 Rc8; 13.Be2 Na5; 14.0-0 Nb3; 15.Rb1 Qb6; 16.Nd2 Rfd8; 17.Nc4 Bxc4; 18.Bxc4 Nxc1; 19.Na4 Qd6; 20.Rbxc1 Ng4; 21.Bxf7+ Kh8 with a clear advantage for Black, Litvinchuk–Randolph, US Open 1984.

### SCHARA GAMBIT, MOVE 8

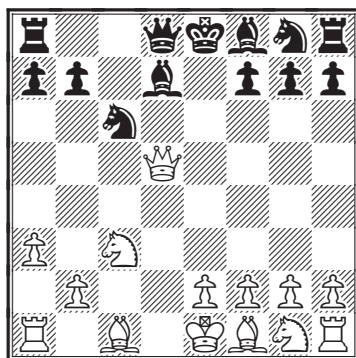
#### Option 3: 8.Bd2



Black should develop normally with 8...Nf6; 9.Qb3 Bb4 (9...Bc5; 10.e3 0-0; 11.Nf3 Qe7; leads to typical gambit play. The pawn at b7 is heavily poisoned. 12.Qxb7?? Rab8; 13.Qa6 Nb4 and Black wins material.) 10.Nf3 0-0; 11.e3 Be6; 12.Qc2 Rc8; 13.Be2 Re8; 14.0-0 Bg4; 15.Rfd1 Qe7; 16.Be1 Ne5; 17.Nxe5 Qxe5; 18.h3 Bf5; 19.Qa4 Bd6; 20.Bf3 Bd7; 21.Qd4 Qh2+; 22.Kf1 Be5. Black had sufficient compensation for the pawn in Havasi–Merényi, Budapest 1932.

SCHARA GAMBIT, MOVE 8

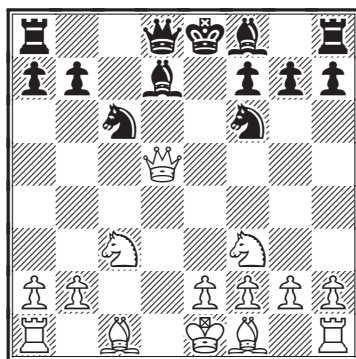
Option 4: 8.a3



This has no independent significance, as after 8...Nf6; 9.Qd1 Bc5; 10.e3 Qe7 transposes below to the main line with 11.a3.

*Returning to the Main Line*

So we return to the position after 8.Nf3, to which we reply with the obvious developing move 8...Nf6.



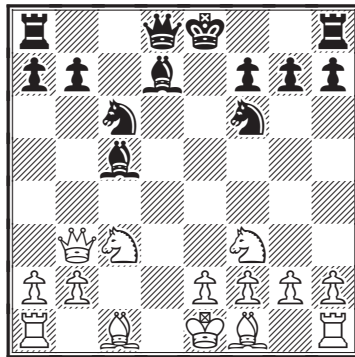
**9.Qd1**

This has traditionally been considered the main line, but 9.Qb3 is growing in popularity. Let's deal with that first before entering the big muddy river of the main line.

1.d4 e6; 2.c4 d5; 3.Nc3 c5; 4.cxd5 cxd4; 5.Qxd4 Nc6; 6.Qd1 exd5; 7.Qxd5 Bd7; 9.Qb3.

## QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED • SCHARA GAMBIT

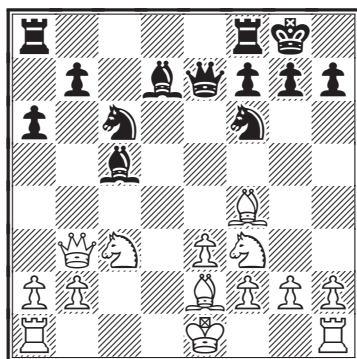
The difference between the 9.Qb3 lines and the lines with Qd1 is that Black does not have pressure on the d-file after queenside castling, and in some cases may be able to pick off the pawn at b7. 9...Bc5.



A) 10.e4 Ng4; 11.Nd1 Qe7. Black is slightly better - Smith & Hall

B) 10.Bg5! 0-0; 11.e3! (11.Ne4 Nxe4; 12.Bxd8 Bxf2+; 13.Kd1 Rfxd8 entered my thoughts when I was playing the Black side of this position in 1980, but I knew that most players would not fall for such a cheap trick.) 11...Be6 (11...h6; 12.Bxf6 Qxf6; 13.Ne4 Qe7; 14.Nxc5 Qxc5; 15.Be2 and White has the better game. Stam – Welling, Utrecht 1985.) 12.Qa4 h6; 13.Bxf6 (13.Rd1 Qe7; 14.Bxf6 Qxf6; 15.Be2. “Black’s active development and Bishop pair give good play in an unclear position” write Smith & Hall.) 13...Qxf6; 14.0-0-0 (14.Ne4? Qxb2; 15.Rd1 Bb4+; 16.Ned2 Bxa2) 14...Rac8 and Black has good counterplay.

C) 10.Bf4 Qe7 is an interesting line. It is probably risky for White to take the pawn at b7. As far as I know, no one has yet dared to do so. After 11.Qxb7 0-0; 12.Rd1 Nb4; 13.Rd2 White should be able to defend against all threats, but Black still has significant compensation for the two pawns. For example, 13...a5; 14.Ne5 Ra7. After 15.Qf3, Black can play 15...Bb7 with tremendous pressure in the center and on both flanks. Against 11.e3 0-0; 12.Be2. Black can try 12...a6!?

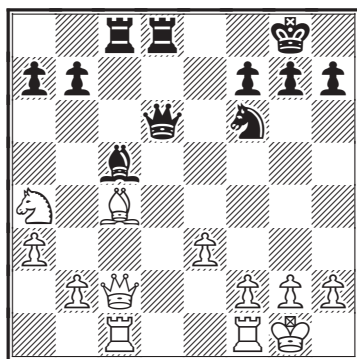


If White captures at b7, Black plays ...Nb4 with unpleasant threats at c2. For example: 13.Qxb7 Nb4; 14.Rd1 Ra7!

D) 10.g3 Be6; 11.Qxb7 Nb4; 12.Qb5+ Nd7; 13.Qa4 0-0; 14.Bg2 Nb6; 15.Qd1 Qxd1+; 16.Kxd1 Rad8+ with a clear advantage for Black, Vinas – Kuijf, Sitges 1992.

E) 10.e3 0-0. In evaluating this game it is important to keep in mind that Black chooses to castle kingside. An obvious alternative is to go the other way. (10...Qe7 intending queenside castling, is suggested by Karpov.) In any case, here are some examples:

E1) 11.a3 Be6; 12.Qc2 Rc8; 13.Be2 Na5; 14.0-0 Nb3; 15.Rb1 Qb6; 16.Nd2 Rfd8; 17.Nc4 Bxc4; 18.Bxc4 Nxc1; 19.Na4 Qd6; 20.Rbxc1.

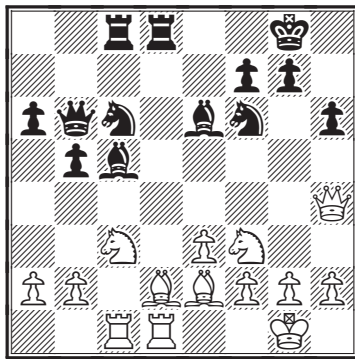


20...Ng4!; 21.Bxf7+ Kh8; 22.g3 (22.Rfd1?! Qxh2+; 23.Kf1 Qh1+; 24.Ke2 Qxg2; 25.Qf5 Nh6; 26.Rxd8+ Rxd8; 27.Qxc5 Qg4+; 28.Ke1 Nxf7; 29.b3 Ng5; 30.Qe7 Nf3+; 31.Kf1 Qh3+; 32.Ke2 and White resigned without waiting to get mated. Litvinchuk–Randolph, US Open

## QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED • SCHARA GAMBIT

1984.) 22...Qh6; 23.h4 is suggested by Marfia. 23...Nxe3; 24.fxe3 (24.Nxc5 Nxc2; 25.Rxc2 b6; 26.Ne6 Rxc2; 27.Nxd8 Qf6 and Black wins.) 24...Bxe3+; 25.Kg2 Rxc2+; 26.Rxc2 Rd2+; 27.Rxd2 Bxd2; 28.Bd5 Qd6; 29.Bf3 b5; 30.Nc3 Bxc3; 31.bxc3 Qd2+; 32.Rf2 Qxc3 with a clear advantage for Black.

E2) 11.Be2 gives Black time to develop. 11...Be6; 12.Qa4 (12.Qd1 Qe7; 13.0-0 Rfd8; 14.Bd2 a6; 15.a3 b5; 16.b4 Bb6; 17.Qc2 Rac8; 18.Rad1 Bg4 is equal according to Smith & Hall.) 12...a6; 13.0-0 b5; 14.Qc2 (14.Qh4 Rc8!; 15.Rd1 Qb6; 16.Bd2 h6; 17.Rac1 Rfd8.

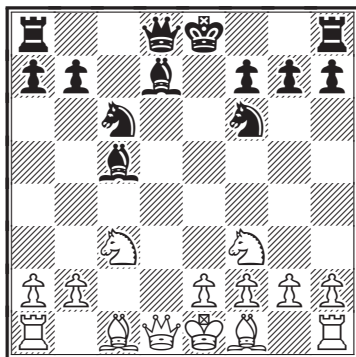


Black has sufficient compensation because White's position is congested and Black's pieces are well-coordinated. 18.Be1 Ng4; 19.h3 Be7; 20.Qg3 Nf6; 21.Nh2 Na5; 22.Ng4 Nxe4; 23.Bxe4 Nc4; 24.b3 Nb2; 25.Rxd8+ Rxd8; 26.Bxe6 Qxe6; 27.Ne2 Bd6; 28.Qh4 Be7; 29.Qh5 Nd3; 30.Rd1 Nxe1; 31.Rxe1 Rd2; 32.Nf4 Qc6; 33.Rd1 g6; 34.Qg4 h5; 35.Nxh5 f5, and Black won, Van der Sterren - Kuijff, Holland Championship 1987)

14...Nb4; 15.Qb1 h6; 16.Bd2 Bg4; 17.Rd1 Qe7; 18.a3 Nc6; 19.Qc2 Rac8; 20.h3 Bh5; 21.Rac1 Ne5; 22.Nxe5 Qxe5; 23.Bxh5 Qxh5; 24.Be1 Bb6; 25.Qe2 Qe5. Black is still down a pawn but there is still plenty of counterplay. 26.Qf3 Rfe8; 27.g3 Qe6; 28.Kg2 Qb3; 29.Qb7 Rb8; 30.Qxa6 Qe6; 31.Kh2 h5; 32.Ne2 h4; 33.a4 hxg3+; 34.Nxg3 Ne4; 35.Nxe4 Bc7+; 36.Nd6 Qe5+; 37.Kg2 Rb6; 38.Qxb6 Bxb6; 39.Nxe8 Qxe8; 40.Rd6 Qe4+; 41.Kg1 Bxe3; 42.Rc8+ Kh7; 43.fxe3 Qb1. Here the game was agreed drawn, Hort-Dankert, Porz 1981.

In any case, the queen usually retreats to d1, and now we aim our bishop at the kingside.

9...Bc5.



10.e3.

White needs to defend the a7-g1 diagonal. The f2-square is weak. In addition, the bishop at f1 must get out so that White can castle. This move is almost always played, and the alternatives have scored very badly for Black, for example:

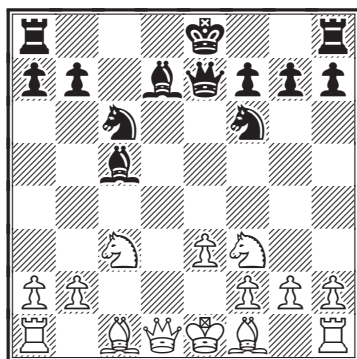
A) 10.Bg5 is easily handled by 10...Qb6 and now if 11.e3 then it is safe to capture the pawn: 11...Qxb2; 12.Bxf6 gxf6; 13.Rc1 Bf5; 14.Bb5 Ba3; 15.Bxc6+ bxc6; 16.Ne2 Qb4+; 17.Nd2 Bxc1; 18.Qxc1 0-0; 19.0-0 c5 with a clear advantage for Black, Chau-Husari, Novi Sad Olympiad 1990.

B) 10.g3 is slow and the Black initiative grows. 10...Qb6!; 11.e3 Rd8; 12.Bd2 Bb4; 13.Qc2 0-0; 14.Bg2 Bxc3; 15.bxc3 (15.Bxc3 Nb4; 16.Bxb4 Qxb4+; gives Black enough compensation because the pieces are active and there are good possibilities of a kingside attack.) 15...Qc5; 16.0-0 Bf5; 17.Qb2 Bd3; 18.Rfe1 Ne4; 19.Nd4 Ne5; 20.Bc1 b6; 21.Qb4 Qxc3; 22.Ba3 Qxb4; 23.Bxb4 Rfe8; 24.Rac1 a5; 25.Bc3 Rc8; 26.Ba1 Nc5 with a clear advantage for Black, Saritha - Radu, Novi Sad Olympiad 1990.

10...Qe7.

This is the normal reply, and now White will try to complete development and castle kingside. Black usually castles queenside and engages in a slugfest on the flanks, but recently kingside castling has been adopted as well. That is the approach we will concentrate on.

## QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED • SCHARA GAMBIT



11.Be2.

Alternatives are important here, as it is not clear which plan is most promising for White. There are several other stations for the bishop, and White can also elect to guard the b4 square by advancing the a-pawn. 11.Bd2 0-0 should transpose to the main lines.

### SCHARA GAMBIT - OPTIONS AT MOVE 11

1.d4 e6; 2.c4 d5; 3.Nc3 c5; 4.cxd5 cxd4; 5.Qxd4 Nc6; 6.Qd1 exd5; 7.Qxd5  
Bd7; 8.Nf3 Nf6; 9.Qd1 Bc5; 10.e3 Qe7; 11.Be2

Option 1: 11.Bb5

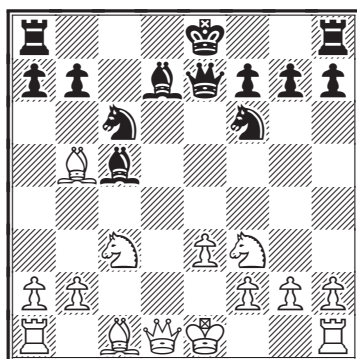
Option 2: 11.a3

Option 3: 11.Bc4

Option 4: 11.Bd3

### SCHARA GAMBIT, MOVE 11

Option 1: 11.Bb5



**11...0-0-0; 12.Qe2 a6** gives Black a good game:

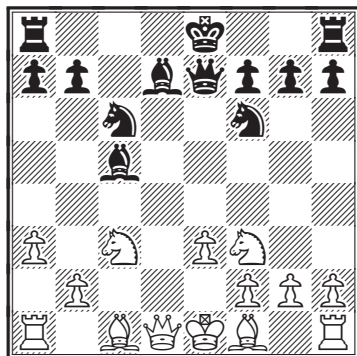
A) 13.Bxa6 bxa6; 14.Qxa6+ Kb8; 15.0-0 Na7 and White does not have sufficient compensation.

B) 13.Bxc6? Bxc6; 14.0-0 Ne4!; 15.Bd2 Nxc3; 16.bxc3 (16.Bxc3 Bb5; 17.Qc2 Bxf1; 18.b4 Bd3; and Black wins.) 16...Qe4! and White is defenseless. 17.c4 Rd6; 18.Bc3 Rg6; 19.Kh1 Rxc2 and White conceded the point in Kuznetsov – Lerner, USSR 1977.

C) 13.Ba4 g5; 14.0-0 Rhe8; 15.a3 g4; 16.Ne1 Kb8; 17.b4 Bd6; 18.Qb2 b5; 19.Bb3 Ne5; 20.Ne2 Nf3+; 21.gxf3 gxf3; 22.Ng3 Be5; 23.Qa2 Bc6; 24.Bb2 Ng4; 25.Bxe5+ Nxe5; 26.Qc2 h5; 27.Qf5 h4 with a clear advantage for Black, Rotariu–Krantz, Correspondence 1982.

## SCHARA GAMBIT, MOVE 11

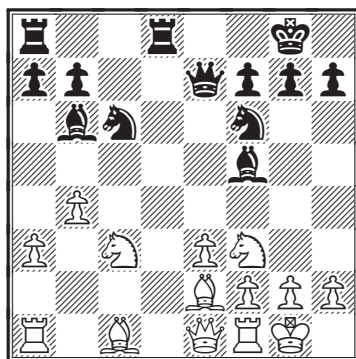
### Option 2: 11.a3



Here kingside castling with **11...0-0** is an example of Black's alternative to the conventional 11...0-0-0. The idea is to take advantage of the open lines on the queenside to annoy the enemy queen. For example:

A) 12.Be2 Rfd8; 13.b4 Bb6; 14.0-0 Bf5; 15.Qe1?! Instead, 15.Qb3 Ng4 is unclear according to Kuijf.

## QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED • SCHARA GAMBIT

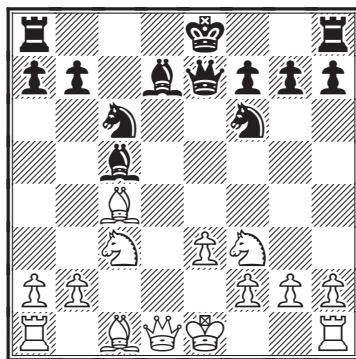


15...Ne5; 16.Bb2 Nd3; 17.Bxd3 Bxd3; 18.Ne2 Rac8?! (18...Ng4! would have been more effective, placing pressure on all of the dark squares on the kingside, for example, 19.Qc3 f6; 20.Qb3+ Kh8 with a clear advantage for Black,) 19.Bd4! Ng4!?!; 20.Bxb6 axb6 (20...axb6; 21.Nfd4 Qe5; 22.g3 Qh5; 23.h4 g5 with a strong attack.) 21.Nfd4 Qe5; 22.g3 Qh5; 23.h4 g5 with a strong attack.

B) 12.Qc2 is best met by 12...Rac8 and on 13.Be2, then 13...g6!?! is interesting, 14.0-0 Rfd8; 15.Rd1 Bf5; 16.Rxd8+ Rxd8; 17.Qa4 Ne5; 18.Qh4! Kg7; 19.h3 Nxf3+; 20.Bxf3 h6; 21.Qa4 g5; 22.b4 Qe5!?!; 23.Qb3 Bd6; with a strong attack for Black in Hovenga-Schiller, Groningen 1996.

### SCHARA GAMBIT, MOVE 11

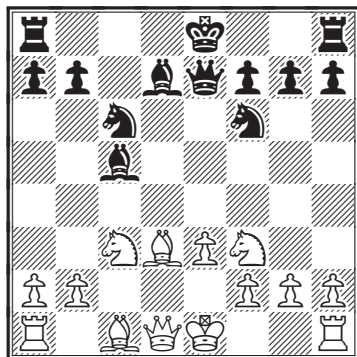
**Option 3: 11.Bc4**



The bishop does not operate effectively here. Black plays 11...0-0; 12.h3 Rad8; 13.Qe2 a6; and the momentum is ours after 14.a3 Bf5; 15.Nh4 Bc8; 16.Nf3 b5; 17.Bd3 Ne5; 18.Bc2 Bb7; 19.e4 Nxf3+; 20.Qxf3 Nxe4; 21.Nxe4 Rfe8; 22.0-0 Bxe4; 23.Bxe4 Qxe4; 24.Qb3 Rd3; 25.Qa2 Rg3 and White resigned in Incutto – L. Bronstein, Buenos Aires 1986.

## SCHARA GAMBIT, MOVE 11

Option 4: 11.Bd3

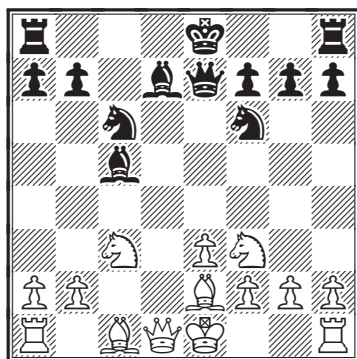


This has recently been tried. 11...g5 (Castling is probably safer.) 12.Nxg5 Rg8; 13.Nge4 0-0-0; 14.Nxf6 Qxf6; 15.Be4! Nb4; 16.0-0 Bg4; (16...Be6!?) 17.Qb3 Be6; 18.Qa4 Bd7; 19.Qa5 Rg5 was seen in Muller & Schreiber-Kullamaa, Postal 1989. 20.Nd5! (20.Bxb7+? is overoptimistic: 20...Kxb7; 21.Ne4 Bc6! and Black wins.) 20...Nxd5; 21.Qxc5+ Bc6; 22.Qc2! keeps the game in unclear waters, according to Kullamaa.

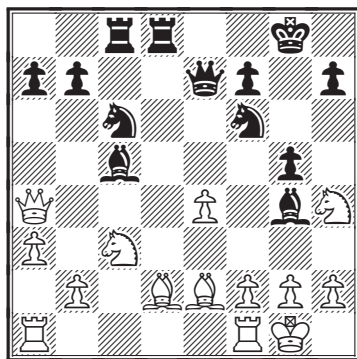
*Returning to the Main Line*

**10...Qe7; 11.Be2.**

## QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED • SCHARA GAMBIT



11...0-0. Black can also adopt plans with queenside castling, but this calm approach is strong. 12.0-0 Rfd8! The rooks belong on c8 and d8, in Bronstein's opinion (and mine). 13.a3 Ne5!?: 14.Nd4 Rac8; 15.Bd2 Nc6; 16.Nf3 Bf5; 17.Qa4 g5; 18.e4 Bg4; 19.Nh4.



Martinovsky-Patterson, Correspondence 1988 continued 19...Be6?; 20.Bxg5 h6; 21.Bxh6 Nd4 and Black had a strong initiative. I don't understand why Black didn't capture at e2! It seems as simple as ABC.

19...Bxe2:

A) 20.Nxe2 Rxd2; 21.Nf5 Qxe4 is good for Black.

B) 20.Bxg5 Bxf1; 21.Nd5 Bxf2+!; 22.Kxf1 Rxd5!; 23.exd5 Re8; 24.Kxf2 Ne4+; 25.Kg1 Qxg5; 26.dxc6 Qe3+!; 27.Kh1 Nf2+; 28.Kg1 Nh3+; 29.Kh1 Qg1+; 30.Rxg1 Nf2#.

C) 20.Nf5 Qe5; 21.Bxg5 Bxf1; 22.Bxf6 Qxf6; 23.Rxf1 and Black will win.