

7. UNIVERSAL FORMATIONS

A “universal” formation which works against all strategy has been a holy grail in chess for a long time. None have been discovered, though several are proposed, usually in books with a great deal of abstract prose and not much concrete analysis. Wouldn't it be nice to bash out your first 8-10 moves without ever having to pause for thought?

The Internet has contributed a new form of chess, called “bullet” chess, which is even faster than superblitz (3 minutes total for each player). Bullet games tend to be 2 minutes or less per player for the entire game, and hand speed is as valuable as chess thought. In this new game, universal formation have added appeal because they almost always gain considerable time on the clock.

They are also useful against computers, who often give great weight to the advantage in space. In fact, several of these opening have only been played against computers, so far.

Universal formations tend to be wary about putting pawns or pieces in exposed position past the third rank. As such, they are hard to immediately “refute.” There are weaknesses which can be exploited late in the opening, but nothing which can lead to immediate demise. Computers tend to play such positions well, remedying positional defects in the late opening and early middlegame.

The problem with a universal formation is that the most that can be achieved is equality (as White), or a slightly inferior game (as Black). Pieces simply aren't in attacking position, and the opponent is granted free reign of the center and a substantial advantage in space. In amateur games however, these are not so easily exploited.

More sensible approaches realize that a desired formation can only be achieved with some cooperation by the opponent, and that deviations require new strategic goals. For example, the various Pterodactyl lines add up to a system, but the normal ...g6, ...Bg7, ...c5 setups are not used when White plays

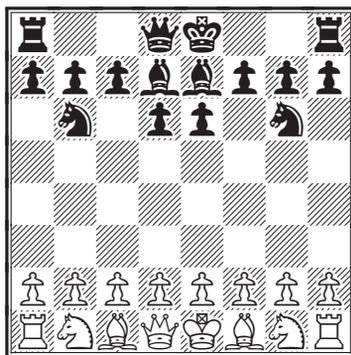
an early c3 or Be3, because often the pawn at c5 will be captured and cannot be recovered. In other cases, the “formation” is just one aspect of the board, for example the fianchetto of both bishops in the **Double Fianchetto**. Or, the formation may just be a target pawn structure, as in the **Gurgenidze Defense**.

The paint-by-the-numbers approach simply doesn't work in chess, and none of the universal formations discussed below are adequate against all opposing strategies. They may work well if the opponent plays imprecisely, which is often the case when caught by surprise. The way to get the advantage against them is usually to choose an approach which takes most advantage of the weak points in the formation. This is easiest to do when you know the opponent is aiming for a specific formation. So, if you want to use the opening, it is best to carefully work out transpositional paths that will encourage your opponent to step into your traps.

We examine half a dozen formations, three rather silly ones, and three which have proponents whose claims are often rather extravagant about their effectiveness. I won't have much to say about the Cabbage, Garbage or Hippo. The Creepy Crawly, Universal Attack and Beginner's Opening have all been the subject of considerable promotion in books which promise an easy life so I'll try to give them a hard time.

In showing the formation, Black's pieces have been left in their original positions.

BEGINNER'S DEFENSE



Black Moves

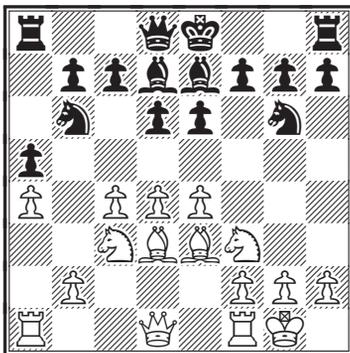
- 1...e6
- 2...d6
- 3...Ne7
- 4...Nd7
- 5...Ng6
- 6...Nb6
- 7...Be7
- 8...Bd7

As part of his universal repertoire, Pafu offers up the same system as Moody, though without the restrictions on opening move order. Here, we'll consider

his Beginner's Defense, an odder creature. I know of no human games played with this system, though Pafu's book contains many games with computers. Pafu recognizes that not all 8 moves can be played against any defense, but he claims that six or seven can always be played. That is true.

EXAMPLES AND DISCUSSION

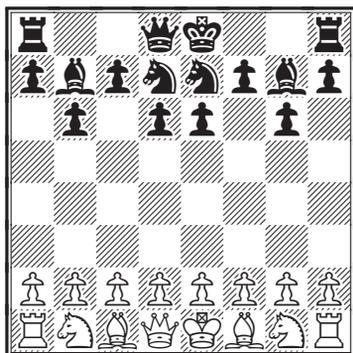
1.e4 e6. To get the knights moving, Black needs to make d7 and e7 available. 2.d4 d6; 3.Bd3. Black has declared the small center, so we know where the bishop goes. 3...Ne7. 3...c5 hopes to reach a Sicilian Scheveningen. 4.c3 thwarts that plan. Black might now try a St. George. 4...a6 5.Nf3 b5 etc. 4.Nf3 Nd7; 5.O-O Ng6; 6.c4. Setting up the broad center makes a lot of sense, because counterplay with ...e5 will involve a waste of a tempo, and ...c5 doesn't coordinate well with the knight on g6. 6...Be7; 7.Nc3 Nb6; 8.a4! Generally, when the Black knight goes to b6, this is a good idea. 8...a5. 8...Bd7; 9.a5 Nc8; 10.Qb3! Black is already under considerable pressure. 9.Be3 Bd7.



Black has achieved the desired formation, but White's setup is much better coordinated. 10.c5 Nc8 11.Qb3 Rb8 12.e5. Black's position seems quite unpleasant.

Pafu hosts a website at www.beginnersgame.com dedicated to his formations.

BEGINNER GAME

*Black Moves*

1...e6

2...d6

3...b6

4...Bb7

5...Ne7

6...Nd7

7...g6

8...Bg7

The Beginner Game has the same target position as the Universal Attack, but employs a different move order, usually fianchettoing the light square bishop before developing the kingside. Let's consider the ramifications of this move order.

I recommend pawns at c4, d4, and e4. Knights in their usual positions, bishops at d3 and g5, with kingside castling, Qd2, Rfe1 and Rac1. Let's see how that can be achieved, and look at some practical examples. White's main concern is to fit these lines into the normal opening repertoire. 1.e4. Let's assume that White will begin by aiming for the ideal pawn center (e4, d4), when opening 1.e4.

1.d4 is more commonly followed by 2.c4 or 2.Nf3, which are also part of our scheme.

a) 1...d6; 2.Nf3 is often seen, since 2.c4 e5!? can be rather murky. 2...g6 is the consistent move. We don't know if Black wants a Modern Defense, King's Indian, Leningrad Dutch or Beginner Formation yet. 3.e4 Now there are two alternatives to the beginner formation: Modern Defense or Wade Defense. 3...Bg7 (3...Bg4 would not be part of the Beginner formation, and White can just play normal moves, for example h3.)

b) 1...e6 2.c4 The move most 1.d4 players prefer. 2...b6 is an interesting move order, since White's recommended move is not part of our plans. 3.a3 Objectively best, and we can still switch to our standard scheme, though a tempo has been spent on a3. 3...g6; 4.Nc3 Bg7; 5.e4 d6; 6.Nf3 Ne7; 7.Bd3 Nd7; 8.Be3 Bb7; 9.Qd2 h6, Epishin-Rivas Pastor, Spain 1991. 10.O-O and White is better.

1...e6. This move is most likely to provoke 2.d4, so we take it as the main line.

1...g6; 2.d4 Bg7; 3.c4 is the choice of those who like the White side of the Averbakh Variations, and it also leads to our desired position after 3...d6; 4.Nc3 e6; 5.Nf3.

3.Nf3 has been seen in many games.

a) 3...d6; 4.Bd3 e6 (4...Bg4 takes us out of the Beginner opening, and 5.c3 is fine.

5.Ne2 etc.

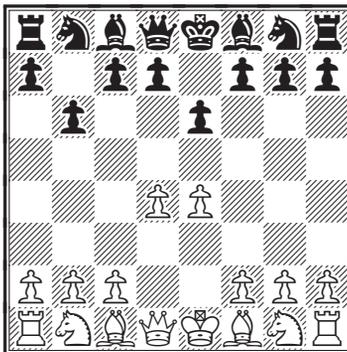
b) 3...b6; 4.Bd3 Bb7; 5.O-O e6; 6.c4.

c) 3...e6; 4.Bd3, heading for our target position.

1...d6; 2.d4 g6; 3.Nf3 Bg7; 4.Bd3, or (3.c4 Bg7; 4.Nc3 Nd7; 5.Nf3 e6; 6.Bd3.

1...b6 2.d4 Bb7 is the standard Owen Defense order. We can't use 3.Nf3, because the e-pawn hangs, so have to move the bishop to d3, inviting the complicated line with ...f5. So, 3.Bd3 g6 (3...d6 4.Nf3 Nd7 5.O-O g6 6.c4 Bg7 7.Nc3) 4.Nf3 Bg7 (4...d6 5.O-O e6 6.Bg5 Ne7? 7.Bf6! Rg8 8.Re1 gave White a big plus in Antonini-Hirt, Paris Open 1994.) 5.O-O e6 6.c4 Ne7 7.Nc3 O-O 8.Re1 d6 9.Be3 Nd7 10.Qd2 e5 11.Bh6 c5 is Gufeld-Gaprindashvili, Kuala Lumpur 1994, where 12.Bxg7 Kxg7 13.dxe5 Nxe5 (13...dxe5 14.Nd5) 14.Re3!? (14.Nxe5 dxe5 15.Re3 Bc8) 14...Ng4 15.Re2!? looks a bit better for White.

2.d4 White is likely to be expecting a French. 2...b6 This fianchetto leads to an Owen Defense move order.



For the Universal Attack, 2...Ne7 or 2...Ng6 will be the choice.

2...g6 is a poor move order because it creates an immediate weakness. 3.Nf3 Bg7; 4.Bg5 Ne7 ;5.Qd2 and White is ready to operate on the diagonal.

2...d6; 3.Nf3 b6; 4.Bd3 or 3...g6; 4.Bd3 b6; 5.O-O Bg7; 6.c4. 3.Bd3. This is where the bishop belongs in our recommended formation for White. 3...Bb7; 4.Nf3. Best, because we don't intend to over-extend with f4, and are ready to castle. 4...d6. Countering the pressure at e5 and preparing ...Nd7.

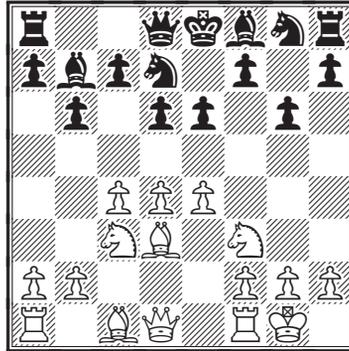
4...Nf6?; 5.e5 Nd5; 6.c4 Ne7; 7.Bg5 d6; 8.O-O with much better development and a good game for White in Sacher-Schuh, Osnabrueck 1994.

4...g6; 5.O-O Bg7; 6.Re1 Ne7, Vasiukov-Orlinkov, Moscow Open 1994, 7.Bg5 O-O; 8.c4 with more space for White.

5.O-O. Naturally, we are going to castle on the kingside. 5...Nd7. 5...Ne7 should be met by 6.c4! g6; 7.Nc3 Bg7; 8.Be3 (8.Bf4 Nd7; 9.Qa4 O-O; 10.Rad1 h6; 11.Be2 f5; 12.e5 g5 as in a Chessmaster-Pafu game from 2000, but 13.exd6 gxf4; 14.dxe7 Qxe7; 15.Rfe1 is also better for White.) 8...O-O; 9.Qd2 with a good game for White, Mainka-

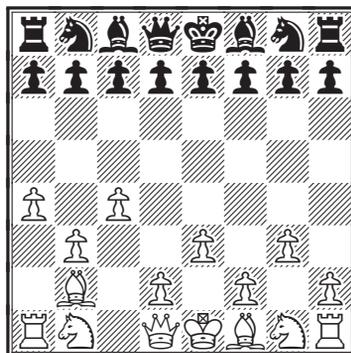
Novoselski, Zurich 1988.

6.c4. Why not grab more space? 6...g6. 6...Ne7; 7.Nc3 g6; 8.Re1 Bg7; 9.Bg5 O-O; 10.Rc1 Re8; 11.Bb1 a6; 12.e5 dxe5; 13.Nxe5 Nxe5; 14.dxe5 Qxd1; 15.Rcxdl gave White a promising game in Bechthold-Schirmer, Montabaur 1994. 7.Nc3.



White has a serious advantage in space, in the center, and in development. Black's options have been limited, and White can already feel good about the game. The bishop goes to g5, the rooks will come to c1 and e1, and the queen can move to d2.' 7...Bg7; 8.Bg5 Ne7; 9.Qd2 h6; 10.Be3 Nf6; 11.h3 d5; 12.cxd5 exd5; 13.e5 Ne4; 14.Qc2 Nxc3; 15.bxc3 O-O; 16.Qd2 Kh7; 17.Nh2 I think that 17.Bf4! gives White a great game. 17...Bc8; 18.g4 f6; 19.exf6 Rxf6; 20.f4 Qd6; 21.Nf3 a5; 22.Ne5 and White eventually prevailed in Ibragimov-Stefanova, Pulvermuele 2000.

CABBAGE FORMATION

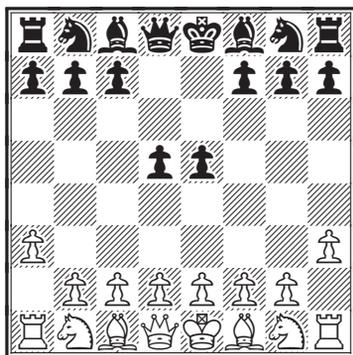


White Moves

- 1.c3
- 2.a3
- 3.b3
- 4.Bb2
- 5.a4
- 6.g3
- 7.e3

Other than spelling out a word, this formation has little use, wasting a tempo on the a-pawn moves. On the other hand, White can repair the damage with Bg2, Ne2 and O-O and may not suffer any long term effects. An opening best suited to “bullet” games. I invented it, but am not eager to take any credit. Let someone who really likes the position adopt it.

CREEPY CRAWLY FORMATION



1.a3 e5
2.h3 d5

This is Basman's **Creepy Crawly** opening. White is content to sit back and let Black determine the course of the game. Naturally Black should take up the challenge and occupy the center. Then the kingside minor pieces will be developed, enabling castling. A variation on this theme is the **Shy Attack**, 1.a3, 2.g3, 3.Bg2, 4.d3, 5.Nd2, 6.e3, 7.h3.

EXAMPLES AND DISCUSSION

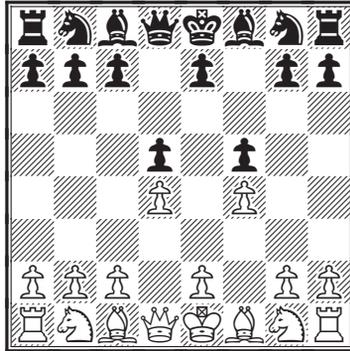
3.d3. 3.c4 c6; (3...d4; 4.d3 a5; 5.g4 Nc6; 6.Nf3 h6; 7.Nbd2 Nf6; 8.Bg2 Basman-Budnikov, London 1993. 3...Nf6 invites a reversed Sicilian Defense, where the advance of the rook pawns is sensible.) 4.cxd5 (4.e3 is a sensible move from Welling. 4...Nf6; 5.b4. This leads to some wild antics on the queenside. 5...a5; 6.Bb2 axb4; 7.axb4 Rxa1; 8.Bxa1 e4?; 9.cxd5 cxd5; 10.Bxf6! Qxf6; 11.Nc3 Be6; 12.Qa4+ and Black's game was soon over in Welling-Obers, Holland 1992.) 4...cxd5 with a number of possibilities, for example:

a) 5.d3 Bd6; 6.g4 (6.Nc3 Ne7; 7.g4 O-O; 8.Bg2 Be6; 9.Nf3 f6; 10.Nh4 Nbc6 Basman-Small, British Championship 1992.) 6...Ne7; 7.Bg2 Nbc6; 8.Nc3 Bc7; 9.Nf3 O-O; 10.b4 Ng6; 11.g5 Be6; 12.h4 f5; 13.h5 Nf4; 14.Bxf4 Basman-Swan, British Championship 1992.

b) 5.g4 Nc6; (5...Ne7; 6.d3 Nbc6; 7.Nc3 g6; 8.Nf3 Bg7; 9.g5 Be6; 10.Bg2 Basman-Watson, British Championship 1990) 6.Bg2 Be6; 7.d3 Nge7; 8.Nc3 Ng6; 9.Nf3 Be7; 10.g5 f5; 11.gxf6 gxf6; 12.Rg1 Qd7; 13.h4 h5; 14.Qa4 O-O-O; 15.b4 b6; 16.Bd2 Kb8; 17.b5 Na5; 18.Na2 Nb7; 19.Nb4 Bxb4; 20.axb4 Nd6; 21.Bh3 Bxh3; 22.Rxg6 Rhg8; 23.Rxf6 Rg7; 24.Bg5 Qc8; 25.Rc1 Rc7; 26.Rc6 Basman-Wall, British Championship 1990.

3...c6; 4.Nf3 Bd6; 5.c4 Nf6; 6.Nc3 d4; 7.Ne4 Basman-Speelman, British Championship 1990. White may be no worse, but certainly has nothing to write home about.

DOUBLE DUCK VARIATION

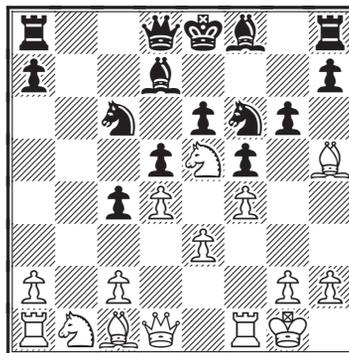


1.f4 f5
2.d4 d5

The symmetrical response to the Canard (f4, d4) is not at all bad, but Black must avoid following the path of our example game, which led to a rapid demise.

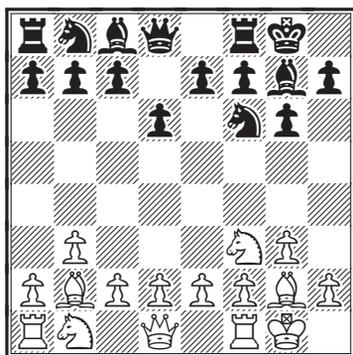
EXAMPLES AND DISCUSSION

3.Nf3 c5; 4.e3 e6; 5.Bd3 c4? Black has been moving nothing but pawns, and so White does not mind losing a tempo with the bishop. Black has lost all flexibility on the queenside. 6.Be2 Nf6; 7.O-O Bd7?! an irrelevant move. Better 7...Bd6 or 7...Nc6. 8.b3 b5; 9.bxc4 bxc4; 10.Ne5 Nc6. Black fails to see the danger. 11.Bh5+! g6.



12.Nxg6! hxg6; 13.Bxg6+ Ke7; 14.Ba3+ Nb4; 15.Bxb4# Williams-Henderson, Bristol, 19th century.

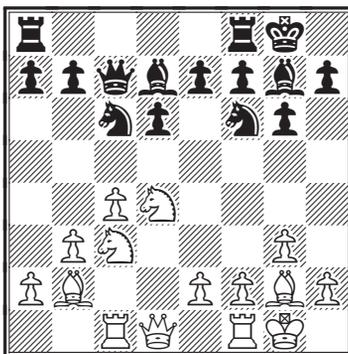
DOUBLE FIANCHETTO FORMATION



- | | |
|-------|-----|
| 1.Nf3 | Nf6 |
| 2.b3 | g6 |
| 3.Bb2 | Bg7 |
| 4.g3 | 0-0 |
| 5.Bg2 | d6 |
| 6.0-0 | |

The move, 6.d4, transposes to a fairly standard chess opening, a variety of the Queen Pawn Game, while 6.c4 transposes to the English Opening. To stay in unorthodox territory, White must continue to refuse to occupy the center with pawns.

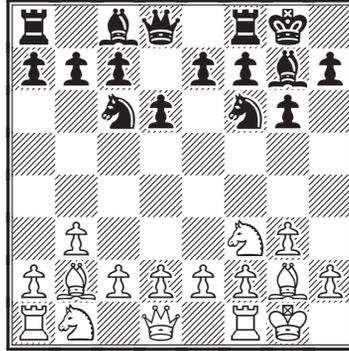
6...c5 can lead to the Hedgehog Variation of the English after 7.c4 cxd4; 8.Nxd4 Qc7; 9.O-O Bd7; 10.Nc3 Nc6; 11.Rc1.



Although the Hedgehog Formation is a standard chess opening these days, it was once considered highly unorthodox. White is given complete command of the center, except for e5. Yet there is no other violation of opening principle by Black.

EXAMPLES AND DISCUSSION

6...Nc6.

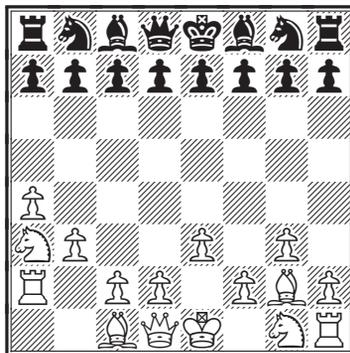


6...e5 and White will almost always play c4 in the next few moves, again heading into English territory.

7.Nc3. 7.c4 e5; is another English.

7...Ne4!? A surprising move, made possible by White's refusal to contest the center. The pin on the knight at c3; is strong. In order to avoid disruption to the pawn structure, White must either capture at e4, giving away the minor exchange, or finally stick a pawn in the center. We'll look at the latter option. 8.d4 Nxc3; 9.Bxc3 f5. This is not merely some sort of transposition to the Leningrad Dutch. White has the awkward bishop at c3, and at some point will need to reposition it, giving Black valuable time. After 10.Qd3 Re8 the game is dynamically balanced.

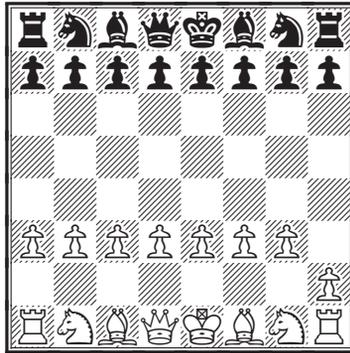
GARBAGE FORMATION

*White Moves*

- 1.g3
- 2.a4
- 3.Ra2
- 4.b3
- 5.Na3
- 6.Bg2
- 7.e3

A joke from Brian Wall. The major drawback is the knight at a3, which has no future. The rook can slide along the second rank once the c-pawn and d-pawn advance.

HIPPOPOTAMUS FORMATION



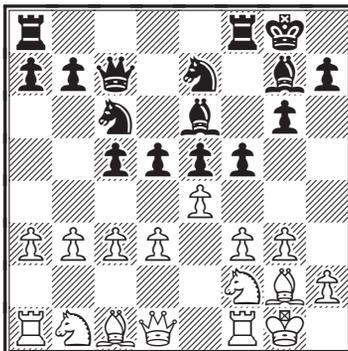
1.a3	g6
2.b3	Bg7
3.c3	d5
4.d3	c5
5.e3	e5
6.f3	Ne7
7.g3	Nbc6

A hippopotamus is a strong and ugly creature. The Hippopotamus Formation is ugly enough but weak. The advance of the pawns to the third rank has a weakening effect not only on the pawn structure, but also on king safety. It also hampers development, because the squares along the third rank, usually the best home for pieces, are occupied by pawns.

EXAMPLES AND DISCUSSION

8.Nh3 O-O. 8...h5 would be well justified here, threatening ...h4. There is no need to act so precipitously, however, and by continuing to develop in normal fashion Black obtains the better game.

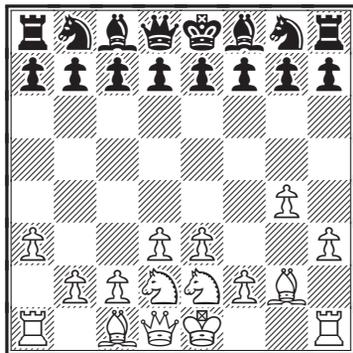
9.Nf2 f5; 10.Bg2 Be6; 11.O-O Qc7. Black has played very sensibly and can be satisfied with the position. 12.e4.



White acts in the center, despite the backward development. But at some point action needs to be taken, else Black will play ...Rad8 and advance to e4 himself. 12...dxe4! 12...Rad8; 13.Qc2 c4 was played in Kuehl-Bornack, Berlin (club game) 1985. After 14.dxc4 dxc4; 15.b4 b5; 16.a4 a6; 17.axb5 axb5; 18.Be3 White had play on the dark-squares and a-file. This illustrates an important point regarding unorthodox formations. If you choose an inappropriate plan, any advantage inherited from the opening stage of the game is soon dissipated and your opponent, despite awkward or even ridiculous play, can gain the advantage.

13.dxe4 Rad8; 14.Qc2 Qb6! The correct plan is to target weaknesses in the White camp and make them even more vulnerable. Here the b3-square is the target. 15.b4 a5! Now it is b4 that is under fire, and Black has an initiative.

RUIZ METHOD



White Moves

a3
h3
d3
e3
Ne2
Nd2
g4
Bg2

While Basman develops his knights at f3 (f6) and c3 (c6), the Ruiz method

sees them planted at e2 and d2 (e7, d7), with the further, rather Basmanian twist of an extended fianchetto with g4 and Bg2. The opening has only been used against computers, so it is difficult to predict how it would fare in human encounters.

EXAMPLES AND DISCUSSION

All of the games below were played by Ruiz using his system against a computer, except for my suggested improvements.

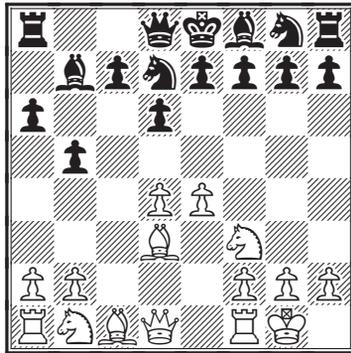
1.e3 d5. 1...e5; 2.d3 Nc6; 3.a3 d5; 4.Nd2 Nf6; 5.h3 Be7; 6.g4 h6; 7.Bg2 O-O; 8.Ne2 b6; 9.Ng3 a5; 10.b3 Ba6 is almost equal, though 11.h4 might be a little better for White. **2.h3 e5; 3.d3 Nc6; 4.a3 Nf6**. This is the correct defensive formation, taking the center and supporting it with knights.

5.Ne2. Black now needs to figure out how to deploy the bishops. Dark square bishop first, to enable castling. **5.Nd2 Bd6; 6.Ne2 Be6; 7.g3 O-O; 8.Bg2 Qd7; 9.g4 Bc5; 10.Ng3** is another game, and **10...d4** looks best. **5...Be7**. I prefer the bishop here. Black has the center and development is coming along nicely. Still, there is nothing wrong with putting the bishop at d6.

5...Bd6; 6.Nd2 O-O; 7.b3 Ne7; 8.Bb2 c5; 9.g3 and here I prefer **9...d4** to **9...e4**, seen in one game. Both **9...a5** and **9...b5** come into consideration as well. **9.g4!?** is more consistent with the method but **9...d4** looks strong.

6.Nd2 O-O; 7.g4 Qd6! The queen is usefully posted on the h2-b8 diagonal. The computers chose **7...b5 8.Bg2 Qd6** but advancing the pawn to b5 is still not justified. Black should instead build on the positional advantage by continuing to develop pieces. **8.Bg2. 8.g5 Nd7; 9.h4 Nb6** and the light squares on the kingside are going to be a problem for White. **8...a5!?** My idea here is that the bishop is nicely stationed at c8, but the rook at a8 will need a path into the game. It can quite safely come to a6, and then work on the b-file or slide across the 6th rank to help with a kingside attack. **9.Ng3 Re8; 10.O-O h6**. Black is still a little better, and can continue with **...Bf8** and then advance one of the central pawns.

SAN JORGE DEFENSE

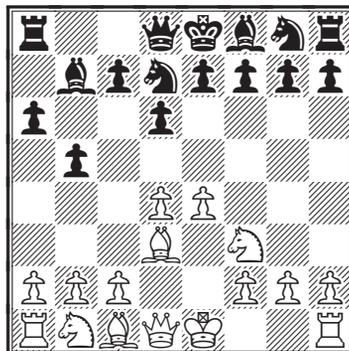


1.e4 a6
2.d4 b5
3.Nf3 Bb3
4.Bd3 d6
5.O-O Nd7

Black's plan in the **San Jorge** is to set up a formation from the Closed Variation of the Spanish Game. 1...a6; 2.d4 g6; 3.Nf3 Bg7; 4.c3 b5; 5.Bd3 d6; 6.O-O Nd7; 7.Re1 e5 is the most direct way to reach the San Jorge. 8.Nbd2 c5; 9.d5 c4; 10.Bc2 Ne7; 11.Nf1 O-O; 12.a4 Bb7 is a typical continuation. The best move order is 1.e4 d6; 2.d4 g6; 3.Nc3 a6, a form of the Rat Defense. This is least likely to provoke a very early c4 by White.

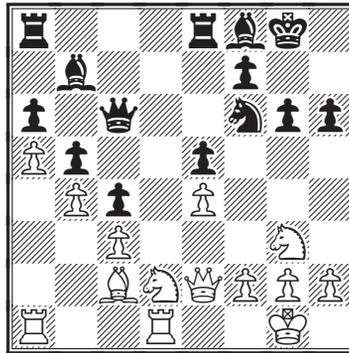
EXAMPLES AND DISCUSSION

1.e4 e6; 2.d4 a6; 3.Nf3 b5; 4.Bd3 Bb7. I no longer use 1...e6 to achieve the target formation. However, in our sample game, we'll see that Black can even use the strategy tempo down!



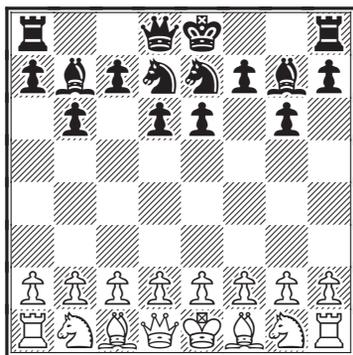
5.Bf4. This extends a special invitation to our formation, since Black will eventually play ...e5 with gain of tempo. A more standard continuation is 5.O-O d6; 6.Bg5 Be7; 7.Bxe7 Qxe7; 8.Nbd2 c5; 9.c3 e5; 10.d5 Nf6; 11.a4 c4; 12.Bc2 Nbd7; 13.axb5 axb5; 14.Rxa8+ Bxa8 with a typical Spanish position where neither bishop is accomplishing much.

5...Nf6; 6.Qe2 c5; 7.c3 d6; 8.O-O Nbd7; 9.Rd1 Qc7; 10.a4 e5!; 11.dxe5 dxe5; 12.Bg5 c4; 13.Bc2 Be7; 14.b4 Qc6; 15.Nbd2 O-O; 16.Nf1 Rfe8; 17.Ng3 g6; 18.a5 Bf8; 19.Nd2 h6; 20.Bxf6 Nxf6. The unorthodox heretic converts to orthodoxy!



Black has a superior form of the Closed Spanish. 21.Ngf1 Rad8; 22.Ne3 Qe6; 23.h3 h5; 24.Qf3 Bh6; 25.Ndf1 Bf4!; 26.h4 Qc6; 27.Nd5 Nxd5; 28.exd5 Qd7; 29.Ne3 Bxe3; 30.fxe3 Bxd5; 31.e4 Qa7+; 32.Qf2 Qxf2+; 33.Kxf2 Be6; 34.Ke3 Bg4; 35.Rf1 Rd6; 36.Rf2 Red8 37.Rff1 Rd3+. White resigned in Rejto-Schiller, World Open 1983.

UNIVERSAL ATTACK



Black Moves

- 1...g6
- 2...Bg7
- 3...e6
- 4...Ne7
- 5...d6
- 6...Nd7
- 7...b6
- 8...Bb7

There are many White openings against which the formation can work, especially if there is a kingside fianchetto so that the bishop is not aimed at Black's kingside. In fact, except as a universal formation there isn't anything particularly unorthodox, and the formation has been seen in hundreds of games. In fact, there is nothing new about Moody's Universal Attack. It was seen even in the ancient Morphy game we follow as an effective example of play against the system. We'll adopt a strategy of e4 and d4, with a bishop at d3, as in the Beginner's Attack. White has options of advancing either bishop pawn, or placing knights at c3 and f3. White's other bishop will usually go to e3, followed by Qd2 and Bh6.

The defensive formation is not unplayable, but it can only be used against appropriate White strategies and that is why the stronger players who have defended the Black side have not combined the ...e6/...Ne7 pair with ...g7/...Bg7 early in the game. They play the least committal moves first, keeping the harmony of kingside fianchetto + ...d6 or queenside fianchetto + ...e6 early in the game.

EXAMPLES AND DISCUSSION

1.e4. The true test of any universal defense must be against openings where White accepts the invitation to occupy the center with pawns at e4 and d4, so I'll only consider those lines. The system can, of course, be used by White, but being essentially defensive in nature I'll examine the Black side. 1...e6. 1...g6; 2.d4 Bg7 leaves White wondering what sort of Modern Defense is coming. I think that is the best move order

for Black. 3.Nc3 allows the Pterodactyl with 3...c5. Against the Universal Attack, it isn't the best formation, but it is good enough for a small advantage. Since it is a popular anti-Modern and Anti-Pirc move, let's take a look. 3...e6; 4.Be3 Ne7; 5.h4!? transposes to the Bobby Fischer game cited below. 3.Nf3 allows Black to sidestep my main line. 3...e6 can lead to interesting independent play on 4.e5!? 2.d4 g6.

2...Ne7 can take the game in similar directions.

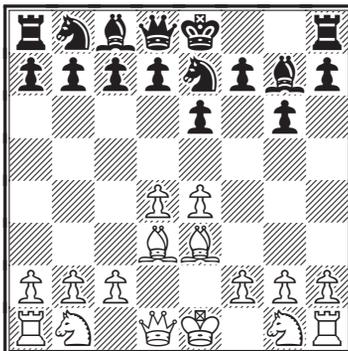
3.Nc3 g6; 4.h4 Bg7; 5.h5 d5; 6.h6 Bf8; 7.Bg5 a6. Bobby Fischer, playing in a simultaneous, overplayed the position. 8.Bf6?! (8.Nf3 Nd7?; 9.exd5 exd5; 10.Nxd5; or 8...Rg8 9.Ne5 followed by Qf3.) 8...Rg8; 9.Nf3 Nd7; 10.e5 Nxf6; 11.exf6 Nf5? (11...Nc6 would have been better.) 12.g4 Qxf6 13.gxf5 Qxf5; "Black has two pawns for the piece and will pick up a third plus the initiative." –Moody. 14.Bd3 Qf4; 15.Rh4 Qf6; 16.Qe2 Bd7; 17.Ne5? (Moody neglects to point out that Fischer missed the easy win 17.Nxd5!) 17...Qxh4; 18.Qf3 f5; 19.O-O-O Bxh6+; 20.Kb1 Qxd4; 21.Qe2 Bg7; 22.Nxd7 Kxd7; 23.Bxf5 Qe5. Black resigned in Bobby Fischer-Codman, 53 board simul, Boston 1964. Moody is amazed and gives analysis showing a win for Fischer! 24.Rxd5+ Qxd5; 25.Nxd5 but he now captures with the e-pawn, a horrible idea. Instead, simply 25...gxf5; 26.Nf4 Be5! wins for Black.

3.Bd3 g6; 4.Ne2 Bg7; 5.c3 b6; 6.Be3 Bb7; 7.O-O h5; 8.Nd2 h4; 9.h3 d6; 10.Qc2 Nd7; 11.Rae1 f5; 12.Bg5 Nf8; 13.Nf4 Qd7; 14.exf5 gxf5; 15.Bxf5 O-O-O; 16.Bg4 where Black resigned in Csank-Albin, Vienna 1890.

3.Bd3. With Black already committed to the kingside weakness, as in the Pafu Beginner Defense, White can use the bishop effectively here. 3.Nc3 Bg7; 4.Nf3 is a natural continuation which can arise via many move orders. 4...Ne7; 5.Bf4 b6; 6.Qd2 Bb7; 7.O-O-O d5; 8.Bb5+ c6; 9.Bd3 was seen in Blumenfeld vs. Moody, Postal 1994. Moody "blundered" with 9...a6, since he maintains that he should have played 9...Nd7 to be followed by ...Kf8. Let's play the same plan that brought him down in the game and see where it leads. 10.Bh6 Kf8; 11.e5! Black is suffocating.

4.Be3 Ne7; 5.Qd2 O-O 6.h4 gave White a great attack in Fancy-Pickering, Lucerne 1982. 5...h6 is suggested by Moody, but that is just one more queenside weakness and 6.Nf3 followed by Bd3 gives White a good game.

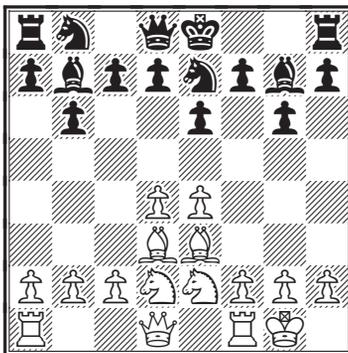
3...Bg7; 4.Be3. Against the Universal Attack formation, the bishop can't get to g5 so quickly. Our formation here is therefore a little different from that proposed against the Beginner's Defence, though that system works well, too. 4...Ne7.



Black has set up the Universal Attack. I like the idea of bringing both knights to the second rank, and keeping open options of c4 or f4. 5.Ne2.

5.Nc3 b6; 6.Nge2 Bb7; 7.O-O O-O; 8.Qd2 d6; 9.Ng3 Nd7; 10.Rae1 c5 was seen in MacKenzie-MacDonnell, London 1862. 11.Nb5! cxd4; 12.Bxd4 Bxd4; 13.Nxd4 leaves Black with the usual kingside dark square problems.

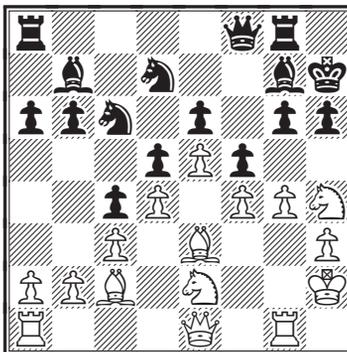
5...b6; 6.Nd2 Bb7; 7.O-O.



White's minor pieces make a strange impression but the formation works well against the Universal Attack. 7...d5. 7...d6; 8.c3 Nd7; 9.Qb3?! The queen really should head to the kingside. 9...O-O; 10.f4 d5; 11.e5 Rb8; 12.Rac1 c5; 13.Qa3 c4; 14.Bc2 a6; 15.g4 b5; 16.Ng3 Re8 and despite the lack of space Black has achieved equality in Anderssen & Allies-Staunton & Allies, Manchester 1857. 8.e5 O-O; 9.f4 f5.

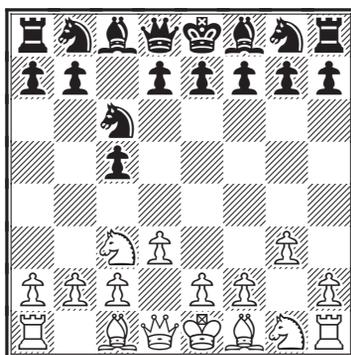
Moody points to this move as a serious error. 9...Nd7 is "the correct and obvious choice". Hardly. 10.c3 c5 is equal, according to Moody. But White is clearly better. 11.Ng3 and the queen will come to the kingside via g4. 10.Ng3! is even stronger. 10...c5; 11.Qg4! c4; 12.Be2 with a kingside attack to follow. This is why Meek chose ...f5. 10.h3 Nd7; 11.Kh2! Morphy prepares an all out attack on the kingside, featuring

a pawnstorm. 11...c5; 12.c3 c4; 13.Bc2 a6; 14.Nf3 h6; 15.g4 Kh7; 16.Rg1 Rg8? 16...Rf7 was a much better defense. 17.Qe1 Nc6; 18.Nh4 Qf8.



19.Nxg6!! A typical Morphy sacrifice, opening up the enemy kingside. 19...Kxg6; 20.gxf5+ Kf7; 21.fxe6+ Kxe6; 22.f5+ Ke7; 23.Qh4+ Ke8; 24.f6 Bxf6; 25.exf6 Rxf6; 26.Rxf6 Nxf6; 27.Bg6+ Kd7; 28.Bf5+ Ke8; 29.Bxh6 Qh8; 30.Rg7 Ng8 and in Morphy vs. Meek, from first American Congress back in 1857, Black resigned without waiting for a reply. The end would have come in the form of 31.Bg6+ Kf8; 32.Rf7+ Ke8; 33.Rc7#.

VENEZOLANA FORMATION



1.d3 c5
2.Nc3 Nc6
3.g3

The Venezolana Formation involves a kingside fianchetto and a pawn at d3, which are found in many flank openings. The main difference is the stationing of the knight at c3, in front of the c-pawn. White therefore makes no effort to occupy the center, and this opening can only appeal to those with strong Hypermodern tendencies.

As with all formations, many move orders may be used to arrive at the same position.

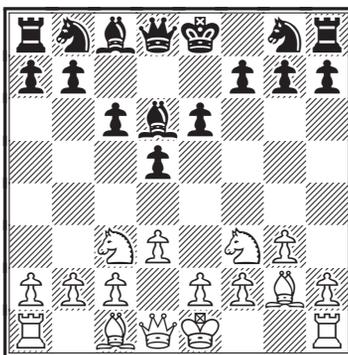
EXAMPLES AND DISCUSSION

1.g3 is the preferred move order of Duncan Suttles, who had quite a bit of experience with the Venezolana formation. Here are some samples.

1.d3 c5; 2.Nc3 Nc6; 3.g3 g6; 4.Bg2 Bg7; 5.Nf3 e6 (5...e5; 6.e4 Nge7 is a more ambitious plan for Black.) 6.O-O Nge7; 7.e4 O-O; 8.Be3 Nd4; 9.Qd2 d6; 10.Bh6 Nec6; 11.Bxg7 Kxg7; 12.Nd1 Nxf3+; 13.Bxf3 f5; 14.exf5 gxf5; 15.Bxc6 bxc6 left Black with an artificial pawn structure in Torres-Diaz, Venezuela 1973. 1.Nc3 c5; 2.Nf3 e6; 3.g3 Nc6; 4.Bg2 d5; 5.d3 is another way to reach the position.

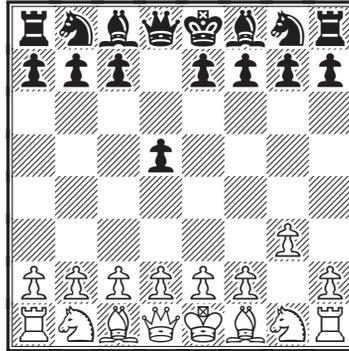
Here Black has chosen a very solid defensive formation, taking a good piece of the center but not creating too many targets for White's pieces. 5...Nf6; 6.O-O Be7; 7.e4 O-O; 8.Qe2 d4; 9.Nd1 e5 and White managed to create some tension in the position with 10.Ne1 Ne8; 11.f4, Hoffman-Grefe, USA 1978.

1.Nf3 e6; 2.g3 d5; 3.Bg2 c6; 4.d3 Bd6; 5.Nc3.



White has set up the Venezolana Formation, though as this game shows the position was investigated quite a long time ago by Yates. White plays slowly, aiming for a timely e4 to attack the enemy pawn barrier. 5...Ne7; 6.O-O O-O 7.e4 b5; 8.Ne1 f5; 9.exd5 exd5; 10.Ne2 Nd7; 11.Bf4 Nb6; 12.Qd2 Ng6 with an equal game in Yates-Nimzowitsch, Carlsbad 1923.

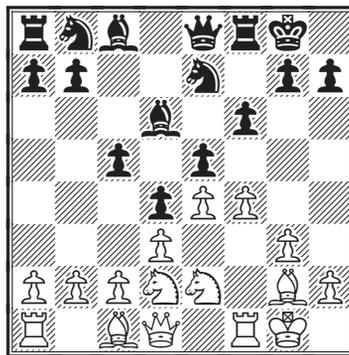
1...d5. 1...g6; 2.Bg2 Bg7; 3.d3 c5 invites a transposition to the Sicilian. (3...d5; 4.Nc3 Nf6; 5.Bd2 O-O; 6.Qc1 is really maneuvering behind the lines! 6...c6; 7.Nd1 Re8; 8.f3 e5; 9.e4 Be6; 10.Nh3 Qc8; 11.Ndf2 a5; 12.O-O dxe4; 13.dxe4 Nbd7; 14.Rd1 Nc5; 15.Bf1 was a level playing field in Suttles-Ostojic, Belgrade 1969.) 4.Nc3 Nc6; 5.f4 (5.e4 d6; 6.Be3 e5; 7.Qd2 Rb8; 8.Nge2 Nge7 9.O-O O-O; 10.Rae1 b5 led to a standard Closed Sicilian in Suttles-Minic, Palma de Majorca Interzonal 1970.) 5...d6; 6.Nf3 Nf6; 7.O-O O-O; 8.h3 Ne8; 9.Kh2 Nc7; 10.Ne4 f5 equalized in Suttles-Evans, Lone Pine 1975.



2.Bg2 e5. 2...c5; 3.d3 Nc6; 4.a3 e5; 5.Nc3 Be6; 6.e4 is a reversed Modern Defense, Suttles-Ivkov, Belgrade 1969.

3.d3 c6. 3...c5; 4.Nc3 Be6; 5.e4 d4; 6.Nce2 g5 is designed to stop f4. It doesn't! **7.f4!? gxf4; 8.gxf4 Qh4+; 9.Ng3 exf4; 10.Qh5! Qxh5; 11.Nxh5 Nc6; 12.Nxf4 Nb4; 13.Kd1** and White had the better structure in Suttles-Portisch, Sousse interzonal 1967. **3...Bc5; 4.Nf3 Qe7; 5.Nc3 c6; 6.e4 dxe4; 7.Nxe4 Bb6; 8.O-O Bg4; 9.a4 f5; 10.Ned2 Nf6** was approximately even in Suttles-Sampouw, Indonesia 1982.

4.Nf3 Bd6; 5.O-O Ne7; 6.Nc3 O-O; 7.e4 d4; 8.Ne2 f6; 9.Nd2 Qe8; 10.f4 c5.



White's kingside attack almost plays itself! 11.f5 Nbc6; 12.g4 a6; 13.h4 b5; 14.Ng3 Bd7; 15.Nf3 and White was better in Suttles-Ujtumen, Palma de Mallorca interzonal 1970.