

**A Complete Opening
Repertoire for Black
after 1...e6**

Copyright © 2025 Thinkers Publishing, Belgium

Author: Nicolas Yap

Managing Editor: Adrien Demuth

Assistant Editor: Daniël Vanheirzeele

Proofreading: Bob Holliman

Software: Hub van de Laar

Cover Design: Dirk Dewitte

ISBN: 9789083488219

D/2025/31732/101

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission from the publisher.

All sales or enquiries should be directed to Thinkers Publishing, 9850 Landegem, Belgium.

E-mail: info@thinkerspublishing.com

Website: www.thinkerspublishing.com

First edition 2025 by Thinkers Publishing.

This book is printed on environmentally friendly paper.

A Complete Opening Repertoire for Black after 1...e6

Nicolas Yap

Thinkers Publishing 2025



Key to Symbols

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
N	novelty
⊙	lead in development
⊙	zugzwang
=	equality
∞	unclear position
∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
↔	with counterplay
Δ	with the idea of
⊃	better is
≤	worse is
+	check
#	mate

Table of Contents

Key to Symbols	4
Introduction.....	7
About the lines and the book as a whole	9
Preface.....	11
The Goal of this book.....	12
Repertoire overview	14
SECTION I – 1.d4 e6 – The Stonewall Defense.....	15
Chapter 1 – Various Second Moves.....	17
Chapter 2 – Various Third Moves	45
Chapter 3 – 3.g3 – Early Alternatives	79
Chapter 4 – 7.♘c3.....	99
Chapter 5 – 7.♙c2	133
Chapter 6 – 7.b3	181
SECTION II – 1.e4 e6 – The French Defense	191
Chapter 7 – Early Deviations	193
Chapter 8 – 3.exd5 – Exchange Variation.....	229
Chapter 9 – 3.e5 – Advance Variation.....	243
Chapter 10 – 3.♘d2 – Tarrasch Variation.....	277
Chapter 11 – 3.♘c3 – Early Alternatives	309
Chapter 12 – 3.♘c3 – Various 7th Moves	349
Chapter 13 – 3.♘c3 with 7.♙g4 – Winawer Variation.....	373
SECTION III – Other First Moves	413
Chapter 14 – 1.c4 e6.....	415
Chapter 15 – 1.♘f3 e6	445
Chapter 16 – Other Rare First Moves.....	483

Introduction

This book gives Black a full repertoire grounded in answering 1...e6 against everything. The answer against 1. d4 is the Stonewall, while the answer against 1. e4 is the French. The repertoire is geared towards all levels due to its flexibility. While I am known for my extreme attention to detail, I have streamlined the text so that it is not as terse as, say, a 1500-page textbook on neurology.

The Stonewall Dutch is a defense that nowadays has a dodgy reputation, but this is ungrounded. It is true that Black willingly creates a bad bishop, but I have both improved on modern theory, as well as offer some odd-looking, interesting, and innovative new ways to play this once renowned (and soon-to-be renowned!) defense. A defense that powerhouses such as Viktor Korchnoi used to play a lot is not being scrapped and thrown into the bin, as much as people nowadays believe it should, but rather shall be revitalized and spring to life anew. As this book binds the Stonewall Dutch with the French, our move order is 1. d4 e6 2. c4 f5. If White wants to transpose into the French with 2. e4 after having played 1. d4 and has learned all of the theory to do so, then let them.

The French Defense needs no introduction. Oft derided and dehumanized, I have heard throughout my chess career even hereunto that the French is refuted, that it is a forced loss, that engines would slaughter it; I have heard it all. However, with Stockfish 16 and newer engines getting better and better, what I found particularly amusing is that the truth of the French is probably that it is 0.00 with best play. In other words, the reputation of the French did the opposite of what many detractors thought would happen. The French started to become a defense that I would use in important games as a surprise weapon when I did not play my favorite Sicilian. Though I played the French in the first round of the 2004 US Cadet in Lindsborg, Kansas, and lost against Elliott Liu, the French stayed a part of my repertoire thereafter. In this book, I provide my own personal taste of French cuisine, with variations that are not popular at all, but ones which I was taught sundry years ago and which I have always found interesting.

As the ethos of this book is flexibility I present to you several different answers within these two opening complexes. While the Stonewall Dutch is not known for flexibility—indeed the pawn structure is often locked and fixed before move ten—there are some new, outlandish-looking ideas that are seldom played that will serve you well and give you a longtime surprise factor. This type of surprise factor means

that you will not have the 'one-game surprise' whereby your opponents catch on to your ideas and then you get slaughtered in all your following games. What I mean is that you can keep using these seldom-played ideas, and your opponents start scrambling for weeks or months trying to find a killer answer, banging their heads against the wall, only to find out that none exists. Opening theory accepts these ideas as totally playable, and in many cases, at least as good as the 'traditional' main lines, new theory in these once seldom-played lines will grow and blossom into the main lines of the future. We will see this in the 1. d4 part of the book.

Coming up with answers to White's tries to dodge the main lines after 1.c4 and 1. ♖f3 was cumbersome to say the least, but I have found something interesting. I shall leave this as a surprise as well.

In modern chess every opening book must be diligently checked with engines, often I do not choose the engine's top choice. This does not mean that Black does not equalize in my recommendations—he does—it is just that I have chosen weirder, offbeat variations that hold.

All in all, this book gives you a full fighting repertoire against all of White's first moves. While the next World Championship contenders probably will not follow my recommendations, perhaps they should! Other than making this repertoire as akin to street-fighting as possible, I have backed it up with highly rigorous and painstaking computer analysis using cloud engines that make the repertoire bulletproof.

About the lines and the book as a whole

Some explaining is in order. This book, which is quite hefty, gives you a full repertoire against everything as Black. Most of the time I recommend 1...e6 against everything, save for some exceptions due to the risk of getting move-ordered into something that I do not recommend. Therefore, the book is quite long but this is not all that bad. I am known for my love of high detail, admittedly detail *in extremis*, but my mindset is always that chess is a concrete sport. Thus, hand-waving and general principles cannot be used all the time, especially as your rating goes up. At a level of, say, 2200+ FIDE, to play all of your games by winging the opening is just asking to get slaughtered. Therefore, in this book you shall see long lines, sometimes extremely long times, going past move 40. This is on purpose. I am not going to leave you hanging when I have to go further. In fact, in my own files, sometimes I went past move 60. Still, I do not expect nor advise you to memorize all of these lines. These lines are mostly for reference, similar to a dissertation where the analysis goes into microscopic detail to prove that if A, then B, or that A is A and not B, and so on. One thing that I absolutely HATE is to see a line that seems cut off too short; I think to myself, 'So, what happens next?'. I hope that you never have to do this in this book. I hope that, if there is something to irk you, that I give you too much analysis rather than too little.

About the line length: I analyzed using rapid cloud engines. Every single line that sits in this book has been computer-checked to the point that the laptop I am writing on had its battery burnt out necessitating that it be connected to the wall socket 24/7, lest it die right away. When you see an evaluation, I tried to cut it off at a point where it is clear as to what is happening. To give the full length of analysis would easily make this book have more than 2000 pages. I also tried to explain without being wordy. Some lines are just analysis without comments. That is why some comments may seem short and abrupt; to comment on every single line would also make the page count explode well past 2000.

I have tried to avoid perpetual check lines and forced draws, but sometimes, when you play Black, you just have to accept it. There is nothing else to be said. I will not recommend theoretically worse lines, as I consider that to be unacceptable. I might mention occasionally how you could play on using a slightly worse move, but under no circumstances would such answers be my main recommendations.

One thing that I must say before I end this is that you should **NOT** memorize every single line in this book.

Preface

This is one of the hardest projects that I have worked on as I must work with a 400-page limit while giving a full Black repertoire against all of White's possible moves, I clearly had to squish as much information as I could, especially since I offer the French against 1. e4, which is one of the most theoretical defenses in chess. Mixing high-level theoretical analysis that is good not only for elite GMs, but also for 3500+ engines, and giving thorough explanations was a hard mix that seemed to me more like mixing water and oil.

Still, what I give in this book is the work of years of research. I used strong cloud engines to bulletproof the repertoire, as well as avoiding my laptop overheating and battery turning into mush. While I could not leave heavy commentary on every line, as that would make the page count soar, you will find concise, no-BS, straightforward annotations that tell you what to do in your games.

The starkest thing about this book, as well as my other works, is theoretical deepness. I will go deep into lines to show, first of all, that Black can equalize, and to equalize. Although I have shortened some lines, I have left many quite long so that you can see how Black should go about playing the middlegame. I did not cut things short leaving you to figure out what the next moves are. I would rather leap off of a cliff than to cut huge chunks of analysis out of the book. Thus, if you work hard on this book, it will give you a fighting repertoire for many years to come.

Nicolas Yap, November 2024.

The Goal of this Book

This might labor the obvious as the title of this book clearly shows that it gives you a repertoire for Black that is based on 1...e6 against most of White's first moves. Of course, after having read the whole book, my wish is that you have a new, complete Black repertoire that is based on the French against 1. e4 and the Stonewall against 1. d4. But a few things must be said to 'get' it.

As I write this introduction (April 2024), the French is a clear-cut way to a draw against 1. e4. The latest engines have shown that the Modern Classical Variation which arises after 1.e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. ♖c3 ♗f6 4. e5 ♗fd7 5. f4 c5 6. ♗f3 ♗c6 7. ♕e3 cxd4 8. ♗xd4 ♔b6!, is a forced draw that yields nought for White. Given that 3. ♗c3 is the only theoretically irritating answer against the French, it has always been known that should Black find out how to fully defang 3. ♗c3 and reach equality, it can be said at last that White has no edge against the French. Nonetheless, though this is a clear draw, I recommend the Winawer, 3. ♗c3 ♕b4. The goal here is to show that Black can also get clear-cut equality against the scary 3. ♗c3, just like how its twin, 3...♗f6, has shown.

The other big main line in the French is the Tarrasch, 3. ♗d2. It is known that 3...c5 4. exd5 ♔xd5 easily gives Black full equality, and it is therefore why elite GMs, as well as other chess professionals, play this line. Knowing this, I always have thought about 3. ♗d2 a6!?, a move that my coach showed me over 20 years ago. Many GMs play this line, although not always all the time, but now and then. The idea is to push ...c5 without worrying about the highly irksome ♕b5+, which often cuts across Black's plans. The goal here is to show that 3. ♗d2 a6 is objectively no worse than 3. ♗d2 c5.

Against 1. d4, it is also said that Black has several openings that give him full equality. These Black openings are the QGA, the Grünfeld, the Nimzo-Indian, the Ragozin, the Orthodox QGD, the Semi-Slav and the Classical Slav. The elite know this, and this comes down to lower-rated players who also play these rock-solid defenses. The Stonewall, however, has not been known to give Black brute-force equality against 1. d4 as all of the above openings can. In this book, I also show that, despite the lack of brute-force equality in the Stonewall, Black still gets equality by drumming up active counterplay despite his gaping hole weaknesses.

Therefore, what I am trying to do here is no brief task; it took me years to rethink the whole Stonewall with highly odd-looking, as well as highly odd answers to reach equality for Black. Without showing too many spoilers, the setups that I like in the Stonewall main lines often have no ...c6 pushes like in the older Stonewall lines, but rather getting the king's bishop to d6, not pushing ...c6, but rather leaping with ...♘c6 instead. Many times, I was shocked that Black could play such ugly moves that elite grandmasters strategy as Botvinnik, Korchnoi, Karpov, Kasparov, Lasker, Rubinstein, etc., would cast a disparaging look at such weirdness.

The book ends with 1...e6 against both the English and Réti, as well as against most of White's other moves like 1. b3. In a way, these latter deals were some of the hardest, most headbutting lines of the book for me, as I tried like hell to avoid being move-ordered out of the book's repertoire. However, I found many quirky, and in many cases, cheeky, answers to hinder White's plans.

We have four main goals:

- Goal 1:** Show that 3. ♘c3 ♙b4 in the French is fully equal for Black.
- Goal 2:** Show that 3. ♘d2 a6 in the French is fully equal for Black.
- Goal 3:** Show that the Stonewall is fully equal for Black
- Goal 4:** Show that this 1...e6 repertoire that is made from Goals 1-3 also gives equality against 1. c4, 1. ♘f3 and everything else.

Goal 5: Show that this 1...e6 repertoire can be played at the highest levels in OTB, correspondence and online chess

Having fulfilled Goals 1-4, my wish is that thou hast great success in showing Goal 5 to be true.

Repertoire Overview

This book's repertoire is split into five parts based on White's first move. In most cases Black's answer to whatever White throws at him on the first move is 1...e6. To cut things short, against 1.d4, Black answers with 1...e6, aiming for a Stonewall Dutch after 2. c4 f5.

Against 1.e4, Black's answer is the crafty French Defense with 1...e6. Against other moves, it gets a bit harder but nonetheless fine for Black.

Against 1. c4, I give 1...e6, trying to drag White into the Stonewall Dutch after 2. d4 f5. Should this not happen, which is common, I like dragging White into a Symmetrical English, such as after 2. g3 c5. The same happens after 1. ♘f3 e6, as 2. c4 c5 drags White back into a Symmetrical English. Against other moves, Black's answer is not always 1...e6. For example, after 1. b4 I like 1...c6!?, as well as 1. g4? d5!. But as you can see, the core of the repertoire is wholly 1...e6.

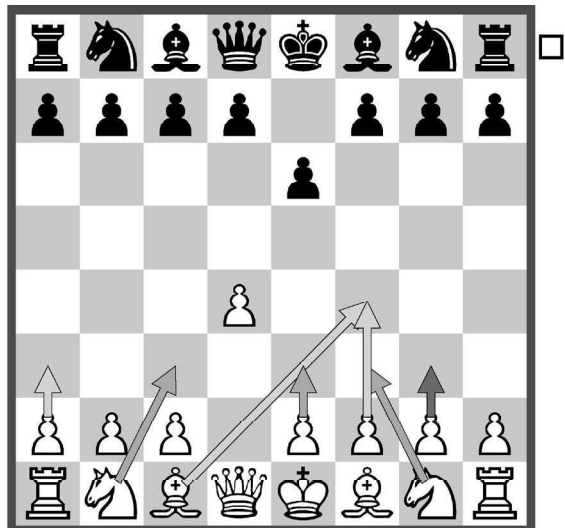
Section I

1.d4 e6



Various Second Moves

1.d4 e6

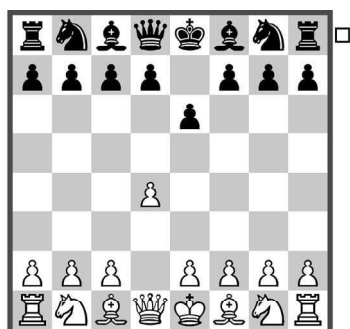


Chapter Guide

Chapter 1 – Various Second Moves

1.d4 e6

a) 2.--.....	19
b) 2. ♘c3	21
c) 2. ♕f4	23
d) 2.g3	31
e) 2. ♘f3 f5 3.--	35
f) 2. ♘f3 f5 3. ♕f4	39

a) 2.--**1. d4 e6**

Position after 1... e6

Let's start our work with the second-move alternatives. There are many, but many are also dumb. At best White keeps equality.

2. a3!?

This move really irked me. So simple, yet so vexing. The problem is that if Black goes forth with a normal Stonewall move like 2...f5, there are some lines where Black would want ...♙b4+, but a3 halts this. However, transposing to another opening where Black already stands equal is what I recommend here.

A) 2. f4?! This is a ridiculous Stonewall try. 2... c5 Before the wall is built, Black should hit White's center.

(see analysis diagram next column)



Position after 2... c5

A1) 3. e3 cxd4 4. exd4 g6!? 5. ♘c3 ♗f6 6. ♕d3 ♕g7 7. ♗f3 ♘c6 8. ♗e4 ♗xe4 9. ♕xe4 0-0 10. ♕xc6 bxc6 11. 0-0 a5 12. ♕e3 ♕a6 ♞ White has no way to hit Black's dark-squared holes.

A2) 3. c3 f5!? In case White tries to build a big center with e4. 4. ♗f3 ♗f6 5. e3 ♗c6 6. ♕e2 ♕e7 7. c4 d5 8. 0-0 0-0 9. ♗c3 dxc4 10. dxc5 ♕xc5



Position after 10... ♕xc5

11. ♕xc4 ♗a5 ♞ White is too far behind in development.

A3) 3. e4 cxd4 4. ♗f3 ♕c5 5. a3 d5 6. e5 ♕b6 7. ♗bd2 ♗h6 ♞ White still has not gotten back the pawn, and ...♗f5 looms.

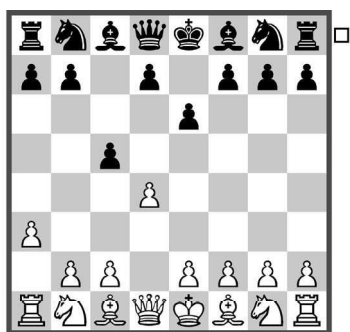
B) 2. e3 c5 3. d5 [3. c3 ♘f6 4. ♘d2 b6 5. e4 ♙e7 6. ♙b5 ♙b7 7. ♙d3 cxd4 8. cxd4 ♙a6 9. ♙xa6 ♘xa6↪ Black can dodge White's center by piling on and invading through the open c-file.] 3... exd5 4. ♘c3 ♘e7 5. ♘ge2 ♘bc6 6. ♘xd5 ♘xd5 7. ♙xd5 d6



Position after 7... d6

8. ♘f4 ♙e7 9. ♙d2 0-0 10. 0-0-0 ♙f6 11. ♙b3 ♗b8↪ Black is ready to push ...b5. Developing the bishop to e6 later is also fine as swapping would strengthen Black's center.

2... c5



Position after 2... c5

3. e3

A) 3. e4 cxd4 4. ♘f3 ♙c5 5. ♘xd4 ♙b6 6. c3 ♘c6 7. b4 ♙xd4 8. cxd4 ♙xd4 9. ♙xd4 ♘xd4 10. ♙b2 e5 11. ♙xd4 exd4 12. ♘d2



Position after 12. ♘d2

12... d5! 13. exd5 ♘f6 14. 0-0-0 0-0 15. ♘c4 ♘xd5 16. ♗xd4 ♙e6= With easy play; White should be careful to not allow ...a5.

B) 3. ♘f3 cxd4 4. ♘xd4 ♘f6



Position after 4... ♘f6

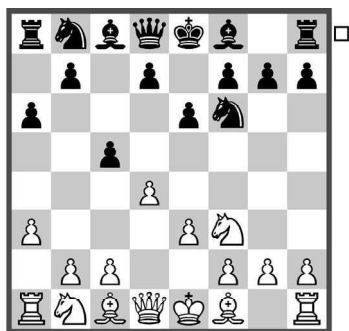
Now White must choose if he wants to go into an English with a3 included or do something else. 5. c4 [5. ♘b5 ♙b6 6. c4 a6 7. ♘5c3 ♘c6 8. e3 ♙c7 9. b4 d5 10. cxd5 exd5 11. ♙b2 ♙e6 12. ♘d2 d4 13. exd4 ♘xd4↪ is easy enough.] 5... ♙e7 6. ♘c3 d5 7. ♙f4 dxc4 8. e4 ♘xe4 9. ♘xe4 e5 10. ♘b5 ♙a5+ 11. ♘ec3 exf4 12. ♙xc4 0-0 13. 0-0 ♘c6 14. b4 ♙d8↪

White has a slight development edge for Black's bishop pair, but this is no problem as Black finishes development by getting the light-squared bishop out next.

3... ♖f6 4. ♗f3

Now Black has a choice to make.

4... a6!?



Position after 4... a6!?

Looks like Black is doing the same rubbish as White, but the aim is to get a highly comfortable QGA like game.

5. c4

5. ♗bd2 b6 6. ♕d3 ♕b7 7. 0-0 d5 8. b3 ♗bd7 9. ♕b2 b5 10. dxc5 ♕xc5 11. c4 bxc4 12. bxc4 dxc4 13. ♗xc4 0-0⇝ Followed by ...♖c8 and ...♕d5; White has nothing here.

5... d5 6. dxc5 ♕xc5 7. b4 ♕e7 8. ♕b2 0-0 9. ♗bd2 b6



Position after 9... b6

Readying ... ♕b7.

10. cxd5 ♗xd5 11. ♕e2 ♕f6 12. ♖b3 ♕b7 13. 0-0 ♗d7 14. ♖fc1 a5⇝

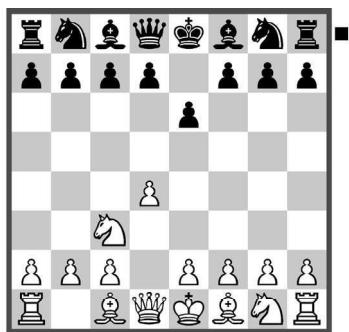
With easy equality in a solid, QGA like position, with ...♖e7 next to pressurize b4.

b) 2. ♗c3

1. d4 e6 2. ♗c3

(see diagram next page)

White often is trying to play some kind of Jobava London. The problem is that Black has neither a pawn on d5 nor knight on f6, so White must improvise.



Position after 2. Nc3

2... Bb4

Black dares White to transpose into the Winawer, but also threatens to break White's pawns.

Black should absolutely never go into the dreadful 2... f5? 3. e4±, which Simon Williams recommends in the second edition of *The Killer Jobava London* from 2023. This is a reversed Open Sicilian where the opening of the e8-h5 diagonal will be deadly.

3. Bf4

White wants some kind of Jobava London, but Black should do something else instead of putting the knight on f6 or the pawn on d5 right away.

3. Qd3 Simon Williams' recommendation in *The Killer Jobava London*, 2nd. Ed. from 2023. Here the simplest is to drag White back into the harmless 4. Qd3 of the Winawer. 3... d5 4. a3 Ba5 5. Nf3 Ne7 6. Bf4 Nd7 7. 0-0-0 0-0

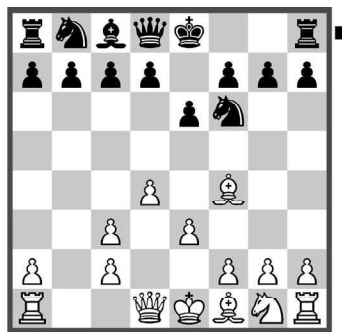


Position after 7... 0-0

8. e4 h6 9. Ne5 Bxc3 10. Qxc3 dxe4 11. Qe1 Nxe5 12. dxe5 Bd7± Black will soon follow up with ...Bc6 when White's bishops can do no harm, given Black's lack of weaknesses.

3... Bxc3+!?

Barely played at all.

4. bxc3 Nf6 5. e3

Position after 5. e3

5... c5

It is best to hit White's center and ready ...Qa5.

5... Ne4? 6. Bd3 Nxc3 7. Qd2 Nd5 8. Bg3 b6 9. e4± 1-0 Kallusky, N (906) –

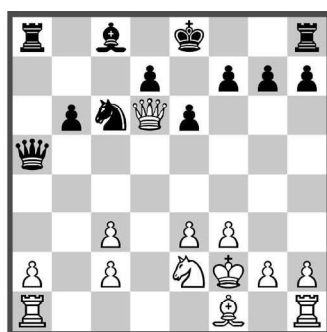
Weihls, L Niedersachsen-ch U10 Borkum 2004 (3) was the only game played in this line and is a bad example of what to do.

The blockade shall be lifted.

6. dxc5

8... ♖e4 9. f3 ♘xd6 10. ♙xd6 ♜b6 11. cxb6 axb6 12. ♔f2

6. ♔d6? is silly, Black replies 6... ♘e4



Position after 12. ♔f2

6... ♙a5 7. ♘e2 ♘c6 8. ♔d6



Position after 8. ♔d6

12... ♙a3

White is a pawn up, but has horrid queenside pawns, like a good Nimzo for Black.

c) 2. ♔f4

1. d4 e6 2. ♔f4

Unfortunately for London players, Black stands fine here, as his flexibility means that White cannot answer like when Black has a pawn on d5 or a knight on f6.



Position after 2. ♔f4

2... c5

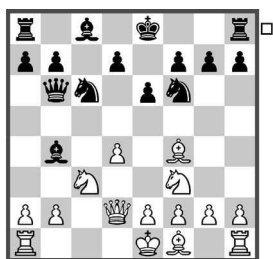
Keeping high flexibility and hitting White's center. Note that Black still refuses to push ...d5 nor put a knight on f6. John Bartholomew does not cover

this in *The London System: Essential Theory*.

3. e3

This is the most natural move for a London player, trying to pretend that there is either a pawn on d5 or knight on f6.

3. c3 White gears up to transpose to an Exchange Slav should Black swap on d4 and push ...d5. Of course, Black should not do this. 3... ♖b6 Same strategy: hit b2, given that White's dark-squared bishop is no longer on c1. 4. ♘f3 ♘c6 Piling on d4. 5. ♖d2 White can no longer leave b2 en prise as c3 and d4 would fall as well. 5... cxd4 6. cxd4 ♙b4 However, White now gets pinned. 7. ♘c3 ♘f6



Position after 7... ♘f6

A) 8. a3 The only database game to reach this position continued 8... ♘e4 9. ♖c2 ♖a5 [9... ♘xc3? 10. bxc3± 1-0 Ushenina, A (2416) – Cori Tello, D (2388) Speed Chess (Women) GP3 Chess.com INT blitz 2020 (1.10) was horrible.] 10. ♖c1 ♙xc3+ 11. bxc3 d5↔ followed by castling with a great Nimzo-like game.

B) 8. e3 The most logical, aiming to get developed as soon as possible. 8... ♘d5 I like piling on more pressure down the a5-e1 diagonal. 9. ♙g3 ♖a5 10. ♖c1 b6 The c8-bishop can now come to a6 or b7, depending upon how White answers.



Position after 10... b6

B1) 11. ♙d3 ♙a6 12. 0-0 ♘xc3 [12... f5 0-1 Fernandez Rodriguez, H (2024) – Pozo Vera, S (2454) Oviedo op 3rd 2008 (2)] 13. bxc3 ♙a3 14. ♖b1 0-0 15. e4 ♖ac8↔ Black has a nice Cambridge Springs like position with more flexibility due to the missing d5-pawn.

B2) 11. a3 Here, however, it is safe to take the pawn. The reason is that unlike in the 11. a4 line, Black takes White's a-pawn on a3 instead of on a4. This means that Black's queen can come back home along the a3-f8 diagonal to e7, which is impossible if it stood on a4. 11... ♙xc3 12. bxc3 ♖xa3 Again, this looks like a Cambridge Springs, but with knights on c6 and d5 instead of pawns, which greatly favors Black. 13. e4



Position after 13. e4

It looks like Black is about to be blown off of the board with e5 and d5. [13. c4 ♖a5 14. ♜c2 ♚a1+=] 13... ♗a5! 14. ♚c2 White absolutely cannot let ...♗b3 happen. [14. ♜c2 ♗f6 15. ♙d3 ♙b7 16. ♜a2 ♚b3 17. ♜b2 ♚a4=] 14... ♗f6 15. ♙d3 ♗h5 16. 0-0 ♗xg3 17. fxg3!? White need not take back automatically with the h-pawn; he can break his own structure like this to get a kingside attack. [17. hxg3 ♚e7 18. ♜a1 d6 19. c4 0-0 20. e5 g6 21. ♙e4 ♙b7↗ White has no attack, and his pawns are about to get hit with ...♜ac8.] 17... ♙b7 18. ♜a1 ♚e7 19. ♚b1 ♙c6 20. ♜a2 ♜c8 21. h4 ♙a8↗ With balanced, but attritional warfare ahead. Black should push ...f6 before castling to halt any e5/♗g5 ideas.

B3) 11. a4 White tries to halt the plan of ...♗xc3 bxc3 ♙a3 at all costs. Now Black should not get greedy and win the a4-pawn. 11... ♙b7 12. ♙b5 a6 13. ♙d3 f5↗ Black can follow up with castling, ...♗ce7, etc. to open up the a8-h1 diagonal.

3... ♚b6



Position after 3... ♚b6

Of course this is the difference, as Black keeps flexibility and also threatens b2.

4. ♗f3

Another way that White can sacrifice the b2-pawn. This is also recommended by Sahaj Grower and Srinath Naranajan in *Lifetime Repertoires: Sahaj's and Srinath's London System*.

4. ♗c3 This is Alex Astaneh – López's recommendation in *The Killer London System, Part II*. White plays a kind of Jobava set-up, goading Black to take on b2. '!'? '!'? '!'? '!'? 4... cxd4 Opening the diagonal for the dark-squared bishop. 5. exd4 White gives up the b2-pawn as there is no going back. 5... ♚xb2 6. ♗ge2 The only way for White to get pieces out and not have the whole queenside fall to bits. 6... ♚a3 Astaneh – López rightly gives this as best; Black gets the queen out of a deep hole, as well as halts White from pushing a3 or a4.