

# Scandinavian Defence

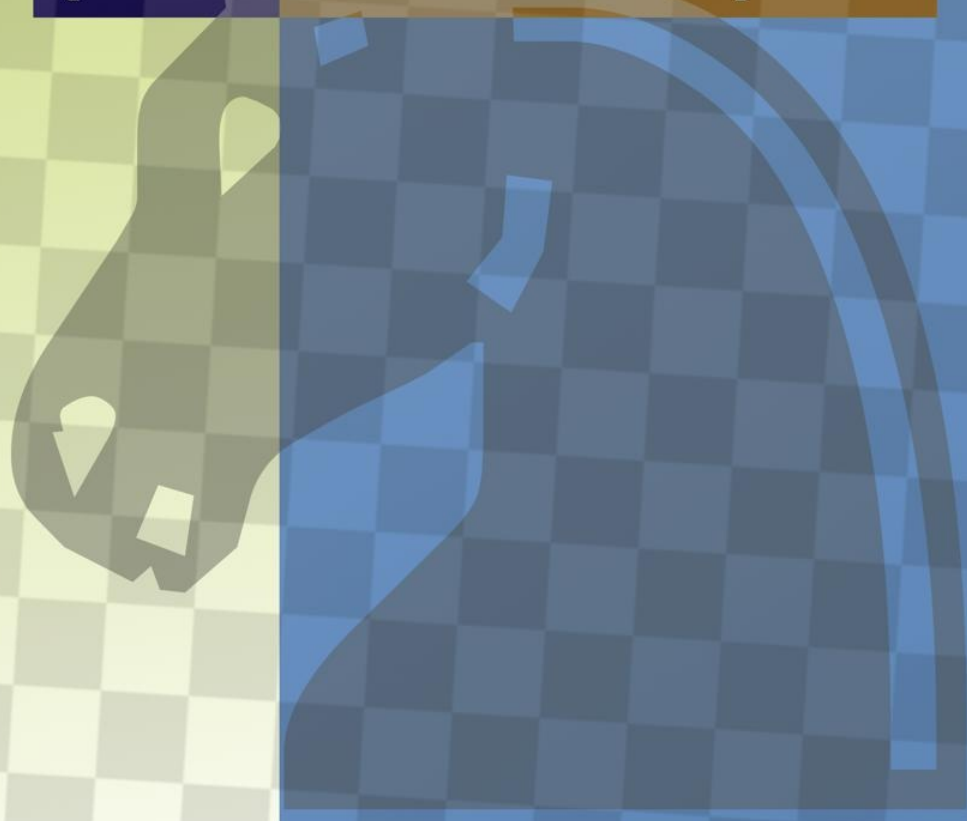
Winning With 2...Nf6  
(Revised Edition)



**Marek Soszynski**

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***Scandinavian Defence:  
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(Revised Edition)***

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## ***About the Author***

Marek Soszynski is a master twice over: a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and a Correspondence Chess Master (CCM) with an International Correspondence Chess Federation (ICCF) rating of over 2300. He writes on — what else? — philosophy and chess. He lives in the city where he was born, Birmingham, England.

## Other chess works by the author

Konikowski, Jerzy, and Marek Soszynski. 2005. *The Fearsome Four Pawns Attack* (Milford: Russell Enterprises)

ISBN: 1888690275

Konikowski, Jerzy, and Marek Soszynski. 2009. *1.b4 Theory & Practice of the Sokolsky Opening* (Milford: Russell Enterprises)

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Konikowski, Jerzy, and Marek Soszynski. 2018. *Sabotaging the Sicilian, French & Caro-Kann with 2.b3* (Milford: Russell Enterprises)

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<https://forwardchess.com/product/the-great-reshevsky>

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ISBN: 9798201257972

Soszynski, Marek. 2022. The Scandinavian Defence: Winning with Qd6 and g6 (MarekMedia)

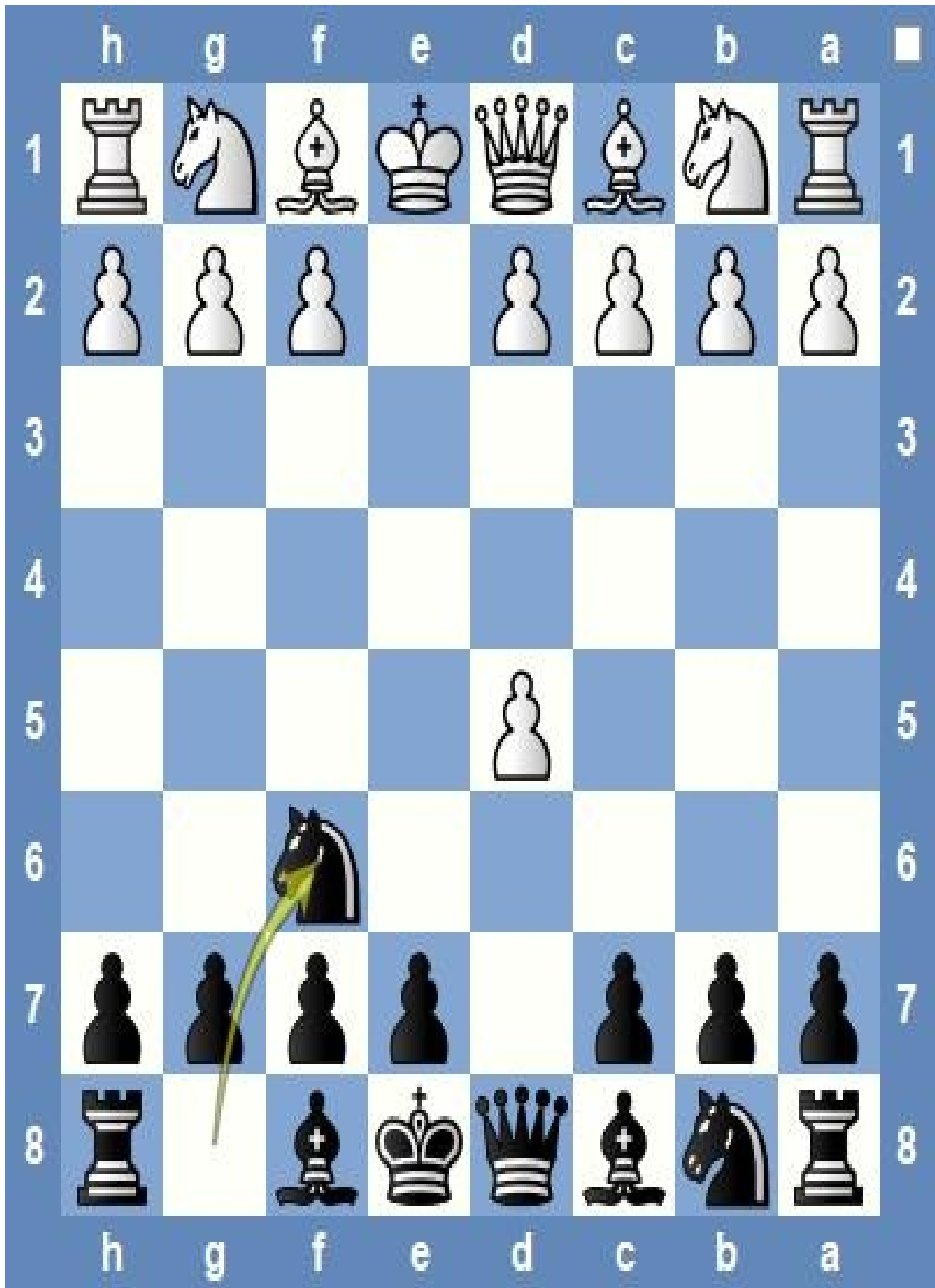
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## ***Introduction***

Chess opening repertoire books used to be called — well, what else but simply an Opening Repertoire. And then, as they multiplied, to differentiate themselves they became Explosive, Ferocious, Strategic, Rock-Solid, Cunning and all the rest. Now we're running out of positive or "power" adjectives. In that case, let's describe this particular book's repertoire as it is: slightly unusual but nevertheless fully up to its initial task, which is to guide Black on how to counter the assertive 1.e4 with the least trouble and greatest economy during the first few moves of a chess game.

We choose the Scandinavian Defence (also known as the Center Counter Defense), 1.e4 d5, because moves other than 2.exd5 are inferior. So, White is already being channelled away from having a pawn on e4 (or later e5) as part of a familiar aggressive set up. Moreover, the central situation won't be blocked or symmetrical, thus the Scandinavian should be less drawish than other defences. We reply to 2.exd5 with 2...Nf6, which used to be called the Marshall Variation and is sometimes called the Modern Variation.

2...Qxd5 is more frequent, both historically and currently. Interest in the knight move grew in the mid-1980s upon the discovery of some initially effective gambit lines for Black; however, gradually White was getting less surprised and more prepared and by around the turn of the century the interest in 2...Nf6 compared with 2...Qxd5 had peaked. The queen move is relatively even more popular nowadays and is considered safer and superior.



Therefore, maybe that is already an argument for using the "neglected" and increasingly overlooked 2...Nf6 today. Moreover, White players should be studying and remembering the dangerous gambit lines as a priority, and yet those are not the lines we'll be playing. That's worth emphasising. No analysis of the Icelandic Gambit (1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.c4 e6) or Portuguese Variation (1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.d4 Bg4) will be found in this book. Generally, as Black, we'll avoid the popular kingside fianchetto lines too (e.g. 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.d4 Nxd5 4.c4 Nb6 5.Nf3 g6). Also, again generally, we prefer our light-squared bishop to be on f5 (targetting the white queenside) rather than on g4; and if we have a knight on d5 that's forced to retreat, we prefer it to go back to f6 rather than b6. Obviously there will be some exceptions.

Anyhow, our lines are sensible and developmental rather than speculative or adventurous. And while we can't turn the 2...Nf6 Scandinavian into the best of defences — especially since we're discounting some of the most fashionable and dynamic lines — we can hope in this book to prove it more than playable. Refer to the Contents and its chapter sections for a brief overview of what we do cover and how we recommend Black should play.

What I offer is a skeleton repertoire for Black against 1.e4. This is not a middlegame manual or a best games compendium. I merely want to get you past the first few moves safely and with reasonable prospects for the rest of the game. That's not easy. White had the first go and chose the most aggressive move. Of course no repertoire book can solve all your problems as Black. There will always be that insurmountable issue of not having the first move.

A word about the analysis. This is not an encyclopaedic book of over-long analytical lines that would be impossible to remember. (If there are any longish variations, this is usually only to prove a point.) However good your powers of recall, and even if you have an opening book within sight, eventually the variations will run out, or your opponent quickly deviates anyway, and then you

are on your own. This short book will take you to a point — admittedly only an early point in most cases — where you have a good-enough position from the opening to "just play chess." You can find some long analyses elsewhere, or get your engine to generate them. Good luck recalling them!

Your engine? My preferred analysis engine is ShashChess, a close derivative of Stockfish. The latter is the world's strongest engine by a clear margin and has been so for some time. It has two drawbacks in its evaluations, however. These don't effect Stockfish's gameplay, i.e. its commanding performance in matches and tournaments. When it comes to assessments, in my opinion ShashChess is more reliable (less volatile when switching back and forth from one colour to the other) and more realistic for human play (in other words its evaluations are more conservative). For example, a clear advantage (+/-) for Stockfish may in practice, in over-the-board reality, be only a slight advantage (+/=) for human chessplayers.

There are no game references in this book. Why not? Because it would be perverse and pointless to determine the best moves (after much book research and computer analysis) and then half-desperately search (often in vain) for games by decent players in which those moves happen to occur. Only then to quote games that in fact went on to be decided much, much later by a random blunder or a lengthy technical endgame — in Black's favour we hope. I agree that the study of complete games is required for the improvement of one's chess overall. This book, though, is for the enhancement, by diversification, of one's opening play.

Speaking of which, one last word of advice which this small book will help you to follow. Do not change your repertoire — add to it!

## Note to the Revised Edition

The first edition (August 2022) contained no particular errors. This revised edition (January 2023) has the same main lines, recommendations and commentaries but does add to them or clarify them here and there, sufficiently to make it a few or actually many pages longer overall depending on your device. There are also some cosmetic formatting and structural changes.

Readers should find it interesting to compare this ebook with the excellent...

Smerdon, David. 2015. Smerdon's Scandinavian (London: Everyman Chess)

ISBN: 9781781942574

Australian Grandmaster Smerdon's large book (nearly 500 printed pages) follows the opposite philosophy to this one. Smerdon covers and encourages the use of razor-sharp gambits. Therefore, there is almost no overlap at all with this ebook. The single notable exception is 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.Bb5+ Nbd7, which is Chapter 3 here and by contrast Section 4, Chapter 15 in Smerdon's. This genuine difference in approach make the two books very useful adjuncts to each other.

## ***Chapter 1: 1.e4 d5 without 2.exd5***

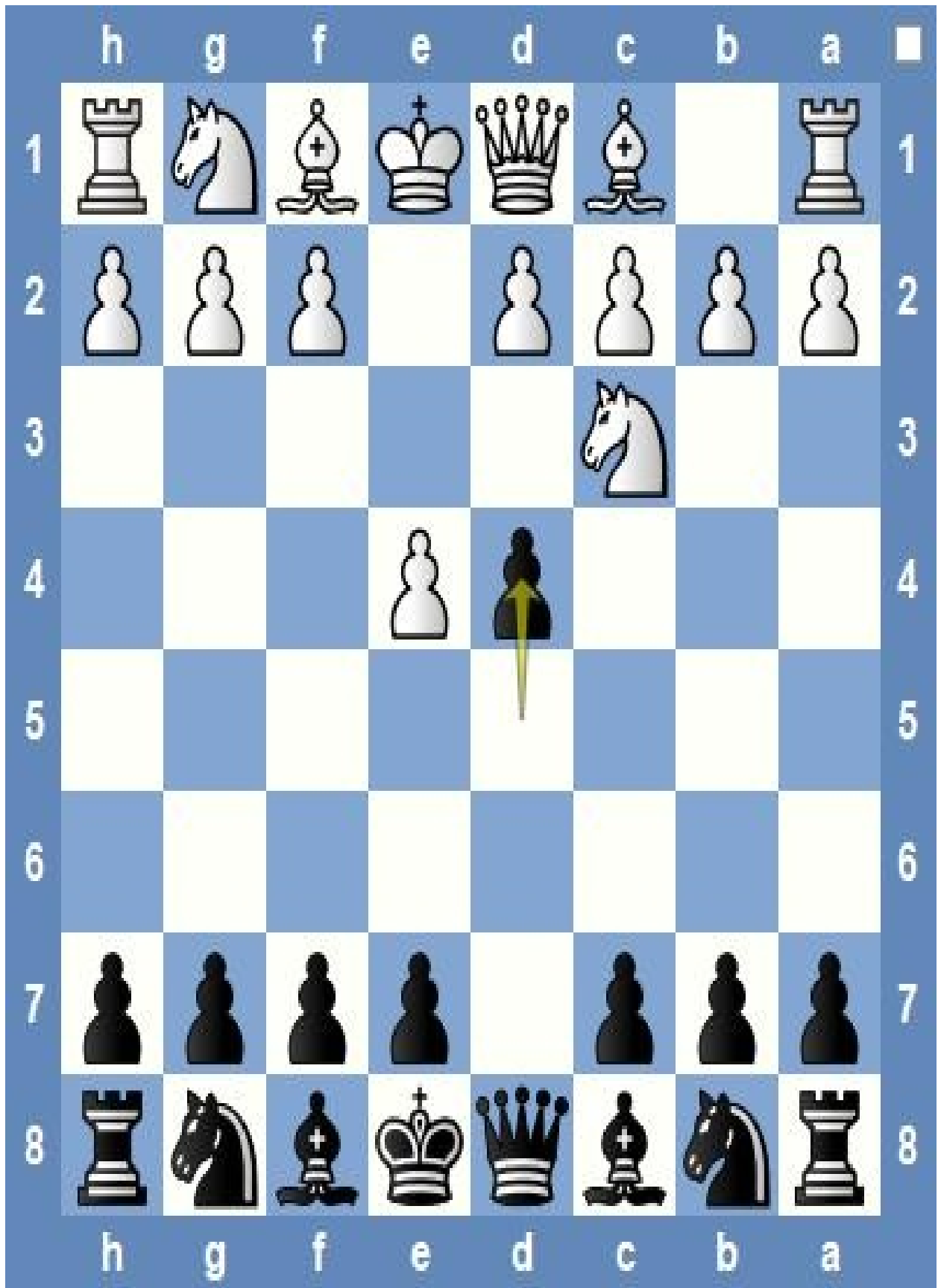
In this first chapter we see what happens if White doesn't take our d-pawn. This looks a timid action on White's part, though some of his possibilities are better than others and just maybe he's actually studied them in order to avoid Black's own preparation in the potentially theory-heavy main lines.

## **Section 1A: 2.Nc3 d4**

### **1.e4 d5 2.Nc3**

Transposing to the Dunst Opening which is also known as the van Geet Opening, i.e. 1.Nc3 d5 2.e4. It is okay (no more than that) for White but our next moves will serve to cramp him. Moreover, in typical lines, our c8-bishop will be very well-placed on e6 after ...e7-e5.

### **2...d4**



## 3.Nce2

a) 3.Nb1 Nf6! is an obviously improved version of Alekhine's Defence (1.e4 Nf6). For example, 4.e5 (4.d3 c5 so the knight can come to c6 behind the c-pawn) 4...Nd5 5.Bc4 (5.d3 c5 again) 5...Nc6 6.Qe2 Bf5 7.d3 e6 =/+.

b) 3.Nd5?! e5 4.c3 (4.Nf3? c6 wins the knight; 4.Qh5 Nd7 5.Bc4 g6 -/+ ) 4...c6 5.Nb4 Nf6 6.d3 c5 7.Nc2 Nc6 =/+.

## 3...e5 4.Ng3

a) 4.c3!? is better than its rarity and poor results suggest. 4...c5 5.cxd4 cxd4 6.Nf3 Nc6 7.Ng3 h5 8.h4 Be6 9.Ng5 (9.Bb5 f6 =) 9...d3! 10.Nxe6 fxe6 11.Qb3 Nd4 12.Qxd3 Rc8 =/+.

b) 4.Nf3 f6 5.Ng3 Be6 transposes to the main line, i.e. 4.Ng3, etc.

c) 4.d3 c5 5.g3 (5.f4 Nc6 6.Nf3 exf4 7.Nxf4 [7.Bxf4 Nf6 =/+] 7...Bd6 8.Be2 Nf6 9.O-O Qc7 =/+ ) 5...Nc6 6.Bg2 h5 =/+.

d) 4.f4 Nc6 5.d3 (5.Nf3 exf4 6.Nxf4 g5 7.Nd3 Bg7 8.g3 h5 =/+ ) 5...exf4 6.Nxf4 (6.Bxf4 is answered by ...Ng8-e7-g6) 6...Nf6 7.Be2 h6 =/+.

## **4...Be6!**

To stop 5.Bc4.

## **5.Nf3**

5.c3 Nc6 (5...c5 here can be met by 6.Bb5+) 6.Bb5 Nge7 =.

## **5...f6 6.Bb5+**

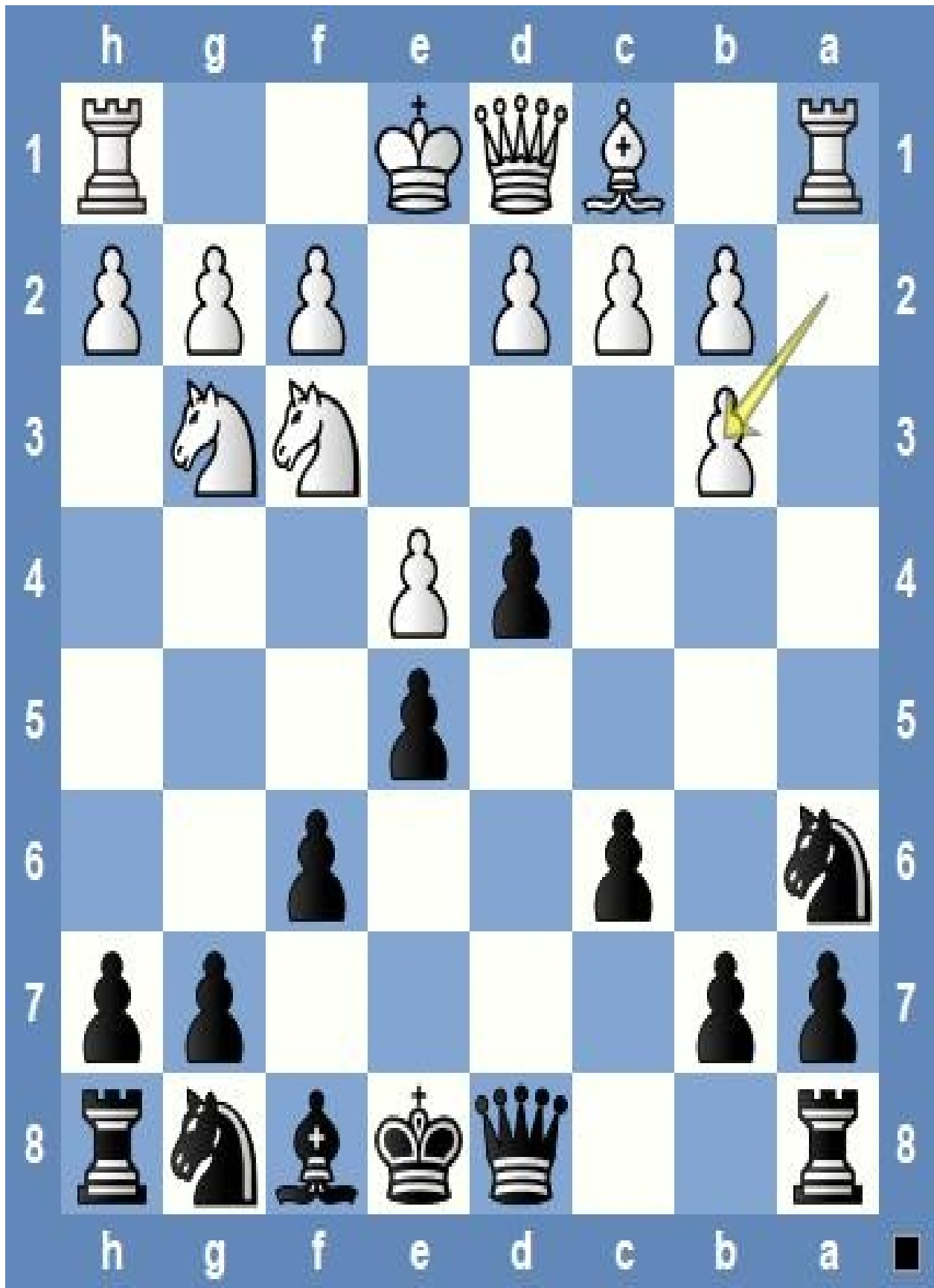
**a) 6.c3 d3! is extremely constricting. 7.Nxe5 fxe5 8.Qh5+ g6! 9.Qxe5 Qd7! (to cover h7 so the white queen is cornered after she captures the rook) 10.Qxh8 (10.Bxd3 Nc6!) 10...Nc6 11.b4 a6 -/+.**

**b) 6.d3 c5 7.Be2 Nc6 8.O-O Qd7 =.**

## **6...c6 7.Ba4 Na6 8.Bb3**

Black was threatening ...Na6-c5 to capture the bishop with the knight.

**8...Bxb3 9.axb3**



**9...d3!**

This will ruin White's tidy pawns and at the same time entomb his bishop.

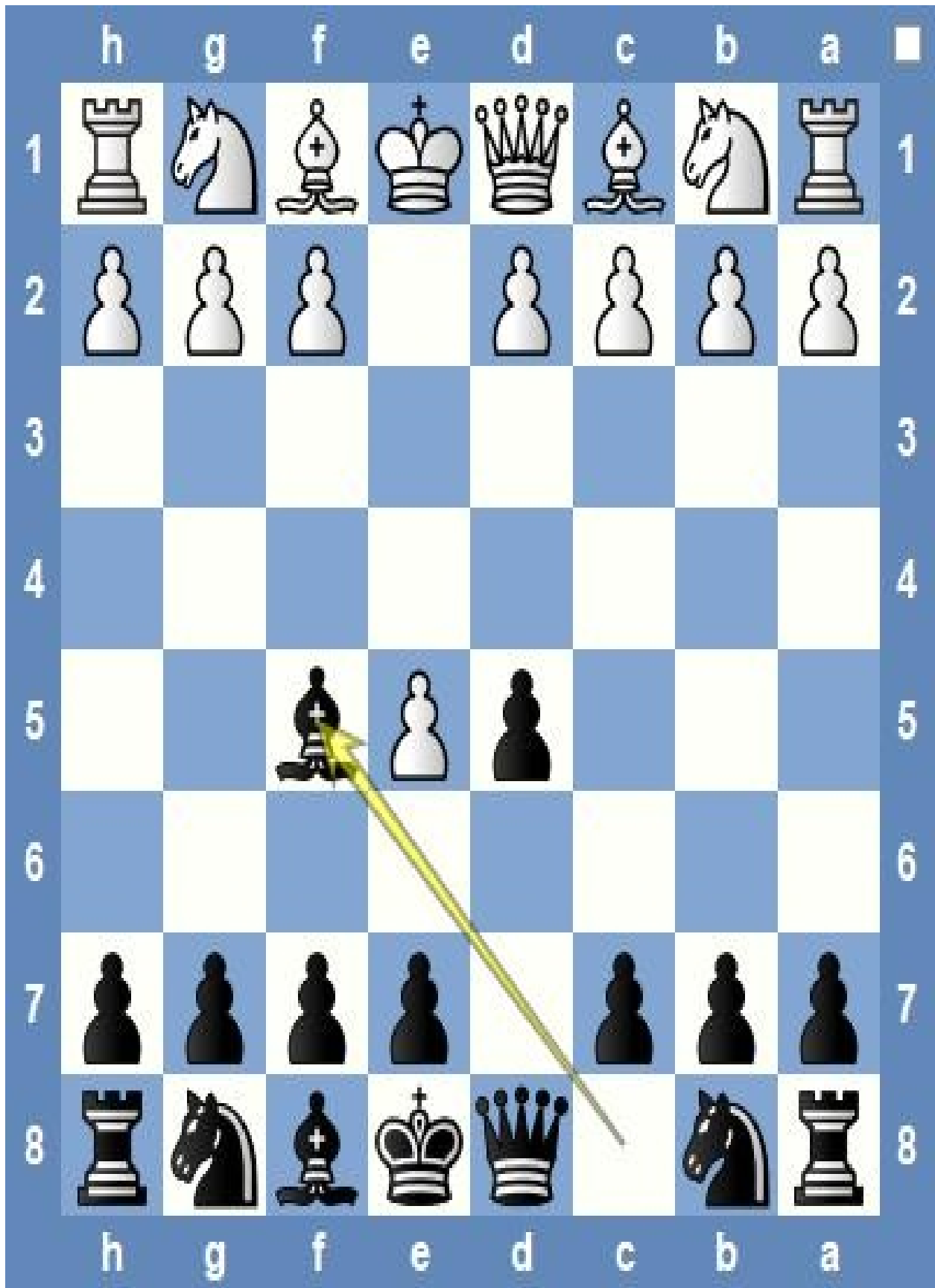
**10.O-O Nb4 11.cxd3 Nxd3 12.Ne1 Nh6 =/+.**

## **Section 1B: 2.e5 Bf5**

**1.e4 d5 2.e5**

Compared with the Advance Variation of the French Defence (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5) the c8-bishop has more options, so Black can take advantage of that.

**2...Bf5**



## **3.d4**

3.f4 e6 (3...c5 straight away is also good though happens to be less popular)  
4.Nf3 c5 5.Bb5+ Nd7 6.O-O (6.d3 is not as bad as it looks. White, despite allowing a dangerous queen check, gets a lot of play providing he's accurate.  
6...Qa5+ 7.Nc3 d4 8.b4! Qxb4 9.Rb1 Qa5! 10.Bxd7+ Kxd7 11.Rxb7+ Ke8  
12.Ng5 Nh6 13.Qf3 Rc8! =/+)  
6...c4 7.Kh1 a6 8.Bxd7+ Qxd7 9.Nd4 Nh6 10.d3 Bg6 11.Be3 Nf5 12.Nxf5 Bxf5 and Black is at least equal.

## **3...e6 4.Nf3**

4.Bd3 Bxd3 5.Qxd3 c5 6.c3 Nc6 =.

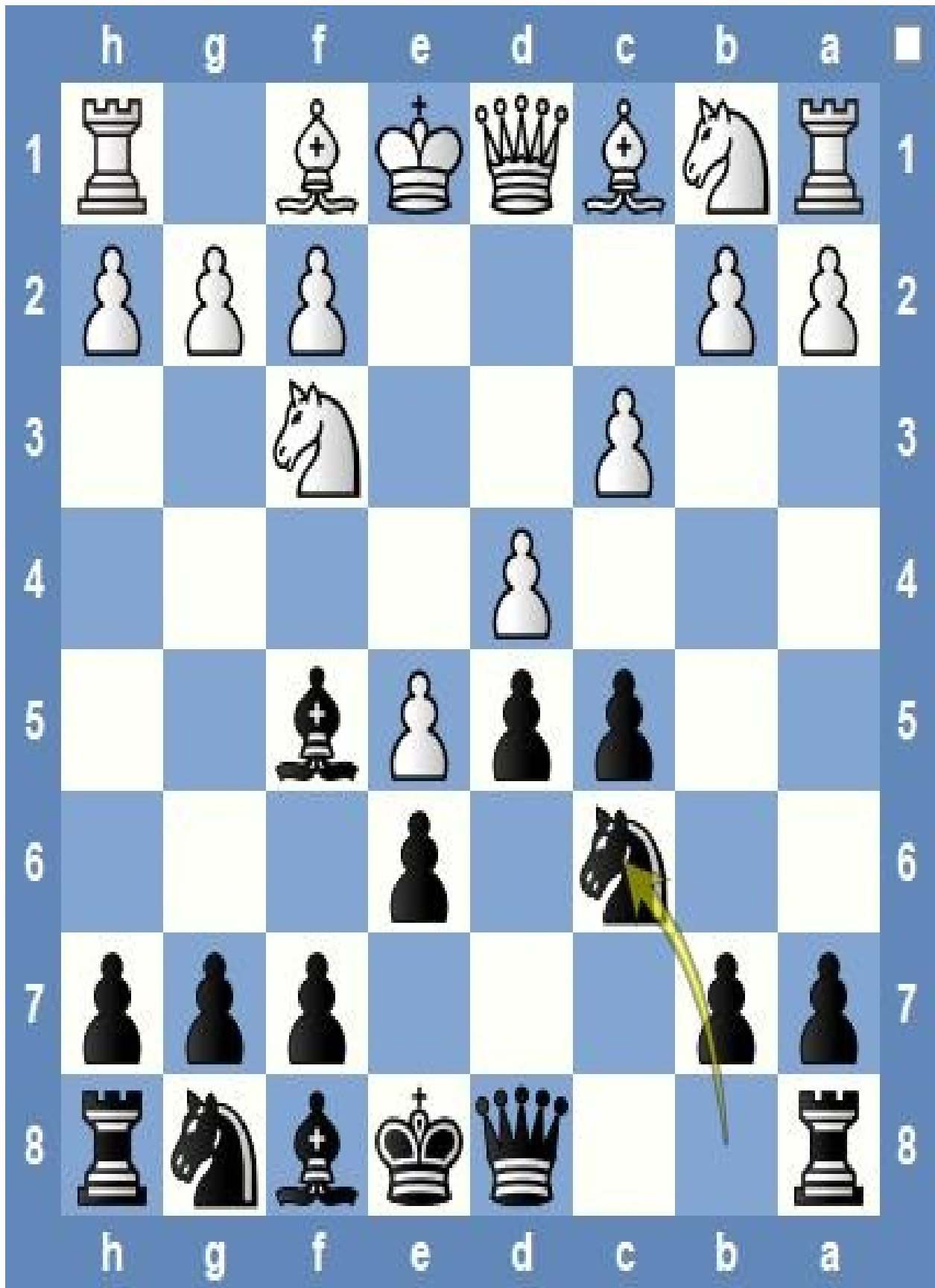
## **4...c5 5.c3**

a) 5.Bb5+ Nd7 6.O-O a6 7.Bxd7+ Qxd7 =.

b) 5.Be3 Qb6 with lively play, e.g. 6.c4 (6.Nc3 Qxb2 7.Nb5 c4!!) 6...Nc6  
7.cxd5 exd5 8.Nc3 Qxb2 9.Na4 Qc2 ~.

## **5...Nc6**





## **6.Bd3**

**a) 6.Be2 cxd4 7.cxd4 Bb4+ 8.Nc3 (8.Bd2 Nge7 =) 8...Nge7 9.O-O O-O 10.Be3 Bg6 intending ...Ne7-f5 is level.**

**b) 6.Bb5 Qb6 7.Bxc6+ (7.Ba4 Bg4 =; 7.a4 c4!) 7...bxc6 (7...Qxc6!?) 8.O-O a5 =.**

**c) 6.Be3 Qb6 7.Nbd2 Qxb2 8.dxc5 a6! 9.Nd4 Nge7 =.**

## **6...Bxd3**

Best of all may be 6...Be4!, e.g. 7.Be3 Nh6! or 7.O-O Bxf3 followed by 8...cxd4.

## **7.Qxd3 Rc8 8.O-O cxd4 9.cxd4 Nb4!**

Black takes advantage of his control of the c-file, ensuring a queen swap or retreat, curtailing any white counterplay.

## **10.Qb5+ Qd7 11.Nc3**

11.a4!? a6 12.Qe2 Ne7 leaves Black with the better options.

**11...Qxb5 12.Nxb5 a6 13.Nc3 Ne7 =.**

## Section 1C: 2.d4 dxe4

### 1.e4 d5 2.d4 dxe4

Instead, Black can revert to one of the semi-open defences: 2...c6 is the Caro-Kann, 2...e6 is the French, and 2...Nc6 is the Nimzowitsch. We might well try one of those more familiar lines rather than face the "scary" gambit that follows.

### 3.Nc3

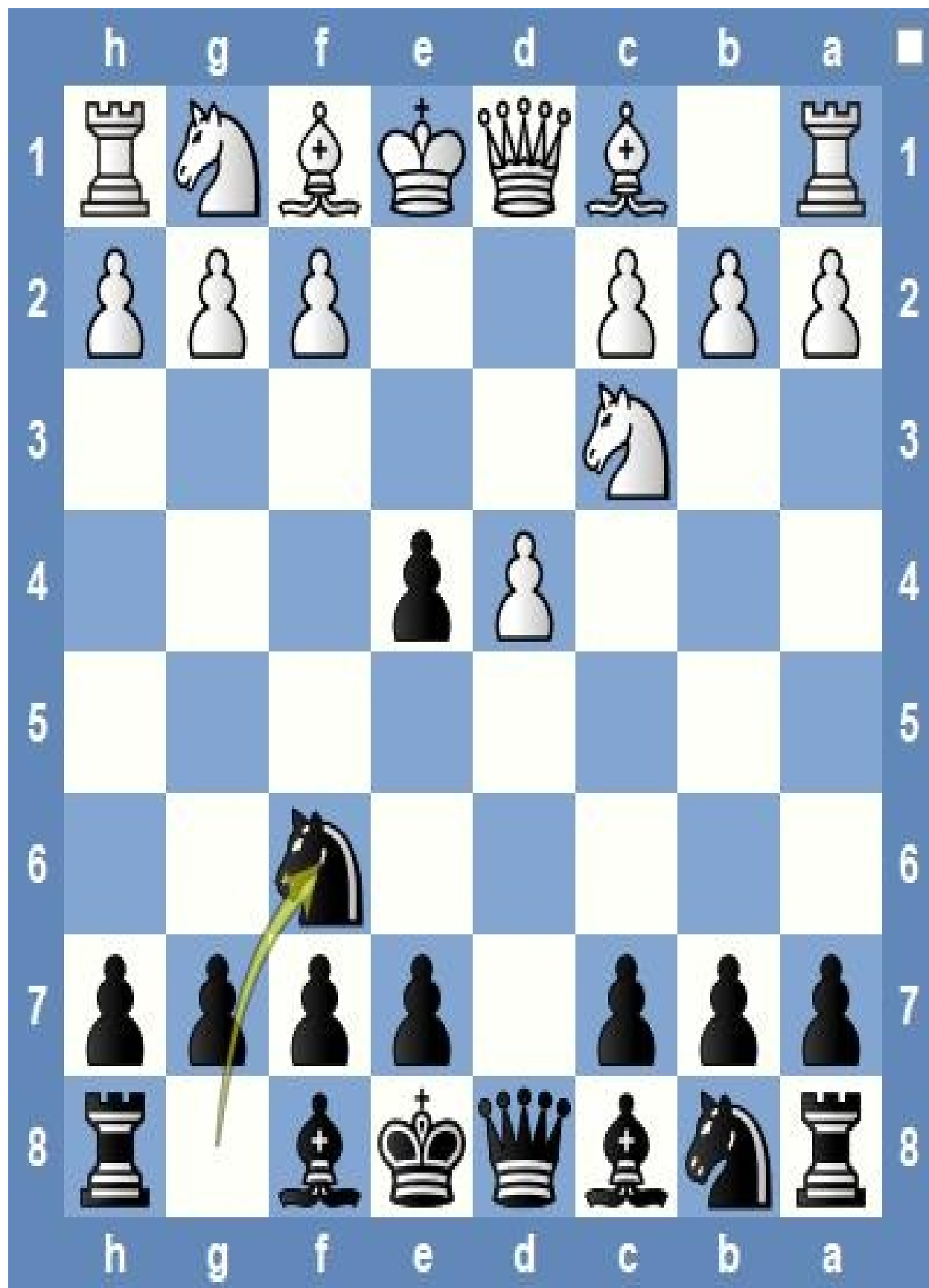
We reach the Blackmar-Diemer Gambit (BDG). It has a fearsome reputation that is undeserved if Black has done his homework by studying this section (or some other source).

Actually, it's unlikely that White would start with 1.e4 and then transpose to a 1.d4 opening (i.e. 1.d4 d5 2.e4 dxe4 3.Nc3 which is the usual route to the BDG) just because Black plays the Scandinavian Defence. Still, it's important for us to be prepared for this very tactical switch.

**a) 3.f3 e5!**

**b) 3.Bc4 Nc6! threatens ...Nc6-a5 not to mention the d4-pawn.**

**3...Nf6**



## 4.f3

4.Bg5 Bf5!

## 4...Bf5

The Vienna Defence. It's more usual to play 4...exf3 but that just follows White's plans.

## 5.fxe4

The two main moves are 5.fxe4 and 5.g4. The others are mentioned in passing. Black remains better with his extra pawn.

**a) 5.g4 leads to lively play requiring care by Black. However, White's position is so loose that this has even been called the Hara-Kiri (i.e. Suicide) Gambit. 5...Bg6.**

**a1) 6.g5 Nd5 7.Nxe4 (7.fxe4 [Kampars Gambit] Nxc3 8.bxc3 Bxe4 9.Nf3 Nc6 -/+)** 7...e6 8.c4 Nb6 9.Be3 Nc6 =/+.

**a2) 6.h4 (the Gunderam Attack, not be confused with Section 4A of the same name) 6...h6 7.fxe4 (7.Nh3 Nc6!; 7.Bg2 Nc6!; 7.Be3 e6!) 7...Nxe4 8.Bg2 Nxc3 9.bxc3 Nd7 10.Rb1 (10.Bxb7 Rb8 11.Qf3 e6 =/+ ) 10...e6 11.Rxb7 Be7 12.h5 Bh7 13.Nh3 O-O 14.O-O a5 =.**

**b) 5.Bg5 Nbd7 =/+.**

**c) 5.Bc4 (the Soller Attack) 5...Nc6 =/+.**

**d) 5.Qe2 Nc6!**

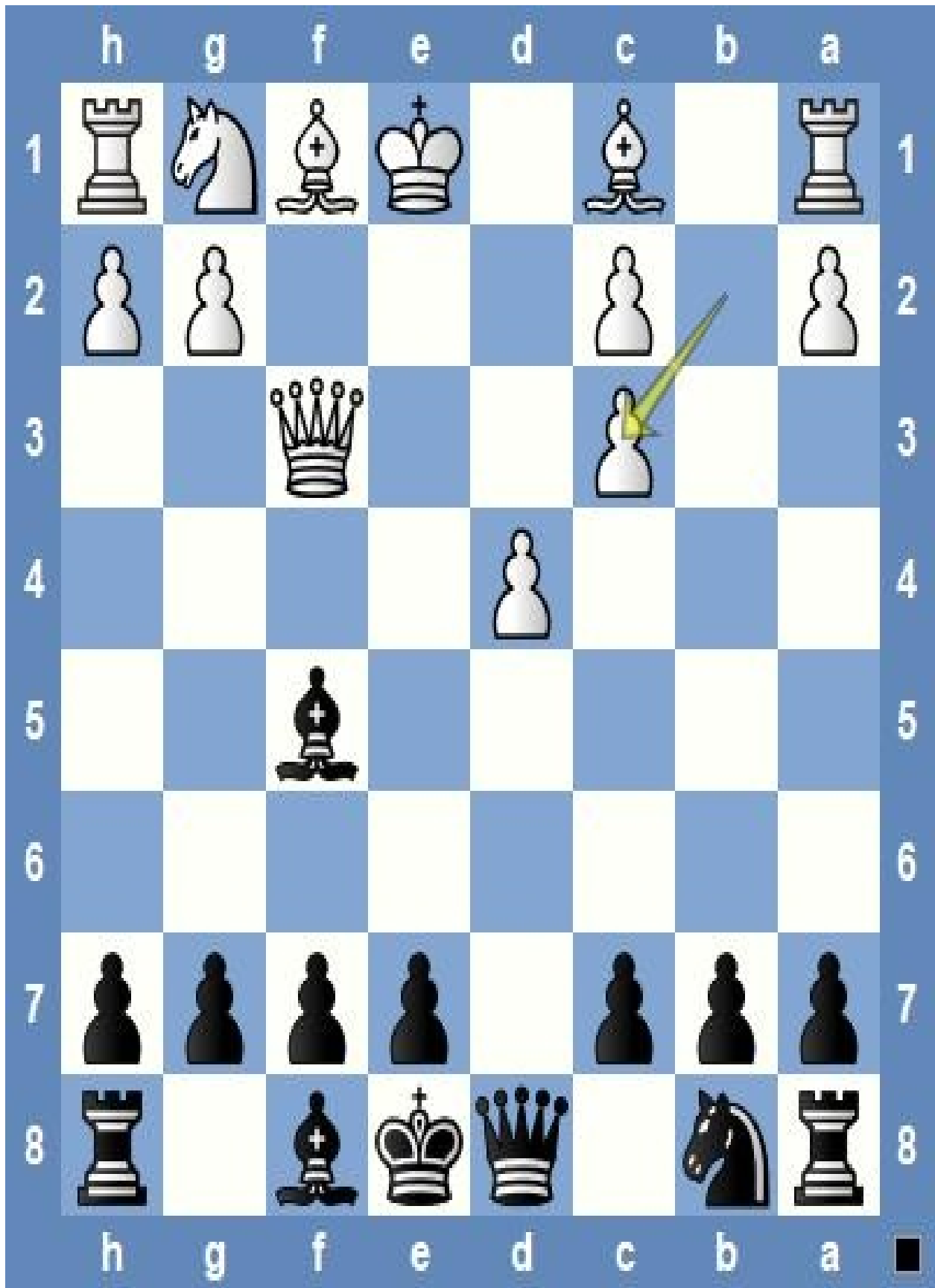
**e) 5.Bf4 Nc6 6.Bb5 e6 +/-.**

**5...Nxe4 6.Qf3 Nxc3!**

A little tricky but an improvement on 6...Nd6 7.Bf4, etc.

**7.bxc3**

7.Qxf5 e6! and the uncaptured black knight on c3 is still guarding against a check on b5.



**7...e6!**

This leads to much more active play than saving the b7-pawn (and light-squared bishop) with the materialistic 7...Qc8 or 7...Bc8.

**8.Qxb7 Nd7 9.Bd3 Bxd3**

Or 9...Rb8 10.Qxa7 Be4! 11.Bxe4 Qh4+ =/+.

**10.cxd3 c5 11.Nf3**

11.Ne2 is the same.

**11...cxd4 12.Nxd4 Bc5 13.Nc6 Qc8 14.Qxc8+ Rxc8  
15.Na5 O-O =/+.**

## Section 1D: 2.Nf3 and others

### 1.e4 d5 2.Nf3?!

The Tennison Gambit. It would be great for Reti Opening (1.Nf3) players if the gambit actually worked because then they could try 1.Nf3 d5 2.e4 more often.

Note how we, in response as Black, take the e-pawn of course but then delay moving our g-knight to f6 often preferring it to go to e7.

Alternatives to 2.Nf3 are:

a) 2.c3?! dxe4 3.Qa4+ Nc6 4.Qxe4 Nf6 =/+.

b) 2.f3 e5!

c) 2.a3 shows White may be intending a kind of inverted Englund Gambit (1.d4 e5?!). 2...dxe4 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Qe2 Nc6 5.Nxe4 Nd4 6.Nxf6+ (6.Qd3? Nxe4 7.Qxe4 Bf5 -+) 6...gxf6 7.Qd1 Bg4! -/+.

d) 2.d3 dxe4 (Black has a wide choice of reasonable alternatives if he wants

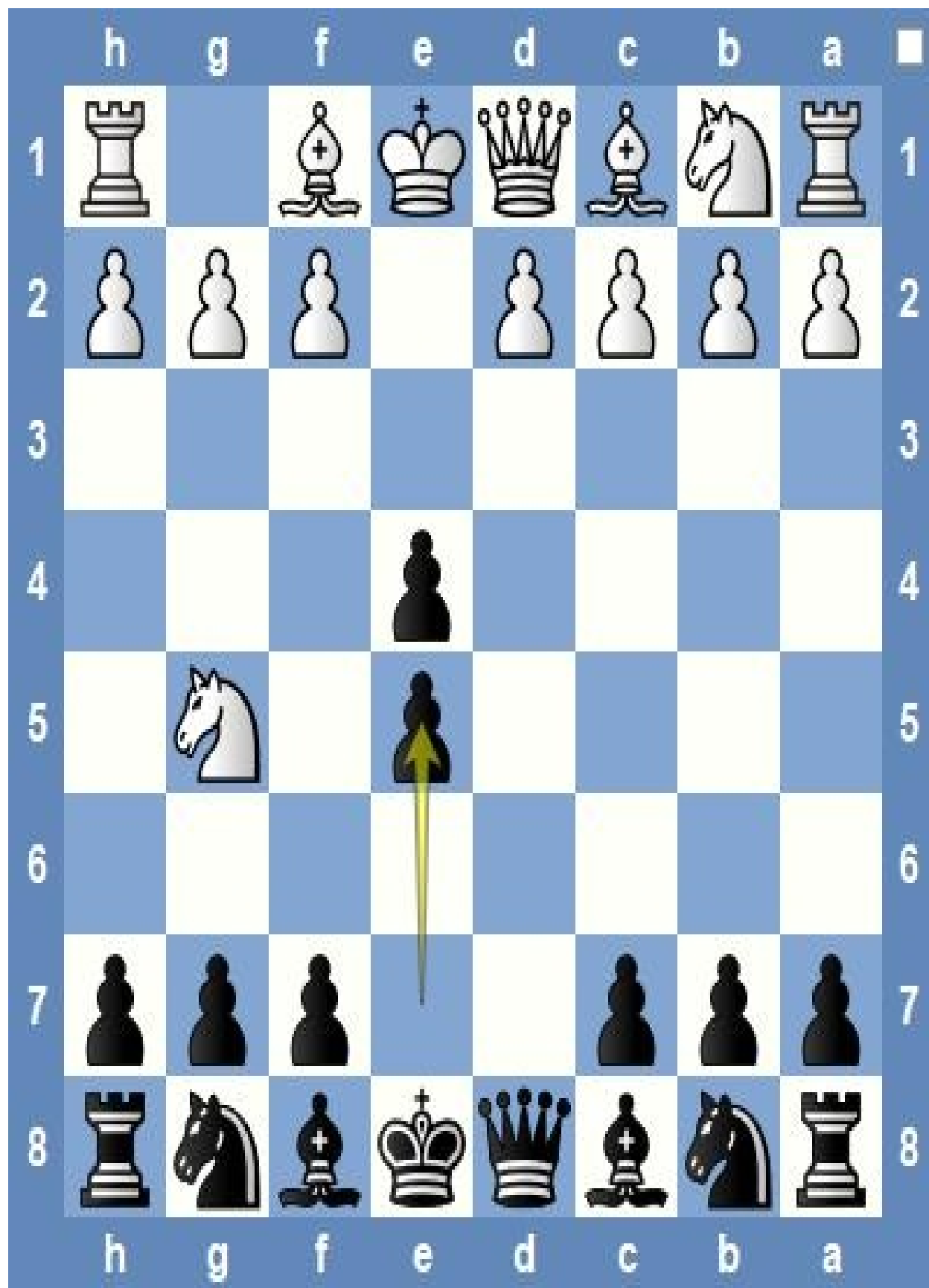
to retain queens) 3.dxe4 (3.Nc3!? exd3 4.Bxd3 Nc6 ~) 3...Qxd1+ 4.Kxd1 Nc6 with no advantage to White. Black prepares to castle long.

## 2...dxe4 3.Ng5

3.Ne5 Nd7 4.Nc4 Ngf6 =/+.

## 3...e5

Simpler than 3...Bf5 which is also good.



## **4.Nxe4**

a) **4.h4 h6 5.Nxe4 Nc6 6.Bb5 Nge7 =/+.**

b) **4.d3 exd3 5.Bxd3 Be7 6.Nf3 (6.Ne4 f5 7.Ng3 g6 8.O-O Nc6 -/+ ) 6...e4!  
7.Bxe4 Qxd1+ 8.Kxd1 Nf6 9.Bd3 Ng4 =/+ or the simpler 9...Nc6 hurrying to  
castle queenside.**

## **4...f5 5.Ng3**

a) **5.Bc4?? Qh4 -+.**

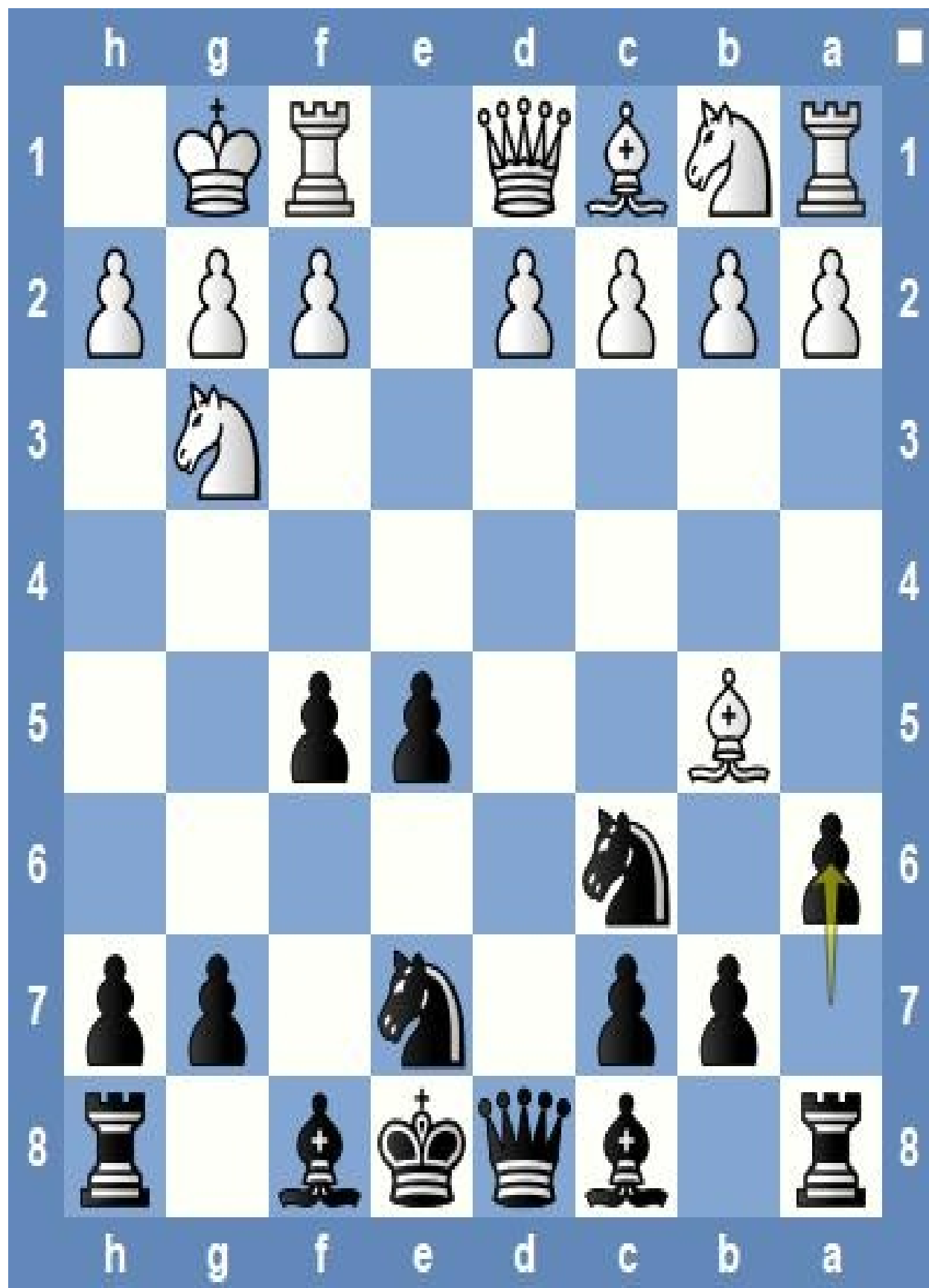
b) **5.d4 Qxd4! 6.Qxd4 exd4 7.Ng5 h6 8.Nf3 Nc6 and Black, a pawn up, will  
aim to castle long.**

## **5...Nc6! 6.Bb5**

6.Bc4 Qh4! Not possible if Black had played 5...Nf6.

## **6...Nge7 7.O-O a6**





**8.Ba4**

8.Bc4 is also met by 8...b5.

**8...b5 9.Bb3 Nd4 10.d3 Nxb3 11.axb3 Bb7 -/+.**

## ***Chapter 2: 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.d4 Nxd5***

In this chapter we face some of our greatest challenges as Black, in particular 3.d4 coupled with 4.c4 (Section 2B). Note that 3.d4 occurs in about 40% of games, which makes it Black's top study priority.

After 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.d4 Nxd5, the equalising continuation 4.Nc3?! Nxc3 5.bxc3 e5 (or 5...g6) doesn't really deserve a section.

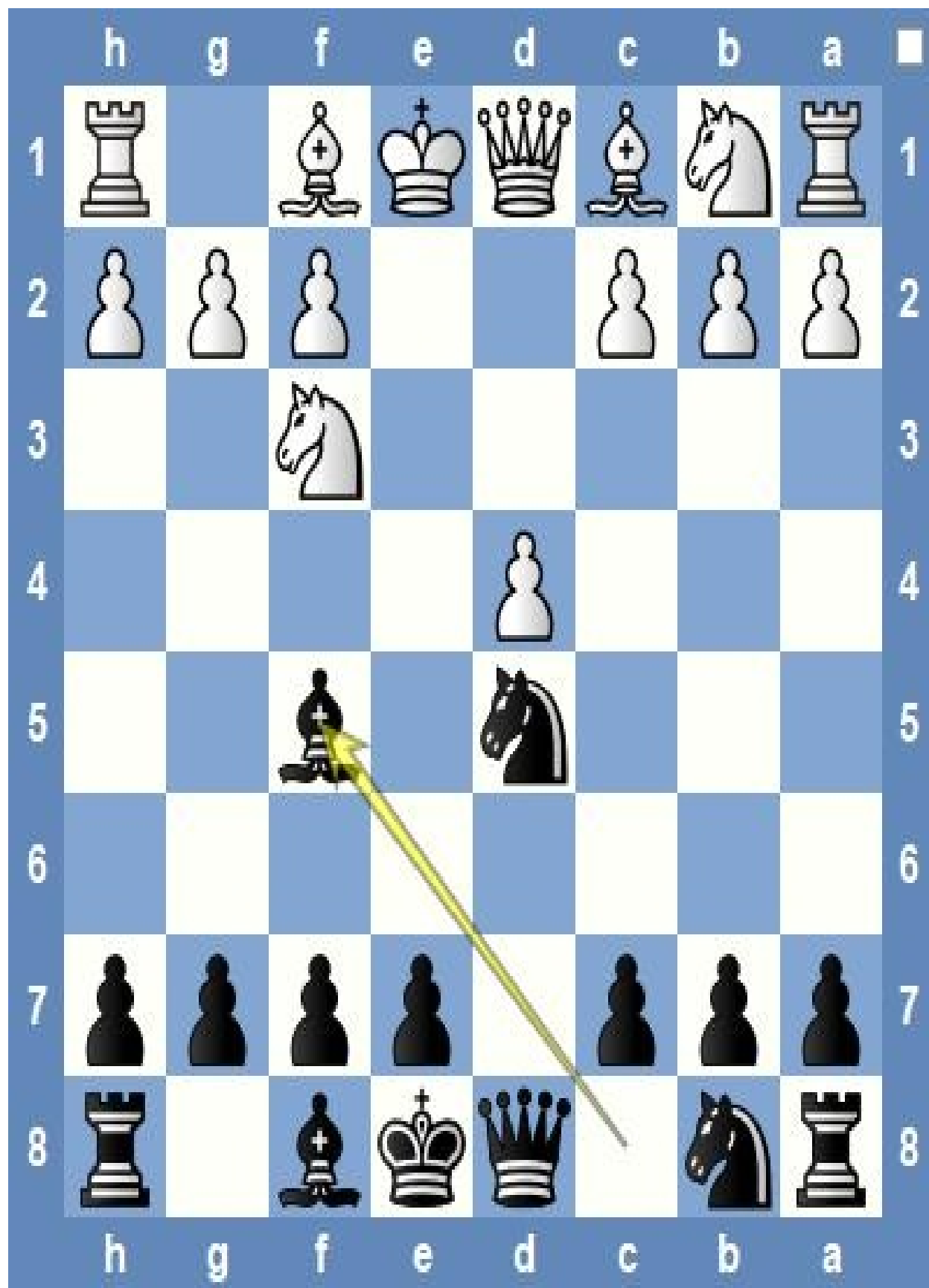
## Section 2A: 4.Nf3 Bf5

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.d4 Nxd5 4.Nf3**

Second only to 4.c4. White develops quickly and sensibly, so we must do the same.

**4...Bf5**

Much less common than 4...g6 or 4...Bg4 but just about as good. White is forced to think about the threat of ...Nd5-b4.



## 5.Bd3!

White immediately confronts the piece that had just been so nicely activated. He is not short of alternatives, but they're not as incisive.

**a) 5.Be2. This is a common position as it is also reached (taking an extra move) by 3.Bb5+ Bd7 (in Chapter 3 our repertoire covers only 3...Nbd7) 4.Be2 Nxd5 5.d4 Bf5 6.Nf3. Here we look at two lines for Black after 5.Be2.**

**a1) 5...Nb4!? 6.Na3 e6 7.c3 (7.O-O Be7 8.c3 Nd5 is similar) 7...Nd5 (=) 8.Qb3 Nd7 9.Qxb7?! Bxa3 10.bxa3 Nxc3 =.**

**a2) 5...e6 (way more popular than the immediate 5...Nb4) 6.O-O Nb4 7.Na3 Be7 8.c3 Nd5 9.Qb3 Nd7 is level, e.g. 10.Qxb7 Bxa3 11.bxa3 Nxc3 12.Bc4 O-O =.**

**b) 5.a3 (wanting to play c2-c4 but fearing ...Nd5-b4) 5...e6 6.c4 Nf6 7.Nc3 Ne4 8.Bd3 Nxc3 9.bxc3 Bxd3 10.Qxd3 Nd7 =.**

**c) 5.c4 Nb4! 6.Na3 e6 7.Be2 Be7 8.O-O O-O =.**

**d) 5.c3 e6 6.Bd3 Bxd3 7.Qxd3 c5! 8.dxc5 Bxc5 (8...Be7!? and White will get in a mess if he tries to hang on to the pawn, e.g. 9.b4?! a5 10.Bd2 axb4**

**11.cxb4? Bf6 -+) 9.Qb5+ Nd7 10.Qxb7 O-O 11.O-O a5 ~/=.**

**e) 5.Nh4 Bd7 6.c4 (6.g3 e6 =) 6...e6 7.Nf3 Nf6 with thoughts of ...c7-c5 is level.**

**f) 5.Bc4 e6 6.O-O Be7 =.**

## **5...Bxd3**

The second favourite is 5...Bg6, but White is sitting pretty after 6.Bxg6 hxg6 7.c4 Nf6 8.Qb3!

## **6.Qxd3**

White has a pleasant lead in development; however, he has traded his light-squared bishop, usually the most threatening white minor piece. Meanwhile Black is on the defensive — that's true — but our pattern of development will be straightforward.

## **6...e6 7.O-O**

**7.Qb5+ Nc6 8.O-O (8.Qxb7? Ndb4 -+) 8...Nb6 =.**

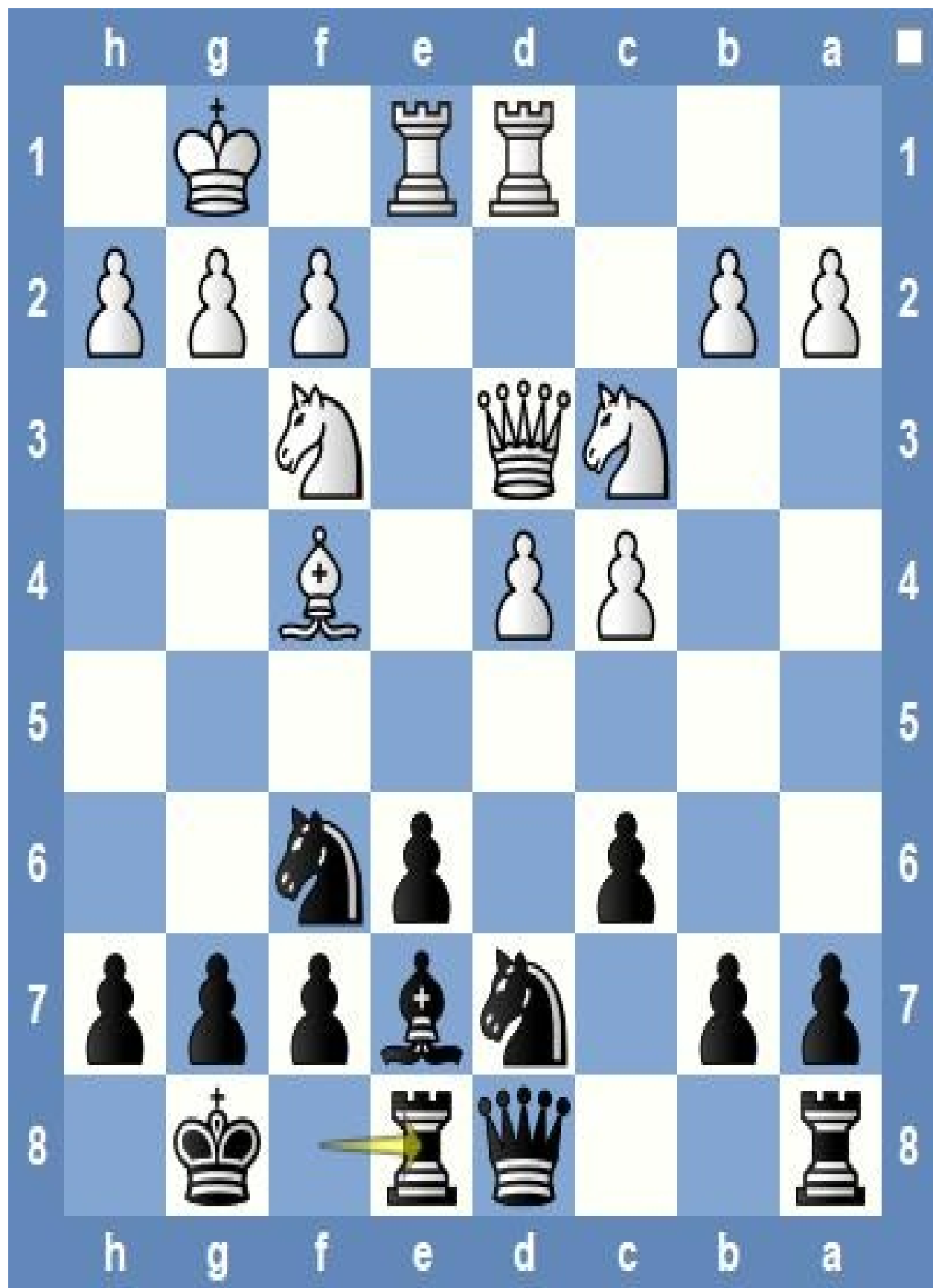
## **7...Nd7**

7...c6 8.c4 Nf6 9.Nc3 Be7 10.Bf4 Nbd7 11.Rfe1 O-O 12.Rad1 transposes.

## **8.c4 N5f6 9.Nc3**

9.d5 exd5 10.Re1+ Be7 11.Qe2 Nf8 (11...Nc5 has the same idea of sending the knight to e6 sooner or later) 12.cxd5 Nxd5 13.Qb5+ c6 14.Qxb7 Qc8 15.Qxc8+ Rxc8 =.

## **9...Be7 10.Bf4 O-O 11.Rad1 c6 12.Rfe1 Re8**



## **13.h3**

13.Ne5 Qa5 14.a3 Rad8 intending ...Nd7-f8 as in the next note.

## **13...Qa5**

13...Nf8 14.Qc2 Ng6 is also near-equal.

## **14.Ne5**

14.a3 Qa6!?

## **14...Nxe5 15.dxe5 Red8 16.Qe2 Nd7 =.**

The knight heads (slowly) to g6.

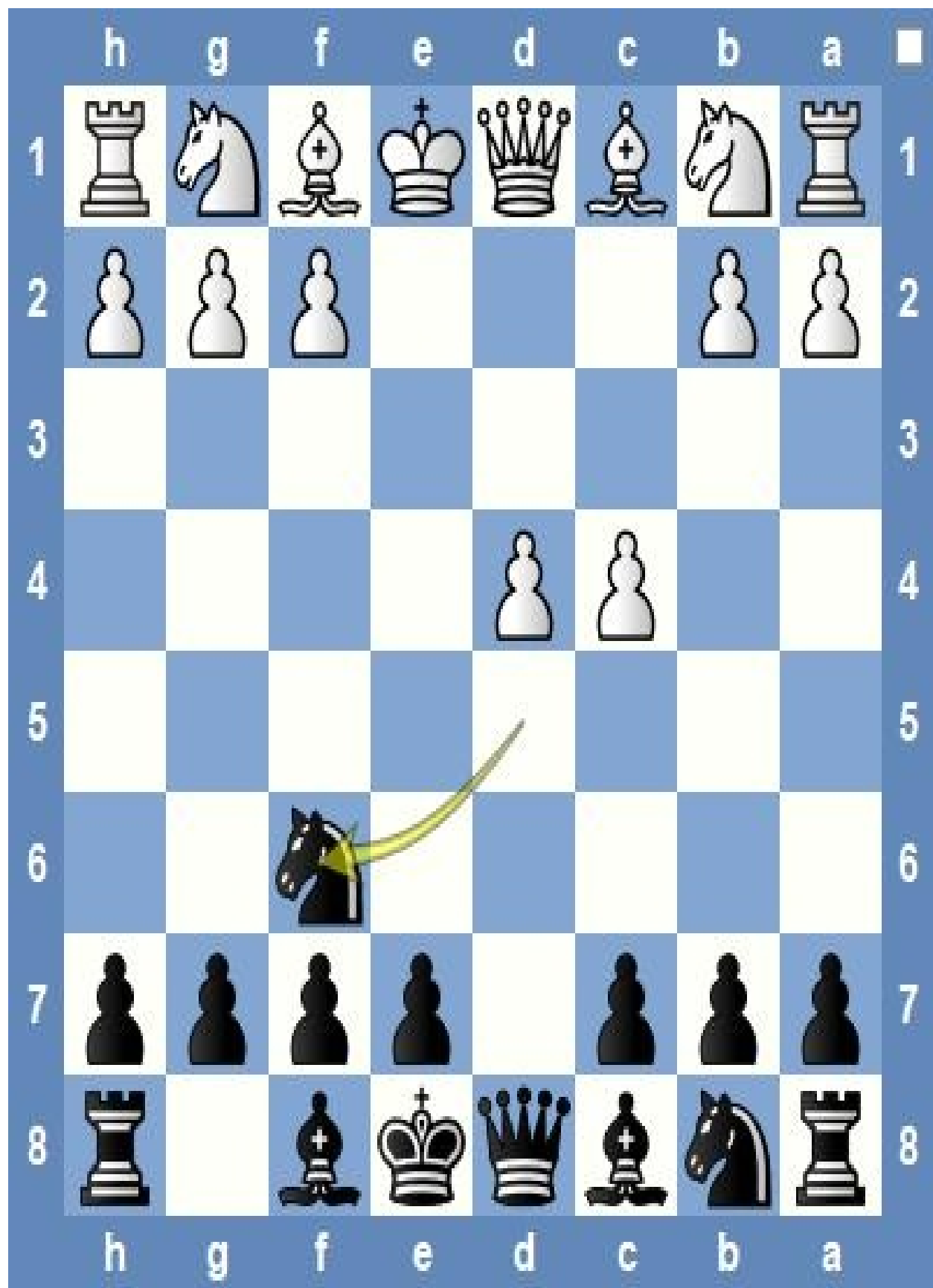
## Section 2B: 4.c4 Nf6

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.d4 Nxd5 4.c4**

Unsurprisingly the most popular move as it is forcing and achieves good results. However, we have some interesting deviations and alternatives for Black.

**4...Nf6**

The Marshall Retreat Variation. Not for us the standard 4...Nb6 (typically accompanied by a kingside fianchetto).



## 5.Nc3

a) 5.Nf3 c5!? Rare. If Black wants to play this move he usually precedes it by 5...e6. We want to surprise White, though.

a1) 6.d5 (commonest but not best, I'm pleased to report) 6...e6 7.Nc3 Bd6! 8.Bg5 O-O (Black does not fear the breakup of his kingside pawns; if he does, he could play 8...h6) 9.Ne4 exd5 10.Bxf6 gxf6 11.Qxd5 Qe7 12.Qxd6 Qxe4+ 13.Be2 Be6 14.Qxc5 Re8 ~/= . Black's more active pieces will soon regain him the pawn.

a2) 6.Nc3! is undeniably better-looking for White but nevertheless defensible by Black, e.g. 6...e6 (alternatively 6...cxd4 7.Qxd4 Qa5 8.Qe5! Qxe5+ 9.Nxe5 Nc6 10.Nxc6 bxc6 +/-) 7.Bg5 (7.Be3 Ng4!?!; 7.d5 transposes to 6.d5; 7.Be2 cxd4 8.Qxd4 [8.Nxd4 e5!] 8...Be7 9.Qxd8+ Bxd8 10.O-O Nc6 ~) 7...h6 8.Bxf6 Qxf6 9.d5 Bd6! ~.

a3) 6.Be2 transposes to b).

b) 5.Be2 c5!? 6.Nf3 cxd4 7.Qxd4 (7.Nxd4 e5!) 7...Qxd4 8.Nxd4 a6 9.Bf4 (to stop ...e7-e5) 9...Bg4 10.f3 Bd7 11.Nc3 Nc6. Black has responded as best as he can to his opponent's accurate play and can fight for equality.

## 5...e5!?

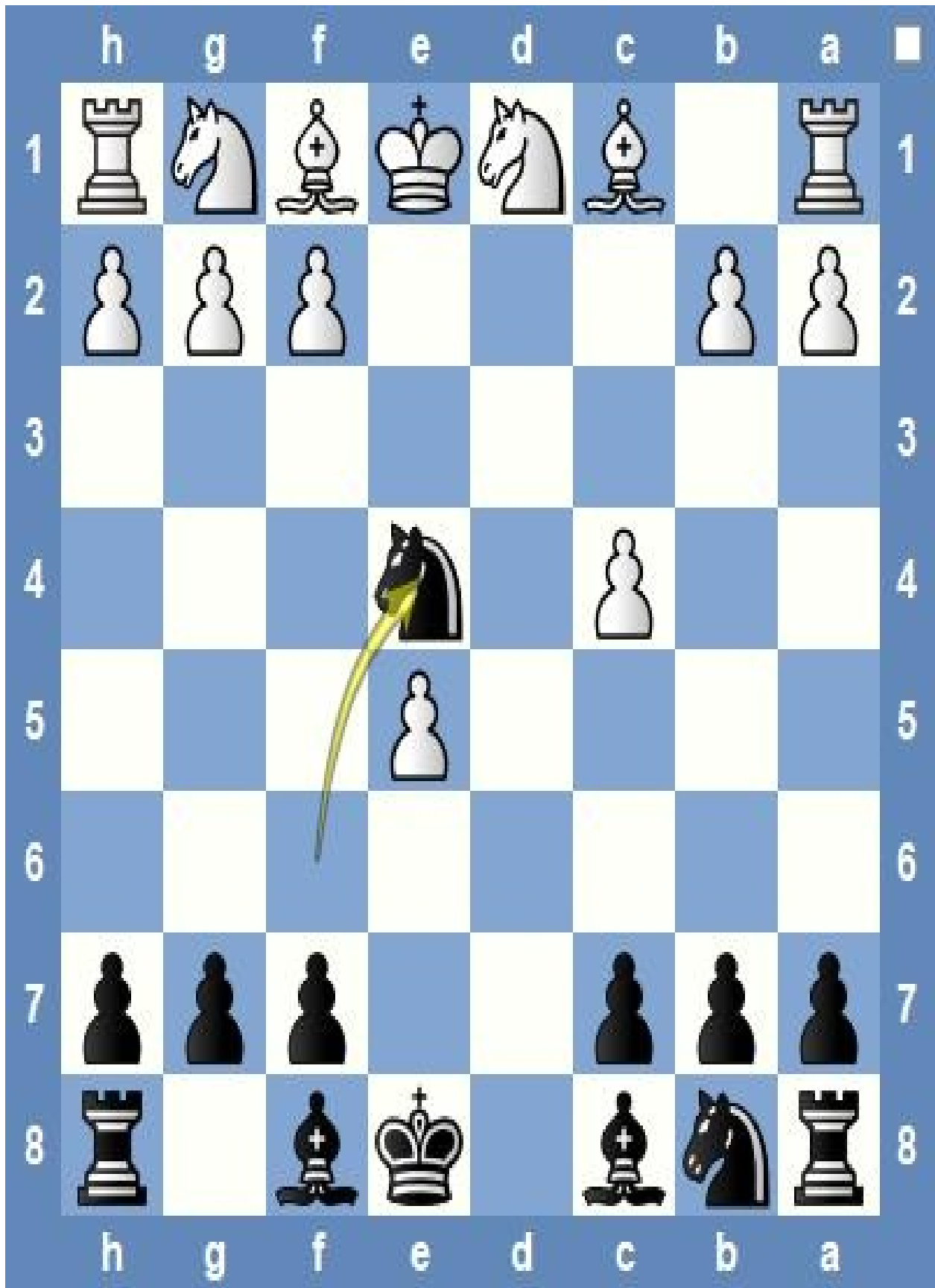
All because White played a knight to c3 rather than f3, and yet 5.Nc3 remains more popular than 5.Nf3.

## **6.dxe5**

6.d5 Bc5 (6...c6!?) 7.Nf3 (7.Be2 e4!?) 7...O-O 8.Be2 Re8 9.O-O a5 =.

## **6...Qxd1+ 7.Nxd1 Ne4**

Better than 7...Ng4 8.f4 with 9.h3 next.



## **8.Bd3**

8.Ne3 Be6 9.Nd5 Na6 10.f3 Nec5 11.Bd2 O-O-O 12.O-O-O h6 ~/=.

## **8...Bb4+**

Another line for Black is 8...Nc5 9.Bb1 Nc6 10.f4 Be6 11.b3 O-O-O 12.Nf3 Bg4 ~/=.

## **9.Kf1 Bf5**

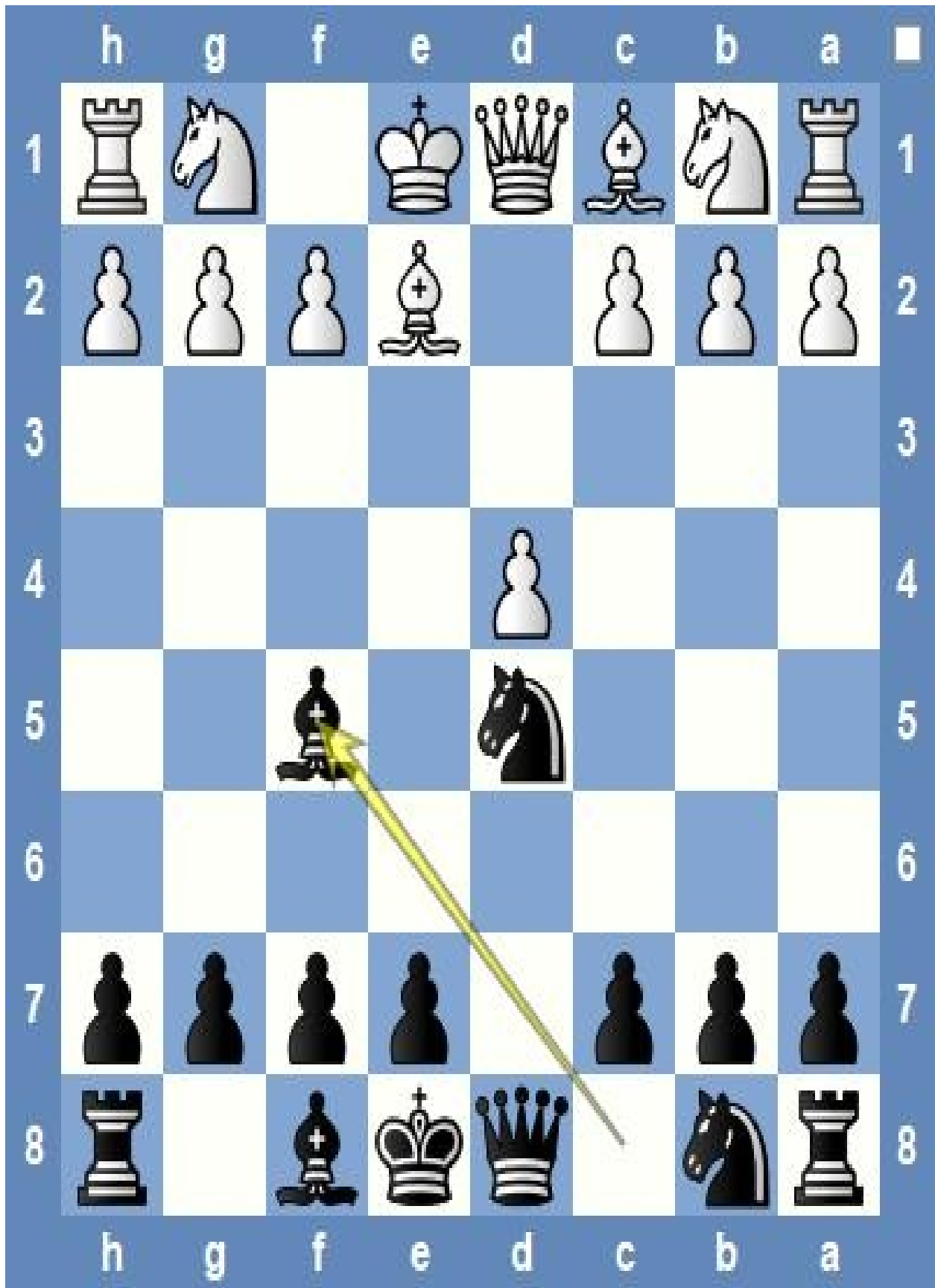
Yet another line for Black is 9...Nc5 10.Bc2 Nc6 11.Ne3 Nd4 12.Ne2 Nxc2 13.Nxc2 Nd3 14.Nxb4 Nxb4 15.Bd2 Nd3 ~/=.

**10.Bb1 Nc6 11.f4 Rd8 12.Ne3 Bc5 13.Ke1 Bg6 ~/=.**

## Section 2C: 4.Be2 Bf5

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.d4 Nxd5 4.Be2 Bf5**

The same position is reached (taking an extra move) by 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.Bb5+ Bd7 4.Be2 Nxd5 5.d4 Bf5. However, 3...Bd7 is not in our repertoire. Instead, in Chapter 3 we answer 3.Bb5+ with 3...Nbd7.



### **5.a3**

5.Nf3 transposes to section 2A.

White is exhibiting an abundance of caution, which can't lead to his advantage. 4.Be2 was to avoid 4.Nf3 Bg4, and now 5.a3 is to prevent ...Nd5-b4.

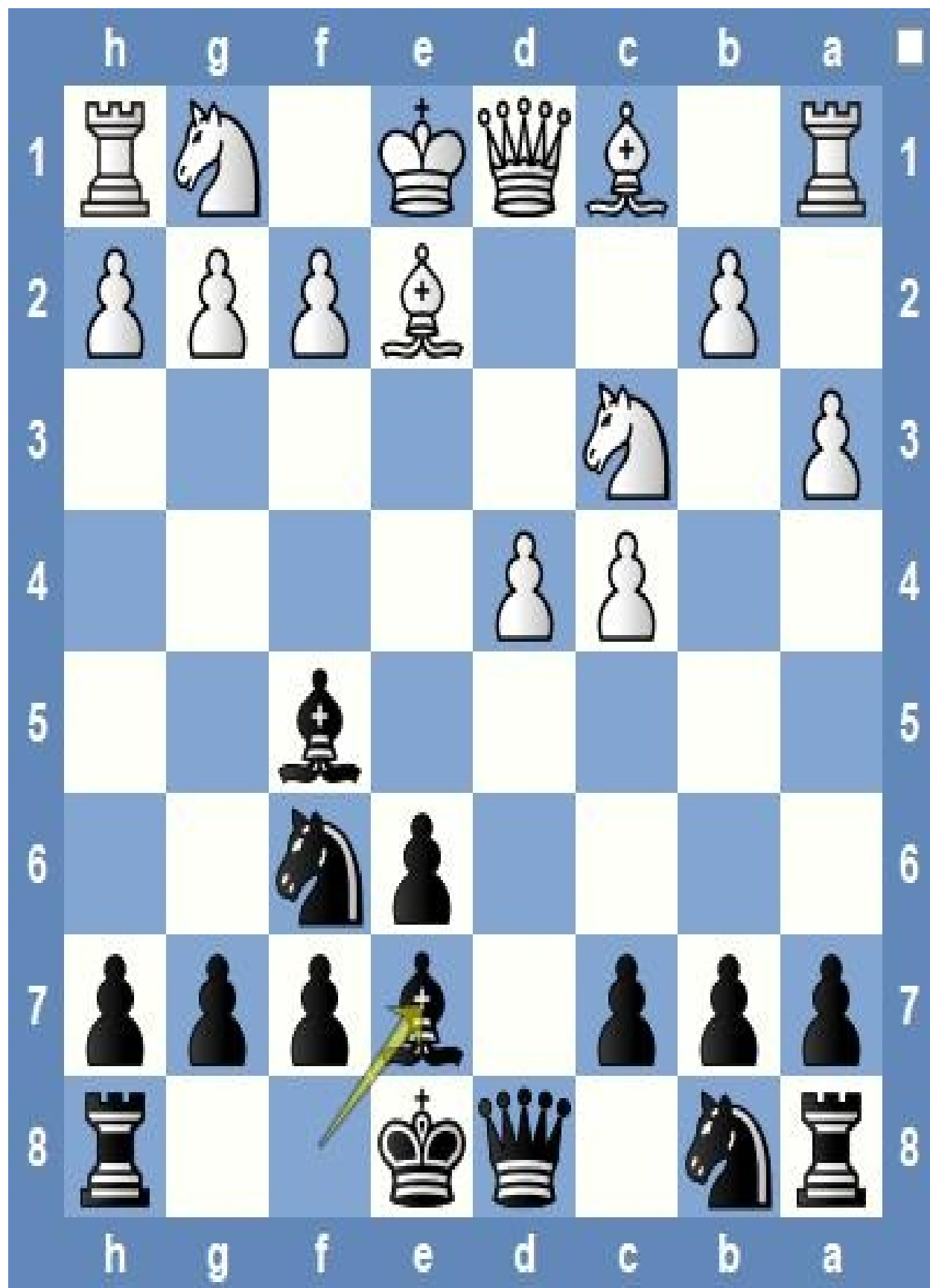
### **5...e6**

5...g6 here is good, but not in the style of the rest of this book.

### **6.c4 Nf6**

6...Nb6 here is good, but again not in the style of the rest of the book.

### **7.Nc3 Be7**



## 8.Nf3

8.g4 Bg6 9.h4 h5 10.gxh5 (10.g5 Ne4 11.Nxe4 Bxe4 12.Bf3 Bxf3 13.Nxf3 c5 =)  
10...Nxb5 11.Be3 c5 is complex but about level, e.g. 12.dxc5 Nd7 13.b4 a6 ~.

## 8...O-O

Another idea is ...Nf6-e4xc3 straight away.

## 9.O-O Ne4 10.Qb3

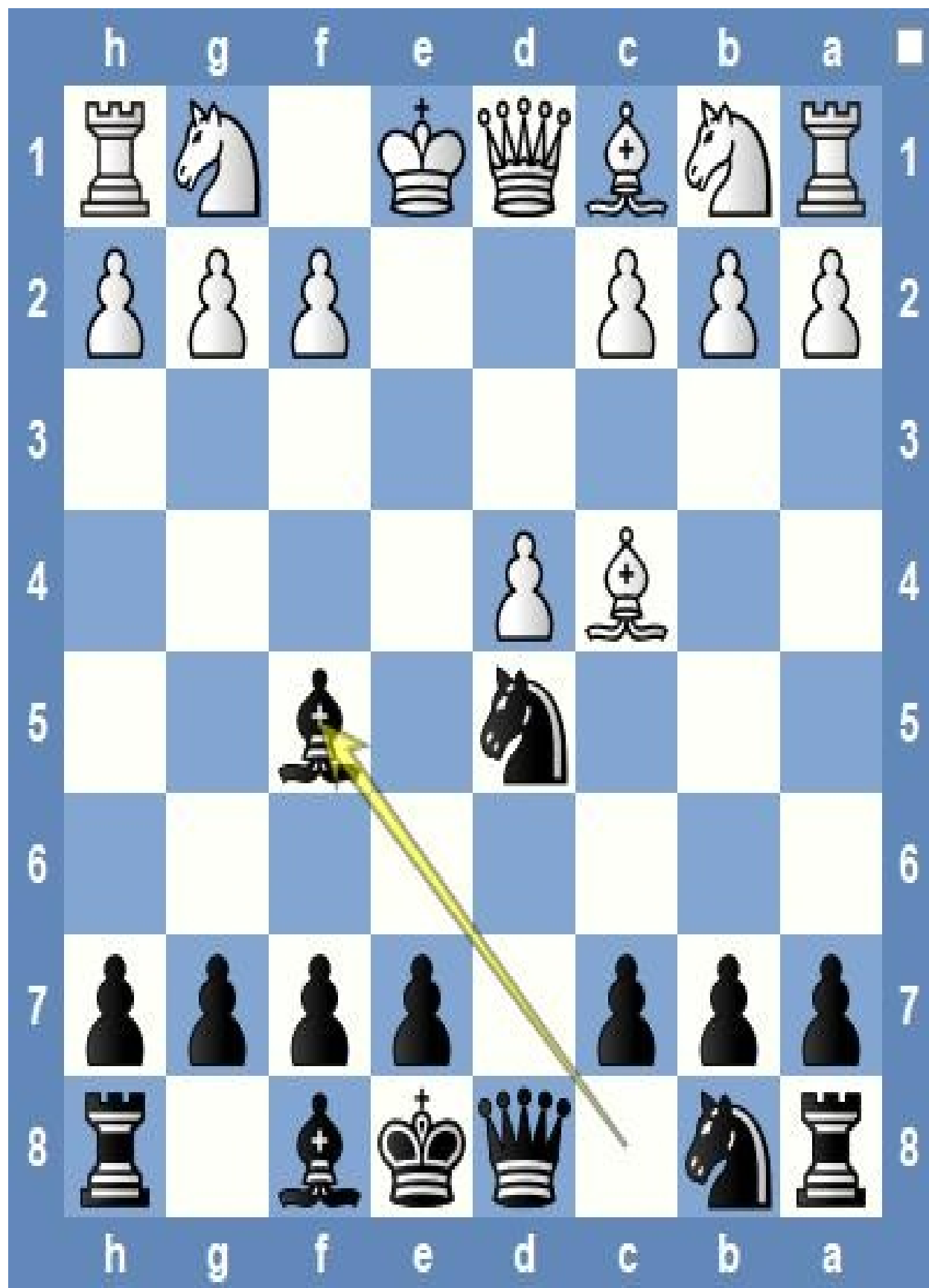
10.Nxe4 Bxe4 11.Be3 Nc6 =.

10...Nc6 11.Rd1 Na5 12.Qa4 Nxc3 13.bxc3 b6 14.c5 Be4 =.

## Section 2D: 4.Bc4 Bf5

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.d4 Nxd5 4.Bc4 Bf5**

This is as good as several more popular options, which suits our general strategy of being a little different in our move choices. And, throughout the repertoire, we consistently prefer to develop our light-squared bishop to f5 when we can.



**5.Nf3**

**a) 5.Qf3 e6! of course.**

**b) 5.c3 e6 6.Nf3 Be7 7.O-O O-O =.**

**5...e6**

Black gets nothing from 5...Nb4 6.Bb3.

**6.O-O Be7 7.Re1 O-O 8.Ne5**

8.Nbd2 Nd7 (among others) is level.

**8...Nd7 9.Bd3!? Nxe5 10.Bxf5 exf5 11.dxe5 Qd7 =.**

***Chapter 3: 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.Bb5+ Nbd7***

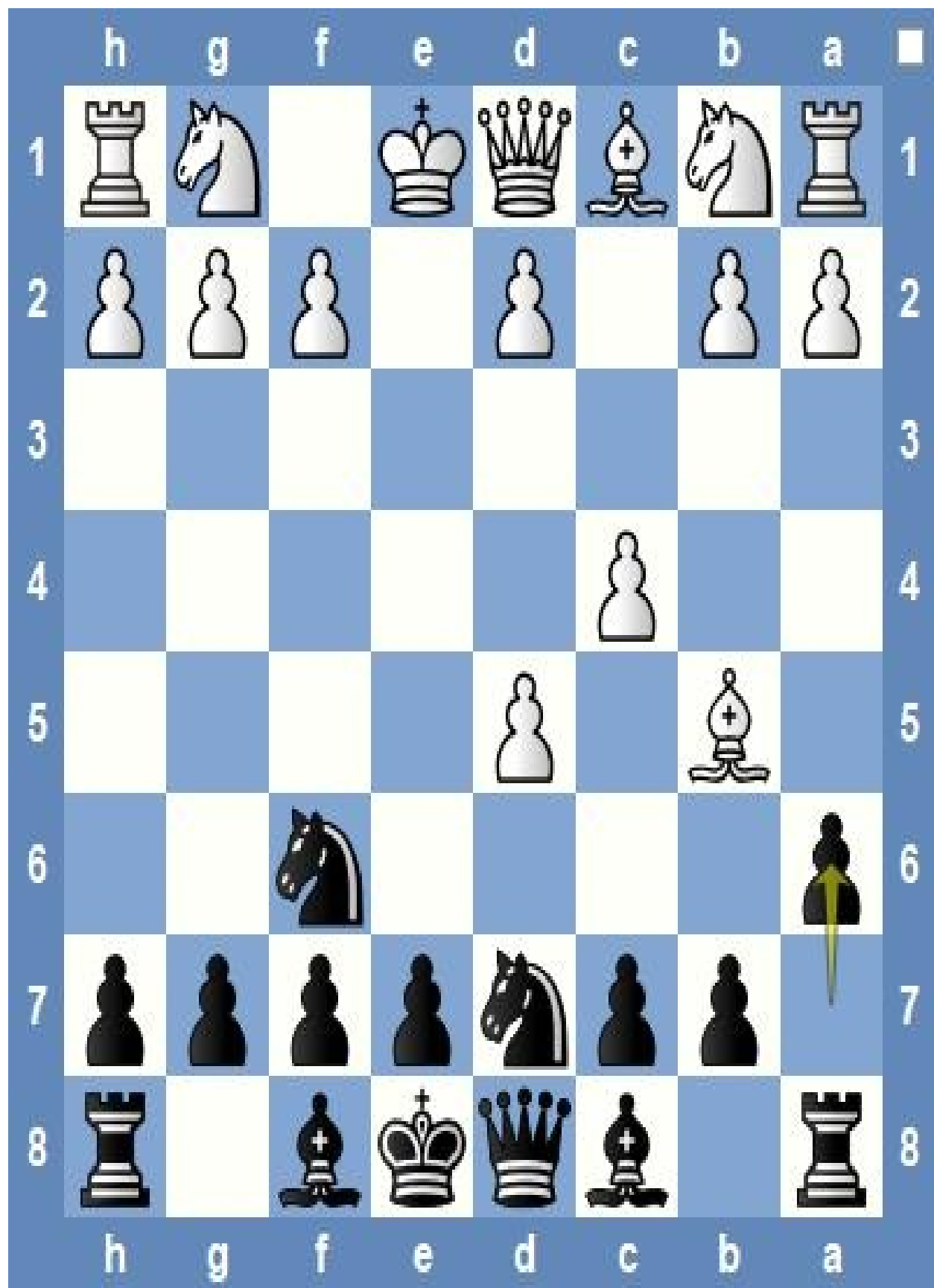
We answer this "Bishop Check Variation" by blocking with the knight, which used to be rare until it was realised how much White must suffer if he tries to hold on to an extra pawn.

## Section 3A: 4.c4 a6

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.Bb5+ Nbd7 4.c4**

The greedy main line.

**4...a6**



## 5.Ba4

Roughly equal in popularity is 5.Bxd7+, and now 5...Bxd7 (or 5...Qxd7!? intending ... e7-e6 or ...Qd7-g4, possibly ...b7-b5).

a) 6.Nf3 e6 7.Qe2 Be7 8.dxe6 Bxe6 9.O-O O-O ~/=.

b) 6.d4 e6 7.dxe6 (7.Qe2 Bb4+!) 7...Bxe6 8.d5 Bg4 9.Nf3 (9.Ne2 Bc5!) 9...Bb4+ 10.Bd2 Qe7+ 11.Qe2 O-O-O! 12.Qxe7 Bxe7 13.O-O Rhe8 ~/=.

5...b5 6.cxb5 Nxd5 7.Nc3

a) 7.Nf3 N7b6 8.bxa6+ Nxa4 9.Qxa4+ Qd7 =.

b) 7.d4 e6 =.

c) 7.Bb3 Nc5! =.

7...N5b6 8.Bc2

8.Bb3 axb5 9.Nxb5 (9.d4 b4 10.Nb5 [10.Ne4 Bb7 =] 10...Bb7 =) 9...Ba6 10.Qf3

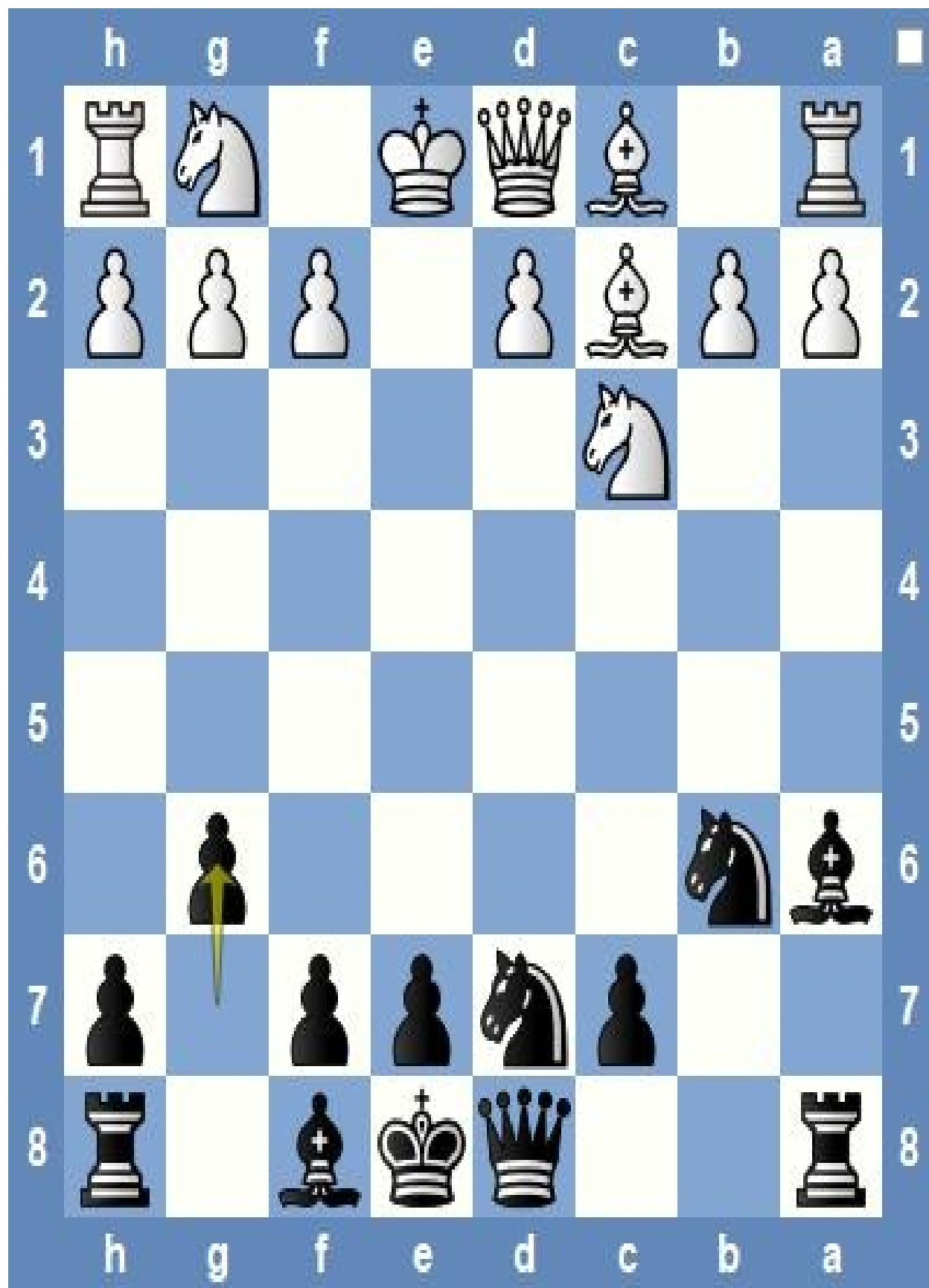
(10.Nc3? Ne5 -/+ ) 10...e6 11.Qc6 Bd6 12.Nxd6+ cxd6 = 13.Qxd6 Nc5  
14.Qxc5?? Qd3 -+.

**8...axb5 9.Nxb5 Ba6 10.Nc3**

10.Na3 e5!

**10...g6**

Clearly best, so on this occasion we shouldn't avoid it. Black will exert considerable pressure down the long dark diagonal and simultaneously down the half-open queenside files (as in the Benko Gambit).



**11.d4 Bg7 12.Nge2 O-O 13.O-O c5 14.Re1 e6 ~/=.**

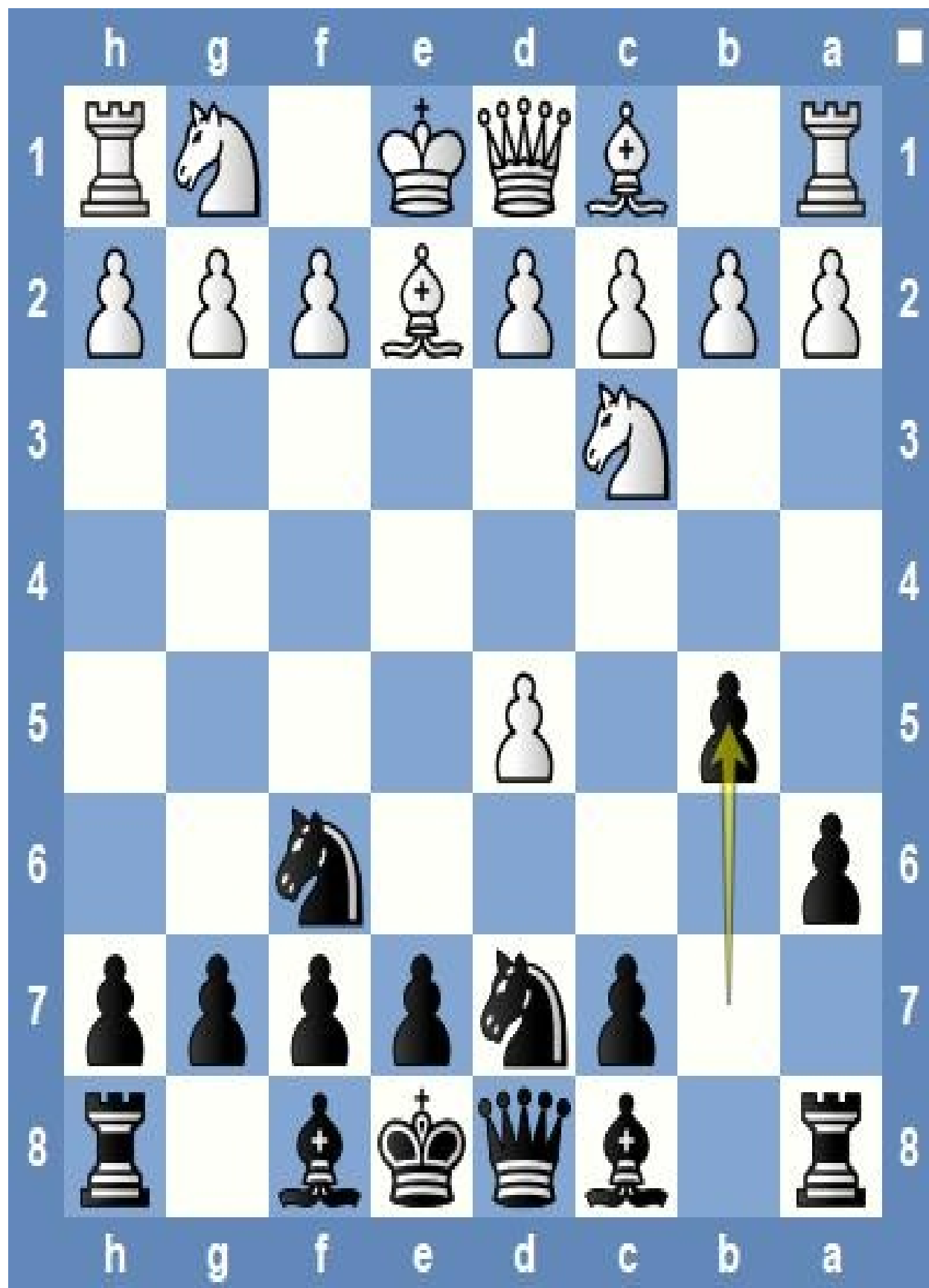
## Section 3B: 4.Nc3 a6

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.Bb5+ Nbd7 4.Nc3 a6 5.Be2**

5.Ba4 b5 6.Bb3 Nc5 7.Nf3 Nxb3 8.axb3 Bb7 9.d4 Nxd5 =.

**5...b5!**

A big improvement on 5...Nb6. The knight retains options where it is on d7.



**6.Nf3**

**a) 6.a3 is common but unnecessary. 6...Bb7 7.Nf3 Nxd5 (7...g6!?) 8.Nxd5 Bxd5 9.O-O e6 =.**

**b) 6.Bf3 Ne5 (6...Bb7 7.d6 c6! 8.dxe7 Bxe7 ~/=) 7.Be2 Nxd5 8.Nf3 Nxf3+ 9.Bxf3 e6 =.**

**6...Bb7 7.O-O b4**

Very rare. Alternatively, 7...g6 8.Nd4 Nxd5 9.Nb3 Bg7 10.Na5 Nxc3 11.dxc3 Be4 12.Bf3 Bxf3 13.Qxf3 O-O 14.Rd1 Qc8 =.

**8.Na4 Nxd5 9.c4 bxc3 10.dxc3 e6 11.c4 N5f6 =.**

## Section 3C: 4.d4 Nxd5

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.Bb5+ Nbd7 4.d4**

This natural move performs very well. Our 5th move as Black is a neglected and effective response.

**4...Nxd5 5.Nf3**

**5.c4 c6! 6.Ba4 N5b6 7.Bb3 e5 =.**

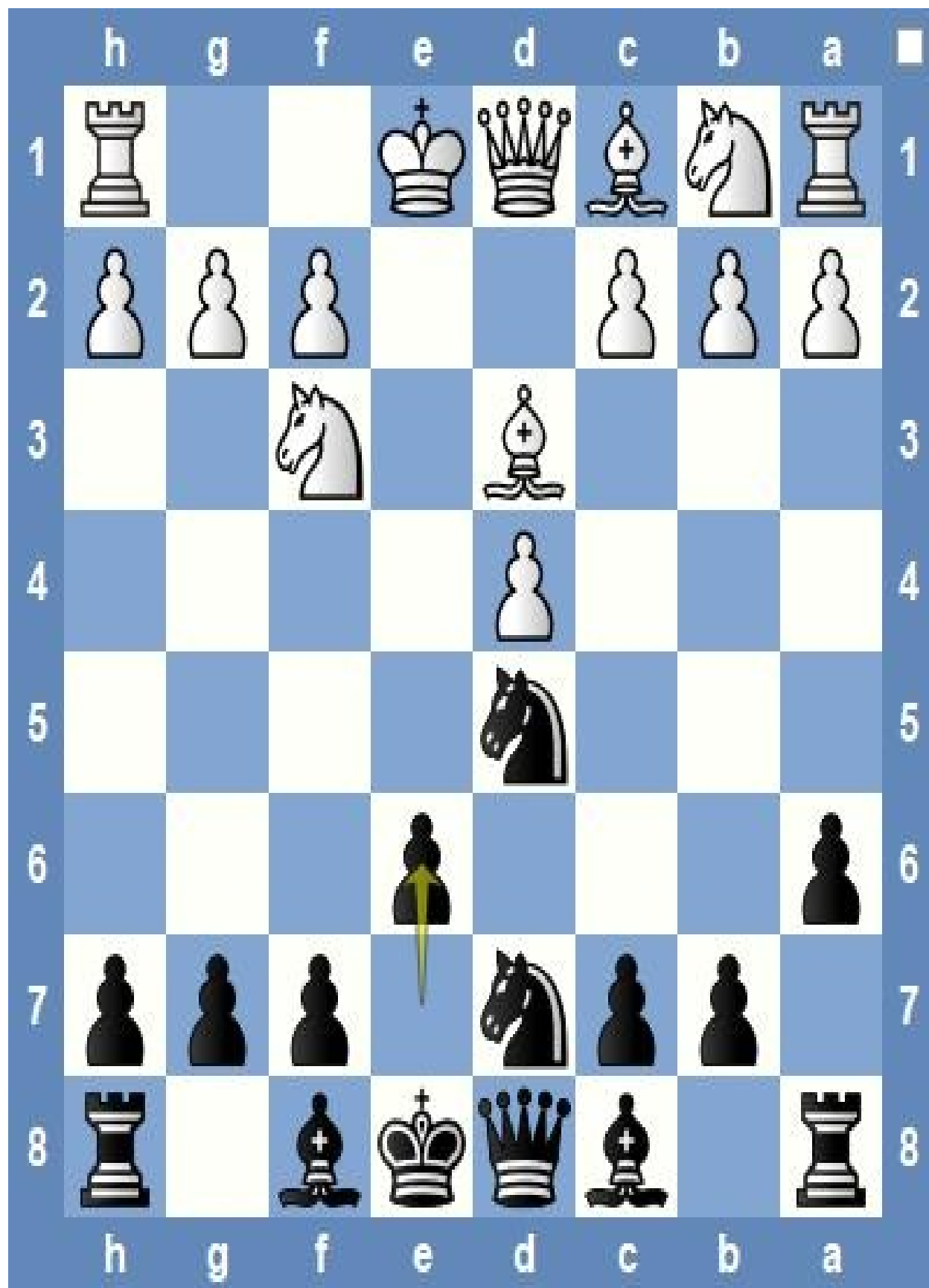
**5...a6!?**

We prefer this over the usual 5...c6 because we want our light-squared bishop to be on b7 for a change.

**6.Bd3**

6.Be2 transposes to Section 3D.

**6...e6**



## **7.c4**

7.O-O c5 8.c4 N5f6 9.d5 exd5 10.cxd5. The open e-file looks dangerous for Black but, with care, it's not too much to worry about. 10...Nb6 11.Re1+ Be7 and now 12.Nc3 O-O =, or 12.d6 Qxd6 13.Bb5+ Kf8 14.Bd3 Bg4 15.h3 Rd8! ~.

## **7...Bb4+**

Or 7...Nb4 8.Be2 c5 =.

## **8.Bd2**

8.Ke2!? is not bad, but unlikely to be played. 8...N5f6 9.c5 c6 =.

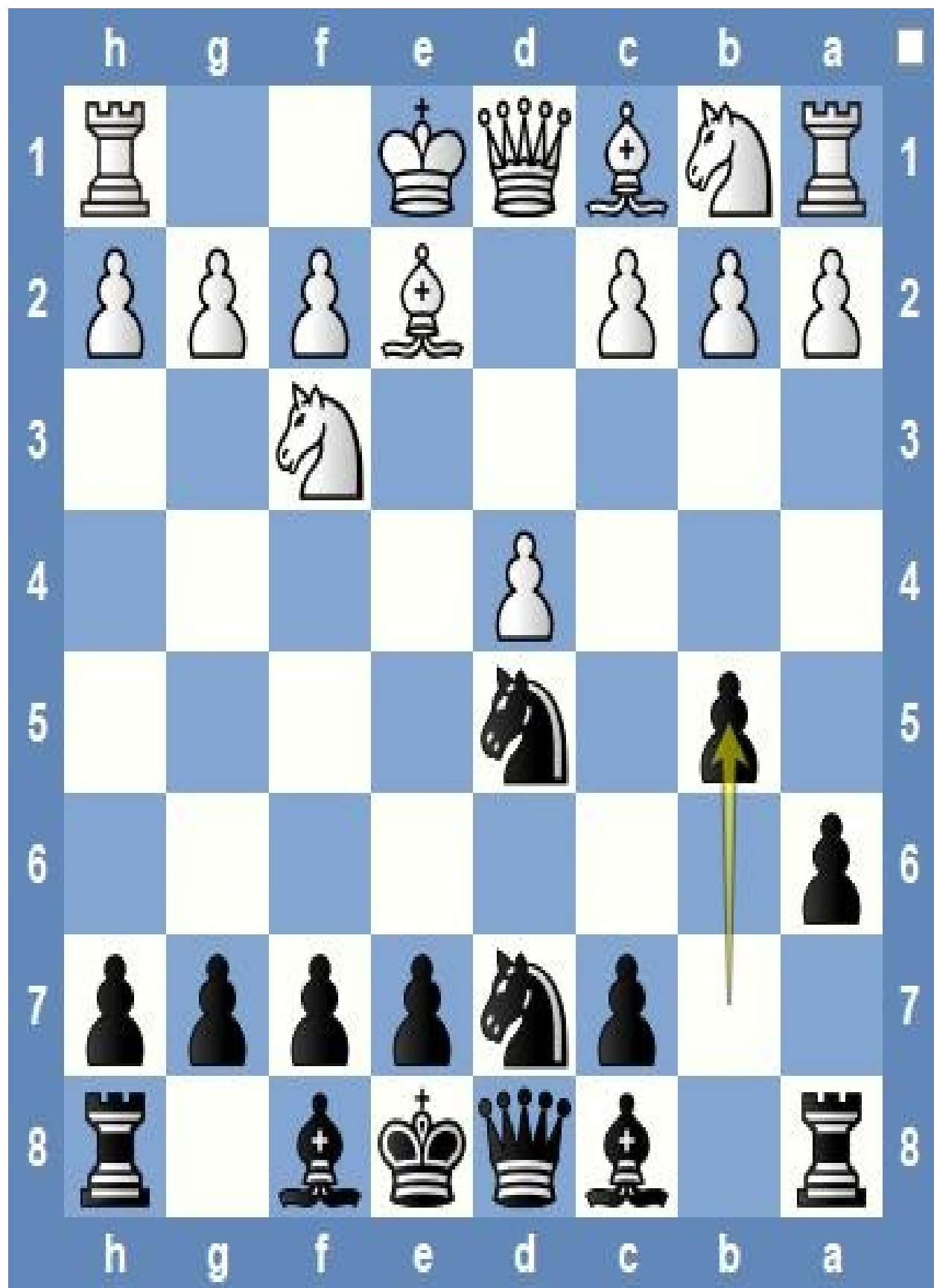
**8...Bxd2+ 9.Qxd2 N5f6 10.O-O b6 11.Nc3 Bb7 =.**

## **Section 3D: 4.Nf3 a6**

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.Bb5+ Nbd7 4.Nf3 a6**

4...Nxd5 5.d4 transposes to Section 3C but 4...a6 right away, before White can play d2-d4, means that the bishop can't reasonably retreat to d3.

**5.Be2 Nxd5 6.d4 b5**



**7.O-O**

7.a4 Bb7. Black hopes for 8.axb5?! axb5 9.Rxa8 Qxa8 10.Bxb5 Qa5+ ~/=.

**7...e6**

This is about level. Play might continue as follows.

**8.a4 b4 9.c4 bxc3 10.bxc3**

10.Nxc3 Bb7=

**10...c5 11.c4 Nb4! 12.Nc3 Be7 13.Bf4 O-O =.**

## ***Chapter 4: 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.c4 c6***

3...c6 exceeds 3...e6 in popularity even though the latter (the Icelandic Gambit) is persistently promoted as an exciting option for Black. Our choice of 3...c6 is safer and scores better.

Note that 3.c4 c6 4.d4 cxd5 (Sections 4A, 4B and 4C) transposes to the well-respected Panov-Botvinnik Attack of the Caro-Kann Defence: 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6. In fact, the 3.c4 c6 line has been called the "Panov Transfer" because it offers White the chance to transpose in that way.

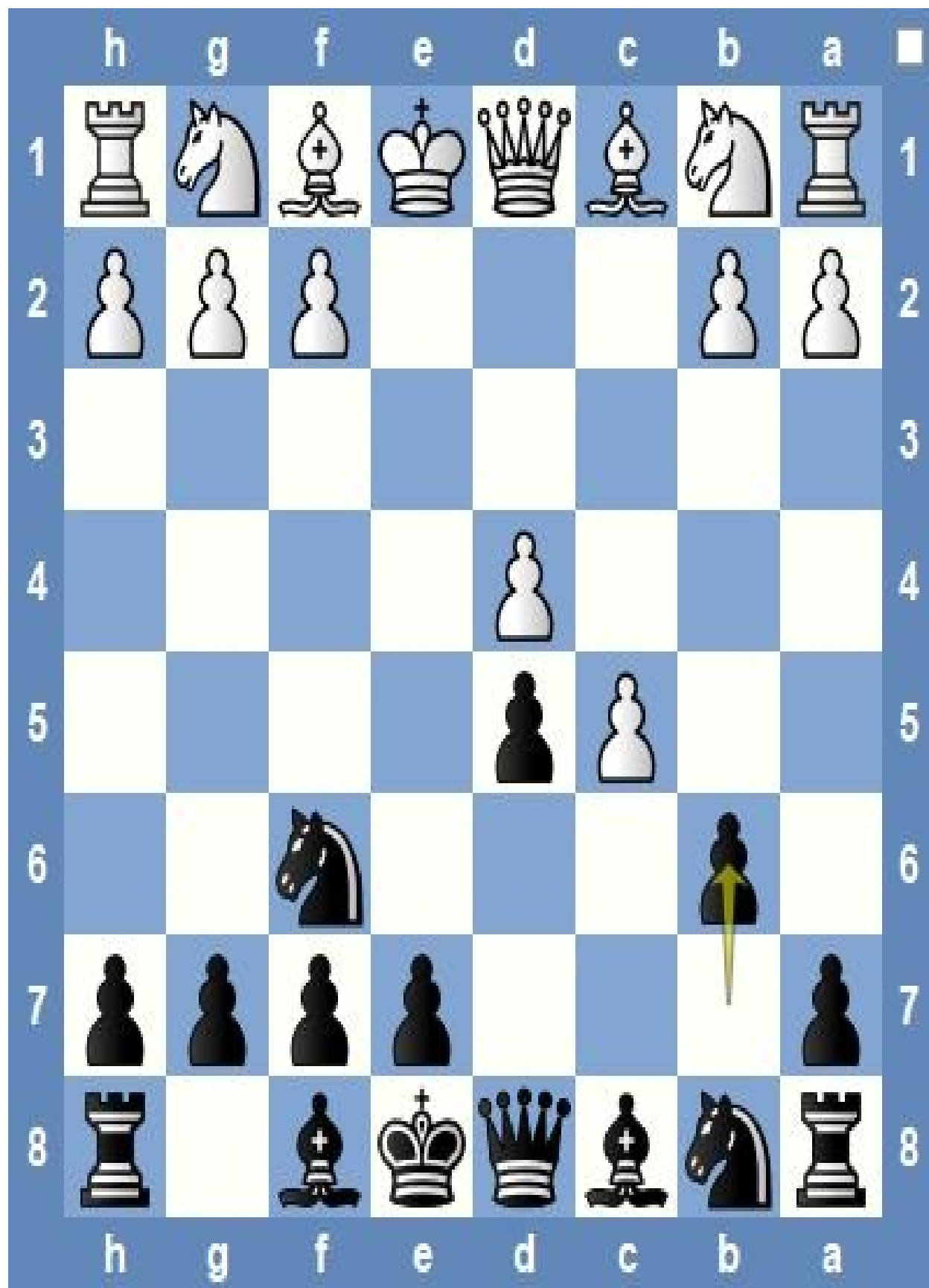
## **Section 4A: 4.d4 cxd5 5.c5 b6**

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.c4 c6 4.d4 cxd5 5.c5**

The Gunderam Attack. Slightly better than its poor reputation.

**5...b6**

Relatively uncommon, but we play to immediately tackle the white spike in our position.



**6.b4**

**a) 6.a3 bxc5 7.dxc5 a5 8.Nc3 e6 9.Be3 Be7 =.**

**b) 6.cxb6 Qxb6 7.Nc3 e6 =.**

**c) 6.Bb5+ Bd7 7.Bxd7+ Qxd7 8.cxb6 Qe6+ =. Next comes ...Qe6xb6.**

**6...bxc5!?**

As this is practically unknown, the activity it generates should come as an unwelcome surprise to White.

**7.bxc5**

**a) 7.Bb5+ Bd7 8.Bxd7+ Qxd7 9.bxc5 e5 transposes.**

**b) 7.dxc5 a5!**

**7...e5 8.Bb5+**

8.dxe5 Bxc5! 9.Bb5+ (9.exf6 Qxf6 forks f2 and a1) 9...Nfd7 =/+.

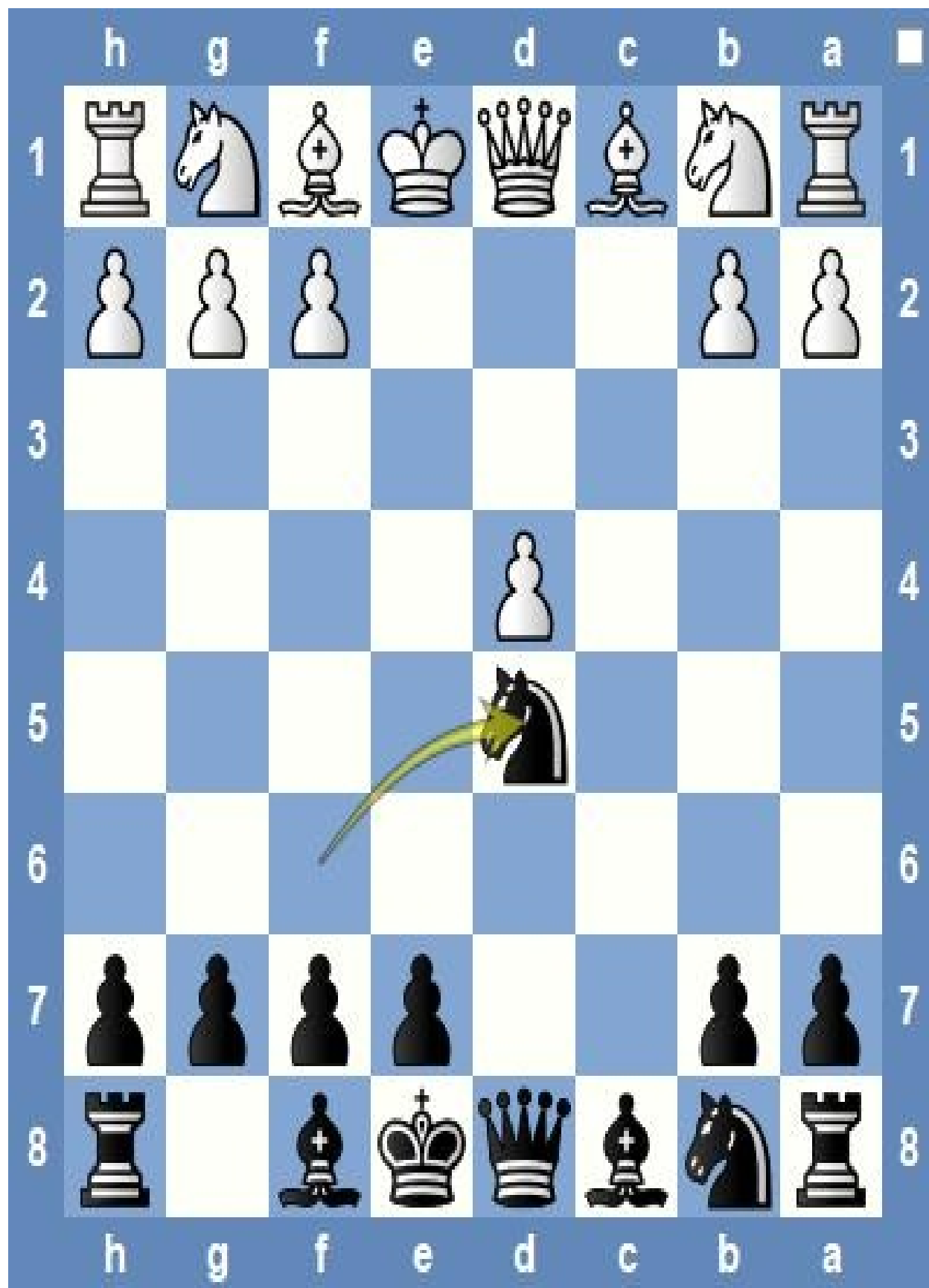
**8...Bd7 9.Bxd7+ Qxd7 10.dxe5 Ne4 11.Nf3 Bxc5 12.O-O O-O =.**

## **Section 4B: 4.d4 cxd5 5.cxd5 Nxd5**

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.c4 c6 4.d4 cxd5 5.cxd5**

Unchallenging. White inflicts an isolated queen's pawn on himself.

**5...Nxd5**



**6.Nc3**

6.Bc4 Nc6 =.

**6...Nc6 7.Nf3 Bf5 8.Bb5**

8.a3 e6 =.

**8...e6 9.Ne5**

If 9.Qa4, 9...f6!? covers e5 and at the same time clears f7 for the uncastled black king if required.

**9...Rc8 10.O-O**

10.Qh5 g6 11.Qe2 h5 =.

**10...Be7 11.Qa4 a6 12.Bxc6+ bxc6 =.**

Attempts by White to gain a pawn will rebound on him, e.g. 13.Nxc6 (13.Qxa6 Nb4 14.Qe2 Nc2 ~/=) 13...Nxc3 14.Qxa6 Ne2+ 15.Kh1 Rxc6! 16.Qxc6+ Qd7

with an extra piece for Black.

## Section 4C: 4.d4 cxd5 5.Nc3 Nc6

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.c4 c6 4.d4 cxd5 5.Nc3 Nc6**

Logical. Instantly moving the c8-bishop someplace, or blocking it by 5...e6, is arguably too committal.

As this is in one of the main lines of the Panov-Botvinnik Attack, there is a wealth of theory available. Here I can only point to some sensible lines for Black.

**6.Nf3**

**a) 6.Bg5 dxc4.**

**a1) 7.d5 Na5 8.Bxc4 (8.b4 cxb3 9.axb3 Bd7 =; 8.Nf3 a6 9.Qd4 b5 = intending ...h7-h6) 8...Nxc4 9.Qa4+ Bd7 10.Qxc4 h6 =.**

**a2) 7.Bxc4 h6 8.Be3 (8.Qb3 e6 =; 8.Bh4 e6 [8...Qxd4 9.Qxd4 Nxd4 10.O-O-O e5 ~] 9.Nf3 Be7 10.O-O O-O =) 8...e6 9.Nf3 Bd6 10.O-O O-O =.**

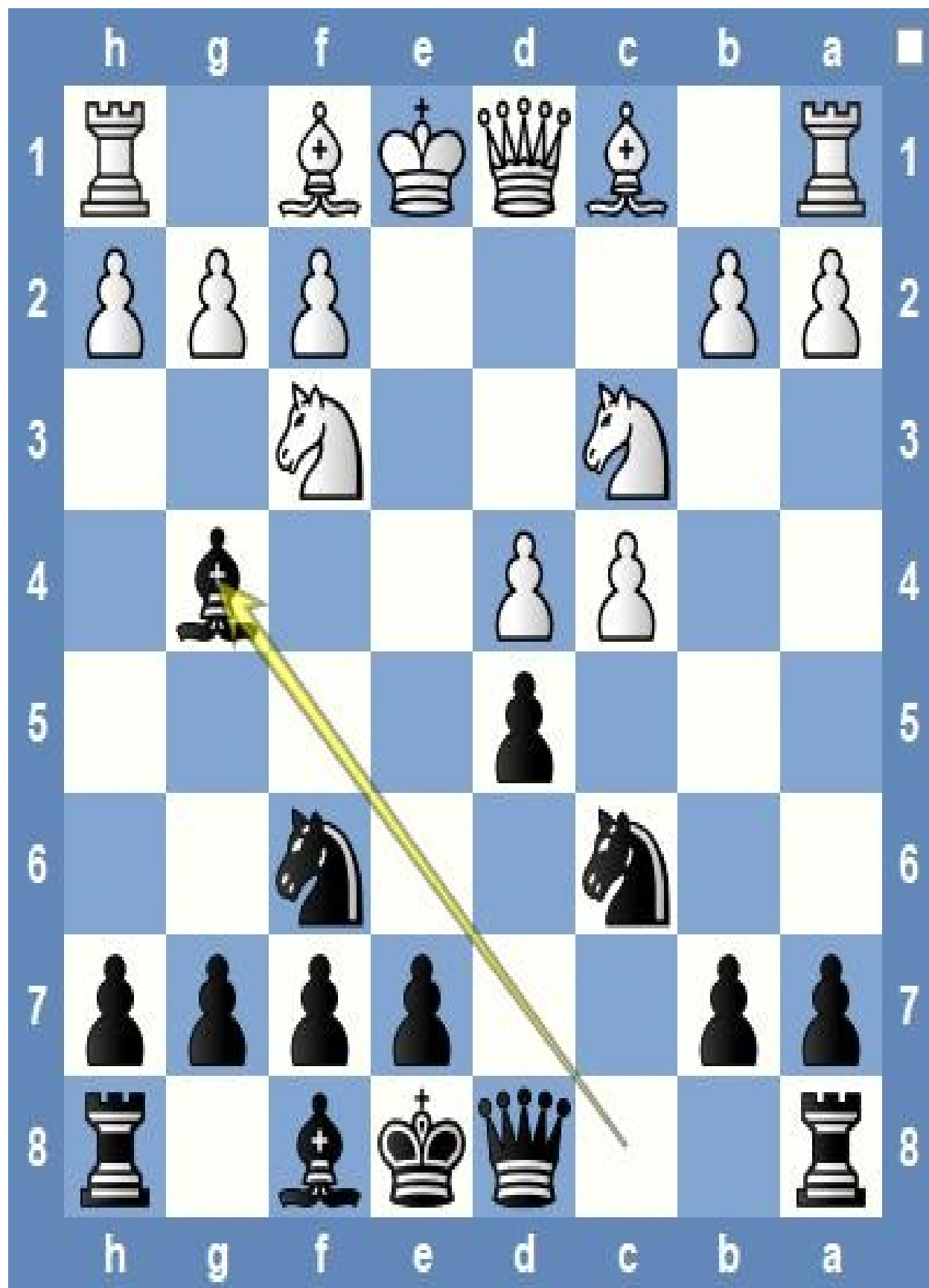
**b) 6.Bf4 g6 happens to be best, and equalises.**

**c) 6.c5 e5! 7.dxe5 Ng4 8.Qxd5 Be6 ~/=.**

**d) 6.Be3 e6 7.Nf3 Bb4 =.**

**e) 6.cxd5 Nxd5 7.Nf3 Bf5 intending ...e7-e6 is level.**

**6...Bg4!**



7.cxd5

a) 7.Be2 e6 8.c5 Be7 9.O-O O-O 10.Be3 Ne4 11.Rc1 Qd7 =.

b) 7.Be3 e6 will probably transpose to the 7.Be2 line.

7...Nxd5 8.Qb3

a) 8.Be2 e6 9.O-O Be7 10.Qb3 Qb6 =.

b) 8.Bc4 e6 9.O-O Be7 =.

8...Bxf3 9.gxf3

9.Qxb7?? Ndb4 -+.

9...e6 10.Qxb7 Nxd4 11.Bb5+ Nxb5 12.Qc6+ Ke7 13.Qxb5 Qd7 14.Nxd5+ Qxd5 15.Qxd5 exd5 =.

## Section 4D: 4.dxc6 Nxc6

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.c4 c6**

This is sometimes known as the Scandinavian Gambit because White can go a pawn up if he captures on c6, as we'll see in this section. Capturing is a second-rate line for White, though, so we should be happy to permit it.

**4.dxc6 Nxc6**

4...e5!? is the ultra-rare Ross Gambit. I know that we said in the Introduction that generally we'd avoid speculative or over-adventurous play, but we must admit that after 5.cxb7 (else Black will reply 5...Nxc6 transposing back to the main line) 5...Bxb7 followed by ...Bf8-c5, Black's development advantage appears fully worth the two pawns.

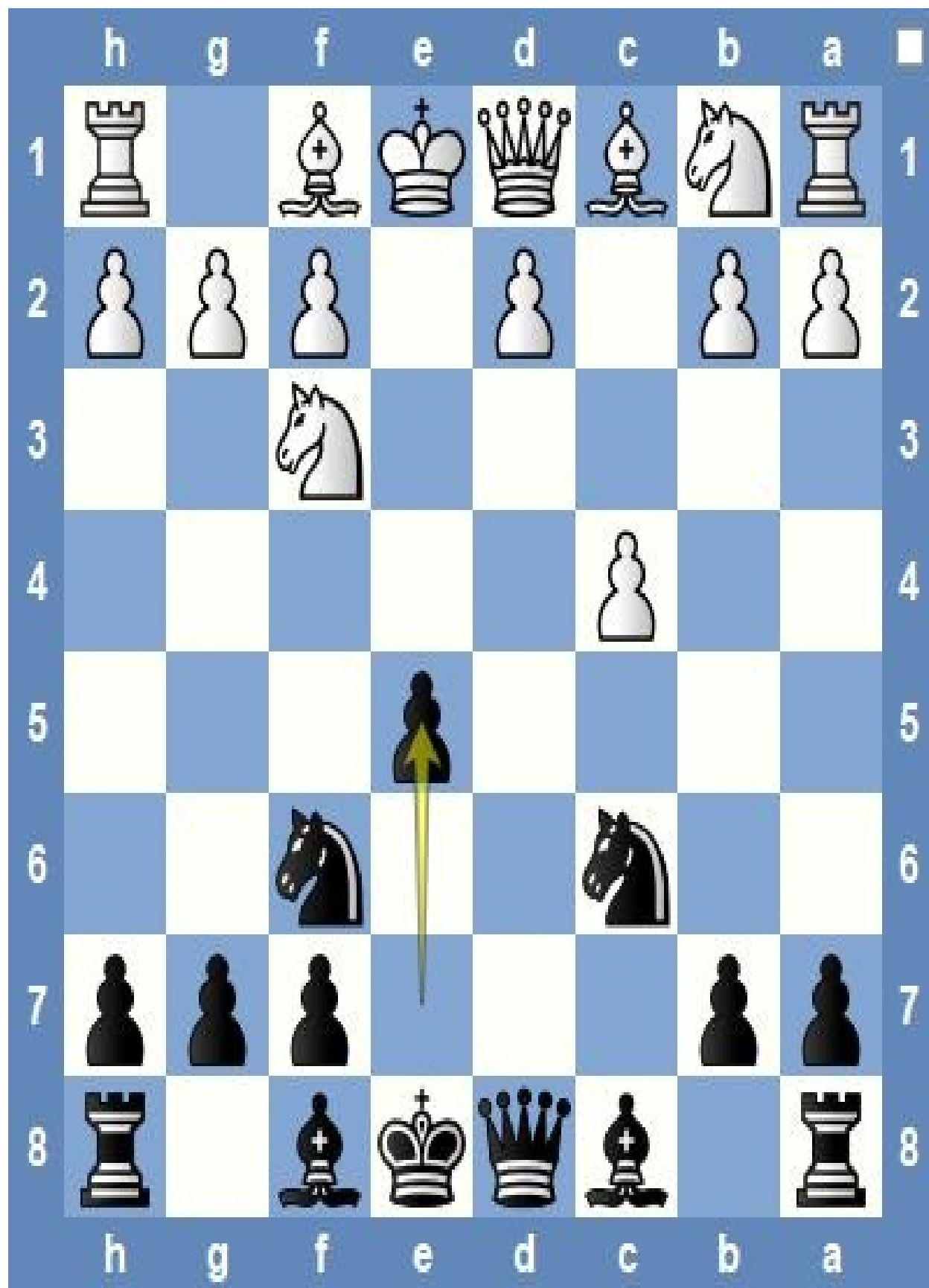
**5.Nf3**

**a) 5.Nc3 e5 6.d3 Bb4 7.Nge2 (7.Bd2 O-O 8.Be2 Bf5 =/+ ) 7...O-O 8.a3 Bxc3+ 9.Nxc3 Nd4 ~/=.**

**b) 5.d3 e5 6.Be2 (6.Nc3 transposes to 5.Nc3) 6...Bb4+ 7.Bd2 Bc5! Black intends ...Bc8-f5.**

**5...e5**

Black has very comfortable development while White has a backward d-pawn, kept backward by the black pawn on e5 which also threatens to advance at any time.



## 6.d3

6.Nc3?! e4 7.Ng5 (7.Qe2 Qe7!) 7...Bf5 8.f3 exf3 9.Nxf3 Bc5 10.d4 (10.Qe2+ Kf8!) 10...Bxd4 -/+.

## 6...e4! 7.dxe4

a) 7.Ng5 Bg4 8.Be2 Bxe2 9.Qxe2 Nd4 =/+.

b) 7.Qe2 Bb4+!

## 7...Qxd1+ 8.Kxd1 Nxe4 9.Be3

Still a quite common position.

## 9...Bf5!

Black will castle long, with the better game.

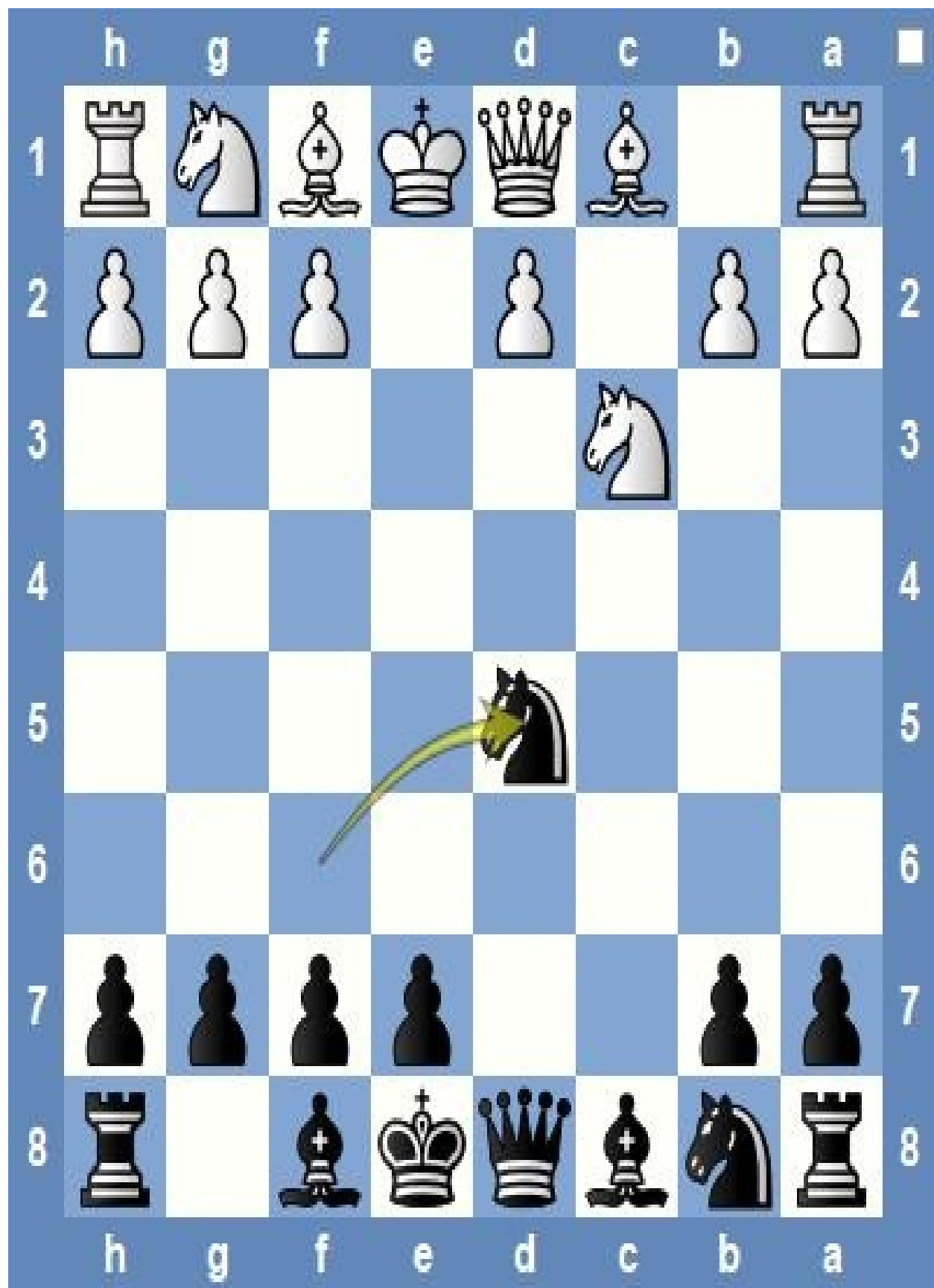
## Section 4E: 4.Nc3 cxd5

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.c4 c6 4.Nc3 cxd5 5.cxd5**

We have transposed to a position from the Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 2.c4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.cxd5 Nf6 5.Nc3. However, in this Caro move order the best lines for White at move five are to give a check with the queen or with the bishop.

5.d4 (instead of 5.cxd5) takes White into Section 4C, which was probably his better option.

**5...Nxd5**



**6.Nf3**

**a) 6.d4 Nc6 7.Nf3 Bf5 8.Bb5 e6 =.**

**b) 6.Bc4 Nb6 7.Bb3 Nc6 8.Nf3 Bf5 9.d4 (9.O-O Bd3!) 9...e6 10.O-O Be7 =.**

**6...Nc6 7.Bb5**

7.d4 transposes to Section 4B.

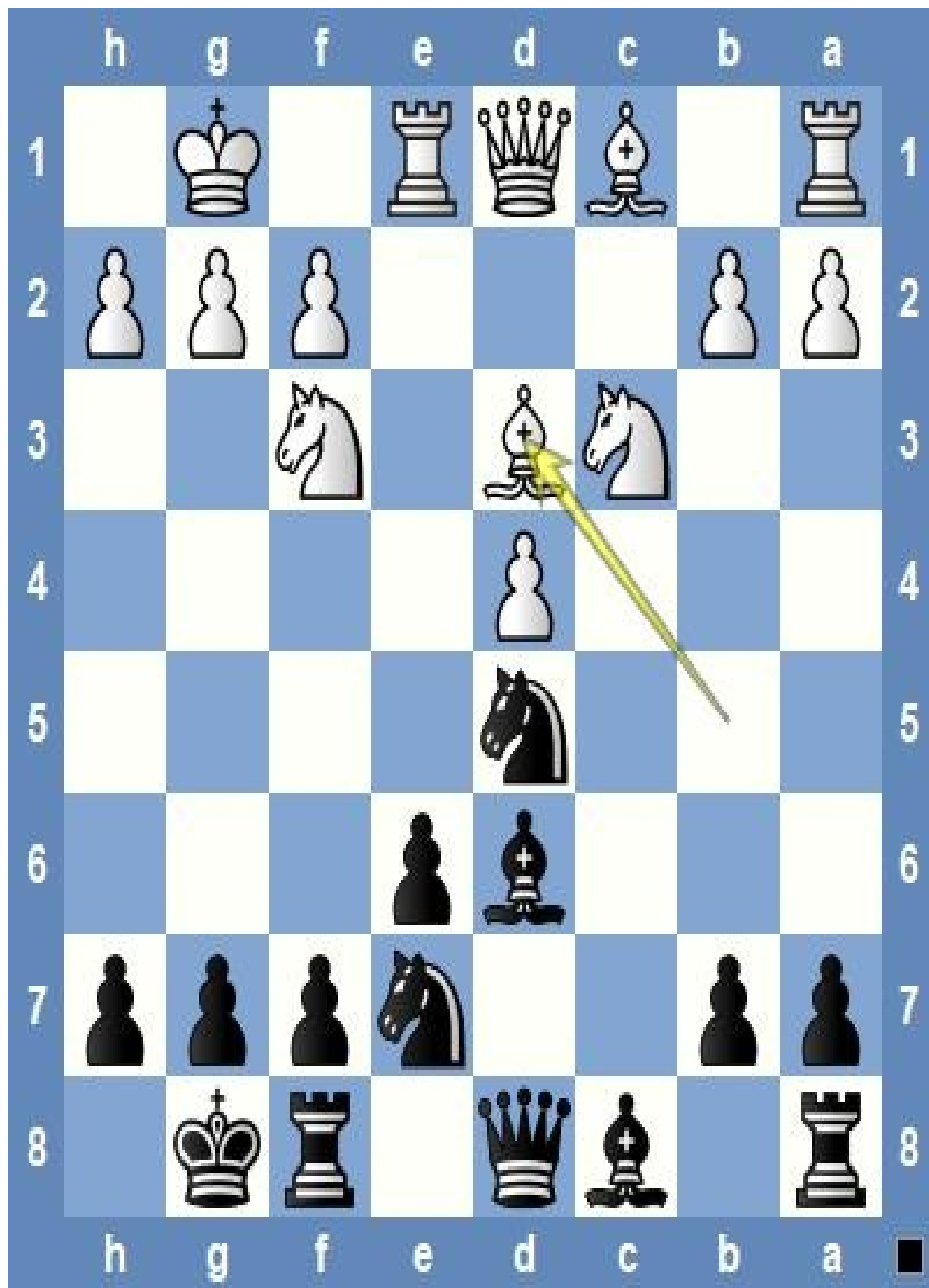
**7...e6 8.O-O**

It doesn't make much sense for White to voluntarily give up his bishop-pair by 8.Bxc6+.

**8...Bd6 9.d4 O-O 10.Re1 Nce7 11.Bd3**

Remarkably, this now transposes to a line of the Alapin Variation of the Sicilian Defence: 1.e4 c5 2.c3 Nf6 3.e5 Nd5 4.d4 cxd4 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.cxd4 d6 7.Nc3 (the main continuation is 7.Bc4) 7...e6 8.exd6 Bxd6 9.Bd3 O-O 10.O-O Nce7 11.Re1. In practice White tends to mishandle this apparently equal position and scores only about 33%.

11.Nxd5 (first, instead of 11.Bd3) is roughly equal too.



**11...b6 12.Ne5**

The Greek Gift sacrifice doesn't work here: 12.Bxh7+?? Kxh7 13.Ng5+ Kg8  
14.Qh5 Nf6 -+.

**12...Bb7 13.Qh5 Nf6 14.Qh3 Ng6 15.Bg5 Be7 =.**

## Section 4F: 4.Nf3 cxd5

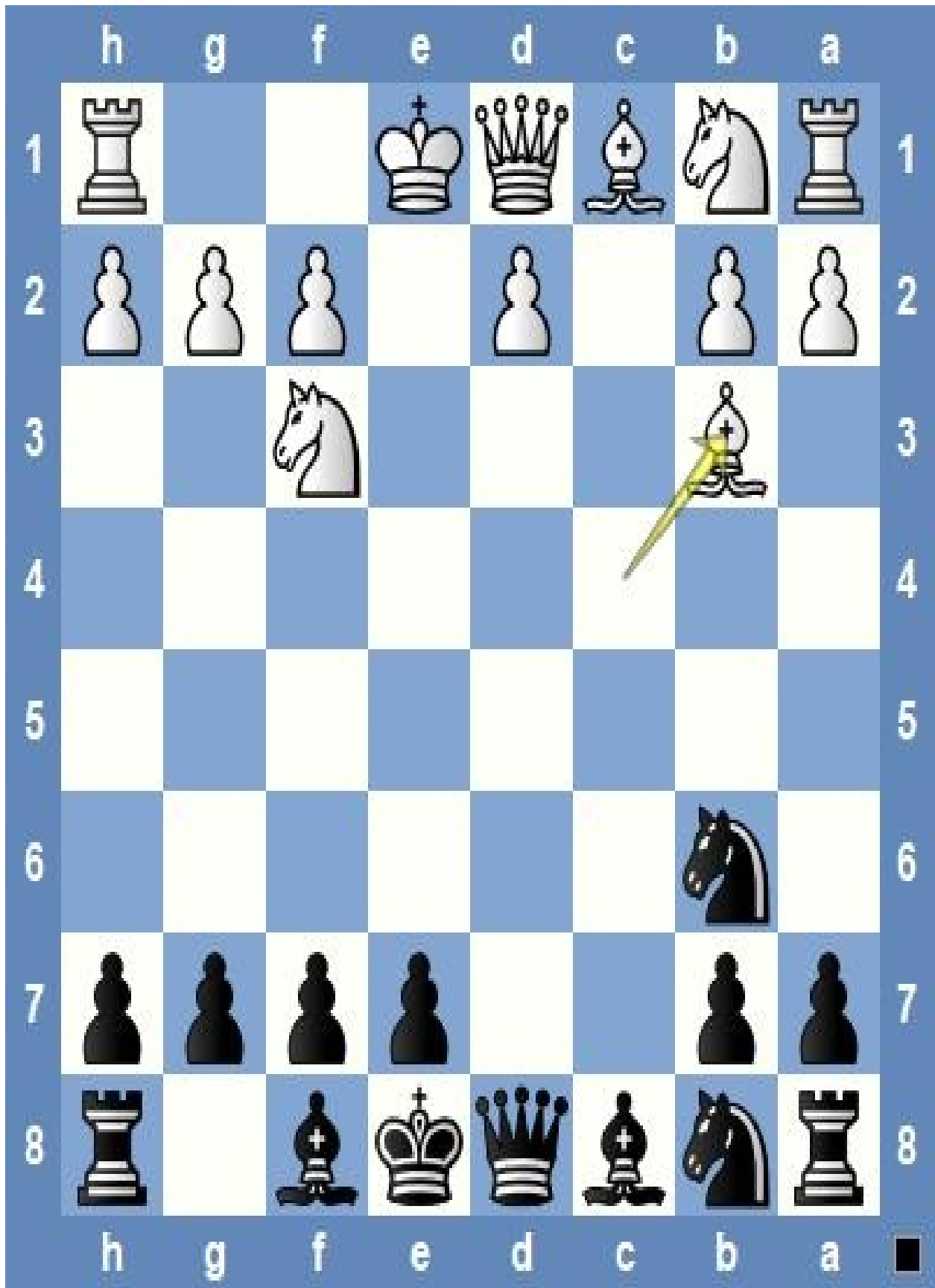
**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.c4 c6 4.Nf3 cxd5 5.cxd5**

5.d4 Nc6 6.Nc3 transposes to Section 4C.

**5...Nxd5 6.Bc4**

6.Nc3 transposes back to Section 4E.

**6...Nb6 7.Bb3**



**7...Bf5**

Rest assured that there are no Bb3xf7+ tricks at this point.

**8.d4 e6 9.O-O Nc6 10.Nc3**

This is a very common position because it can also be reached, one way or another, by the 1.e4 c6 2.c4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.cxd5 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nxd5, etc., move order. Although a balanced position, somehow White fails to score 50%.

**10...Be7 11.d5**

White is understandably anxious to get rid of his isolated pawn.

11.Be3 O-O 12.d5 is similar.

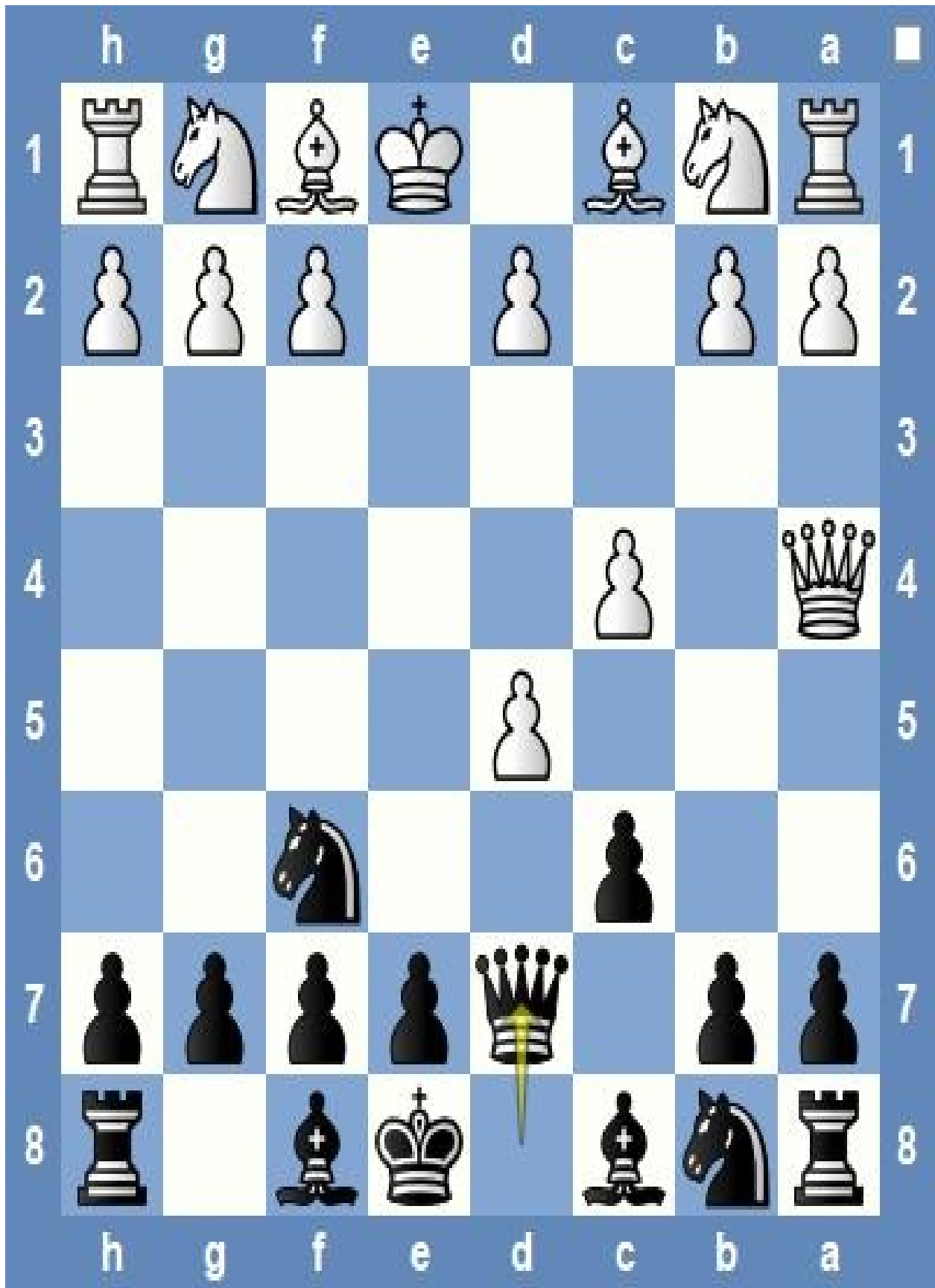
**11...exd5 12.Nxd5 Nxd5 13.Qxd5 Qxd5 14.Bxd5 O-O =.**

## Section 4G: 4.Qa4 Qd7

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.c4 c6 4.Qa4**

This looks like an improvisation from a blitz game. In case it isn't, we won't play the expected 4...Bd7.

**4...Qd7!?**



**5.dxc6**

5.Nc3 cxd5 6.Qxd7+ Nbx d7 7.d3 (7.cxd5 Nb6 8.d6 e6!) and now 7...b6  
intending queenside castling or 7...e5 =.

**5...Nxc6 6.Nf3 e5 7.d3 Bb4+ 8.Bd2 Bxd2+ 9.Nbx d2 O-O 10.Be2 Qg4 11.O-O  
Nh5 ~/=.**

## ***Chapter 5: 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.Nf3 and others***

A quick reminder that 3.d4 is Chapter 2, 3.Bb5+ is Chapter 3, and 3.c4 is Chapter 4. In this fifth and final chapter we deal with the rest.

While it's true that several of the moves here tend to transpose, do not underestimate or overlook them merely because they are in the "miscellaneous moves" chapter. You have to become familiar with White's different move orders.

### **1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.Nf3**

**a) 3.Nc3 (a strangely common choice of move considering that Black regains his pawn immediately with equality; also reached by an Alekhine Defence move order, i.e. 1.e4 Nf6 2.Nc3 d5 3.exd5) 3...Nxd5 4.Bc4 (4.Nf3 Nxc3 5.bxc3 g6 =; 4.Nge2 e5 =; 4.Qf3 Nf6!?) 4...e6 (avoiding 4...Nxc3 5.Qf3! but 4...Nb6 is alright).**

**a1) 5.Bxd5?! exd5 6.Qe2+?! (White plays for tricky tactics) 6...Be7 7.Qe5 (7.Nf3 d4! 8.Nb5 c5 =/+ ) 7...d4! 8.Nd5 Nc6 9.Qxg7 Rf8 and Black is much better developed. Note ...d5-d4 in these lines.**

**a2) 5.Nf3 Be7 6.O-O O-O 7.d4 Nxc3 8.bxc3 Nd7 =.**

**a3) 5.Qf3 Nb4 6.Bb3 N8c6 7.Nge2 Na5 8.Ba4+ Bd7 9.a3 Nd5 =.**

**b) 3.Bc4 Nxd5 is likely to transpose to a1) or Chapter 2.**

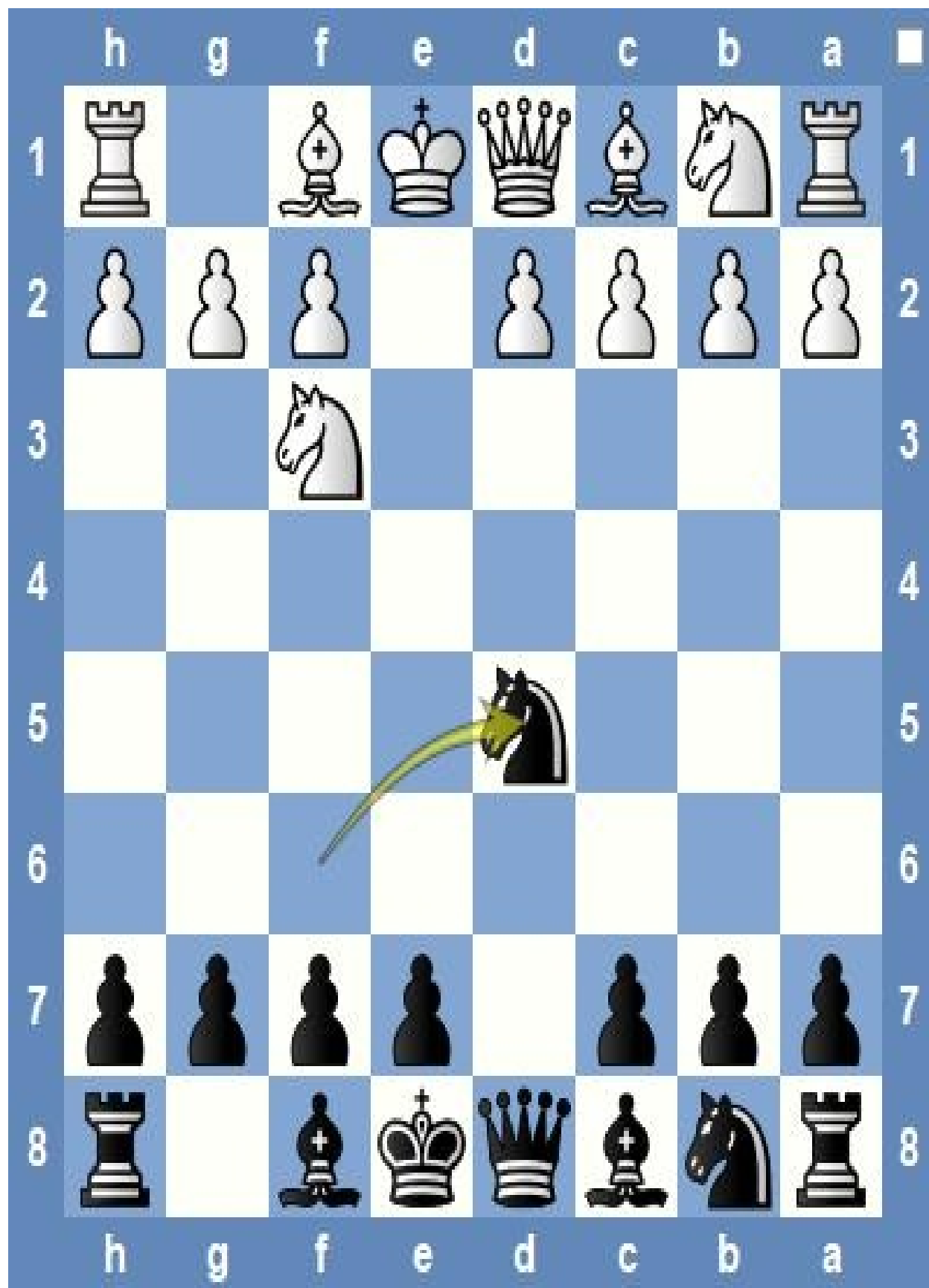
**c) After 3.Be2, 3...Nxd5 4.d4 transposes to Section 2C, or Black can even try 3...c6!? 4.dxc6 5.Nf3 e5 ~/= for which compare Section 4D.**

**d) 3.b3 Nxd5 4.Bb2 Bf5 5.Nf3 e6 =.**

## **3...Nxd5**

I prefer this over 3...Bg4 4.Bb5+ Nbd7 5.h3 Bh5 6.Nc3 a6 7.Be2 Nb6 8.O-O Nbx5 9.Nxd5 Qxd5 10.c4 followed by 11.d4.

Given the title of this book, I can hardly recommend the otherwise perfectly reasonable 3...Qxd5 either. However, the knight capture is genuinely better anyway.



## 4.d4

This is by far the usual move and transposes to Section 2A. Others:

a) **4.Bc4 Bf5 5.d4** goes into Section 2D.

b) **4.c4 Nb4!** (better than **4...Nf6 5.d4**, which transposes to Section 2B where we go **5...c5!?**) **5.d4 Bf5 6.Na3 (6.Qa4+ N8c6 7.d5?? Nc2+ 8.Ke2 Qd7 -+)**  
**6...e6 7.Be2 Be7 8.O-O N8c6 =.**

c) **4.g3 c5! 5.Bg2 Nc6 6.O-O Bg4 =.**

## *Signs & Symbols*

- + - White is winning
- +/- White is clearly better
- +/= White is slightly better
- = Equal position
- =/+ Black is slightly better
- /+ Black is clearly better
- + Black is winning
- ~ Unclear position
- ~/= or =/~ With compensation
- # Checkmate
- !! Excellent move
- ! Good move
- !? Interesting move
- ?! Dubious or misguided move
- ? Mistaken move
- ?? Bad move or blunder

## *Afterword*

With thanks to, among others, Correspondence Chess, Senior International Master (SIM), Mike Donnelly for comments on an early draft of this book.

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