



Eric Briffoz

Easy Guide to the Hippo Attack & Defence

A Universal Opening System
for White & Black

easy guide to the Hippo attack & Defence

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Chapter 1: Introduction

About the Hippo and about this book

Many chess players have only a limited amount of time to study the chess openings in great details. Being myself in the same situation is the main reason why I wanted to find a universal, flexible and creative repertoire, without too much theory.

This book is not really a repertoire book. This book is about **ideas** on an opening system which can be applied both with White and Black. This system has received its seal of approval thanks to usage by some of the top International Grandmasters (and World Champions!), with both colours.

The fact that the hippo avoids direct confrontation with the opponent's army also means that continuations are not as forcing as they are in other openings. In short, and as will be detailed in the book, the great flexibility of the system allows the one endorsing it to play without having to learn a lot of variations, like in most other openings.

Since this system is very rarely used (no book existed yet about the hippo attack before this one), this also means that there are plenty of new discoveries to be found in the future. It can be used both as a surprise weapon, or as a main opening choice.

Since the hippo is mostly using transpositions, it seemed impossible to create a table of variations. Therefore, don't look for it. Because this book is not about learning variations, this book is about ideas that will enable the reader to play the hippo, by learning the typical types of middle games, the typical opening strategies and the various pawn structures.

This book is very middle-game based, because with the Hippo, we have a typical opening setup, which allows the player to enter the middle game phase without having to worry about remembering theoretical moves.

Basically, the hippo player develops all his minor pieces mostly on the 2nd row (but also sometimes on the 3rd row) and places most of its pawns on the 3rd row. According to the opponent choices, he/she will then react and counter-attack accordingly, releasing the Hippo hidden powers at the right time.

A typical basic set-up of the Hippo looks like the diagram below.

I want to make it very clear that the hippo is actually a much broader system than just this particular example of setup. Basically, there are times when the Bishop c8 will want to go the g4 instead of b7, or when the Queen knight will want to go to c6 instead of d7, just to give 2 examples.

In other words, you do not have to reproduce exactly and certainly not automatically the same setup. It is very important to know that the Hippo is also very closely related to the Modern Defence. Hence a Chapter 4 will open the road towards that opening.

We believe that the hippo is one of the most flexible existing opening system in chess, in which the imagination can still take over computerized theories.

How to use this book

I did not want to overload the reader with excessive variations of moves without providing enough textual explanations. I tried to write this book in a user-friendly format, with a sufficient number of diagrams so that it can be read easily (it is supposed to be an “easy guide” as the title mentions). It has also been written so that the ideas and the plans behind the moves are emphasized.

The reader is advised to play the 30 analysed games completely, until he or she familiarizes with the typical Hippo positions, tactics and strategies. It is also very important to practice the opening as much as possible, for example on the internet, or in training games.

While analysing the selected games from this book, I did not want to leave any human uncertainty. Therefore, (almost) all moves and variations have been verified by Stockfish8 64 bits, currently the best engine in the world rated 3484 ahead of Houdini and Komodo. And by the way, it's an Open Source engine as well! But of course, the reader may have their own ideas which can differ from the author's. Because in Chess like in life, there is no such thing as “a single truth”.



Why we should investigate the Hippo, and why it is not popular yet

Is chess all about memorizing the theories of variations until the 20th move and beyond?

If you think so, then this book is perhaps not for you.

Frequently, someone find a new move in the most fashionable opening, sometimes happening as far as move 25, which might make your favourite opening book outdated. And perhaps, this new theoretical move (which might be elected “Most important novelty of the month” by the Informator) was found, tested and analysed with the help of the most advanced chess software.

We are in 2017, experiencing more than ever the rise of IT Artificial Intelligence all over the planet.

This movement is increasing and will never stop: any knowledge is available in the palm of your hands, the second after it happened.

Garry Kasparov won (and then lost) a match versus IBM Deep Blue in 1996. This event was considered as the victory of the machine against the human brain. However later human versus machines contests proved that humans could still defeat the strongest programmed chess software.

It would be utopic to try to fight against an artificial intelligence (basically a software system learning by itself), only by using pure calculation logic. Kasparov explains this very well in his latest book “Deep Thinking”.

Human brains make mistakes when they calculate, and of course computer software never fail at calculation, at least when the software is built without known or unknown bug.

So, is the human brain nothing more than a pure calculating machine? Chess is moving, like it or not, more and more towards computerized type of chess. Champions are over-using chess software and Databases to prepare their opening theory. And this evolution will increase, the same way robotics and artificial intelligence will increase in other non-related fields.

In that respect, we must ask ourselves the question about what we aim for,

regarding the future of chess.

I personally believe that chess should be developed towards the following directions:

- Towards the creativity of the human minds
- Towards the intuition of the human minds
- Towards the new strategies that a human mind can generate
- Towards the competitive aspects between human brains.

“Chess for me is 1% of calculation, maybe even less, and 99% Intuition.

For Computers, it’s exactly the opposite.” Gary Kasparov.

So, the big question is, after all this **why is this system not yet popular**, and why is there currently only one book available about the system (and for Black only, from the prolific writer IM Andrew Martin)?

I currently consider the following 5 possible reasons why it is not played very often:

1- It has a very bad reputation (especially from the classical theory point of view: for example, Tarrasch, Reuben Fine and many other writers consider this opening as very poor and possibly losing!)

Mind you, they also thought the same about the now fully respected Modern defence, and about the Owen defence. Let us suppose we are asking contemporary players what they think about 3...Qd6 Scandinavian, and compare with what older books said about this move (if it was even mentioned!). Now we all know that 3...Qd6 (the system introduced by IGM David Bronstein) is considered as the main line of the classical Scandinavian.

2- The lack of regularly played games by top class GM (probably somehow related to the previous point). Like the Alekhine defence or the Owen defence, which used to be rarely played, the Hippo is currently played only from time to time by Grandmasters, and mostly as a surprise weapon. The fact is that now the Alekhine or the Owen

are not surprising weapons anymore. Remember that chess openings are mostly a matter of fashion these days.

This means that maybe one day in the future the Hippopotamus system as well might be considered as good as the King's Indian.

3- The fear of the infamous "Austrian Attack". We shall analyse how to counter this attack with the Hippo, when analysing the games from Chapter 3, Part 3. Good defensive schemes can overcome the Austrian Attack.

4- The fact that it *seems* to be extremely passive. I emphasize the word "*seems*" as I believe this is mainly an appearance.

5- The fact that very strong defensive skills are required, which is not to every chess player's taste.

A few World Class Hippo Practitioners

Quite a lot of negative things are being written on the internet about this opening. Possibly these persons believe that the setup is too passive and do almost nothing to control the centre. Of course, we know that hypermodern chess is also about controlling the central squares, but by other means than only with pawns!

For those who may still doubt about the validity and solidity of this system, please consider that all these very famous players (and World Champions!) have successfully played the hippo system against World Class opponents. This is a quite interesting pedigree for the Hippo system.

- **IGM Boris Spassky:** World Champion from 1966 until 1972, he played the Hippo defence twice during his World Championship Match in 66, and later as well in tournaments.
The World Champion's games will be analysed in games 19, 24 and 27.
- **IGM Ruslan Ponomarev :** He is the youngest FIDE World Champion in history.
In game 20, he beats an English Grand Master by using the Hippo defence.
- **IGM Aaron Nimzowitsch:** His name shines like a diamond in the History of Chess. Nimzo beats top GM Rubinstein in game 11.
- **IGM Nakamura Hikaru:** In the top 5 of the World. An artist on the board. In game #2, Hikaru beats IGM Igor Khenkin with the Hippo.
- **IGM Tony Miles:** The man who beat Karpov with 1...a6 and my chess hero. His game with the Hippo will be analysed in game #25.
- **IGM Krasenkow, Michal :** A former member of the +2700 Elo limited club, a winner a many major tournaments, and winner of

multiple “Best Game” awards.

- **IGM Jon Speelman** Former #4 in the World, and former World Champion Candidate. See his game #12 against me.
- **IGM Tiger Hillarp Persson:** Swedish IGM, which is a famous World expert in the Modern defence, and writer of the excellent book “Tiger’s Modern”.
- **IGM Pavel Blatny:** The Czech Grand Master plays the hippo system regularly with success and is considered as an expert in the 1.e3 opening.

The list could be longer, but these alone include so many top GM’s, that is should be more than sufficient to provide to the system a full evidence of its viability, and give the Hippo system a major stamp of approval.

It is no surprise that you will find complete analysed games from all these players in this book.

A brief Timeline history of the Hippopotamus System

- **The 1920's : Nimzowitsch and the hypermodern revolution**

Back in 1928, that is 90 years ago, the great IGM Aaron Nimzowitsch played some games with the double fianchetto with white, reaching the same type of setup, that is with pawns on e3, d3, b3 and g3. One of his most famous game with the hippo is analyzed in game 11 of this book, in which he beats the great Akiba Rubinstein.

- **The 1950's : Ujtelky**

This opening as we know it, was later popularized by the Slovak International Master Maximillian Ujtelky (20 April 1915, [Hungary](#) – 12 December 1979), who played it many times, and against very strong opposition players (Spassky, Nezhmetdinov...) during that period.

“Basically, Ujtelky was provoking his opponents to the extreme and was waiting for them to have a nervous breakdown”. Amatzai Avni

Probably, the best known classical battle of the Hippo is the one presented in game #17, and it will show you the typical aspects of the opening system. He was opposed to the great Rashid Nezhmetdinov, for those who have never heard of him, one of the most dangerous combination player, ever...

- **The 1960's : Bors Spassky**

The history of the hippo continued, and IGM Boris Spassky was opposed with the white pieces to Ujtelky, in **1964** during the Chigorin Memorial. Spassky won that game, but this game was a turning point for him, because he was so much impressed by the flexibility of the system. From that day on, he started to investigate the opening in great detail (that is, as a future World Champion), and especially with the objective to prepare his 1966 World Championship match versus Tigran Petrosian.

Boris Spassky played the hippo twice successfully against the then World Champion Tigran Petrosian, during the **1966** World Championship match, both games ended with a draw, as Petrosian was

not able to break down the fortress.

Since that moment, the Hippo became more respected by the World Elite, and the next decades saw famous Grand Masters use it from time to time as a surprise weapon.

- **The 1970's**

In 1972, the great **Bobby Fischer**, who celebrated his World Championship title on the very day that I was born, said that the rules of chess should be changed because of theory evolution. By the way, also World Champion Capablanca anticipated such a situation.

Capablanca wanted to merge 2 boards side by side.

To avoid theoretical knowledge, the great Bobby invented the **Fischer Random Chess**, which avoids completely any theoretical knowledge. During that period of time also, chess professionals started to investigate new possible openings...

- **Current time, and future evolution**

I believe that in the near future, Fischer Random will become more popular than it is already now. However, I also believe that the Classical Chess as it exists since it was initially created will always remain alive. Because chess itself is unlimited.... I refer again to Kasparov book "Deep Thinking" to understand why.

Chess is still currently facing the problem of a huge amount of opening theory moves and millions of games available in the palm of our hands. Therefore, the authors believe (Stockfish 8 as well) that the Hippo is certainly an opening worthwhile investigating in the future!

Main Characteristics of the Hippo System

I found that the following 11 characteristics are reflecting the Hippopotamus System quite well.

Therefore, the following points are key areas well worth studying and understanding in order to make progress in this particular opening, and also in chess in general.

1-Hyper-Mordernism & Nimzowitch “My System”

Everybody knows what hypermodern chess means, so I will not go into great details, as this is not the scope of this book. Basically, the hypermodern school teaches us that it is possible to develop by using indirect control of the centre, instead of control by the pawns which is characteristic of the classical school. This means that the hypermodern tries to control and focus on the central area of the board with distant pieces, using quite often fianchetto's for the bishops.

I encourage every chess player who never studied Nimzowitsch's Masterpiece “My System” to read it. Many top players consider “My System” to be one of the most instructive chess book ever written in the entire history of chess literature.

2- The X-rays bishops

The Hippo somehow combines the benefits of the Owen defence (1... b6), together with the benefits of the Modern Defence (1...g6). While the Owen focuses on mainly controlling the central white squares d5 and e4, the Modern seeks to control the black ones on e5 and d4...

In the hippo this means that the full centre of the board will be under control, meaning that the Bg7 and the Bb7 will act like X-Rays on the most important section of the board.

The strength of the 2 fianchetto bishops will be seen very frequently in the games of the book, like in the following diagram which is extracted from game #5 where both bishops are extremely active and powerful:



3-Concept of provocation:

One of the ideas of hypermodern chess is to wait for the opponent to overreach (overextend) and then counter-attack. While overreaching, the hope is that the opponent centre will become **weaker**.

These ideas are also typical of defence systems like the Alekhine defence, the Modern defence, the Pirc defence, the East-Indian defence, and the Owen defence, to name just a few. And as you know, our system combines the concepts of the Owen together with the concepts of the Modern. If you want to read more about the concept of overextension, there is an interesting book written by Cyrus Lakdawala called “The Alekhine defence – Move by Move”.

The result is that you find yourself potentially threatening or winning one of the centre pawn during the middle game or even in the endgame. This will be seen in some of the following games, like in this diagram extracted from game 14, where black had a beautiful centre made of pawns c5, d5 and e5, but nothing remains from it:



4-Hidden potential energy

The concept of **hidden potential** is extremely important in this opening. All hippo forces remain hidden and avoid direct opening contact behind the 3 first rows, and at the right moment they will be released, with strong power. Think about a very tight elastic behind the first 3 rows, which is ready to be released at any moment and on any side of the board.

In the following diagram which is extracted from game 25, we can witness the tremendous activity of absolutely all the hippo player's pieces. The hidden potential energy was released, in the hands of Boris Spassky:



5-Pawn Mobility and flexibility:

“Positional play is a fight between mobility (of the mass of pawns) on one side, and the tendencies to handicap these on the other side.... (...). It is very important to search for the **greatest possible mobility** of the pawn mass, because expansionism of a mass of pawns can have a struggling effect”.

Aaron Nimzowitsch.

Depending upon the opponent strategy, the hippo player will often launch a counter attack either on the side with **b, c or f, g** pawns, or in the centre with e or d pawns.

As Nimzowitsch theory teaches us, e4 might be much stronger when played later in the game rather than at the first move. This will prove to be true in a lot of the following games, as in the following diagram (from game #2) where white played d4 on the 15th move, and it came with a central domination.



7-Psychology

It is impossible not to mention this important aspect. How not to be shocked when your opponent gets out of the main paths of the respected theory as quickly as this. How not to get worried about not knowing how to react correctly. Or how not to become overconfident against such a “weird” and very rare system. Read the current literature about the hippo on the internet, and you will witness so many negative comments about it. Never mind, this book proves that the hippo is very much safe and worth investigating.

In the following diagram extracted from game #27, white was overconfident when launching a very quick kingside attack, with the queen to h4, and pawns on g4 and f4. However, Spassky reacted accordingly on the centre of the board, pushed f5 at the right moment, and achieved a very comfortable position, where white’s attack was completely aborted.



8-Usage of the f and c files.

Quite often, black will react on the side by opening either the f or the c files (or even both), which are made possible by the very nature of the hippo (thanks to the knights developed on the 2nd line). CJS Purdy once wrote that the quality of an opening can be judged by the rooks' possibilities to become active quickly.

With any opening played, this rule should be respected as much as possible.

The following diagram, extracted from game #8 shows a killing activity from the rook on the f file, where white was able to play the tactical pseudo-sacrifice Nxf7!



9-How to counter the famous Austrian Attack?

“An Austrian Attack setup by white aiming to push f5 seems almost crushing against the hippo. Crude, but effective. » (Unknown).

A lot of writings claim that the Austrian attack can destroy the hippo setup. It may be a dangerous system, however there are good ways to counter this attack, if properly conducted. The same applies to the Austrian attack versus the Modern defence.

Successful examples of how to react against the Austrian attack can be found in Chapter 3 – Part 3.

Against the Austrian attack, when white has played Bd3, the f4-f5 push can become effective. That is the reason why it is best to delay the pure hippo by leaving the Bishop on the c8-h3 diagonal for a while, such that the f5 push will not be easy.

So, after 1. d4 g6 2. e4 Bg7 3. Nc3 d6 4. f4 e6!? 5. Nf3 Ne7 6. Bd3! black should play either 6...0-0 ,6...a6! or 6...Nc6!? and not 6...b6? directly.

GM Krasenkow is one of the world leading expert for Black in the 1. d4 g6 2. e4 Bg7 3. Nc3 d6 4. f4 e6!? line. As you will see in game 29, he allowed the f4-f5 push but it still was not decisive, and reached the following position where the Austrian attack never got dangerous:



10-Is the System too passive: The art of defence

Since the huge majority of the players are by far either e4, d4, c4 or Nf3 players, this system may indeed seem amazingly passive to them. This is usually not the truth. However, effective **strong defensive skills** are also needed in chess and perhaps more in this system than in any other defences. The art of defence is a truly important concept in chess and some nice books have been written about it. (see Bibliography).

In the diagram below, extracted from game #28, black just played the strong defensive move Nf8!, in order to protect the h squares. After a successful defence, black went on to win.



11-The obsession of activism

The following point is one of the key point of Nimzowitsch “My System”, which is mostly not followed by some players, even sometimes by some Masters themselves.

In the hippo system, perhaps more than in any other system, the player must be ready to be very **patient**, moving the pieces around to prepare for a counter-attack, or to prepare for defence in a certain area of the board.

This is a small but very interesting extract from My System:

“(the activist player...) shall ignore all the other moves, quiet moves or moves in view of reorganizing its pieces. The positional moves in most of the cases are not moves of defence neither moves of attack. They are, from my conception, moves which aim to magisterially assure the position...”

This diagram (extracted from game #1) perfectly illustrates this idea, where white just played 15.Qb1! followed soon by Qa2!



Is the hippo a Universal System for Black & White?

I was searching for some material about the hippo as white on the always evolving internet chess material. Could a defence, one move in advance possibly be worse than the defence itself?

For example, is there anyone who believes that the 1.b3 opening is worse than the Owen defence? At worst, it could be roughly equivalent, white being one move ahead.

Therefore, a few players thought that a hippo system might be playable as white as well, and they proved successful in practice, as we shall see in Chapter 2.

Nothing concrete really exist yet formally described in any book. Just a few pages, here and there lost on some internet forums. The big question is why not?

Most of chess players like to play 1.e4 (the best first move according to Bobby Fischer, the same person who invented Fischer Random...) or 1.d4, 1.c4 and 1.Nf3. And that's about it, for the huge majority of world players. Because people believe what they are being taught and told since centuries.

Some other people like to go out of the main roads and like offbeat openings like: 1.f4 (The Bird), 1.b3 (Nimzo-Larsen), 1.g3 (the Benko), 1.b4 (the Sokolsky), 1.Nc3 (the Dunst) or even 1.g4 (the Basman).

I have read a book about a universal system where white plays 1. Nc3 and as black 1. Nc6 against any white move, a book written by Blitz Master Tim Sawyer. I really enjoyed the idea and practiced this system with great success on the internet.

All these offbeat openings all playable in blitz or in rapid chess. I particularly enjoy playing the Bird or Larsen's b3, sometimes 1.b4, or even Basman move 1. g4 in blitz on the internet, for their surprising value. Very recently, Magnus Carlsen has even played the Bird opening 1.f4 (specifically the Leningrad system) in high competition, and won with it.

Let people think whatever they want about 1.g4 and how bad it is supposed to be.

However, let me remind these people, that in 2005 Anatoly Karpov was requested to play 1. g4 against IGM Susan Polgar, because Mister Gorbatchev played Anatoly's first move. And Karpov won with Basman's 1.g4! So, what is theoretically a best opening move?

Until a certain extremely high GM level, there are many openings which can be used to reach a correct and playable middle game.

Furthermore, games are almost never decided in the opening stage of the game. More often in the middle game and extremely often in the endgame.

David Bronstein sometimes used to think **1 hour** before playing his first move, because he wanted to create something new, every time he was sitting on the board.

Remember that Bronstein invented new opening systems, which were at the time very doubtful: 1. e4 – d5 2. exd5 – Qxd5 3. Nc3 – **Qd6** !? in the Scandinavian defence. At the time, it was not considered playable at all.

But this **Qd6** is nowadays considered by many Grand Masters, as **the** main line of the Scandinavian defence and so many books are available on this defence that I think it should be called the **Bronstein** Defence... he would definitely deserve it.

Chess is not only a mathematical science, but also an art developed by two human minds.

Like a Painter in front of a blank canvas, or like a Pianist sitting at his piano, a Chess Master also wants to create an unforgettable Masterpiece.

I think as Chess Players, we also should create, invent, and use our **imagination** and **intuition**, instead of following main line theories until the 20th and more move.

Just a bit of IT, and why chess engines don't like the hippo.

I wish to just introduce in this page, just enough knowledge about computer sciences, in order to understand how chess software engines are designed.

If you are not interested, you may skip and safely go to Chapter 2.

The main thing any computer is doing (how powerful its processor and software might be) is to execute some algorithms using their processor with the help of a database (or multiple). The chess algorithms are different from engine to engine of course. These software were analysed and then programmed by some IT specialists.

These algorithms are relying upon a huge database of millions of available games played in history, and they may even learn by themselves based on their own results using what we call Artificial intelligence. This means that when they fail, the software will record **why and when** they did a mistake, and the following time, they will never do it again.

Soon these engines will be helped by quantum processors (meaning a lot faster calculations).

Let's down to the lowest level of decision of any computer processor and at the lowest level of data contained in the laptop you are using. You will find nothing but 0 and 1's (true or false) in the hardware, even within Quantum Computers. **True of False operations** tree repeated millions of times per second.

The chess algorithms are building a huge tree by calculating every possible branch with these true of false decisions. And then, calculate which is supposed to be the best branch.

When you open **Kotov** book "**Think like a grand Master**" at almost any page, it really feels like it contains a lot of useful information to build a chess algorithm. By the way, Botvinnik was also a pioneer in developing and research for chess algorithms.

The total number of moves in chess is **infinite**. According to some scientists and Kasparov, it does contain 120 zeros. This would be equal to the number of seconds since.... the Universe was created, if a big bang really happened.

Any software, in the opening phase of any chess game, is first, only relying on the opening theory and games that were provided by human brains.

The huge majority of the chess players is relying on the knowledge they received from opening theory books or from evolving theory by grandmasters. **Theory** is relying on games played by GM's or from software programs.

Artificial intelligence in chess is nothing more than **hugely artificially fed human intelligence powered by extremely powerful computers which should never fail at calculation process.**

On the other side the human brain is mostly deciding based on **intuition** and a bit of calculation.

Now comes another question. What is the goal of chess.

Is it really to memorize a huge number of moves in your head, which anyhow will never surpass the software / human knowledge?

Like this (pseudo-code):

If he plays (this that I remember)

then

I recall that the book/games/software told me to do this.

So I will do this.

Else

I will try to think by myself (but: the computer still knows or calculates)

End If.

The computer unsolvable position...

Recent discoveries show that certain chess positions can be immediately resolved (within only a few seconds) by any human brain (because of intuition or pattern recognition), while the latest strongest computer based chess software are totally unable to solve the position, **even when we allow them countless hours of** calculation time.

Any software thinks the following position is won for black.

Yet, any chess player knows that it is not won for black, almost instantly, by using pattern recognition and intuition.

The key of this position is that white simply has to first move his knight c3 away (to d5 or e4 or d1) and then move his king around (and nothing else!) and black will NEVER be able to win.

The c6 pawn is blocking the complete black possibilities to liberate enough material to allow mating white's lonely king! Also, of course cxb5 and bxa4 instantly win for black, we see and know this instantly.



Maybe someday, faster, stronger quantum computers will perhaps be able to solve this kind of unsolvable type of position. Or maybe not. And then, other types of unsolvable solutions will be found by humans.

The key is that the human creativity and intuition will always lead the movement of artificial intelligence. These human abilities will always be the key of the uniqueness of mankind.

Its power for creativity, its consciousness, and its intuition. No scientist can define or explain exactly how and why the human consciousness is working.

Chapter 2: The Hippo System as White

A significant number of Grand Masters have used the Hippo as white. Grand Master Hillarp Persson from Sweden, who wrote the very famous book “The Modern Tiger” will be the first example in this book. But note also the great Legend Aaron Nimzowitsch, which provided the first stamp of approval as white to the system, as early as in 1928.

In this chapter, we will analyse, explain the strategies and tactics behind Grand Masters, International Masters high level games, step by step.

We will categorize the games in the following way, depending on the opponent’s central approach:

- **Chapter 2, Part 1: Black plays the classical centre e5-d5:** by far the most common reaction from the hippo opponent.
- **Chapter 2, Part 2: Black plays the e6 and d5 system**
- **Chapter 2, Part 3: Black plays the e5 – d5 and c5 centre.**

Chapter 2, Part 1: Black plays Classical Centre e5 – d5

Game #1: GM Tiger Hillarp Persson Vs. GM Smith Axel (Fide 2505) - 2008.

Tiger Hillarp Persson is one of the top IGM practionner of the modern defence, which is of course closely related with the hippo. His opponent, Axel Smith is a very strong young GM from Sweden.

The following game is a rare and true Hippo system played by a GM as white, and is a hugely instructive game in order to understand the main strategic ideas which are hidden behind the Hippopotamus opening.

We are going to analyse this game between two Grandmasters, each of which will be playing their own style: Hypermodern versus Classical...

1.g3 – Nf6 2. Bg2 – d5 3. d3 – e5 4. Nf3



Nothing new until now. The position looks like a Pirc in advance, or a King's Indian Attack, and could even lead towards a Reti.

White could as well already avoid Nf3 and choose for a3 or Nc3, in order to get the opponent out of their comfort zone. For Example, let us suppose a3 played now, fully in the spirit of a reversed Modern Defence. The position would look as follows:



But there are so many other possibilities. Never forget that Chess, like life is always a matter a personal choice. For example, you might try Nd2, c3, e3, h3....

New discoveries are there, waiting to be found, and to be tried.

But now, let's go back to the game.

4... Nc6 5. 0-0 – Be7 6. a3 – a5

Black wants to prevent the advance b4, which would provide white a space edge on the queen side, as well as threat against the Nc6.

7. Nc3!?

A very typical and provocative move, almost begging black to play d4 in order to open the white diagonal of the Bishop g2.

At the same time, another idea of this move might be to put some pressure on the d5 pawn, when Bg5 would follow. This is a very instructive idea, which we shall see again in other games later...



7... 0-0

On d4, white would be playing 8. Ne4 – Nxe4 9 dxe4 – Bg4 10. e3, with an interesting position.

8. e3!

Amazing. Black was certainly expecting e2-e4, reaching some usual types of positions. By playing e3 now, white retains a maximum of pawn flexibility for the future. A theme which we will find many times.



8... Re8 9. b3

The position looks more and more like a Hippo formation: all pawns are

currently on the 3rd rank, waiting for the opponent to overreach, and react accordingly.

Exactly the same strategy as the Alekhine defence. At the same time, both bishops will prepare for their work on the longest diagonals of the board.

9... Bf5

On the contrary, black is playing in the purest classical style of chess, which leads the game into a very instructive domain: Classical versus Hypermodern Concepts!

10. h3

A usual concept in the hippo as soon as the bishop is developed. When the bishop is developed, h3 is played in order to follow either with Kh2 with a solid position, or with g4 for the more adventurous minds... avoiding the exchange of white's very important bishop on g2.

10... h6

Black wants to free a hiding place for its bishop, in case of g4, potentially followed by Nh4, winning the pair of bishop with a better pawn structure.

11. Bb2 – Qd7 12. Kh2 – Rad8 13. Ne2

There are multiple ideas behind this move.

- First of all, it adds pressure to the e5 square.
- Secondly, the c pawn becomes free as well, possibly preparing a future c2-c4 advance in order to counter-attack the black centre of pawns, and opening the c line for a rook.

Always remember that the rooks are the most difficult pieces to activate during chess openings. Anything helping the powerful rooks to control open or semi open files must be good ideas.

13... Bd6 14. Nd2!

And now white continues in similar fashion as the previous move. Releasing some power to bishop g2, and freeing the f pawn, behind which a white rook is hoping to get some freedom!

14...Qe7 15. Qb1!?!?



A truly amazing idea!!

White wants to move his queen to a2, and then move the Rook a1, after which the Queen will go to a1, increasing the pressure on the e5 pawn. Isn't it a wonderful strategy?

Hypermodern chess at its maximum.

15... Bg6 16. Qa2 – Nb8 17. Rae1

The best place for the rook, which is centralized. You will very soon understand why the rook belongs there...

17... Nbd7 18. Qa1

Unbelievable but true. This is the 18th move and white did not move any pawn or piece beyond the first 3 lines! In typical games, the 18th move is usually either:

- An ongoing theory battle, or
- An ongoing middle game

In this game however, we are outside of any theory, plus the middle game has not yet truly started!

18... c6 19. f4!



Finally, a pawn is moved to the 4th rank, and this comes with much more energy and power than it would have had if it was played before. Both white rooks are ideally placed for the configuration of the position. Both bishops are extremely active. Both knights are centralized and ready to be released where they will be needed.

19... Bc7

Of course, exf4 is out of question for black, because of the Qa1 – Bb2 battery against e5 and f6...

20. Qc1

A strange move at first sight. But remember these rules in the Hippo system:

- Be patient and do not rush
- Slowly improve your position with hidden/positional ideas.

Here, white's idea is to play a4 and continue possibly with Ba3, activating the bishop towards the d6 square.

20... Qd6 21. a4 – Bb8 22. Ba3 – Qc7 23. f5!

Gaining space on the king side with tempo, and preparing to continue with e4, after which white's position will be extremely powerful on the king side.



23... Bh5

Bh7 was certainly interesting, and would come to my mind. As we shall see later, the Bishop on h5 will not be well placed and will be in danger. But white should be very careful about the g3 square, threatened by the Qc7 and Bb8... and therefore, white followed with the very natural:

24. e4!

Again, a multi-purpose move:

- The clear idea to continue with g4 trapping the bishop. Of course, g4 was not possible before because of black playing e4 with check.
- To block black's most dangerous active pieces, which are the Queen c7 and the Bb8.

White's edge becomes clear.

24... dxe4

Feeling the danger on the kingside, black decides to open up the centre, in order to possibly get some compensation in that area. It is a fact that closing the position with 24...d4 would give white all comfort and time to build up a very dangerous kingside attack.

25. dxe4 – Bxe2 Mandatory, as the bishop was in danger. 26. Rxe2 – Ba7?!

In this position, worth investigating was b5!, aiming for b4 and at the same time stopping any possibility for white to use the c4 square for its knight.

27. g4!!



This is an amazing Grand Master very long-term strategy! The basic idea is that white will build up very slowly but surely an attack on the side of the board where it has more space. With a lot of patience. If I tell you that white is getting prepared to play g4 to g5 12 moves later, this is certainly called very long-term planning!

27... Bc5

Of course, black wants to trade pieces in order not to allow future Nc4, and to lower the pressure.

28. Bf3

One of these “mysterious” or hidden moves which tell that white surely has read Nimzowitsch!

It looks as if white is doing nothing in particular.

However, white protects its g4 pawn in order to plan the h4 push in the future. I must encourage you to study the games of the 8th World Champion Tigran V. Petrosian.

I studied a great book (unfortunately not easy to find anymore...), written by Belgian GM O’Kelly about Petrosian, which contains a chapter called “The art of doing nothing”.

This move really reminds me this idea, which is so typical of Nimzowisch and of course of Petrosian himself.

28... Qd6 29. Nc4 – Qe7 30. Bb2 - Ra8 31. Qe1 – Bb4 32. c3 – Bc5 33. Bc1!



The bishop is now going to focus on the g5 and h6 squares. The g5 breakthrough remains one of white's main objectives.

Obviously, black cannot do much more than waiting for white to display its strategy!

33... Nb6 34. Nxb6 – Bxb6 35. Rg2!

The attack has now become as easy as a child puzzle...

All white forces are coordinated and all focussed on the main strategic objective, started since white's 23rd move f5.



35... Nh7

Trying to slow down white's advance of pawn's army. Also Black may hope to play Ng5 to force Bd1, but...

36. h4! – f6 37. Be2!

The Bg2 has fulfilled many objectives during the game, by protecting the g4 pawn, and now comes back toward the a2-g8 diagonal with amazing force! Yes, e4 is stronger when it is prepared, and yes, Bc4 is here much stronger than in the first moves of the Italian opening.

37...Bc5 38. Bc4+ – Kh8 39. g5



Let's take a look at this position. Very honestly, could we deduce that white played its first pawn or piece on the 4th rank only on the 19th move?

There's a saying in French : "L'habit ne fait pas le moine" which is very difficult to translate in English. Let's say something like "The clothes do not make the man".

The saying applies here perfectly. This position doesn't make us think at all about an hippo...

39...fxg5 40. hxg5 – hxg5 41. Rf3



41...Qf6 42. Rh3 – Be7 43. Kh1!!



Is this not beautiful: this king's middle game move Kh2 to h1 decides the game!

Black cannot prevent Rgh2, while the square g8 is inaccessible.

A Hypermodern masterpiece!

1-0

Game #2: GM Nakamura, Hi (2704) vs. GM Khenkin, I. (2647)

American top GM Hikaru Nakamura is a very interesting player, which is

extremely creative and who does not fear to go into complicated uncertainties, as this game will show. Hikaru plays this game in the purest Hippo style and wins brilliantly.

1. g3 d5 2. Bg2 e5 3. d3 Nf6 4. Nf3 Nc6 5. a3



We are in a sort of hybrid system between a Reversed Pirc and a reversed Modern. And somehow, the position will become a hippo system.

5... a5

Not allowing b4 followed by Bb2... where white would have reached a comfortable Sokolsky opening.

6. O-O h6

The idea of black is that white will play Bg5, in order to put some more pressure on the d5 pawn, in a traditional Pirc or modern system. However white had something else in mind.

7. b3 Bd6 8. Bb2 O-O 9. Nc3

We saw this concept in the first game, and this will not be the last time in this book. Again, the concept of provocation which is so typical for any hypermodern system.



9...Re8 10. Nb5

Another hippo possibility would have been
 10. e3 Be6 11. h3 Qd7 12. Kh2Ne7 13. Nd2 c6 14. Ne2 with a pure hippo
 position :



Back to the game, after 9. Nb5 followed

10... Be6 11. c4

Counter-attacking the centre via the wings, with 2 main ideas:

- To exchange on d5 heading towards an English Opening,
- Or ideas of c4-c5, allowing to trade the c pawn against the e5 pawn.



11...a4 12. Rc1 dxc4 13. bxc4

Respecting the principle to always take back towards the centre.

13...Qd7 14. e3 Bf5 15. d4

White now has a space advantage in the centre!



15...exd4

In case of e4?!, then Nd2, followed by Qc2 and Nc3 will win the e4 pawn.

16. exd4 Bg4 17. Re1 Rxe1+ 18. Qxe1 Re8 19. Ne5?!

A weird decision. Instead the simple 19. Qd1! – Bf8 20. Qc2 – Qc8 21. Re1 – Rxe1 22. Nxe1 and white wins the a4 pawn, and possibly the game. But Nakamura is Nakamura... and likes complications.

19...Nxe5 20. dxe5 Bc5 21. Kh1 Bh3 22. f3 Bxg2+ 23. Kxg2 c6 24. Nc3 Bd4



As we can see, all hope of white advantage has vanished for white, because of the 19. Ne5 strange decision. On the other hand, we have a very lively game, which suits perfectly the style of Hikaru.

25. f4 Ng4 26. Nd1 Ne3+?!

Probably not the best decision. Instead, 26... Bxb2 27. Nxb2 – Qd4 28. Nd1 – h5 with a better position for black.

27. Nxe3- Bxb2 28. Rd1 Qe7 29. Nf5! Qxa3 30. Qe2 Qb3

No white is suddenly in a winning position! Hikaru won his 19.Ne5 gamble move! Chess, for humans is not an exact science.

31. Rd7 a3 32. Qg4! – Black resigned.



Mate is unavoidable. If 32... Qc2+ 33. Kh3 – g6 34. Nxh6+ - Kg7 35. Rxf7+! – Kxh6 36. Qh4 mate.

In this game, Nakamura showed us that unexpected moves, even if not always the best, can lead to extreme complications which are not easily solved even by Grand Masters.

1-0

Game #3: GM. Pavel Blatny (2475) – GM. Jan Votava , 26 July 2006 (CZE)

GM Pavel Blatny from Czech Republic is a well-known specialist of 1. e3 opening.

1. b3 e5 2. Bb2 Nc6 3. e3 Nf6 4. g3 !?

An atypical move. b3 players would play c4, Nf3 or Bb5. This move however is in full hypo spirit. Surely black does not expect a Bishop on g2.



4... d5 5. Bg2 Bd6 6. d3 Qe7 7. a3 h5

The typical h pawn reaction again, based on the fact that the Knight did not develop to control the h4 square.



8. h3

Mostly the usual reaction. The Hippo player is preparing the g pawn push to g4, following the h pawn intrusion.

8... d4

Again, a typical reaction to an unusual opening. Black wants to force a King's Indian set up. You will face this very often, as the hippo opponent wants to reach a better known territory.

9. e4 h4 10. g4



Following a strange setup, white enjoys a position where he will be able to

break the opponent's pawn chain, either via f4, via c3, or gain some space on the queen side via b4 and b5.

10... Nh7 11. Nd2 Nf8 12. Nc4

With this move, white gains the pair on bishops, because Bc5 is met by b4.



12... Be6 13. Nxd6+ Qxd6 14. Ne2

Naturally. White wants to keep the f pawn free. If black does not react accordingly, white aims for castle followed by f4, with the objective of attacking the pawn chain at its base (rule by Nimzowitsch).



14... g5

And black does not allow Nimzowitsch idea of playing f4. This means that white will have to focus on other plans meaning the c3 pawn attacking the top of the pawn chain (d4) instead of its e5 base. Also, white can also aim to gain queen side space with b4 and b5.

15. Qd2 f6 16. b4 Ng6



Interesting would be a6 to counter the b5 push. In this situation, white will continue with a c3 plan to open the c file (as in the game). White will also potentially continue with Nc1 and Nb3, toward the c5 square.

17. b5 Nd8 18. c3

Probably the most natural move in the world....

18... dxc3

Also possible was 18... c5 19. bxc6 – dxc3 20. Bxc3 – Nxc6 with an interesting position.

19. Qxc3

And white reaches a reversed Sicilian structure: white's semi open c file versus black's semi open d file.

position.

23.. a5?!

Black should have played 23... Qxa4! 24. Qxb7 – Qa5+ 25. Kf1 – Rc8 with a clear advantage due to superior activity of pieces.

24. Qd2 Ngf4 25. Nxf4 Nxf4 26. O-O



The position is unbalanced. Black's knight is very strong on f4 while white has the pair of bishop with a strong Ba3. However, Bg2 is currently almost a big pawn. One of the future white strategy will turn around the activation of the bishop, via the d4 push.

26... Qe6

On 26... Qxa4, then 27. Bc5 – Qc6 28. Rxa5 is quite even.

27. Rfc1 Bc6 28. Bf1 Kf7 29. Qe3?!

Stronger would be 29. d4! Bxe4 30. Rc7+ - Kg6 31. Re1 with an advantage.

29... Rhc8 30. Rcb1 Kg6 31. Bc5 Rd8 32. f3 Qd7 33. Bb6

Rdc8



White has reached a position where the d4 pawn push will allow white's bishop to get a new life.

34. d4 Bxa4 35. dxe5 fxe5 36. Rb2

If 36. Rc1? – Rxc1 37. Rxc1 – Bb5! 38. Bxa5 – Bxf1
(Rxa5? Qb6+ +-) 39. Rxf1 – Qd4 -+

**36... Rc2 37. Qa3 Qc6 38. Rbb1 Qd7 39. Rb2 Qc6 40.
Rd1 Rg2+**

A very aesthetic position indeed! Now the superior activity of both rooks will finally decide the game in white's favour. Notice that the black rook on a8 remained completely passive in this game.



41. Bxg2 Bxd1 42. Bc5 Ne6 43. Rb6 Qc8 44. Bf1 Kh7 45. Be3 Ng7 46. Bxg5 Qc7 47. Rh6+



And mate follows.

1-0

Game #4: GM. Pavel Blatny (2475) – B. Heberla (2389) ,
16/02/2003

1. g3 e5 2. Bg2 Nc6 3. b3 Nf6 4. Bb2 d5 5. e3 Bd6

We have reached a similar situation from the previous

Blatny game (#3).



6. d3 O-O

On 6...Bg4, Nge2 followed by h3 and potentially g4 would lead to a good position for white, because h3-g4 and Ng3 is a usual setup in the hippo.

7. Nd2 Ne7

Black wishes to reinforce the d5 square and bring the knight to the g6 square where it will be poorly placed with little prospect. However, the positive aspect of the manoeuvre is that the g3 – g4 push will be more difficult to achieve, because of the weakening of the f4 and h4 squares. As such it can be considered as a prophylactic move.



8. Ne2 c6 9. h3 Ng6 10. a3 Re8

Another pure hippo setup has occurred. White now has to choose its middle game plan and strategy. Obviously the g4 push is not a possibility, and f4 would be too weakening for the e3 pawn. White has therefore to find a plan based on the extension on the Queen side, or play for e4 central push would be another idea.



11. c4!

A counter attack from the wing on towards the centre.

11... b6

11... dxc4 12. Nxc4 would lead to a reversed Sicilian with a move in advance.

11... a5 would be interesting in view of making the b4 pawn push more difficult: for example: 12. cxd5-Nxd5 13. Qc2 with a reversed Sicilian.

12. b4

Because of black's setup, white chooses to expand on the queen side. This type of position is very similar to the Sokolsky opening strategies. In the current context, black should worry about ideas with b4-b5 to undermine the c6-d5 pawn chain, enhancing Bg2 activity along the h1 – a8 diagonal. People interested in the 1.b4 (Sokolsky- opening can have a look at the reference in the bibliography chapter at the end of the book.



12... Bb7 13. Qb3

As mentioned above, an alternative scenario could be 13.b5 directly, after which 13... cxb5 14. cxb5 – Qd7 15. Qb3 – h5! 16. a4 – h4 17. g4 – d4!? 18. e4 – Nh7 19. 0-0 with a double-edged position.

13... e4?!

Black probably thought that the opening of the position in the centre would favour him because white did not castle yet. As will be seen in the game, the opening of central lanes actually favours white, because of the strong Rook going to d1. Better was 13... h5! to follow the same plan as explained in the notes of white's 13th move.

14. dxe4 Nxe4 15. Rd1 Qc7 16. O-O



16... Rad8

Possibly better was 16...Nxd2 17.Rxd2-dxc4 18.Qxc4-Be5 19. Rfd1-Bxb2 21. Rd7! -Qxd7 22. Rxd7 – Ne5 23. Qb3 – Nxd7 24. Qxb2 with a slight advantage to white, because of better pieces coordination (see diagram):



Now back to our game, followed:

17. Nxe4 dxe4 18. Nc3! c5

Unfortunately for black, this move is necessary in order to protect the weak advanced e4 pawn. The weakening of both the e4 pawn and the b5 / d5 pawns mean a very successful hippo strategic play. White stands better.

19. Nb5 Qb8 20. Nxd6

White won the important Bd6.

Rxd6 21. bxc5 Rxd1

Mandatory. If 21... bxc5?? follows Rxd6 and the Bb7 is lost.

22. Rxd1 bxc5 23. Rd7?!



The rook on the 7th rank looks very natural of course. However, 23. Qb5! was the only way to keep a very strong advantage: 23... Qc8 24. h4! – a6 25. Qb6 – Nf8 26. Bc3 with a clear advantage, as white completely dominates the complete board.

23... Ba6?

23... Bc6! Would have saved black. 24. Qxb8 – Rxb8 25. Rc7 – Rxb2 26. Rxc6 – Rb1+ 27. Kh2-Rb2 with a slight advantage to white.

24. Qxb8 Rxb8 25. Bc3 Bxc4 26. Bxe4



White's position is completely winning: the pair of bishop is just too strong, and the rook on d7 is a killer.

26...Be6 27. Rxa7 Bxh3 28. a4 Nf8 29. a5



And now the "a" pawn is a killer as well.

1-0

Game #5: IM. Fries-Nielsen, Jens Ove (2385) – GM. Hickl, Joerg (2500), 1988 Bundesliga

1. b3 d6 2. Bb2 e5 3. e3 Nd7 4. g3 Ngf6 5. Bg2 d5

Black unfortunately loses already an important tempo, and we can now consider that white is 2 tempi ahead in a hippo setup. This is however an overreaction from the hippo opponent.



6. Ne2 Bd6 7. d3 c6 8. Nd2 O-O 9. O-O

Again, a pure hippo setup has arrived.



9... a5 10. a3 Re8 11. h3 Qe7 12. Kh2

A typical move again in a hippo setup, with a double objective:

- To protect the h3 pawn
- To get an activity possibility for the rook on g1 or h1, in case of a king side attack (with h4 or g4).

12... Bc7 13. Nc3

A decision which focusses on the e4 square, repositioning the knight which was not effective on the e2 square. In such a situation where black blocked the b4 advance and where an attack on the king side is currently not possible, white could aim for the c4, a plan which was seen in game 4 , move 11. (GM Pavel Blatny).



13... Nf8 14. e4

The idea behind 13. Nc3. The game is now switching towards a Pirc in advance.

14...dxe4

Deciding to open the centre, however black also had the possibilities to close the centre via d4 or to keep the tension with 14...Bg4 – Qe1.

15. Ndx4 Nxe4 16. Nxe4

The position is now approximately equal according to Stockfish. However, it is an unbalanced situation which is ideal for any hypermodern player. White's bishops are both extremely strong, but black has no real weakness until now. All these parameters usually mean a long fight and struggle.



16...Bf5 17. Re1 Ne6 18. Nd2 f6 19. Nf3!

White wants to take possession of the pair of bishops, after which they should have an advantage on the light squares.

19... Bb6

Even if black tries to avoid the exchange by playing Bg6, white follows with Nh4 , Nf5 and h4 with a tremendous knight on f5.

20. Nh4 Bg6 21. Nxf6 hxf6 22. Qd2 Bd4 23. c3 Bb6 24. d4!



White realizes its ideal breakthrough, opening lanes for maximum pair of bishops activity and a Re1 x ray with the Qe7.

**24... exd4 25. cxd4 Qd6 26. Qd3 Nxd4 27. Rxe8+ Rxe8
28. Rd1**

On 28. Qxg6? – Re2 would be very strong for black.

28... Rd8 29. Qxg6 Qe7 30. Be4



Strange as it may seem, the position should be pretty equal

if black defends correctly. White's light square advantage is for the moment just a mirage.

30... Qf7?!

But there was an if, in the previous statement. Correct would be 30... Nf3+! 31. Bxf3 – Rxd1 32. Bxd1 (or 32. Qh7+ followed by Qh5+) – Qe1!

31. Qh7+ Kf8 32. b4 axb4 33. axb4 Qg8 34. Qh5

The position is still objectively equal, however white has the initiative and a position which is for a human being more enjoyable to play. Stockfish however finds it very equal.

34... Ne6?

And this is a mistake. On 34... Qa2! White would have nothing better than a draw with 35. Qh8+ - Kf7 (Or Qg8 with draw) 36. Qh5+ - Ke7 37. Rb1.

35. b5! Rxd1 36. Qxd1 Ke7 37. bxc6

Winning a pawn and probably the game. The rest is technique and does not require specific explanations...

37...bxc6 38. Bxc6 Qc8 39. Ba3+ Bc5 40. Bxc5+ Nxc5 41. Qd5 Ne6 42. Ba4 Ng5 43. h4 Nf7 44. Qe4+ Kd6 45. Qb4+ Qc5 46. Qb8+ Qc7 47. Qf8+ Ke5 48. Qxg7 Qb6 49. f4+ Ke6 50. Qg4+ Ke7 51. Qe2+ Kf8 52. Bd7 Qd4 53. Bh3 Nd6 54. Bg2 Kf7 55. Qa2+ Kg7 56. Qe6 Nc4 57. Qe7+ Kh6 58. Qf8+ Kg6 59. h5+ Kxh5 60. Qg7 Qd3 61.

Bf3+

1-0

Game #6: IM [Gerard Welling](#) - [J Dubbeldam](#), Corr NL/M (1991)

1. [g3](#) [d5](#) 2. [Bg2](#) [c6](#) 3. [d3](#) [Nf6](#) 4. [Nd2](#) [e5](#) 5. [e3](#) [Bc5](#) 6. [Ne2](#)

A typical setup we have already seen, where white keeps a maximum of pawn flexibility.



6... [Nbd7](#) 7. [a3](#) [a5](#) 8. [b3](#) [b5!?](#)

An unusual, but very interesting idea. Seeing that white is doing nothing to claim pawn territory activity, black takes immediately the opportunity to get some space advantage on the queen side. At the same time, it is move difficult for white to achieve the pawn advance c2-c4 (a common pawn move in this opening, as we already saw).



9. [Bb2](#) [Bb7](#)

In case of 9.Ng4, white needs to be careful about Bxe3! followed by a fork on d1 and g2. In this case, of course white plays d4 to immediately shut down the bishop c5 diagonal, while the move Ng4 will be a waste of time (the knight will be kicked away by h3 which is a precious move in almost any hippo setup).

10. 0-0 – 0-0 11. h3 – Re8 12. g4



Interesting concept. Instead of immediately claiming central territory advance with d4, white has the idea of playing Ng3, aiming towards the f5 square.

On the other side, such a move must be carefully analysed because such an advance of a pawn on the king side might be dangerous because of the weaknesses created. In this case, black already kingside castle, which means the g4 push is perfectly safe!

12... Qe7

Interesting was 12... Bd6 13. c4 – h6 14. Qc2 – Rc8 15. Rfc1 – Qe7 and Ng3 will follow with an unbalanced situation.

13. Ng3 h6 14. d4 Bb6

If instead 14... exd4 15. exd4 – Bb6 16. Nf3 – Qf8 17. Ne5 with a better position for white.

15. dxe5 Nxe5



We have reached a very interesting unbalanced middlegame where the Bb2 has become extremely powerful, and the Knight on g3 has a wonderful square on f5.

16. Nf3 – Bc7 17. Nf5 – Qd8

Finally, white begins the implementation of the idea of 12. g4.

18. Nxe5

Another very interesting option is 18... N3d4 – Bb6 19. a4- b4 20. f4-Ng6 21. g5-hxg5 22. Nxg7!? – Rxe3 ((22... Kxg7 23. g5 +-)) 23. Nf5 with a crazy double-edged position! Yes, the hippo can be very wild sometimes, while

leaving a lot of interesting play for creative people! Just have a look at the following diagram...



But back to the game, black played more calmly:

18... Bxe5 19. Bxe5 – Rxe5 20. Qd4!

Powerful centralization of the queen.

20... Qc7 21. b4 – Ne8?!

A passive move. Better was 21... Bc8 22. f4 – Re8 23. Nxf6+ - Kh7 24. g5 – Ne4 25. Ng4 with an unclear position.

22. f4 – Re6 23. h4 - f6

Interesting was 23... Rg6 24. g5 – Nd6 25. Nxd6 – Rxd6 26. f5 with an aggressive pawn structure for white on the king side.

24. Qc5

White now has a positional advantage, with a knight on f5 becoming as dangerous as a lion in cage!

24... Qd7 25. a4! – Ba6

Potentially stronger was 25... Nd6 26. bxa5 – Nxf5 27. gxf5 – Rd6 28. Rfb1! with an important queen side domination.

26. Rfd1

Also, e4 was very strong, although the text move is very good as well.

26... Qa7 27. Nd4

Unfortunately, white misses the beautiful sacrifice 27. Rxd5!! with a winning game, as the bishop taking on d5 will regain a rook.



After the move Nd4 played in the game followed

27... Rxe3

Not better was 27... Qxc5 28. Rxe3 – axb5 winning.

28. axb5 – Bb7 29. Qxa7 – Rxa7 30. bxc6 – Bc8 31. b5

White's pawns b5 and c6 are lethal... also d5 is falling, and so black had to resign.

1-0

A truly beautiful hippo game with the very instructive manoeuvre g4-Ng3-Nf5.



Game #7: GM Movsziszian, K (2487) – GM Malinin, V (2280), World Senior 2014, GRE

1.g3 e5 2.Bg2 d5 3.d3 Nc6 4.a3 Be6 5.Nd2 Qd7!?



Black is showing that it will not allow an easy castle for white, except if they are ready to trade their white square bishop, which would be very unambitious.

6.b4

Interesting idea once again flirting with the interesting Sokolsky territories. 1.

b4 is also a great offbeat opening, and the interested reader should look for “Play 1.b4!” by Lipshun (Everyman Chess).

6... Nge7 7.Bb2 f6 8.c4 g5

A weird idea, because white still hasn't committed castle, and nobody knows if he will ever do so, or if he will prefer to stay centralized! But a GM idea anyhow, so it cannot be disregarded.

8... d4 was perhaps more indicated, even though the Bg2 would gain a lot of activity.



9.Rc1 Ng6 10.e3 Be7

Another option would have been 10...0-0-0 11. Qc2 – Kb8 with a double-edged position.

11.h3 O-O?!

Another strange decision. We expected 1... Rd8 to put some pressure on the d file.

12.cxd5 Bxd5 13.Bxd5+ Qxd5 14.Qb3

And we have reached now a reversed Sicilian defence, classical one, but with one move in advance: indeed this is a now an English Opening...

The Hippo is full of secrets after all!



14... Rfd8 15.Ke2!

There was no need to castle for white in this game, and as soon as move 15, the King gets already centralized (very important in any endgame), acting as an important defensive piece!

15...Kg7 16.Ngf3 Rd7 17.Qxd5 Rxd5 18.Ne4 a5 19.Nc3 Rd7 20.b5 Nd8

This is a position which should be very common for every Sicilian / English players:

- White enjoys the c “semi-open” file
- Black enjoys the d “semi-open” file
- In the Sicilian defence, the move d5 (here d4) often comes as a positional liberation.



21.d4 ! Ne6 22.dxe5 Nxe5 23.Nxe5 fxe5 24.Ne4



White has a long term positional advantage due to the following elements:

- Pressure on the c7 file
- An isolated e5 pawn, which is pressured by the Bb2.

24... Kg6

Stepping out of the deadly diagonal, is a very good reflex.

25.a4 Rad8 26.Rc2 h5 27.g4!

Of course, white blocks its pawns on the opposite colour of black's and its own remaining bishop.



Rd5 28.Rhc1 hxg4 29.hxg4 Bb4 30.Bc3 Bxc3 31.Rxc3 R8d7 32.R3c2 Rh7

33.Rd2 Rxd2+ 34.Nxd2 Kf6 35.Ne4+ Kg6 36.Rd1

Smartly keeping the knights for now instead of Nc5... For the time being, white's knight is more active than its black colleague.



A wonderful endgame strategy will follow now, well worth studying.

Time for technical concretisation has arrived!

**36... Re7 37.Rd5 Nf8 38.Nc5 b6 39.Ne4 Nd7 40.Kd3 Rf7 41.Kc4 Nf6
42.Rxe5**

Winning a pawn, and the game...

The rest is GM technique.

**42...Nxe4 43.Rxe4 Rxf2 44.Re6+ Kf7 45.Rc6 Rg2 46.Kd5 Rxc7+
Kg6 48.e4 Rg1 49.Rc6+ Kg7 50.Rxb6 Ra1 51.Rb7+ Kg6 52.b6 Rxa4
53.Rb8 Rb4 54.b7 Kg7 55.e5 Rb1 56.e6 Rd1+ 57.Kc5 Rc1+ 58.Kb6 Rb1+
59.Ka7 Kf6 60.Rg8 a4 61.e7 Kxe7 62.Rxg5 Kd6**

1-0

Game #8: E. Briffoz (2125) – S. Balestra (1937),
lichess.org – April 2017

1.d3!?

“I even played 1.e3 and 1.d3 a few times against computers to get them out of book. Terrible moves, of course. 1.b3 at least a real move!” – Gary Kasparov

While we can possibly agree with Gary's words (at the very top level), this move is certainly not so "terrible" as it seems.

Again, this move is a very natural move in any hippo setup. So why would it be so terrible after all?

1... Nf6 2. Nf3 – g6 3. g3 – Bg7 4. Bg2 – d6 5. 0-0 – 0-0 6. Nc3 – e5

Black is playing in pure King's Indian setup strategy now, probably never expect the following white development of moves...



7. Nd2!?! – Nc6 8. h3!

8...Be6 9. e3 – Re8 10. b3 – d5 11. Bb2 – Qd7 12. Kh2

White chooses this move over g4 for now, because of the simple fact that black's g6 pawn doesn't allow the Ne2-g3-f5 manoeuvre.

12...a6 13. Ne2



13... Rad8 14. a3 – h5?!

Over-optimistic and not dangerous for white, because black already castled short and the rook is not even on h8 anymore!

15. Nf3 – Qd6

The queen needs to defend the e5 pawn!

16. Ng5 – Bc8 17. b4 – h4 18. e4!

Blocking the black e5 square became very important as it shuts down the h2-b8 diagonal, where white's king is situated.

18.. hxg3 19. fxg3!

Opening the f file to white's advantage...



19... Bh6?!

A mistake. The best move was dxe4: after 19... dxe4 20. Nxe4 Nxe4 21. dxe4 Be6 22. Qxd6 Rxd6 23. Rad1 Red8 24. Rxd6 Rxd6 25. Bc1 a5 26. c3. , with an unclear position.

20. Bc1!

After this move, black's position becomes very critical.

20...dxe4



21. Nxf7!

A neat pseudo-sacrifice. Now white has a better position, if he does not screw it.

21... Kxf7 22. Bxh6 – exd3 23. Qxd3 – Bf5 24. Qc4 + - Ke7

If 24... Be6 then 25. Qh4!

25. Bg5 – Rf8 26. Nc3 – Ke8 27. Rad1 – Nd4

White's position is won.



28. Bxf6 ! – Rxf6 29. Ne4 – Bxe4 30. Bxe4 – Rxf1+ 31. Rxf1 – b5??

Checkmate follows! The best move was Nf5, but even so... after 31... Nf5 32. h4 Kd7 33. Bxf5 gxf5 34. Rxf5 , with a winning position anyway.



32. Qf7#

White wins by checkmate. 1-0

Game #9: E. Briffoz (2125) – Kkarpov (1928) – Internet

Lichess, May 07 2017.

1. a3!? - e5

The Anderssen Opening they call it!

But for this specific game against a certain “Kkarpov”, I might have called this opening a Reversed Saint-George...

Winning against Karpov with the Saint-George, was this not a historical achievement in itself?

I was thinking to myself: what about winning against another Karpov with the Saint-George reversed?

But for now, let’s just call this an ongoing Hippo.

2. g3 d5 3. Bg2 Nf6 4. d3 c6

Kkarpov is playing in a very classic way... Or dare I say, very Karpov like?

5. Nf3 Bd6 6. Nbd2 O-O 7. O-O h6



In this kind of Reversed Pirc, white could be tempted to play e4. This is also a good possibility. But white wanted to continue on a less common path and play for a gain of space on the queen side.

8. b4 Nbd7

In the event of 8... e5, white continues with Bb2 and the pressure on e5 compensate the b4 hanging pawn.

9. Bb2 Re8 10. e4 d4?!

This is an inaccuracy. The best move was a5. (10... a5 11. Re1). This type of reaction however is very common especially in the system using the e5-d5-c5 centre, trying to migrate to a Kings Indian type of position.

11. h3

A slight inaccuracy according to StockFish, the best move was c3, continuing 11. c3 dxc3 12. Bxc3 b6 13. Nc4 Bc7 14. a4 b5 15. Na5 Bxa5 16. bxa5 Ba6 17. axb5 Bxb5.

11... c5 Probably not a great move, because first black is allowing white to push b5, gaining an important space on the queen side, and at the same time securing a beautiful place for the knight on c4, for the rest of its life!



12. Nc4 Bc7 13. b5 Nb6 14. Na5?

A mistake, allowing Na4 with a comfortable position for black. Better was 14. Nxb6! and continue later with Nd2 and Nc4.



14... c4?

The Best move was Na4, after which white had to retreat with Nc4 with an even position.

15. dxc4

Also worth investigating was 15. Nxc4 Nxc4 16. dxc4 Nxe4 17. Re1 f5 18. Nh4 Rf8 19. Ng6 Rf6 20. Qh5 Qe8 21. Nf4 Qxh5

15... Be6?

Again a mistake. The best move was 15...Na4: After 15... Na4 16. Bxd4 exd4 17. Nb3 Bb6 18. e5 Ne4 19. Nfxd4 Rxe5 20. Nf3 Re8 21. Qxd8 Rxd8 22. Ne5 with an interesting position.

16. c5 Nc4 17. Nxb7?!

The best move was Nxc4, with a following possible line: 17. Nxc4 Bxc4 18. Re1 Ba5 19. a4 Rc8 20. Nxe5 Rxe5 21. Bxd4 Bxe1 22. Bxe5 Qxd1 23. Rxd1 Ba5.

17... Nxb2?

A mistake in an already difficult position. White definitely won the opening

battle.

18. Nxd8 Nxd1 19. Nxe6 Rxe6 20. Rfxd1 Nxe4?

A mistake: the best move was Rb8. (20... Rb8 21. a4)

21. Nd2 Nxd2?!

Inaccuracy. The best move was f5. (21... f5 22. Bxe4 fxe4 23. Nxe4 Ba5 24. a4 Re7 25. Rab1 Rc7 26. c6 Kf7 27. Nc5 Re7 28. Kg2)

22. Bxa8

Black resigns. 1-0

Chapter 2, Part 2: Black plays e6 – d5 centre

Game #10: IM. Ilya Odessky – GM. A. Rustemov, Moskow 1997

Ilya Odessky wrote an interesting book about 1.b3 edited by New In Chess, from which this game is extracted. 1.b3, as 1.g3, as 1.a3 are all very closely related to the hippopotamus opening.

1.b3

Officially the Nimzo-Larsen. But as we know, there are a multitude of possibilities to initiate other openings, like the Réti, or the English for example.

1... d5 2. Bb2 – Nf6 3. Nf3 – Bf5 4. g3 !?

Heading towards a hippo system in advance already.

4... e6 5. Bg2 – Be7



6. d3 – h6 7. Nbd2 – 0-0 8. 0-0 – Bh7

9. e3!?

Now white plays the elastic pawn move... White will then get prepared to follow with the follow plan: achieving the e3-e4 move, either by Re1 and e4, either with Qe1 and e4, or either with Qe2 and e4.



9... c5

Another solid but slightly passive option would be 9... Nbd7 10. Qe2 -c6 11.

e4 with a small edge for white. If you want more information about specific variations and games from this position, I refer the reader to Odessky's book, but basically the game is oriented into a type of King's Indian Attack, following 11.e4, and this material is outside of the scope of an Hippo.

10. Ne5?!

I personally do not think there was any hurry to play this move, although it might be useful later. However, we have to remember that this game is from a book about 1.b3 and not about the hippo itself, and so white continues in a "Larsen b3" spirit. I am not sure, however that Nimzowitsch would have played Ne5...

Actually, even Odessky himself in his notes, writes that he considers that 10.Ne1 might be, strange as it may seem, a better option for white, in order to keep as many pieces on the board and retain better fighting chances.

Also, more in the spirit of the hippo would be moves like Qe2 directly, preparing for e3-e4, or a3 preparing for b4. With the text move, the only thing happening is exchanges of pieces, which is benefic for the defending player.

10... Nfd7!

Of course, as white now needs to trade pieces, which is obviously advantageous for black.

11. Nxd7

If instead white plays 11. Ndf3, black follows with Qc7 and Bf6, and again white has no choice but to trade pieces on d7.

However, not mentioned is f4. It is true that after Nxe5 and fxe5, then Nc6 is played with a very good position for black, and a bad structure of pawns for white.

11...Nxd7 12. e4 – Bf6!

Just in time to avoid e4-e5, followed by f4, which would have led the position towards a KIA type of middle game.

By hurrying with Ne5, white now gets a position which is not so flexible as it could have been by continuing in a pure hippo style.



13. Bxf6

Not many other choices, unfortunately for white he has to trade yet another piece... And one of its most important piece in any hippo system. The passive 13. c3 is weak because of 13...Ne5 , then 14. Qe2 – Nc6 with an unpleasant position for white.

13... Nxf6 14. e5?!

I think this move is positionally not very correct, as the g2 bishop will become “a big pawn” (biting on granite!), and also due to the fact that f4 will have to follow in order to support e5, ending up with a weak position on the dark squares. A better option could have been 14. a4, with ideas of playing a5 gaining space of the queen side, and keeping opportunities to trade on exd5, in order to strengthen white’s remaining bishop.

14... Nd7 15. f4



The result of the opening is not very good for white as he lost his best bishop b2, and its remaining Bg2 is completely locked. This shows how a good timing is needed for white before reaching the opponent territory! Here white traded 2 minor pieces and sees that any possibility of an advantage has disappeared. And as can be seen, the missing bishop makes black squares very weak (especially the g1-a7 diagonal).

15... Qa5 16. Nf3 – Rac8

Very interestingly, Stockfish 8 (one of the world's strongest engine) gives the strange looking Nb8! in this position, with the aim of playing Qb6 and follow with Nc6, where the knight will get a second life (It is almost worthless on d7). Classy reconversion by Stockfish!

17. c4

Black was threatening to play c4 itself, opening the position with a big activity for the black pieces (especially the Rc8, and the knight d7 which may go to c5, pressure on d3 square by the Bh7).

17... Nb6!

The exclamation mark is according to Odessky in his book.

Instead, if 17... dxc4 18. dxc4 – Nb8 19. Qe2 – Rcd8 20. Rfd1 with an equal position.

While playing Nb6, black claims his intentions to avoid simplifications, and

aims rather at complicating the game instead. Remember Tal's 2+2=5's rule...

18. Qe2 – Rfd8 19. Rfd1

Interesting would have been Nh4, with ideas of following later with Bh3, g4 and eventually continuing with f4-f5. Instead, white is continuing in a very flat way.

19... Rc7 20. g4 – Rcd7 21. Kf2

White's position is now very passive, and he can only sit and wait for the events...

21... Nc8!

The Knight is reorienting towards the e7 square where it will be more helpful

22. Kg3 – Ne7 23. h4 – h5!

Of course, black is securing a comfortable sofa on f5 for his horse! White has the huge disadvantage of having to protect its weak d3 pawn, and the Rd1 cannot move either, because of dxc4 followed by the d file invasion.



24. Bh3 – hxg4 25. Bxg4 – Nf5 26. Bxf5

Almost forced to give up its remaining bishop against the strong knight.

– Bxf5 27. h5 – dxc4 28. dxc4 – Rd3!

Invasion of the d file.

29. Rxd3 – Rxd3 30. Rd1 – Qc3 31. Rxd3 – Qxd3 32. Qxd3 – Bxd3



33. Kh4?! Not better for white would have been 33. Ng6, following which 33...b6 34.a3 – Bb3 and white loses either the b or the c4 pawn.

– Bb1 34. a3 – a5 35. Nd2 – Bc2 36. Kg4 – Kh7 37. Kg5 – b6

Zugzwang! White has now 2 weaknesses on h5 and b3, and finally the h pawn will fall...



38. Kg4 – Kh6 39. Kh4 – Bd3 40. Kg4 – Be2

White resigned. 0-1

Game #11: GM. A. Nimzowitsch – GM. A. Rubinstein,

Berlin 1928

We are in 1928. Both players are true legends, and among the very best players at that time.

It is very interesting to note that this Nimzowisch-Rubinstein game is included in Soltis *“The Hundred Greatest Games of the Twentieth Century”*! (as Number 77).

The advance of the “f” pawn (a typical hippo strategy), and the final sacrifice of the rook are amazing.

As we shall see, Nimzowitsch produces a system with both bishops developed in fianchetto, followed by both central pawns in e3 and d3, reaching an hybrid hippopotamus system.

Learning the classics is essential to the improvement of any chess Master!

1.Nf3 – d5 2. b3 – Bf5 3. Bb2 – e6 4. g3!

Simply amazing! The great Nimzo does not play e3 as most of the people would think he would, and goes for a fianchetto of both bishops instead. He realizes that the king bishop will have better prospects on the long diagonal than on f1-a6.



4... h6 5. Bg2 – Nbd7 6. 0-0 – Ngf6 7. d3 – Be7 8. e3

Again, an amazing situation: we have reached a pure hippo setup, in 1928!



8... 0-0 9. Qe2 – c6

More risky but enterprising would have been c5.
But in this position, nobody can guess Nimzo's move...

10. Kh1!!

Again, a totally surprising and truly amazing move!! Nimzowitsch is actually inventing his own system in this game! The art of doing nothing, and a mysterious positional move. Later a certain World Champion called Tigran Vartanovitch Petrosian became his best disciple, and applied similar ideas many times. In 2017, this move is easily accepted and understood. But in 1928, it was another matter!

White is basically playing completely in the hippo style: waiting for the opponent to take the initiative. At the same time, the long strategic idea is to prepare a possible f4 in the future without compromising its king's safety.

10...a5 11. a4 – Nc5 12. Nd4 – Bh7 13. f4!

Here is the reason why Kh1 was played! How many times will we witness the Hippo player advancing his f pawn?



13... Nfd7

With the idea of playing Bf6.

14. Nd2 – Qc7 15. e4!?



There we go! Nimzowitsch's idea is to prove that e4 is stronger now than on the 1st move! Remember also that Nimzo used to play 1.e3! very often, again in the same spirit.

Later, GM Pavel Blatny, and Belgian International Master Michel Jadoul (my chess coach at the Chess Academy) endorsed 1.e3! with many successes.

15... dxe4

If not, then white continues e4-e5 with a big positional advantage.

16. Nxe4

Why didn't Aaron play exd4?

Maybe he thought the exchange of the d2 knight, which is quite passive against an active Nc5 is advantageous for white. However, exd4 would be quite interesting to investigate for white.

16... Nxe4 17. dxe4 – e5! 18. Nf3

We might imagine that Nf5 would be more aggressive. However, it only leads to exchanges which lead towards a drawish game: 17. Nf5 – Bxf5 18. exf5 – Bf6 19. fxe5 – Bxe5 20. Bxe5 , and white cannot claim any advantage.

18... exf4 19. gxf4 – Rfe8

Of course, Qxf4 is wrong, due to Ne5! with a double attack on the knight d7 and the queen.

20. e5

A very complicated decision. White decides it is time to gain central space, but at the same time gives away some important central squares like the d5, and at the same time opens up the Bishop h7 diagonal.

20... Nc5 21. Nd4

Aiming for f4-f5...

21... Ne6 22. Rad1

Stockfish gives the following variation: 21. f5! – Nxd4 22. Bxd4 -Bf6 23. Rae1 – Bh4 24. Bf2 – Bxf2 25. Rxf2 – Rad8 with an even game. White's space advantage is countered by black's high pressure on e5 and f5 pawns. This is roughly equal.

So it seems that Nimzo's decision was right, compared to the computer's decision!

22... Nxd4 23. Bxd4 – Bf5 24. Be4 – Bx4 25. Qxe4

White enjoys a space advantage in the centre. This situation is quite paradoxal when we remember white played a hippo system: one would expect exactly the opposite! White is now threatening e6.



25... Rad8

If c5, then Ba1 – c4 and e6 follows anyhow.

26. e6! += (or maybe +/-) Bf8 27. Be5 – Qc8 28. f5

White's position is strategically won.

28... fxe6 29. f6!!



29... Rxd1 30. f7! Kh8 31. Rxd1 – Rd8 32. Qg6!!

A Beautiful finish by Nimzowitsch with a splendid rook sacrifice!

Black cannot avoid mate. For example, Rxd1+ - Kg2 – Rd2+ - Kg3, followed by Qxh6 mate.

actually causing the IGM so much trouble on the board, that the other Grand Masters present (Ljubojevic, Korchnoi, Timman etc...) arrived to watch my game, and asked Jon why the heck he did not beat this young boy yet. Unfortunately for me, I did not know yet that Jon was a top World endgame specialist. My time management on the clock was also very bad. I went into an endgame and then the following story happened... I can be quite proud of this game, with the exception of my very last move! It is still hunting me, in some nightmares from time to time...

1. g3 – d5 2. Nf3 – c6 3. Bg2 -Nf6 4. 0-0 – Bf5 5. d3 – e6 6. c4?!

Stricto-senso, this is not a real hippo anymore. This game actually shows why choosing for a Hippo like type of system would have been more flexible for white, ie: by playing Nd2, e3, and maybe later Qe2 followed by e4, for example. Also possible would have been Nc3!?.



6... Be7 7. Qb3 – Qb6 8. Be3 –



8... Qxb3

It seems to me that c5 might have been an interesting option, with opportunities to continue with d4 and Nc6, where black seems to be quite active.

9. axb3- Nbd7?!

The other option was 9...a6, followed by 10. Nh4 – Bg6 11. Nxc6 – hxc6 12. h3 – Nbd7 with a solid position. Black preferred the more active option, but this is not sufficient.

10. Rxa7 – Rxa7 11. Bxa7 – 0-0



White won a pawn, but as we shall soon witness, black pieces activity will increase. Of course, this is not yet enough of a compensation for the pawn,

and luckily, white also made a mistake later...

11... 0-0 12. Nc3 – Ra8 13. Be3 – h6 14. Nd4 – Bh7 15. Nc2 – Nc5 16. Ra1 – Ra6

17. Rxa6 – Nxa6 18. Kf1?!

A mistake in an interesting position where anything can happen, from both sides.

18... Ng4! Suddenly, Nxe3 followed by d4, plus the pawn h2 are threatened...

Black has a nice position but white has no real weaknesses.

19. Bb6 – Nxh2+ 20. Ke1 – Ng4



21. Na4 – Kf8 22. c5

At this stage, I thought white was not playing to win anymore.

22...Ne5 23. b4 - Nc4!?

An interesting move targeting both Bb6 and the b2 pawn. It came as a surprise to my opponent.



24. Ba7

Obviously, black is a bit better here. Stockfish give -0,5 in my favour for this position.

24... Bf6 25. b3 – Nb2?!

Probably a weak decision from me, as it will only help white to correct its pawn structure... Much better was Ne5 and it is difficult to see how white can progress. But again, a small 17 years old boy still makes mistakes.

26. Kd2 – Nxa4

Again, Ke8 was probably better.

27. bxa4. With a pawn majority on the queen side.

27... Be7 28. Bb6 – Ke8 29. e4

Only by opening up the position in the centre will allow white to further progress.

29... dxe4 30. Bxe4 – Bxe4 31. dxe4 – h5!

The position is assessed as completely equal by the engine.



32. f4 – h4 Even better would have been 32...g5 33. fxg5 – Bxg5+ 34. Ke2 – Bf6! With the bishop looking forward for the c3 square, and a very good endgame for black.

33. gxh4 – Bxh4 34. b5 – Nb8 35. Nd4 – Kd7? A big mistake in big time trouble...

Of course, I had to play 35... cxb5 36. axb5 – Bf2! 37. Kd3 – Nbd7 38. Ba7 – e5! 39. c6-bxc6 40. bxc6 – Bxd4 41. c7- Nb6 42. Bxb6 – Kd7 43. Bxd4 – exd4 44. Kxd4 – Kxc7

This position is a theoretical draw. What a pity.



36. Ba7

In this position, I unfortunately ran out of my allocated clock time, and my flag fell. The position is not yet won for white, but after 36... Kc8 37. Bxb8 – Kxb8 38. bxc6 – Be7 39. cxb7 – Kxb7 40. c6 – Kd3, the situation seems hopeless for black.

Only my young age and time trouble did not provide me half a point. Jon congratulated me for my good play, admitting we were not far from a draw. While I was deeply sad about the conclusion of the game, this came as a small consolation.

Yes, life can be tough sometimes, but defeats always come as a possibility to learn a lot in order to improve oneself, especially when playing against one of the Top Player in the World.

Game #13: E. Briffoz (2125) – Silentgwh (1928, Belarus) – Internet, June 5 2017.

1.h3!?

What on earth is this strange move?

It is officially supposed to be called the “Clemenz” Opening.

This is considered as one of the worst first moves as white, according to opening theory.

However, as we already know, we are heading to a Hippo system, in which the move h3 is almost always used. In that perspective, it means that h3 will not be a waste of time, since the move actually prepares to reach the (almost) respectable Hippo System.

1...Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. d3 e6 4. g3 c5 5. Bg2 Nc6 6. O-O g6 7. Nc3!? Bg7



8. e4

Instead of playing e4, white could play e3, more in the spirit of Nimzowitsch and the Hippo itself.

8... dxe4?!

Worth considering was castling, after which

8... O-O 9. exd5 Nxd5 10. Nxd5 exd5 11. Re1 h6 12. Be3 d4 13. Bd2 Re8 14. Rxe8+ Qxe8 15. Bf4...

After 8...d4, the game goes into the Kings Indian Attack territories.

9. dxe4 O-O 10. Be3 b6 11. e5 Nd7?

Worth consideration was Nd5. (11... Nd5 12. Nxd5)

12. Bg5 Qe8 13. Nb5 Ba6?

Mistake. Best move was Bb7. After which 13... Bb7 14. Nd6 Qb8 15. Bf4 h6 16. h4 Rd8 17. Qe1 Nb4 18. Nxb7 Qxb7 19. Qc1 h5 20. a3...

14. Nc7 Qc8 15. Nxa6 Qxa6 16. Qxd7 Nxe5?

Best was Rac8. 16... Rac8 17. Qd2 Nxe5 18. Nxe5 Bxe5 19. c3 Bg7 20. Rfd1

b5 21. a3 c4 22. Be7 Rfe8 23. Qd6

17. Nxe5

A miniature.

Black resigns. 1-0

Chapter 2, Part 3: Black plays e5 – d5 – c5

Game #14: IM Fries Nielsen, Jens Ove – Hansen, Mads Smith, Denmark (1988)

1. b3 d5 2. Bb2 Nf6 3. g3 Bf5 4. Bg2 e6 5. e3 c5 6. d3 Be7 7. Ne2 Nc6 8. Nd2 e5



We have reached a pure hippo setup where black established a c5 – d5 – e5 centre. Once more, we witness a tempo lost by black, as they want to control the full centre with pawns against a seemingly passive opening.

9. h3 O-O 10. O-O d4

One of the most typical reaction in this type of setup, which was also played by the World Champion Petrosian in game 24. By advancing the pawn to d4, black wants to go into a usual type of opening where they may feel more comfortable. That opening is the King's Indian setup.

11. e4 Bd7 12. f4!

A great move attacking the pawn chain at the base like Nimzo (again him!) taught us to proceed.



12... Ne8

On 12...exf4, both Nxf4 and gxf4 are possible. I would personally prefer gxf4, with a strong centre for the e4 and f4 pawns. White may then continue with a plan of c3 to attack the pawn chain by the top.

13. fxe5 Nxe5 14. Nf4 Nd6 15. Qh5 f6 16. a4

White wants to consolidate a brilliant square c4 for its knight, while the other knight will have the possibility to enjoy the excellent d5 square.



16...b6 17. Nc4 Ndf7

17... Ndxc4 18. dxc4 – Be8 19. Qe2 – Qd6 was possible as well.

18. Qe2 a6 19. Nd5 Rb8 20. a5 Nxc4 21. bxc4

The knight on d5 is any chess player's dream!



21... bxa5

Also possible was 21...b5 22. cxb5 – Bxb5 23. c4 when anything can happen in an unbalanced position.

22. c3 Bd6 23. cxd4

Black's centre of pawn is just disappearing like water in the hand...

23...Bxg3 24. dxc5 Rc8



White's position is ready for a final tactical blow!

25. Bxf6! gxf6 26. Nxf6+

Black is lost: either Nh5+ or Qh5 follow with huge damage.

1-0

Game #15: FM Feustel Bernd (2375) – GM Pflieger Helmut (2500) , Bundesliga 1981

This game will show a Fide Master beating a IGM with the hippo attack. But it is a very important lesson why the hippo player should refrain from castling too soon, as it can be very dangerous.

Always remember the golden rule in the Hippo is not to commit your king to soon, at least not before your opponent does!

1.g3 d5 2. Bg2 Nf6 3. d3 c5 4. Nd2

For those who like the Dutch or the Bird, 4. f4 would transpose to a Leningrad setup.

4... Nc6 5. e3

Of course e4 would have led towards a Kings Indian Attack.

5... e5 6. Ne2?!

Possibly committing the knight too soon. Better would be b3 followed by Bb2 (see diagram), before considering castling at all. We will understand why later in the game. The basic idea in the hippo is not to commit short castle before black did, as a dangerous attack by the h pawn could occur as we will demonstrate.

This position would have been easier to play, while retaining the possibility for Ngf3 as well and waiting for black to castle.



6...Be7 7. O-O?! O-O?!

Both sides castle, and both sides are probably making a slight mistake! Please remember the Chapter about the main hippo strategies. The timing of castling is of extreme importance in this opening!

Basically, by castling already now, white commits too soon and provides a possible target by h5, as can be seen in the following diagram:



An interesting position. Instead of castling, black could have tried the aggressive 7... h5!? Following by 8. Nf3 – h4 9. c4 – hxg3 10. fxg3 – Qd7 11. Nxe6 – fxe6 12. e4 with a position which might be slightly better for black, although it is very unbalanced and playable:



Now let's go back to the game, there followed:

8. b3 Re8 9. Bb2 Bf8 10. h3 h6 11. Kh2



A typical position has now appeared. We already saw multiple types of strategies in such as playing for c4, playing for g4, playing for e4, and playing for f4. The latter is white's choice.

Perhaps e4 is stronger when it is not played on the first move. Perhaps f4 as well.

11... Bd7 12. f4

A very risky move at this stage of the game. You must have strong nerves to

17... N_xg2

If instead 17... B_g4 then 18. Q_f2 – N_xf1 19. R_xf1 – B_xe2 20. Q_xf7+ - K_h8 21. R_f2 – Q_g5 22. N_e4 is estimated 1.4 by Stockfish8. Who said that the hippo was a quiet opening?



Now back to our game...

18. K_xg2 B_g4 19. N_f3 c_xd4 20. Q_d2?!

Better was simply Q_f2 with a pressure on the f file. White makes its life unnecessarily slightly more difficult. But it is still won.

20... B_b4! 21. Q_d1 Q_d5 22. B_xd4 R_e7 23. c3 B_d6

The rest is just a matter of technique, white will just enjoy its extra piece!

24. Q_d2 R_ae8 25. R_ae1 f5 26. N_eg1 f4 27. R_xe7 R_xe7 28. g_xf4 R_e6 29. B_e5 R_g6 30. K_f2 B_e7 31. Q_e3 B_f5 32. R_d1 K_h7 33. N_e2 Q_d8 34. N_g3 B_g4 35. f5 R_a6 36. a4 B_f6 37. B_xf6 R_xf6 38. Q_d4
1-0

Game #16: Vasova, M (1910) – Maksimovic, S (2223) BUL Open 2013

The following recent game shows a below expert level player, outplaying an opponent which has 300 Elo more than him!

1.g3 e5 2.Bg2 d5 3.d3 c5 4.Nc3!?



I really like this idea of further provocation, while stressing some pressure on d5 and possibly entering an advantageous Modern / King's Indian hybrid where white will play f4 without losing any tempo, since the knight will not be developed to f3.

A very similar idea will be analysed with reversed colours, in Chapter 3.

4... Be6

If d4 – then 5. Nd5 followed by e4, with either a super strong knight, or a strong d5 passed pawn.

5.e4 d4 6.Nd5 Ne7 7.Nxe7

Also possible would have been 7.c4 – dxc3 8. Nxc3 – Nbc6 but white has a weakness on d3.

7... Bxe7 8.f4 exf4 9.gxf4!

Best practice is always to take back towards the centre, because centre pawns are more powerful, even though here, white loses its right to castle. But by now, you already learned a lot about castling or not, in this book!

9... Bh4+ 10.Kf1 Nc6 11.Nf3 Bg4 12.Qd2 O-O 13.a3 f5

Black feels like opening up the centre, because of white's king position. This seems natural, but however, white obtains a strong passed pawn on e5. A long term positional advantage.

14.e5 Rc8 15.Nxh4 Qxh4



Yet another very odd position, which shows how rich and full of surprises this opening can be. Rarely will you find twice the same position when playing the Hippo, and this is very good news for chess openings in general. In the hippo, you can create your own masterpieces, and you can create huge surprise by winning over a much higher rated opponent.

16.Qf2 Qh6

Of course, with such a strong e5 passed pawn, black must avoid to enter into an endgame at all costs.

17.h3 Bh5 18.Kg1!

Once again, an amazing strategic manoeuvre: white's king will find refuge on h2, and will give the Rh1 all its freedom.

18.. Be8 19.Kh2 Nd8 20.Rg1 Bc6 21.Bd2 Ne6 22.Raf1 Rfd8 23.Be1 Rd7?!

Interesting was 23...c4 24. Qg3 – cxd3 25. cxd3 – Bxg2 26. Qxg2 – g6 27. Qf3 – Rc2+ 28. Rg2 with an unclear position. If white reaches the endgame, they will probably win.

24.Qh4

Of course, aiming for the endgame, as previously stated...

24... Qxh4 25.Bxh4 Bxg2 26.Rxg2 c4 27.dxc4 Rxc4 28.Rd2 Rdc7 29.Rff2

Black seems to have a more active position, this is a fact. However, white has

a long static positional advantage. Nothing is clear yet.

29... a5 30.b3?!

A dubious move weakening white's position and allowing Rc3. Bg3 followed by Rg2 and h4 was better. But again, chess like life is far from being an exact science!

30...Rc3 31.a4 Kf7 32.Bg3 h6 33.Kg2 Ke8?!

Better was 33... Nc5! 34.Rxd4 - Ne4+- 35. e6+! - Ke7 (Ke6 – 36. Rxe4+! – fxe4 37. f5+- Kf6 38. Bxc7 – Rxc7 with an advantage for black, even though the rook ending is far from being won for black.

34.h4 Kd7 35.h5 Kc6 36.Rfe2 Kd5 37.Kh2 Rf3 38.Rf2 Rxf2+ 39.Bxf2 Ke4 40.Bg3 Rc3 41.Kg2 b6 42.Rf2 Ke3 43.Bh2 Ke4 44.Bg3 Re3 45.Bh2 Kd5 46.Rd2 Ke4 47.Rf2

Given the Elo situation, white is happy with a draw. But black wants more...

47... d3 48.cxd3+ Rxd3 49.Re2+ Kd4 50.Rc2 Rxb3 51.Rc6 Rb2+ 52.Kh3



This position is assessed as completely equal by StockFish 8.

"The winner of the game is the player who makes the next-to-last mistake."
Tartakower.

52... Nc5 53.Bg1+ Kd5 54.Rd6+ Ke4 55.e6 Kxf4 56.Be3+!!



A Wonderful tactical move!

By blocking black's rook access to the e file, nothing can stop the e pawn from access to paradise.

The rest does not need any comment.

**56... Kxe3 57.e7 Ne4 58.e8=Q Kf4 59.Rd4 Kf3 60.Qc6 Rb1 61.Rd3+ Kf4
62.Qc2 Rh1+ 63.Kg2 Rxh5 64.Qc1+ Kg4 65.Qd1+ Kg5 66.Rd7 g6
67.Qc1+ Kg4 68.Qd1+ Kg5 69.Qc1+ Kg4 70.Rd3 Rh4 71.Qe3 Kh5
72.Qf3+ Rg4+ 73.Kf1 Kg5 74.Qe3+ Rf4+ 75.Ke1 h5 76.Rb3 Kg4 77.Rxb6
g5 78.Rb3 h4 79.Qe2+**

1-0

Chapter 3: The Hippo System as Black

As black, there are plenty of different possibilities to play for a hippo, just as in white.

Just to give an example, some players went as far as to play 1. e4 – e6 2. d4 – d6!?

Imagine the head of the opponent, directly out of his comfort zone, like Mile's 1...a6 against Anatoly Karpov's 1.e4. The opponent might think black didn't push its pawn far enough and felt asleep while the pawn was on the d6 square.

Psychologically, this usually gives the strange sensation to play against an unknown opening, and white feels like he will be obliged to prove why this unknown opening is so bad. This must have occurred in Karpov's head versus Miles.

If white does not prove that the “strange” opening is bad, he will already have lost the first psychological battle of the game. Well, the reality is that the Hippo is not as bad as they think, and white needs to be very careful, as much as against any other opening defence.

We will categorize the games in the following way, depending on the opponent's central approach:

- **Chapter 3, Part 1: White plays the classical centre e4-d4:** by far the most common reaction from the hippo opponent.
- **Chapter 3, Part 2: White plays the e4 – d4 and c4 centre.**
- **Chapter 3, Part 3: White plays the e4 – d4 and f4 centre**

Chapter 3, Part 1: White plays Classical Centre e4 – d4 Game #17 – IM Rashid Nezhmetdinov – IM Maximilian Ujtelky, Chigorin Memorial (1964), Sochi USSR

Rashid Nezhmetdinov was one of the most creative and attacking player who beat a lot of the best players in the World. To name just a few of his victims, let's mention Mikhail Tal, Spassky, Bronstein, Polugaevsky and Geller.

"His games reveal the beauty of chess and make you love in chess not so much the points and high placings, but the wonderful harmony and elegance of this particular world.", said Mikhail Tal about him.

Fasten your seat belts, this game is an extremely wild epic battle. One of the most complicated and strangest chess battle in history. Get ready for 75 moves you will not forget easily!

1. [e4](#) [g6](#) 2. [d4](#) [Bg7](#) 3. [Nc3](#) [d6](#) 4. [Bc4](#)

Directly aiming at the f7 weak square, black needs to be very careful. The most natural move to shut the bishop diagonal is e6. Nf6 would enter a regular Pirc defence. We will certainly need a good engine to try to understand what is happening in this game.



4... [e6](#) 5. [Nf3](#) [Ne7](#) 6. [h4](#)



White plays one of the most aggressive system against the hippo defence. What else can we expect from Mister Nezhmetdinov?

6... [h6](#)

An interesting defence against a flank attack usually consists of counter-attacking in the centre.

6...d5 would achieve this objective, and at the same time would win a tempo on white's bishop.

After 6...d5 7. Bb3 – with the following options for black: dxe4, h6, Nbc6 or even h5, the position would look as in the following diagram.



Now let's go back to 6...h6: black is preparing to counter h5 with g5, with a double-edged position.

7. [Bf4](#) [a6](#) 8. [Qe2](#) [Nd7](#) 9. [a4](#)

Avoiding b5 followed by Bb7 is priority of course.

9... [b6](#) 10. [Rd1](#) [Bb7](#) 11. [Kf1!](#)?

A concept where white will kind of “pseudo-castle” by going with his king to g1, without moving its Rook from h1, where it is actively supporting the h4 advance, and ready to move to the 3rd rank.



11... [Nf8!](#)?

For a strange move, this is a strange one, as well as a nightmare for anyone trying to understand what is behind this manoeuvre! But wait for the rest of the game in order to try to clarify this one. Trying to remain rational, we could say that black will overprotect e6 and will give the d7 square to the queen.

12. [Kg1](#) [Qc8](#)

Perhaps black just wants to escape the vis-à-vis with the Rd1? Perhaps white wants to wait and do nothing, waiting for white to shoot first? After all, is this not one of the main principle of the hyper modernism in chess? So many questions without answers... And this is not the last one from this game.

13. [Bb3](#) [Qd7](#)

And we were just trying to understand 12... Qc8!! No worries... Well, perhaps this move provides us with the answer of the previous questions!

14. [Rh3!](#) [Rd8](#)

A typical hippo position. White can try to play e5, but then black will close the centre with d5, followed by Qe1 and a long strategic battle ahead. And if d5, then e5 will block the centre as well.

A nightmare for an attacking player like Nezhmetdinov, so don't expect any of these 2 moves from him in this game.



15. [Bc4](#) [Qc8](#)

OK, so let's recap: we had first Qc8, then Qd7, and now Qc8 again. But the achievement is that black managed to place its rook on a central d file, where it will be much more active than on its a8 square!

16. [Bb3](#) [f6!](#)!?!?

What a very strange move again! It seems like nothing is easy to understand in this game so far.



I try to ask the engine (a huge one), but it fails completely to understand this as well!

So, let a human mind try to understand this in a less logical-mathematical way what is happening here... Black knows that white is one the most dangerous attacking player in the World. Black knows that white might lose its patience (or nerves) sometime. Perhaps. However, if I were to rate this move, I would say it's just very special. The engine now says white is +1.1! It doesn't understand yet why white will lose this game.

17. [Re1](#) [Kf7](#)

Strange as it may seem, this move is quite logic in this position. The King is a strong defending piece as well after all.

18. [Bc1](#) [c6](#)

Beautiful, it happens that the 8 black pawns are all on the 3rd rank. This position is possibly unique in chess history. I might make a poster on my wall with the following position, because the game shows why the hippo could be the future of chess openings.



19. [Nd2 d5](#)

Finally, a breakthrough! And as Nimzowitsch would have said: “With stronger power than if it was made on move 1!”

20. [a5 b5](#) 21. [Nf3 Qc7](#) 22. [Bd2 Bc8](#)

Black must have had nerves of steel...

23. [Na2 Nh7](#) 24. [Nb4 Rhe8](#) 25. [Nd3 Nf8](#) 26. [Bf4](#)



26... [Qxa5](#)

Winning a pawn, but at which price?

27. e5 f5 28. Bd2?

A big mistake. Following h5! black would have had to play 28...Ng8 (28...g5 fails after Bxg5, hxg5 and Nxc5+) with a huge advantage.

28... Qb6 29. Ra1 Nh7 30. Ba5

Winning it seems, but not yet. The engine assesses the position to +2. However, a game of chess is usually long and, at least until a top level, contains many mistakes played by both players. Tartakower used to say the following 2 quotes:

- "The blunders are all there on the board, waiting to be made."
- "The winner of the game is the player who makes the next-to-last mistake."

What I would like to stress out is that by making things complex for your opponent, you get more chances to get a wild battle in which lots of mistakes will be possible.

I also want to remind the reader of the fact that former World Champion Mikhail Tal did not always play in the most correct way, as was verified by engines as well. But this way of playing was psychologically very interesting. Tal made, on purpose, things very complicated for his opponents to resolve in such a way that they were very often unable to escape the wildness of complications. The strategy used by Ujtelky can be compared, but used in another way.

30... Qa7 31. Bd8 Rxd8 32. Qd2 Bb7 33. Qa5 Ra8 34. Nc5



In such a poor position, black might just resign. Stockfish assesses +1.8. But he did not and made history. We are at master level, and black is giving us a lesson about “No surrender”.

34... [Bc8](#) 35. [c3](#) [Nf8](#) 36. [Ne1](#)?

A mistake from white. They should have played either Qa3 or Nd3, remaining with a winning advantage.

36... [Bxe5](#)!

And now suddenly, white’s advantage vanishes.



37. [dxe5](#) [Qxc5](#) 38. [Nd3](#) [Qa7](#) 39. [Bc2](#) [c5](#)!



This position is crazy: black has the advantage according to StockFish, but more amazing characteristic is that black still has all 8 pawns after 40 moves! This game is really from another planet.

40. [b4 Nc6](#) 41. [Qa3 c4](#) 42. [Nc5 Nxe5](#) 43. [Qc1 h5?!](#)

A strange move, which creates black square weaknesses. Instead Kg7 was safe.

44. [Rg3 Ned7](#) 45. [Nxe6!??](#)

A Tal like type of sacrifice. As he used to say, there are two types of sacrifices: correct ones and mine.



45... [Nxe6](#) 46. [Qh6 Ndf8](#) 47. [Bxf5](#)



White continues his work and tries to open lanes for its rooks, and hopes for mate.

47... [gxf5](#) 48. [Re1](#)

Instead, if 48. Qxh5+ - Kf6 49. Qh8+ - Ke7 and black has a winning advantage.

48... [Bd7](#) 49. [Qh5](#) [Ke7](#) 50. [Qf5](#) [Kd6](#)!

Black escapes!

51. [h5](#) [a5](#) 52. [Qe5](#) [Kc6](#)



Strange as it may seem, white is lost. Unless he makes a mistake.

[“The winner is the one who makes the next-to-last mistake.”](#) - Tartakower.

53. [Rd1](#) [Nc7](#) 54. [Ra1](#) [Qb8](#) 55. [bxa5](#) [b4](#) 56. [cxb4](#) [Qxb4](#) 57. [Rf3](#) [Nce6](#) 58. [a6](#)
[Qc5](#) 59. [Qe1](#) [Nd4](#) 60. [Rf6](#) [Nfe6](#) 61. [Ra5](#) [Qb6](#) 62. [h6](#) [Kd6](#) 63. [h7](#) [c3](#)



If you ever need to answer a question related to the “passivity” of the hippo, just show this board position and then a long discussion will begin...

Black wins, and the following moves belong to the beautiful chess masterpiece history...

64. [Ra1](#) [c2](#) 65. [Rg6](#) [Rh8](#) 66. [a7](#) [Qb2](#) 67. [Rh6](#) [Ne2](#) 68. [Kh2](#) [c1Q](#) 69. [Rc1](#) [Nc1](#)
70. [Qa5](#) [Bc6](#) 71. [Qa6](#) [Qe5](#) 72. [g3](#) [Nb3](#) 73. [f4](#) [Qb2](#) 74. [Kh3](#) [Nc5](#) 75. [a8-Q](#)

0-1

Game #18 – GM Tigran Petrosian – GM Boris Spassky,
World Championship 16 May 1966

We are in 1966, and Petrosian was the World Champion since 1963, following his victory over Mikhail Botvinnik. Boris Spassky became the official challenger after defeating Paul Keres in quarterfinals (6-4), Efim Geller in semi-finals (5,5 – 2,5) and former World Champion Mikhail Tal in Final (7-4)

In two of this 1966 World Championship games, the World Champion played the Hippo setup with black and scored 50%. A tremendous achievement as black against the World Champion.

For the second time in the match, Boris Spassky decides to enter into a hippopotamus defence again. (The first game featuring the hippo between them is game #23).

1. d4-g6 2. e4- Bg7 3. Nf3 – d6 4. Be2 – e6!



The explanation mark because this is a World Championship match and everybody in the world is expecting some trendy theoretical moves. But after only 4 moves, black plays a so-called “dubious move”, entering into very rare territories.

5. c3

Don't expect Petrosian to play aggressively, he was a “Boa Constrictor” Champion.

5... Nd7 6. 0-0 – Ne7



7. Nbd2 – b6 8. a4 – a6 9. Re1 – Bb7 10. Bd3 – 0-0

This position is pure hippo. And black may castle now, since white already committed.



11. Nc4 – Qe8 12. **Bd2 f6!**?

Yet another pure hippo idea well worth remembering: to place the Queen on f7...



13. [Qe2](#) [Kh8](#) 14. [Kh1](#) [Qf7](#) 15. [Ng1](#)!

An incredible prophylactic manoeuvre, which follows 2 basic ideas. Petrosian remains himself, using a “My System” strategy.

- The first idea is to overprotect the strong important strategic squares of the centre, in this case it is the pawn e4 that he wants to overprotect.
- The second idea is to prepare against black’s e6-e5 breakthrough, after which he could continue dxe5 and after fxe5 by black, white has the possibility to strengthen his position by f3.



15...e5 16. dxe5

Finally, Petrosian decides to open up the position.

Even the engine decides to close the position. With 16. d5, followed by f5. Becomes a modern, enhanced King's Indian Attack!

16... fxe5



And suddenly, we understand the meaning of both 12th and the 14th move! The Queen and the King couldn't feel better at home. Boris must have felt a great feeling, at this moment of the World Championship game!

17.f3 – Nc5 18. Ne3 [Qe8](#) 19. [Bc2](#) [a5](#) !

An important move securing the knight's position. Spassky's position becomes incredibly interesting. Nc5 may in the future go to e6, f4... However, one of Black's main issue to resolve is about Bb7. How to improve its activity?

20. [Nh3](#) [Bc8](#)

Just like this...



21. [Nf2](#) [Be6](#) 22. [Qd1](#)

The Tiger actually has not many possibilities to progress.

22.. [Qf7](#) 23. [Ra3](#) [Bd7](#)

Instead of this move, b4 was possible, after which follows 24... axb4 25. cxb4 – Ne6

24. [Nd3](#)

For a player like Petrosian, this move is pure logic. Exchanging a highly active black knight against a passive one.

24... [Nd3](#) 25. [Bd3](#) [Bh6](#) 26. [Bc4](#)

26... Be6 or Qf4 were possible.... But black played it cool.

26... [Qg7](#)



7. [Nf3](#) [e6](#)

One of the great advantage of the hippo over the Pirc / Modern / King's Indian defences is that the a2 – g8 is fully covered. Furthermore, when the bishop arrives to c4, then d5 is often possible, chasing the bishop with tempo.

8. [Bc4](#) [h6](#) 9. [h3](#) [Ne7](#) 10. [0-0](#) [Bb7](#) 11. [Rfe1](#) [g5](#)

A plan which is quite common in the hippo is to counter attack via the wings. g5 is an interesting move preparing Ng6 and possible Nf4 in the near future. Furthermore after g5, d5 will be correctly met with e5 followed by Ng6 and Nf4.



12. [Nh2](#)

Stockfish gives 12. Rad1-c6 13. h4-d5 14. Bb3 – g4!?! with a complex middle game.

12.. [Ng6](#) 13. [Nf1](#)

Aiming toward the h5 square, where the bishop would be annoyed.

13... [Nf6](#) 14. [Ng3](#) 0-0



Time for planning has arrived for both sides. As previously seen, counter attack from the c pawn is a natural idea in such positions. The goal for black and white is to open lanes for the rooks in order to activate them from now on.

15. [Bd3](#) [c5](#) !

Great move. We, hypermodern players, believe that this move is better now than on the 1st or 2nd move.

16. [dxc5](#)

Stockfish gives 16.d5 followed by a crazy variation: 16... Nh4 17. f4 – exd5 18. fxg5 d4 19. gxf6 – dxe3 20. Qxe3 – Qxf6 assessed as equal. But we feel business did not start yet !

16... [bxc5](#)

As a rule, always take back towards the centre, as centre pawns are considered as more important than side pawns. But rules are also made to be avoided!

17. [Rad1 Qc7](#) 18. [Qe2](#)

White seems to have lost the opening battle, as he struggles to find a good plan to advance. In the event of 18. f4 -d5 is extremely strong with a better position for black: 19. fxc5-hxc5 20. exd5-Qxg3 with major advantage.

18...[d5!](#)



This is the centrist victory, as Nimzowitsch used to call it in his trilogy.

19. [exd5](#) [exd5](#) 20. [Bc1](#) [Rae8](#) 21. [Qd2](#)

21...[Nh4](#) 22. [Re8](#) [Re8](#) 23. [Re1](#) [Rxe1](#) 24. [Qxe1](#) [c4](#) 25. [Bf1](#)

This position is just tremendous for black, controlling the complete board, in space and in activity as well. And when you are Ponomariov, this is enough for victory!



25...d4 26. [Nce2](#) [Qc5](#) 27. [Qd1](#) [Ne4](#) 28. [Nxe4](#) [Bxe4](#) 29. [Ng3](#) [Bg6](#)
30. [Qe2](#) [d3](#) 31. [cxd3](#) [cxd3](#)

The situation is desperate for white. The d3 pawn is a killer.

32. [Qe8+](#) [Kh7](#) 33. [Be3](#) [Qd5](#) 34. [Bd2](#) [Bxb2](#)

The rest does not need comments, it is again a matter of technique.

35. [f3](#) [Be5](#) 36. [Ne4](#) [Bxe4](#) 37. [fxe4](#) [Qd4](#) 38. [Kh1](#) [Qf2](#)

It's mate in 4 (or less !)

0-1

Game #20 – IM Sanchez Almeyra Jorge (2440) - Campos Hernandez Antonio (2178), Malgrat de Mar, 1998.

The following game sees an expert player drawing with black against an international master. Black seems to be playing in full hippo free spirit, without following any specific rule, and without following any specific opening theory. And yet will achieve a great result as black.

1.e4 d6 2.d4 e6 !

Great. Seems like black did not push the e pawn enough and missed the French defence for a very poor stuff! Actually, black is heading for a hippo, against a much stronger opposition (almost 300 elo difference!).



3.Nf3 h6!

Re-Wow move! Black is playing in pure hippo style from the beginning, which makes this game extremely interesting.

Remember now that I played 1.h3!? in game 13?

Now, are we ready to answer the question: is 1. a3 a bad move?

Is 1. h3 such a bad move? I don't think so...



4.Nc3 a6!

This is going totally crazy! White, an International Master must think he was playing against a beginner...



8.e5 Nd5 9.Bd2

Have a look at the position. It's almost an Alekhine, where the d5 knight is protected from a c4 aggression...



9... O-O 10.Bd3 f6

A typical Alekhine reaction, but usually when the centre was cleared with dxe5 first.

11.exf6 Bxf6 12.Nxd5

Stockfish does not consider this move which strengthen black centre. It considers 12. Qe2 – Nxc3 13. Bxc3 – d5 with an technical advantage for white, even though we all know that it does not mean a lot at this stage of the

game where many things can happen.

12... exd5 13.Re1 Bg4 14.Be2 c6

Possibly Nc6 was better, it seems more natural as well to Stockfish.

15.b3

Sometimes, it is difficult to understand some moves. So, what can I say?

15...Bxf3 16.Bxf3 Bxd4



17.c3 Be5 18.Rc1 Qf6

18... Qh4 was also interesting.

19.Qe2 Nd7 20.Rcd1

Black is a full pawn ahead and has such an advantage that it should be converted. But...

20... Bxc3??

Life can be tough. If black played the simple 20... Rad8, they would win in the long term and the position is assessed as -2 !.

21.Bxc3 Qxc3 22.Qe6+

After the big mistake, black will have to fight for a draw, which he did...

Again, the rest needs no comment.

22... Rf7 23.Bh5 Qf6 24.Bxf7+ Qxf7 25.Qxf7+ Kxf7 26.Rd2 Ne5 27.Rde2

**Kg8 28.f4 Nd3 29.Re8+ Rxe8 30.Rxe8+ Kf7 31.Ra8 Ke7 32.Rxa6 Nxf4
33.Rxc6 d4 34.Kf1 Ke6 35.a4 bxa4 36.bxa4 Kd5 37.Rc1 Nd3 38.Rb1 Nc5
39.a5 d3 40.Rd1 Kc6 41.Ke1 Kb5 42.Ra1 Ka6 43.Kd2 Nb3+ 44.Kxd3
Nxa1 45.Kc4 Nc2 46.Kd5 Ne3+ 47.Kxd6 Nxc2 48.Ke5 g6 49.Kf6 Nf4
50.h3 h5 51.Kg5 Nxc3+ 52.Kxc3 Nf4+ 53.Kg5**

1/2-1/2

Game #21 – WGM Goreskul A (2228) – GM Kislinsky A (2472) ; Ukr Championship , 2010.

1.e4 a6 2.d4 g6 !?

No Saint-George today! As we will witness once more, there are multiple ways to play a hippo setup and sometimes, moves are being played just to get the opponent out of their opening knowledge.

Another point is that psychologically it is not always easy to expect a Saint-George, and then to see that black will not play it the following move.

3.Bd3 Bg7 4.c3 Nf6!?

Interesting sequence of moves, inviting white to further advance to e5 in an Alekhine fashion.

5.Nf3

Let's examine what would possibly happen in case of 5.e5, accepting the challenge: 5.e5-Nd5 white can choose to either continue the chase with 6.c4 after which 6...Nb4! gains a tempo on the bishop. 7. Be4 – d6! and the pressure on e5 is very strong, such that white will probably have to exchange on d6 sooner or later. Note that 8. Qa4+ does not work for white, because of 8...N4c6 9.d5 – b5! 10. cxb5-Nxe5 with advantage for black (-1.3).

Instead of 6.c4, white could play as well 6. Qb3 with for example 6...Nb6 7.Nf3-d6 with a sort of Alekhine position:



Let's go back to the game after 5.Nf3.

5...O-O

Black goes on with its provocation tactic.

6.O-O d6

We have now reached by transposition a Pirc position.

7.Re1 Nc6

Again a knight provocation on the other side of the board.

8.e5

It seems that white did not want to reach the following line: 8.h3-e5 9.d5-Ne7 10.c4 which looks like a kings indian defence. If instead white plays 8.d5 – Ne5 9.Nxe5-dxe5, it does not provide any advantage.

8...dxe5 9.dxe5

The other way of taking back e5 with the knight does not look very promising as to reach a possible edge: after 9. Nxe5-Nxe5 10.dxe5-Ng4 11.f4-h5 securing the f5 square for the knight or the bishop with a comfortable position.

9...Ng4 10.Bf4 Qd5 11.Qe2 Be6?!

There was a tactical possibility which would be better than the text move:

11... Ngxe5! (11...Ncxe5 is the same) 12. Bxe5-Nxe5 13.Nxe5-Bxe5
14.Qxe5-Qxd3 is at least equal for black.

It is true however that the line would lead to a very simplified situation, and perhaps black preferred a move which is technically inferior but which does not simplify the board.

12.Nbd2 Rad8 13.Be4 Qc5 14.Bxc6

White had to protect the e5 pawn, a sad necessity, which is the consequence of the weakening of the advanced central pawns. Another possible option was 14. Bc2 , but even there the tactical trick still works: 14... Ngxe5 leads to complete equality and a simplified board.

14...Qxc6 15.Nd4 Qb6 16.Nxe6

Very interesting was 16.h3!? -Nh6 17.g4-Qxb2 18.Qe3-c5 19.N4f3-Nxg4 20.hxg4 with an important advantage for white.

16...Qxe6 17.Nf3 Rd5 18.h3 Nh6 19.Nd4 Qc8 20.Rad1 Rfd8

At this stage the situation is quite equal and it's indeed difficult to understand that black will win the game. But once again, chess is an intellectual battle between 2 human brains, and not an exact science.



21.Nf3 c6 22.Rxd5 Rxd5 23.Rd1?!

White misses its chance to obtain an consequent advantage by playing 23.g4!.

The move keeps the Kh6 completely out of play. Following 23...f6 24.e6! and the end game will be very painful for black with such a passive situation.

23.. Rxd1+ 24.Qxd1 Bf8

Desperately trying to find a second life for the knight on h6, by freeing the g7 square via f5... So, of course, we can bet white's next move!

25.g4

Simply denying black's knight to jump back into play.

25...Kg7

And now white is freeing the g8 square for the knight!

26.Bxh6+?

Strategically not a wise decision to trade the opponent's problematic piece against such a strong bishop. All hopes of white advantage have vanished.

26... Kxh6 27.Qd4 e6 28.Ng5 Kg7

Black of course does not fall in the trap 28... Kxg5?? 29. Qe3+ - Kh4 30. Kg2 , followed by f4 and mate will follow.

29.Ne4 c5 30.Qd3 c4 31.Qd4 Qc6 32.f3?

This is a mistake allowing black to get an advantage.

Instead 32. Nd6 kept an equal situation: for example 32... Qf3 33.Ne8+ Kh8 34.Qxc4 with an even endgame.

32...Be7?

Instead, 32...Qb5 directly was winning a pawn (either b2 or e5) as white cannot protect both at the same time.

33.f4 Qb5 One move too late.

34.Qd2 Qa5 35.a3 Qd5 36.Qxd5?!

Inaccuracy. Better was 36. Qd4! with equality: 36...Qb5 37. Qd2-Bxa3! 38.Qd8! and white gets a draw.

36... exd5 37.Nd2?

A huge mistake, I assume due to time trouble. This loses a pawn and the game. Instead 37. Ng3 kept some hope even though the bishop is in theory stronger than the knight in such an endgame.

37... Bc5+ 38.Kf1 Be3 39.Ke2 Bxf4

0-1

**Game #22 – GM J. Shaw – IM A. Martin – British League
2004**

The following game is present and explained already in 2 books:

- Play 1...b6 from Christian Bauer,
- Andrew Martin's book on the hippo defence of course.

However, I choose to include it in this book anyhow as well, for the following reasons:

- First of all, for anyone who would not own any of these 2 books.
- And also, to present it in my own way of seeing it. I believe it is extremely interesting to view different points of view from the same game. This allows the reader or the analyst to understand things from different angles, and possibly might have its own point of view as well.
- Finally, it seems that I have a different opinion about black's 8th move 8...bxa5 compared to the 2 other authors opinions.

1. e4 b6 2. d4 Bb7 3. Nc3 e6 4. Nf3 d6



This move actually leaves the pure Owen theory which considers moves like Bb4 or Nf6 possibly followed by a further d7-d5, for maximum of pressure

against the e4 pawn.

With 4...d6, black declares another intention. Martin explains that he chooses the move order b6-Bb7 first in order to try avoiding the aggressive systems based on f4 (Austrian attack) or Be3-Qd2. We will look at the Austrian attack in Part 3 (games 28, 29 and 30).

5. Bd3 Nd7 6. O-O

Christian Bauer in his book on “b6” explains that white has no interest in playing h4 here, because black still has the possibility to play Nf6.

6...g6 7. a4

IM Bauer proposes the interesting 7.Bg5 move, trying to create some disturbance. However, I believe that after 7...Ne7 8. Qd2-h6! chases the bishop away with gain of tempo, especially in a hippo context where h6 is almost always played!

7...Bg7?!

Both Christian Bauer and Andrew Martin consider that 7...a6! was the right reaction to a4, in order to reply with b5 on the a5 push. I agree with them, this is a typical theme, which even sometimes occurs on the kingside with h6 and g5...

8. a5!

Of course.

8...bxa5?!

Christian Bauer does not consider this move to be bad in his book, but I actually do and I will explain why.

Both Martin and Bauer think that 8...Ne7?! is not very good in view of 9.a6!-Bc8 and totally I agree with them about 8...Ne7?!.

However, I wonder why they don't consider at all the 8...a6!? possibility. After 9.axb6-cxb6 followed by a later b5 it seems fully playable to me, and to Stockfish8 as well. Also, the pawn structure would be much better than with the text move. And if white does not take on b6, then black can play b5! (and correct his mistake from move 7!).



After the text move however (bxa5?!), the queenside pawns of black are structurally weak. This is a long term huge positional disadvantage and this is why I decided to mark this move as ?!.

9. Be3

Of course, white is not in a hurry to take back the a5 pawn. In fact, he will take it with a knight, which will be more effective than with the rook.

9...Ngf6

Completely correct as well would be 9...Ne7 to keep the full hippo spirit.

10. Nd2!

Marked as a very good move by Bauer in his book. The idea is of course to transfer to b3 and head towards a5 which will highlight the black queenside weaknesses. This manoeuvre is extremely strong.

10...O-O 11. Nb3 c6

Wow, this is sad to have to play such a passive move, but the situation is not brilliant for

12. Nxa5 Qc7 13. f4!?

Andrew Martin proposes 13. Ra2-Rfb8 14.Qf3-Bc8 15.Rfa1 with a highly favourable position for white. Bauer however thinks that after 15...e5 with the idea of exd4 might not be that bad.

13... Rab8 14. Qe2

On 14. Nxb7 to gain the bishop pair, Bauer notes that 14...Rxb7 followed by c5 gives black some counterplay.

14...Ba8 15. Nb3 c5

What else?

16. dxc5?!

It seems that everyone missed the powerful 16.Nb5! following which black needs to give up the exchange with 16...Rxb5 17.Bxb5, because the b5 knight threatens d6, the queen and also a7 at the same time!



16...dxc5 17. Ra2 Rb4 18. Nd2 Qb8 19. Nc4 Nd5!? 20. exd5 exd5 21.Nd5?

A blunder. Better was 21.Ne5! Nxe5 22.fxe5- d4 23.Bd2-dxc3 24.Bxc3-Rh4!? (Bauer's suggestion), and white still has a clear advantage.

The rest is not very interesting from the opening perspective, so I will just present the moves without any comments. Please not however the beautiful sacrifice of the Rook on c4 on move 24.

21...Bxd5 22. b3 Re8 23. Qd2 Bxc4 24. Bxc4 Rxc4!!



25. Qxd7 Rxe3! 26. bxc4 Bd4 27. Kh1 Qxf4! 28. Raa1 Bxa1 29. Rxa1 Qxc4 30. Qxa7 Qxc2

As Bauer correctly writes, the rest is a matter of technique, with 2 pawns up!

31. Rf1 Qc4 32. Qa8 Kg7 33. Qa1 Qd4 34. Qa7 Qf6 35. Kg1 Qe7 36. Qa1 f6 37. h3 Re2 38. Kh1 Qe5 39. Qa7 Kh6 40. Qf7 Re1 41. Re1 Qe1 42. Kh2 Qe5 43. g3 Qe2 44. Kg1 Qd1 45. Kf2 Qd4 46. Kf3 c4 47. g4 Qd3 48. Kg2 Kg5 49. Qf8 Qe2 50. Kg3 Qe3 51. Kg2 c3 52. Qc8 Kh4 53. Qc7 Qh3 54. Kf2 Kg4

0-1

Chapter 3, Part 2: White plays e4 – d4 – c4

Game #23 – GM Tigran Petrosian – GM Boris Spassky ,
World Championship 12 may 1966

1.Nf3-g6 2. d4 – Bg7 3. c4-d6

The position looks like a Modern, and can turn into a Kings Indian defence. By not committing any knight yet, black keeps a very flexible type of position, allowing him to adapt according to white's choices.



4. Nc3 – Nbd7

Very interesting move, waiting as much as possible before moving the Knight g8.

The main idea is not to block the f pawn directly. As we know, in most of the King's Indian defences, black has to waste a tempo with its Kf6 in order to free the f pawn. In the Modern and in the hippo, black tries to avoid this problem, and retains the options of developing its knight either to e7 or to h6.



5. e4 – e6!?

In this position, black mostly plays e7-e5 entering a Modern defence, and possibly a King's Indian Defence. The main advantage of e7-e6 is that black does not commit its central setup yet. With pawns on e6 and d6, black still has the possibility to play e5 or d5, or leaving them and moving the f/c pawn. Again, the hippo setup tries to avoid direct central confrontation and aims to keep a maximum of flexibility.

By the way, black's 5th move must have been a big surprise for the World Champion, taking him outside of his team home preparation.

6. Be2-b6 7.0-0

It is only now that we can see the beginning of a strange hippo setup, both bishops will be in fianchetto and both knights on d7 and e7. In this position, black has multiple options: h6 or Ne7 or Bb7. Usually all 3 options are valid and will probably transpose to the same situation, like in this game, where black chooses to first play Bb7, and then Ne7 followed by h6.



7... Bb7 8. Be3 – Ne7

Note that Ngf6 was possible, even though not in full spirit of the hippo setup. After 8... Ngf6 could follow for example the following line: 9. Qc2 – 0-0 10. Rad1 – Qe7 11. h3 – h6 and black can either:

- Continue with the idea of e6-e5, entering a King's Indian hybrid.
- Or continue with the idea of c7-c5, reaching a benoni type of position (white should not take on c5, because Nxc5 creates pressure on the e4 pawn, reaching a Hedgehog hybrid).

9. Qc2

Interesting would have been 9. Qd2. 9... 0-0 10. Bg5 – e5 11. Bxg7 – Kxg7 with a slight advantage to white, as black misses its powerful Bg7, but black remains with a very solid position.

If black wants to play in a more active way, he can try the interesting 9. Qd2 – d5!? (see diagram):



The idea is to counter-attack the e4 pawn. If 10. cxd5 – exd5 11. e5 – 0-0 12. Bg5 – f6 with an unbalanced situation. We can easily imagine that such a possibility was not in accordance with Petrosian “safety-first” spirit.



Now back to our game in which white (instead of Qd2) played Qc2. Black followed with:

9... h6



10. Rad1 – 0-0 11. d5 – e5!

Interestingly, by playing d5 white forces the position into a King's Indian hybrid, where he will feel much more at home. It is a known fact that the King's Indian defence was a big speciality of Petrosian (both with white & black). However, this is a first victory for black's opening choice, as he reached a King's Indian type of position, but with a better placed Knight on e7 to support the f5 counter-advance.

12. Qc1

What else could white play in such a position? It is not so easy to find a constructive plan.

12...Kh7 13. g3 ?! f5 !



This position reminds me my game against De Gueldre (see game in Chapter 4). White makes probably a small mistake by weakening its own light squares, even though it will be counter balanced by the ownership of the e4 powerful square.

14. [exf5](#) [Nxf5](#)

Black has fully equalized already, and has a very active position with regards to its pieces. White will try to play on its advantageous e4 square and on the light squares.

15. [Bd3](#) [Bc8!](#)

Correctly assessing that the bishop now better belongs to the c8-h3 diagonal.

16. [Kg2](#) [Nf6](#)

Spassky is playing very actively, but begins to play in a risky way as well.

17. [Ne4](#) [Nh5](#)

Interesting, because black avoids exchanges of minor pieces and wants to take his chances on the king's side.

18. [Bd2](#)

Of course, g4 loses because of Nxe3 followed by Bxg4.

18... [Bd7](#) 19. [Kh1](#) [Ne7](#) 20. [Nh4](#) [Bh3](#) 21. [Rg1](#)
[Bd7](#) 22. [Be3](#) [Qe8](#) 23. [Rde1](#) [Qf7](#) 24. [Qc2](#) [Kh8](#)

24... Nf6 might have been better.

25. [Nd2](#) [Nf5](#) 26. [Nxf5](#) [gxf5](#) 27. [g4](#) !

The position is now entering a critical stage.

27..[e4](#) 28. [gxh5](#) [f4](#)?

A mistake after which white gets a big advantage.

Better was 28... [exd3](#) 29. [Qxd3](#) – [Rae8](#) 30. [Nf3](#) – [Qxh5](#) 31. [Bd4](#)-[Bf6](#) 32. [Rxe8](#) – [Bxe8](#) 33. [Qe3](#) – [Bg6](#) with an advantage for white, as white is very passive.

29. [Rxc7](#)! [Qxc7](#)

The positional exchange sacrifice was a Petrosian speciality. White should win if everything happens correctly. However, we all know that human chess is not an exact science!

30. [Rg1](#) [Qe5](#) 31. [Nf3](#)!

With the lethal threat [Bd2](#) followed by [Bc3](#)...



31.. [exd3](#)

If [exf3](#) then [Bd2](#)! is winning for white as [Bc3](#) cannot be stopped.

32. [Nxe5](#)?



White should have played Qxd3! after which he is winning: 32. Qxd3-Bf5 33. Nxe5- Bxd3 34. Bd4-dxe5 35. Bxe5+ - Kh7 36. Rg7+ followed by the gain of the c7, the a7 and finally the Bd3.

32...[dxc2](#)

Now the position is equal.

33. [Bd4](#) [dxe5](#) 34. [Bxe5+](#) [Kh7](#) 35. [Rg7](#)
[Kh8](#) 36. [Rg6](#) [Kh7](#) 37. [Rg7](#) [Kh8](#) 38. [Rg6](#) [Kh7](#) 39. [Rg7+](#)

Despite being a rook down, white gets a perpetual check.



1/2 - 1/2

Game #24 - IM Dolezal Radoslav (2299) - Novotny Jiri (2307), Ch. Czech Republic Plzen 1999.

The following game features an international Master losing with white in 25 moves against the hippo defence. Indeed, in the hippo the h6-g5-Ne7-Ng6 plan can be terribly strong, like in this game, if white is not careful.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d6

We already saw the same move order in previous games. Perhaps this is the future of chess openings...

3.c4 Ne7 4.Nf3 Nd7 5.Nc3 g6 6.Bd3 Bg7 7.Be3 b6 8.Qd2 h6 9.O-O Bb7 10.Rad1

The other option is to play 10.d5 in order to play the Kings Indian style. After 10.d5-e5 is the usual continuation, after which black can choose a plan based on g5 and Ng6. This is very common in the hippo.

10... a6 11.h3 g5

Naturally this has been seen before, although not exactly in the same position. Black is aware that not only the knight e7 is happy to go to g6, but also the fact that with h3 being played this move is even stronger as it could generate threats on g4 ...



12.Nh2 Ng6 13.Ng4

This manoeuvre is very difficult to understand, as the knight will soon be chased back to h2 after h5.

13...e5 14.Bc2

If instead 14.d5 is played, then 14...Nf4! 15.f3-h5 with initiative.

14...h5! 15.Nh2



15... g4! 16.hxg4?

This is a mistake. Better was to ignore the g4 move and continue with 16.d5-gxh3 and 17.g3. Even if in this position black is of course slightly better.

16... hxg4 17.Nxg4?

Slightly better would be 17.g3 -exd4 18.Bxd4-Bxd4 19.Qxd4-Qg5! With the idea of playing Qh5 with huge threats (estimated at -3 by Stockfish!).

17...Qh4 18.f3 exd4 19.Bxd4 Bxd4+ 20.Qxd4 Nf4 21.Qd2 Qg3



Totally hopeless for white.

22.Rfe1 O-O-O (Ne5! Was more direct) 23.Nd5 Bxd5 24.exd5 Rh5 25.Re4 Rdh8

And mate follows! How an International Master can lose in 25 moves with white against the Hippo!

0-1

Game #25 - GM Alexander Baburin – GM. Tony Miles

It is pleasure and such an honour to present a Tony Miles game in this book. Tony Miles was such an incredible player who was always ready to play underrated openings, and achieved historical successes. In view of this, he can be regarded as an avant-gardist! I also believe that, because of his hugely active style of play, it is worth it to study his games, for any player who wants to improve their play.

I had the honour to meet and to play in the same tournaments with the late Tony Miles in the end of the 1980's, for a few years at the International Tournaments in Virton (Beaufiful Belgian region...not far from Orval. If you don't know this Belgian Trappist beer, you probably miss something, but it's hard to find, except if you go there directly).

Tony is the creative Genius, the man who dared to play the **Saint-George defence 1...a6!** against World Champion Anatoly Karpov; and defeated him with the weird opening.



I was only 15 years old when I met the late Tony Miles. I remember playing this tournament in Virton, finishing 5/9 far away from Tony, who won the tournament far ahead of the rest.

One day during the tournament, I was just a small teenager among the first chess boards of this international tournament and Tony was of course playing, as every day at the first board.

The legend suddenly stopped at my board and analysed my game. Tony stared at my position for quite some time, and for some reason he seemed quite interested at my position. What was he calculating, and what was he thinking about is impossible to say, because I never asked him.

But what I do know for sure, is that since this moment, my way of looking at chess in general had changed dramatically. Somehow, I understood that I had to follow a different path, a path like his. Could it be the hidden and dark forest path? Somehow, I believe that the hippopotamus system is a sort of a deep and dark forest as well...

“You have to take your opponent into a deep and dark forest, where $2+2=5$, and the path leading out is wide enough for one” - Mikhail Tal

1. [d4](#) [e6](#) 2. [c4](#) [b6](#) 3. [a3](#) [g6](#) 4. [Nc3](#) [Bg7](#) 5. [e4](#) [Ne7](#)

The defence with e6 and b6 against d4 setups is supposed to be called the English defence. Therefore, it is one of **reasons** why the classification of openings disregards the hippo classification. In fact, when you open the classification from the “Informator” for example, you will never see any such hippo opening code.



6. [Nf3](#)

If 6.h4, then black may choose between playing h6 (to counter h5 in a proper manner), or to play for the rule which claims that we should counter a wing attack with a hit in the centre, with 6..d5!

6...[Bb7](#) 7. [Bd3](#) [d6](#) 8. [O-O](#)

The safe approach. Other ideas involving a queen side castle are more double-edged of course. In such an event, black may choose not to kingside castle, in favour of queenside castle or no castle at all.

8...[Nd7](#)9. [Re1](#) [h6](#) 10. [h3](#)

While h6 looks perfectly logical (in view of playing g5), we can really ask

ourselves the question if the move 10.h3 makes any sense. On the contrary, it will only add power to the g5 black move, because a possible threat of g5-g4 will open the white king's position.

10.. a6 11. Be3 g5!

There it is, the logical follow up of the h6 move which was seen in so many games in this book (also from the white point of view). To repeat the principle, the move is multipurpose. One idea is to free the square g6 for the knight, following which e5 would consolidate the f4 square. Another idea of course is prepare a potential king side attack.

12. Rc1 c5

Now that all light pieces have been successfully developed, and the king is currently in safety zone, black wants to open lanes for rooks and counterattacks on the light dark squares, actually similar concept as in the Benoni defence. The main difference here with the Benoni is of course the fact that the knight is developed on e7 rather than on f6 like in Benoni's.

13. d5

Taking on c5 by 13.dxc5 instead leads to an equal type of middle game where black may later try to take advantage of the d4 square with a knight. For example: 13.dxc5-dxc5 14.b4-Qc7 15.bxc5-bxc5 16.Na4-Ng6 with an enjoyable position for black (assessed as 0 by StockFish8).

The third option for white is not to react to c5 currently and continue with a neutral move like 13.Bf1. In that case, black may quietly continue with Ng6 followed by Qc7 and 0-0.

At first sight, 13.d5 is the most entrepreneurial move which gains space in the centre.

13...Ng6

Black squares are now weakened and black will concentrate on occupying / controlling the e5 , d4, or f4 squares.

14. Bc2 Qe7 15. Qd2

Of course. White wants to follow with Rd1 to amplify white's pressure on the

d6 square.

15...0-0

Remarkable: black castles only now... The position quite a closed nature until now. We will see who is going to take advantage of the opening of central lanes.

16. Rcd1

As usual in Benoni types of structures of pawns, the d6 square is one of the potential weaknesses. To counter balance this weakness, black usually focusses on very active piece play.

16... Nde5!?

Just taking active pieces measures, and at the same time tickling both the Nf3 and the pawn on c4.

17. Nxe5

Of course white may not win the d6 pawn for free: 17.dxe6?-Nxf3+! 18.dxf3-Be5! With a won game for black.

17...Bxe5

And by this knight manoeuvre to e5, black now has consolidated d6 at the same time. I really like the potential of black activity which is increasing move after move.



18. [Bd3](#) [Qf6](#)

Another interesting option would have been: 18...f5!? 19.exf5-exf5 20.Na4-b5!? (after the delayed Benoni, we reach a delayed Benko!) 21.cxb5-axb5 22.Bxb5-Qg7 23.f3-Rfb8 with pressure on the queen side, as it is often the case in Benko gambits.

19. [Na4](#) [Rab8](#) 20. [Nxb6](#)

White wins a pawn, but again this comes with a cost of black gaining extra piece activity, a concept which was very often seen in Tony Miles games.

21. [Bc8](#) [Na4](#)

Possible was 21.Nxc8 but black has a surprising move with 21...Rxb2! 22.Qa5-Rxc8 with an advantage for black. Not good either is 21.Qa5? because of Qd8 and the knight is trapped!

22. [Bd7](#) 22. [Nc3](#) [Rb3](#) !

Black had the possibility to regain its pawn by the means of Rxb2 followed by Bxc3 but this leads to lots of exchanges, and especially trading the tremendous bishop e5. However, black wants to retain pieces on the board as he has a big initiative for the pawn, and aims at doubling the rooks on the b file.

23. [Rb1](#) [Rfb8](#)

Tremendous play! Black's position looks like a very good Benko gambit. All pieces of the black army are very active, without any exception. This is worth a diagram:



24. [Nd1](#)

Probably better even though still difficult would have been 24.dxe6-Bxe6 25.Nd5-Bxd5 26.exd5-Rxb2 with consequent advantage for black.

24..[exd5](#) 25.[cxd5](#) [Nf4](#)

Also worth investigating is 25... Bxh3!? 26. Be2 (26. gxh3-Qf3 -+) Bd7 and black stands better.

26. [Bxf4](#) [gxf4](#) !

Amazing position : almost everything is ready for the final sacrifice !

27. [Bc2](#)

27. f3 would be followed by Bd4+ and Qh4 with a crushing position. For example: 27..Bd4+ 28. Kf1-Qh4 29.Re2-Qg3! 30.Nf2-Bxf2 31.Rxf2-Rxd3! 32.Qxd3-Bb5 wins.

And 27.Bf1 would be followed by Bxh3!

27...[Rxb3](#) ! 28. [gxh3](#) [Kh8](#)

28...f3! Would lead to mate !

29. [f3](#) [Rg8](#) 30. [Kh1](#) [Qh4](#)

And white resigned as mate is impossible to avoid!

A wonderful attacking and active masterpiece from Tony Miles.

0-1

Game #26 – Ernerock (2066) – E. Briffoz (2125) – Internet lichess [Date "2017.05.29"]

1.d4 - a6!?

At first glance, a strange move, but again, a6 is very often included in any Hippo System... therefore, it cannot be bad!

2.g3!?

Seems that white doesn't want black to go into a hippo!
Never mind, we'll get a hybrid!

2... g6 3. Bg2 Bg7 4. c4 c5!?



Now white has multiple options.

Either to gain space while closing the centre like in the game.

Other possibility would be to play quietly with Nf3, maybe heading to a sort of hedgehog system.

Yes, strange as it may seem, the hedgehog and the hippopotamus are very closely related animals in chess!

5. d5 d6 6. Nc3 Nf6 7. Nf3 O-O?!

Inaccuracy. Best move was b5.

7... b5 8. O-O b4 9. Na4 O-O 10. Nh4 Ng4 11. e4 Bd7 12. a3 a5 13. Nf3 Na6
14. Re1

8. O-O h6 9. e4 Nbd7 10. Be3?!

Inaccuracy. Best move was a4. (10. a4 Re8 11. Re1 g5 12. Bd2 g4 13. Nh4
Ne5 14. b3 Nh7 15. Nf5 Ng5 16. Bxg5 hxg5)

10... Rb8 11. a4 Ng4 12. Qd2?!

Inaccuracy. Best move was Bd2. 12. Bd2 Nge5 13. Nxe5 Nxe5 14. b3 Nd3
15. Rb1 Bd7 16. Qe2 Nb4 17. Rfc1 e5 18. dxe6 Bxe6.

**12... Nxe3 13. Qxe3 Ne5 14. Nxe5 Bxe5 15. Qxh6 Bg7 16. Qd2 Qa5 17.
Qc2 Bd7 18. Rfe1 Qb4 19. Bf1 f5 20. Bd3 f4!**

Black forces the opening of the F file, once again. This concept of the f-file
opening is typical of the Hippo, thanks to the fact that black did not commit
his knight on f6 in the opening.

21. Ra3?

A mistake. The best move was e5.

For example 21. e5 Bxe5 22. Rxe5 dxe5 23. Re1 Qb6 24. Bxg6 Bg4 25. Rxe5
Qf6 26. Re1 Kg7 27. Be4 Rf7

21... fxg3 22. fxg3?

A bad move, as best move was hxg3. Even so, Black's position is just too
strong.

22... Bd4+ 23. Kh1 Rf2



What a tremendous position for black! All their pieces are extremely active, and the Rook b8 is getting ready to continue on the f file... When we talk about huge power release.

24. Qb3?

A bad move, but in an already lost position.

Somewhat better move was Qc1: 24. Qc1 Bg4 25. Be2 Bxe2 26. Rxe2 Rxe2 27. Nxe2 Bxb2 28. Qh6 Qxa3 29. Qxg6+ Bg7 30. Qe6+ Kf8 -+

24... Rxb2

0-1

White resigns, since they lose a piece or the exchange at least.

Chapter 3, Part 3: White plays e4 – d4 and f4 (Austrian attack)

This chapter will present games where white is using the famous Austrian attack Setup. One of the most feared setup by hippo practitioners. Black needs to be very cautious, but as we will see in the games, they can survive.

Game #27 – IM. Cuartas, Carlos vs. GM Boris Spassky , Lugano 1982

Throughout his chess career, World Champion Boris Spassky enjoyed very good results with the hippopotamus system. Not only in World Championship match, but also later in tournaments, like in this game from 1982.

1. e4 d6 2. d4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. f4 e6

By playing this move, Spassky is showing that he is not afraid of facing the infamous Austrian attack with a hippopotamus defence.



5. Nf3 Ne7 6. Be3 a6

Usually played with the idea of queen side expansion with b5. If white plays 7.a4, then black replies with b6. In game #30, in the same position black played b6 instead.

7. Bd3

Aiming towards the important f5 square.

7...b5

Of course, Spassky knows that he should not castle too early (and certainly not before white committed himself), and he knows as well that he can expand on the queen side since white didn't play a4, in a delayed Saint-George style.

8. 0-0 0-0 9. Qe1

Also possible would be 9.e5 followed by 9...Nd7 and for example 10.Qe2-Bb7 11.Ne4-Nf5 12.Bf2-f6!? With an uncertain but dynamic position.

The 9. Qe1 move is thematic in positions where white plays f4, in order to follow with Qh4, and possibly later with Rook to f3 and h3, creating dangerous threats on the kingside. Another idea is to prepare a future pawn storm on the kingside by g4 and f5. If black allows white to play f5, without compensation, he will be in terrible situation.

9...Nbc6!

Brilliant understanding of the position by Boris Spassky!

This move is both quite surprising and very interesting at the same time. In positions like these, where each tempo will count (as white plans to launch a ferocious attack on the kingside), it is of extreme importance to react very actively, in the centre, and as soon as possible. If this is not achieved, the risk of being crushed in defence is very high.

The move 9... Nbc6 respects this rule, and also aims at the following 4 objectives:

- Pressuring the d4 pawn
- Preparing a possible Nb4 to annoy the import bishop on d3 which supports the f5 advance
- Preparing a possible counter attack in the centre by the means of e6-e5.
- By not going to d7, black keeps better control of the f5 square (with the bishop c8).

Remember the golden rule that an attack on the side is always best met by a reaction in the centre. This is one of the main key idea of the famous System by Nimzowitsch.



10. Qh4

Of course, 10.a3 is another possibility to avoid the annoying Nb4. But white is in a hurry to bring his forces to the kingside as fast as possible, and as a consequence he does not think about any prophylactic measures. This strategy means living on the edge.

10...Nb4

Of course!

11. g4

This is really rushing quickly to the attack, but however leaving all the rest “behind”. Strange as it may seem, a move like 11. Rac1 was maybe preferable, with the evident idea to activate the rook on the c file after Nxd3-cxd3.

White’s main idea here is to play f4-f5 rapidly, and it was not the case without playing g4 to first support. Note the very role of the Bc8 again! Now white is fully ready for f4-f5 followed by Bh6 and Ng5! Scary, and so...

11...f5!

Again, a tremendous understanding of the situation. Black must avoid f5 at all costs.



12. gxf5 exf5 13. e5

Another possibility would be to play 13. d5 with ideas to free the d4 square for the knight of the bishop. After 13.d5-c6! 14.Ng5-h6 15.Ne6-Bxe6 16.dxe6 – Nxd3 17.cxd3-Rf6! White's attack has completely disappeared.

13... Nxd3 14. cxd3

Black has played the opening perfectly until now, and his position is already safe after only 14 moves!



14...b4!

Chasing the knight allows black to use the d5 square effectively.

15. Ne2 Nd5 16. Qxd8 Rxd8 17. Kf2



In this position, black's first task will be to complete its development of pieces, and then will focus on the f4 pawn which is one of the main weaknesses of white's position. On the negative side, white has a potential strong passed pawn on e5.

17...Bb7 18. Rac1 Rac8 19. h4 Bh6

Another option would be to play 19...Nxe3 20.Kxe3-Bxf3! (to remove the main defender of the d4-e5 chain) 21.Rxf3-c5! With a nice position for black which managed to destroy the e5-d4 pawn chain.

20. h5 dxe5 21. dxe5 Nxe3 22. Kxe3 c5!

It was crucial to avoid d4, after which the e5 pawn would become a very dangerous monster!

23. hxg6 hxg6 24. Nh4 Kf7 25. Rg1 Re8!?

Throughout this game, Spassky prefers to play actively and aims at winning the e5 pawn, thanks to the f4 pinned pawn. At the same time, he continues to create problems to his opponent...

26. Rxc6?!

And white fails to solve the problem the best way! Stronger would have been 26.Kf2! Re6 with a double-edged position.

26... Rxe5+27. Kf2 Re6 28. Rxe6 Kxe6



Black's main advantage in this endgame is the pair of bishops.

29. Rg1 Rf8 30. Rg6+ Rf6 31. Rg8 Bc6 32. b3 Bb5 33. Ke3 Bf8 34. Ng3 Kf7 35. Rg5 Rd6 36. Rxf5+ Ke8 37. Ne4 Rxd3+ 38. Kf2 Bg7 39. Nxc5 Bd4+ 40. Ke1 Rc3 41. Nb7 Bc6 42. Nd6+ Kd7 43. Nc4 Rh3 44. Ng6 Be4 45. Rf7+ Kd8 46. Nge5 Rh1+ 47. Ke2 Rh2+ 48. Kf1 Rh1+

And draw by repetition.

½- ½

Game #28 – GM John van der Wiel vs FM Bernd Feustel

Once again a game featuring FM Bernd Feustel beating an IGM with the Hippo, this time as black.

1. e4 g6 2. d4 Bg7 3. Nc3 d6 4. f4 Nd7 5. Be3 b6 6. Be2 Nh6?!

Played in the same spirit as e6-Ne7: black does not want to interfere with the f-pawn, and does not want to become a potential target of the e4 pawn either. At the same time, the Nh6 move is quite provocative as we shall see that white was tempted to play g4.

But the main issue with this move, is that white can play 7.Qd2! followed by 0-0-0, when white will threaten f5 as we will see in the notes of the next move.



7. g4?!

Probably exactly what black wanted by playing Nh6. As written above, much stronger would be 7.Qd2!-Ndf6 (with the idea of Ng4 to exchange on e3) 8.h3-Bb7 9.d5!-c6 10.g4 and black has many difficulties.

7... Bb7 8. Bf3

Of course 8.g5 is currently impossible because of 8...Nf5!.

8...e5

A correct decision in an already difficult position. Black decides to react in the central dark squares, and at the same time opens the d8-h4 diagonal for the queen.

9. g5

If 9.h4 then 9...f6 (to foresee the f7 square for the knight) 10.Qd2-Nf7 (fxe5 was a threat) 11.0-0-0 – Qe7 followed by black queen castle, but black remains with a cramped and passive position.

9... Ng8 10. Qd2

If 10.h4, black can reply with 10...h6. Then 11.Nge2-hxg5 12.hxg5-Rxh1+ 13.Bxh1 Qe7 with a quite safe position.

10...Ne7 11. O-O-O exf4 12. Bf4 O-O

As we can see in the diagram below, black's position is cramped and white may continue by h4 and h5, with a strong attack on the king. Stockfish

estimates the position at +1.5 already!



13. Nge2 a6

13...f5!? Is perhaps a little bit better for black as after 14.gxf6 ep Nxf6 15.d5! (intending Nd4) Bc8 and black can survive. The other possibility 13...c5 is not possible due to Nb5! and d6 is hanging.

14. h4 b5 15. h5

Black's counter attack seems so much slower that it is difficult to think that black will not lose.

15...Re8 16. Ng3

Probably to anticipate b4, when the e2 square is accessible for the c knight.

16...Nf8!

A good defensive move: the knight arrives to defend the h7 square.



17. hxg6 fxc6 18. Qg2

Also possible was 18. Rdf1-c5 (trying to activate the Bg7) 19.d5-Qa5! With the threat b4 followed by Qxa2.

18...Qd7 19. Rh4 b4 20. Nd5 Bxd5

When a player is in defensive mode, exchanges are usually easing the situation.

21. exd5 Nf5!

Further continuing with material exchanges.

22. Nxf5 gxf5!

Of course, not Qxf5 because white's light square bishop will become too dangerous on the h3-c8 diagonal.

23. Rh5

To avoid Ng6 with double attack on h4 and f4.

23...Re7 24. Bg3

This is a sign that white has difficulties to find a plan to continue the attack.

24...Rae8 25. Bf2 a5 26. Qh3 a4

The situation is completely reversed now: black totally controls the central squares (especially the e file), and has successfully defended against white's kingside tentative of attack. It is now black's turn to attack the enemy's king!



27. Rh1 b3!

Opening lanes on the king's protection and threatening bxa2 of course.

28. axb3 axb3 29. cxb3

Black must not fear 29. Rxh7 as after Nxh7 30.Qxh7+ Kf8 31.cxb3-Qb5 32.Bh5-Qd3! Is winning for black: 33.Bxe8-Re2 and mate is unavoidable.



29...Qb5 30. Rxh7?

White probably lost their nerves, and make an incorrect sacrifice. It was important to start defending by playing 30.Bd1 Qxd5 31.Qc3 Qb5 32.Qc4+ to force the exchange of queens with approximately an equal game.

30...Nxb7 31. Qxb7+ Kf8 32. Bh5

Of course 32.Qxf5?? loses immediately because of Rf7! Winning the bishop.

32...Qxd5

Even stronger was 32...Qd3! With the same ideas as comment from move 29.

33. Bxe8 Rxe8 34. Rf1 Ra8! 35. Kd2 Bxd4?

Tempting but not so good. Immediately winning was 35...Ra2! , for example 36. Be3 Qg2+! 37.Rf2 Rxb2+ -+ or 36.Rb1 – Qe4! 37.Qh1 – Rxb2+ -+



We just provide the remaining moves without comments, the most interesting part of the game has been described.

36. Bxd4 Qxd4+ 37. Kc2 Qe4 38. Kd2 Qg2 39. Kc3 Qf1 40. Qh8 Ke7 41. Qa8 Qe1 42. Kd3 Qg3 43. Kc2 Qg5 44. b4 Qf4 45. Qc8 Qc4 46. Kb1 f4 47. b5 d5 48. Qg8 Qe4 49. Ka2 f3 50. Qg3 Kd8 51. Qg8 Kd7 52. Qg7 Kc8 53. Qf8 Kb7 54. Qf6 d4 55. Ka3 Qe3 56. Ka2 d3 57. Qc6 Kb8 58. Qd7 Qe4

0-1

Game #29 - IM. Mortensen, E. (2471) vs. GM Krasenkow, Michal (2593)

In the following game, we will see yet another example of how to play against the Austrian Attack. This time, black allowed the f4-f5 pawn to be pushed, and decided to castle on the queenside.

1. e4 g6 2. d4 Bg7 3. Nc3 d6 4. f4 e6 5. Nf3 Ne7 6. Be3 b6

In game #28, Spassky preferred to play 6...a6 with the idea of playing b5. Which is best is a matter of personal choice.

7. Qd2 Bb7 8. Bd3 Nd7 9. O-O-O



9...Nf6 10. f5

White decides to immediately open up the position. Another idea would be 10.e5 – Nfd5 11. Nxd5 (11. Ne4 -Nxe3 12.Qxe3 0-0) 11...Nxd5 12.Bf2 Ne7 13.h4 h5 with interesting play.

10...exf5 11. exf5 Qd7!

I like this flexible approach very much, both threatening Nxf5 for good, and intending to possibly castle on the queenside where the king will be safer situated. Not so good would be 11...Nxf5?! 12.Bxf5! gxf5 13.Bg5! Kf8 (13...h6 14. Rhe1+) 14.Rhe1 and white has a plus.

12. Bh6 - Bxh6 13. Qxh6 0-0-0

Black's position is of course very solid.



14. Rhf1 Rde8

Of course not 14...Nxf5?? Because of 15.Bxf5! Qxf5 (15...gxf5 16.Qxf6 +/-) 16.Ng5! Ng4 (Qd7 loses the knight f6) 17. Qh4 and white is winning as black will lose at least the Ng4, or other material.

15. a3

Possible and interesting would be 15.Ng5!? Bg2 with a complex game to follow. The text move allows black to reach an equal endgame position.

15...Ned5! 16. Nxd5 Bxd5

16...Nxd5 was also reaching an equal position, after 17. Rfe1 and rooks liquidation.

17. Rde1 Rxe1+ 18. Rxe1 Re8



Both players agreed to a draw in this position which is objectively very equal. For example 19.fxg6-hxg6 20.Rxe8+ Qxe8 21.b3 (white has to be cautious and must not allow 21...Bxf3 followed by Qe1 mate !) 21...Be4 and an equal endgame. $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$

Chapter 4: Experience in the Modern defence

The concepts of the Hippo and the Modern defence are very closely related, as already mentioned in the previous chapters. Therefore, I will present to the reader one final game using the Modern defence, which will show how powerful this defence can be. Perhaps, this can also give ideas to the readers to learn more about the Modern defence (there are many great books about it, see the Bibliography below).

Game #30 : De Gueldre P (Fide 2200) – Briffoz E. (lichess 2125) , Rapid-Liège Tournament 2002

So, this following game is more a modern defence than a pure hippo. It is however very interesting in the sense that the counterattack with the f pawn (f5) reaches a similar idea as in the hippo, since the knight is developed on e7 rather than on f6.

It provides also an amazing demonstration of the tremendous activity of the black pieces in this miniature of 21 moves. Philippe De Gueldre is a young Belgian candidate master, and one of the top Belgian player with high potential to become International Master in the near future.

. e4 – g6 2. d4 – Bg7 3. c4 – d6 4. Nc3 – Nd7 5. Be3 – e5

Already counter-attacking in the centre on the black squares. If white decides to play Nf3, they will have to take the opening of the e-file into consideration.

6. d5

White decides to close the centre. The structure of the position is now close to a King's Indian, with the advantage that black did not have to waste a time to play f5 because the knight is developed on e7.

6... Ne7!



As mentioned, black wishes to reach f7-f5 as fast as possible. This move,

characteristic of the Hypo, is more flexible than Nf6, which would lead to a king's Indian defence.

7. Bd3 – 0-0 8. Nge2 – f5! Very active and natural move.



9. g3?!

A passive move which is not very accurate in such a position and does not to improve white's position. Of course, the idea is to avoid f5-f4, but the big problem is that white squares (h3 and f3) become weak on the kingside. More appropriate and natural would have been 9. f3. following which black could decide to continue with Nf6, and ideas as a5 to gain space on the Queen's side and c6 to attack the pawn chain.

9... Nc5!? 10 f3

It becomes now clear that white g3 was a dubious move.

10... fxe4

Opening the lanes for the rooks and for the queen where they will be possibly doubled with great danger.

11. fxe4 – Rf3!

I was in the shape of my life that year of 2002, and played in very active fashion.



12. Bxc5

The only move for white, unfortunately losing its most important bishop.

The other option 12. Qd2 would lose immediately because of 12... Bh6! 13. Bxh6 – Nxd3+ 14. Kd1 – Nf2+ -+

12... dxc5 13. Qd2 – Qf8!

A double aim move:

- First to control the f-file and
- Second to support Bh6 at the same time.

14. Nc1 – Bh6 15. Qc2 – Bh3 16. Be2 – Re3!!?



A pure intuitive move, because it was not very easy to calculate all the consequences that could potentially follow, as I might have lost the exchange in some variations. The game was played in the context of a rapid tournament, which left little time to calculate every possibility. In such a situation, my intuition told me to go for it.

Eventually the risk paid off, and this game became one of my favourite achievement until this day.

17. Nd1

Will white win the exchange?

On 17. Rg1 – Rf8 would follow with a winning position.

17... Qf3!



A very aesthetic position for black: all pieces are extremely active, with the exception of the knight and the Rook a8 which will soon play its role on the f file as well.

18. Nxe3

White decides to eliminate the annoying Re3. On Rg1, I had foreseen Raf8 with a winning position, as the king will not escape.

18...Qxh1+ 19. Nf1 – Raf8 20. Qd3 – Bxf1 21. Bxf1 – Tf3!



An Amazing position, and a strong demonstration of powerful pieces activity against a 2200 player.

After Qe2 follows Re3 winning the Queen, and so white gave up.

0-1

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About the Author

Eric Briffoz is a Senior Computer Scientist, and Chess Player since he is 8 years old. In 1981 (age of 9) he joined his first Belgian Official Club. In 2013, he became the President of the Rebecq Chess Club in Belgium, which he founded. His is a student from International Master Michel Jadoul.

At the moment of printing this book, his Major Chess achievements included the following:

- Winner of 3 Open Blitz Tournaments on lichess.org
- Vice Champion of Washington State USA in 1990 (Junior)
- Victory against a FIDE Master.
- Victory against a US National Master
- Draw against Double World Correspondence Chess Champion Tinu Yim (Estonia), at the age of 17.
- Tournament victory against 4 times Belgian Woman Champion.

His peak ELO rating on lichess.org is currently **2125** (on the road towards National Master level).

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