



COLUMNISTS

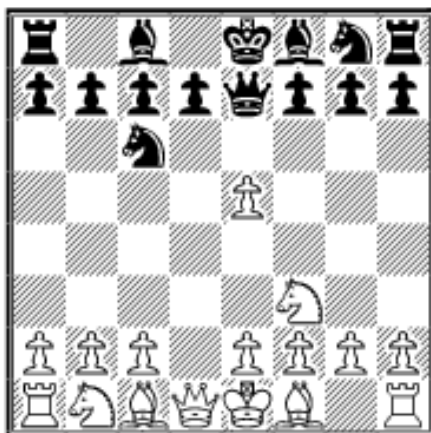
Over the Horizons

Stefan Bücker



Visiting Planet England

Some openings have a special charm. There are moments when I cannot believe in the correctness of the King's Gambit or the Englund Gambit, but months later I find myself again sitting at the board, or in front of the screen, analyzing the critical positions. Like the King's Gambit, the Englund Gambit rarely transposes to other openings. A typical Englund position also looks strange, as though it came from another world. This column will not suffice even to get an overview of the many forms of the Englund Gambit (Soller Gambit, Felbecker Gambit, Charlick Gambit, Zilbermints Gambit), so we'll visit just the most important continent: **1 d4 e5 2 dxe5 Nc6 3 Nf3 Qe7**.



The opening was invented by the same man who established the Latvian Gambit: **Karlis Betinš** (1867-1943; in German sources: Karl Behting). He published his analysis "Königsbauer gegen Damenbauer" in *Deutsche Schachzeitung* 1930, pp. 171-174. Two years later **Fritz Englund** (1871-1933), the leading chess figure in Sweden, sponsored a thematic tournament, held at Stockholm in late 1932 and early 1933. Every game had to begin with Betinš' main line **4 Qd5**. Don't ask me why the new planet wasn't named after Karlis Betinš – probably because his article had already been forgotten, or – more probable – because Englund died shortly afterwards. When chess magazines reported his death, they rarely failed to mention "Englund's Gambit Tournament." So the name stuck.



Karlis Betinš

It has got a name (though the wrong one), but does it really deserve our attention? In his book *Dynamic Black Defenses* (1989) [4], Tim Harding wrote on the Englund Gambit **1 d4 e5**: “Stefan Bucker is writing a book on the gambit, to be published [...] towards the end of 1988 (after my deadline for this edition). No doubt he has some original ideas about how Black may complicate matters, but I find it hard to believe that he can find ways to make the gambit playable in competitions above 2000 Elo standard.”

Years later the same author wrote in his magazine *Chess Mail* 5/1998 [8]: “There are so many different ways for Black to continue after 2 dxe5 Nc6 (or 2...f6!?) 3 Nf3 that it is really four gambits in one [...] Yet all the gambit books and monographs in the world should not save Black if his opponent is a sound 2300 player.” This statement doesn’t sound as negative as the first, but a third quote from Harding (*The Kibitzer* column No. 4, 1996) even puts the Englund Gambit in the category of “truly eccentric and almost certainly unsound gambits which however may have their place in pub games, five-minute tournaments and other forms of casual play.”



Fritz Englund

However, in my six tournament games with the Englund Gambit, my average opponent could well be regarded as a “sound 2300 player.” Instead of a 6-0 for White, as suggested by Harding, the result was a meager 1-5, including two draws. This doesn’t prove much, true. None of the games followed the difficult main lines – and I admit that these lines *are* more difficult for Black than for White. Maybe they knew about my book, but this doesn’t really explain why five of them played the cautious **4 g3**. The only exception was Valery Lukov (Bulgaria, 2440), who tried **4 Qd5 f6 5 Nc3? fxe5 6 Bg5 Nf6 7 Bxf6 gxf6**, which was already slightly better for Black (=, 62). These six players all made the same mistake: to believe that you can refute the Englund Gambit over the board, without knowledge. It did not even work without time pressure: **Henry Grob** (1904-1974), the Swiss master, was the first to test the Englund Gambit on a regular basis, in dozens of correspondence games. He won the great majority and published them in an excellent book [\[1\]](#), recommending to play the gambit in correspondence games rather than over the board.

These games are hardly relevant for the theory of the opening, and my play wasn’t faultless. But look at some positions, and decide for yourself. My point is that blowing Black off the board isn’t so easy. Even passive positions have their resources, and provoking White to begin a pawn storm can often be a good idea to increase your own winning chances. Who hasn’t got the feeling: “Nowadays everybody plays so cautious. Against my Alekhine’s Defense nobody dares to play the Four Pawns Attack anymore.” Yes, that’s a problem. But against the Englund Gambit, experienced players are often throwing caution into the wind:

V. Trichkov (2290) –Bücker (2345)
Prague 1991 (Bohemians)

1 d4 e5 2 dxe5 Nc6 3 Nf3 Qe7 4 g3 Nxe5 5 Nxe5 Qxe5 6 Bg2 Bb4+ 7 c3 Ba5 8 Nd2 Qe6 9 0-0 Ne7 10 b4 Bb6 11 c4 d6 12 Bb2 0-0 13 Qc2 c6 14 e4 Qh6 15 Rad1 Bg4 16 Nf3 Rad8 17 Qc3 f6 18 a4 Qh5 19 a5 Bc7 20 Rd2 a6 21 Ne1 Qf7 22 Nc2 Be6 23 Ne3 Bb8 24 Rfd1 Kh8 25 Kh1 Qg8 26 f4 Rd7 27 Ba3 Rfd8

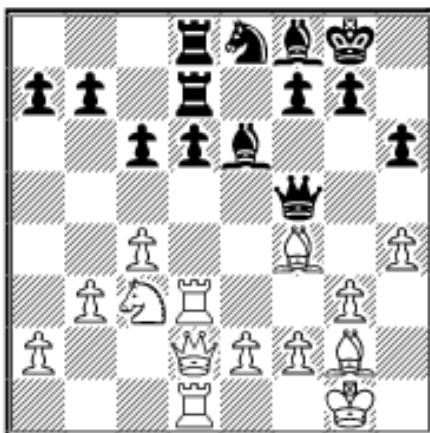


28 f5 Bf7 29 Bb2 Qe8 30 g4 Ng8 31 g5 Bh5 32 Rf1 Rf7 33 h4 Qe7 34 b5 Rdf8 35 Rdf2 Qd8 36 bxc6 bxc6 37 e5 dxe5 38 Bxc6 fxg5 39 hxg5 Qxg5 40 Rg1 Qh6 41 Rh2 Qxc6+ 42 Nd5 Rxf5 0-1

H. Schuh (2375) - Bücker (2345)

Bad Neuenahr 1991, German Championship

1 d4 e5 2 dxe5 Nc6 3 Nf3 Qe7 4 g3 Nxe5 5 Bg2 Nxf3+ 6 Bxf3 Nf6 7 c4 d6 8 Nc3 c6 9 Qd4 Qe6 10 Bf4 Be7 11 0-0 0-0 12 Rfd1 Rd8 13 Rd3 Qf5 14 Rad1 Be6 15 b3 h6 16 Qe3 Ne8 17 Qd2 Rd7 18 Bg2 Bf8 19 h4 Rad8

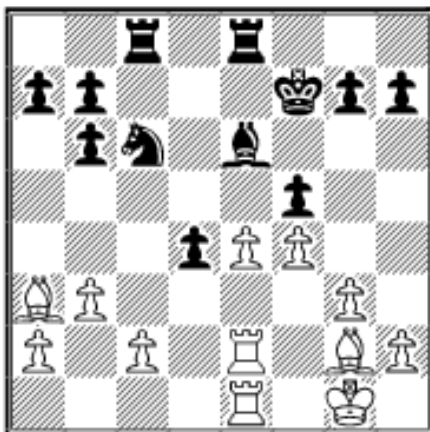


20 Qe3 Qa5 21 Qd2 f6 22 Ne4 Qh5 23 Be3 Bf5 24 Rd4 d5 25 cxd5 Rxd5 26 Bf3 Rxd4 27 Bxd4 Qg6 28 h5 Qf7 29 Qc3 Bxe4 30 Bxe4 c5 31 Bg6 Qd5 32 e4 cxd4 0-1

R. Mecklenburg – Bücker (2355)

Bad Godesberg 1991, Championship of North Rhine & Westphalia

1 d4 e5 2 dxe5 Nc6 3 Nf3 Qe7 4 g3 Nxe5 5 Bg2 Nxf3+ 6 Bxf3 Qe6 7 0-0 Bc5 8 Qd5 Qxd5 9 Bxd5 Ne7 10 Bg2 d5 11 Nc3 Be6 12 e4 d4 13 Na4 Bb6 14 Nxb6 cxb6 15 f4 f5 16 Re1 Rc8 17 b3 Kf7 18 Ba3 Rhe8 19 Re2 Nc6 20 Rae1



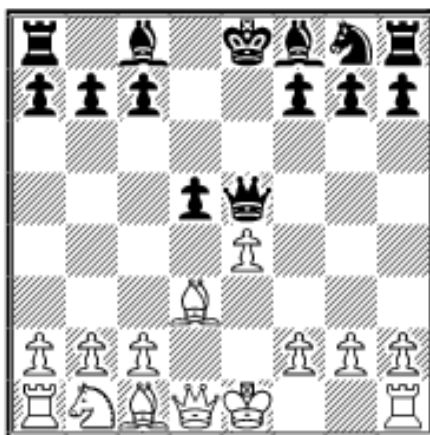
20...d3 21 Re3 Nd4 22 exf5? (22 cxd3) Bxf5 23 Bd5+ Kg6 24 Rxe8 Rxe8 25 Rf1 dxc2 26 Bb2 Bd3 27 Ra1 c1Q+ 28 Bxc1 Nc2 0-1

Critical Variations

In the following part, I'll look only at the two most critical variations. There are dozens of other options for White. Here I can only give a few additional hints:

1 d4 e5 2 dxe5 Nc6 3 Nf3 Qe7 4 e4 Nxe5 5 Nxe5 Qxe5 6 Bd3.

Although my book [3] analyzed this position twice (p. 80 and p. 136), neither of the two different lines was convincing. 6...d5!? (Holger Riedel) may be better, for example:



7 0-0 dxe4 8 Nc3!? (8 Bxe4 Bd6 9 g3 Nf6 10 Bc6+?! bxc6 11 Re1 Ne4, Riedel) 8...Bd6 9 g3 f5 10 Bb5+ Bd7 11 Bxd7+ Kxd7, about =.

(b) 1 d4 e5 2 dxe5 Nc6 3 Nf3 Qe7 4 Nc3 Nxe5 5 e4! (better than 5 Nd5 Nxf3+ 6 gxf3 Qd8 7 Qd4 d6 8 Bg5 f6 9. Bd2 c6 10 Nf4 Qb6) 5...Nf6 (suggested by Joachim Schmidt-Brauns) 6 Bg5 (or 6 Nxe5 Qxe5 7 f4 Qe6, J. Schmidt-Brauns, 8 Qd4 b6 9

Bc4 Bc5) 6...c6 7 Nxe5 Qxe5 8 f4 Qe6 9 Qd4 b6 10 Bc4 Bc5 +=.

(c) 1 d4 e5 2 dxe5 Nc6 3 Bf4. Recommended by Pablo Viaggio (Buenos Aires) in *The Myers Openings Bulletin* 20 (1981), p. 16f. My response in [3] was 3...Qe7 4 Nc3 Nxe5 5 Nd5 Qd6 6 Nf3 f6, overlooking 7 e4 Ne7 8 Nxe5 fxe5 9 Qh5+ +- . James Hickey (Australia) preferred 3...g5 4 Bg3 Bg7, and maybe he is right, but the other retreat 4 Bd2 is equally critical, and White certainly stands better. Perhaps Black should rather play 3...f6 4 Nf3 fxe5 5 Nxe5 Qf6 6 Nd3

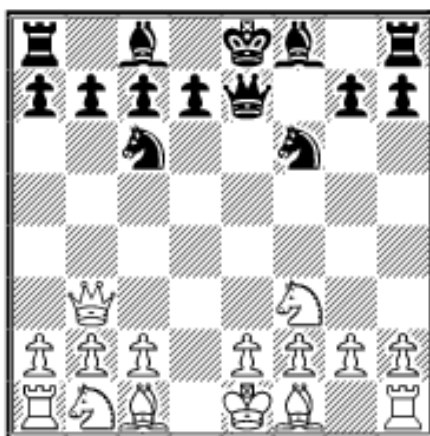
d6, in the style of a Soller Gambit. The computer doesn't see enough compensation for the pawn, but Black can develop quickly, he has the e- and the f-file, and he can strive for d5 or g5. In practice Black will have reasonable chances.

Terrifying Main Lines I: Stockholm Variation

1 d4 e5 2 dxe5 Nc6 3 Nf3 Qe7 4 Qd5!

Analyzed on 24 pages in my book, plus many more in a later series of articles published in *Gambit Revue*. Some books call it the "Spielmann Variation," after a game Spielmann - Lundin, but Rudolf Spielmann didn't have a choice, since 4 Qd5 was the prescribed move in the thematic tournament 1932/33 and *had* to be played in any of the 30 games.

4...f6 5 exf6 Nxf6 6 Qb3



There is nothing wrong with 6 Qd1. Most theoreticians preferred the text move; however, because the queen b3 attacks b7 and hampers Black's development (at least it seems so).

6...d5

The point of Black's set-up now is 7 Nc3 Bd7! (Bertazzo 1981).

Unimpressed by White's Qb3, Black calmly continues his development.

Sharp variations arise, like 8 Nxd5 Nxd5 9 Qxd5 Nb4 10 Qb3 Qe4!, or 8 Nb5 0-0-0 9 Bf4 a6 10 Nxc7 Qb4+, or 8 Bg5 Na5!?, or finally 8 Qxb7 Rb8 9 Qxc7 Qc5. But then Joachim Schmidt-Brauns (Jena/Germany) found another plan, which seemed terribly strong:

7 Bg5! Bd7

To escape this variation, I even studied the wild experiment 7...a5?!, to pose the opponent unusual problems. Black gains space at the queenside, in some lines a piece can occupy the b4-square:

(a) 8 Nc3 a4! 9 Qb5 (9 Nxa4? Qb4+ 10 Nc3 d4 -/+) Ra5 10 Qd3 Nb4 11 Qd2 d4 12 Nb1 Qe4 13 Na3 Rd5 or Nc6, about =.

(b) 8 Bxf6 Qxf6 9 Nc3 a4 10 Nxa4 (10 Qxd5 Bb4 =) Rxa4 11 Qxa4 Bb4+ 12 Nd2 Qxb2 =+.

(c) 8 a4 is a logical response: White wants to keep the queen on b3. 8...Nb4! 9 e3 (9 Na3 Bf5 also seems playable) 9...Qe4 10 Bd3 Nxd3+

11 cxd3 (or 11 Qxd3 Bb4+ 12 Nc3 0-0) 11...Bb4+ 12 Nbd2 Qe6 13 0-0 0-0 =. Although White has an extra pawn, Black can be satisfied. In fact, I'd prefer to play the position with Black.

(d) 8 a3 a4

(d1) 9 Qc3 Ra5! 10 e3 (10 Bxf6 gxf6 11 e3 Bg7, followed by f5, =) 10...d4!, with some attractive variations:



(d1a) 11 Qd2 Rxc5!! 12 Nxc5 Ng4 13 e4 Qc5 14 Nf3 Bd6 15 c3 Bf4! 16. Qc2 Be6 17 Bd3 Bb3 18 Qe2 0-0 = 19 0-0 Nge5! 20 Ne1 Be6 21 h3 dxc3 etc. A dangerous position for White.

(d1b) 11 Bxf6! dxc3 12 Bxe7 cxb2 13 Ra2 Bxe7 14 Rxb2 0-0!. Black should be able to defend, because it is difficult for White to coordinate his pieces. For example, 15 Bc4+

Kh8 16 Rb5 Rf5! 17 Rxf5 Bxf5 18 Bd3 Bxd3 19 cxd3 Rb5 [Oder] 15 h3 b6 16 Bb5 Na7 17 Bc4+ Kh8 18 Ke2 Bb7 19 Rd1 h6 (or g6). Black's pieces are rather active, and there are threats of Rc5 or Raf5. In the coming ending, White always has to keep an eye on the breakthrough b5-b4.

(d2) 9 Qd3! is best and more or less refutes Black's idea. 9...Ne5 (9...Be6 10 Nc3 h6 11 Bxf6 Qxf6 12 0-0-0 +/-; 9...Qc5 10 Bxf6 gxf6 11 Nc3 d4 12 Nb5! Ne5 13 Nxe5 fxe5 14 e3 +/-) 10 Qd4 Nxf3+ 11 gxf3 Qc5 12 Bxf6 gxf6 13 Qxf6 Rg8 14 Qe5+ Kf7 15 Nc3 Bg7 16 Qh5+ Kf8 17 0-0-0 Bxc3 18 Rxd5 Qe7 19 bxc3 Qxa3+ 20 Kd2 Qe7 21 e3 Be6 22 Rd4 Rg5 23 Qh6+ +/-, White is clearly better. Black's remaining hope rests on promoting the a-pawn.

8 e3!

The point of the new concept by Joachim Schmidt-Brauns, Black isn't troubling himself with the unclear consequences of 8 Nc3 Na5.

8...0-0-0 9 Nc3 Be6

Not 9...Na5? 10 Bxf6 Nxb3 because of 11 Bxe7, attacking the Rd8 – an important difference to the line 8 Nc3 Na5.

10 Nd4 Nxd4 11 exd4



More than once I wrote in *Kaissiber* that this line might be a refutation of the Englund Gambit. Some years ago the position has been tested in a series of 21 computer games, arranged by Hans-Christian Lykke – the modern equivalent of the Stockholm tournament of 1932/33. White scored 78 percent. Nevertheless, the stranded white queen gives Black some compensation for the gambit pawn.

A possible continuation is: 11...Rd6 12 0-0-0 Rb6 13 Qa4 Kb8 14 f3 Qf7 15 Bf4?! (to prevent 15...Bd6 +=) 15...Ne4! 16 Bxc7+ Qxc7 17 fxe4 (17 Qe8+? Bc8 18 Nxd5 Nf6! 19 Nxc7 Nxe8 20 Nxe8 g6 =, winning the knight) 17...Be7 18 Nxd5 Bxd5 19 exd5 Rb4 20 Qa3 Rc8 21 Qg3 Bd6 22 Qd3 Rxd4 23 Qe2 Rb4 24 c4 b5 25 Kb1 bxc4 +=.

So the diagram position seems playable, but some of the old gambit spirit connected with 7...Bd7 has gone. For example, White can choose the solid 14 a3 Qf7 15 Bxf6 gxf6 +=, and still has a slight advantage.



Zygmunt Nasiolkowski, Lüdenscheid

Terrifying Main Lines II: The Grob Variation

1 d4 e5 2 dxe5 Nc6 3 Nf3 Qe7 4 Bf4!

In the majority of his games with the Englund Gambit Henry Grob had to defend against this line, so it seems fair to name it after him. The following sequence of moves was also strongly favoured by the

theoretician Ludek Pachman, and in the last eight years Eric Schiller claimed in his works [\[2\]](#), [\[5\]](#) and [\[9\]](#) that 4 Bf4 were a refutation of Black's strategy.

4...Qb4+

The alternatives are not attractive, but when the main line practically leads to a loss by force, they are looking a bit better:

(a) 4...f6?! 5 exf6 Nxf6 6 Nc3 d5 7 e3! +/- . The position reminds me on 6 Qd1 in the Stockholm Variation above, but with two extra moves for White.

(b) 4...d6!? 5 exd6 Qf6. A kind of Charlick (or Hartlaub) Variation of the Englund, which involves the somewhat dubious "exchange" of the d-pawn for White's e5-pawn. But what else can Black do?

(b1) 6 e3 Qxb2 7 Nbd2 Bxd6 8 Bxd6 cxd6 9 Rb1 looks risky, but apparently Black can survive: 9...Qc3 10 Rb3 Qa5 11 Rb5 Qc3 12 Bd3 Nf6 13 0-0 a6 (13...d5 14 Nb1 Qa1 15 c4!) 14 Rb3 Qc5 15 Ne4 Nxe4 16 Bxe4 0-0, and Black may be able to hold, e. g. 17 Qd3 Be6!.

(b2) 6 Qc1 Bxd6 7 Bxd6 Qxd6 8 Qd2 Qe7 9 e3 Nf6, for example 10 Bb5 Bg4. For his sacrificed pawn, Black hasn't much. But there are open files for his rooks and no immediate problems – with the exception of a missing pawn.

5 Bd2

After 5 Nc3!?, White has a difficult choice to make: 5...Qxb2 6 Bd2 transposes to the main line, while 5...Qxf4 apparently isn't much better: 6 Nd5 Qe4 7 Nxc7+ Kd8 8 Nxa8 Nb4 (8...b6 9 Qd3 Qxd3 10 exd3 Bb7 11 Nxb6 axb6 12 d4 etc., with a rook and three pawns for only two pieces) 9 Rc1 Nxa2 10 Rb1 Nb4 (so far my analysis in [\[3\]](#)) 11 c3 b6 12 cxb4 Bxb4+ 13 Nd2 Qxa8 14 e3 Qd5 15 Rc1 Ne7 16 Rc4 Nc6 17 f4 Bb7 18 e4 Qa5 +/-.

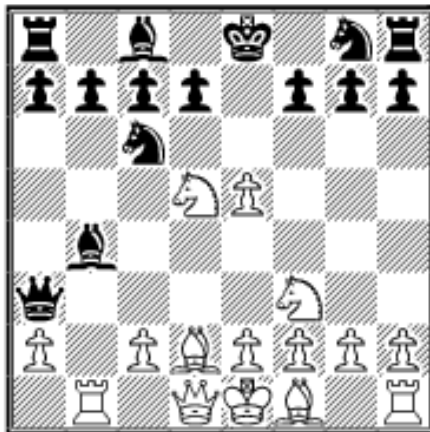
5...Qxb2

5...Qe7 6 Bc3 b6 7 e3 Bb7 8 Bd3 f6 9 exf6 Nxf6 +/- isn't impressive, but considering the consequences of the main line, this version of the Soller Gambit might still be the best escape route that Black has. But this isn't yet the whole truth, since White could reply 6 Bf4!? Qb4+ 7 Nc3, to reach the last note (5 Nc3!?, above) and force his opponent into the main line.

6 Nc3 Bb4

6...Nb4? 7 Nd4 c6 8 a4 +- is incorrect.

7 Rb1 Qa3 8 Nd5!



Even stronger than the traditional line 8 Rb3 Qa5 9 e4 Nge7 10 Bb5 (Eric Schiller [5]) a6 11 Bxc6! dxc6 12 0-0, which is also good for White.

8...Bxd2+

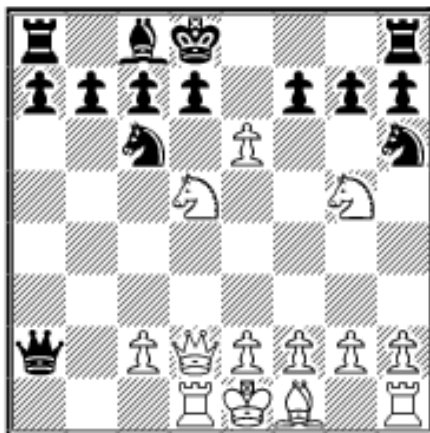
The “books” (including mine) recommended 8...Ba5, to lure White’s rook to b5: 9 Rb5 Bxd2+ (or 9...Kd8 10 Rxa5 Nxa5 11 Bb4

Qxa2 12 Ng5, and now either 12...Nh6 13 e6 d6 14 Nxc7 +- or 12...Nc6 13 Nxf7+ Ke8 14 Nxh8 Nxb4 15 Nxb4 Qa3 16 Nd3 Nh6 17 e3 Kf8 18 e6 +-) 10 Qxd2 Kd8 11 e4 h6 12 h4 b6 13 Bc4 Qf8. So far analysis by Grob [1], but this line is hopeless, as Joel Benjamin demonstrated in [5]: 14 Nf4 Nge7? 15 0-0 Ba6 16 e6 Kc8 17 exd7+ Kb7 18 Rc5!, and White wins.

9 Qxd2 Qxa2 10 Rd1 Kd8 11 Ng5!

With the white rook still on b1, now the standard treatment 11 Qg5+ Nge7 12 Qxg7? Qa5+ 13 c3 Nxd5 14 Qxh8+ Ke7 15 Rxd5 Qxd5 16 Qxh7 Qa5 only leads to a draw. In this sequence, another 12th move may be slightly more precise, but this doesn’t matter anymore, since the text move 11 Ng5! is so much stronger.

11...Nh6 12 e6!



12...d6 13 e7+ Kd7

Or 13...Nxe7 14 Nxc7! Kxc7? 15 Qxd6 mate.

14 Nxh7! (14 g3) 14...Nf5

If Black accepts the sacrifice, 14...Rxh7?, there follows a forced mate: 15 e8Q+! Kxe8 16 Nxc7+ Kf8 17 Qxd6+ Kg8 18 Qd8+ Nxd8 19 Rxd8 mate.

15 Nf8+ Ke8 16 Nxc7+ Kxe7 17 Nxa8 Kxf8 +/-.

Did I overlook any improvements for Black? If not, then 4 Bf4 d6 is going to become the new main line of the Englund Gambit. Not my problem, fortunately, since my opponents will surely continue to play 4 g3.

Thank you very much for several concrete reactions to last month's topic, the Scandinavian Defence. Next month I'll return to this battlefield.

Sources:

- [1] H. Grob: *Englund Gambit*, Zurich 1968
- [2] J. Benjamin, E. Schiller: *Unorthodox Openings*, London 1987
- [3] S. Bücker: *Englund-Gambit. Drei Gambits in einem*, Düsseldorf 1988
- [4] T. Harding: *Dynamic Black Defenses*, Dallas 1989, p. 117
- [5] J. Watson, E. Schiller: *The Big Book of Busts*, San Francisco 1995
- [6] T. Harding: *The Kibitzer*, www.chesscafe.com, column No. 4, 1996
- [7] S. Bücker: "Kampf ums Remis im Englund-Gambit" in *Kaissiber* 1 (1996), p. 4; p. 64
- [8] T. Harding: "Eat My Pawns!", in *Chess Mail* 5/1998, p. 10
- [9] E. Schiller: *Unorthodox Chess Openings*, New York 1998
- [10] S. Bücker: "Niederer Leben auf Planet Englund" in *Kaissiber* 10 (1999), p. 24
- [11] S. Bücker: "Zurechtgerückt" in *Kaissiber* 11 (1999), p. 5

Send your games or comments to redaktion@kaissiber.de



- [\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)
- [\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)
- [\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe.com\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

Copyright 2006 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

"The Chess Cafe®" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.