



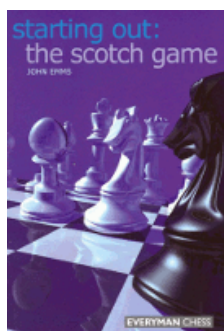
COLUMNISTS

The Openings Explained

Abby Marshall



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Scotch Four Knights Glek Variation [C26]

This month I cover a familiar opening with a twist: the Scotch Four Knights with 4.g3!

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6

Chess does not get much simpler than this. Both sides follow the principles of controlling the center and developing knights before bishops.

4.g3



[FEN "r1bqkb1r/pppp1ppp/2n2n2/4p3/4P3/2N2NP1/PPPP1P1P/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 0 4"]

The light-squared bishop can already be developed, so why would we play this? First of all, it can be a surprise to the opponent. Second of all, White has a greater possibility of playing f4 later, as in the Vienna game or King's Gambit. This variation is named for the Russian grandmaster Igor Glek who pioneered the variation.

4.Bc4?! is an elementary mistake. 4...Nxe4! The classic fork trick! 5.Nxe4 (5. Bxf7+ 0 Kxf7 0 6.Nxe4 When I first learned the fork trick, this variation made me nervous. However, the black king is perfectly safe and Black has complete control of the center. 6...d5 7.Nfg5+ Kg8 8.Qf3 Qd7 Black is better because of the bishop-pair, center control, and, after ...h6 and ...Kh7, the king has castled by hand, so to speak.) 5...d5.

4.Bb5 is a common move. Black plays classically with 4...Bc5 or adventurously with 4...Nd4!?. The latter is called Rubinstein's Variation after the famous Polish grandmaster.

4...Bc5

This is not generally considered the main line, but it is so natural I decided to focus on it in this article.

4...d5 is Black's most active response and also prods White's light squares, which have more holes after 4.g3. In some variations we transpose directly to the Vienna game. 5.exd5 White cannot let Black have two pawns in the center.

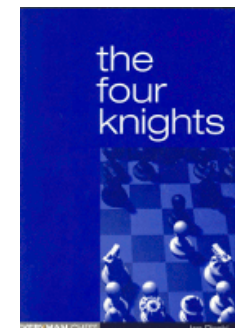
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[FEN "r1bqkb1r/ppp2ppp/2n2n2/3Pp3/8/2N2NP1/PPPP1P1P/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 0 5"]

A) 5...Nd4!? This is a gutsy move that tries to take over the initiative, since 4.g3 stalled development for White. 6.Bg2 White must not take the hanging e-pawn, which would open the e-file for Black's queen and lead to a scary situation. 6...Bg4 This is nothing to worry about. 7.h3 This move is fine, though maybe a bit slow. (7.0-0 may put more fight in the game. 7...e4 This looks strong but does not work well for Black. 8.Re1 Qe7 9.Nxe4 Nxe4 10.d3) 7...Bxf3 (7...Bh5 8.g4 Bg6 9.d3 White is comfortably developed and does not have to worry about the extended kingside because the bishop protects the king.) 8.Bxf3 Nxf3+ 9.Qxf3 Bb4 10.0-0 0-0 11.d3 This is not the most exciting chess, making 7.0-0 more attractive.

B) 5...Nxd5 6.Bg2 The threat is 7.Nxe5, exposing an attack from the bishop on g2 to the knight on d5. 6...Nde7 This is pretty popular. On an intuitive level I would be happy to see this if I were White. I am developing and my opponent is retreating, blocking in the f8-bishop. The e-pawn constricts White a bit. However look at the juicy diagonal of the g2-bishop. (6...Nxc3 This is okay, but concedes the center to some degree. 7.bxc3 White will play d4 in the near future and also has the open b-file. 7...Bd6 8.0-0 0-0 9.Rb1 Rb8 10.d4 The rook on b1 and the latent power of the bishop on g2 give White good play.; 6...Be6 This is the most natural move. We can reach this position via the Vienna game too. 7.0-0 Be7 8.Re1 Pressure down the e-file is a major theme in positions where Black plays ...d5. 8...Nxc3 9.bxc3 Bf6 10.Ba3 A great move that stops Black from castling kingside. 10...Qd7 11.Qb1!? The queenside is not so safe for Black!; 6...Nb6 We will look at this in the first illustrative game.) 7.0-0 g6 Black decides to get the f8-bishop out in a way to keep the knight on e7. White is much better developed than Black, so I suspect White is doing well. 8.d4! White strikes energetically in the center. 8...exd4 9.Nb5 Bg7 (9...a6 is just two slow. Black is still two moves away from castling. 10.Nbxd4 Bg7 11.Nxc6 Qxd1 12.Rxd1 Nxc6 13.Re1+ Be6 14.Ng5 White has the initiative) 10.Bf4 0-0 11.Nxc7 Rb8 12.Nb5 Ra8 13.Qd2 White has a pull because of Black's weak dark squares.



[FEN "r1bq1rk1/pp2npbp/2n3p1/1N6/3p1B2/5NP1/PPQP1PBP/R4RK1 b - - 0 13"]

4...Bb4 This is a sensible move. Since 4.Bb5 is a common move, it follows that Black doing the same makes sense. 5.Bg2 d6 (5...Bxc3 Trying to win a pawn does not work. 6.dxc3 Nxe4 7.Nxe5) 6.d3 Be6 (6...Bg4 7.h3 and g4 is not far behind.) 7.0-0 h6 8.Nh4 White eyes the f5-square and may play f4 in a few moves. Nd5 also becomes possible to get control over the light squares. 8...0-0 (8...d5 is premature. Black should castle first. 9.exd5 Nxd5 10.Nxd5 Bxd5 11.Qg4 I would not feel comfortable with my king in the center in this

position.) 9.Nd5 Bc5 10.Be3 White is going to try to make the d5- and f5-squares into strongholds and perhaps start a kingside attack.

4...g6 Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but it is not the best way of playing chess. 5.d4 White uses the extra tempo to start play in the center. 5...exd4 6.Nxd4 Bg7 7.Nde2



[FEN "r1bqk2r/pppp1pbp/2n2np1/8/4P3/2N3P1/PPPP1NP1P/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 0 7"]

This is, of course, not the only way to play this position. But it keeps the possibility of f4 open and the bishop is going to g2 anyways. 7...d6 8.Bg2 Bg4 9.h3 Be6 10.Bg5 Qd7 11.Qd2 Ne5 12.b3 h6 13.Be3 White is clearly going to castle queenside, and Black will probably do the same. After Nf4, White will be better. It is unclear what Black is going to do.

4...Nxe4 This crazy looking move actually makes more sense here than its White counterpart of 4.Nxe5. After White takes on e4, there is no retreat to g3. As well, Black is only after equality, whereas White (in 4.Nxe5) is after an advantage. So let's see how this plays out. 5.Nxe4 d5 6.Nc3 d4



[FEN "r1bqkb1r/ppp2ppp/2n5/4p3/3p4/2N2NP1/PPPP1P1P/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 7"]

A) 7.Nb1 I would never play this move, but if White is ambitious about refuting Black's idea, this would be the way to do it! 7...e4 8.Ng1 d3 9.c3 White wants to protect the d4-square, but what about the light squares? 9...Bc5 10.Qh5 Bb6 11.Qh4 Quiz: Is this a game between novices or 2300+ players? White's strategy is just asking for it, and then I saw the famous grandmaster Ivanov on the black side. 11...Qxh4 12.gxh4 0-0 13.b3 Ne5 14.Na3 Re8 15.Nc4 Nxc4 16.bxc4 Be6 17.Bg2 Bxc4 18.Nh3 c6 (18...Re6 is better) 19.0-0 White is now better, since there is development. 19...f5 1-0 Ivanov,A (2649)-Husari,S (2351)/Natick 2000.

B) 7.Bg2 White should not be ashamed to give the piece back. 7...dxc3 8.bxc3 Bd6 9.0-0 Maybe White is a little better because the c-pawn supports a d4-push. Still a very interesting try for Black.

5.Bg2

From here the bishop also looks at d5. White also aims for f4, which may loosen up the e-pawns and open the way for the bishop on g2.

5...d6

Black keeps open the idea of castling queenside.

5...0-0 6.d3 Re8 7.0-0 Nd4 Black adopts a confrontational approach to White's strategy. Glek works to avoid trades. (7...d6 8.Bg5 Be6 9.Nd5 We see again the idea of pressuring the light squares by playing Nd5. If the bishop takes on d5, the f5-square lacks a defender.) 8.h3 c6 9.Nh2 This move anticipates f4 and opens the diagonal for the g2-bishop. 9...h6 10.Na4 Bf8 11.f4 d5 and now after 12.fxe5 Rxe5 13.Be3 we have a messy game.

6.h3

White does not like ...Bg4, gumming up White's plans to retreat the knight and play f4.

6...a6



[FEN "r1bqk2r/1pp2ppp/p1np1n2/2b1p3/4P3/2N2NPP/PPPP1PB1/R1BQK2R w KQkq - 0 7"]

Black can now retreat the bishop to a7. We will look at 6...h6 in the second illustrative game, which gives rise to different structures than we see here.

7.d3 h6 8.0-0 Be6 9.Be3

This is a pretty typical position: both sides just develop their pieces.

9...Qd7

Black prepares to castle queenside.

10.Kh2

White defends the pawn on h3 from the black queen and bishop battery.

10...0-0-0

Black may play ...g5 to go after White's pawns on g3/h3.

10...g5 right away is unfavorable, because the black king is still in the center. 11.d4 exd4 12.Nxd4 0-0-0 13.Nxc6 bxc6 14.Bxc5 dxc5 15.Qe2 Tripled pawns are not always so bad, especially in this case when they control good central squares. Black's king is weak, so White is near winning here.

11.d4

This is a good break since, if Black's e-pawn captures on d4, it gives greater scope to the g2-bishop. White also gets a more space to maneuver.

11...exd4 12.Nxd4 Ne5 13.b3



[FEN "2kr3r/1ppq1pp1/p2pbn1p/2b1n3/3NP3/1PN1B1PP/P1P2PBK/R2Q1R2 b - - 0 13"]

The knight on d4 can always take on e6 if Black's kingside attack seems scary. It is a dynamic fight. White will bring the rooks to the center and aim eventually for a break, probably f4. Notice that White cannot play f4 right away because Nc4+ wins the bishop on e3.

In the following encounter, White uses d4- and f4-breaks to attack Black's king in the center.

Solovjov, Sergey (2414) – Yemelin, Vasily (2564)
St Petersburg-ch (1), 29.05.2007

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.g3 d5 5.exd5 Nxd5 6.Bg2 Nb6



[FEN "r1bqkb1r/ppp2ppp/1nn5/4p3/8/2N2NP1/PPPP1PBP/R1BQK2R w KQkq - 0 7"]

This is where we left off in the theory section. The knight on b6 is out of play. It does not have the flexibility of the knight on e7. Let's see how White handles this.

7.0-0

One of the appeals of this opening is that White castles quickly.

7...Bc5

7...Be7 is too passive. 8.Re1 f6 9.d4! This breaks down the brittle structure of the e5-f6-g7 pawn chain. 9...Nxd4 10.Nxd4 exd4 11.Nb5 Black's light squares are weak.

8.d4!

Dynamic play! White is castled, so he tries to open the position.

8...Bxd4

This is probably best.

8...exd4 9.Re1+ Be6 10.Ng5 is very dangerous for Black. 10...dxc3 11.Nxe6 Qxd1 12.Nxc7+ Kf8 (12...Kd8 13.Rxd1+ Kxc7 14.Bf4+ Kc8 15.Bh3+) 13.Rxd1 This is much better for White.

8...Nxd4 9.Nxe5.

9.Nxd4

Notice that the g2-bishop is now unleashed.

9...Nxd4

Black keeps the e-file closed.

9...Qxd4 10.Nb5 Qd8 11.Qxd8+ Kxd8 12.f4 White can continue opening up the center even after the queens are exchanged.

10.f4

White uses the f4-break to benefit from the fact that the black king is in the center.

10...Nc6



[FEN "r1bqk2r/ppp2ppp/1nn5/4p3/5P2/2N3P1/PPP3BP/R1BQ1RK1 w kq - 0 11"]

Black missteps under the pressure and lets White get the upper hand. 10...0-0 is better, when White can continue by taking the e-pawn.

11.Qxd8+

Although the queens come off, the position of the king in the center means things are not better for Black. This is still a middlegame.

11...Kxd8 12.Be3 f5?

Black probably wanted to close the f-file, but the price is too high. The c8-bishop has nowhere to go and the e-file is weak.

13.Rad1+ Bd7 14.fxe5

White's bishop is now immensely powerful.

14...Kc8 15.e6!?

White wants to open lines, but this is not really necessary. White can protect the e-pawn and focus on the d-file and d5-square.

15...Bxe6 16.Bf4



[FEN "r1k4r/ppp3pp/1nn1b3/5p2/5B2/2N3P1/PPP3BP/3R1RK1 b - - 0 16"]

The bishops create a very nice visual as they bear down on the diagonal.

16...Rd8

16...Re8 17.Nb5 Re7 18.Rfe1 is terrible for Black. Nothing is holding together.

17.Nb5

White has to work out the tactics. Once that is done, this move is very strong and Black could not do much to prevent it.

17...Bc4 18.Nxc7 Bxf1 19.Rxf1 g6

19...Rb8 20.Ne6 wins the exchange nonetheless.

20.Nxa8 Nxa8 21.Re1

The bishop-pair is much too strong for the two knights, especially with pawns on both sides of the board, which favors the long-range bishops.

21...Nc7 22.c4



[FEN "2kr4/ppn4p/2n3p1/5p2/2P2B2/6P1/PP4BP/4R1K1 b - - 0 22"]

White begins expanding where he has a pawn majority.

22...Re8 23.Rxe8+ Nxe8 24.Kf2 Nb4 25.Ke2 Nxa2 26.Bd2

With the knight out of play White won handily.

26...Nf6 27.Kd1 b6 28.b4 Ng4 29.b5 f4 30.Bh3 h5 31.gxf4 Kb7 32.Bxg4 hxg4 33.Kc2 1-0

This was a very nice game by Solovjov. Two of the key pawn breaks were present in this game.

The next fairly short game illustrates a new structure and old concepts.

Rabelo Gil, Eddy (2330) – Pujols, Carlos (2330)

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.g3 Bc5 5.Bg2 d6 6.h3 h6



[FEN "r1bqk2r/ppp2pp1/2np1n1p/2b1p3/4P3/2N2NPP/PPPP1PB1/R1BQK2R w KQkq - 0 7"]

This is where we left off in the theory section. White manages to snag the c5-bishop and quickly destroy Black's structure.

7.d3

7.Na4? Bxf2+! 8.Kxf2 Nxe4+ and Black picks up the g-pawn as well.

7...Be6

7...a6 is the most accurate. We also see this in the Italian game with 3.Bc4 and 4.d3: Black puts pawns on h6, d6, and a6 to restrict White's movement and allow the bishop to fall back to a7.

8.Na4

White wants the bishop-pair.

8...Qd7

Black should probably just castle kingside here. The queenside gets a little messy for Black now.

9.Nxc5 dxc5

This is an interesting structure. Black has doubled pawns, but the d-file is open and the center is firmly under control by both sides.

10.Be3 b6

10...Qd6 11.0-0 0-0 is more typical of this structure. It is about even here.

11.Qd2

White plays this not to castle queenside, but to get at Black's king on the queenside. The black king quickly runs into trouble.

11...0-0-0?! 12.Qc3 Qd6

Black defends the e-pawn.

13.Nd2

White starts moving to the queenside and uncovering the bishop on g2.

13...Nd7

13...Nd4 is more active. 14.a4 a5 15.Nc4 Bxc4 16.Qxc4 Kb7 The bishop-pair makes White a little better.

14.a3

White is planning b4.

14...Kb7 15.f4!?



[FEN "3r3r/pkpn1pp1/1pnqb2p/2p1p3/4PP2/P1QPB1PP/1PPN2B1/R3K2R b KQ - 0 15"]

This is a good punch. Black has been so focused on the queenside that the kingside is abandoned. I wish White were castled, but I like the play on both sides of the board.

15...f6 16.Nc4 Qe7 17.Rb1?!

17.0-0-0 It is easy for Black to open the kingside, so White should get safe and expand in the center later.

17...a5

17...exf4! 18.gxf4 g5 was Black's best chance to obtain counterplay. The white king is not very safe.

18.0-0

This is just a mistake. Black should not line up the queen on the file of the black rook.

18...Qf7? 19.fxe5 Nd4?

This knight was one of the sole protectors of the king.

19...Ndx5 20.Nxe5 Nxe5 21.b4 White is wreaking havoc on the king.

20.Bxd4 cxd4 21.Qxd4 Bxc4 22.exf6 1-0

Perhaps Black caved under the pressure. White's play shows the f4-break, and the idea of Na4 and Qc3 as it relates to the structure after the black knight captures on c5.

Lessons Learned

- Learn the typical pawn breaks: d4, which occurs in many king-pawn openings, and f4. These breaks open the position for the bishop on g2.
- White usually castles before Black. We have seen a couple games where White goes after the uncastled black king. The e-file is a typical avenue for getting at the king in the center and attacking the e-pawn.
- The light squares d5 (supported by the bishop on g2!) and f5 are also important. White can put knights on those squares to weaken Black's light squares.

Bibliography

- ChessPublishing.com

Practitioners

- Igor Glek has won more than 100 international events and was once number twelve in the world. He is a prolific contributor to opening theory and has trained many young chess players.

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