

Larry Kaufman

Sabotage the Grünfeld

A Cutting-Edge Repertoire for White Based on 3.f3

New In Chess 2014

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Introduction

This book is about the position arising after the opening moves 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3. It is sometimes called 'Alekhine's Anti-Grünfeld' due to the critical role played in its early days by then World Champion Alexander Alekhine, and to the motivation of White's 3.f3 move to avoid a proper Grünfeld Indian Defense, which would arise after the natural 3.♘c3 d5. Although a full White repertoire is part of this book, it also includes coverage of major non-repertoire lines so that a Black repertoire can also be derived from it. Explanations are aimed at club level players, but the actual analysis is intended to be suitable even for grandmasters.



The idea of the weird-looking 3.f3 (weird because the g1-knight usually goes there) is to provoke 3...d5 by threatening to play 4.e4, at a time when White's knight is not yet on c3. Then the Exchange Variation of the Grünfeld is more effective since Black cannot swap off his attacked knight on d5. The counter-argument is that White has paid a price for this, in the sense that f2-f3 is not as useful a move in general as ♘f3 would have been. However it is still quite useful, as it goes well with queenside castling and a kingside attack similar to the Yugoslav Attack against the Dragon Sicilian or the Sämisch King's Indian, into which play often transposes.

The move 3.f3 does have some other drawbacks. Instead of playing Grünfeld-style (3...d5), Black can target the dark squares weakened by f2-f3 with moves like 3...e5, 3...c5, and 3...♘c6, the move chosen for the Black repertoire in *The Kaufman Repertoire For Black and White* (KRBW), my last book. Black can also just choose the King's Indian, content with the fact that White is virtually forced to choose the Sämisch Variation against it, which may not be his best option.

This book might seem an odd choice for an author who just enthusiastically recommended the Grünfeld for Black in KRBW. But I am always keen to try to prove White's advantage in chess, and when I realized the strength of the move 3.f3 I felt that it deserved a book of its own. I expected this to be the only book in the current century devoted to this position, but a similar book by grandmaster Svetushkin came out first. While we agree more often than not, I point out the many places where I could not agree with him after doing further analysis. Although we are both grandmasters, Svetushkin is considerably higher rated than I am, but on the other hand I probably have much better computer hardware and software than he is likely to have used. These days this is very important.

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So what is my verdict on 3.f3 from a theoretical standpoint? In my view, it is extremely difficult to demonstrate any meaningful advantage against the Grünfeld, but the 3.f3 d5 neo-Grünfeld does seem to give White his normal opening edge. I think this is also true of the alternative third moves other than 3...♗g7 (or 3...d6 first), the King's Indian. Against the King's Indian, I don't think that the Sämisch is White's best option, but I do think it suffices for a normal opening edge. So White is giving up something against the King's Indian to get something against the Grünfeld. Since the Grünfeld has a much better theoretical reputation than the King's Indian, White has more latitude as to what to play in the second case. To summarize, 3.f3 seems to give White his normal slight plus whatever Black plays, whereas the usual 3.♘c3 fails to do so against 3...d5!. If all this is true, then 3.f3 may simply be 'the best move'! So the move 3.f3 is suitable to use at every opportunity, but is especially appropriate against opponents known to prefer the Grünfeld over the King's Indian.

The 3.f3 Anti-Grünfeld is by no means new, though it is newly popular. It was introduced in 1929 in games by Flohr and Nimzowitsch, but was quickly taken up by World Champion Alexander Alekhine in his title defense against Bogoljubow, and he played it many times over several years thereafter. It was named 'Alekhine's Anti-Grüenfeld Attack' in one book with the same name written by Alan I. Watson in 1996. It was also played by many other famous players of that era, including Fine, Yudovich, and Bondarevsky. However the majority of these early games transposed to the Sämisch, and in the majority of games featuring 3...d5 White refrained from queenside castling, which is now considered essential in this variation. Still, some of the early games do feature modern lines, and we trace their development in the historical section of this book.

This book attempts to cover all the reasonably important variations arising after 3.f3, but with the Sämisch King's Indian being given restricted coverage to avoid duplication with Schandorff's excellent coverage of it in his recent White repertoire book. However, he only covers lines with 6.♗e3 so I fully cover lines without it, as well as some improvements I have found on his lines. This is not strictly a repertoire book, but I do make clear which lines I recommend for a repertoire for White, as well as which ones are playable for Black (i.e. limit White to no more than a 'par' opening plus).

Virtually everything in this book has been checked by the two strongest engines at the time of writing, Houdini 3 and (at a later stage) 4, and Komodo, for at least 15 minutes per position, usually more. Both of these engines are much stronger than the corresponding versions that were used for my last book, so the quality of analysis is that much higher. This analysis is done using the 'IDeA' feature of 'Aquarium' so that hundreds of positions can be scheduled for analysis overnight (one core per position). With an eight core and a twelve core computer devoted to this task, you can see how it was possible to analyze deeply the many thousands of positions in this book in a reasonable time. Most writers just use the engines to check as they

write, so many positions will have less than a minute's scrutiny. My method insures that the quality of the analysis will be top-notch, at least to the extent that the computers can approach the truth. I use my own judgment as a grandmaster to decide which engine to believe when they disagree, as well as to identify the occasional instances where they both get things wrong, primarily in endgames and in severely blocked positions. Because I am a co-author of Komodo (together with the late Don Dailey), I am usually able to explain in words why it evaluates a position as it does. I tend to favor Komodo's analysis over Houdini both because I better understand where the scores are coming from, and because I believe that Komodo's evaluations are on average a bit more realistic in human terms. At the time of writing, Houdini is the stronger engine at blitz levels, while tests at levels averaging a couple minutes per move generally favor Komodo. Based on this trend, I believe that at levels like 15 minutes per move as used for this book, Komodo is likely stronger than Houdini, but no one tests at such long levels so I can't be certain of this. But regardless of which engine is objectively stronger, Komodo seems to 'like' the white side of most of the recommended lines in this book more than Houdini, correctly so in my opinion as the lines in question do score well for White in human practice.

As with my previous books, my choice of recommended lines is primarily objective, and hence suitable even for the elite grandmasters, but since the text is aimed at ordinary club players, I hope that this book will appeal to a wide range of players, including even grandmasters.

Another feature of the previous book which I retained for this one is that all references to material values are based on my own scale, which is pawn = 1, knight = 3.5, single bishop = 3.5, two bishops together = 7.5 (i.e. half a pawn bonus for the pair), rook = 5.25, and queen = 10. This is far more accurate and reliable than the traditional 1-3-3-5-9 count.

Most chess opening books focus on master/grandmaster games, with analysis by engines of the moves. In this book, I work partly from databases which include large numbers of games played by computers. Consequently I focus more on the analysis and less on the actual games, since the analysis done at 15 minutes per move will be of much higher quality than almost all of the actual games, which are played at much faster time limits than this. I make an effort to cite relevant games in the variations, but I'm not fanatical about it, I don't always try to track down which computer-recommended move is the actual novelty in a sideline, especially since many novelties are played in computer games anyway. Frankly, since most opening analysis used in games comes from computers, I don't think it's terribly interesting to know which grandmaster happened to get the first chance to use a computer-inspired novelty. In at least one case, an elite game featured a novelty followed for many moves by a variation I had already written up for this book!

Working on this book has been somewhat of a novel experience for me. In my previous books, which covered the full range of openings, I had to cut off analysis at some reasonable depth in order to be able to write such books. This time, I was

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able to analyze all the way into the endgame in many lines, since the range of coverage was so much narrower. I hope that I have come fairly close to the truth in at least most lines. The usual result of such deep analysis of a good White opening is that White should reach an endgame where he is the only one with winning chances, although Black should be able to hold. That is indeed the result shown here for many of the best Black defenses.

I also want to point out that I have been playing this 3.f3 line in tournaments since late 2012 myself (mostly as White, once as Black), and so I have some first-hand experience with the lines. So far I believe I have gotten a clear (maybe winning) advantage out of the opening in every White game, though I make too many mistakes at the board at age 65 so my actual results aren't that wonderful.

For those who are not familiar with me, my tournament successes now span more than half a century, from second place in the Maryland Junior Championship in 1961 to the World Open Senior Championship in 2013. I earned the grandmaster title by winning the World Senior Championship in 2008. I won the American Open Championship in 1966, became an international master in 1980, played in four U.S. Championships and two Student Olympiads, and have been Maryland champion eight times, including as recently as 2012. My son Raymond is an international master. This is my third chess book. I have been involved with computer chess (off and on) since 1967, when I worked on 'MacHack', the first computer to compete in human tournaments. More recently I worked on Rybka and now Komodo.

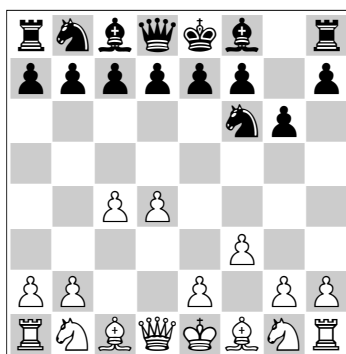
I would like to thank IM Eric Kislik for his help in analyzing many of the lines in this book, the late Don Dailey, my Komodo partner, for this engine without which the book just wouldn't be nearly as good, and of course all the players who played the games featured herein. The book includes relevant grandmaster games right up to February 2014.

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February 2014

Chapter 2

Third Move Offshoots

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3



Aside from the Neo-Grünfeld 3...d5 and the King's Indian 3...g6 (or 3...d6, which should transpose), Black has several interesting tries on move three, some of which are serious options adopted by elite players. We'll explore them in this chapter.

First we try the gambit move 3...e5, attributed to Adorjan and adopted by Leko. It aims at the elementary tactic 4.dxe5 ♘h5 5.e4? ♚h4+ followed by ...♘g3, winning the exchange. Of course White need not cooperate, with 5.♘h3 apparently being the best way to avoid this trick, in which case Black retains some but not full compensation for the pawn. See Game 2.1. The related 3...♘h5 is also covered there; it is no better.

Next we look at 3...♘c6, my recommendation for Black in KRBW. It is quite logical to attack d4 since White has played f2-f3, which strengthens the light squares but weakens the dark ones. Nevertheless White gains time kicking the knight around, and it seems that the line I recommended in KRBW is not quite equal for Black. Whether White should develop his knight to f3 or h3 (after playing f3-f4) is a tough choice; I currently lean towards f3. See Game 2.2. This line remains quite playable for Black, if not fully equal.

Now we come to the latest try, Vachier-Lagrave's 3...e6 (although it was actually first played in 1934!!). Black aims for ...d7-d5 intending to take back with the knight only if White plays 4.♘c3, and otherwise with the pawn. Rather a clever idea, I would say! 4.e4 d5 looks best, then White can choose between 5.e5 ♘h5 6.♙e3! (not 6.f4?, which is also examined in Game 2.3), or 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♘c3, Svidler's recent choice in Game 2.4. Both should give White a pull, but I currently

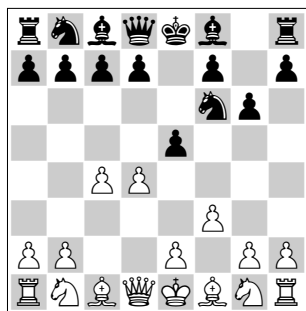
favor Svidler's line. Probably we'll see more games with 3...e6, it doesn't look too bad.

Finally we examine the Benoni move 3...c5. This seems to be just a transposition to the King's Indian Sämisch, and indeed after 4.d5 ♖g7 5.e4 d6 6.♟bc3 0-0 7.♞ge2 we reach the same position as in the 'Sämisch with ...c7-c5' chapter after 3...♞g7 4.e4 d6 5.♟c3 0-0 6.♞ge2 c5 7.d5. However there are some important subtleties here. With the King's Indian move order, White can choose 7.♞e3, which 3...c5 avoids. On the other hand, when Black commits to ...c7-c5 on move three, White can try to do without ♞ge2 and play ♞g5 instead, which is considered a rather good line against ...c7-c5 but slightly dubious when Black can play ...a7-a6 before ...c7-c5, so as to meet d4-d5 by ...b7-b5 a la Benko. This ♞g5 line is examined in Game 2.5.

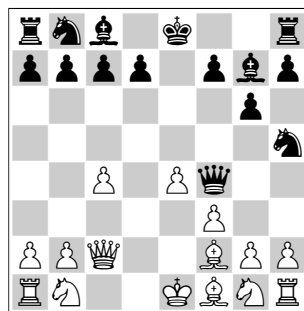
Furthermore, White can opt for bringing the king's knight to c3 instead of the queen's knight, as White did in the World Championship game Anand-Gelfand (Game 2.6). I think this is rather logical, because the e2-knight is something of a problem piece for White in the Sämisch. My conclusion is that while 3...c5 is quite playable, on balance I think it's objectively better just to play the King's Indian with 6...c5. However since the Sämisch without d4-d5 may be a bit drawish, I can recommend 3...c5 to the player who very much wants to avoid a draw.

In Game 2.7 we look at 4...b5 5.cxb5 a6, which is a version of the Benko Gambit. I think White's chances are better than in the Benko proper, if White plays as shown in Game 2.7. White plays the same plan as might have occurred in Game 2.6, namely posting the knights on a3 and (via e2) c3. This seems to deprive Black of much of his typical Benko counterplay. Consequently this cousin of the Benko Gambit is rarely seen or recommended.

(E60) **Game 2.1**
Grover, Sahar
Grandelius, Nils
 Chennai Wch-jr 2011 (10.7)
1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3 e5?!



A similar idea is 3...♞h5 4.e4 e5 5.♞e3 exd4 6.♞xd4 (6...♞xd4 ♞g7 7.♞xg7 ♞xg7 8.♟c3 0-0 9.♞d2 d6 10.0-0-0 ♟c6 11.♟b1± +0.29) 6...♞g7 7.♞d2 ♞h4+ 8.♞f2 ♞f4 9.♞c2±.



Analysis diagram

This logical but somewhat dubious gambit is credited to Adorjan. Leko beat Kramnik once with it.

Black's queen and knight are rather misplaced and will lose time retreating, for example 9...♞a6 10.♟c3 +0.37.

(E81) Game 4.3

Svidler, Peter
Grischuk, Alexander

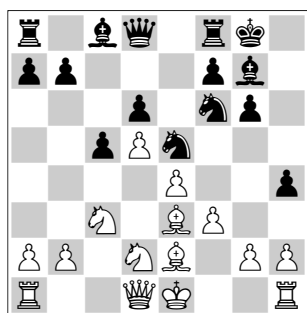
London ct 2013 (9.2)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 ♕g7
4.e4 d6 5.f3 0-0 6.♖e3 c5
7.♗ge2 ♗c6 8.d5 ♗e5 9.♗g3 h5
10.♖e2 h4 11.♗f1 e6 12.f4

The move 12.♗d2, recommended by Svetushkin, is the safe continuation if White fears the piece sacrifice of this game. However it seems Svetushkin missed one equalizing defense: 12...exd5 13.cxd5 and now:

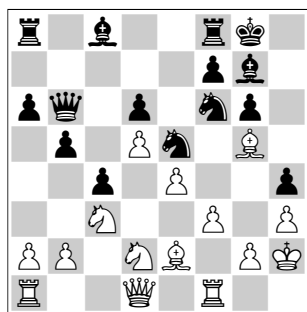


Peter Svidler



Analysis diagram

A1) 13...a6 14.0-0 b5 (14...h3 15.g4±)
15.h3 c4 16.♖g5 ♖b6+ 17.♗h2

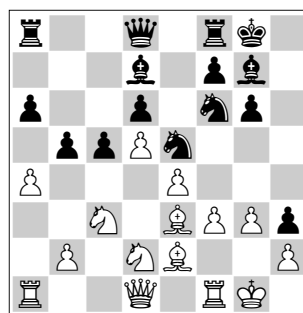


Analysis diagram

17...♗d3 (17...♗h5 18.f4± +0.44)
18.♖d3 cxd3 19.♖b1± +0.26;

A2) 13...h3! (Svetushkin does not consider this strong move) 14.g3

(White would rather play g2-g4 in order to make h3 a target, but in this precise position 14.g4? runs into 14...♖xg4!, which favors Black) 14...a6 15.a4 ♖d7 16.0-0 b5=.

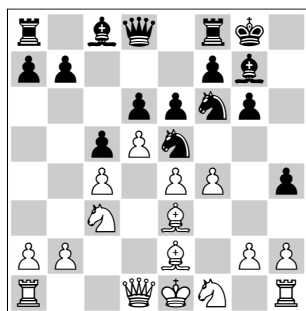


Analysis diagram

This version of Carlsen's gambit after 13...♖d7 (see line A3 below) is sound, because there will be no way to support a bishop on b5 by a2-a4;

A3) 13...♖d7?! 14.0-0 b5?!
15.♗xb5±. This was an unsound gambit played by Magnus Carlsen against Ruslan Ponomariov in Medias 2010. The point is that in this case White can support a bishop on b5 by a2-a4.

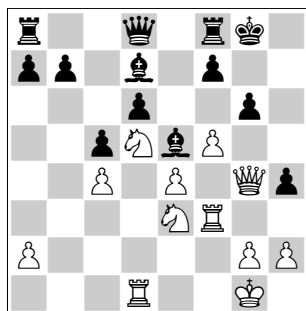
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12...xc4

Kasparov is reported to have found and endorsed this sacrifice many years ago, claiming it favored Black, but that was before powerful computers could prove him wrong.

A) 12...xc4 13.♙xg4 13...♘xg4 14.♚xg4 exd5 15.f5 d4 16.♘d5 dxe3 17.♘fxe3 ♙xb2 18.0-0 ♙e5 19.♖ad1 ♙d7 20.♗f3±

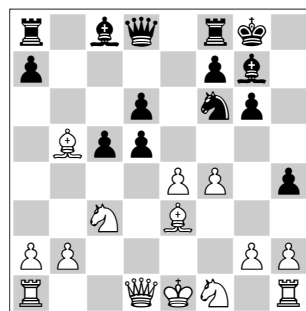


Analysis diagram

+0.60. White's attack and splendid development should count for more than Black's extra pawn and bishop pair;

B) Alternatively, after 12...h3 13.gxh3 ♘xc4 14.♙xc4 b5 15.♙xb5 exd5 16.exd5 ♖b8 17.♚d2± +0.80 Black can probably pick up a couple pawns for the piece, but it should not be enough.

13.♙xc4 b5 14.♙xb5 exd5

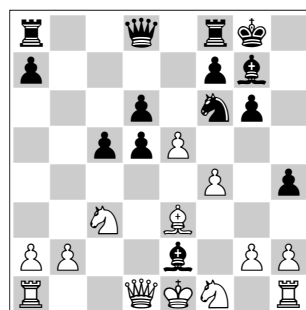


15.e5!

15.exd5 ♖b8 16.♚d2 ♙f5 17.♖c1 +0.56. Komodo considers this line as also in White's favor by half a pawn, but since White is a piece up this means that Black has tremendous (if not quite full) compensation for it. White surely made the right practical choice in the game.

15...dxe5

Svetushkin calls 15...g4 best and considers that it casts doubt on 12.f4. But is it so? 16.♙e2 ♙xe2



Analysis diagram

17.♚xe2! (Svetushkin considers only the obvious recapture with the knight (to avoid the pawn fork) and rightly concludes that it gives White nothing. But the queen recapture looks strong) 17...dxe5 18.fxe5 and now:

A) 18...♘d7 19.♘xd5 ♘xe5 20.♖d1±