

An Introduction to the Evans Gambit

Richard Westbrook, 2006.

The Evans Gambit originated in the 1820's and for decades struck terror in the hearts of defenders. It arises out of the Giuoco Piano and is an attempt to gain the initiative in the center at the cost of a pawn. After,

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5, the Evans Gambit begins with **4.b4!?** British sea captain W.D. Evans's idea is based on decoying the Bc5 from defense of d4 and owes some of its strength to the fact that Black's usual freeing move, ...d7-d5, is not feasible. White hopes to set up a strong pawn center immediately and often uses Ba3 to prevent Black from castling, or at least slow him down. Play usually continues

4... Bxb4

It doesn't make much sense to capture with the knight –

4... Nxb4
5.c3 Nc6
6.d4 exd4
7.0-0! ...

7.cxd4 Bb4+ 8.Bd2 is OK for White.

7... Nf6

7... dxc3
8.Bxf7+ Kxf7
9.Qd5+ Ke8
10.Qxc5 d6
11.Qxc3 Qf6
12.e5 (12.Qa3)

8.cxd4 Be7

For the price of a pawn, White has a "dream" position! See the last Sample Game.

5.c3 Ba5

Black sometimes plays 5...Bc5 but keeping the bishop on the a5-e1 diagonal is stronger.

6.d4 [or, 0-0] exd4?!

Black is tempting fate. This capture is not good; strong players will do something else. However, inexperienced players may. In any case, you need to know the attacking themes which are the foundation of the opening.

In the late 19th Century, Emanuel Lasker found a way to improve Black's chances. After 6...d6, if

A) 7.0-0!? Bb6! (Lasker's Defense)
8.dxe5 dxe5
9.Qxd8+!?!* Nxd8
10.Nxe5 Be6 leads to an ending where Black's pawn structure will be superior to White's.

*White should try

9.Qb3! Qf6
10.Bg5 Qg6
11.Bd5 Nge7
12.Bxe7 Kxe7
13.Bxc6 Qxc6
14.Nxe5 Qe6
15.Nc4. Unclear.

B) So instead of castling immediately, White should strike at Black's weaknesses before the center is cleared -

7.Qb3! Qd7
(7...Nxd4! is a rare, but good continuation.)

8.dxe5 Bb6

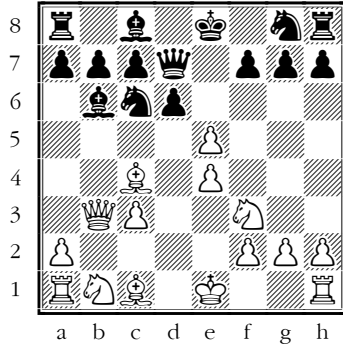
9.Nbd2** regains the pawn and keeps some attacking chances. - R Fine. For example,

9... Na5
10.Qc2 Nxc4
11.Nxc4 dxe5
12.Nfxe5 Qe6
13.Ba3 Ne7
14.Qa4+ Bd7
15.Nxd7 Qxd7
16.Nxb6 cxb6
17.Qxd7+ Kxd7
18.0-0-0+ +/-.

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White's advantages are kingside pawn majority; lead in development; B v. N.

**Instead of 9.Nbd2, White can try



9.Bb5!? a6
10.Ba4! Bc5
(to recapture with the bishop, threaten ...b5, and prevent Ba3.)
11.c4 (stops ...b5, but allows) dxe5
12.0-0 Nge7
13.Nxe5 Qd6
14.Nd3 Bd4
15.Nc3 0-0
16.Ba3 Qf6
with a fairly equal position.

** And, not the weak 9.exd6!? Na5.

Back to the main line after:
1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.b4!? Bxb4
5.c3 Ba5 6.d4 exd4?!

7.0-0 dxc3!?
8.Qb3 Qf6!? [...Qe7?]
9.e5 Qg6
10.Nxc3 Nge7

10... Bxc3!?
11.Qxc3 Nge7
12.Ng5 0-0
13.Bd3 Qh5
14.Bxh7+ Kh8
15.f4 d6
16.exd6 cxd6
17.Be4.

Now, the most popular move after 10.Nge7 is

11.Ne2 ...

Or, 11.Ba3 0-0
12.Rad1 Bxc3
13.Qxc3 Re8
14.Rfe1 a6
15.Nd4 Nf5
16.Nxf5 Qxf5
17.Bb2 Re7

If 17...Kh8 18.Qg3 Qg6 19.Qf4 -/+.

18.Qg3 ...

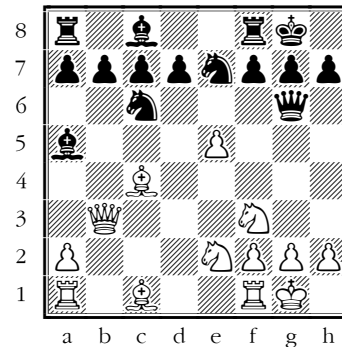
White's pressure continues; Black has a difficult time completing his development.-/+
Black could try

18... b5

Certainly not 18...d6??
19.exd6 Rxe1+
20.Rxe1 Ne5
21.Bxe5 +-

19.Bd5 Bb7
20.Be4 Qe6
21.Qh4 h6. =/+

11... 0-0 =/+.



White's activity gives him good chances.

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Sample Games

If 17...cxd6? 18.Rxb6+ as above.

Famous games with 8...Qe7 include:

18.Bxc7 Bc8
19.Qa4 ...

Steinitz, W - Gray

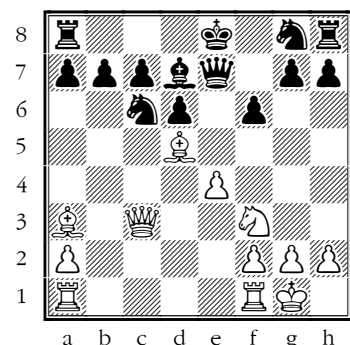
Great Britain (simul), 1872

1.e4 e5
2.Nf3 Nc6
3.Bc4 Bc5
4.b4 Bxb4
5.c3 Ba5
6.d4 exd4
7.0-0 dxc3
8.Qb3 Qe7?
9.Nxc3 Bxc3
10.Qxc3 f6
11.Ba3 d6
12.Bd5 Bd7

White threatens 20.Bxc6+; 20.Rb6; 20.Bxd8;
and 20.Bxb6, among other things!

19... Nge7
20.Rxb6! Bb7
21.Rfb1! Nxd5
22.exd5 Nd4
23.Qxe8 Rdx8
24.Rxb7 +-.

13... 0-0-0
14.Rab1 +- Be6?!
15.Rxb7! Kxb7



If 15...Bxd5 16.exd5 Kxb7 17.Qxc6+ wins easily.

16.Qxc6+ Kc8
17.Qa6+ Kd7
18.Bc6# 1-0.

13.Rfe1 ...

Even stronger is

13.Qb3! 0-0-0
14.Rab1 b6
15.Qc4 [Or, 15.Rfc1 Qe8 16.Qc4] Qe8
16.Qa6+ Kb8
17.Bxd6!! ...

White threatens

18.Rxb6+ axb6
19.Qxb6+ Ka8
20.Qa6+ Kb8
21.Rb1+ Nb4
22.Qb7#;

17... Ka8

Reuben Fine was one of the strongest players in the world during the late 1930's and 1940's. He was famous for his opening and endgame knowledge. He quit competitive chess to practice psychiatry and eventually became something of a mentor to Fischer.

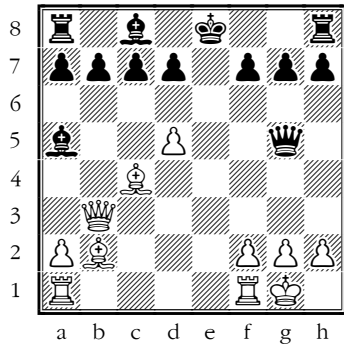
Fischer, R - Fine, R

New York, 1963

1.e4 e5
2.Nf3 Nc6
3.Bc4 Bc5
4.b4 Bxb4
5.c3 Ba5
6.d4 exd4
7.0-0 dxc3
8.Qb3 Qe7
9.Nxc3 Nf6
10.Nd5 Nxd5
11.exd5! Ne5

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12.Nxe5 Qxe5
 13.Bb2 ...



13... Qg5
 14.h4! ...

Even stronger is
 14.Qa3!! d6

The "natural" 14...Bb6 is even worse!

15.Rae1+! Kd8
 16.Bxg7 Rg8 and now
 17.h4 Bc5

If 17... Qxh4?
 18.Qg3!! Qe7
 19.Rxe7 +- Kxe7?
 20.Qe5+ Kd8
 21.Bf6#;

15.Qxa5 0-0
 White has won a piece and his attack continues!
 16.f4 Qg6
 17.Rae1 with threats against c7 and e7. +-.

14... Qxh4
 15.Bxg7 Rg8
 16.Rfe1+ Kd8

If 16...Bxe1 17.Rxe1+ Kd8 18.Qc3 winning with a variation on the theme to the game.

17.Qg3 1-0.

A virtually unknown game is one of mine from yesteryear -

Westbrook, Richard - Von Halle, Eric
 Oak Ridge Chess Club, 1968

1.e4 e5
 2.Nf3 Nc6
 3.Bc4 Bc5
 4.b4 Bxb4
 5.c3 Ba5
 6.d4 exd4
 7.0-0 dxc3
 8.Qb3 Qe7

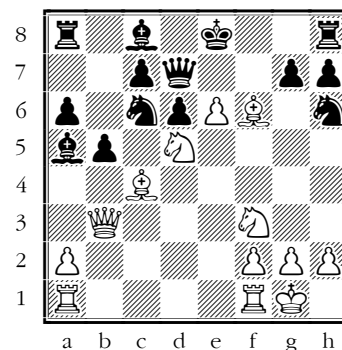
Better is 8... Qf6
 9.e5 ...

Or, 9.Bg5 Qg6
 10.Nxc3 Bxc3 (10...Nge7 11.e5)
 11.Qxc3 d6
 12.e5.

9... Qg6
 10.Nxc3 Nge7
 (10...Bxc3 11.Qxc3 Nge7 12.Ng5)

11.Ba3 0-0
 12.Rad1.

9.Nxc3 Nh6? [...d6]
 10.Ba3 d6
 11.Bb2 [Nd5!]f6?? [...0-0]
 12.Nd5 Qd7 [...Qd8]
 13.Bxf6 a6 [13...Ng4 +/-]
 14.e5! b5??
 (14...dxe5 15.Nxe5 Nxe5 16.Bxe5±)
 15.e6! ... 1-0.



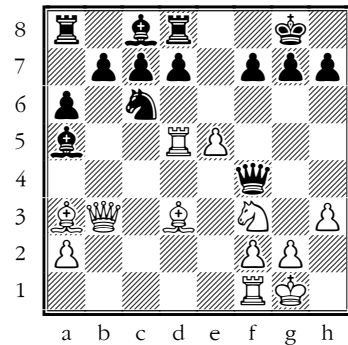
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Sample games with 8.Qf6:

Rainfray (2270) - Koulichenko (2150)

FRA-chT U18 (11), 1999

1.e4 e5
2.Nf3 Nc6
3.Bc4 Bc5
4.b4 Bxb4
5.c3 Ba5
6.d4 exd4
7.0-0 dxc3
8.Qb3 Qf6
9.e5 Qg6
10.Nxc3 Nge7
11.Ba3 0-0
12.Rad1 a6?!
13.Nd5 Nxd5
14.Rxd5 Rd8
15.Bd3 Qg4
16.h3 Qf4



17.g3!? ...

A strong, and hard-to-find!, move is 17.Rc1! ... which threatens 18.Rc4 Qh6 19.Rh4! winning the queen, as well as Rxc6 followed by Rxh5 winning two pieces for the rook.

17... Qh6
18.Rxc6 Qxc6
19.Rxa5 +-.

17... Qh6
18.Bc1 Qxh3
19.Ng5 Qg4

Stronger, but still losing, is

19... Qh5
20.Bxh7+ Kf8
21.e6 dxe6
22.Rxd8+ Nxd8
23.Qa3+ Ke8
24.Qxa5 ...

with moves such as 25.Qc3, 25.Qe5, and 25.Qxc7 in the air. +-.

20.Bxh7+ Kf8

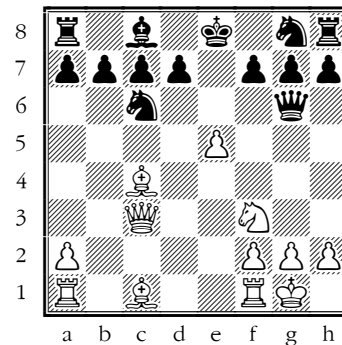
Better is 20...Kh8 21.Nxf7+ Kxh7 22.Nxd8 but White is still winning.

21.Rxa5 Nxa5
22.Qxf7# 1-0.

Bergell - Knorre, V

Berlin, 1865

1.e4 e5
2.Nf3 Nc6
3.Bc4 Bc5
4.b4 Bxb4
5.c3 Ba5
6.d4 exd4
7.0-0 dxc3
8.Qb3 Qf6
9.e5 Qg6
10.Nxc3 Bxc3
11.Qxc3 ...



11... b6

Better is 11... Nge7
12.Ng5 0-0

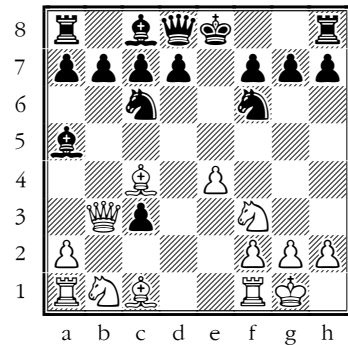
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Even stronger is
15.Ne4! Qe7
16.Ba3! ...
with the threats of Rad1 and Bxe7.

15... gxb6
16.Red1+ 1-0.

Priborsky, J - Haruda, M
Plzen op-B U18 Plzen (2), 1998

1.e4 e5
2.Nf3 Nc6
3.Bc4 Bc5
4.b4 Bxb4
5.c3 Ba5
6.d4 exd4
7.0-0 dxc3
8.Qb3 Nf6? [...Qf6]



9.Bxf7+!?

9.e5! Ne4

9... 0-0!
10.exf6 Qxf6
11.Bg5 Qf5
12.Nxc3 ...

White has three pawns for the piece and excellent piece play.

12... Nd4
13.Nxd4 Qxg5
14.Nf3 and the queen has to hide on d8.

9... Ng4?

10.Bxf7+ Kf8
11.Bg5 Ne7
12.Bh5 Nh6
13.Bxh6 d5
14.exd6 Ng6
15.Bg5 Qxd6
16.Nxc3 +-.

10.Bxf7+ Kf8
11.Ba3+ d6
12.Bd5 Nc5
13.Bxc5 dxc5
14.Qc4 +/-.

To meet the devastating threat of Qf4+, Black must play something like 14...Qd7.

9... Kf8
10.e5 Ne4
11.Qc4 Ng5? [...c2!]
12.Bxg5 Ne7
13.Qf4 ... 1-0.

Black resigned because White threatens mate in six, to which there is no satisfactory defense. The mate is

14.Bd5+ Nf5
15.Qxf5+ Qf6
16.exf6 gxf6
17.Qxf6+ Ke8
18.Qf7#.

Black is begging for trouble if he takes with the knight at move four. For example,

Khakimov, Timur - Khariuchi, N
RUS-ch U12 St Petersburg (5), 1999

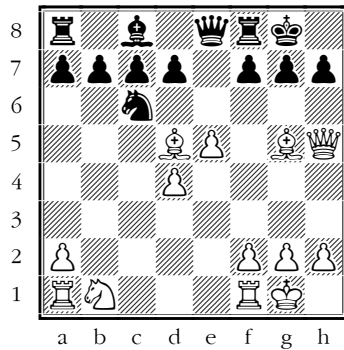
1.e4 e5
2.Nf3 Nc6
3.Bc4 Bc5
4.b4 Nxb4
5.c3 Nc6
6.0-0 Nf6
7.d4 exd4
8.cxd4 Be7
9.e5 Ne4
10.Bd5 ...

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Correct is

10.d5! Na5
 11.Qe1 Nxc4!?
 12.Qxe4 Nxe5 (12...Nb6? 13.d6!)
 White wins a piece.

10... **Ng5??** [10...f5!]
11.Nxg5 **Bxg5**
12.Qh5! **0-0**
13.Bxg5 **Qe8**



14.Be4

Much stronger is

14.Bf6! Ne7
 (14...gxf6?? 15.Be4!)
 15.Nc3 d6
 16.Rae1 Be6
 17.Bxb7 Rb8
 18.Bf3 ...
 White remains up a piece with a strong attack.
 18... gxf6?!
 19.Ne4!

14... **g6**
15.Qh6 **Nxe5**
16.Bf6 **Nf3+**
17.gxf3 **Qe7**
18.Qg7# **1-0.**