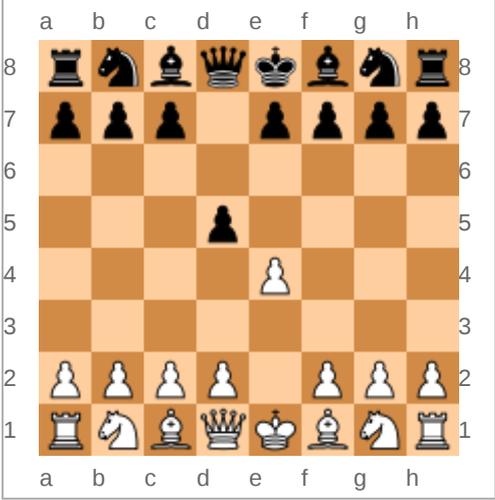


Scandinavian Defense

The **Scandinavian Defense** (or **Center Counter Defense**, or **Center Counter Game**) is a chess opening characterized by the moves:

- e4 d5

Scandinavian Defense

	
Moves	1.e4 d5
ECO	B01
Origin	Fictional game Castellvi vs. Vinyoles, Valencia 1475
Named after	Scandinavia
Parent	King's Pawn Game
Synonym(s)	Center Counter Defense Center Counter Game

Contents

- History**
 - Origin
 - 19th and early 20th centuries
 - Modern era
- Main line: 2.exd5**
 - 2...Qxd5
 - 3.Nc3
 - 3...Qa5
 - 3...Qd8
 - 3...Qd6
 - Other 3rd moves for Black
 - 3.d4
 - 3.Nf3
 - 2...Nf6
- Alternatives to 2.exd5**
- See also**
- References**

- 6 Further reading
- 7 External links

History

Origin

The Center Counter Defense is one of the oldest recorded openings, first recorded as being played between Francesc de Castellví and Narcís Vinyoles in Valencia in 1475 in what may be the first recorded game of modern chess, and being mentioned by Lucena in 1497.

19th and early 20th centuries

Analysis by Scandinavian masters in the late 19th century showed it is playable for Black; Ludvig Collijn played the opening with success. Although the Center Counter Defense has never enjoyed widespread popularity among top-flight players, Joseph Henry Blackburne and Jacques Mieses often played it, and greatly developed its theory in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was an occasional choice in this era for top players such as Dr. Siegbert Tarrasch, Rudolph Spielmann, and Dr. Savielly Tartakower.^[1] Alexander Alekhine used it to draw against World Champion Emanuel Lasker at St. Petersburg 1914, and future World Champion José Raúl Capablanca won twice with it at New York 1915.^{[2][3]}

Modern era

A regular user from the 1950s onwards was Yugoslav IM Nikola Karaklajić but a lengthy period of non-support by top players ended by the 1960s, when former world championship finalist David Bronstein and women's world champion Nona Gaprindashvili played it occasionally. Danish Grandmaster Bent Larsen, a four-time world championship candidate, played it occasionally from the 1960s onwards; he defeated World Champion Anatoly Karpov with it at Montreal 1979, spurring a rise in popularity. The popular name also began to switch from "Center Counter Defense" to "Scandinavian Defense" around this time. Danish Grandmaster Curt Hansen is also considered an expert in the opening.^[4] Australian Grandmaster Ian Rogers has adopted it frequently starting in the 1980s. In 1995, the Scandinavian Defense made its first appearance in a world chess championship match, in the 14th game of the PCA final at New York City. Viswanathan Anand as Black obtained an excellent position using the opening against Garry Kasparov, although Kasparov won the game.^[5]

During the sixth round of the 2014 Chess Olympiad at Tromsø, Magnus Carlsen chose the Scandinavian against Fabiano Caruana, and won; Carlsen used the opening again to draw with Caruana at the 2016 Chess Olympiad at Baku.^[6]

The opening is classified under code B01 in the Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings (ECO).

Main line: 2.exd5

White normally continues 2.exd5 when Black has two major continuations: 2...Qxd5 and 2...Nf6 (the **Marshall Gambit**). The rare move 2...c6 was played successfully by Joseph Blackburne on at least one occasion, but is thought to be unsound (after 3.dxc6), and is almost never seen in masterlevel play.^[7]

2...Qxd5

3.Nc3

After 2...Qxd5, the most commonly played move is 3.Nc3 because it attacks the queen with gain of tempo. Against 3.Nc3, Black has a few choices. It must be mentioned that although Black does lose a tempo with 2...Qxd5, White is going to have to lose a tempo as well to gain an attack. White will have to move the knight on c3 in order to push his pawn to c4 because Black will have pawns on c6 and e6. So, the infamous wasted tempo by Black gets returned later in the opening.

3...Qa5

This is considered the "classical" line, and is currently the most popular option. White can choose from multiple setups. A common line is 4.d4 c6 (or 4...e5) 5.Nf3 Nf6 6.Bc4 Bf5 (6...Bg4 is a different option. Even though Black has shown that ...Bf5 can be an excellent move, trading the bishop for the knight after 6...Bg4 7.h3 Bxf3 removes the knight, which if not removed, will find its way to e5 with excellent prospects.) 7.Bd2 e6. White has a few options, such as the aggressive 8.Qe2, or the quiet 8.0-0. Black's pawn structure (pawns on e6 and c6) resemble a Caro–Kann Defence structure, therefore many Caro–Kann players wishing to expand their repertoire have adopted this form of the Scandinavian. It's actually an "improved" Caro–Kann position because the light-squared bishop gets developed outside of the pawn structure.

Another setup after 3...Qa5 is to target the b7-pawn by fianchettoing the bishop on the h1–a8 diagonal, instead of placing it on the a2–g8 diagonal, by 4.g3 Nf6 5.Bg2 c6 6.Nf3 followed by 0-0, Rb1, and then exploiting the b7-pawn by b4–b5. The line with 4.g3 has been tried by Anand,^[8] Baadur Jobava,^[9] Gyula Sax,^[10] and Francisco Vallejo Pons^[11] among others.

A more speculative approach against 3...Qa5 is 4.b4?!, described by Nigel Davies as an "ancient gambit line".^[12] Grandmasters who have ventured this line as White include Lasker^{[13][14]} Capablanca,^[15] and Paul Keres.^[16] If Black plays correctly White should not have sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but it can be difficult to prove this over the board. Davies suggests delaying the gambit with 4.Nf3 Nf6 5.b4 Qxb4 6.a4!?, with the idea of Bc1–a3, as a possible way to rehabilitate this line.^[17]

3...Qd8

The retreat with 3...Qd8 was depicted in Castellvi–Vinyoles, and may be the oldest of all Scandinavian lines. Prior to the 20th century, it was often considered the main line, and was characterized as "best" by Howard Staunton in his *Chess-Player's Handbook*,^[18] but was gradually superseded by 3...Qa5. In the 1960s, 3...Qd8 experienced something of a revival after the move was played in a game by Bronstein against GM Andrija Fuderer in 1959, though Bronstein ultimately lost the game.^[19] Bronstein's game featured the older line 4.d4 Nf6, while other grandmasters, including Karl Robatsch, explored fianchetto systems with 4.d4 g6 and a later ...Ng8–h6.

The line's reputation suffered after a string of defeats, however, including two well-known miniatures won by Bobby Fischer against Robatsch in the 1962 Chess Olympiad (later published in *My 60 Memorable Games*) and William Addison in 1970. The variation with 4...g6 "has been under a cloud ever since [Fischer's] crushing win",^[20] but the 3...Qd8 variation as a whole remains playable, although it is now considered somewhat passive. It is played particularly by International Masters John Bartholomew and Daniel Lowinger, and by the Grandmasters David Garcia and Nikola Djukic.

3...Qd6

The move 3...Qd6 offers another way to play against 3.Nc3, and it has been growing in popularity in recent years. At first sight the move may look dubious, exposing the queen to a later Nb5 or Bf4, and for many years it was poorly regarded for this reason. Numerous grandmaster games have since shown 3...Qd6 to be quite playable, however, and it has been played many times in high-level chess since the mid-1990s. White players against this line have found an effective setup with d4, Nf3, g3, Bg2, 0-0, and a future Ne5 with a strong, active position. The variation was covered thoroughly in a 2002 book by Michael Melts.

Other 3rd moves for Black

3...Qe5+?! (the **Patzer Variation**) is regarded as bad for Black; for example after 4.Be2 c6 5.Nf3 Qc7 6.d4 White has a handy lead in development.

Likewise the rare 3...Qe6+?! is regarded as inferior. One idea is that after the natural interposition 4.Be2, Black plays 4...Qg6 attacking the g2-pawn. However, White will usually sacrifice this pawn by 5.Nf3 Qxg2 6.Rg1 Qh3 7.d4 with a massive lead in development. David Letterman played this line as Black in a televised game against Garry Kasparov,^[21] and was checkmated in 23 moves.

3.d4

Alternatives to 3.Nc3 include 3.d4, which can transpose into a variation of the Nimzowitsch Defense after 3...Nc6 (1.e4 Nc6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 Qxd5), or Black can play 3...e5, as well. After 3...Nc6 4.Nf3 Bg4 5.Be2 0-0-0 Black has better development to compensate for White's center after a future c4. Black may also respond to 3.d4 with 3...e5. After the usual 4.dxe5, Black most often plays the pawn sacrifice 4...Qxd1+ 5.Kxd1 Nc6. After White defends the pawn, Black follows up with ...Bg4+ and ...0-0-0, e.g. 6.Bb5 Bg4+ 7.f3 0-0-0+ and Black has enough compensation for the pawn, because he is better developed and White's king is stuck in the center. Less popular is 4...Qxe5, since the queen has moved twice in the opening and is in the center of the board, where White can attack it with gain of time (Nf3). However grandmasters such as Tiviakov have shown that it is not so easy to exploit the centralized queen.

3.Nf3

Another common response after 2...Qxd5 is the noncommittal 3.Nf3. After 3...Bg4 4.Be2 Nc6, White can transpose to main lines with 5.d4, but has other options, such as 5.0-0.

2...Nf6

The other main branch of the Scandinavian Defense is 2...Nf6. The idea is to delay capturing the d5-pawn for another move, avoiding the loss of time that Black incurs in the ...Qxd5 lines after 3.Nc3. Now White has several possibilities:

The **Modern Variation** is 3.d4. Grandmaster John Emms calls this the main line of the 2...Nf6 variations, saying that "3.d4 is the common choice for White...and it is easy to see why it is so popular."^[22] The idea behind the Modern Variation is to give back the pawn in order to achieve quick development. 3...Nxd5 is the most obvious reply, although 3...Qxd5 is sometimes seen. Black wins back the pawn, but White can gain some time by attacking the knight. White usually responds 4.c4, when the knight must move. The most common responses are:

- 4...Nb6, named by Ron Harman and IM Shaun Taulbut as the most active option!^[23]
- 4...Nf6, which Emms calls "slightly unusual, but certainly possible"^[24] GM Savielly Tartakower, an aficionado of unusual openings, discussing Black's options, stated "the soundest is 4...Nf6."^[26] This is sometimes called the **Marshall Retreat Variation**.
- 4...Nb4!?, the tricky **Kiel Variation**, described by Harman and Taulbut as "a speculative try!"^[26] Black is hoping for 5.Qa4+ N8c6 6.d5? b5! with a good game; however White gets a large advantage after 5.a3 N4c6 6.d5 Ne5 7.Nf3 (or 7.f4 Ng6 8.Bd3 e5 9.Qe2) or 5.Qa4+ N8c6 6.a3!, so the Kiel variation is seldom seen in practice.^[27]

White may also play 4.Nf3 Bg4 5.c4. Now 5...Nb6 6.c5! is a sharp line; Black should respond 6...N6d7!, rather than 6...Nd5? 7.Qb3, when Black resigned after 7...b6? 8.Ne5! in Timman-Bakkali, Nice Olympiad 1974, and 7...Bxf3 8.Qxb7! Ne3 9.Qxf3 Nc2+ 10.Kd1 Nxa1 11.Qxa8 also wins for White!^{[28][29]}

An important and recently popular alternative to 3...Nxd5 is 3...Bg4!?, the sharp **Portuguese Variation** or **Jadoul Variation**. In this line, Black gives up the d-pawn in order to achieve rapid development and piece activity; the resulting play is often similar to the Icelandic Gambit. The normal continuation is 4.f3 Bf5 5.Bb5+ Nbd7 6.c4. Occasionally seen is 3...g6, the **Richter Variation**, which was played on occasion by IM Kurt Richter in the 1930s.^[30]

Another common response is 3.c4, with which White attempts to retain the extra pawn, at the cost of the inactivity of the light-square bishop. Now Black can play 3...c6, the **Scandinavian Gambit**,^[31] which is the most common move. The line 4.dxc6? Nxc6, described by Emms as "a miserly pawn grab",^[32] gives Black too much central control and development. Furthermore, after 4.dxc6 Black can play 4...e5, the **Ross Gambit**,^[33] which after 5.cxb7 Bxb7 resembles a reversed Danish Gambit. Most common after 3...c6

is 4.d4 cxd5, transposing to the Panov–Botvinnik Attack of the Caro–Kann Defence 3...e6! is the sharp **Icelandic Gambit** or **Palme Gambit**, invented by Icelandic masters who looked for an alternative to the more common 3...c6. Black sacrifices a pawn to achieve rapid development. The most critical line in this double-edged variation is thought to be 4.dxe6 Bxe6 5.Nf3.^[34]

A third major alternative is 3.Bb5+. The most popular reply is 3...Bd7, though the rarer 3...Nbd7 is gaining more attention recently. After 3.Bb5+ Bd7, White has several options. The most obvious is 4.Bxd7+, after which White can play to keep the extra pawn with 4...Qxd7 5.c4. The historical main line is 4.Bc4, which can lead to very sharp play after 4...Bg4 5.f3 Bf5 6.Nc3, or 4...b5 5.Bb3 a5. Finally, 4.Be2 has recently become more popular, attempting to exploit the misplaced bishop on d7 after 4...Nxd5.

White's 3.Nf3 is a flexible move that, depending on Black's reply, can transpose into lines with ...Nxd5 or ...Qxd5.

White's 3.Nc3 transposes into a line of Alekhine's Defence normally seen after 1.e4 Nf6 2.Nc3 d5 3.exd5, and generally thought to be equal.^[35] After 3...Nxd5 4.Bc4, the most common reply is 4...Nb6, although 4...Nxc3, 4...c6, and 4...e6 are also viable continuations.

Alternatives to 2.exd5

There are several ways for White to avoid the main lines of the Scandinavian Defense. One option is to defer or avoid the exchange of e-pawn for d-pawn. This is most often done by 2.Nc3, which transposes into the Dunst Opening after 2...d4 or 2...dxe4.

If instead 2.e5?! is played, Black can play 2...c5, develop the queen's bishop, and play ...e7–e6, reaching a favorable French Defense setup, since here unlike in the standard French Black's light-squared bishop is not shut in on c8. This line can also be compared to the Caro–Kann variation 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5!?!; since in this Scandinavian line Black has played ...c5 in one rather than two moves, he has a comfortable position.^[36] However, this line often leads away from open positions towards blocked center positions, likely not Black's original intent.

White can also gambit the e-pawn, most frequently by 2.d4, transposing into the Blackmar–Diemer Gambit. Other gambits such as 2.Nf3?! (the **Tennison Gambit**) are seldom seen.

In general, none of these sidelines are believed to offer White more than equality, and the overwhelming majority of masters opt for 2.exd5 when facing the Scandinavian.^{[36][37]}

The Scandinavian is thus arguably Black's most "forcing" defense to 1.e4, restricting White to a relatively small number of options. This has helped to make the Scandinavian Defense fairly popular among club-level players, though it remains relatively rare at the grandmaster level.

See also

- List of chess openings
- List of chess openings named after places
- Tennison Gambit, 1.e4 d5 2.Nf3

References

1. Chessgames.com, game collection file for ECO code B01
2. Plaskett, James (2004). *The Scandinavian Defence* London: Batsford. pp. 118–21. ISBN 0-7134-8911-1
3. Grefe, John and Silman, Jeremy (1983). *Center Counter*. Coraopolis, Pennsylvania: Chess Enterprises, Inc. p. 72. ISBN 0-931462-22-3
4. "Curt Hansen" (<http://www.chessbase-shop.com/en/author/18>). ChessBase GmbH Retrieved 15 December 2013.
5. Kasparov vs. Anand, 1995 (<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1018629>) Chessgames.com
6. <http://www.chessgames.com> Caruana vs. Carlsen game files

7. Harman, Ron & Taulbut, Shaun (1993). *Winning with the Scandinavian* New York: Henry Holt. p. 28. [ISBN 0-8050-2935-4](#).
8. Viswanathan Anand vs. Vassily Ivanchuk, 1994(<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1018511>) [Chessgames.com](#)
9. Baadur Jobava vs. Sarkhan Gashimov 2010 (<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1603962>) [Chessgames.com](#)
10. Gyula Sax vs. Einar J Gausel, 2001(<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1216830>) [Chessgames.com](#)
11. Francisco Vallejo Pons vs. Etienne Bacrot, 1994 (<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1022556>) [Chessgames.com](#)
12. Davies, Nigel (2007). *The Gambiteer I*. London: Everyman Chess. p. 144. ISBN 978-1-85744-516-9
13. Emanuel Lasker vs. A G Berg, 1905(<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1380120>) [Chessgames.com](#)
14. Emanuel Lasker vs. Fortuijn, 1908(<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1380159>) [Chessgames.com](#)
15. Jose Raul Capablanca vs. Rene Portela, 1913(<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1265571>) [Chessgames.com](#)
16. Paul Keres vs. Feliks Kibbermann, 1935(<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1071678>) [Chessgames.com](#)
17. Davies, pp. 144–48.
18. Staunton, Howard (1864). "The chess-player's handbook: A popular and scientific introduction to the game of chess" (<https://books.google.com/books?id=fd8CAAAAXAAJ>). London: Henry G. Bohn: 377.
19. Harman and Taulbut, p.68
20. Emms, John (2004). *The Scandinavian, 2nd ed* London: Everyman Chess. p. 97. ISBN 1-85744-375-6
21. "Garry Kasparov vs. David Letterman, 1990"(<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1070486>) [Chessgames.com](#)
22. Emms, p. 110.
23. Harman and Taulbut, p. 127
24. Emms, p. 111.
25. *500 Master Games of Chess* by Savielly Tartakower and Julius du Mont, G Bell & Sons, London, 1952, p. 413
26. Harman and Taulbut, p. 125
27. Grefe and Silman, pp. 73–74.
28. Plaskett, p. 119.
29. Grefe and Silman, p. 78.
30. Harman and Taulbut, p. 119.
31. <http://www.365chess.com/opening.php?m=7&n=866&ms=e4.d5.exd5.Nf6.c4.c6&ns=3.20.27.45.729.866>
32. Emms, p. 155.
33. <http://faithsaves.net/scandinavian-marshall-ross-gambit/>
34. Emms, p. 174.
35. Emms, p. 129.
36. Emms, p. 88.
37. "Chessgames.com Chess Opening Explorer (statistics after 1.e4 d5)"(<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/explorer?mode=287531&move=2&moves=e4.d5&nodes=21720.287531>) [Chessgames.com](#)

Further reading

- Anderson, Selby (1997). *The Center Counter Defense: The Portuguese Variation*. Pickard & Son. ISBN 1-886846-10-3.
- Melts, Michael (2002). *Scandinavian Defense: The Dynamic 3...Qd6* Russell Enterprises. ISBN 978-1-888690-11-8
- Plaskett, James (2004). *The Scandinavian Defense* Batsford. ISBN 0-7134-8911-1
- Martin, Andrew (2004). *The Essential Center Counter*. Thinker's Press. ISBN 1-888710-22-5.
- Melts, Michael (2009). *Scandinavian Defense: The Dynamic 3...Qd6 2nd Ed* Russell Enterprises. ISBN 978-1-888690-55-2

- Houska, Jovanka (2009). *Starting Out: The Scandinavian Everyman Chess*. ISBN 978-1-85744-582-4
- Bauer, Christian (2010). *Play the Scandinavian Quality Chess*. ISBN 978-1-906552-55-8
- Wahls, Matthias, et. al. (2011). *The Modern Scandinavian New in Chess*. ISBN 978-9-056913-44-1
- Lakdawala, Cyrus (2013). *The Scandinavian: Move by Move Everyman Chess*. ISBN 978-1-78194-009-9
- Lowinger, Daniel (2013). *The 3...Qd8 Scandinavian: Simple and Strong* Russell Enterprises. ISBN 978-1-936490-76-9.
- Kasparov, Sergey (2015). *Understanding the Scandinavian Gambit*. ISBN 978-1-910093-65-8
- Smerdon, David (2015). *Smerdon's Scandinavian Everyman Chess*. ISBN 978-1-78194-294-9
- Kotronias, Vassilios (2016). *The Safest Scandinavian Chess Stars Publishing* ISBN 9786197188066

External links

- [Overview of the opening](#)
 - [Opening Report: 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 \(27531 games\)](#)
-

Retrieved from ["https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Scandinavian_Defense&oldid=808701857"](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Scandinavian_Defense&oldid=808701857)

This page was last edited on 4 November 2017, at 15:53.

Text is available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](#); additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the [Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.](#), a non-profit organization.