

2025 Menlo Park CC Championship

Round 3 Bulletin • Nov. 20, 2025



White: Troy
Black: Mititiuk
Petroff

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3

The best move for masters, but unsuitable for inexperienced players.

2... Nf6! 3. d4

3. Nxe5 is most common, after which I recommend not 3...d6, but 3...Nc6 or 3...Nxe4.

3... exd4

3...d5 is a Marshall specialty that maintains the symmetry and the tension. Then 4. dxe5 Nxe4 5. Bd3 Nc6 6. Nbd2 Nc5 7. Be2 Be7 happened this year at the Maharashtra GM Open and the Berkeley Chess Club.

4. e5 Ng8?

4... Ne4 5. Qxd4 (NM Craig Barnes, a Shorman student, experimented successfully with 5. c3 in 1977.) 5... d5 6. exd6 Nxd6 is typical.

5. Nxd4

Blessed with extra time after 4...Ng8?, this would be an ideal time to repeat Barnes' 5. c3, while 5. Qxd4 Nc6 6. Qe4 is an improved Center Game (where the black d-pawn is restrained from d5 by the discovered check, but in this position, the pawn can't freely move to d6, either).

5... Nc6 6. Bf4

The best way to handle an opponent's threat is to ignore it, if possible. 5...Nc6 is not a real threat: 6. Nc3 Nxe5? 7. Qe2 Qe7 8. Nd5 +-.

6... Bc5 7. Nxc6 bxc6

Neither capture is desirable. 7... dxc6 is a little better for developing the queenside, but 8. Qxd8+ Kxd8 is a won endgame for White, in theory.

8. Bc4

8. Qg4 is hard to handle. 8...Kf8 is clunky, 8...g6 is full of holes. I'd suggest letting the pawn and its neighbor go: 8. Qg4 Ne7 9. Qxg7 Rg8 10. Qxh7 d6.

8... d5

Black's back to equal, because White rejected aggressive moves at 5, 6, and 8.

9. exd6 cxd6 10. O-O Rb8?

If 8...d5 was good, then so is 10...d5. The pressure on b2 is an illusion, while the d6-pawn is pinned.

11. Bb3?

Again, ignore the threat. 11. Nd2, then White is far ahead on 11...Nf6 12. Re1+ or 11...Ne7 12. Ne4.

11...Rxb2?

11... Rxb2 loses, because 12. Re1+ and 12. Ne4 are still effective, and White receives the additional option of trapping the rook.

11... Qf6 12. Qf3 Ne7 13. Re1

Suddenly, the b8-rook is useful. 13...Rb4!, when 14. c4 stuffs the b3-bishop, while White's structure is ruined if the f4-bishop moves.

13... O-O 14. Nc3 Rb4

One move too late.

15. Ne4 Qxb2? 16. Nxc5 dxc5

White has many winning moves: 17. Be5, 17. Bd6, 17. a3.

17. Rxe7?? Qxa1+ 0-1

White: Swick

Black: Zelan Fang

Greco Countergambit

1. e4

Review: If I gave you the white pieces and two moves to start the game instead of just one, which two would they be? They would be the king and queen pawns two squares.

1... e5 2. Nf3

So why don't people play 2. d4 here? Because chess teachers are terrible, who think they're supposed to give Soviet Pioneer training to 100-rated kids. 2. Nf3 is a professional-quality move, not suitable for club players and students because Black has three good counterattacking moves:

2...Nf6, 2...d5, and 2...f5 — none are as effective against 2. d4 (the student should work this out).

2... f5!

Preaching 2...Nc6? is how bad chess teachers protect each other: Unsuitable moves for White, passive defensive moves for Black.

3. Nc3

A passive defensive move, like 2...Nc6.

3... fxe4

I'd rather play 3...Nf6 to renew ...fxe4 as a threat to win a pawn, and to give White another chance to play 4. exf5.

4. Nxe4

Why play 2. Nf3 then decline two chances to play Nf3xe5? Better and more consistent is 4. Nxe5, and Black oughtn't play 4... Nf6 because 5. Bc4 d5 6. Nxd5!.

4... Nf6

The idea behind 2...f5 is to wipe out the e4-pawn ahead of ...d7-d5, so play 4...d5 with at least equality (and the long-term potential for more, considering the pawn center).

5. Nxf6+ Qxf6 6. d4

There's only one example of this in the two databases in use, but why not? Good move!

6... e4

Attacking the knight is the only good try. If White plays 7. Bg5 easily, White gains a development lead and the initiative.

7. Qe2

Blocking the bishop is less comfortable than moving the knight. f1-bishop.

7... d5 8. Bg5 Qd6

White's untangling of the minor pieces is trickier if the black queen keeps the bishop in sight by 8...Qf5 or 8...Qg6.

9. O-O-O

9. Ne5 gets the knight off the hook.

9... Nc6

9... Be7! unpins the e4-pawn while hitting the g5-bishop. Black is well ahead on 10. Bxe7 exf3.

10. g3?

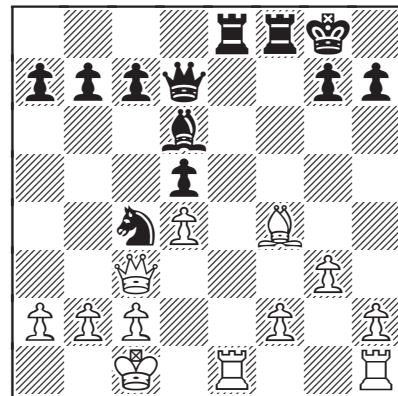
Instead of moving the knight to safety, White invites a pin.

10... Bg4 11. Bg2 Be7 12. Bf4 exf3 13. Qe3 Qd7

13... fxg2 14. Bxd6 gxh1=Q 15. Rxh1 cxd6 is resignable.

14. Bxf3 Bxf3 15. Qxf3 O-O 16. Qe3 Rae8 17. Qb3 Na5 18. Qc3 Nc4 19. Rde1 Bd6

Good move, leading to at least one exchange.



20. Bxd6 Nxd6

Black didn't want to help White develop the king rook by 20...Rxe1+ 21. Rxe1 Nxd6, but Black can't be deterred from ...Rf8-e8.

21. f4

White's idea is 21...Rxe1+ 22. Rxe1 Re8 23. Re5, after which 23...Rxe5 24. dxe5 creates some chances for counterplay. The problem is that e4 becomes an ideal post for the knight.

21... Ne4 22. Qf3 c6

With suitable center control, better development, and equal king safety — to go with the extra knight — Black must launch the a- and b-pawns to open files for the heavy pieces.

23. h4 Re7 24. Qg2 Rfe8

There's nothing wrong with this, but anything can happen if White's kingside attack lands before Black's opposite-wing attack has even begun.

25. c3

White's only chance is to continue pushing on the kingside, but Black's pieces cooperate well on 25. g4 Nf6 26. Rxe7 Rxe7 (Black is more nervous with 26... Qxe7 27. g5 Ne4 28. f5)) 27. g5 Qg4+.

0-1 in 52