

## Journey in the Dark

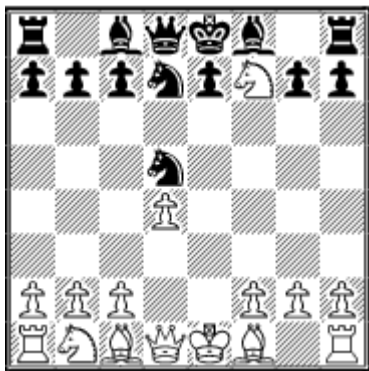
Who is the only world champion to have an opening named after him? If your answer is Alexander Alekhine, then you might be interested in a new, star move in the Alekhine Defence.

**Francis Cottegnie** from **Belgium** writes, "I'm a correspondence IM (two norms), and I have discovered a winning move in the Alekhine Defence. The existing variation can be deleted from the books!"

These are fighting words, so it is necessary to have a good look at the crucial correspondence game. It certainly seems to illuminate a sideline.

*Francis Cottegnie-Bruno Bortolin*, Correspondence 2007

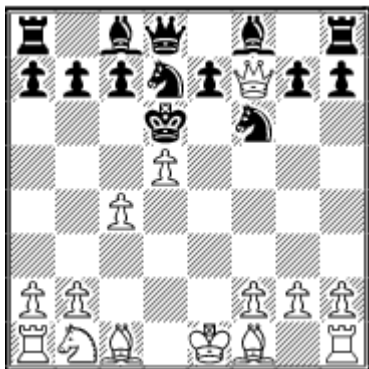
**1 e4 Nf6** The Alekhine still has some strong supporters who have tired of defending the Sicilian or Ruy Lopez. Arguably chief amongst them is Alexander Baburin, the Russian grandmaster who now resides in Southern Ireland. **2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 dxe5** This move was revived by Bent Larsen, but nowadays **5...g6** tends to be preferred. **5 Nxe5 Nd7 6 Nxf7!?**



Well done! It is always good to see someone prepared to take on the complications of this extraordinary line. It sort of helps that this game was played by e-mail, which allows the players to remind themselves of the moves by looking in the books.

**6...Kxf7 7 Qh5+ Ke6** The king moves up the board, but it is the only way to keep fighting: **7...Kg8?? 8 Qxd5+ e6 9 Qxe6** is checkmate; while **7...g6 8 Qxd5+** leaves White a clear pawn up, with the bonus that the black king is badly exposed. **8 c4** The reason why strong players usually shun this line as Black in tournament play is that apart from trying to keep up with the vast complications, White can also bale out with a draw upon **8 Qg4+ Kf7 9 Qh5+ Ke6 10 Qg4+** with a repetition of position,

because **10...Kd6** is now hopeless after **11 c4 N5f6 12 c5+**, when the difference compared to the main game is that the king has already moved to the d6-square which is fatal. **8...N5f6 9 d5+ Kd6 10 Qf7**



**10...Nb8?! This** is well known to be dubious, but Mr. Cottegnie wants to resign it to history after his new move. The main line starts with **10...Ne5**, when the game P.Ponkratov-A.Tomilin, Nojabrsk 2005 continued: **11 Bf4 c5 12 Nc3 a6 13 b4 b6 14 b5 a5 15 Bd3 g6 16 Ne4+ Nxe4 17 Bxe4 Bh6 18 Bxe5+ Kxe5 19 d6 Be6 20 Qf3 Rf8 21 Qc3+** (White lures the black king forward as part of a mating net) **21...Kxe4 22 f3+ Kf5 23 g4+ Kf4** (or **23...Kg5 24 h4+ Kf4 25 Ke2** with similar play to the game) **24 Ke2** (White might be behind if you count the pieces, but the black king is snared) **24...Bxc4+ 25 Kf2 Bd3 26 Rae1 1-0. 11 c5+ Kd7 12 Bb5+** The direct approach is to gain time by checking and then aiming to quickly develop. Instead, **12 Bf4**

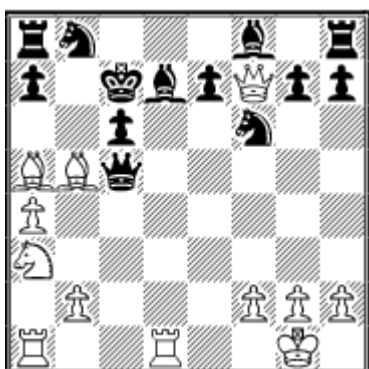
has been played before: **12...Qe8 13 Qe6+ Kd8 14 Qe5 Qd7 15 Nc3 g5?! (15...Ng4** needs to be investigated, because after **16 Qe2**, Black has a choice of either **16...Na6** or **16...Qf5** with complicated play) **16 Bg3 Na6 17 Bxa6 bxa6 18 0-0 Ke8 19 Rfe1 Kf7 20 c6 Qf5 21 Qd4 h5**

22 Bxc7 h4 23 Re5 Qg4 and now instead of 24 Ne4, as in the game Hiermann-Pitschka, Austrian Team Championship 2000, White should play 24 Qe3!, which looks like an improvement, when 24...Rg8 25 h3 Qh5 26 Bd8 is winning for White. **12...c6 13 dxc6+ bxc6 14 0-0 Qa5 15 Rd1+** It must be correct to chase the black king. Also possible: 15 Bc4 and now a) 15...Kc7 16 b4 (16 Bf4+ Kb7 and now 17 b4 is more accurate to make sure that the b-pawn is shed, when the black king is already on the b-file) 16...Qxb4 17 Bf4+ Kd8 18 Nd2 (White relies on development to help the attack, and the practicalities of finding an accurate defence for Black at the board are immense) 18...Nbd7 19 Nb3 Ba6 20 Bxa6 Qxf4 21 Bb7 Rb8 (21...Ne5! offers greater resistance) 22 Bxc6 Ne5 23 Qe6 Nxc6 24 Qxc6 Qc7 25 Rfd1+ Nd7 and now instead of 26 Qd5, as in the game B.Hammar-D.Cramling,Lulea 1980, White can decisively play 26 Qa4 with the simple plan of doubling rooks on the d-file. For example: 26...Ke8 27 Rd3 Rd8 28 Rad1 e6 29 c6 wins. b) 15...Kd8 16 Rd1+ Bd7 (16...Nbd7 is another way of blocking the check, when a sample line runs 17 Nc3 Rb8 18 Qe6 Rb4 19 b3 and Black is struggling to find something useful to do) 17 Be3 Ng4 (17...Kc8 to move the king out of danger looks obvious although after 18 Nc3 Qc7 19 Be6 Kb7 20 Rd4, the attack continues) 18 Be6 (perhaps 18 Qe6!?) 18...Nxe3 19 fxe3 Qxc5 20 Nc3 Qe5? (20...Qxe3+ 21 Kh1 Kc7 is a sterner test, because Black seems to have survived) 21 Rxd7+ Nxd7 22 Rd1 Kc7 23 Rxd7+ Kb6 24 e4 Qf6 25 Qh5 g5 26 Qh3 Qf4 27 Nd5+! 1-0, Mutschnik-Pitschka, Stuttgart 2005. **15...Kc7 16 a4!!**

The double exclamation marks are supplied by Mr. Cottagnie, and if it works then he is entitled to be proud of this innovation. After all, then it surely will be known as the Cottagnie



Variation. The immediate threat is Bd2 to trap the queen, so Black has to respond positively. In the past players have concentrated on chasing the king with 16 Bf4+ Kb7 17 Be2 Nd5 18 b4 Qxb4 19 Na3 Qxf4? (19...Nxf4 20 Rab1 Nxe2+ 21 Kf1 Qxb1 22 Rxb1+ Kc7 23 Kxe2 is Black's best chance in the circumstances, but White is still on top) 20 Rab1+ Qb4 21 Rxd5 Qxb1+ 22 Nxb1 Nd7 23 Rd2 and Black can resign, T.Ernst-B.Lindberg, Gavle 1982. **16...Qb4** The big test has to be to accept the piece sacrifice: 16...cxb5 17 axb5 and now a) 17...Qxa1 18 Bf4+ Kb7 19 c6+ Kb6 20 Qb3 (this is a clever move because soon the computer agrees that Black is in trouble) 20...e5 21 Be3+ Bc5 (I wondered whether the king could escape with 21...Kc7, but found that 22 b6+ is a killer move: 22...Kxc6 23 b7 Bxb7 24 Qc4+ Bc5 25 Qxc5 checkmate) 22 Bxc5+ Kxc5 23 Qe3+ Kb4 24 Qc3+ Cottagnie's analysis stops here, but 24...Ka4 25 Qxe5! allows White to conjure checkmate possibilities. For example: 25...Kb4 26 Qc3+ Ka4 27 Rd4+ Kxb5 28 Rb4+ Ka5 29 Qc5+ Ka6 30 Qb5 checkmate. b) 17...Qxb5 18 Nc3 Qxc5 19 Be3 is very strong. For instance, I looked at the following: 19...Qc6 (19...Qf5 20 Qc4+ Nc6 21 Nb5+ Kb7 22 Nxa7 Nxa7 23 Qa6+ Kc7 24 Qb6 checkmate) 20 Bf4+ Kb7 21 Rd6 Bd7 22 Qb3+ Kc8 23 Rxc6+ Nxc6 24 Qc4 with the initiative. **17 Bd2 Qxc5 18 Na3 Bd7 19 Ba5+ 1-0**



Black resigned in view of 19...Kb7 20 Rac1 Qf5 21 Qb3!, when checkmate cannot be avoided.

I wonder if anyone playing Black will want to test the Cottagnie Variation?