

Chess Miniatures

# MINIATURES IN THE RUY LOPEZ MAIN LINES



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# From Chapter 1

## Open Spanish – Minor Lines

### Game 1

Jaime Alexander Cuartas (2529) – Rene Marcial Alonso Garcia (2393)

Montcada 2010

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Nxe4 6.d4 exd4 7.Re1 d5 8.Nxd4  
Bd6



This is a very sharp variation that is very tricky to play for White. It has claimed many victims for White, even by much higher-rated opponents.

### 9.Be3

White alternatives are:

- (a) 9.Qf3 0-0 10.Nxc6 bxc6 11.Bxc6 Bxh2+ 12.Kxh2 Qd6+ 13.Bf4 Qxc6 14.Nc3 Bf5, and Black is simply up a pawn, Almasi-Varga, Tucepi 1996.
- (b) 9.g3 0-0 10.Nxc6 bxc6 11.Bxc6 (or 11.Be3 Bb7 12.c4 Qf6 13.Nc3 Ng5 14.f4 Ne6 15.Qf3 Nc5 16.Bc2 Rfe8 with a better game for Black, Sarwat-Vaisman, Cairo 2000) 11...Bc5 12.Be3 Nxf2 13.Qxd5 Bxe3 14.Bxa8?!, and here:



*What is Black's best continuation?*

(b1) 14...Nh3+ 15.Kg2 Qf6 16.Rf1 (16.Nc3! is White's best defense: 16...Bg4 17.Qe4 Qf2+ 18.Kh1 Qxe1+ 19.Rxe1 Nf2+ 20.Kg2 Nxe4 21.Bxe4 Bd2 with a likely draw; now, however, it is soon over for White) 16...Nf2 17.Qf3 Bh3+ 18.Kg1 Ng4+ (this wins, but Black can do even better with the spectacular 18...Ne4+ 19.Kh1 Nxg3+ 20.hxg3 Qh6, and it is over for White) 19.Kh1 Bxf1 20.Nc3 Bh3, and White resigned, 0-1, Estrada Nieto-Hall, Kitchener 2006.

(b2) The immediate 14...Qf6! is the right move, but this line is very difficult to calculate, e.g., 15.Qf3 Ng4+ 16.Kg2 Qxb2 17.Na3 Ba7 and Black is better, having amazing compensation for the exchange and White's pieces being very poorly coordinated.

(c) 9.Nxc6 is the topic of our next two main games.

### 9...0-0 10.c4

Or 10.Nxc6 bxc6 11.Bxc6 Bxh2+ 12.Kxh2 Qd6+ 13.Kg1 Qxc6, and Black is simply up a pawn with a good position.

### 10...Ne5 11.cxd5



## 11...Qh4

Black has a very strong alternative in 11...Bg4, for example, 12.Qc2 Nc5 13.Rf1 Qh4 14.Nd2 Ned3 15.g3 Qh5 with a nasty attack and White's position is in a complete disarray.

## 12.g3?!

White should have given preference to 12.Nc3 Bg4 13.Qc2 Nc5 14.h3 Bh5, but this too is better for Black.

## 12...Qh3 13.Nd2 Bg4 14.f3 Nxd2

Black could also play the spectacular 14...Nxc3 15.hxc3 Qxc3+ 16.Kf1 Bh3+ 17.Ke2 b5 18.Ne4 Qg2+ 19.Nf2 Nc4 20.Rg1 Qh2 21.Rh1 Rfe8, and Black is winning.

## 15.fxg4?



*How should Black best continue?*

White's choice in the game is definitely bad, but the alternative, while better, is also quite depressing: 15.Qxd2 Bxf3 16.Bf4 f6 17.Bxe5 fxe5 18.Nxf3 Rxf3 19.Qg2 Bc5+ 20.Kh1 Qxg2+ 21.Kxg2 Rf2+ 22.Kh3 Bd6 with a position Black should win.

## 15...Ndc4 16.Qc2 Nxg4 17.Nf5 Ncxe3 18.Nxe3



*What is Black's best move?*

**18...Bc5! 19.Kh1 Bxe3 20.Bd7 Bb6 21.Bf5 g6** and White decided that, a piece down, it was time to resign. **0-1**

# From Chapter 4

## Anti-Marshall

### Game 40

Viswanathan Anand (2779) – Peter Svidler (2728)

Wijk aan Zee 2007

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.h3 Bb7  
9.d3 Re8 10.a4



This is a fairly rare line. Instead, 10.a3 and 10.Nc3 are seen more frequently.

### 10...h6

An interesting alternative is 10...d6 which after 11.Bd2 b4 12.c3 d5 led to Marshall-style play: 13.exd5 Nxd5 14.Nxe5 Nxe5 15.Rxe5 Bf6 16.Rxe8+ Qxe8 17.cxb4 Bxb2 18.Ra2 Be5, and Black has excellent compensation for the pawn, Topalov-Adams, Sofia 2005.

### 11.c3

In a game between the players of our main game, but with the colors reversed, Svidler tried 11.axb5 axb5 12.Rxa8 Bxa8 13.c3 Bf8 14.d4 d6 15.d5 Na5 16.Ba2 c6 17.Na3 Qc7 18.Qe2 cxd5 19.Nxb5 Qd7 20.exd5 Bxd5 21.Bxd5 Nxd5 22.Rd1 Nf6, and here a draw was agreed upon, ½-½, Svidler-Anand, Mexico City 2007; Black clearly has no problems.

### 11...b4

A peculiar decision by Black, not only releasing the tension on the queenside but also handing over the c4-square to White. Instead, Black of the text move, Black has a couple of good alternatives:

- (a) 11...Bf8 12.axb5 (12.Nbd2 Na5 13.Bc2 c5 also looks fine for Black) 12...axb5 13.Rxa8 Qxa8 14.Na3?! Bxa3 15.bxa3 Na5 16.Nh4 d5 and Black has taken over the initiative, Safranska-Adams, London 1991.
- (b) 11...Bc5 12.Nbd2 Bb6 13.Ba2 Rf8?! (played in anticipation of White exchanging on b5 and then flinging the queen to b3, but this may, in fact, be fine for Black, for example, 13...d6 14.axb5 axb5 15.Qb3 d5 16.Qxb5 Nb8!, and White's queen will have a hard time returning to safety without shedding at least a pawn, e.g., 17.c4 Bc6 18.Qb3 Ba4 19.Qa3 Bc6 with a draw by repetition) 14.Nf1 d6 15.Ng3 Ne7 16.Nh4 Kh7 17.Qf3 and White has the upper hand, Topalov-Anand, Monte Carlo 2006. White exerts strong kingside pressure.

### **12.Nbd2 d5!?**

Black insists on playing in the style of the Marshall, but it isn't entirely clear that it was the best or what would have happened if White had just accepted the pawn. A decent alternative was 12...Rb8.

### **13.a5**

Anand decides against accepting the pawn sacrifice and instead opts for a more positional solution, putting Black's queenside under pressure. Accepting the pawn could lead us down the following path: 13.exd5 Nxd5 14.Nxe5 Nxe5 (14...bxc3?! 15.Nxf7! Kxf7 16.Qf3+ as given by Marin is very close to winning for White) 15.Rxe5 bxc3 16.bxc3 Nxc3 17.Qh5 Rf8 18.Bb2 (Marin) and White's pieces are far better placed than their black counterparts.

### **13...dxe4 14.dxe4 Bc5**

The text move has been criticized by several commentators, but interestingly, it is also my computer's favorite move. The alternative, 14...Bf8, keeps the kingside better guarded (rather than making a fairly empty threat against f2), but after 15.Qc2 Rb8 16.Nc4 Ba8, 17.Ne3 looks pleasant for White.

### **15.Qe2 Qe7?!**



*This is a typical move to clear the d8-square for the rook on a8, but it invites trouble. Can you see how White should best continue?*

### 16.Nh4!

With Black's light-square bishop on b7, the f5-square is very weak. Additionally, Black cannot play ...g7-g6 because of the f7-pawn being pinned by the bishop on b3, and therefore Nxg6 is possible.

### 16...Nd7 17.Nf5 Qf6 18.Qg4

As Marin points out in *ChessBase Magazine*: "White only needs one more move (Nf3) to build up an attack with his queen and all the minor pieces against the enemy king. Notably, all Black's minor pieces are relatively uselessly grouped on the other wing." Getting Black's pieces back to the kingside is anything but easy.

### 18...Ne7?



*This is a simple mistake, I trust there will be no problem finding the right move here?*

In his annotations in *ChessBase Magazine*, Marin gives the following analysis:  
18...Rad8 19.Nf3 Kh8 (or 19...Kf8)



*Can you spot the winning move for White?*

20.Ng5! hxc5 21.Qh5 Kg8 22.Bxc5 and Black loses the queen) 20.Bg5! (here 20.Ng5 Rf8 and Black is alive, according to Marin, but 21.Qh5! Kg8 22.Nf3, threatening Bg5, should win for White) 20...Qg6 (also 20...hxc5 21.Qh5+ Kg8 22.Nxc5 g6 23.Qh7+ Kf8 24.Qh6+ Kg8 25.Nh7 wins quickly for White) 21.N5h4 Qd6 22.Bxd8 Rxd8 23.Rad1 and White wins additional material. Black's best is probably 18...Kh8 19.Nf3 Nf8 20.Be3 Bxe3 21.Nxe3 with a clear positional advantage for White.

**19.Nxh6+! Qxh6 20.Qxd7 Red8?**

This is the same as resignation, allowing White to pick up a second pawn.

**21.Qxc7** On 21...Rdc8, White does not capture the bishop on b7: 22.Qxb7 Ra7 and the queen is trapped, but rather captures the e5-pawn. **1-0**

# From Chapter 5

## Marshall Gambit

### Game 53

Thomas Luther (2524) – Levente Vajda (2541)

Romanian Team Ch (Baile Tusnad) 2005

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3 d5  
9.d4 exd4 10.e5 Ne4 11.cxd4 Bg4 12.Nc3 Bxf3 13.gxf3



### 13...Nxc3

The alternative 13...Nxf2 14.Kxf2 Bh4+ 15.Ke3 Bxe1 16.Qxe1 Ne7, Ghinda-Lukacs, Bucharest 1978, and now 17.Kf2 (or 17.Qg1) 17...Nf5 18.Kg2 both promise the better chances for White.

### 14.bxc3 f5

Black has also tried 14...Qd7 15.Kh1 Nd8? (15...f5 is more solid, but also not easy to play for Black after 16.Rg1) 16.f4 f5 (16...c6 is discussed in the notes to the game by Arizmendi in *ChessBase Magazine*, but it too is quite problematic for Black: 17.Bc2 f5 18.exf6 Rxf6 (on 18...Bxf6, Arizmendi gives 19.Qh5 with transposition to the game, but in fact 19.Ba3! is much stronger. Black is completely without a reasonable defense, e.g., 19...Rf7 20.Bf5!) 19.Qd3 Rh6 (or 19...g6 20.f5 Rxf5 21.Qh3, winning the exchange) 20.f5 Rf6 21.Bg5 Rf7, and now 22.f6! is stronger than Arizmendi's line which goes (22.Rxe7 Rxe7 23.f6 gxf6 24.Bxf6 with a clear advantage) 22...gxf6 23.Bh6 Bd6 24.Qf3 with Bf5 to follow, and Black has a very hard time defending against both the invasion on e8 and on the g-file) 17.exf6 Bxf6 18.Qh5 c6 19.Bc2 g6 20.Rg1 Bg7



*How should White best continue?*

21.Rxg6! hxg6 22.Bxg6 Rf6 (22...Bh6 23.Qxh6 Qg7 24.Qh5 Rf6 25.f5 is no consolation) 23.Bh7+ Kf8 24.Ba3+ Rd6 25.Qf5+ Ke7 26.Re1+ (Black is up a rook, but his position is falling apart and it will cost a lot of material to defend) 26...Ne6 27.Qg6 Re8 28.Qxg7+ Kd8 29.Qf6+ Kc8 30.Bf5 c5 31.Bxc5 Nxc5 32.Bxd7+ Kc7 33.Qxd6+, and Black finally resigned, 1-0, Arizmendi Martinez-Nemet, Biel 2006.

### 15.Kh1 Kh8

15...Na5 16.Rg1 Qd7 17.Qe2 Qe6 18.Bg5 c6 19.Bc2 Ra7 20.f4



This position looks solid for Black, and that is in fact also the case, but it is instructive how quickly it falls apart after a few less than exact moves by Black: 20...Kh8?! (20...Nc4 21.Bxe7 Rxe7 22.a4 is somewhat better for White) 21.Qh5 Ba3?



*How should White continue?*

22.Rg3! (not only designed to double the rooks on the g-file, but also to threaten Rh3 whenever it makes sense. Black is basically lost at this point!) 22...Nc4 23.Rag1 Qf7 24.Qh4 Nd2 25.Rh3 Qg8 (25...g6 26.Bf6+ Kg8 27.Bxf5 is even worse) 26.f3 Nc4 27.Bd3 (27.Bf6 is also very nasty for Black) 27...Nb2 28.Bb1 Nc4 29.Bf6 Nd6 30.Be7 Rxe7 31.Qxe7 and Black had enough, 1-0, Shirov-Bacrot, Germany 2003.

**16.Rg1 Na5 17.Bc2 Nc4**



*How should White continue?*

- (a) 17...c5 18.Bf4 (or 18.Qf1 cxd4 19.Qg2 g6 20.Bh6 Rf7 21.cxd4 Rc8 22.Bd3, and a draw was agreed, ½-½, McShane-Almasi, Germany 2004) 18...Nc6 19.dxc5 Bxc5 20.e6 Bxf2 21.Rg2 Bh4 22.Bb3 Ne7 23.a4 Bf6 24.axb5 axb5 25.Rxa8 Qxa8 26.Bd6 Qc8 27.Bxd5 Rd8 28.Bxe7 Bxe7, and Black has the somewhat better chances, Haznedaroglu-Peli, email 2008.
- (b) 17...Qd7 18.Bg5 Bxg5 19.Rxg5 Nc6 20.Qc1 Qe6 21.f4 Ne7 22.a4 c6 23.Bd3 Rac8 24.Qe3, and White is marginally better thanks to his more

active prospects, but Black's position is solid, Ivanchuk-Jakovenko, Moscow 2007.

### 18.Qf1!

This is by no means decisive, but it is the best and a quite dangerous plan: White initiates his attack on the kingside.

### 18...Bh4?

- (a) Black is basically sticking his head in the lion's mouth. But even a solid-looking option like 18...Qd7 19.Qh3 Qe6 20.Bg5! Rae8 21.Rg2 is very dangerous for Black (my computer calls it decisively better for White, but that may be a slight exaggeration).
- (b) 18...g6 19.Bh6 Rg8 20.h4! Rb8 21.Qh3 and White has the initiative and good attacking prospects.

### 19.Qh3 Bxf2?

19...g6 20.Bh6 Rg8



*What is White's best move?*

(20...Qe7 21.Bxf8 Rxf8 22.f4 Na3 23.Bd3 c6 24.Rg2 is also much better for White, but at least doesn't lose immediately for Black) 21.Bxf5!, and White is winning because of 21...gxf5 22.Rxg8+ loses on the spot for Black.

### 20.Rg5!?

The text move is a good move, but White, in fact, has a much stronger move in 20.Bg5! Qd7 21.Rg2 Be3 22.Re1! Bxg5 23.Rxg5, and since Black doesn't have a

satisfactory way to defend the f-pawn, he has to play 23...g6 which loses to 24.Rxg6 Rae8 25.Reg1 and Black's position completely collapses.

**20...g6 21.Rxg6 Qh4 22.Qxh4 Bxh4 23.Rc6!**

White keeps the rook active, not just threatening the pawn on c7, but actively participating in the ongoing attack on Black's kingside.

**23...Rg8?**

Black should have played 23...Be1 24.Bh6 (24.Bg5!? Bxc3 25.Rd1 is also very good) 24...Bxc3 25.Rd1 Rf7 26.Bg5 Kg8 27.Rg1 Rg7 28.Bxf5, and White is winning.

**24.Bxf5 Raf8 25.Be6** and Black resigned. The d-pawn falls next. **1-0**

# From Chapter 8

## Main Line with 9...Bb7 (Zaitsev Variation)

### Game 77

Ljubomir Ljubojevic (2550) – Gyala Sax (2445)  
Hilversum 1973

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.h3 Bb7  
9.d3 d6 10.c3 Na5 11.Bc2 c5 12.Nbd2 Re8 13.Nf1 h6 14.Ng3 Bf8 15.Nh2 d5



Black can also consider 15...g6, e.g., 16.Qf3 h5 17.Bd2 d5 18.Rad1 Re6 19.Qe2 Qc7 20.Nf3 Rae8 21.Bg5 Nd7 22.a3 Bc6 23.Bb1 Nb6 24.Ba2 c4 25.d4 dxe4 26.Nxe5 f5 27.Nf1 Nd5 with chances for both sides as in Castellanos-Hjartarson, Turin 2006, where the former candidates finalist from Iceland eventually won.

### 16.Nh5

This is the crossroads in this variation. White has some other moves available as well:

- (a) 16.Qf3 c4 17.Ng4 Nxg4 18.hxg4 d4 19.dxc4 bxc4 20.Rd1 Qb6 21.Rb1 Rad8 22.g5 Qc6 23.b4 cxb3 24.Bxb3 Nxb3 25.Rxb3 was played in Kritz-Tseshkovsky, Biel 2007, and now 25...hxg5 26.Bxg5 Rd7 is fine for Black who has well-coordinated and actively placed pieces.
- (b) 16.Qe2 c4 17.dxc4 Nxc4 18.Ng4 dxe4 19.Nxe4 Nxe4 20.Bxe4 Bxe4 21.Qxe4 Qd7 22.Qe2 f5 23.Nh2 e4 24.Rd1 Qf7, and Black's chances are preferable, Kryvoruchko-Friedel, Beijing 2008.
- (c) 16.Ng4 Re6 (or 16...dxe4 17.dxe4 Nxg4 18.Qxg4 Qf6 19.f4 exf4 20.Bxf4 Nc6 21.Nf5 Ne5 22.Qg3 Ng6 23.e5, and White has the

initiative, Hevia Alejano-Mendez Fortes, Havana 2010) 17.Nxf6+ (17.exd5 Qxd5 18.Ne4 Nh7 19.Qf3 Rd8 20.Bd2 Qd7 21.Qf5 Qe7 22.Qh5 Kh8 is comfortable for Black, Yanev-Brkic, Skopje 2016) 17...Qxf6 18.Qe2 g6 19.Be3 Qh4 20.Rad1 Rd8 21.Qg4 Qxg4 22.hxg4 dxe4 23.Nxe4 Bxe4 24.dxe4 Rxd1 25.Rxd1 Nc4 26.Bc1 with a comfortable little plus for White thanks to his pair of bishops, Sokolov-Howell, Paris 2006.

## 16...Nh7

Black even has the somewhat unusual option of 16...d4 available, e.g., 17.Nxf6+ Qxf6 18.cxd4 exd4 19.Bd2 Qb6 20.Nf3 Rac8, and Black's chances should be no worse.

## 17.Qg4 Re6

Black has a perfectly reasonable alternative in 17...g6 18.Ng3 c4 19.dxc4 Nxc4, when Black's chances are no worse than White's.

## 18.f4 Rg6 19.Qe2 dxe4 20.dxe4 Qh4

Or 20...Re6 21.Ng4 (also 21.f5 Rd6 22.Nf3 Qe8 23.Be3 can be considered) 21...Qh4 (21...exf4 22.Nxf4 followed by e4–e5 looks very nice for White) 22.f5 Ree8 23.g3 Qd8 24.a4, and White has the initiative and better chances.

## 21.fxe5 Ng5 22.Kh1 Nc4?

22...Ne6 doesn't attempt to recoup the pawn, but is a decent choice, providing Black some compensation for the pawn.

## 23.Nf4



*How does White continue after 23...Rc6?*

## **23...Rc6**

Black's best move is 23...Nxe5, 24.Nxg6 Nxg6 25.Bxg5 Qxg5, and while he has some positional compensation thanks to the weak dark squares in White's position, mainly around the isolated e-pawn, it doesn't make up for the exchange he is down.

## **24.g3!**

The black queen is trapped! After 24.g3 Qxg3 25.Rg1 there is no way out. Therefore, Black resigned. **1-0**