



The Safest Grünfeld
Reloaded
A Complete Repertoire for Black

Alexander Delchev

The Safest Grünfeld Reloaded

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Contents

Foreword	5
Introduction	9
Chapter 1 The Fianchetto System	11
Chapter 2 The ♘f4 System	57
Chapter 3 The ♘g5 System	99
Chapter 4 The e3 System	137
Chapter 5 The Russian System 5. ♖b3	157
Chapter 6 Rare Lines. Deviations on move 5	167
Chapter 7 Rare Lines. Deviations on move 7	191
Chapter 8 The Exchange System 7. ♘e3	209
Chapter 9 The Exchange System 7. ♗f3	225
Chapter 10 The Exchange System 7. ♘c4	257
Chapter 11 SOS Systems	281
Chapter 12 The Sämish Anti-Grünfeld – 3.f3	291
Chapter 13 The English Anti-Grünfeld	313
Chapter 14 The Queen's Pawn Anti-Grünfeld	335
Index of Variations	347

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Foreword

What's new?

This book is a completely new edition of the original *The Safest Grünfeld* of 2011. I rechecked all the lines and changed my recommendations according to latest developments of theory and my new understanding.

Especially the anti-Grünfeld chapters are basically new. In my opinion top players have long lost hope to find advantage in the main lines and try early deviations. Anand chose 3.f3 against Gelfand and 5.♗d2 against Carlsen. So I devoted special attention to the Sämish approach with two different propositions. 3...♖c6 is less studied and probably more rewarding from a practical standpoint, while 3...d5 is in perfect theoretical shape, but requires more memorization.

Every too often White players try to avoid the Grünfeld by refraining from d4 or c4. I added an additional chapter on the very topical lately Trompowsky and Barry/Jobava attack.

The 7.♗c4 system in the Exchange Variation, and the Russian System have also underwent a major reconstruction.

In general, I aimed to propose a more dynamic approach than in the first edition, despite the book title.

A little background

I have been studying the Grünfeld for years. I often used it in decisive games as Black, but I also have extensive practice as White.

I always aim to surprise the opponent in the opening, so after the appearance of the book in 2011 I started to choose the Grünfeld mostly in rapid chess, to avoid home preparation. However, many of my students went on developing new ideas. Thus I have been constantly in touch with current theory, and in 2019 I decided to test my new recommendations in classical chess.

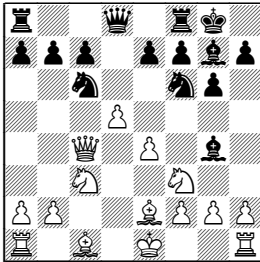
I am convinced that learning an opening should not begin with memorization of variations. We should firstly understand what our positional aims are, what to pursue, and what to avoid. Then we should examine the typical pawn structures and plans that ensue from them. Only then should we choose a system which best fits in with our style of play. You will hardly remember many details, but general understanding will save you from big trouble.

Here are some examples from the practice of my students.

We had studied the typical ideas and a few classical examples, so

when Kadric got into the position of the following diagram, he did not get crushed, despite the fact that he did not know the best move order:

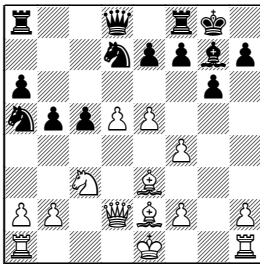
Drenchev–Kadric
Plovdiv 2011



9...♙xf3?!

Correct is 9...♘a5! 10.♙a4 ♙xf3.

10.gxf3 ♘a5 11.♙d3! c5! 12.♙e3
♘d7 13.f4 a6 14.e5 b5 15.♙d2



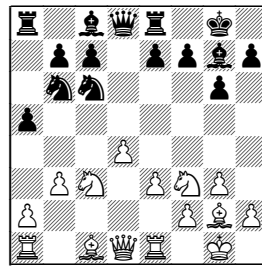
White is 150 Elo points higher rated (2521) than his opponent and much more experienced, but he was forced to think concretely in an unusual position. Black remembered that I advocated ...a6 and ...b5 in the Grünfeld and successfully gained space on the queenside. Now he could have applied another typical method – a pawn sacrifice – to seize the initiative: 15...f6 16.e6 ♘b6 17.♙xc5 ♘bc4 18.♙c1 f5 19.0-0

♙c8↑, instead of the timid 15...♙c8. Later he got the upper hand nonetheless.

When we studied the ideas of the g3-system, I showed the game Benko-Smyslov, Budapest 1949 (given in Chapter 1), which introduced for the first time the attack on the queenside by the a-pawn.

During the following game, Kadric recalled it and, inspired by Smyslov's example, followed up by:

G.Szabo–Kadric
Plovdiv 2011



11...a4!?

Consistent, though probably not best (11...e5! =).

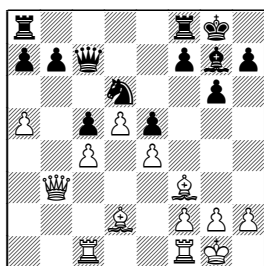
12.♘xa4 ♘xa4 13.bxa4 e5! 14.♙b2 exd4 15.♙xd4 ♘xd4 16.♘xd4 ♙xd4 17.♙xd4 ♙xd4 18.exd4, and Black easily drew against the 185 Elo points favourite.

I would also like to call your attention to a thematic manoeuvre in the Grünfeld – ...♘c6-a5-b7-d6, blocking the advanced d5-pawn.

I first delved into this idea during my work with Ivan Saric, a World and European champion under 18, now a leading Croatian grandmaster. One of my students

liked it so much that he strived to reach a similar pawn structure in every game, thinking that Black was even better. I spent some effort to convince him that the evaluation of such positions depended on the placement of the other pieces. Here is an example from my own practice:

Naumkin–Delchev
Cappelle la Grande 2011



During the game I indulged in meditation of a philosophical character – if White did not have any problems even in this perfect example of a blockade, I thought, then perhaps Black did not stand so well in other similar positions either. He lacks an active plan. The natural-looking move ...f7-f5 would only weaken the e5-pawn. After ♖e1, ♔c3, Black cannot make any progress since his setup is basically passive and defensive. His left flank is cramped. That is why I recommend to resort to this plan mostly after having gained space on the queenside first with ...b5. In this new edition of the book, I even avoided such lines in favour of the more dynamic pawn structure arising after ...e6xd5.

My advice is: study different strategic ideas before drawing your conclusions. Play according to the position – do not overestimate your chances.

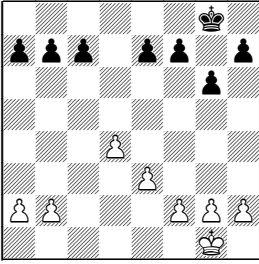
The biggest challenge before the author of an opening book is how to solve the problem of the speed with which information becomes outdated and obsolete. I tried to offer at least two alternatives in every major system. That should bring about flexibility in our repertoire, and allow a variable approach to opponents according to their strength or playing style. With our backup lines you should be able to avoid long forced variations and surprise your opponents.

The main dish of the book are the “Step by Step” sections. However, the “Main Ideas” are also very important as they often complement the “Step by Step” sections. I also tried to reduce the amount of “Step by Step” theory by examining some backup lines in heavily annotated games, given in the “Complete Games”. That should facilitate your navigation between the numerous branches of our repertoire.

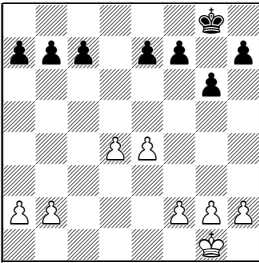
I have arranged the material according to the main pawn structures in the Grünfeld.

Thus Chapters 1-4 consider systems where White does not hurry to occupy the centre and our g7-bishop is restrained by the d4-pawn:

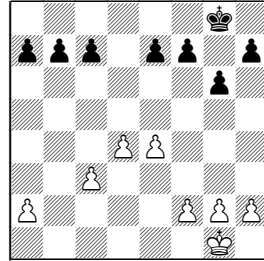
Foreword



Then in Chapters 5-6 I examine the more aggressive pawn formation:



Chapters 7-10 are devoted to the Exchange System. This has been White's most popular weapon.



Chapter 11 calls your attention to several offbeat systems which might surprise you in OTB games.

The last part deals with some Anti-Grünfeld approaches.

The material in this book is up to date to the end of July, 2019.

*A. Delchev
August 2019*

Index of Variations

Chapter 1. The Fianchetto System

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♙g7

3...c6 4.♙g2 d5 23 5.♘f3 (5.♖a4 23; 5.e3 23) ♙g7

6.b3 24 (6.cxd5 25; 6.♖b3 25; 6.♗bd2 26)

4.♙g2 d5 5.♘f3 27 5...dxc4 6.♗a3 c3 7.bxc3 c5 8.0-0 0-0 9.♞e1 28
9.e3 29

5.cxd5 ♗xd5 6.e4 (6.♗c3 31) 6...♗b6 7.♗e2 31

6.♘f3 ♗b6 7.♗c3 ♗c6 8.e3 0-0 9.0-0 ♞e8 36

10.d5 39

10.♞e1 a5 11.♖c2 42

11.♖e2 44

11.h3 45

Chapter 2. The ♙f4 System

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.♙f4 ♙g7

5.♞c1 66

5.♘f3 0-0 6.e3 68 6...c5 7.dxc5 ♗e4 69

7...♖a5 69

6.♞c1 c5 75

6...dxc4 75

5.e3 c5 (5...0-0 93) 6.dxc5 ♖a5 7.♖b3 78

7.♖a4+ 78

7.♘f3 81

7.♞c1 82

Index of Variations

Chapter 3. Systems with ♔g5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5

4.♔g5 ♘e4 111 5.♙h4 (5.h4!?) 287; 5.♖c1 287; 5.cxd5 111; 5.♙f4 111; 5.♘xe4 111) 5...♗xc3 6.bxc3 dxc4 7.e3 (7.e4 112) 7...♔e6

8.♔e2 113

8.♖b1 113

8.♗b1 114

8.♗f3 115 9.♔e2 ♘b6

10.0-0 ♔g7 11.a4 116

11.e4 118

4...♔g7 5.♙xf6 (5.♗f3 119; 5.e3 c5 119) 5...♙xf6 6.cxd5 c6

7.dxc6 120

7.e3 120

7.e4 121

7.♖c1 122

4.♗f3 ♔g7 5.♔g5 ♘e4 6.♙f4 123

6.cxd5 ♘xg5 7.♗xg5 0-0 123 (7...c6 123)

6.♙h4 126

Chapter 4. The e3 System

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.e3 ♔g7

5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♗xd5 142 (6.♙c4 142)

5.♖b3 146

5.♗f3 0-0 6.♔d2 153

6.b4 148

6.♔e2 c5 7.dxc5 150

7.0-0 151

Chapter 5. The Russian System

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.♗f3 (4.♖a4+ 160; 4.♖b3 160) 4...♔g7

5.♖b3 dxc4

6.♖xc4 0-0 (6...♔e6 161) 7.e4 (7.♙f4 161) 7...a6 162

7...♗c6 164

Index of Variations

Chapter 6. Rare Lines. Deviations on move 5

1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 g6 3.♟c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♟xd5

5.♟d2 (4.♟f3 ♟g7 5.cxd5 ♟xd5 6.♟d2 174) 5...♟b6 (5...♟g7 175)

6.♟f3 176

6.♟g5 178

6.♟f4 179

6.e3 180

5.♟a4 181

5.♞b3 ♟xc3 6.bxc3 ♟g7 7.♟a3 182

7.♟f3 183

5.♟g5 184

Chapter 7. Rare Lines. Deviations on move 7

1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 g6 3.♟c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♟xd5 5.e4 ♟xc3 6.bxc3 ♟g7

7.♟b5+ 195

7.♞a4+ ♟d7 8.♟f3 0-0 198

9.♟e3 198

9.♞a3 199

9.♟g5 200

9.♟e2 201

7.♟a3 203

7.♟g5 204

Chapter 8. The Exchange System 7.♟e3

1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 g6 3.♟c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♟xd5 5.e4 ♟xc3 6.bxc3 ♟g7 7.♟e3

7...c5 8.♞d2 213 (8.♟f3 213; 8.♞b1 213)

8.♞c1 215

Chapter 9. The Exchange System 7.♟f3

1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 g6 3.♟c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♟xd5 5.e4 ♟xc3 6.bxc3 ♟g7 7.♟f3 c5

8.♟b5+ ♟d7 236 (8...♟c6 236)

8.♟e2 238

8.h3 239

8.♟e3 ♟g4 240 (8...♞a5 240)

8.♞b1 244

Chapter 10. The Exchange System 7.♙c4

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 ♙g7 7.♙c4
7...0-0 8.♗e2 c5 9.♙e3 ♗c6 10.0-0 (10.♙c1 261) 10...e6 (10...♙c7 11.♙c1 e6
262; ; 10...♙c7 11...♙c1 ♗d8 263; 10...b6 262; 10...♙g4 277; 10...♗a5 271)
11.dxc5 265 (11.♙b1 265; 11.♙c1 265)
11.♙c1 266
11.♙d2 267

Chapter 11. SOS Systems

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5

4.g4?! 282
4.h4?! 283
4.♗f3 ♙g7 5.h4!? 284
5...c6 284
5...dxc4!? 286
4.♙g5 ♗e4 5.♙c1?! 287
5.h4!? 287
4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.♙g7 288

Chapter 12. The Sämish Anti-Grünfeld – 3.f3

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3

3...d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.e4 ♗b6 6.♗c3 ♙g7 7.♙e3 0-0 8.♙d2 e5 9.d5 c6
10.h4 295
10.♙d1 297
3...♗c6 301
4.d5 301
4.♗c3 307
4.e4 308

Chapter 13. The English Anti-Grünfeld

1.c4 ♗f6

2.♗c3 d5 3.cxd5 ♗xd5 4.g3 c5 317 (4...g6 317)
4.♗f3 c5 (4...g6 327) 5.e4 322 (5...e3 322)
2.♗f3 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 326 (4.♙a4+ 326) 4...♗xd5 5.h4 327 (5.♙a4+
328; 5.e4 328)

Chapter 14. The Queen's Pawn Anti-Grünfeld

1.d4 ♖f6

2.♙g5 c5 3.♙xf6 339 (3.d5 d6 339)

2.♖f3 g6 3.♗c3 342 (3.♙f4 342)

2.♙f4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.e3 345 (4.♞d2 345)