Contents

6 Fianchetto Systems with g3

1 d4 ♞f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♞c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♞f3

6 g3 g6 7 ♗g2 ♗g7 *(D)* normally ends up transposing to our main line, though there are a few independent paths:
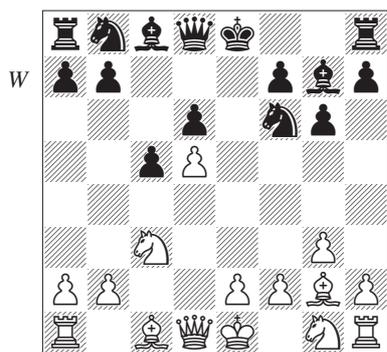
a) White can try 8 ♞h3, but if ♞f4 follows, it obstructs his pieces: 8...0-0 9 0-0 b6 (or 9...a6 10 a4 ♗xh3!? 11 ♗xh3 ♞bd7 12 ♗f4 ♕c7 13 ♖c1 ♖ae8 14 ♗g2 ♞e5 = Vadasz-Varga, Budapest 1998) 10 ♞f4 a6 11 a4 ♖e8 12 h3 ♖a7! 13 e4 ♖ae7 = Moeller-Baklund, Moscow 1956.

b) The idea 8 e4 0-0 9 ♞ge2 fails to control the e5-square and forfeits the idea of placing a knight on c4. Black has several good answers, of which lines 'b2' and 'b3' are best, in my opinion:

b1) 9...♞a6 10 0-0 ♞c7 11 a4 a6 12 a5 ♖e8 13 f3 ♞b5 14 ♗e3 ♞d7 = (Kapengut).

b2) 9...a6 10 a4 ♞bd7 11 0-0 ♖b8 12 a5 b5! (12...♖e8 =) 13 axb6 ♕xb6! (since ♞c4 isn't available) 14 h3 and now 14...♖e8 = Novotelnov-Plater, Moscow 1947, or 14...♞e8 with the idea ...♞c7-b5-d4 – Kapengut.

b3) 9...♖e8 10 0-0 (10 a4 ♞a6! 11 0-0 ♞b4 12 h3 b6 13 ♗g5 h6 14 ♗e3 ♗a6 = Tanin-Aratovsky, corr. 1954) 10...b5! 11 ♞xb5 ♞xe4 12 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 13 ♞ec3 ♖e8 14 ♗f4 ♗f8 = Murei-Quinteros, New York 1983.

6...g6 7 g3 ♗g7 8 ♗g2 0-0 *(D)*
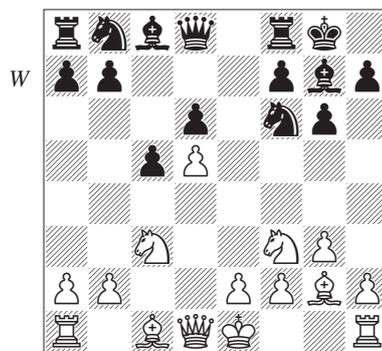
9 0-0

This is the basic position of the Fianchetto System, a very solid approach which at first glance uses two

tempi to put the king's bishop on a bad diagonal (blocked by the d5-pawn), and doesn't even begin to expand in the centre. Yet this is a popular choice of strong positional players, because it covers e4, protects the king, and allows a sort of Knight's Tour by ♘d2-c4. Often, when Black turns his attention to challenging that knight, White can play moves like ♖e1 and ♗f4 followed by e4-e5, which incidentally can bring the g2-bishop to life.

White's strategy is primarily preventative: he advances few pawns and denies Black an easy target. Key central squares are to be guarded so as to hinder any freeing moves, and even manoeuvres such as ...♘g4-e5 are often discouraged by h3.

Since Black lacks space, his inability to grapple directly with the enemy can be irritating for him. But the very nature of White's scheme also gives Black more leeway, because his own position is under no attack. White tends to have his pieces on the first and second ranks (e.g., rooks on e1 and a1, bishops on c1 and g2, knights on c3 and d2, queen on c2). This means that Black can organize his troops into whatever formation he pleases, since he is under little obligation to defend the usual sore spots on d6 and e5. And fortunately for him, he still has one plan that can't be prevented forever, i.e., the customary advance of his queenside majority. To the extent that White must divert his forces to keep the queenside pawns in check, Black is given greater freedom to manoeuvre in the centre.

There are fewer issues of move-order in this chapter than in any other. Instead of 9 0-0, the only non-transpositional sequence that I'm aware of is the immediate 9 ♘d2 a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 ♘c4 (11 0-0 ♖e8 transposes to Line A) 11...♘b6 12 ♘a3 ♗d7, which can lead to:

a) 13 ♗d2 ♘xa4! 14 ♘xa4 b5 15 ♘c3 (15 ♘xc5 dxc5 16 d6 {16 0-0 ♖e8} 16...♖c8; 15 ♗f4 bxa4 16 ♗xd6 ♖e8) 15...b4 16 ♘c4 bxc3 17 bxc3 ♕e7 18 ♘b6 ♖a7 19 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 20 0-0 ♖b8 = Krasenkov-Tolnai, Budapest 1989.

b) After 13 0-0, 13...♖e8 transposes to Line A; if Black wants to avoid those lines, he can also try 13...♖b8 14 a5 ♘c8 15 ♘c4 and, for example, 15...♘e8 (15...♖e8 again transposes to Line A) 16 ♗f4 g5! (16...f5 17 ♕d2 ♗b5 18 ♘xb5 axb5 19 ♘a3 ♘c7 =) 17 ♗d2 f5 18 ♕c1 h6 19 h4 ♗f6 20 hxg5 hxg5 21 f4 g4 22 b3 ♕e7 ∓.

c) 13 a5 ♘c8 14 ♘c4 ♘g4 15 ♗f4 ♗b5!? 16 ♕b3 ♗xc4 17 ♕xc4 ♘e5 (17...b5!? 18 axb6 ♘xb6) 18 ♕a2 b5 19 axb6 ♘xb6 20 0-0 ♕e7 (20...♖e8) 21 b3 ♖fb8!? (21...♘d3!? 22 exd3 ♗xc3 23 ♖ac1 ♗b4 is unclear) 22 ♕c2, Krasenkov-Petran, Balatonbereny 1988, and now simply 22...a5 with the idea of ...c4 keeps Black active, although his earlier options achieve equality more easily.

All these examples bear close resemblance to the main lines below.

After the text-move (9 0-0), play divides into:

The first approach is a positional one, calmly preparing the eventual queenside attack, although when the goals of the two sides conflict, the usual Benoni fireworks can erupt. The second strategy is impatient and tactical. Black will enforce moves like ...♘e4 before White has had a chance to organize his preventative formation.

A)

9...a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 *(D)*
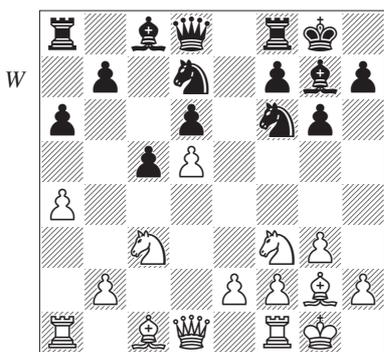
This is the most-played line of the g3 fianchetto system. White has these main moves:

A1: 11 e4   113
A2: 11 ♗f4   114
A3: 11 ♘d2   115

The last is the most important. But many top players choose 11 ♗f4 to avoid the complexity and depth of theory on 11 ♘d2, so that will also be studied in detail.

Note that 11 e4 cannot arise from the 9...a6 10 a4 ♖e8 move-order, but in that case 11 ♘d2 sometimes transposes, as explained in the relevant section (Line B2).

Also played are:

a) 11 a5 ♖e8 (11...b5 12 axb6 ♘xb6 13 e4 ♖e8 14 ♖e1, Pons-Gil Reguera, Madrid 1992, and now 14...h6!? 15 ♕c2 ♖a7!? 16 ♖d1 ♖ae7 17 ♘d2 ♘g4 is double-edged) 12 ♗f4 ♕c7 13 ♘a4 b5! 14 axb6 ♘xb6 15 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 16 ♘d2 was given as ± by Marin, but I would be happy with 16...♕xb2! 17 ♘c4!? (17 ♗xd6 ♗g4!; 17 ♖b1 ♕a3!? 18 ♗xd6 ♗g4 19 f3 ♕e3+) 17...♕xe2 18 ♘xd6 ♕xd1 19 ♖fxd1 ♖d8 = or 19...♖e2 =.

b) 11 h3 ♖e8 (perhaps the simplest move; both 11...♖b8 and 11...h6 also equalize, according to theory):

b1) 12 ♗f4 ♘h5 13 ♗g5 (13 ♗xd6 ♕b6) 13...f6 14 ♗d2 f5 15 ♗g5 ♗f6 (15...♕b6 16 ♕d2 ♘df6 17 a5 ♕c7 =) 16 ♕d2 ♘e5 =.

b2) 12 ♕c2 b6 13 ♖b1 ♕c7 14 ♗f4 ♘h5 15 ♗d2 ♘e5 = 16 g4!? ♘xf3+ 17 ♗xf3 ♘f6 18 b4 ♘d7 19 bxc5 ♘xc5 is equal, Koskinen-Sher, Copenhagen 1996.

b3) 12 ♖e1 ♘e4 (this resembles the ...♖e8 systems covered in Line B, but here h3 is of little use to White) 13 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 14 ♕c2 ♕e7!? (14...♖e8 =) 15 ♗d2 ♘f6 16 ♘h4 ♗d7! 17 ♗c3 ♖e8 18 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 19 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 20 ♖a3 (20 ♔g2 ♘g5 21 g4 h5 22 f3 ♘h7 =), Razuvaev-Tal, USSR Ch (Moscow) 1983, and now 20...♗xh3 = is easiest, with two pawns for the exchange.

c) 11 ♖b1 ♖e8 12 b4 (12 ♗d2 ♘b6! 13 e4 ♘c4 14 ♗c1 b5 15 axb5 axb5 16