

THAT'S CHESS!

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO HYPERNAÏVE PLAY

by

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CHAPTER I

PROLOGUE

CHESS, CHESS, CHESS. What *is* chess? A game? No; games are for children. A sport? No; sports have special shoes. Life itself? No; ok, let me just tell you. Chess, when you really get down to it, is when you have a bunch of different shapes on a bit of wood, and you take turns moving them around. Chess is a language; a system of rules with meaning and an infinite decision tree. Any time you say “quick game?”, *that’s* chess.

Within Sheffield’s philosophy department, a new chess paradigm has emerged, calling into question fundamental assumptions of both classical and contemporary chess theory: Are material and positional gains always to be favoured over equivalent losses? Are king’s- and queen’s pawn games really ‘playable’? Do considerations of principle always outweigh those of spiciness?

The ‘hypernaïve’ style of play expounded in this volume is (unsurprisingly) not without its detractors. One noted commentor, J.H.P. Lewis, described it as “bad chess, poorly played”. But, to paraphrase E.T. Bell, “time makes fools of us all”. Let’s begin.

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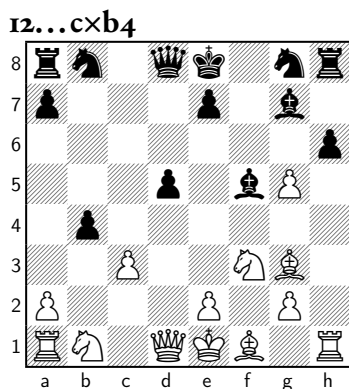
CHAPTER II

CHE BLUNDERO!

EVERY ROSE HAS ITS THORN, but every thorn has a rose! To get things right, one must understand how to do things *wrong*. In this way, the hypernaïve school is well-versed in *blunders*. This chapter deals with two instructive examples.

ROBERTO CARLOS

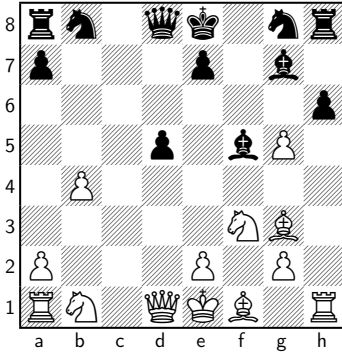
Consider the following setup in an early game between GM Roberto “Carlos” Morgan (white) and “Doctor” Emma Bolton (black).¹



Let’s not think too much about whether black just made the right move — it’s white’s turn now!

¹<https://lichess.org/RoSeiD7n>

13 cxb4

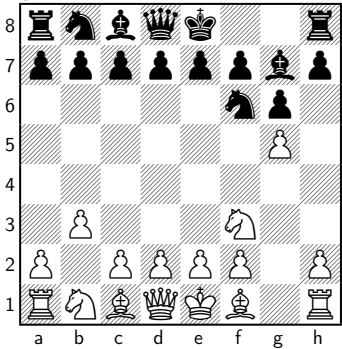


Blundero grosso! In his eagerness, white has exposed his rook, yielding 13... ♖×a1.

This particular kind of rook blunder, the so-called ‘Roberto Carlos’, is a mainstay of hypernaïve play, with countless extant examples. One interesting, but rarer, variation might follow from the following, fairly typical, opening sequence.²

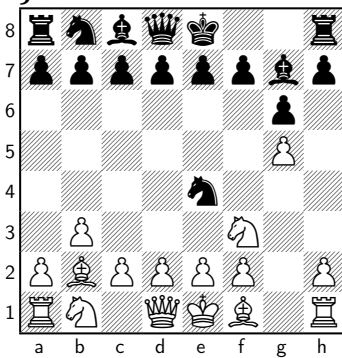
1 b3 g6 2 g4 ♖f6 3 ♖f3 ♗g7 4

g5



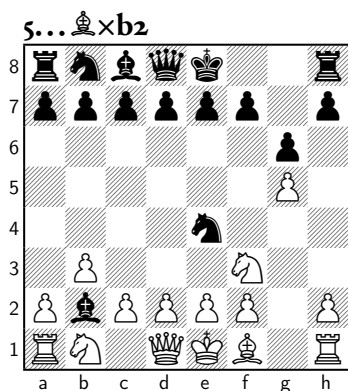
White has perhaps played g5 in the hopes that black will fail to notice and just let them have the knight. So far, so principled. In response, black plays 4... ♖e4, threatening the Roberto Carlos with ... ♗×a1.

5 ♗b2



White recognises the threat and attempts to head it off with ♗b2, immobilising black’s bishop by pinning it to the rook on h8, threatening a reverse Roberto.

²Morgan carries out a similar tactic here (<https://lichess.org/TvsjAUoh>), but avoids the full Roberto.

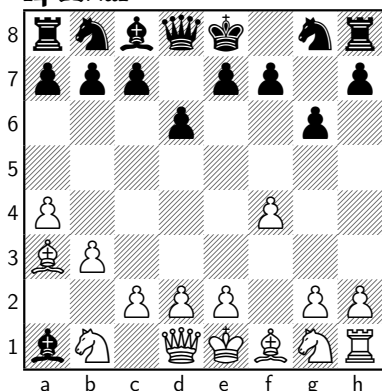


Doppio blundero! Who could have seen this coming?

GUILLERMO BLUNDERO

Guillermo del Calabrone was surely not the first to have played the Guillermo, but, through its ubiquity in his repertoire, it is a matter of consensus that he *perfected* it. Indeed, del Calabrone's first recorded use of this blunder³ already displayed full mastery of the technique — a queen sacrifice with absolutely no material or positional gain:

1 b3 d6 2 a4 g6 3 ♖a3 ♖g7 4 f4 ♖×a1

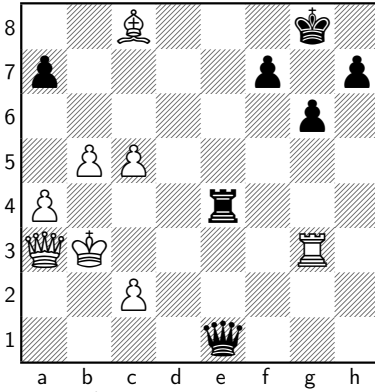


Black gets off to a strong start, successfully executing the Roberto Carlos.

³playing black against Morgan; <https://lichess.org/5GDpf3k4>

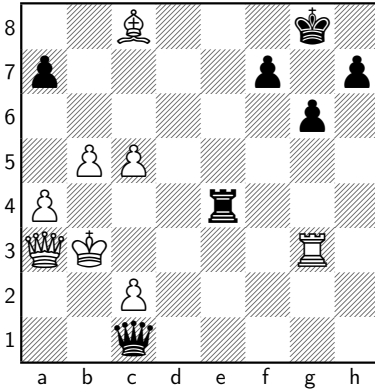
...30 ♔a3 ♖c8 31 ♙xc8 ♖e4

32 dxc5 ♗er+ 33 ♙b3



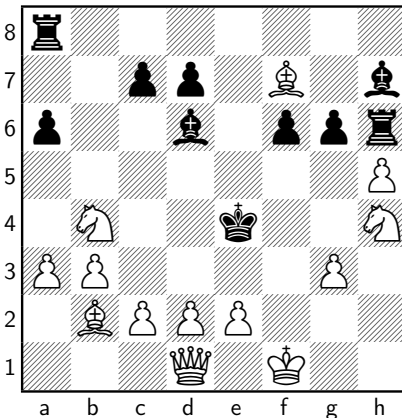
Much later in the game, black finds himself in a strong position, despite having blundered his rook only a few turns previously. Probably black's best move here is ...♔xg3, recovering the previously blundered rook.

33... ♔c1



Instead, Guillermo chooses 33... ♔c1, which is followed immediately by 34 ♔xc1, bringing the game to a close.

EXERCISE



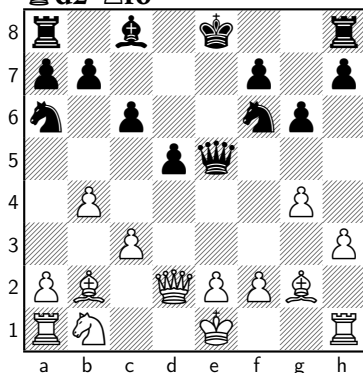
White to force a Guillermo Blundero in 2 moves.

CHAPTER III

THE MORGAN-SCOVILLE SCALE

COMMENTING ON HIS APPROACH to openings, Roberto Morgan remarks: “The modern chess maestros act as though the purpose of an opening is to secure a preferable position for future movements. This is the great mistake of their era. A chess opening ought to serve two purposes. First, to psychologically terrorise one’s opponent. Second, to revolt against the dominant aesthetic standards of one’s time. The true virtues of a chess opening are chaos and repugnance. The first moves of a game should not only rattle one’s opponent, but strike fear in the gods at what they have created.” This chapter will examine some of the attic-grandmaster’s *spiciest* openings. Let’s dig in!

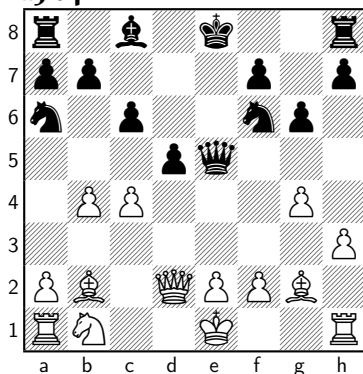
...8 ♖b2 e5 9 ♘f3 ♔d6 10
dxe5 ♙xe5 11 ♗xe5 ♚xe5 12
♙d2 ♘f6



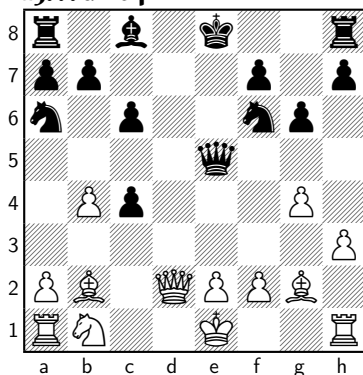
(Morgan v del Calabrone;

<https://lichess.org/nf8EVJYg>)

13 c4



13...dxc4



Spicé 🌶️

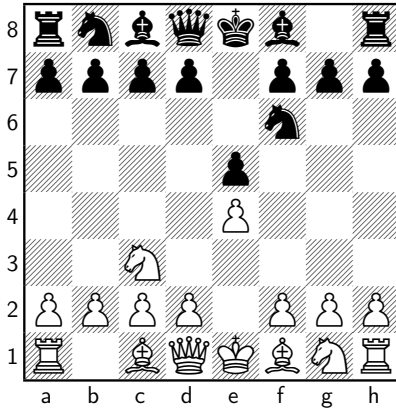
The Stinking Bishop

The goal of this opening is to lull your opponent into a false sense of security by hiding the b2 bishop behind the c3 pawn.

The c3 pawn is then offered as bait...

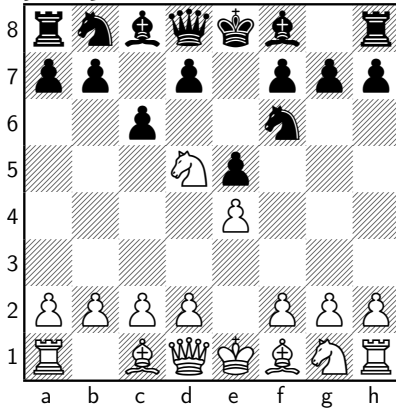
...and down goes the trap!
Black takes with ...dxc4,
leaving white to capture black's
queen with 14 ♙xe5.

1 e4 e5 2 ♖c3 ♜f6

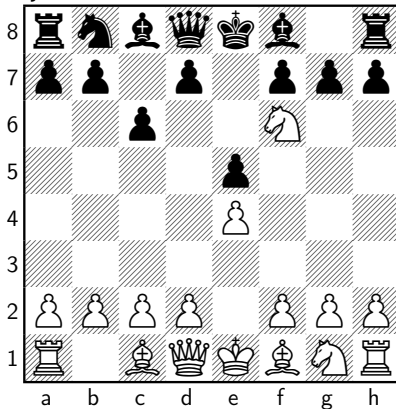


(Morgan v Bolton; <https://lichess.org/rVobrjiD>)

3 ♜d5 c6



4 ♜×f6+



Très Spicé 🌶️🌶️

Don Quixote's Delight

So far black is expecting a fairly normal game, likely anticipating f4, ♙c4, or g3.

Taking advantage of the element of surprise, white plays ♜d5, well defended by the e4 pawn. Black panics and plays ...c6, hoping to scare the knight away.

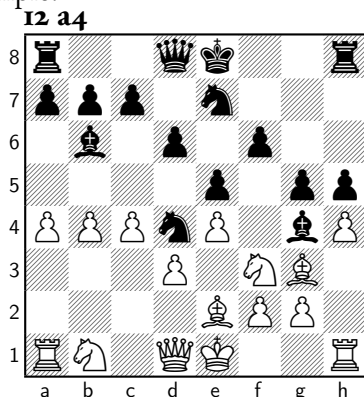
Undeterred, white takes the knight, forcing black's queen into the open with 4... ♙×f6. Robbie smash!

MORGAN'S IMMORTAL GAME

Throughout chess history one finds games which forever change the way the game is played — Kasparov v Topalov, Fischer v Spassky, That Game at the Opera. I'm not personally that familiar with these games, but this one surely sits alongside them as the pinnacle of the hypernaïve school.

Books could be written about this game. In this volume I only have space to discuss its opening, but I should offer some of its other highlights: *four* Robertos Carlos — one including a Guillermo Blundero and another including a 'doppio' variation — a frantic pawn chase, bombastic sacrifices, and a nail-biting mating sequence. I highly recommend playing the whole game through.¹

To put the opening into historical context, by this point Morgan had already experimented with three-pawns-in-a-row strategies, preempting the Doctor's Gambit in this game from March 2018, for example:²



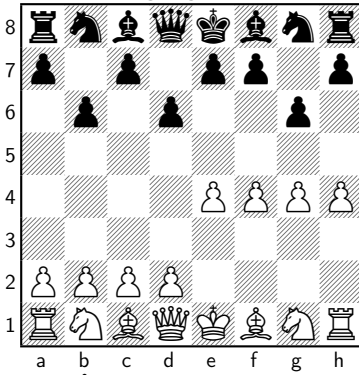
The 'far left' Doctor's Gambit.

But in the *Immortal*, Morgan offers a revolutionary development of the Doctor's Gambit.

¹Morgan (white) v del Calabrone (black); <https://lichess.org/X1XDVERx>

²Morgan v Bolton; <https://lichess.org/aCwPn5m5>.

1 h4 d6 2 g4 g6 3 f4 b6 4 e4

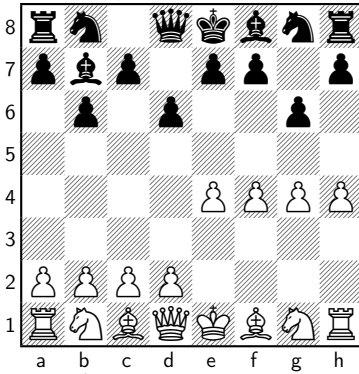


A Thousand Suns 🌞🌞🌞

Morgan's Gambit

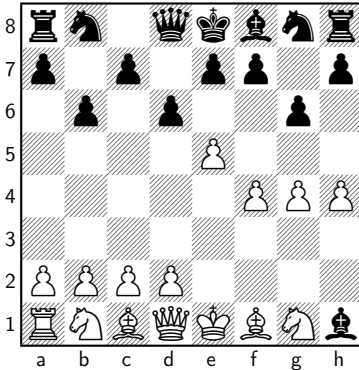
Four pawns in a row.

4... ♖b7



At first, black responds defensively, but then sees an opportunity to play the Roberto Carlos, and prepares his bishop with ... ♗b7.

5 e5 ♗xh1



With white's next move, e5, he offers up his rook, and we see that this 'blunder' was his intention all along. Black accepts the gambit, playing ... ♗xh1, trading white's rook for a significant positional disadvantage.

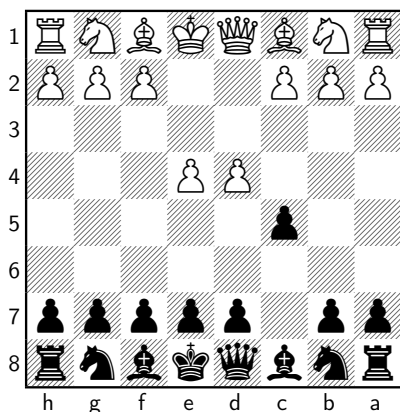
This sequence arguably secures a victory for white. So, more generally, what hope is there for black against this opening? My feeling is that Morgan's Gambit *declined* is less of a blind alley, but this surely requires further study.

CHAPTER IV

EPILOGUE: MEDITATION ON POSITIONALITY

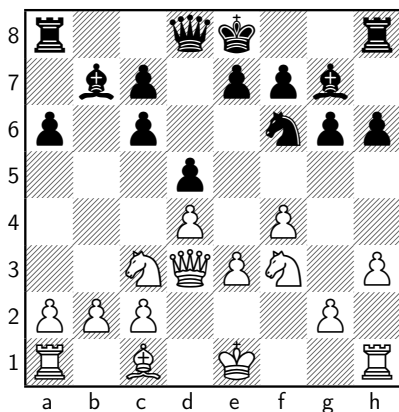
MUCH INK HAS BEEN SPILLED on the topic of *positionality*.
All in vain! Is such-and-such position positional? *Look and see.*

EXERCISES



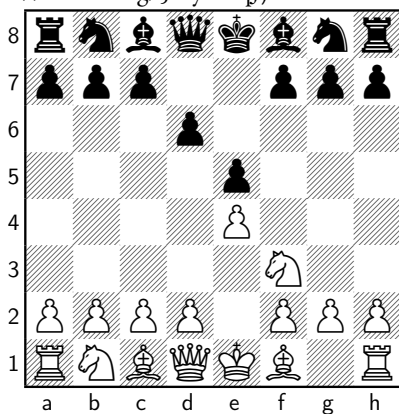
1. Black to play. Is ...c4 positional?

(del Calabrone v Morgan;
<https://lichess.org/eoCcgySP>)



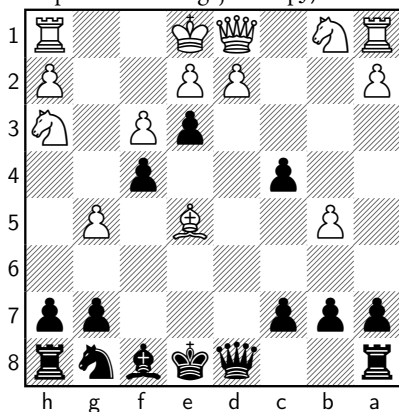
2. From the groundbreaking 'Doctor's Gambit' game. White to play; is e4!? positional?

(Bolton v Morgan; <https://lichess.org/5zdynUqJ>)



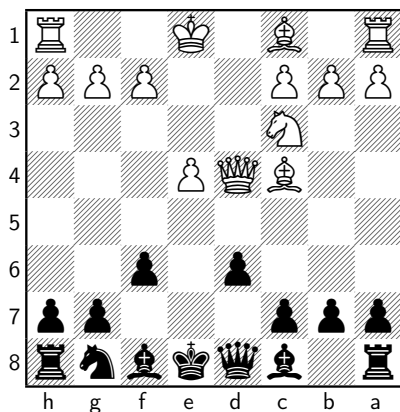
3. White to play. Is ♔e2 positional?

(Morgan v M.J. Cull; <https://lichess.org/jaMt2ipJ>)



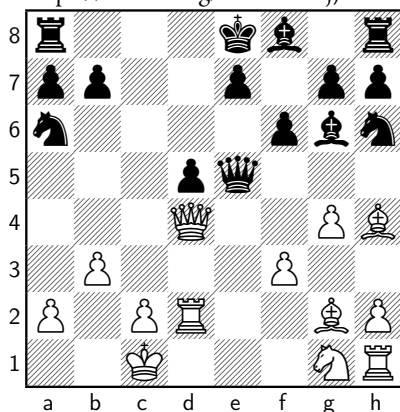
4. Black to play. Is ...c3 positional?

(del Calabrone v Bolton; <https://lichess.org/zoBSYGhn>)



5. Black to play. Is ... ♔e7 positional?

(Morgan v J. "H.P." Lewis;
<https://lichess.org/usKUKFbj>)



6. White to play. Is ♔xd5 positional?

(del Calabrone v Morgan;
<https://lichess.org/UcpfZPV3>)

SOLUTIONS

All are *highly* positional.