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Queen's Indian Defense (QID) Analysis

By Coach M

Dear Students,

This resource contains analysis of the QID. Through it, we can have a clearer picture of the trends, pros/cons, theoretical positions, common slip-ups, evaluations, etc... relating to the QID.

This is for YOUR eyes only!!

As students of Coach M, you have been granted special security clearance to view this TOP SECRET information contained within. May it serve your game well and may our pawns be passed!

Queen's Indian Defense (QID): After the moves 1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 b6 (Figure 1), black announces that they will defend the queen's pawn game with the QID.



Statistics will show that this defense is the most popular at high level against 1. d4 and that white can rarely get more than a nominal edge.

Figure 1

Our sources within chess.com have smuggled out a statistical summary of the frequency of occurrence of the QID, at the Master level, which is now given here on the next page (Figure 2).



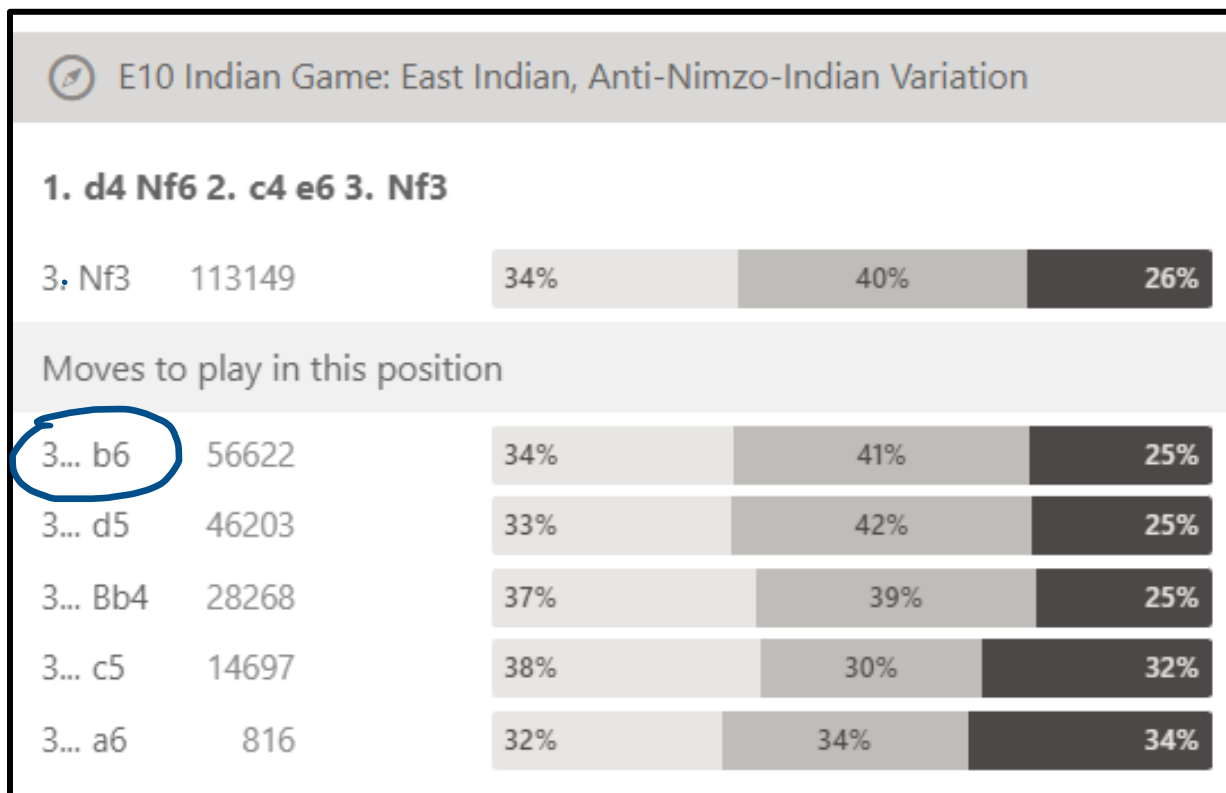


Figure 2

We observe here that the “gap”, measuring the white winning percentage minus the black winning percentage, for the QID, is $34\% - 25\% = 9\%$. From this we may infer that amongst equally matched players, in 100 games, white should win an extra 9 games. Projecting that our own results with the QID will match the Master game spreads above, then we, playing the QID (or against the QID), will win 34% of our QID games as white; we’ll win 25% of our QID games as black; and 41% of our QID games will be draws.

OPENING DEFENSE RULE OF THUMB 1:

Any defense against 1. d4, 1. e4, 1. c4, or 1. Nf3, that cuts the gap to 10% (or less) is a defense worth using/playing with regularity.

Thus, by the above, the QID (9% gap) is a defense worth using/playing with regularity. Other defenses that also achieve this threshold include but are not limited to the *Sicilian Taimanov* Variation (1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6, (2% gap)), *Queen's Gambit Ragozin* Variation (1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 d5 4. Nc3 Bb4, (8% gap)), and the *English Opening, Carls-Bremen, Reversed Dragon* Variation (1. c4 e5 2. Nc3 Nf6 3. g3 d5, (4% gap)). Here gap statistics are from the chess.com Explorer. The above line of reasoning leads us to the following Corollary 1:

CORROLARY 1 TO OPENING RULE OF THUMB:

Any defense against 1. d4, 1. e4, 1. c4, or 1. Nf3, that fails to cut the gap to 10% (or less) is a defense worth weening off/ditching/reducing regularity of reliance upon it.

Thus, by the above Corollary 1, the Dutch Defense (1...f5 against 1. d4, (13% gap)), and the King's Indian Defense (1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7, (12% gap)), should be either shelved completely by players of these defenses or at least there should be some weening-off / ditching / reducing regularity of reliance upon them.

We'll now survey (3) set-ups within the QID and gauge the suitability of them for inclusion in our repertoire as either white or black.



1. King's Bishop Fianchetto Line

The King's Bishop Fianchetto Line is the most popular way to meet the QID by a 3 to 1 margin at the Master Level. To this point, approximately 60% of all Master QID games are in this line, see Figure 3.



Figure 3

The statistics for the QID King’s Bishop Fianchetto (main) Line, out to move 7, see Figure 4, (Note: variations from this main line ARE possible however deviations are generally riskier for each player and likely move the gap in a “counter direction”):

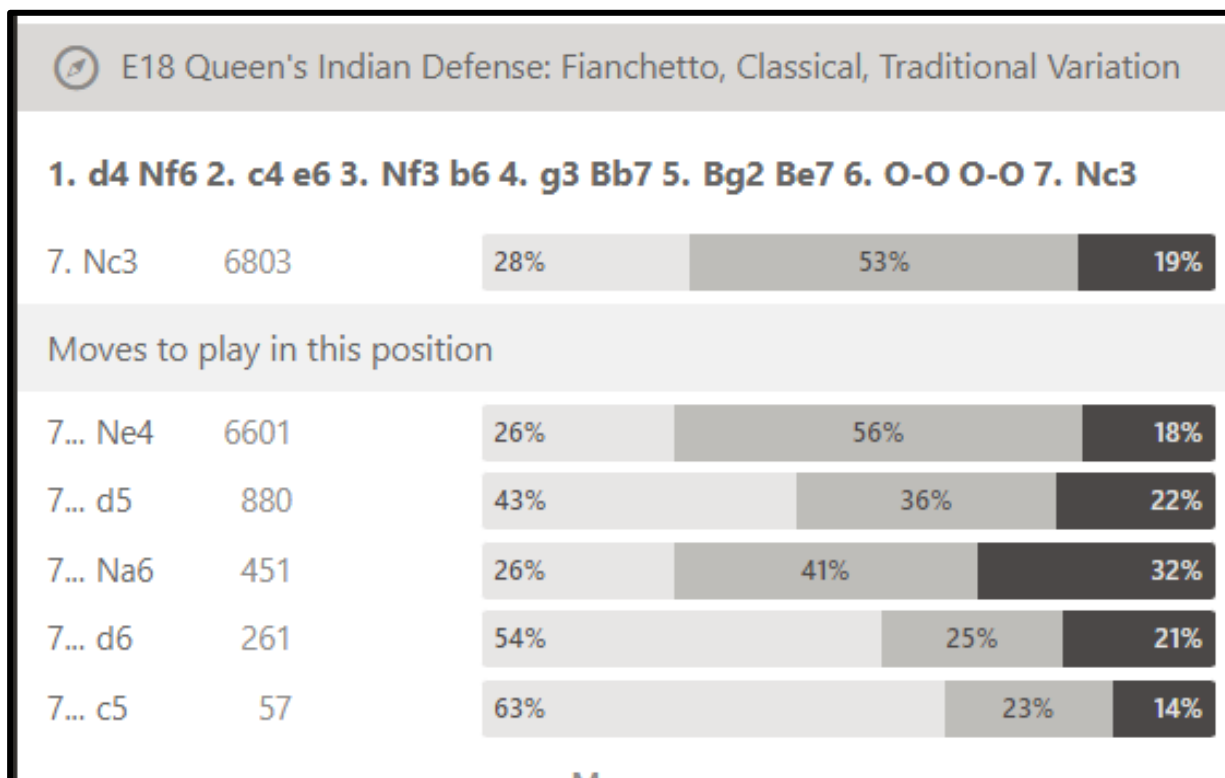


Figure 4

Here we can observe that black's 7...Ne4 conforms to **OPENING DEFENSE RULE OF THUMB 1** (8% gap) and thus it can be put into our repertoire if defending the 1. d4 game with a QID and if white opts for this main line of the King's Bishop Fianchetto variation. Observe that the sample size of 6,601 Master games in the 7...Ne4 line is sufficiently large to warrant faith in the results/statistics (26% : 56% : 18%) being representative and reflective of what we can expect with our own games against players of equal ability in this line.

Remark 1: It can be seen that the 7... Na6 is actually netting better statistics for black, in 451 games, though this sample size is significantly smaller than that of the 7...Ne4 line.

More analysis/investigation is needed for 7...Na6. Is it truly some not-so-well known improvement for black over the more trusted main line move, 7...Ne4? Does a strong chess engine, running at high depth, produce an evaluation that would justify the impressive 7...Na6 results/statistics (26% : 41% : 32%)?

One theoretical line of play in this King's Bishop Fianchetto Line leads to the following position shown with engine evaluation by Stockfish 15.1 at depth 36, see Figure 5.



White employs an optimal development scheme yet still can only achieve a nominal edge.

Figure 5

For all intents and purposes, black has equalized according to this readout from Stockfish 15.1 at depth 36.

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2. Kasparov-Petrosian Line

According to the database in chess.com, the Kasparov-Petrosian line, (1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 b6 4. a3!?) is the second most popular choice amongst Masters when playing against the QID, see Figure 6.



Figure 6

The primary idea behind this seemingly innocuous 4. a3!? is to enable the queen's knight to develop to c3 without allowing the disruptive pin Bb4.

Besides having World Champion proponents, GMs Garry Kasparov and GM Tigran Petrosian, this line boasts some truly impressive statistics for white, see Figures 7-8, though the strong results, in practice, for this line do not completely correlate with the engine analysis of positions.

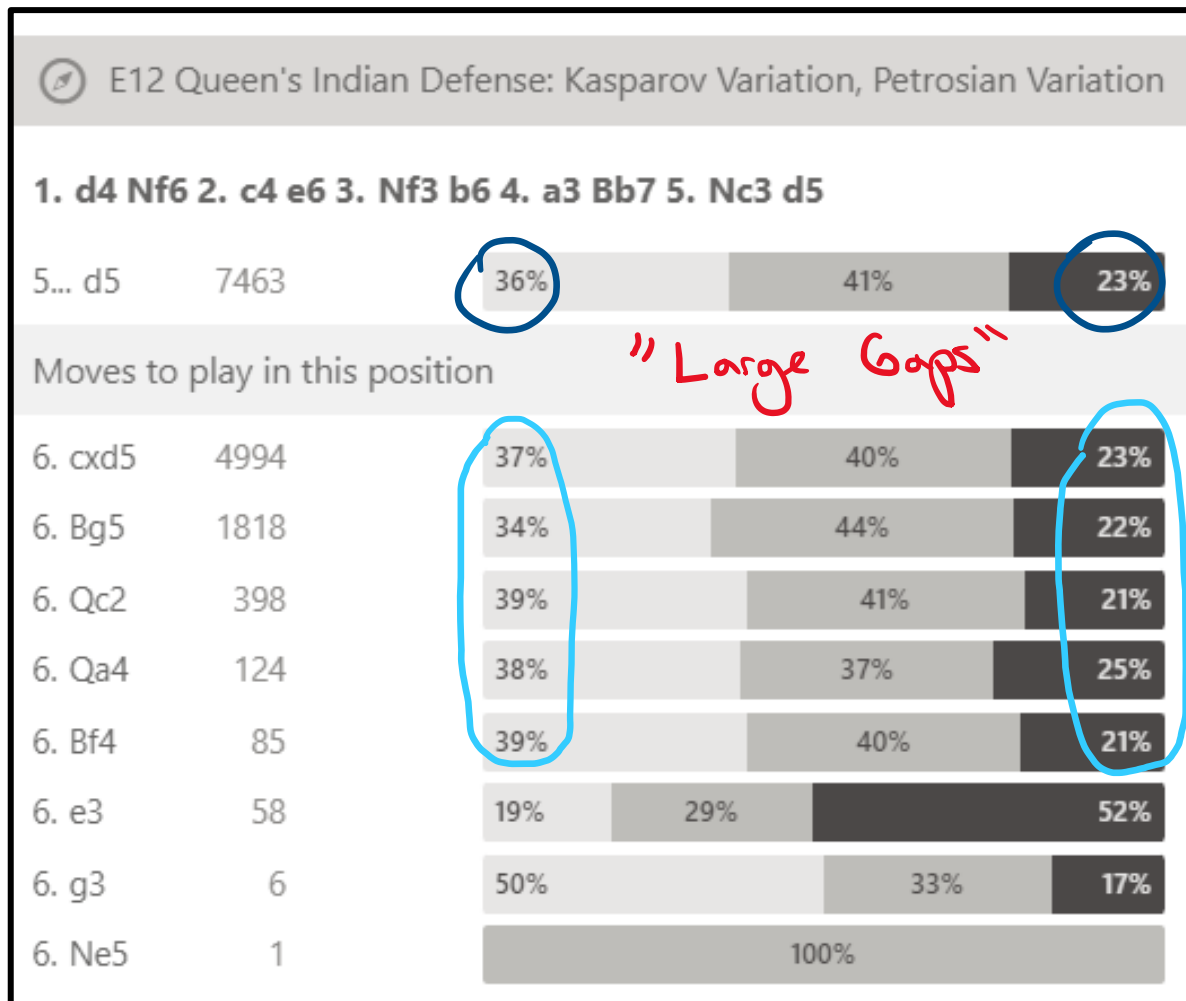


Figure 7



Figure 8

Here, in this above critical main line of the QID Kasparov Petrosian variation, white's edge is already nominal and black has for all intents and purposes achieved equality by move 5, see Figure 9. So the promising statistics above from Master play are curbed somewhat by the cold engine evaluation indicating no edge for white.



Figure 9

Per the above Stockfish 15.1 analysis at depth 37, black is equal by move 5. and *should* have no problems yet white is winning more in Master play.

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3. QID Miles Variation

The relatively obscure QID, Miles Variation, is a rarity at any level in Master play. It takes its name from the creative English GM, Tony Miles, the very same GM who famously defeated World Champion Anatoly Karpov in a classical game with 1...a6!? Strategies in the QID Miles Variation, characterized by the early B move 4...Bf4, mirror those in the “London System” whereby white aims to “win on the queenside”. The starting position of the Miles Variation is as shown in Figure 10.



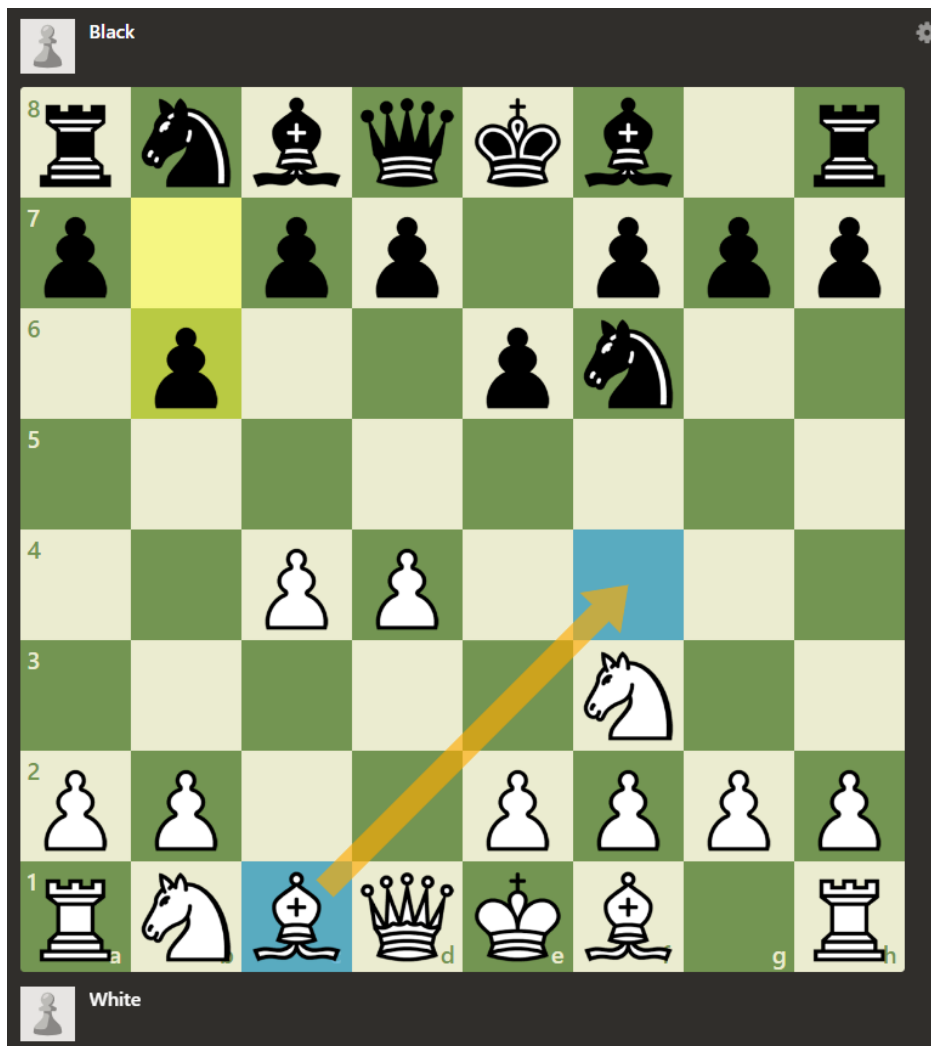


Figure 10

Play will typically follow the line 4. Bf4 Bb7 5. e3 Bb4+ 6. Nbd2 after which engine analysis indicates that white's edge is nominal and thus, for all intents and purposes, black has equalized by move 6. It can be seen that statistics, in particular for the "gap", for the QID Miles Variation, are at least as impressive as 4. a3, the Kasparov Petrosian System, see Figure 11.

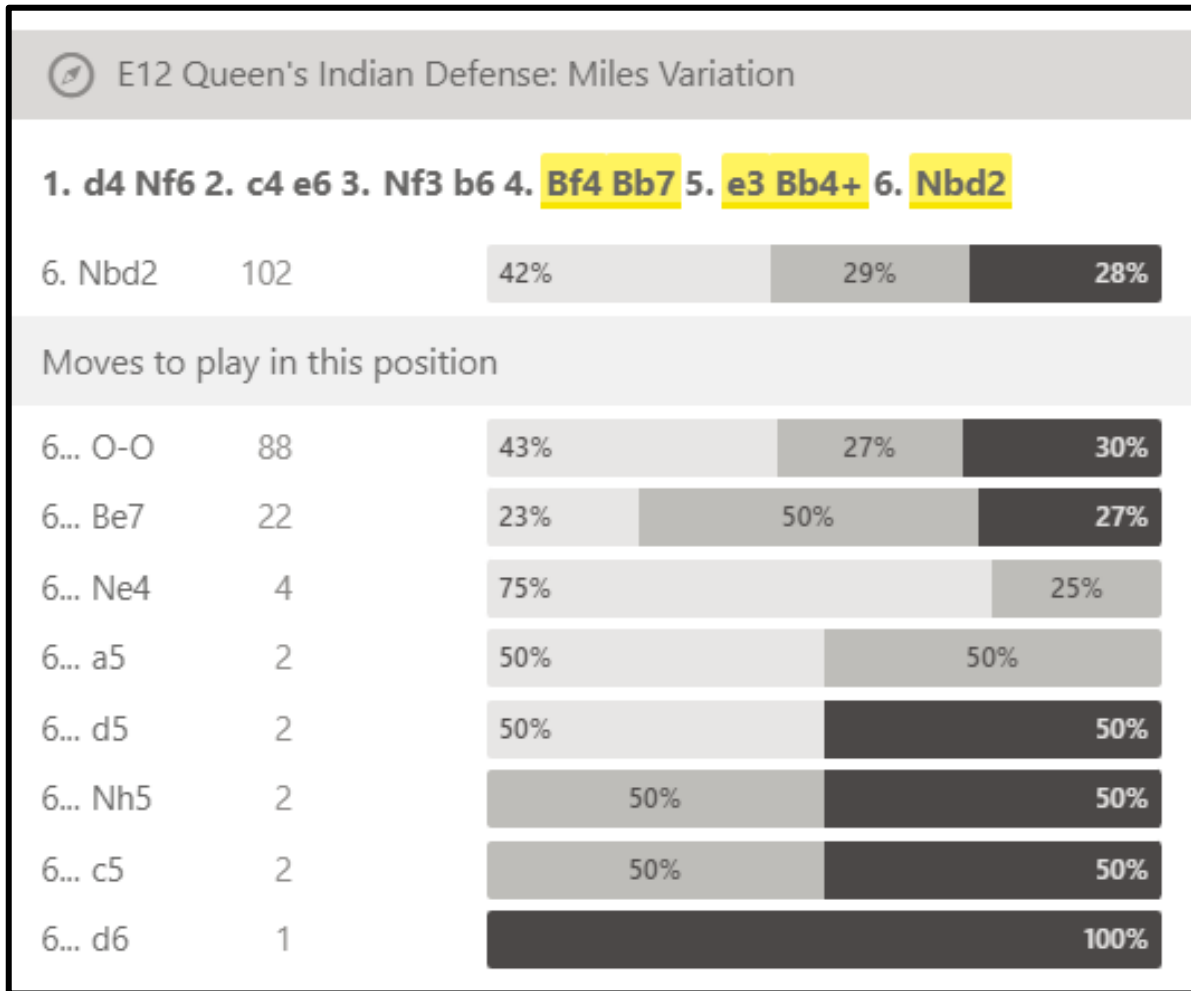


Figure 11

Remark 2: It can be seen that only 102 Master games feature the Miles Variation of the QID. We also observe that there is a large 13% gap in the 6. 0-0 “main line” which is indeed impressive when compared to the lesser gaps obtained in lesser alternatives though, engine analysis does not rate white’s Miles Variation as sufficient for any edge (same as Kasparov-Petrosian Line).

Also, due to the small sample sizes, little stock can be put into these gap statistics and further analysis/practice with it is required to ascertain whether this Miles variation is capable of being a good long-term choice for white to combat the QID. Engine analysis is very similar to the 4. a3 Kasparov Petrosian Line in that it's rather cold on whether there is any significant edge for white, see Figures 12-13.



Figure 12



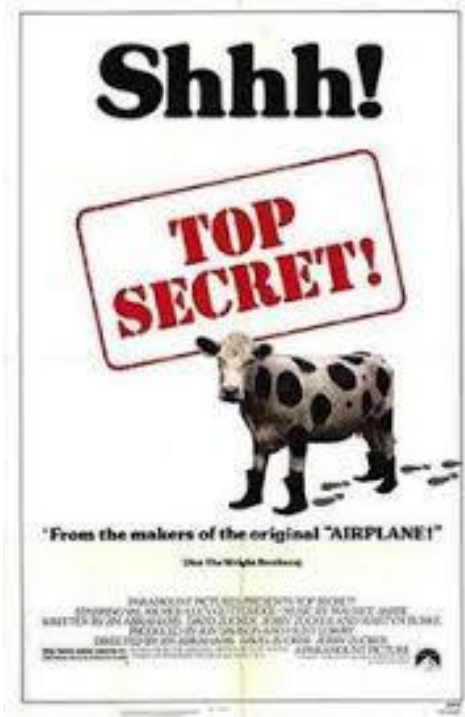
Figure 13

*No edge.
Black is equal.*

Black has equalized by move 6.

Conclusion: Regardless of the line chosen to battle the QID, it follows from this analysis that the QID is one “tough nut” to crack and thus it can be made part of our own repertoire to improve starting positions that we have in our games (when defending against 1. d4).

Below are some test positions from the various lines showing exploitation of select inaccuracies played. Good Luck on these positions.



Exercises:

A. Blunder by black in the King's B Fianchetto Line.



d6?? is a disaster here for black (correct was Nc6 and black is slightly better). How does d6?? fail here?

B. Blunder by black in the Kasparov Petrosian Line.



While $Be7$ is part of our main line in the King's Bishop Fianchetto Line, this $Be7$ move can fail quite miserably in the Kasparov Petrosian Line. In this position in the Kasparov Petrosian Line, how does white exploit the inaccurate $Be7$?! and net a significant edge?

C. Blunder by black in the Miles Variation.



This has gone rather wrong for black. The QID Miles Variation Bishop is making a real nuisance of itself on d6. That said, white must respond to black's threat to eat d4. How would you play this position? Note: Black was far too relaxed in the opening to allow Bd6...

Solutions to Exercises:

A. d6?? is a disaster because of Ng5! picking up and exchange at the very least.

B. Be7?! allows d5! and black is cramped.

C. Not Nf3? or Nb3? Though these defend the d-pawn, they both allow Ne4, driving away our super Bishop on d6. The best move ensures that the B will remain on d6. It's Qf3! Defending tactically. Attempts to pick up the rook via Nxd4 QxB Nc2+ are poor for black as the N will be trapped and so white will have two minors for a R+p. In this particular case, the minors will beat out the R.