

**The
Queen's Gambit
Accepted**

**A Modern Counterattack in an
Ancient Opening**

Max Dlugy

Foreword by Alex Fishbein



**2023
Russell Enterprises, LLC
Portsmouth, NH USA**

The Queen's Gambit
A Modern Counterattack in an Ancient Opening
by Max Dlugy

ISBN: 978-1-949859-67-6 (print)
ISBN: 978-1-949859-68-3 (eBook)

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Published by:
Russell Enterprises, LLC
P.O. Box 332
Portsmouth, NH 03802 USA

<http://www.russell-enterprises.com>
info@russell-enterprises.com

Cover design by Molly Scanlon

Printed in the United States of America



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Introduction

Dear Reader!

To make sure we are on the same wavelength, I want to ask you a question: Why did you get this book? If your answer is “I wanted to learn the Queen’s Gambit Accepted,” then you should know, that is not why I wrote it! This book is for those who want to make the QGA a weapon of destruction, an opening that, from the very first moves, will force your complacent opponent to start calculating incredibly complicated variations just to stay on pace with your newly found knowledge of how to apply the pressure with the black pieces. Are you with me now? Good!

Let me start with a story of how a 15-year old boy, who four years later would become the World Junior Champion, decided the Queen’s Gambit Accepted was the opening for him. Forty years later, that same person is now transferring four

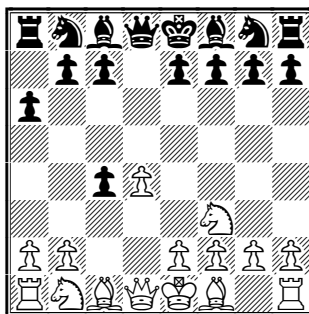
decades of knowledge and experience to those that want to play for a win with Black!

Let’s start with my first important experience with the Queen’s Gambit Accepted at the World Under-16 Championship in Argentina, where I arrived as the rating favorite, but ended up in seventh place, in large part due to this game played in round eight.

Dlugy – Barua D21

Embalse 1981

1.d4 d5 2.c4 d×c4 3.♘f3 a6



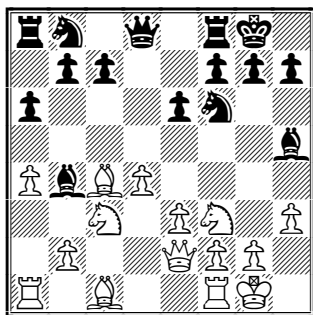
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I had never seen this mysterious move, and assumed that I must work to win back the c-pawn now by playing a4. This assumption hits many players playing White, allowing Black to get in many good ideas for free.

4.a4 ♖g4?!

Obviously both players were not that privy to main line theory. This move, played by the future grandmaster Dibyendu Barua, is a rare bird in modern chess for the obvious reason that ♗e5! would be quite a strong reply. Believing my opponent has something up his sleeve though, I played:

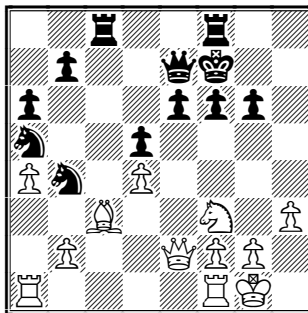
5.e3 ♗f6 6.♖xc4 e6 7.h3 ♖h5
8.♗c3 ♖b4 9.0-0 0-0 10.♙e2?!



Not the best treatment of the Alekhine Variation, as Black can now get a very nice game with 10...c5.

10...♗d5 11.♗e4 ♗c6 12.♗g3
♖g6 13.♖d3 ♖d6 14.♖xg6
h×g6 15.♗e4 ♙e7 16.♗×d6

c×d6 17.e4 ♗db4 18.♖e3 d5
19.e5 ♗a5 20.♗g5 f6 21.e×f6
g×f6 22.♗f3 ♖ac8 23.♖d2 ♙f7
24.♖c3?!



I had played reasonably well to up to this point, and I could have retained a nice advantage by concentrating on the weakened kingside with 24.♖ae1!.

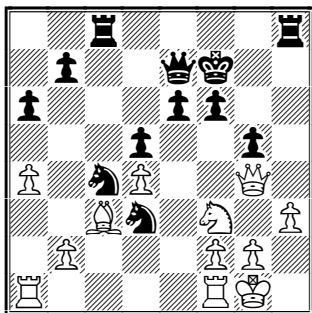
24...♗c4 25.♗h4?

The beginning of my problems. Black is fully prepared for my attack, something I completely underestimated.

25...♖h8 26.♙g4 g5 27.♗f3?

A further mistake. It was important to get rid of the strong knight on b4 first, leading to a minimally worse game after 27.♖xb4 ♙xb4 28.♖fe1! ♖c6 29.♗f3 ♗d2 30.♗xd2 ♙xd2 31.♖ad1, with a salvageable position.

27...♗d3



27...♖c6 was even stronger, but what happens now completes the puzzle.

28.♞a2??

It is amazing how material-friendly I was at 15! This ugly move ends the battle. After the correct 28.♞ad1 ♖dxb2 29.♙xb2 ♖xb2 30.♞c1 ♖c4 31.♞fe1, White has sufficient compensation for the pawn, and the position is roughly equal.

28...♞cg8!

From this point on my opponent is relentless.

29.b3 f5 30.♞g3 g4 31.♖g5+ ♞xg5 32.♞xg5 ♞xh3 33.gxh3 gxh3+ 34.♞g3 ♞f4 35.bxc4 ♞f3 36.♞e1 h2+ 0-1 I felt quite uncomfortable ceding the b4-square throughout the game, and felt like I would have preferred the black pieces throughout.

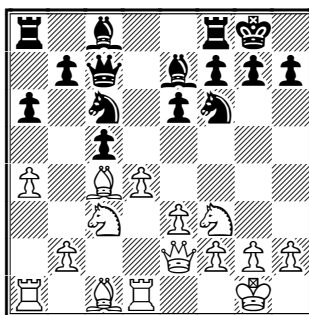
After Argentina, I went to England to play in the Lloyds Bank tournament and there I fell into an

instructive trap on the white side of the QGA against international master George Botterill, making me so unhappy that I resigned by move 15. Let's take a look at this trap, since both Alina Kashlinskaya and Vladimir Malakhov had fallen into it when I was playing Black!

Dlugy – Botterill D27

London 1981

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♖f3 a6 4.a4 ♖f6 5.e3 e6 6.♙xc4 c5 7.0-0 ♖c6 8.♞e2 ♞c7 9.♖c3 ♙e7 10.♞d1 0-0



11.e4?

Though it is really not over for White yet, Black's response can make a serious dent into White's psyche.

11...♖g4!!

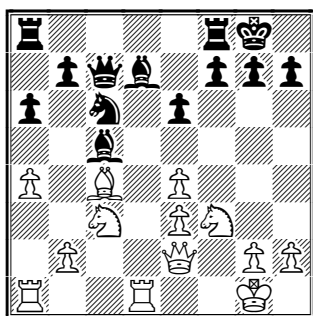
This beautiful knight sortie forces White to find a reasonable defense to the threat of ...♖d4!. I panicked and played...

12.dxc5?

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The only playable move here is 12.e5 – occurring only four times in the 54 games in the database. After 12...dxd4 13.dxd4 cxd4 14.♖xg4 dxc3 15.bxc3 ♖xe5 16.♞b1, White has surprisingly reasonable compensation for the pawn, and will likely equalize in the near future. I have to say that neither Vladimir Malakhov, rated roughly 2680 at the time of our blitz game, nor Alina Kashlinshkaya, a strong WGM, found this solution in our games.

12...♙xc5 13.♙e3 ♘xe3
14.fxe3 ♙d7



whereupon I simply resigned, not willing to be tortured by a stronger player from this position.

These two losses to Barua and Botterill convinced me to buy a book on the QGA from the tournament's book concession and start learning the opening. The very next round I beat John Levitt, another future grandmaster, in my first outing ever with the QGA. I could not find the game, but I do

remember it was a crazy game with the line starting 1.d4 d4 2.c4 dxc4 3.♗f3 ♗f6 4.♗c3 a6 5.e4 b5. This was the start of my close relationship to the QGA.

In 1993, when I was already working as a currency trader for a major bank, I got a postcard from Viktor Korchnoi. Viktor asked if I would be his coach to prepare him for the next world chess championship cycle. I was very pleased with the offer, but could only accept if he came to New York to work with me. He refused and it did not materialize. When I ran into Dmitry Gurevich, Viktor's long-time coach, he told me the main reason for the offer is that he could not understand how it was that I always got great positions on the black side of the QGA!

Recently, a major development propelled the QGA to the forefront of openings chosen by the top players. An amazingly cool move in a line researched by many players over the years reestablished the viability of the move 3...b5! in the Central Variation after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e4. Considering that my coach Vitaly Zaltsman was the first player to suggest 3...b5 in a serious competition and that I was the first grandmaster to play it against none other than the reigning world champion at the time (Garry Kasparov), I would like to use this book as the opportunity to name the

3...b5 variation the Zaltsman Variation.

It was his amazing positional foresight that put the move in play. He convinced me to try it out in an exhibition game against Garry Kasparov and we will analyze this game in the Annotated Games section. I believe the resurgence of the Zaltsman Variation has already started the path of the renewed viability and popularity of the Queen's Gambit Accepted, with many top players happily beginning or returning to play it.

The book is written from Black's perspective to show that in many cases Black, has more than one way to get a good position and can continuously surprise White with new ideas. I also took apart a number of variations which are considered playable for Black, to show that it is not that simple to equalize and there are a number of pitfalls to avoid. I intentionally left out the analysis of the Exchange Variation's endgame, which is well covered in the Semkov/Delchev book *Understanding the Queen's Gambit*. Although I have played that endgame for decades – I personally think it is much less fun to play an endgame in which you have to be precise to equalize against even a

weaker player. Enough suffering – I am a chess senior!

I have created a quick guide for starting out with the QGA. It is called "*QuickStarter!*" The idea is that hopefully, after studying 10-15 pages of material and getting familiar with the lines in online games, it will be easier for you to embrace this opening.

When referencing the excellent book *Your Jungle Guide to 1.d4!* by Kotronias and Ivanov, I refer to it by the abbreviation "JB" to stand for the timeless Jungle Book. I hope the authors understand my humor. In the Annotated Games section, I endeavored to show not only the latest ideas in the variations covered, but also some timeless QGA beauties and positional struggles that have adorned this fine opening for generations.

Dear Reader! As always, I welcome your comments and suggestions for future editions of the book. Please do not hesitate to write to my email at chessmaxinc@gmail.com.

With the Very Best Regards,

Maxim Dlugy
New York
February 2023

Foreword

There are few books as well suited to their author as the one you have just opened. If you wanted to learn the Berlin Defense, you would want to read a book by Kramnik. If you want to find out about the Grünfeld, you might want to read a book by Svidler. If you want to take up the Queen's Gambit Accepted, you want Maxim Dlugy as your guide.

Maxim Dlugy has played the QGA for 40 years now, and it's always been his main opening against 1.d4. The Queen's Gambit Accepted has had its peaks and valleys in popularity, but Maxim has been there all this time, both finding new ideas and adapting the ideas of others to a solid repertoire. As he explains in the *QuickStarter!* chapter, the move 6...♖b6! against the 3.e4 variation has brought new life to the opening. Therefore, not only is the author perfect for the book, but it is also written at the right time.

Dlugy's name may not be familiar to all players who were born in the 21st century, but in the 1980s and 1990s he was one of the most feared competitors in the United States. He was the World Junior Champion in 1985, won the World Open in 1985 and 1988, had several excellent results in the US Championship and was in the World Top 50. He also had a very clean, no-nonsense positional style, which was not that common among people of that generation.

I first met Maxim in 1984. He was eighteen (two years older than me), and already then it was obvious that he was a refined positional player. During the next several years, he was a very tough opponent for me. I kept getting the black pieces against him, and my attempts at the King's Indian, Dutch, and Benko Gambit landed in convincing defeats, among a few fortunate draws: all valuable lessons for me. More recently, I had White against him

twice in classical time-control games, and I was hoping to press home some advantage – but... two draws, and, of course, in the QGA both times!

The Queen's Gambit Accepted suited Maxim's style very well. People were afraid of playing against his QGA because if you get a worse position with an isolated queen pawn against him, only prayer can help you! He was deadly with a small positional advantage, be it in the middlegame or endgame. Game 21 in the Annotated Games section is a good example.

Another feature of Maxim's style that shone through since the beginning is his healthy skepticism toward unclear sacrifices. This doesn't mean that he is a pawn grabber, but if you sacrifice material against Dlugy, you are going to have to demonstrate the compensation concretely, because he is an excellent tactician and will refute all superficial tries (see Games 1 and 7 for that). In the QGA, if you don't recover that c4-pawn early enough, there may be no compensation.

Thus, I always saw Maxim Dlugy as someone I was learning chess from. Now you, the reader, can see what you can learn from him about the Queen's Gambit Accepted. I think you will be well rewarded.

Some opening books nowadays are hard to read. There is a prevailing myth that people need to remember long computer variations just to survive in the opening. I have seen a lot of books with well-tested lines that go to move 40. But these lines are unlikely to actually occur, and they teach you little about chess, or even about the main ideas of that opening. Maxim Dlugy takes a different approach here.

While there is no shortage of exact theoretical variations, Maxim gives the context for all lines. He both explains the strategical ideas behind the moves and reflects on the history of how the variation came about. He shows lines that used to be considered equalizing, but are not reliable anymore. He always presents the most challenging response to the repertoire. Indeed, as he himself mentions, this book will be valuable for people playing against the QGA.

But my favorite section is the aforementioned Annotated Games section, which makes up almost a third of the book. Here, you will see what happens not on a computer screen that is left running overnight, but on a real chess board with real pieces. Dlugy will explain to you the critical moments of the game and the reasons behind the decisions. An especially nice touch is

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the conclusion after each game, which starts with something like “In this game, we learned that...” For example, for game 11, he writes: “In this game, we saw that the positions where White plays d5 to trade the e6-pawn for the d-pawn give Black a latent endgame advantage...” Every game teaches a lesson, often with deep insight.

I also really like the *QuickStarter!* chapter. It’s for the impatient reader (but aren’t we all a bit impatient?). In a few pages, it gives you not only all the lines that will be in your repertoire, but also specific strategic ideas to focus on. I hope that this will give other authors an example, and future opening books will be structured like this.

In the first paragraph of his Introduction, Maxim asks the reader if they got this book because they wanted to learn the QGA. He then says that’s not why he wrote it. He says this book is for those who “want to make the QGA a weapon of destruction, an opening that, from the very first moves, will force your complacent opponent to start calculating complicated variations just to stay on pace...” With the author’s permission, I would take this a step further. This book will teach you not just the QGA, but chess strategy in general. It will teach you how to play solid yet lively positions and allow you to take something away from Maxim Dlugy’s classical style and lucid explanations. If you want to improve your chess while learning a reliable opening with Black, you are now reading the book you need.

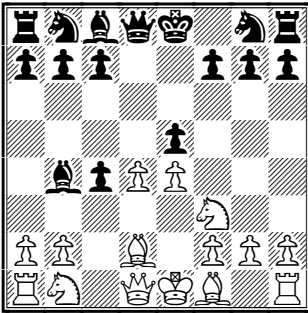
Alex Fishbein
Spring Hill, Tennessee
March 2023

Chapter 2

The Central Variation

5. ♖d2

1. d4 d5 2. c4 dxc4 3. e4 e5 4. ♘f3
♙b4+ 5. ♖d2



This move is the second most popular move in this position, scoring over 58% in the database. Its examination will lead us to mostly technical positions, where Black has to be precise to equalize chances.

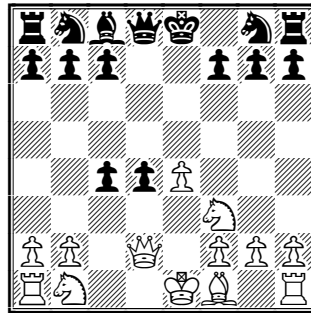
5... ♙x d2+

Here White has two equally strong continuations.

6. ♘bxd2

This continuation is the more common approach. Though White basically sacrifices a pawn, Black must be precise in dealing with this gambit.

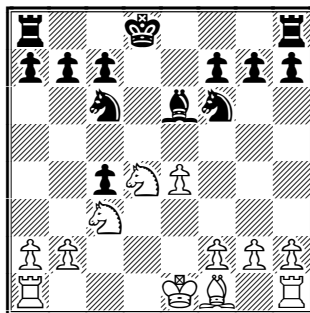
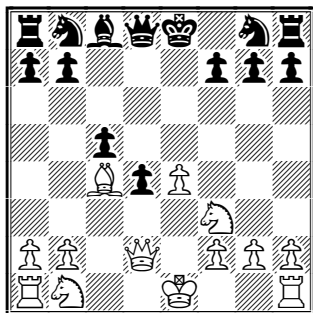
6. ♗xd2 is a major alternative. After 6... exd4,



the only real continuation for an advantage is 7. ♘xd4. Let's quickly dismiss the others:

(a) 7. ♙xc4 c5!

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8.b4 (Worse is 8.♖e5 ♗e6! 9.♗xe6 fxe6 and White simply does not have much for Black's pawn and center.) 8...♗c6 9.bxc5 ♖f6 10.0-0 11.♖e1 ♗g4 12.e5 ♗d7 13.♗xd4 ♗dxe5 14.♗xc6 ♗xc6 and Black has full equality;

(b) 7.♙xd4 ♖f6!

The most precise move. The main point of the move is to force White to trade on d8 instead of empowering White's knight by exchanging on d4. 8.♗c3

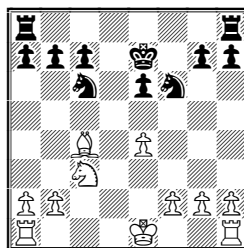
8.♙xd8+ basically transposes, as White has nothing better than 9.♗c3 following the trade. If after 8...♙xd8 White plays 9.♗xc4?!, it is at best a dubious attempt at an advantage that could easily backfire after 9...♗xe4 10.♗xf7 ♗d6 11.♗b3 ♖e8+ 12.♖f1 a5! 13.♗c3 h6! 14.♖d1 ♖a6! and White must be accurate to maintain the balance.

8...♗e6! A very important move, forcing White to work to regain the pawn. 9.♙xd8+ ♙xd8 10.♗d4 ♗c6!

Not a very pretty, but a precise move leading to equality.

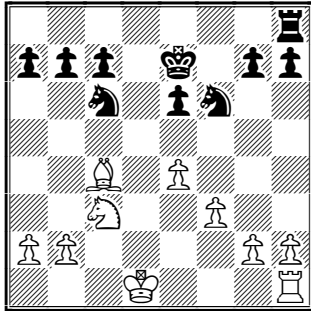
11.♗xc6+

This looks strong, but the counterplay down the b-file will keep Black safe. Let's take a look at other possibilities: 11.♗xe6+ fxe6 12.♗xc4 ♖e7



And now 13.0-0-0?

(b1) 13.♖d1 ♖ad8 14.f3 (14.0-0? g5! 15.f3 h5 and you can see how with simple moves, Black leaves White gasping for air. Though objectively this endgame is close to a draw, the e6-pawn limits the light-square bishop, while the control of the important e5-square by Black's knight gives him chances.) 14...♖xd1+ 15.♙xd1



15...dxe5

15...d8+ 16.e2 e5 17.b3 c4 18.bxc4 d7 19.d1 g5 and though Black has a nice position, White can hold the endgame with precise play.

16.e2 d8+ and now White has to be careful. The most precise move to deal with the impending ...c6 is 17.e1 c6 18.b1! defending the d2-square to allow the king to depart. 18...d7 19.f2 d4 20.e3 c5 21.c3 with an equal endgame;

(b2) 13.f4! is the most precise.

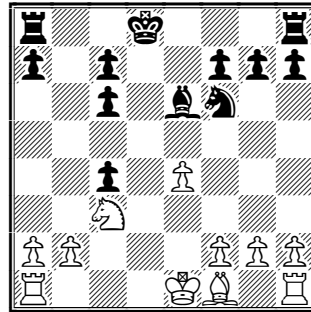
13...ad8 14.e5 h5 15.g3 g5 16.e2 g7 17.fxg5 xe5 18.d1 xd1+ 19.cxd1 cf5 with an equal endgame.

Back to 13.0-0-0: 13...g4 14.d2 ad8 15.xd8

Not 15.f3? xd2 16.xd2 d8+ 17.c1 e3 18.b3 g6 19.g3 d3=.

15...xd8 16.f4 d4 17.b3 e5! and Black is much better; if 18.g3, then 18...b4.

Returning to 11.dxc6 bxc6:



12.f4

White has also tried 12.0-0-0+ e7 13.e2 when Black should probably go for dark-square control with 13...g5 14.h4 h6 15.d4 ad8 16.xd8 xd8 17.hxg5 hxg5 followed by the knight transfer to e5.

12...g6 13.0-0-0+ e7 14.e2

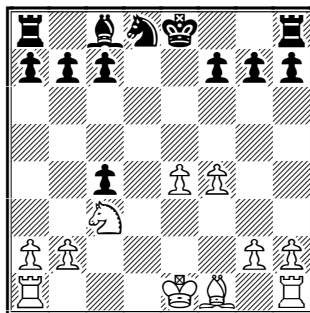
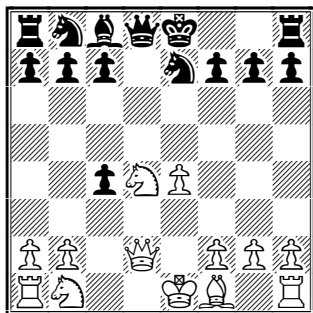
14.e1 f8 15.g3 was Petrusson-Dlugy which ended in a draw after I played 15...d7. But more precise was to play for the open h-file with 15...h5!.

14...h5 15.he1 ad8 16.h3 h4 17.f3 and here in Timman-Salov, instead of the immediate 17...h5 which was enough for a draw, Black should have opted for 17...xd1+ 18.xd1 h5 19.xh5 xh5 20.e2 f5! with some chances for an edge. So White has to rely on...

(c) 7.cxd4 to fight for an advantage.

7...e7!

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This is the safest road to equality, as I found out in my match against Sanan Sjugirov in Aeroflot 2013. I played 7...♗f6 twice, including in the Armageddon game, and lost both games.

8.♗xc4

The most natural move, though 8.♗c3, potentially having in mind a quick queenside castling deployment is a very valid option. Let's take a look:

8.♗c3 ♖bc6 9.♗xc6 ♗xc6!

It would be a mistake to trade on d2 first, as Black can use the trade on d8 to improve his knight on c6. After 9...♙xd2+ 10.♗xd2 ♗xc6 11.♖b5! ♗d8 12.♗xc4 ♗e5 13.♗e2 c6 14.♗c3, White's space advantage translates to a nagging pull in the endgame.

10.♙xd8+ ♗xd8 11.f4

After 11.♗xc4 ♗e6 12.♗xe6 ♗xe6 13.♖d1 c6 14.♗e2 ♗e7 15.♗e3, White's optically better position gets neutralized with either 15...h5 followed by ...g6 or with ...g6 looking to play ...f5 quickly. Generally speaking, in these kinds of endgames, which we will see soon enough in some other variations, Black's potential passed-pawn on the queenside will compensate for White's space advantage in the center. Black needs to strive to trade rooks to make his queenside-pawns come alive faster.

11...♗e6!

Black is tempting White to play f5, after which it will be easier to combat White's space advantage.

12.f5 ♗d7 13.♗d5

13.♗xc4 is not very testing as after 13...♗c6, Black secures the e5-square for the knight.