

The French Defense...

...Properly Played

Wolfgang
Uhlmann



JBV Chess Books

Wolfgang Uhlmann

The French Defense ...Properly Played

A Life Long French

JBV Chess Books

Preface	8
The Tarrasch Variation	10
1 Bialas – Uhlmann Leipzig 1951	11
2 Govedarica – Uhlmann Vrbas 1977	13
3 Hamann – Uhlmann Halle 1963	16
4 Kostro – Uhlmann Zakopane 1974	17
5 Prandstetter – Uhlmann Decin 1977	19
6 Stoica – Uhlmann Bukarest 1979	22
7 Prandstetter – Uhlmann Trencianske Teplice 1979 ...	24
8 Radulov – Uhlmann Albena 1983	26
9 Stein – Uhlmann Moskau 1971	28
10 Kuijf – Uhlmann Amsterdam 1990	31
11 Neukirch – Uhlmann Potsdam 1974	33
12 Womacka – Uhlmann Dresden 2001	34
13 Saren – Uhlmann Aarhus 1971	36
14 Kupreychik – Uhlmann Fürstenwalde 1969	38
15 Geller – Uhlmann Amsterdam 1970	39
16 Mestel – Uhlmann Hastings 1973	43
17 Kholmov – Uhlmann Halle 1978	46
18 Suetin – Uhlmann Debrecen 1987	48
19 Karpow – Uhlmann Madrid 1973	50
20 Vogt – Uhlmann Potsdam 1974	52
21 Velimirovic – Uhlmann Vinkovci 1982	55
22 Ibrahimoglu – Uhlmann Siegen 1970	58
23 Nijboer – Uhlmann Amsterdam 1990	59
24 Tischbiereck – Uhlmann Dresden 1984	62
25 Fridman – Blühbaum German Championship	65
The Nimzowitsch Variation	70
26 Kramnik – Buhmann Dortmund 2016	71
27 J. Polgar – Korchnoi Buenos Aires 2001	73
28 Fischer – Uhlmann Buenos Aires 1960	75
29 Fischer – Uhlmann Interzonal Tournament	79
30 Smyslov – Uhlmann Havanna 1964	80

31	Liebert – Uhlmann	Halle 1962	82
32	Bogdanovic – Uhlmann	Sarajevo 1965	84
33	August – Uhlmann	Erfurt 1976	86
34	Pelitow – Uhlmann	Szombathely 1966	88
35	Becker – Uhlmann	Halle 1982	90
36	Suetin – Uhlmann	Berlin 1967	93
37	Hazai – Uhlmann	Halle 1981	95
38	Ghinda – Uhlmann	Zinnowitz 1976	98
39	T. Pächtz – Uhlmann	Fürstenwalde 1981	102
40	Unzicker – Uhlmann	Warna 1962	104
41	Sjasjutkina – E. Pächtz	Tschakwi 2015	107
42	Enders – Uhlmann	Erfurt 1985	109
43	Anand – Curt Hansen	Middelfahrt 2003	111
44	Bronstein – Uhlmann	Tallinn 1977	112
45	Lanc – Uhlmann	Bukarest 1979	114
46	Bogdanovic – Uhlmann	Sarajevo 1963	116
47	Hartman – Uhlmann	Budapest 1986	118
48	Psakhis – Uhlmann	Tallinn 1987	120
49	Hertneck – Uhlmann	Dresden 1993	123
50	Cs. Horvath – Uhlmann	Debrecen 1988	127
51	Anand – Lputyan	New Delhi 2001	129
52	Garcia-Martinez Uhlmann	Leipzig 1983	133
53	Kaklin – Uhlmann	Budapest 1986	133
54	Hausner – Uhlmann	Halle 1982	135
55	Hausmann – Uhlmann	Weimar 1998	138
56	Schmittdiel – Uhlmann	Germany 1992.....	140
57	Eley – Uhlmann	Hastings 1973	141
	The Advance Variation		144
58	Möhring – Uhlmann	Halle 1982	144
59	Przewoznik – Uhlmann	Zakopane 1980	148
60	Rosen – Uhlmann	Dresden 2001	149
61	Enders – Uhlmann	Eggesin 1978	151
62	Teske – Uhlmann	Nordhausen 1986	153
63	Badestein – Uhlmann	Berlin 1973	155

The King's Indian Attack	158	
64 Sawon – Uhlmann	Skopje 1968	160
65 Browne – Uhlmann	Amsterdam 1972	160
66 Lau – Uhlmann	Potsdam 1988	162
67 Enders – Uhlmann	Jüterbog 1985	165
The Exchange Variation	167	
68 Silva – Uhlmann	Tel Aviv 1964	167
69 Velimirovic – Uhlmann	Skopje 1976	169
70 Böhnisch – Uhlmann	Leipzig 1989	171
71 A. Zude – Uhlmann	Frankfurt 1990	173
72 Varga – Uhlmann	Eger 1986	175
Miscellaneous Lines	177	
73 Kovacs – Uhlmann	Sarajevo 1969	177
74 Lendwai – Uhlmann	Graz 1991	178
75 Santa Cruz – Uhlmann	Havanna 1964	180
76 Eskandary – Uhlmann	Dresden 2002	181
Player list	184	



Dear chess friends!

After having published the book 'The French Defense – Properly Played' in 1991, I would like to complement that part of my lifework concerning opening theory. Since the first edition of the book is out of print, I would like to meet the wish of many chess friends by explaining more details about this fight-oriented opening. I have revised the book, added more games and included the latest theoretical findings.

Since at my actual age of 82 years I could not contribute any current game of my own, I have included five up to date games from other specialists of the French Defense. When I wrote the annotations for the selected games, I paid special attention to the correct evaluation of the theoretical insights. However, my main concern is still to give you practical hints about the positional evaluation in the variety of lines, as this enables you to find the right plan in a given position.

It's an accepted fact among my colleagues that for the best part of my long chess career I've been one of the best connoisseurs of this opening. I was lucky enough to compete against the absolute best in the world (among them most prominent players, like world champions Botvinnik, Smyslov, Tal, Fischer and Karpov) and to achieve many nice successes with this opening. As a result, it's not surprising that in my tournament practice I almost always answered 1.e2-e4 with 1...e7-e6. In this context I would like to mention that my love for this opening was due to my great respect and admiration for my role model Mikhail Botvinnik.

Since I've chosen only my best French games, it was, of course, inevitable that this collection contains many older games from my long career. I wanted to show you the unconditional fight which starts right in the opening. You will witness creative opening treatment and courageous risk-taking with fantastic combinations, but also valuable positional games in which the right strategy leads to success. And finally the comments are enriched by skillful endgames.

I have always considered it right to learn from my own mistakes, and to draw conclusions from them. Playing the French Defense brings joy, is highly interesting, and leads to games which are about life or death. Even in lines considered rather toothless (e.g. the Exchange Variation) there are still ways to play for a win.

When choosing my best French games from the past 40 years, I've also done some statistical research in order to determine how many times I've applied my pet defense, and I was surprised by the result. From the roughly 700 serious games I've played with this opening, I've scored about 420 points, and thus 60%. If you consider that this result was achieved as Black and primarily against strong opponents, it is just fantastic. It also explains my passion for this opening and the fact that I never had to fear even the best prepared opponent.

Dear chess friends, I wish that you enjoy the often complicated lines and recommend you always consider the pawn structure when creating an opening plan. The skillful handling of the transition from the opening to the middle game is also an important part on the way to victory. I wish you a lot of fun and many eventful hours when you study the following games. And I hope that you will also become a fan of the battle-oriented French Defense.

Grandmaster Wolfgang Uhlmann

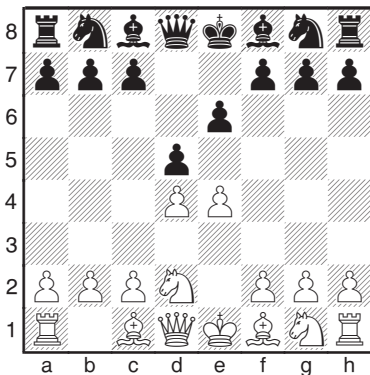
Siegbert Tarrasch was born in Breslau in 1863 and died in Munich in 1934. He was a grandmaster who lived for many years in Nuremberg and later on in Munich. He gave the teachings of Wilhelm Steinitz a scientific framework. He was respectfully called the 'Praeceptor Germaniae' (teacher of Germany). His main works 'Das Schachspiel' (The Chess Game), '300 Schachpartien' (300 Chess Games) and 'Die moderne Schachpartie' (The Modern Chess Game), were pioneering landmarks for entire generations.



Siegbert Tarrasch

The Tarrasch Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2



This setup is characterized by the move 3.♘d2. Its pioneer was Dr. Siegbert Tarrasch, who introduced the system to the tournament practice in 1880. As an ardent advocat

of solid pawn positions he favored this move, which is considered one of the safest approaches against the French Defense. White doesn't intend to exert immediate pressure on the center but instead relies on long-term strategic play. As a rule, sharp lines can be avoided, which are typical, for example, in the Nimzowitsch Variation after 3.♘c3 ♘b4 due to the pin of White's knight.

After 3.♘d2 Black has three completely different answers at his disposal. First of all the move 3...♘f6 which provokes the further advance 4.e5 and leaves White

some space advantage. Little material is exchanged, and White can keep his center stable by f2–f4 and c2–c3, whereas Black tries to counter-attack by means of the levers c7–c5 and f7–f6. This leads to battle-oriented lines and thus to considerably more decided games than draws.

The second answer to 3.♘d2 is the classic move 3...c7–c5 which tries to profit from the relatively passive position of White's knight by immediately initiating the fight for the center, which in most cases leads to the dissolution of the central tension. However, Black has to accept that after swapping pawns on c5 and d5 he remains with an isolated pawn on d5. In an endgame this is often an easy target object, although it can be compensated by active piece play.

And the third possible reply is 3...dxe4. This more draw-oriented approach is currently booming, and top players like Anand, Bareyev, Ponomaryov, Shirov and Radjabov have significantly enriched its theory.

Game 1 Bialas – Uhlmann Leipzig 1951

In 1951 I achieved my first big success as a 16-year-old at the German Youth Championship in Leipzig. I clearly won 1.5 points ahead of the runner-up, a result that provided me with the necessary stimulation for further tournament successes. Already at that time, the French Defense was my favorite weapon against the opening move 1.e4. Although the following sensational game is not free of mistakes, I still consider it a small tactical gem in my collection.

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♘f6 4.e5
♗fd7 5.♙d3 c5 6.c3 ♗c6 7.♗e2
♚b6 8.♗f3 cxd4 9.cxd4 f6 10.exf6
♙b4+?!**

From a later point of view, this move should better be replaced by the immediate 10...♗xf6.

11.♙d2 ♗xf6 12.0-0 0-0 13.a3

After the preferable 13.♙xb4 Black would face long term difficulties to activate his light squared bishop, which is, however, a general problem of the French Defense.

13...♙d6 14.b4

Instead of this inaccuracy 14.♗c3 was the right approach, as 14...♚xb2 would run into 15.♗a4.

14...e5!

By opening the position, Black obtains promising piece play even

before the opponent's troops have reached a halfway harmonious setup.

15.dxe5 ♘xe5 16.♘xe5 ♙xe5

In this sharp position 17.♖c1 fails to 17...♘g4 with a double attack on f2 and h2. And 17.♙e3 could not solve the problems either, as after 17...♚c7 18.♖c1 ♙xh2+ 19.♔g1 ♚e5 20.g3 ♙g4! White cannot ward off the threat 21...♙f3. That's why the textmove is forced.

17.♙c3 ♙xh2+

In youthful exuberance Black launches an attack according to well known patterns. However, the combination has a hole, as I had to recognize several decades later.

18.♔xh2 ♘g4+ 19.♔g3

This is forced, as after 19.♔g1 ♚h6 only the return sacrifice 20.♙e5 could have prevented the mate. Only by bringing his king out into the open, White can hope to survive and maybe even refute Black's sacrifice combination.

19...♖xf2

That's the real point of the bishop sacrifice, as without the pawn on f2 White's king lacks protection and the attacking queen can come closer by means of decisive moves like 20...♚e3+ or 20...♚d6+. And 20.♖xf2 fails to 20...♚xf2+ 21.♔h3 ♘e3 and mate in a few moves.

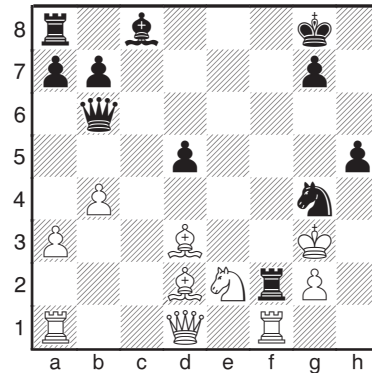
20.♙d2

The best defense, as 20.♚c1 is followed by 20...♚c7+ 21.♘f4 ♖xf1

22.♙xf1 (22.♚xf1 ♚xc3) 22...g5 23.♙d2 ♚d6 24.♚c5 gxf4+ 25.♙xf4 ♚xc5 26.bxc5 ♙f5 with a small edge for Black.

20...♘e3?

When I made this move, I was so much focussed on winning the queen that I didn't properly evaluate the overall consequences. The right move was 20...h5!



It was 60 years later that a German chess friend pointed out to me this move which gives Black winning chances in the following lines:

1) After 21.♙f4 and only now 21...♘e3!, the line 22.♙e3? ♚xe3+ 23.♔h2 ♚h3+ ends with a mate, and after 22...h4+ 23.♔xh4 ♘xd1 White loses a piece.

2) 21.♘f4 h4+ 22.♔xh4 ♚h6+ 23.♘h5 ♖xd2-+

3) 21.♚e1 ♚f6 22.♖xf2 (22.♖h1 g5 23.♖xh5 ♚e5+ 24.♔h3 ♚h2#) 22...h4+ 23.♔h3 ♘xf2+ followed by ♘xd3.

4) After extensive analysis I found a line that probably rescues White

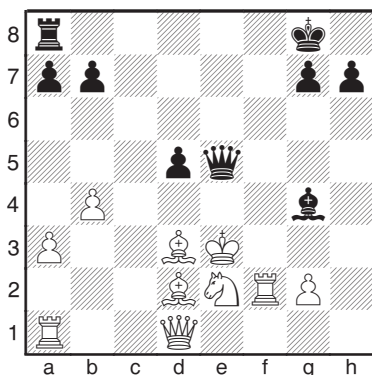
in the sense that while Black still has better chances there's no immediate win: 21. ♖c1! ♜d6+ 22. ♙f4 h4+ 23. ♗xh4 g5+!! 24. ♗g3 (24. ♙xg5? ♜h2# or 24. ♗xg5 ♜h6#) 24...gxf4+ 25. ♗xf4 ♞xf1 with a small edge after 26. ♙xf1 ♙f5 or 26. ♜xf1 ♙d7.

21. ♖xf2 ♜d6+ 22. ♗f3??

Only this decisive mistake leads to defeat. After the correct 22. ♗f4! ♗xd1 23. ♞xd1 g5 24. ♞h1 Black would have to fight for a draw.

22... ♙g4+ 23. ♗xe3 ♜e5+

The final position deserves a diagram.



White resigned. A tragicomic picture: The white king dies surrounded by too many of its men, which, instead of helping, form a coffin.

Game 2

Govedarica – Uhlmann

Vrbas 1977

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3. ♗d2 ♗f6 4.e5 ♗fd7 5. ♙d3 c5 6.c3 ♗c6 7. ♗e2 ♜b6 8. ♗f3 cxd4 9.cxd4 f6 10.exf6 ♗xf6 11.0-0 ♙d6 12.a3

The main moves are 12. ♗c3, 12. ♗f4, 12. ♙f4 and 12. ♗g3.

12...0-0 13.b4?

At this stage, the pawn advance is a mistake, and should be replaced by the correct move 13. ♗c3. This game was played 26 years after the first one, in a grandmaster tournament in Yugoslavia, which I won in a sovereign manner. I was at the height of my chess career concerning perfected positional and tactical skills. I vaguely remembered my first attempt against Bialas where the small but essential difference consisted in the fact that the white bishop was already on d2, a detail that turns out to be in Black's favor.

13...e5!

This central liberation action at the same time is the beginning of an attack on the kingside.

14.dxe5 ♗xe5 15. ♗xe5

This move already leads to serious difficulties for White. The alternative 15. ♗ed4 would have kept the position in balance.

15... ♙xe5 16. ♞a2

16. ♙e3 loses very quickly in view of 16... ♜c7 17. ♞c1 ♙xh2+ 18. ♗h1

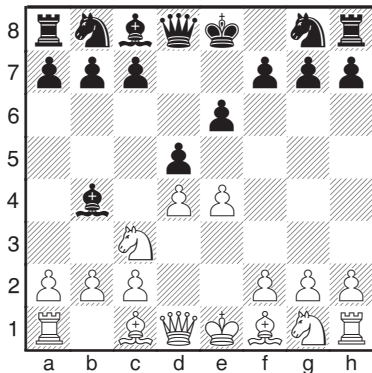
Aaron Nimzowitsch was born in Riga in 1886 and died in Copenhagen in 1935. From 1925-1930 he was one of the strongest players in the world. His biggest success was the first place in Karlovy Vary in 1929. In a field of 22 strong masters he won 1.5 points ahead of Capablanca and Spielmann. His 'immortal zugzwang game' shows an example of his skills. However, in the chess world Nimzowitsch also remains immortal because of his opening systems: the Nimzo-Indian Defense and the Nimzowitsch variation of the French Defense.



Aaron Nimzowitsch

The Nimzowitsch Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4



The bishop's sally to b4, which bears the name of Nimzowitsch, is undoubtedly the most dangerous line in the French Defense. (The other main lines are 3...♞f6 and 3...dxe4.) White has a variety of

answers at his disposal (like e.g. 4.e5, 4.♙d2, 4.♙d3, 4.♞ge2) which all lead to different positions. The move 4.e5 is the most common, and 4...c5 or 4...♞e7 are the normal responses.

The main move 4...c5 leads to a fight around the pawn on d4. After 4...c5 or 4...♞e7, the game mostly continues 5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 which leads to different pawn structures and thus a dynamic position. Now White can choose the sharp 7.Qg4 or one of the positional approaches 7.Nf3 or 7.a4. Complicated and often dangerous games can arise, with high success rates for both sides.

Game 26
Kramnik – Buhmann
 Dortmund 2016

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5
 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♗f3 ♕e7 7.♕e3 b6

This trend line has been introduced to tournament practice by the German players Blühbaum and Svane. Black wants to play 8...♕a6 and to prevent 8...dxc5 at the same time, as 8...bxc5 would strengthen his center. The usual line is 7...a6 and 8...b5 gaining space on the queenside.

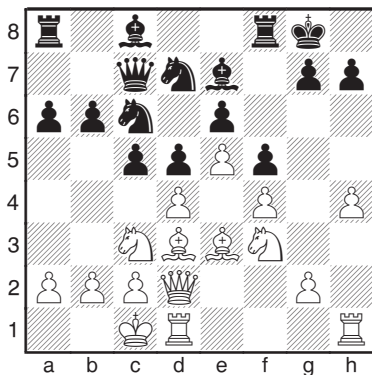
8.♖d2 0-0

Now Black waives the intended 8...♕a6, as White could play 9.♕xa6 in *one* move without losing a tempo for ♕e2 or ♕d3.

9.h4!

Kramnik is miserly with every single tempo, and leaves no doubt that he's preparing an attack on the kingside.

9...♗c6 10.♕b5 ♖c7 11.0-0-0 a6
 12.♕d3! f5



The newcomer at the traditional Dortmund elite tournament spent 45 minutes for this move, as the position requires utmost precision.

1) So for example 12...c4 could very well be followed by 13.♕xh7+ ♔xh7 14.♗g5+ ♔g8 15.♖e2 g6 16.♖g4 with a strong attack; e.g. 16...♖e8 17.h5 ♗f8 18.hxg6 fxg6 19.♖h4 ♕xg5 20.♖h8+ ♔f7 21.♖h7+ ♗xh7 22.♖xh7+ ♔f8 23.♖xc7+-.

2) Probably 12...♖d8!? was a better defense, to parry 13.♗g5 with 13...♗f8. After 12...♖d8!? the sacrifice 13.♕xh7+ ♔xh7 14.♗g5+ ♔g8 15.♖e2 ♕xe5 16.hxg5 cxd4 17.♖h5 ♔f8 would be incorrect. However, after 12...♖d8 White is not obliged to sacrifice a piece, as he could reinforce the attack by 13.♗g5.

13.g4!

Kramnik wants to demolish the protective pawn wall with all force and full risk, so that major material sacrifices can already be expected.

13...c4 14.gxf5!? cxd3 15.fxe6
 ♗7b8 16.♗xd5 ♖d8

