# The Queen's Gambit Accepted

A Modern Counterattack in an Ancient Opening

**Second Edition** 

Max Dlugy

Foreword by Alex Fishbein



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# The Queen's Gambit Accepted A Modern Counterattack in an Ancient Opening Second Edition

by Max Dlugy

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# Introduction

#### Dear Reader!

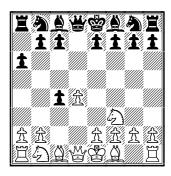
To make sure we are on the same wavelength, I want to ask you a question: Why did you get this book? If your answer is "I wanted to learn the Queen's Gambit Accepted," then you should know, that is not why I wrote it! This book is for those who want to make the QGA a weapon of destruction, an opening 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

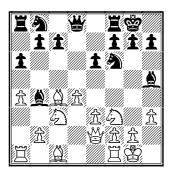
#### 1.d4 d5 2.c4 d×c4 3.4\( \) f3 a6



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.

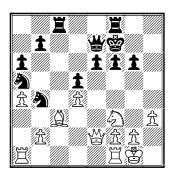
#### 4.a4 <u>Ag</u>4?!

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 \$\tilde{D}\$e5! would be quite a strong reply. Believing my opponent has something up his sleeve though, I played:



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

10... 句 5 11. 句 e 4 句 c 6 12. 句 g 3 실 g 6 13. 실 d 3 실 d 6 14. 실 × g 6 h × g 6 15. 句 e 4 營 e 7 16. 句 × d 6 c × d 6 17. e 4 句 d b 4 18. 실 e 3 d 5 19. e 5 句 a 5 20. 句 g 5 f 6 21. e × f 6 g × f 6 22. 句 f 3 莒 a c 8 23. 실 d 2 營 f 7 24. 실 c 3 ?!



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. \(\mathbb{A}\) ae1!.

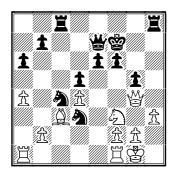
#### 24...\$\c4 25.\$\h4?

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

#### 25... 互h8 26. 曾g4 g5 27. 公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. 基本b4 營×b4 28. 其fe1! 其c6 29. 包f3 包d2 30. ②×d2 營×d2 31. 其ad1, with a salvageable position.

#### 27...公d3



27...\( \) c6 was even stronger, but what happens now completes the puzzle.

#### 28.**営a2??**

It is amazing how material-friendly I was at 15! This ugly move ends the battle. After the correct 28.\(\mathbb{Z}\) ad\(\simeq\) 29.\(\mathbb{Z}\) \(\simeq\) 230.\(\mathbb{Z}\) c1 \(\simeq\) c4 31.\(\mathbb{Z}\) fe1, White has sufficient compensation for the pawn, and the position is roughly equal.

#### 28... **黨cg8!**

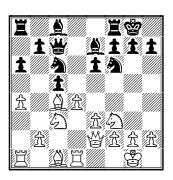
From this point on my opponent is relentless.

29.b3 f5 30.營g3 g4 31.②g5+ 營×g5 32.營×d3 莒×h3 33.g×h3 g×h3+ 34.營g3 營f4 35.b×c4 營f3 36.邑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 d×c4 3.分f3 a6 4.a4 分f6 5.e3 e6 6.总×c4 c5 7.0-0 分c6 8.營e2 營c7 9.分c3 总e7 10.莒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.

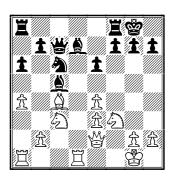
#### 11...**公g4!!**

This beautiful knight sortie forces White to find a reasonable defense to the threat of ... \( \) \( \

#### 12.d×c5?

The only playable move here is 12.e5 – occurring only four times in the 54 games in the database. After 12...②×d4 13.⑤×d4 c×d4 14.⑥×g4 d×c3 15.b×c3 ⑥×e5 16.⑤b1, 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... 魚×c5 13. 鱼e3 ഹ×e3 14.f×e3 鱼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 d5 2.c4 d×c4 3.2163 2016 4.203 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 d×c4 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 Anotated 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...\(\text{\textit{\textit{B}}}\)6! 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 11 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 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 is 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 strategical ideas to focus on. I hope that this will give other authors an example, and future opening books will be structured like this.

#### The Queen's Gambit Accepted

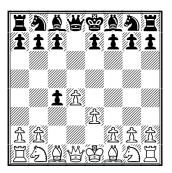
In the first paragraph of his Introduction, Maxim asks the reader if they got this book because they wanted to learn the QGA. He then says that's not why he wrote it. He says this book is for those who "want to make the QGA a weapon of destruction, an opening that, from the very first moves, will force 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 4**

# The Quiet Line 3.e3 e5

#### 1.d4 d5 2.c4 d×c4 3.e3



This tricky move order, avoids an important drawish line that Black can choose after 3. 15 b5, and though it allows the simplifying 3...e5, it gives White more options if Black selects other continuations. Black must decide between 3...e5 and moves such as 3...a6, 3...e6 or 3... 16 which all tend to transpose to the same position in a few moves. Let's take a look:

#### 3...e5

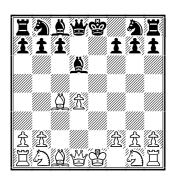
After 3...e6, 4.2×c4 2f6 5.2f3 a6 transposes to positions covered in other chapters.

#### 

The history of the alternative

4.d×e5 goes back to 1795, and most notably the famous De Labourdonnais-McDonnell match of 1834, where McDonnell embraced the Queen's Gambit Accepted. After 4...\subseteq ×d1+ 5. \$\div d1 &c6 6.f4 (or 6. &d2 &\times e5 7.2×c4 2c6! 8.2f3 2e6 9.a3 0-0 -0+ 10.ge1 @e7 11.@d2 ᡚf6 12.鼻c3 包e4 13.鼻×g7 罩hg8 14. Qc3 公×c3 15.b×c3 口d5 16. ବିର୍ପ୍ତ d4 ବି×d4 17.e×d4 c5 18. ବିe3 🖺 dd8 19. 🖺 d3 c×d4 20.c×d4 h5 21.g3 \(\mathbb{Z}\)×d4, preserving a significant advantage for Black.) 6... de6 McDonnell secured a large advantage, but went on to lose the actual game.

#### 4...e×d4 5.e×d4 Ad6!



The new approach to this line. A couple of instructive examples will make you stay away from

putting the bishop on e7. Let's take a look:

5... \( 26 \) 6. \( 26 \) 4 \( 26 \) 6. \( 26 \) 4 \( 26 \) 6. \(2

11... 2g4 also does not help as White plays 12.h3 2h5 13.g4 2g6 14.2e5! with serious threats of h4 and f4. 14... 2fd5 15.2×e7 2×e7 16.f4 h6 17.f5 2h7 18.2e4 is not the appetizing position you imagine you will get in the opening as you're having your morning meal. This is the reason why developing the bishop to d6 has become the staple in this variation in recent years.

Back to 11...2bd5: 12.2×d5.

Now in Artemiev-Ivanchuk 2017, Black had to accept the worse strategic position with 12...c×d5, as after the move he played, 12...②×d5, White had a clear-cut tactical operation in 13. 三×e7 ②×e7 14. 營e2 ②e6 (14...三e8 15. 三e1 also loses) 15. ②xe6 f×e6 16. ③xe6+ 三f7 17. ②e5 ⑤d5 18. ④xf7+ ⑤xf7 19. ②xf7 ⑤xf7 20. ⑤f1, with an extra pawn and good winning chances.

#### 6.公f3

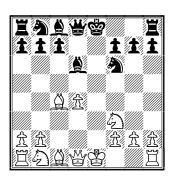
Now White has two completely different approaches in his attempt to fight for an advantage in this position. He can choose to trade into an endgame in which—although he has an isolated d-pawn—his pieces are very active, or he can keep the queens on and

try his luck using the e-file, putting pressure on the a2-g8 diagonal with his slight edge in space. Let's see a couple of alternatives before proceeding with the standard development of the king's knight:

6. ₩b3?! makes no sense as it misplaces White's queen. After 6... ₩e7+ 7. ♣e3 ♠f6 8. ♠f3 0-0 9.0-0 ♠c6, Black wins a tempo with the threat of ... ♠a5 and easily equalizes.

6. ②c3 does not really have any independent significance as White will have to play 2f3 followed by kingside castling in any case. The only other reasonable plan is to develop the knight on e2. After 6... \$\Delta f6\$ 7.42ge2 0-0 8.0-0, we should still develop the knight to c6: 8...2c6! 9. 2e3. Here, Black should concern himself with stopping White's potentially interesting piece placements such as 4b5 or △g5. Therefore, 9...a6! N 10.\(\mathbb{Z}\)c1 h6 is best, and Black has a comfortable game.

#### 6...4\f6

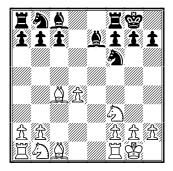


7.0-0

7. e2+ has also been seen. This alternative is a serious attempt to secure a long-lasting advantage in the endgame. With best play, though, Black can preserve equal chances. 7... e7 8. ×e7+ 2×e7!

The alternative 8... \*\varepsilon \text{r} makes it difficult to equalize.

9.0-0 (9.\(\text{\alpha}\)c3 is also possible, but has no independent significance, as after Black castles, so will White. Thus, 9...0-0 should be our reply.) 9...0-0



10. ②c3. The most logical move. White has also played:

(a) 10. Ee1 Ad6 11. Ag5 Abd7 12. Ac3 h6 13. Ah4 Ab6 14. Ab3 a5!, and Black seems to have no problems. As we have seen in previous chapters, allowing White to double the f-pawns while giving away the dark-square bishop is usually not dangerous for Black. Such is the case here as well:

15.4×f6

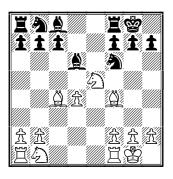
15.a3 transposes to Balta-Steinbacher, examined under 10.2c3. As a result of White's choice Black got his chance to activate the rook quickly: After 15...a4 16.2a2 \( \beta \) d7, the game was about equal, see the related analysis included therein.

15...g×f6 16.a4 单d7 17.包e4 當g7 18.單ec1 單fe8 19.包×d6 c×d6 20.單c7 單ab8. After ousting the rook with ...單ec8 Black will be equal.

(b) 10.4f4 is begging for ...4d6 to be played. After 10...4d6 11.4×d6 c×d6 12.2c3 4g4, Black should equalize easily. In Liang-Cordova 2016, there followed 13.2d2 2c6 14.f3 4f5 15.2de4 4×e4 16.f×e4 2×d4 17.4ad1 2c6 18.4×d6 2e5=.

Note that after 10... 2d6, White can avoid exchanging with:

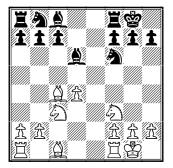
#### 11.**⊴**e5



This was seen in Gunina-Sgircea 2019. Black of course should have used the possible pin to his advantage and played 11...\$\(\text{\scale} \color{1}\) Now as Black threatens both ...\$\(\text{\scale} \cdot \delta \

and ... h5, White's play is rather forced. 12. \( \simes \text{xc6} \) \( \simes \text{f4} 13. \simes \text{e7} + \)
\( \simes \text{h8} 14. \text{g3} \) \( \simes \text{d6} 15. \simes \text{xc8} \) \( \simes \text{c3} \) g6 and Black is slightly better thanks to the weakened d-pawn.

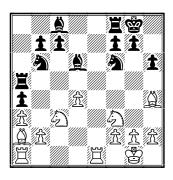
Returning to 10.2c3: 10...2d6!



The leitmotif of this variation seems to be the perfect placement of the bishop on d6. (10...\(\delta\)bd7 is also possible, but I prefer the more affirmative move order.)

To the naked eye, it may seem that offering such bait to the knight on c3 simply does not make sense, but look at what Black gets in return: 11. 2b5

If White plays for quick development, Black also has good squares for his pieces: 11.4g5 4bd7 12.4fe1 h6 13.4h4 4b6 14.4b3 a5 15.a3 a4 16.4a2 4a5!



17. ②d2 (17. ②×f6 g×f6 18. ②e4 ③e7 19. □ac1 c6) 17... □d7.

This is Balta-Steinbacher 2018, mentioned also above. Black continues to mobilize his pieces, also thinking of trading a pair of rooks with ... \( \mathbb{E} e8. \)

At this point, instead of the game's 18.\(\mathbb{Z}\) ad1 \(\mathbb{Z}\) e8! with equality, White should have tried to use the e4-square for preparation of knight maneuvers:

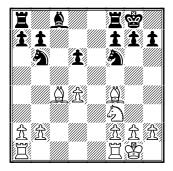
18.f3 闰h5!? (meeting 18...豆c8 19.句de4 with 19...①xe4 20.fxe4 豆h5 is also possible.) 19.鱼xf6 gxf6 20.句de4 鱼xh2+ 21.常f2 常g7 22.豆h1 f5 23.句c5 f4! 24.句e2 豆h4 25.豆ad1 鱼b5 26.句xf4 豆xf4 27.豆xh2 豆e8 28.豆d2 鱼c4! 29.鱼b1 鱼d5 30.常g3 豆f6 31.点d3 鱼c6=. Equality is yet again the outcome; White's weak d-pawn is compensation for Black's weakened kingside-pawns.

In the actual game, after 18.\(\mathbb{I}\)ad1 \(\mathbb{I}\)e8! 19.\(\mathbb{I}\)xe8+ \(\mathbb{L}\)xe8 20.f3 \(\mathbb{L}\)d7 21.\(\mathbb{L}\)xf6, the players agreed to a draw.

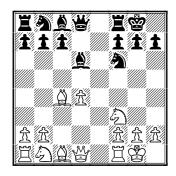
Back to 11.\( \Delta b5: 11...\( \Delta bd7 \) 12.\( \Delta \times d6 \)

12.\(\mathbb{E}\)e1 was played in Dippel-Trzaska. After 12...\(\Delta\)b6 13.\(\Delta\)×d6 c×d6 14.\(\Delta\)b3, Black should have focused on organizing his play via the transit d5-square with a great position. After 14...h6! N 15.\(\Delta\)f4 \(\mathbb{E}\)d8 16.\(\mathbb{E}\)ac1 ac1 ac1 17.a3 a4 18.\(\Delta\)ac2 \(\mathbb{E}\)ac5 followed by ...\(\mathbb{E}\)b5, Black stands very well.

12...c×d6 13.具f4 包b6



7...0-0



#### 8.Ag5

To test Black's setup White wastes no time pinning the f6-knight.

If instead 8.2c3, there follows 8...2c6!. The point of Black's concept. Black strives for immediate piece play against the center pawn.

9.Ag5

Stopping ... 294 with h3 will allow Black to do the same. White will not have any advantage in this case: 9.h3 h6 10. 261 268!.

If Black wastes time on 10...a6, 11.\( \text{2}e5! \) will give White a slight edge in the endgame after \( 11...\( \text{2} \times 5 \) 12.d\( \text{2}e5 \) \( \text{2} \times d1 \) \( \text{3}e8 \) 14.\( \text{2}f4. \)

