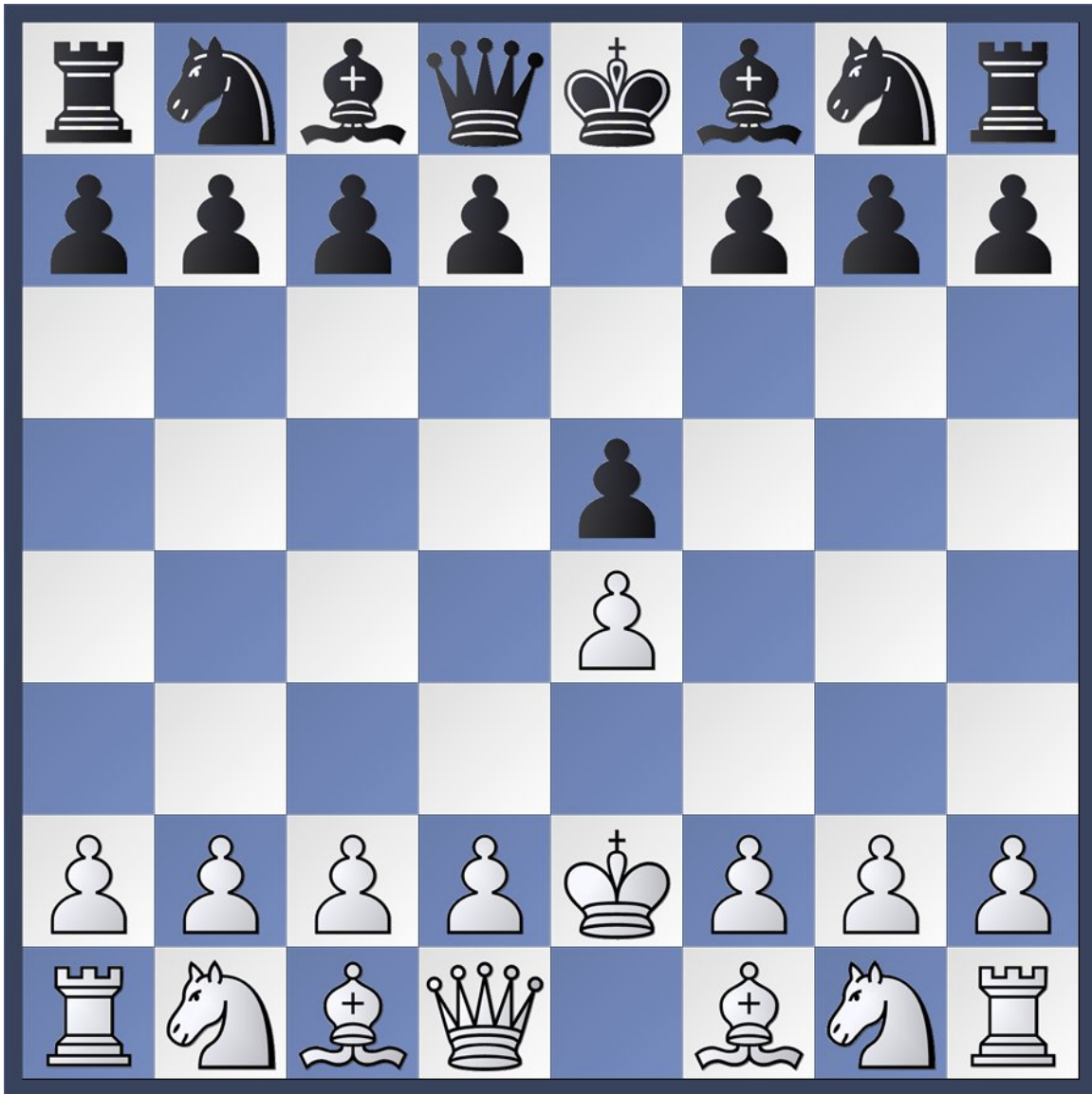


Winning With the Bongcloud

A Complete Repertoire for White

by BM Andrew Fabbro



Winning With the Bongcloud: A Complete Repertoire for White

by Bongcloudmaster (BM) Andrew Fabbro (andrew@fabbro.org)

Dedication

Special thanks to this opening's greatest master, chess.com's Lenny_Bongcloud, to whom this humble volume is dedicated.

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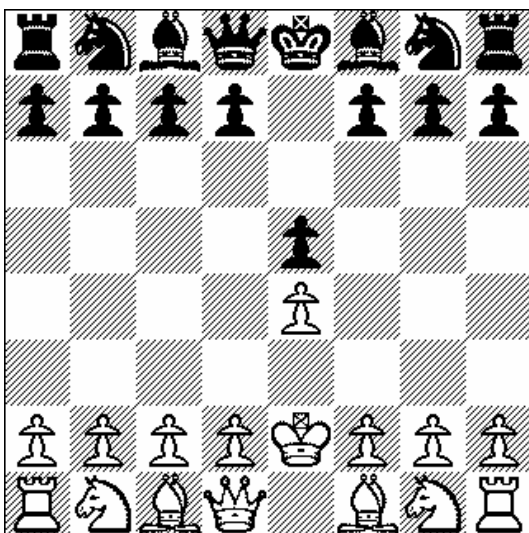
Feedback

The author welcomes all feedback at andrew@fabbro.org

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Introduction



1. e4 e5 2. Ke2!

Black to play and lose in 25 turns.

The Bongcloud (also known as the Boungcloud, or *Bongwolke* in German) is the type of rich opening that promises something for everyone. For the positionalist, White's ambitious plan promises a game full of long-range novelties. For the tactician, some of the sharper gambit lines will leave him calculating to his heart's content. For the endgame specialist, the complete flexibility in pawn structure leaves everything on the table. For the openings mad scientist, there is a wealth of unexplored passageways to delve. And for the casual club player, there is a pleasant lack of established theory which means he's more likely to surprise his opponent than to be surprised by Ke2!

In recent years, the Bongcloud has seen a resurgence, as avant-garde Internet players, tired of shop-worn Sicilians, Ruys, and QGDs have taken up the ancient Bongcloud as a novel approach. It is an especially important opening in anti-computer play, as no software yet written contains an adequate book against the Bongcloud. While various specialists have floated pet "anti-Bongcloud" openings, there has been no published refutation of this immensely popular opening and it remains a time-tested attack.

One key benefit of learning the Bongcloud is that it functions equally well as either an attack or a defense. White cannot prevent Black from setting up the Bongcloud, and many a White player has found himself staring at the "Deathstar of Chess Openings" with colors reversed. As the saying goes – "If you play 1. e4, be prepared for the Bongcloud. If you play 1. ...e5, expect it."

In this book, we will focus on the practical Bongcloud lines, including the Bongcloud Counter-Gambit, the sharp 4. Kf3! Marijanezy Bind, the Accelerated and Hyperaccelerated Bongclouds, and the Alapin Attack, as well as lesser club favorites

such as the Old Steinitz Bongcloud, the Nimzo-Bongcloud, and the Bogo-Bongcloud. Because this is a practical book, we will not explore every nook and cranny of Bongcloud play, but rather seek to give the enterprising *Bongcloudista* a thorough grounding in the many exciting variations, resulting middlegames, and long-range strategic plans the Ke2 Jedi will likely face. Smoke 'em if you got 'em!

Top 10 Reasons to Play the Bongcloud

10. Your current repertoire is too drawish.
9. You want to avoid the reams of theory needed to play the Najdorf or QGD by selecting an opening with less published thought.
8. "Everything is playable at the club level."
7. You are devoted to a de la Maza tactics regimen and don't want to waste time studying openings.
6. You are intimidated by openings with hard-to-pronounce names like Bogoljubov-Indian, Scheveningen Sicilian, Trompowsky, and Konstantinopolsky
5. Your current repertoire is too well-known in your club and you want to surprise your opponents.
4. You can't afford the full version of ChessBase and want an opening where all known games will fit in ChessBase Light's 32,000-game limit.
3. You're interested in an opening for which no GM or IM has published a refutation.
2. You've noticed that while dozens of people have published "Anti-Sicilian" books, there are far fewer "Anti-Bongcloud" books.
1. You're high as a kite.

Sources Consulted

How to Regress Your Chess by Silman

The Hallucinations Behind the Chess Openings by Reuben Fine

The Art of the Blunder in Chess by Vukovic

Play Losing Chess by Seirawan

Not My System by Nimzovich

The Really Complete Idiot's Guide to Chess by Wolff

How to Beat Your Dog at Chess by Chandler

Illogical Chess, Move By Move by Chernev

Chess Openings for White, Unexplained by Marv Albert and GM Unpronounceablevili

The Stoner's Mind by Silman

The Least Instructive Games of Chess Ever Played by Chernev

Chess Fundamentals: The Out-Takes by Capablanca

Recent Developments in the 9. Bb5 Bongcloud by Lenny

History

*“Men play the Sicilian.
Real men play the King’s Gambit.
Champions play the Bongcloud.”*
-- Wilhem Steinitz

The Bongcloud Opening was known to Ruy Lopez, but is not mentioned in his seminal work, *Libro de la invención liberal y arte del juego del Axedrez*. Scholars have speculated that this opening was kept out of Lopez’s work so that he would retain it as a secret weapon to use in ecclesiastical tournaments. Philidor, writing in the 18th century, does not mention the Bongcloud (or *Le Nuage Marie-Jean* as it was known in his day) in his *Analyse du jeu des Échecs*, perhaps for lack of space.

In the 19th Century, the American master Morphy was famous for giving odds to his opponents – even Queen’s odds to some. But history records no instance in which he gave “Bongcloud Odds” to an opponent, likely out of respect for the ferocity of the defense. Tragically, Dr. Tartakower died before he could complete his second great work, *500 Bongcloudmaster Games of Chess*.

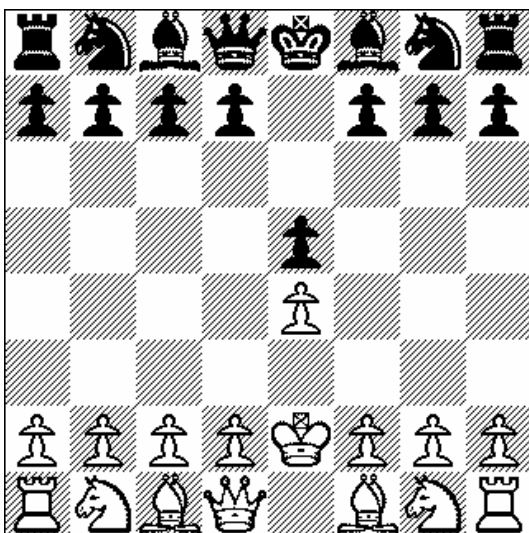
Apocryphally, the Bongcloud is what Jose Capablanca’s father played with the young prodigy beat him at age four.

With the theoretical revolution of the hypermoderns in the early part of the 20th century, classical weapons such as the Bongcloud fell out of fashion. Alekhine reportedly played it at the 1930 San Remo, but this may have been due to a small earthquake aftershock that rattled the board on his second move.

Although both Botvinnik and Tal experimented with the opening, it was not until the Bobby Fischer took it up in the early 1960s that the opening found an exponent. Unfortunately, the Bongcloud in Fischer’s hands was so devastating that the games were short and unmemorable, and none are recorded in *My 60 Memorable Games*.

The “big Ks” (Karpov, Kasparov, Kramnik) have all analyzed the Bongcloud, but none have published a refutation. Commentators noted that the opening repertoire of most Grandmasters – recent champions Kasparov and Anand included – tend to move towards 1. d4 as they advance in rank, likely to avoid the labyrinth of the Bongcloud.

The Bongcloud: A Brief Survey



Position after 1. e4 e5 2. Ke2!

White throws down the gauntlet and begins the duel, but it is often Black that has choice of weapons. Innumerable defenses against the *Bongborg* have been tried.

...Ke7! This inaugurates the Bongcloud Counter-Gambit, and play often leads to the very sharp Marijanezy Bind, after 3. g4 g5 3. Kf3!

...Ne7 The Alapin Defense has a dubious reputation, owing the lock-in of both Black's Bishop and Queen, though it appeals to counter-punchers who wish to assault White's center via ...d5 and ...f5.

...Nc6 followed by ...Nf6 This inaugurates the Two Knights Copacabana Tango, where Black seeks to prove the old axiom that action in the center is best met by bold counterattacks on the wings.

...Nf6 is an aggressive response by Black, often leading to unbalanced middle games and pretty miniatures. It has fallen somewhat out of favor at the highest levels of play but is still sometimes seen at the club level, or as a surprise weapon.

...Nc6 followed by 3. Kf3 Bc5 4. Kg3 Nxe4 5. Kh3! is the Hyperaccelerated Bongcloud. The positional 3. Kf3 is the signature of the "accelerated" games, as White seeks to move His Majesty to a new throne on the right flank.

...f5 The Bongcloud Wing Gambit, despite its name, has a drawish reputation. The Exchange Variation (3. exf5) has been all but discredited, and the Delayed Exchange Manyana Deferred (3. Nc3) is to be avoided unless White wants to be doomed to

passivity. The Fosterbeer Counter-gambit (3. f5) is still often seen at the club level and is White's best response to this dubious gambit.

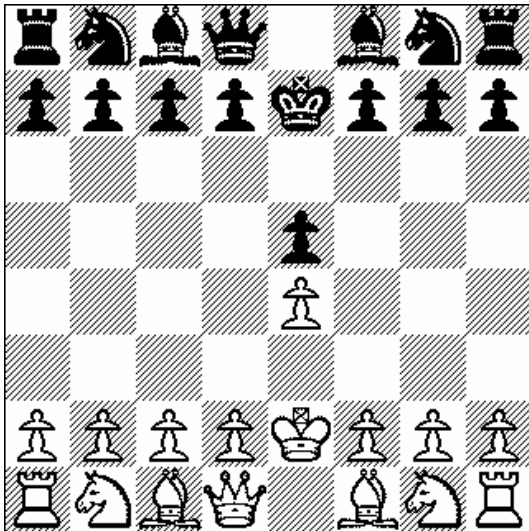
1. e4 Nc6 2. Ke2! is the opening sequence for the Nimzo-Bongcloud, where Black seeks to control the tempo by playing ...d4 at a time of his own choosing.

1. e4 e6 2. Ke2! e5 3. Ke3! Ke7 is the Old Steinitz Bongcloud. This line, and the Delayed Bongcloud (*1. e4 d6 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Ke2!*) are not materially better for White, who controls the choice. I recommend you avoid them and play straight-up Bongclouds.

Periodically, Black will choose the Bogo-Bongcloud (*2. ...Nf3 3. Ke3! Bc5*), but this is simply wasted time.

1. e4 e5 2. Ke2! Nf6 3. Ke1 Nxe4 4. Ke2! Known as the *Bongcloud Piano*, this old continuation leads to many pretty miniatures (and early bathroom breaks at tournaments), but presents no real problems for the well-prepared player.

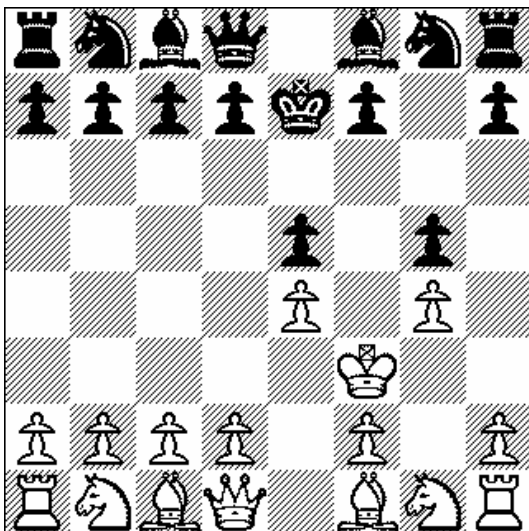
The Bongcloud Counter-Gambit (and the Marijanezy Bind)



Position after 1. e4 e5 2. Ke2! Ke7

The BCGC has a long heritage, likely due to its obviousness: if White can set up the dreaded Bongcloud, can't the same dynamic formation work for Black as well? Perhaps, and perhaps not.

The question is which side will perceive the right moment to break symmetry. Typically, White is happy to play along, and by far the most common continuation is the *Marijanezy Bind*: 3. g4 g5 4. Kf3!



The move order is significant. With g4, White prevents the escape of Black's light-squared Bishop, denying Black the opportunity to pin the King to his Queen at the g4 outpost. However, Kf6 doesn't accomplish anything for Black, as White retains all of his strategic options (e.g., Bc4 and d4, Kg3/Qf3, etc.)

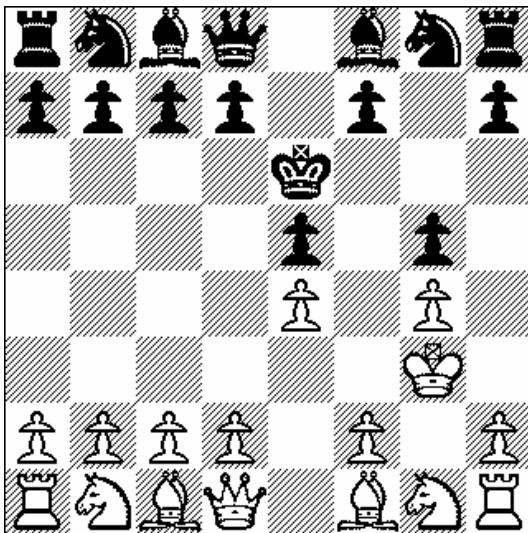
Black's best counterplay is instead 3. ...Ke6.

Illustrative Game

Lenny-Fischer

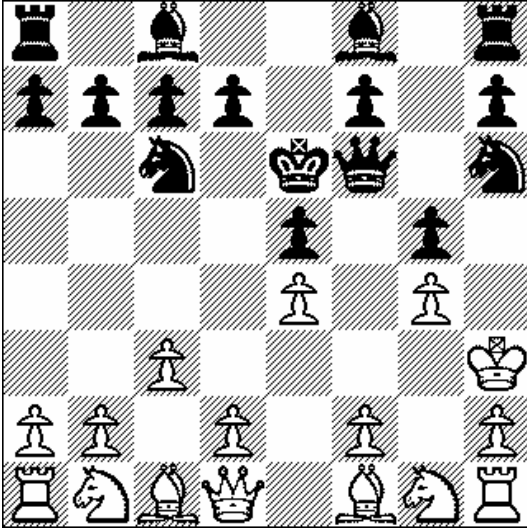
Mar del Plata, 1976

- | | |
|---------|-----|
| 1. e4 | e5 |
| 2. Ke2! | Ke7 |
| 3. g4 | g5 |
| 4. Kf3 | Ke6 |
| 5. Kg3 | |



White heads for the safety of his Kingside flank, the *raison d'etre* of the Bongcloud.

- | | |
|--------|-------|
| 5. | Qf6 |
| 6. Kh3 | Nh6 |
| 7. c3 | Nf6?? |



Black misunderstands the threat of c3.

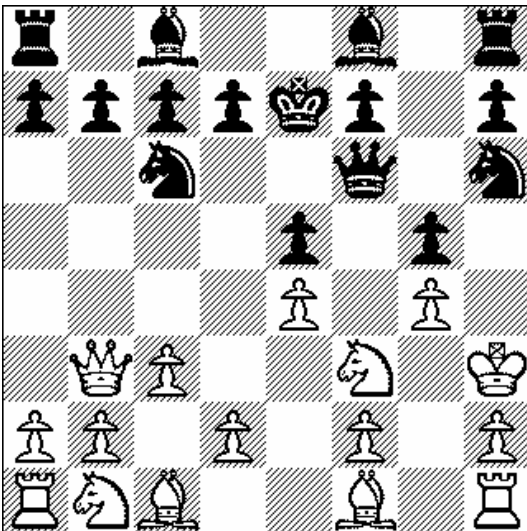
7. Qb3+

Already, Black's King is driven from the heart of battle into the obscurity of the seventh rank. The disgraced monarch has no option except to retreat. Note that 8... d5 leads to Qxd5 with no change in status.

8. Ke7

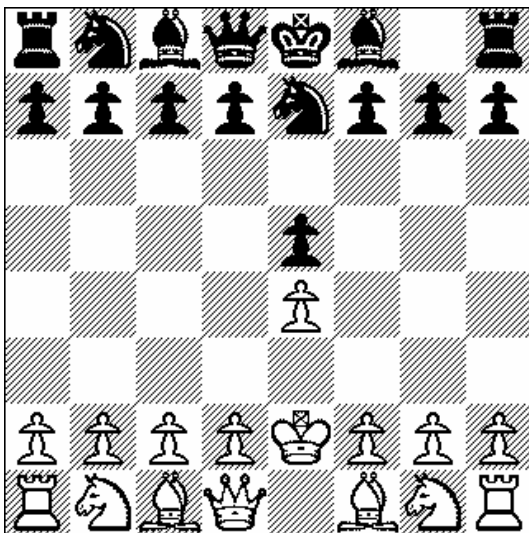
9. Nf3!

This move came like a thunderclap. The seemingly "normal" c3 is now shown to be the foundation of bold action in the middle, as White now will launch an assault with d4 on his next move, locking Black's Queen into a static defensive role, caught guarding both the d4 and g5 pawns (the latter threatened by White's Bishop).



In this arch-typical Marijanezy Bind position, a clever Black player might be able to delay the inevitable with some tactical wizardry, but positionally, he is lost.

The Alapin Defense



Position after 1. e4 e5 2. Ke2! Ne7

The Alapin Defense has a double-edged reputation. Fast action by White often demonstrates that Black's self-imprisonment of his Bishop and Queen is a liability. Timing by Black is crucial, and experience shows that a premature ...d5 or ...f5 is often savagely twisted to advantage by White. Black often overextends himself with an early Kingside pawn storm, to White's advantage in the middle game.

White's most popular continuation is the positional Kf3. While "opening lawyers" will raise objections about the double-move of a piece this early in the game, there is a sound positional basis in 3. Kf3, 4. Kg3, and 5. Kh3. By seeking the h3 square, the White King allows the freeing f4 and g4 levers – and in doing so, neutralizes Black's Kingside attack. He opens a natural development square for his Kingside Knight (f3) and positions his Monarch on the key c8-h3 diagonal.

Illustrative Game

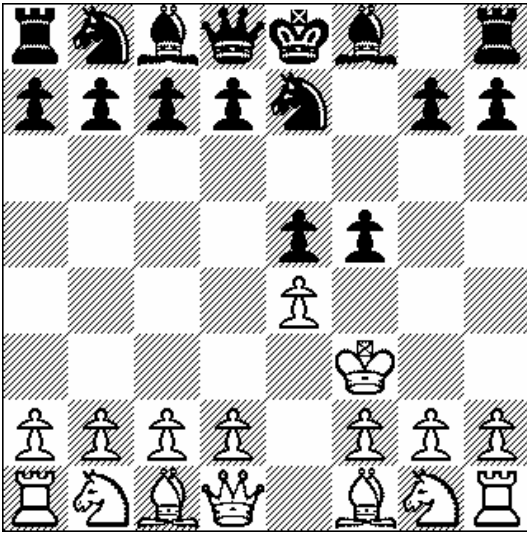
Lenny-Botvinnik

USSR vs. The Rest of the World, London, 1984

1. e4 e5
2. Ke2! Ne7

The thematic Alapin move. In a rare lapse from his usual thorough opening preparation, Botvinnik missed the fact that BM Lenny had published an article on meeting the Alapin only three months earlier!

3. Kf3 f5



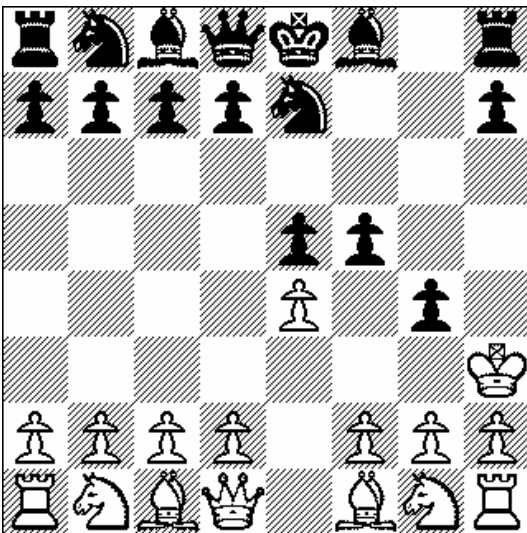
Modern theory judges this premature, though it had not been settled at the time of this game. Lenny was, as usual, ahead of his time in demonstrating that against the Bongcloud, Black cannot afford to plunge in head-first!

A less-experienced player would be tempted to exchange pawns (4. exf5 Nxf5), but this hampers the King's quest for h3 (leaving only the circuitous g4-h3 route). Lenny remains focused.

4. Kg3! g5

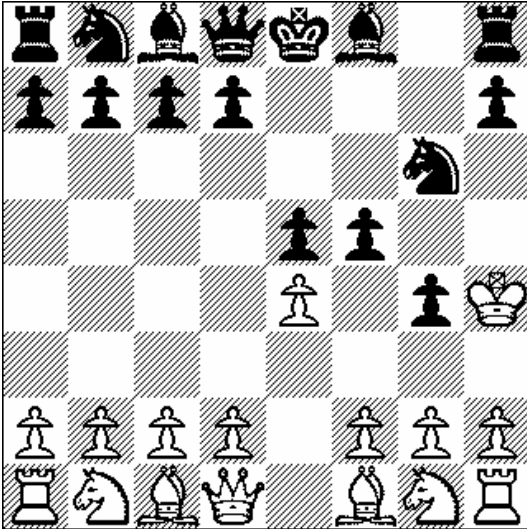
Black continues his dubious plan.

5. Kh3 g4+



A pointless check that wastes time. Black has myopically focused on White's King, ignoring the timeless adage of the Bongcloud Masters: "A King is prim on the rim!" The game is already won for White with his crushing positional advantage.

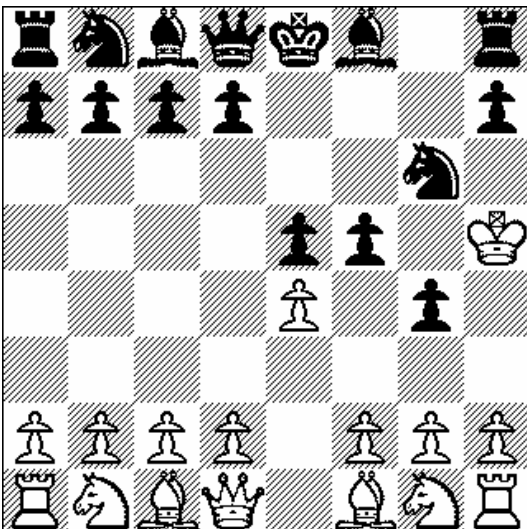
6. Kh4! Ng6+



Again, Black harasses without development. He has violated nearly every opening rule – frequent pawn moves, lack of development, pointless checks, and moving the same piece repeatedly.

Some players have advocated the quiet 7. Kg3 line, which has advantages in supporting the f- and h-file foot soldiers. However, in this game, BM Lenny stayed rimward.

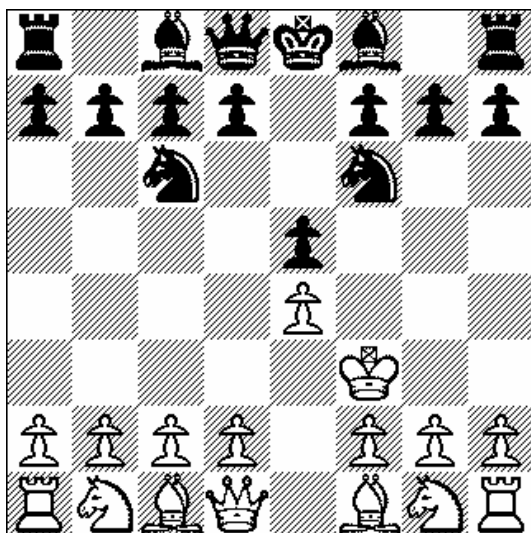
7. Kh5!



The threat is Qxg4, with wild complications, as Nf3 and Bc4 penetrate into the heart of the now-bare Black Kingside. White has a royal bind on the poorly-placed Black Knight and will soon devastate Black's Kingside. Alternatively, Black might meet h5 with an *en passant* capture, setting up a Right Edge Long Castle, as the Rook and King exchange places (via exf5, Kxg4, and Rh5) and set up a "royal battery".

The ending was never in doubt and Botvinnik confessed afterwards that he had known nothing about the 4. Kg3! line. Now you do.

The Two Knights Copacabana Tango



Position after 1. e4 e5 2. Ke2! Nc6 3. Kf3 Nf6

The Two Knights Copacabana Tango is common among club players who wish to leverage their knowledge from the Two Knights' Defense of the classic open games. But as we shall see, the Bongcloud is an altogether different kettle of fish!

Black may reach this position after either sequence of Knight moves, though 2. ...Nf6 Kf3 usually leads to 3. Bc5 and the Accelerated Bongcloud, Exchange Variation, which will be covered in the next chapter. 2. ...Nc6 is the main thematic move in the Two Knights Copacabana Tango.

As the adage goes – “When playing the Bongcloud, keep your edge by keeping to the edge!” White will continue with the Kg3 and Kh3 moves, and Black will need to prove that his extraneous action on the Queenside is not a waste of time.

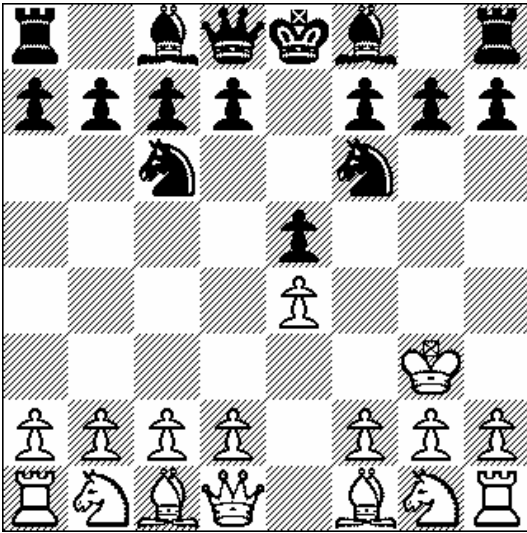
In this game, Bongcloudmaster Haight gives an excellent example of the “pendulum” tactic – swinging back and forth between g3 and h3 (White’s “Winter Castle”) to meet and deflect Black attacks.

Illustrative Game

Haight-Asbury

Linares, 1987

- | | |
|---------|-----|
| 1. e4 | e5 |
| 2. Ke2! | Nc6 |
| 3. Kf3 | Nf6 |
| 4. Kg3 | |



Haight continues to the “Eastern Front.” This sort of asymmetrical King setup, where the Monarchs align on different files very early in the proceedings, is typical of the dynamic positions arising from the Bongcloud.

4. Nxe4??

At first glance, this is an exceedingly logical move, as it wins material for Black and forces a White response. But theory has long shown that Black will likely be unable to hold on to the pawn. Some would even term White’s ignorance of the threat a gambit.

5. Kh3

White’s King takes up residence in its Winter Palace.

5. d6+

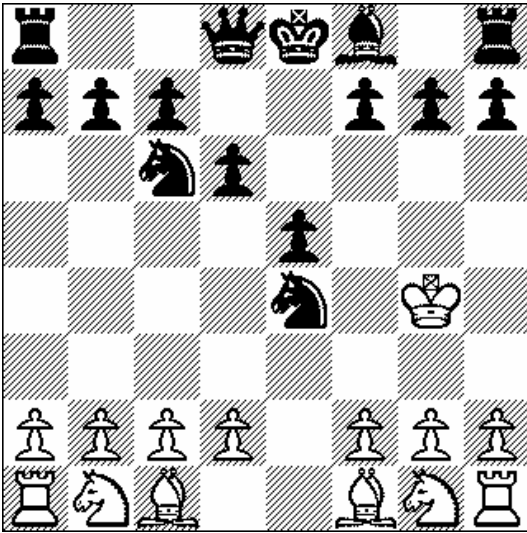
Watching from the close-circuit-televized commentators’ booth, I remember a collective gasp rippling through the assembled audience. While this seems like a natural development move that also forces a White response, it locks in the Queenside Bishop, dooming it to passivity. Given White’s commanding presence on the h-file (hence the problem of developing Black’s g pawn), it will be some time, if ever, before Black’s dark-squared Bishop sees the light of day.

6. Qg4!

White sidesteps a Black trap by refusing to sacrifice his g-pawn and open a gash in his Kingside.

6. Bxg4

7. Kxg4



I showed this position to one of my junior students, who counted up the material and proclaimed a Black advantage. Most club players would see the same, but show this position to an IM or GM and he would immediately notice the absence of any Black influence on the light squares. Black's Knights are both sitting on light squares (and hence can only move to dark), and Black has lost his light-squared Bishop.

Additionally, White has the advantage of the Bishop pair.

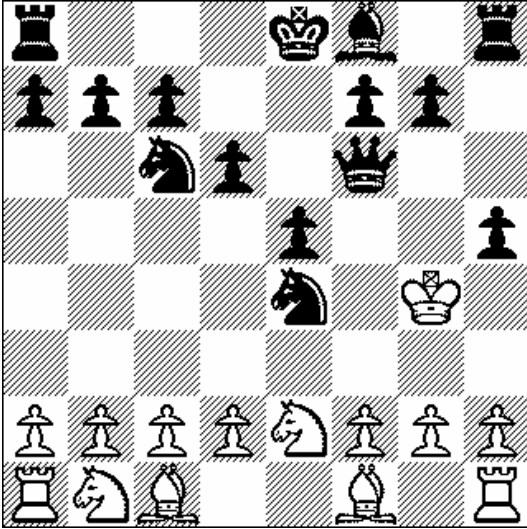
7. Qf6??

This move deprives the d4 Knight of its retreat square and steps in front of the f4 pawn.

8. Ne2

Prevents Black's threat of Nxf2 by affording an escape square for his Rook, while simultaneously preparing the f4 and d4 advances to smash Black's center. You can't ask for more than that from a single move!

8. h5+??

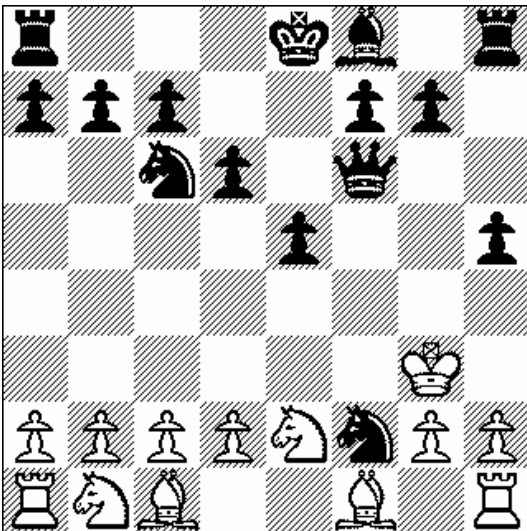


9. Kh3!

Back to home base. Despite all of Black’s machinations, the Winter Palace is still a sanctuary.

9. Nxf2

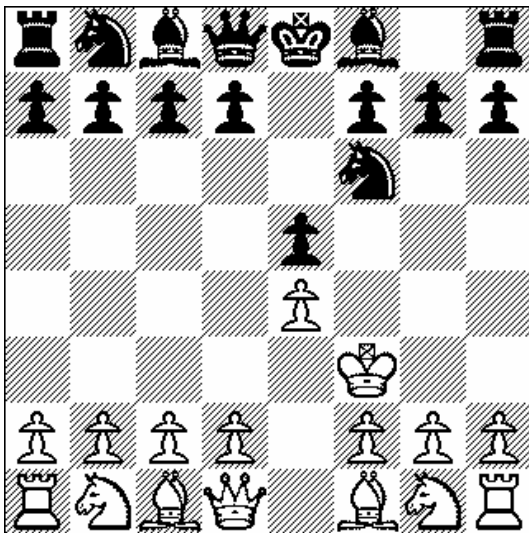
10. Kg3!



White continues his textbook execution of a “pendulum,” swinging back and forth between g3 and h3 to counter every Black threat. With the dynamically placed King, Black’s attack teeters on the edge of petering out. Nxh1 will trap the Black Knight and extinguish the threat.

In the actual game, play took a different turn as Black continued his h-file pressure. Nonetheless, this game is an excellent example of how 2. ...Nc6 is often a wasted tempo in the Bongcloud.

Pedal to the Metal: The Accelerated and Hyper-Accelerated Bongclouds



Position after 1. e4 e5 2. Ke2 Nf6 3. Kf3

The Accelerated Bongcloud and its twin, the Hyperaccelerated Bongcloud, are characterized by the bold sortie of the King in defense of the e4 pawn and a dash to the H-file. It's not unusual for the King to reach the Good Square (h3) by move five, and as we'll see, Black's best attempt to stop him usually hurts more than it helps.

Illustrative Game (Hyperaccelerated Bongcloud, Exchange Variation)

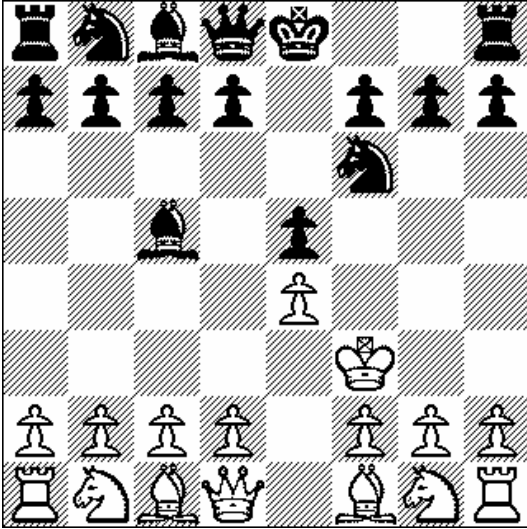
Phish-Garcia

Woodstock, 1969

1. e4 e5
2. Ke2! Nf6

This is likely a mistake. As we'll see, there's no place for the Knight to go.

3. Kf3 Bc5



Black really has nothing else. The White King has ensnared the Black Knight, preventing it from moving to e4 or g4, while His Majesty's e-file minion guards d5. The Black Knight is a textbook example of a piece doomed to passivity.

- 4. Kg3 Nxe4+??
- 5. Kh3!

Black's capture on e4 has only speeded the Monarch to his home, while setting a trap for Black.

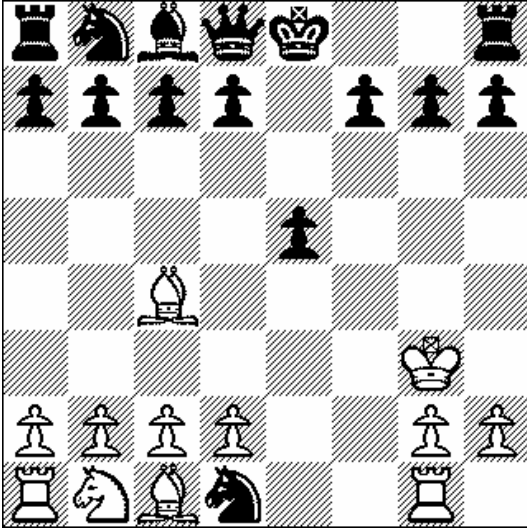
- 5. Nxf2+
- 6. Kg3 Nxd1

Once again, we see the thematic pendulum. Black reaches for White's Queen the way a wild animal reaches for bait in a trap; he does not see that his Knight is irretrievably lost on the backwaters of White's first rank. While "3 points for 9" seems good in the classic Reinfield equation, the reality is that White has traded an undeveloped, backward Queen for Black's forward Knight.

- 7. Kh3

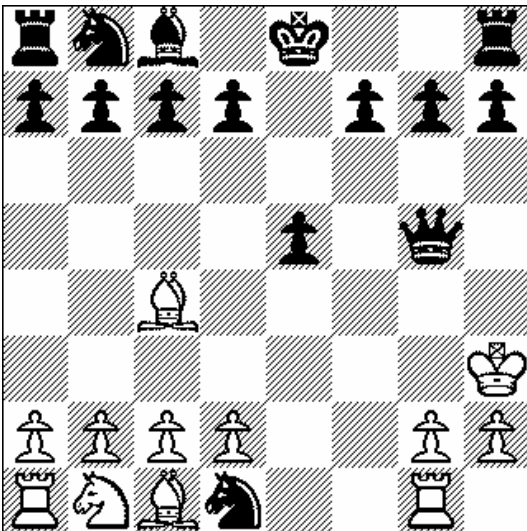
After White's light-squared Bishop is activated, Black's Knight is lost.

- 7. h5
- 8. Bc4 Bxg1
- 9. Rxd1



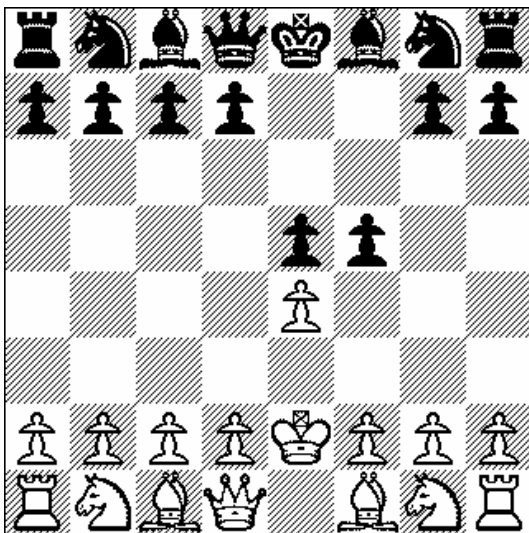
...and White is clearly winning. Black's sole developed piece is trapped behind enemy lines and is hung; White has several developed pieces while Black's remain at home; and White's King is located on the dynamic g3/h3 pendulum.

9. Qg5+
10. Kh3



White continues to swing on the pendulum. Meanwhile, his excellently placed Bishop blocks Black's progress on the d5 square, leaving Black with no hope of developing his pieces any time soon. Black is positionally adrift, a not uncommon situation when confronted by the Bongcloud!

The Bongcloud Wing Gambit



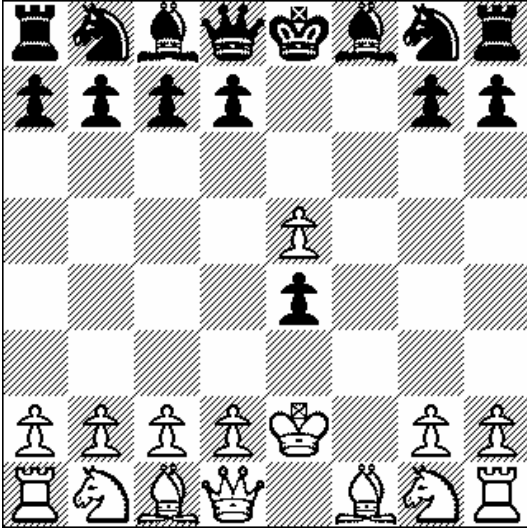
Position after 1. e4 e5 2. Ke2! f4

The Bongcloud Wing Gambit is popular at the club level, though rarely seen in serious international play. There are two popular continuations.

In the Exchange Variation (3. exf4, also known as the Sativa-Indica Attack, owing to its popularity in the 19th Century Amsterdam-Vancouver correspondence match), White seeks immediate simplification. It was popular in the Romantic Era of Bongcloud play, but after losing to this line, Bobby Fischer published “A Bust to the Bongcloud Exchange Variation” in the 1963 issue of *High Times*, demonstrating that Black’s 3. ...Qg5 leads to a Black advantage as it aborts White’s key strategic goal of moving his King to the safety of h3. This line has never recovered from Fischer’s article.

More popular is 3. Nc3, the Bongcloud Delayed Exchange Manyana Deferred, which has a drawish reputation. Play typically continues 3. ...fxe4 4. Nxe4 d5 5. Nc3 Bg4 and White is often forced to transpose into less favorable lines. I do not recommend 3. Nc3.

The best White response is the Fosterbeer Counter-Gambit, which proceeds with 3. f4! After the logical exchange (3. fxe4 4. fxe5), White has the upper hand, as Black’s d6 or d5 (via the e-pawn’s *en passant* capture threat) is now prevented:

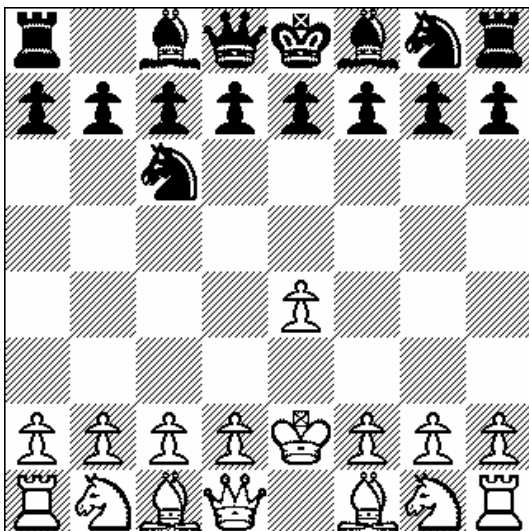


Position after 4. exf5

Black has assayed 4. ...d5 5. exd5 on occasion, but after 5. ...Bg4 6. Ke3!, his pawn on e4 is quite lost and White's material advantage is too great to overcome.

In light of this, Black has usually looked elsewhere for an advantage.

The Nimzo-Bongcloud



Position after 1. e4 Nc6 2. Ke2!

Transpositional opportunities are rife in the Nimzo-Bongcloud, and the majority of games transpose into Hyperaccelerated lines with 2. ...e5. In the pure Nimzo, however, White often much choose between the traditional Bongcloud h3 march and supporting an d4 advance in the center. If he is going to march to h3, then he will likely transition into a traditional Bongcloud.

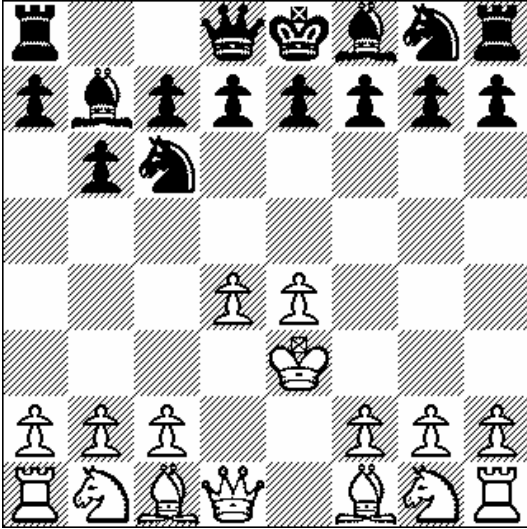
The defining theme of the Nimzo-Bongcloud is the King's move to e3, where he supports d4. Often, he sets up the Bongcloud Steamroller, using his two central pawns as shields to ward off Black's blows and achieve a strongpoint in the heart of Black's camp. Ask any modern military man if he would like to find that the enemy headquarters has been relocated to his own backyard and he will surely say no!

Illustrative Game

Fabbro-Deep Blue Red Oh Wow Purple Dude

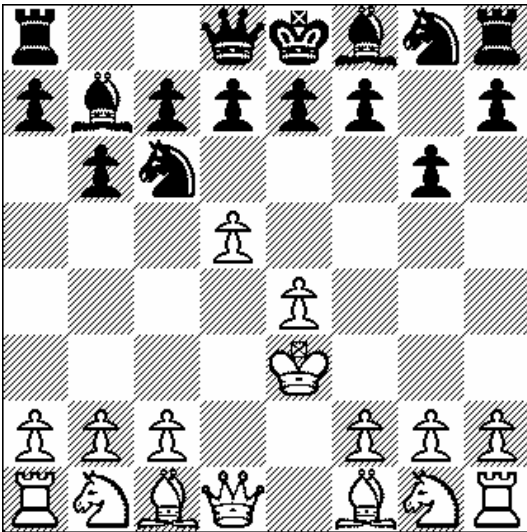
Ann Arbor, 1994

- | | |
|---------|-----|
| 1. e4 | Nf6 |
| 2. Ke2! | b7 |
| 3. Ke3 | Bb6 |
| 4. d4 | |



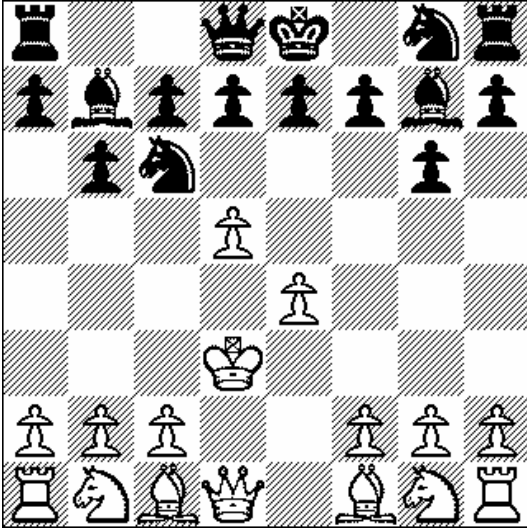
Black is attempting a hypermodern setup, hoping that by allowing White to setup a forward pawn center, he can later undermine it from behind. This is fraught from risk when that pawn center has a “royal taskmaster” behind it, whipping it forward!

- 4. g7
- 5. d5



Demanding action. Black’s girly “hypermodern theory” has been crushed by the White battering ram! Were either Réti or Nimzovich ever World Champion? Didn’t think so.

- 5. Bh6+
- 6. Kd3 Bg7



The height of pointlessness. At this point in the match, IBM's lead programmer was interrupted by a phone call and I remember overhearing one half of the conversation on the phone:

“It's not in MCO. But I found a reference in the liner notes to a King Crimson album. Says it's called the Bongcloud. Uh-huh. No, nothing in the book. Hey, don't get angry at me, I told you not to write the damn thing in VisualBasic.”

7. Ke3

Black is already in danger of a draw by repetition and it's only move seven! Ignoring the capture on f6, I switch back to protect the base of the pawn chain and keep pushing the steamroller.

7. Nb4

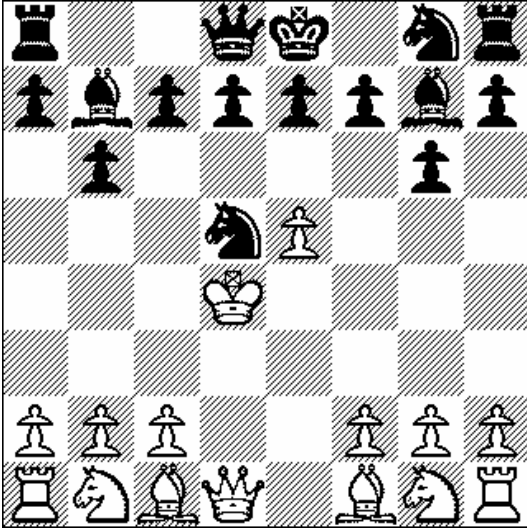
Where else can it go?

8. e4

White now has a formidable pawn center. To the novice, it appears both pawns are under attack without protection, but this is the beauty of the Bongcloud Steamroller: Black can only attack one pawn at a time. When he makes his choice. White will push on with the other pawn, thrusting the King ever further to main Black lines and ultimate victory.

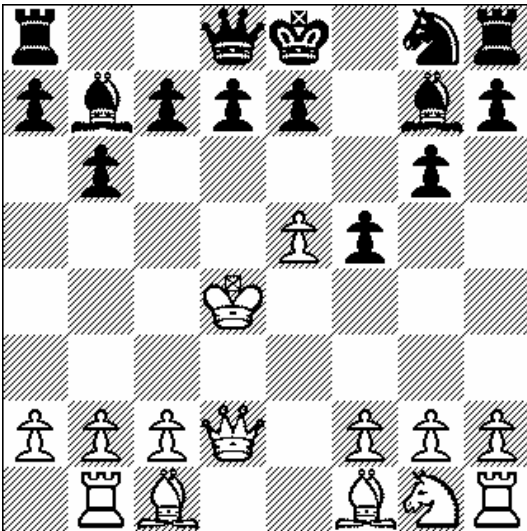
8. Nxd5

9. Kd4



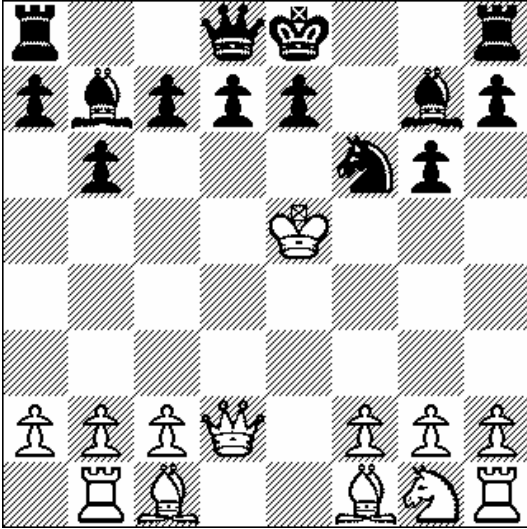
Black has made his choice, and now finds he's underestimated the power of the King!

9. Nc3
 10. Qd2 Nxb1
 11. Rxb1 f5??



This was an attempt by Black to penetrate behind the White lines on the right flank. Owing to the power of the centralized monarch, there is little surprise that it did not succeed.

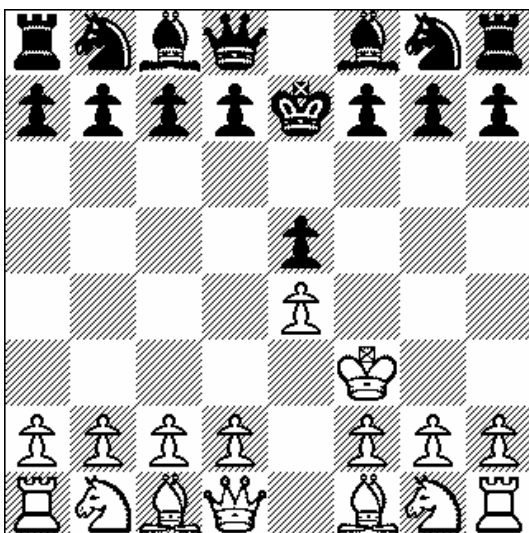
12. exf5 Nxf5
 13. Ke5!



White stands on the threshold of his sixth rank. Note the Queen ready to move behind him, forming a royal battery. His Bishops are situated to explode out of the backfield to lance deep into Black's flanks. Black's King is sitting at home, fat, dumb, and stupid. Even amateurs know that you should be castled by move 13!

Deep BROWPD elected to maneuver with his Knight at this point, sending it on an edgeward errand that ignored the main point of White's central thrust. Reports that the poor machine had smoke coming out of it may be apocryphal.

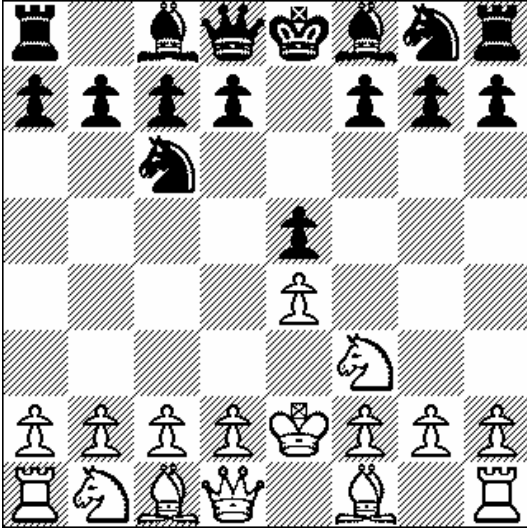
Odds and Ends



Position after 1. e4 e6 2. Ke2! e5 3. Kf3! Ke7

This position – the Old Steinitz Bongcloud – may look familiar and indeed it should – it’s the Bongcloud Counter-Gambit with an extra tempo for White. Black plays 1. ...e6 expecting a quiet, stolid French Defense game, only to be confronted by the awesome spectacle of a Bongcloud with 2. Ke2! A tempo behind, he attempts to quickly setup a Bongcloud of his own, but White’s smoke overpowers his. Play normally progresses as in the Bongcloud Counter-Gambit. White may choose to set up the Marijanezy Gambit or not, or pursue a full-on Kingside pawn storm. The initiative is clearly White’s.

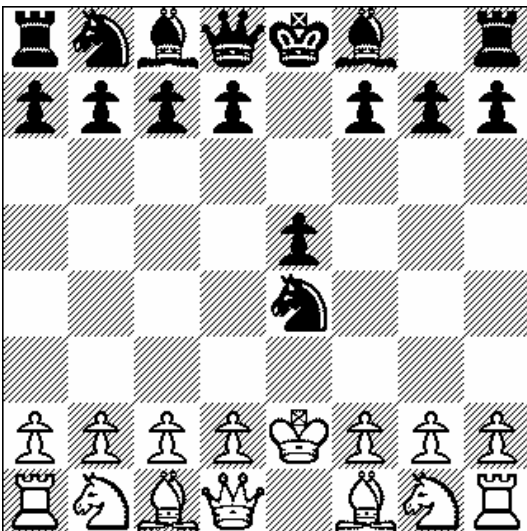
White sometimes sneaks in a Bongcloud. Informally known in Grandmaster circuits as “exhaling through dryer sheets” to hide his smoke, a typical setup is the Delayed Bongcloud, reached after 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Ke2!



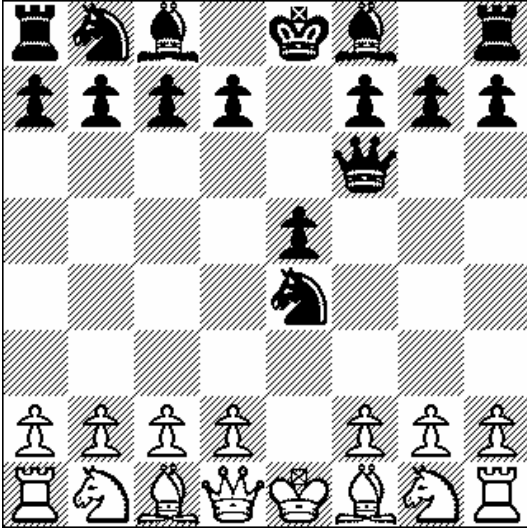
Black expects a staid toothless Ruy Lopez and is instead impaled on the horns of a Bongcloud.

The problem with these setups is that they interfere with the ability of White's King to reach the key h3 square. Black typically heads into the Two Knights Copacabana Tango with 3. ...Nf6. A popular continuation at the club level is for White to gambit a Knight with 4. Nxe5 Nxe5 5. Kf3! but this seems an unnecessary waste of material. Better is to simply go for the Bongcloud from the start.

The Bongcloud Piano (1. e4 e5 2. Ke2! Nf6 3. Ke1 Nxe4 4. Ke2!) is perhaps proof that a good move played once is also a good move played twice.

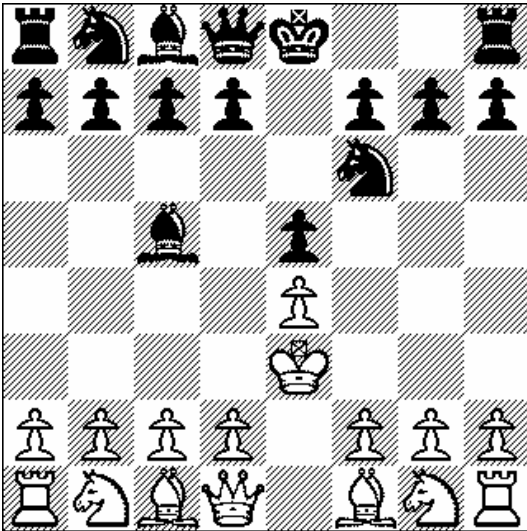


Black often assays 4. ...Qf6. White can continue his "quiet" play with the logical Ke1, which leaves Black with few tactical choices.



Position after 4. ...Qf6 5. Ke1

Finally, the Bogo-Bongcloud (1. e4 e5 2. Ke2! Nf6 3. Ke3 Bc5+) looks superficially exciting, but is apt to transpose into other lines.



White typically proceeds on the familiar f3-g3-h3 axis, proving that Black's early Bc5 is a waste of time. Black periodically attempts Nxe4 followed by an early Qf6, but these lines are not materially different than those explored earlier.