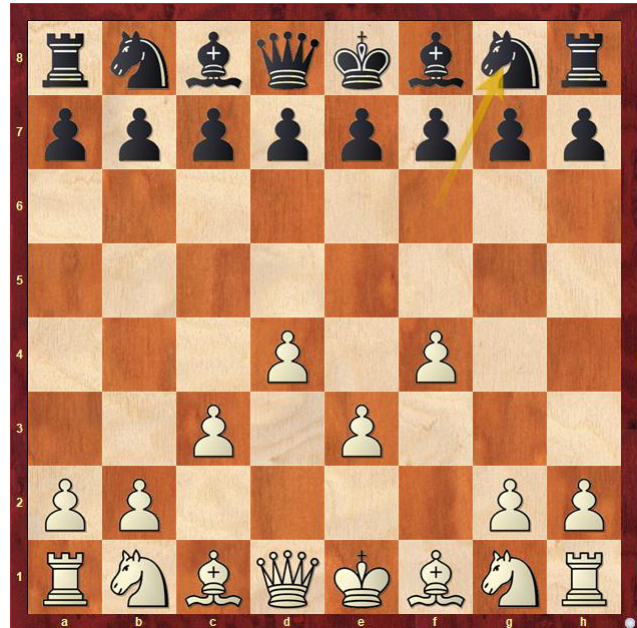
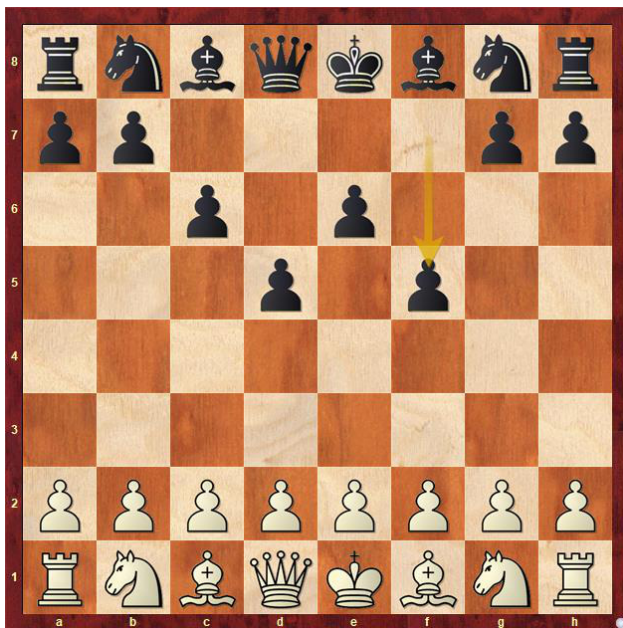


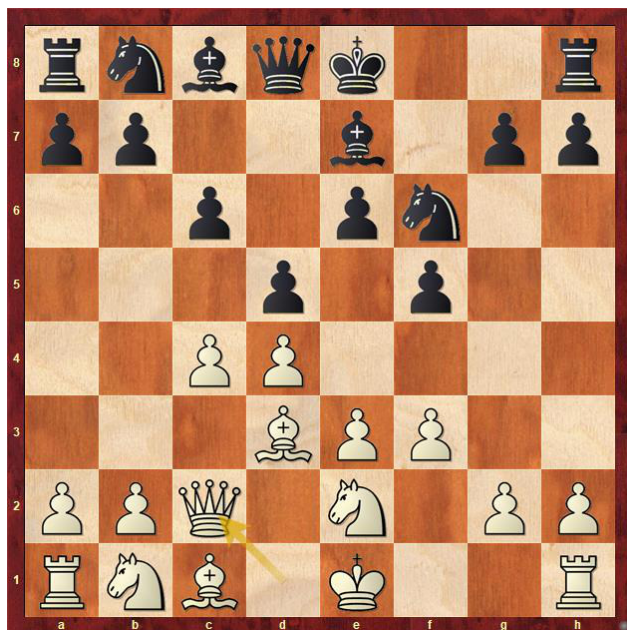
How to play against a white or black stonewall

A black or white stonewall looks as following:



Because as positional player I hate(d) playing white against a black stonewall, but recently played (and lost) against a white stonewall, I did some good thinking about playing against it. I am happy to share my insights 'open source' with the rest of the chess world (especially non-professional club players), because I regard stonewall a bit as 'anti chess'. Stonewall players are usually tactical players who are not good at setting up a position positionally, and choose for a wall in the hope that when it opens, they will win because of a combination (or Kingside attack).

First a useful white position against a black stonewall: the Rubinstein set-up:



(diagram 3)

Note that white prevents a Ne4 by an early f3, and prepares a later 'blow-up' by e3-e4. I find this approach against a black stonewall quite useful. Note, amongs others, pawn f5 is 'under fire' and prevents a freeing move as e6-e5.

More subtleties of blowing up a stonewall I will share from black's point of view, as I learned most of my black game lost against white stonewall.



First think of white's possibility f4-f5, in due time. Black should not be afraid of f4-f5, generally, because it leaves pawn e3 as an ugly backward pawn prohibiting Bc1 as well. Black can wait and let white capture on e6; recapture with a piece so as black you can occupy the e-file with a queen and or rook(s) pushing against e3. For the same reason (having a half-open file against e3) black can capture e6xf5 and have it his way.

White will strive to post a N(knight) on e5. This could be prevented by f7-f6. However, a knight on e5 is no disaster for black. Black can go a) for a later f6, or b) for a trade of the Ne5 (especially when white cannot recapture with Nxe5), whereafter white takes f4xe5 and plays f7-f6. (White is unlikely to recapture d4xe5 as this enables a break-through as d5-d4).|

The following position arises (I leave out piece moves).



(diagram 5)

Black can now comfortably play f7-f6 and threatens to capture f6xe5, after which white would have a very weak pawn on e5 (almost impossible to hold). So likely white plays e5xf6, and black Bxf6. Latter move prepares the liberation move e6-e5, after which pressure can be exerted along the e-line (after dx5 Bxe5), or, in case white does not take on e5, black has also the comfortable option of playing e5-e4 thereby crippling white's forces.



(diagram 6)

One possibility has not been mentioned yet: the stonewall player voluntarily exchanging his Ne5 (white) of Ne4 (black) against for example a knight on d7 or d2. One should recapture, of course, and then go for the 'full blow' against the white stonewall by f6-e5 or against the black stonewall by f3-e4.

As the not-stonewall party, beware to exchange one minor piece (Ne4/e5) at maximum, as exchanging more pieces before a blow-up frees the forces of the stonewall player.

‘Open source’

I strongly invite readers to comment on this document, certainly because I am no master or grandmaster at all (just a good positional club player, hating stonewall and seeing it as ‘anti-chess’ and trying to find the positional answer to play against a stonewall).

Thank you in advance for input, and otherwise have fun beating the stonewall positionally in future, as cited above!

Philippe Blankert 29 December 2018, internetavenue@outlook.com