

The Ruy Lopez

Chess

The Spanish Game, and why 3.Bb5 is more subtle than it looks.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 — attacking the knight that defends e5, and one of the most analysed openings in chess.

MOVE
3.Bb5

MAIN REPLY
3...a6

SOLID REPLY
3...Nf6

- 3...a6 (the Morphy Defence) is by far the most common reply.
- 4.Ba4 keeps the pressure; 4.Bxc6 is the Exchange Variation.
- White does not win a pawn immediately: 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.Nxe5 Qd4 regains it.
- The Berlin Defence (3...Nf6) is famously solid.
- White's plan is usually c3, d4 and a slow build-up.
- It is the main line at the highest level.

LOOK FOR IT

The Berlin was used to hold the world championship match of 2000 and remains a mainstream drawing weapon.

It rewards understanding over memorisation: the plans persist even when the move order changes.