Part III
Caro-Kann - Panov Variation

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Welcome everyone to Part III of a Caro-Kann Series! Today we will be reviewing the Panov Variation also know as the Panov-Botvinnik Attack. This variation gains its name from Vasily Panov and World Champion Mikhail Botvinnik. The Panov Variation is one of the main contributions to chess opening theory which Vasily has made. To be honest the Panov Variation isn't being used by the heavy weights at the top much anymore. When it is used according to my database and research, its for a quick draw. Not trying to say this line is refuted, but I will say the positions are a bit dry. Most of the mainlines in the Panov Variation lead directly to the Endgame. Other lines leave White completely lost or with an inferior position.

I have chosen a Endgame line for review today. We will focus mainly on this line, However we review some other lines as well. First let us cover the main ideas in the Panov Variation.

- White has an isolated d-pawn. Which is almost always a weakness.
- White has initiative. Due to the aggressive actions in the center with c4.
- White overall has a worse structure if Black plays correctly.
- White’s King can be exposed.
- White can either trade directly to the endgame or face a worse middlegame.
- White tends to gain a lead development in a lot of variations. Not without the cost of a pawn in those cases. Usually the d-pawn.
- White’s f-pawn can become doubled.
- Black seems gain the initiative in the Endgame after all White’s threats are dealt with.
- Black won’t castle at all he will run his King towards the center. Sometimes he can castle you will have to determine this for each position.
- Black will sack the e-pawn in most cases. This is to undermine the c-pawn and weaken the center.
- Black’s f-pawns can be doubled as well. The g-file may prove useful.
- Black still seeks their winning chances in the Endgame.
- Black should always be tactical aware in these variations. With the center open things may become dangerous quickly.

As before we will review typical piece placement in the Panov Variation ONLY:
● The Light Squared Bishop makes a detour in this variation not going to f5 and also not being developed first. Look for chances to develop on Bg4 pinning the Knight and Be6 pressuring the queenside and preventing d5. Check may need to be dealt with so you have Bd7 as well.
● The Dark Squared Bishop enjoys a wide range of posts: Bd6 blocking pressure from White’s Rooks, Bb4 preventing Re1, g6 followed by Bg7 in some variations. Bxc5 this can happen after e5 and dxe5 the pawn sack.
● The King’s Knight is the first to be developed. Always on f6. Remember there can be exceptions.
● The Queen’s Knight is usually the second to join the battle finding his home on c6.
● The Queen is always being traded off in a number ways. I will be better off demonstrating this. For the sake of the lecture: Qd7, Qa5+ and Qxd5.
● Rooks are hard to decide where they should go c, g and d-files are all options. With The Panov Variation going directly to the Endgame active Rook placement is of the utmost importance.

Now we will begin reviewing the example line:

1. e4 c6
2. d4 d5
3. exd5 cxd5
4. c4

This is the start of the Panov Variation. As you can see the center is going to be open. This makes the Panov Variation tough to face over the board as tactics are **ALWAYS** a factor in structures with the center open.
I did quite a bit of mental debate on which line to show you guys here. We can quickly review some these other lines during the lecture but for the sake of simplicity I chose the following. This is all pretty much forced once they play 6. **Nf3**

6. **Nf3 Bg4**  
7. cxd5 Nxd5  
8. Qb3 Bxf3  
9. gxf3 e6  
10. Qxb7 Nxd4  
11. Bb5+ Nxb5  
12. Qc6+ Ke7  
13. Qxb5 Qd7  
14. Nxd5+ Qxd5

We have reached the classic Panov Ending. It comes in two different variations. Your opponent could choose to play Bg5+ or Qxd5. There are some minor differences in each ending. Let us look at **15. Bg5+** first.

15. **Bg5+**
15... c6
16. Qxd5 exd5

We will analyse this position on the demo board. Key things to make a note of: By provoking f6 White has possibly weakened e6. It also prevents the Bishop from finding a nice home on f6. The Bishop is also already on e3. Now we will look at the other Panov Ending.

15. Qxd5 exd5

This ending is slightly different, as you can see. White can seek some active play on the e-file. But there isn’t too much to go on and the initiative will soon be lost.
I’m gonna end this lecture here. Seeing as the Panov does not offer much in the way of a middlegame. Analysing should prove useful in gaining a good understanding of what the Endgame is all about and how to proceed in such positions. Join us next week for Part IV with the Exchange Variation!