

# **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

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This book is dedicated to my father, Andrew Philip “Skip” Fabbro II, who taught me to play chess.

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## FEEDBACK

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The author welcomes all feedback at [andrew@fabbro.org](mailto:andrew@fabbro.org)

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# Forward to the Tenth Anniversary Edition

I am a patzer. I've always been a patzer and I always will be a patzer.

Like most patzers, I should be studying tactics, carefully annotating my own games, and reading introductory classics, with some tough endgame problems thrown in for my own good. But also like most patzers, I've long been fascinated by books on chess openings. I've read far more opening manuals than I should have, starting from the first time I came across *Modern Chess Openings* in a used book store when I was in my teens.

The colorful names of the openings speak to the romanticism in chess. A computer might be programmed to “know” 1. e4 c5, but for human players it's the swashbuckling Sicilian. Players study the King's Indian, Queen's Gambit, Hedgehog, and Poisoned Pawn, all of which sound far more interesting than an afternoon on king-and-pawn endgames. Just say the name of this famous opening out loud and see if it doesn't fire the chess romantic in your heart: “Hyper-Accelerated Dragon!”

Throughout my patzer career, I've noticed that if you read enough opening manuals, you discover they all have similar structure, rhythm, and language. In order to keep the reader engaged, they use purple language to emphasize the importance of certain moves. They impart a breathless sense of drama to what are often exquisitely subtle variations. Some of these books seem like they're written by retired boxing match commentators who come to the chess annotation business with the same tense, excited vocabulary.

These writers also tend to use the same stock phrases, and often you can copy-paste comments from one opening book into another, particularly in the less-crunchy opening commentary where the author is trying to sell the reader on his or her pet variation. Chess opening manuals are their own strange sub-sub-sub-genre of literature.

Ten years ago I ran across the Bongcloud Opening on chess.com. Someone had played it for laughs a few times and there were quite a few comments about how funny the opening was. Coming off one of my periodic chess manias, my brain was loaded with the thundering commentary of chess opening manuals and, on a lark, I wrote *Winning with the Bongcloud* as a parody of chess opening manuals.

To my delight, I have received a stream of emails over the years from players who enjoyed the book. I've seen it referred to on forums, and even on some play-by-play YouTube chess channels. Occasionally it's not been clear to me that the reader is conscious that it's a parody, which is an extra layer of glee.

The book has never been available in printed form, and as it's reached its tenth year, I've taken some time to clean up and beautify the original manuscript, fix innumerable typos, refresh and expand the art, and put it proper print and ebook format for the 2020s.

To my fellow patzers, I wish you much success with the Bongcloud...though I would not expect it.

I'd like to close with a special acknowledgement to the readers over the years who've noted the one thing that all the final positions in all illustrative games have in common. Bravo.

BM Andrew Fabbro  
February 2020

# Introduction



1. e4 e5 2. Ke2!

*Black to play and lose in 25 turns.*

The Bongcloud (also known as the *Boungcloud*, *Bongwolke* in German, and *Nuage de Bong* in French) 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 chess 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 well-known 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 Nimzo-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 Trompowsky, Konstantinopolsky, Bogoljubov-Indian, and Scheveningen Sicilian.
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 no known “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

*How Not to Choose a Chess Move* by Soltis

*Chess Openings for White, Unexplained* by Marv Albert

*The Stoner's Mind* by Silman

*Stink Unlike a Grandmaster* by Kotov

*My Sad Successors* by Kasparov

*500 Patzer Games of Chess* by Tartakower

*No Really, How Not to Play Chess* by Znosko-Borovsky

*The Least Instructive Games of Chess Ever Played* by Chernev

*Chess Fundamentals: The Outtakes* 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.

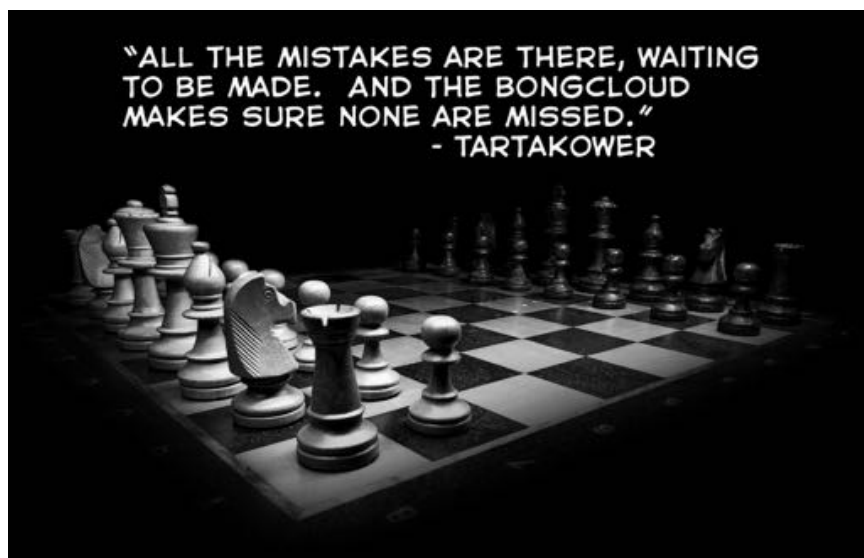
In the 19th Century, the American master Morphy was famous for giving odds to his opponents – even Queen’s odds to some. But history records no instance in which he gave “Bongcloud Odds” to an opponent, likely out of respect for the ferocity of the opening. Tragically, Dr. Tartakower died before he could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

Apocryphally, the Bongcloud is what Jose Capablanca’s father played when 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 Bongcloud have been tried.

*...Ke7!* This inaugurates the Bongcloud Counter-Gambit, and play often leads to the very sharp Marijanezy Bind, after 3. g4 g5 4. 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 ... d5 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. ...Nf6 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



*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 #1

*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'être* of the Bongcloud.

- 5.                                Qf6
- 6.     Kh3                        Nh6
- 7.     c3                            Nc6??

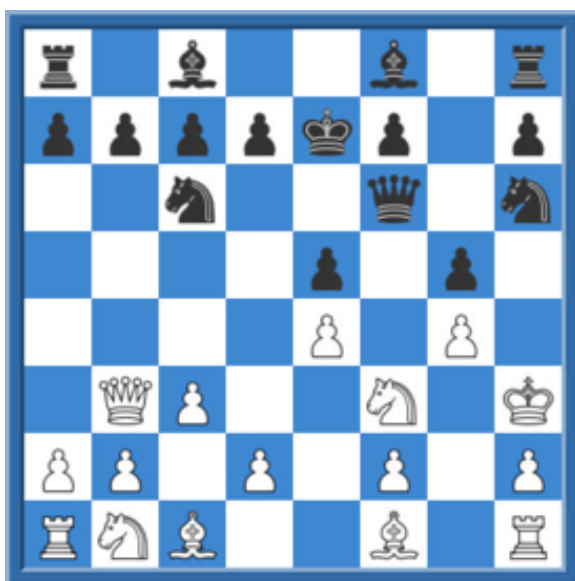
Black misunderstands the threat of c3.

- 8.     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 Marijanec 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 #2

*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.

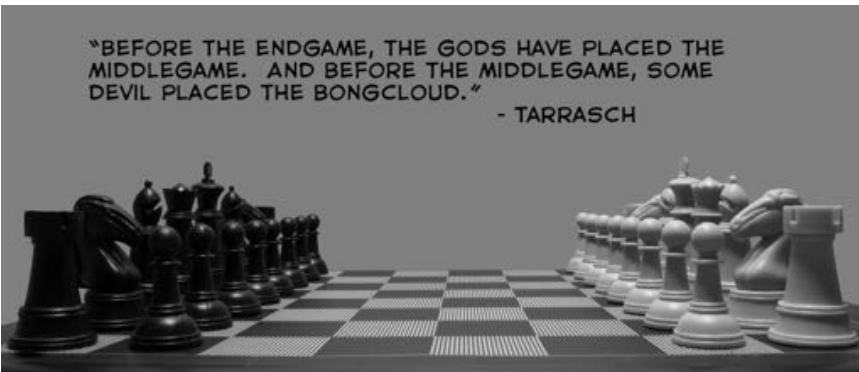
6. Kh4! Ng6+



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!







While Qh4 may seem attractive to the unschooled opponent panicking in the face of the Bongcloud, there are wild complications in many lines of play here, 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.

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 #3

*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. Nxd1 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: 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 #4

#### (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.

In 1956, a Byrne-Fischer game in the Rosenwald Memorial Tournament was termed the “Game of the Century.” In that famous game, Fischer employed a windmill attack style. Notice here how the *Bongcloudista* emulates that famous grandmaster’s style with his tick-tock King movements.

5. Nxf2+
6. Kg3 Nxe4

The thematic pendulum in action. Black reaches for White’s rook 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 5” seems good in the classic

Reinfeld equation, the reality is that White has traded an undeveloped, backward Rook for Black's forward Knight.

7. Kh3 Nf2+



At this point, Black is creatively bankrupt. His premature attack has left him with no offensive options against tediously jousting at windmills with his lone thrusting his lone knight.

8. Kg3

White effortlessly sidesteps the useless knight again. Black is perhaps tempted by NxQ but the ensuing complications are a tangled of perplexities that Black was ill-prepared to calculate over the board. Instead, releasing the futility of his toothless assault, is forced to violate a cardinal rule of development and bring his Queen out early.

8. Qg5+  
9. Qg4



...and White is clearly winning. Black's sole developed piece is awkwardly placed behind enemy lines. White's King is located on the dynamic g3/h3 pendulum and he has a powerful "royal battering ram" on the g-file. 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.

In author's opinion, the "Bongcloud Steamroller" (using his two central pawns to ward off Black's blows and achieve a strongpoint in the heart of Black's camp) is an attractive but perhaps bygone approach. While the powerful center encampment of the two pawns backed by their "royal taskmaster" whipping them forward seems logical, it often leads to sharper plan than many prefer.



Instead, I recommend the usual f3-g3-h3 axis of play for his majesty, though as we'll see, the d4 lever can still be thrown for good effect.

**Illustrative Game #5**

*Fabbro-Deep Blue Red Oh Wow Purple Dude  
Ann Arbor, 1994*

- 1. e4 Nc6
- 2. Ke2! b6
- 3. Kf3 Bb7
- 4. d4



White's moves 3 and 4 are interchangeable here. With 2. ...b6, Black's intention to setup a hypermodern defense is obvious. His hope is that by allowing White to setup a forward pawn center, he can later undermine it from behind. This is sort of chessboard

ballet may work against a weaker defense, but as well'll see, it's spitting in the wind of the Bongcloud hurricane.

4. Nf6

Similar to the Two Knights, except without Black occupying the center.

5. e5

White slams into Black's lines with the force of a thousand armored tanks.

5. Nxd4+



Too clever by half, and if double check won games, Black would have a 0-1. But that's not how the game works.

In the post-match press conference, IBM's leader programmer admitted that he saw this move as highly advantageous.

“This opening not in the MCO, though I found a reference in the liner notes of a King Crimson album. We thought that our flexible, hypermodern Nc6 move left lots of options open, but we didn't see the Bongcloud coming.”

Were either Réti or Nimzovich ever World Champion? Didn't think so.

6. Kg3



His majesty is now ensconced in with his right flank fully behind him. His bridge menaces the d-file and the d1-h5 diagonal, while his Bishop controls another swath of the light tiles. All options are open to him, while Black's "horseplay" has left him deeply committed.

6. e4+

Black relieves the tension on his Knight, but only by wasting time with a useless check.

7. Kh3 Nf5

8. Bb5



After this, further reporting would hardly serve our purposes here, but a brief positional analysis is insightful:

- White's King is safely tucked away, surrounded by his own troopers.
- One Bishop is situated to explode out of the backfield and lance deep into Black's flanks, while another is on a direct path to the Black monarch.
- Black's d-pawn is helplessly pinned.

- White has multiple pawns that can threaten Black's overextended equestrians in a single move, and his own Knights are in ready reserve.
- 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 White's litany of positional advantages. 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.

“LET US SAY THE GAME MAY BE CONTINUED IN TWO WAYS: ONE OF THEM IS A BEAUTIFUL TACTICAL BLOW THAT GIVES RISE TO VARIATIONS THAT DON'T YIELD TO PRECISE CALCULATIONS; THE OTHER IS THE BONGCLOUD. I WOULD CHOOSE THE LATTER WITHOUT THINKING TWICE.”

- KARPOV

