

Grandmaster Repertoire

**Victor
Mikhalevski**

**The
Open
Spanish**



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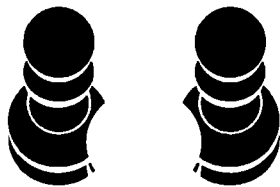


Grandmaster Repertoire 13

The Open Spanish

By

Victor Mikhalevski



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GRANDMASTER REPERTOIRE 13 — THE OPEN SPANISH

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Preface

By the Author

My elder brother Sasha, IM Alex Mikhalevski, taught me to play chess when I was 4, just before he started his Soviet Army service. He returned from the army two years later and then I began to train seriously under his guidance. You may be wondering why I have started this Introduction with something unrelated to the Open Spanish? However, it *is* related as I have been playing the Open Spanish ever since I started playing chess and it was my brother who taught me this variation. Curiously enough, he played the French Defence when he joined the army, but returned from it playing the Open Spanish. In the army he had the privilege of being trained by a great theoretician, and in his prime one of the best players in the world, Isaac Boleslavsky. Boleslavsky recommended that he play this system. So it is quite possible I would not be writing this book, nor playing the Open Spanish, were it not for this great man, who died when I had barely learned how the pieces move.

In January 1991 I moved with my family to Israel. Only two months later I played my first tournament there, the Israel Open Championship. I won a decisive last-round game against the famous GM Yehuda Gruenfeld with the help of the Open Spanish, crushing my opponent in good style. It was the first of numerous encounters with Yehuda in this system.

Since my childhood right up to the moment of writing these words, the Open Spanish has served me faithfully and helped me to win many important games, so when Quality Chess asked me to write a book on this opening system I didn't have to think twice. I would also like to add that the book is not only about the Open variation, as it is a repertoire book that starts after 4.♘a4 ♟f6. Therefore all White's side lines, such as 5.d3 and 5.♖e2 and other deviations from 5.0–0, are also covered with no less attention than the Open variation itself.

I hope everyone enjoys the book and if a few of you decide to take up the Open Spanish then I shall consider my mission to be accomplished.

Victor Mikhalevski
Beer-Sheva, December 2012

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5.0–0 ♘xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6**

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Key to symbols used

±	White is slightly better
∓	Black is slightly better
⊕	White is better
⊖	Black is better
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
=	equality
≡	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
∞	unclear
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
!?	a move worth considering
?!	a move of doubtful value
#	mate

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Periodicals

New In Chess Yearbooks

Secrets of Opening Surprises (SOS)

Electronic/Internet Resources

ChessBase Magazine

ChessPublishing.com

Chapter 1

Sidelines

5.♙xc6 and 5.♘c3



Variation Index

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4

4...♘f6

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A2) after 8.♙xd4



8...♙e7!N

A32) after 11.d4



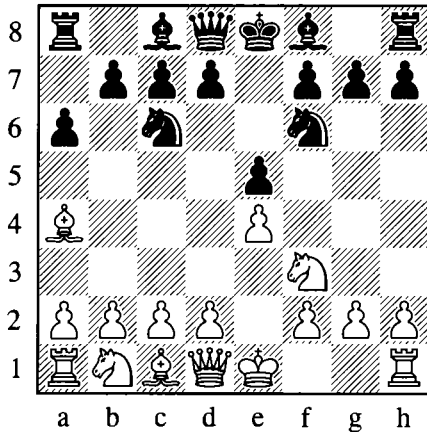
11...♙f6!N

B1) after 13.d3



13...♙g4!N

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6



In this chapter we will address the minor options of A) 5.♙xc6 and B) 5.♘c3.

Other rare moves have little to recommend them. Here is one such example:

5.c3?! ♘xe4!

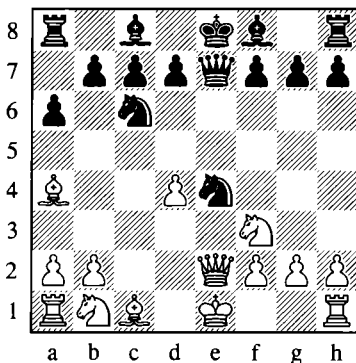
White already has to play accurately in order to maintain the balance.

6.♙e2!

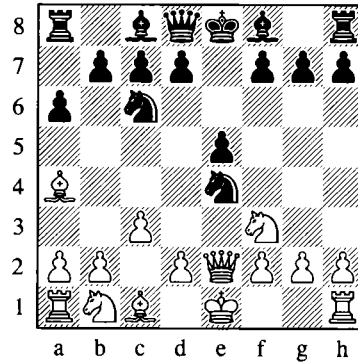
6.0-0?! ♘c5 7.♙c2 (7.♙xc6 dxc6 8.♘xe5 ♘d3!?) 7...e4 8.♙e1 ♙e7! 9.♙xe4 ♘xe4 10.♙xe4 d5! Black is better thanks to his bishop pair and the weak light squares in White's camp.

6.d4?! exd4 7.♙e2 (7.cxd4 ♙b4+ 8.♘bd2 ♘xd2 9.♙xd2 ♙e7+!; 7.0-0 ♙e7 8.cxd4 d5 9.♘e5 ♙d7! White does not have sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn.)

7...♙e7 8.cxd4 (8.0-0 ♘c5! 9.♙d1 ♙d8! 10.cxd4 ♘xa4 11.♙xa4 d5!)



8...b5 9.♙b3 ♘f6! 10.♙e3 ♘a5 11.♘bd2 ♘xb3 12.♘xb3 g6 13.♙c2 ♙g7! 14.0-0 0-0 15.♙xc7 ♘d5 16.♙c1 d6! with an obvious positional advantage for Black.



6...♘c5 7.♘xe5

7.♙xc6?! dxc6 8.d4 This attempt to obtain a favourable pawn structure does not work: 8...♘e6 9.dxe5 ♘c5! The strong knight move prepares ...♙d3, underlining the weakness of the d3-square.

7...♘e5 8.♙xe5+ ♙e7

The more entertaining 8...♙e7!? is also promising for Black: 9.♙xg7 (After 9.♙c2 ♘e6 10.d4 d5 11.0-0 0-0= Black is fine.) 9...♙f6 10.♙g4 ♘xa4 11.♙xa4 ♙e7+ 12.♘d1 b5 13.♙f4 d5! Black's compensation is not in doubt; White's king is stuck in the centre, his light squares are weak and most of his pieces are still undeveloped.

9.♙xe7+ ♙xe7 10.♙c2 d5 11.d4 ♘e6

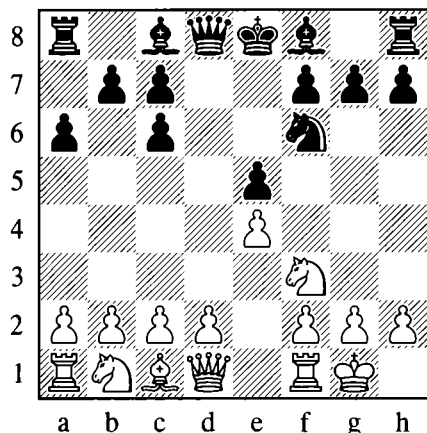
With an equal position in Treysman – Horowitz, New York 1936.

A) 5.♙xc6

The idea behind this delayed exchange is to exploit the position of the knight on f6. The point is that in the main line of the Exchange Variation after 4.♙xc6 dxc6 5.0-0 Black usually protects the e5-pawn by means of 5...f6, which is now impossible. Moreover the knight would usually go to e7, where it enjoys greater flexibility than on f6.

5...dxc6

From this position it is worth considering
A1) 6.0-0, A2) 6.♞c3 and A3) 6.d3.

A1) 6.0-0

This promises no advantage against Black's obvious reply.

6...♞xe4

The knight, which was supposed to be misplaced, has captured the central pawn.

7.♞e2

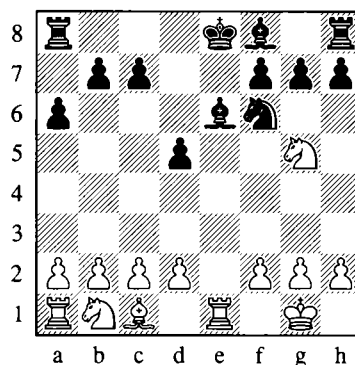
7.d3 ♞d6 8.♞xe5 ♟e7 9.♞e1 transposes to 7.♞e1 below.

7.♞xe5 ♟e7 8.♞e2 ♞d6 9.♞e1 ♟e6 (9...♞f5!?) 10.♞c3 ♞f5 11.♞e4 0-0 Black enjoyed a comfortable position with the bishop pair in Gufeld – Tal, Leningrad 1954.

7.♞e1 ♞d6! This looks like the best retreat, heading to a nice square on f5. 8.♞xe5 ♟e7 9.d3 0-0 Black was doing fine in Castro – Kurtic, Uruguay 1983.

7...♞f6 8.♞xe5

8.♞xe5+ ♟e6 9.♞g5 ♞d5 10.♞xd5 occurred in Sanz Calzada – Vargas, Barcelona 2001, and now 10...cxd5N promises a slight edge for Black, for example: 11.♞e1



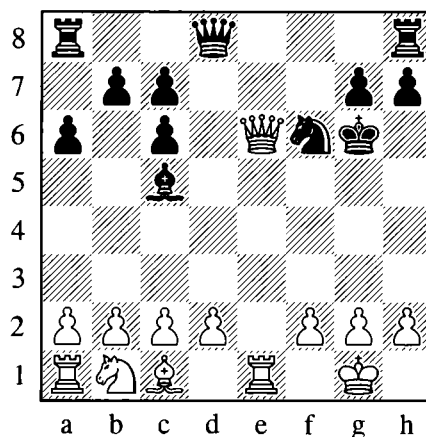
11...♟d6! 12.♞xe6 fxe6 13.♞xe6+?! (13.d3 is better, though after 13...0-0 14.♞xe6 ♞g4 15.h3 ♞xf2 Black retains some initiative.) 13...♟d7! 14.♞e1 ♞ae8 15.♞f1 ♞g4! 16.h3 ♞xf2! White is in trouble as the knight is untouchable.

8...♟e6 9.♞e1 ♟c5!

Black has a fine position, as the following tactical strike does not work:

10.♞xf7?! ♟xf7 11.♞xe6+ ♟g6

Despite the king position, Black is clearly better thanks to his huge lead in development.

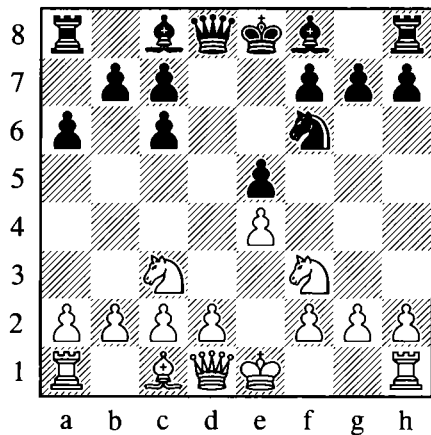
**12.♞e5**

12.♞e4 h5! 13.♞e5 ♞d6 is similar.

12...♞d6 13.♞f5+ ♟f7 14.♞e1 ♞ae8

Black obviously has more than enough play for a pawn.

A2) 6. ♖c3



6... ♗d6 7.d4

7.d3 will be considered in line A3 – see 7. ♖c3 in the note to White's 7th move on page 12.

Another option is:

7.0–0 ♗g4!

The pin is rather annoying. Here is an illustrative line:

8. ♖e2

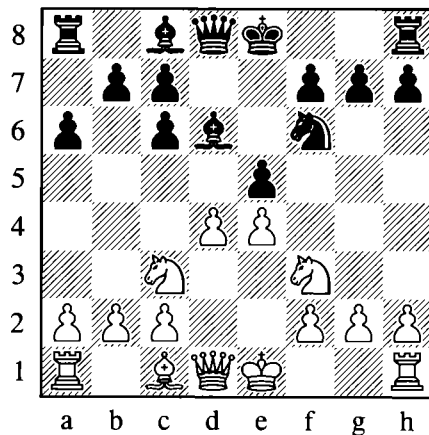
This is slightly inaccurate, as Black will not be forced to move his bishop.

8.d3 occurred in Varlamov – Volkov, Vizantia 2006, and now 8... ♖d7N 9.h3 ♗h5 transposes to 8.h3 below. (But note that 9...h5? would be a mistake in view of 10.hxg4 hxg4 11. ♖g5±.)

8.h3 is better, although after 8... ♗h5 9.d3 ♖d7 Black is still doing fine as the knight on c3 is misplaced. (With the knight on b1 White would have the option of ♖bd2 to relieve the pressure on the f3-knight).

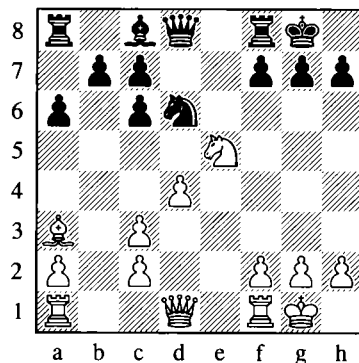
8... ♖d7 9.h3 h5! 10.d3 ♖f6 11. ♗e3 ♗xf3 12. ♖xf3 ♖xf3 13.gxf3 ♖f8! 14. ♖e2 ♖e6

Black has a slight edge due to the weak square on f4 and the damaged pawn structure on the kingside.



7...exd4

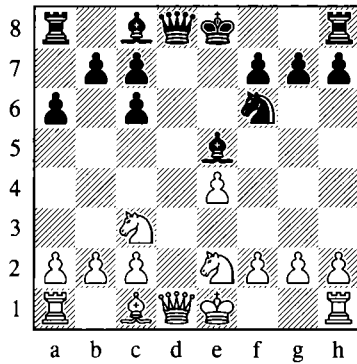
I also like Karpov's 7... ♗b4!?, which is enough for equality. 8. ♖xe5 ♖xe4 9.0–0! ♗xc3 10.bxc3 0–0 11. ♗a3 (11. ♖f3 ♖d6 12. ♖e1 ♖e8 13. ♗f4 ♗e6 leads to a roughly equal position.) 11... ♖d6=



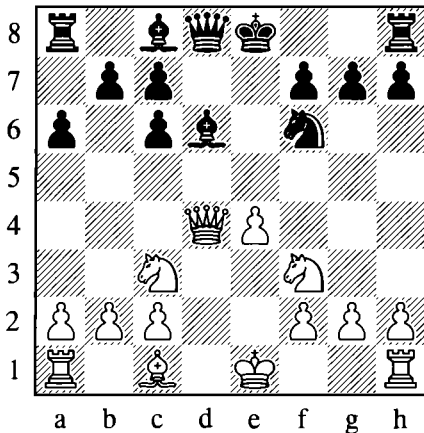
12.c4?! f6 13. ♖g4 ♖e8 14. ♖e3 ♖f5! 15. ♖xf5 ♗xf5 16. ♖d2 ♗e6 17. ♖c3 ♖d7 18. ♖fe1 ♖f7 Black was slightly better and eventually won a remarkable opposite-coloured bishop endgame in Kurajica – Karpov, Skopje 1976.

8. ♖xd4

The dubious 8. ♖xd4?!N remains untested, and with good reason: 8... ♗e5 (Also the simple 8...0–0± is good for Black.) 9. ♖de2 (9. ♗e3 ♖g4 10. ♖f3 ♗xc3† 11.bxc3 ♖xd1† 12. ♖xd1 ♖xe3 13.fxe3 0–0± is clearly in Black's favour.)



9...♙xd1† 10.♔xd1 ♖g4! 11.♔e1 f5! with initiative.



8...♙e7!N

Black develops his queen and prepares ... ♘c5. This is an obvious improvement over 8...♘e7? 9.♘f4! 0-0 10.0-0-0! ♙xd4 11.♖xd4 and White was slightly better in Treybal – Lustig, Prague 1928.

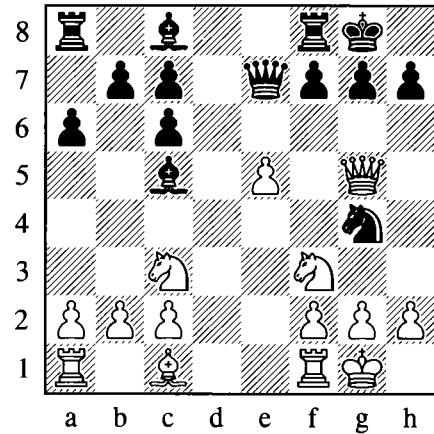
9.0-0

9.♘e3 threatens to win a piece with e4-e5, but after 9...c5! 10.♙d3 ♘g4 11.0-0-0 0-0-0 Black obtains a comfortable position.

9...♘c5 10.♙d2

Apparently this is the best square for the queen, having in mind the ♙g5 idea.

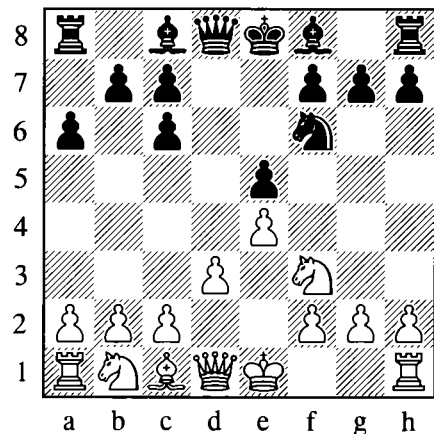
10...0-0 11.e5 ♖g4 12.♙g5



12...♙xg5 13.♘xg5 ♘e6 14.♖e4 ♘b6 15.h3 ♘d5 16.♗ae1 f6! 17.exf6 ♖xf6

Black is doing fine.

A3) 6.d3



The most popular move is also the most flexible, as it leaves open the options of both ♖bd2 and ♖c3.

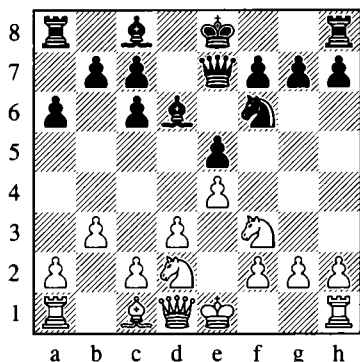
6...♘d6

After this natural reply White sometimes castles immediately with A31) 7.0-0, but by far the most common move is A32) 7.♖bd2.

Here are a few other sidelines:

7.b3 ♙e7 (Black can also play 7...♘e6 8.♘b2 ♖d7 9.♖bd2 b5 10.0-0 0-0 transposing to

the main A32 line.) 8.♘bd2 Pridorozhni – Predke, Kazan 2010. Now it looks interesting for Black to try:



8...b5!? Taking away the c4-square. 9.♗b2 0-0 10.♘f1 ♘h5! Since the knight is misplaced on f6, rerouting it to a better position is a typical idea in this system. 11.♘e3 ♘f4 12.0-0 ♗d7 Black has a good position.

7.♗g5

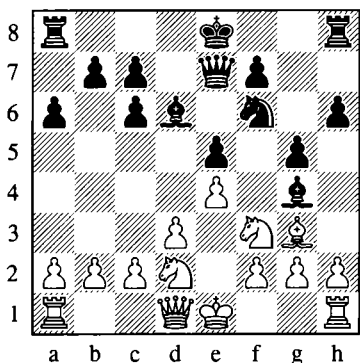
The early pin isn't dangerous for Black.

7...h6 8.♗h4 ♖e7 9.♘bd2 g5

This ambitious move works well, although 9...♗e6 is also fine.

10.♗g3 ♗g4

Another typical idea. After driving the enemy bishop back to g3 Black pins the f3-knight, while also having in mind the ...♗h5-g6 manoeuvre.



11.h3

11.♘c4 may be met by 11...♗h5 (11...0-0

12.♘e3 ♗e6 is also playable) 12.♘e3 ♗g6 followed by long castling and Black is by no means worse.

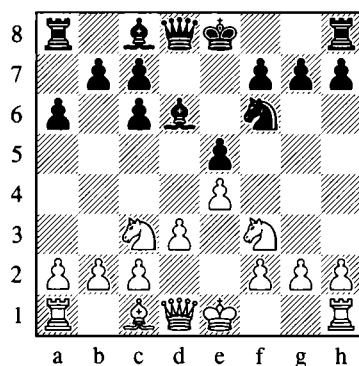
11...♗h5 12.♘c4 0-0-0 13.♖e2 ♘d7 14.♗h2 f6

Black had the more pleasant position in Gufeld – Geller, Tashkent 1958.

A final sideline is:

7.♘c3

Here I like the idea of:



7...♗e6!?

7...h6 is possible, but at this stage the bishop need not fear harassment from a knight on g5.

I also have to mention an old World Championship match game which continued: 7...c5 8.h3 ♗e6 9.♗e3 h6 10.a4 c4 (10...♘d7!?N bringing the knight to c6 via b8 deserved serious attention.) 11.d4 exd4 12.♗xd4 ♗b4 13.0-0 c6 This was Alekhine – Bogoljubow, Germany (16) 1934, and here White had a strong manoeuvre:

14.♖c1! (instead of 14.e5) 14...0-0 15.♖f4 with a slight edge for White.

8.♗g5?!

This has been White's choice in both games, but it does not make a good impression.

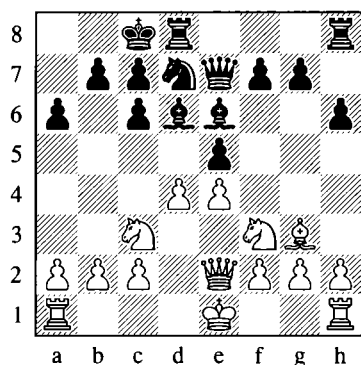
8...h6 9.♗h4

Maze – Renet, Besancon 2006. Now I would recommend:

9...♖e7!N

Preparing long castling. In the game Black played 9...c5, but we will see that there is no real need to prevent d3-d4.

10.♞e2 0-0-0 11.♟g3 ♞d7 12.d4



12...♞b8!

Ignoring the attack on e5. Play may continue:

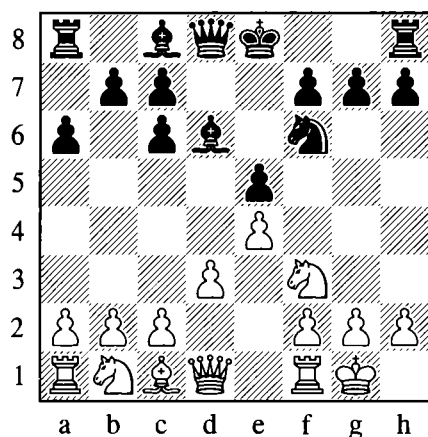
13.dxe5

Or 13.♞xe5 ♞xe5 14.dxe5 ♟b4 15.0-0 ♟xc3! 16.bxc3 ♞c5 17.♞f3 ♟d2 with initiative.

13...♟b4 14.0-0 ♞b6 15.♟fd1 ♟xc3 16.bxc3 ♟xd1† 17.♟xd1 ♞a4!

Black has the better prospects thanks to White's damaged pawn structure on the queenside and misplaced bishop on g3.

A31) 7.0-0



After this move I would like to recommend

a novelty, which is likely to transpose to the main line.

7...♟e6!?N

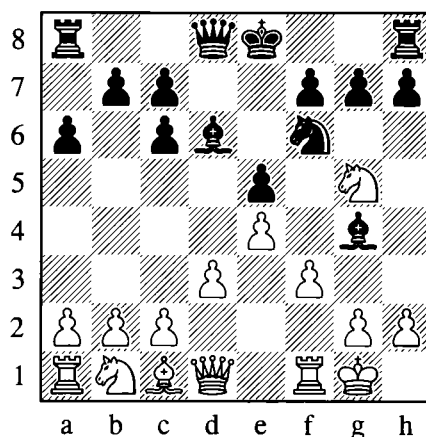
The main point of this move is to prepare ...♞d7, which should be played in response to White's ♞bd2. If Black retreats the knight prematurely, his light-squared bishop will be exchanged after ♞g5.

8.♞g5?!

Objectively White should prefer 8.♞bd2 when 8...0-0 transposes into the main A32 line. Nevertheless we should examine the consequences of the obvious knight lunge.

8...♟g4 9.f3?!

9.♞f3 is the lesser evil, but then it is obvious that White's previous move makes no sense.



9...♟d7

Now the positional threat of ...h6 more or less forces White's hand.

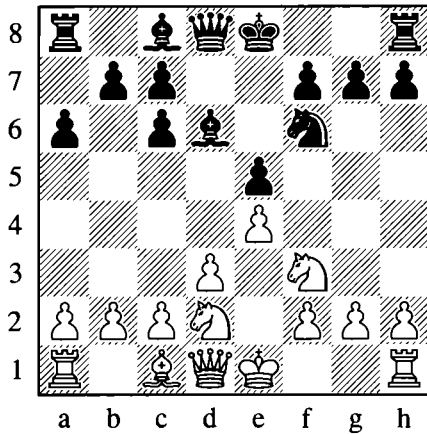
10.f4 exf4 11.♟xf4

11.♞f3 ♟g4 also favours Black, as it is not clear how White can regain his pawn.

11...♟xf4 12.♟xf4 ♞e7!

White's unstable pieces will cost him material one way or another.

A32) 7.♟b2



This has been by far the most popular continuation.

7...♙e6 8.0-0

Once again 8.♟g5 doesn't make much sense: 8...♙g4 9.f3?! (9.♟gf3 is the lesser evil) 9...♙c8 10.♟c4 (After 10.f4 exf4 11.♟c4 0-0 12.♟f3 ♜e8 White's compensation is insufficient.) 10...h6 11.♟h3 ♙xh3 12.gxh3 ♟h5 With a damaged structure and the black queen coming to h4 next, White has real problems.

8.b3 does not have much independent significance: 8...b5 (In my opinion this is the most accurate move order as it prevents the option of ♟c4. Nevertheless there is nothing wrong with 8...♟d7, which was played in the majority of games from this position.) 9.♙b2 ♟d7 10.0-0 Now Black should play 10...0-0 transposing to the main line below, rather than 10...g5?! 11.d4! f6 12.c4! g4 13.♟h4 which gave White the better position in Byway – Flear, Torquay 1982.

8...0-0

Black can also start with 8...♟d7.

9.b3 ♟d7

Black can also consider 9...b5!?, which

eliminates the ♟c4 idea entirely and transposes to the main line after 10.♙b2 ♟d7.

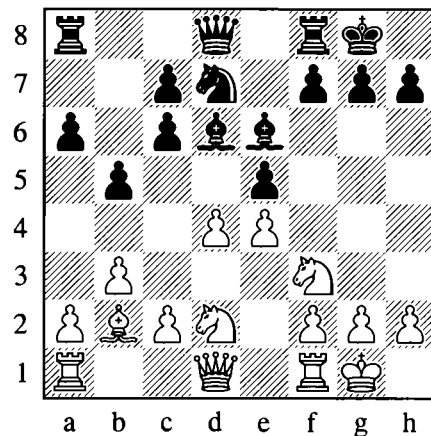
10.♙b2

10.♟c4 doesn't promise any advantage in view of: 10...♙xc4 11.bxc4 (or 11.dxc4 ♟c5 12.♞e2 ♟e6 and Black is doing fine.) Kristol – Haraldsson, corr. 1969, and now 11...b5!N with easy equality.

10...b5!?

This is Carlsen's idea. Black takes away the c4-square and thus reduces the mobility of the d2-knight.

11.d4



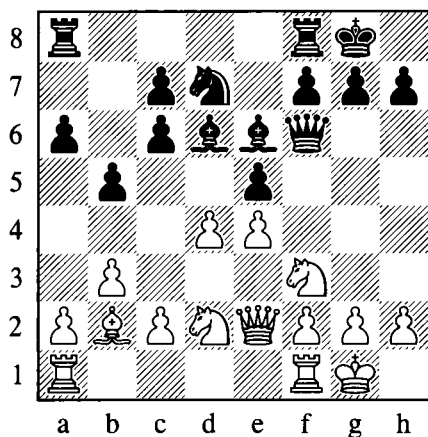
11...♞f6!N

Improving on Carlsen's play. This way Black connects the rooks, protects the e5-pawn and brings the queen to the kingside.

The game continued: 11...f6 12.h3 c5?! (According to GM Postny Black had to play 12...♞e8! bringing the queen to the kingside.) 13.d5 ♙f7 14.a4 ♟b6 15.c4 c6 16.♟h4± Nakamura – Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2010.

12.♞e2

12.dxe5 ♟xe5 13.♟xe5 ♙xe5 14.♙xe5 ♞xe5 is okay for Black thanks to the weakness of White's dark squares.

**12...exd4**

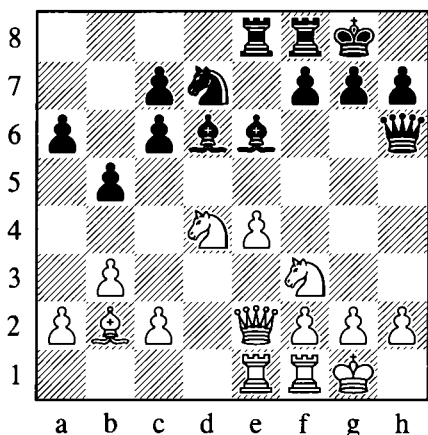
12...♟fe8!? is a worthy alternative.

13.♞xd4 ♜h6 14.♞f3

14.h3 is not an improvement due to 14...♟fe8! 15.♟fe1 (15.♞xc6?! is strongly met by 15...♞f4! 16.♟fd1 ♞xh3!?) 15...♞c5 16.♟ad1 ♞d7 with pressure on e4.

14...♟ae8 15.♟ael

Now 15.♞xc6? loses to: 15...♞d5 16.♞a5 ♞xe4+–

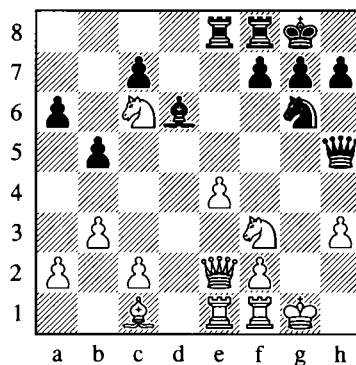
**15...♞e5 16.h3 ♞g6**

The knight would love to visit the f4-square.

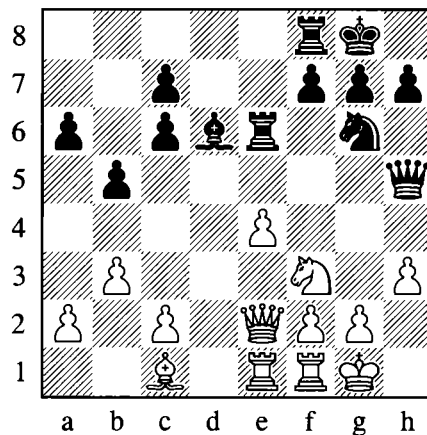
17.♞c1 ♜h5! 18.♞xe6

18.♞xc6 gives Black a pleasant choice:

18...♞xh3!? (There is also 18...♞d7 19.♞cd4 c5 20.♞g5! ♜xe2 21.♞xe2 ♞c6! 22.♞g3 f6 23.♞f3 ♞xg3 24.fxg3 ♞xe4 with an equal ending.) 19.gxh3



19...♞f4! (19...♜xh3?! is less accurate in view of 20.e5!) 20.♞xf4 ♞xf4 21.♞fd4! ♜xh3 22.f3 ♞e3! 23.♜xe3 ♜g3+ 24.♞h1 ♜h3+ The game ends in perpetual check.

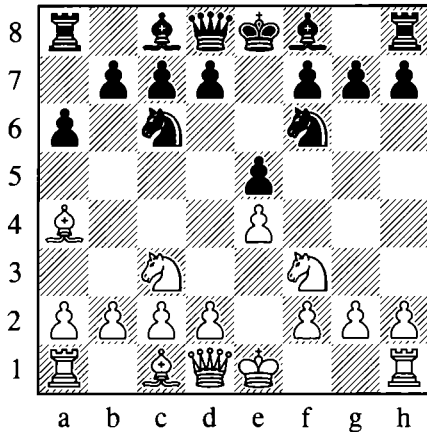
18...♟xe6**19.♞g5**

19.♞d4 ♜e5! 20.♞f3 ♜h5=

19...♜xe2 20.♟xe2 ♟e7 21.♞f3 ♟fe8 22.♟fe1 ♞b4 23.♞d2 ♞xd2 24.♟xd2 f6=

The endgame is balanced, as Black's activity and pressure against the e4-pawn make up for his doubled c-pawns.

B) 5.♘c3

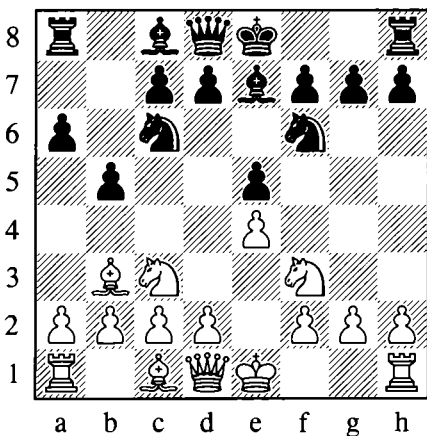


This natural developing move, which has been known since the middle of the nineteenth century, and was a favourite weapon of the 10th World Champion, Boris Spassky, is a rare guest in modern tournament practice. One of its main drawbacks is the fact that it blocks the c-pawn, making the typical retreat of the light-squared bishop to c2 impossible.

5...b5

5...♙e7 is also playable, and after 6.0-0 b5 7.♙b3 d6 we transpose to the line B2 below. However, I do not see any reason to give White the extra option of 6.♙xc6!?

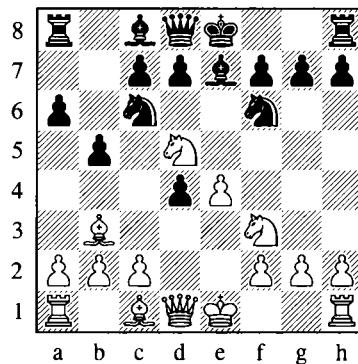
6.♙b3 ♙e7



From here Black's typical plan involves exchanging White's light-squared bishop by means of ...♘a5, which will normally ensure him of a comfortable game. Usually he will have to start with ...d6 to protect the e5-pawn. This idea has good chances to work thanks to the position of the knight on c3.

We will analyse **B1) 7.a4**, **B2) 7.0-0** and **B3) 7.d3**.

The aggressive 7.d4 promises no advantage: 7...exd4 8.♘d5 (8.♘xd4? falls into a well-known trap. 8...♘xd4 9.♙xd4 c5 10.♙d1 c4 trapping the bishop. 11.e5 ♘g8+ and White's compensation for a piece is insufficient.) Janosevic – Haag, Budapest 1965.



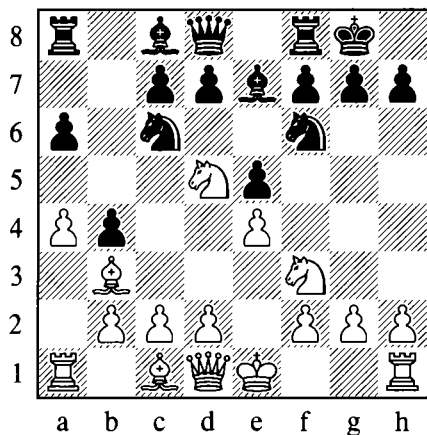
8...♙b7!N 9.0-0 (9.e5? ♘xe5!+) 9...0-0 10.♙e1 d6 11.♙d2 ♘d7 12.a4 ♘c5 13.axb5 axb5 14.♙xa8 ♙xa8 15.♙a2 ♙d7 Black is just fine.

B1) 7.a4

This way White is trying to avoid an exchange of the light-squared bishop.

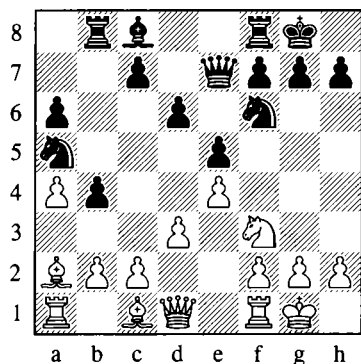
7...b4 8.♘d5 0-0

8...♘xe4!? is a playable alternative, although White should get adequate compensation for the pawn.



9.♘xf6†

Another possible continuation is: 9.d3 ♘a5 10.♘xe7† (After 10.♙a2 ♘xd5 11.♙xd5 c6 12.♙a2 d6 the position is equal.) 10...♗xe7 11.♙a2 d6 12.0–0 ♖b8

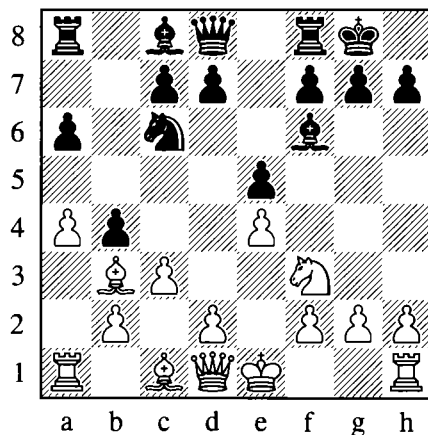


With ...♙e6 coming soon, Black equalizes easily. Attempting to pin the f6-knight is not dangerous, as the following game shows: 13.♙g5 h6 14.♙h4?! b3!? (14...♙g4!? is also strong.) 15.♙xb3 ♘xb3 16.cxb3 ♙g4= The weak b-pawns yield Black more than sufficient compensation, T. Paetz – Postny, Dresden 2007.

9...♙xf6 10.c3

White wants to preserve his bishop.

Another possible continuation is 10.0–0 ♘a5 11.♙a2 (11.♙d5 c6 12.♙a2 d5 is good for Black) 11...♙b7 12.d3 d5= with full equality.

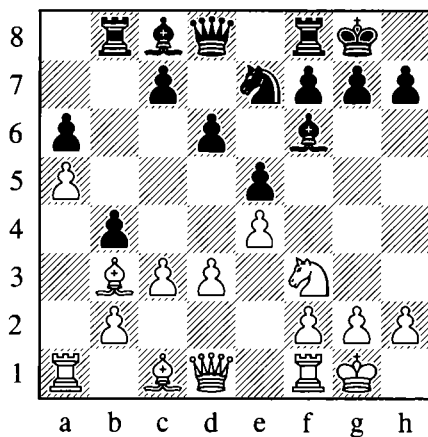


10...♖b8 11.0–0 d6 12.a5

Taking away the a5-square from Black's knight.

12...♘e7 13.d3

This position was reached in Yurtaev – Peng Xiaomin, Istanbul 2000. Now instead of prematurely exchanging on c3, I found a logical improvement.



13...♙g4!N

Black's idea is to exploit the loose bishop on b3.

14.♙c4

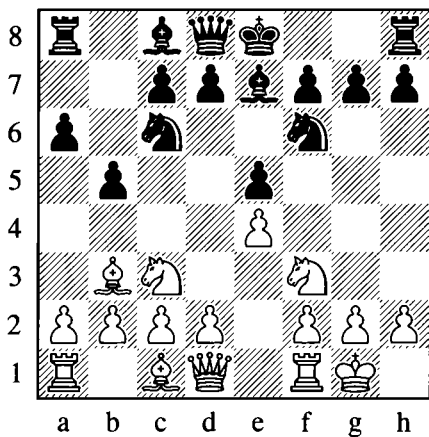
After 14.cxb4 ♖xb4 15.♖a3 c5= White's queenside pawns are weak.

14.♖b1 is met by 14...bxc3 15.bxc3 ♘c6! and White has to worry about his a-pawn.

14...d5! 15.exd5 bxc3! 16.bxc3 ♘xd5
17.♙d2 ♚d6♠

White is under some pressure.

B2) 7.0–0



7...d6

Black protects the e5-pawn and prepares ...♙a5. Now we will analyse both **B21) 8.a4** and **B22) 8.♙d5**.

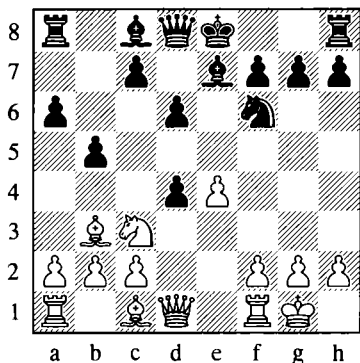
Several other moves have been played, but none of them are dangerous. Here are two examples:

8.d4?

This overambitious move can be punished.

8...♙xd4! 9.♙xd4 exd4

White already has a problem as the d4-pawn is poisoned.



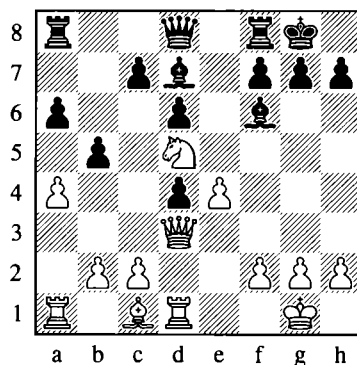
10.♙d5!?

10.♙xd4?? c5 wins material.

10.♙d5 c5 (10...♙b7!?) 11.♙xe7?! ♚xe7
White had no compensation for the pawn in Baird – Schlechter, Vienna 1898.

10...♙xd5 11.♙xd5 ♙f6 12.a4 ♙d7 13.♚d3
0–0 14.♙d1

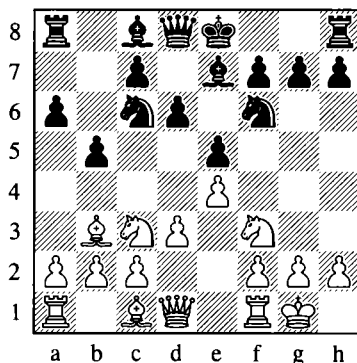
This was Nikonov – Valner, corr. 2005, and now Black can try:



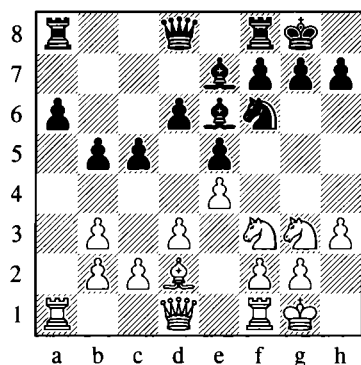
14...bxa4N 15.♙xf6† ♚xf6 16.♚xd4 ♚xd4
17.♙xd4♠

Black's extra pawn gives him some winning chances in the endgame.

8.d3 does not lose a pawn, but can hardly threaten Black:

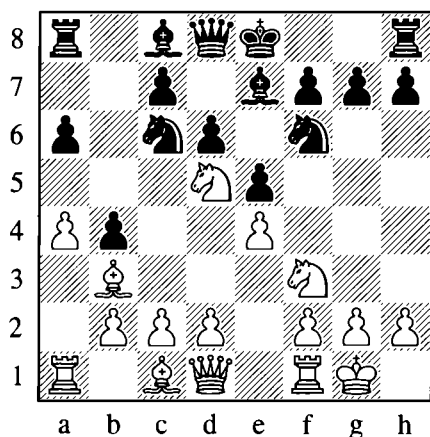


8...♙a5 Black carries out his main plan of eliminating the light-squared bishop, and obtains an equal position. 9.♙e2 0–0 10.♙g3
♙xb3 11.axb3 c5 12.h3 ♙e6 13.♙d2



13...a5!?N (This looks like a reasonable improvement over Delgado Ramirez – Melkumyan, Internet 2009, which continued 13...h6.) 14.♖e1 a4 15.bxa4 ♖xa4 16.♙xa4 bxa4 17.♗e2 ♗c7 18.♙a1 ♙b8 19.♙c3 ♗c6 The position remains equal.

B21) 8.a4 b4 9.♘d5



9...♘a5! 10.♙a2

10.♘xb4 gives Black a pleasant choice. 10...♙b8!?N (10...♘xb3 11.cxb3 ♘xe4 was perfectly okay in Kruger – Loman, Haarlem 1901, but it may be even better to play for compensation.) 11.♘d5 ♘xb3 12.♘xf6† ♙xf6 13.cxb3 0–0 Black has at least enough for the sacrificed pawn.

10...♘d5 11.♙xd5 c6 12.♙a2 c5

Preventing d3-d4 is a typical policy in this

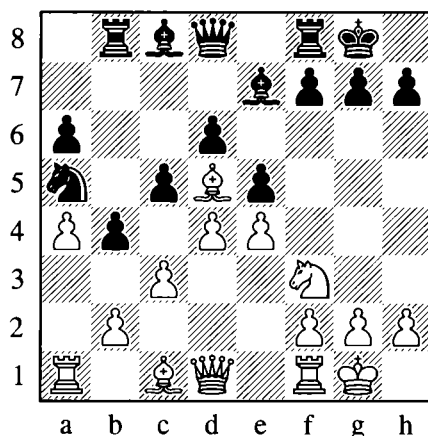
line. The weakening of the light squares is of no consequence, as Black will soon be able to exchange the light-squared bishops.

13.c3

13.♙d5 ♙b8 14.d3 occurred in M. Szabo – A. Alekseev, Internet 2010, and now after 14...0–0!N intending 15...♙e6 Black solves all his problems.

13...♙b8 14.♙d5 0–0 15.d4

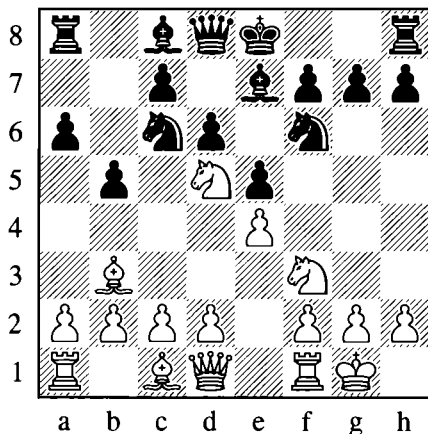
White's play seems consistent, but Black is ready with a strong and quite instructive reply.



15...exd4! 16.cxd4 c4! 17.♙c3 ♙e6! 18.♙xe6 fxe6 19.d5 e5

Black had a comfortable position in Alekhine – Bogoljubow, Bad Pistyan 1922, thanks to his powerful queenside majority.

B22) 8.♘d5



8...♖a5

Black proceeds according to the standard recipe.

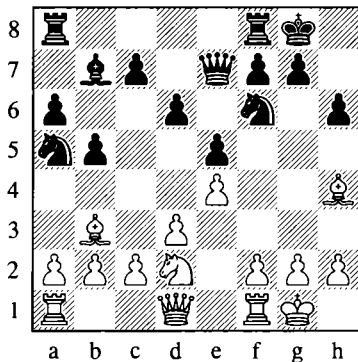
9.♘xe7

9.d4 ♘xb3 10.♘xf6† (10.axb3 ♘xd5 11.exd5 e4 12.♘e1 0–0 is good for Black.) 10...♙xf6 11.axb3 exd4 12.♘xd4 ♙b7 13.c4 0–0! gave Black a comfortable position in Grundherr – Gyimesi, Germany 2003.

9...♙xe7 10.♙e1

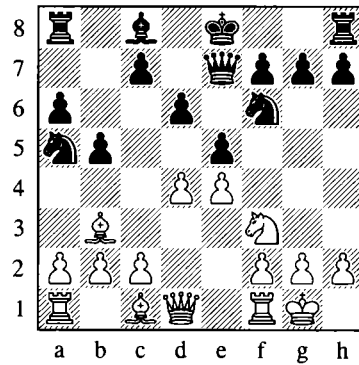
With this move White prepares to play d2–d4 in one move, without wasting a tempo putting the pawn on d3.

10.d3 0–0 11.♙g5 is not dangerous for Black: 11...h6 12.♙h4 (12.♙xf6 ♗xf6 13.♘d2 ♙d7 was equal in Spassky – Beliavsky, Tilburg 1981.) 12...♙b7 13.♘d2 This was Spassky – Short, Linares 1990, and now the simplest path to equality would have been:



13...g5!N 14.♙g3 c5 15.♙e1 ♘e8! With the knight coming to g7 and the b3-bishop about to perish, White has no way to prevent ...f5. A possible continuation is: 16.f3 ♘g7 17.♙f2 ♘xb3 18.axb3 f5=

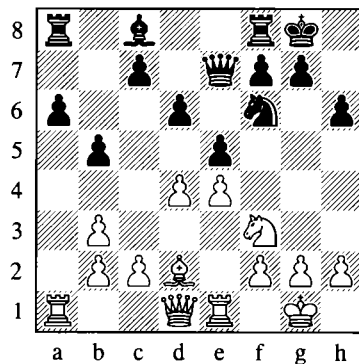
White can also consider the tricky option: 10.d4!?

**10...h6!**

The most accurate reply, preventing the annoying pin.

Instead after 10...♘xb3 11.axb3 ♘xe4 12.dxe5 ♙b7 13.exd6 ♗xd6 14.♗xd6 ♘xd6 (14...cxd6!? 15.♘d4 ♘d7 16.♙f4±) 15.♙e1† White is slightly better, although Black retains good chances for a draw.

11.♙e1 0–0 12.♙d2 ♘xb3 13.axb3

**13...c5!N**

By forcing a clarification of the central structure, Black equalizes easily.

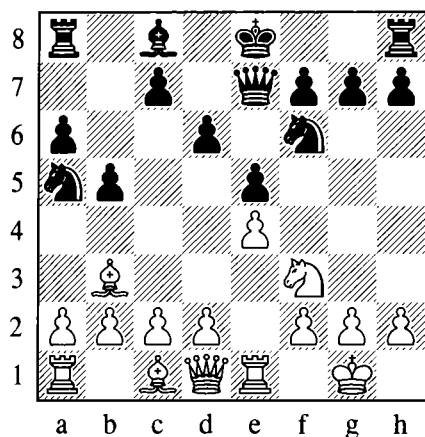
After the less accurate 13...♙b7?! 14.d5 Black's bishop found itself restricted by the enemy pawns in Neikirkh – Petrov, Sofia 1945.

14.dxe5

14.d5 ♘e8 intending ...f5 is good for Black.

14...dxe5 15.♙a5 ♙b7 16.♗d3 ♗e6=

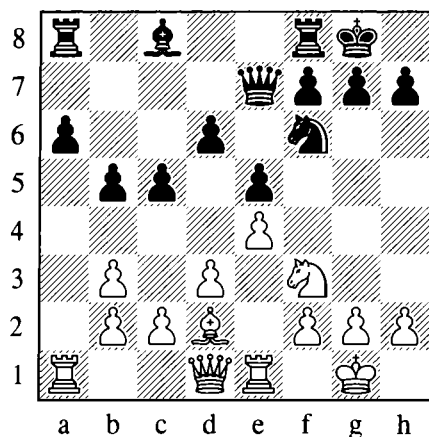
Black is fine.



10...♞xb3 11.axb3 c5 12.d3 0-0 13.♞d2

13.♞g5 h6 14.♞xf6 (14.♞h4N ♖e6 15.♞d2 ♞b7 16.♞f1 d5!=) 14...♗xf6 15.♞d2 ♗g5 16.♞e3 f5 17.exf5 ♞b7 18.♞e4 ♗xf5 19.♗e2 ♗e6 was equal in Klaman – Spassky, Moscow 1957.

The text move was played in Vallejo Pons – Gustafsson, Gibraltar 2010. Here Black's most precise continuation would have been:



13...♞d7!N

Stopping the enemy knight from coming to h4, which might otherwise have proved quite annoying.

14.b4 ♞b7

Now Black has a strong plan of pushing the f-pawn, for example:

15.bxc5 ♞xc5 16.♞b4 f5! 17.♞xc5 dxc5 18.exf5 ♗xf5 19.♞d2 ♗h4=

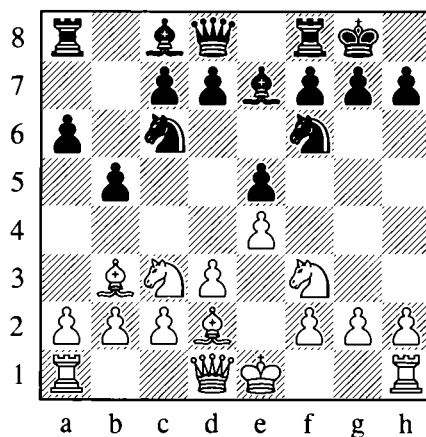
Black's kingside initiative compensates for the weak pawn on e5.

B3) 7.d3 0-0

7...d6 has been the most common move and will usually transpose. However, I have chosen to recommend the text move as there have been a few rare instances when Black has been able to play ...d7-d5 in one move. We will analyse **B31) 8.♞d2!?**, **B32) 8.♞d5** and **B33) 8.0-0** in detail.

8.a4 b4 9.♞d5 ♞a5 transposes to 9.d3 in the note to variation B1.

B31) 8.♞d2!?

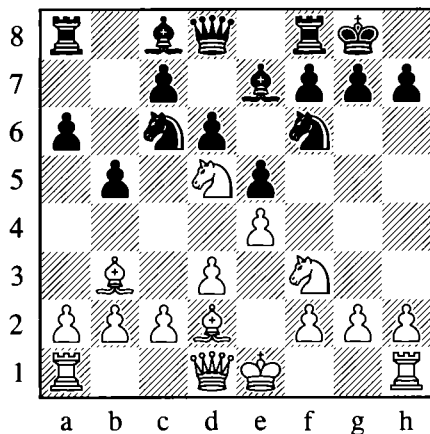


This tricky move was an idea of the late Armenian GM Karen Asrian. White wants to take away the a5-square from the enemy knight.

8...d6

Before playing ...♞a5 Black has to protect the e5-pawn.

9.♟d5

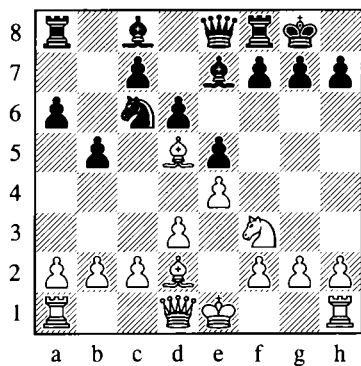


9...♙g4!N

Improving over the game continuation. Black creates a threat of ...♟d4 and thus either gets access to a5 or simplifies the position by exchanging knights and light-squared bishops.

It is worth mentioning the game continuation: 9...♟d5 10.♙xd5 ♜xe8

Black wants to solve his problems by playing ...♙e6 next.



11.a4!

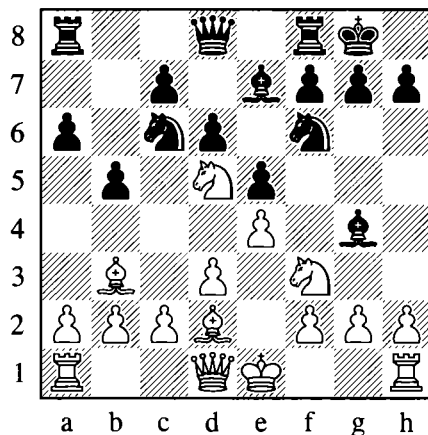
This way White sets some problems.

The stem game continued: 11.0–0 ♙e6 12.a4 (12.c4!?N deserved attention, though after 12...♜b8 Black should have no problems equalizing.) 12...♙f6 13.axb5 axb5 14.♜xa8 ♜xa8 15.c4 bxc4 16.dxc4 ♜b8 17.♙c3 ♙xd5

18.cxd5= Asrian – Ponomarev, Sochi 2006.

11...♜b8 12.axb5 axb5 13.0–0

White was slightly better due to his control over the a-file and the misplaced knight on c6 in Spasov – Ponomarev, Zafra 2007.

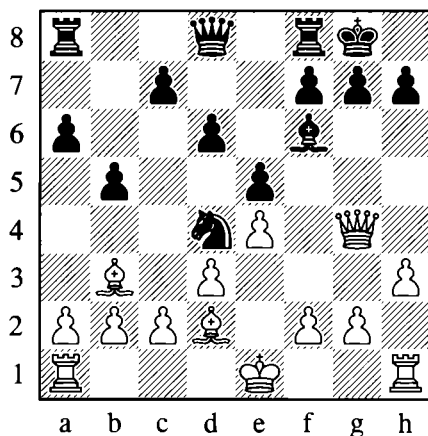


10.h3

10.♙e3 ♟a5 11.h3 ♟xd5 12.♙xd5 ♙xf3 13.♜xf3 c6 14.♙b3 ♙g5!= is absolutely equal.

10.c3 ♟a5 11.♟xe7+ ♜xe7 12.♙c2 is more interesting, but after 12...c5 13.h3 ♙d7 14.0–0 ♟c6 the position is roughly balanced, as Black's extra space and harmonious pieces are enough to counter White's bishop pair.

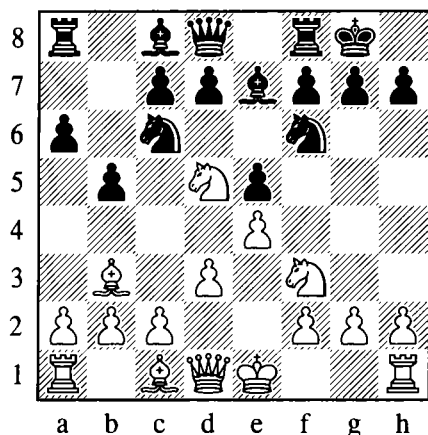
10...♙xf3 11.♟xf6+ ♙xf6 12.♜xf3 ♟d4 13.♜g4



13...a5! 14.c3 ♘xb3 15.axb3 a4! 16.bxa4 bxa4 17.0–0 ♖b8=

Black is fine, as the pawn on b2 is just as weak as the one on a4.

B32) 8.♘d5



8...♘a5!

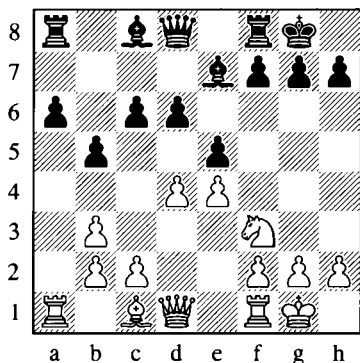
In this particular position Black does not need to play ...d6 first.

9.♘xe7†N

This untested move was the most interesting option to analyse.

9.♘xe5?! is dubious in view of 9...♘xb3 10.axb3 ♘xd5 11.exd5 ♙b4†! 12.c3 ♖e7! 13.d4 f6! 14.cxb4 fx5 15.0–0 ♙b7! with a marginal edge for Black.

One game continued: 9.0–0 ♘xd5 10.♙d2 c6 11.♙b3 ♘xb3 12.axb3 d6 13.d4

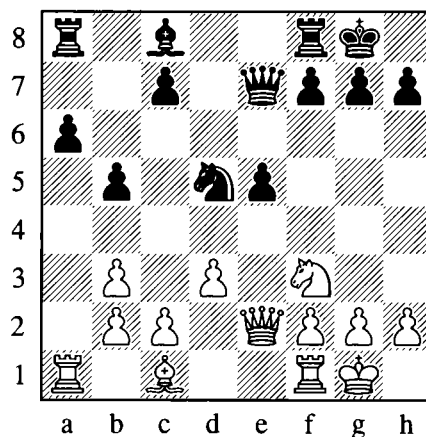


Szumilas – Klykow, Wroclaw 2004, and now 13...♖c7!N 14.♙d2 a5 15.♖e1 a4! 16.bxa4 ♙xa4= leads to equality.

9...♖xe7 10.0–0 ♘xb3 11.axb3 d5!

This active move is the main reason for the earlier decision to delay ...d6.

12.exd5 ♘xd5 13.♖e2



13...♙f5!

Exploiting the vulnerability of White's queenside.

14.♙e1

14.♘xe5?? loses material after 14...f6–+.

14.♖xe5 is strongly met by 14...♖xe5 15.♘xe5 ♘b4! 16.c3 ♘c2! 17.♙a5 f6 18.♘c6 ♙xd3 19.♙d1 ♙e4 when Black has slightly the more comfortable side of equality.

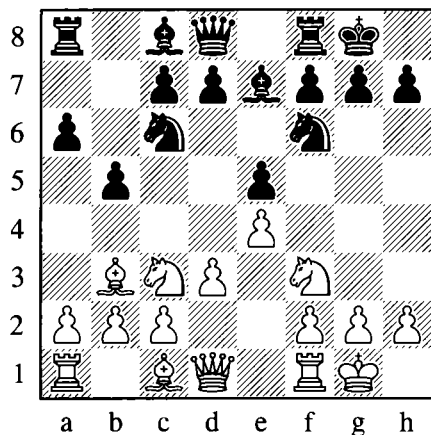
14...f6 15.♘h4

15.d4? ♘b4!†

15...♙d7

Black is fine, as shown by the following illustrative continuation.

16.d4 ♙ae8! 17.♙d2 exd4 18.♖d3 ♖c5 19.♘f3 ♙xe1† 20.♙xe1 ♙e8 21.♙xe8† ♙xe8 22.♖xd4 ♖xd4 23.♘xd4 ♙f7=

B33) 8.0–0**8...d6**

Once again Black creates a positional threat of ... $\text{d}a5$.

9.a4

9. $\text{d}e2$ $\text{d}a5$ leads to a position that was covered on page 18 – see the 8.d3 line given in the notes to variation B2, after 7.0–0 d6.

9. $\text{d}d5$ $\text{d}a5$ 10. $\text{d}xe7\uparrow$ $\text{w}xe7$ transposes to 10.d3 in the notes to line B22, on page 20.

9.h3 $\text{d}a5$

This position was popular at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, but nowadays it is a rare guest at grandmaster level, which is hardly surprising. The ensuing positions are dry and Black experiences no problems after obtaining the two-bishop advantage.

10. $\text{g}g5$

10. $\text{d}e2$ c5 11. $\text{d}g3$ c4!N 12.dxc4 $\text{d}xc4$ 13. $\text{w}e2$ $\text{w}c7$ 14.c3 $\text{g}b7$ 15. $\text{w}e1$ g6=

10...c6

Taking control over the d5-square.

11. $\text{d}e2$ $\text{d}h5$!? 12. $\text{g}xe7$ $\text{w}xe7$

Ismagambetov – Sulypa, Olomouc 2007. Now instead of the weakening 13.g4, I also quickly checked:

13. $\text{w}d2$!N $\text{d}xb3$ 14.axb3 f5

Intending ... $\text{d}f6$ and Black obtains a promising position.

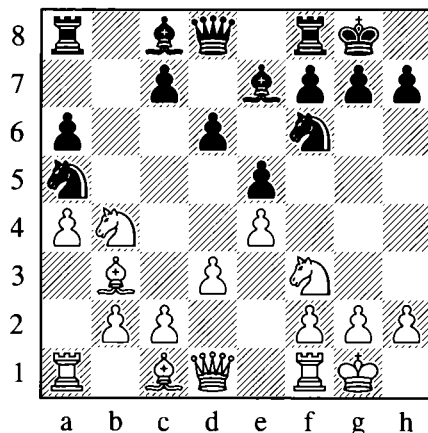
9...b4 10. $\text{d}d5$ $\text{d}a5$!

We see another version of a thematic pawn sacrifice.

11. $\text{d}xb4$

11. $\text{d}xe7\uparrow$ $\text{w}xe7$ 12. $\text{g}a2$ transposes to the 9.d3 line given in the notes to variation B1, on page 17.

Perhaps White can consider 11. $\text{g}a2$ N, although after 11... $\text{d}xd5$ 12. $\text{g}xd5$ c6 13. $\text{g}a2$ c5 (13... $\text{w}b8$!?) 14. $\text{g}d5$ $\text{w}b8$ 15. $\text{g}e3$ $\text{g}e6$ Black has comfortable equality.

**11... $\text{w}b8$ 12. $\text{g}d2$**

Or 12. $\text{d}d5$ $\text{d}xb3$ 13. $\text{d}xe7\uparrow$ $\text{w}xe7$ 14.cxb3 $\text{g}g4$! 15. $\text{w}a3$ $\text{d}d7$! with strong compensation for a pawn.

12...c5 13. $\text{d}d5$ $\text{d}xb3$ 14. $\text{d}xf6\uparrow$

14. $\text{d}xe7\uparrow$ $\text{w}xe7$ 15.cxb3 $\text{g}e6$ is also fine for Black.

14... $\text{g}xf6$ 15.cxb3 $\text{g}e6$ 16. $\text{w}a3$ $\text{w}b6$ ̄

Black succeeded in winning back his pawn while keeping a positional advantage in Kalygin – Potapov, Alushta 2003.

Conclusion

The 5.♟xc6 system gives Black a choice between several different set-ups, but the one involving the dark-squared bishop on d6 followed by the thematic regrouping with ...♞e6 and ...♞d7 looks like the most natural and reliable. According to my analysis Black has no problems at all.

The system with 5.♞c3 also promises no advantage for White. Black's plan is straightforward: he prepares ...♞a5 – usually with a preliminary ...d6, but sometimes without it – and exchanges the b3-bishop at the appropriate moment. If White creates an escape square on a2, then Black can always exchange the bishop with ...♞e6, resulting in easy equality.

Chapter 2

Sidelines



5.d4 exd4 – Introduction and 6.e5

Variation Index

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.d4

5...exd4 6.e5 ♘e4

A) 7.♘xd4?	27
B) 7.0-0 ♙e7	29
B1) 8.c3!?	29
B2) 8.b4?!	30
B3) 8.♙xc6	31
B4) 8.♞e1	33
B5) 8.♘xd4 0-0!	35
B51) 9.c3?!	35
B52) 9.♞e1	37
B53) 9.♙f4	38
B54) 9.♘f5 ♘c5!? 10.♞g4 g6 11.♙xc6 dxc6 12.♘xe7† ♞xe7	39
B541) 13.♞e2	40
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B543) 13.♞g3	41

A) after 9.♙c3



9...b5!N

B2) after 11.♘xd4



11...♘xe5!N

B543) note to 14.♞e1



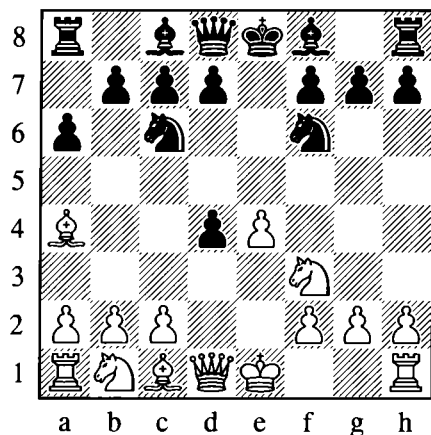
21...♞d2!N

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.d4

The central attack is not theoretically dangerous, but Black should be well prepared for it.

5...exd4

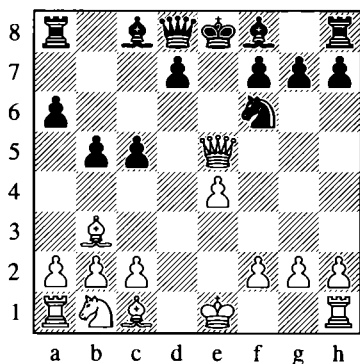
From here the most important move is 6.0-0, which will be considered separately in the next chapter. In the present chapter we will concentrate on White's other options, the main one being:



6.e5

We will also check a couple of minor alternatives.

6.♘xd4?! ♘xd4 7.♙xd4 b5 8.♙b3 (8.e5? is already losing to 8...c5!-+) 8...c5 9.♙e5†



With this move White avoids losing a piece, but the ensuing position after 9...♙e7 10.c4 (or 10.♙d5 d6 11.♙c6† ♙d7 12.♙xd7† ♙xd7†) 10...d6 11.♙f4 ♙e6† is in Black's favour.

Another questionable line is:

6.♙e2?! ♙d6!N

Surprisingly, this development of the bishop seems to be the best. Black's idea is to keep the e-file open for his heavy pieces.

The natural 6...♙e7 is playable but less clear: 7.e5 (7.0-0!? transposes to line A of Chapter 3.) 7...♘d5 8.0-0 Cao Sang – Macieja, Budapest 1996. 8...♘b6!N (instead of 8...0-0) 9.♙b3 (9.♙xc6 dxc6 is also pleasant for Black) 9...d5 10.exd6 ♙xd6 11.♙g5 f6 12.♙h4 ♙g4 Followed by long castling with a slight edge for Black.

7.0-0

7.e5 is answered by: 7...0-0! 8.0-0 ♙e8†

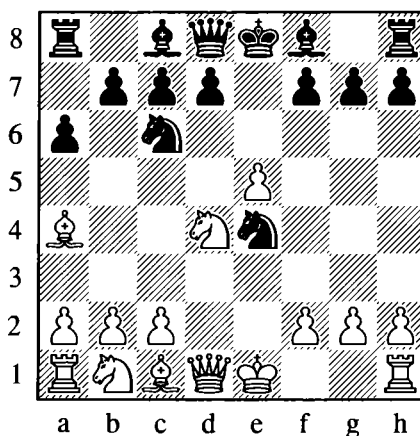
7...0-0†

With ...♙e8 coming next, Black keeps an extra pawn as well as some pressure on the e-file.

6...♘e4

Now we will analyse the faulty A) 7.♘xd4? before moving on to the main line of B) 7.0-0.

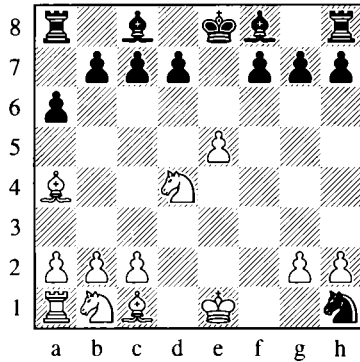
A) 7.♘xd4?



This presents Black with an immediate tactical opportunity.

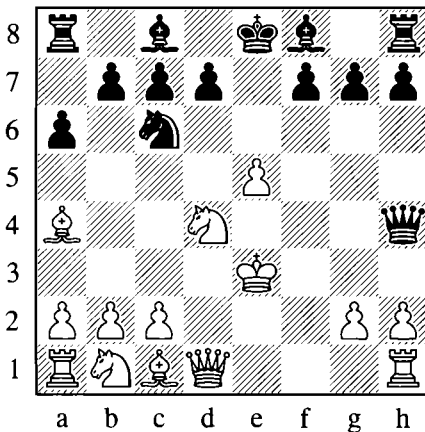
7...♖xf2! 8.♔xf2

After 8.♖xc6?! ♖h4! 9.♖d4 ♖xd4 10.♖xd4 ♖xh1 it will cost White too much time to trap the knight:



11.c3 b5 12.♙d1 ♙b7 13.♔f1 0-0-0 14.♖d2 d6! ♣ Martin – Velasco Blasco, Catalonia 1996.

8...♖h4! 9.♔e3



9...b5!N

This new move is a try for an advantage.

9...♖xd4†

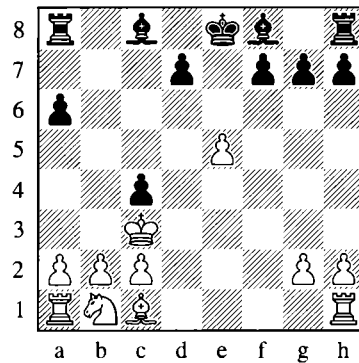
This move wins back the piece but only leads to a level endgame if White plays correctly.

10.♖xd4 ♖xd4 11.♔xd4 c5† 12.♔c3!

12.♔d3 is less accurate: 12...b5 13.♖c3 (After 13.♙b3 c4† 14.♙xc4 bxc4† 15.♔xc4 d6! ♣ White's king comes under attack.) 13...bxa4 14.♖d5 Gunsberg – Cohn, Hannover 1902, 14...♖b8!N 15.♔c3 ♙b7 16.♙d1 ♙c6 with a slight edge for Black.

12...b5 13.♙b3 c4 14.♙xc4 bxc4

Now we see the importance of the king's positioning on c3 instead of d3. Since there is no check, White has time to develop his knight.



15.♖d2! ♙b7 16.♖xc4 ♙xg2

16...♖c8!?N does not change the evaluation: 17.b3 ♙xg2 18.♙d1 ♙f3 19.♙d2 ♙e7 20.♔b2 f5 21.♖d6† ♙xd6 22.♙xd6= 17.♙g1 ♙h3 18.♖d6† ♙xd6 19.exd6= Grekh – Bagrationi, Odessa 2008.

10.♙b3

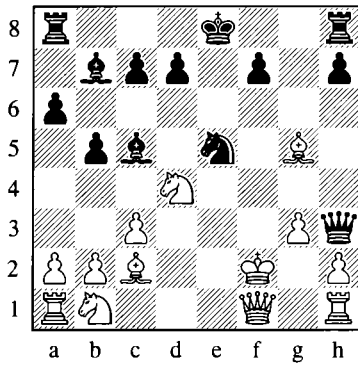
10.g3 ♖e7! ♣

10...♙c5!

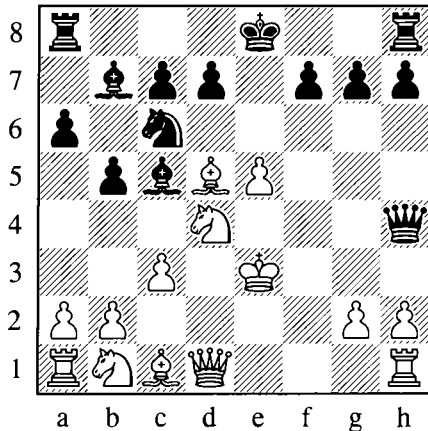
Black is playing for an attack. 10...♖xd4† 11.♖xd4 ♖xd4 12.♔xd4 c5† 13.♔c3 reaches the 9...♖xd4† line noted above.

11.c3 ♙b7! 12.♙d5

The main alternative is: 12.g3 ♖g5† 13.♔f2 ♖f5† 14.♙f4 g5 15.♙c2 ♖h3 16.♙xg5 ♖xe5 17.♖f1



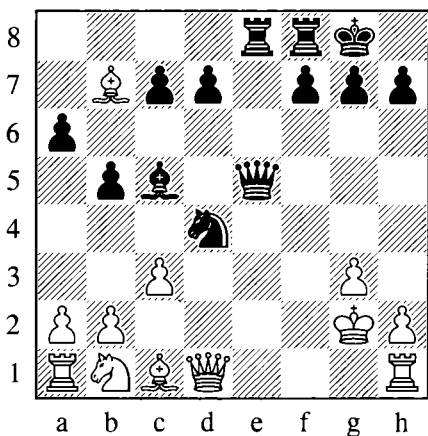
17...♙h5! 18.♙f4 0-0-0! with a strong attack.



12...0-0! 13.g3 ♙g5† 14.♙f2 ♙xe5 15.♙f3 ♙ae8! 16.♙g2

16...♙f4 ♙f5! 17.♙d2 g5†

16...♙xd4 17.♙xb7

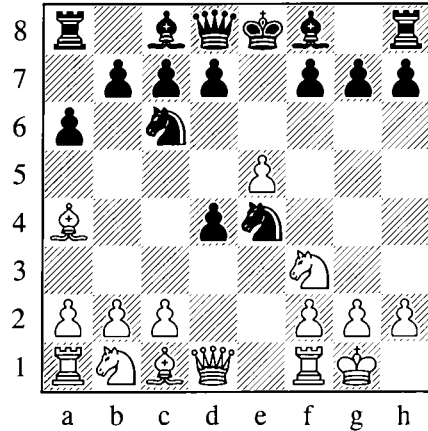


17...♙e2†! 18.♙xe2 ♙xe2† 19.♙h3

19.♙f1 doesn't help after 19...♙fe8! 20.cxd4 ♙xd4 21.♙e3! ♙8xe3 22.♙c3 ♙xb2 23.♙d1 ♙d2 24.♙xe3 ♙xa1† when Black's pawns are more important than White's extra piece.

19...♙c2 20.♙xa6 ♙xa1 21.♙xb5 ♙f2 22.♙xd7 ♙d8†

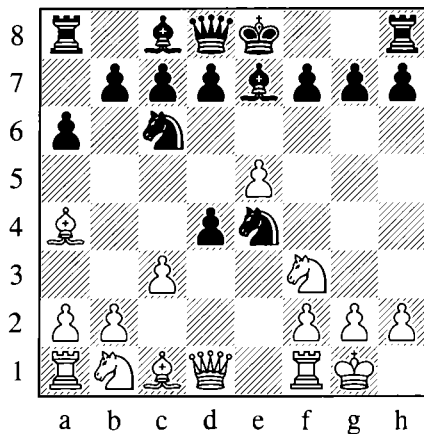
B) 7.0-0



7...♙e7

7...♙c5 is the main alternative, but I have chosen to concentrate on the bishop move. We will analyse five replies: B1) 8.c3!?, B2) 8.b4!?, B3) 8.♙xc6, B4) 8.♙e1 and B5) 8.♙xd4.

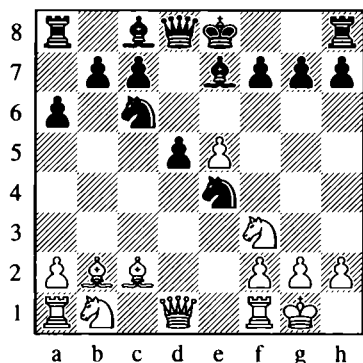
B1) 8.c3!?



This pawn sacrifice has been known since the very first games in the 5.d4 system, around 1860! The best reaction is to accept the offer.

8...dxc3 9.♖xc3

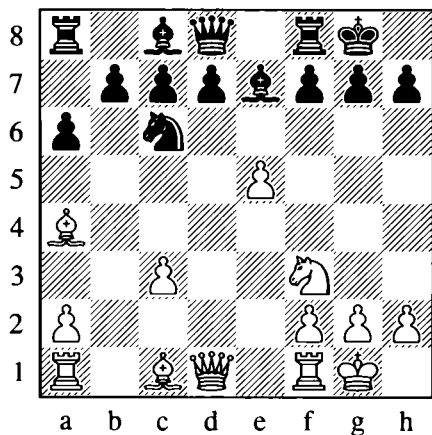
9.♖c2?! cxb2 10.♖xb2 d5! leaves White struggling:



11.exd6 (11.♖bd2?! ♖c5!± Richter – Sämisch, Berlin 1937.) 11...♖xd6 12.♖xg7 ♖g8 13.♖c3 ♖h3 14.♖e1 ♖g4! 15.f3 ♖f5 Black is a clear pawn up.

9...♖xc3 10.bxc3 0-0

This position first occurred in the game Lelie – Anderssen, Amsterdam 1861. White's best chance to create counterplay is:



11.♖f4!N

Other moves are insufficient, for instance:

11.♖d3 d6 12.♖xc6 (Or 12.♖c2 g6 13.♖h6 ♖e8 14.♖ad1 ♖xe5 15.♖xe5 dxe5 16.♖g3 ♖d6± Sokolovsky – Provotorov, Voronezh 2007.) 12...bxc6 13.♖a3 Kendall – Parker, Birmingham 2002, and now 13...c5 leaves White a pawn down with a poor bishop on a3.

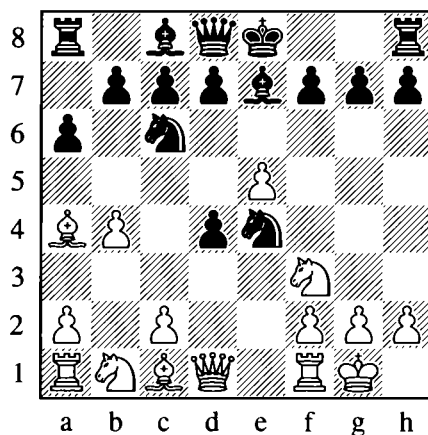
11...d6

White's last move was directed against this, but Black can play it anyway. 11...d5!? also looks quite promising.

12.♖e1 ♖g4 13.h3 ♖xf3 14.♖xf3 ♖xe5 15.♖xe5 dxe5 16.♖ad1 ♖d6 17.♖xb7 ♖e7

Black keeps his extra pawn, but his winning chances are not great.

B2) 8.b4?!



This strange-looking move was advocated by IM Godes. It is creative and interesting, but objectively rather dubious.

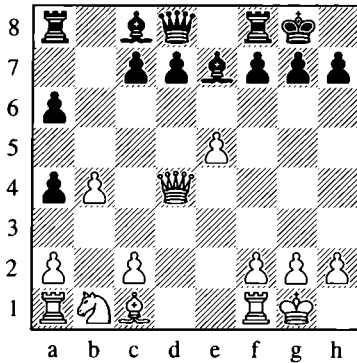
8...0-0!

Black should not get too greedy, as after 8...♖xb4 9.♖e2 ♖c3 10.♖xc3 ♖xc3 11.♖g5 ♖e7 12.♖ad1 White obtained a promising initiative in Godes – Zeltov, Soviet Union 1967.

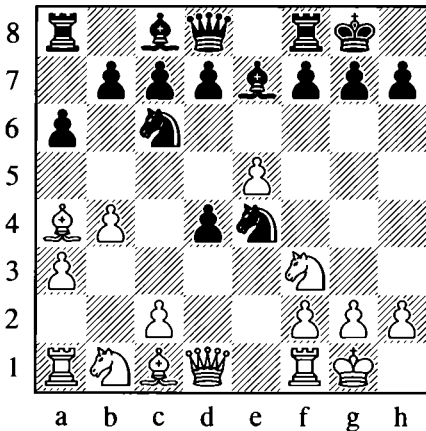
9.a3

9.♞e1 d5 occurred in Wakselman – Duratti, Bourbon Lancy 1998. Best play from here seems to be 10.exd6 ♞xd6 11.♙xc6 bxc6 12.♞xd4 ♙f6 13.c3 (13.♞xc6 ♖d7 14.♞e5 ♖f5 15.f4 ♞e8 is also in Black's favour) 13...♖d7 14.♞d2 a5± and Black is better.

It is also worth mentioning: 9.♖d3 b5! 10.♖xe4 bxa4 11.♞xd4 ♞xd4! 12.♖xd4 (12.♖xa8? ♞xc2±)

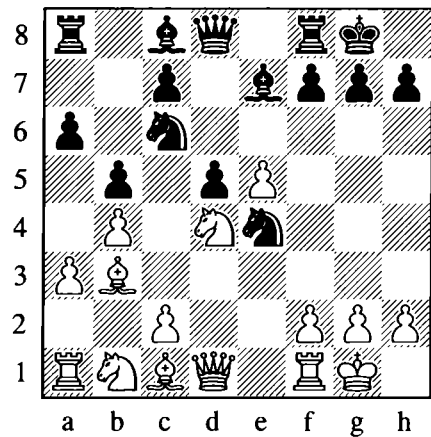


12...d6! Black opens up the position for his bishops. 13.♖e4 (13.♞c3 dxe5±) 13...♞b8! 14.♞d1 ♞b5! Intending 15...♙b7 with better prospects for Black, Stefl – Skyva, Brno 1974.



9...b5 10.♙b3 d5 11.♞xd4

Van Veen – Atalik, Hoogeveen 2005. Now it turns out that Black could have taken the e5-pawn.



11...♞xe5!N 12.♙f4 ♞g6 13.♞c6 ♖e8!
14.♞xe7†

14.♙xd5? is bad in view of 14...♙f6!–+.

Another important line is 14.♙e3 ♙d6!± with the idea 15.♙xd5 ♙b7 16.♞e7† ♖xe7 17.♙xb7 ♞ad8±.

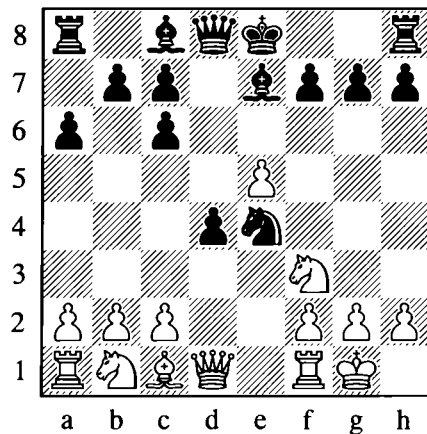
14...♖xe7 15.♙e3

15.♙xd5? ♞d8! wins material.

15...♙b7!±

Black keeps an extra pawn.

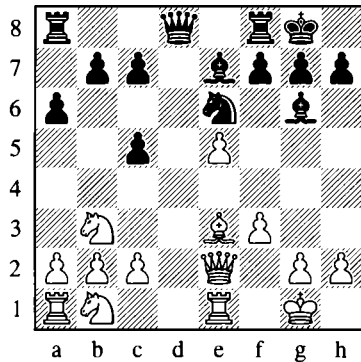
B3) 8.♙xc6 dxc6



9.♞xd4

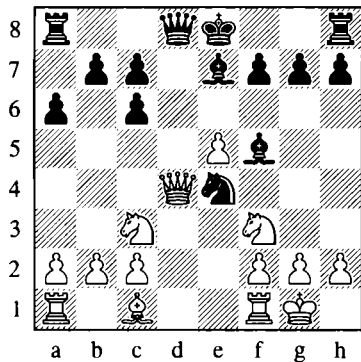
White is struggling to equalize after other moves too.

9.♞e1 ♕f5!N (9...♖c5 transposes to line B4 below, but Black can go for something even better.) 10.♖xd4 ♕g6 11.♖e3 0–0 12.f3 ♖g5 13.♞e2 c5 14.♖b3 ♖e6



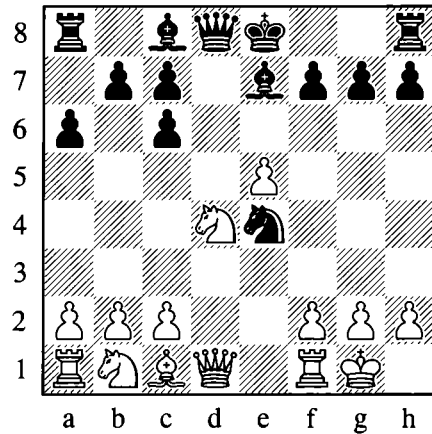
15.♖c3 (15.♞d1 ♞e8 16.♖c3 b6 is also comfortable for Black.) 15...♖d4! 16.♕xd4 cxd4 17.♖e4 ♞d5 with a slight edge for Black.

9.♞xd4 ♕f5! 10.♖c3



10...♞xd4!N (This is an improvement over an old game of Paul Morphy. That encounter continued 10...♕c5 11.♞xd8† [11.♞c4!?] 11...♞xd8 12.♖h4 ♖xc3 13.♖xf5 ♖e2† 14.♖h1 Lowenthal – Morphy, London 1859, and now Black could have retained a slight edge by means of: 14...♖xc1N 15.♞axc1 0–0 16.♖g3 ♞fe8 17.f4 f6 18.exf6 gxf6 19.♞cd1

♖f7) 11.♖xd4 ♕g6 12.♖xe4 ♕xe4 13.♖e3 0–0 14.♞fe1 c5 15.♖f3 ♕f5! Black has an excellent version of a Berlin Endgame.

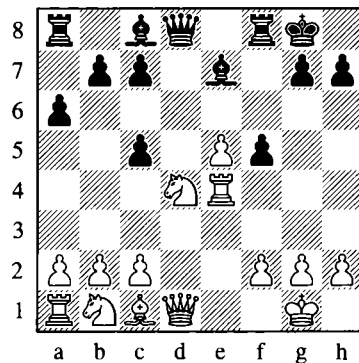


9...0–0 10.♞e1

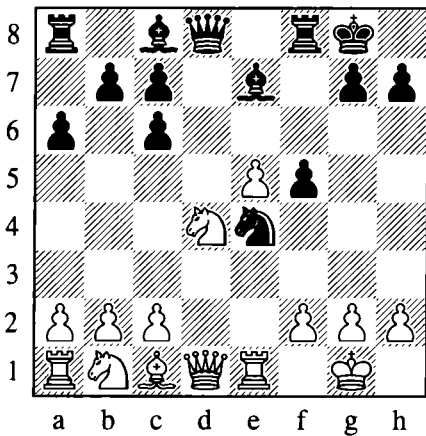
10.f3 ♖g5!N This seems to be the best retreat as it retains the option of ...c5. (Nevertheless after 10...♖c5!? 11.♖c3 f6 12.exf6 ♕xf6 Black was slightly better in Strikovic – Lazic, Subotica 2008, thanks to his bishop pair in the open position.) 11.♖h1 c5 12.♖e2 f6 13.exf6 ♕xf6! Black's chances are higher.

10...f5

10...c5!?N 11.♞xe4 f5! is also a reasonable attempt to fight for the advantage:



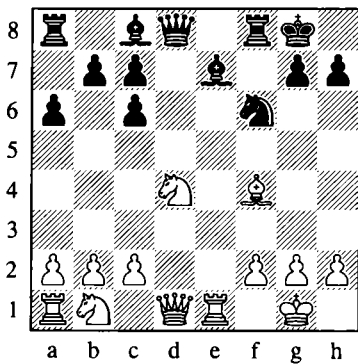
12.♞e1 cxd4 13.c3 d3 14.♞e3 ♞d5 15.♞xd3 ♞xd3 16.♞xd3 ♕e6 17.♖d2 ♞ad8 18.♞xd8 ♞xd8 Black has the initiative.



11.♞d3!N

Attempting to exploit the weakness of the a2-g8 diagonal seems like the only challenging idea.

11.exf6 ♟xf6 (11...♟xf6!? 12.♞xe4 c5 13.c3 cxd4 14.cxd4 ♟f5 is also in Black's favour.) 12.♟f4 This was played in Mikhalchishin – Dorfman, Tbilisi 1978, and now the logical continuation would have been:

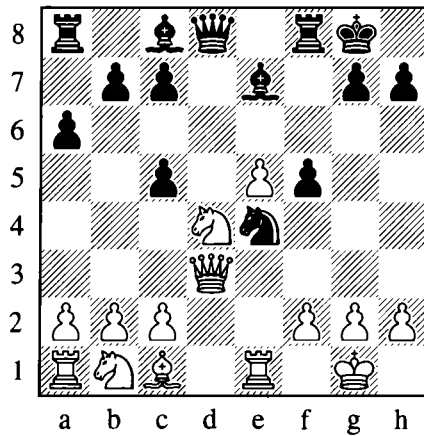


12...c5!N 13.♟f3 ♞xd1 14.♞xd1 ♟f5! 15.c3 (or 15.c4 ♟e4! 16.♟xc7 ♟f6 17.♟e5 ♟xf2! and Black is on top) 15...♞ad8 with a slight edge for Black.

11...c5!

It transpires that Black can continue with his plan while safely ignoring the check.

After 11...♟c5 12.♞c4+ ♞d5 13.♞xd5+ cxd5 14.♟c3 ♟e6 15.♟xe6 ♟xe6 16.♟e2 White retains chances to equalize.



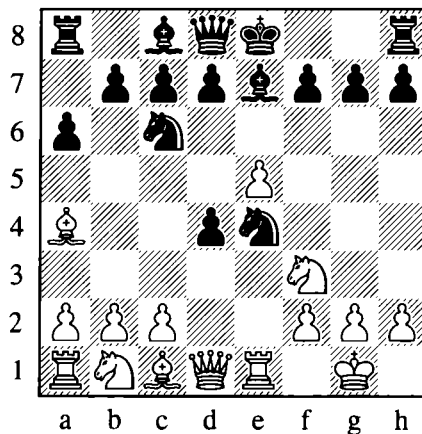
12.♟e2

After 12.♞b3+ ♟f7 13.♟e2 (or 13.♟f3 b5) 13...b5 Black has the initiative.

12...♞xd3 13.cxd3 ♟g5 14.♟bc3 ♞d8 15.♟xg5 ♟xg5 16.♞ed1 ♟f7

Black is slightly better thanks to his bishop pair.

B4) 8.♞e1



8...♟c5 9.♟xc6 dxc6 10.♟xd4

10.♞xd4?! is dubious in view of 10...♟f5! 11.♞c4 ♞d5 (11...♟e6!N is also good for

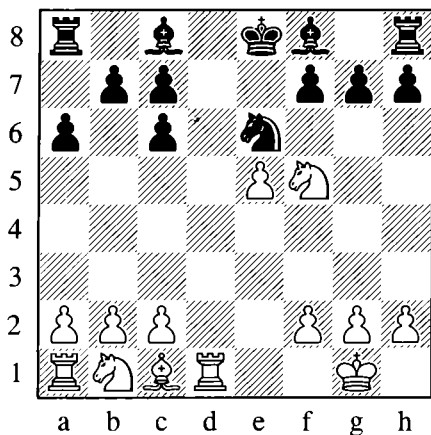
Black) 12.♖e2 ♜e4! Ferro – Esposito, Spoleto 2011.

10...♟e6

I decided to recommend this move, although 10...0–0 has been a more popular choice.

11.♟f5 ♜xd1 12.♞xd1 ♟f8

12...♟d8 is also equal.



13.♟c3

One high-level game saw: 13.♟e3 h5 Black intends to seize space on the kingside, and perhaps to develop his rook via the h5-square. (13...g6!?N looks like a reasonable alternative: 14.♟h6 ♟g7 15.♟g4 h5 16.♟f6† ♟e7=) 14.♟g3! Intending to bring the knight to e4. 14...♟c5!? Black adjusts his set-up accordingly. 15.♟c3 h4 16.♟ge2 h3 17.g3 ♟g4 18.♞d4 ♟f5 The position remained balanced in Gashimov – Tkachiev, Warsaw (rapid) 2010.

13...h5!

This is the most flexible move. Black is not in a hurry to determine the position of his king, which feels pretty safe in the centre. Meanwhile he wants to take space on the kingside with ...h4 and develop his rook on h5.

14.♟e4

White can block the h-pawn by means of 14.♟h4N but then Black can, at the

minimum, repeat the position by playing 14...♟e7 15.♟f5 ♟f8.

14.h4 can be met by 14...g6, when Black has benefited from the inclusion of the mutual h-pawn moves, as White cannot continue with ♟h6-g4-f6(†). Instead he must settle for something like 15.♟d4, and after 15...♟xd4 16.♞xd4 ♟c5 17.♞e4 ♟f5 18.♞e2 ♟e7 19.♟g5 ♟xg5 20.hxg5 0–0–0 Black is doing fine.

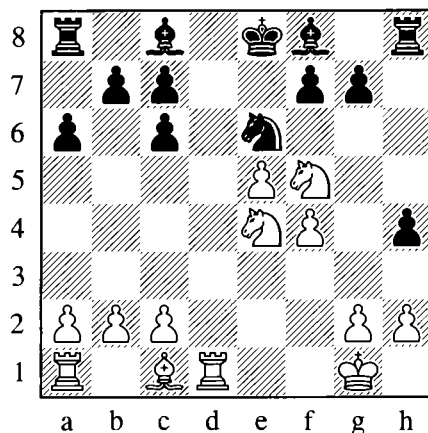
14...h4!

Now Black is already fighting for the advantage. Apart from the aforementioned ...♞h5 idea, he can also consider ...c5 followed by ...b6 and ...♟b7, reaching a fantastic version of the Berlin Endgame.

15.f4?!

15.♟e3 is an improvement, although after 15...c5 followed by ...b6 Black is doing well.

We have been following the game Hess – Karklins, Philadelphia 2006, and now Black's play can easily be improved.



15...b6!N

Instead the game saw 15...♞h5 16.g4! with unclear play.

16.♟e3

White should probably do something else, but I mention this natural move just to illustrate the danger.

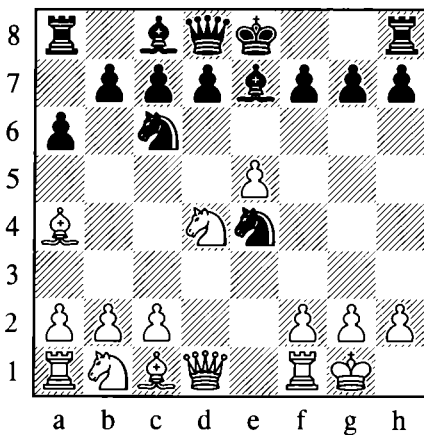
16...c5!

Suddenly the f5-knight is in danger. Obviously ...g6?? would allow mate in one, but ...d8! is a serious threat.

17.g3 ♖b7

Black is clearly better.

B5) 8.♟xd4



This is the main line by far.

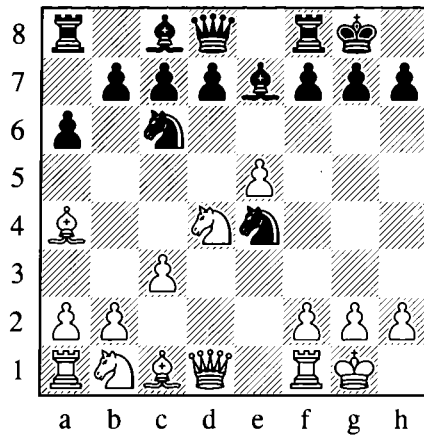
8...0-0!

8...♟xd4 has been played more frequently, but the text move is more flexible and has scored significantly better. We will analyse four responses, the last of which is by far the most popular: **B51) 9.c3?!**, **B52) 9.♞e1**, **B53) 9.♞f4** and **B54) 9.♟f5**.

9.♞xc6 dxc6 takes us back to variation B3.

9.♟xc6?! is pretty feeble: 9...dxc6 10.c3 Saving the light-squared bishop from exchange. 10...♞xd1 11.♞xd1 ♟c5 12.♞c2 ♞d8 13.♟d2 ♟d3 14.♟f3 ♞g4+ Black was better in Meister – Gustafsson, Bad Koenigshofen 2007.

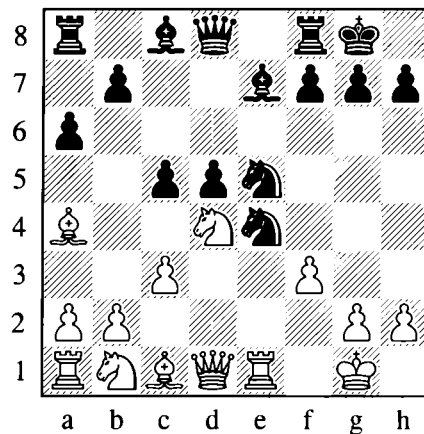
B51) 9.c3?!



This fails to develop a piece and offers Black a chance to take the e-pawn – an invitation that he should be happy to accept.

9...♟xe5! 10.♞e1 d5 11.f3 c5!

This intermediate move allows Black to save a piece and claim an advantage.



12.fxe4

12.♟c2? allows Black to trap the light-squared bishop: 12...b5 13.fxe4 dxe4! 14.♞xd8 ♞xd8 15.♞b3 (15.♞xe4 ♟d3+) 15...c4+

12...cxd4 13.cxd4

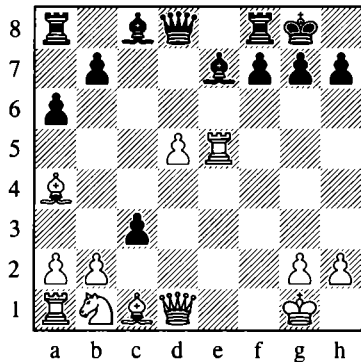
The other capture is worse.

13.exd5?

It turns out that Black can ignore the attack on the knight.

13...dxc3! 14.♞xe5

Or 14.♜xc3N ♜g4!→ and Black will win an exchange.

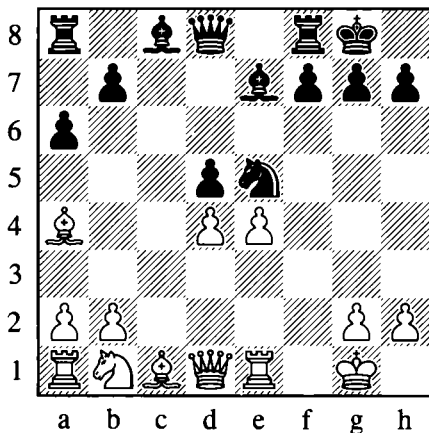


14...♞b6!?

14...♞f6!N→ is even stronger.

15.♞e3 ♞c5 16.♜xc3 ♞xe3† 17.♜h1 ♞f4 18.♞e4 ♞h6 19.♞g1 ♞f5 20.♞e7 b5 21.♞b3 ♞d6

Black was clearly better in Wolf – Leonhardt, Barmen 1905.



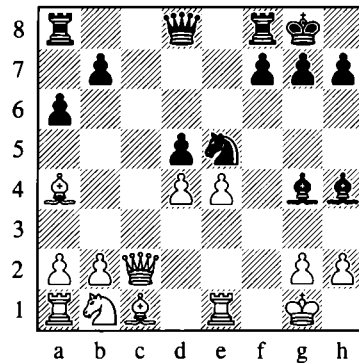
13...♞g4!

A strong intermediate move.

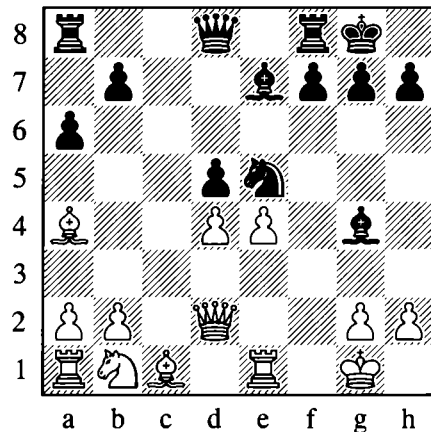
14.♞d2!

The inferior 14.♞c2?! was played in Loman

– Alekhine, Scheveningen 1913, and here Black missed a powerful idea: 14...♞h4!N



15.♞f1 ♞b6! 16.♞e3 ♜c4! 17.♞f2 ♞xf2† 18.♞xf2 (After 18.♞xf2 ♞xd4† Black is a pawn up.) 18...♞xb2! 19.♞xb2 ♜xb2 20.♞b3 dxe4† with a big material advantage.

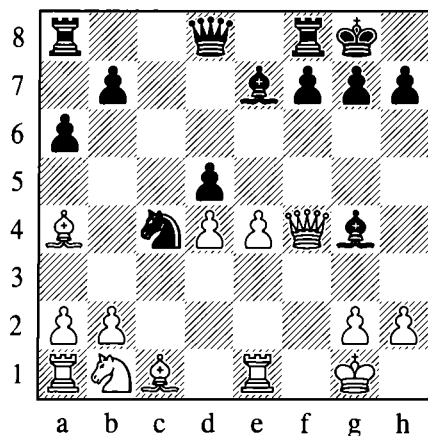


14...♜c4!

One old game went 14...♜g6 15.e5?! (15.exd5N is better) 15...f6! 16.exf6 ♞xf6 with an edge to Black, Alekhine/Levenfish – Konstantky/Kosopalov/Ovs, Russia (cable) 1914.

15.♞f4

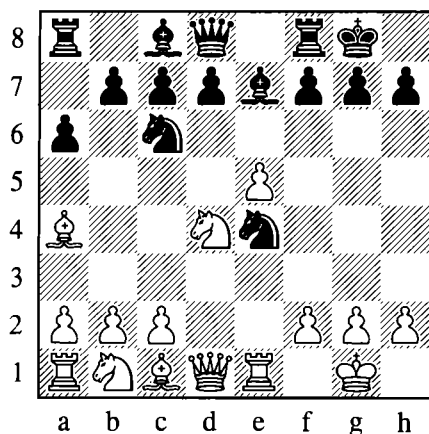
White preferred 15.♞d3 in Vachal – Borkovec, Czech Republic 1996, but after 15...dxe4!N 16.♞xe4 (16.♞xc4? b5!†) 16...♞b4! 17.♜c3 ♞h5 Black is better thanks to his bishop pair and the weakness on d4.

**15...h5N**

15...f5 also gave Black the better chances in Morgado – Montero Gonzalez, corr. 1968, but I like the text move.

16.exd5 h4! 17.g3 f6 18.c3 b5 19.b3 b6

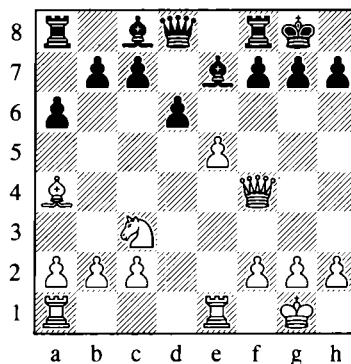
Black has a strong initiative for the pawn.

B52) 9...e1**9...dxd4 10...xe4**

The other capture is no better:

10...xd4 dxc5 11...dxc3 d6! 12...f4

12...exd6 fxd6 13...e3 f5 is good for Black. Also after 12...b3N c6! White has to fight for equality as Black will soon have the advantage of the bishop pair.

12...dxe6 13...e4 dxf4 14...xf4

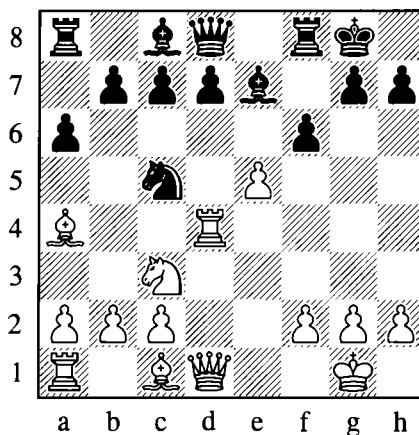
This was Blatny – Stulik, Podebrady 1956, and now Black could have obtained a slight advantage with the natural move:

14...d5!N**10...dxc6**

For the moment Black's position is rather compact, but he will soon free himself by undermining the e5-pawn.

11...dxc3 dxc5 12...d4

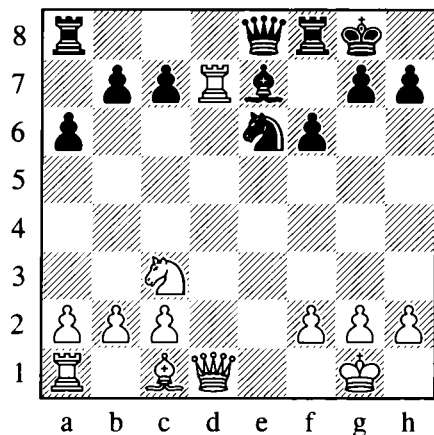
12...e1N has never been played, with good reason as 12...d5! gives Black an obvious edge.

12...f6!**13...xd7!**

The only way to maintain the balance.

13...♙xd7 14.e6 ♘xe6 15.♞xd7 ♔e8

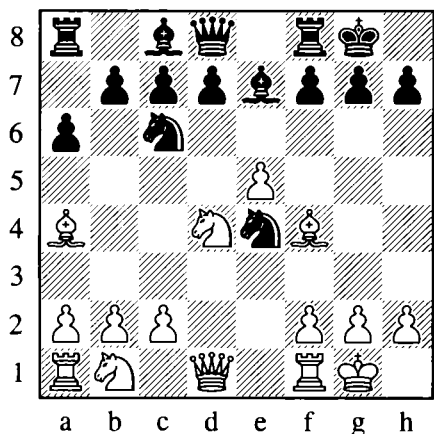
Now the threat of ...♙d6 forces a retreat.



16.♞d3 ♙d6 17.♙e3 ♔c6 18.♞d2 f5!

With an equal position in Botvinnik – Ragozin, Moscow (training match) 1946.

B53) 9.♙f4

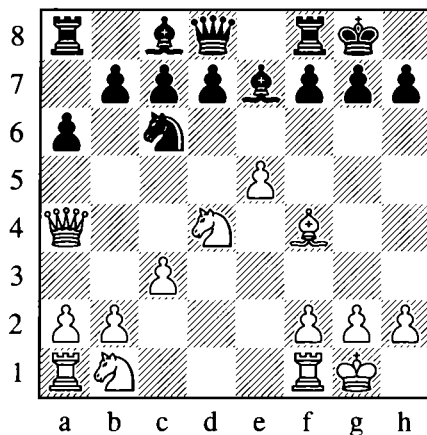


9...♘c5 10.c3

10.♙b3 ♘xb3 11.axb3 f6! 12.♘xc6 dxc6 13.♘c3 ♔xd1 14.♞axd1 ♙f5 15.♞d2 ♞ad8! gave Black a comfortable position in Kovacs – Kluger, Budapest 1966.

10...♘xa4 11.♞xa4

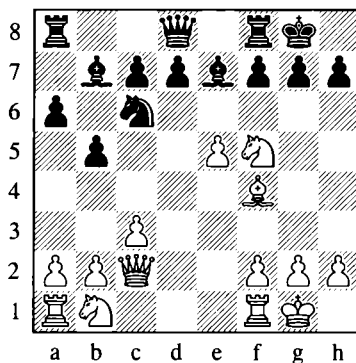
Palermo – Bolbochan, Buenos Aires 1965. Now Black's play can be improved by means of:



11...b5!N 12.♞d1

After 12.♘b5 ♞b8 Black wins back the b2-pawn with a fine position.

I also analysed: 12.♞c2 ♙b7 13.♘f5 (Or 13.♘d2 ♘xd4 14.cxd4 d6 and Black is slightly better thanks to the strong light-squared bishop.) Now Black has a strong idea:



13...f6! Not for the first time this undermining move works perfectly. 14.exf6 (14.♘xe7+ ♘xe7! 15.exf6 ♞xf6) 14...♙xf6 15.♘d2 ♙g5! ♞

12...♙b7

Black has a fine position, based on the following tactical line:

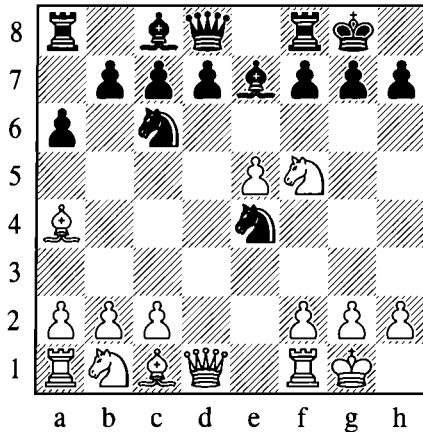
13.♘f5 ♙g5! 14.♞g4 f6! 15.♞e1

The spectacular 15.♘xg7?! is met by 15...♘xe5! 16.♙xe5 fxe5 17.♘h5 ♘h8 and Black is on top.

15...♖f7!

White must fight to equalize, and I am not sure if he can manage it.

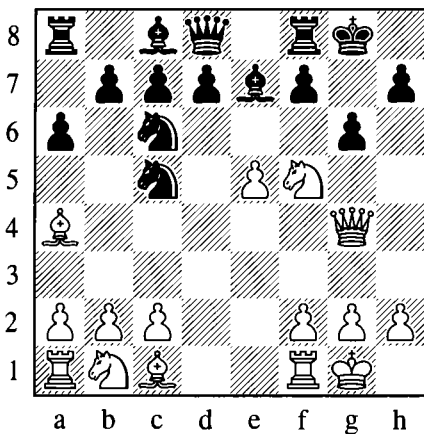
B54) 9.♘f5



9...♘c5!?

9...d5 is recommended in most theoretical manuals. It is a decent enough move, but I find the text more interesting.

10.♞g4 g6



11.♙xc6

White almost always makes this exchange. Here are two harmless alternatives:

11.♘e7† ♞xe7 12.♘c3 (12.♙xc6 dxc6 transposes to the main line below.) 12...♞xe5

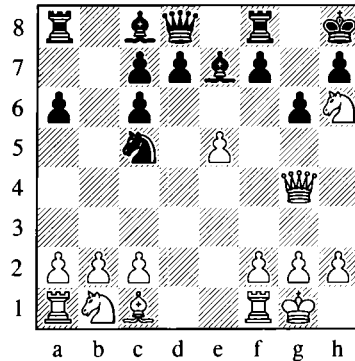
13.♙f4 d6 14.♞h4 ♞f5 15.♙xc6 bxc6 White does not have enough for the pawn.

11.♘h6† ♘h8

11...♙g7 is likely to lead to a move repetition after 12.♘f5† ♙g8.

12.♙xc6 bxc6!

12...dxc6 13.♞g3 is about equal, but the text move enables Black to fight for the advantage.



13.♘c3

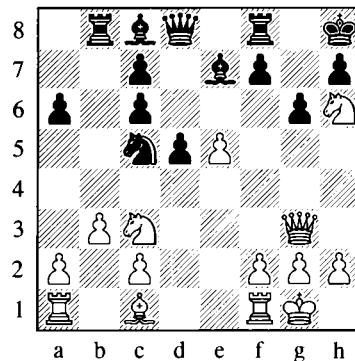
13.♞c4N ♘e6 14.♘d2 f5! 15.exf6 ♙xf6 16.♘f3 c5! 17.♞d5 ♖b8 18.♘e5 ♞e8 19.♙e1 ♙g7† is also in Black's favour.

13...d5

13...f5!?N also looks promising.

14.♞g3 ♖b8! 15.b3

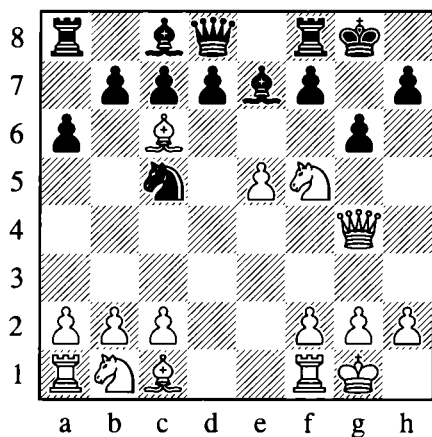
Diaz Hernandez – Guerra Mendez, Havana 2010, and now:



15...f5!N 16.exf6

Otherwise the h6-knight is in trouble.
 16...♙d6! 17.♖f3 ♗xf6 18.♗xf6 ♜xf6 19.♙e3
 ♜e6 20.♜e2 c5

With a slight edge for Black.



11...dxc6 12.♜xe7+ ♗xe7

The pawn structure is the same as in the famous endgame of the Berlin Defence. The main differences here are that Black has castled, and the queens have not been exchanged. The former should make it easier for Black to develop and coordinate his forces, and the only question is whether White will have a chance to exploit the weak dark squares on the kingside. According to my analysis Black's lead in development, combined with strong defensive resources such as ...♜e6, should render the chances of a successful white attack highly unlikely.

We will check three queen moves: B541) 13.♗e2, B542) 13.♗g5 and B543) 13.♗g3.

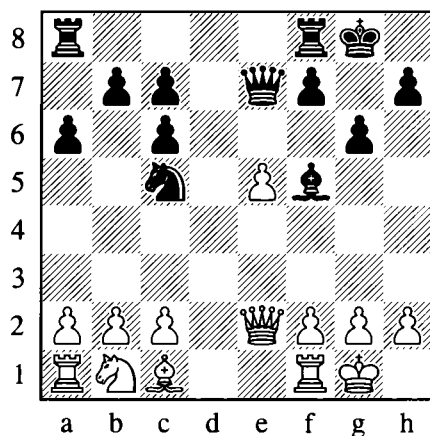
B541) 13.♗e2

Against this rare move I propose an immediate novelty:

13...♙f5!N

13...♗e8 has been played in a few games, but I was not entirely satisfied with the following

line: 14.♜c3!N (14.♗e1 ♙f5! 15.♜c3 ♜ad8 16.h3 [16.g4!N ♙e6 17.♙e3 deserved attention.] 16...h5 17.♙h6?! [17.g4!N] 17...♜e6! and Black was better in Godena – Ivanchuk, Reggio Emilia 2011.) 14...♗xe5 15.♗xe5 ♜xe5 16.b4! ♜d7 (Or 16...♜e6 17.f4 ♜h5 18.♜e4 ♜f8 19.♙b2 with good compensation for the pawn.) 17.♙f4 ♜e8 18.♜fe1 ♜f6 19.♙e5 ♜d5 20.♜xd5 cxd5 21.♙xc7= I think Black should be striving for more than an equal endgame in this line.

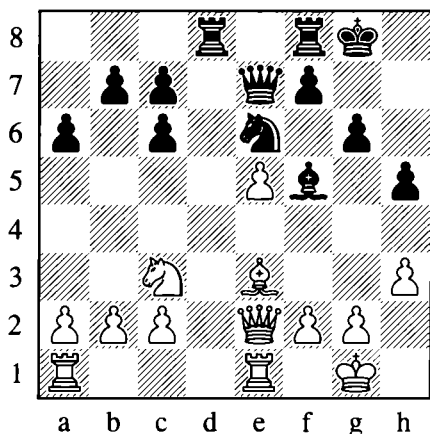


14.♜c3 h5

I would rate Black's chances as slightly better. Here is an illustrative line.

15.h3 ♜ad8 16.♗e1 ♜e6 17.♙e3

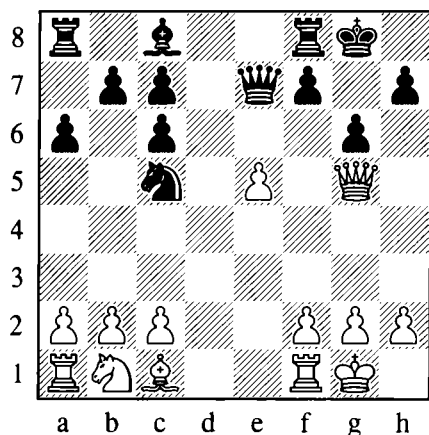
17.♜e4 ♜d4 18.♜f6+ ♗xf6 19.exf6 ♜xe2+ 20.♗xe2 ♜fe8 is also better for Black.



17...♖b4! 18.♞ab1 ♘d4 19.♙xd4 ♜xd4
20.♞ed1 ♞h4

The e5-pawn will be a target.

B542) 13.♞g5

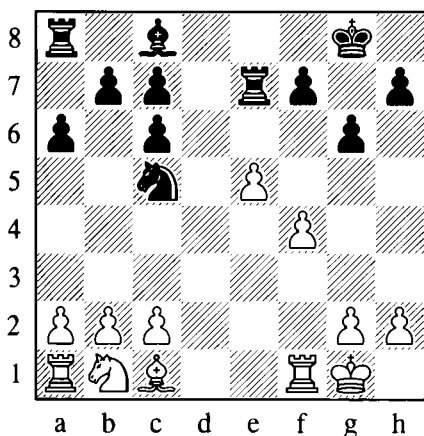


13...♞e8! 14.♞xe7

14.♞e1 does not fully solve White's problems:
14...♞xg5 (14...♙f5!?N might be more precise
as after 15.♞xe7 ♞xe7 16.♙g5 ♞d7 Black
takes the d-file.) 15.♙xg5 ♙f5 16.♘a3 b5! By
restricting the knight Black obtained a slight
edge in Yudovich – Lilienthal, Moscow 1942.

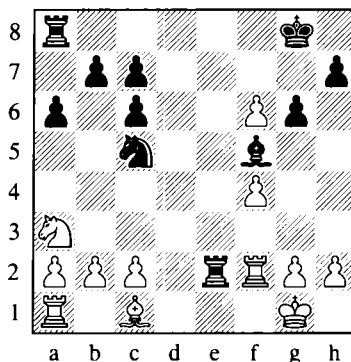
14...♞xe7 15.f4

15.♞e1 ♙f5 transposes to the 14.♞e1 ♙f5
line in the previous note.



15...♙f5 16.♘a3 ♞d7!N

I like this move the most, although Black's
play in the following game was also quite
interesting: 16...f6!? 17.exf6 ♞e2 18.♞f2

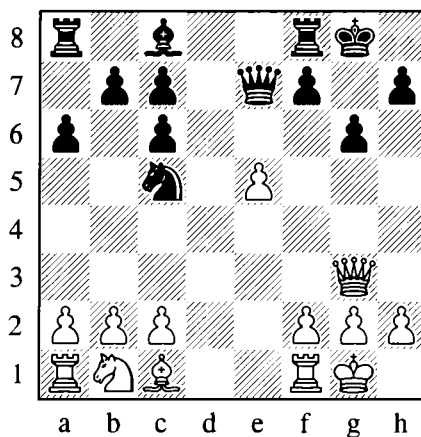


18...♞xf2!N (Black could have played for
a win, instead of settling for a repetition
after 18...♞e1† 19.♞f1 ♞e2 ½–½ O'Kelly de
Galway – Smyslov, Zagreb 1955.) 19.♙xf2
♘e4† 20.♙g1 ♞d8 21.♙e3 ♘xf6 Black is
better thanks to the misplaced knight on a3.

17.h3 h5 18.♙e3 ♘a4 19.b3 ♘c3

All of Black's pieces are superior to their
counterparts.

B543) 13.♞g3



13...♞e8!

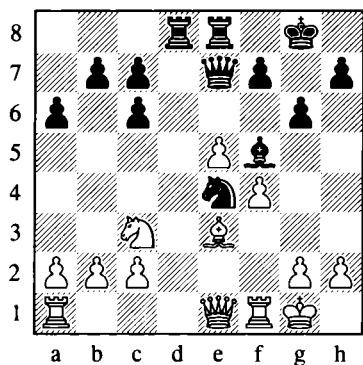
This seems best. Now White must decide
how to meet the attack on the e5-pawn.

14.♖e1

This has been the most common move by far, although three others have been tested:

14.♘c3!? ♕f5! (14...♞xe5 transposes to the note to Black's 13th move in variation B541, which ended up being equal.) Now I do not see anything better than 15.♞e1 transposing to the main line below.

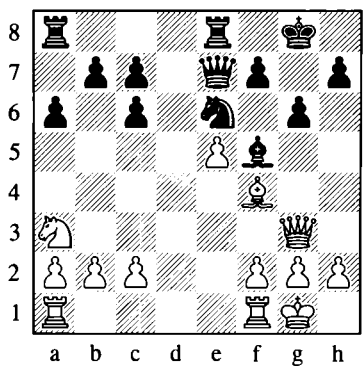
14.f4 ♕f5 15.♕e3 ♘e4 16.♞e1 ♖ad8 (16...f6!??) 17.♘c3



17...♞b4! 18.♘xe4 ♞xe4+ White was under pressure in Gdovin – Skala, Czech Republic 1995.

14.♕f4 ♕f5 15.♘a3 ♘e6

Black has the more harmonious position, and we will see a couple of practical encounters in which he increased his advantage.

**16.♕e3**

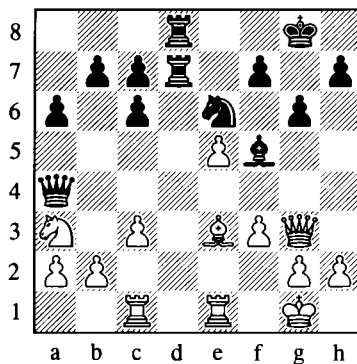
16.♖ae1 ♖ad8 17.♕c1 b5 18.f4 ♞c5+ 19.♞f2 (19.♕e3 ♞b4) This was Ris – Baramidze, Liverpool 2008, and now the simple 19...♞xf2+! 20.♞xf2 ♖d7+ would have left White facing an unpleasant endgame.

16...♞b4 17.♖ab1 ♖ad8

17...♘d4N also looks good.

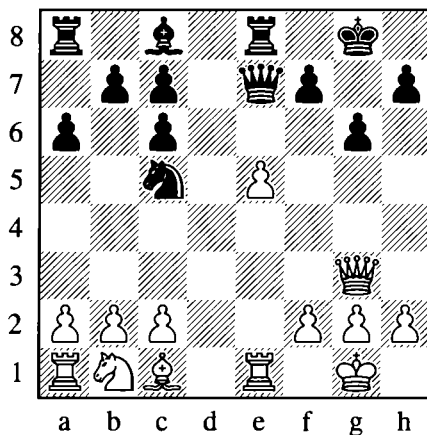
18.c3 ♞a4 19.♖bc1 ♖d7 20.♞fe1 ♖ed8 21.f3?

Dhar Barua – Sundararajan, Kolkata 2000, Black was already clearly better, and after this mistake he could have secured a winning position with:



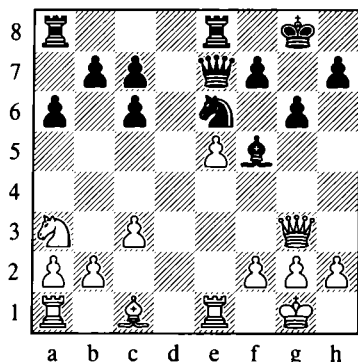
21...♖d2!N 22.♕xd2 ♖xd2+

With an overwhelming position for the exchange, as White's queenside pawns are doomed and ...♘f4 is a terrible threat.



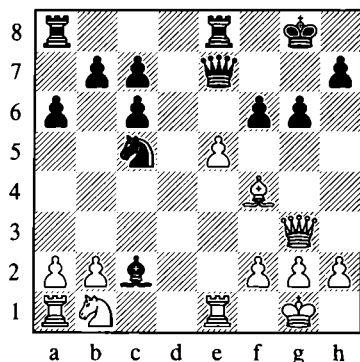
14...♕f5 15.♘c3

15.♠a3?! ♠e6 16.c3 occurred in Platz – Padevsky, Halle 1954. Now I would like to offer:

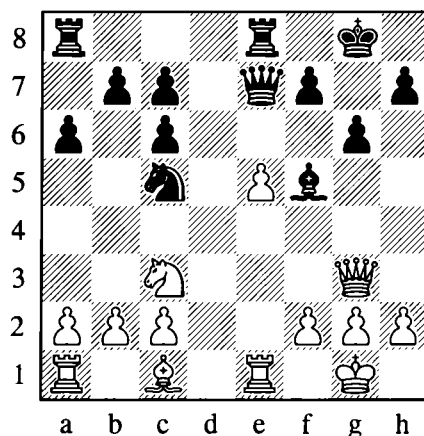


16...b5!N Black restricts the a3-knight and obtains the better chances. 17.♠e3 ♠ad8

15.♠g5 runs into 15...f6! 16.♠f4 ♠xc2. This was Valsecchi – Canova, Bergamo 2006, and now White's best chance of saving the game would have been:



17.♠d2N ♠f5! 18.♠e3 fxe5 19.♠xe5 ♠f8 20.♠e3 ♠d3 21.♠xe8 ♠xe8 22.♠xc7 ♠g7! 23.♠xg7† ♠xg7 with slightly better chances for Black thanks to the strong knight on d3.



15...♠e6!

Preventing ♠g5. The weakness of Black's dark squares on the kingside is of surprisingly little consequence.

16.♠e4 ♠xe4 17.♠xe4 ♠ad8 18.♠e3 ♠d7!?

18...♠d5!N looks promising as well.

19.f3 ♠d5!

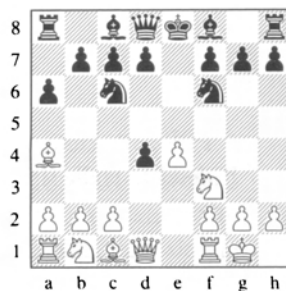
Black's strong knight and control over the d-file gave him a comfortable position in Burstow – Vukceovich, Lincoln 1969.

Conclusion

Black is doing fine throughout this chapter, and the Berlin-style positions from line B54 provide a particularly fresh and fertile battleground in which White seems to face the more difficult problems.



Sidelines



5.d4 exd4 6.0-0

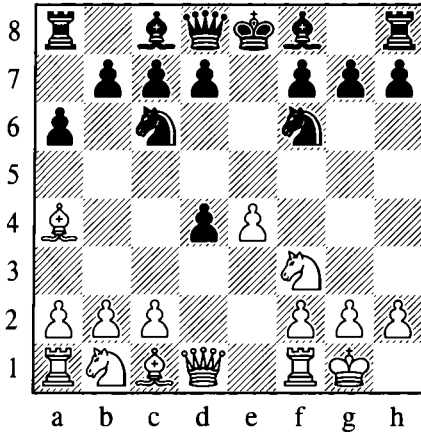
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1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.d4 exd4 6.0–0



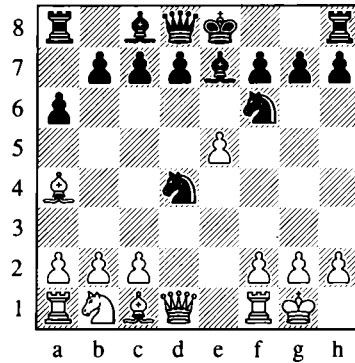
6...♙e7

6...♘e4 is an important alternative, so I decided to show you the main line: 7.♙e1 d5 8.♘xd4 ♙d6 9.♘xc6 ♙xh2† 10.♙h1! (10.♙xh2 leads to a perpetual: 10...♙h4† 11.♙g1 ♙xf2† 12.♙h2 ♙h4† 13.♙g1 ♙f2† 14.♙h2 ♙h4† ½–½ Kiprov – Popov, Sofia 1945.) 10...♙h4 11.♙xe4†! dxe4 12.♙d8† ♙xd8 13.♘xd8† ♙xd8 14.♙xh2± This endgame has been known since Lasker's German simul tour in 1908. Seven years later the position occurred in Capablanca – Lasker, New York 1915, and since then it has been considered to be in White's favour.

From here we will check the interesting sideline A) 7.♙e2!? before moving on to the much more common B) 7.♙e1.

7.e5 is another popular move, but after 7...♘e4 we have transposed to variation B of the previous chapter.

7.♘xd4?! is dubious: 7...♘xd4 8.e5 (8.♙xd4? loses a piece: 8...c5 9.♙d3 b5 10.e5! ♘g8 11.♙g3 ♙f8!± White did not have enough compensation for the trapped bishop in De Pinto Paiva – Cotta, Belo Horizonte 1966.)

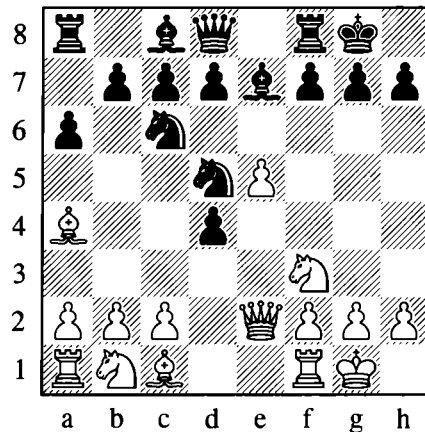


8...b5!N (Improving over 8...♘e6 as played in Gross – Kashdan, Los Angeles 1954.) 9.exf6 (9.♙xd4? runs into 9...c5 10.♙d3 ♘g8 transposing to 8.♙xd4? above.) 9...♙xf6 10.c3 ♘e6 11.♙c2 ♙b7 and Black is a pawn up.

A) 7.♙e2!?

In this rare but interesting line, White is looking for active play to compensate for his missing pawn.

7...0–0 8.e5 ♘d5



9.♙b3!?

This rare move is arguably White's best chance to obtain sufficient compensation.

The more common 9.♙d1 fails to impress after: 9...d6!N (9...♘b6 proved to be satisfactory in

Cao Sang – Estrada Nieto, Budapest 1996, but Black can play for more.) 10.♙xc6 bxc6 11.♜xd4 ♖d7! 12.c4 ♜b6 13.♗f3 d5! ♣ Black has bright prospects with ...c5 coming next.

9.c3!?

This gambit is interesting, but it shouldn't be too dangerous for Black.

9...dxc3 10.♙b3 cxb2 11.♙xb2 ♜f4

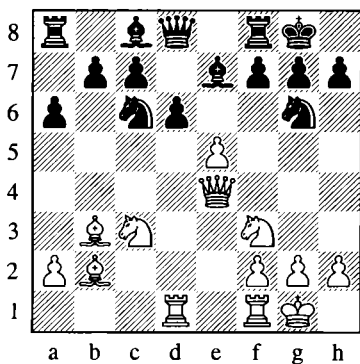
11...♜b6!?N with the idea of ...d5 is a reasonable alternative.

12.♗e4 ♜g6

12...♜e6!?N deserves attention.

13.♜c3 d6! 14.♙ad1

Cao Sang – Maciejka, Budapest 1996. Now I'll try to improve upon Black's play by means of:



14...♙a5!N

14...♗e8!?N and 14...♙d7!?N are both interesting, but I prefer to go after the bishop.

15.♙c2

I also checked: 15.♜d5 ♜xb3 16.axb3 ♙e6 17.♜xe7+ ♗xe7 18.♗xb7 ♙fb8 19.♗c6 ♙xb3 20.exd6 cxd6 21.♙xd6 ♙a4 22.♗c3 ♙xb2! 23.♙xg6 hxg6 24.♗xb2 a5! ♣ Black is a healthy pawn up.

15...♙e6

Now Black is threatening ...♜c4, so...

16.♙a1

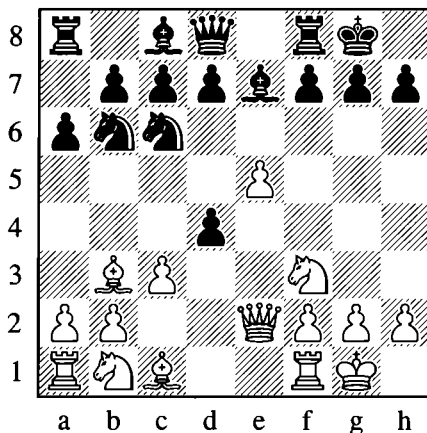
16.♜d5 ♙xd5 17.♗xd5 c6 18.♗d4 d5! ♣ White does not have enough for two pawns.

16...♙e8 17.♜d5 ♜c6

Black's two extra pawns should eventually tell.

9...♜b6 10.c3!

Fast development is the key here. Now in Lee/Leonhardt – Gunston/Shoosmith, England – USA (cable) 1905, Black should have gone for the principled approach:

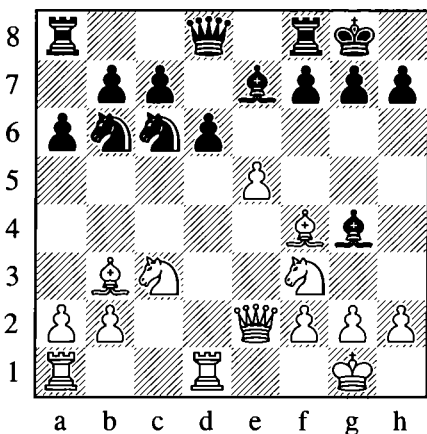


10...dxc3!N 11.♜xc3 d6!

Challenging White to prove his compensation. I analysed the following line.

12.♙d1 ♙g4! 13.♙f4

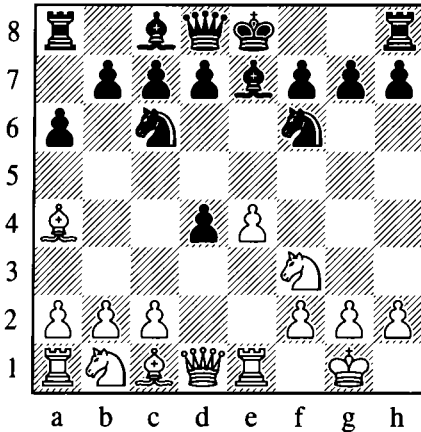
After 13.exd6 ♙xd6 14.♜e4 ♗e7 15.♙g5 ♗e5! 16.♜xe5 ♙xe2 17.♙xd6 cxd6 18.♜xc6 bxc6 19.♜d6 ♜d5! ♣ White's compensation for the exchange is insufficient.



13...♞e8! 14.h3 ♜f5! 15.♞d5 ♞xd5 16.♜xd5
♞d7 17.♞ac1 ♜e6

White's initiative is approaching the value of a pawn, but it seems to me that the most he can hope for is to equalize by restoring material equality.

B) 7.♞e1



7...b5!

After this forcing move White only has two sensible options: B1) 8.♜b3 and B2) 8.e5.

B1) 8.♜b3 d6

This is Black's only reasonable move as White was threatening e4-e5. (Now we can see why Black had to break the pin on the previous move – otherwise White would still be able to advance the e-pawn here.) We will analyse the rare B11) 9.a4 followed by the main line of B12) 9.♜d5!.

Obviously 9.♞xd4?? is no good due to 9...♞xd4 10.♞xd4 c5 when Black wins a piece.

A rare but interesting gambit idea is:

9.c3

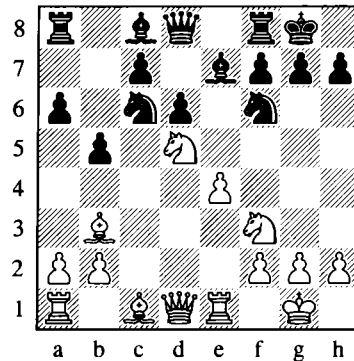
White sacrifices a pawn for the sake of fast development.

9...dxc3 10.♞xc3 0–0

11.♞d5

Another game continued: 11.h3 ♞e5 12.♞h2?! (12.♜f4 is better than the text, although after 12...♞g6 13.♜g3 ♜b7 Black retains slightly better chances) 12...♜b7 13.f4 ♞c4 White did not have enough for the pawn in Brooks – Wedberg, New York 1989.

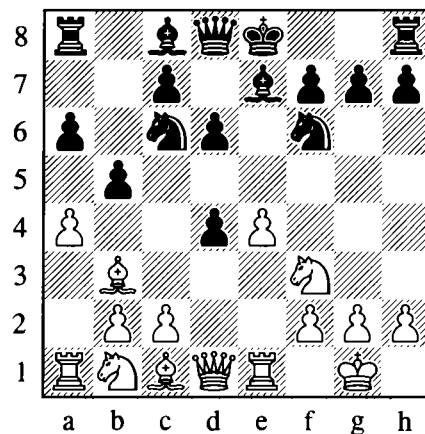
The present position was reached in Savchenko – Smirnov, Olginka 2011. Now Black could have restrained his opponent's initiative with:



11...♜g4!N 12.♜f4 ♞e5! 13.♜xe5 dxe5 14.♞c1
♜d6 15.h3 ♜h5±

White does not have much to show for the missing pawn.

B11) 9.a4



9...♙g4!

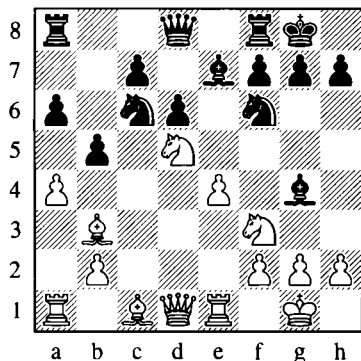
This calls White's last move into question. Black defends his queenside while developing a piece and making it difficult for White to reclaim the d4-pawn.

10.axb5

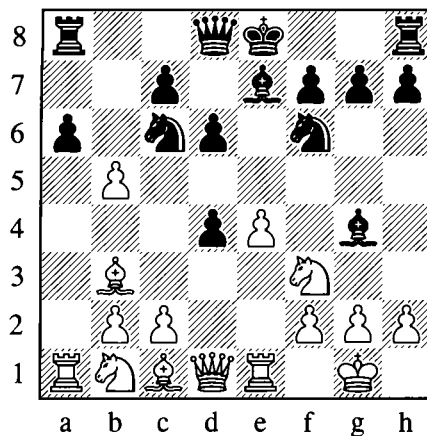
I checked two other moves:

10.h3 ♙xf3 11.♖xf3 0–0 12.♗e2 ♜b8! 13.axb5 axb5 14.♘d2 ♘d7! Black regroupes his forces: the knight goes to c5, while the dark-squared bishop will protect the d4-pawn from f6. 15.♘f3 ♙f6 16.♙d2 ♘c5 17.♙d5 ♘e7 18.♙a2 ♘g6! Zapata – Smejkal, La Valetta 1980. Black's chances are higher thanks to his extra pawn.

10.c3 dxc3 11.♘xc3 0–0 12.♘d5 (12.♙f4N ♙xf3 13.♖xf3 ♘d4 14.♖d1 ♘xb3 15.♖xb3 c6 16.♙ad1 ♖b6! ♖ Black returns his extra pawn and obtains a better position: 17.♙xd6 ♙xd6 18.♙xd6 ♖c5 19.♙d2 ♙fe8!) Egin – Savon, Orel 1998. Now I would like to bring to your attention the following idea:



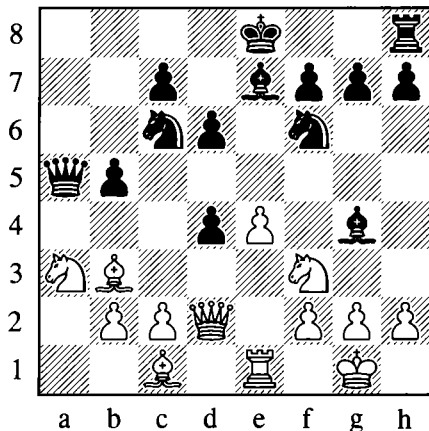
12...bxa4!N 13.♙xa4 ♘e5 14.♘xe5! ♙xd1 15.♘c6 Winning back the queen, but the story does not end there. 15...♘d5! 16.♘xd8 ♙xa4 17.exd5 ♙xd8 18.♙xa4 f5! ♖ Black retains some winning chances in the endgame.

**10...axb5 11.♙xa8 ♖xa8 12.♘a3**

12.♖d3!N might be better although 12...♙xf3 13.♖xf3 0–0 still favours Black.

12...♖a5 13.♖d2

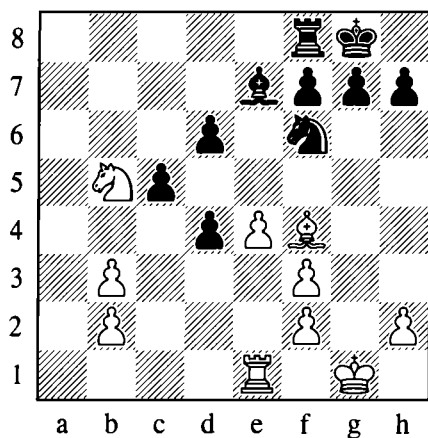
13.♙d2 ♖b6 also favoured Black in Tsyrennimaev – Buldaev, Ulan Ude 2010. For example, 14.h3N ♙xf3 15.♖xf3 ♘e5 16.♖e2 c6 17.f4 ♘g6 18.♙h1 0–0 19.e5 dxe5 20.fxe5 ♘e8! and Black keeps his extra pawn.

**13...♙xf3 14.gxf3 0–0**

14...♖xd2!N 15.♙xd2 ♘e5 16.♙g2 c6! ♖

15.♖xa5 ♘xa5 16.♘xb5 ♘xb3 17.cxb3 c5 18.♙f4

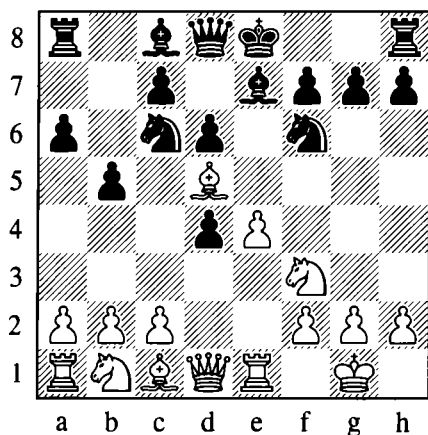
Volokitin – Dorfman, Bad Wiessee 2001. Black's play can be improved by means of:



18...Bb8?N 19. Qxd6 Qxd6 20. Qxd6 Bxb3
21. Ba1 h6

With decent winning chances in the endgame.

B12) 9. Qd5!

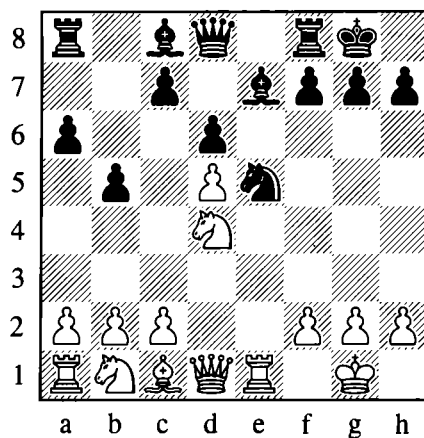


The main line. White wins back the d4-pawn and hopes to exploit the weakened c6-square along with his slight spatial advantage.

9...Qxd5 10. exd5 Qe5 11. Qxd4

11. Qxe5? is bad as after 11...dxe5 12. Bxe5 0–0 Black wins either the d5-pawn or an exchange.

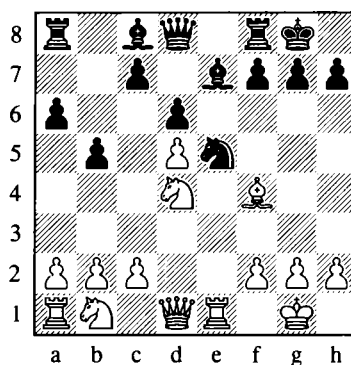
11...0–0



This natural move is best, as White cannot exploit the weakening of the c6-square. We will analyse **B121) 12.f4**, **B122) 12.Qc3** and **B123) 12.a4**, after first checking a couple of rare moves:

12.b3?! Qf6 13. Qc3 (13.f4?! Qg6 14.c4? Qg4! 15. Qd2 Bxe8! led to a decisive advantage for Black in Warszawski – Romanishin, Warsaw 2011.) 13...Bb7 14.a3 Bxe8 15. Qe3 c5 (15...Qg6!?N 16. Qd3 Qd7+ is also good for Black) 16.dxc6 Qxc6+ The strong bishops gave Black better chances in Pares Vives – Pablo Marin, Malgrat del Mar 1991.

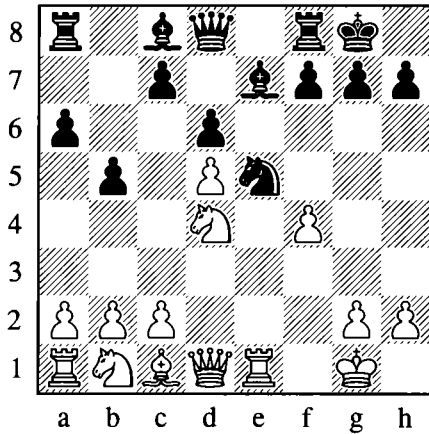
12. Qf4?!



12...Bb7! 13. Qc3 (13.f4?! dxe5 was played in Plat – Krejci, Czech Republic 2007. Here I think 14.Qc6N is the least of the evils, but

still after 14...♖d6! 15.♘xe7+ ♜xe7 Black is better as the d5-pawn is vulnerable.) 13...♘c4! 14.♘bc3 ♙f6 (Black is also better after 14...♘xb2 15.♖b1 ♘c4 16.a4 ♙f6 17.axb5 ♖d7!) 15.♖b1 ♜e8 Black is in full control, Fressinet – Kramnik, Paris 2002.

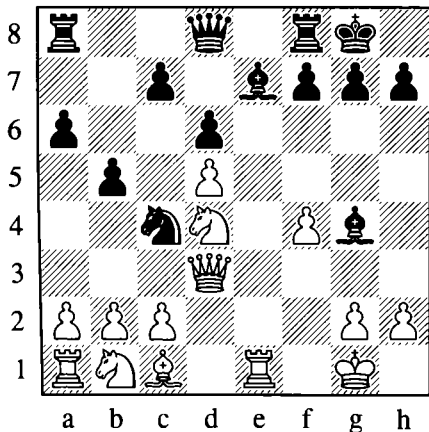
B121) 12.f4



This is not dangerous for Black due to the following intermediate move.

12...♙g4 13.♖d2 ♘c4 14.♖d3

14.♖f2?! ♙h4! provokes 15.g3, which weakens the light squares on the kingside: 15...♙f6 16.♘c3 (After 16.♘c6?! ♖d7 17.♘c3 ♙xc3 18.bxc3 ♜ae8 Black's advantage was even larger in Balanel – Filip, Marianske Lazne 1956.) 16...♜e8 Black has an obvious advantage, Rendi – Olarasu, Brasov 2004.



14...♙h4!

Before coming to f6 the bishop provokes a weakening of White's kingside.

15.♖f1

This awkward move is the least of the evils.

15.g3 ♙f6 16.♘c3 ♜e8 gave Black a clear plus in Georg – Halasz, Dortmund 1991.

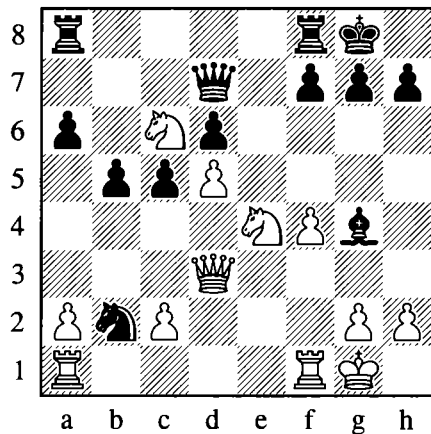
15.♜e4 was played in S. Marin – Adla, Zaragoza 2006, and here the simple 15...♜e8!N should decide, for instance: 16.♘d2 ♜xe4 17.♘xe4 ♜e7 18.♘c6 ♜e8 19.♘d4 Otherwise ...♙f5 is devastating. 19...f5→ White cannot hold his position together.

15...♙f6! 16.♘d2 c5!? 17.♘c6

Perhaps White should have preferred 17.dxc6N, although after 17...♖b6 18.c3 ♜fe8 Black's chances are higher.

17...♖d7 18.♘e4 ♙xb2 19.♙xb2 ♘xb2

Suradiradja – Torre, Dubai 1986. Now White's best chance would have been:



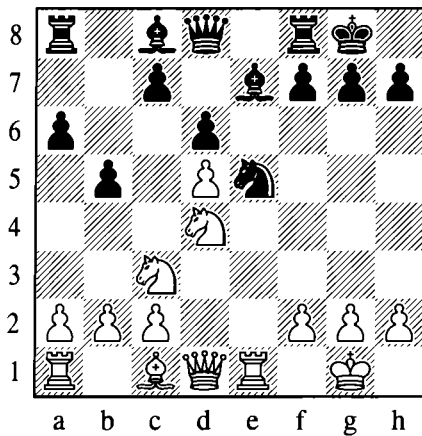
20.♖g3!N

But even this is not enough to equalize.

20...♜ae8 21.♜fe1 f5! 22.♘g5 h6! 23.♘e6 ♜f6

Despite the strong knight on e6, Black's extra pawn should eventually tell.

B122) 12.♘c3

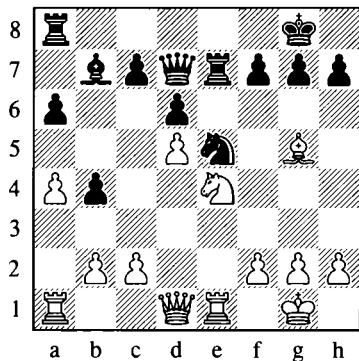


12...♞e8!

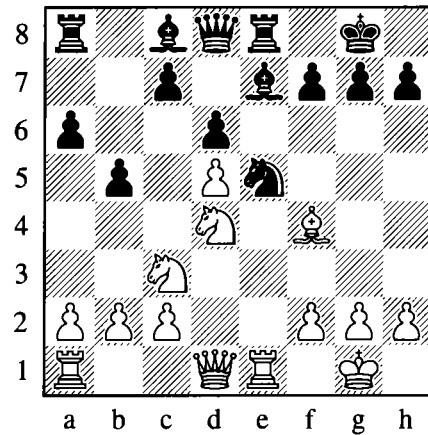
First played by Spassky, this developing move seems to be the best. Black brings the rook into play and leaves the light-squared bishop on the c8-h3 diagonal in order to meet 13.f4 with 13...♞g4.

13.♙f4

13.a4 is worse due to 13...b4 14.♗e4 ♞b7 15.♗f5 ♞d7! 16.♗xe7† ♞xe7 17.♙g5



17...♞e8! (17...f6? runs into 18.♙xf6!±) 18.f3 f5 19.♗g3 ♞f7!± and the weakness of the d5-pawn combined with Black's better pieces yields the second player a comfortable edge, Timman – Spassky, Hilversum 1983.



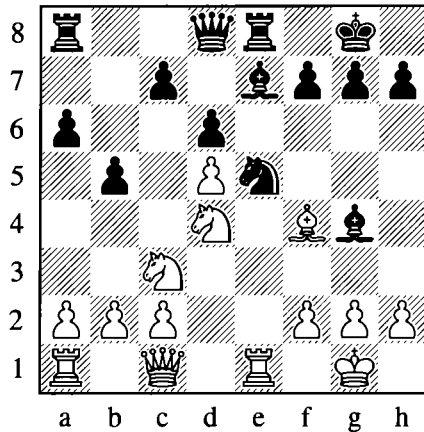
13...♞g4!

Black tries to provoke a weakening pawn move.

14.♞c1

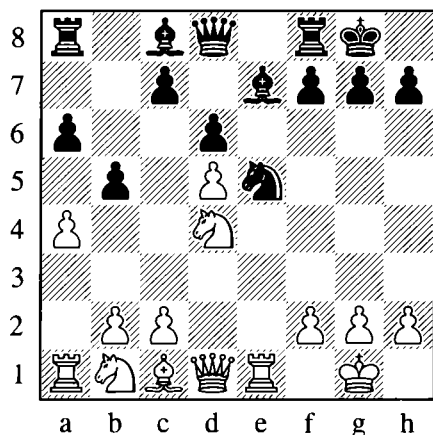
14.f3 ♞d7 15.b3 occurred in Roche Simon – Lafarga Santorroman, Aragon 2003, and here Black's play can easily be improved: 15...♗g6 16.♙e3 ♞b8 17.a3 ♞b7±

The main move was played in Thipsay – Flear, Torquay 2002. Here the only way for Black to retain a slight advantage is:

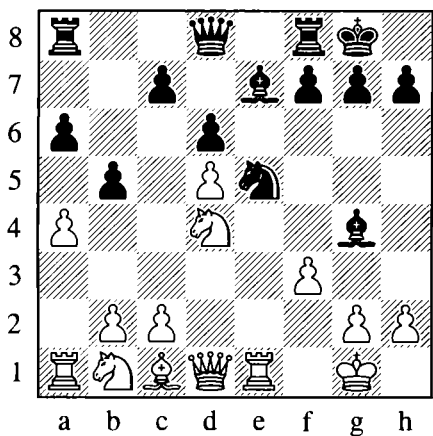


14...♙f6!N 15.♗e4 ♞d7! 16.♙d2 ♗g6±

Black is better due to the weakness of the d5-pawn.

B123) 12.a4**12...♙g4!**

Once again this move works well. Now White faces a difficult choice between weakening his dark squares with **B1231) 13.f3** and placing his queen clumsily with **B1232) 13.♙d2**.

B1231) 13.f3**13...♙d7 14.♘c3**

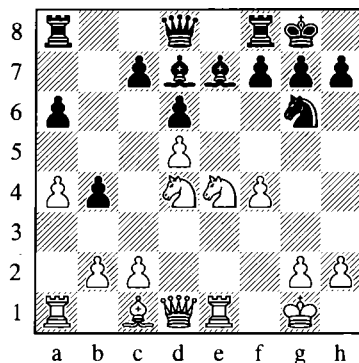
The alternative is:

14.f4 ♘g6

14...♙g4 is also playable, although compared with the earlier variation B121, the extra move a2-a4 will improve White's prospects to some degree.

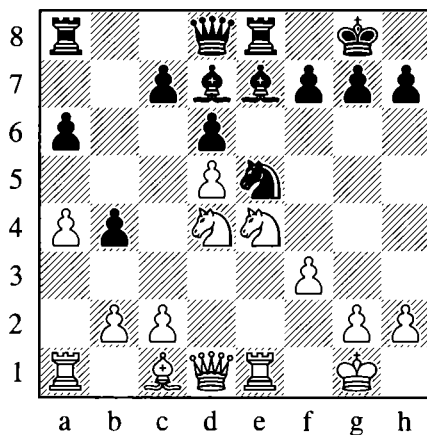
15.♘c3 b4 16.♘e4

16.♘a2?! misplaces the knight, and after 16...♙b8 (16...a5!?N 17.c3 ♙b8 is the same.) 17.c3 a5 18.cxb4 axb4 Black was better in L. Milov – Smagin, Podolsk 1990. Here I found a slight improvement over the game Bakhtiyarly – Dovliatov, Baku 2006.

**16...♞e8!?N**

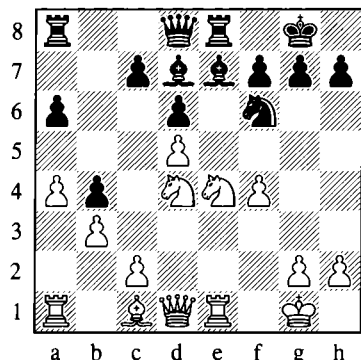
With the following possible continuation: 17.f5! ♘e5 18.b3 c6 19.dxc6 ♘xc6 20.♘xc6 ♙xc6 21.♙b2 ♙f8

Black retains slightly better chances.

14...b4 15.♘e4 ♞e8**16.b3**

16.♙f4 is well met by 16...♙b8! intending ...♙b7 to target the d5-pawn, as in Vetoshko – Huda, Lviv 2010.

Another game continued: 16.f4 ♖g4 17.b3 (or 17.c4 bxc3 18.bxc3 ♜b8 19.♞f3 ♖f6 20.♖xf6† ♙xf6) 17...♖f6!

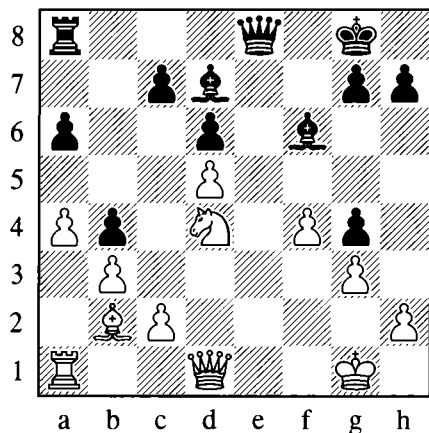


18.♖xf6† (18.c4 ♖xe4 19.♙xe4 ♙f6 is also in Black's favour.) 18...♙xf6 19.♙b2 ♜xe1† 20.♞xe1 ♞b8! 21.♞f2 ♞b7 22.♞f3 ♜e8 Black was better in Makarichev – Kholmov, Tallinn 1983.

16...♙h4! 17.g3 f5!

An important intermediate move.

18.♖f2 ♙f6 19.♙b2 ♞b8! 20.f4 ♖g4 21.♞xe8† ♞xc8 22.♖xg4 fxg4

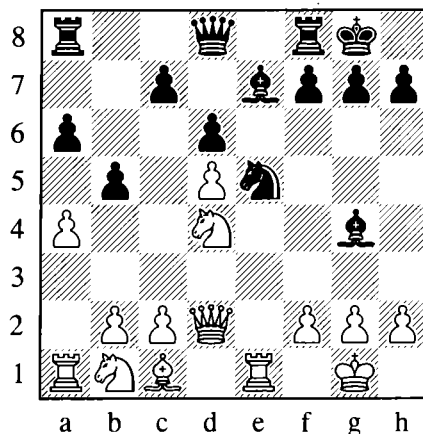


The exchanges have not fully solved White's problems.

23.♞d3 ♞f7! 24.♞c4 ♜e8!?

Black was better in Zapata – Bruzon Batista, Merida 2006, thanks to his control over the e-file, pair of bishops and the unpleasant pin along the h8-a1 diagonal.

B1232) 13.♞d2

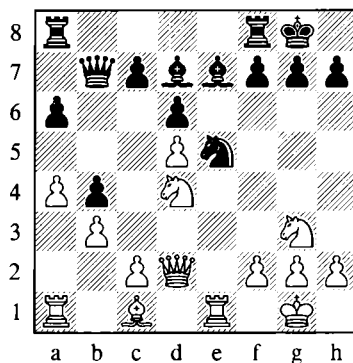


13...♙d7!

Having provoked White's unfavourable queen move, the bishop drops back to cover the c6-square.

14.♖c3 b4 15.♖e4

15.♖ce2 ♞b8! 16.b3 ♞b7 17.♖g3 (White is not helped by 17.c4 bxc3 18.♖xc3 ♜fe8 19.♙b2 ♖g6 20.♞d3 ♙f6 Perez Rodriguez – De la Paz Perdomo, Santa Clara 2005.)



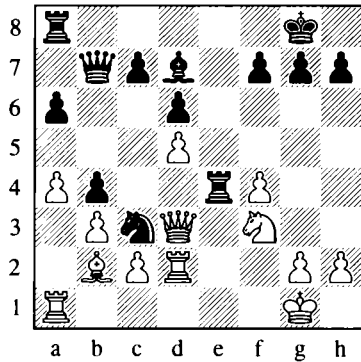
Now in Belavenets – Honfi Gurszky, corr. 1984, Black could have maintained the better

chances with 17...♖g6!N with ideas of ...♙f6 and ...♞ae8.

15...♞b8 16.f4 ♘g4 17.b3 ♞b7 18.♙b2!

Only this move allows White to maintain the balance.

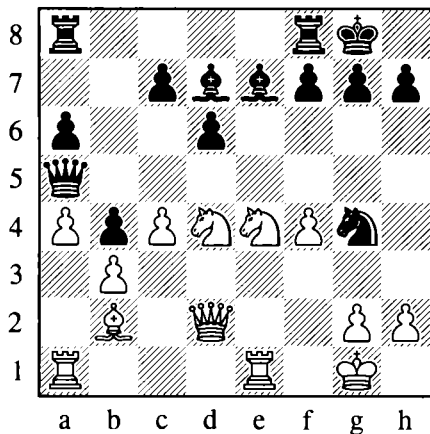
18.♘f3?! is dubious. 18...♙f6 (18...c6!??) 19.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 20.♞d1 ♘e4 21.♞d4 ♘c3 22.♞d2 ♞fe8 23.♙b2 ♞e4 24.♞d3



Kiewra – Bojkov, Berkeley 2011, and now 24...♞b6!N 25.♙h1 ♞e3 26.♞d4 ♞ae8! yields Black the upper hand.

18...♞xd5 19.c4! ♞a5

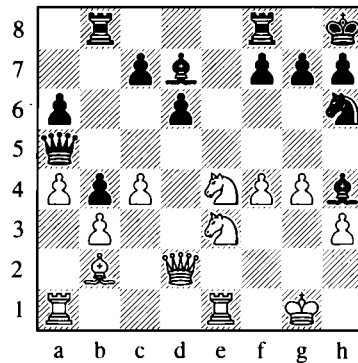
19...♞b7!?N looks like an interesting alternative: 20.♘c5! dxc5 21.♞xe7 ♞ad8 Black has chances to obtain a slight edge.



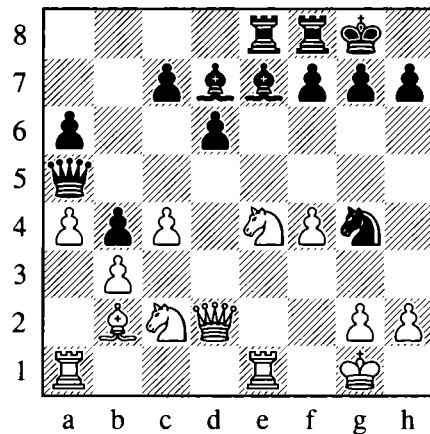
20.♘c2 ♞ae8!N

Black should not become too attached to his extra pawn.

The greedy 20...♞ab8?! allows White to develop a promising initiative: 21.h3 ♘h6 22.♘e3 ♙h8 (22...♙c6N may be a slight improvement, although 23.♞d4 f6 24.♘g5 still gives White good play.) 23.g4 ♙h4 Kunzelmann – Brandhorst, e-mail 2004. Here White should have played:

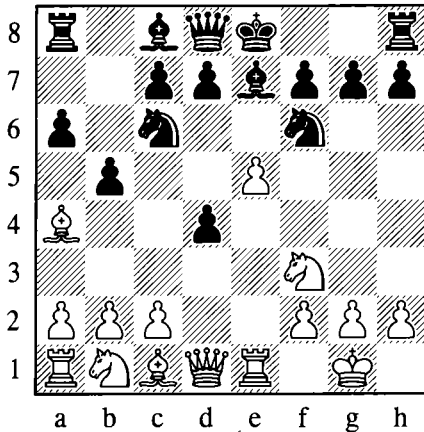


24.♞d4!N ♞g8 (24...f6 25.c5!) 25.c5! With some initiative; the main threat is ♘c4, but Black also looks slightly vulnerable on the kingside.



21.♘xb4 f5 22.♞c3 ♘f6

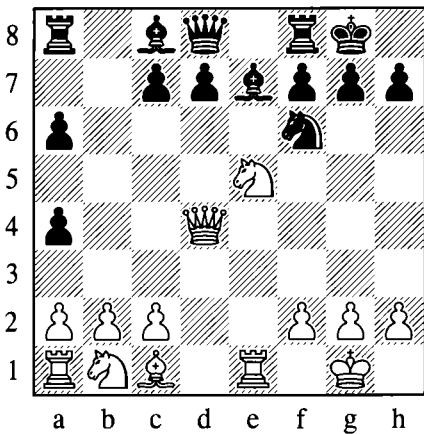
The position is roughly equal.

B2) 8.e5**8...♞xe5!**

This is the simple way to defuse White's central attack. Now we must consider **B21) 9.♞e5** and **B22) 9.♞xe5**.

B21) 9.♞e5 bxa4 10.♞xd4 0–0

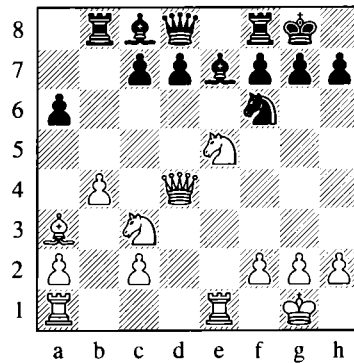
10...♞b8 11.♞xa4 0–0 transposes to the main line, but it seems more logical to castle first.

**11.♞xa4**

Let's have a look at the alternatives:

11.♞c3 is less accurate as it allows Black an additional option: 11...a3!? (11...♞b8 12.♞xa4 transposes to the main line). 12.b4 ♞b8

13.♞xa3?! (13.♞d3 d6 14.♞xa3 ♞f5 is slightly better for Black.)



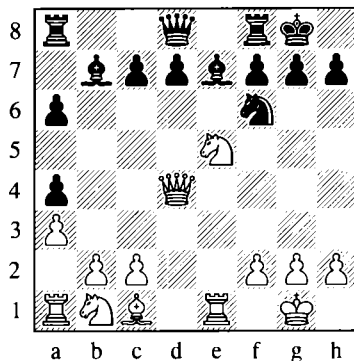
13...a5! 14.♞a7 ♞b7 White faced difficult problems in Plat – Votava, Czech Republic 2008.

11.a3

A justifiably rare continuation. The idea behind the move is to take away the b4-square from Black's rook and prevent the ...a3 idea as we saw above. But if White wants to stop ...a3, why not just capture the a4-pawn immediately?

11...♞b7!?N

I like this move, although 11...♞b8 12.♞c3 ♞e8 (12...♞b6!?) 13.♞xa4 ♞d6 was also better for Black in Liwak – Jakubowski, Poraj 1997.

**12.♞xa4 ♞e8!**

Preparing ...d6.

13. ♖c4 c5! 14. ♖d3 d5

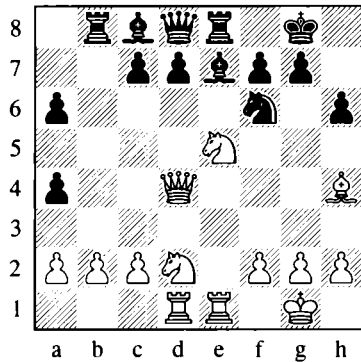
Black has a slight edge thanks to the centre and the bishop pair.

Finally there is:

11. ♗g5

This move has been played in quite a lot of games, but is certainly not to be feared.

11... ♖b8! 12. ♖d2 h6 13. ♗h4 ♖e8 14. ♖ad1



14... ♖b6!N

Bringing the rook to e6.

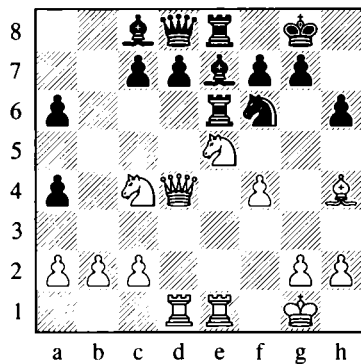
15. ♖dc4

Or 15. ♖d3 a3 16. ♖c4 ♖e6 17. ♖xe6 dxe6 18. ♗xf6 ♗xf6 19. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 20. ♖xa3 a5! 21. ♖c4 a4 with a slight edge for Black thanks to the bishop pair.

15... ♖e6 16. f4

16. ♖e3 ♗b7 17. ♖f5 ♗f8

Now in Winkelmann – Wossning, corr. 1995, Black should have played:

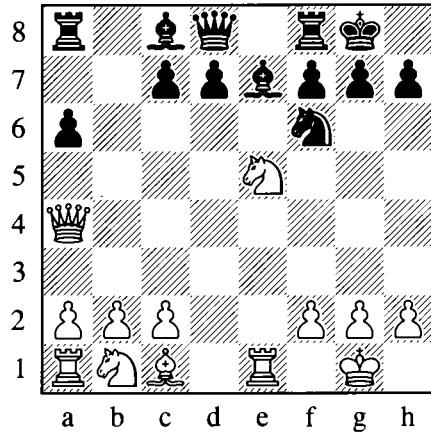


16... ♖g4!N 17. ♖xg4

17. ♗xe7 ♖xe7

17. ♗g3 d6 18. ♖xg4 ♖xe1† 19. ♖e1 ♗xg4† 17... ♗xh4 18. ♖xe6 dxe6

Black will have excellent winning chances in the ending, thanks to his extra pawn and bishop pair. (18... ♖xe6!? also promises a big advantage.)



11... ♖b8 12. ♖c3

12.a3 ♖e8 13. ♖c3 ♗d6 transposes to the 11.a3 ♖b8 line mentioned above.

Another idea is:

12. ♖d3

This way White prevents the ... ♖b4 idea and protects the b2-pawn in order to develop the dark-squared bishop.

12... d5!?N

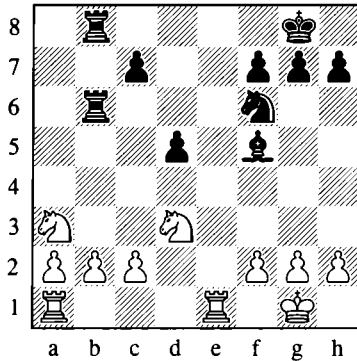
This novelty is an attempt to fight for the advantage.

A few games have seen 12... ♖d5 which is enough for equality: 13. ♗d2 ♗f6 14. ♖c3 (14. ♖a3?! d6! 15. ♖a5 ♗b7 16. c4 ♖b6 was better for Black in Reshevsky – Unzicker, Dubrovnik 1950.) 14... ♖xc3 15. ♗xc3 ♗xc3 16. bxc3 d6 with roughly equal chances in Fuderer – Euwe, Beverwijk 1952.

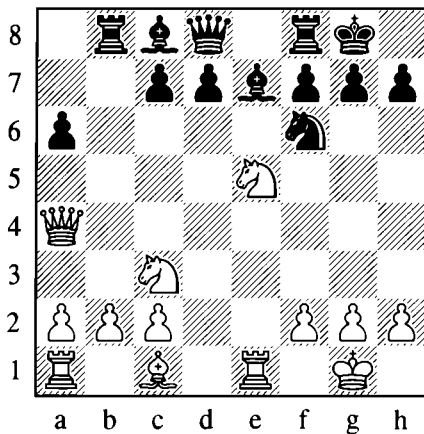
13. ♗f4 ♗f5!

A temporary pawn sacrifice. 13... ♖b6 14. ♖d2 c5 is playable but less energetic.

14.♟xa6 ♖b6 15.♟a7 ♙d6 16.♙xd6 ♟xd6
 17.♟a3
 17.b3?? loses to 17...♘g4 18.g3 ♙xd3
 19.cxd3 ♟f6+.
 17...♟xa3 18.♘xa3 ♖fb8!



With some initiative. One of Black's ideas is:
 19.b3?! ♖a8 20.♘b1 ♙xd3 21.cxd3 ♖xb3+



12...♖b4

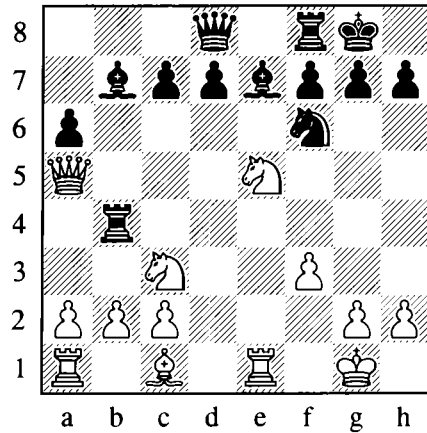
The mobile rook gives Black a lot of dynamic possibilities involving swinging to the kingside.

13.♟a5 ♙b7 14.f3

14.♘d3 ♖g4! 15.g3 d6+ Wertjanz – Schreiner, Jenbach 2009.

14.h3 was played in Capelan – Unzicker, West Berlin 1971, and now 14...♖h4!N promises a slight edge for Black, for example:

15.♘d3 ♖h5 16.♖e5 ♖xe5 17.♟xe5 ♖e8
 18.♙e3 d6 19.♟a5 ♟c8+



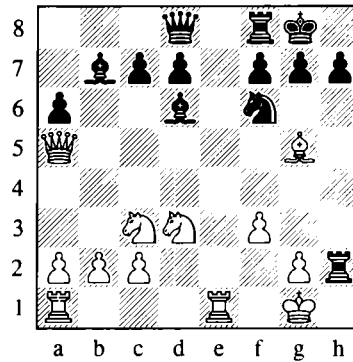
14...♖h4 15.♘d3 ♖h5!N

This is the only way to retain some advantage. I also examined the alternative, and found some amazing possibilities:

15...♙d6 16.♙g5!

Galkin – Yemelin, St Petersburg 1994. Now Black could have accepted the pawn sacrifice.

16...♖xh2!?N



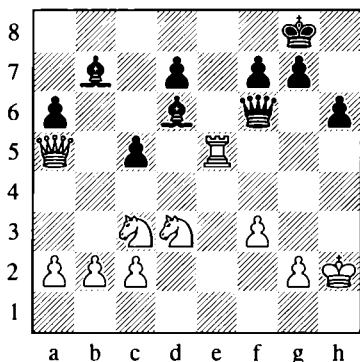
17.♖e5!!

The best defence.

17.♘f4 is met by 17...h6 18.♘xh2 hxg5
 19.♟xg5 ♘h7! 20.♟xd8 ♖xd8 21.g3 ♘g5
 22.♖f1 ♘xf3+ with a strong initiative.
 17...h6 18.♙xf6 ♟xf6 19.♘xh2 ♖e8 20.♖ae1
 ♖xe5! 21.♖xe5

21.♘xe5?? loses to 21...♟h4+.

21...c5!



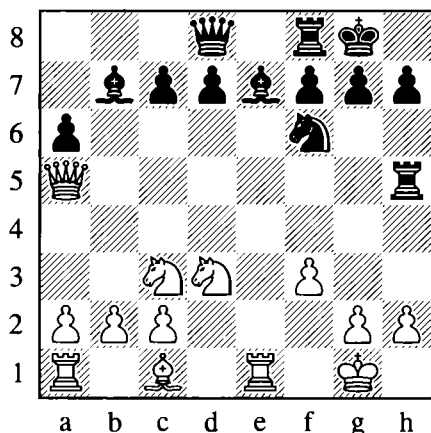
22.♖h3!!

22.f4? is a mistake due to 22...♙xe5 23.fxe5 ♗g5 and Black wins.

22...♙xe5 23.♘xe5 ♗xe5 24.♗d8† ♖h7

25.♗xd7 ♗h5† 26.♖g3 ♗g6† 27.♖h2 ♙c6

With a roughly level endgame.



16.♗a4 ♙d6! 17.♙f4 ♗h4 18.g3 ♗xf4!

The rook concludes its eventful journey with a fine sacrifice.

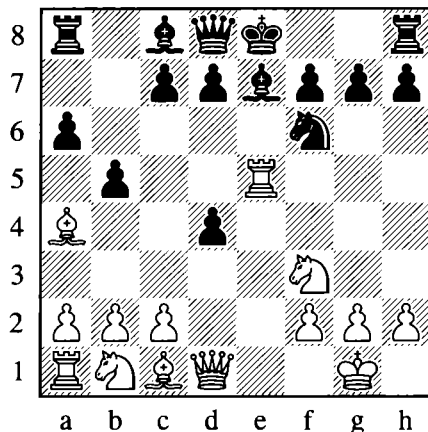
19.♘xf4

After 19.gxf4 ♙xf3 Black has a strong initiative for the sacrificed material due to the vulnerable position of White's king.

19...♙xf3

Black has fantastic play for the exchange.

B22) 9.♙xe5



9...d6!

A small finesse – Black jabs at the rook before taking on a4. We will analyse the tempting but misguided B221) 10.♗g5?! followed by the correct B222) 10.♗e1.

10.♙xb5†? axb5 11.♗xb5 c5† left White's rook looking stupid in Mare – Oksanen, corr. 1992.

10.♗xe7†? ♗xe7 11.♙b3 c5 is clearly in Black's favour thanks to his avalanche of pawns, Nogueiras Santiago – Frey Beckman, Bogota 1979.

B221) 10.♗g5?! bxa4 11.♗xg7

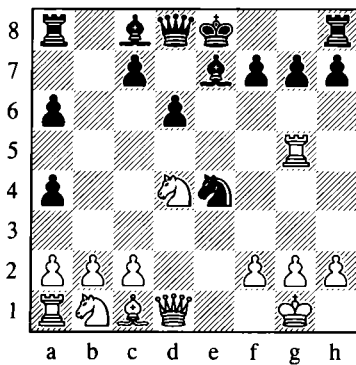
This implies a material sacrifice, but it is arguably already too late for White to turn back.

After 11.♗xd4?! 0–0 there is no justification for the weird position of White's rook.

11.♘xd4 ♘e4!N

The most aggressive move, which refutes White's strategy.

11...0–0 led to a safe but modest edge for Black after 12.♘c3 ♙d7 13.♘f5 ♙xf5 14.♗xf5 a3!? in Perez Perez – Spassky, Amsterdam 1964.



12.♖c6

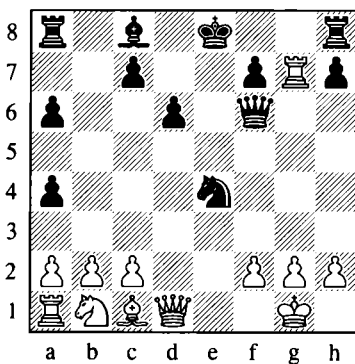
After 12.♖xg7 ♔f6 the rook is trapped. My analysis continues 13.♕h6 ♕xg7 14.♕xg7 ♖g8 15.♖c3! ♜h4! 16.♜f3 ♜g4! 17.♖e1 ♜xf3 18.♖xf3 ♖xg7 19.♖xe4† ♔f8 20.♖xa4 ♕b7 and White's compensation is insufficient.

12...♜d7 13.♖xe7 ♜xe7 14.♖xg7

Or 14.♖a5 0–0 with a big development advantage for Black.

14...♜f6!

Once again the rook finds itself trapped. The best that White can do is:

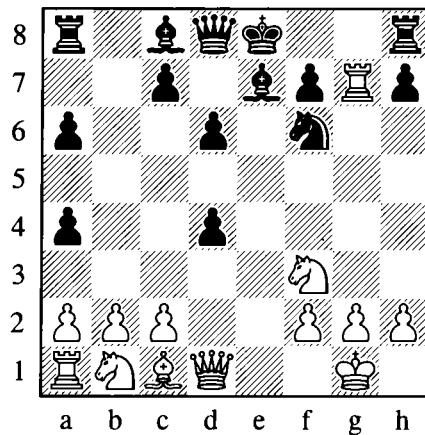


15.♜f3 ♜xg7 16.♜xe4† ♜e5! 17.♜c6† ♔e7! 18.♜xc7†

18.♖d2 ♕d7 19.♜xc7 ♖hc8 reaches the same position.

18...♕d7 19.♖d2 ♖hc8 20.♜b7 ♖ab8 21.♜xa6 ♖xc2

Black has good chances of converting his material advantage.



11...♖h5

Trapping the rook right away.

There is a second promising line:

11...c5!? 12.c3 h6!

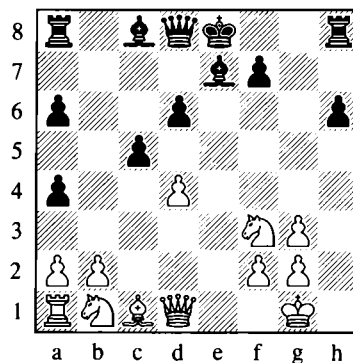
Before going after the rook, Black takes away the g5-square.

13.cxd4

13.♖e1 prevents the intended ...♖h5. In this case Black can continue: 13...d5! 14.cxd4 ♖e4! Creating the threat of ...♕f6. 15.dxc5 ♕xc5! 16.♖d3 ♜f6 17.♖c3 ♜xg7 18.♖xe4 ♕e7 Black keeps the better prospects.

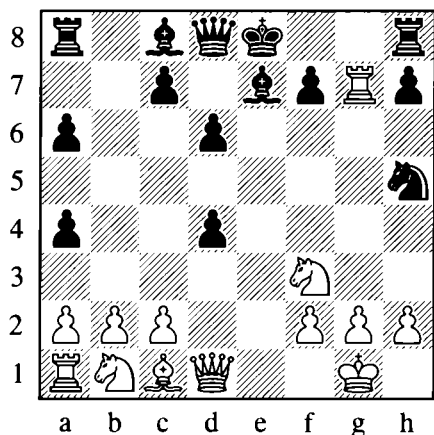
13...♖h5 14.♖g3 ♖xg3 15.hxg3

Vogt – Margolin, Germany 2005. Now despite his extra exchange Black has to be precise to prove his superiority. I suggest the following improvement:



15...♔f8!N 16.♕f4 ♔g7

Improving the king's position, with slightly better chances.

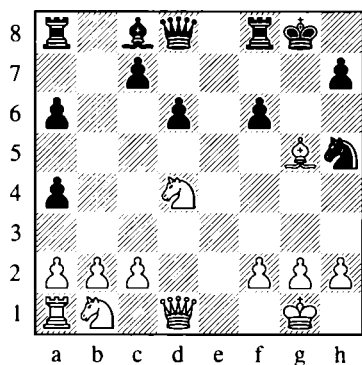


12...Bg5

This is virtually forced – if the rook is going to perish, it should at least trade its life for that of the important enemy bishop, rather than a humble knight.

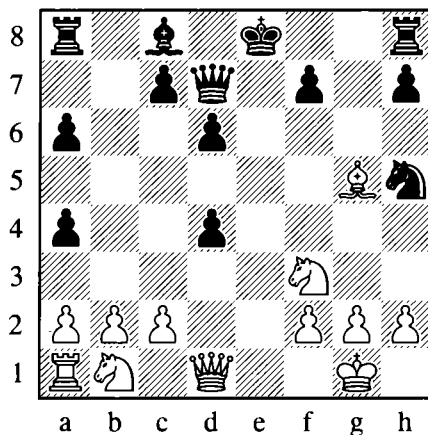
12...Bg5 13.Bxg5 Bxd7!

13...f6 is less clear. My main line continues: 14.Qxd4! (This is better than 14.Bxd4 as played in Rogers – Hebden, London 1988, after which 14...Bb7!N 15.Qbd2 0-0 16.Bh6 Bf7 17.Bxa4 Bxd7 leaves White without enough for the exchange.) 14...0-0! Escaping from a check on h5.



15.Bh6 Qg7 16.Bf3 Reshevsky – Euwe, Dubrovnik 1950. Now Black should play

16...Bb8!N although after 17.Qc3 (17.Qc6! is met by 17...Bxe8!) 17...Bd7! 18.Qd5 Bf7! 19.Bc1 Bxe8! 20.Bf1 White keeps some initiative for the exchange.



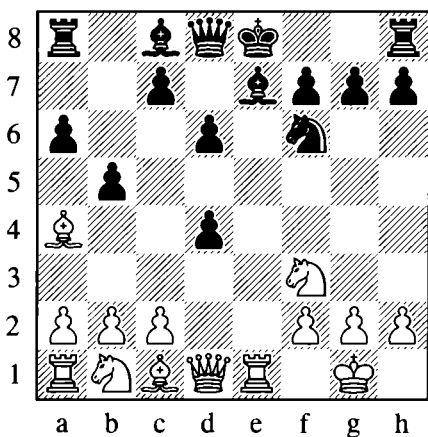
14.Bxd4

Now 14.Qxd4N can be met by 14...Bg4 15.Bc1 Bxe6 although this may be the best White can do.

14...0-0! 15.h3 Bb7

In Rogers – J. Howell, London 1988, Black was well on the way towards consolidating his material advantage.

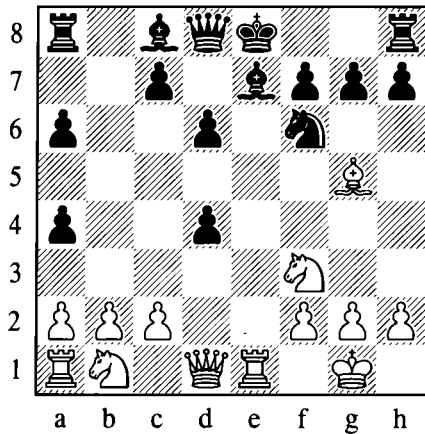
B222) 10...Re1



10...bxa4

From here White sometimes plays **B2221)** 11.♙g5 but the main line is **B2222)** 11.♘xd4.

B2221) 11.♙g5



11...0–0!

Black shouldn't be greedy.

11...c5?! 12.♙xf6 gxf6 13.c3 dxc3 14.♘xc3 ♙e6 was played in Wittmann – Rodriguez Cespedes, Prague 1980. Now White could have obtained a powerful initiative with the help of 15.♘h4! N 0–0 16.♙h5! followed by either ♘f5 or ♘d5.

12.♙e2

12.♘xd4 ♙d7? can be compared with line B2222 below. There is no good reason for the bishop to have gone to g5 so early, and Black stands better.

12...h6!

A strong intermediate move, which allows Black to seize the initiative.

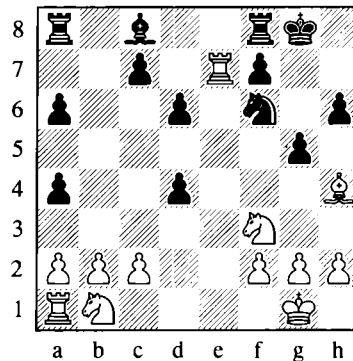
13.♙h4

13.♙xe7 hxg5 leaves Black with an extra pawn.

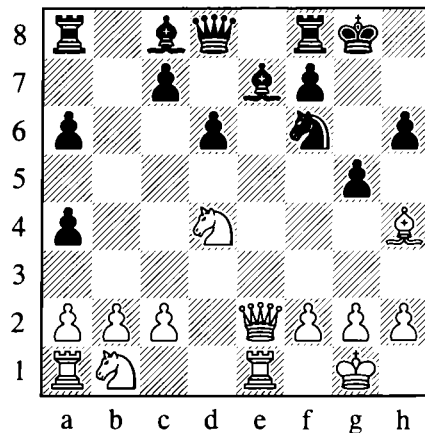
13...g5! 14.♘xd4

14.♙xe7N is probably the lesser of the evils,

though after 14...♙xe7 15.♙xe7 Black is on top thanks to the following tactical idea:



15...♘d5! 16.♙e4 c5! 17.c3! (17.♙g3 is met by 17...f5 18.♙e2 f4+ 17...♙f5! 18.♙e1 gxh4 19.cxd4 ♘b4 20.♘a3 ♘d3 21.♙e2 h3!?)



14...♙d7!

Guarding the c6-square while setting up an indirect defence of the e7-bishop.

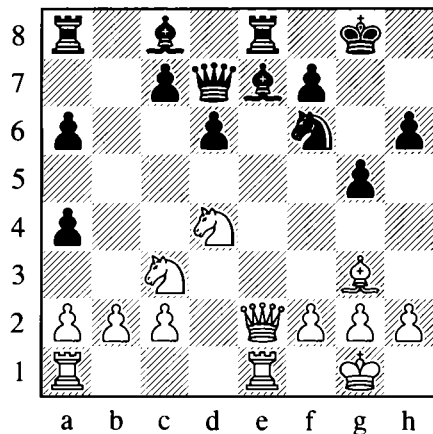
15.♙g3

15.♙xe7?! is of course impossible in view of 15...♙e8.

Another game continued: 15.♘c3 ♙e8 16.♙f3 (16.♙g3 is the best chance, but it immediately transposes to the main line below, where Black is better.) 16...d5! Pisk – Volzhin, Canberra 2001.

15...♖e8 16.♘c3

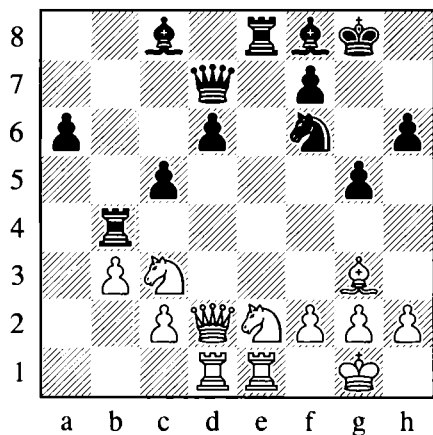
A. Rodriguez – Sorin, Sao Paulo 1991. Now the most precise continuation is:

**16...♖b8!N**

I analysed the following plausible continuation.

**17.b3 axb3 18.axb3 ♖b4! 19.♖ad1 ♘f8
20.♗d2 c5 21.♘de2**

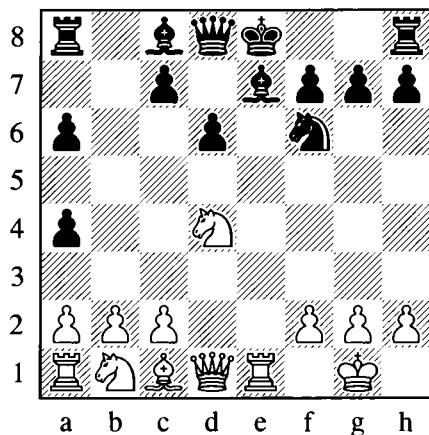
And here there is a small finesse:

**21...♘b7!?**

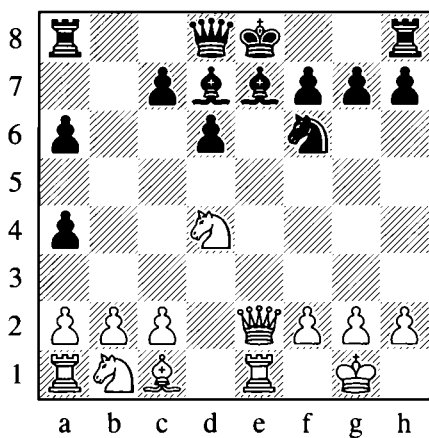
Based on the following idea.

22.♘xd6? ♗c6! 23.f3 ♖d8—+

Black wins a piece.

B2222) 11.♘xd4**11...♘d7**

Obviously Black needs to guard the c6-square. From this position we reach a final division between **B22221) 12.♗e2, B22222) 12.c4** and **B22223) 12.♗f3**.

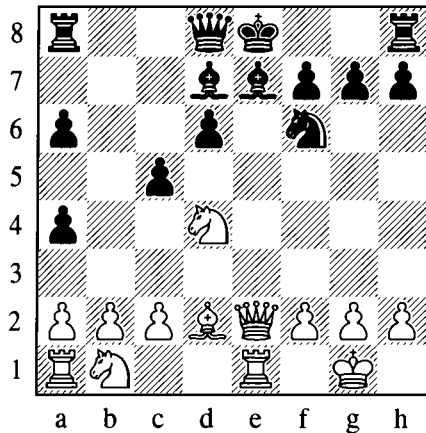
B22221) 12.♗e2

It turns out that Black has no problem dealing with the pin along the e-file.

12...c5 13.♘d2?!

This tricky move threatens ♘a5, but Black is ready with a strong counter.

13.♘f3 is met by 13...h6! to take away the g5-square, and after 14.♘c3 ♕e6 Black was ready to castle with slightly better chances thanks to the bishop pair in Davletbayeva – Kuderinov, Astana 2011.



13...0–0!! 14.♖xe7 ♖b8!

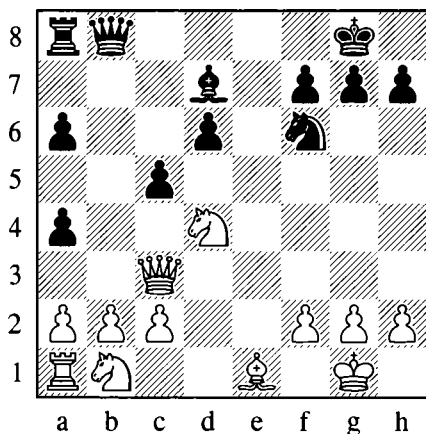
Effectively refuting White's play. It turns out that White cannot save the knight due to the threat of ...♖e8 trapping the queen.

15.♖e3 ♖e8! 16.♖c3

16.♖a3 cxd4 17.♖xe8† ♖xe8† 18.♖xd6? ♖e2 19.h3 ♖e8–+

16...♖e1† 17.♕xe1

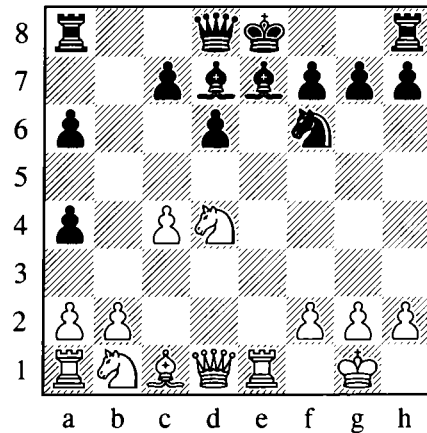
Now Black has at his disposal a strong intermediate move:



17...♘d5! 18.♖a3 cxd4 19.♘d2 ♖b6!†

Black keeps an extra pawn and a clear advantage.

B22222) 12.c4



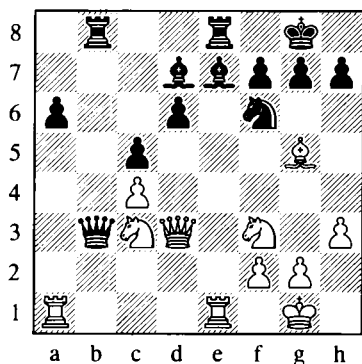
This has achieved a positive score for White in practice, but I do not rate it highly.

12...0–0! 13.♘c3 ♖b8! 14.♘xa4N

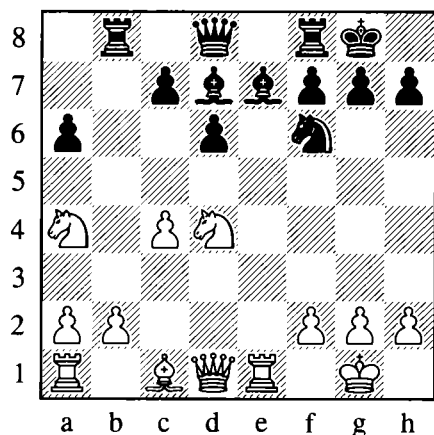
This untested move seems like a logical one to analyse.

14.♖f3 is well met by: 14...♘g4! 15.♘f5 (15.♘c6 Polacek – Findlay, Toronto 1990, 15...♕xc6N 16.♖xc6 ♕f6 Black is clearly better as 17.♘xa4? runs into 17...♕d4.) 15...♘e5 16.♖e4 ♕f6 17.♘d5 Khaled – Perez, Novi Sad (ol) 1990. Black has several good moves here, but I like the simple option: 17...♖e8N†

14.h3 was played in Polacek – Kasinski, Toronto 1990, and here Black should have played: 14...c5!N 15.♘f3 (Or 15.♘c2 ♖e8 16.♘e3 ♕f8! 17.b3 g6! 18.♕b2 ♕c6! 19.♖c2 ♕g7 with a better position for Black.) 15...♖e8 16.b3 axb3 17.axb3 ♖b6 18.♕g5 ♖xb3 19.♖d3



19...f5! 20. Wxf5 Wxc3 21. Bc1 Bb4 22. gxf6 gxf6 23. Bxa6 Bb2! 24. Bf1 We2! Black keeps an extra pawn and good winning chances.



14...g4!

14...Bb4 fails to reach the goal due to 15.b3 Bxa4 16.f5! Be8 17.Wd2! Bb6 18.bxa4 with a roughly equal position.

15.h3

After 15.f3 the surprising 15...g4! is awkward for White: 16.Bf1 (16.g3 gxf6 strongly favours Black.) 16...Be8! 17.f3 g5 Black has two bishops and an active position.

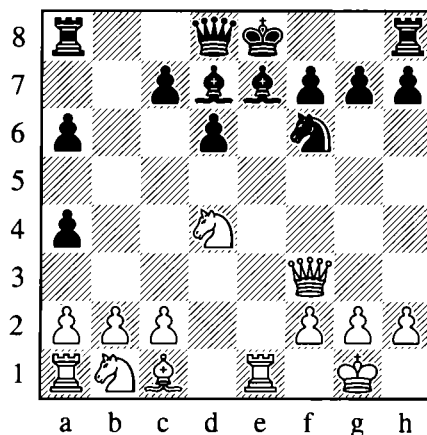
15...g5 16.c5

After 16.f3 gxc4 17.b3 b6 White's initiative is not worth a pawn.

16...g6!

And White has no time for 17.cxd6? in view of 17...Bb4!-+ with a decisive double attack on a4 and d4.

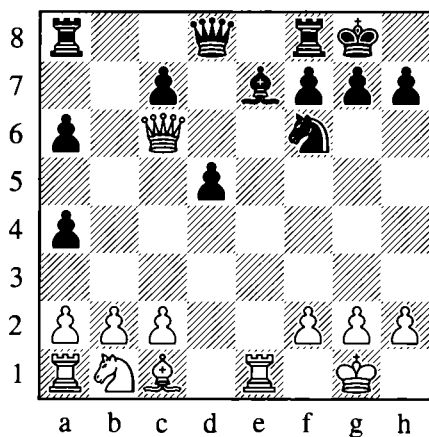
B22223) 12.Wf3



This is the main line. White's plan is to exchange one of the enemy bishops.

12...0-0 13.f3 gxc6 14.Wxc6 d5

I remember my brother showed me this line when I was a young boy, and it still seems to be the best.

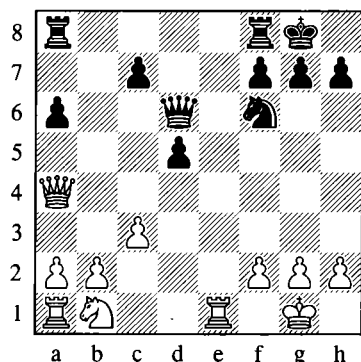


15.Wxa4

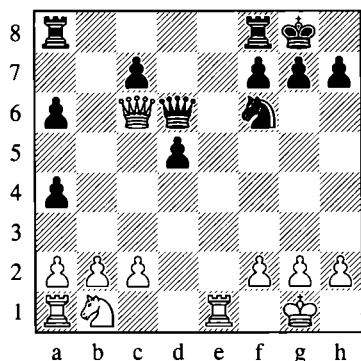
The other main option is:

15.g4 g6!

15...♙b4 is a reasonable alternative. Black's idea is to provoke c2-c3 and create pressure along the b-file. 16.c3 ♙d6 17.♙xd6 ♖xd6 18.♗xa4 Hermlin – Martynov, Rovaniemi 1999. Here Black should have played:



18...♙b8!N 19.b3 ♗c5! Black obstructs the development of the opponent's queenside. 20.♗d4 (20.♙d2!? may be the best try, and after 20...♗xc3 21.♙f3 c5 22.♙ac1 ♗b4 23.♗xb4 cxb4 24.♙d4 White has some compensation for the pawn.) 20...♙e8! 21.♙d2 ♗a3!♣ Black maintains some pressure.
16.♙xd6 ♖xd6



17.♖xd6

17.♗xa4?! is dubious in view of 17...♙ab8 18.♗d4?! Palkovi – Solozhenkin, Naleczow 1988, and now 18...c5N 19.♗c3 d4♣ wins a pawn as 20.♗a3? is met by 20...♙g4! winning.

17...cxd6

Despite having two pairs of double pawns Black is better. For example:

18.♙d2

18.f3 may be a better chance although Black remains on top after 18...♙fc8 or 18...♙fb8.

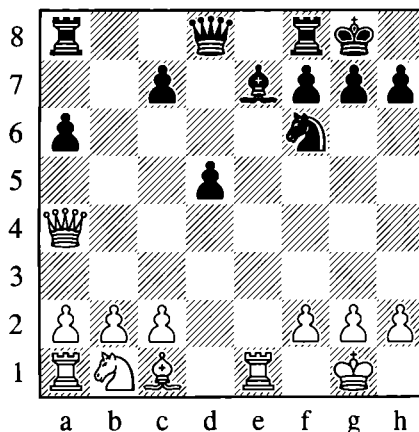
18...♙fc8! 19.♙ec1

19.♙ac1!♣

19...♙ab8 20.♙ab1 g6♣

White faced a difficult defence and he failed to hold the endgame in Petrossian – Kravtsov, Marseille 2009.

After the text move I would like to propose a move which is technically a novelty in this position, even though it immediately transposes to a bunch of existing games.



15...♙b8!N

Black offers the a-pawn and prevents White from developing his bishop.

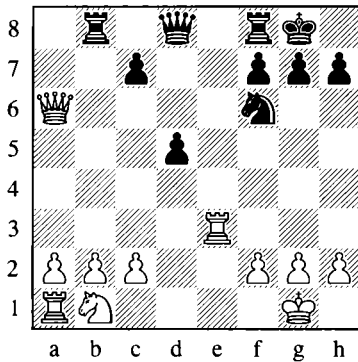
15...♙e4 used to be the main line, but I was unable to find much advantage after: 16.♙c3! (Better than 16.♙d2 ♙c5 17.♗g4 ♙f6 18.♙b3 ♙e8! with a slight edge for Black in Brendel – Van den Doel, Germany 2009.) 16...♙xc3 17.bxc3 Despite the doubled c-pawns Black had no more than a tiny advantage in Trani – Lo Nigro, corr. 1998. I checked the possible continuation 17...♙f6N

18.♔d2 c5 19.♟ab1 when White is in no real danger.

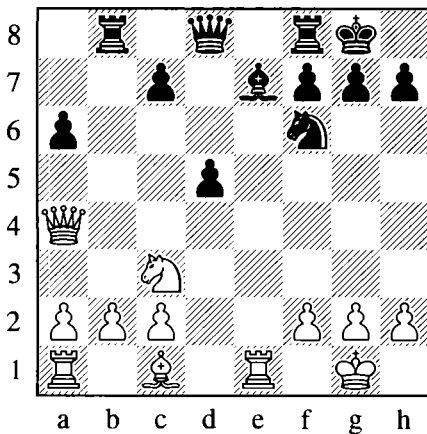
16.♘c3

Correctly rejecting the pawn sacrifice.

16.♟xa6?! is dubious and leads to some initiative for Black: 16...♔c5! 17.♔e3! Otherwise ...♘g4 would be very strong. 17...♔xe3 18.♟xe3



Ardeleanu – Grivas, Athens 1984. Now the simple 18...♟xb2!N promises Black some advantage, for instance 19.♟d3 c5 20.a4 ♟b6 21.♟d1 ♟a8+ and the passed a-pawn is more of a weakness than a strength.



16...♔c5!

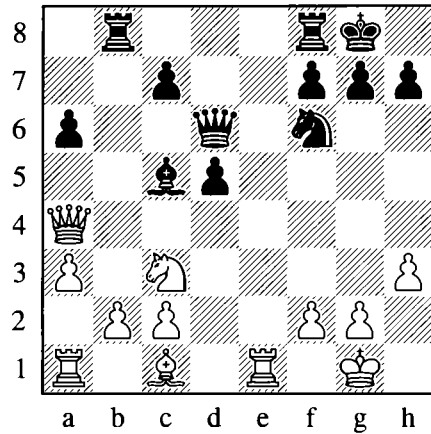
This strong move sets up ideas such as ...♟b4 and ...♘g4.

17.h3

17.a3!?N h6! 18.h3 ♟d6 transposes.

17...♟d6 18.a3

White's last two moves have guarded against both the aforementioned ideas. This position was reached in Capoccia – Larsson, e-mail 1999, and here I think Black should have played:



18...h6!?N

Taking a square away from White's bishop. Black has a more harmonious position and White still needs to find a way to develop his queenside pieces.

Conclusion

The 5.d4 exd4 6.0–0 line contains some tricks, but it cannot cause any serious opening problems against a well-prepared adversary. Moreover, in most of the lines it is Black who is fighting for the advantage.



Sidelines

Worrall System

Variation Index

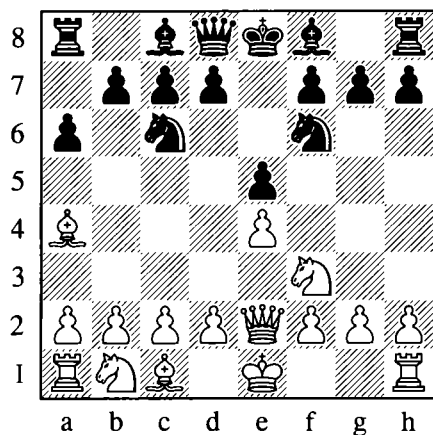


1.e4 e5 2.d3 c6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 f6 5.Qe2

5...b5 6.Bb3 Bc5

A) 7.a4 Bb7	69
A1) 8.d3	69
A2) 8.axb5 axb5 9.Bxa8 Qxa8	71
B) 7.c3 0-0	73
B1) 8.d3	73
B2) 8.0-0 d5!?	75
B21) 9.d3	75
B22) 9.exd5	78
C) 7.d3 h6!?	81
C1) 8.Bc3	81
C2) 8.h3	82
C3) 8.0-0	84
C4) 8.Bbd2	85
C5) 8.c3 0-0	86
C51) 9.h3	86
C52) 9.0-0	87
C53) 9.Bbd2	88

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.♚e2



According to the database this system dates back to 1849, when it was introduced by one of the first Russian masters named Schumov. Nevertheless, it has the name of the American player T.H. Worrall. The pros and cons of the queen move are apparent from the outset. On the one hand, White develops the queen at an early stage, to a square where she might become vulnerable. On the plus side, White avoids the Open Variation while retaining the option of playing c2-c3 and d2-d4 without wasting a tempo on d2-d3, as occurs in the 5.d3 system of the next chapter. The central advance may also be supported by a rook from the d1-square. By coincidence, my editor for this book, IM Andrew Greet, has written a repertoire book (referenced in the bibliography) in which he advocated this system for White.

5...b5 6.♙b3 ♙c5

The most aggressive move, which Greet refers to as the “Anti-5.♚e2 Variation”. The bishop is more active on c5 than on e7, as it takes control over the important a7-g1 diagonal and makes the d2-d4 advance more difficult. Concerning the relative disadvantages of this system, it can be pointed out that if White somehow succeeds in advancing the d-pawn to

d4, the bishop will fall under attack and Black will lose a tempo. White may also try to set problems by pinning the f6-knight. So my task will be to demonstrate that advantages of the active bishop on c5 are more significant than its drawbacks.

For those who are interested in the 6...♙e7 system, I can refer you to the books of Andrew Greet and Mihail Marin (both listed in the bibliography), who offer repertoire coverage from, respectively, the white and the black side of the position. I have chosen not to go down this path, as after 7.0-0 we transpose to the 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♚e2 b5 7.♙b3 system, where Black has missed the opportunity to initiate the Open Spanish with 5...♘xe4.

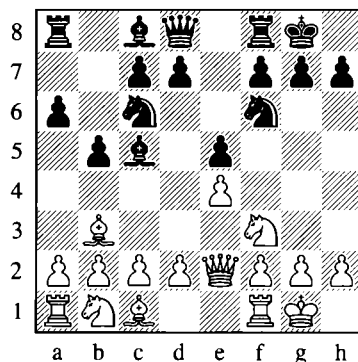
Here White has three main continuations: **A) 7.a4, B) 7.c3 and C) 7.d3.**

7.0-0

This will almost always transpose to one of the other main variations in which White castles over the next few moves. Here is one independent line:

7...0-0

Black makes a flexible move without determining his plans.



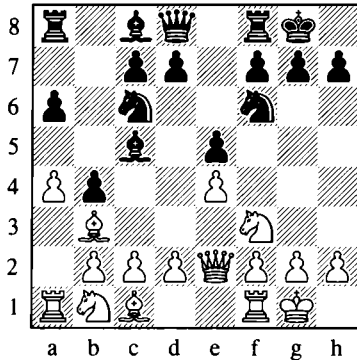
8.a4

8.d3 h6 (8...♞e8!? is also sensible) transposes to variation C3 – see 7.d3 h6 8.0-0 0-0 on page 84.

8.c3 transposes to line B2 with 7.c3 0-0
8.0-0, as featured on page 75.

8...b4!?

Black can also play 8...♙b7 transposing to the 8.0-0 0-0 line in the notes to variation A (after 7.a4 ♘b7).



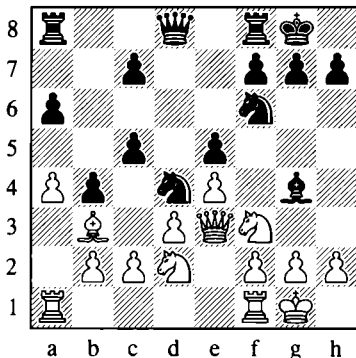
9.d3N

9.a5 d6 with the idea of ...♙g4 was fine for Black in Hrusovsky – Hartl, Slovakia 1995.

9...d6!

This time 9...h6 is unnecessary, as Black's last move created an unpleasant threat of ...♙g4 followed by ...♘d4, and so White has no time for 10.♙g5.

10.♙e3 ♙g4 11.♙xc5 dxc5 12.♘bd2 ♘d4 13.♙e3



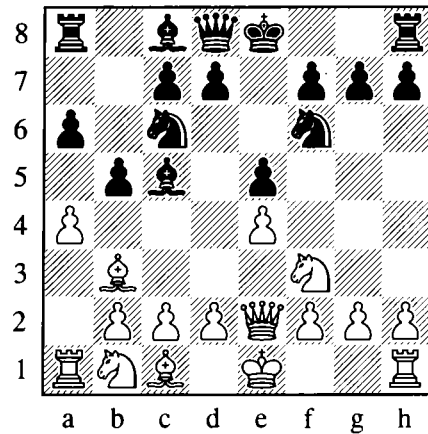
13...♙xf3! 14.♘xf3 ♘g4 15.♙d2 ♘xf3†
16.gxf3 ♙h4

Forcing a draw. If Black is feeling more ambitious, he may prefer 16...♙f6!? 17.f4 ♙d4 when everything is to play for.

17.fxg4 ♙xg4†=

With perpetual check.

A) 7.a4



7...♙b7

Black makes a useful developing move, based on the fact that the b5-pawn is not really threatened. Note that 7...b4 would be risky due to 8.♙xf7†!

Now White can choose between maintaining the tension with A1) 8.d3, and releasing it with A2) 8.axb5.

8.0-0 0-0 9.d3 h6 transposes to the 9.0-0 line in the note to variation A1 below.

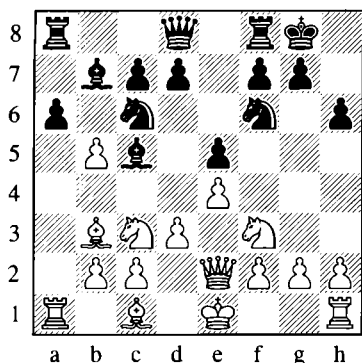
A1) 8.d3 h6

It is useful to prevent the annoying pin. We will see the same idea occurring in variation B as well.

9.axb5

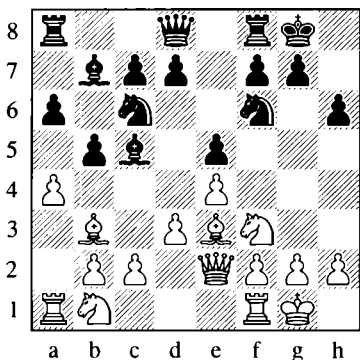
Here are two other ideas:

9.♘c3 0-0!? (9...♘d4!? also makes sense.)
10.axb5 This position arose in Bisguier – Trifunovic, Bled 1961, and here Black missed a chance to take over the initiative:



10...d4!N 11.dxd4 exd4 12.b1 axb5
13.Bxa8 Bxa8 14.0-0 Re8 Followed by ...d5
with excellent prospects.

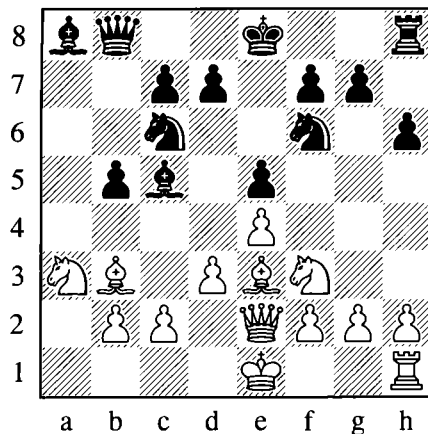
9.0-0 0-0 10.Bc3 Re8! 11.Bc3 Bf8!
intending ...d5 was also fine for Black in
Monteban – Van Dongen, Leiden 2000.)
The present position was reached in Titova
Boric – Urbanec, Bratislava 1994, and
here I would like to offer the following
idea:



10...d4!N 11.dxd4 exd4 12.Bf4 Re8 13.Wf3
d5 14.e5 Bh7= Black transfers the knight to
either g6 or e6 with a good position.

9...axb5 10.Bxa8 Bxa8 11.d3 Bb8 12.Bc3

This position occurred in Van der Wiel –
Van der Sterren, Amsterdam 1994. Here I
recommend a move that we can now consider
quite thematic for this line:

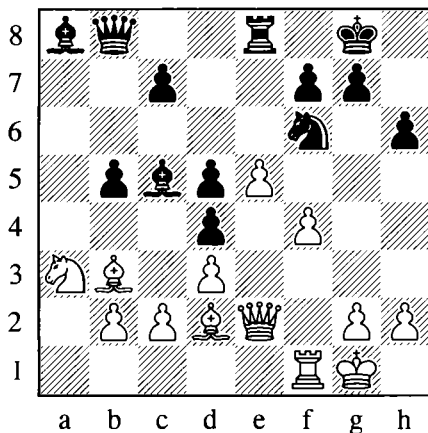


12...d4!N 13.dxd4 exd4 14.Bd2

After this move Black gets to showcase some
nice ideas.

The alternative is: 14.Bf4 Bb4† (The simple
14...0-0 is fine.) 15.Bd2 (15.c3! dxc3 16.0-0
looks like the right way for White to preserve
dynamic equality.) 15...Bxd2† 16.Wxd2 c5!
17.Wa5 Bc6= The misplaced knight on a3
allows Black to claim a slight edge.

14...0-0 15.0-0 d5! 16.e5 Re8 17.f4



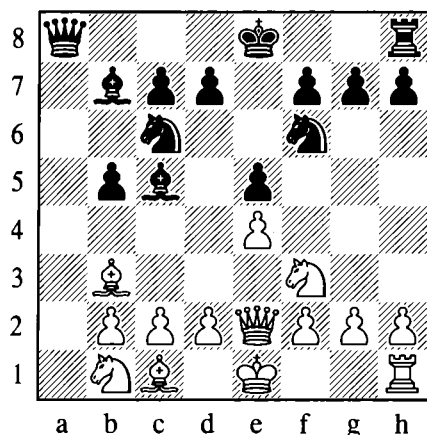
17...d4!

The knight is untouchable in view of a
discovery.

18.Bc1 Ba7!

With a good position for Black.

A2) 8.axb5 axb5 9.♞xa8 ♞xa8



White should be careful here.

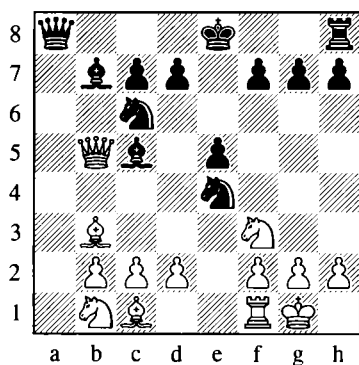
10.♟c3

10.♞xb5?!

This greedy move was played in Lane – Kosten, Saint Affrique 1995. I recommend the simple reply:

10...♟e4N 11.0-0!

After 11.♟xf7? ♟xf7 12.♞c4† ♟e8 13.♞xe4 Black has a pleasant choice between the immediate 13...♟d4!? 14.♞xe5† ♟d8† with a strong initiative, and the even stronger preparatory move 13...♟d6† with ideas of ...♞a1 and ...♟d4.



11...♟xf2?!

This is strongest, although Black should be at least a bit better after other moves too.

12.♞xf2 ♞a7 13.d4!

13.♞e2? is bad in view of: 13...♟xf2

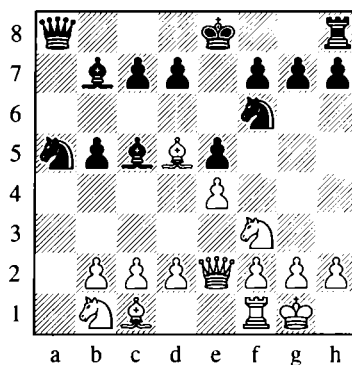
14.♞xf2 ♞a1! 15.♟xf7† ♟d8!-+

13...♟xd4 14.♟xd4 ♞xd4 15.♞e2 ♟xf2

16.♞xf2 ♞d1† 17.♞f1 ♞xf1† 18.♟xf1 d5

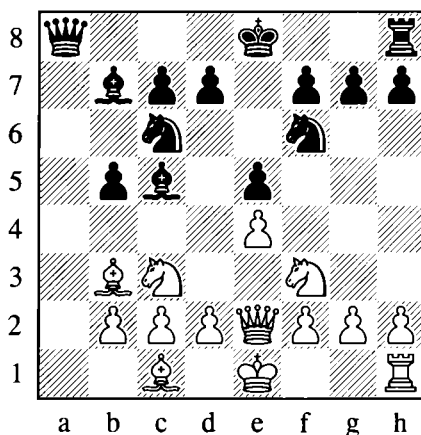
Black's rook and two extra pawns should outgun White's two minor pieces in this endgame.

The following line is safer for White, but still harmless: 10.0-0 ♟a5! 11.♟d5 (11.♟xe5 ♟xb3 12.cxb3 0-0 13.d3 ♞e8 14.♟g4 ♟xg4 15.♞xg4 d5 is slightly better for Black.)



This position occurred in Ortiz – Meulemans, Internet 2010. Now the natural 11...♟xd5N 12.exd5 0-0! 13.♞xb5 ♟b6 promises Black at least equal chances.

After the text move I would like to offer the following pawn sacrifice:



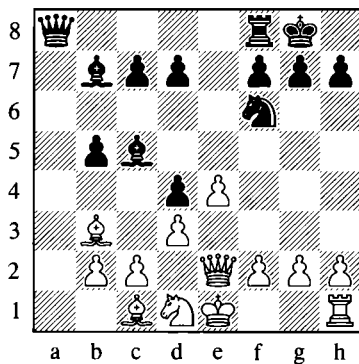
10...0-0!

This move was brought to my attention by my editor Andrew Greet, although it has been tested in a few games. I checked numerous possibilities but found no route to equality for White.

11.♖xb5N

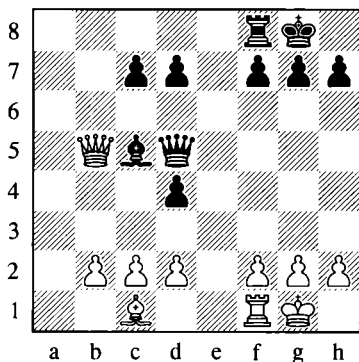
The only debate here is whether one of the following options is a lesser evil for White.

11.d3?! ♘d4! 12.♘xd4 exd4 13.♘d1 occurred in Preinfalk – Puc, Ljubljana 1945. Now the best way to prove Black's superiority is:



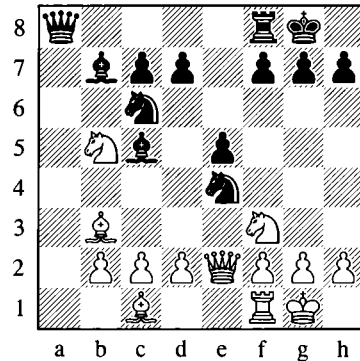
13...d5! 14.e5 ♝e8 15.0-0 ♞b6! Followed by advancing the c-pawn.

Also after 11.0-0N ♘d4! is strong: 12.♘xd4 exd4 13.♘d5 ♘xd5 14.♙xd5 ♙xd5 15.exd5 ♖xd5 16.♖xb5

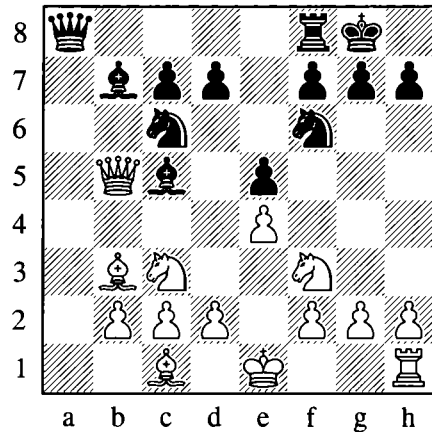


16...d3! 17.♖xd3 ♖xd3 18.cxd3 ♝e8! Black has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn.

11.♘xb5N also doesn't work in view of: 11...♘xe4! 12.0-0 (12.♖xe4? is strongly met by 12...♘d4 13.♖g4 ♘xf3† 14.♙e2 ♘d4† with a big advantage for Black.)



12...♘xf2! 13.♝xf2 ♖a1! 14.♖e1 ♙xf2† 15.♙xf2 ♘a5! 16.d3 ♘xb3 17.cxb3 d6

**11...♖a7!**

Now there is no good defence against ...♙xf2†. For example:

12.♖e2

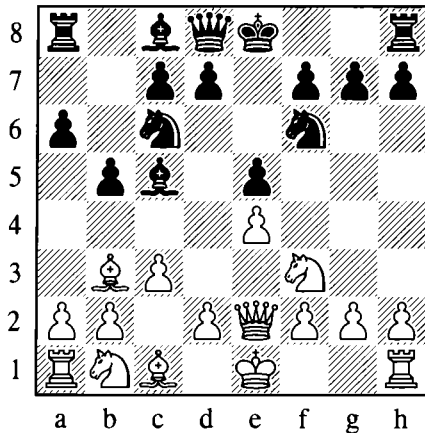
12.0-0 is met by 12...♙a6 of course.

12...♘d4! 13.♘xd4 exd4 14.♘d5 ♙xd5

15.♙xd5 ♖e8 16.♗c4 ♜xd5 17.♗xd5 c6
18.♗f5 d5+

Black will regain his pawn while keeping a positional advantage.

B) 7.c3



This logical system of development was introduced by one of the best players in the world in the middle of the 19th century, Howard Staunton. White hints at a possible d2-d4 advance in the future, while also creating an escape square on c2 for the bishop.

7...0-0

After this natural move we will analyse both **B1) 8.d3** and **B2) 8.0-0**, after first checking a harmless sideline.

8.a4

This combines oddly with White's previous move, and is not at all dangerous.

8...b4 9.0-0

McDermott – Vaughan, Nashua 2009. Here I would like to offer an improvement:

9...d5!? N 10.exd5

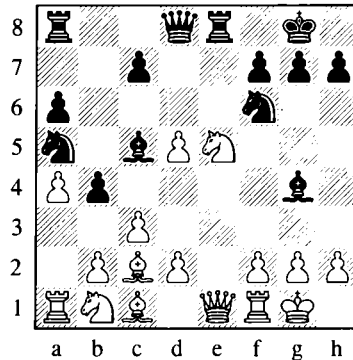
10.d3 bxc3 (10...♜a5!?) 11.bxc3 (11.♜xc3 ♙g4!) 11...♗b8 12.♜bd2 ♙e6 is also more pleasant for Black.

10...♜a5! 11.♙c2 ♖e8!

Black will regain the d5-pawn with

dividends. One of the more interesting possible continuations is:

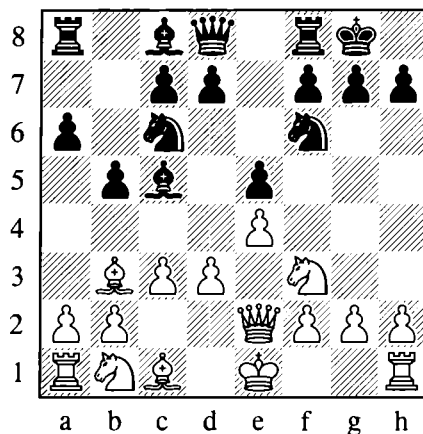
12.♜xe5 ♙g4 13.♗e1



13...b3! 14.♙e4 ♖xe5 15.♙xh7+ ♜xh7
16.♗xe5 ♙d6+

Black has a substantial lead in development.

B1) 8.d3



8...d5!?

Black has a perfectly acceptable alternative in 8...h6, which transposes to the later variation C5 on page 86.

9.exd5

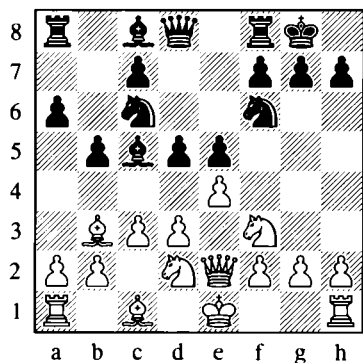
If there is a way to punish Black's last move, then opening the centre must surely be it. The following alternatives certainly hold no fear for Black.

9.0–0 transposes to the variation B21 which can be found on page 75, after 8.0–0 d5! 9.d3.

9.♘g5 has been the most popular move, but it is toothless: 9...dxe4! (Note that 9...d4?! is inaccurate in view of 10.♙d5! ♖d6 11.♙xc6 and Black loses a pawn.) 10.dxe4 h6 11.♙h4 ♖d6 Preparing the following knight move. 12.♙g3 ♘h5 Black was already slightly better in Popovic – Adhiban, Amsterdam 2011.

9.♘bd2

This move was played in Tiviakov – El Taher, Doha 2002. At this point I would like to borrow an idea from my analysis of variation B21, which we will come to shortly on page 75.



9...d4!N

After this move I see no good way for White to challenge Black's space advantage. Play may continue:

10.0–0 dxc3! 11.bxc3 ♘h5!

Black attempts to provoke a weakening of the light squares on the kingside.

12.♘b1

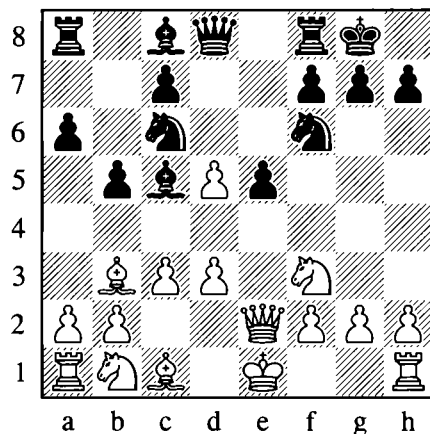
This retreat confirms the wrongness of White's set-up.

12.g3 ♘f6! intending ...♙g4 is also great for Black.

12...♙g4!

Black has at least equalized. White's problem

is that he cannot attack the light-squared bishop with 13.h3 in view of 13...♘g3.



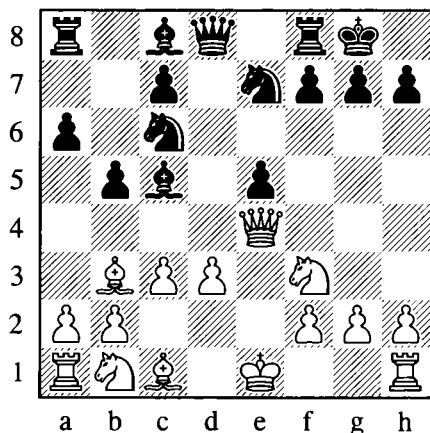
9...♘xd5 10.♙e4

This is the consistent move, but it fails to present any problems.

10.0–0 was played in Hori – Hayashi, corr. 2009, and here Black can take over the initiative with 10...♖d6N 11.♘g5 ♘f6! 12.♘d2 ♙g4! followed by ...♙ad8.

10...♘de7!

This defence has been known since the beginning of the 20th century.



11.♘xe5

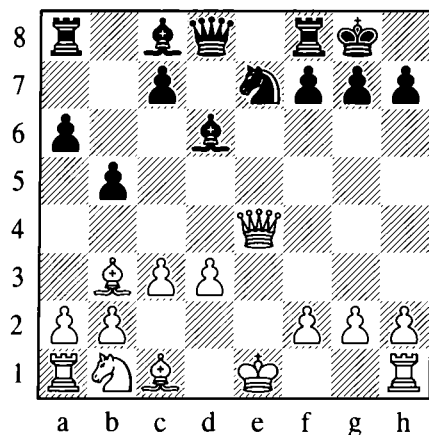
This gives Black a strong initiative, but it is hard to suggest anything better.

11.♔g5 ♕f5 12.♖xf5 ♜xf5 13.♕xd8 ♖axd8 gave Black a good endgame in Albin – Schlechter, Monte Carlo 1903.

11...♜xe5 12.♖xe5 ♕d6 13.♖e4?!

Although this move is not the best, it was played in an instructive game which beautifully illustrates Black's chances in this line.

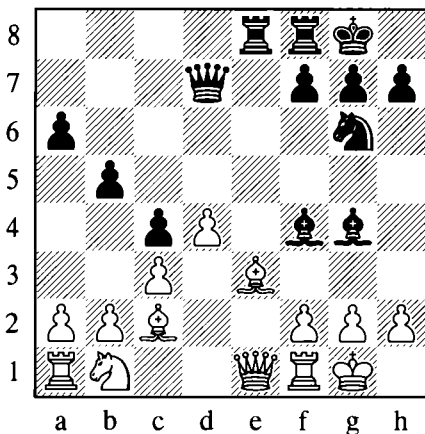
13.♖e2 is a better try, but even here after 13...♕b7 14.0-0 ♜g6 Black had fantastic compensation for a pawn and went on to win in Hedrera – Bericat, corr. 1995.



13...♕f5 14.♖f3 ♖d7 15.d4 ♜g6 16.0-0 ♕g4 17.♖d3 c5!

White is threatened on all sides, and in the game he swiftly collapsed.

18.♕c2? c4 19.♖d2 ♕f4 20.♖e1 ♖ae8 21.♕e3

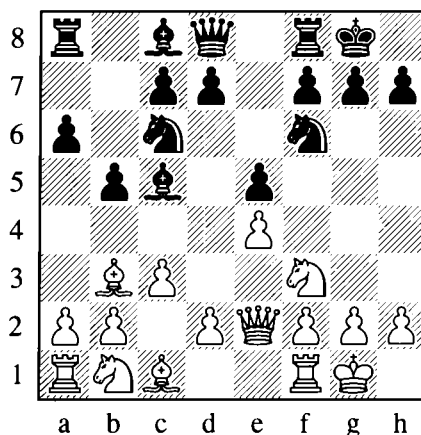


21...♕f3!

0-1

Brzeski – Malaniuk, Koszalin 2005.

B2) 8.0-0

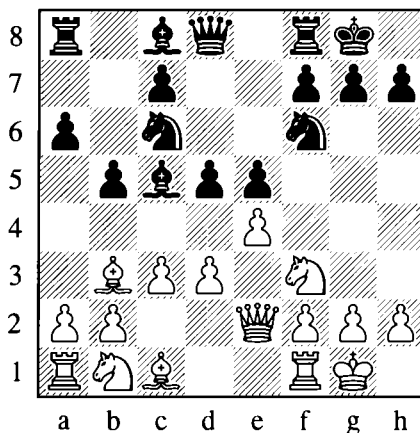


8...d5!?

Black plays in the style of the Marshall Attack. I like this aggressive continuation, although I should mention that there is nothing wrong with the waiting move 8...♖e8, after which 9.d3 h6 transposes to the later variation C52 on page 87.

After the text move we will analyse both B21) 9.d3 and B22) 9.exd5.

B21) 9.d3



This gives White a solid and stable central position, but does not offer any advantage.

9...d4!

I like this space-gaining move. The same plan has occurred in many games in the analogous position with the black bishop on e7, but having it on the more active c5-square represents a definite achievement for Black.

10.♘g5

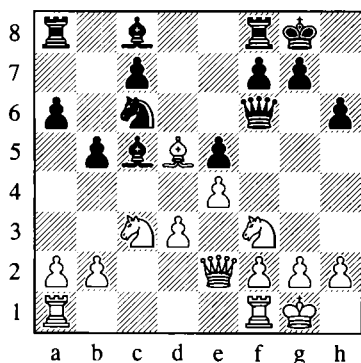
10.cxd4 ♘xd4 11.♘xd4 ♘xd4 is pleasant for Black.

Also after 10.h3 h6 11.a4 ♘b7 (11...♗b8!?) 12.axb5 axb5 13.♖xa8 ♜xa8 Black was fine in Danielian – Sargissian, Yerevan 2004.

10...h6 11.♘h4

The alternative is 11.♘xf6 ♜xf6 12.♘d5, against which I see at least two good options for Black:

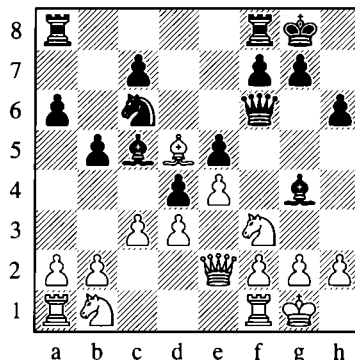
a) 12...dxc3 13.♘xc3 (13.bxc3 ♘d7♞ was played in Ljubojevic – Sokolov, Linares 1995, but this just leads to a better version of the following 12...♘g4 line for Black, since the h-pawn is back on h2.)



13...♘g4! 14.♘xc6 This is forced, otherwise the knight's arrival on d4 will hurt. 14...♘xf3! 15.♜xf3 ♜xc6 16.♖ac1 ♜d6 17.♘d5 c6 Black was just fine in Baumgardt – Geissler, corr. 1999.

b) 12...♘g4!?!N

I also found this new and interesting alternative.



13.h3

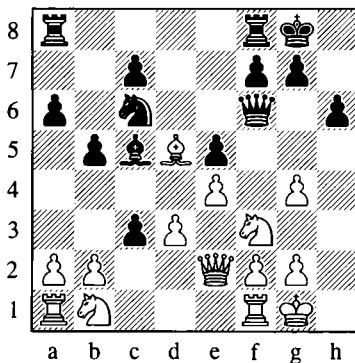
No better is: 13.♘xc6 ♜xc6 14.♘xe5 ♘xe2 15.♘xc6 ♘xd3! 16.♖e1 ♖ae8 17.cxd4 ♘xe4 18.dxc5 ♘xc6 19.♘d2 ♖xe1† 20.♖e1 ♖d8 Black ends up with the more comfortable endgame since his rook and bishop are superior to White's rook and knight.

13...dxc3!

This is a somewhat unusual type of combination.

14.hxg4

14.bxc3 ♘d7 is fine for Black, despite being a tempo down on the previous line with 12...dxc3.

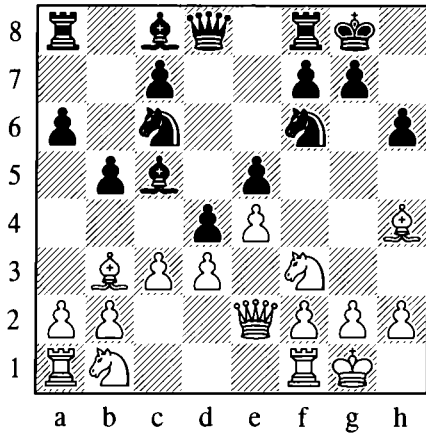


14...♘d4! 15.♘xd4 cxb2! 16.♘b3

16.♜xb2?! is dubious in view of: 16...♘xd4 17.♘c3 c6!♞

16...bxa1=♚ 17.♖xa1 c6 18.♗b3 ♜ad8

Black is at least not worse thanks to his pressure along the d-file and the potential outpost on d4.



11...♚d6!

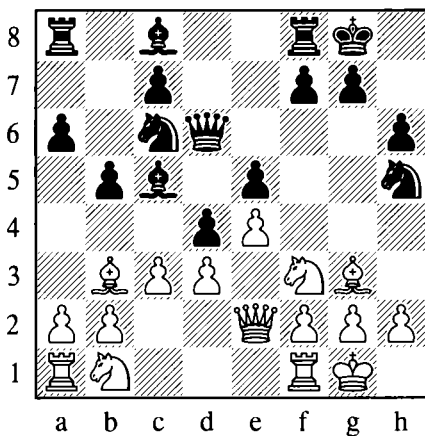
Black unpins the knight.

12.♗g3

12.♗xf6 may be the lesser evil, after which 12...♚xf6 transposes to the 11.♗xf6 line noted above.

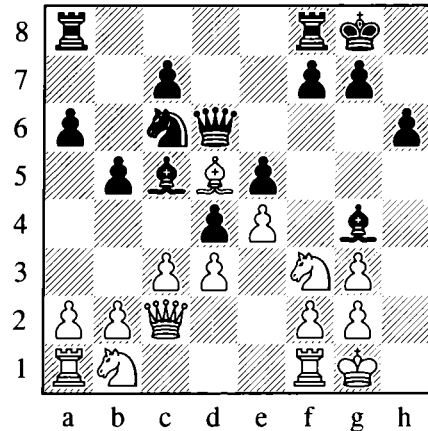
12...♖h5

12...dxc3!N 13.bxc3 ♖h5 14.♗d5 ♗g4! might be even more precise.



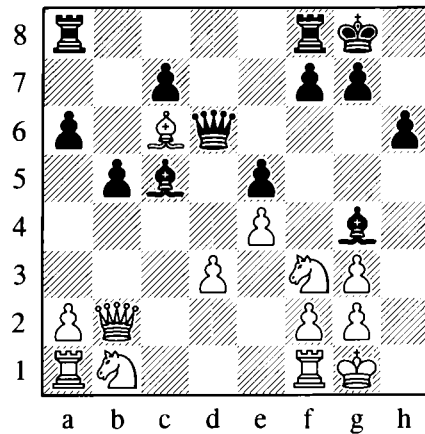
13.♗d5 ♖xg3 14.hxg3 ♗g4 15.♚c2

15.♗xc6 ♚xc6 16.♖xe5 ♗xe2 17.♖xc6 ♗xd3! reaches an almost identical position as in line 'b' of the 11.♗xf6 variation, except that White now has a pawn on g3 instead of h2. This small change does little to alter the evaluation, and Black is still slightly better.



15...dxc3! 16.♗xc6 cxb2! 17.♚xb2

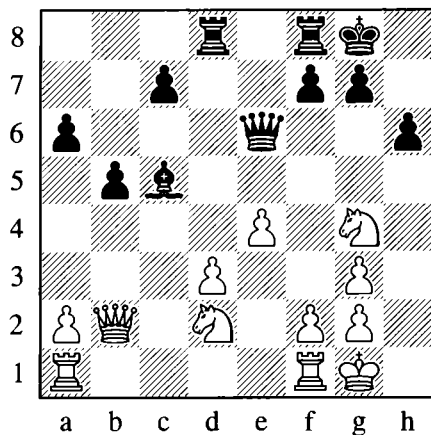
This position was reached in Matikozian – Bisguier, Connecticut 2004. Here I found a strong novelty:



17...♚ad8!N

This promises Black the upper hand since White is unable to keep his extra piece. For example:

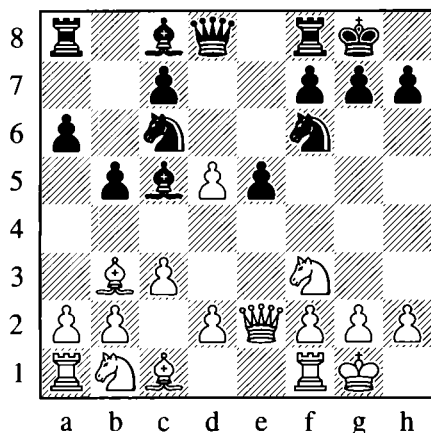
18.♖bd2 ♚xc6 19.♖xe5 ♚e6 20.♖xg4



20...d4! 21. b3 xg4

Black is better, as ...xg3 is a troublesome threat while the d3-pawn will remain a constant weakness.

B22) 9.exd5



Accepting the sacrifice is the principled choice, and the unbalanced nature of the ensuing positions makes it difficult to evaluate them precisely. Nevertheless I believe in Black's chances.

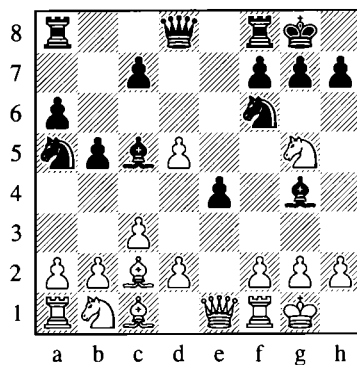
9...e4 10.dxc6

White hardly has anything better:

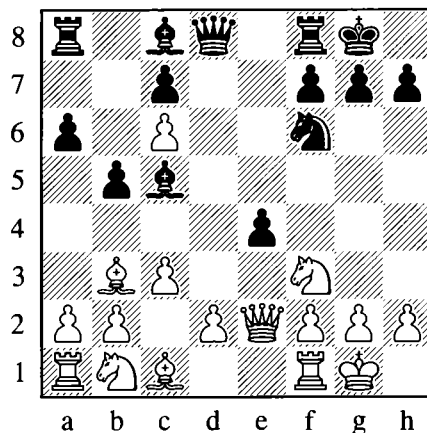
10.d4?! exf3 11. xf3 dxd4! 12.cxd4 dxd4 gives Black a comfortable position, for instance:

13. dxc3 d4 14. f4 d5! 15. dxc3 d6 16. d4 dxc3 B. Socko – Wahls, Hamburg 1996.

10. d5 is well met by: 10...d4! 11. e1 d5! 12. d2?! (A better chance seems to be: 12. dxc4N d8 13. d3 dxb3 14. axb3 dxd5 15. c4 bxc4 16. bxc4 c6 17. dbc3 dxe4 18. dxe4 f5! Black wins back the pawn and obtains slightly better chances.)



12...d8! 13. b4 dxd5 14. bxc5 dxc5 Black had an obvious initiative in Cap – Masek, Rakovnik 2011.

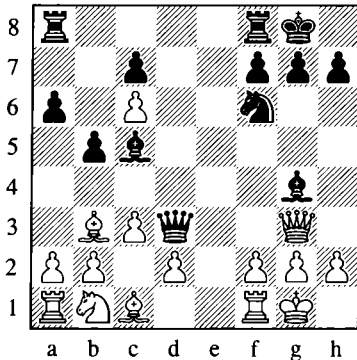


10...exf3

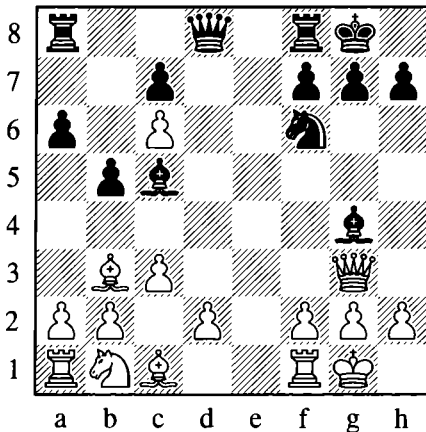
10...d4? doesn't work in view of 11.d4!, vacating the d2-square for the queen's knight with gain of tempo.

11. xf3 d4 12. d3

12.♞f4? Galvao – Bochecha, Portugal 1997, is strongly met by 12...♞d3!N paralysing White's queenside: 13.♞g3 (13.♞e1 ♞fe8!±)



13...♞e2! 14.♞xd3 ♞xd3 15.♞e1 ♖g4! 16.♞e3 ♞ad8!± with an obvious advantage for Black.



12...♞d6

I also analysed the alternative:

12...♞e2

This also leads to reasonable play, although it does give White the extra option of defending with the ♞h3 move, as in the following line:

13.d4

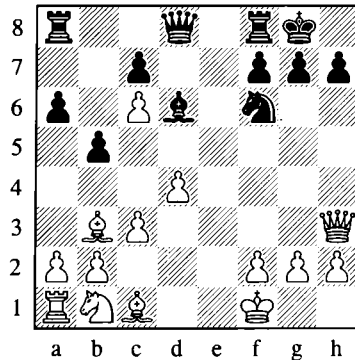
White must sacrifice an exchange since 13.♞e1? loses to 13...♖e4!–+.

13...♞d6 14.♞h3

This has the point of avoiding the ...♖d5 idea, which is available after 14.♞h4.

14.♞h4 transposes to the main line below after 12...♞d6.

14...♞xf1 15.♞xf1

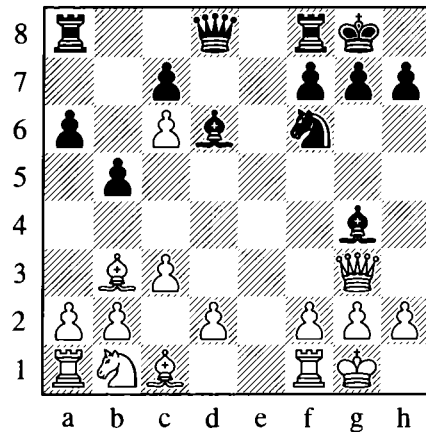


15...♞e7

15...♞e8!? was tested in Poulsen – Grazynys, corr. 2004, and also seems quite playable.

16.♞e3 ♞e4 17.♖d2 ♞xc6

With approximate dynamic equality in Airijan – Shinkevich, Nizhnij Novgorod 1999.

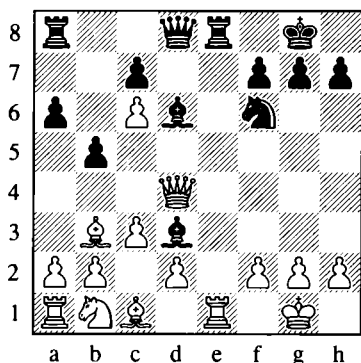


13.♞h4 ♞e2 14.d4

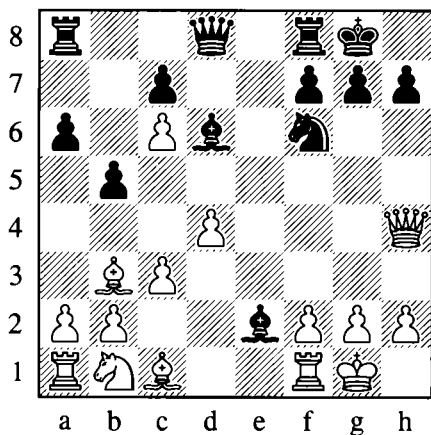
The same position could also be reached via the 12...♞e2 line noted above, but here the queen is already on h4. In other words, by choosing the 12...♞d6 move order Black avoided the possibility of 14.♞h3.

Attempting to save the rook could prove dangerous: 14.♞e1 ♞d3! This strong blockade

compensates for the material deficit. 15.♖d4 ♜e8!



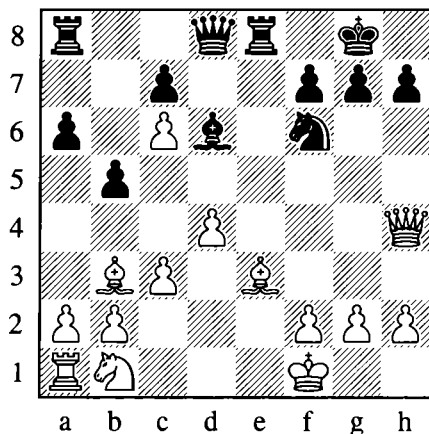
16.♞e3! (Obviously 16.♞xe8?? ♜xe8 17.♜xd3 [17.♜e3 ♘g4! is also hopeless] 17...♜e1† 18.♜f1 ♙xh2†! is not an option for White.) This position was reached in Reig Alberó – Fons Cervero, Valencia 1995. Now Black has a pleasant choice between 16...♞e4N 17.d3 ♙xc6 and 16...♞f5N 17.h3 ♘e4, both of which offer him full compensation for the sacrificed pawn.



14...♙xf1 15.♔xf1 ♞e8 16.♞e3

16.♞g5!?N ♜e7 17.♞e3 prevents the ...♘d5 idea which features in the main line, but White pays a price in the form of the lost tempo. Black has a strong reply in 17...a5! 18.♘d2 h6!, intending ...a4 and keeping a slight edge.

We have been following the game Safarli – Geske, Pardubice 2010. In this position I found an attractive new idea:



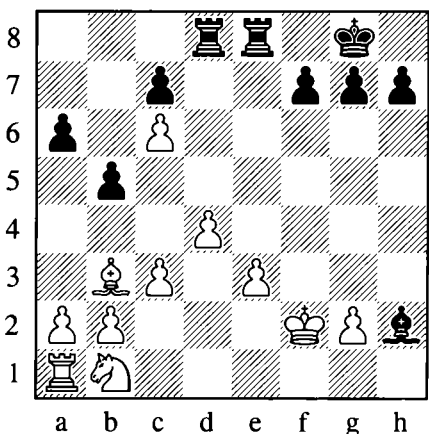
16...♞d5!N

Intending to exchange White's dark-squared bishop. 16...♜c8!?N 17.♘d2 ♜g4 is a reasonable alternative which leads to a position of dynamic equality.

17.♜xd8

In the event of 17.♞g5 ♞e7 18.♞xe7 ♞xe7 the threat of a discovered check forces White to move the queen, which leads to the loss of the c6-pawn: 19.♜g3 ♜e8! 20.♘d2 ♜xc6 and Black is better.

17...♘e3† 18.fxe3 ♞axd8 19.♔f2 ♙xh2

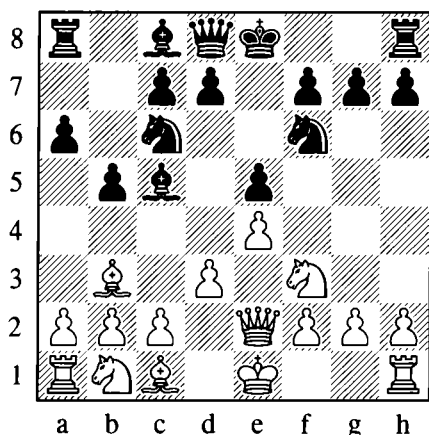


20.♟d2!

Attempting to trap the bishop leads nowhere: 20.g3 ♖d6 21.♟d2 ♜f6† 22.♟f3 g5! 23.♙g2 ♙xg3! 24.♙xg3 ♜xe3 25.♙d1 h5± Black is the clear favourite thanks to his three connected passed pawns.

20...♙d6

Despite White's strong centre, Black should not be worse.

C) 7.d3

With this move White acknowledges the reality that d2-d4 is unlikely to be possible in the early stages of the game. Instead he plays flexibly and hopes to set up a troublesome pin with ♙g5.

Let me point out a subtle drawback of White's scheme. The way I see it, White is getting an inferior version of the 5.d3 b5 6.♙b3 ♙c5 variation seen in the next chapter, as 7.♜e2, which transposes to the present position, can hardly be the best move available there.

7...h6!?

This is not the most popular continuation, but I like it for a few reasons. Firstly, Black prevents the potentially troublesome ♙g5 pin once and for all. And secondly, by avoiding

the ...d6 move for now, Black maintains the possibility of advancing with ...d5 in one move.

We will analyse five replies in detail: C1) 8.♟c3, C2) 8.h3, C3) 8.0-0, C4) 8.♟bd2 and C5) 8.c3.

Another idea is:

8.♙e3

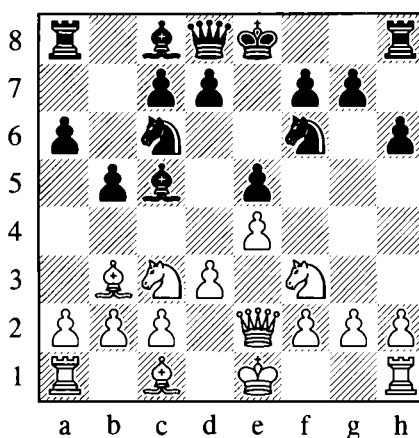
This simplifying move has never been tested at grandmaster level, except in an old game of Euwe.

8...♙xe3 9.fxex3**9.♜xe3 d6=****9...d6!**

9...d5 is less precise due to the weakness of the c5-square. As a general rule, I would advise you not to play this move in positions where the dark-squared bishops have already been exchanged. 10.exd5 ♟xd5 11.0-0 (11.♟c3!?) 11...0-0 Maroczy – Euwe, Bad Aussee 1921. Now White could have obtained the upper hand with 12.♟bd2N ♙e6 13.♜ac1! intending c2-c4.

10.0-0 ♟a5!

After eliminating White's light-squared bishop Black was fine in Daspres – Cheron, Pau 2008.

C1) 8.♟c3

This move has hardly ever been played, but fighting for the d5-square makes a certain amount of sense.

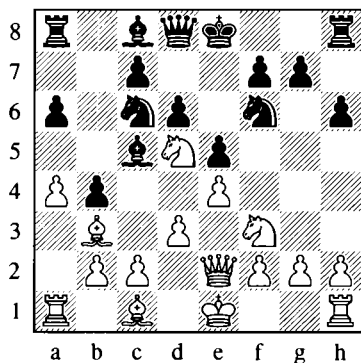
8...d6!

Since the ...d5 advance is not on the agenda anymore, it is the right time for this natural move.

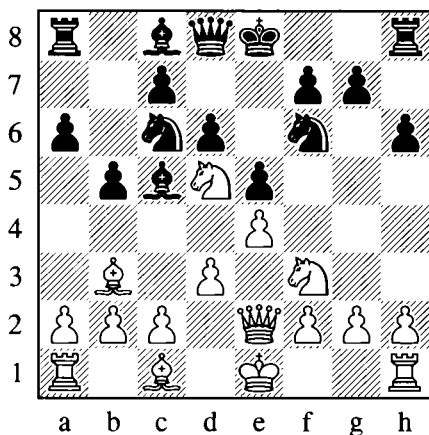
9.♟d5N

This logical move is technically a novelty, although it immediately transposes to another game.

9.a4 b4 10.♟d5 was played in Donovan – Uche, Hastings 2008, and now I would like to offer an obvious improvement:



10...♟g4!N 11.♟e3 ♟d4 12.♟xd4 ♟xd4 13.♟b1 ♟c5 (13...♟b8!?= is also possible.) 14.h3 ♟e6 with an equal position.



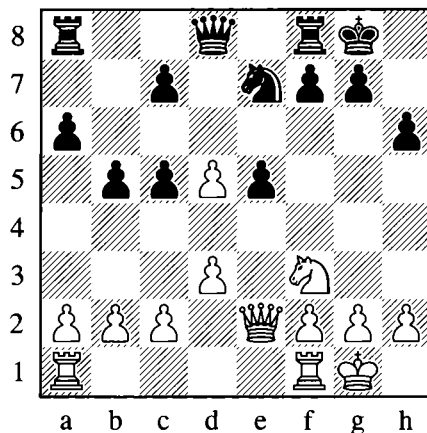
9...♟e6N

I prefer this over 9...♟g4, as played in E. Gonzalez – Mitsakos, Corte Ingles 1998, which loses some of its point after 10.c3N.

10.0-0 0-0 11.♟e3 ♟xd5! 12.♟xd5

The alternative is 12.exd5 ♟xe3 13.dxc6 (After 13.fxex3 ♟e7 White remains with a stupid bishop on b3.) 13...♟b6= with a balanced position.

12...♟xd5 13.exd5 ♟e7 14.♟xc5 dxc5



15.♟xe5

15.c4 is met by 15...f6 intending ...c6 and Black is fine.

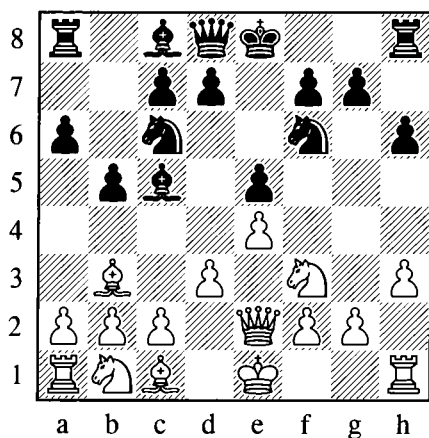
15.♟xe5 ♟xd5 is also equal.

15...♟xd5

With a roughly equal position.

C2) 8.h3

This funny-looking move has only been used in a single game, but considering that the player in question was Tiviakov, the world's foremost expert on the Worrall System, the move cannot be ignored. It can be viewed as a useful waiting move, which prevents a future ...♟g4 and hints at a possible g2-g4 expansion on the kingside.

**8...0-0!?**

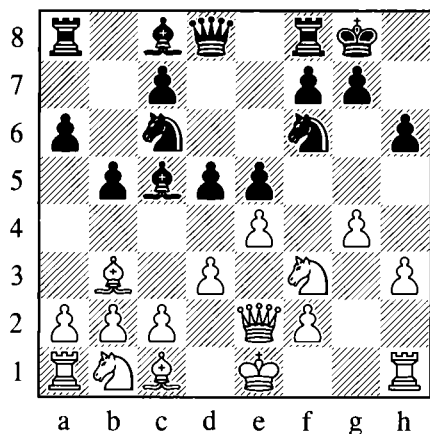
This is my new and rather provocative idea. 8...d6 is another sensible move which was played in Tiviakov – Xie Jun, Beijing 1998.

9.g4!?

This aggressive move is surely the reason why Black refrained from castling in the aforementioned game.

9...d5!

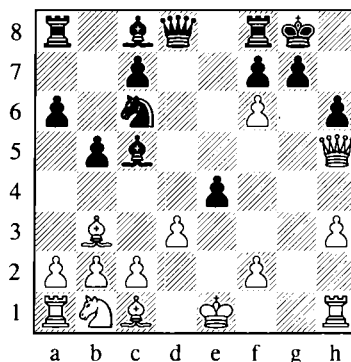
Black answers with a counterattack in the centre. Now the position becomes rather sharp.

**10.g5!**

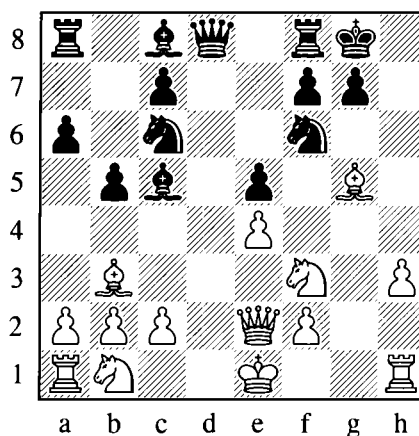
10.dxc3 is met by 10...dxe4! 11.dxe4 (11.dxe4? dxd4) 11...dxe4 12.xf3 e4! 13.fh5

10...dxe4 11.dxe4

11.gxf6?! is dubious due to: 11...exf3 12.xf3 e4! 13.fh5



13...b4! 14.c3 xf6 15.cxb4 exd3 16.0-0 d4! with a strong initiative for the sacrificed piece.

11...hgx5 12.fgx5**12...d6!**

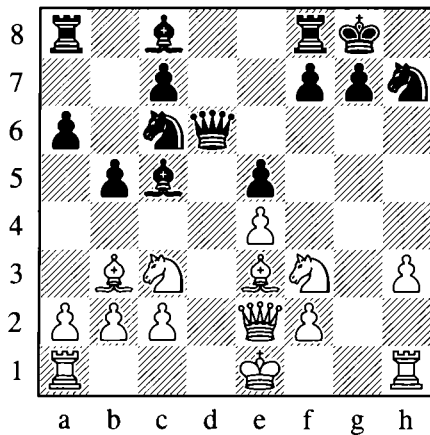
Unpinning the knight.

13.dxc3 d4h7

The ensuing ...d4 should yield Black a good game, for instance:

14.f3

14.f3 d4 15.fxd4 fxd4 is also roughly equal.

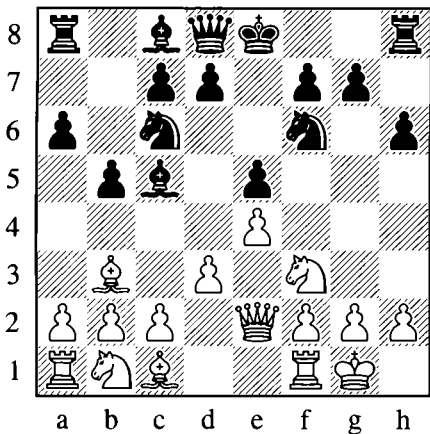


14...d4 15. dxd4 exd4 16. 0-0-0 b7
16...e6!? is also sensible.

17. g1 f6=

Black is holding his own in this tense position.

C3) 8.0-0



Castling is a sensible move although it takes away some of White's more aggressive ideas as we saw in the previous line.

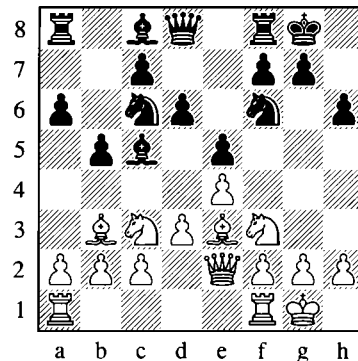
8...0-0

Black is also safe to castle and can start thinking about ...d5 soon.

9.e3

9.c3 and 9. dbd2 e8 10.c3 both reach variation C52 at the same respective move numbers.

9. d3 d6 10. e3 was played in Hommeles – Solleveld, Leeuwarden 2001. Here I propose the natural continuation:



10...g4!N 11. d5 d4 12. exd4 exd4
13. c3 a7 and Black is fine.

After the text move I would like to introduce an interesting novelty.

9...d6!?N

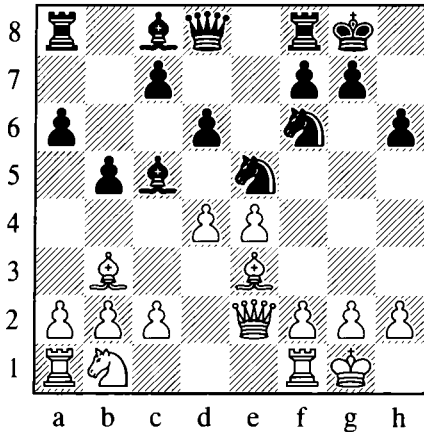
9...ex3 10.fxe3 d5 occurred in Davies – Solleveld, Haarlem 2001. I have already mentioned the drawback of playing ...d5 after the dark-squared bishops have been exchanged, and this is no exception. After the correct 11.exd5N dxd5 12. dbd2! the weakness of the c5-square, along with the possibility of opening the c-file by means of c2-c4, gives White the better chances.

10. dxc5?!

This striking move deserves to be analysed, even though it is not very good.

Objectively White should prefer a quieter alternative such as 10.a4 g4 11.h3 exf3 12. xxf3 d4 13. exd4 exd4= with a roughly equal position.

10...♖xe5 11.d4



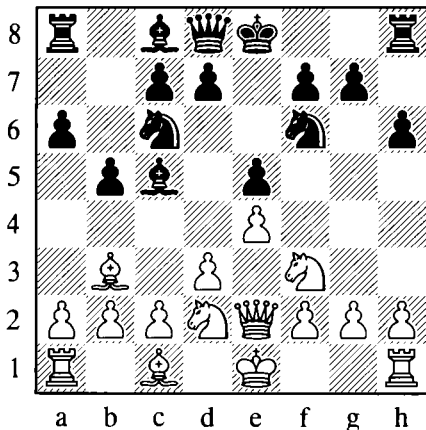
11...♞e7!

11...♞xd4!? 12.♞xd4 c5 13.♞xe5 dxe5 14.♞d1 ♞b6 15.♞d5 c4! is also fine for Black, but the text move enables him to fight for the advantage.

12.dxc5 dxc5 13.c4 ♖xe4 14.cxb5 ♞b7! ♞

Black prevents ♞d5 and creates the threat of ...axb5. The strong position of Black's minor pieces promises him the upper hand.

C4) 8.♖bd2

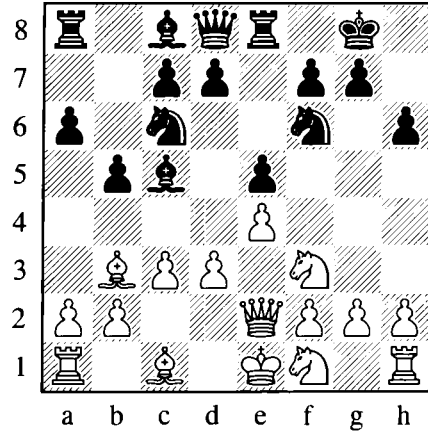


This time White prioritizes the development of his knight.

8...0-0 9.♖f1 ♞e8 10.c3

White saves his light-squared bishop from exchange.

After 10.♖g3 Black can play 10...♖a5! 11.0-0 (Or 11.♞e3 ♞f8! followed by ...♖xb3 and ...d5 with a slight edge to Black.) 11...♖xb3 12.axb3 d5 with a slight advantage thanks to the bishop pair.

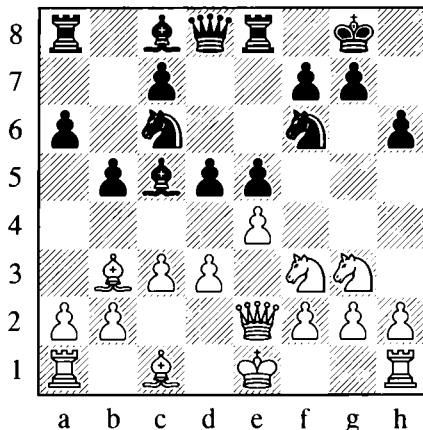


10...d5!

Black establishes a space advantage in the centre, as planned and without making any concessions. I already rate his prospects as slightly better.

11.♖g3

This position arose in the game Tiviakov – Cherniaev, Port Erin 1998. Now I like the aggressive continuation:



11...a5!N

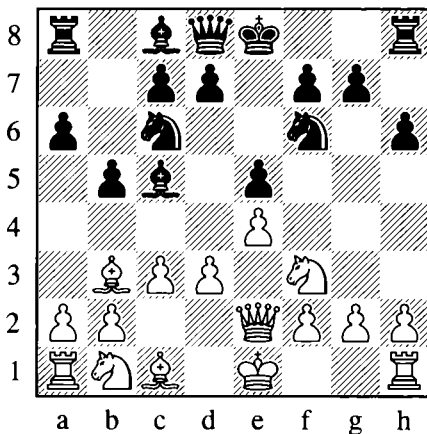
Taking space on the queenside and making the life of the b3-bishop a bit less comfortable.

12.a4

12.0-0 a4 also favours Black.

12...b4 13.0-0 ♖b8?

Black is better.

C5) 8.c3

This is the main line.

8...0-0

The same position sometimes arises via a 7.c3 0-0 8.d3 h6 move order, although we saw in variation B1 that 8...d5!? was a good independent alternative in that line.

At this juncture we will consider the three main options of C51) 9.h3, C52) 9.0-0 and C53) 9.♘bd2.

C51) 9.h3

This resembles the earlier variation C2, except that here White has wasted time on c2-c3, which is hardly an essential part of his kingside attacking plans. Therefore Black already has every reason to feel confident.

9...d5 10.g4?!

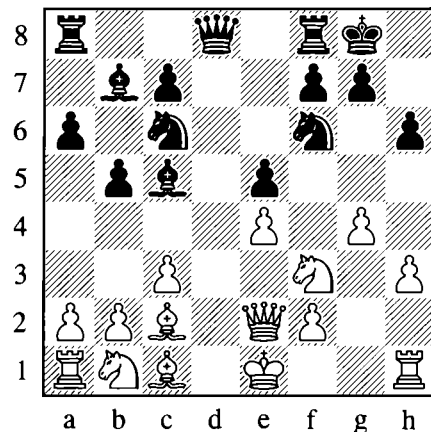
This may seem like a principled move, but it seems to me that it is riskier for White than for Black.

The safer 10.0-0 was played in Tiviakov – Bauer, Mondariz 2000. Now I like 10...dxe4!?N, preventing the exd5 idea, and after 11.dxe4 ♖e7 12.♙e3 ♘a5 Black intends to play ...♙b7 with a good game.

10...dxe4 11.dxe4 ♙b7!? 12.♙c2

The point of Black's last move is that 12.g5? is refuted by 12...♘xe4! 13.♙xe4 ♘a5 14.♙e2 (14.♙g4 h5!?) 14...♘xb3 15.axb3 ♙d5+ when Black wins back the piece and obtains a clear advantage.

The present position was reached in Mikhaletz – Jedryczka, Swidnica 1999, and here Black missed a strong idea.

**12...♘e7!N**

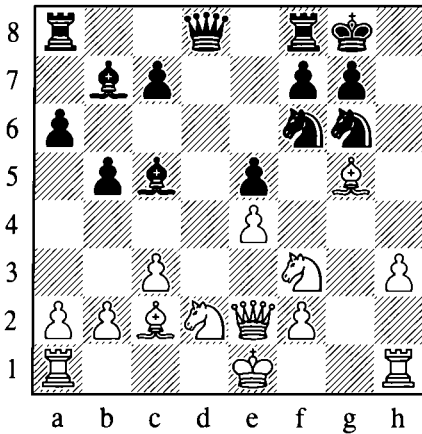
Intending to put the knight on g6, where it will fortify Black's kingside while eyeing the weak f4-square.

13.g5

How else can White try to make sense of the earlier g2-g4 move? Certainly not with the greedy 13.♘xe5 ♙e8, when the disappearance of the e5-pawn merely opens a crucial attacking file for Black.

13...hxg5 14.♙xg5 ♘g6 15.♘bd2

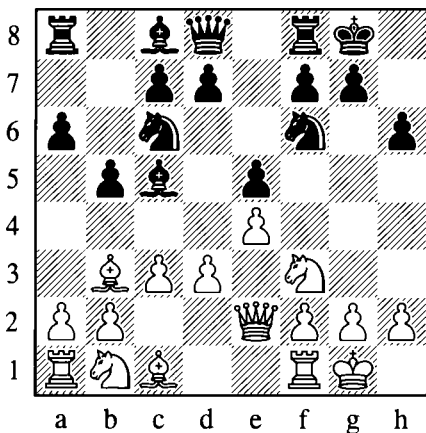
The attempt to attack with 15.h4 is ruined by the simple 15...♖d6! (threatening ...♘h5) 16.h5 ♘f4 17.♙xf4 exf4 with a clear advantage.

**15...♖d6!**

Black unpins the f6-knight and prepares ...♘h5 again.

16.0-0-0 ♖b6!?

Black has some positional advantages while White's attack is unlikely to happen.

C52) 9.0-0**9...♞e8**

This maintains the possibility of playing ...d5 in one go. The rook move also vacates the

f8-square for the dark-squared bishop, while creating the faintest hint of a threat against the white queen.

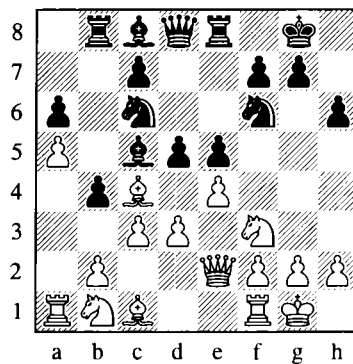
10.♘bd2

This seems best. Other moves give Black chances to take over the initiative, as you can see in the following lines:

10.h3 d5 Everything is ready for this advance. 11.♞d1 ♙e6 12.♘bd2 ♖d7 With ...♞ad8 coming soon, Black was already more comfortable in Lorenzini – Sorin, Rosario 2000.

10.♙e3 ♙f8 11.h3 d5 12.♞d1 was played in Figueroa – Mirkov, Monterrey 2010, and now Black could have obtained some advantage by means of: 12...♘a5!?N 13.♙c2 c5? With a useful space advantage.

Finally 10.a4 b4 11.a5 ♞b8! 12.♙c4 occurred in Fogarasi – Almasi, Hungary 1997, and now 12...d5!N would have brought Black some initiative:



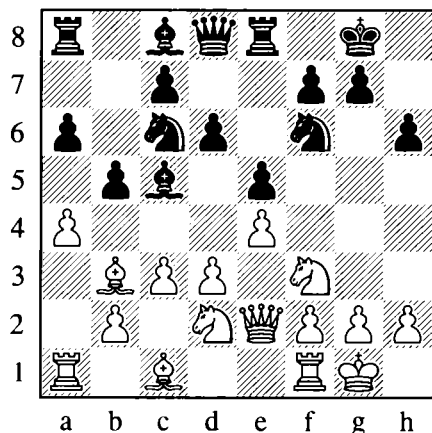
13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.♖e4 ♙e6 15.♘xe5 (After 15.♙xa6 ♖d6!? White is under strong pressure, while the development of his queenside remains difficult.) 15...♘xe5 16.♖xe5 ♙d6 17.♖e4 ♖d7 Black has a strong initiative for the pawn thanks to his far superior development.

10...d6

This is one of the few occasions in the chapter where I decided to settle for moving the d-pawn a single square. The slight problem with 10...d5 is revealed after 11.exd5 ♖xd5 12.♗e4, when the otherwise desirable 12...♙f8? allows White to win a pawn with 13.♙xh6. For this reason Black would be forced to play 12...♙e7, when his position is playable, but he has lost a bit of coordination.

11.a4

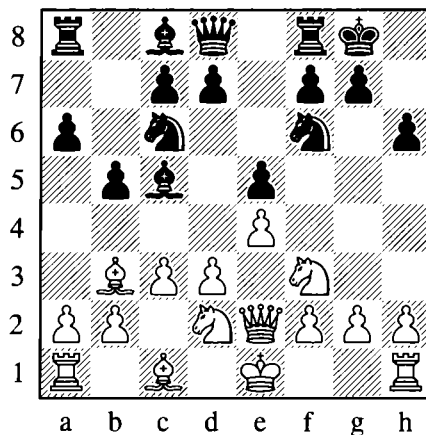
After 11.♖d1 (or 11.♖e1) 11...♗g4 12.♖f1 Black can either come back to f6 if he is satisfied with a draw or play the useful waiting move 12...♙b6!? as in Berezjuk – Plachetka, Slovakia 1998.

**11...♖b8 12.axb5 axb5**

This position has been reached in several games, via a few different move orders. It seems to me that the position is of a non-forcing character, so I have chosen one example between the two highest-rated players to illustrate how the play may continue.

13.♙c2 ♙b6 14.♗b3 ♗e7 15.d4 ♗g6 16.dxe5 ♗xe5 17.♗xe5 ♖xe5=

Black's pressure along the e-file compensates for White's slight space advantage in the centre, Salgado Lopez – Inarkiev, Barcelona 2010.

C53) 9.♗bd2**9...♖e8 10.h3**

10.♗f1 and 10.0-0 transpose to the earlier variations C4 and C52 respectively.

10...d5

This time I see no reason to refrain from the most active move.

11.exd5!?

This seems to be White's most challenging approach.

11.g4

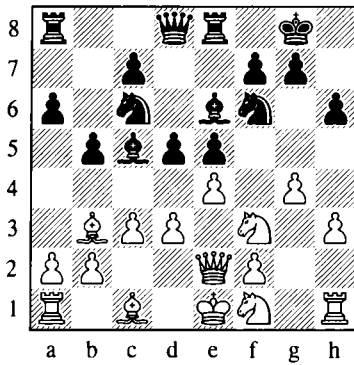
This has been played in a few games, but as usual I am not afraid of it. The position could become sharp, but White will generally be taking at least as many risks as Black.

11...♙e6

11...a5!?N also deserves consideration.

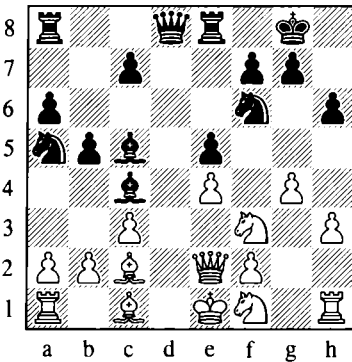
12.♗f1?

12.g5 must be the right move, and it leads to a rather unclear position after 12...♗h5 13.exd5 ♙xd5 14.♗e4 ♗f4 15.♙xf4 exf4 16.gxh6 f5, when one of the natural and straightforward lines leads to a draw: 17.♖g1 fxe4 18.dxe4 ♙xb3 19.♖xg7+ ♗h8 20.axb3 ♙f8 21.♗g5 ♗e5 22.♖d1 ♖f6 23.♖dd7 ♖e7 24.♖dxe7 ♙xe7 25.♖h7+ ♗g8 26.♖g7+ ♗h8=

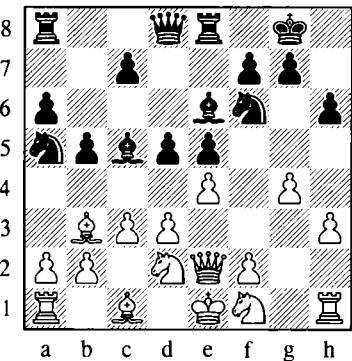


2...Qa5! 13. Q3d2

This is an admission of failure, but White cannot play 13. Qc2? in view of 13...dxe4 14. dxe4 Qc4:

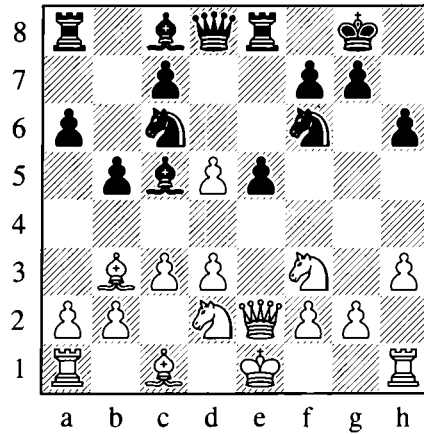


15. Qd1 (Or 15. Qd2 Qb8!-+ with ideas of ...Rd8 and ...Qa7.) 15...Qxd1† (The spectacular 15...Qxe4!? is also strong.) 16. Qxd1 Qxf2+ with a clear extra pawn for Black.



13...dxe4 14. dxe4 Qxb3 15. axb3 Qd7+

Black obtained an obvious advantage in Castellanos Rodriguez – Tania, Sort 2007.



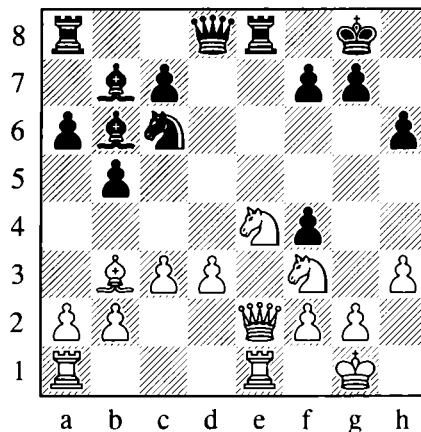
11...Qxd5 12. Qe4 Qf4N

It is necessary to improve on 12...Qf8? 13. Qxh6! when Black lost a pawn in Brzeski – Nurkiewicz, Krakow 2005.

Black could, however, consider 12...Qe7!?N 13. 0-0 Qf5 which leads to a roughly equal position.

13. Qxf4 exf4 14. 0-0 Qb6 15. Rfe1 Qb7

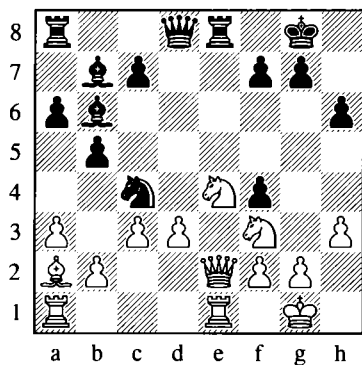
Now Black has a positional threat of ...Qa5, when the bishop will not be able to vacate the a2-g8 diagonal on account of the pinning ...f5.



16. ♖f5!

A nice tactical idea.

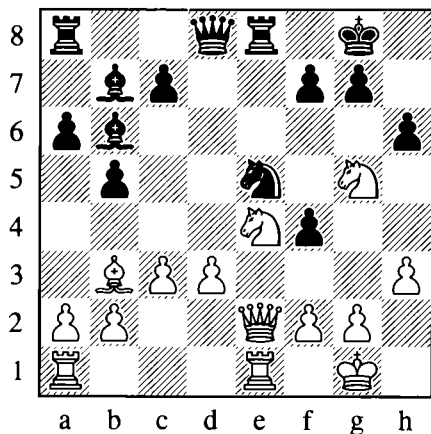
I also checked the quieter 16. a3 intending to keep the bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal. In this case Black can reply with 16... ♖a5 17. ♗a2 ♖c4!, intending to bring the knight to d6 and later exchange the strong knight on e4. Play may continue:



18. ♖ad1 ♖d6 19. ♖c2 ♖d7! The queen is coming to f5 to put even more pressure on e4. 20. ♖c1 ♖f5 21. ♗b1 ♖ad8= Black is doing fine.

16... ♖e5!

16... hxf5? is refuted by 17. ♖h5! ♖e5 18. ♖xf5+.



17. ♖h5 ♖d5!

Blocking the key attacking diagonal enables Black to maintain the equilibrium. We are already well into uncharted territory, but since the position remains rather complex, I extended the analysis for quite some way.

18. ♖f3

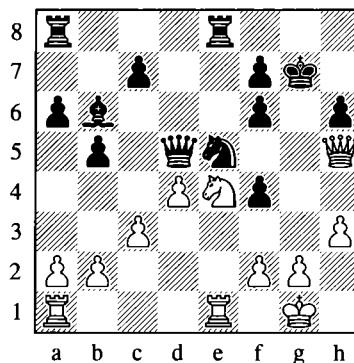
White hopes that the instability of the black pieces on the fifth rank will force a concession of some kind.

18. ♗xd5

This is the only reasonable alternative, but it promises no advantage.

18... ♖xd5 19. ♖f3

19. ♖f6? gxf6 20. ♖e4 ♖g7 21. d4 meets with a cute refutation:



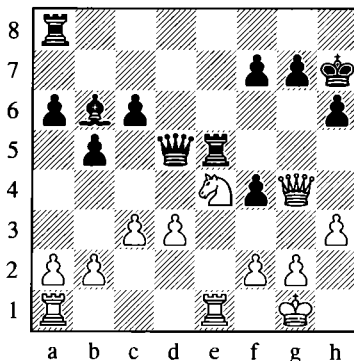
21... ♖f5!+.

19... c6

Black protects the queen and forces an exchange on e5.

20. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 21. ♖g4 ♖h7

21... ♖e6 is a safe alternative, and 22. ♖xe6 ♖xe6 is about equal.



22.♘d2

In the event of 22.♙xf4 ♖ae8 23.♞ed1 f5 24.♘g3 ♙c7 Black obtains sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn, thanks to his control over the e-file and the strong positions of all his pieces.

22...♞xe1† 23.♞xe1 ♙xd3 24.♙xf4 ♞d8

Black has slightly the easier side of equality.

18...♙xb3 19.♘xe5

White must avoid 19.axb3? ♘xd3±.

19...♙d5!

19...♙d5 is playable, but I prefer the text move.

20.axb3

I checked two other moves as well.

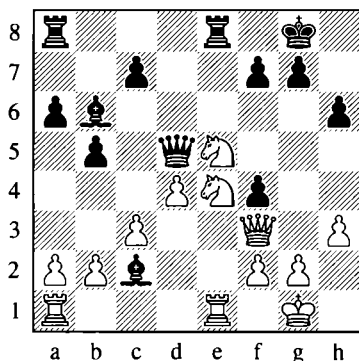
20.d4?!

This attempt to maintain the knight on e5 is not quite justified.

20...♙c2!

But not 20...♙xa2? 21.♙f5 ♙e6 22.♙xf4 ♙d5 23.♘g3!± intending ♘f5 when White is better thanks to the dominating position of his pieces.

21.♙f3



21...♞ad8!

21...♙xe4 22.♞xe4 f6 doesn't win a piece due to the simple 23.♞e1.

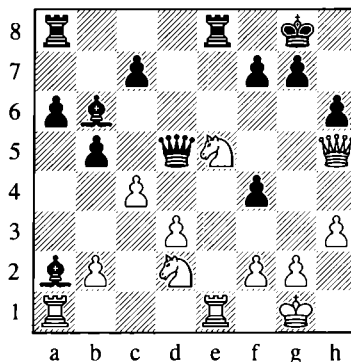
22.♘d2 ♙xf3 23.♘dxf3 ♞e6!

Black's bishop pair gives him chances to press in the endgame, despite the slight damage to his kingside structure.

20.♘d2!?

This seems to lead to a forced draw after accurate play.

20...♙xa2 21.c4



21...♙xc4!!

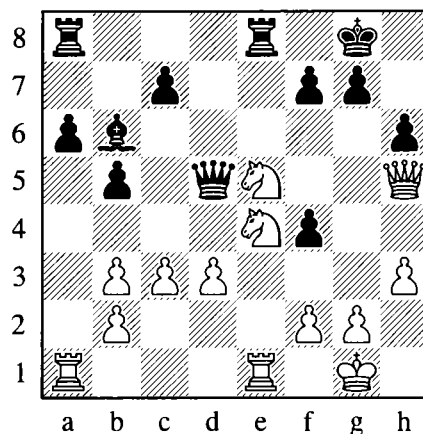
A beautiful move!

22.dxc4

22.♘dxc4?! is strongly met by 22...♙a7! intending ...f6, for example: 23.♞ac1 f6 24.♙f3 ♙xf3 25.♘xf3 ♞xe1† 26.♘e1 bxc4 27.♞xc4 ♞b8!±

22...♙xd2 23.♙xf7† ♘h7 24.♙g6† ♘g8 25.♙f7† ♘h7=

Neither side can avoid the repetition.



20...♖xe5 21.♟f3

21.♟g4 is inaccurate in view of 21...♞e6! and White has nothing better than 22.♟f3 ♞d8. The upshot is that Black has a slightly improved version of the main line since his rook is securely placed on e6, instead of e5 where it can be tactically vulnerable.

21...♞ae8 22.b4

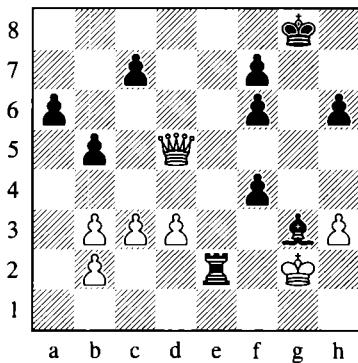
Again I analysed a couple of other tries for White.

22.♘f6†

This tactical solution doesn't promise any advantage.

22...gxf6 23.♟xd5 ♞xe1† 24.♞xe1 ♞xe1† 25.♙h2 ♙xf2 26.g3 ♙xg3† 27.♙g2 ♞e2†

Black is at least equal as the attempt to escape the checks leads only to misery for White.

**28.♙f3?**

After 28.♙g1 Black can choose between 28...♞e1† with the perpetual and 28...♞xb2!! trying to play on.

28...♞e3† 29.♙g4

It is too late to backtrack with 29.♙g2 as 29...♙h4 followed by ...f3† kills the game immediately.

29...♞e5! 30.♟d4 f5†! 31.♙f3

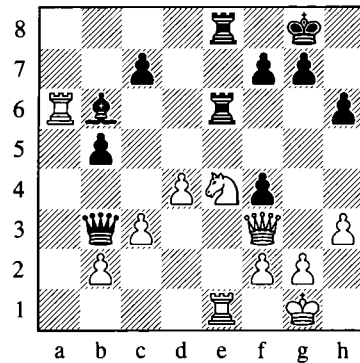
31.♙h5 f3-+

31...♞e3† 32.♙g2 ♞e2† 33.♙f3 ♞xb2-+

Black will play ...♞f2† at his convenience, leading to a winning king and pawn endgame.

22.♞xa6

This move should lead to equality after the following sequence.

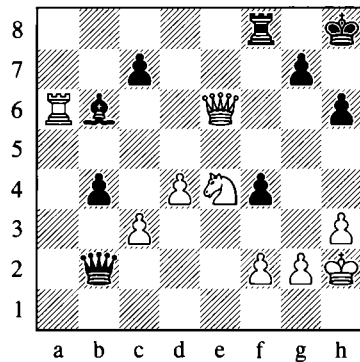
22...♟xb3 23.d4 ♞5e6

24.♙h2! ♟c2 25.♞e2 ♟b1! 26.♘d2 ♟xb2 27.♞xe6 fxe6 28.♟c6

Another drawing line is: 28.♞a8 ♞xa8 29.♟xa8† ♙f7 30.♘f3 ♟xf2 31.♙e5† ♙e7 32.♟g8 ♟g3† 33.♙g1 ♟e1†=

28...♞f8 29.♟xe6† ♙h8 30.♙e4 b4

By now White has nothing better than to force a draw by means of:



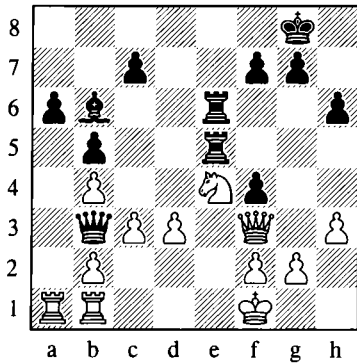
31.♟c6! bxc3 32.♞a8 ♞xa8 33.♟xa8† ♙h7 34.♘xc3 ♟xc3 35.♟e4† ♙g8 36.♟e8†=

22...♞8e6!

This way Black prepares ...f5 and takes control over the e-file. The immediate 22...f5?? loses to 23.♘f6†!.

23.♞e1

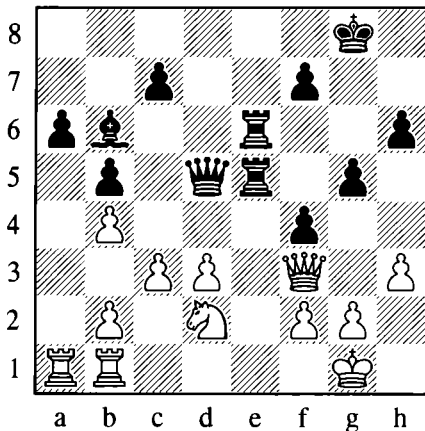
The alternative is: 23.♟f1 ♞b3 24.♞e1
(After 24.♞d1 ♞d5 White has nothing better
than 25.♞f3 repeating.)



24...♞e8! Black needed a good waiting move.
25.♞xf4 ♞d5 26.♞d1 ♞f5 27.♞g3 ♞e6 28.♞d2
♞g6 Black maintains an adequate initiative for
the sacrificed pawn.

23...g5

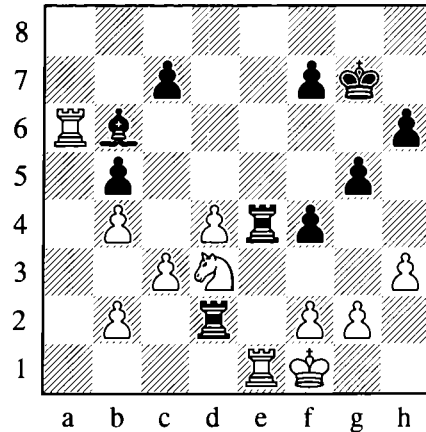
With this move Black defends the f4-pawn and
prepares ...♟g7 and ...f5.

24.♟d2

24...♞xf3 25.♟xf3 ♞e2 26.d4 ♟g7 27.♞xa6
♞c2 28.♟e1 ♞d2 29.♟f1!?

29.♟f3 ♞c2= is a move repetition. The text
move is a final attempt to prolong the game,
but Black has a good answer.

29...♞e2 30.♟d3! ♞e4! 31.♞e1



31...♞xd4! 32.cxd4 ♞xd3=

Black has full compensation for the sacrificed
exchange.

Conclusion

The early development of the queen to e2 has
both good and bad points, but overall it is hard
to believe it can be the best way to conduct
the opening. Nevertheless, the privilege of the
first move means that White can still hope
for an interesting game. Black's set-up with
5...b5 and 6...♞c5 has a proven track record,
and throughout the chapter we have seen Black
obtaining healthy prospects with the help of
the active plan involving ...d5 whenever the
chance presents itself.

Chapter 5

Sidelines



5.d3 – Introduction and Sidelines

Variation Index

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.d3

5...b5 6.♙b3 ♙c5

A) 7.♙g5	96
B) 7.a4	97
C) 7.♘c3 d6	101
C1) 8.♙g5	101
C2) 8.♘d5 h6!	102
C21) 9.♘xf6†	102
C22) 9.c3!	104
D) 7.c3 d6	107
D1) 8.♘bd2	107
D2) 8.♙e2!? h6	108
D21) 9.0–0	109
D22) 9.♘bd2	111

A) after 9.c3



9...♙b8!?N

C21) after 14.♙e1



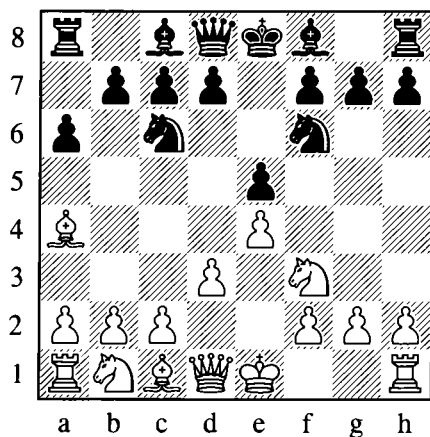
14...♙b6!N

C22) after 13.♙e1!



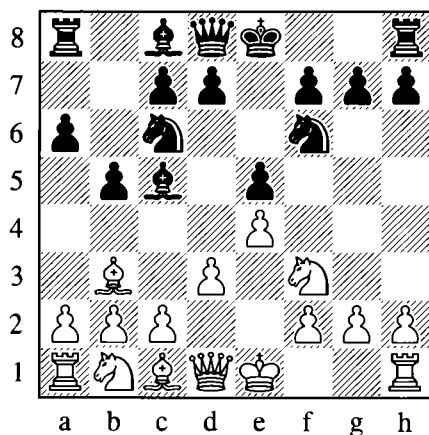
13...♙c6!?N

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.d3



This is the most popular alternative to 5.0–0, so it is essential for us to find a reliable set-up against it. I have encountered this system a lot of times, and I decided to recommend Black's most active set-up involving the development of the dark-squared bishop to c5. Apart from being objectively strong and solid, this also ties in nicely with the recommendation from the previous chapter.

5...b5 6.♙b3 ♙c5



The other main line here is 6...♙e7, but this leads to the realm of the Closed Ruy

Lopez, which is not part of the recommended repertoire in this book.

After the text move White has several options available, and the job of classifying them is complicated by the plethora of transpositions that may occur. In order to simplify the task, I decided to make the main line of 7.0–0 the subject of a separate chapter, beginning on page 113 immediately after the present chapter. All other related move orders featuring early castling from White will also be classified under that chapter.

In the present chapter we will consider all major variations in which White either does without castling, or postpones it for long enough to avoid a simple transposition. We will consider four main branches, arranged in roughly ascending order of importance: A) 7.♙g5, B) 7.a4, C) 7.♘c3 and D) 7.c3.

Of course we also have the usual selection of rare moves that can be covered more briefly:

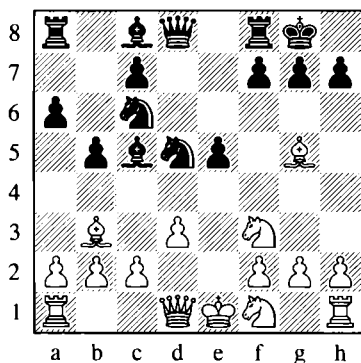
Amusingly, the database only contains a single game in which 7.♙e2 was played in this position, even though it immediately transposes to variation C of the previous chapter, accompanied by a rise in the game count to over 170.

7.h3 d6 is almost certain to transpose to a line considered elsewhere. For example, 8.c3 leads to 8.h3 in the note to variation D on page 107, while 8.0–0 takes us to the start of the next chapter – see the 8.h3 move noted on page 114.

The peculiar 7.♙d5?! was played in Seidov – Bayramov, Dos Hermanas 2004, and now after the natural 7...♘xd5N 8.exd5 ♘b4 9.0–0 (9.♘xe5 0–0! 10.0–0 ♘xd5 11.c4 ♙d6! 12.♙e1 ♘b6) 9...0–0 (9...♘xd5!?) 10.c4 bxc4 11.dxc4 e4 12.♘e1 a5 13.♘c3 f5 Black has a good position.

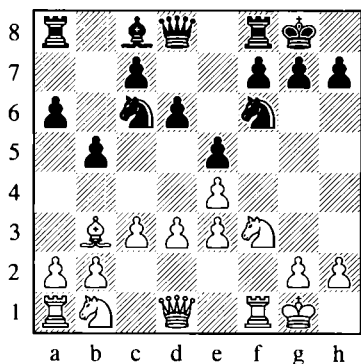
7.♖xe5?! is also dubious and after 7...♗xe5 8.d4, Shirazi – Balinas, Chicago 1989, 8...♗xd4N 9.♖xd4 d6 10.♖e3 c5 11.c3 ♗b7 12.♗d2 0–0 13.0–0 ♖e8♞ Black is doing well.

7.♗bd2 0–0 8.♗f1 (8.c3 d6 reaches line D1 on page 107) is met by 8...d5! 9.exd5 ♗xd5 10.♗g5 Galiana Salom – Vidarte Morales, Son Servera 2004, and now:



10...f6N 11.♗e3 (11.♗d2 ♗d4!♞) 11...♗e6 12.♗xd5 ♗xd5♞ with a slight edge for Black.

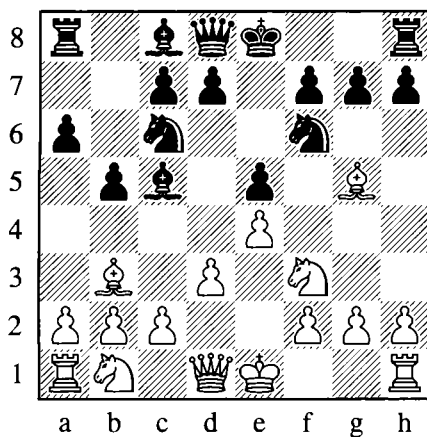
7.♗e3 is playable but rather harmless: 7...d6 8.c3 (After 8.♗xc5 dxc5 9.c3 0–0 10.♖e2 ♖d6 the pressure along the d-file promised Black a comfortable position in Del Rio Angelis – Jedryczka, Castelldefels 2006.) 8...0–0 9.0–0 ♗xe3 10.fxe3



10...♗a5 (10...♗e7N 11.♗bd2 ♗g6 is also roughly equal.) 11.♗c2 c5 12.♗bd2 c4 13.b4

cx d3 14.♗xd3 ♗c6 Black was at least not worse in Pelletier – Ponomarev, Biel 2004.

A) 7.♗g5



This move is slightly premature as the pin does not cause Black any discomfort.

7...h6 8.♗h4 d6 9.c3

9.♗d5 makes no sense as after 9...♗d7 White is forced to exchange one of his bishops, Wahl – Pragua, Tiefenbach 2004.

More interesting is:

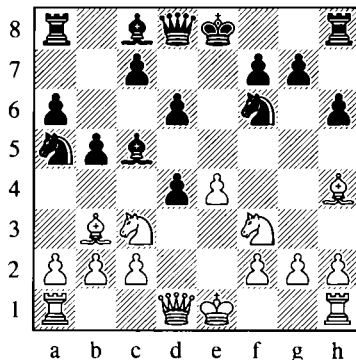
9.♗c3

As played in Malloggi – Mariano, Crema 2000. Now the following line leads to interesting complications.

9...♗a5!♞N

9...g5 is a safe alternative.

10.d4! exd4

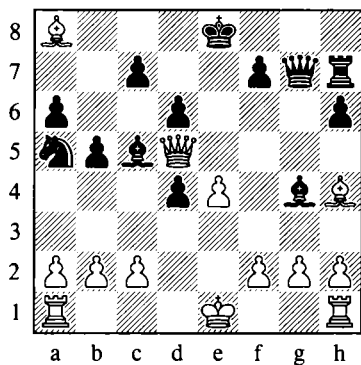


11.♖d5! g5 12.♖xg5! ♜xd5 13.♜h5! ♜f6!
14.♜h7! ♜g7! 15.♙xd5

After 15.♜xd5? ♜xh7 16.♜xa8 0–0!±

White's queen is in trouble.

15...♙xh7 16.♙xa8 ♙g4 17.♜d5



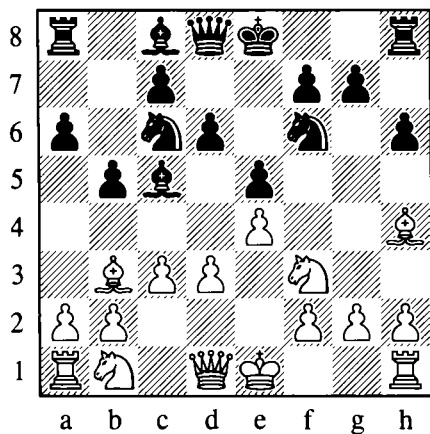
17...♙d7!

17...♙e6 forces a draw.

18.e5 c6 19.♜e4 ♜xe5

Black is on top due to the misplaced bishop on a8.

The present position was reached in Kritz – Rainfray, Lausanne 2003. Now I would like to offer the following idea for your attention:



9...♙b8!±N

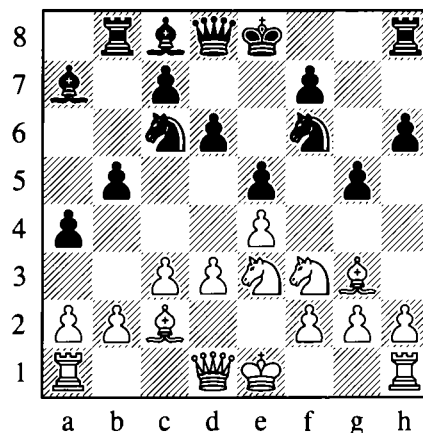
A good waiting and prophylactic move. Black is waiting for his opponent to castle, in which case he will play ...g5 without fearing a

subsequent h2-h4. The rook move also avoids the potential pinning action of a bishop on d5.

10.♜bd2 ♙a7

Black employs another waiting move. A possible continuation is:

11.♜f1 a5 12.♜e3 a4 13.♙c2 g5 14.♙g3



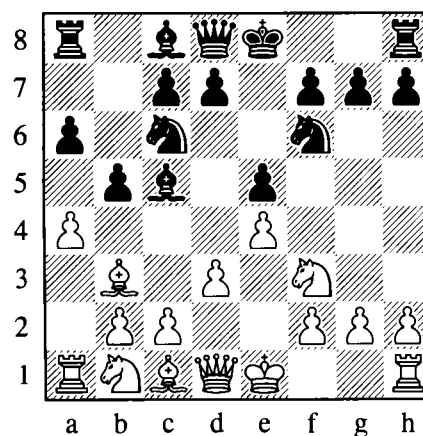
14...h5! 15.h4 g4

Black is doing well thanks to the following point:

16.♜g5? ♜g8!

The white knight is in trouble, with ...f6 on the way.

B) 7.a4



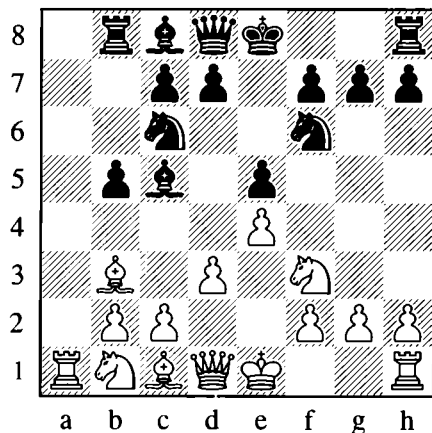
7...♖b8

7...b4 is also playable, but generally speaking the above rook move will be my preferred antidote to a2-a4 in the present chapter.

8.axb5

8.0-0 d6 transposes to line B in the next chapter – see 7.0-0 d6 8.a4 ♖b8 on page 116.

Other moves are also likely to transpose, three examples being 8.♘c3 d6, 8.c3 d6 and 8.♙g5 h6 9.♙h4 d6. In all these cases I do not see anything better for White than exchanging on b5, which will lead to one of the lines given below.

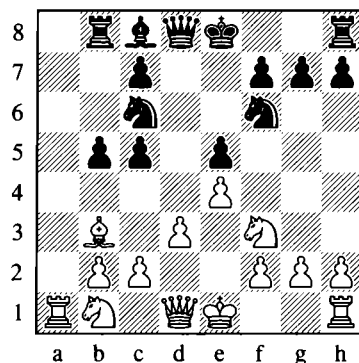
8...axb5**9.♘c3**

Both 9.0-0 d6 and 9.c3 d6 10.0-0 h6 transpose to variations considered in the next chapter; see variations B2 and C2 on pages 118 and 124 respectively.

There are, however, two bishop moves that deserve attention.

9.♙e3 d6 10.♙xc5

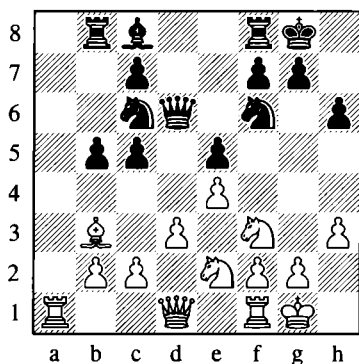
10.♘bd2 0-0 11.0-0 ♙xe3 12.fxe3 transposes to line B21 of the next chapter, on page 199.

10...dxc5**11.h3**

11.c3 0-0 12.0-0 ♖d6 with pressure along the d-file is fine for Black, Sedlak – Erdos Hungary 2009.

11...0-0 12.0-0 ♖d6 13.♘c3 h6 14.♘e2

Now in Vachier Lagrave – Fontaine, France 2008, Black had the following interesting idea available:

**14...c4!?N**

The game continuation of 14...♙d8 is also good for Black.

15.dxc4 ♘xe4

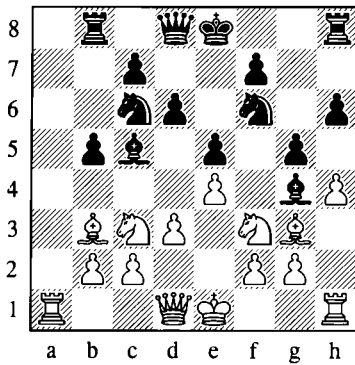
Black has at least equal chances.

9.♙g5 h6 10.♙h4

10.♙xf6 ♖xf6 11.♘c3 ♘e7 is in Black's favour.

10...d6 11.♘bd2

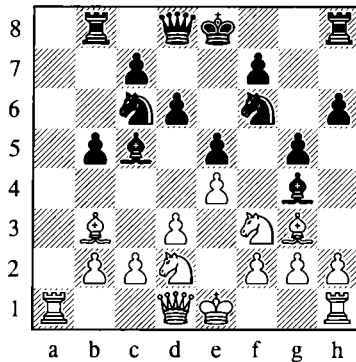
11.♘c3 g5 12.♙g3 ♙g4 13.h4 occurred in Arakhamia-Grant – Motwani, Edinburgh 1999. Now Black could have done well with:



13...d5!N 14.hxg5 hxg5 15.d5 d4 16.c3 xf3 17.gxf3 The doubled pawns leave White with a dead bishop on g3, and after 17...dxb3 18.Bxb3 c6 19.d3 e3 f6! 20.e2 xe3 21.e3 f8 followed by ...g7 Black's chances are higher.

1...g5 12.g3 g4

We already know this typical idea.



13.c3 d5 14.d1

The main drawback of ...g5 is the weakening of the f5-square, so White is trying to bring his knight there.

13...d4! 15.gxf4 gxf4

Black prevented his opponent's idea and retained a good position in Kosashvili – Orchnoi, Curacao 2002.

..d6 10.g5

10.h3 h6 11.0-0 transposes to 11.d3 in the note to line B22 in the next chapter – see page 120.

10.g3 g4 11.fxe3 g6 12.d5 g5 13.exd5 e7 14.e4 g6 15.0-0-0 transposes to the 12.d3 line in the notes to line B21 in the next chapter – see page 119.

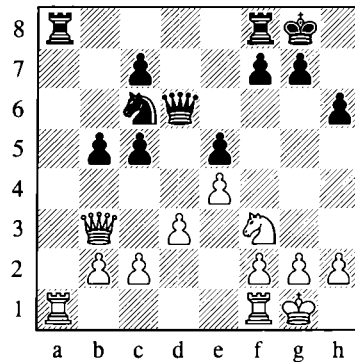
White's only other significant option is:

10.d5 h6

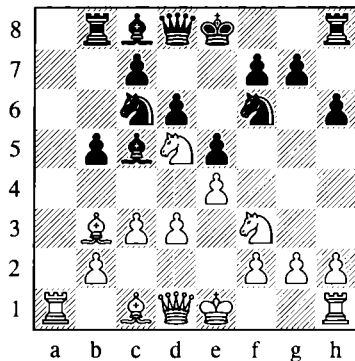
Preventing the pin.

11.c3

I also analysed: 11.g3 0-0 12.0-0 g6 13.gxc5 (Or 13.c3 g5 14.exd5 g6 15.dxc6 b6 16.d4 e8! and Black was better in Shabalov – Friedel, Las Vegas 2003.) 13...dxc5 14.fxf6+ xf6 15.gxe6 xe6 16.d2 e8 17.c3 d6 18.b3



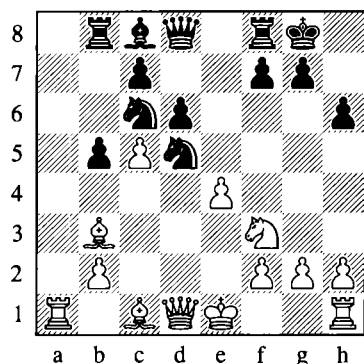
18...b4! 19.h3 d4 20.dxd4 xd4= with full equality in Ki. Georgiev – Kasimdzhanov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007.



11...0-0 12.d4 exd4 13.cxd4 d5 14.dxc5 Or 14.g5 b4+ 15.g2 g2+ 16.xd2 e7 17.b3 g4 followed by ...c5 and

Black experiences no problems.

The main position was reached in Godena – Naiditsch, Heraklio 2007, and here I propose:



14...♘db4!N 15.cxd6 ♖xd6 16.♗xd6 cxd6
17.0-0 ♜e8 18.♙f4 ♙e6! 19.♙xe6 ♜xe6
20.♞ad1 ♞d8

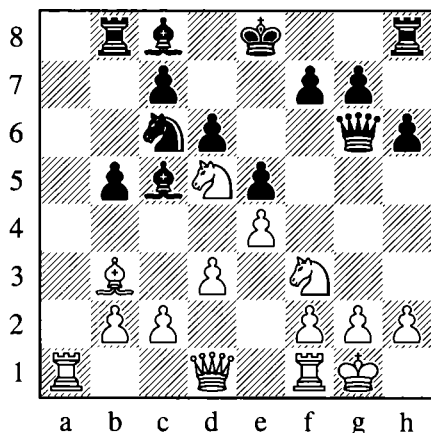
Black has no problems in this endgame.

10...h6 11.♙xf6 ♗xf6 12.♘d5

Ponomarev – Adams, Sofia 2005. Here I found a nice new idea for Black:

12...♗g6!N 13.0-0

Certainly not 13.♘xc7? ♘d8 14.♘d5 ♗xg2+.



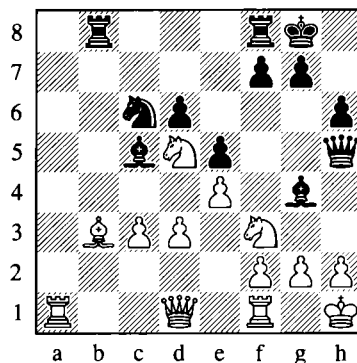
13...0-0!

Making it into a real gambit.

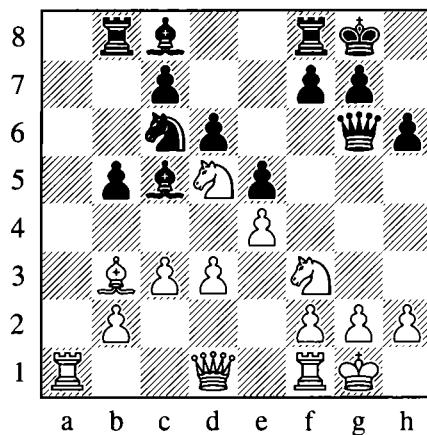
14.c3

14.♘xc7 ♙h3 15.♘h4 (or 15.♘e1 ♙g4 16.♗d2 ♘d4 17.♘d5 ♗h5 with initiative) 15...♗g5 is good for Black.

Also after 14.♙h1 ♙g4 15.c3 ♗h5 16.♘xc7 b4 Black's initiative is enough for a pawn, for example: 17.♘d5 bxc3 18.bxc3



18...♜xb3! 19.♗xb3 ♙xf3 and White has to accept the perpetual: 20.gxf3 ♗xf3+ 21.♙g1 ♗g4+=



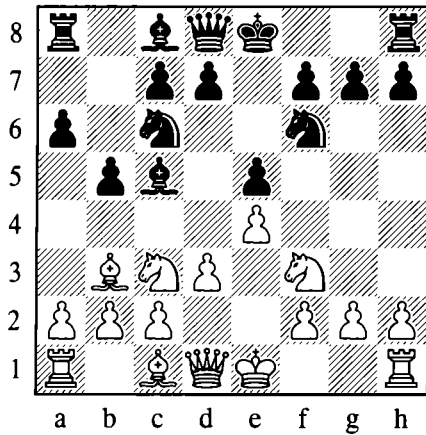
14...♙h3 15.♘e1 ♙g4 16.♗d2 ♙e6!

Black defends the c7-pawn indirectly, for the last time.

17.♞a6 ♙xd5 18.♙xd5 ♘e7=

The position is balanced.

C) 7.♘c3

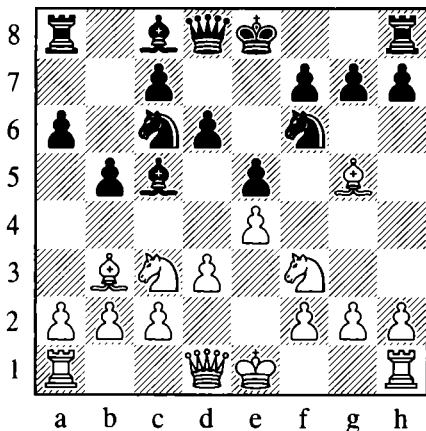


7...d6

From here White would love to set up the combination of a bishop on g5 and a knight on d5, but of course we will not allow both of these moves to be played. We will analyse both C1) 8.♗g5 and C2) 8.♘d5 in turn.

8.a4 is well met by 8...♗g4!? (There is also 8...♗b8 with a probable transposition to variation B above after 9.axb5 axb5.) 9.axb5 axb5 10.♗xa8 ♖xa8 11.♘d5 ♗a7! and Black was fighting for the advantage in Nyzhnyk – Karpachev, Bad Woerishofen 2010.

C1) 8.♗g5



8...h6 9.♗xf6

9.♗h4 transposes to variation A above.

9...♖xf6 10.♘d5

We have reached the same position as in variation B above, except that here the moves a2-a4 and ...♗b8, followed by a pawn exchange on b5, have not taken place. This leads me to recommend a different course of action for Black, for reasons that will be explained.

10...♖d8

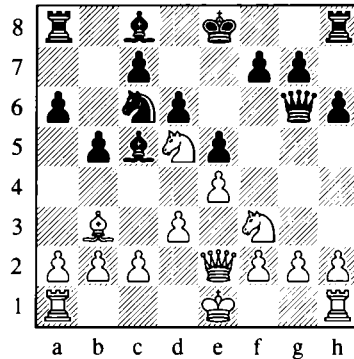
10...♖g6!?N

This was the recommendation in the aforementioned line. It remains playable and leads to an unclear position, but White has one key resource that was less appealing in the other variation.

11.♖e2!

11.♘xc7+? ♗d8 12.♘xa8 ♖xg2 13.♗f1 ♗g4 is nasty for White.

11.♘h4!? is playable, although after 11...♖g5 12.♘xc7+ ♗d8 13.♘xa8 ♖xh4 14.0-0 ♗g4 15.♖d2 ♗d7 16.c3 ♗xa8 the complex position should not be unfavourable to Black.



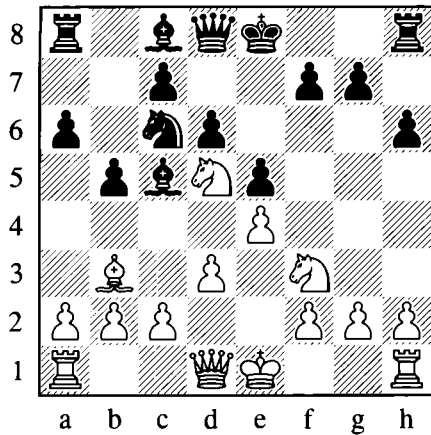
11...0-0 12.♘xc7

12.c3!? is another idea.

12...♗a7 13.♘d5 ♘d4!? 14.♘xd4 ♗xd4 15.0-0-0!

The position is rather unclear, but compared with the analogous situation from variation B,

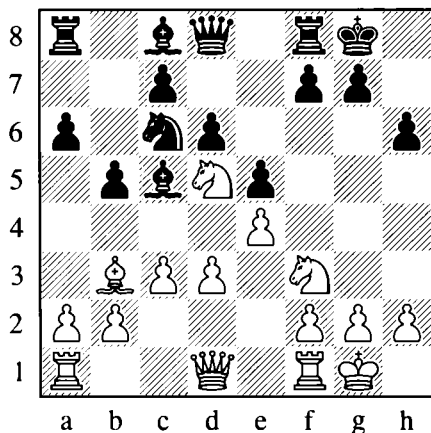
White has certainly benefited from the absence of an open a-file.



11.c3 0-0 12.0-0

After 12.d4 ♖a7 13.a4?! exd4 14.axb5 axb5 15.cxd4 ♗g4 16.♞a6 ♖b6 17.♞xa8 ♜xa8 White's centre was under fire in Iturrizaga Bonelli – Michelen, Bogota 2006.

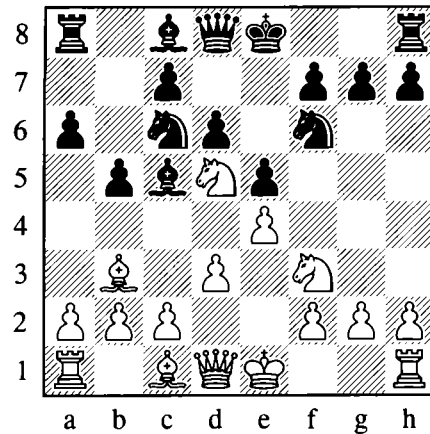
The text move was played in Marco – Spielmann, Bad Pistyan 1922. At this point my preferred continuation would be:



12...♖a5N 13.♗c2 c6 14.♖e3 ♗xc3 15.fxe3 c5=

With a roughly equal position.

C2) 8.♖d5



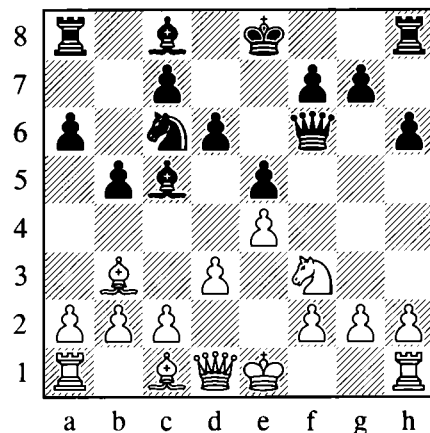
8...h6!

Black should prevent ♗g5. The two main options are C21) 9.♖xf6† and C22) 9.c3!.

9.a4 ♞b8 (9...♖a5!?) 10.axb5 axb5 transposes to 10.♖d5 h6 in the notes to variation B on page 99 above.

9.0-0 allows 9...♖a5 which should equalize easily, for instance: 10.♗e3 ♖xb3 11.axb3 ♖xd5 12.exd5 (12.♗xc5 dxc5 13.exd5 ♜xd5 14.♖xe5 0-0 is also equal.) 12...♗xc3 13.fxe3 0-0 14.c4 ♖b7= Black prepares ...c6 with a comfortable position, Riascos – Madariaga, Medellin Cuartas Memorial 2011.

C21) 9.♖xf6† ♜xf6



10.♙d5

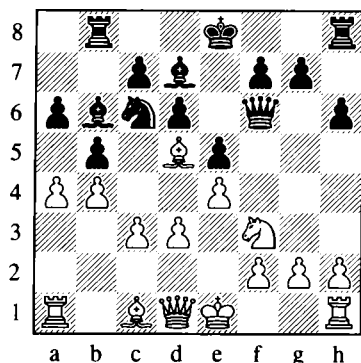
There is no other way to make sense of White's previous move.

10...♙d7 11.♙e3

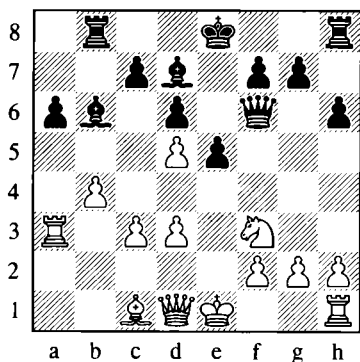
I also analysed:

11.c3 ♜b8

Black unpins the knight and prepares ...♘e7.

12.b4 ♙b6 13.a4**13...bxa4!N**

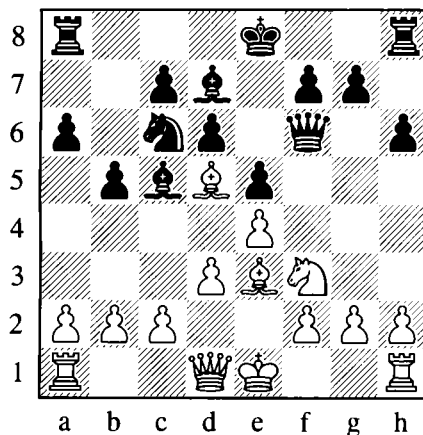
A promising alternative to 13...♘e7 as played in Stripunsky – Banawa, Philadelphia 2007, although this is also okay for Black.

14.♜xa4 ♘e7 15.♜a3 ♘xd5 16.exd5**16...0-0! 17.0-0**

17.♜xa6? is bad due to 17...e4! 18.dxe4 ♜xc3† 19.♘d2 ♙xf2†! 20.♙xf2 ♜d4†-+ and Black wins the rook on a6.

17...♜a8!

Intending ...a5, with a good position for Black.

**11...♜d8**

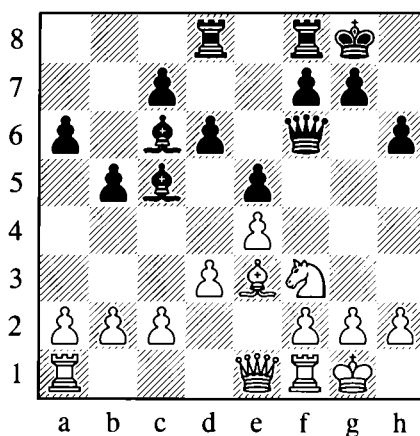
11...♜b8!? also makes sense.

12.♙xc6 ♙xc6 13.0-0

13.♙xc5 dxc5 14.♜e2 0-0 15.♜e3 ♜e7 was equal in Hernandez Guerrero – Lugo, Lubbock 2007.

13...0-0 14.♜e1

Zvjaginsev – Ganguly, Moscow 2005. Now Black could have played:

**14...♙b6!N**

Preparing ...d5. The minor damage to Black's pawn structure is not important here.

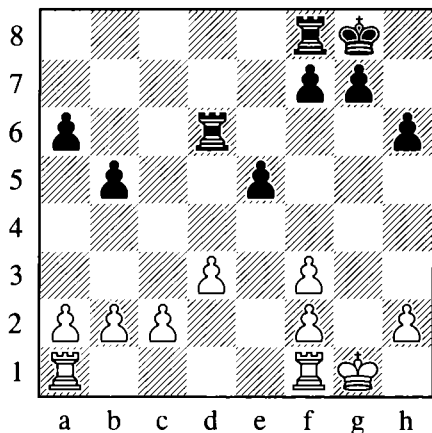
15.♙xb6 cxb6 16.♜e3

Or 16.♞d1 ♞fe8 followed by ...d5 at an appropriate moment.

16...d5! 17.exd5 ♞xd5!

This should solve all Black's problems, for instance:

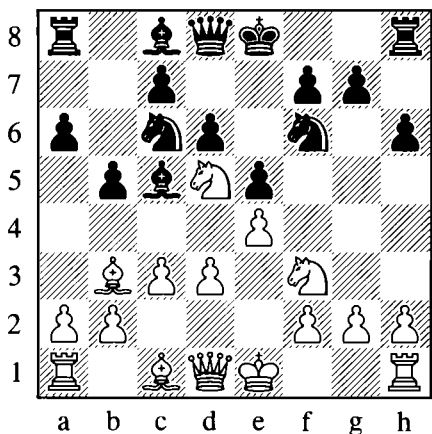
18.♞xb6 ♞d6 19.♞e3 ♟xf3 20.♞xf3 ♞xf3 21.gxf3



21...♞c8! 22.♞ac1 ♞g6†! 23.♚h1 ♞gc6 24.c3 ♞d8 25.♞fd1 ♞cd6=

Black regains the pawn to reach an equal endgame.

C22) 9.c3!



This is the only serious attempt to fight for the advantage.

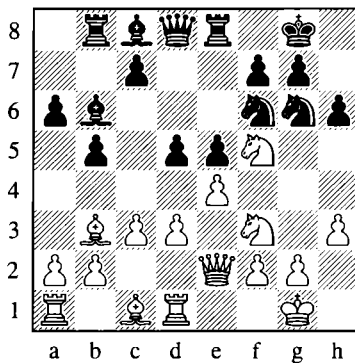
9...♞b8

A typical idea: Black sets up the possibility of exchanging on d5 without landing in an unpleasant pin. 9...0-0 10.0-0 ♞b8 reaches the same position.

10.0-0 0-0 11.d4

I checked four other moves, all of them pretty harmless.

11.♟e3?! cannot promise any advantage, and in the following game Black gradually took over: 11...♟b6 12.♞e2 ♟e7! Transferring the knight to f4. 13.♞d1 ♟g6 14.♟f5 d5 15.h3 ♞e8

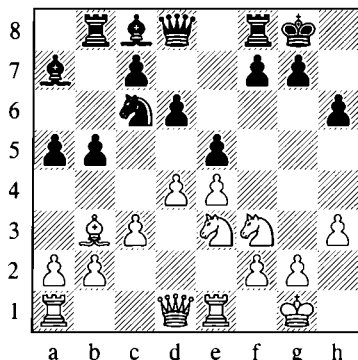


16.g4?! c5 17.c4?! bxc4 18.dxc4 d4 Black was clearly better thanks to his protected passed pawn and the vulnerable position of White's king in Lahno – Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2006.

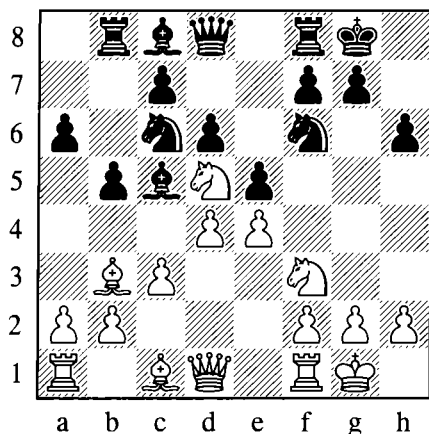
11.h3 ♟xd5 12.♟xd5 ♟e7 13.♟b3 ♟g6 14.d4 ♟b6 led to an equal position in Gopal – Sinha, Atul 2006.

11.♟e3 ♟xd5 12.♟xd5 ♟e3 13.fxe3 ♟e7 14.♟b3 ♟g6 15.♞e1 ♞e7 With ...♟e6 coming next, the position is equal and the players agreed a draw in Kindermann – Ragger, Gmunden 2005.

11.♞e1 a5!? 12.d4 ♕a7 13.♙e3 ♜g4 14.h3
 ♜xe3 15.♜xe3 occurred in Aguirre – Kis Kos,
 Internet 2010, and here I suggest:



15...a4N 16.♙d5 ♜a5! 17.a3 c6 18.♙a2 ♞f6
 with equality.



11...♙a7

I also analysed:

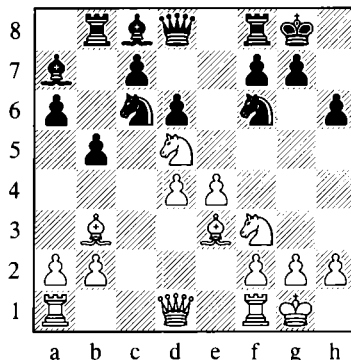
11...exd4

Initially I thought this move would be more
 precise, as it takes away White's option of
 recapturing on d4 with a piece, as seen in
 the 12...exd4 variation in the notes to the
 main line. However, I found that Black still
 has some problems to solve after:

12.cxd4 ♙a7 13.♙e3!N

After the inaccurate 13.e5?!, as played in
 Movsisian – Ragger, Herceg Novi 2005,
 Black can fight for the advantage by means

of: 13...dxe5!N 14.dxe5 ♜xd5 15.♙xd5
 (15.♞xd5 ♜a5!?) 15...♜d4! 16.♙e3 ♞xd5
 17.♙xd4 c5 18.♙e3 ♞b7!?



13...♜xd5 14.♙xd5 ♜e7 15.♙b3 d5!?

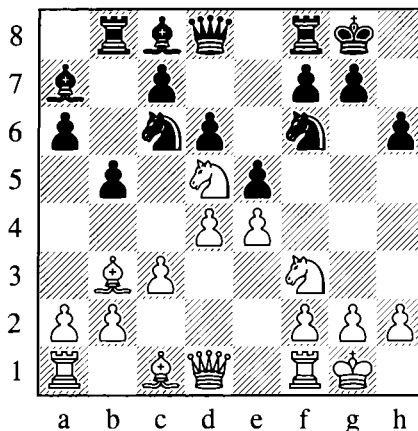
15...♙b7 16.♞c2 c5 17.dxc5 ♞c8 18.♞ad1
 ♙xc5 19.♙xc5 ♞xc5 20.♞d3± is slightly
 better for White due to the weakness of the
 d6-pawn.

16.e5

16.♜e5!? is also interesting.

16...♙f5 17.♞c1

White retains slightly better chances.



12.♙e3

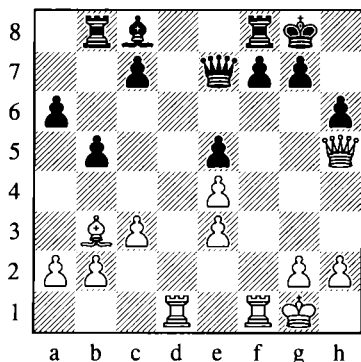
This is the most challenging move, and the
 only one to have been tested so far. White can
 afford to leave the e4-pawn hanging.

12...♜xe4

Black continues on the principled path. According to my analysis it should lead to a simplified position where Black has to be careful, but should be able to equalize without too many problems.

After 12...exd4 13.♟xd4! ♟xd4 14.♙xd4 ♙xd4 15.♚xd4± Black was under some pressure in Asrian – Yegiazarian, Yerevan 2005.

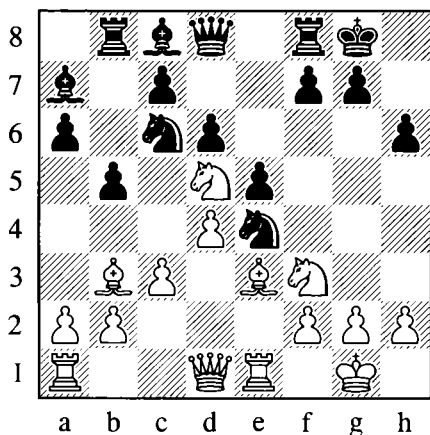
I also investigated a new idea: 12...♟g4!? 13.dxe5 ♟xe3 14.♟xe3 ♟xe5 15.♟xe5 dxe5 16.♚h5 ♙xe3 17.fxe3 ♚e7 18.♙ad1



18...♙e6! 19.♚xe5 ♚be8 20.♙f4 ♙xb3 21.♚xe7 ♙xe3 22.axb3 ♙fe8 I believe Black should be able to hold this endgame, although some care is still required.

13.♙e1!

In this tense position I would like to propose a logical novelty.

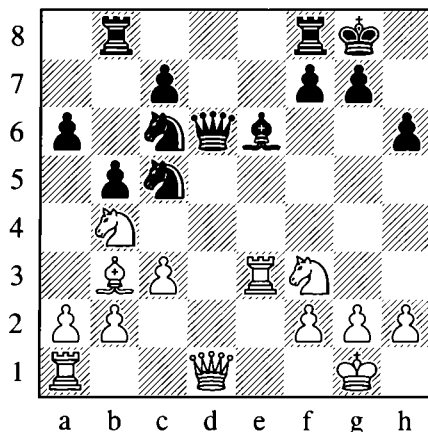


13...♙e6!?N

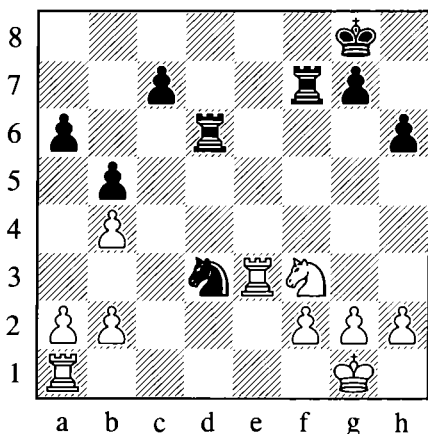
The only game on the database continued 13...♟f6 14.♟xf6† ♚xf6 15.dxe5 dxe5 16.♙xa7 ♟xa7 17.♟xe5 ♟c6 18.♚h5 ♟xe5 19.♚xe5 ♚xe5 20.♙xe5± and White retained a slight endgame advantage in Akopian – Harikrishna, Sochi 2007.

The text move leads to a more complex position where I believe Black is doing okay. White has a few playable moves, but the following forcing line looks to me like the critical continuation:

14.dxe5 ♙xe3 15.♙xe3 ♟c5 16.exd6 ♚xd6 17.♟b4



17...♙bd8! 18.♚xd6 ♙xd6 19.♙xe6 ♟xb4 20.♙xf7† ♙xf7 21.cxb4 ♟d3

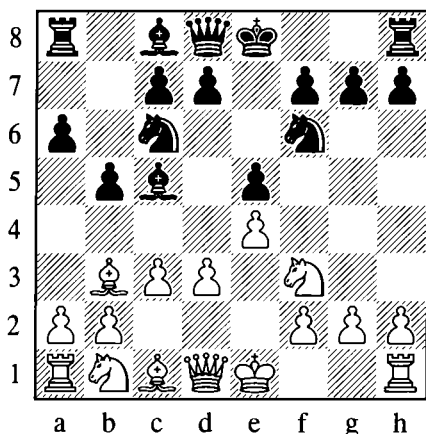


22.a3

22.♖xd3 ♖xd3 23.♘e5 ♖d2 24.♘xf7 ♜xf7= is equal.

22...♘xb2 23.♘e5 ♖f4 24.g3 ♖fd4 25.♖c1 ♖d1†

Black equalizes.

D) 7.c3**7...d6**

Black cannot treat the position the same way as the ♖e2 lines of the previous chapter, as here 7...h6?! can be answered by 8.d4!N exd4 9.e5 ♘e4 10.♙d5! with advantage to White. After the text move we will pay particular attention to **D1) 8.♘bd2** as well as the tricky **D2) 8.♖e2!?**.

Most other plausible moves will transpose to variations considered elsewhere in either this or the next chapter. Here are some examples:

8.♙g5 h6 9.♙h4 transposes to variation A.

8.0–0 transposes to line C of the next chapter with 7.0–0 d6 8.c3, as found on page 122. Indeed, most other instances involving early castling will be considered under the same section.

8.a4 ♖b8 9.axb5 axb5 10.0–0 h6 transposes to variation C2 in the next chapter – see page 126 for the continuation from this position.

8.h3 is flexible, but Black can return the ball over the net with 8...h6, when a transposition is almost inevitable. The main examples are:

a) 9.♘bd2 0–0 reaches 9.h3 in the notes to line D1 below.

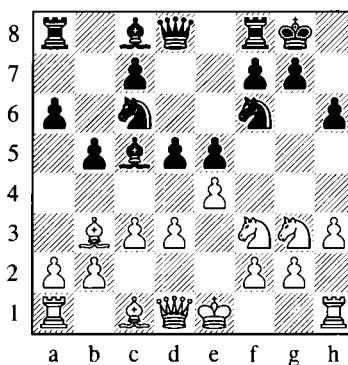
b) 9.♖e2 is met by 9...0–0. Now 10.0–0 reaches the 10.h3 move given in the notes to variation D21, while 10.♘bd2 takes us to the 10.h3 move in the notes to line D22.

c) 9.0–0 0–0 transposes to line C3 of the next chapter on page 135.

D1) 8.♘bd2 0–0 9.♘f1

9.0–0 h6 leads to variation C of the next chapter on page 122.

Another game continued: 9.h3 h6 10.♘f1 d5! Black can afford to lose a tempo with the d-pawn as White has played the opening rather timidly. 11.♘g3 (11.♖e2 a5!? gave Black good prospects in Urbina – Lodhi, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010.)



Perunovic – I. Sokolov, Neum 2002. Now the simple 11...dxe4!N 12.dxe4 (Or 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.dxe4 ♘a5! 14.♙c2 ♖xd1† 15.♙xd1 ♘c4 with an initiative for Black.) 12...♖xd1† 13.♙xd1 ♙e6 leads to a slight plus for Black.

9...d5

Once again Black can afford to lose a tempo.
9...h6!? is not a bad alternative.

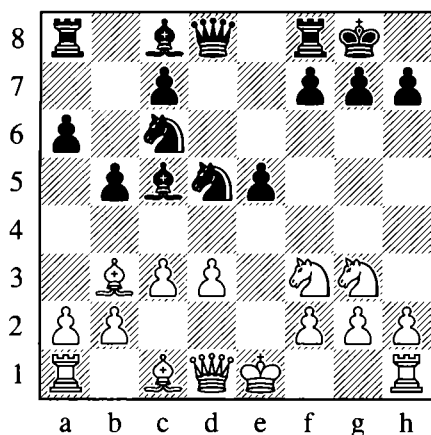
10.exd5

10.♞e2 dxe4 11.dxe4 ♠a5 12.♙c2 ♠c4! gives Black the initiative.

10.♠g3 is similar to the Perunovic – Sokolov game. The absence of the moves h2-h3 and ...h6 does not change much, so Black should once again play 10...dxe4 11.♠xe4!?N (11.dxe4 ♞xd1† 12.♙xd1 h6 was at least equal for Black in Wilson – Deschenaux, Biel 2002.) 11...♠xe4 12.dxe4 ♠a5 13.♙c2 ♞xd1† 14.♙xd1 ♠c4 with some initiative.

10...♠xd5 11.♠g3

Degraeve – Mounier, Bastia 1999. Here I found an interesting new idea:

**11...a5!?N**

Black takes some space on the queenside and prepares to drive away the light-squared bishop from its comfortable home on b3. Play may continue:

12.♠e4 ♙a7 13.a4 b4 14.0-0 ♜b8 15.♙c4 ♙f5

With a roughly equal position.

D2) 8.♞e2!?

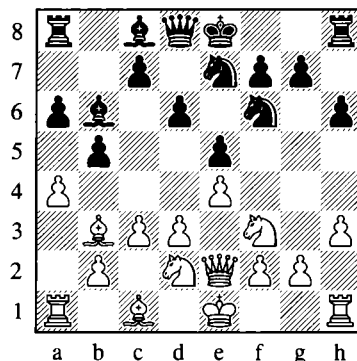
According to my database this is an exceedingly rare move, having been chosen in just three out of more than 140 games. Nevertheless the game count immediately rises to more than 250 after 8.♞e2 has been played! It is quite a tricky line for our repertoire, as we immediately transpose to a Worrall System with Black already committed to ...d6, instead of the more active ...d5 that I was keen to recommend in the previous chapter.

Despite this inconvenience Black should not experience any serious problems, so let's see how he should handle the position.

8...h6

We start by preventing the troublesome pin. Here White's main options are **D21) 9.0-0** and **D22) 9.♠bd2**, although we will also check a few sidelines.

After 9.h3 I favour the slightly unusual move 9...♙b6!?, with the idea of transferring the queen's knight to g6. (The immediate 9...♠e7 is answered by 10.d4.) 10.♠bd2 ♠e7 11.a4



This was Dgebuadze – De Jong, Gent 2002, and here I suggest 11...♙b7N 12.♠f1 ♠g6 13.♠g3 c5 14.0-0 0-0 with an equal position.

9.♙e3 ♙xe3 (Black can also ignore White's last move with 9...0-0!?) 10.♞xe3 (10.fxe3 0-0

11.0–0 transposes to the 11.fxe3 line given in the notes to variation D21 below.) 10...♖a5 11.♗c2 c5 12.♘bd2 0–0 Black was fine in Bitansky – Golod, Israel 2004. In this position White's most natural move would appear to be 13.0–0N which immediately transposes to variation D21 below.

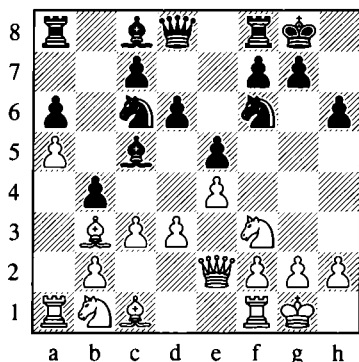
9.a4

This doesn't make much sense here as it can be answered by:

9...b4

This move tends to work best when c2–c3 has already been played.

10.a5 0–0 11.0–0

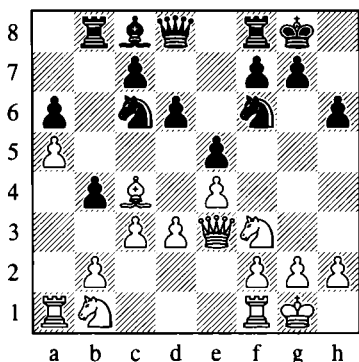


1...♞b8!?

This leads to complicated play.

A safer approach is 11...♗e6 12.♗xe6 fxe6 intending ...♞d7 and ...♞ab8 when Black is by no means worse, Fogarasi – Sandor, Budapest 1995.

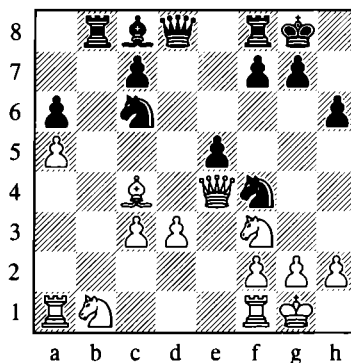
2.♗c4 ♗a7 13.♗e3 ♗xe3 14.♞xe3



14...bxc3N

14...♗e6 was played in Svidler – Anand, Monte Carlo (blind/rapid) 2006, and here White could have continued 15.♗xa6!N bxc3 16.bxc3 ♞a8 17.♗b7 ♞xa5 18.♘bd2 ♞xa1 19.♞xa1 ♘e7 20.d4 retaining a slight edge.

15.bxc3 d5! 16.exd5 ♘xd5 17.♞e4 ♘f4!



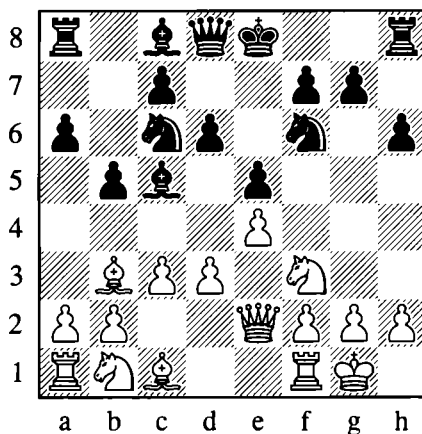
18.♘bd2

18.♞xc6? is bad in view of 18...♗b7 19.♞c5 ♗xf3 20.♞xe5 g5! with the idea 21.gxf3? ♞d7!–+.

18...♞f6 19.g3 ♘h3† 20.♘g2 ♞d8!

In this complicated position the chances are roughly equal.

D21) 9.0–0

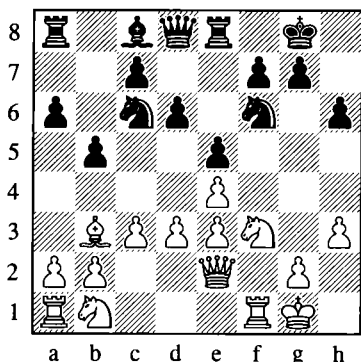


9...0–0 10.♗e3

10.♖bd2 ♜e8 takes us back to variation C52 of the previous chapter – see page 87.

10.a4 b4 11.a5 transposes to 9.a4 above.

10.h3 ♜e8 11.♙e3 is harmless: 11...♙xe3 12.fxe3 (12.♞xe3 ♖a5 13.♙c2 c5 14.♖bd2 ♞c7 15.♞ac1 ♖c6 was good for Black in Ritscher – Frantz, Darmstadt 1996.)



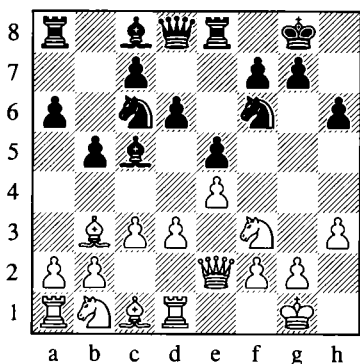
12...♖a5 13.♙c2 c5 14.♖bd2 ♙e6 15.♞f2 ♞c8 16.♖h4 d5 Black equalized easily in Reichstein – Kaidanov, Philadelphia 1999.

10.♞d1 ♜e8

This useful move is directed against d3-d4.

11.h3

11.♖bd2 can be met by 11...♖g4, as noted on page 88 of the previous chapter (note to White's 11th move in line C52).



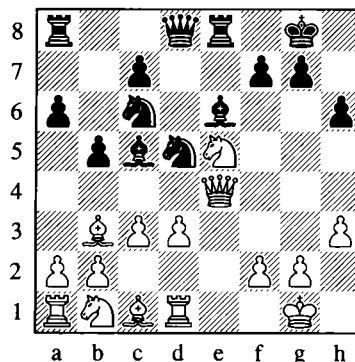
11...d5!?

This leads to a tempo-down version of the

Worrall, but Black is still fine as White's set-up is harmless.

12.♖bd2

The greedy 12.exd5 ♖xd5 13.♞e4?! ♙e6 14.♖xe5? was played in Martinez Salas – Argaya Urdaniz, Orvina 2006, and here Black could have obtained a clear advantage with:



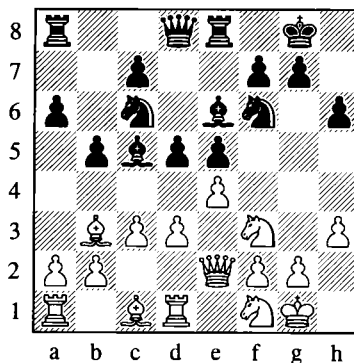
14...♖xe5N 15.♞xe5 (Or 15.d4 ♖f6! 16.♞c2 ♖f3†! 17.gxf3 ♙d6+ with a strong attack.) 15...♙g4! 16.♞xd5 ♙xd1+ White loses an exchange for virtually no compensation.

12...♙e6

Turn back to page 87 in the previous chapter, and see the 10.h3 line in the note to White's 10th move in line C52. There it is Black to move, but it is hardly the kind of position where White can use his extra tempo to any great advantage.

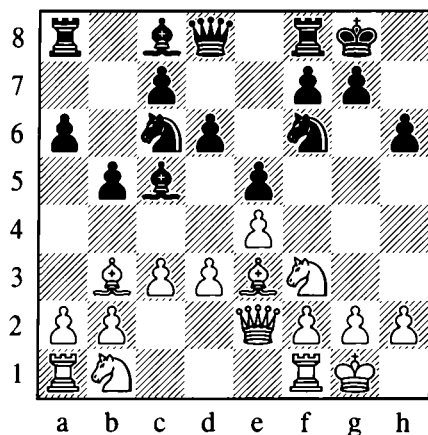
13.♖f1

Sanz Alonso – Fernandez Saavedra, Vila Real 2001. Here I suggest:



13...♖d7N 14.♘g3 ♜ad8=

The position is equal.



10...♙xe3 11.♞xe3

11.fxe3 looks harmless after 11...♘a5 12.♙c2 c5 13.♘bd2. Black has tested several moves here, but I rather like 13...♞b8!? intending to create counterplay on the queenside, Bruned – Karpachev, Metz 2008.

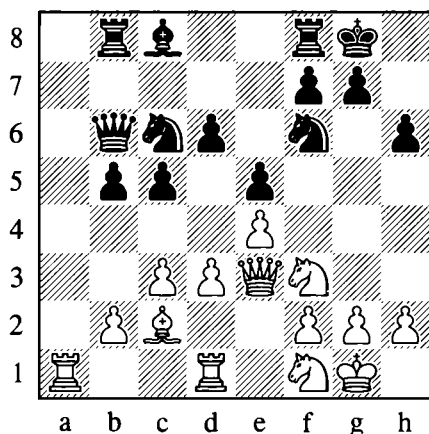
11...♘a5 12.♙c2 c5

Again this Chigorin-style set-up works especially well after the dark-squared bishops have been exchanged.

13.♘bd2 ♘c6 14.a4 ♞b8

14...♙d7!?N also looks quite reliable.

15.axb5 axb5 16.♞fd1 ♞b6 17.♘f1



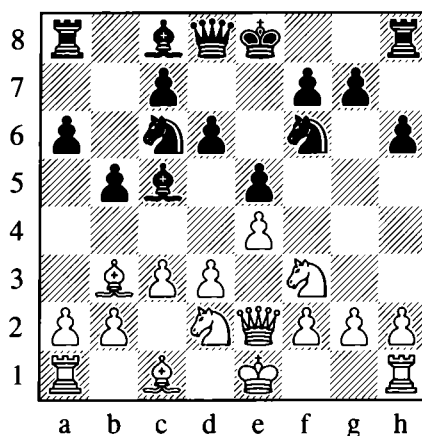
17...d5!?

Shirov goes for an active approach, but Black would also have been perfectly okay after a quiet move such as 17...♙e6N.

18.exd5 ♘xd5 19.♞e4 ♘f6 20.♞e2 ♞e8
21.♘g3 ♙e6! 22.♞e1 ♙d5 23.♘d2

In this equal position a draw was agreed in Tiviakov – Shirov, Hoogeveen 2010.

D22) 9.♘bd2

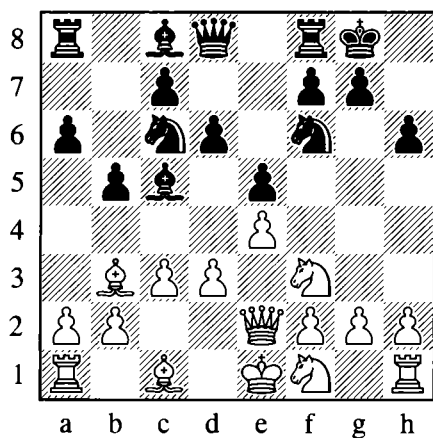


9...0-0 10.♘f1

White delays castling in order to bring the knight to g3 without moving the rook.

10.0-0 ♞e8 transposes to line C52 of the previous chapter – see page 87.

The other main candidate is 10.h3, as played in Yagupov – Mainka, Groningen 1995. Here I would like to offer the following idea: 10...♘e7!?N In order to transfer the knight to g6. There is no need to fear d3-d4 as we will soon see. 11.♘f1 (After 11.d4?! exd4 12.cxd4 ♙b6 White's centre is fragile and can be easily attacked by means of ...♘g6 followed by ...♙b7 and ...♞e8.) 11...♘g6 Black has obtained a comfortable version of a Worrall System. He has completed the knight manoeuvre to g6 and saved some time by doing without the prophylactic ...♙b6 move.



10...d7?!

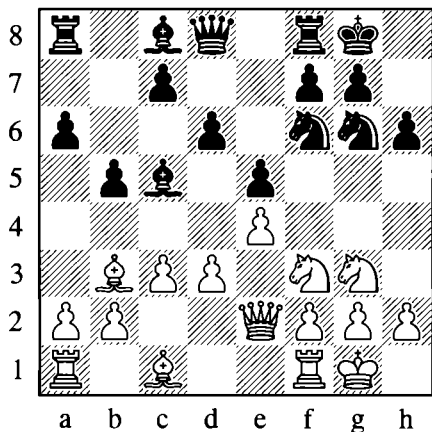
A logical transfer of the knight to g6, using the fact that White is behind in development and thus cannot benefit from d3-d4.

11.dg3

After 11.d4? exd4 12.cxd4 b6 (12...b4† is also decent) 13.dg3 e8 White's centre comes under heavy pressure.

11...dg6 12.0-0

Tiviakov – Fayard, Paris 1991. Now I would like to offer:



12...b6!?N

The game continuation of 12...e8 was also reasonable, but I prefer a different method of safeguarding against the d3-d4 push. The idea is shown in the short illustrative line below:

13.a4 b6 14.bxc6 fxc6=

The rook turns out to be quite happy on the f-file.

Conclusion

5.d3 is not just a sideline, but a serious move with which White can legitimately fight for an advantage. In this chapter I would highlight variations C22 and D2 as demanding particular attention, although my analysis indicates that Black should be doing fine after accurate play. In the next chapter we will see if White can cause more problems by castling early.



Sidelines



5.d3 – Main Line with 7.0–0

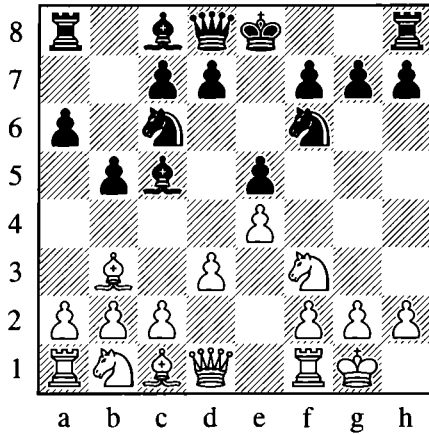
Variation Index

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.d3 b5 6.♙b3 ♙c5 7.0–0

7...d6

A) 8.♘c3	114
B) 8.a4 ♖b8	115
B1) 9.h3	117
B2) 9.axb5 axb5	118
B21) 10.♙e3	119
B22) 10.h3	120
C) 8.c3 h6	122
C1) 9.♙e3	124
C2) 9.a4 ♖b8 10.axb5! axb5 11.d4 ♙b6	
12.♘a3 0–0 13.♘xb5 ♙g4	124
C21) 14.♖e1N	128
C22) 14.♙c2N	130
C23) 14.d5	132
C24) 14.♙e3	133
C3) 9.h3 0–0	135
C31) 10.a4	135
C32) 10.d4	136
C33) 10.♙e3	137
C34) 10.♘bd2	137

1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♟f6
5.d3 b5 6.♙b3 ♙c5 7.0-0



This can be viewed as the main line, especially when we factor in the various transpositions noted in the previous chapter, whereby White starts with some other move but then castles in the near future.

7...d6

Black acknowledges that an early ...d5 is not likely to happen, and thus chooses the most flexible move. Now we will analyse **A) 8.♟c3**, **B) 8.a4** and **C) 8.c3** after first dealing with a few miscellaneous lines.

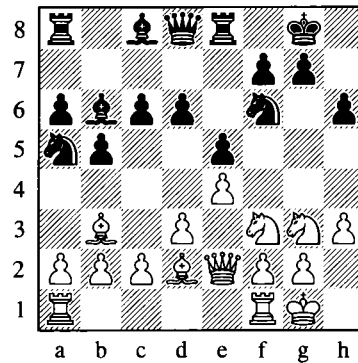
8.♙e3 ♙xe3 9.fxe3 ♟a5 10.♟c3 transposes to variation A below.

The rare 8.a3 is designed to preserve the bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal. Now I would like to introduce a logical novelty: 8...♙e6!?N Immediately targeting the bishop in question. (8...♙g4!? is another sensible idea that was seen in Loskutov – Nozdrachev, Moscow 2012.) 9.♙xe6 fxe6 10.♙e3 ♙xe3 11.fxe3 0-0= With a near-symmetrical pawn structure the position is absolutely equal.

8.♙g5 This pinning move tends not to be dangerous in positions where Black has not

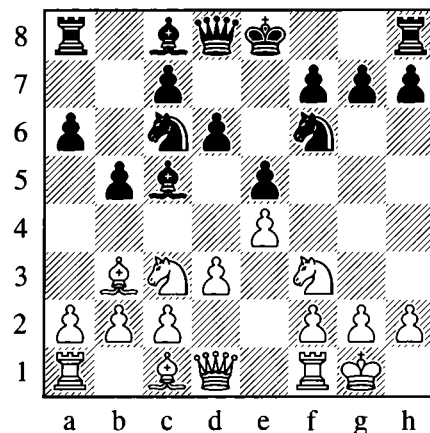
yet castled. 8...h6 9.♙h4 g5 10.♙g3 ♙g4 A typical idea. After unpinning his own knight Black creates a pin of his own. 11.c3 0-0 Black is fine. Later he may consider transferring the bishop to g6, especially if White nudges it with h2-h3. The ...♟h5-f4 manoeuvre will also be an attractive idea in many positions.

8.h3 ♟a5! allows Black to eliminate White's light-squared bishop at a moment of his choosing: 9.♟c3 h6 10.♟e2 0-0 11.♟g3 ♙e8 12.♙d2 ♙b6 13.♙e2 c6



With an equal position in Movsesian – Adams, Hastings 1996. It is important to mention here that 14.♟h4N can be met by 14...♟xb3 15.axb3 ♟xe4! 16.♟xe4 (or 16.♙xe4? d5+ winning a pawn.) 16...d5! 17.♟f3 dxe4 maintaining the balance.

A) 8.♟c3



8...♖a5 9.♙e3

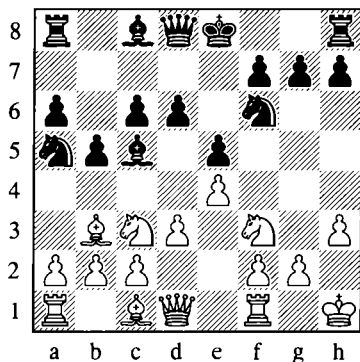
9.h3 transposes to the 8.h3 line noted above.

9.♙h1!?

This move has been played by the current World Champion. The purpose is of course to prepare f2–f4.

9...c6 10.h3

This was Anand – Topalov, Las Palmas 1996, and here I recommend:

**10...h6**

I believe this move is more useful than Topalov's 10...♖a7. For example:

11.♖h2 0–0 12.f4 ♗e7 13.fxe5 dxe5 14.♗f3 ♖h7

Followed by ...♖g5 and Black is okay.

9...♙xe3 10.fxe3 0–0 11.♗e1

After the harmless 11.♖d5 ♖xd5 12.♙xd5 c6 13.♙b3 ♖xb3 14.axb3 ♙g4 15.h3 ♙xf3 16.♗xf3 a5 17.♖a2 the players agreed a draw in Spassky – Godena, France 2002.

11...c5

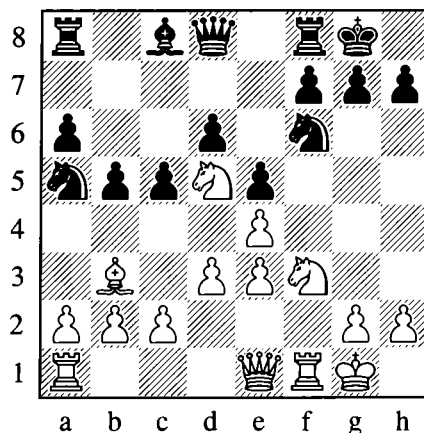
Threatening ...c4, which would damage White's pawn structure.

Another sensible idea is 11...c6 to guard the d5-square, as in Zigo – Kotan, Czech Republic 2007.

12.♖d5

12.♙d5 ♖xd5 13.exd5 f5! 14.a3 ♙d7 15.♙h1 ♖b7 16.♗g3 ♗e7 was roughly equal in Illescas Cordoba – Malaniuk, Yerevan 1996.

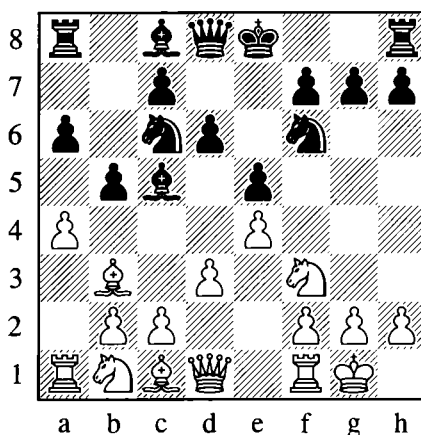
The text move was played in Asrian – Ivanchuk, Kemer 2007. Now I would like to offer the natural improvement:

**12...♖xb3N 13.♖xf6+ ♗xf6 14.axb3 ♗d8 15.♖h4 a5**

15...d5! also looks okay.

16.♖f5 f6=

Black should not experience any real problems as the knight on f5 can be exchanged whenever it becomes necessary.

B) 8.a4

8...♖b8

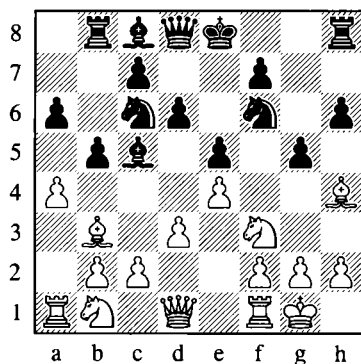
The main line. Another possibility is 8...♙g4 9.c3 0-0 10.h3 ♙xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘d4 12.♙c2 b4 13.♘d2 ♖b8 14.♖b1!? as seen in Leko – Kasimdzhanov, Moscow (blitz) 2007. It seems to me that in this line Black might come under some positional pressure due to White's bishop pair.

After the rook move it is worth considering **B1) 9.h3** and **B2) 9.axb5**. There are many possible move orders with White exchanging on b5 on one move or another, but my general rule has been to group all lines with an early axb5 under variation B2.

9.c3 h6 transposes to line C2, but Black may try to do better with 9...b4!?

9.♙e3 ♙xe3 10.fxe3 0-0 leaves White with nothing better than 11.axb5 axb5 transposing to variation B21.

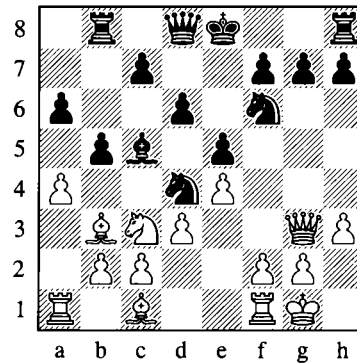
9.♙g5 is premature: 9...h6 10.♙h4 g5!



11.♘g5? White isn't ready for this sacrifice. (11.♙g3N was necessary, but after 11...♙g4 Black is fine.) 11...hxg5 12.♙xg5 ♖g8 13.h4 ♙g4 14.♗d2 ♘d4 15.♘c3 ♗d7! With a decisive advantage for Black, Evans – Adams, Ebbw Vale 1998.

9.♘c3 ♙g4 10.h3 ♙xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘d4 12.♗g3

This position occurred in J. Polgar – Anand, Moscow (blitz) 2009. Here I found an important improvement:



12...♗e7!N

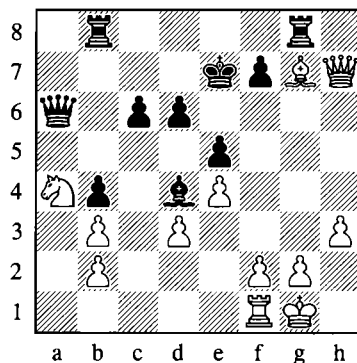
In the game Black exchanged on b3, but the text move preserves the strong threat of ...b4, when the knight cannot move due to the fork on e2. Play may continue:

13.axb5 axb5 14.♙g5 c6

Now 14...b4?! is met by 15.♙xf6 followed by ♘d5 with some initiative for White.

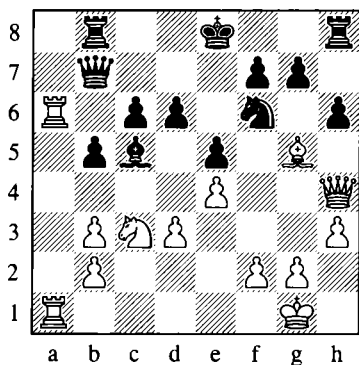
15.♗h4 h6 16.♖a6 ♗b7 17.♖fa1

Another interesting line continues: 17.♙xf6 ♗xa6 18.♙xg7 ♖g8! 19.♗xh6 ♘xb3 20.♗h7 ♗e7 21.cxb3 b4 22.♘a4 ♙d4



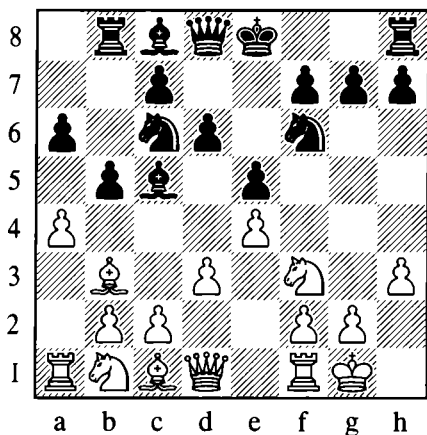
And now White has nothing better than 23.♗h4+! ♗e8 24.♗h7 ♗e7= with a repetition.

17...♘xb3 18.cxb3



18...hxg5! 19.♖xh8+ ♔e7 20.♖xg7 ♜g8
21.♗h6 ♜g6 22.♗h8 ♜g8=
With a repetition.

B1) 9.h3



9...h6

Black responds with a useful pawn move of his own, preventing the ♔g5 pin before castling.

10.c3

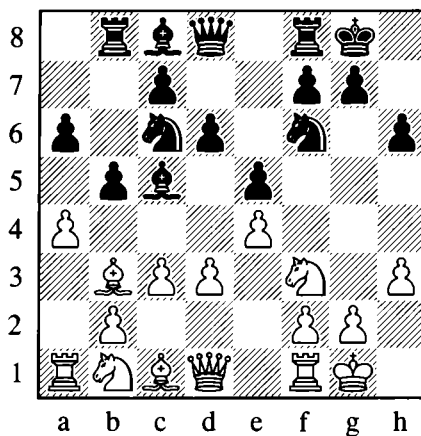
10.♘c3 was played in Ris – Markus, Amsterdam 2004, and here Black's most convincing equalizer would have been: 10...b4!N (The game continuation of 10...0–0 is also playable, and in the event of a subsequent exchange on b5 the game transposes to the 11.♘c3 line given in the notes to variation B22 – see page 120.)

11.♘d5 ♘a5 12.♙e3 ♙xe3 13.♘xe3 ♘xb3
14.cxb3 0–0 15.♞c1 c5 with equality.

10...0–0

With this move we transpose to a position that could also be reached via the move order 8.c3 h6 9.h3 0–0 10.a4 ♞b8 – see the note to Black's 10th move in variation C31 on page 135. The only difference is that, via that move order, I have a minor preference for 10...♙b7 instead of 10...♞b8 as has been played here. Nevertheless Black should have no particular problems if he plays accurately.

I should also mention that, via the present move order, 10...b4N looks insufficient for equality in view of 11.d4 ♙a7 12.♙e3 bxc3 13.bxc3 exd4 14.cxd4 0–0 15.♘c3 ♞e8 16.a5 ♘b4 17.e5±.

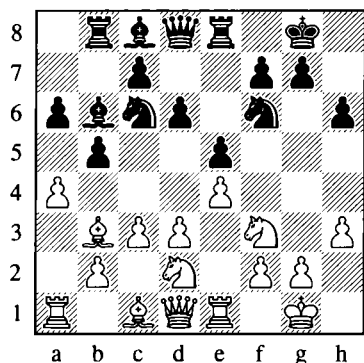


11.d4

11.axb5 axb5 takes us to B22, but we will continue checking to see if White can benefit from delaying the exchange.

11.♘bd2 ♙b6 12.♞e1 ♞e8 is considered under the 11.♞e1 move order given immediately below.

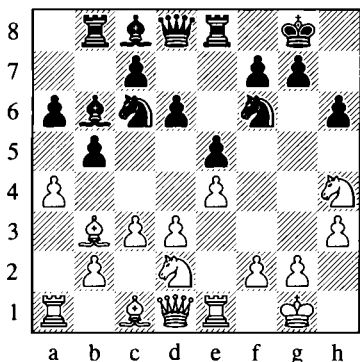
11.♞e1 ♞e8 12.♘bd2 ♙b6



From this position it is worth mentioning two directions for White:

a) One logical continuation is 13.♖f1 ♘e7 14.♘g3 ♘g6, which takes us to variation C34. The move order in question is 8.c3 h6 9.h3 0-0 10.♘bd2 ♖b6 11.♞e1 ♘e7 12.♘f1 ♘g6 13.♘g3 ♞e8 14.a4. Via that move order I have chosen to recommend 14...♖b7 as the main line, but on page 140 I mention that 14...♞b8 is a playable alternative, and it is the latter move to which we have transposed here. And in the event that White exchanges with 15.axb5 axb5, we immediately transpose to the 11.a4 line given in the notes to variation C34 on page 138 (the relevant move order being 8.c3 h6 9.h3 0-0 10.♘bd2 ♖b6 11.a4 ♞b8 12.♞e1 ♘e7 13.♘f1 ♘g6 14.axb5 axb5 15.♘g3 ♞e8).

b) White should definitely avoid 13.♘h4? in view of the following neat refutation:



13...♘g4! 14.hxg4 ♞xh4 and Black won a pawn in Jakovenko – De Vreugt, Yerevan 2000.

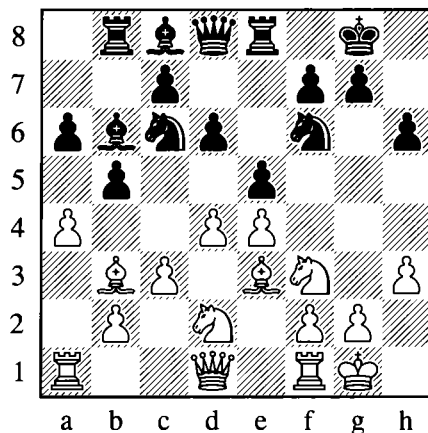
11...♖b6 12.♞e3 ♞e8

12...b4!?N is a fresh idea, but I have chosen to wait for one more move before offering my main improvement.

13.♘bd2

13.axb5 axb5 once again transposes to variation B22.

The knight move was played in Ding Linlin – Petronic, Tianjing 2001. At this point I would like to play by analogy with line B22, where the position is identical except for the exchange of pawns on b5.



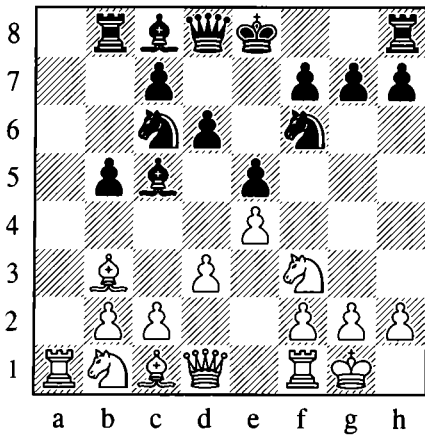
13...exd4N 14.cxd4 ♘b4

I fail to see any good reason for White to delay the exchange any longer.

15.axb5 axb5

We have transposed to variation B22 – see page 122 for the continuation from this position. If for some reason White continues to postpone the exchange on b5, Black can just carry on playing in the same manner as in that line.

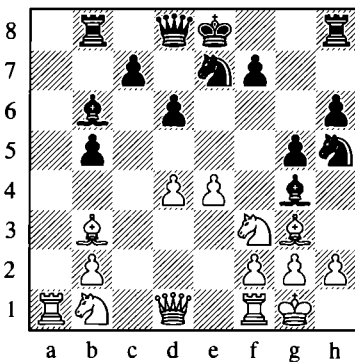
B2) 9.axb5 axb5



After the exchange on b5 White's main options are **B21) 10.♙e3** and **B22) 10.h3**.

10.c3 h6 takes us to variation C2.

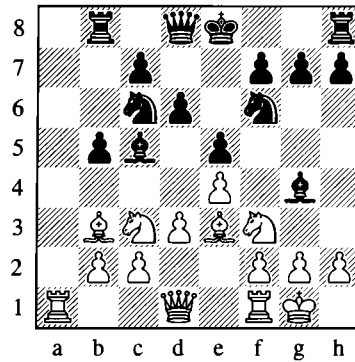
10.♙g5 is premature, just as it was on the previous move (compare the 9.♙g5 note on page 116): 10...h6 11.♙h4 (This is consistent, although objectively White should probably admit his mistake and play 11.♙e3.) 11...g5! 12.♙g3 ♙g4 13.c3 ♘h5 14.♙d5 ♘e7 15.d4 exd4 16.cxd4 ♙b6 17.♙b3



This was Gayer – Fedorchuk, Warsaw 2004. Now after 17...♘c6!N White experiences problems with the d4-pawn, for example 18.h3 ♘xg3 19.fxg3 ♘xd4 20.♙xf7+ ♗e7 21.hxg4 ♘xf3+ 22.♙h1 ♘e5 23.♙h5 ♗f8 24.♗f5 ♗a8 25.♘c3 c6 and White has some problems.

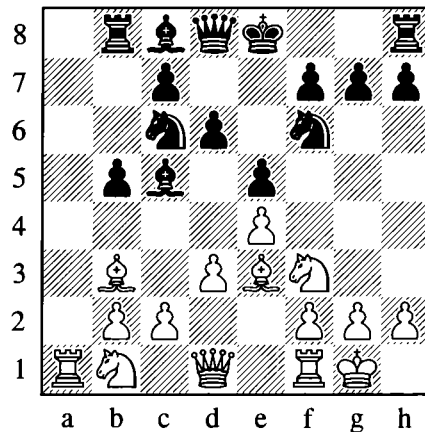
10.♘c3 ♙g4 11.♙e3 (11.h3 ♙xf3 12.♗xf3

♘d4 13.♗g3 was played in Spata – Della Morte, Asuncion 2010, and here Black should play 13...♗e7! transposing to the 9.♘c3 line covered on page 116.)



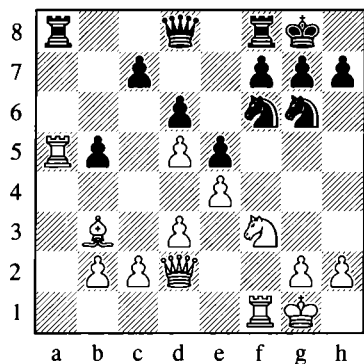
11...♘d4! After forcing the exchange of White's dark-squared bishop Black equalizes easily. 12.♙xd4 ♙xd4 13.h3 ♙xf3 14.♗xf3 0–0 15.♗a2 c6 16.♘e2 ♙b6 17.c3 ♗e7 18.♘g3 In this equal position a draw was agreed in Iordachescu – Loosnikov, Moscow 2008.

B21) 10.♙e3



10...♙xe3 11.fxex3 0–0 12.♘bd2

12.♘c3 ♙e6 13.♘d5 ♙xd5 14.exd5 (14.♙xd5 ♘xd5 [14...♘e7!?N] 15.exd5 ♘e7 16.e4 c6 17.dxc6 ♘xc6 was equal in Organdziev – Godena, Ohrid 2001.) 14...♘e7 15.e4 ♘g6 16.♗d2 ♗a8 17.♗a5



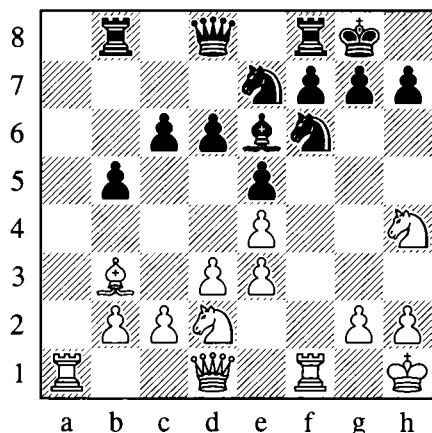
This position was reached in Fressinet – Grischuk, Internet (blitz) 2004, and here Black could have started fighting for the advantage by means of 17...Rxa5!N 18.Qxa5 Qd7, with good chances on the kingside.

12...Qe7 13.Qh4

13.h3 Qg6 14.Ra7 c5 15.Qa1 occurred Kamsky – Anand, Moscow (blitz) 2007. Now the simplest route to equality seems to be: 15...Qe7!?N Intending to reposition the knight on c6. 16.Qa5 (16.Qa2 h6!=) 16...Qxa5 17.Rxa5 Qc6 18.Ra3 Qb4! Black is not worse.

13...Qe6 14.Qh1 c6=

White has obtained no advantage from the opening, and in the following game he came up with a dubious idea.



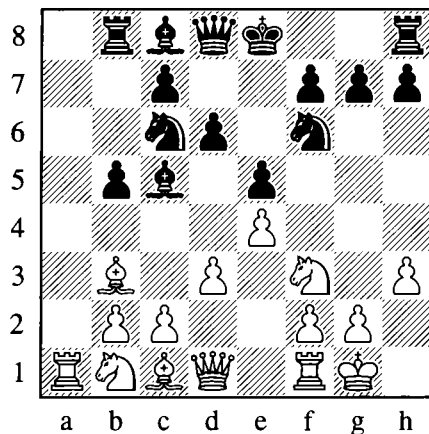
15.c4? bxc4 16.Qxc4

Karjakin – Svidler, Moscow (blitz) 2009. Here Black should have played:

16...d5!N 17.Qb3 Rb4!F

With a clear advantage.

B22) 10.h3



This keeps more tension in the position than the previous line.

10...h6

As usual Black prevents the troublesome pin before castling.

11.c3

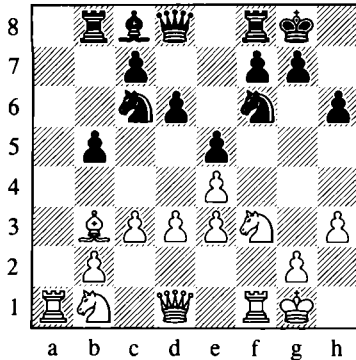
11.Qc3 can be compared with the 10.Qc3 line given on page 117 in the notes to variation B1 – the difference is that here the pawns on a4 and a6 have been exchanged. This means that Black lacks the strong option of ...b4 followed by ...Qa5, but he still experiences no problems. 11...0-0 12.Qe3 Qxe3 13.fxe3 Qe6 14.Qd5 Qxd5 15.Qxd5 Qxd5 16.exd5 Qe7 17.e4 c6! 18.dxc6 Qb6† followed by ...Qxc6 and Black was fine in J. Polgar – Tkachiev, Moscow (blitz) 2009.

11...0-0 12.d4

I checked three other moves as well.

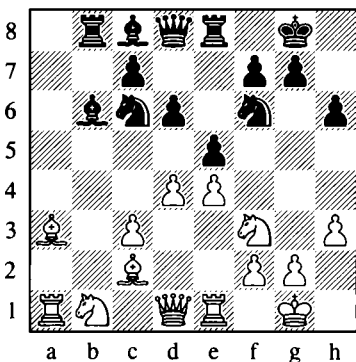
12.♞e1 transposes to the 11.♞e1 line given in the notes to line C2 (via the move order 8.c3 h6 9.a4 ♜b8 10.axb5 axb5 11.♞e1 0–0 12.h3).

12.♙e3 ♙xe3 13.fxe3 occurred in Thipsay – Pon, New Delhi 2010. Black has a solid position and his only misplaced piece is the knight on c6, so the following thematic manoeuvre looks logical:

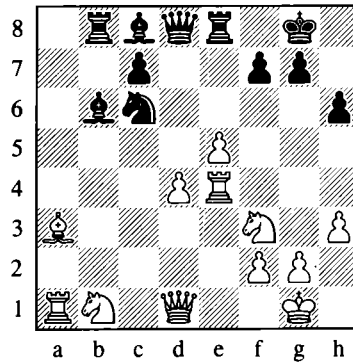


13...♘e7!N Not only preparing ...♘g6, but also ...c5. For example, after 14.♘h4 Black plays 14...c5 15.♘d2 c4! and obtains the better chances.

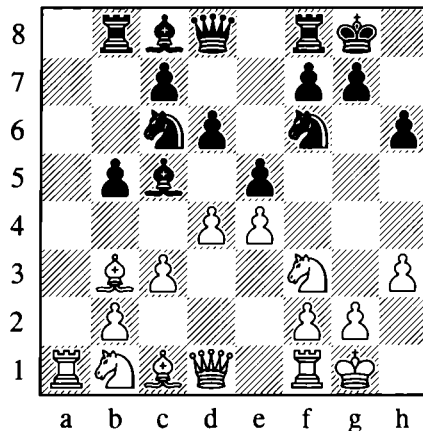
12.♙c2 b4 13.d4 bxc3 14.bxc3 ♙b6 15.♙a3 ♞e8 16.♞e1 was seen in Malakhov – Tkachiev, Sochi 2006, and here I found a way to improve Black's play:



16...exd4!N 17.cxd4 d5! 18.e5 ♘e4 Black's chances are higher, for example: 19.♙xe4 dxe4 20.♞xe4



20...f5! 21.♞f4 g5 22.♞c2 ♞d7! 23.♞xf5 ♞xf5 24.♞xc6 ♙b7+ In material terms White is okay, but in reality Black's bishop pair and development advantage combined with White's shaky pawn centre adds up to a serious advantage for the second player.



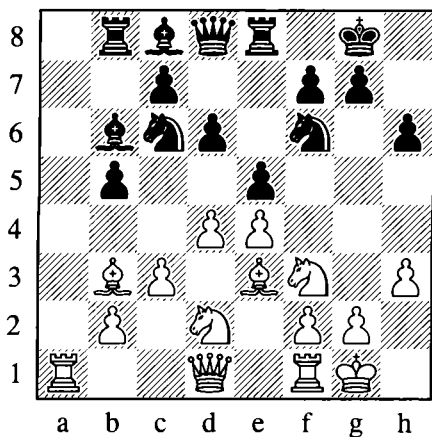
12...♙b6 13.♙e3

13.♞e1 can be met by 13...b4!? transposing to a note in variation C2, reached via the move order 8.c3 h6 9.a4 ♜b8 10.axb5 axb5 11.♞e1 0–0 12.h3 b4!? 13.d4 ♙b6 – see the 11.♞e1 line given on page 126.

13...♞e8 14.♘bd2

We have reached a position from the Archangelsk Variation with one key difference: it is Black to move! (See for instance the games Navara – Tkachiev, Wijk aan Zee 2011, where White played 15.♞e1 here, as well as Kamsky

– Svidler, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011, where he preferred 15.♖c2.)



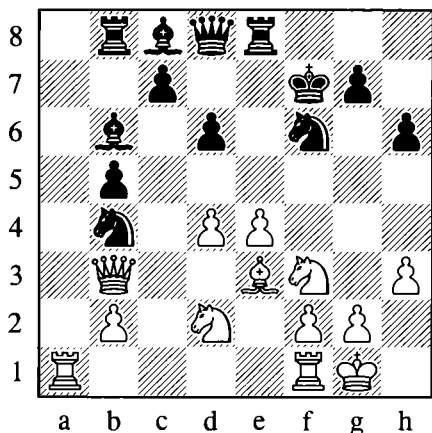
14...exd4 15.cxd4 Qb4?

It was too early for 15...Qxe4? in view of 16.Qxe4 Bxe4 17.Qd5, but after the text move Black is threatening to take the pawn.

16.Qxf7+

Also after 16.♖e2 Qd7! Black is fine.

16...Qxf7 17.♖b3+



17...Qb5!

The knight was about to perish anyway, so Black should take the opportunity to damage the enemy centre.

18.exd5 ♖d7! 19.Qb1!

The knight hurries towards c3. After other moves Black simply plays ...Qb7 and captures on d5 with a positional advantage.

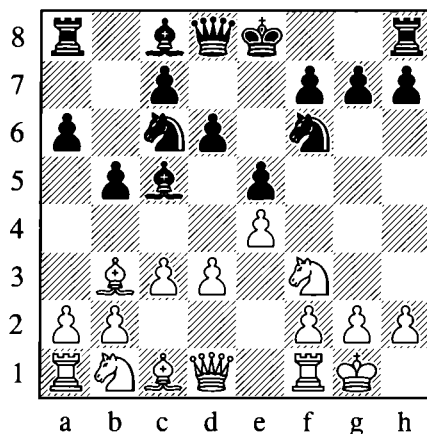
19...♖f5

19...Qb7!?N also makes sense, intending 20.Qc3 Qxd5! 21.Qxb5 (21.Qxb5 ♖e6 is better for Black) 21...Qf8! with some initiative.

20.Qc3 ♖h5 21.Qh2 Qd7

Black had good compensation for the sacrificed pawn in Onoprienko – Todorovic, Budva 2009.

C) 8.c3



The idea behind this move is to save the light-squared bishop from exchange and prepare d3-d4 at an opportune moment.

8...h6

As usual Black prevents the Qg5 pin before castling. Now we will focus on three main paths: C1) 9.Qe3, C2) 9.a4 and C3) 9.h3.

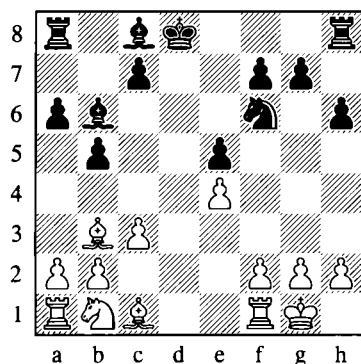
9.Qbd2 has little independent value after 9...0-0, when 10.Qe1 transposes to the 9.Qe1 line noted below, while 10.h3 reaches the main line C3.

9.d4

The central advance is premature as it leads immediately to the Archangelsk Variation with an extra tempo for Black.

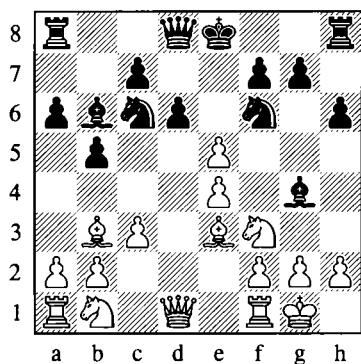
9...♟b6 10.♟e3

10.dxe5 is harmless: 10...♞xe5 11.♞xe5 dxe5 12.♞xd8† ♜xd8



13.♞d2 (After 13.♟xf7, Nesovanovic – Zdravkovic, Belgrade 2007, 13...♞f8N 14.♟d5 ♞xd5 15.exd5 ♟b7 the position is equal although it is White who will have to be slightly more careful.) 13...♞e7 14.♞f3 ♟e6 15.♞xe5 ♟xb3 16.axb3 ♞xe4 17.♟f4 ♞he8= Glaser – Bohak, corr. 2010.

10...♟g4 11.dxe5



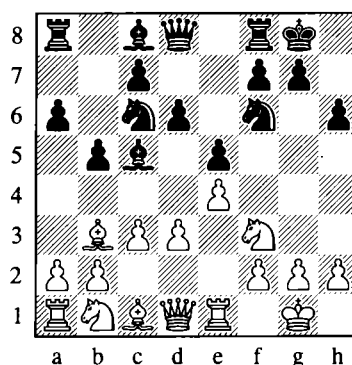
11...♟xf3!N

11...dxe5 12.♟xb6 cxb6 was also okay for Black in Sevillano – Zilberstein, Reno 2007. 12.♞xf3 ♞xe5 13.♞e2 ♟xe3 14.♞xe3 0–0

Black is doing well; the plan is ...♞e8 with pressure against White's centre.

Finally there is:

9.♞e1 0–0



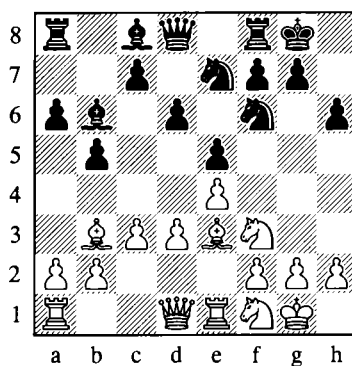
10.♞bd2

10.h3 takes us to variation C3.

10...♟b6 11.♞f1 ♞e7 12.♟e3

12.a4 ♟b7 13.♞g3 ♞g6 14.h3 ♞e8 reaches the main line of C3, reached via the move order 9.h3 0–0 10.♞bd2 ♟b6 11.♞e1 ♞e7 12.♞f1 ♞g6 13.♞g3 ♞e8 14.a4 ♟b7.

12.♞g3 ♞g6 13.h3 is another route to variation C3.

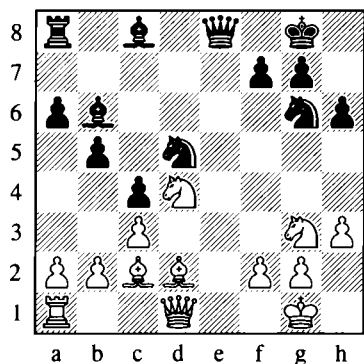


12...c5!

Black is fighting for the centre and restricting White's dark-squared bishop.

13.h3 ♞g6 14.♞g3 d5 15.exd5 ♞xd5 16.♟d2 ♞e8 17.d4 c4 18.♟c2 exd4 19.♞xe8† ♞xe8 20.♞xd4

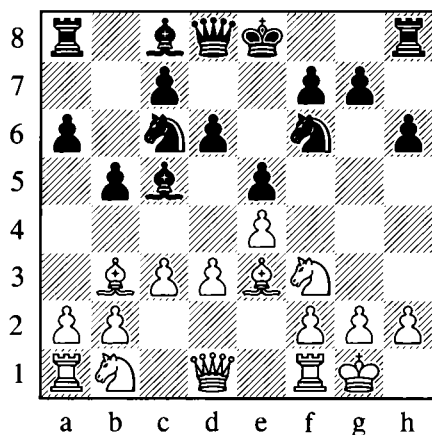
Adams – Naiditsch, Heraklio 2007. Now the most accurate continuation would have been:



20...♙b7N

With a good position for Black.

C1) 9.♙c3



9...0-0

9...♙c3 is quite playable, but there is nothing wrong with allowing an exchange on c5.

10.♘bd2

10.♙xc5 dxc5 gave Black a good position in Pecchiari – Grosar, Nova Gorica 2009, in view of the easy plan of ...♗d6 and ...♞d8 with pressure on the d-file.

10...♙xc3

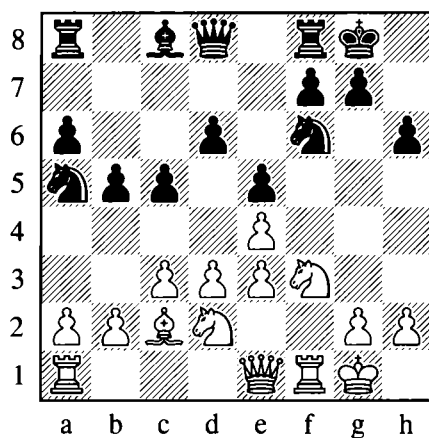
I don't like 10...♙b7 as the bishop will be more useful on the c8-h3 diagonal where it guards the f5-square.

11.fxe3 ♘a5

The bishop is strong on the a2-g8 diagonal, where it puts pressure on f7, so it makes sense to drive it away.

12.♙c2 c5 13.♞e1

Bojkov – Predojevic, Plovdiv 2008. White would like to develop some initiative on the kingside, but I don't believe it will be too dangerous for Black. In this position I recommend:



13...♞b8!N

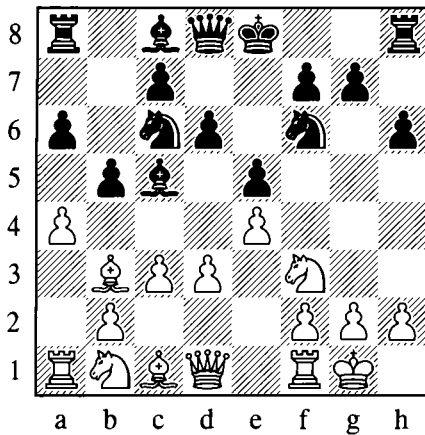
I prefer this to 13...♘c6, which was played in the aforementioned game as well as a few others. The text move has a few purposes, one of which is preparing to answer a future a2-a4 with ...b4. Additionally, the knight is left on a5 in order to prepare ...c4, which also combines well with the rook on the b-file. A possible continuation is:

14.♘h4 c4 15.d4 b4

With a balanced middlegame.

C2) 9.a4 ♞b8

White has tried several different moves in this position, but in my opinion there is only one clear favourite.

**10.axb5!**

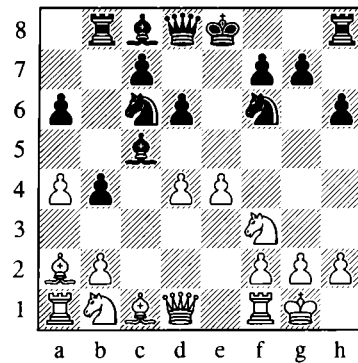
If White neglects to make this exchange then Black will more than likely be able to play ...b4, with good chances to exploit the weakening of White's queenside. (On the previous move 9...b4?! would have been met by 10.d4 when the weakness of the b4-pawn causes Black some problems.) A summary of the alternatives will illustrate this point quite convincingly.

Firstly, let us note that 10.d4 ♖b6 11.♟a3 0–0 leaves White nothing better than 12.axb5 axb5 transposing to the main line below – see 10.axb5 axb5 11.d4 ♖b6 12.♟a3 0–0.

After 10.♞e1, as played in Carlsson – Subirats Ruiz, Barbera del Valles 2011, 10...b4!N 11.d4 ♟a7 12.a5 0–0 Black is fine as White's centre is becoming vulnerable.

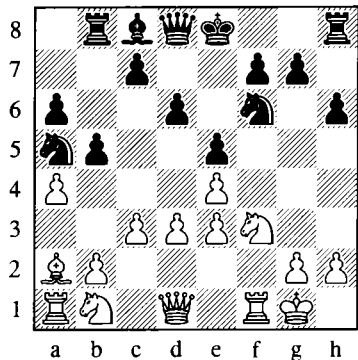
10.♟h4 occurred in Kryvoruchko – Cheparinov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009. This move can also be also met by 10...b4!N 11.♟d2 0–0 when the position of the knight on h4 doesn't look great.

10.♟a2 was seen in Kostenko – Peiris, Ravana 2009. This way White is preparing b2-b4, so once again Black can play 10...b4!N 11.d4 exd4 12.cxd4 and here there is another nice idea:



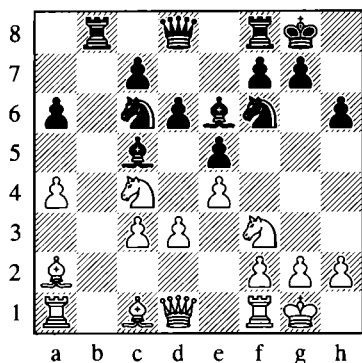
12...♟xd4!? A temporary piece sacrifice. 13.♟xd4 ♟xd4 14.♞xd4 (14.♟xf7+ ♜xf7 15.♞xd4 ♞e8=) 14...b3 Black wins back the piece. 15.♟xb3 (15.e5 dxe5 16.♞xe5+ ♟e6 is also fine for Black.) 15...♞xb3 Black has no problems.

10.♟e3 was played in Efimenko – Karjakin, Kramatorsk 2002. This is better than some of White's other attempts to do without the exchange on b5, but Black is still fine after: 10...♟xe3N 11.fxe3 ♟a5 12.♟a2



12...b4! 13.♟bd2 0–0 White is equal at best, given his inflexible pawn structure and queenside weaknesses.

10.♟bd2 has been played in several games including Grigoriants – Allahverdiev, Abu Dhabi 2006. Here the idea of 10...b4!N works well again, for example: 11.♟c4 bxc3 12.bxc3 ♟e6 13.♟a2 0–0

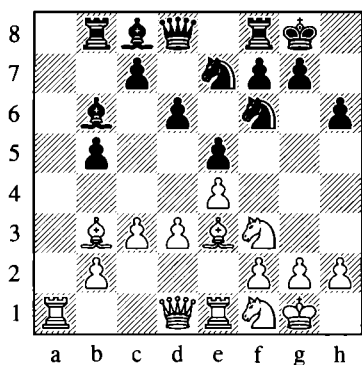


Black is fine. It's important to note that 14.d4? is strongly met by 14...xe4! 15.♖d3 (15.dxc5 ♖xc3 16.♗c2 ♖xa2 17.♗xa2 ♖a5 18.♖fd2 ♖xc4 19.♖xc4 ♖b4+) 15...♖xc3! 16.♗xc3 ♖xd4+ and Black wins material.

10...axb5 11.d4

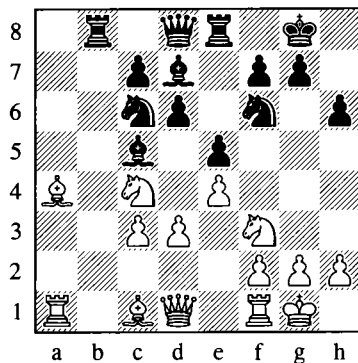
This is the most forcing continuation. I also checked three other moves:

11.♖bd2 0-0 12.♞e1 ♖b6 Before bringing the knight to g6 Black retreats the bishop, anticipating an advance of the enemy d-pawn. 13.♖f1 ♖e7 14.♖e3



14...c5! 15.h3 ♖g6 16.♖g3 c4! 17.♖xb6 ♞xb6 18.♖c2 cxd3 19.♖xd3 ♖e6 with a pleasant position for Black in Akopian – Adams, Yerevan 2008.

11.♖a3 0-0 12.♖c2 b4 13.♖e3 bxc3 14.bxc3 ♞e8!? 15.♖a4 (15.h3!?) 15...♖d7 16.♖c4



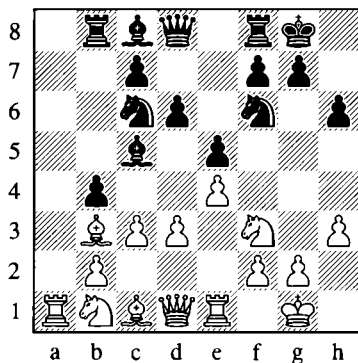
16...♖e7 Black transfers the knight to g6. 17.d4 exd4 18.cxd4 ♖b4 19.e5 ♖fd5 20.♖d2 ♖xa4 21.♗xa4 ♖xd2 22.♖cxd2 A draw was agreed in this equal position in Hracek – Kurnosov, Rijeka 2010.

11.♞e1 0-0 12.h3 b4!?

I like this move, which aims to simplify the queenside and open the b-file for the rook.

12...♖b6?! transposes to an unfavourable version of the 10.♞e1 line mentioned under variation C3, which occurs after the moves 9.h3 0-0 10.♞e1 ♖b6 11.a4 and now 11...♞b8?! (instead of the recommended 11...♖b7) 12.axb5 axb5 as discussed on page 135.

However, 12...♞e8!? is a worthy alternative.

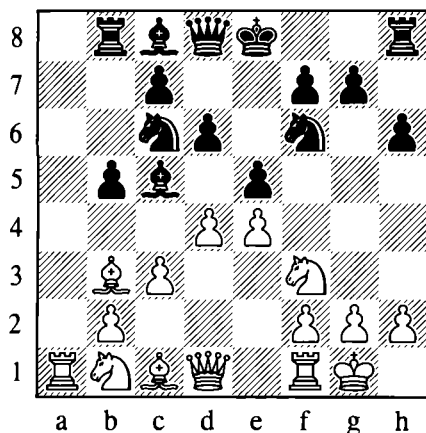


13.♖bd2

White can snatch a pawn by means of 13.d4 ♖b6 14.d5 ♖a5 15.cxb4, but this allows Black to obtain strong counterplay with

15...♖xb3 16.♗xb3 ♘h5! 17.♙e3 f5!
 13...bxc3 14.bxc3 ♙d7 15.♘f1 ♙b6 16.♙e3
 ♘e7 17.♗c2 ♘g6

With a roughly equal position in Leko – Anand, Moscow (blitz) 2009.

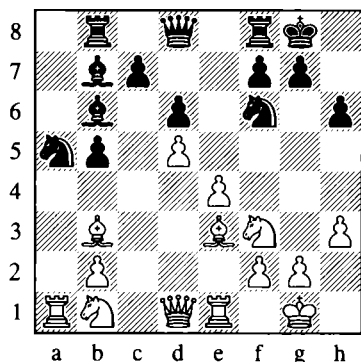


11...♙b6

Not for the first time in this chapter, we have transposed to an Arkhangelsk Variation with White having wasted a tempo on d3-d4. However, on this occasion Black's 'free' tempo has been spent on ...h7-h6, which is not always the most useful move, although we will see some lines where it adds definite value to Black's position.

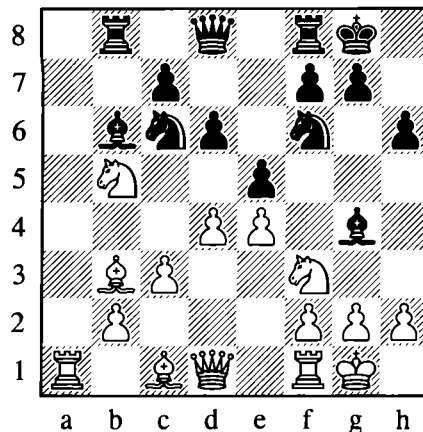
12.♘a3

This is White's usual plan. The following alternative is pretty harmless: 12.h3 ♙b7 13.♗e1 0–0 14.♙e3 exd4! 15.cxd4 ♘a5 16.d5



Becerra Rivero – Godena, Havana 1999.
 Now the immediate 16...c6!N equalizes without problems, for example: 17.dxc6 ♙xc6 18.♘c3 ♙xe3 19.♗xe3 ♘xb3 20.♗xb3 b4 21.♘d5 ♙xd5 22.exd5 ♗e8 23.♗xe8† ♗xe8 24.♘d4 ♗e4 25.♘c6 ♗e8=

12...0–0 13.♘xb5 ♙g4



Black obtains good compensation for the sacrificed pawn. The position is almost identical to the main line of the Arkhangelsk Variation, except for the extra move ...h6 which is only likely to help Black.

From here I had to decide in what level of detail to analyse the position – not an easy decision at all! On the one hand I found only two games on the database, and given that Black has a clear extra tempo over a known line, it was tempting to make a quick summary with the conclusion that Black was doing well.

On the other hand, Black does indeed have an extra tempo, but the ensuing positions are altogether different from the ones that occur throughout most of this book. The play can be extremely double-edged, and in such situations, would the majority of readers really take much comfort from the knowledge that they have been granted the free move ...h6?

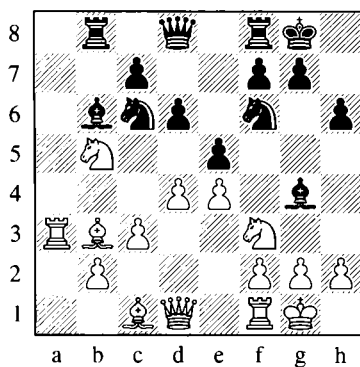
In the end, after consulting with my editor, I decided to offer a relatively detailed analysis, not only covering the two moves that have been played from this position, but also checking some of the other critical moves which have been played many times in the Archangelsk position without ...h6. Some might consider this overkill, but others will want to know how to handle this part of the repertoire. Thus we will now examine four paths: **C21) 14.♖e1N**, **C22) 14.♙c2N**, **C23) 14.d5** and **C24) 14.♙e3**.

I checked a couple of rook moves as well:

14.♖a4?!N is a mistake both here and in the Archangelsk for similar reasons: 14...♙d7! Now the rook turns out to be misplaced on a4. 15.♖e1 Retreating the rook from a4 would allow Black to take the e4-pawn. 15...♙a5! 16.c4 ♗xb3 17.♙xb3 exd4 Black is better.

14.♖a3N

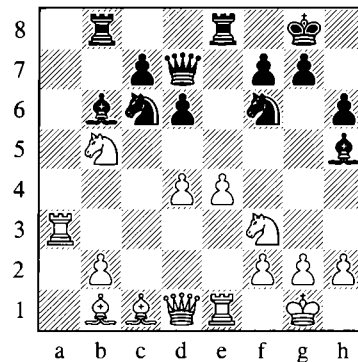
This move allows Black to take advantage of the position of the pawn on h6. In fact, Karjakin once reached the analogous position with the pawn on h7, and chose to spend a tempo moving it to h6, so in the present game we really are a full tempo up. Black can exploit this as follows:



14...exd4! 15.cxd4 ♖e8 16.♖e1 ♙d7 17.♙c2 ♙h5! 18.♙b1

Taking the bishop away from a potential attack from a knight on b4.

Another possible line is 18.♖a4 d5 19.e5 ♗e4 20.♗c3 ♗xe5 21.dxe5 ♙xf2† 22.♙h1 ♙xf3 23.gxf3 ♗xc3 24.bxc3 ♙xe1 25.♙xe1 ♙h3! and Black has the initiative.



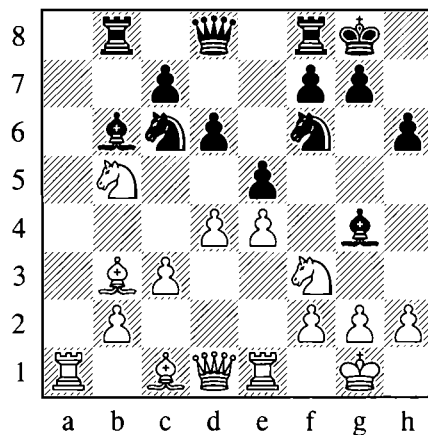
18...♗e7! 19.♙a4

In the analogous position from the Archangelsk Variation White has the strong option of 19.♗c3 ♗g6 20.♙g5, but here the extra ...h6 move makes that impossible.

19...♗g6

Black has full compensation for the pawn.

C21) 14.♖e1N



14...♙xf3 15.gxf3 ♗h5! 16.♙h1 ♙f6

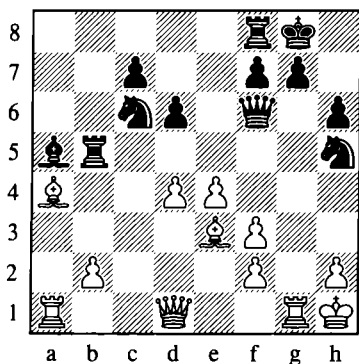
The main line in the analogous position from the Archangelsk Variation is 17.♖g1 with

the idea to meet 17...exd4 with 18.♙g5, which is impossible here, so White must settle for a more modest scheme of development.

17.♙e3 exd4 18.cxd4 ♖a5 19.♙d5

I also analysed:

19.♙g1 ♜xb5 20.♙a4



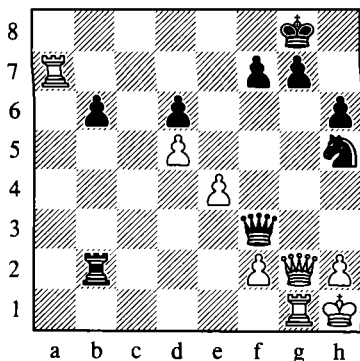
20...♜fb8!

Once again Black takes advantage of the ...h6 move. With the pawn on h7 this move would not work due to the back rank problem.

21.♙xb5 ♜xb5 22.♜e2 ♘a7 23.d5 ♜xb2 24.♜f1

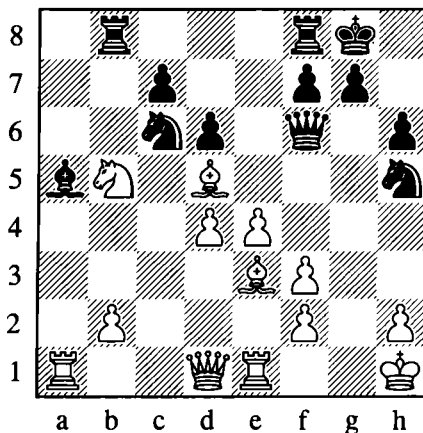
The alternative is 24.e5!? ♜xe5 25.♜d3! ♜b5 26.♙xa7 ♜xd5 and Black obtains sufficient compensation for the sacrificed exchange.

24...♙b6 25.♙xb6 cxb6 26.♜xa7 ♜xf3† 27.♜g2



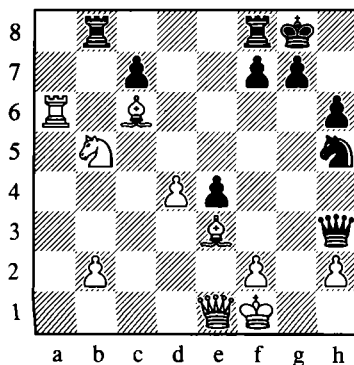
27...♘g3†! 28.hxg3 ♜h5† 29.♜h2 ♜f3†
With perpetual check.

The text move was once played by Anand in the position with the pawn on h7, against Piket in 1998. Here the position of the pawn makes no real difference, so we can just copy Black's play for a few moves.



19...♙xe1 20.♙xc6 d5! 21.♜c1

21.♜a6 enables Black to force a draw in a similar manner: 21...dxe4 22.♜xe1 ♜xf3† 23.♘g1 ♜g4† 24.♘f1 ♜h3†



Now 25.♘e2? leads to disaster: 25...♘f4† 26.♘d1 (or 26.♘d2 ♘d3 27.♜a1 ♘b4+) 26...♜h5† 27.♘c2 ♘d3 28.♜c3 ♜xb5+

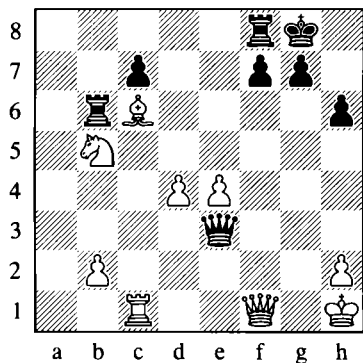
Correct is therefore: 25.♘g1 ♜g4†=

21...dxe4!

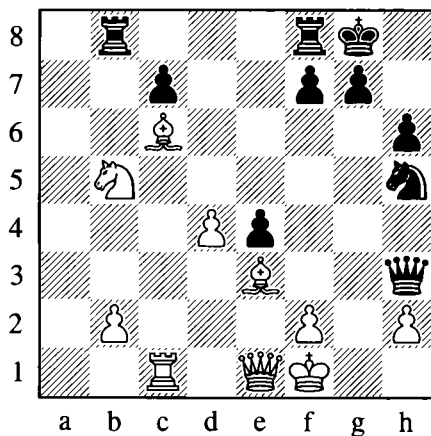
This strong intermediate move seems to work also with the h-pawn on h7, though Piket retreated the bishop to a5 and was able to draw.

22. ♖xe1

22.fxe4 leads to the same result: 22...♙xf2
 23.♙xf2 ♖xf2 24.♖xh5 ♖b6! 25.♖f5 ♖e3
 26.♖f1



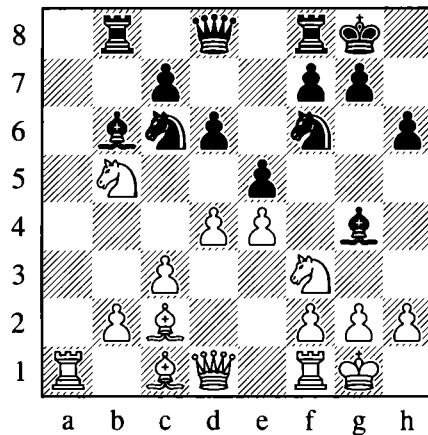
26...♖xc6! 27.♖xc6 ♖xe4† 28.♖g2 ♖e1† with a perpetual.

22...♖xf3† 23.♙g1 ♖g4† 24.♙f1 ♖h3†**25.♙e2??**

For illustrative purposes, we will see what happens if White tries too hard to play for a win. He should of course settle for 25.♙g1 ♖g4† and a draw.

25...♙f4†! 26.♙d2 ♙d3 27.♖f1 ♖f5! 28.d5
 ♖fd8! 29.♖c2 ♖xd5 30.♙xd5 ♖xd5 31.♙c3
 ♖d7+

With a decisive attack.

C22) 14.♙c2N

This move has been played in over a hundred games in the position with the pawn on h7.

14...d5!?

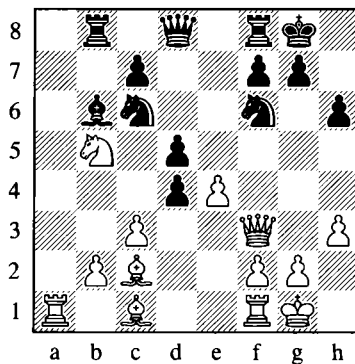
14...exd4 is the most popular continuation in the Archangelsk position. It is playable here too, but I couldn't find a way to make much use of the extra ...h6 move. The text move is rare, but it gives Black more chances to make use of ...h6.

15.exd5

White's other logical option is:

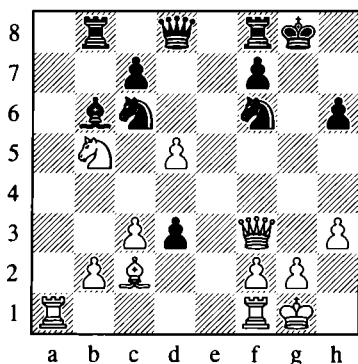
15.h3 ♙xf3 16.♖xf3 exd4

In the analogous position with the pawn on h7 Ivanchuk moved his bishop to g5, which is impossible here.



17.exd5

17.♙xh6 leads to a forced draw: 17...gxh6 18.exd5 d3! (18...♘d5?! is worse, although in the rather forced line 19.♚e4! d3 20.♚xd3 ♖f6 21.♚g3† ♕h8 22.♚f4 ♕g7 23.♚ad1 ♚e7 24.♚fe1 ♚c5 25.♚e3 ♖h5 26.♚e4 ♖f6 27.♚h4 ♖h5 28.♖d4! ♚g5 29.♚xg5† hxg5 30.♖xc6 ♙xe3 31.♖xb8 ♚xb8 32.fxex3 ♚xb2 33.♙d3 ♖f6 Black retains chances for a draw thanks to his active rook.)

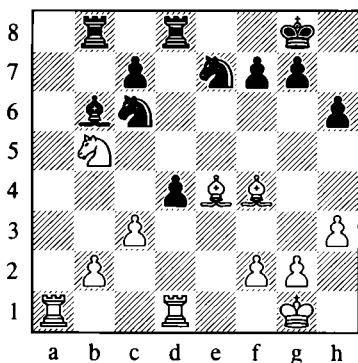


19.♙xd3 ♖xd5 20.♙e4 ♖ce7 21.c4 c6 22.cxd5 cxb5 23.♚g3† ♕h8 24.♚e5† ♕g8 25.♚g3†=

7...♚xd5 18.♚xd5 ♖xd5

This position is known with the h-pawn on h7, where Black generally manages to solve his problems. It's obvious that the pawn on h6 can't do any harm for Black, moreover it might be useful there, for example:

9.♙e4 ♚fd8 20.♚d1 ♖de7 21.♙f4

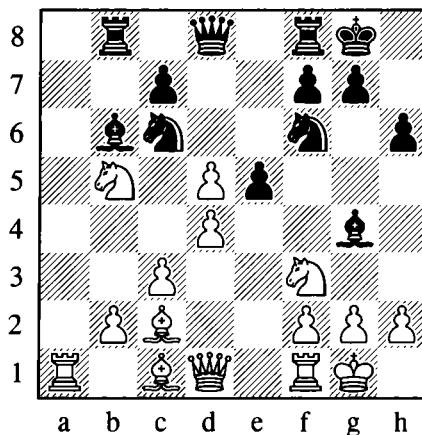


1...g5!

Black takes advantage of the pawn on h6 to solve the back rank problem.

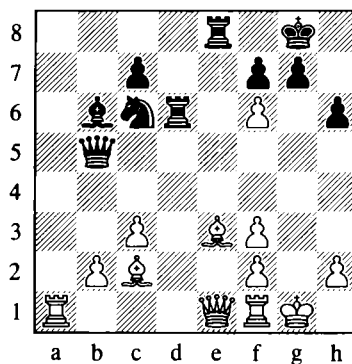
22.♙h2 dxc3 23.bxc3 ♚xd1† 24.♚xd1 ♙xf2† 25.♕xf2 ♚xb5 26.♙xc7 ♚c5! 27.♚c1 ♖c8! 28.g4 ♖e5

The endgame is balanced; Black has two knights against two bishops, but his superior piece coordination makes up for it.

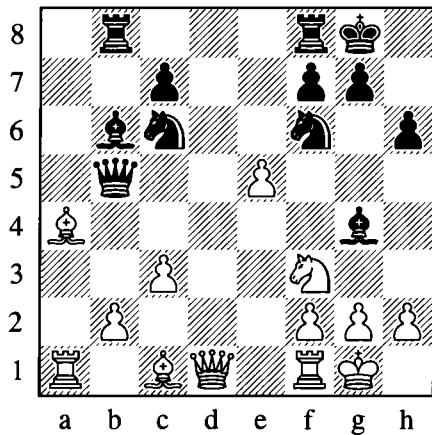


15...♚xd5 16.dxe5 ♚xb5 17.♙a4

With the pawn on h7 White could play 17.exf6 ♚bd8 followed by capturing on h7, but that is not an option here. Instead play may continue: 18.♚e1 ♚fe8 19.♙e3 ♙xf3 20.gxf3 ♚d6!

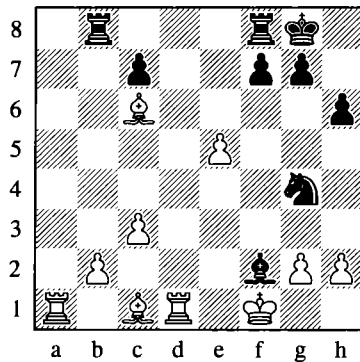


Black has some initiative as 21.fxg7?! only leads to trouble for White: 21...♖e5! 22.♙d1 ♙xe3 23.fxe3 ♚xb2 24.♙e2 ♚d2 25.♚f2 (or 25.♚b1 ♚xc3†) 25...♖d3 26.♙xd3 ♚xf2†

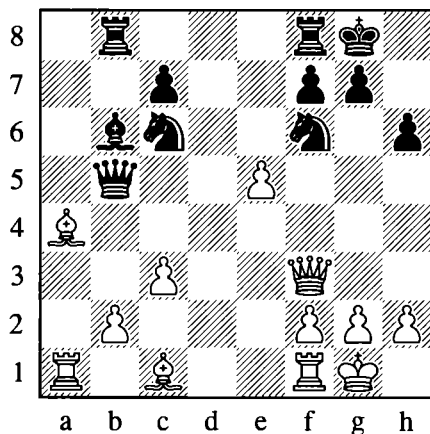


17...xf3 18.xf3

I also analysed: 18.xb5 dxd1 19.xc6 (19.exf6? a7!?) 19...d4 20.xd1 xf2† 21.f1 (21.h1 dxe5=)



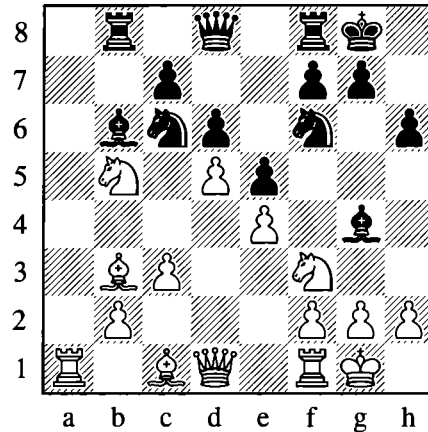
21...e3! 22.b4 b6 23.d7 xc1 24.xdc1 dxe5 With a roughly equal position.



18...dxe5 19.xb5 dxf3† 20.gxf3 xf2† 21.f2 xb5

This line seems to represent the critical test of 14...d5!?. White is marginally better, but I do not believe Black should have much trouble holding the endgame.

C23) 14.d5



This was played in one of the two games I found on the database from the previous position.

14...d7 15.c2

Now I would like to introduce a novelty, although the same move is well known from the position with the pawn on h7.

15...d7!N

This gives good attacking chances, and the pawn on h6 proves to be of great value in several key lines.

I also checked 15...d6 16.h3, Petrosian – Karthikeyan, Al Ain 2008, and now 16...hx3!N 17.gxh3 d7 is critical, although White does have the option of 18.d6! (18.c4? hx3+–) 18...cxd6 19.h2 leading to an unclear situation. Black has obvious compensation for the pawn, but White has his chances too.

16. ♖a3

The alternative is risky for White:

16.c4 ♖g6

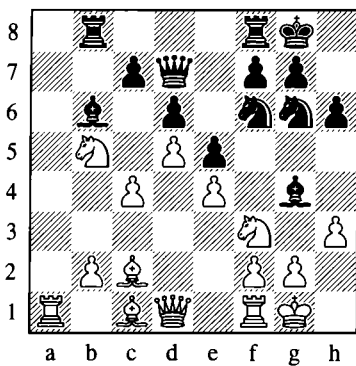
Black has a dangerous initiative, as shown by the following illustrative line:

17.h3?

White should prefer one of the following alternatives, although neither of them is great for him:

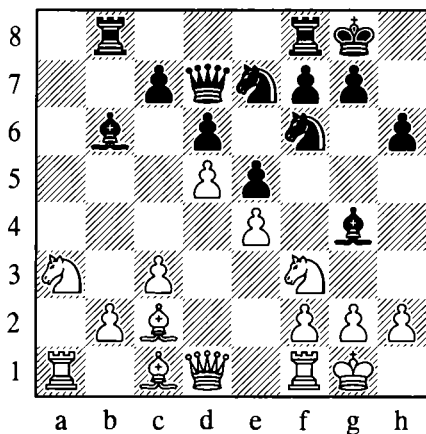
17. ♖d3 ♖h5 18. ♖b3 ♖hf4 19. ♗xf4 ♖xf4 20. ♗d1 f5 with good attacking chances.

After 17. ♖a3 ♖h4 White will be forced to sacrifice an exchange on f3.



17... ♗xh3! 18.gxh3? ♖xh3—+

In the analogous position from the Archangelsk White's only defence is ♖g5, which is obviously not going to work here.



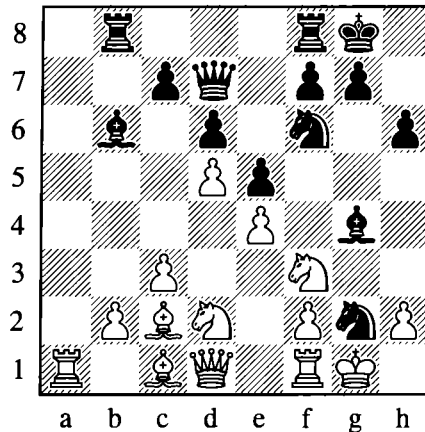
16... ♖g6!

Once again the ...h6 move is useful as White is unable to prevent ...♖h4 by putting his bishop on g5. Play may continue:

17. ♖c4 ♖h4 18. ♖cd2 ♖xg2!

This forces a draw.

A riskier alternative is 18... ♖h5!? 19.h3 ♖f4 20.hxg4 ♖xg4 21. ♖xh4 ♖e2† 22. ♖xe2 ♖xe2 with double-edged play in a position with a queen against three minor pieces.



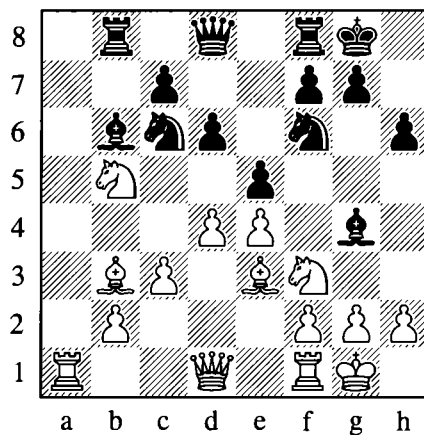
19. ♖xg2 ♗h3† 20. ♖h1 ♖g4 21. ♖c4 ♗xf1 22. ♖xf1

22. ♖xb6? ♖b5—+

22... ♖xf2† 23. ♖g1 ♖h3† 24. ♖h1 ♖f2=

The game ends in perpetual check.

C24) 14. ♗e3



Finally we come to the move that was chosen by Peter Leko, albeit in a rapid game.

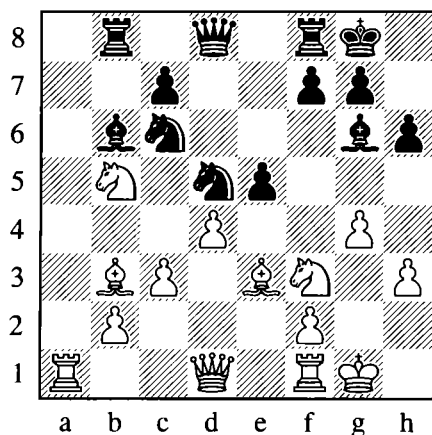
14...d5!

This strong blow in the centre is the best way to make use of Black's extra tempo.

15.exd5 ♖xd5

In the corresponding position from the Arkhangelsk with the pawn on h7 instead of h6, White would have the strong option of ♕g5! here.

16.h3 ♖h5 17.g4 ♕g6



18.♖a3?

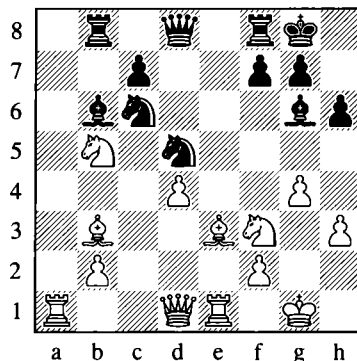
This error might have landed White in hot water.

18.♖e1N

This developing move is better, although Black can continue in a similar fashion regardless.

18...exd4 19.cxd4

19.♖bxd4 also leads to approximate equality: 19...♖xe3 20.♖xe3 (20.fxe3 ♖d6 is fine for Black.) 20...♖xd4 21.cxd4 (Or 21.♖xd4 ♖d6! with an equal position as White can't keep his knight on d4.) 21...c5! (21...♖d6!?) 22.♖e5 cxd4 23.♖f3 ♖d6 24.♖xg6 ♖xg6 with a roughly balanced position.



19...♖e8! 20.♖c3 ♖xe3 21.♖xe3 ♖xd4

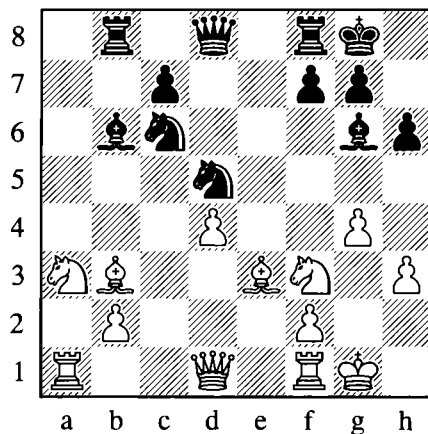
21...♖xe3!? 22.fxe3 ♖a5 gives Black some initiative for the pawn.

22.♖xe8† ♖xe8 23.♖xd4 ♖xd4 24.♖xf7† ♖xf7 25.♖xd4 ♖xb2=

With obvious equality.

18...exd4 19.cxd4

Now in the game Leko – Kramnik, Miskolc (rapid) 2007, Black missed a good opportunity.



19...♖d6!N

This gives Black some advantage, as pointed out by Berkes and Meszaros. In their annotations they present the following lines:

20.♖g2

20.♖c4? ♖xe3!→

20...♖f4† 21.♖xf4 ♖xf4†

That concludes the coverage of the Archangelsk comparison with Black's extra ...h6 move. For some this will be complete overkill, but for others I hope it will be useful and/or interesting.

C3) 9.h3

This has been White's most popular move order, although a plethora of transpositions await us.

9...0–0

Here I analysed **C31) 10.a4**, **C32) 10.d4**, **C33) 10.♟e3** and **C34) 10.♞bd2**. The major theoretical branches can be found in the last of these.

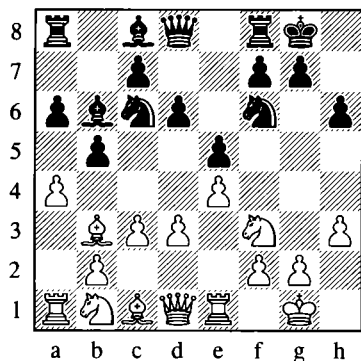
The other move worth mentioning is:

10.♞e1

This has actually been the most popular move order, but it almost always transposes to variation C34 at some point.

10...♟b6 11.a4

11.♞bd2 immediately takes us to variation C34 on page 137.



11...♟b7!

This is an important moment. In the event of 11...♟b8 White can cause problems with: 12.axb5 axb5 13.♞a3! (13.♞bd2 ♞e7 14.♞f1 ♞g6 15.♞g3 transposes to the 11.a4 line given in the notes to variation C34, via

the move order 10.♞bd2 ♟b6 11.a4 ♟b8 12.♞e1 ♞e7 13.♞f1 ♞g6 14.axb5 axb5.) 13...♟a8 Critelli – Friedel, Peabody 2007, and now 14.♞d2!N ♟a6 15.♞h4 brings White some initiative.

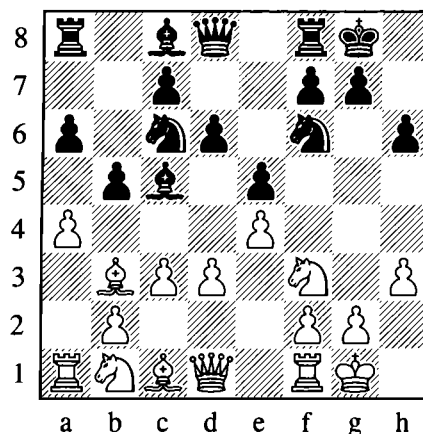
12.♞bd2 ♞e7

Here White has nothing better than the thematic knight manoeuvre:

13.♞f1 ♞g6 14.♞g3 ♟e8

We have reached a position that will be considered under the move order 10.♞bd2 ♟b6 11.♞e1 ♞e7 12.♞f1 ♞g6 13.♞g3 ♟e8 14.a4 ♟b7 – see variation C34, with the relevant position occurring on page 140.

C31) 10.a4



10...♟b7

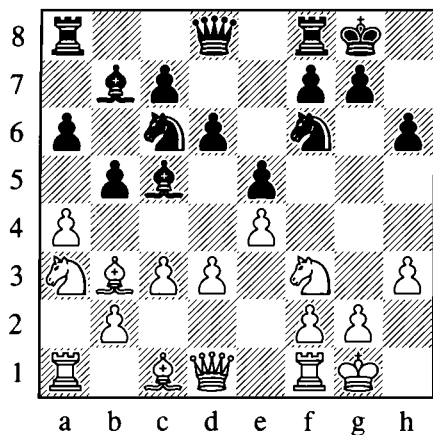
10...♟b8 is the main alternative, and was considered in variation B1 via the move order 8.a4 ♟b8 9.h3 h6 10.c3 0–0. Black is doing okay there, but given the choice, I slightly prefer the bishop move in the present position.

11.♞a3

11.♞e1 ♟b6 transposes to the 10.♞e1 ♟b6 11.a4 ♟b7 line noted immediately before the start of this variation.

11.♟e3 ♟xe3 12.fxe3 occurred in Parkanyi – Bagi, Budapest 2010, and now the thematic

manoeuvre 12...♖e7N 13.♗bd2 ♘g6 would have given Black a pleasant position.



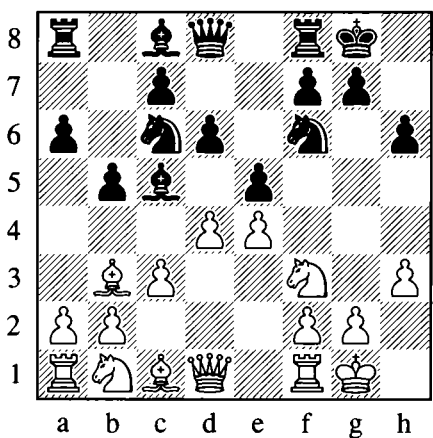
11...♗d7!N

After 11...b4 a draw was agreed in Mihok – Roussel Roozmon, Budapest 2008, but I prefer the text move.

12.♙d2 ♘e7 13.♗c2 ♘g6

Black experiences no problems at all.

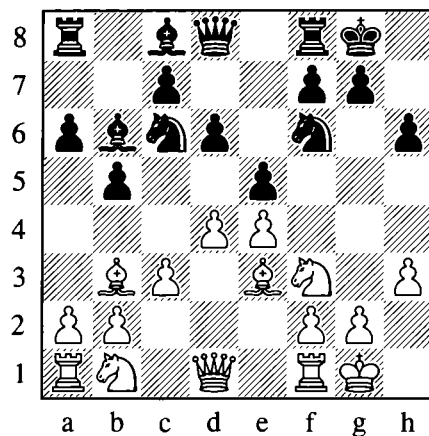
C32) 10.d4



This move is premature and leads to another form of Archangelsk with an extra tempo for Black. Fortunately this one does not require as much analysis as the version we encountered earlier in variation C2.

10...♙b6 11.♙e3

This position appears in several games in the database, but usually with White to move. At this point in the game Palos – Gorelov, Werfen 1992, Black could have made best use of his extra tempo with:

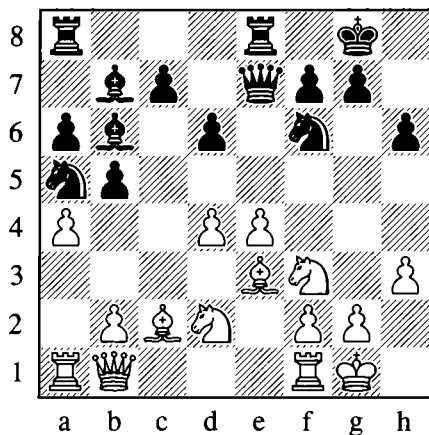


11...exd4!N 12.cxd4

Or 12.♗xd4 ♘a5! 13.♙c2 c5 14.♗f3 ♗c4 15.♙c1 ♙b7 16.♙e1 ♙e8 17.b3 ♗e5 and Black is better.

12...♗a5! 13.♙c2 ♙b7 14.♗bd2 ♙e8 15.♙b1 ♙e7 16.a4!?

16.♙e1 ♗xe4 17.♙xh6 f5 favours Black.



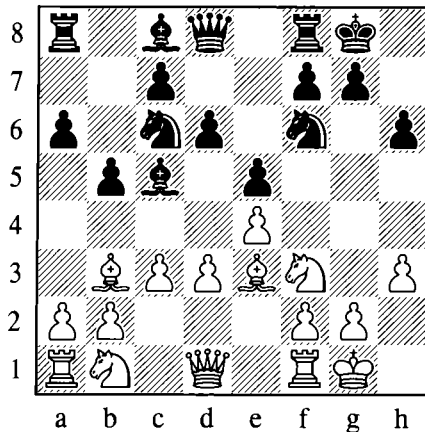
16...♗c4

16...♖xe4? doesn't work, as after 17.♗xe4 ♕xe4 18.♕xe4 ♜xe4 19.♞xe4 ♝xe4 20.axb5 the natural recapture 20...axb5?? is impossible due to 21.b4 and White wins a piece.

17.♗xc4 bxc4 18.a5 ♕a7 19.♞a2 ♗xe4 20.♞xc4 d5

Black is fine.

C33) 10.♕e3



Another rare and pretty harmless move.

10...♕xe3 11.fxex3 ♕e6 12.♗bd2 d5!?

At this point I advise the reader to turn back to page 81 in Chapter 4, and regard the comments after the 8.♕e3 move given in the note before the start of variation C1. There I cautioned the reader against playing the move ...d5 in positions after the dark-squared bishops had been exchanged, on account of the weakness of the c5-square. The present case is an exception, mainly because Black is already quite well developed.

That being said, there is nothing wrong with normal moves such as 12...♞d7N and 12...♗e7N.

13.♞e2

In the event of 13.d4 Black can answer with the coldblooded 13...♞e8!.

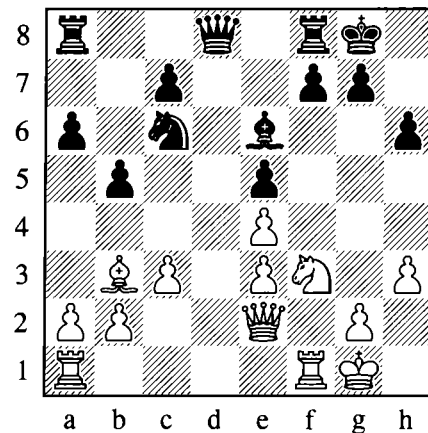
Attempting to play in the manner described in the aforementioned Worrall line given on page 81 will not work. For one thing, after 13.exd5 Black has the option of 13...♕xd5 when White is unlikely to be able to make use of the c5-square, and must instead take measures against the positional threat of ...e4.

13...dxe4

13...♞d7!?N is also decent.

14.♗xe4 ♗xe4 15.dxe4

This position was reached in Ugodnikov – Shirov, Toronto (simul) 2010. Here I would like to introduce the following novelty:



15...♞e7!?N 16.♕d5 ♗a5!

An important resource.

17.♕xa8 ♕c4 18.♞e1 ♕xf1 19.♕d5 ♕c4 20.b3 ♕xd5 21.exd5 ♗b7

With a roughly equal position.

C34) 10.♗bd2

Finally we come to the main theoretical path.

10...♕b6

Black makes the typical prophylactic retreat before employing the ...♗e7-g6 manoeuvre.

11.♞e1

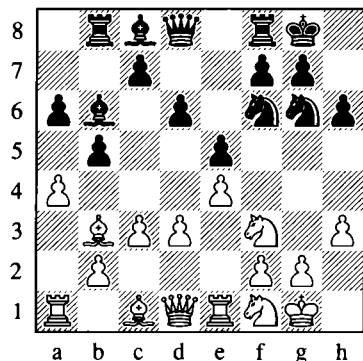
11.a4 ♖b8

The inclusion of these moves doesn't seem to change much.

11...♗b7!? also looks quite playable.

12.♗e1 ♖e7 13.♖f1 ♖g6

13...c5!?N deserves attention.



14.axb5 axb5 15.♖g3 ♗e8 16.♖h2

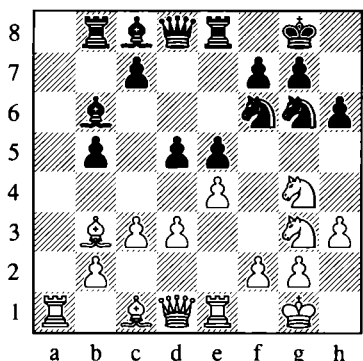
An unfortunate idea.

After 16.♗e3N the position is roughly balanced.

16...d5! 17.♖g4?

This is already a serious mistake.

17.exd5 is better, although after 17...♖xd5 Black is at least equal.

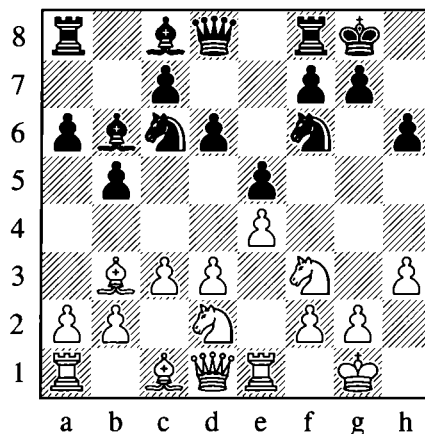


17...♖xg4 18.hxg4 ♗h4!

White must have missed this move.

19.♗e3 ♗xg4

Black was a healthy pawn up in Dominguez Perez – Caruana, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009.



11...♖e7

A typical manoeuvre for both the Spanish and the Italian. Black transfers the knight to g6 from where it will get access to f4.

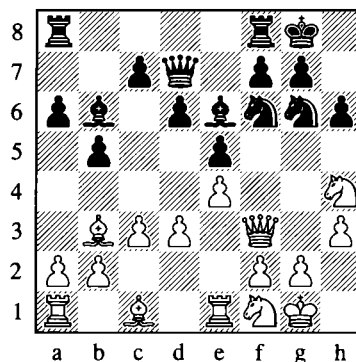
12.♖f1

White can go for a different knight move:

12.♖h4 ♗e6

12...♖c6!?N is cheeky but playable.

13.♖f1 ♗d7 14.♗f3 ♖g6



15.♗xe6

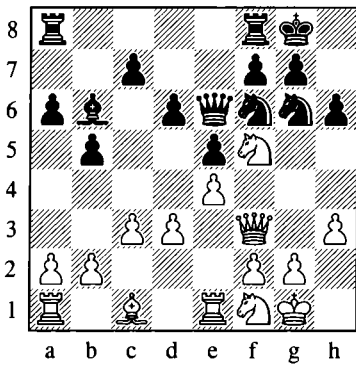
15.♖f5 ♗xf5 16.♗xf5 ♗xf5 17.exf5 was played in H. Hunt – Emms, Southend 2006, and now 17...♖f4!?N is the simplest route to equality.

15...♗xe6

15...♖xh4?? is refuted by 16.♗xf6!.

16.♖f5

Houska – Lahno, Heraklio 2007.

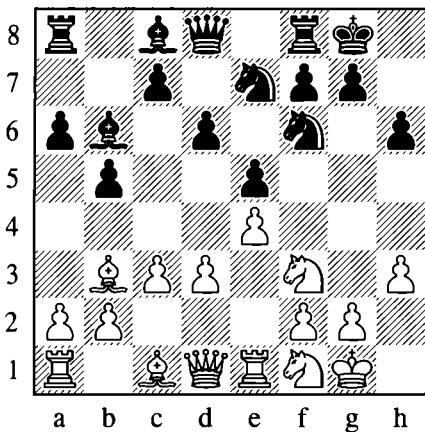


16...♞ad8!?N

The game continued with 16...d5, but I prefer to give this move proper support in order to take away some of White's tactical resources. I analysed the following logical line:

17.h4 d5 18.h5 dxe4 19.dxe4 ♖f4 20.♙xf4 exf4 21.♞xf4 ♜fe8! 22.♜lg3 ♞e5! 23.♞xe5 ♞xe5 24.♞e2 ♞d3!

With ideas including ...♜g4 and ...g6, Black has good compensation for the pawn.



12...♜g6 13.♜g3

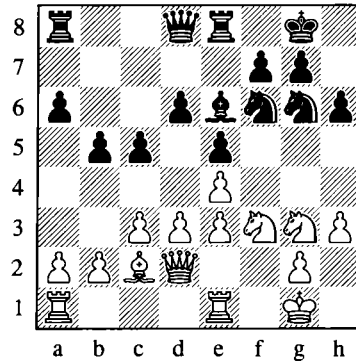
If we took back the ...b5 move and put the dark-squared bishop on a7 we would get a well-known theoretical position from the Italian.

13...♞e8 14.a4

After 14.♜h2 in Akopian – Leko, Yerevan

(rapid) 2008, the immediate 14...d5!N looks strong. For example, 15.♞f3 ♜h4 16.♞e2 ♙e6! and Black is by no means worse.

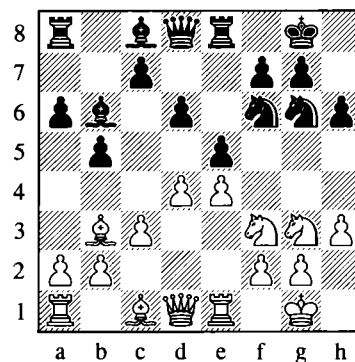
White has also tested: 14.♙e3 ♙xe3 15.fxe3 ♙e6 16.♙c2 (16.♙xe6 fxe6=) 16...c5 17.♞d2



This position occurred in the game Arakhamia-Grant – Emms, England 2011. In the game Black put the queen on b6 and got a good position, but I slightly prefer 17...♞c7N with the idea of ...d5, when I don't see a single problem for Black, to say the least.

14.d4

This position occurred in a few games, including Akopian – Kasimdzhanov, Sochi 2007. Now I would like to offer a novelty.



14...exd4!N

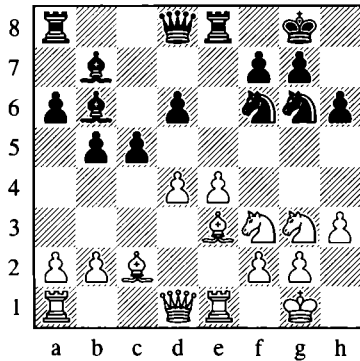
This dynamic approach is an interesting departure from the solid alternatives of

14...c5 and 14...♙b7.

15.cxd4 c5

Black mobilizes his queenside and puts pressure on White's centre.

16.♙e3 ♙b7 17.♙c2

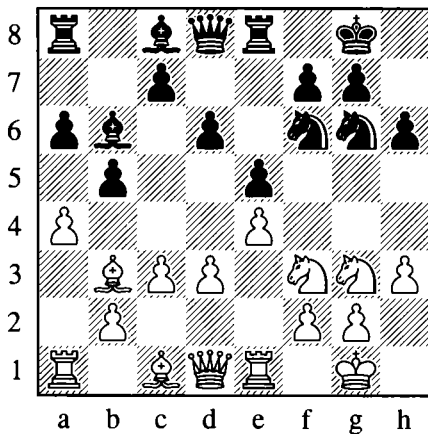


17...cxd4!

17...♙xe4?! is strongly met by 18.♙xe4 ♙xe4 19.♙g5! hxg5 20.♙xe4 ♙c8 21.♙xg6 fxg6 22.♙b3+! c4 23.♙a3 with a serious initiative, as it is difficult for Black to protect his weaknesses.

18.♙xd4 ♙c8=

The position bears some resemblance to the Chigorin System, although the bishop does not normally find its way to the b6-square in that line. Black's active pieces and pressure on the e4-pawn fully compensate for his weakness on d6.



14...♙b7

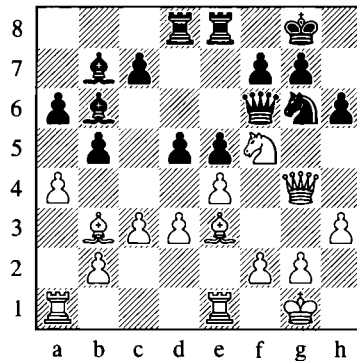
Comparing this variation to the analogous position from the Italian, one of the advantages of having the b-pawn on b5 is the availability of the b7-square for the light-squared bishop.

14...♙b8!? is also reasonable, and in the event of 15.axb5 axb5 we transpose to the earlier 11.a4 variation noted on page 138.

15.♙f5!?

This sharpens the position. The ensuing complications could be dangerous over the board, but after precise play Black should obtain good prospects. We should check two other continuations:

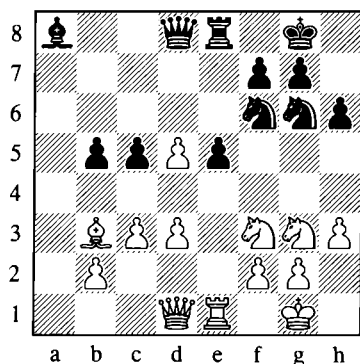
15.♙h2 d5 16.♙g4 ♙xg4 17.♙xg4 ♙f6 18.♙e3 ♙ad8! 19.♙f5 This position occurred in Petrosian – Fressinet, Moscow 2006. Here I would like to offer the following improvement, which seems to equalize the position.



19...♙c8!N 20.axb5 axb5 21.♙xb6 cxb6! The point of this recapture is to retain pressure on f5. 22.g3 Preventing the ...♙f4 idea, but the knight has a good secondary option. 22...♙e7 23.♙f3 ♙xf5 24.exf5 ♙xf5 25.♙xd5 ♙xf5 26.♙xf3 ♙xd3= Black is fine.

15.♙e3 ♙xe3 16.♙xe3 (Or 16.fxe3 d5 17.exd5 ♙xd5 18.♙xd5 ♙xd5 19.e4 Morgado – Pinus,

Cordoba 1994, 19...♖b7!?N 20.axb5 axb5 21.♞xa8 ♖xa8 with roughly equal chances.) 16...d5 17.axb5 axb5 18.♞xa8 ♞xa8 19.♞e1 c5 20.exd5

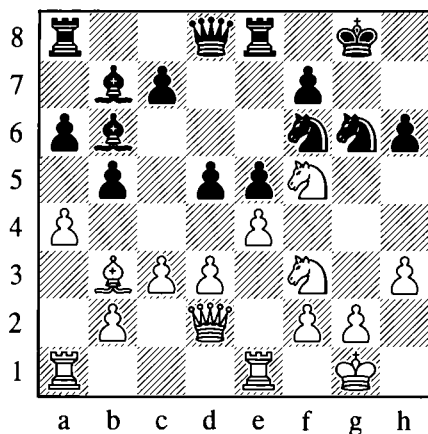


Carlsen – Tkachiev, Moscow (blitz) 2008. Now after 20...♗xd5N Black's chances are higher, for instance 21.d4 exd4 22.cxd4 ♞xe1† 23.♗xe1 c4♣ with a better pawn structure for Black.

15...d5 16.♞xh6?!

This interesting piece sacrifice is a logical follow-up of the previous move. Unfortunately for White, it does not quite achieve the goal against precise defence.

16...gxh6 17.♖d2



17...♗f4!N

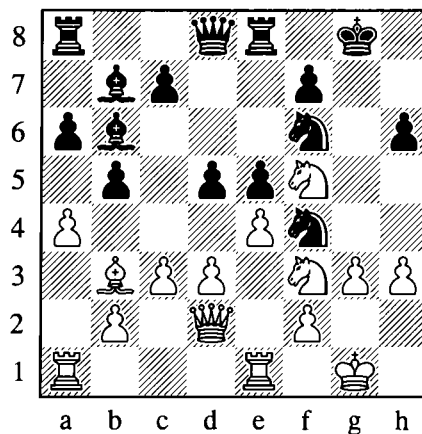
This seems to be the best defence. In the game Fedorchuk – Rizouk, Navalmoral 2008 Black opted for 17...♗h7 18.exd5 ♖f6 19.♗xh6† ♗f8 20.axb5 axb5 21.♞xa8 ♞xa8, which led to an unclear position with mutual chances.

18.g3

18.♗xh6† ♗f8 19.♗xe5 ♗6h5 20.♗exf7 ♖h4 reaches a wild position where Black's chances are higher.

After the seemingly strong 18.♗xe5?! Black has a powerful reply: 18...♗6h5! 19.♗xh6† ♗h7 20.♗eg4 (20.♗exf7 ♖h4!–+ is highly unpleasant.) 20...dxe4 21.♞xf7 ♖g5! With a decisive advantage. Black's extra piece is much more important than White's pawns.

By the way, the inclusion of the moves 18.a5 ♞a7 does not change much, as 19.♗xe5 is still met by 19...♗6h5!♣ with the initiative.



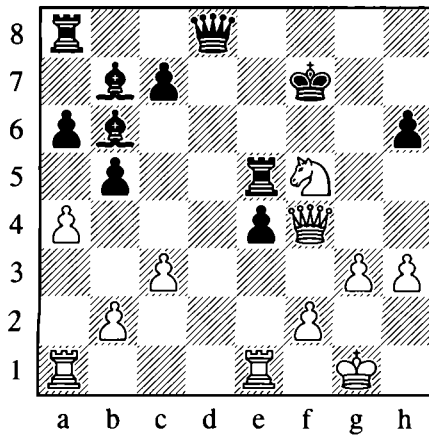
18...♗xe4!

This tactical strike gives Black a fine game.

19.dxe4 dxe4 20.♞xf7†

White has nothing better.

20...♗xf7 21.♗xe5† ♞xe5 22.♖xf4



22...♖xf5! 23.♗xf5† ♕f6 24.♗xf6†

Otherwise White would experience problems with his king.

24...♔xf6 25.axb5 axb5 26.♖xa8 ♕xa8

Black has some winning chances in this endgame.

Conclusion

We have reached the end of a rather exhaustive investigation into the 5.d3 b5 6.♗b3 ♕c5 system. Black must be ready for various types of positions, including a sharp version of the Archangelsk Variation where it is important to know how best to make use of the extra ...h6 move. These and other nuances make the ...♕c5 system a tough one to master, but the reward for doing so will be an active yet reliable repertoire, as well as a greater understanding of chess in general.

Chapter 7

5.0-0

5.0-0 ♖xe4 – Sidelines



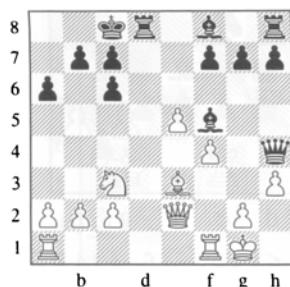
Variation Index

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♖c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♖f6 5.0-0

5...♖xe4

A) 6.♗xc6	144
B) 6.♗e2	145
C) 6.♗e1 ♖c5	147
C1) 7.♖xe5	147
C2) 7.♖c3!?	149
C3) 7.♗xc6 dxc6	150
C31) 8.d4	151
C32) 8.♖xe5 ♗e7	152
C321) 9.b3	153
C322) 9.d4 ♖e6	154
C3221) 10.c3	154
C3222) 10.♗e3 0-0	156
C32221) 11.♖c3	156
C32222) 11.c4!	157

B) after 14.f4



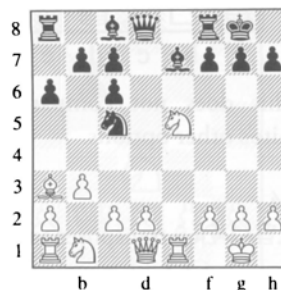
14...♗g3!N

C3) note to the 8th move



9...♗g4!N

C321) after 10.♗a3!?



10...♗f5!N

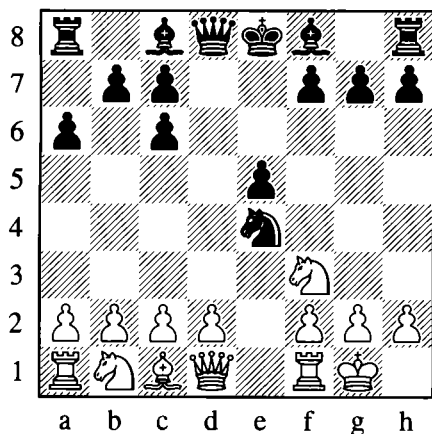
1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♞c6 3.♟b5 a6 4.♟a4 ♟f6
5.0-0 ♟xe4

What can be more logical than capturing a central pawn? Of course the issue is not quite that simple, as Black is behind in development with his king still two moves away from castling. In the remaining part of the book my task will be to demonstrate the correctness of Black's policy.

One of the additional positive features of the Open Spanish is that it reduces White's options compared to the closed positions occurring after 5...♟e7. Nevertheless there are a number of sidelines available, and in this chapter we will look at three of them: A) 6.♟xc6, B) 6.♟e2 and C) 6.♟e1.

6.♟xe5!? is a funny move order, but after 6...♟xe5 7.♟e1 ♟c5 8.♟xe5† ♟e7 we reach variation C1 which can be found on page 147.

A) 6.♟xc6 dxc6



This does not compare favourably with White's other options.

7.d4

7.♟e2 ♟c5 transposes to variation B below.

7.d3 ♟c5 8.♟xe5 ♟e7 can be compared to variation C, but here White has prematurely

committed himself to a modest set-up with d2-d3, so the most he can hope for is equality.

7.♟e1 can be met by 7...♟d6!? (7...♟c5 transposes to variation C3, but Black can try to exploit his opponent's decision to exchange on c6 prematurely.) 8.♟xe5 ♟e7 9.d4 0-0 with a comfortable position for Black, as in Von Schuetz – Wemmers, Berlin 1881.

7...exd4!

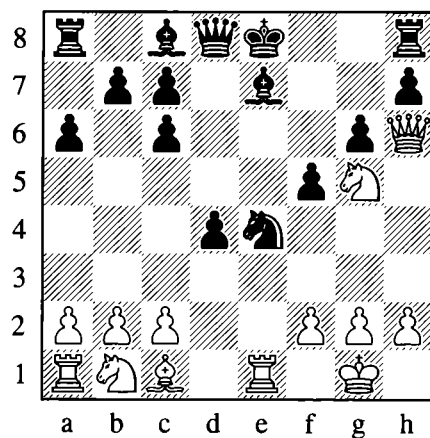
The position before this move has occurred in approximately 170 games, but in the overwhelming majority of them it has been White to play. Clearly Black should be comfortable after any sensible move, but the text is the most ambitious.

8.♟e1 f5 9.♟g5 ♟e7 10.♟h5†N

This seems like a better attempt than 10.♟xe4 fxe4 11.♟h5† g6 12.♟h6 ♟f5± as played in Lebedev – Neimanis, Soviet Union 1986.

10...g6 11.♟h6

Now Black can secure some advantage with the following accurate continuation:

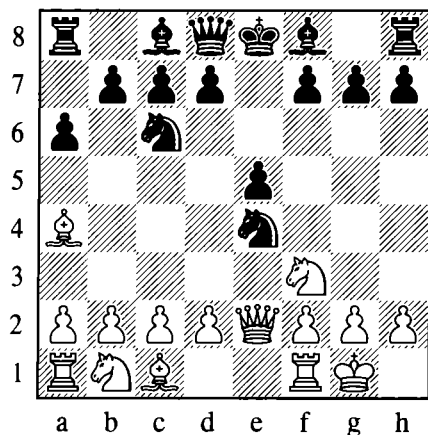


11...♟f8! 12.♟h3 h6 13.♟xe4 fxe4 14.♟xe4† ♟e7 15.♟b3 ♟f5 16.♟e1 ♟d7

White can restore material equality by

taking the pawn on b7, but he will still be a long way from equality due to his opponent's mighty bishops.

B) 6. ♖e2



6...♖c5 7.♗xc6

A questionable alternative is:

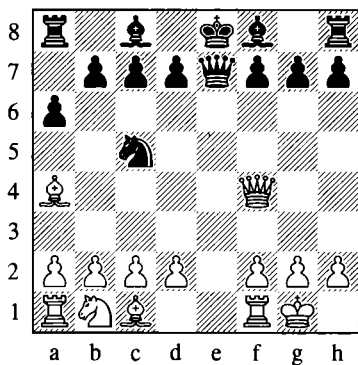
7.♖xe5?!

Unfortunately for White, this gives up the bishop pair for little compensation.

7...♖xe5 8. ♖xe5 ♗e7 9. ♖f4

9. ♖xe7 ♗xe7 10. ♗b3 ♖xb3 11. axb3 d5 is slightly better for Black.

9. ♖d4 was played in the old game Schliemann – Beger, Berlin 1866, and now after the most accurate 9...b6!N (9...♖xa4 10. ♖xa4 transposes to the main 9. ♖f4 line) 10. ♖c3 ♗b7 11. ♖d5 ♖d6 12. ♗e1 ♗e6 13. c4 0–0–0! ♖ Black obtains some advantage.



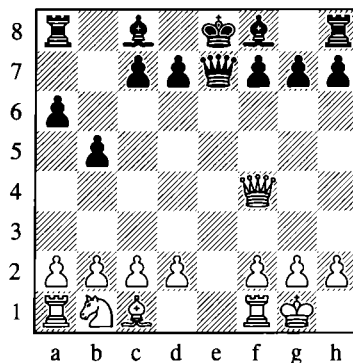
9...♖xa4 10. ♖xa4

Now Black has a pleasant choice.

10...b5!

Safer but less ambitious is 10...♖b4 11. ♗e1 ♗d8 12. ♖xb4 ♗xb4 with roughly equal chances, Tardif – Demarre, Issy les Moulineaux 2009.

11. ♖f4



11...♖e6!

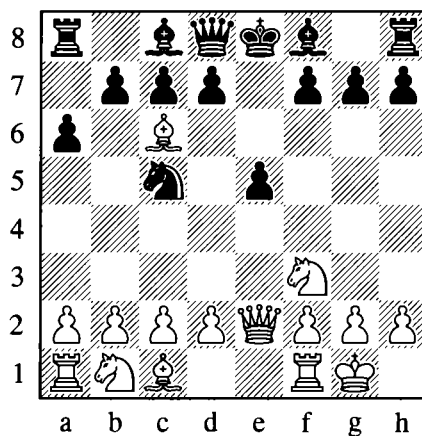
Black fights for the advantage by offering a pawn.

12. ♖xc7

Otherwise Black will play ...♗d6 anyway, with good chances in a position with equal material.

12...♗d6 13. ♖c3 0–0

Black has a serious initiative for the sacrificed pawn.

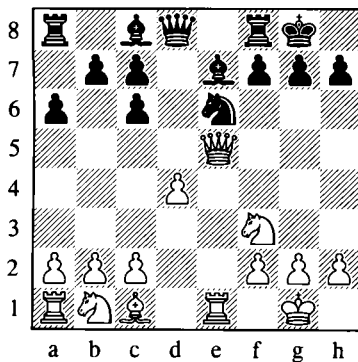


7...dxc6 8.d4

This has been White's usual plan, intending to secure a kingside majority by taking on e5 with the d-pawn. Other moves are harmless:

8.♖xe5 ♗e7 (8...♖e6!?N also makes sense) was fine for Black in Sauter – Giacomini, Davos 2008, as he was able to complete development while keeping the bishop pair.

The other possibility is: 8.♜xe5† ♖e6 9.♗e1 (9.♖c3 ♗d6 10.♜e2 0–0 11.d3 ♞e8 with some edge for Black in Diaz Barrios – Korneev, El Sauzal 2004.) 9...♗e7 (But not 9...♗d6?? 10.♜xg7+– Zapata – Calle Soto, Yucay 2001.) 10.d4 0–0



11.♖c3? (White should settle for 11.c3 as in Yumpo – Vasquez, Peru 1996, although Black retains a good position after 11...♞e8N.) 11...♗f6 12.♜e4 ♖xd4 13.♖xd4 ♜xd4 Black had a useful extra pawn in Winawer – Makovetz, Dresden 1892.

8...♖e6 9.dxe5 ♖d4! 10.♖xd4 ♜xd4

After exchanging these knights Black's remaining pieces will develop smoothly, and his strong bishops – especially the unopposed light-squared one – should ensure him of at least equal chances. The pawn structure is the same as in the famous Berlin Endgame, but here there is a huge difference as Black still has the right to castle, which should guarantee

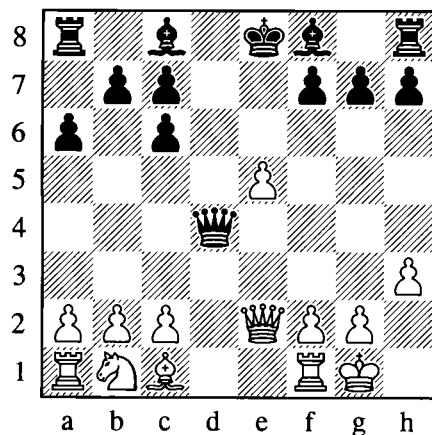
both the safety of his king and the ability of his rooks to develop quickly and actively.

It is worth noting that an almost identical position can be reached via the Berlin Defence after the moves 3...♖f6 4.0–0 ♖xe4 5.d4 ♖d6 6.♗xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♖f5 8.♜e2 ♖d4 9.♖xd4 ♜xd4. The only difference is the position of the black pawn on a6 instead of a7, which is unlikely to alter the evaluation in any serious way.

11.h3

11.♖d2 ♗f5! 12.♖f3 ♜e4 13.♜xe4 ♗xe4 gave Black a slightly better endgame in Mamatov – Geldimamedov, Riga 1975. The light-squared bishop is tremendous.

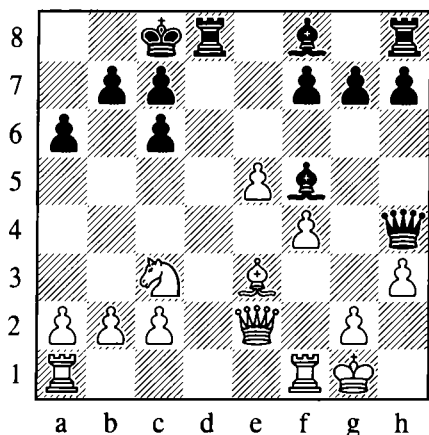
The reason for White's last move can be seen in the following line: 11.♞d1 ♗g4! (11...♜g4!? 12.f3 ♜g6 13.♗e3 ♗f5 was also fine for Black in Lurie – Bykhovsky, Tel Aviv 2002.) 12.♞xd4 ♗xe2 13.♖c3 ♗h5 14.♗g5 h6 15.♗f4 ♞d8 Black was slightly better in Barstatis – Lein, Soviet Union 1967.

**11...♗f5 12.♖c3**

White is also struggling after: 12.♞d1 ♜e4 13.♜xe4 ♗xe4 14.c4 ♗c2! Inviting the rook to a bad square. 15.♞d2 ♗f5 16.♖c3 ♗b4! Dueckstein – Karaklajic, Zagreb 1955.

12...♞h4!

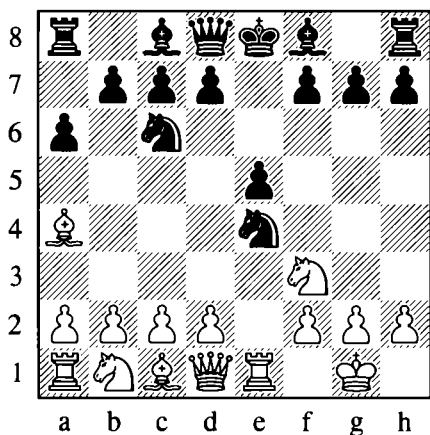
Black removes the queen from her vulnerable position in the centre of the board.

13.♙e3 0–0–0 14.f4**14...♞g3!N**

Black should not be satisfied with equality. The only game on the database to reach this ended quickly after 14...♙xh3 15.gxh3 ♞g3† 16.♖h1 ♞xh3† 17.♖g1 ♞g3† 18.♖h1 and a draw was agreed in view of the perpetual in Reidman – Bisguier, New York 1954.

5.♙f3 ♞g6 16.♙c1 h5

Black's chances are higher thanks to his bishop pair and control over the light squares.

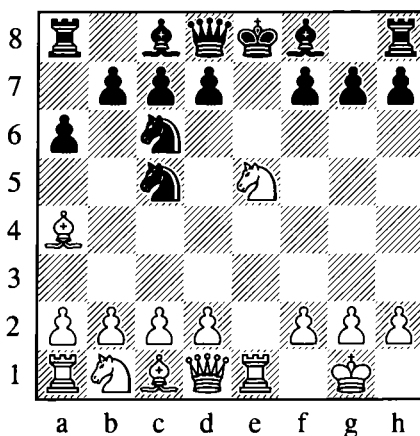
C) 6.♙e1

This is the only really significant alternative to 6.d4. White will try to exploit his development advantage, but the drawback is that he will have to trade his valuable light-squared bishop.

6...♖c5

After this natural move we will examine C1) 7.♖xe5, C2) 7.♖c3!? and C3) 7.♙xc6.

7.♙b3? makes no sense. In Le Nguyen Nhu – Nguyen Khanh Ngoc, Hanoi 1995, Black should have responded with 7...d6!N 8.d4 ♖xb3 9.axb3 ♙e7 10.dxe5 0–0 11.exd6 ♞xd6 with better chances thanks to the bishop pair in an open position.

C1) 7.♖xe5**7...♖xe5 8.♙xe5† ♙e7 9.♖c3**

After 9.♙b3 ♖xb3 10.axb3 0–0 11.d4 d5 12.♙f4 c6 Black was at least not worse in Babic – Gazarek, Croatia 2009.

9...0–0

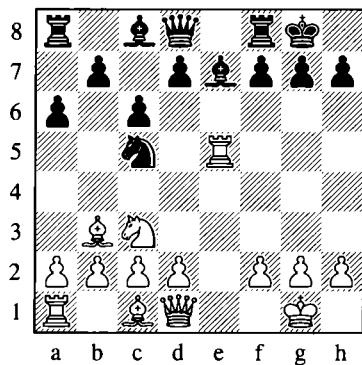
Black must avoid the well-known trap: 9...♖xa4?? 10.♖d5!+–

10.d4

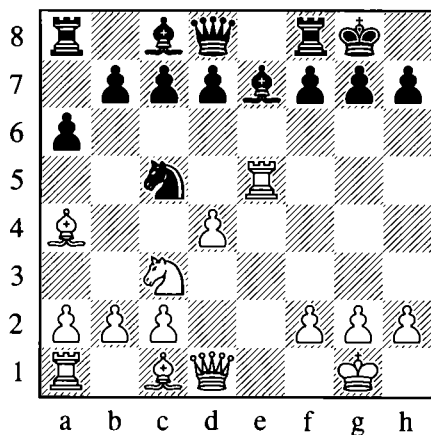
10.♞e2? is bad in view of 10...♙d6 11.♙h5N (11.♙e3? ♖xa4 12.♖xa4 ♞h4+– with a decisive

advantage, Barletta – Gentile, Imperia 2003.)
 11...♞e8 12.♞f1 g6 13.♞h3 ♕e5!-+ and White
 must lose material one way or another.

In the event of 10.♞b3 I would like to offer
 an improvement over the existing move order.
 10...c6!N (After 10...♞xb3 11.axb3 c6 White
 can play 12.d3 [12.d4 d5 transposes to 10...c6]
 taking control over the light squares. Black's
 position is still slightly better after 12...d5, but
 the version seen below is more favourable still.)



11.d4 (Now 11.d3 can be met by 11...d5 when
 Black postpones or omits entirely the exchange
 on b3. White's light-squared bishop is now out
 of play and he must worry about ideas such
 as ...a5-a4.) 11...♞xb3 12.axb3 d5 Now we
 transpose to a few known games, including the
 following: 13.♞e1 ♕d6 14.♞h5 ♞f6 15.♕e3
 ♕f5- Black was better in Quispe Santacruz –
 Sorin, Rosario 2001.



10...♞xa4 11.♞xa4

Now out of several playable moves, I
 particularly like the following idea:

11...b5!

Intending to post the light-squared bishop
 on the long diagonal.

12.♞c3

12.♞f3N ♞b8 13.♞c3 ♕f6- does not solve
 White's problems.

12...♕d6 13.♞h5

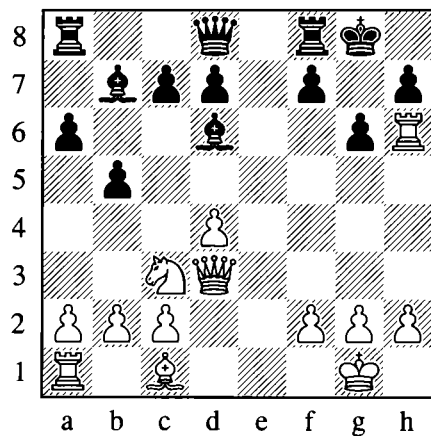
13.♞e1N ♕b7 14.♞h5 ♞f6 also favours
 Black.

13...♕b7 14.♞d3 g6!

14...f5 is promising and soon led to a winning
 position after White faltered in Oskam –
 Euwe, Amsterdam 1920. Nevertheless the text
 move, which has the idea of taking over the
 e-file, is even better.

15.♞h6

Perhaps White should prefer 15.♞h3N
 although 15...♞e8 intending ...b4 preserves a
 clear advantage for Black.



15...f5

15...♞e8!N 16.♕e3 b4 17.♞e2 ♞f6 is
 another strong plan, but Black instead decides

to gain space on the kingside and keep the e8-square free for the queen's rook.

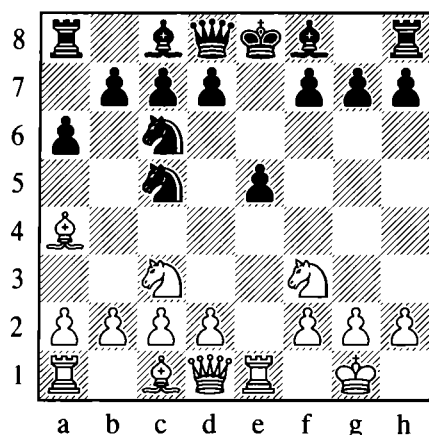
16.h4

This was Felix – Macharacek, Brno 1998, and now Black should have played:

16...♖e8N 17.♙g5 f4

Intending ...♗f5. White's kingside demonstration has achieved nothing and the rook on h6 is more of a liability than an asset.

C2) 7.♖c3!?



Quite a tricky move. In essence, White is playing for a more sophisticated version of the 9...♖xa4?? 10.♖d5! trap noted in line C1 above.

7...♙e7

7...♖xa4 8.♖xe5! ♙e7 9.♖d5! is playable but unnecessarily risky for Black.

8.♖d5

Other moves have little independent value. For instance, 8.♖xe5 ♖xe5 9.♗xe5 0–0 takes us to variation C1, and 8.♙xc6 dxc6 9.♖xe5 ♖e6! transposes to the 9.♖c3 line given on page 153, in the notes to variation C32.

8...e4

There is an interesting alternative in 8...♙d6! as played in Farmer – Reuter, e-mail 2000, but I will focus on the tried and tested solution.

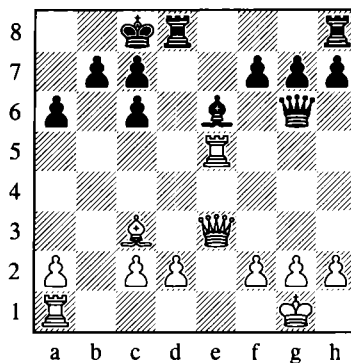
9.♙xc6 dxc6

9...bxc6 does not equalize: 10.♖xe7 ♗xe7 11.d3! (11.d4 ♖b7 12.♙g5?! f6 13.♖d2 d5 14.♙f4 0–0 15.f3 f5 ♗ Lorenz Duran – Baron Rodriguez, La Roda 2005.) One line that I checked continues 11...0–0 12.dxe4 ♗e8 13.♖d4! with a slight edge to White.

10.♖xe7 ♗xe7 11.d4!

This is White's only real chance to cause problems.

11.b4 promises no advantage in view of the strong intermediate move: 11...♙e6! 12.bxc5 (12.♖e5 ♖a4 13.♗xe4 0–0–0 is also good for Black.) 12...exf3 13.♗xf3 ♗xc5 14.♙b2 ♗g5 15.♙c3 (15.d3?! may be an improvement although I am still not impressed by White's position.) 15...0–0–0 16.♗e5 ♗g6 17.♗e3

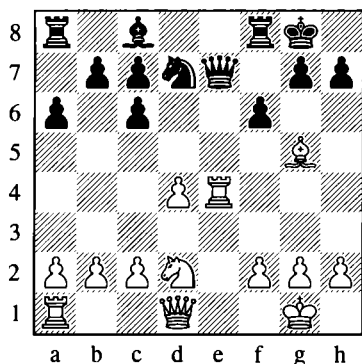


This was Kengis – Tal, Jurmala 1983, and now the cold-blooded 17...♗he8!N promises a slight edge, for instance 18.♙g5 ♗xc2 19.♗xg7 ♗g8! 20.♗xg8 ♗xg8 and White's compensation for a pawn isn't sufficient.

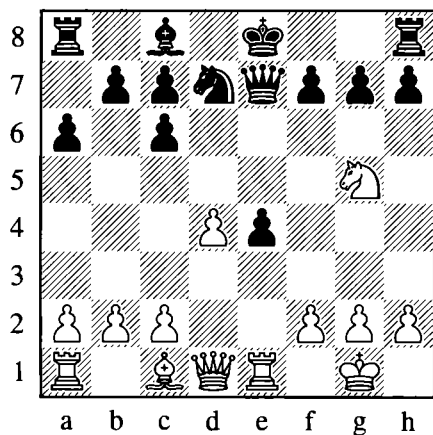
11...♖d7 12.♖g5

12.♙g5 is not dangerous: 12...f6 13.♖d2 0–0 14.♗xe4?! (14.♙f4N=) Schweber – Savon,

Mar del Plata 1971, and now Black could have obtained the upper hand with a paradoxical move:



14...♖d8!!N Now White has a problem with his bishop. 15.♗f4 g5 Now we see why the queen is needed on d8: to protect the c7-pawn. 16.♖h5! (After 16.♗e3? f5 17.♗e6 ♘f6 the verdict is clear.) 16...♘b6! (16...gxf4? 17.♗ae1! is too dangerous.) 17.♗g3 ♗f5! One way or another, White must give up material for questionable compensation.



12...♘f6 13.f3 ♗e6

This developing move should promise equal chances.

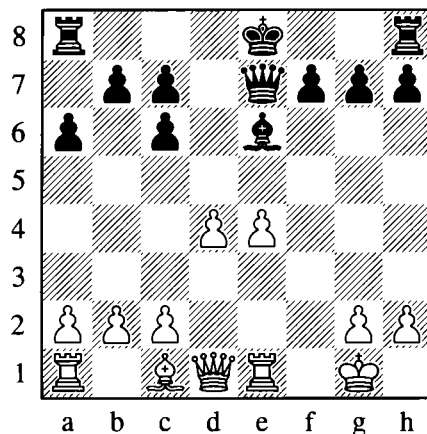
14.♙xe4!N

I decided to investigate this untested move. After 14.fxe4 0-0-0 Black has few problems

as White's centre is not stable, De Lisa - Pannekoek, e-mail 2005.

14...♙xe4 15.fxe4

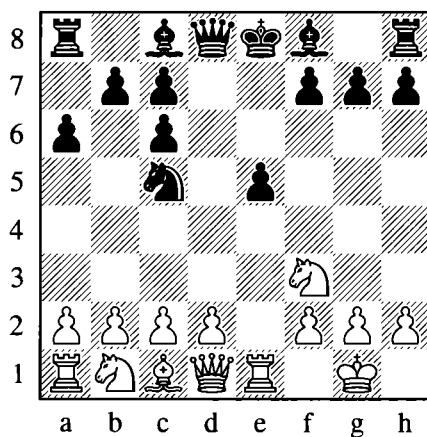
15.♗xe4 ♖d7 (or 15...0-0!? immediately) followed by short castling is equal.



15...0-0-0 16.♗f4 ♗b8 17.♖d2 ♖d7 18.c3 f6=

The middlegame with opposite-coloured bishops holds balanced chances.

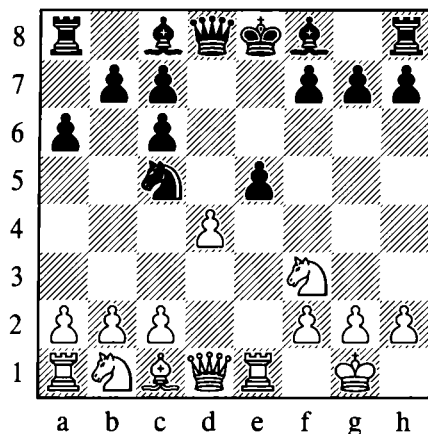
C3) 7.♗xc6 dxc6



Exchanging is the main line. From here we will consider the slightly unusual C31) 8.d4 followed by the main line of C32) 8.♙xe5.

Taking with the rook looks strange since it will soon have to move again: 8.♞xe5† ♙e7 9.d4 This was Dahl Pedersen – Hartman, Copenhagen 1996, and here my suggestion would be 9...♙g4!N 10.♖bd2 ♖d7 11.♞e1 0-0 and the position is equal.

C31) 8.d4



This resembles the earlier variation B.

8...♖e6

8...e4!? is playable, but Black has absolutely nothing to fear from the Berlin structure after dxe5, so I would not go out of my way to prevent it.

9.dxe5

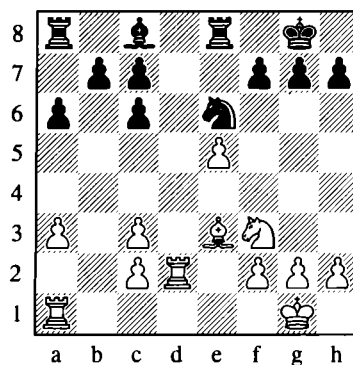
9.♖xe5 gives Black the option of 9...♙e7 which transposes to variation C322 on page 154. However, given this move order I would be tempted to try the more active 9...♙d6!?

9...♞xd1 10.♞xd1 ♙e7

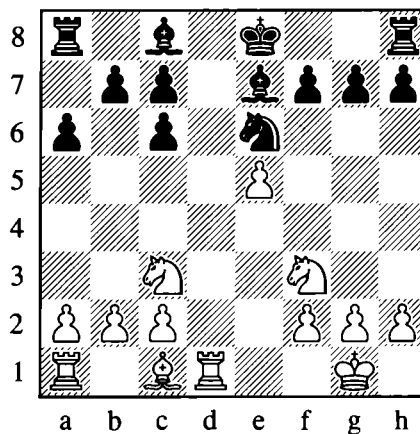
Black has a great version of the famous Berlin endgame. His knight is well placed on e6 and, more importantly, he can still castle. Thus king safety will not be an issue, and the black rooks will be able to develop easily.

11.♖c3

Another possible continuation is: 11.♙e3 0-0 12.♖c3 ♞e8 13.♞d2 (13.♖e4 transposes to the main line below.) 13...♙b4 14.a3 ♙xc3 15.bxc3



15...♖f8! This thematic manoeuvre works well, although 15...c5!?N intending ...b6 is also promising for Black.) 16.♞b1 ♖g6 17.h4 h5 with better chances for Black in Pyada – April87, Internet (rapid) 2006.



11...0-0 12.♖e4

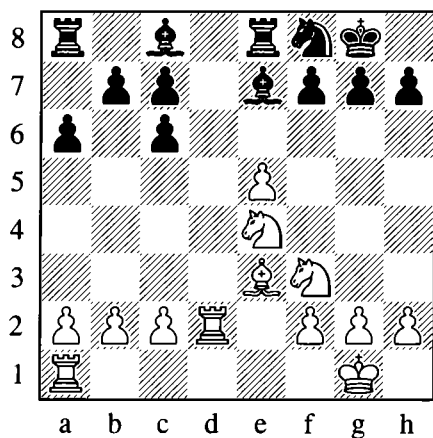
12.♙e3 transposes to 11.♙e3 above.

12...♞e8 13.♙e3 ♖f8!

Black opens the path for the light-squared bishop and transfers the knight to g6 in order to attack the e5-pawn.

14.♞d2

This position was reached in Hoffmann – Steiner, Austria 1997, and here I suggest:



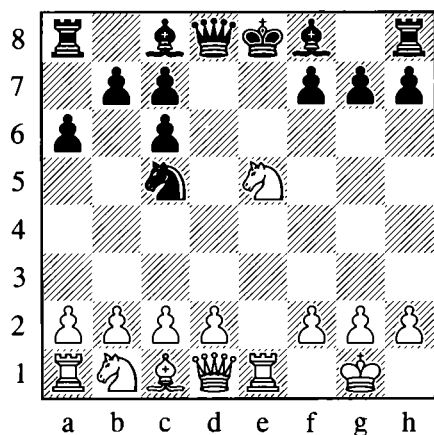
14...♙g4!?N

With the following possible continuation:

15.♘e1 ♘g6 16.h3 ♙e6 17.f4 ♙d5 18.♘c3 ♙b4! 19.♙f2 ♙xc3 20.bxc3 f6 21.exf6 gxf6

With a slight edge for Black, thanks to White's damaged pawn structure on the queenside and weak light squares.

C32) 8.♘xe5



8...♙e7

This is the main line, and I believe it is the most reliable continuation.

I will present some brief analysis of the other main move, to show why I was not completely happy with it:

8...♘e6!? 9.♙h5!

I believe this is the only way to set problems. 9.d3 ♙e7 10.♘c3 transposes to 9.♘c3 in the note to White's next move in the main line below.

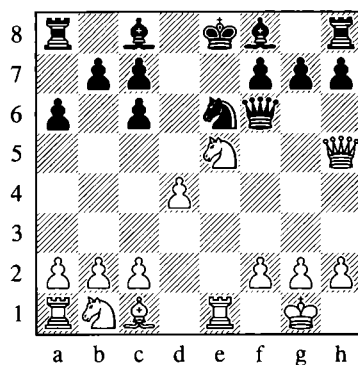
9.d4 ♙e7 transposes to variation C322 on page 154, but the more active 9...♙d6!? looks to be a simpler route to equality.

9.♙f3 ♙f6! leads to complex play after the queen exchange, but according to my analysis Black is doing quite well. The doubled pawns do not harm his chances too much, and in some lines the open g-file can become an important avenue of counterplay.

9...♙f6!

After 9...g6 10.♙f3 f5 (I also analysed 10...f6 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♙xc6† and concluded that Black cannot equalize) 11.b3 ♙e7 12.♙b2 0-0 13.♘a3 a5 14.♘ac4 a4 15.♙e3 White obtains a slight edge.

10.d4!

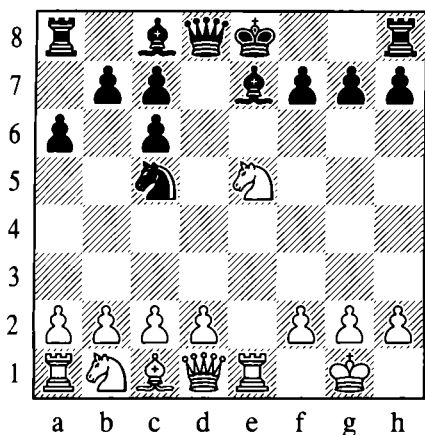


10...g6!?N

I also checked 10...♙d6 11.♘c3 Moran – Vincifori, Buenos Aires 2003, followed by 11...0-0N 12.♘e4 ♙d8 13.c3 ♙e7 14.♘g3 with a slight edge for White.

11.♙d1 ♙g7 12.♘d2 0-0 13.♘df3 ♙d8! 14.♙e3 f6 15.♘d3 b6 16.c4 a5 17.♙b3 ♙e8

Black reaches a playable position, though it seems to me that White keeps a slight edge.



After the text move we must consider **C321)** **9.b3** and **C322)** **9.d4**, after first checking some rare alternatives.

9.♞e2?! doesn't make sense in view of **9...♖e6**.

9.♖c3 ♖e6! prevents d2-d4, and after **10.d3 0-0 11.♙e3 f6 12.♖f3 f5 13.h3 ♙f6! 14.♞b1 c5!** Black obtained a useful space advantage in Boehm – Brandner, Vienna 2006.

9.d3 is likely to transpose to the aforementioned **9.♖c3** line after **9...0-0 10.♖c3 ♖e6**.

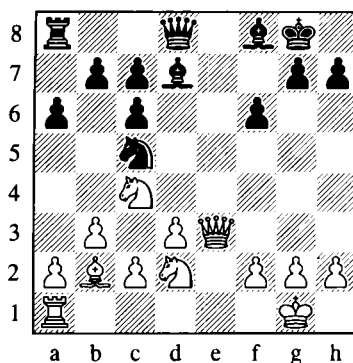
C321) 9.b3

This has scored surprisingly highly in practice, but fortunately it is not too difficult to improve Black's play.

9...0-0 10.♙a3!?

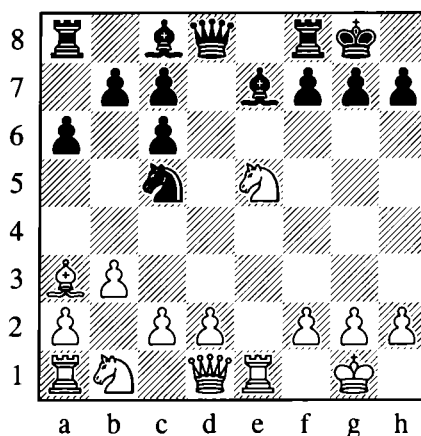
It makes sense for White to attempt to trade a pair of bishops.

10.♙b2 has been played in several games, but so far nobody has tested what I believe to be the most logical reply: **10...♞e8!?N 11.d3 (11.♞h5 ♙e6 12.d3 f6 13.♖c4 ♙f7 is fine for Black.) 11...♙f8 12.♖d2 f6 13.♖ec4 ♞xe1† 14.♞xe1 ♙d7 15.♞e3**



15...b5! Forcing the knight to an unfavourable position. **16.♖a5 ♞e8!** Black transfers the queen to the kingside with good play.

The text move was played in Popovic – Prasad, Subotica 1987. Here Black has an effective way to delay or even prevent the bishop exchange.



10...♙f5!N 11.d3 ♞e8 12.♖d2 ♙f8!

Suddenly Black has created the threat of **...♖xd3**.

13.♙b2

13.♖ec4 ♞d7 14.♖f3 f6 is fine for Black.

13.♞f3 ♙e6 intending **...f6** is similarly comfortable for the second player.

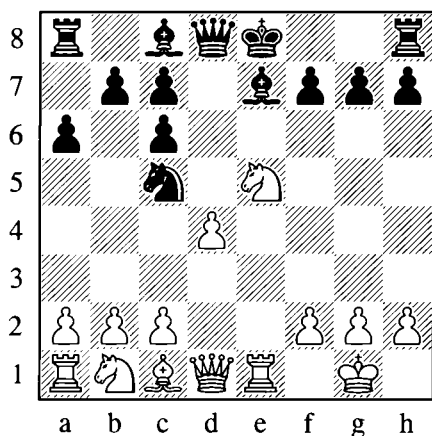
13...♞h4!? 14.♖df3 ♞h5

Black can afford the luxury of playing slightly

adventurously with his queen. His next move is likely to be ...f6, so White has nothing better than the following line:

15.♘d4 ♖xd1 16.♙axd1 ♕c8 17.♘c4 ♕d7=

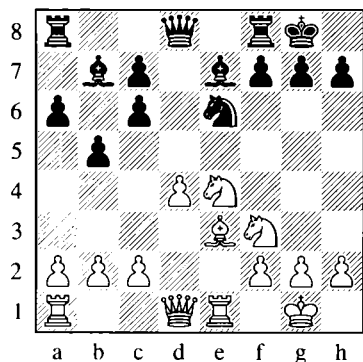
C322) 9.d4



9...♗e6

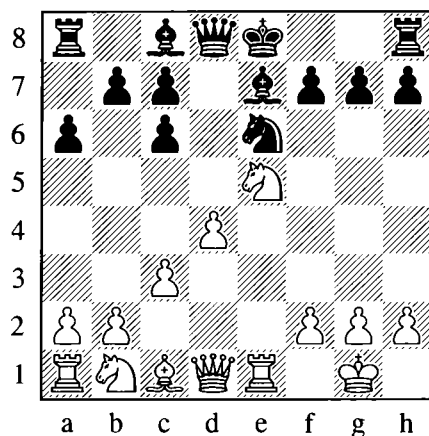
After this natural move White has another choice. The most popular move has been C3221) 10.c3, but more challenging is C3222) 10.♕e3.

Retreating the knight does not seem logical illogical: 10.♘f3 0–0 11.♘c3 b5!? 12.♕e3 ♕b7 Black's set-up works well thanks to the following idea: 13.♘e4 As played in Baumgardt – Exler, e-mail 2001. Here Black should have played:



13...c5!N 14.♘xc5 ♕xc5 15.dxc5 ♖f6! 16.c3 ♖ad8 17.♖e2 ♖de8 Now the threat of ...♘f4 forces White either to repeat the position or return his extra pawn: 18.♘d4 (18.♖d1 ♖d8=) 18...♖g6 19.f3 ♘xc5=

C3221) 10.c3



10...0–0 11.f4

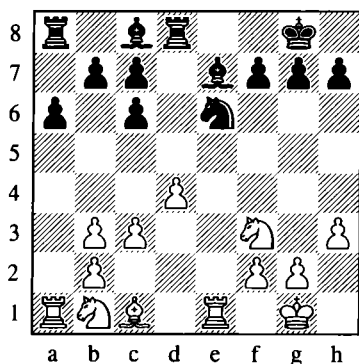
This seems like the only real attempt to create problems for Black. Here is a summary of the alternatives:

11.♕e3 transposes to the harmless 11.c3 line as given in the notes to variation C3222 below.

11.♖b3 was played in Schnegg – Kanonier, Austria 2011, and now after 11...♖e8!N 12.♘d2 ♖d5 13.♘f1 ♕f8 14.♕e3 a5 Black is doing fine.

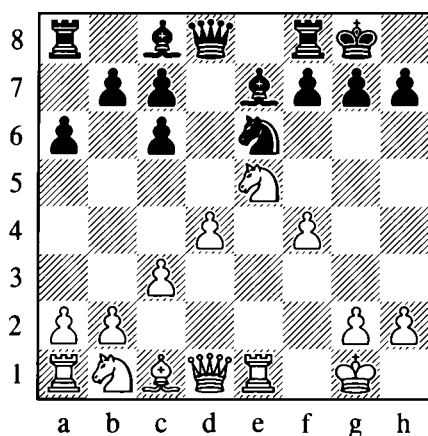
11.♖f3 f6 12.♘d3 ♖e8 (12...♖d5!?) 13.♘f4?! (13.♘d2= would be better.) 13...♕d6! 14.♘xe6?! ♕xe6= Black was better in Velikhanli – Graf, Dubai 2003, thanks to the bishop pair.

11.h3 ♖d5! Black prepares ...c5, opening up the position for his bishops. 12.♖b3 ♖d8! 13.♘f3 ♖xb3 14.axb3



Now in Drazic – Beikert, Sofia 1994, Black should have played 14...c5!N 15.dxc5 ♗xc5 with a slight edge.

Finally, 11.♖d2?! has been White's most popular choice, which I find strange as after 11...c5! Black is already fighting for the advantage: 12.dxc5 (12.♖df3 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♖d5 is just better for Black thanks to his bishop pair and the weak pawn on d4, K. Lee – Lagerman, Reykjavik 2012.) 12...♖xc5 13.♖df3 (13.♖f3 is better, but after 13...f6 14.♖ec4 ♗e8 Black is fine.) 13...♖xd1 14.♗xd1 f6 15.♖c4 ♗e6 The two bishops in an open position yield Black the upper hand, Kobayashi – Mikhalevski, Sao Paulo 2002.



11...♗e8!

This coldblooded move prepares a retreat square for the knight and takes the sting out

of White's attack.

12.f5 ♖f8 13.♖h5 g6!?

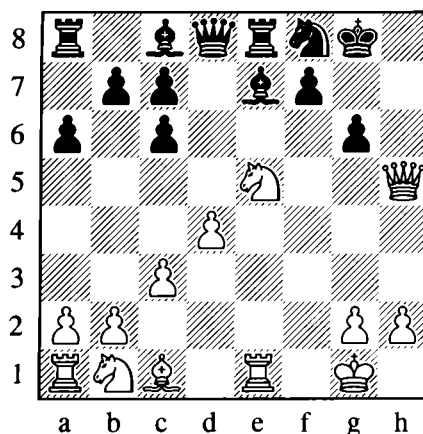
This ambitious move seems to work well, although the safer 13...♖d5N also leaves Black at least equal.

14.fxg6

This position occurred in Langrock – Duy, Germany 1998, and now Black should have preferred:

14...hxc6!N

It turns out that Black need not fear the following 'brilliant' continuation.



15.♖h8+!?

15.♖f3 ♖d5 gives Black a slight plus thanks to his strong pair of bishops.

15...♖xh8 16.♖xf7+ ♖g8 17.♖xd8 ♗b8!

Black protects the b7-pawn and prepares to develop his light-squared bishop.

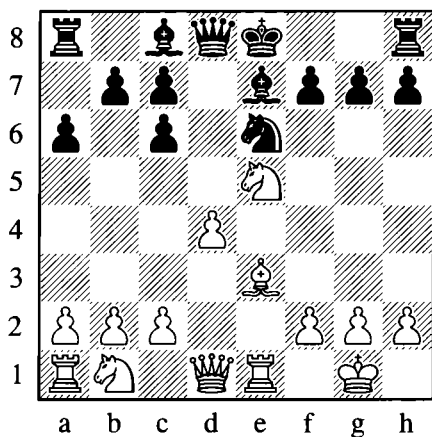
18.♗h6

18.♗g5!? ♗xd8 19.♗xe8 ♗xg5 gives Black slightly better chances as well, despite the awkward pin along the eighth rank.

18...♗f5 19.♗xf8 ♖xf8 20.♖e6+ ♖f7 21.♖f4 ♗d6 22.♗f1 ♗e4 23.♖h5 ♗e2!

Black has more than enough play for the sacrificed pawn.

C3222) 10.♔e3

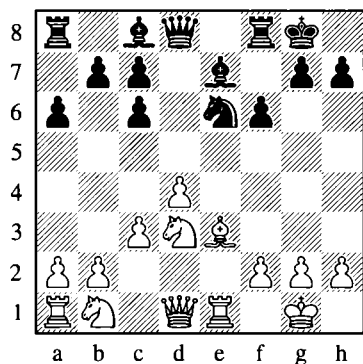


This developing move allows White to choose a more active set-up than the previous one.

10...0-0

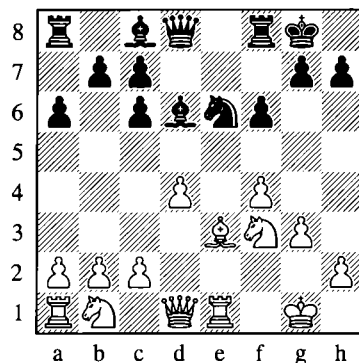
Now we reach a final division between C32221) 11.♘c3 and C32222) 11.c4!, after first checking a couple of harmless alternatives.

The modest 11.c3 promises White little chance of an advantage: 11...f6 12.♘d3 (12.♘f3 ♗d5 13.♘bd2 b5 14.a4 ♔d7 15.b3 ♖fe8 16.♗c2 ♘f8 17.c4 ♗f5 18.♘e4 bxc4 19.bxc4 ♗g6! with slightly better chances for Black.)



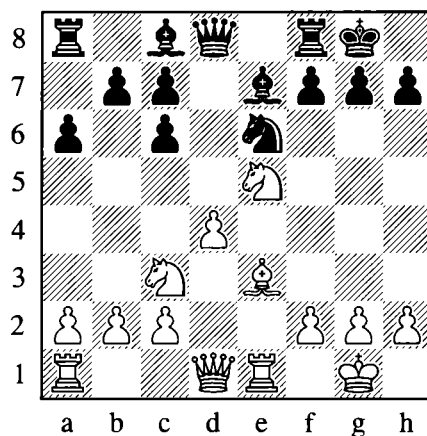
12...a5!?N 13.a4 ♖e8 14.♘d2 b6 15.♘f4 ♔d6 16.♗f3 ♘xf4 17.♔xf4 ♔e6! =

11.f4 f6 12.♘f3 ♔d6 13.g3 (Or 13.♗d2 ♖e8 14.c4 c5 15.d5 ♘f8 16.♘c3 ♘g6 and Black was fine in Belostozkaja – Pankiewicz, Wroclaw 2004.)



Vonk – Stelter, Goch 2003. 13...♖e8!N 14.♗d3 ♘f8 15.f5 ♗d7 16.♘h4 b6 17.♘d2 ♔b7 and Black is at least not worse due to the weak light squares.

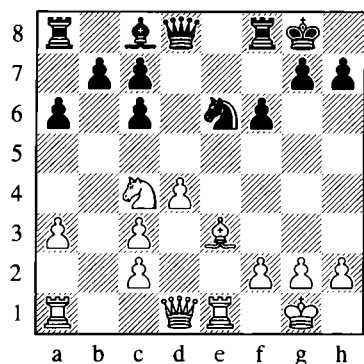
C32221) 11.♘c3



11...f6 12.♘f3

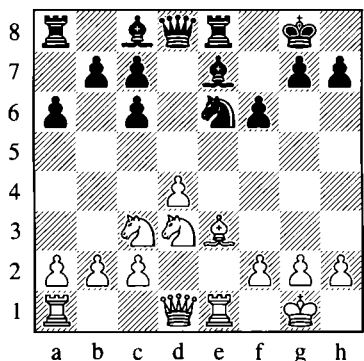
Two other retreats have been played:

12.♘c4 ♔b4! 13.a3 (or 13.♗d3 b6 14.a3 ♔xc3 15.♗xc3 ♔b7=) 13...♔xc3 14.bxc3



This was Zhuravlev – Kuprijanov, Cherepovets 2002. Now I would like to offer 14...♗d7!?N 15.♗d3 b6 16.♗ad1 ♖b7 17.♖b2 ♗ad8 18.c4 ♗fe8 with an equal position.

12.♖d3 ♗e8 (12...a5!?N also makes sense) occurred in Kanceljak – Kruljac, Sibenik 2009. Here I checked a new idea for White:



13.♗h5!N Protecting the d4-pawn indirectly. 13...b6! (In the event of 13...g6 the queen shows her agility by zipping to the opposite flank: 14.♗a5 b6 15.♗a4 b5 16.♗b3 b4 17.♖f4! with some edge for White.) 14.♗ad1 ♖b7 15.♗g4 ♗d7 16.♖f4 ♖f8 17.♖c1 ♖c8! Black has no problems equalizing.

12...♗e8

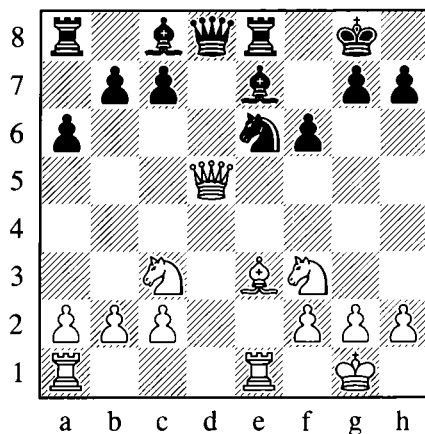
I decided to recommend this rare move instead of the more common 12...f5, which has the drawback of weakening the e5-square.

13.d5

I also checked 13.♗d3 ♖f8 14.♖f4 (or 14.d5 cxd5 15.♖xd5 ♖e6 16.c4 ♖xd5 17.cxd5 c6 18.♗b3 ♗xd5 19.♗xb7 ♗b5 20.♗xb5 cxb5=) 14...♖e6 15.♗e3 ♗d7 16.♗ae1 ♗ad8 with equal chances.

13...cxd5 14.♗xd5

14.♖xd5N is slightly better, but the position after 14...♖d6 15.♗d3 b5! 16.♗ad1 ♖b7 remains about equal.



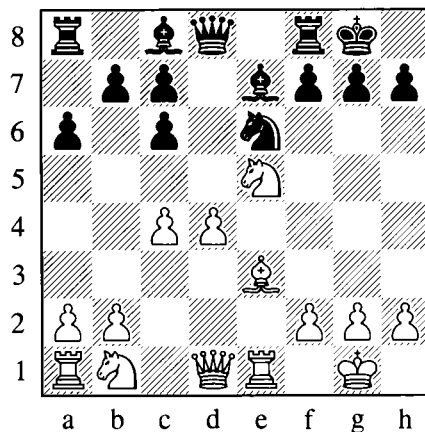
14...♗xd5 15.♖xd5

This position occurred in Arias Castanedo – Korneev, Zaragoza 1999, and here Black could have equalized easily with the simple move:

15...♖d7N

Followed by ...♖c6.

C32222) 11.c4!



Preparing d4-d5 is the only serious attempt to cause Black problems.

11...f6

This is my main recommendation although 11...♔d6!? also deserves consideration.

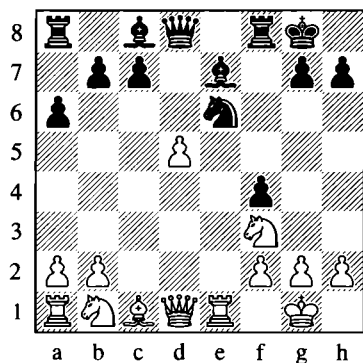
12.♘f3 f5

Black's idea is to restrict White's bishop. 12...♘g5!?N is also interesting.

13.♘c3

Other moves appear less dangerous:

13.d5 f4 14.♔c1 cxd5 15.cxd5 (15.♖xd5 is answered by 15...c6! 16.♖xd8 ♔xd8 17.♘c3 ♘c5 and Black is fine.) This occurred in Gavazov – Dimov, Albena 2010, and now Black could have played:



15...♘c5!N 16.♘c3 ♔g4 Black is fine as the following critical line leads nowhere for White: 17.b4 ♘d7 18.♖b3 ♔d6 19.♘e4 ♔xf3 20.♖xf3 ♔xb4 21.♖d1 ♔d6! Black is better.

13.♔d2 f4

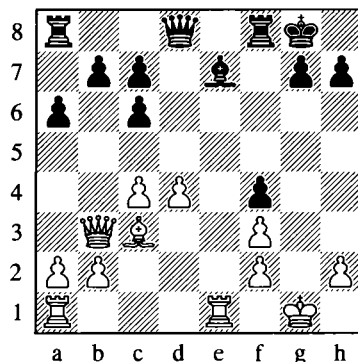
13...♔f6!?N is a reasonable alternative, for example, 14.♔c3 b5! 15.♖b3 ♖b8! (15...bxc4!? 16.♖xc4 ♖d5) 16.cxb5 ♖xb5 17.♖a4 ♖d5=

14.♔c3

14.♘c3 transposes to the 13.♘c3 f4 14.♔d2!? line given in the note to the main line below.

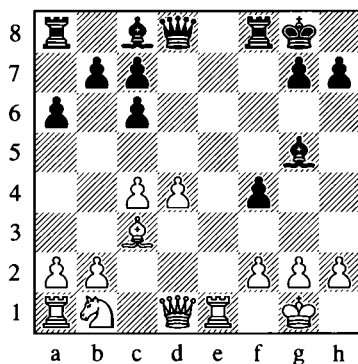
14...♘g5 15.♘g5

A playable alternative is: 15.♘bd2 ♔g4 16.♖b3 (Or 16.♖e2!?N ♔f6 17.♖d3 ♘xf3† 18.♘xf3 ♖d7 19.♘e5 ♔xe5 20.♖xe5 ♖ae8 21.♖ae1 ♖xe5 22.♖xe5 ♖e8 23.♖xe8† ♖xe8 and Black shouldn't have problems holding this position.) 16...♘xf3† 17.♘xf3 ♔xf3 18.gxf3



Radulski – Lubczynski, Plovdiv 2008. Now Black should have played the modest 18...♖b8!N, followed by 19.♖ad1 ♖f6 20.♘h1 ♖d7= with roughly equal chances.

15...♔xg5



16.f3?!

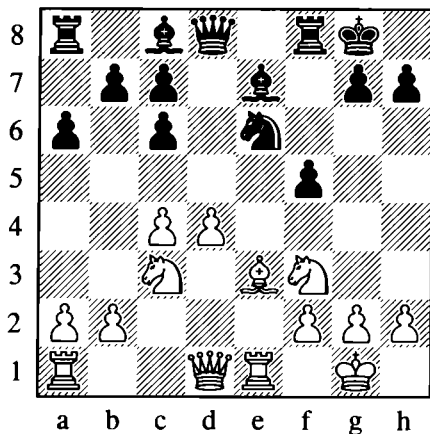
16.♖f3N is a better try, but Black should be okay after 16...♔f6 17.d5 ♔d7 18.♘d2 ♔xc3 19.♖xc3 ♖f6.

16...♔f5†

Black was better in Gipslis – Averbakh, Riga 1958, since the following natural move loses material for White:

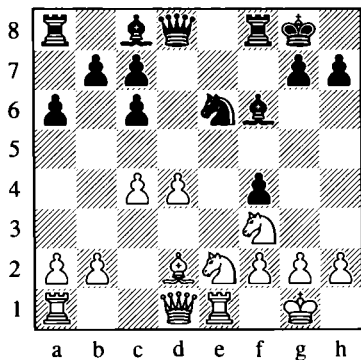
17.♖d2?N ♕h4! 18.♞e2 ♕d3 19.♞e6 ♜d7
20.♞e5 ♕f6

White must lose an exchange.



13...f4 14.♕c1

14.♕d2!? ♕f6 15.♖e2!N (15.d5 was good for Black in the following game: 15...♖c5 16.♖e5?! ♕xe5 17.♞xe5 ♖d3+ Vitolinsh – Mikhailchishin, Uzhgorod 1988.)



15...♖g5! 16.♜b3 ♕e6! With the idea 17.♖xf4 ♖xf3† 18.gxf3 ♕f7 19.d5 ♜d7! with good compensation for the pawn, thanks to White's damaged kingside structure.

14...♕f6 15.d5 ♖c5

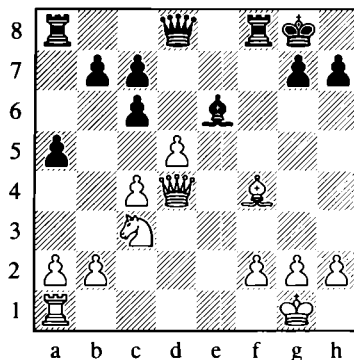
Now we will depart from the game Rossetti – Urbaniak, Internet 2010, in order to examine the critical continuation.

16.♖d4!N

This is White's only attempt to fight for the advantage.

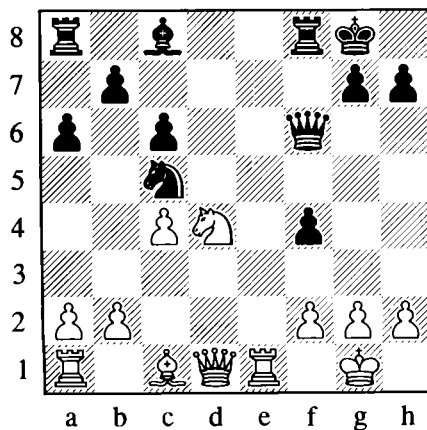
16...cxd5

16...a5 allows White to sacrifice an exchange in return for a long-term initiative: 17.♕xf4! ♕xd4 18.♜xd4 ♖e6! 19.♞xe6 ♕xe6



20.♕e5! ♕c8 21.c5 (21.♕xg7? is impossible in view of 21...c5 22.♜e5 ♞f5 23.♜g3 ♞g5 24.♕f6! ♜xf6 25.♖e4 ♞xg3 26.♖xf6† ♖f7 with a big advantage for Black.) 21...♞f7 22.d6± I prefer White here.

17.♖xd5 c6 18.♖xf6† ♜xf6

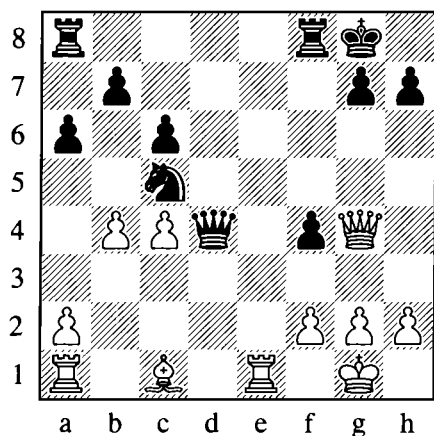


19.b4! ♕g4!

19...♖a4 20.♕a3! ♕g4 21.♜xg4 ♜xd4 22.♞ad1±

20. ♖xg4

20.f3 can be met by 20...♘a4! intending 21.fxg4?! (21.c5 is better, but Black is still fine after 21...♞ae8 22.♞xe8 ♞xe8 23.fxg4 ♞d8=) 21...♞ad8+ leading to Black's advantage.

20... ♖xd4**21. ♕e3! ♖d7!**

An important defence, which saves a piece.

22. ♖xd7 ♘xd7 23. ♕d4 ♞fe8

Black should hold this endgame without much difficulty.

Conclusion

We have examined various attempts by White to launch a quick attack using the open e-file. This is a perfectly natural reaction to Black's fifth move, but the main drawback is that White's valuable light-squared bishop becomes an early casualty, which is likely to harm his chances in the ensuing middlegame. Nevertheless Black should take care, especially in the critical C32222 variation examined at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 8

5.0-0

6.d4 b5 – Sidelines



Variation Index

1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♟c6 3.♞b5 a6 4.♞a4 ♟f6 5.0-0 ♟xe4 6.d4

6...b5

A 7.d5	162
B) 7.♞e1	163
C) 7.♟xe5 ♟xe5 8.dxe5!	164
C1) 8...d5	165
C2) 8...♞b7!?	167

C) note to 8.dxe5



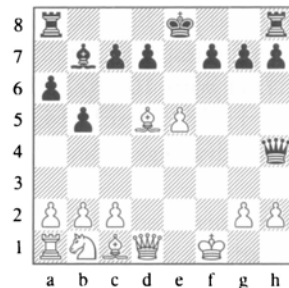
9...c5!N

C1) after 11.♟d2



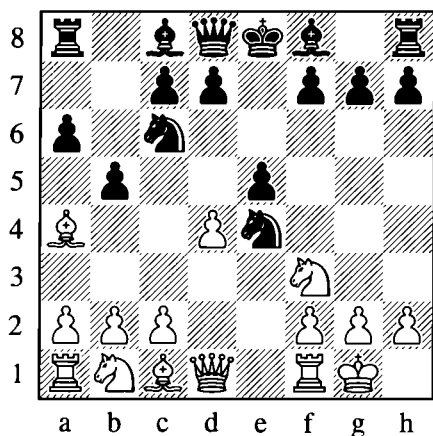
11...♞h4!N

C2) after 13.♟f1



13...♞c6!N

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♘xc4 6.d4 b5



From this position the main line is of course 7.♙b3, coverage of which will begin in the next chapter. In this chapter we will deal with three rare alternatives: A) 7.d5, B) 7.♙e1 and C) 7.♘xe5.

A) 7.d5

This line entered the theory books thanks to the efforts of the strong German player Curt Richter in the 1930s, although Vidmar was the first to introduce it in 1902.

7...bxa4 8.dxc6 d6

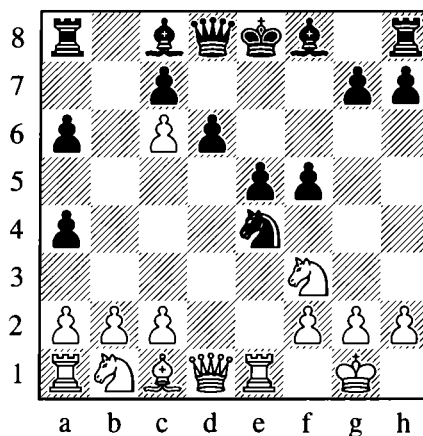
Black ensures the integrity of his pawn structure.

9.♙e1

9.c4 has also been tested in practice. Here I like the untested 9...♙f5!N intending to meet 10.♙xa4 with 10...♙e7 11.♙e1 ♘c5 12.♙a5 ♘d3 13.♙d1 ♘xc1 14.♙xc1 ♙e4! when Black's advantage is beyond any doubt.

9...f5!

I like this ambitious move more than the popular 9...♘f6.



10.c4

Other moves also fail to solve White's problems.

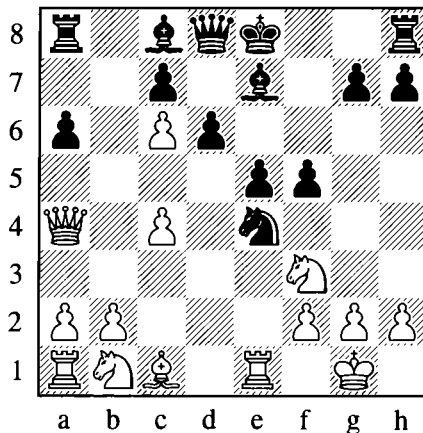
10.♘bd2 ♘c5 11.b4 axb3 12.♘xb3 ♘e6 13.c4 ♙e7 14.♙d5 ♙f6+ Roethgen – Popp, corr. 1958.

10.♙d5 ♙e7 11.♘c3 ♘c5 (11...♘xc3 12.bxc3 ♙f6) 12.b4 axb3 13.axb3 ♙e6 14.♙d1 0-0 Black's bishop pair and central pawn majority gave him the upper hand in Pinasco – Medveski, e-mail 2000.

I also considered 10.♘fd2N ♘xd2 11.♙xd2 ♙e6 12.♘c3 ♙e7 13.♘d5 0-0 and Black is better.

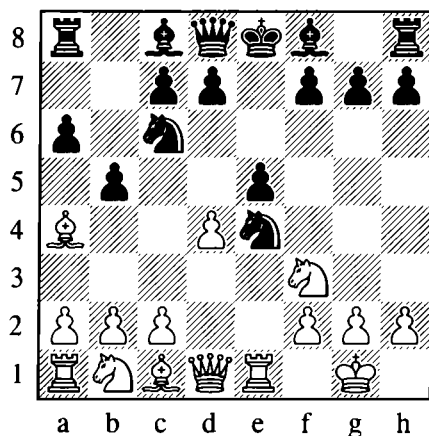
10...♙e7 11.♙xa4

11.♘c3!?N ♘xc3 12.bxc3 0-0 13.♙d5+ ♘h8 intending ...♙f6 is also better for Black.



11...0-0 12.♖bd2 ♜c5

In Huguet – Demarre, Charbonnieres 1968, Black's strong centre and bishop pair made him the clear favourite.

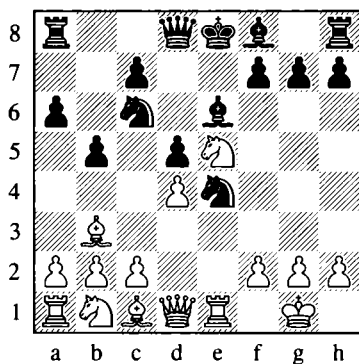
B) 7.♞e1**7...bxa4**

I believe Black should take the chance to secure the advantage of the bishop pair. Nevertheless there is a perfectly playable alternative:

7...d5 8.♞b3 ♞e6 9.♜xe5?!

White should prefer 9.dxe5 transposing to the rare but interesting 9.♞e1!? variation in the main line of the Open Spanish – see Chapter 11 on page 193.

The text move meets with a convincing reply.

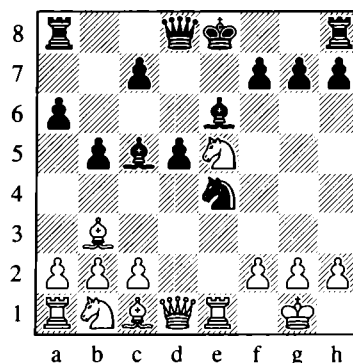


...♜xd4! 10.♞xd4

10.♜c3N is another idea, but after 10...♜xb3 11.axb3 ♜xc3 12.bxc3 ♞d6 13.♞f4 0-0 White is a pawn down for not much.

10...♞c5 11.♞d1

This position was reached in Rusu – Ignat, Romania 1994, and here Black should have played:

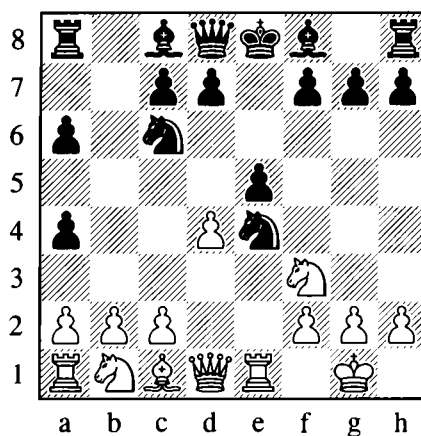


11...♞xf2+ 12.♜f1

12.♜h1? ♞g3!-+

12...♞xe1 13.♞xe1 0-0

With a rook and two pawns again two minor pieces, plus the safer king and a dominating knight on e4, Black is better.

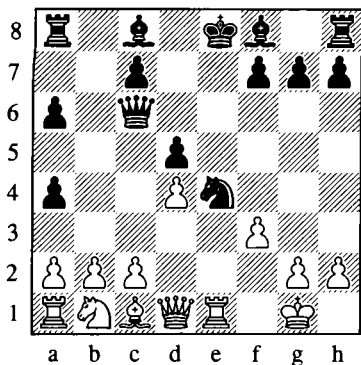
**8.♞xe4**

White should stick with the obvious move, as attempts to do without it may easily backfire:

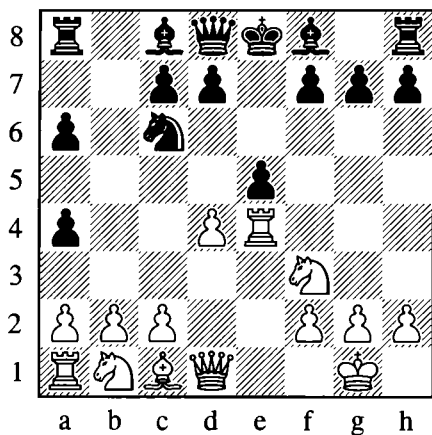
8.d5 ♜xf2! 9.♜xf2 ♞c5+ 10.♞e3 ♞xe3+

11.♞xe3 ♘e7 12.♘xe5 (12.♞xe5N d6 13.♞e1 0-0 is no better for White) 12...0-0 Black is a pawn up, Almeida – Maes, corr. 1994.

8.♘xe5N looks clever, but Black has an equally cunning reply: 8...d5! 9.♘xc6 ♞f6 10.f3 ♞xc6



11.c4!? (11.fxe4 dxe4 is also in Black's favour.) 11...♞xc4 12.fxe4 ♘b4 Black completes development and retains an extra pawn.



8...d5

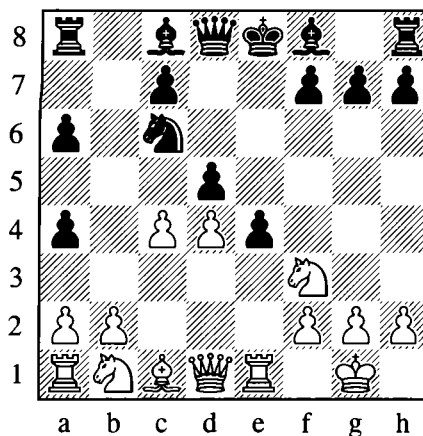
Now Black takes the centre with the pawns.

9.♞e1 e4 10.c4!N

White's only chance is to undermine the centre.

The feeble 10.c3 was played in Katz – M. Goldberg, Gunderland 2003, and now after

10...♘d6N (10...♘e7N 11.♘e5 ♘xe5 12.dxe5 ♘f5 is also excellent for Black) 11.♞xa4 ♘d7 Black has two bishops and a powerful pawn centre.



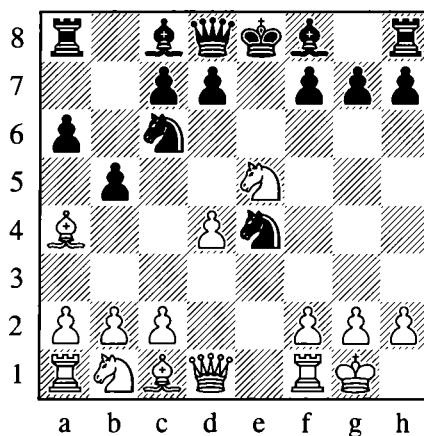
10...♘b4 11.♘d2 a5!?

11...0-0 is enough for equality, but I like the idea of using the isolated a-pawn to make a positive contribution.

12.♞xa4 ♘d7! 13.♞c2 0-0 14.cxd5 exf3 15.dxc6 ♘e6

Despite being a pawn down, Black is at least equal thanks to his safer king and mighty light-squared bishop.

C) 7.♘xe5



This temporarily gives up a piece, but White can regain it soon enough.

7...♘xe5 8.dxe5

Once again the obvious capture is the best.

8.♘b3N has never been tested. The best reply looks to be 8...♘c4! 9.♗e1 d5 10.f3 f5 11.fxe4 dxe4! 12.a4 ♘b7 with an extra pawn for Black.

8.♗e1?

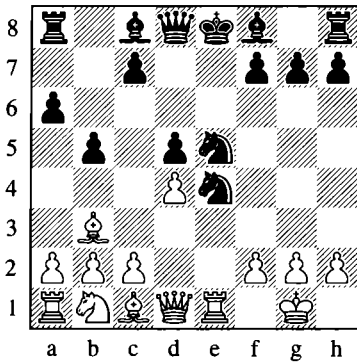
This was White's choice is the only game that deviated from 8.dxe5. It is hardly surprising that it has not been repeated, as the move is just bad.

8...d5

8...♘b7!? 9.♘b3 ♖h4! 10.g3 ♖f6+ also promises Black a big advantage.

9.♘b3

This was Pelzer – Dimer, Amsterdam 1899, and here Black could have refuted his opponent's play with:



9...c5!N

This wins a piece by force, for example:

10.♘f4

After 10.f3 c4! 11.fxe4 ♘g6! The bishop on b3 is trapped and the game is over.

10...♘g4! 11.♗c1

11.f3 ♘g6! is also hopeless for White.

11...♘g6 12.♘xd5 ♗xd5 13.♘c3 ♗h5 14.♗e3 ♘e7+

Black retains an extra piece.

After the text move it should be noted that 8...bxa4 9.♗d5 regains the piece and leads to an unclear situation. However, Black has at least two good alternatives, and I will present both C1) 8...d5 and C2) 8...♘b7!? in turn.

C1) 8...d5

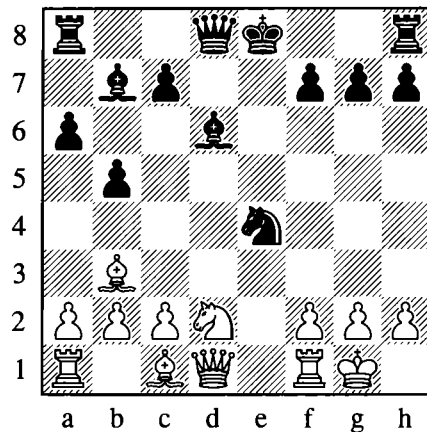
From this position play should normally transpose to the 7.♘b3 d5 8.♘xe5 variation, as considered in variation D of the following chapter. In this section we will see what happens if White tries to avoid that path.

9.exd6?!

This independent move only speeds up Black's development. The correct 9.♘b3 reaches the aforementioned variation from the next chapter, coverage of which begins on page 176.

9...♘xd6 10.♘b3 ♘b7 11.♘d2

This position occurred in Borgo – C. Flear, Eupen 1994. Now Black missed a chance to seize the initiative:



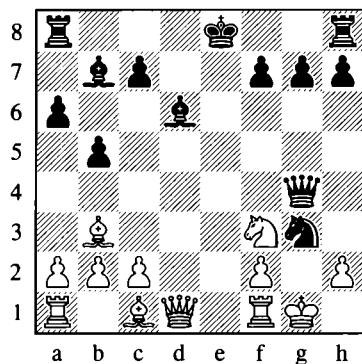
11...♗h4!N 12.h3

12.♘f3 is met by 12...♗h5 with excellent attacking chances.

12.g3

Black is well equipped to deal with this move:

12...♖xg3! 13.♘f3! ♔g4!



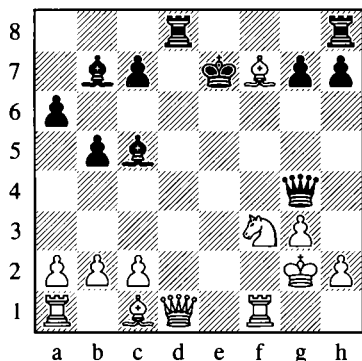
14.♙xf7†!

14.fxg3 0-0-0! leaves White nothing better than returning the piece: 15.♔d4 ♙xf3 16.♔xg4† ♙xg4 17.♙xf7 ♙h3 18.♙f3 ♙e5! 19.♙g5 ♙xb2† Black has a healthy extra pawn.

14...♙e7!

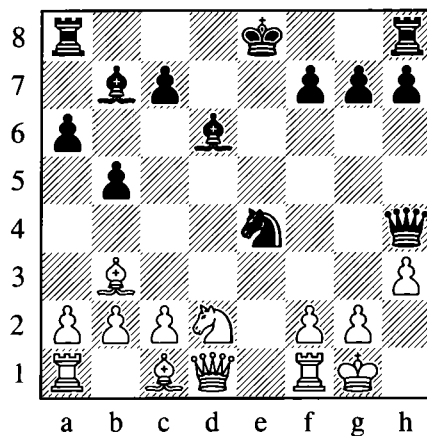
And not 14...♙xf7?? 15.♙e5† when White wins.

15.fxg3 ♙c5† 16.♙g2 ♖ad8



17.h3! ♖xd1 18.hxg4 ♖xf1 19.♙g5†! ♙xf7 20.♖f1 ♖f8!†

White may have staved off the mating threats, but he still faces a miserable endgame against Black's mighty bishop pair.



12...0-0-0

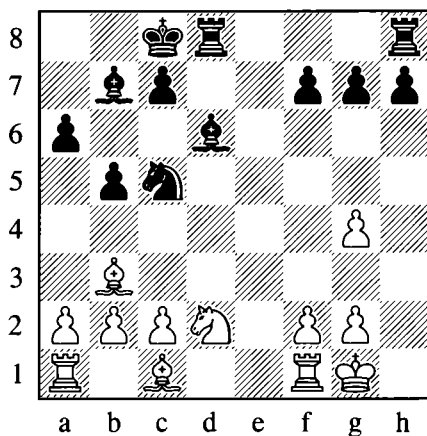
Black is obviously better thanks to his development advantage. I conducted some further analysis to see how the game may develop from here.

13.♔g4†

Exchanging queens is an obvious idea, but it does not solve White's problems.

13...♔xg4 14.hxg4 ♙c5!

Intending to secure the advantage of the two bishops. The justification of Black's last move is seen in the following line:



15.♙xf7 ♖df8! 16.b4

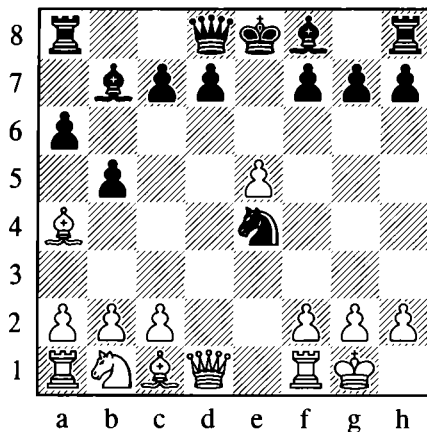
After 16.♙b3 h5! 17.g5 h4! followed by ...h3 Black launches a decisive attack along the h-file.

16...Bxf7 17.bxc5 Bxc5

Black has restored material equality and obtained a big advantage thanks to his bishop pair and pressure along the f-file.

C2) 8...Bb7!?

Although there is nothing at all wrong with the previous line, I decided to offer some coverage of this independent alternative, in case the reader does not wish to allow a transposition to the next chapter with 8...d5 9.Bb3.

**9.Bb3 Bc5**

Black develops actively and takes aim at the f2-pawn. Interestingly, we have now transposed to a separate line of the Spanish, which is normally reached after the following move order: 3...d6 4.0-0 Bc5 5.dxe5 dxe5 6.d4 a6 7.Ba4 b5 8.dxe5 dxe4 9.Bb3 Bb7.

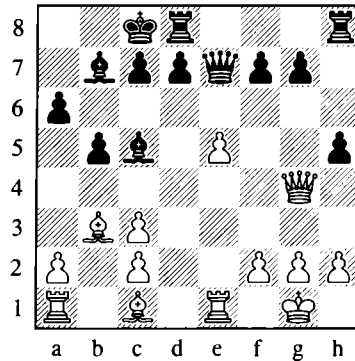
10.Bd5

This is the most popular continuation, which leads to double-edged positions. Here are two other ideas:

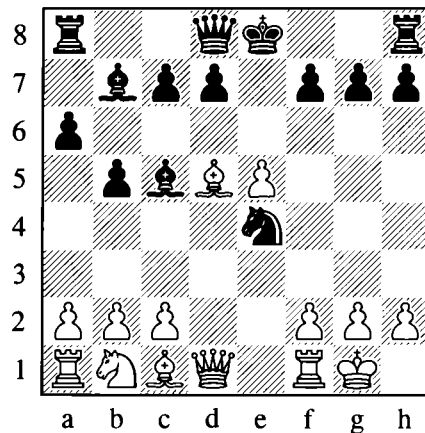
10.dxc3!? should be met by: 10...dxc3N (Instead 10...Bh4 occurred in Short – Onischuk, Wijk aan Zee 1997, and here White should have played 11.Bf3!N 0-0 12.g3 dxc3 13.Bxb7 dxe2† 14.Bg2 with slightly better

chances.) 11.bxc3 Bxe7 This position has not yet been reached in practice. One sensible move is 12.Bg4, transposing to 10.Bg4 below.

10.Bg4!? should be met by 10...Bxe7! when play may continue: 11.dxc3! dxc3 12.bxc3 0-0 13.Bxe1! h5 (13...f6!?N gives roughly equal chances and deserves consideration.)

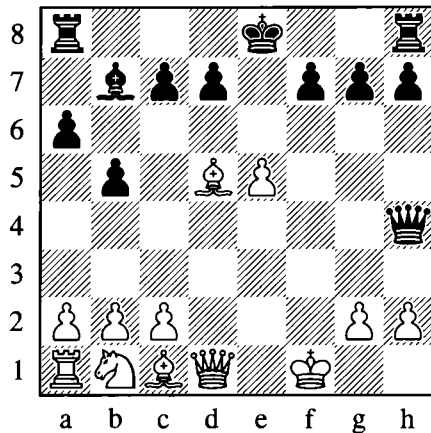


14.Bh3 (14.Bf5N is more accurate although 14...f6! maintains the balance.) This position was reached in Capablanca – Pulvermacher, New York 1907, and here Black should have played 14...f6! with good chances to take over the initiative.

**10...dxf2!?**

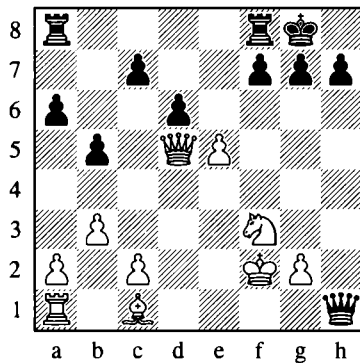
This exchanging operation has been Black's most popular choice and it seems to be the best.

11. ♖xf2 ♙xf2† 12. ♕xf2 ♜h4† 13. ♖f1

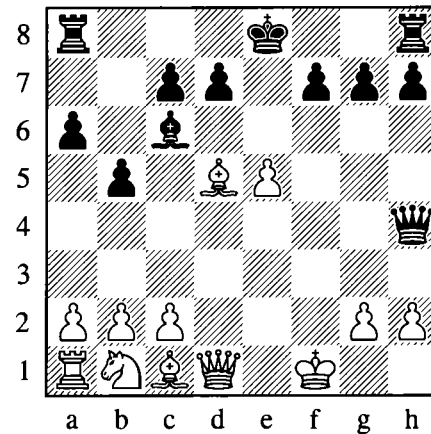


13... ♙c6!?!N

According to my database, all games have continued with the more obvious 13... ♙xd5, which leads to a complicated game with mutual chances: 14. ♜xd5 0-0 15. ♘d2 ♜xh2 16. ♘f3 ♜h1† (16... ♜h5!?! also leads to a double-edged position.) 17. ♖f2 d6 18. b3



18... ♜h5! As played in Lovakovic – Oestergaard, e-mail 2002. I believe White's best from here is 19. ♙b2N ♙ad8 when the position remains rather unclear.



14. ♘c3 0-0 15. ♖g1 ♙ae8

Compared with the previous note, White's king is safer and the h2-pawn has been preserved. On the other hand, Black is well mobilized and will soon be able to win the e5-pawn.

16. ♙xc6 dxc6 17. g3 ♜b4 18. a3 ♜c5†
19. ♖g2 ♙xe5 20. ♙f4 ♙e7

With the e-file firmly in his hands, Black is at least not worse.

Conclusion

None of the variations examined here have much to offer White other than surprise value. In many lines, if Black plays accurately then the question is not whether he can equalize, but rather if he can claim an advantage at an early stage of the game.

Chapter 9

5.0-0



7.♘b3 d5 – without 8.dxe5

Variation Index

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3

7...d5

A) 8.♘c3?!	170
B) 8.♞e1	171
C) 8.a4 ♘xd4 9.♘xd4 exd4	172
C1) 10.axb5	173
C2) 10.♘c3!?	174
D) 8.♘xe5 ♘xe5 9.dxe5 c6	176
D1) 10.c3	176
D2) 10.♙e3	178

note to 8th move options



11...♙c5!N

A) after 12.f4



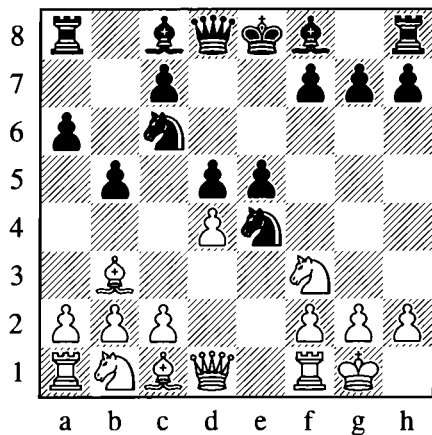
12...h6!N

C1) after 11.c3!?



11...♞a7!N

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♘xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5



From this common position the main move is of course 8.dxe5, and we will deal with it in the third and final section of the book, beginning in the very next chapter. Before that we must first look at the four sidelines: A) 8.♘c3?!, B) 8.♙e1, C) 8.a4 and D) 8.♘xe5.

White's other rare options are just bad. Here is one such example:

8.c4? ♙g4!

8...dxc4 should also be good for Black, but I find the text move even more convincing.

9.cxd5

9.h3N ♙xf3 10.gxf3 dxc4! 11.♙c2 ♘g5 should be winning for Black.

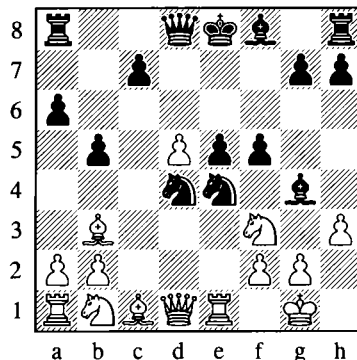
9.dxe5 dxc4 10.♙c2 (or 10.♙e2 Caruso – Ruzzier, Padova 1998, 10...♘c5N–+) 10...♘c5 (10...♙xd1N is just as good) 11.a4 This occurred in Berkley – Wurm, e-mail 2002, and now the simple 11...♙xd1 12.♙xd1 (12.♙xd1 ♘b4) 12...b4 13.♘bd2 ♙e6+ gives Black an extra pawn and a clear advantage.

9...♘xd4 10.♙e1 f5!

This ambitious move should refute White's play, if followed up correctly.

11.h3

Now in Harksen – Fahlander, corr. 1915, Black could have justified his previous play with:



11...♙c5!N 12.hxg4 ♘xf3† 13.♙xf3 ♙xf2† 14.♘f1 ♙xe1 15.♘xe1 ♙h4†! 16.♘d1 0-0!–+

Black's overwhelming development advantage should decide the game.

A) 8.♘c3?!

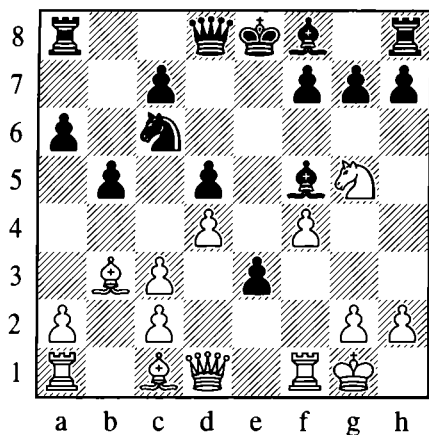
This move is questionable, but it demands an accurate response.

8...♘xc3 9.bxc3 e4

Apart from being a pawn down, White faces the strategic problem of having the b3-bishop stuck in a 'cage'. If Black manages to complete development, relocate his knight and lock the cage door with ...c6, there will be no way out other than a desperate c3-c4 sacrifice. Still, we should not get ahead of ourselves – Black still needs to navigate the opening while behind in development.

10.♘g5 ♙f5! 11.f3 e3! 12.f4!

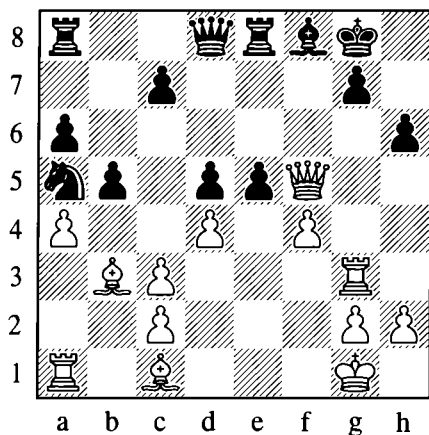
We have been following the game Homs – Lehmann, Germany 2008. White has done everything possible to make his position work, but Black could still have retained the upper hand with the following precise continuation:



12...h6!N 13.♘f3 ♟e7 14.♞e1 0-0 15.♞xe3
♞e8 16.a4 ♘a5 17.♘e5 ♟f8

17...♘c4!? 18.♟xc4 bxc4 changes the
character of the position but still looks quite
attractive for Black.

18.♞g3 f6 19.♞h5 fxe5 20.♞xf5



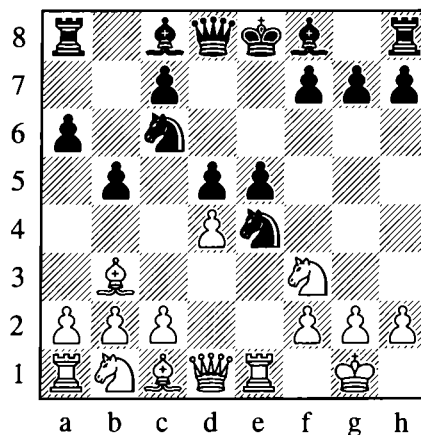
20...♘xb3!

This requires a certain flexibility in one's
thinking, as Black waves goodbye to the dream
of locking the cage door with ...c6. The text
move leads to an advantage by force, so it's not
all bad news.

21.cxb3 exd4 22.cxd4 bxa4! 23.bxa4 ♞e1†
24.♘f2 ♞e4!♠

Material is level but White is under some
pressure due to his vulnerable king and weak
d4-pawn.

B) 8.♞e1



8...♟e6 9.♘xe5

9.dxe5 transposes to 8.dxe5 ♟e6 9.♞e1!? –
see Chapter 11 beginning on page 193.

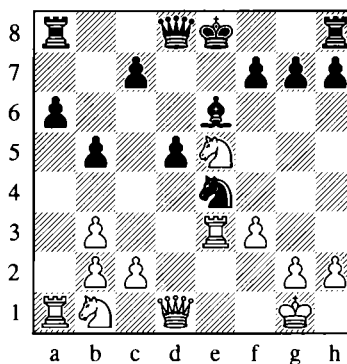
9...♘xd4!

Exposing the drawback of White's move
order, namely the unprotected f2-pawn.

10.♞xd4

After 10.♘d2!?N ♘xd2 11.♟xd2 ♘xb3
12.cxb3 ♟d6 13.♘c6 ♞d7 14.♞c1 0-0 White
has some positional compensation for the
pawn, but he is fighting for a draw at most.

Another game continued: 10.f3? ♘xb3
11.axb3 ♟c5† 12.♟e3 ♟xe3† 13.♞xe3



This was Montavon – Kreuzer, Berlin 1993, and here 13...♖g5!N→ would have left White without much chance to resist.

10...♙c5 11.♖d1

11.♖d3? ♙xf2† 12.♗f1 ♙xe1 was hopeless for White in D. Reid – C. Benson, Dunedin 1999.

The present position was reached in Rusu – Ignat, Romania 1994. Here the right path for Black would have been:

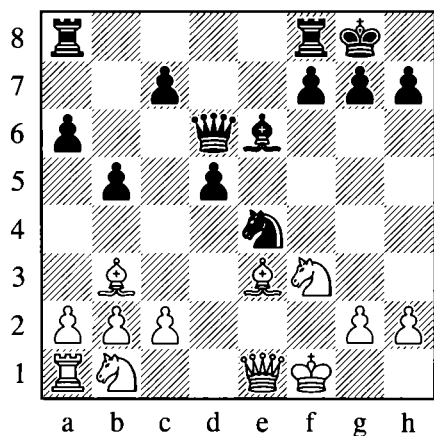
11...♙xf2† 12.♗f1 ♙xe1

12...♖f6!? can also be considered, but the straightforward approach works well. In the ensuing middlegame White's two extra minor pieces will be no match for Black's rook and two pawns.

13.♖xe1 ♖d6 14.♙f3

I also analysed: 14.♙f4 g5! 15.♙g3 c5 16.c3 0-0-0! 17.♙d2 ♙xg3† 18.♖xg3 f6 19.♙ef3 ♖xg3 20.hxg3 ♖he8† The endgame is much better for Black.

14...0-0 15.♙e3



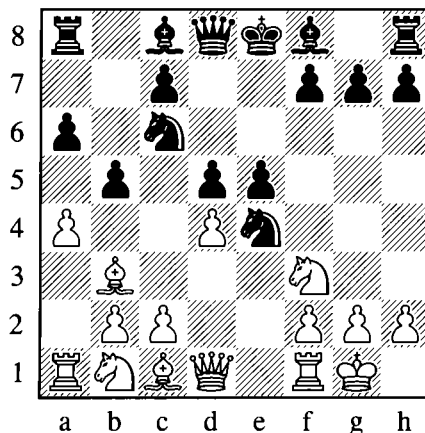
15...c5!

It is time for Black to start putting his extra pawns to use.

16.c3 f5 17.♙bd2 ♖ae8†

Followed by ...f4. White faces an uphill struggle to resist.

C) 8.a4



This system was developed by the best Russian player at the end of the 19th century, Mikhail Chigorin. White's idea is to use the b5-pawn as a hook for his play on the queenside. In the beginning it scored extremely well, but since then Black found ways to fight against it. Nowadays it is not considered particularly dangerous, but there are still some important lines of which Black must be aware.

8...♙xd4 9.♙xd4

9.axb5? makes no sense in view of 9...♙xb3 10.cxb3 ♙b7! with a clear advantage for Black.

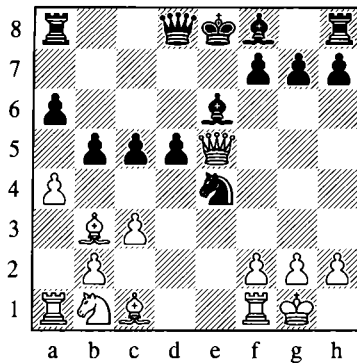
9...exd4

From this position White's usual continuation has been C1) 10.axb5, but we must not ignore the striking possibility of C2) 10.♙c3!.

Here are two rare and inferior moves that quickly be dismissed:

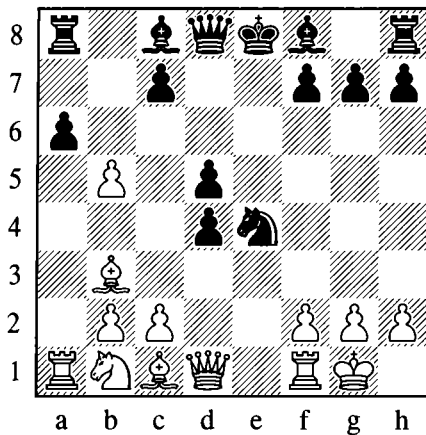
10.♖e1?! ♙e6 11.f3 ♙c5 12.♖xd4 ♙xb3 13.cxb3 c5 14.♖d1 ♙e7† Mara – Dunlop, Timaru 1911.

10.♙xd4?! is dubious in view of: 10...♙e6!
11.c3 c5 12.♙e5



12...♙b8 (12...♙f6!?) 13.♙xb8† ♖xb8 14.axb5
axb5 A pawn down in the endgame, White
was fighting for a draw in Lasker – Schlechter,
Germany (2) 1910.

C1) 10.axb5



10...♙c5 11.c3!?

This seems to be White's best try.

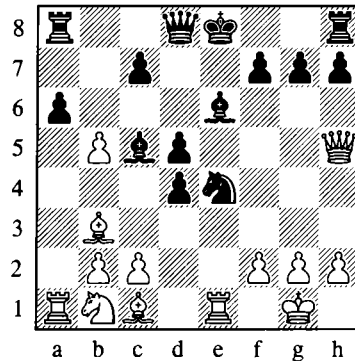
11.♙c3 is less appealing here than on the
previous move, and Black has a convincing
reply: 11...0-0! 12.♙xe4 (12.♙xd5 ♙b7†)
12...dxe4† 13.♙h5 ♙b6 White was struggling
in City Berlin – City Riga, corr. 1911.

The following alternative is a bit more
interesting, but still unimpressive:

11.♙h5 ♙e6 12.♙e1

12.bxa6 A. Popovic – Jovanovic, Belgrade
2011. 12...0-0!N 13.♙d2 ♙f6 14.♙h4 c6
15.♙f3 ♙b6 16.♙f4 ♙e4†

12.♙xa6N 0-0!† is also better for Black
thanks to his strong centre and the weakness
of the b5-pawn.



12...0-0!†

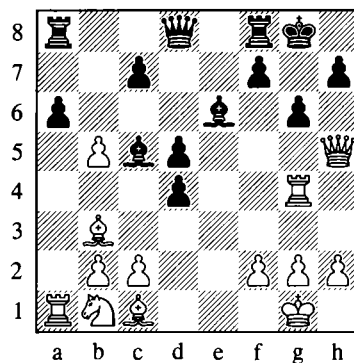
It turns out that Black has no need to fear
the following capture:

13.♙xe4?!N

Objectively White should prefer 13.bxa6 as
played in Mary – Colsaet, Internet 2003,
although here Black could have obtained a
clear advantage with 13...♙d6N†.

13...g6! 14.♙g4

The only defence, but Black has a neat way
of refuting it.



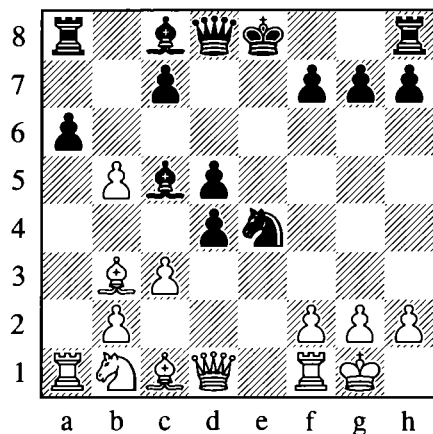
14...axb5! 15.♙xa8 ♙xa8

White is powerless against the threats along

the first rank, as his heavy pieces are stuck on the kingside. For example:

16.♖g3 ♖a1 17.♗d1 ♖xb1-+

The main line continuation was played in Lasker – Schlechter, Germany (8) 1910, and several subsequent games. At this point I found a new and strong reply for Black:



11...♖a7!N

This is a clear improvement over the usual 11...0-0.

12.♗h5

After 12.cxd4 axb5! 13.♖xa7 ♖xa7 Black keeps an extra pawn.

12...0-0! 13.♗xd5 ♖b7 14.♗xd8 ♖xd8 15.cxd4 axb5! 16.♖xa7 ♖xa7

Black has the advantage thanks to his more active pieces. Here is an illustrative line:

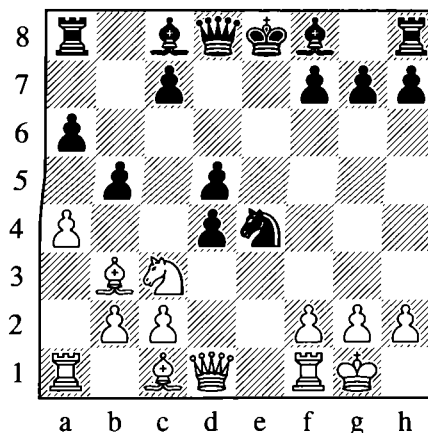
17.♘c3 ♖xd4 18.♘b5 ♖a6! 19.♖c4 ♖xb5 20.♖xb5 ♘xf2!

The knight is untouchable, as you can see in the following line:

21.♖xf2? ♖d5! 22.♖e2 ♖f5! 23.♖f3 ♖c5! 24.♖d2 ♖c2! 25.♖e1 ♖xf2† 26.♖xf2 ♖c1†

By now White can resign.

C2) 10.♘c3!?



This bold move is based on the weakness of the d5-pawn and Black's hanging pieces on a8 and e4. However, Black is not without resources of his own.

10...♘c3 11.bxc3 c5!

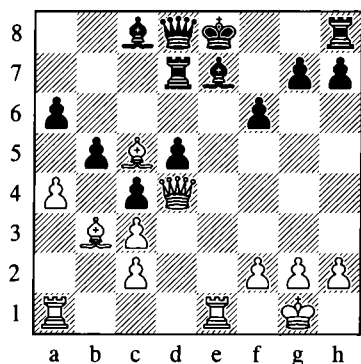
Black wants to exclude the light-squared bishop from the game.

11...♖e6 has given Black good positions in a few games, but it seems to me that White can obtain decent counterplay with the untested 12.f4!N.

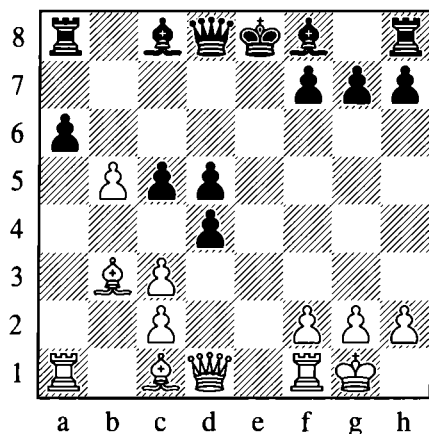
12.axb5

The inclusion of the moves 12.♖e1†N ♖e7 only helps Black, for instance 13.♖g5 ♖e6 14.♖xe7 ♖xe7 15.cxd4 c4 16.♖a2 ♗d6 intending ...♖he8 and Black has excellent chances to convert his extra pawn.

12.♗h5?! is unimpressive and has only been played in one game: 12...c4 13.♖e1† ♖e7 14.♖a3 ♖a7 15.♖c5 (I also analysed: 15.♗e5 f6 16.♗xd4 ♖d7 17.♖a2 ♖b7+ The buried bishop on a2 is a major handicap for White.) 15...♖d7 16.♗e5 f6 17.♗xd4 Now in Pedersen – Keemink, corr. 1930, Black could have obtained excellent chances for victory with:



17...0-0 18.♟b6 ♚e8 19.♟a2 bxa4. Even if Black's two extra a-pawns were magically removed, White would still face a major strategic problem as his light-squared bishop is trapped in a tight cage.



12...♟e7 13.♚f3

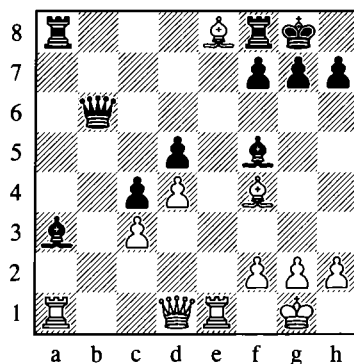
I analysed three other moves:

13.bxa6N 0-0! 14.cxd4 c4 15.♟a4 ♜xa6. gives Black a positional advantage due to his extra space and the misplaced bishop on a4.

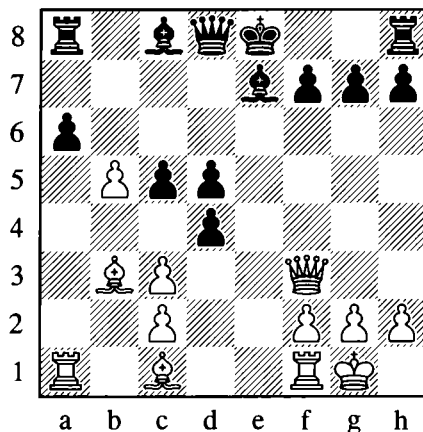
13.c4 0-0! 14.cxd5 ♟b7! and Black's chances are higher. For example, 15.bxa6 ♜xa6 16.♜xa6 ♟a6 17.♜e1 ♟f6 18.c4 dxc3 19.♟e3 ♚d6 and Black was a pawn up in Schubert – Kaufmann, Trebic 1915.

13.cxd4 c4 14.♟a4 0-0 15.♟f4! ♟f5! 16.c3

axb5 17.♟xb5 ♚b6 18.♜e1! ♟a3! 19.♟e8! occurred in Teichmann – Rubinstein, Breslau 1912. White has played quite inventively, but Black could still have maintained some advantage with:



19...♚b7!N Protecting the rook on a8 and thus threatening to place the bishop on b2. 20.♜e3 ♟d3! 21.♚e1 ♟e4! 22.f3 ♜fxe8 23.fxe4 ♜xe4 24.♜xe4 dxe4. Black has an extra pawn and the c3-pawn is weak.

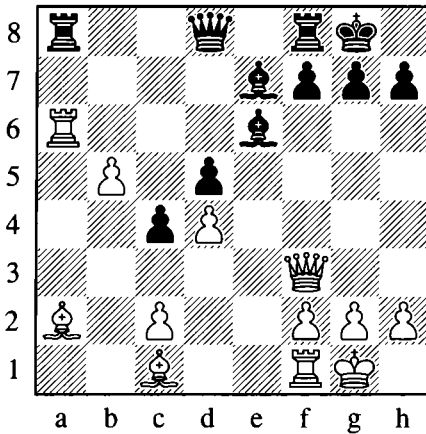


13...♟e6 14.♜xa6

The weak 14.cxd4? was played in Moewig – Wagner, Cologne 1911, and here Black missed the strong reply 14...c4!N 15.♟a4 0-0 when White either loses a pawn or experiences problems with his light-squared bishop.

14...0-0 15.cxd4 c4 16.♟a2

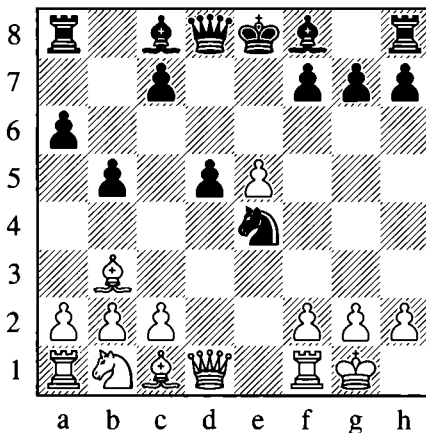
16.♔a4? runs into the witty reply 16...♙d7!
 17.♖xa8 ♗xa8 18.♙a3 ♙xa3 19.♗xa3 ♗a5
 20.♗d6 ♙e8! and Black is going to win the
 bishop.



16...♖xa6 17.bxa6 ♗a5 18.♙b1 c3! and

Black will soon recoup the a6-pawn with
 ...♖a8xa6, or perhaps even ...♖c8 and ...♗xa6.
 Meanwhile he keeps an obvious positional
 advantage due to White's stranded light-
 squared bishop, Spielmann – Tarrasch, San
 Sebastian 1912.

D) 8.♙xe5 ♙xe5 9.dxe5



Compared with the main 8.dxe5 line, the
 disappearance of the knights on f3 and c6
 should simplify Black's defensive task, although

as we will see, a certain degree of accuracy will
 be required.

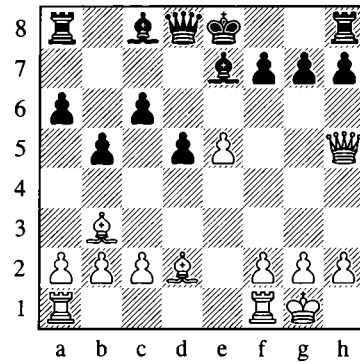
9...c6

Securing the centre and immediately
 highlighting one of the ways in which Black
 has benefited from the early knight exchange.
 We will analyse the two main branches: D1)
 10.c3 and D2) 10.♙e3.

A tame alternative is:

10.♙d2 ♙xd2 11.♙xd2 ♙e7 12.♗h5

12.a4 ♙f5 13.c3 0-0 14.♙c2 ♗d7 15.♗b1
 ♙xc2 16.♗xc2 occurred in Sugden – Collins,
 Hastings 2007, and here my suggestion
 would be 16...f6N (or 16...♖ae8N) 17.exf6
 ♙xf6 with easy equality.



12...♙e6 13.c3 ♗d7

This creates a threat of ...♙g4, so White has
 no time to prevent the bishop from coming
 to f5.

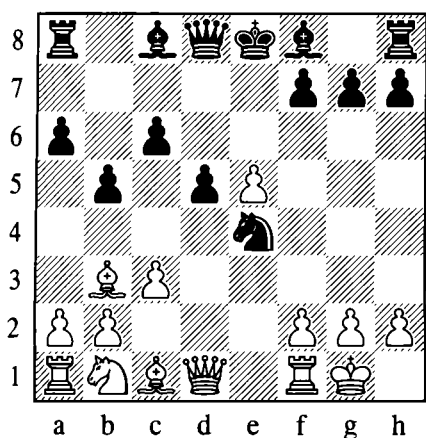
14.♙g5 ♙f5

14...♙g4!?N might be even more accurate:
 15.♗h4 ♙f5 16.♙xe7 ♗xe7 17.♗f4 ♗e6
 18.♗b4 ♗e7=

15.♖fe1 ♙g6 16.♗h4 ♙xg5 17.♗xg5 0-0
 18.♖ad1 ♖fe8

Black does not experience a single problem,
 Short – Timman, El Escorial (8) 1993.

D1) 10.c3



White secures an escape square for the bishop.

10...♟c5 11.♞d2

Another idea is:

11.♞e2

This way White prepares to exchange the dark-squared bishops while keeping the knights on the board.

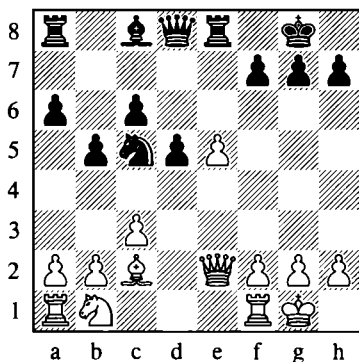
11...0-0 12.♟e3

12.♞h1? is bad in view of 12...♞h4! 13.♟e3 ♟g4! 14.♞e1 ♟xe3 15.♞xe3 ♟ae8 16.♞g1! ♟e6! and Black was clearly better in Cherbak – Bakhmatov, Kiev 1960.

12...♟e8

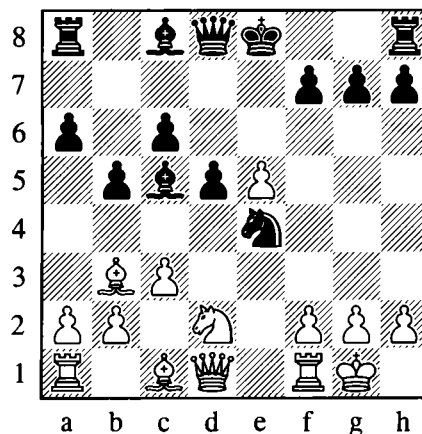
A draw was agreed here in Smirin – Ivanchuk, Moscow 1988, although I would rate Black's chances as slightly higher. Play could have continued as follows:

13.♟xc5 ♞xc5 14.♟c2



14...d4! 15.♞d1 d3! 16.♟xd3 ♞g5! 17.♟c2 ♟g4 (17...♟f5!?) 18.f3 ♟xe5 19.♞f1 ♞e3† 20.♞f2 ♞xf2† 21.♞xf2 ♟f5 22.♟xf5 ♟xf5 23.♞a3=

A draw is the most likely outcome.



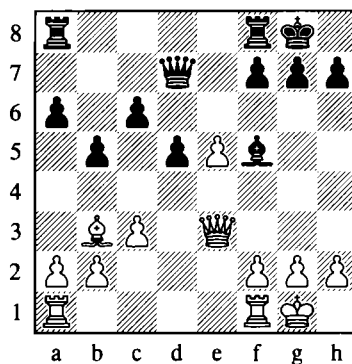
11...♞xd2 12.♟xd2 ♟f5

12...♞h4!? also equalizes, as illustrated by the following old game: 13.♞h1 0-0 14.f4 ♟g4! 15.♞e1 ♞xe1 16.♟axe1 ♟f5! 17.♟e3 ♟xe3 18.♟xe3 ♟ad8 19.♞d1 ♞d7 20.h3 h5 21.♞d2 ♟fd8 Black was fine in Bird – Steinitz, Vienna 1873.

13.♟e1

White prepares to exchange bishops. Another way to do it is:

13.♞f3 ♞d7 14.♟e3 ♟xe3 15.♞xe3 0-0

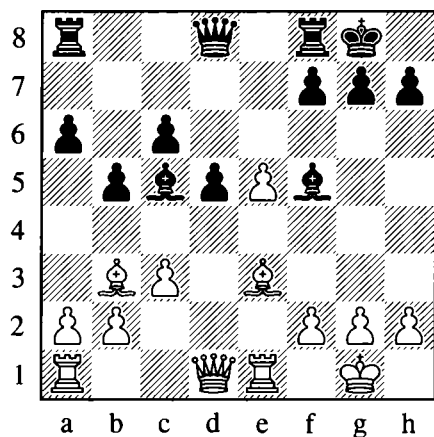


16.♟fe1 (16.a4 is premature as after 16...♟ab8!

17.axb5 ♖xb5 the b2-pawn is in danger.)
 16...♖ab8!? (The simple 16...♗fe8N is also good.) 17.f3 ♗fe8 18.♖c5 ♗e6 19.♗e3 ♖e7 (19...h5!N) Black was fine in Petrosian – Teschner, Oberhausen 1961.

13...0-0 14.♗e3

I also briefly considered 14.♗c2N ♗xc2 15.♖xc2 ♗e8= and Black is fine.



14...♗xe3

Probably the best solution, although Karpov once played 14...♗e7!? keeping the dark-squared bishops on the board. The game continued 15.a4 (15.♗c2!? ♖d7 16.♖b1! ♗xc2 17.♖xc2 looks like a better try, although here too Black should have few problems equalizing.) 15...♖d7 16.♖d2 In this roughly equal position a draw was agreed in Hort – Karpov, Bugojno 1980.

15.♗xe3 ♗e8

15...♖d7 has been played, but I prefer the text move slightly as the queen may prefer another square.

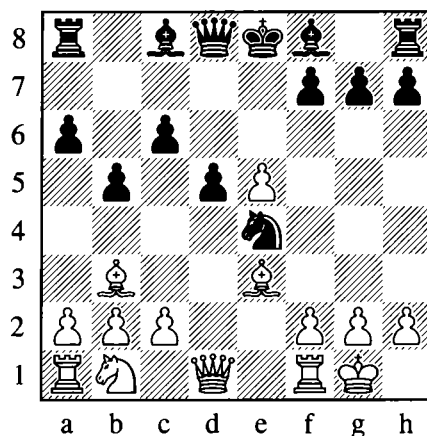
16.♖d4N

The slightly odd 16.♖h5 was played in Randa – Sheers, e-mail 1996. The most logical reply is 16...♖d7N 17.♗ae1 ♗ad8 when Black is well mobilized and can start thinking about

advancing his queenside pawns, while it is hard to see what the queen is doing on h5.

16...♖c7 17.♗ae1 ♗ad8 18.♖c5 ♗e6
 With equal chances.

D2) 10.♗e3

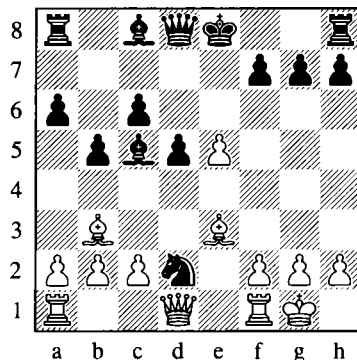


I believe that covering the a7-g1 diagonal and anticipating ...♗c5 is White's only real chance to fight for the initiative.

10...♗f5!?

This move is rare, but I believe it to be a convincing equalizer. I will present some brief analysis of the alternatives to show that White's set-up is not as harmless as it may appear.

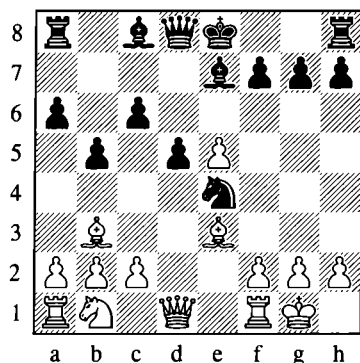
10...♗c5 11.♖d2! ♖xd2 (11...♗xe3 12.♖xe4!±)



12.♙xc5!N (Only 12.♖xd2 has been played, but it is not especially dangerous.) 12...♜xf1 13.♖xf1 In my opinion Black is under long-term pressure, as the dark-squared bishop is stronger than either of the black rooks.

10...♙e7

This has been the most popular choice. It is certainly playable, but Black must demonstrate some precision.



11.c3!

11.♜d2 ♜c5 12.c3 enabled Black to grab a pawn with 12...♜d3! in Boey – Mikhalevski, Antwerp 1998.

11...0–0

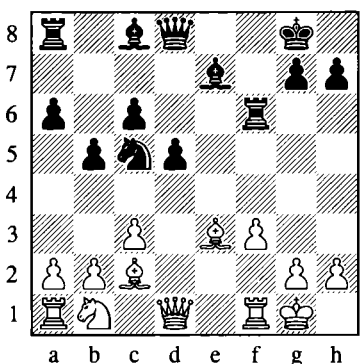
This 'automatic' move is inaccurate!

The right way is 11...♙f5!, transposing to the 11.c3 line given in the notes to the main line below.

12.f3!

12.♜d2 ♜xd2 13.♖xd2 ♙f5 is equal, and transposes to our main line below.

12...♜c5 13.♙c2 f5 14.exf6 ♖xf6

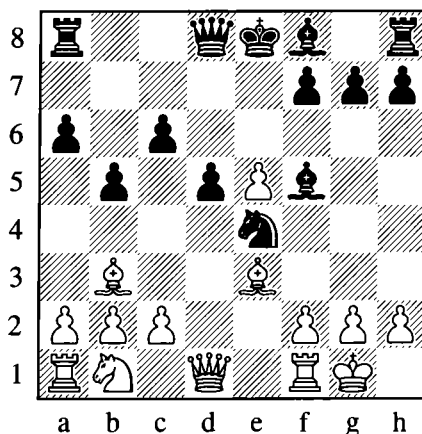


15.♜d2!N

The less accurate 15.♙d4?! was seen in Barle – Tukmakov, Krk 1976. The best response would have been 15...♖h6!N 16.f4 (or 16.♙e3 ♖e6! 17.♙d4 ♙d6 18.g3 ♖h6 with a comfortable position for Black) 16...♙d6! 17.♖e1! ♖f8! 18.♜d2 ♙f5 and Black is fine.

15...♖c7 16.♙d4 ♖h6 17.f4 ♜e6 18.♙e5 ♙c5† 19.♜h1 ♙d6 20.♖f3 ♙xe5 21.fxe5

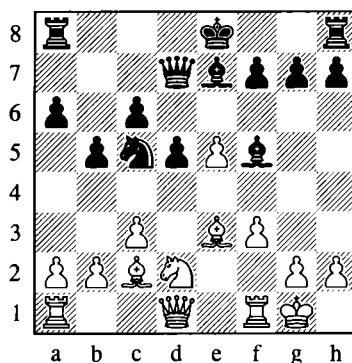
White is slightly better.



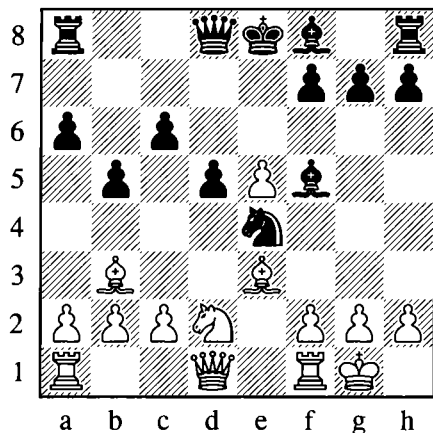
11.♜d2

11.a4 was played in Nikitinyh – Pukshansky, Leningrad 1980. The simplest reply looks to be 11...♙e7 when Black has no problems.

Another game continued: 11.c3 ♙e7 12.♙c2 ♖d7 13.f3 ♜c5 14.♜d2 Kholmov – Unzicker, Kislovodsk 1972. Now the most precise is:



14...♔d3!N 15.♖f2 (15.♖e1 ♜f5! is also good for Black.) 15...0–0 16.♘b3 ♙xc2 17.♗xc2 ♘a4! Black prepares ...c5 and maintains an equal position.



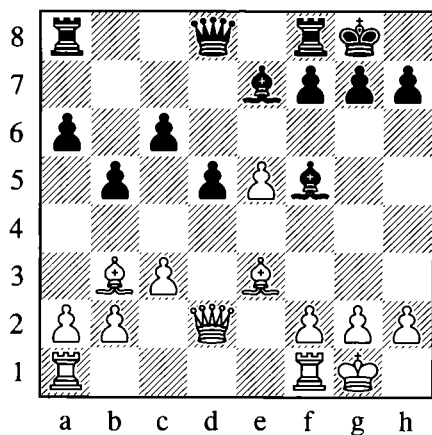
11...♘xd2 12.♜xd2 ♙e7 13.c3N

Technically this is a novelty, but the move is thematic and we quickly transpose to a known position.

13.♜c3 ♜c8 14.♙c5 ♙xc5 15.♜xc5 ♜e7 16.♜e3 0–0 was comfortable for Black in Rosenhek – Mesko, corr. 2010.

13...0–0

This position has occurred in a dozen games, most of which featured the 10...♙e7 move order. (See the relevant note above, where 12.♘d2 was played instead of the more challenging 12.f3!.)

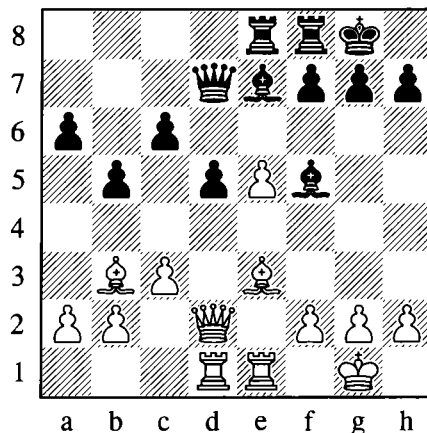


14.♖fe1

14.♙c2 ♜d7=

14...♜d7 15.♖ad1 ♖ae8!

Preparing ...f6.



16.♙c2N

White may as well admit he has no advantage and settle for simplifying the position.

16.♜d4 f6 17.♙f4 fxe5 18.♙xe5 ♙f6 19.♙xf6 ♜xf6 20.a4 was agreed drawn in S. Larsen – Lannaioli, e-mail 1998, and after 20...♜fe6 21.♜xe6 ♜xe6 Black is certainly not worse.

16...♙xc2 17.♜xc2 f6 18.exf6 ♜xf6=

Following by ...♙d6.

Conclusion

Black has no worries in any of the variations examined here. Nevertheless he should not neglect them, as they all present certain challenges and could be quite troublesome to tackle when unprepared, especially variations C and D.

Chapter 10

Main Lines

Sidelines

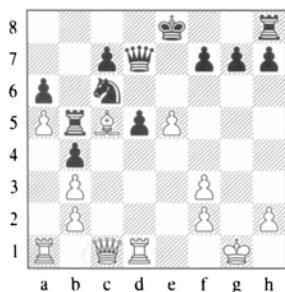
Variation Index



1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5
8...♙e6

A) 9.♙e1	182
B) 9.♘c3	184
C) 9.a4 b4	185
C1) 10.c3	186
C2) 10.a5 ♘c5!	187
C21) 11.♙e3	189
C22) 11.♙g5	190

C21) after 19.gxf3



19...♘d8!N

C22) note to 13.♙h4



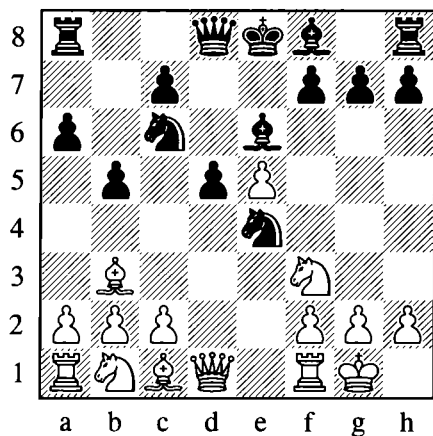
14...g5!N

C22) after 18.♙fe1



18...♙ab8!N

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♗xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6



We have arrived at the main tabiya of the Open Spanish. Here is a brief list of White's major options and where they can be found in the book.

9.♙e1! can be found in the next chapter, beginning on page 193.

9.♙e3 is the subject of Chapters 12 and 13, on pages 209 and 216 respectively.

9.♗e2 can be found in Chapters 14 and 15 on pages 235 and 246.

9.c3 is considered in Chapters 16 and 17, pages 270 and 295.

9.♘bd2 is the most critical theoretical path. This move is the subject of Chapters 18 and 19 – see pages 317 and 339.

The present chapter is devoted to White's minor options, namely **A) 9.♗e1**, **B) 9.♘c3**, and **C) 9.a4**.

9.♙f4?!

This rare move is too provocative.

9...g5! 10.♙e3

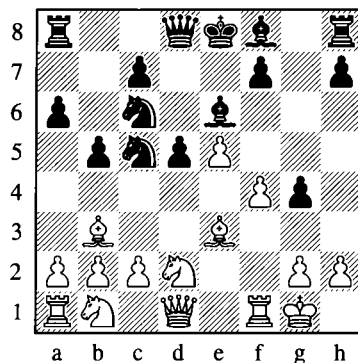
After 10.♙g3?! h5 Black is already clearly better as there is no convenient way to meet the threat of ...h4, Nathan – Collett, Bath 1963.

10...g4

Black drives the knight away from the defence of the central pawn.

11.♘fd2 ♘c5 12.f4

12.c3 ♘d3! wins the e-pawn.



12...d4! 13.♙f2

Now in Tolnai – Duemmke, Velden 1994, Black should have restrained his opponent's counterplay by means of:

13...♙f5N

With full control over the position.

A) 9.♗e1

This weird-looking move has only ever been tried in a couple of games. White was successful both times, but Black's play can easily be improved.

9...♙e7

Compared with the 9.♗e2 line of the next chapter, White does not have the ♗d1 idea available here.

10.♘c3N

This seems to me to be the only logical follow-up of White's previous move.

10.♖bd2N doesn't make sense, as after 10...♖c5 the queen is misplaced on e1.

The strange 10.♙f4?! was played in Moranda – Yahya, Belfort 2005. Here Black should borrow an idea from the 9.♙f4?! line analysed above and play 10...g5! 11.♙e3 g4 12.♖fd2 ♖c5 with better chances.

10.c3

This was White's choice in Wohl – D. Ledger, Birmingham 2002. Here I recommend the improvement:

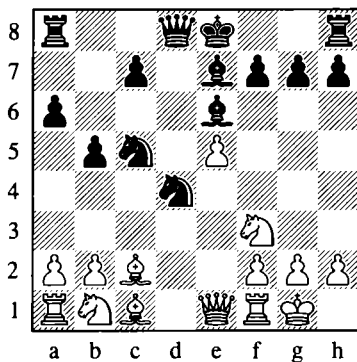
10...♖c5!N 11.♙c2 d4

The same idea is often seen in the 9.♖bd2 line. Here White has substituted the knight development with the strange queen move to e1, which is hardly likely to improve his chances.

12.cxd4

In the analogous position with the knight already on d2 White can meet the ...d4 move with ♖b3 or ♖e4, but here no such options exist.

12...♖xd4

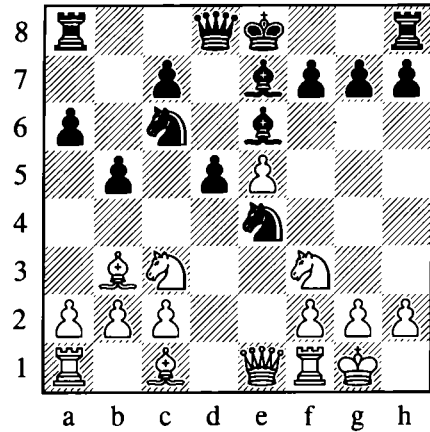


13.♖xd4

The attempt to utilize of the queen's presence on e1 with 13.♙e4?! does not make much sense, as after 13...♖xe4 14.♙xe4 ♖xf3† 15.♙xf3 0-0 Black's bishop pair gives him the advantage.

13...♙xd4

Black has a comfortable position and is already threatening to win an exchange with ...♙c4.



10...♖c5!

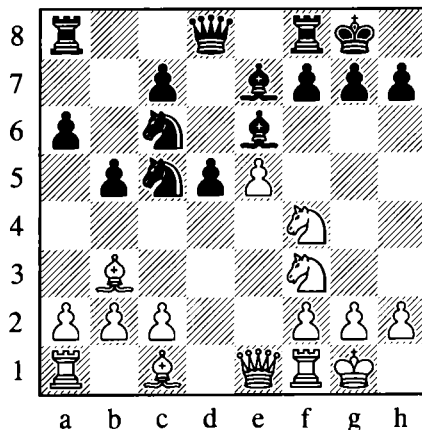
Exchanging on c3 would be too compliant.

11.♖e2!?

Preparing to bring the knight to d4 or f4. It is hard to suggest a better idea.

11...0-0 12.♖f4

12.♖ed4 is harmless. 12...♖xd4 13.♖xd4 ♙d7 14.c3 ♖xb3 15.axb3 c5 Usually when Black manages to advance his c-pawn to c5 in the Open Spanish he is doing fine, and the present position is no exception.

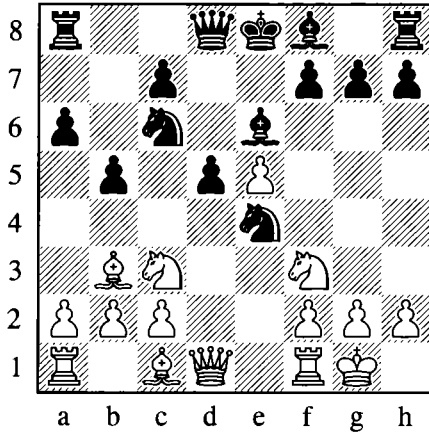


12...♖xb3 13.♗xe6

13.axb3?! ♕f5 is better for Black.

13...fxe6 14.axb3 ♖e8!

Black transfers the queen to h5 and obtains a comfortable position.

B) 9.♗c3

This old move was first introduced by the maestro Mieses in his match against Minckwitz in 1871. White's idea is to exchange the strong knight on e4, without regard for the soon-to-be doubled c-pawns or the potential problems liberating the b3-bishop. The latter will practically be dead if Black manages to advance his c-pawn to c6 or c4.

9...♗xc3 10.bxc3 ♕e7

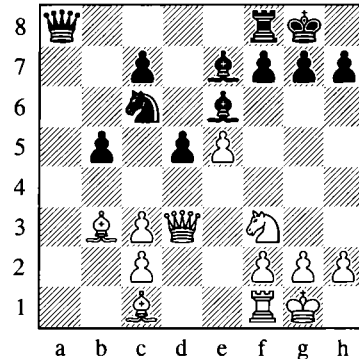
This position can also arise via the move order 8.♗c3 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 ♕e7 10.dxe5, although given the choice I would prefer 9...e4! as recommended in the previous chapter. So if White is aiming to reach the current position, he should prefer the move order given in the present chapter.

11.♗d4

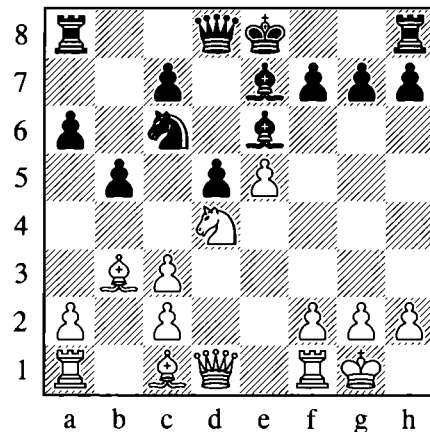
This line was advocated by the Brazilian IM Van Riemsdijk. It makes sense as White is

trying to improve his pawn structure and free the light-squared bishop.

11.a4 is an interesting alternative which has the aim of creating objects of attack in the centre and on the queenside. 11...0-0 12.axb5 axb5 13.♖xa8 ♖xa8 14.♗d3 (14.♕xd5? ♖d8 15.♕xc6? ♖xc6+ is clearly in Black's favour.)



This position occurred a long time ago in Gelbfuhs – Steinitz, Vienna 1873. Now it would be best to continue with 14...♖a5!?N 15.♖d1 (15.♕xd5?? ♖d8+) 15...h6 with a roughly equal position.

**11...♗xd4**

11...♖d7!? is a reasonable attempt to avoid improving White's structure. Now White has to sacrifice a pawn to maintain the balance: 12.♗xe6!N (12.f4 ♗xd4 13.cxd4 occurred

in Roselli Mailhe – Korneev, Sao Paulo 2002, and now 13...♔g4!N 14.♖e1 0-0 gives Black a slight edge.) 12...fxe6 13.♗h5† g6 14.♗h6 ♕xe5 15.♗g7 ♕f7 16.a4 ♔f8 17.♗f6 ♔e7 18.♗g7= Neither side can avoid the move repetition.

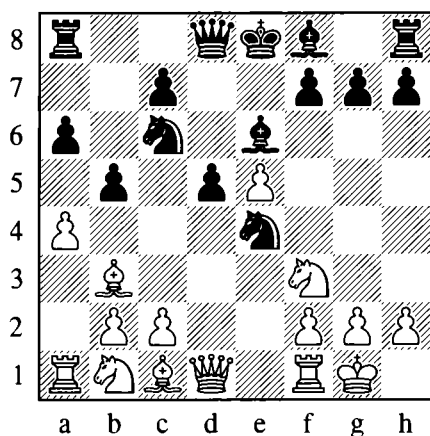
12.cxd4 0-0 13.♔d2

13.f4 ♔f5 14.c3 c5 15.♔e3 c4 16.♔c2 ♔xc2 (16...♗d7N=) 17.♗xc2 f5= 18.a4?! was played in Van Riemsdijk – Slipak, Buenos Aires 1990, and now after the obvious 18...b4N 19.cxb4 ♔xb4 Black has the advantage as his passed pawn is the more dangerous of the two.

13...c5 14.dxc5 ♔xc5

Black had the slightly better prospects in Van Riemsdijk – Milos, Bogota 1992.

C) 9.a4



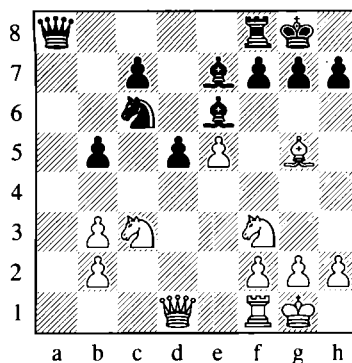
This move was introduced way back in Baden-Baden 1870! The a2-a4 thrust is thematic for all Ruy Lopez lines where ...b5 has been played, but here it fails to cause Black problems.

9...b4

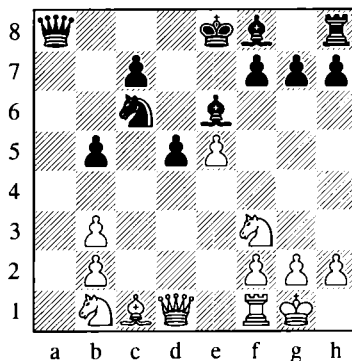
This is my main recommendation, but I will also mention a second satisfactory line:

9...♕c5!? 10.axb5

10.♔g5 ♔e7 11.axb5N (Or 11.♔xe7 ♕xe7 12.♕bd2 Lewicki – Suliborski, Karpacz 2010, 12...b4!N and Black seems to be okay.) 11...♕xb3 12.cxb3 axb5 13.♔xa8 ♗xa8 14.♕c3 0-0



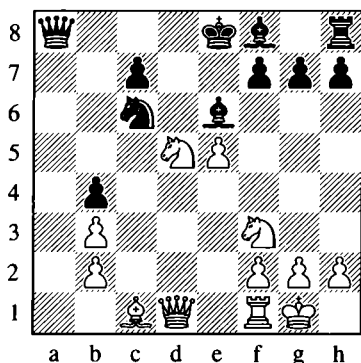
15.♕xb5 ♗a5 16.♔xe7 (16.♕bd4 doesn't change much: 16...♕xd4 17.♗xd4 ♔c5 18.♗c3 ♗b6 19.♔e3 ♔xe3 20.fxe3 ♖b8 21.♖c1 ♗xb3 22.♗xb3 ♖xb3 23.♖xc7 ♖xb2=) 16...♕xe7 17.♕bd4 c5 18.♕xe6 fxe6 Black has good compensation thanks to the weak doubled pawns on the b-file.
10...♕xb3 11.cxb3 axb5 12.♔xa8 ♗xa8



13.♕c3 b4 14.♕xd5

Or 14.♕b5 ♗b7 15.♕bd4 ♕xd4 16.♕xd4 c5 17.♕xe6 fxe6 with a roughly equal position, Simagin – Ravinsky, Moscow 1955.

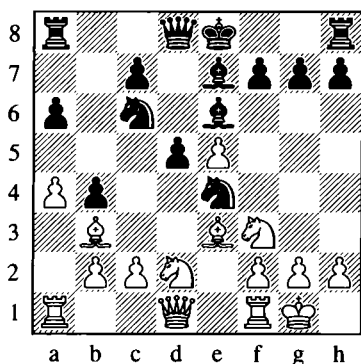
This position was reached in Ostovic – Muskardin, Sibenik 2007, and here Black has a useful improvement:



14...♖d8!N 15.♘f4 ♖xd1 16.♞xd1 ♙xb3
Black has no problems.

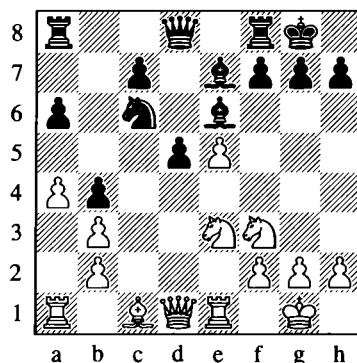
From this position we will analyse **C1) 10.c3** and **C2) 10.a5**, after briefly checking a couple of alternatives.

10.♙e3 ♙e7 11.♘bd2



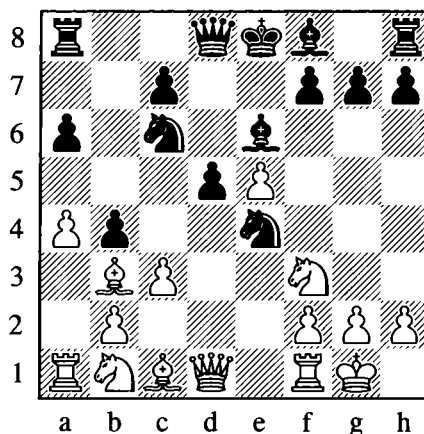
11...♘xd2! Simple and strong. 12.♞xd2 ♘a5
As played in the first game to feature 9.a4, Stern – Minckwitz, Baden-Baden 1870. Black intends to play ...c5 obtaining a good position.

10.♘bd2 can be compared with the main line that we will meet in Chapter 18, but it makes less sense after the mutual pawns moves on the queenside. Here is one example: 10...♞c5 11.♞e1 ♙e7 12.♘f1 0–0 13.♘e3 ♘xb3 14.cxb3



14...♘a5! 15.♘d4 c5 16.♘xe6 fxe6 With a comfortable position for Black in Briussel – Baron, Cergy Pontoise 2004. It is usually the case that when Black manages to move the knight away from c6 and play ...c5, he obtains a good position.

C1) 10.c3



This attempt to play a main line with the inclusion of the moves a2-a4 and ...b4 makes more sense than the two alternatives mentioned above. Here I would like to offer a new but highly logical idea:

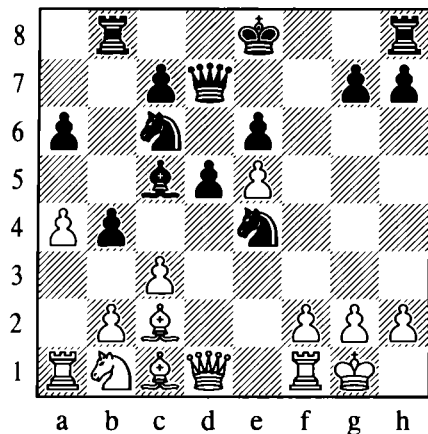
10...♞b8!N

Black forgets about any parallels with the main lines of the popular 9.c3 variation, and instead focuses on a specific feature of the present position, namely the unstable bishop

on b3. The game could go in many possible directions from here, but I will focus on the line that looks most logical to me.

11. ♖d4 ♜d7! 12. ♜xe6 fxe6 13. ♙c2 ♙c5

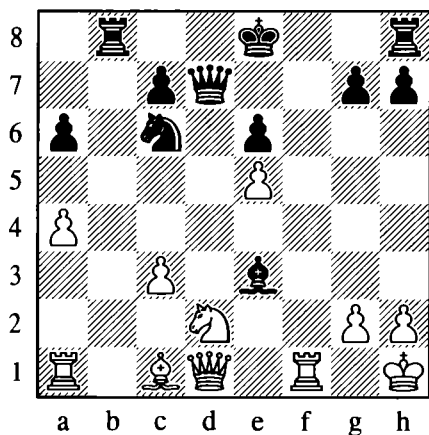
I will leave it for the reader to analyse the risky-looking but playable 13... ♜xe5! if he wishes.



14. ♙xe4 dxe4 15. ♜d2

15. ♜xd7† ♜xd7 16. ♜d1† ♜c8 favours Black.

15...e3 16.fxe3 bxc3 17.bxc3 ♙xe3† 18. ♜h1

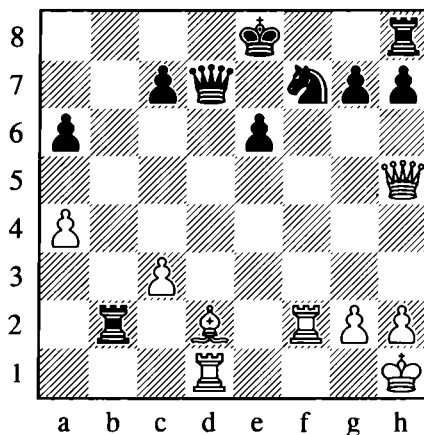


18... ♙xd2! 19. ♙xd2 ♜b2 20. ♜f2 ♜xe5

21. ♜h5†

21. ♜e2 ♜f8!†

21... ♜f7 22. ♜d1



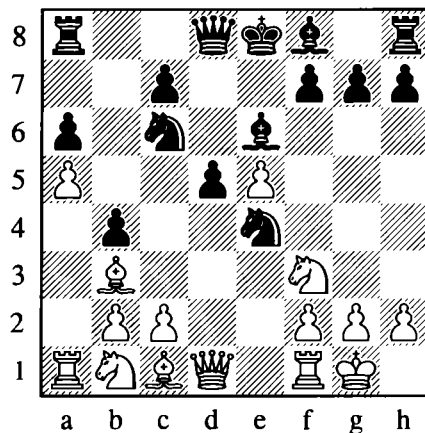
22...g6!

The immediate 22...0-0?? loses to 23. ♙e3!.

23. ♜g4 0-0

Black is fine. White has just about enough activity to make up for the missing pawn, but he cannot hope for more than equality.

C2) 10.a5

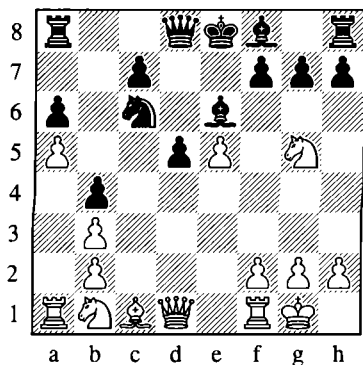


Obviously White wants to play ♙a4 with an annoying pin, but Black can easily parry the threat.

10... ♜c5!

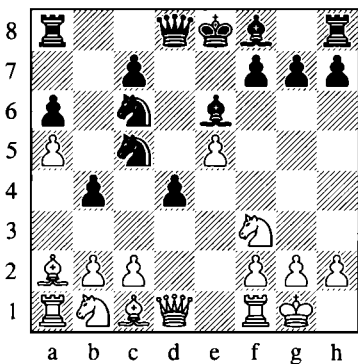
Covering the a4-square and preparing to eliminate the bishop where it stands. From here we will analyse two bishop moves, **C21) 11.♙e3** and **C22) 11.♙g5**, after first dealing with some minor alternatives.

11.♘g5?! ♜xb3 12.cxb3?! (12.♜xe6 fxe6 13.cxb3 ♖d7 14.♞e1 ♙c5 is also more pleasant for Black.)



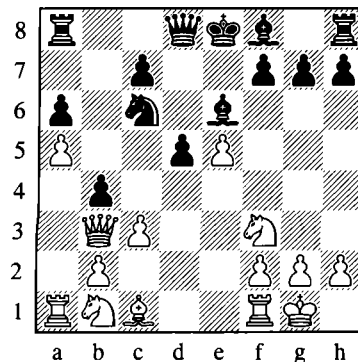
This position was reached in Vilches del Castillo – Morales de la Rosa, Linares 1991, and now Black could have saved the light-squared bishop and obtained a clear advantage with 12...♙f5!N7.

If White saves the light-squared bishop from exchange with 11.♙a2, as in Lenier – Divyasri, New Delhi 2007, Black can play 11...d4!N obtaining the d5-square for his queen. For example:



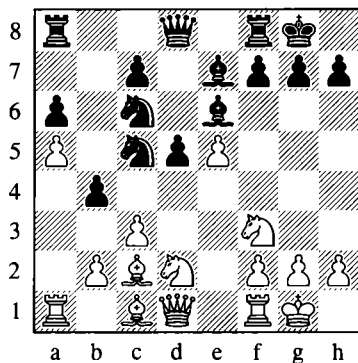
12.♜bd2 ♙xa2 13.♞xa2 ♙e7 14.b3 ♖d5 15.♜c4 0-0 with a comfortable position for Black.

11.c3 was once played in an exhibition game by the second World Champion. 11...♜xb3 12.♞xb3 Lasker – Meyer, Prague (simul) 1900. Now I propose the logical improvement:



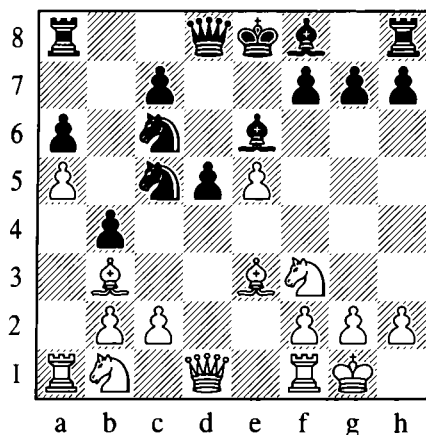
12...♖d7!N 13.♜d4 ♞b8! 14.♖d1 ♜xd4 15.cxd4 c57

Finally there is 11.♜bd2 ♙e7 12.c3 0-0 13.♙c2 as played in Sulek – Federic, Bratislava 2008. Here Black missed a good opportunity to claim the advantage:



13...d4!N 14.cxd4 ♜xd4 15.♜xd4 ♖xd4 Black has obtained a considerably improved version of a position type which is usually associated with the 9.♜bd2 main line. (Compare variation C4 of Chapter 18, page 326.)

C21) 11.♙e3

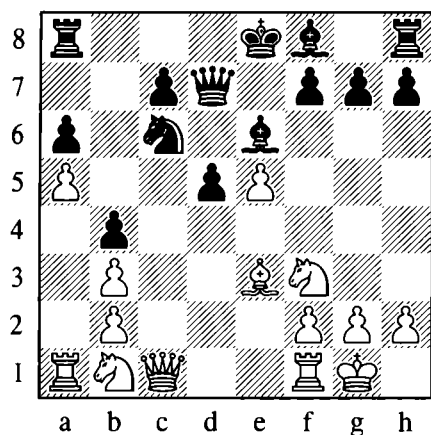


11...♘xb3 12.cxb3 ♖d7

It is not uncommon in the Open Spanish for Black to mobilize his queen in this way before developing the kingside pieces.

13.♞c1

13.♞c2 ♙f5 14.♞c1 is not an improvement for White: 14...♞b8! 15.♘h4 ♙e6 16.f4 ♙e7 17.♞e1 d4+ with a clear advantage for Black in Movsesian – Morwani, Hastings 1996.



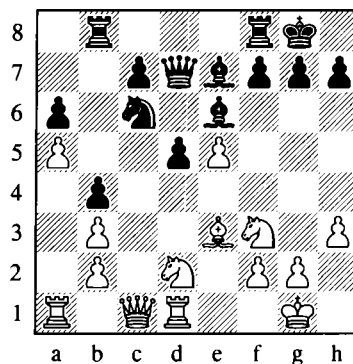
13...♞b8!

It is useful to have the ...♞b5 move available. In this unusual pawn structure both sides have weaknesses, but it seems that Black is better equipped for the battle that lies ahead.

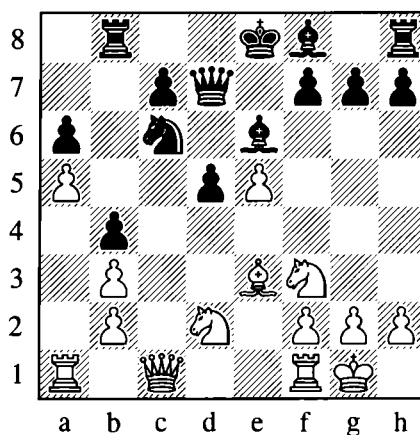
14.♘bd2

It is too early for White to try and occupy the c5-square: 14.♙c5 ♙xc5 15.♞xc5 ♞b5 16.♞c1 0-0 17.♘bd2 d4+ Black was dominating in Lind – Ebenfelt, Linköping 1984.

Another game continued: 14.♞d1 ♙e7 15.♘bd2 0-0 16.h3

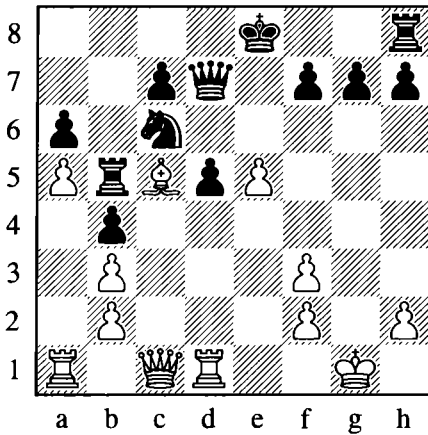


This position was reached in Povah – I. Watson, Torquay 1982, and now after 16...♞b5!N+ Black is in full control.



14...♞b5 15.♞d1 ♙e7 16.♘e4 ♙g4! 17.♘c5 ♙xc5 18.♙xc5 ♙xf3 19.gxf3

We have been following the game Wemmers – Van Wessel, Netherlands 2000. At this point my preference would be for the natural manoeuvre:

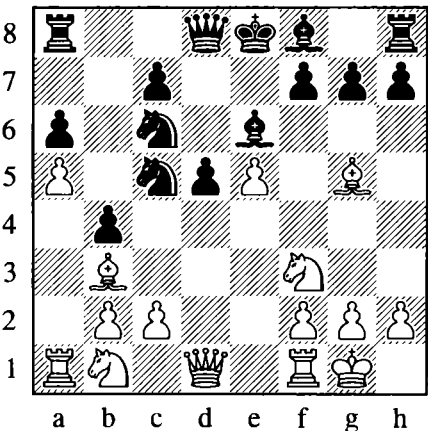


19...♖d8!N

The knight is coming to e6, where it will drive the white bishop away and thus facilitate castling, allowing Black to enjoy his positional advantages.

By the way, the game continuation of 19...h5!? is the computer's top choice and should also be good for Black, although the plan of developing the rook on h6 is a bit unorthodox.

C22) 11.♙g5



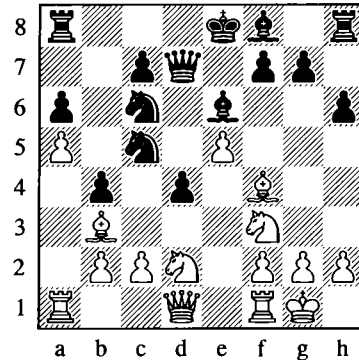
11...♗d7 12.♘bd2 h6

Before deciding how to continue his development, Black forces the enemy bishop to make a decision.

13.♙h4

The two other candidates have also been tested.

13.♙e3 d4 14.♙f4 occurred in Reissmann - Ofstad, Munich 1958. Now Black could have played:



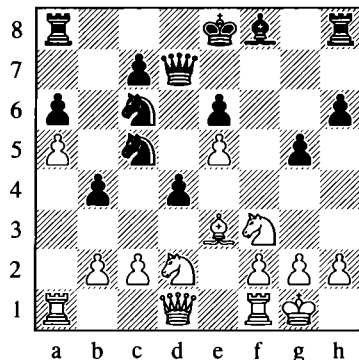
14...g5!N 15.♙g3 0-0-0 Black prepares ...d3 and obtains the better chances, for instance: 16.♙xe6 fxe6 17.♘e1 d3!♞

13.♙f4

With this move White sets a little trap.

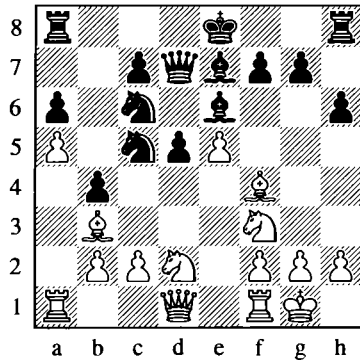
13...♙e7!N

In a couple of games Black has tried to transpose to the note to move 13 in the main line below with 13...g5!?. The trick is seen after 14.♙e3 when 14...d4 fails to win a piece, although it is still perfectly playable: 15.♙xe6 fxe6? This is the real mistake. (Black should prefer 15...♘e6N 16.♘e4! ♙g7 17.♙d2 ♗d5 when he is fine.)



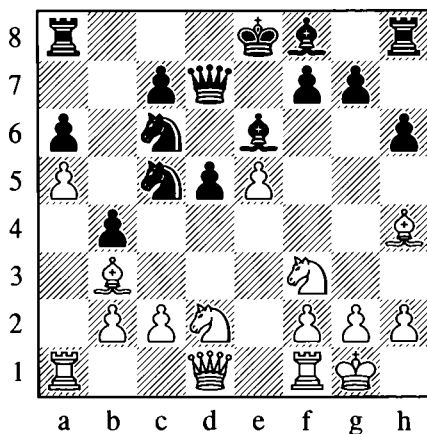
16.♖xd4! Black fell into this trap in both of the games to have featured White's 13th move. 16...♗xd4 17.♞h5† ♔d8? (17...♞f7± is the lesser evil.) 18.♞ad1 ♕c8 19.♗c4+– White regains the sacrificed piece to reach a winning position, Zaitsev – Honfi, Moscow 1971.

Despite the improvement noted for Black at move 15 in the above line, I like the novelty on move 13 even more. A plausible continuation is:



14.♗a2 ♗g4 15.h3 ♗h5

Followed by short castling, with the more comfortable position for Black.

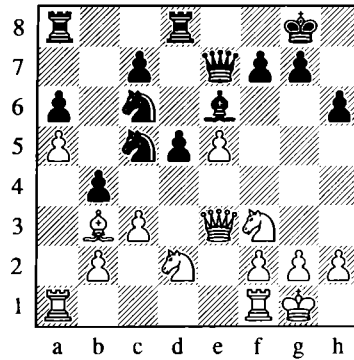


13...♗e7

This simple developing move leads to a good position for Black. 13...g5!? 14.♗g3 ♗g7 15.c3 0–0 is a good alternative which has been tested in a few games.

14.♗xe7 ♞xe7 15.c3

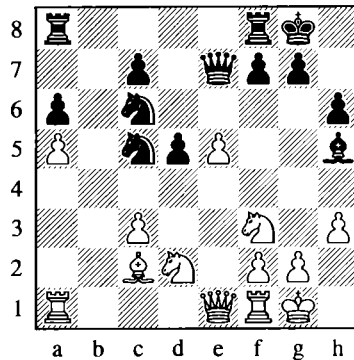
15.♞e2 0–0 16.♞e3 ♞fd8 17.c3 occurred in the game Vujadinovic – Kolev, Vrnjacka Banja 1990. Here I would like to improve upon Black's play with:



17...d4!N 18.cxd4 ♗xb3 19.♗xb3 ♗xb3 20.♞xb3 ♗xd4 21.♗xd4 ♞xd4 White is under some pressure in the heavy piece endgame.

15...0–0 16.♗a4

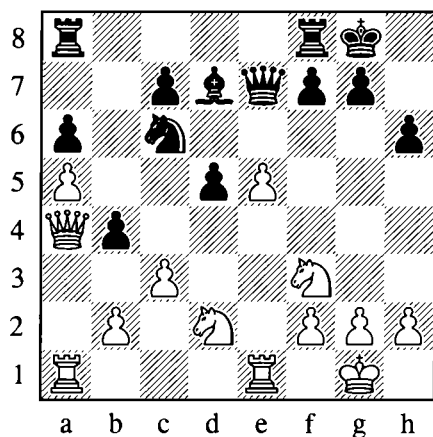
Another game continued: 16.♗c2 ♗g4 17.h3 ♗h5 18.♞e1 bxc3 19.bxc3 Kindermann – Tukmakov, Biel 1988. Now I would like to offer:



19...♞ab8!N What could be more natural than placing a rook on an open file? 20.♗d4 (20.♞e3 ♞b2 21.♗b1 ♞e8 22.g4 ♗g6) 20...♗xd4 21.cxd4 ♗e6 22.♞e3 ♞b2 23.♞fc1 ♞g5! Black creates a threat of ...♗f4 and obtains better chances.

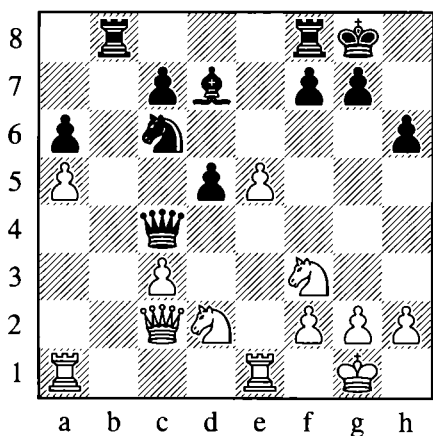
16...♟xa4 17.♞xa4 ♔d7!? 18.♞fe1

Now I would like to improve upon my own play in the game Lima – Mikhalevski, Sao Paulo 2002.



18...♞ab8!N 19.♞c2 bxc3 20.bxc3 ♞c5
21.♟b3 ♞c4 22.♟bd2

22.♟fd2 ♞b5 23.♟d4 reaches the same position.



22...♞b5 23.♟d4 ♞b2 24.♞xb2 ♞xb2
25.♟f3 ♞fb8

Black has a healthy position thanks to his control over the b-file.

Conclusion

We have examined three of White's unusual options on move 9. None of them is especially dangerous, and a well-prepared Open Spanish player should be able to face them with a high degree of confidence.

Chapter 11

Main Lines



9.♖e1!?

Variation Index

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4
6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6 9.♖e1!?

9...♙e7 10.c3 0-0

A) 11.h3	195
B) 11.♙e3	196
C) 11.♘bd2 ♘c5	198
C1) 12.♘d4	198
C2) 12.♙c2	199
D) 11.♘d4! ♙h4!?N	203
D1) 12.♖xe4 dxe4	203
D2) 12.♖e2	204
D3) 12.♘xc6	204
D4) 12.g3!?	205

note to 11th move options



11...♙c5!N

D) after 11.♘d4!



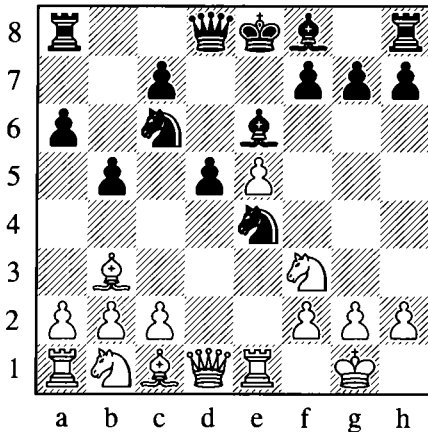
11...♙h4!?N

D4) after 13.♘d2!



13...♙c8!!

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♘xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6
9.♙e1!



This used to be a pet line of GM Kupreichik and was subsequently tested by Nigel Short in a couple of games. Although it is comparatively rare, it presents some interesting problems and you will see later that I had to find some radical new ideas for Black in the critical main line.

9...♙e7 10.c3

In Chapter 16 we will see Black answering the more common 9.c3 with the active 9...♙c5, so you might say White is trying to get an improved version of that line – although the downside is of course that he has already invested a tempo putting his rook on e1.

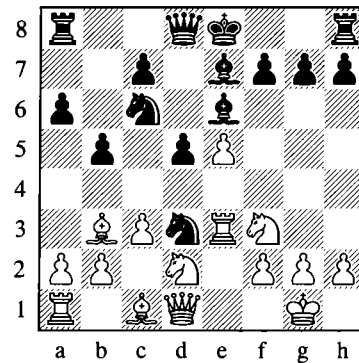
10.♙e3 transposes to the rare 9.♙e3 ♙e7 10.♙e1 as mentioned in Chapter 12 on page 210.

10.♘bd2

This position may also arise via the main 9.♘bd2 variation, if White answers 9...♙e7 with 10.♙e1 instead of the more popular 10.c3. However, there is no transposition to our repertoire here, as in Chapters 18 and 19 we will be meeting 9.♘bd2 with 9...♘c5. 10...♘c5 11.c3 ♘d3 12.♙e3

12.♙e2 ♘f4 13.♙e1 ♘d3= repeated the

position in Garbisu de Goni – Sorin, Benasque 1992.



12...♘c1 13.♙xc1 0-0 14.♘d4 ♘xd4 15.cxd4

We have transposed to a position normally reached via the move order 10.c3 0-0 11.♘bd2 ♘c5 12.♘d4 ♘xd4 13.cxd4 ♘d3 14.♙e3 ♘xc1! 15.♙xc1 – see variation C1 below.

10...0-0

From this position White's main ideas are **A) 11.h3**, **B) 11.♙e3**, **C) 11.♘bd2** and **D) 11.♘d4!**

11.♙c2?!

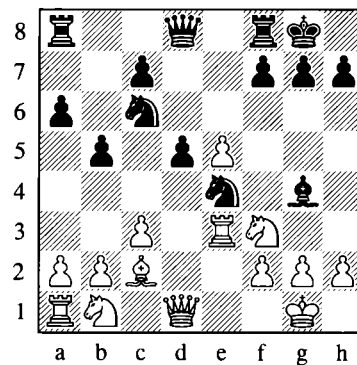
Judd – Pollock, New York 1889. Here Black already has a chance to fight for the initiative with:

11...♙c5!N 12.♙e3

Or 12.♙e2 f6! 13.exf6 ♗xf6 14.♙e3 ♙xe3 15.♙xe3 ♘e5 and White is under pressure.

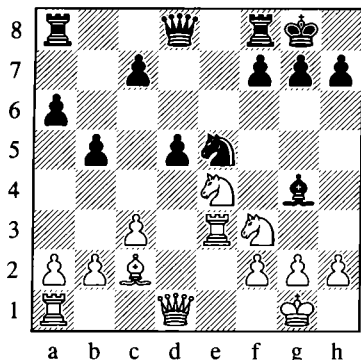
12...♙xe3 13.♙xe3 ♙g4

Suddenly White starts to experience problems with the e5-pawn.



14.♖bd2 ♖xe5 15.♖xe4

After 15.♖xe4 dxe4 16.♖xe4 ♖e8 17.♗e2 f6 Black is slightly better.



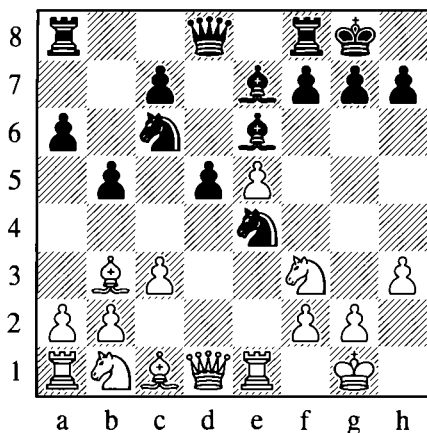
15...♗xf3!

This strong intermediate move preserves an edge for Black.

16.gxf3 dxe4 17.♗xd8 ♖axd8 18.♖xe4 ♖c4!
19.♖e2 f5! 20.♖b7 ♖f6!±

Black is better thanks to White's misplaced bishop on b7 and damaged pawn structure.

A) 11.h3



An extremely rare waiting move. White creates "luft" for the king and prevents ...♗g4, avoiding the problems seen in the above note.

11...♗d7

Black just continues developing.

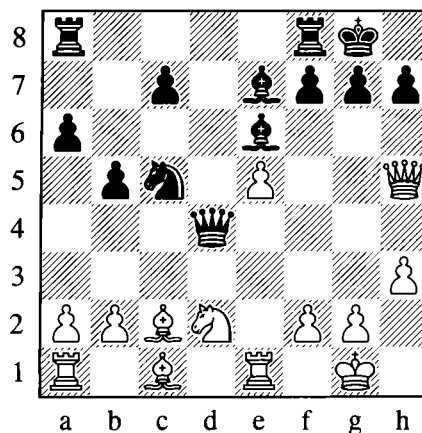
12.♖bd2 ♖c5 13.♖c2 d4!

We will see a lot more of this thematic break when we get to the 9.♖bd2 system in Chapters 18 and 19.

14.cxd4 ♖xd4 15.♖xd4 ♗xd4 16.♗h5

16.♖f3 ♗xd1 17.♖xd1 reaches a position from the 9.♖bd2 system where White has played h2-h3 instead of more challenging alternatives. See page 327 for the comparison; in the position after 15...0-0, the move 16.h3 makes no sense at all there.

16.♗e2 was seen in Cork – R. Smith, Sunningdale 2007, and now 16...♖ad8N 17.♖f3 ♗c4= leads to an equal endgame.



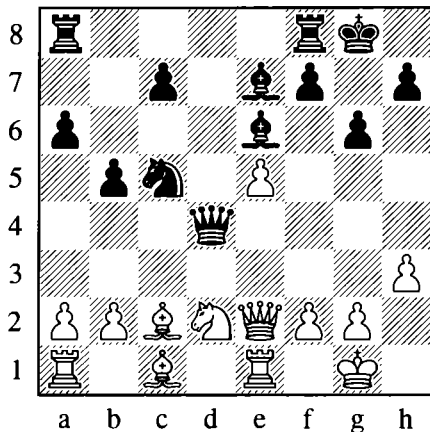
16...g6!?N

This simple new move works fine, although 16...♖d3 is also enough for equality: 17.♖xd3 ♗xd3 18.♖e4 ♖ad8= 19.♖f4?! (19.♖g5 ♖xg5 20.♖xg5 h6 21.♖xe6 fxe6 would have maintained the balance.) Bologan – Fressinet, Bastia 2005. Now Black could have caused some problems by means of: 19...♗c2!N 20.♖e2 ♗a4! 21.♖g5 ♖xg5 22.♖xg5 h6 23.♖xe6 fxe6 Black has a slight plus, as his active pieces are more significant than the slight damage to his pawn structure.

17.♗e2

17.♖h6?! is well met by 17...♙d5! 18.♗b3 ♗xb3 19.axb3 ♜fe8! and White has to look for equality.

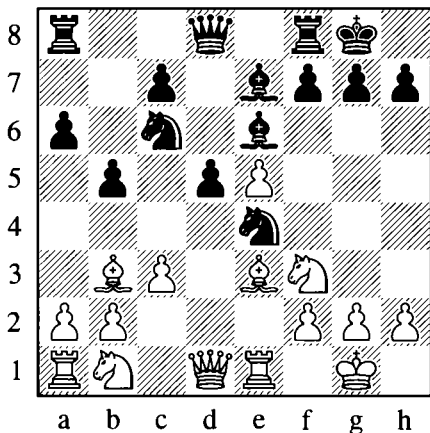
17.♗f3 can be answered by 17...♜xf2† (or 17...♜xb2!?) 18.♙xf2 gxf2 with a roughly equal position.



17...♜ad8 18.♗f3 ♜c4

Black obtains a comfortable endgame position. Once again a comparison can be made with variation C4 in Chapter 18.

B) 11.♙e3



This position can be classed as a rare version of the 9.♙e3 line, which might arise after 9.♙e3

♙e7 10.c3 0-0 (In Chapter 13 I recommend 10...♗c5 here) 11.♜e1 (11.♗bd2! is a better try for an advantage).

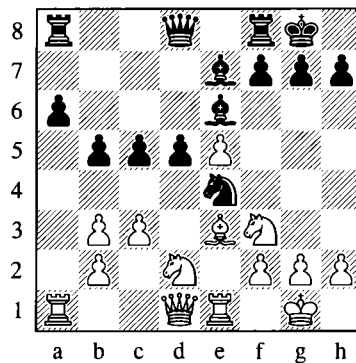
11...♗a5!

This practically forces an exchange of the strong light-squared bishop, as retreating it to c2 is dubious.

11...♜d7 is playable, but in that case White can transpose to the main line of the 9.♙e3 system with 12.♗bd2. In Chapter 13 I avoid this in favour of a different approach, so I see no sense in allowing it here.

12.♗d4

After 12.♗bd2 as played in Byfield – E. Brown, Kingston 1997, Black should simply play 12...♗xb3N 13.axb3 c5 with the possible continuation:

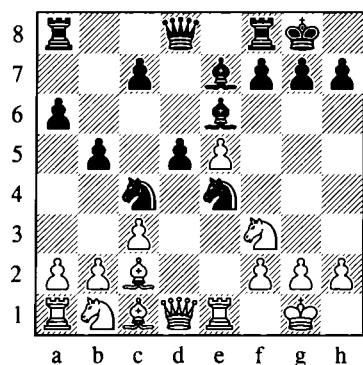


14.♗xe4 dxe4 15.♜xd8 ♜fxd8 16.♗g5 ♙xg5 17.♙xg5 ♜d3 Although a draw is the most likely outcome, the symbolic advantage is on Black's side.

12.♙c2?!

This natural move turns out to be a mistake. 12...♗c4 13.♙c1?

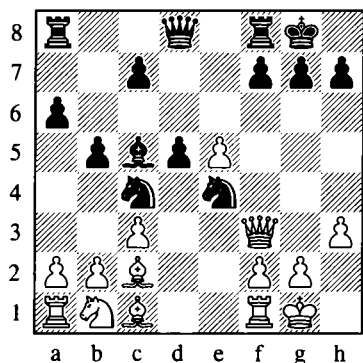
13.♜c1 is the lesser evil. 13...♙g4 14.♗d4 Sulejmanova – Antoshkova, Ufa 1996, and now 14...♙h4!N is strong, intending to meet 15.g3?! with 15...c5! 16.♗b3 ♗xe5†.



13...♞c5! 14.♟d4?

According to Postny this is already a decisive mistake, and it's hard to disagree with him.

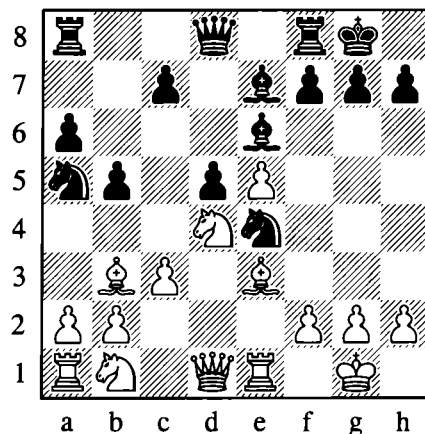
Black is also clearly better after 14.♞xe4 dxe4 15.♟d4 ♟xe5 16.♞xe4 ♟d5 17.♟e2 ♟c6! 14.♞f1 in Znosko Borovsky – Silverman, Birmingham 1937, could have been met by the strong 14...♞g4!N 15.h3 ♞xf3 16.♟xf3 (16.gxf3 loses by force to 16...♟h4! 17.fxe4 ♟g3† 18.♟h1 ♟xh3† 19.♟g1 ♟xe5–+)



16...f5! 17.♞f4 ♟e7 Black wins a pawn and obtains a big advantage.

14...♟xf2! 15.♟xf2 ♟h4† 16.♟g1 ♞g4 17.♞e2 ♞xe2 18.♟xe2 ♞xd4† 19.cxd4 ♟xd4† 20.♟f2 ♟xf2† 21.♟xf2 ♟xe5–+

Black duly converted his advantage in Efimenko – Kaidanov, Moscow 2003.



12...♟c4! N

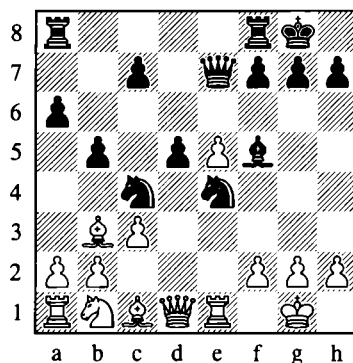
12...c5!? has been played a few times and is also quite playable, but I find this untested move quite appealing.

13.♞xc4

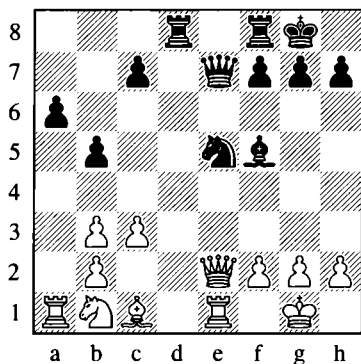
White has a couple of other sensible replies.

13.♞c1 ♞d7 (The provocative 13...♞h4!? 14.g3 ♞g5! 15.f4 ♞e7 is also interesting.) 14.f3 ♟g5 15.♞c2 g6! Black restricts both the light-squared bishop and the knight on d4. 16.♟d2 c5 17.♟xc4 bxc4 18.♟e2 ♞c6 with a roughly equal position.

13.♟c6 ♟d7 14.♟xe7† ♟xe7 15.♞c1?! (15.♞xc4 bxc4 transposes to 14.♟c6 in the notes to the main line below.) 15...♞f5!† with better chances for Black thanks to his better development. It should be noted that the d5-pawn is untouchable:



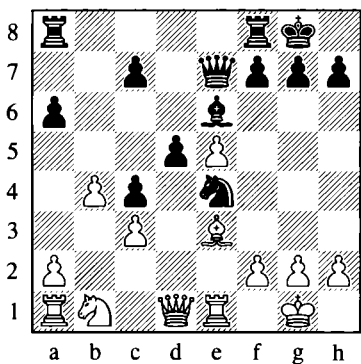
16.♞xd5? ♜ad8 17.♞b7 (or 17.♞c6 ♘a5!
18.♞xa6 ♜a8 19.♞xb5 ♜fb8→+ and Black wins
a piece) 17...♘c5 18.♞f3 ♘xb3 19.axb3 ♘xe5
20.♞e2



20...♘f3! 21.gxf3 ♞xe2 22.♞xe2 ♜d1†
23.♙g2 ♞xc1→

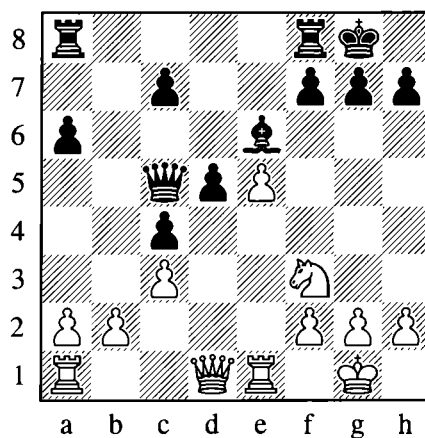
13...bxc4 14.♘d2

No better is: 14.♘c6 ♞d7 15.♘xe7† ♞xe7
16.b4 (16.♘d2 ♙f5 is fine for Black; 16.b3
♜ad8! 17.♞c2 ♘c5 also gives the second player
a good position.)



16...♙f5! 17.f3 ♙f4! 18.♙c1 ♞h4! Black has a
serious initiative, for instance 19.fxe4?! ♙f3!
20.gxf3 ♞xf3 21.♞xf3 ♞xe1† 22.♞f1 ♞xe4
and White has no good defence.

14...♘c5 15.♘c6 ♞d7 16.♘xe7† ♞xe7
17.♙xc5 ♞xc5 18.♘f3



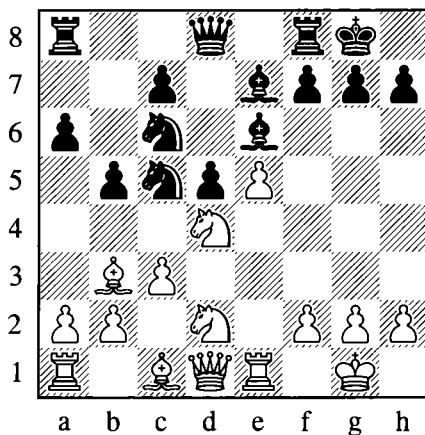
18...♞ab8! 19.♞d2 a5!

Black has a promising position, despite the
seemingly bad bishop on e6. He has useful
pressure on the queenside, and another key
point is that the white knight will not manage
to settle on the d4-square, as ...c5 will come at
some point.

C) 11.♘bd2 ♘c5

Now we immediately face another division
between C1) 12.♘d4 and C2) 12.♙c2.

C1) 12.♘d4



This move has scored quite well for White,
but Black can obtain a good position with the

help of a recent idea from the talented young Hungarian grandmaster Richard Rapport.

**12...♟xd4 13.cxd4 ♟d3 14.♞e3 ♟xc1!
15.♞xc1 a5!**

Most previous games have continued 15...c5, but White has good chances for an advantage there. The text move aims to gain additional space on the queenside while keeping the ...c5 break in reserve.

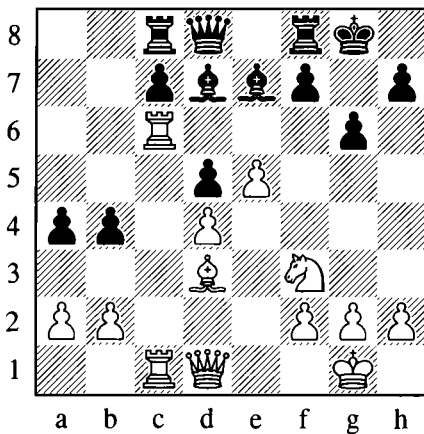
16.♞ec3

16.a4N runs into 16...♞b8 (16...b4!? also looks playable) when the open b-file promises Black good counterplay. A possible continuation is 17.axb5 ♞xb5 18.♞ec3 ♞b8! with the idea 19.♞xc7? ♟g5! 20.♟c2 ♞xb2+.

16...♞c8 17.♟f3

17.a4N should be met by 17...♟b4, and if the rook leaves the c-file Black will play ...bxa4 followed by ...c5 with a good position. Therefore I see nothing better for White than 18.♞c6, and after 18...♟d7 19.♞6c2 ♟f5 20.♞c6= we have a repetition of moves.

17...a4 18.♟c2 g6 19.♟d3 b4 20.♞c6 ♟d7



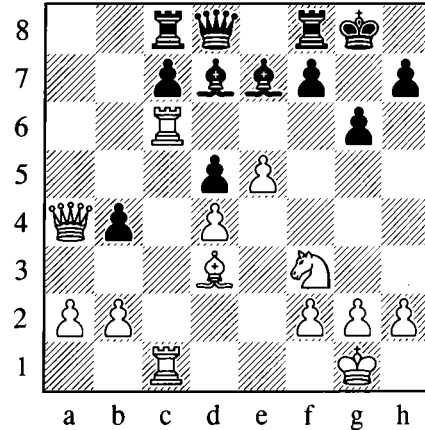
21.♞xa4?!

This positional exchange sacrifice looks tempting, but it does not work out quite as

White hopes. Instead he should have settled for one of the following alternatives:

21.♞a6N c5 22.dxc5 ♟xc5 is equal.

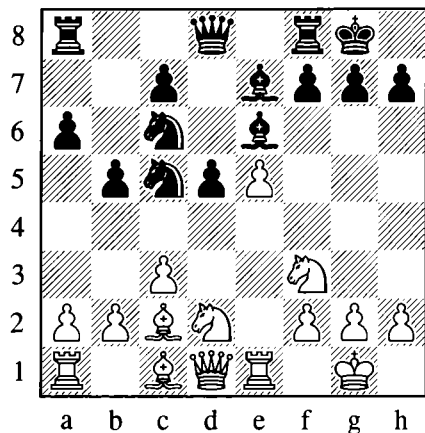
21.♞6c2N b3 22.axb3 axb3 23.♞e2! (23.♞d2?! ♟g4! is awkward for White; 23.♞c3 ♟b4! 24.♞xb3 ♟xc3 25.♞xc3 ♞e7 leaves White with questionable compensation.) 23...c5 with equality.



21...♞a8! 22.♞b3 ♟xc6 23.♞xc6 ♞a5! 24.h3 ♞d7 25.♞c2 ♞xa2 26.♞xc7 ♞e6

White had slightly less than full compensation for the exchange in Almasi – Rapport, Gibraltar 2012.

C2) 12.♟c2



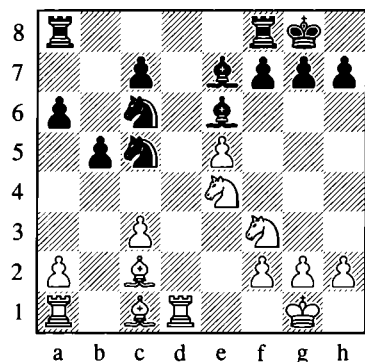
12...d4!

This move was introduced by Tarrasch almost a hundred years ago, and was later picked up by the fifth World Champion Max Euwe. Since then it has become thematic for many lines of the Open Spanish. Nowadays it most frequently occurs in a similar position without the inclusion of the moves ♖e1 and ...0-0.

13.cxd4

We should also consider two knight moves:

13.♞e4 dxc3 14.bxc3 (14.♞xc5 transposes to 13.♞b3 below) 14...♞xd1 15.♞xd1

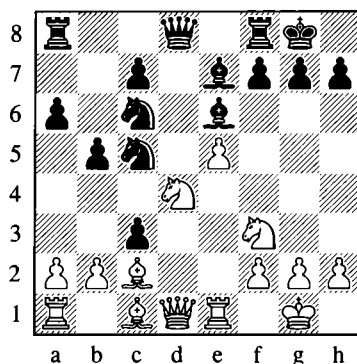


15...♙f5! 16.♞e1 ♞fd8! 17.♙f4 ♞d3 18.♙xd3 ♞xd3+ Exchanging White's light-squared bishop for a knight proved to be a significant positional achievement in Tarnowski – Szabo, Szczawno Zdroj 1950.

13.♞b3 dxc3 14.♞bd4!?N

After 14.bxc3 ♞xd1 15.♞xd1 ♞a4! 16.♙d2 ♞fd8 Black was slightly better in Pavlovic – Ernst, Wijk aan Zee 2004.

14.♞xc5 This position can also arise after 13.♞e4, as noted above. 14...♞xd1 15.♞xd1 ♙xc5 16.bxc3 ♞ad8! 17.♞xd8 ♞xd8 18.♙g5 ♞e8! 19.♙e4 ♞a5 with better chances for Black in Hoffmann – Krasenkow, Budapest 2004.

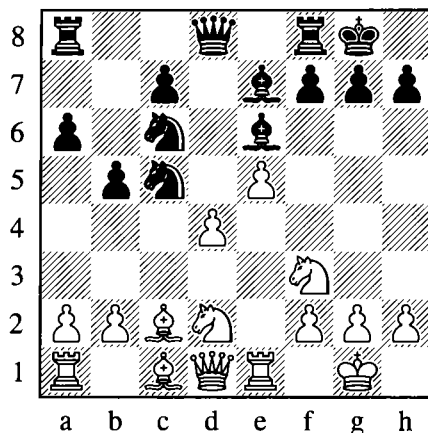


The text move is untested, but it may be White's best. It offers a pawn sacrifice which should be declined:

14...♞b4!

After eliminating White's light-squared bishop Black obtains a good position.

15.bxc3 ♞xc2 16.♞xc2 ♙d5! 17.♞f5 ♙xf3 18.gxf3 ♞e8 19.♞d1 ♞c8 20.♙a3 ♙f8=

**13...♞xd4 14.♞xd4 ♞xd4**

White has tried several moves here, none of which are especially threatening to us.

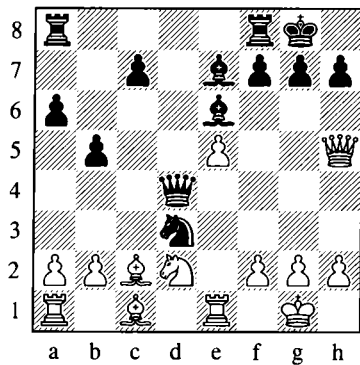
15.♞f3

I have analysed three alternatives below.

15.♞h5?!

This is dubious due to the strong reply:

15...♞d3!



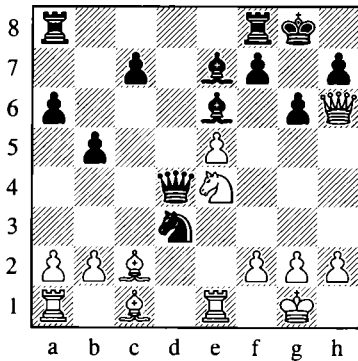
16.♘e4?

16.♙xd3 is the lesser evil. 16...♙xd3 17.♘e4
Now in Lipnowski – Babb, Winnipeg 2003, the right continuation would have been 17...♗fd8!N 18.♙g5 ♖d4! 19.♗e3 ♙c2 20.♙xe7 ♗xe4 21.♙f3 ♙d5 with a slight advantage for Black.

16...g6 17.♙h6

17.♙d1 was seen in Seres – Grafl, Budapest 2004, and here Black missed an obvious opportunity: 17...♘e1!N 18.♙xd4 ♘xc2 19.♙d1 ♘xa1 20.♙g5 ♙xg5 21.♘xg5 ♗ad8 22.♙xa1 ♗d4! 23.♘f3 ♗d5+

The main move occurred in Solmanis – Keres, Riga 1944. Here Black could have refuted his opponent's play with the following coldblooded defence:

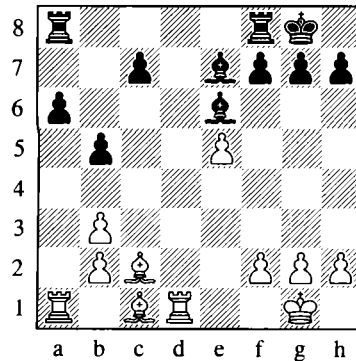


7...♘e1!N 18.♙g5 f5!! 19.♙xe7
19.exf6 doesn't help: 19...♗f7 20.♗xe1 ♙f8+
9...fxe4 20.♙f6 ♗xf6 21.exf6 ♙xf6 22.♗xe1

♙xb2 23.♙xe4 ♗f8 24.♙e3 ♙xa2-+

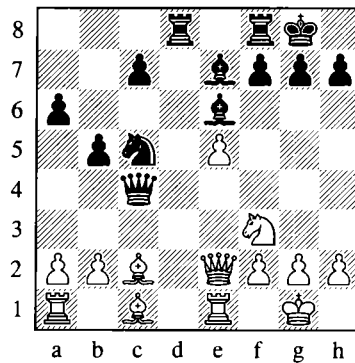
Black should win with his two extra pawns.

15.♘b3 ♘xb3 16.axb3 (16.♙xb3 c5 is fine for Black.) 16...♙xd1 17.♗xd1 Now I'll try to improve on the old game Lasker – Tarrasch, St Petersburg 1914.



17...f6!N 18.♙f4 ♗fd8! 19.♗xd8+ (or 19.♗e1 f5!) 19...♗xd8= The position is equal as the a6-pawn is untouchable: 20.♗xa6?? ♙f5!-+

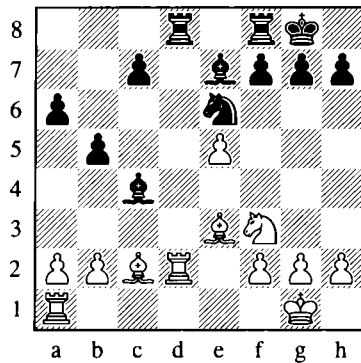
15.♙e2 ♗ad8 16.♘f3 ♙c4



17.♙e3

17.b3 ♙xe2 18.♗xe2 ♙g4 19.♙e3 De Haas – O'Mahony, Haarlem 1994. 19...♗d5!N 20.♗d2 ♙xf3 21.gxf3 ♗xe5 22.♙f4 ♙g5! 23.♙xe5 ♙xd2 24.♙xc7 ♘e6 with some advantage for Black.

17...♙xe2 18.♗xe2 ♙c4 19.♗d2 ♘e6

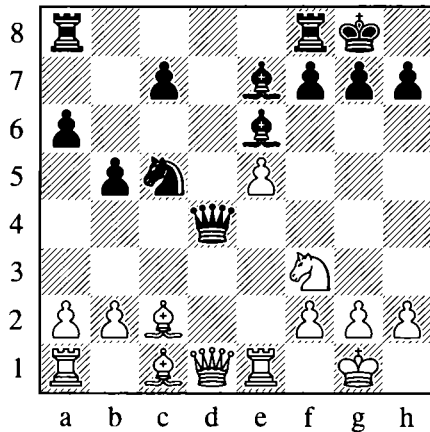


20.♙b3?!

A better idea is 20.a4N ♗d5 when the position remains equal.

20...♙xb3 21.axb3 ♙b4

Black was slightly better in Ki. Georgiev – Piket, Biel 1993.



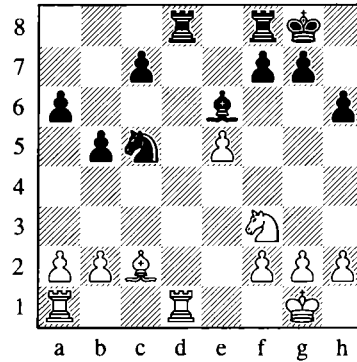
15...♙xd1 16.♙xd1

Suddenly we have arrived at a position that has more commonly been reached via the move order 9.♘bd2 ♘c5 10.c3 ♗e7 11.♗c2 d4 12.cxd4 ♘xd4 13.♘xd4 ♙xd4 14.♘f3 ♙xd1 15.♙xd1 0–0, which is considered satisfactory for Black. Here the situation is even better, as White is a full tempo down, having moved his rook from f1 to e1 before capturing on d1. This does not secure Black an advantage, but it definitely gives him a more comfortable version of equality.

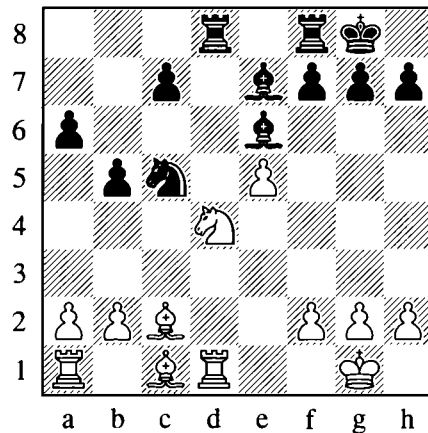
16...♙ad8 17.♘d4

17.♗e3 was played in Da Silva – Becker Filho, Brasilia 2006, and now after 17...♗d5!?N 18.♘d4 g6= Black equalizes without any problems.

Another game continued: 17.♗g5 ♗xg5 18.♘g5 h6 19.♘f3?! (19.♘xe6N ♘xe6=) Ait Hamidou – Amin, Tripoli 2003, and now Black missed a good opportunity:



19...♙xd1! 20.♙xd1 ♗xa2 21.♙a1 ♗d5 22.b4 ♘d7 23.♙xa6 ♗xf3 24.gxf3 ♘xe5 Black keeps an extra pawn and good winning chances.



17...♙fe8 18.b3 ♗g4!

A useful finesse.

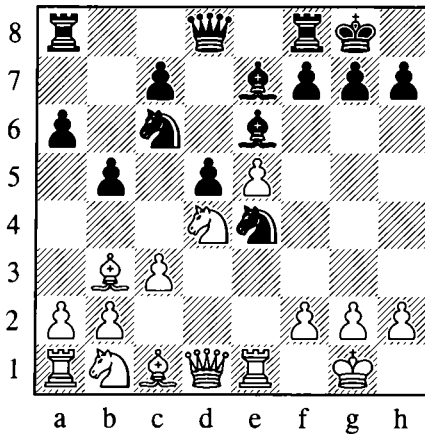
19.f3 ♘e6 20.♘c6?!

20.♟xe6N is the lesser evil although 20...♞xd1† 21.♙xd1 ♙xe6 is still quite pleasant for Black.

20...♙c5† 21.♙f1 ♞xd1† 22.♙xd1 ♙f5♞/♞

White was facing a difficult endgame in Garcia Vasquez – Amin, Batumi 2006.

D) 11.♟d4!



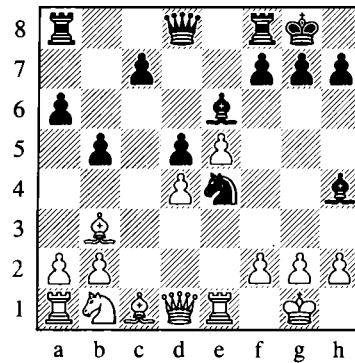
This is the more challenging move, which makes good use of the rook on e1. After analysing the main continuations I was not entirely happy with Black's prospects, so I returned to this position and found a radical new approach.

11...♙h4!?

I discovered and developed this striking novelty with the help of our iron friend.

The piece sacrifice 11...♟xe5!? 12.f3 ♙d6 13.fxe4 ♙g4 has been tested in several games, but I am not completely convinced by Black's compensation.

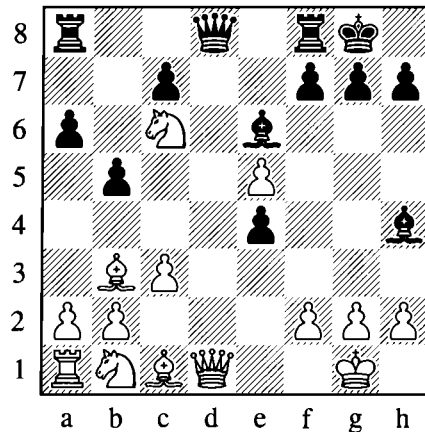
I also checked: 11...♟xd4 12.cxd4 ♙h4!? (The main line is 12...♙b4 13.♞e2! c5 14.f3 cxd4 15.fxe4 ♙g4 with complications which seem to be in White's favour, Grischuk – Sutovsky, Sochi 2006.)



13.♙e3!N (13.♞f1 was played in Maroczy – Weenink, Scheveningen 1923, and now 13...♟xf2! would have transposed to variation D2 below.) 13...f5 14.♟d2 c6 15.♞c1 with some advantage for White.

In this fresh position I analysed White's four plausible options: D1) 12.♞xe4, D2) 12.♞e2, D3) 12.♟xc6 and D4) 12.g3!?

D1) 12.♞xe4 dxe4 13.♟xc6



13...♙xb3! 14.♞xb3 ♞d7 15.♟d4 c5

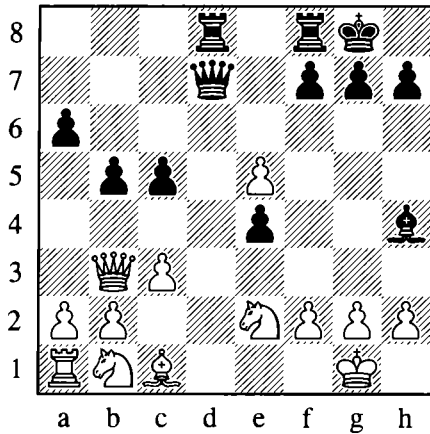
Black has temporarily given up two knights for a rook, but the justification for his play will soon become apparent.

16.♟e2?

The lesser evil for White would be to make an exchange sacrifice with 16.♙e3, which would give him reasonable chances to equalize.

16...♖ad8

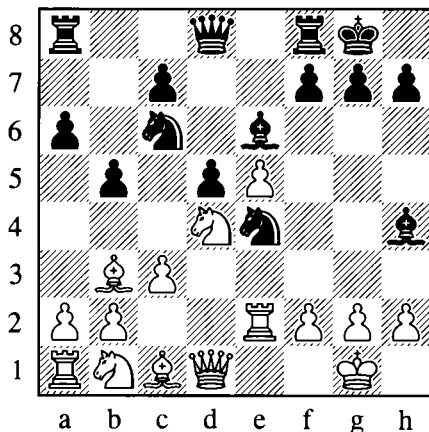
Now it becomes obvious that White has a hard time defending his first rank.

**17.♘d2**

17.♘d2 ♕g5! 18.♕e1 c4 19.♖c2 ♖d1±

17...e3! 18.fxe3 ♖d3!

White is in serious trouble.

D2) 12.♖e2

White nullifies the threat to the f2-pawn – or does he?

12...♘d4 13.cxd4 ♘xf2!

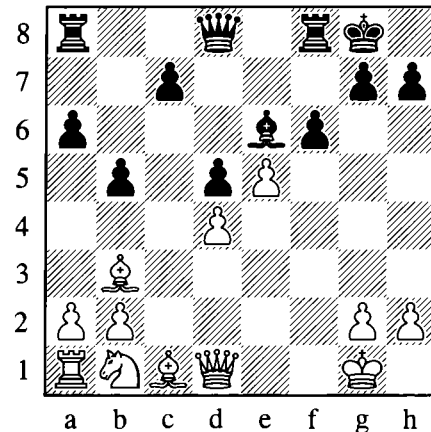
It turns out that Black can ignore the defence.

14.♖xf2 ♕xf2† 15.♔xf2 f6!

It is vital to open the kingside before White can mobilize his pieces.

16.♔g1

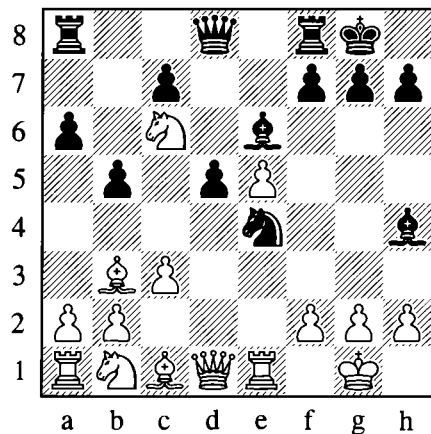
16.exf6?? is impossible as after 16...♖xf6† White either gets mated or loses his queen.

**16...fxe5 17.dxe5**

The position after 17.♕e3 e4 18.♘c3 ♖d6 is also about equal. Black will double his rooks along the f-file, and when necessary the c-pawn will go to c6 to support the centre.

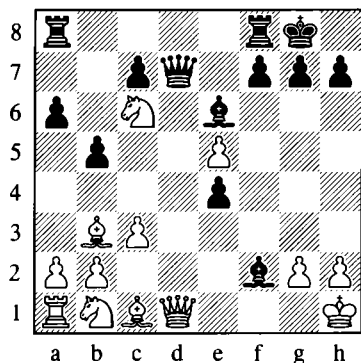
17...c5 18.♕e3 ♖e7! 19.♘d2 d4=

In view of his strong centre, Black is fine in this position with rook and a pawn against two minor pieces.

D3) 12.♘xc6

12...♙xf2† 13.♖f1

13.♖h1?! is worse: 13...♞d7! 14.♞xe4 (14.♖d4? is bad in view of 14...♙g4 15.♖f3 ♞f5! and the threat of ...♖g3†! forces White to sacrifice an exchange: 16.♞xe4 dxe4 17.♙c2 ♞ad8 18.♞e2 exf3 19.♞xf2 ♞xe5†) 14...dxe4 White is forced to go into an inferior ending:



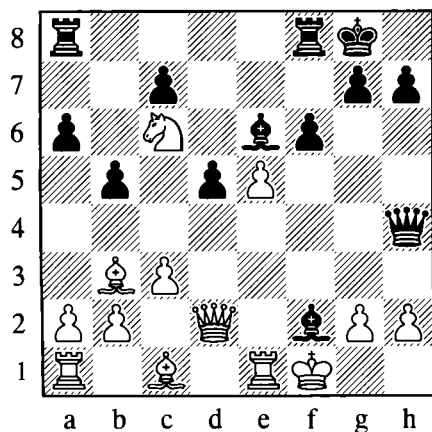
15.♞xd7 ♙xd7 16.♖e7† ♖h8 17.♖d5 c6
18.♖e3 ♞ae8†

13...♞h4

Of course Black should not bother taking the rook yet. Instead he brings the heavy artillery into the attack.

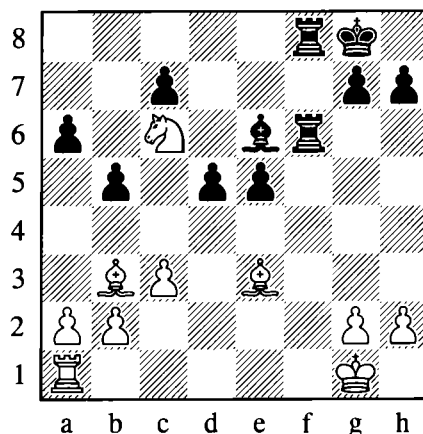
14.♖d2 ♖xd2† 15.♞xd2 f6!

This small tactical finesse enables Black to bring another heavy piece into the attack. Now White must find an extraordinary resource if he is to survive.

**16.♞e4!!**

16.♞e2? is no good, as after 16...♙b6 17.g3 ♞h3† 18.♖e1 fxe5→ Black's attack should decide the game.

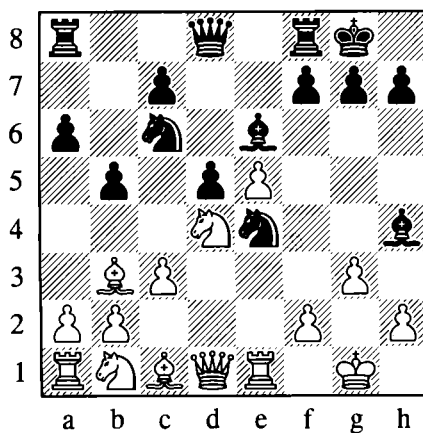
16...♞xe4 17.♖xf2 fxe5† 18.♖g1 ♞f6
19.♞e3 ♞af8 20.♙d2 ♞xe3† 21.♙xe3

**21...d4!**

Even after the queen exchange Black must continue playing energetically, this time targeting the hanging knight on c6.

22.♙g5! ♙xb3 23.♙xf6 ♞xf6 24.♖xe5 ♙f7!
25.cxd4 ♞d6

The endgame should be drawn, although it is White who will have to be more careful.

D4) 12.g3!?

This critical reply leads to a tactical melee, which seems to result in equality after best play.

12...♟xe5!

A surprising and strong piece sacrifice.

I also briefly checked 12...♟xd4 13.cxd4 ♔e7 14.f3 ♟g5 15.h4 ♟h3† 16.♟g2 h5. Even though I don't see a direct way for White to exploit the misplaced knight on h3 here, Black's position looks much too risky to recommend.

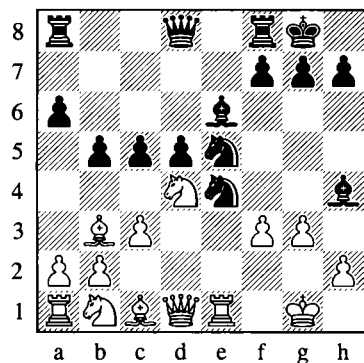
13.♟d2!

This developing move is critical. Immediate attempts to win material lead to trouble for White.

13.gxh4?? is hopeless, as after 13...♟xh4 14.♟f1 ♔h3 Black already has a decisive attack.

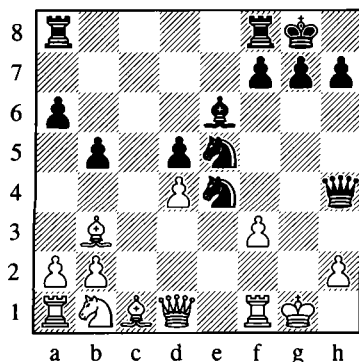
13.f3 c5!

With two pieces en prise, Black ignores both threats and goes after one of White's best-placed pieces.



14.♟xe6

Taking the other bishop does not help: 14.gxh4 ♟xh4! Black does not bother taking the knight on d4, as it is more important to bring his queen into the attack. 15.♟f1 (15.fxe4 cxd4 16.♟f1 dxe4 17.♟xd4 ♟g4† 18.♟h1 ♟h3 19.♟d2 ♟g4 20.♟g1 e3 is also excellent for Black.) 15...cxd4 16.cxd4

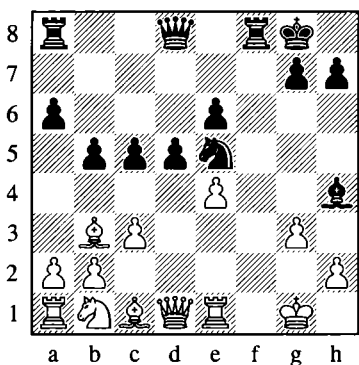


16...♟xf3! 17.♟xf3 ♔g4 18.♟g2 ♔h3 19.♟f4 ♟h6 20.♟f3 ♟ae8! with a strong attack.

14...fxe6

Black has two pieces under attack but, as Tal once observed, "He can only take them one at a time!"

15.fxe4



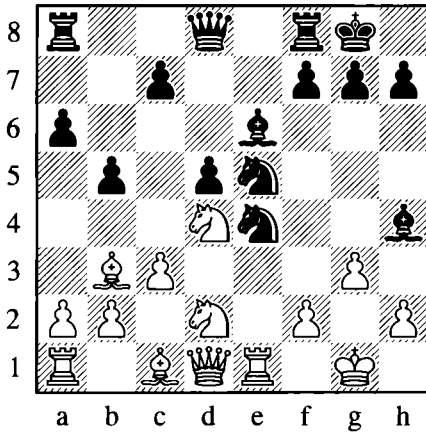
15...♔g5! 16.♟e2

Or 16.♔xg5 ♟xg5 17.♟g2 c4 18.♔c2 ♟f3 with serious threats.

16...♔xc1 17.♟xc1 c4 18.♔c2 d4 19.cxd4 ♟xd4† 20.♟h1 ♟d3

Black keeps a strong initiative for the sacrificed piece.

The text move is more challenging, as White strives to mobilize his queenside pieces while exchanging one or more of Black's attacking pieces, while preserving the option of winning material afterwards. It is here that Black needs to find a truly extraordinary idea.



13...♙c8!!

Black 'undevelops' his bishop just to save it from being exchanged.

14.♘2f3

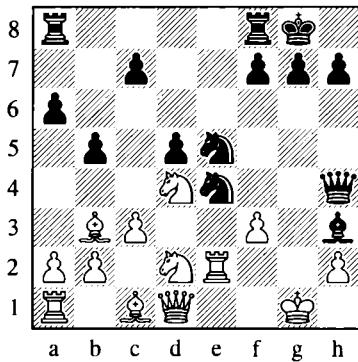
There are two other candidates:

White can spoil the party with 14.♘xe4 dxe4 15.♖xe4 (after 15.gxh4? ♜xh4 the attack is too strong) 15...♙f6 when the position is equal.

Obviously we must see what happens if White grabs the bishop:

14.gxh4 ♜xh4 15.♖e2 ♙h3 16.f3

Here Black must rely on a familiar resource:

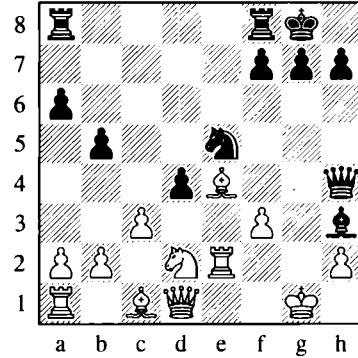


16...c5! 17.♙xd5

Or 17.♘xe4 cxd4 18.♘g3 ♘xf3† 19.♙h1 ♙g4 with a dangerous attack.

17...cxd4 18.♙xe4

18.♘xe4 ♙ad8!†



18...d3! 19.♙xa8 ♜g5† 20.♙h1 dxe2 21.♜xc2 ♙xa8

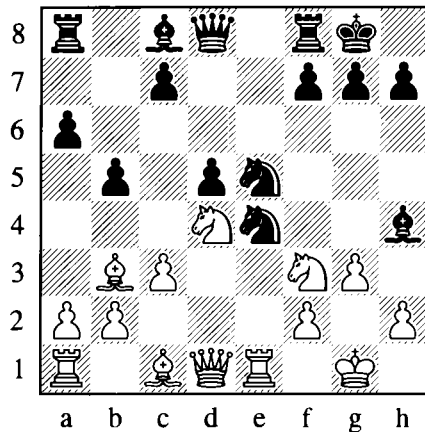
Black has an excellent position as the following move does not win a piece for White:

22.♘c4 ♜f5! 23.♘e5 ♖e8

Black regains the knight with an obvious advantage due to his much safer king. Note that the following move only worsens White's plight:

24.f4?! f6

The knight on e5 still drops, and White's king will be even more exposed than it was before.



14...♙g4!

Black's light-squared bishop has become the star of the show.

15.gxh4

I will take this move as the main line, although we will see that Black easily regains the piece.

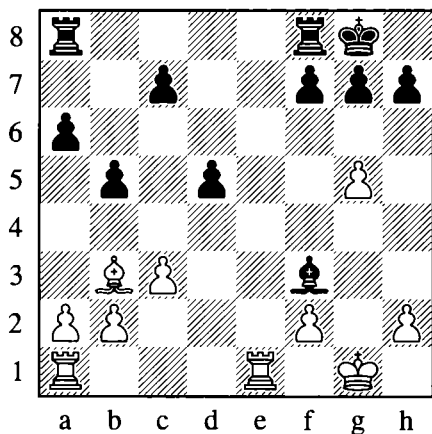
Objectively White's best continuation looks to be 15.h3!?, and after 15...♟xf3† 16.♟xf3 ♟xf3 17.♟xf3 ♟g5 18.♟xg5 ♟xg5 19.♟xd5 ♟xd5 20.♟xe4 ♟xe4 21.♟xe4 ♟fe8 he keeps a minute edge in the double-rook ending, although Black should have no difficulty holding the draw.

15...♟f6 16.♟g5

This is forced, as 16.♟e3? c5! leaves White without a good defence.

16...♟xg5 17.hxg5 ♟xf3† 18.♟xf3 ♟xf3 19.♟xf3 ♟xf3

Black has emerged with a temporary extra pawn, but the position quickly becomes equal after White captures it.



20.♟e3 ♟e4 21.f3 ♟g6 22.♟xd5 ♟ad8=

Conclusion

9.♟e1 has still not been played in a huge number of games, but that may be set to change, as it can lead to rich positions containing considerable scope for creativity. On that note, I was especially pleased to discover the 11...♟h4! move as presented in variation D, and look forward to seeing my recommendation and subsequent analysis tested in practice.

Chapter 12

Main Lines

9.♘e3 – Introduction

Variation Index

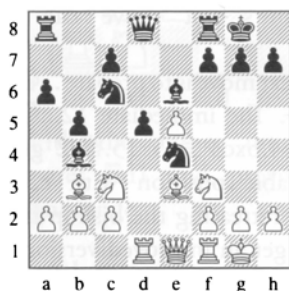
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4
6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6 9.♙e3

9...♙e7

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B) 10.♘bd2 ♘c5	212
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note to move 10



12...♙a5!N

B2) note to 12.♘f1



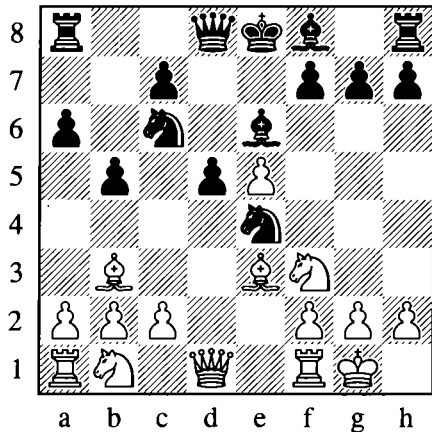
12...d4!N

B2) after 17.♙c2



17...♙d5!N

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♗xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6
9.♙e3



9...♙e7

9...♙e5 is playable but I generally prefer not to exchange the dark-squared bishops in the early stages of the Open Spanish. After the text move the main reply by far is 10.c3, which will receive dedicated coverage in the next chapter. Before then we will turn our attention to the sidelines **A) 10.♖d3!?** and **B) 10.♗bd2**, after first sweeping away a few rare options.

10.a4 b4 transposes to 9.a4 b4 10.♙e3 as covered on page 186.

10.♖e2 0-0 11.♞d1 transposes to variation A in Chapter 15 – see page 247.

The rare 10.♞e1 is met by 10...0-0, after which 11.♗bd2 ♗c5 transposes to the 10.♗bd2 ♗c5 11.♞e1 0-0 line as considered in variation B2 on page 213, while 11.c3 leads to the 11.♞e1 sideline in the notes to 10.c3 ♗c5 on page 217 in the next chapter.

10.♗c3? is weak as the following exchange leaves the light-squared bishop in a cage: 10...♗xc3 11.bxc3 0-0 12.h3 ♗a5 13.a4 c5+

White had no compensation for the dreadful bishop in Perez Vilches – Grau Serra, Valencia 2004.

10.♞e1?!

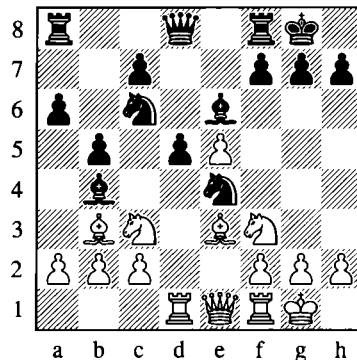
This weird-looking move has the purpose of preparing ♗c3. Nevertheless it is hard to imagine that such an artificial-looking approach can be good.

10...0-0 11.♗c3 ♙b4!

Black intends to capture on c3 and leave the b3-bishop in a cage.

12.♞d1

Here I found an attractive new idea for Black:



12...♙a5!N

Unfortunately Black has no time for 12...♙xc3?! 13.bxc3 ♗a5 because of 14.♗d4! c5 15.♗e2! c4 16.f3!± and Black's knight is also trapped.

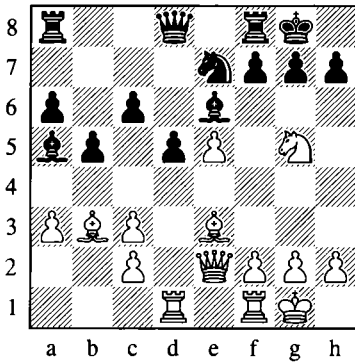
12...♞e8!? 13.♞d3?! ♗e7+ was better for Black in Zaitsev – Unzicker, Moscow 1982, but White's last move can be improved.

The point of the text move is to prepare ...♗e7 followed by ...c5. The immediate 12...♗e7 13.♗g5! ♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♙a5 15.♖e2 gives White a reasonable position with c3-c4 coming next. By retreating the bishop first, Black intends to get an improved version of this line.

13.a3 ♗e7 14.♗g5!

White has to prevent the advance of the c-pawn to c4.

14...♘xc3 15.bxc3 c6! 16.♖e2!?



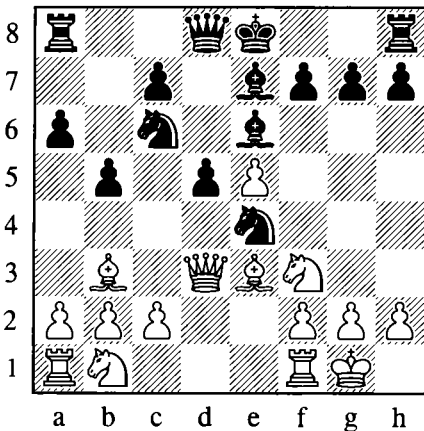
16...♙f5!

16...♙xc3?? runs into 17.♖d3+.

After the text move Black is doing well, as the following attempt to free the arrested bishop does not fully solve White's problems:

17.c4 bxc4 18.♙xc4 ♖c7 19.♙xa6 ♖xe5 20.♘f3 ♖d6

A) 10.♖d3!?



With this rather unusual move White prepares ♗d1 and provokes the following knight lunge.

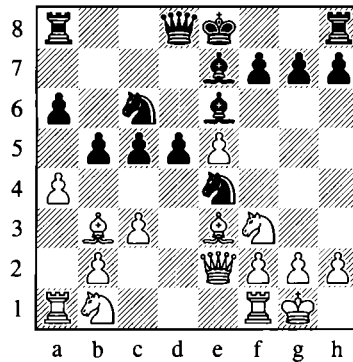
10...♙b4

It is also worth considering 10...♙a5!N preparing to advance the c-pawn, and after

11.♘c3 ♘xc3 12.♖xc3 ♘c4 Black has a decent position.

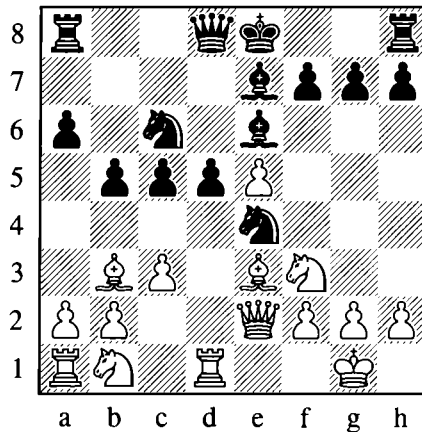
11.♖e2 c5 12.c3 ♘c6 13.♗d1

13.a4 was played in Adrian – Wetzels, Ludwigshafen 1996, but this attack can safely be ignored:



13...0-0!N Based on the following line:

14.axb5 axb5 15.♗xa8 ♖xa8 16.♖xb5?! ♗b8 17.♖a4 ♖b7 18.♙c2 ♗a8 19.♖b3 ♖c7 20.♖b5 ♗b8 21.♖a4 ♘xe5 Black emerges with equal material and a notable positional advantage, with better central control and pressure along the b-file.

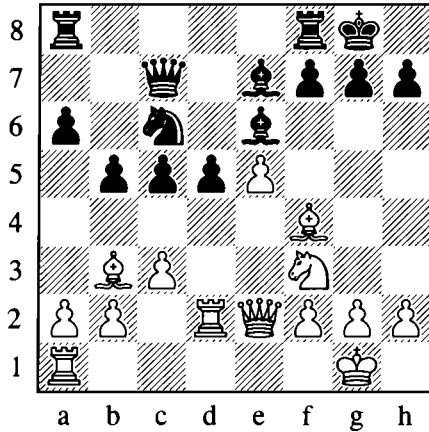


13...0-0 14.♘bd2

14.♙c2 ♖c8 15.a4 ♖b7 looks equal.

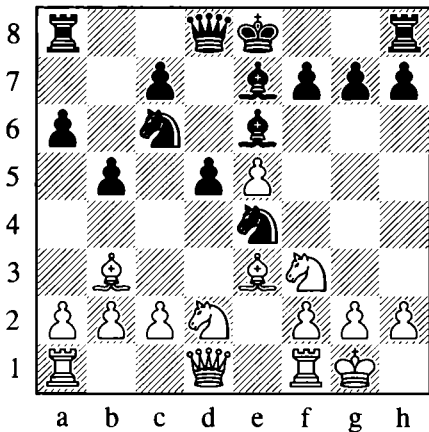
14...♖c7 15.♙f4 ♘xd2 16.♗xd2

This position occurred in Haznedaroglu – Erdogdu, Kusadasi 2004. At this point Black should have played:



16...c4!N 17.♙c2 b4 18.♞e3 ♞ab8
With good play on the queenside.

B) 10.♘bd2



10...♘c5

Now it is worth analysing B1) 11.♘g5?!, B2) 11.♞e1 and B3) 11.♙xc5.

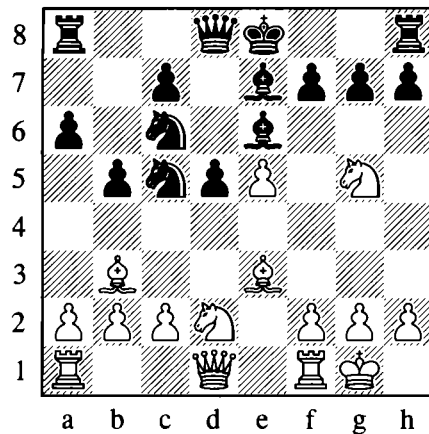
White's most popular move has been 11.c3?! transposing to variation C in the next chapter, where 11...♘d3! gives Black excellent prospects – see page 220 for more details.

11.♞e2?! makes little sense and leads to an advantage for Black after 11...d4, for instance: 12.♙f4 0–0 13.♞fd1 ♙f5

11.a4?! also doesn't reach the goal: 11...d4 12.♙f4 0–0 13.axb5 axb5 14.♞xa8 ♞xa8 Black was better in Bailet – Koziak, Guingamp 2010.

11.♘d4 is rare and pretty harmless, but not outright bad. Play may continue 11...♘xd4 12.♙xd4 ♞d7 13.c3 ♘a4 14.♞b1 c5 15.♙e3 0–0 16.♘f3 ♞ad8 17.♞e2 ♙f5 18.♞bd1 ♞e6 with roughly equal chances, Tseshkovsky – Balashov, Rostov on Don 1980.

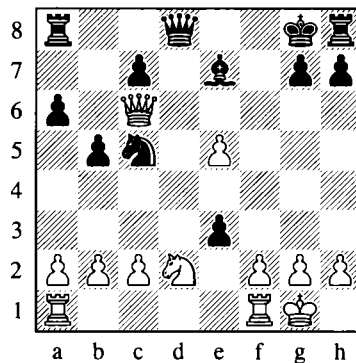
B1) 11.♘g5?!



This move may appear interesting, but it is harmless at best.

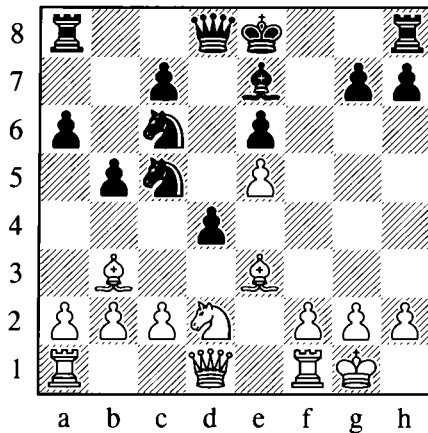
11...d4! 12.♘xe6

12.♘xf7?! is not dangerous: 12...♙xf7 13.♙xf7+ ♘xf7 14.♞f3+ ♘g8 15.♞xc6 dxe3



16.♘b3 (16.fxe3 h5!?) 16...e2! 17.♗fe1 ♘xb3 18.♞e6† ♕f8 19.♞f5† ♕e8 Black escapes the checks and enjoys an extra piece for two pawns.

12...fxe6



13.♙f4

After 13.♞h5†N g6 14.♞f3 ♘xe5 15.♞f4 ♘c6 16.♞f3 Black can choose between repeating moves with 16...♘e5= and playing on with 16...♞d7?.

13...0-0 14.♞g4 ♞d7

Milde – Herzog, Internet 2010. Black has the more comfortable position. He can exchange White's light-squared bishop at any moment, and he also has the tempting plan of ...♞f5 attacking the e5-pawn.

B2) 11.♗e1

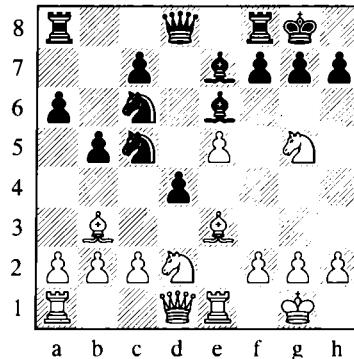
White supports the e5-pawn and makes the f1-square available for the knight.

11...0-0 12.♘f1

Three other moves have been tested.

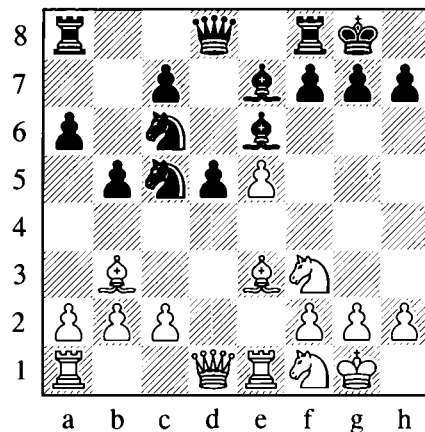
12.h3?! is too slow. 12...d4! 13.♙f4 ♙f5! Black was better in Avgousti – Takashima, Thessaloniki 1984.

12.♘g5?! was played in Aagaard – Van der Veen, Hoogeveen 2000, and here Black missed a strong reply: 12...d4!N



13.♞h5! The only way to avoid losing a piece. 13...♙xg5! 14.♙xg5 ♞d7 Material is equal but Black's position is more comfortable.

Finally there is 12.♙xc5!? ♙xc5 13.c3 as played in Rantanen – Lehmusvaara, Tampere 2003. Here I think Black should have played: 13...♙b6!N 14.♙c2 f6 15.exf6 ♞xf6 with roughly equal chances.

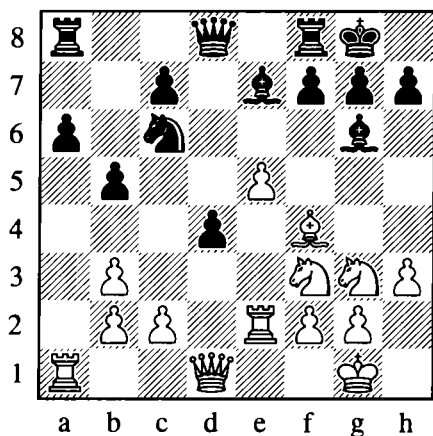


12...♘xb3 13.axb3 ♙g4 14.♙f4 d4!

Vacating the d5-square for the queen.

15.h3 ♙h5 16.♘g3 ♙g6 17.♗e2

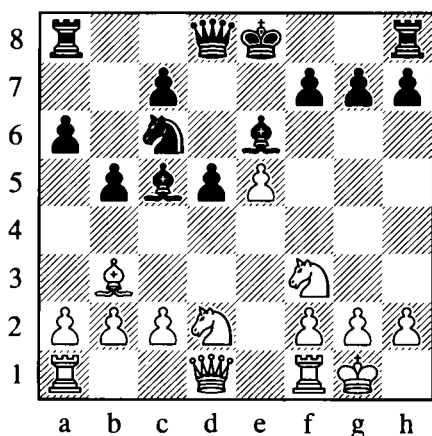
Meyer – Rhodin, Germany 1994. Here the consistent continuation would have been:



17...♖d5!N

Intending ...♜fd8, when Black's strongly centralized pieces give him the upper hand.

B3) 11.♙xc5 ♜xc5



It is hard to believe that White can fight for an advantage after exchanging his dark-squared bishop for an enemy knight.

12.c3 0-0 13.♙c2

Another game continued:

13.♖e2 ♙f5 14.♞ad1

Handke – Smeets, Amsterdam 2002. Now the most precise would have been:

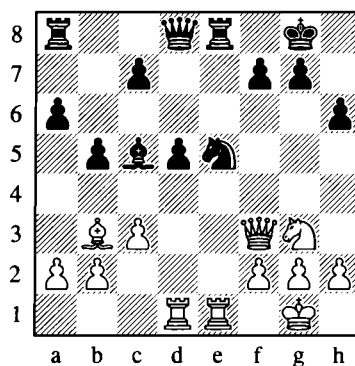
14...♞e8N

Putting pressure on the e5-pawn.

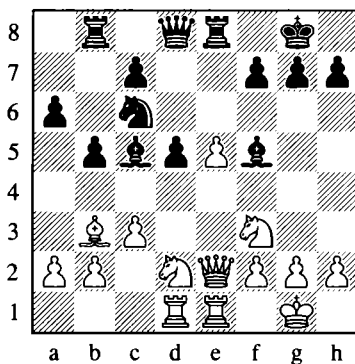
15.♞fe1 ♞b8!

The point of this weird-looking move is revealed in the following line: 15...h6

16.♙f1 ♙e4 17.♙g3 ♙xf3 18.♖xf3 ♙xe5



19.♞xe5! ♞xe5 20.♙xd5 The rook on a8 is under attack, so Black is forced to settle for 20...♞xd5 21.♞xd5 ♙d6 22.♙f5 with some initiative for White.

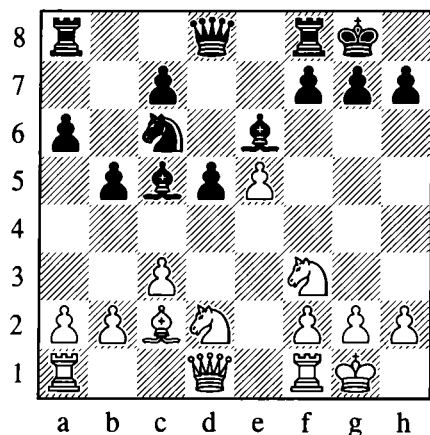


16.♙f1 ♙e4 17.♙g3 ♙xf3

White does not seem to have anything better. After 17.♙g3 ♙xf3 18.♖xf3 ♙xe5 19.♖xd5 ♖xd5 20.♙xd5 c6 it is White who will have to be careful to maintain the balance in the endgame.

17...♙g6=

And in the event of 18.♙f1 Black can choose between a draw by repetition and playing on in an equal position with a move such as 18...♙e7.



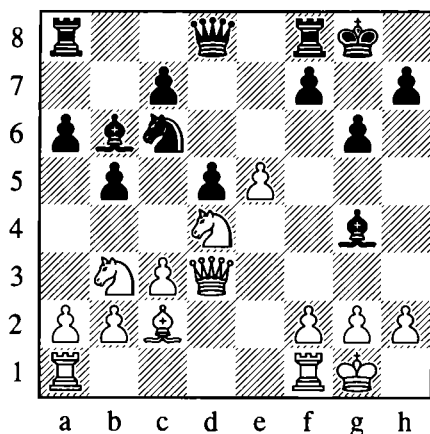
13...♙b6 14.♘b3 ♙g4 15.♙d3

15.♞e1?! ♔f6! 16.♙d3 ♔g6 17.exf6 ♙xf3!
18.♙xf3 ♙d6! 19.♞e2 ♞xf6+ left White having
to deal with pressure against f2 in Marjanovic
– Stean, Smederevska Palanka 1980.

15...♔g6 16.♘fd4?!

This tempting pseudo-sacrifice has been
tested in a couple of games.

White should prefer 16.♞ae1N when both
16...♙d7 17.♘fd4 ♞ae8 and 16...♙xf3!?
17.♙xf3 ♔f6! (17...♙d7=) offer Black good
prospects.



16...♘xe5!

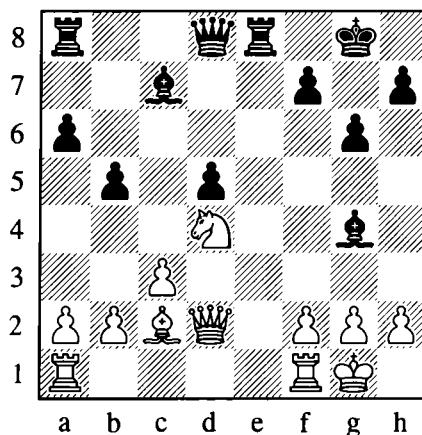
Black settled for 16...♙d7 in Zaitsev –
Vlasov, St Petersburg 1999, but taking the
pawn works out well for him.

17.♙g3 c5! 18.♙xe5

18.♘xc5 ♙xc5 19.♙xe5 is met by 19...♙d6
20.♙e3 ♙f6! with a comfortable position for
Black.

18...cxd4 19.♘xd4 ♙c7 20.♙e3 ♞e8 21.♙d2

Or 21.♙d3 ♙d6 22.♙g3 ♙d7 with Black's
initiative.



21...♙d6 22.g3 ♙b6 23.♞fe1 b4!

City Hamburg – City Berlin, corr. 1883.
With his last move Black takes advantage of the
fact that 24.cxb4? ♙f6! is awkward for White,
and thus clears some space on the queenside.
The d5-pawn is not really weak and Black will
have chances to press in the endgame with his
two bishops.

Conclusion

There is nothing here for Black to fear, and if
White wishes to fight for an advantage after
9.♙e3 ♙e7, his only serious attempt is 10.c3 as
considered in the next chapter.

Chapter 13

Main Lines

9.♘e3 ♘e7 10.c3

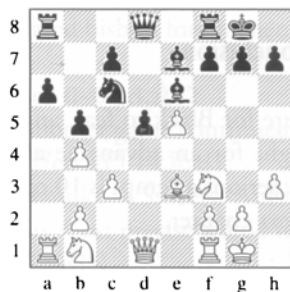
Variation Index

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4
6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6 9.♙e3 ♙e7 10.c3

10...♘c5

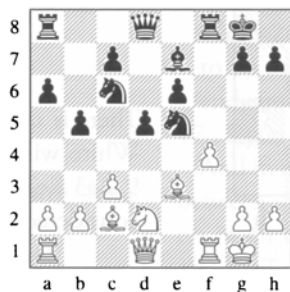
A) 11.♘g5!?	218
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C) 11.♘bd2?!	220
D) 11.♙c2 ♘d7	222
D1) 12.♙d4!?	222
D2) 12.♙f4	223
D3) 12.♘d4!? ♘dxe5 13.♘xe6! fxe6 14.♘d2 0-0 15.f4 ♘f7!N	225
D31) 16.♘b3	226
D32) 16.♙g4	227
D4) 12.♙e1 ♘dxe5 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5	228
D41) 14.f4?!	228
D42) 14.♙d4 ♘g6!	229
D421) 15.♙h5	229
D422) 15.♙xg7	231

B) after 13.b4



13...a5!N

D3) after 15.f4



15...♘f7!N

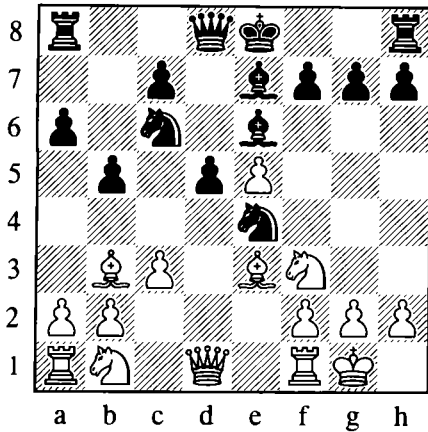
D421) after 22.♙e3



22...♙e8!!



1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♞b5 a6 4.♞a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♘xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♞b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♞e6
9.♞e3 ♞e7 10.c3

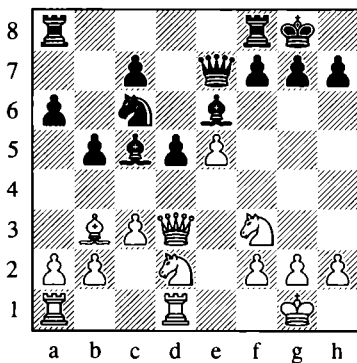


This is the main line by far. Before developing any more queenside pieces, White restrains the enemy d-pawn and creates a retreat square on c2 for his bishop.

10...♘c5

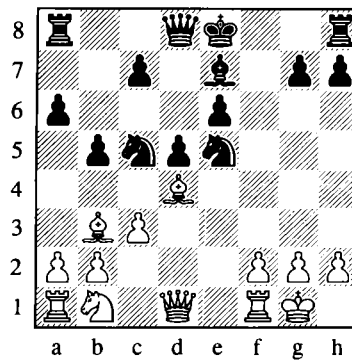
This has proven to be one of Black's most reliable answers. The idea is that if the bishop retreats to c2, the knight will drop back to d7 where it hits the e5-pawn. We will consider four main replies, arranged in ascending order of popularity: **A) 11.♘g5!?**, **B) 11.h3**, **C) 11.♘bd2?!** and **D) 11.♞c2**. Here are a few minor alternatives:

11.♞xc5 ♞xc5 12.♞d3 0-0 13.♞d1 ♞e7!
14.♘bd2 Now I would like to improve with:



14...♞fd8!N Black leaves the other rook on a8 to defend the queenside. (14...♞ad8 was seen in Gurbanov – Mamedyarov, Baku 2000, and here White could have played 15.a4!N with some pressure.) Now 15.a4 can be met by 15...b4 and Black is fine.

11.♘d4 is a rare line which can easily transpose to variation A below. 11...♘xe5 12.♘xe6 fxe6 13.♞d4 (13.♞e2 ♘xb3 14.axb3 0-0 15.♞d4 reaches line A.)

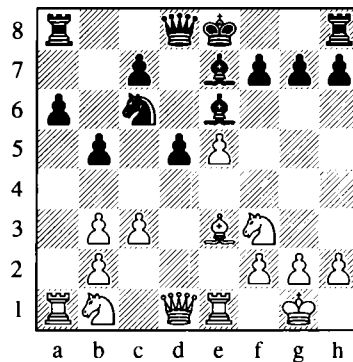


13...♘xb3 (13...♘g6!?N is an interesting alternative. This position can also arise via the 11.♘g5 move order of variation A.) 14.axb3 ♘f7 We have reached the 14.♞d4 line in the notes to variation A below.

11.♞e1

This final option occurred in Mestel – Bernal, Thessaloniki (ol) 1984. Here Black should have begun by eliminating the opponent's light-squared bishop.

11...♘xb3!N 12.axb3



12...♙g4! 13.♘bd2 0-0 14.h3 ♖h5

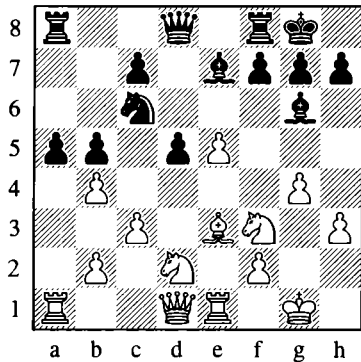
Now the threat of ...♘xe5 forces a concession of some kind.

15.g4

This weakens the kingside, but after 15.♙f4 d4! 16.♖e2 ♗d7 Black is in good shape.

15...♙g6 16.b4 a5

Black has a good position, for example:

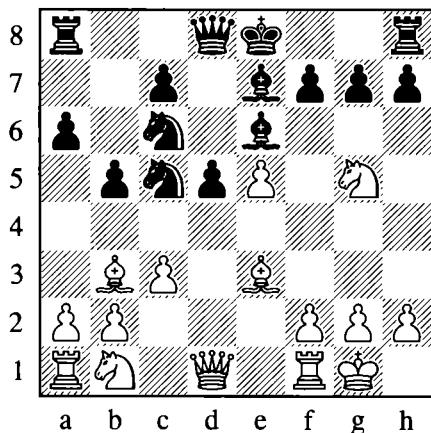


17.♖e2 ♗d7! 18.bxa5

18.♖xb5 axb4 19.c4 ♖ad8! is roughly equal.
18...♖xa5 19.e6 fxe6 20.♖xa5 ♘xa5 21.♘e5
♗e8 22.♘g6 hxg6 23.♙d4 ♙d6 24.♖xe6†
♖xe6 25.♖xe6 ♘f7 26.♖e2 c5=

The endgame is balanced.

A) 11.♘g5!?



This interesting move was seen in Mithrakanth – G. Garcia, Thessaloniki 1984. Black's most straightforward reply is:

11...♘xb3N

11...♘xe5 is likely to transpose to the above 11.♘d4 line after 12.♘e6 fxe6.

12.♘xe6 fxe6 13.axb3 ♘xe5 14.♖e2

14.♙d4 ♘f7

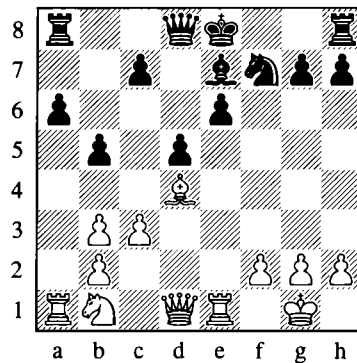
14...♘g6!?

15.♖e1

15.♖e2 0-0 transposes to the main line – see

14.♖e2 0-0 15.♙d4 ♘f7 below.

15.♙xg7 ♖g8 16.♙d4 e5 17.♙e3 ♗d7 favours Black who has the strong centre.



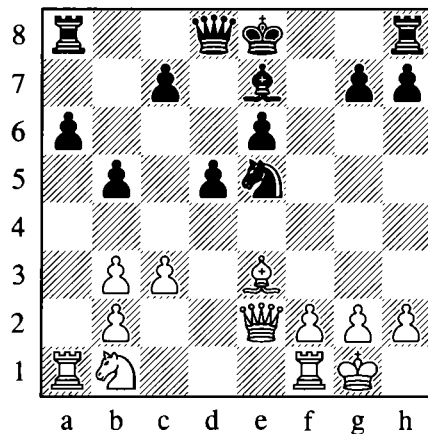
15...0-0 16.b4

In the event of 16.♖xe6 c5 17.♙e3 d4!

18.cxd4 cxd4 19.♖xd4 ♘g5! White starts to experience problems.

16...a5! 17.♖e2 e5! 18.♖xa5! ♙d6! 19.♙e3 c6
20.♖xa8 ♖xa8

Black is slightly better thanks to the strong centre.



14...0-0

Another idea is 14...♘c6!? 15.♖g4 ♗d6 16.♗xg7 0-0-0 17.♝xa6 ♘b7 when Black's strong centre offers positional compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

15.♙d4 ♘f7

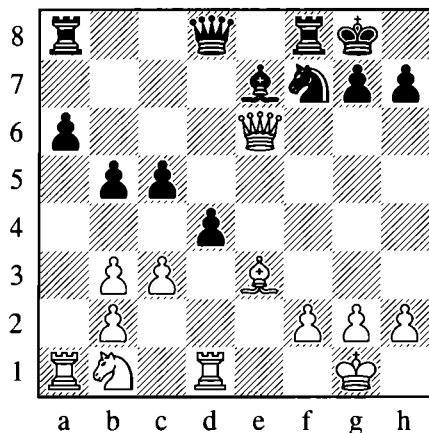
Despite the novelty on move 11, we have now transposed to an existing game.

16.♗xe6 c5

Another idea is 16...♙d6!?N with roughly equal chances.

17.♙e3 d4 18.♝d1

Leow – Torre, Thessaloniki (ol) 1984. At this point the right path would have been:

**18...♙g5!N 19.cxd4**

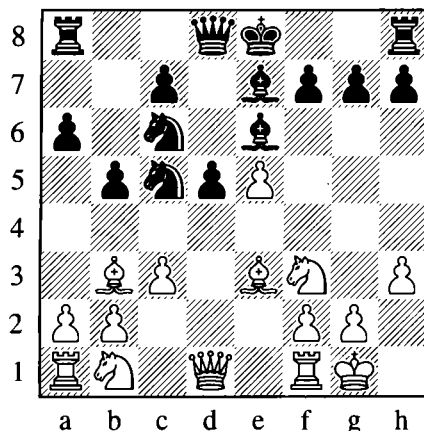
Or 19.♙xg5 ♗xg5 20.♘d2 ♝fe8 with an equal position.

19...♝e8 20.♙xg5 ♗xg5 21.♗c6 cxd4=

The position is balanced. It should be noted that grabbing a pawn is risky for White.

22.♝xa6?! ♝ac8 23.♗d7 ♘e5 24.♗d5† ♘h8

Black has an extremely strong initiative; the immediate threat is ...♝c1.

B) 11.h3

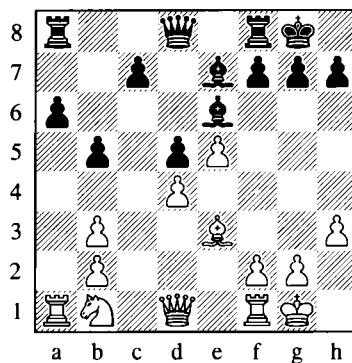
This prevents the ...♙g4 idea, but allows Black to eliminate the b3-bishop and thus offers White little chance of obtaining an advantage.

11...♘xb3 12.axb3 0-0 13.b4

White has tried three other moves.

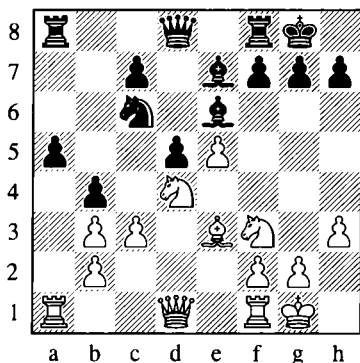
13.♝e1 Paulakos – Patterson, Ybbs 1968, 13...♙f5!N 14.♗e2 ♗d7 15.♘bd2 ♝fe8 with a good position for Black.

13.♘d4 ♘xd4 14.cxd4 should be harmless, as long as Black opens the position for his bishops:

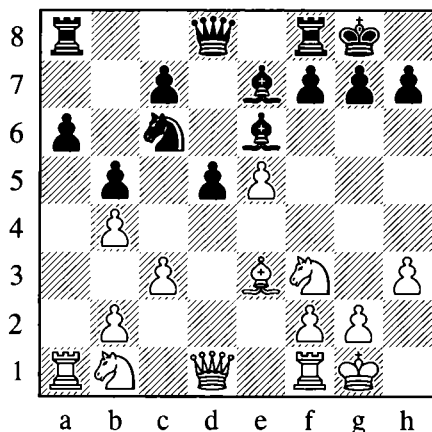


14...f6! 15.f4 fxe5 16.fxe5 ♝xf1† 17.♗xf1 c5! 18.♘c3 c4 with roughly equal chances in Damjanovic – Lehmann, Beverwijk 1966.

13.♖a3 b4 (13...f6!?N 14.exf6 ♜xf6 15.♙g5 ♜g6 16.♙xe7 ♞xe7 is also good for Black.)
14.♜c2 a5 15.♜cd4



15...♜xd4 16.cxd4 (16.♜xd4 ♞d7 17.f4 c5 18.♜xe6 fxe6 is also roughly equal.) This position occurred in Magomedov – Sagalchik, Frunze 1989, and now I recommend 16...h6N= intending ...♞d7 without allowing the dark-squared bishops to be exchanged.



13...a5!N

13...♞d7 gave Black a decent position in Kuzmin – Sorokin, Blagoveshchensk 1988, but the text move is more forcing.

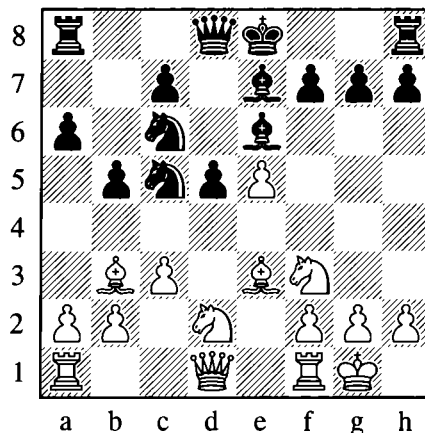
14.bxa5 ♜xa5 15.♜bd2

15.♜d4 ♜c4! 16.♜xa8 ♞xa8=

15...c5

Black is doing fine.

C) 11.♜bd2?!



Surprisingly, this natural move is a mistake. The same position has frequently arisen with the 10.♜bd2 ♜c5 11.c3?! move order, as was noted in the previous chapter on page 212.

11...♜d3!

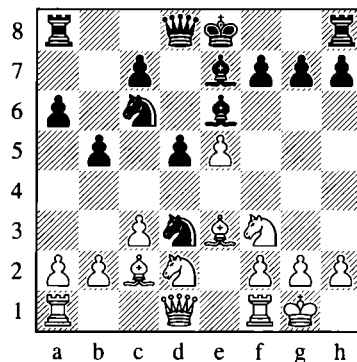
The double attack on e5 and b2 is not easy to meet.

12.♞b1

White has tried several other moves, none of which solve his opening problems.

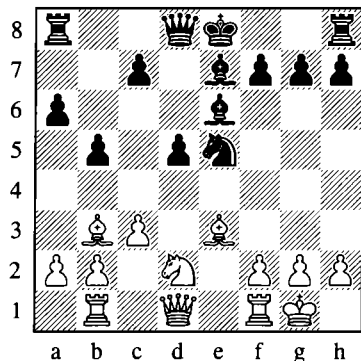
12.♜d4 ♜xd4 13.cxd4 ♜xb2 14.♞e2 ♜c1 left Black with a clear extra pawn in Bernard Flear, Narbonne 2008.

12.♙c2



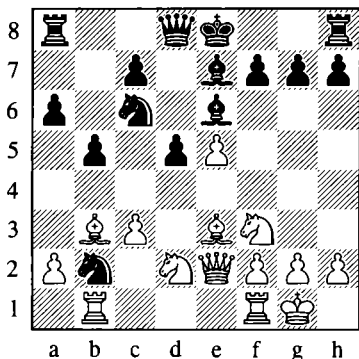
This was seen in Mashian – Grinshpun, Tel Aviv 1993, and now 12...♖xb2!N 13.♙e2 ♖a4! is another safe extra pawn. Given the choice between taking on b2 and e5, Black should generally prefer the former to keep the centre closed.

12.♙b1 ♖dx5 13.♖xe5 ♖xe5



14.♙d4 (14.f4 ♖c4 15.♙xc4 [15.♙d4 ♙f5] 15...dxc4 16.f5 ♙d5 17.♙g4 ♙d7! 18.♙xg7 0–0–0+) 14...♖c6 15.♙xg7 ♙g8 Black obtained an improved version of the main line in Abreu Delgado – Gomez Fontal, Havana 2010.

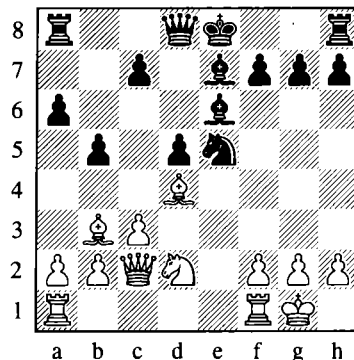
12.♙e2 ♖xb2 13.♙ab1 (13.♖d4 ♖xd4 14.cxd4 transposes to 12.♖d4 as noted above.)



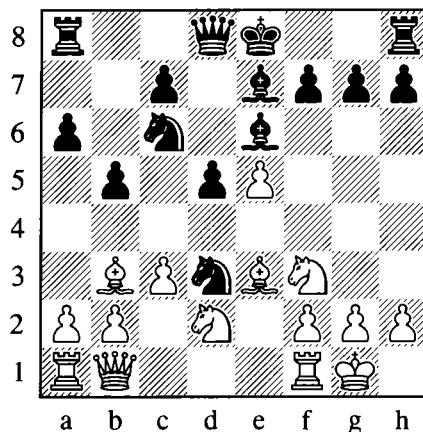
13...♖a4! (13...♖c4? allows White to develop a serious initiative with 14.♖xc4 dxc4 15.♙c2 followed by ♙bd1 and ♙e4.) 14.♙xa4 bxa4

15.♙d1 ♙d7! Munguntuul – Pashikian, Moscow 2006. Black keeps the upper hand thanks to his extra pawn and pair of bishops.

A final possibility is: 12.♙c2 ♖dx5 13.♖xe5 ♖xe5 14.♙d4

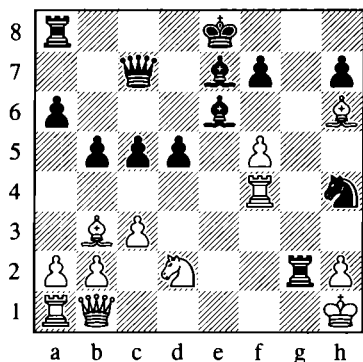


14...♙d6! 15.f4 ♖g4 16.♙xg7 ♙g8 17.♙xh7 0–0–0+ Despite being a pawn up White is in trouble, for instance: 18.♙ae1? ♙xg7! 19.♙xg7 ♙f6 20.♙h7 ♙h8+ White's queen was trapped in Gustavsson – Majer, Hessen 1991.

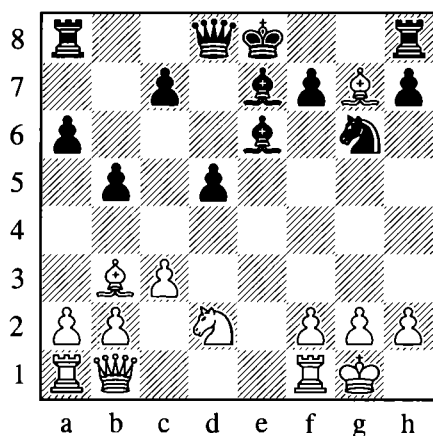


12...♖dx5 13.♖xe5 ♖xe5 14.♙d4 ♖g6 15.♙xg7

15.f4?! is even worse: 15...c5 16.♙xg7 ♙g8 17.♙h6 ♖h4 18.f5 ♙xg2+ 19.♖h1 ♙c7 20.♙f4 (20.♙f4 ♙d6+) Osinovsky – Vorobiov, St Petersburg 2003.



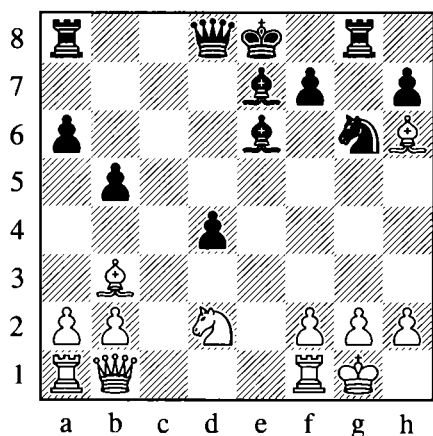
20...Rhx2+! N 21. Qxh2 Qxf5 Black is completely winning.



15...Bg8 16. Qd4

16...Qh6 Qg5!+ is not helping White.

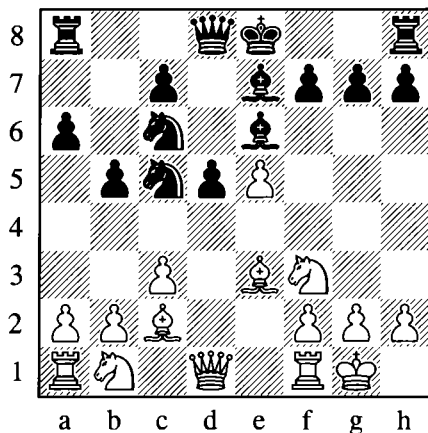
16...c5 17. Qe3 d4 18. cxd4 cxd4 19. Qh6



19...d3! 20. g3 Qxb3 21. axb3 Qd5!

Black keeps some initiative in the position with equal material.

D) 11. Qc2



White has to keep the light-squared bishop in order to retain chances for an advantage.

11...Qd7

Black continues with his plan and targets the e5-pawn. We will analyse D1) 12. Qd4!?, D2) 12. Qf4, D3) 12. Qd4!? and D4) 12. Re1 in detail.

D1) 12. Qd4!? Qg4!

This seems to be both the safest and the best way to meet White's last move.

13. Re1 Qxd4 14. cxd4

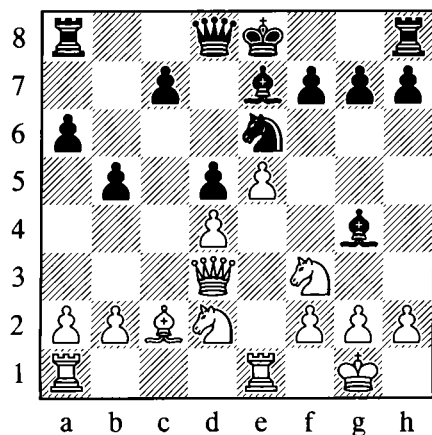
14. Qxd4N allows 14...Qxf3 (14...Qe6 15. h3 c5 16. Qf4 0-0= is also fine for Black) 15. gxf3 Qc5 16. f4 Qe6 17. Qe3 g6 with an equal position.

14...Qf8!

Black brings the knight to e6 and equalizes easily.

15. Qd3 Qe6 16. Qbd2

Lordachescu – Golod, Port Erin 2007. Now I would like to correct Black's play by offering:



16...c5!N 17.dxc5 ♙xc5 18.♘b3 ♙a7!

Black has a comfortable position, since the white knights cannot settle on the d4-square, as shown by the following brief line:

19.♘fd4?! ♘xd4 20.♘xd4 ♖b6!♞

White must shed a pawn.

D2) 12.♙f4

An interesting and rather provocative move.

12...g5

Black should accept the challenge.

13.♙e3

13.♙g3?!

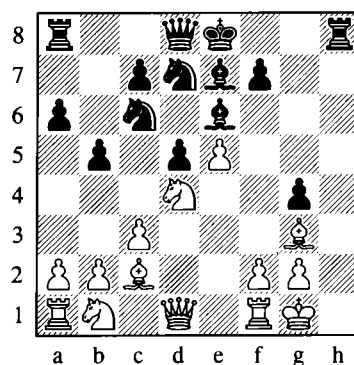
This pushes the provocation a step too far as White may fall under attack.

13...h5 14.h3 g4 15.hxg4

15.♘d4? ♘xd4 16.cxd4 occurred in Pereda de Pablo – Martin Luis, Tenerife 2005, and now the simple 16...gxh3N 17.gxh3 ♙xh3♞ leaves Black with an extra pawn.

15...hxg4 16.♘d4

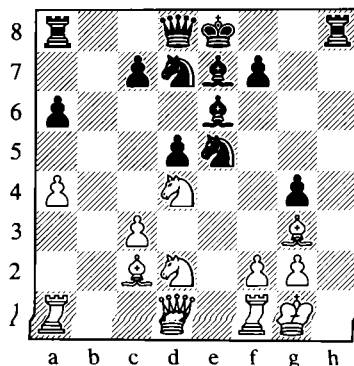
Now I would like to improve on my own play from the game Panarin – Mikhalevski, Internet (blitz) 2003.



16...cxe5!N 17.a4

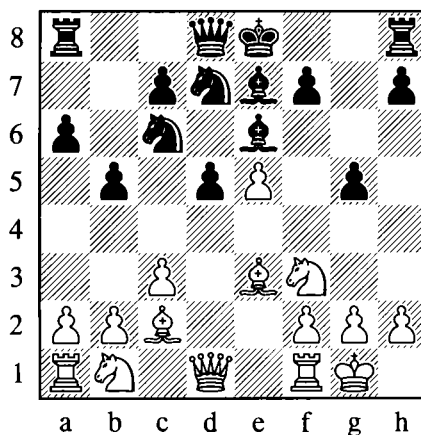
Or 17.♖e1 ♙d6♞ intending to bring the queen to the h-file.

17...b4! 18.♘d2 bxc3 19.bxc3



19...♙h4! 20.♖e2 ♙xg3 21.fxg3 ♖g5♞

Black is better despite the uncertain position of his king.



13...♖dxe5 14.♗dxe5

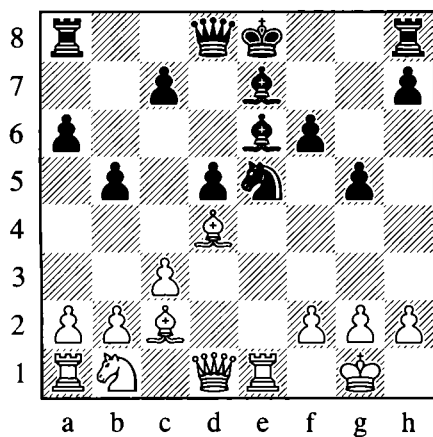
14.♗d4 ♗xd4 15.♙xd4 reaches the same position.

14...♗xe5 15.♙d4 ♖f6 16.♖e1

This seems to be the most accurate move order, although White has a couple of other ways to attempt to demonstrate compensation.

16.♗d2 was the move order seen in the A. Sokolov – Kaidanov game quoted at the end of the main line. That encounter continued 16...♙d6 17.♖e1 0–0 transposing to our main line, but Black can also consider 16...c5!? 17.♙xe5 ♖xe5 18.♖e1 ♙f6 19.♖h5† ♗f8 20.♖h6† ♗e7 which reaches a doubled-edged position.

After 16.♖h5† Black's most precise answer seems to be: 16...♙f7!N (16...♗d7 17.♖e2 c5 18.♙xe5 ♖xe5 19.♖xe5 ♙d6 was also good for Black in Dabetic – Todorovic, Bela Crkva 1987.) 17.♖h6 c5 18.♙xe5 ♖xe5 19.c4! ♗d6! 20.♖xd6 ♙xd6 21.cxd5 c4 and Black keeps slightly better chances.

**16...♙d6N**

I prefer this over 16...♖d6 as was played in Smirin – De Jong, Kemer 2007. And unlike

the 16.♗d2 line noted above, Black does not have the option of 16...c5 here.

17.♗d2

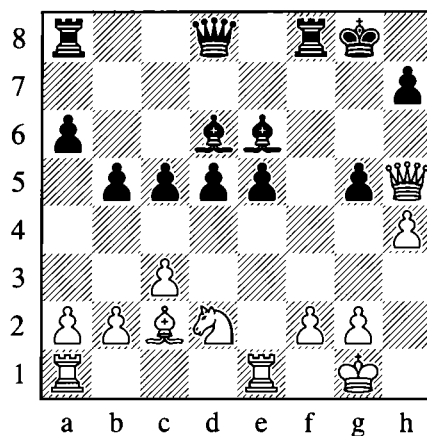
Now we transpose to another game which featured the 16.♗d2 move order.

17...0–0 18.h4?!

18.♗f3N is better. After 18...♗xf3† 19.♖xf3 ♖d7 20.♖d3 ♖ae8 White retains some compensation for the pawn, though Black's chances are not worse.

18...c5! 19.♙xe5

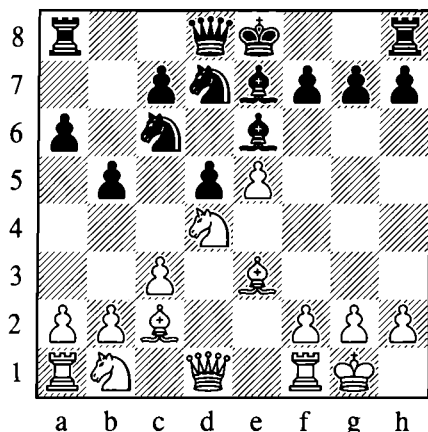
19.♖h5!?N reduces Black's options although 19...♖a7 still gives leaves him with some advantage.

19...♖xe5 20.♖h5

20...e4! 21.♗xe4 dxe4 22.♙xe4 ♖a7 23.hxg5 ♖g7

Black was better in A. Sokolov – Kaidanov, Vilnius 1984.

D3) 12.♘d4!?

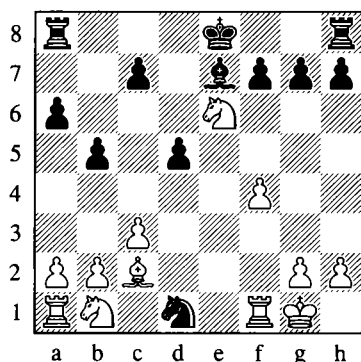


This rare move was introduced by the great Tal against Timman.

12...♘dxе5 13.♘xe6!

This important improvement was introduced in 2011 by the young Polish grandmaster Swiercz, who went on to become World Under-18 Champion the following year.

The older 13.f4 leads by force to an equal endgame: 13...♘c4! 14.♘xc6 ♘xc3 15.♘xd8 ♘xd1 16.♘xe6

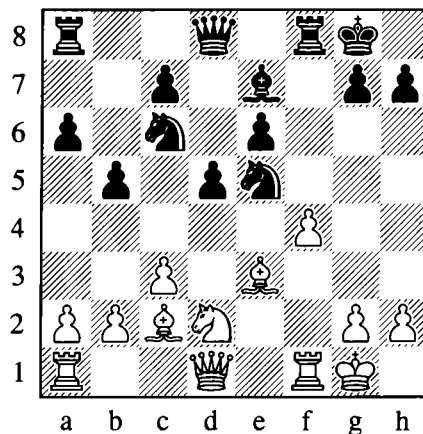


16...♘e3! 17.♘xc7† ♔d7 18.♘xa8 ♘xc2 19.♘d2 (Another game continued 19.♘b6† ♔c6 20.♘d5 ♙c5† 21.♔h1 ♔xd5 22.♘d2 ♘xa1 23.♙xa1 ♙e8 24.♙d1 ♙e2 and Black had full compensation for a pawn, Denis – Flear, Le Touquet 1988.) 19...♙c5† 20.♔h1

♘xa1 21.♙xa1 ♙xa8 22.♙e1 ♔d6 23.g3 ♙c8 In this roughly equal endgame a draw was agreed in Tal – Timman, Montpellier 1985.

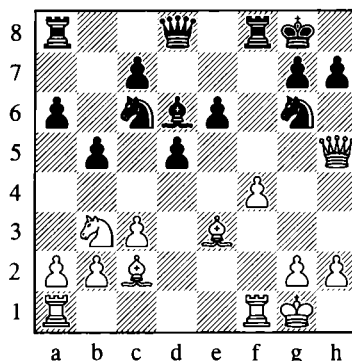
13...fxe6 14.♘d2 0–0 15.f4

It is in this position that I believe Black should strive to improve.



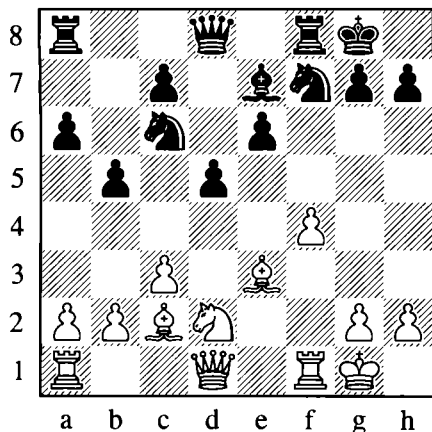
15...♘f7!N

I also analysed 15...♘g6 but found it unsatisfactory: 16.♘b3 (16.♙g4!?N is met by 16...d4! 17.cxd4 ♘xd4 18.♙xg6 hxg6 19.♘b3 ♘f5 20.♙f2 ♙e8 21.♘c5 ♙f7 and Black should be able to hold.) 16...♘d6 17.♙h5



17...♙e8!?N (After 17...♘ce7 18.♘c5! Black fell under pressure in Swiercz – De Jong, Wijk aan Zee 2011.) The text move protects both the knight on g6 and the e6-pawn, but even

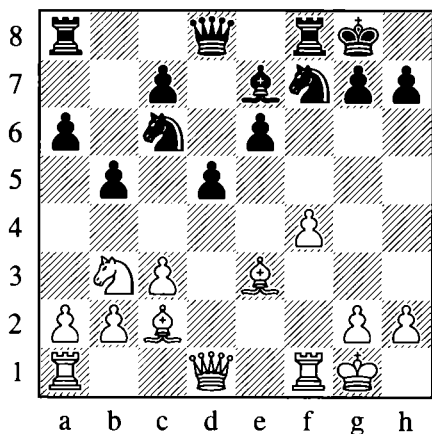
so, after 18.♖ae1 ♜f7 19.♘c5 ♞e7 20.♘b7 ♞af8 21.g3± Black is still under some pressure. In particular the knight on g6 feels misplaced.



The point of my new idea is to transfer the knight to f5, instead of the passive g6-square.

Next we will look at **D31) 16.♘b3** and **D32) 16.♞g4**

D31) 16.♘b3



16...♙d6

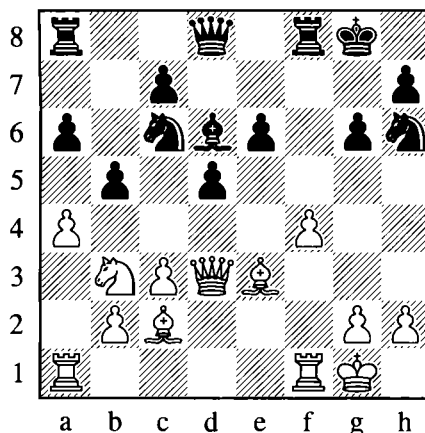
Black improves the bishop and anticipates ♞g4, which can now be met by ...♞e7.

17.♞d3

17.a4 ♘h6 18.♞d3 g6 is just another move order.

17...g6 18.a4 ♘h6

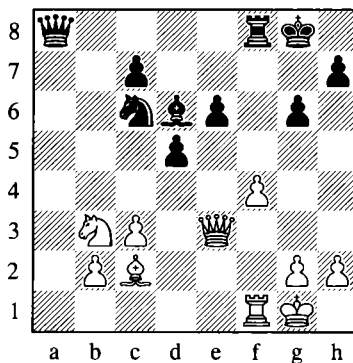
Black does not mind returning a pawn on the queenside; it is more important to improve the position of the knight.



19.g3

If White hopes to achieve anything then he should keep the tension in the position.

I also checked: 19.axb5 axb5 20.♞xa8 ♞xa8 21.♞xb5 ♘g4! 22.♞e2 ♘xe3 23.♞xe3

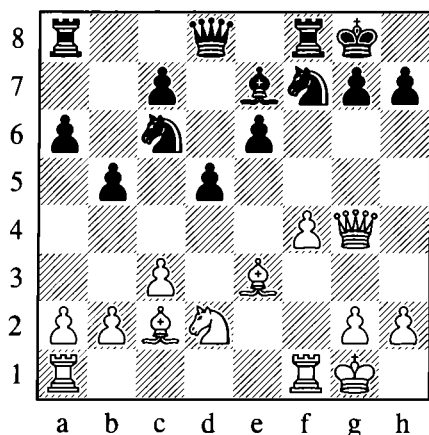


23...e5! 24.♞d3 (24.f5?! is strongly met by 24...e4±) 24...♞xf4 25.♞xd5† ♘g7 26.♞xf4 exf4 and Black is fine.

19...bxa4 20.♞xa4 a5

The position is complex and double-edged White has about enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but I think Black is okay.

D32) 16.♞g4



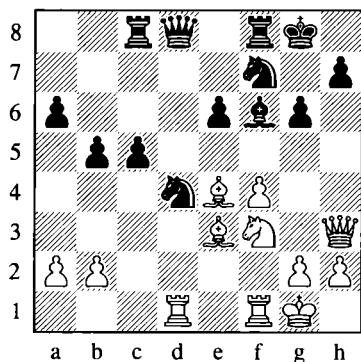
This logical move was a suggestion from Nikos Ntirlis. White attacks the e6-pawn before the black queen can get to e7.

16...d4!

An important central break.

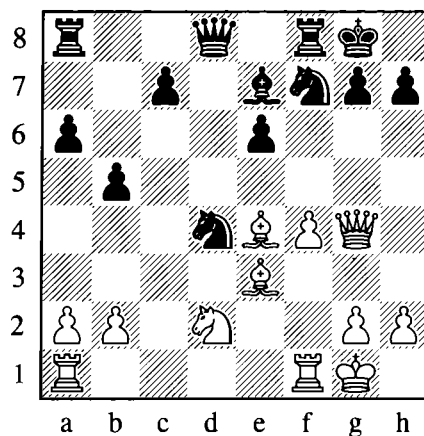
17.cxd4

I also considered the tricky 17.♞h3, with the idea of preventing ...♖h6, but it promises White no advantage after: 17...g6 18.cxd4 ♖xd4 19.♙e4 ♜c8 20.♙ad1 c5 21.♖f3 ♙f6



Black is fine, for example: 22.♜fe1 (It's important that 22.b4?! can be met by 22...♞e7! 23.bxc5?! ♖e2† 24.♙h1 ♖c3 winning an exchange.) 22...♞c7! 23.b4 ♜cd8=

17...♖xd4 18.♙e4



18...♜c8!

The alternative is 18...♖f5 19.♞h3 ♜c8, but I think Black should avoid committing himself to a knight retreat at this stage. The energetic 20.g4! leads to some advantage for White, as interested readers with an analysis engine may check for themselves.

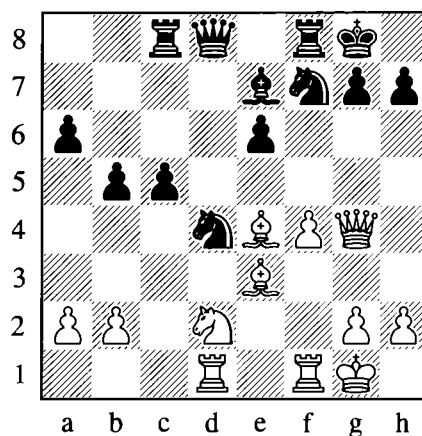
19.♙ad1

19.♞h3 g6 transposes to the 17.♞h3 line noted above.

White can also try 19.♖b3, though after 19...♖h6 20.♞h3 ♖df5 21.♙ad1 ♙d6 22.♙f2 c5 Black seems to be able to solve his problems.

19...c5

19...♖h6 20.♞h3 c5 21.♖b3 reaches the same position.



20. ♖b3?

After 20. ♖f3 ♖h6! 21. ♖h3 ♖xf3† 22. ♖xf3 ♖c7 Black's extra pawn compensates for White's initiative.

20... ♖h6 21. ♖h3 ♖b6!

Black keeps the e6-pawn.

22. ♖xd4 cxd4 23. ♖xd4

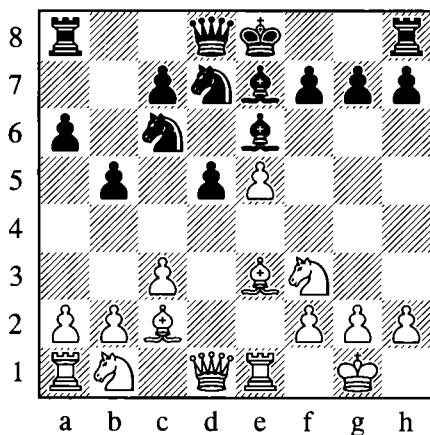
White has regained his pawn, but Black has simplified the position and a drawish endgame is likely to ensue.

23... ♖c5 24. ♖c3

I also checked 24. ♖xc5 ♖xc5† 25. ♖h1 ♖c4! 26. ♖de1 ♖xa2 27. ♖b1 ♖xb2 28. ♖xe6† ♖h8 29. ♖xa6 ♖cd8 with roughly equal chances.

**24... ♖xd4 25. ♖xd4 ♖xd4† 26. ♖xd4 ♖fd8
27. ♖fd1 ♖xd4 28. ♖xd4 ♖f5 29. ♖d2 ♖c4
30. ♖b7 a5**

Black should not have much trouble holding this endgame.

D4) 12. ♖e1

The main line. White intends to exchange his central pawn for the one on g7.

12... ♖dx5 13. ♖xe5

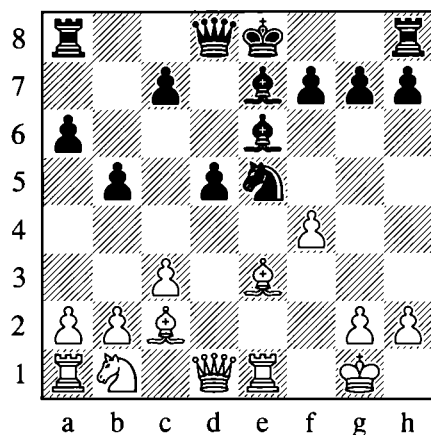
13. ♖d4 gives Black a choice. The easiest

option is 13... ♖xd4 14. ♖xd4 as in Bergvoll – Geske, Arco 2005, after which 14... ♖g6 immediately transposes to the main line.

An independent alternative is 13... 0-0!?N 14. ♖xe6 fxe6 15. ♖d2 ♖d6 16. f4 ♖d7 although in this case White retains decent compensation for the pawn.

13... ♖xe5

Now we will analyse the rare **D41) 14. f4!** and the main line **D42) 14. ♖d4**.

D41) 14. f4?!

This sideline is rather dubious.

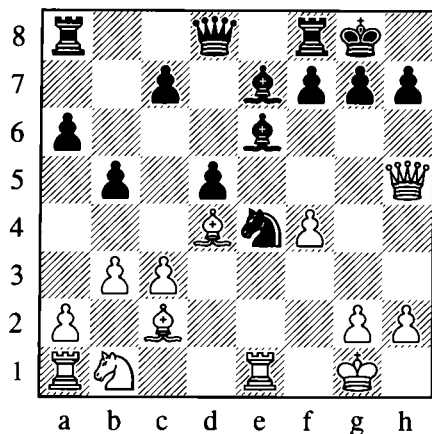
14... ♖c4 15. ♖d4 0-0 16. b3!

16. f5?! ♖d7 (16... ♖c8!?N is also strong.) 17. ♖xg7? (17. ♖d2N is better, but after 17... ♖xb2 18. ♖f3 ♖f6! 19. ♖xd5 ♖c6! Black keeps the advantage.) 17... ♖xg7 18. ♖g4† ♖h8 0-1 White resigned as he had no compensation for the sacrificed piece, Ferreira – Korneev, Lisbon 2000.

16... ♖d6 17. ♖h5 ♖e4!

It is essential to neutralize White's light-squared bishop.

17... g6?? loses outright to 18. ♖e5!, while 17... h6? is strongly met by 18. ♖xg7! ♖xg7 19. ♖xe6! ♖h8 20. ♖e5.

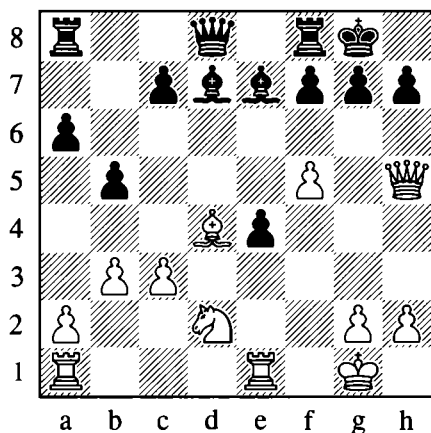


18.f5

18.♙e4!? N dxe4 19.♙xe4 may be White's best chance, although after 19...h6! 20.♙xa8 ♜xa8 21.♖d2 ♞e8! 22.♞e1 ♙f8 Black keeps a slight edge thanks to his bishop pair.

18...♙d7 19.♙xe4 dxe4 20.♖d2

Xu Yuhua – Wang Yu, China 2010. Now I would like to improve Black's play by means of:



20...c5! N 21.f6

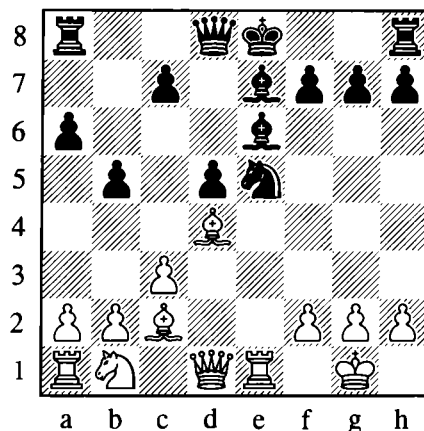
Also after 21.♙e5 ♙xf5 22.♜xf5 ♜xd2 23.♙xe4 ♙g5! White does not have enough compensation for a pawn.

21...cxd4 22.fxe7 ♜xe7 23.♙xe4 ♜a3!
24.♙xd4 ♙c6 25.♖e4 ♜b2 26.♞f1 ♙xe4

27.♙xe4 ♜xc3 28.♙e7 g6

Black keeps an extra pawn and some winning chances in the major piece ending.

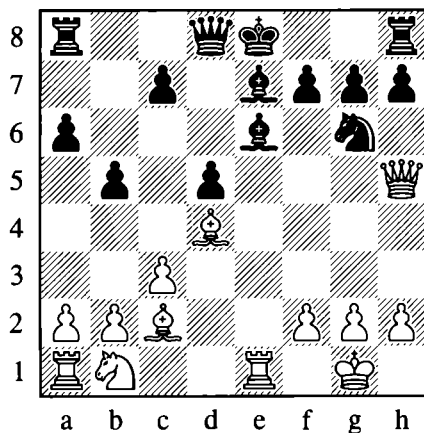
D42) 14.♙d4



14...♖g6!

14...♖c6 is riskier as it leaves the kingside unprotected. After the text move we will analyse the rare D421) 15.♜h5 followed by the usual D422) 15.♙xg7.

D421) 15.♜h5

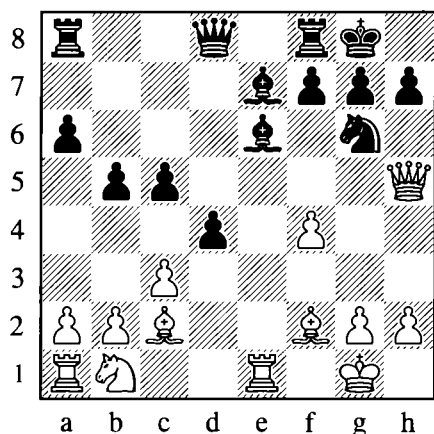


This move has been tested only once, but it should not be ignored. I analysed it quite deeply and found some lovely resources.

15...0-0 16.f4 c5 17.♙f2 d4!N

This new idea invites complications which ultimately work well for Black.

The stem game continued 17...f5!? which seems playable, although I would be a little worried about the weakening of the e5-square. 18.g3 (18.♞xe6? is impossible in view of 18...♙xf4+!) 18...♙c8 19.♙d2 ♞d7 20.♙f3 ♙b7 Kapengut – Chekhov, Minsk 1981. White retained some compensation for the sacrificed pawn thanks to the weakness of the e5-square and the misplaced knight on g6.

**18.f5**

18.cxd4 is met by the strong intermediate move 18...♙f6! when Black is better. The main point is that 19.f5? does not work due to 19...♙xd4!±.

Another nice line continues 18.♙e4 f5! 19.♙xa8 ♞xa8 20.g3 ♞d5! when Black has more than sufficient compensation for the sacrificed exchange due to the weak light squares.

18...d3! 19.♙d1 d2! 20.♞e3 ♙c4!

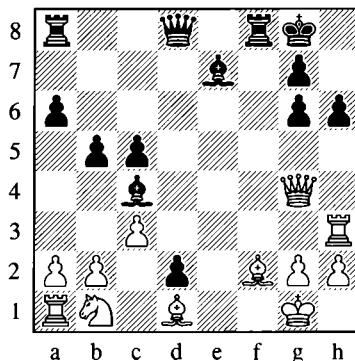
Now White starts to experience problems with the first rank.

21.♞h3

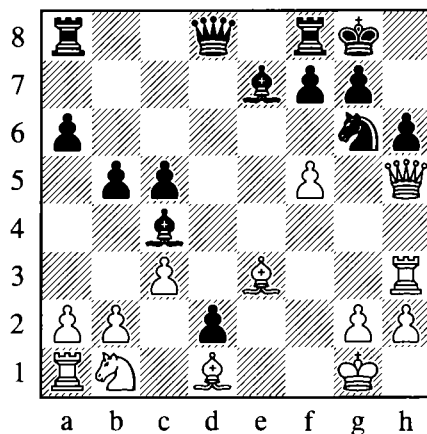
After 21.b3 ♙f4! 22.♞g4 ♙e2! 23.♞xe2 ♙xe2† 24.♞xe2 ♙g5! Black keeps the d2-pawn and obtains better chances.

21...h6 22.♙e3

I also analysed: 22.fxg6 fxg6 23.♞g4 (23.♞xg6? is bad due to 23...♞xf2! 24.♙xf2 ♙h4† 25.♙g1 ♞e7! with a decisive attack.)



23...♙g5! 24.♞f3 ♞e8!±

**22...♞e8!!**

A brilliant way to keep the initiative alive.

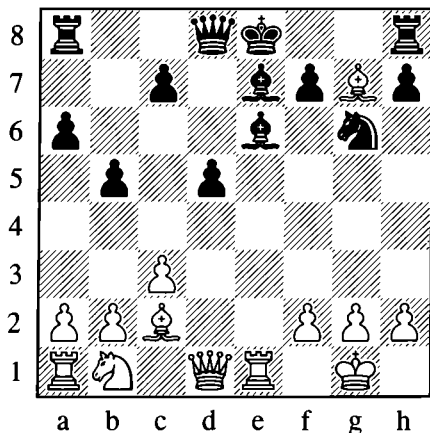
23.♙xd2 ♙g5!

Black exploits the weakness of the first rank.

24.♞f3 ♙e5! 25.♞g3 ♙xe3† 26.♞xe3 ♞d8! 27.f6 ♙f3†! 28.♞xf3 ♞xe3† 29.♞xe3 ♞xd2±

With a powerful rook on d2, Black keeps some chances to press in the endgame.

D422) 15.♙xg7



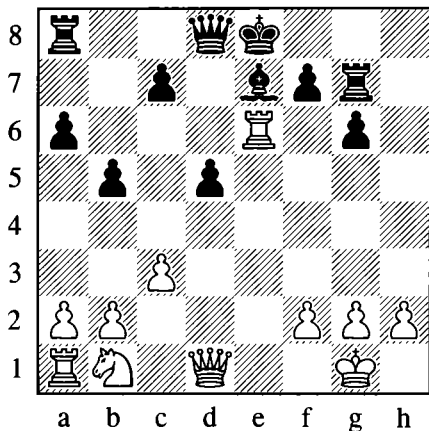
15...♜g8 16.♙xg6

This is the only way to stop Black's attack along the g-file. 16.♙d4? is never played, as 16...♞h4 17.g3 ♙g4 is unpleasant for White.

16...♜g7 17.♜xe6!

White keeps the g-file closed. 17.♙h5 ♞f8 18.♞d2 ♙d6 (18...♞d6!?N 19.♞f3 ♙f6 also looks fine for Black) 19.♞f1 ♞f6 20.♙f3 ♞d8 brought Black a good position in Morozevich – Flear, Hyeres 1992.

17...hxg6



18.♜e2!

18.♜e1 is wrong as White will need to move the rook again in order to double along the e-file.

After 18.♜e3 as played in Sisniega – C. Toth, Bogota 1991, I suggest 18...♜h7N 19.♞d2 ♞f8 20.♞f3 ♙f6 and compared with the main line I don't see any advantage of having the rook on e3 instead of e2.

18.♜e5?!

This move makes little sense as Black will gain a tempo by putting his bishop on f6, which he plans to do anyway.

18...c6 19.♞d2 ♞f8 20.♞f3 ♜h7

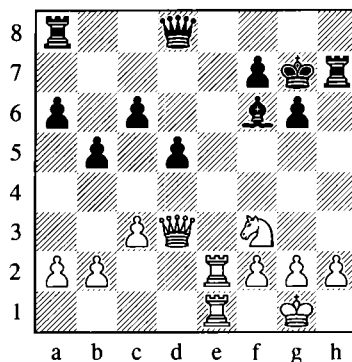
Black's plan includes ...♙f6, ...♞g7 and ...♞d6. Generally the rook on h7 will rejoin the action via h8, although occasionally Black will aim for a rook lift with ...♜h5.

21.♞d3

21.♜e2 ♞g7 22.a4 ♙f6 23.♞d2 ♜h8 led to a similar scenario in Ganguly – Roussel Roozmon, Turin (ol) 2006, as White lost a tempo on ♜e5-e2.

21...♙f6 22.♜e2 ♞g7 23.♜ae1

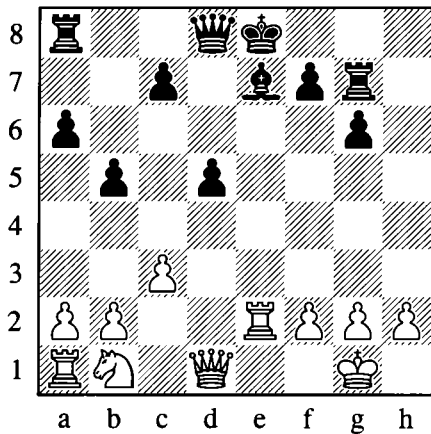
Krnan – Mikhalevski, Kapuskasing 2004. Now I should have played:



23...♞d6!N

The position can be compared with the game Balogh – Mikhalevski, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010, as referenced in the 19.♞d3 variation in the note to White's next move in the main

line below. The position here is identical to that occurring after move 22 in Balogh – Mikhalevski, except that Black has been presented with the extra move ...c6, which can hardly harm his prospects and may be of some benefit.



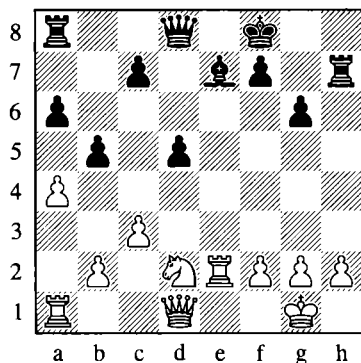
18...♔f8

Obviously the king should vacate the open file.

19.♘d2

The knight is heading for f3. Two other moves have been tried.

19.a4 ♖h7 20.♘d2 occurred in Van den Doel – Motwani, Belgium 2002, and now I suggest:



20...♙f6!N In my opinion the bishop belongs on this square, rather than d6 where it went

in the aforementioned game. Now the most likely continuation is 21.♘f3 which transposes to our main line – see 19.♘d2 ♖h7 20.♘f3 ♙f6 21.a4 below.

19.♗d3

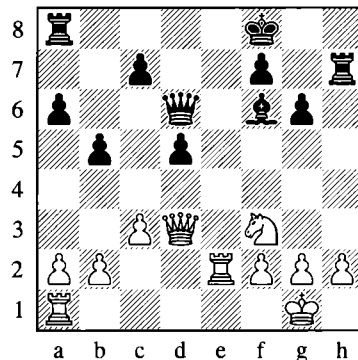
This move doesn't change much.

19...♖h7

I have already mentioned that Black's best set-up involves ...♙f6, ...♗g7, ... ♗d6 and usually ...♖hh8.

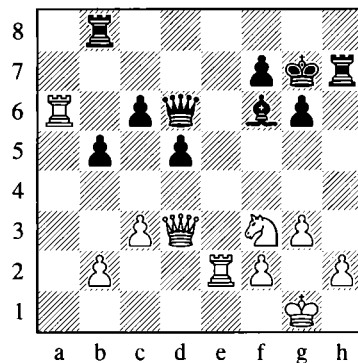
20.♘d2 ♙f6 21.♘f3 ♗d6

In a couple of other games Black has preferred 21...♗g7 first, which also seems fine.



22.♗ae1

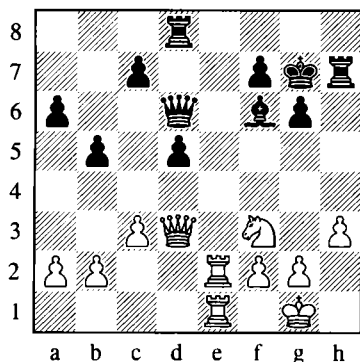
I also checked: 22.a4!?N ♖b8 23.axb5 axb5 24.♗a5 c6 25.♗a6 ♗g7 26.g3



26...♗d7! 27.♘d4 ♖c8 28.h4 (28.♘xb5? is refuted by 28...♖ch8!) 28...♖hh8! 29.♘xb5 ♙xh4! with roughly equal chances.

22...♙g7 23.h3 ♜d8!?

23...♜h5N is perfectly playable, but after careful consideration I decided there was no need to prevent White's next move.

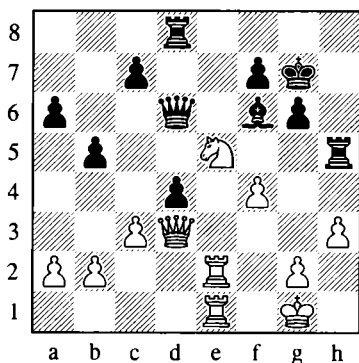


24.♙e5 ♜h5!

The rook enters the game from the fifth rank. The immediate 24...d4 is premature in view of 25.cxd4 ♜xd4 26.♜c2, although even here 26...♜d6! should enable Black to equalize.

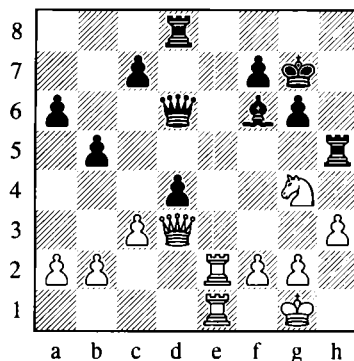
25.♙g4

During the game my main worry was 25.f4, but Black is fine after 25...d4!:



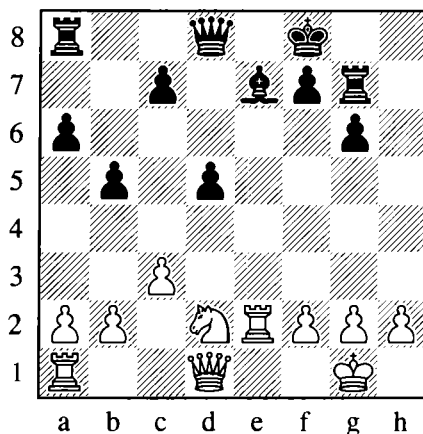
26.c4! (After 26.g4 ♜hh8 27.♙e4 [27.c4 ♜he8! is also better for Black thanks to the strong passed d-pawn.] 27...dxc3 28.♜xc3 c5 The weakening of the kingside is definitely in Black's favour.) 26...c5! It is White who has to think about equalizing.

25...d4!



26.♙xf6 ♜xf6 27.cxd4 ♜xd4 28.♜c3 c5 29.b3 ♜hd5

Black had the better chances in the major piece endgame in Balogh – Mikhalevski, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010.



19...♜h7

19...♜g8 is a possible alternative, but I prefer the rook on the h-file.

19...♙f6 is likely to lead to the same position after a subsequent ...♜h7, but it seems more natural to move the rook first, as this piece is in more obvious need of relocation.

20.♙f3 ♙f6

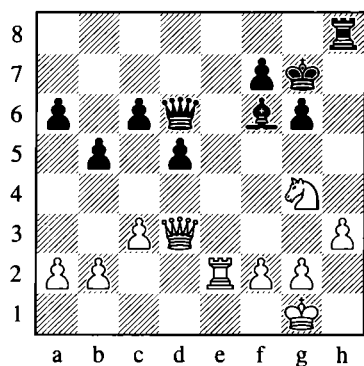
The pieces go to their best spots. I once tried 20...♜d6 against Jakovenko, but now I prefer the text move.

21.a4

White is trying to put pressure on the queenside.

21.♖d2 ♖d6 22.♜ae1 ♜g7 ½–½ was the rather uneventful course of Cabrilo – Todorovic, Valjevo 2011.

21.h3 ♜g7 (21...♜h8) 22.♜d3 ♜h8 23.♞d1 c6 24.♜e5 ♖d6 Black has completed his regrouping and equalized. 25.♜g4 ♜ae8 26.♞de1 ♜xe2 27.♜xe2



Magem Badals – Flear, Palma de Mallorca 1991. Now the most precise continuation would have been 27...c5!?N 28.♜xf6 ♜xf6 with equal chances as the black king is in no real danger.

21...♜g7 22.♜b3

Previously White played 22.♜d3, which doesn't promise any advantage either. 22...c6 23.h3 ♜h8 In this roughly equal position a draw was agreed in Kastner – Lyne, corr. 2005.

22...c6

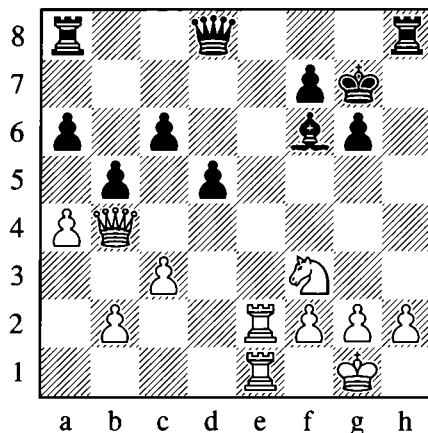
Black can also start with 22...♜h8N since the attempt to win a pawn by means of 23.axb5 axb5 24.♜xa8 ♖xa8 25.♜xb5? backfires after 25...♜b8 26.♜d3 ♖a1† 27.♜e1 ♜xb2 with a slight edge for Black.

23.♜b4

White is trying to take control over the dark squares, but Black continues with his plan.

23...♜h8 24.♜ae1

This position occurred in the game Ponomariov – Roiz, Saratov 2011, which I followed live, being Michael's second during the tournament. Here I recommend the following minor improvement:

**24...♜f8!?N 25.♜f4**

25.♜e7? is bad in view of 25...a5! 26.♜d6 ♜e8! 27.♞d7 ♜xe1† 28.♜xe1 ♖xd6 29.♞xd6 bxa4!+ with a winning position for Black thanks to the plan of ...♜b8xb2.

25...♜b8 26.♜d2 ♖d6=

Black obtains his desired set-up.

Conclusion

Black does not have many problems in the main line of the 9.♞e3 system, and the plan of ...♜c5-d7xe5 continues to hold up well. Variation D3 with 12.♜d4!? awaits further testing, although I believe Black's position should be resilient enough after my new 15...♜f7! move. In the more popular variation D4 with 12.♜e1, I believe Black should be absolutely fine as long as he arranges his pieces in the correct way, as demonstrated in the final part of the chapter.

Chapter 14

Main Lines

9. ♖e2 – Introduction

Variation Index

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4
6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6 9.♖e2

9...♙e7

A) 10.c4?!	237
B) 10.♘bd2	238
C) 10.c3 0-0	240
C1) 11.♙c2	240
C2) 11.♘bd2	241
C3) 11.♘d4	243

A) after 15.♘c5



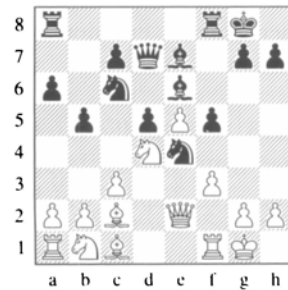
15...♙b7!N

C1) after 13.♘bd2



13...♙ad8!N

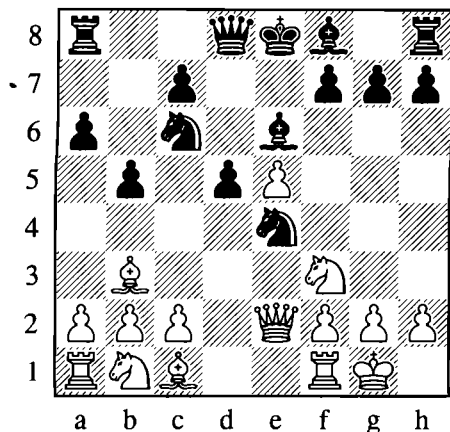
C3) after 13.f3



13...♙c5!N



1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♗xc4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙c6
9.♚e2



With this queen move White vacates the d1-square for the rook and pre-empt the possibility of ...♙c5, which can now be met by ♙e3. This plan was introduced early in the previous century in the game Izbinsky – Rubinstein, Kiev 1903.

9...♙e7

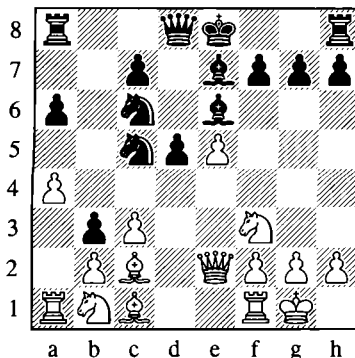
I have always preferred this line over 9...♙c5, as I don't like to exchange the dark-squared bishops in this pawn structure. From here the main move by far is 10.♞d1, which will receive dedicated coverage in the next chapter. Over the following pages we will analyse three rare but interesting alternatives: A) 10.c4?!, B) 10.♗bd2 and C) 10.c3.

Other moves do not require too much attention.

10.♙e3 0-0 hardly leaves White anything better than 10.♞d1 leading to variation A of the next chapter, which can be found on page 247.

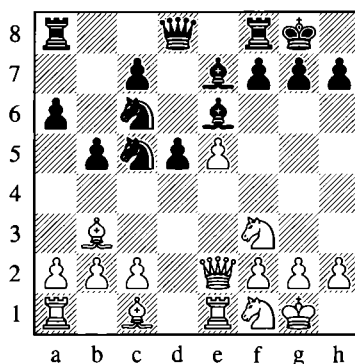
10.a4 b4 can be compared with variation C of Chapter 10, and it seems to me that the

inclusion of the moves ♚e2 and ...♙e7 is likely to favour Black. Here is an illustrative example: 11.c3 ♗c5 12.♙c2 b3!



13.♙d3 (Also after 13.♙d1N d4! 14.cxd4 ♗xd4 15.♗xd4 ♚xd4 Black's advantage is not in doubt.) 13...♚d7 14.♙e3 ♗xd3 15.♚xd3 ♙f5+ Black's domination over the light squares gave him the better chances in Rautenberg – Czaya, Weidenau 1947.

10.♞e1 doesn't make much sense as the rook would be better on d1. 10...0-0 11.♗bd2 ♗c5 12.♗f1 I. Polgar – Bukacek, Dresden 1969. Now Black's best continuation would have been:

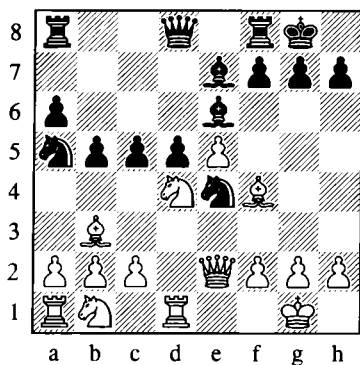


12...♙g4!N 13.♞d1 d4 14.♗e3 d3! Forcing the following inadequate exchange sacrifice. 15.♞xd3 (15.cxd3? ♗d4+) 15...♗xd3 16.♗xg4 ♗c5 White cannot hope for sufficient compensation after the light-squared bishop is eliminated.

10.♙f4

The combination of White's last two moves does not make much sense.

10...0–0 11.♞d1 ♘a5 12.♘d4 c5



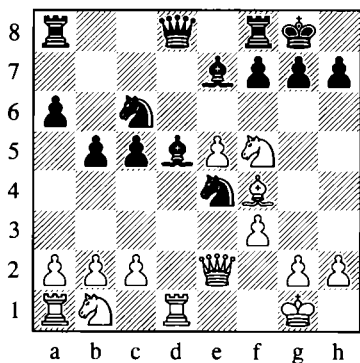
13.♙xd5!N

This is the only chance to make sense of White's position, although ultimately Black is still doing well.

13.♘e6? fxe6 14.♞g4 was played in Leal – Henriques, Amadora 2000, and here it is easy to improve Black's play: 14...♞xf4!N 15.♞xf4 c4

13...♙xd5 14.♘f5 ♘c6 15.f3

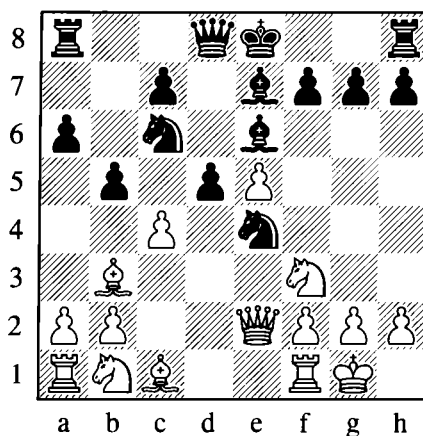
I also checked the following line: 15.♘e7† ♘xe7 16.f3 ♘g6! 17.♙e3 ♘g5 18.♘c3 18...♙xf3! 19.♞xd8 ♙xe2 20.♞xf8† ♞xf8 21.♙xg5 ♞e8! with some superiority for Black.



15...♘d4! 16.♘d4 cxd4 17.fxe4 ♙c4 18.♞f3 ♞b6

Black has a positional advantage and White's extra pawn is hardly relevant.

A) 10.c4?!

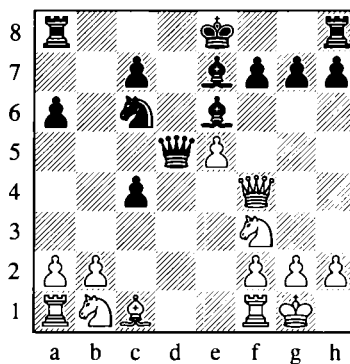


This move is dubious, but it has the aim of causing concrete problems which is why I gave it the status of a main line.

10...bxc4 11.♙a4

This is the only serious attempt to justify White's last move.

11.♙xc4 is pretty feeble: 11...dxc4 12.♞xe4 ♞d5 13.♞f4



Now in Panchenko – Kharitonov, Sochi 1979, the simple 13...0–0!N would have led to Black's advantage, for instance: 14.♘c3 ♞d3 15.♞d1 ♞c2 16.♞g3 (or 16.♞d2 ♞g6 17.♘d5 ♙b4!)

16...♟f8 17.♞e1 ♞ab8 18.h3 ♞g6! The overriding theme of these positions is that Black's bishop pair and active pieces are more significant than the token weakness of the doubled c-pawns.

11...♞d7 12.♞c3

White needs to get more pieces involved in the game.

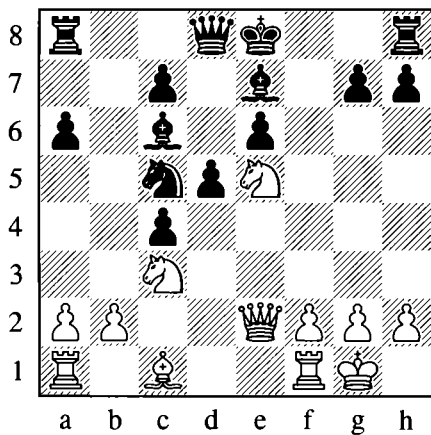
The attempt to force an immediate breakthrough is doomed to fail: 12.e6 fxe6 13.♞xc6 ♞xc6 14.♞e5 ♞b7 15.♞h5† g6 16.♞xg6 ♞f6! 17.♞h3 ♞g8! In Keres – Bronstein, Moscow 1946, Black's strong centre and open g-file gave him an obvious advantage.

12...♞c5! 13.e6

13.♞xc6 ♞xc6 14.♞d4 ♞d7 15.♞f3 ♞b7 also left White without enough compensation in Lundin – Backe, Hallsberg 1981.

13...fxe6 14.♞xc6 ♞xc6 15.♞e5

This position was reached in Abroshin – Radchenko, corr. 1954, and here Black's most accurate continuation would have been:

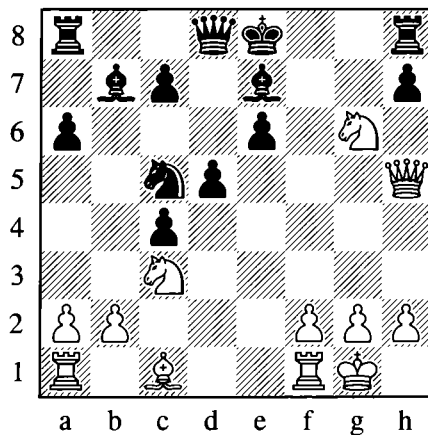


15...♞b7!N

The game continuation of 15...♞d6 was also pretty good and led to broadly similar play, but I slightly prefer this way of doing things.

16.♞h5† g6 17.♞xg6

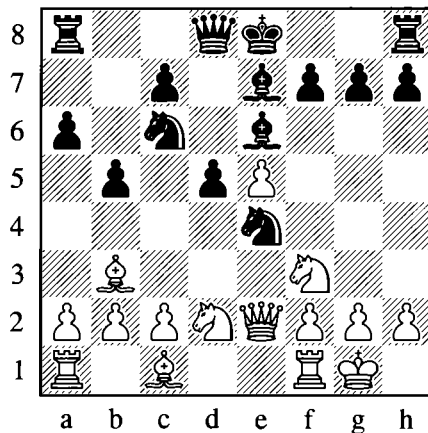
Now Black does not have the option of ...♞f6 as in the note to move 12, but he has a more than adequate alternative.



17...hxc6! 18.♞xh8† ♞d7

Black dominates the centre and White's extra exchange is of little significance.

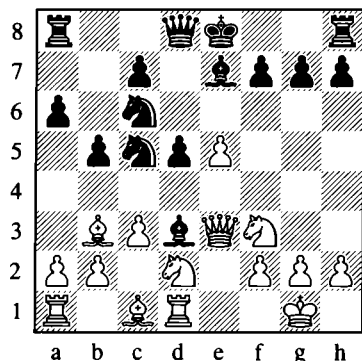
B) 10.♞bd2



This rare move doesn't promise White any advantage. The same position sometimes arises via the move order 9.♞bd2 ♞e7 10.♞e2, although in Chapter 18 and 19 we meet 9.♞bd2 with 9...♞c5, so it is only the present move order that is relevant to us.

10...♘c5 11.♙d1

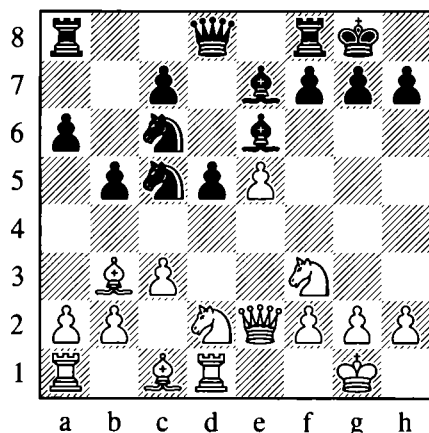
11.c3 is strongly answered by 11...♙f5! making use of the weak d3-square. 12.♙d1 ♘d3 13.♖e3 This position occurred in Elez – Rade, Bihac 2010, and now I would like to offer:



13...0-0!?N 14.♘d4 ♖d7 15.♘2f3 ♙e4 16.♘xc6 ♖xc6 17.♘d4 ♖d7 18.♙c2 ♙ae8! With the idea of ...f6 and Black is doing fine.

11...0-0 12.c3

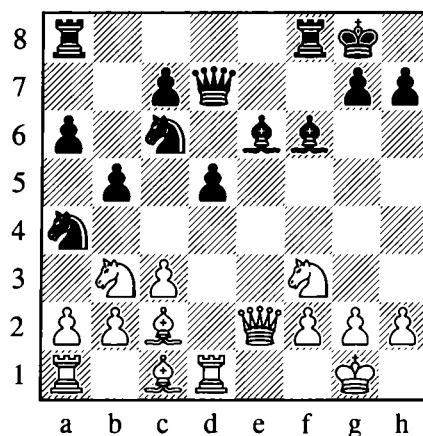
12.♘f1 has been tried by a few strong players including Grischuk, albeit in a blitz game. I recommend the rare 12...f6! as the opening of the f-file will favour Black. For example: 13.exf6N (13.♘g3 fxg3 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.♖xe5 ♙d6 was more pleasant for Black in T. Lee – Currie, e-mail 2001.) 13...♙xf6 14.c3 ♖d6! Followed by ...♙ae8 and Black is better.

**12...♖d7**

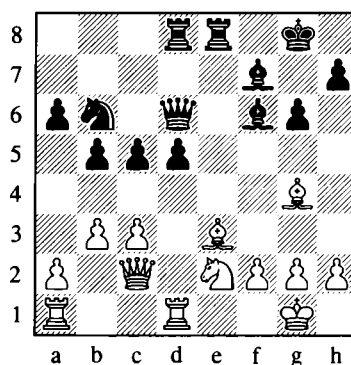
12...♙f5 is a reasonable alternative which has the idea of preventing ♙c2.

13.♙c2 f6

Black chooses a good moment to execute this thematic freeing move, as White's pieces are still not particularly well developed.

14.exf6 ♙xf6 15.♘b3 ♘a4**16.♙b1**

Another game continued 16.♘fd4 ♘xd4 17.♘xd4 ♙f7 18.♙f5 ♖d6 19.♙e3 ♙fe8 20.♖c2 g6 21.♙g4 c5 22.♘e2 ♙ad8 23.b3 ♘b6



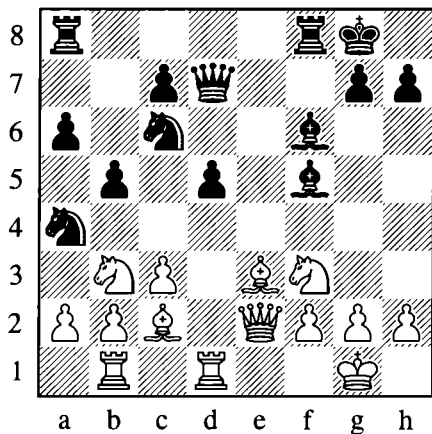
With approximate equality in Dervishi – Vallejo Pons, Palermo 2007. Black intends ...♘d7-e5 over the next few moves.

16...♙f5

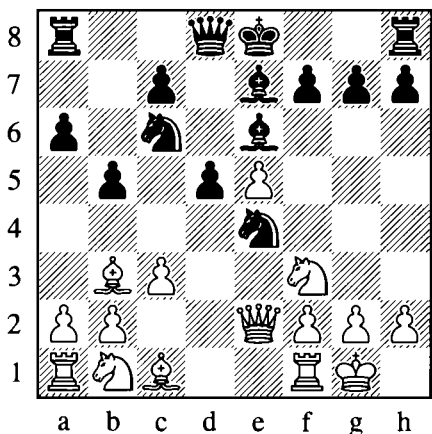
Exchanging the light-squared bishops is a typical plan for Black in the Open Spanish, especially in the 9.c3 variation which can be found in Chapters 16 and 17.

17.♙e3

This position occurred in Vasiukov – Lutikov, Moscow 1982. Now Black's easiest route to equality seems to be:



17...♙xc2N 18.♖xc2 ♘e5 19.♘xe5 ♙xe5=
With ...♞ae8 to follow.

C) 10.c3

This position can also arise via the 9.c3 ♙e7 10.♖e2 move order, but once again this

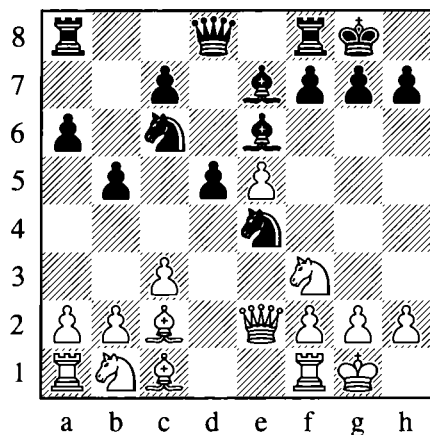
alternative sequence is of little interest to us, as in Chapter 16 we will be meeting 9.c3 with 9...♙c5.

10...0-0

From this position I will analyse **C1) 11.♙c2, C2) 11.♘bd2** and **C3) 11.♘d4** in detail.

11.♞d1 will be analysed later under the move order 10.♞d1 0-0 11.c3 – see variation B in the next chapter on page 249.

The rare 11.a4?! ♘c5 12.♙c2 occurred in Niephaus – Cortlever, Utrecht 1954, and here Black's strongest continuation would have been 12...♘xa4!N 13.♙xa4 bxa4 14.♞xa4 a5! intending ...♞d7. Black has the upper hand thanks to his bishop pair and control over the light squares, and the incidental threat of ...♘xe5 will also force White to lose some time.

C1) 11.♙c2**11...♞d7! 12.♞d1**

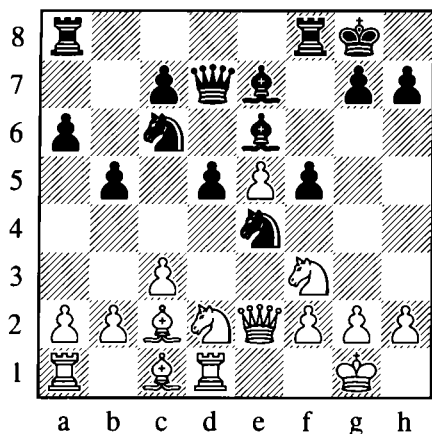
12.♘d4 transposes to variation C3 below.

12.♙xe4?! is a dubious pawn grab as it leaves White seriously weak on the light squares. 12...dxex4 13.♖xe4 ♙d5 14.♖d3 (14.♖e3

♞ad8 15.♜bd2 f6! 14...♞e6 Black has more than sufficient compensation.

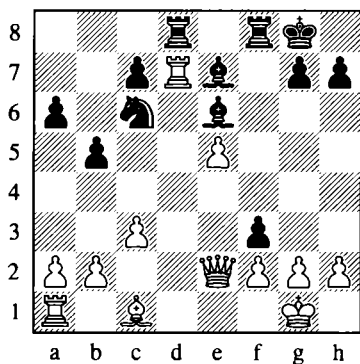
12...f5! 13.♜bd2

This position was reached in Tal – Keres, Moscow 1967. Here Black could have equalized most effectively with:



13...♞ad8! 14.♜bd3

14.♜xe4? is bad: 14...fxe4 15.♜xe4 dxe4 16.♞xd7 exf3



17.♞xd8? (17.gxf3 ♞xd7 is depressing, but still White's best chance.) 17...fxe2 18.♞xf8+ ♜xf8 19.♜e3 ♜b4! 20.♞e1 ♜c4! 21.♜d2 ♜c2 22.♞c1 ♜d3+ White's situation is hopeless.

14.♜d4 ♜xd4 15.cxd4 c5! is also good for Black.

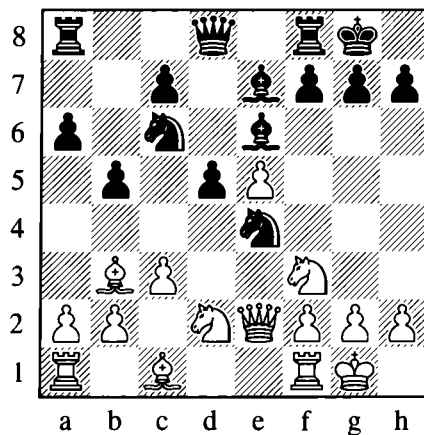
14...♜f7!

Black moves the bishop away from attack and towards the h5-square.

15.♜bd4 ♜xd4 16.cxd4 ♞e6=

Followed by ...♜h5 with a good position for Black.

C2) 11.♜bd2



Not for the first time in the chapter, we arrive at a position that can be reached via at least one other move order. This time the alternative routes are 9.♜bd2 ♜e7 10.c3 0-0 11.♞e2 and 9.c3 ♜e7 10.♜bd2 0-0 11.♞e2, although it must be said that 11.♞e2 is a relative sideline in that position, with 11.♜c2! being the main try for an advantage.

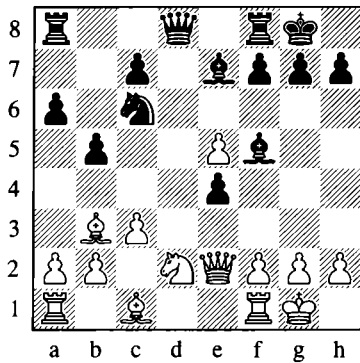
I should add that neither of these move orders are relevant to our repertoire, as we will be meeting 9.c3 with 9...♜c5 and 9.♜bd2 with 9...♜c5.

11...♜f5

I like this move against ♞e2 set-ups, as it prevents White from playing ♜c2 in view of ...♜xc3.

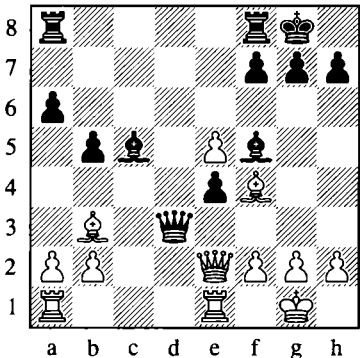
12.♞d1

After 12.♜xe4 dxe4 13.♜d2 Black has a pleasant choice:



13...♖d3!? An interesting exchange sacrifice. (There is a safe alternative in 13...♜xe5 14.♜xe4 ♖d3=) 14.♖xd3 exd3 15.♙d5 ♜xe5 16.♞e1 ♜g6 17.♙xa8 ♞xa8 Black has good compensation.

12.♜d4 ♜xd4 13.cxd4 c5 14.♜xe4 dxe4! 15.dxc5 ♙xc5 16.♙f4 ♖d3 17.♞fe1 occurred in Valenti – Ernst, Amsterdam 2006. Now I would like to improve with:



17...♖xe2!N 18.♞xe2 ♞ae8 19.h3 ♙d4 20.g4 ♙e6 21.♞d2 ♙a7 The endgame is balanced. One nice line continues: 22.♞e1 ♙xb3 23.axb3 f5! 24.gxf5 e3!=

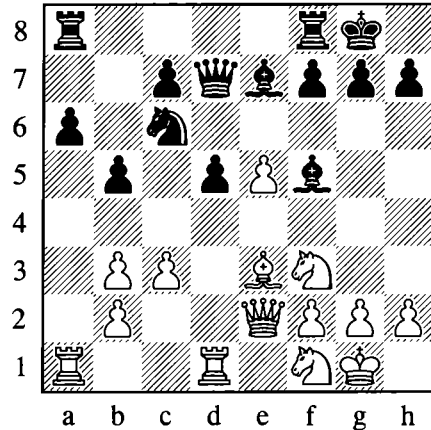
12...♜c5 13.♜f1

13.♜d4 ♙d3! 14.♖e3 transposes to the 11.c3 line given in the notes to variation B, examined earlier on page 239.

13...♜xb3 14.axb3 ♖d7 15.♙e3

After 15.♜e3 ♙e4 I do not see anything better for White than 16.♜d2 ♙g6 17.♜f3 offering a repetition of moves.

We have been following the game Houna – Takashima, Thessaloniki 1984. Now I would like to improve upon Black's play with:



15...♙g6!N

Black moves the bishop to a more secure position and prepares to transfer his knight to e6.

16.b4

16.c4?! is strongly met by 16...♜b4!♞.

16.♙f4 ♜d8! 17.c4 ♜e6 18.♙e3 c6= is also pleasant for Black.

16...♞fd8

Black strengthens his centre and prepares the following idea.

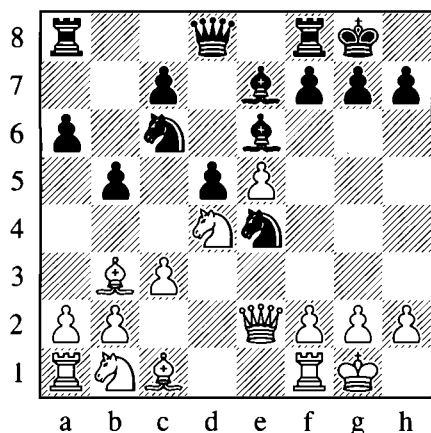
17.h3 a5!=

Based on the following line:

18.♖xb5 ♞ab8 19.♖a6 axb4 20.c4 ♖e6

Black is fine.

C3) 11.♘d4



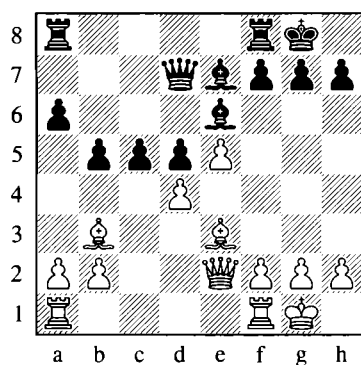
11...♞d7!

Black should avoid exchanging on e4 here, as it would leave the d4-knight short of squares.

12.♙c2

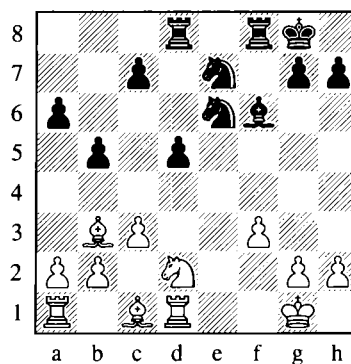
I checked two other moves:

12.♘d2 ♘xd4 13.cxd4 ♘xd2 14.♙xd2 c5 15.♙e3 (Or 15.dxc5 ♙xc5 with a roughly balanced position in Gerenski – Popov, Sofia 1957. For example, 16.♞ac1 ♞ac8 17.♞xc5 ♞xc5 18.♙b4 ♞fc8 19.♙xc5 ♞xc5 20.♞d1 ♞c7 21.♞e3 h6 with equality.)

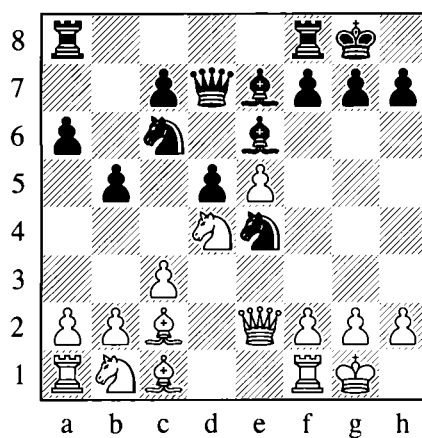


15...c4 16.♙c2 This was Collins – Flear, Port Erin 2001, and now I would like to improve upon Black's play with 16...♙f5!N when the pawn majority on the queenside promises Black a slight superiority.

12.f3 ♘c5 13.♙c2 f6! Getting rid of the e5-pawn is a typical plan which works well here. 14.exf6 ♙xf6 15.♘xe6 ♞xe6 16.♞xe6† ♘xe6 17.♙b3 ♞ad8 18.♞d1 ♘e7 19.♘d2 White wants to put the knight on e4, so...



19...♙f7! 20.♞f1 c5 21.f4 c4 22.♙d1 This position was reached in Korchnoi – Suetin, Leningrad 1960, and here Black could have continued with the flexible 22...♙g8!N♞, preventing the ♘f3-g5 plan which occurred in the game. Meanwhile Black can develop his initiative with the plan of ...♘c5, ...♘c6 and ...d4.

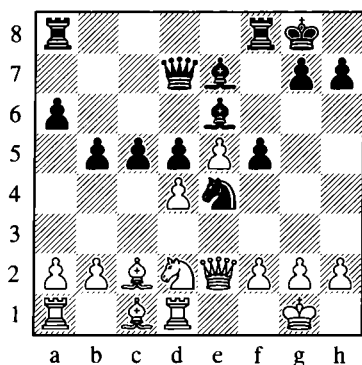


12...f5 13.f3

13.exf6?! is dubious due to 13...♘xd4! 14.cxd4 ♙xf6♞.

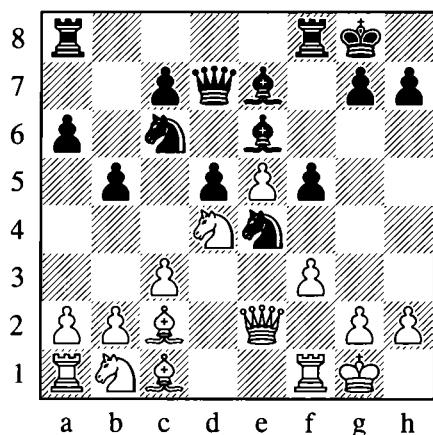
13.♞d1 ♘xd4 14.cxd4 c5 15.♘d2 occurred in

Sethuraman – Bulski, Legnica 2010. Now I would like to offer:



15...♞a7!N 16.♜xe4 fxe4 17.♙e3 ♝ac8 Black is doing fine.

The main line position was reached in Byrne – Unzicker, Hastings 1971. At this point I would like to introduce an interesting piece sacrifice.



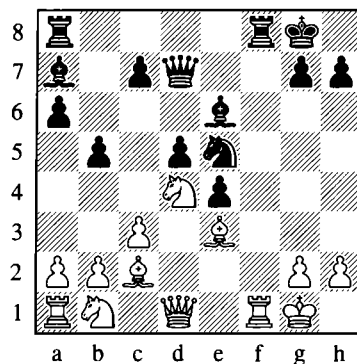
13...♙c5!N

An attractive and powerful idea, which I have discovered while working on this book.

14.♞d1

White should reject the sacrifice: 14.fxe4?! ♜xd4 15.cxd4 ♙xd4† 16.♙e3 ♙xb2 17.exf5 ♙xa1 18.fxe6 ♝xf1† 19.♞xf1 ♞xe6 20.♞d3 g6 21.♙b3 c6 22.♜c3 ♜g7 23.♞d4 ♝f8= Black's chances are higher.

Another interesting line is: 14.♞d1!? ♙a7 15.fxe4 fxe4 I like this recapture, which allows us to retain the integrity of the pawn chain. 16.♙e3 ♜xe5



17.♜d2 (17.♝xf8† ♝xf8 18.♞e1 c5 19.♜xe6 ♞xe6 20.♜d2 ♜g4 21.♞e2 ♞d7! 22.♜h1 ♜xe3 23.♞xe3 c4 followed by ...♝f2 and Black develops some initiative.) 17...♜g4 18.♞e2 ♞d6 19.g3 ♜xe3 20.♞xe3 ♙h3 21.♝xf8† ♝xf8 With two pawns and a strong pawn centre for a piece, Black's chances are good.

14...♜xe5

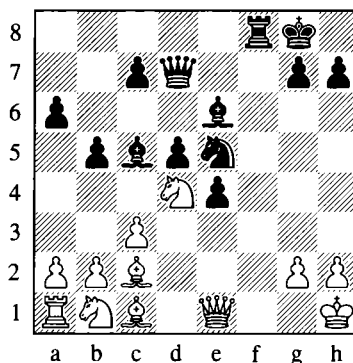
14...♙a7!? could be considered here too.

15.♜h1 ♝ac8!

Black intensifies the pressure by bringing his last piece into play.

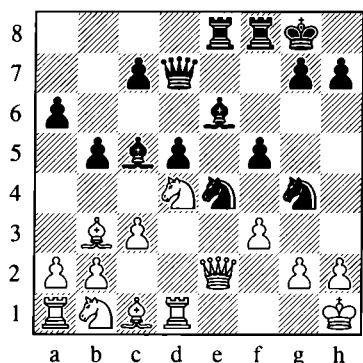
16.a4

After 16.fxe4? fxe4 Black's threats turn out to be too strong, for example: 17.♝f1 (17.♜xe6 ♞xe6 18.♜d2 ♜g4+) 17...♝xf1† 18.♞xf1 ♝f8 19.♞e1

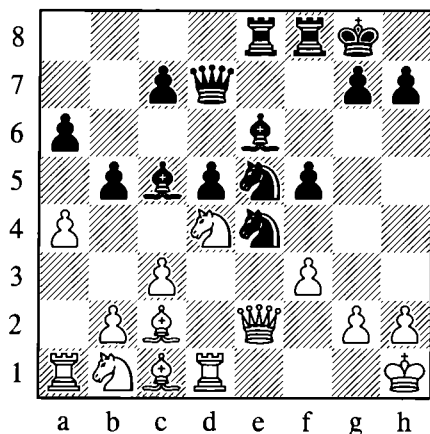


19...♘g4! 20.♘d2 ♞d6 21.♞g3 ♞xg3
22.hxg3 ♙xd4 23.cxd4 ♜f2–+ With complete domination.

16.♙b3 ♘g4!? Black insists on opening the f-file at the cost of a piece. (The quiet 16...♖h8!? also promises good play.)



17.fxe4 ♙xd4 18.cxd4 fxe4 19.♙e3 ♞d6 20.g3
♘xe3 21.♞xe3 ♜f3 22.♞g5 h6 23.♞h4 ♞f8!
Once again Black develops a strong initiative.



16...♞f7!

Intending to transfer the queen to h5.

17.axb5

After 17.fxe4 fxe4 18.h3 ♞g6! Black creates a strong threat of ...♙g4 and obtains a serious initiative.

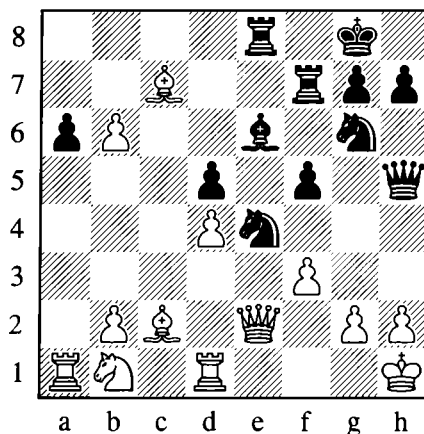
17...♞h5!

Finally the tension on the kingside is too much to bear, and a forcing sequence ensues.

18.♙f4!

18.fxe4? ♘g4! is too dangerous.

18...♙xd4! 19.cxd4 ♘g6 20.♙xc7 ♜f7! 21.b6



21...♜xc7! 22.♙xe4 ♘f4! 23.♞f2

After 23.♞e3 ♜c6 24.♙d3 ♘xd3 25.♞xd3
♜xb6 Black is okay.

23...♜c6 24.♙c2 ♜xb6=

With roughly equal chances.

Conclusion

The variations examined here are pretty rare but they should not be underestimated, and there were a number of places where I was forced to find improvements over existing theory. I am especially pleased to have found the 13...♙c5!N idea in the final variation of the chapter, and am now satisfied that Black is at least holding his own in the ensuing complications.

Chapter 15

Main Lines

9.♔e2 ♕e7 10.♖d1



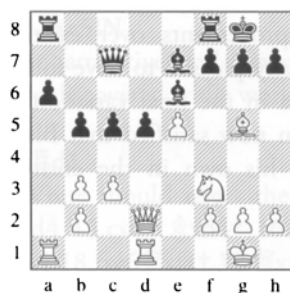
Variation Index

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4
6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6 9.♔e2 ♙e7 10.♖d1

10...0-0

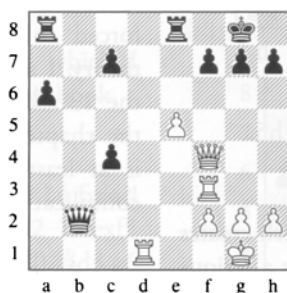
A) 11.♙e3	247
B) 11.c3 ♘c5 12.♙c2 ♙g4	249
B1) 13.♘bd2	249
B2) 13.b4	251
C) 11.c4 bxc4 12.♙xc4 ♙c5 13.♙e3 ♙xe3 14.♔xe3 ♔b8 15.♙b3 ♘a5	254
C1) 16.♘d4	255
C2) 16.♘c3	255
C3) 16.♘e1	257
C4) 16.♘bd2 ♔a7	258
C41) 17.♔e2	259
C42) 17.♘d4	261
C43) 17.♘xe4	263
C44) 17.♔xa7	266

A) after 16.♙g5



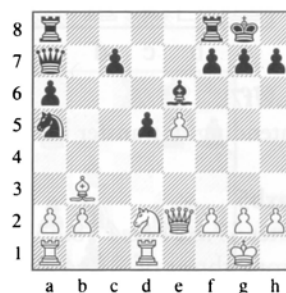
16...♙xg5!N

C2) after 26.♙f3



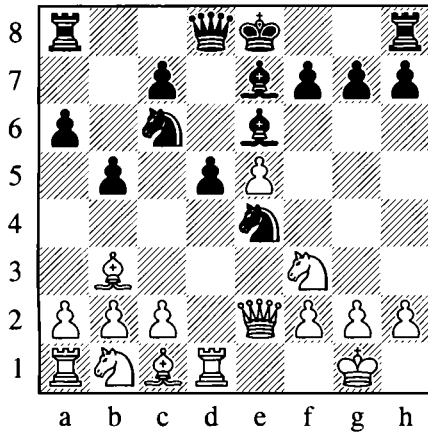
26...c3!N

C41) after 18.♘xd2



18...♙b8!N

1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♟c6 3.♖b5 a6 4.♖a4 ♟f6
5.0-0 ♟xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♖b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♖e6
9.♟e2 ♖e7 10.♞d1



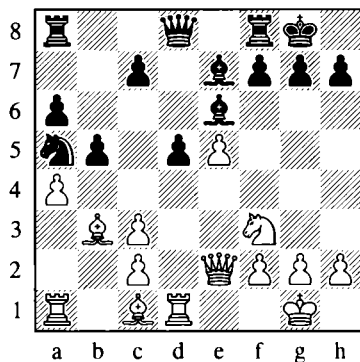
This is the main line, and certainly the most natural follow-up to the previous move. White is hoping to make use of the pressure along the d-file.

10...0-0

Here we will consider A) 11.♖e3 and B) 11.c3 before analysing the main line C) 11.c4.

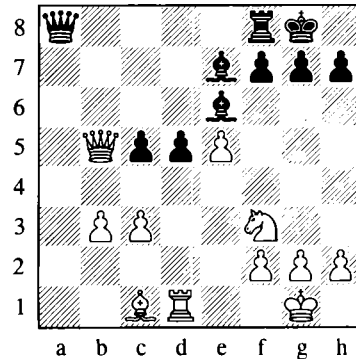
11.♟bd2 ♟c5 transposes to variation B in the previous chapter – see page 238.

11.♟c3?! is dubious: 11...♟xc3 12.bxc3 ♟a5 13.a4 Cappello – Kchouk, Lugano 1968.



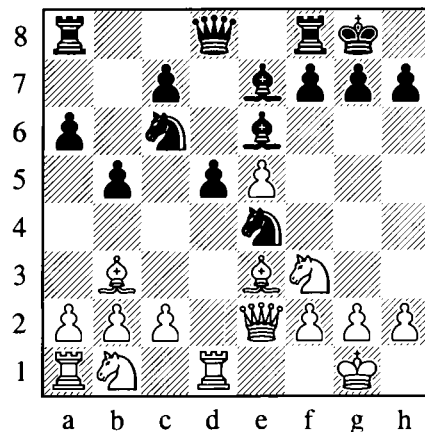
13...c5!N 14.axb5 axb5 15.♟xb5 ♟xb3

16.♞xa8 ♟xa8 17.cxb3 (or 17.♟xb3 ♞b8
18.♟a3 ♟xa3 19.♖xa3 ♞a8 20.♞a1 ♖f5
21.♟e1 f6=)



17...♞b8 18.♟a4 ♟b7 19.b4 d4! and Black is better.

A) 11.♖e3



11...♟a5!

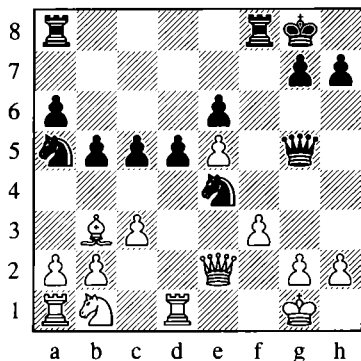
Preparing ...c5, which normally brings Black a good game.

12.♟bd2

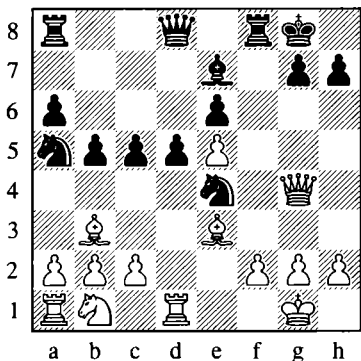
Moving the other knight does not cause Black problems:

12.♟d4 c5 13.♟xe6 fxe6 14.♟g4

After 14.c3 Black exchanges the dark-squared bishops, which could result in a forced drawing line: 14...♖g5! 15.f3 ♖xe3† 16.♟xe3 ♟g5 17.♟e2



17...Wh5! 18.g4 Wh4! 19.fxe4 Qxb3 20.axb3 Bf2! 21.Wxf2 Wxg4† 22.Wg2 Wxd1† 23.Wf1 Wg4† 24.Wg2 (But not 24.Qh1?? Bf8-+) 24...Wd1† 1/2-1/2 Apicella – Gyimesi, Paris 1995.



14...Wb6 15.c3

It's important that 15.f3? doesn't work in view of 15...Bg5! 16.fxe4 Bxc3† 17.Qh1 c4 and Black wins.

15.Qd2!?N may be White's best, and after 15...Qxd2 16.Bxd2 Qc4 17.Bxc4 bxc4 18.c3 Bxd8 the position is equal.

15...Qxb3 16.axb3 Bf5 17.f3 Bg5! 18.Bxg5 c4† 19.Bd4 Bxg5 20.Wf4 Bf5 21.We3 Qc5

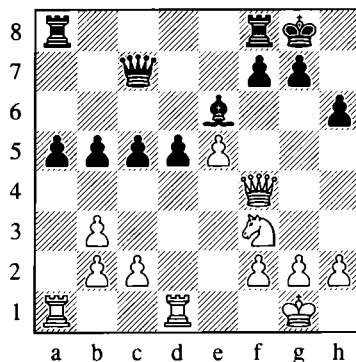
Black had the better chances in Kvon – Egin, Tashkent 2008.

12...Qxd2 13.Wxd2 Qxb3 14.axb3 c5

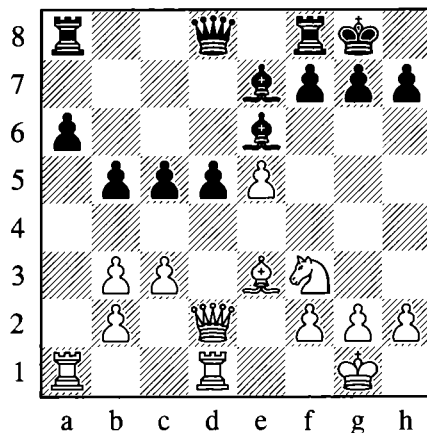
The position is roughly balanced. White has the more active rooks, while Black can point to his bishop pair and mobile queenside pawns.

15.c3

Another game continued: 15.Bg5 Bxg5 (15...h6!? is a good alternative.) 16.Qxg5 h6 (16...Bf5!? is also equal.) 17.Qf3 a5 18.Wf4 Wc7



19.Wg3?! d4! and Black seized initiative in Zhang Zhong – Torre, Jakarta 2011.

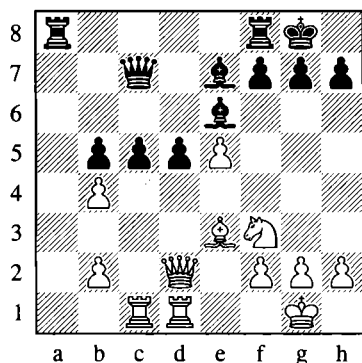


15...Wc7 16.Bg5

White has tried a couple of other methods of playing on the dark squares.

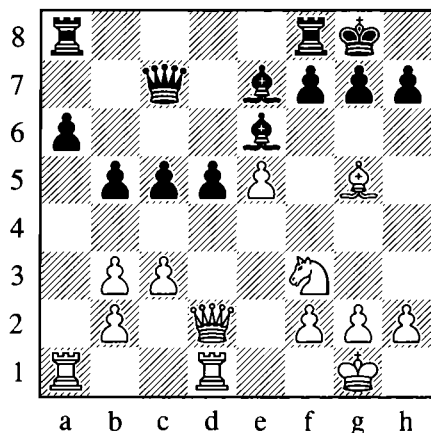
16.b4 cxb4 17.cxb4 Wc4 18.Bc5 Bxc5 19.bxc5 Wxc5 20.Qd4 (20.b4 Wb6 21.Qd4 Bfc8 22.Ba5 Bc4 is fine for Black.) 20...Bfc8 Black's extra pawn compensates for the strong knight on d4, Mateo – Xu Jun, Dubai 1986.

16.Bac1 a5 17.b4 (17.Bg5!? Bxg5 18.Wxg5 b4! is fine for Black.) 17...axb4 18.cxb4



18...c4! Obvious and strong. Now the b4-pawn becomes a target. 19.♞d4 ♖a4! with better chances for Black in Krantz – Ek, Falkoeping 1965.

The main move was played in Parma – Peters, Luxembourg 1971. At this point I would like to improve Black's play with:



16...♙xg5!N

Luring one of the white pieces away from the centre.

17.♟xg5 a5

Black intends ...b4, which would not only prevent White from blockading on the dark squares, but would also fix the b3-pawn as a target for a future endgame. The critical line continues as follows:

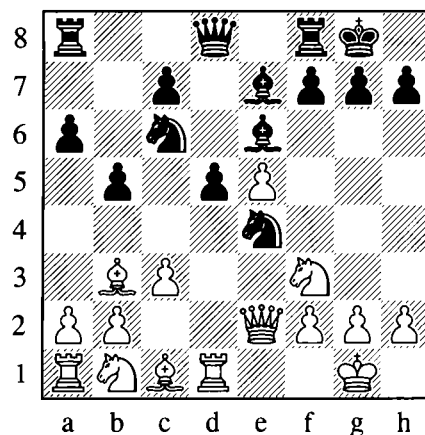
18.b4!? axb4 19.cxb4 ♖xa1 20.♞xa1 cxb4 21.♟d2

21.♞c1 ♟b8 22.h3 ♞c8=

21...♟c4 22.♞c1 ♟e4 23.♞e1 ♟c4 24.♞c1=

Neither side benefits from avoiding the repetition.

B) 11.c3



I happened to meet this line once, in a game that will be referenced in the note to move 19 in variation B2 below. Almost two decades later, I am happy to recommend the same path for Black.

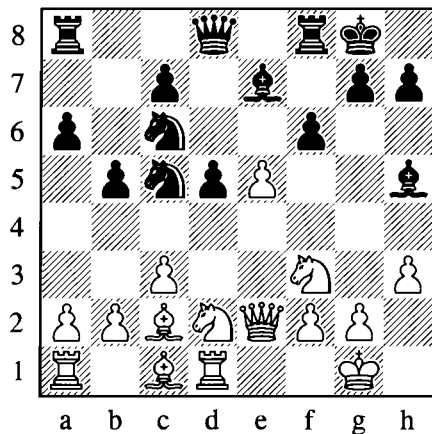
11...♞c5 12.♙c2 ♙g4

At this point we will analyse the simple developing move B1) 13.♞bd2 followed by the more critical B2) 13.b4.

B1) 13.♞bd2 f6! 14.h3

14.exf6 ♙xf6 15.♞b3 was seen in Stanchev – Dzhogov, Sofia 1945, and now Black's play can be improved by means of 15...♞e8!N 16.♙e3 ♞a4 17.h3 ♙h5 18.♟d3 ♙g6 19.♟d2 ♙h5! with an equal position.

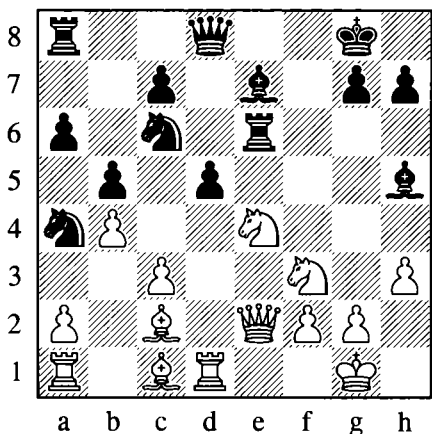
14...♙h5

**15.b4?!**

This was played in the only game to have reached the previous position, but it is inaccurate. A better continuation is 15.g4!?N ♖g6 16.♙xg6 hxg6 17.exf6 ♙xf6 18.♘b3 ♘e4 19.♙e3 ♗d6 20.♘bd2 ♗ae8 with roughly equal chances.

15...♘a4

15...♘e6!?N is also decent.

16.exf6 ♗xf6 17.♘e4 ♗e6**18.♙e3N**

I mainly analysed this new move, as it is the only real chance to justify White's previous play.

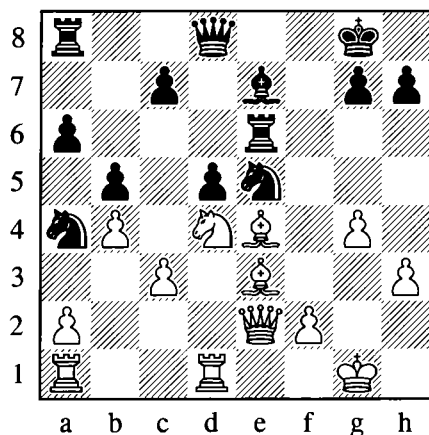
After 18.♙b3? ♘b6+ Black was clearly better in Ozsvath – Honfi, Budapest 1958.

18...♘e5 19.g4 ♙g6

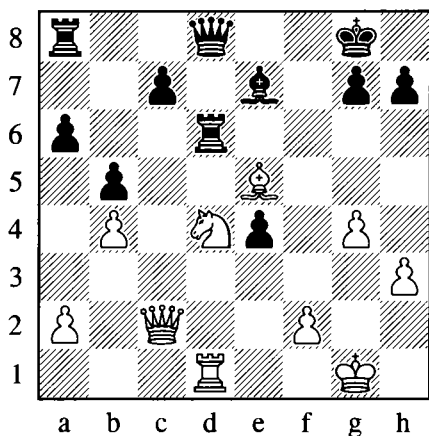
The position is becoming rather critical, but the complications slightly favour Black.

20.♘d4 ♙xe4 21.♙xe4

21.♘xe6? ♘xc3! 22.♘xd8 ♘xe2+ 23.♙f1 ♙xc2 24.♗d2 ♙d3 25.♗xd3 ♘xd3 26.♙xe2 ♘xb4 leaves Black with a decisive advantage.



21...♗d6! 22.♙f4! dxe4 23.♙xe5 ♘xc3 24.♗c2 ♘xd1 25.♗xd1

**25...e3!**

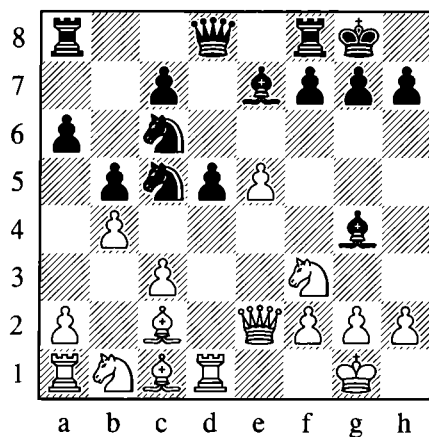
This strong move destroys White's pawn structure on the kingside. 25...♗d5? would

be a mistake in view of 26.♟b3! intending 26...♜h8 27.♞xg7† and White wins.

26.fxe3 ♞f8!

Black gives back the material and retains a better position thanks to the weaknesses in White's pawn structure.

B2) 13.b4

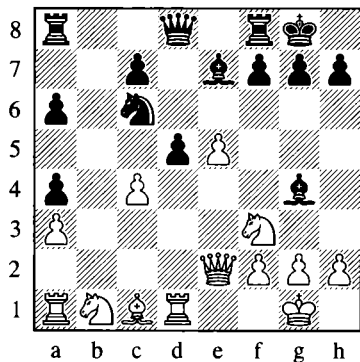


13...♞a4!

Black has no need to fear doubled pawns, as exchanging on a4 would leave White seriously weak on the light squares, especially after b2-b4 has been played.

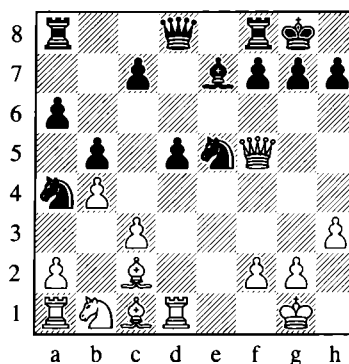
14.♞f4

14.c4?! as played in Markus – Van Buuren, corr. 1985, should not turn out well for White: 14...♞xb4!N 15.♞xa4 bxa4 16.a3 ♞c6



17.♞xd5 (In the event of 17.cxd5 I would like to correct Fracnik's analysis and offer the immediate 17...♞xe5! with a big advantage for Black.) 17...♟c8 Black's chances are higher thanks to his development advantage and bishop pair.

14.h3!? ♞xf3 15.♟xf3 occurred in Marcotulli – Lombart, e-mail 2001, and now the consistent continuation would have been: 15...♞xe5!N 16.♟f5 (16.♟h5 ♞g6 17.♞xd5 ♟e8 18.♞e3 ♟c6= and Black seizes the initiative thanks to the weakness of the c3-pawn.)

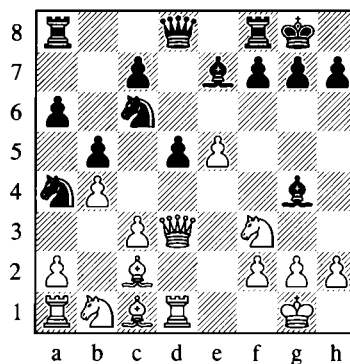


16...♞g6 17.♞xd5 ♟c8 18.♞e3 c6 19.♟xc8 ♞axc8 Black at least equalizes.

I checked one other idea for White:

14.♟d3N

This attempt to win a pawn doesn't lead to the desired result.

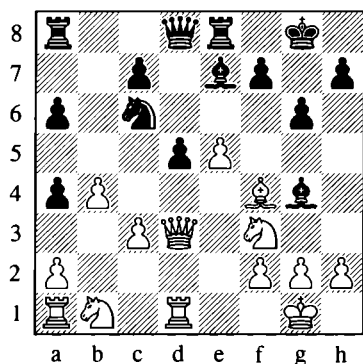


14...g6 15.♔xa4

If 15.♖xd5?! ♜xd5 16.♞xd5 ♕xf3 17.gxf3 ♘b6 Black wins back the pawn and obtains slightly better chances as pointed out by Fracnik.

15...bxa4 16.♕h6 ♞e8 17.♕f4!

17.♖xd5 ♜xd5 18.♞xd5 ♕xf3 19.gxf3 ♞ad8
20.♞xd8 ♞xd8 21.♘d2 ♘xe5†

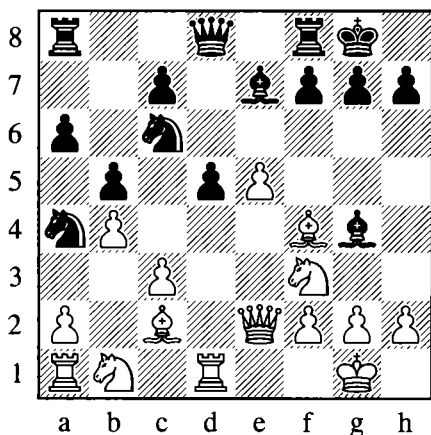


17...f6!

This move would be even stronger with the rook on f8, hence the earlier 16.♕h6 move.

18.h3 ♕f5 19.♖xd5† ♜xd5 20.♞xd5 ♞ad8!
21.♞xd8 ♞xd8 22.♘bd2 ♘xe5! 23.♘xe5 fxe5
24.♕e3 c5! 25.bxc5 ♕xc5 26.♕xc5 ♞xd2

Black is certainly not worse in this endgame.



14...♖d7!?

I find this the most natural move, even though it implies a pawn sacrifice.

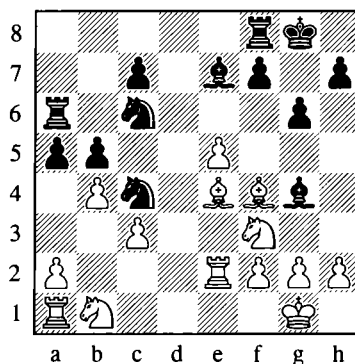
15.♖d3 g6 16.♖xd5 ♜xd5 17.♞xd5 ♘b6
18.♞d1

White's only real attempt to fight for an advantage is the untested move:

18.♞d2!N

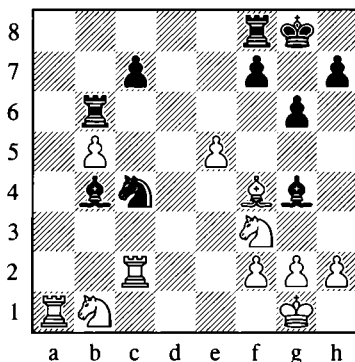
But here too Black should be okay after accurate play.

18...♘c4 19.♞e2 a5 20.♕e4 ♞a6



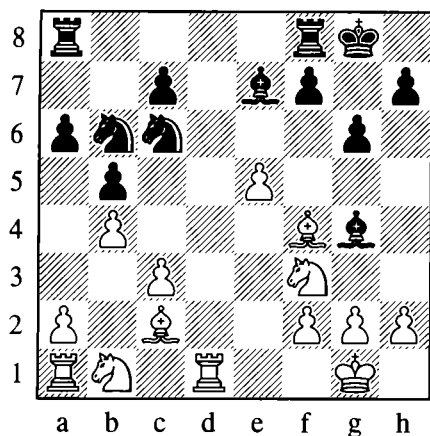
21.a4! axb4 22.♕xc6 ♞xc6 23.axb5 ♞b6
24.cxb4 ♕xb4 25.♞c2

Another nice line continues: 25.♞e4
♕e6 26.♞a4 c5! 27.bxc6 ♕d5 28.♞d4
♕xc6 29.♞a2 ♕c5! 30.♞xc4 ♞xb1† with
equality.



25...♕e6! 26.♘g5 ♕d5 27.♘c3 ♕xc3 28.♞xc3
♞xb5 29.♘e4 ♘g7

Black will have to be slightly careful due to the weak dark squares on the kingside, but he should not have too much trouble holding the endgame.



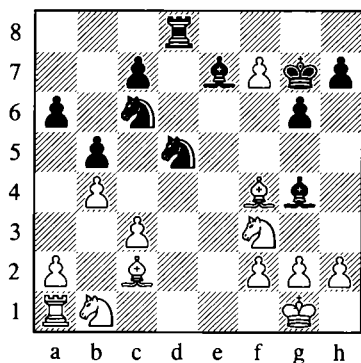
18...♞ad8! 19.♞e1

Fracnik considered this move to be dubious, though in my opinion it's better than the following alternative which Sax played against me:

19.♞xd8 ♞xd8 20.e6 ♘d5 21.exf7+ ♘g7!?

Black avoids being pinned along the a2-g8 diagonal.

Nevertheless 21...♘f7 also looks playable, and after 22.♙b3 ♙xf3 23.gxf3 ♙f6 24.♙xc7 ♞d7 Black has some initiative for the sacrificed material.

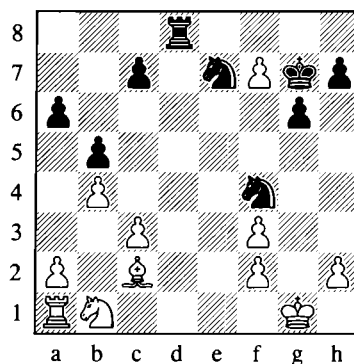


22.♙g5

22.♘e5 doesn't promise any advantage either: 22...♘cxb4! 23.cxb4 ♘xf4 24.♘g4 h5 25.♘e3 ♙f6 26.g3 ♘e6 27.♙b3 ♞d6 28.♙xe6 ♞xe6 29.♘c3 ♙xc3 30.♞c1 ♙e5= The position is equal.

22...♙xf3 23.♙xe7 ♘cxe7 24.gxf3 ♘f4!?

My idea was to keep the king in the cage. Black is also doing fine after 24...♘f5!? 25.a4 ♘h4 26.axb5 ♘xf3+ 27.♙h1 axb5 with equality.

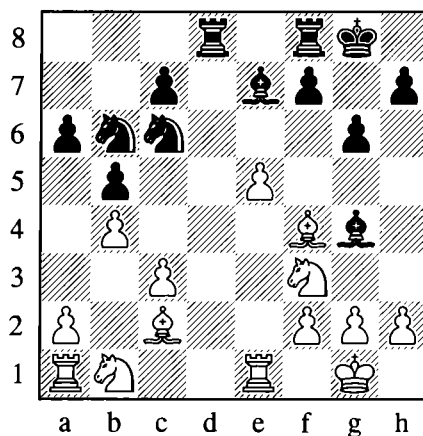


25.a4 ♘f5 26.axb5 axb5

Sax – Mikhalevski, Benasque 1993. Now White should have played:

27.♞a7N ♞d7=

With equal chances.



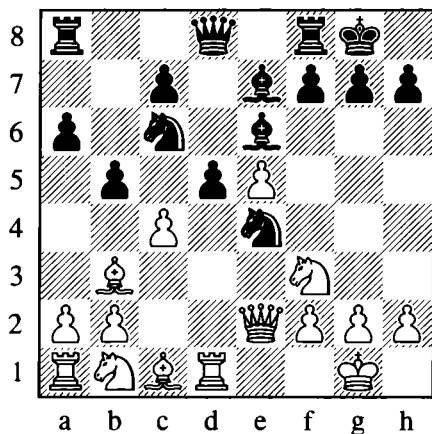
19...♘d5 20.♙h6

After 20.♙g3 f5! 21.h3 ♙xf3 22.gxf3 f4 23.♙h2 ♘h8!? a complicated position arises. Black intends ...♞fe8 and ...♙f8 to hit the e5-pawn, while White also has to worry about whether the caged bishop on h2 will ever see the light of day.

20...♞fe8 21.a4 ♙xf3 22.gxf3 ♙f8!?

Black won the e5-pawn and took over the initiative. Short – Timman, El Escorial (6) 1993.

C) 11.c4



This is the main line by far. White attempts to seize the initiative by attacking the centre.

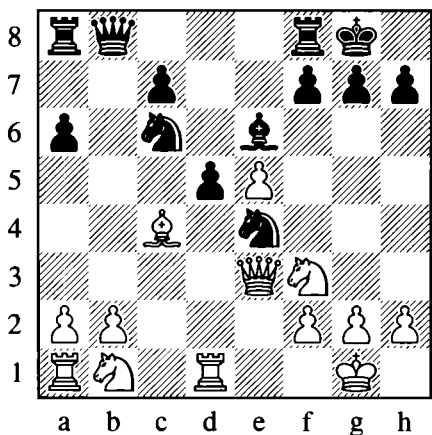
11...bxc4 12.♙xc4 ♙c5

Some alternatives have been tried, but I like this active option the most. White's next few moves are virtually forced.

13.♙e3 ♙xe3

Black deflects the queen from the defence of the b2-pawn.

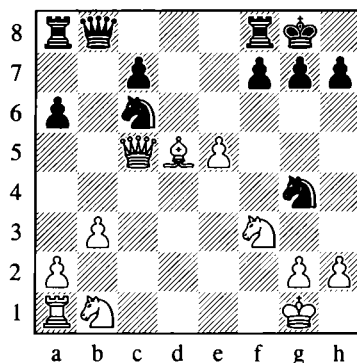
14.♞xe3 ♞b8



15.♙b3

15.♙b3?? loses to 15...♙xd5 16.♞xd5 ♞xb2 17.♞xe4 Bacholke – Grimm, Germany 2005, and now 17...♞ad8!N+ is the most precise. Black is an exchange up without allowing any compensation.

15.b3?! is questionable in view of: 15...♙xf2 16.♞xd5 (or 16.♞xf2 dxc4 and Black is a pawn up, Houtsonen – Alava, Kuopio 1992) 16...♙g4! 17.♞c5 ♙xd5 18.♙xd5



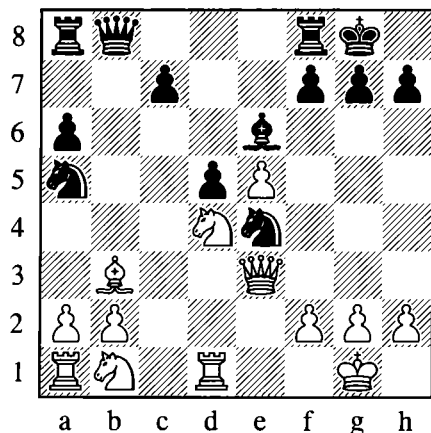
Hartmann – Oechslein, Germany 1976. Now 18...♙b4!N is strong, based on the line 19.♙xa8 ♞d8! 20.♙f1 (20.♙c3 ♙d3!–+) 20...♙d3! 21.♞e7 ♙f4! 22.♙bd2 ♞xa8 with a decisive advantage for Black thanks to the vulnerable king on f1.

15...♙a5

I prefer this over the less popular 15...♞b6. We have now reached a key juncture where White has four main options: C1) 16.♙d4, C2) 16.♙c3, C3) 16.♙e1 and C4) 16.♙bd2.

16.♙xd5 allows Black to force a draw immediately if he wishes it: 16...♙xd5 17.♞xd5 ♞xb2 18.♞d4 ♞c1† 19.♞d1 ♞b2 (If Black wants to play for a win then 19...♞xd1† 20.♞xd1 ♞fd8 leads to an equal endgame where the stronger play could win from either side.) 20.♞d4 ♞c1† ½–½ Sharif – Strobel, Skopje (Ol) 1972.

C1) 16.♞d4



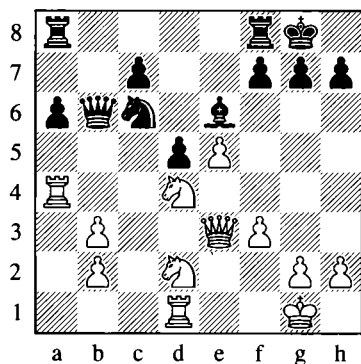
16...♟b6 17.♞f3

17.♞c3 ♞xc3 18.bxc3 occurred in Rapatinski – Beckmann, Germany 1987. Here I suggest 18...c5!?N 19.♞f3 ♞xb3 20.axb3 ♟xb3 21.♞db1 ♟c4 22.♞d2 d4 23.♞xc4 dxe3 24.♞xe3 a5 with roughly equal chances.

17...♞c5 18.♞c3N

This untested move seems to be White's best, so I promoted it to my main line.

An old game of mine continued: 18.♞d2? ♞cxb3 19.axb3 ♞c6! 20.♞a4



Lederman – Mikhalevski, Beersheba 1991. Now I should have played 20...♞b4!N 21.♞c1 a5± when Black's advantage is not in doubt.

18...♞cxb3 19.axb3 c5!

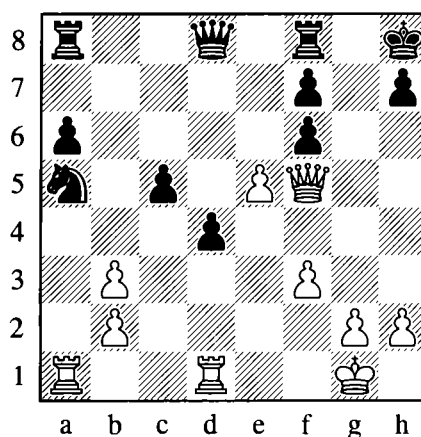
Mobilizing the c-pawn is an important theme in many Open Spanish lines, and this one is no exception.

20.♞f5

I also analysed 20.♞xd5 ♖xd5 21.♞f5 ♖e6 22.♞d6 ♟b5 23.♞xg7 ♜xg7 24.♟g5† ♜h8 25.♟f6±= with a perpetual.

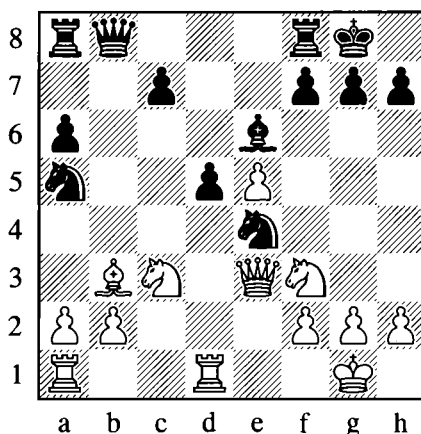
20...d4! 21.♟g5 ♖xf5 22.♞d5 ♟d8 23.♞f6† ♜h8 24.♟xf5 gxf6

Now White has nothing better than forcing a draw.



25.♞xa5! ♟xa5 26.♟xf6† ♜g8 27.♟g5†= The game ends in perpetual check.

C2) 16.♞c3

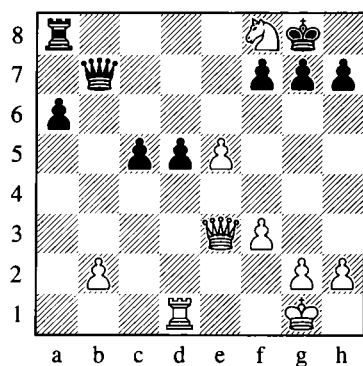


With this rare move White gives up a pawn in the hope of developing an initiative, but the idea does not cause Black many problems.

16...♖xb3 17.axb3 ♖xb3 18.♘d4 ♖b7
19.♘a4
19.f3

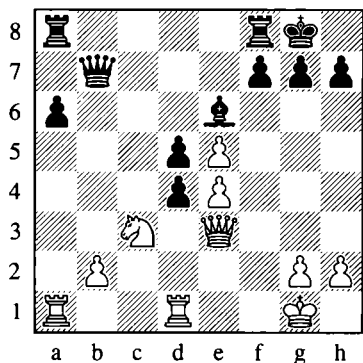
This move was played in Gajsin – Vokarev, Ekaterinburg 2008, and here I found a nice new idea:

19...c5!?N 20.fxe4
20.♘xe6 ♘xc3 21.♘xf8 ♘xd1 22.♙xd1



22...c4!= The knight on f8 is trapped and so the position is equal.

20...cxd4

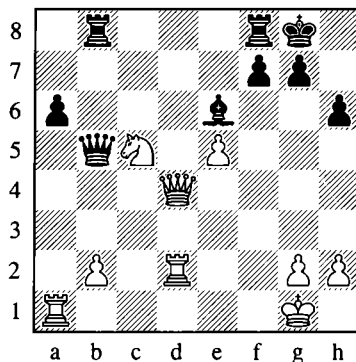


21.♙xd4

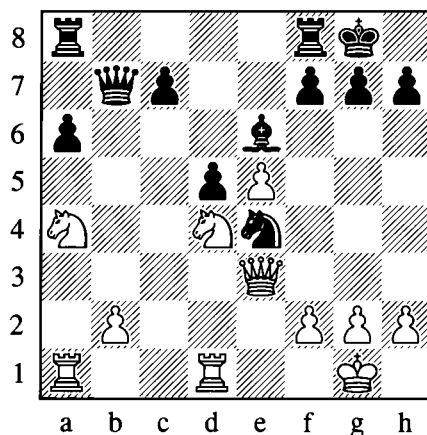
21.♙xd4 dxe4 22.b4 ♖c7! 23.♘xe4 (23.♙xe4 ♙ac8 is also good for Black.) 23...♙xe5 24.♙a5 ♖c7 25.♙c5 ♖e7 26.♘d6 ♖f6 and Black isn't worse.

21...dxe4 22.♘xe4 ♙ab8 23.♙d2 h6 24.♘c5 ♖b5

The position is equal, for example:



25.h3 ♙fd8! 26.♙xd8† ♙xd8 27.♙xd8† ♖h7
28.♘xe6 fxe6 29.♙d6 ♖xb2 30.♙axa6 ♖c1†
31.♖h2 ♙f4†=



19...♙d7! 20.♘b3?!

20.f3 ♙xa4 21.♙xa4 ♘c5 22.♙a3 ♙fe8 is also preferable for Black.

20...♙xa4 21.♙xa4 ♙fe8 22.♙a3 ♘d6!

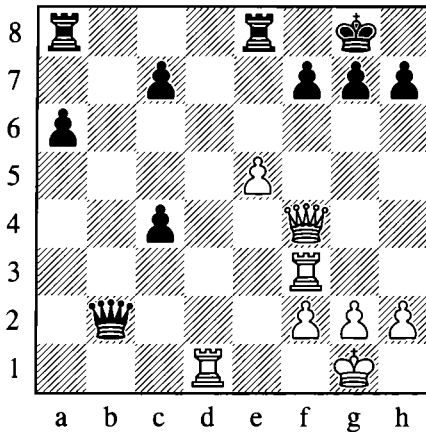
A simple but nonetheless pleasing manoeuvre.

23.♙f4 ♘c4 24.♘a5 ♖xb2

Also in Black's favour is 24...♘xa5!?N 25.♙xa5 c6+ with the ideas of ...♖xb2 and ...♖c7.

25.♟xc4 dxc4 26.♞f3

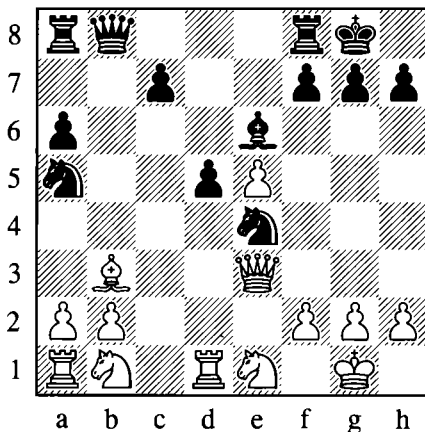
Jakel – Mikhalevski, Antwerp 1999. Here I should have played:

**26...c3!N**

Black is better, for instance:

**27.♞xf7† ♔h8 28.♞g3 ♞g8 29.♞f1 c2
30.♞c4 ♞ad8 31.♞c3 ♞d2 32.e6 h6**

The endgame is complex but more dangerous for White.

C3) 16.♟e1

White creates a threat of f2-f3 while the knight eyes the d3-square.

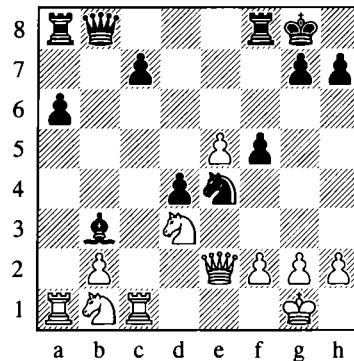
16...♟xb3 17.axb3 f5!

Black's idea is to meet 18.f3 with 18...f4 saving the knight.

18.f3

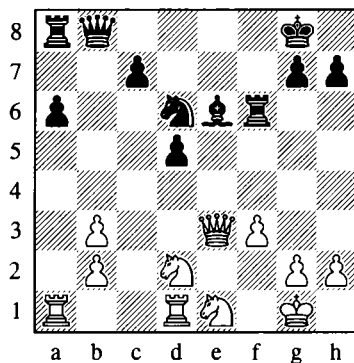
This has been tested in some correspondence games and has made a plus score for White, but it hardly presents any problems for Black. I checked three other moves as well:

18.♟d3 d4! 19.♞e2 ♟xb3 20.♞c1 Brenjo – Iordachescu, Zlatibor 2007. Now I would like to improve upon Black's play with:



20...♞d8N 21.♟d2 ♟d5 22.♞c2 c5! with slightly better chances.

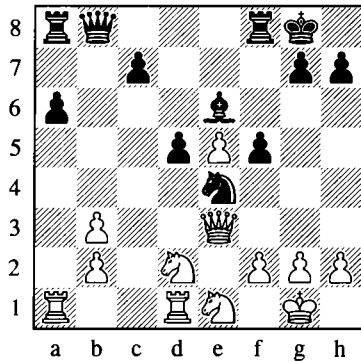
18.exf6 has been White's most common move, but it seems toothless: 18...♞xf6 19.f3 ♟d6 20.♟d2



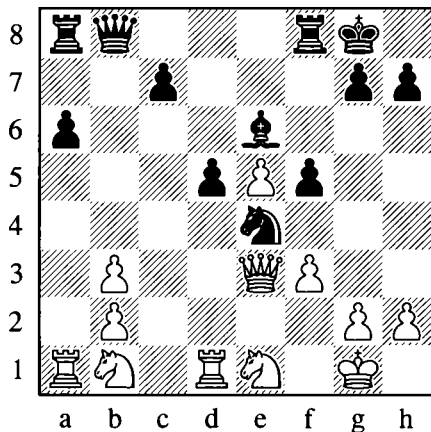
20...♟f5 21.♞ac1 ♟b5 22.♟f1 c6! Black's pieces were doing a better job of controlling

the important squares in Azarov – Golod, Ohrid 2001.

Finally 18.♖d2!? was played in Norzold – Goth, corr. 1985, and here I found a modest improvement:



18...♙b5N 19.♙ac1 ♙ac8 20.♖ef3 c5 21.♖xe4 dxe4 22.♙d6 ♙xb3 23.♖g5 ♙xe3 24.fxe3 ♙b3 25.♙c3 h6 26.♖xe4 fxe4 27.♙xb3 ♙b8= with a roughly equal endgame.

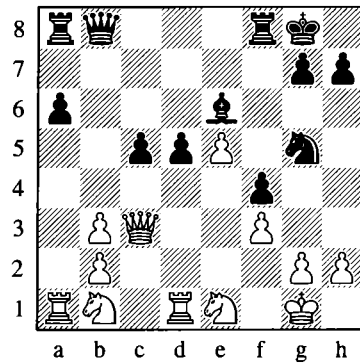


18...f4 19.♙d4 c5 20.♙d3 ♖g5 21.♙c2

21...♙xa6? is poor: 21...♙xa6 22.♙xa6 This was Pierquin – Mathieu, corr. 1977, and now the simple 22...♙xb3N 23.♙e2 ♖f5! vacating the e6-square for the knight leads to a virtually decisive advantage for Black.

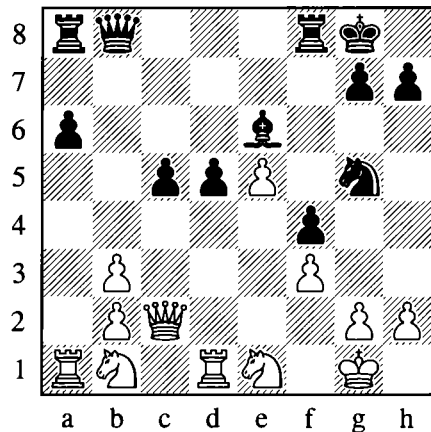
21.♙c3 occurred in Miriello – Casabona, corr.

1980. Here I would like to improve Black's play with the following natural idea:



21...♙c8!N 22.♖d3 d4 Followed by ...♙xb3 and Black is better.

The text move was played in Oechslein – Preinfalk, corr. 1977. At this point Black could have obtained a comfortable advantage with:



21...♙c8!N 22.♖d3 ♖f5! 23.♙d2 d4! 24.♙xf4 ♖xd3 25.♙xd3 ♖f7!

Black wins back the pawn and keeps some advantage.

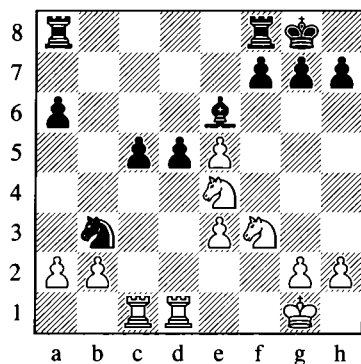
C4) 16.♖bd2

This position has been known since 1948! White is fighting for the c5-square.

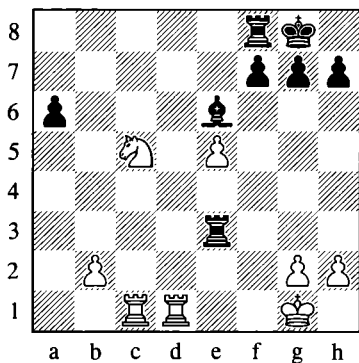
16...♖a7

Korchnoi's idea – Black intends to simplify into an equal endgame. At this final branching point we will analyse four main options: C41) 17.♖e2, C42) 17.♞d4, C43) 17.♞xe4 and C44) 17.♖xa7.

17.♞ac1 ♖xe3 18.fxe3 c5 19.♞xe4 ♞xb3

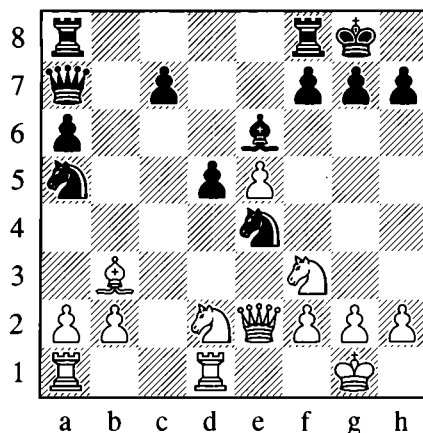


20.axb3 (20.♞f6† gxf6 21.axb3 fxe5 22.♞xe5 ♞fb8 23.♞xc5 ♞xb3 24.♞d3 a5= Black advances the pawn to a5 and equalizes.) 20...dxe4 21.♞d2 ♞ab8 22.♞xe4 ♞xb3 23.♞xc5 ♞xe3



24.♞xa6 (24.♞e1 ♞xe1† 25.♞e1 ♞b8= Mrdja – Vocaturo, Turin 2008.) 24...♞xe5 We have arrived at a surprising transposition to a line given in the note to White's 18th move in line C44 – see 17.♖xa7 ♞xa7 18.♞ac1 c5 19.♞xe4 ♞xb3 20.axb3 dxe4 21.♞d2 e3 22.fxe3 ♞b7 23.♞e4 ♞xb3 24.♞xc5 ♞xe3 25.♞xa6 ♞xe5 on page 266.

C41) 17.♖e2

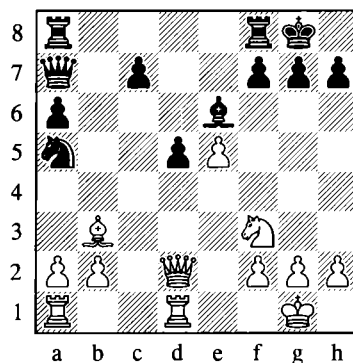


17...♞xd2 18.♞xd2

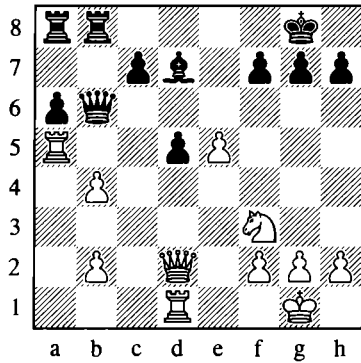
I checked the two other captures as well:

18.♞xd2 ♞xb3 19.axb3 c5 20.♞g5 h6 21.♞xe6 (21.♞f3 ♞fb8† Lichtenstein – Elyakim, corr. 1990.) 21...fxe6 The exchange on e6 has strengthened Black's pawn centre. 22.♖g4 Johansen – Pyrich, corr. 1990. 22...♖b6N Black is better thanks to his superior pawn structure.

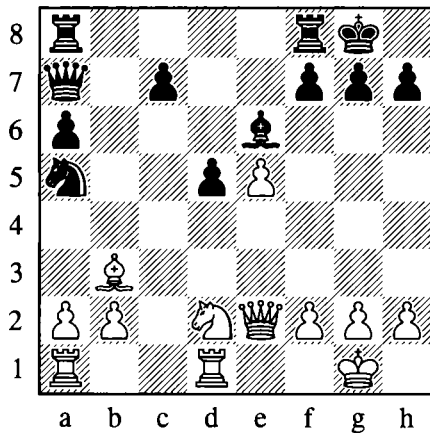
18.♖xd2 Moreno Ramos – Heller, corr. 1983.



18...♞xb3!N Black should eliminate the bishop before it drops back to c2, which would give White some play on the kingside. 19.axb3 ♞fb8 20.b4 ♖b6 21.♞a4 ♕d7 22.♞a5



At this point Black has a pleasant choice between repeating the position with 22...♞e6 23.♞a4 ♞d7, and playing for a win with 22...c6!? 23.♞a4 ♞g4.



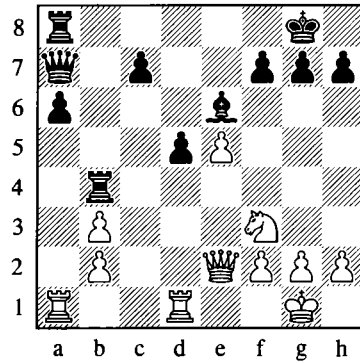
18...♞f8!N

Improving over 18...♞b6 as played in Berndt – Stockfleth, Germany 1989. With the text move Black prepares the advance of the c-pawn and claims the upper hand, as shown in the following lines.

19.♞d3

White wants to retreat the bishop to c2, but he will not get the chance.

19.♞f3 attacks the d5-pawn, preventing ...c5 for the moment. 19...♞xb3 20.axb3 ♞b4! Taking the b3-pawn gives White some initiative thanks to his pressure along the c-file.

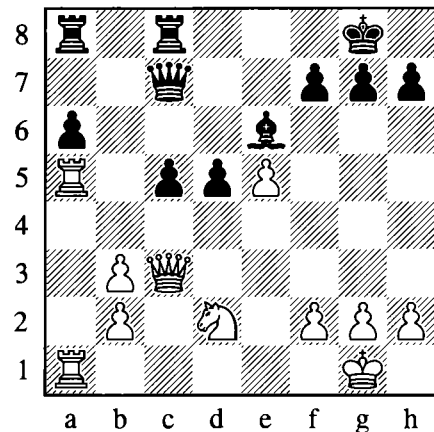


21.♞d3 h6! After preventing ♞g5 Black is ready to apply pressure along the b-file. 22.♞a4 ♞xa4 23.bxa4 c5 Black's advantage is obvious.

19...♞xb3 20.axb3

20.♞xb3 c5

20...c5 21.♞a5 ♞c7 22.♞c3 ♞c8 23.♞da1



23...h6!?

Again this move is useful, and here it comes with the following idea:

24.♞xa6

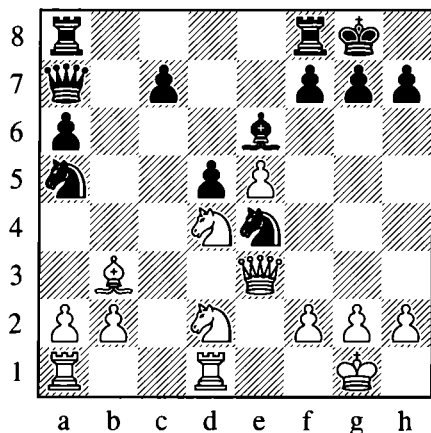
24.♞c1?? loses to 24...d4! 25.♞xc5 ♞b7-+.

24...♞xa6 25.♞xa6 d4 26.♞g3 ♞b7

White's extra pawn is irrelevant here and he faces an unpleasant endgame.

27.♞a1 ♞a8 28.♞c1 ♞a2

C42) 17.♞d4



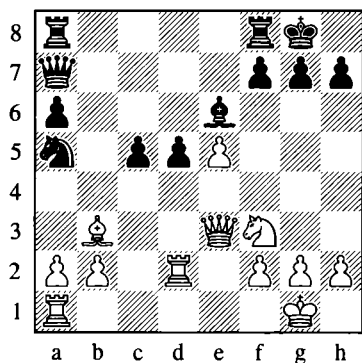
17...♞xd2 18.♖xd2

Taking with the rook is dubious:

18.♞xd2?! c5 19.♞f3?!

Objectively White should prefer 19.♞xe6 fxe6 20.♞c2 g6+ as in Guedon – Marzolf, Metz 2011. We have encountered similar positions already, and here too Black's chances are higher thanks to his better pawn structure.

This position occurred in Ivanovic – Beckemeier, West Berlin 1988. At this point Black could have safely won some material:



19...d4!N 20.♖e4 ♕xb3 21.♞g5 g6 22.♖h4 h5 23.♞e4

23.g4? doesn't work in view of the simple

23...♞d5 24.gxh5 ♞c4 25.♞e2 ♖e7+.

23...f5!

Perhaps this is the detail that Black overlooked in the aforementioned game.
24.♞f6+ ♞xf6 25.exf6 ♞e8!+

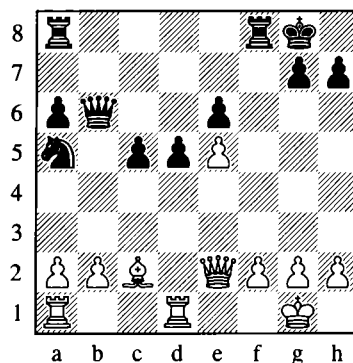
18...♖b6

Black protects the knight and prepares 19...c5.

19.♞c2

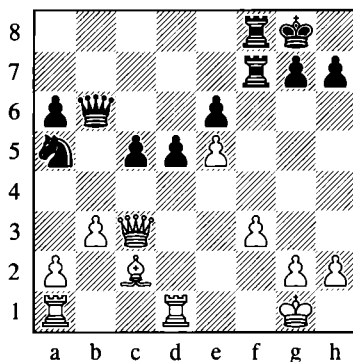
White has tried some other moves, but in all cases advancing the c-pawn offers Black at least an equal game.

19.♖e2 c5 20.♞xe6 fxe6 21.♞c2



Janosevic – Haag, Birmingham 1975. Now Black has a number of good options, for example: 21...♞f7N 22.b3 g6 23.♖e3 ♞c6+

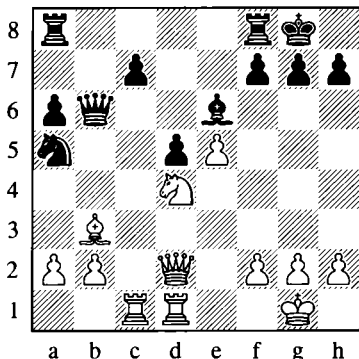
19.♖c3 c5 20.♞xe6 fxe6 21.♞c2 ♞a7 22.b3 ♞af7 23.f3



In this position a draw was agreed in Romanishin – Luczak, Polanica Zdroj 1980, but I think Black has good reason to continue the game, for example: 23...c4† 24.♙h1 ♖c7

19.♞ac1

This is better than the two previous alternatives, though Black is still doing fine.

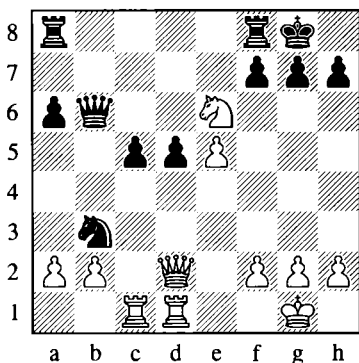


19...c5! 20.♘e6

20.♘f3?! makes no sense. 20...♘xb3 21.axb3 Patrici – Muttoni, corr. 1981, and now after the simple 21...♞ab8N 22.♞c2 ♞fc8 23.♘g5 g6 Black is better.

20...♘xb3!

20...fxe6 can be met by 21.♙xd5! exd5 22.♞xd5† ♙h8 23.♞xc5 ♞xc5 24.♞xc5 ♘b7 25.♞c7 when White's pawns are at least a match for Black's knight.



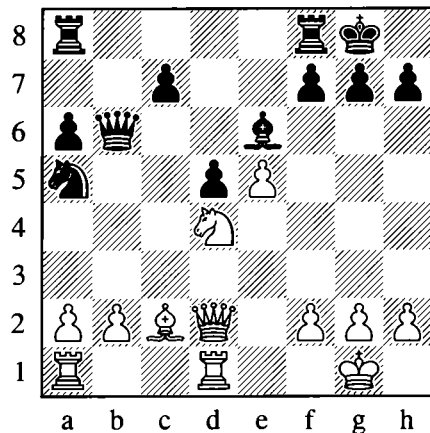
21.♞xd5

White should avoid 21.axb3?! fxe6 as played in Corby – Garcia Vicente, corr. 1981. The

exchange on e6 has improved Black's pawn structure and given him some advantage, just as in several other variations in this chapter.

21...♘xc1 22.♘xf8 ♘e2† 23.♙f1 ♞xf8 24.♘xe2 ♞xb2†

The position was equal and a draw was soon agreed in Donnelly – Lilloni, corr. 1971.

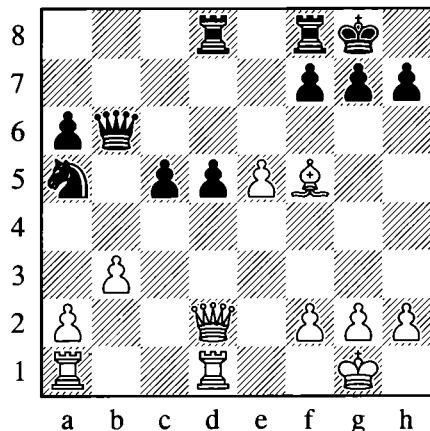


19...c5 20.♘f5

As usual, 20.♘e6?! fxe6 only helped Black in Cowling – Touw, corr. 1997.

20...♙xf5 21.♙xf5 ♞ad8 22.b3

After 22.♞e1 ♘c6! 23.♞ad1 ♘d4 24.♙b1 a5 the strong position of the knight on d4 promises slightly better chances for Black, Jansa – Stean, Vrsac 1979.



22...♞fe8! 23.♞e1 c4

23...g6!?=

24.♟g5 ♟c7 25.e6 f6 26.♟h4 g6 27.e7

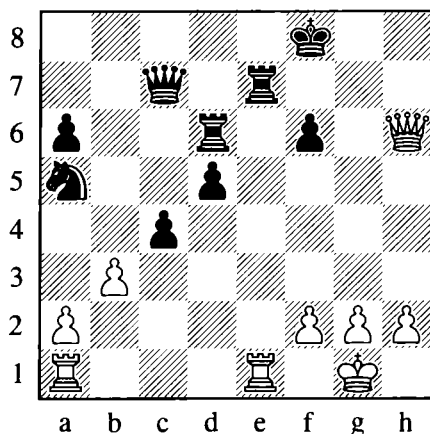
27.♞c2 ♜g7 is also equal.

27...♞d6 28.♟g3!?

A risky but (barely) playable attacking move.

The safer 28.♞e6 leads to equality: 28...♞xe6 29.♞xe6† ♜g7 30.♞xd5 cxb3 31.axb3 ♟c5! 32.♟a4 ♞xe7 33.♞c4 ♜xc4=

28...♞xe7 29.♞xg6 hxg6 30.♟xg6† ♜f8 31.♟h6†



31...♞g7

Black can take an immediate draw with 31...♜g8, as White can hardly avoid the repetition.

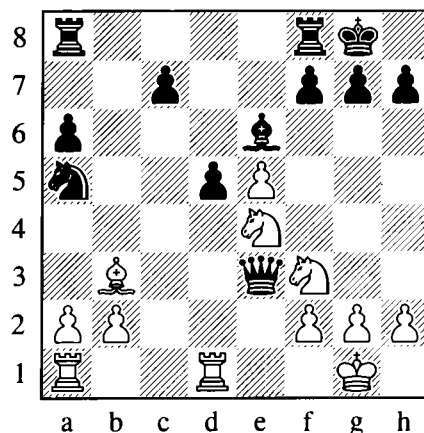
32.♞e3 f5!

Kavalek – Karpov, Montreal 1979. Now White should have continued:

33.♟h3N

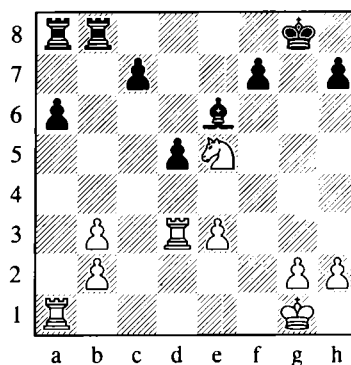
Although after accurate play his attack will only yield him a draw at best.

C43) 17.♜xe4 ♟xe3

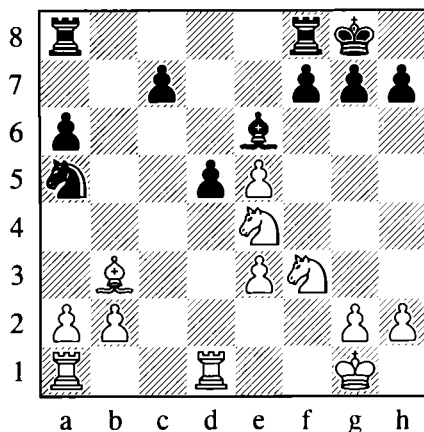


18.fxe3

18.♜f6† isn't dangerous: 18...gxf6 19.fxe3 ♜xb3 20.axb3 fxe5 21.♜xe5 ♞fb8 22.♞d3

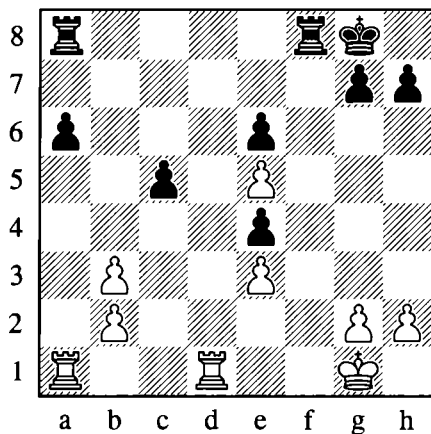


Carrasco – Pimenta, Metz 1998. Now Black's play can be improved by means of 22...♞b6!N 23.♞c3 c5! 24.♜f2 d4 with equality.



18...♖xb3 19.axb3 dxe4 20.♖d4 c5
21.♖xe6 fxe6

The double-rook endgame can be compared with variation C44 below, the only differences being the positions of the black rook on a8 instead of a7 and the white pawn on e3 instead of f2. Although the latter might seem like a weakness for White, in some lines it might favour him as the pawn on f2 can become weak. In the coming variations we will see Black relying on two key plans to secure equality: the timely exchanging of one pair of rooks, and the activation of his king via f7 and g6.



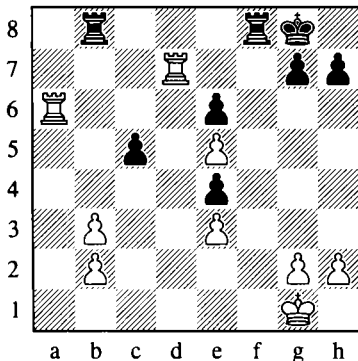
22.♖d6

22.♖d7

This continuation occurred only once in Czarnota – Landa, Cappelle la Grande 2005. Now Black can play:

22...♖ab8!?N 23.♖xa6

23.♖a3 ♖fd8 24.♖xd8† (or 24.♖d6 ♖xd6
25.exd6 ♖f7 26.♖xa6 ♖xb3=) 24...♖xd8
25.♖xa6 ♖f7=



23...♖f7!

An important intermediate move, which fully equalizes.

24.♖d2 ♖xb3 25.♖e2 ♖fb7 26.♖xe6 ♖xb2
27.♖xb2 ♖xb2 28.♖c6 ♖e2 29.♖xc5 ♖xe3
30.e6 ♖f8 31.♖c7

31.♖c8† ♖e7 32.♖c7† ♖xe6 33.♖xg7 h6
34.♖g6† ♖f5 35.♖xh6 ♖a3 is equal. The only way for White to avoid the perpetual is to move his king away from the e-pawn, which is dangerous only for him.

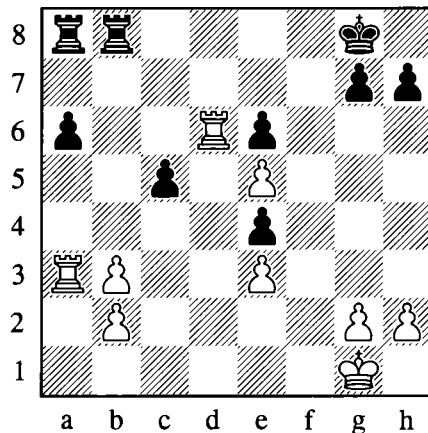
31...♖a3 32.♖f7† ♖g8 33.♖f4 e3 34.♖f1 ♖a6
35.e7 ♖a8=

Followed by ...♖e8 with a dead draw.

22...♖fb8 23.♖a3

23.♖xe6 ♖xb3 takes most of the tension out of the position and led to a quick draw in the following game: 24.♖exa6 ♖xa6 25.♖xa6 ♖xe3 26.e6 ♖f8 27.♖a7 ♖b3 28.♖f7† ½–½ Mansson – Wheeler, corr. 2001.

After the text move we arrive at a position that can also be reached via a 20...♖fb8 move order. Black is under only mild pressure, and can secure a draw with a few accurate moves.



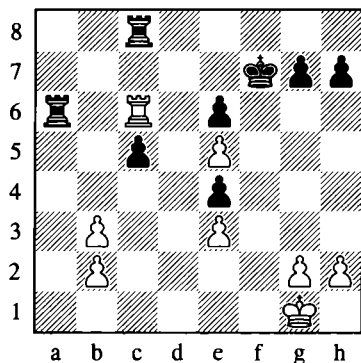
23...♖f7! 24.♖f2

White has tested two other moves.

24.♖c6 ♖c8!?N

Black has numerous paths to equality, one example being 24...♞b5 25.♔f2 a5 as in Manzini – Javarone, corr. 1984. Nevertheless, exchanging one pair of rooks seems to be the easiest method.

25.♞axa6 ♞xa6

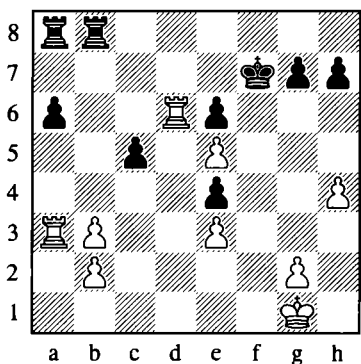


26.♞xc8

26.♞xa6 ♞b8=

26...♞b6 27.♞xc5 ♞xb3=

24.h4



24...♞d8!?

The same idea as in the 24.♞c6 line above. Black exchanges a pair of rooks and secures the draw without difficulty.

24...a5!?N also deserves attention, with the point that 25.♔f2 ♞a7 26.♔g3 c4 transposes to the main line below.

25.♞c6 ♞dc8!N

25...♞d5= is another solution which led to an

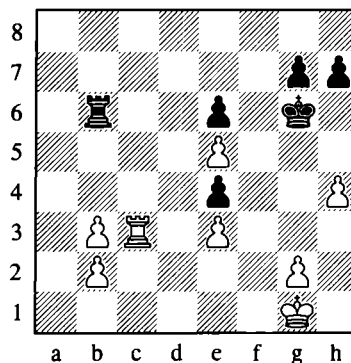
eventual draw in Yudovich – Omelchenko, corr. 1982.

26.♞axa6 ♞xa6 27.♞xc8

Or 27.♞xa6 ♞b8 28.♞a3 ♔g6! 29.g4 h5 and Black is fine.

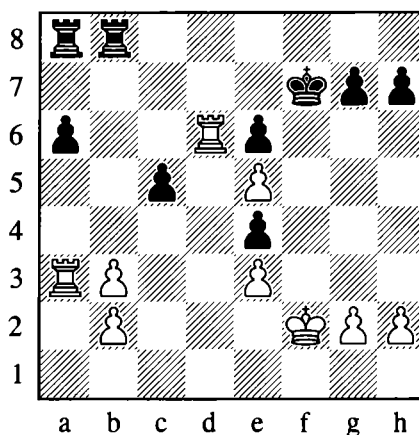
27...♔g6 28.♞xc5 ♞b6 29.♞c3

29.♞c4 ♞xb3 30.♞xe4 h5! is an easy draw.



29...h5! =

Despite White's two extra pawns he cannot make progress, as his king needs to remain on the kingside to protect his pawns there.



24...♞a7!

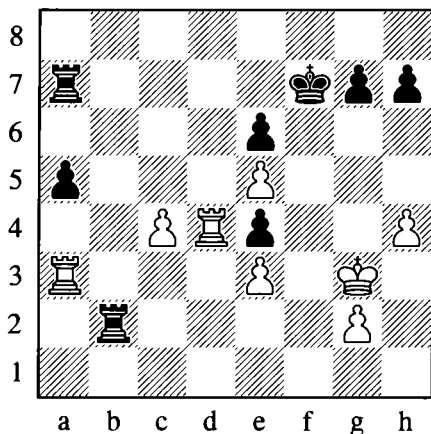
Black guards the seventh rank and prepares to double rooks along the b-file.

25.♔g3 a5 26.h4 c4! 27.bxc4 ♞xb2 28.♞d4

In the event of 28.h5!? ♞c2 29.♞d4 Black solves his problems with: 29...g6! 30.♞xe4

gxf5 Now the king gains access to g6. 31.♖a4
 ♔g6 32.♞f4 ♞f7 33.♞xa5 ♞xf4 34.exf4 ♔f5
 35.♞a7 h4†!=

The main move was played in Gdansk –
 I. Sokolov, Neum 2000. Now Black's most
 accurate continuation is:



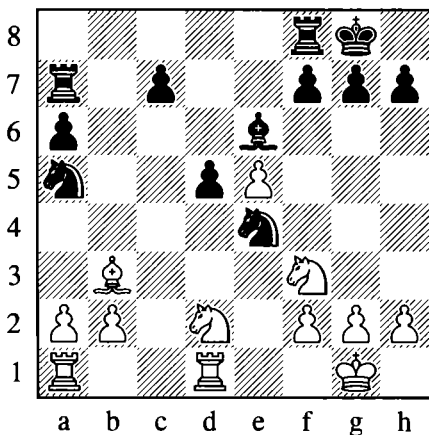
28...♔g6!N

With the following point:

29.♞xe4 ♔f5 30.♞d4 ♔xe5

Black cannot be worse.

C44) 17.♞xa7 ♞xa7



18.♔xe4

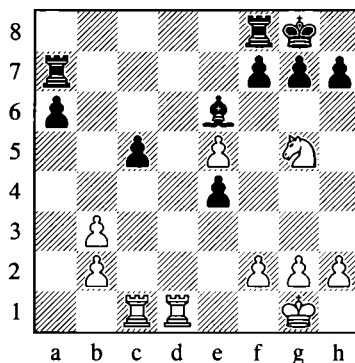
This leads to a slightly different version of
 the endgame we encountered in variation C43
 above. Again Black should have few problems
 as long as he plays carefully.

A harmless alternative is 18.♔d4 ♔xd2
 19.♞xd2 c5 20.♔e2 (20.♔xe6? fxe6 improves
 Black's pawn structure as usual, and after
 21.g3 ♞b8 he was clearly better in Mueller –
 Mikhalevski, Berlin 1994.) 20...♔xb3 21.axb3
 ♞b8 with a roughly equal position in Sanz
 Alonso – Naranjo Moreno, Santa Cruz de
 Tenerife 2006.

Another pretty tame continuation is:

18.♞ac1 c5 19.♔xe4 ♔xb3 20.axb3 dxe4 21.♔g5
 21.♔d2 e3 22.fxe3 ♞b7 23.♔e4 ♞xb3
 24.♔xc5 ♞xe3 25.♔xa6 ♞xe5 is equal and
 the players agreed a draw a couple of moves
 later in Matanovic – Korchnoi, Sukhumi
 1966. (The same position can also arise via
 the rare 17.♞ac1 move order, as noted earlier
 on page 259.)

The main move was played in Svernn – Comp
 WChess, Sweden 1995. Now I would like to
 recommend:



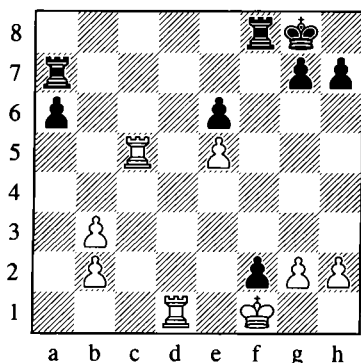
21...e3!N

With the idea to damage White's pawn
 structure.

22.♔xe6

22.fxe3 ♔xb3 23.♞d6 c4 is equal.

22...exf2† 23.♔f1! fxe6 24.♞xc5



24...♞f4!

Black transfers the rook to the b-file, which should lead to simplifications and a draw.

For example:

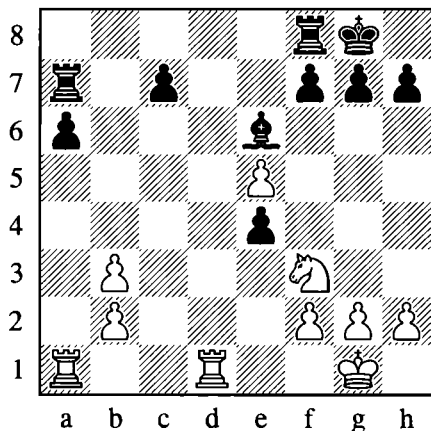
25.♞d6 ♖f7 26.♞cc6 ♞b7 27.♞xa6 ♞fb4!
28.♞d2 ♞xb3 29.♞xf2† ♖e7 30.♞a2 ♞b5
31.♞e2 ♖f7=

The king comes to f5 and White's chances of converting his extra pawn are virtually nonexistent.

18...♜xb3 19.axb3

19.♜f6†!N is an interesting new idea, although after 19...gxf6 20.axb3 ♖g7 21.exf6† ♖xf6 Black's broken kingside is balanced by the weakness of White's b-pawns so Black should not have too many problems.

19...dxe4



20.♜d4

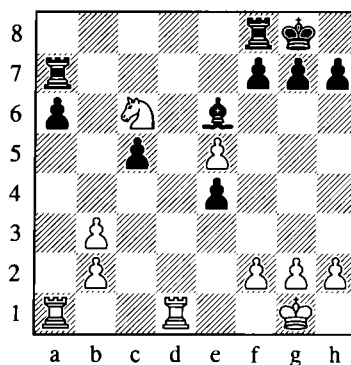
20.♜d2 occurred in Ravi – Gokhale, Kolkata 1999. Now Black could have equalized comfortably with 20...e3!N 21.fxe3 h6! followed by attacking the weak pawns on the b- and e-files.

20...c5 21.♜xe6

It is also worth considering:

21.♜c6!?

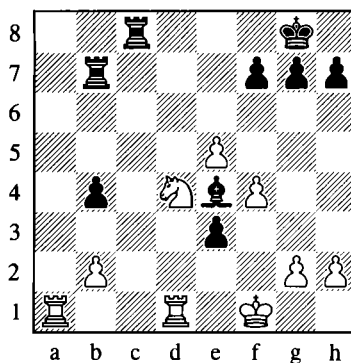
Now Black has a choice.



21...♞c7!?

21...♞b7 22.b4! White closes the b-file.
22...cxb4 23.♞xa6 ♕c4 24.♞a5 ♕d3 25.f4!?

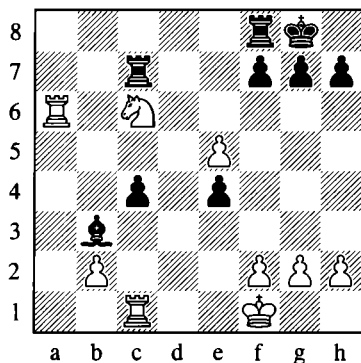
♞c8 26.♜d4 e3 27.♞aa1 ♕e4 28.♖f1



Now I would like to improve upon Radulski – Erdos, Warsaw 2010, with: 28...g5!N
29.fxg5 ♞e7 30.♞ac1 ♞xc1 31.♞xc1 ♞xe5
32.h4 ♕b7! =

22.♞xa6 ♕xb3 23.♞c1 c4 24.♖f1

24.♖b6 allows Black to equalize with 24...g6 followed by ...♗e8.

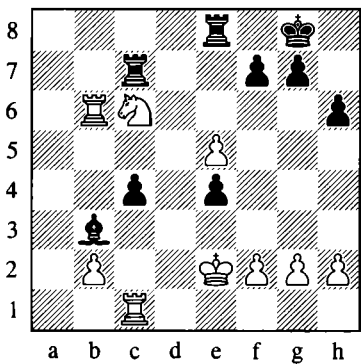


24...h6

24...g6!?N also makes sense.

25.♖b6 ♗e8 26.♔e2

I tried to improve upon White's play with 26.♔d4!?N, but Black seems to hold after 26...♗a2!? 27.e6! (27.♖a6 is met by 27...♗d7! =) 27...fxe6 28.♔b5 ♖cc8 29.♔c3 ♗b3 30.♔xe4 ♖b8! and the counterattack against b2 promises equal chances.



26...♗d7! 27.♔a5

27.♔e3 ♗d3† 28.♔xe4 ♗d2 =

27...♖xe5 28.♖b8† ♔h7 29.♔xc4 ♗xc4† 30.♖xc4 f5!

Black equalized in Lelenko – Armani, e-mail 2001.

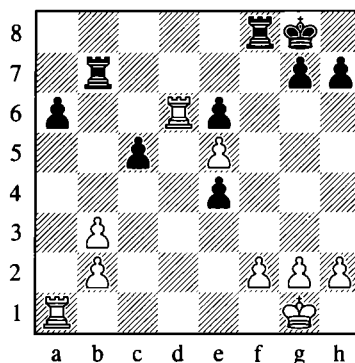
21...fxe6

We have arrived at a well-known rook endgame in which Black has little to fear.

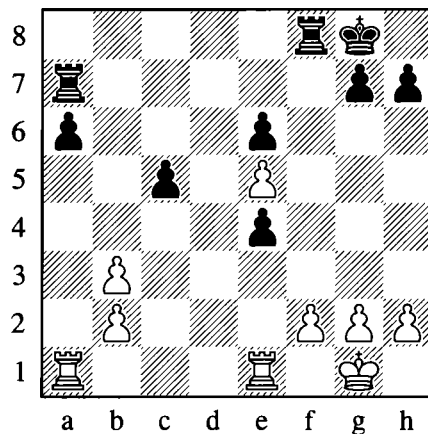
22.♗e1

22.♗a5?! is dangerous only for White: 22...♗af7! 23.♖f1 e3 24.f3 ♖b7 25.♖xa6 ♖xb3 26.♖xe6?! (26.♖b1 is a better defence, but Black's chances are still higher after 26...c4 27.♖c6 ♖f4 28.♔f1 ♗d4.) 26...♖xb2 27.♗e1 ♗a8 White was in trouble and failed to hold the position in Chiburdanidze – Chekhov, Riga 1980.

A decade ago I faced 22.♗d6 in Svendsen – Mikhalevski, Biel (rapid) 2002. Now 22...♖b7!?N seems to be the easiest route to equality, for instance:

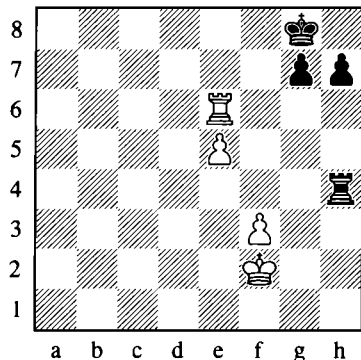


23.♖xe6 ♖xb3 24.♗a2 e3 25.fxe3 ♖xe3 26.h4 ♗e2 27.♖exa6 ♖ff2 28.♗a8† ♔f7 29.♖8a7† ♔f8 30.♖a8† =



22...♖b8 23.♖a3 ♖ab7 24.♖xa6

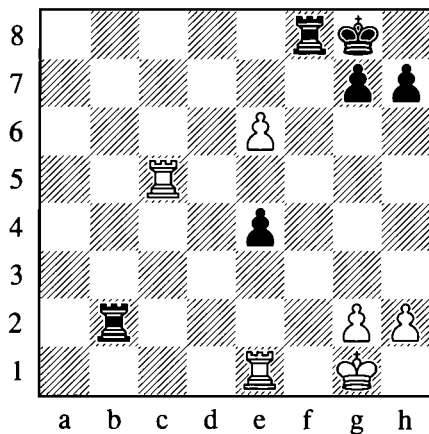
I also analysed: 24.♞e3 c4! 25.bxc4 ♞xb2
26.h4 ♞f8 27.f3 exf3 28.♞xf3 ♞xf3 29.gxf3
♞c2 30.♞xa6 ♞xc4 31.♔f2 ♞xh4 32.♞xe6



32...♞f4! 33.♔e3 ♔f7! 34.♞a6 g5= and a draw
could be agreed.

24...♞xb3 25.♞xe6 ♞xb2 26.♞c6 ♞f8 27.e6
♞xf2 28.♞c8† ♞f8 29.♞xc5

Boada Llombart – Velker, corr. 2005. Now I
would like to offer the simple solution:



29...h6!?!N

Taking away the g5-square. The finish might
be:

30.e7 ♞e8 31.♞xe4 ♞b7 32.♞ce5 ♔f7=

With a dead draw.

Conclusion

9.♟e2 is not quite considered one of the
'absolute' main lines against the Open Spanish,
but in conjunction with 10.♞d1 it constitutes
quite a potent weapon which Black must take
seriously. The main line of this chapter led to
a tricky endgame requiring a good level of
technical accuracy. Both sides will face their
own challenges, but it seems to me that Black's
position continues to hold up well.

Chapter 16

Main Lines



9.c3 – Introduction

Variation Index

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4
6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6 9.c3

9...♙c5

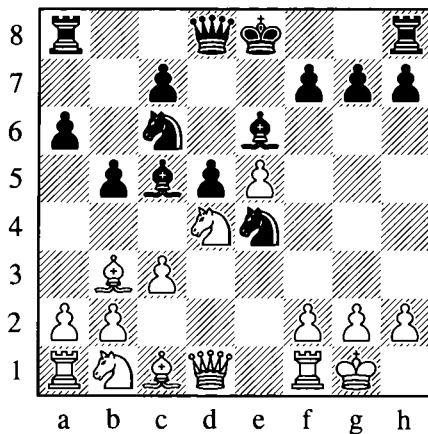
A) 10.♘d4?!	271
B) 10.a4	272
C) 10.♙f4?!	272
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E) 10.♚e2	275
F) 10.♚d3 0-0	277
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F12) 12.exf6	278
F2) 11.♘bd2 f5 12.exf6 ♘xf6	281
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G) 10.♘bd2 0-0	290
G1) 11.♘xe4	291
G2) 11.♚e2 ♙f5	292
G21) 12.a4	292
G22) 12.♘xe4	293

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♘xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6
9.c3 ♙c5

White has tried a lot of different moves here. From the present position the absolute main line is 10.♘bd2 0-0 11.♙c2, which will receive dedicated coverage in the next chapter. Over the following pages we will analyse all of White's significant alternatives, arranged as follows: A) 10.♘d4?!, B) 10.a4, C) 10.♙f4?!, D) 10.♙c2, E) 10.♙e2, F) 10.♙d3 and G) 10.♘bd2 (without 11.♙c2).

10.♙e1 is seldom seen, although after 10...0-0 11.♙e3 f6 12.♘bd2 ♘xd2 13.♙xd2 we transpose to a branch of the 10.♙d3 line – see variation F11 on page 278.

A) 10.♘d4?!



This pawn sacrifice is dubious.

10...♘xe5 11.a4

11.♙e1N is refuted by 11...♙h4! 12.g3 ♙f6 13.f4 ♘g4 14.♙xd5 ♙xd5 15.♙xg4 0-0.

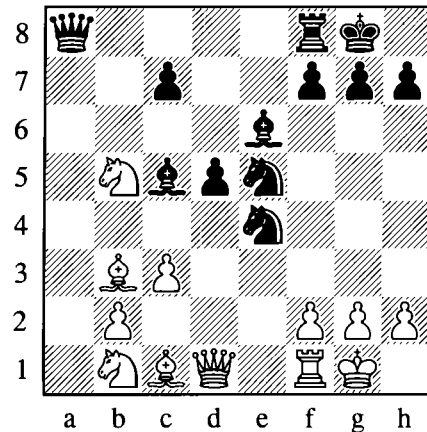
After 11.♙h5 as in Piana – De Francisci, Bratto 2006, Black can keep his extra pawn with 11...♙xd4N 12.cxd4 ♘d3.

I also checked 11.♘d2N ♘xd2 12.♙xd2 0-0 13.♘xe6 fxe6 14.♙e2 ♙f6 15.♙ae1 ♘c4 and

Black keeps some advantage.

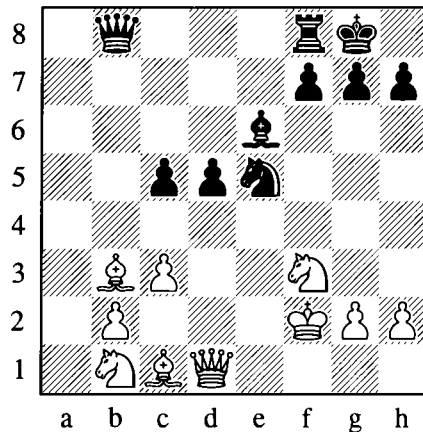
11...0-0 12.axb5 axb5 13.♙xa8 ♙xa8
14.♘xb5

White regained his pawn in Metger – Weiss, Frankfurt 1887, but both players missed the following point:



14...♘xf2!N 15.♙xf2 ♙xf2† 16.♘xf2 ♙b8
17.♘d4 c5 18.♘f3

After 18.♘xe6 fxe6† 19.♘g1 c4 20.♙c2 h5!→ White's position is more than difficult.



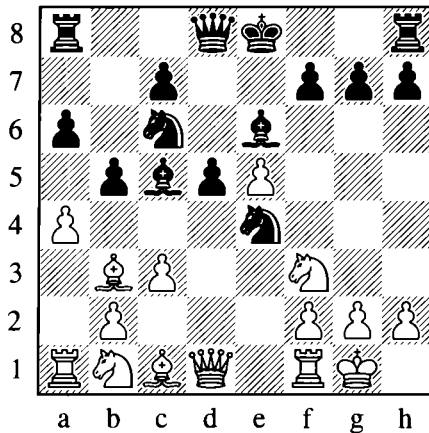
18...♘xf3! 19.♘xf3

A sad necessity.

19...d4! 20.♘d2 ♙xh2

White has little chance of saving the game.

B) 10.a4



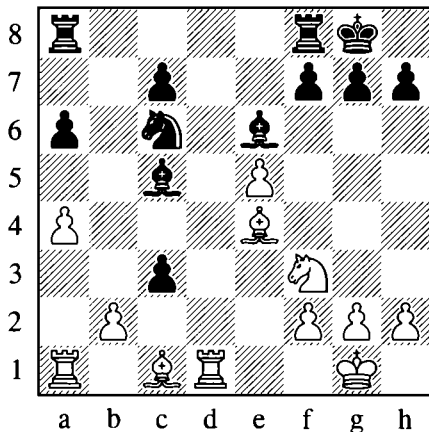
This hardly sets Black any problems either.

10...0-0 11.♘bd2

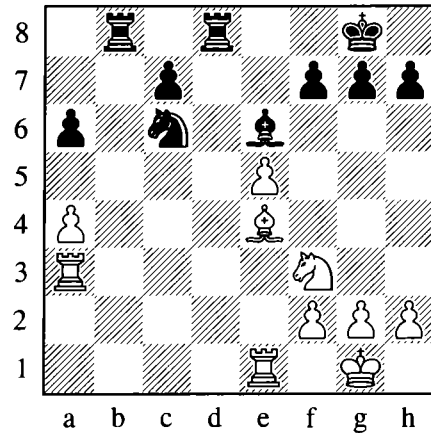
11.axb5 axb5 12.♞xa8 ♜xa8 does not achieve much for White, since 13.♙xd5? loses to 13...♘xf2! 14.♞xf2 ♞d8 15.♘d4 ♞xd5+ as seen in Virostko – Macionis, Moravka 1994.

11...b4 12.♙c2 bxc3 13.♘xe4 dxe4 14.♙xe4 ♜xd1 15.♞xd1

The ensuing endgame should be equal, as demonstrated by the following sequence.

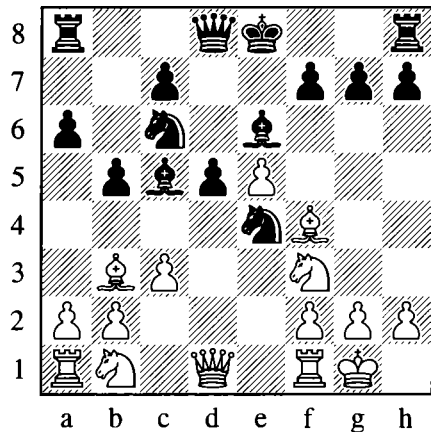
15...♞fd8! 16.♞e1! cxb2 17.♙xb2 ♞ab8!
18.♙a3 ♙xa3 19.♞xa3

Kupreichik – Mikhalchishin, Lvov 1988.
Now I offer a simple improvement:

19...♘d4!N 20.♞c3 ♘xf3† 21.♙xf3 ♞d4
22.a5 ♞b5 23.♞xc7 ♞xa5

Black is fine.

C) 10.♙f4?!



This provocative move is dubious.

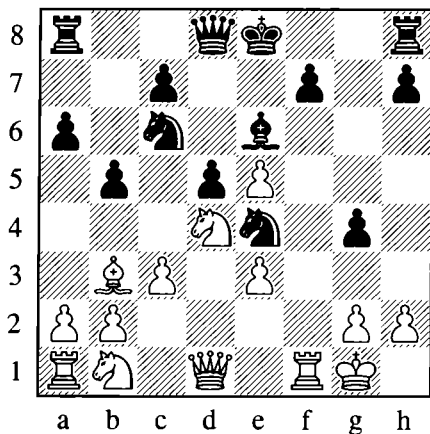
10...g5! 11.♙e3

After 11.♙g3? h5+ White already has no good defence, for instance 12.♘d4 h4 13.♘xc6 (13.♙xh4 ♙xd4+) 13...hxg3 and Black soon won in Richter – Barnes, Frankfurt 1887.

11...♙xe3 12.fxe3 g4

This wins a pawn, although that is not the end of the story as Black also weakens his kingside. Let's see how he should deal with that issue.

13. ♖d4



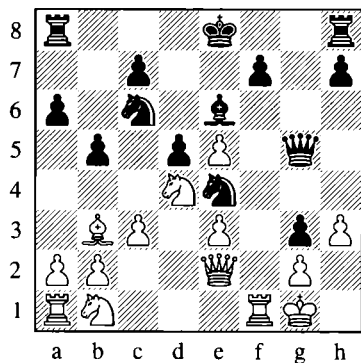
13...g3!N

A surprising and strong novelty. It turns out that the knight on c6 is untouchable.

14. h×g3

14. ♖xc6? is refuted by 14...gxh2† 15. ♖xh2 (15. ♖h1 ♖g3† 16. ♖xh2 ♖h4† 17. ♖g1 ♖g4 18. ♖d3 ♖e2†–+) 15... ♖h4† 16. ♖g1 ♖g8! with a decisive attack.

Another nice line continues: 14. h3 ♖g5! 15. ♖e2 (Or 15. ♖xc6 ♖xe3† 16. ♖h1 ♖f2† 17. ♖xf2 gxf2 18. ♖d2 ♖g8! 19. ♖f3 ♖e4!† with the idea of ...♖xh3.)



15... ♖g4!! 16. ♖f3 ♖xf3 17. gxf3 ♖f2 18. ♖xd5 ♖h6! Black keeps the better chances.

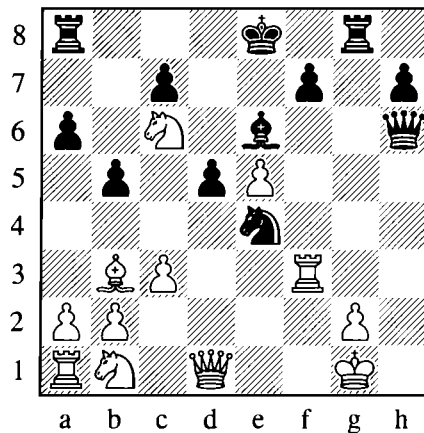
14... ♖g5! 15. ♖xc6?

White should prefer 15. ♖f4 although 15... ♖xe5 leaves Black on top.

15... ♖xe3† 16. ♖h2

16. ♖h1 ♖xg3† 17. ♖h2 ♖e2!–+

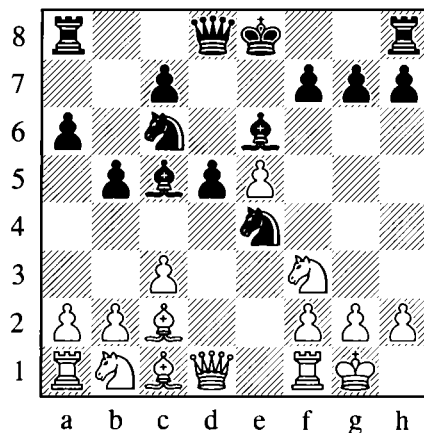
16... ♖xg3† 17. ♖g1 ♖e3† 18. ♖h2 ♖g8 19. ♖f3 ♖h6† 20. ♖g1



20... ♖g4!–+

Followed by ...♖h4 with decisive threats.

D) 10. ♖c2

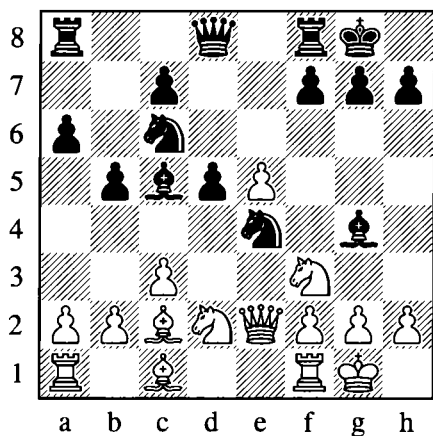


10...0-0 11.♖e2

11.♖bd2 leads to the main line as examined in the next chapter. Against the text move I would like to introduce a surprising pawn sacrifice.

11...♙g4! N 12.♖bd2

After 12.♙xe4 dxe4 13.♗xe4 ♙xf3 14.gxf3 ♗d7 Black has a strong initiative, for example: 15.f4 ♖ae8 16.♙e3 (or 16.♖d2 f6 17.♖f3 ♗g4† 18.♖h1 ♖xe5!?) 16...♙xe3 17.fxe3 f6 Black regains the pawn with better chances.

**12...♖xe5 13.♖xe4 ♖e8!?**

This leads to interesting complications which eventually peter out to equality.

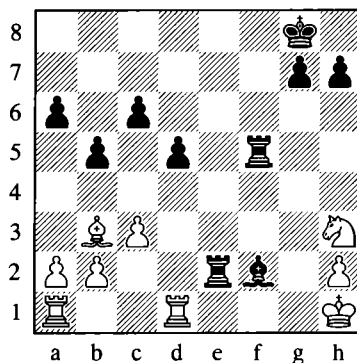
The safe and simple alternative is 13...♙xf3 14.gxf3 dxe4 15.♗xe4 (15.♙xe4 ♖e8=) and here the straightforward 15...♖g6 and the more striking 15...♗h4!? are both good enough for equality.

14.♖d1 f5! 15.♙g5 ♖xf3† 16.gxf3 ♗xg5 17.♖xg5

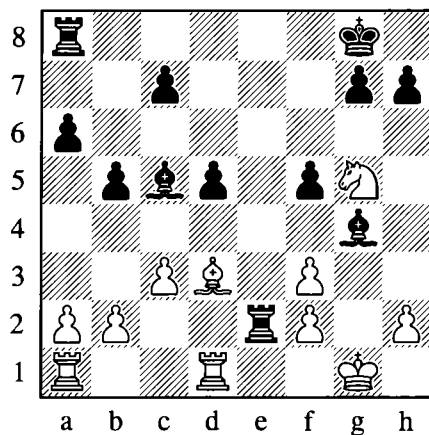
17.fxg4?! dxe4 18.♖d5 ♗e7 19.♖xf5 g6 20.♙b3† ♖h8 21.♖f7 ♗h4 is slightly better for Black due to the vulnerability of White's king.

17...♖xe2 18.♙d3

18.♙b3 c6 19.fxg4 ♖f8! 20.gxf5 ♖xf5 21.♖h3 ♙xf2† 22.♖h1



22...♙g3! 23.hxg3 ♖h5 24.♖e1 ♖xh3† 25.♖g1 ♖xg3† 26.♖f1 ♖xb2 27.♖e8† ♖f7 28.♖c8 ♖f3† Black has a minimum of a draw, although I expect most players would try for more.

**18...♙xf2†!?**

18...♖xf2 19.fxg4 ♖e8 is an easy route to a draw.

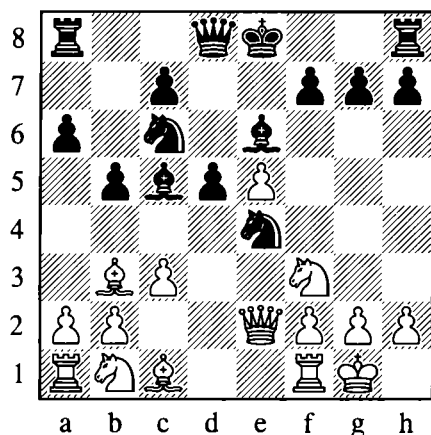
19.♖h1

19.♖f1? ♖xb2 20.fxg4 ♙e3 is dangerous for White.

19...♖e3! 20.fxg4 ♙h4! =

Black traps the knight and equalizes.

E) 10.♖e2



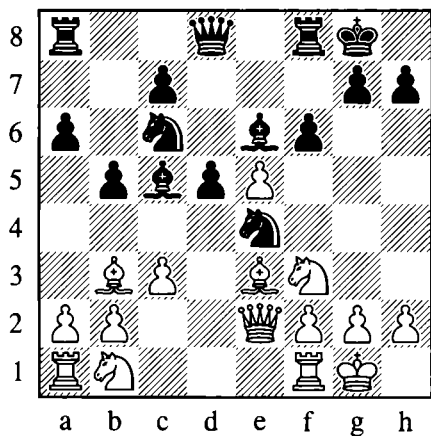
The idea of this move is to prepare to exchange the dark-squared bishops by means of ♗e3.

10...0-0 11.♗e3

11.♗e2 transposes to variation D above, while 11.♖bd2 transposes to the later variation G2 on page 292.

11...f6!

Black begins his standard counterplay.

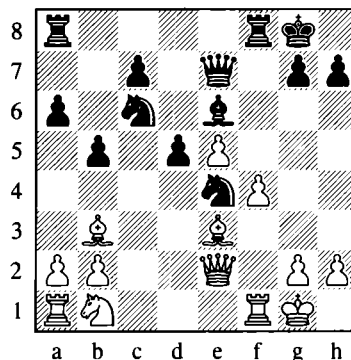


12.exf6

12.♖bd2 ♖xd2 13.♖xd2 reaches a position that will be examined under the 10.♖d3 move order – see variation F11 on page 278. Apart

from that there are two other moves worth considering:

12.♖d4 ♗xd4 13.cxd4 fxe5 14.dxe5 ♖e7 15.f4 After 15.♖c3 ♖xc3 16.bxc3 ♖xe5 17.♗d4 ♖c4 18.♗xc4 dxc4 a draw was agreed in Gligoric – Unzicker, Oberhausen 1961, although Black could have played on for a while without risking anything.

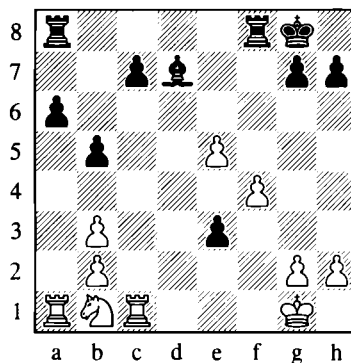


15...♖c5!N

15...♗ad8 gave Black a reasonable position in Mascarinas – Shanmugam, Singapore 2010, but the text move enables him to fight for the initiative.

16.♗c1 ♖xb3 17.axb3 ♖d7 18.♖c2 d4! 19.♖xc6 dxe3 20.♖xd7 ♗xd7

White faces some difficulties in the endgame, for instance:



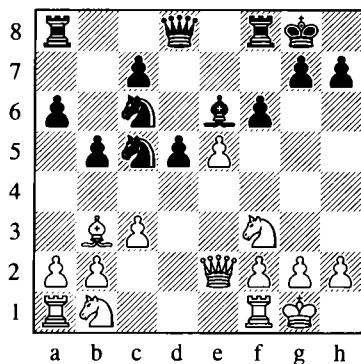
21.g3

21.♗xc7 ♗e6 22.♖c3 ♗xf4+ 21...b4!

Black has better chances thanks to the misplaced knight on b1.

Another harmless continuation is:

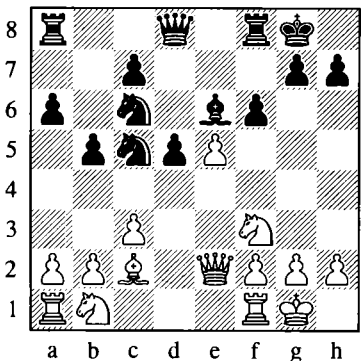
12.♙xc5 ♘xc5



13.♙c2

13.exf6 ♗xf6 is slightly better for Black thanks to his lead in development and active pieces.

13.♘bd2 occurred in Simacek – Virostko, Czech Republic 1999, and now I would like to offer 13...♞e8!N (13...♙f7!N is equally good) 14.exf6 ♙f7 15.♗d1 ♗xf6 16.♙c2 ♞ad8 with the more comfortable position for Black.



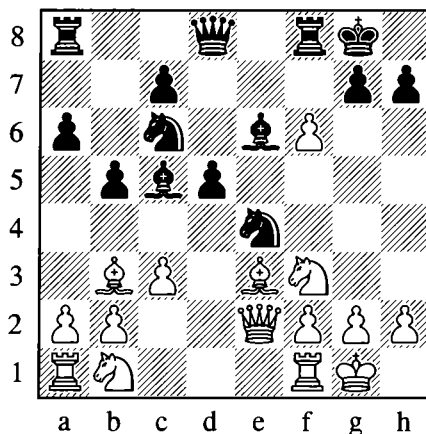
13...d4!N

Breaking through in the centre.

This is much better than the slow 13...♗e7?! as played in Van Leent – Nieuwelink, Vlissingen 2001.

14.cxd4 ♘xd4 15.♘xd4 ♗xd4 16.exf6 ♙c4!
17.♗d1! ♗xf6

Black has the initiative.

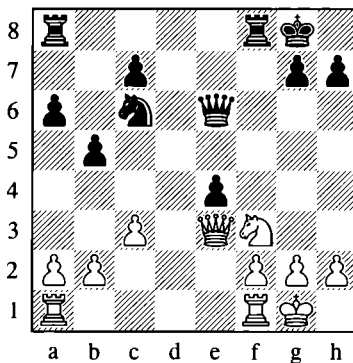


12...♗xf6 13.♘bd2 ♙xc3 14.fxex3!N

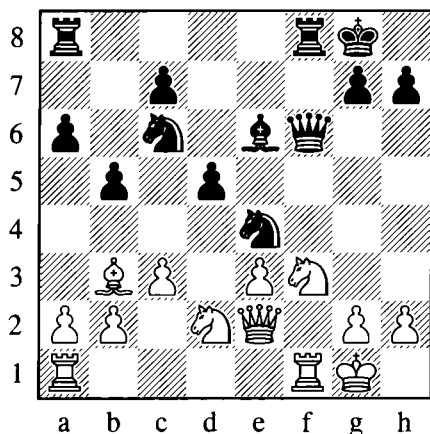
I decided to check this interesting new approach for White.

14.♗xe3 reaches a position from variation F12 beginning with 10.♗d3; see page 280 for the continuation from move 14.

The alternative is: 14.♘xe4 dxe4 15.♙xe6† ♗xe6 16.♗xe3



16...♗g6! Black has at least enough activity to make up for the isolated e-pawn. Play may continue 17.♘d2 (or 17.♘d4 ♘e5!) 17...♞ae8 with the idea of ...♘e5.



14...Wh6!

Black has to be slightly careful; the e3-pawn is not really weak, and White can try targeting the queenside. Fortunately the problems are not serious, and I found a convincing path to an equal endgame.

15.a4 Qa5! 16.Qc2 Qxd2 17.Qxd2 Qc4 18.axb5 axb5 19.Bxa8 Bxa8 20.Qxc4 bxc4 21.e4 Bf8=

Black is in no danger here.

F) 10.Qd3

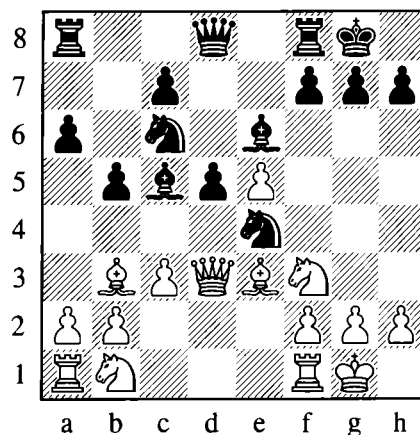
This has been White's second most popular choice in the position. The queen move prepares the ideas of 11.Qe3 to exchange the dark-squared bishops, and Qbd2 to challenge the e4-knight without blocking the queen.

10...0-0

At this point we reach an important division between F1) 11.Qe3 and F2) 11.Qbd2.

11.a4?! is too slow, and in Vadla – Gazarek, Zagreb 1997, Black missed a chance to seize the initiative with 11...f6!N 12.exf6 Bxf6 13.Qe3! (White has no time for 13.axb5? due to 13...Qe5!-+) 13...Qxe3 14.Bxe3 Qa5! with slightly better chances.

F1) 11.Qe3



11...f6

Here the main options are F11) 12.Qbd2 and F12) 12.exf6.

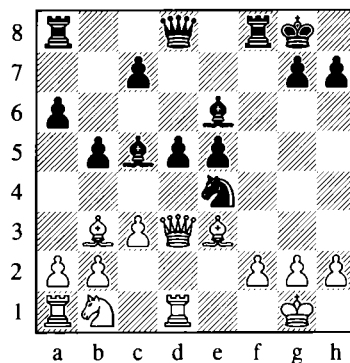
12.Bd1

This move from the game Cizek – Haba, Karvina 1986, can be strongly met by:

12...Qxe5!N 13.Qxe5

Or 13.Bxe4 dxe4 14.Qxe6+ Qh8 15.Bxd8 Bxd8 16.Qd4 Qc6! 17.Qd2 Qxd4 18.cxd4 Qxd4 19.Qxd4 Bxd4 with an endgame advantage for Black.

13...fxe5



14.Bxe4

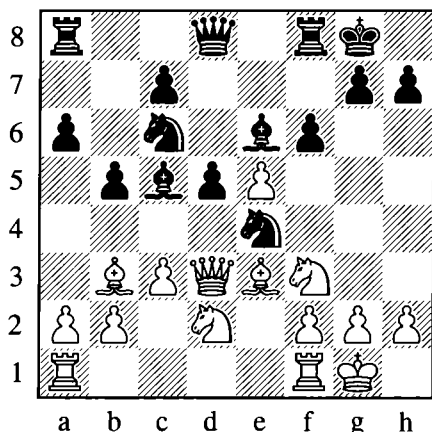
After 14.Qxd5? Qxd5 15.Qxc5 Qxc5 16.Bxd5+ Bxd5 17.Bxd5 Bxd8! Black is much better as White has no time to finish

development without suffering material losses.

14...dxe4 15.♙xe6† ♚h8 16.♖xd8 ♜axd8
17.♙g4 ♙xe3 18.fxe3 ♞d3

The endgame is slightly better for Black.

F11) 12.♘bd2



12...♘xd2 13.♞xd2

This position can arise via the 10.♞e2 and 10.♞e1 move orders as well.

13...♙xe3 14.♞xe3 ♘xe5 15.♘xe5 fxe5
16.♞xe5 ♞d7

The immediate 16...♙f7!?N with the idea of ...c5 also makes sense.

17.a4

17.♞fe1 occurred in Almasi – Gyimesi, Kecskemet 1993. Now I would like to offer 17...♞ae8N 18.a4 ♙f7 19.♞d4 ♞d6 followed by ...c5 with an equal position.

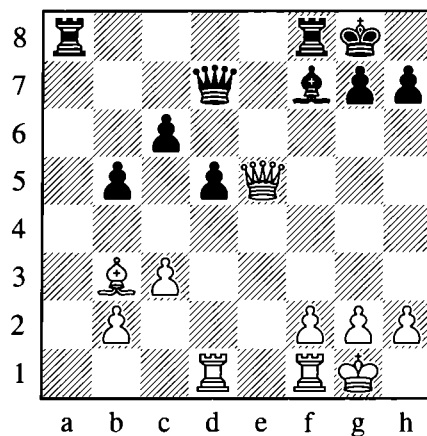
17...♙f7 18.axb5 axb5 19.♞ad1

19.♙c2 c5 20.♙f5 ♞c6=

19...c6=

Black is absolutely fine. There is one potential nightmare scenario with all major pieces exchanged, white king on d4 and pawn on b4, but Black would have to make some serious

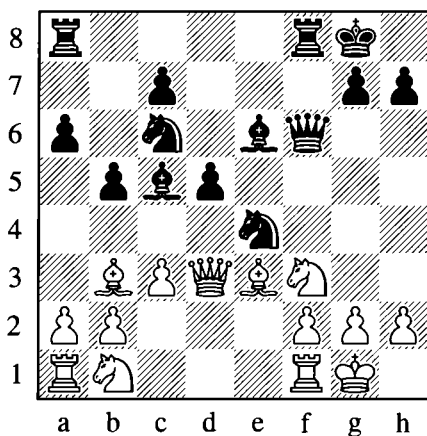
mistakes for all that to happen. We will follow a top-level game which reached this position.



20.♙c2 ♞fe8 21.♞d4 ♞a2 22.♞d2 ♞d6
23.b4 ♞a3 24.♞c1 ♙g6

A draw was agreed here in Shirov – Anand, Mallorca 2004, although by this stage Black has slightly the more comfortable position.

F12) 12.exf6 ♞xf6



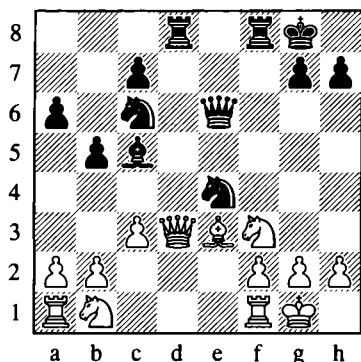
13.♘bd2

It is important to note that grabbing the d5-pawn is dubious for White:

13.♙xd5?! ♞ad8! 14.♙xe6†

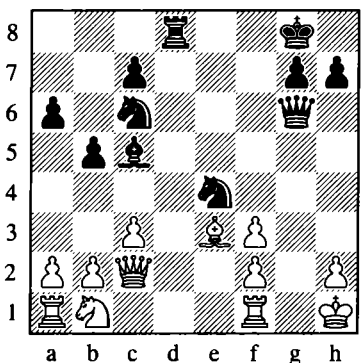
14.♙xc5 ♘xc5 15.♙xe6† ♘xe6 16.♞c2 ♘f4
17.♘bd2 ♘e5! leaves Black with a strong initiative.

14...♖xe6

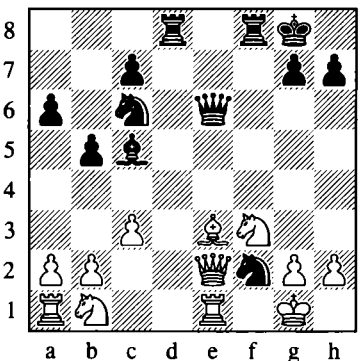


15.♘d4

15.♖c2? was refuted in the following game: 15...♞xf3! 16.gxf3 (16.♙xc5 ♜xc5 17.gxf3 ♜d3!-+ is also hopeless for White.) 16...♞g6† 17.♙h1

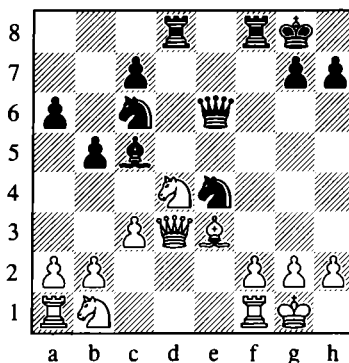


17...♜g3† 18.hxg3 ♖xc2 19.♙xc5 ♖xb2 20.♜a3 ♖xc3 21.♞ac1 ♖xf3† 22.♙g1 ♞d5-+ Maranovic – Te Velde, Groningen 1965. 15.♖e2? is also bad: 15...♜xf2! 16.♞e1



16...♞fe8! I missed this idea in the old game Widera – Mikhalevski, Katowice 1990. 17.♙xf2 ♖f5! 18.g4 (or 18.♖f1 ♞xe3! 19.♞xe3 ♜e5!-+) 18...♖f8! 19.♖f1 (Also after 19.♖c2 ♜e5! 20.♙xc5 ♖xc5†-+ Black wins easily.) 19...♞xe3 20.♞xe3 ♖f4-+ White soon had to resign in Christiansen – From, corr. 1956.

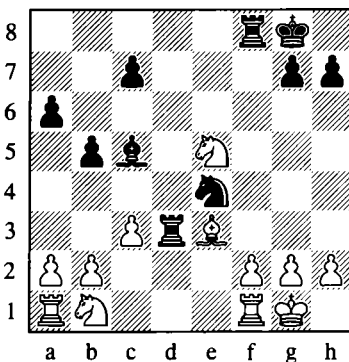
The main move was played in Medina Garcia – Karaklajic, Casablanca 1974. Now I would like to improve Black's play with:



15...♖e5!N 16.♜xc6

After 16.♜d2 ♜xd2 17.♖xd2 ♜xd4 18.cxd4 ♙xd4 19.♙xd4 ♞xd4 20.♖c3 c5+ White faces an unpleasant endgame.

16...♞xd3 17.♜xe5

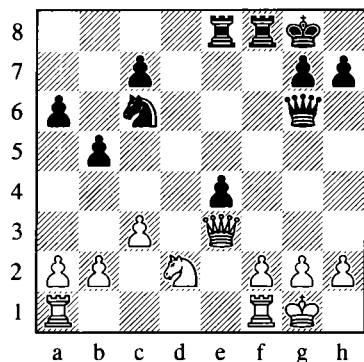


17...♞xe3! 18.♜d7 ♞xf2! 19.♜xc5 ♞xf1† 20.♙xf1 ♜xc5

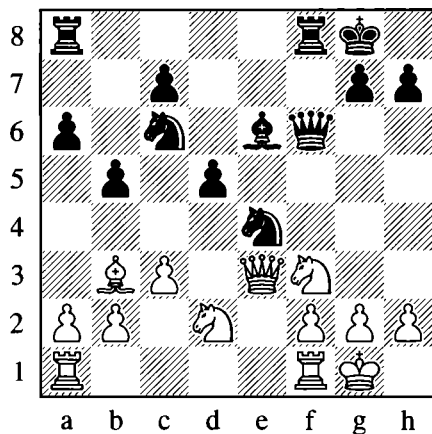
White should be able to hold the endgame, but he will have to play carefully for at least a few more moves.

13...♙xe3 14.♖xe3

After 14.♘e4?! dxe4 15.♙xe6† ♖xe6 16.♖xe3 ♖g6! 17.♘d2 ♜ae8 Black's active pieces count for more than the isolated e-pawn, for instance:



18.♞ae1 ♘e5! An important resource. 19.♖g3 ♖xg3 20.hxg3 ♘d3 21.♞xe4 ♘xb2 Now it is Black who has the advantage thanks to his superior pawn structure.

**14...♘d2 15.♖xd2 ♞ad8 16.♞fe1**

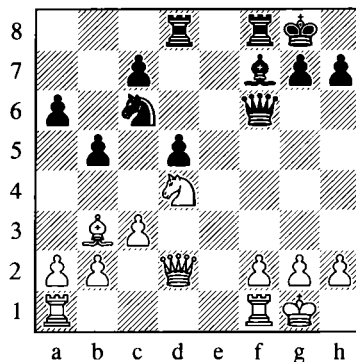
This is the main line, although White has tested a few other moves.

16.♘g5 occurred in Harman – Varnam, Swansea 2006, and here the simple 16...♙f5!N is fine for Black as the d5-pawn is untouchable: 17.♙xd5†?? (17.♞fe1 is better, although after 17...♘a5! Black certainly has no problems.)

17...♙h8–+ There is no good defence against 18...♘e7.

16.♘d4 ♙f7

16...♘a5! is also equal.



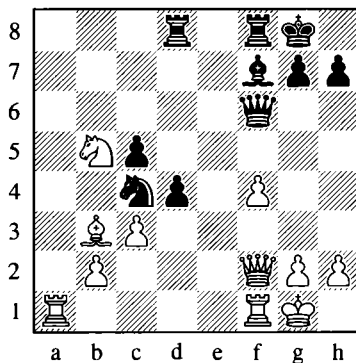
17.a4

17.♙c2 occurred in Ivkov – Geller, Zagreb 1955, and here Black's play can be improved by means of 17...♘a5!N 18.♞ae1 c5 19.♘f3 ♘c4 20.♖c1 d4 and Black is on top.

17...♘e5! 18.axb5 axb5 19.f4

19.♘xb5?! is answered by 19...♞b8 20.♙a4 c6 21.♘d4 ♘c4 22.♖c1 c5! 23.♘b5 ♙g6! with a strong initiative for the pawn.

19...♘c4 20.♖f2 c5! 21.♘xb5 d4!

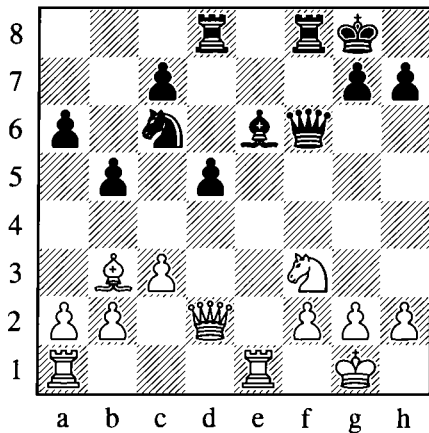


22.cxd4?!

Best play would have been 22.♞a7!N ♘e3 23.♞xf7 ♞xf7 24.♙xf7† ♖xf7 25.♞e1 ♖c4 26.cxd4 cxd4 27.♖e2 d3 28.♖xe3 ♖xb5 with equality.

22...♖b6! 23.♙xc4 ♙xc4 24.♘c3 ♜xd4!
25.♜f1 ♜dxf4 26.♖c2 ♖f6

Black kept some pressure in Kononenko – Khmelniker, Pardubice 2007.



16...♙g4!

This move has not been played in many games and Black's practical results have been poor, but in the games in question the mistakes came later. According to my analysis Black should be able to solve his problems with ease.

17.♜e3

17.♙xd5? is bad as after 17...♙h8 the pin along the d-file counts for much more than a pawn.

17.♘g5N ♘a5! 18.♘e4 ♖g6 19.♘g3 ♘c4= is comfortable for Black.

17...♘a5 18.♘e5 ♙h5 19.♙c2

I also checked 19.f3N ♘xb3 20.axb3 c5= when Black is doing fine.

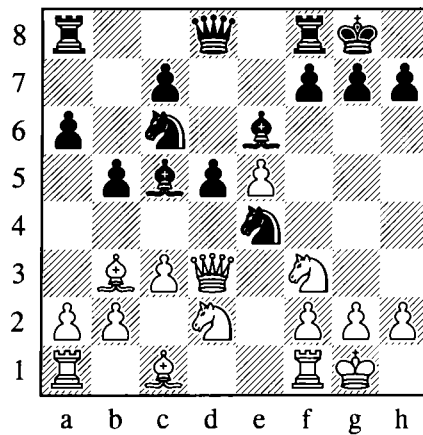
19...♘c4 20.♘c4 dxc4 21.♖e1

We have been following the game Kirwald – De Homont, e-mail 2003. Black has several decent moves here, but perhaps the simplest is:

21...♜fe8=

Black's active pieces compensate for his doubled c-pawns and the position is equal.

F2) 11.♘bd2



This is the other main line. White challenges the strong knight on e4.

11...f5 12.exf6

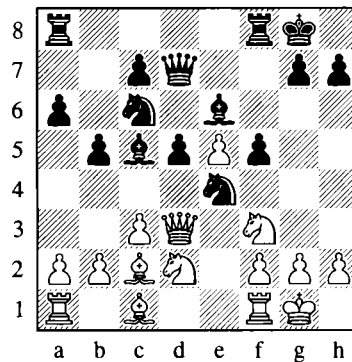
This is almost always played.

12.♙c2!?

This rare move leads to a different type of game. White intends to play ♘b3 followed by either ♘bd4 or ♙e3.

12...♖d7

Black connects the rooks and leaves the e7-square available for other pieces.

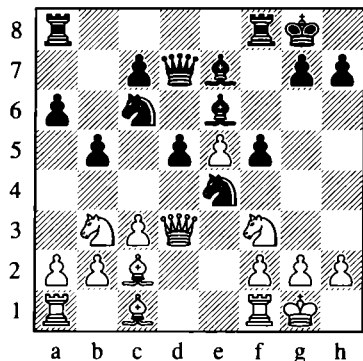


13.♘b3 ♙e7!?:N

It looks logical to keep the dark-squared bishop from being exchanged.

13...♙a7 was once played by Max Euwe, but

after 14.♙e3 ♖xe3 15.♞xe3 White was better thanks to his control over the dark squares. 15...♞d8? (15...♞ae8 was necessary.) Now in Pilnik – Euwe, Buenos Aires 1947, White could have obtained a big advantage by means of 16.♞fd4! N c5 17.♞e2!±.

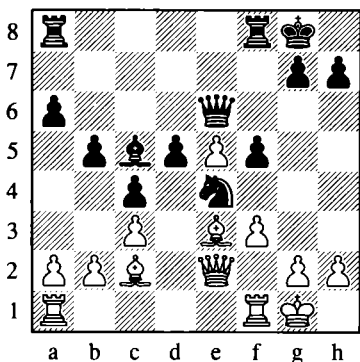


14.♞bd4

This is the most consistent move. From here I analysed the following natural continuation:

14...♞xd4 15.♞xd4 c5 16.♞xe6 ♞xe6 17.♜c4 18.♞e2 ♙c5† 19.♙e3

After 19.♙h1! ♞g3†! 20.hxg3 f4! 21.♙xf4 ♙xf4 22.♞f2 ♞f7= White must lose the exchange for insufficient compensation.



19...f4! 20.♙xc5

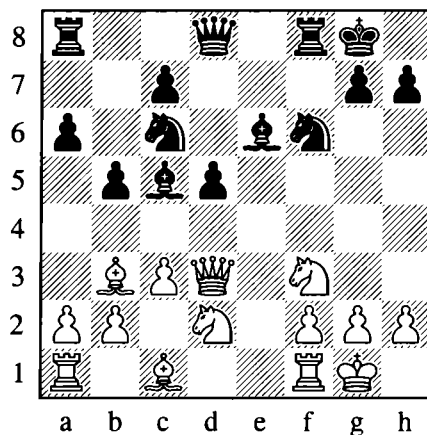
Black is fine after 20.♙d4 ♙xd4† 21.cxd4 ♞g5 22.h4 ♞f7= with the idea of transferring the knight to either e6 or c6.

20...♞xc5 21.♞ad1 ♞ad8

Black supports the d5-pawn and prepares to

bring his knight to c6. The position is roughly equal.

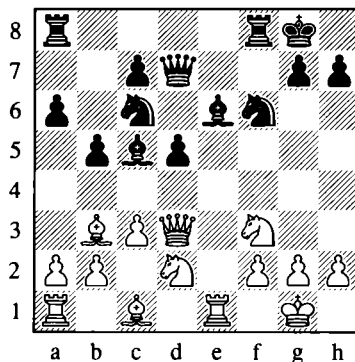
12...♞xf6



From here White sometimes tries F21) 13.♞g5?!, but the main line is F22) 13.a4. We will analyse both moves after briefly checking two minor alternatives:

13.♙c2 occurred in Stoltz – Lundin, Stockholm 1930. Here I would like to deviate with 13...♞d6! N 14.♞b3 ♙b6 15.♙e3 (15.♞g5 ♙d7= intending ...♞e5 is better for Black) 15...♙xe3 16.♞xe3 ♙g4! and the position is roughly equal.

13.♞e1 ♞d7



14.♞f1

14.♖xe6 may seem tempting, but it leads to Black's advantage. 14...♗xe6 15.♘e4 ♗xe4 16.♗xe4 ♘xe4 17.♙xd5† ♖h8 18.♙xe4 ♖f6! 19.♙g5 ♖e6 20.♙d5 ♖d6

14.♘e4N is playable, and leads to equality after: 14...♘xe4 15.♗xe4 ♖ad8! 16.♙e3 ♙e7! 17.♗f4 ♙f5 18.♗e2 ♘a5! 19.♙c2 ♙xc2 20.♗xf8† ♙xf8 21.♗xc2 ♘c4=

14...♖h8 15.♙e3 ♙d6 16.♘g3 ♖ae8

Black had a good position in Yurtaev – Sasikiran, Kolkata 1998. His ideas include ...♙g4, ...♘g4 and ...♘a5.

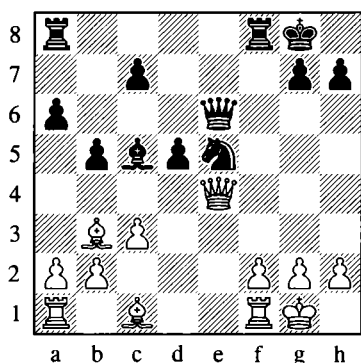
F21) 13.♘g5?!

This aggressive move doesn't promise any advantage, to say the least.

13...♘e5 14.♗g3

We can easily dismiss 14.♘e6? ♘xd3 15.♘xd8 ♖axd8 when Black is clearly better due to the pressure against f2.

Another harmless sideline is: 14.♗e2 ♗d6 15.♘e6 ♗xe6 16.♘e4 ♘xe4 17.♗xe4



Shamkovich – Peters, London 1978. Now the simple 17...c6!N 18.♙e3 ♙xe3 19.♗xe3 ♖ae8 leads to a comfortable position for Black.

14...♗d6 15.♙c2

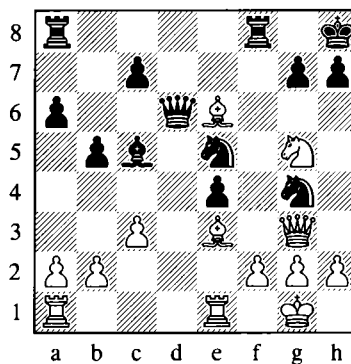
This consistent move has been the usual choice, although Black has a good answer

ready. White has tried a few alternative approaches as well:

15.♖d1?? This blunder was seen in Kupreichik – Morris, Copenhagen 1993. The Belarusian grandmaster eventually won the game, but the result would have been different had Black taken the opportunity to win the queen with: 15...♘h5!–+

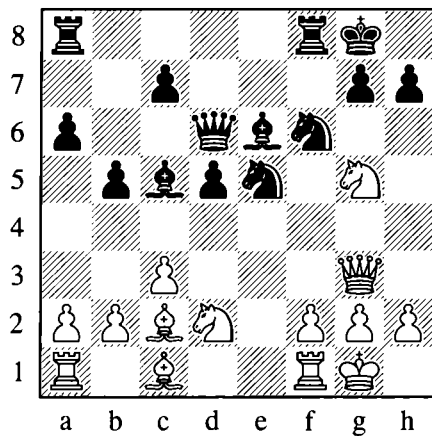
15.♘e6?! is dubious, as after 15...♗xe6 the threat of ...♘eg4 with pressure on f2 is troublesome for White.

15.♖e1 also leaves the f2-pawn vulnerable, as shown in the following example: 15...♘fg4! 16.♘de4 dxe4 17.♙xe6† ♖h8 18.♙e3 (18.♘xe4? loses immediately after 18...♗xe6 19.♘xc5 ♘f3† as seen in Breyer – Spielmann, Bad Pistyan 1912.)



18...♘xf2! 19.♗h4 h6 20.♘xe4 ♘xe4 21.♗xe4 ♖ae8! 22.♙xc5 ♗xc5† 23.♗d4 ♗xd4† 24.cxd4 ♘d3 25.♖e3 ♘xb2 26.♖c1 ♖f6 Black kept some endgame advantage in Zagorovsky – Taimanov, Leningrad 1947.

Finally, 15.♘df3 ♘xf3† 16.♘xf3 was played in Blau – Trifunovic, Hilversum 1947. Now I would like to introduce a new idea: 16...♖ae8N 17.♗xd6 ♙xd6 I don't see a single problem for Black.



15...d7

Black preserves the light-squared bishop.

16.b3

In the event of 16.d3 Nxf3† 17.f3 Wxg3 18.hxg3 e8 Black has the more comfortable endgame.

16...b6 17.d4

17.f4 e8 18.d4 (18.e1N is also strongly met by 18...h5!†) 18...h5! transposes to the main line below.

17...e8 18.f4 h5!

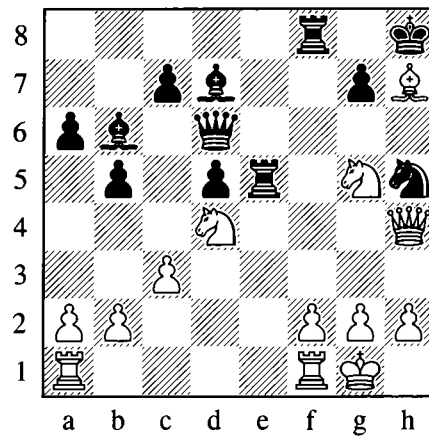
Initiating complications which turn out favourably for Black.

19.gxe5

I also checked 19.Wh4N g6 20.g3 c5 21.d3 Nxf3† 22.f3 d3 23.hxg3 e2 which results in a clear edge for Black.

19.f7† h8 20.gxe5 (20.Wh4? is refuted by 20...xf4 21.Wxh5 Wh6!–+ and Black wins a piece.) 20...e5 transposes to the main line below.

19...e5 20.f7† h8 21.Wh4



21...h6!

21...g6 brought Black a decent position in Khalifman – Kaidanov, Kujbyshev 1986, but the text move is stronger.

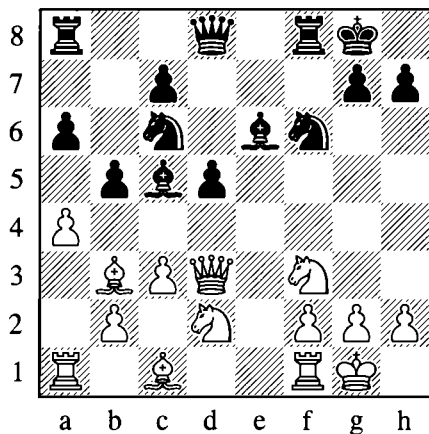
22.d3 e5 23.f4!

23...f4?! is dubious in view of 24.Wxf4 f4 25.f7† h7 26.fh6 h6 with a complicated endgame, as in Tiemann – Weiner, corr. 1971.

24.Wxh6 gxh6†

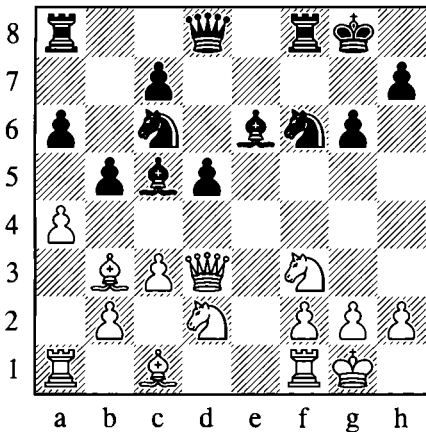
Black's two pieces are stronger than a rook and he eventually won in Trautmann – Antoszkiewicz, corr. 1978.

F22) 13.a4



This was a pet line of Andrei Sokolov, who once reached the final of the candidates matches. White uses the position of the queen on d3 to exert pressure on the queenside. From this position I analysed two continuations of roughly equal strength, and I decided to present both of them so that the reader can choose whichever option he prefers. Thus we have F221) 13...g6!? and F222) 13...Bb8.

F221) 13...g6!?



This extremely rare move was played in just one correspondence game. Black's idea is to prepare ...f5 to harass the enemy queen.

14. Qd4!

This is White's only attempt to fight for the advantage. The other natural continuation is 14.axb5 f5 15. Bc2 Bc8 16. Bb1 axb5 17. Bxa8 Bxa8 18. Bc1 Qa5! 19. Bxe8+ Bxe8 20. Qa2 Qc4 and Black is doing fine.

14... Qxd4

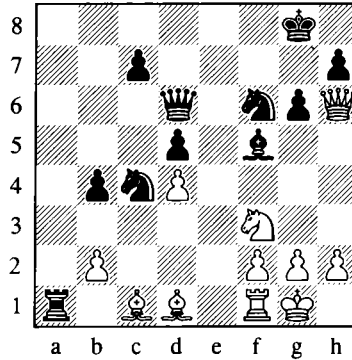
This was Black's choice in the aforementioned correspondence game, and it seems good enough to equalize.

14... Qxd4! N

Exchanging the bishop is a reasonable alternative, despite the obvious strategic risk.

15.cxd4 f5 16. Bc3 Bb6 17.axb5 axb5 18. Bxa8 Bxa8 19. Qf3 Qa5 20. Qd1 b4 21. Bc3 Qc4 22. Bb6 Bb1

Black's activity compensates for his dark-squared weaknesses, for example:



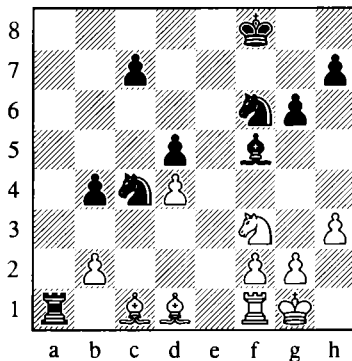
23.h3

Another nice line continues: 23.b3 Qg4 24. Bg5 h6 25. Bf4 Bxf4 26. Qxf4 g5! 27. Qxc7 (After 27.bxc4?! gxf4 28.cxd5 Bb3! Black is better thanks to the strong passed pawn.) 27... Qce3! 28.fxe3 Qxe3 29. Qe1 Bxd1 30. Bxd1 Qxd1 31. Qd6 Qc2=

23... Bf8! 24. Bxf8+

24.b3 Bxh6 25. Qxh6 Qa5=

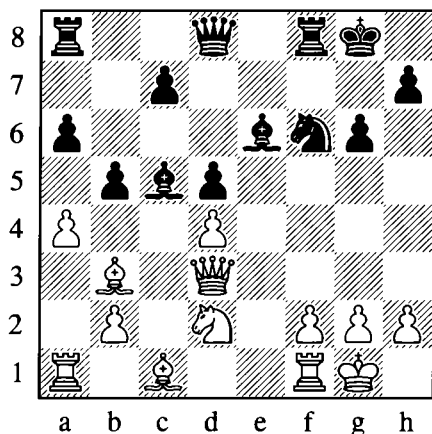
24... Qxf8



25. Qb3! Qg8 26. Qg5 Bxf1+ 27. Qxf1 Qf7 28. Qc1 Qd3+ 29. Qe1 Qe4=

Black should not lose this endgame.

15.cxd4

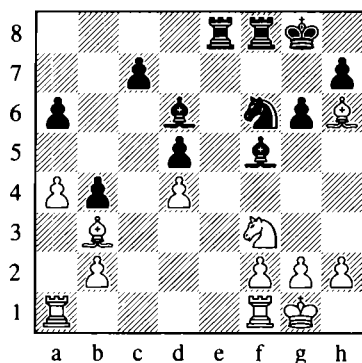


15...♙f5 16.♚c3 ♜d6 17.♞f3

Stammberger – Wiesen, corr. 1988. Now I would like to improve upon Black's play with:

17...b4!N 18.♚c6 ♚e8! 19.♙xd5†

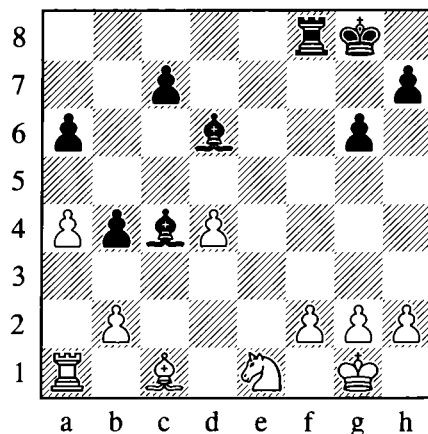
After 19.♚xe8 ♜axe8 20.♙h6 Black comes with a strong exchange sacrifice:



20...♜e2! 21.♙xf8 ♜xf8 with full compensation.

I also analysed 19.♞e5 ♚xc6 20.♞xc6 ♜g7 21.♞e1 ♜ae8 22.♙g5 ♜d7 23.♞e5 ♙c8 and here White must take measures against ...c5: 24.♙xf6† ♜xf6 25.♞c6 (Or 25.f4 ♜g7 26.g3 c5 and Black is fine.) 25...♞xe1† 26.♞xe1 ♙e6 With a roughly equal position.

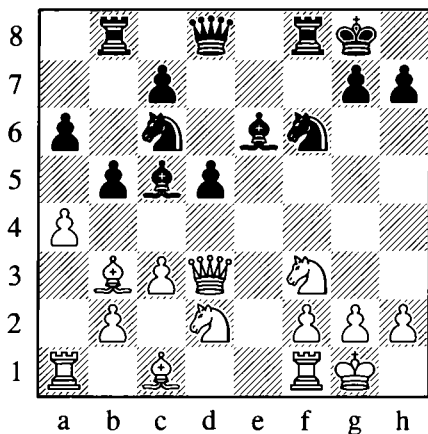
19...♞xd5 20.♚xd5† ♙e6 21.♚e4 ♙c4 22.♚xe8 ♜axe8 23.♞e1 ♜xe1† 24.♞xe1



24...c5! 25.♙e3 cxd4 26.♙xd4 ♜d8

Black's strong bishops provide sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

F222) 13...♞b8



This is the tried-and-tested move.

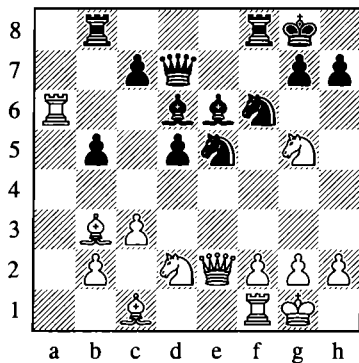
14.axb5 axb5 15.♞g5

A couple of other moves have been tried.

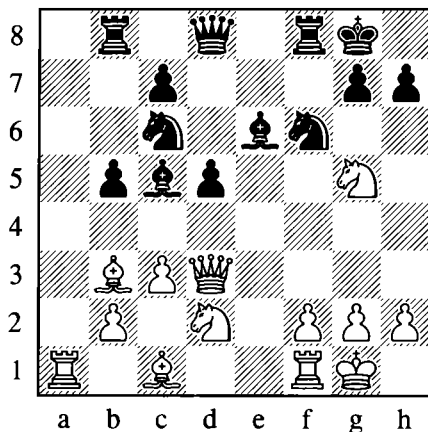
15.♙c2 ♙f7 16.♞b3 ♙b6 17.♞bd4 ♞xd4 18.♞xd4 ♙g6 19.♚d1 ♙xc2 20.♚xc2?! (20.♞xc2N ♚d6=) 20...♚d7 Black had a slight edge in G. Garcia – C. Toth, Bogota 1991.

15.♞a6 is another reasonable alternative.

15...♖d7! 16.♘g5 ♘e5! (16...♙f5? can be punished by 17.♘ge4!±) 17.♗e2 ♙d6



18.♘xe6 (18.♘de4?! ♘xe4 19.♘xe6 ♘xc3! 20.bxc3 ♗xe6 21.♗e4 dxe4 22.♙xe6† ♖h8 20.♙xc3 ♗xe6 21.♗e4 dxe4 22.♙xe6† ♖h8 with a slight edge for Black in Molnar – Sandor, Budapest 1996.) 18...♗xe6 19.♘e4 ♘c4! 20.♘xf6† ♗xf6 Black has easily solved his opening problems, Simeone – Herzog, e-mail 2006.



15...♘e5!

This is the only decent move, but it is good enough to equalize.

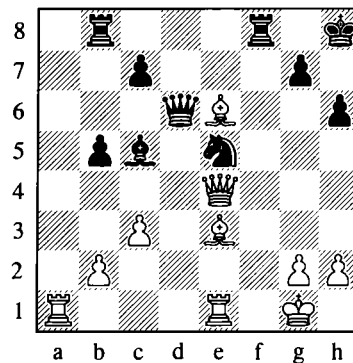
16.♗g3 ♗d6

Compared with the earlier variation F21, the opening of the a-file helps White slightly but does not change the evaluation in a serious way. For a concrete example of how the open

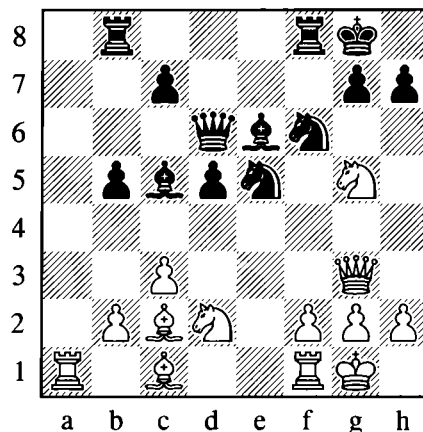
a-file can affect the play, see the note to Black's next move below.

17.♙c2

17.♙e1?! is strongly met by: 17...♘fg4! 18.♘de4 dxe4 19.♙xe6† ♖h8 20.♙c3 ♘xf2 21.♗h4 (Or 21.♘h7 ♙xe3 22.♘xf8 ♙xf8 23.♙xe3 ♗xe6 24.♙f1 ♘ed3 with some edge for Black.) 21...h6 22.♘xe4 ♘xe4 23.♗xe4



This was Vadla – Gazarek, Zagreb 1997. Now 23...♙be8!N 24.♙xc5 ♗xc5† 25.♗d4 ♗xd4† 26.cxd4 ♘d3 promises slightly better chances for Black.



17...♙b6!?

Black takes the bishop away from a potential attack from a knight on b3. This move does not seem to have been tested over the board, but it has occurred in some correspondence games.

In the earlier variation F21, we reached the same position without the moves a2-a4, ...Bb8 and an exchange on b5. In that position I recommended:

17...♙d7

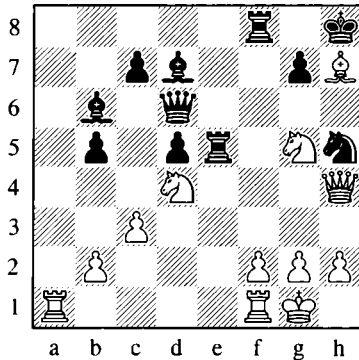
The same move is playable here too, although

Black should not follow the exact same path.

18.♘b3 ♙b6 19.♙f4 ♖be8 20.♘d4 ♘h5

20...h6!? also looks playable.

21.♙xh7+ ♔h8 22.♙xe5 ♖xe5 23.♖h4



23...g6!

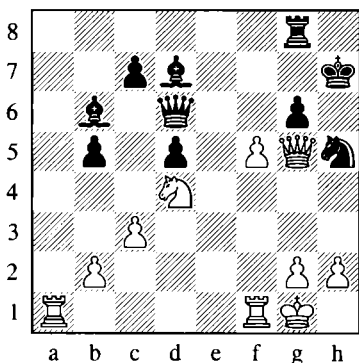
This is where the paths diverge. Black must avoid 23...♖h6? 24.♘df3 ♖xg5? 25.♘xg5 ♘f4? due to 26.♖xf4!+- when the open a-file helps White to exploit the weakness of the back rank.

24.f4

I also analysed: 24.g4 ♖xg5 25.♖xg5 ♖f4! An important move, which solves all Black's problems. 26.♖xf4 ♘xf4 27.♖fe1 ♖f7!? 28.♘f3 ♔xh7! 29.♘g5+ ♔g7 30.♘f7 ♔xf7

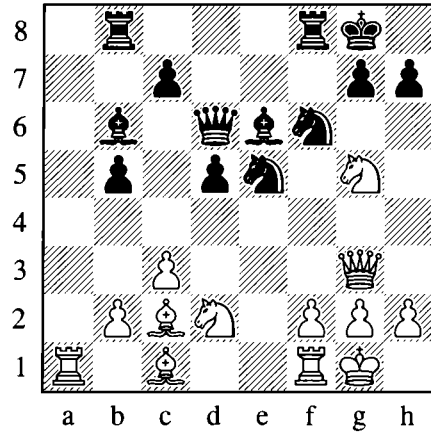
I prefer Black thanks to his strong pieces.

24...♖xg5 25.♖xg5 ♔xh7 26.f5 ♖g8



27.g4 ♖f6 28.fxg6+ ♖xg6 29.♖xg6+ ♖xg6 30.♖f7+ ♖g7 31.♖xd7 ♖xd7 32.gxh5 ♖e7=

The endgame is equal.



18.♘b3

This has been White's usual reply.

18.♘xe6?! ♖xe6± left White facing some kingside pressure in Prestini – Alderisio, e-mail 1998.

The untested 18.♘df3!?N ♘xf3+ 19.♘xf3 ♖xg3 20.hxg3 ♖be8 leads to a roughly equal endgame.

18...♙e4!

It turns out that opening the a-file is not exclusively beneficial to White. In this instance, the strong knight move is only possible thanks to the looseness of the knight on b3.

19.♙xe4

In the event of 19.♖h4 ♘xg5 20.♙xg5 ♙f5 21.♙xf5 ♖xf5± Black obtains a comfortable position after exchanging the light-squared bishops.

White's only other option is:

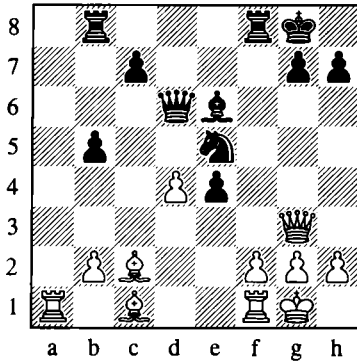
19.♙xe4 dxe4 20.♘d4

20.♙xe4?? is impossible in view of 20...♙xf2+!-+.

20.♙e3 also fails to impress after 20...♙xe3
21.fxe3 (21.♖xe3?! ♘g4) 21...♙c4!
followed by ...♙d3 and Black is better.

20...♙xd4 21.cxd4

Skala – Petr, corr. 1990. Now Black's play
can be easily improved:

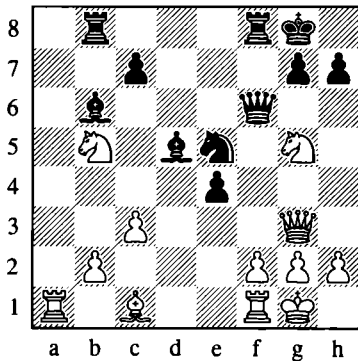


21...♘d3!N 22.♙e3 ♙d5!

It is White who must worry about equalizing.

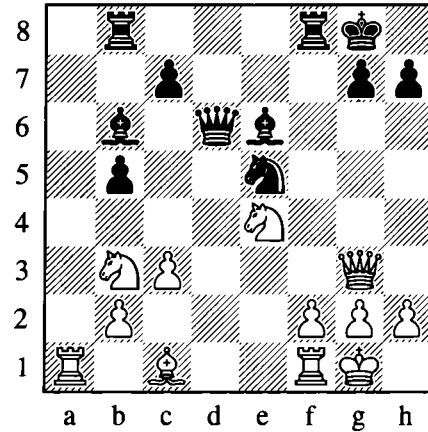
19...dxe4 20.♘xe4

20.♘d4 was played in Haufe – Bericat, corr. 1999, and here Black could have obtained a fine position with: 20...♙d5!N 21.♘xb5 (21.♙e3 h6 22.♘h3 ♘d3+ is better for Black thanks to the misplaced knight on h3.) 21...♖f6↑ Black has more than enough activity for a pawn, for example:



22.♙e3 h6 23.♙xb6 (or 23.♘h3 ♙c4+)
23...♖xb6 24.♘xc7 ♙c4 25.♘xe4 ♖e7 26.♖a5
♘d3+ White is in trouble as 27.♘d2? ♘f4!
wins for Black.

The main move was played in Canibal – Van Wieringen, e-mail 2003. At this point Black's best continuation would have been:

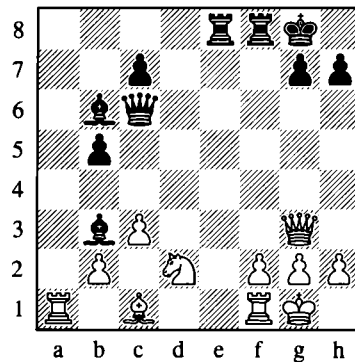


20...♙c6!N

This strong novelty should lead to Black's advantage.

21.♘ed2

Here is a nice variation: 21.♖xe5 ♙xb3
22.♘d2 ♖be8 23.♖g3

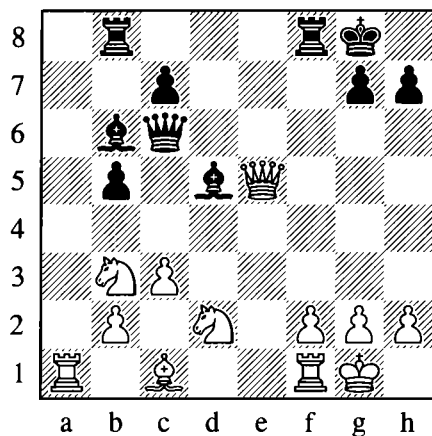


23...♙c4! 24.♘xc4 ♙xf2!+ Black obtains a decisive advantage.

21...♙d5! 22.♖xe5

It is important to see what happens when White accepts the temporary piece sacrifice.

22.♘d4 may be better although after 22...♖f6 Black still has the initiative.



22...♖be8 23.♘d4

23.♗g3 is answered by 23...♙xb3 24.♘xb3? ♙xf2+ again.

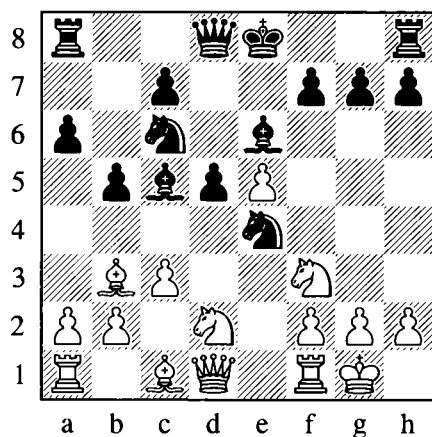
23...♖xe5 24.♘xc6 ♙xc6

Black maintains a strong initiative, and White has nothing better than returning his extra pawn:

25.♘f3 ♙xf3 26.gxf3 ♖xf3

Perhaps White can hold the endgame, but he will have to suffer for quite some time.

G) 10.♘bd2 (without 11.♙c2)



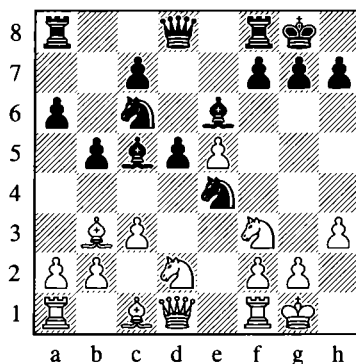
This is the main move. White develops a piece and begins the process of challenging the e4-knight.

10...0-0

As I mentioned in the chapter introduction, by far the most important option from this position is 11.♙c2, which can be found in the next chapter beginning on page 295. Over the final few pages of the present chapter we will deal with the sidelines G1) 11.♘xe4 and G2) 11.♗e2.

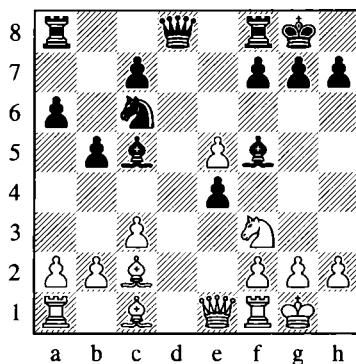
11.a4 transposes to the earlier variation B – see page 272.

11.h3 wastes an important tempo. In Karabayeva – Dudas, Kemer 2009, Black could have exploited this by means of:



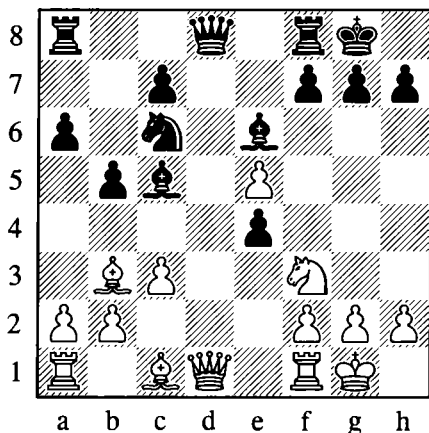
11...♖e8!N Intending to meet 12.♙c2 with 12...♙f5 when the e5-pawn is becoming vulnerable.

11.♗e1 This artificial move cannot offer White any opening advantage. 11...♙f5 12.♘xe4 dxe4 (12...♙xc4 is also good for Black.) 13.♙c2 Doucin – Haba, Toulouse 1990. Now I would like to offer:



13...exf3!?N 14.♙xf5 ♖e8! 15.♙xh7† ♜h8!
16.♙c2 fxg2 17.♜xg2 ♜xe5 18.♞e4 ♜g6
19.♞g4 ♞d5† 20.♜g1 ♜g8! and Black is
slightly better.

G1) 11.♜xe4 dxe4



The exchange is premature for White.

12.♜g5

12.♙xe6? fxe6 13.♞b3 occurred in He – Hristov, Kemer 2009, and now the simple 13...♞d5!N 14.♜g5 ♖ae8!† gives Black a clear advantage.

After 12.♞xd8 ♖axd8 13.♜g5 ♜xe5 14.♙xe6 fxe6 15.♜xe4 ♙b6† Black's superior pieces more than made up for his isolated e-pawn in De Souza Mendes – Charlier, Sao Paulo 1943.

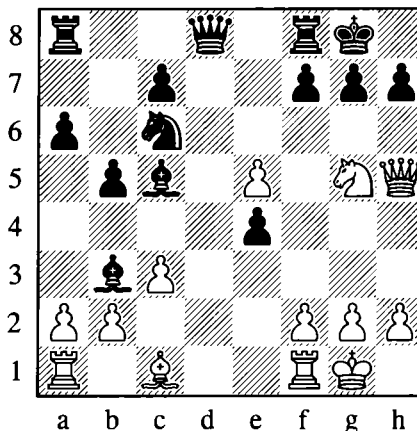
12...♙xb3! 13.♞h5!?

This is an interesting attempt to complicate the game. Other moves enable Black to claim at least equal chances without much difficulty.

13.♞xb3? is refuted by 13...e3! as in Kuljanin – Khalifman, Bela Crkva 1989.

13.axb3 e3! 14.♞h5?! (White should prefer 14.♙xe3!N ♙xe3 15.♞xd8 ♖fxd8 16.fxe3 ♜xe5 when he just about clings to equality.)

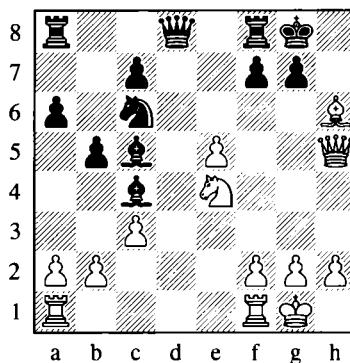
14...exf2† 15.♜h1 ♞d3! Black was clearly on top in Dergausov – Panush, Chisinau 2007.



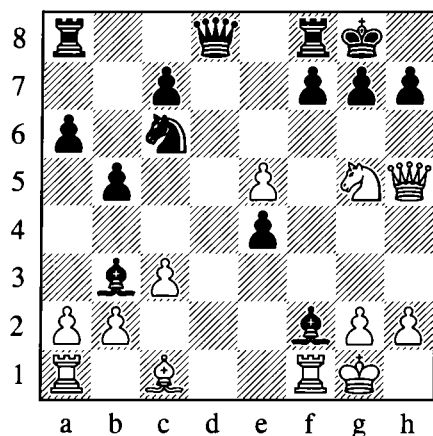
13...♙xf2!†N

This new move looks attractive, although it is not clear if it is objectively best. The good news is that Black is fighting for an advantage in both of the critical lines, so the reader can happily choose whichever one he prefers.

13...h6 has been played previously, and also makes sense if followed up correctly. 14.♜xe4 ♙c4 15.♙xh6 Now in Niermann – Schemmann, Germany 2005, Black should have played:



15...♙e7!N 16.♞g4 g6 17.♖fd1 ♞c8 18.♞f4 ♞f5 19.♞xf5 gxf5 20.♙xf8 ♜xf8 21.♜g3 f4 With two bishops versus a rook, Black has reasonable winning chances in the endgame.



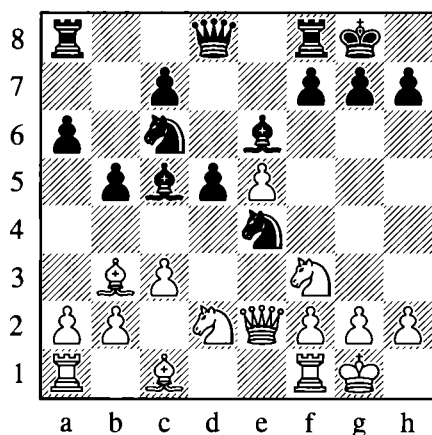
14.♞xf2

14.♙xf2 is strongly met by 14...e3! 15.♙xc3 ♙c2 when Black neutralizes the attack and keeps a clear positional advantage.

14...♞d1† 15.♞xd1 ♙xd1 16.♘xe4 ♞fe8 17.♙f4 ♙h5

White is under some pressure and must battle for equality.

G2) 11.♞e2



11...♙f5

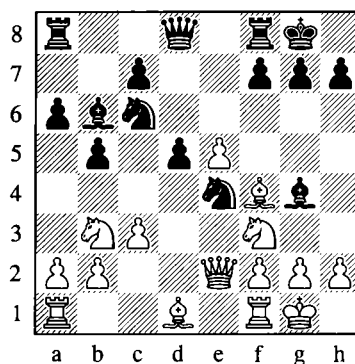
Exchanging on d2 would only facilitate the development of White's queenside pieces, so instead Black supports the knight and activates his bishop. Now the two main options are G21) 12.a4 and G22) 12.♘xe4.

12.♙c2? is bad in view of 12...♘xc3! 13.bxc3 ♙xc2 and Black won a pawn in Englund - Loewy, Barmen 1905.

12.e6?! is questionable due to 12...♘f6! 13.exf7† ♞xf7† and White experiences problems with the development of his queenside, Kalezic - Caruana, Budva 2009.

The strange 12.♞d1? occurred in Motylev - Caruana, Wijk aan Zee 2009. Black has a wide choice of good replies, one of them being 12...♙e6!?N repeating the position, so the line is of no theoretical value for White.

12.♙d1?! is weird and leads to Black's advantage. 12...♙b6 13.♘b3 ♙g4! White starts to experience problems with the e5-pawn. 14.♙f4 Ciruelos Clerencia - Baena Canada, Linares 1998.

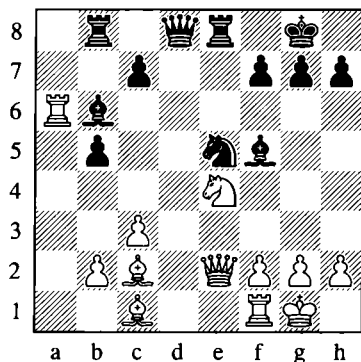


14...♙e8!N This simple move wins a pawn, for instance 15.♞c2 ♙xf3 16.♙xf3?! (16.gxf3 ♞h4!†) 16...♘xe5 17.♙xe4 (17.♙xe5 ♞xe5†) 17...dxe4 18.♞xe4?! ♞d3! with a winning endgame in sight.

G21) 12.a4 ♞b8 13.axb5 axb5 14.♘xe4

This leads to a position resembling the 12.♘xe4 variation without the a-pawns – see variation G22 below for the comparison.

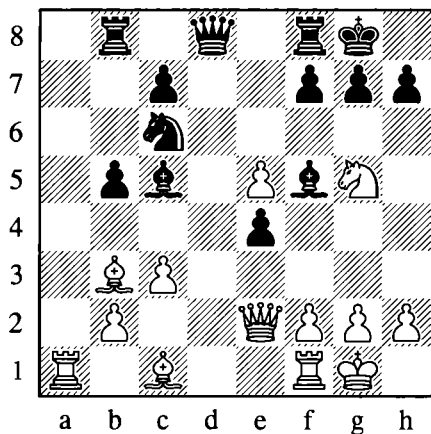
The attempt to utilize the open a-file with 14.♖a6 is not dangerous for Black. 14...♗b6 15.♟xe4 dxe4 16.♞g5 ♞xe5 17.♞xe4 ♞e8! 18.♗c2 Kosten – Martin, Toulon 1999. Now Black should have played



18...♗g4!N 19.♞d2 ♞xd2 20.♗xd2 ♗e2+ With ...♗d3 coming next, Black is clearly better.

14...dxe4 15.♞g5

15.♞d1? does not work: 15...exf3 16.♞xf3 ♗d7 17.e6 fxe6 18.♗xe6+ ♗xe6 19.♞xd8 Kozel – Olsarova, Karvina 2010, and now after 19...♞xd8N White is completely lost.



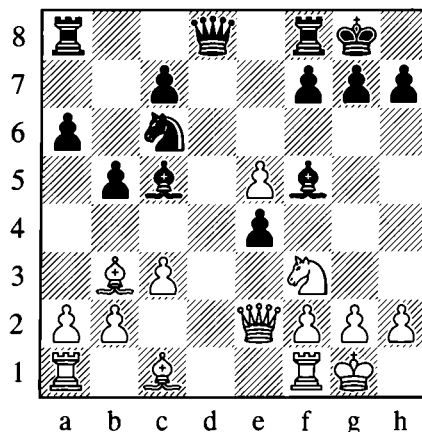
15...♞xe5 16.♞xe4 ♗g4 17.♞c2

Now Black has a pleasant choice.

17...♗b6

Black was at least equal in Dragomirescu – Kiselev, Split 2012. It is also worth mentioning that 17...♗f5!?N leaves White with nothing better than 18.♞e2= repeating the position, so take your pick.

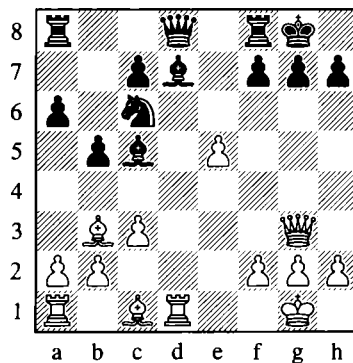
G22) 12.♞xe4 dxe4



13.♞g5

13.♞d2? was played in Damjanovic – Honfi, Pecs 1964, and here Black missed an immediate refutation with 13...e3!N 14.fxe3 ♗d3+ leading to both a material and a positional advantage.

13.♞d1? does not work. 13...exf3 14.♞xf3 ♗d7 15.♞g3 (15.♞d5? is even worse: 15...♗g4!+ Boleaslavsky – Sokolsky, Sverdlovsk 1942.) Now in Garcia Cardenas – Paez Medina, Santiago de Chile 2010, Black could have refuted his opponent's play with:



15...♖e7!N 16.e6 fxe6 17.♙xe6† ♙xe6
18.♟xd8 ♟axd8→Black has too much material
for the queen.

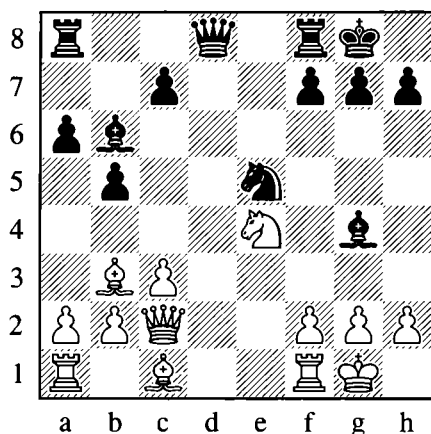
13...♖xe5 14.♖xe4 ♙g4 15.♞c2

15.♞d2 ♞xd2 16.♙xd2 ♙b6 led to a
tiny edge for Black in Horowitz – Pilnik,
Hollywood 1945.

15...♙b6!?

This can be compared with variation G21
above; here too, this move is a reasonable
attempt to play for a win.

Once again Black can practically force a
repetition with 15...♙f5 16.♞e2 ♙g4 17.♞c2=
as occurred in Averbakh – Flohr, Moscow
1944.



16.♙f4

16.♖g3?! ♞f6 gave Black the initiative in
Bezkorovaina – Severina, Kharkiv 2012.

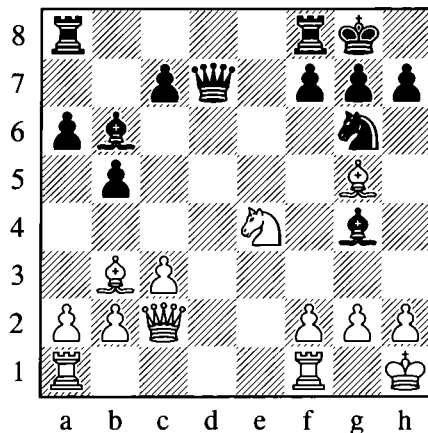
16.♙g5 ♞d7 17.♖h1 occurred in Schnider –
Kotz, Austria 2010, and now after 17...♟ae8!N
18.f3 ♙f5 Black obtains slightly better
chances.

Finally I encountered 16.♖g5 ♖d3 17.♙e3
almost two decades ago in Lengyel –
Mikhalevski, Budapest 1993. At this point

I should have played: 17...c5!N 18.c4 h6
19.♖e4 ♙f5 20.f3 ♟a7 intending ...♟d7 and
keeping a slight edge.

16...♖g6! 17.♙g5 ♞d7 18.♖h1

This was Damjanovic – Honfi, Pecs 1964. At
this point Black's most accurate continuation
would have been:



18...♟fe8!N 19.f3 ♙e6

Black has the more harmonious position and
it is White who must struggle to equalize.

Conclusion

We have dealt with several rare lines here. To
some extent, the purpose of this chapter was
to clear the debris along the path leading to
the most important lines of the 9.c3 system,
namely those occurring after 9...♙c5 10.♖bd2
0–0 11.♙c2, which can be found in the next
chapter. Of the variations examined in the
present chapter, line F with 10.♞d3 tends
to lead to the most interesting and complex
positions, although we have seen that Black
should have little to fear if he knows what he
is doing.

Chapter 17

Main Lines



9.c3 ♖c5 10.♘bd2 0-0 11.♙c2

Variation Index

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4
6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6 9.c3 ♙c5 10.♘l♗2 0-0 11.♙c2

11...♙f5

A) 12.♘xe4	296
B) 12.♘b3 ♙g6	297
B1) 13.♙f4	298
B2) 13.a4	301
B3) 13.♘xc5	302
B4) 13.♘fd4 ♙xd4	302
B41) 14.♘xd4!?	303
B42) 14.cxd4 a5	305
B421) 15.♙d3?!	305
B422) 15.a4	306
B423) 15.♙e3 a4	307
B4231) 16.♘d2	307
B4232) 16.♘c1 a3!	309
B42321) 17.bxa3	310
B42322) 17.b3! f6!	311
B423221) 18.f3	311
B423222) 18.exf6	313
B423223) 18.♘d3	314

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♘xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6
9.c3 ♙c5 10.♘bd2 0-0 11.♙c2

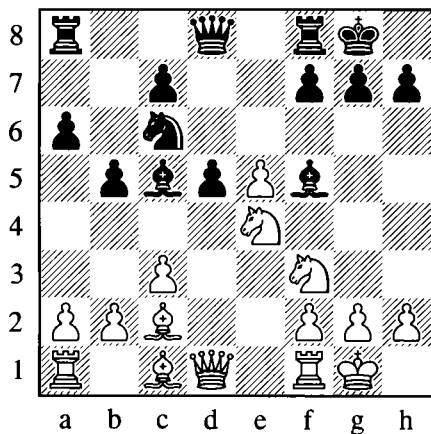
This is the big main line of the 9.c3 system, and Black has three major ways to play against it. In my own games I have mainly chosen the aggressive 11...♘xf2 and achieved good results, and I have also used 11...f5 successfully a few times. However, for this volume I took a fresh look at the different lines and decided to recommend a third option.

11...♙f5

Although I have done well with the two alternatives, I regard the text move as perhaps the most reliable of all. We will begin by examining White's attempt to force the play with A) 12.♘xe4, before moving on to the main line of B) 12.♘b3.

12.♞e2? loses a pawn to trick that we have already encountered in a few of the earlier chapters: 12...♘xc3! 13.bxc3 ♙xc2 14.♘b3 ♙xb3 15.axb3 ♞e8† Tohtrenhagen – Lamby, Eilendorf 1992.

A) 12.♘xe4



This continuation is extremely rare, but it is worth checking it as the most reliable reply has only been played in a single game.

12...dxe4!

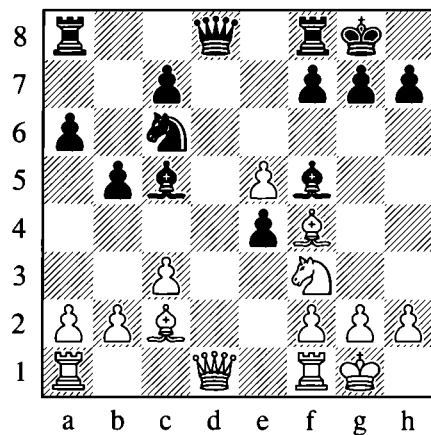
In four of the five available games Black took with the bishop, but I prefer the pawn capture.

13.♙f4!?N

For the time being the knight on f3 is indirectly defended due to the loose bishop on f5, so I think White should protect the e5-pawn before moving the knight.

After the immediate 13.♘g5N ♞xd1 14.♞xd1 ♞ae8! 15.♙xe4 ♙xe4 16.♘xe4 ♙b6 Black wins back the e5-pawn and obtains slightly better chances.

13.♞e1 occurred in Reynolds – Zachowski, e-mail 1993. This move actually transposes to the 11.♞e1 line given in the notes to variation G in the previous chapter – see page 290, where 13...exf3!?N leads to an edge for Black.



13...♙g6 14.♘g5 ♞xd1 15.♞fxd1

Also after 15.♞axd1 e3! 16.♙xg6 exf2† 17.♘h1 hxg6 Black is fine.

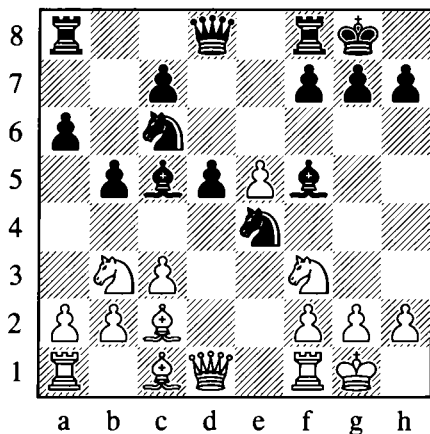
15...e3

15...♙xf2†! 16.♘xf2 e3† 17.♘xe3 ♙xc2 18.♞d7 ♞ac8= is a reasonable alternative.

16.♙xg6 exf2† 17.♘f1 fxg6 18.♘e6 ♞f7

Black is not worse.

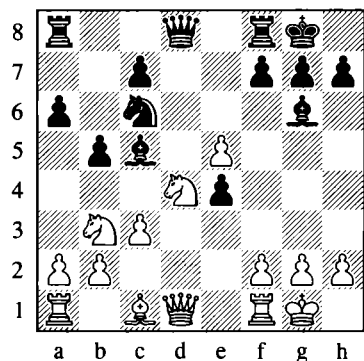
B) 12.♟b3



12...♖g6

Here we see a rare case in the Open Spanish where Black is willing to exchange his dark-squared bishop for an enemy knight. The point is that an exchange on c5 will lead to an unavoidable exchange of the light-squared bishops. From here we will consider four main moves, the last of which is by far the most important: **B1)** 13.♖f4, **B2)** 13.a4, **B3)** 13.♟xc5 and **B4)** 13.♟fd4. Here is a roundup of three minor options:

13.♖xe4 promises multiple exchanges but no advantage: 13...dxe4 14.♟fd4 (14.♟xc5 exf3 15.♞xf3 ♟xe5 16.♞g3 ♟c4 is equal.)



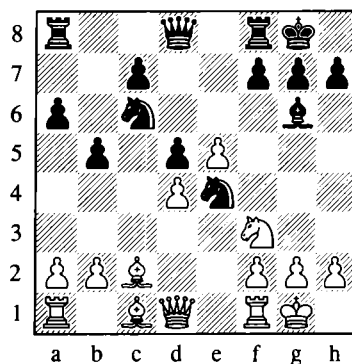
14...♖xd4!? (14...♞d5N also looks perfectly decent.) 15.cxd4 Zimmermann – Koester,

e-mail 1992, and now the simplest continuation is 15...♟b4N followed by ...♟d3 and Black is fine.

13.♟bd4 ♖xd4 14.cxd4

14.♟xd4 transposes to the later variation B41 on page 303.

The text move can be compared with variation B42 (page 305). The present version is an improvement for Black as the f2-f3 move is not available, and he can obtain good prospects as shown below.

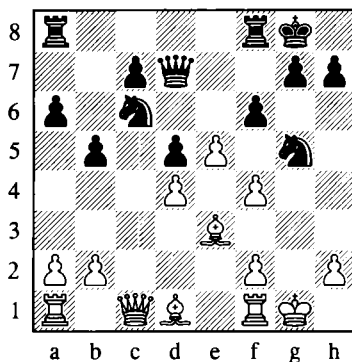


14...f6 15.♖c3

15.♖b3 ♖h5! 16.♞c2 ♟a5 is also good for Black.

15...♖h5 16.♞c1 ♞d7 17.♖d1 ♖xf3 18.gxf3 ♟g5 19.f4

Ziegler – Ernst, Sundsvall 1989. Now Black could have played:



19...♟h3+N 20.♖g2

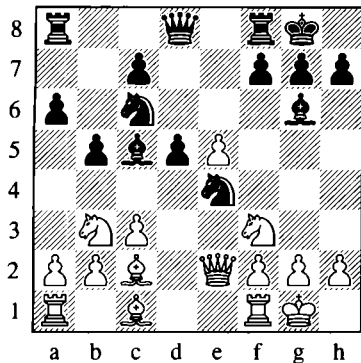
20.♖h1 g5! is strong.

20...♖e7!

Intending ...♜g6 with good play for Black.

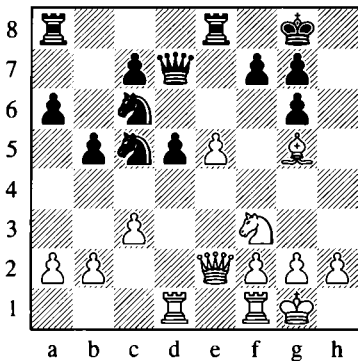
13.♖e2

This move was tested just once.



13...♖e8 14.♜xc5 ♜xc5 15.♙xg6 hxg6 16.♙g5 ♜d7 17.♞ad1

Now we can improve on Black's in Ljubojevic – Timman, Hilversum 1987.



17...♜e4!N 18.♖xe4

Or 18.♙h4 g5! 19.♖xe4 dxe4 20.♞xd7 exf3 21.♙xg5 ♞ac8 22.♙f4 ♜xe5 and Black is fine.

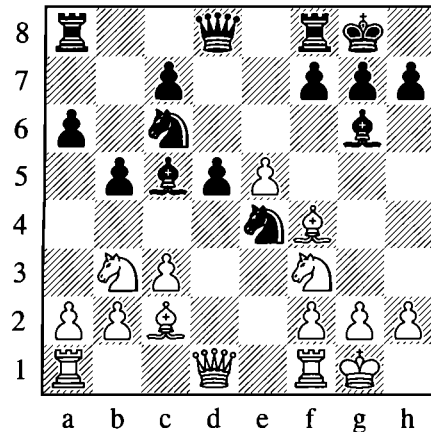
18...dxe4 19.♞xd7 exf3 20.♞xc7 ♜xe5 21.♞d1 ♜d3! 22.gxf3

22.b3 ♞e1! 23.♞xe1 ♜xe1 24.g4 ♞e8 reaches a roughly equal endgame.

22...♜xb2 23.♞dd7 ♞f8=

White's bind is only temporary, as Black can relieve the pressure by transferring his knight to b6 via c4.

B1) 13.♙f4

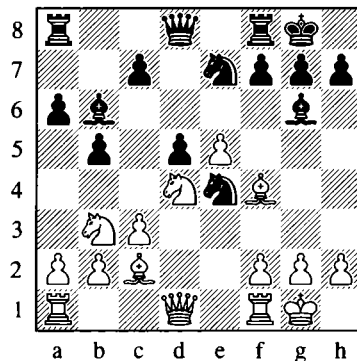


13...♙b6 14.a4

White wants to create an object of attack on b5.

14.♜bd4 was played in Szalanczy – Meurs, Budapest 2011, and now after the simple 14...♜xd4!N 15.cxd4 c5 Black is fine.

A slightly different approach is demanded by 14.♜fd4 as seen in Popovic – Skembris, Bar 1997: 14...♜e7!N



Black intends to advance with ...c5 next. Note that 15.f3?! does nothing to prevent this plan in view of 15...c5! 16.fxex4 cxd4 17.♜xd4 ♞c8! and Black is slightly better.

14...♞d7 15.axb5?!

This move appears consistent and it was once tested in a game between two top grandmasters. Nevertheless, it is not dangerous for Black to say the least.

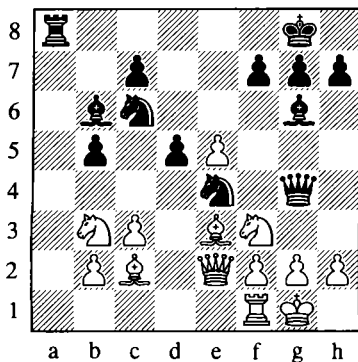
Closing the queenside with 15.a5?! doesn't make much sense either: 15...♙a7 16.♟fd4 ♜ae8! 17.♟xc6 ♞xc6 18.♟d4 ♞b7 19.h4 c5 ♞Cijs – Van der Houwen, corr. 2002.

15.♟bd4N presents few problems after 15...♟xd4 16.cxd4 ♙h5 with equal chances.

15.♞e2?!

This dubious move occurred in one game, in which White had to resign just eight moves later!

15...♞g4! 16.axb5 axb5 17.♞xa8 ♞xa8 18.♙e3 18.♙g3 ♟xg3 19.hxg3 ♞c4! ♞ is also in Black's favour.



18...♟xe5! 19.♙xb6 cxb6 20.♟bd4 ♟xf3† 21.♟xf3?

21.♞xf3 is better, although the simple 21...♞xf3 22.gxf3 ♟c5 ♞ retains a slight edge for Black.

21...♟g5! 22.♟h1

22.♙xg6 loses to 22...♟h3†! 23.♟h1 ♟f4–+.

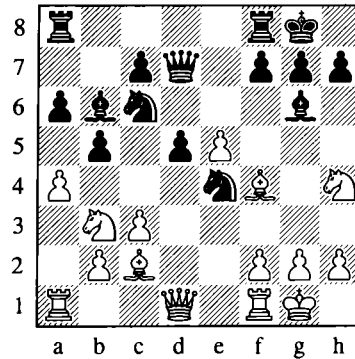
22...♙xc2 23.♞e1

Or 23.♞xc2 ♟xf3 24.gxf3 ♞xf3† 25.♟g1 ♞e8 and Black wins.

23...♙e4!

0–1 Swathi – Tania, New Delhi 2008.

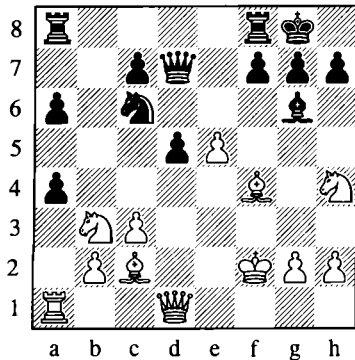
There is one final option worth mentioning: 15.♟h4!?N



This interesting novelty virtually forces the following sequence:

15...♟xf2 16.♞xf2 ♙xf2† 17.♟xf2 bxa4!

Black takes a concrete approach to exploit the power of the queen on d7.



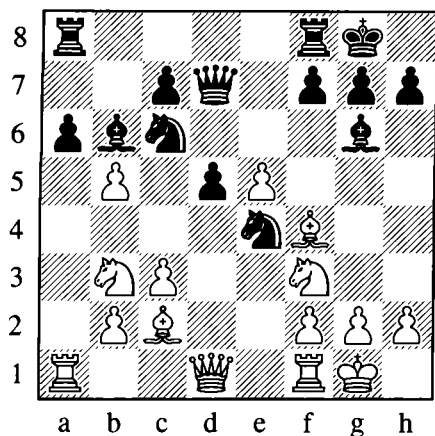
18.♞xa4 ♟xe5 19.♟c5

After 19.♟d4!? ♙xc2 20.♞xc2 ♟c4 21.♞f5 ♞e7 22.♙g5 ♞d6 23.♙f4 Black can choose between repeating the position with 23...♞e7, and playing for a win with 23...♞c6!? intending ...♞ab8.

19...♞e7 20.♙xe5 ♞xc5† 21.♟d4 ♞e7 22.♟f5 22.♟f3 ♙xc2 23.♞xc2 c5 24.♙e5 ♞fe8 is fine for Black.

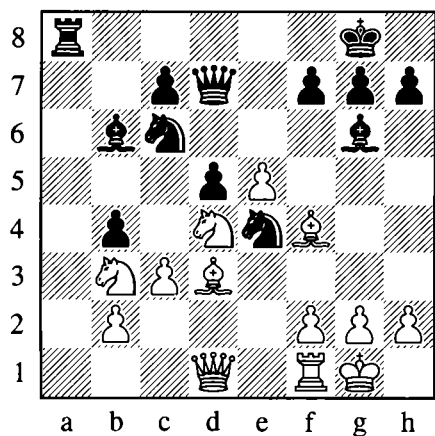
22...♙xf5 23.♙xf5 g6 24.♙g4 c5 25.♙e3 ♞ab8! 26.♙c1 ♞fd8

Black's last move prepares ...d4. The position is dynamically balanced.



15...axb5 16. Rxa8 Rxa8 17. Qfd4 b4!
18. Qd3!

Threatening a nasty pin. There is no other way for White to pose problems, for instance 18. Qxc6 Rxc6 19. Qxe4 (19. cxb4?? fails to 19... Qxf2!-+) 19... Qxe4 20. cxb4 Rxc4 and Black's advantage is not in doubt.



18...bxc3!

It turns out that Black need not fear ghosts.

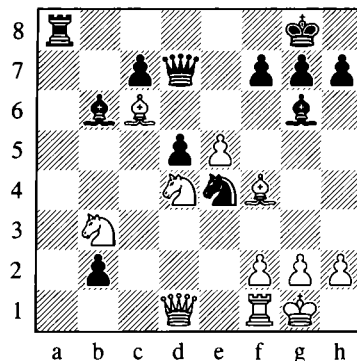
19. Qb5 Qxf2

Black faces a difficult though pleasant choice here, as he has two good alternatives available:

19...c2!?N 20. Qxc2 Rxe6 (20... Qxf2!? 21. Rxf2 transposes to the main line below.)
21. Qcd4 (21. Qe3 Qa7! 22. Qxb6 Qxb5=) 21... Qxd4 22. Qxd4 Qxd4 23. Rxd4 c5

24. Rxd1 h6= Black has a comfortable position thanks to his strong centre.

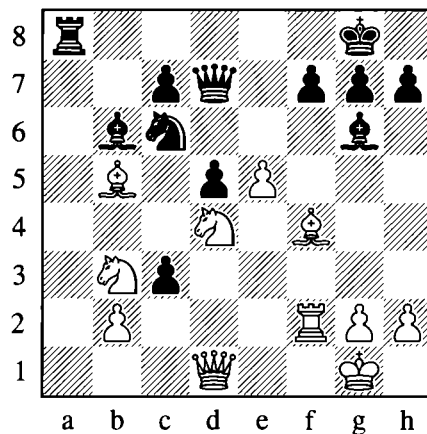
19...cxb2!?N 20. Qxc6



20... Qxf2!! 21. Rxf2 Rxc6! 22. Rxb2 (22. Qxc6 b1=R 23. Rxb1 Qxf2+ 24. Qxf2 Qxb1 25. Qe7+ Qh8!=) 22... Rxa4 23. Qe3 c5 24. Qe2 d4 25. Qf2 c4 Black retains slightly better chances.

20. Rxf2

We have been following the game Short – Timman, Tilburg 1988. Here Black's most accurate continuation would have been:



20...c2!N 21. Qxc2 Qxf2+ 22. Qxf2 Rf5
23. g3

23... Qg3 Qh5 24. Rxd2 Qxe5=

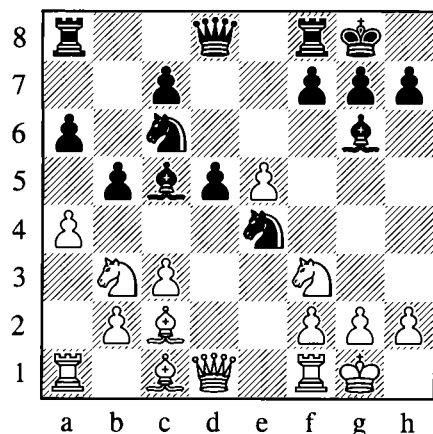
23... Qh5 24. Rxd2

24. Rxd2 Qxe5=

24...♙xc2† 25.♟d2 ♜d8 26.♙xc6 ♜xd2†
27.♙xd2 ♙xd2†

White should be able to hold this position, but Black can keep playing with a draw in hand for at least a few more moves.

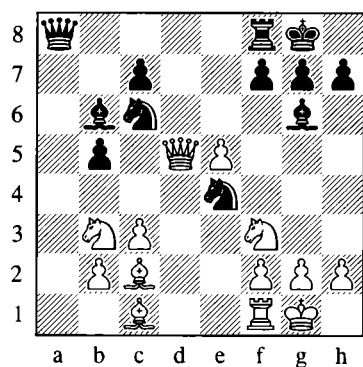
B2) 13.a4



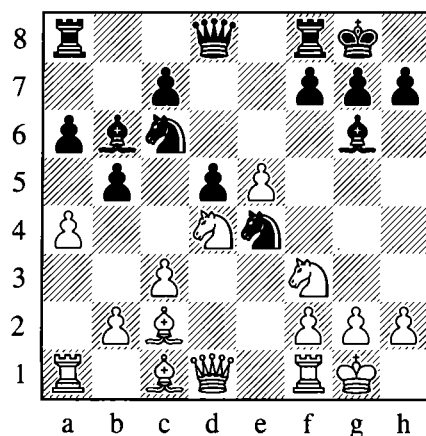
Black can safely ignore this flank activity.

13...♙b6 14.♟bd4

Black has nothing to fear from exchanges: 14.axb5 axb5 15.♜xa8 ♙xa8 16.♙xd5 (16.♟bd4 ♜e8 17.♙f4 ♟xd4 18.♟xd4 ♙a2! is good for Black, Dragun – Kolosowski, Warsaw 2012.)



16...♟xc3! 17.bxc3 ♙xc2 18.♙xb5 ♜b8!
19.♟c5! ♙e4 Black was fine in Tukmakov – Savon, Moscow 1969.



14...♟xd4 15.♟xd4 ♙d7 16.♙e3 c5!?:N

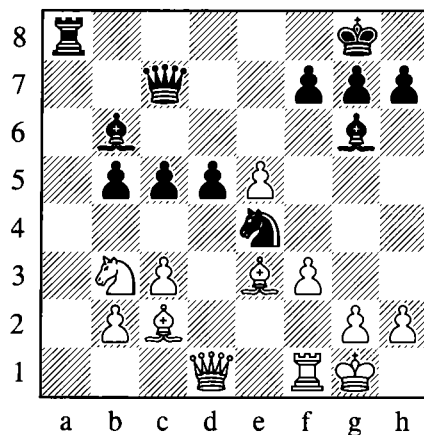
I find this more logical than 16...♟c5 as was played in Van der Wiel – Korchnoi, Wijk aan Zee 1983. The continuation might be:

17.♟b3 ♙c7 18.axb5

18.f3?! d4! gives Black a better version of the main line below.

18...axb5 19.♜xa8 ♜xa8 20.f3

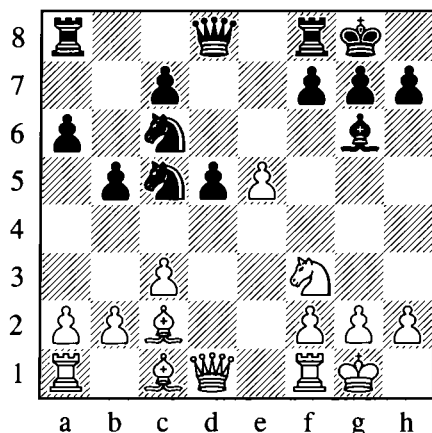
After 20.♙xd5? ♜d8† the queen is trapped.



20...d4! 21.♙xe4 ♙xe4 22.cxd4 cxd4 23.♙xd4 ♜d8! 24.fxe4 ♙xd4† 25.♟xd4 ♙c4!=

The tactical sequence has resulted in an equal endgame.

B3) 13. ♖xc5 ♜xc5



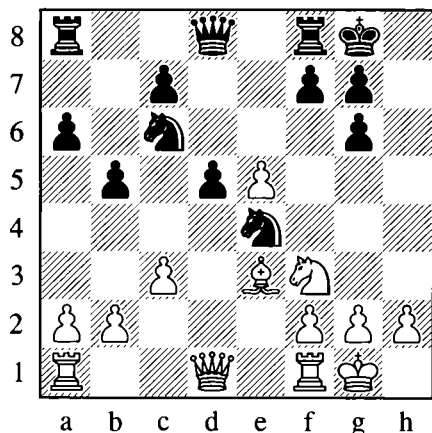
14. ♙g6

14. ♙g5 doesn't make sense as it forces the queen to a better square, while the bishop isn't doing much on g5. After 14... ♗d7 Black was fine in Zelic – Mihalincic, Zadar 1995.

14. ♖e1 was played in Sanfeliu Fabregas – Korneev, Manresa 1996. Here I would like to recommend 14... ♙xc2N 15. ♗xc2 ♖e8 16. ♙e3 ♜e4 17. ♙f4 ♜e7 18. ♖ad1 ♗c8 with a roughly equal position.

14... ♙g6 15. ♙e3 ♜e4

Black intends to attack the e5-pawn with ... ♖e8.



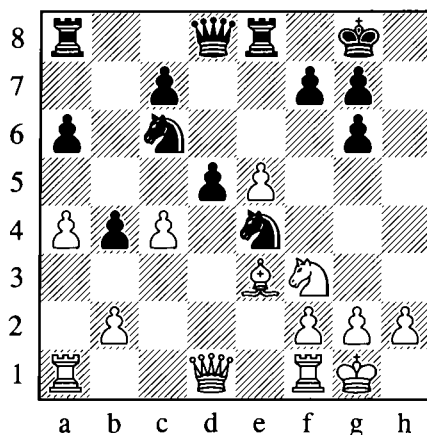
16. a4!N

Only with this move can White present a challenge.

16. ♗d3 ♖e8 17. ♙d4 occurred in Jirovsky – Virostko, Plzen 1997. Now the most precise is 17... g5!N 18. h3 ♗d7 19. ♖fe1 g4 20. ♙xg4 ♗xg4 and Black is doing fine.

16... b4 17. c4 ♖e8

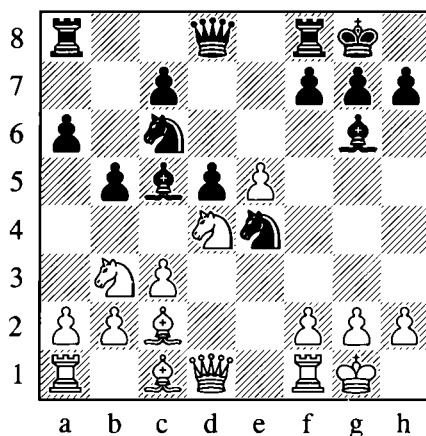
17... dxc4!? is slightly riskier but may also be playable.



18. cxd5 ♜xe5 19. ♜xe5 ♖xe5 20. ♗d4 ♗xd5 21. ♗xb4 c5

The position is roughly equal. White has a bishop against a knight, but Black is well centralized.

B4) 13. ♜fd4

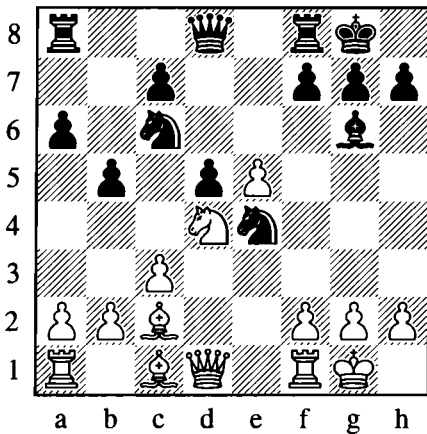


As mentioned previously, this is by far the most important option.

13...♖xd4

Black ‘sacrifices’ his dark-squared bishop, trusting in the activity of his other pieces. We will analyse both **B41) 14.♟xd4!?** and **B42) 14.cxd4**.

B41) 14.♟xd4!?

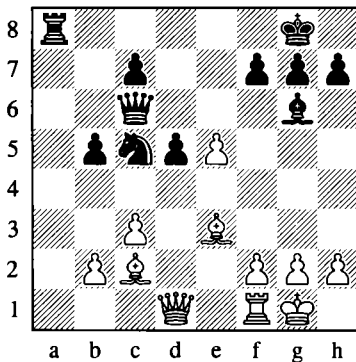


This move is less common, but nevertheless rather poisonous.

14...♞d7! 15.f4

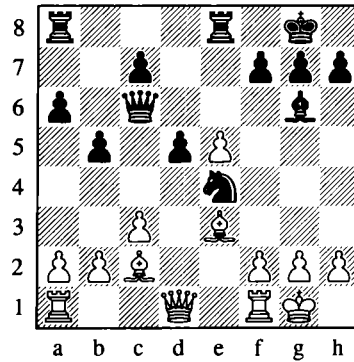
Other plans are less dangerous.

15.a4 ♟c5 (15...♟xe5 is also playable, but on this occasion one good move is enough.)
16.axb5 axb5 17.♞xa8 ♞xa8 18.♟xc6 ♞xc6
19.♖e3



Schlosser – Kolev, Cannes 1990. Now 19...♖xc2N 20.♞xc2 ♞e8 promises Black equal chances.

15.♟xc6 ♞xc6 16.♖e3 ♞fe8



17.♖d4!N

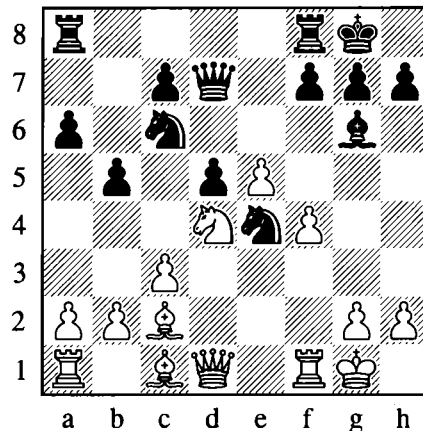
White should hold back his f-pawn, as demonstrated by the following two games:

17.f3? loses a pawn to 17...♟xc3! 18.♞d2 ♖xc2 19.♞xc2 ♞xe5 20.♞a1 ♟e2†! 21.♞xe2 ♞xc2 22.♞xc2 ♞xe3 23.♞xc7 g6+ as seen in Speelman – Timman, London (6) 1989.

17.f4?! ♟xc3! 18.bxc3 ♞xc3 19.f5 ♞xe3† 20.♟h1 ♞xe5 21.fxg6 hxg6 With four pawns for a piece Black was better in Korchnoi – Karl, Switzerland 1982.

17...♟g5 18.♖b3 ♟e6

With roughly equal chances.

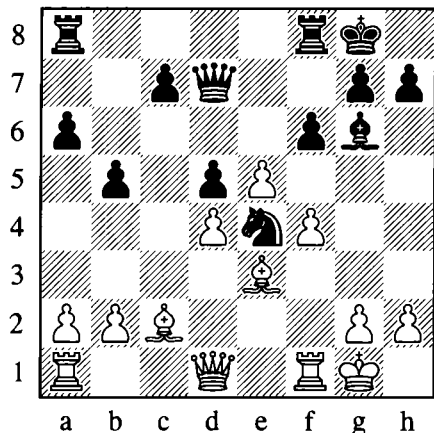


15...♟xd4 16.cxd4 f6

16...♞f5!? is an interesting alternative which could also be considered.

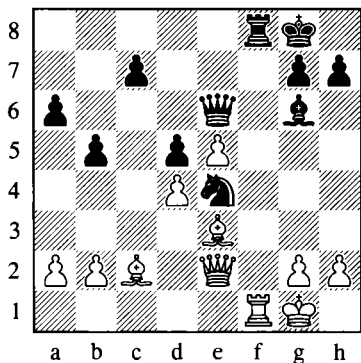
17.♞e3

17.g4 f5! 18.♞xe4?! (18.h3N a5 and 18.g5N a5 are both about equal.) 18...dxe4 With ...♞f7 on the way, Black's control over the light squares gave him the upper hand in Ronneland – Wedberg, Stockholm 1992.

**17...♞ad8!**

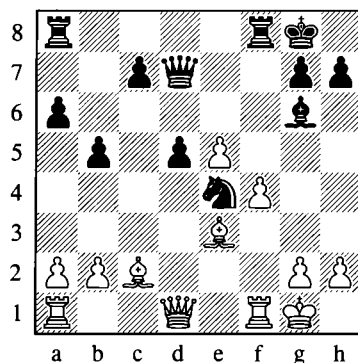
I prefer this over 17...fxe5. It is worth considering both of White's responses here:

a) 18.fxe5 is not too dangerous for Black. 18...♞xf1† 19.♞xf1 ♞f8 20.♞e2 ♞e6 21.♞f1 (After 21.♞c1!? c6 I don't see how White can make progress, although this still looks like his best chance to play for a win.)



21...♞xf1† The players agreed a draw here in Leko – Korchnoi, Leon 1994. The continuation might have been 22.♞xf1 (22.♞xf1 ♟g3!=) 22...♞f5† 23.♞f3 ♟d2† 24.♞xd2 ♞xf3† 25.gxf3 ♞xc2 with a drawn endgame.

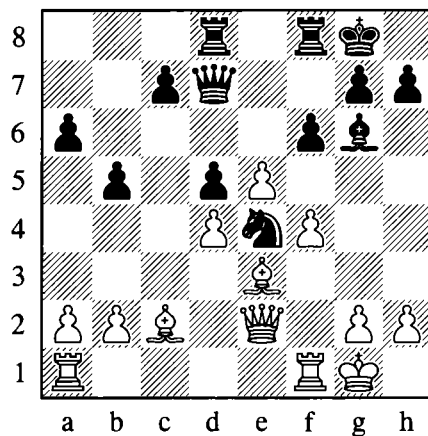
b) 18.dxe5! is stronger:



18...♞f5N (This was my attempt to improve over 18...♞ad8 19.g4! when Black faced tricky problems in Mauro – Quattrocchi, corr. 1996.) 19.♞c1 ♞ad8 20.♞d4± Black is still under some pressure.

18.♞e2

Now I would like to offer an improvement.

**18...♞f5!?N**

To understand the main point of this move, we should first examine the immediate

18...fxe5 19.dxe5! when 19...d4? does not work in view of 20.♖ad1! c5 21.♖xd4! cxd4 22.♖xe4±. With the bishop on f5, the same idea will not work for White as the move ♖ad1 can always be met by ...♖g4.

18...♟h8 was played in Klovans – Dorfman, Soviet Union 1981, but this move hardly seems to be necessary. After the text move I analysed the following illustrative line:

19.♖ac1 c6 20.♖d3 a5 21.♞d1

21.a4!? can be met by 21...bxa4! 22.♖c2 ♞e6! 23.♖xa4 c5! with counterplay.

21...a4 22.♖e2

Threatening g2-g4, so the time has come to release the central tension.

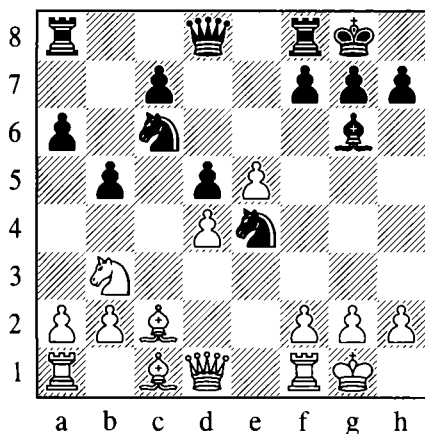
22...fxe5 23.fxe5

23.dxe5? is bad here due to 23...d4±.

23...♞e6=

Black has built a fortress.

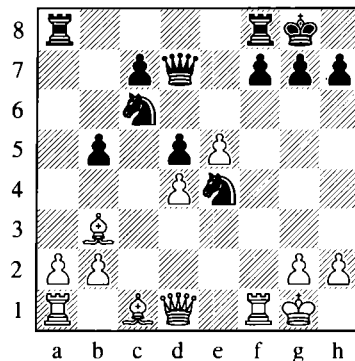
B42) 14.cxd4



14...a5

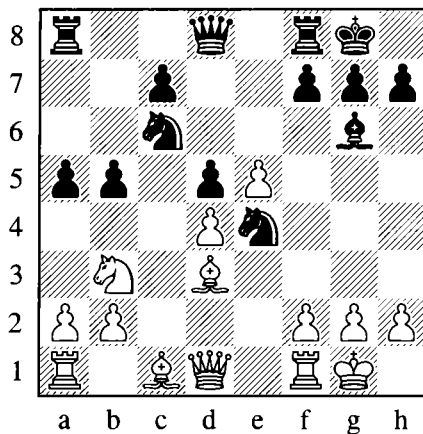
Black must hurry to obtain counterplay, otherwise he will just be positionally worse. We will examine three replies: **B421) 15.♖d3?!**, **B422) 15.a4** and **B423) 15.♖e3**.

The rare 15.f4 leads to a forcing sequence: 15...a4! 16.f5! axb3 17.♖xb3 ♖xf5 (17...♞d7!? 18.fxc6 hxc6 also looks okay for Black.) 18.♖xf5 ♞d7 19.♖f1



Here Black can improve on the game Acs – Gyimesi, Hungary 1998, with 19...f6N 20.exf6 ♖xf6 21.♖xf6 ♟xf6 22.♞d3 ♟a5 23.♖c2 ♟c6!? when I do not see any more than equality for White.

B421) 15.♖d3?!



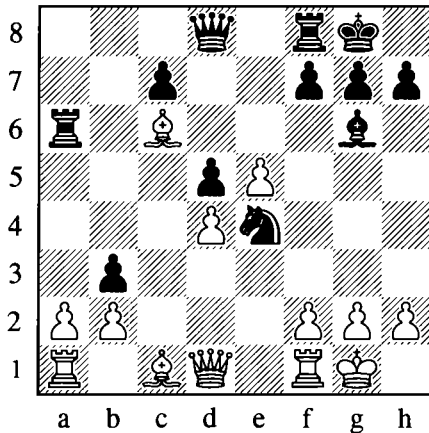
This rare move was introduced by Tshkovsky. He won a couple of games with it in 1980, but modern analysis casts a dark shadow over it.

15...a4!

Initiating a forcing sequence.

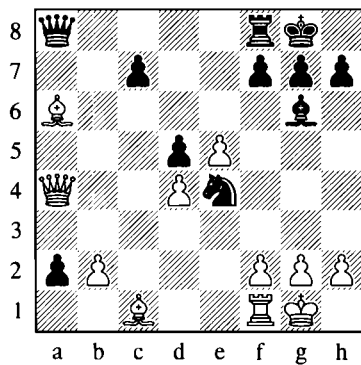
16.♙xb5 axb3 17.♙xc6 ♖a6!

This important intermediate move attacks the light-squared bishop in order to grant the queen access to the a8-square. 17...♖xa2? is bad in view of 18.♖xa2 bxa2 19.♙a4± and White wins the a2-pawn.

**18.f3**

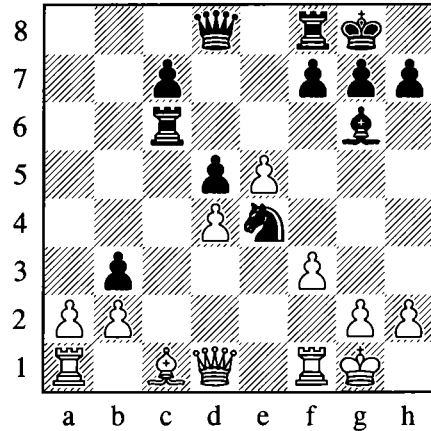
18.♙b7 ♖b6! 19.f3 ♖xb7 20.fxe4 bxa2 21.♖xa2 ♙xe4 gave Black slightly better chances thanks to the strong bishop on e4, B. Briscoe – I. Clarke, corr. 1994.

18.♙b5?N ♖xa2 is in Black's favour, for example: 19.♖xa2 (19.♙e3 ♖xb2±) 19...bxa2 20.♙a4 ♙a8! 21.♙a6

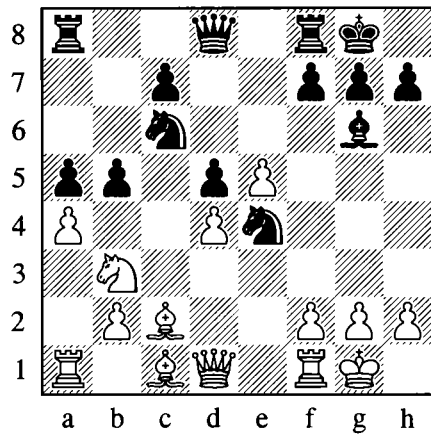


21...♘g3!! 22.hxg3 ♙d3 23.♙xa2 Otherwise ...♙xa6 will save the a2-pawn, giving Black a serious endgame advantage. 23...♙xf1 24.♙xf1

♙c6!± By attacking the c1-bishop, Black wins a tempo for ...♖a8 and thus emerges the exchange up.

18...♖xc6**19.fxe4 bxa2 20.♖xa2 ♙xe4±**

Black kept a slight edge in Ljubojevic – Tal, Niksic 1983, thanks to his superior bishop.

B422) 15.a4

This rare move promises no advantage.

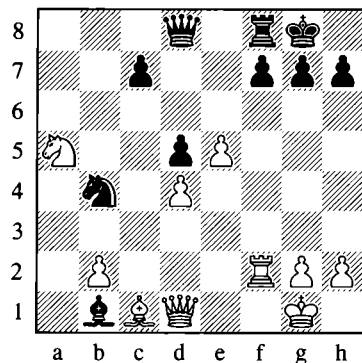
15...♘b4! 16.♙b1

16.♙xe4 is better, but Black experiences no problems after: 16...dxe4 17.axb5 ♘d3! 18.♙e3 ♙d7 19.♘xa5 ♙xb5 20.♙a4 ♙xa4

21.♙xa4 f6! White will have to return his extra pawn to reach an equal endgame.

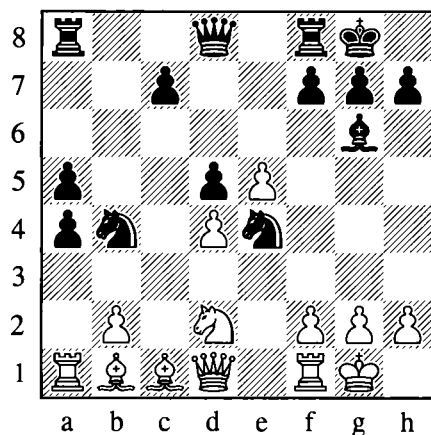
16...bxa4! 17.♟d2

No better is: 17.♙xa4 ♟xf2! 18.♙xf2 ♙xb1 19.♙xa5 ♙xa5 20.♟xa5



This was Hall – Richter, Internet 2010, and now after 20...♙b8!N I prefer Black.

The main move occurred in Sarfati – Green, New Zealand 1985. At this point I would like to improve with:



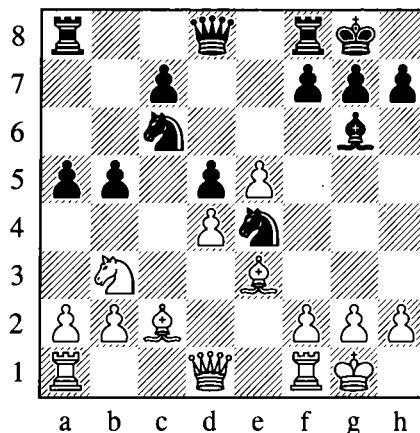
17...♙e7!N

Preparing ...c5. A possible continuation is:

18.♙xa4 c5 19.♟xe4 dxe4 20.♙e3 cxd4 21.♙xd4 ♙fd8 22.♙c3 ♟d3

With approximately equal chances.

B423) 15.♙e3



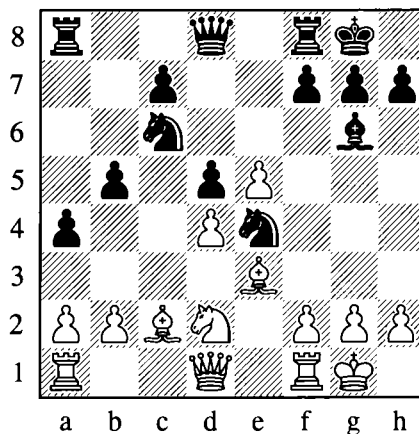
The purpose of this move is to support d4-pawn with the bishop, as the knight will shortly have to retreat.

15...a4

From this position White often plays B4231) 16.♟d2 but the most critical move is B4232) 16.♟c1.

16.♙xe4 is not especially challenging. One of the rare examples of this move continued: 16...dxe4 17.♟c5 ♙d5 18.a3 ♙fd8 19.♟b7 ♙e8 20.♟c5 Zaitsev – Bebhuk, Moscow 1964, and now Black could have repeated the position with: 20...♙ed8=

B4231) 16.♟d2



16...a3

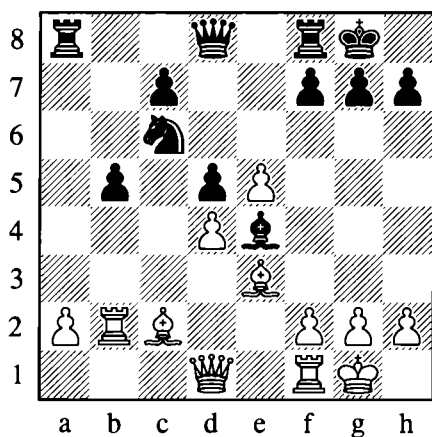
This is my recommendation, although 16...f6 is a valid alternative.

17.♟xe4

17.♞b1 axb2 18.♟xe4 ♟xe4 reaches the same position.

17...axb2 18.♞b1 ♟xe4 19.♞xb2

19.♟xe4N is worse as it vacates the d5-square for the black queen. Nevertheless after 19...dxe4 20.♞xb2 ♞d5 21.♞b3 ♞fd8 22.♞xb5 ♞xb5 23.♞xb5 ♟xd4 24.♞b4 c5 25.♞c4 White retains equality.

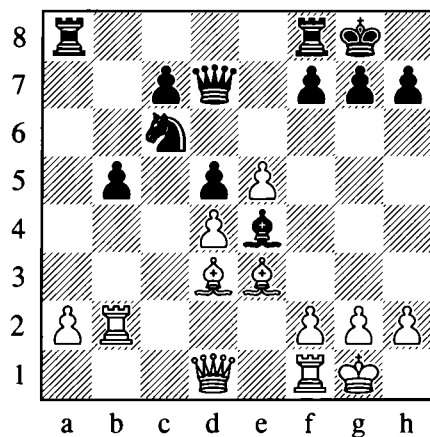
**19...♞d7!**

Black defends the b5-pawn indirectly.

20.♟d3

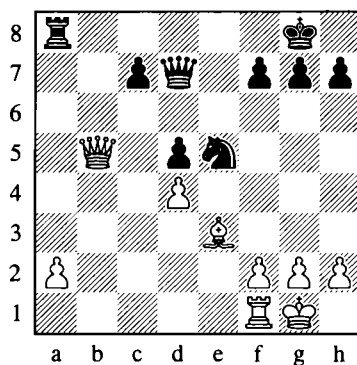
This line became popular in the eighties, before fading into obscurity after Black's best methods became established. White would like to force the bishops off without allowing a favourable change in Black's pawn structure. Compare the following game: 20.♟d3 dxe4 21.♞xb5 ♟xd4 22.♞c5 ♞fd8 23.♟xd4 ♞xd4 24.♞xd4 ♞xd4 25.♞xc7 h6 (Or 25...h5 26.♞c2 and in this equal position a draw was agreed in Mortensen – Fries Nielsen, Silkeborg 1980.) 26.♞c2 ♞e8 27.♞c5 ♞a8 28.♞c2 ♞e8= J. Polgar – Anand, Monte Carlo (rapid) 1995.

By the way, 20.f3?! is unsatisfactory due to 20...♟xc2 21.♞xc2 ♟a5! when the knight takes up a dominating position on c4, P. Jorgensen – C. Johansson, corr. 1986.

**20...♟d3 21.♞xd3 b4**

This idea from Korchnoi seems to be the most precise.

21...♞fb8 should also be enough for equality, since after 22.♞xb5 ♞xb5 23.♞xb5 Black has at his disposal: 23...♟xe5!



24.♞d7?! (24.♞b7N leads to equality after 24...♞c6 25.♞xc6 ♟xc6 26.♞c1 ♞a6=) 24...♟xd7 25.♞c1 ♞xa2 26.♞xc7 ♞a1+ with a tiny advantage for Black in Garrido Dominguez – Korneev, Seville 2006.

22.♞c1

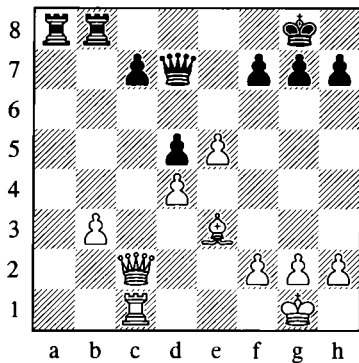
22.♖d2 ♜fb8 23.♜fb1 ♞g4! 24.♖e3 ♜b6 led to a roughly equal position in Hübner – Korchnoi, Lucerne 1982. White's pressure along the c-file can be countered by an attack along the a-file.

22...♜fb8

Once again Black brings the rook to b6 and equalizes.

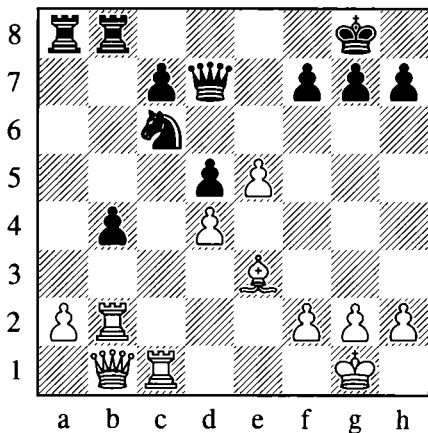
23.♞b1

23.♜bc2? is strongly met by: 23...b3! 24.axb3 (24.♜xc6!? b2♞ is also better for Black.) 24...♟b4 25.♞e2 ♟xc2 26.♞xc2



Hellers – Wedberg, Sweden 1993. Now 26...c6!N♞ intending ...♜a6 leaves Black with good winning chances.

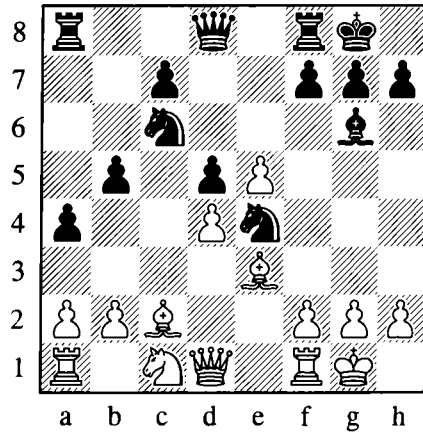
The text move was played in Lobron – Korchnoi, Meudon 1984. Now I see nothing wrong with the following simple reply:



23...♜b6N

With a balanced position.

B4232) 16.♟c1

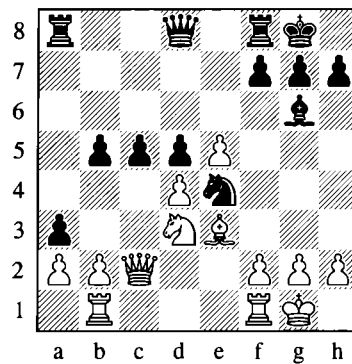


I believe this is White's only serious attempt to fight for an advantage.

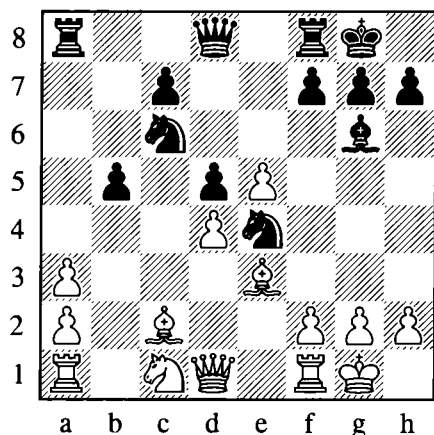
16...a3!

The a-pawn advances for the third move in a row! White can respond with B42321) 17.bxa3 or B42322) 17.b3!.

17.♜b1?! occurred in Unzicker – Korchnoi, Beersheba 1984, and here 17...♟b4!N is strong: 18.♟d3 ♟xc2 19.♞xc2 c5!♞



Black has the better chances; his last move is justified by the line 20.dxc5 d4! 21.♟f4 (21.♖f4 ♟xc5!–+) 21...♖f5! 22.♜bd1 ♟g3!♞ and White is in trouble.

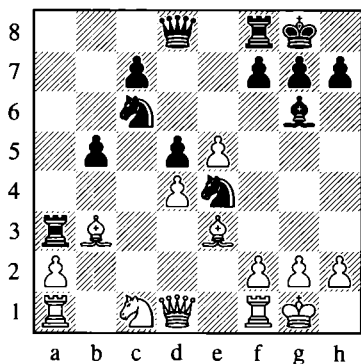
B42321) 17.bxa3**17...♞xa3**

Black can also start with 17...♞c3!?N 18.♞d2 ♞xa3 when the position remains equal.

18.♞e2!

I believe this rare move to be the strongest one available to White.

18.♞d3?! ♞c3 19.♞d2 occurred in Hickl – Van der Sterren, Munich 1990, and now Black could have played 19...♞a8!N 20.♞b3 ♞xd3 21.♞xd3 b4 transposing to the 18.♞b3?! line below.

18.♞b3?!

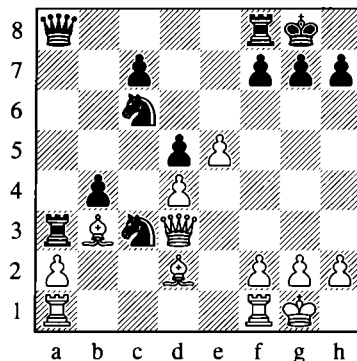
This has been tested at a high level, but White risks becoming worse.

18...♞c3 19.♞d2 b4 20.♞d3

20.♞e2N ♞xe2† 21.♞xe2 ♞a5 also favours Black.

20...♞xd3 21.♞xd3 ♞a8!

The a2-pawn is extremely weak.

22.♞d2

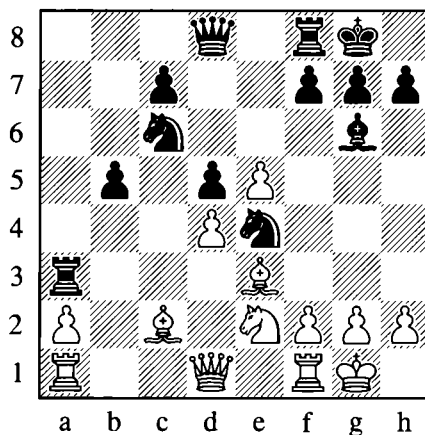
The players agreed a draw here in Nunn – Marin, Thessaloniki (ol) 1988, but in a subsequent correspondence game Black played on and won quickly:

22...♞xa2 23.♞xa2?

White had to try 23.♞fb1N, although 23...♞b8! (preparing ...♞c3) 24.h3 ♞a7! still leaves Black on top.

23...♞xa2 24.♞c1?**24.♞xd5 ♞a1†****24...♞a1 25.♞c2 ♞xc1† 26.♞xc1 g6 27.♞e3 ♞a1†**

0–1 Raijmaekers – Roering, corr. 1991.

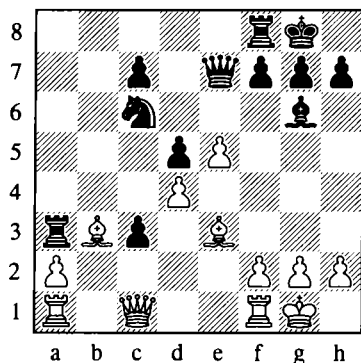


18...♟c3 19.♟d2?!

Instead of wasting time with the queen, White should prefer 19.♟xc3N ♖xc3 20.♖xg6 hxg6 21.a4! b4 22.a5! reaching a position of dynamic equality.

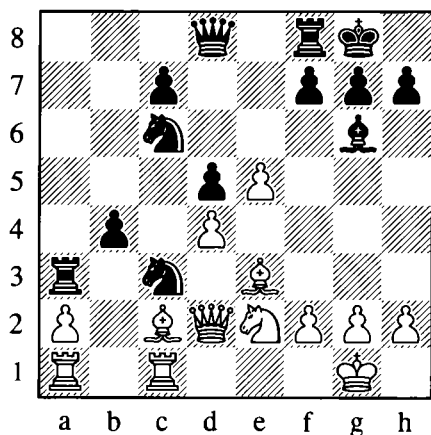
19...b4 20.♖fc1

I also examined: 20.♟xc3!?N bxc3 21.♟c1 ♟e7 22.♖b3



22...♟b4! 23.♖xd5 ♖a6! Thanks to the strong c-pawn, Black's chances are slightly higher.

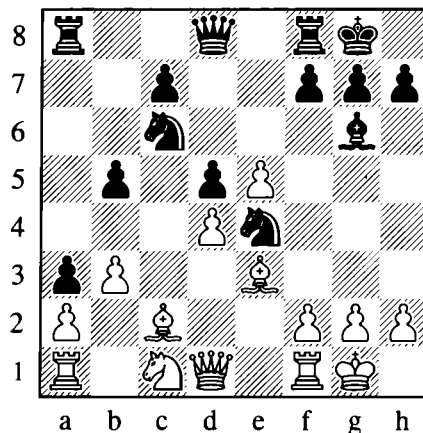
Now in the game Bogut – Gazarek, Pula 1997, Black missed a good opportunity:



20...♟xa2!N 21.♖xg6 ♟xc1 22.♖xc1 hxg6 23.♖xc6 b3 24.♟c1 ♟a8! 25.♖xc7 ♖a2!♠

The b-pawn is extremely dangerous.

B42322) 17.b3!



White should keep the a-file closed.

17...f6!

In this rather tense position we reach a final branching point, where we will consider B423221) 18.f3, B423222) 18.exf6 and B423223) 18.♟d3.

B423221) 18.f3

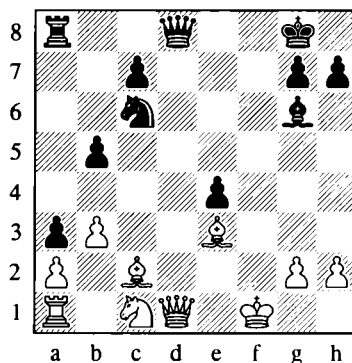
This move is rarely seen due to Black's strong reply.

18...fxe5!

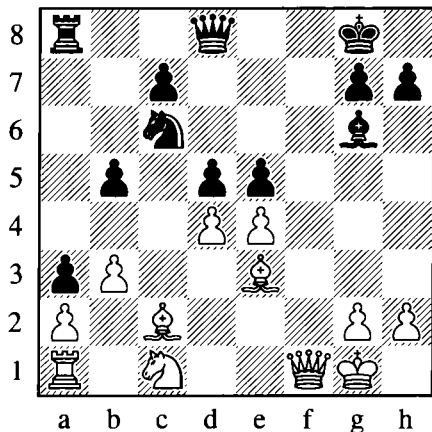
A brave and a correct piece sacrifice.

19.fxe4 ♖xf1† 20.♟xf1

20.♟xf1? is already a decisive mistake: 20...exd4 21.♖xd4 dxe4 22.♖e3 (22.♟e2 doesn't save White: 22...♟f8† 23.♟g1 ♖d8→)



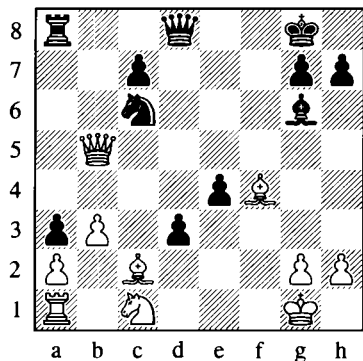
22...♖f6† 23.♔g1 ♜d8! 24.♞g4 ♞c3 0–1
Solomon – Van der Sterren, Sydney 1991. A
spectacular win!



20...exd4 21.♞xb5

After 21.♙f2N dxe4 22.♞xb5 ♞d7! Black is
doing fine with two connected passed pawns.

21.♙f4? dxe4 22.♞xb5 d3!



23.♘e2!N

Only this spectacular move can keep White
in the game.

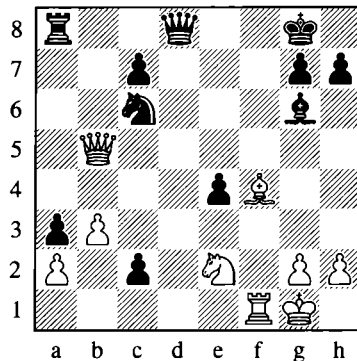
23.♞c4†? occurred in Wonnacott – Blaisot,
e-mail 1999. Now Black can force a win
with: 23...♙f7!N 24.♞xe4 (24.♞xc6 ♞d4†
25.♔h1 ♜f8!–+) 24...dxc2 25.♘d3 (25.♞xc6
♞d4† 26.♔f1 ♙d5–+) 25...♞f6 26.♜f1 ♞e8
27.♞a4 ♜d8! 28.♞e4 ♙xb3! with a decisive
advantage.

23...dxc2

This seems strongest, although 23...♞f6! is
an interesting alternative.

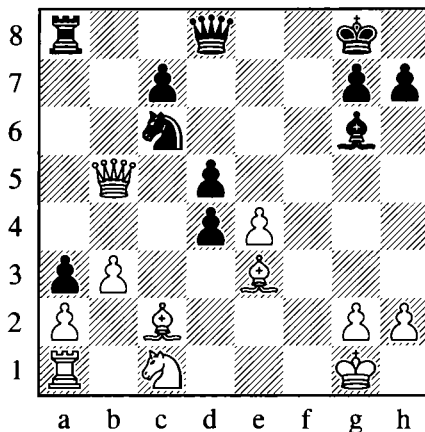
24.♜f1!

24.♞xc6? ♞d1† 25.♔f2 e3†! 26.♔g3 ♞e8
wins for Black.



24...♘e7! 25.♞c4† ♘d5 26.♙xc7 ♞d7 27.♘f4
♙f7 28.♘d5 ♜c8! 29.♞xc2 ♙xd5! 30.♙d6 h6!
31.♙c5 e3!†

Black is better thanks to the pin along the
c-file, the strong e-pawn and the weakness of
g2.



21...♘a7!

An important resource!

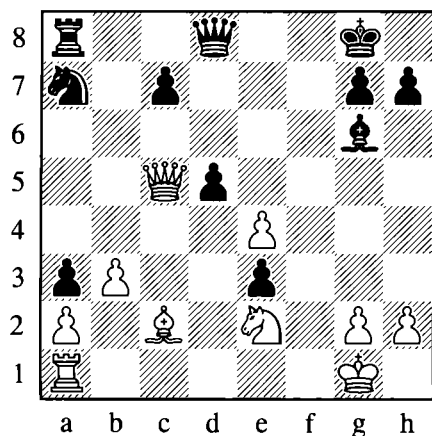
22.♞c5?!

This dubious move was played in two
correspondence games.

22.♙xd5!N is necessary and after 22...♙xd5 23.exd5 dxe3 24.♙xg6 hxg6 the endgame turns out to be equal.

22...dxe3 23.♟e2

Also after 23.♙xe3N ♟c6 24.♙c3 dxe4! 25.♟e2 ♙f6 Black maintains some advantage.

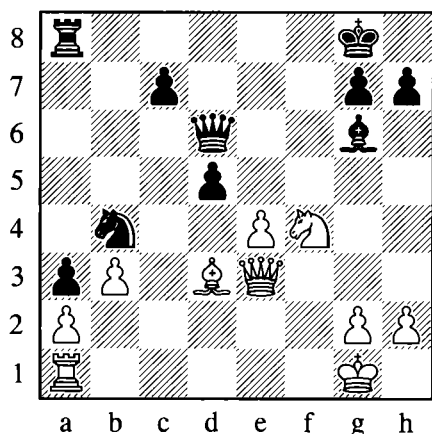


23...♙d6! 24.♙xe3 ♟c6!

The knight is heading to b4. Black is somewhat better, and in the following game his advantage quickly grew:

25.♟f4? ♟b4 26.♙d3

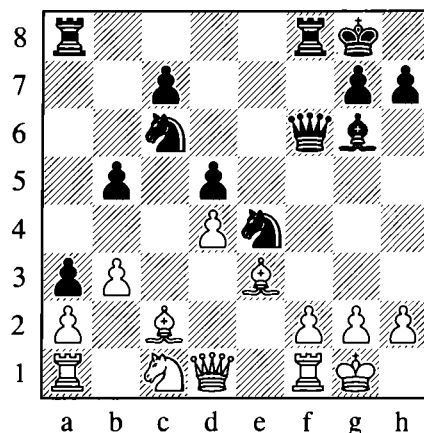
Aikio – C. Johansson, corr. 1986. Now the most precise would have been:



26...♙e8!N

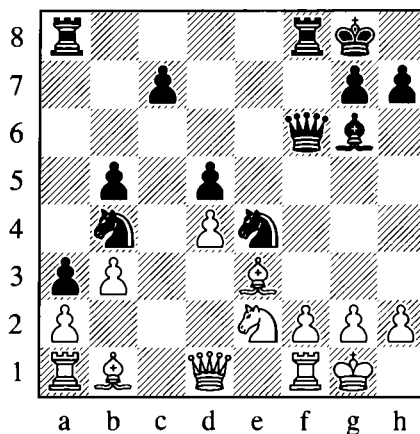
With a large advantage to Black, as the e4-pawn is doomed and the knight on b4 dominates.

B423222) 18.exf6 ♙xf6



This exchange releases the tension prematurely and enables Black to become quite active.

19.♟e2 ♟b4 20.♙b1



20...♙fe8!N

This untested move seems like the most logical to me. The rook won't be needed on f8 too much, whereas the other rook will be useful on a8 protecting the a3-pawn, anticipating a move like ♙c1.

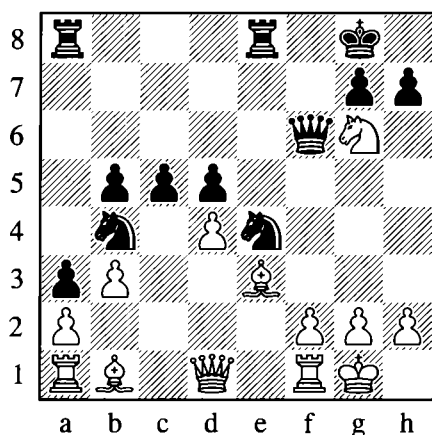
Other continuations include 20...♖e7 as featured in Karpov – Korchnoi, Merano (6) 1981, and 20...♞ae8 as played in Liberzon – Stean, Beersheba 1982, but I find the text move more convincing than either of them.

21.♘f4 c5!

Black's pieces are active enough to support this tactical solution.

22.♘xg6

I also analysed 22.♙xe4 ♙xe4 23.dxc5 ♘c2 24.♞c1 d4 25.♙d2 d3 26.♞g4 ♞d4! with good compensation for the sacrificed pawn.



22...♘c3! 23.♞d2 cxd4 24.♙g5 ♘xb1!

Another important intermediate move.

25.♞axb1 ♞xg6 26.♞xb4 ♞xg5

Black has sufficient counterplay, mainly due to the weakness of the a2-pawn. Note the importance of the rook on a8.

27.♞xb5

27.♞xb4? ♞e2 favours Black.

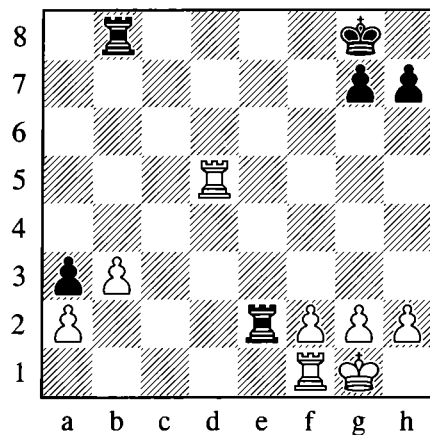
27...♞f5 28.♞bd1 d3! 29.♞xd3

29.♞xd3?! ♞xd3 30.♞xd3 ♞e2 31.♞a1 ♞c8 is better for Black.

29...♞ab8 30.♞xd5†

30.♞a6 ♞a8 31.♞b5 ♞ab8= repeats the position.

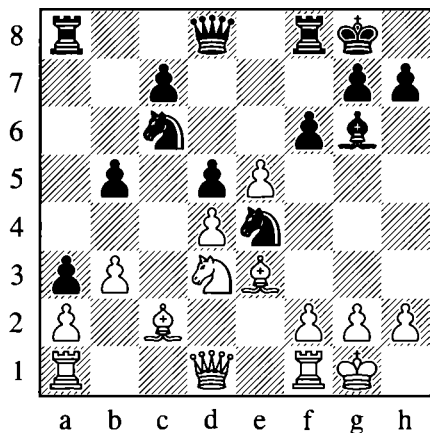
30...♞xd5 31.♞xd5 ♞e2



32.♞a1 ♞c8 33.g3 ♞f8 34.f4 ♞c8=

With ...♞cc2 coming next, Black is in no danger whatsoever.

B423223) 18.♘d3



I consider this the most challenging move.

18...b4!?

The idea behind the move is to connect Black's queenside pawns and secure the outpost on c3.

It is also worth mentioning the more popular main line. It leads to an endgame with opposite-coloured bishops, where Black is a little worse but should be able to hold.

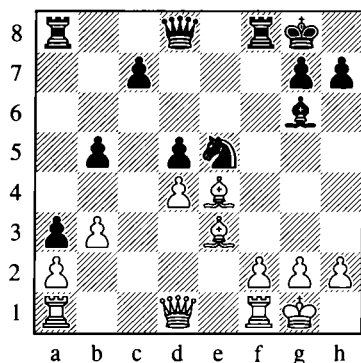
18...fxe5 19.♟xe5

19.dxe5? is dubious due to: 19...d4! 20.♙d2 ♟c3! 21.♞e1 b4

19...♟xe5 20.♙xe4!

With this important intermediate move, White eliminates the knight before it can do any damage.

20.dxe5? is strongly met by 20...♟c3! 21.♞d2 d4! 22.♙xg6 hxg6 23.♞ac1 c5 (23...b4!?) with better chances for Black.



20...dxe4!?

This move was introduced by Timman back in 1995. Black's idea is to exchange heavy pieces.

21.dxe5 ♞xd1

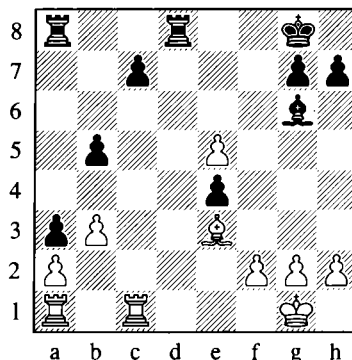
21...♞e8 22.♞c1 ♞xe5 23.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 24.♞xc7 ♞ed5 25.h3± did not fully solve Black's problems in Karjakin – Kaidanov, Moscow 2005.

22.♞fxd1 ♞fd8 23.♞dc1!?

After 23.h3 ♙f7 24.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 25.♞c1 ♞c8 26.♙c5 ♙d5! 27.♟f1 c6 28.♟e2 ♟f7 29.♟e3 ♟e6 30.♙d6 ♞a8 Black equalized and a draw was soon agreed in Ivanchuk – Timman, Novgorod 1995.

The text move was mentioned by Wedberg in his annotations to that game. White's plan is to target the c7-pawn, and the move was

tested in the game P. Smith – Somborski, corr. 1997. My recommendation for Black would be:



23...♞ac8N 24.♞c2

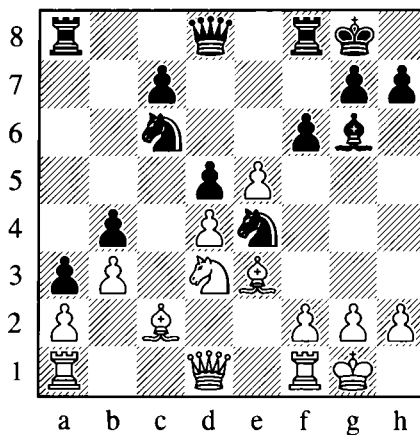
Or 24.♞c5!? c6 25.e6 ♞d6 26.♞ac1 ♞cd8 27.h4 ♞xe6 28.♞xc6 ♞xc6 29.♞xc6 ♞d1+ 30.♟h2 ♞a1 and Black should hold the draw.

24...♙f7!

Improving on 24...♟f7 as mentioned by Wedberg.

25.♞ac1 ♙d5!

25...♞d3!? is also interesting but the text move is more reliable. Black intends ...c6, with a fortress that seems unlikely to be breached.



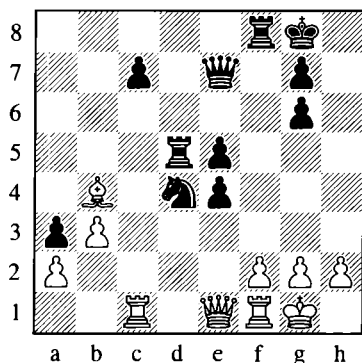
19.♞e1!

This seems like White's best try, and was played in Chekhov – Gorelov, Wisla 1992,

and two subsequent games. In all cases Black exchanged on e5, but I would like to deviate with:

19...♖e7!N 20.exf6

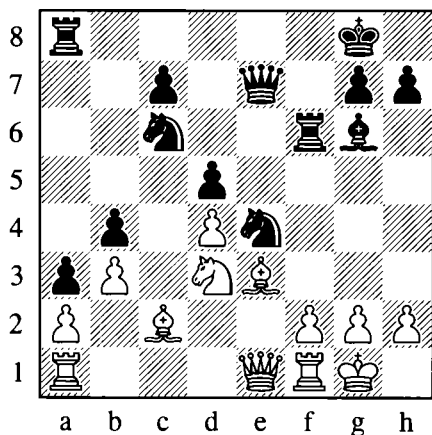
I also analysed: 20.♘f4 fxe5 21.♘g6 hxg6 22.♙xe4! dxe4 23.d5 ♘d4 24.♞c1 ♞ad8 25.♙d2 ♞xd5 26.♙xb4



26...c5 27.♙xa3 ♞f4! Black is well centralized and can look to develop threats on the kingside.

20...♞xf6

I prefer this over 20...♘xf6 21.f3 ♞fe8 22.♙f2 ♞e2! 23.♞xe2 ♞xe2 24.♞ac1 ♞ae8 25.♞fd1 ♞8e6 26.♘e1!± and after some exchanges Black remains with a backward pawn on c7.



21.♘f4 ♘c3 22.♙xg6 hxg6 23.♘e2 ♘e4!

Black intends to follow up with ...♞e8. The potential weakness of the backward c-pawn is compensated by Black's activity and the long-term potential of the advanced queenside pawns.

Conclusion

We have reached the end of quite a complex chapter. In general I prefer to avoid variation labels such as "B423223" but here I found no good way to avoid it, so I hope the chapter structure was not too confusing. The chess content was also quite challenging, especially the main lines. Here we saw Black giving up the bishop pair and accepting a backward pawn on the c-file, in return for dynamic counterplay based on his active pieces and space advantage on the queenside. My overall conclusion is that Black's chances are quite satisfactory in the main lines of the 9.c3 system.

Chapter 18

Main Lines



9. ♘bd2 – Introduction and Sidelines

Variation Index

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♘xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6 9.♘bd2

9...♘c5

A) 10.♙e1	318
B) 10.♙e2	320
C) 10.c3 ♙e7	321
C1) 11.♙e2	322
C2) 11.♘d4	323
C3) 11.a4	324
C4) 11.♙c2 d4 12.cxd4 ♘xd4 13.♘xd4 ♙xd4	
14.♘f3 ♙xd1 15.♙xd1 0-0	326
C41) 16.♙g5	327
C42) 16.♙e3	329
C43) 16.♘g5	330
C44) 16.♘d4	334

A) after 15.♘e5



15...♙b7!N

C1) after 13.♘bd2



13...♙ad8!N

C.3) after 13.f3



13...♙c5!N

1...e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♘xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6
9.♘bd2

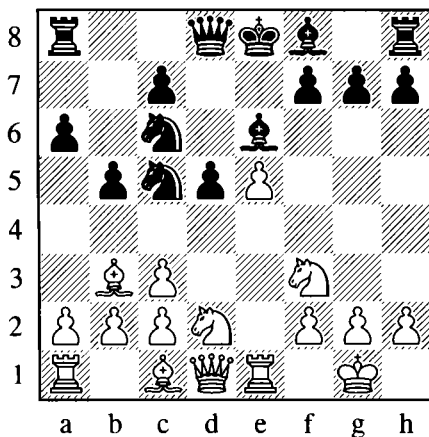
This move falls behind 9.c3 in the overall frequency table, but in theoretical terms it can be considered the absolute main line of the Open Spanish. White develops another piece and challenges the knight on e4.

9...♘c5

We will start by moving the knight out of harm's way. From this position the main line of our repertoire continues 10.c3 ♙e7 11.♙c2 d4 12.♘b3, and this will form the starting position for the next and final chapter of the book. In this chapter we will consider all significant deviations up to that point, organized as follows: **A) 10.♙e1**, **B) 10.♙e2** and **C) 10.c3**.

10.h3 is hardly the most useful move available to White. Play may continue 10...♙e7 (10...g6!?N is an interesting attempt to exploit the slowness of White's last move.) 11.c3 and we have transposed to the rare 10.c3 ♙e7 11.h3 line, as covered in a later note on page 321.

A) 10.♙e1



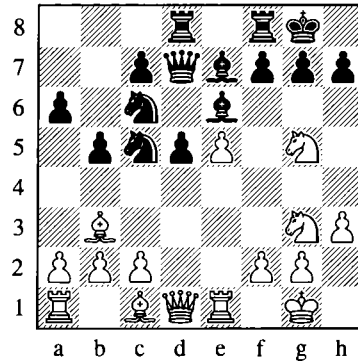
White prepares the ♘f1-g3 manoeuvre.

10...♙e7 11.♘f1

11.c3 0-0 leads to variation C of Chapter 11, which can be found on page 198.

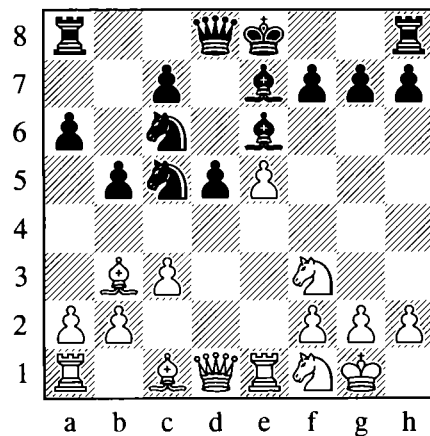
11...0-0 12.c3

White can continue to delay this move with 12.♘g3 ♙d7 13.h3 ♙ad8 14.♘g5 as in Galkin – Adamek, Warsaw 2006. Here I suggest:



14...h6!?N (14...g6!?N is also interesting.) 15.♘xe6 ♙xe6 16.♙e3 ♘xb3 17.axb3 d4 18.♙d2 ♙c5 19.♙xa6 ♙b6 Black has sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn; the plan is to push with ...d3 next.

The text move prepares ♙c2. This position has been known since the first quarter of the 20th century, when Euwe defended Black's position no less than three times.



12...♟xb3 13.axb3 d4!N

Euwe preferred 13...b4 but scored just half a point out of the three games on the database.

Although I find the proposed novelty to be the most convenient solution, I will also mention a playable alternative:

13...♞d7 14.h3

Curiously, after suffering on the black side of this variation, the future fifth World Champion decided to give it a shot with White. He continued 14.♙g5 and eventually won in Euwe – Sonnenburg, Amsterdam 1923, but after 14...♙xg5!N 15.♟xg5 h6 16.♟f3 a5= I don't see any problems for Black.

The text move was played in Mamedov – Rafiei, Teheran 2005. Here I found an improvement for Black:

14...d4!N 15.♟xd4

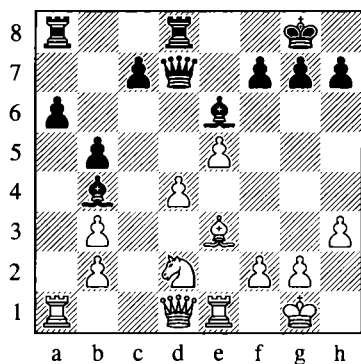
Or 15.cxd4 ♙d5! 16.♙e3 ♜fd8 with excellent compensation thanks to Black's full control over the light squares.

15...♟xd4 16.cxd4

16.♞xd4 ♞xd4 17.cxd4 ♙xb3 is also pleasant for Black.

16...♜fd8 17.♙e3 ♙b4 18.♟d2

After 18.♜e2 ♞d5 19.♟d2 c5! White is under pressure.



18...c5! 19.♙g5

19.dxc5? is refuted by: 19...♙xd2 20.c6 ♞d3! 21.c7 ♜d5!-+

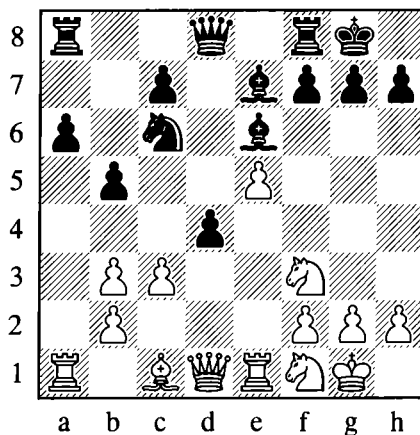
19...♞xd4 20.♙xd8 ♙xd2 21.♙b6 ♙xe1

22.♞xd4 cxd4 23.♜xe1 ♙xb3

23...d3!?

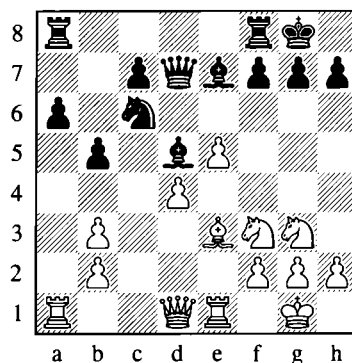
24.♙xd4 a5

The endgame is equal.



14.♟xd4

The alternative is: 14.cxd4 ♙d5 15.♙e3 ♞d7 16.♟g3

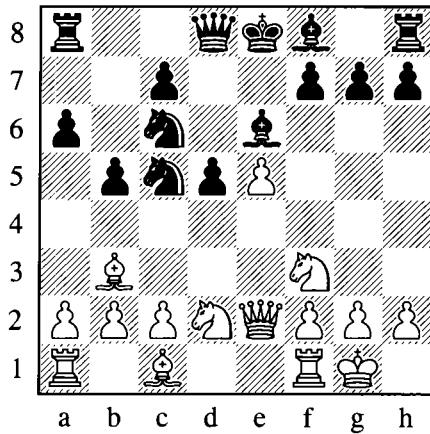


16...f6! 17.exf6 ♙xf6 18.♟g5 ♜ae8 19.♞d3 ♙xg5 20.♙xg5 ♜xe1† 21.♜xe1 ♞f7= Black regains the pawn with an equal position.

14...♟xd4 15.cxd4 c5! 16.dxc5 ♙xc5 17.♙e3 ♙e7 18.♟g3 ♙b4

Black has sufficient compensation and will soon restore material equality.

B) 10.♖e2

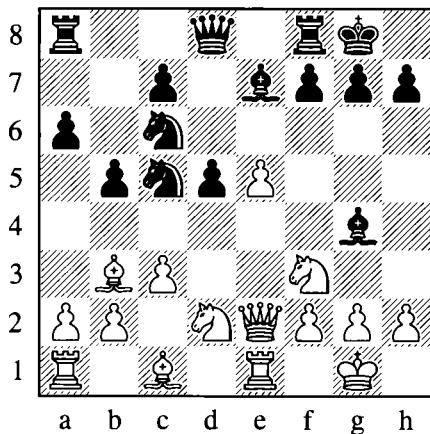


This can be compared with the 9.♖e2 system of Chapters 14 and 15, although mixing the queen move with an early ♖bd2 promises nothing good for White.

10...♗e7 11.♞e1

This has been an extremely rare choice, but the logical alternatives are both covered under separate move orders: 11.c3 transposes to variation C1 on page 322, while 11.♞d1 takes us back to variation B of Chapter 14 – see page 239 for the continuation from here.

11...0-0 12.c3 ♗g4!



13.h3

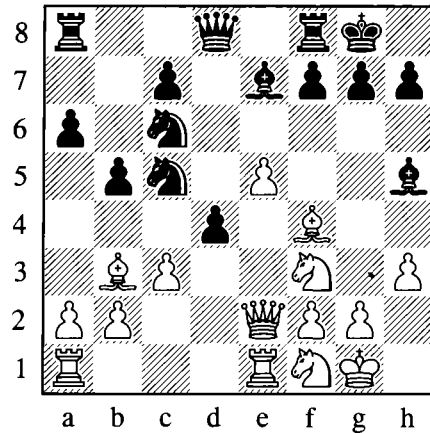
13.♗c2 d4! gives White some problems.

13...♗h5 14.♘f1 d4!

This thematic break is also strong here.

15.♗f4

Butkiewicz – Simacek, Wrocław 2010. Now I think Black should simplify with:

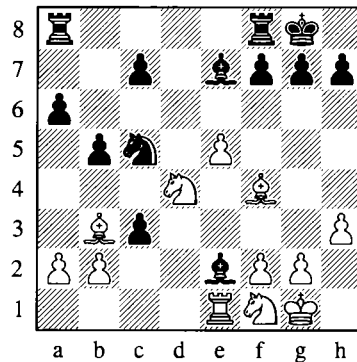


15...dxc3!?N 16.bxc3

16.♞ad1?!

This intermediate move leads to trouble for White after:

16...♘d4! 17.♞xd4 ♖xd4 18.♘xd4 ♗xe2



19.♞xe2

Or 19.♘xe2 ♘xb3 20.axb3 cxb2 21.♞b1 ♗a3 22.♘d4 ♞fd8 23.♘c2 b4! and the strong b2-pawn yields Black a clear edge.

19...cxb2 20.♙c2

The pawn cannot be captured, as 20.♞xb2?! ♟d3 wins material.

20...♟a4! 21.♙d2 c5 22.♟f5 ♞fe8

Followed by ...c4 when the queenside pawns are likely to decide the game.

16...♞d3!

Now White has some problems, for instance:

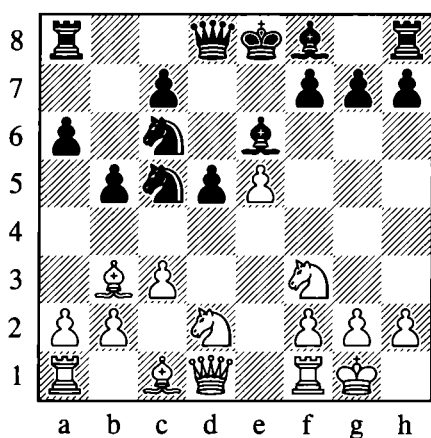
17.♞xd3

17.♟e3 ♞ad8 is also better for Black.

17...♟xd3 18.♙d5 ♟xf4 19.♙xc6 ♞ad8

Black has a pair of bishops, active pieces and the pawns on a2 and c3 are weak.

C) 10.c3



This is overwhelmingly White's most popular choice. Its main purpose is to prepare a retreat square on c2 for the bishop.

10...♙e7

The sharp 10...d4 is the most popular theoretical line, while 10...♙g4 is also playable. I have used all three of them in many games over the years, but for this book I have chosen to recommend the modest yet reliable bishop development.

Let us recall from the introduction that the main theoretical continuation is 11.♙c2 d4 12.♟b3, which will be analysed in the next chapter beginning on page 339. In the remainder of the present chapter we will analyse the following alternatives: **C1) 11.♞e2**, **C2) 11.♟d4**, **C3) 11.a4** and **C4) 11.♙c2** (without 12.♟b3).

11.♞e1 0–0 leads to variation C of Chapter 11, which can be found on page 198.

A harmless sideline is:

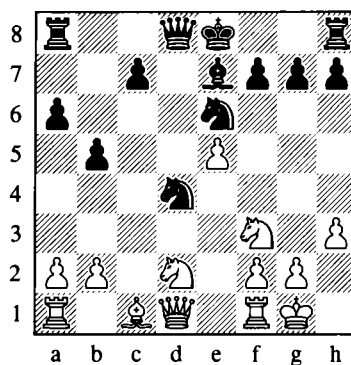
11.h3 d4

11...♙f5!?N looks like a reasonable alternative.

12.♙xe6

The alternative is: 12.cxd4 ♟xd4 13.♟xd4 ♞xd4 14.♙xe6 ♟xe6 15.♟f3 ♞xd1 16.♞xd1 ♙c5 17.♟f1 ♟e7 18.♟e2 ♞hd8 19.♙e3 ♙xe3 20.♟xe3 c5 and Black equalized easily in Korzubov – Kharitonov, Tallinn 1983.

12...♟xe6 13.cxd4 ♟cxd4



A similar sequence can occur in the sharp 10...d4 variation. Here the insertion of the moves h2-h3 and ...♙e7 is clearly in Black's favour, for instance:

14.a4

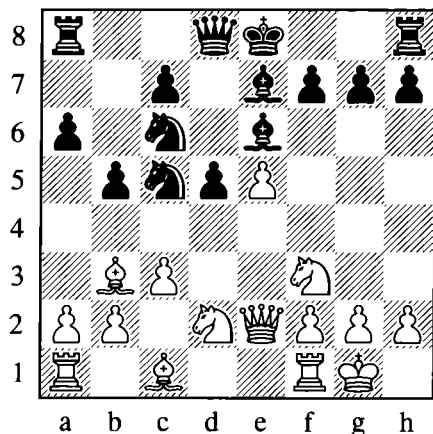
This is the main line in the aforementioned system.

14.♟xd4 ♞xd4 transposes to the note to move 12 above.

14...0-0

This simple solution is impossible with the bishop on f8. Black was at least equal in Rayner – Flear, Eastbourne 1990.

C1) 11.♖e2



This mixing of systems is hardly a good idea.

11...♗f5!

Black stops ♗c2 and homes in on the weak d3-square.

12.♞d1

12.♞e3?! misplaced the queen in Lowitz – Schulz, Germany 2004. I would suggest 12...0-0N 13.♗d1 ♖e6 14.♖b3 f6! with good play for Black.

12...♗d3!

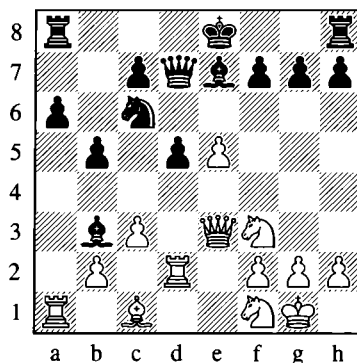
Black forces the queen to a bad square.

13.♞e3 ♞d7

13...0-0 is likely to transpose to the main line after 14.♖d4 ♞d7.

14.♖d4

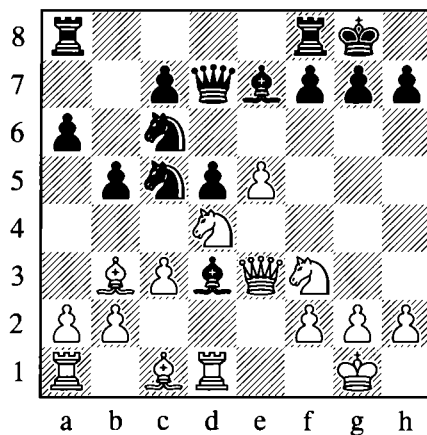
The natural 14.♖f1?! loses a pawn: 14...♖xb3 15.axb3 ♗c2! 16.♞d2 ♗xb3



17.♖d4!? This seems like the best try, but it is still not good enough to ensure full compensation. (17.♖g3 a5 clearly favours Black.) 17...♖xd4 18.cxd4 ♗c4 19.♖g3 b4! Black saves his light-squared bishop and enjoys an extra pawn.

14...0-0! 15.♖2f3

This position was reached in Elez – Rade, Bihac 2010. Now I would like to improve Black's play with:



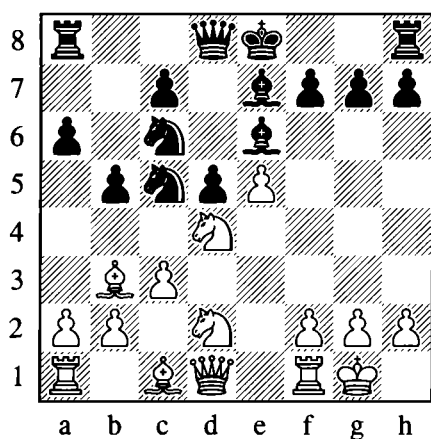
15...♗e4!N 16.♖xc6 ♞xc6 17.♖d4 ♞d7 18.♞g3 ♖xb3

18...♗g6!? also looks fine for Black.

19.♖xb3 c5

With an equal position.

C2) 11.♟d4

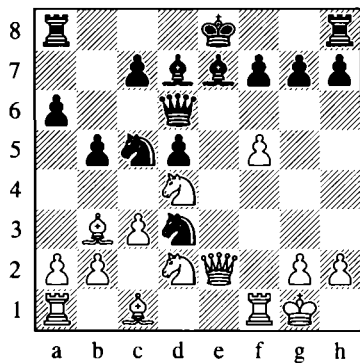


This rare move offers a pawn sacrifice which Black should accept.

11...♟xe5 12...♟c2

This may seem rather slow, but White's more energetic attempts to justify his play also fail to impress:

12.♟e2 was played in Hatanbaatar – Munhbayar, Erdenet 1994. Here I suggest 12...♟d6!N when best play continues: 13.f4 (13.♟2f3 ♟g6 leaves White with little to show for the pawn.) 13...♟ed3 14.f5 ♟d7



15.f6! gxf6 16.♟c2 ♟xc1 17.♟axc1 0–0–0 18.♟cel ♟de8♞ Although White can claim some compensation here, Black's chances are higher.

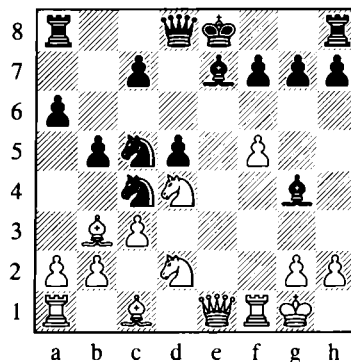
12.f4 ♟g4!

A strong intermediate move.

13.♟e1 ♟c4 14.f5?

14.♟g3N is better, but after 14...h5 15.♟xc4 dxc4 16.h3 ♟e6 17.♟xg7 ♟f6 18.♟xe6 ♟xg7 19.♟xd8 ♟xd8♞ Black has the better endgame.

The attempt to trap the bishop was seen in Walsh – Souto, Buenos Aires 1988.



14...0–0!

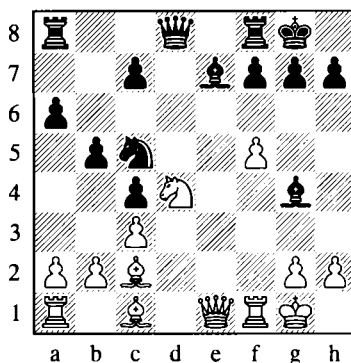
After this obvious improvement Black is clearly better, for example:

15.♟xc4

15.h3? ♟h4! 16.g3 ♟d3 traps the queen.

15.♟g3?! h5 16.♟c6 ♟d6! gives Black a decisive advantage.

15...dxc4 16.♟c2



16...♟e8! 17.♟g3 h5 18.h3 ♟h4 19.♟f4 ♟e2

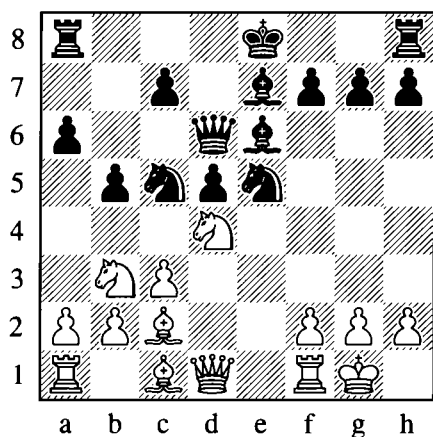
The bishop escapes, leaving Black with both a material and a positional advantage.

12...♖d6 13.♘b3

Caruana mentions that 13.b4 ♘a4 is fine for Black. White can regain his pawn, but doing so will cost him his valuable light-squared bishop.

Caruana also notes 13.f4 ♘c6 as satisfactory for Black, although in my opinion 13...♘g4 deserves serious attention.

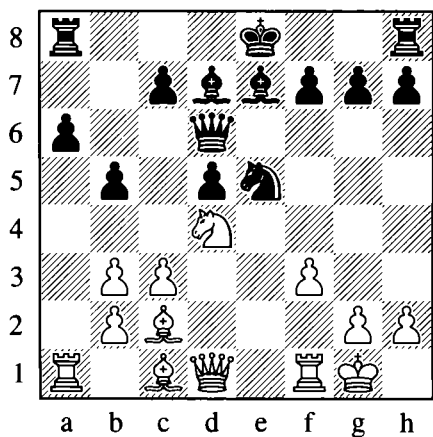
The text move occurred in the game Gashimov – Caruana, Khanty-Mansiysk (rapid) 2009.

**13...♙g4!N**

This improvement was also offered by the Italian superstar.

14.f3 ♘xb3!

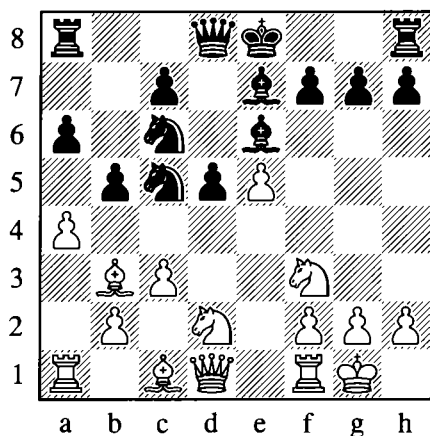
An important intermediate move.

15.axb3 ♙d7**16.f4**

16.♙f4 0–0 17.♞e1 ♙f6 is noted by Caruana.

16...♘g4

Caruana states that “only Black can be better.” I would have to agree with him, as White remains a pawn down for uncertain compensation.

C3) 11.a4

This flank attack is extremely rare, but should still be approached with caution.

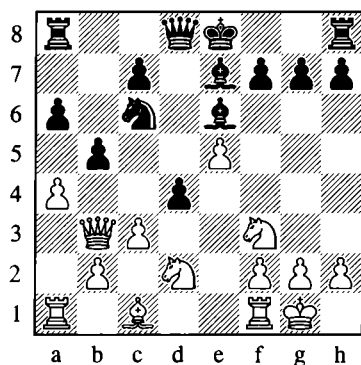
11...♘b3

Caruana chose 11...b4?! in a rapid game against Gashimov, but after 12.♘d4! White began to develop some initiative. 11...0–0!? makes a bit more sense, but I prefer the text move.

12.♘xb3!N

This untested move is clearly best, as Caruana pointed out in his annotations.

The dubious 12.♖xb3?! was seen in Morozevich – Carlsen, Morelia/Linares 2007. Here both Marin and Caruana point out that 12...d4!N is good for Black, and I fully agree with them. A possible continuation is:



13.♞d1 dxc3 14.bxc3 0-0 15.♞e2 ♟f5! Black's advantage is not in doubt.

12...0-0 13.♟e3

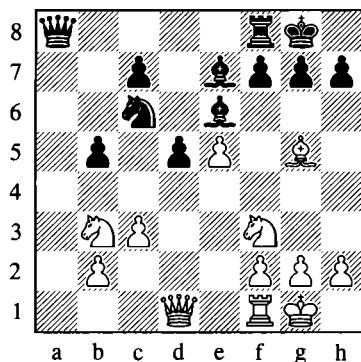
White is trying to take control over the dark squares.

The alternative is:

13.axb5 axb5 14.♞xa8 ♞xa8 15.♟g5

Caruana stops here and remarks that "White might have a slight edge, but Black is pretty solid..."

I decided to extend the analysis slightly:



15...♟g4! 16.♟xe7 ♟xe7 17.♟bd4

17.h3?! is dubious due to 17...♟xf3 18.♞xf3 ♞a2!.

17...c5! 18.h3

Or 18.♟xb5 ♞c6 19.♟d6 ♟g6 20.♞e1 f6! and Black is fine.

18...♟d7=

With an equal position. (18...♟xh3!? is also playable.)

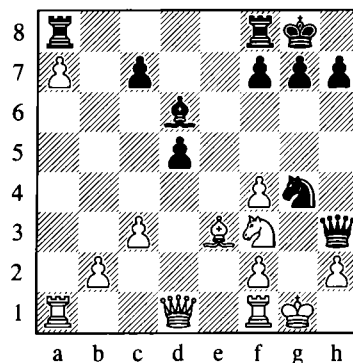
13...♟g4!?

Black initiates complications, making use of his unopposed light-squared bishop.

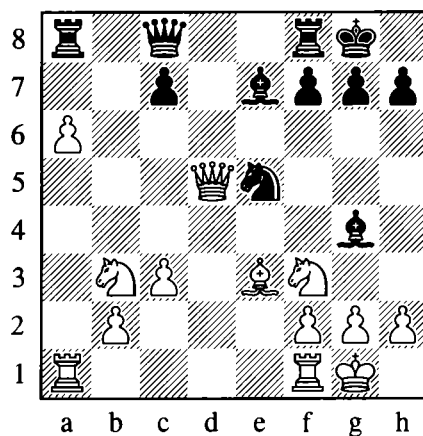
There is a safe alternative in 13...b4, which leads to roughly equal play.

14.axb5 ♟xe5 15.bxa6 ♞c8! 16.♞xd5

16.a7?! is strongly met by: 16...♟xf3 17.gxf3 ♞h3 18.♟d2 ♟d6 19.f4 ♟g4 20.♟f3



20...c6! 21.c4 ♟f8! 22.cxd5 cxd5. Black has a dangerous initiative. His threats include ...d4 and ...♟xe3 followed by ...♟c5.



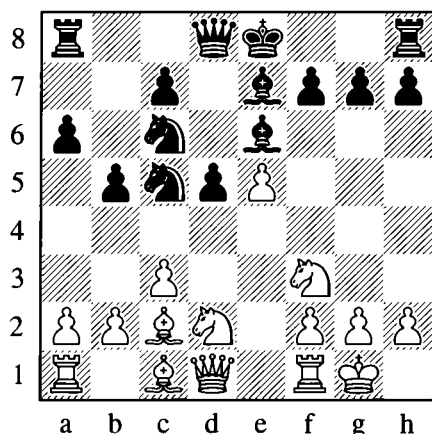
16...♟xf3! 17.gxf3 ♟h3 18.♞fe1

18.a7?! ♟d8 19.♞c4 ♟d6 20.♟f4 ♟b6! is better for Black.

18...♞xa6 19.♞xa6 ♞xa6 20.♞h5 ♞g6†

21. ♖xg6 fxg6 22. ♕d2 ♖a8

Despite the queen exchange, Black maintains adequate compensation thanks to the weakness of White's first rank, not to mention the doubled f-pawns and Black's bishop pair.

C4) 11. ♕c2

With his last move White safeguards the bishop, which has now set its sights on the kingside.

11...d4

I have tested both this move and 11...♗g4 in my own games. Pushing the d-pawn is a thematic idea to force the play. In this particular case it may lead to positions where White has a slight endgame advantage, but where Black is not in any real danger. See the next chapter for more details.

12.cxd4

As I mentioned previously, the main theoretical move is 12. ♖b3, which forms the subject of the next and final chapter.

12. ♖e4 d3 forces 13. ♖xc5 – see 12. ♖b3 d3 13. ♖xc5 as covered in variation A of the next chapter, beginning on page 340.

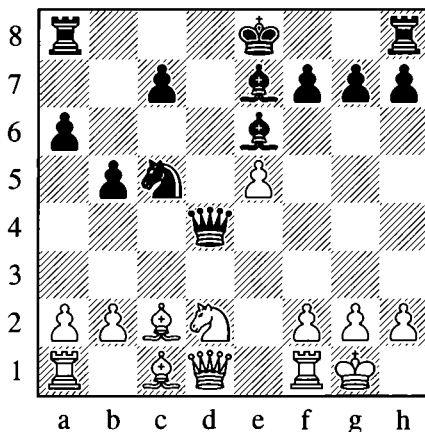
12... ♖xd4**13. ♖xd4**

The alternatives don't make much sense.

13.b4? ♖xc2 14. ♖xc2 ♖d3! 15. ♖xd3 ♖xd3 16. ♖d4 occurred in Zapata – Torres, Miami 2007. Now after 16...♗d5N 17. ♖c3 ♗b7 Black can claim an advantage thanks to his bishop pair.

13. ♖e4?! ♖xc2 14. ♖xc2 ♖d3! 15. ♖xd3 ♖xd3 16. ♖d4 occurred in Zapata – Torres, Miami 2007. Now after 16...♗d5N 17. ♖c3 ♗b7 Black can claim an advantage thanks to his bishop pair.

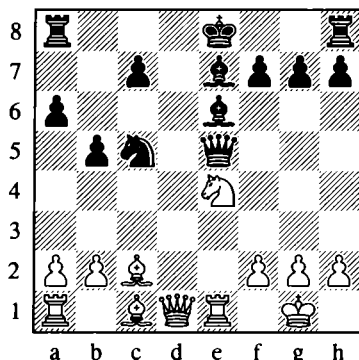
13. ♗e4 was seen in Bar – Mazziotti Irigoyen, San Bernardo 2002. This is the best of the three sidelines, but still a clear inaccuracy. 13...♖b8!N 14. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 15. ♗c6† ♗d7 16. ♗xd7† ♖xd7 17. ♖f3 ♖d3! Black intends ...c5-c4 with a slight advantage.

13... ♖xd4**14. ♖f3**

Once again this is obviously the best move for White, who will try to exploit the slight weakening of Black's queenside in the endgame. Here are some deservedly rare sidelines:

14. ♖f3?! makes no sense. 14...0–0 15. ♖e1 ♗ad8† Kaiser – Ferrari, Seefeld 1999.

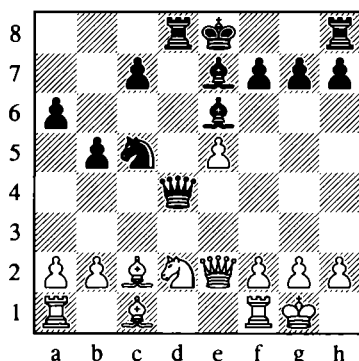
14.♟e4? is an unjustified pawn sacrifice:
 14...♞xe5 15.♞e1 (15.♟xc5N ♟xc5 16.♞f3
 0–0 17.♟f4 ♞f6 18.♟e4 ♞ac8)–



15...♞d8! 16.♞e2 0–0 17.f4 ♞d5+ Black was a healthy pawn up in Kutzner – Gremeda, Budapest 2005.

14.a4?! was played in I. Popov – Ripsov, Cherepovets 2001. Here Black's play can easily be improved with: 14...♟xa4N (14...0–0N 15.axb5 axb5 16.♞xa8 ♞xa8 17.♟f3 ♞xd1 18.♞xd1 b4 is also good for Black.) 15.♟xa4 bxa4 16.♞xa4+ ♞xa4 17.♞xa4 0–0+ Black is slightly better thanks to the bishop pair.

14.♞e2?! ♞d8



15.♟f3

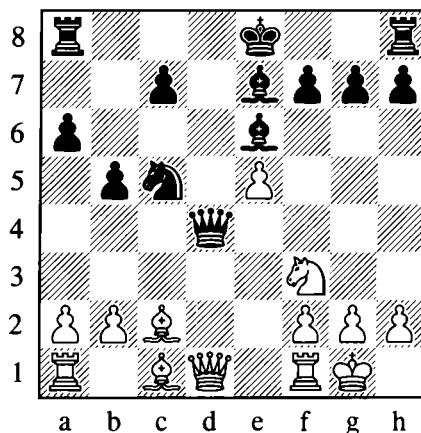
15.♟h1 ♟d3 16.♟b3 ♟xc1 17.♞fxcl ♞xb2 18.f4 Castellanos – Vedreno Rios, Mislata 2003. Now I would like to offer 18...♟d5!N

and White has insufficient compensation for the pawn.

15.♞d1 0–0 16.♟b3 ♞c4 17.♞xc4 ♞xd1+ 18.♟xd1 ♟xc4 left Black with the more comfortable position in Arvola – Benning, Goch 2009.

15...♞c4 16.♞xc4 ♟xc4

Only Black can be better, Martin Perez – Baron Rodriguez, Madrid 2006.



14...♞xd1 15.♞xd1 0–0

After getting some rare sidelines out of the way, we have arrived at the main starting position for the 12.cxd4 variation. White has tried four moves here: C41) 16.♟g5, C42) 16.♟e3, C43) 16.♟g5 and C44) 16.♟d4.

C41) 16.♟g5

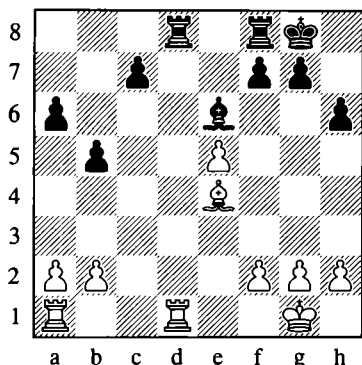
This was introduced by Svidler in 2004, but it has not really caught on. White is going for a version of the main 16.♟g5 line without dark-squared bishops on the board.

16...♟xg5 17.♟xg5 h6 18.♟h7+

18.♟xe6N ♟xe6 should give Black a slightly easier version of the main line, with his king one square closer to the centre.

In a subsequent game White attempted to improve upon Svidler's play with:

18.♖e4 ♜xe4 19.♙xe4 ♜ad8



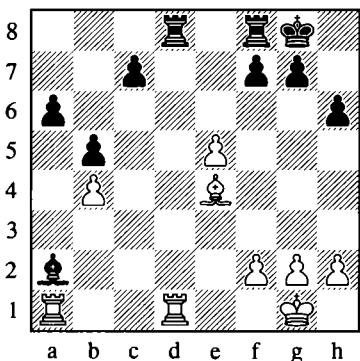
20.b4?!

White fixes the queenside, but gives away his a-pawn. The idea is playable, but hardly a serious try for an advantage.

After the seemingly principled 20.f4 Black answers with 20...♙g4! seizing the d-file: 21.♞xd8 (21.♞dc1 ♜d4 22.♙b7 ♙c8! 23.♙f3 ♞xf4 24.♞xc7 ♜d4 is equal.) 21...♞xd8 22.♞c1 ♜d4 23.♙b7 a5= and Black cannot be worse.

20...♙xa2!

Taking advantage of the weak first rank.



21.f3!N

21.f4? ♞xd1† 22.♞xd1 f6! left White struggling in Panchanathan – Ernst, Maastricht 2009.

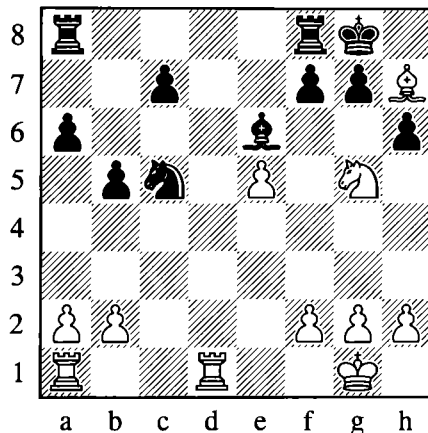
The text move is safer and should lead to equality.

21...♞xd1† 22.♞xd1 ♙c4 23.♞a1 f6

23...f5!? 24.♙c2 f4 25.♞xa6 ♜c8 is also equal.

24.♞xa6 fxe5 25.♞a7 ♜c8 26.♙f5 ♜f8 27.♙e4 ♜c8=

The game ends in a repetition.

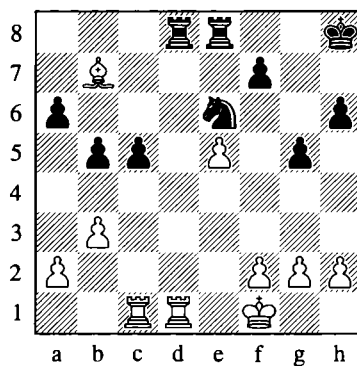


18...♙h8 19.♖xe6 ♜xe6 20.♙e4 ♜ad8

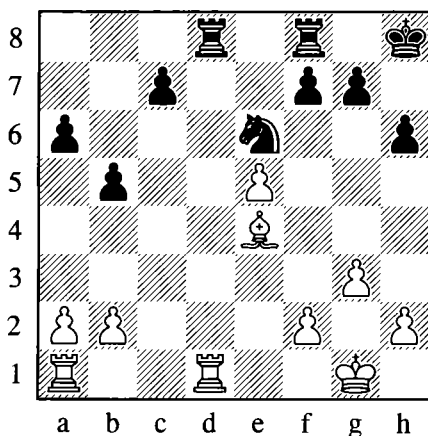
Compared with the later variation C43 (which begins on page 330), the absence of dark-squared bishops does not seem to harm Black's chances. We will follow the example of Kramnik, who equalized without any noticeable problems.

21.g3

21.♞ac1 is slightly more challenging, but Black is safe enough after: 21...c5 22.b3 ♜fe8 23.♙f1 g5! 24.♙b7



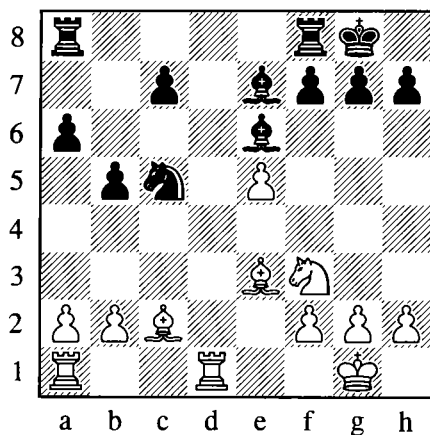
24...b4! Based on the following line: 25.♙xa6 ♞xd1† 26.♞xd1 ♜d4 27.♙c4 ♙g7 28.♞e1 ♞a8 29.♞a1 ♜c2 30.♞d1 ♜d4=

**21...♟fe8**

Black begins to target the weak pawn on e5.

22.♟c6 ♟e7 23.a4 ♞d4 24.axb5 axb5
25.♟xb5 ♞f3† 26.♞g2 ♟b8 27.♟e2
½–½

A draw was agreed here in Svidler – Kramnik, Dortmund 2004, as the queenside pawns are likely to be exchanged. Note that 27.♞d5 ♟xe5 (27...♞xe5!?) 28.♟c4 ♟xd5 29.♟xd5 ♞e5= would not have changed much.

C42) 16.♟e3

This is a sensible developing move, but not a dangerous one.

16...♟fd8 17.♟dc1

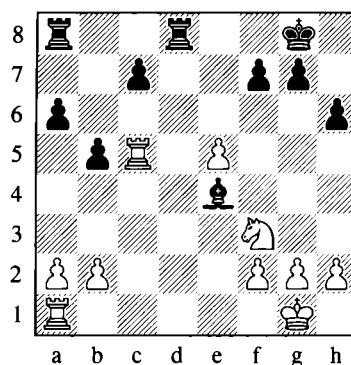
17.♞d4 ♟d5 18.♞e2 (18.♞f5 ♟f8 leads to line C44 below – see 16.♞d4 ♟fd8 17.♟e3 ♟d5 18.♞f5 ♟f8 on page 334.) This can be met by 18...♟c4! 19.♞c3 ♞f8 intending ...♟d3 and Black equalizes.

17...h6

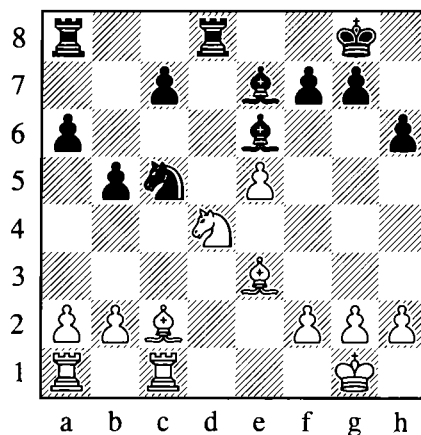
White was threatening to take on h7. Apart from that, it is useful to take the g5-square away from White's pieces.

18.♞d4

18.♟xc5 leads to an equal rook endgame:
18...♟xc5 19.♟e4 ♟d5 20.♟xc5 ♟xe4



21.♟xc7 ♟xf3 22.gxf3 ♞d2 23.b3 ♟e8 24.♟e1
♟xa2= Saric – P. H. Nielsen, Aix-les-Bains 2011.



18...♟d5 19.♞f5 ♟f8 20.♟xc5!

Otherwise the knight retreats to e6, leaving everything in order for Black.

20...♙xc5 21.♙d1! ♙f8 22.♞xc7

White has won a pawn, but in return Black has the bishop pair and enough prospects for counterplay.

22...♙e6 23.♞e3 ♞d2 24.♙c2

24.b3N ♞ad8 gives Black plenty of activity.

24...♞ad8

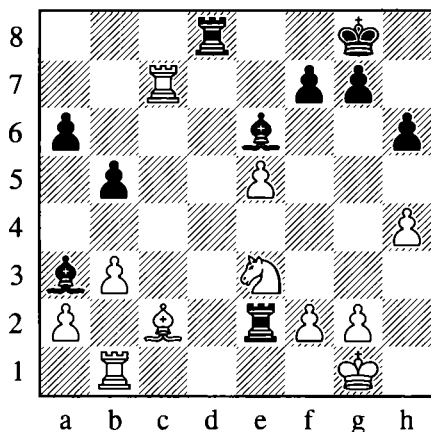
24...g5!?N is an interesting way of restraining White's kingside pawns.

25.h4 ♞e2

Black prepares to double on the second rank. I would also consider 25...h5!?N with balanced chances.

26.b3 ♙a3 27.♞b1

We have been following the game Robson – Kaidanov, Saint Louis 2009. Now I would like to improve Black's play with:



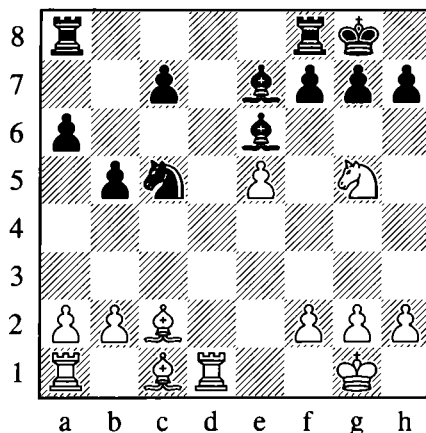
27...a5!N

Preventing b3-b4.

28.h5 ♙f8!

Black has at least full compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

C43) 16.♞g5

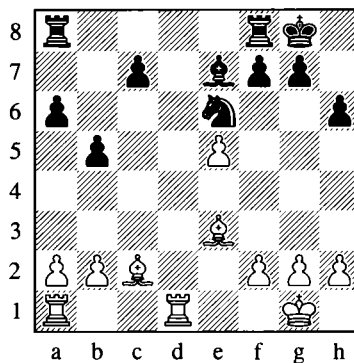


With this move White forces the exchange of one of the enemy bishops.

16...h6 17.♙h7+!?

Before coming to e4 White worsens the position of the black king.

The immediate 17.♞xe6 is not an improvement. 17...♞xe6 18.♙e3 Now in Schnoor – Geske, Dresden 2007, Black could have continued as in the main line with:

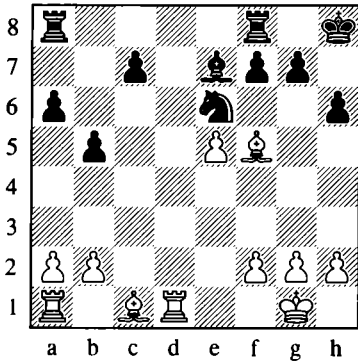


18...♙g5!N 19.♙xg5 hxg5 20.♙b3 (Both 20.♙e4 and 20.♙f5 can be compared with the main line below; the only difference is that here the black king is on g8 instead of h8, which is obviously not harming his chances.) 20...♞ad8 21.♙xe6 Otherwise ...♞fe8 comes.

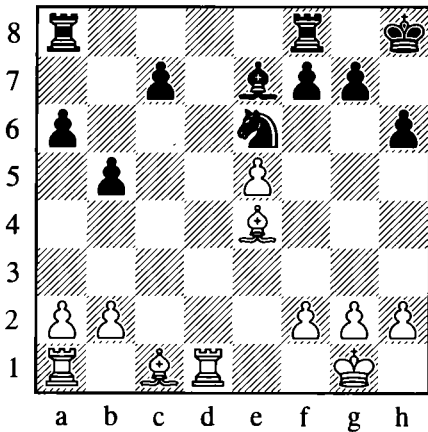
21...fxe6 22.♟f1 ♟f7 23.♞ac1 ♞xd1† 24.♞xd1
♟e7 25.♞d3 ♞f5= Black equalizes.

17...♟h8 18.♜xe6 ♜xe6 19.♞e4

White tried a different approach with 19.♞f5 in Baramidze – Belikov, Dortmund 2003. Here Black should respond with:



19...♞c5!N Guarding the e3-square and preparing to bring a rook to d8. Play may continue 20.♞e3 ♞xe3 21.fxe3 ♞ad8 22.♟f2 ♞fe8 and Black has no problem equalizing.

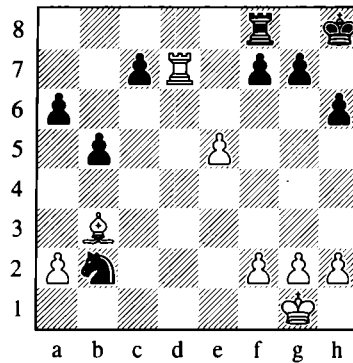


19...♞ad8 20.♞e3 ♞g5!

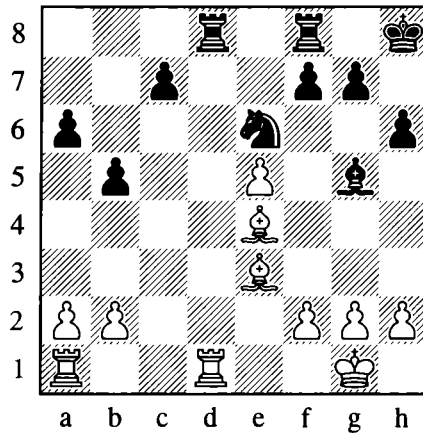
It is important to exchange at least one of White's strong bishops.

20...♞c5!? is a reasonable alternative, and the logical continuation of 21.♞xc5 ♜xc5 22.♞d5 ♜a4 23.♞b3 ♞xd1† 24.♞xd1 ♜xb2 25.♞d7 occurred in Nyysti – Norri, Finland 2008.

Now I would like to improve Black's play with:



25...g5!N (25...♟g8!?N also should suffice.)
26.♞xf7 ♜d3! 27.e6 ♜e5 28.♞xc7 ♜xf7
29.exf7 ♟g7 30.♞a7 ♞c8 The best White can hope for is to eliminate all the queenside pawns, resulting in a rook endgame with three pawns against two on the kingside, which should be an easy draw.



21.♞xg5 hxg5 22.♟f1

White plans to bring the king to e3 to support a kingside advance with g2-g3 and f2-f4.

The immediate 22.g3 doesn't set many problems: 22...♞fe8 (22...♜d4!?N 23.♞b7 ♞fe8 equalizes easily.) 23.♞c6 ♞e7 24.♞d5 ♞xd5 25.♞xd5 ♜d4 26.♞d1 c5 27.♟g2 ♞xe5 28.♞xf7 a5 29.a4 b4 Black was fine in Timofeev – Movsesian, Sarajevo 2007.

22...g6 23.♔e2

This was White's latest attempt at 2700 level.

23.♙d5N ♜fe8 24.♙xe6 ♜xd1† 25.♜xd1 ♜xe6
26.♞d7 ♔g7 27.♜xc7 ♜xe5= leads to an equal
rook endgame.

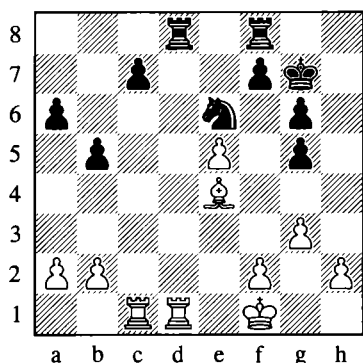
The other serious move, which was once played
by Anand, is:

23.♜ac1

A logical attempt to target Black's weaknesses
on the c-file.

23...♔g7 24.g3

Here Black's most precise move order is:



24...♜fe8!N

The game continued 24...g4 25.♙d5 ♜fe8,
reaching a position that we will come to
shortly. The problem is that White had the
extra possibility of 25.♙b7!N a5 26.♙d5,
when the loosening of Black's queenside
pawns complicates the defence, although
even here Black retains good chances for a
draw after 26...♔h6! activating the king.

25.♙d5

25.♙c6 ♜e7 26.♜xd8 ♔xd8 27.♙g2 ♔e6
28.b4 g4! 29.h3 gxh3 30.♙xh3 ♔d4
31.♙g2 ♜xe5 32.♜xc7 ♔f6 reaches an equal
endgame.

25...g4

We have now transposed back to the Anand
game without allowing the 25.♙b7!N
possibility noted above.

26.♙c6 ♜h8

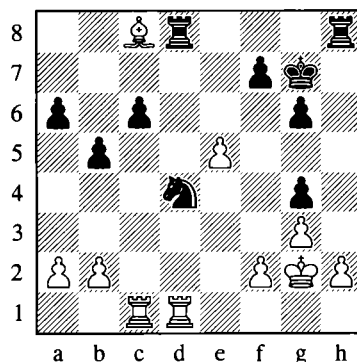
26...♜e7!? is also equal.

27.♙g2 ♔d4 28.♙b7 c6!

Cutting the bishop off.

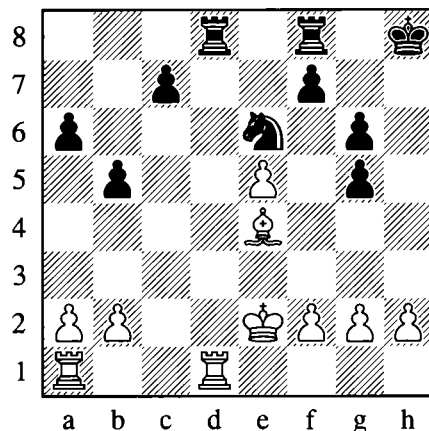
29.♙c8!

This position was reached in Anand – Green-
feld, Haifa (rapid) 2000. Here I believe the
most accurate continuation would have been:



29...♔f3N 30.♙xg4 ♔xe5 31.♙e2 g5

With equal chances.



23...♔g7 24.g3 ♜fe8

With this move Black creates a threat of
...♜xd1 followed by ...♔c5 with a double
attack.

24...c5!?N 25.♔e3 g4! also looks fine for Black.

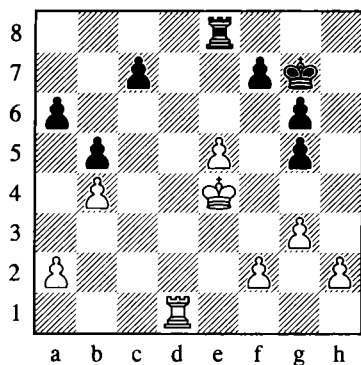
25.♔e3 ♜xd1 26.♜xd1 ♔c5!

This seems to be the simplest route to equality.

27.f4

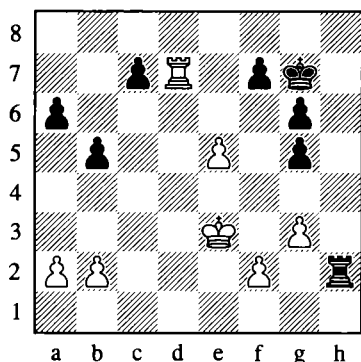
I checked two other ideas, neither of which lead to any advantage for White.

Against 27.b4N Black can play: 27...♟xe4 28.♟xe4

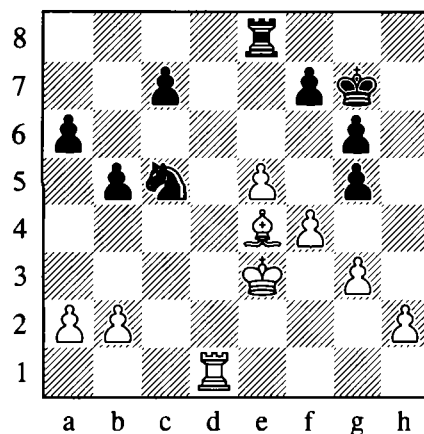


28...f5†! 29.♟d3 ♞xe5 30.♞c1 g4! 31.♞xc7† ♟f6 The endgame is equal, for instance: 32.♞c6† ♞e6 33.♞xe6† ♟xe6 34.♟d4 ♟d6 35.a3 g5=

27.♞d5N ♟xe4 28.♟xe4 ♞h8 29.♞d7 ♞xh2 30.♟e3



30...♞h1! 31.♞xc7 ♞e1† 32.♟d4 ♞e2 33.♞a7 ♞xb2 34.e6 ♞xf2 35.♟c5 ♞f5† 36.♟b4 ♟f6 37.exf7 ♟g7 and a draw is inevitable.

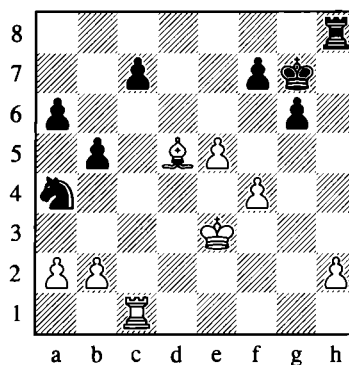


27...gxf4†

27...♞h8!?N is also equal.

28.♟xf4

Another possibility is: 28.gxf4 ♞h8 29.♟d5 ♟a4! 30.♞c1



30...♞h3†! 31.♟f3 ♟xb2 32.♞xc7 ♟f8 and Black is fine.

28...♟e6† 29.♟e3 ♞h8 30.h4 ♞h5 31.♞d5 c6 32.♞d6 ♞xe5

By now it is obvious that Black has equalized, and the rest of the game was pretty uneventful.

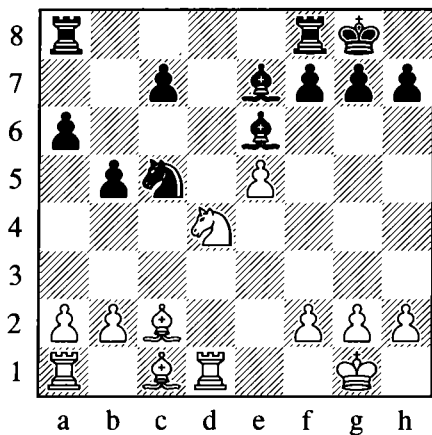
33.♟f3 c5 34.♞xa6 ♟d4† 35.♟f4 f6 36.♞a7† ♟h6 37.g4 ♟e6† 38.♟f3 ♟d4† 1/2–1/2

Efimenko – Caruana, Poikovsky 2011.

The notes to this and the earlier Anand – Greenfield game indicate that Black should

not have too much trouble maintaining the balance against 16.♘g5.

C44) 16.♘d4



Compared with the previous line this fails to gain a tempo against the h7-pawn, but on the plus side for White, the knight gets some other options besides taking on e6.

16...♜f8 17.♙e3

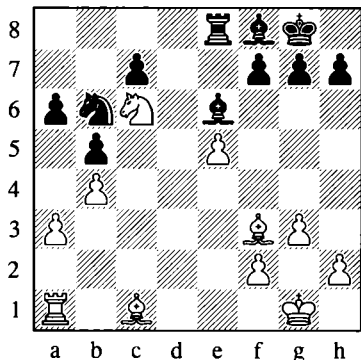
In the 2011 Women's World Championship final White tried a different approach, which has not yet been repeated.

17.b4!? ♘a4 18.♘c6 ♜xd1† 19.♙xd1 ♙f8 20.♙f3 ♜e8 21.a3 ♘b6!

The knight is heading to c4.

22.g3

This was Hou Yifan – Koneru, Tirana (5) 2011, and here I recommend:



22...g6!N

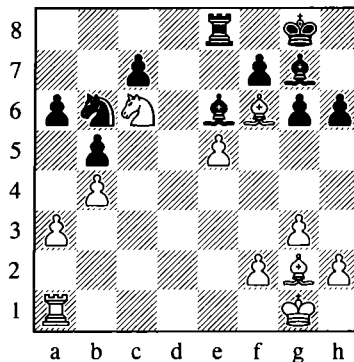
Preparing an attack on the e5-pawn. Play may continue:

23.♙g5 ♙g7 24.♙g2

24.♙d8? is met by 24...♙xe5!.

24...h6 25.♙f6

25.♙e3 f6 26.exf6 ♙xf6 27.♜c1 ♘h7 is also balanced.



25...♙xf6 26.exf6 ♘f8 27.♜c1 ♙c4 28.♘a5 ♜e6 29.♙b7 ♜xf6 30.♙xa6 ♜f3 31.♘xc4 bxc4=

The ending should be drawn.

17...♙d5!

The bishop covers the c6-square and vacates e6 for the knight.

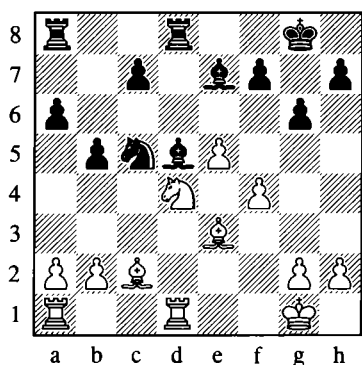
18.♘f5

The only drawback of Black's last move is that it left f5 ungaurded. If White is to obtain any hope of an advantage, he had better make use of this. Three harmless alternatives have been tried:

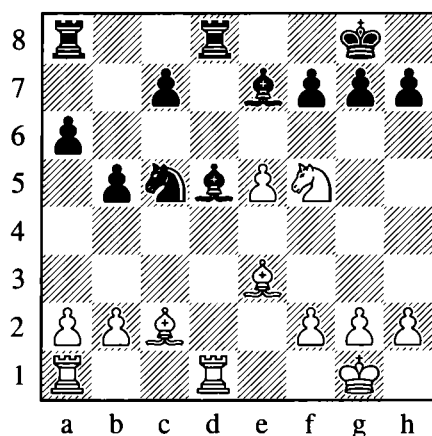
18.b3 can be met by 18...g6, taking away the f5-square. 19.f3 ♘e6 20.♙f2 In this roughly equal position a draw was agreed in Zupe – Stannov, Skopje 2012.

18.♜ac1 ♘e6 19.♘xe6 (19.♘f5 ♙f8=) 19...fxe6 20.♙b3 ♙xb3 21.axb3 ♜xd1† 22.♜xd1 ♜d8 23.♜xd8† ♙xd8 was equal in Marinkovic – Bodic, Cacak 1991.

18.f4 occurred in Pablo Marin – Baron Rodriguez, Barcelona 2005. Here I would recommend 18...g6!?N to guard the f5-square, after which play may continue:



19.♞ac1 ♜e6 20.♜xe6 (20.♜e2 b4! 21.♝f2 a5 is fine for Black.) 20...fxe6 21.♞b3 ♟xb3 22.axb3 ♞xd1† 23.♞xd1 ♞d8 24.♞xd8† ♟xd8 with an equal bishop endgame.

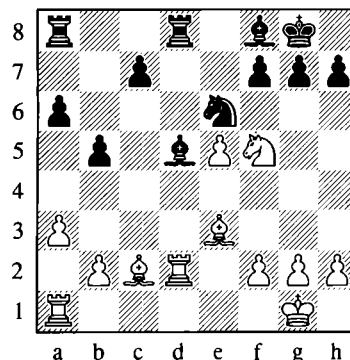


18...♟f8 19.♟g5

With this move White attempts to exploit the hanging position of the bishop on d5. Curiously, the exact same position once arose from the 9.♟bd2 ♟e7 variation, after White lost a tempo on ♞elxd1 but saved one by playing ♟g5 in one move, without going to e3 first.

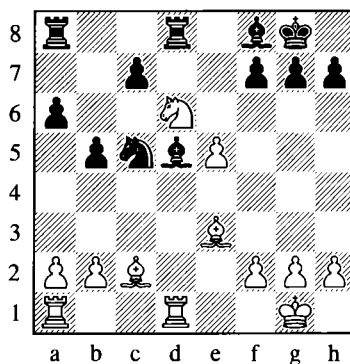
Two other moves have been tested, the second of which deserves particular attention.

19.♞d2 ♜e6 20.a3 was played in Nijboer – Ernst, Haaksbergen 2009. Here I would like to introduce:



20...b4!?N 21.axb4 ♟xb4 22.♞dd1 a5 23.f3 c6 With a roughly equal position.

We must also examine a tactical possibility: 19.♜d6!?



19...♟xc2! 20.♟xc5

20.♜xf7N may lead to a beautiful drawing finale: 20...♞xd1† 21.♞xd1 ♟f3 22.♞d4 ♜e6 (22...♟e7!?) 23.♟b3! ♜xd4 24.♜h6† ♜h8 25.♜f7† with a perpetual.

20...cxd6 21.exd6

White's only chance is to create a passed pawn.

In the event of 21.♟xd6 ♟f3 22.♞d2 ♞ac8= Black is fine.

21...♟f3 22.♞d2 g6

Black prepares ...♟h6 at the appropriate

moment, while also taking the f5-square away from White's light-squared bishop, thus preparing to double on the d-file.

23.a4

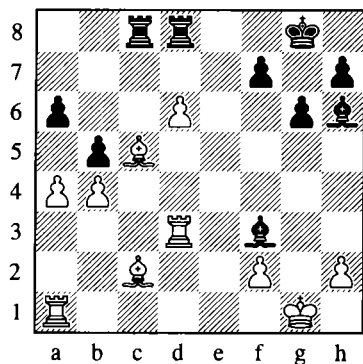
23.♞e1 ♞d7 24.♙d1 ♙xd1 25.♞exd1 f5 26.b4 ♟f7 27.♟f1 ♞c8 28.a3 ♞e8 29.h3 ♞e5 30.♟g2 ♟e6 was equal in Hindicky – Feco, corr. 2005.

23...♞ac8

23...♞d7!?N is also equal.

24.b4 ♙h6 25.♞d3

This is the only option, as 25.♞d4? ♙g7 is no good for White.

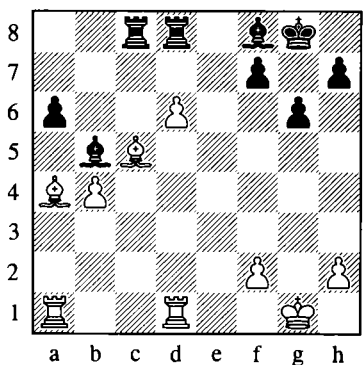


25...♙c6

25...♙e4!?N=

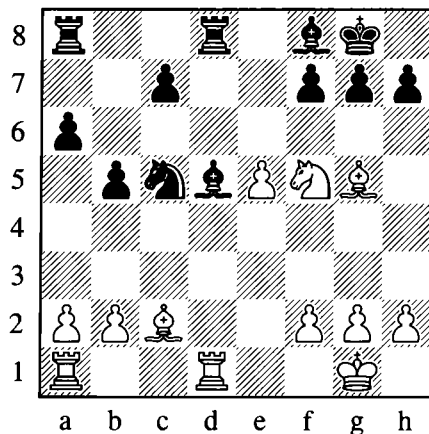
26.axb5 ♙xb5 27.♞dd1 ♙f8 28.♙a4

White simplifies to a draw. Protecting the bishop with 28.♞a2N doesn't change much: 28...♞d7 29.♟g2 ♞cd8 30.♙b6 ♞e8 31.♙c5 ♞ed8=



28...♙xa4 29.♞xa4 ♞c6 30.♞a3 f6 31.♟g2 ♟f7 32.♞da1 ♙xd6 33.♞xa6 ♞xa6 34.♞xa6 ♙xc5 35.bxc5 ♞c8=

A draw was agreed a few moves later in Volokitin – Sutovsky, Poikovsky 2008. A well-played game by both players!



19...♞d7 20.♟e7† ♙xe7 21.♙xe7 ♟e6!

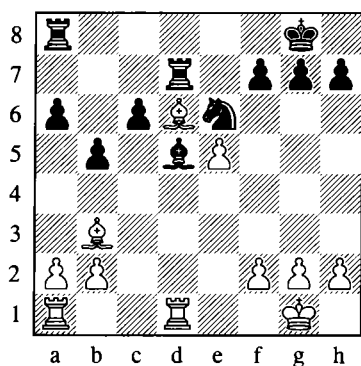
The position after White's 21st move was first reached in the game Shirov – Ivanchuk, Sofia 2009. On that occasion Black played 21...♞xe7?!, but failed to equalize and White eventually won the ending.

The text move was recommended by Mihail Marin. Although the conventional advice when playing against the bishop pair is to eliminate one of the bishops when given the opportunity, the Romanian grandmaster pointed out that, in this particular position, it is more important for Black to preserve his own bishop, in order to bolster his control over the light squares. Two subsequent games have followed this path, and it seems to me that Black is doing fine.

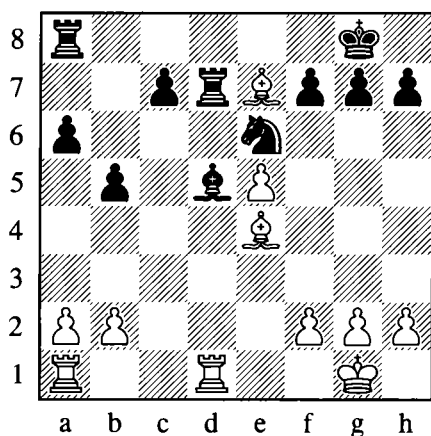
22.♙e4

Marin points out the line 22.♞xd5? ♞xd5 23.♙e4 ♞ad8 24.♙xd8 ♞xd8+ when Black is doing well.

The other possibility is: 22.♟b3 c6 23.♟d6 (23.♟xd5 occurred in Vutov – Dimov, Albena 2011, and now 23...♞xd5N transposes to the main line below.)



23...♟b3 24.axb3 a5 Black is fine according to Marin. I agree with his assessment, and would only add that Black's next move is likely to be 25...f6, undermining the enemy bishop and making room to activate the king.



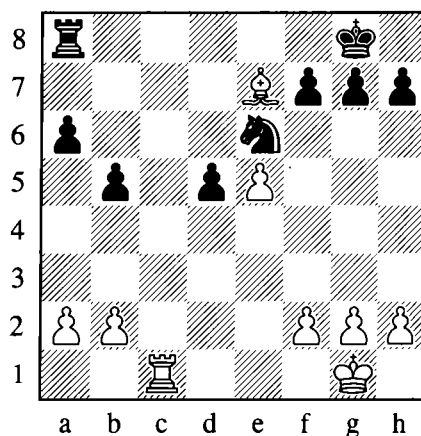
22...c6 23.♟xd5 ♞xd5 24.♞xd5

24.♟d6 gives Black a choice of equalizing lines: 24...♟d4 (the alternative is 24...♞xd1† 25.♞xd1 ♞d8 followed by ...f6.) 25.♟f1 f6 26.♞ac1 fxe5 27.♟xe5 ♞xe5 28.♞xd4 ♞ae8 29.♞d2 c5=

24...cxd5 25.♞c1!

Taking the open file is the only serious

attempt to cause problems. Instead 25.a4 ♞c8 26.axb5 axb5 27.g3 h5 is fine for Black.



25...h5!?

Black prepares to activate his king via h7 and g6.

I also checked 25...♟f4?! but was less than happy with the ensuing endgame after: 26.♞d1 ♞c8 27.g3 ♞c1 28.♞xc1 ♟e2† 29.♟f1 ♟xc1 30.b4! White retains some winning chances due to the passive king on g8 and the vulnerable pawns on the queenside.

Marin offered a reasonable alternative: 25...♞e8N 26.♟d6 g5 27.♞c6 ♟g7 28.♟f1 (or 28.♞xa6 ♞c8) 28...h5 and Black has counterplay thanks to the strong knight on e6.

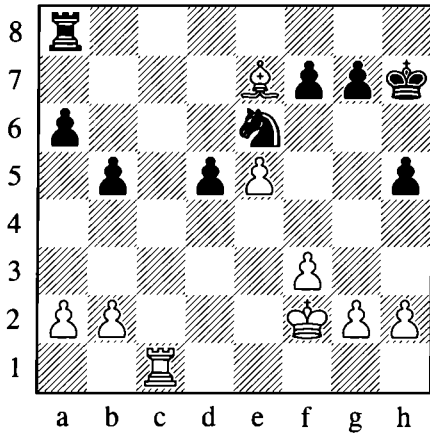
26.f3

26.♟f1N ♟h7 27.♟d6 g5 is similar to Marin's line above.

26...♟h7

26...♟f4!N promises roughly equal chances, for instance: 27.♞c2 (or 27.♞d1 ♞e8 28.♟d6 ♞c8 with counterplay) 27...♞e8 28.♟d6 ♟d3 29.♞d2 ♟xe5 30.♞xd5 ♞d8 31.♞xe5 ♞xd6=

27.♟f2



27...d4! 28.Bd1

Another possibility is 28.Bc2 Bxe8 29.f6 d4 30.b4 g6 31.Bd2 Bc8 32.f5 d6 and once again White has to be accurate to equalize.

28...Bc8 29.Bd2 d4!?

Svidler – Caruana, Amsterdam 2009. Black has gradually obtained the upper hand, and he went on to win in good style.

Conclusion

The sidelines after 10.c3 f7 have occasionally attracted the interest of top grandmasters, and contain enough interesting points to make them worthy of attention. Nevertheless, it is hard to see any of them rivalling 11.f2 for main-line status.

After 11.f2 d4, the 12.cxd4 line does not seem to offer White any serious chances for an advantage against correct defence. So far all attempts to improve on Anand's play have failed, and so the ball remains in White's court.

Chapter 19

Main Lines



9. ♖bd2 ♜c5 10. c3 ♙e7 11. ♙c2 d4 12. ♖b3

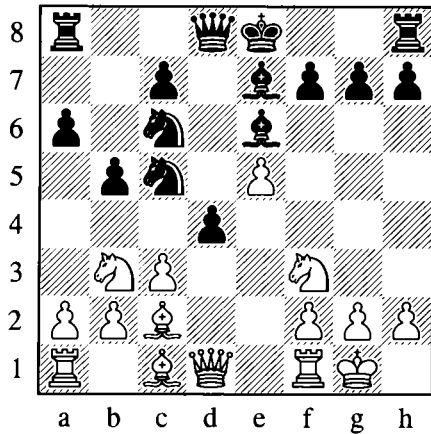
Variation Index

1. e4 e5 2. ♖f3 ♜c6 3. ♙b5 a6 4. ♙a4 ♜f6 5. 0-0 ♜xe4 6. d4 b5 7. ♙b3 d5
8. dxe5 ♙e6 9. ♖bd2 ♜c5 10. c3 ♙e7 11. ♙c2 d4 12. ♖b3

12...d3

A) 13. ♜xc5 dxc2 14. ♙xd8† ♜xd8 15. ♜xe6 fxe6 16. ♙e3 ♜d5	340
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A2) 17. ♜ac1	344
A3) 17. ♜fc1 ♜xe5 18. ♜xe5 ♜xe5 19. ♜xc2	346
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B1) 15. b4	354
B2) 15. ♙e3 0-0	358
B21) 16. ♜e1	359
B22) 16. ♜d4	361
B23) 16. ♙d4 ♙d5 17. ♜e1 d2!	362
B231) 18. ♙xd2	363
B232) 18. ♜e3	364
B233) 18. ♙xf5!?	365
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1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♗xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6
9.♘bd2 ♘c5 10.c3 ♙e7 11.♙c2 d4 12.♘b3

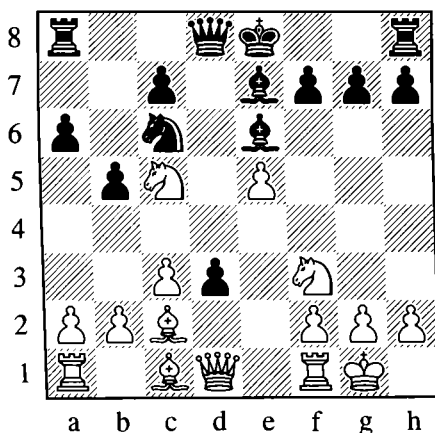


With this ambitious move White retains the tension and dares the black d-pawn to advance one square further, in the hope that it will become vulnerable on d3.

12...d3

Other moves fail to equalize, so we will accept the challenge. From this position both A) 13.♘xc5 and B) 13.♙b1 are serious options. Each move has its own appeal, and both have been tested at high levels. The former aims for a risk-free endgame edge, while the second is more complex and ambitious, but also potentially double-edged.

A) 13.♘xc5



By simplifying the position, White attempts to torture Black in a slightly better endgame.

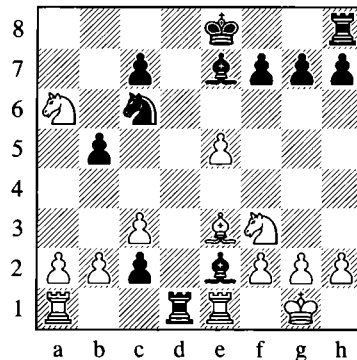
13...dxc2 14.♙xd8† ♖xd8 15.♘xe6

For the sake of completeness I also analysed a poor alternative:

15.♘xa6?N

This is a mistake as it allows Black to keep both the c2-pawn and the bishop pair.

15...♙c4 16.♖e1 ♖d1 17.♙e3 ♙e2!



18.♘xc7†

18.♘d4 ♘xd4 19.cxd4 ♘d7 20.f3 ♖a8
21.♘c5† ♙xc5 22.dxc5 ♖xe1† 23.♖xe1 ♙d1
24.a3 b4!†

18...♘d7 19.♘xb5

19.♘a6? loses to 19...♖a8 20.♘c5† ♙xc5
21.♙xc5 ♖xa2! 22.♖c1 ♖xb2!—+ with ...♖b1 to follow.

19...♖xa1 20.♖xa1 ♙xb5 21.♘e1 ♘xe5
22.♘xc2 ♖a8†

Black's extra piece is more significant than White's three pawns, even though the latter are both passed and connected. Black's pieces (including his king) are actively placed, and the pawns are a long way back.

15...fxe6 16.♙e3

White's plan is to bring a rook to c1 and pick up the c2-pawn. The other bishop move makes little sense:

16.♙f4 0-0 17.♙g3

White should prefer 17.♙e3N although

Black can then proceed by analogy with the main line and enjoy having an extra tempo.

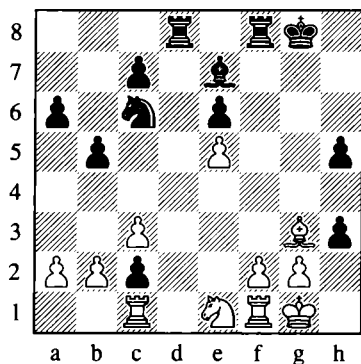
17...g5!

With the unpleasant threat of ...g4.

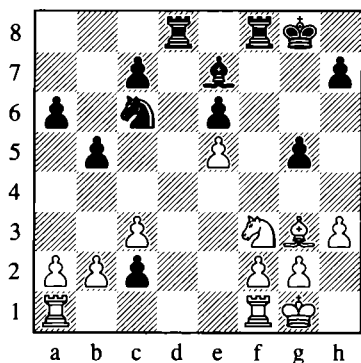
18.h3

Perhaps White should prefer 18.♙ac1 although Black is fine here too: 18...g4

19.♟e1 h5 20.h4 gxh3:



21.gxh3 (21.♟xc2 hxg2 22.♟xg2 h4 23.♙h2 ♜d2! is clearly in Black's favour; also after 21.♙xc2?! hxg2 22.♟xg2 ♜d1 23.♙e2 h4 24.♙h2 ♜a1! 25.a3 ♟a5! Black brings the knight to c4 and obtains better chances.) 21...♙f5 22.♙xc2 ♟xe5=



18...♙xf3!N

This strong positional exchange sacrifice is made possible by the misplaced bishop on g3.

18...h5 gave Black equal chances in G. Pinsky – Kuhl, corr. 1999, but he can play for more.

19.gxf3 b4! 20.♙fc1 ♜d2 21.♟f1! bxc3 22.bxc3 ♙a3

Winning back the exchange.

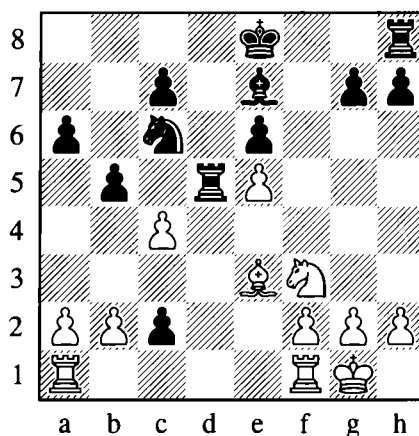
23.♟e1 ♙xc1 24.♙xc1 ♜d5

Black has restored the material balance and obtained a slight edge, thanks to his active rook and better pawn structure.

16...♜d5

Black prepares to pick up the e5-pawn. This will lead to a position with equal material (after the c2-pawn drops) and the question is whether White will be able to make anything of his slightly better pawn structure. We will analyse three logical attempts: A1) 17.c4!?, A2) 17.♙ac1 and A3) 17.♙fc1.

A1) 17.c4!?



With this highly ambitious move White tries to damage Black's pawn structure. At the same time White weakens his own queenside, and the ensuing struggle will be far from one-sided.

17...bxc4 18.♙ac1 ♟b4!

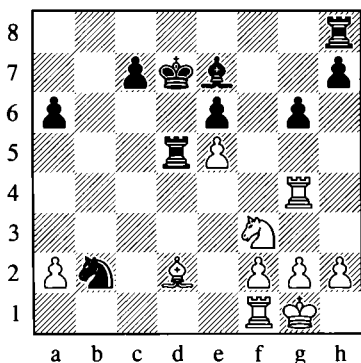
This strong idea was shown to me by Boris Gelfand. Previously most games had continued with 18...♟xe5, with Black struggling for equality and not necessarily succeeding.

When I first played the text move in 2004 I believed it was a novelty, although during my

research for this book I noticed it had been played in an e-mail game from 1998.

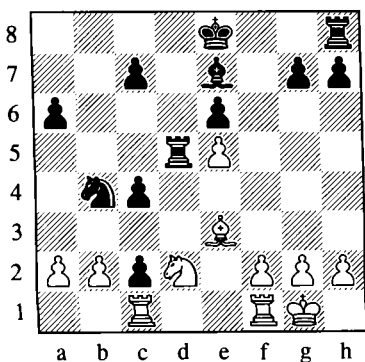
19.a3

My opponent chose 19.♔d2, which has not been repeated. The game continued: 19...♘d3 20.♞xc2 ♘d7! 21.♞xc4 ♘xb2 22.♞g4 g6



Black is comfortable and I soon took over the initiative: 23.♞g5 (23.♞e3!? ♘d3 is also fine for Black.) 23...♘d3! 24.♞xe7 ♘xe7 Ehlvest – Mikhalevski, Philadelphia 2004.

The only other move to have been tested is: 19.♘d2



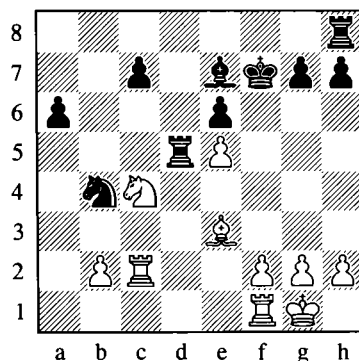
19...♘f7?N

19...♘xa2 leads to equal play after: 20.♞xc2 ♘b4 21.♞xc4 ♘d7 22.♘b1 ♞d3! Vacating the d5-square for the knight. 23.♘d2 Inconsistent. 23...♘d5 24.♞d4 ♞xd4 25.♞xd4 ♞b8 Black had a slight edge in Hudec – Wojcik, e-mail 2006.

Nevertheless I believe the text move is more accurate. Black waits for the white knight to occupy the c4-square before grabbing the a2-pawn, while the f7-square makes a better home for the black king than d7, as the d-file can be occupied by the other rook.

20.♘xc4 ♘xa2 21.♞xc2 ♘b4

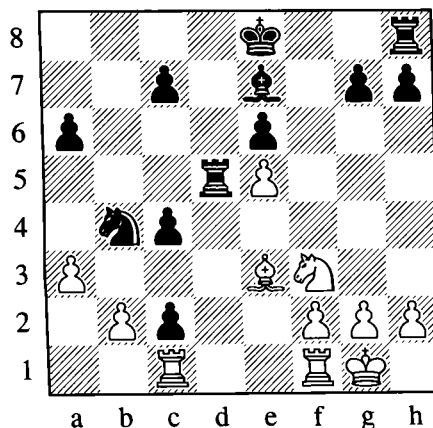
Now White's rook does not have the c4-square available.



22.♞e2 ♘d3! 23.♞a1 ♞b4!

With ...a5 coming next, Black cannot be worse. Please note that gobbling the a-pawn leads to immediate disaster for White:

24.♞xa6? ♘c1!—+

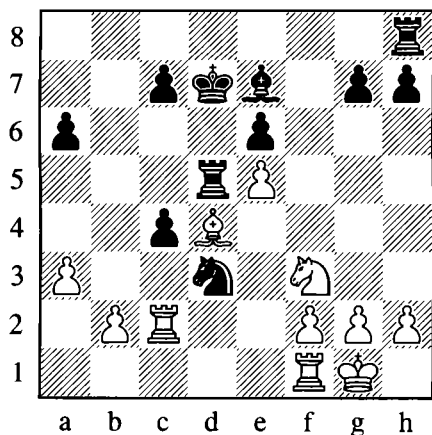


19...♘d3 20.♞xc2 ♘d7!

The point of Black's play. Now White's queenside pawns turn out to be vulnerable.

21.♚d4

21.♚c1!? N ♟b8 is equal.

**21...♟b8 22.♚c3**

This seems best. The other continuation to have been tested is:

22.h3 ♚c5!

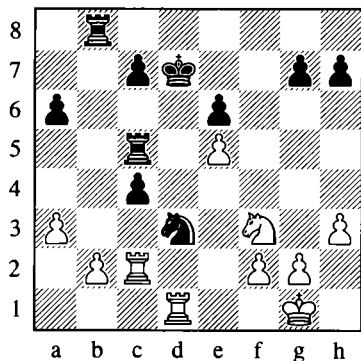
In the first game to feature 18...♟b4! Black went astray by making two unnecessary pawn moves: 22...g6 23.♚c3 h6?! 24.♟d2± Bückner – Barkwell, e-mail 1998.

23.♚xc5

23.♚c3 ♟f8 is also fine for Black.

23...♟xc5 24.♟d1

This position was reached in Freytag – Koehler, e-mail 2004, and here Black can improve with:



24...♟c6! N 25.♟d4†

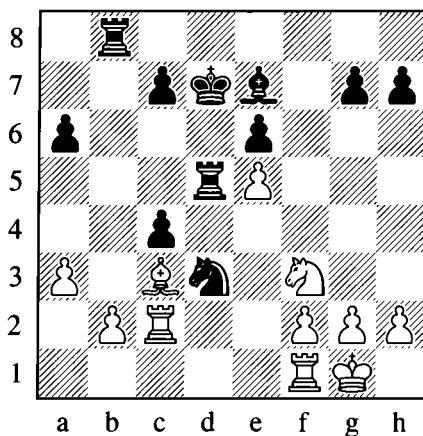
25.♟dd2 is strongly met by 25...♟xb2!

26.♟xb2 c3. Black will take one of the rooks followed by the e5-pawn, leaving him with an extra pawn and some winning chances.

25...♟d5 26.♟f3 ♟b3!†

Intending ...♟cb5 and Black's chances are higher.

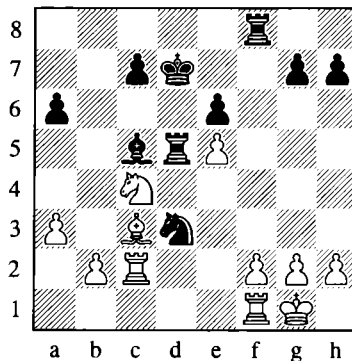
We have been following the game Hou Yifan – Koneru, Tirana (4) 2011. At this point Black's play can be improved with the following natural move:

**22...♚c5! N**

As suggested by Mikhalechishin. Play may continue as follows.

23.g3

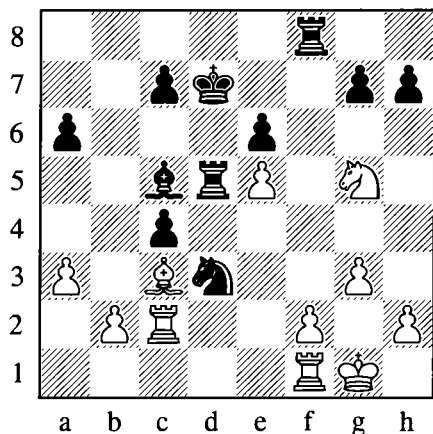
23.♟d2?! is dubious due to: 23...♟f8! 24.♟xc4 (or 24.♟e4 ♚d4 25.♚xd4 ♟xd4 26.f3 ♟b8! 27.♟d1 ♟b5!†)



24...♖xf2! 25.g3 The knight was untouchable due to mate on the first rank. 25...♖g4† 26.♗g2 ♜xf1 27.♗xf1 ♔d4!♞

23...♞f8 24.♖g5

24.♗g2 h6 25.♞e2 ♞b8! is equal.



24...h6 25.♖e4 ♔b6!

The immediate 25...♔d4 is inaccurate due to 26.♔xd4 ♞xd4 27.♖d2 ♖xe5 28.f4 ♖d3 29.♖xc4 with a slight edge to White.

The retreat to b6 carries the following attractive idea:

26.♗g2

This is the most obvious attempt for White to improve his position. 26.h4 can be met by 26...h5 or 25...a5, when not much has changed.

26...♔d4!

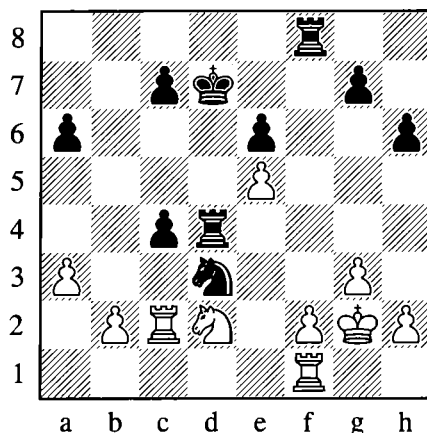
We will soon see why this works better with the king on g2.

27.♔xd4

Continuing by analogy with the aforementioned 25...♔d4 line.

If White avoids it with 27.f4 then 27...♞b8 28.♞b1 c5= still results in a balanced position.

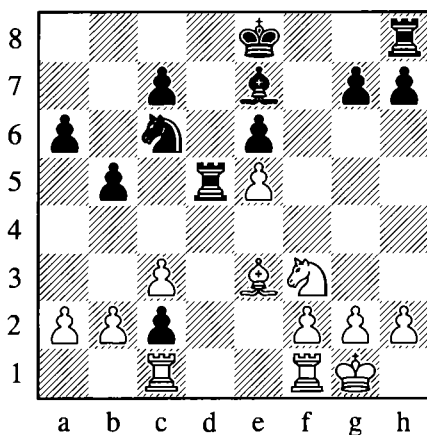
27...♞xd4 28.♖d2



28...♞xf2†! 29.♞xf2 ♖e1† 30.♗h3 ♖xc2 31.♖f3 ♞d3!

Black is fine.

A2) 17.♞ac1

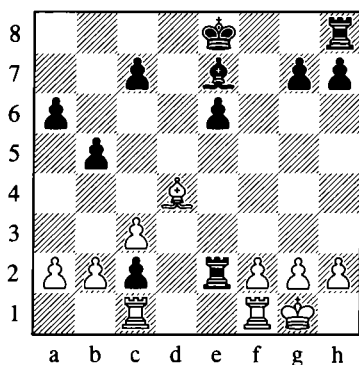


According to the database this position has been known for at least 67 years!

17...♖xe5 18.♖xe5 ♞xe5 19.♞xc2

The immediate 19.c4N is likely to transpose to the main line after 19...b4 20.♞xc2 ♗f7.

19.♔d4? is inadvisable due to the simple 19...♞e2 when White already has to worry about equalizing, for instance:

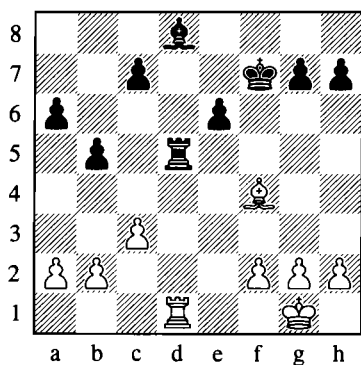


20.♞fe1 ♞xe1† 21.♞xe1 ♙g5 22.♙e3 ♙xe3
23.fxe3 ♜e7 24.♞c1 ♞d8 25.♞xc2 ♞d1†
26.♜f2 c5+ Black can press for a long time in
this endgame.

19...♜f7 20.c4!

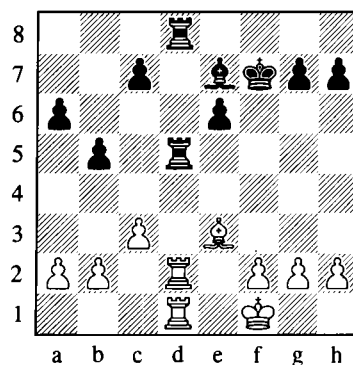
This is the only real attempt to cause
problems. Two harmless alternatives have been
tried:

20.♙f4 ♞c5 Black is ready to take the d-file
with ...♞d8. 21.♞d2 (21.♙e3 ♞c6 is also equal,
as ...♞d8 is coming next.) 21...♞d8 22.♞xd8
♙xd8 23.♞d1 ♞d5

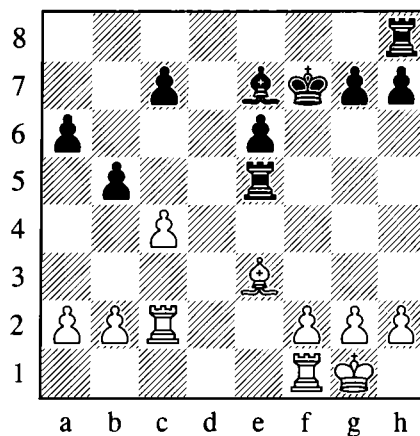


24.♞c1 c5 (24...♙g5!N=) 25.♜f1 ♙f6 26.♜e2
c4= Borriß – Pieper Emden, Budapest 1991.

20.♞d1 ♞d5 21.♞cd2 ♞hd8 22.♜f1 occurred
in Kravtsiv – Khmelniker, Pardubice 2007.
Now the easiest route to a draw is:



22...♞xd2 23.♞xd2 ♞xd2 24.♙xd2 e5! White
cannot prevent the further advance of the
e-pawn, for example: 25.b3 (Or 25.♜e2 ♜e6
26.♜d3 ♜d5 27.f3 c5= followed by ...c4+.)
25...e4 26.♜e2 ♜e6 27.c4 bxc4 28.bxc4 ♜f5=



20...b4!

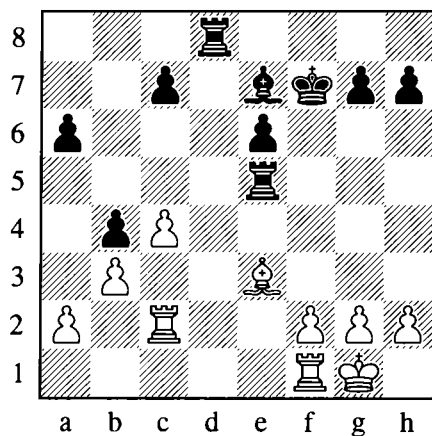
Black keeps the c-file closed to avoid
problems with the backward pawn on the
c-file. The drawback is the fixing of a pawn on
a dark square, but it is not too hard to work
around this problem.

21.b3

White's strongest move is 21.♞d1!
transposing to variation A32 – see page 353
for the continuation from this position.

21...♞d8!

Black takes the only open file.

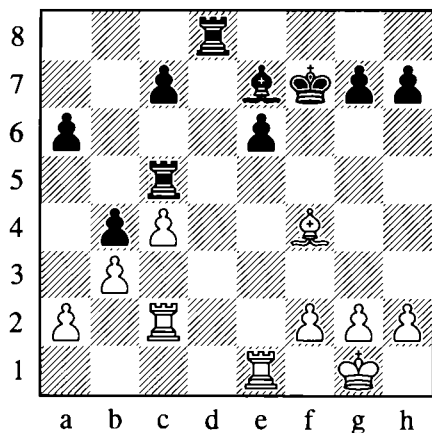


22.♙f4 ♜c5

From here Black has to solve two small problems: safeguarding the e6-pawn and improving the position of the rook on c5. I do not believe either of them should present much difficulty.

23.♞e1

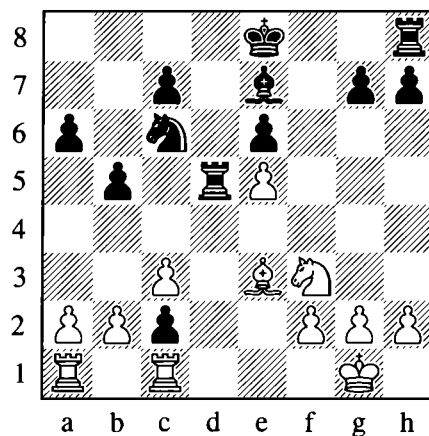
This position was reached in Fishbein – Esserman, Seattle 2003. Here I found a nice idea:



23...a5!N 24.♙f1 a4! 25.♞ce2 ♞c6

Black maintains the balance thanks to the counterattack on the b3-pawn.

A3) 17.♞fc1



Theory and practice have demonstrated this move to be more accurate than 17.♞ac1 for two reasons. First the rook on a1 might help to support a2-a4, and second the f1-square is now available for the king. It is true that the two lines may transpose to one another, as mentioned in the note to move 21 in line A2 above. Nevertheless, the difference in rook placement may benefit White in those lines where the transposition does not take place.

17...♙xe5 18.♙xe5 ♞xe5 19.♞xc2

This endgame promises White a slight edge with little risk, where he can attempt to exploit his better pawn structure. Nevertheless, after investigating the position thoroughly I do not believe Black should be in much danger of losing.

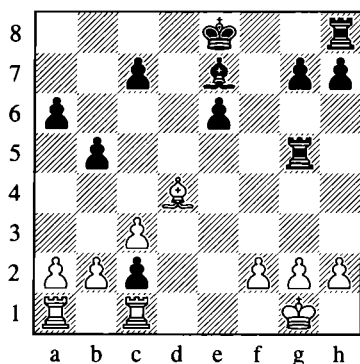
19.a4?!N has nothing to recommend it. At the very least, Black can play 19...♙f7 when 20.♞xc2 transposes to the harmless 20.a4 sideline, as given in the notes to variation A32 on page 352.

There is even a second good answer in 19...♙c5!? with the point that after 20.♙xc5 ♞xc5 21.axb5 Black can safely play 21...axb5!, as 22.♞a8? ♙e7 23.♞xh8? ♞d5 backfires on White.

A more sensible alternative for White is:

19.♙d4 ♜g5

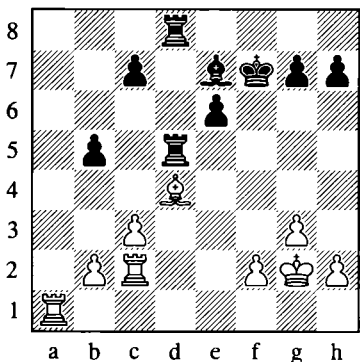
19...♜e2!? is a reasonable alternative if followed up correctly: 20.♖f1 ♜d2 21.♙e3 ♜d1! Exchanging one pair of rooks eases the defensive burden. 22.♜xd1 cxd1=♙† 23.♜xd1 ♜f8 Black intends to put the rook on f5. 24.♖e2 (Or 24.g4!?N ♙d6 25.♖e2 ♖d7 26.h4 ♖c6 and Black's position looks defensible.) 24...♜f5 25.♜d4 Puijssers – De Jong, Hilversum 2008. Now I suggest 25...♙f6!?N 26.♜e4 (26.♜d3 ♜d5=) 26...♖d7 and Black should be able to hold.



20.♜xc2 ♖f7 21.a4

21.♙e3 ♜e5 transposes to line A32 with the move count increased by two on each side; Black could also consider moving the rook to f5 or h5, although the general evaluation is similar.

21...♜d5 22.axb5 axb5 23.g3 ♜hd8 24.♖g2 Benjamin – Kaidanov, San Diego 2004. Now I would recommend:

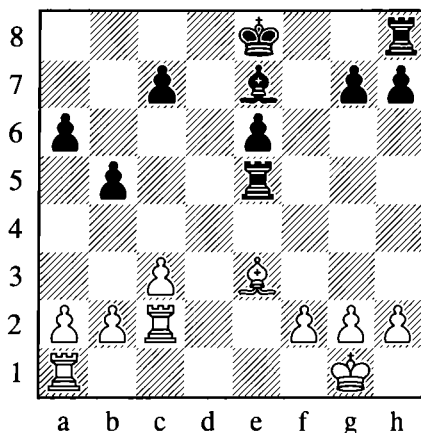


24...♙c5!N

The exchange of bishops makes Black's task easier.

25.♙xc5 ♜xc5

The position can be compared with some of the various endgames we will encounter later in the chapter. Black should have no problems holding a draw.



After the text move we reach an important moment where Black must decide between A31) 19...0-0 and A32) 19...♖f7!. After a detailed investigation I concluded that the second move is stronger, but I decided to include my analysis of the first for instructive purposes.

A31) 19...0-0

From this position Black intends to exchange the dark-squared bishops, which would simplify his defensive task.

20.g3

White solves the back rank problem and gives himself the option of placing the bishop on f4. This seems to be the most challenging option, although I analysed three others as well:

20.♙d4 ♜d5 21.♜e1

By attacking the e-pawn White avoids an exchange of bishops.

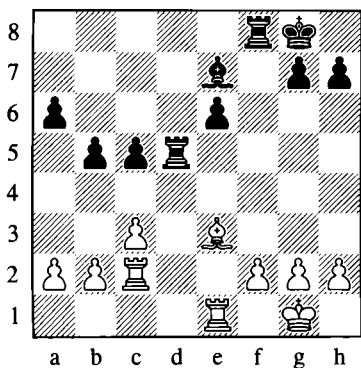
21.♖e2 c5 22.♙e3 ♜fd8 23.♜ae1 ♜d1
Exchanging a pair of rooks makes it easier to protect the e6-pawn. 24.♙f1 ♙f7= Eriksson – Henriksson, Gothenburg 2005.

21...c5

Black gains space.

22.♙e3

Jurkovic – Zilic, Rabac 2003. Now I would like to improve Black's play with:



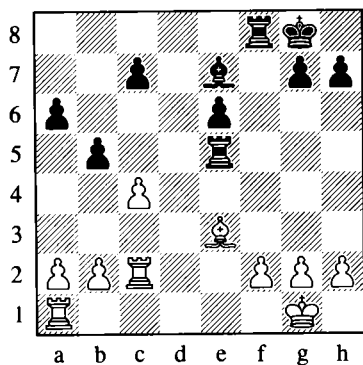
22...c4N

This is the consistent follow-up to the previous move. Black gains space and fixes at least one enemy queenside pawn on a dark square.

23.g3 ♙f7 24.♜ce2 ♜fd8 25.♙d4 ♜8d6=
Intending ...♙f6 with easy equality.

20.c4

This move does not prevent Black's plan of exchanging bishops.



20...♙c5! 21.cxb5

21.♜e1 ♙xe3 22.♜xe3 ♜d8! 23.♙f1 ♜xe3
24.fxe3 b4 Black's pawn structure is no longer worse and so the position is equal, Krzyzanowski – Adamek, Szczawno Zdroj 2008.

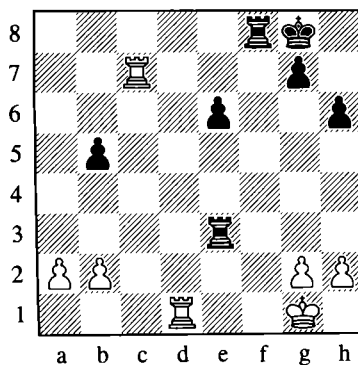
21.♙xc5N White goes for a rook endgame with a better pawn structure, but allows heavy simplifications: 21...♜xc5 22.♜ac1 ♜xc4 23.♜xc4 bxc4 24.♜xc4 ♜d8 25.g3 ♜d2 26.♜b4 a5 27.♜b7 a4 Black has good chances to exchange the queenside pawns and secure a draw, although a bit of accuracy is still required.

21...♙xe3 22.fxe3 axb5 23.♜xc7 ♜xe3

Black has solved most of his problems and in the one game that reached this position he drew without much difficulty.

24.♜d1 h6!

Avoiding any issues on the back rank.



25.h3 ♜f5!

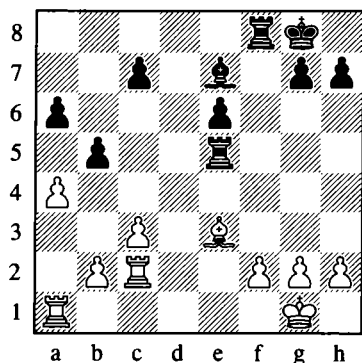
Now the g7-pawn can be protected from the front.

26.♜d2 ♙h7

½–½ By now the position is equal and a draw was agreed in Luther – Beckemeier, Germany 1990.

20.a4!?

White is trying to activate his rook from a1.



20...bxa4!?N

A concrete approach. Black exploits the weakness of the first rank to force a bishop exchange, damaging White's structure on the kingside.

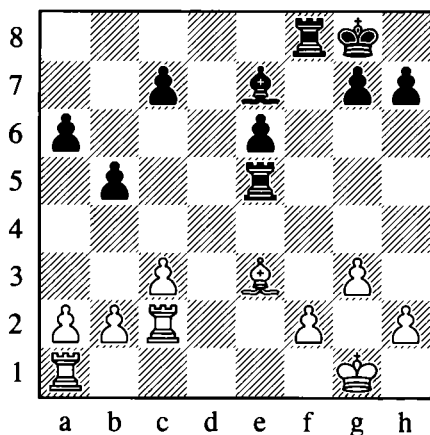
20...♙c5 has been tested and also seems satisfactory.

21.♞xa4 ♙g5 22.g3

22.♞e2 a5 23.♞c4 ♙xe3 24.fxe3 (24.♞xe3 ♞xe3 25.fxe3 ♞b8=) 24...♞f7 is similar to 22.g3.

22...♙xe3 23.fxe3 a5 24.♞c4 ♞f7 25.e4 g5 26.♟g2 ♟g7

Black has a marginally worse, but definitely tenable position.



20...♙c5 21.♙f4!

In my opinion this is the only real try to set problems.

The alternative is:

21.♙xc5 ♞xc5

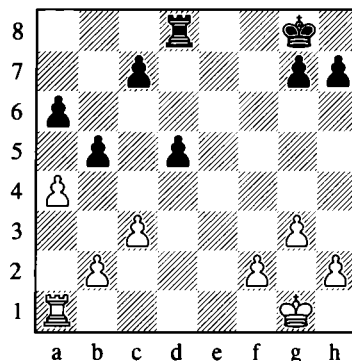
In my opinion White's advantage is not enough to generate real winning chances.

22.♞d2

22.♞e1 ♟f7 23.♞ce2 ♞c6 24.♟g2 ♞d8 25.h4 ♞d5 26.g4 ♞cd6 was equal in Stellwagen – L'Ami, Wijk aan Zee 2007.

22...♞d5 23.♞xd5 exd5 24.a4 ♞d8!

Preparing the fully-equalizing ...d4.



25.axb5 axb5 26.♟f1 d4 27.♞d1 d3

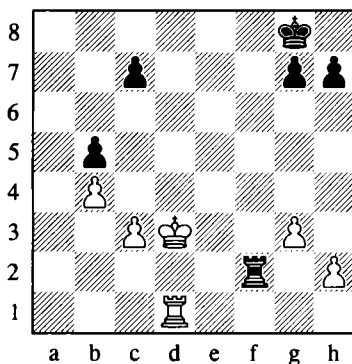
27...c5!?N 28.cxd4 c4 is also good for a draw.

28.b4 ♞d5 29.♟e1

This move prevents the liquidation of the queenside pawns.

After 29.f3N with the idea of ♟f2-e3 Black exchanges the queenside pawns and reaches a theoretically drawish position with two pawns versus three on the kingside: 29...♟f7 30.♟f2 c5 31.bxc5 ♞xc5 32.♞xd3 g5!? (32...♞c4!?) 33.♟e3 ♞c4! 34.♟d2 b4! 35.cxb4 ♞xb4=

29...♞e5† 30.♟d2 ♞e2† 31.♟xd3 ♞xf2



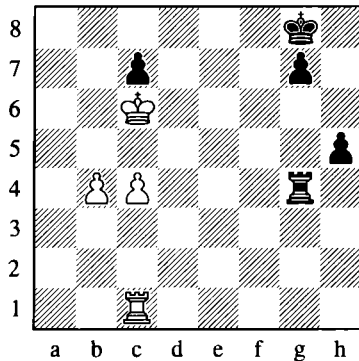
32.♔d4

32...♞d2 leads to an equal pawn endgame:

32...♞xd2† 33.♕xd2 ♕f7 34.♕d3 ♕e6
35.♕d4 ♕d6=

32...♞xh2 33.♕c5 ♞h3 34.♕xb5 ♞xg3 35.c4
h5 36.♕c6 ♞g4 37.♞c1

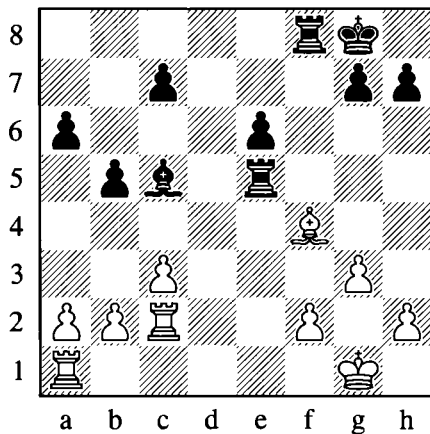
I also checked: 37.c5 ♞xb4 38.♕xc7 ♕f7
39.c6 g5 40.♕d6 g4 41.c7 ♞c4= Black
will give up his rook for the c-pawn at the
appropriate moment and run with his king
to support his kingside pawns.



37...h4 38.b5 h3 39.c5 ♞b4! 40.♞h1 ♞b3
41.b6 cxb6 42.cxb6 ♞c3†

A draw was agreed in Grigoryan – Petrosian,
Yerevan 2011. The next few moves might be:
43.♕d7 ♞b3 44.♕c7 ♞c3†=

With a move repetition.

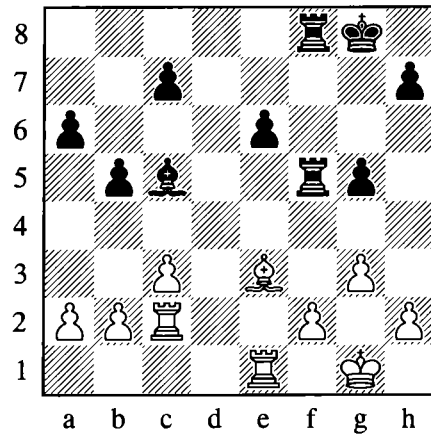


21...♞ef5 22.♞e1

Now Black will have to weaken his position
in order to achieve the desired bishop exchange.

22...g5 23.♞e3

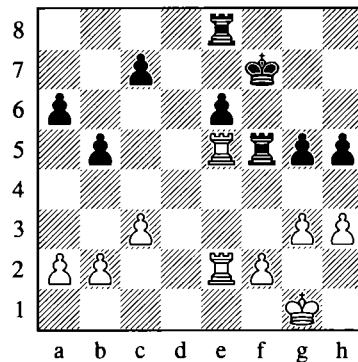
Here I believe Black's best chance to hold the
endgame is:



23...♞e5!?!N

The alternative is 23...♞xe3 24.♞xe3 ♕f7,
when it is worth considering two approaches
for White.

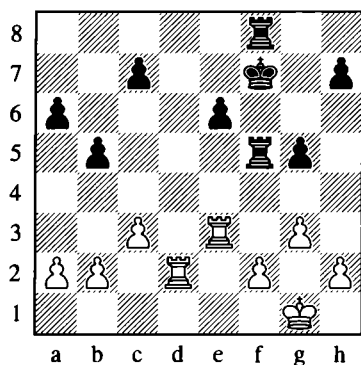
a) 25.♞ce2 ♞e8 26.♞e5 h5 27.h3 was played in
Sutovsky – Krasenkow, Shenyang 1999. Now
Black can improve with:



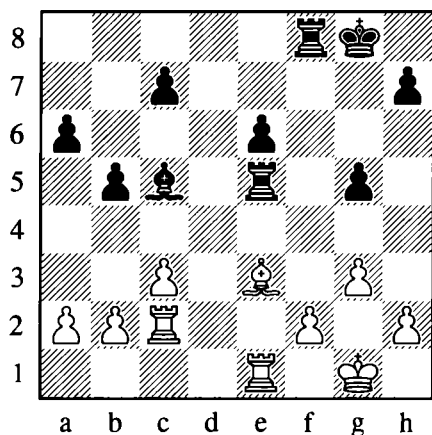
27...♞xe5!N This enables Black to equalize
easily after the following sequence: 28.♞xe5
♕f6 29.♞c5 ♞d8! 30.♞xc7 ♞d1†! (30...♞d2?!
is worse because of 31.♞a7! and White retains

some winning chances.) 31.♟g2 ♜a1! 32.a3 ♜a2 33.♜a7 ♜xb2 34.♜xa6 ♜b3=

b) More problematic for Black is: 25.♞d2!N



25...♟f6 26.♞ed3± Black is under some pressure. This is why I chose to focus on a new idea on move 23, although as we will see, even this does not fully solve the problems.

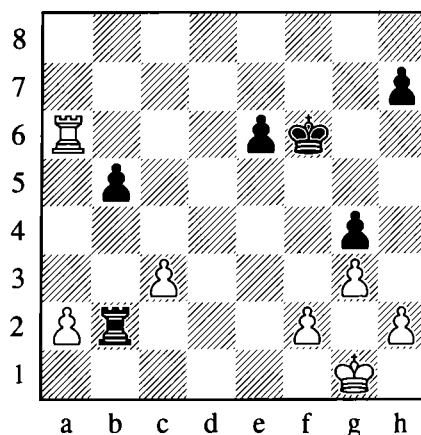


24.♜ce2 ♙xe3 25.♜xe3 ♜xe3 26.♜xe3 ♟f7 27.♜e5!

After 27.♜f3† ♟e7 28.♜xf8 ♟xf8 29.♟g2 ♟f7 30.♟f3 e5! Black will put his c-pawn on c6, enabling him to hold the pawn endgame without much difficulty.

27...♟f6 28.♜c5 ♞d8! 29.♜xc7 ♞d2 30.♜a7 ♜xb2 31.♜xa6 g4!

Black fixes the kingside pawns.



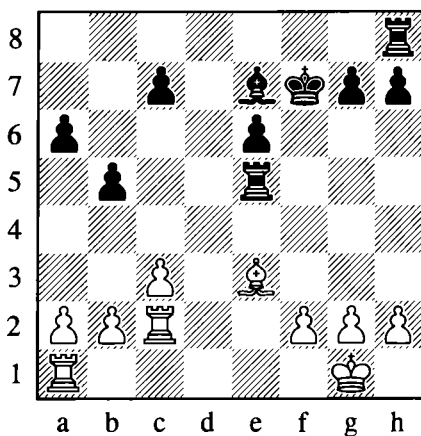
32.a4

This exchange cannot be avoided.

32...bxa4 33.♜xa4 h5±

I cannot tell for sure whether or not Black holds this endgame. His drawing chances seem good, but White can press for a while longer.

A32) 19...♟f7!

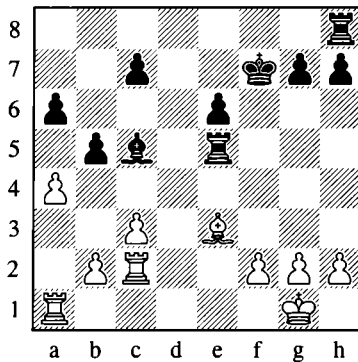


This has been slightly less popular than 19...0–0, but I think it is the better move. The king is better placed on f7 where it protects the e6-pawn.

20.c4!

White takes away the d5-square. I checked two other moves as well.

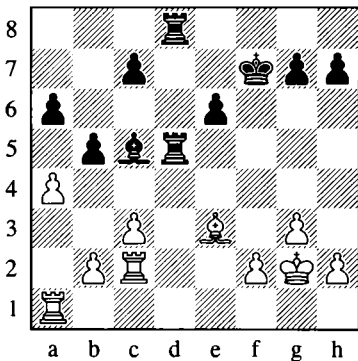
20.a4 was seen in Salgado Lopez – Martinez Martin, Madrid 2005. Here I suggest the immediate 20...♔c5! based on the following lines:



21.♔f4 (After 21.♔xc5 ♜xc5 22.axb5 axb5 23.♞d2 ♞b8! Black prepares to advance the b-pawn, while the appearance of a rook on d7 causes no problems. 24.♞d4 ♞b6! 25.♕f1 ♞d6=) 21...♞e4 22.♔xc7 ♞c8 23.♔g3 ♞xa4= Black will either take over the d-file or exchange the queenside pawns.

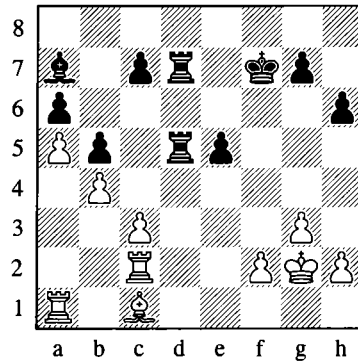
20.g3 ♞d8 21.a4 ♞ed5 22.♕g2 ♔c5!

Once again exchanging bishops should ease the defence.



23.♔xc5

23.♔f4!?N I think White should try to keep the bishops on the board, although Black still seems to be okay. 23...e5 24.♔g5 ♞8d7 25.b4 h6 26.♔c1 ♔b6 27.a5 ♔a7



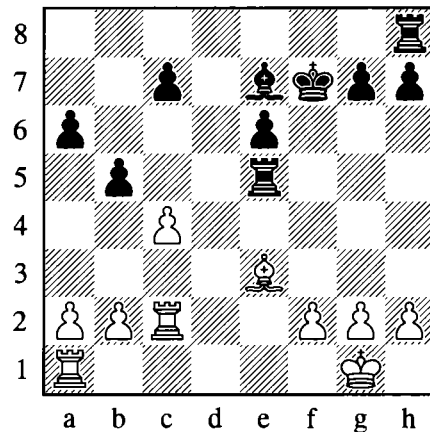
28.c4 bxc4 29.♞xc4 ♔d4 30.♞b1 ♕e6! 31.h4 (31.♔e3 ♞b5 32.♔xd4 exd4=) 31...c5 Black equalizes in view of 32.b5 axb5 33.♞xb5 ♞5d6= followed by ...♔d5.

23...♞xc5 24.axb5 axb5 25.♞e2 ♞cd5 26.♞a7 ♞8d7

In spite of White's slight superiority the position should not be difficult for Black to hold, as demonstrated by the game continuation:

27.♞b7 c6 28.♞b6 ♞7d6 29.h4 ♕f6 30.♞e3 h5 31.b3 ♞f5 32.♞b8 ♕f7 33.♞b7+ ♕f6 34.♞b8 ♕f7 35.♞b7+ ♕f6 36.♞b8

½–½ Hou Yifan – Saptarshi, Zürich 2009. White ran out of ways to improve her position.



20...b4

Black has to keep the c-file closed.

21.♞d1

White has also tried:

21.♞f4

This attempt to drive the rook to the passive c5-square does not reach the goal.

21...♞e4! 22.g3 ♞d8!

Black takes the d-file.

23.♟g2

23.♞xc7 ♞c8 is nothing for White, and

23.c5 ♞d5 24.c6 ♞d6 is also equal.

23...g5 24.♞e3

Once again 24.♞xc7 ♞c8 25.♟f3 ♞d4

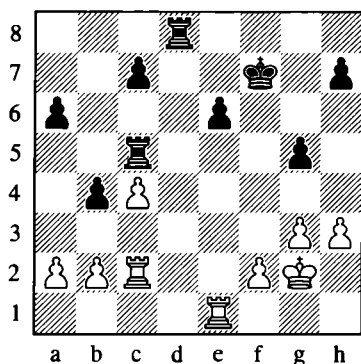
26.♞b6 ♞dxc4= is completely equal.

24...♞e5!?

Not the only move, but a logical one. Black prepares to exchange bishops.

25.h3 ♞c5 26.♞xc5 ♞xc5 27.♞e1

Now I would prefer:



27...♟f6!?N

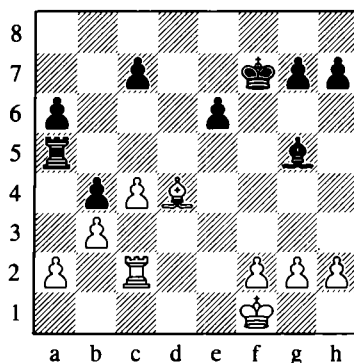
The immediate 27...e5 is also possible, and after 28.b3 a5 29.♞e3 a4= Black equalized in Kharlov – Sorokin, Kazan 2005.

28.♞ce2 e5 29.b3 a5=

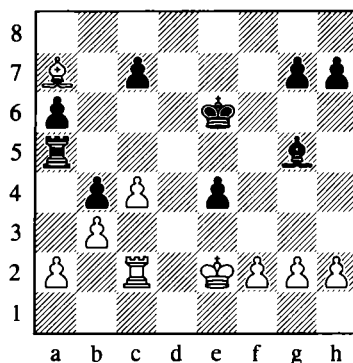
21...♞d8 22.♞xd8 ♞xd8 23.♟f1 ♞g5 24.♞a7!

If White is to preserve winning chances he needs to keep the bishops on the board, and this is the best way to do it.

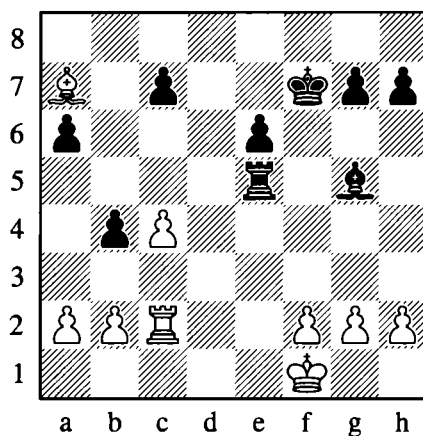
In one game White chose a different plan: 24.♞d4 ♞a5 25.b3 Potkin – Amin, Abu Dhabi 2006. Now the most accurate seems to be:



25...e5!N Black takes advantage of the bishop on d4 and advances his pawn to e4. 26.♞a7 (After 26.♞a1 ♞f6! Black intends ...♞a3 followed by advancing the a-pawn.) 26...e4! 27.♟e2 ♟e6 From here play may continue:



28.g3 h5 29.♞d4 g6 30.h4 ♞h6 31.♞e3 ♞xe3 32.♟xe3 ♟e5 33.♞d2 c6= Once again Black intends ...♞a3 and advancing the a-pawn.



24...♙e7

Black has a viable alternative in 24...♞f5!? as played in Xie Jun – Z. Polgar, Jaen (10) 1996. I chose to concentrate on the text move in order to pursue the thematic plan of exchanging bishops.

25.♞e2 ♞f5!

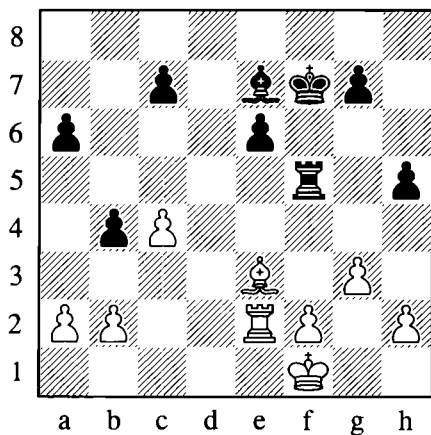
Black must decline the rook exchange, as the resulting bishop endgame with a fixed pawn weakness on b4 would be unpleasant.

26.♙e3

26.b3 h5 27.h3 h4 28.♞d2 ♙d6 leaves Black looking solid.

26...h5 27.g3

This position was reached in Sutovsky – Sorokin, Sochi 2005. Here Black could have equalized with:

**27...♙c5!N**

As suggested by Postny. Here is a possible continuation:

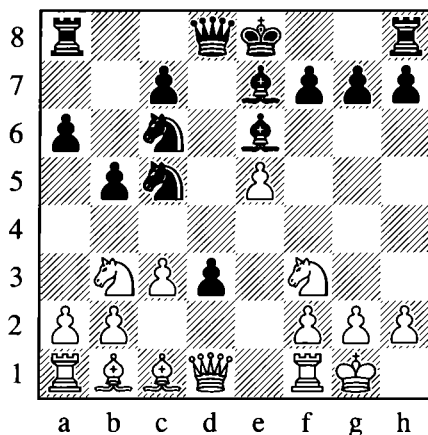
28.♙f4 ♙d6 29.♙d2 a5!? 30.♖g2 a4 31.b3!?

Otherwise Black could play ...b3, leading to a probable exchange of the pawn on b3 for the one on c4. In that case the draw would be almost certain. The text move prevents that idea, but allows a different one.

31...axb3 32.axb3 ♞a5!=

Black obtains enough counterplay on the queenside.

Overall the 13.♘xc5 line does lead to a better endgame for White, but I believe Black has a pretty comfortable drawing margin.

B) 13.♙b1

This is arguably the most challenging line of all. White avoids the early simplifications that we saw in variation A.

13...♘xb3 14.axb3 ♙f5

Now the main question is whether the d3-pawn will be more of a weakness or a strength. From here we will analyse both **B1) 15.b4** and **B2) 15.♙e3**, the latter being the main line.

15.♞e1 0–0 has little independent value, as 16.b4 leads immediately to line B1 and 16.♙e3 to line B21.

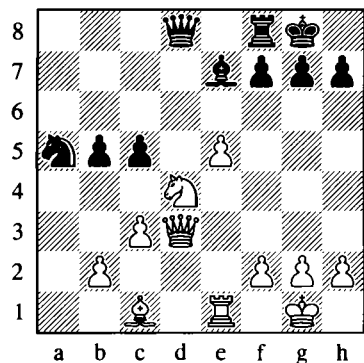
B1) 15.b4

This move was introduced by Karjakin against Mamedyarov at the end of 2009. White wants to fix the queenside pawn structure.

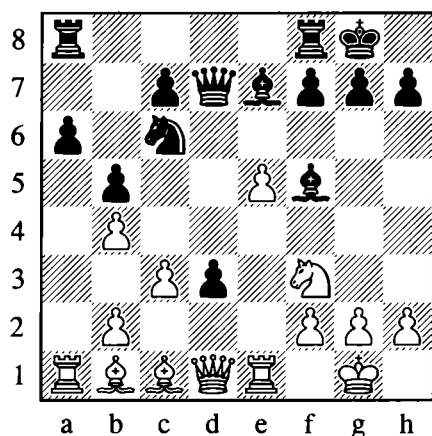
15...0–0 16.♞e1 ♖d7

Better than Mamedyarov's 16...♙d5?! which left the queen too exposed.

It is also worth mentioning that the immediate 16...a5?! runs into the following nice idea: 17.bxa5 ♜xa5 18.♜xa5 ♘xa5 19.♟d4 ♙g6 20.♙xd3 ♙xd3 21.♙xd3 c5



22.♙xb5! cxd4 23.♙d2!!± It transpires that Black's material advantage is only temporary.



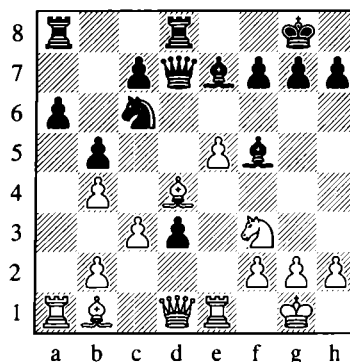
17.h3

The alternative is:

17.♙e3 ♜fd8 18.♙d4!±N

18.h3 is well met by: 18...a5! 19.bxa5?! ♜xa5 20.♜xa5 ♘xa5 21.♟d4 Now Black's play in De Vreugt – De Jong, Leeuwarden 2005, can be improved by means of 21...♟c4!N± with better chances for Black.

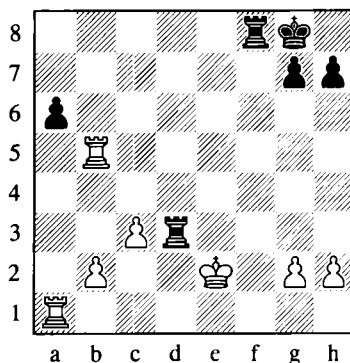
The text move is a better attempt to fight for the advantage.



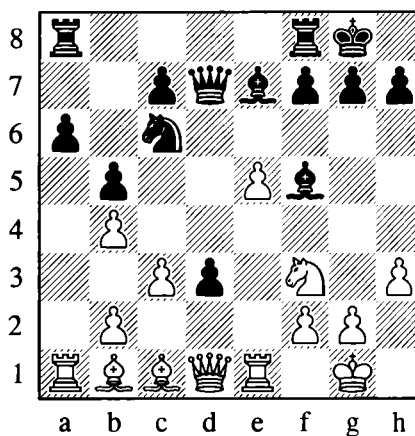
18...♟xd4 19.♟xd4 c5 20.e6

I also checked 20.♟xf5 ♙xf5 21.bxc5 ♙xc5 22.♙f3 ♙xf3 23.gxf3 d2 24.♙d1 ♙b6 25.♟f1 ♙c7 26.f4 f6! with equal chances.

20...fxe6 21.bxc5 ♙xc5 22.♟xf5 exf5 23.♙xd3 ♟f8 24.♙e5 ♙xf2+ 25.♟xf2 ♙xd3 26.♙xd3 ♙xd3 27.♙xf5+ ♟g8 28.♙xb5 ♙f8+ 29.♟e2



29...♙xc3! 30.bxc3 axb5 31.♙a5 ♙c8! 32.♟d3 ♙c5=



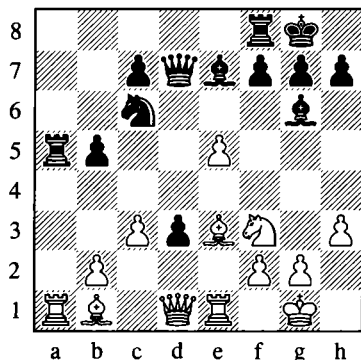
17...♙g6!?

With this clever move Black prepares to meet ♙e3 with ...a5. The point is that after exchanges on a5 White will not be able to play ♖d4 with gain of tempo.

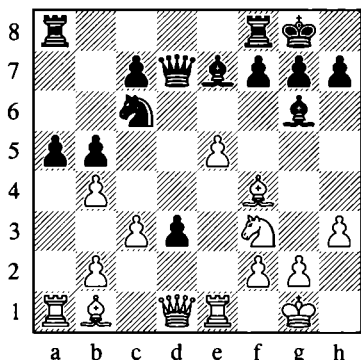
18.♙a2

White creates an obvious threat of e5-e6. I analysed two other possibilities.

18.♙e3N a5! 19.bxa5 (19.e6!? fxe6 20.bxa5 e5! 21.a6 e4 22.♖d2 ♖h8 23.a7 ♙d6= With the strong pawns on e4 and d3 Black should not be worse; his plan for the next two moves is to bring the queen to e5 via e8.) 19...♞xa5

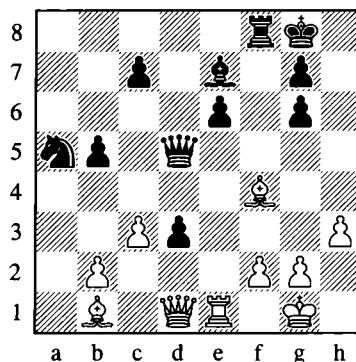


20.e6! ♜d5! (White's idea would work after: 20...fxe6? 21.♞xa5 ♖xa5 22.♖e5 ♜d5 23.♖xg6 hxg6 24.♜xd3+ 21.exf7 ♞xf7 22.♞xa5 ♖xa5= Black is fine.

18.♙f4!? a5!**19.bxa5**

After 19.e6 fxe6 20.♙a2 ♙f7 21.♙b1 ♙g6= the position is equal.

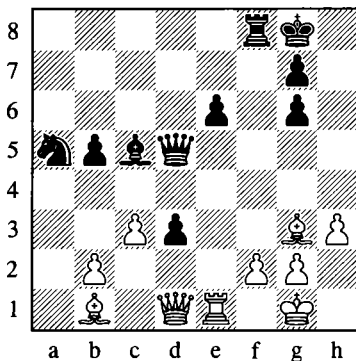
19...♞xa5 20.e6! fxe6 21.♞xa5 ♖xa5 22.♖e5 ♜d5 23.♖xg6 hxg6

**24.♙xc7**

I also analysed 24.♞e5N ♜c4 25.♙e3 ♞d8 26.♙d4 d2! 27.♙xg6 ♞xd4 28.cxd4 ♜c1 29.♙c2 (or 29.♙h5 ♖c4) 29...♖c6 30.♞xb5 ♖xd4 31.♞b8+ ♖f7 32.♙a4 ♙d6 and Black has sufficient compensation for the exchange.

24...♙c5! 25.♙g3

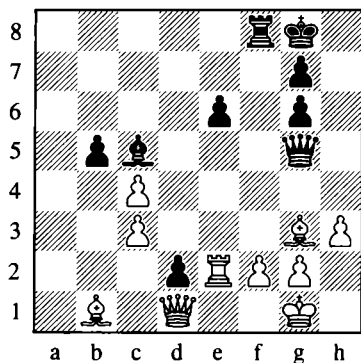
Das – Ashton, Hastings 2011. Now I would like to improve upon Black's play with:

**25...d2!N 26.♞e2 ♖c4 27.b3 ♜g5! 28.bxc4**

After 28.♖h1 ♖b2 29.♜xd2 ♜xg3! 30.♜xb2 ♙xf2 31.♜c1 ♞f6!= Black is fine.

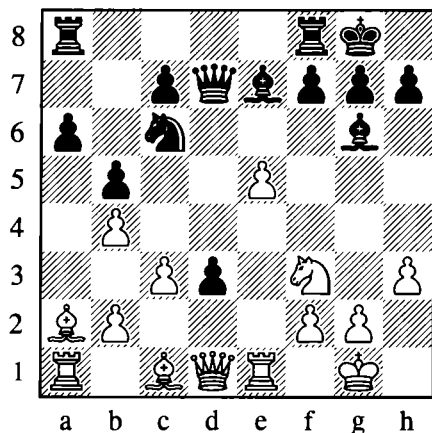
28.♖h2? is strongly met by: 28...♙xf2! 29.♙xf2 (29.♞xf2 ♖e3! 30.♞xf8+ ♖xf8

31.♟f3† ♟f6 32.♟xe3 d1=♟† 29...♟xf2!
30.♟xf2 ♘e3 31.♟xd2 ♘f1† 32.♟xf1
♟xd2† White faces a difficult struggle for a draw.



28...♟xg3 29.♟xd2 bxc4 30.♙e4 ♔h7=

Black's weakened kingside structure is balanced out by his pressure on the f2-pawn.



18...♔h8!

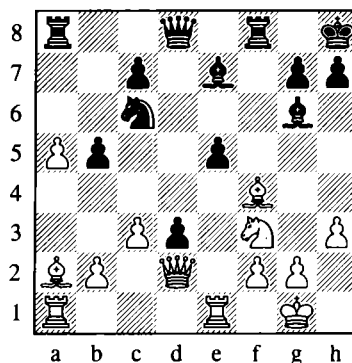
Black has to move the king to safety.

19.♙f4

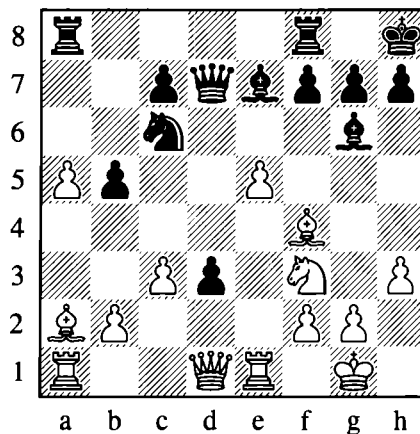
19.e6N is not dangerous, and after 19...fxe6 20.♙xe6 ♟d6 Black has a good position.

19...a5 20.bxa5

In the event of 20.e6N Black plays 20...♟d8! with the following idea in mind: 21.bxa5 fxe6 22.♟d2 e5!



23.♙xe5 (23.♘xe5 ♘xe5 24.♙xe5 ♟xa5 25.b4 ♟a8†) 23...♟xa5 Black's chances are higher thanks to the strong passed pawn on d3.



20...♟xa5!

After 20...♘xa5 White can play: 21.e6! fxe6 22.♙xe6 ♟d8 23.♙g3 ♙f6 24.♘e5 Exploiting the absence of the knight from c6. 24...♙xe5 25.♟xe5 with a slight edge for White.

21.b4 ♟a4 22.♙b3

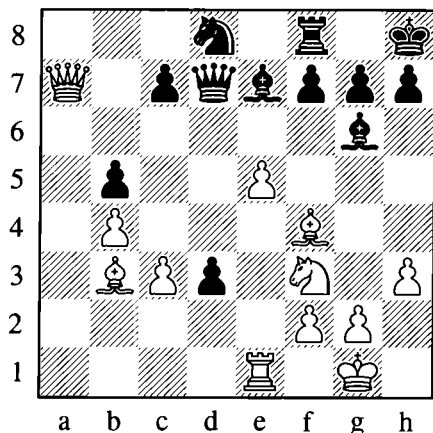
22.e6N fxe6 23.♙xe6 ♟xa1 24.♟xa1 ♟d8 is roughly equal.

22...♟xa1 23.♟xa1 ♘d8!

Black intends to transfer his knight to a nice blocking position on e6.

24.♟a7!

This position was reached in Shirov – Caruana, Wijk aan Zee 2010. So far both sides have played strongly and consistently, but here I believe Black should have modified his plan, in response to his opponent's last move.

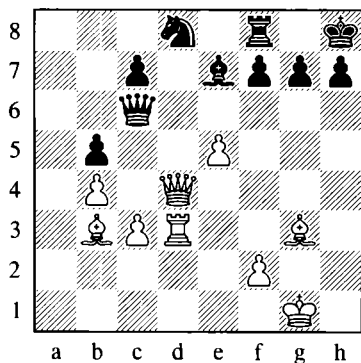


24...h5!N

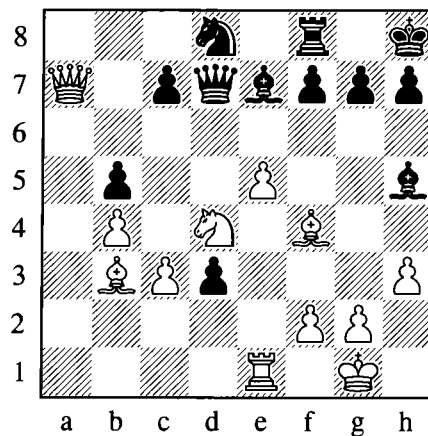
The game continuation of 24...h5! 25.g4 h4 26.g5 d8 can be met by 26.♖b7!N (Shirov's 26.gxe6!? also gave White an edge which he eventually converted.) 26...c6 27.♗xd7 ♝xd7 28.♝a1± with better chances for White.

25.♟d4

I also analysed: 25.♗d4 ♗f5! 26.g4 ♟xg4 27.hxg4 ♗xg4† 28.♟g3 ♗xf3 29.♝e3 ♗c6 30.♝xd3



30...♗g6! 31.♗d7 ♟h4 32.♗xb5 ♟xg3 33.fxg3 ♟e6= and Black is fine.



25...♟c6!

The knight abandons its plan to occupy the e6-square, in order to force the exchange of its white counterpart.

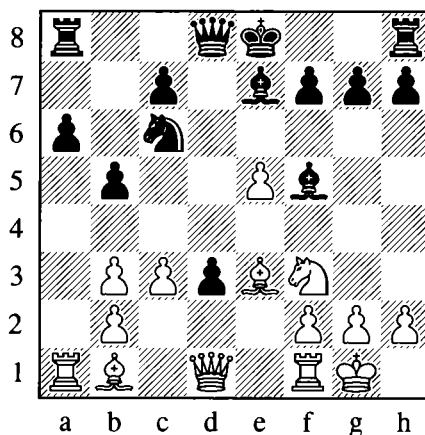
26.♟xc6

26.e6? is bad due to: 26...♗xd4! 27.♗xd4 ♟xd4 28.cxd4 fxe6†

26...♗xc6 27.♟d2 ♝a8 28.♗d4 ♝d8 29.♗e3 ♟g6

With a roughly equal position.

B2) 15.♟e3

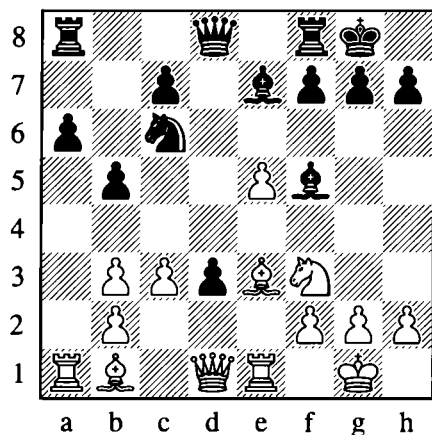


This is the main line. White's plan is to bring his bishop to d4 and devour the d3-pawn.

15...0-0

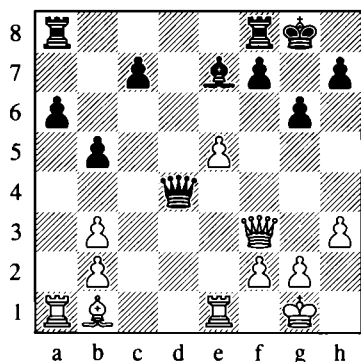
From here I analysed three main options:
B21) 16.♙e1, B22) 16.♟d4 and **B23) 16.♙d4**.

I also considered 16.b4N but after 16...♞d5 White has nothing better than 17.♙e1 transposing to variation B21.

B21) 16.♙e1**16...♞d5 17.b4**

17.♙d4 transposes to the main line B23 – see page 362.

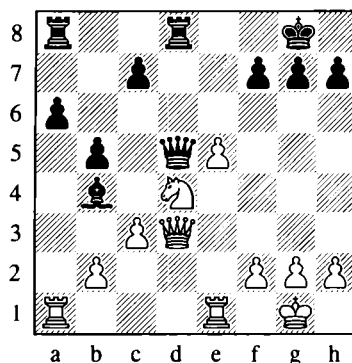
17.h3!?N is an interesting waiting move, after which Black must avoid ending up in an inferior version of the main line. The right response is: 17...♙e4 18.♙d4 (Or 18.♙f4 ♙g6! 19.b4 a5! and Black equalizes.) 18...♟xd4 19.cxd4 ♙xf3 20.♞xd3 ♞xf3 21.♞xf3 ♞xd4



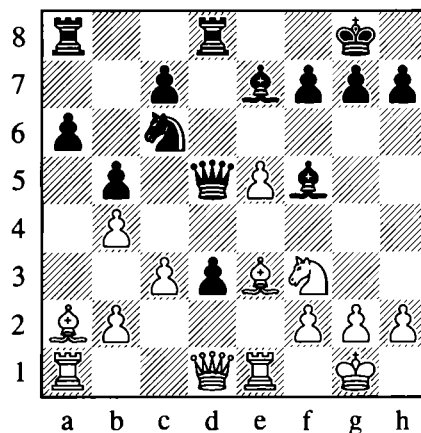
22.♙e4 ♙ad8 23.♙e2 ♙c5! 24.♙c6 ♙b6 25.g3 (25.♙xa6 ♞d1† 26.♟h2 ♙d3 27.♙a1 ♞xb3=) 25...♞d3 26.♙xa6 ♞xf3 27.♙xf3 ♙d3=

17....♙fd8 18.♙a2

In the event of 18.♙d4N Black should play: 18...♙xb4! 19.♙xd3 ♙xd3 20.♞xd3 ♟xd4 21.♟xd4

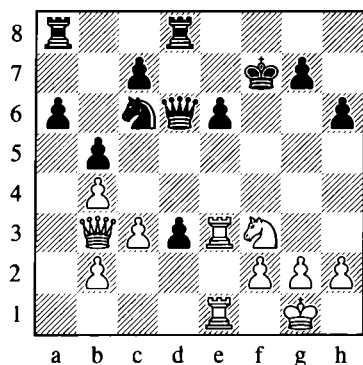


21...♙c5!? (21...c5!? 22.♙e4! a5!! 23.h3! is less clear.) 22.♙e4 ♙f8! 23.♞e2 c5 with equal chances.

**18...♞d7 19.♟d4**

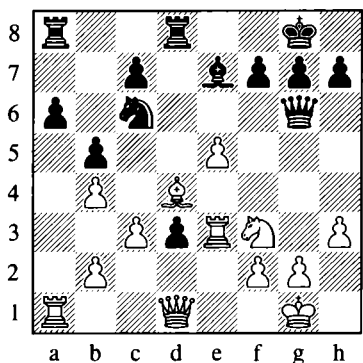
I analysed two alternatives.

19.♙g5 h6! 20.e6!?N (Attempting to improve over 20.♙xe7 ♞xe7 21.♟d2 ♙e6! when Black was fine in Smirnov – Iordachescu, Khanty-Mansiysk 2008.) 20...♙xe6 21.♙xe7 ♞xe7 22.♙e3 ♞d6 23.♙xe6 fxe6 24.♞b3 ♟f7 25.♙ae1

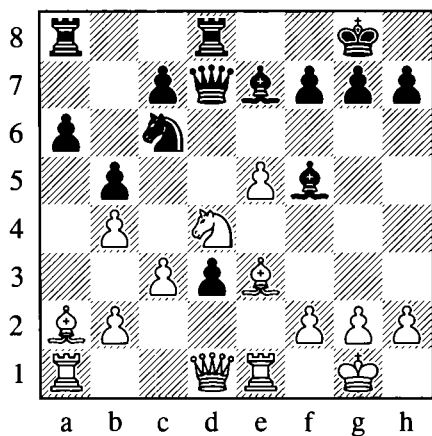


25...Wd5! 26.Wxd5 Bxd5 27.Bxe6 Qxb4!
28.cxb4 d2 The resulting endgame is equal.

19.h3!?N is a useful waiting move. 19...Qe6
20.Qxe6 Wxe6 21.Qd4 Wg6 22.Be3



22...a5! Thanks to this thematic move Black
equalizes easily. 23.Wxd3 Wxd3 24.Bxd3 axb4
25.Bxa8 Bxa8 26.Qe3 Bd8=

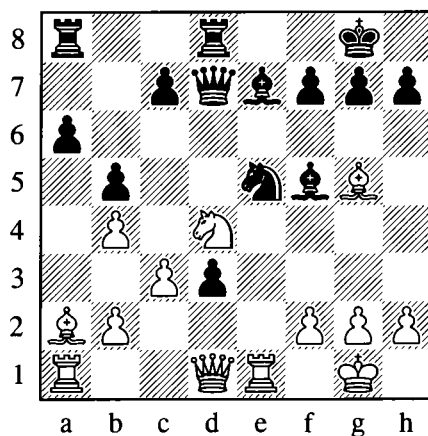


19...Qxe5!?N

I prefer this move slightly, although Black
comes close to full equality with the game
continuation: 19...Qxd4 20.Qxd4 Qxb4
21.e6! Qxe6 22.Bxe6! fxe6 23.Wg4 Qh8
24.Qxe6 Wxe7 25.cxb4 Bxd4 ½–½ Robson –
Ernst, Hoogeveen 2008.

20.Qg5

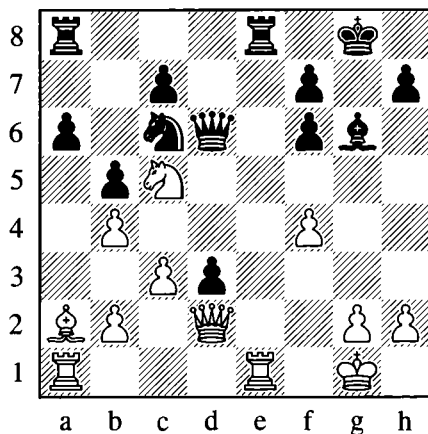
20.Qf4 Qg6 21.Qxf5 Wxf5 22.Qxc7 Bd7 is
good for Black thanks to the strong d-pawn.



20...Qf6!

It is always difficult to foresee such a move
over the board. From here my main line leads
to a move repetition.

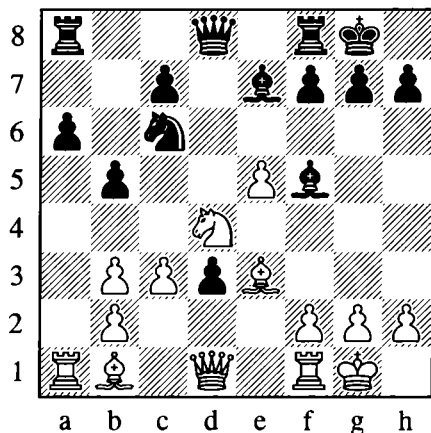
21.Qxf6 gxf6 22.Wd2 Qg6 23.f4 Qc6
24.Qe6 Be8 25.Qc5 Wd6



26.♟b7!

Attempting to play on with 26.g4 allows 26...a5! with some initiative for Black.

26...♙d7 27.♟c5 ♙d6=

B22) 16.♟d4**16...♟xd4 17.cxd4 c5 18.♙xd3**

18.♙f3 occurred in Romero Araya – Von Dessaver, Santiago de Chile 2009. Here Black can equalize easily with: 18...cxd4N 19.♙d2 (19.♙xd4? ♙xd4 20.♙xf5 ♙ad8! is clearly better for Black.) 19...♙d7 20.♙xd3 ♙xd3 21.♙xd3 We have now transposed to the 19.♙f4 line given in the notes to the main line below, with the move count being one lower. As we will soon see, 22...f6! offers Black a good game.

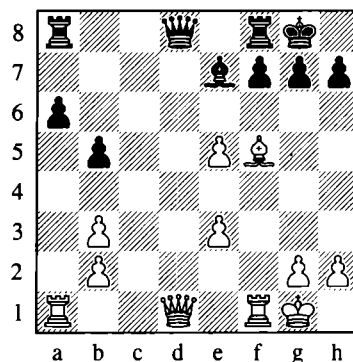
18...cxd4 19.♙xd4!

This is White's only real try for an advantage.

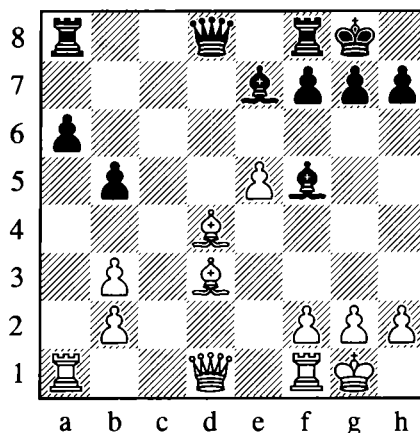
I faced 19.♙f4 almost a decade ago: 19...♙d7 20.♙b1 ♙g6!? 21.♙d2 ♙xd3 22.♙xd3 f6! Black gets rid of the e5-pawn and equalizes easily. 23.♙fe1 fxe5 24.♙xe5 ♙f6 25.♙h5 g6 26.♙c5 ♙g7= Luther – Mikhalevski, Port Erin 2003.

I also considered: 19.♙xf5N dxe3 20.fxe3 (20.♙xd8?! ♙axd8! 21.fxe3 g6! 22.♙e4 ♙c5

23.♙xa6 ♙xe3† 24.♙h1 ♙fe8 leaves Black with a slight edge.)



20...♙b6! 21.♙f3 ♙ad8 Black obtains sufficient compensation thanks to White's pawn weaknesses. For example: 22.b4 g6! 23.♙c2 ♙g5=

**19...♙xd4 20.♙xf5 ♙xb2!**

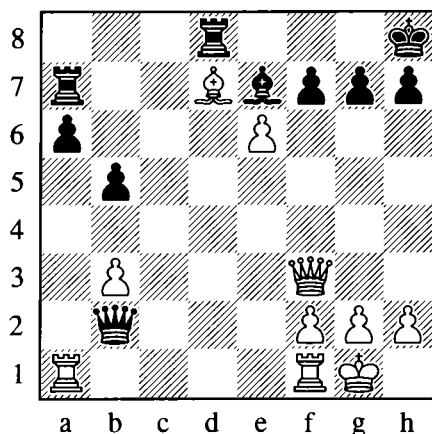
20...♙xe5?! is strongly met by 21.♙h5 g6 22.♙xg6!± and Black faces a tough defence.

21.♙d5 ♙fd8

21...♙ad8!N 22.♙d7 ♙a3! is an interesting alternative but the text move seems reliable enough.

22.♙d7 ♙a7 23.e6 ♙h8! 24.♙f3!

Ganguly – Najer, Moscow 2005. Now I would like to improve Black's play with:



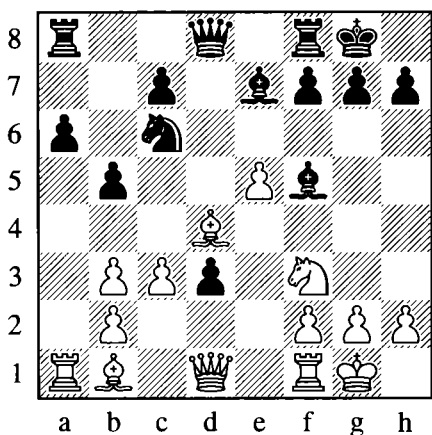
24...fxe6N 25.♙xb5 ♖c5 26.♙c4

I also considered 26.♞xa6 ♞xa6 27.♙xa6 ♞f8 28.♞g3 (28.♞e2 ♞xb3=) 28...e5 intending 29.♙d3 e4! 30.♙c4 ♞d2= with an equal position as neither side can make progress.

26...♞f8 27.♞c6 ♙xf2† 28.♙h1 a5 29.♞xe6 ♞aa8

White has slightly more active pieces, but the position is heavily simplified with opposite-coloured bishops, so a draw is by far the most likely result.

B23) 16.♙d4



This is the main line. White simply threatens to capture on d3.

16...♞d5

Black counters with an attack on b3.

17.♞e1

The rook is coming to e3 in order to attack the d3-pawn.

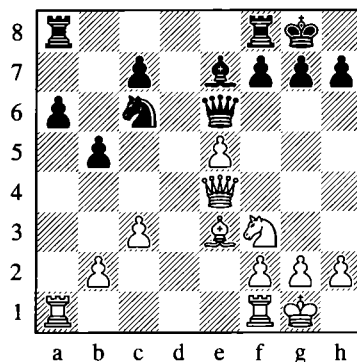
Exchanging b3 for d3 does not bring White any advantage.

17.♙xd3 ♙xd3 18.♞xd3 ♞xb3 19.♞e4 ♞e6

Black retains a solid position, for instance:

20.♙e3

20.♞f4 ♞fd8 21.♞fe1 a5 22.♞ad1 a4 was fine for Black in Michalczak – Zarges, Recklinghausen 2002.



20...f5! 21.♞f4 a5!

Black improves his pawn structure on the queenside.

22.♞fd1

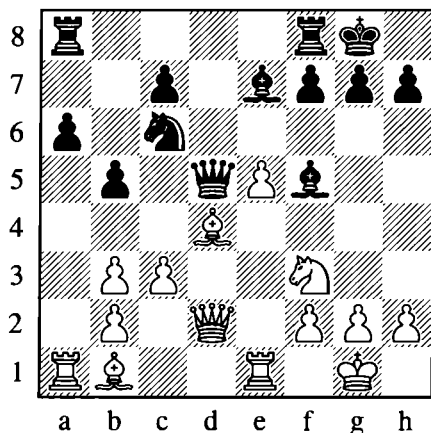
After 22.♙d4?! ♙xd4 23.cxd4 a4= the change in the pawn structure favours Black, who will create a passed pawn on the a-file.

22...♞fd8 23.h4 ♞xd1† 24.♞xd1 ♞d8=

Black has fully equalized and a draw was soon agreed in Frolyanov – Vokarev, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

17...d2!

This clever tactical idea is intended to disrupt White's coordination. From here we will consider four options: **B231) 18.♞xd2**, **B232) 18.♞e3**, **B233) 18.♙xf5!?** and **B234) 18.♞e2**.

B231) 18.♙xd2

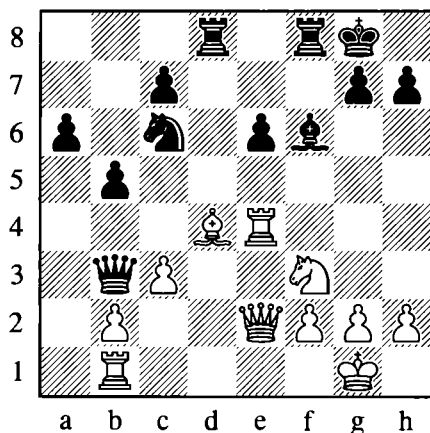
This leads to similar play as the 17.♙xd3 line noted above. Here too Black has few problems.

18...♙xb1 19.♙axb1 ♙xb3 20.e6

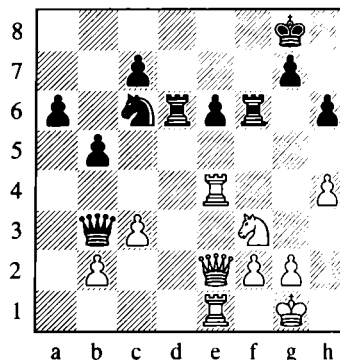
20.♙e3 was played in Franklin – Talsma, England 2010, and here I prefer the simple 20...♙ad8N 21.♙e4 ♙d5= intending ...a5.

20...fxe6 21.♙e4

21.♙e2N a5 22.♙xe6† ♙xe6 23.♙xe6 ♙d6 is roughly equal.

21...♙ad8 22.♙e2 ♙f6**23.♙xe6?!**

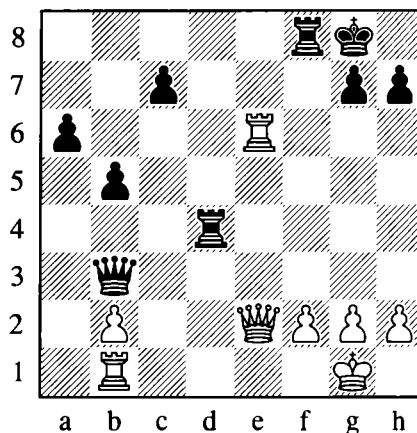
White should have preferred 23.♙xf6N ♙xf6 24.h4 when he retains sufficient compensation for a pawn, for example: 24...h6 25.♙e1 ♙d6



26.♟h2! e5 27.♟g4 ♙f5 28.♟xe5 ♙xe5 29.♙xe5 ♟xe5 30.♙xe5 ♙xb2 31.♙e8† ♟h7 32.♙e4†= The game ends in perpetual check.

23...♟xd4 24.♟xd4

24.cxd4N ♙xd4 25.♙xa6 ♙b6 26.♙e1 ♙d3 also results in a slight edge for Black.

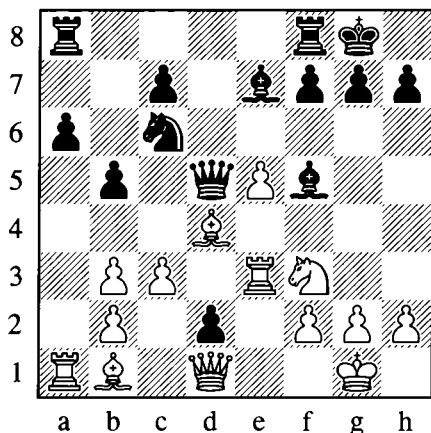
24...♙xd4 25.cxd4 ♙xd4**26.♙e7?!**

26.♙xa6N was better. After 26...♙d5 Black keeps some initiative, but White should be able to hold the ending with careful defence.

26...♙d5

White had insufficient compensation for the pawn and eventually lost in Brkic – Iordachescu, Plovdiv 2008.

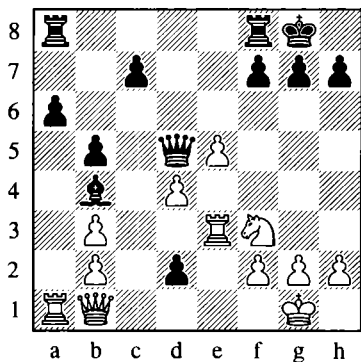
B232) 18.♖e3



This move also fails to present much of a problem.

18...♗b1 19.♖xb1

19.♗xb1 ♘xd4 20.cxd4 ♗b4!



21.♗d3

21.♗g5 is met by 21...f5! when Black's chances are higher.

21.♗d3 ♖ad8! 22.♖xa6 ♖fe8! A coldblooded move. (The immediate 22...c5 was playable, but it works even better when it has full support.) 23.♖a1 c5! Black takes over the initiative.

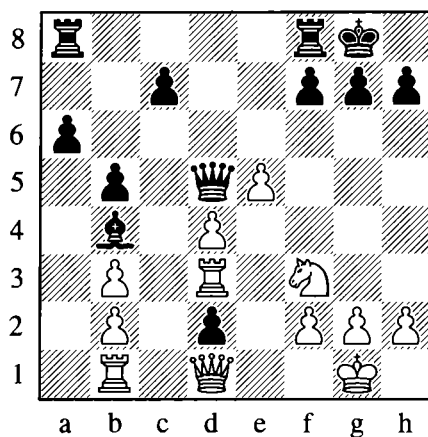
21...c5 22.♘xd2 ♗xd2 23.dxc5 ♗xc5 24.♖xd2 ♗xe5

Black has a miniscule edge although the position should, of course, be drawn.

19...♘xd4 20.cxd4 ♗b4 21.♗d3?!

The immediate 21.♘xd2N had to be played, and after 21...♗xd4 22.♘f3 ♗xd1† 23.♖xd1 ♖ad8 24.♖ed3 ♖xd3 25.♖xd3 f6! Black has just a marginally better endgame.

The inaccurate rook move was played in Rodriguez Céspedes – Baron Rodriguez, Aragon 2005. Now Black could have exploited the hanging position of the rook on d3 with:



21...♖fe8! 22.♗c2

22.♘xd2 ♖xe5!† is the idea behind Black's previous move.

22...♖ad8!

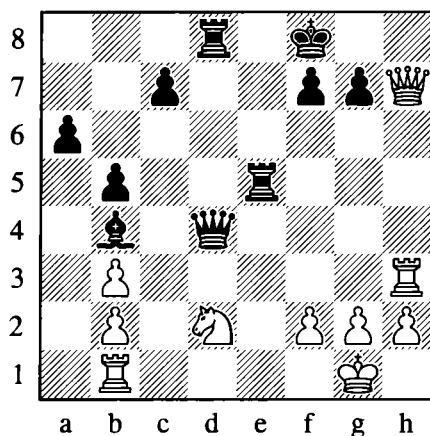
Black's chances are higher. The following line looks like White's only chance to challenge this assessment.

23.♘xd2 ♖xe5 24.♖h3 ♗xd4

24...♖h5!†

25.♗xh7† ♗f8

The attack is not dangerous, as Black's superbly-centralized pieces cover all the important squares.



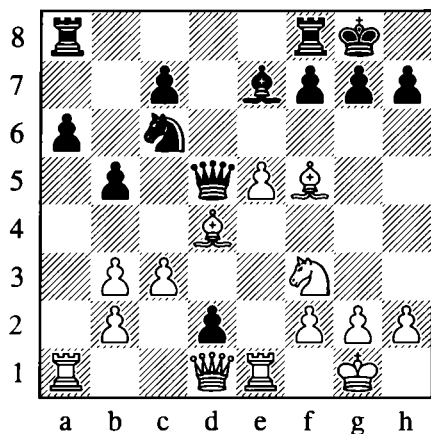
26.♟f1 ♙c5 27.♙f3

27.♟e3? ♙d3!±

27...f6±

The king is safe and Black has some positional advantages which he can try to exploit.

B233) 18.♙xf5!?



White sacrifices an exchange in the hope of exploiting his central control and powerful light-squared bishop.

18...dxe1=♙† 19.♙xe1 ♙xb3!

Black has to accept the sacrificed material. Here I think White should look to improve on the one existing game.

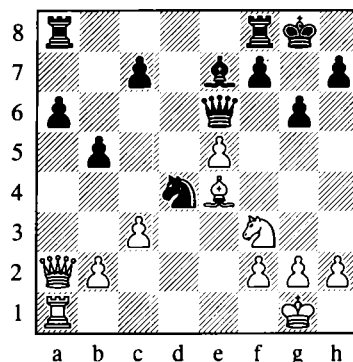
20.♙e2!±N

The aforementioned game continued:

20.♙b1!±

This is not the best position for the queen.

20...g6 21.♙e4 ♙e6 22.♙a2?! ♟xd4



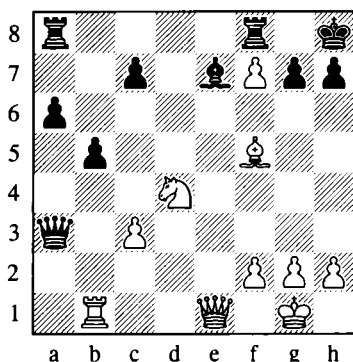
23.♙xa8

White's best chance was 23.cxd4 ♙xa2 24.♙xa2 ♙a7 25.♙c6 when the misplaced rook on a7 offers him some compensation, although Black can start to untangle himself with 25...♙b8! 26.d5 a5! when he keeps some winning chances.

23...♟b3 24.♙d5 ♙xd5 25.♟d4 ♙xe5 26.♙xb3 ♙c5±

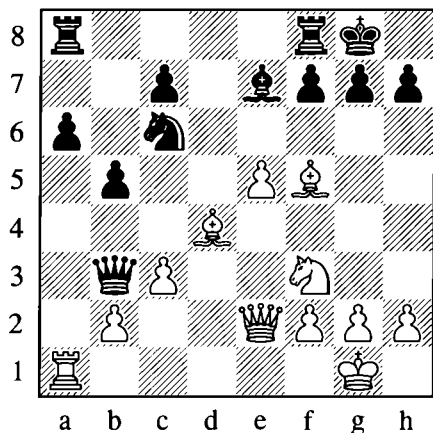
Black obtained an extra pawn and eventually converted his advantage in Amonatov – Svetushkin, Moscow 2007.

20.e6!±N also makes sense and requires some analysis: 20...♟xd4 21.♟xd4 ♙xb2 22.exf7† ♟h8 Black takes advantage of the hanging rook on a1. 23.♙b1 ♙a3



24.♔c2! ♕f6! 25.♖e6 ♜e7! The only defence, but it is good enough. 26.♖h3 ♕h4! (26...g6!? 27.♕xg6 ♜xf7 is also at least enough for equality.) 27.g3 ♜xf7 Black's chances are slightly higher.

The text move is perhaps White's best chance. Compared with the Amonatov – Svetushkin game, the queen is better on e2 than b1, and this should enable White to claim enough positional compensation for the sacrificed exchange.



20...g6 21.♕d7

21.♕b1 ♘xd4 22.♘xd4 ♜d5 23.♕a2 ♜b7 24.♕b1 ♜b6 25.♕e4 ♜ae8 followed by ...♕c5 looks slightly better for Black.

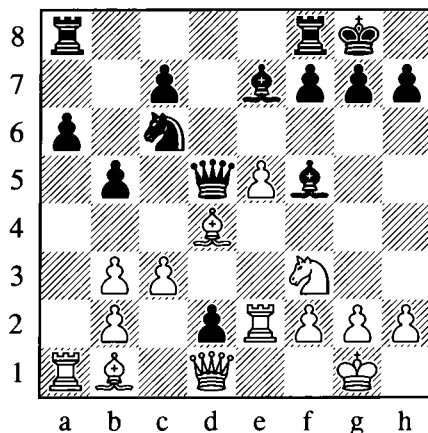
21...♘d8!

A strong manoeuvre. Black brings the knight to e6.

22.♕e3 ♘e6 23.♕c6 ♜ab8

White keeps a reasonable level of compensation but Black should not have problems.

B234) 18.♜e2



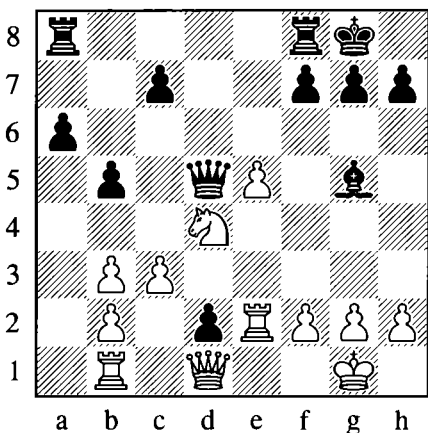
This is the most principled continuation of all. White wants to win the d-pawn for free.

18...♕xb1 19.♜xb1 ♘xd4 20.♘xd4

20.cxd4?! has never been played and allows Black to protect the d2-pawn from the queenside: 20...♕b4!?

20...♕g5

Now the pawn has to be protected from the kingside.



21.g3

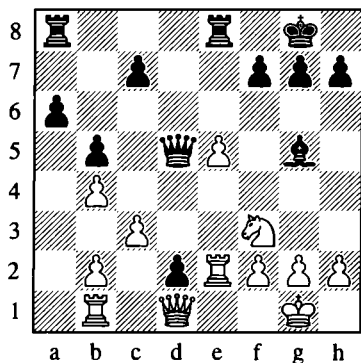
Preparing f2-f4 is the most logical plan.

21.b4?!

This dubious move was played in Solleveld – De Jong, Hilversum 2006, and here Black's play can easily be improved.

21...♙fe8!N 22.♟f3?!

22.h4 is better, although after 22...♙h6! 23.g3 ♙xe5 24.f4 ♙xe2 25.♙xe2 c5 26.bxc5 ♙xc5 27.♟h2 g6 28.♙xd2 ♙g7 Black keeps a positional edge.



22...♙ad8!

It turns out that Black can ignore the attack, and in fact White has nothing better than returning with the knight to d4.

23.♟d4

23.♟xg5? is bad due to the unexpected 23...♙a2! and it turns out that White has no good way of stopping ...♙xb1.

23.♙a1 ♙f4 maintains an edge for Black.

23...a5! 24.bxa5 b4! ♙

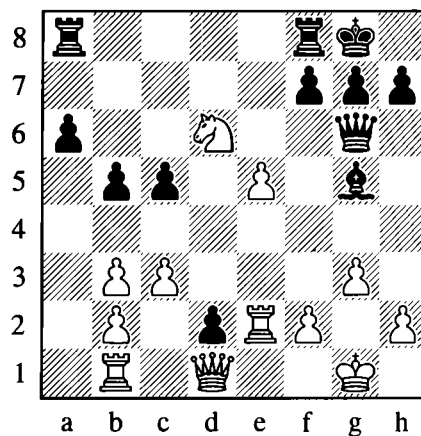
White is under pressure.

21...c5 22.♟f5 ♙d3!

Black has also played 22...♙e6!? 23.♟d6 ♙g6 reaching the same position. The move order should not matter too much: retreating to e6 gives White the extra possibility of 23.♙c2!?N although this should not be too dangerous; still, it would seem easier to eliminate this option altogether.

23.♟d6 ♙g6!

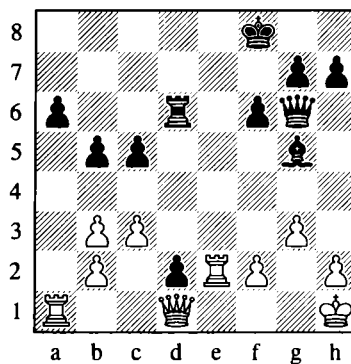
The queen must go here in order to interfere with the f2-f4 plan.



24.h4

White offers the h-pawn in order to lure the bishop away from defending the one on d2. So far this is the only move to have been tested, but I also analysed a couple of alternatives.

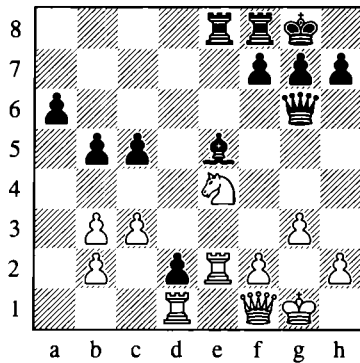
24.♟h1N unpins the g-pawn and renews the threat of f4, but Black is ready to answer with 24...f6! 25.e6 ♙ad8 26.e7 ♙xd6 27.exf8=♙† ♟xf8 28.♙a1



28...♙d3!= The mighty passed pawn on d2 gives Black full compensation for the exchange. In fact, I don't see a single idea for White to make progress.

24.♙f1!?N ♙f4! 25.♙d1 ♙xe5! 26.♟e4 ♙ae8!?

26...♙c6 27.♟xd2 is close to equal, although White can claim a modest initiative.



27.♙xc5

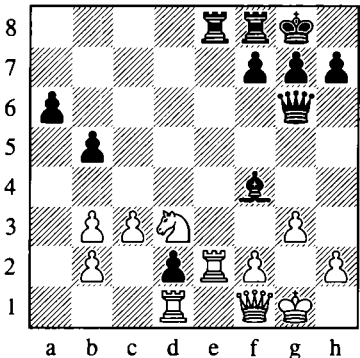
27.♙xd2? is refuted by 27...♙f4!

27...♙f4

27...♙h5!? 28.♙exd2 ♙xg3! 29.hxg3 ♙xc5 is slightly worse for Black, although the position should be defendable.

28.♙d3!

28.♙xe8 ♙xe8 29.♙d3 is met by 29...♙h5! 30.gxf4 ♙g4† 31.♙h1 ♙f3† 32.♙g1 ♙g4†= with a perpetual.

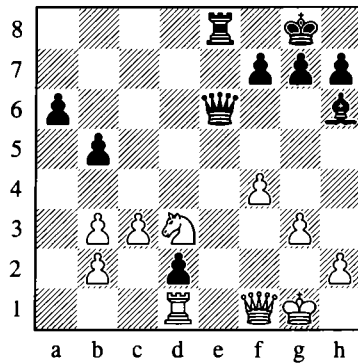


28...♙h6

28...♙xg3 29.hxg3 ♙xd3 30.♙xe8 ♙xf1† 31.♙xf1 ♙xe8 32.♙xd2 is slightly better for White, although once again Black should hold a draw.

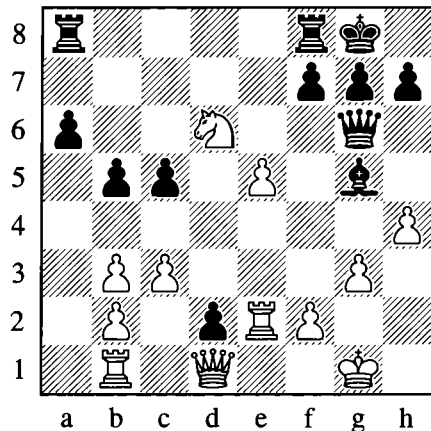
29.♙xe8 ♙xe8 30.f4 ♙e6

30...♙xf4!? 31.♙xf4 ♙c2 32.♙g2 a5 33.♙f3 h6 34.♙f2 ♙xb2 leads to an endgame that will be tough to win for White, but it is hardly necessary for Black to risk this.



31.♙xd2 ♙xb3 32.♙c5 ♙a2 33.♙d3 g6 34.♙g2 ♙f8 35.b4 ♙a1 36.♙e4 ♙g7=

Black should not have much trouble extinguishing White's temporary initiative.



24...♙xh4!

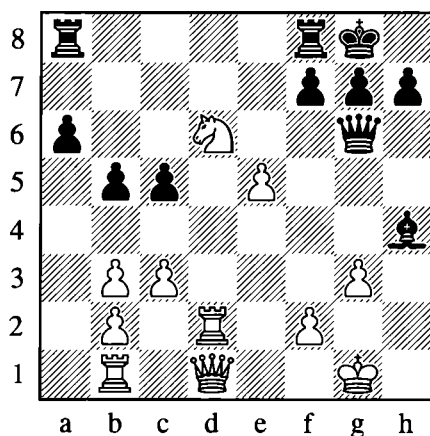
This is the latest word of theory.

I also considered 24...♙f4!?N but found that after 25.h5 ♙e6 26.♙e4 ♙xe5 27.♙xd2 ♙f5 28.♙d6 ♙xd6 29.♙xd6 h6 30.♙a1 White keeps a nagging initiative.

24...♙h6 is met by: 25.h5!N (25.♙h2?! f6 26.e6 ♙ad8 27.e7 ♙xd6 28.exf8=♙† ♙xf8 29.♙a1 ♙d3!= leads to a position resembling the 24.♙h1N line noted above, Stellwagen – Svetushkin, Dresden [ol] 2008; 25.♙a1!?N is interesting though.) 25...♙xh5 26.♙xd2 ♙xe5 27.♙d5 ♙e6 28.♙f5± with some pressure for White.

25.♟xd2

The destruction of the d2-pawn brings a sense of normality to the position. The strong knight on d6 promises slightly better chances for White, but Black should be able to equalize with precise play.

**25...♙e7!**

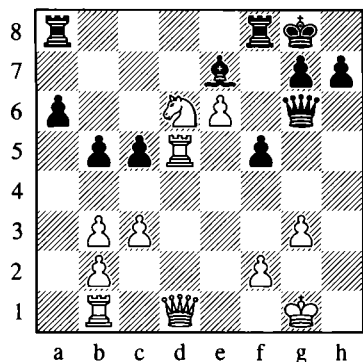
Black's counterplay is connected with undermining the strong knight with ...f6, so White will not be able to have everything his own way.

26.♟a1!?:N

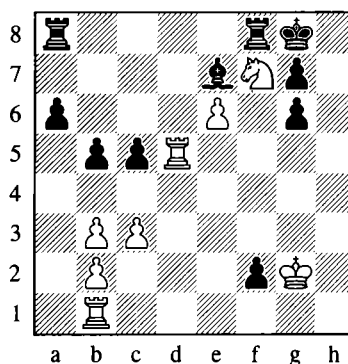
This new move seems to be White's best chance for a meaningful advantage.

We must also consider another rook move, which was tested in a high-level game.

26.♟d5 f6! 27.e6 f5

**28.♟d3**

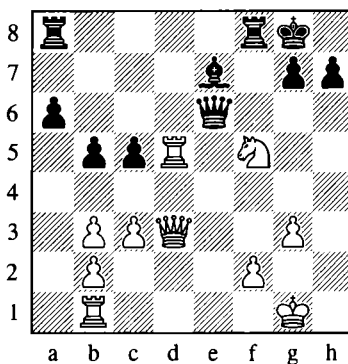
28.♟e2 can be met by the following nice idea: 28...f4 29.♟e4 fxg3 30.♟xg6 gxf2+ 31.♟g2 hxg6 32.♟f7



32...♟ae8! The point is that 33.♟h1?! runs into 33...♙h4! 34.♟xh4 (34.♟e5 g5!?) 34...♟xe6 35.♟f4 ♟e7! with advantage to Black.

28...♟xe6 29.♟xf5

Black has eliminated the passed e-pawn, but he still needs to take care to neutralize White's active knight and rook.

**29...♙f6!?:N**

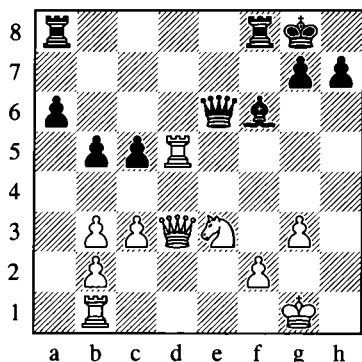
Safeguarding the bishop and preparing ...♟ad8.

In the game Black fell under some pressure after: 29...♟ad8 30.♟e3! ♟xe3 31.♟xe3 ♟xd5 32.♟xd5 ♙d8 33.f4± Caruana – L'Ami, Reykjavik 2012. I believe the position should still be defensible at this stage, but

the practical problems proved too much and Black eventually succumbed.

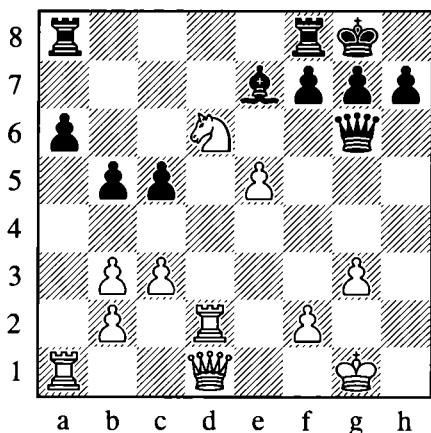
30.♘e3

30.♞d1 ♕e5 31.♘e3 ♞ae8 32.♞e1 ♞c6
33.♞e2 ♞e6 also looks about equal.



30...♞ad8 31.♞d1 ♞fe8

Black has solved most of his problems and White has no more than a miniscule edge.

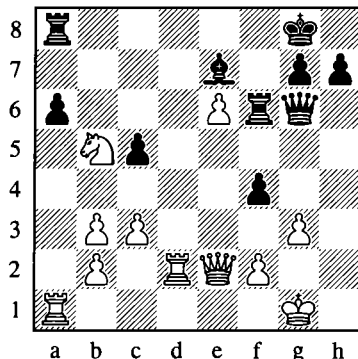


26...f6!

26...♞e6 may lead to an unpleasant rook endgame after: 27.♞d5! f6 28.♞xc5 fxe5 29.♞d5! ♞xd5 30.♞xd5 ♞ad8 31.♞ad1 ♞xd6 32.♞xd6 ♕xd6 33.♞xd6± An important point is that 33...♞f6? 34.♞xf6 gxf6 35.b4 ♖f7 36.b3+- reaches a winning pawn endgame for White.

27.♞f3!

27.e6 is unconvincing: 27...f5 28.♞e2 ♞f6 29.♘xb5 (29.♞e1?! f4! 30.♞e5 fxg3 31.fxg3 ♞d8 32.♘e4 ♞xd2 33.♘xd2 h5! gives Black some initiative.) 29...f4! Black obtains sufficient counterplay, for example:



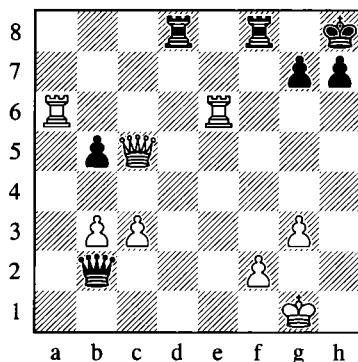
30.♘c7 fxg3! 31.f4 ♞h6! 32.♘xa8 g2! 33.♞xg2 ♞xf4! 34.♞f2 ♞e3! 35.♞a4! ♞c1† 36.♞f1 ♞g5† 37.♞g2 ♞c1†= White cannot avoid a repetition.

27...fxe5 28.♞d5† ♖h8 29.♞xe5 ♕g5!?

There is a second line that deserves serious consideration:

29...♕xd6 30.♞xd6

The alternative is: 30.♞xd6 ♞c2 31.♞xc5 ♞xb2 32.♞axa6 ♞ae8 33.♞e6 ♞d8

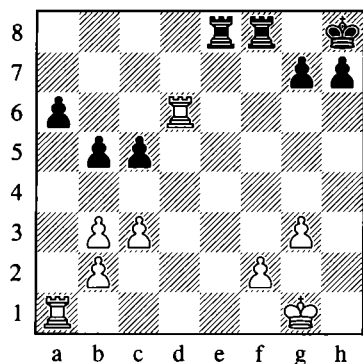


34.♞ad6 ♞c8 35.♞c6 ♞cd8 White must either agree to a threefold repetition or permit a counterattack on the f2-pawn after 36.b4 ♞c1† 37.♖g2 ♞d1 38.♞e3 ♞d2, and

after an exchange on f2 I doubt that White can win.

30...♙xd6 31.♙xd6 ♙ae8

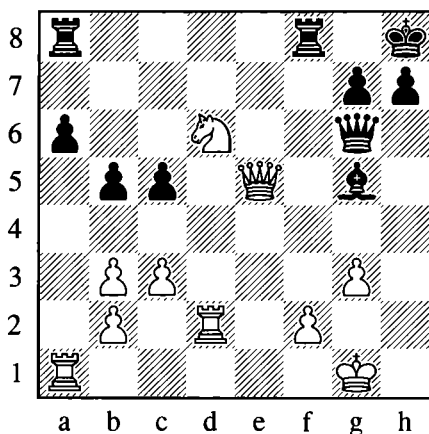
Black seems to have just enough to equalize, as shown by the following lines:



32.♟f1 ♙e3 33.♙axa6

33...♙dxa6 ♙ef3=

33...♙ef3 34.♙d2 b4! 35.c4 ♙xg3 36.♙c6 ♙g5 37.♙d5 ♙xd5 38.cxd5 ♟g8 39.♟e2 ♙f5 40.♙xc5 h5 41.♟e3 h4=



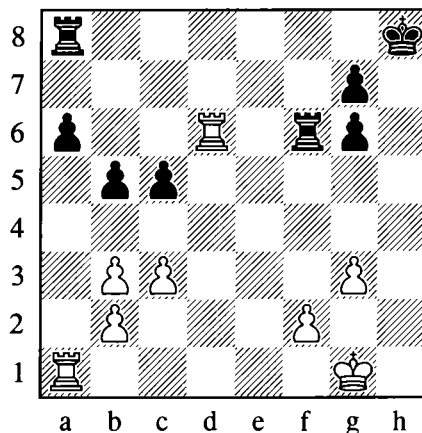
30.♙dd1

30.♙d5 ♙f4 31.♙e4 ♙xd6 32.♙xg6 hxg6 33.♙xd6 reaches the same position.

30...♙f4 31.♙e4 ♙xd6

Unfortunately 31...♙xg3? 32.fxg3 ♙xg3† 33.♙g2 ♙e3† 34.♟h1 ♙f3 is insufficient due to 35.♟f7! ♟g8 36.♟g5 and White wins.

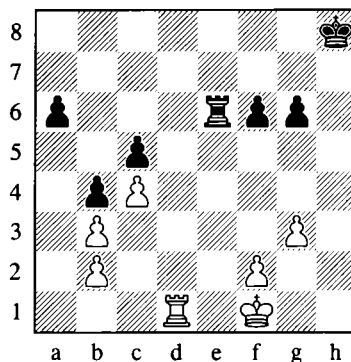
32.♙xg6 hxg6 33.♙xd6 ♙f6



34.♙d5

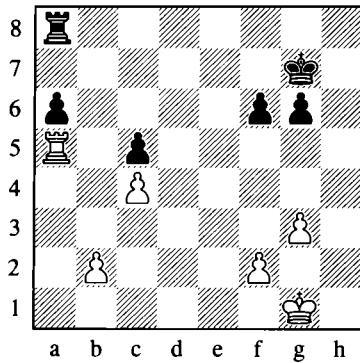
I checked two other attempts, neither of which enable White to achieve his goal.

34.♙ad1 b4! 35.c4 ♙e8 36.♙xf6 gxf6 37.♟f1 ♙e6

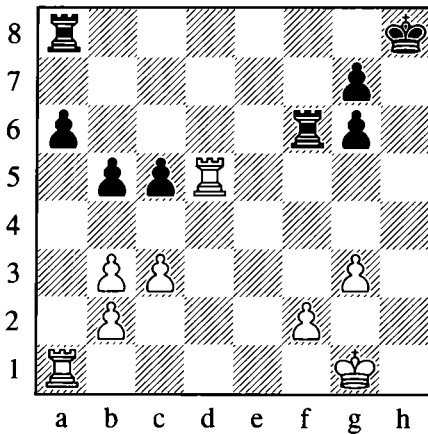


38.♙d8† ♟g7 39.♙c8 ♙d6 40.♟e2 ♙e6† 41.♟d3 ♙e5 Black can hold the endgame without too much trouble, as the loss of the a-pawn is of little significance.

34.♙xf6 gxf6 35.♙a5 ♟g7 36.c4 (Otherwise Black brings the king to the queenside freeing the rook from defence: 36.♟g2 ♟f7 37.♟f3 ♟e6 38.♟f4 ♟d5=) 36...bxc4 37.bxc4



37...g5! 38.♖xc5 ♖b8 39.♗a5 ♖xb2 40.♗xa6 ♗c2 41.♗c6 g4!= The draw is rather easy as the king approaches the c-pawn.



34...♗e8

34...♖h7!? also looks okay.

35.♖f1 c4 36.bxc4 bxc4‡

Despite White's slight superiority, Black's counterplay against the b2-pawn makes a draw the most likely result by far.

Conclusion

This brings our investigation of the Open Spanish to a close. The 13.♘xc5 line leads to a slightly better endgame for White, but I do not believe Black has much to fear. The 13.♗b1 variation seems to represent the biggest challenge to our repertoire in the 9.♘bd2 system, but here too I hope I have demonstrated that Black can neutralize White's slight initiative. I have endeavoured to anticipate as many potential improvements for White as possible, and I look forward to seeing my recommendations tested in practical play.

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B423221) 18.f3 311

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Chapter 18

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0–0 ♘xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6 9.♘bd2
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 ♞c5 10.c3 ♙e7 11.♙c2 d4 12.♟b3 d3

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B2) 15.♙e3 0–0 358

B21) 16.♞e1 359

B22) 16.♟d4 361

B23) 16.♙d4 ♞d5 17.♞e1 d2! 362

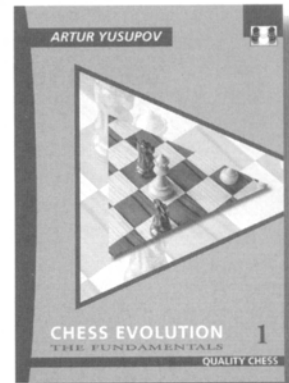
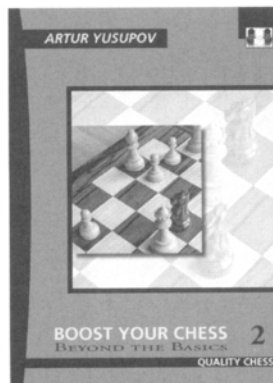
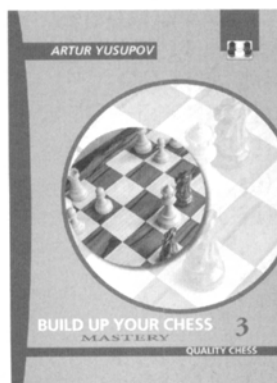
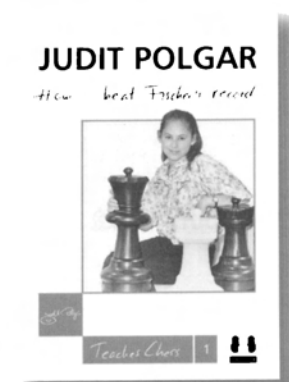
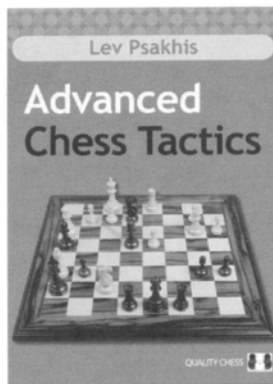
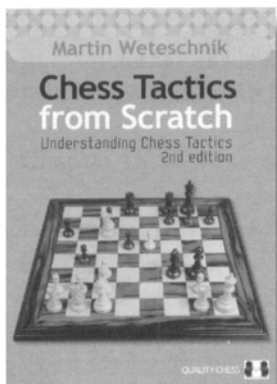
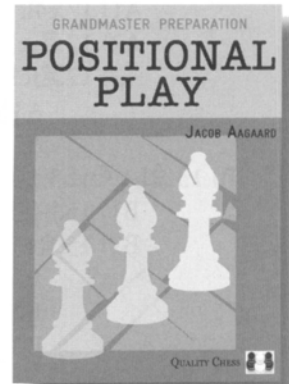
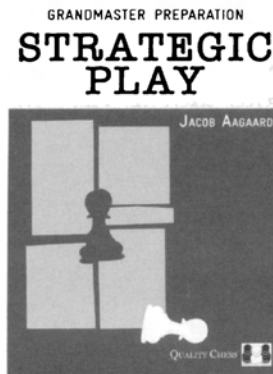
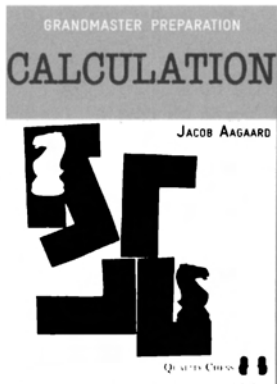
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B232) 18.♞e3 364

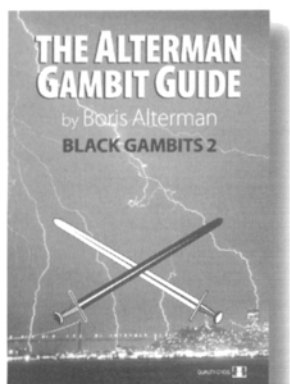
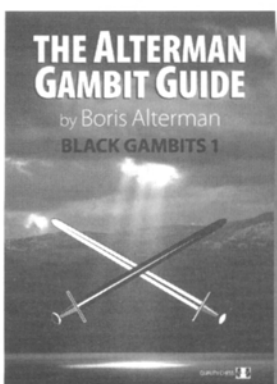
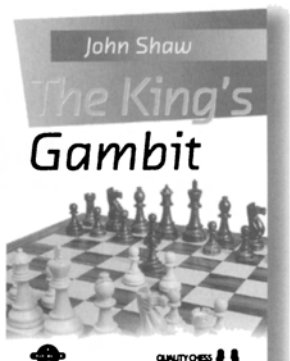
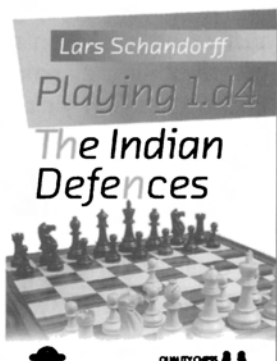
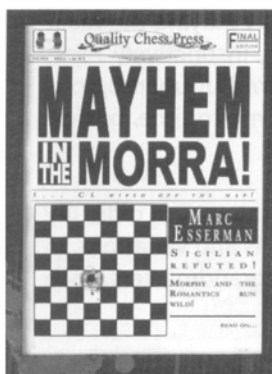
B233) 18.♙xf5!? 365

B234) 18.♞e2 366

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