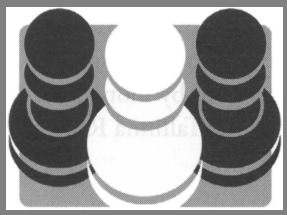
Grandmaster Repertoire

The Dragon 2

By

Gawain Jones



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The Dragon 2

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Key to symbols used

⩲	White is slightly better	?	a weak move
⩱	Black is slightly better	??	a blunder
±	White is better	!	a good move
∓	Black is better	!!	an excellent move
+ -	White has a decisive advantage	!?	a move worth considering
- +	Black has a decisive advantage	?!	a move of doubtful value
=	equality	#	mate
∞	with compensation		
⇄	with counterplay		
c	unclear		

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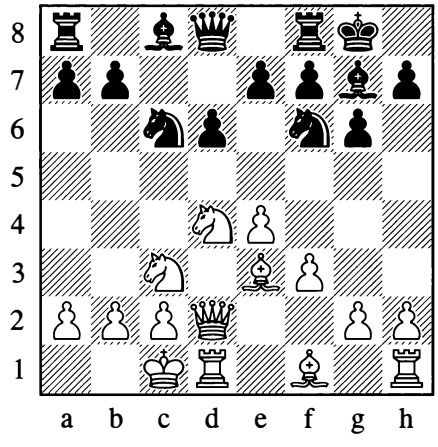
Williams: *Killer Dragon* 1 & 2, Ginger GM 2011

Introduction to 9.0–0–0

Welcome to Volume 2! T is book continues where the frst left of, by providing a complete repertoire against all of White's alternatives to the Yugoslav Attack with 9. c4 and 9.g4. Volume 1 contains both a preface and a detailed thematic introduction to the Dragon and, since the two books are complementary halves of a single work, I will not take up space duplicating them here.

I would, however, like to say a few things about the most important topic of the present volume, namely the position after the opening moves: l.e4 cS 2. t O d6 3.d4 c d4 4. t xd4 t f S. t c3 g6 6. e3 g7 7.0 0-0 8. d2 t c6 9.0-0-0



Coverage of this critical variation spans the frst seven chapters. In my own praxis I have faced 9.0-0-0 more often than any other system. I think this is due to practical considerations: the 9. c4 lines are razor-sharp and White needs to remember a lot of theory, whereas here the play tends to be more positional.

9...dS

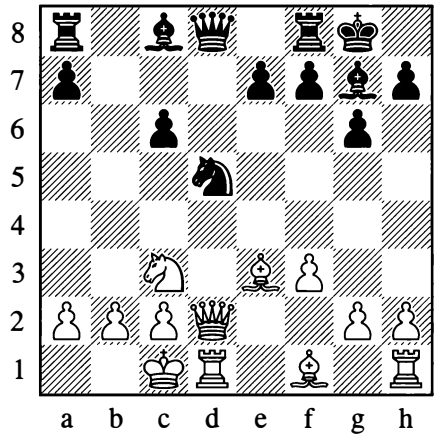
Typically in the Dragon, when we get the chance to execute the ...d5 break we should take it.

10.exdS

10.Wb1 received a Burry of interest some years ago, but in Chapter 5 I will show a good way to neutralize it.

10. ' e1 used to be popular but then fell out of fashion. However, it has recently attracted the attention of some strong players. T e positions a f er 10...e5 11. 4 xc6 bxc6 12.exd5 4 xd5 have defnite similarities to the old main line; see Chapter 6 for further details.

10... t xdS 11. t xc6 bxc6



12. i d4

12. l xd5 cxd5 13. xd5 c7 is covered in Chapters 3 and 4. Taking the material, whether just the pawn or grabbing the black rooks for the white queen as well, is dangerous for White. T e open lines on the queenside give Black easy counterplay against White's king.

T e text move is White's main try and, in my view, the current main line of the entire Dragon.

12... , bd4

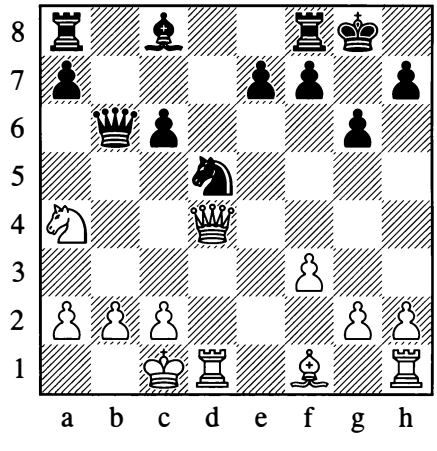
12...e5 13. i c5 i e6 used to be the main line but Black was su fering rather.

13. xd4 Wb6

White will try to exploit his better structure and the outpost on c5, but Black has his own trumps.

14. c a4

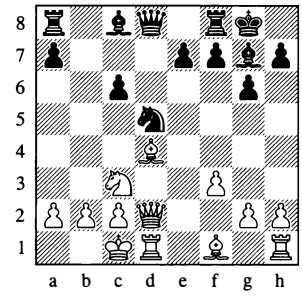
White's other tries are covered in Chapter 1.



From this important position I have covered two options in detail. T e slightly o fbeat 14...Wa5 15.b3 i e6!? is presented in Chapter 1 and the more popular 14...Wc7 can be found in Chapter 2.

Chapter 1

9.0–0–0



Introduction and 14...♕a5

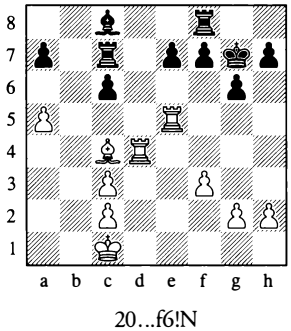
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2. f d6 3.d4 c d4 4. xd4 f 5. c3 **g6** 6. . e3 . g7 7. f 0-0 8.Wd2 c6 9.0-0-0 d5 10.exd5 xd5 11. xc6 bxc6 12. . d4 . xd4 13.Wxd4

13...Wb6

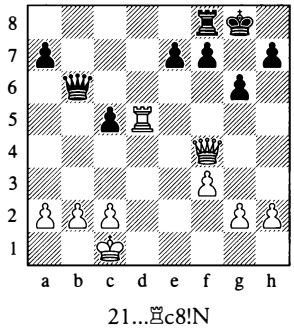
A) 14. xd5 c d5 8
AI) 15.Wxd5 9
A2) 15.Wxb6 11
B) 14. . c4!? 11
C) 14. a4 Wa5 15.b3 . e6!? 13
C1) 16.g3 13
C2) 16. . c4 15
C3) 16.Wd2 Wc7 16
C31) 17. c5 17
C32) 17.c4 17
C4) 16.Wc5 18
C5) 16.h4 19
C6) 16.We5 Wb4 21
C61) 17.c4 22
C62) 17. c b2 24

B) note to 14...♘e3



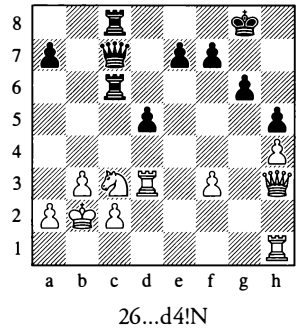
20...f6!N

B) after 21.♖xd5



21...♖c8!N

C2) after 26.♕h3



26...d4!N

l.e4 c5 2. t £ d6 3.d4 c d4 4. t xd4 t f 5. t c3 g 6. . e3 . g7 7. £ 0-0 8.Ydl t c6 9.0-0-0 d5

White can handle this variation in several ways. We will start by analysing his main line.

10.exd5 t xd5 l1. t xc6 bxc6 12. . d4

T is is a strategic variation. White aims to prevent counterplay and hopes eventually to exploit his slightly better structure. Black needs to be patient and avoid creating any additional weaknesses.

12... . xd4

12...e5 used to be the main line but in recent years Black has been struggling, and so attention has shifted to this bishop trade.

13.Yxd4 Yb6

For a long time this line was basically ignored but it is now arguably the main line of the entire Dragon! Black has the worse structure but that, by itself, should not be a major problem. It is vital that we avoid reaching a position where White has a knight sitting on c5 dominating our bishop. T erefore, unusually, in this structure each side o f en tries to exchange its bishop for the enemy knight.

We will analyse A) 14. t xd5 and B) 14. . c4!? before tackling the main line of C) 14. t a4.

14]We5

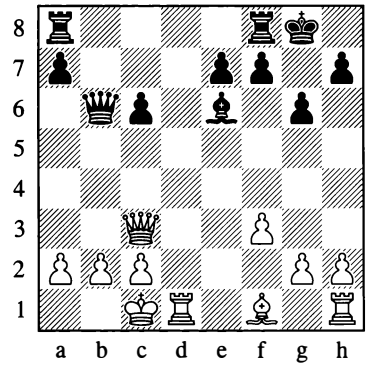
Black has two logical ways to meet this rare move.

14... l xc3N

T is feels the most correct to me.

14...e6!?N is the more ambitious option. If the pawn gets stuck here then Black will be lef with a terrible bishop. However, a fer 15.h4 Black can obtain counterplay with 15...f6 16. ' e1 EbS 17.b3 ' c5 1S. l e4 ' a3t 19. ' b1 e5 and the bishop escapes. 20. . c4 . e6 21.h5 g5 22.h6 ' hSo With a highly unclear middlegame.

15. ' xc3 . e6



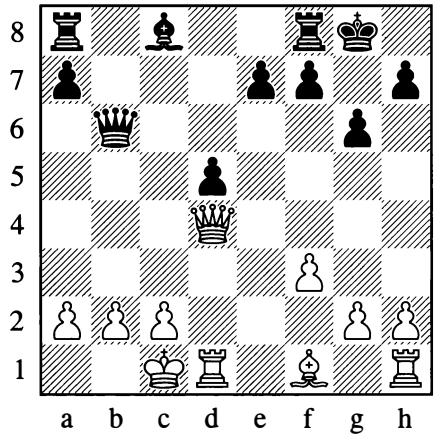
16.h4 EadS 17. . d3

17.h5 Exdlt 1S. ' xd1 EdSt 19. ' cl ' d4 is no problem for us.

17... ' d4 1S. ' xd4 Exd4 19. . e4 c5 20.Exd4 cxd4 21.Ed1 EdS=

T e ending should be f ne for Black, who is ready to start pushing his central pawns.

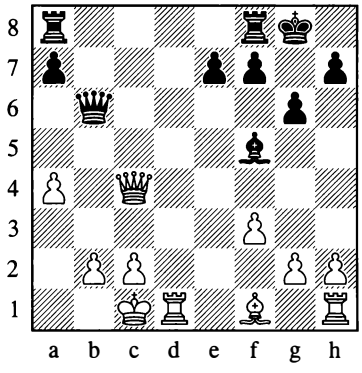
A) 14. t xd5 cxd5



Since White cannot really get away with grabbing the d-pawn, repairing Black's structure cannot be considered a critical test. Nevertheless, it is worth familiarizing yourself with AI) 15.Yxd5 and **A2)** 15.Yxb6.

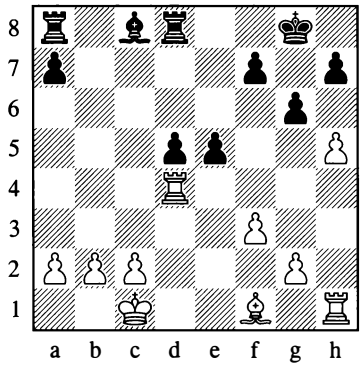
15. ' e5?! If White wants to play this move he should do it on the previous turn. 15... . e6 16. . d3 (16.h4 f6N 17. ' f4 EfbS ') 16...EfbsN 17.h4 f6 1S. ' c3 Eb7+ Black's kingside is quite safe as he can meet 19.h5 with 19...g5.

IS.a4?! has been played in a couple of engine games. I suppose White is hoping for an improved version of the IS.h4 endings but Black does not have to oblige. IS...Wc7! I6. ' xdS e6 I7. ' e4 fS (17.. J ab8!?N might be even stronger) I8. ' c4 ' b6



Black has strong pressure. White has tried I9. ' c3 Efc8 20. c4, but Black can now reach a favourable ending with: 20...Exc4 21. ' xc4 Ec8 22. ' e2 Exc2t 23. ' xc2 xc2 24. c xc2 ' cSt 2S.Wd3 ' b4 26.Ed2 ' xa4+

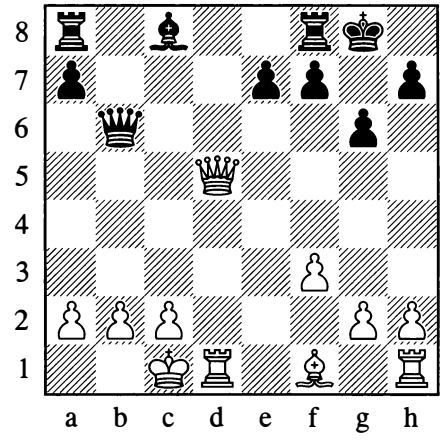
IS.h4 has been played in quite a few correspondence and engine games, but it does not really put any pressure on Black. I think the most sensible antidote is IS...Ed8 I6.hS ' xd4 I7.Exd4 eS when the position is equal, although I would prefer Black as I like the central pawns. Play may continue:



I8.Ea4 (18.Edh4 fS 19.hxg6 xg6= Bernal Varela - Orriz, email 2009) I8... c g7 I9. a6 e6 20.Ee1 c f6= Skulason – A. Kristjansson, email 2010.

Finally, IS. c bI Ed8 I6.h4 ' xd4 17.Exd4 eS I8.Ea4 c g7= was similar to lS.h4 above in fscherfanatic3 - frauholle, engine game 2012.

AI) I5.Wxd5



David Baramidze actually grabbed this hot pawn against me, but Black has various ways to garner enough compensation.

I5... . e6 I6.Wb5

T e inaccurate I6. ' e4?! was seen in Balanov - Golubev, Ukraine 1999. 16...Eac8!N would have been awkward for W ite, as Black threatens both to take on a2 and to hit the c2-pawn with ... fS.

16. ' d4 ' aS 17.a3

17. c4 Efd8 18. ' e4 xc4 19. ' xc4 ' gSt 20. c b1 ' xg2+ Black has regained his pawn and now has an edge as White's remaining kingside pawns are weak.

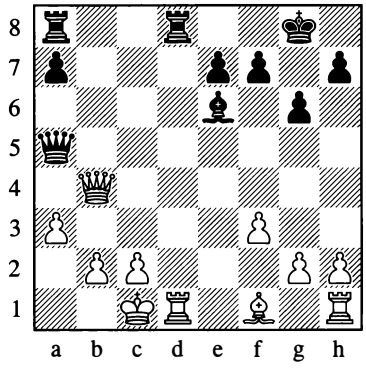
17...Efd8

17...Eac8!?N also seems fne.

18. ' b4?!

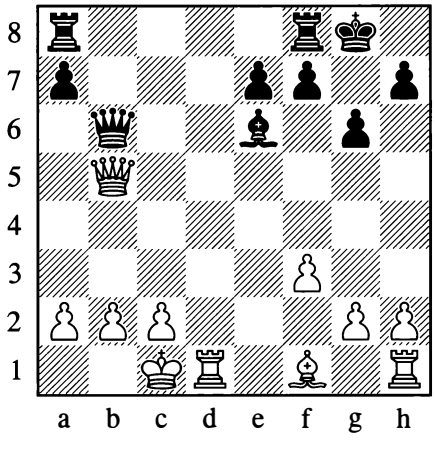
18. ' e3N had to be tried, but White understandably did not want to allow 18...ExdIt 19.Wxd1 ' dSt 20. d3 ' a2.

Nevertheless, White can still keep equality with 21.b3 ' xa3 22. e2.



18... ' g5t 19.: d2 a5 20. ' c3 : ac8 21.h4 ' f4 22.< d1?! d5! 23. ' xa5 xf3t!

T e Australian GM won a few moves later in I. Gurevich - Rogers, London 1992. A great attacking display!



16.. . f

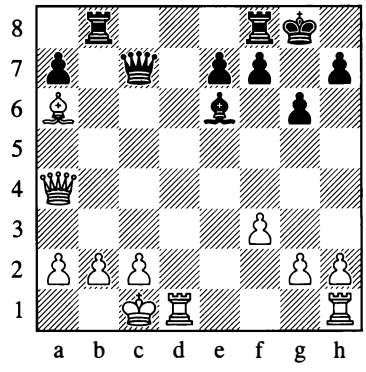
T is was my choice when I encountered this variation. A promising alternative is:

16... ' c7 17. ' a4

17. d3 : ab8 18. ' a4 a5 19.c3 was played in M. Nemeth - Kargin, Budapest 2005, and here 19... ' b6!N 20. ' a3 (20.: d2? : fd8! is extremely awkward for White) 20...: fd8 would have put White under heavy pressure.

17...: ab8 18. a6?!

18. d3 transposes to 17. d3 above.



18...: b6 19. bl ' c5 20. d3 : fb8

Black has a venomous attack and it didn't take him long to force resignation.

21.b3 a5 22.< b2 : b4 23. ' a3 a4 24.: hel axb3 25.cxb3 ' d4t 26. c1 xb3

0-1 Dziel - Gmuer, corr. 1997.

17.: d2 ' e1t

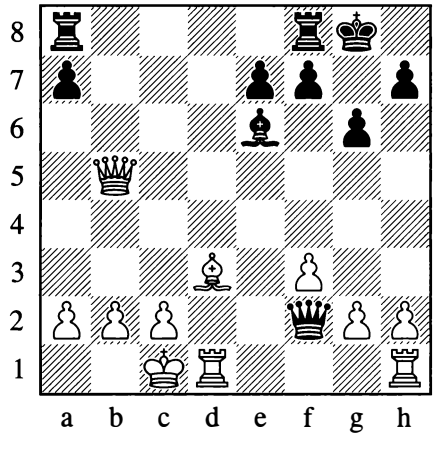
17... ' e3!? is a way to avoid the repetition.

18.: dl ' f

White can repeat moves with 19.: d2, but my opponent decided to play for more.

19.. d3

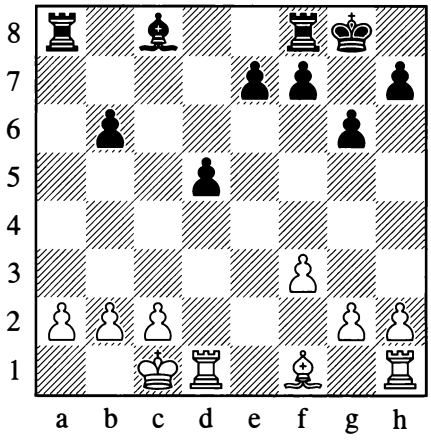
In Baramidze - lones, Warsaw 2013, there wasn't really a good reason not to play:



19... ' xg2N 20.. e4 : ac8

With a comfortable game for Black.

A2) 15.%xb6 a b6



T is simplistic continuation gives White equality at best.

16.a3

16.Wb1 b7 17. b5 Wg7 18.:he1 f6 19.f4 e6 Only Black could be better in Nadig - Smerdon, Canberra 2009.

16.:xd5 e6 17.:d1 (As Chris Ward noted, White can't go after the b6-pawn with 17.:b5? in view of 17...:xa2 18.:xb6 :aI t 19.Wd2 :d8t+ when the pin along the back rank wins material) 17...:xa2= Black has regained the pawn with a comfortable game.

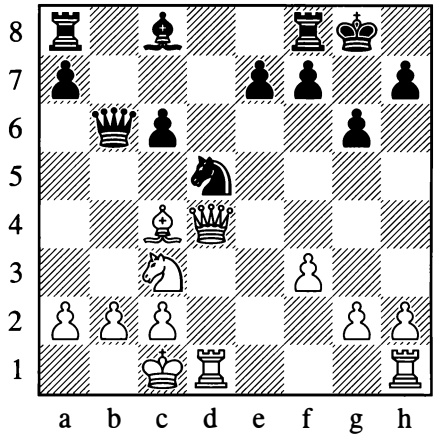
16...:d8 17.:d4

17. b5 :a5 18.a4 e6 19. d2 d7 was also fne for Black in Lazan - Daurelle, email 2006.

17...:d6 18.i b5 e5 19.:b4 £=

Quite a few engine games have reached this position and the results confrm that Black is completely fne. T e b6-pawn is the only weakness but it is nicely defended. Meanwhile Black has excellent central control.

B) 14.i c4!?

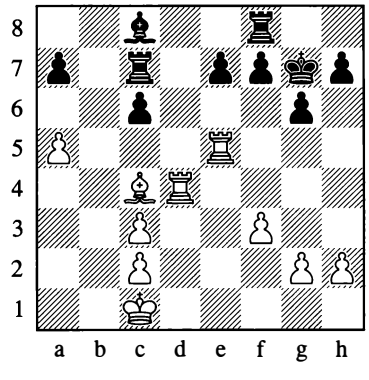


T is is much rarer than the main line but it has been the choice of a lot of strong GMs, including Ivanchuk who used it to defeat Carlsen, so we obviously need to take it seriously.

14...l e3

T is has become the main line, probably because it promises Black more active play.

14...i xd4 was Magnus's choice. A fer 15.:xd4 4xc3 16.bxc3 W ite's structure has been compromised but Black has been lef rather passive. I can't believe that Black should really be worse, but he does need to be accurate for a few moves. 16...:b8 17.:el :b7 18.:e5 :c7 19.a4 g7 20.a5 Here I would go for:



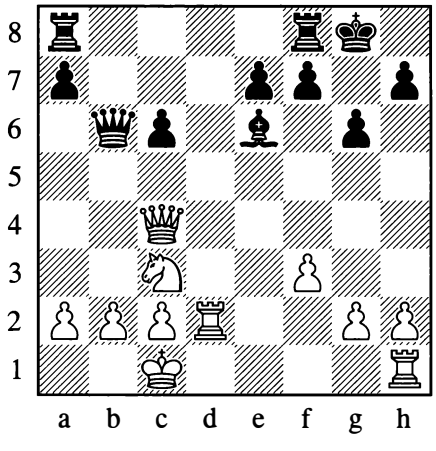
20...f6!N (Instead Magnus chose 20...mf6, but soon found himself very passively placed. 21. l 5 e6 22.h4 h6 23.f4 h5 24.md2 me7 25.me3 Ed8 26.g3 Ivanchuk - Carlsen, Leon [rapid] 2009. T e game should have been drawn as White cannot make much progress, but Black can do nothing but sit and wait, which is never much fun.) 21.Ec5 e5 22.Ed6 i d7 23.g4 g5= Compared to the game, Black has a bit more space and can try to force the enemy pieces backwards.

15.Ed2

15. c a4 is a temporary pawn sacrifce. 15... ' xd4 16.Exd4 i f5 17. i b3 c xg2 18.Eg1 e5 19.Ec4 c f4 20.Ee1 Efe8 21.Exc6 Ee7= White regained his pawn but he had no advantage, and Black eventually prevailed in J. Todorovic - Ristic, Kraljevo 2011.

15... t xc4 16. xc4 e6

I wrote earlier that Black generally doesn't want to trade knight for bishop in this structure. T e present position is an exception, as Black has plenty of activity and will be able to push his c-pawn before White can utilize the outpost on c5.



17. f4

17. ' h4 was played in a high-rated encounter. White attacks the e7-pawn but now the queen won't fnd it as easy to get to the long diagonal.

a) T e young American played 17...Eab8 18.b3 c5!? but I was unable to fnd equality for Black after: 19. ' xe7 (19. c d5N ' a5! exploits the location of White's queen: 20. c xe7t g7 21. c d5 i xd5 22.Exd5 ' xa2=) 19...c4 T is was Dominguez Perez - Robson, Lubbock 2011, and now 20. ' d6!N would have been good for White.

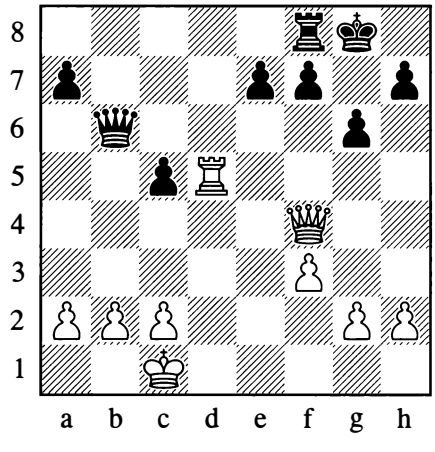
b) Instead I propose 17...Ead8N 18.Ehd1 Exd2 19.Exd2 Ed8 when White has no more than a tiny edge.

17...c5

17...Eab8 18.b3 c5 was played in the high-level game Aekseev - Grandelius, Jerusalem 2015, but I think it's better to move the c-pawn immediately.

18. i d5 xd5 19.Exd5 Ead8 20J hd1 Exd5 21.Exd5

We have been following Sanz Velez - Castello Benavent, corr. 2012. I think Black's most accurate continuation is:



21...Ec8!N

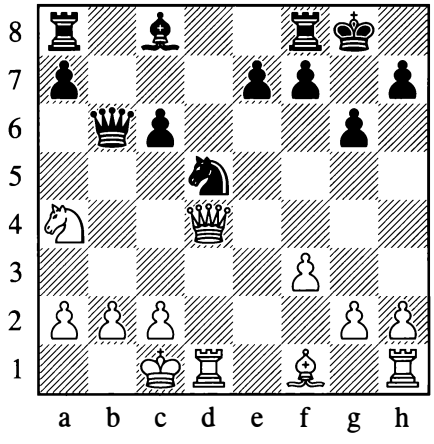
Preparing to advance the c-pawn.

22.a3

22. ' c4 ' e6 is fne for Black.

22...c4 23. ' d4 Wc? 24.g3 ' b?=

C) 14. t a4



T is has been by far White's most popular choice. Exchanging on d4 would gift W ite an easy endgame advantage, so Black is left with a choice between two queen moves. Since we are dealing with a popular and critical variation, I decided to cover both of them.

14...Wa5

14... ' c7 is the alternative, which is discussed separately in the next chapter.

15.b3

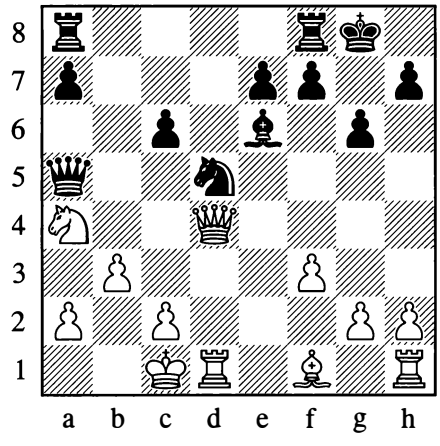
T e threat was ...e5, so White was obliged to defend the knight.

15... i e6!?

According to my database, this move was introduced to tournament praxis by a young Levon Aronian in 1995. It remained obscure for a long time afterwards, and Golubev does not mention it at all in *Experts vs. the Sicilian*. Roughly ten years ago it was used several times by Isaev, a strong correspondence player, with others following suit. More recently it has become increasingly popular among GMs.

15... i f5?! used to be the main line until it became clear that 16. ' c5! is strong. It is worth mentioning the simple tactical point that 16...Wc7?? is impossible due to 17J! hd5. T is highlights one advantage of putting the bishop on e6.

15..:Wc7 is the most popular move, which can be compared with the next chapter. Black argues that b2-b3 is a potential weakness which stops White from putting his bishop on b3. Nevertheless, White's free move also has some positive attributes, and after 16.c4 W ite has scored highly in correspondence and engine games.



Returning to our main line, I considered six possible replies: C1) 16.g3, C2) 16. i c4, C3) 16. ' d2, C4) I6. ' c5, C5) 16.h4 and C6) 16.We5.

C1) 16.g3

T e 15... i e6 variation frst came to my attention in 2011, when Timofeev used it to defeat Sjugirov. T e text move was White's choice in this battle of 2600s, but it is rather slow and has not been repeated. I guess the idea is to control the f4-square, but this does not seem especially important in the present position.

16.. J 8 17. c5 c7

Obviously Black should not exchange on c5, as then White will be able to exploit his better structure. As a general rule, we will only ofer the trade on our own terms, when it would improve our queenside structure. In the meantime we will try to exploit the slight weakening of White's king that arose when we provoked b2-b3.

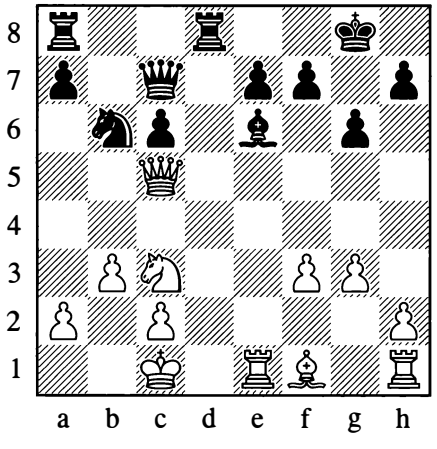
18 J el!?

White prepares an interesting exchange sacrifce.

I also considered 18. . d3N when 18...Eab8 looks sensible, with the idea of ... t b4.

18... t b6 19. t c3

T is position was reached in Sjugirov - Timofeev, Taganrog 2011. As I pointed out on ChessPublishing, Black's safest continuation is:



19... t d5N

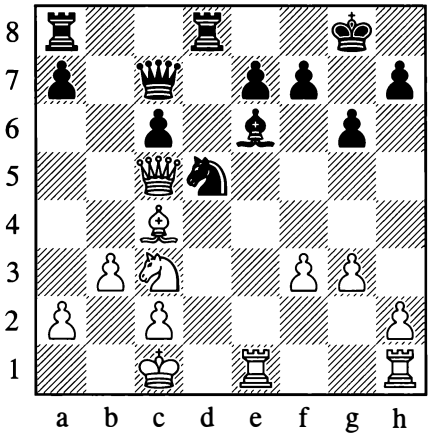
If Black can exchange the knights then he won't have any problems at all.

T e game continued 19...a5 20.Exe6! f e6 21. . h3 t d7 22.Wxe7 We5 23.Wxe6t Wxe6 24. . xe6t mg7 and Black eventually won, but at this point White has the slightly better ending.

20. i c4!?

20.Exe6? f e6 21. . h3 does not work here due to 20...We5+.

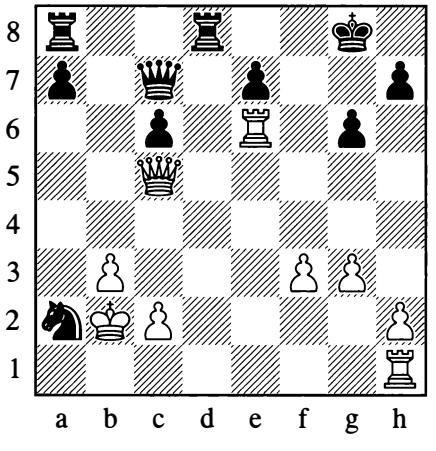
20.mb2 t xc3 21.Wxc3 . d5 is equal.



20... t xc3 21. i xe6 t x a t

Black could also play for more than the draw with 21... t b5!?.

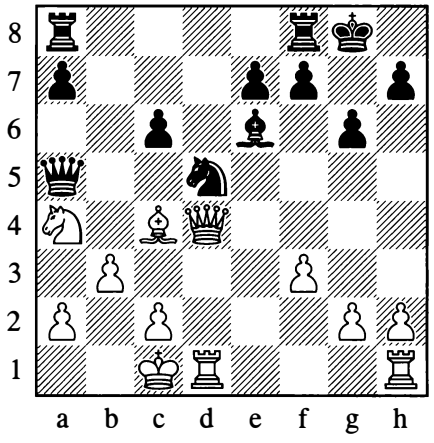
22 . b2 f e6 23.Exe6



23... b6! 24. xe7 t b4 25.Exg6t! hx g 26. e6t <g7 27. e7t=

I suggested this line on ChessPublishing and it still seems fne.

C2) 16. i c4

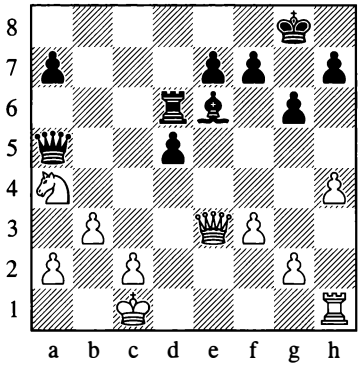


T is was Mickey Adams' choice when I surprised him with this line in 2011.

16... : 8 17. ' c5

Two other moves have been tried:

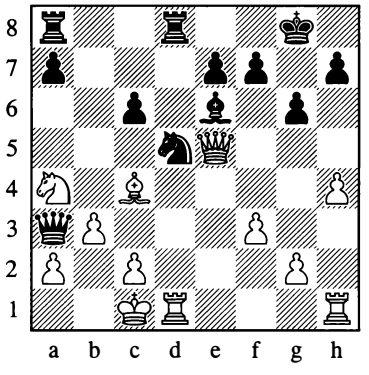
17. i xd5 l xd5 IS.We3 l adS 19.h4 l Sd6 20. l xd5 cxd5 Black is active enough, as the following lines demonstrate.



21.h5 (21.Wd4N i d7 22. t c3 f6 23.f4 Wb6 24. l d l Wxd4 25. l xd4 i c6 White won't be able to stop ...e5 so Black has more than enough play) 21...d4 22.Wd2 Wxd2 t ½–½ Siefring - A.C. Martin, email 2000.

17.We5 Wb4 IS.h4 Wa3 t

T e following is a good illustration of what Black must avoid: lS...h5?! 19. c b2 l abS 20. i xd5! cxd5 21. l d4 T is position is very like the main line we'll see in variation C62. However, with our pawn already on h5 White's attack is much faster and so we have to exchange queens. 21...Wd6 22. l e l l bcS 23.Wxd6 l xd6 24.b4± cfm - pharaomum, engine game 2014. White is in complete control and his knight will completely dominate Black's bishop. If Black could break with ...e5 his position would be f ne, but that will be extremely di f cult to achieve.

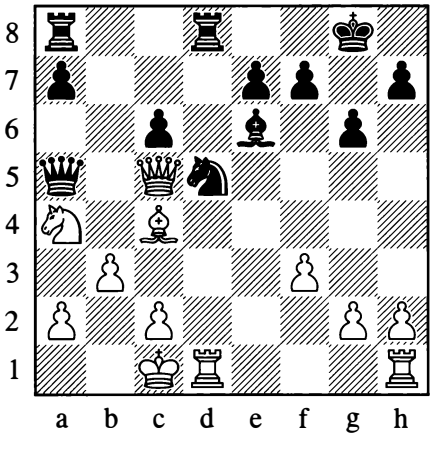


19. b1 t b4 20.Wb2 Wxb2 t 21. t xb2 i f5!

W ite has achieved the queen exchange but the pressure against c2 forces him to compromise his structure.

22. i d3 t xd3 23. t xd3 i xd3

½–½ Kra f - Canamas Soler, email 2009.



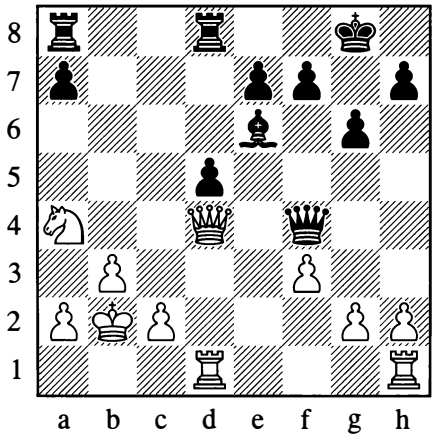
17..JWc7 1S. L d5

My game against Adams continued: lS. ' b1 l f4 (T is felt simple and logical, although lS... ' f4!? has also been played successfully) 19.93 j xc4 20. ' xc4 l d5 21.l he1 l b6 22. ' e4 l xa4 23. ' xa4 e6 24. ' e4 l d5= Adams - lones, She f eld 2011.

I S..JWf4t! 19.@b2 a d5 20. ' d4

T is was tried in a recent all-GM battle.

20.c3 j d7 21. ' xd5 j xa4 22. ' xdSt l xdS 23.l xdSt ' g7 24.bxa4 ' xa4 ½–½ Kitson - Isaev, email 2005, was an easy draw for the second player.



20... ' c7

Black plays for the initiative.

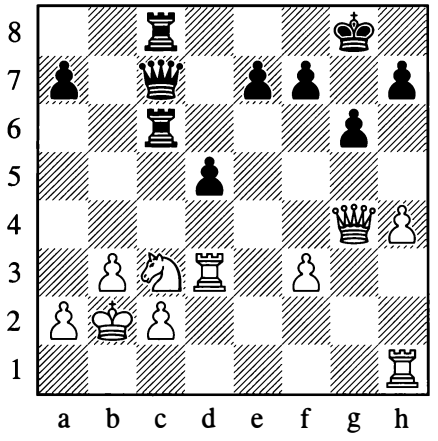
21.g4?!

T is pawn thrust is not particularly challenging, but Black should be fne after other moves too.

21..J3acS 2 V c3 gd6 23.h4 gc6 24.gd3 . xg4! 25. ' xg4

25. f g4 e5+ was Black's idea.

White should have tried 25. l xd5 although 25... l xc2t 26. ' a1 ' d6 still leaves Black on top, since 27. f g4?! ' a3! forces W ite to return the knight to prevent mate.



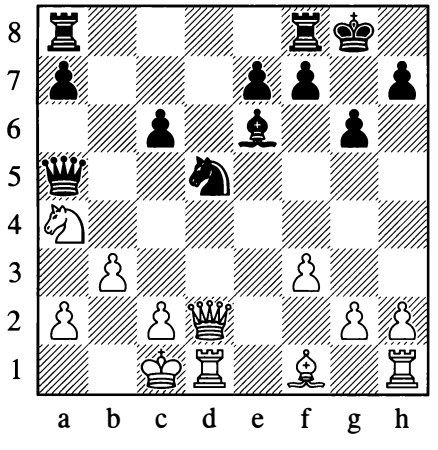
25...h5 26. ' h3

In Istratescu - Chatalbashev, Graz 2015, White's defensive idea was to meet 26... l xc3N with 27. ' xcSt although even here Black is clearly better. However, Black has an even stronger move available.

26...d4!N

With a decisive advantage.

C3) 16. d2



T is is a logical move, o fering a queen exchange while keeping the c5-square free for the knight.

16...♕c7

As usual, we decline the trade. White may try C31) 17. l c5 or C32) 17.c4.

C31) 17. l c5 ad8!

T is looks the most accurate. Black utilizes a tactical resource to prevent his structure from being compromised.

17... l fd8!? also looks sensible: 18. l e1 (18. t xe6 l e5! is similar to our main line) 18... l d6 19. t xe6 l a3 t 20. b1 t b4 21. l c3 l xa2 t 22. ' c l f e6 23. . c4 l a3 t 24. l b2 t xc2! 25. . xe6 t ' f8 26. l xa3 t xa3 27. l e4 ' g7 A draw was agreed in Mauro - Isaev, email 2005. However, the text move is even more accurate.

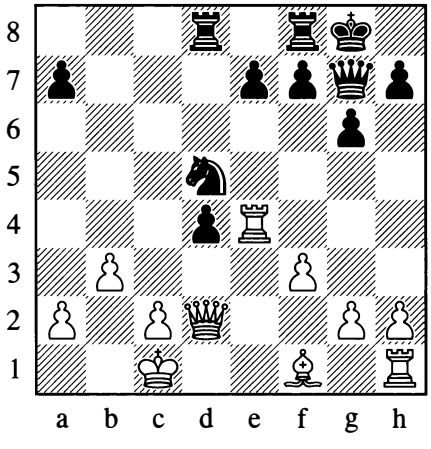
18. l xe6

18. l e1 can be conveniently met by 18... . c8.

18... ' e5! 19. 1 d4 c5 20. e l

T is position was reached in Helbich - Isaev, email 2005. On ChessPublishing I suggested the improvement:

20... g7!?N 21. e4 c d4



22. xd4

T e point is that 22. l xd4? t f6 is winning for Black.

22... d6i

White has big problems down the long diagonal.

C32) 17.c4

T is is quite a common idea for White with the bishop on e6. White forces the knight to move and sets up a blockade against the bishop. On the other hand, he has to be careful as his king becomes more exposed.

17... l f4

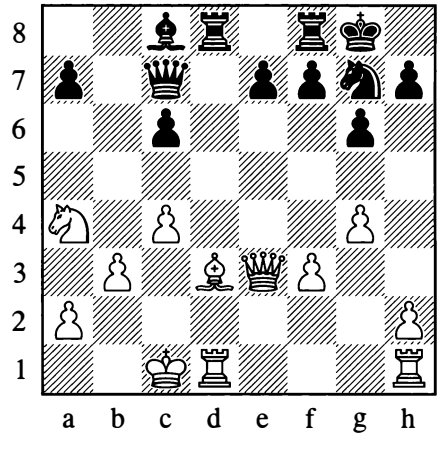
In this structure the knight doesn't have much potential on f6, so instead it aims for the g7-square.

18.g3 l h5 19. e3 l g7

From here the knight can re-emerge via e6 or f5. It is also a good defensive piece, enabling Black to fght back against any kingside assault with ...h5.

20.g4 ad8 21. d3 c8

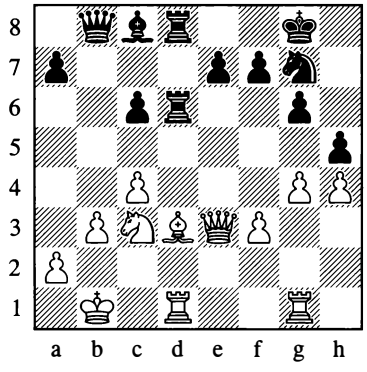
Now that the a8-rook has been developed, Black can drop his bishop back to allow the knight to use the e6-square.



2 V c5

22. b1 l d6 23. t c3 l fd8 24.h4 h5 shows Black's defensive idea: With the knight on

g7 White fnds it hard to progress his attack. 25.ghgl ' bS!? Black waits. His pieces can't really be improved but the same can be said for White's.



26. ' b2 hxg4!? Black decides to force the issue, arguing that the king is actually slightly worse placed on b2. 27. f g4 gd4 2S.h5 ' h2t 29. ' e2 ' xe2t 30. i xe2 l e6 31.hxg6 f6!? 32.gge1 l f4 33. i f3 l d3t 34.gxd3 gxd3 35. i xc6 e6 With dynamic equality in Strengell - Walczak, email 2009. T e game was subsequently drawn but, in a practical encounter, all three results would be possible.

22. b2 is similar: 22...gd6 23.h4 h5 24.gxh5 ge6 25. ' gl l xh5 26. l c5 gf6 27. ' e3 ge8= futur - sferenc, engine game 2013.

22...gd6

22...f5!? is a more aggressive attempt, lashing out in the centre. 23.h3 e5 24. i c2 e4!? 25.gxd8 ' xd8 26. f e4 f g4 27.hxg4 i xg4 28. l d3 ' e7= hiseyin Iahin, - purepower, engine game 2012.

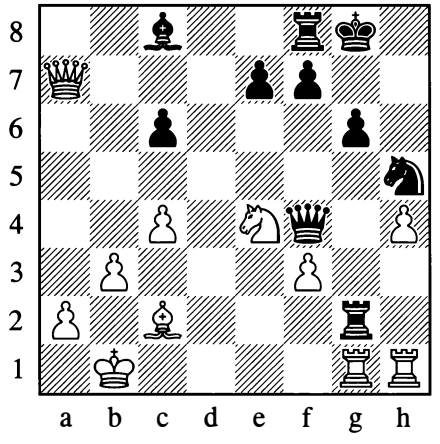
23.h4 Yb6 24J de1 h5!?

24... l e6 is also fne, and afer 25. t e4 ' xe3t 26.gxe3 gd7 27. i c2 gfd8= Black went on to draw fairly easily in Kurgansky - Kazantsev, email 2009.

25. g h5 t xh5 26. . c2 Ya5 27. i b2 gd2

Black starts to exploit the squares exposed by White's c2-c4.

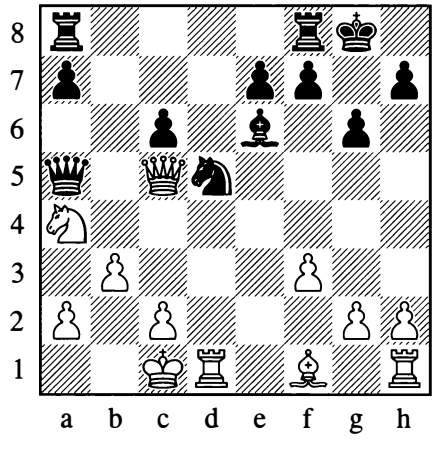
28. t e4 gg2 29. : egl Ye5t 30. i bl Yf4 31.Yxa7



31... : xc2! 32. i xc2 Yx f 33. : e1 . f 34.Ye3 Yg2t 35. i c3 Yxa2

Black had excellent compensation in Turkov - Isaev, email 2007.

C4) 16.Yc5



T is move is unpleasant in the analogous position with our bishop on f5, but here it is not so challenging.

16...♕c7

As mentioned earlier, the di f erence is that Black's queen can retreat to its natural square without hanging the knight on d5.

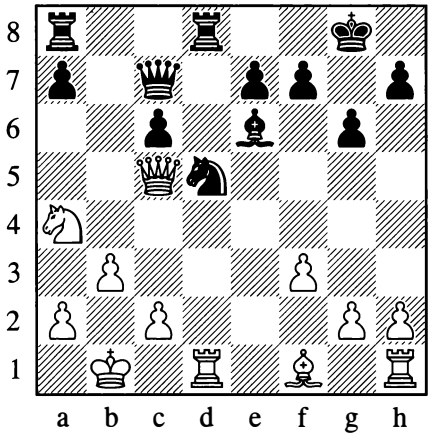
17.Wb1

17.g3 l fdS transposes to variation C l.

17..J fd8

It's nice to be consistent.

17... l abS was the choice of the young Levon Aronian in the stem game with 15... e6. Play continued: lS.g3 ' e5 19.f4 ' e4 20. c4 Grigoriants - Aronian, Moscow 1995. Here Levon grabbed the pawn with 20... l xf4!? (On ChessPublishing I suggested 20... f5N 21.l c1 ♕g2 when Black threatens to take on c2 due to the loose rook on h1) 21.l hel ' xc4 22. ' xc4 xc4 23.gxf4 with an equal ending; White's initiative makes up for his pawn de fcit.



18. a6 gd6 19.9del

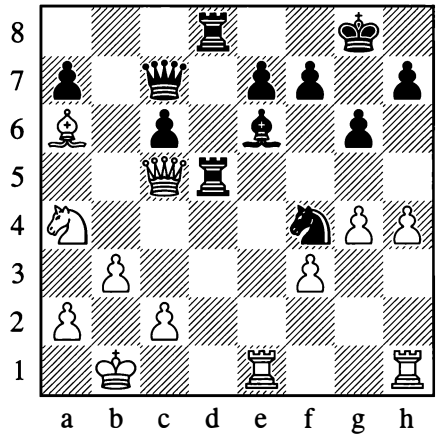
Comparing this to the Sjugirov - Timofeev game we saw in variation C l, this rook sidestep doesn't seem as logical as White is hardly threatening to capture on e6.

19...gad8

19... l bS!?N seems like a sensible alternative.

20.g4 t f4 21.h4 gd5

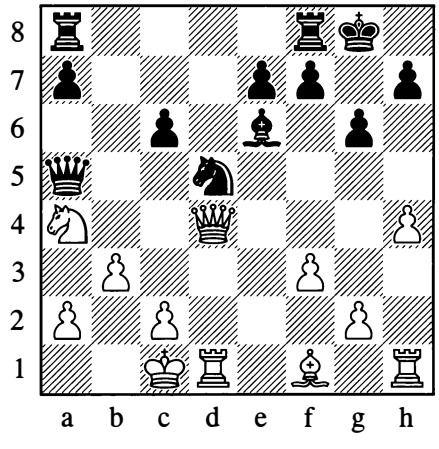
Fighting for squares on the kingside with 21...h5!?N also looks good to me.



22. c3 a5 23. i c4 xc3 24. t xc3 gd4 25. i xe6 t xe6=

Guimaraes - Neubauer, Rio de Janeiro 2011.

C5) 16.h4



T is has been the choice of quite a few engines. White tries to create threats on the kingside in order to provoke a queen exchange.

16...gad8

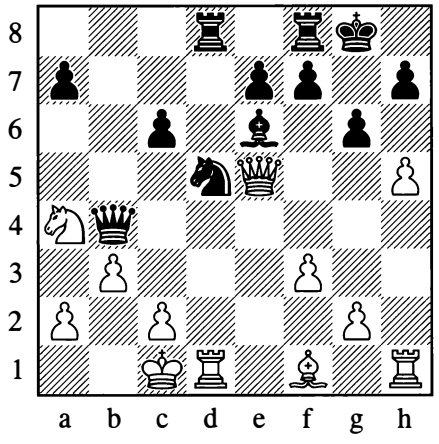
16... l fdS has also worked out fne for Black. 17. ' e5 ' b4 lS. ' b2 (lS.h5 ' a3t 19. ' b2 is similar to our main line and will probably transpose) lS... l b6 19.1xdSt lxdS 20. l xb6

Wxb6 21.h5 ½–½ Supino - Senzacqua, email 2011.

17.Ve5

17.h5? runs into 17... l b4 and Black's attack lands immediately.

17...Vb4 lS.h5



lS... f !?N

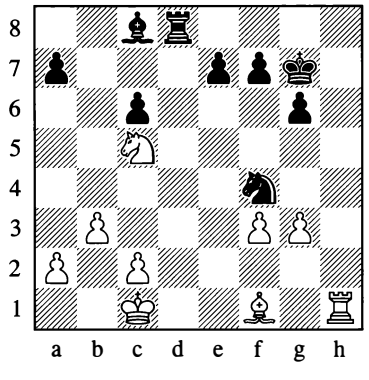
I think this is a good novelty. From f5 the bishop combines attack and defence.

Previously Black has acquiesced to the queen exchange:

18...Wa3t 19.Wb2 Wxb2t 20. xb2 l f4

W ite has succeeded in carrying out the queen trade but now he has to spend some time defending his frst rank.

21.lxd8 lxd8 22.hxg6 hxg6 23. i cl g7 24. l c5 . c8 25.g3



25... l d5!

25... l e6 26. l xe6t . xe6 27.lh4 should probably be a draw but Black will have to su fer for a long time.

26. l d3

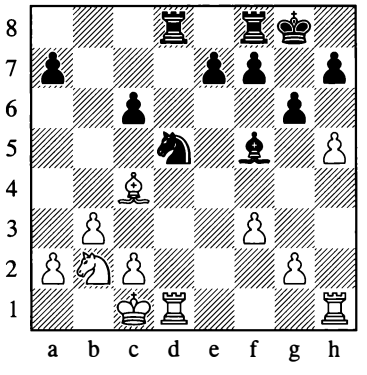
26.b4N is more critical. I think Black should play 26... l h5 27.g4 l f4 when he should draw without any real di f culty, as he can generate a passed pawn easily enough.

26... l xd3t 27. . xd3 . f5=

Black had no problems in moonfeet - katzenmaier, engine game 2012.

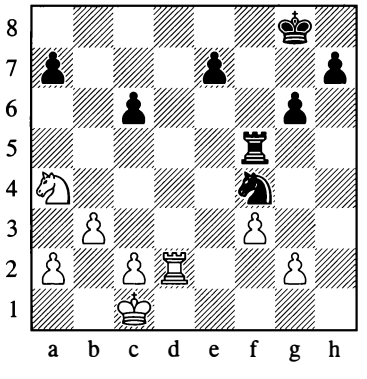
19.94

19. . c4 Wa3t 20.Wb2 Wxb2t (20...Wd6!?) 21. l xb2 (21. xb2 l e3+)

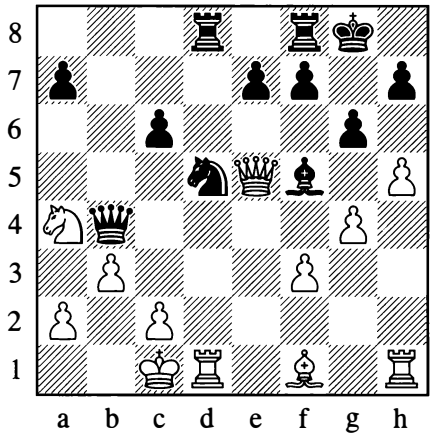


21... l c3 22.lxd8 l xa2t 23. b1 l c3t 24. c1 gives Black at least a perpetual.

19.hxg6 . xg6 20. . d3 f4t sees Black enter an ending that should be fne for him. 21. xf4 t xf4 22. . xg6 lxdlt 23.lxdl f g6! 24.ld2 Ef5



Black has more pawn islands but the pressure against the g2-pawn makes it easy to create a passed h-pawn. 25. t k3 (25.g3 c e6 26.f4 h5=) 25...2g5 26.g4 h5=



19... h c2!

T is sacrifce forces a draw.

20. <xc2

20.h6 i a3t 21. <xc2 c b4t= shows the basic drawing mechanism.

20... ' a3!

White has nowhere to hide, for instance:

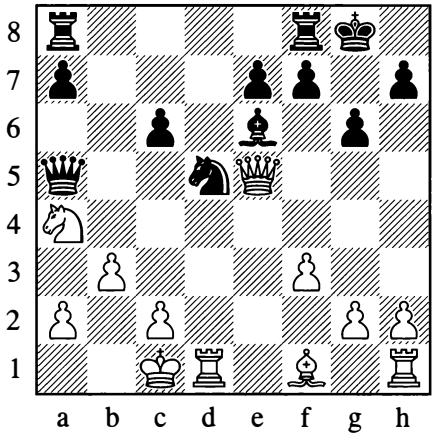
21.2 d

21.hxg6 c b4t 22. <c3 c xa2t 23. <c2 c b4t 24. <c3= is another route to a draw.

21... t b4t 22. <dl l d2t 23. <xd2 gd8t 24. <e3 ' el t 25. < f l d3t 26. h d3 ' xhl 27. t c5 2d5 28. ' xe7 ' h2t=

Finally White must accept the inevitable.

C6) 16. ' e5



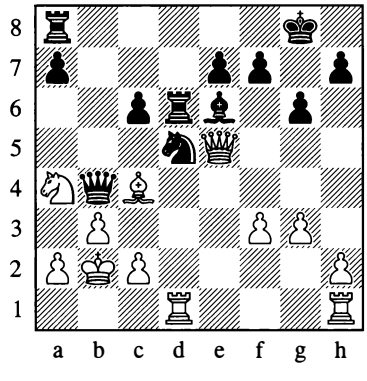
T is is White's most common try; he pins the knight and threatens c2-c4.

16... ' b4

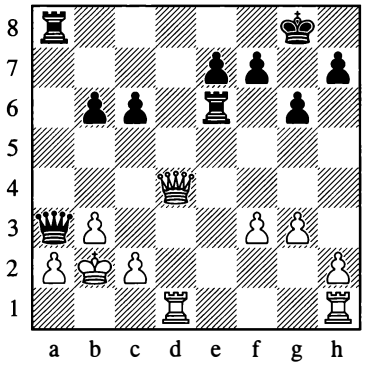
White has two main approaches: C61) 17.c4 and C62) 17. <b2. T e main point of the latter move is to prevent a check on a3 and thus prepare to develop the bishop on c4.

17.h4 2ad8 transposes to variation C5.

Timofeev repeated this variation recently - a positive indication that Black's set-up is in a healthy state. T at game continued: 17.g3 2fd8 18. c4 2d6 19. <b2? An unfortunate blunder. (19.h4N was to be preferred, when Black has a choice of replies. 19...2ad8 20.h5 i a3t 21. i b2 i xb2t 22. c xb2 c c3= is one of the simpler ones.)



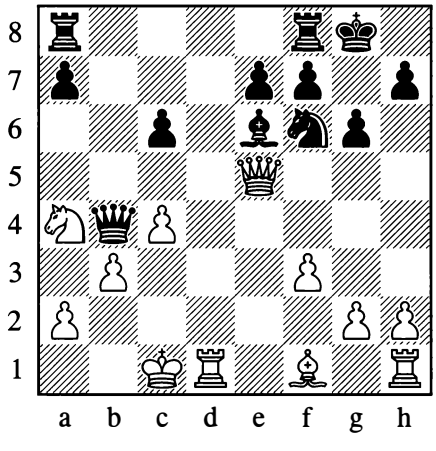
19...♘b6! Unfortunately for White, he has no choice but to trade knights and open up the a-file for the rook. 20. l xb6 axb6 21. i xe6 : xe6 22. d4 a3 t



23. c3 c5 24. f4 a5 t 25. b2 xa2 t 26. c3 b5 27. : d5 c4 28. bxc4 b4 t 29. d2 b3 0-1 Ozolin - Timofeev, Moscow 2015.

C61) 17.c4 t f

17... l b6? is the move Black would like to play but 18. c5! is an unpleasant rebuttal, forcing the trade on W ite's terms.

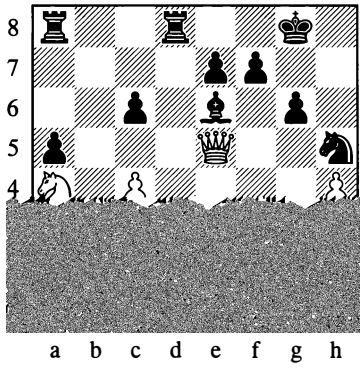


18. i d

Black also seems to be fne after other moves, for instance:

18. i e2 l d7 19. c3 a5 20. f4 a3 t 21. b2 b4 White could fnd nothing better than repeating: 22. c3 a3 t ½–½ Bohak - Goncharov, email 2009.

Nor did 18. g4 put any pressure on Black: 18... : fd8 19. i e2 a5 (19... l d7N also looks fne) 20. h4 h5 21. gxh5 l xh5 22. i d3 a3 t 23. b1



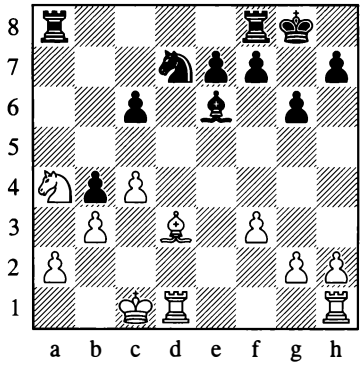
23... : xd3! 24. : xd3 i f5 25. : hd1 f6 26. c5 xc5 27. l xc5 l f4= Sivo k o - Isaev, email 2005.

18. c5 a5!

T is is a recurring theme in this line: if White wishes to exchange queens, he will have to improve Black's structure.

19. i e2

19. i d3 l d7! 20. xb4 axb4

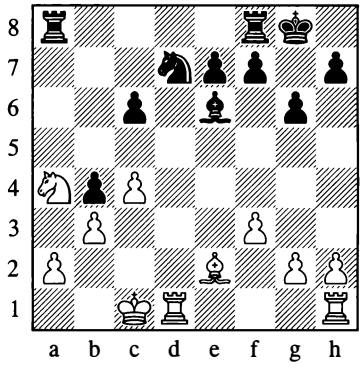


T is has been tested a few times but White has been unable to put any pressure on Black,

and the second player even managed to win a game himself. Black's plan is to exchange knights and then put pressure on the a2-pawn, for instance: 21.1 he1 1 a5 22. , c2 ' c5 23. ' xc5 1 xc5= r a z o r - question mark, engine game 2013.

19... ' d7 20.Wxb4 axb4

Again we have the same structure and again there are no problems.



21.f4 1 a5

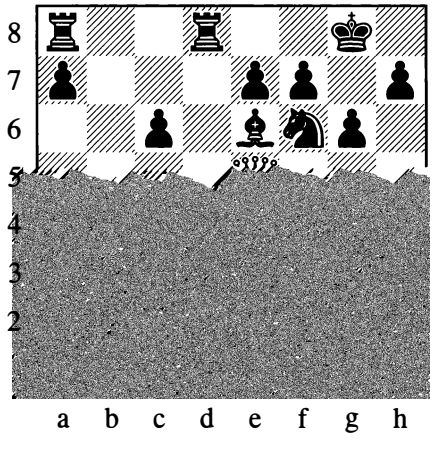
21...1 a6 22.1 he1 ' b6 23. ' xb6 1 xb6 was also level in oops - centurio, engine game 2014.

22.1 he1 ' c5 23. ' xc5 1 xc5 24. , f 1 a8=

Canamas Soler has had this position twice in email chess, and held both games easily.

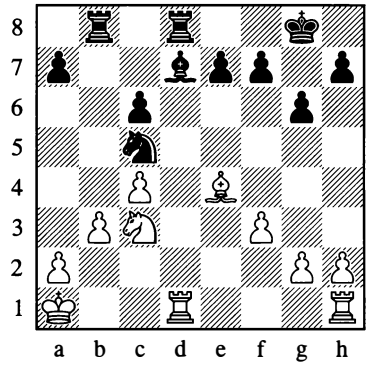
lS.. J S

White has tried a few di ferent moves from this position, but in each case Black's plan remains similar.



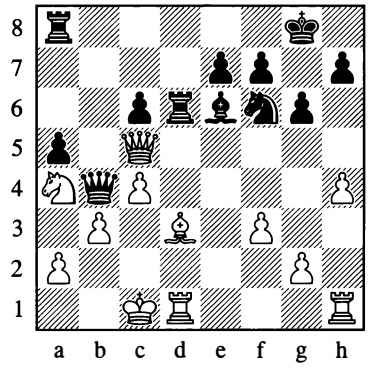
19. ' c5

19. b2 1 ab8 20. < a1 ' d7 21.Wc3 Wxc3 t 22. ' xc3 ' c5 23. , e4 , d7



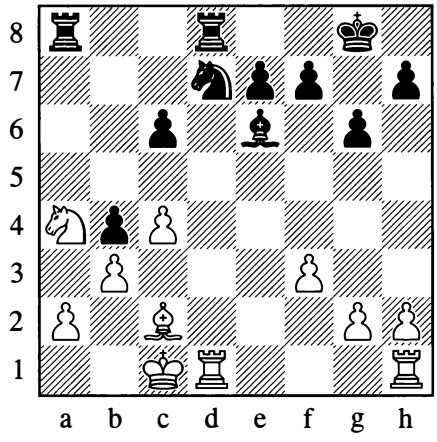
24. , c2 f6 25. < b2 a5 26. ' e4 ' e6 27.1 d2 , e8 28.1 hd1 1 xd2 29.1 xd2 c5= unbridled - herzsjemz, engine game 2013.

19.h4 1 d6 20.Wc5 (20. , c2 1 ad8 21.1 xd6 xd6 22. xd6 exd6 was equal in Waters - Goncharov, email 2009) 20...a5! Once again, Black permits a queen exchange on his own terms.



21. , c2 ' d7 22.Wg5 1 xd1 t 23.1 xd1 1 b8 24.Wf4 1 b7 25.Wd4 h5 26. , e4 Wa3 t 27.Wb2 Wxb2 t 28. xb2 1 c7 29. c3 < g7 ½–½ Santamaria Perez - A ico, email 2011. Black's position is slightly passive but everything is defended, and W ite was evidently unable to f nd a way to make progress.

19...a5 20. . c2 1 d7 21. ' xb4 a b4



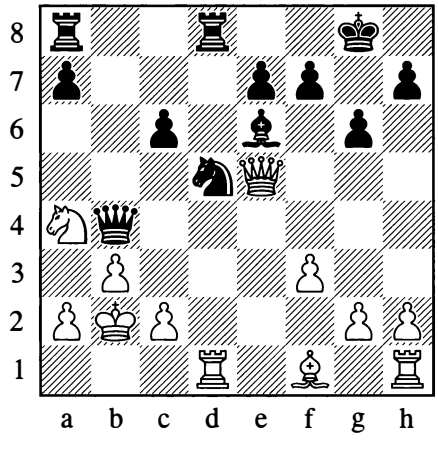
22JM 2

22.1he1 <f8 23.1d4 c5 24.1d2 1ac8 25.g4 1c7= has occurred in a couple of correspondence games but Black had no problems.

22...1 db8 23.1 el 1 b7 24. i dl 1 a5=

Here too, Black was fne in Bernal Varela - Sidenko, email 2009.

C62) 17. <b2 1 fd8



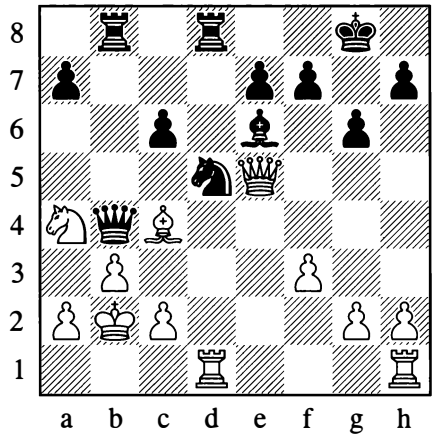
Black has tried a few di ferent rook moves, but this one feels like the most logical to me.

18. i c4

A ter this move the game becomes surprisingly double-edged.

18.1d4 ' d6 19. ' xd6 exd6 (Black has also drawn all his games with 19...1xd6 but I don't see a reason not to improve our structure) 20. c4 t c7 21.1hd1 d5 22. fl <g7 23.c4 1e8 24. t c5 1e7 25.cxd5 xd5 leonidas i - derecho, engine game 2012. Black still has the slightly worse structure but the bishop has become strong on d5, while the rest of Black's pieces also have good futures. Black is fne.

18...1 ab8



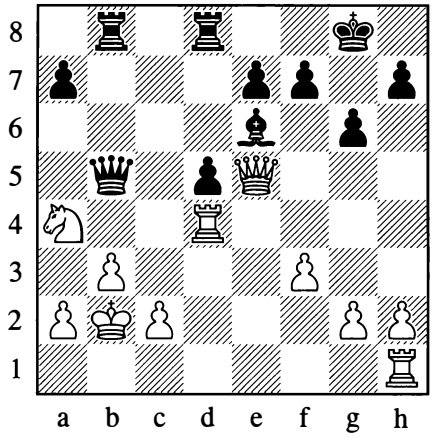
19. i xd5!

Repairing Black's inferior structure might seem counterintuitive but the idea is to control the dark squares, in particular d4 and e5, and to start attacking on the kingside.

19...cxd5 20.1 d4 Wb5!

I think this is the best square for the queen. From here it can drop back to c6 and defend along the sixth rank.

20... ' d6?! 21. ' xd6 1xd6 22.1e1 is another endgame that Black should avoid. T e bishop has no future and it will be hard to break out with ...e5.

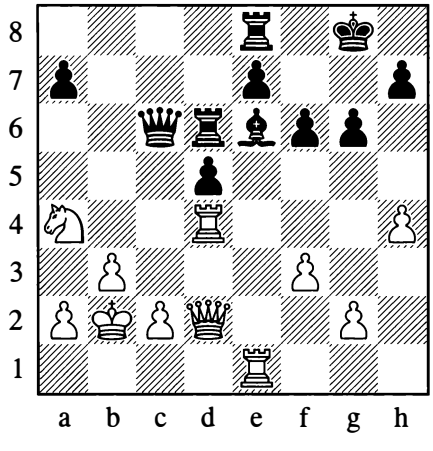


21. e1

T e battle now revolves around the eS-square. If White can prevent ...eS then things may become miserable for Black but, happily, I don't think he can accomplish his aim. Black's plan is to defend his bishop and play ...f6, before retreating the bishop to f and fnally carrying out ...eS.

If White goes for the attack straight away with 21.h4N we can play 21...Wc6 22.hS f6 23.We2 gS. T e kingside remains closed and Black can turn his attention ro the central break with ...!d6, ...!e8, ... f and fnally ...eS.

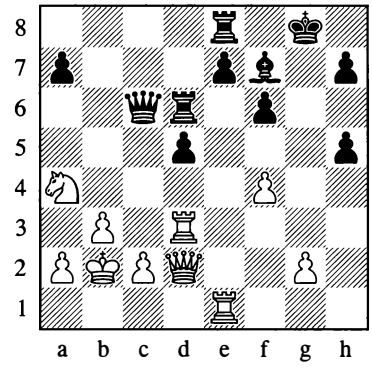
21... d6 22.h4 f 23.We2 Wc6 24JWd2 e8



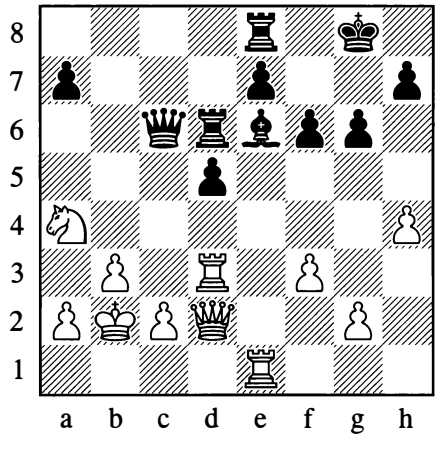
T e frst phase of the plan is complete.

25. d3

In another game White tried to distract Black with 2S.hS but the second player was unru f ed: 2S...gxhS 26. d3 f 27.f4 asterix_2006 - derecho, Internet 2012, Here I see no reason not to carry out the thematic plan:



27...eSN I prefer Black's chances. (Instead Black continued rearranging his pieces with 27...Wd7 28. g3t mh8 29.Wd4 !c6 30.!ge3 as 31. 1e2 Wd6= and the game was eventually drawn.)



25... . f 26.£4 %d7!

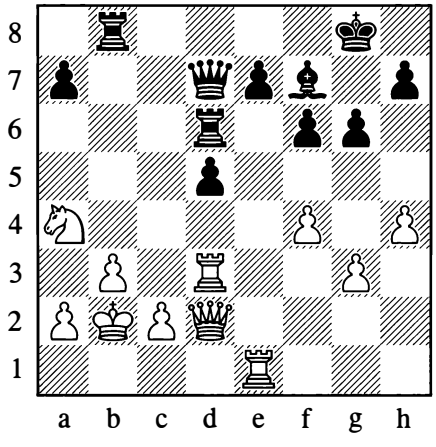
On this occasion I think we should wait a little longer.

T e immediate 26...eS is possible but we have to watch out, as Black's king may become

slightly vulnerable. 27. f e5 f e5 28. l c3 dd8 29.Wg5 Wc7 30.h5 We7 31.Wxe7 xe7 32.h6t T e far-advanced pawn is a slight thorn in Black's side in the endgame, and White a so has some pressure against our centre. In hugodave - the viper, engine game 2012, Black held the draw, but the defensive task might prove unpleasant over the board.

27.g3 gb8

I think this position is balanced. Black has succeeded in fghting for the central dark squares and prevented any kingside attack. T e ...e5 plan is always an option, but Black needs to be careful not to create additional weaknesses. White's major pieces are on good squares but his knight is sidelined, and it is not easy to fnd a useful role for this piece.



28. cl

White could try 28. l c3N but the knight isn't so well placed here either, and it's not clear where it should go. It would be well placed on d4, but if the knight drops back to e2 then ...e5 will be strong. Besides, White's last move also gives us the option of 28...d4, and after 29. l e4 d5 30. d1 d8= Black has no problems.

28...gc8 29.gde3 ge6 3o.Wd4 Vt7 31.g l e2 gxe3 32.Vke3 ge8 33.VtS Vd7=

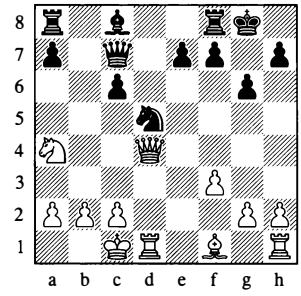
T e position remained equal in unbridled - pharaomum, engine game 2014.

Conclusion

15... e6 is still a rare line but is beginning to become more popular as the main lines of the next chapter become completely worked out. You should remember to only exchange queens on Black's terms, for instance by leaving the queen on b4 and playing ...a5, when an exchange by White will help to repair Black's structure. In most of the lines examined here Black's strategy remains similar. T e most important thing is to avoid an unfavourable endgame with a bad bishop versus a strong knight. T e fnal variation with c4xd5 sees White aim for just this scenario, but Black seems to have enough resources after improving his pawn structure, although he should take care not to be too hasty in breaking with ...e5.

Chapter 2

9.0–0–0



Main Line with 14...♕c7

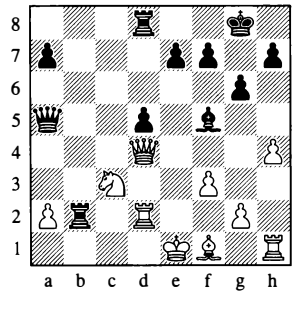
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2. l O d6 3.d4 c d4 4. l xd4 l f 5. l c3 g6 6. e3 g7 7. 0 0-0
8.Vd2 l c6 9.0-0-0 d5 10.exd5 l xd5 11. l xc6 bxc6 12. d4 xd4
13.Vxd4 Vb6 14. l a4

14...Vc7

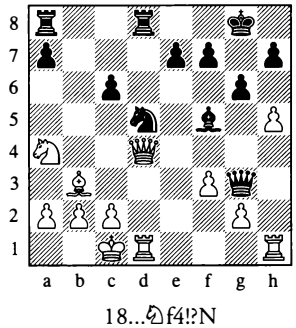
A) 15. l c5 d8 28
B) 15.h4 d8 30
B1) 16.c4? 31
B2) 16.b3?! 32
B3) 16. c4 33
C) 15. c4 d8 33
C1) 16. b3 35
C11) 16... f 35
C12) 16... e6!? 37
C2) 16. l c5 f 17. b3 l f4 39
C21) 18.Vc4 39
C22) 18.V f xd1t 19. xd1 d8 40
C221) 20. xd8t 41
C222) 20. e1!? **44**

B1) after 21.♖d2



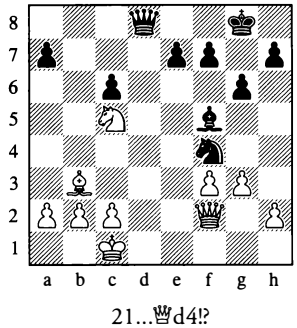
21...e5!

B3) after 18.h5



18...♘f4!?N

C221) after 21.g3

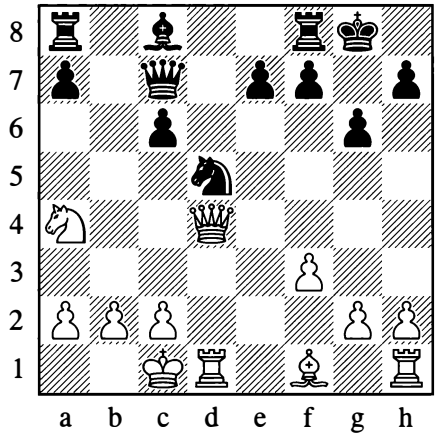


21...♕d4!?

l.e4 cS z .£ d6 3.d4 c d4 4. l xd4 l f S. l c3 g6 6. . e3 . g7 7. £ 0-0 8.Wd2 l c6 9.0-0-0 dS 10.exdS l xdS l1. l xc6 bxc6 12. . d4 . xd4 13.Wxd4 Wb6 14. l a4

A though 14...Wa5 seems pretty reliable, I would also like to present a more thoroughly tested line which I have used successfully in several games.

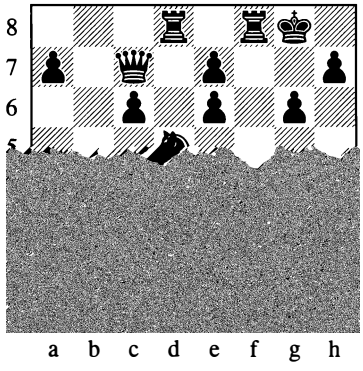
14...Wc7



This is not mentioned at all by Golubev in *Experts*, which is understandable as the move was not known as a serious option at the time. T at all changed in 2009 when Magnus Carlsen adopted it. We will analyse A) IS. l cS, B) IS.h4 and the main line C) IS. . c4.

15.c4?! White voluntarily weakens his king's safety and deprives his bishop of the c4-square. 15... l f4 16. l c5 l e6 17. l xe6 . xe6' Tayar - Veech, Las Vegas 2010.

15.g3 is a typical move but it is normaly played once the fl-bishop is developed. 15... . f5 (l5...2dSN doesn't appear to have been played but it makes sense to me and is likely to transpose elsewhere.) 16.g4 . e6 17. l c5 2adS! IS. l xe6 f e6 T is position has certain similarities to the 9.g4 variation covered in the frst volume. Black's structure looks extremely ugly but White can't really exploit it without a knight or a dark-squared bishop. Black has pressure against the weak f3-pawn and his knight is very strong. A practical example continued:



19.We4 2d6 20. . e2 Wa5 21. . c4 2f4 22.We2 2xc4!? 23.Wxc4 l e3 24.Wc3 Wxc3 25.bxc3 l xdl 26.2xdl Wg7 Both sides have been lef with incredibly ugly structures in a drawn endgame, Nestorovic - Kanarek, Krakow 2011.

A) Is. l cs

T is is a logical move but it tends to make more sense with the bishop already developed.

IS...2d8 16.c4?!

Attempting to exploit the pin along the d-fle is critical, but it proves to be too risky.

16. . c4 transposes to variation C2.

16.h4 is covered on page 30 - see 16. l c5 in the notes to ugW A 6 [illegible] c A

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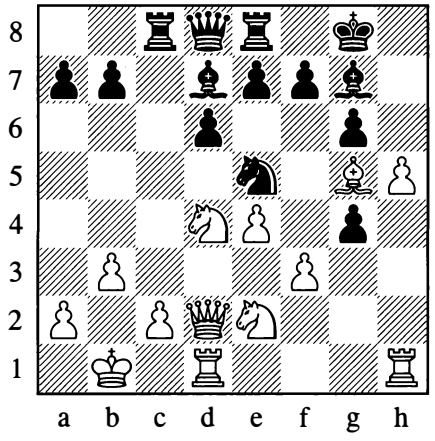


19...l cS!

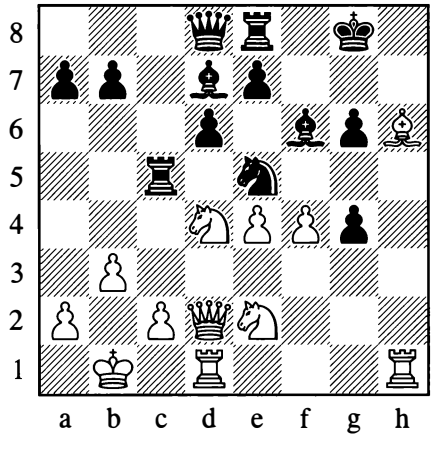
T e rook is a good defender along the ffth rank and threatens to exchange queens on a5.

20.h x 6 f g 21. . h6

21.f4 t f holds Black's position together.

21... . f 22.f4

Here we have a choice:



22... t f

T is is the more forcing move.

22... t f is also possible. 23.f5 g5 24.2h5 e6 T e position is still highly complicated, but I don't think Black's chances are worse afer 25. f e6 xe6 26J ' 'm d7.

23. t x

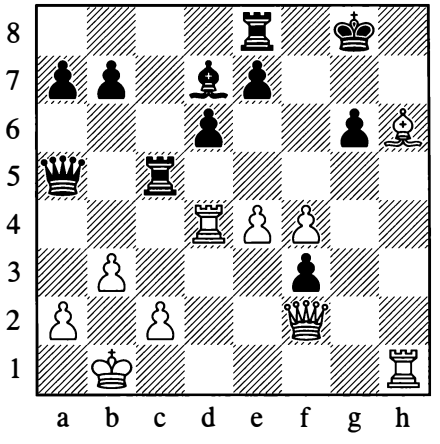
23.Wd3 t xd4 24. t xd4 e5 is about equal.

23...**gxf3** 24. t d4 aS! 2S. f i d4

25... g4 is an interesting alternative.

26. l d4

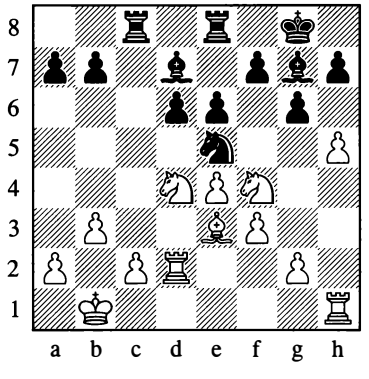
26.Wxd4 Wc3 27.Wf2 EecS 2S.Eh2 g4 looks fne.



26...Eec8 27.c4 !hS 28. x ! x l t 29. xhl hS 30. xhS g hS=

D122) IS.hS aS 16. t ce2

A even younger Anish Giri tried 16. t d5 Wxd2 17.Exd2 e6 lS. t f4 in Giri - Pachta, Vienna 200S. I think Black's most accurate is:



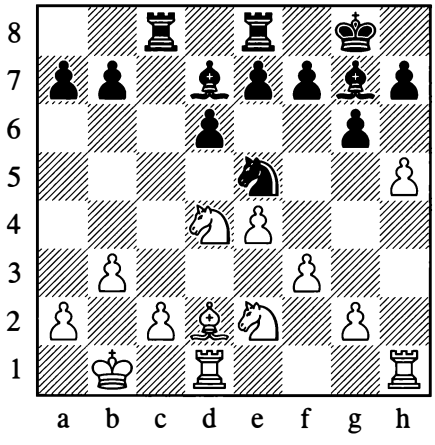
lS...g5!N 19. t d3 (19. t h3!? f6 20. t f2 fS

21. 4 e2 a6 is an odd position but should be fne for Black) 19... 4 xd3 20.Exd3 h6 21.c4 a6 22. 4 c2 . fS= Black can dismantle White's bind with both ...f5 and ...b5.

Meanwhile it's too late to try and keep the queens on the board. 16. 4 de2? 4 c4! is a strong blow: 17.bxc4 Exc4 1S.hxg6 hxg6 19. . d4 Wb4t 20. a1 . xd4 21. 4 xd4 Wxc3t 22.Wxc3 Exc3+

16... x d 17. . d

T is position has been reached a few times and Black hasn't realy had any problems. I would start with:



17...b5N

Black prevents White from establishing a Maroczy Bind with c2-c4. With our bishop pair we shouldn't be worse.

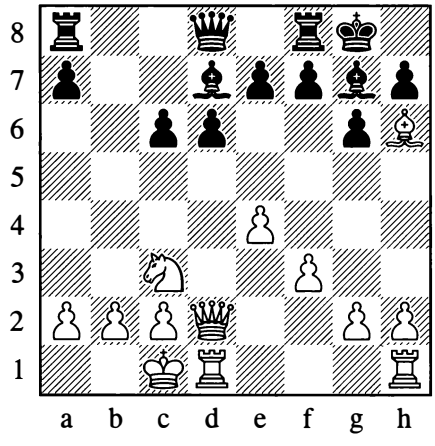
D2) 1 2 6

T is exchange is normaly a terrible idea for White. It allows Black to improve his structure, taking control of the d5-square (often the most tender square in Black's camp), and provides Black with a semi-open b-fle on which to attack. However, this is probably White's critical test. T e knight trade allows White to exchange the dark-squared bishops and so leaves our king without its main defenders.

12...bxc6 13. . h6

T e logical continuation.

13. . d4 is the alternative way to try and trade. I quite like 13...f6!?N which is an intriguing way to keep the bishop pair. T e game might continue 14.h4 Wa5 when White's attempts to batter his way through don't seem convincing: 15.h5 gxh5 16. . e3 EabS 17.Eh4 . eS+ Black can consolidate the kingside and still has attacking chances on the queenside.

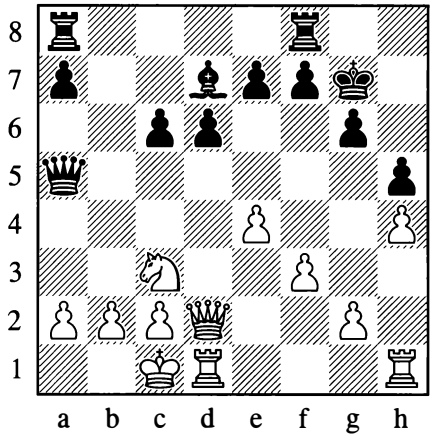


13... a5 14. . g7

Normally White's attack is more dangerous if he can advance his h-pawn before trading on g7 so we can't meet it with ...h5. However, here 14.h4N can be met with: 14... . xc3 (14... . f6!? is an interesting exchange sacrifce that also looks decent) 15.Wxc3 Wxc3 16.bxc3 EfdS= Black is marginally better with his superior structure.

14... ' x 7 15.h4 h5

T is is the tabiya of the variation. Our plan is simply to attack down the b-fle. White's plans involve either trying to open up our kingside or reach a slightly better ending. T e second plan can be achieved if White manages to play e4-e5 and forces us to cede the c5-square for his knight.

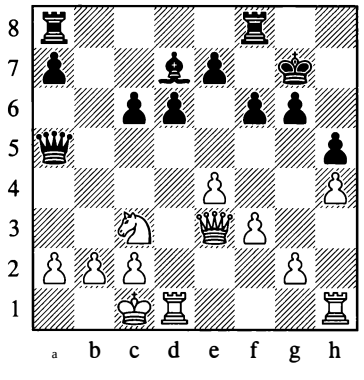


We should consider the immediate D21) 16.e5!? and also the new move D22) 16.g4!?N.

16. ' g5 Wxg5t 17.hxg5 T is structure can sometimes be annoying in the Dragon as White can try to get pressure down the h-fle, perhaps combined with e4-e5. I'd break free of any potential bind now with 17...f6 1S.gxf6t ' xf6= entering an equal ending.

16. d4t f6 17.We3

17.Ehg1 looked far too slow in Silva - Silveira, Salvador 2009. 17...EabSN 1S. ' b1 i e6 19.94 Eb4 20.We3 hxg4 21. f g4 Wb6+



17.. J abS 1S.b3 Wb6 19.Wd3

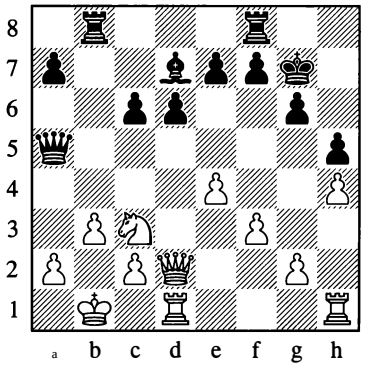
If White had taken with 19.Wxb6 I was intending to recapture with the rook, as I wasn't sure how to evaluate 19...axb6 20.a4. True, we have what looks like a nice structure, and we're almost certainly not worse, but I worried about an ending with all the rooks traded where W ite has the potential to create a passed pawn with b3-b4 and a4-a5.

19...Wc5

I was at least equal in E. Paehtz - lones, Douglas 2014.

16.Ehe1 was seen in Smirin - Corrales limenez, Rockville 2013. I would start to get some counterplay down the b-fle with: 16...EabSN 17. ' b1 (17.e5 d5+ reaches the structure W ite is aiming for, but now he has no way to trade queens and thus no way to get his knight to c5.) 17...Eb4 1S.b3 EfbS=

16. ' b1 EabS 17.b3 as played in F. Meyer - Zeldin, Ruhrgebiet 2004, was hardly threatening. I'd probably take my time and play:



17...f6N Guarding against any future e4-e5 ideas and ensuring that a subsequent g2-g4, h4-h5 can be met with ...g5 - creating a solid shell.

16.Edg1 EhS 17.g4

T is was Passeier - A. Becker, Germany 2007. I would start our queenside counterplay with:

17...EabSN

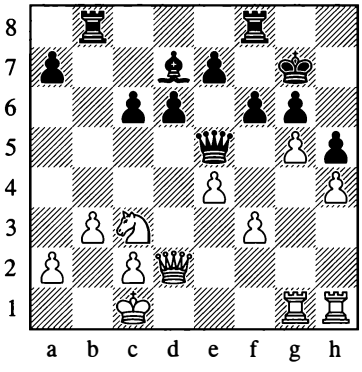
Our kingside looks solid enough.

18.Wd4t

18.gxh5 l x 5 19.1g5 Wxg5 (or 19...Wb4!? 20.lxh5 Wxb2t 21.md1 Walt 22.me2 Wxh1 23.Wh6t ' f6 which doesn't give W ite more than a perpetual) 20.Wxg5 lxg5 21.hxg5 f6=

18...f6 19.95 lhf8 20.b3 We5 21.Wd2

21.Wxa7 is an extremely risky pawn grab: 21...Wxc3 22.Wxd7 Walt 23.md2 Wd4t 24.me2 f5 White's position looks dangerous.



21... f g5 22.lxg5 Wf4 23.lhg1 mh7!

Black is fne, as 24.lxg6 can be met with 24... i g4!.

D21) 16.e5!?

Probably White's trickiest attempt.

16...d5

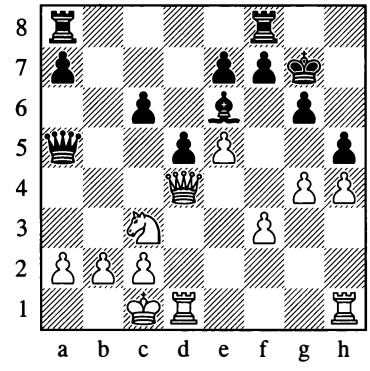
16...Wxe5?! 17.lhe1 Wf6 18. t e4 would be awkward for us.

17. ' g5N

A more aggressive try, but it leaves White's king rather vulnerable.

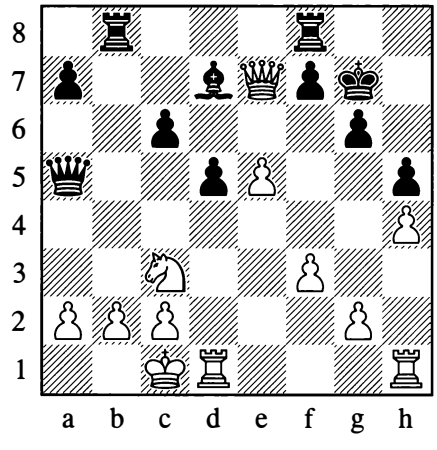
17.g4 lh8 18.Wg5 mf8 A typical Dragon rerouting. Our h8-rook does a good job of slowing White's attack and we can start playing on the queenside. One sample line could be: 19.1d4 lb8 20.a3 (20.lf4 ' e8 I don't see how White gets any further - his queen isn't actually that usefully placed) 20... i e6 21.la4 Wb6 22.lb4 Wc7 23. t e2 lxb4 24.axb4 Wb6 25.Wf4 ' e8+ Black is starting to outplay White, who is rather planless.

17.Wd4 i e6 18.g4? In Memmel - Simon, Schweinfurt 2013, Black should have played:



18...c5!N 19.Wa4 Wxa4 20. t xa4 hxg4 21. f g4 (21. t xc5 gxf3+) 21... i xg4 22.ldg1 (22.lxd5 i f3-+ is the problem) 22... i f5+

17..J3ab8 18. ' xe7



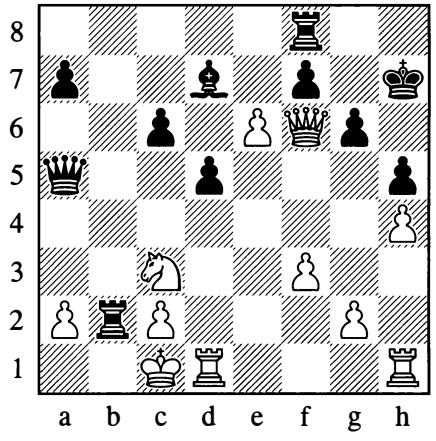
18...lxb2! 19. ' f t

19. ' xb2? lb8t 20. ' cl Wxc3 21.Wxd7 lb2 22.ld2 lxa2-+

19... <h7 20.e6!

20. ' xb2?! is still too early: 20...Wb4† 21. ' cl

i xc3 22.g4 c5 23. i f4 (23.gxh5 j f5-+) 23...d4+



20...d4!? 21.Wxd4

21.exd7?? lxc2t 22.<xc2 i xc3t 23.<bl lb8#; 21.lxd4?? i xc3-+

21... i a3 22. " a4

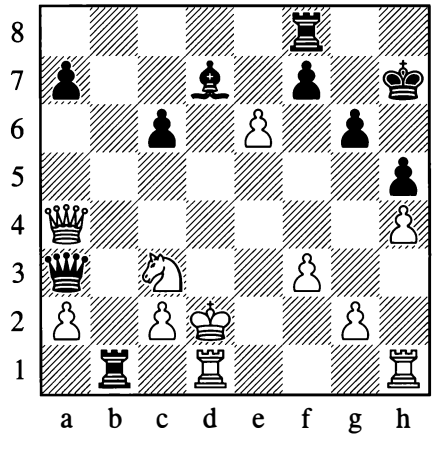
22. l bl?! lxblt 23.<xbl j xe6 24.c4 lb8t 25.<al j xc4 26.ld2 lb4 27.lb2 la4 28. i d2 j d5' White is the exchange for a pawn up but the d5-bishop dominates.

22...lblt

A pretty sacrifce that White should probably decline.

23. d2

23.Wxbl lb8t 24. i b3 lxb3t 25.axb3 j xe6'

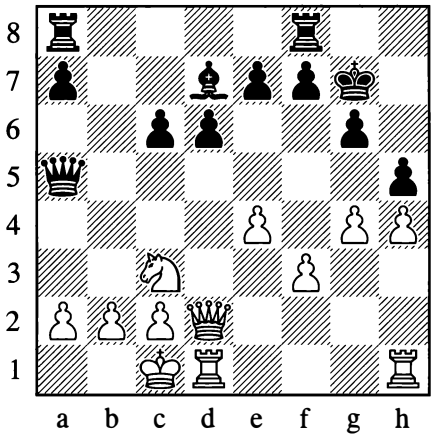


23...lxdlt 24 J 1 Wxa4 25. l xa4 i xe6=

With a level ending.

D22) 16.g4!?N

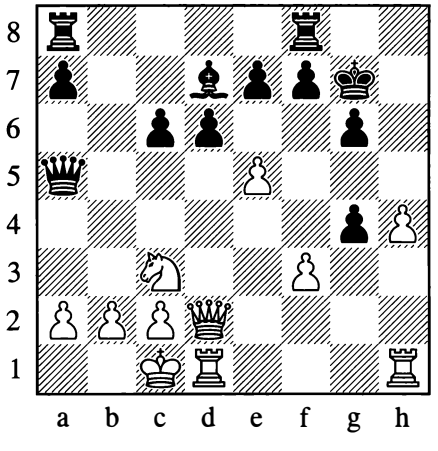
T is hasn't been played but feels like White's most ambitious try.



16...hxg4

Again W ite can push in the centre with D221) 17.e5!?, or continue on the kingside with D222) 17.h5.

D221) 17.e5!?



During my game with Elisabeth Paehtz I wondered about this move order. I think Black should respond in the following manner:

17...gxf3

17... xe5 might be playable here, but it still feels a bit risky afer 18.Ede1 f6 19.h5 (or 19. t e4) 19...Eh8 20. f g4 (20. t e4 e5) 20... xg4 21.h6t g8. My engine informs me it's all a draw though.

18.exd6

18.h5 xe5 19.hxg6

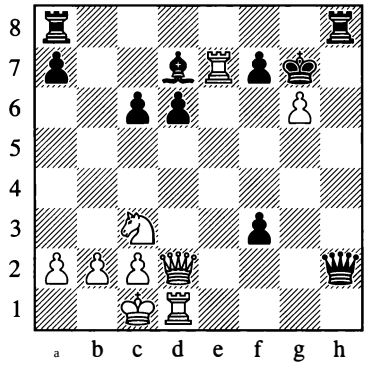
A er 19.Ede1 f5 20.hxg6 Eh8 21.Ehfl e5!? 22. xd6 f4t 23. bl h3 our f3-pawn suddenly becomes powerful, although the machine shows it's still equal with accurate play.

19...Eh8 20.Ehe1 h2!

White won't be able to keep the queens on the board.

21.Exe7

21. d4t?! e5! 22. xd6 f2 is excellent for Black.



21... xd2t 22. xd2

22.Exd2 Ehlt 23.Edl Exdlt 24. t xdl e6+

22... e6+

Black has the better chances in the ending.

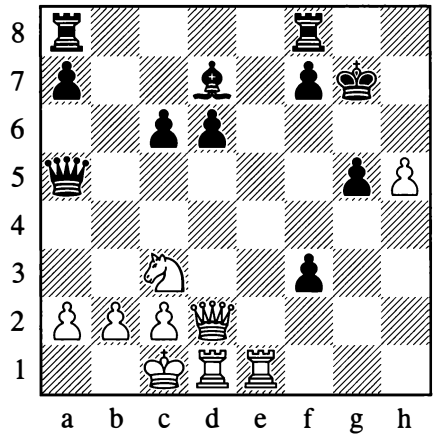
18...exd6 19.hS gS!

A typical response blocking up the kingside.

20 J he1

20.Ehgl f6+

20. xd6 e6 21. t e4 f5 22. t g3 f4t would again get those queens o f the board.

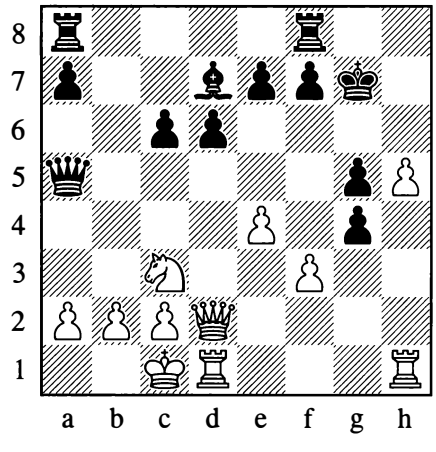


20... . e6 21. d4t Wh7 22.h6 gg8 23. t e4 f 24. t f t Wxh6 2S. t xg8t gxg8 26. xd6 Wg6

We have successfully fought o f White's attack and can look forward to the rest of the game with confdence. T ose g- and f-pawns do a great job defending our king as well as threatening to promote.

D222) 17.hS gS!

T is is always an important move In the Dragon after White has tried to blow open the kingside. T e pawn does an important job, both defending the king and allowing our queen to settle on e5.



18.h6t

IS.f4? gxf4 19. ' xf4 f6+ doesn't get anywhere.

IS.Edgl can be met with lS...<h6 19. f g4 ' e5!+. We'll follow up with ...f6; our king is completely safe and we can play on the queenside without risk.

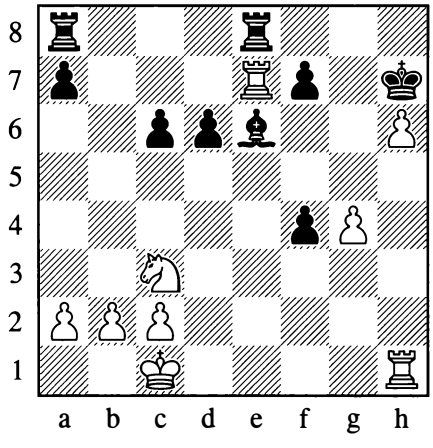
18...<h7 19.eS!

White has to force something or he will simply be worse.

19. f g4 ' e5 is fairly similar to the position after lS.Edgl. Our plan doesn't change.

19... xeS 20J del f4 21. xf4 g f4 22J:he7 J e6 23. f g4 : fe8

23...d5!?



24.:xe8 :xe8 2S. l e4 : d8

T is endgame should be a draw but White still needs to show a little accuracy.

Conclusion

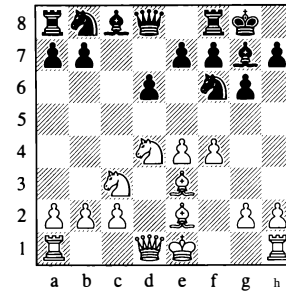
T e Classical-Yugoslav Attack Hybrid with e2 and e3 is an important and popular line. A er my recommendation of 9... l g4 the positions become sharp and should be looked at care f lly. White has two main tries: 12.h4 and 12. l xc6.

With the former, White normally has to acquiesce to a queenless middlegame in which I believe Black is f ne, although care should be taken against the rare 15. l ce2!? maintaining the queens on the board.

With the latter White exchanges o f dark-squared bishops and intends to go for an immediate mate. Hopefully I've shown Black has enough defensive resources and counterplay down the b-f le.

Chapter 13

Classical Variation



Rabinovich Attack

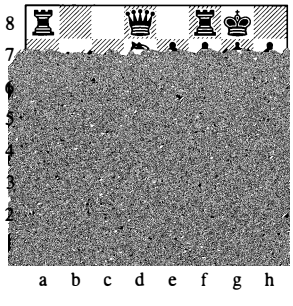
Variation Index

1.e4 cS 2. t f d6 3.d4 c d4 4. t xd4 t f S. t c3 **g6** 6. . e2 . g7 7. . e3 0-0 8.f4

8... t c6

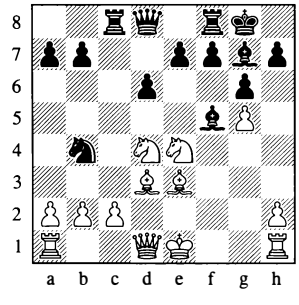
A) 9. ' d2 207
B) 9. t b3 . e6 208
B1) 10. . f 208
B2) 10.g4 c8 209
B21) l1.h4?! 210
B22) 11.£ . d7 211
B221) 12.0-0 211
B222) 12.gS 212
B23) 11.0-0 t aS 12.£ . c4 213
B231) 13. . d3 21S
B232) 13. t xaS 21S
B233) 13. . xa7 216
B24) l1.gS t d7 217
B241) 12. ' d2 218
B242) 12.h4 219

B1) note to 12.a4



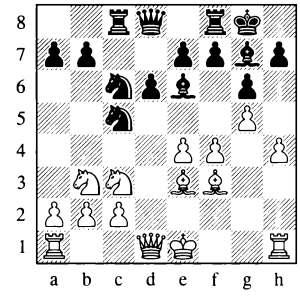
15...♘xd4N

B222) after 15.♘d4



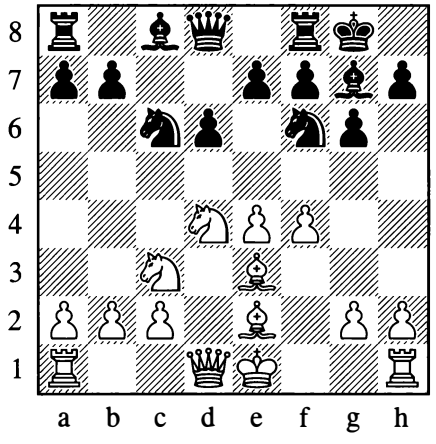
15...d5!N

B242) after 13.♗f3



13...b5!N

1.e4 c5 2. f d6 3.d4 c d4 4. l xd4 f 5. c3 g 6. e2 g7 7. e3 0-0 8.f4 l c6



We should check A) 9.Wd2 before moving on to the more popular B) 9. b3.

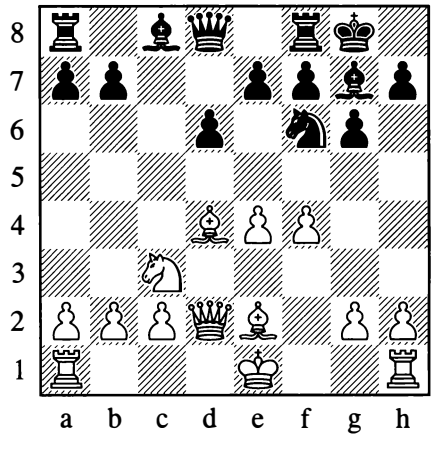
9.0-0 would transpose to variation A of Chapter 8.

Meanwhile, it's worth noting that White can't yet play 9.g4? on account of: 9... l xg4! 10. xg4 xg4 11.Wxg4 l xd4+

A) 9.Wd2

T is seems odd in conjunction with f2-f4 as now the g4-square feels vulnerable. We can immediately neutralize White's set-up:

9... xd4 10. xd4



10...e5!

I've mentioned previously this thematic way of playing against white pawns on f4 and e4.

11. f e5

11. e3 l g4!?N

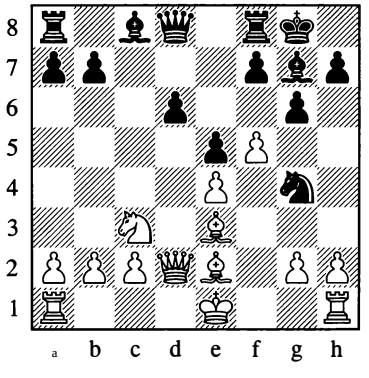
I think this is the most accurate. W ite will have insu f cient play for the loss of the bishop pair.

11...exf4 is also a good option. 12. xf4?! (White has to come up with the unplayed 12. d4N to try and keep the balance) 12...Ee8+ W ite is dropping a pawn.

12.f5

T is is White's only critical try, but I don't believe in his attacking chances.

12. xg4 exf4!+ is an important intermezzo to remember.



12... t xe3 13.Wxe3 gxf5 14.0-0-0 f e4 15.Wxe4

15. l xe4 d5+

15... e6 16. c4 Ec8+

We can defend with ...Wg5-g6 if necessary. W ite has some compensation due to the outpost on d5 but it's not enough.

11. f2

As 11. e3 doesn't actually defend the f4-pawn there's some logic to this move.

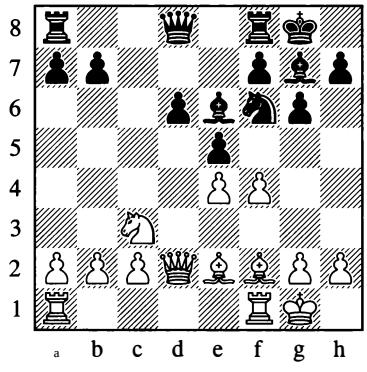
11... e6

11... h6!? is also interesting but a lot sharper.

11... t g4?! would be a mistake here: we can't meet 12. j xg4 with 12...exf4 as it no longer hits the dark-squared bishop, and 12... j xg4 13. fS! leaves our bishop perilously short of squares.

12.0-0

T is position was agreed drawn in Pad - Poloch, Ostrava 1981. I would have played on with:

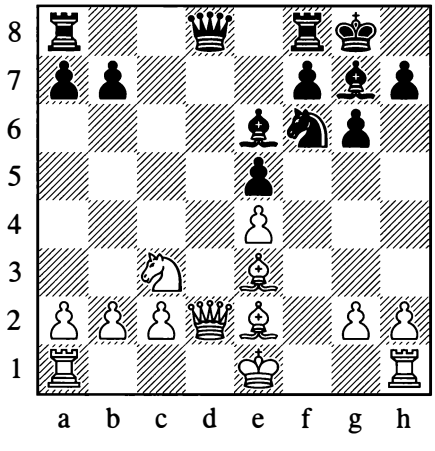


12...dSN 13.exdS t xdS 14. t xdS j xdS IS.Ead1 j c6

Black has the better side of equality.

11...dxe5 12. . e3 . e6

12...Wxd2t 13. j xd2 j e6= as seen in B. Socko - Beliavsky, Ohrid 2001, was also fne, but I think it is slightly more accurate to encourage W ite to make the trade.



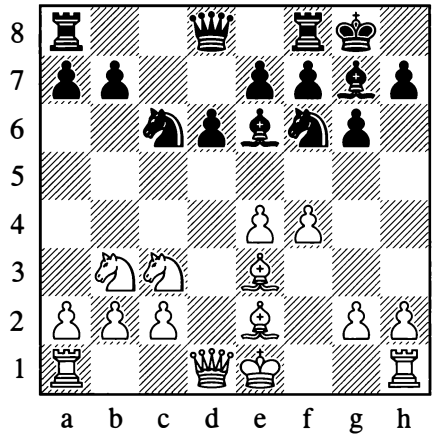
13. ' xd8

White has nothing better, as 13.0-0-0 WaS! looks rather uncomfortable for him.

13..J f d8 14.0-0 h6 15J adl a6=

Gruber - Biriescu, Wattens 1999.

B) 9. t b3 . e6



W ite has occasionally played BI) 10. . f , but it is usual to continue aggressively with B2) 10.g4, which is the real starting position for the Rabinovich Attack.

10.0-0 would simply transpose to Chapter 9.

BI) 10. . f

T is is unusual before castling.

10... . c4

A critical try.

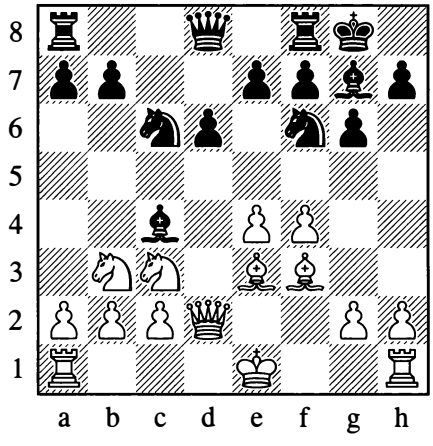
10... t d7!?N is an interesting idea that Houdini ofen pops up with in these structures. T e aim is simply to reroute the knight round to c4: 11.0-0 t b6 12.Wcl t c4 13. j f2 Wd7=

11. ' d2

I I. t dS eS! Ripping open White's position.

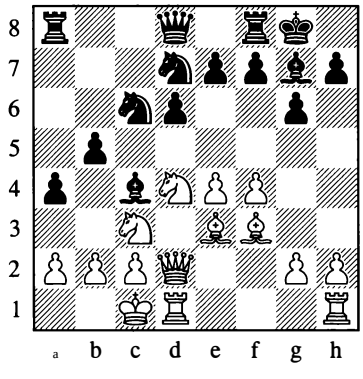
12. c d2 xd5 13.exd5 exf4 14. xf4 Ee8t White was forced to relinquish castling rights and Black should have been winning in Couso - Erdogan, Kallithea 2002.

II. c d2 a6 leaves White struggling to castle in either direction.



11...a5 12.a4

12. c a4?! c d7 13.0-0-0?! was extremely provocative. How many free tempos does White want to give Black's attack? 13...b5 14. c c3 a4 15. c d4



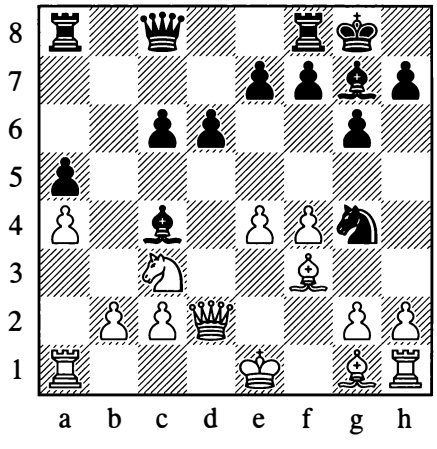
T is was Ruskjar - H. Kristensen, Norresundby 1992. Black got carried away with 15...b4?!, but instead the simple 15... c xd4N 16. xd4 e5!+ would leave him with a fantastic position.

Ater 12. c d5 c d7 it is surprisingly di f cult for White to defend the b2-pawn, Sebastian - Berndt, Hamburg 1997.

Our main line was reached via transposition between two strong Russian GMs. T e game continued:

12..JWc8 13. l d4 l g4 14 . Б bxc6 15. . gl

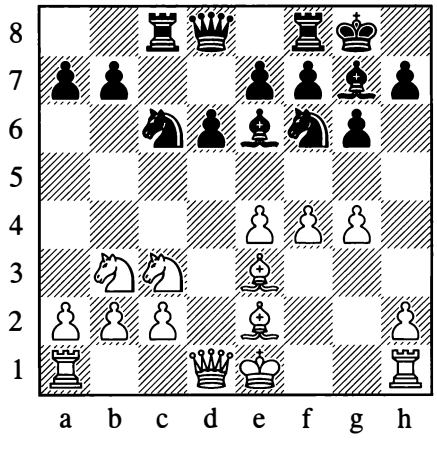
Inarkiev - Motylev, Moscow 2002. I like the look of:



15... f N

Black has a strong initiative.

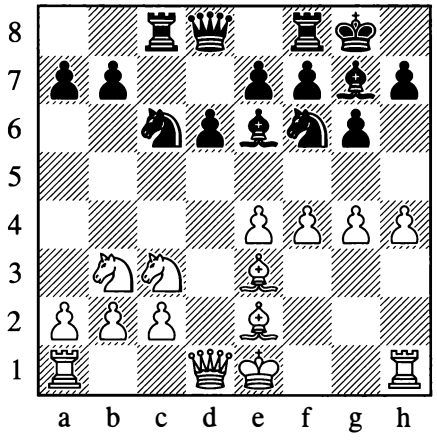
B2) 10.g4 gc8



White has tried four moves in this position and we will check them all: B21) 11.h4?!, B22) 11.£, B23) 11.0-0 and B24) 11.gS.

B21) 11.h4?!

A extremely aggressive approach, but with White's king stuck in the centre this can hardly work.



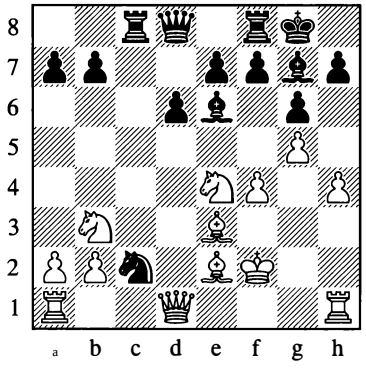
11... t b4!?N

Black has already set up a lot of threats.

11...b5N also looks promising, for example: 12.g5 t h5 13.i xh5 gxh5 14.f5 b4 15.t e2 i d7 16.t bd4 t e5'

12.a3

12.g5 t xe4! We've already seen this idea that Black prepared with his last. White's position collapses. 13.t xe4 t xc2t 14.m f2



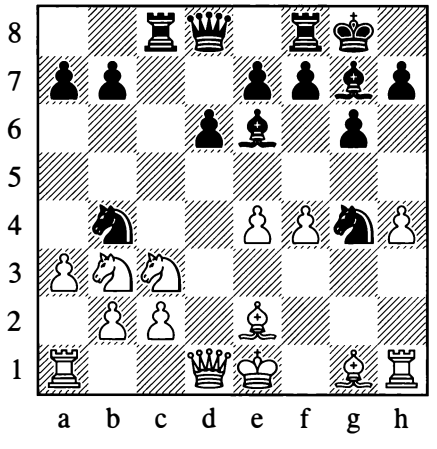
We have a lot of strong options, but the most forcing looks to be: 14...i xb3 15.axb3 d5! 16.t g3 t xa1 17.Wxa1 d4 18.i d2 d3 19.i f3 Wb6t 20.mg2 :c2 21.t e4 i xb2 Black has a large material advantage.

12.0-0 t xg4! T is time we'll take the other pawn. 13.i xg4 i xg4 14.Wxg4 t xc2 15.i d2 t xa1 16.:xa1 f5!? As White's king is rather loose, it makes sense to open up the position for our extra rook. (16...e6' is a sensible alternative) 17.Wh3 e5+

12... t xg4! 13.i gl

13.i xg4? loses immediately: 13...i xg4 14.Wxg4 t xc2t 15.md2 t xe3 16.mxe3 Wb6t -+

13.i d4 i xd4 14.t xd4 With two knights hanging it looks like we might be in trouble, but we have a clever reply: 14... t e3 15.Wd2 Wb6! T e knights defend each other. 16.Wxe3 (16. a b4 Wxd4+) 16...Wxd4+



13.. J hc3! 14.bxc3

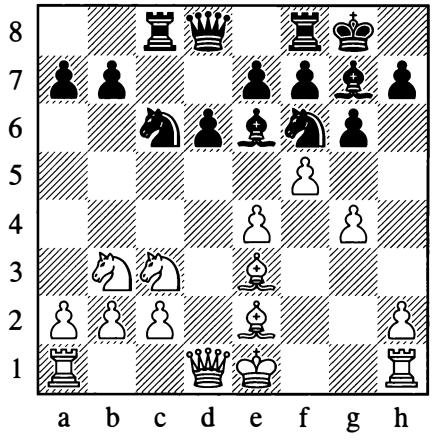
14.axb4 t e3-+

14...i xc3t IS.<f t f 16.a b4 i xal 17.Vxal t xe4;

With three pawns for the piece I favour Black's chances. White's king is still exposed and his pawns are all loose.

B22) 11. £

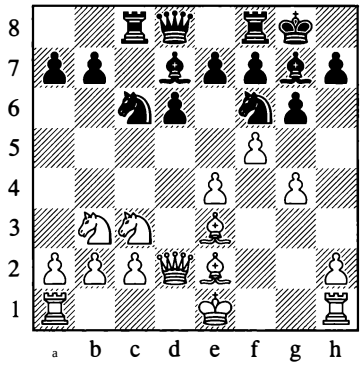
I suppose it makes sense to gain a tempo on the e6-bishop, but giving away control of the e5-square is risky.



11... . d7

A change of direction with B221) 12.0-0 seems odd, while continuing aggressively with B222) 12.g5 is most common.

12. \ d2 has been played a few times, but is refuted nicely by:



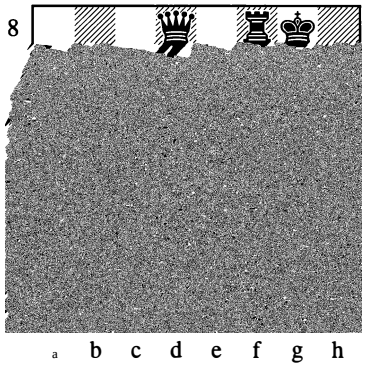
12...b5! White cannot hold on to both his g4- and e4-pawns and so his position will crumble. 13.g5 (13.a3 a5 hardly changes anything) 13...b4 14.gxf6 bxc3 15.bxc3 . xf6= Krutsky - Horak, Kouty nad Desnou 2014.

B221) 12.0-0

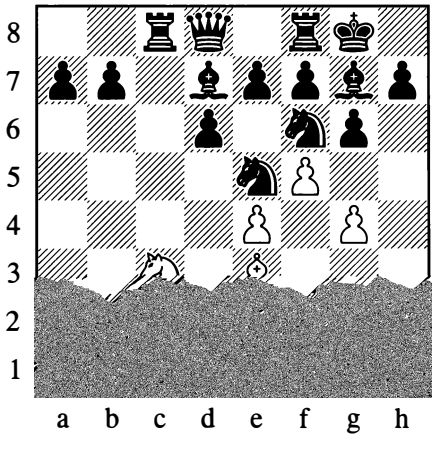
T is feels like the strangest time of all to switch plans, having just ceded the e5-square.

12... t e5 13. t d2

13.g5? has been White's most common move but it just loses. 13...Exc3! 14.bxc3 (14.gxf6 Exe3 15. f g7 ' xg7-+ is no better) 14... t xe4 15. f g6 hxg6 White's position has aready collapsed. T is position has been reached eleven times, with White's many di f erent attempts garnering just half a point. One example continued:



16. \ e1 t xc3 17. . d4 t xe2t 18. \ xe2 \ c8 19.Ef4 . c6 20. \ fl t f3t 21. ' f2 t xd4 22. t xd4 . d5 23. \ b5 . xd4t 24.Exd4 \ f5t 0-1 Fuglsang - Petursson, Copenhagen 1997.

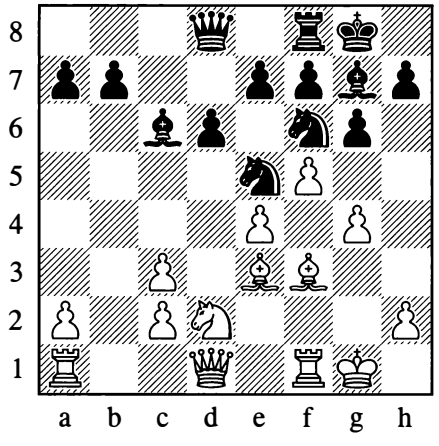


13.. J c3!?

This exchange sacrifce is still promising for Black.

14.bxc3 . c6 lS. . O

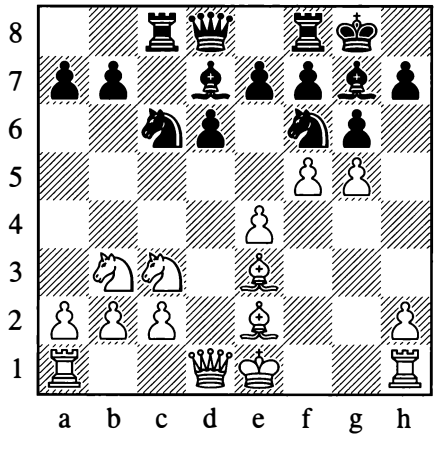
A er lS. d4 l xe4 16. l xe4 xe4 17. d3 dS Black had good compensation, but following IB.gS? gxfS! 19. xfS e6 he was winning. White tried 20. e3, to defend both the gS-pawn and indirectly defend the bishop on fS, but 20... l c4 21. f4 b6t 22.1f2 l e3 forced resignation in Kotsur - A. Sokolov, Nizhnij Novgorod 199B.



lS...dS;

Black will regain at least a pawn for the exchange and White's position is extremely loose. Black has scored S/6 from this position.

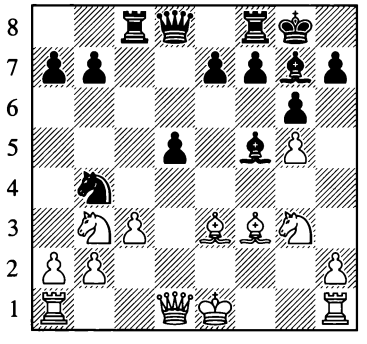
B222) 12.gS



This has been played in virtually all the games to reach this position, but Black has done nothing to justi f White's aggression.

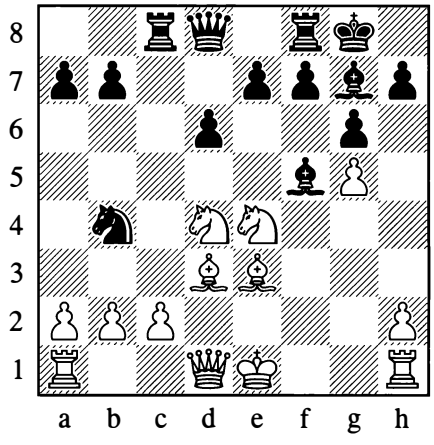
12... t xe4!

T is has only been played once, but it looks a strong piece sacrifce to me. White players who choose this variation obviously want to attack, so it makes



15. t c3N t xd3t 16.cxd3 . bc3t 17.bxc3 Exc3 1S.0-0 Exd3 19. ' e2 ' d7+ T e four pawns are worth more than the knight here.

Our main line has followed Schuh - Imhof, Austria 1995. Here I like:



15...d5!N

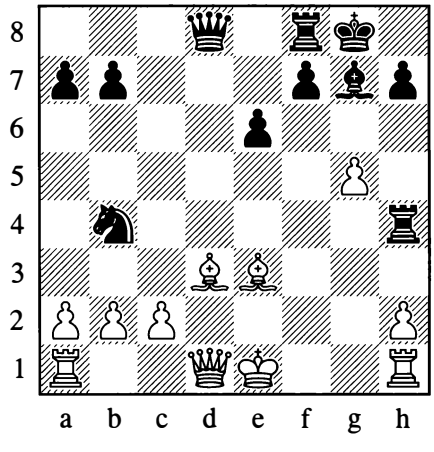
Black looks to be winning.

16. t x

16. t f2 xd3 17. t xd3 xd4! regains the piece after 1S. t xb4 xe3 or 1S. xd4 t xc2 t.

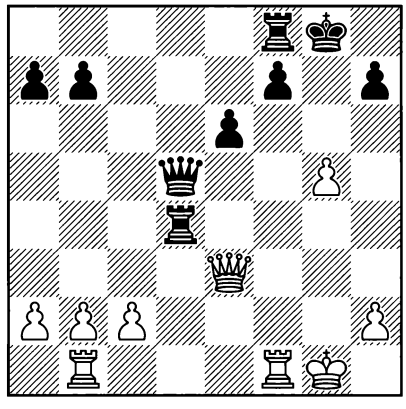
16...dxe4 17. i xe4 g 18. i x f e6 19. i e4 c4 20. i d3 h4

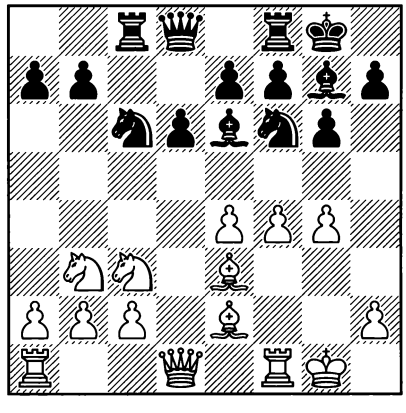
Material may be even, but White's position is far too loose.



21. bl i d4 22. i xd4 t xd3t 23. xd3 xd4 24. e3 d5

White has no way to hold on to his extra pawn.

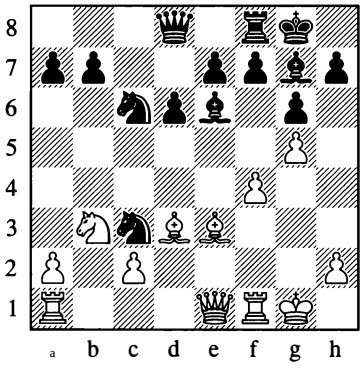




that is one idea, but we are also lining up the typical exchange sacrifce .. . ƀ3.

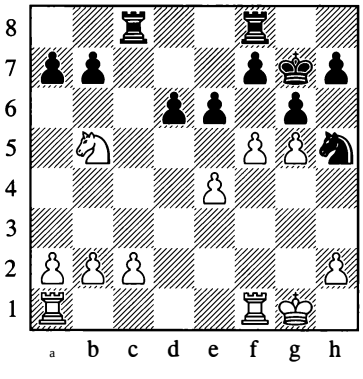
12.£

12.g5?! walks into the sacrifce. 12.. . ƀ3! 13.bxc3 l xe4 14.. d3 l xc3 15.We1 l c6 Black already has a large advantage and White had to throw in the towel only a few moves later:



16.f5?! gxf5 17.. xf5 . xf5 1B. xf5 Wd7 19.Wfl l e2t! 20.<h1 . xal 21. l xal We6 0-1 Yu Shaoteng - Wang Zili, Beijing 1997.

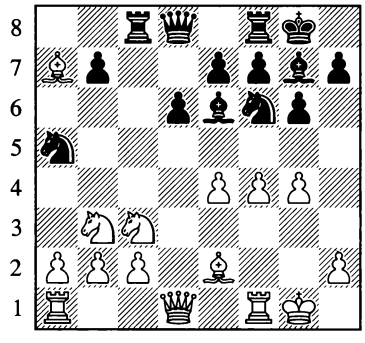
12.. d4 T is defends against ... xc3 and means that ... l c4 won't come with tempo. T erefore Blacks best is probably: 12... . c4 (White's approach also has a practical problem - a f er 12... l c6 his best is to return the bishop to e3) A game that reached this position continued 13.g5 . xe2 14.Wxe2 l h5 15.. xg7 <xg7 16.f5 e6 17. l xa5 Wxa5 IB.Wb5 Wxb5 19. 1 xb5 Paakkonen - Jouhki, Joensuu 1997.

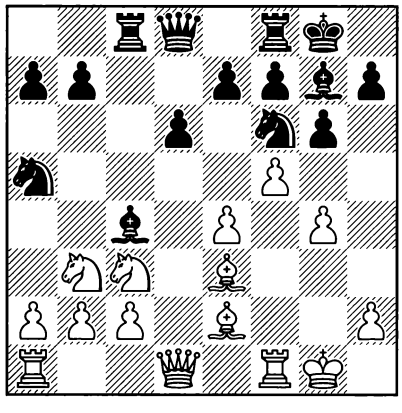


19...exf5N 20.exf5 xc2 21. l xd6 xb2' Black has the better chances in the ending with his extra pawn.

12.e5 l eB 13.exd6 l xd6' wasn't an inspiring exchange of pawns for White in Alarcon - Robbiano Taboada, Lima 1993. Without an e-pawn White will struggle to generate any attacking chances, so the g- and f-pawns are simply misplaced.

12.. xa7 was a hot pawn to grab in Pershin - Chuprova, St Petersburg 2012. Black missed the opportunity to





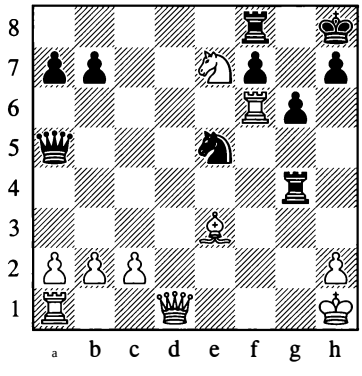
Again White has a choice of moves: B231) 13. i d3, B232) 13. l xa5 and B233) 13. i xa7.

13. d4 xe2 14. ' xe2 t c6 15. e3 t d7+ was pleasant for Black in Simon - Za. Varga, Gyor 1991. White really needs to crash through immediately or his chronic dark square weaknesses will cost him.

13.g5 t d7 doesn't get White anywhere. T at's a juicy-looking outpost on e5.

B231) 13. i d3 1 d7

13...d5!?N is also interesting. T e game seems to burn out to a roughly equal position afer some crazy complications. 14.e5 t d7 15. t xa5 ' xa5 16. xc4 l xc4 17. t xd5 t xe5 18. t xe7t ' h8 19.f6 l xg4t 20. ' h1 xf6 21.l xf6

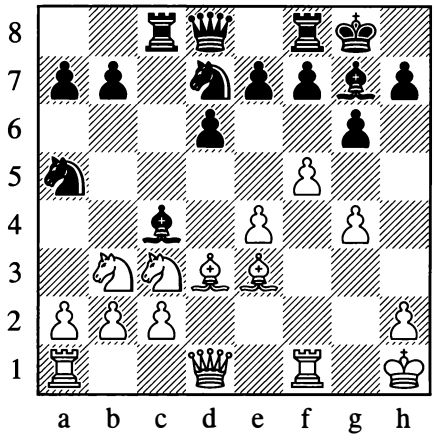


21... ' b4! T e threat of 22... ' e4t forces White to give back the piece: 22. t xg6t hxg6 23. ' d5 ' e7=

14.Wh1

14. xa7 is probably critical, but 14...b5 15. e3 t e5 gives Black great compensation. For example: 16. ' e2 b4 17. t d5 xd5 18.exd5 t ac4 19. d4 t xd3 20.cxd3 xd4t 21. t xd4 ' b6

We have been following Castro - Postny, Evora 2007, when simplest would be:

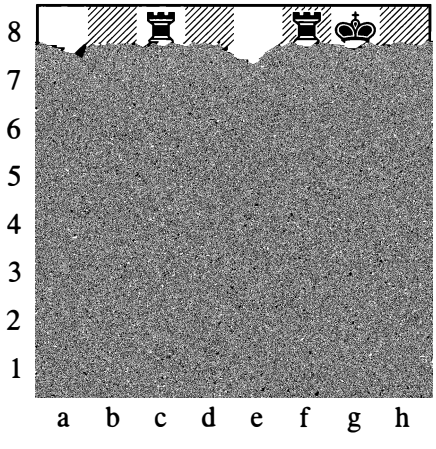


14...a6N

Now we don't have to worry about any subsequent xa7, and we'll follow up with ... t e5 and ...b5-b4. I don't know how White proposes to continue his attack.

B232) 13. l xa5 ' xa5 14.g5

14. d4 as in Durao - Stets, Figueira da Foz 2010, should have been met with 14... t d7N. Black is extremely comfortable.



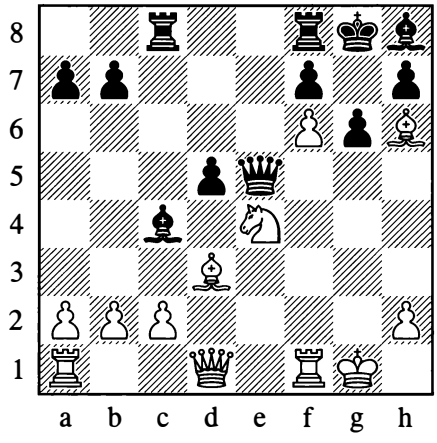
14... l xe4! 15. t xe4 ' e5 16. i d3 d5

T anks to the pin we'll regain the piece with an excellent position. White's only way to try and complicate is as follows:

17. f N

Black won quickly after 17. f g6 hxg6 in Gatto - Lanz Calavia, corr. 1988.

17...ex f 18. g h8 19. h6



19...dxe4 20. . bc4 E fd8!

Black still regains the piece.

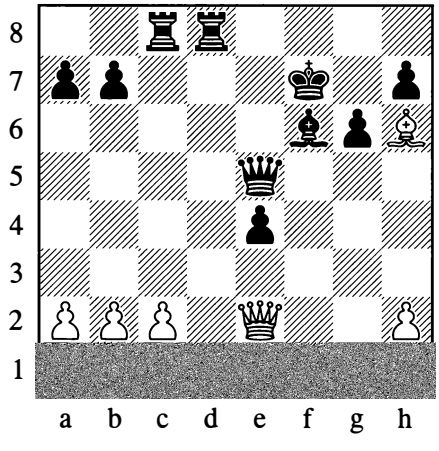
21. i t

21.We2 Wd4 H

21...@x f 22JWe2 x f

22... : 6+ is a safe option.

If White allows us to consolidate we're simply a pawn up, so I think he has to keep playing for complications.

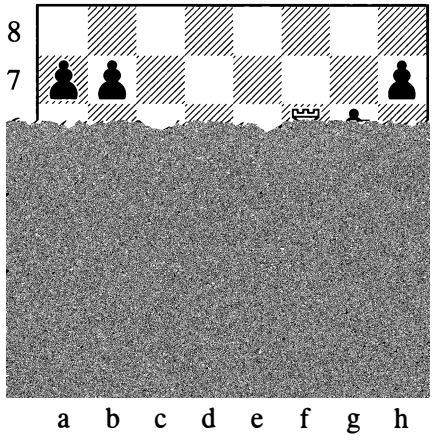


23.Ex f t!? @ x 24.E f t @e6 2s.Wg4t @dS+

Our king might look ridiculous but W ite doesn't have that many pieces to attack with, and our queen and e4-pawn provide good cover. White's king is also exposed. T e line might continue:

26. gS @c6 27.E f t @bS! 28.We2t Ec4 29.a4t @as! 30. dlt Exd2 31.Wxdlt @xa4 32.b3t

32.Wd7t c Jb5 33.Wd2t Eb4 and W ite runs out of checks.



32...@a3 33.Wc1t @b4

T e computer informs me that 33... <a2!? is even stronger, as 34.Efl Wc5t 35. <hl Exc2 36.Walt <xb3 37.Eblt <c4 is apparently completely winning for Black. White has no way to generate threats against our nomadic king.

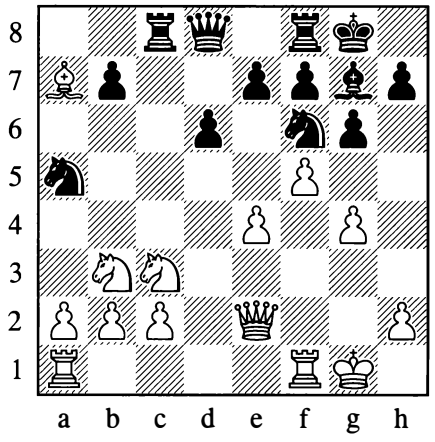
34.Wdlt Wc3 3S.Wd6t EcS

T e checks have stopped and we can go about converting our material advantage.

B233) 13. xa7

Grabbing this pawn looks extremely risky, but White is running out of healthy options.

13... xe2 14.Wxe2



14... l 7!N

I like this move, preventing White from dropping his bishop back to d4.

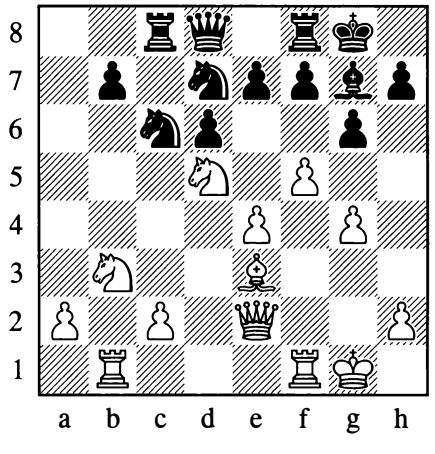
IS. t dS

15. d4?! doesn't really work: 15... t xb3 16. xg7 t xa1 17. xfS <xfS 1S. \ f2 t e5+

15. t d1 defends the b2-pawn but is rather passive. 15...b6 16. t xa5 \ c7! 17. t b3 \ xa7 Black's powerful bishop and strong outpost on e5, coupled with W ite's loose kingside, surely provide more than enough compensation for the pawn.

IS... t c6 16. i e3 i xb2 17J abl i g7

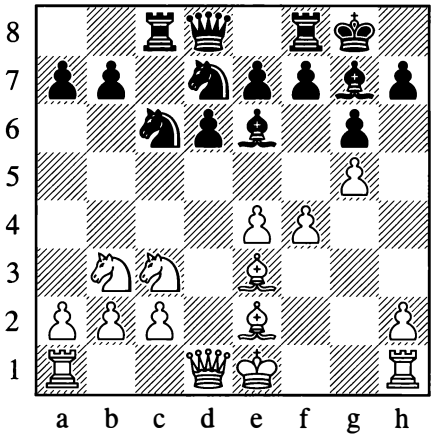
White's attack may look threatening, but we can defuse it with a well-timed ...e6, for example:



18.gS e6! 19. £ exdS 20. f g7 Wxg7 21.exdS t ceSi

With such strong k ights Black must be better. White needs his g5-pawn back on g2.

B24) l1.gS l d7



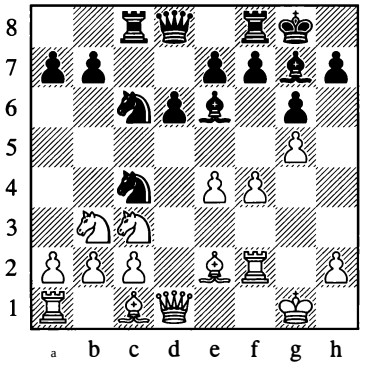
White chooses between B241) 12. d2 and B242) 12.h4 in almost equa measure according to my database.

12.0-0

T is feels to me as though White has suddenly got cold feet. As I observed earlier, the plan of ... t d7-b6-c4 is an interesting one in these structures, so Black's normal response should come as no surprise:

12... t b6 13.f5

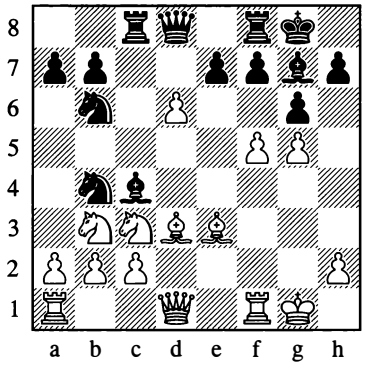
White has tried 13.Ef2, attempting to keep his position together, but Black continues: 13... t c4 14. cl



14...b5! 15.f5 . d7 16. ' xb5 ' xb2 17.Wfl . e5+ Black was dominating in Lastin - Yakovich, Elista 1995.

13... . c4 14. . d3 d5! 15.exd5 ' b4 16.d6

T is was all seen in Jarvenpaa - Kosmo, Helsinki 200S, where Black's most accurate continuation would have been:



16... ' 4d5!N 17. ' xd5 ' xd5 1S. . f2 Wxd6+ Black holds a clear advantage.

Last summer I happened to reach this position again and was surprised by 12. ' d4. I continued: 12... ' c5 (12...Wb6N 13. ' xe6 Wxe3 14. ' xfS . xc3t 15.bxc3 Wxc3t 16. c f2 ' c5+ was another tempting option) 13. ' xc6 (13. ' xe6 f e6 was my intention, putting pressure on the f4-pawn) 13... . xc3t 14.bxc3 f xc6 15.f5 gxf5 16.exf5 . xf5 17.0-0 WcS 1S.We1 . xc2 19.Wh4 We6 20. f f We4 White didn't have much of an attack for the two pawns in Hinrichs - Jones, Helsingor 2014.

B241) 12.W d l c5!

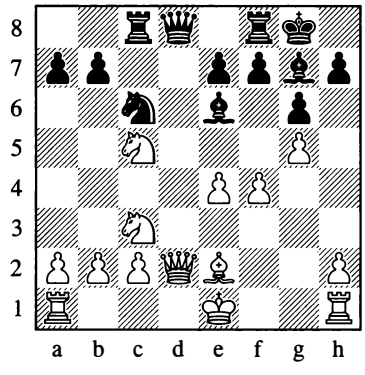
We're o fering a pawn to take over the dark squares.

13. f

13. ' xc5N dxc5 14.WxdS (14. . xc5 Wa5!) 14...f f dS 15. . xc5 ' d4 is given by Chris Ward, who comments: " T ere would be serious pressure against White's queenside." In fact, White also has to watch out to keep his f4-pawn protected. With an uncontested dark-squared bishop, Black stands better.

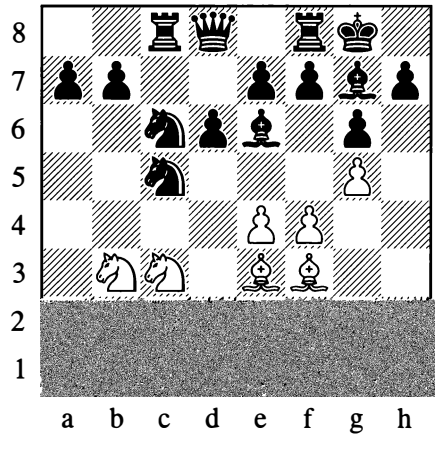
13. ' d4 Moving the k ight again feels extremely unnatural. 13...Wa5! Black already has a large advantage, but a f er 14.a3? ' xd4! 15.b4 (or 15. . xd4 ' xe4! 16. ' xe4 Wxd2t 17. c xd2 . xd4-+) 15... ' xe2! he was completely winning in Maly - Van Asseldonk, Liberec 2009.

Taking with the bishop doesn't solve White's problems either: 13. . xc5N dxc5 14. ' xc5



14... . d4! 15. ' xe6 . f t 16. c d1 f e6 17. . c4 Wxd2t 1S. i xd2 f cdSt 19. c e2 Exf4+

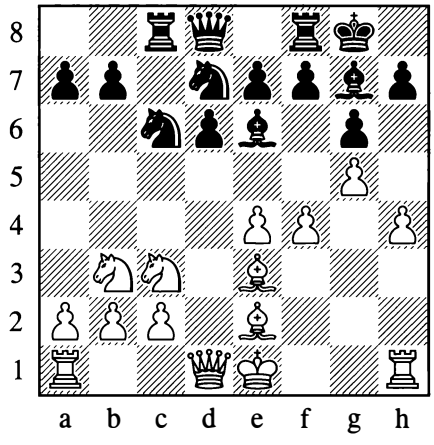
T e text was played in Yakovich - Grigoryan, Moscow 2011. I recommend:



13...h5!N

Black has a dangerous initiative.

B242) 12.h4



12... t c5!

When I had this position I remembered my idea was to play ... t c5 at some point, but I prefaced it with the weaker 12... t b4.

13. f

13. t d4?! was played in Cueto Chajtur - Silva Lillo, Santiago 1990. T e same move was bad after 12.Wd2 and even worse here. Mter 13...Wb6!N White would have to drop his knight back again: 14. t b3 (14. t xe6 runs into 14...Wxb2! when the tactics work for Black) 14...Wb4! W ite loses material.

We should check what happens if White grabs the pawn:

13. t xc5N dxc5 14.WxdB

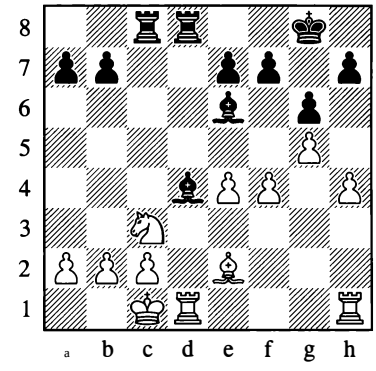
T e immediate 14. xc5? is met by: 14...Wa5! 15. e3 EfdB 16. d2 (16. d3 doesn't help either: 16... t b4 17.e5 f5 1B.0-0 l xc2! 19.Wxc2 xd3 20.Wg2 xfl -+) 16...Wb6 17.Wc1 Exd2! IB.mxd2 (lB.Wxd2 Wxb2 19.Eb1 Wxc3-+) IB... t b4 Black's attack is crushing.

14...E f dB 15. xc5 l d4 16. xd4 xd4

Black will regain the pawn with an edge.

17.0-0-0

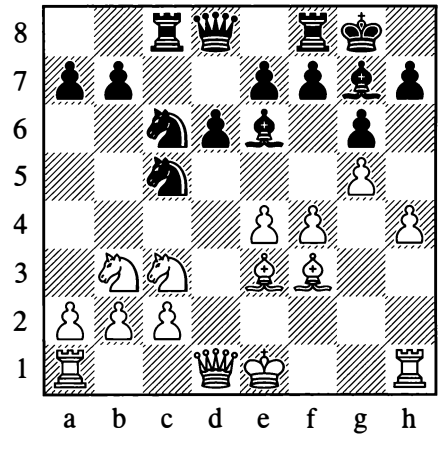
17. d3 xc3t 1B.bxc3 Exc3 19.a4 d7! 20.md2 Ec5+



17... e3t 1B. c b1 Exdl t 19.Exd1 xf4+

We can press in the ending with the bishop p L

Surprisingly, a young Dmitry Kononenko allowed this position twice with W ite in the year he became an IM. Black has lots of pleasant choices, but I don't see why we shouldn't continue as we did in variation B241:



13...h5!N

W ite's last was purely defensive so we can simply create additional threats. Of course ...b4 is one idea, but in fact ... l a4 is even more annoying.

14. t xc5

White doesn't have enough time to make anything from his early aggression on the kingside, as 14.hS?! can be met by 14... t a4! and we crash through on the queenside.

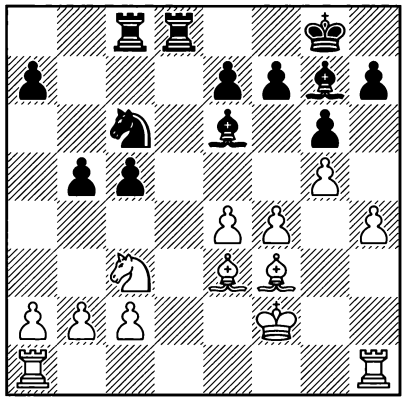
14. t d4 is an improvement over 13. t d4, but Black is still in control with 14... " aS+.

14...dxc5 15. xd8

1S. i xcS?! " aS! is again extremely strong.

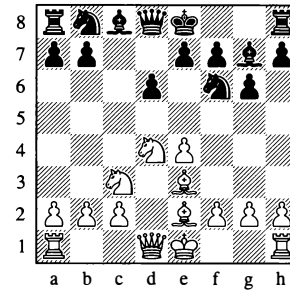
15.. J d8 16.@ f

16. i xcS?! fails to: 16... i xc3t (or the immediate 16... t eS) 17.bxc3 t eS! 18. f eS



Chapter 14

Classical Variation



Other Aggressive Options

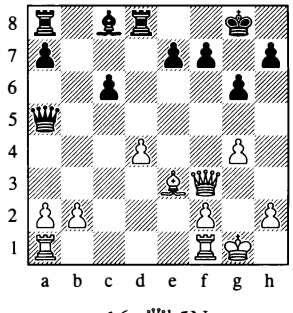
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.l f d6 3.d4 c d4 4.l xd4 l f 5.l c3 g6 6.J e2 J g7 7.J e3

7...0-0

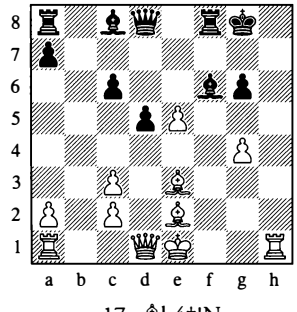
A) 8.l b3 222
B) 8.g4 d5 223
B1) 9.exd5?! 223
B2) 9.e5 224
C) 8.h4 l c6 9.h5 d5 226
C1) 10.l xc6 226
C2) 10.hxg6 227

B1) after 16.♕f3



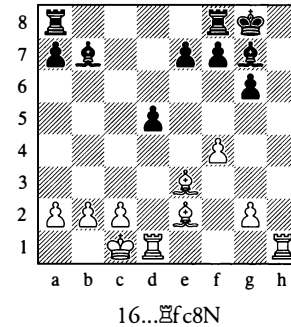
16...♕b5N

B2) after 17.fxe5



17...♗h4†!N

C2) after 16.f4

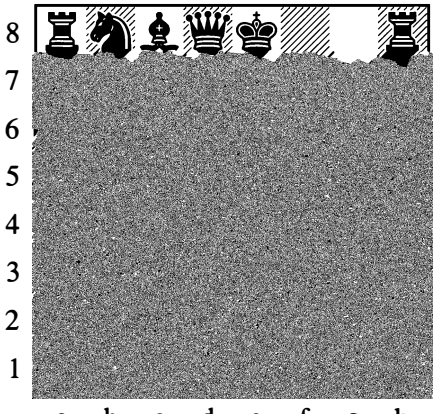


16...♖fc8N

l.e4 c5 v f d6 3.d4 c d4 4. t xd4 l f 5. t c3 g 6. e2 g7 7. e3

7.h4 feels somewhat premature when we have not yet castled. 7... l c6 8. i e3 h5 9. ' d2 (9.f3 0-0 10. ' d2 d5=) 9... l g4 10. i xg4 i xg4 11.f3 i d7=

k „ en! H i fo



7...0-0

I should note that with the lines I've chosen you can also start with 7... l c6. T is cuts out most of this chapter, as 8.g4? is no longer playable. (8.h4 transposes to the previous note) 8... l xg4! 9. i xg4 (9. l xc6 l xe3 10. l xd8 l xd1 11.!xd1 xd8+) 9... i xg4 10. ' xg4 (10. l xc6 i xd1 11. l xd8 i f3 12. l x f x f 13.!gl i e5+) 10... l xd4 Black is a clean pawn up.

We will brief y cover A) 8. t b3, before moving on to the aggresive pawn thrusts B) 8.g4 and C) 8.h4.

8.f3 l c6 9. ' d2 transposes to variation C of Chapter 12.

A) 8. t b3

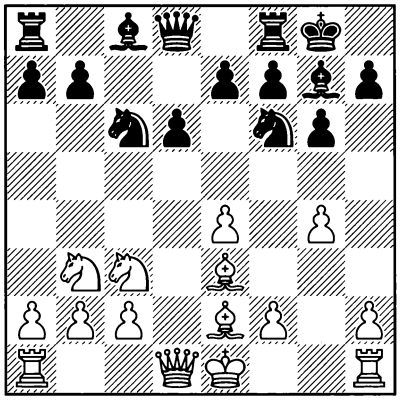
From time to time White starts this way.

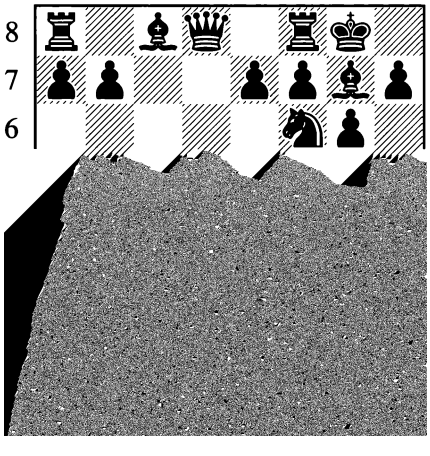
8... t c6

White now has a variety of options to transpose elsewhere, but there are a couple of standalone continuations.

9.g4

9.h4 is the other independent try, but now I don't see much logic for the knight dropping back to b3. 9...h5 seems the most sensible: 10.f3 i e6 11.g4?! (T e sacrifce doesn't work out but 11. ' d2N d5 12.exd5





11... L g4!

T e key move to remember.

12. L g4 l xg4 13.Vxg4 l xc2t 14.<e2 l xal 15 J al L c3 16.bxc3 Vxd5

Practice has proved that the rook and two pawns are stronger than the two pieces here. W ite's main problem is that he can't generate any attacking chances with such a weak king, so he'll instead have to su fer in the ending.

B) 8.g4

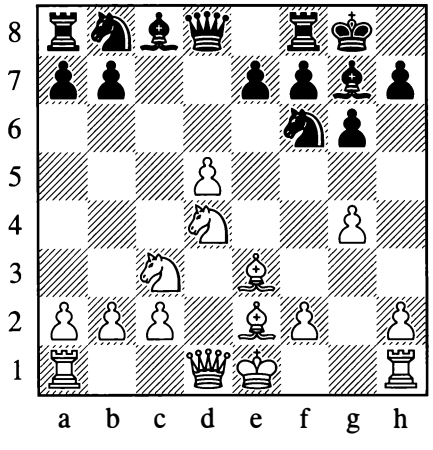
T is line has similarities to the Rabinovich Attack. However, as White has not yet dropped his knight back to b3 we can strike back in the centre immediately with:

8...d5

At this point B1) 9.exd5?! seems too loosening, while B2) 9.e5 requires more care.

B1) 9.exd5?!

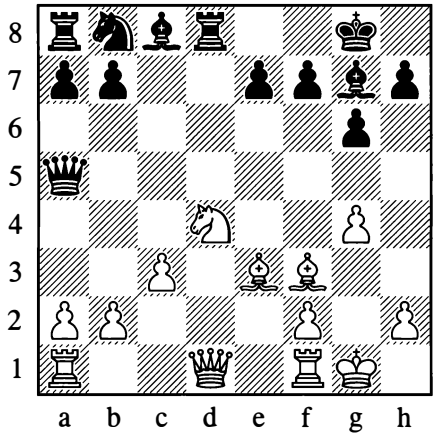
T is feels really wrong to me; what is the pawn on g4 doing with an open centre?



9... l xd5 10. l xd5 Vxd5 11. . f Va5t 12.c3 d8 13.0-0

White is actually lucky he has this move to be only slightly worse.

13. " e2? loses at once: 13... xd4 14. xd4 xd4 15.b4 Wc7 16.cxd4 Wc3t 17.Wd2 Wxf3 0-1 Zminda - Gajdamowicz, Wroclaw 2011.

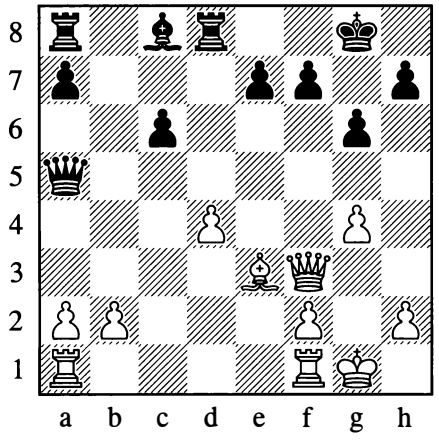


13... L d4! 14. c d4 l c6 15. . xc6

I don't like this move either, but White is worse anyway. For example, 15.d5 t e5+ or 15. c1 Wxa2+ or 15.a3 e6+.

15...bxc6 16.V f

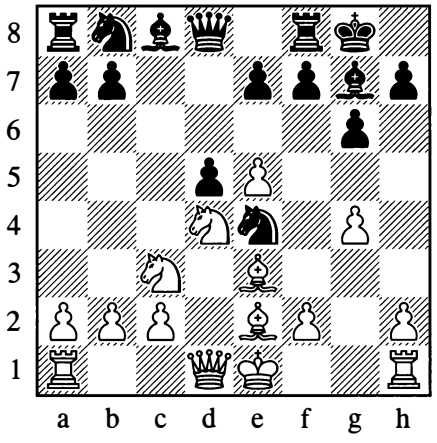
H. Bosboom - Haridas, Brighton 2013.



16...Vb5N 17.b3 . e6i

White will be subjected to a miserable defence.

B2) 9.e5 e4



Having access to the e4-square is the reason that we can get away with ...d5 without frst playing ... t c6.

10.f4

W ite's only ambitious continuation.

10. t xe4 dxe4

T is promises White nothing.

11.e6

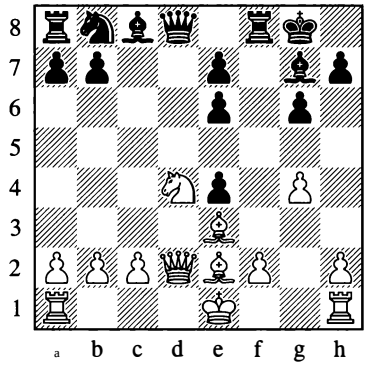
11.f4? exf3 12. . xf3 in Jonas - Percze, Hungary 2010, should have been met by: 12... t d7!N 13.e6 t e5 14.0-0 t c4! Black wins material.

11... f e6

Black has a terrible-looking structure but we do have an extra pawn. Meanwhile, White's pawn on g4 is extremely misplaced.

12. ' d2

Kiltti - Salmensuu, Finland 2005.



12... t c6N

I suggested this on ChessPublishing. I think White should probably accept he's worse and play:

13.0-0-0 . xd4

13... ' d5!? is an option if you wish to keep more material on the board.

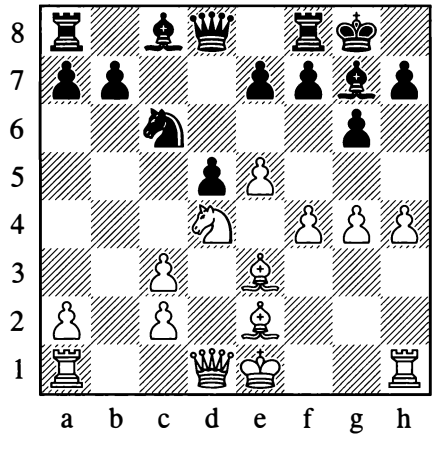
14. . xd4 t xd4 15. ' xd4 ' xd4 16.Exd4 Exf2 17.Exe4 b6

White should try to hold the slightly worse ending, but of course he won't have much fun.

10... xc3 11.bxc3 l c6 12.h4

With his queenside compromised, White gambles everything on crashing through on the kingside.

Personally I think 12.0-0N is more sensible, but it's not really in the spirit of White's hyper-aggressive opening. If White does choose to play slowly I would probably continue with 12... t a5 (12...g5!?) 13.Eb1 b6+ followed by ... . b7, ... ' d7 and ... t c4. White has to watch out for us opening the position with ...f6 and I don't see his plan.



12... f !

Unfortunately for White, we can open the centre before his attack lands.

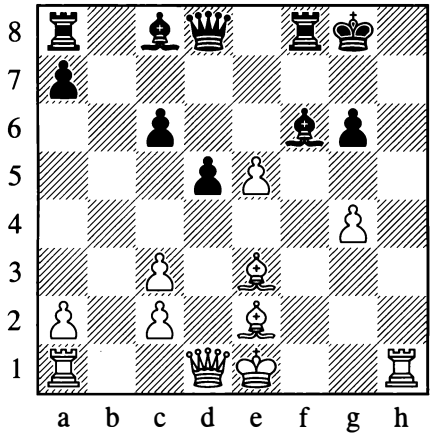
13.ex f i x 14.h5 e5 15. xc6 bxc6

16. h g6

16. f e5 xe5 17.hxg6? White had to defend c3, but he was already clearly worse in any event. 17... xc3t IS. d2 ' f6 19.9xh7t WhS 20. ' c1 a6 21.Eh2 ' fl t! 0-1 Balaskas - Andreakos, Athens 1993.

16... h g6 17. f eS

We have been following Douthwaite - Fiedler, Toronto 1995. Here I'd prefer:



17... i h4t!N

Instead Black won quicky after: 17... xe5 1S. ' d3 ' f6 19.0-0-0 e6?! (19... d7! was a better route, as the bishop doesn't get in the way so much afer 20.Eh6 eS) 20.Eh6 f 21.Efl (21.g5!) 21... ' d6 22. c d1?! (22. d4! would have put Black under pressure) 22...EabS 23.Wd2 c5 24. g5? c4 25. ' f3 d4 26. f6 dxc3t Here White resigned but, as you can see, the game was not perfect.

18.♖xh4

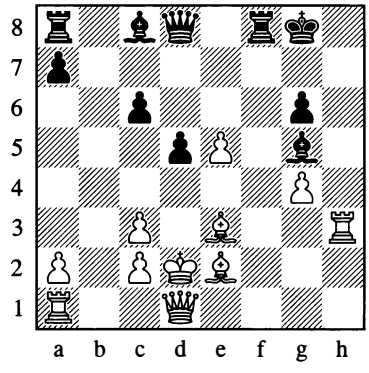
I think this is White's best practical chance.

1S. c d2 g5!

Putting White under signifcant pressure. We will follow my engines' attempts to defend White's position.

19.Eh3

19. ' g1 d4! also looks good for Black. 20. xg5 ' xg5t 21.We1 dxc3 22.Ed1 ' xe5 Now White is forced to trade queens with 23. ' h2, when 23... ' xh2 24.Exh2 EbS+ gives Black good winning chances in the ending.



19... xe3t 20.Exe3 d4 21. c4t Wg7 22.Ee4 d c3t 23.Wxc3 ' a5t 24. c b2 ' b4t 25. c c1 ' a3t 26.Wb1

T e engine now started to realize that Black was simply winning.

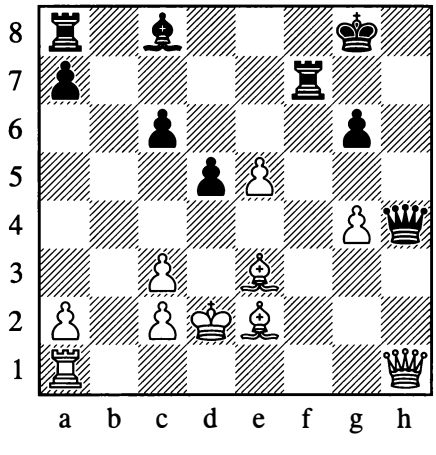
26... a6 27. b3 Efl 2S.Ee1 EafS

We will net White's queen.

18...W x 4t 19. i d ♖f7

Our queen on h4 prevents any W ite attack. He would probably be well advised to o f er the trade:

2o.Whl

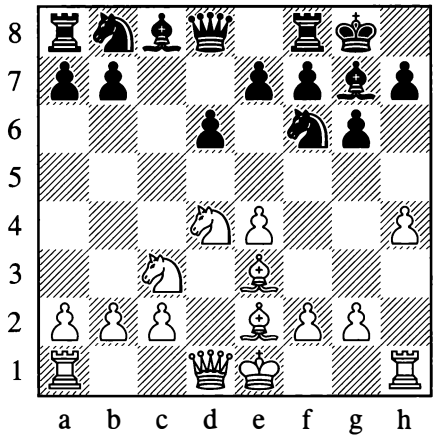


2o...Wxhl 21.gxhl gh7 22.gg1 gh2i

Black is obviously better. White has some drawing chances with the pawn for the exchange, but we can probe for a long time.

C) 8.h4

A line that was fashionable a long, long time ago!



8... l 6

T is actually transposes ro a position that was played twice in the 1958 World Championship match between Smyslov and Botvinnik.

9.hS dS

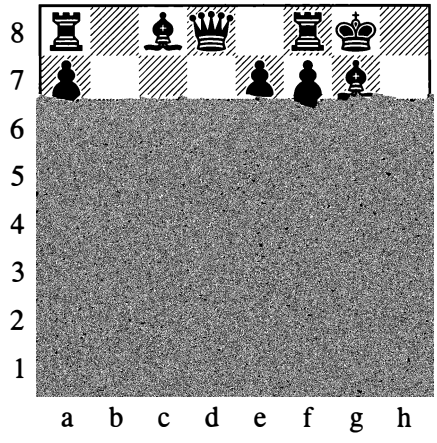
T e thematic centre counter to a fank attack. White has two options: C1) 1o. l hc6 and C2) I0.hxg6.

C1) I0. t xc6 bxc6 11.eS l e4 12. l xe4 dxe4 13. h 6

13. j d4 j f5!?N A interesting way to try and exploit White's move order. A f er 14.hxg6 j xg6 the bishop does a good job combining attack and defence, as we've seen elsewhere.

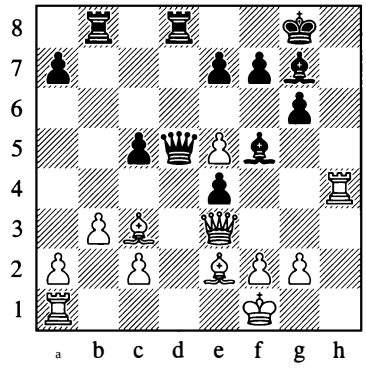
13... h g 14. i d4

14. \ xd8 was the ex-World Champion's more recent choice. After 14...l xd8 15. j f4 j e6 16. l d1 l d5 17. l xd5 cxd5 18. ' d2 d4 Black was comfortable. T e prodigy went on to beat the legend in Smyslov - Bacrot, Albert (3) 1996.



14...WdS

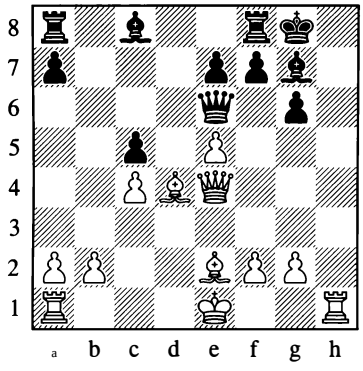
14... j e6!? also looks sensible. 15. j c3 (15. \ d2 c5 16. j c3 \ xd2t 17. ' xd2 f6N is fne for Black) A computer battle continued: 15... \ d5!? 16. \ c1 l fd8 17. \ e3 c5 18. l h4 j f5 19. ' f1 l ab8 20.b3



20... l b4! Here the dark-squared bishop is worth a rook. An enterprising move from the engine! 21. j xb4 \ xe5 22. l d1 l xd1t 23. j xd1 cxb4 24. \ xa7 \ a1 White's loose king and scattered pieces promised Black good compensation in Hiarcs 13.2 - Naum 4.2, engine game 2011.

15.♕d2

Perhaps White should try 15.c4N, but after 15... e6 16. c2 c5! (16... i a6 17. xe4 i xc4= is a more solid option) 17. xe4



17...cxd4 (17... i b7!? also looks interesting) 18. xa8 b6 Black has a lot of play for the exchange.

15" J d8 16 J d1 ' xa2! 17. ' f4

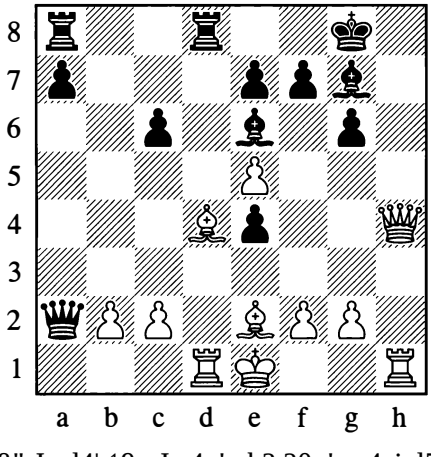
Gala k ov - Ziatdinov, Tashkent 1977. Here I like:

17". i e6N

We will be able to counter e fectively if White continues in an aggressive manner:

18. ' h4

18. xe4 a4+

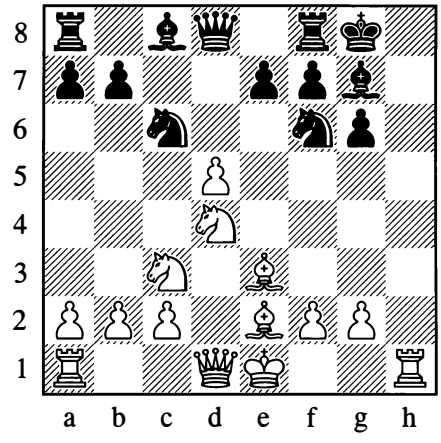


18" J xd4! 19 J 4 ' xb2 20. ' xe4 i d5+

Black has superb winning chances.

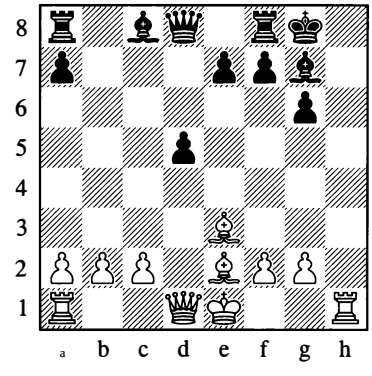
C2) 10. h g6 **hxg6** 11.exd5

11. t xc6 bxc6 12.e5 t e4 13. t xe4 dxe4 would simply transpose to variation C1.



11". t xd5 12. t xc6 bxc6 13. t xd5 ' xd5

13...cxd5N also looks reasonable if you wish to keep the queens on the board. T e positions are quite double-edged; W ite has an open h-fle but nowhere safe for his own king.



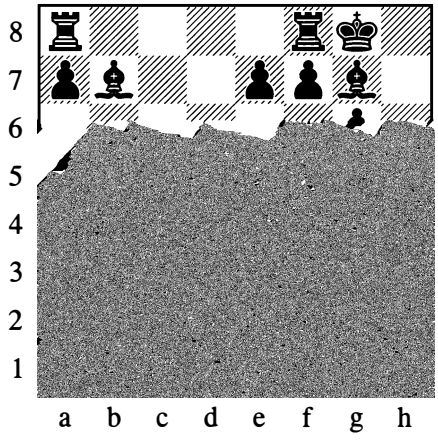
a) 14. i h6 can be met with 14... i xb2 15. i xf8 a5t 16. ' f1 ' xf8 17.2b1 xa2 and Black is not worse.

b) 14. d2 d6 15.2d1 2d8 16. i f3 i a6 would prevent White from castling. A er 17. a5 d4!? Black has a dangerous initiative.

c) 14.c3 c7 15. d2 2d8 is unclear.

14JWxd5 a d5 15.0-0-0 . b7 16.f4

T is was all played in Smyslov - Botvinnik, Moscow (5) 1958. A improvement over Botvinnik's play would be:



16..J fc8N

With an equal position.

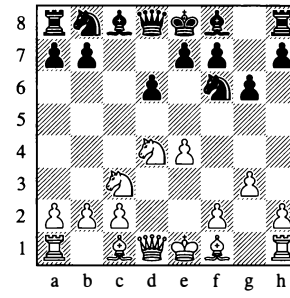
Conclusion

T is chapter has dealt with some additional aggressive options that White may have stored in his armoury. In the frst section we are reminded again that a poorly prepared g2-g4 is o f en well met by the ...d5 break in the centre.

T e most signifcant White try was 8.h4, which transposed to a position tested by Smyslov at World Championship level. T e move is interesting and certainly has some merit, but my analysis shows that Black has nothing to fear - playing for a win should White make the slightest error.

Chapter 15

Fianchetto Variation



Introduction

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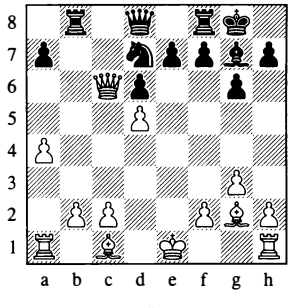
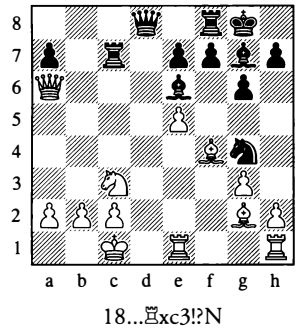
C2) 10. l d3 241

A1) note to 11.e5N



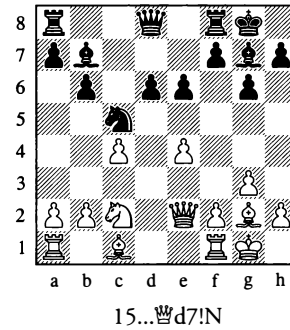
14...♘c5!N

B2) note to 14.♗xb7!?



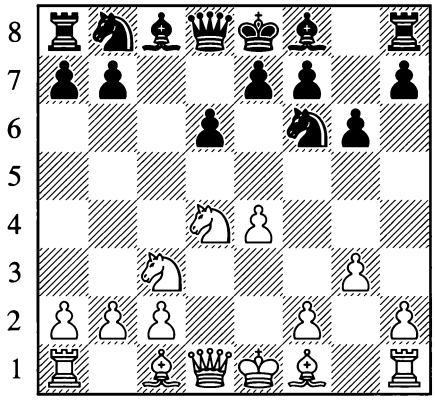
18...♖xc3!?N

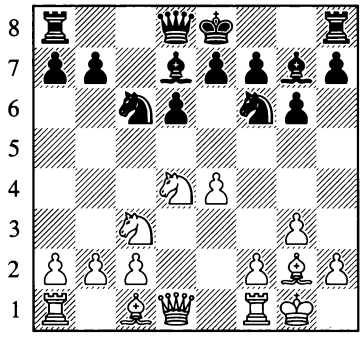
C2) after 15.♘c2



15...♕d7!N

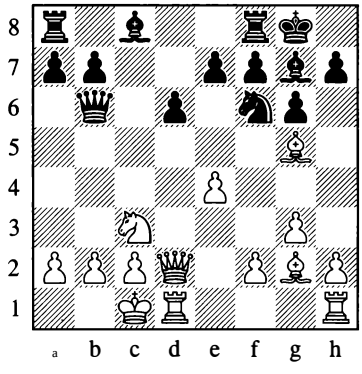
l.e4 cS 2. l a d6 3.d4 c d4 4. l xd4 l f
S. l c3 g 6.g3 tL





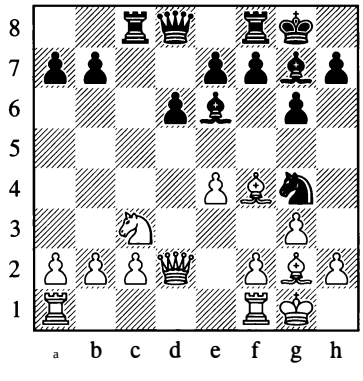
White can try expanding on the queenside with A) 9.a4, while B) 9.eS has recently been played at a high level and must be checked carefully. Finally, C) 9.0-0 is W ite's most common choice by far.

9. i g5 0-0 10: \ d2 (for 10.0-0 see the note on 10. i g5 in variation C) 10...Wb6!? 11.0-0-0?! It was better to give the pawn, as now Black has a typical queenside attack while White has nothing on the kingside.



11... i e6 12. i e3 Wa6 13.a3 EfcS 14. i d4 b5 15. i fl EabS White was unable to slow Black's attack and had to resign a few moves later in Calego - Li Chao, Reykjavik 2014.

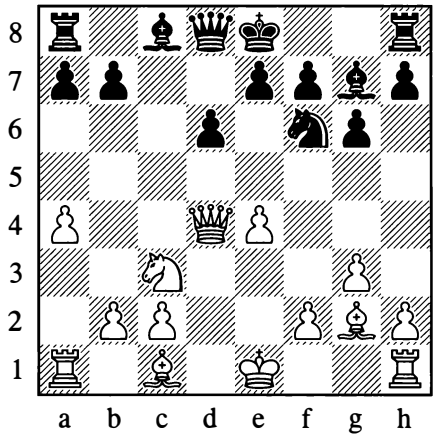
9. i e3?! was tried once by Vassily Ivanchuk, against none other than Carry Kasparov, but this is the wrong square for the bishop. 9...0-0 10.Wd2 l g4 11. i f4 i e6 12.0-0 EcS+



Black was comfortable in Mrva - Szalanczy, Budapest 1993.

A) 9.a4

T is move is seen from time to time. W ite grabs some space on the queenside.



9...0-0

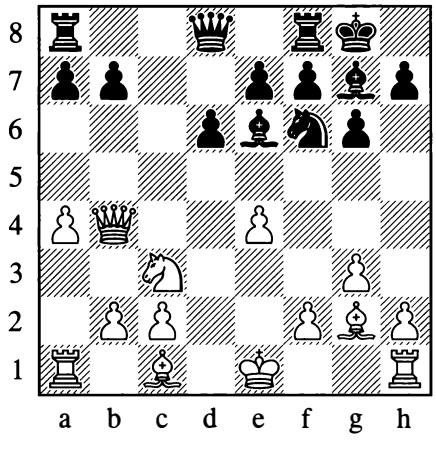
We immediately reach another split: White can play AI) I0.Wb4 or **A2)** I0.aS.

AI) I0.Wb4

W ite attempts to slow our development by putting pressure on b7.

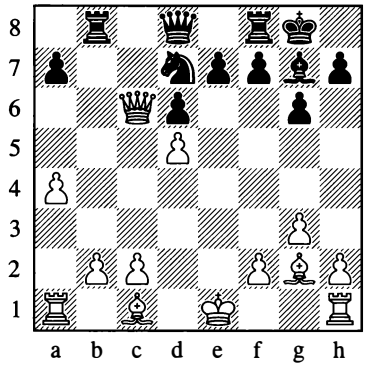
I0... i e6!?

T is still looks playable to me.



11.e5N

11.Wxb7 t d7 12. t d5?! (12.0-0 is better but Black still has good compensation for the pawn afer 12...a5) 12.. J b8 13.Wc6 . xd5 White was already in trouble, but afer 14.exd5? Black could have ended matters immediately in Zawadzki - lzoria, Litohoto 1999:



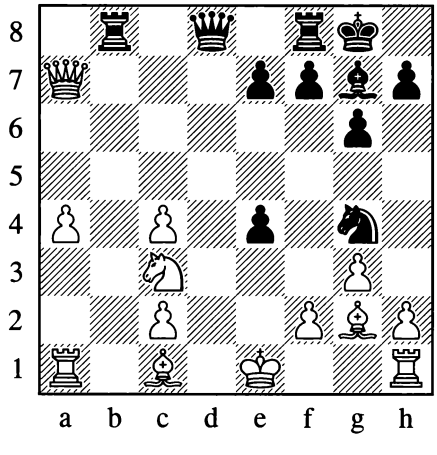
14... t c5!N T ere is no escape route for the white queen.

11... d e5 12. \ xb7 : b8

12...e4 13.0-0 Wc8 also gives Black decent play.

13. \ xa7 i c4!? 14.b3 e4 15.bxc4 t g4C1

A messy position. Apart from hitting the knight, Black also threatens ... . d4xf2 t, so the following sequence is advisable for White:

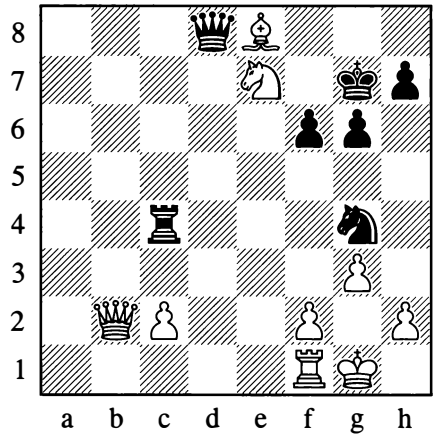


16. t d5 . xal 17.0-0 : a8

T e game could potentially burn out with:

18. t xe7t ' g7 19. \ b7 : xa4 20. . xe4 : e8 21. i b2t i xb2 22. \ xb2t f 23. i c6 : xc4 24. h e8

24.Wb3 t e7=



24...♕xe7

White has a problem with his bishop, but it should still be a draw.

25. \ b8

25. . b5? : b4 26.Wa3 t xf2!=

25... : xc2 26. i a4=

T at line was hardly forced, but it served as an interesting sample line all the same.

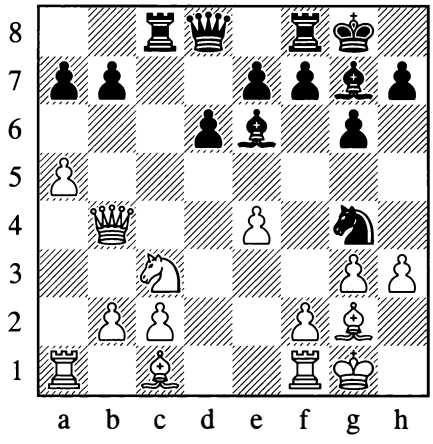
A2) 10.a5 i e6 11. \ b4 : c8! 12.0-0

12.Wxb7 : c7 13.Wb4 . c4+ White's king is stuck in the centre, granting Black more than enough compensation for the pawn.

12... t g4 13.h3

13.Wxb7 : c7 14.Wb4 Wd7+ is similar to the main line.

So far this is Zlatanovic - Radosavljevic, Pozarevac 2009. Now I like the following sequence:

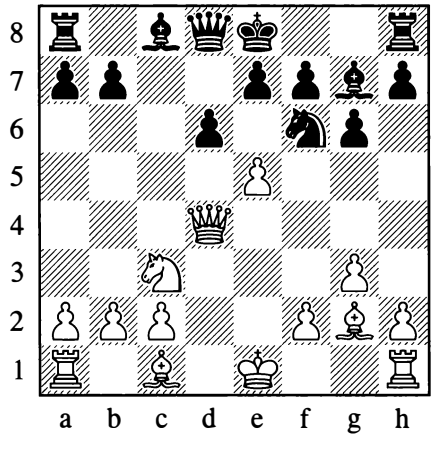


13... c e5N 14. ' xh7 c7 15. ' h4 ' d7 16. h2 c4 17. ' a3 c5i

White fnds himself in some di f culty. His primary problem is holding on to the b2- and c2-pawns. Black has well-coordinated pieces, a signifcant lead in development and an easy plan of putting pressure on White's queenside.

B) 9.e5

T is has been played a couple of times by Vladimir Onischuk recently. Of course we should check this as it must be the most critical.



9... c g4

This square seems the most logical to me.

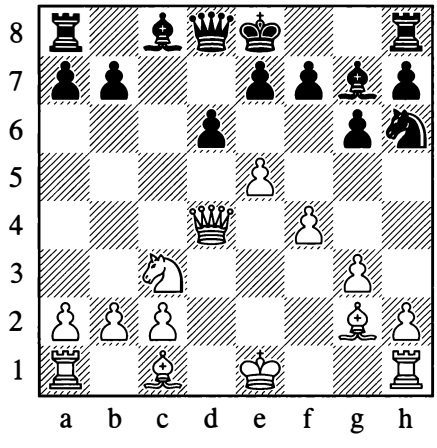
10.f4

10.Wa4 t?! . d7 I 11.Wb3 t xe5 12.Wxb7 Eb8 13.Wxa7 t c6 14.We3 t d4' Black must be much better. True, White is a pawn up, but Black dominates the centre and W ite will struggle to defend his pawns and develop his queenside.

10... c h6

Dropping the knight back immediately prevents it being locked out of the game.

10...0-0 l 1.h3 t h6 12.g4 might be okay, but the knight looks rather awkward.



11. . d2!?

White intends to castle long. T is had seldom been played before this year, but there have now been a few high-rated engine battles so maybe we can say this is cutting-edge theory.

11.h3 t f5 is obviously not working.

After 11.0-0 0-0 White is in danger of being overextended. (Chris Ward gives 11... t f5 12.W f dxe5 13.Ed1. I believe Black's position is playable, but White has quite dangerous compensation for the pawn.) T e reason behind delaying ... t hf5 can be seen after 12.Ed1 . g4!.

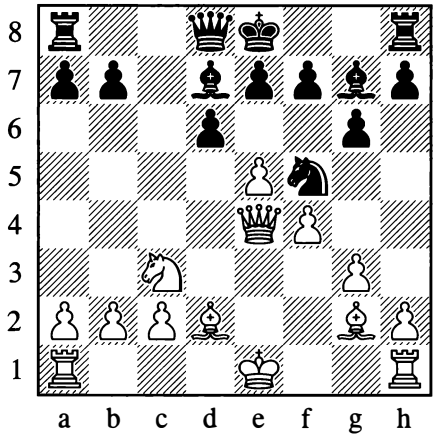
Now B1) 11... l is a quieter continuation, but I will also present some of the fascinating computer-assisted lines that arise afer B2) 11...0-0.

B1) 11... l f

T is is probably the safer option - for both sides.

12. ' e4 . d7!?

12...dxe5N should also be considered. I imagine White's idea might be to play 13.0-0-0!?.



13. ' xb7 gb8 14. ' xa7 gxb2 15.0-0-0!

A move that would be difcult for any human to play, but computers have no fear!

15... ' b8 16. ' xb8t gxb8

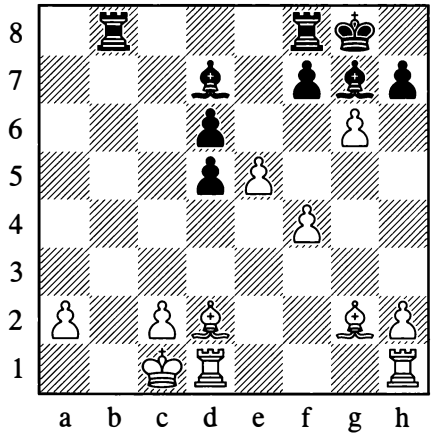
Black still has strong pressure despite the queen exchange.

17. l d5 0-0 18.g4 e6 19. 9

19. c f6t was tried in the other game to reach this position. 19... xf6 20.exf6 c h4 21.ghgl gfc8 22. el a4 23.gd2 c xg2 24.ggxg2 c6 White still has his extra pawn but he's unlikely to be able to exploit it. His structure isn't great, Black still has decent queenside pressure, and if the rooks get exchanged we have a drawn opposite-coloured-bishop ending. In Yucateco - Jin38, engine game 2015, Black had no problem holding the draw.

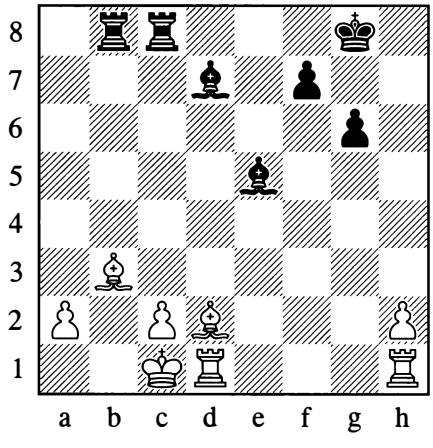
19...exd5 20. f g6

20.f6 can be met with 20...gfc8! 21. f g7? f5+.



20...**hxg6** 21. h d5 gfc8 22. . b3 dxe5 23. f e5 . xe5

Again White has managed to retain his extra pawn, but Black still has strong pressure.



24. . e3 . f 25.gd5 gxb3! 26. a b3 gxc2t 27. ' dl g a 28.gxe5 . g4t 29. d gaIt 30. d2 gxbl=

T ey were left in a drawn endgame in JPN - Jin38, engine game 2015.

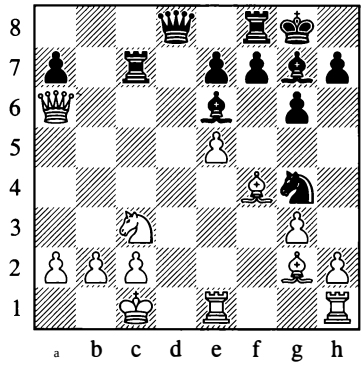
B2) 11...0-0 12.0-0-0 i g4
13. : de1 i e6 14. , bb7!?

T e latest word. To a human this looks suicidal, but if an engine can't see mate it will take the material on o fer. T e alternatives don't put any pressure on Black.

14.a3 Here I'd centralize the knight. 14... l fSN (14...dxeS, happily exchanging queens, has been Black's choice in a couple of games. lS. ' xdB E f dB 16. f eS Ed7 17. i f4=) IS. ' f2 dxe5 16. f e5 l d4t Black has good attacking chances.

14. ' b4 EcB 15. ' xb7 Ec7 16. ' a6 dxe5 17. f e5 l g4 1B. i f4

Here I would be itching to play:



1B...Exc3!?N

1B...Ec5 19. ' xa7 ' cB 20. ' b6 l xe5 21. i xe5 i xe5 22. i b7 ' c7 23. ' xc7 i xc7 Black had enough compensation for the pawn in Hannibal 1.4b - Houdini 4, engine game 2014.

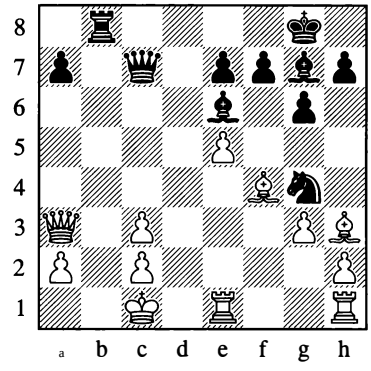
19.bxc3 ' c7 20. ' a3 EbB

Black is currently the exchange and a pawn down, but the e5-pawn looks likely to drop and Black has an extremely powerful initiative. I think a carbon-based life-form would struggle to defend.

21. i h3!

T is seems to be forced.

21.h4 a5! T e point is to prevent White from challenging on the b-fle. 22.h5 ' b6-+

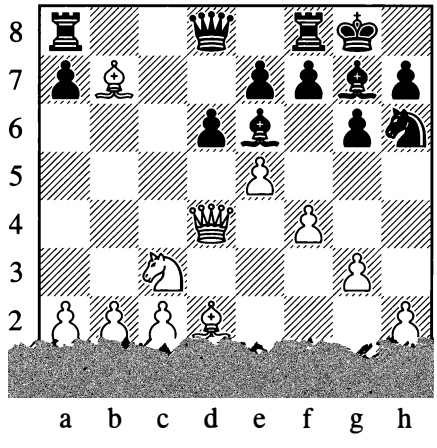


21... ' b7

21...Eb7!?

22. ' b4 ' cB

Black will have at least a repetition and can play for more.



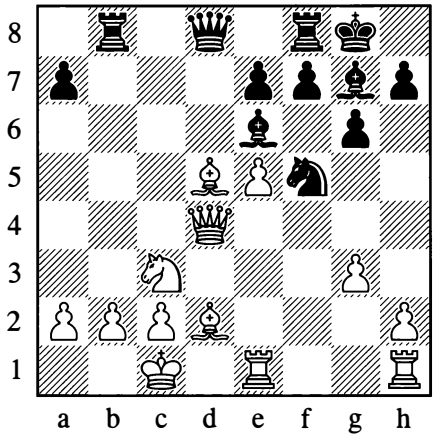
14... : b8 15. i d5 d e5 16. f e5

I analysed this position for quite a long time. Black has many plausible-looking continuations and I've o fered a couple of interesting lines: B21) 16... l 5 N and B22) 16... a5N.

16...Eb6 was the choice in Stockfsh 6 - Chiron 2, engine game 2015, but feels a bit unnatural to me.

B21) 16... t f N

Bringing the knight back into the game with gain of tempo is logical.



17. d3

17. i e4 i b6 IS.b3

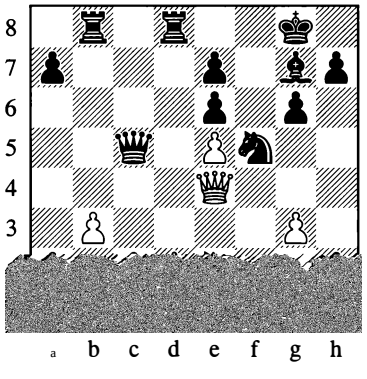
IS. b3 t d4 looks like excellent compensation.

IS...EfdS 19.Edl i c5 20. xe6 f e6=

Black's structure looks ugly, but the e5-pawn is dropping and he will have a strong initiative. T e engine reckons that to stay equal White has to fnd:

21. t e2

21.EheI?! fails to 21...Exd2!.



21... xe5

Black has lots of options.

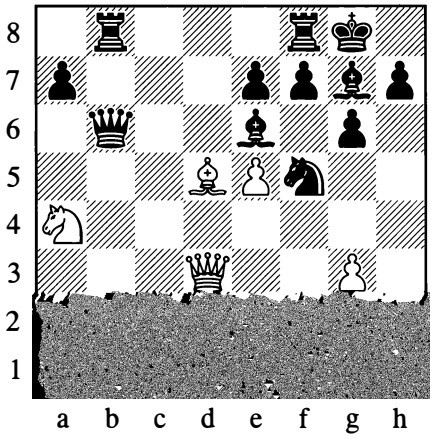
21... t d6!? is also interesting. Of course the knight is poisoned: 22.exd6 i a3t 23.@b1 i b2#

22.@b1 Exd2!? 23.Exd2 t d6 24. i g4 t c4

Black has the easier position.

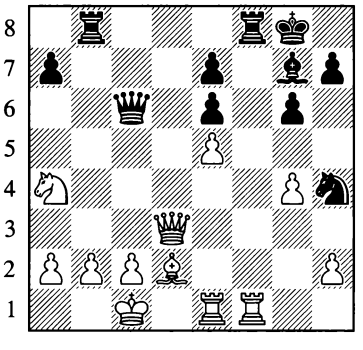
17... b6 18. t a4

IS.b3?! EfdS+ T e pin is extremely awkward.



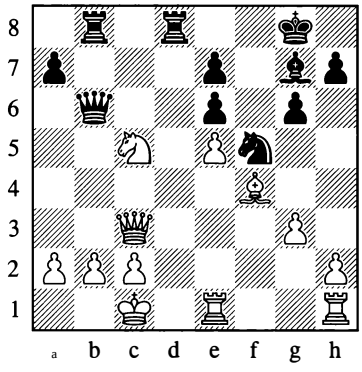
18... c7 19. i e6 f e6

An interesting position: White is a pawn up and has the better structure, but Black's pieces are active and he can generate dangerous attacking cs كد c



22. e4 xe4 23.lxfSt lxfS 24.lxe4 lflt 25.le1 lf2= Black's play on the kingside will come quicky.

2o. i f4 White supports his e5-pawn, but now his queen and knight will get hit around. 20...lfdS 21. c3 b7 22. t c5 b6

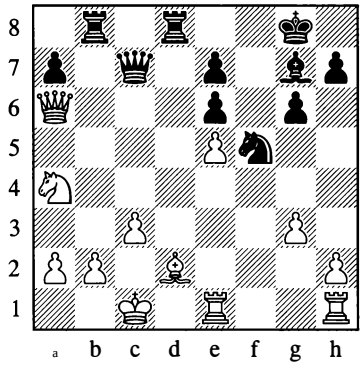


23.a3!? Preparing to support the knight on c5. (23. t b3 lbcS 24. a5 c6 25.c3 ld5 26. a3 ixe5!? 27. ixe5 lxe5=) 23...a5 24.ldl ldcS 25.b4 axb4 26.axb4 xb4 27. xb4 lxb4 2S. t xe6 lbc4 29.ld2 h6 30.h4 lSc6= Black has ongoing pressure and is certainly not worse.

20.c3 lfdS 21. a6

T e only square for the white queen.

21. c2? lxd2! 22. xd2 i h6-+



21...ld4!

Black has dangerous threats.

22.lhfl

22. xe6t? hS 23. a6 lbb4 24.b3 lxa4! 25.bxa4 i h6!-+

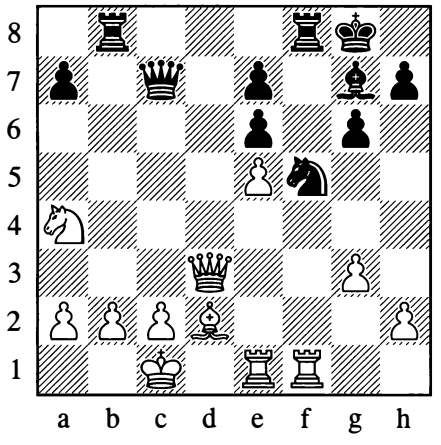
22.b3 lbdS 23. i f4 lxa4 24. xa4 xc3t 25. bl g5 26. i xg5 i xe5 27.lxe5 xe5=

22.lhgl hS!? is unclear.

22...lbb4 23. xe6t ' hS 24.lxf5 gxf5 25.b3 le4 26.c4 lexc4t 27.bxc4 lxa4 2S. xf5 xc4t

2S...lxc4t!?

29. c2 xc2t 30. xc2 lxa2t=



20..J bc8!?

20...lfdS 21. c3 d7 22. t c5 d5 23. t b3 a5 24. xa5 lb5 25. c3 i xe5 26. d3 xd3 27.cxd3 lxd3 Black has regained material parity but is probably a touch worse due to his inferior structure - though I don't think it should be the end of the world.

21.c3 a5 22. e4 Efd8 23.b3

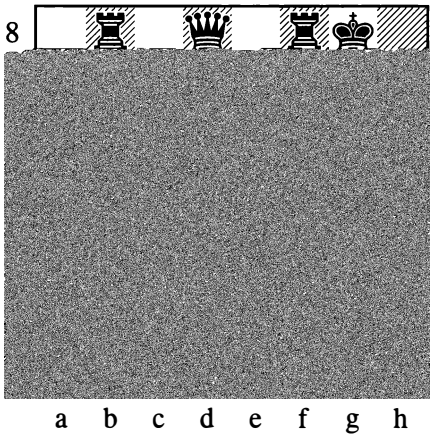
23.g4 t d4 24.b3 t b5 - W ite has to watch out for sacrifces on both d2 and c3.

23..J d5

T e e5-pawn is dropping. T e position is highly complex, but I certainly don't think Black's practical chances are worse with White's queenside so loose.

B22) 16...a5N

Taking control of the b4-square and grabbing some space on the queenside.

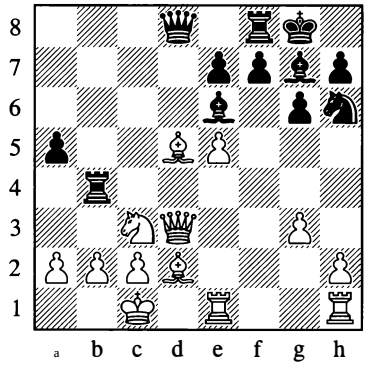


17. . f4

I concentrated on this approach as this is how Stoc k sh played the stem game.

17. <b1 t f5 1B.Wd3 Wc7 19. xe6 f e6 T is feels like a better version of variation B21. White can try to block up the queenside with 20. t b5 Wb7 21.c4, but Black will at least regain the pawn: 21...EfdB 22.Wc2 t d4 23. t xd4 Exd4 24. c3 Exc4=

17.We4 Eb4 (17...Wd7!? would ask White how he plans to continue) 1B.Wd3 (1B.Wg2 Wd7 19.h3 t f5)



1B... t g4 (1B...Wb6 19. xe6 Wxe6 20. t d5 Eb7 also gives Black reasonable compensation) 19. xe6 Wxd3 20.cxd3 f e6 Black regains the pawn with an equal position, as 21. f4?! t f2! wins the exchange.

17.a3 T is could be W ite's automatic reaction, but the inclusion of the a-pawn moves favours Black: 17...EcB 1B.We4 f5 19.Wg2 b6 Black has strong counterplay.

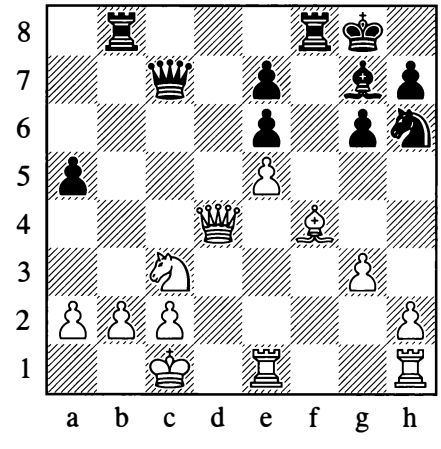
17... " c7 18. , xe6

1B.Ed1 EfdB 19.Ehe1 Eb4 20.Wd2 t f5 Black has strong pressure for the pawn.

1B. b3 Eb4 19.Wf2 EfbB also looks dangerous.

18... f e6

Again we have this odd structure. It may look ugly, but Black's e6-pawn does a useful job controlling the d5-square and Black's pieces all have a lot of potential. Watch out for ...g5 ideas in certain positions to activate the g7-bishop. T e game might continue:



19. " d3

19.Ed1 t f =

19...Efd8 20. a6 Edc8 21. xe6t @h8

White may be two pawns up, bur he has to be careful defending his king.

22J e4

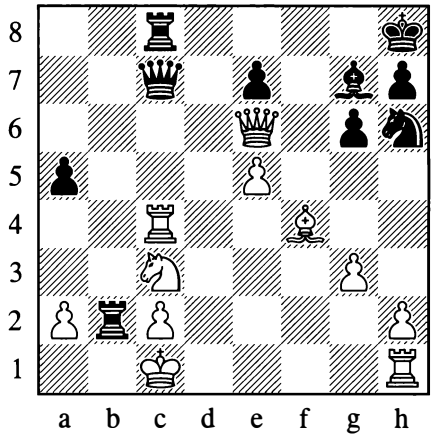
22. d2 a4 23.!hfl l f5 Black has a strong initiative.

22...!xb2

22...a4!? is a good alternative if you wish to continue attacking.

23.!c4

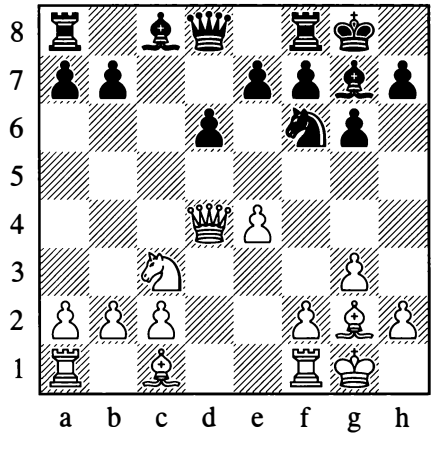
T e point behind White's last, otherwise he would be in a lot of trouble.



23... xc4 24. xc4 Exc4 2S. i xb2 l g4=

Black will regain the e5-pawn with a level ending.

C) 9.0-0 0-0

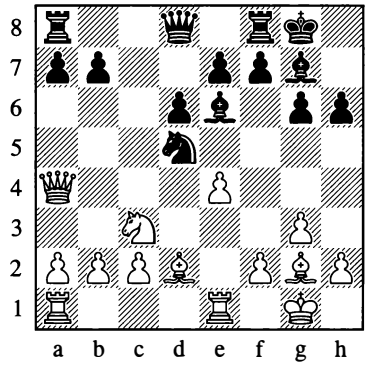


White can prepare to retreat his queen with C1) 10.h3 or immediately move from the line of fre with C2) 10. d .

10. c4 looks a foolish choice of square as the white queen will be hit again, bur it has been the choice of a few strong players. A recent game continued 10... e6 11.l d5 !c8 12. b3 b5 13.c3 l xd5 14.exd5 d7 15.!e1 a5= Fedorov - Artemiev, Voronezh 2014.

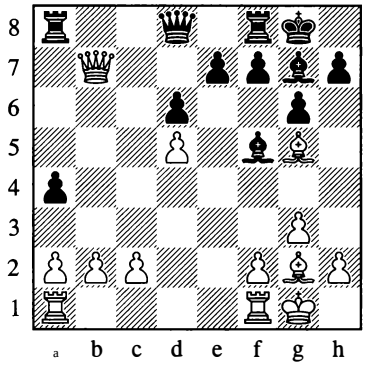
10.a4 is of course similar to 9.a4. 10... e6 11. b4 a5 12. xb7 l d7 is simply a di ferent move order to reach a position given in the note to White's 11th move in variation AI, in which Black has good compensation.

10. g5 h6 White doesn't have a particularly good square for his bishop. 11. d2 e6 12.!fe1 l d5 13. a4 Movsesian - Shirov, Dordrecht 1999, when best is:



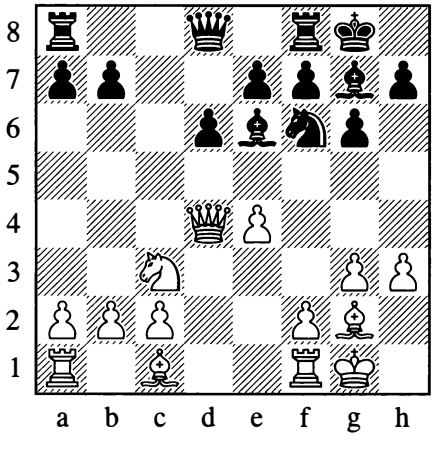
13...l xc3N 14. xc3 xc3 15.bxc3 c7+

10. b4 is quite similar to the lines with a2-a4. It used to be the main move, bur 10...a5! causes White some problems: 11. b3 (I1. b5 l d7! followed by ...b6 still leaves the white queen a job extricating herself) 11... e6 12.l d5 (I2. xb7 l d7+ is actually the same position as one we saw just above via 10.a4, bur with W ite's pawn still on a2) 12...a4 13. xb7 l xd5 14.exd5 f5 15. g5



15...Wb8! 16.Wxb8 : f b8+ Black's queenside pressure proved too much in the elite encounter, Adams - Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 1998.

Cl) I0.h3 e6



White's choice of queen moves comes down to Cl1) 11.Wb4 or C12) 11.Wdl.

Cl1) 11.Wb4 Wc8!

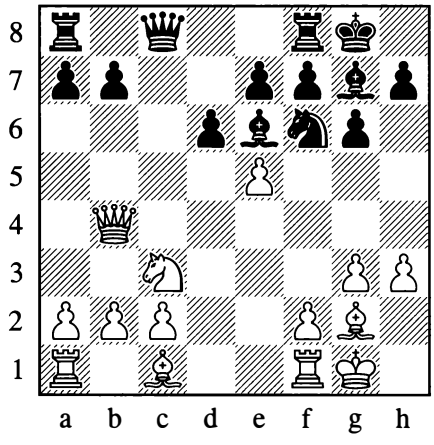
Defending b7 and eyeing the h3-pawn.

12.e5

T is was once played against me.

12. I h2 allowed Boris Gelfand to seize the initiative with: 12...a5! 13.Wa3 b5! W ite had nothing better than 14. l d5 i xd5 15.exd5 Wxc2+ in Svidler - Gelfand, Polanica Zdroj 2000.

12. i g5 was played in Kashtanov - Bocharov, Dos Hermanas 2004. Black has lots of tempting moves, but the simplest would be: 12...h6N 13. i e3 (13. i xf6 i xf6+ is obviously lousy for White) 13...a5 Black wins the h3-pawn for free as 14.Wb6 l d7 15.Wb5 i c4 wins the exchange.

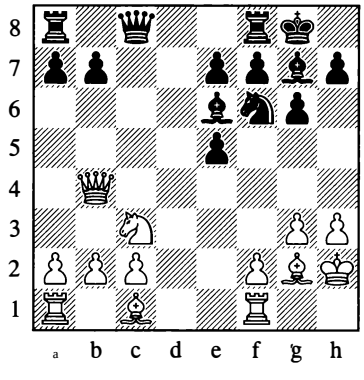


12... d e5 13.Wxe7

13. i xb7?! Wb8! and the pin nets Black material.

13.Wxb7?! drops a pawn afer 13...Wxb7 14. i xb7 i xh3+.

13.@h2 I considered that this was probably W ite's best, simply ignoring the pawns. On ChessPublishing I gave the following line:

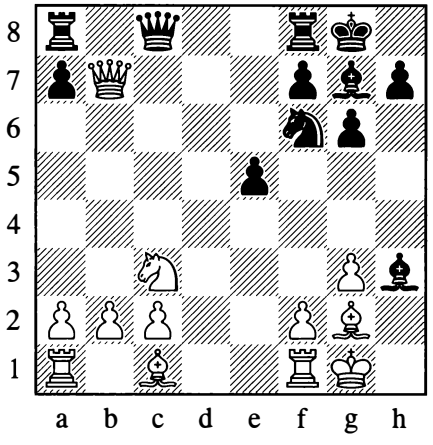


13... : d8! 14.Wxb7 Wxb7 15. i xb7 : ab8 16. i c6 i f5 17. i a4 l e4 T e pressure on

White's position means it's di f cult for him to develop his queenside.

13... h 3 14JWxb7

T is was Heidenfeld - Jones, Bunratty 2011, when simplest would have been:

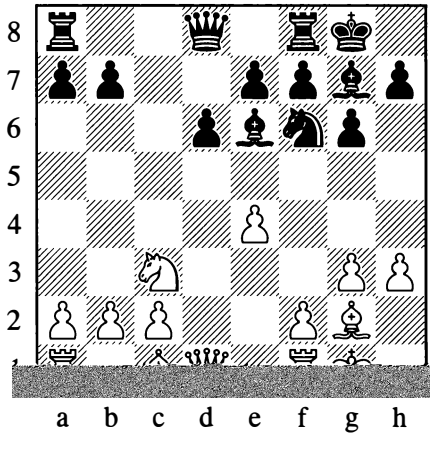


14...Wxb7N lS. . b7 ab8 16. g2 f !;

Black is winning the c-pawn.

C12) 11.Wd1

T is was the point of h2-h3, as now the queen won't get hit by ... g4.



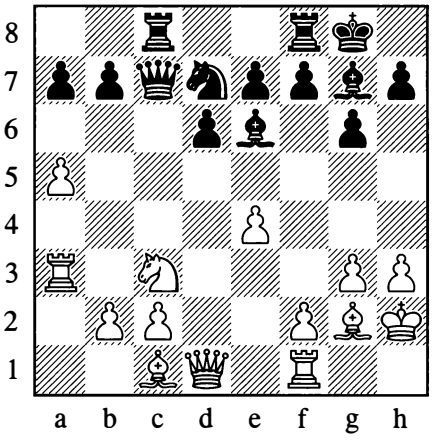
11...Wc8 12.@h2 Wc4 13.a4

13. l d5 l xe4 14. l xe7t \ h8 leaves the white knight caught behind enemy lines.

13... ac8 14.aS l d7 lS. a Wc7!?

Preparing Black's next.

T e straightforward 15... fd8N was also possible. 16.f4 ' c5 Once White has pushed his f-pawn it's not so easy for him to kick the queen away from the c5-square, as e3 is no longer so easy to achieve.

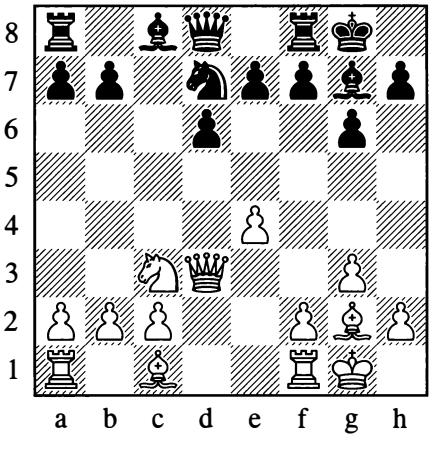


16.£4 . c3!? 17. xc3 WxaS

Peter proved White didn't have enough for the pawn in Makarichev - Svidler, Elista 1995.

C2) lo.Wd3 l d7

10... e6 is played more often, but I like the knight move and Black has scored highly. We're trying to claim that the queen has still not found a safe spot.

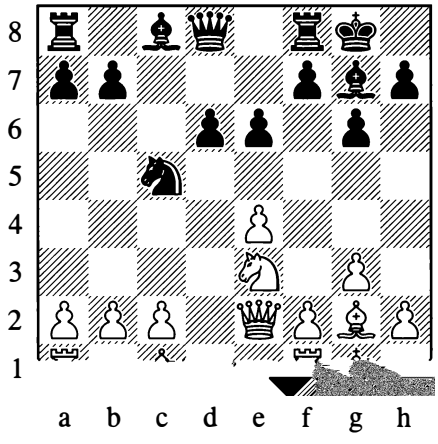


11. l d5

11. i e3 l e5 12 . e2 i g4! Forcing a weakness in White's kingside. 13. f3 i d7N is comfortable for Black. With the pawn on f3 it's not so straightforward for White to come up with a good plan. He doesn't have enough time to get in c2-c4, while 14. a4 l c8' followed by ... l c4 is unpleasant.

11... l c5 12. e2 e6 13. l e3

13. l b4 b6 14. c4 i b7 was similar in Mihalincic – A. Saric, Zagreb 2014.

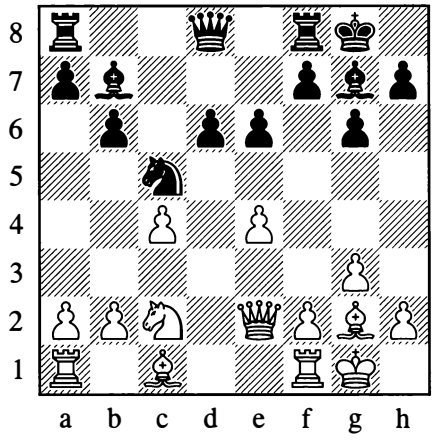


13...b6 14. c4 . b7

We have reached a typical Hedgehog-style position, but one in which Black has good coordination while White's pieces are still clumsy.

15. l c2

Stefanek - Blehm, Krynica 1998. Here I suggest:



15... d7!N

With the following idea:

16. l dl f !i

Black has taken over the initiative.

Conclusion

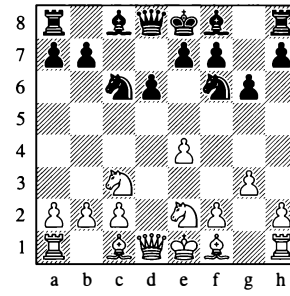
With the Fianchetto Variation, White tries to sidestep the sharp tactical lines of the Dragon. His plan is for a positional game, where he can slowly create a bind and prevent the usual Dragon break of ...d5. With the lines I've suggested he doesn't get of so easily, and has to solve real problems right from the start of the game.

T e sharp 9. e5 featured in variation B is an exception to White's usual positional approach. However, I believe my analysis should allow you to meet this critical line with confdence.

Alowing the knight exchange on d4 leads nothing for White, so he usually plays 7. l de2 - as covered in the following chapter.

Chapter 16

Fianchetto Variation



7.♘de2

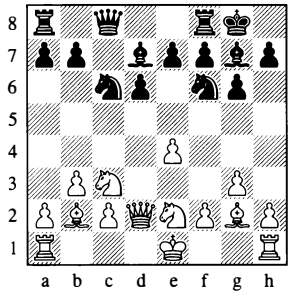
Variation Index

l.e4 cS 2. t f d6 3.d4 c d4 4. t xd4 t f 5. t c3 **g6** 6.g3 t e6 7. t de2

7... d7!? 8. g2 e8

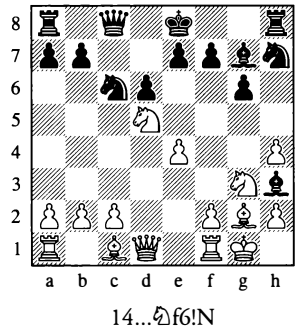
A) 9.b3 244
B) 9. t f4 245
C) 9. t d5 245
D) 9.0-0 246
E) 9.h3 g7 248
E l) 10. e3 248
E2) 10. t f4 249
E3) 10.a4 250
E4) 10.b3 252
E41) 10...h5!? 252
E42) 10...0-0 11. b2 gb8!? 254
E421) 12.gb1 254
E422) 12. d2 b5 13.0-0-0 a6 14.@b1 g fe8 256
E4221) 15.f4 256
E4222) 15.g4 258

A) after 11.♕d2



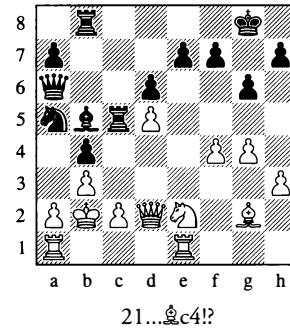
11...b5!N

D) after 14.♘g3



14...♘f6!N

E4222) after 21.♖a1!



21...♗c4!?

1.e4 cS 2 f d6 3.d4 c d4 4. t xd4 . f S. t c3 g 6.g3 t c6 7. . de2 d7!?

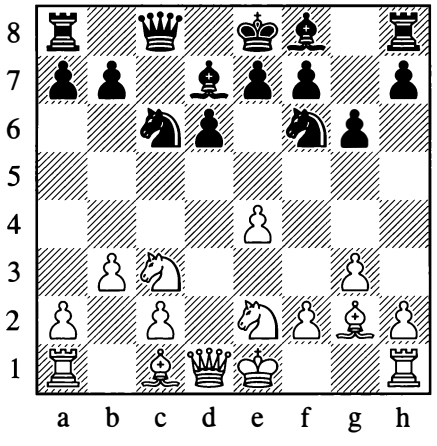
W en White chooses the Fianchetto Variation he is hoping to avoid the complexities of a typical Dragon battle and simply develop his pieces. We're not going to let him have such an easy life! Our plan is ...Wc8, ... h3 and perhaps ...h5-h4. Surprisingly, this caveman approach isn't so easy to defend against.

8. g2 Wc8

White has a wide range of moves at this point: A) 9.b3, B) 9. . f4, C) 9. . dS, D) 9.0-0 and E) 9.h3.

A) 9.b3

One of White's main options is to fanchetto his queenside bishop. We should simply complete our development and ask where White is intending to put his king.



9... g7 10. b2 0-0

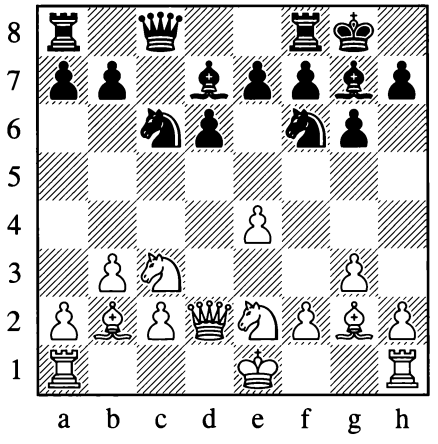
Instead 10... . h3 11. . xh3 Wxh3 12. t f4 doesn't really get Black anywhere yet, although he could consider the strange-looking 12...Wh6!? as 13.0-0 allows 13... t xe4. However, matters still aren't completely clear following 14. t xe4 . xb2 15. t xd6t!.

If you feel inspired by the piece sacrifce o fered later in this chapter then 10...h5 would be the correct move order - transposing to variation E41 after 11.h3.

11.Wd2

White's idea is to castle long and play more aggressively. However, Black's attack looks faster.

White has normally opted for 11.h3 transposing to variation E42.



11...b5!N 12.0–0–0

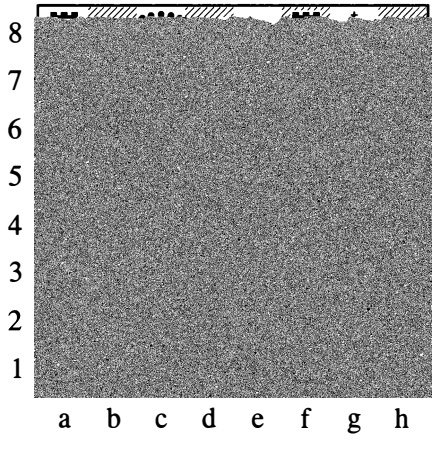
12.♘xb5?! ♘xe4!

12...aS 13. . dS a4

T e position already looks dangerous for White.

14. . b6

White can try grabbing the exchange, but Black will be left with great compensation.



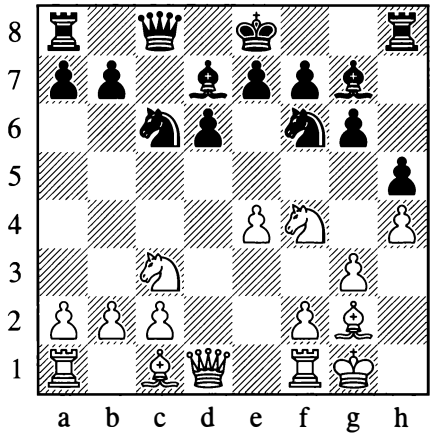
14... a6 15. l xa8 xa8

Black's attack is in free-Row while White's is yet to start.

B) 9. l f4 . g7 10.0-0 h5 11.h4

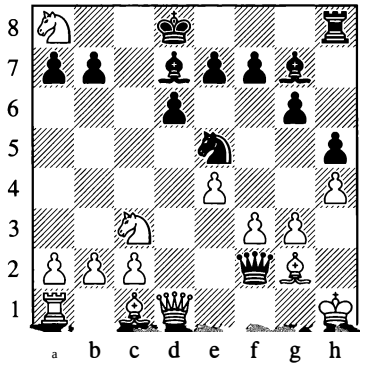
11.h3 transposes to variation E2.

White now doesn't have to worry about his h3-pawn hanging, but on the other hand he has lost control of the g4-square. I would try and exploit that with:



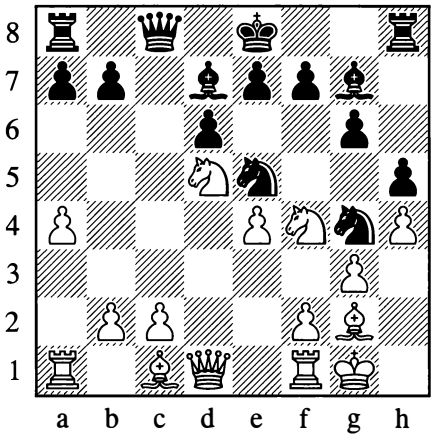
11... l g4 12. l cd5

12. l fdS was Koh - Chua Zheng Yuan, Singapore 2009, when 12... l ceSN is likely to be similar to the main line. In the event of 13.f3?! \ cs t 14. < h1 l f2 t 1S. xf2 \ xf2 16. l c7 t ' dS 17. l xaS White is temporarily a piece ahead but the knight is trapped in the corner:



17... \ xg3 1S. . gS (1S. . e3 l g4! 19. f g4 . eS!-+) 1S... l g4! 19. f g4 . eS 20. < g1 f6 21. . c1 fS!+ Black is left with what is probably a decisive attack.

12... l ce5 13.a4



13...e6N

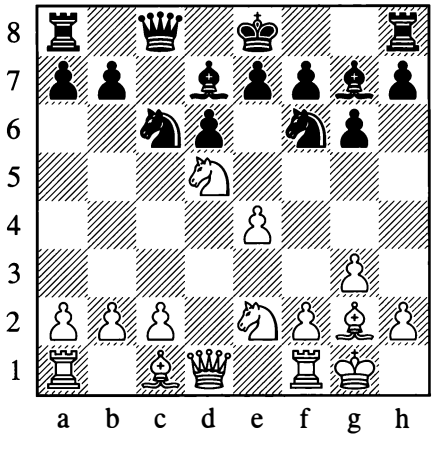
I prefer this to the overly ambitious 13...gS?! of De Jong - R. Burnett, Groningen 1997.

14. l c3 c5i

Black has good control of the position.

C) 9. d5 . g7 10.0-0

Here I suggest we follow our typical attacking plan in this variation:

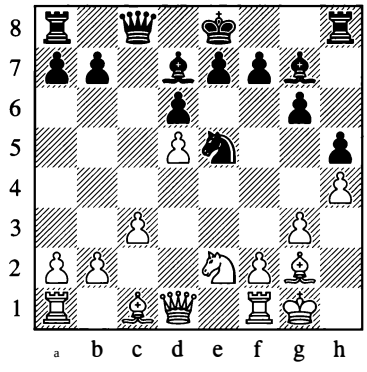


10...hS 11.h3

T is is extremely provocative.

11. g5 transposes to variation D.

11.h4 isn't really a move White wants to play, as now g4 becomes a tender square in his position. 11... l xd5 12.exd5 l e5 13.c3 Sorsa - Korhonen, Naantali 1997, and now best is:



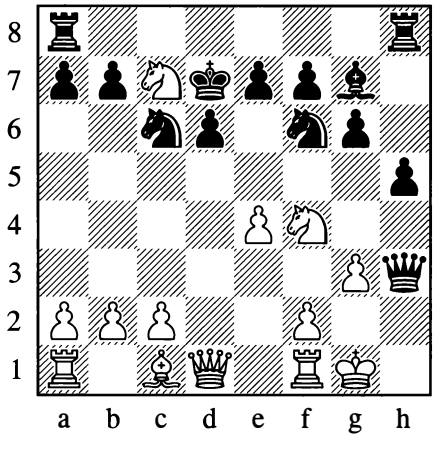
13... g4!N I prefer Black, although White shouldn't be too much worse after 14.Wa4t Wd7 15.Wxd1t xd7.

11... i xh3

I think we should take the bait.

12. i xh3 Wxh3 13. l c7t i d7 14. t f4

T is move is the reason White doesn't lose immediately, as would be the case afer 14. l xa8?? l g4.



14...Wg4 1S. t xaS lhaS

Right now we only have one pawn for the exchange, but White cannot easily hold on to e4.

16.Wd3N

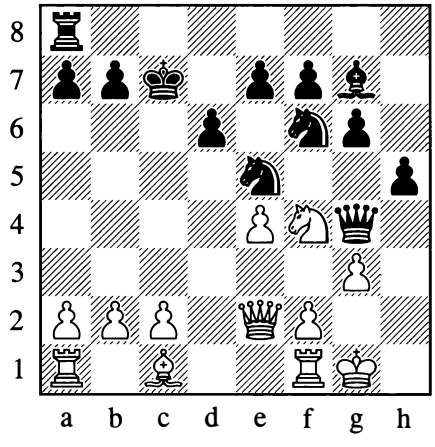
16.Wxg4t hxg4 17. e3 l xe4+ Ermenkov - Velimirovic, Baile Herculane 1978.

16... t eS 17.WbSt i c7

W ite had better trade queens with:

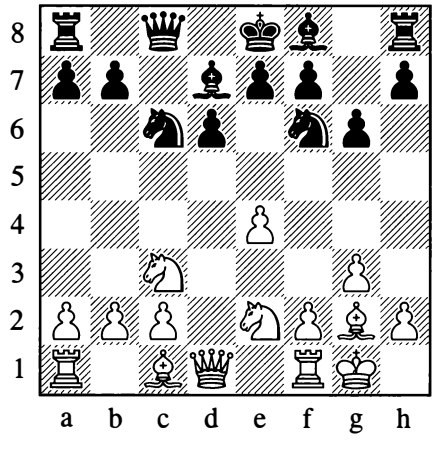
1S.We2

But of course e4 drops here too.



1S...Wxe2 19. t xe2 t xe4;

D) 9.0-0



White normally avoids this move as it looks to play into our hands. I see no reason for us to avoid our usual continuation:

9...h5 10. i g5

10.h4 i g7 11. i g5 0-0 followed by ...EeB and ... l e5 is comfortable for Black. Note that 12. l d5 l xd5 13.exd5 l e5 14. i xe7? doesn't work, as 14...EeB 15. i xd6? (15. i g5 l c4=) 15... l c4 16. i f4 l xb2 17.We1 Wxc2-+ wins material.

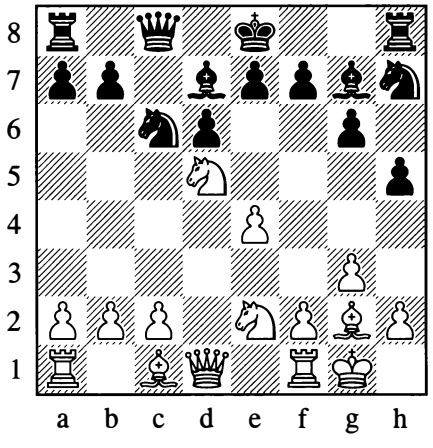
10... i g7 11. t d5 t h7!

Shifting the bishop away.

12. i cl

A sad move to have to play.

12. i e3 would give Black a pleasant choice between grabbing the pawn and continuing the attack with 12...h4.

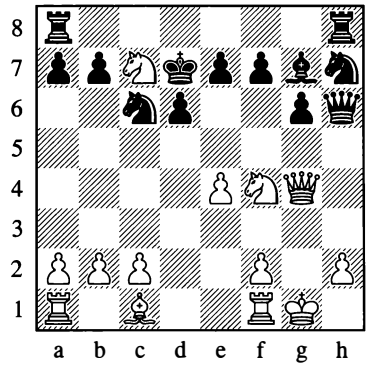


12...h4 13. g h4

13.c3 is probably better, but afer 13...hxg3 White is obliged to play the ugly 14. f g3 (14.hxg3 l f6 followed by ... i h3 is far too strong).

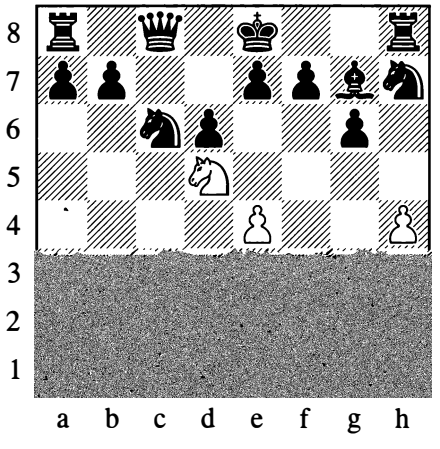
13... i h3 14. t g3

Grabbing the exchange looks like a death wish. On ChessPublishing I gave the line 14. i xh3 Wxh3 15. l c7t 'td7 16. l f4 Wxh4 17. l g2 Wh3 1B. l f4 Wh6+ as extremely dangerous for White. T e critical line runs: 19.Wg4t 0 9. l xaB l f6 20.h3 g5 and Black crashes through)



19...f5! 20.Wg3 (20.Wxg6 Wxg6t 21. l xg6 'txc7+ or 20.exf5 l g5!+) 2o... l g5 21. l xaB i e5 Black's attack has reached decisive proportions.

Our main line was seen in Kofdis - Atalik, Ilioupolis 1995, when I still like:



14... t f !N 15. i g5 t xd5 16.exd5 t e5;

Black stands well: White's king is vulnerable, he has a bad structure and we can gain back our pawn with ...f6 whenever we wish.

E) 9.h3

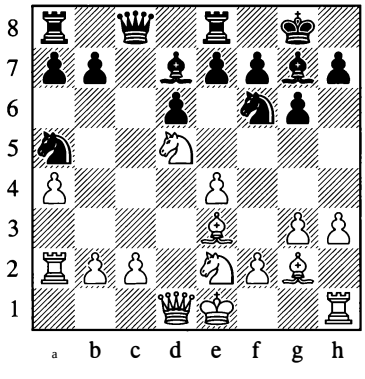
White normally decides that he doesn't want to allow our bishop into h3, but now he has some problems castling kingside.

9... . g7

9...h5!? If you are attracted to the positions after 10...h5!? you could also try it here. Most White players have gone 10.b3 when 10... g7 transposes to variation E41.

White has tried a variety of moves at this point, and our focus will be on E1) 10. . e3, E2) 10. l f4, E3) 10.a4 and E4) 10.h3.

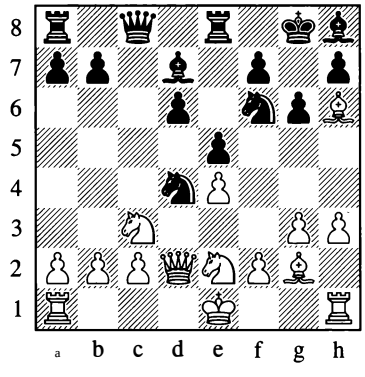
White can jump straight in with 10. l d5, but it's risky as he hasn't played the preparatory moves to deal with the pressure on the long diagonal. A early game continued: 10...0-0 I1.a4 e8 12. e3 l a5! 13. a2 (White is a tempo too slow as 13.b3? drops the exchange: 13... l xd5 14.exd5 xa1)



13... l c4 14. c1 l xd5 15.exd5 e5 16.dxe6 xe6 17.b3 l e5' Black had a pleasant initiative in Kagan - Speelman, Skara 1980.

10.g4 White covers the h3-pawn but still isn't really threatening to castle short. One of the earliest games in the line continued: 10... b8 I1.g5?! I dislike this committal move as White cedes squares and leaves the h3-pawn vulnerable. 11... l h5 12. l d5 f5! 13. f3?! f e4 14. xh5 gxh5+ 15. l g3? l d4!-+ 16. l f6t xf6 17. ' xh5t ' d8 18.gxf6 ' c4 19. f e7t c8 20. bl l xc2t 21. ' dl l d4 22. ' d2 ' d3t 23. e1 l c2# Mestel - Speelman, Hastings 1978.

10. g5 was played against me the frst time I reached this position. 10...0-0 11.♕c1?! White tries copycat tactics, but this move has little logic here - White is hardly able to generate a kingside initiative. It isn't easy for White to make progress without castling kingside, and Black's simple plan is to grab space on the queenside with ...b5: 11... e8 12. h6 h8 13. l f4 l d4 14. ' d2 e5 15. l fe2



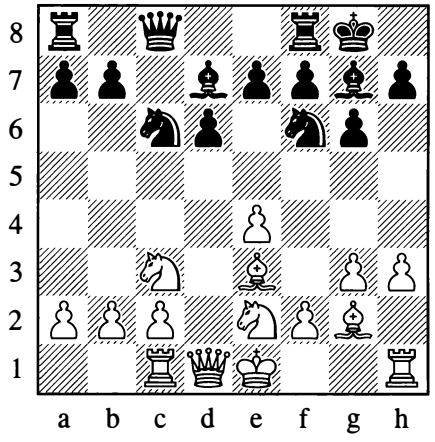
15...b5! 16.♖c1 b4 17.♘d5 ♘xd5 18.exd5 Berzinsh - Jones, Sunningdale 2007. Here the simplest would be 18... l xe2N 19. ' xe2 e4+ winning a pawn, as 20. bI?! still allows 20... xb2!.

E1) 10. . e3 0-0 l1. c1

I I.a4 transposes to the note to White's 11th move in variation E3.

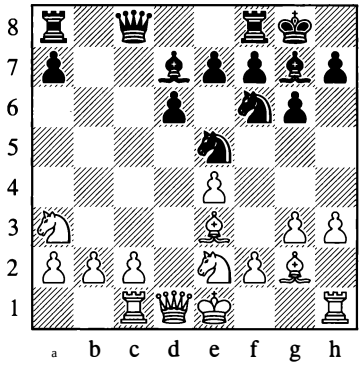
11. ' d2 b5! is promising for Black, and can be compared with the main line.

White is trying for a Maroczy bind set-up with b2-b3, l d5 and c2-c4, but we can cut across that:



11...h5! 12.h3

1 2 b5?!N isn't advisable: 12... ' e5 13. ' a3 (13. ' bc3 ' c4 14.b3 ' xe3 15. f e3 c5+ White's position looks extremely ugly)



13... c6! 14. f (14. ' c3 ' b7+ White cannot defend both the e4- and b2-pawns.) 14...d5!+ Black has great play for the pawn.

T is position has been reached a couple of times. In both games Black played 12...Eb8 followed by ...a5, but that weakened the b6-square and so Black was vulnerable to ' d5-b6. Instead, I quite like rerouting the knight again:

12... l h4N 13. a

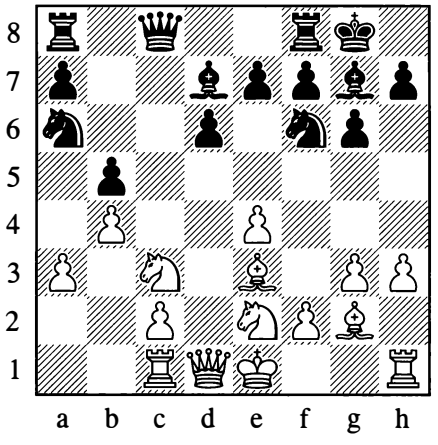
13. ' d2 Ee8 14.a3 ' a6 is similar.

13...♘a6

Here Black has a few di ferent plans. Out main idea is to play ...b4 to get our knight back to b4, which is rather awkward for White to deal with.

14.h4

White stops our idea, but now we have:

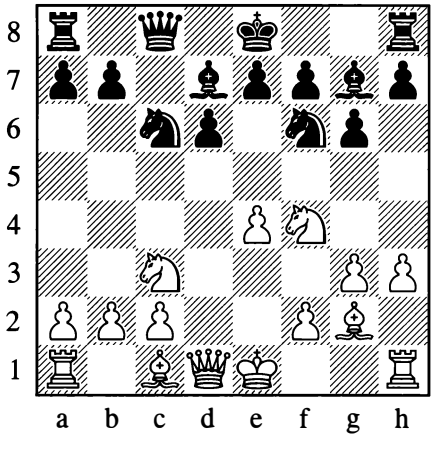


14... l c7

We can play ...a5 and target the b4-pawn, and we also have ideas of preparing ...d5. Meanwhile, White still has to make some concession in order to castle.

E2) lo. l f4

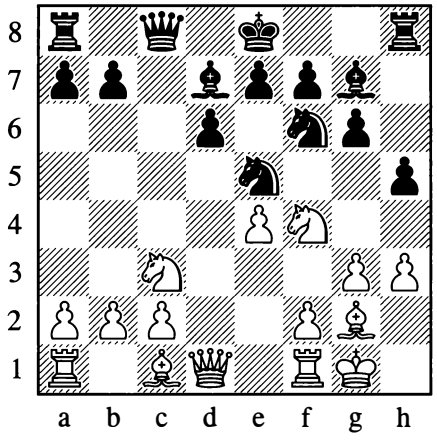
T is is quite logical. White is defending the h3-pawn in order to try and castle, and also has ideas of planting a k ight on d5.



10...h5 11. 0

A high-rated encounter continued: 11. i e3 l e5 (11... l a5!N as suggested by Simon Williams would be more ambitious, when Black is defnitely for preference) 12. i d4 l c6 13. i e3 l e5 14. i d4 l c6 15. i e3 T is was agreed drawn in Vallejo Pons - Anand, Benidorm (rapid) 2003.

11... l e5

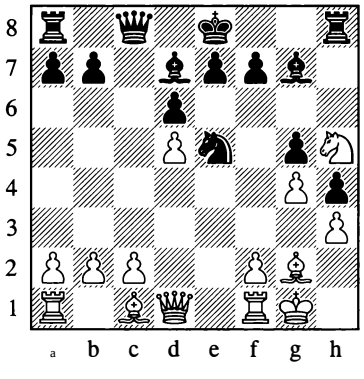


12. l cd5

12. l e2 h4!? (12...0-0 with a roughly equal game is also possible of course) 13.g4 l f g4!? 14.hxg4 i xg4 15.f3 i d7 looks quite scary. T e position has similarities to variation E41.

12... l xd5 13.exd5 ' f

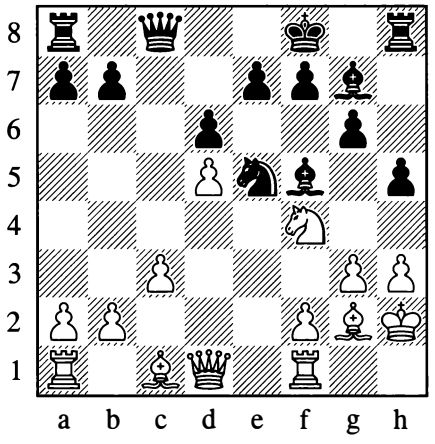
It was also possible to go for White's throat straight away with: 13...h4N 14.g4 g5 15. l h5 (15. l d3 f5!+)



15...Exh5!? (15... i h6 followed by ...f5 is also dangerous for White) 16.gxh5 i xh3 Black has a strong attack.

14. ' h2 i f 15.c3

Andrey Ivanov - Kislinsky, Rodatychi 2006. Here we can reply calmly:

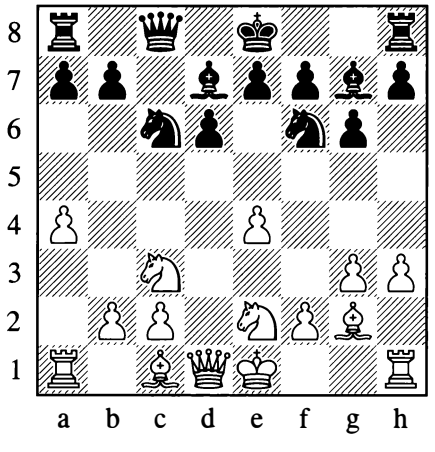


15... i f N

Black has a pleasant position: he hasn't ruled out the caveman attack with ...h4 and ...g5, but he could also play more slowly and complete his development with ... <g7. Black's minor pieces coordinate much more harmoniously than White's.

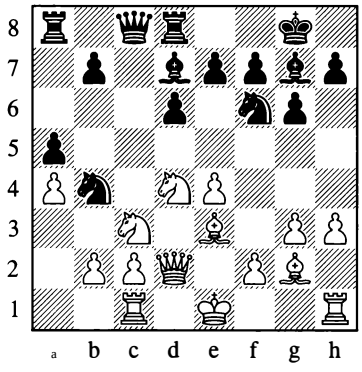
E3) 10.a4

T e choice of one of the world's top ten in a recent game.



10...0-0 11. . gS

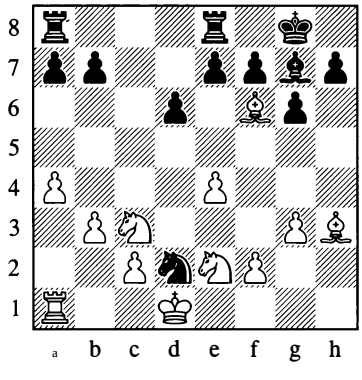
11. i e3 is White's usual choice. 11... : dS 12. 1 d2 4 b4 13. : c1 a5 14. 4 d4 Short - Mestel, Hastings 19S2. Here I like rerouting the knight:



14... 4 a6N 15.b3 (l5.g4 i c6 16.0-0 4 c5= also looks totally f ne for Black. White can cripple our structure with 17. 4 xc6 bxc6 l s. i xc5 dxc5 but he's likely to run into trouble on the dark squares. Meanwhile, the b2-pawn has suddenly become vulnerable.) 15... 4 c5 White will still be forced to play 16.g4 should he ever wish to castle. Black can play in analogy with the above note to 15.g4 with 16... i c6=.

11... : e8 12. \ d2 l eS 13.b3 : b8

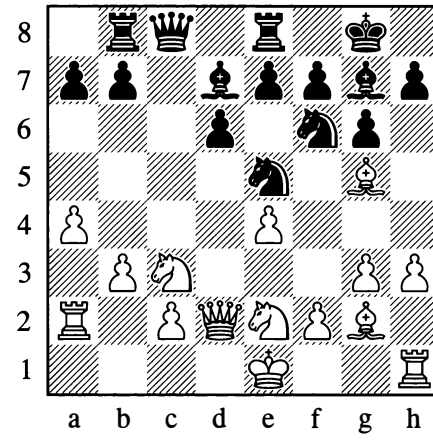
13... i xh3!?N is the engine's choice, but Hou Yifan was evidently not convinced that 14. : xh3 1 xh3 15. i xh3 4 f t 16. ' d1 4 xd2 17. i xf6! (17. i xd2?! 4 xe4!') would favour her. Black can get rook and two pawns for the two pieces with:



17... 4 xe4 (l7... 4 xb3?! l s. i xg7! 4 xal 19. i d4t and the knight on a1 will drop) lS. 4 xe4 exf6 19. 4 4c3° In my experience I fnd engines tend to overvalue the rook against two minor pieces. Here it tells me it's equal, but I think only W ite has winning chances and so it was a good decision to avoid these complications.

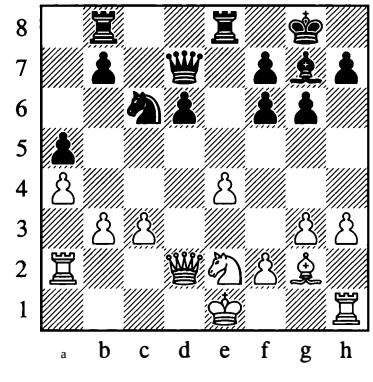
14. : a

A rather odd square for the rook, but you can already see A ish is struggling for a plan without being able to castle.

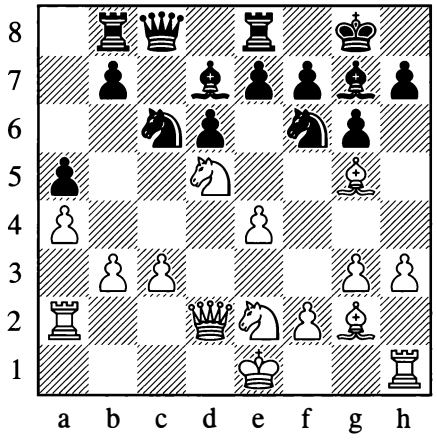


14... l c6! IS. l dS as 16.c3

16. i xf6 should have been preferred, but it's still not so easy for White to castle. 16...exf6 17. 4 b6 1 c7 lS. 4 xd7 1 xd7 19.c3 (19.0-0?! f5 20.exf5 4 b4! traps the rook) Here Black has various options, but I like:



19...We6 20.Eb2 b5= Black has su f cient counterplay for the slightly ugly structure. We have pressure on White's queenside and will be able to break with ...f5 at some point.



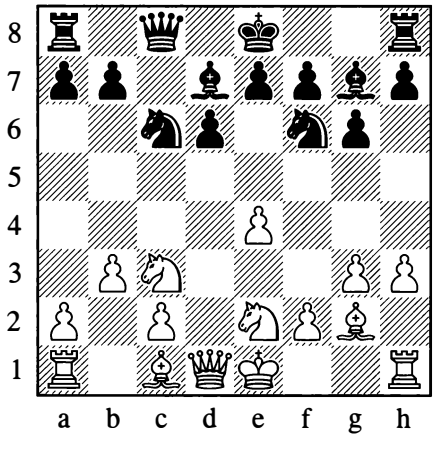
16...b5!

Now there's no time for l b6.

17. a b5 : xb5 18. dl b8 19. : a l xd5 20.exd5 l e5 21.0-0 a4! 22. l d4 : xb3! 23. l xb3 l c4+

Black had a strong passed pawn for the exchange and went on to score a nice upset in Giri - Hou Yifan, Wijk aan Zee 2013.

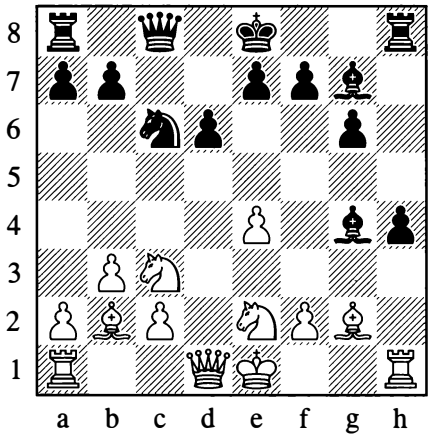
E4) 10.b3



At this point I would like to show E41) 10...h5!? as an interesting option for those of you with a more adventurous disposition, although E42) l0...0-0 still gives rise to an exciting struggle.

E41) 10...h5!? l1. i b2 h4 l2.g4 l xg4! 13.hxg4 i xg4

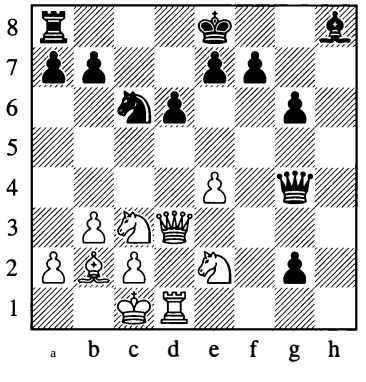
T is position has been reached four times at the time of writing. In return for the invested piece Black has two pawns, a lead in development and the initiative.



14. : f

T is is logical, allowing the bishop to dtop back to hI.

14. f3 h3 15. f g4 hxg2 16.ExhSt xhS 17.Wd3 Wxg4 IS.0-0-0 Suarez Gomez - Medarde Santiago, Lisbon 2014.



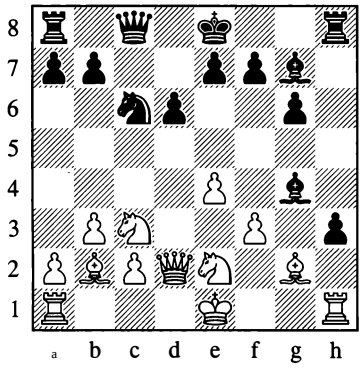
A very complex position has arisen, with Black having three pawns for the piece. T e crucial question is whether the pawn on g2 is a strength or will it drop o f My engine helpfully evaluates the position as 0.00 after various moves for Black.

14.Wd2?!

Ignoring Black's threat doesn't look advisable.

14...h3 1S.f3N

Chris Ward o fers this as an improvement on 1S. fl? t eS! 16. t d4? (16.0-0-0 had to be tried, bur 16... f3 is still good for Black) 16... f3!-+ with the dual threat of taking the rook and 17... h6 trapping the queen, Zivkovic - D. Radovanovic, Belgrade 2014.



1S... t b4!?

T is intriguing suggestion of my engine might be strongest.

As Ward mentions, 1S...hxg2 16 . hSt xhS 17. f g4 Wxg4 is a better version of 14.f3 for Black, as the queen is misplaced on d2.

16. f g4

16. xh3 i xh3 17. i xh3 xh3 1S.0-0-0 g2+

16...Wxg4

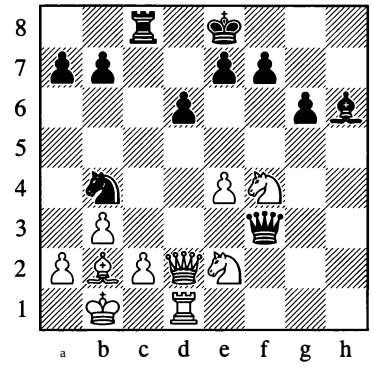
T e following moves all seem forced.

17. xh3 i xh3 1S. i xh3

1S.0-0-0?? h6-+

1s...Wxh3 19.0-0-0 h6 20. t f4 Wf3 21. t ce2 i cS! 22. l b1

22.Wxb4? Wxe2!-+



22... xf4 23. t xf4 i xc2 24.Wd4 i h2 2S. i e1

2S. t dS? t c6 26.Wd3 Wg2-+

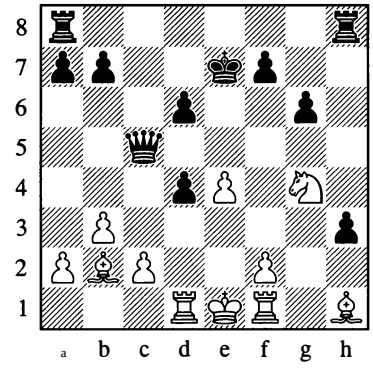
2S... t c6 26.We3 Wxe3 27. i xe3+

T e smoke clears and Black has slightly better prospects in the ending with his three pawns for the piece.

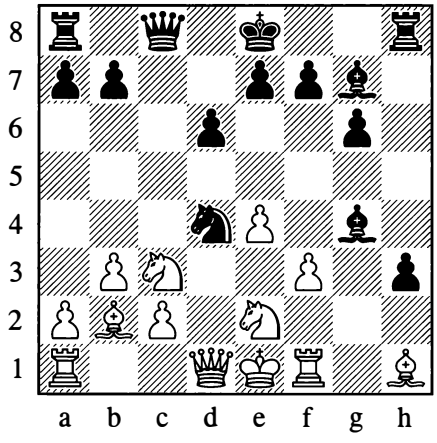
14...h3 15. i hl l d4 16. £ N

T is would have been consistent with White's previous couple of moves.

16.Wxd4? xd4 17. t xd4 White was obviously scared and decided to give back material; sometimes three pieces can outgun the queen and two pawns, but here White's king still isn't entirely secure, while the h3-pawn is obviously strong. 17...WcS 1S. t dS eS! 19. t f6t c e7 20. t xg4 exd4 21. i d1 Movsesian - Likavsky, Czech Republic 200S. Black should have thrown in:



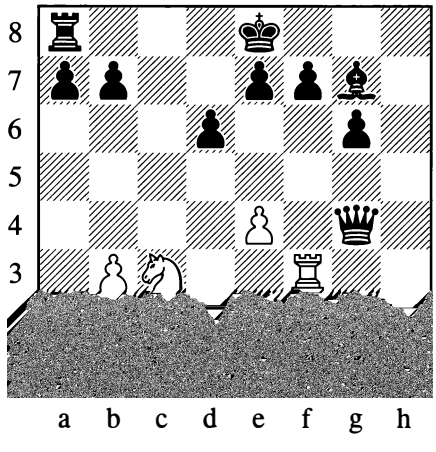
21...Wg5N Forcing White to go passive. 22. t h2 (22. . f3 h2 is awkward) Only now should Black play: 22...Wa5 t 23. l d2 l hcB 24. \ dl Wxa2 25. . xd4 a5! 26. t g4 a4-+ Black has the stronger attack.



16... t x t 17.♗xf3

17. l x f ? . xf3 IB. . xf3 h2 19. d2 (19. . hl Wg4+) 19...hl=W! 20. . xhl . h6t 21. \ d3 Wh3t 22. t g3 (22. \ c4 a5!-+ closes the net on the white king) 22...Wxg3 t 23.Wf3 Wxf3t 24. . xf3 . g7+ T e rook and two pawns outweigh the minor pieces in this ending.

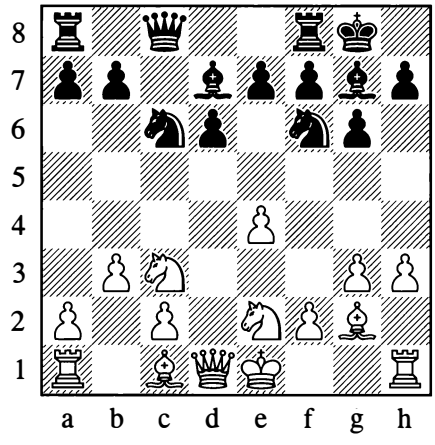
17... i x 18.g x h2 19. ' dl hl=W 20.Wxhl gxhl 21.gxhl Wg4C1



T is line is given by Chris Ward, who assesses it as unclear. T e rook and two pieces balance the queen and two pawns. As he writes, "It could go either way!"

E42) 10...0-0

Now we've slowed White's development we can be happy with completing our own.



11. i b2 gb8!?

T is is suggested by Simon Williams and looks promising. As White struggles to castle kingside he normally switches to the queenside, so it makes sense to start an o fensive there.

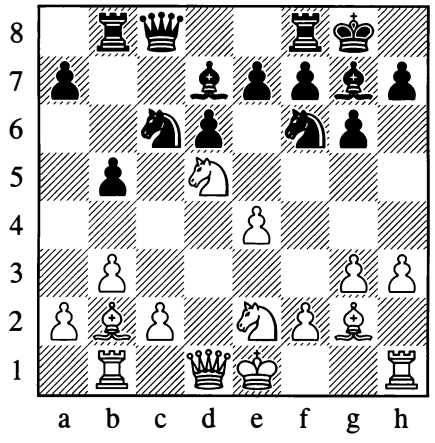
At this point White has tried E421) 12.gbl and E422) 12.Wdl.

12. t d5?! allowed 12... t xd5 13. . xg7 t e3! 14. f e3 \ xg7 in Rohonyan - Aksionova, Dnipropetrovsk 2002. Black has a pleasant advantage, with the better structure and a fantastic outpost on e5.

E421) 12.gbl

Preparing to move the knight.

12...b5 13. t d5



13^{00}.e5!?

I suggested this as a novelty and then got a chance to test it myself. T e move looks ugly, but is not so bad if you want to keep more life in the position. White still has an issue with the h3-pawn.

13... t xd5 14.exd5 j xb2 15. xb2 t dS 16. 1 d2 was Motwani - Ca. Hansen, Aalborg 1991. Simplest would be: 16...e5N 17.dxe6 t xe6 1S.0-0 (I s. 1 xd6?! eS+ followed by 19... t g5 is problematic) 1S... j c6= T e slight weakness on d6 shouldn't be a problem as Black's pieces are better coordinated.

14. t x t

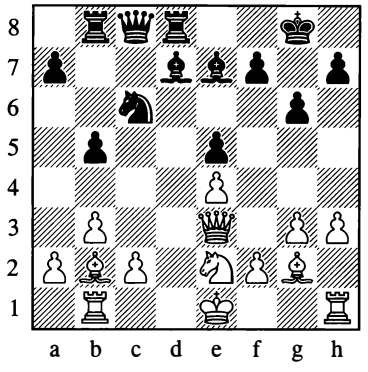
14.h4?! is premature, as 14... t xd5! 15.exd5 t b4 forces White to make the big concession 16.c3. Mter 16... t a6 17.0-0 j f5 1S. a1 t c5+ Black dominates.

14...♗xf6 15.0-0

T is was played against me.

Declining the pawn is also possible, but Black is fne. For example: 15. t c3N j e6 16. t d5 j g7= White's knight looks nice, but he still has to resolve the issue of his king and watch out for Black taking on d5 and playing ... t b4.

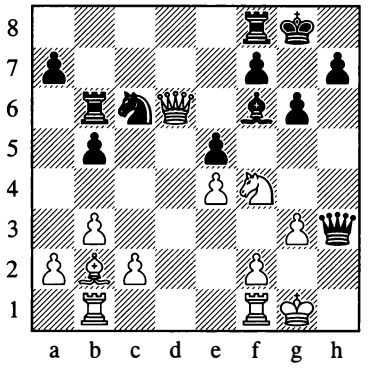
15. 1 xd6N j e7 16. 1 d2 dS 17. 1 e3



17... j b4 t! 1S.c3 j a5 With the dark-squared bishop coming back into the game, Black has good play for the pawn. White would like to play 19. 1 h6, defending h3 and preparing cast/ing, but 19... t d4!+ would cut across his plans.

15^{00}. i e7

I also analysed 15... j xh3N 16. j xh3 1 xh3 17. 1 xd6 b6!? 1S. l f4! when I missed I could continue:



1S... j e7! 19. 1 xg6t hxg6 20. l xh3 a6= Black will regain the pawn with a roughly equal position.

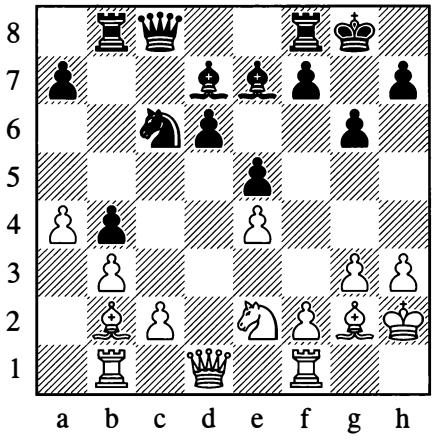
15... dSN is aso interesting.

16. i h2 b4

A committal decision, but I didn't want the e2-knight getting to d5.

17.a4

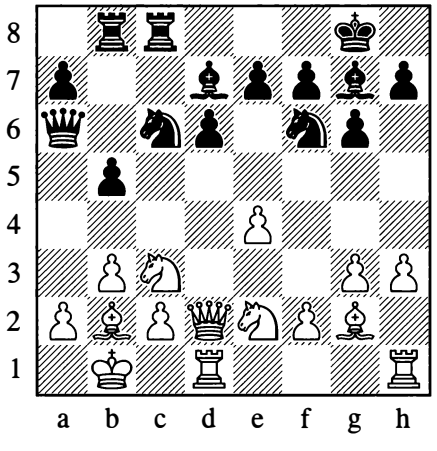
In Kochetkova - Jones, Reykjavik 20IS, I should probably have played the immediate:



17... i e6N

To be followed by ...fS. T e position is double-edged.

E422) 12. ' d2 b5 13.0-0-0 ' a6 14.@bl : 8



Both of White's fanchettoed bishops make a rather strange impression. White's king might seem relatively secure, but the c4-square isn't as covered as he might like. We have to consider both E4221) 15.f4 and E4222) 15.g4.

Simon Williams continues his line with:

lS.t dSN

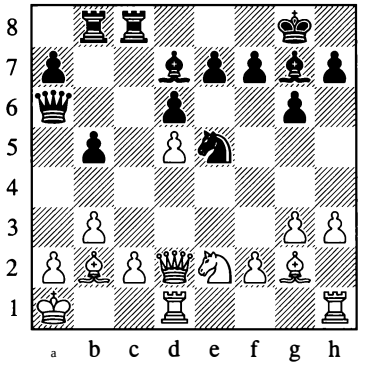
T is is too committal, but also instructive.

15... t xd5 16.exdS t eS 17.mal

Simon doesn't mention the text move, which has to be tried.

Mter 17.2hel? t c4! 18.bxc4 bxc4 19.c3 2cS 20.<al 2aS 21. t c1 2abS Black has a decisive attack.

17. t d4? t c4! is also horrible.

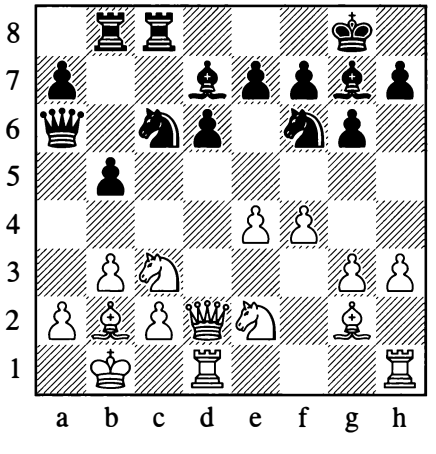


17... t c4 18.bxc4 xb2t 19.mxb2 bxc4t 20.ma1 c3 21. t xc3 Wa3 22.2b1 Wxc3t 23.Wxc3 2xbIt 24.2xb1 2xc3

T is endgame should be drawn, but Black can press.

E4221) 15.f4

T is was seen in Poljak - Jelica, Makarska Tucepi 1995, and is more forcing as White threatens e4-e5 in some situations. Black has lots of options, but I would like to be consistent:



ls... l aSN

T is prepares ... l c4 in some positions, but the knight is also getting out of the way and will no longer be attacked after exd5.

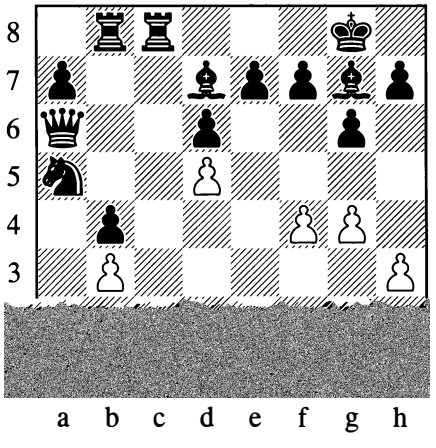
15...b4N is also a viable option: 16. l d5 l xd5 17.exd5 xb2 18. <hb2 (18.dxc6? Wa3! 19.cxd7 Ec5-+ and White is powerless to prevent 20...Ea5) 18... l d8= With the pawn on d5, White would rather have his pawn on g4 rather than f4. Here he doesn't control the f5-square and his pieces are rather restricted. Black will continue with some combination of checking on a3 and doubling rooks on the c-fle.

16.g4

16.e5 b4! 17.exf6? (T is doesn't work, but neither 17. l d5 l xd5 18. xd5 Ec5 nor 17. l e4 l xe4 18. xe4 l b7! poses any problems for Black) 17...bxc3 18. l xc3 l c4!-+

16...b4 17. l dS l xdS 18.exdS

T e knight isn't hanging on c6, so Black has time for:



18... i c3!

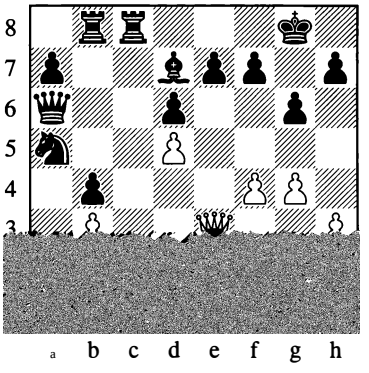
Giving up a pawn to open lines towards the opponent's king isn't unusual in the Dragon, but here Black is also happy to trade his dark-squared bishop for a knight.

19. 1 xc3

19.We3?!

Declining the o f er doesn't slow down Black's attack particularly:

19... i xb2 20. \ xb2



20...Ec3! 21.Wd2

21. l xc3? l c4t! 22.bxc4 Wa3t 23. \ a1 bxc3 24.Wc1 Eb2 W ite is forced to give his queen with 25.Wb1 when 25...Exb1 t 26.Exb1 Wa4-+ wins material.

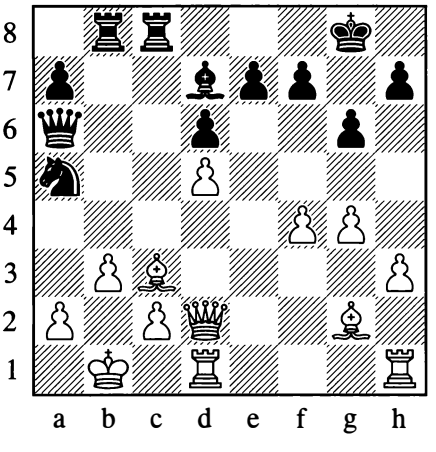
A er 21.Wxe7? l c4t 22.bxc4 Wa3t 23.mb1 b3!-+ Black mates.

21...Ebc8 22. l d4 b5 23. i e4 E8c5

T e attack is dangerous.

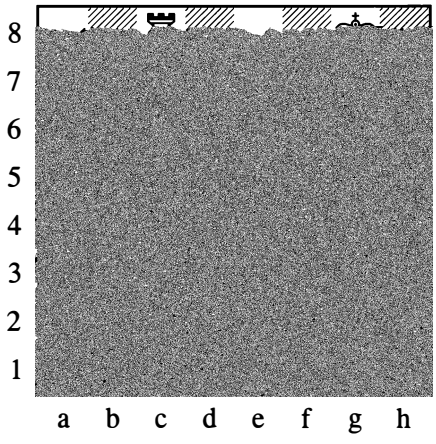
19...bxc3 20. i xc3

20. fl!? should be met with: 20... l xb3! 21.cxb3 (21.axb3?! Wa5 22.We1 Exb3! 23.cxb3 c2t 24. \ cl cxd1=Wt 25. \ xd1 Wxd5t-+) 21...Wa5 22. i xc3 Wxc3=



20... l c4 21. ' d4 l a3t 22. b2 gxc3! 23. ' xc3 gc8 24. i f ' b6

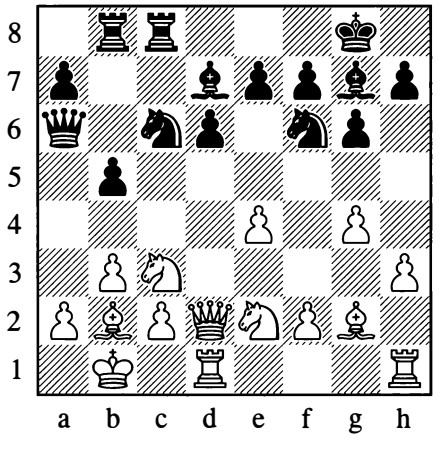
White has to give up the queen to prevent Black's attack from breaking through.



25. ' xc8t i xc8 26. x a ' f =

Black regains the pawn and the queen balances the two rooks, as White cannot easily challenge on the dark squares.

E4222) 15.g4



15... l a5

Again I've decided to go with the most consistent and aggressive choice. T is is another move that I got the chance to try before the book was published, although you won't fnd the game in any database.

15... l eB

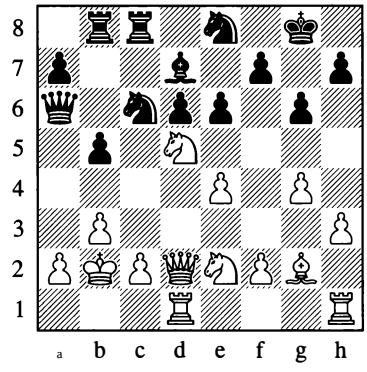
Stephen Gordon has played this - rerouting the k ight so that when White plays l d5, he's not obliged to change the structure.

16. l d5

16. f4!?

16... xb2 17. < xb2 e6

17...b4!?



IB. l e3!N

T is is a strong improvement, and I've been unable to fnd a way for Black to break through.

IB. l b4?! l xb4 19. ' xb4 l c5 20.h4 l bcB 21. l cl e5 22.g5 l g7 23. h3 xh3 24. l xh3 l e6 25. ' d2 was agreed drawn in Tiviakov - Gordon, Germany 2013, but the English GM really should have continued with 25... ' b7N 26. l e3 a5!+.

IB... l e5

IB...b4 19. f4 l b5 20. < bl l a5 21. l cl l c5 22.g5 t

IB... ' b6 19. f4 a5 20.a3 t

19. al ' a3 20. f4 t

15...e6!?N

Black can also consider immediately taking control of the d5-square, as captuting the d-pawn seems to only be a draw.

16. ' xd6

16. f4 b4 17. l a4 l a5 (17...e5!? with the idea of ... l d4 is also interesting) IB.g5 l eB 19. xg7 < xg7 20. l b2 l c7

Our counterplay is coming quickly and so the position looks respectable for Black.

16...b4 17. l d5!

White is fortunate he's not just losing a piece here, but the tactics allow him to scramble a draw.

17...exd5 18. j xf6 Wxe2 19. j xg7 xg7 20.Ehe1

20.Wxd7? l d4-+

20...Wxf2 21.Efl Wxg2 22.Wf6t g8 23.Wx f t ' h8 24.Wf6t g8=

16.Bhe1N

16.f4 transposes to variation E4221.

16.g5?! b4!+

In a friendly rapid tournament, my strong opponent tried:

16.e5!? b4 17. l e4

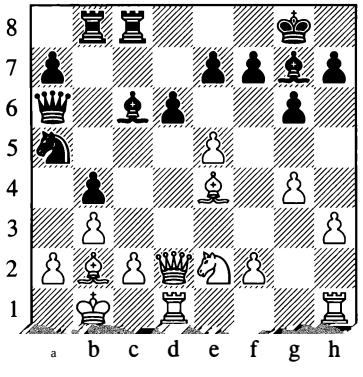
17.exf6 bxc3 18. l xc3 l c4!+

17... l xe4

17...dxe5N 18. l xf6t j xf6 19.Wxd7 Wxe2 20.Ed2 White has decent compensation for the pawn with his powerful bishop pair.

18. j xe4 j c6

18... j b5!?N should also be considered.

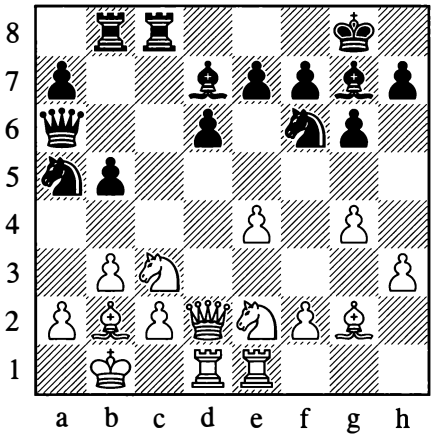


19. j xc6 l xc6 20.exd6 j xb2 21. xb2

In Nunn - Jones, Hampstead (rapid) 2014, I should probably have gone for:

21...Ed8N

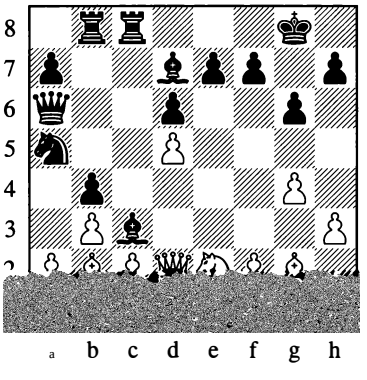
T e position is roughly equal.



16...Bc5!

It seems better for Black to improve his pieces by utilizing this usual rook lift before pushing with ...b4.

It's also possible to continue with 16...b4, in analogy with the line we saw after 15.f4, but I don't think it's so e fective here. With the e2-knight defended W ite has more options. 17. l d5 l xd5 18.exd5 j c3 I analysed three continuations:



a) 19. 1 xc3 bxc3 20. j xc3 l c4 21.Wd4 l a3t 22. b2 Bxc3 23.Wxc3 Ec8 24. j fl Wb6 25.Wxc8t j xc8 26. ' xa3 Wx f T is is of course extremely similar, but is a slightly better version for W ite with his rook already active on e1. Nevertheless, this position is completely playable for Black and again my engine gives various 0.00 assessments.

b) 19.Wf4

T is is an aternative path, but Black has:

19... t xb3! 20.axb3 j xb2 21. i xb2 2xc2t 22. i xc2 Wa2t

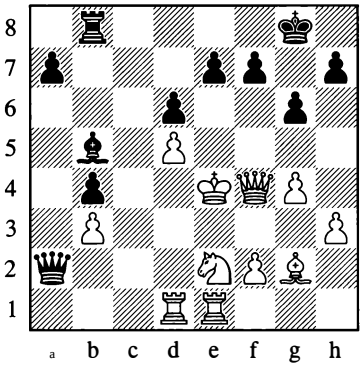
Surprisingly, despite the extra rook and knight, White doesn't seem to be better.

23. i d3

23. i cl 2cBt 24.Wc4 2xc4t 25.bxc4 b3-+

23... j b5t 24. i e4

24. i d4 Wb2t 25. i e4 Wc2t is the same.



24...Wc2t 25. i f3

25.me3 Wxb3t 26.me4 Wc2t (26... j xe2!? is also possible if Black wishes to play for more) 27. i e3=

25... j xe2t 26.2xe2 Wxb3t 27.2e3 Wxdl t 2B. i g3

White has managed to escape the checks but now has only a piece for three pawns.

2B...Wcl! 29.2xe7 Wxf4t 30.mxf4 b3 31. j e4 a5

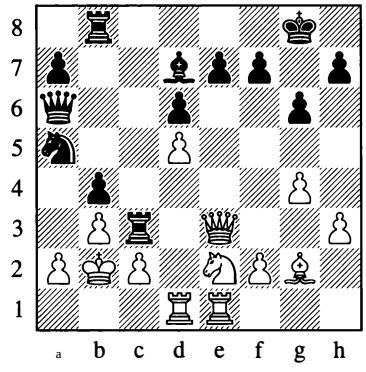
Black's queenside pawns hold the draw.

c) 19.We3 j xb2

White's rook is en prise on el, but 19... j xeI? isn't advisable as Black's king is terribly insecure. In fact, White already has a decisive advantage after simply recapturing.

20.mxb2 2c3

Perhaps Black is better of rerouting his knight with 20... t b7, when White only has a slight advantage.



21.Wcl!

T is is an important di ference.

T e careless 21.Wd4? allows 21... t c4t! 22.bxc4 Wa3t 23.mbl j a4 24.2d2 2cB! and Black's attack breaks through.

21...2c5

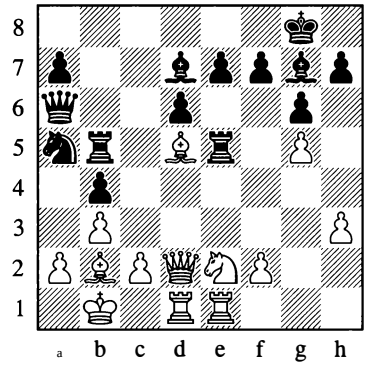
Black doesn't have any tricks and so is forced to drop back. White should have some advantage, as the knight is rather misplaced on a5 if we can't get any sacrifces to work.

17.f4

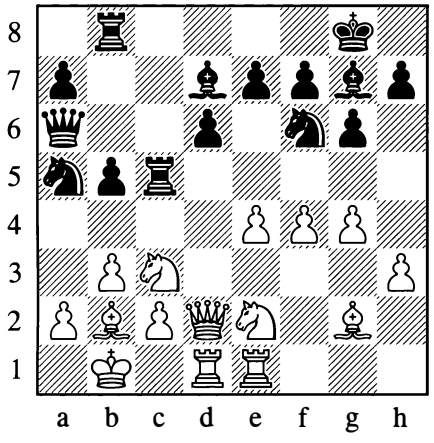
T is seems the most logical for White.

I also looked at 17.g5 b4! IB. t a4 (lB.gxf6? bxc3 19. t xc3 t c4!+ is a typical motif in this line) IB... t xe4! 19. j xe4 j xa4 20. j xg7 (20.bxa4?? t c4) 20...mxg7 21.bxa4 t c4 when we have a strong attack for the piece invested.

17.e5!? An interesting computer suggestion. However, after 17...2xe5 IB.g5 b4! 19. t d5 t xd5 20. j xd5 2b5! I don't think many humans would fancy playing White.



After 21. xe5 xe5 Black already has one pawn for the exchange, and it's hard to argue that the bishop on e5 isn't worth at least a rook.



17...b4

Now Black gets a better version of the lines we saw after 16...b4.

18. l d5 t xd5 19.exd5 i b2

19... c3 is also possible, but then ...Ec5 would have been a wasted tempo.

20.@xb2 i b5

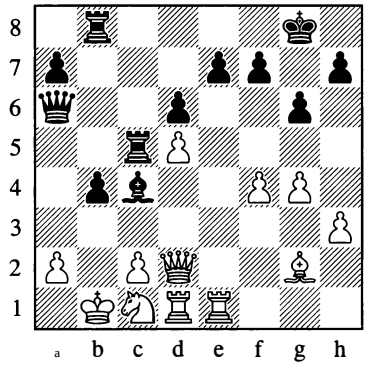
Black is already threatening the sneaky ... t c4t, and White has to be very accurate to prevent the mate threats.

21.Eal!

T is seems to be White's best defence.

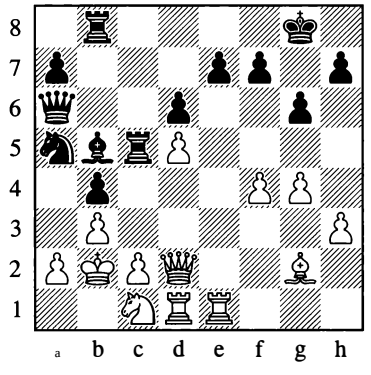
21. e4? loses immediately to: 21... t c4t! 22.bxc4 Wa3t 23.Wa1 xc4 24. t cl xa2! 25. t xa2 (25.Ee3 is White's best, but Black is completely winning after either 25...Ec3 or 25...b3) 25...Ea5 26.c4 bxc3 Black will mate within a few moves.

21.Wb1? also doesn't prevent us crashing through with: 21... t c4! 22.bxc4 xc4 23. t cl



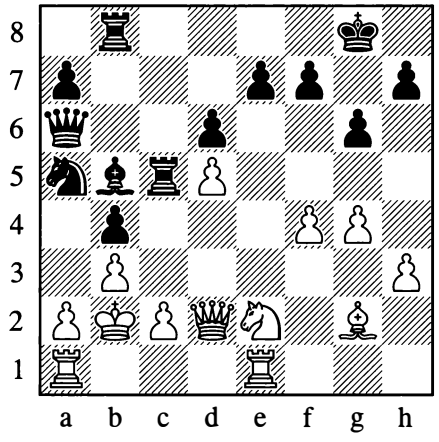
23...Wa3! White cannot deal with the threat of 24... xa2t followed by 25...b3, for example: 24.Ee3 xa2t 25. t xa2 b3 26.cxb3 Exb3t 27.Exb3 Wxb3t 28. ' a1 Ec2 29.Wxc2 Wxc2 30. f3 Wf2 31. e4 We3 32. c2 Wxh3 White's pawns are all dropping.

21. t cl is a sensible-looking defending move, but even here we can continue as before:



21... t c4t! 22.bxc4 xc4 23.Ee3 White defends against our initia threat, but 23...Ebc8! followed by ...Wa4 puts a lot of pressure on W ite's position.

21.Eb1 A good defensive try. Here I think it's time to play: 21... xe2 22.Wxe2 Wxe2 23.Exe2 Ec7= Black will follow up with ... t b7-c5 and ...a5.

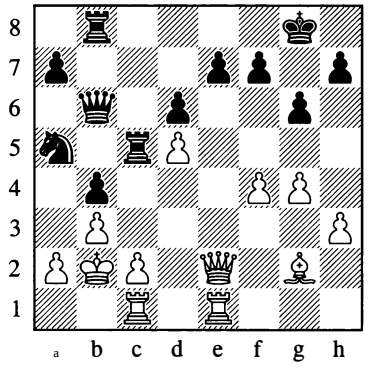


21... . c4!?

As putting the knight on c4 no longer works with the a-pawn defended, this seemed a logical try. T e bishop is of course poisoned and now White will fnd it hard to defend his dS-pawn.

21... c c4t? doesn't really work here: 22.bxc4 Wa3t 23.<b1 Exc4 24.c d4 . a4 2S.Ee3 Ec3 26.c b3 We still have some pressure, but I'm sceptical that it's enough to justi f the piece.

21... . xe2 is the computer's top suggestion, but after: 22.Wxe2 Wb6 23.Eac1! (23.Wxe7 allows a draw with 23...Ebc8 24.Eac1 Exc2t! 2S.Exc2 Wd4t 26.<b1 Exc2 27.c xc2 Wc3t 28.c b1 Wd3t=)



23...Ebc8 24.Wd2 White has taken control and reached the kind of position he's been aiming for.

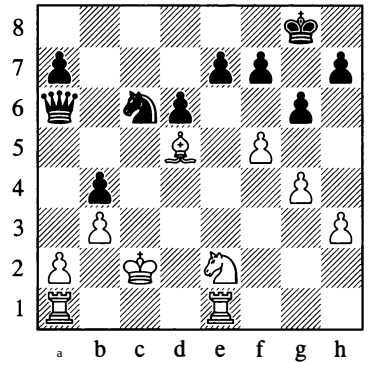
T e problem with the immediate 21...Ebc8 is that 22.c d4 seems to keep White's position together.

22. f

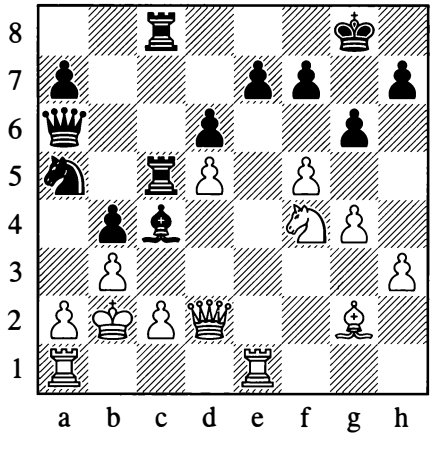
W ite gets on with it on the kingside which seems critica!.

22...Ebc8 23. . f4

If White sees what we're up to then he might try covering the c2-square with 23. . e4. T en I think Black should go for the sacrifce: 23... . xdS 24. . xdS Exc2t 2S.Wxc2 Exc2t 26.<xc2 c c6



Black has queen and rwo pawns against rwo rooks and a bishop. Normally that wouldn't be quite enough material, but White's king is still exposed and Black will grab at least one more pawn as White attempts to coordinate his pieces. I think Black has adequate compensation, especially in practical play.

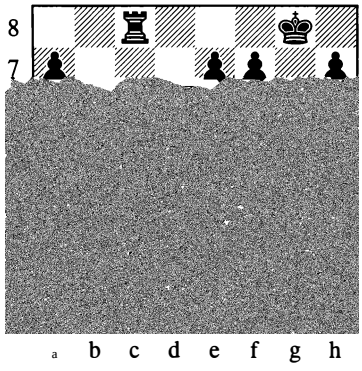


23... h b3!

T is was my idea. Of course the computer takes some convincing - but we have to show them humans can play chess too!

24. c b3

24.axb3? T is recapture would actually leave W ite in a lot of trouble after:



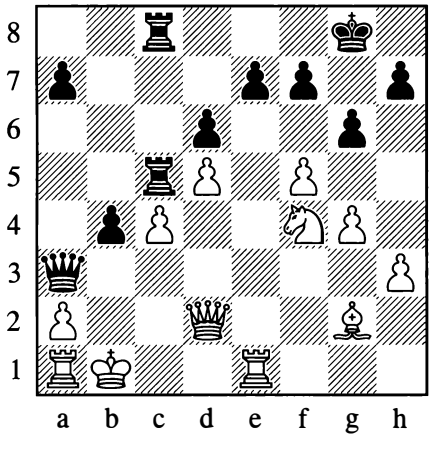
24... : xc2t 25. 1 xc2 : xc2t 26. < xc2 1 c8t -+

24... t c4t!

It was time for the t pical knight sacrifce.

25.bxc4 W a t 26.@bl

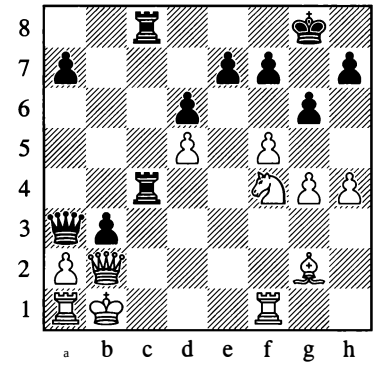
26. < c2? : xc4t 27. ' d1 : c2-+



26... : xc4 27. i e4

T is is how my engine tries to defend afer having the position on the screen for a while.

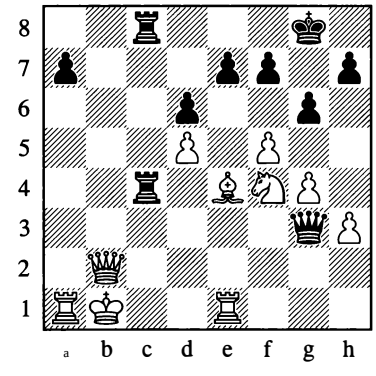
27. : d1 was its immediate suggestion, but 27... 1 g3 forks the two minor pieces. T ere is nothing better than 28. : fl 1 a3 when W ite has no way of making progress. One amusing sample line continues: 29.h4 b3 30. 1 b2



30... : b8! 31.axb3 (31. 1 xa3?? bxa2t 32. < ha2 : c2t 33. 1 b2 : cxb2t 34.ma3 : 2b6 and W ite has no defence to the mate in one) 31... 1 xb3 32. 1 xb3 : xb3t 33.ma2 : b6= W ite cannot escape the checks.

27...b3 28.Wb2

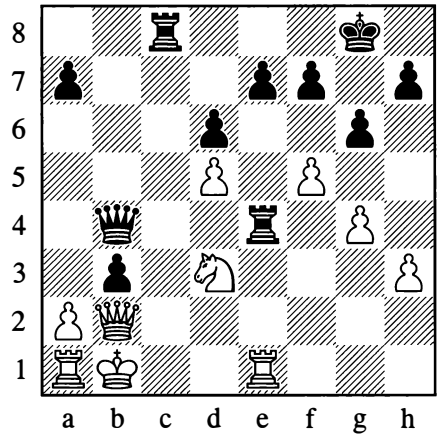
28.axb3 1 xb3t 29. 1 b2 1 g3 would again see W ite's pieces overworked. In fact, the only way for him to retain the balance would be:



30. : fl! : xe4 31. : a3! : e3 32. : xe3 1 xe3 33. : c1 Desperately t r ing to trade pieces. 33... 1 e4t 34.mal 1 a4t 35.mbl 1 e4t=

28...Wb4 29. t d gxe4!

T at's one piece back.



30J : dl

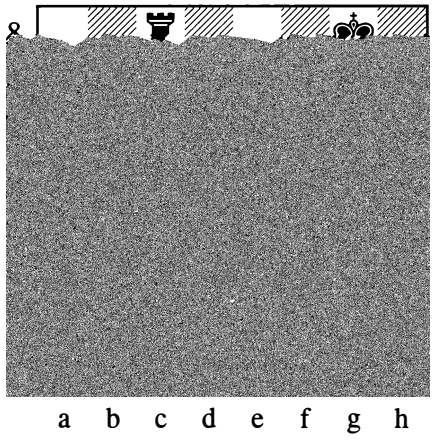
For humans, 30. l :l would be more logical. 30...1xc1t 31. t xc1 bxa2t 32.1xa2 " cS White has managed to coordinate his pieces somewhat and shouldn't get mated immediately. However, we're about to get three pawns for the piece and, with his king so loose, I don't think White can realistically think about winning this position.

30... ' b5 31. a b3!

31. " xb3?! Another sensible-looking move, but after 31... " e8! White is worse. 32. t b2 1b8 33. " d3 leaves Black with a choice between 33... " a4 34.a3 1e3 3S. " xe3 " xd1t 36. " c1 " xdS+ and 33...1xb2t 34.mxb2 " b8t 3S. " b3 (3s.mc2 " c7t 36. < d2 " aSt 37.mc2 " est doesn't help) 3S...1b4+.

31... xd5 32. t f b7 33J3 a

T e rook is not yet en prise as 33. t xe4? " xe4t 34.ma2 1c2 picks up the queen.



33...1e3 '

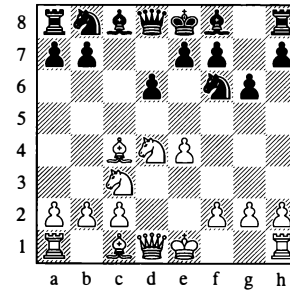
I think it's time to end the line. White (with computer precision) has avoided being mated, but in the process has had to give back a large part of his material advantage. Black still has by far the more active pieces, as well as the safer king and two pawns for the piece. Black has great compensation, and there were numerous he falump traps for White to fall into on the way.

Conclusion

In the Fianchetto Variation most players go for 7. t de2. I like the idea of 8... " c8, not allowing White to play on auto-pilot. It is risky for White to castle kingside but, as we've seen, the king isn't completely safe on the queenside either. I've o f ered a few alternatives: 10...hS!? is a prelude to a dangerous piece sacrifce, while 1S...e6!?N also looks interesting. In all of these lines White's play is certainly not easy and he has to defend with the utmost care.

Chapter 17

Minor Lines



Quiet Set-ups with ♗c4

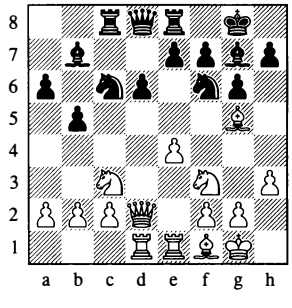
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2. t a d6 3.d4 c d4 4. t xd4 t f 5. t c3 g6 6. . c4

6... . g7

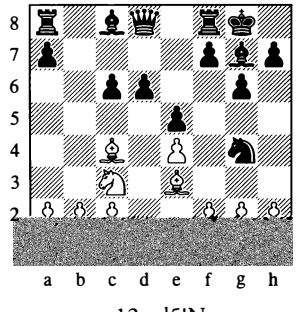
A) 7. . g5 266
B) 7. . e3 267
C) 7.0-0 0-0 269
C1) 8. . g5 270
C2) 8. e1 t c6 270
C21) 9. t b3 271
C22) 9. . b3 272
C23) 9.h3 . d7 272
C231) 10. t a 272
C232) 10. . e3 273
C233) 10. . b3 274
C234) 10. . g5 276

C) note to move 8



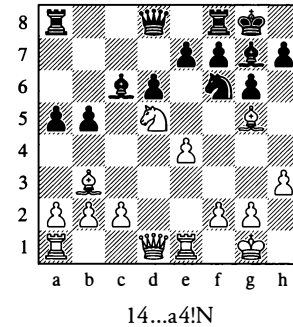
14...♘a5!N

C2) note to move 9



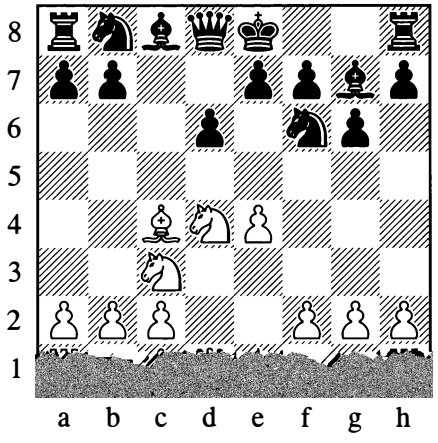
12...d5!N

C233) after 14.♗g5



14...a4!N

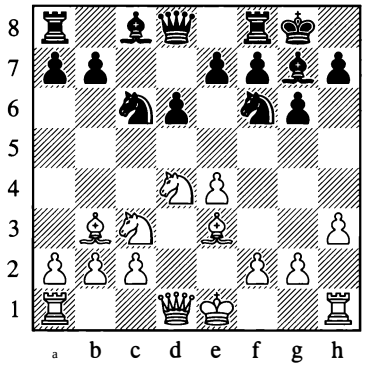
1.e4 cS 2. t a d6 3.d4 c d4 4. t xd4 t f S. t c3 g 6. i c4 i g7



Neither A) 7. i gS nor B) 7. i e3 should cause us any di f culties, but we should check them anyway. C) 7.0-0 is the main line.

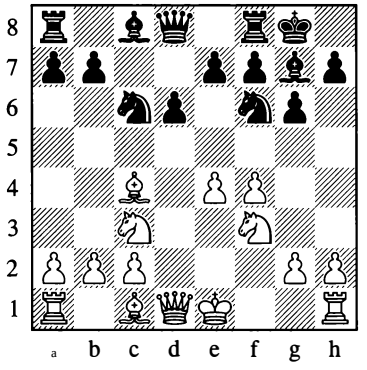
7.f3 is yet another Yugoslav Attack move order after 7...0-0 8. e3.

7.h3 also looks likely to transpose elsewhere. 7...0-0 8. b3 l c6 9. e3 is the only way to keep it independent:



9... l a5 10.0-0 b6!? 11. l d5 e6 12. l xf6t Wxf6 13.c3 b7 14. c2 l c4 15. cl d5' Black was better in Diamant - B. Smith, Lubbock 2010.

7.f4 looks rather premature. It's far more likely that White's king is going to get into trouble than Black's. 7...0-0 8. l f3 l c6



We're now at a position that's actually more likely to be reached by a Levenfsh move order. It's worth remembering that 9.0-0 can be met with the typical 9...b5!' exploiting the open a7-g1 diagonal.

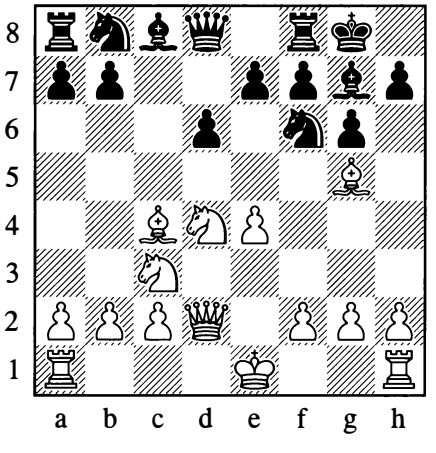
A) 7. i gS

T is move is possible of course, but c4 and g5 don't tend to work well together as the d4-square is rather loose.

7...0-0 8.W d

T is is another independent approach. White is trying to play a Yugoslav Attack while doing without f2-f3 and so gaining a tempo.

8.0-0 transposes to variation C1.



S... t c6

However, this already threatens ... t xe4 and so White needs to make a concession.

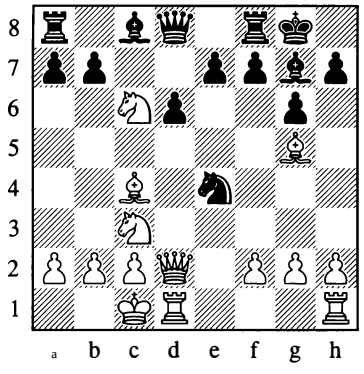
9. t xc6

9.0-0-0 t xe4

9... t xd4N 10. ' xd4 h6+ is a good alternative.

10. t xc6

10. t xe4 t xd4 11. i h6 i xh6 12. ' xh6 t f5 13. ' g5 was Fomani - Wikner,]onkoping 1988. A er 13... ' c7N 14. i b3 i e6+ White's attack shouldn't be too dangerous.



10... t xd2

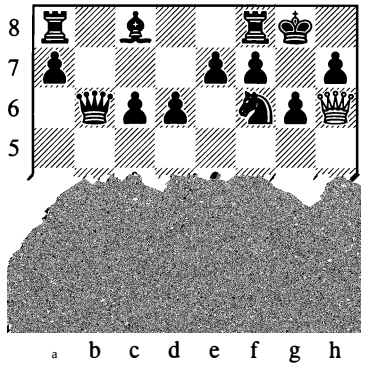
10... i xc3!?N is probably even stronger.

11. i x f t mx f 12. t xd8t 1xd8 13. i xd2 i e6+

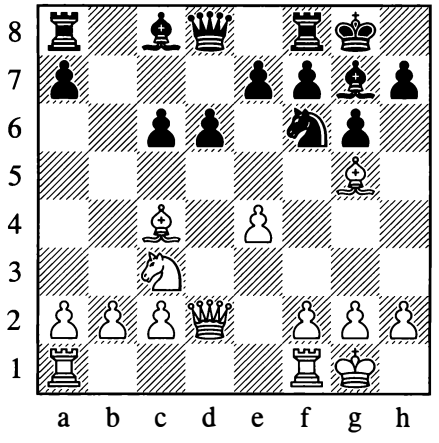
Zegers - Postma, Twente 2007.

9...bxc6 10.0-0

With 10. i h6?! White attempts to play aggressively, but 10... i xh6 11. ' xh6 ' b6! is good for Black.



12. i b3?! Missing one of Black's two threats. (12. ' cl d5!+ is also miserable) 12... ' xf2 t! 13. i x f t g4 t 14.mg3 t xh6+ Azevedo - Santiago,]oao Pessoa 2013.



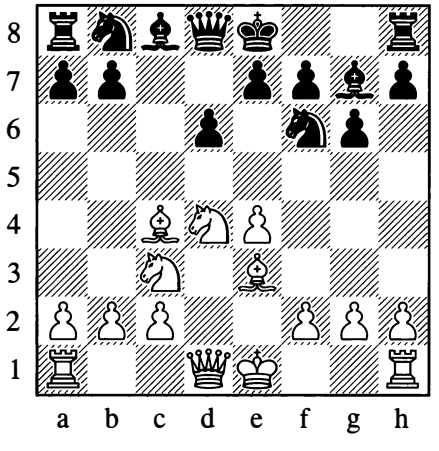
10..J ! bS 11. i b3

11.1ab1 was tried in a recent game, but 11... ' c7 12.f4?! d5! 13. i xf6 i xf6 14.e5 i g7 15. i d3 f6+ already saw the young GM struggling in Antipov - Gaehwiler, Pune 2014.

11... l d7=

B) 7. i e3

A slightly odd move order. If W ite wants to play the Yugoslav Attack then developing the dark-squared bishop frst is more fexible.



7...0-0

Against this particular move order 7... t g4 is a possibility, but I feel B. i b5t fB 9.0-0 is quite dangerous. Black will have the bishop pair and White a terrible structure, but the pressure down the f-fle is dangerous.

8.h3

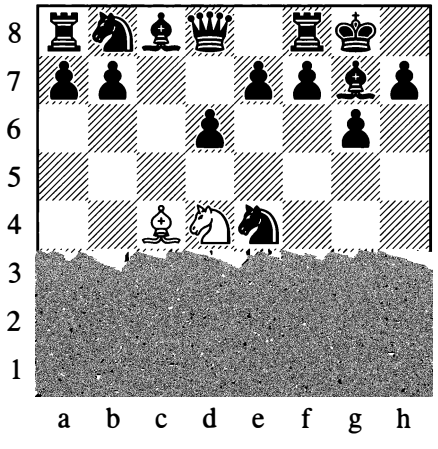
8.f3 would be a Yugoslav Attack; B. i b3?! t g4+.

B.Wd2?! t g4! T is is now good for Black. White doesn't have a i b5t trick and so he'll have no compensation for Blacks bishop pair. White has tried to retain his bishop with 9. i g5, but a f er 9...h6 10. i h4 i xd4! 11.Wxd4 e5! 12. i xdB exd4+ Black wins material.

8... l xe4

A good way to exploit White's move order.

B... t c6 will transpose elsewhere a f er either 9.0-0 or 9. i b3.

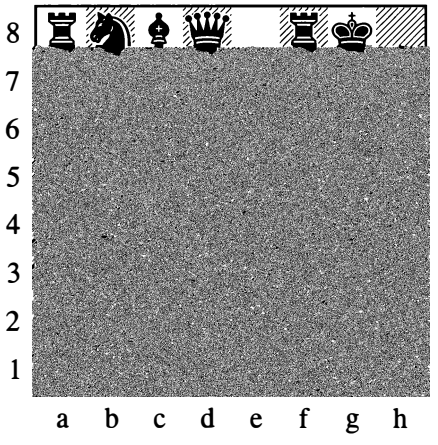


9. t xe4

9. i x f t :x f 10. t xe4 t c6 11.0-0 Wb6!? (l1... i xd4 12. i xd4 d5 followed by ...e5 is also f ne) 12.c3 (12. t b3 Wb4 13. t g5 :f5+ favours Black. We have the bishop pair and the centre.) 12...Wxb2 I don't see a way for White to exploit the queen's location. 13.:e1 t xd4 14. i xd4 i xd4 15.cxd4 (I5.Wxd4 Wb6+) 15... i d7 16.a4 b6+ I don't think White has enough play for the pawn.

9...d5 10. l b5

10. i d3?! dxe4 11. i xe4? loses at once to 11...f5! 12. i f3 f4-+.

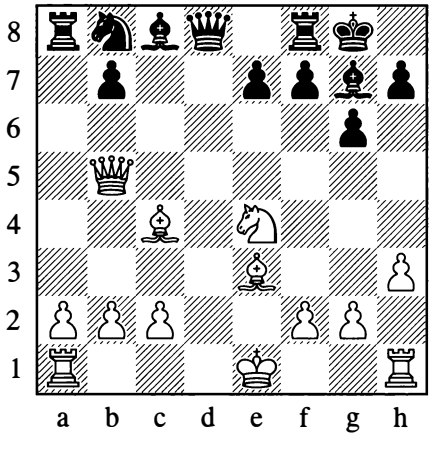


10...a6

10... d c4 giving the exchange is also possible. 11.WxdB :xdB 12. t c7 i f5 13.f3 t a6 14. t xa8 i xb2 15.:b1 c3= Black had t o pawns for the exchange and rough equali t in Deren - Abdelmoumen, email 2006.

11.Wxd5 a b5! 12.Wxb5

12.WxdB :xdB 13. i xb5 i f5+; 12.0-0-0!? Wa5 13.Wxb5 Wxb5 14. i xb5 :xa2=

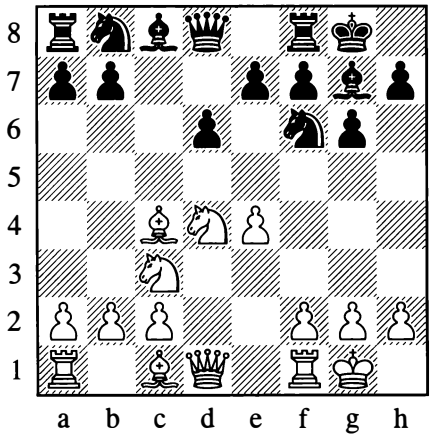


12...i d7 13. ' b3 i a4 14. ' fl3 ' a5t 15. i d2 ' c7

Black had a strong initiative for the pawn in Felicio - Gonzaga Grego, email 2008.

C) 7.0-0 0-0

Let's compare this position to the one with the bishop on e2. In White's favour he has pressure down the a2-g8 diagonal against the black king and f-pawn - which slows our typical break ...d5. On the other hand he now has to watch out for ... l xe4 ideas followed by ...d5, forking bishop and knight. T e g4-square is also more vulnerable and so White will generally need to spend a tempo on h2-h3. T e bishop on c4 will probably have to move again as we can easily hit it with ... l c6-e5/a5 or ... : k8. T e c4-bishop and d4-knight both want to drop back to b3, so White's pieces don't coordinate well.



We will consider C1) 8. i g5 and the most common C2) 8. e1.

8.h3 l c6 9. i e3 transposes to 8. i e3 immediately below.

8. i e3 l c6 9.h3 l xe4 is also possible here. (9... i d7 is again likely to transpose elsewhere) 10. l xe4 (10. i x f t Ex f 11. l xe4 was already covered in the note to White's 9th move in variation B) 10...d5 11. l xc6 bxc6 12. i d3 dxe4 13. i xe4 ' c7=

8.f4? As usual, this is far too early: 8... ' b6! 9. < h1 (9. i e3 l g4-+) 9... l xe4!+

8.f3 looks wrong when linked to castling kingside. White's king becomes rather exposed and it's tough to come up with a good plan for him. 8... t k6 9. i e3 i d7 10. ' fl2 Ec8 11. i b3 l e5 12. ' ff l c4 Black is already comfortable.

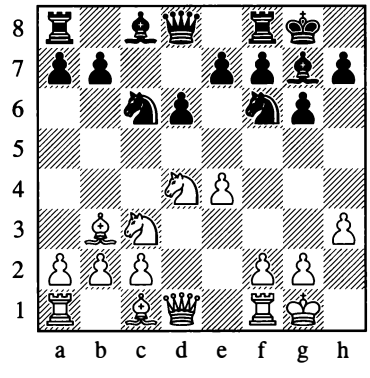
8. i b3 l c6

White has his typical problem with the knight.

9.h3

9. l xc6 bxc6 is, as usual, comfortable for Black.

For 9.Ee1 see variation C22.



9... l xd4

It makes sense to take the knight before White gets time to defend it with i e3.

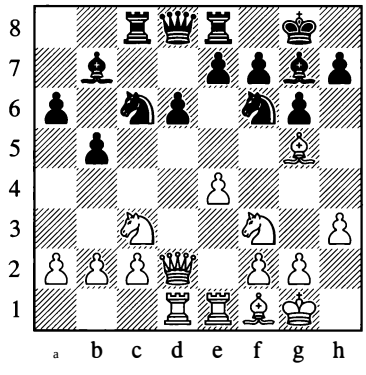
9...a5!? immediately is also interesting, with the idea 10. i e3 a4.

10. ' xd4 l d7 11. ' fl1 l c5 12.Ee1 a5=

With a typical, roughly equal position.

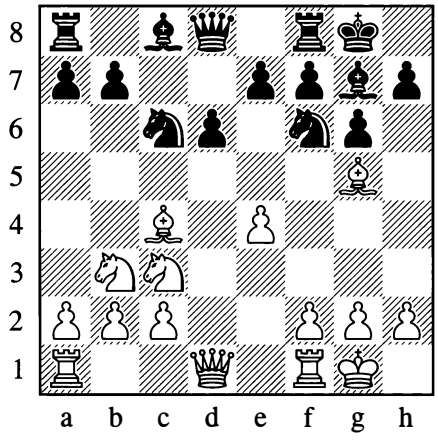
8. l f was tried fairly recently by a strong, young GM, but developing normally is a su f cient antidote. 8... l c6 9.h3 a6 10.Ee1 b5 11. i fl i b7 12. i g5 Ee8 13. ' fl2 Ec8 14.Ead1

Yu Yangyi - Khusnutdinov, Zaozhuang 2012. Here I like:



14... t a5!N T is looks good as we don't need to fear 15.e5 dxe5 16. l xe5 Wxd2 17. i xd2 l c6, when the psoition is level.

Cl) 8. i g5 t c6 9. t b3



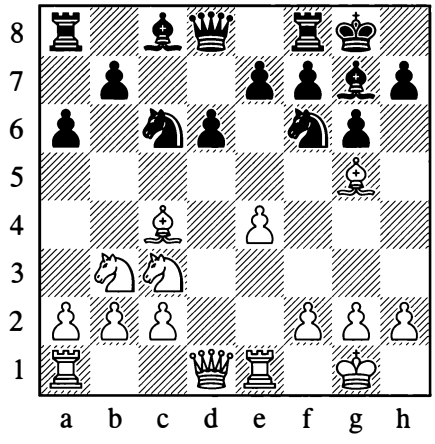
9. l xc6 T is move always feels like a big concession in the Dragon. 9...bxc6 10.Wd2 T is position is examined in variation A.

9. i b3 h6 10. i h4 Wb6!?N would exploit White's h4-bishop being rather o fside. We can follow up with ...Wc5 and playing on the queenside.

9.Ee1 transposes to the note on 9. i g5 in variation C2 below.

T e pOSltlon would be a normal Karpov Variation with the bishop back on e2 but, as usual in these variations, the bishop is now rather loose. When I had this position I chose:

9...a6 I0. : el
10.a4 b6=



I0...b5 11. i f :e8 12. t d5 t xd5 13.exd5 t e5 14.a4 i g4 15.Wd2 i d? 16. a b5 a b5 1?.c3 t c4 18. h c4 bxc4 19. t d4 : xal 20. : xal Wb6;

Tischbierek - Jones, Porto San Giorgo 2003.

C2) 8. : el t c6

We have reached another split, with White's options being C21) 9. t b3, C22) 9. i b3 and C23) 9.h3.

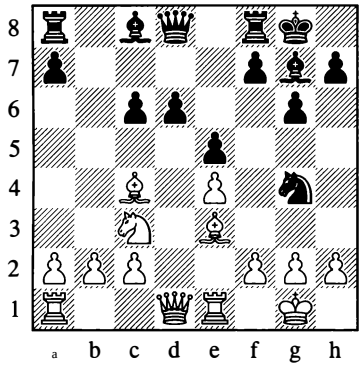
9. i g5 l xd4 10.Wxd4 h6 I1. i xf6 (l1. i d2 l g4 12.Wd3 l e5') 11... i xf6 12.We3 c h7 13.Eadl i d7=

9. l xc6 is generally a move we're happy to see. Ater 9...bxc6 we now control the d5-square, which is generally our weakest point in the Dragon, and have play down the semi-open b-fle: 10. i g5 Eb8 I1. i b3 l d7=

9. l f3 gives White a worse version of 10. l f3 (variation C23!) as we can now play: 9... i g4

10.h3 . xf3 11.Wxf3 l e5 12.We2 l xc4 13.Wxc4 Black is already a little better with the superior bishop.

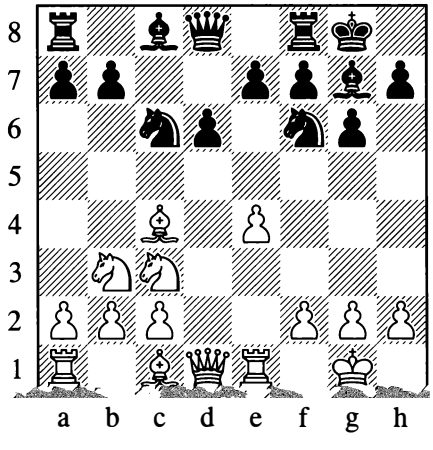
9. . e3?! is premature as 9... l g4! is awkward to deal with: 10. l xc6 bxc6 11. . d4 e5 12. . e3



12...d5!N T is is practically winning, as 13.exd5 Wh4 14.h3 (14. . c5 Wxh2t 15. < fl e4!-+) 14... l xe3 15.Exe3 Wxc4 wins a piece.

C21) 9. t b3

T is looks rather clumsy with the bishop on c4. A na Muzychuk tried an interesting idea:



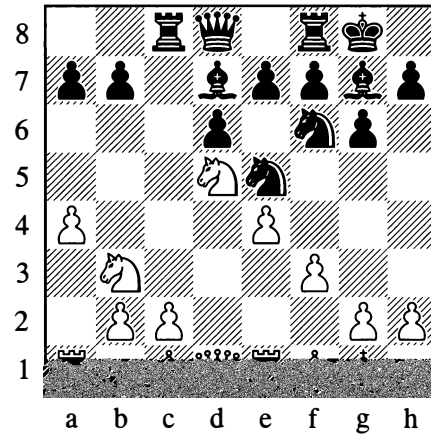
9... t eS 10. . f . g4!? 11.0 . d7

Black claims that the pawn on f and king on gl don't work well together.

12.a4 : s 13. t dS?!

T is is a typical idea for W ite in Classical Dragons, but with the pawn on f3 it doesn't work so well.

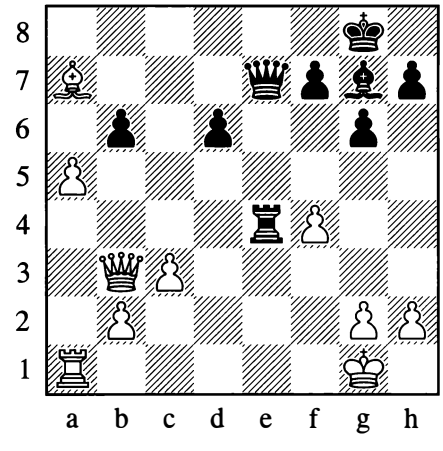
13. . e3 a6 14.a5 l c4 15. . xc4 Exc4= is safer.



13... t xdS 14.exdS EeS IS.c3 e6!

Opening up lines to exploit Black's lead in development and W ite's vulnerable king.

16.f4?! t c4 17. L c4 Exc4 IS.dxe6 Exe6 19.9xe6 L e6 20. . e3 Ee4 21. L a7 b6! 22.aS L b3 23. xb3 e7!

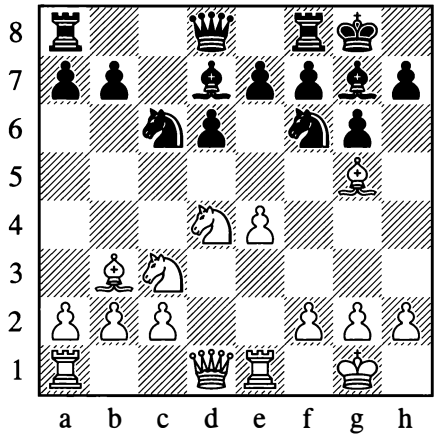


T e double attack won material in Vega Gutierrez - A. Muzychuk, Tromso (ol) 2014.

C22) 9. i b3 i d7 10. i g5

10.h3 is examined in variation C233 below.

10. l xc6 xc6 11. g5 h6 12. h4 l d7 13. l d5?! g5! 14. g3 xb2 15.Ebl g7 16.h4 l e5+ White had insu f cient compensation for the pawn in Zhang Zhong - Jakovenko, Taiyuan 2006.

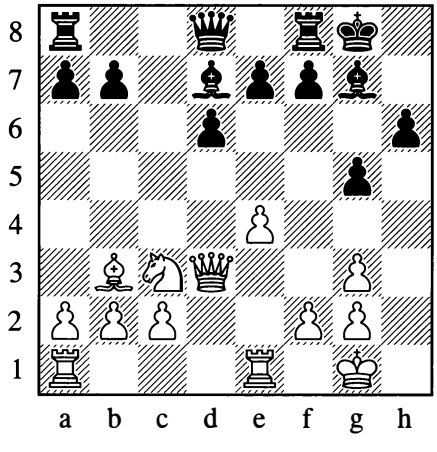


10...h6 11. i h4

We can now grab the bishop pair.

11... l xd4 12. ' xd4 g5 13. i g3 h5 14. ' d3 xg3 15.hxg3

Here I like:



15... i c6N 16.Eadl e6

If White grabs the pawn we will obtain fantastic compensation:

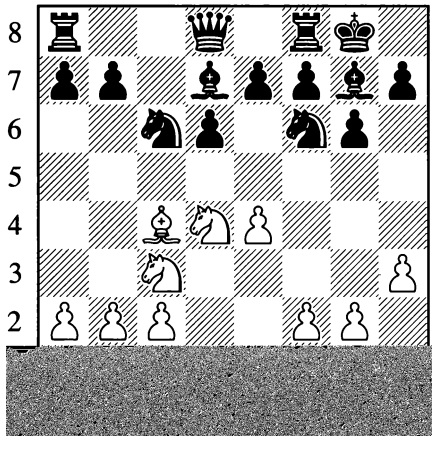
17. ' xd6 ' xd6 18.Exd6 i e5 19.Ed3 g7;

T e bishop on e5 dominates, and our plan is to open up the h-fle with ...h5-h4 and .. J hS.

C23) 9.h3

White t a es control of g4.

9... i d7



Once again White has a choice, the main options being C231) 10. l f , C232) 10. i e3, C233) 10. i b3 and C234) 10. i g5.

C231) 10. f

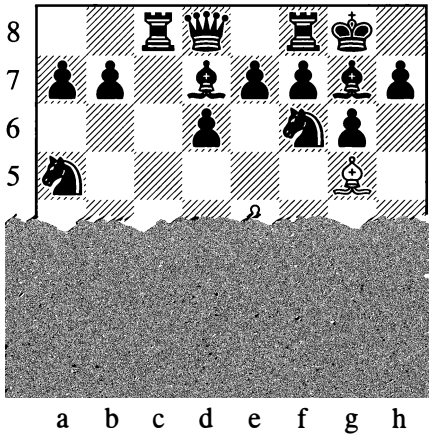
T is works better than normal with the bishop on c4 but it is still not dangerous.

10...Ec8 11. i b3

11. fl Wa5 12. e3 e6 13.a3 d5! Black had taken the initiative in TL. Petrosian - Mamedov, Dresden (ol) 200S.

11... a5 12. i g5

12. l d5 l c4=



12...h6N

I prefer this, keeping a bit more tension.

12... t c4 13. xc4 Exc4 14.e5 dxe5 15. t xe5 Ec7 16. ' d4 j f5 17. ' xa7 j xc2= was fne for Black in Zelcic - A. Kovacevic, Bizovac 2009.

13. h4

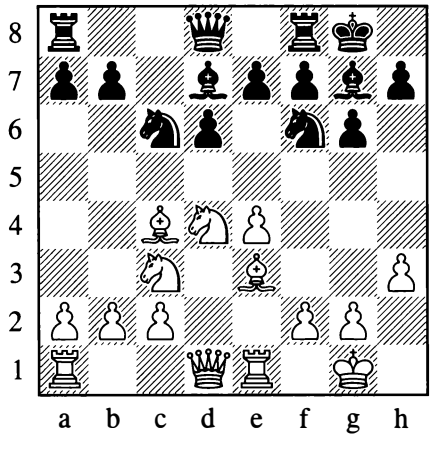
13. j e3 can be met by 13... ' c7= followed by our usual plan of ...b5.

Only now should we exchange on c4:

13... t c4 14. xc4 gxc4=

15.e5 dxe5 16. t xe5? is no longer playable as the bishop drops.

C232) 10. e3



A sensible developing move, but it is not challenging. It prevents the problems we see in variation C234, but the bishop isn't really well placed here.

10...Ec8 11. b3 t a5

A usual plan in the Dragon: Black is probably going to put that knight on c4, but also keeps open the possibility of taking on b3.

12.Vd3

12. t f3 a6 13. ' d2 b5 14. j h6

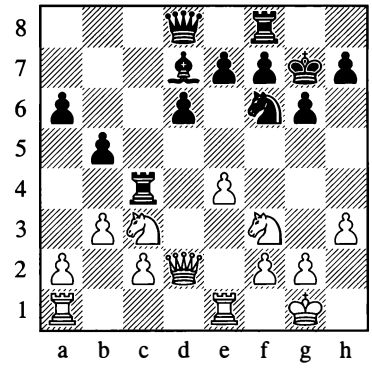
T is move is rare, but it was actually played against me just as I fnished this book. I played a logical continuation:

14... t c4

Initially I had intended to recommend 14... j c6 with an equal position, Brasoy - Paulsen, Karasjok 2004.

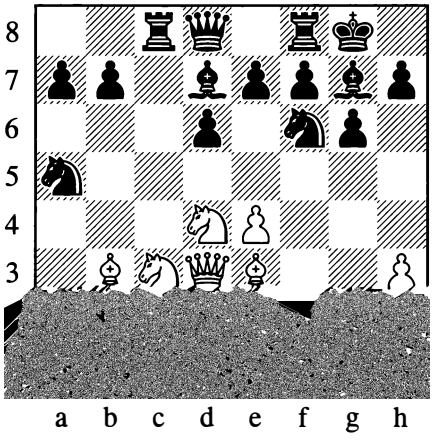
15. j xc4 Exc4 16. j xg7 xg7 17.b3

17.e5 would be safer, but is just equal after 17...dxe5 1S. t xe5 Ec7 19.Ead1 ' cS=.



17...Ec6!? lS. t d5 e5! 19. t xf6 ' xf6 20.Ee3 EfcS

Emms - Jones, Hinckey Island 2015. T e position is approximately equal but is easier for Black to play. In John's time trouble I managed to push ...a5-a4 and eventually broke with ...d5.



12...a6 13 J adl

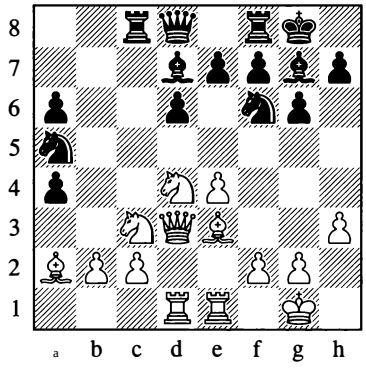
13. l d5 l xd5 14.exd5 b5 15. 1 d1 l e8 and Black is already fne. A er the further 16. i g5?! l c4 17. i cl l c5 White was struggling ¦ o Reite - Agdestein, Trondheim 2004.

13. i g5 Moving the bishop twice can hardly be the refutation of the line: 13... l e8 14. l ad1 b5 15. ' e2 h6 16. i xf6 i xf6 17. l d5 i g7 18.c3 e6 19. 1 e3 ' b6 Black was taking over in Houdini 2.0c - Strelka 5.5, engine game 2012.

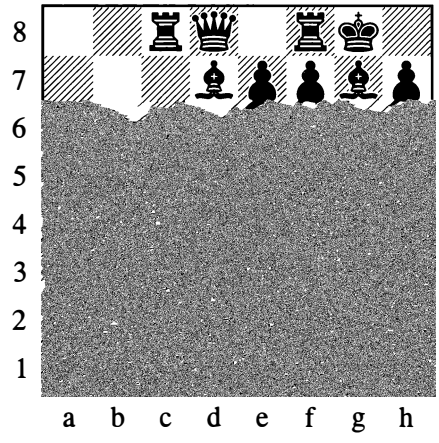
13.f4 has ideas of e4-e5, so Black normally responds with: 13... ' c7 14. l f3 i c6= Black will follow up with the usual ...b5.

13...b5 14. d5

14.a4 can be met with 14...bxa4! 15. i a2 (I5. i xa4 l xc3! and 15. l xa4 e5! 16. l e2 i b5 17. ' xd6 ' xd6 18.l xd6 l xe4 19.1 d5 l xb3 20.cxb3 l b8 are both unpleasant)



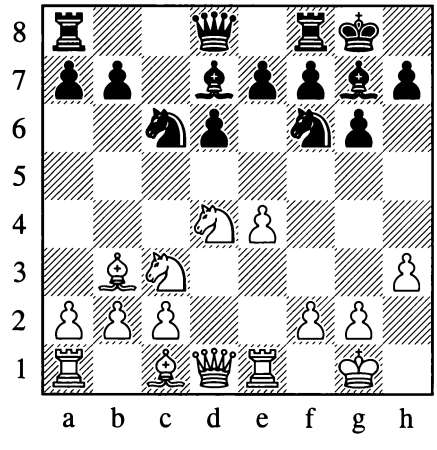
15... l b7! A good rerouting of the knight. 16. i cl l c5 (T e immediate 16... ' b6' is more accurate) 17. ' g3 ' b6 18. l d5? l xd5 19.exd5 i xd4! 20. l xd4 l b3 21. i xb3 Wxd4 22.c3 Wc5 23. i a2 l fe8 0-1 Gavrilakis - Miroshnichenko, Kallithea 2008.



14... c4 15. i cl l c5=

Black has no worries.

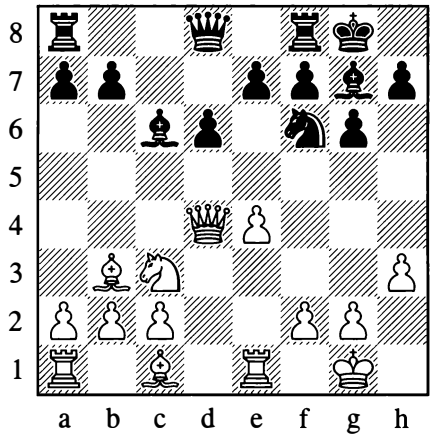
C233) 10. i b3



White defends his loose bishop, but after the following line I don't believe Black has any problems:

10... xd4 11. ' xd4 i c6

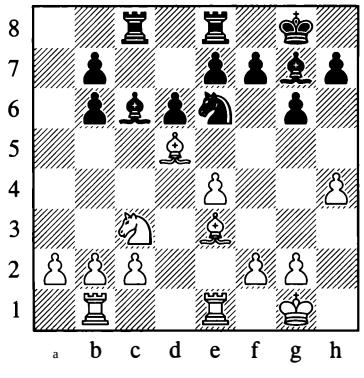
Our plan is to play ... l d7, ...b5 and ...a5.



12. \ d1

It seems odd to come all the way back with the queen, but now at least ... t d7-c5 won't come with a tempo as it would with the queen on d3. Also, the bishop on cl isn't obstructed as it would be with the queen on e3.

12. d3 t d7 13. i g5 t c5 14. e3 EeS 15. i d5 b6 16.Eab1 EacS 17.h4 t e6 1S. xb6 axb6 19. e3

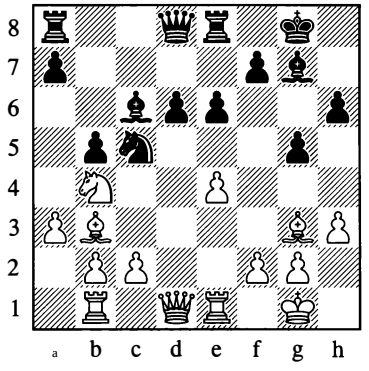


Middelburg - R. Fridman, Germany 2003. Here 19...b5N favours Black.

12. e3 t d7 13. d2 t c5= Aloyzas Kveinys has played this position as White a couple of times for some reason, but Black is already comfortable.

12...h5 13. t d5

13.a3 t d7 14. t d5 t c5 15. g5 EeS 16.Eb1 h6 17. h4 g5 1S. g3 e6 19. t b4 was played in McShane - Tiviakov, C a via (ol) 2004:



19... xe4!N looks strong. 20. xd6 t xb3 21.Exe4 b6! 22. e5 (22.cxb3 EadS+ regains the piece) 22...EedS 23. t d3 t c5 24.Ee3 t xd3 25.cxd3 EacS+ Black is better: with a rook on d5 White won't have any opportunity to attack our king.

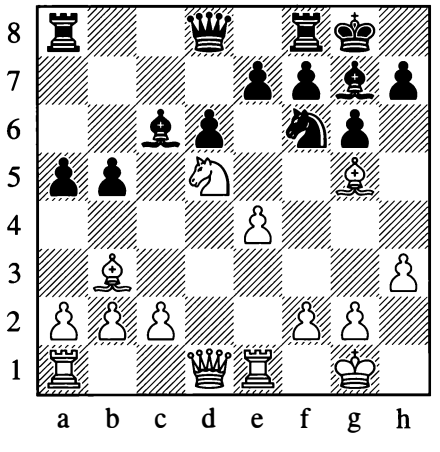
13...a5

T e immediate 13...e6= is also f ne.

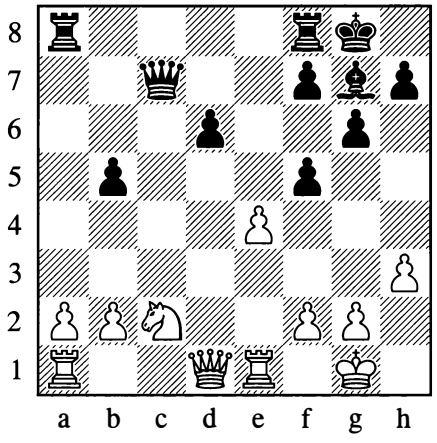
14. i g5

14.a3 was Su.B. Hansen - W. Watson, Germany 1999, when simplest is 14...e6N.

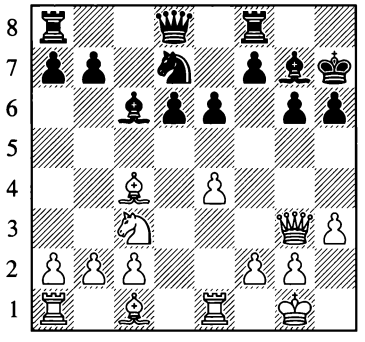
We have been following Wedberg - Carlsson, Linkoping 2001, and here I like:



14...a4!N 15. L e x 16. t b4 a b3
17. t xc6 Wc7 18. t b4 bxc2 19. t xc2 f i

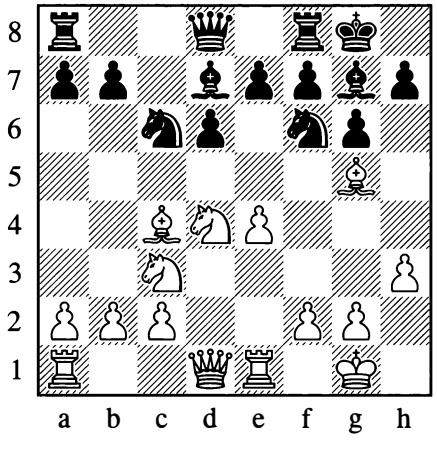


Black has a favourable position with the stronger minor piece.



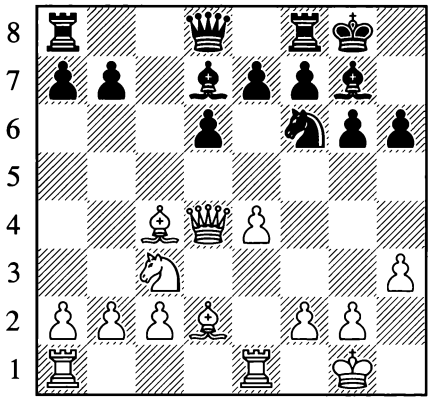
C234) 10. . g5

T is used to be the main line, but recently White has found himself with some problems.



10... t xd4 11.Wxd4 h6!

T is is the issue. White doesn't have a good square for his bishop k 'o mi .

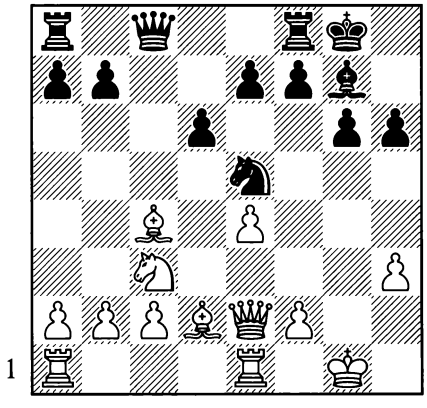


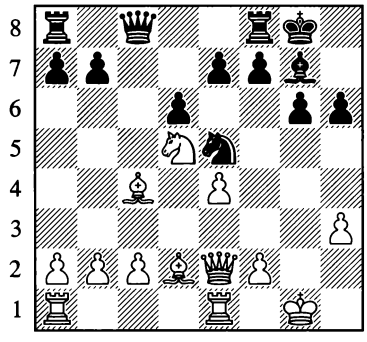
12... t g4! 13. d3?!

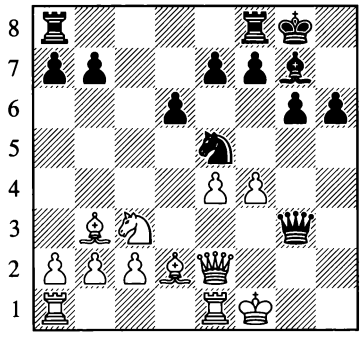
13 . d5 would stop Black's attack, but Black has a pleasant edge after 13... c6 14. ' d3 l e5 15.Wfl l xc4 16.Wxc4 1cS+.

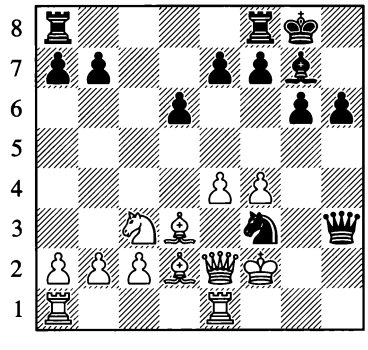
13... l eS 14. \ e2 x 3!

T e hit which refuted this line. It transpires that White's pieces are badly placed to defend his king. 6.W2 os ndp6W2 11L-s defs

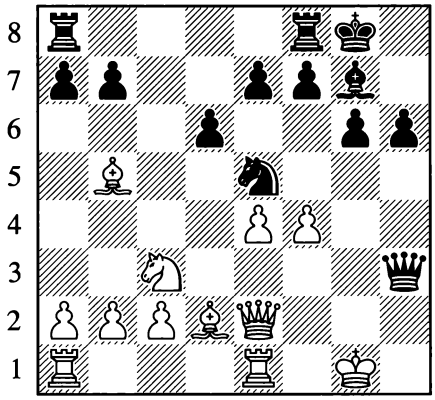


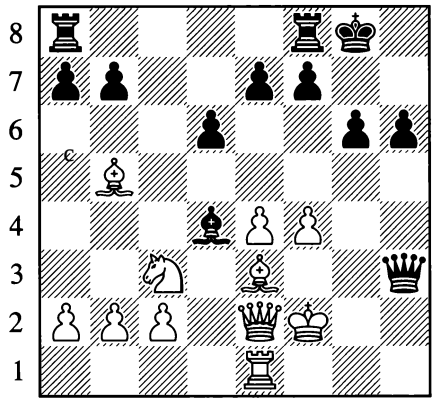






18... t xd2! 19.Wxd2 0 9.e5 has to be tried, but 19...Wh2t 20.me3 Wg3t 21.Wxd2 Wxf4t 22.md1 Wxe5+ must favour Black with four pawns for the knight) 19...Wh2t 20.me3 d4t! W ite's queen drops. k





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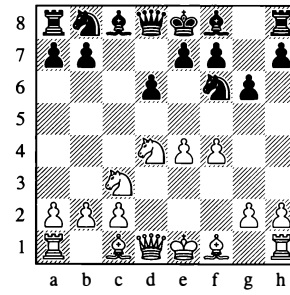
Chapter 18

Minor Lines



Levenfish Variation

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2. a d6 3.d4 cxd4 4. xd4 f 5. c3 g6 6.£4

6... c6

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E1) 9. ' a . g7 288
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E22) 10. . e3 . e7 11. ' d2 0-0 12.0-0-0 d5 295
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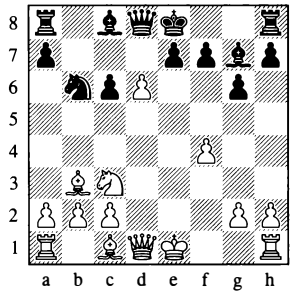
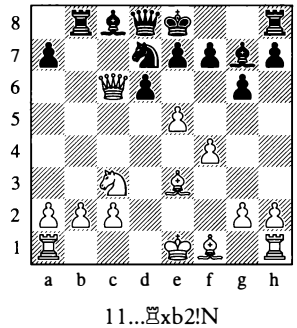
A) after 11.♗b3



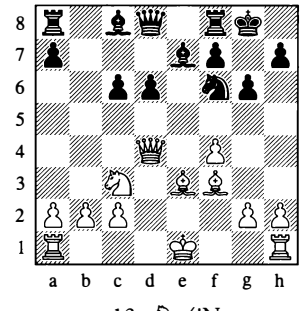
11...0–0!N

E11) after 11.♗e3



11...♖xb2!N

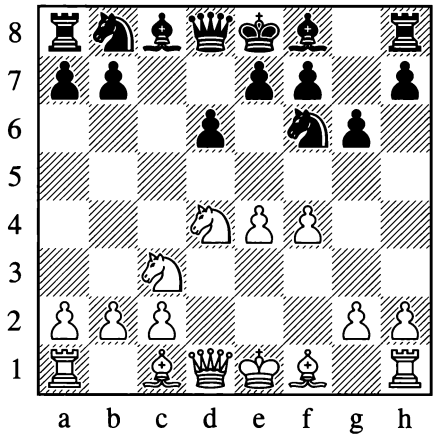
E21) after 13.♗f3



13...♘g4!N

1.e4 cS 2. i f d6 3.d4 c d4 4. i xd4 i f S. i c3 g 6.f4

T e Levenfsh used to be fairly popular but it has fallen into disuse for the past few decades. White has a few tricks but as long as they are sidestepped Black will have excellent chances.



6...♘c6

It is important to prevent a quick e4-e5. 6...♘bd7 has also done well, but I have chosen to recommend the traditional development of the knight to c6.

We will analyse fve options, the last of which is by far the most important: A) 7. . c4, B) 7. i b3, C) 7. . bS, D) 7. i f and E) 7. i xc6.

7. ! e2 is likely to transpose to some sort of Classical Variation. 7... ! g7 8. ! e3 (8. l b3 is variation B below) 8...0-0 We have reached the Rabinovich Attack in Chapter 13.

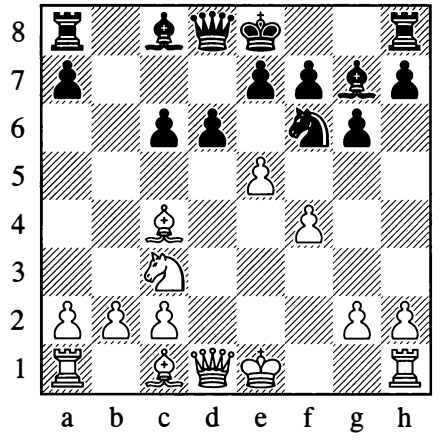
Also after 7. ! e3 ! g7 White has nothing better than transposing to some other variation, for instance with 8. ! e2 0-0 as above.

A) 7. . c4 . g7 8. t xc6

8. l f3 0-0 9.0-0 actualy reaches a position I mentioned briefy at the start of Chapter 17, where Black is doing well afer 9...b5!.

8...bxc6 9.eS

White's attack might look threatening but Black has everything under control.



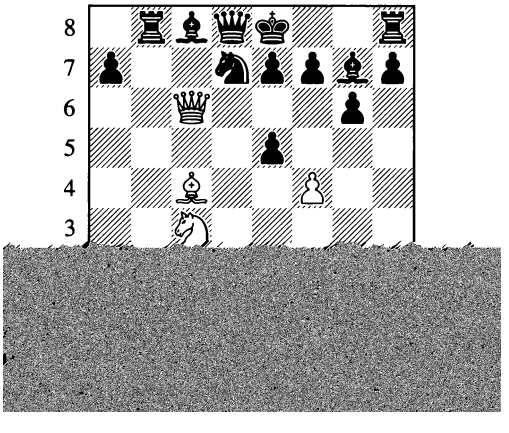
9... i d7!

T is move is rare but it simply looks good for Black.

10.exd6

10.e6N needs checkng but 10... f e6 11. ! xe6 ' b6 ' leaves White's king in more danger than Black's.

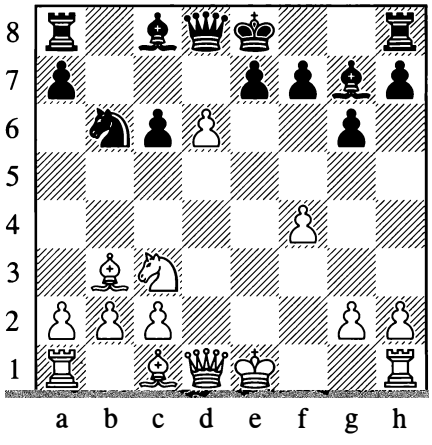
10. ' f3 has not been played in this exact position, but 10...dxe5 immediately transposes to a game which continued: 11. ' xc6 b8 12.0-0 In Ahmed - Onabogun, Abuja 2003, Black should have played:



Taking the pawn is risky: 14 . xa7 (14. j e3 t b6+) 14... t b6 15. j e2 (15. j b3 Wd4t 16. <h l md8+ Black totally dominates the board) 15...exf4 16. j xf4 j d4t 17. <h l e5 18. j h6 1e8 Black has more than enough for the pawn.

10... . b6 11. . b3

Here I found a strong novelty to improve on Krizek - Janda, Czech Republic 2006.



11...0-0!N 12. d e7?!

T is must be the critical test of Black's last move, but objectively it is a mistake.

Mter 12.0-0 exd6' the fact that Black has castled before recapturing the pawn means that W ite is unable to force a queen exchange with We2 t.

12...Wxe7t 13.We2 Wh4t 14.g3

14.Wf2? 1e8t 15. t e2 We7 is already winning for Black.

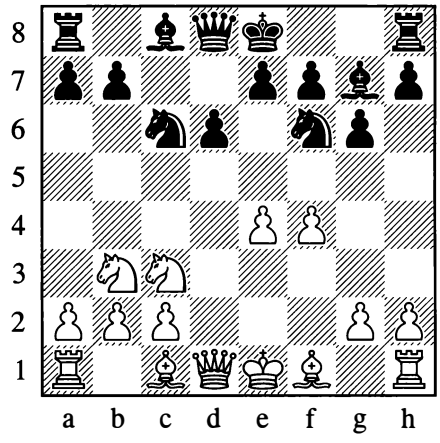
14...Wh3

White is in trouble, for instance:

15. . e3 . g4 16.W f Wh5 17.W f c5! 18.0-0 1fe8+

T e threats are ...1xe3 and ...c4, and 19. j xc5? loses immediately to 19... j xc3 20.bxc3 1e2.

B) 7. . b3 . g7



8. . e2

8. j d3 0-0 9.0-0 is examined in variation A of the next chapter.

8. j e3?!

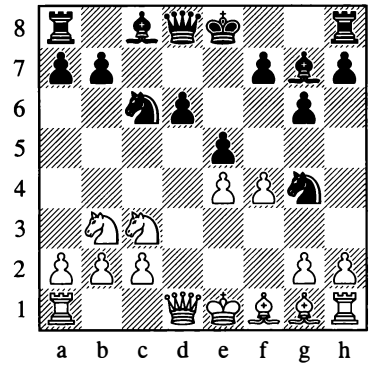
Black can exploit W ite's move order with:

8... t g4

8...0-0 9. j e2 would again transpose to the Rabinovich Attack - see variation B of Chapter 13.

9. j gl e5!

Carving out a strong outpost on e5.



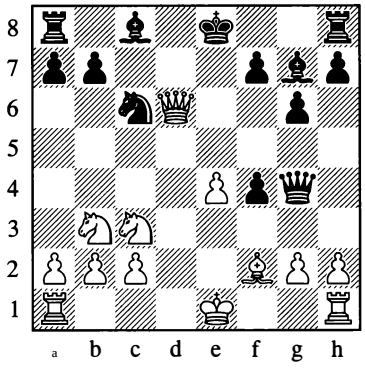
10. j e2

10. f e5 j xe5 I l.Wf3 was Ermenkov - Gaprindashvili, Albena 1985, and now a f er 11...Wh4t N 12.g3 Wf6' W ite's structure is rather ugly.

10. ' f exf4 l1.h3 is even worse; in Galioto - Todorov, Porto San Giorgio 2000, Black could have obtained a clear advantage: 11... l e3!N 12. . xe3 . xc3t 13.bxc3 f e3 14. ' xe3 ' h4t 15.g3 ' e7+ White has nothing to compensate for his lousy structure.

10...exf4 11. . xg4 ' h4t 12. . f2 ' xg4 13. ' xd6

Somehow White has scored 2/2 from this position. However, a f er the improvement...



13... . xc3t!N 14.bxc3 ' xg2

Black should be winning.

8...0-0

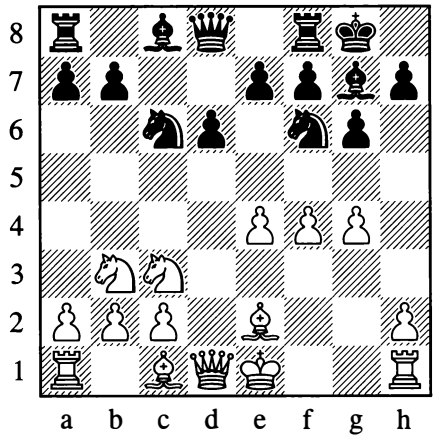
T is is likely to transpose elsewhere. Black may also try and cut across White's plans with 8... ' b6!?.

9.g4!?

For 9. . e3 see variation B of Chapter 13.

9.0-0 transposes to variation B1 of Chapter 11.

9. . f was tried once by Alexander Morozevich but a f er 9...a5!N 10.a4 ' b6 Black is doing well, as 11. ' e2 l b4! 12. . e3? fails to 12... l xc2 t.



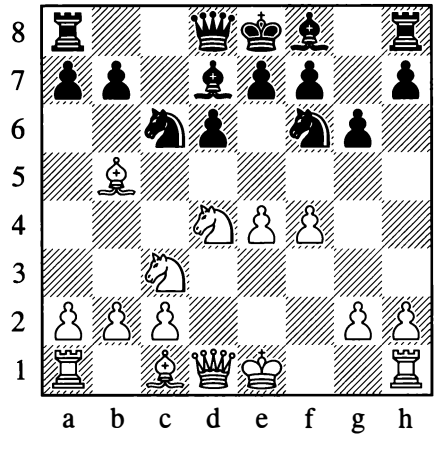
9...aS! 10.a4

10.g5 a4! was great for Black in Gershon - Lederer, Tel Aviv 1994. T e tactical point is that l1.gxf6N . xf6 12. l d2?? allows 12... . h4t 13. fl . h3t 14.mgl ' b6 mate!

10... l b4 11.gS l d7 12. l bS l cs;

White is rather overextended.

C) 7. . bS . d7



White's two main options are C1) 8. i e3 and C2) 8. . c6.

8. l xc6?!

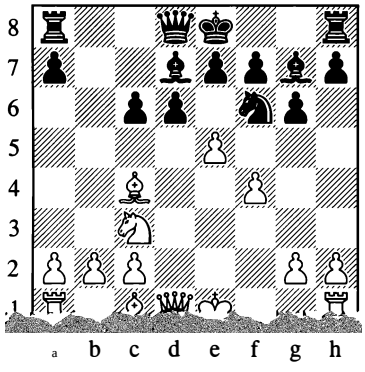
T is doesn't really f t in with White's previous move.

8...bxc6

8... xc6 is also completely fne.

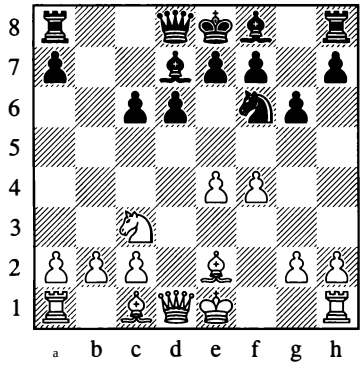
9. e2

9. c4 g7 10.e5?!



T is is what W ite would like to play, but afer 10...dxe5 I1. fe5 t g4+ he gets very little play for the pawn.

T e text move controls the g4-square but White's play does not make a good impression. He is efectively playing an inferior version of variation E, having played the tame e2 instead of the active e4-e5, while giving Black the free move ... d7.



9... ' b6!?N

T e straightforward 9... g7 is also fne.

T e text move prevents White from castling. White would probably have to try:

10.e5 dxe5 I1. fe5 t d5 12. t xd5 cxd5 13. ' xd5 Eb8

Black has excellent play for the pawn.

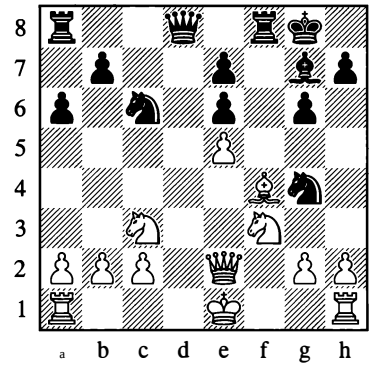
8. t f3 g7

Here too, Black is comfortable, for example:

9. ' e2 0-0 10.e5?!

T is advance is the whole point of the Levenfsh Variation. Unfortunately for W ite, it hardly ever works.

10...dxe5 I1. fe5 t g4 12. f4 a6 13. c4 e6! 14. xe6 fe6



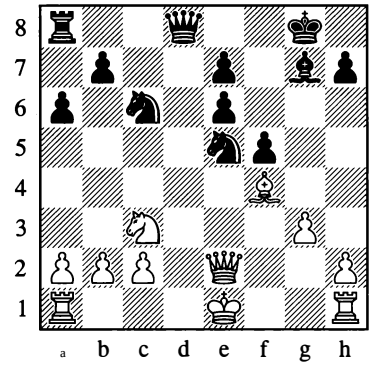
15.g3N

15. d2? was played in S a - Ivanovic, Vrbas 1980, when 15... t d4!N 16. t xd4 ' xd4 would have given Black a decisive advantage.

T e text move is necessary to hold onto the e5-pawn, at least temporarily. I like the following idea for Black.

15...Ef5!? 16. t h4 t gxe5! 17. t xf5 gxf5

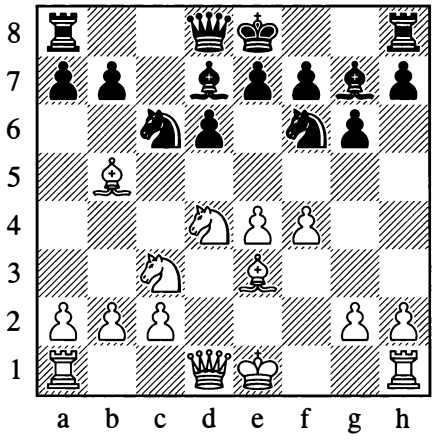
Black has excellent play for the sacrifced exchange, for instance:



18.0-0 ' b6t 19. ' e3 ' xe3t 20. xe3 t c4 21. cl t b4

Black will have two pawns for the exchange and his pieces will dominate the board.

C1) 8. . e3 . g7

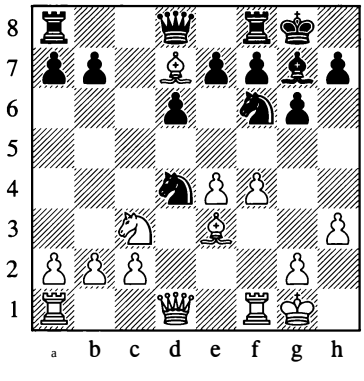


9.0-0?

T is has been the most common choice but it leads to big trouble for White.

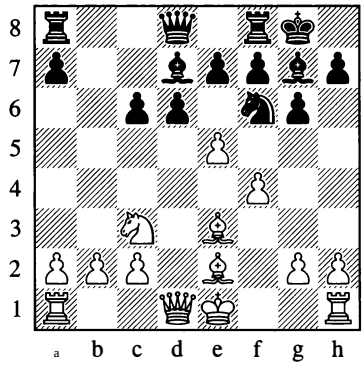
9. ' d2 is the lesser evil but White has mixed up several plans, and normal play will give Black the better chances.

Likewise White could try 9.h3 but 9...0-0 is more comfortable for Black, not least because 10.0-0 t xd4 wins a pawn after 11. . xd7 (or 11. . xd4 . xb5 12. t xb5 t xe4')



11... t xc2! 12. ' xc2 t xd7+.

Ater 9. t xc6 bxc6 10. . e2 White has prevented our ... ' b6 idea, but 10...0-0 is comfortable for Black. It is worth adding that I1.e5?! still doesn't work:

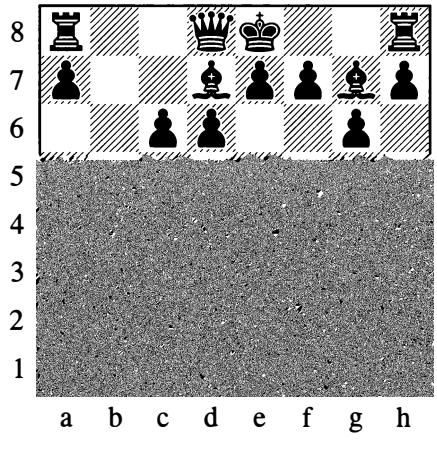


11... t d5! 12. t xd5 cxd5 13. ' xd5 . e6 14. ' e4 . f5+ We regain the pawn with a good position.

9... l g4! lo. l xc6

10. . xc6 t xe3 is no good for White.

10...bxc6 11. . d4



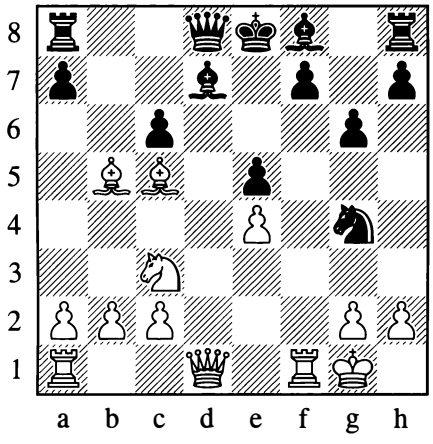
11...e5! 12. f e5 dxe5

White is dropping material. His trickiest attempt is:

13. . c5 . f !?N

This is the most practical reply although

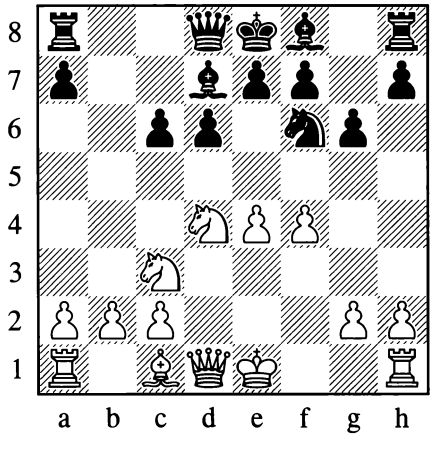
13...cxb5, as played in Do T i T uy - Phan Nguyen Mai, Vung Tau 2004, should also be winning.



14. L x f 15. . e2 t e3 16.Wd6 t x f 17.Wxe5t We7 18.Wxe7t xe7 19. x f . e6

Black has a big advantage in the endgame.

C2) 8. . xc6 bxc6



T is is the most sensible continuation but White is unable to crash through.

9.e5

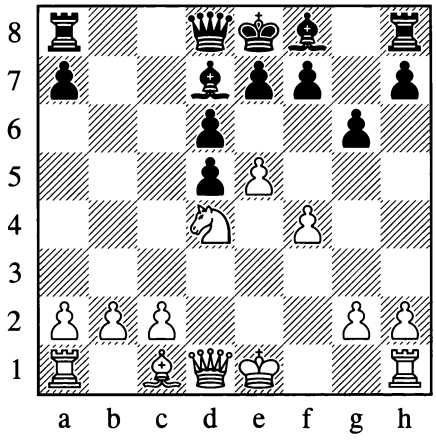
Again the only logical follow-up.

9... i d5! 10. t xd5

10. c e4?! . g7 11.exd6 0-0 12.0-0 exd6 is simply good for Black, as 13. c xd6? loses a piece to 13... . g4! 14.Wxg4 . xd4t 15. i h1 Wxd6.

Another game continued 10.exd6 c xc3 11.bxc3 c5! 12.dxe7?! Wxe7t 13. c e2 : ds 14 . d3 . c6 15.Wg3 . g7 and White was already in big trouble. T e further error 16.0-0? was played in Johansson - Nilsson, Stockholm 1961, when Black could have won a piece with 16...Wxe2N 17. e1 : d1.

I0... a d5



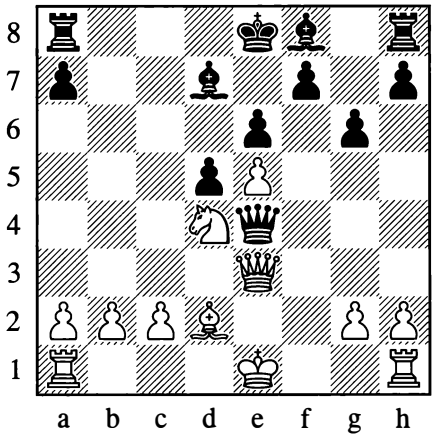
11.♕f3

11.exd6 e6! is an important point; Black maintains his structure and has a pleasant edge with the bishop pair.

11.0-0 . g7 12.exd6 (Again 12.Wf3 can be met with 12...e6) 12...Wb6 13. . e3 Wxd6+ Black had his customary edge in L. Horvath - B. Papp, Hungary 2010.

11...e6 12. . d2 d e5 13. f e5 Wh4t 14.W f We4t 15.We3

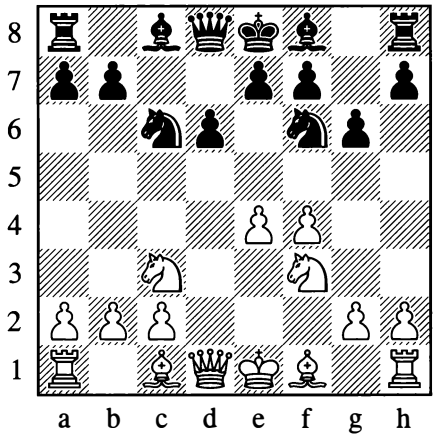
T is was all seen in the old game Chaplinsky - Tolush, Riga 1952. Here Eddie Dearing, quoting Attila Schneider, recommends:



15... ' xg2!N 16.0-0-0 : c8 17. : dgl ' e4 18. ' xe4 dxe4 19J el : c4+

Black's powerful bishops give him fne prospects in the endgame.

D) 7.♘f3



T is has recently been tried by some strong players. White opts for some sort of hybrid of the Open Sicilian and Grand Prix Attack.

7... g7 8. d3

8. j c4 0-0 reaches a position discussed briefy on page 266 in the note on 7. f4.

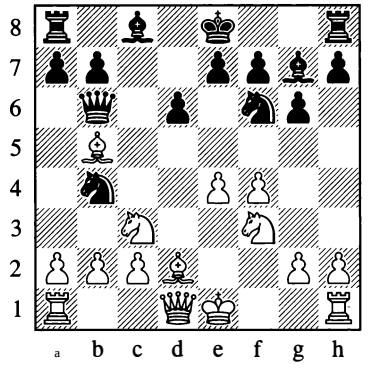
8... ' b6!?

T is is the critical test of White's set-up. T e idea is to make it as awkward as possible for W ite to castle.

9. ' e2

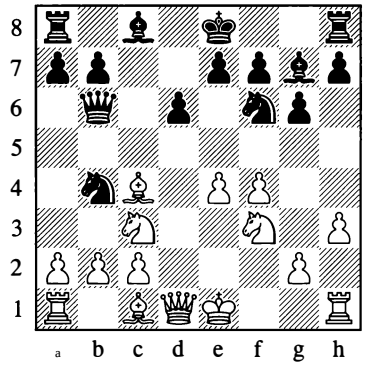
White hopes to develop his bishop on e3 afer defending the b2-pawn. Other moves are no better:

9. j d2 t b4!?N seems a logical novelty. 10. j b5t (Attempting to castle with 10. ' e2 0-0 11. j e3? fails to the surprising 11... t xc2 t! 12. j xc2 ' xb2 13. d2 t xe4 t! 14. t xe4 ' b4t 15. dl j xal+)

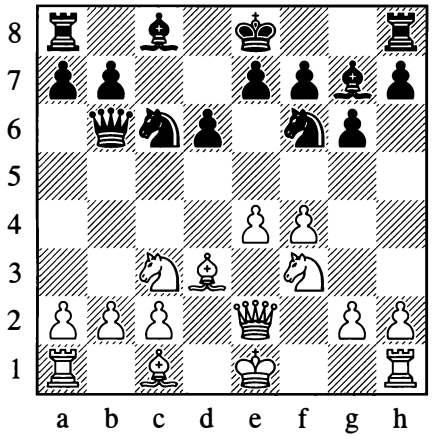


10... j d7 11. j xd7 t t xd7 12.a3 t a6! T is looks strange but Black is guarding the c7-square against a possible t d5. 13. : b1 t cTt

9.h3 takes control of g4 but cedes the g3-square. Once again 9... t b4!?N is promising: 10. j c4 (10. t a4 ' a5 11. t c3 t xd3 t 12.cxd3 b5+; 10. j e2?! t h5! is rather aw k ard. White could try 11. j b5t but 11... ' f8! 12.a3 t a6! leaves W ite in trouble.)



The text move is better although 10... t h5! still favours Black, as 11. t e2 can be met with 11...d5!.



9...0-0 10J bl

White defends b2 and so prepares i e3.

White can o fer a queen trade with 10. " e3 but this doesn't put any pressure on Black at all. 10... \ xe3t 11. i xe3 t b4 (l1...b6!?) 12.h3 b6 13.a3 t xd3t 14.cxd3 i b7 15 J 1 A draw was agreed in Hubner - Sosonko, Wijk aan Zee 1986, although Black had the easier game.

10. \ f is similar, but White misses the chance to develop his bishop while recapturing. 10... \ x f t 11. < xf2 In Hojjatova - Menzi, Batumi 2010, 11... t b4N would have given Black fne prospects.

10. i d2 has also been played but Black can simply grab the pawn. 10... \ xb2 11. : b1 \ a3 12.0-0 a6 13. < h1 In Kraus - Z. Haba, Czech Republic 2012, the logical 13...b5N would have left White with little to show for his pawn defcit.

10. t d1

This can be met with the same formula as in our main line.

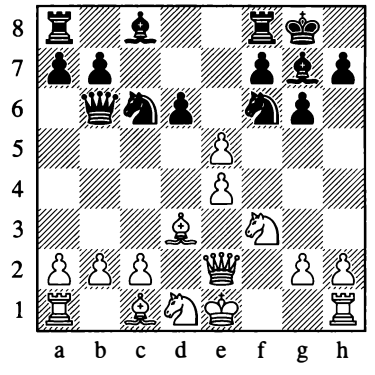
10...e5!

10... t b4!? also makes some sense.

11. f e5

11. i e3 t d4 12. \ d2 t g4 13. i xd4 exd4 14.0-0 i d7 Black already has a nice edge but it's amazing how quick y the experienced GM playing White loses. 15. : e1 : fe8 16.h3 t f6 17. \ f2 i c6 18.b3 t xe4 19. i xe4 i xe4 0-1 Art. Minasian - Komljenovic, Oviedo 1993.

T e main move was played in Mrdja - Rezan, Sibenik 2009. As I pointed out on ChessPublishing, Black can improve with:

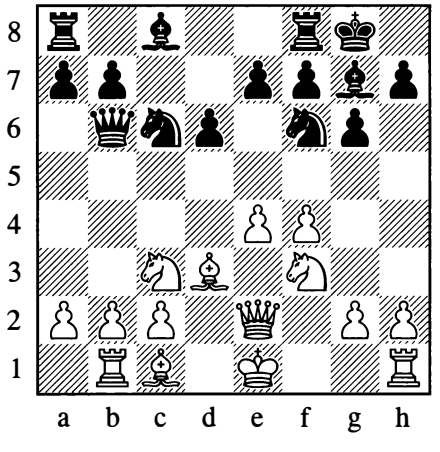


11... t xe5!N

The stronger recapture.

12. t xe5 dxe5 13. i e3 \ b4t 14. i d2 \ d6 15.0-0 t h5

Black has the easier game.



10...e5!

I like this classic way of playing against White's e4- and f4-pawns.

11. e3

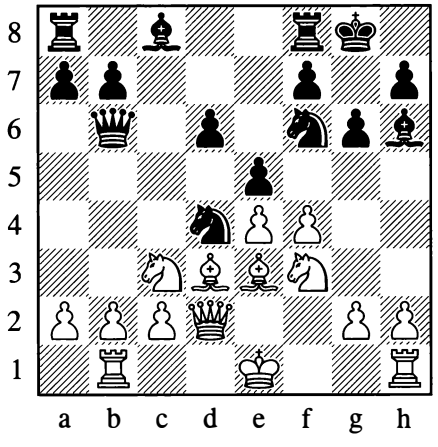
T is doesn't work out too well, but 11.Wf2 Wxf2t 12. c xf2 L b4 also favours Black.

11... t d4 12.Wd2N

Mter 12. j xd4? exd4 13. L d1 1e8 14. c f1 L xe4 Black was completely winning In Konev - Tamayo, Benasque 2000.

12... h6!

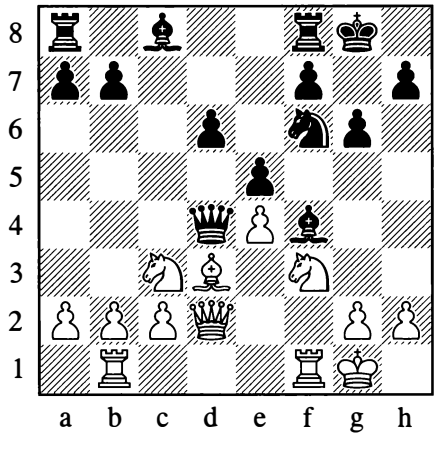
T is keeps W ite under pressure.



13.0-0!

13. f e5?? j xe3 14.Wxe3 L xc2t would be embarrassing for White.

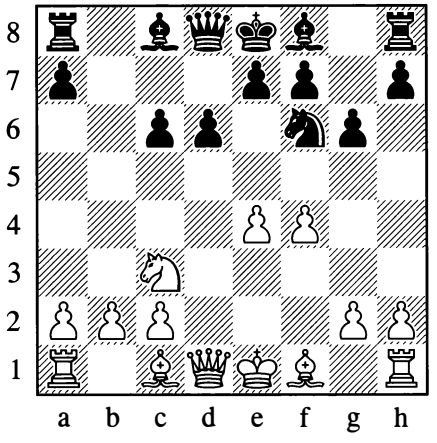
13... xf4! 14. xd4 Wxd4t!



15. t xd4 xd2 16. l x f exd4 17. L b5 e6

Black's strong bishops give him the better prospects.

E) 7. l xc6 bxc6



T is is White's normal continuation. He improves Black's structure but hopes to crash through in the centre before we can complete our development. If his attack fails then Black can count on a pleasant middlegame.

8.e5

T is is White's only logical continuation, without which his last move makes no sense.

8... l d7

White may try E1) 9.W f or E2) 9.exd6.

9. j c4 j g7 takes us back to variation A.

E1) 9.W f

Black has an array of choices. Defending the c6-pawn is okay, but I prefer the more dynamic possibility of sacrifcing it for the initiative.

9... g7

9...dxe5!?

T is is likely to transpose to our main line, but it also sets a subtle trap.

10. xc6

10. j c4 j g7 transposes to the note on 10. f in variation A.

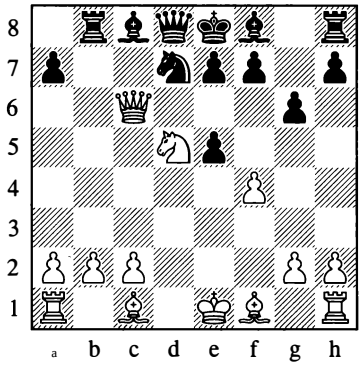
T e best continuation is 10. j b5 j g7 11. j xc6 l b8 - see variation E12 below.

10... l b8 11. l d5?

11. j e3 j h6!? is complicated but Black is certainly not worse.

11. f e5 j g7 also feels more pleasant for Black.

T e advantage of this move order for Black is that this knight jump looks tempting but is, in fact, seriously fawed.

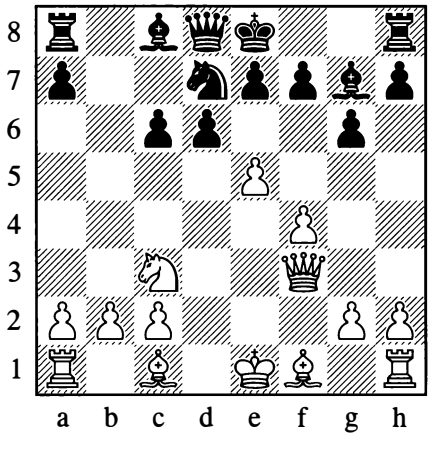


11... j g7 12. j c4

12. l c7t ' fS gets nowhere for White and he will have to take care not to lose the knight, for example after 13. j d3? j b7 14. c4 l cS.

12...0-0 13. j e3 j b7-+

White was dropping material in Istrati - Gara, Oropesa del Mar 1999.



At this point E11) 10.Yxc6 is the obvious move, but we should also consider E12) 10. . b5!?.

10.exd6 0-0! 11.dxe7?! is an extremely hot pawn to grab. l1... xe7t 12. c f2 (12. j e2 l e8-+ is a chronic pin) In L. Lukacs - Szakaly, Hungary 2011, 12... l c5N 13. j e3 l eS would have given Black a clear advantage.

E11) 10.Yxc6 Eb8 11. . e3

11.exd6

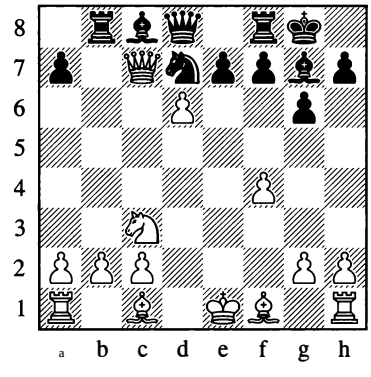
As usual in these variations, tak ng the pawn on d6 is asking for trouble.

11...0-0 12. c7

Other moves are no better:

12. j a6 l b6 13. j xcS ExcS 14. b7 Vicente Soler - Rodriguez Rey, Spain 19S4. 14... xd6N 15.0-0 j xc3 16.bxc3 l xc3+

12. j e3 l xb2 13.0-0-0 Ouran Vallverde - Rodriguez Rey, Spain 19S4. 13... l b7N 14. j d4 j xd4 15. l xd4 exd6+



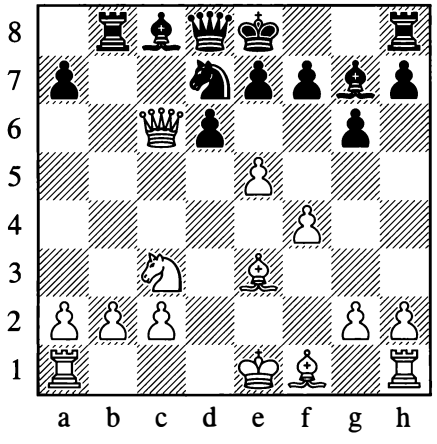
12... e8!?N

Keeping the queens on makes sense to me, although 12...exd6 13. xd8 l xd8+ is also tempting; despite the queen exchange, Black still has a dangerous initiative. A correspondence game which reached this position didn't last long: 14. j c4 l eSt 15. ' n a6 16. l d1 j b7 17.c3 d5 1S. j b3 d4 19.f5 l c5 20. f g6 hxg6 21. j f4 l bdS

22.h4 le4 23. c7 lde8 24. t f2 le2 0-1
Zimniok - John, email 2001.

13. e2 exd6 14.Wxd6 b7

Black has fantastic compensation.



11...Exb2!N

Black has castled in a couple of correspondence games but capturing the pawn must be critical.

12.< b5

12.0-0-0 lb8 13. xa7 lb7 14. d4 dxe5 15. xe5 0-0+

12. t d5!? is tricky but 12...lb8! seems to favour Black. (12...0-0 13.Wxc8 is W ite's idea, although even here Black is fne afer 13...Wxc8 14. t xe7t h8 15. t xc8 lxc8.)

12...0-0 13.Wc3

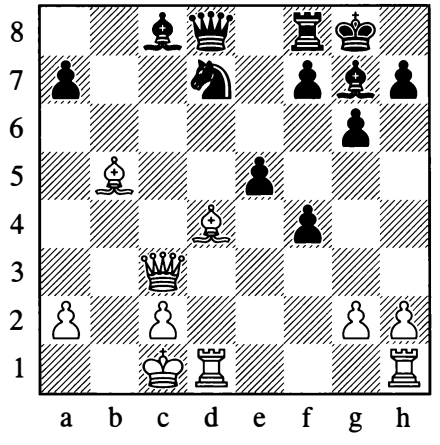
T is is a typical computer line and I'm not convinced that it's really playable for a human.

13...Exb5 14. h b5 dxe5 15.0-0-0

15.0-0 exf4 16. d4 e5 17. xa7 Wg5+ gives Black a strong pawn mass and a kingside initiative.

15...exf4 16. i d4 e5

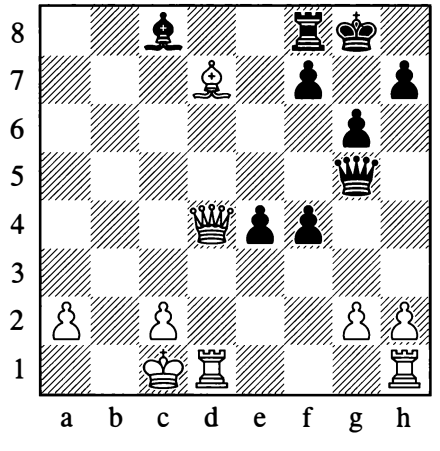
16... t f6 17.Wc5 e6 also looks reasonable for Black. T ese positions are obviously messy but we have the far safer king, so White's position is the more di f cult to handle.



17. i xa7 e4 18. i d4

T e following line caught my imagination.

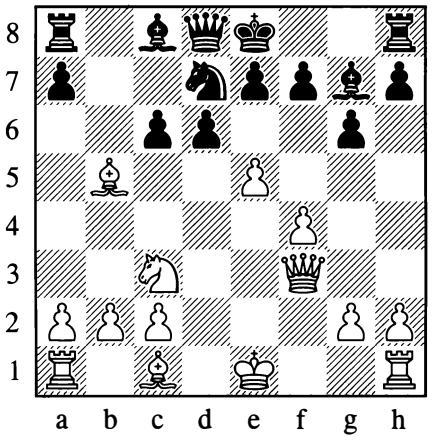
18... i xd4!? 19.Wxd4 Wg5 20. h d7



20... f t 21.< bl h d7 22.Wxd7 Eb8t 23.< a! f

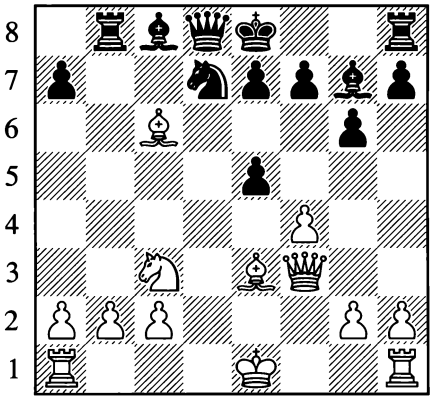
Despite White's extra rook he certainly isn't better. Black's connected passed pawns are dangerous while White has to watch out for his king's safety. My engine evaluates the position as dead equal.

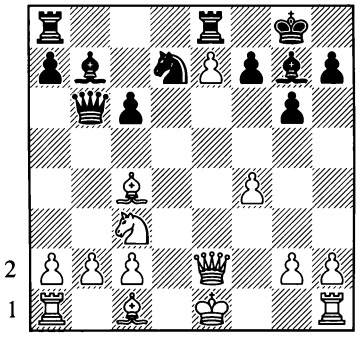
E12) 10. b5!?

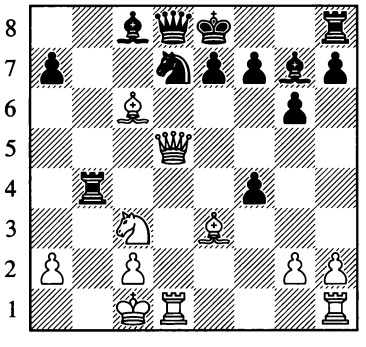


h prefers

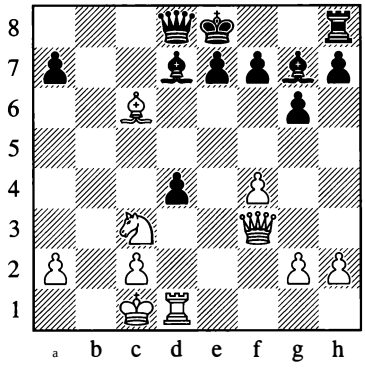
17.h3 t h5+ Black had easily





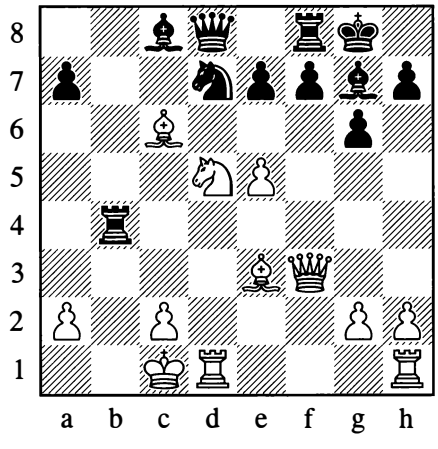


14 Jhd7!N i xd7 15.l d1 baes out and is probably the most sensible approach. Best play continues: 15... l d4! 16. i xd4 exd4



17. i xdlt Wxd7 18.Wa8t Wd8 19.Wxd8t (19.Wc6t < f8+) 19... i xd8 20. t b5 i c8 Black has the better ending but objectively it should be a draw.

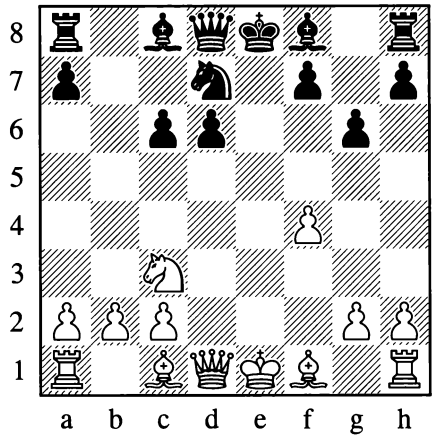
14...0-0 15. t d5



15... l xe5! 16. t xb4 Wa5 17.Wf4 t xc6 18. l xc6 Wa3t 19. i d2 Wc3t 20. ' cl Wxc6

Black had an overwhelming advantage in Szafranski - Vassia, email 2000.

E2) 9.exd6 exd6

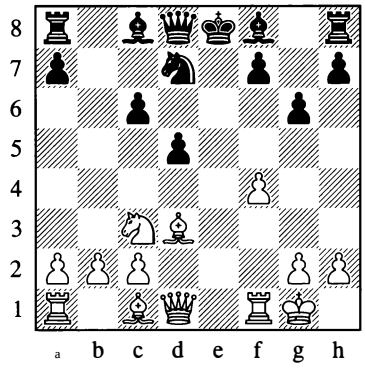


It is worth considering **E21) 10.♕d4**, but the most popular continuation has been **E22) 10.♗e3**.

10. i e2 puts absolutely no pressure on Black. 10...d5 l1. i e3 (11.0-0 i g7 12. i e3 0-0+) 11... i g7 12. i d4 T is was Estrada Degrandi - Toran Albero, San Rafael 1951, and now 12...0-0N leaves Black with a typical advantage; the b2-pawn is especially vulnerable.

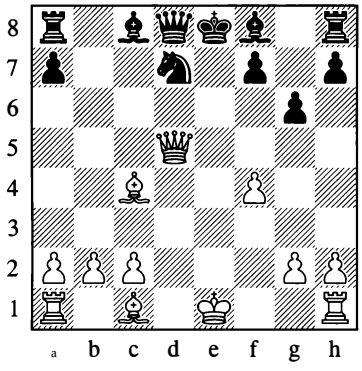
Likewise 10.Wf3 d5 is simply excellent for Black.

10. i d3 gives us a pleasant choice be t een 10... t c5+ and the more typical: 10...d5 11.0-0



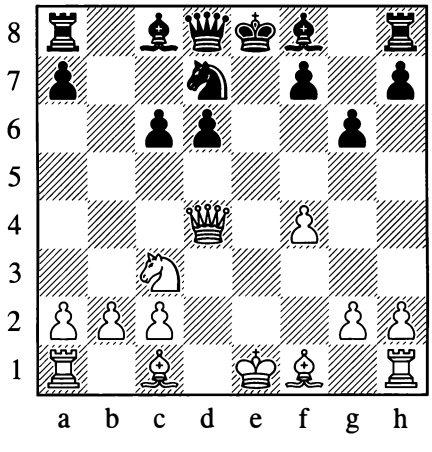
11... i c5 t N 12. < h1 0-0+

10. i c4 doesn't prevent 10...d5! either. T e only critical line to check is I 1. t xd5 cxd5 12. ' xd5 as in Fejzovski - Goulenok, Paris 1993, but Black can refute his opponent's play with:



12... i b4t!N 13.c3 ' h4t 14.g3 (14. i fl i c5!-+; or 14. dl 0-0 15.cxb4 t b6 16. ' c5 Ed8t 17. c2 t xc4 18. ' xc4 ' f2t and W ite can resign) 14... ' e7t 15. i e2 (15. dl 0-0! also gives us a decisive attack) 15...EbB 16.cxb4 i b7 17. ' d4 0-0 IB.Efl EfeB 19.Ef2 t f6 Black has a crushing attack.

E21) 10.Wd4



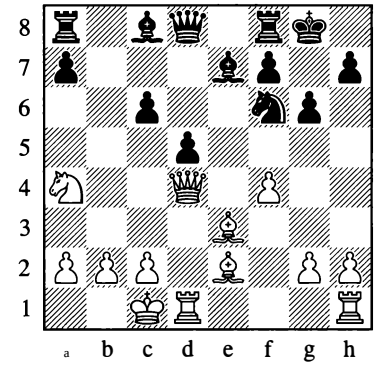
T is was the young Kasparov's attempt but, despite his famed preparation, he was quickly worse.

10... t f 11. . e3 . e7 12. . e2 0-0

White has managed to force Black to develop his bishop to e7 rather than g7, but this isn't a big deal for us. White's f4-pawn gets in the way of his attack and his pieces don't coordinate well.

13. . f

13.0-0-0 has been played in a couple of computer battles but Black's play is straightforward: 13...d5 14. t a4 (14. ' a4 ' c7 15.Ehfl a6 16.h3 EbB 17.a3 EeB IB. i d4 t d7 19. i bl i d6 20. i f3 i b7 21. i a7 EaB 22. i gl t c5 23. i xc5 i xc5+ saw Black take over completely in el-shaddai - crgiorgio, engine game 2013)



14... t e4 15. i f3 i f6 16. ' xe4 dxe4 17.ExdB Exd8 18. i xe4 i e6 19. t c5 i d5+ Black eventually converted the extra exchange in gereksiz - gamestar, engine game 2012.

13.0-0 d5

Our plan is simply to advance our central pawns, and there doesn't seem to be much White can do about it.

14. ' a4

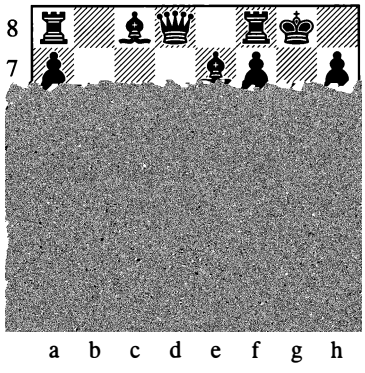
14. ' d2 EbB 15. i xa7 Exb2 16.Eabl Exbl 17.Exbl c5 18. i f3 occurred in Klykow - Gaponenko, Wroclaw 2004, and after IB...d4!N Black completely dominates.

14.b4 i f5 15.Eacl saw White attempting to slow the central advance in Gireman - Shashwat, Nagpur 2012, but 15...a5!N

would have been winning for Black.

14...c5

14...EbB!? is also good for Black.



15.Ead1

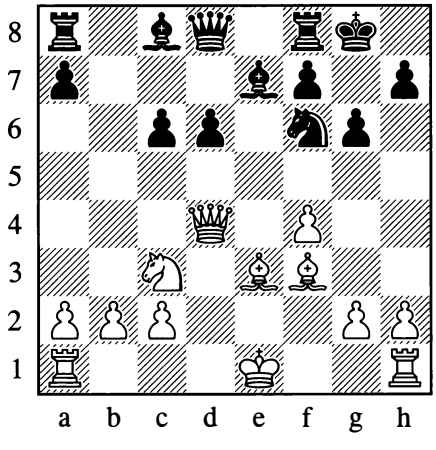
15. f3 EbB 16.Wxa7 Eb7 17.WaB Wd7+

15...d4 16. f2

In Shtyka - Kadatsky, Internet 2006, the easiest way forward would have been:

16...Wb6!N

T is simply picks up the b2-pawn as 17. l b5? d7 1B.Wb3 EabB only makes matters worse for White.



13.. . ⅊g4!N

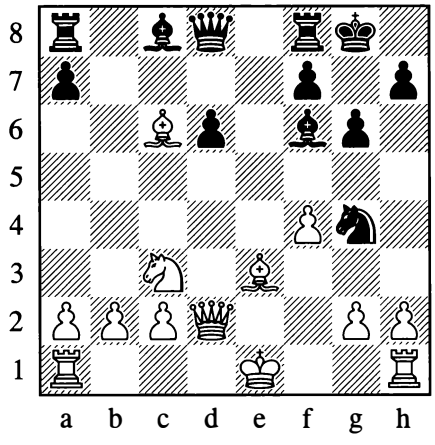
13...d5 was played in Kasparov - Balashov, Moscow 19B1, when a draw was soon agreed. Black can get a good game by using the same plan as shown above when White castles. However, I think my novelty is even stronger.

14. . c6

14. xg4 xg4 15.0-0 f6+ is comfortable for Black.

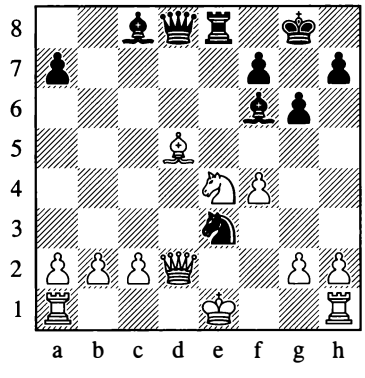
14... f 15.W d

A er 15. xaB xd4 16. xd4 We7t 17.Wd2 d5! White's king is unlikely to survive.



15... t xe3 16.Wxe3

16. xaB? loses by force: 16...EeB 17. l e4 d5! 1B. xd5 (1B. l xf6t Wxf6 19.W f l c4 is no better)

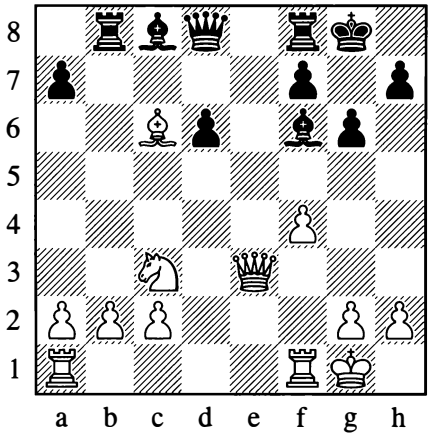


1B... l xg2t! 19. ' tf2 (19.Wd1 Exe4 20. xe4 g4t 21.Wcl xb2t 22.Wxb2 Wxd2-+) 19...Exe4 Black has a crushing initiative.

16..J b8 17.0-0

17. l d5 a6!+ traps White's king in the centre of the board.

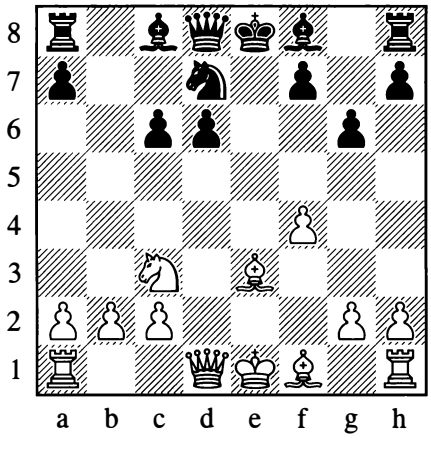
17.0-0-0 ' a5 18.Exd6 e6= also gives us a dangerous attack.



17...Wb6 18.Wxb6 :xb6 19. i d5 :xb2 20. l e4 i d4t 2 U hl :xc2i

Black has good winning chances in the ending with the extra pawn.

E22) 10. i e3

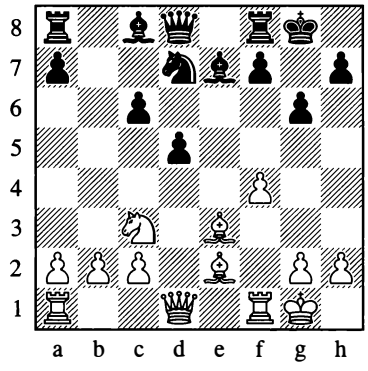


White threatens 11. d4 so it makes sense for us to develop and castle as quickly as possible.

10... i e7 11.Wd2

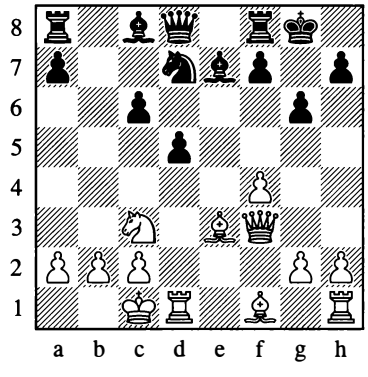
T is is White's usual approach as he wishes to castle queenside.

11. e2 prepares short castling but puts absolutely no pressure on Black. 11...0-0 12.0-0 (Or 12. ' d2 d5 13.0-0 Ee8 14. f3 d6 15.mh1 Eb8 16.b3 t:c5+ Patterson - Berza, email 2010.) 12...d5



13. ' e1?! Ee8 14. ' f2 T is was Gnauk - Ersoez, Germany 2003, and after 14... h4!N 15. ' f3 ' e7 16. f2 xf2t 17. ' xf2 t:f6 18.Eae1 ' b4= Black has taken over.

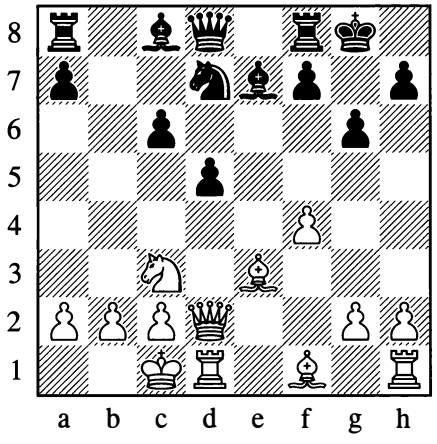
W ite has also tried 11. ' f3 but once again Black gets a fne game by following the same plan. 11...d5 12.0-0-0 0-0 T e queen may look more active on f3 than on d2 but, after the knight goes to f6, the threat of ... g4 may force W ite to move his queen again.



13.g4 (13.h4 t:f6 14. e2 h5 15. ' g3 Lindinger - Golubev, Hamburg 1999. 15... t:g4N 16. d4 c5 17. e5 d4+) 13... f6 14. d4 xd4 15.Exd4 Eb8 16.Ed2 ' b6 17.b3 ' b4

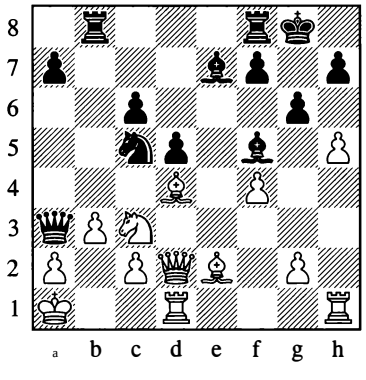
18. i e2 l f6+ T e legendary Dutch GM was taking over in Tarjan - Timman, Venice 1974.

11...0-0 12.0-0-0 d5



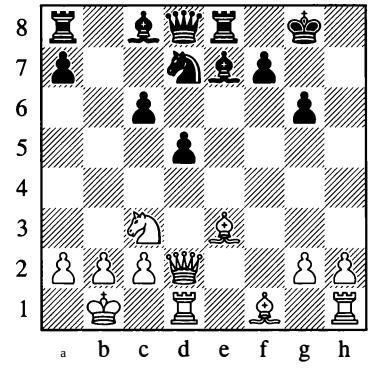
Practice has shown that White's attack is not dangerous. Black controls the centre and can aim to either advance his d-pawn or attack along the b-fle. Just as in the last note, White must decide which pawn to advance in order to generate an attack. We will consider E221) 13.h4 and E222) 13.g4.

Another good example continued: 13. i e2 ' aS 14.h4 :b8 IS.hS l cS 16. i d4 ' b4 17.b3 i fS 18. c b2 ' a3t! 19. c al (19. c xa3 l xb3t 20. c b2 l xd2t+)



19... i f6! 20. l b1 (20. i xf6 i xc2! was the point, when Black is better after both 21. :b1 i xb1 22. :xb1 :xb3 and 21. ' xc2 l xb3t) 20... i xd4t 21. ' xd4 ' b4 22. c b2 ' xd4t 23. :xd4 i e4+ Berecz - Lovakovic, email 2010.

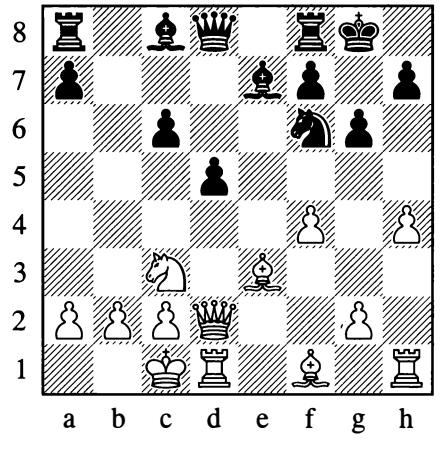
Finally, 13. fS has also been tried. 13... :e8 (13... l eSN 14. f g6 f g6+ also looks reliable) 14. f g6 hxg6 IS. c b1



In Bogdanovich - Matveev, Moscow 200S, IS... i f6!N would have been safest. 16.h4 ' e7 17. i d4 :b8 18.hS ' b4 Our counterplay comes in time, and a f er 19.b3 ' xd4 20. ' xd4 i xd4 21. :xd4 gS+ Black has a promising endgame.

E221) 13.h4 l f!

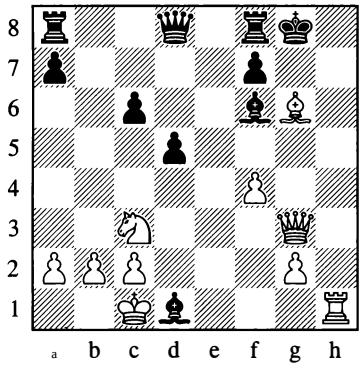
From here the knight controls hS and aso prepares to jump to g4 to harass the e3-bishop.



14.hS

T is pawn sacrifce is typical against the Dragon but on this occasion it doesn't work. However, it's hard to o f er White any better alternatives.

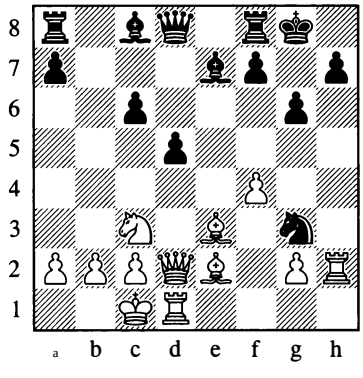
14. j e2 c g4 (Playing à la Golubev with 14...h5N, blocking up the kingside and winning f5 as an outpost, is also superb for Black) 15.h5 c xe3 16.Wxe3 j f6 17.hxg6 hxg6 18. j d3 j g4 19.Wg3 j xd1 20. j xg6



20...Ee8! 21. j h7t i f8 22. c xd1 Eb H Black's king was quite safe as W ite could not attack on the dark squares in starcraf c ii, - squeek, engine game 2013.

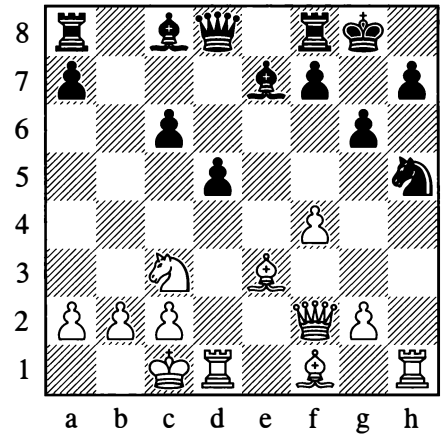
14... l x S lS. f

15. j e2 c g3 16.Eh2 occurred in S. Christensen –]. Nielsen, Aalborg 1999.



After 16...Ee8N White has nothing to show for his pawn defcit while the k ight is strongly placed on g3. Black is simply winning.

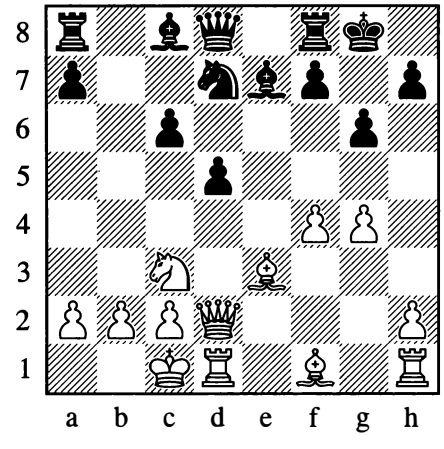
T e text move was played in Salinnikov - Kargin, Novosibirsk 1999. Here I would prefer:



ls... l f N 16. . e2 l lg4 17. h g4 h g4 18.gdel . f +

With a clear extra pawn.

E222) 13.g4



13... aS

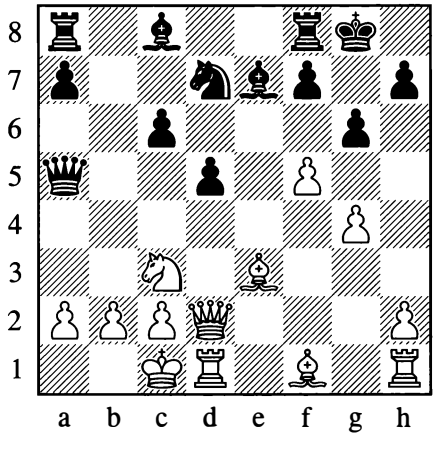
If you wish to keep an eye on the kngside you can aso start with 13...Ee8!?. T e idea is to wait for 14.h4N before jumping our k ight over to the kngside with 14... c f6 15.g5 c h5+.

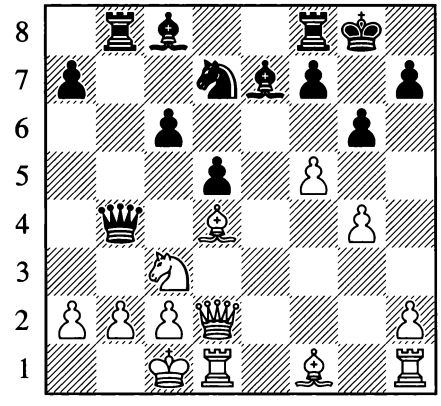
White avoided this outcome with 14.g5 in I. Popov - Ulko, Moscow 2007, but his last move loses fexibility on the kingside, and 14... c5N 15. d4 xd4 16.Wxd4 Wb6' leaves Black with a comfortable advantage.

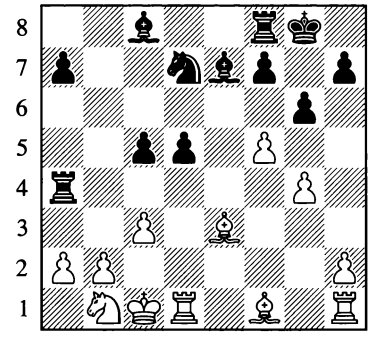
14. £

14. i b1 was played in Friedel - Steigman, San Francisco 2000. After the natural 14.. J bSN 15. i al EeS Black completely dominates the board while White's attack is getting nowhere, for example: 16. d4 c5+; or 16.h4 t f6 17.g5 t g4 IS. d4 c5+; or 16. g2 Wb4 17.Wc1 f6+.

14.Wf2 doesn't slow our attack either. 14...EbS! 15. d4 Magaldi - Roselli Mailhe, Uruguay 19S6. 15... dS!N A peculiar-looking move, but an extremely strong one. T e main point is to threaten ...c5 without White being able to counter with t xd5 hitting the e7-bishop. Black is already winning.







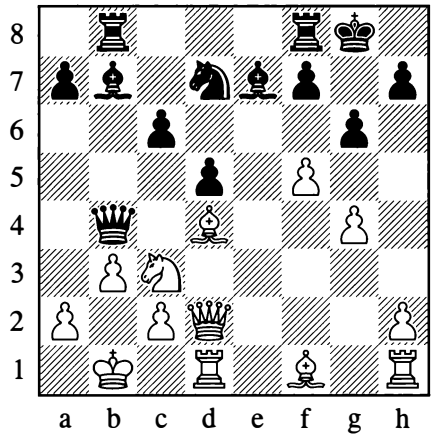
14...Eb8 15. . d4

15. f g6 f g6 16. [illegible]

16... c5 is likely to transpose to the note to Black's 15th move above.

17. i bl

17.h4? loses to 17...c5. Mter the text move the critical line appears to be:



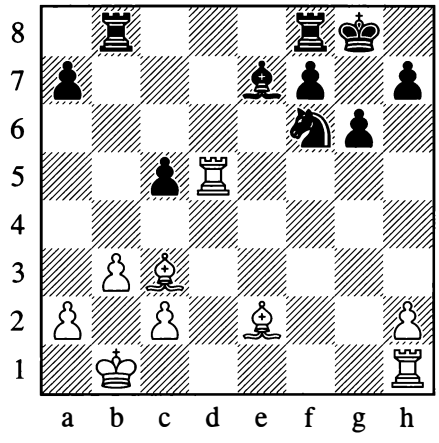
17...c5 18. l xd5! L d5 19. . c3 ' xg4

19... g5!? looks like a forced draw: 20. ' xg5 ' xc3 21. xd5 ' f3 22. f g6 hxg6 23. d6 (23. gl ' f2 24. hl ' f3=) 23... ' xhl 24. xg6t f g6 25. ' xg6t ' h8 26. ' h6t ' g8=

20. . e2

20. ' xd5 I f6 21. xf6 xf6+ Black has the safer king and the threat of a rook to d8 is awkward for White.

20... ' x f 21. ' xd5 ' xd5 22J xd5 l f



23.♗xf6 ♗xf6 24J : c5 bc8

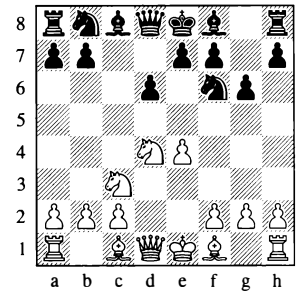
T e game should probably end in a draw, but Black can press for a while with no risk. His bishop can go to c3 to keep the white king boxed in, and he also has the more mobile pawn majority.

Conclusion

T e Levenfsh was popular a few decades ago and a fair amount of theory built up on it. However, its reputation remains dubious and accurate play promises Black the better chances in most variations. In recent years a few strong players have tried 7. l f3 to reach a reasonably active position without much theory. However, 8... ' b6!? is a convincing answer which cuts across White's approach and gives him immediate problems to solve.

Chapter 19

Minor Lines



6th Move Deviations

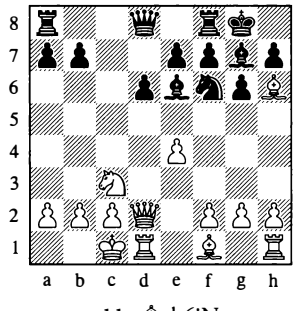
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3

5...g6

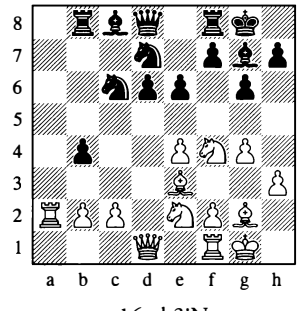
A) 6.♗d3 301
B) 6.h4 302
C) 6.♘d5 303
D) 6.♗b5† 304
E) 6.♗g5 ♗g7 7.♕d2 ♘c6 305
E1) 8.0–0–0 307
E2) 8.♘b3 308
F) 6.h3!? ♗g7 310
F1) 7.♗e3 0–0 8.♕d2 ♘c6 310
F11) 9.g4 311
F12) 9.0–0–0 312
F2) 7.g4 ♘c6 314
F21) 8.♘de2 314
F22) 8.♗e3 315

E1) after 11.♗h6



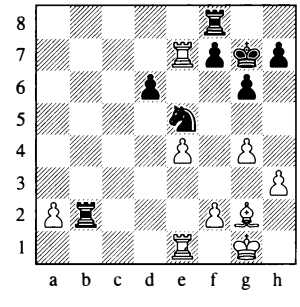
11...♗xh6!N

F21) after 16.♘df4



16...b3!N

F22) after 21.♖xe7



21...♖a8!N

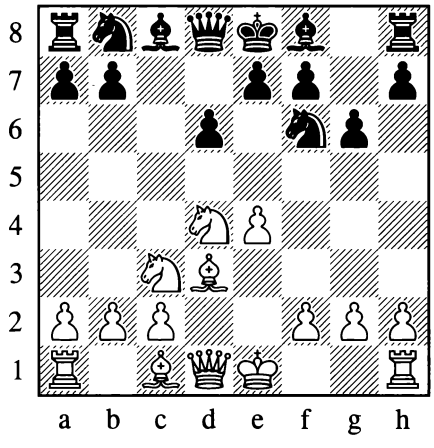
1.e4 cS 2. t f d6 3.d4 c d4 4. t xd4 t f S. t c3 g

T e lines examined in this chapter are rare and generally not dangerous, bur it's still useful to have some idea of how to deal with them. We will analyse A) 6. i d3, B) 6.h4, C) 6. t dS, D) 6. i bSt, E) 6. i gS and F) 6.h3!?.

6. c f doesn't put any pressure on Black. 6... c c6 7. i c4 i g7 8.0-0 0-0 9.h3 a6=

6. c de2 is a strange move order to play the Fiancherro Variation as Black is not obliged to develop his knight to c6. However, we may as well simply transpose with 6... c c6 7.g3, as covered in Chapter 16.

A) 6. i d3



This is an odd square for the bishop. I like the idea of immediately exploiting it with:

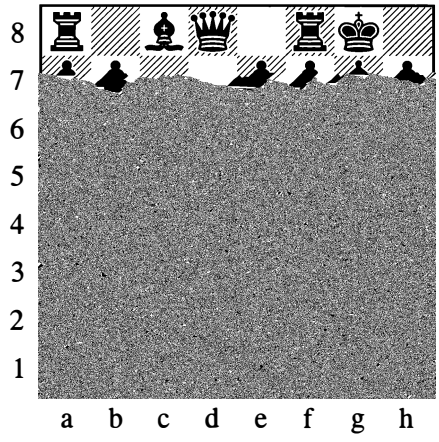
6... t c6 7. t b3

7. i e3 c g4! is awkward for White.

7. c xc6 bxc6 is obviously fne for Black.

7... i g7 8.0-0 0-0 9.f4

T is is at least a consistent follow-up.



9...aS!

Also interesting is:

9...b5!?N

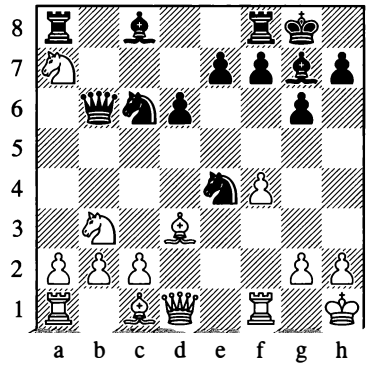
Borrowing an idea from the Classical where W ite plays f2-f4 prematurely.

10. t xh5

10. i xb5?! actually transposes to a position examined in Chapter 11 - see 10. i xb5?! in the notes to variation B1 on page 183.

10... ' b6t 11. c hl t xe4 12. c xa7

12. i xe4 ' xb5 13. ' f3 i d7 must favour Black with his central pawns.



12...d5 13. i xe4

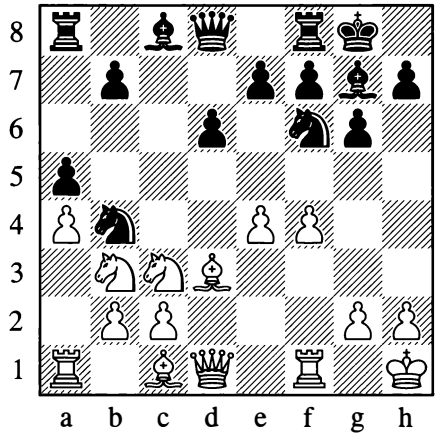
13. t xc8 t f2t! 14. lhf2 ' x f 15. c xe7t t xeTt

13... d e4 14. t xc8 l f c8 15.c3 ' b5

Black's queenside pressure yields su f cient compensation and White will struggle to complete his development.

10.a4 l b4 11. i hl

Here I found an improvement over Gonzalvez Perales - Sanchez Saez, Mislata 2012.

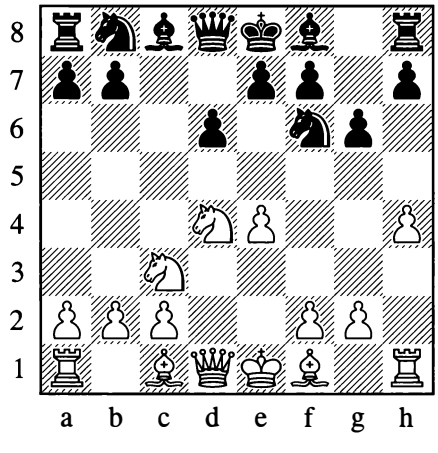


11... ' b6N

Black's position looks preferable, based on the following line:

12. £ d5! 13. f g6 hxg6 14.exd5 t f d5 15. l xd5 t xd5;

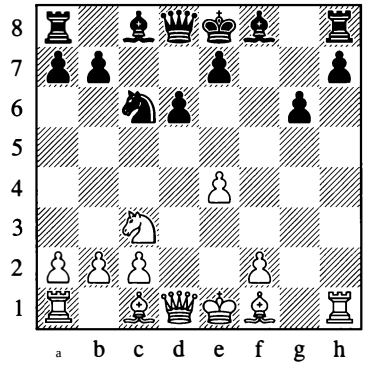
B) 6.h4



T is looks like co feehouse chess and is a move best le f for blitz.

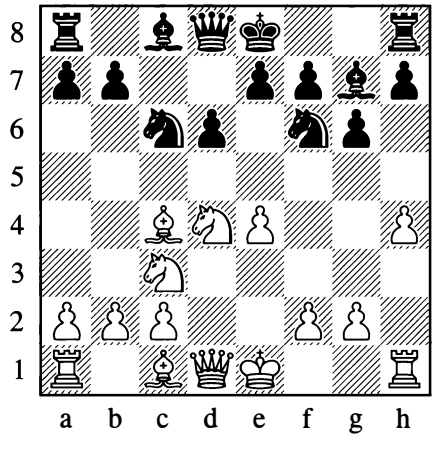
6... t c6 7. c4

7.h5?! is really going all-in. 7... l xh5 8.g4 l xd4 9.gxh5 l c6 10.hxg6 f g6



11. h6?! ♗xh6 12 J h6 ' b6 Black already had a deCiSive advantage in Velimirovic – W. Watson, Bor 1986.

7...♗g7

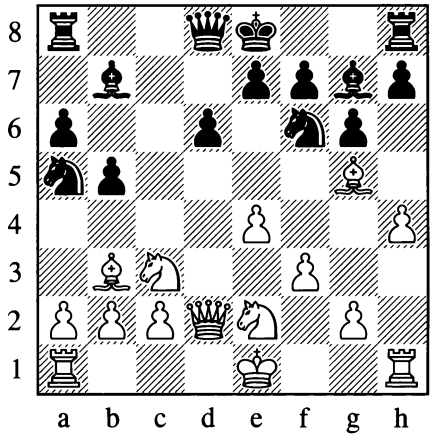


8. t de2

8. l xc6 bxc6 9.e5 is nothing to worry about. In Meszaros - Parkanyi, Eger 1990, 9... l g4!N 10.exd6 exd6 would have been better for Black.

8...a6 **9.f3** b5 10. b3 b7 11. g5 t a5 12. ' d2

T is position was reached in Manea - Corsino, Vienna 2012. I would continue:



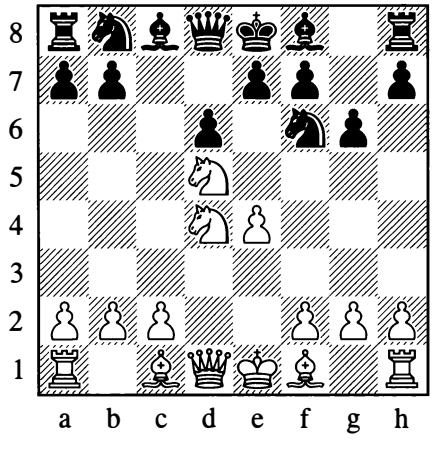
12...♖c8N

Black has the best possible version of a Dragadorf (Dragon-Najdorf hybrid).

13. h6 h 6 14 J 6 l xb3 15. c b3 i b6

Both kings are stuck in the centre for the time being, but Black can continue to make progress on the queenside while White's kingside play isn't really getting anywhere.

C) 6. l d5



T is move only makes sense if we capture on e4.

6... l xd5!?

T is attempts to refute the knight jump.

6... g7

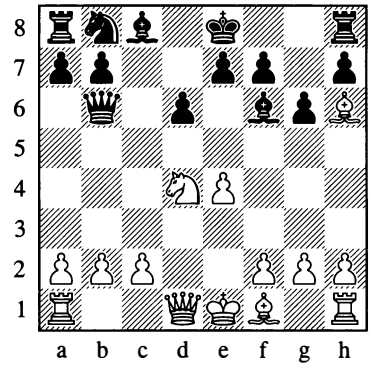
T is straightforward developing move is also sensible.

7. 4 xf6 t

7. b5 t is more common in practice but 7... d7 8.0-0 0-0 puts absolutely no pressure on Black.

7... xf6 8. h6 i b6!

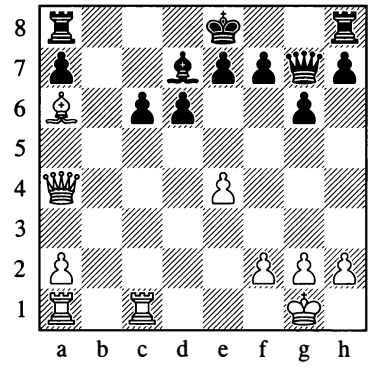
Black wins a pawn. Ireland's Andrew Smith has attempted to prove White's compensation three times, but has yet to save even half a point.



9.c3 i xb2 10. b5 t d7

10... 4 d7 also favoured Black in A.P Smith - Tiviakov, Port Erin 2001, but I like the text move - which was also Simon Williams' suggestion - even more. Interestingly, both of Smith's subsequent opponents went for the bishop move and followed the same route until move 20!

11.0-0 4 c6 12. i a4 xc3 13. 4 xc6 bxc6 14. c4 g7 15.Efcl i e5 16. xg7 i xg7 17. a6



17...c5!N

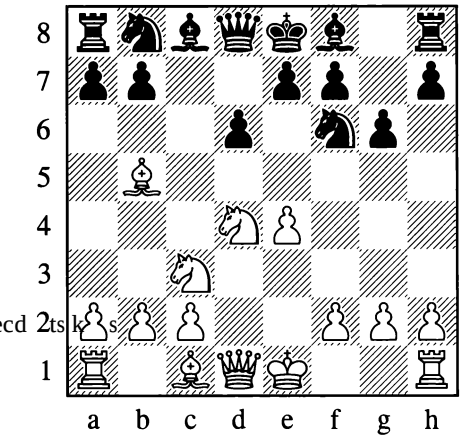
17...Eb8 18..fl 0-0 19.'xa7 Efd8' led to f rther defeats of Smith at the hands of Rchard Webb and James Holland, in 2009 and 2010 respectively. T e text move is even stronger though.

18..b5 .xb5 19.'xb5t <f8 20.'b7 Ed8

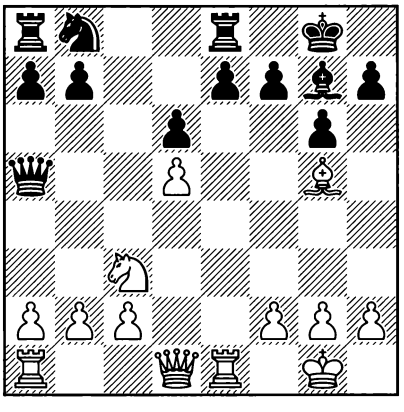
Black follows with ... ' e5 and ... g7, with a winning position.

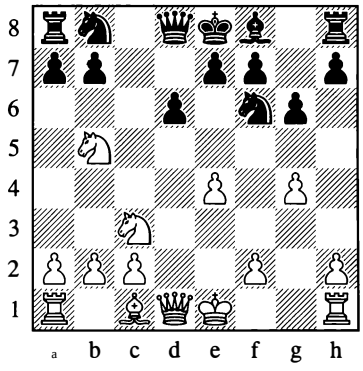
7. b5t

7.exd5?! ' a5t wins a pawn for acwhecd 2ts k s

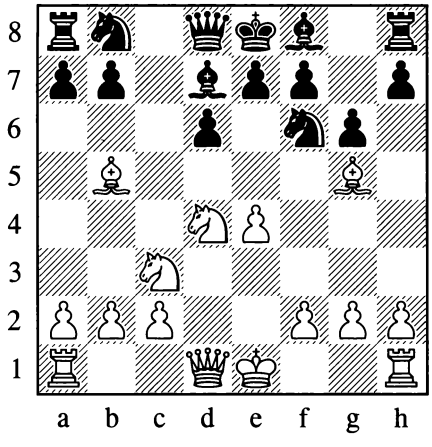


If White is so keen to check the king, then why not do it on move three?





8...a6N 9. l d4 j g7 10.g5 l fd7 I1.h4 l c6'
White has wasted two tempos exchanging light-squared bishops. If you are at all worried about his kingside attack you can simply delay castling and play on the queenside.



7...♗g7 8.♕e2

8.♗xd7† ♘bxd7 9.0–0 0–0 is also fine for Black.

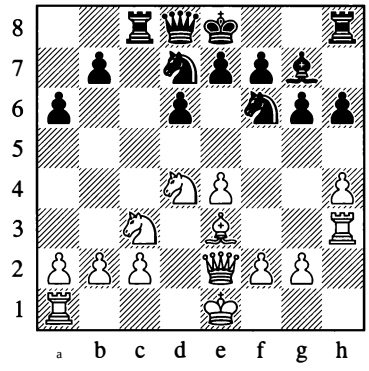
S...a6

T ere are plenty of good alternatives but we might as well be consistent.

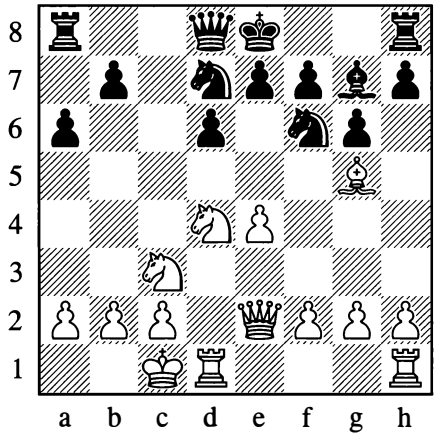
9. . bd7t t bxd7 10.0-0-0

10.f4?! has been played a few times but 10... l h5!N followed by ...h6 wins the f4-pawn.

10.h4 lc8 11.l h3 is an exotic way to deter the exchange sacrifce on c3. In Frolov - Golubev, Kev 1995, l1...h6!N would have left White without a good square for his bishop: 12. j e3 (12. j xf6 l xf6'; 12. j d2 b5')

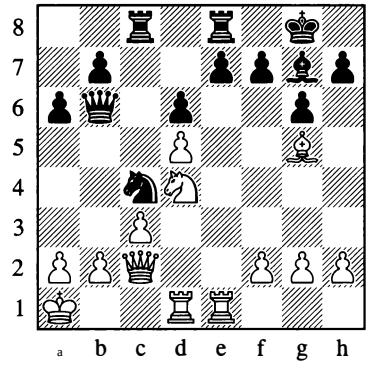


12...l xc3! 13.bxc3 l xe4 14. j xh6 l xc3!'



lo.. J s l1.f4

11. l d5 was played recently but disastrously: 11...0-0 12. c bl l xd5 13.exd5 l e5 14.c3 1 b6 15. c al l c4 16.l hel l fe8 17. 1 c2?



17... xd4! 1S.8xd4 4 a3 19.We4 4 c2 t! 0-1 Cigan - Cvitan, Slovenia 2014.

11..J3xc3!

Defusing White's initiative and opening up W ite's king.

12.bxc3 Vt7

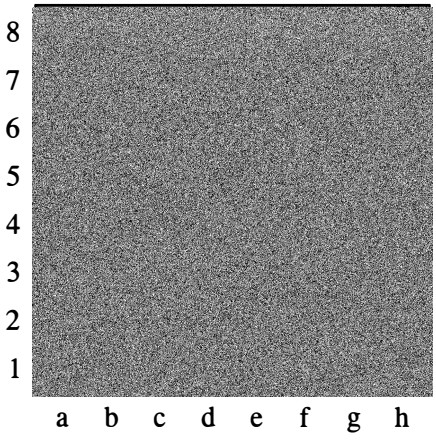
I actually faced this line recently, although only in rapid, and chose 12...Wa5 which also looks decent.

13. h

Also a fer 13. 4 b3 4 b6 14.8d3 0-0 15.W f 4 a4 16.8hd1 8cS 17.e5 4 eS 1S.Wh3 fS 19.8e1 dxe5 20. f e5 4 xc3+ Black was obviously doing well in A. Mueller - Aleksandrov, email 2010.

13... h 14.V!f

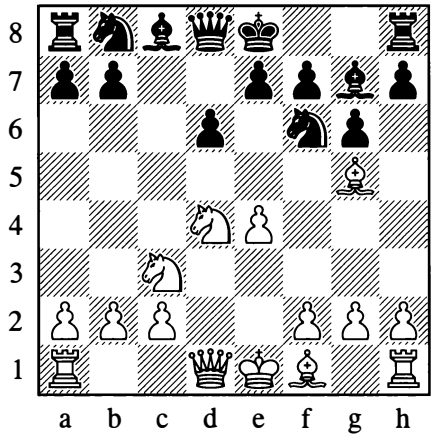
We have been following Grover - B. Smith, Rethymnon 2009. I suggest continuing as Aleksandrov did in the aforementioned game:



14... t b6N

With superb compensation.

E) 6. g5 g7



7.Vd2

White has tried several other moves, none of which are especially t a ing.

7. b5 t d7 transposes to variation D above.

7. c4 transposes to variation A of Chapter 17.

7. e2 transposes to variation A of Chapter 11.

7.f3 4 c6 S. 4 b3 e6 leaves White with nothing better than 9.Wd2, which transposes to 9.f3 in the notes to variation E2.

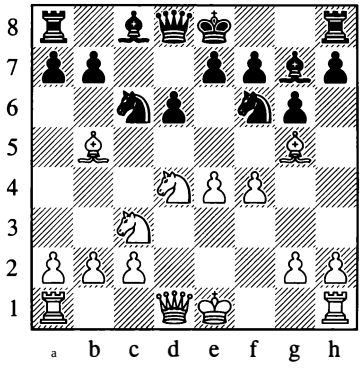
7.f4

T is is a fairly aggressive set-up, but it's hard to believe White will be able to crash through with e4-e5 with his king stuck in the centre.

7... 4 c6 S. b5

S. 4 b3 e6 9.Wd2 transposes to 9.f4 in the notes to variation E2 below. (9.Wf3 8cS' is hardly an improvement for White.)

S. 4 xc6?! bxc6 9.e5 is premature: 9... 4 g4 (T ere is also 9...dxe5 10.WxdSt <xdS 11. f e5 4 g4 12.0-0-a t <eS' when White has insu f cient compensation for the pawn) 10.W f Wb6 11.0-0-0 8bS+



S...0-0!N

T is temporary sacrifce gives White serious problems.

9. c xc6

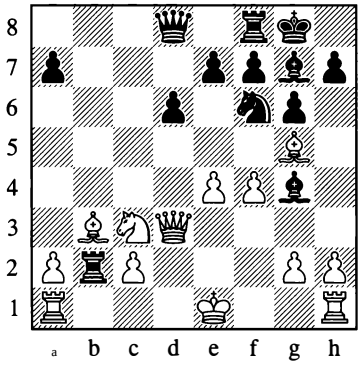
9.e5 j g4!+

9...bxc6 10. j xc6 j g4 11. d3 1bS 12. j a4

White cannot castle immediately as 12.0-0? b6t wins the bishop.

12...1xb2 13. j b3?

T is is the obvious follow-up but it fails tactically.



13... c xe4! 14. c xe4 1xb3 15.axb3 j xaI+

7... l c6

With the bishop on g5 it makes sense to target the slightly loose knight on d4. White may try El) 8.0-0-0 or E2) 8. l b3.

El) 8.0-0-0 xd4

S... c xe4!? wins a pawn but gives White some initiative.

9.Wxd4 0-0 10.Wd2

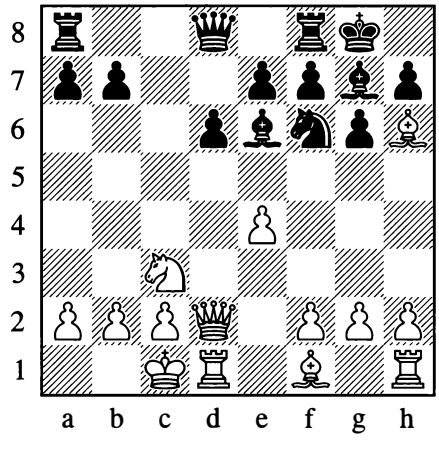
10.e5 a5! is a useful idea to remember. 11. j xf6 dxe5! 12. xe5 xe5 13. j xe5 j xe5+

10. j c4 a5 11. d2 was seen in Baumgardt - Werner, Germany 1995, and now 11... j e6!N would have virtually forced White to exchange on e6. 12. j xe6 (I2. j b3?! j xb3 13.cxb3 c xe4! 14. c xe4 xa2+ grants Black a dangerous attack) 12... f e6+ Black can combine attacking on the queenside with play down the f-fle.

10... . e6 l l. . h6

11. bl a5 allowed White to exchange queens in Krasnici - Nguyen Luu, Germany 2001, but the simple improvement 11...1cS!N gives Black a fne position.

Now Black can improve on Zoubeir - Lesbros, Hammamet 2010.



11... . xh6!N 12.Wxh6 l c8

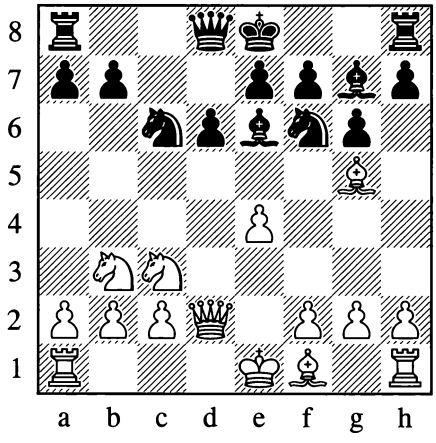
White is a long way from delivering mate, so it makes sense to divert his queen from the centre.

13.We3

White has nothing better; for instance, 13.h4?! l xc3 14.bxc3 l g4 15.Wd2 Wb6= leaves him in trouble.

13...♕a5∓

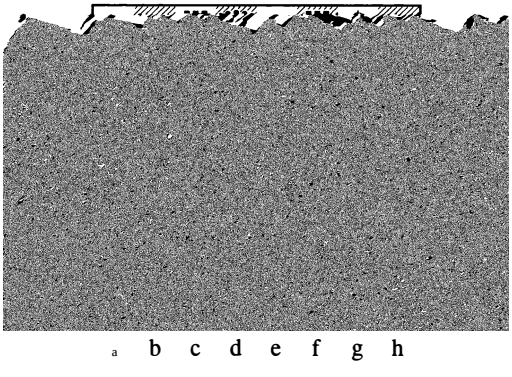
E2) 8. l b3 . e6



9.0–0–0

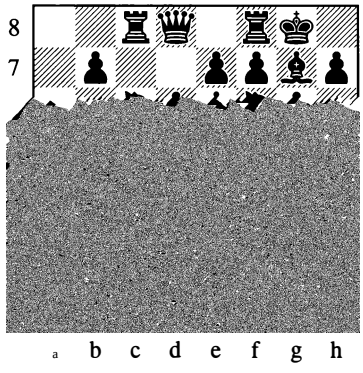
9.♗h6 0–0∓ is comfortable for Black, who enjoys a significant lead in development.

9.f3 lc8 10. h6 0-0 l1.h4?! (11. xg7 Wxg7 12.0-0-0 is better, when the position is similar to the main line below) W ite cannot get away with playing so aggressively while behind in development, as our counterplay in the centre and on the queenside comes too quick y:

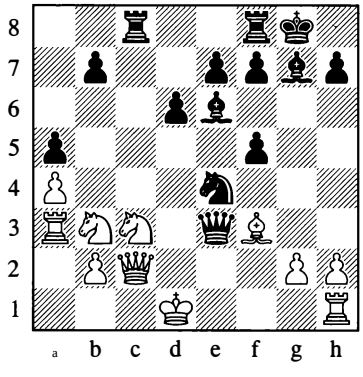


11... xh6 12.Wxh6 l b4 13.Wd2 (13.0-0-0? xb3 14.axb3 Wa5-+; 13.lcl d5+) 13...d5+

9.f4 was tried once by Simen Agdestein but he was obviously su fering the e fects of jetlag, as his position soon went disastrously wrong: 9...0-0 10. e2 a5! l1.a4 lc8 (T e immediate 11...Wb6, preventing White from castling kingside, is also strong)



12.la3 l b4 13. f3 Wb6 White is already completely busted. 14.f5 gxf5 15. e3 l xc2t 16.Wxc2 Wxe3t 17.Wd1 l xe4



18. xe4 fe4 19.1cl g4t 20.l 1e2 Wd3t 0-1 Agdestein - Tindall, Canberra 1997.

9. e2

T is might transpose to an o f beat line of the Karpov Variation.

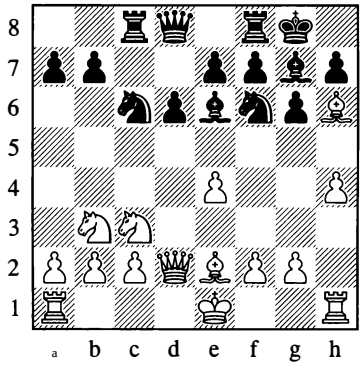
9...lc8 10. h6

10.0-0 0-0 is variation B2 of Chapter 10.

10...0-0 l1.h4

11. xg7 c xg7 12.h4 (12.0-0 t e5+) 12...h5 13.f3 was seen in Seehaus - Guth, Bad Homburg 2011. After 13...d5!N White's

pieces don't coordinate particularly well, while all of Black's are on strong squares.



11...d5!N

Once again, this thematic break is simplest.

12.exd5 xd5 13. l xd5 xd5 14. xd5 l xd5 15. xg7 xg7

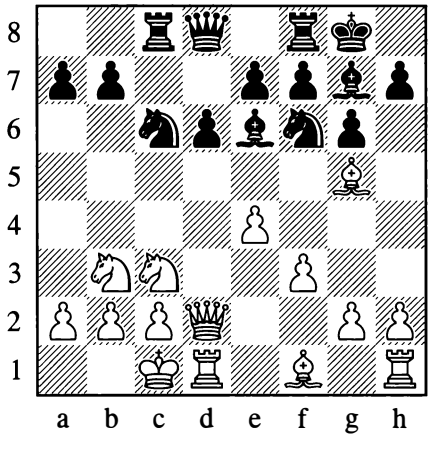
Black is at least equal.

9... c8

Compared to a usual Yugoslav Attack, the premature l b3 has allowed us to develop our bishop actively on e6, so Black is already doing well.

10.8 0-0

In this position the young Ruslan Ponomariov agreed a draw with White against Miso Cebalo, despite ourrating him by a good 150 points, so he can't have been too optimistic.

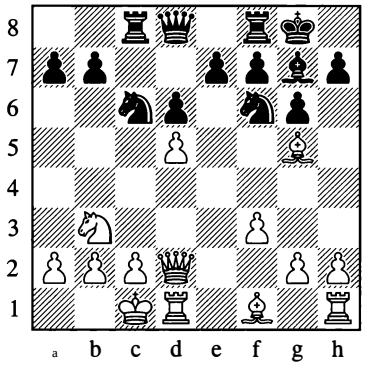


11. . h6

11. b1 has been played a couple of times. I think I'd play 11... l e5N 12.h4 h5 with a position that resembles a Soltis Variation. However, with White's bishop much more passively placed on f1, it's hard to see why Black should have any problems.

11.g4 l e5 12. e2 was played in Sage - Fossan, Aalborg 1987, when 12... l c4N looks the most logical (12...b5!?N is aso interesting). W ite is forced to exchange with 13. xc4 xc4, when Black has a straightforward plan of advancing his b-pawn.

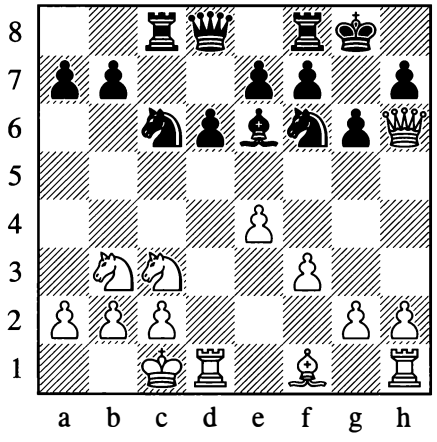
Finally, 11. l d5? xd5 12.exd5 was played in Feierabend - Keinschmidt, Soemmerda 1957, when it seems both players overlooked the following trick:



12... l xd5!N T e knight is immune, as afer 13. xd5? l b4 14. e4 2xc2t 15. xc2 l xc2 16. xc2 c8t! 17. d2 (17. b1 f5t) 17... e6 Black's attack is too strong.

11... h 6 12.Vxh6

In Caizapanta - Woetzel, Germany 1998, the most logical continuation would have been:



12... t e5N

Opening up the c-fle for the rook.

13 J e3

13.h4 xc3! 14.bxc3 Wc7 gives Black the usual fantastic compensation.

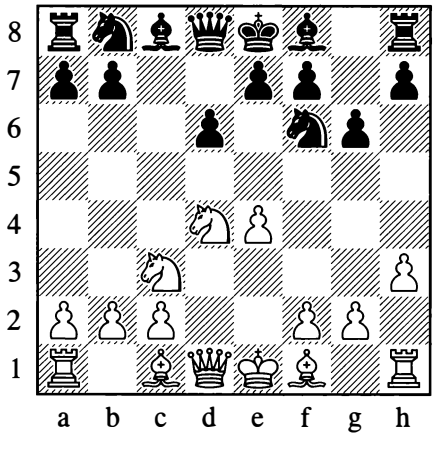
13... , bb3 14. a b3 ' a5 15.@b1

Black's easiest continuation is to go for a pleasant queenless middlegame with:

15... ' c5

We can also play for an attack with 15... t c6!?, when 16. t d5 t xd5 17. xd5 Wc7 reaches a dynamically equal position.

F) 6.h3!?



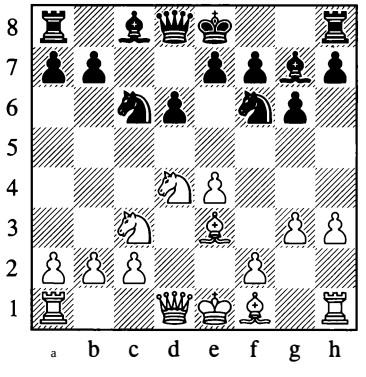
T is is an interesting move. White is not yet declaring his intentions. T e line could transpose into a Classical Variation, a weird type of Yugoslav Attack or an Accelerated Fianchetto. It is much rarer, however, than the same idea versus the Najdorf

6... . g7

White's main options are F1) 7.. e3 and F2) 7.g4.

7. j c4 transposes to the note on 7.h3 at the start of Chapter 17.

7.g3 t c6 8. j e3 (8. t de2 j d7 9. j g2 \ c8 transposes to variation E of Chapter 16) White's unusual move order has enabled him to maintain his knight on d4 but we shouldn't be worried. Alexander Motylev showed a good way forward for Black:



8... j d7 9. j g2 0-0 (Playing by analogy to Chapter 16 with 9...Wc8!? is also possible.) 10.Wd2 Wa5 11.0-0 t e5 12.b3 fc8 13. t ce2 Wxd2 14. j xd2 t c6 T e endgame was easier for Black in Rade - Motylev, Kallithea 2008.

F1) 7.. e3

T is position is more commonly reached via a 6. j e3 j g7 7.h3 move order. White is playing a hybrid system which resembles the Yugoslav Attack, but the present version is less

dangerous as White has deprived himself of the h4-hS plan.

7...0-0 8.W d

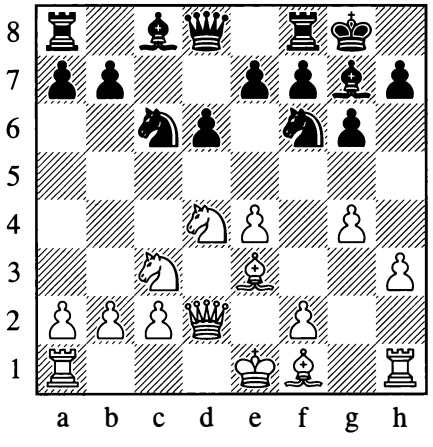
8. c4 transposes to variation B of Chapter 17.

8.g4 t c6 is covered under variation F22 below.

8... t c6

White may proceed with FII) 9.g4 or F12) 9.0-0-0.

F11) 9.g4



T is was played fairly recently against Baadur Jobava, and the Super-GM countered perfectly.

9...d5!

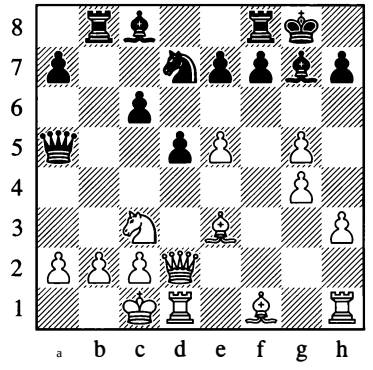
T is highlights another disadvantage of h2-h3. In the analogous position with f2-f3, the text move would be impossible as g4-gS would win a pawn, but here the e4-pawn lacks protection.

10.0-0-0!

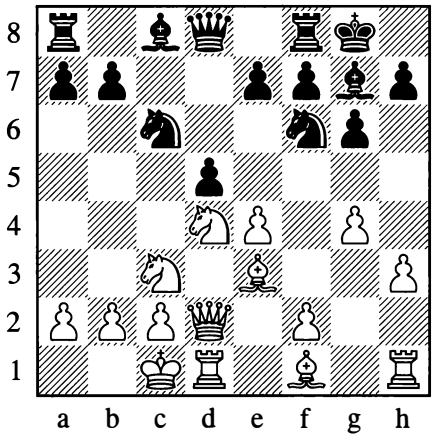
T is seems to be White's only way of bailing out to an equal position.

10.exdS t xdS favours Black.

Jobavas game continued: 10. t xc6 bxc6 11.0-0-0 Eb8 12.eS t d7 13.f4 gS! 14. f gS ' aS



IS.a3? (1S. f4 was necessary but afer IS...Exb2! 16.mxb2 t xeS Black has a huge attack) IS... t xeS 16. e2 e6 0-1 Popilski - Jobava, Warsaw 2013. Black isn't any material up but his queenside threats are overwhelming.



I0... t xe4!?

T is move invited a forcing simplifcation to a double-edged endgame.

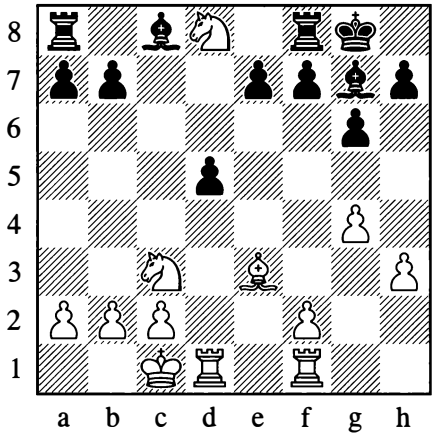
10... t xd4N is more straightforward: 11. xd4 (A er 11. ' xd4?! t xe4 12. ' xdS t d6 I feel Black's queenside play will put W ite under signifcant pressure) 11... t xe4 12. t xe4 dxe4 With easy equality.

11. c xc6!?

W ite takes up the challenge.

11. l xe4 dxe4 12. l xc6 ' xd2 t 13J "hd2 bxc6 14. c4 is equal.

11... c xd2 12. c xd8 c x 13. hx f



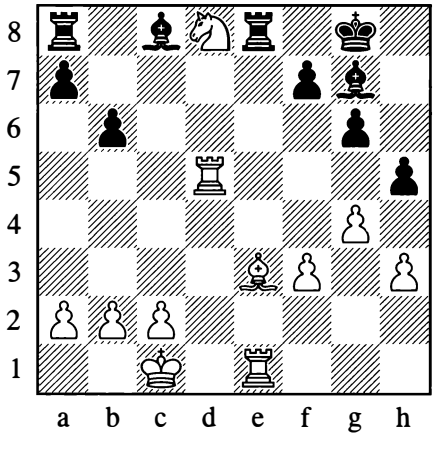
13...e6!? 14. . xd5 exd5 15. xd5

A most peculiar endgame has arisen. W ite is a pawn up, but the big question is whether the d8-knight is a liability or a strength. T e following email game indicates that the position is dynamically balanced.

15...h5

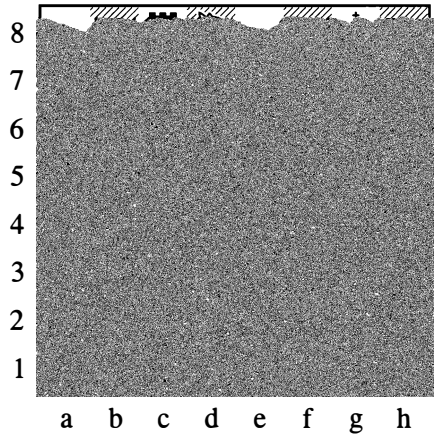
15...f5!? also looks interesting.

16.f3 b6 17.♖e1 ♖e8



18. . f xe1 t 19. . xel hxg4 20.hxg4 . a6 21.f4 c8 22.g5 . c4 23. d7 ♗**xa2** 24. xa7 . d5

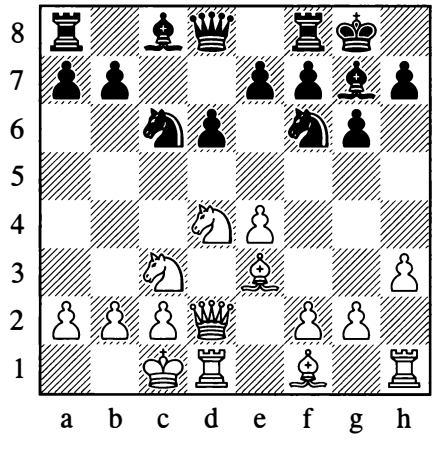
T e knight has remained on d8 the entire time. White can keep it safely defended, but his pieces are too tied up to o f er any winning chances with the extra pawn.



25. d7 . e4 26.c3 . f 27. d5 . e4 28. d6 . f 29. d7 . g4 30. d5

½–½ Kurylo - Korabliov, email 2010.

F12) 9.0-0-0



T is is a better try but we shouldn't be worried, as our queenside counterplay fows easily.

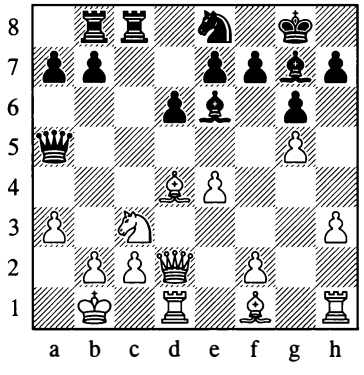
9... l xd4 10. . xd4 . e6

T is position reminds me of the 9.g4 Yugoslav Attack with 10.0-0-0 l xd4, as featured in variation C of Chapter 14 in the frst volume. White generally has to exchange queens as our attack is faster.

l1.g4

11.Wb1 Wa5 12. l d5 (12.a3 transposes to 11.a3 below) 12...Wxd2 13. l xe7t? (13. l xf6t= was necessary) 13...Wh8 14.Exd2 l xe4 15. . xg7t i xg7 16.Ee2 l f6 W ite's knight was trapped in Ramsdal - Bruun, Helsingor 2013.

11.a3 has been tried in a couple of correspondence games. 11...Wa5 12.Wb1 (12.g4 leads to the main line below) Efc8 13.g4 Eab8 14.g5 l e8



15. l d5 Wxd2 16.Exd2 . xd5 17.exd5 . xd4 18.Exd4 T is equal ending was agreed drawn within a few moves in Khorunzhy - Borwell, email 2011.

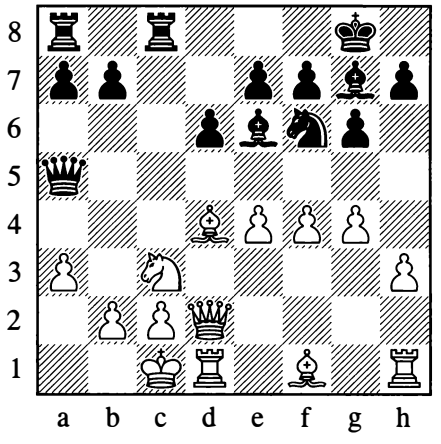
11... ' a5 12.a3

12.g5 l h5 13. . xg7 (A fer 13.a3? . xd4 14.Wxd4 Wxg5t 15. i b1 Efc8 the Dragon expert was a clear pawn up in Sahu - Ward, Isle of Man 1996) 13... l xg7 14. i b1 Efc8 15. t d5 Wxd2 16.Exd2 . xd5 is another balanced endgame.

12..J fc8 13.f4?!

T is is White's only aggressive plan but it's risky.

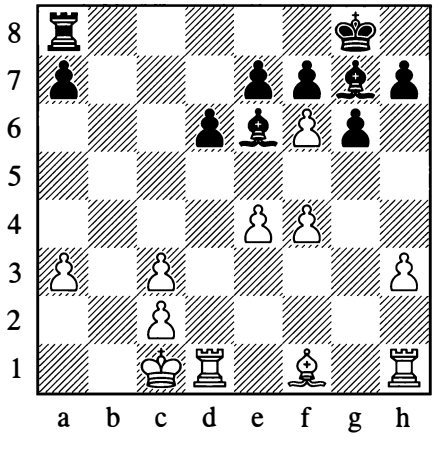
13. i b1 transposes to the note on 11.a3 above.



13...b5! 14.g5 b4!

T is forcing continuation gives Black the better game.

15. g bxc3 16. , xc3 Exc3 17.Wxc3 Wxc3 18.bxc3



18... . h6! 19. f e7 . 4t 20. i b2 Eb8t 21. i a1 . e5

Despite being the exchange down Black has the better chances, as the bishops are so strong and W ite's structure is horrible.

In B. Johansson - Fagerstrom, email 2009, Black was able to grind out the full point.

F2) 7.g4

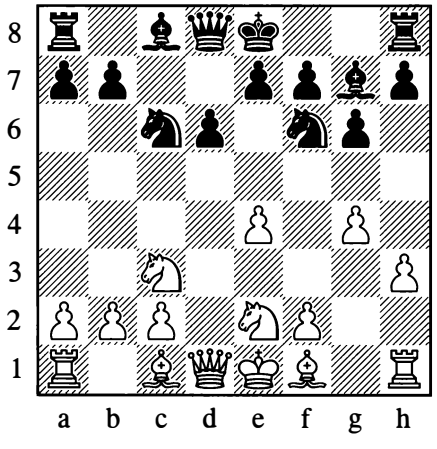
T is is an aggressive form of the Fianchetto Variation but it is unlikely to strike fear into Dragon players' hearts.

7... . c6

White can either play F21) 8. l de2 as in Chapter 16, or support the knight with F22) 8. . e3.

8. . g2 l xd4 9.Wxd4 0-0+ gave Black a favourable version of the normal Fianchetto Variation in I. Stark - Goebel, Germany 2002. White's additional space on the kingside is less relevant than Black's extra developing move.

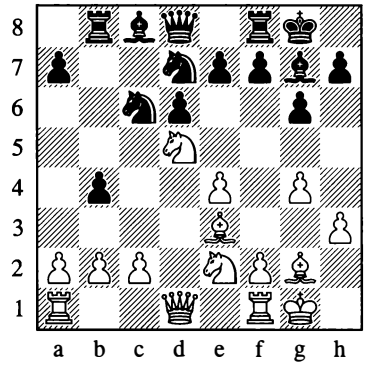
F21) 8. l de2



T is has been the more popular choice but it allows Black quick queenside counterplay.

8...0-0 9. . g2 : b8 10.0-0

10. . e3 b5 11.0-0 (11. l d4 l xd4 12. . xd4 occurred in Kosanovic - A. Kovacevic, Szekszard 1994, and now afer 12...b4N 13. l d5 . a6!+ W ite won't fnd sanctuary for his king) 11...b4 12. l d5 l d7!



T is is generally the preferred way to meet White's knight jump. Black is already better, and afer 13. l d4?! xd4! 14. xd4 e6 he was winning a piece in Figuero Toro - Rusev, Navalmoral 2008.

10.a4

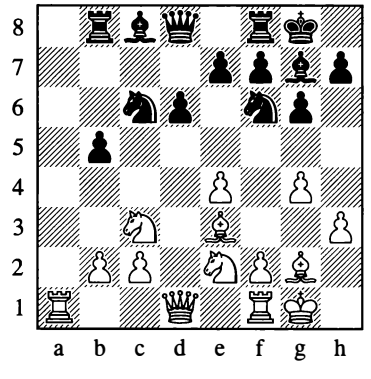
T is fails to slow down our queenside play.

10...a6

10...b6N is an alternative way of playing.

11.0-0 b5 12.axb5 axb5 13. e3

13. l d5 l d7! lef White's knight attacking air. 14.gb1 b7 15.b3 e6 16. l dc3 In Mendoza - Martinez Romero, Medellin 2012, 16...b4N 17. l a4 l c5+ would have favoured Black.



13... l d7!?

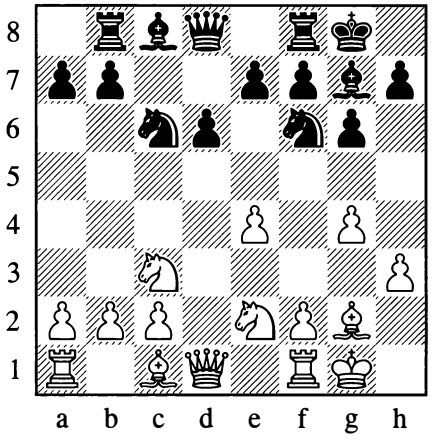
T e typical 13...b4 14. l d5 l d7 is fne, but targeting the b2-pawn also makes sense.

14.Wc1 b4 15. l a4?!

Black stands better after 15. t d5 e6 16. t df4 ' c7 but this was the lesser evil.

15... i a6 16 J el ' c7 17. t f4 e6+

Black was in full control in Rogic - Brkic, Pula 2008.

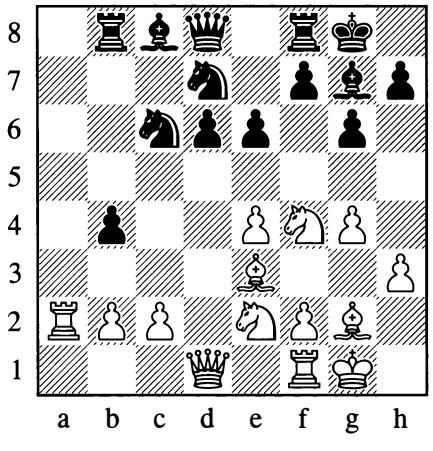


10...b5

Black's queenside play fows smoothly, just as it does in the similar positions mentioned above.

11.a3 t d7 12. i e3 a5 13. a2 b4 14. a b4 a b4 15. t d5 e6 16. t df4

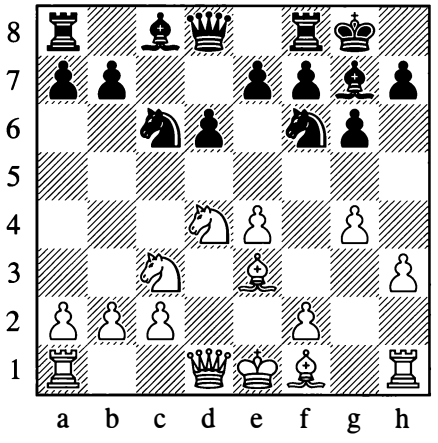
In Kononenko - Tukhaev, Evpatoria 2007, Black should have continued:



16...b3!N 17. c b3 t c5

With strong pressure.

F22) 8. i e3 0-0

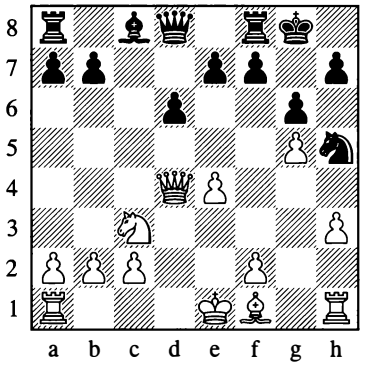


9. i g2

9. ' d2 takes us back to variation F11.

9.g5?! is seldom a good approach for White. Not only are his attacking options limited by the rigid structure, but he has also ceded a big hole on f4 and his pawns are at risk of becoming weak in a future endgame.

9... t h5 10. ' d2 t xd4 11. i xd4 i xd4 12. ' xd4



12...e5! Now that Black has traded dark-squared bishops, this central advance gives him a favourable version of a Najdorf 13. ' e3 i e6+ Odeev - Annaberdiev, Istanbul 2010.

9... · d4 10. i .d4 Ya5 11.Yd2

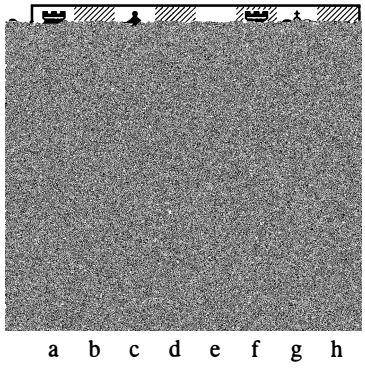
11.0-0 h5!?N

Now that White has committed his king, this looks an interesting combative approach.

12. t d5

I think this is W ite's only way to retain the balance.

In the event of 12. xf6 xf6 13. t d5 hxg4 14. t xf6t (or 14.hxg4 c g7) 14...exf6 15.hxg4 c gTt Black has the safer king and the better prospects.



12... t xd5

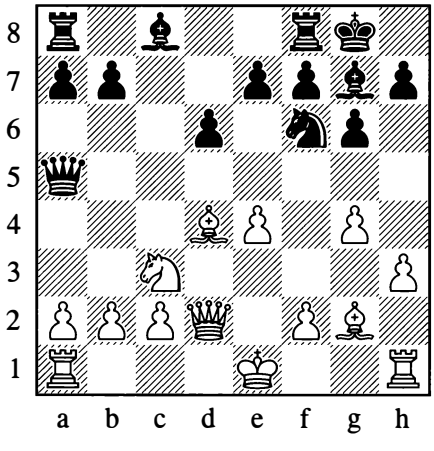
12...hxg4!? is sharp: 13. t xe7t c h7 14. t xc8 Eaxc8 15.hxg4 t xg4! 16.c3 (16. xg7 Wh5 17.Wxd6 c xg7 gives Black splendid compensation) 16...Wh5 17.Ee1 With a messy position.

13.exd5 hxg4 14. xg7

14.hxg4 Wa4! 15. xg7 c xgTt

14... c xg7 15.Wd4t e5 16.dxe6t We5 17.Wxe5t dxe5 18.ex f Ex f

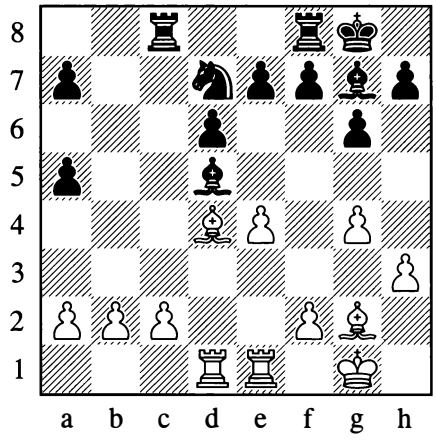
With a level ending.



11... . e6 12.0-0 Eac8

12...h5!?N is tempting here as well: 13.g5 t d7 14.f4 (14.Ead1 xd4 15.Wxd4 Wxg5 16.f4 Wc5+ does not give White full compensation) 14...Eac8 15.f5 xd4t 16.Wxd4 c4 17.Ef2 t e5 T e strong knight keeps Black's position together. White is at def nite risk of over-expansion.

13.Eadl b6 14.Efel t d7 IS. t dS . xdS 16. ' xaS bxaS

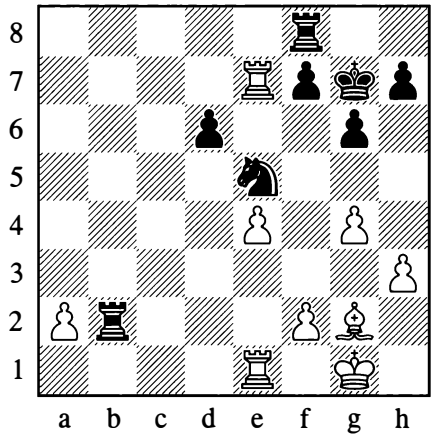


17. . xg7

17.exd5N is slightly more accurate although 17... xd4 18.Exd4 Exc2 19.Exe7 C c5 20.Exa7 Exb2 21.Exa5 Ee8 leaves Black with at least enough compensation. T e g2-bishop is no longer contributing much to the game.

17... c xg7 18.ExdS Exc2 19.ExaS Exb2 20.Exa7 t eS 21.Exe7

In Bachmann Schiavo - Milos, Villa Martelli 2010, Black should have preferred:



21... a8!N

Despite the reduced material, White is under considerable pressure.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, all of White's ofbeat tries can be met by logical moves. After 6. t d5 you simply have to remember not to take on e4, while after 6. b5t and 7. g5 it's worth remembering the e fectiveness of the exchange sacrifce on c3 in case White tries to play aggressively. Of the lines examined in this chapter, 6.h3!? is probably the most interesting. White keeps his options open but none of the transpositions are particularly threatening.

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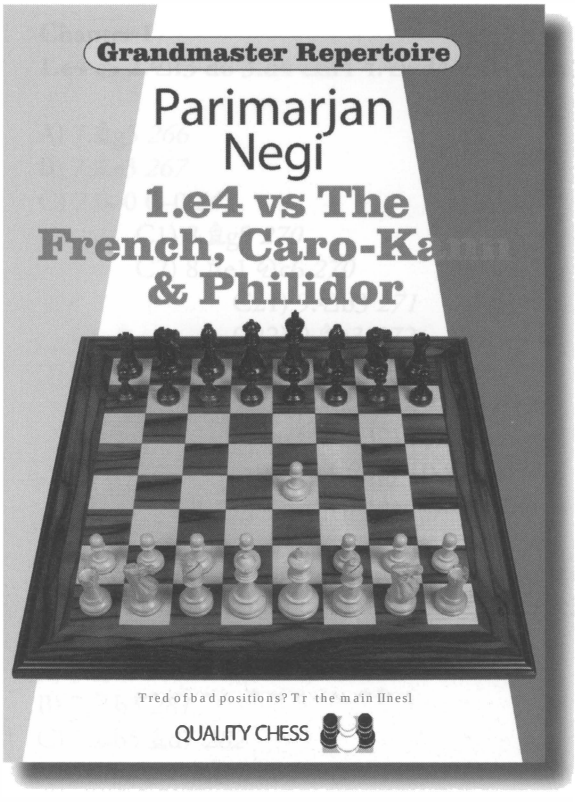
Negi on 1.e4



Reaction to **1.e4 vs The French, Caro-Kann & Philidor:**

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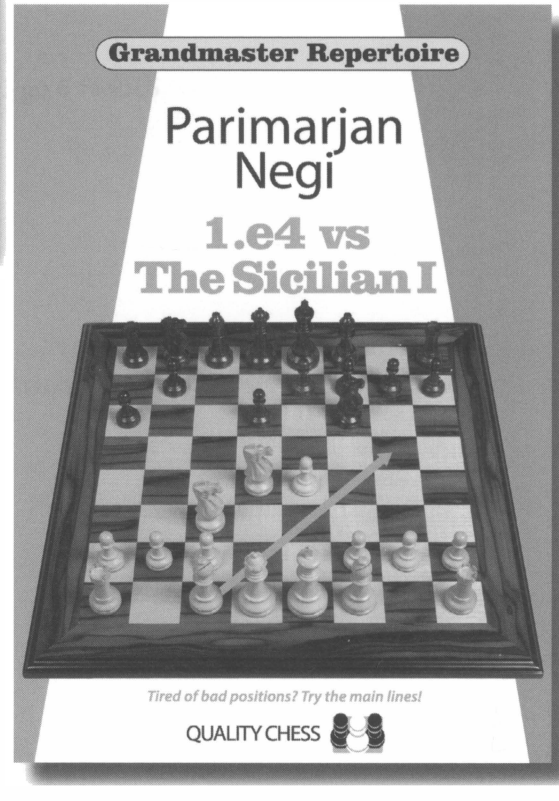

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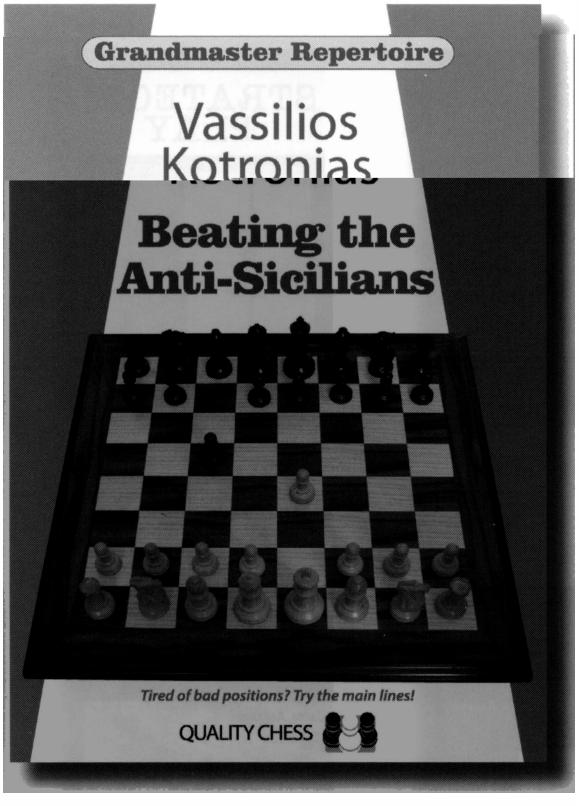

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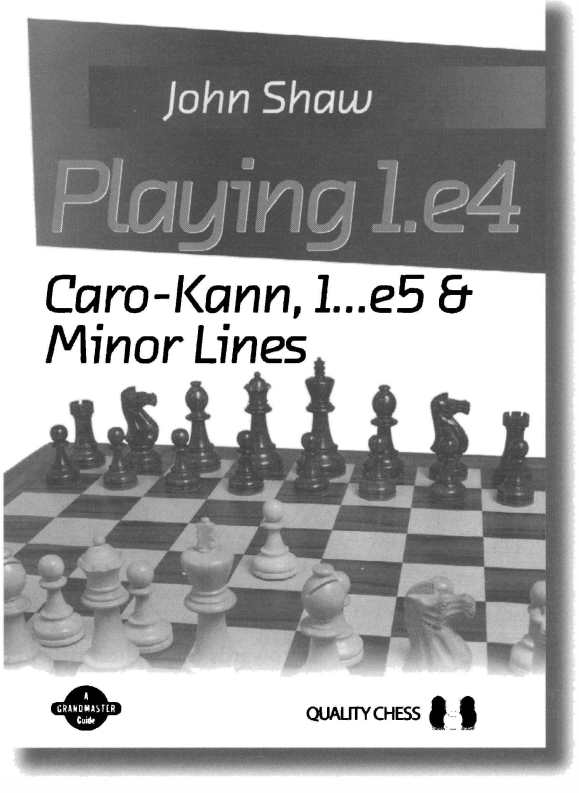

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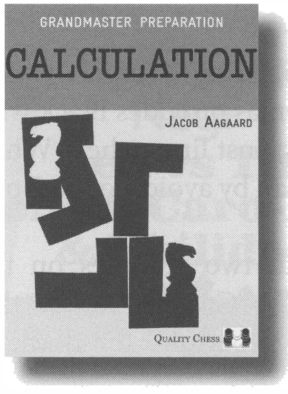

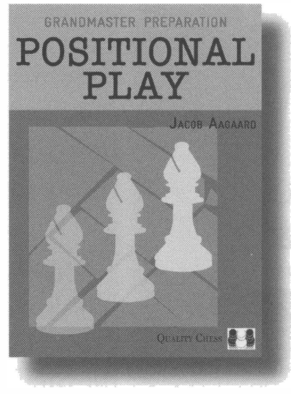

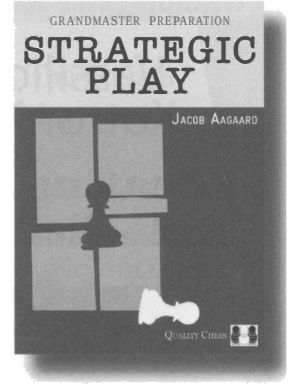

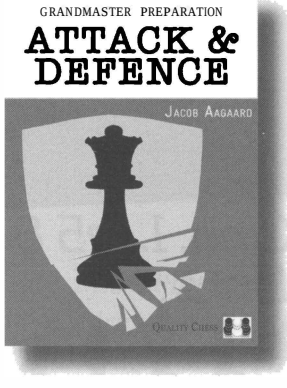

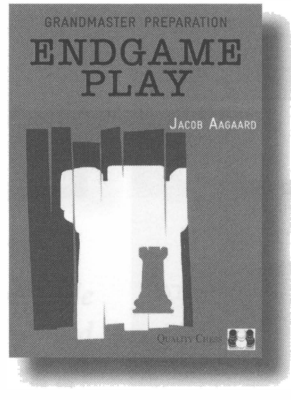

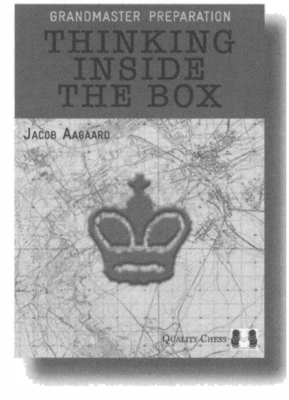

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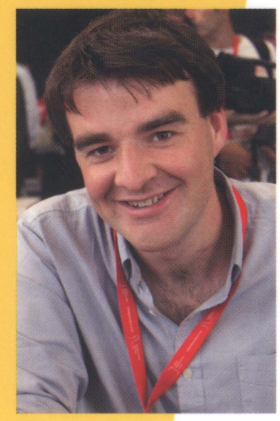

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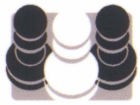

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