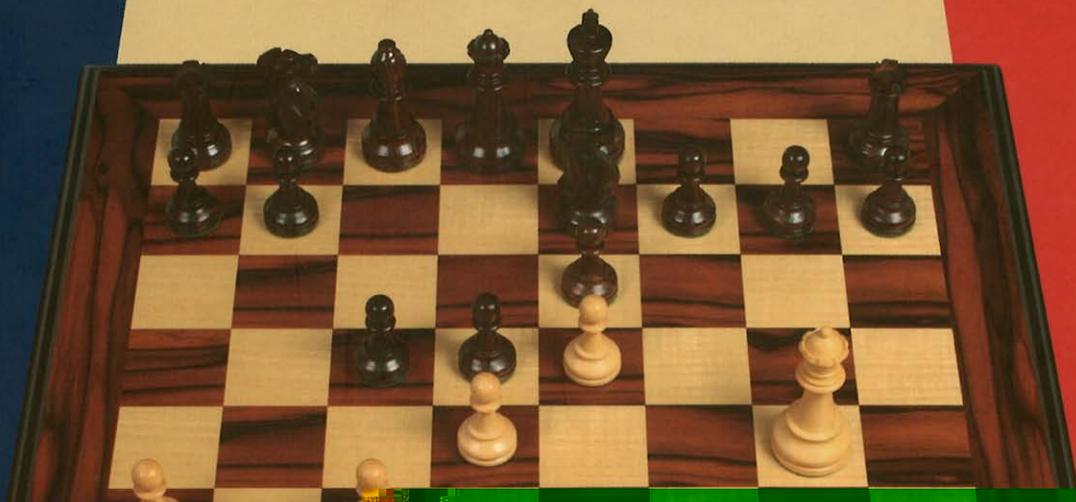


Grandmaster Repertoire

**Emanuel
Berg**

**The French
Defence**

VOLUME TWO



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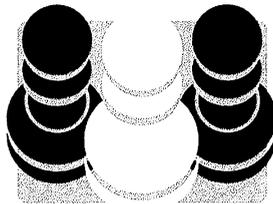


Grandmaster Repertoire 15

The French Defence 2

By

Emmanuel Berg



Quality Chess

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Preface

In the Preface of the first volume I talked about my background in both the French Defence and the game of chess in general. Here I will avoid repeating the same story and instead focus on the subject at hand. The starting

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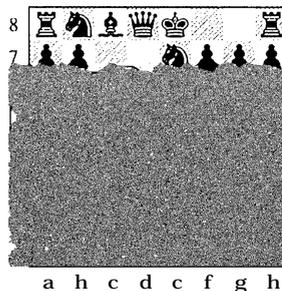
Key to symbols used

±	White is slightly better	-	with an attack
±	Black is slightly better	t	with an initiative
±	White is better	?	a weak move
+	Black is better	??	a blunder
+·	White has a decisive advantage	!	a good move
·+	Black has a decisive advantage	!!	an excellent move
=	equality	!?	a move a move N1

Defence

Chapter 1

Poisoned Pawn



7...cxd4

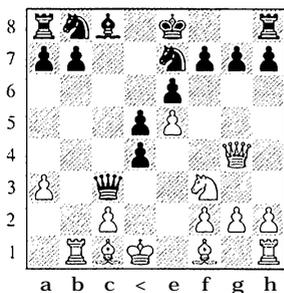
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♙xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♚g4

7...cxd4

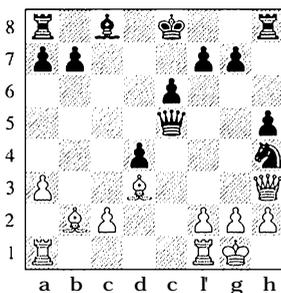
A) 8.♘f3!?	8
B) 8.cxd4 ♚c7	9
B1) 9.♙a2	9
B2) 9.♙d1	11
B3) 9.♙d2	13

A) afe Dlt dl



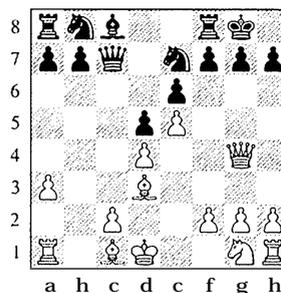
10..1 gQN

B1) af r I7Vh3



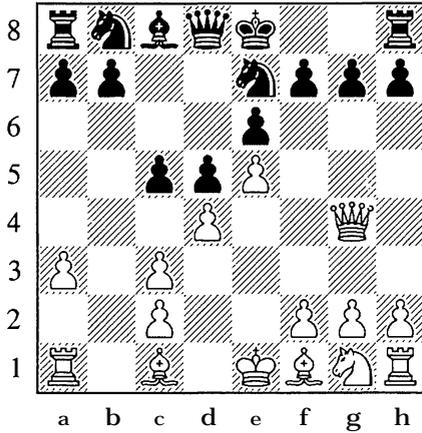
17..1 N

B2) no r r 9..h5



10..b6N

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 Nc6 4.e5 c5 5.a3 Nxc3 6.bxc3 1.e7 7.g4



7...cxd4

This is my preferred route to the Poisoned Pawn Variation. 7...c7 is a more popular move, which usually arrives at the same position after 8.xg7 Eg8 9.xh7 cxd4. However, via this move order Black must also be ready for the challenging sideline 8.Wd3!? cxd4 (8...c4 is solid, but not really in the spirit of the Poisoned Pawn) 9.l e2 when White sacrifices his centre, but gets to develop his kingside pieces before taking on g7.

By taking on d4 immediately Black makes the 8..d3 option less appealing for White. (We will see in the next chapter that the move is still playable, but does not carry the same bite against the 7...cxd4 move order.) This here is a trade-off, as the immediate capture on d4 allows White the additional option of recapturing on d4, but as we will soon see, this is not at all dangerous. To summarize, allowing the possibility of 7...cxd4 8.cxd4 is a small price to pay for avoiding the more venomous 7...V c7 8..,d3 line.

After that brief explanation we are ready to consider White's possible responses. In this chapter we will consider A) 8.l f !? and B) 8.cxd4.

8.. d3 is the subject of the next chapter, beginning on page 15.

The main move is of course 8.l xg7, coverage of which begins in Chapter 3.

A) 8.l f !?

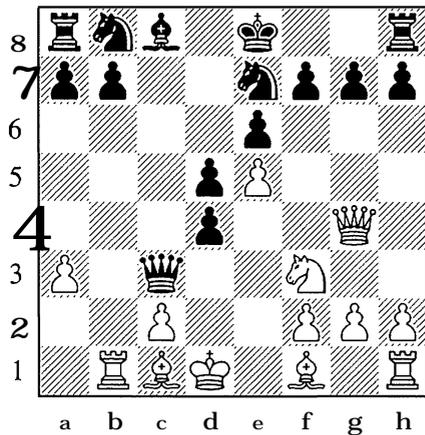
This move is practically unknown to theory, although it was mentioned by Watson in PTF4.

8..1 a5N

8..c7 is also possible, with a likely transposition after 9.Eb1 (or 9.c d1 ' xc3 IOEb1) 9... xc3!N 10.f d1. However, it somehow feels correct to begin by placing the queen on the more active a5-square.

9.Eb1 ' xc3t 10c dl

This position occurred in the game Juenger - Liedl, Austria 2010, which arrived here via the 8..c7 9.c dl ' xc3 10.Eb1 move order. Here Black's best continuation is



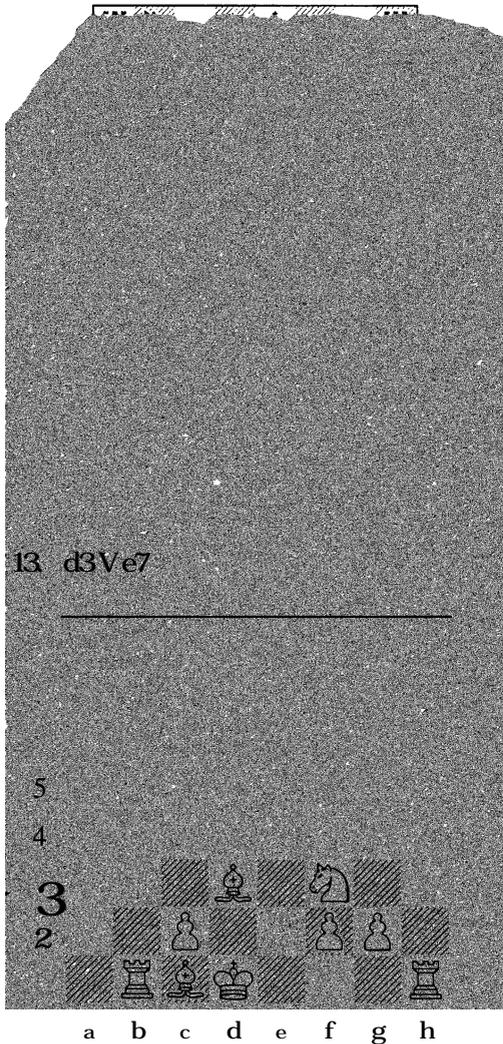
10..1 g6!N

Instead the game saw 10...0-0 11..d3 when White had a dangerous initiative on the kingside.

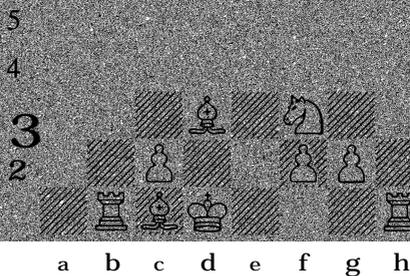
11.h4 h5 12.g\ es

12...Vc? is given by Watson, who offers the following line: 13. d3! c6 14. XxgG f g6 15. VxgG! V f7 16. Vxf ! xf 17. i, b2 Ef 18. i, xd4 g8 19. k c5 Ef4 20. dG b6+ This indeed looks favourable for Black.

However, White can pose more problems with 13. l xd4! when he has lots of activity, although Black should be okay here too. Here is one interesting line: 13...V xe5 14. i, b5! . d7



13. d3Ve7



a b c d e f g h

14. xg6

White has nothing better than simplifying, as 14. l g3! c6 favours Black

14..VxgS IS.. xf t \ xf 16l xgSt \ e8 17.Eh3! c6 1s.l f b6!9.Eg3@f

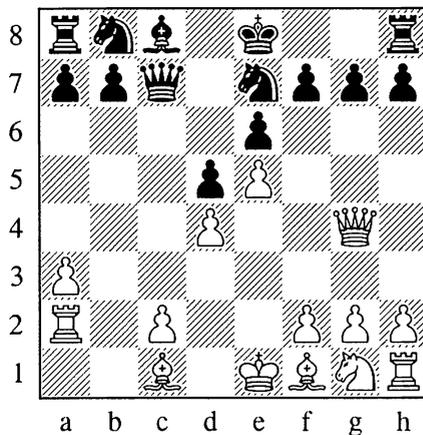
Black is at least equal.

B) 8.cxd4Vc7

Threatening the c2-pawn as well as the crucial check on d. Now it is worth analysing B1) 9.Ea , B2) 9.Wdl and B3) 9i ld2

9.l2e2 is harmless after 9...l bc6, while 9.. .0 O!N seems promising too.

B1) 9. Ea2



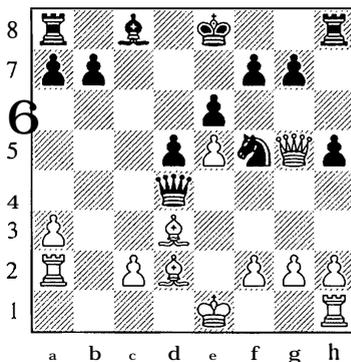
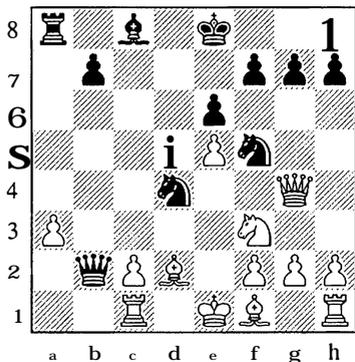
a b c d e f g h

This move defends against the queenside threats but is rather passive.

9...l fS 10l f l c6!1. d3

11.. \lb2? has been played, but after 11...Va5! 12.c3 b6+ Black was better in Petrova- Weetik, B ganrog 2013. White's rook and bishop look ridiculous on the queenside.

11.. d2? has been tried by GMs Hjartarson and Apicella, but not recently. Black achieves an excellent game as follows: 11...V bG 12.8a1 V b2 13.Ecl l2cxd4



14.1 xd4 (14.c3?1 c2?! [including 14...h5!N first is even better] 15. d11 xa3 gave Black a clear advantage in Ashley - Arizmendi Martinez, Bermuda 1999.) 14...Wxd4 15.i. b5! d7 16.We2 We4 17. xd? t ' xd7 18.Wxe4 dxe4 Black was a pawn up with an obvious advantage in Hjartarson - Nikolic, Reykjavik 1991.

15J hf5?N

Objectively a weak move, but worth the king.

The correct continuation is 15.0-0 Wg4 when Black forced a queen exchange, leaving White struggling to prove full compensation for the pawn in Vogt - Kosten, Gr z 2004.

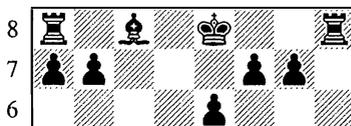
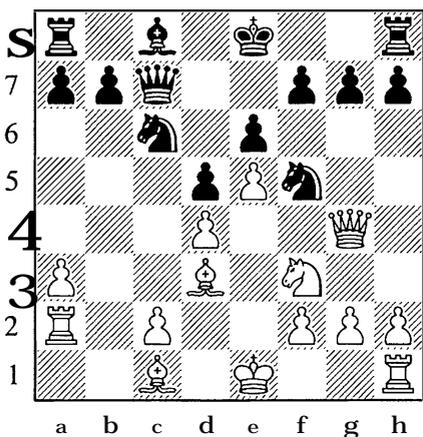
15...Wxe5! 16' fl

16. d1 ' xf5 17. \Yxg7 \ g4i" 18.Wxg4 hxg4+

16...Wxf5!

It is the strongest reply, although it allows some mild complications.

16...exf5 17.f4 Wf6 (17...Wd4 18.\ b4) 18. \ xf6 gxf6+



11...h5!

Please don't fall for the trap 11...l cxd4?? 12.l xd4 l ic3?1 13. fl! - when Black loses a piece and the game.

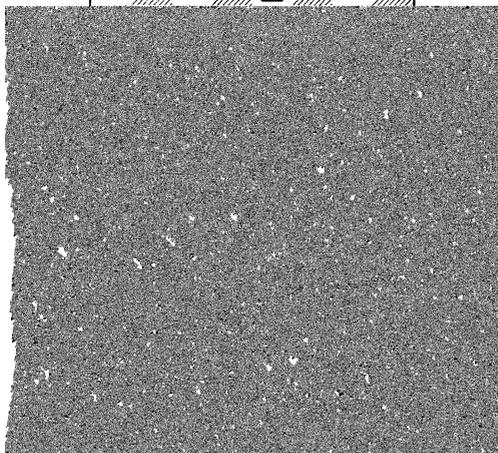
12.Wf4

This seems like the best attempt. It can alter the file, cause Black many problems:

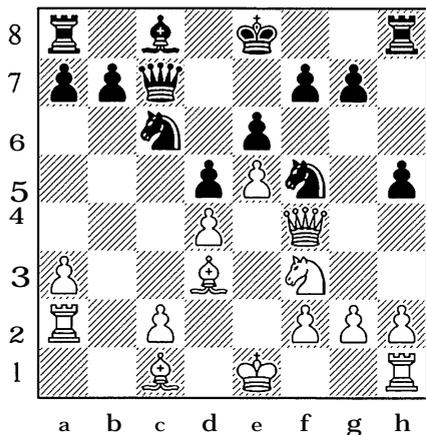
12.Wg5! cxd4 13.l hd4 fc3?1 14.i,d2

14. \ fl Wxd4+

14...Wxd4



Black's superior development and piece coordination bring him a clear advantage.

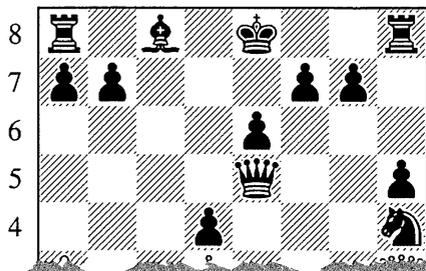


12...t bxd4 130-0

After 13.t kd4 14. e3† 14...d2 ♖xd4 15.. xf5 xf4 16.. xf4 exf5+ Black was a pawn up with the healthier pawn structure in Mekhitarian - Fier, Americana 2009.

13..l2xf t 14' xf ' xe5 15 ,b2 d4 16f aal t h4 17.' h3

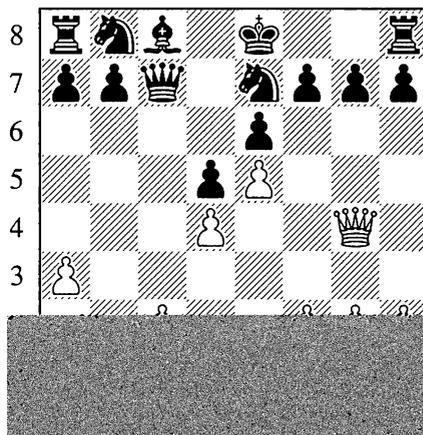
Now in Hou Yif n - N. Pert, Liverpool 2007, Black should have played:



18.. f i

White has some compensation, but I do not believe it is enough f r two pawns.

B2) 9. dl

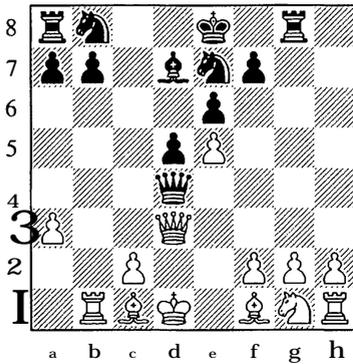


This move has been tested by such strong players as Shirov and Kamsky. Moving the king is of course a concession f r White, although it is not an uncommon scenario f r the Poisoned Pawn lines in general. On d1 the king avoids the check on c3 and is pretty secure f r the time being. Meanwhile White hopes to put Black under pressure on the kingside.

9...h5!

This active move has been f voured by Poisoned Pawn expert Yuri Shulman, as well as Kamsky himself when he f ced this line with Black. I will mention two other possibilities; the second in particular looks like a valid alternative.

9...d7?! was chosen by Nisipeanu in a recent game. He won, but I believe this move gives White too many opportunities. The game continued: 10. ♖xg7 ♜g8 11. ♖xh7 ♖c3 12. ♜b1 ♖xd4† 13. ♖d3 (13...d2!± is a possible improvement f r White.)



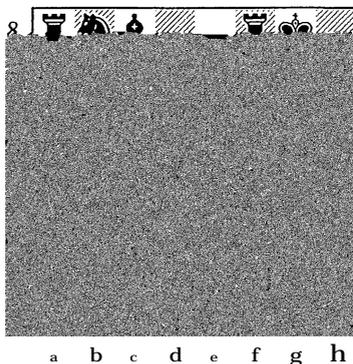
13...xf2? Too ambitious (13...xe5 looks better.) 14.xb7! bc6 Sochacki - Nisipeanu, Pardubice 2013, and here 15.f3N± would have left White with a clear advantage.

9...0-0?

f is has scored poorly, but this is mainly because Black has followed it up incorrectly.

10. d3

10.f3 was seen in Kansky - Nikolic, Monte Carlo 1996. At this point I suggest the novelty 10..b6N in order to exchange of White's dangerous light-squared bishop as soon as possible. After 11. d3! f5= Black prevents any sacrifice on h7 and intends to continue with... a6, or possibly... d7 first to guard f5.



10...b6N

10..f5 has been played in all ten games in the database. This move might hold for Black, but it gives White a dangerous initiative

after 11.exf6 Exf6! 2... h5! as in Shirov - Zhukova, Gibraltar 2006.

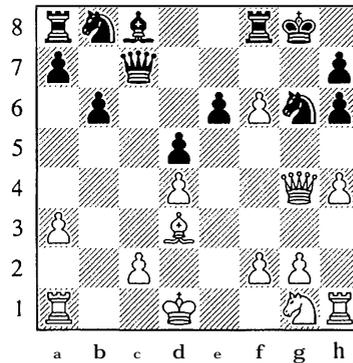
11. .h6

The sharpest and most straightforward move.

Instead 11.f3 leads back to 10.c f3 above.

11..c g6 12.h4 f5! 13.exf6 gxh6

Black's position looks risky, but in fact he does not have much to worry about.



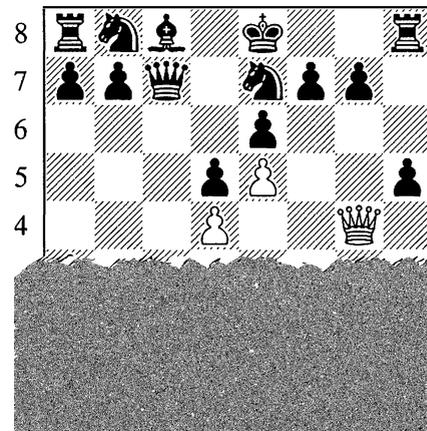
14...xg6

14.h5? \ f4! 15.Eh4 \ xg4! 16.Exg4 e5

17.f g3 e4 18.. b5 a6 19.. a4 Exf6+

14...mhs! 15.. d3 Exf6+

Black has coped with the attack and emerged with a sound position with good prospects. White remains with a badly placed king and poor coordination amongst his pieces. Objectively 9...0-0? seems just as good as the main line, the only drawback being the need to navigate a few tricky tactics.



10\ xg7

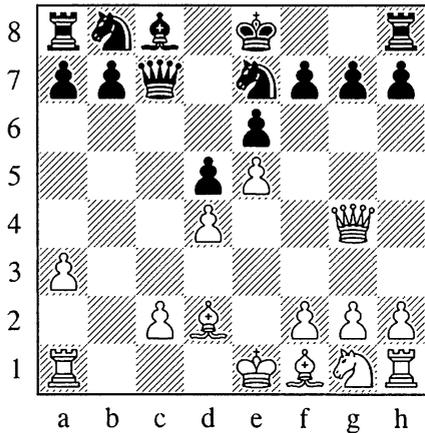
The only critical reply.

10\ f is well met by 10..b6 intending ...l.a6, f r instance: 11.♘b5†1 bc6!(1 l... d7 12. d3 was less clear in Savchenko - Kamsky, Balm 2009.) 12.♘f3 a5 13.: bl a6 14.i ,xaG l ha6+ Savchenko - Shulman, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009. Black holds a slight advantage due to his safer king light-square control and pressure along the half open c-file.

10...: gS 11.\ h6 Wc3 12.: bl Wxd4t 13.\,d2\ xe5 14.l f \ h8 15.' JxhS: xhS:

White did nor have full compensation f r the pawn in Bennborn - Rak y, corr. 2011, and Black eventually converted his advantage into a full point.

B3) 9.\ d2



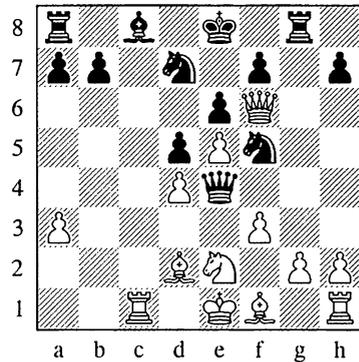
White offers an exchange of the pawns on c2 and g7. Unfortunately for him, the black queen can become quite troublesome on the queenside.

9... \ xc2 10Wxg7

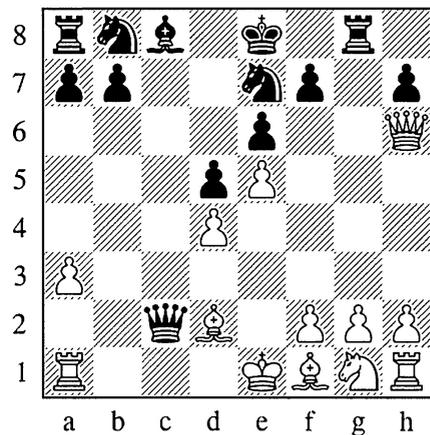
After 10.Ecl \ e4! 11.\ xe4 dxe4 12.♘e2 Jd7 13.l c3 \,c6 White faced an uphill struggle f r a draw in Kovchan - Petr, Kharkov 2011

10...: gS 11.\ h6

11\ fg? has made a plus score f r White, but the rare 11...♘f5! causes him serious trouble: 12.: cIN The only chance. (12.♘b5†? . .d7 13.Ecl \ e4!" 14...\ e3 l.c6 With ...l d7 coming White was about to lose his queen and the game in Ianovichin - Seif rt, Lirohoto 1999.) 12...\ e4!" 13.l e2 l d7 14.f3 Both queens are short of squares, but the black one can sacrifice herself on more favourable terms.



14...♘d3 15.♘c3 ♘xd2†! 16.♔xd2 ♘xf6 17.exf6 ♘xd4†



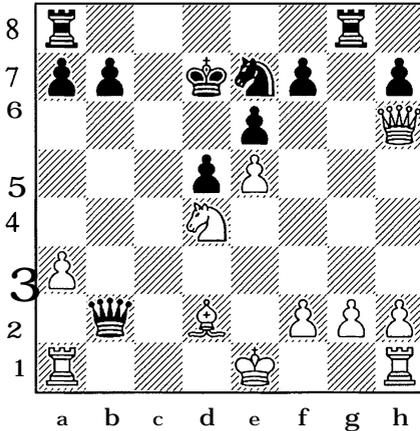
11...♘bc6 12.♘f3

12.♘e2 merely transposes, as Black has the exact same trick available.

12..l xd4! 13.l xd4\ b2 14. .b5t

After 14. c1 x d4 15. e3 x e3! 16. x c3
 , d7+ White had insufficient compensation for
 a pawn in Lama Fernandez - Jesus Hurtado,
 Barcelona 2011.

14... d7 15J d7t <.xd7



16! b3!?

Deflecting the black queen to an inferior
 square.

16.0 0' xd4+ occurred in Srinivasan - Roller,
 Toronto 2003. Black is a pawn up with active
 pieces, while his king is safely hidden behind
 the French pawn chain.

16..' xb3 17.0 0' f 18. gS' fS 19.f4

Zufc - Grigoryan, Rijeka 2010. Here we
 can improve with

19... acB+

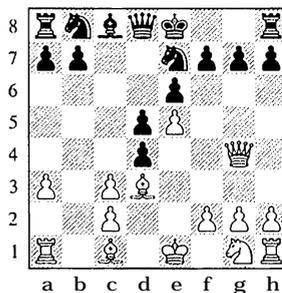
Black has a healthy extra pawn and active
 piece play.

Conclusion

8! f3! is an interesting idea but it seems good
 enough for equality at best. 8.cxd4 is a more
 natural idea, but after 8..' c7 White must
 make a difficult decision. There are three main
 ways of handling the threats on the queenside,
 but all have their drawbacks, and Black has
 excellent chances not only to equalize, but also
 to fight for the advantage.

Chapter 2

Poisoned Pawn



8. ♖d3!?

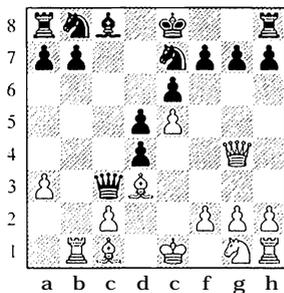
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♘xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♙g4 cxd4
8.♖d3!?

8... ♙a5!

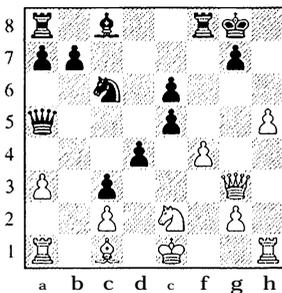
A) 9. ♖b1!?	16
B) 9. ♘e2 0-0	17
B1) 10. 0-0?	17
B2) 10. ♖xh7†?	18
B3) 10. h4!?	20
B4) 10. ♖g5	21
B5) 10. ♖d2	23

A) after 9... ♙a5!



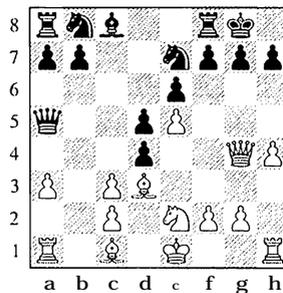
10 ♖d2!N

B2) after 17. h5



17... c4!N

B3) after 10. h4!?



10... 1 d7!N

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.f3 . h4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 . xc3 6.bxc3 7.g4 cxd4 8. d3!?

This tricky move has the idea of developing the kingside pieces before taking the g7-pawn. However, there is a drawback to playing it against our chosen move order.

8... a5!

This is why I prefer the 7...cxd4 move order. Instead 8...c7 9.f3 e2 transposes to the double-edged line we are trying to avoid. Black has done well in the most recent grandmaster games, but I think the last word has yet to be said.

After the text move White has tried A) 9.f3 h1!? and B) 9.f3 e2

9.Wd1 occurred in Jezek - Handel, corr. 1994, and now the obvious 9...xc3 10.f3 b1 reaches the note to White's 10th move in variation A below.

A) 9.f3 b1!? \xc3

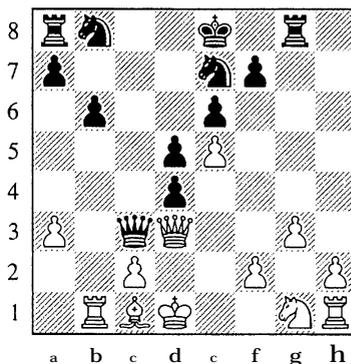


a b c d e f g h

10. d2!N

A clear improvement. 10. d1 was played in Vuckovic - Grischuk, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010. Now instead of putting the king on the awkward f3-square, Black could have obtained the better chances with 10...b6!N Preparing to

exchange the bishop on d3, which is holding together White's queenside. 1.f3 \xc3 2.g8 3.g7 4.a6 5.g3 6.f3 7.d3 8.\xc3



a b c d e f g h

14...c7 15.f3 h7+ 1.f3 e5-pawn is weak and Black has active prospects on the c-file. Moreover, his knights are flexible and well placed for various operations.

10...i c7 11.f3

1.f3 \xc3 2.g8 3.g7 4.a6 5.g3 6.f3 7.d3 8.\xc3 9.Wd1 10.f3 b1 is good for Black.

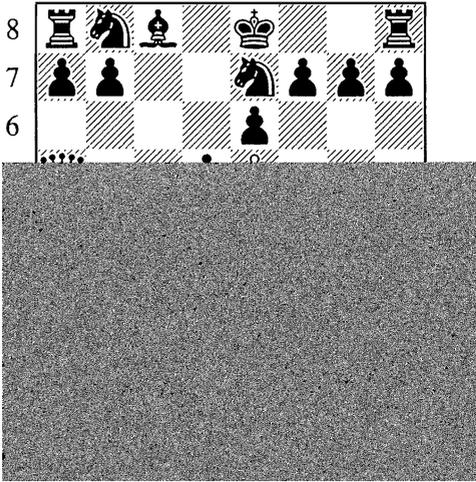


a b c d e f g h

11.f3 12.O-O e6

White obviously has some compensation due to his piece activity, but Black is two pawns up at present and is about to complete his development, so his chances are at least not worse.

B) 9.1 ♖e2



9...0 0

Castling entails certain risks, but Black has good defensive resources and his queenside counterplay is already well underway. We will focus on five main options, of which the first two are clearly inferior while the last three are all viable. The choices are: B1) 10.0 0?, B2) 10. ♗h7?, B3) 10.h4?, B4) 10.i g5 and B5) 10.i d2

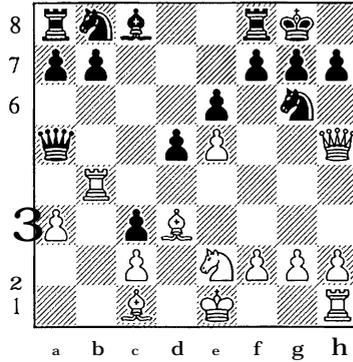
White has tried some other moves, but they can all be dealt with relatively quickly.

10. ♗h6 1 ♗g6 11.h4 1 ♗d7! transposes to variation B3.

10? ♗d4? gives Black an easy game. 10..1 bc6 11. ♗e3 0!is was Polanski - W. Hort, email 2001, and here I like 11...b6N. A possible follow-up is 12.a4! (or 12.0 0 i ,a6) 12..1 ♗f5 13. ♗f4 i ,a6 14.0 0 Efd8!+ with the idea of ...d4. Black is slightly better thanks to his superior pawn structure.

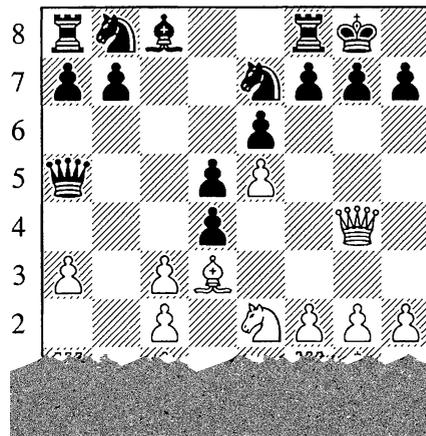
102b1 was played in Bhend - Kupper; Zürich 1971, and here the obvious 10..dxc3N is a good novelty. True, it opens up lines for some

attacking chances for White, but Black is able to defend. 11. ♗h5 1 ♗g6 12.1 b4! This is the point behind White's 10th move, swinging the rook over to the kingside, but it is not quite enough.



12..1 ♖b6 13.1 h4 ♖h6 14. ♗g6 ♗xg6 15. ♗xg6 1 ♖e7 16. ♗g4 1 ♗f5 17. ♗h6 ♗c7 18.1 h3 1 ♖h6 19.1 ♗h6 ♗xe5+ After a mostly forced tactical sequence, Black remains a pawn up and keeps the advantage.

B1) 10.0 0?



This move is too slow; White should be trying to develop his initiative and create threats.

10..dxc3 11 ♗g3

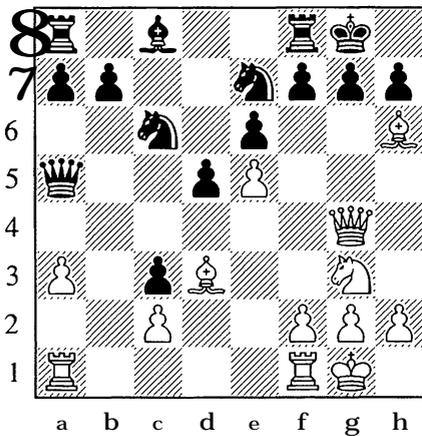
11. ♗h7? ♗h7 12.1 h4 ♗g8 13. ♗ke7 1 ♖b6 14. ♗g5 d4 15. ♗d8 16. ♗g3 was played

in Demchenko - Mesropov, Moscow 2012, and here 16...i d5!N would have secured a big advantage, as White has no real compensation for the pawn deficit.

Perhaps White's best chance is 11.a4!N 1 bc6 12. ,a 1 e8+, although here too Black has won the opening battle.

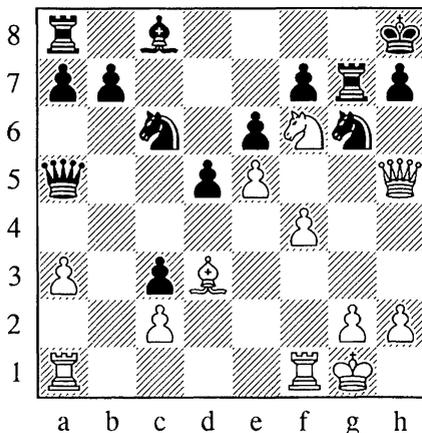
11...1 bc6 12.i h6?

Embarking on an unsound attacking scheme. 1 le plan soon f ils, but it is hard to suggest anything much better; for instance 12.l h5t g6 13.l el d4 14.i f4\ c5+



12...1 g6 13.gxg7\ xg7 14.l hSt f h8 15.f4 15. Vg5\ ds 16\ h6l g8i 7.l l6l g7 18.f4 l ce7 19.l h5i f - +

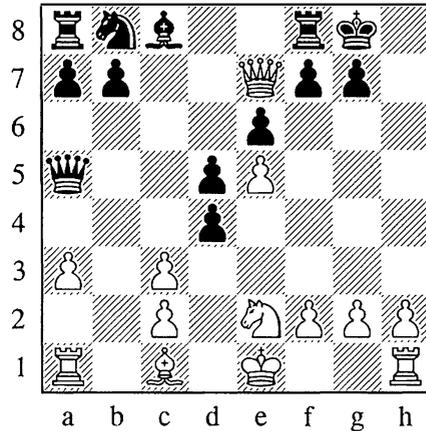
15...: gs 16l f : g7 17.i hS



17...1 d4! +

Preventing 1 f. White's compensation was insufficient and he went on to lose in Haemmerling- Hawelky, corr: 1964.

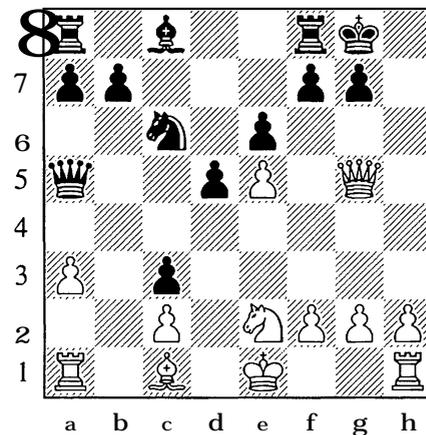
B2) 10i xh7t?\ xh7 1 l\ h4t Vg8 12\ xe7



This small combination removes a pawn from Black's kingside but costs too much time.

12...1 c6 13i gS d c3

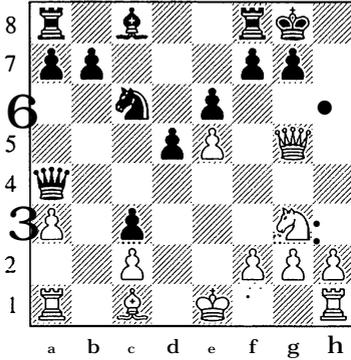
Black has an extra pawn and sufficient resources to defend his kingside.



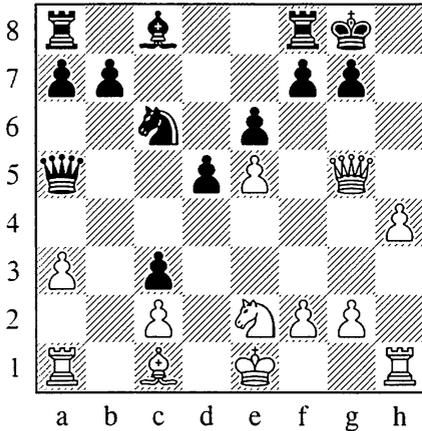
14.h4

14.O O transposes, the note to White's 11th move in variation B1 above.

J4.1 g3? was played in Daligault - Ricou, Hyeres 2002. Here Black can obtain a decisive advantage with the help of an important resource: 14... a4!N



The loss of either c2 or e5 is inevitable, and the queen will easily defend the kingside. Play may continue: 15.Ea2 (15.1 h5 \ e4! 16., \ e3 \ xe5 -+ is easy) 15... \ c4! - Black is not ready to make on a2 immediately, but he threatens to do so after ...1 xe5 or ...f6. At the same time \ White is prevented from castling and has no good moves left.



14...d4!

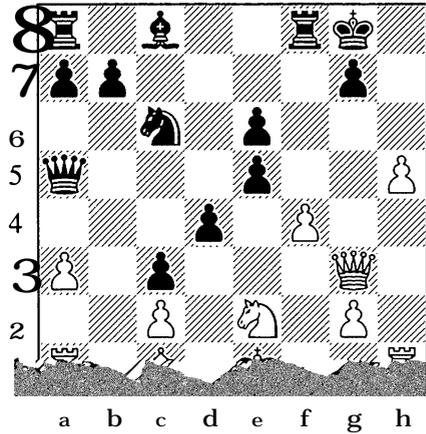
Again Black connects his queen with the kingside while targeting an enemy pawn.

15.f4

15.h5 f6+

15..f 16 \ g3f e5 17.h5

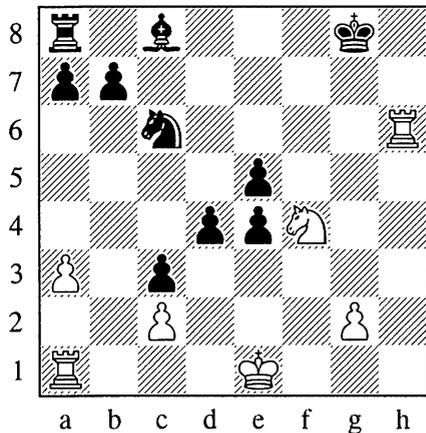
We have been following the game Rocha - De la Villa Garcia, Linares 2002. White is doing his best to keep the position complicated, but Black can secure a decisive advantage with the following accurate continuation:



17...e4!N 18h6E6f

Intending ... \ f5. White can try sacrificing another pawn to open lines for his pieces, but the idea falls short.

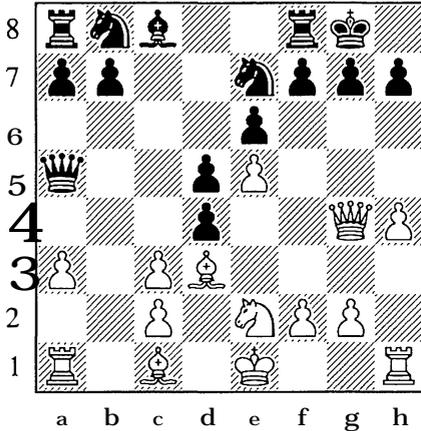
19.f5 \ xf 20.hxg7 Exg7 21 \ h4 \ h7 22 h6 Eg6 23.1 f4 Exh6 24 \ xh6 1 xh6 25.Exh6 e5



26.d5 \ g7 27.d6 \ g4++

Black has a won endgame in view of his mighty pawn centre.

B3) 10.h4!?



This rare move was tried in M. T. Benini, corr. 1991, and a couple of subsequent games. White's set-up is surprisingly dangerous and Black needs to play accurately to avoid trouble.

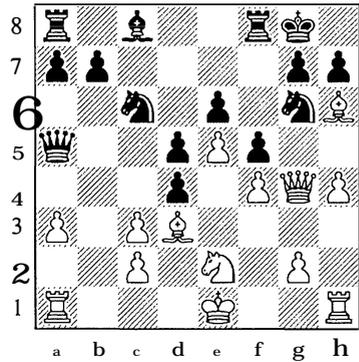
10...t d7!N

After this strong novelty Black seems to be fine, although the position remains sharp. The main advantage of having the knight on d7 is that after a later ...f5 Black will be able to recapture with the knight on f6.

I will include my analysis of the other knight move so you can see where the danger lies:

10...t bc6? 11... h6 t g6 12.f4 f5 12...gxh6?! is worse: 13.h5 @ g7N (J3...f5 Leone - Scalisi, corr. 1966, J4.cxf6N e5 15.f5 ! xf6 J6.hxg6 hxg6 17.! xh6±; 13...\ c7N 14.hxg6 f g6 15! xh6 \ g7 16.\ h3± intending 0-0-0 followed by ! h1.) 14.hxg6 f g6 (14...hxg6 15.\ h4 ! h8 16.\ f6! @ g8 17.i xg6±) 15.\ h3 h5 16.g4- And the attack continues.

This text move is the best chance to defend against h4-h5. At this point, however, White can improve on the game Wadling - Amell, r r1, anl" " h1(/ 1



13.exf6N Exf6 14.i xg7!

Watson mentions the line 14.h5 c5 as favouring Black. Indeed after 15.f5 e4 16.hxg6 there is 16...! xg6! 17.\ h5 .1xf5+. However, after the improvement given in the main line I have not been able to find a fully satisfactory defence.

14...e5

14...! xg7 15.h5 e5 16.f5 transposes to the next note.

15.f5 f7

After 15...! xg7 16.h5 e4 17.hxg6 the reply 17...Exg6? is impossible due to 18.i hhl! T. Instead Black must settle for 17...hxg6 when 18.\ h4± gives White a dangerous attack along the h-file.

16.h5 Exg7 17.hxg6 hxg6 18! hG e4 19.Exg6 Wc7 20.. b5 c e5 21 hgl 1 xg7 22.\ f4!;

White is better developed and has a dangerous initiative.

11. h6 t g6 12. xg6

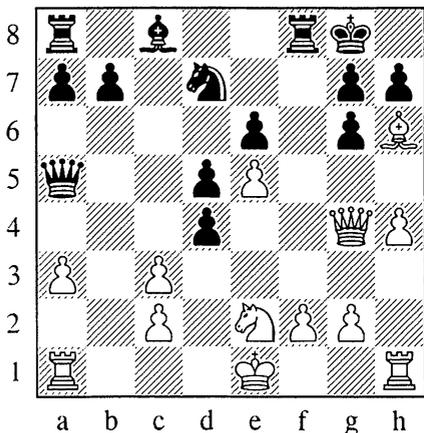
12.f4?! allows Black to demonstrate the usefulness of the knight on d7. 12...f5 13.exf6 c xG 14.Wg3 e5! Opening the path for the bishop on c8, which makes it possible to jump with a knight to g4. 15.\ hg (15.f e5 t g4+) 15...t g4!+

12.. xg7 Wxg7 13.h5 t dxe5 14.\ xd4 Wg8 15.hxg6 t xg6 Although White has compensation for the pawn, Black has managed to consolidate and is doing fine. It is

worth adding that ...JS f followed by ...Et is an important defensive resource.

12...f g6

12...hxg6 13. f4 leaves White with an active position and the possibility of an attack with h4-h5.



13. ♖xc6 † ♜f7

13. ♖xc6 † ♜f7

14] d2?

14. ♖e8! ♜f8 (14...1-f? 15.e6 ♖xc6 16. ♖xa8?) 15. ♖e6! =

14...d3! 15. ♖e8

After 15.cxd3? 1 c5 16. ♖xd3 " 6 17. ♖d6 c5 18.c4 Exd6 19. ♖xa5 1 xd3! 20. ♖f1 xf2 21. ♖g1 Ed? 22! d Ec2 23! xd3

: xd3 White faces a horrible endgame.

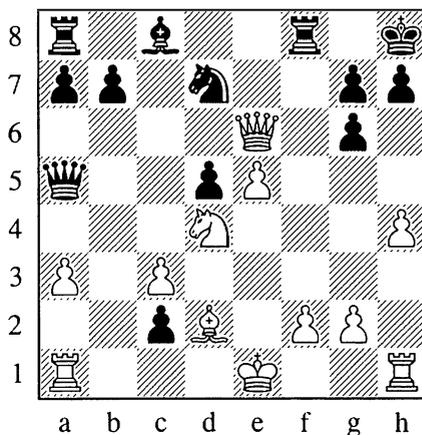
15...2 16. ♖e6 h8

Black can repeat the position if he wishes, but by now he has every reason to play on.

17. d4

!7.cxd3? 1 c5 is similar to the earlier note.

17...dxc2



18.0-0

18.c4? ♜c7! only makes things worse for White.

18..1 b6 19. ♖e7, f i

B4) 10.i gS



"This has been the main try by top players. Objectively Black is doing fine, but he should take great care when choosing his next few moves.

10...t g!

-n!is is the most solid choice. Black has also tried 10...1 bc6, but after 11.f4 dxc3 12.0-0 White has great attacking chances and has achieved a huge score in practice.

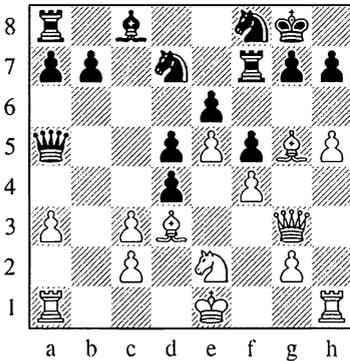
Perhaps Black can defend somehow, but this is certainly not to my taste.

11. f4! h7

Just as in the previous line, Black prepares the ...f5 break and wants to be ready to recapture with the knight on f6.

12. xg6

12. h4 f5 u. g3: f 14. h5! gf8+ f6 uous Black. One noteworthy game continued



15. ♖h4 ♘c5 16. ♙e7 dxc3 17. ♗h3 ♙d7 18. ♜d4 ♞c8 19. ♙xc5 ♜xc5 20. ♚f2 ♙a4+ White was two pawns down for not much in Short – Shulman, Ohrid 2001.

12... f g6!

Once again, it is worth sacrificing the e6 pawn to avoid White's attack.

13. \ xe6t : f 14. 0 0

14. e8! : f 15. e6t leads to a perpetual and has occurred in several games

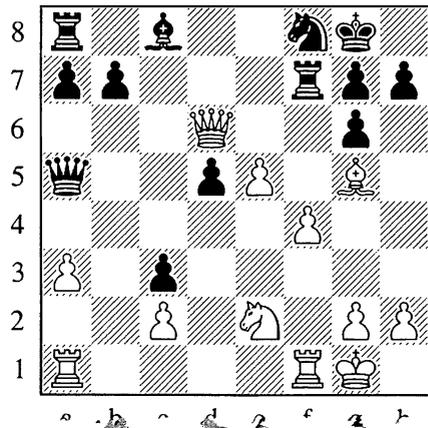
14... dxc3 15. d6

15. ♖8! : f 16. e6t might once again lead to perpetual check. 1 f is actually seems to be White's best continuation.

15...! f N

15...! lc5 16. xd5. \ e6 17. d4 was about equal in Friedel - Shulman, Saint Louis 2009.

The text move has already been suggested by Watson. By choosing the f8 square for the knight instead of c5, Black keeps the d5 pawn defended while still planning to deploy the knight on e6 in the near future.



16! d4? 1d7! 17. b4 xb4 18. axb4 1c7 19. a5 1c4 20. 1xd5! e6+

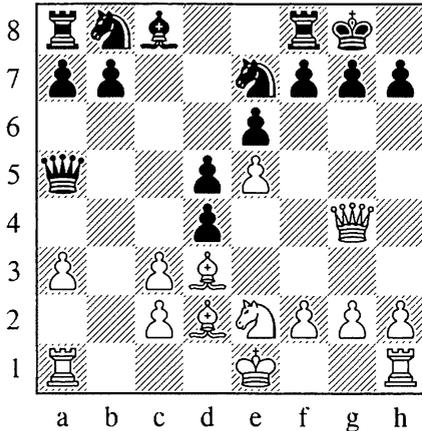
16. 1adl \ g4 17. 1xd5 a4 18. 1xc3 xc2 19. ♖b4! e6t.

16... \ g4 17. 1 d4 b6 18. xb6 axb6

19. d6 a4 20. b4 C e6

Black maintains at least equal chances.

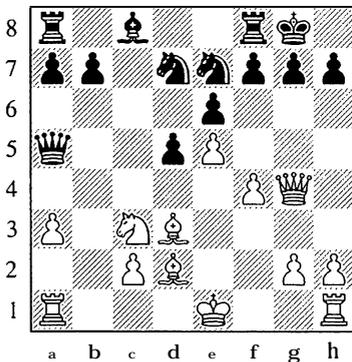
B5) 10" ♖d2



This move has a different strategy in mind. Instead of playing t)r a direct attack, White aims for active piece play and intends to place his strong dark-squared bishop on b4.

10... d c3 1U c3

11. C xc3? is inaccurate, and I found a strong improvement over the game Kosar - Zelenka, email 2004. 11... ♔d7! This looks like a good novelty, with the possible continuation: 12. f4 (12. t. b5 \ bG+)

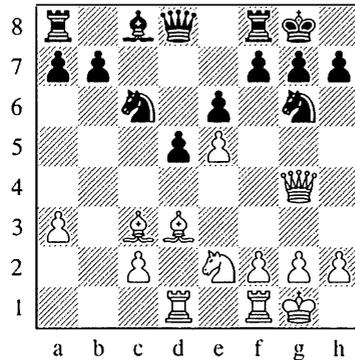


12... \ dS! Defending against a possible double attack against h7 and e7, which could occur after . . . xh7t followed by \ h4t. The queen

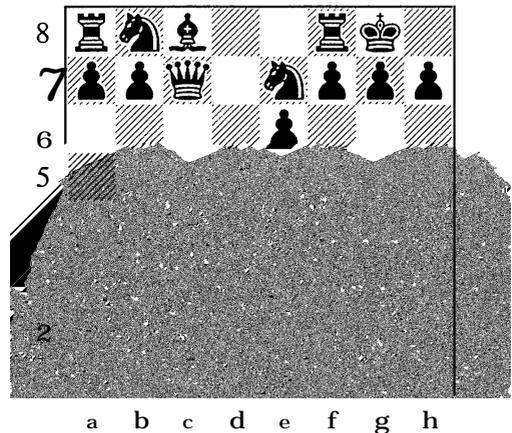
also avoids the X-ray attention of the bishop on d2. 13. 0-0 (13. \ h3 f5+) 13... C c5+ Black has consolidated and remains a pawn up.

u . . ♙c7

11... \ dS! is also interesting: 12. 0-0 C bc6 13. ad1 t gG



14. ♙xg6? (14. f4N is better, when Black can continue 14... ♙e7 attacking a3 and possibly preparing ...f5 at some stage.) 14... fxg6 Black had a healthy extra pawn and went on to win in Daligault - Ricou, Le Grand Bornand 2003.

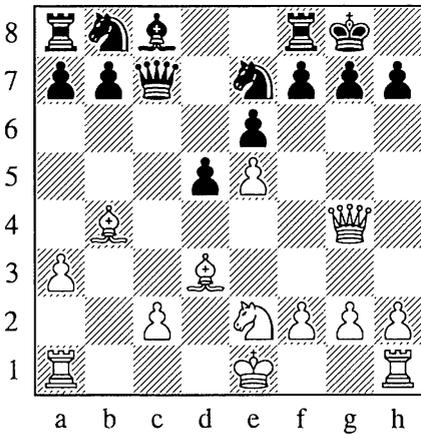


12" \, b4!

White should make activating this bishop his top priority, mainly to prevent the development of the enemy knight to d7. The importance of this point is shown in the following two variations:

12.0 0 occurred in Macieja - Vysochin, Warsaw 2010, and now after 12...1 d7!N Black's chances are higher, for instance: 13.\ h5 (13.f4 1 c5+) 13...1 gG 14.,d4 (14.f4! c5+) 14...1 c5+

12.h4 1 bcG+ was promising for Black in Gabrielsen - Djurhuus, Asker 2000. However, 12...1 d7!N would have been even better, when apart from attacking the c5-pawn, Black also prepares ...f5 or a knight jump to c5 to exchange the bishop on d3.



12...1bc6

12...1d8!N can also be considered, intending an exchange sacrifice on d6 if allowed.

13., d6! a5! 14.d f =

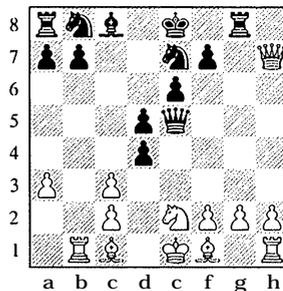
The position was dynamically balanced in Berg - Sorensen, Denmark 2007.

Conclusion

8. 1d3! is a playable option for White, but the active reply 8...1 a5! enables Black to make full use of the 7...cxd4 move order. The critical position arises after 9.1e2 0-0 when White has tried several different paths. Black must take care against the direct attacking attempts, but in many lines the development of the queen's knight to d7 is the key, planning ...f5 followed by recapturing on f6 with the knight. In theoretical terms I see no problems for Black in any of the lines examined here.

Chapter 3

Poisoned Pawn



8. ♔xg7

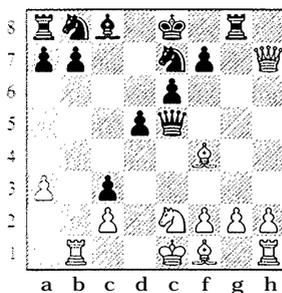
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♘xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♗g4 cxd4
8.♗xg7 ♗g8 9.♖xh7 ♖c7 10.♞b1! ♗xe5† 11.♘e2

11...d d

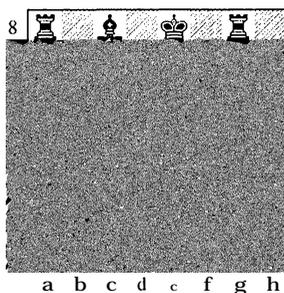
A) 12. ♘f4	27
B) 12.h4 d4	28
B1) 13.h5	28
B2) 13. ♘f4	29

A) after 12. f4



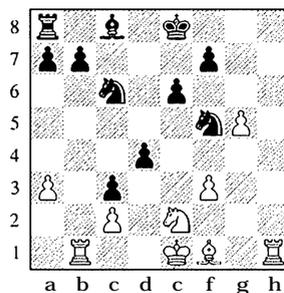
12..Vf4N

B1) after 14.h4



14..Eg4N

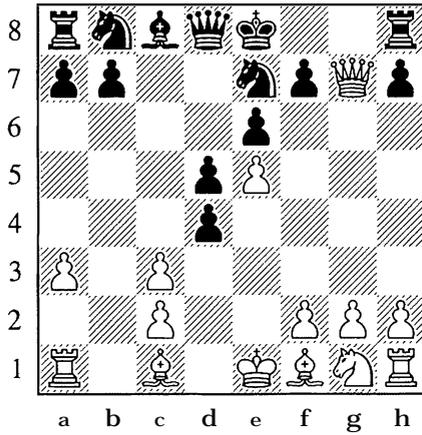
B2) after 18.hxg5



18..lfe7!N

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.f3 c3 4.b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3
i.xc3t 6.bxc3l e7 7.g4 cxd4 8.gxg7

bishop has been swapped of, and Black's development has been quickened.



Taking the g-pawn is the critical path, and indeed the main reason for putting the queen on g4 on the previous move.

8.. g89° xh7

There is no sense in passing up the chance to take a second pawn on the kingside.

9.. c7

The usual move, hitting c3 and e5.

In this short chapter I will concentrate on a few of White's rare IQh moves.

10' d1 is a significant option which can be found in Chapters 4 and 5.

10l e2 is the main line by far. Coverage of this move begins in Chapter 6 on page 64.

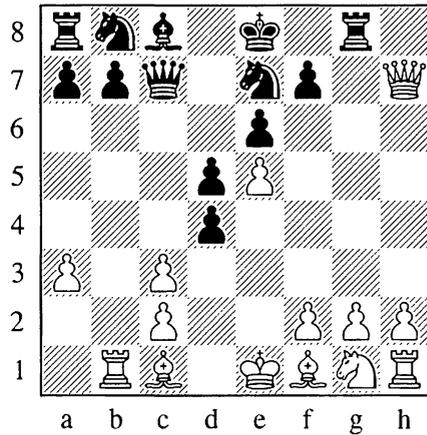
10 bl?!

Aside from the two moves mentioned above, this is the only option worth analysing as a main line. Most other moves are obviously inferior and can be dealt with quickly. Here are a few brief examples:

10.1 lb5? f, d7 11.. .xd? t1 xd7 | 2.1 e2 dxc3+ makes no sense for White. The bad French

10.\d2 looks strange but is not such a bad move. 10..' xe5i' (10..dxc3 IL \f4 l bc6 12.l f \d7 is similar variation B4 of Chapter 4, but White might be able to benefit from having avoided moving his king to c1.) 11.l e2 dxc3N (Improving over 11...l bc6? Bradler - Lick, Borkum 2004, after which 12.cxd4N l kd4 13j, 3 \ f5 14.\ xf5 l dxf5 15.h4! favors White.) 12.l.f4 (12..\kc3 \ c7=) 12..\ f6 13.h4 h8 14.. g5 ' xf2! 15.t xf2 fxh7 16.l xc3 f6! Black's strong centre gives him at least equal chances.

10.1 d3 has been played quite a few times, but after 10..l .xe5! 11.l e2 dxc3 we immediately transpose to a position reached later under the move order 10l e2 dxc3 1.l \ d3 \ xe5 - see variation B of Chapter 6 on page 69.



Although this move has been known since 1975, it was a game by Morozovich in 2011 that breathed new life into it. That being said, there are still very few games played in the database, so it is hard to make any serious judgement from them.

10..\ xeSt

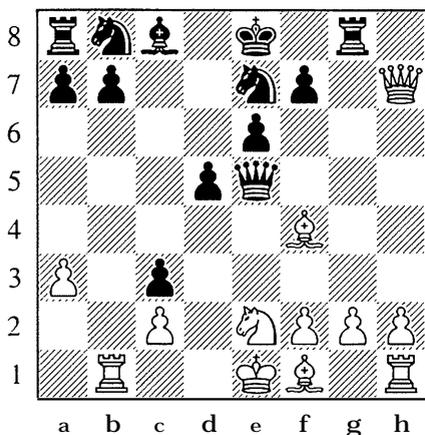
10..' xc3? transposes to an old Botvinnik

game. (At that time the theory of the Poisoned Pawn was in its infancy, and on the previous move the Patriarch chose 9... a5? instead of 9... c7, so he did not have the option to capture on e5 as in our main line.) 11. h2 e? (11... V xa3 12. ♖f3±) This was Alexander - Botvinnik, Britain - USSR (Radio match) 1946, and here 12.c ♖N would have been better for White.

11.c e2c c3

Now it makes sense to consider A) 12. ♔f4 and B) 12.h4.

A) 12. ♔f4



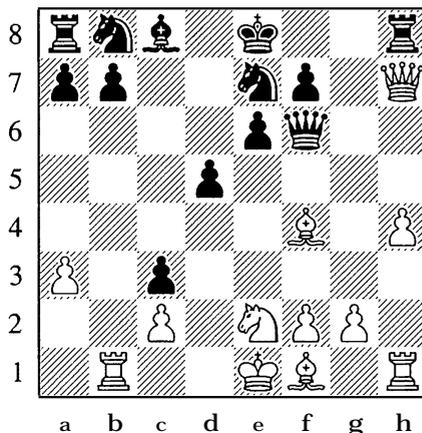
12... ♖f6N

This improvement has also been mentioned by Watson and Vitiugov.

12... ♖f5? 13. ♖xf5 cxf5 14.c xc3; gave White a favourable endgame in Eckert - Becker; Brilon 1993, thanks to his bishop pair; an active piece and dangerous passed h-pawn.

13.h4 gh8?

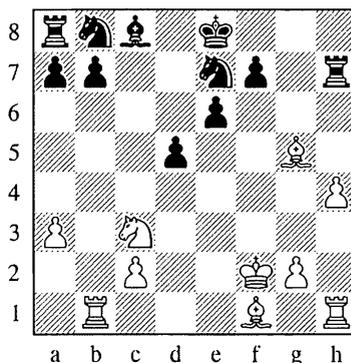
I prefer this over 13...c d7 14...g5 \ e5 15: he7 Eh8 16...\ d6 Exh7 17...\ xe5 c xe5 18! xc3. Here both 18...< e7= (Watson) and 18...f5= (Vitiugov) look fine for Black, although the line was not completely forced.



14 \ d3!?

White gives up the important h-pawn in order to consolidate in other areas.

The alternative is: 14.. ♗g5 \ xf2! 15. ♖xf2 ♖xh7 16. ♖xc3



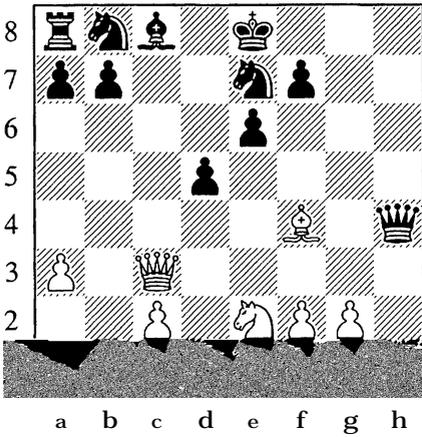
16...f6!

An important move which takes control over the dark squares and gives Black a solid position with an extra pawn. White nonetheless has compensation due to his piece activity, passed h-pawn and bishop pair, so I would evaluate the chances as roughly equal.

14..Exh4 15.Exh4

15.Je5? \ h6 16.Exh4 \ xh4+ does not help White.

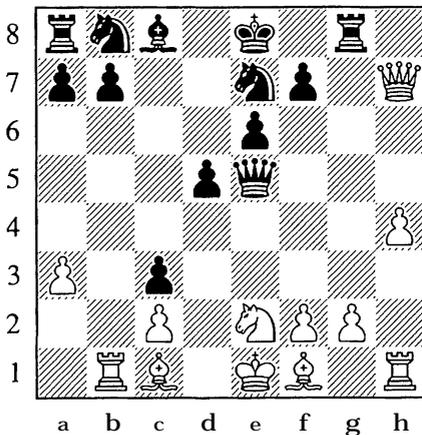
15...\ x 4 16 \ xc3



16...1 d7!

Not for the last time, we see the knight making good use of the d7-square. Although it blocks the development of the queenside pieces for the time being, the knight fulfils the important duty of controlling f6, and can drop back to f8 when necessary to come to the rescue of the king. The position is in a state of dynamic balance where White's better development and pair of bishops should compensate for the pawn deficit. Still, a pawn is a pawn and Black also has a strong centre, so I would take the black pieces if given the choice.

B) 12h4



This was the choice of Morozevich.

12...d4

12...1 bc6N could be considered, although it has the practical disadvantage that after 13. f4 \ f6 (13...° f5 14.\xf5 1 xf5 15.l xd ±) 14. g5 ° e5 White can choose between repeating the position and continuing the fight with 15.l he7 or 15.f4!?

Guarding the d - pawn is more challenging. Now White can choose between B1) 13h5 and B2) 13.lJ4.

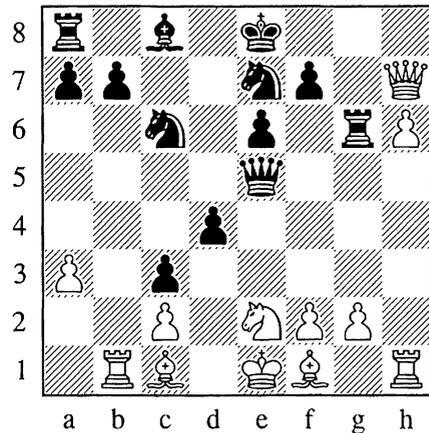
B1) 13h5

This was the move that Morozevich used to defend at Vitiugov, but Black has a strong improvement available.

13...1 bc6 14.h6! g6!N

This move stalemates the queen on h7 and paralyses White's position to a large extent.

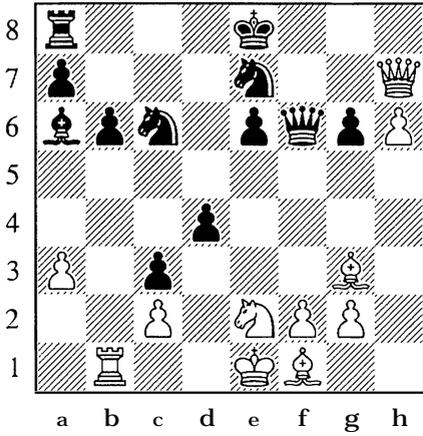
In the game continued 14...f5 15.H4 \ f6 16.l g3 \ h8 17.° xh8 ! xh8 with a double-edged position, Morozevich - Vitiugov, St Petersburg 2011.



15...h3

Van Delft and Ris mention 15.°f4 ♖f6 intending ...d7f5 with advantage to Black.

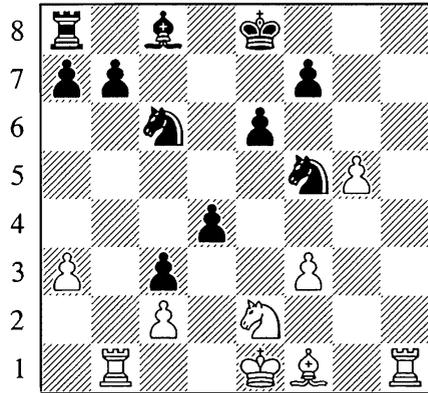
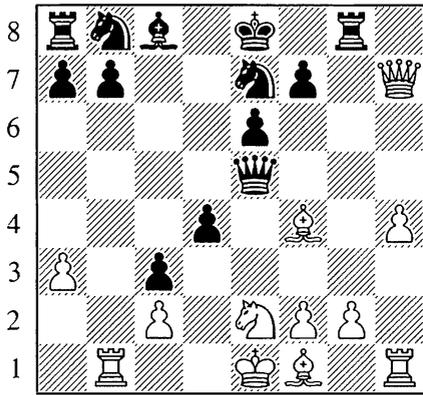
15...b6 16! g3 \,a6 17.! xg6 f g6 18.« f4 \ f6 19.lg3



19...gd8!

Black must remain vigilant, as

.♙c2+

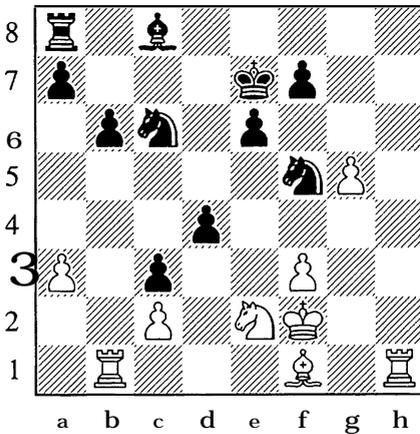


(27.f4N; would have kept Black under pressure.) 27...e5 28.ig3 1. ke6 29.og4 1. ke5 30.. f5 1. ke4 2. 2. Firat - Shimanov, Athens 2012. In the final position Black is solid and it is hard for White to create winning chances, although he could still have tried for a few more moves.

19.ogf

19.Eh? is met by 19..i f = intending ...i g8

19..b6

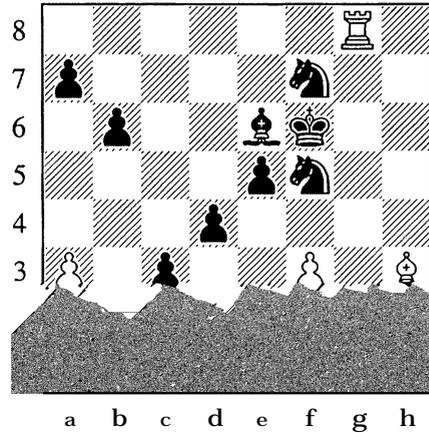


20.Eh7

20.Eh8 . ,b7 21.Exa8 . ,xa8 is dynamically balanced. Black has two pawns for the exchange and a strong centre.

20...e5 21.g6 e6 22. h3 Ef 23.Egl i f 24.gxf 1. h8! 25.Eg8Exf 26.Exf t 1. kf

Black has two pawns, active pieces and dangerous central pawns which fully compensate for White's extra exchange. On the other hand White's rook is extremely active, so overall the chances are balanced and a draw is the most likely outcome. I have provided some sample lines to show how this may occur.



27.Ea8

27.f4 1. f7d6 28.E g' i e7 29.Ea8 i f6 30.Exa? (30.E =>) 30...1. ke4! 31.ogf3 1. h2 32.t f2 1. ke4! = A perpetual check should ensue, as going a step too far in the winning attempts might easily cost a full point for White.

27...1. g5 28. g4 1. ke3! 29. xe6 ' ke6 30.4xc3 1. h3t 31.oe2 1. f4t 32.ogf 1. ke2! 32...4 h3t =

33.1. bl a5 34.Ec5 4. d3t 35.oe2 1. f4t 36.ogf =

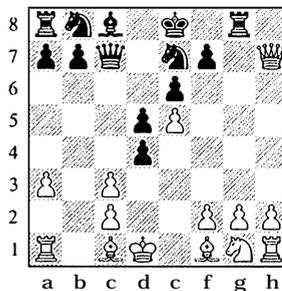
White should take the draw, as 36.ogd2 4. e3t is certainly not advantageous for him

Conclusion

We have begun the main part of our investigation into the Poisoned Pawn jungle, which occurs after 8.Vxg7 Eg8 9.i xh7 Vc7. 11.e reply IOEb! is unusual, but it seems fully playable, and many lines result in a dynamic balance between Black's extra pawn and White's positional trumps such as the bishop pair and passed h-pawn. Variation B2 is the most critical line, but I found an important improvement which assures Black of a good game.

Chapter 4

Poisoned Pawn



10. ♔d1

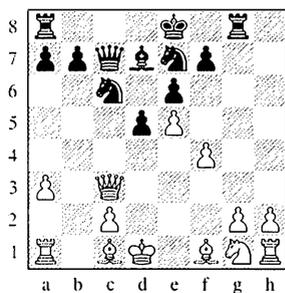
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♘xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7
7.♙g4 cxd4 8.♙xg7 ♙g8 9.♙xh7 ♙c7 10.♔d1

10... ♘bc6

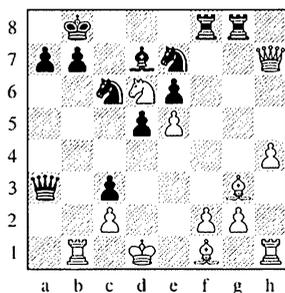
A) 11.f4 ♘d7	32
A1) 12.♙d3?!	32
A2) 12.♘f3 0-0-0	33
A21) 13.cxd4??	33
A22) 13.♙d3	34
B) 11.♘f3 dxc3	36
B1) 12.h4	37
B2) 12.♘g5	38
B3) 12.♙b1 ♘d7	39
B31) 13.♘g5	39
B32) 13.♘g5	40
B4) 12.♘f4 ♙b6!	41
B41) 13.♘g3	41
B42) 13.♔e1	42
B43) 13.♘e3	43

A1) after 13.Vh4



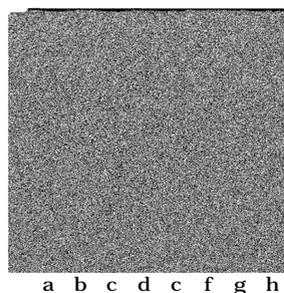
13...d4!N

B41) after 19. b1



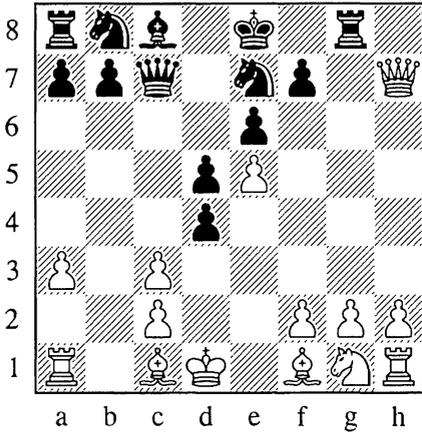
19... ♘2N

B42) after 17.%h4



17...c5!N

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.l c3 .,b4 4.c5 c5 5.a3
 .,xc3t 6.bxc3l e7 7.\ g4 cxd4 8\ xg7 Eg8
 9. xh7\ c7 10' dl



This interesting move deserves serious attention. White moves the king away from its exposed position on e1 and plans a more active development of his knight to f3, instead of e2 as in the main line.

10...l bc6

The most dynamic move, keeping the central tension and aiming for quick development. I investigated 10...l h7 and 10...dxc3 as well, but for reasons that I will not go into here, I was less satisfied with those moves, although the latter could easily end up transposing to our main lines after a subsequent ...t bc6.

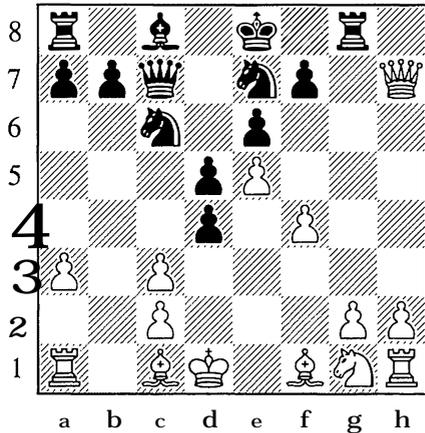
From this position we will begin by analysing A) 11.f4 before introducing the main line of B) 11.l f .

Alternatives are rare and will usually transpose to one of the 11.l f3 lines. Here are two examples:

11.Ebl i d7 12.l f dxc3 has occurred a few times; this position can be further analysed under the move order 1.l f3 dxc3 12.Ebl i,d7 - see variation B3 on page 39.

11. f4 occurred in Fass - Langer, corr: 1976, and now the simple 11...dxc3N leaves White with nothing better than 12.l f3, which once again transposes to a later variation - see 11.l f3 dxc3 12... beginning on page 41.

A) 11.f4



11...i ,d7

From here it is worth considering the weak A1) 12\ d3?! followed by the more sensible A2) 12.l f .

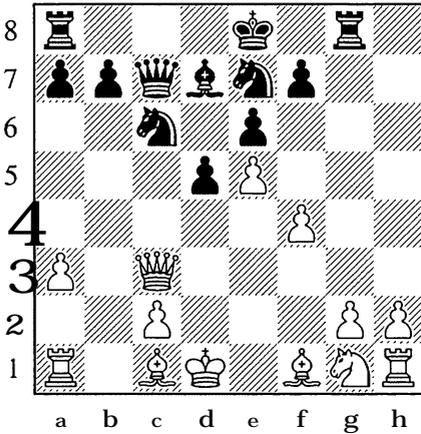
A1) 12i d3?!

This move generally does not combine well with the king on d1, as White is virtually a tempo down compared to normal Poisoned Pawn lines. Moreover, White will have to take extra care about a possible opening of the position, especially the d-f file.

12...dxc3 13i xc3

13.l e2 reaches a normal main line position where White has chosen the bizarre ' d1 move instead of capturing on c3 or pushing the h-pawn. 13...d4! looks like the best answer, with excellent chances for Black.

After the text move Black can improve on the game Kobylka - Falout, Br o 1987.



13...d4!N

If his move is mentioned by Watson and is also the computer's top choice. I have added some sample lines below.

14.\ c4

14.\ d3! f5 is clearly better for Black, who has excellent piece coordination.

14.\ c5! f5 15.f3 : c8 16.: b1 b6 17.\ c4 gives Black a pleasant choice between swapping queens with 17...! ce7 and keeping them on with 17...\ b7, with excellent chances in both cases.

14...\ b6 15.f f

15.\ b3 \ c5 16.\ c4 \ xc4! 7.. xc4: xg2+

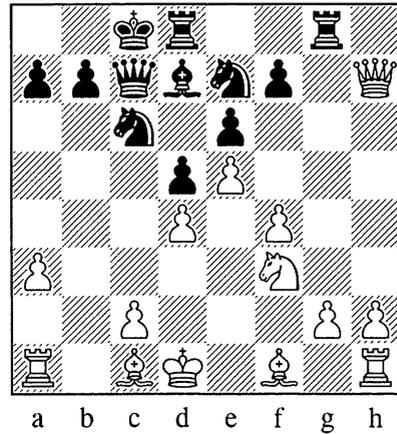
15...: c5 16. d2! f5:

Black has an active position with good chances to develop an attack against the white king.

A) 12.f f 0 0 0

From here we will begin by refuting the disastrous A 1) 13.c d4?? before moving on to the same alternative A 2) 13.\ d3.

A 1) 13.c d4??



This is a huge mistake which, strictly speaking, loses by force. Though you are unlikely to force it, it is worth familiarizing yourself with the refutation, just in case one of your opponents unwittingly follows this path.

13...! f !

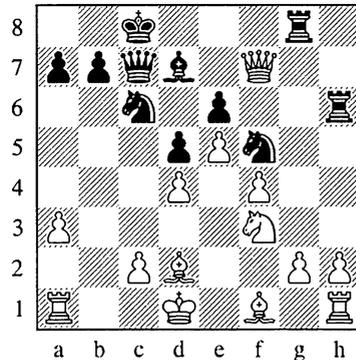
Blocking the queen's escape route. White is unable to rescue her without making final concessions elsewhere.

14.f g5

14.c3? loses immediately to 14...: h5 15.\ xf 1 cxd4! as pointed out by Watson.

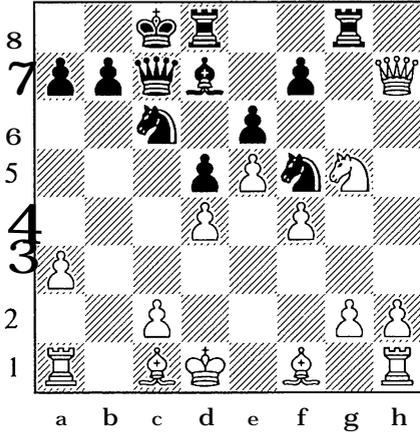
14. d2N does not help either: 14...: h5

15.\ xf Edf 16.\ g6. f 8 17.\ f6 (17.\ f7 l ds 18.iWG: h6 +) 17... h6 18.Wf



18...! d8! Threatening simply ...f8. 19.g4

[xg4 20.c g5 Wh8! Now ...c d8 is the plan. 21. .b4 [xh2 22.[xh2 i Vxh2 + White has saved his queen, but in the process he has allowed Black to build up a winning attack.



14...cxd4 15.. d3 Wc3 16[a sh4

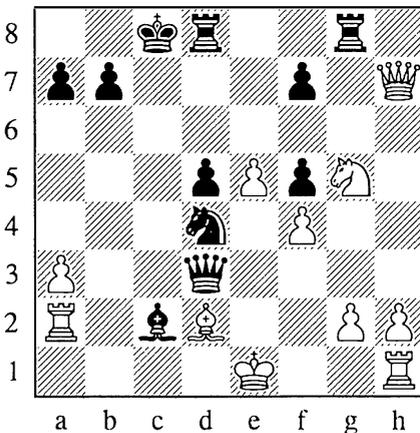
This time Black is not playing to trap the enemy queen, but rather to exploit her misplacement by executing a direct attack on the white monarch.

17. fxf5

17.Wh3 [hS- +

17...exf 18.\h2 1 xc2t 19.Wel iWd3

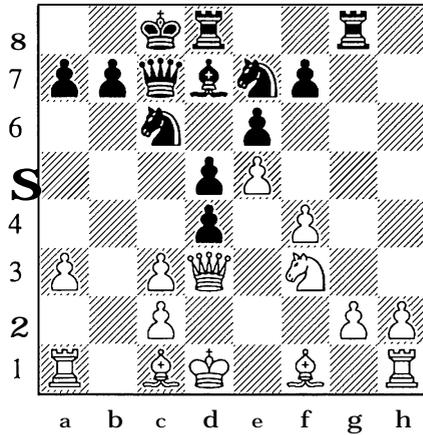
White could have resigned here, but he struggled on for a few more moves.



20[xc2t c xc2t 21.Wdl c d4 22[gl Wbl t 23. cl Wc2t 24.Wel We2#

Baiocchi - Nicolini, Italy 1969. According to my database nobody has since repeated 13.cxd4??, and with good reason.

A 2) 13.Wd3

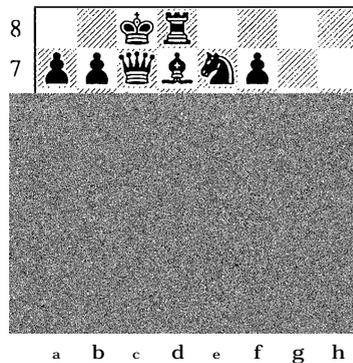


13..dxc3

Now Black threatens to play ...d4, securing a strong pawn centre which will also restrict the movement of White's pieces.

14i bxc3

14.c g5? [xg5! 15.f g5 occurred in Vukmirovic - Grkovic, Belgrade 2003. At this point, rather than capturing the e5 pawn immediately, Black could have obtained a fantastic position with: 15...d4!N



White's extra exchange is of little use here while Black's minor pieces are full of life. Black will soon grab the e5-pawn, after which his central pawns are likely to lead to victory. Some possible scenarios are: 16...g4 (16...g4 17.g3 18.fxe5 19.fxe5 20.d3 21.Wc5) Black has a powerful, continuing initiative and I doubt that White's position can be saved.

14...d4 15.Wc5

The other queen move is no better:

15.Wc4 16.d5 17.f6

Vasiukov - Krasnov, Cheboksary 1960.

Here Black can improve with:

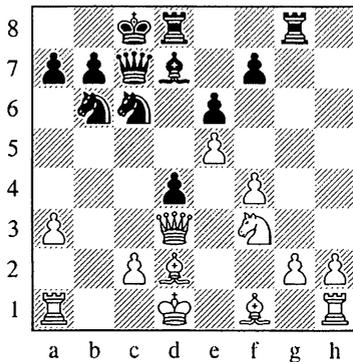
16...1 bGN

As suggested by Watson. Here are some illustrative lines:

17.Wd3

17.Wc5? 1 a4+

17.Wb3 1 e7+ intending ...1 ed5 and/or ...1 a4.



17...1 e7!

Black has a strong initiative and it is hard for White to create counterplay. It should be noted that the d4-pawn is entirely poisonous:

18.1 xd4?

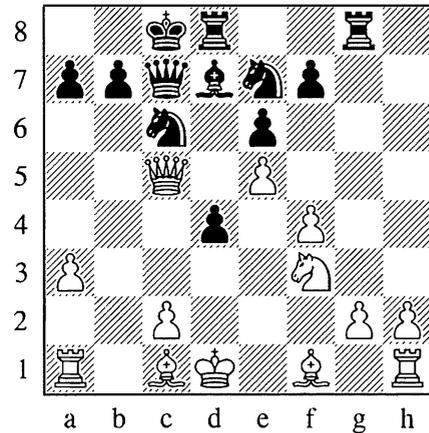
-[his greedy move would play into Black's hand, as it opens up X-ray attacks towards White's king and queen. There might follow:

18...f cG 19.1 xcG

After 19.: g1 f5 20.c3: d7- + the pressure on the d-file will soon turn out to be more than the white position can bear:

19...: xd3 20.1 xe7! Wxe7 21.cxd3 b8

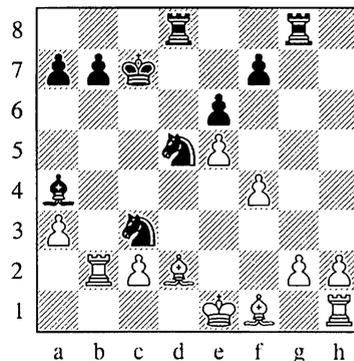
The material balance is close, but White's vulnerable king is likely to be the deciding factor.



15...♔d5 16.g3

I doubt that White has anything better. Here are two other moves I considered:

16.1 xd4?? loses on the spot: 16...1 xd4 17.Wxc4! (17.Wxd4 18.c3! 18...ei \lb5 19.Wxa7 : d1! 20. f2 ♔xf1 21.♔xf1 1 e4! 22.mgl : xfl t 23. xfl Wc4! 24.mgl W62- +) 17...mxc7 18.f d2 f a4 19.: a2 1 b5 20. e! 1 bc3 21.Eb2 Black is a piece up and can win almost any way he chooses, but he found a nice way to end it by targeting White's bishop and rook:

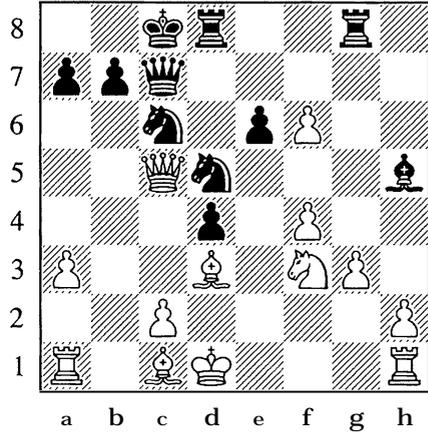
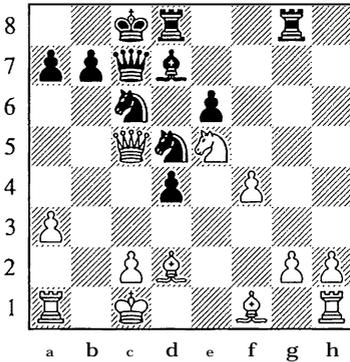


21..0e4 22.c4 c dc3 23.g3 c d1! 0 1
Ambrosio- Castiglioni, corr: 1970

17.i d3
17.exf6 N c xf6 18J d3 \e8

Watson mentions the idea of 16. d2N f6! breaking up the centre, which indeed looks promising for Black. A plausible line is: 17. ♖c1 (17.exf6 c xf6 is advantageous for Black, as Watson points out.) 17..f e5 18.c xe5 (18.f e5! ,!S!+)

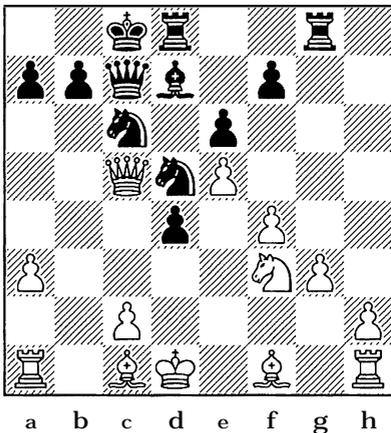
17...i e8 18exf \h5



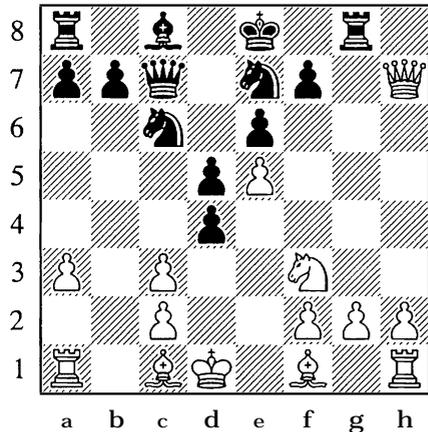
18...c f6 Black's initiative and saf r king promise full compensation fr the pawn deficit. (18...c xe5 19.Wxc? t l xc7 20.f e5 i c6 is another option)

19! e2??
19.Ef1 would have kept White in the game

19.... xf t 20l xf c e5
O 1Marder- Willumsen, Copenhagen 2004



B) l l c f



16..f
Here to o opening the centre of ers Black f ull counterplay. If und one game on the d tab. s. where White soon blundered:

11...d c3
From this position White's most popular and challenging move is 12c g5 and it will receive dedicated coverage in the next chapter beginning on page 45.

In the remainder of the present chapter we will consider four sidelines: B1) 12.h4, B2) 12.g5, B3) 12.Eh1 and B4) 12.i f4.

The database shows that several other options have been tested, but all of them are clearly inferior and likely to come unstuck after natural moves from Black. Here are a few brief examples:

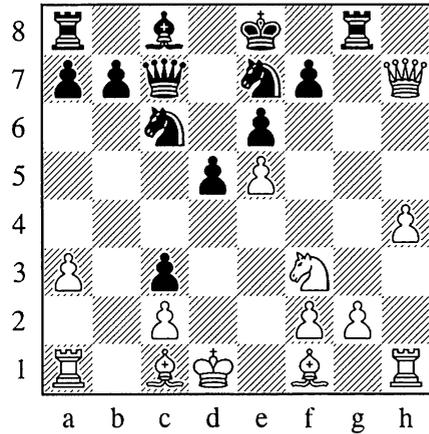
12.J,b5? is bad for several reasons. Black has always replied 12...i d7 with a favourable position, but even stronger is 12...! b6!N for instance: 13J.xc6t (13... f1 ' xf2 is no fun either.) 13...bxc6+ Black has ducks against both g2 and f2, and the bishop will soon be deployed on a6. White's situation is already hopeless.

12.. h6? ..d7 13.l g5? occurred in Bodo - E Porrisch, Hungary 1969. Now the simple 13...l keSN gives Black a big advantage, for instance: 14.f4 f6 15.fxg5 fxg5 + f e5-pawn will soon fall and Black already has a won position.

12.. d3? ..d7 (I generally prefer rapid development rather than picking up pawns; nevertheless 12...Exg2N+ is also favourable for Black.) 13.h4 0-0-0 14. g5 Malette - Leriche, Montreal 2004.

A possible continuation is 15. h6 1 f5 16. xf5 exf5 17. \ d6 i b6 18.Ef1 \ b2 19.Ec1 i b5 20.Eel Ee8+ with a great position for Black.

B1) 12.h4



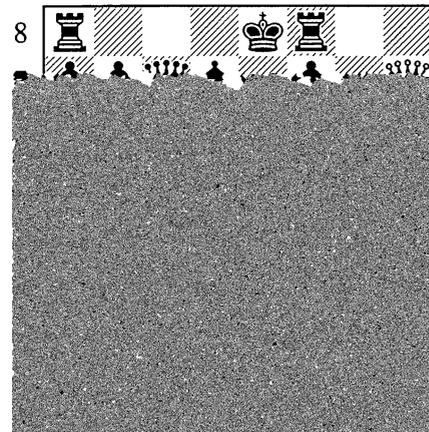
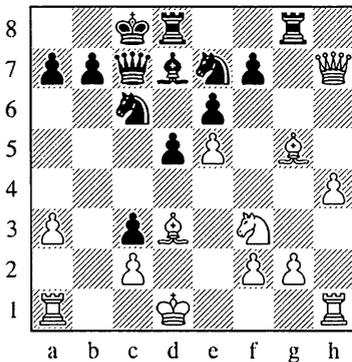
12...♔d7 13.♗g5

13.♗g5 leads to variation B2 directly below.

13..Ef 14.f4! f 15i d3

15.g4 leads nowhere for White: 15..l g3 16.Eg1 l xfl 17.Exfl l f4+ Davies - J. Watson, Manchester 1978.

After the text move 1 f and an improvement over Black's play in Garnier - Dubois, France 1993.



15..Wb6!N

With various attacking motifs. The primary threat is ...Wf2.

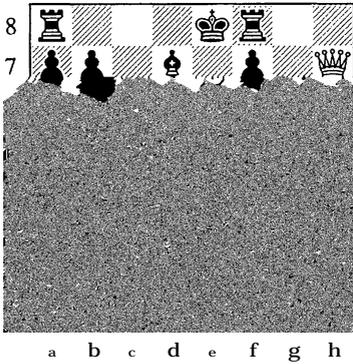
16.f e1 1 kd4!?

16...Wf2 17.\kf5 exf5 18.Qc3 Vxg2 may well be good for Black as well, but the text move looks even more tempting.

17.a4

Guarding against the deadly threats of ... a4 and ... \b5.

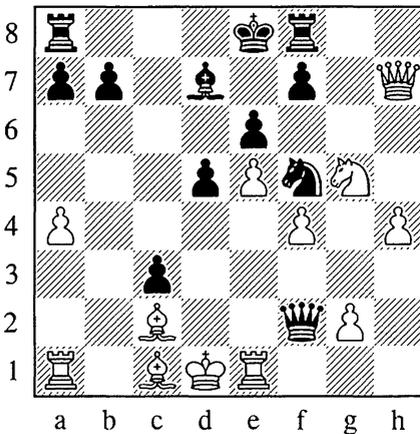
17.g4 meets with a crushing refutation:



17...l kc2! 18.gxf5 (or 18.\xc2 \b5+ intending ...Wd4+) 18...l ka1 19.fxg2 e6 +

17...l kc2! 18i xc2Wf

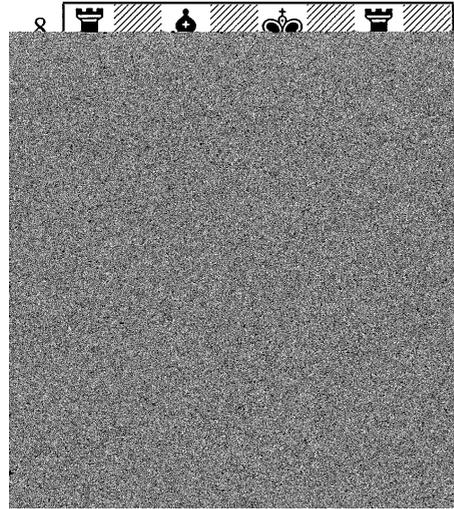
White is in serious trouble due to the absence of his queen from the main battleground. One instructive line is:



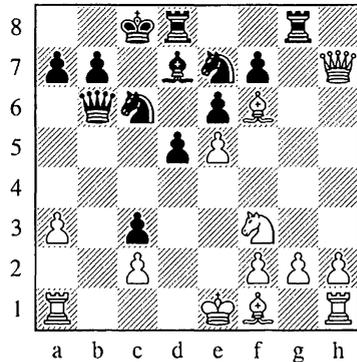
19.g4?f c8! 20g f f c4

White is defenceless against the threat of ...Wd4+.

B2) 12.. g5



13. fG puts the bishop on a nice square but costs valuable time: 13.. fb6 14. e1 (14.l lg5?? gxf5 15i xg5 Wd4" \6.' .d3 [or 16. cl Vxe5 17.iWh5 0-0-0 18.\e2 f h8 19.Wg4 f g8 20.h4 f6 +] \6...Wg4! 17. el iWg5 + Rozsa - Gostisa, Yugoslavia 1980) 14...0-0-0+ In the following game White's situation quickly deteriorated:

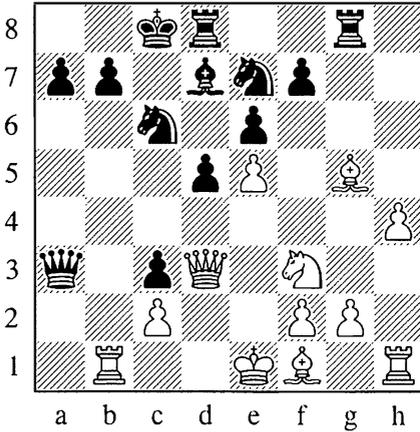


15.Qd3? Wxg2 16.Wf1 Wf8+ Winter - Panic, Bad Wiessee 2003.

13..Wb6!

'Il lis is a rhemaric way f r Black r acrivare the queen in this line.

14.mel Wb2 15.l dl 0-0-0 16.l d3 Wxa3 17.: bl



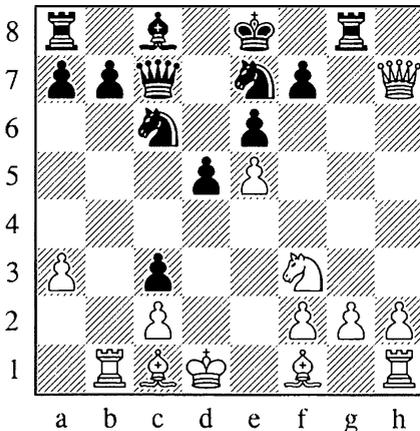
17...Bxg5! 18.Qxg5

Also after 18.hxg5N Qb4 19.Wd1 Qa4 20.Qd3 d4 Black has a strong initiative.

18..Cxe5

Black had more than enough compensation for the sacrificed exchange in Speice- Staszko, Pardubicc 1996.

B3) 12.: bl

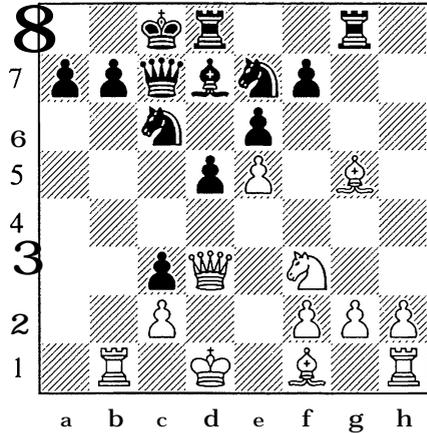


This is a logical move, raking control over the b-file and preventing ...Wb6.

12.. d7

Now it is worth considering B31) 13. gS and B32) 13.Cg5.

B31) 13.Qg5 0-0-0 14.Wd3



14..l xgS!

Not for the first time, this typical sacrifice works well.

15.Cxg5 Cxe5 16.Wd4

Here If und a useful improvement.

16..f6!N

16... bS of ered Black full compensation in Necula – Newman, email 1999, but the text move is stronger:

17.C h7!?

17.Cf b8 is excellent for Black. 'Il le text move is an interesting attempt to stir up trouble, but here too the second player has more than enough resources.

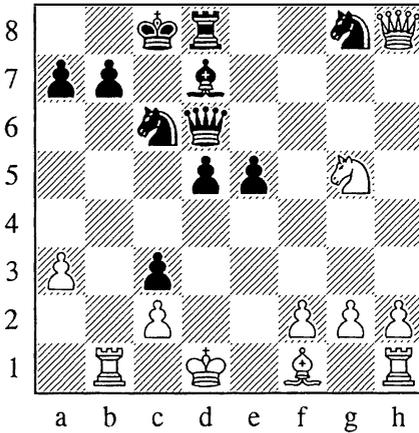
17..C 5c6 18'-txf6

18.Wxc3? d4 19.Wg3 (19.Wd2 Qd5) 19...Qe5 intending ...d3.

18...e5 19.Cg5! g8 h8
20. Vg6! h4+

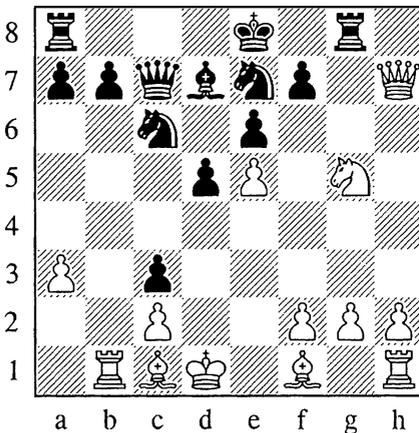
20... d6

Black has an excellent position. It is worth pointing out the unsurprising fact that White cannot grab further material:



21. d7? e7 22. xd8 g5+
With mate to follow soon.

B32) 13! g5

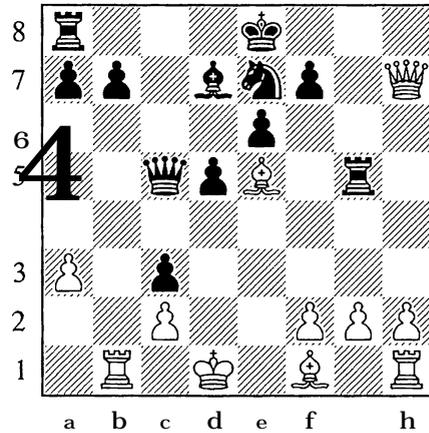


This can be compared with the main line with 12! g5, as found in the next chapter. However, the inclusion of 12.Eb1 d7 leads to some important differences:

13...! ke5! 14.i, f4

By contrast to the next chapter, 14.f4? is not a valid option here due to 14...Exg5 15.f g5 0-0-0+ as seen in Makepeace - G. Smith, Great Yarmouth 2007. The inclusion of the ... d7 move clearly favours Black, who has more than enough compensation for the sacrificed material in view of his development advantage, strong pawn centre and safer king.

14...! c5! 15. xc5! xg5



16. h4! N

White needs to improve on 16.f4? as played in E. Mueller - Skorska, com: 1978. Now 16...! g8! N looks best when after 17. l xb7 Wxa3 18! b1 . c6+ Black is slightly better:

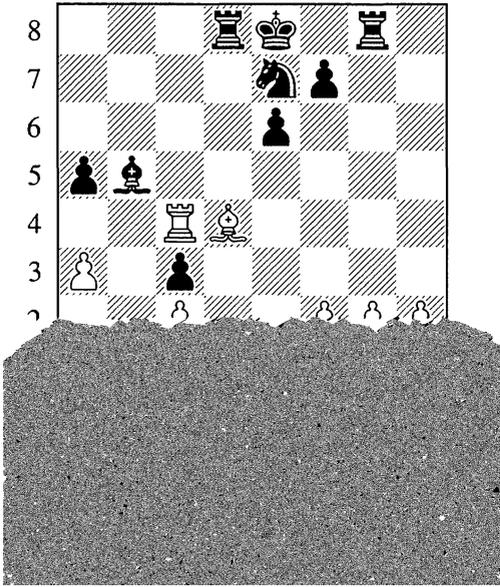
16...: g8! 17J xb7
17! b3! f5+

17...d4!?

Not the only playable move, but the most forcing.

17... xa3? is one valid alternative; Black could also keep the tension with 17...: c5, leading to a dynamic but approximately equal position.

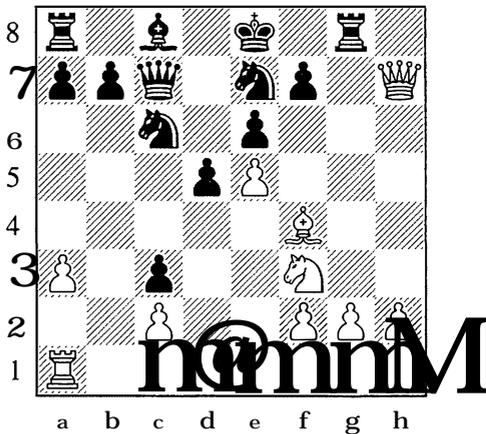
18 Wxd4 \ xd4! 19. ,xd4 . .c6 20! b4 a5
21.Ec4: d8 22. l cl . b5



23... xc4 24. xc4 f xg2=

The endgame is balanced, though far from a certain draw. White will have two pawns for the exchange (after capturing on a5) and a strong pair of bishops, but all of his pawns are isolated.

B4 12.i f4



This is by far the most popular of the alternatives presented in this chapter. However, it has seldom been seen in recent years especially at high levels.

12..1 6!

Not only attacking f2 but also intending to invade with ...Wb2. There are three main replies worth considering: B41) 13.&g3, B42) 13.©e1 and B43) 13.\e3.

B41) 13.&g3 Wb2 14.f d1 Wc3 15.h4

15. ..d3 c b4 is good for Black.

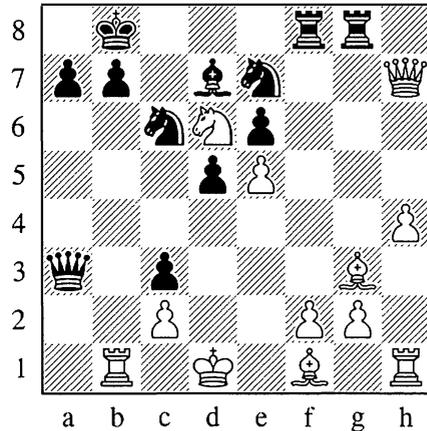
15.... ..d7 16.C g5 0-0-0!

This type of minor sacrifice should be second nature to a Poisoned Pawn player. Rather than defend passively with ...f f , Black completes his development and intends to utilize the open f-file after White captures on f .

17.c x f f d f8 18.c d6 t © b8 19.f b1

19. ..d3 Wc5 20.i h6 C b4 already leaves White without a good defence.

The text move was seen in Schuermans - Webster; Guersey 1989. Black already has a great position, and here the most convincing route to victory would have been:



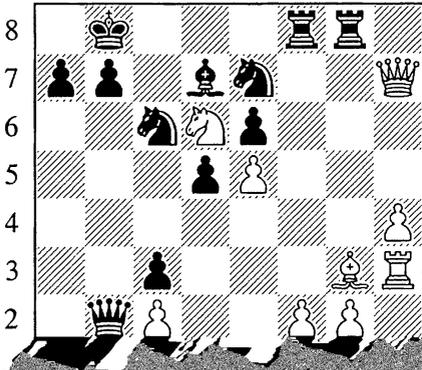
19..i a2!N 20.f d1

20.f xb2 t © a8 21.Wd3 (21.Wh6 C f5 22.c xf5 © xb7- +) 21..WaH 22.© e2 c f5 is crushing.

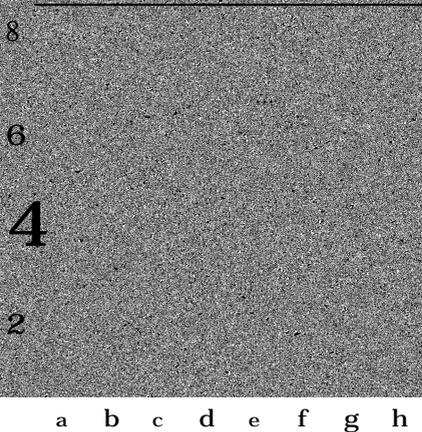
20..Wb2

A small prophylactic move, guarding the c3-pawn so that a future ' d3 can be met by the deadly reply ...1 b4. White is defenceless against Black's huge initiative. One possible finish is

21. [h3



B42 13.Wf1



a b c d e f g h

Moving the king from e1 to d1 and back within a short time does not inspire confidence, and Black easily develops a strong initiative.

13...1d7 14.4 g5

14.' d3 occurred in Johnson - Bur , corr: 1991. Black has a few good replies, but strongest is 14..♞g4!N 15.. ♞e3 (15.♙g3? ♜d4+; 15.g3 ♜g6+) 15...d4 16.kcl ' a5+

14...4 xe5 15.\ ♞e5

Another disaster for White occurred after 15.h4 ' d4! 16.\ ♞e3 a4 17.f4?! 0-0-0! 18.f e5 ♜f5 when, despite the extra piece, his position was on the verge of collapse in Runowiecki - Wiacek, Poland 1998

15.. [xg5 16.\ g 17.i fh4

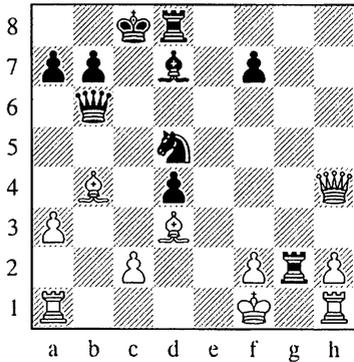
Watson mentions 17.. ♞d [c8 18.h4 ♞g8 19.' d3 ' c7 20. b2 g4 when Black has a clear advantage.

The text move was played in Jansson - Botteill, London 1979, and here I found a strong improvement for Black.

18.. 0 0 0 19.fW4

After 19.g.c2 ♞c8+ White has no answer to the deadly threats along the e-file.

I also analysed the following line which contains a nice finish: 19. xc3 d4 20.k b4 (or 20' xd4 e64 21. .e2 xe2!+) 20.. ♜d5 2i.. d3 ♞xg2 22. Wf1



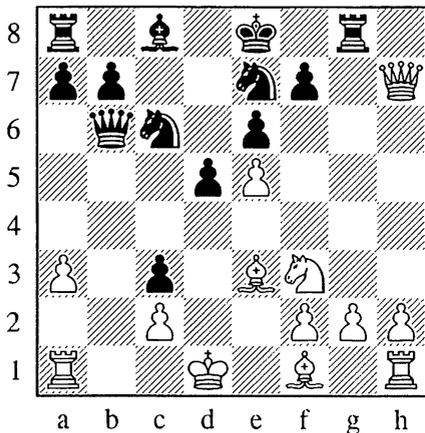
22...♖c6!→ With a crushing initiative for Black.

19..Wb6 20.Wxc3t 1 c6 21.f4 f6 22.f Wxf
23.l.g3geSt 24 dl
24..\e2Wh5 +

24...d4 25.Wf Ws 26.Wf4l e5 +

Black has an overwhelming position and White will soon collapse.

B43) 13.l,e3



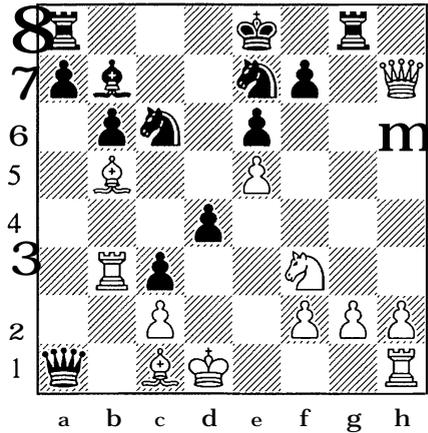
"this seems to be the best chance, although White will still be fighting for equality.

13..\b2 14.: cl Wxa3 15.gbl b6 16.gb3

16.l.bS should be met by 16...£b? when 17.gb3 Walt 1S.i k:l d4 transposes to the main line below.

16..Walt 17.l.cl d4 18.£bS £b?

Here I f und an improvement f r White.



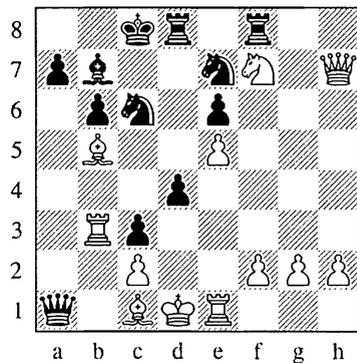
19.t gS!N

White was swiftly demolished after 19.: a3? Wb1 20: b3Wa2. These two moves have helped Black, whose queen stands better on a2 than a1. The point is that a future ega3 will allow the black queen to take up an excellent central post on d5, rather than forcing it sideways to b1. 21.t gS gf 22.WhS? A mistake in an unpleasant position. 22...0 0 23.We2 d3 + Scheglmann - Pischner, corr. 1990

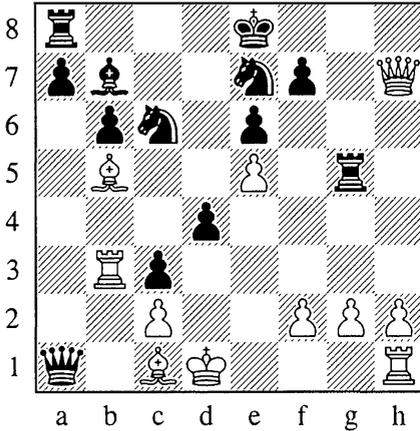
19..gxfS!?

This move leads to colourful tactics. Black is almost winning, but White has a narrow path to equality.

19..gf is a good alternative. One instructive continuation is 20.ge1 0 0 21.l xf ? (Better is 2J..\d3 with an unclear game.)



21...d3! 22.♙xd3 ♖xd3† 23.♗xd3 Exf 24.♖a3
Wb1 25.♗xc3 ♕f5! White has a slight material
 advantage, but Black has a safer king and far
 better piece coordination.

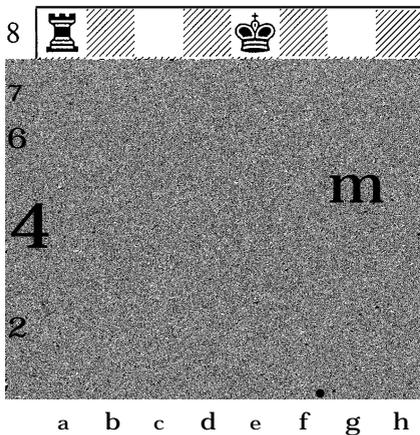


20.Ea3 \ bl 21.Eb3 1 xb3!

An attractive winning attempt which
 narrowly falls short. Black can take an instant
 draw with 21...♗a1= if he wants it.

22.cxb3 Exg2 23.t a3!

Securing just enough counterplay. The finish
 might be:



**23...a6 24. xc6! 1 kc6 25.WhSt < d7
 26\ f < es 27.Whst**

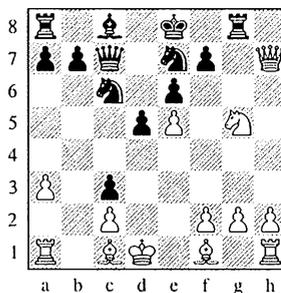
With perpetual check.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced us to the quite
 popular 10.♔d1 ♕bc6 line. 11.f4 is playable
 but slow, and Black is at least equal in the lines
 that follow. 11.♕f3 is more natural, and after
JJ.♙dxc3 White has tried several different
 ideas. In this chapter we have checked several
 of the minor options, and found that in most
 variations Black has excellent chances of
 seizing the initiative. Having established that
 the sidelines pose no threat, we will turn the
 page and begin analysing the more challenging
 12.♕g5 variation.

Chapter 5

Poisoned Pawn



11. ♖f3 dxc3 12. ♖g5

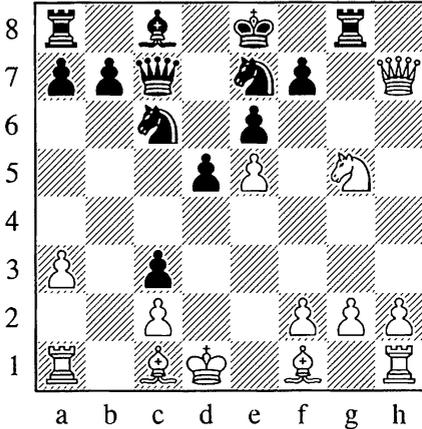
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♙xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♙g4 cxd4
8.♙xg7 ♗g8 9.♙xh7 ♙c7 10.♙d1 ♘bc6 11.♘f3 dxc3 12.♘g5

12...♘xe5

A) 13.f4 f6!	46
A1) 14.♙h5†	46
A) 14.♙b5†	47
A3) 14.fxe5 fxe5 15.♙h5† ♙d8 16.♙xe5 Wes	49
A31) 17.♙d3?!	50
A32) 17.h4 ♙d7	51
A321) 18.♙b1	52
A322) 18.♙h3	53
A323) 18.♙g4!N	54
A33) 17.♙h4	55
B) 13.♙f4 ♙b6 14.♙xe5 ♗xg5	56
B1) 15.h4?!	57
B2) 15.♙xc3	58
B3) 15.♙h4! ♗g8 16.♙d4 ♙xd4† 17.♙xd4 ♙d7	59
B31) 18.♙b1	61
B32) 18.h4!	62

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3
 ♘xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♖g4 cxd4 8.♗xg7 ♖g8
 9.♗xh7 ♗c7 10.♔d1 ♘bc6 11.♘f3 dxc3
 12.♘g5



This is the sharpest and most popular way for White to handle the 10.♔d1 system.

12..1 keS

Here White has two serious options: A) 13.f4 and B) 13.Nf4. The first has been slightly more popular but it has scored badly in practice. In any case, both moves need to be checked carefully.

A) 13.f4 !

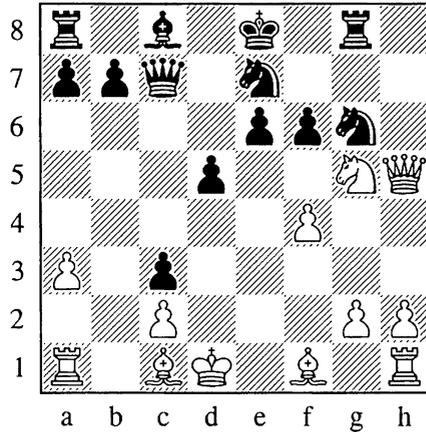
An important moment. The alternative 13..♗xg5!? looks tempting, as Black gets a strong pawn centre and apparently good counter-chances. The exchange sacrifice has been Black's most popular choice; nevertheless, I found that after correct defence White can claim some advantage.

After the text move White has occasionally tried two sidelines in 1) 14. hSt and A) 14. hSt, but the main line by far is A) 14.f eS.

I found one example of 14.1 ke6?? ♘xe6

15.f c5, Krzewicky – Calzolari, corr. 1994, at which point 15...♗xe5N would have been the most convincing of several winning continuations for Black

A1) 14. hSt 1 Esg6



15.1 h7!N

This interesting novelty is worth considering, although with careful play Black emerges on top.

15.♘b5† was played in Sztepa – Sinlén, Eger 1997, and now a test, the logical 15...♘d7N 16.1 ke6 \ b6 17.♘xd7† ♘xd7 18.♗e1 ♘f the position is messy but somewhat favourable to Black.

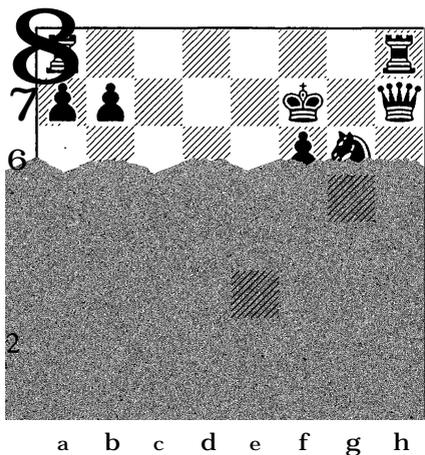
15..mf 16 d3

16.g4 is too ambitious 16..♗h8 17.♘d3 (17.f5 exf5 does not help White) 17... \ b6 18.fS exf5 19.g5 (19.Ec1 ♖g4 +) 19...fxg5† The position is still rather messy but Black has a distinct material advantage and his king is not in all serious trouble, despite being out for a walk.

16..Eh8 17.f exf5 18Ee1

White's attack is almost working but Black has just enough time to organize a successful defence, as shown below.

18.. \ dS! 19.g4 \ g8 20.gxf xfs 21.\xfS
 \ x 7 22. xg t l kg 23 \ xdSt



23.. ©fS!

If checks will soon run out; meanwhile White's king is also far from safe.

24.g6

24.\ d6!? ©g7 25.\ c? t ©g8+ certainly does not help White.

24.. \ c7!

By keeping the queens on the board, Black gives his opponent maximum chances to go wrong.

24.. \ h5f reaches a slightly better endgame with no risk for Black: 25.1 f x h 5 g x h 5 26.g x f 0 ! (g 7 27.g f 3 g d 8 ! 28.© e l g e 8 j ! 29.© f l g x h 2 30.g x c 3 1 l h 4 t

25.gd6

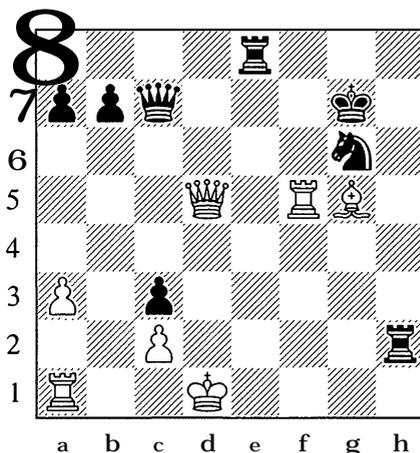
25.\ f5 \ d?t 26.\ t e l \ xe6! 27.\ xe6 2e8+ reaches a more favourable version of the endgame, with an extra pawn and decent winning chances for Black.

25..g x h 2 26.g x f 0 t ©g 7 27.. \ t S e 8

After 27...g d8? 28.g x g 6 ! ! ©x g 6 29. d 8 White escapes with a draw.

2s.gfsi

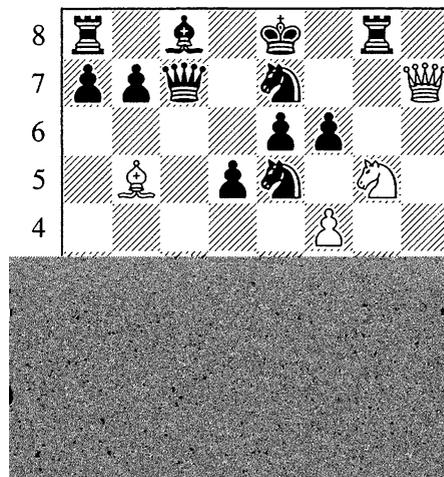
28.gf1? gee2 wins. After the text move White may be able to survive, although he is clearly hanging on by a thread. In any case, we are well past the opening phase, so I will leave you with one possible continuation suggested by the computer:



28..ge7!? 29.. J6t ©h6! 30.\ bSt ©h7
 31.\ ke7 g d 2 t 32. ♖ x d 2 c x d 2 33. f \ h 2

White is still under pressure, although he has reasonable chances to save the game by making a timely exchange sacrifice and playing for a fortress with rook and bishop against queen.

A) 14. bSt



There have been two games from this position, both of which saw White blunder on the next move.

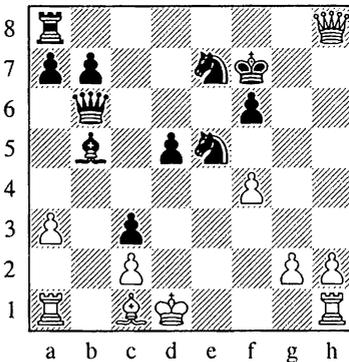
16. Wh5f

This is the only chance to make White's position work, and a much better try than the following disastrous attempts

16.1 g2? 17. Exg7 17. Wxg7

17. xdn f 18. fh8! 1 g8 +

17..J xb5 18. Wh8! f



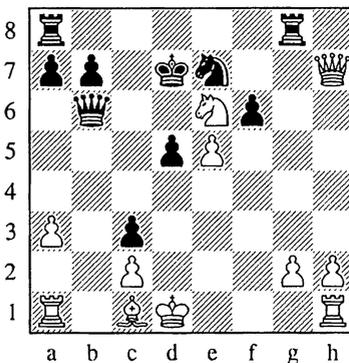
19. Wh5f

19. Whn is a slight improvement but not enough to save the game: 19... e6 20. Wh3t 1 f5 21. Wxc3! g4 22.. ,b2 (22. Ee1! d7- + 22..1 f2! 23. cl d7- +

19..1 5g6 20. Wh? f f8 21. Wh6! g8 22. f5 Wd4t 23. cl 1 h4 24.. e3 Wg4

0-1 Greene- Vaughan, USA 1982.

16.b d? 17? xd7 17.f e5



17... xe6!

Both kings are vulnerable but Black's development advantage should enable him to win comfortably, although some care is still needed.

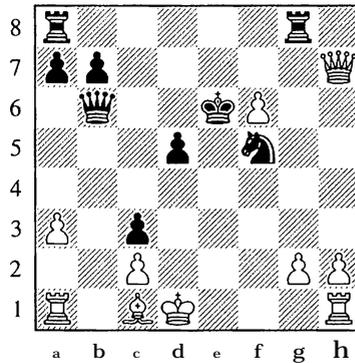
18.cxf6N

This untested move seems like the best try.

The game continued: 18. Wh3j 1 f5 19. Efl Wd4! 20. cl Gamenez Gonzalez - Moran Nuque, Cuba 1993. Now 20... Eg4N is the most straightforward win, as pointed out by Watson.

18..1 f5!

The knight shields the king while also preventing the white queen from assisting with the defence. A possible follow-up is:



19.geH

19. Wh3 Wd4t 20. Wd3 WxdJ-r 21. cxd3 Exg2- + does not change much

19.. xf6 20. Wh7 Wd4! 21. Wd3 Wxd3t 22. cxd3 Exg2- +

Black's queenside pawn majority and ongoing initiative will decide the game.

16..Eg !

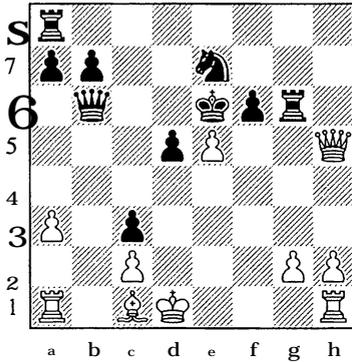
16..1 5g6 transposes to the note to White's 15th move in variation A, but via this move order Black can do even better:

17.f c5

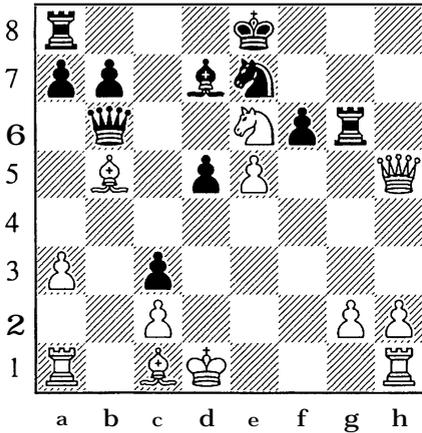
Other tries are worse:

J7.g b 1? Wxe6 18.fxe5 0-0-0 19.Eel gxc2+

17. h d? t mxd7 18. f e5 mxeG! This looks slightly provocative, but the queen is well placed on bG and we have already seen that the king can survive on e6.



19. exf (19. ♖h3? f5 + eliminates any possibility of counterplay for White.) 19...l d4t 20. meI Exg2 21. h3t Eg4 22. f e7 (xe7 23. d ! We5! 24. mdl Ee4! Forcing White to return the extra piece. 25. le. Exc3 26. Wxe3 1 xe3 27. Eel WxeH 28. mxel Eh8+



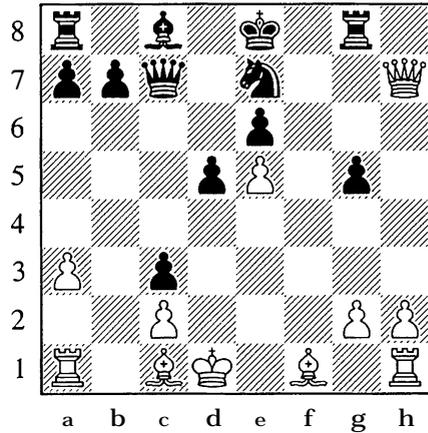
17... Wke6 18 xd?t mxd7 19. Ebl Exg2!?

Black is spoiled for choice as the simple 19. ♗b6+ also gives him the better chances.

20. Exb?t mc6 21. Eb3 WkeS 22. WkeS f e5 23. Exc3t mdlG

Black is better in the endgame, due to his active pieces and strong central pawns.

A) 14 f eS f g5



This is by far the most important branch of the 13. f4 variation. White's centre is crumbling but he has managed to open up the kingside.

15. Wht

This is the only move to have been tested so far

15. h4! ?N

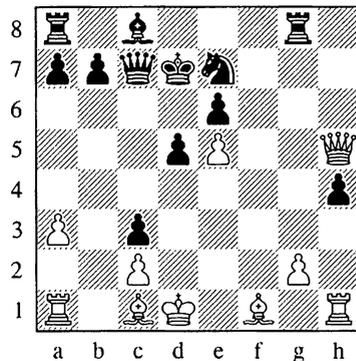
An interesting alternative, opening the h-file before checking.

15... gxf4 !6. \ h5t md7!

An interesting refinement.

Watson recommends 16. ♗mdS 17. ♗g5 \ c5 as leading to Black's advantage, but after 18. Wxh4 d7 19. iJG a5! 20. Ebl the position is approximately equal.

f e text move temporarily blocks the path of the c8 bishop, but has the advantage of avoiding attacks from a bishop on g5.



17. b5†

With the king on d7, 17. ♔g5?? just loses to 17... \ xe5.

Against most other moves Black will play ... ♖c5 and ... ♕c7, completing development with an excellent position.

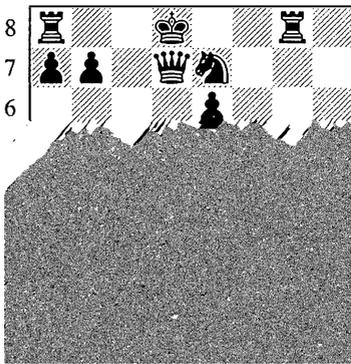
17... ♖d8

Strangely enough, the extra move ,f1-b5 helps Black, who will gain time with ... ♖c5 or ... ♔d7. The vulnerability of the g2-pawn might also come into play.

18Ebr

18. g5 \ c5 is excellent for Black.

18.. d7 19J g5 xb5 20. ♖xb5 ♖d7



21.. ,xe? t

21. ♖b3 ♕c7 22. ♔xe7 ♖xe7 23. ♖xc3† ♖d7+ Black keeps some pressure thanks to his better pawn structure.

21... ♖xe7 22. ♖xh4 ♖xh4 23. ♖xh4 ♕d7! 24. ♖h7† ♕c6 25. ♖xb7 ♖ac8†

White has some problems, the g2-pawn is under fire and Black intends ... \ k5-d4 to target e5. At any rate, we may conclude that the untested 15h4!?, while interesting does not pose much of a threat, and the only question is whether Black can push for a significant advantage. Let us now return to the much more important main line.

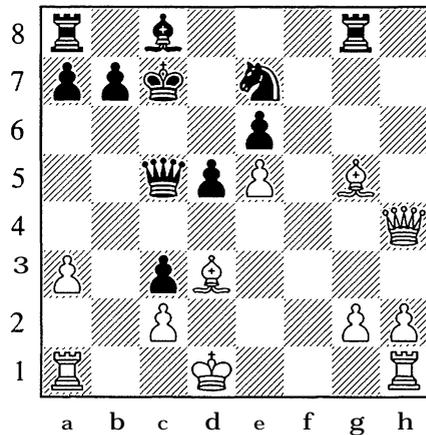
15... ♖ds 16.. .xgS Wes

We have come to a branching point in this sharp variation. A 1) 17. \ d3?! is a

substandard move, but A 2) 17.h4 and A 3) 17. \ h4 are both interesting.

A 1) 17.. d3?! ♖c7 18 \ h4?!

18 xc7N \ xc7 19.Ef1 is a better try, although Black's chances are still to be preferred after 19.. ♔d7 20. ♖f7 \ g5 21 \ xg5 ♖xg5 22.. ,b5 Ed8 with a favourable endgame.

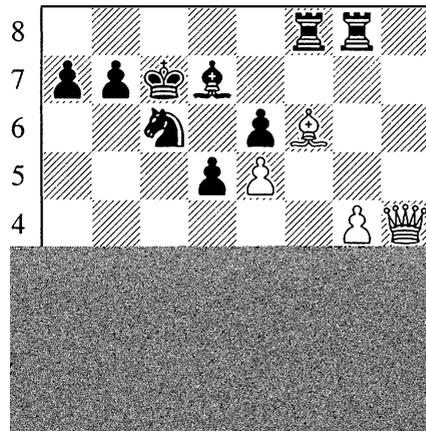


18..l c6 19.Eel . d7

Black has almost completed development, and over the next few moves he systematically builds up a winning position.

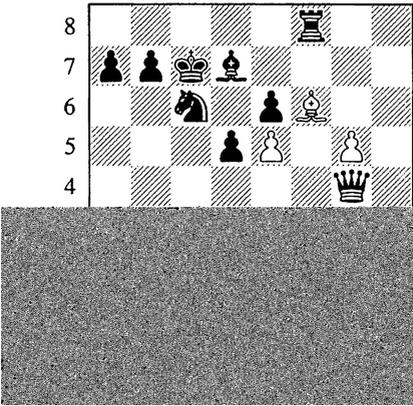
20.g4 ♖af8 21. f \ d4 22.h3 \ f23.Ee2 \ fl t 24.Eel ♔ t 25.Ee2

Sisnicga - Agdestein, Tawco 1985. Here Black missed a direct win:



25...f h8!N 26. xh8

26. \ f2 \ xh3 doesn't offer any hope either, for instance: 27.g5 \ g4 28.Wc1 l hH 29.l e1



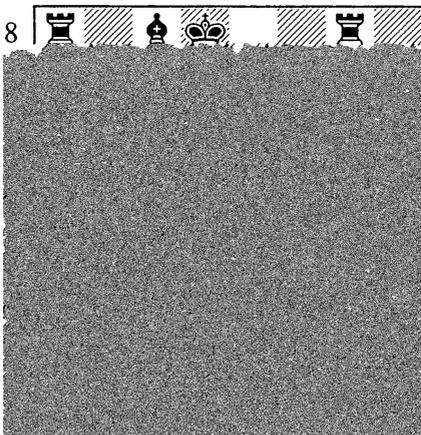
26..Wh1 t 27.ge1 \ h2 28.Wc1

28.Wh6 m4 +

28.,gf !+

This final accurate move decides the issue by threatening both ...gxd3 and ...gxh3. White is a whole rook up but he has no coordination whatsoever.

A ♘ 17.h4



Pushing the h-pawn is a thematic plan for White in the Poisoned Pawn, but it seems dangerous here as White is behind in

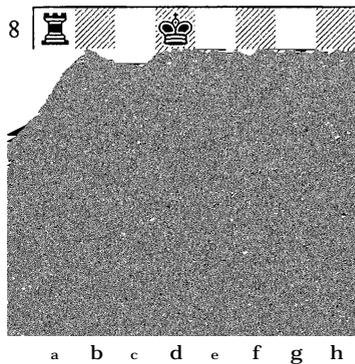
development and his king is rather exposed. A glance at the database shows that White's practical results with this move have been horrific, with just a single draw out of eight games at the time of writing.

17...i,d7

Although this is not the most important theoretical line, I find it quite instructive to break down the different possibilities and see how Black's initiative should be developed and exploited. From this position White's most sensible options are A321) 18.l b1, A322) 18.gh3 and A323) 18. \ g4!N. '1 m e other moves have been tried, but they are all clearly inferior:

18.\Wf ?? meets with a simple refutation: !8...gxcg5 19.hxcg5 We} 0-1 Kirsten - Leisebein, corr: 1986.

18.\ h?? is not much better 18...gxcg5 19.hxcg5

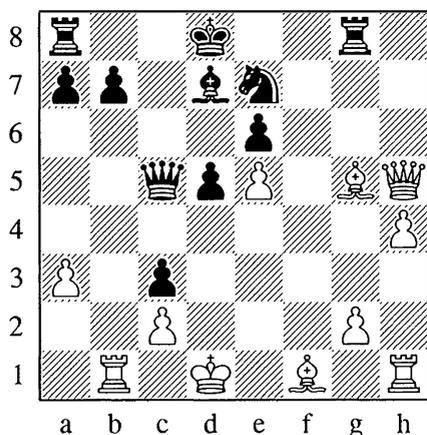


19...♖f5! 20.\ h3 Wc7 Black has a won position due to his strong initiative and White's total lack of coordination. 21.g4 (2i.\ d3 would hold on a bit longer but if I to change the result: 21...l e3! 22.Wc1 [22.Wc1 l f - +J 22...l xfl 23.gxf1 .b5 24.\ h?J' Wc6 25.l e1 \ f 26.f d1 We3! 27.Wbl \ b6- +) 21...!2c3! 22.Wc1 Zichichi - Pascual, corr: 1979. At this point 22...♖xc2!-+ is the most

convincing path, although in the game Black won quickly anyway.

Finally, 18.♔d3? ♖c7 19.♜e2 (19.♞f1 ♞af8 20.♜e2 is the same thing) 19...♞af8 20.♞f1 ♞xf1! 21.Vxf1 occurred in Gyuricza – Schuster, Brazil 1992, and here 21...1 ♞GN+ would have given Black a considerable advantage. His king is safer, the e5-pawn is weak and the bishop can soon be activated via the e8-square.

A321) 18Ebl



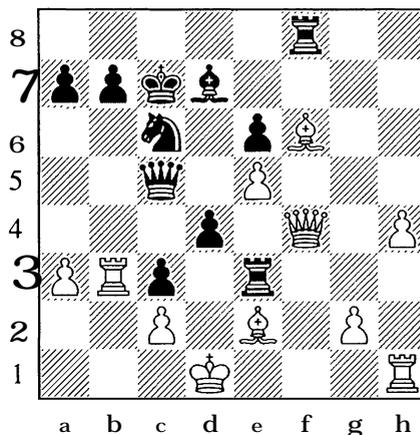
This move is also not especially convincing, as White encourages his opponent to make a move he wants to play anyway.

18..Wc7 19.1 f 1 b6

I found one example on the database, which we will follow for a few more moves. Black soon built up an overwhelming position but then failed to move in for the kill.

20.gb3d4 21.1 e4 Eaf 22. f6 Eg3 23J e2 Ee3 24. W4

In the game Bergmann – Descovich email 1997, Black elected to force a draw here by means of 24...♔a5 25.♞b4 ♔c6 followed by a repetition. However, there are several better options available.



24... .e8N

Other strong ideas include 24...a5!N and 24...Wc8!N intending ...♔xe5, both of which promise a large advantage for Black. However, I like the idea of activating the last piece even more.

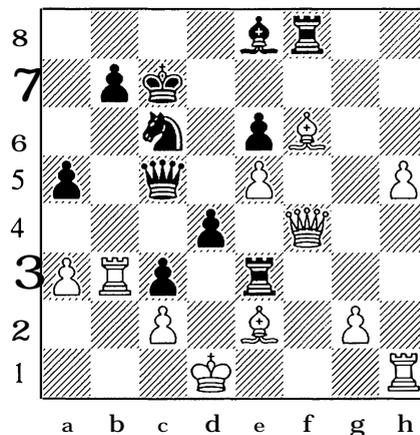
27.h5

Preventing ...♔g6 while pushing the passed pawn.

27.♞h3 ♔g6! 28.♞xc3 dxc3 is winning for Black, who threatens the deadly ...♔xc2†.

27...a5

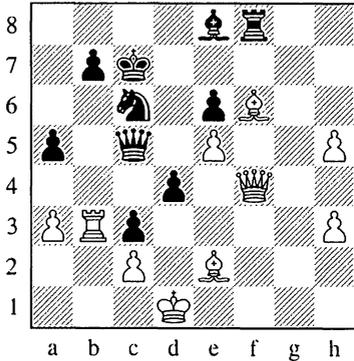
With the bishop manoeuvre temporarily prevented, Black turns his attention to the other wing and threatens the simple ...a4, against which there is no good defence.



28.h6

28.a4? ' b4+ is an instant disaster for White.

28.Eh3 Exh3 29.gxh3 allows an amazing finish:



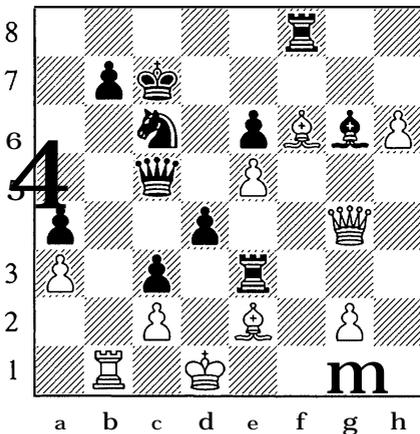
29...d3! 30. dxc3 dxc3 31. dxc1 d4+

28...a4 29.Eb1 <g6

Threatening the killing ...1 xc2!.

30i g4

30.: cl i ka3 31.h7 ,xcU ! 32.Exc2 i hH 33.Ec1c2†+



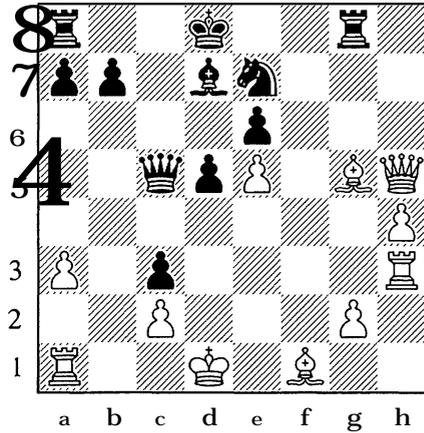
30...Exf6

A final flourish to bring the knight into the attack.

31.exf6 Cc5 32i f4 xc2- +

White will suffer catastrophic material losses and/or be mated in the near future.

A 22 18: h3



18..@c7 19.gxe7i ke7 20.Exc3t . c6

White has won a pawn, but it has come at a high price: his remaining pawns are scattered around the board, while Black's king is safe and he will have good piece coordination after bringing the queen's rook into play. The following analysis demonstrates that Black's chances are higher:

21.Ef Eaf 22.< cl

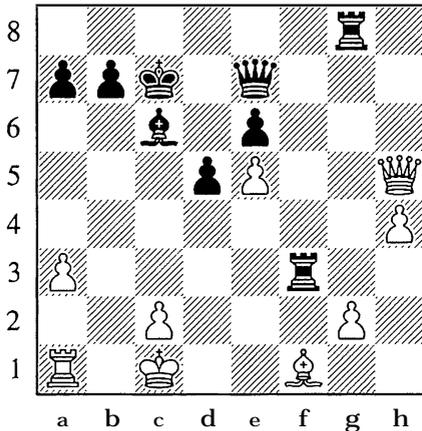
Perhaps White should take the opportunity to bail out to an endgame: 22.Exf Exf 23.1 d3 i g7 24.i g5 i kg5 25.hxg5 m2 26.g4: g2 27.g6 1 e8!+ White is worse as both g-pawns will fall, but he should be able to draw with precise defence.

After the cxc move I would like to vary from the game Thom Leeson - Van der Kleij, corr. 1988.

22...Exf3N

Van der Kleij was successful with 22...Eh8 in both the above and a subsequent correspondence game. Black is certainly the

one fighting for the advantage in that line too, but it should be possible for White to hold a draw with correct defence. That might be true after the text move as well, but this way Black has better chances to obtain lasting pressure.



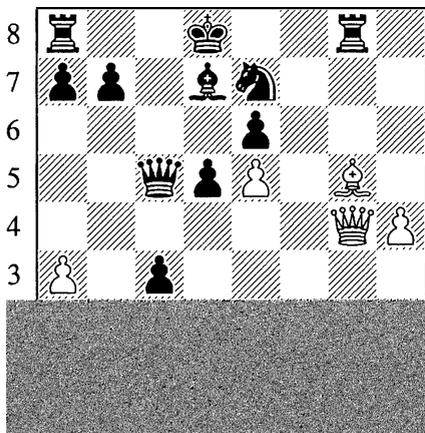
23.g f

23. ♖xf3?! ♜f8 24. ♖d3 ♖g7 (24... ♖xh4)

23.. ♜g1 24.< b2 \ c5 25 \ h? t i , d7 26 \ d3 E h i

Black will restore material equality by picking up the pawn on h4. In the resulting position he will have an ongoing initiative due to White's inferior pawn structure.

A 23) 18. ♖g4! ? N



This move has not yet been tested, but it may be the only option in the position to give White equality.

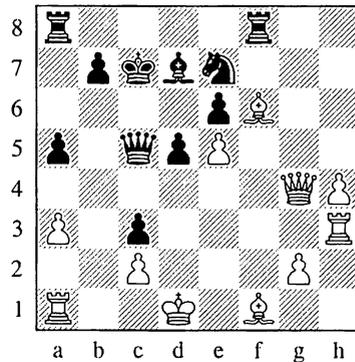
18...a5!

Preventing the white queen from switching to b4.

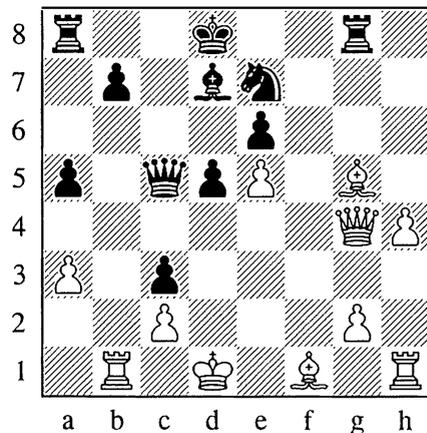
19: bl

19.h5?! runs into 19... ♜xg5! 20. ♖xg5 ♖c7 21. ♙d3 ♜g8 22. ♖f4 ♜f8 intending ... ♜f2 with a serious initiative for Black.

19. ♜h3!? is an interesting alternative: 19... ♜f8 20. ♙f6 (After 20. ♜f3 ♖c7 21. ♙xe7 \ xe7 22. ♜xc3 ♙c6 Black's initiative fully compensates for the pawn deficit.) 20...< c?



21. ♜b1 (21.h5 is met in exactly the same way.) 21...d4 Intending ... ♙d5 with some initiative for Black.

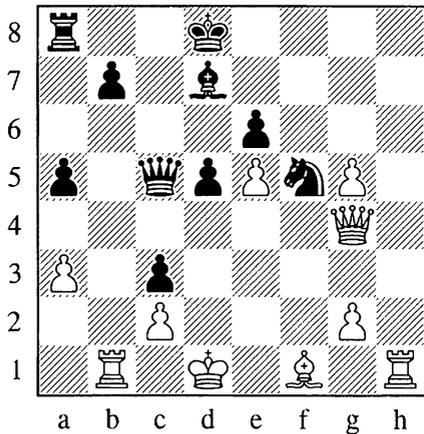


19...Exg5! 20.hxg5

20.Wxg5 < c7 is good for Black.

20...1 f5

Black has a promising initiative for the exchange, although with accurate defence White can draw as follows:



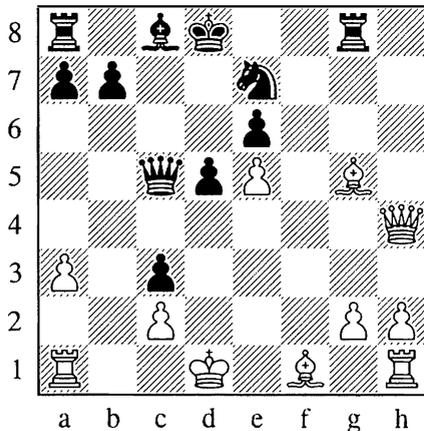
21. ♖f4 ♔c7 22. ♖h3 ♖f8 23. ♖f3 ♘e3†
 24. ♖xe3 ♖xe3 25. ♖xe3 ♖xf1† 26. ♖e1 ♖f2
 27. ♖e2

27. ♖g1? ♔e8 is dangerous for White.

27...Ef t

With a repetition of moves, as pointed out by Watson.

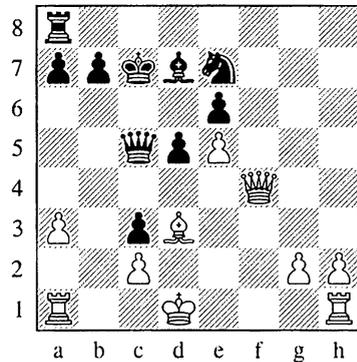
A33) 17J) h4



This has been White's most popular choice. Unlike 17.h4, it has achieved a positive score for White in the database. -n)is time White holds back the h-pawn in order to intensify the pin along the h4-d8 diagonal, hoping to disrupt Black's development.

17...1,d7 18. d3 c6

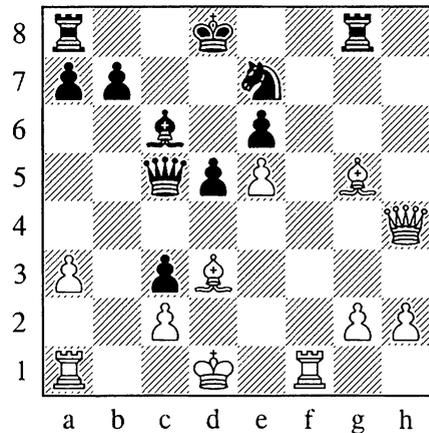
The exchange sacrifice 18...8xg5! looks like a viable alternative: 19.Wxg5 c x7 20.Wf4 (Another game continued: 20.Wh4 l cG 21.Ef1 8g8 22.Wf2 d4 23.Be1 ' c80 Marcinkiewicz - Pascual Gras, corr. 1983.)



20...d4 21. ♖b1 ♘d5 22. ♖f7 ♖d8= Soentges – Knudsen, email 2001. Black's activity fully compensates for the sacrificed material.

19.Ef

I also considered 19.Be1N < d7 20. e3 d4! 21. .xd4 \ a5t with an active game for Black.

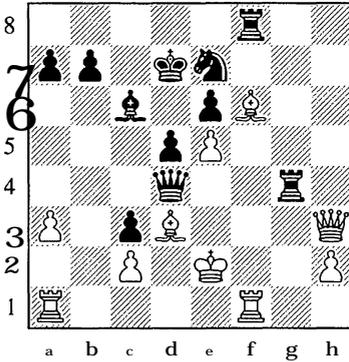


19..Wd7 20.g4

20.f f ?? is a blunder in view of: 20... gIt 21.Ef1 (21. J1 Eaf ! +) 21... xg2 22.\ hG f af ! 23.f xS f xf8 24.Øel f h8 25.SJ1 ' g4t 0-1 Enders- Blacs, Kccskemct 1989.

20..Eaf 21.f xf8N

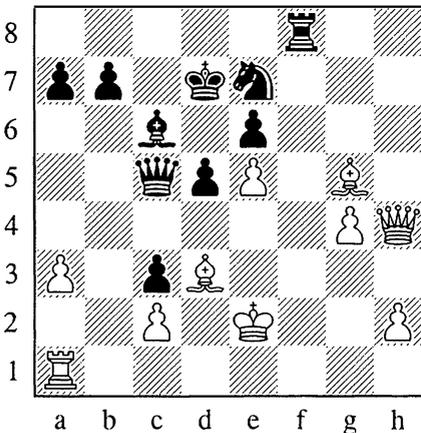
White needs an improvement, as the previously played 21.Wc2?? loses by f rce af er: 21..' d4 22..JGExg4 23.V h3



23..f e4t 24J hc4 fd2:1 25.Wf3 dxe4† 26.Wg4 f g8t 27.1 h5 l c7 0-1 B. Stein - Buk l, Balatonbereny 1985.

21..f xf 22.1 e2

ll tis untested position is balanced, and Black has a few options leading to dif erent types of equality. The most f rcing line is



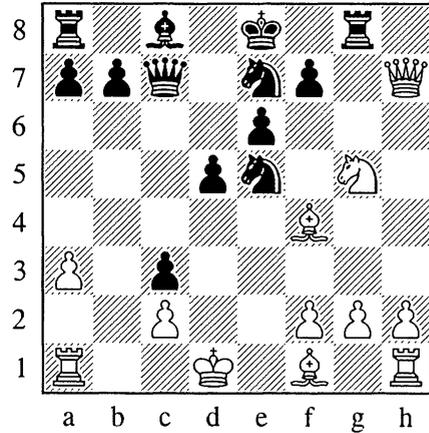
22..'t bS

22...Vd4! and 22...f g8! are both mentioned by Watson, and indeed these options are completely fine as well.

23.i xe7 .1.xd3t 24.c d3 ' xe7 2S.' xe7t Wxe7=

The respective pawn majorities should cancel each other out f r a draw, although there are still some more moves to play bef re the result becomes a certainty.

B) 13.W4



A natural developing move, putting f urther pressure on the knight and the f -pawn.

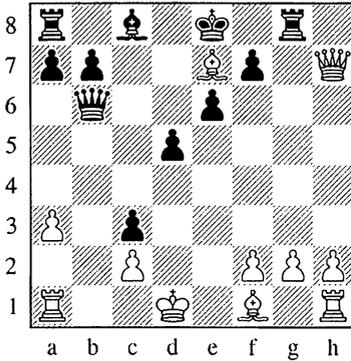
13..' b6 14.<xcS1 xgS

This is the tabiya of the 13.W line. White has tried several moves, the main ones being B1) 1S.h4?, B2) 1S.Jxc3 and B3) 1S.i h4!. As you can tell from the punctuation, the last option is the most challenging.

Other moves are weak and can be dismissed quickly:

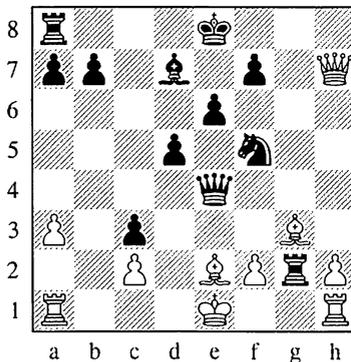
15.f4? ' c3 16.l Vd3) xc5 17.fxc5 ' xc5+ White's extra exchange is outweighed by Black's two extra pawns, strong centre and potential f r active piece play.

15.♗f6?: g8!N (This is stronger than 15...: g6, although that move also gave Black a good position in Pivrotto - Framacere, Italy 1984.) Now after 16...:xe7 Black has an important resource:



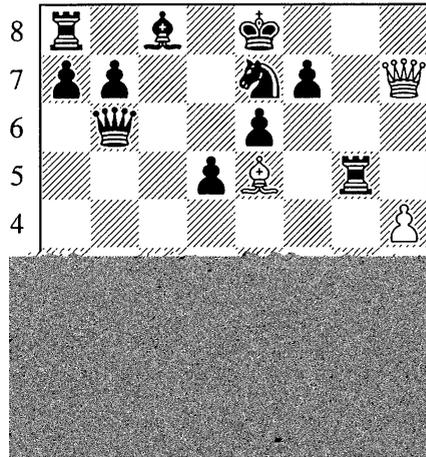
16. ♖d4+! 17. ♗d3 (17. ♖c1 ♗g7)

15.i.e2? is a faulty idea, as after 15...: xg2 16...:g3 White will never get a chance to take the rook: 16...4 f5 17... h5 (I also considered: 17... hStN < e7 18.' xd 1 kg3 19.f g3 a5+ Avoiding a possible exchange of queens on b4.) 17... \ d4t 18.< cl \ e4t 19.i.e2 . .d7 Black has a won position, and the game we are following did not last much longer:



20. ♖g8+ ♗e7 21. ♖g5+ f6 22. ♖h5 ♗d4 23. ♗f1 ♗xe2 24. ♖xe2 ♖xc2+ 25. ♗xe2 d4 26. ♖ab1 ♗c6 27. ♖he1 e5 28. ♗f1 ♗f3 0-1 Schuett - Balogh, Germany 1970.

B1) 15.h4?



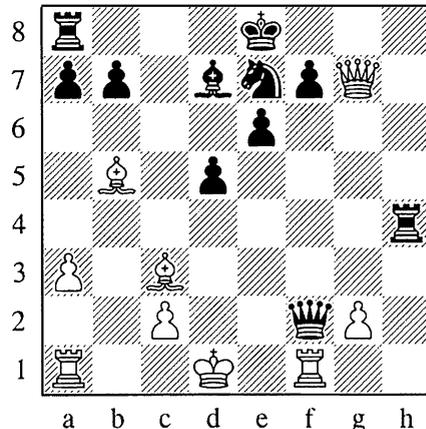
f ds is not much better than the minor options mentioned above. White utilizes the indirect defence of his bishop, based on the possibility of \ h8", but Black can steer the game into favourable complications.

15... \ f 16i xc3: g4

I found three practical examples from this position, all of which were won by Black.

17.♗b5+ 1 H7 18: f : xh4 19.i g7

19...< xd7 20. xf \ xg2 + Black soon won in Machefsky - Katz, USA 1975. The text move forces Black to play accurately.



19... f6!

It is only in the endgame but good enough to claim an advantage.

20. Wxf7

Once again, the claim that Black's position is hopeless for White: 20. Wxf7 21. Qxd7 22. Qxg8 23. Qxd4+ 0-1 Mesáros - Givić, Yugoslavia 1985.

20. Qd3N may be White's best chance, although 120. Qf5 21. Qxf5 22. Qf6 23. Qxf7 loses him fight for a draw.

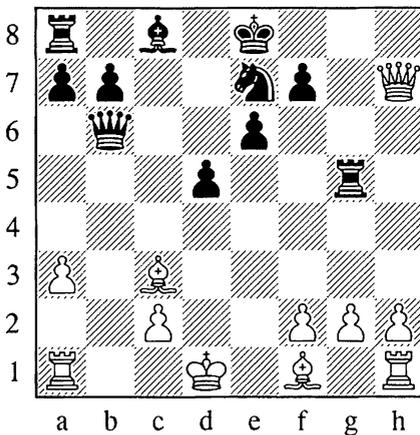
20... c6 21. Qa5 22. Qf8+ 23. Qxa8 24. Wxa7 25. Qc6

There is no perpetual, and one way or another, White will have to force it material.

25. Qa5 26. Qd7 27. Qa7 28. Qxc7 29. Qx7 30. Qd6 31. Qb7 32. Qd1 33. Qxa3+

Black emerges with an extra pawn and was able to win the rook endgame in Kotenko - Korelov, USSR 1971.

82) 15. ...xc3



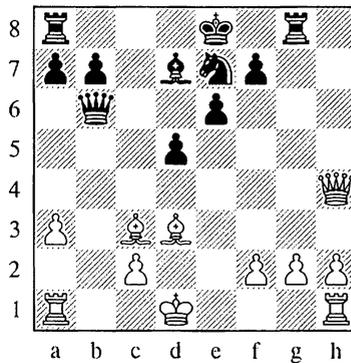
This time White grabs an important pawn but gives Black rapid development and active prospects on the open c-file.

15... Qd7 16. f

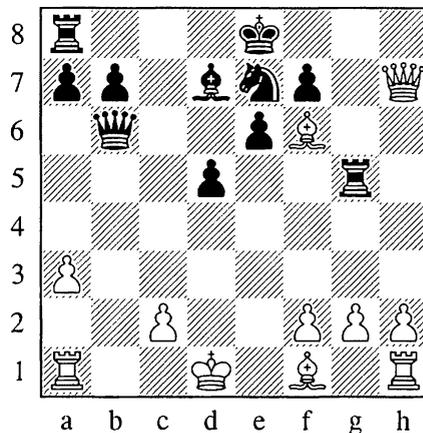
White is at least slightly worse in all the main variations. Here are a few other possibilities:

16. h4 17. g8 17... e1 occurred in Danilovic - I. Gurevich, Worcester, 1989. At this point the game continuation 17... e5 gave Black the better prospects, although 17... c8N seems like a more natural way to develop Black's initiative.

16. Wf4 17. Qg8 17... Qd3 (17... Wd4 18. Wc7 18... Wc6) Blatny - Janata, Luhacovice 1968.) Now in Konnyu - Dlačny, Eger 2005, Black could have safely grabbed the g2-pawn with the better prospects:



17... Qxg2 18. Qb4 19. Qe2 20. Qg6



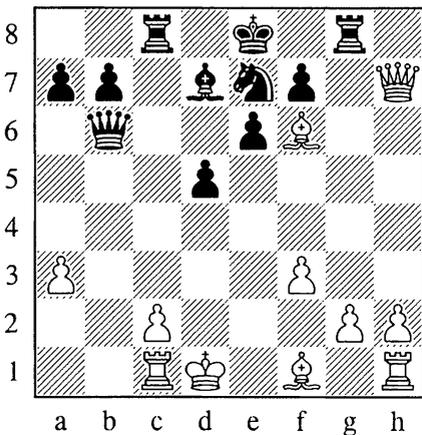
16... g8 17. f ?

This is the only move to have been tested in this position, but it is a mistake.

17. 1.d3N is better, but Black remains on top after: 17...c5! The most dynamic option, fighting for the initiative. (17...fxg2 18.Wh8t f g8 19.Wh4 Wc5 may be marginally better for Black, but the dark-squared bishop and passed h-pawn assure White of some compensation.) 18...lxe5 (18.Wh4 1 f5 19.Wh7 f f8 20. ♖xc5 Wxf2+) 18...Wxf2+

17...f c8 18f cl

This position occurred in Socriges - Bruederle, corr. 1991. Black has several promising continuations, but I find the following idea especially appealing:



18...e5!

forcing White to exchange of his dark-squared bishop, which is his most important asset.

19. 1xe7

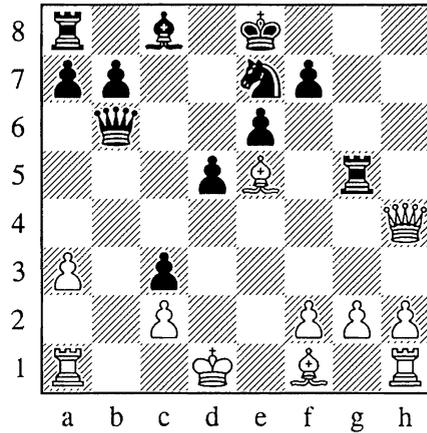
19... ♖e5?? meets with a tactical refutation: 19...i J5 20.Wh4 . ♖c2! 21. d21 f5+

19... xe? 20Wh4t e8+

Black is better thanks to his strong pawn centre, development advantage and superior piece coordination. Endgames are likely to

favour Black as well, although for the time being he should be happy to keep the queens on and go after White's king.

B3) 15.Wh4!



This is the most challenging way for White to handle the position. Now Black must decide where to put the rook, while keeping in mind that the bishop on e5 is untouchable due to the prospective fork on h8.

15..f g8

I played this move in a game in 2012, and have found no reason nor to recommend it here.

The main alternative is 15...f f5 as recommended by Williams. Play continues 16.Wh8t d7 17.. h4 Wd6 18J d3 Wf4 with a messy position and something close to a dynamic balance.

16Wd4

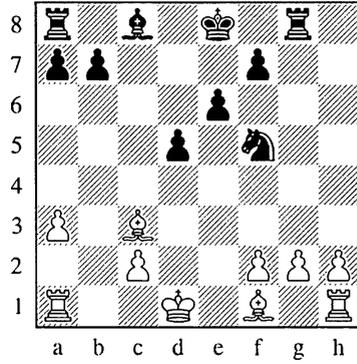
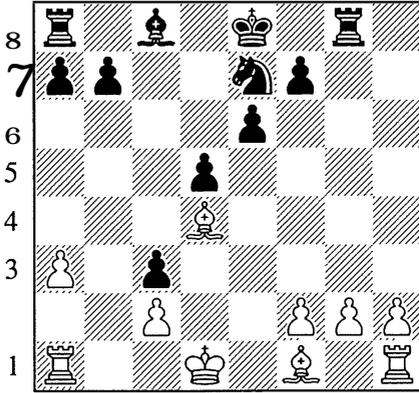
White hopes that a queen exchange will enable him to exploit his passed h-pawn. This is a standard concept for several lines in the Winawer Poisoned Pawn.

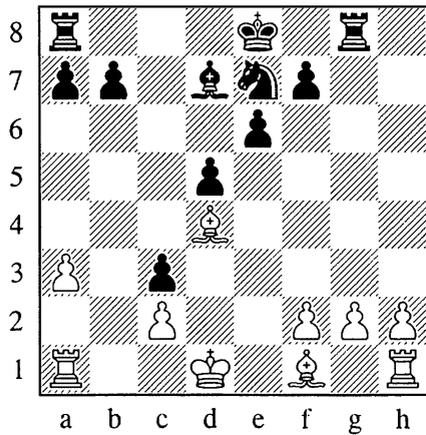
16... xc3. h7 has been covered under the move order 15.. hc3 S.d7 16.Wh4 f g8- see the note to White's 16th move in variation B2 above.

16.. 'xd4t

Black has also tried 16.. 'd8 but deactivating the queen is a concession and after 17.H6! White has some initiative.

17.. \xd44





Returning to the main line, we see Black making a flexible developing move while holding back the ...d5 plan for a moment. At this point I analysed both B31) 18Ebl and B32) 18h4!.

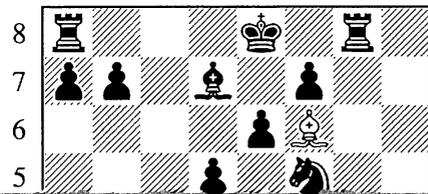
Black succeeds in blocking the h-pawn with his king, and will soon pick up the c2-pawn with attacking chances against White's king.

B31) 18fbl

This move occurred in Schuermans - Van der Burch, Belgium 2003. This would have been a good moment for Black to activate the knight:

18...c3 ♞N 19.

19. .xc3 is met by 19...d4 intending ...i.c6 when Black is on top.



One game continued:

18...xc3?

We already know that White should avoid taking this pawn without a good reason. Now in the game Kerek - Dlačny, Budapest 1997, Black could have fought for the advantage with:

18...f c8N

Or 18... cGfN intending ...d4.

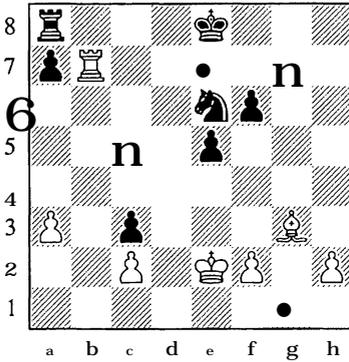
19. JG

19.w.d21 RfK

25. g

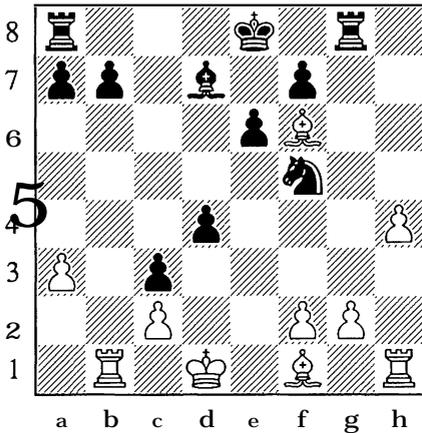
25.l h7l d8 does not help White.

25...: g7 26.: xg7l kg7 27.l b1e5 28.: b7l b6
Black's pawn chain makes a strong impression
and ...d3! is threatened.



29. h4 0-0-0! 30.t xa7: d6+

Black has a strong initiative and a dangerous
pawn mass



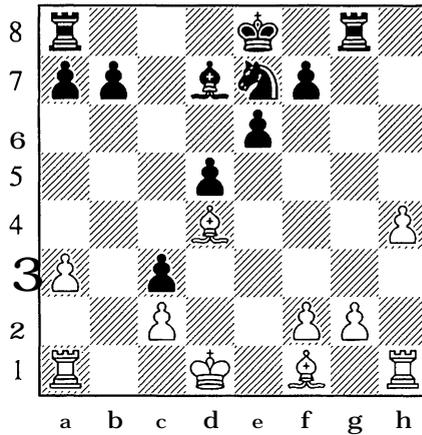
20...: g6 21.\ e5 f6 22.h5 gh6 23i f4 l h7
24i .d3

24.gxb7? is strongly met by 24...e5 25.\,cl
Qe3! 26.fxe3 \,g4H making use of the
tactical possibilities on of er.

24... .c6

Black has an extra pawn and the h-pawn
is not a serious threat, so his chances are
somewhat higher:

B32) 18h4!



Pushing the h-pawn as quickly as possible is
the best way f r White to proceed.

18..l f5 19.\J6!

White hopes to lu e the rook to the unf-
avourable g6-square bef re capturing on d .

19..xd d4 20.\,f2 f6 is f ne f r Black

19...l: h6!N

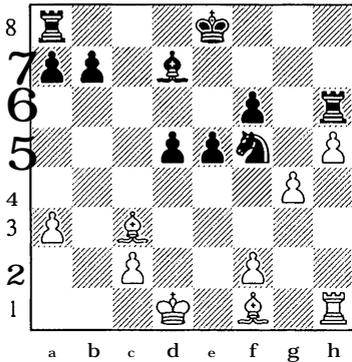
11lis is my suggested improvement over
my own game. By threatening to invade on
g4, Black hopes to provoke weaknesses in the
enemy camp.

1also checked 19...l hG?N. Initially this move
is the engine's top choice, but af er 20.. d !
E xg2 21.\,e2± the machine soon changes its
tune. White's initiative is worth more than
Black's temporary material gain, and the
h-pawn is becoming extremely dangerous.

When I reached this position over the board
I chose the inaccurate 19...: gG?. At this
point it is worth considering two replies f r
White: the game continuation, f llowed by an
improvcment.

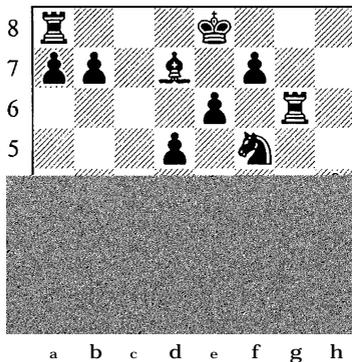
a) The game continued 20.\,e5 f6 21.h5

1 h6 22. xc3 e5 23.g4 and here a draw was agreed in Nilsson - Berg, Sweden 2012. The continuation might have been:



23...cxd6! (23...1 d4 24...xd4 . .xg4t 25.< d2 [25... e2 . xe2-1 26.< xe2 exd4 27.1 abI=J 25...exd4 26.1 g1 .1.e6 27... e2t gives White slight pressure although Black should be able to hold.) 24.f3 EcS 25. .d21 h8= 'f œ position is balanced; White has the bishop pair but Black has a strong centre.

b) Unfortunately 20.1 xc3!N is slightly favourable for White, for instance:



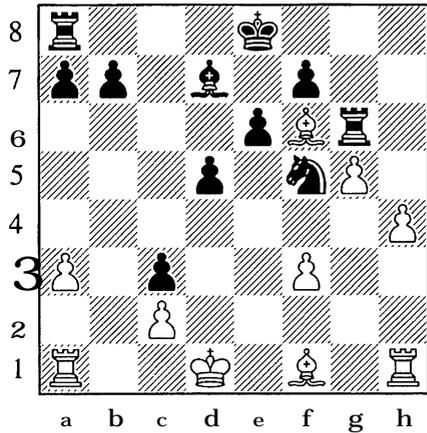
20...to 21.h5 Eh6 22.1 bI White has obtained a slightly improved version of a familiar position type.

20f

20.1 xc31 g4 followed by ...EcS gives Black plenty of activity.

20..1 fS 21.g41 g !22.gS

After 22. .xc31 g3 23.h5 Eh6 24. g11 xfl 25.Exf1 fo= Black is fine. The text move is the more ambitious try, but Black has a good answer.



22..1 xf ! 23g f6 1 e3t 24.\ cl 1 xfl 25 xfl Jb6

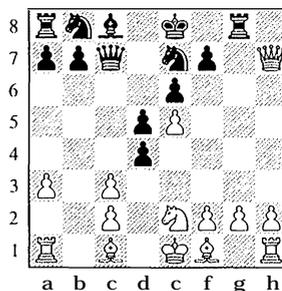
Intending ...md7 and ... hS. Black's extra pawn and better pawn structure of er full compensation for the sacrificed exchange.

Conclusion

12.1 g5 is a sharp and ambitious line, whereby White allows his centre to be destroyed by 12...1 xe5 in order to make gains in other areas. 13.f f6! leads to wild complications, but analysis and practical results confirm that Black has good reason for optimism, and in many lines it is the white king that ends up falling under enemy fire. 13. 1 leads to a different type of struggle, with the main line resulting in a complex endgame. We have seen how Black can prevent the passed h-pawn from becoming too strong while utilizing his strong centre to create promising counterplay. Overall the theoretical assessment of the 10md1 variation is a healthy one for Black.

Chapter 6

Poisoned Pawn



10. Nxe2

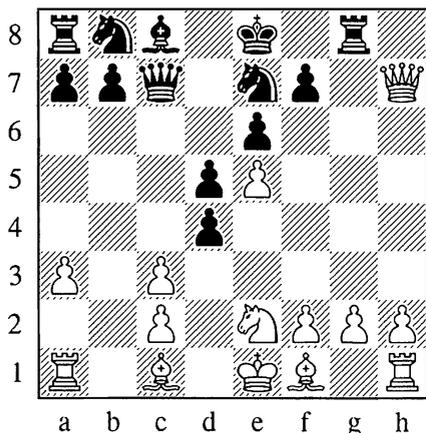
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Qb4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 Qxc3† 6.bxc3 Nxe7
7.Wg4 cxd4 8.Wxg7 Bg8 9.Wxh7 Wc7 10.Ne2

10...dxc3

A) 11.h4!? Nbc6	66
A1) 12.Wd3	66
A) 12.Qg5!?	67
B) 11.Wd3 Wxe5	69
B1) 12.f4	69
B2) 12.Wxc3 Nbc6 13.Wxe5 Nxe5	72
B21) 14.Ng3!?	73
B22) 14.h4	74
C) 11.Qf4 Nbc6	75
C1) 12.h4	77
C2) 12.Wd3 Qd7	79
C21) 13.Bb1	80
C22) 13.Wxc3 0-0-0	81
C221) 14.0-0-0!?N	83
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1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Oc3 b4 4.eS c5 5.a3
 xc3t 6.bxc3t e7 7.Wg4 cxd4 8.Wg7 Eg8
 9.l xh7Wc7 10.Oe2



'Ollis move in r duc.s the most important branch of the Winawer Poisoned Pawn. Unlike the previous two chapters, White avoids moving his king unnecessarily and develops a piece.

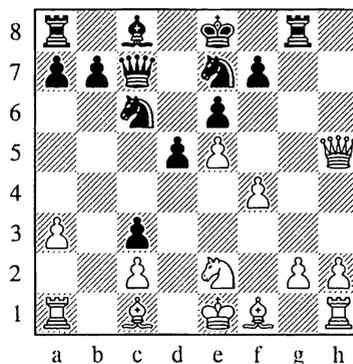
10...dxc3

'I le most popular move has been 10...0 bc6, which almost always transposes to one of our main lines af er a subsequent ...dxc3. I have chosen to capture on c3 frst, bur to tell the truth I know of no strong reason to pref r one move order over the other.

Af er the text move White's most popular option is 11.f4 to def nd the e5-pawn. Coverage of this move begins in the next chapter on page 86.

In the present chapter we will analyse three interesting sidelines: A) 11.h4?; B) 11.Wd3 and C) 11.i f4, af er frst checking a couple of extremely rare alter atives.

11.Wh5? 0 bc6 12.f4 occurred in Trajber - L Varg., Hajduboszormeny 1995. Now instead of 12...d4 which allows counterplay by 0 g3-e4, I wo uld pref r:



12...b6!+ Intending to pur the bishop on b7. It is worth emphasizing that this is often the ideal square f r Black' bishop in the Winawer Poisoned Pawn.

11.g3

This is a noth r rare move which should not worry Black.

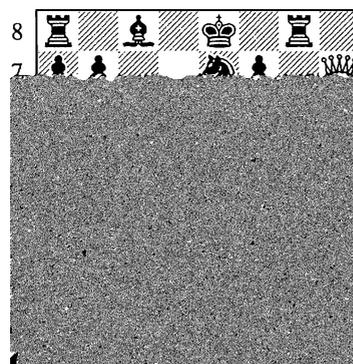
11...Wxe5 12.J14 Wf6 13.h4

13.i ,d6? occurred in Wengerd - Pedersen, email 1995, and now 13...0 bc6N+ intending ...e5 is a simple way to an advantage.

13...0 bc6 14. g2?

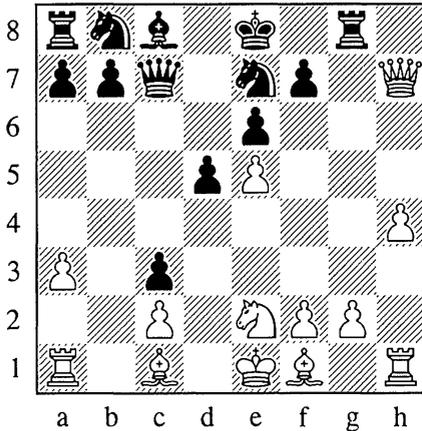
White could still have equalized with 14. g5N Wf3 (14...We5 15.i J4=) 15.Egl ' lg4 16.l lL 1 h4 17. h3 Qf3† 18.© fl l kE! 19.© el 0 f3! = with a rather spe ta ular r e petition.

The text move occu red in Pylaeva - Dogodkina, Moscow 2009. At this point Black could have seized the initiative with:



14...c5!N 15. g5Wd6 16.' kc3 \$ 17.Wh5 Wc5+

A) 11.h4!?



The passed h-pawn is one of White's most important assets in the Poisoned Pawn Variation, and here we see White bringing it into play at the earliest opportunity. By avoiding the f2-f4 move White also hopes to find an active role for his dark-squared bishop.

11...Cbc6

11...xc5? 12. f4 favors White.

After the text move White has two main independent options: A1) 12.Wd3 and A) 12.i.g5!?

The strongest move is actually 12.f4! transposing to the critical main line that can be found later under the move order 11.f4 Cbc6 12.h4!. Coverage of that variation begins in Chapter 11 on page 147.

12..J4N is technically a new move, but it immediately transposes to a position considered later in the chapter under the move order J].i f4' bc6 12.h4 - see variation C.1 beginning on page 77.

-for artificial-looking 12.Eh3? has been played in a single game, Tegzes - Rogowski, Balatonbereny 1995. Black should be doing well after 12...Wc5N 13.f3 f6 14.Exc3 d4! 15.Ed3 d7+ thanks to his development advantage and better piece coordination.

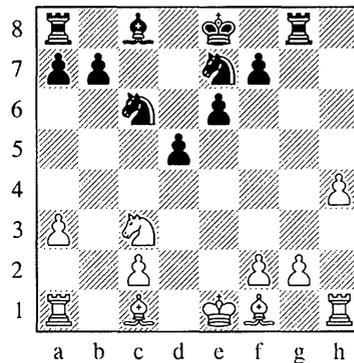
A1) 12.Wd3Wc5!

12...Ckc5 would have led to a slightly less favorable version of the position type seen in the next note after: 13.Wxc3 Wc3f 14.Ckc3 Qd7 15' b5 i xb5 !6.1.xb5f C7c6 17.c f1 White has good long-term chances in view of the bishop pair and potentially strong passed h-pawn.

13: bl ?

Too ambitious.

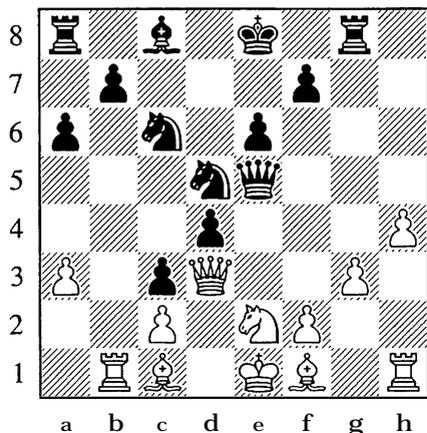
White should settle for: 13. Vxc3N Wxc3i" (Keeping the queens on with 13...d4!? 14.Wd3 b6 is also worth considering.) 14.' kc3



14...Qd4! With sufficient counterplay for Black, whose ideas include ...Qd7, ...Ec8 and perhaps ...e5 at some point.

13...d4 14.EbS1 d5 15.g3a6 16.Ebl

Here I find a useful improvement for Black.



I experimented with the white side of this position in a couple of games in 2011. White is striving to put the opponent under immediate pressure.

12...Vxe5!

It is essential to grab this pawn immediately.

12...♗d7?

I tested this inferior option in one of the aforementioned games, which we will follow for a few more moves.

13.f4

White has achieved the best of both worlds: securing the e5-pawn with the dark-squared bishop developed actively outside the pawn chain.

13...0-0 14.Eh3 d4 15.Ed1 l f5 16.g4

White's advantage is already decisive.

16..1 He7!N

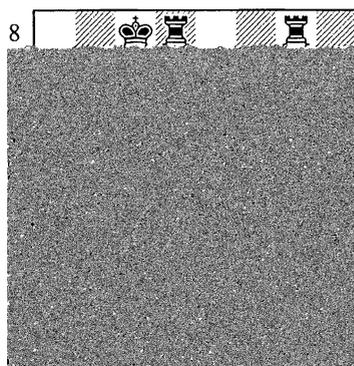
16...b5 was fine for Black in Sulskis – Williams, Liverpool 2006, but I like the text move even more. The plan is simply ...Vc5 and ...e5. A possible continuation is:

17.. ♗2Vc5 18.0-0

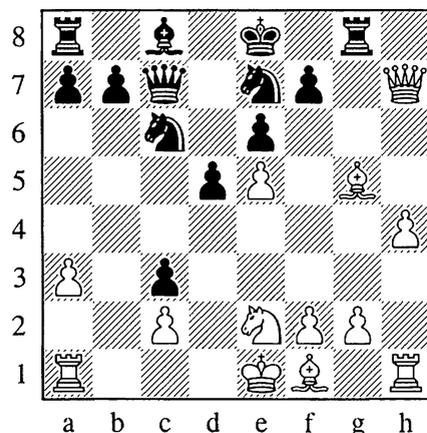
18.h5 e5 19.h6 20.. ♗e4 i xe4 21.Vxe4 0-0 22.h7 Eh8 23.g4 f6+

18..e5 19i g5Ea7!

Defending against any X-ray threats along the h1-a8 diagonal. Black may continue with ...b5 next, or possibly ...f5 or ...cJ5 depending on White's reaction. Black has the better chances thanks to his extra pawn and powerful centre.



A) 12i g5!?



16..1 ke3

White gladly sacrifices the queen after 16...Eh5 17.Vxf7! Edf 18.Vg8 Ehg8 19.gxf5! Exg6 20.fg6+ when the connected passed pawns on the kingside decide the outcome.

17.i xd8Vxd8

Here White should play:

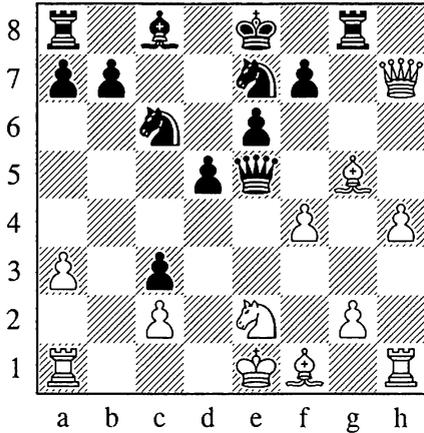
18.Exe3!N

Instead of 18.Exd4? as in Berg – Oskarsson, Sweden 2011.

18...dxe3 19.g5 Eh8 20.Vxf7 Exh4 21.Ed3+

White has a completely overwhelming position.

13.f4



13... c7!

After this precise move White has no route to an advantage. Other moves are less convincing:

13... h8? occurred in Arvola - Djurhuus, Sandeford 2012. Here the most accurate path for White is 14. xf3! N Wxf 15.f c5 1 ke5 16.l kc3 with better chances thanks to the pair of bishops and passed pawns on the kingside.

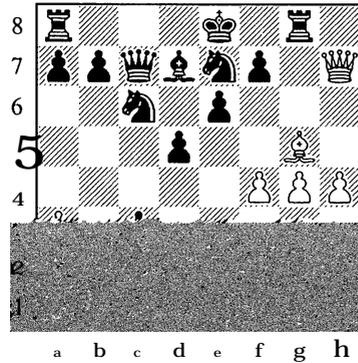
I also considered 13... e3N but found that after 14.l d1 intending Eh3 White has some initiative.

14. d3

Centralizing the queen is a sensible plan.

White should definitely avoid 14.h5? e5+ intending...

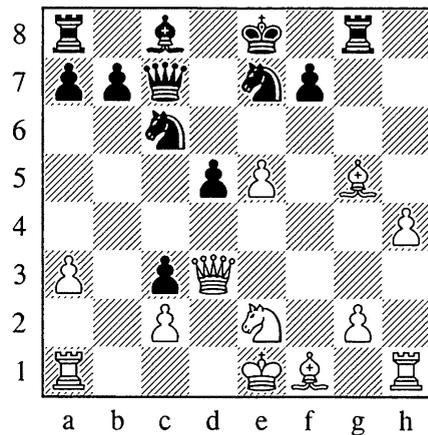
14.g4N should be met by: 14...i,d7 (14...e5 15.f5 e4 16. d1 \ c5 17...14 \ f6 gives White the option of forcing a draw with 18. g5, but he may also consider 18. xd5!? Eh8 19.Ed6i .e6 20.g5 xh7 21.gxf6l kf5 22.Edl xh4 23.Exh4l xh4 24.l kc3 when the two bishops may become a telling factor in the endgame.)



With the text move Black prepares to castle before opening the centre. Play may continue: 15. g2 0-0 16. xf c5 17.f5 Edf 18. h7 Here Black has the option of forcing an immediate draw with 18..Eh8 19. g7 hg8, but he could also consider keeping that idea in reserve with a move such as 18...Wb6!?

14...e5! 15.f eS

15. \ xc3? is much too risky: 15...d4 16. \ c5 b6 17. \ c4. le6 18. \ d3 0-0+



15...f5!N

This is an interesting attempt to exploit Black's development advantage.

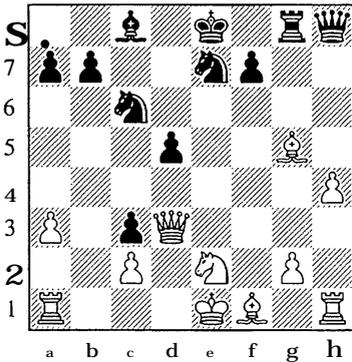
The game continuation is also perfectly fine:

15... \ xe5 16.H4 \ f6

16... \ f5!N 17. \ xc3 \ c4t is a good alternative.

17.i g5 \ h8!?

An interesting winning attempt. Instead 17... \ e5 would repeat the position.



18.S he7 0 xe7 19.' xc3 \ xc3 j 20.0 xc3 ♕f5= Berg - D. Petrosian, Dubai 2011. The position is about equal, although Black has slightly the easier game due to his better development and active piece play.

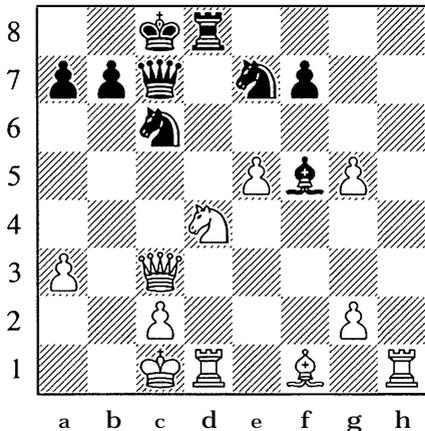
16 \ xc3 0 0 17.0 0 0 Exg5!

An excellent sacrifice, eliminating White's best piece. Now Black will have the greater number of active pieces, and being the exchange down will be of little importance.

18 hxg5 d4 19.0 xd4!

Sacrificing the knight is White's best defence.

After 19.' b2 Wxe5 Black has a huge initiative which more than compensates for the sacrificed exchange.



19..0 xd4 20 \ xc7 r ♗c7 21.i d3 .e6

We have reached an interesting endgame with two knights against rook and two pawns. Taking into account White's poor pawn structure, we may evaluate Black's position as slightly better, although the first player has good drawing chances.

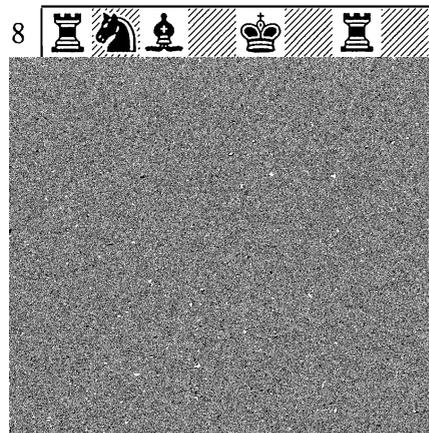
B) 11.' d3 Wxe5

11...ll bc6 is a popular alternative which will almost certainly transpose to another line, either from this chapter or elsewhere in the book, after moves such as 12.1.f4, 12.h4, 12.' xc3 or 12.J4. Nevertheless, it seems principled to capture on e5 as long as there are no ill consequences.

White has two main options: B1) 12.f4 and B2) 12 \ xc3.

12.i f4 \ h8! (12... ♖f5 is more popular, but I believe the text move to be at least as strong.) 13 \ xc3 This position occurred in Lischer Santillan - Heyn, email 2003, and now after 13...0 bc6N= Black is ready to advance with ...e5, achieving a comfortable position.

B1) 12.f4



This move claims some space in the centre but restricts the c1-bishop.

12...i hS!N

-this interesting novelty of ers Black an active game.

I f und two games in the database, both of which continued with:

12...\ c7

·Ilis seems quite reliable as well.

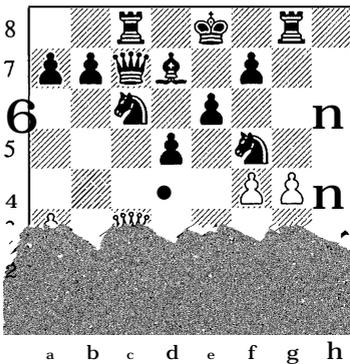
13.: le3

13.l xc3?! \ d7 14.£bl a6 15" d2 was already better f r Black in Ciprys- Kanovsky, Kurzrak 2002. At this point 15... c6N+ is a good improvement, activating the bishop and intending ...l d7.

l le urtested 13.h4!N may well be White's best move.

13...l bc6 14.i xc3t f5 15.\ g1.\ d7 16.O O O £c8 17.g4?

White's position was already troublesome, and his last move is a serious mistake which could easily have cost the game in Nyzhnyk - Rosmann, Bad Zwischenahn 2010.



17...l d6!N

This simple retreat leaves White in a hopeless situation. Here arc a f w illustrative lines:

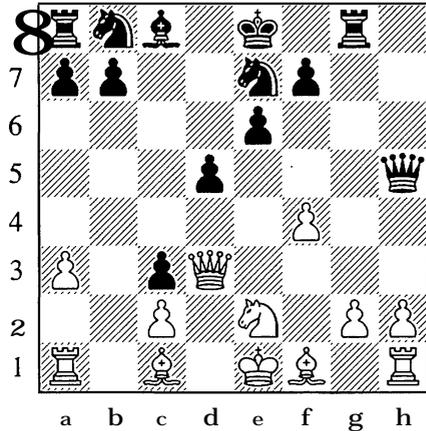
18.h3

18.l g3gxg4 19J e3gh4 gives Black a huge advantage which should be winning in the long term. Not only has Black won a healthy pawn, he has also great attacking potential.

18..l e4 19.i b2l a5 20.§.g2l g3! 21.l xg3 Vxf4!+

White' position collapses.

Although retreating the queen to c7 is perf ctly playable, posting her on h5 has considerable appeal, since - as we will soon see in the variations below - natural moves can easily land White in a worse position.



13l xc3l f5 14.\ e3

14.l b5l a6 15.a4 d7+ gives Black quick development and a slight edge.

14...b6! 15.l xdS!?

This leads to interesting complications, although Black has at least a forced draw and can consider playing f r more. Alter atives f ll short of equality f r White:

15. f2 :la6 !6.l b5 . .xb5 17.\ xb5t l d7+ intending ...Vhs or ...gcs.

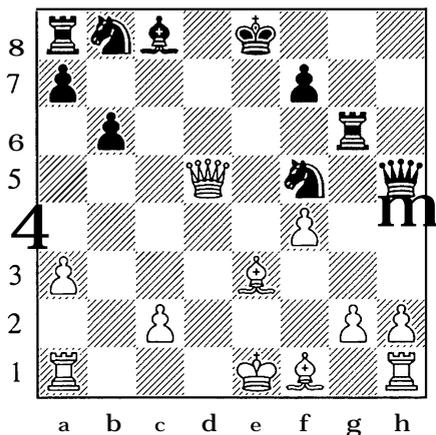
15.l b5.\ a6 16.l d t ' d7 17.l xa6 l xa6+ Black has f ne piece coordination and is slightly better: l ough the king might look exposed on d7, there is not much White can do about it due to his lack of development.

15...exd5 16 \ xd5 2g6!?

-this is the ambitious move, leading to sharp complications and positions that are extremely hard to assess.

16...\ h4t is the saf option which virtually forces a draw af er: 17.§J2\ el 18. e2 t.a6

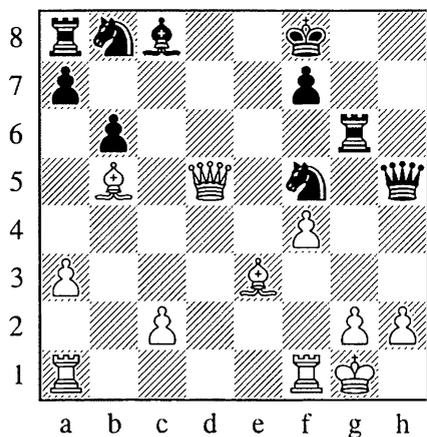
19.0-0-0! (19.c4?! f8 20.0-0-1 c6 2J.J3 /c8 is better for Black.) 19... xa3t 20.Wb1 ' b4! = with a repetition of moves.



17.. b5t

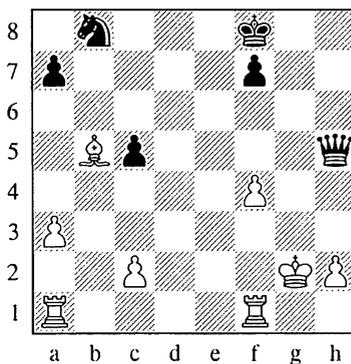
17.' xaS? leads to a forced line in which White only just survives: 17...l hc3 18.' xb8 l xcU 19.Wd2' a5!! 20.Wxc2 / cG! 21.Wd1 ' a4j 22.Wel / eGt 23.«.e2 ' c2 24.' e5 : xe5 25.f e5 ' c3! 2G.@ f2 ' d j 27.@ g3 ' xe5t Black keeps some winning chances with the option of a perpetual check any time he wants it.

17...wfs 18.0-0



18...♞h6!?

The soundest option is 18... ♞b7!. This move should lead to a forced draw, although White needs to find a small finesse on the next move: 19J c5j! bxc5 20JWkb7 c e3 21.V xaS : xg2! 22.' xg2 1 xg2 23.Wxg2



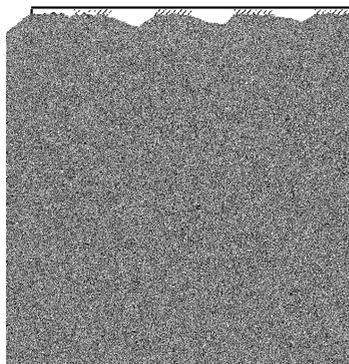
If White had not given up his bishop on c5, then the bishop on b5 would now be hanging. As things stand, Black must make a perpetual with: 23...' gG! 24.@ h1 ' e4! 25.@ g1 ' gGt =

The text move ♞h6 is an interesting winning attempt, although it could be argued that Black is taking the greater risk by playing this way.

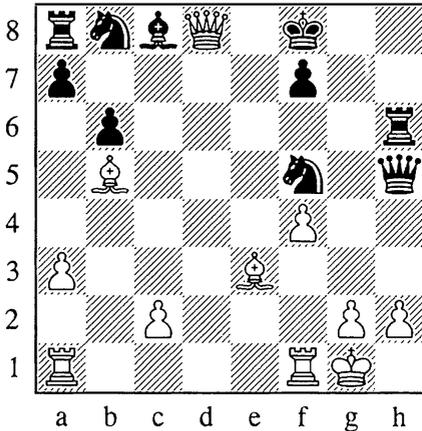
19.' d8!

This move is stronger than the following alternative:

19.' ,c5t bxc5 20.h3 l dG 2J.\ xa8 . .xh3 22.gxh3



22...Wg4 (22...Wxh3 might lead to a draw by perpetual as er: 23.1 f2 g e6 24.Wxb5! Q e8 25. ,d3 Wh2! 2G@ f3 Wh3! =) 23.Wg2 1 kb5 24.gab1 Wd6! Material is roughly equal but I pref r Black, who will have great attacking prospects once his knights become active.



19... \ g? 20.Wg5! Wg

20..Wxg5 21.f g5 gd6 22.. c1 f llowed by b2t gives White excellent compensation f r the sacrif ced material with two extra pawns, powerf ul bishops and attacking chances against Black's king.

21. ,cl f 22i b2 1 h7 23.1 xg6 1 xg6 24.1 f li i

White has good compensation f r the sacrif ced piece, but let's not f rget that Black has already passed up two opportunities to f ree a draw.

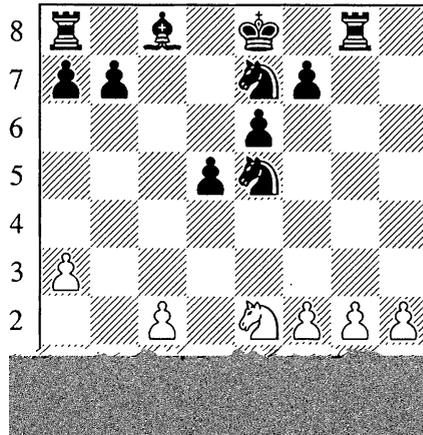
B2) 12.\ xc3

'J is is a more solid alter ative, avoiding the weakening f2-t4 and angling f r a f miliar type of endgame.

12..1 bc6 13. Vxe5

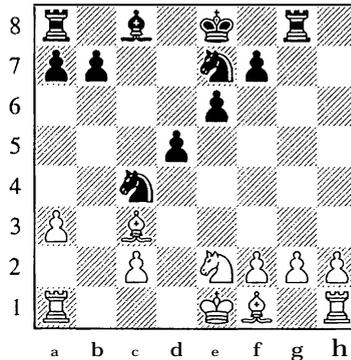
13.h4N has been covered under the move order 11.h4 Q bc6 12.Wd3 i. xe5 13.Wxc3- sec the note ro White's 13th move in variation A1.

13..1 ke5



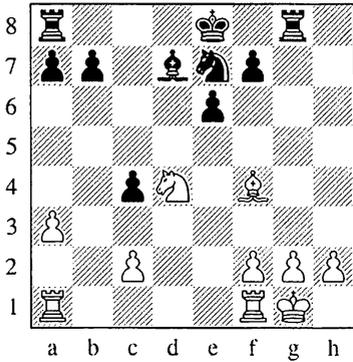
At this point White has tried several move, but I consider the most important options to be B21) 14.1 g3! and B22) 14.h4. Here are a f w other examples

14.. b2! c4 15. .c3 (15. JGN g6 16.. ,c3 f6 17.1 f4 gh6 18.0-0-0 b5=)



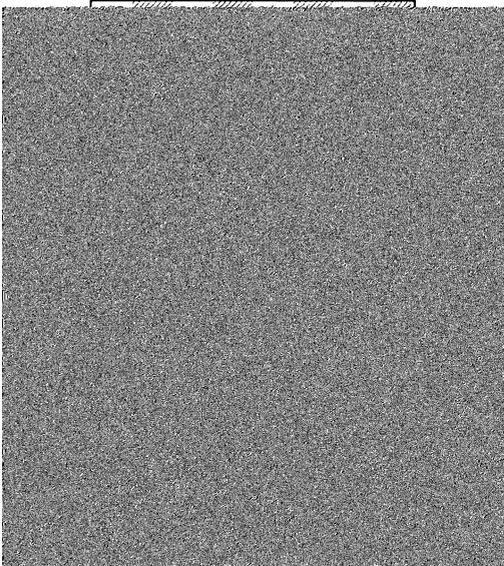
This position occurred in Asadi - Froewis, Batumi 2006, and here 15...e5N looks like a good improvement. Black controls the centre and has a comfortable position with a slight edge.

14.1 h4 .Wd7 15.Wf4? has been played, but White's last move is inaccurate as Black will be able ro gain a tempo with ...e5 later: 15..1 h4 (15...fG!N+) 16.Wxc4 dxc4 17.0-0



Duarte – Old, Niccoli 1999. Now Black should have continued 17...f6!N intending ...e5 with a positional advantage.

14.f4 1. b4 15.1 H4 1.d7 !6.Wf2 was another unconvincing set-up f om White in Boudenne – Carrasco Martinez, Santiago 1995.



B21) 14.1 ♗3!?

This tricky move f roces Black to counter the plan of 1. h5.

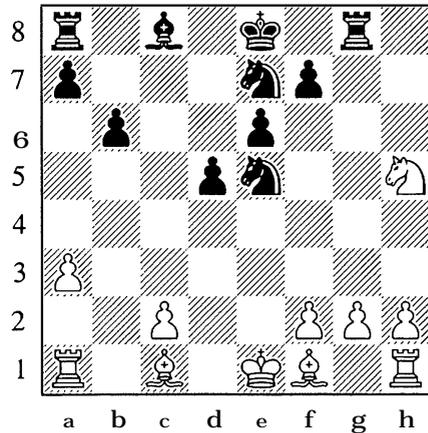
14...b6!N

14...f.d? has been played, bur af er the obvious 15.l2 h5N I prde r White.

I also considered 14...f6N bur af er 15.1 h5 ©f7 16.. b2 White gets some initiative as 1. kf6! is an annoying threat.

15.1 hS

15.1,b2! k4 16. c3 b7 17.h4 e5!?! leads to balanced play.



15..1 H7! 16. bS!?

This is more challenging than 16.i .b2 b7 when Black completes developmen with no particular problems.

16..Exg2 17.h4!

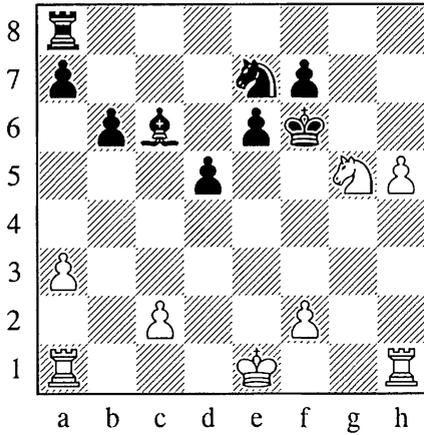
In such positions, it is of en the case that advancing the h-pawn is more important than grabbing material.

Af er 17.1 ♗3 «.b7 18.1.f1 d4 19.f.xg2 i .xg2 20.Eg1 f.f Blacks extra pawn, piece activity and central control fully compensate f r the exchange.

17..Eg6 18. gS ©f8 19.1.xd7

Another option is 19.1 ♗4 8g8 20.i .h6! ©e8 21.♗h5 Eg6 22J g5 Wf with balanced chances. One possible f nish might be 23.. d3 1 g8 24.1 ♗6 j hs 25.h5 1. ke5 26.1 hn ©gs 27.1 ♗6! ♗f8= with a repetition.

19... xd7 20.l2f .\t6 21.hS ExgS 22.1 h7t ©g7 23.1 ♗gS ©f6



24.f4

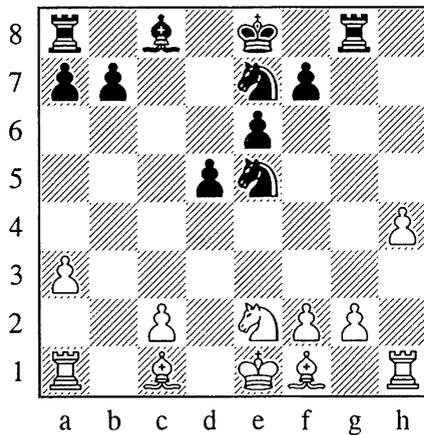
This winning attempt is slightly risky.

Safely is 24. t h n ♔g7 25. ♘g5 ♕f6= with a repetition.

24...d4! 25. h2 h8E

Black's activity, extra pawn and better structure offer full compensation for the sacrificed exchange.

B22) 14.h4



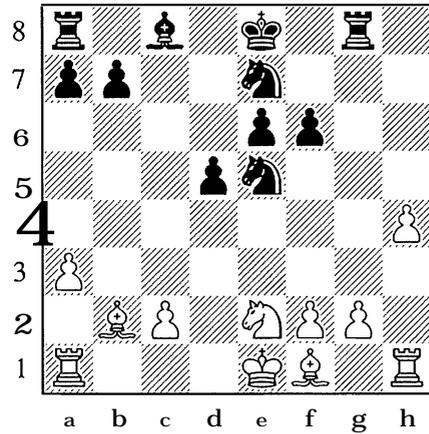
This is clearly a logical move, so I was rather surprised to find out it was a novelty when I forced it in Autumn 2012.

14...f6

This is almost always a desirable move in such positions. Black prevents ♕g5 and gives a square for the king on f6, while improving his control over the dark squares in general.

15.fb2

15. ♘d4 ♕d7=



15...♕f7!N

This is more reliable than the move I played in the game. The White is allowed to get two connected passed pawns on the kingside, but Black is well placed to counter them.

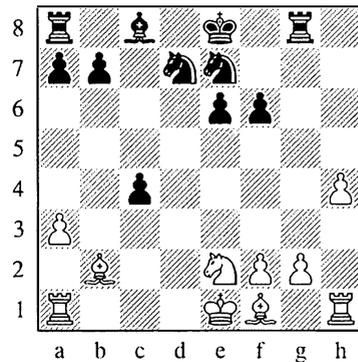
I will present a few moves of my own game to show the need for an improvement:

15...♘d7 16.c4!

White opens the position and utilizes tactics to exchange his weak c-pawn.

16.1 d4 e5 17. ♘b5 ♔f6 18.0-0 c b6=

16...dxc4



17.C g3!N

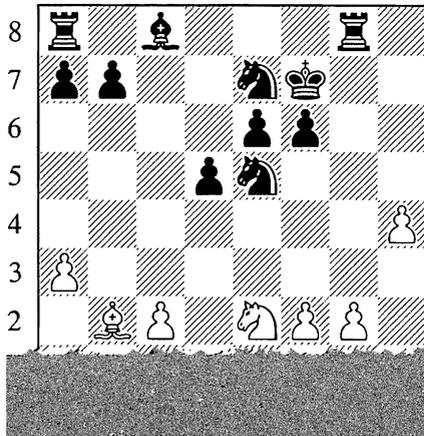
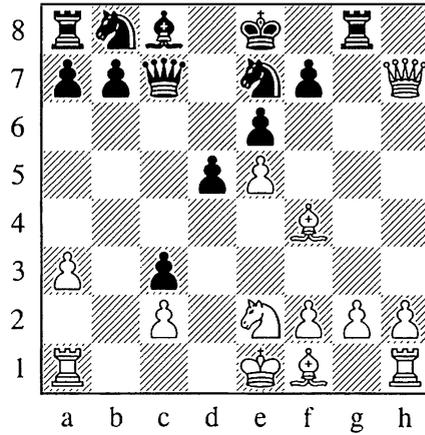
In the game White went astray with: 17.C f4 g3! 18.g3 e5 19..1e2?! C c5! 20.1 h5 i f7 White has completely lost his piece coordination and cannot even win the exchange any longer. Black went on to win in Lundberg – Berg, Vasteras 2012.

17...C d5

17...b5 18.a4 b4 19. xc4 i f7 20.C e4 C f5 21.O-O C b6 22.i b3±

18.i xc4 C 7b6 19. .a2 i f7 20.h5t

White keeps the initiative.

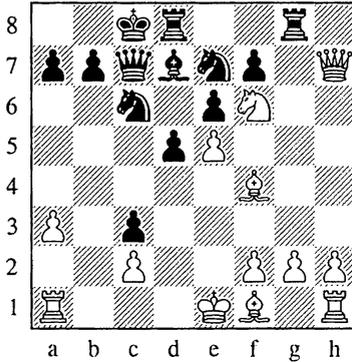


16. \xe5?!

If there was a way to question the correctness of Black's last move, it ~~is~~ t acg t a

o

14. Wd3 d4 also favours Black, who intends ...1 g6 next.



14. 1 g6!

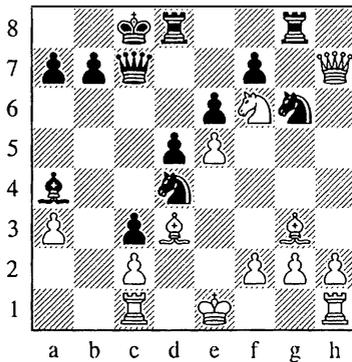
It works out that Black can launch a counterattack while leaving the rook hanging for a few moves.

15. \g3! h4 16. Ec1

16 d3. a4 17. Ec1 transposes

16... a4 17.. d3

17. c xg5? 1 kc2! 18: xc2 c hc2 19. @e2 (19. b5 Wb6 20. 0 0 Wxb5 +) 19... \,e4 20. 0 0! f4 +



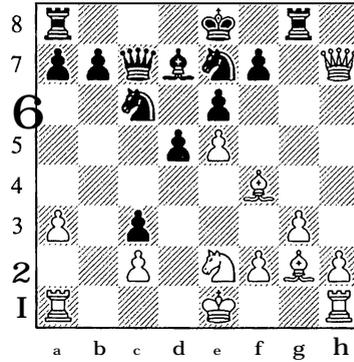
17... \h8 18. \g7 a6!

Intending ...b5. Black is close to winning.

A final inferior option is

12. g3! . d7 13. g2

this set-up enables White to complete the development of his kingside, but fails to put any pressure on the black position.



13..1 ke5 14. 0 0 0 0 15. \xe5

15. Efe1 is met b) 15.. Edf + intending ...1 f7g6

15.. fxe5 16. Wd3

16. ihf 1 f5+

16.. tbs 17. Eab1

17.1 kc3: c8! 8.1 e2 V c7+

17... Ec5 18: b3

So for Black's play has been fine, but here it is necessary to improve



18..1 f5N

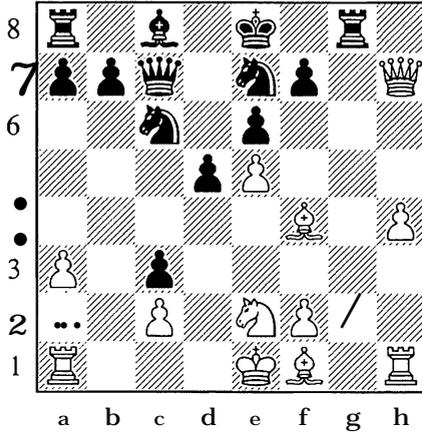
Black has other good moves, but I like the plan of manoeuvring the knight to d6

In the game Black blundered with 18... Ec4?? allowing the tactical shot 19. Exb7! with a huge advantage for White, Kharajan - Ruchkin, Rybinsk 2004.

19. Wb 1 b6 20: xc3: xc3 21. c xc3! h6+

Material is level, but Black has a better pawn structure and well centralized pieces.

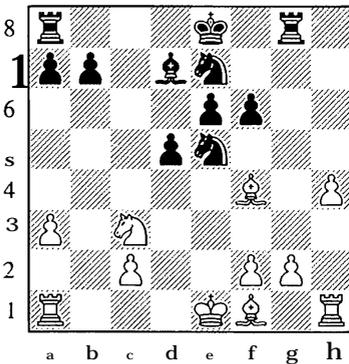
C1) 12.h4



12.. d? 13.h5!

This untested move seems like the most logical and interesting option. White not only advances the pawn one step closer to promotion, but also prevents the black knight from stepping to g6 in the future. Other moves fail to present problems:

13.1 d3?! 1 xe5! 14.\ xc3 @ xc3r 15.1 xc3 occurred in Lane - Petrik, Slovakia 1997, and here 15...f6!N+ is a useful improvement.



"The rook is coming to c8 in the near future and, with the bishop already on d7, 16.t b5 can be met by 16.. \.xb5 17J xb5!" Wf7. Black's development advantage, strong centre and well placed knights are more significant than White's pair of bishops.

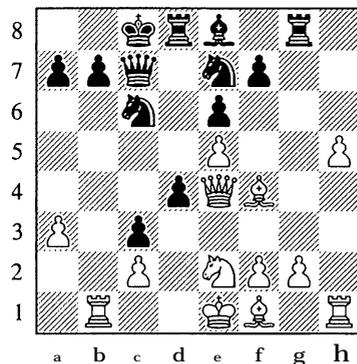
13.i b1 0-0-0 14.i h3N can be met by 14...1 f5! with at least a draw - compare 13.i h3 below. Alternatively 14.\ d3 is considered later under the move order 12.i d3 i.\ d7 13.i b1 0-0-0 14.h4 - see variation C21 on page 80.

13.i h3 0-0-0 14.i xc3 was seen in Pieprzyk - Knapik, Wroclaw 2012. Here it looks logical to cut off the queen's escape with 14.\ f5N. 15.0-0-0 (Avoiding the repetition with 15.\ h5? is favourable for Black after 15.\ d4+ with a strong initiative.) 15...1 h8 16.\ xf1 df 17.\ g6 At this point Black has an easy draw with 17...i fg8= if he wants it. There is also the option of continuing the fight with a move like 17...\ b8!?, so you may take your pick.

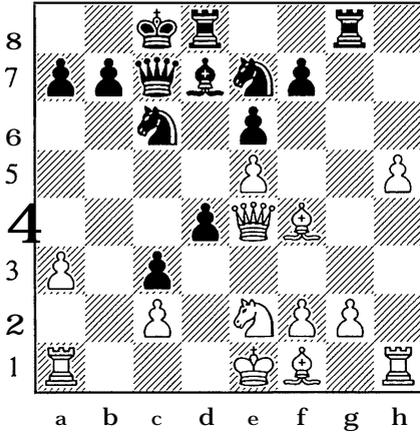
13..0-0-0 14.i d3d4 15.\ e4!?

It makes sense for White to keep the e5 pawn guarded.

15.i b1 is well met by 15.. e8! when Black is ready to grab the pawn. 16.\ e4 (After 16.\ d6 1 xe5 17.i .xe5 Wxe5+ Black is a pawn up with a strong centre, while the passed h-pawn can easily be blocked.)

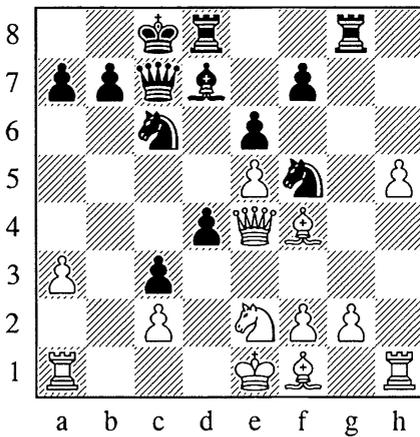
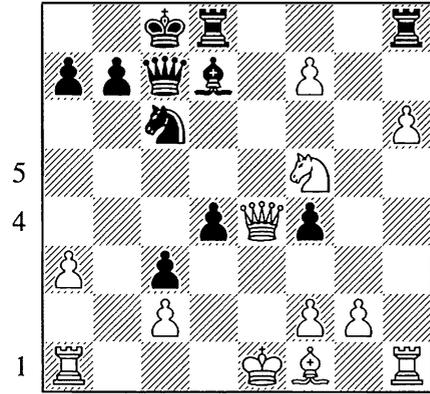


16..d3! 17.cxd3 1 d5 Suddenly all Black's pieces are active and White is in serious trouble, being behind in development with a vulnerable king in the centre.

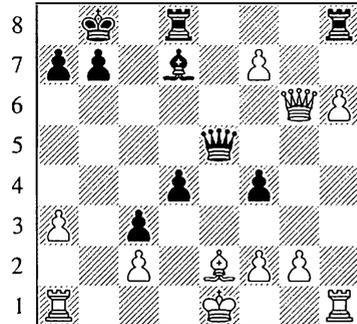


15..1 f5

I consider this the soundest move. The main point is to prepare ...f6, when exf6 can be answered with



16.h6 f6 17.exf6 e5 18.f7 ♖h8 19.♘g3
19.♙g5 ♜df8 20.♚d5 ♜ce7 21.♚b3 ♚c6

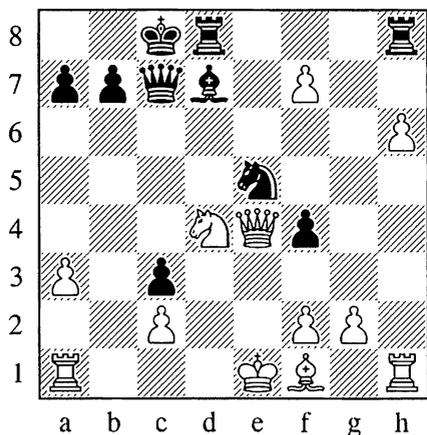


24... f5!

24...d3? looks attractive but only leads to a draw: 25.cxd3 (25\ xd3 g4 26\ b5 Ed5 27\ c4 1d4 28\ b5 1d5=) 25...c2 26.c d2 \ a5 27. cl \ e5 28 d2=

25.Wg? We6+

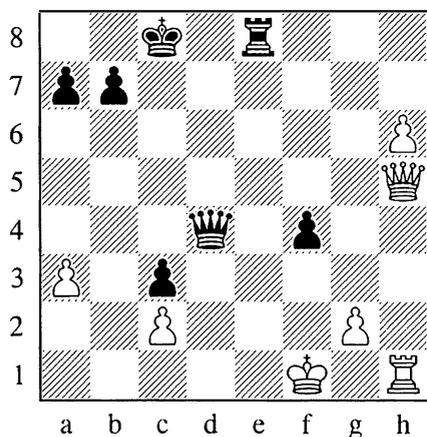
White is in trouble.



21...xf7 22.Qe2 Qhe8!

From here there is a long and mostly forcing line leading to a draw.

23\ g6 1 keS 24\ hS \ b6! 25.Edl . g4 26.s.xg4t ' kg4t 27. f ' kf 28'Zxf Exd4 29.Exd4 \ xd4t 30. fl

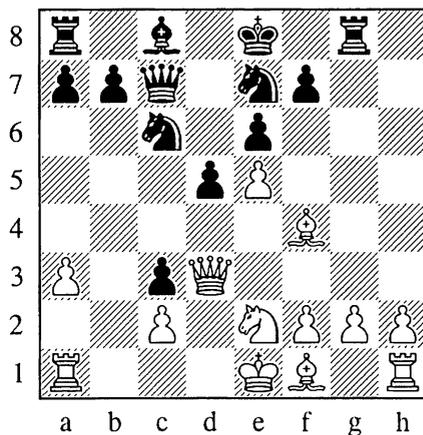


30...Qe1! 31.Qxe1 Qd2† 32.Qf1 Qc1†

33.c f We3t=

With perpetual check.

C2) 12.Wd3



Centralizing the queen has been White's most popular choice.

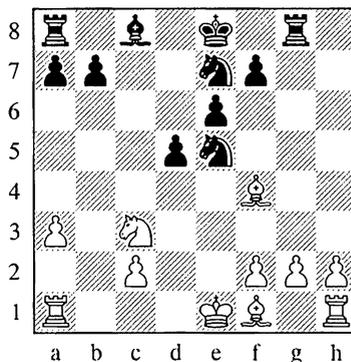
12...s.d?

I like the idea of developing quickly and waiting for the best possible moment to strike in the centre.

I will mention, in passing, the immediate central capture:

12...1 ke5 13\ xc3 \ xc3t \ 4.c xc3

We have reached a familiar type of endgame. Besides position should be quite playable, but against this particular variation it would not be my first choice, simply because Black can play more ambitiously.



14...f6

Improving over 14...1 f6 as played in Fakler - Vetter; email 2001, after which 15. Jg5! intending h2-h4 looks favourable for White.

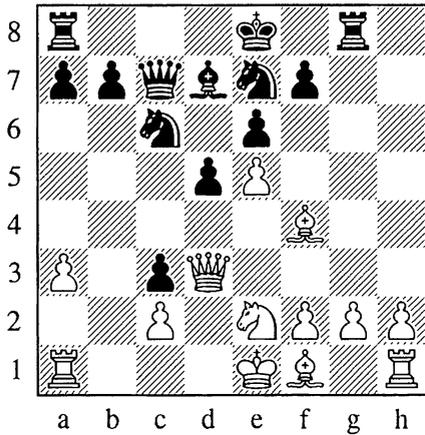
As we have already seen, it is important for Black to post his central pawns on dark squares in this kind of endgame. This will counter White's dark-squared bishop while also ensuring a brighter future for the bishop on c8.

15.1 b5!

1. catering a fork on c7 and hinting at a possible c2-c4.

15...Wd5

Intending ... d7 with a fully playable position, as Black's central pawns provide his pieces with enough stability. Black can also consider 15...Wd7! intending ...a6.



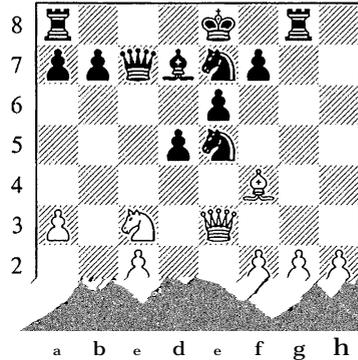
After the text move White's two main options are C21) 13. b1 and C22) 13.1 xc3. The following alternatives do not make much sense:

13.h4? transposes to the position after 13.1 d3? in the note to White's 13th move of variation C1 on page 77.

13.1 kc3? 1 ke5 14.1 e3

After 14.1 d2N f6+ Black is better, having a

strong centre and superior development. It is also to Black's advantage that the queens are on the board, as the white king is potentially weaker than the black one.



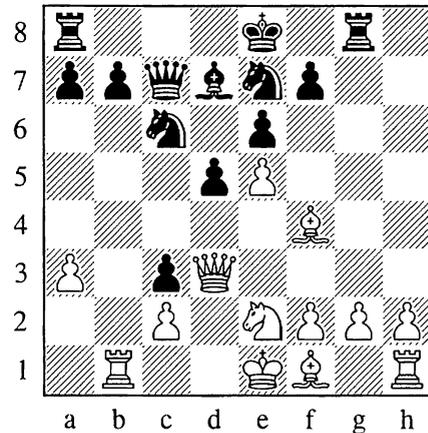
14...f6

After 14...1 f6 15. i,xd3 1 xc3! 16. We2 xg2 Black eventually prevailed in Campbell - Saraceni, email 2005. However, at this point 17. i,e5!N would have reached a dynamic position with roughly equal chances.

15.1 b5 i,xb5 16. Qxb5+ Wf+

Intending ...1 f5. Black is extremely active, and White is unable to exploit the slightly exposed position of the king on f.

C21) 13. b1



13...0-0-0

13...d4!N is a serious alternative which can be compared with the main line below. The ...d4 pawn sacrifice is a typical method to make use of Black's quick development.

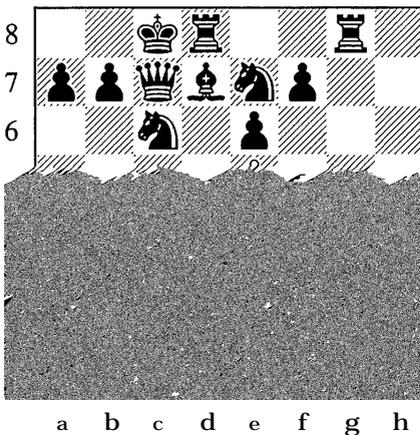
14.h4

14.\xc3 was played in Holl - 'falnadgc, corr: 1991. Here Black should play 14...d4N intending ...l h5, with full compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

The text move transposes to a game Bakali - Uhlmann, Lugano 1968. Now instead of 14...t g6 I suggest:

14..d4N

With plenty of active prospects for Black, as shown by the following illustrative lines.



a b c d e f g h

15.t kd4

15.h5 has already been considered under the move order 12.h4 . d7 13.h5!N 0-0-0 14.\d3 d4 15. b1 - see the note to White's 15th move in the earlier variation C I.

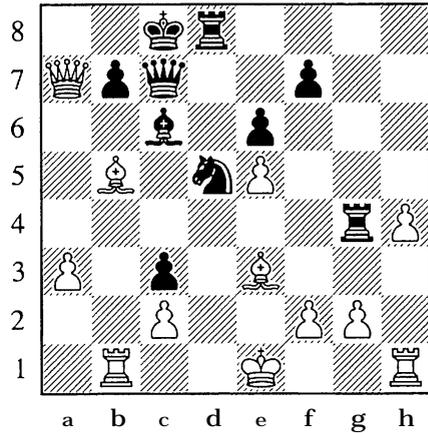
15. g5 \xc5 16. .xe7 t ke7 17.\xd4 \xd4 18.l kd4 g4 19.t k2 t h5t

15..l kd4 16.\xd4. c6 17.\xa7

White may as well take a second pawn, as 17.\c4 t h5 does nothing to diminish Black's initiative.

17.. g4! 18 e3t h5 19. b5

19. h3 \xc5+



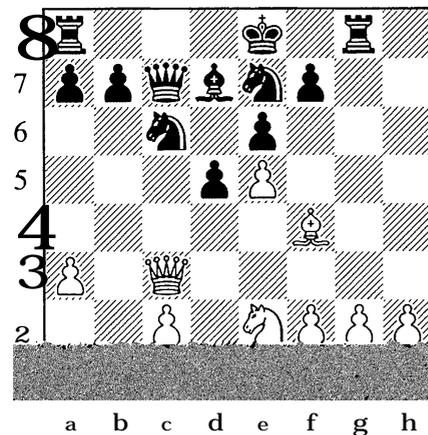
19..t ke3 20.f e3 xg2 21. xc6 \xc6 22.\a8t Wc7 23.\a8t b6

23...\c8 24.\a8!= repeats, but Black does not have to take a draw just yet.

24.\a7t \b7 25.\xb7t \xb?t

White should hold the endgame, but there is some play remaining.

C22) 13.\xc3



13..0-0-0

From this position the untested C221) 14.O-O!N deserves attention, but the main line is C222) 14.h4.

14.Eb1 was considered under the move order 13.Eb1 0-0-0 14.1xc3 - see the note to White's 14th move in variation C21 above

14. e3?

This has been played on a single occasion, and should not be repeated

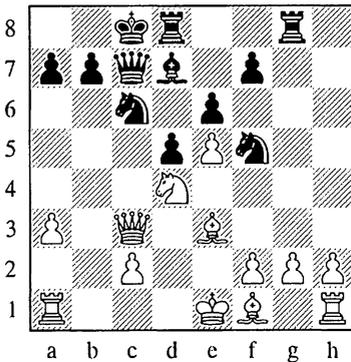
14..1 f5

14..1g4!N in rendering...1c4 can also be considered. Now 15.f4? is bad in view of 15...d4! 16.0xd4 17.d1 d2 18.1xd4. b5 with a huge initiative for Black.

15.1 h4??

15. f4 looks best, but then Black has simply won two tempos for free. 15...d4 is a logical continuation, and after 16.1c5, c5 Black has a great position.

Now in the game Boer- Meszaros, Budapest 1999, Black could have achieved a winning position with:



15...xe5N 16.0-0-0

16.1d1 g4-+

16...g4 17.d2b5 18.1xc3 18.dxc3 d4 19.h3 g6-+

Black is winning a piece.

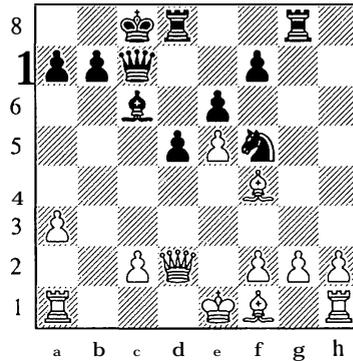
14.1 h4

This has been played a few times, but it does not trouble Black.

14..1 h4 15.1xd4 16.1d2, cG

For the second player has full compensation for the sacrificed pawn. The following game

featured some inaccuracies on both sides, but it contains some thematic ideas which are worth remembering



17.Eb1 d4 18.Eg1 fG?

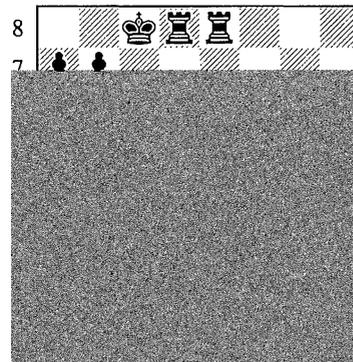
A typical device to mobilize the central pawns.

18..1g4N is one of many possible alternatives.

19.exfG e5 20.1g5 e4 21. f4 e3 22.f e3 dxc3 23.1 b4 1 d7 24. ,d3 1 h4 25. xe3?

f e3 tal error:

25...EgS 26. f2 1 g4 27.1 d2



27...f3??

This could easily have led to a reversal of the final outcome.

Either 27...EeG or 27...1d6! would have been crushing.

28.1 b4??

28.1b4! would have turned the tables and given White a winning position.

28...1 ♞4 29.\ d2 ♞d6!

Black takes his chance the second time around.

30.! ♗51 ♞f3?

30...♞e6+

31.\ ♜f4?

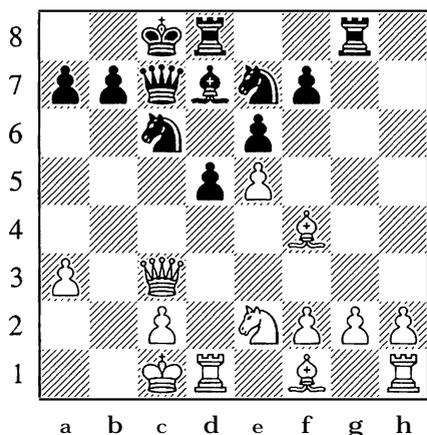
31.♞b4! would have kept White in the game. Apparently neither player was alert to this possibility.

31...\ ♗g5 32.\ ♜f5! ♞i.d7 33.♜.\ ♜e3" 34.< ♗3 ♞l ♗li"

0-1 ♞h ann - Marcinovic, Sibenik 2007.

Let us now turn our attention to the two more challenging options available to White.

C221) 14.0-0 ♞7N

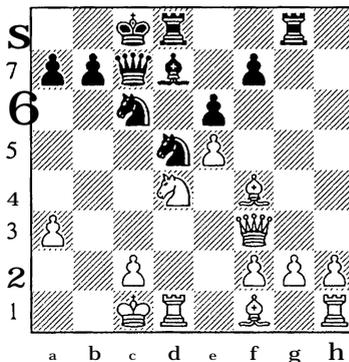


An interesting novelty, against which Black should play concretely in order to maintain the balance.

14...d4! 15.\ ♞b2

15.♞xd4!? 1 ♞d4 16.\ ♞cl ♞t < ♞c7 17.1 ♞d4 is dynamically equal; White has two pawns for the exchange and a pair of bishops, while Black has a solid pawn structure and better development.

1 also considered: 15.1 ♞d4 1 ♞d5 16.\ ♜f3 (16.\ ♞c41 ♞f4 ♞e4 ds to the same thing.)

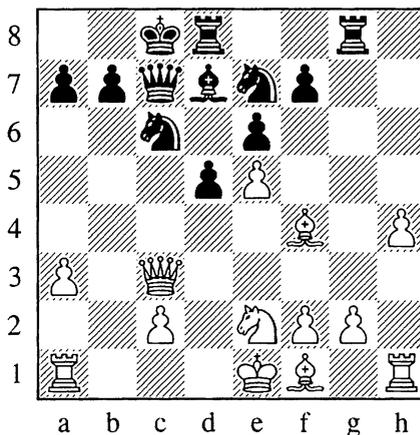


16...1 ♞f4 17.1 ♞c6 ! ♞c6 18.\ ♞f4 < ♞s Black is two pawns down at the moment, but he is ahead in development with a significantly safer king.

15...1 ♞d5 16" ♗3< ♞8 17.1 ♞d41 ♞a5!

Black has a strong initiative with attacking chances on the queenside, which fully compensates for the two-pawn deficit.

C222) 14h4



Pushing the h-pawn is a thematic plan that White can consider at just about every turn in the Poisoned Pawn Variation, and here we see another version of it.

14...d4 15.\ ♞c5

White can try a different queen move:

15. d2

As played in Paschke- Namyslo, Regensburg 1997, and a few other games. Here I propose the novelty:

15... h5

I find this much more straightforward than 15... e5 as played in the above game. A possible continuation is:

16. g3

16... g5? is well met by 16... xc5 17... xd8 d3 18. Ed1 cxe2 19... xe2 @xc5+ with a material advantage for Black.

16... g3 h4 is also promising for the second player.

16... f1 17. exf6 18. kf4 18. kf4

After 18... gxf4? e5! Black has a serious development advantage and active piece play in return for a small material investment.

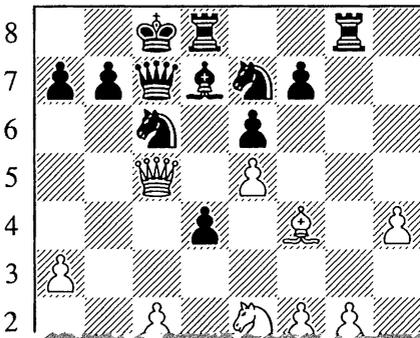
18... e5 19... e2

19... d1 d3

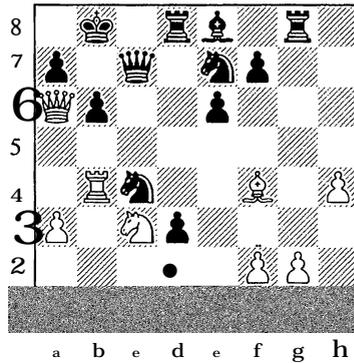
19... a5

Black can also keep the game going with 19... ixf6? although this would entail some risk.

20. Wd2 Wc5! =



16. c4?? leads to disaster for White after: 16... b6 17... b5 d3 18... b3 19... b5 19... a6! @bs 20... b1 19... xc4 21. Eb4



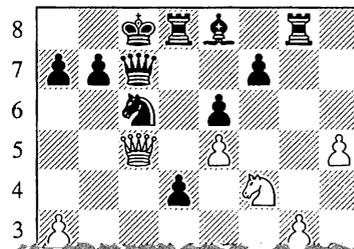
This position occurred in Grigoryev - Chybicki, Poland 1990, and now 21... d2! N 22... d1 h5 23... kd5! bU! + would have been winning.

16... h5 17. 0-0

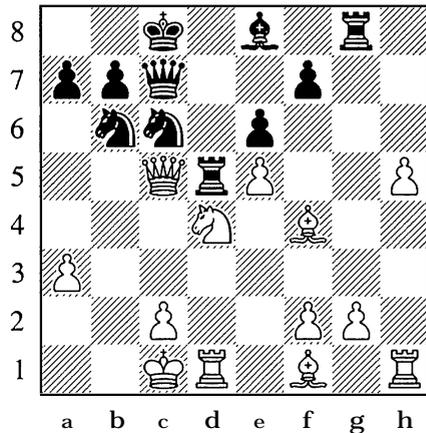
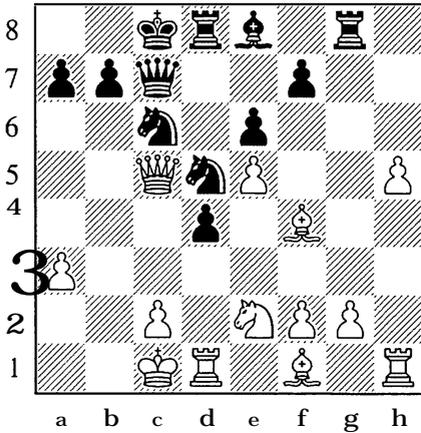
Alteratives are worse:

16... d2 t b6+ intending... d5

17. g3 t xf4 18. gxf4 (18... gxf4?? Ed5 19... c4 ' a5! 20... d1 [20... c3 d3 +] 20... d3 21... cxd3 1 c5 22... e4! ke5 +)



16. h5



17...1 b6!N

17... ♖xf4 18. Ck4 b6 19. ♗c4 ♗e5 was fine for Black in Andersen - Elcoate, email 2003. I am not sure if the text move is objectively an improvement, but it leads to more complicated positions and gives White additional chances to go wrong.

18. Ck4!?

Giving up a piece and setting a small trap.

After 18... b5 Ed5 19... d3 Ck7 20. Ck4 . a4! 21. ♗c3 g8 Black has a lot of active counterplay for the two sacrificed pawns. True, White has a dangerous passed h-pawn, but he may not get enough time to advance it.

18... d5!

18... ♗xd4? 19... ♗xc7 20. h6± is something Black must avoid.

19. Ck6!

19.1 c3 Ck4 20. ♗xd4 ♗xc7 21. h6 . .b5 22. h7 g8 23. ♗b5 ♗xb5 24. J g5 Exd1 25. r Jd1 l k3j 26. r ♖l ♗d7± leaves White with a difficult endgame.

19...f e6 20. Exd5 Ck4 21. i g3 \ h? a

The position is dynamically balanced and any result is possible.

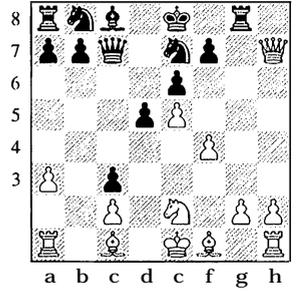
Conclusion

The lines examined in this chapter are all characterized by White's refusal to defend his pawn on e5 by means of f2-f3. In variations A and B he simply allows it to be captured, hoping to make gains in other areas such as quick mobilization of the pieces and/or advancing the passed h-pawn. We encountered several different versions of the thematic endgame involving the disappearance of the pawns on e5 and c3, a related version of which can be found in the last part of the previous chapter.

Variation C leads to a different type of struggle with White guarding the e5-pawn with the help of a bishop rather than a pawn on f4. It is worth paying attention to this plan, although with careful play Black should have an easier time than in the big main lines, and we saw several instances where the second player was able to generate strong counterplay.

Chapter 7

Poisoned Pawn



11.f4

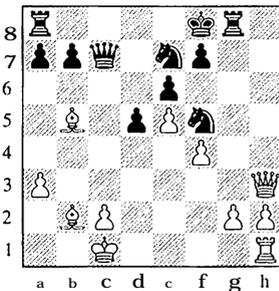
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♘xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♖g4 cxd4
8.♗xg7 ♗g8 9.♗xh7 ♖c7 10.♘e2 dxc3 11.f4

11...♘bc6

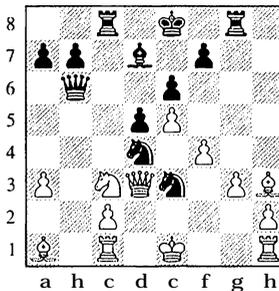
A) 12.♙e3	87
B) 12.♗b1	87
C) 12.♘xc3 ♘d4!	88
C1) 13.♙b2	89
C2) 13.♗d3 ♘ef5	91
C21) 14.g3	91
C22) 14.♙d2	92
C23) 14.♙b2	93

C1) af er I7.1 h3



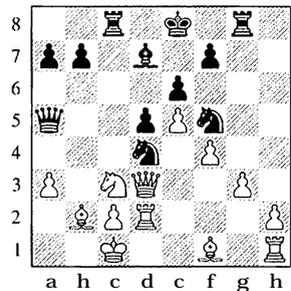
17...Vc5N

C21) af er 18.\h1



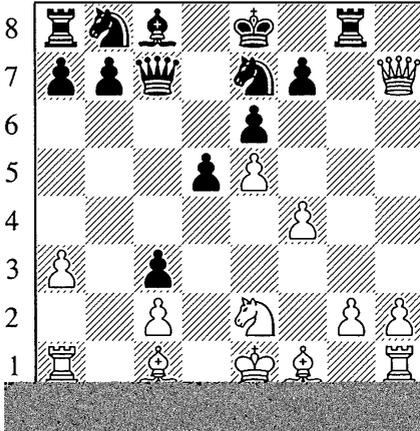
18..1h8N

C23) af er 17.g°



17...'lc7N

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.l c3 i,b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3
 j,xc3t 6.bxc3l e7 7.Wg4 cxd4 8.Wxg7 : g8
 9.Wx 7 Wc7 10.l e2 dxc3 11.f4



With this move we enter the main channels of the Winawer Poisoned Pawn.

11..l bc6

In this chapter we will analyse three sidelines:
 A) 12. e3, B) 12! b1 and C) 12l xc3

12.l g3 . ,d7 gives White nothing better than 13.Wd3, when 13...d4 is analysed under the move order 12.Wd3 d4 13.l g3 i ,d7 - see variation C in Chapter 8.

In terms of popularity, 12.Wd3 is the main line by far. Coverage of this move begins in the next chapter on page 95.

However, I believe the biggest theoretical challenge to the Poisoned Pawn comes from the modern 12.h4!. This critical line will be placed under the microscope in Chapters 11- 13, beginning on page 147.

A) 12. e3

This rare move deserves to be mentioned. White develops the bishop to a good square and restrains the ...d4 advance, which is one of Black's main ideas.

12..Was!

Supporting the c3-pawn.

13.Wd3N

This seems like a logical way to improve on the following game: 13.l d4 l xd4 14. .xd4 \ a4 15.\ d3 l f5 16.l xc3 d7 17.g3 Ec8f Benzaquen - R. Garcia, Buenos Aires 1962. Black has a great position with lots of activity, which more than compensates for the pawn deficit.

I also considered 13.l g3N d7 14.j ,e2 0-0-0 15.0-0 d4 16. f2l g6= with an active game for Black.

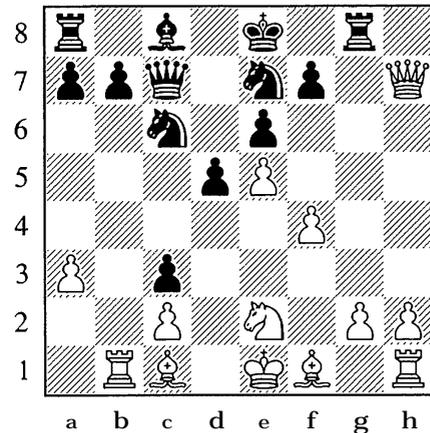
13..b6! 14.l d4

14.Ed11 f5 J5.i 2 . ,aG 16.Wxc3 Ec8t

14... ,d7 15.g3l xd4 16. .xd4 Wa4 17.\,xc3 Ec8t

Black has at least enough counterplay for a pawn.

B) 12Ebl



This move is quite thematic, but it is unusual to play it this early.

12..b6!N

An interesting attempt to take advantage of White's move order.

...the standard 12...h7 is absolutely fine, with a likely transposition to a variation considered elsewhere in the book, for instance after 13.Wd3 d4 - see variation D of Chapter 8

13.1 xc3

13.♙c3 enables Black to make a strong sacrifice: 13...d4! 14.1 xd4 can be alternative is 14...xd4 15.1 xd4 a6... intending ...♙b7 with plenty of activity for Black.) 14...1 xd4 15.♙xc4 i...b7 !6.♞b3 Wd7 17...b5 t,c6 18...xgWxc6 19.r hc3 Wd5 Black has excellent play for the sacrificed material.

13.Wd3 d4 transposes in a few games. The critical continuation is 14.1 xd4 1 xd4 15.Wxc4 b7 16.1 b3! c8 17.: g1 d5 when Black has enough counterplay to maintain the balance, Arslanov - Sadykov, Kazan 2012.

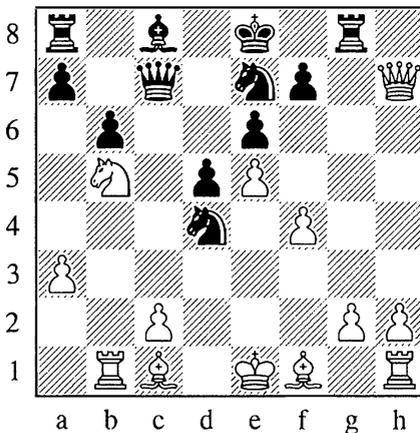
13..1 d4

Now the position resembles the later variation C, with the moves ♞b1 and ...b6 having been included. Perhaps the most significant effect of these two moves is that White is deprived of the option of long castling

14.1 b5

14.♞d3 ♟ef5 offers Black equal chances, and can be compared with the later variation C2.

14...h2§ d7 is fine for Black as well.



14..1 xb5 15.0 xbSt \.d7 16. xd?t ' xd7

As usual in the French, Black should be happy to have exchanged the light-squared bishops.

17.0 West 18' hl Eaf 19.Wd3 ♟f5

Threatening ...♟g3†.

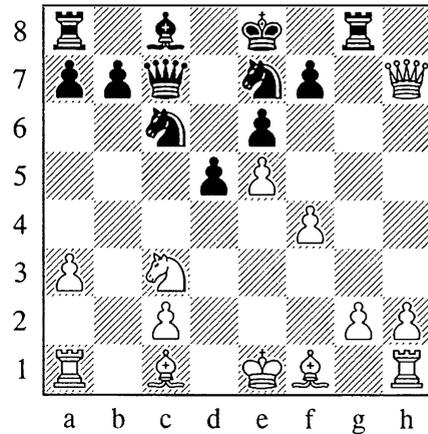
20: f

20.g3: cs 21: b2Wd4+

20..Ec8 21.c3f g t

Black has more than enough play for the sacrificed pawn.

C) 12.1 xc3



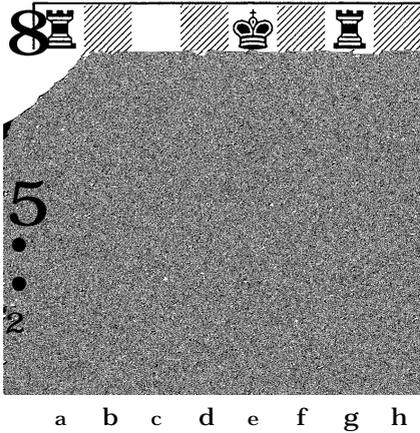
This move has recently been played by Karjakin among other strong players.

12..1 d4!

12...♟xe5 13.♟b5 Wb8 14...W2 has scored well for White so far

The text move is a good and active solution. Now White's two main options are C1) 13...b2 and C2) 13.Wd3.

C1) 13. b2.l d?

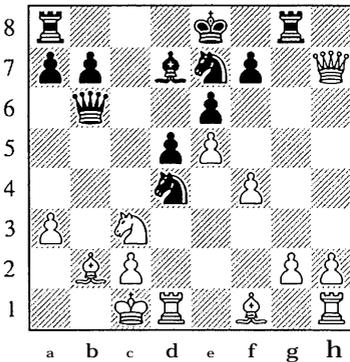


14.0-0-0

14.Wd3N gives Black a choice. 14... ef5 is a simple option which transposes to 13.Wd3 l2 ef5 14.< b2 ,< d7 - see variation C 23 below. Alternatively, via this move order Black can consider 14... df5! with good prospects.

14...c d f S

14...Wb6? was played recently by the French expert Vitiugov, but it looks rather shaky to me as the knight on d4 is unstable.

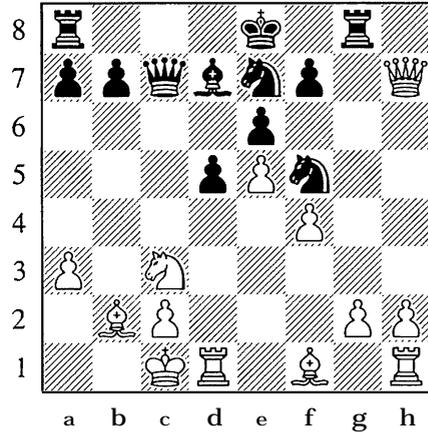


All three games in the database have continued with 15.\ d3 ' df5 16.' b5, but after the accurate reply 16...c8 17.g3 a6 18.c c4 a4 19.: d2 : c4= Black was fine in Svidler - Viriugov, Paris/St Petersburg 2013.

However, I find some improvements for

White. One option is 15.' xd5!N ' b3; 16.cxb3 cxd5 17. ,d3 when White's strong bishops offer him the better prospects.

Another serious option is 15.g4!N, a thematic pawn sacrifice that both sides should keep in mind in the Poisoned Pawn. After 15...: xg4 16J h3 : g8 17.f5! White has a strong initiative.

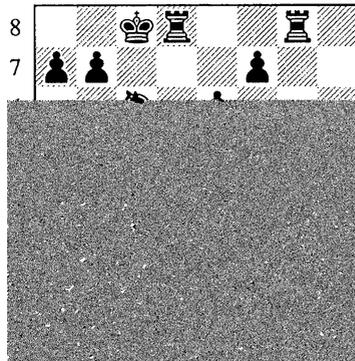


15.c b S

I considered two other options.

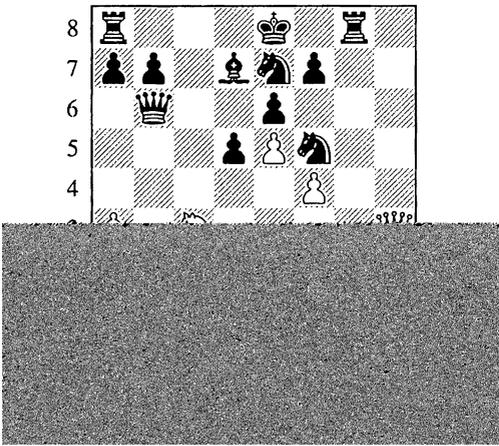
15.Wh3 gives Black a choice between a) 15...l f c5 and b) 15...Wb6:

a) 15...Wc5 was played in a recent high-level encounter: 16.: d2 0-0-0 17.g4 ' e3 18.c d1 c xfl 19. xfl . b5 20.: eI ' c6 21.f5 This complex position was reached in Karjakin - Nepomniachtchi, Moscow 2013.



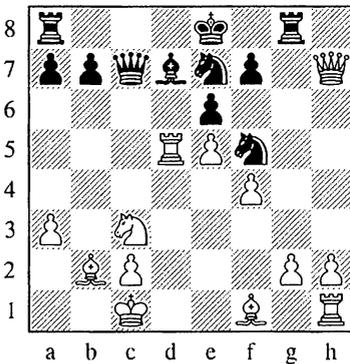
Here I would prefer 21...Wb5N (instead of 21...d4 which opens the way for White's knight to come to e4) to secure the king. Later Black can use the chance for his rook and/or push with ...d4 at a more appropriate moment. Black has full compensation for the sacrificed pawn and the position is dynamically equal.

b) 15...Wb6 16...d2 occurred in Luther - Ruppert, Wiesbaden 2011. Here instead of castling I suggest the novelty:



It is also worth mentioning the spectacular and so far untried idea:

15...xd5!N



Though it may seem alarming, Black has more than one good reply leading to at least a draw.

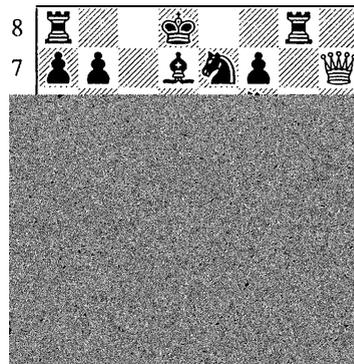
15...exd5

Black can also reject the sacrifice with 15...0-0!? when my main line continues: 16.1 b5 . .xb5 17.Exd8J' Exd8 18J b5 a6 19.' a4 1 lg6 20.i b3! Wb8! 1 hthreatening ...; h8 21.\ xe6 (21.g4Wc6! 22.Ee1 f22.: g1 Wc5 23.Eh1 Wc6=] 22...l h4 23.J hd4 Exd4 24.Wb2 Necessary to prevent ...Wc3. 24...Exf4= Black's activity should secure at least a draw.) 21...f e6 22.Wg6 Ec8 Once again White cannot hope for more than a draw: 23.Wb1 (23.c3 \ c4) 23...Wkc2! 24.Wal \ b3 25.Ecl : xcl ! 26.J hcl l d4 27J b2l k2! 28.Wbl xa3r 29.Wal =

16.1 kd5 fc5!

...n lis is the most straightforward.

17.1 IM Wes



18.1 kgS

18.i d3?! Exg2 19.\ hS! l lg8 20.1 kd7 Egl T 21.1 xgl xgl T 22.Wd2 V2! 23.< 7:3 V d4l 24.Wb3 i d5! 25.. c4 i f 26.Wa2 Wxd7+ is messy but better for Black.

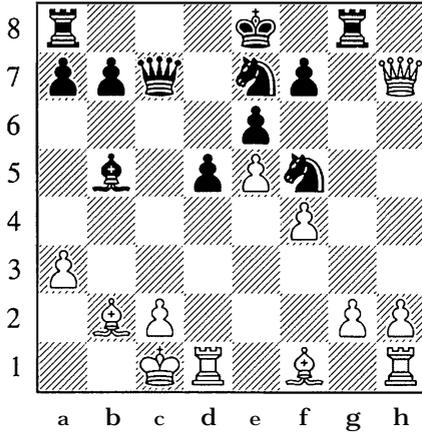
18...\ e3! 19.Wbl WeU 24. cl d5=

White can do nothing to prevent perpetual check from the knight on c3 and a4. Black can assess his opponent's response before deciding whether to force a draw immediately or try something else.

15...J hb5!

15...\ b6 should be avoided due to: 16.1 h6i!N (16.1 h4 0-0-0 17.\ h3 Wb8=

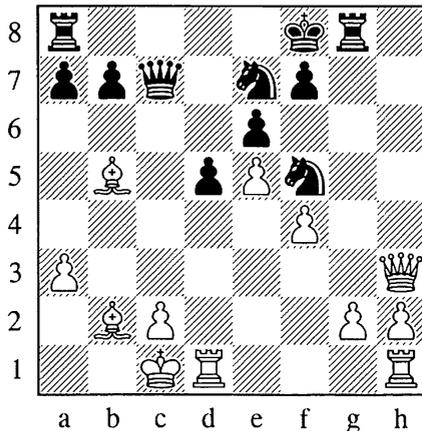
Casella- Kazmierczuk, corr: 2010.) 16...l xd6
17.exd6 Wxd6 18.g3



16 .xb5t f8 17.Wh3

17. .d3 l e3 18.i d2 l c4 19. xc4 Wxc4=
Lecha Gonzalez - Schyndel, corr: 2011.

After the text move I found an improvement
for Black.



17...Wc5!N

17...d2g6?! allowed White to consolidate
with 18.Wb3! followed by g2-g3 in Gao Rui -
Mu Ke, Beijing 2012.

18 d3\ e3t 19.Wxe3l xe3=

Black will restore material equality by
picking up the pawn on g2. In the ensuing

endgame his chances are at least equal, as his
pawn structure is better and his knights will
have good outpost squares available.

C2) 13.Wd3l ef5

This position has arisen quite a few times
via the move order 12.Wd3 l f5 (12...d4
is my recommendation, as revealed later in
Chapter 8) 13.l xc3 l cd4. However, if Black
plays that way he must take into consideration
options such as 13.Wxc3 and 13.l g1!?

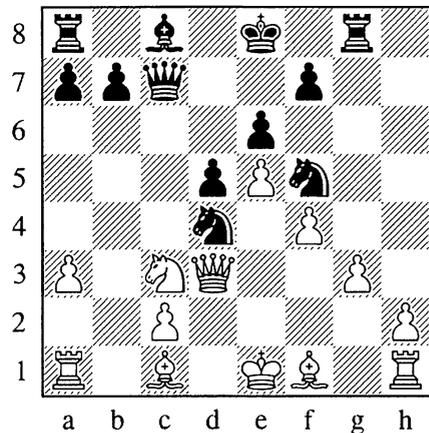
At this point White's main options are C21)
14.g3, C22) 14. .d2 and C23) 14; b2

14.l g1 is bad due to 14...Wc5!+.

After 14.l b5?! 1xb5 15.Wxb5! d7 16. ld3
the novelty 16...0-0 ON+ is better for Black,
who intends ... a4 or ... c6 and ...d4.

Finally, 14.i a2 : d7 15.i b2 i c8 16. .d2
occurred in Mueller - Hannebauer, corr:
1986, and now 16...b6N+ intending ...Wc5 is
good for Black.

C21) 14.g3



White wants to finish developing his
kingside pieces, but the plan is rather slow.

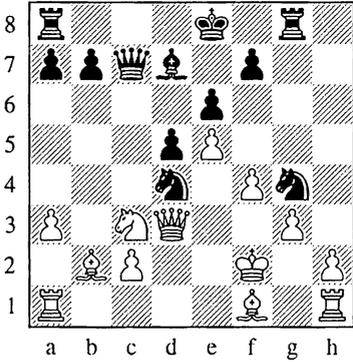
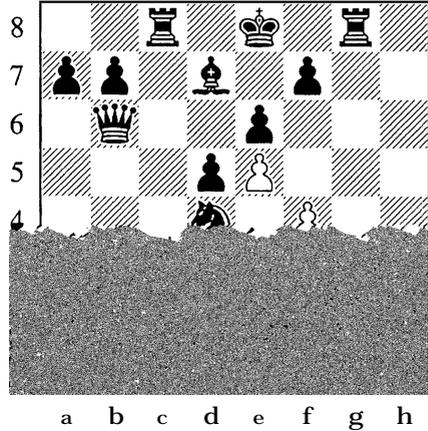
14..i d7

Now White must worry about a rook arriving on the c-file.

15..h3

15..d2 is analysed under 14J d2 d7 15.g3- see variation C22 below

15. b2? was played in McClemen - Burrows, Sunningdale 2011. White's last move is a mistake which could have been punished as follows 15..l k3N 16.< f2 (16.g.cj Vc5+) 16..l g4!



17. e1 (17. g2? dxc2!+) 17... c5!+

15..gc8 16.l,b2??

This natural move loses outright.

The lesser evil is 16. d2, which transposes to the note to White's 16th move in variation C22 below

16..l k3! 17.gcl

17.< f2 was played in R. Ryan- Myers, USA 1992, and here 17...l hxc2N+ is crushing.

17... b6 18..al

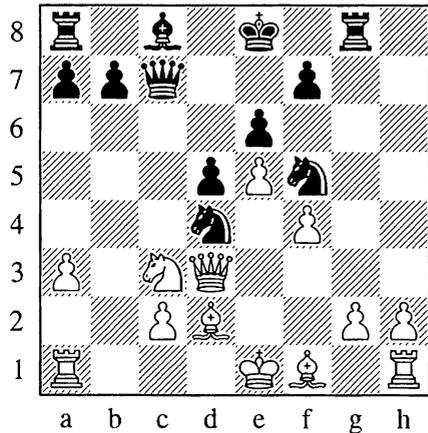
This position was reached in Antal - Bodrogi, Budapest 1998. Here the easiest route to victory would have been

18..gh8N

Forcing the bishop to retreat before re-executing the winning combination

19..f 1 lxc2! 20.gxc2 1 kc2 21..xc2 d4 +

C22) 14.l d2



14... d7 15.g3

15.0-0-0 b6 is good for Black, as pointed out by Watson.

After 15.m) 1 the simplest response is 15...b6, intending... c5 or ...gc8 when Black is fine.

15..gc8 16.gcl

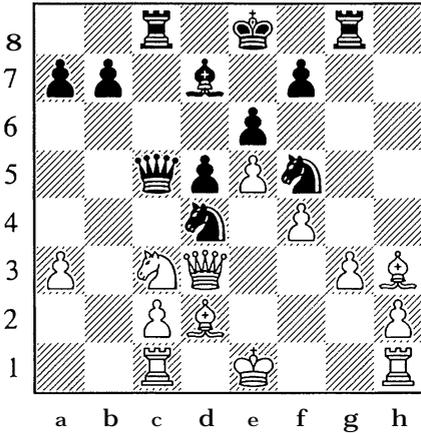
16. h3 occurred in Pinheiro - Castro, Lisbon 2004, and one subsequent game. White was victorious in both encounters, but 16...Wc5!N would have been a strong reply, preventing castling in either direction. In this case Black keeps the better chances, and after the plausible reply 17.Ec1 we transpose to the main line below.

16...Wc5!

With this typical resource, Black improves the position of the queen and limits the opponent's options. White hardly has any active prospects at all, and his extra pawn exerts no influence on the game. Meanwhile Black's pieces coordinate harmoniously.

17. ,h3

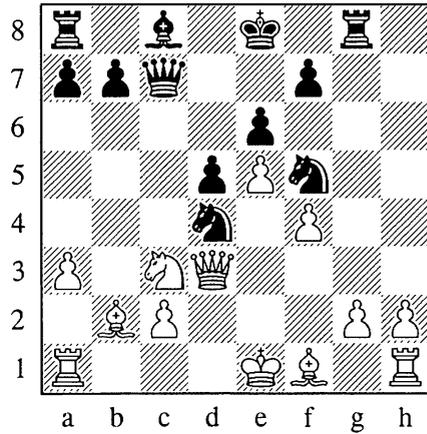
Here I found a useful improvement for Black.



17...a5!N

In Tukhaev - Limontas, Anek 2000, Black elected to simplify with 17...t b5?! but there is no need to relieve the tension. After the text move it is hard for White to find a good plan. Despite being a pawn down, Black keeps an advantage in view of his well-coordinated pieces and White's lack of counterplay.

C23) 14. b2



This is White's most challenging option, guarding the knight and preparing long castling.

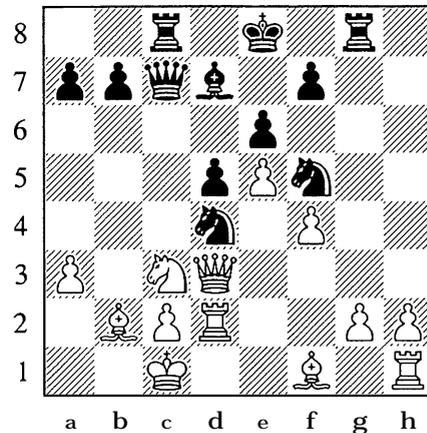
14... d7

14...t e3?! 15.4 b5!t dxc2! (or 15...t lexc2! 16.Wd1 t kb5 17.Ecl±) 16.Wf2 was good for White in Greet - Williams, Liverpool 2007.

15.0-0-0

15.g3? transposes to 15... b2? in the notes to variation C2I above.

15...: cs 16.Ed2

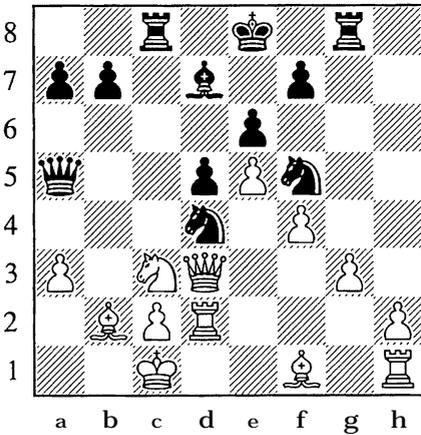


16...Wb5

16... \ c5 17.g3 c6 18.j J13± is mentioned by Khalifman, but the text move is an improvement.

17.g3

17.1 kd5?? is a fatal error that was played in Ringoir - Williams, Liverpool 2008. Here the most clear-cut win would have been 17...1hc2tN !8Wxc2 1 kc2 19l f6t ©f 20.©xc2 (20l kd?t ©g7 21.©xc2 1 k3t 22.Wd3l xfl- +) 20... \ a4t 21.Wcl Eh8 +

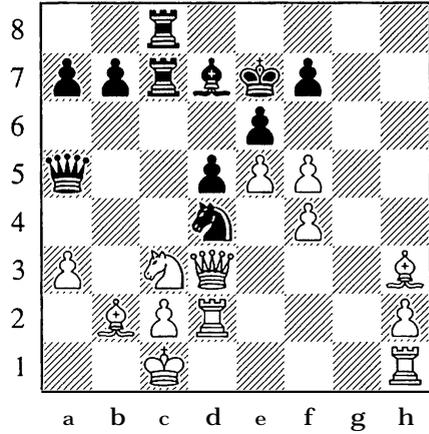


17...Wb5!N

With the simple but effective plan of doubling the rooks on the c-file.

17...Ec5 is playable but slightly less accurate. 18 J13 ,b5 19l kb5 Exb5 occurred in Briscoe - Williams, Liverpool 2008, and here White can improve with 20 ,xf5!N 1 kf5 21.©bl. In the resulting position Black keeps some compensation, but I doubt that it is enough to claim full equality if White plays precisely.

18 ,h3Ec7 19.g4Egc8 20.gxf5



20...t b3t! 21.cxb3

21.©b1? Exc3 22 ,xc3 Exc3 23.cxb3 transposes. 23©bl?below

21...f xc3t 22.Shc3f xc3t 23.Wb2

After 23©b1?f xd3 24. xd3. b5 + White does not have time to coordinate his pieces.

23.. xd3 24f xd3

In material terms White is doing okay, but his lack of coordination is still a problem.

24.. \ b6!!

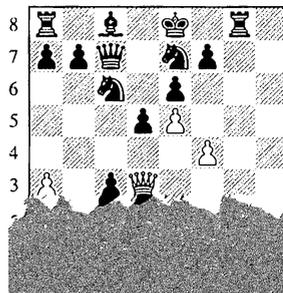
1reatening ... \ f2t. An important point is that White cannot play 25.Ef1? due to 25... b5

Conclusion

All three of the main lines examined in this chapter lead to positions where Black has ample compensation for being a pawn down. Variation C has occurred in several games between strong players, but I have found no cause for concern; on the contrary, in many lines it is White who risks falling into a worse position.

Chapter 8

Poisoned Pawn



12. ♔d3 d4!

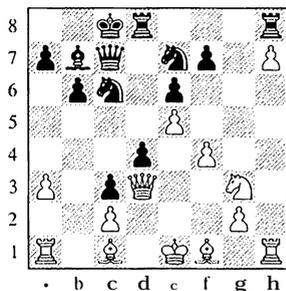
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♔g4 cxd4
 8.♔xg7 ♗g8 9.♔xh7 ♔c7 10.♘e2 dxc3 11.f4 ♘bc6 12.♔d3

12...d4!

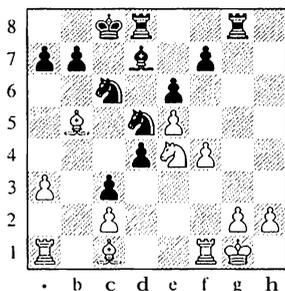
A) 13.g3	96
B) 13.h4 b6!	97
B1) 14.h5?!	97
B2) 14.♘xd4	99
C) 13.♘g3 ♗d7	100
C1) 14.♗e2	100
C2) 14.♘e4	102
D) 13.♗b1 ♗d7	106
D1) 14.♘g3	106
D2) 14.h3!?	109
D3) 14.g3	109
D4) 14.♗g1	112

B1) after 17.f g3



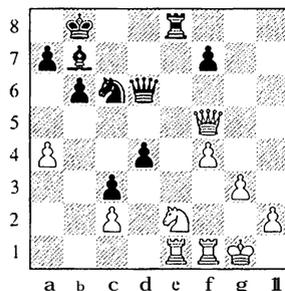
17..f g6N

C1) note r 17.Cd6I



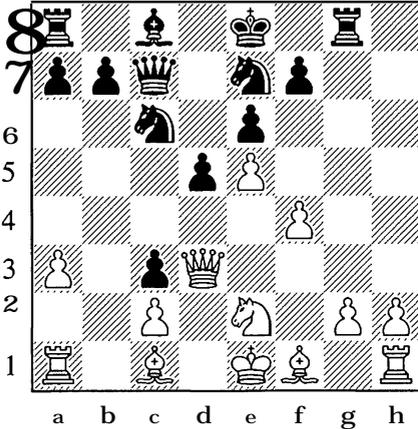
18..f cc7N

D3) af er 24.f bd



24..f c3N

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 h4 4.e5 c5 5.a3
 xc3t 6.bxc3 l e7 7.' g4 cxd4 8' xg7
 gg89' xh7' c7 lO l e2 dxc3 11.f4l bc6
 12' d3



12...d4!

If the traditional main line has been 12... d7, but I believe White can get a comfortable edge there without too much difficulty. The text move has become more popular in recent years, and has been tested at the highest level. Black intends to sacrifice the d-pawn in order to open lines and activate his pieces. If White decides not to take it, he will have a cramped position and may find it difficult to activate his queenside pieces.

It is worth mentioning 12... f5? as an interesting alternative, after which 13. l kc3 l kd4 transposes to variation C2 of the previous chapter. However, with this move order White must also reckon on the possibilities of 13. Vxc3 and 13. gl!?

After the text move, the most critical and popular continuation is 13. l kd4, which can be found in the next two chapters.

Before then we will consider the various ways in which White may decline the d-pawn, namely A) 13.g3, B) 13.h4, C) 13. l g3 and D) 13.gbl.

13.ggl?! ' b6! is already slightly better for Black. The last move is worth remembering as it secures the d4-pawn while controlling the b]-square, making it difficult for White to develop either of his queenside pieces. One of my own games continued 14. l g3 . d7 15. l kd4 0-0-0 16. l h6f mbs 17. l kd ' c5 when Black had a solid grip and a clear advantage in D. Ledger- Berg London 2011.

A) 13.g3

The idea of fianchettoing the bishop is well known, although it has rarely been seen in this exact position. Black has a choice of good replies

13...b6!N

This has not yet been tested, but we already know that the queenside fianchetto is an attractive plan for Black. Two other moves can be considered.

The untested 13... %6!N deserves attention, with the same ideas as in the above note with 13.ggl?!

13... ,d7 has been chosen in all three of the existing games, including one of my own. White has two main options:

a) 14. i, g2 0-0-0 15. m)l is covered later under the move order 13. mill i d7 14. g3 0-0-0 15. J g2 - see variation D3. However, via the present move order Black has the tempting option of 14...' b6!N.

b) For this reason 14. blN is more accurate, and after 14..0-0-0 15. g2 White reaches the same position without allowing the black queen to go to b6. Turn to page 110 for the continuation from this position.

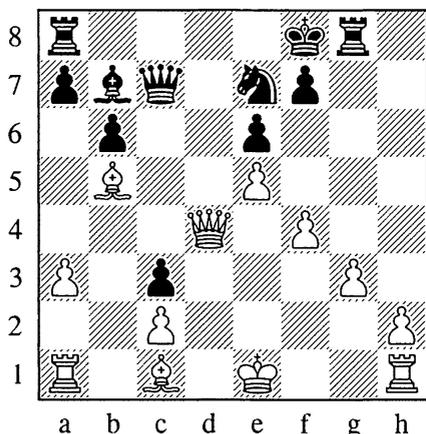
14. l xd4!

This is the only critical test, as other moves would allow ... ,b7 and ...0-0-0 with a great position for Black.

14..Ckd4 15.1 xd4. b7 16. b5t

This annoying check was the main reason why I preferred 13... h7 when I encountered 13.g3 over the board. However, subsequent analysis convinced me that Black does not experience any problems after moving his king.

16..c fs



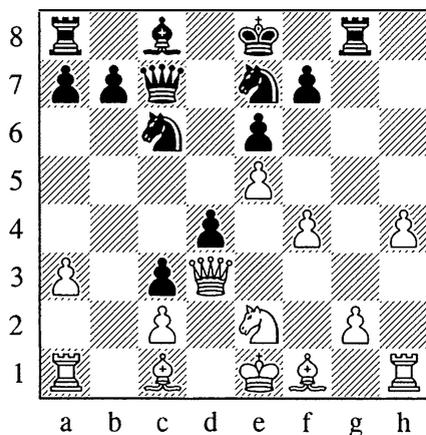
17. ♖g1

After 17.0-0 ♘f5 18. ♖c4 ♖xc4 19. ♗xc4 ♗e4↑ Black's activity and pressure against c2 offers him strong compensation in the endgame.

17..J h5! 18.1 f : ds 19.a4c gsi i

Here too, Black has full compensation for the pawn.

B) 13h4



Pushing the h-pawn is a standard idea in the Winawer Poisoned Pawn. Here White uses it as a waiting move before deciding whether to take on d4 or not.

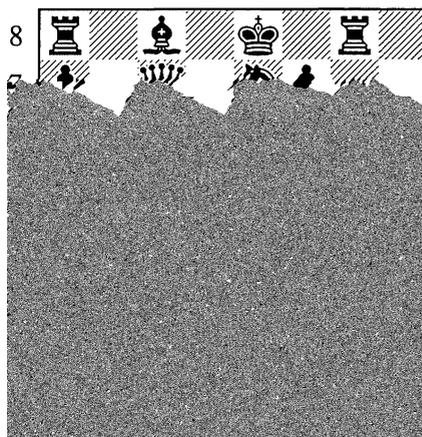
13..b6!

Once again, the fianchetto development works well when Black has time for it.

13... H7 14.h5 transposes to the 12.h4! d4! variation as covered in Chapter 13. This is playable for Black, but it also happens to be the most theoretically critical line of the entire Poisoned Pawn system. The present variation is less dangerous and thus should be preferred.

From here White has tried B1) 14.h5? and B2) 14.Cxd4.

B1) 14.h5?



This is illogical, for reasons that will soon be explained.

14... b? 15.h6

15.: g1 0 0 0 16.g4 c b8 was also pleasant for Black in Von Meijenfeldt - Maatman, Dieren 2011.

15..o-o-o 16.h7: hs

"Ollis position can best be understood by comparing it to variation B of Chapter 13,

which can be reached by substituting the moves ... d7 and ...l b8 f r ...b6 and ...i ,b7. In that line, Black was forced to develop his bishop on d7 earlier, and after castling he moved his king to b8 with the intention of rerouting the bishop to c8 and b7.

In the present line, by developing the bishop to b7 directly, Black has saved two full tempos - as well as gaining some additional flexibility by delaying the move ...l b8, which he may be able to do without.

17.c g3

Another idea is

17.) b1

By covering the b4 square, White prepares to free his queenside pieces with a3-a4 and i ,a3

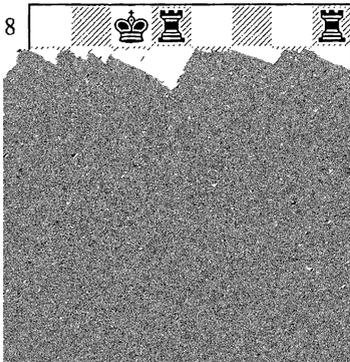
17...t d5

This is my preference, preventing a2-a4 as there is now another knight ready to jump to b4. Still, just about any sensible move will give Black an improved version of variation B2 of Chapter 13.

For instance, 17...' b8 was played in a recent game which continued: 18 h6 t g6 19. h5? Losing time. (19.l f2! was a better try.) 19...d f8 20.g4 t d7! Intending ...t c5 with an overwhelming position for Black, Jacko- Kovac, Martin 2013.

18. h6

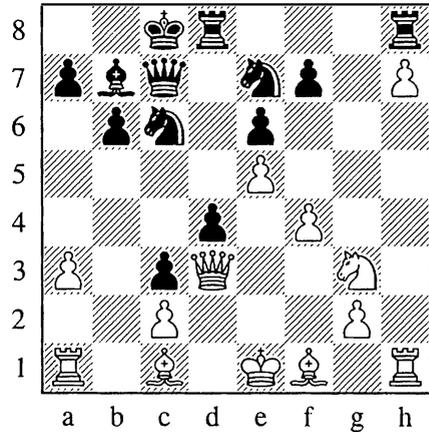
18t xd4 t xf4! 19.. xf4 t xd4 is risky for White.



18..i e7

Black had good prospects in Elburg - Bell, corr: 2012. The computer says that the position is equal but I would favour Black, especially in an over-the-board game. There are various plans, including the central break with ...f6, dropping the queen back to f and perhaps later g7, and the knight retreat to c7 with the idea of ...\ a6 and perhaps ...d? later:

The text move was seen in Wang Hao - Vitiugov, St Petersburg 2012, and here I would like to propose a novelty.



17...d g6!N

Preventing the knight from coming to e4. A possible continuation is:

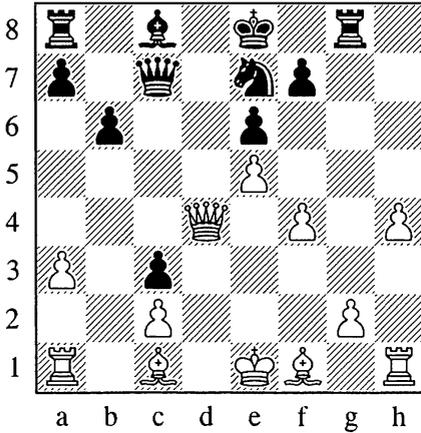
18' c4

18t e4?? t cxe5 19.f e5 i xe5 + 'b the tactical point behind Black's last move

18..i bs 19. d3' e?

Intending ...t a5 with a good game for Black.

B2) 14.1 xd4! xd4 15' xd4



This is the more critical try, aiming to punish Black for his slow queenside development. Play leads practically by force to the following endgame.

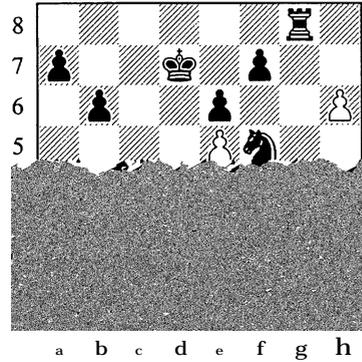
14...1 f5 16i bSt i d? 17! xd? t ' xd7 18i xd7t ' xd7

An analogous endgame has occurred in a few games after: 13.c xd4 c xd4 14.\ xd4 c f5? (The correct 14...Wd7 is covered in the next chapter) 15. b5! \.c7 16.\ xd?T \ xd7 17. xd7! ' xd7 18. f2 Black has no compensation for the missing pawn, and White is virtually winning.

Fortunately, in the present line the inclusion of the moves h2-h4 and ...b6 helps Black considerably, by loosening White's entire kingside. The e- and h-pawns are both weak, and Black should soon be able to restore material equality.

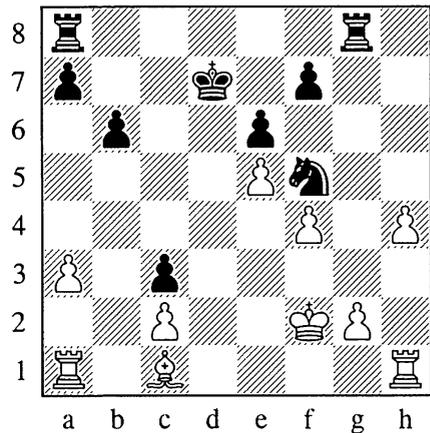
19' f

White has also tried 19.Eh2 Eg4 20.h5 Eag8 21.h6, when Black faces a choice:



a) 21..j h8 wins back the h-pawn, but after 22. f2 Exh6 23.Exh6 c xh6 24. f ! Eg8 25. e3 White had some initiative in Borosova - Berg, Gibraltar 2012.

b) 21...Eh4! is more precise, as pointed out by both Vitiugov and Watson. Play may continue 22.h7 l h8 23.Exh4 c xh4 24. f2 Exh7 followed by ...Eg7 with an approximately equal endgame.

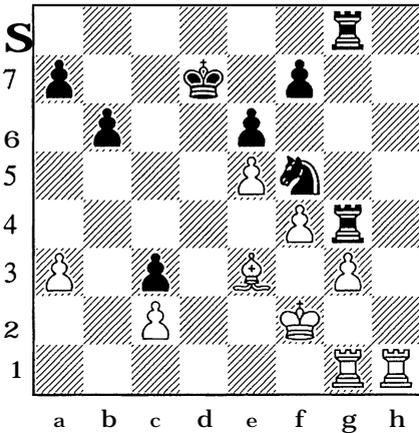


19...Eg4 20. e3 Eeg8

20...xc3N 21. xc3 Eeg2 also looks like a pretty solid route to a draw.

21: agl l x 4 22.g3! f5

Vitiugov evaluates this endgame as better for Black, which seems a bit optimistic, and after a series of logical moves the following high-level game was drawn.



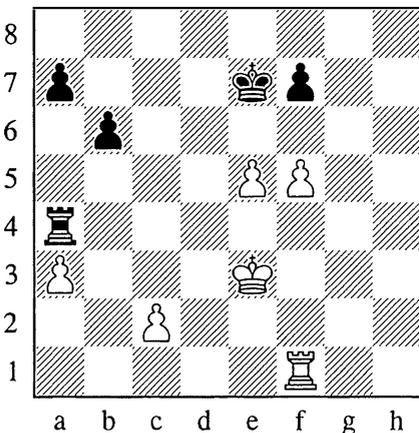
23.gh3 c e7

23..l ic6!? also seems fine, heading for the queenside. The rest of the game is not too important for us, but I will present it with a few brief comments.

24.c f t ke3 25.c xe3 gds 26.gh2 ggg8 gd2?!

Not the only playable move, but the simplest way to liquidate to a drawn rook ending. White has too many weaknesses and is unable to do much with his extra pawn.

28.gxd2 cxd2 29.c xd2 ghs 30.f5 exf 31.gxf gh5 32.gfl gh4 33.c e3 ga4



34.♞d1

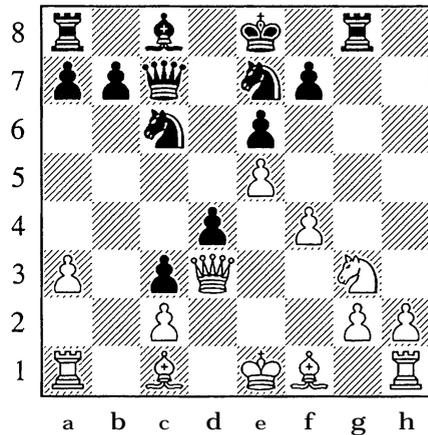
34.♞a1 ♞a5 is equal.

34..gxa3t 35.c e4 ga4t 36.gd4 gxd4t 37.c xd4 f 38.e6 c d6 39.c c4 a6 40.c b4 c c6

11_11

Bologan- Kamsky, Reggio Emilia 2010.

C) 13.t b3



With this move White hopes to utilize the newly-available e4-square.

13.. d7

Black has no time for a fianchetto, as the knight will deliver a painful check from d6 or f6. Now White can choose between C1) 14. e2 and C2) 14.t b4.

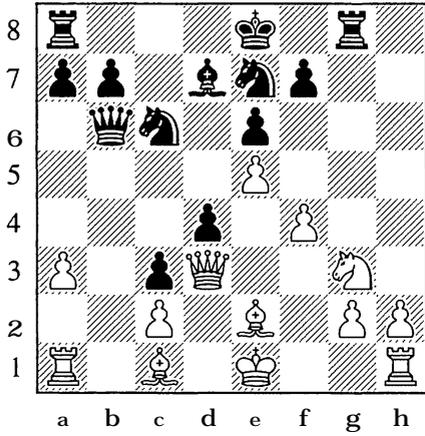
14.Eb1 is covered later under the move order 13Eb1, d7 14.< g3- see variation D1

C1) 14. e2

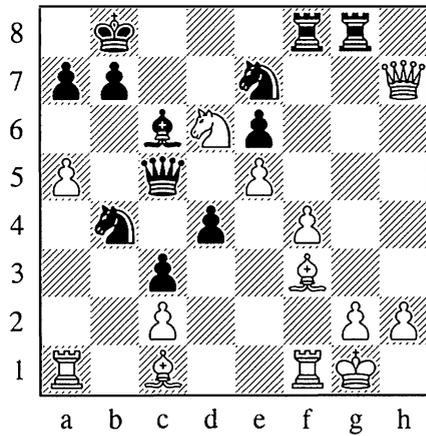
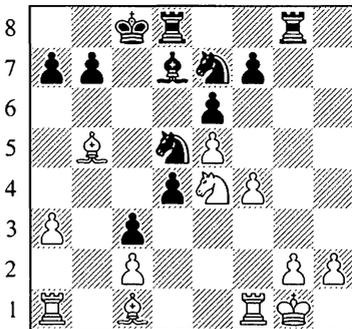
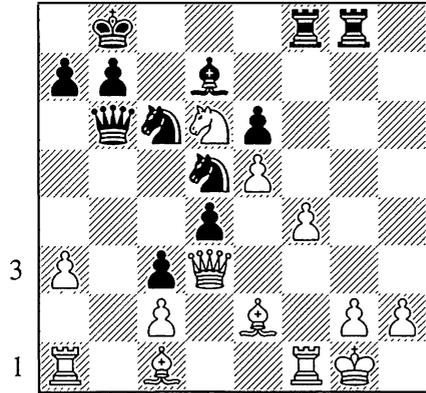
This developing move has been used by Karjakin.

14..Wb6!

We are already familiar with this method of preventing g6. Since White is about to castle on the kingside, tactical threats on the a7-g1 diagonal may also come into play.



15. 0-0 0-0 16. ♖d3 d5
16...! ♖8! ♖N is



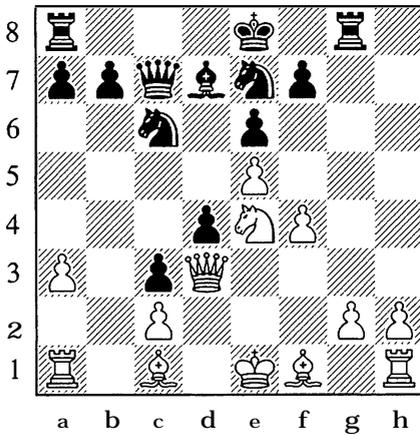
23... ♗f5! ♖N

In the game Kamsky preferred 23...d3t and eventually lost, although his position at this stage was still at least equal. Subsequent analysis has demonstrated that it is even better for Black to keep the discovered check in reserve for a few more moves.

24.t xf exf5 25. a3 d3t 26.Wh1 xf 27J f dxc2

Black holds an advantage thanks to his better piece coordination and dangerous passed c-pawns.

C2) 14.t e4



This is the obvious follow-up to White's last move. The knight is excellently placed, although White runs the risk of making too many moves with the same piece.

14...0-0-0 15.t d6t

15.Eb1 is covered under the move order 13.Eb1 d7 14.l g3 0-0-0 15.l e4 - see the note to White's 15th move in variation D1 below.

15.g3 t bS 16.Eb1 occurred in Pikula - Sedlak, Kragujevac 2011. Here instead of ...\c8I suggest 16...l b5N which gives Black quick activity. 111Cle might follow 17.l g2 . cG 18.O-O1 f5+ when Black has the better chances.

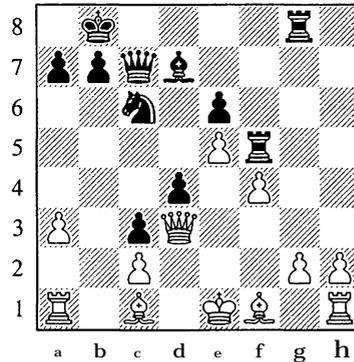
1s...i bs 16: b1

16l kf ?

If king the pawn immediately of ers Black a lot of counterplay.

16...Edf 17.l d6l lf5 18l kf5Exf5

White has made six consecutive moves with the same piece, only to see it exchanged. In the same period, Black has brought his king to safety on the queenside and activated his entire army.

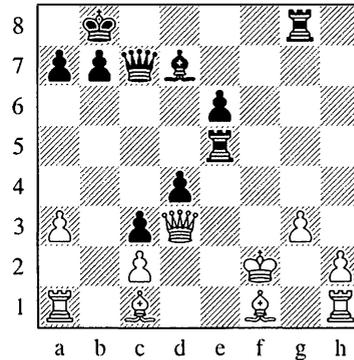


19.g3?

White attempts to develop his kingside pieces, but allows a tactical shot.

19...l ke5! 20.f c5Exc5t 21.\ f2

Now Black could have won with:



21...xf8+N

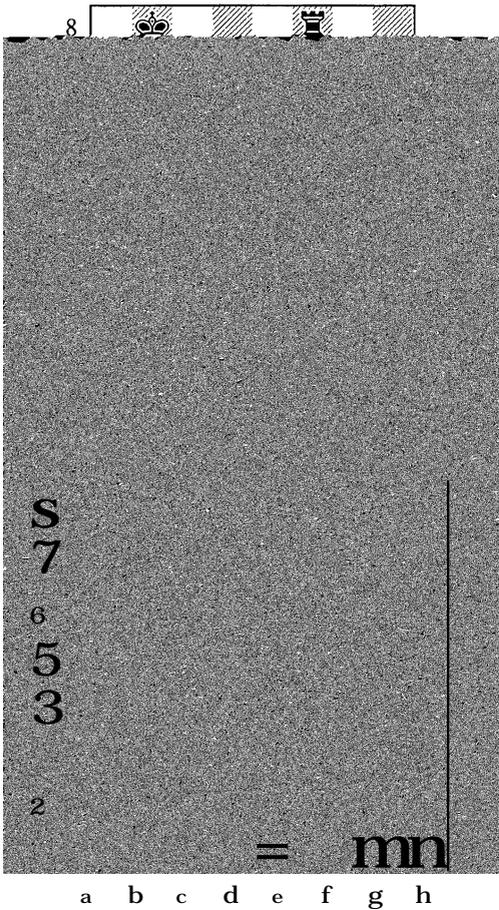
Instead of the blunder 21...xf5+?? 22.xf5! when Black had to resign in Cooke - Abramson, New York 1991.

22.gf4

22.gf1 b5 23.xb5 xb5 24.xb5 d3!-+

22...: g5

Apart from ...e5, Black also threatens ...: xf4. A possible finish is:



16...b6 17.t kf

'faking the f pawn is slightly better here than on the previous turn, as White benefits from the developing move Eb1, whereas Black's ...b6 is not as useful (though it is also not completely without value).

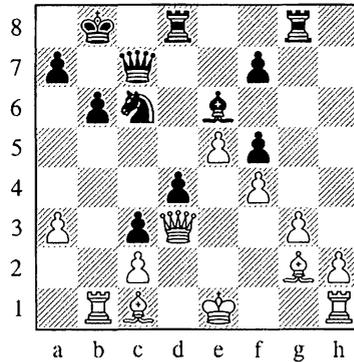
17.C b5 ' b7 18.C dG is a slightly annoying repetition of moves, when Black has nothing better than 18...' c7. If Black is desperate to play for a win then 18...' a8?! can be tried, but this clearly misplaces the queen and is not something I can honestly recommend.

17.g3

This has been played a few times, but it does not trouble Black at all.

17...c f5 18.' xf5 exf5 19. g2. .e6

Not for the first time, White has spent several tempos manoeuvring his knight, only to see it exchanged. Meanwhile, his queenside pieces remain undeveloped. In one game he tried to repeat this, with disastrous consequences.



20.a4??

20.O O should be preferred, although after 20...C a5 Black has the more comfortable position.

20... a2! 21.: a! c b4

Black already has a decisive attack.

22.\ xf5 5.e6 23.' e4 .d5 24.' e2 .!xg2 25.' xg2 C xc2' 26.' xc2 d3 27.' b3 d2!' 28.1.xd2 Exd2 29.Ec1 ' c5

O-1 Reinhart - Carpentier, Le Port Marly 2009.

17..gdf 18t d6t f5 19.t kf5 gxf5 20.a4

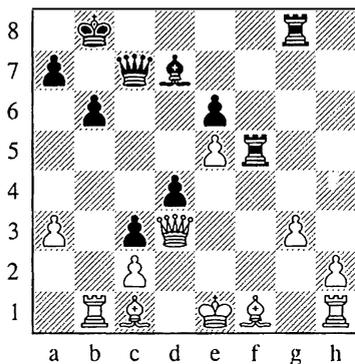
This move has been played in a few correspondence games. It leads to messy complications, but Black is completely fine and it seems to me that it is White who needs to be more careful.

20.g3?!

'It is not as bad as 19.g3? in the analogous position in the note on White's 16th move.

However, Black can still obtain an excellent game with a familiar device.

20... Cxe5 21. f e5



21... cG

Compared with the aforementioned line, Black must change his approach slightly.

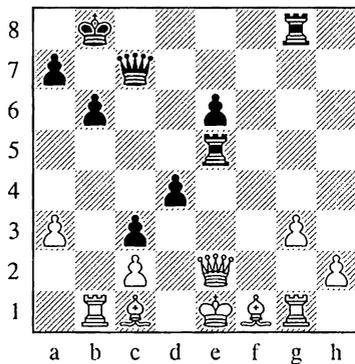
The point is that 21... ♖xe5†? is refuted by 22. ♕e2, as the rook on b1 prevents the reply ...J b5.

22.1 gi . e4! 23. ♖xe4

23. ♖e2?? d3 24. cxd3 ♕f3-+

231 c4 1 xc4 24i ,xc4 ♕xc2 25. ♖b4 d3

23... [xe5 24. ♖e2

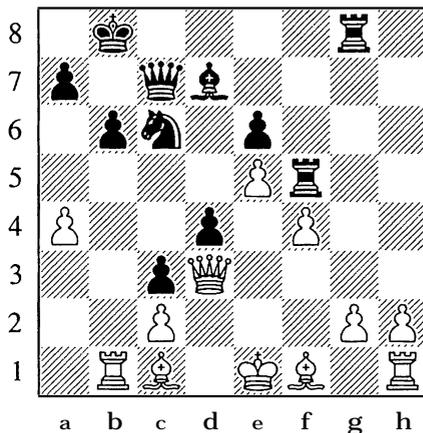


24... ♖f8! N

Improving on 24... ♖xe2† 25. ♕xe2 e5 as played in Kovacevic - Bukal, Zadar 2010. Now instead of 26. ♖g2? White should have played 26. ♖b5!N reaching an unclear position where anything could happen.

The text move is better; the white queen is not running away, so Black should take

the opportunity to improve the rook before taking further action. Although White has enough material for the queen, his poor coordination and exposed king give Black the advantage.



20...c xcS! 21.Wxc4

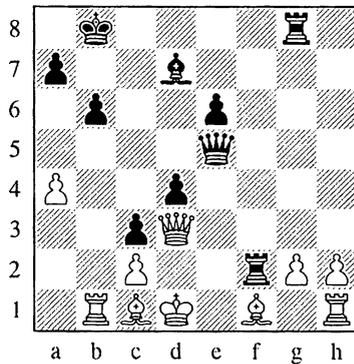
21.fxe5

Taking the knight is dangerous for White, although he can draw with computer-accurate defense.

21... ♖xe5† 22. ♕d1

22. ♖e2? ♖d6!-+ leaves White unable to develop his pieces or safeguard his king without making fatal concessions.

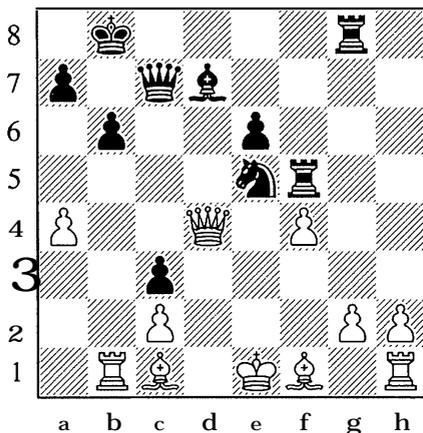
22... ♖f2



23. ♖b4!

Only this move is good enough to save the game for White. There might follow:

23... \bS 24! xd4.Wh5† 25.g4 \$ g4i 26! xg4
! xg4 27.i dSi' b7 28.\ d7J' bS 29.i dSt=
With perpetual check.



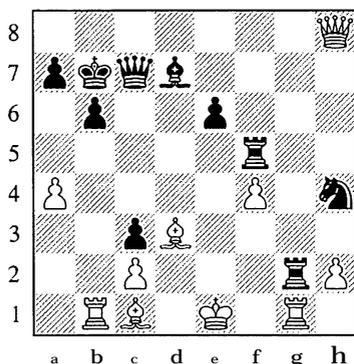
21..1 b6 22.Eb3

Another correspondence game continued:

22.. d3! h4! 23! gl

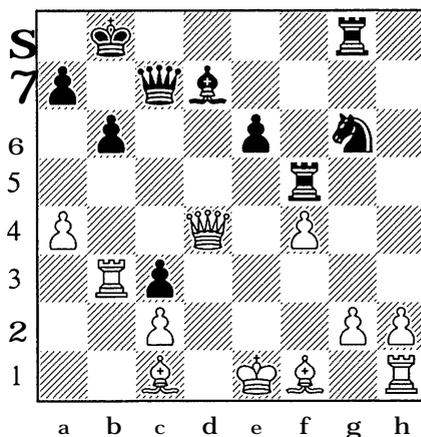
23.\,xf5 l xf5 24.\ e5 (24.i d3 \$,xa4 gives Black a continuous strong initiative)
24...\ xe5t 25.f e5 ! xg2 26.Eb3 ! xc2
27.@ dl Ea2 28.Exc3 ,xa4t 29.' tl l h4+
White f ces a diHculr endgame.

23...Exg2 24. St ' b7



25.Exg2! xg2t 26.@ f2) xf4j' 27..Qxf4 ♖xf4†
28.' kg2

Here the players agreed a draw in Maierhof r - Vivante-Sowter, corr. 2012, in view of 28...! lc6t with perpetual check to f llow.

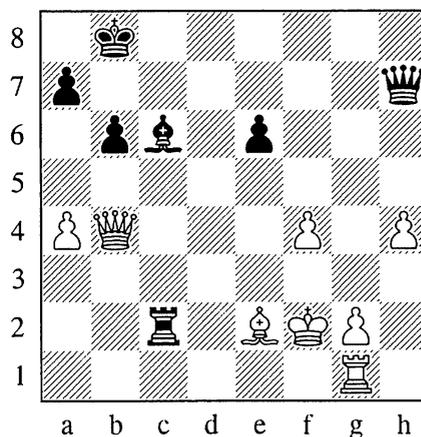


22..EdS 23 b4! h4 24.Exc3i c6 25.Egl d7

The position remains sharp bur dynamically balanced. [n an over-the-board game I would say Black's attack is worth at least as much as White's extra pawns, bur in the following correspondence game White defended accurately and a draw ensued.

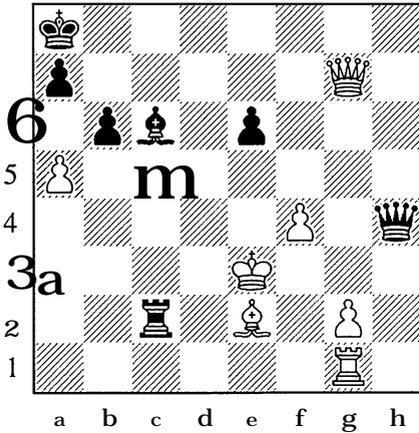
26.Eg3 Edl t 27.@f Exg3 28.hxg3 Excl 29.gxh4Exc2t 30i e2 h7

Black's attacking forces work well, bur his own king may also become exposed to checks fom the side.



31.♔e3 ♖xh4 32.♖f8† ♔b7 33.♖g7† ♔a8 34.a5!?

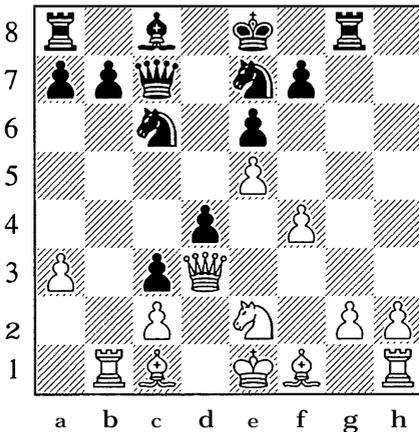
A final winning attempt from White.



34...! hc2t 35.@xc2' xf4 36' hSt @b7
37.a6t @c7 38' c3' g4t 39.@d2
1 - 1

Pavlicek - Cvak, corr. 2010. The chances of all these moves being found or memorized by over-the-board players is slim, but it is still quite instructive to see such high-quality games played out in full.

D) 13. bl



This is perhaps the most significant of the lines dealt with in the present chapter: The rook occupies the semi-open b-file and prevents the enemy queen from occupying the desirable b6-square.

13.. d?

I have decided to recommend this, the main line continuation

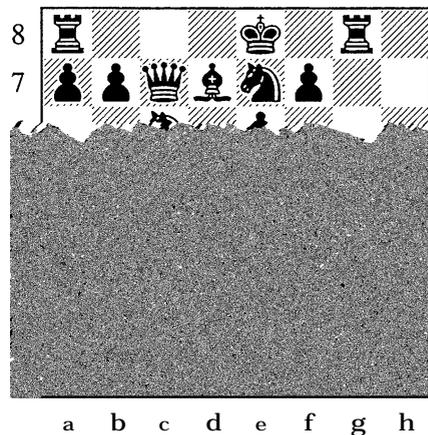
13..b6!? is a playable alternative. This position has been discussed briefly via the move order 12.Ebl b6!? 13. d3 d4 - see the note to White's 13th move in variation B of Chapter 7, on page 88.

We now reach a significant branching point. Two of the most natural moves quickly transpose to variations covered elsewhere in the book, while the four main independent lines are: D1) 14.t g3, D2) 14.h3!?, D3) 14.g3 and D4) 14. gl.

The most popular continuation has been 14.cxd4 cxd4 15. Wxd4 l f5 transposing to 13cxd4 4xd4 14.Wxd4 d7 15: bl c f5 - see variation E of Chapter 9 on page 120.

14.h4 0-0-0 15.h5 transposes to 12.h4! d4! 13h5.,d7 14. d3 0-0-0 15Eb1 - see variation A in Chapter 13 on page 169.

D1) 14 t g3



14..0-0-0 15. c2

White is aiming to catch up with development and castle. His set-up resembles the earlier variation C 1, but the presence of the

rook on b1 stops us from putting the queen on the favourable b6-square.

15.1 e4

This slightly provocative move invites Black to make a promising knight sacrifice, either immediately or on the next move.

15...1 f5

15...1 e5!? is also quite playable: 16.fxe5 (16.Wxd4? . c6) 16... \ xe5 17. \ e2 i lc6 18.l g3 \ d5 Oil- Eingor , Odessa 1989. (On the last move 18... \ xe2t !?N 19J .xe2 [19.l xe2 . e4] 19... xg2 20.! g1 e4 is also interesting.)

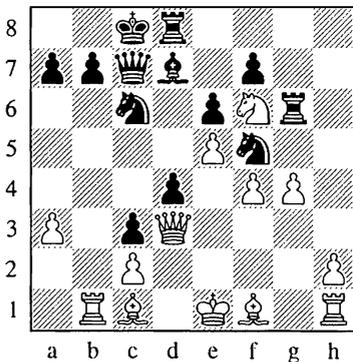
16.1 f6N

This untested move is the most logical try. 16.h3? l ke5! 17.f e5 \ xe5 18.t f2 f.c6 19.l g5 was played in Lueling- Leers Fischer; Germany 1993. At this point 19...1 h4!N leaves White without a good defence, as 20. \ g3 allows 20... \ fS" 21. \ g1 \ xc2- +. 16.. le2?! xg2 17.J.f occurred in Bojovic - Zlaranovic, Paracin 2011, and now after 17...! g7N+ Black is a pawn up with a firm grip on the centre. His likely plan for the next few moves is ...Cl a5 followed by ... cG.

16...! g6

Black has good prospects, for instance:

17.g4

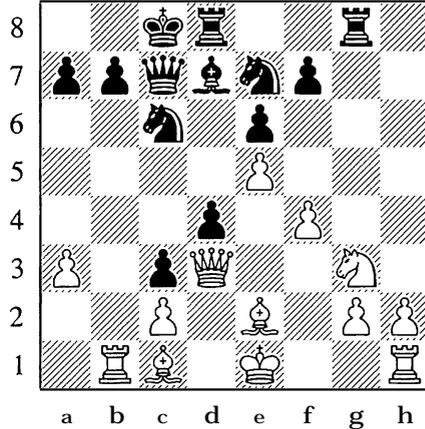


17... \ xe5!?

17... \ h4 is also perfectly playable.

18.f e5 cG 19.gxfS \ xe5\ 20. \ e2 \ xf5 21.C lh5. xh1 22.C lg3 1 xg3 23.hxg3 f3

Black has three pawns for the piece, plus the initiative.



15...1 fS!

The coming knight exchange leads to a slight damaging of Black's structure but, more importantly, it helps his bishop to become more active.

16.t xf exf 17.0 0

17.iJ: f.e6 18.0 0 transposes to the main line below.

17... e6 18 d7!?

By shielding the king, Black ensures that \ xf5 will not come with check in some lines. It is also useful to overprotect the pawn on b7.

It is worth knowing that Black can effectively force a draw with:

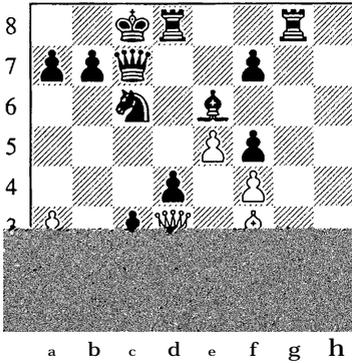
18...!, a2 19.! a1

19.! b5? a6 20.: c5 \ b6 21.! xcG" bxc6+ Baxter - Campbell, Scotland 1978.

19. \ xf5i"? Wb8 20.! a1 c4+ intending ...d3 is good for Black.

19... eG

Let's see what happens if White tries to avoid the repetition.



20.Wb5?

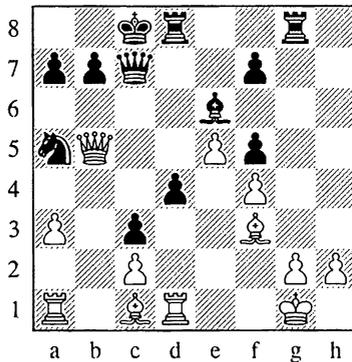
20.a4?? t b4 + Albert - Pamperin, corr 1973

20.fel? has been a popular move, played more than twenty times. However, after 20...Wb6!+ Black has achieved a crushing score. White's queenside is essentially stalemated, as neither rook nor bishop is able to move. The only feeling move 21.a4?? loses to 21...t b4 followed by ...d3.

20.fbl = is best.

20..l kS 21.Ed1

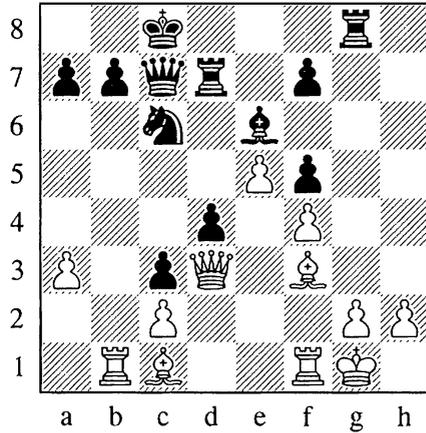
Valve - Suivuo, Finland 1971. Black has several good continuations from here, but the most convincing is:



21...c4! N 22.Wb4 d5 23.dxd5 Bxd5

The absence of White's light-squared bishop leaves his king naked against the upcoming attack. At the same time White is still struggling with the development of the queenside and his queen is left offside on b4.

If you encounter this variation in a practical game, perhaps the best idea would be to hint at the possible repetition with 18...a2, just to give White a chance to go wrong. If your opponent seems happy to repeat the position, you can then decide whether to play on with the main line continuation.



19.a4

This is a logical step towards developing the imprisoned bishop on c1, and was played in the only game I found from the above position, Barber - Viner, Melbourne 1971. Here I suggest the improvement:

19.. t kSN

Intending to use the c4-square.

20i a !?

20.fdl can be met by: 20...Wc4! 21.Wxc4t \xc4 Preparing ...d3 22.Eb4 d3 23.cxd3 \xd3+ We have reached an interesting unbalanced endgame ofering mutual chances.

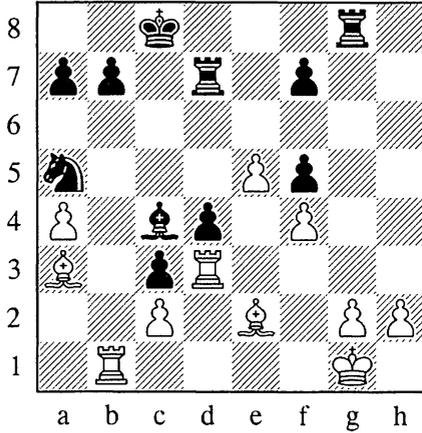
20..' c4!

Grabbing an exchange with 20...c4? 21.\xf5 \xf1 22.fxf! gives White an extra pawn and a powerful pair of bishops, leaving Black in a difficult defensive situation.

21i fdl

After 21. lxc4 lxc4 22. i.c1 (22. Jd6 l c2+) 22. j d5 23. xd5 Exd5! Black's pieces are more active.

21.. ' xd3 22. J xd3 i c4 23. i e2!
23. ! cc 1? d3+



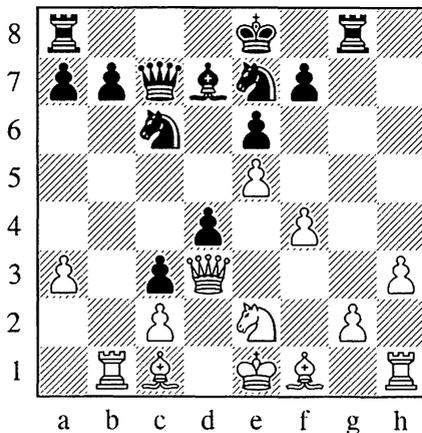
23...♙d5!

Just like at move 20, Black does best to avoid the obvious material grab.

24.g3i e4 25.i c5l c6t

Black keeps an initiative and can continue to press for a full point. Although the rook cannot be taken yet, White is in an awkward situation as he has to keep defending it, while it cannot move back to d1.

D2) 14.h3!?



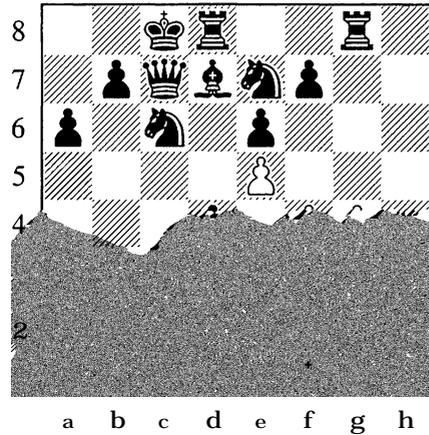
This interesting move prepares g2-g4 followed by i g2 and 0-0.

14..0-0 15.g4

White has scored well from here in practice, and it took some effort to find a suitable plan for Black. Eventually I found a strong but far from-obvious idea that was used in a correspondence game.

15...a6!

The main point of this move is to lend extra force to Black's intended ...l a5. With the b5-square under control, the knight move will create an immediate threat of ...i b5. In the likely event that White responds with l xd4, Black will not have to worry about any future l b5 ideas.



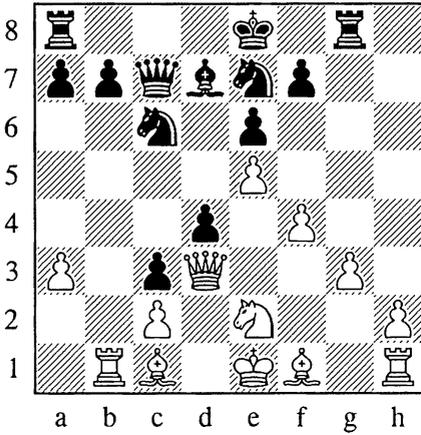
16i f

16. i .g2N is met by 16..l a5 17. l xd4 « k6 18.\ f2 i xg2 19. l xg2 l c5 when Black's activity fully compensates for the pawn deficit.

16..l a5 17. l xd4 i c6 18.ggl i d5

Black had a promising initiative for the sacrificed pawn in Davidson - Tugsavul, corr. 2011.

D3) 14.g3



This is a better move order than 13.g3 as seen in variation A, since here Black can neither place his queen on b6 nor fianchetto his bishop.

14..0 0 0 15i g2! f5

I consider this move the strongest, although the following alternative is tricky and leads to interesting play:

15..1 a5?

Intending ... c6

16! xd4!

Taking the pawn is the critical test.

After 16.0 0? 17.S,c6 17.S,xc6 1 axc6+ Black was already better in Dominguez Perez - Grischuk, Almar 2008

1G.. c6 17.. xc6! exG

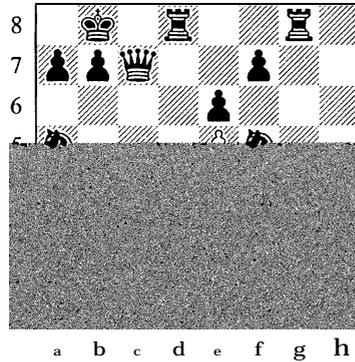


20..cxd2! 21.< xd2 < xc7 22i e!

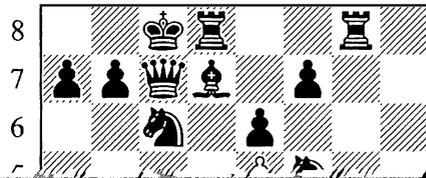
Intending < f2 and h4. White has somewhat better prospects, although Black was able to muster enough counterplay to secure a draw in Spiegel - Hengl, corr: 2011.

16i e4

White can also try: 16.0 0 i b8 17.a4!N (17.. e4 transposes to J6j e4 i b8 17.0 0 below) 17..1 a5 From here Watson analyses 18. ,a3. ,xa4 19' ,e4



19..1 c3! 20 dG ExdG 21.exdG WxdG 22.1 xd4! xf1 23! cGt < c7 24.1 xa5 Wxd3 25 xd3 1 e3 26.Exbl t i dG At the end of this mostly forced line, Black indeed seems to be fine.



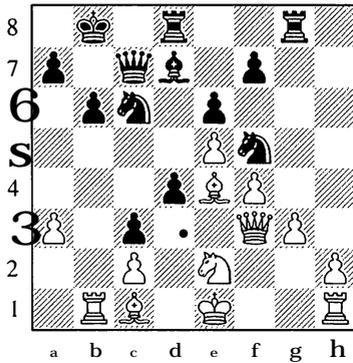
Commencing a regrouping char plays an important role in some key theoretical lines, most notably those in Chapter 13. The idea is to redeploy the bishop on the excellent b7-square.

17.0 0

White has tried a few other ideas, but in most cases Black gets a good game by relying on the same manoeuvre.

17.i g1 c8 18.g4 l f7 19.h4 b6 20.h5 b7 21.hg Groszpeter - Psakhis, Andorra 1995. 21...Eh8!? 22.g5! f50

17.Wf Novak - Guie, Bled 1996. 17. bGN (Also interesting is 17... e8!N when ideas of ...d3 are in the air.)



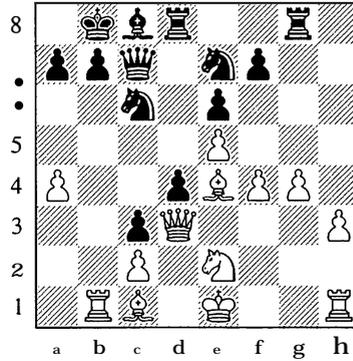
18.g4 d3! (18...l be7!? is also interesting.) 19.' xd3i xg4 Having eliminated the g-pawn, Black has excellent positional compensation (after the c3-pawn drops) thanks to his active pieces and control over the light squares.

17.h3!?

I encountered this move in a team match in Denmark late in 2012. Preparing g2-g4 is a natural idea, especially when the black knight has already moved to f5.

17...k8 18.g4! f7 19.a4

Kolvig - Berg, Copenhagen 2012. Here it looks good for Black to play:

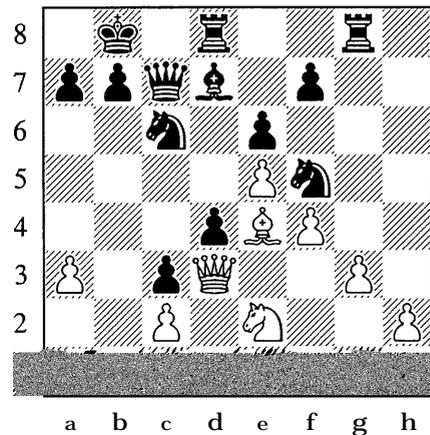


19...l H5!N

The game continued 19...bG 20. a3 . lb7 and I eventually won, but White's play can be improved.

The text move has the following nice point: 20.. a3! kf ! 21.l kf4! kc5 22.' g3 d3!

With a strong initiative for Black.



17...b6

Black proceeds with the standard regrouping. Two games have continued this way, but there does not appear to be anything wrong with 17...k8SN first.

18.a4i c8 19.i a3i h7 20i xf5

20.Efd1 l a8 21. xf5 cxf5 22.' .dG ' c7 leaves White sensitive on the light squares, and after 23.l f2?! fg!+ Black had clearly taken over the initiative in the Smirnov - D. Petrosian, Moscow 2011.

20...xf5

White has two ways to gain material, but neither is especially promising for him.

21. d6

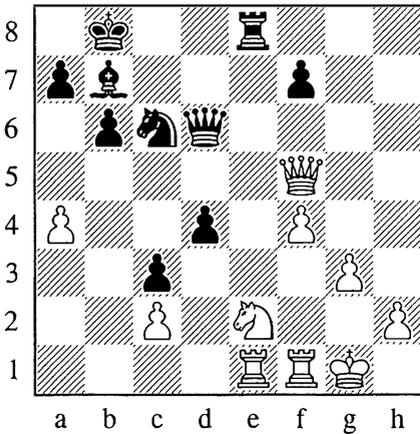
21...xf5? L a5 is excellent for Black, who intends...i c6 in the near future.

21...gxd6 22.exd6' xcd6

Black has excellent play for the sacrificed exchange.

23' xf5 ge8 24.gbel

We have been following the game Draskovic - Koepke, Sunny Beach 2011, and here I find a strong improvement:



24...ge3!N

Black has a significant plus in view of the mighty bishop on b7 as well as the strong pawns on d4 and c3. White has to watch out for ...c3 ideas as well as ...l e7 followed by ...i c6.

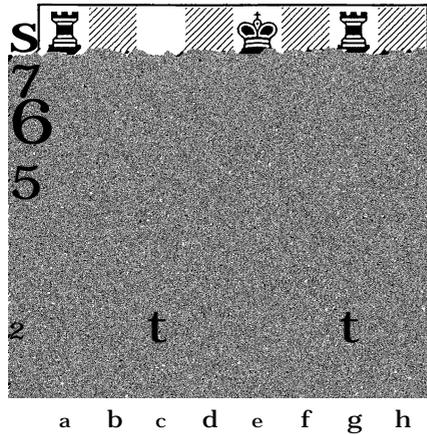
25.l xc3!?

1 l is seems to be the best attempt to escape, but Black remains on top.

25..gxc3 26.gest 1 d8 27' e5 ' xe5 28.f e5 @c7 29.e6! f e6 30.gf l c6 31.gf t @d6 32.gxb7 gxc2

White has an extra exchange once more, but Black's initiative remains the most important factor, despite the reduced material.

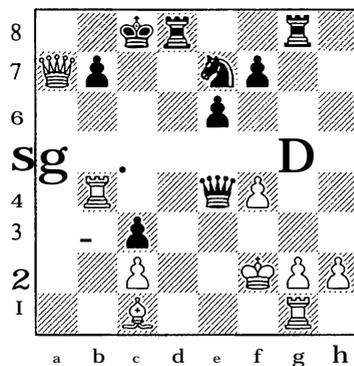
04) 14.f g1



This can be compared with the earlier variation 02. Here too White is preparing g2-g4, but this time he removes the rook from the sensitive diagonal. One slight drawback is that White no longer has the option of castling.

14..0 0 0 15.g4

After 15.l xd4! l xd4 !6i xd4 Black has an active reply which is likely to lead to a draw, as shown in the following game: 16.. b5! (If Black is determined to keep the game going then 16...c b8? can be considered.) 17.i xa7 .xf1 18.cxf1 i c4!t 19.c f2i e4 20.f b4



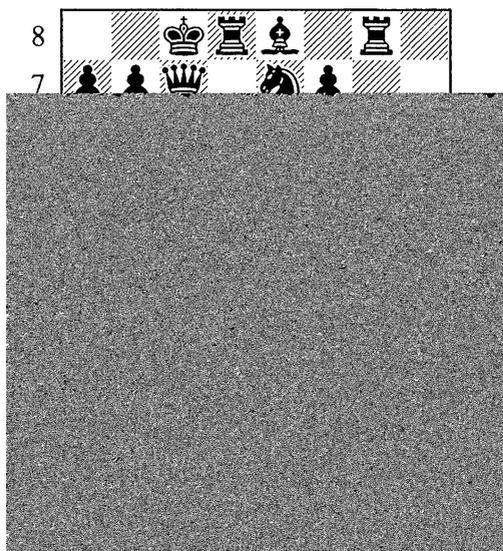
20...g2 ♗! Not the only move, but the most stylish. 21.♖xg2 ♜xc2† 22.♔f3 ♜dU 23.♔f2 ♜c2t 24.♔f3 ♜dI† 25.♔f2 ♚ ♚ Luther - Gdanski, Aegina 1993.

15.. eS

This has been Black's most common choice, unblocking the rook on d8 and perhaps intending...f6 followed by ...i g6 at some point.

15..♔b8! has hardly ever been tried here, but the familiar plan of rerouting the bishop to b7 looks sensible and could be a topic for further investigation.

16J g3

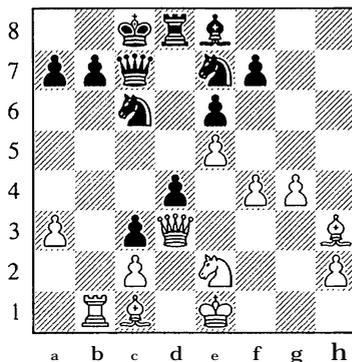


When I reached this position against Perer Svidler in 2007 I chose 16...f6!.. 'I le move is interesting but not quite correct, and I went on to lose the game.

16...♘d5! has been tested in a few subsequent games and has also done well for Black. However, the rook move is the one I like the most.

17.h3

The alternative is 17.g3 g3h3 18.i xh3 as played in Caprio - Sromboli, Porto San Giorgio 2008. Here I suggest the novelty:



18..l a5N There might follow 19.♗g2 i c6 20.♗f1! a6 21.♘xd4 ♗d5 and Black's activity compensates for the pawn deficit.

The main line is slightly more challenging, as White keeps more pieces on the board and aims to show that his rook on g3 is more useful than Black's on h8. Here I find an interesting improvement over the game Gombkoetoe - Varga, corr: 1999.

17...t hS!N

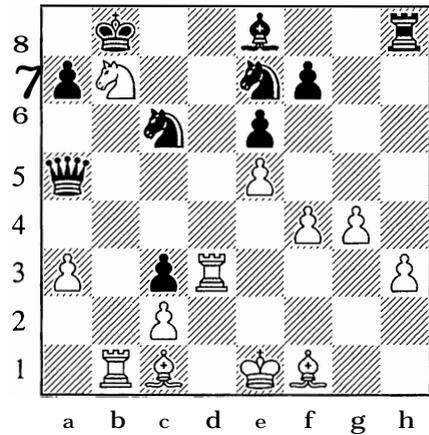
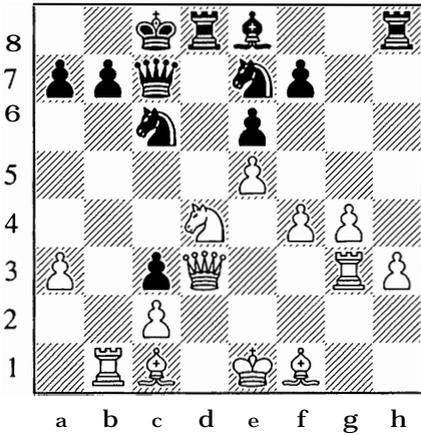
Offering the d-pawn in order to become active on the queenside.

18t kd4

18.. g2 is met by 18... ♔6, as Black is always happy to exchange these bishops.

An interesting alternative is: 18.♔f2 a6! (18..♘ec6 is playable but less dynamic.) 19.♘xd4 ♘ac6 20.♗e3 ♘xd4 21.♗xd4 ♘c6 22.♖b4 ♘xb4 23.axb4 ♗b5 24.♜xc3 ♖xd4! 25.♜xd4 ♜xc2† 26.♔g1 ♜b1 27.♖f3 ♖d8 28.♜c3† mbs 29.♜b3 ♜c1 30.♜c3 ♜b1=

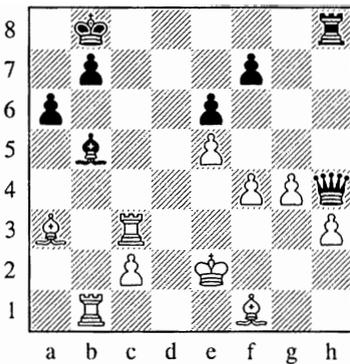
18..t hC6



19.1 b5!?

1. The queen sacrifice is fascinating, but it does not lead to any more than dynamic equilibrium.

19.cxc6 might end up in a crazy draw after:
 19..Exd3 20.1 ke7! Vxe7 21.:xd3 Vh4
 22. e2a6 23.Ξxc3† b5 24.a4.I.,xa4 25.k a3
 Ξb5†



26.Ξxb5 axb5 27.Ξd6† ♔a7 28.Ξc5† ♔b8
 29.Ξd6†= with perpetual check.

19...:xd3 20.:xd3 Wd8 21.c d6t Wb8
 22.1 kb7

22...Wc7 23.1 d6t Wd8 24.:xc3

With a rook and three pawns for the queen, White has something close to material equality, plus some initiative. However, Black should be fine as long as he is willing to return some material at the right moment.

24...1 d8 25.:cs d7 26.:b7

26.I,a6 .,cs is level, and could lead to a repetition after 27.♙b5 d7 28.I,a6

26...Wxb7 27.1 kb7 Wxb7 28.c4 1 kb3

Black is not worse in this endgame.

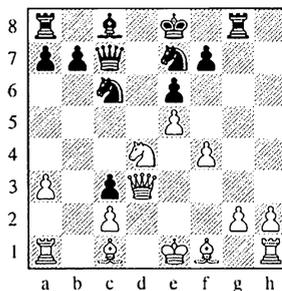
Conclusion

Although declining to capture the c-pawn after 12.V d3 d4! might seem a copout, the variations are still highly complex. Depending on White's choice on move 13, Black will decide between placing his bishop on d7 or, if possible, arranging a fianchetto on b7. In a few lines the ...1 b6 move proved to be an important resource.

In these lines Black cannot play 'on autopilot', and must react carefully to whichever set-up White may choose. Just as in many Winawer Poisoned Pawn variations, the positions may become extremely complicated, but from a theoretical perspective everything seems fine for Black.

Chapter 9

Poisoned Pawn



13. ♖xd4

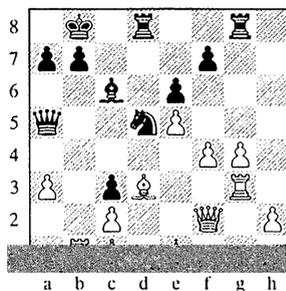
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♖g4 cxd4
 8.♗xg7 ♜g8 9.♗xh7 ♗c7 10.♘e2 dxc3 11.f4 ♘bc6 12.♗d3 d4!
 13.♘xd4 ♘xd4 14.♗xd4

14...♗d7

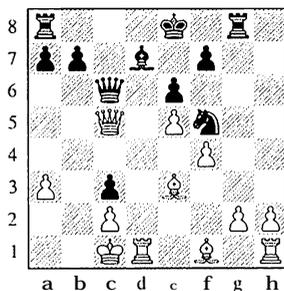
A) 15.♗d6	116
B) 15.g3	117
C) 15.h4	118
D) 15.♗e3	119
E) 15.♖b1 ♘f5 16.♗f2 ♗c6 17.♜g1 ♖d8	120
E1) 18.♗xa7	121
E2) 18.♗d3?	122
E3) 18.♖b4	123

Note r 14...♗d7



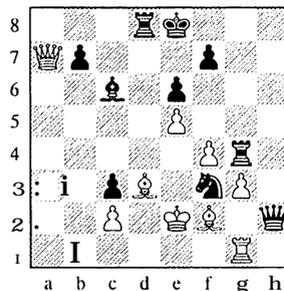
20...♖h8!N

D) after 17.0-0-0



17...♗b6!N

E1) after 25.\♗



25...♗h5!N

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.t c3 ,b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 . xc3t 6.bxc3 t e7 7.Wg4 cxd4 8.Wkg7 ggs 9.Wxh7 Wc7 10.4e2 dxc3 11.f4 t bc6 12.Wd3d4 13.t xd4

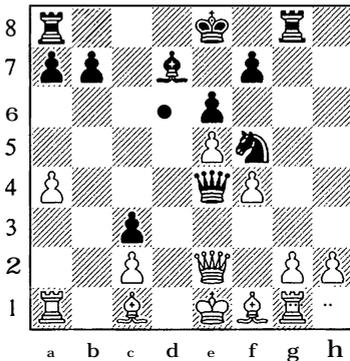
Accepting the pawn sacrifice is the critical reply.

13...t xd4 14.Wkd4 ,d7

14...t f5? is premature due to 15J b5t. The text move prevents the check, thus setting up the knight jump, while also preparing long castling. Several replies have been tested, and in this chapter we will examine A) 15Wd6, B) 15g3, C) 15.h4, D) 15.l e3andE) 15.gbl.

15.l gl is the main line, and will be considered separately in the next chapter. Here are a f w other rare possibilities:

15.a4?! is too slow. 15...t f5 16.Wf2 Wc6 17.l gl We4! 18.We2



18...Wb4!+ Black has a significant advantage due to his better development and piece activity, Djordjevic - Zlatanovic, Paracin 2013. (Black can also force a draw with 18...Wd4 19.Wf2 We4! = but in this position there is every reason to play for more.)

Another harmless sideline is:

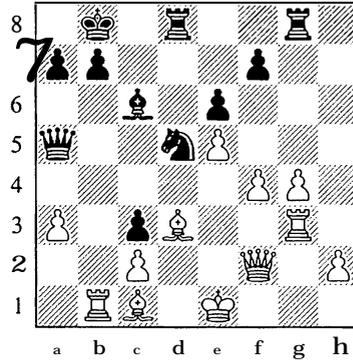
15.Wf2i cG 16.ggl

J6.h4 was played in Hobusch - Raitza, I insterbergen 2003, and here I suggest

16..ke4N with a healthy and active game for Black.

16..Wa5 17.i d3 0 0 0 18.g4 \ bs 19.gg3 t d5 20.gbl

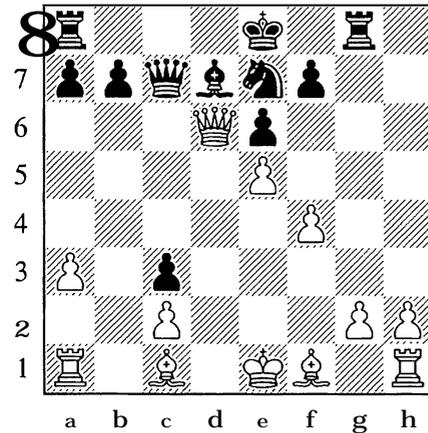
Sulistya- Nguyen Thi Dung Tlan, Genting Highlands 1998. Now I propose:



20...m18!N

The king control of the h-file and preventing h2-h4. Black has an active game with at least full compensation for the pawn.

A) 15.Wd6



This attempt to simplify the position does not trouble Black, who has quite a few playable options.

15...Wd5!N

This is an interesting new idea, intending

...! f5 and possibly ...% 4! I should mention that there are two good alternatives:

The simple 15... \xc6 16.exd6 ' f5 was at least equal for Black in Cherov - Medvedev, Novokuznetsk 2012. Black will soon regain the pawn on d6 and has active piece play.

15...Wa5!? Keeping the queens on is more ambitious; Black hopes to make use of his better development. 16.Wb4 \ d5 17." xd gxc2! 18.\ d3 Exc2 19.Wxc2 Wxh1 20.\ g2 t xg2 2L .xg2 0-0-0 The position was about equal in Sluka - Cech, Luhacovice 1993.

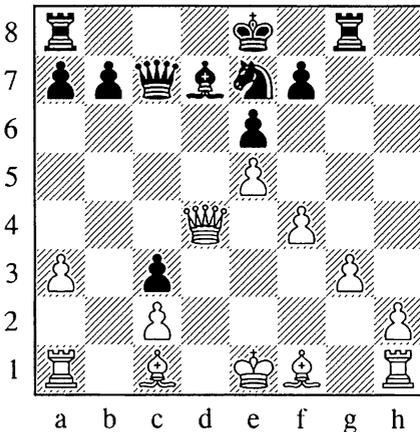
16.a4 ' f5 17.Wc6 Ec8 18.Wf

18.Wxa7 i.c6 19.Wf2 ♖d5 gives Black a strong initiative.

18...I.c6 19...\b5 \ d5 20...\xc6t \ xc6 21.0-0 e4t

Black's initiative provides at least enough compensation for the pawn.

B) 15.g3



15... ♗f5!?!N

This novelty is a small move-order finesse.

15...Wc6 might transpose to the main line below after 16.Egl ' f5 17.\ c4. The only

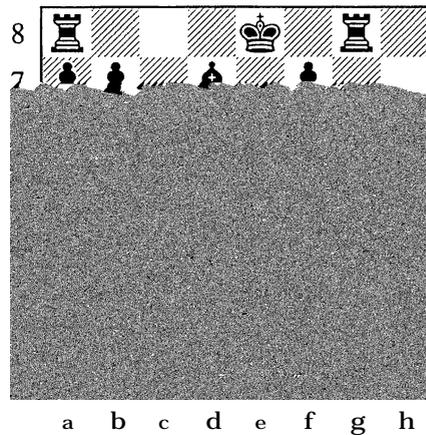
slight problem with this move order is 17.\ f2 We4- 18.We2 as played in Czeremin - Namyslo, Dortmund 1993. At this point I was unable to find anything better for Black than 18...\ d4N 19.Wf We4t= repeating the position. 11lis is fine is Black is happy with a draw, but I would prefer to play for a win when the opportunity presents itself:

16.Wc4

16.Wf \c6 17.Egl 0-0-0t

16..Wc6!? 17.Egl

17.Wxc6 I.xc6 18.1gl Eh8 transposes to the main line below.



17...: hSN 18.Wxc6 I xc6 19.h4 ' d4 20.\d3!?

An interesting exchange sacrifice. If Black is allowed to capture the c2-pawn he will at least not be worse.

20...' f t 21.l f ' xgl 22.l xgl l f !=

White's strong pair of bishops gives him just enough compensation for the exchange. -the best approach for Black is to put his king on g7, where it can block the advance of White's h-pawn while allowing the rooks to become active on the queenside.

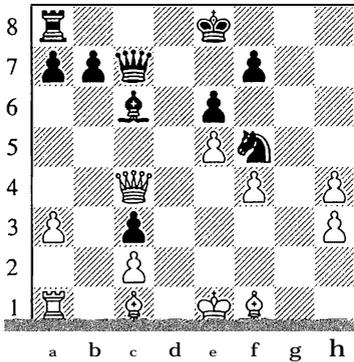
C) 15h4



Advancing the h-pawn is thematic in these positions, but it looks risky to do it with the centre already open. Besides, White seriously weakens his kingside structure and it will take a few more moves for the h-pawn to become dangerous.

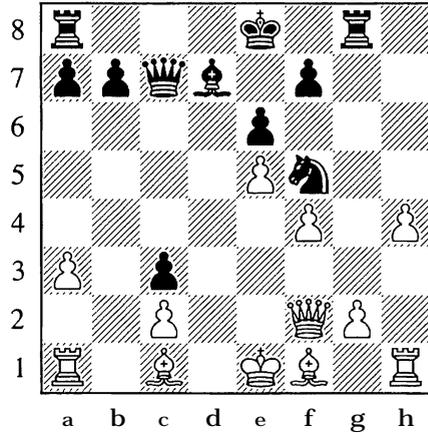
15...1 f5 16.Wf

IG Vd3?1 g3 17.Wc4. cG 18! h3 occurred in Olesen - P Petersen, Copenhagen 1992. Black is totally winning here, and the best way to prove it is 18...1 xh3N 19.gxh3



19...Wd5! 20.We2 0 d4 21.Wf2 0 f3! 22.We2 V d5 23.V e3 0 0 + with a crushing position.

The text move was played in Bajric - Selimovic, Lukavac 2012. Here I suggest:



16...1 a4N

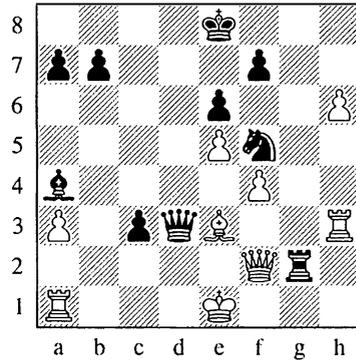
Blocking the a3-pawn and developing pressure against c2.

17.1 h3! d8

Intending ...0 d4

18 .c3Wc6 19.hS. bS

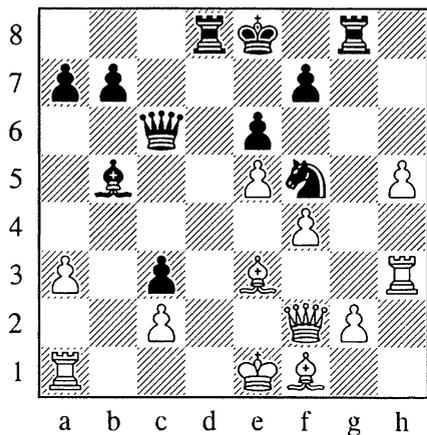
The alternative is 19...We4!?, after which my main line leads to a wild forced draw: 20. d3 l xd3 21.cxd3i xd3 22.hG1 xa2!



23.h7! Exf2 24.h8=Kt d7 25.cxf2 Qxc3 26.Exe3 Wd2+ 27.Ee2 Wd4+ 28.cxf3 Wd3+ 29.Ee3 Qc6+ 30.cxf2 Wd2+ 31.Ee2 Wxf4+ 32.cel Wg3+ 33.cfl Wf3+ 34.Ef2 Wd3+= with perpetual check.

The text move has the simple idea of exchanging the light-squared bishops, enabling Black

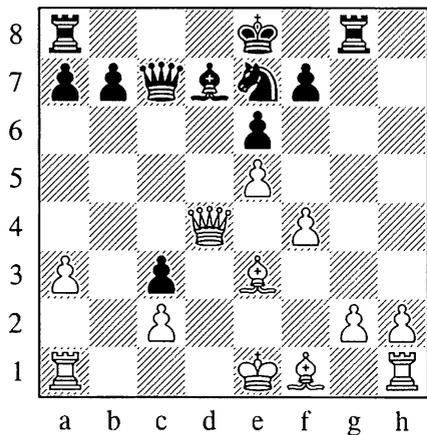
to obtain plenty of counterplay on the light squares. The line might follow:



20.h6 ♖xf1 21.h7 ♜h8 22.♖xf1 ♘xe3†
23.♗xc3 ♝d2 24.♗g3 ♖f8 25.♔g1 ♗e4=

Black will pick up the h7-pawn at a moment of his choosing, leading to a level endgame.

D) 1S1 ♞3



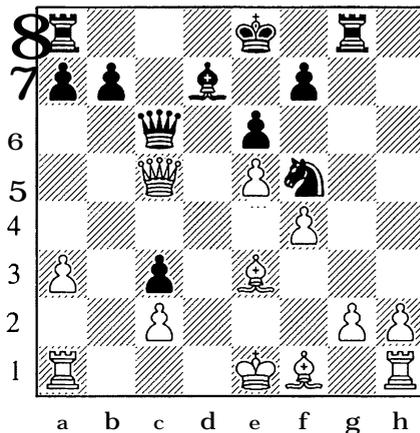
White prepares to offer a queen exchange on c5.

15... ♗f5

This line scored poorly, but it can be attractive due to the fact that most players have followed it up incorrectly on the next move.

16. ♖c6

Black does not mind exchanging queens, but it will happen on his own terms.



17. 0-0

Another game continued:

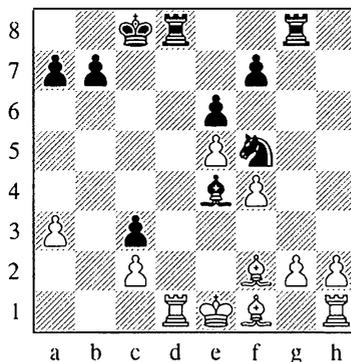
17. ♗xc6 ♖xc6 18. ♖f2

18. ♖f2 ♝d8 in ending ... ♗xe3 ... ♝d2 gives Black suitable compensation for the pawn.

18... 0-0

Also interesting is 18... ♗g4! when Black will pick up the f-pawn.

19. ♖d1 ♖e4



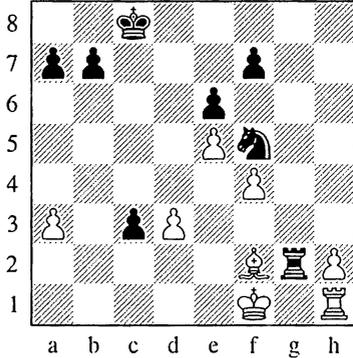
20... ♖d3?

Better is 20. ♖xd8† ♝xd8 21. ♖d3 ♖xc6 22. ♖xc6 ♝xd3 23. ♖e2 ♝d2† 24. ♖f3 At this point Black has the option of forming a draw with ... ♝d3†, but he can also try 24... ♖e7.

leading to an unclear endgame. In the larger case Black is doing well on the queenside, but White's passed h-pawn has the potential to become a monster.

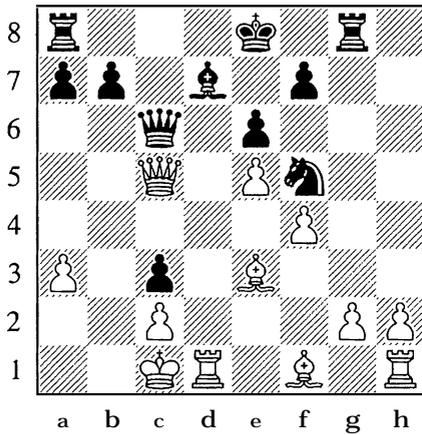
20..J xd3 21.Exd3 ♖xd3 22.cxd3 Exg2 23.mn ?

23.' e2 would have minimized Black's advantage. The text move is a blunder.



23...♖xh2! 24.♖g1 c2 25.♔c2 ♔d4† 26.♔c3 ♔b3

0-1 Flermoen – Johannessen, Fagernes 2011.

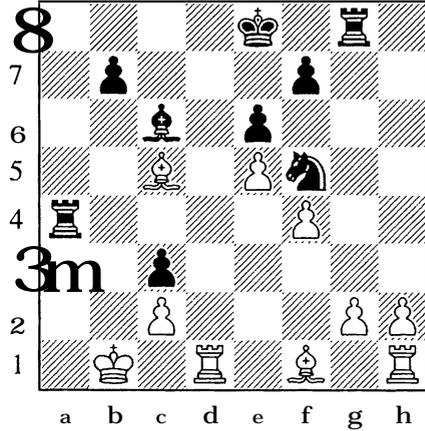


17...1 b6!N

Black has exchanged on e3 in a couple of games, but the text move is an attractive improvement which has also been mentioned by Watson. By moving his queen for the second time in a row, Black forces a promising endgame.

18. xb6 a b6 19.Jxb6 Exa3 20' bl 8a4! 21.. .c5. ,c6

Black has an ongoing initiative, compensate for the missing pawn. A possible follow-up is:



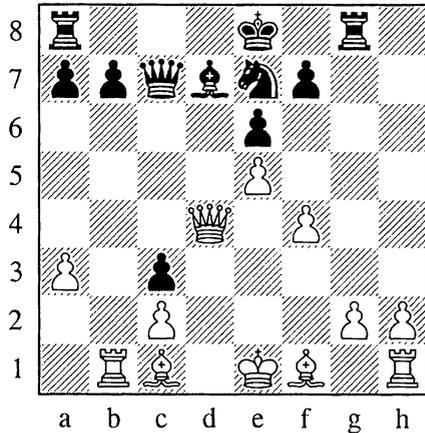
22.8d3: c4 23: dst!

23.i a3 Eg4! 24.! h3 ! e4 25.. ,d3 8exf4 slightly favours Black.

23..' xd8 24,' ,xc4 Exg2 25. d30 e7 26.h4 ! d2 27.Ef Eh2=

The position is level.

E) 15.Ebl



This bears some resemblance to the main 15.EgI variation, as both lines generally involve the white rooks coming to b1 and g1.

However, the way Black arranges his pieces will differ slightly.

15.. ♠f 16. ♖c6

If 15.gg1 had been played instead of 15.mJ1, then 17.g4 would be a strong reply. In the present line, Black gets away with it as the rook on h1 hangs. Vitiugov recommends 16..i c6 which is also quite playable, but I believe the text move is more difficult for White to handle, especially over the board.

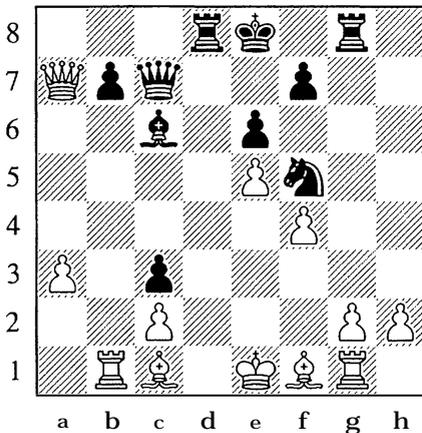
17.gg1 gds!

17...0-0 has achieved a higher percentage score but, without going into full details, it is less reliable. Interestingly, Vitiugov offers some further analysis supporting the same conclusion, but does not mention the text move, which I regard as a significant improvement.

Now Black is ready to meet g2-g4 with ... ♠h4. White can respond with E1) 18. ♖xa7, E2) 18.l ♠h3? or E3) 18J ♖b4.

18l ♠k2 was a sound but slightly timid move seen in Lohou- Carpentier, France 2009. Here 18...i a5N looks like a good improvement, intending 19.gb4 i d5= when Black has active counterplay.

E1) 18i ♠ka7



This has only been played in a single game. It is (barely) playable but risky for White.

18.. ♠h4!

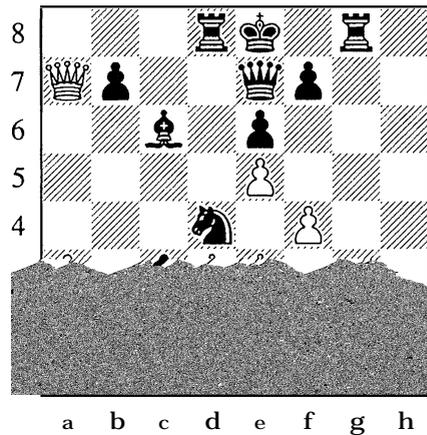
Now White's queen is cut off from the defence of the king.

19.l ♠h3 i ♠e7

Black's queen heads for the kingside. In the one practical encounter White immediately went astray.

20. ♖e3?!

20.\ f1N is better, intending 20...i h4 21.; ♖b7! when White's counterplay arrives just in time to maintain the balance. A possible finish is 21..j ♖xg2!!? 22.gxg2 gxg2 23.i ♖g2 ♖g4\ 24.' f2 ♖f3† 25.♗g1 i ♠g4! = with perpetual check.

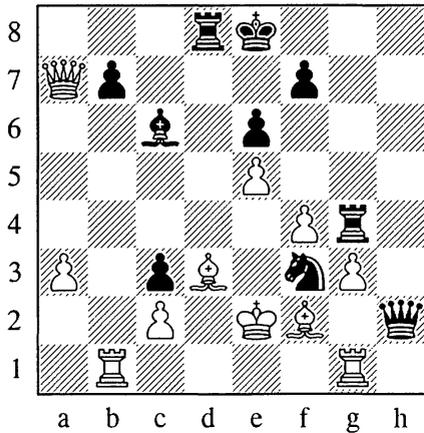


20..i ♠h4t 21.\ f1?

21.g3 would have kept the game alive, although Black's chances remain higher following: 21..l ♠f 22.mf2 i ♖h2t 23.gg2 ♖h3 24.i b5 l ♠h4! 25.. ♖xc6! ♖xc6 26.gbg1 l ♠g2 27.; ♖g2 mf 28.i c5\mg7 29.. d6gh8+

21...gg4! 22.g3i ♠h3t 23' e1' ♠f' 24' e2 i ♖h2 25.l

So for Black has conducted the attack perfectly, and here he could have sealed the victory with:



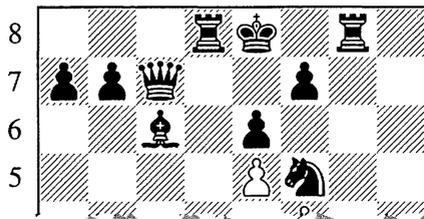
25... ♖h5!N

In Palmblad – S. Gustafsson, Stockholm 2004, Black erred with 25... ♖xg1†? and White eventually managed to escape with a draw.

26.8h1 1 h4t! 27.. .xd4 8h4t- +

Black has a mating attack.

E2) 18.. .d3?

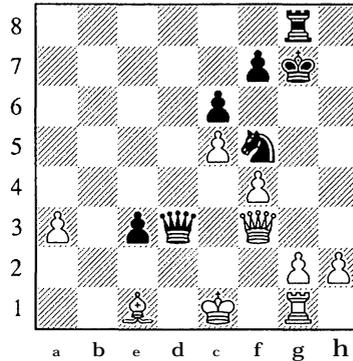


18..8xd3! 19.cxd3 Wd8

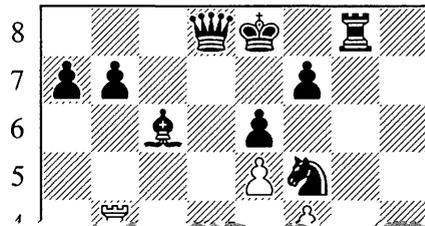
19...Wd7 may come to the same thing, but it seems more correct to maintain the possibility of a check on h4 in some lines.

20: b4

Another game continued: 20.Wxa7 iVxd3 2J.\ b8! (21.: b4 transposes to the main line below) 21..@e7 22: xbl i" xb7 23W&bl i" @f 24.Wa8! @g7 25.Vf3E. Pedersen– Hall, cor: 1995



Here I suggest 25..Wd4!N when Black has a clear advantage in view of his safe king and superior pieces. Notably White's bishop on c1 is out of moves.

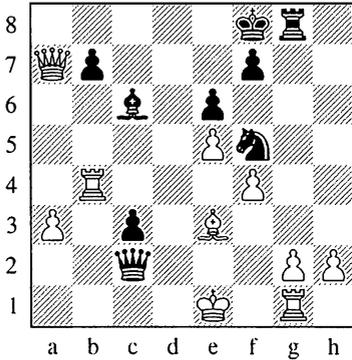


21.We2?Wd5 22.Wc4 8xg2 gave Black a huge advantage in Hopwood– Stayt, England 2013.

21..iM2 22.WbStN

Only with this improvement can White hope to survive.

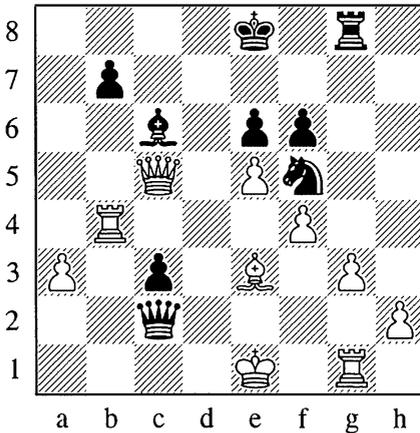
22. i e3? Wf ! prepares to hide the king on g7. White has no good defence, and the one practical encounter ended quickly:



23. ♖xb7 ♗xb7 24. ♕c5† ♔g7 25. ♗xb7 ♖d2† 0–1 Palkovi – F. Portisch, Eger 1987.

22..W e7 23.W c? t i d7 24.W cSt W e8 25i .e3i c6 26.g3 f6!

Black's initiative is worth more than the sacrificed material. His last move prepares ...Wf followed by activating the rook with deadly effect.



27. i b6!

Other moves follow to offer much resistance.

27...Wf 28. 1xc6 bxc6 29. W a? t l e7 30. exf

< x :

Black has regained some material and keeps an advantage thanks to his superior pieces and strong c3-pawn. The knight has an excellent square on d5, and Black still has the possibility of activating his rook to create threats against the white king.

E3 18 1 b4

This is White's most logical approach. The rook controls the d4- and e4-squares and prepares to go to c4 in order to pick up the c3-pawn.

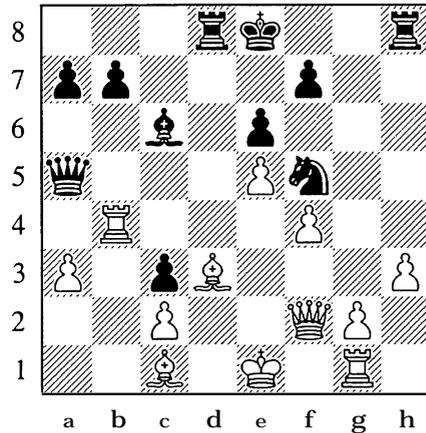
18..W aS

18.. \ d7 has been played, but I prefer to activate the queen on the queenside.

19" id3

19. i c4 has not been tried. At the minimum, Black can play 19... \ b5 when the threat of an invasion on b1 virtually forces the rook to return to b4.

19...Eh8 20.h3

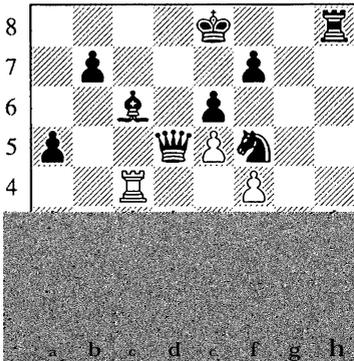


20..Exd3!

It is definitely worth an exchange to eliminate White's strong bishop. Now Black will have full control over the light squares.

21. cxd3 W dS 22.g4

White could also try 22...c2N a5 23Ec4. Here Black can maintain full compensation with



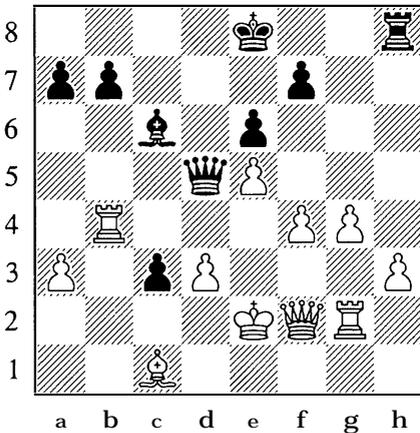
23...Eg8 24...bxd Exg2 25Exg2 \ xg2 26Exc6 bxc6 The computer says the position is equal, but in a practical encounter Black's safer king and superior minor piece should more than offset the small deficit of a pawn.

22...1 h4 23Wc2

23Eg3 V h1 24... f1 \ h2 25Wf2 V h1 = force a draw.

23...1 b2 24.Exg2

We have been following the game Adelsack - Violi, corr. 2000. Here the most straightforward solution is:

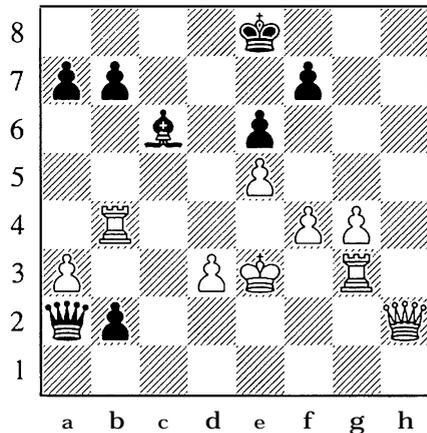


24...Exh3N

As pointed out by Watson. The finish might be:

25.Eg3 Eh2 26... xh2 \ a2 27.. b2 cxb2 281 f3

28... hst Wd7 29.Ed4t ...d5 looks risky for White, but he can still force a draw with: 30) xd5t exd5 31.e6t f e6 32\ g? < b6 33. c3t d7 341 g? t=



28..b1= 29\ hSt Wd7 30.Exb1 \ xbl =

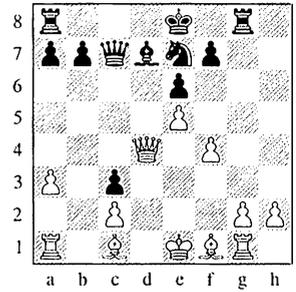
Black's initiative is sufficient to force perpetual check, but nothing more.

Conclusion

The first three main lines of the chapter were dealt with rather easily. 15. e3 is slightly trickier, but the clever queen manoeuvre to c6 and b6 enables Black to solve his problems and claim at least equal chances. 15.Eb1 is the most significant of the lines examined, but we saw that after 15...1 f5 16\ f2. c6 17.1 g1 Ed8 Black has a full share of the chances, especially with the strong exchange sacrifice on d3 on the cards. The ultimate verdict is equality, but in practical terms I would always prefer Black's side due to his safer king.

Chapter 10

Poisoned Pawn



15. ♖g1

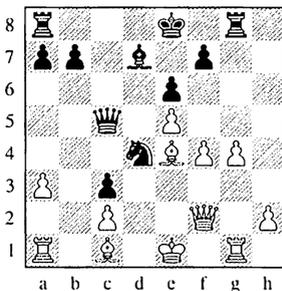
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♙xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♞g4 cxd4
 8.♞xg7 ♞g8 9.♞xh7 ♞c7 10.♘e2 dxc3 11.f4 ♘bc6 12.♞d3 d4!
 13.♘xd4 ♘xd4 14.♞xd4 ♙d7 15.♞g1

15... ♘f5 16.♞f2 ♞c6

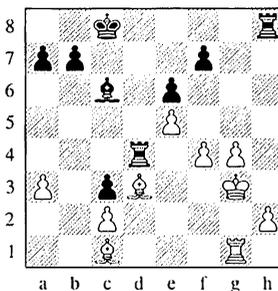
A) 17.g4	126
B) 17.♙d3 ♞d5	128
B1) 18.♙e3	130
B2) 18.a4 0-0-0	131
B21) 19.♙a3N	132
B22) 19.♞a3	132
B3) 18.♞b1 ♙c6	135
B31) 19.♞b4	135
B32) 19.♞b3 0-0-0 20.♞xc3 ♙b8	137
B321) 21.♞c5	139
B322) 21.g3!?	141
B323) 21.g4	143

A) after 21! ♙c6!



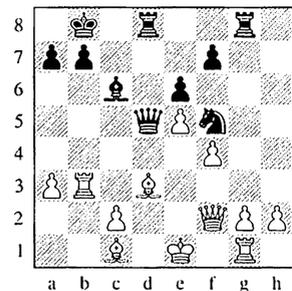
21... ♙c6!N

B31) after 24. ♙g3



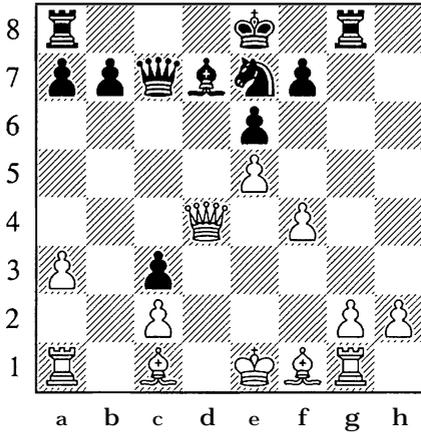
24... ♘d3!N

not to B32)



21... a6N

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.lc3i b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3! kc3t
 6.bxc3! l e7 7.g4 c d4 8.Wg? l gS 9.Wh7
 Wc7 10.l e2 d c3 11.f4 l lc6 12.Wd3 d4
 13.l xd4! xd4 14.Wd4! d7 15J gl



This is the main move by far, and it has two main purposes. By defending the g-pawn, White facilitates the development of his light-squared bishop. The c3 rook move also supports a future g2-g4 to drive the enemy knight away from f5.

15...f

15...0-0? does not work due to the simple 16.Wa7, c6 17J e3±.

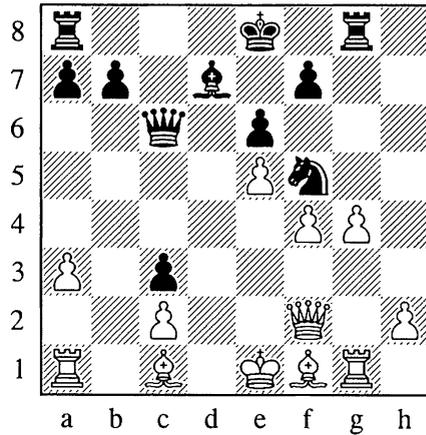
15...h8 16.h3 1 f5 17.Wf2 1,cG 18.g4 l h4 19.l g3 has been tested in a few games. Without going into full details, I believe White is slightly better here.

16.Wf Wc6

16...i cG does not make much sense here due to 17.g4!, so Black should instead begin by activating his queen. White now faces a choice between A) 17.g4 and B) 17...d3.

17.l b1 allows Black to force an immediate draw with 17...We4t 18.We2 Wd4 19.i f2 We4!±. If he wishes to keep the game going then 17...d3 is possible, and may transpose to variation B3 below after 18...d3.

A) 17.g4

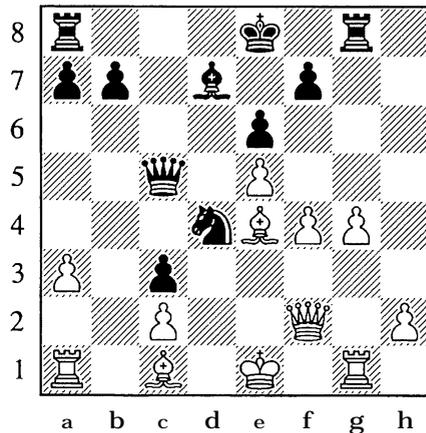


This is White's most direct approach, and it forces Black to make some important decisions.

17...e4t 18.We2 d5

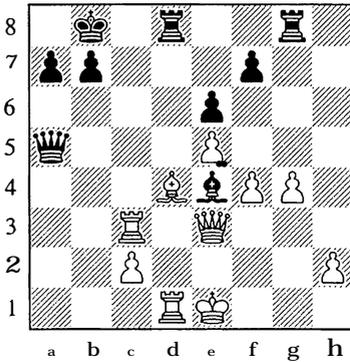
18...Wa4 and 18...Wd4 lead to interesting play, but sadly not full equality.

19.l g2i- c5 20.l f 1 d4 21.l l e4!



21...c6!N

Improving on: 21...0-0 22J e3 (22.l g3? i cG favors Black.) 22...cG Vitiugov assessed this position as offering counterplay for Black, but a deeper investigation shows that White is better: 23.l d1 1.xe4 24...xd4 Wxa3 25.l g3 b8 26.l xc3 Wa5 27.i e3



27...: k6!N This was suggested by Watson as a possible improvement. (Af er 27...: d5 28.h3 White was a saf pawn up with the better chances in Brunner - Legemaat, corr. 2011.) 28.Wf2 Exg4 29.i xa?i @ c8 30.Exc6t bxc6 31..b6 \ xb6 32.\ xb6 Exd1 33\ xc6'i @ d8 34.\ f Egg1 It is possible that Black can draw this endgame with accurate play, but who would wish to suf er in this way?

22.i xc6t

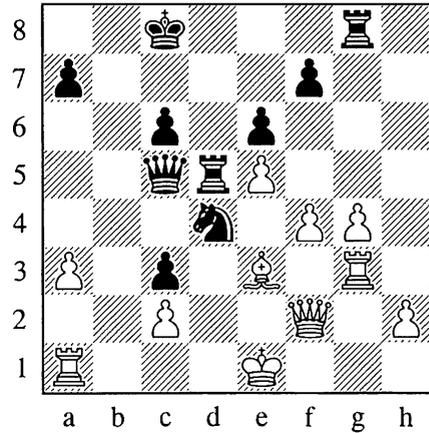
22.. c3 .l xe4 23.i xd4 \ c4 24.EdI Ed8 25.h3 .xc2 26.\ xc2 Exd4 27.Exd4 \ xd4 28.Eg3 \ xf4 29.\ xc3' f is equal, as pointed out by Watson.

22...bxc6 23.Eg3 0-0-0

Black is a pawn down with a weakened queenside structure, but his active pieces of er full compensation.

24.l e3Ed5!?

24...\ c4! 25.h4 \ a4 26.Ecl \ xa3 27.h5 \ b2 is given by Watson, and I suspect that many readers would f nd this the easier line to play over the board. Black has equal chances, with an obvious plan of pushing the a-pawn. I decided to explore the text move to see if Black could achieve anything more, bm here too the verdict was equality af er accurate play f om both sides. I will present the rest of my analysis and allow the reader to decide which continuation to play if he encounters this variation.

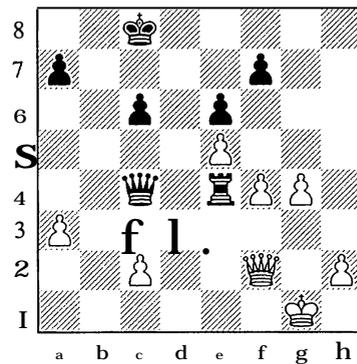


25.h4

Black has no immediate threats, so White takes the opportunity to mobilize the h-pawn.

Another possible continuation is:

25.EdI Egd8 26.. xd4 Exd4 27.Egd3 27.Exd4 Exd4 28.Ed3 Ee4t 29.Wf1 Wc4 30' gl Exf4 transposes 27...Ee4! 28 \ fl \ c4 29' gl Exd3 30.Exd3 30.cxc3?Ed4!+ is a nice trick.



30...Exf 3!l bxa7 Exg4t 32.Eg3 Exg3t 33.hxg3 \ e4

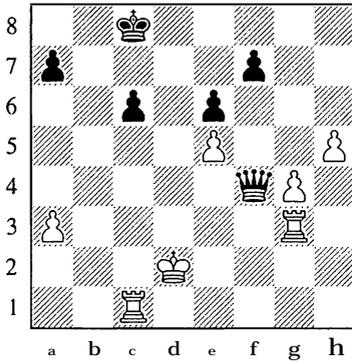
Black's active queen and advanced c-pawn would be important assets, were it not f r the fact that White can f orec an immediate draw.

34.\ aSI ' td7 35 \ b?f ' t8 36.WbSt ' td7 37.\ d6t We8=

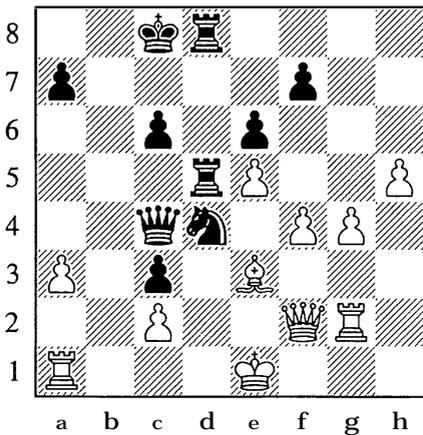
25...Eg8 26.h5 \ c4
 1 ueatering. ♞xc2† f llowed by ...Ed2●

27.Eg2

27.♞c1 Ck2!! 28.Wxc2 Ed2 29.\ kd2 Exd2
 30.\ kd2 cxd2 31.\ mxd2 Wxf4t leads to a dr w:



32.Ee3 me? 33.Eh1 ♞xg4 34.Ehh3 \ h4"
 35.me2 ♞c4†= White cannot escape the checks



27...Eh5!

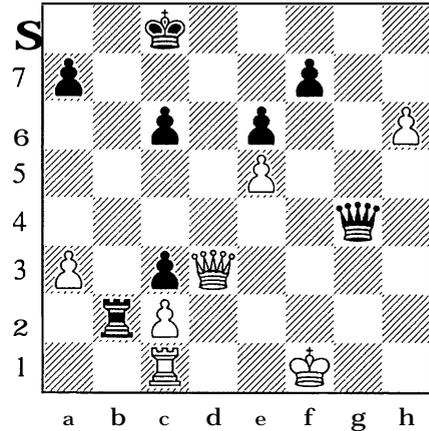
The doubled rooks were unable to achieve anything on the d-file, so Black takes the opportunity to invade on the queenside.

28.\ g3 Eb2 29.Ec1 \ a4 30. kd4 Exd4
 31.h6

31. ♞xc3 ♞xf4 32.1 xb2 ♞e4† 33.Ee2 \ h1†
 34.i d2 1 d5t = is another drawing line.

31..Exf4 32.1 d3 Ee4t 33.mf1 Exg4
 34.Exg4 \ xg4

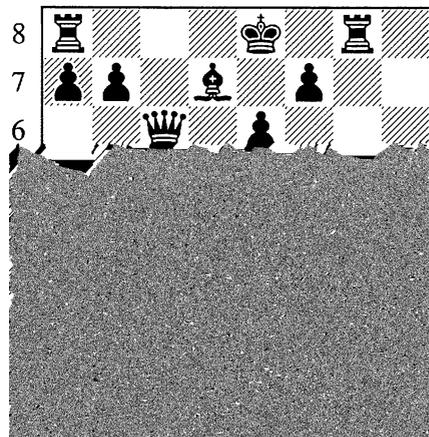
White is unable to hide his king



35.h7 \ f4t 36.mg2 Wg4t 37.i h2 i hSt
 38 \ h3 \ xe5t =

Once again the game ends in perpetual check. Tell the truth, Watson's 24. ♞c4 seems like a f r easier route to equalit . The bolded continuation was interesting to analyse, but in a f w of the above lines it was Black who was under pressure to force a draw bef re the h-pawn could promote. Nevertheless, f om a theoretical point of view both moves are f ne.

B) 17.. d3



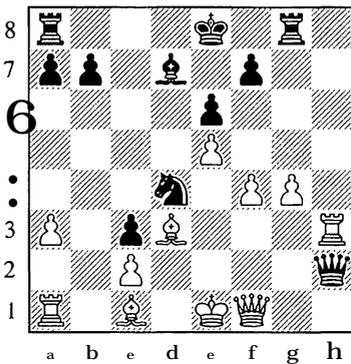
This time White prioritizes his development before advancing the g-pawn.

17...Wd5

The queen makes way for the bishop to come to c6, where it will increase Black's pressure on the long diagonal. The text move also supports a future ...t d4. We have reached a major crossroads where White has tried several different moves, but the main options are B1) 18.J e3, B2) 18.a4 and B3) 18: b1, the final move being the most popular by far.

Before analysing the three main moves, we will consider three less challenging ones:

18.g4? is premature. 18...1 d4 19: g3 ' h1 t 20.Wf1 Wxh2 21 .Eh3!?(21 .Wg2 Wxg2 22.Exg2 s c6 23.Eg3 was played in M. Friedel - Aleksiev, Dortmund 2013, and now 23...: h8!N would have preserved Black's initiative.)



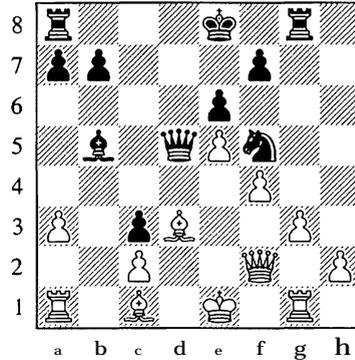
21...cxc2! 22. d1 Wxh3 23: xh3c xa1 The position was messy but somewhat favourable for Black in R. Jones - Mason, High Wycombe 2012.

18.g3

First played in Hengst - Bittner, corr. 1990. Here Black does well with:

18...i .b5!N

It is not for nothing that the white rook normally goes to b1 on move 18.



19. .xb5J

After 19.' g2 Wc5 20.s xf5 exf5 Black's activity fully compensates for the pawn deficit.

19.« kf5 20.' e3 0-0-0 21. f2 f6 22.' xc3! \ c6 is mentioned by Watson. Black has full compensation for the sacrificed material in view of his piece activity and White's vulnerable king.

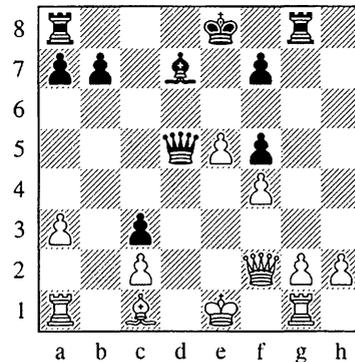
19...Wxb5 20.g4 c e7 21.Eg3 Wc4

21...' c6 is also playable; in both cases Black has at least enough compensation for the pawn.

A final minor alternative is:

18. .xf5

As a general rule, Black is happy to play with opposite-coloured bishops in such positions, as his domination of the light squares gives him ongoing attacking chances.



19.♙e3 0-0-0 20.♞d1

20.Wf3 gives Black a choice:

a) 20...Wxf3! 21.gxf3 Eh8 22.0-0 .c6= is a simple line showing that Black has nothing to fear from the endgame. White is still a pawn up, but Black has an active position and the pawns on f3, h3 and c2 are all vulnerable.

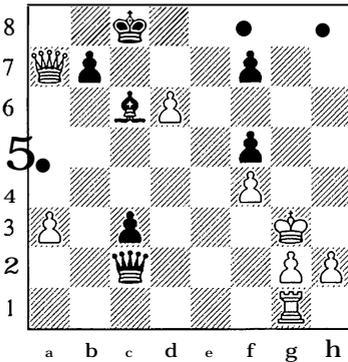
b) 20...Wc4! 21.We2 Wa4 keeps the queens on and thus preserves more winning chances.

20...Wa2

Black intends ...\ c6 with fine counterplay. Following the computer's top choices, the continuation might be:

21.. .c5 <,c6 22.. ,d6 Eg6 23.Wa7 Efxd6 24.Exd6 Exd6 25.exd6 WbH 26. f2 Wxc2! 27. g3

This line is given by Watson, who correctly evaluates the position as equal. The finish might be:



27...Wd3f 28.© h4

2s.© f2 Wd2t=

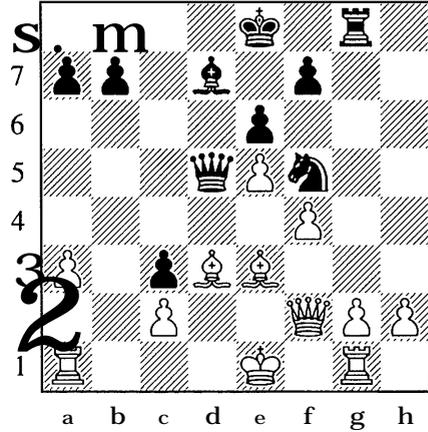
28..Wd2!

White has nothing better than retreating his king.

29. g3 Wd3! =

BI) 18. e3

'llis has achieved a modest plus score for White, but Black should be fine after correct play.



18..1 ke3 19.Wke3 Exg2 20.Exg2 Wkg2

21.. ,e4

21.0-0 O!N

'll is untested move deserves consideration.

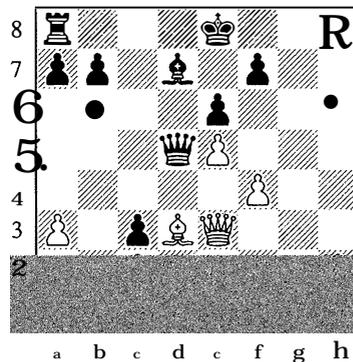
21...Wd5!

21..Wdh2? 22.Wd4 . d6 23.Egl Wsh

24.© bl↑ is what White wants. Rather than courting pawns, Black should improve his piece coordination and target the enemy king.

22.Egl

22! fgl Wd2 forces White to take a perpetual with: 23.Wgs t e7 24.\fg5f f8 25.Wh6! =

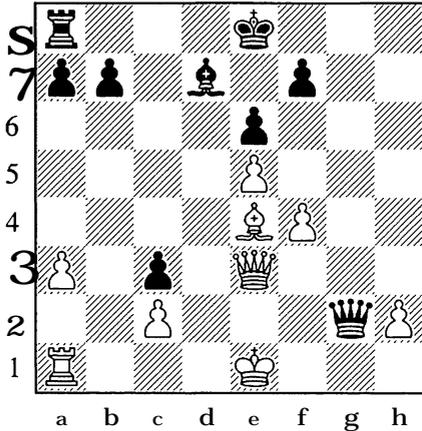


22..0-0 O 23.Wa7. d6 24.Ed1Ed?!

Watson assesses this position as equal. He is correct, although the play remains complex. It is worth adding the following point:

25.h4! ff3!

Black's counterplay is sufficient. Note that 25...Wa2? would be a blunder due to 26.Wa8tr c7 27.Wa8tr followed by 28.1 xc3.



21...1 xh2 22.0 0 0

Warson also gives 22...xb7 Eb8 23.g,e4 1 h4t 24.1 f2 Wxfz 25.cxf2 Eb5 intending ...Ea5 with an equal endgame. I would add that Black can deviate from this line with 24...1 g4!?, when the position is still equal, but the presence of queens means that either side might still try to win.

22...g,c6!

An important move, leading to a level endgame after accurate play from both sides.

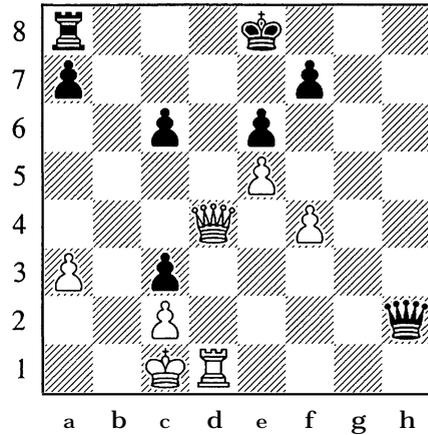
22...Ed8? occurred in Robson - Shankland, Milwaukee 2009, and now 23.1 d4!N 1 xf4t 24.' bl would have given White a big advantage.

23. xc6t

23.r b1.\xe4 24.Wxc4 may also lead to a draw after: 24...1 f2! 25.1 xb7 Wfb6t 26.Wxb6 axb6 27.© a2 Ea4 28.Ebl Exf4 y2 y2 Dulary - Anderson, corr: 2012.

23...bxc6 24.1 d4

24.1 c5? Wxf 25.' bl Wa4 gave White some problems in Barrientos Chavarriaga - Pozo Vera, Panama City 2011.



24...a8

White has no special threats, so Black gains a bit of space while removing the pawn from the glare of the enemy queen.

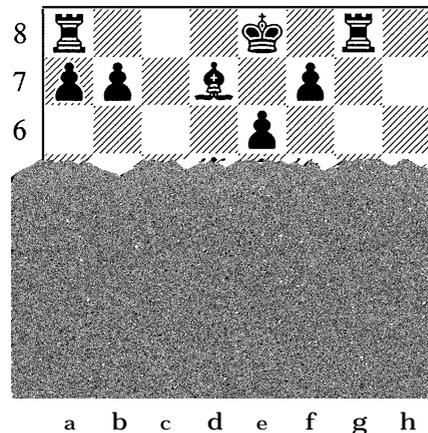
25.Egl

25.r bl We2! 26.Wd?tr f 27.Wd6t c g7 28.Egl† ' h8= is mentioned by Warson.

25...Wd2t 26.Wxd2 cxd2t 27.' xd2= 1z 1z

The endgame is level and the players agreed a draw in Walter - Girard, corr: 2012.

B2) 18a4



This move is rare, but pushing the a-pawn is almost always a plausible plan in such

positions. White is preparing to activate either his rook or his bishop via a3

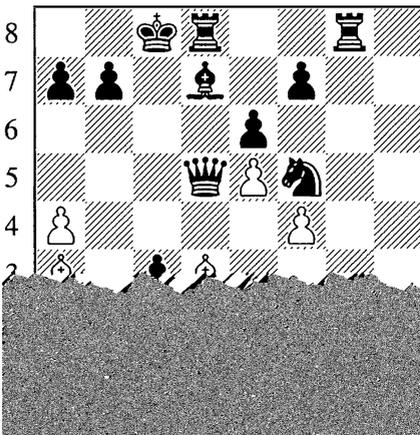
18..0 0 0

At this both B21) 19.i a3N and 822) 19.g a3 should be considered.

19.\ xa7N is possible and might lead to a forced draw after 19...g xg2 20.g xg2 ' xg2 2.J.\ a8t r x7 22.\ a5!r x8 23.\ a8!f= when neither side can avoid the perpetual.

If Black desperately needs to win he can try 19...i c6!? 20.\ f2 \ a5!, but after 2.J.g4 l h4 22.gg3 \ d5 23.r fl! White is objectively slightly better.

B21) 19.i a N



This has not yet been played, but it is a sensible developing move that suggests itself quite naturally after White's last.

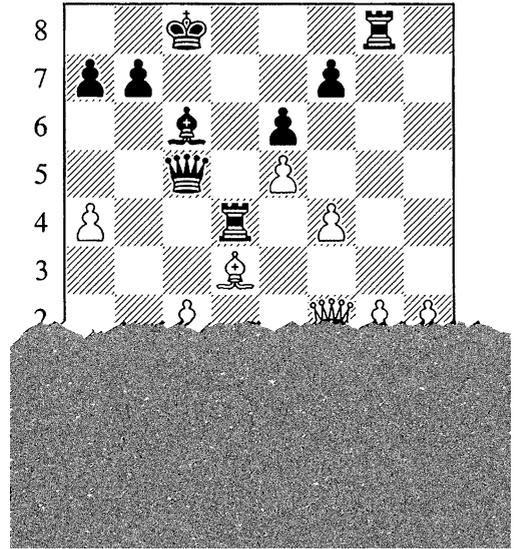
19... .c6!

Black should resist the temptation to grab the a4-pawn, which would help White to develop counterplay.

20 .b4! h4! 21.i xc3 \ es 22.i hd4 gxd4

Black is two pawns down for the moment, but his active piece play ensures at least an equal game. White's exposed king and

lack of coordination puts him in a difficult position where accuracy is needed. A possible continuation is:



24.< f

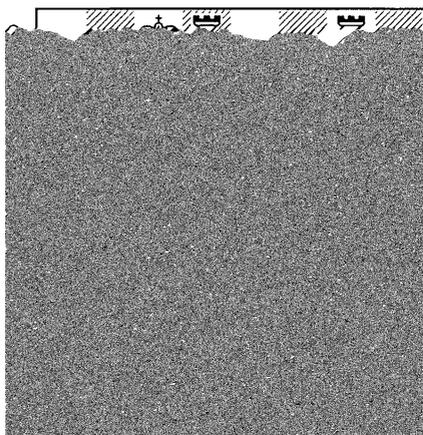
24.r e2 gives Black a choice. 24...ge4!!? 25. .ke4 l d2! 26.r xd2 \ xft 27.< d3 . .xe4! 28.< xe4 Ve2! 29.r d4 iJ d2!f= leads to a perpetual. Alternatively, 24...f5!? is an interesting attempt to keep playing for a win, and after 25.exf6 e5t Black gets a strong initiative.

24...ast

Black maintains full compensation for the sacrificed material. The pawn on a4 might soon fall, which will give Black a strong passed a-pawn.

822) 19.l a3

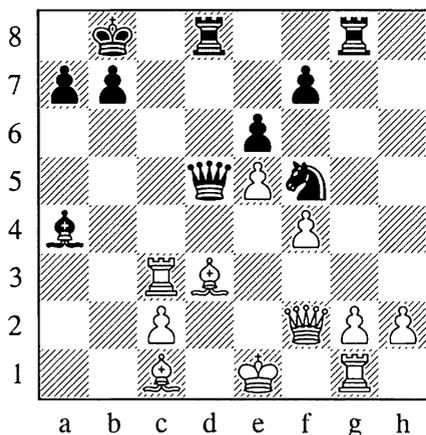
This is the only move to have been played. It usually leads to something resembling the main B32 line, but with White offering his a-pawn in an attempt to develop an initiative on the queenside.



19..Wb8 20.Exc3. ~~1~~a4!

This time Black does best to grab the pawn. This is justified by the fact that the white rook will have to waste additional time to return to the half open a-file.

20... ~~t6~~? is an response to a few games which arrived at this position via a slightly different move order. Compared with the main B32 variation, White has been granted the extra move a3-a4. This gives him the useful possibility of 21.♔a3! with the better chances, as seen in Milman-T. Irim, Philadelphia 2011.



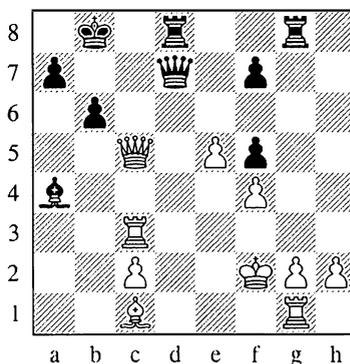
21.♔a3

I also considered:
21.♖c5 ♖d7!

Black avoids the queen exchange and preserves equal chances.

22...~~xf5~~ exf5 23.Wf2 b6!

23...Ec5 should be avoided in view of 24.Wd6t @ xd6 25.Exc5-t Exc8 26.e.d6 Exc2-t 27.Wg3 when White's h-pawn is more dangerous than the connected a- and b-pawns. The ending may well be a draw with perfect play, but it is Black who will have to work harder to prove it.



24.Wd

24. % 4. lb5!

24...We6 25...a3 Ec8

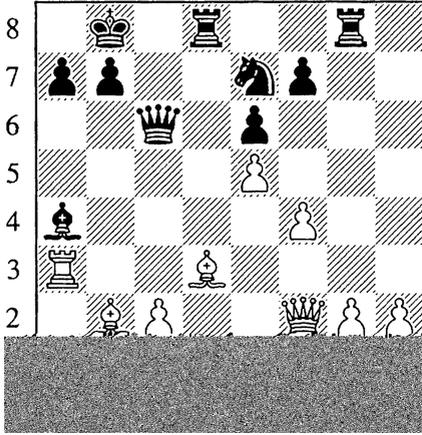
Black's initiative provides full compensation for the pawn, and the opposite-coloured bishops make it harder for the white king to find a suitable refuge.

21..Wc6

Watson goes into some detail analysing 21...b5!? in ChessPublishing. The move seems to hold up okay, but I would prefer to avoid loosening the king's defences when an equally good alternative exists. The queen move appears slightly awkward as the bishop remains pinned, but White has no immediate way to exploit it and Black will soon tidy up the queenside, either with...b6, or with...a6 intending ...~~lb5~~.

22...b2! e7!

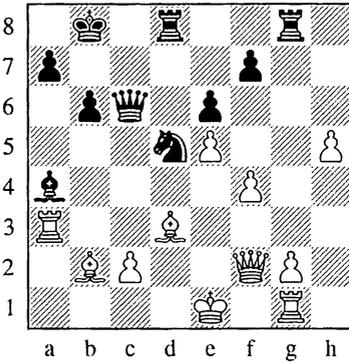
The knight steps away from a possible g2-g4 attack and prepares to hop forwards to d5.



23.g3

23.g4 / d5 24.h4 was played in Shabaev - Kurbasov, corr. 2011. Here I propose 24...a6 intending ...b5 with equal play. (The game continued 24...Ed7 25. d4 b6 26.Eg2?? / xf4 with a decisive advantage for Black, but White could have claimed an edge with 26.c3!N.)

Another plausible continuation is:
23.h4N / d5 24.h5 b6



25.hg?

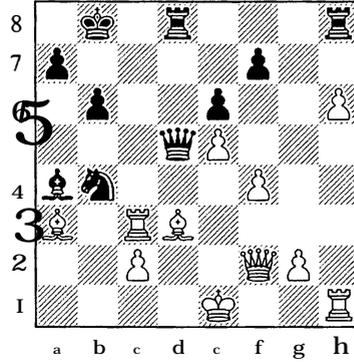
Too ambitious.

White should settle for 25...d4 although 25...b5 is fine for Black.

25...Eh8! 26.Eh1

26.h7 / b4 27.Ec3 fd5 also favors Black.

26.../ b4 27.Ec3 \ d5 28.\ a3



28...\ a5! 29.j d2 / xc2! 30.Exc2 Exd3 31.i xa5 bxa5 32.Ebl t ' ?a8 33.Eh3 Exh3 34.gxh3 ExhG+

The most likely outcome is a draw, but Black can press for a while.

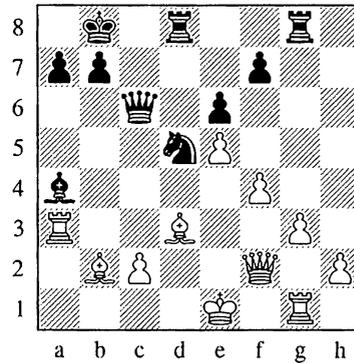
23...b6

By shielding the a7-pawn, Black prepares to move his bishop.

Although Black does not require an improvement over the main line, I would like to mention a playable alternative:

23...1 d5!N

Intending .../ b4.

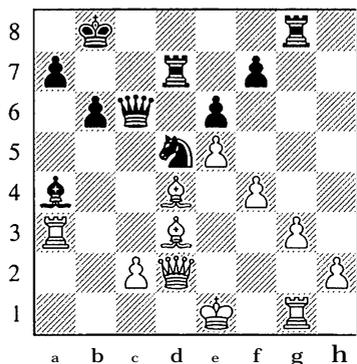


24...d4

24\ d4 is met by 24...b5! followed by ...a5 with an active game for Black.

24...bG that is the result

the light-squared bishops, Black weakens his opponent's king while increasing the power of the knight on d5. Black has fair compensation for the pawn and good practical chances to play for a win.



26.h4

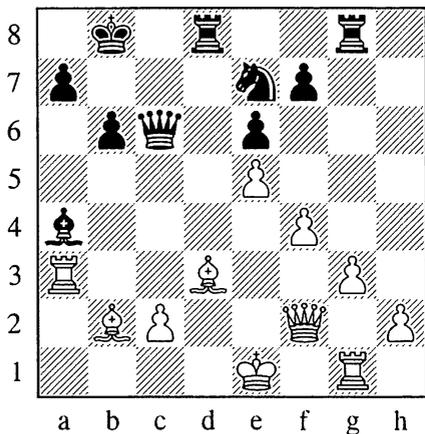
26. f2: gd8t

26...: gd8 27... e4 1 b5 28i .xd5

28i ,d3 1 c6= repeats

28..Exd5 29.c3 Ec8!

Black has a strong initiative and White has to watch out for an exchange sacrifice on d4.



24. ♖e2

24. ♖g2 ♖d7 intending ...♙c6 gave Black good compensation in Moza – Hengl, corr. 2012.

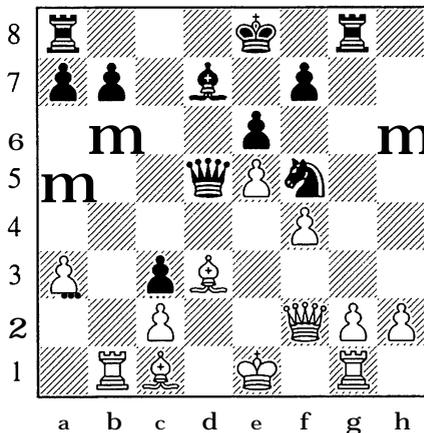
24...: d? 25.Ec3 ♖d5 26\ e4 1 a5 27. f

27. e2 can be met by 27...m18 28.h4 t f5 with counterplay.

27...t h5 28.Ec4 b5 29.Ed4 c6

Black maintained full compensation in Grabner - Urbanek, corr: 2011.

B3) 18: bl



This is the main line by far. White prevents ...♙b5 while preparing a attack the c3-pawn.

18... b6

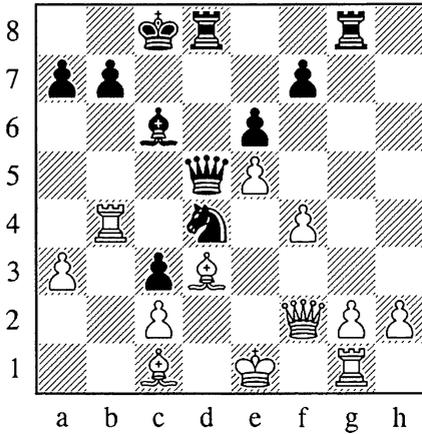
From here White occasionally tries B31) 19: b4, but the main line and the best move is B32) 19: b3

B31) 19: b4

This move has hardly ever occurred in the specific position occurring after Black's last move, but the resulting position has been reached many times via different move orders, one example being 15.Eb1 t f5 16.1 f2 1 c6 (in variation E of the previous chapter I recommend 16...f,c6 for Black) 17.Eb4 1 d5 18.1 gl . c6 19...d3.

19..0-0-0

19...Ed8 has been more popular, but castling makes more sense to me.

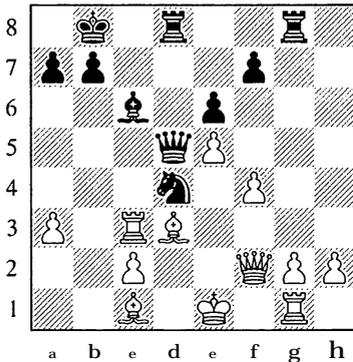


20.g4!?

This is the only real attempt to justify the position of the rook on b4.

20. \ xa7?Exg2 is a terrible trade f r White.

White's most popular continuation has been:
20.Ec4 \ b8 21.Exc3



This way of handling the posit'bn makes absolutely no sense f r White, as the same position occurs in variation B32 with White to move instead of Black. The only question is whether White can still cling to equality in the present line.

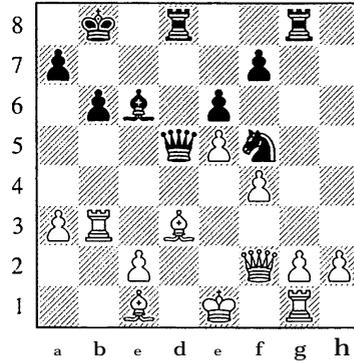
21...bG!

'll is my pref rrence, although any sensible move should work well.

22.Eb3

22.J,d2 may be the best way f r White to

maintain the balance, f r instance: 22... .b5 23.g4 (23.1 xb5 \ xb5 24. \ e2V d5= Black's activity fully compensates f r the pawn def.cit. 25.♙e3 1 a5 26. d2 \ d5 27.. ,d a5 28.\ d2 ½ ½ Baumgartner - Dor er, corr: 2012.) 23...l h4 24.Eg3 Eh8 25.k e3 . kd3 26.cxd3 l b5 27.i cl \ b3 28.. f&bG axb6 29.\ xbGf' \ aS 30.Eh3! Ec8 31.Exh8 ½ ½ Pierzak - Bell, corr: 2010.



22...EhS!N

A common manoeuvre to create weaknesses in White's camp.

23.h3 Ehg8!

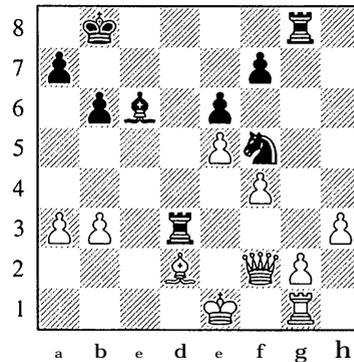
Intending ...Eg3. We will f llow Watson's analysis f r a f w more moves.

24.S d2

24.c4 \ a5! 25. d2 1 a4t

24...\ xb3! 25.cxb3 Exd3

Watson claims an advantage f r Black, and I fully agree that Black's tremendous piece activity outweighs his material def.cit. Here is one brief illustrative line.



26.g4!

Other moves allow Black to claim a larger advantage.

26...♖d4 27.♙g3 ♖f3† 28.♙xf3 ♙xf3

White still has a slight material advantage, but Black's rooks may outrun the enemy queen.

20...c d4 21.Exd4

The exchange sacrifice is White's only chance. 21.♙g3? ♖h1-1 22.♗f1 ♖xh2 is not good for him.

21.. ' xd4 22' xd4 Exd4

White only has one pawn for the exchange, but his bishops are strong and the passed h-pawn is a big asset in the endgame. We will follow one example where White went astray, in order to showcase an important idea for Black.

23' -f ?

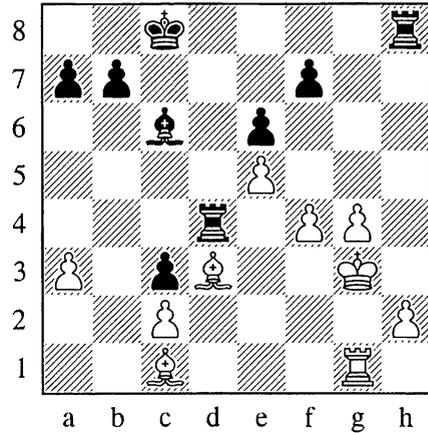
This is an instructive error. White may have recognized the fact that Black would like to exchange of the light-squared bishops, and thus decided to activate his king while preparing to meet ...♙e4 with c e winning material. He should have preferred one of the following alternatives:

23.♙e3 ♙a4 (23...♙xd3!N 24.cxd3 ♙h8 25.f5 ♖d7 is also quite safe) 24.h4 ♙e4 25.♙xe4 ♙xe4 26.♖e2 ♙a4 27.♙c1 g d4 '11e endgame remained balanced in Mitkov – Lamoureux, Paris 1993.

23.h4!N ♙e4 24.♙xe4 ♙xe4† 25.♖f2 ♙d4 is also about equal.

23..gh8 24 \ g3

Here I found an improvement over the game Ondrejat - Cech, Decin 1996.



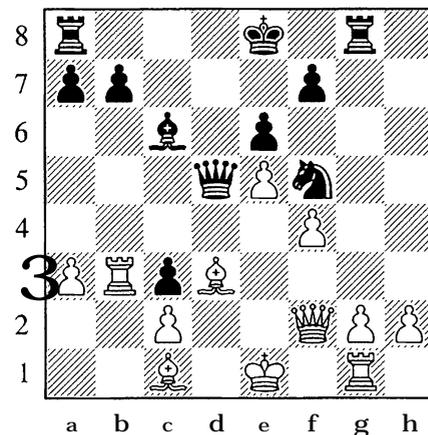
24...♙xd3!N

The game continuation of 24...♙e4 left Black at least equal, but the text move is stronger.

25.c d3gd8

Black will pick up the d3-pawn next, restoring material equality while keeping some initiative. Black also has the more dangerous pawn majority, with ...a5 and ...b5-b4 coming soon.

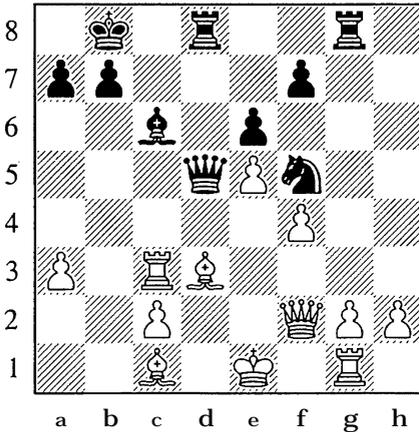
B32) 19.f b3



19..0 0 20.Exc3 \ b8

This position has been tested in several games in recent years, including at the elite level. Although Black is two pawns down, he has excellent counterplay due to his active

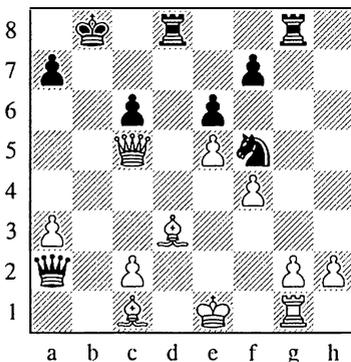
pieces and White's vulnerable king. Computer analysis has caused many old assessments to be revised, and the current verdict is that Black is holding his own.



White has tested a variety of options, the three most significant being B321) 21. c5, B322) 21.g3! and B323) 21.g4.

Before analysing these variations, we will consider three rook moves. None of them are outright mistakes, but they all contain certain drawbacks. Pay attention to the following analysis and you will get an idea of some of the basic plans and tactical motifs for both sides.

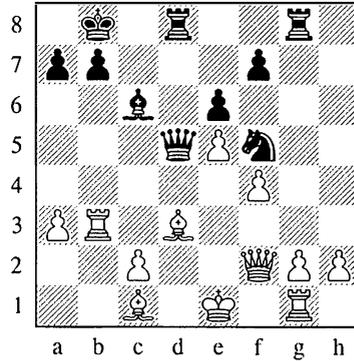
21.Ec5 allows the black queen to invade. 21... a2 In the following GM encounter White found nothing better than simplifying to a drawn endgame: 22.Exc6 bxc6 23. c5



23...l xd3! 24.cxd3 Exg2 25.l xg2 ' xg2 26.S c3! ke3 27. x e3 Wh1† 28. e2' xh2! = 12 Ganguy - Shulman, Ningbo 2011.

21: b3

Having removed the c3-pawn, White moves the rook back to its previous square, where it blocks the queen's route to a2 while vaguely eyeing the enemy king.



21...a6!N

Improving on 21... a5!?! 22.S d2 ' a4 23.: b4 a5 24. c5 Ed5 25.Ec3 Egd8 26.g4 l H4 27.Ec4 Exc5 28.Exa4 ' ha4 29.c4± as played in Pijpers - Shirov, Rogaska Slatina 2011. Shirov eventually dcf and his lower-rated opponent, but his position at this stage was highly dubious.

In the text move was proposed by Ris. Black's idea is to play ... a b5 next.

22. d2

White must avoid both 22. xa6?? ' d1# and 22.g4?l d4 +.

22.c4 Wd4! is also promising for Black.

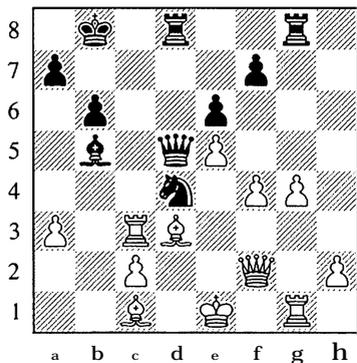
22.... ,b5 23.: xb5 axb5

Black has fine compensation and White is vulnerable on the light squares.

21.Ec4

This move also fails to impress. Black's logical reply enables him to make the rook into a target.

21...b6! 22.g4. ,b5! 23.Ec3l H4

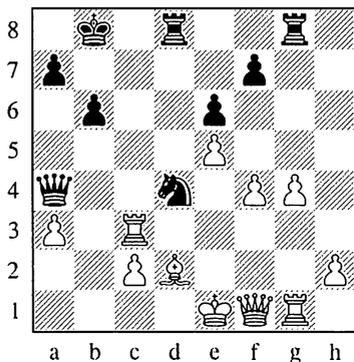


24..1.xb5?

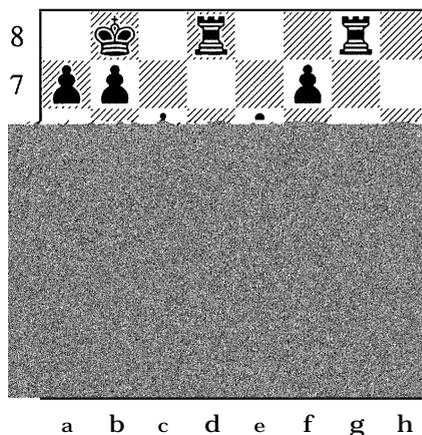
As Watson points out, White could have held the balance with: 24: g3!N Wh1† 25.\ f1 \ xh2 26.Eh3 .xd3 27.Exh2 . kf1 28' kf1 Exg4 29.Ed3=

24...\ xb5 25.\ f1 \ a5 26.l.d2 Wa4+

White is struggling, and in the following game he quickly collapsed:



27.♙e3?? ♖xc2† 28.♜f2 ♜xe3 29.♞xe3 ♜xf4† 30.♜e2 ♜xh2† 31.♞g2 ♜h7 32.♜f3 ♞d4 23.♜f3 ♞d4



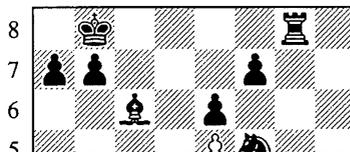
21...Exg2 22 \ xdS Exgl t 23.Wf \ kd5!N Sometimes the simple moves are the best.

23...Edg8!?

This flashy move has occurred in both of the games on my database. It certainly has aesthetic appeal, but objectively it is slightly inaccurate.

24 \ dst : xd8 25.Wxgl Eg8! 26.Wf1

Compared with my main line, Black's bishop is placed on c6 instead of d5. The difference is not huge, but it does mean that Black is prevented from playing ...I g2 at certain moments due to the reply Exc6 winning a piece.



B321) 21i cS

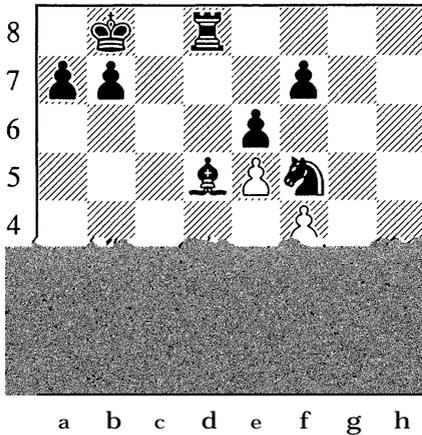
With this move White returns one of his extra pawns to force an exchange of queens. Black's active pieces should provide full compensation, but it is worth paying attention to some of the finer details.

at this point she could have secured an edge with:

29. d3Nt

White is in control, with an extra pawn and a further target on f5. White can also consider exchanging on f5 to get the dark-squared bishop on, when the time is right.

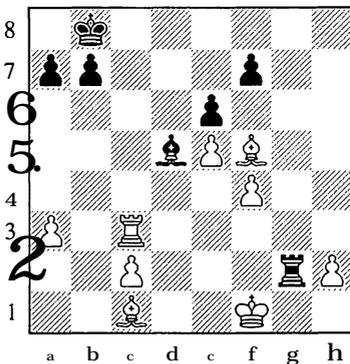
24. xg1



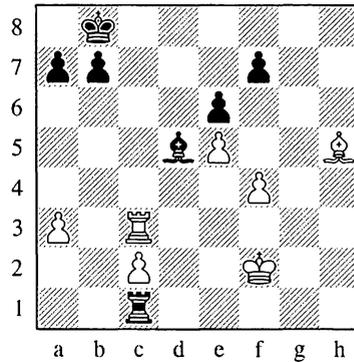
24..Eg8 25. f1 l e7!?

Intending ...Eh8 or ...Eg2.

The immediate 25..Eg2 is also playable, although Black needs to be slightly careful: 26. i xf5



26...Exh2! (After 26...exf5 27.Ed3 Exc2 28.1xd5 Exc! 29.©g2 the endgame may ultimately be drawn, but Black is under some pressure.) 27.k g4: 11-1 28. f2 Exc1 29. i h5



29...e4! 30...xf. J5 Black should hold the draw without too many problems.

26. i e2

26.a4 1g2 (or 26..Eh8=) 27.h3 1g3 28. i a3 t c6 is fine for Black, who is poised to restore material equality.

26...t f

This allows a reprieve but it is clearly the best move. The knight returns to a fine square where it prevents the enemy rook from becoming active.

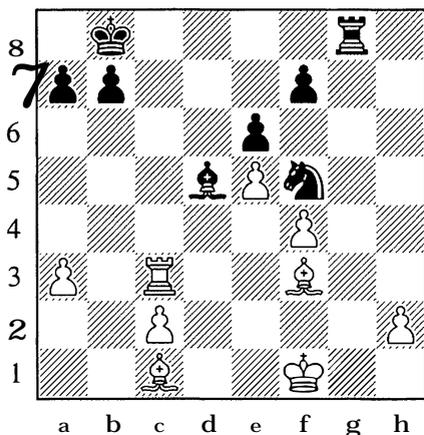
27...f

27. i ,d3= repeats the position.

27...d2?! Eg2 is unpleasant for White.

27. J/b2 can be played, but it hardly improves White's position. Black can proceed with 27...b6 preparing ...d7b7. Now 28...a6 might look slightly annoying, but after 28...i ,b7 29. J xb7 ©xb7 Black has full compensation for the pawn in view of the strong knight on f5, better pawn structure and more active pieces.

27.a4 is a sensible idea to activate the dark-squared bishop. This time Black responds with 27...a ,g2t! 28.©f2 (28. :e! \ ,c6=) 28..i k6 when he regains a pawn, either on a4 or on h2 after ...Eg2!. The position is balanced.



27...fxg3 28: xf

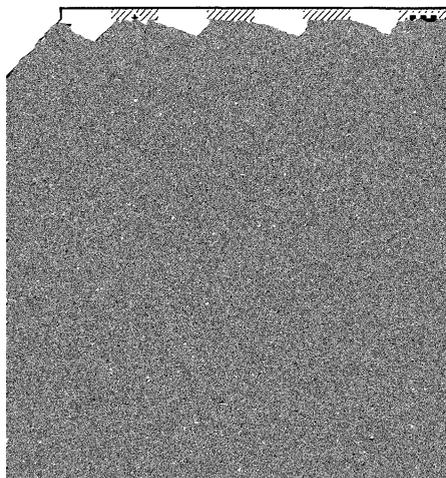
Despite the reduced material, Black retains good positional compensation for the pawn in view of the superb knight on f5 and the numerous pawn weaknesses in White's camp.

28...: hs?

With this move Black not only attacks the h-pawn, but also prevents White's rook from getting active on h3.

29.h3

29. f gives Black a choice between 29...' t7 improving the king, and 29...: h3 intending to swing the rook to c3.

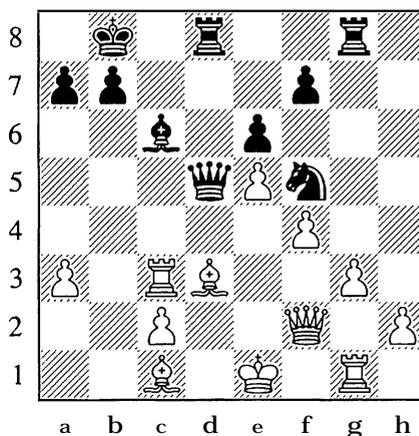


Now that the white rook is prevented from coming to h3, the black rook can look for something else to do.

30.c3b5;

Black has full compensation for the pawn. White's bishop is hampered by its own pawns and the rook is a defender on the third rank. Black, on the other hand, can move his pieces freely, as long as he does not allow the h-pawn to start running. A logical plan is to march the king up the board to attack the pawns on a3 and c3. If the white bishop remains on c1, Black may even consider ...a5 with the duet of ...b4.

B322) 21.g3?

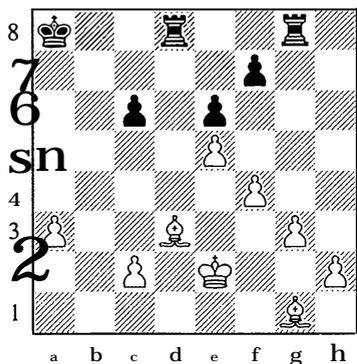


This interesting move has the idea of sacrificing an exchange in order to limit Black's counterplay.

21...c d4 22j e3 c f t 23©dl c xgl

According to my database, this is the only move to have been tried. White receives some initiative for the exchange, but after correct play a drawn endgame is reached. I investigated a couple of other attempts to create winning chances for Black; the first is dubious but the second is of roughly equal value to the main line.

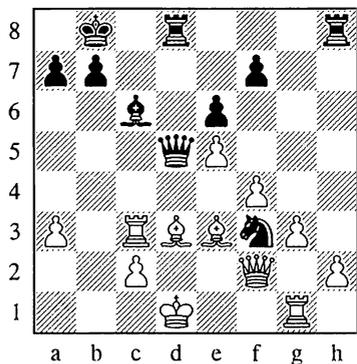
23...i a2?N is an attempt to get closer to the white king, but it allows White to force the following endgame: 24.k xa7' '-a8 25.Exc6! i bIt 26.' t2l xgU 27.i xgl i xgl 28.\,xgl bxc6



The material balance is unusual, but the position is more dangerous for Black. The bishops are strong, the rooks do not have many targets, and White has several extra pawns.

23...Eh5!N

This move is mentioned by Watson, and it seems perfectly playable. Black attempts to increase his initiative, but here too the likely verdict is a draw after best play.



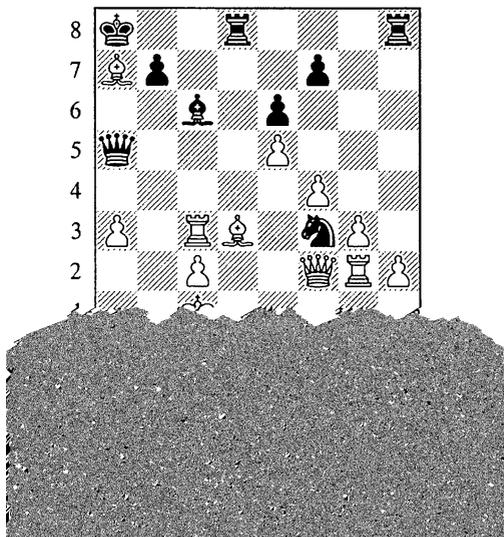
24... xa7 t

White can also consider 24.l g2!? l xe5 25.f e5 iMkg2 26.i xa7'i' '-t8 27.h4 (27.i xg2 S,xg2 28.\,gl i fl is an equal

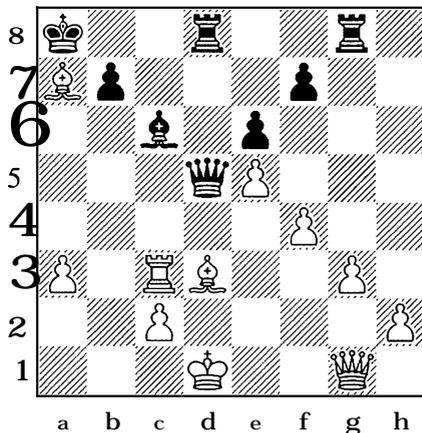
endgame) 27...i hIt 28.' tI2 i,e4 with an interesting battle to follow and roughly equal chances.

24... a8 25.Eg2i b5! 26.' tI

A draw may occur after: 26.' t2 Exd3! 27.Exd3i bI 28.Ec3i b5t 29.Ed3i bI= 26...i a5



24... xa7 mas 25i xgl



25...\$b5!

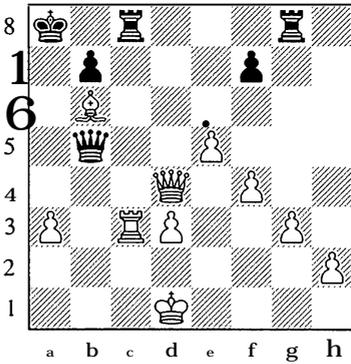
Black increases the pressure along the d-f file. From a positional point of view, it is also useful to exchange one half of White's bishop pair.

26.1 b6i xd3 27.cxd3

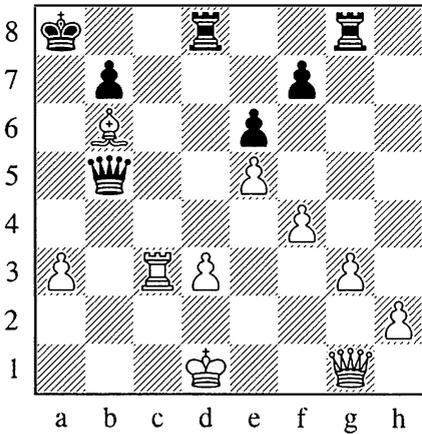
27.Exd3 Wb5 28.Ed6 Ec8 occurred in Pacher - Petrik, Banska Stiavnica 2011. The position is equal but White has to be careful. Here 29.We3N would have been best, when 29..Wb1 30.Wc1 Wb5 31.We3= repeats the position.

27...Wb5!

'It is less precise 27...Ec8 28.Wd4! Wb5 occurred in Michalczak - Johannessen, Rogaska Slatina 2011. Here White could have obtained a clear advantage with:



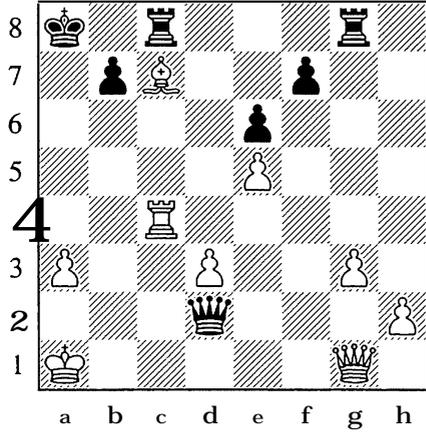
29.i c7!N 11u.eatening Ec4 or Ec5. 29...Wb1! 30.Ec1 Wb3! 31.c d2 Egd8 32.Wc4 Wxc4 33.Exc4 b5 34. .xd8! bxc4 35.i f6± The h-pawn is a serious threat in the endgame.



28.♞c2

28.i xd8 Wb1 t 29.Ec1 Wxd3t 30.c e1 Exd8 gives Black at least a perpetual.

28..Ec5 29.i c7Wd4t 30.< b2Wk 4 31.Ec4 Wd2t 32.< i1



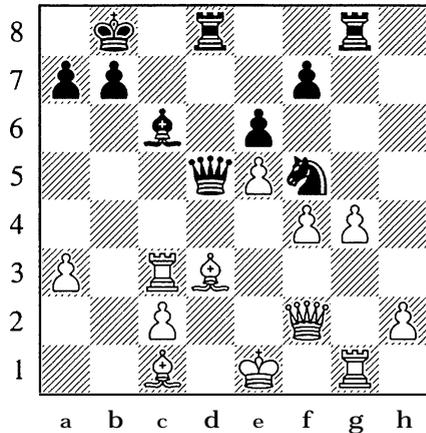
32...Exc7!

'It is only move, but good enough. White will have to return his extra material to protect his king.

33.Exc7 Wxd3 34.\Vg2 1 xa3t 35.Wa2 ' xa2t 36.c xa2 Eh8 37.h4 Eg8 38.Ec3= f - f

Antonov - Oren, corr: 2012.

B323) 21.g4



This is White's most direct attempt, and the clear first choice in terms of both popularity and statistical results.

21...1 H4 22.Eg3Wh1 t 23. f1

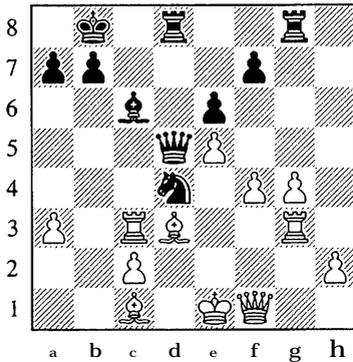
This was recommended in Khalifman's book in 2006. It was a novelty at that time, but it has been tested in a number of games since.

23.Wf1 Wd5!N

This is the cleanest route to equality, if Black does not mind a repetition.

23...Wxh2? 24.Eh3 Wg2 25.Wxg2 i xg2 26.Eh7 gives White the better endgame.

23...1 f ! 24.i f2 Wxh2 25.Wg2 xg2! 26.Exg2 t h4 gives Black sufficient compensation for the pawn deficit, and after 27.Eg3 Eh8 28.f,e3 a draw was agreed in Kain – Liebert, corr. 2012.



24.h3

It is not easy to find a constructive way for White to keep the game going.

24.Wf2= repeats.

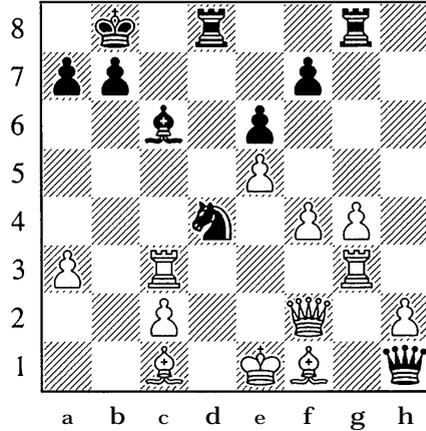
24.h4 1 f5 25.i xf5 exf5 is fine for Black.

24...Wa5 25.c d2 Wb6 26.Ee3!?

26.i e3 Wa5 27" d2 Wb6=

26...' a4

Black has full compensation. White must be on guard against various tactical motifs, and Black can increase the pressure by doubling his rooks on the d-file.



23...bQ

Khalifman only considered 23...Eh8 24.h3 b6 25.a4! ♔xa4 26.i a3 leading to White's advantage. The text move is an improvement that was discovered some time after his book was published.

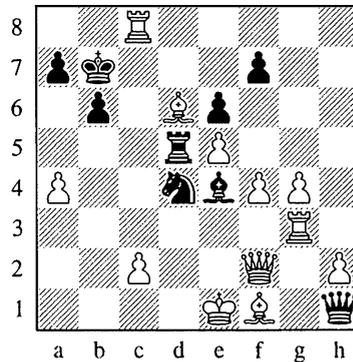
24.a4

This has been tested in a few correspondence games.

An over-the-board game between two top players continued:

24.i b2 i e4 25.a4 Ed5 26.f,a3 Ec8 27.♔d6† b7 28.Exc8

The time has come for Black to improve.



28...♔xc8N

This simple move maintains the balance.

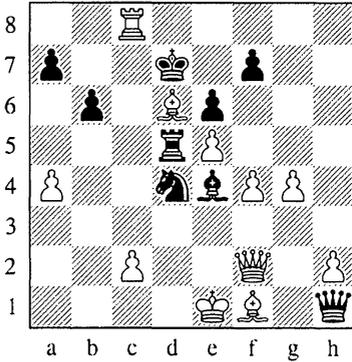
28...♔f3†?? 29.♔e2 ♖d2† 30.♔e3 ♔xc8 was

played in Leko - Caruana, Dortmund 2012. At this point 31. ♔a6! N Wd8 32. \ f1 ' xfl (or 32... ♖xh2 33. ♗h3+-) 33. xfl would have given White a decisive advantage.

29.: c3!

29.c4? ♖c2† 30.♗e2 ♗d4+- intending ... cG gives Black a crushing position.

29...Wd7 30.♗c7† We8 31.: c8! Wd7

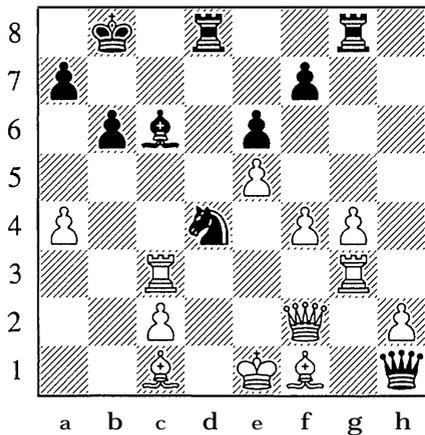


32.: b8!?

32.: c7! is a simple draw; the text move is a flashier route to the same end.

32...c xc2t 33.Wxc2 \kc2 34.Eb? t We8

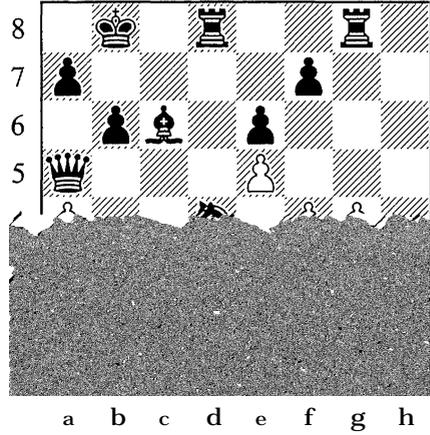
35.: b8! =



24..We4t 25.: ge3 Wd8 26.: ed3

After 26.h3 xa4 27. ,d3' h!t a draw was agreed in Ilyushchenko - Crummitt, corr. 2013, as there is a virtually forced repetition coming after 28.Wf1 ♖h2 29.♖f2 \ h1†.

26..Wd8 27.\ ♗3



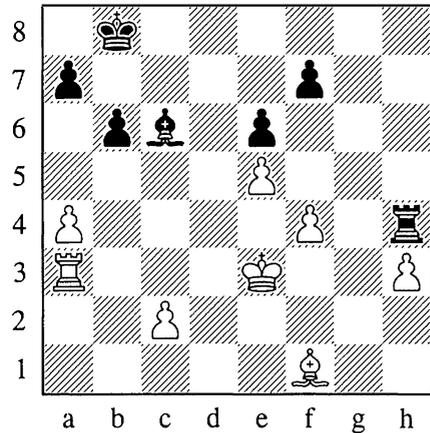
27...l bS!

This clever move forces the following simplifications.

28\ d2 : xd3 29.: xd3 c xa3 30.: xa3 ' xd2t 31. xd2: xg4

White still has an extra pawn, but he has no advantage due to his many pawn weaknesses and Black's activity.

32.©e3 fh4 33.h3



33...a5!

By fixing the weakness on a4, Black ties up the enemy rook and makes the draw a certainty.

34. ♞a1

1/2-1/2

Soldano - Girard, corr. 2010. White does not have a single way to improve his position without dropping at least a pawn.

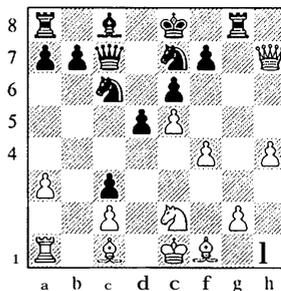
Conclusion

The 15. g1 line is widely regarded as the critical test of the entire 12. d3 d4 variation. After the standard moves 15... ♘f5 16. f2 ♜c6, the immediate 17. g4 loosens White's position and enables Black to obtain adequate counterplay, although the second player must play accurately at certain moments.

The developing move 17... d3 is more popular, when Black replies 17... ♞d5. We checked a number of deviations, but the most important continuation by far is 18. b1 a,c6 19. b3 0-0-0 20. Exc3 ♜b5. The latest games and analysis demonstrate that Black has full compensation for the rook-pawn investment. The only downside is that many lines have been analysed all the way through to perpetual check or drawn endgames, but that is the reality of modern chess, especially in sharp, forcing opening variations. From the theoretical standpoint though, such outcomes can be considered satisfactory for us, and the onus is on White to find a new way to fight for an advantage.

Chapter 11

Poisoned Pawn



12.h4!

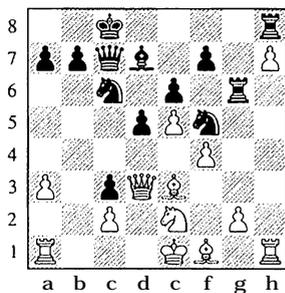
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♙g4 cxd4 8.♙xc7 ♗g8 9.♙xh7 ♙c7 10.♘e2 dxc3 11.f4 ♘bc6 12.h4! ♗d7 13.h5 0-0-0 14.♙d3

14...♘f5?!

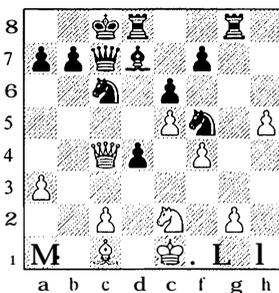
- | | |
|------------|-----|
| A) 15.h6 | 149 |
| B) 15.♙xc3 | 149 |
| C) 15.♗b1! | 150 |

A) after 17..1c3



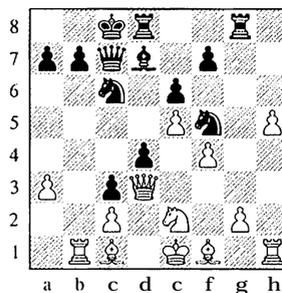
17..1xc3N

B) after 161 c4



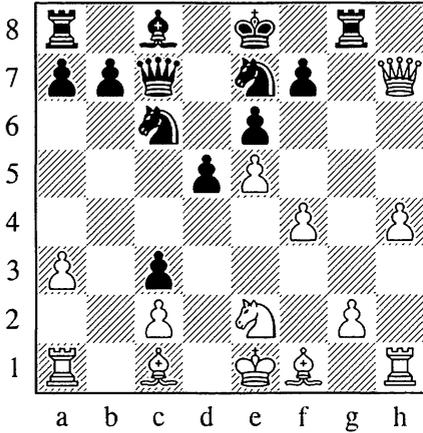
16..f!

C) after 15..d4



16 g!

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 c3 1.b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3
 xc3t 6.bxc3 c e7 7.Wg4 cxd4 8.Wg7
 gg8 9.Wh7 We? 10.c e2 d c3 l 1.f4 c bc6
 12.h4!



I consider this move the ultimate main line of the Winawer Poisoned Pawn. At the time of writing it has only occurred in around fifty games, compared with over a thousand for 12.Wd3. However, a statistical score of more than 70% for White serves as a strong hint that Black will have to tread carefully.

I first found this move during the 2012 Olympiad in Istanbul, when GM Mladen Palac of Croatia deployed it against me. I failed to find the optimal set-up and was soundly defeated. After the event I conducted a deep investigation of the whole variation, but for a long time I was unable to find any clear-cut solution for Black. I kept an eye on the latest games, especially correspondence games which contained some extremely deep ideas. Eventually, by combining the ideas from those games with my own analytical work, I was able to make some sense of the chaos.

The theory of the 12.h4! variation is still in its infancy, which increases the likelihood of existing evaluations being overturned. For this reason, I have elected to cover a few different

approaches for Black, to enable the reader to understand the terrain.

12...Jd?

Developing the bishop looks natural, and has been the most popular choice so far: We will investigate it briefly in the present chapter, before moving on to what I consider Black's two most important tries.

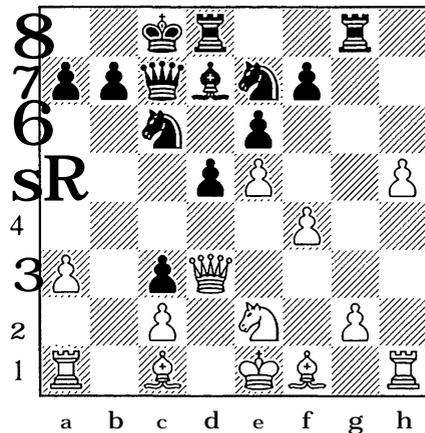
12...b6!? is a significant alternative which can be found in Chapter 12.

12...d4! is my main recommendation; see Chapter 13 for details.

13.h5 0-0-0 14.Wd3

J4.h6? allows 14...8g6!N when the queen is in trouble.

The text move transposes to a position that has often been reached via the move order 10...fbc6 (instead of my recommended 10...dxc3) 11.J.f4 11.d7 12.V.d3 dxc3 13.h4 (13.cxc3 is also critical) 14.0-0-0 14.h5.



14..1 f ?

Black's best move is 14...d4!, which will be considered later under the move order 12...d4! 13.h5 . d7 14.Wd3 0-0-0 - see Chapter 13 beginning on page 168.

The text move has been Black's most popular choice, but it favours White, and I will provide a few variations to show why this is the case. The following material is not strictly relevant to our repertoire for Black, but is included as useful background information, especially if you also happen to play the white side of these positions.

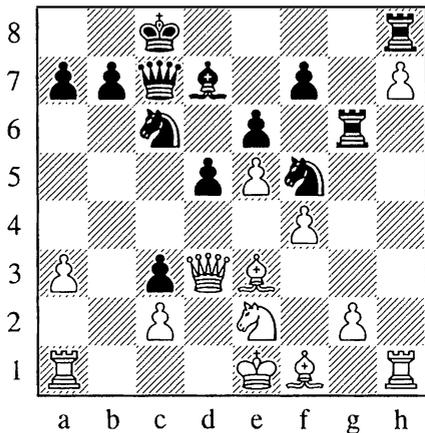
White can now choose between **A) 15.h6**, **B) 15\ xc3** and finally the most accurate **C) 15.fbl!**.

A) 15.h6

This was Leko's choice, but it should be fine for Black.

15...f6 16h? f8 17.. e3

Here Black has a simple improvement which was mentioned by Kritz in *ChessBase Magazine*.



17...dxe3!

17...d4? 18.f2 left White in full control in Leko – Bartel, Dortmund 2012.

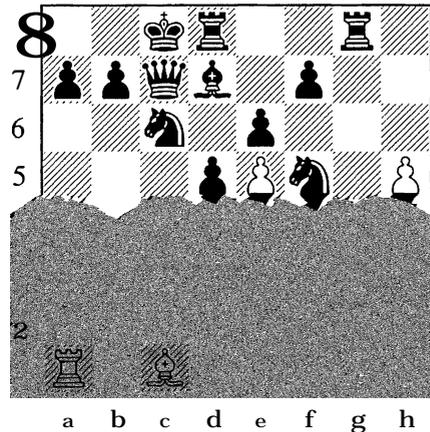
18Vxe3 f6 19.\ d3

Otherwise Black picks up the h7-pawn with a good position.

19..\ a5!

Guarding c3. Black has at least equal chances.

B) 15\ xc3



Objectively this may give White chances for an advantage, but it also offers Black good prospects for counterplay.

15..d4!

15..' b8 16.f6 17.f8 18.d2 d4 19.f4 b6 19.a4 Shyam – Sengupta, Aurangabad 2011.

16\ c4

16.f6 d3 a5! = intending ...a4 is fine for Black.

16..f !

Nisipeanu played this against Volokitin in 2012, but unfortunately the players immediately agreed a draw. Black is ready to give up another pawn in order to open the centre and exploit his lead in development.

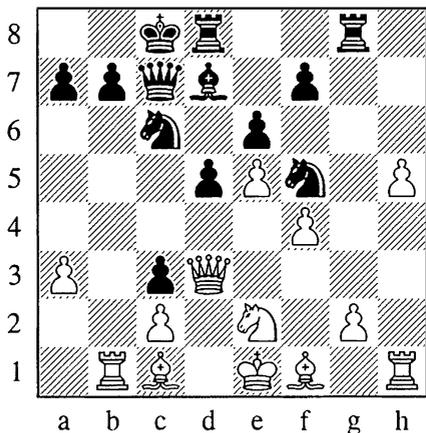
17.exf6 e5

White has a significant material advantage, and with computer accuracy he may stand better. However, in a game between humans the situation could be evaluated as highly unclear, with interesting counterplay for Black. One game continued:

18.Eb1 1 d6 19.Wb3 e4

With a sharp position and mutual chances Silin – Anderson, corr. 2012. (19..Eg8!N could also be considered.)

C) 15.Eb1!



Apart from improving the rook in a general sense, this move has the specific purpose of preparing $Eg1$ followed by $g2-g4$. If White tried $15.Eg1$ immediately then $15..Wb6!$ would take the sting out of that plan.

15..d4

Watson mentions $15..@b8$ $16.fxd$ $Eg4$ $17..,d2$ which is favourable for White.

15..Qa5!?

The idea of this move is to put the queen on $c5$ to control the $g1$ -square, but it does not work.

16.Eg1! 1 c4

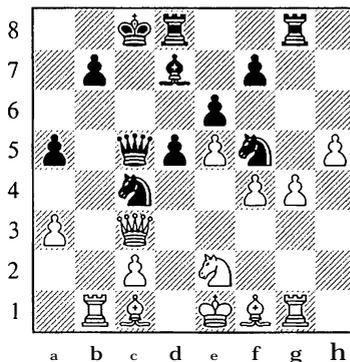
$16..Eg4$ is only a temporary solution, and after $17.g3$ followed by $\backslash.h3$ White is clearly better.

17.g4 Wc5 18.Wxd a5N

Preventing $17b4$ is Black's only try.

18. Qh4? 19.Eg3! b6 20.%4 Wc7 21. Wc7 led to a straightforward win for White in Edouard – Zhukova, Aix-les-Bains 2011.

18..1 h6? 19.g5! f5 20.\h3+ gives White an overwhelming position, as pointed out by Edouard.

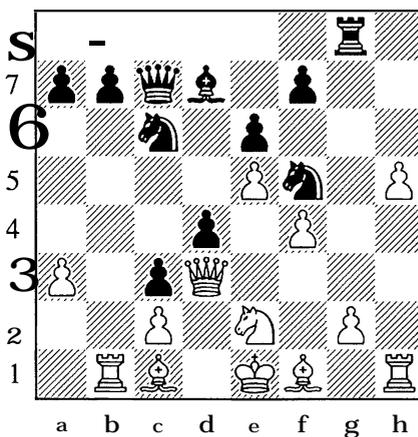


19.Wb3!?, c6

Edouard also mentions the lines $19..b6$ $20.gxf5$ $xg1$ $21.g1 \backslash Wg1$ $22.Wh3+$ and $19..b5$ $20a4$ $1 d4$ $21.1 xd4$ $Wxd4$ $22.Eg3$ $b4$ $23.h6+$.

$20.gxf5$: $xg1$ $21.g1 \backslash Wg1$ $22.f e6$ $fxe6$ $23.V h3+$

Analysis by Edouard.



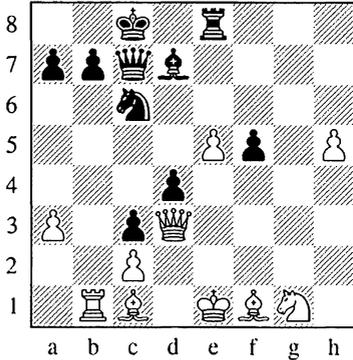
16.Eg1!

White intends to force through $g2-g4$. Black's only chance to complicate the game is with a central break, but analysis shows that White comes out on top.

16..Eg4

The computer initially rates this as equal, but after a few moves White's advantage becomes evident.

16...f6 is also insufficient: 17.g4 f e5 (17...l h6 18.exf6 g xg4 19.g xg4 l kg4 20.l kd4 l2.xd4 21.\ xd4±) 18.gxf5 g xg1 19.t kgl exf5 20.fxe5 geS



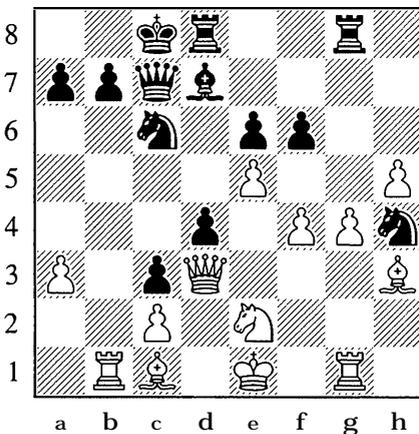
21.♙e2! ♖xe5 22.♔f1!± White's extra piece should decide.

17.g3 f6!?

17...Wb8 18i .h3 sees White's plan proceeding smoothly.

18i .h3Egg8 19.g4l h4

Kuipers - Ratsma, Vlissingen 2013. Here White should have played:



20.exf6N

After this move Black may get some practical swindling chances, but with accurate play White is simply winning.

20...eS 21.Wf !

The king should walk away from the e-tle as well as potential f rks on f3.

21...' b8 22.W4i .e6 23.gb5! S c4

23.. a6 is met by 24.g cS+ or 24.gxe5+ .

24.gxeS+

Black's counterplay has ended, and White's king is secure behind the massive wall of passed pawns. (24.l kc3! also works although a human player would most likely find it more complicated.)

Conclusion

In this short chapter we got acquainted with the 12.h4! variation, which I consider the most critical of all White's tries against the Poisoned Pawn. Black's most obvious reply is to develop and castle with 12...s d7 13.hS O O O. After the standard 14.i d3, Black has a couple of options.

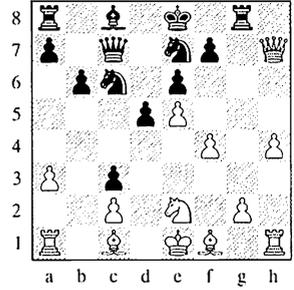
The best move is 14...d4!, transposing to the 12...d4! variation as considered later in Chapter 13.

In this chapter I analysed the inferior 14...l fS?, mainly to show some of the typical problems that Black should avoid. Neither 15.h6 nor 15.\ xc3 represents a serious challenge, but 15.gb1! is a different matter.

After that brief introduction to the 12.h4! variation, the remainder of the Poisoned Pawn section of the book will focus on Black's two most promising paths: 12...b6! and 12...d4!.

Chapter 12

Poisoned Pawn



12...b6!?

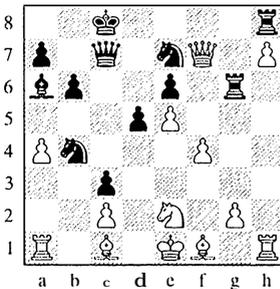
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♘xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♖g4 cxd4
8.♗xg7 ♗g8 9.♗xh7 ♗c7 10.♘e2 dxc3 11.f4 ♘bc6 12.h4!

12...b6!?

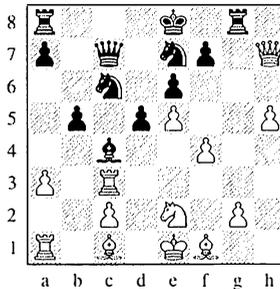
A) 13.h5N ♘a6!	153
A1) 14.♘e3?	153
A) 14.h6	154
B) 13.♗h3!?	157
C) 13.♘xc3!	160
C1) 13...♘xe5	160
C2) 13...♘d4	163
C21) 14.♗h3N	163
C22) 14.♘b2	164

A2) af cr 17...J h8



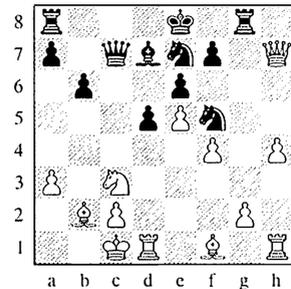
18J a2!!

B) after 15... b5



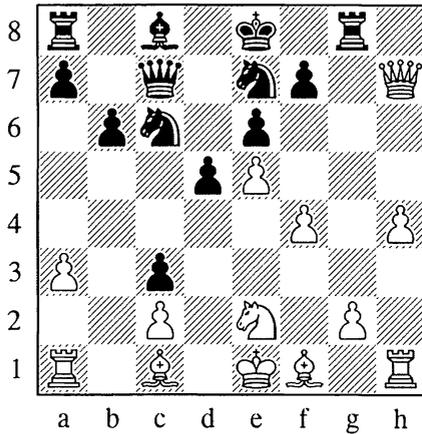
16hG7

C22) after 15...♘d7



16.g4!N

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3
 6.\xc3 7.bxc3 c e7 7.Wg4 cxd4 8.Wg7
 1.g8 9.Wxh7 We? 10.Ce2 dxc3 11.f4 Cbc6
 12.h4! b6!?



With this move Black plans to put his bishop on either b7 or a6. We have seen in several of the earlier chapters that, as a general rule, this method of development should be favoured when Black has time for it. I would like to make it clear that 12...b6 is not my primary recommendation against 12.h4!, but after consulting with my editor we decided to include a large chunk of my analysis anyway, as it contains many instructive points and theoretical improvements.

When I was making a substantial effort to repair the 12.h4! line for Black after my defeat at the Palac in the 2012 Olympiad, 12...b6 was the move I put my trust into. At that time it seemed to me that both 12...i d7 and 12...d4 were insufficient to reach equality. Now my opinion has changed, and I would like to present 12...b6 as an interesting sideline that might serve as a secondary repertoire choice. I should also mention that 12...b6 has been analysed by Watson in the fourth edition of *Play the French*, and that Vitiugov played it successfully in June 2013. However, on closer inspection I found neither the analysis

of Watson nor the game of Vitiugov to be entirely sufficient for Black. Nevertheless, it is still worth studying this line, if only to open your eyes to the range of tactical possibilities available to both sides. Besides, practical testing remains extremely limited, so perhaps you can build upon my analysis to find an improvement for Black somewhere.

We will consider three options: A) 13.h5N, B) 13:\ h3! and C) 13.Cxc3.

13.\ d3 d4 transposes to variation B of Chapter 8 on page 97.

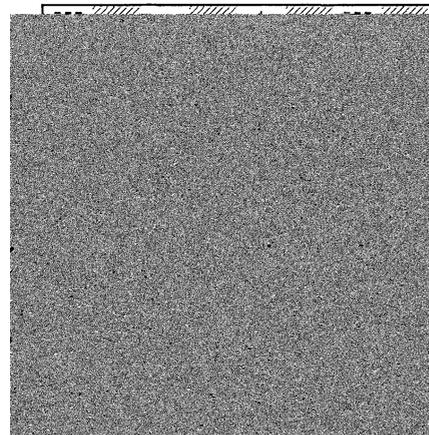
A) 13.h5N

This move has not been tested, for good reason. Now Black will have time to achieve the desired set-up on the queenside without suffering any repercussions.

13...i a6!

From here I have analysed the weak A1) 14.\ e3? for illustrative purposes, followed by the more sensible A) 14.h6.

A1) 14.i,e3?



Initially this is the computer's second choice, but it runs into a strong counter:

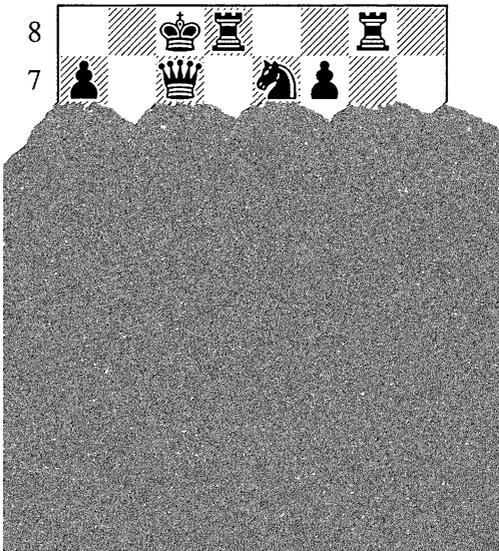
14...d4!

Sacrificing a pawn to open the game before White can establish a blockade on d4.

15. f2 0-0 16. xf (16. e4 d3 17.cxd3 \,xd' 18.iVa4 D6SK19.Ecl l d5+) 16...i d?t

Black has a powerful initiative and great attacking chances against White's king.

15... xf 16: xf l xd4 17. Qxd4 0-0-0 18 e4



19. a8t

19.Ed1 Cc6 +

19...t d7 20 Vf f

20.' xa? t' e8 +

20..' e8 21.

21.. e3 l f5 +

21.\,g1 l f5 22.EdI Exd1 j' 23' \,xdl Eg3

24. e2 \,9SCh, K

21...Ed2 22h6

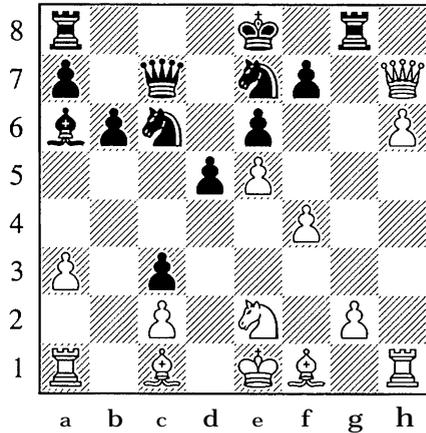
22.EdI Exg2! +

22.g3! d5 + Black is dominating the position and has already a decisive advantage.

22...Exg2! 23.h7 Eh2 +

White has avoided being checkmated, but Black is about to win a pawn while keeping a dominant position.

A2) 14.h6



Note that both here and in similar positions, the arrival of the pawn on h6 creates the deadly threat of f8g8! followed by h6-h7. In this case, Black has an easy way to avoid it.

14..0-0 15' xf Eg6!

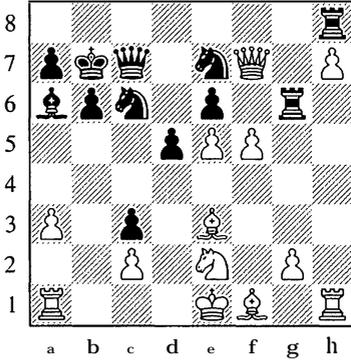
This smart move not only protects the e6-pawn, but also threatens to trap White's queen with ...Eh8 followed by ...l d8.

16.a4!

Preparing \,a3 is the only good way to save the queen. Such a defence would be almost impossible to find over the board, especially in conjunction with the amazing f8-up two moves later:

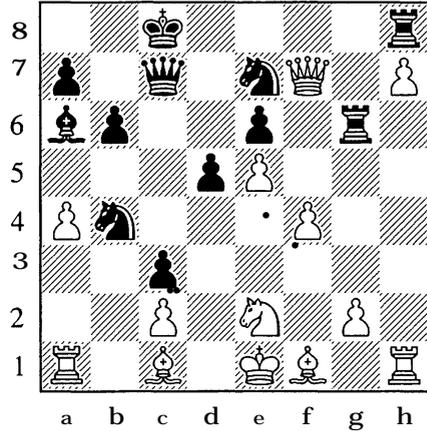
16.Eh3? Eh8 17.f5 (17.Exc3! c4 18.f5! xe5 transposes) 17...C xe5 18.Exd :.c4 19.. f4 (19.f gG l xf 20.gxf l g6+) 19...l xf 20.. xc7! xf5+

16.. d ?@ b7 17.h7? (17.4 d4 is the lesser evil, but af er 17...4 xd4 18.Jkd4 Jkf1 19.Exf1 8xh6+ intending ...8d7 Black is clearly better due t his piece activity and saf r king.) 17..8h8 18.f5! ? Otherwise ...4 d8 traps the queen. The text move looks like an interesting way t complicate the game, but Black can obtain a decisive advan age:



24...d4 + Despite being a f ul rook up, White is defenceless

17...8h8



18..4 xe5! 19.f g64 xf 20.g7 (20.gxf 4 f5 +) 20..8xh7 21.Exh7 Jke2 22.J ke2 ' g3!" 23J ' xg2+ Black controls the passed g-pawn and is about to move f rward with his strong pawn centre.

188a2!!

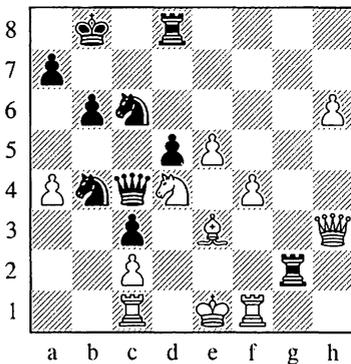
An amazing defensive resource. Only this computer-accurate def nce enables White to hold the balance.

18@d1? Yxe2f 19.. xe2' c5 + 18.Fa3 4xc2!" 19.<d1 Jke2i" 20.J ke2 20.<m1

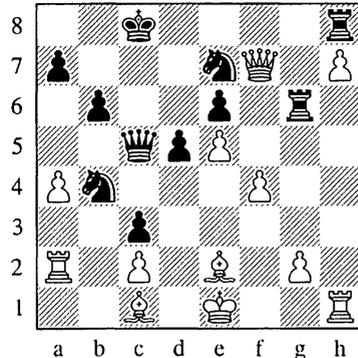
16..4 b4 17.h7

17.4 d4? meets with a convincing ref utation: 17...J kf1 18.Exf1 ' c4! 19.. d Exg2 20.' xeG!"< b8 21.Ecl 4 ec6! 22.' h3

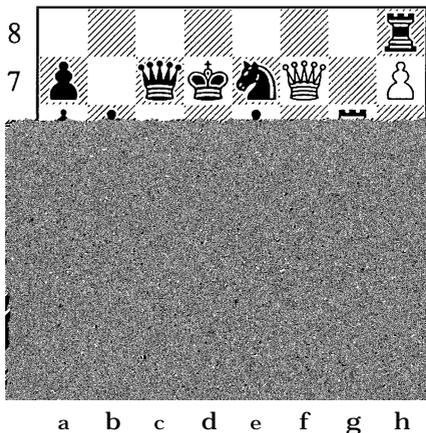
mi .dKÖBÖ xP P3@E @D à CBÀk



22...dxd4! 23.Wxg2 dxc2†! 24.Ëxc2 (24.çf2 d3† 25.çg1 dxe3 26.Wg5 Ëc8-+)



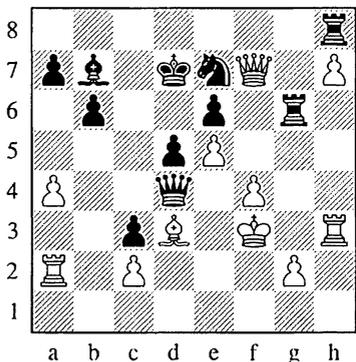
20.) f1!t xa2 21.f5! A Houdini-like escape, in every sense. 21... cxf5 (21... t xc1 22. a6! d8 23.fxg6 Wd4 24.g7 Wd1! 25. f2 Wd4t=) 22.. g5! gxg5 23.Wf6 b7 24. Vxh8 We3 25.Wf6 Wei 126. f2 V f4t 27.k f Wd1 =



19.g4!

Once again this is the only way through the minefield.

19. a ? Wc4 20.mf2 i Vc5t 21.mf3 . .b7 22.. ,xb4 \Vxb4 23.g h3 (23.mf2 i .a6 24.g h3 Wc5t 25.g.c3 1 h6 26.f5 18xh7 27.f.c6! ' ?7- + and Black crashes through.) 23...\ 5 24.t d4 Wxd4 25.k d3

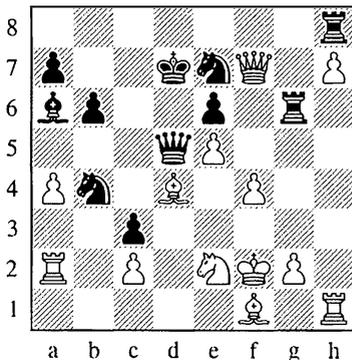


25... ♖xd3! 26.cxd3 d4† 27. ♔e2 ♞xg2†+

19.mf2? West 20.k c3 d4 2 uh d4

21.t xd4 Wd5 +

21... Wd5



22.f5

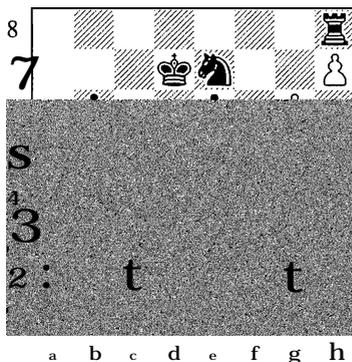
The best try, but it is not quite good enough.

22... xc2! 23.fxg6. xf1

23... Wxd4t is also good, but less convincing.

24.Wf3

24. xf1 i Vxa2- +



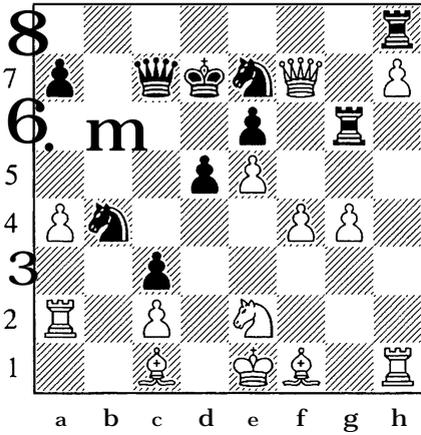
24...: f !! 25.g7

25.Wxf ? allows 25...\ xg2t followed by mate next move.

25.h8=W gxf3! 26.gxf3 Wxd4t 27.mxf1 \ c4j followed by ...Wxa2 is winning for Black, in view of the upcoming passed c-pawn combined with the ongoing attack against White's vulnerable king.

25..gxf3t 26.gxf3 Wxd4t 27.mxf1 t bd5 28.g8=W t xg8 29.hxg8=W t c3-1 30.mf2 Wd1 I 3J. g1 1 ci r 32. h2 Wf1 33. h3 Wxf 34.mh2 t g4t _5.Wxg4 Wxg4 +

Material is close to equal, but White's poor piece coordination means his two rooks are no match for the black queen.



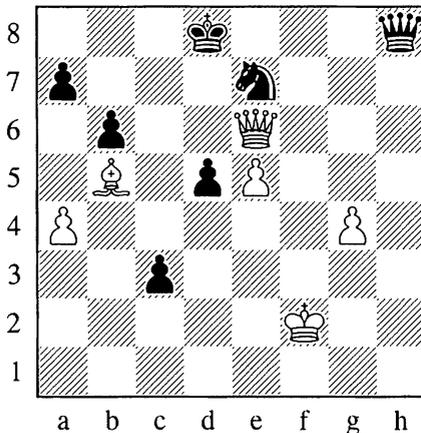
19..Wc4 20.f5 Wxa2

20..exf5 21.gxf5 g2 22.c d4! C d3t (22...♖xd4? would give White the upper hand following 23.i xg2 ♗xe5† 24.♔f2 ♕xa2 25.♙g5±) 23.♙xd3 ♗xd4 24.♗c6† e8 25.i .xaG ♗f2† 26.♔d1 ♗f3†= Black has no more than perpetual check.

21.f !?

21.f g6 ♗xc2 22.WxeGt ' ke6 23.♕d4† ♔xe5 24.♕xc2 ♕xc2† 25.♔d1 I xf1 26.g7 1hh7 27. xh7 C d4 is another route m a probable draw.

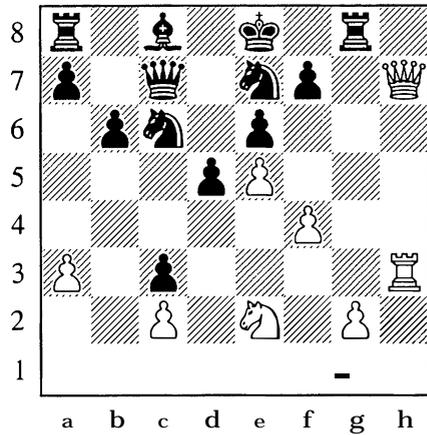
21...Cbc6 22.f e7 Cxe7 23.Cf4! Wxc2 24.i xa6Wkclt 25' f Wkh1 26. .bSt ' t8 27.c xg6Wkh7 28.Cxh8 Wkh8 29.Wxe6



29..Vh2t 30' f Whlt 31.Wf4 W64t 32.Wg3W63t =

The game ends in perper al check. 'f sum up, after 13.h5 White can narrowly survive, bur Black has excellent practical attacking chances and can choose between several routes leading m a draw with correct play.

B) 13. h3!?



This move was frst proposed by Edouard when annotating his 2011 game against Zhukova, as referenced in the notes m variation C of the previous chapter: Although it has scored well f r White, I believe it is nor the most critical.

13... a6!

13...d4!?

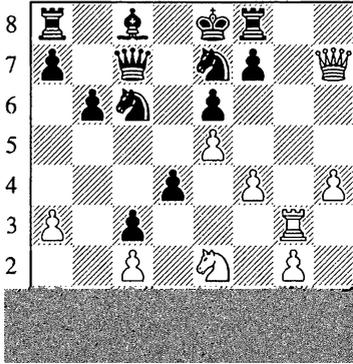
'Jhis move leads to wild complications. I produced some f scinating analysis rhar could fill several pages, bur since the main move is the one I ultimately f und more convincing, I will merely of er a brief summary of the alter ative, showing rhe general direction of the ensuing battle.

14. g3!

14.C g3N and 14.a4 are both playable, bur the text move is critical, and has achieved a perf ct score for White in fcu games on my database.

14...Ef !

'I le only move.



15.a4!

Edouard evaluated this position as better for White, and the computer agrees. However, a deeper analysis reveals that Black has plenty of resources to achieve counterplay, both in tactical and positional terms.

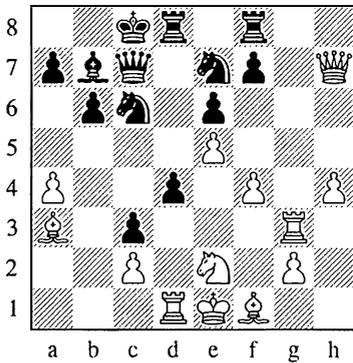
15... b7

The active and seemingly logical 15... a6 is slightly inferior for Black following: 16.\a3 0-0 17.Ed1! d3 18.Edxd3! \,xd3 19.Exd3

16.\a3 0-0 17.Ed1!

The critical continuation.

After 17.h5 \ d7! Black overprotects the pawn on e6, intending to go for ...: h8



17...d7!! 18.gxf8 xf8

I analysed this position exhaustively and found that Black was doing okay everywhere.

However, I eventually concluded that 13... a6! was the more convincing route to equality, as Black takes fewer risks while still obtaining dynamic counterattacking possibilities.

14.Exc3 c4

Warson gives 14...Ec5N when 15.l h4,\xf1 16. \xf1 l kd4! 17.Exc7 Exc7= is absolutely fine for Black, whose activity fully compensates for the sacrificed queen.

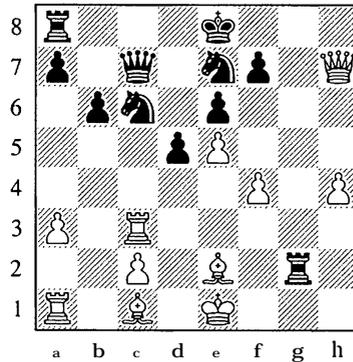
However, White can pose more problems with 15.l g3! threatening to invade on h5 and f6. Black can try to obtain counterplay with 15...Exg3!? (15...\xf1 16.c \xf1!) 16.Exg3 \xf1 17.'-\xf1 l f5, but after 18.%h3! l ke7 19.\ h5! @ xc2 20.@ e2± White is better.

14... xe2!N

'his interesting move was mentioned to me by Sandro Mareco.

15. ,xe2 Exg2

From a practical point of view, it could be argued that White has the more difficult task due to the lack of shelter for his king. However, strictly speaking Black falls short of equality.



16.c f1!

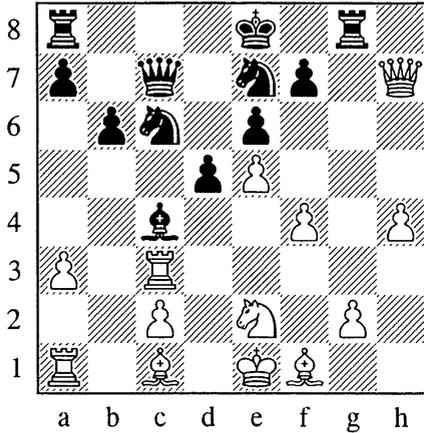
I also considered 16.\ h5 and 16.\,b5!?, but found that Black was doing fine in both cases.

16..Eg8 17.a4! 0-0 18. ,a3 b8

18..c b7! 19.a5! f5 20.axb6 axb6 21. a6!! c b8 22. b5 puts Black in trouble.

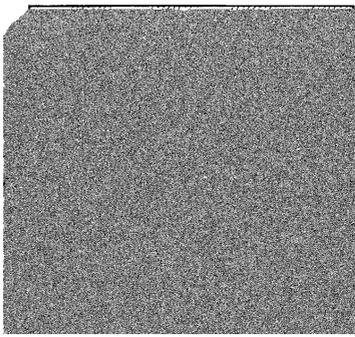
19.Wxf7 d4 20.8h3

The position remains complicated, but White's chances are higher.



15.h5

15.a4 is well met by 15...1 xe5! 16.fxex5 Wxe5 threatening ...8h8 to trap White's queen. 17.8xc4 (17. f4 \ f 18.\,g5 \ e5 19.i .f4= f res a repetition) 17...dxc4 18.c3 8h8 19.@ bl 1xh4 20.Wb5! Wxb5 21.axb5



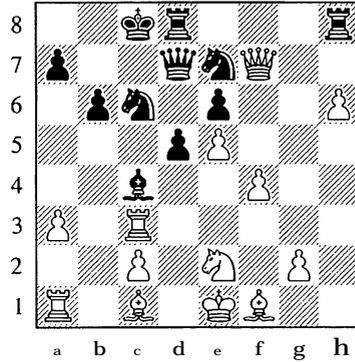
a b c d e f g h

21...8h5 22.1 d4 1 f5 23.1 xf5 8xf5 24.sxc4 k8 25.8a4 a6! 26.\,d3 8d5 27.@ d2 8cd8 28.8d4 axb5 29.8xd5 8xd5= A draw was soon agreed in Ferwick - Bell, corr: 2012.

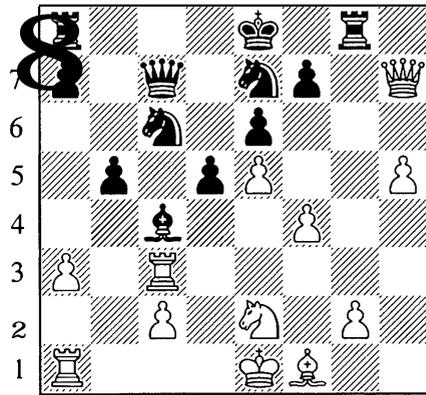
15...b5

This move has proved its reliability in a correspondence game. However, it is not the only playable option.

15...0 0 0!N is an interesting alternative: 16.\ xf \ d7 17.h6 8h8 Black is two pawns down, but White is still undeveloped and lacks coordination among his pieces. The continuation might be:



18.a4 (18.h7 8df 19.Wg7 We8 20.g4 gf 21.@ h6 Wd7 22.1h3 d4 intending ...1 d5) 18...1xh6 19.f5 8hh8 20.@ xex6 1 xf5 21.\ xd? t @ xd7 White has managed to force a queen exchange, but Black has regained one pawn while keeping some initiative.



16.h6!N

This seems like the critical attempt, advancing the pawn and threatening Wxg8!

The aforementioned game continued: 16.1g3 @ d7 17.8xg8 8xg8 18. .e3 1 f5 19.@ xg8 l2xe3 20.Wxf7+t 1 e? 21.hGWc5 22.h7 1 xc2!

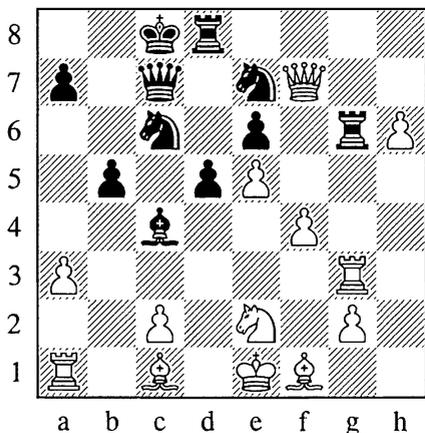
23. d1 c e3t \2 \2 Kraf – Volovici, corr: 2012.

16..0 0 0 17.' xf gg6!

We have already encountered the same idea in the earlier variation A2. The main threat is to trap the queen with ...gh5 followed by ...c d5. In this particular position, Black has the additional plan of simply capturing the h6-pawn.

18.gg3

Neither 18. e3 gxh6 nor 18.a4 b4 19.gg3 xh6 cause any problems for Black.



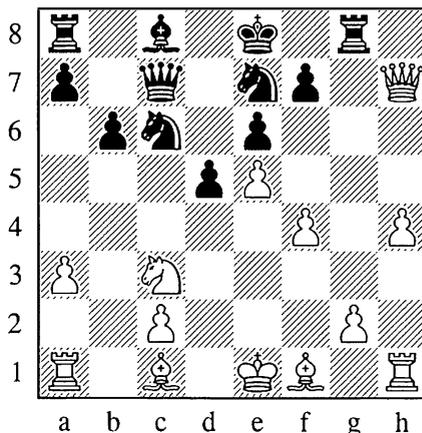
18...xh6 19.xh3 xg6 20.g4 dxg8 21.g5 cb7 22.d2

After a series of natural moves, Black now has an easy draw if he wants it.

22...g8g7 23' e8gg8=

Ambitious players could look for some way to play on for Black, although this would entail an element of risk, and objectively White would have chances to claim a slight advantage.

C) 13.c xc3



It may seem like a surprising choice, as the knight appears to be tactically vulnerable. On the plus side, however, White captures a pawn and threatens c b5, while preventing the enemy bishop from coming to a6. Ultimately the verdict boils down to hard analysis, and in this regard I have not been able to make Black's position work in the way I wanted. I will present my analysis of both C1) 13..c xe5 and C2) 13..l d4.

13...a6 prevents the annoying knight jump to b5, but is rather slow. After 14. b2 c a5 15.0 0 0 c c4 16.g h3 ,b7 17.c e2 White is clearly better:

C1) 13..c xe5

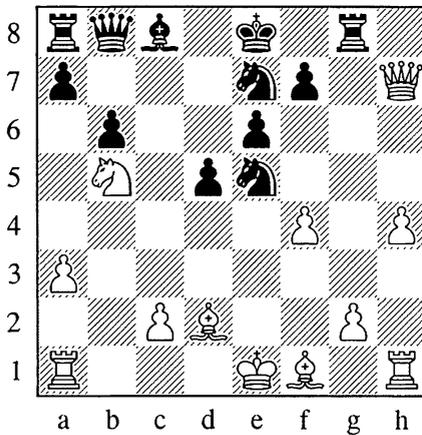
Winning back the pawn is the first idea to consider. In the analysis that follows, the general picture is that Black comes close to equality in several lines, but White always keeps a slight initiative.

14.l b5i b8 15. d2!N

It is worth mentioning briefly that neither 15. ,e2 c g4 nor 15.f e5' xe5! 16.it dl ' xal (16...a6=) 17.< d T i dS 18.c xAS e5 pose any problems for Black.

15.h5 is a serious candidate which was tested in two correspondence games in 2012. Black managed to draw both games, but it was far from an easy walk in either of them: 15... d7 (15...a6 16.1 d4 \ d6 17.1 e2!g4 18.h6 1 f 19.Wd3t was seen in Quattrocchi - Moncher, corr: 2012.) 16.a4 a6 17.1 c3 \ c7 18.l2e2 1 5c6 19.h6; Jemec - Liebert, corr: 2012.

The text move is a new idea I analysed. It is hard to say if it is a genuine improvement over 15.h5, but it is certainly another way of posing problems to Black.



15...d7

I considered three other knight moves.

15...1 d7 16.h5 a6 17.1 d4 C f6 transposes to the main line below.

15...1 c4?! i6. xc4 dxc4 17.h5! gxc2 18.0-0-0 d7 19.\ h8!" g8 20.Wb2 1 b6 21.m14±

15.K1 5c6!?! i6.h5 e5

16...a6 17.1 c3 f5 18.h3t

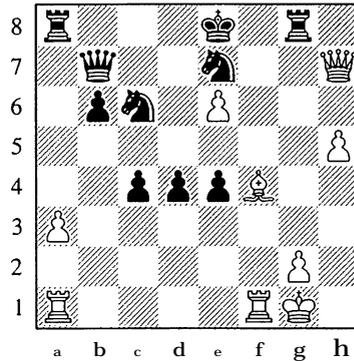
"The text move looks like a good attempt to fight for the initiative, but White has some powerful tactical resources.

17.c4! d4

17...exf4 18.cxd5 We5! 19.1 f2 Wxal 20.dxc6t

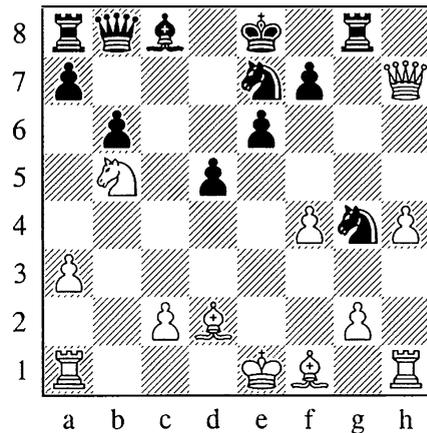
18.1 h6! e6

18...1 d7 19.\ f6 a6 20.1 c3 dxc3 21.. kxc3+ 19.1 d3 a6 20.f5! axb5 21.f e6 f5 22.0-0 e4 23.1 .f4 \ b7 24.1.xe4! f e4 25.\ h7 bxc4



26.. k7! 1 e5! 27.1 ke5 0-0-0 28.1 f4 e3 29.1 a2! d5 30.\ c2 b5 31.gxd4±

The crazy tactics have subsided and White remains on top.



16.h5 a6

16...e5?? is refuted by: 17.♙b4! ♙f5 18.♘d6† ♖xd6 19.♙b5† ♔d8 20.♖xg8† ♘xg8 21.♙xd6+±

17.1 d4! f6

17...e5?! 18.1 c6+±

18.1 d3! e4

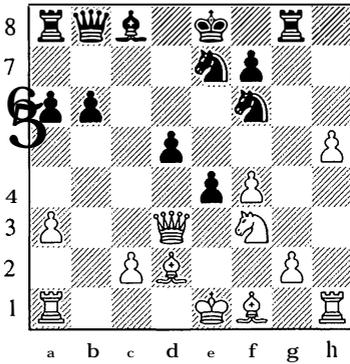
Black can try the immediate central push:

18...e8 19. f3!

19. f3. Black is well developed and has a powerful initiative. White's passed h-pawn can now also easily be blocked by ... h7 if necessary.

19...e4

19...e4 20. c3 d4 21. b3



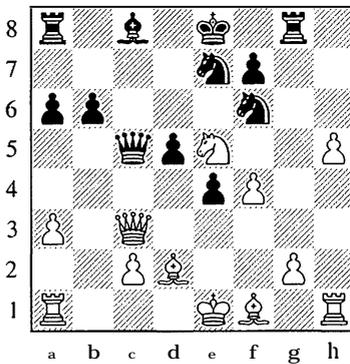
20. fc3Wd6

20...exf3 is riskier: 21. Wxf6 f g2 22. hg2 8xg2 23.h6 Eg6 24.h7 8xf6 25.h8=Wt ' g8 26.Eg1! (26.i h gSt? © d7 27.EhS Wd6+) 26...© d7 27.ExgS Ee6t 28.© dl Wc7 29.fS 8e4 30. f8 © c6 31.Eb1- ' f e black king is f r from comfortable.

21.c eS WcS

21...e6 22. b2 is good f r White.

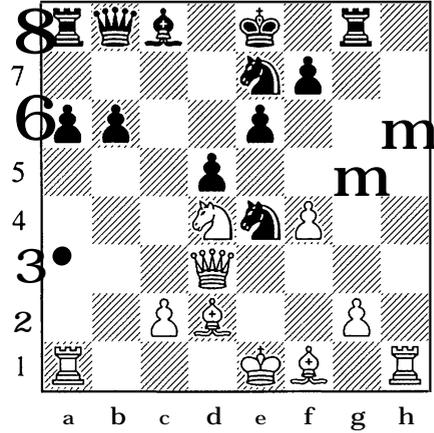
Another possibility is: 21... fS 22.h6 EhS 23.g4 e3 24. ,xc3 d4 25.Wb3 ' xc3 26. Vxf t © ds 27.Wgn



22. ' xcS bxcS 23.Eb1 ' fS 24.h6 e3 25.l cl

' g3 26.h7 Eh8 27.Eh6 Exh7 28.Exh7 ' xh7 29.S xe3 ' xfl 30. xfl d4 31. f2±

I am pretty sure that Black can hold this endgame; nevertheless, White can continue to press without risking much.



19.h6e5

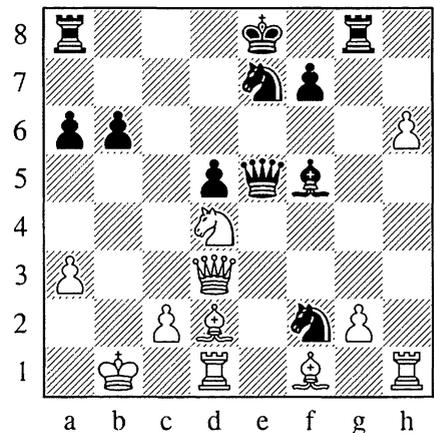
19...V cn is playable f r Black, but it is hardly the most inspiring way to conduct the position.

20.f e5' xe5 21.0 0 0. f5

21...' f2 is too greedy, and 22. Vc3 dxdl (22...' xh1? 23. Ee1+) 23. dxdl is virtually winning f r White.

22.© bl! ' f

22...h7 23. b4 a5 24' bSt f fs 25' c6 ' c3! 26. \xc3 Vxc3 27.' c4±



23.t xf t xdl

23...t xd3?? 24. xd3+-

24.t d6! f

24...\ xd6 25.h? : h8 26.\ f3

25.\ b3 Wxd6 26.\ f

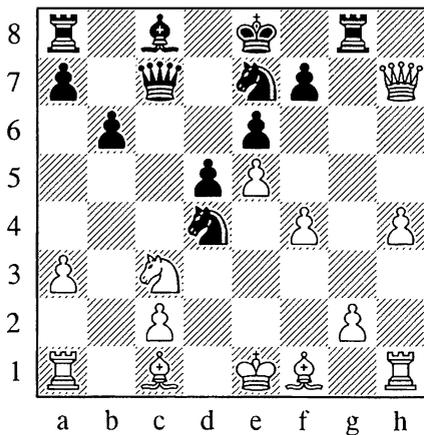
After picking up the loose knight White will still be an exchange down, but his strong bishops and passed h-pawn mean it is Black who is struggling to equalize.

26...Eg3 27.\ xdl Exa3 28.h7 Wg7 29. h6t

h8 30.\ d4t f 31. g5 E 8 32.Eh6 t c6 33. x6t Vx 34.\ xf6t Exf6 35.Exf6 t eS 36.Exb6' xh7 37.: d6

White picks up a pawn and can continue pressing for the win, although the reduced material of hers Black good drawing chances.

C2) 13..t d4



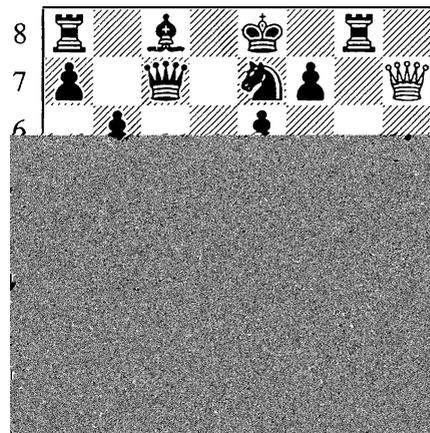
This multipurpose move activates the knight, protects the b5-square and opens the c-f file for the black queen. The resulting position can be compared with variation C of Chapter 7, the only difference being the inclusion of the moves h2-h4 for White and ...b6 for Black. Unfortunately, the addition of these moves slightly favors the first player.

White has two main tries: C21) 14.Eh3N and C22) 14. b2. We will analyse them both after quickly dismissing a couple of weaker alternatives:

14.\ d3? leaves White far too passive after 14...t ef5 when Black threatens ...Eg3 and ... a6. Here the inclusion of the aforementioned pawn moves clearly favors Black.

After 14.t b5? t xb5 15. x b5f: d7 16. .xd. t Wxd7+ the simplifications clearly favor Black; he is fully developed while White stands with a naked king in the centre along with multiple weaknesses.

C21) 14.Eh3N



This is the only move mentioned by Watson, and is the top suggestion of my computer engine.

14...\ cS

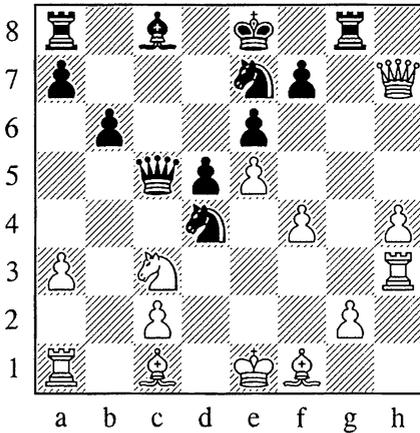
A useful move, activating the queen along the c5-g1 diagonal as well as preventing the knight jump to b5. Watson gives this move as interesting without any further analysis.

14... b? gives White a pleasant choice:

a) Watson analyses 15.t b5 \ xc2 16.\ d3 \ xd3 17.t d6! d7 18. .xd3s.c6 19. e3t df5

20.cxf5 txf5 21.♙xf5 exf5 which he assesses as drawn. However, after 22.g3 White can press for a long time, having a dangerous passed h-pawn and a better pawn structure. Going back a few moves, White can improve with 19. f2! when there is no need to enter an endgame with opposite-coloured bishops.

b) 15.Wd3! is another good solution, when White is slightly better:



15.♙b2!

Preparing for 0-0-0 and possibly ♖d3. Note that the immediate 15.♖d3? ♙a6! is excellent for Black.

15.a4 is countered by 15...Eg6! blocking White's queen and threatening the pawn on c2. I analysed this in some depth and concluded that Black is okay, but I will not go into details as the main line is the real problem.

15..l df !?

Cutting off White's queen and threatening an invasion on e3. This is a decent attempt to cause problems, but ultimately it is insufficient.

15... b7 16.0-0-0 favours White.

15..)f8 is worth considering in such positions, the main idea being to protect the rook on g8, thus enabling Black to activate

the e7-knight. Unfortunately White keeps the upper hand after 16.0-0-0! (16.Wd3? is well met by 16...a6!) 16...t ef5 17.Wh5± intending g2-g4.

16! bS!

Exposing the drawback of Black's last move.

16..Eg?

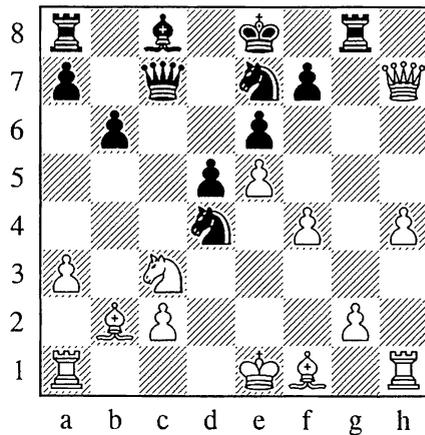
16..V xc2? allows 17.c d6t as the f5-knight is pinned.

17.i h8t Eg8 18Whs

The queen reruns to civilization and White has a clear advantage, for instance:

18..' xc2 19.' e2Vke2t 20.\ke2±

C22) 14. b2



White intends to go for long castling. Initially the computer indicates that Black is doing fine, but a deeper investigation paints a more pessimistic picture.

14..l df !

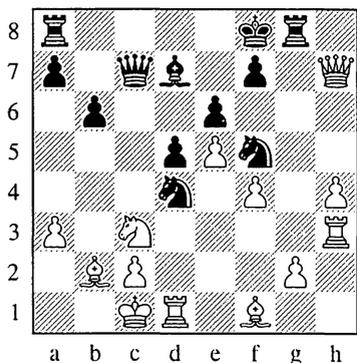
The best try. Black cuts off the enemy queen while avoiding tactics connected with 1 xd5. Here are a few other moves I checked:

14..a6 15.0-0-0 1 df5 transposes to 15...a6 in the notes to the main line below.

14... d7 gives White additional options such as 15.Wd3!? (There is also 15.O-O-O when 15...Cdf5 transposes to the main line.)
 15...ll df5 (15...Cef5 16.Eh3±) 16.h5 Lg3 17.Wd2±

14...Wc5 15.O-O-O d7 16.cxd5! (16.Wd3 cdf5 17.Eh3t is also good for White) 16...exd5 17.l,xd4 xa3! 1S..! b2 1Vc5 (1S...Wb4 19.Exd5±) 19.Wd3±

14...< f 15.O-O-O Cef5 16.Eh3!
 16.Wh5 Cg7 (16...1Vc5 17.Eh3±) 17.Wh7 ll gf5=
 16..jl d7
 16... b7 17.Exd4! Cxd4 1S.Cb5 Cxb5 19.a4!!+- is a beautiful variation.



17.a4! ♖c5 18.♞d2 ♜e7 19.♞b5 ♞xb5 20.axb5 ♞e3
 20...♞h8 21.♞xh8! ♞xh8 22.♞a3+-
 21.f5! exf5 22.♞h6 f4 23.♞f3 ♞g4 24.♞xf4 ♞xf4 25.♞xf4±

15.O-O-O

15.Cb5 leads to a forced draw after 15... fxc2 16.c d6j © ds 17.Cxf t © eS 1S. b5t (or 1S.c d6t © dS=) 1S.... d7 19.C d6! © dS 20.C bl t < eS and White must give a p rpe al: 21.c d6t=

15.. ,d?

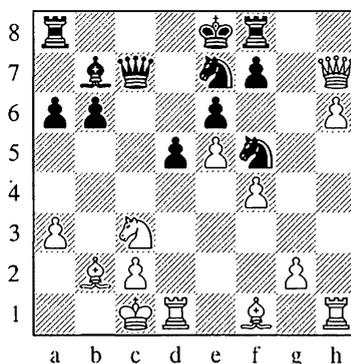
Black has ro guard against C b5.

Black also f ils to solve his problems af er:

15...a6 16.h5! . b7 17.h6 ms

Black has nothing better; f r instance:

- a) 17...d4? 18.♞xg8† CxgS 19.h7 © e7 20.ll b5! axb5 21.hS=I . \e4 22.. d3+-
- b) 17...© f 1S.Eh3 d4 19.g4 C e3 20.Exe3 dxe3 21.C e4 . \ke4 22.Wxe4±
- c) 17...O-O-O !S.Wx17 © bS (1S...d4 19.h7 EhS 20.Eh3! © bS 21.g4 C e3 22.Exe3 dxe3 23.Exd5! WxdS 24. d3+-) 19. d3 Egf 20.Wh5 d4 21.ll e2 . kg2 22.Eh2 \ d5 23.. xf5 C xf5 24.c xd4±



1S.g4!N

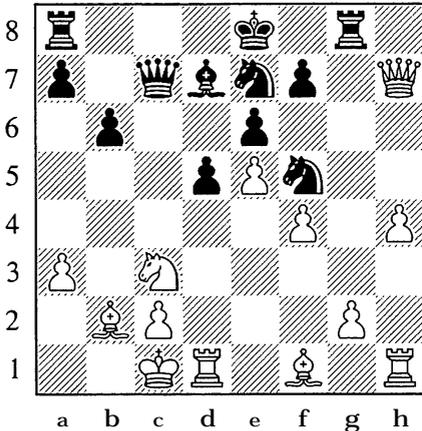
White has a pleasant choice. The t rxi move is a tactical solution that works well.

The f llowing positional plan worked well in a correspondence game: 1S.C e2 C e3 19.C d4 C 7f5 20. d3 C xc4 21. xd4 C xd 1 22.© xd 1 O-O-O 23.Wg7 Eg8 24.Wf6 EhS 25.h7 EceS 26.f5! .k6 27.f e6 fxe6 2S. g6 1-O R. Bauer - Dor er; corr. 2012.

18..d4

1S...O-O-O 19.gxf5 Cxf5 20.. d3 EhS 21.\xf5+-
 19.Eh3 O-O-O 20.gxf5 Cxf5 21.C a4! . b4 21..EhS 22.WxhS ExhS 23.. kd4 C xc4 24.Exd4 < bs 25.Ec3 Wc7 26.c xb6 Wh4 27..Wxa6! xa6 2S.C d7!+-
 22.J,d3 .xd3 23.Edxd3 EhS 24. fxhS!
 24.C xbGt lb7 25.c d5Exh7 26J b3t < c6 27.C xc7 © xc7 2S.Eb4t
 24...ExhS 25.. kd4±

Returning to the text move, I regard this as another critical position for the 12...b6 line. Initially the computer signals 0.00, but a deeper inspection reveals that White is clearly better. The fact that Yitiugov defeated Potkin with Black in a rapid game does not change this reality, especially after the following improvement.



16.g4!N

By opening the g file White gets a dangerous attack.

The spectacular 16.Exd5!N is playable, but only leads to a draw after further complications.

16.l b5!? . xb5 17.. xb5t Wf J&I d3 ' c5 19. 7b1 Ec8 20.h5 Cd 21.g4!?! kd1 22.Exd1 Exg4 was seen in Porkin - Yitiugov, Khanty-Mansiysk (rapid) 2013. At this point 23.hgN W8 24.f5 would have kept some initiative for White.

Initially my big idea was to improve on the above game with 18.g4!N. 1 l is causes Black some problems, although the second player does have the additional option of 18...Ec5, forcing 19.k d3. Without going into full details, Black is actually in some trouble here too, but the immediate 16.g4! is slightly more accurate as Black is deprived of the ...Ec8 option.

16..Exg4

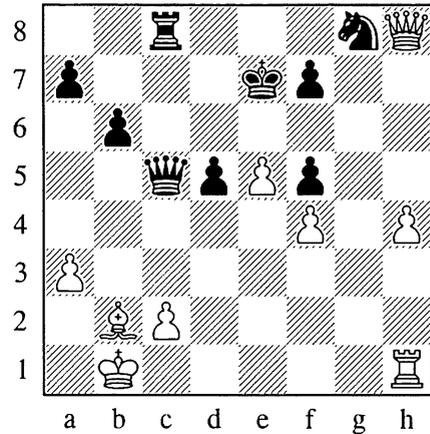
In the event of 16..Eg7 17. W5 l g3 the intermediate 18.l b5! turns out well for White.

16...l d 17.l b5! \.kb5 18. ,xb5t Wf 19.\.d3! l kd! 20.Exd1 ' c6 21.g5± Black's position is a sorry sight, despite the extra exchange.

17.l bS! . xb5 18.\.kbSt Wf 19. dgl c8 20\ hSt!

The immediate 20. ld3 is less convincing due to 20...l g3

20..EgS 21.) xgSt l kg8 22.\.d3 Vcs 23.Wbl We7 24.. xf exf



25.e6! ♖xc2† 26.♔a2! ♜c4† 27.♔a1 ♜e4 28.♞g1 ♜xe6 29.♞xg8 ♞xg8 30.♜xg8 ♜e1† 31.♔a2 ♜xh4 32.♜b8+-

Conclusion

We have seen in some earlier chapters that Black often does well to develop his bishop on b7 or a6 when the opportunity arises. With that in mind, it makes sense to investigate 12...b6!?. When I first started putting serious work into finding a solution against 12.h4!, this was my main source of hope. At the time of writing, however, I would only recommend it as a surprise weapon.

From the point of view of strict repertoire choices, I could have omitted this chapter entirely from the book. However, the process of analysing 12...b6!? has helped me to better understand these positions in general, and I hope the readers will be able to derive a similar benefit. The chapter also contains some important theoretical improvements which improve on existing games and sources; it is just a pity that most of the improvements are for White!

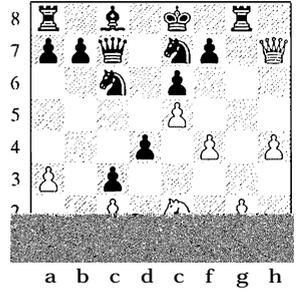
We began by analysing 13.h5N, which is not at all dangerous, and in fact after 13... a6! White has to play accurately to stay on the board. 13.Eh3!? is a better move, but 13... .a6! seems like a convincing equalizer:

So far, so good, but it is with 13.l kc3! that the real problems appear. 13... c5 captures an important pawn, but enables White to keep some initiative. 13...l c4 is the move I would have liked to see working, but my analysis shows that both 14. h3N and 14. .b2 pose serious problems for the second player.

Despite the generally negative outlook, 12...b6!? could still find a place in a French player's repertoire, as long as the critical 13.⌘xc3! is met by 13...l ke5. Here the theoretical verdict is not too bad; Black is only slightly worse, and there are a number of lines leading to endgames where Black is under a bit of pressure but should be able to hold a draw with careful defence.

Chapter 13

Poisoned Pawn



12. d4!

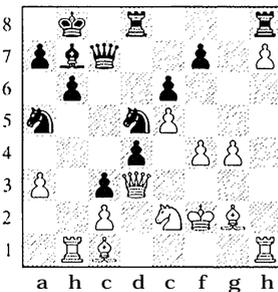
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♘xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♙g4 cxd4 8.♙xg7 ♜g8 9.♙xh7 ♙c7 10.♘e2 dxc3 11.f4 ♘bc6 12.h4! d4! 13.h5

13...♙d7

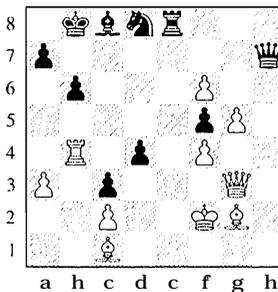
A) 14.♙d3 0-0-0 15.♞b1 ♘b8!	169
A1) 16.h6	170
A) 16.♘g3	172
B) 14.h6 0-0-0 15.♙d3 ♘b8! 16.h7 ♞h8	173
B1) 17.g4 ♙c8 18.♙g2 b6	175
B11) 19.♞h3	175
B12) 19.♘f2!?N	176
B2) 17.♞b1! ♙c8	177
B21) 18.a4!?N	178
B22) 18.♘f2 b6	178
B221) 19.♘g3	179
B222) 19.a4	180

B 12) nrrc ! 21hxb7



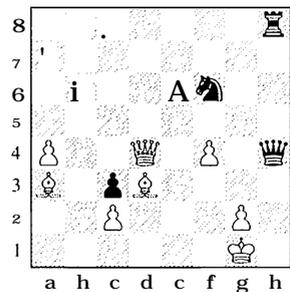
22...i d!

B221) afcr 27.Wg3



27...d.!

B222) af c 28I xh6!!



28... b7!

In my commentary for ChessBase Magazine 151, I wrongly awarded 15...t f5?! an exclamation mark. However, a deeper analysis has revealed that White holds at least a slight advantage. You can find this position analysed under the move order 12... \ d7 13.h5 0-0-0 14.V d3 C f5?! 15.1 b1! d4 - see variation C of Chapter 11, where 16.1 g1! was shown to be good for White.

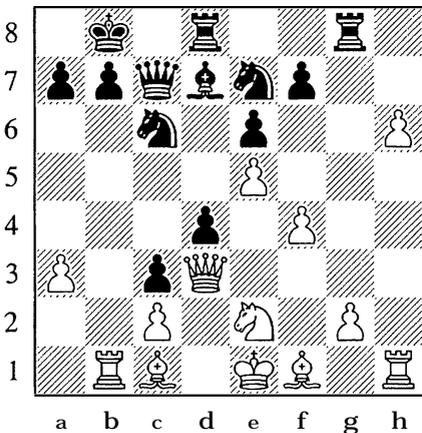
15...£,eS!?! is playable, and after the likely 16.h6 we reach a position that can occur via the move order 14.h6 0-0-0 15.' d3 . e8!?! (15..1 b8! is my recommendation, as found on page 174) 16.1 b1.

From here I find that Black has reasonable prospects after 16...4 d5!, but I will say no more about this as I do not want to get too distracted from the main line.

The king move is Black's strongest continuation, and was my choice in the 2012 game against Palac. When I annotated the game for ChessBase Magazine 151 I assessed it as dubious, but later I came to understand that the unfavourable result only occurred due to my subsequent mistakes.

White can choose between A1) 16.h6 and A2) 16.t g3.

A1) 16.h6



If White wants to push this pawn to h7, it is more accurate to do so at the earliest convenience, as seen in variation B below. The placement of the rook on b1 and king on b8 may seem like a trivial difference, but it gives Black a useful extra possibility.

16...1 g6!

16...J c8 17.h7 1 h8 transposes to the critical variation B2, as discussed later on page 177. According to my analysis Black should be okay there, but the text move leads to a more comfortable form of dynamic equality. The main advantage is that the rook remains active on the g-file, rather than being driven to the passive h8-square. White's h-pawn may also become a target. The significance of the king on b8 will become apparent a few moves later in the main line below.

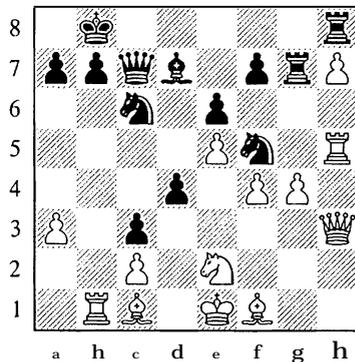
17.h7 1 h8 18.0xd4N

Grabbing the pawn must be the critical test, while there is still time for it.

18.1 h5!?

This was seen in a correspondence game from 2012. The move is not bad, but Black found a convincing answer:

18...t f5 19. %1 g7 20.g4



20...d3!

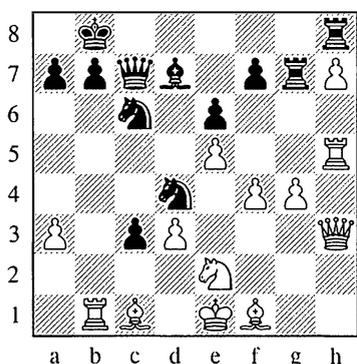
The key move which guarantees Black's counterplay.

21.cxd3!?

21.Wxd3 is safe: 21...g4 22.Wxd \,e5 23.h3 g7 24. e3 The following series of exchanges resulted in a quick draw: 24...cxd 25.Wxe3 Egxh7 26.! xh7 l xh7 27.. g2 ! g7 28.Wf2 ' a5 29.' d4 Y2 Y2 Lucki - Sviridova, corr: 2012.

21...l fd4

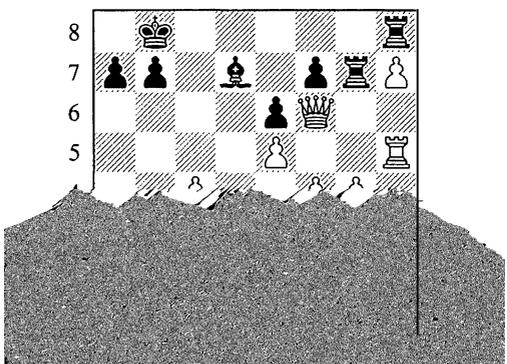
Black's activity compensates for the sacrificed pawn, and the passed c-pawn has the potential to create a lot of trouble for White. Here is one entertaining line I analysed:



22.♔f2 c2 23.♖b2 ♖xe2 24.♙xc2 ♖d4 25.♖b4 ♜c3 26.♜h4

26.♖c4! ♜a1 27.♜e3 ♖xe2 28.♔xe2 ♖xg4 leaves the white king in some danger.

26...♖b3 27.♖c4 ♜xc4 28.dxc4 ♖xc1 29.♜f6!



29...' ♖xe2!?

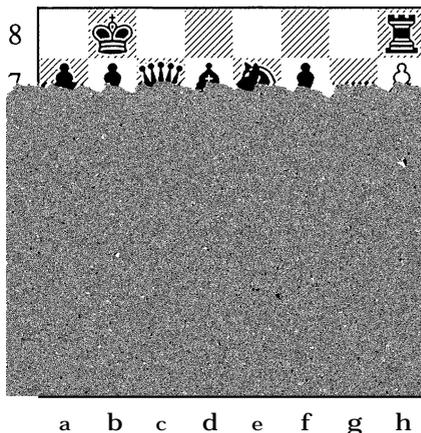
The simpler solution 29...g4 30.l xh7 8xh7 31.Wd6t \,c5 32.Wd6t was 33.Wf Wb5 34.Wd6! also leads to a draw.

30.Wxg7 c1=' f3! f xh5! f Wc7 32.Wf Wxf4!"

33. ♖xe2 We4! =

With perpetual check to follow.

18...l2xd4 19.Wxd4



19...l f5i

Black has obvious compensation for the sacrificed pawn in view of his better development, safer king and active piece play. Here is where we finally appreciate the value of the king on b5: the a7-pawn is defended! If Black tried the same ...! g6 scheme in the analogous variation B (in which the white rook stands on a1 and the black king on c5), the reply Wxa7 would give White the advantage.

20.Wg1!?

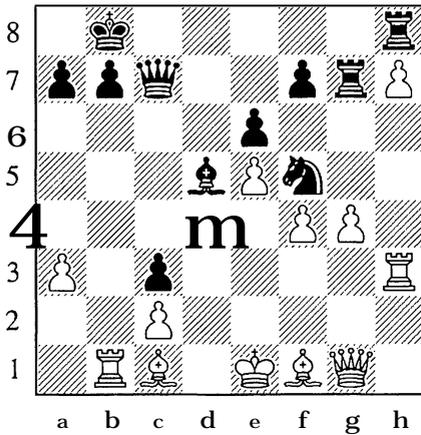
From this slightly unorthodox square the queen is ready to support the g2-g4 push at some moment.

20.Wb4 c6 gives Black a promising initiative.

20.Wf c6 puts pressure on the g2-pawn, restricting White's development. An obvious plan for the next few moves is ...g-g? followed by taking on h7.

20... c6 21.! h3! g7 22.g4. d5

Defending c3 and preventing ! b3.



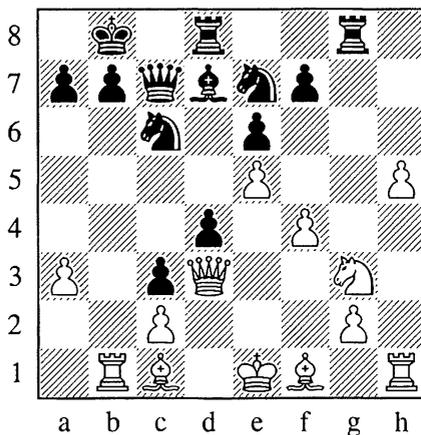
23.EbS

23... d3? is a mistake in view of 23...2g, h7 24.2xh7 2xh7+ when the threat of ...Eh1 tactically protects the knight on f5.

23... \ d8 24.2c5. ,e4

Black has ongoing counterplay and intends ...t d4 or ...h c2 next.

A1) 16.t g3



White continues his policy of activating the pieces. 111is was the critical position where I went wrong against Palac.

16..t f !N

On the previous turn the same knight move was a mistake, but here it is much more logical.

Black challenges the knight on g3 and guards the d6-square. This would be my first choice, but it is worth mentioning a few other ideas.

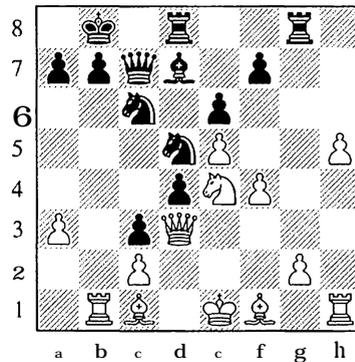
I tried J6..F c8? 17.t e4 t xe5 18.fx5 V xe5 in the hope of getting compensation for the piece, but after 19.\ f t d5 20.\ 4 White was much better in Palac - Berg, Istanbul (ol) 2012.

16...t d5!N

This is an interesting alternative, aiming for an improved version of the piece sacrifice I used against Palac. There might follow:

17.t e4

17.h6 f5! 18.exf6 t xf4t gives Black plenty of activity.



17...t xe5! 18.fxc5

18.\ xd4 t g4 19.t c5 t b6 20.\ xc3 \c6 21.h6 f5 Black has the safer king and the easier game.

18...\ xe5 19.\ e2 f,c6

Black's development advantage and piece activity, along with the two extra pawns, fully compensate for the sacrificed piece.

Finally, 16...f5!N is also playable, albeit rather complicated. There might follow 17.exf6 t d5 18.h6 e5 (or 18...t xf4t) 19.h7 2h8t with a complicated position that I would evaluate as more dangerous for White, who still has most of his pieces on the first rank while the centre is about to open up.

17. Ckf5

17. V e4 is well met by 17... Qce7 intending ... Qc6 or ... Qd5.

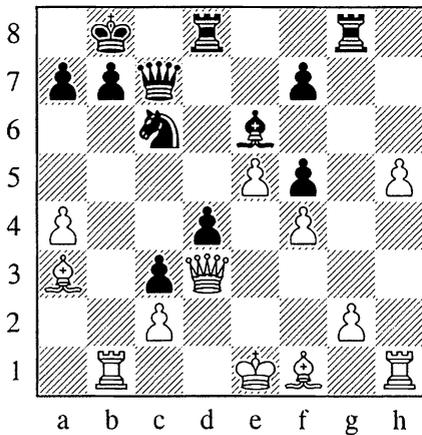
17... exf

Black is at least equal, as shown by the following illustrative lines

18. a4

White has to get his dark-squared bishop into the game somehow.

18... NleG 19. i a3



19... Qa2! 20. Bd1

20. Qd6? Bxd6 21. exd6 Qxd6 22. Bb5 Qd5 gives Black a crushing initiative.

20. Ba1 is met by 20... Qd5+ intending 21. Qd6? Bxd6 22. exd6 Qxd6+ when Black crashes through.

20. Bb5 aG 21. Qd6 Bxd6 22. exd6 Qxd6 23. Bxf5 I eG+ is also excellent for Black: 24. Qf2 Qb4 25. Qh3 Qxc2 26. Bc5 Qd6+ White is in trouble.

20... fG!

One way or another, the e-f file will soon be opened.

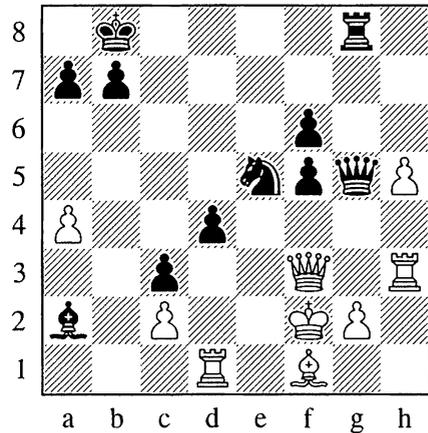
21.. HG

21. exf6? Qxf4 is a wf d f r White

21... gxd6 22. exd6 Wxd6 23. ' f

23. Qxf5?? We7! +

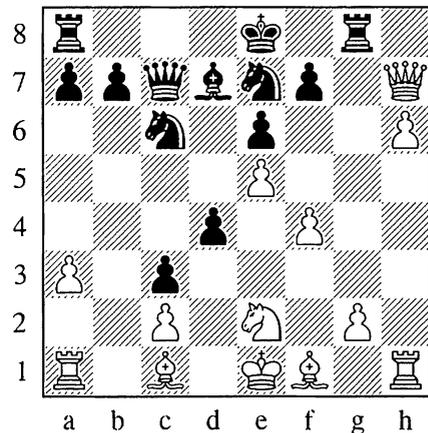
23... Wxf4t 24. Wf Wg5 25. gh3 Ce5



26. Qg3 Qh6 27. Qh2 Bg4+

Black dominates the board with his strong pieces and pawns.

B) 14. h6



14... 0-0-0

Nothing else makes any sense, especially as the familiar pseudo-sacrifice on g8 was threatened.

15.Wd3

The queen retreats to the centre and makes way for the further advance of the h-pawn. We have reached a critical position where Black must decide how best to counterplay.

15... b8!

Once again favour the familiar regrouping of the queenside with the bishop going to b7. It is worth taking a moment to consider the drawbacks of the various alternatives.

The plan involving 15...8g6? does not work as well as in the earlier variation A1. The position after 16.h7 Eh8 17.cxd4 Cxd4 18.iVxd4 has occurred five times in my database, with Black just scoring just a single draw so far. The main problem, of course, is that Black must constantly be on guard against Wxa7, which limits his active possibilities compared with the aforementioned line.

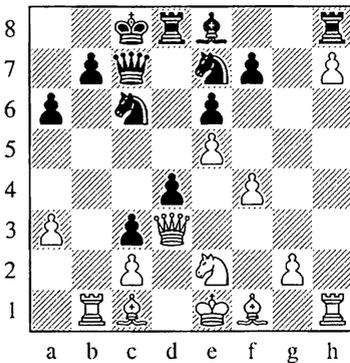
15...Wb6? is quite a logical move, protecting the d4-pawn and preventing Eb1. However, White is better after: 16.h7 Eh8 17.c g3 (or 17.g4 ,l e8 18.c g3 C g6 19.c c4± Ootcs - Koudinov, Bussum 2011) 17... b5 18.C c4; H. Schneider - Quarzaah, corr. 2010.

15...a6?

This was tried recently by Danielian, but it fails to equalize.

16.h7 Eh8 17J b1.1cS

Here White can improve with:



18.C g3!N

Instead of 18.g4 which allowed counterplay after 18...f6! in Muzychuk - E. Danielian, Dilijan 2013.

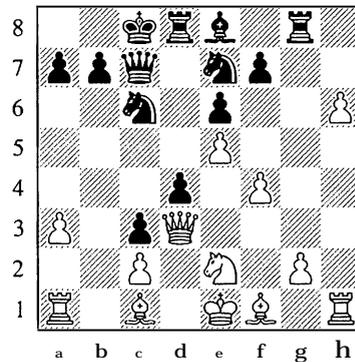
18...f6 19.exf6 C d5

19...l g6? is well met by 20.f c7! xd3 21.exd5=W! followed by .1,xd3 with a winning advantage for White.

20.l c4

White is clearly better.

If Black is looking for a secondary line to investigate 15...i,c8!? would be my suggestion.



I found several examples of this move from recent years, both in over-the-board and correspondence games. Black clears the d-file and intends a quick ...f6, followed by a possible activation of the bishop on g6. The plan is interesting and may lead to fascinating complications, but ultimately I find it slightly less convincing than the main line.

Let us now return to the recommended 15... b5!

Just as in the earlier variation A, this is the plan I like the most. Before undertaking any action in the centre, Black aims for a thematic queenside regrouping with .j1 8 followed by ...b6 and ...Wb7.

The ensuing analysis contains some of the most complex and hard-to-understand positions

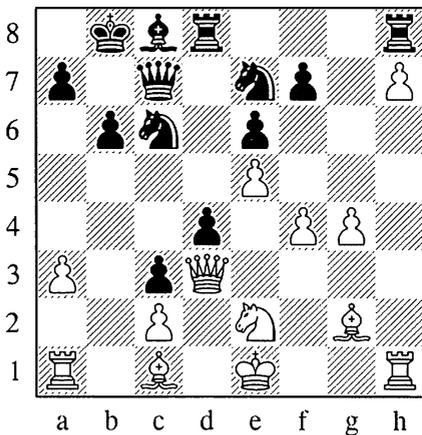
in the entire book. Even with the help of a strong analysis engine, it is difficult to make sense of what is going on. Abstractly, we can understand that White has the bishop pair and a potentially decisive kingside majority, while Black has the safer king and a strong presence in the centre thanks to his active pieces and the c3-d4 pawn wedge. In the ensuing middlegame, White will attempt to coordinate his pieces while Black will look for the right moment to break open the centre with ...f6.

Although these general ideas are easy to grasp, the evaluation often boils down to concrete tactical nuances which are virtually impossible for human players to find over the board. However, I found several correspondence games in which Black's position proved its resilience.

16.h7 f h8

In this position White has tried both B1) 17.g4 and B2) 17.f b1!, the latter being the move I consider more dangerous.

B1) 17.g4 J k8 18..lg2 b6



Black continues his regrouping. At this point both B1) 19.f h3 and B2) 19.' f !N deserve some attention.

19.f b1 . k8 18.g4 b6 19.. g2 - see the note to White's 18th move in variation B2 below.

19.' lg3 can be met in a couple of ways. 19... lb7 can be compared with variation B12 below, and may well transpose after a subsequent © f2.

However; Black might try to benefit from his opponent's move order by playing 19...' k5!? first, since the white knight is no longer attacking the d4-pawn. This way Black retains the option of ... b7, but might also consider ...' k4 followed by ... ka6.

B1) 19.f h3

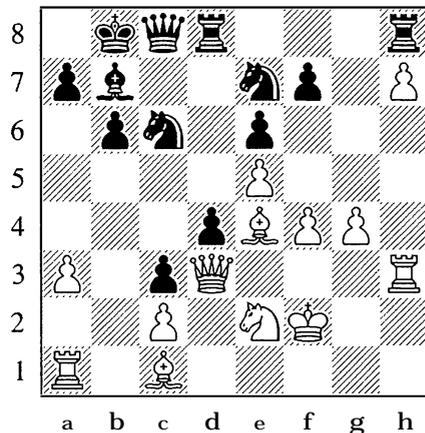
This was played in the only practical encounter I found on my database. Activating the rook along the third rank is thematic, but Black found an attractive plan of his own.

19... \b? 20.© f i c8!

A clever retreat, preparing ...Ya6.

2U e4

Here Black's most precise continuation is:

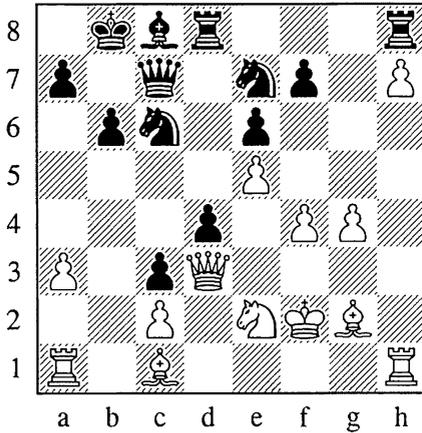


21...l2dS!N

In the game Black preferred 21.. "Ya6 and went on to win in Barbosa - Santiago,

Montenegro 2013, but it is even more promising to improve another piece while keeping the opponent guessing about if or when ...i.a6 may come. I would rate Black's chances as slightly higher.

B 12) 19.f f !N



'f' is untested move is a serious option. The king is less exposed here than on e1, and may later find safety on g1 or even g3.

19...i.b7 20.c g3 c a5!

As usual, Black is happy to exchange the light-squared bishops.

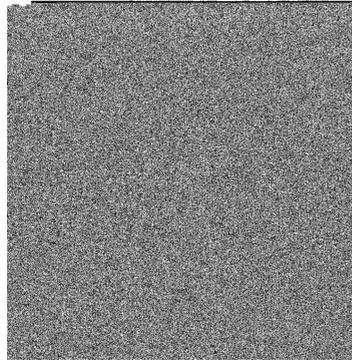
21.i xb7

21...c c4+ is not unpleasant for Black, who threatens ...c b2.

I also considered:

21.Eb1 c d5 22.c e2

22.c e4 c c4 is dangerous for White, for instance: 23...f c de3 24.c f6 \xf3 25.f xf3 \ bl f 26.c e4 White is caught in an unpleasant pin. There is no immediate breakthrough, but Black can play patiently with: 26...\ c6 27.a4 a5+ Strengthening the position and leaving White with the difficult question of how to develop his queenside pieces.



22...c c3!

Not the only playable move, but the most convincing.

23. xd dx3f 24.iWke3 c c4 25.\ xc3 \Xc5!'

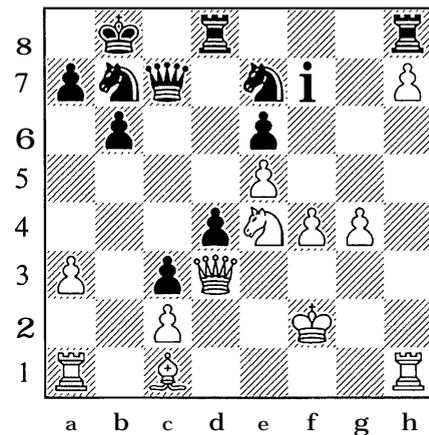
26 f g3.\ xg2 27.f xg2\ c5! 28.f g1

28.f g3?? c d2- +

28...\ c5!'

With perpetual check.

21...c xb7 22.c e4



22...c d5!

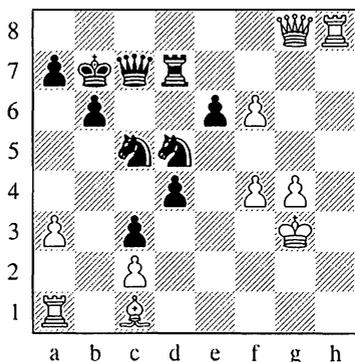
A clever move, not only guarding the f6-square but also planning ...f5 followed by ...l xh7. Since White is undeveloped on the queenside, a quick opening of the position might prove fatal to him.

23.f g3!

...f5 is the safest place for the king.

23...f5 24.exf6 gxf7 25.gxf7

The tempting 25.l c5? does not work: 25...l xc5! (25...Wxc5 26.gxf7 l xf6 27.g h6 Wd5!t would be a good answer; but the main move is even stronger.) 26.Wxf7 g d7 27.WgSt mb7 28.g h5



28...d3! 29.♖a8† ♔a6 30.♗c8† ♗xc8 31.♞xc8 ♝xf6†

25...i Wxh7 26.Wxd4 gh5

Black's attack is enough for a draw, but not more. A plausible continuation is:

27.WeSt

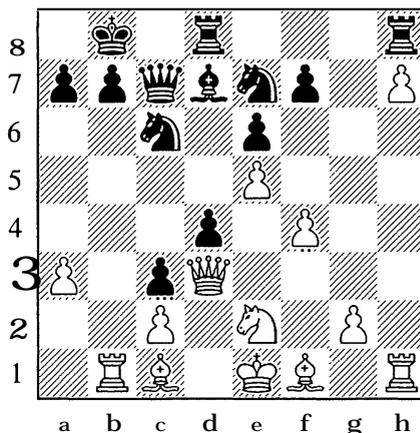
It makes sense for White to exchange queens.

The computer points out that 27.l f2!? is playable, but after 27...l c6 Black is certainly not worse.

27...mas 28.Wh5 Wxh5 29.gxh5 gx h5 30.a4 gf5 31. .a3 l xf6 32.l xf6 gxf6 33.gel mhs=

White has enough activity to make up for the missing pawn, so the endgame should be a draw.

B2) 17.gb1!

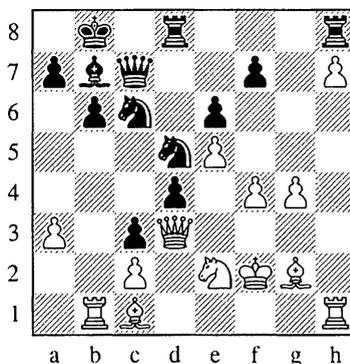


This is the most challenging approach of all. By taking control over the b-f file and the b4-square in particular, White prepares a3-a4 and ♖a3, solving the problem of his queenside development.

17...♞c8

Black proceeds with his plan. Here I consider White's most important options to be B21) 18.a4!♞N and B22) 18.mf .

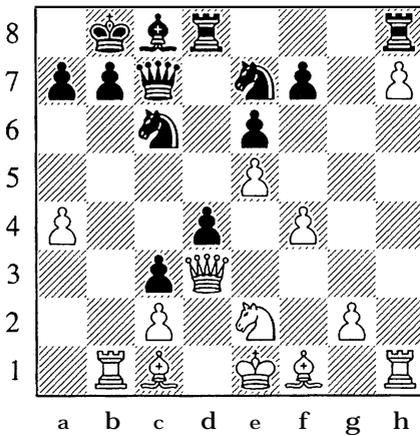
I only found one over-the-board example from the above position, which continued: 18.g4 b6 19.5lg2 . b7 20.' f2 This was Salgado Lopez - Alekseev, Novi Sad 2009. Here I suggest 20...l d5!N (instead of 20...l a5 as played in the game).



Black is fully developed and has the safe king. The main danger of Black's position is of course the h7-pawn, which holds him down for the moment. On the other hand, White's rook on b1 and bishop on c1 are rather passive.

It is important for Black to remain flexible and decide which idea to play depending on the concrete details of the position. A few ideas worth keeping in mind are the ...f5 break (or possibly ...f6, if White does not have the reply ...xd5 followed by exf6), activation of the bishop with ...Nc8 and ...Nc6, and possibly a knight jump to c3 at the right moment. Overall I consider Black's chances to be no worse.

B21) 18.a4!?



This move has yet to be tested but it is worth checking, as it is a logical follow-up to White's last. With the b4-square covered, White clears the a3-square in order to activate his bishop.

18... a8

Apart from sidestepping a future #3, ...Tf8 is also quite useful to move the king of the b-file. Black is ready to move the c1-knight to either d5 or f5, depending on how White plays.

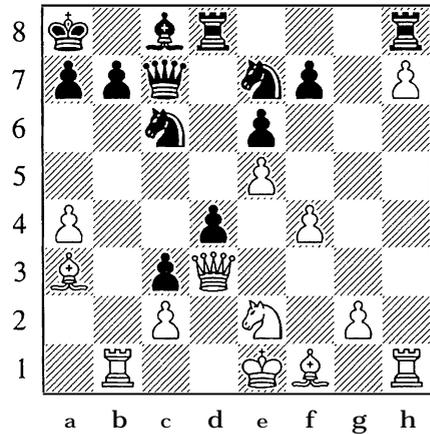
18...b6? 19.1.a 1 f5 20.Eh3! is excellent for White.

18...C d5 19.! a3 (19.C xd4 1 lb4) 19...< as 20.i ,dG (20. f2 fG) 20...ExdG 21.cxdG WxdG leads to interesting play, but I prefer the main line.

19..l a3

If White doesn't play this move then ...C d5 will come with added force.

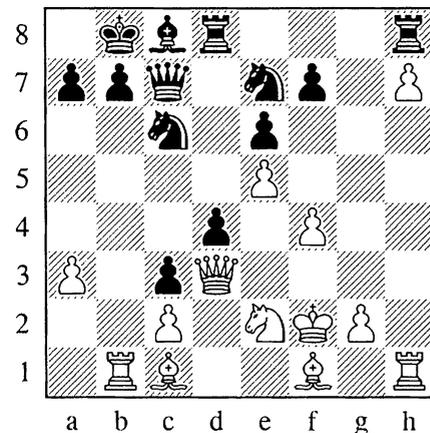
19.g4?! C d5 20.l a3 fG! and 19.< f2 C d5 20.l a3 fG! are both excellent for Black.



19..l f5!?

With the bishop already on a3, the knight is well placed on f5 where it covers g6. It's ready to jump to e3 when necessary, and also blocks the white queen's defence of the h7-pawn, thus preparing ...f6 followed by ...Exh7.

B22) 18.© f



As discussed earlier, the king is slightly safer here than on e1. In this particular position, White also has in mind the idea of connecting the rooks after a future a3-a4 and ...a3. The text move has been tested in three correspondence games, all of which ended in draws, which is a good indication of the soundness of Black's position.

18...b6

Black continues as normal. Here we reach a final division between B221) 19.t g3 and B222) 19.a4.

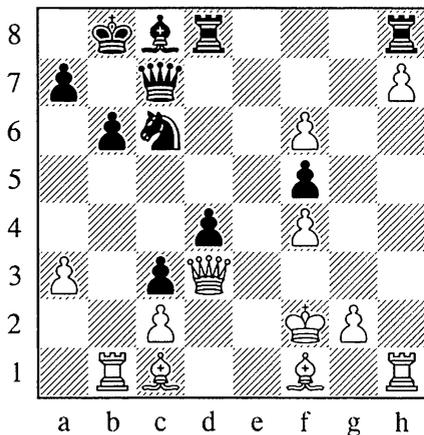
B221) 19.c g3

Improving the knight is a logical plan. It has been tested in one game, but Black came up with a resolute response.

19...f ! 20.exf t f

20...t d5 could be considered, but it is understandable that Black wished to eliminate the h7-pawn.

21.c xf5 exf



22.g4!

Definitely the critical try.

22...: xh7!

It looks risky to allow White to protect his f6-pawn, but Black has judged everything correctly.

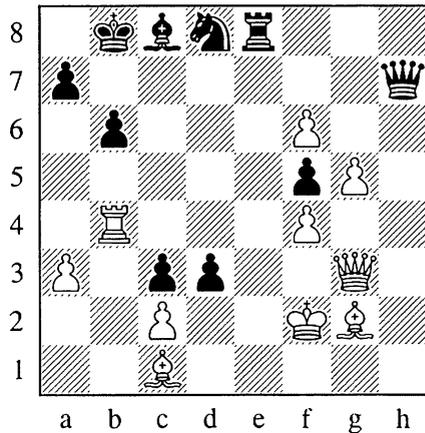
22...1 g4 is less appealing, as 23..f g2 gives White some initiative.

23.: xh7 Wxh7 24.g5

Here is one of many examples in this chapter of a position that would be extremely difficult to assess over the board. It looks like Black is in some danger, but he has enough counterplay to hold the balance, thanks to White's exposed king and passive queenside pieces.

24...: h5 25.. g2 t d8! 26.: b4 : e8 27.Wg3 d3!

A small finesse, making the c3-pawn into a passer:



28.cxd3

28.♞xd3? ♞h4† is too dangerous for White.

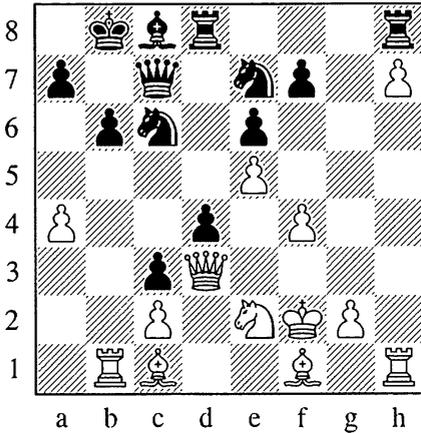
28...Nb7 29.. kb7 Wxb7 30.Wf Wh7 31.l k3

A draw was agreed here in Shpakovsky - Dclizia, corr: 2012. The continuation might be:

31...Wh2t 32.© fl Wa =

Black has enough counterplay to force a draw.

B222) 19.a4



Activating the bishop is the critical idea

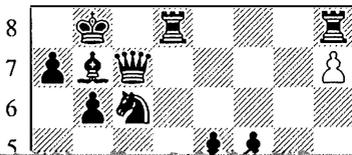
19...f !

With i,a3-d6 on the agenda, Black must find a way to generate counterplay. One way or another, this will involve sacrificing material to get closer to the white king.

Although the main line is the option that makes most sense to me, I will also mention another wild correspondence game in which Black was able to hold the balance.

19... b7!? 20J a3 t f5 21.Eh3 f6 22.g4 fxc5 23.gxf5 cxf5

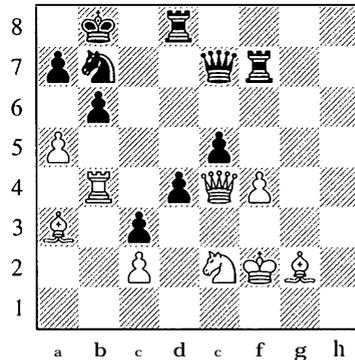
Black' initiative provides just enough compensation for the sacrificed material.



27.1 g2

White has sensibly rerouted some material in order to generate some attacking chances of his own. The bishops are strong, and in a practical game I would regard Black's position as slightly unpleasant to defend. Nevertheless, in the game White was unable to prove anything

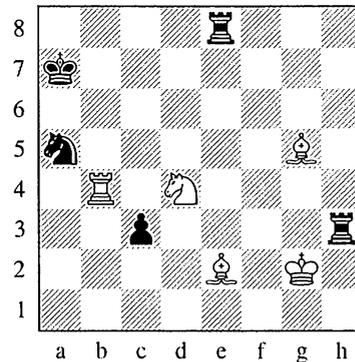
27...t a5 28: b4 ; f 29.i g6 t b7 30.' e4 ' e7 31.a5



31...d3!

Just as the defence appears to be at breaking point, this thematic pawn break saves the day.

32.cxd3 exf4 33.' xc7 Exc7 34.axb6 f 35.bxa1 t Wa8 36J hf3 Exd3 37.\ c1 \.xa7 38.c d4c a5 39.i ,g5Ee840.. ,e2; h34J.\g2



A draw was agreed here in Gardarsson - Ritsema, corr: 2011. From a strictly theoretical perspective, this is a satisfactory outcome for Black, but it is fir to say that Black was

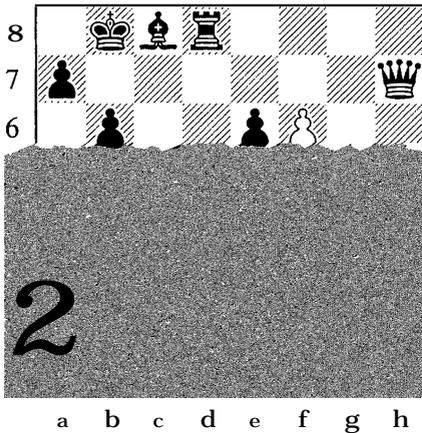
under pressure for much of the game. Even in the final position, many players would keep pressing for a win with White. For this reason, I would advise the reader to focus on the main line, to which we will now return.

20.exf6 1 d5 21.8h6

2.J.1 xd4 11 xd4 22.♖xd4 ♜xh7 23.♞xh7 ♜xh7 transposes to the main line, except for the move count being one less.

21...Wf 22.11 xd4 1 kd4 23.1 xd4 Exh7 24.Exh7 1 xh7

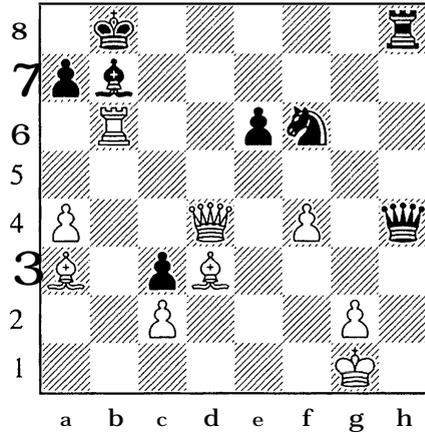
Black is a pawn down, but c2 is hanging and f6 is liable to drop in the near future. On the other hand, the position is beginning to open up for White's bishops. Neither king is particularly safe, so anything may happen. We will continue to follow a couple of games which featured logical play on both sides.



25.♙d3 1 h4t 26.ii gl 8h8 27.. a3! 1 kf6 27...% It ! 28.♔f2 i xb1 29.f7 ♖h1 30.. \.d6! @a8 31.♙c4 is dangerous for Black. White can win back the rook at any time and his bishops are extremely powerful.

28.8xb6t! . ,b7!

28...axb6?? 29.1 xb6! leads to mate in a few more moves. After the text move Black's defences appear shaky, but they hold together.



29.8xb7t @xb7 30.1 b4t!

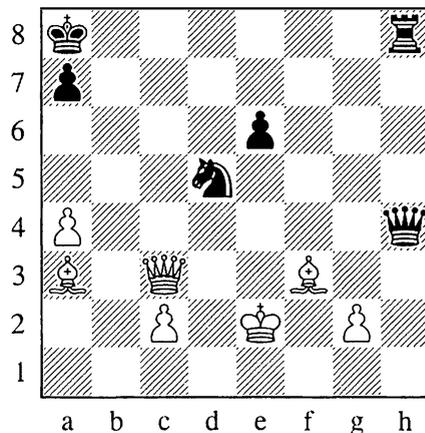
My database contained one game that ended in a quick perpetual after 30.. c4! 1 kc4 31.1 xe4r ♕c7 32.♖c4† ♖?d8 33.1 d3! 12 ♘ Riccio – Delizia, corr: 2012.

Nor long before the book was published, my editor tested this line for Black in an online correspondence game, against an unknown but well-prepared opponent, who came up with the text move. Now Black is forced to tread carefully for a few more moves, but the final result ends up the same.

30..@as

The only move, as 30..♕c8?? and 30...@c?? both lead to mate in a few moves.

31.. \.e4t 1 h5 32.i xc3 ♖h2t 33.@f 1 xf4t 34.. \ 1 h4t 35.@e2



35... b7!

The brave king must take a step forward, as there is no other defence against the check on c6.

36... d6 Wxa4 37.Wg? t Wc6 38.Wc? t Wb5

White has no mating attack, and his own king is also exposed.

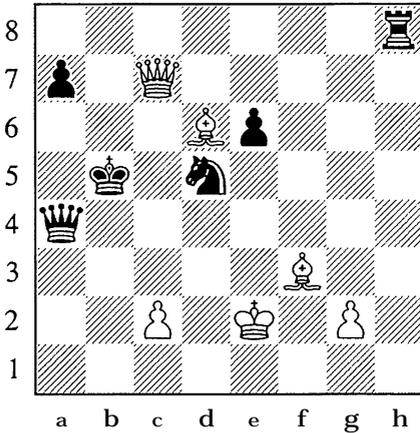
At this point White offered a draw which was accepted in N.N. – Greet, Inter et 2013. The continuation might have been:

43...Wd5! 44. Vxg8 Wal t 45.Wf mx d6 46.V dSt Wc5

With a likely perpetual.

Conclusion

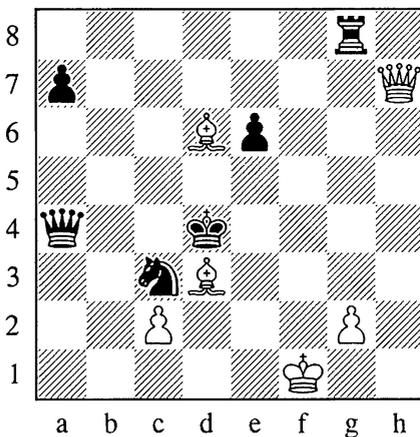
We have reached the end of the Winawer Poisoned Pawn journey. 12.h4! currently



39.Wb? t Wc4 40.\ c4! 8g8!

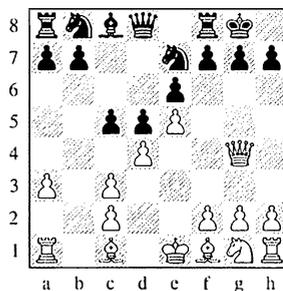
White was threatening g.d3† followed by Wgn .

4L.' d3t <1 d4 42.Wh? t c3t 43. fl



Chapter 14

7...00



8.h4 and 8.♘f3

Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♘xc3† 6.bxc3 ♞e7 7.♙g4

7...0-0

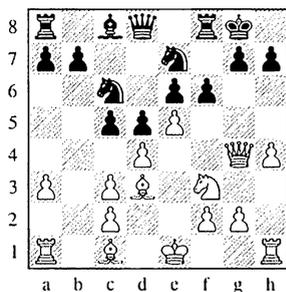
A) 8.h4

184

B) 8.♞f3

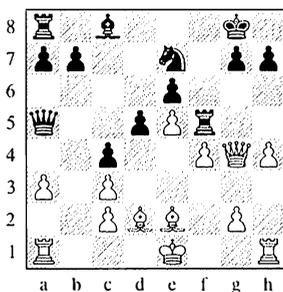
185

A) after 10.♞d3



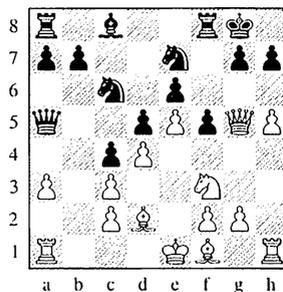
10..c4N

B) note to 10h4



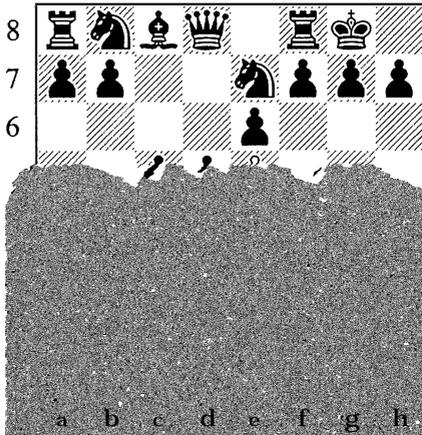
15...♞d7N♣

B) after 12h5



12..h6N

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♞c3 b4 4.c5 c5 5.a3
 .,xc3t 6.bxc3 0c77.\ g4 0-0



would consider this a more reliable and arguably theoretically sounder option than the Poisoned Pawn Variation. True, by committing himself to short castling Black presents his opponent with a clear target of attack. However, with accurate play and correct timing of the ...f5 move, Black should have enough resources to reach a satisfactory middlegame.

From the present position White's main move is 8.♙d3, and we will start analysing it in the next chapter beginning on page 188. In the present chapter we will focus on the rare **A) 8.h4** and the more significant sideline **B) 8.0f**. The following minor alternatives are clearly inferior.

8.♙g5? is premature. 8...♞a5! 9.♙d2 (9.♞h3 ♚bc6 T Brown – Viberg, corr. 1985.) 9...♚bc6 M. Pavlov – Voiculescu, Timisoara 1976. Black has won an important tempo and is already slightly better. He has several promising possibilities over the next few moves, including ...f5/f6, ...b6 and ...♞a4.

8.♙h6?

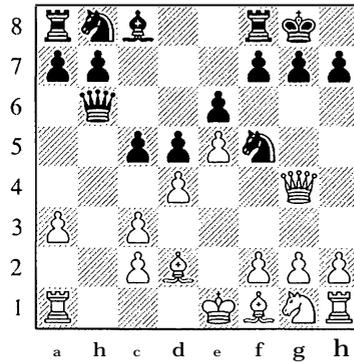
This simplistic approach threatens mate in one, but Black can defend while gaining a useful tempo.

8...♚f5 9.♙d2

9.♙g5 gives Black a pleasant choice between 9...♞c7 and 9...♞b6.

9...♞b6!N

9...♚c6 followed by ...f6 also offers Black a good game, Pipitone – Naumkin, Toscolano 1995.



10.♚f3

10.♙d3 cxd4 11.♙xf5 exf5 12.♞xd4 ♞b2 intending ...♚c6 with rapid development.

10.dxc5 ♞xc5 also favours Black.

10...♞b2 11.♞c1 b6

Intending ...♙a6 with the more pleasant game for Black.

A) 8.h4

This plan is too slow, as Black will achieve quick counterplay in the centre.

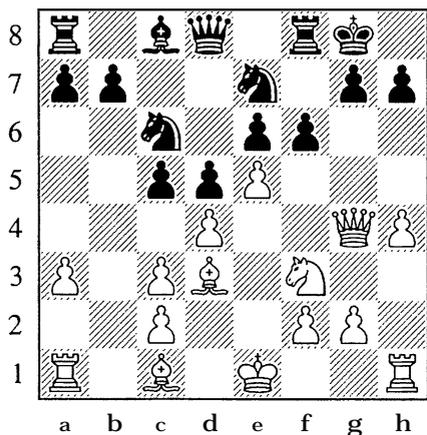
8...♚bc6 9.i f

9.h5 is consistent, but after 9...f6 10.exf6 (or 10.h6 g6 11.exf6 ♞xf6 transposing) 10...♞xf6 11.h6 g6 Black is threatening ...e5 with a good game. 12.♞g5 was the continuation of Soloviev – Uusi, Gorky 1954, and here 12...♞f8N would have kept an edge for Black.

9.♙d3 is covered later under the move order 8.♙d3 ♚bc6 9.h4 – see variation A of Chapter 19 on page 244.

9...f 10.\,d3

10.cxf Exf + intending ...c5 was good for Black in Roth - Raf It, Werf n 1998.



10...c4!N

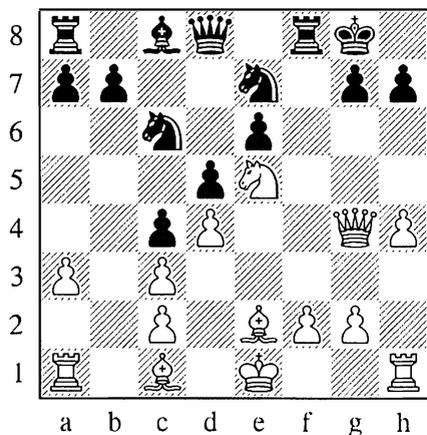
Improving over 10..1 8 as played in Formanek – Spassky, Vancouver 1971. The text move is technically a novelty but it immediately transposes to some other games after White's next move.

11.L« e2

11.exf6 Exf6 1L f.g5 Exf 1: ♔hl ♠♙xh7 14.♙xf3 ♕d7 15.h5 1ff +

11...f cS 12.l keS

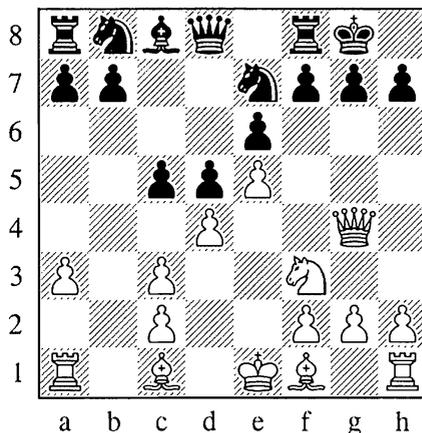
12.dxe5 occurred in Coleman – Kalwasinski, Copenhagen 1997, and now after 12...E f5!N 13.♙g3 a5 14..l.d2 <?h8 Black has a comfortable game, with ...♕d7 and ...! f8 to follow shortly.



12...l keS 13.dxeS c7 14.f4 ♘d7 15.hS 1 fS 16.h6 g6i

Black had the better chances in Pavlovic - Drasko, Nixsic 1997.

B) 8.l2f



This is not a bad move, and it can easily transpose to more popular lines after a subsequent f.d3. However, by playing the knight move first, White loses some flexibility while giving Black an additional option.

8..V aS!?

This is the extra option which seems quite playable.

That said, if I reached this position over the board I would probably choose 8..l bc6!, when the natural 9..d3 leads straight to variation D of Chapter 19. Black is absolutely fine there, but in this chapter I will present the independent option to enable the reader to decide which path he prefers.

Before doing that, I would like to present my analysis of an inferior alternative. Black should not follow this path, but it is useful to familiarize ourselves with some of the resources available to White.

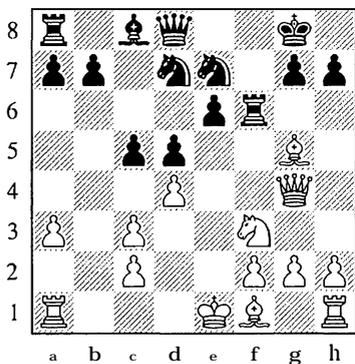
8...f5?!

My **original** intention was to recommend this direct move, but a deeper investigation **revealed** it to be dubious.

9.exf6 ♖xf6 10.♗g5 ♘d7!

This is the way to go, defending actively. White can hardly take the exchange at once, since Black will get far too much **counterplay** after ...♘xf6 followed by ...♖a5.

10...♖a5!? leads to **sharp play** af er 11.♗xf6 ♖xc3† 12.♗e2, but **af er lengthy** analysis which I **will not go into here**, I found White's chances to be preferable.



11...♗d3! c4

11...♖f7?!N does not solve Black's problems af er: 12.♖h3! g6 (12...h6 13.♗g6!±) 13.♗h4! e5 14.♖c6†

12.♗e2 ♖f7?!N

This was my best attempt to **make** Black's position work.

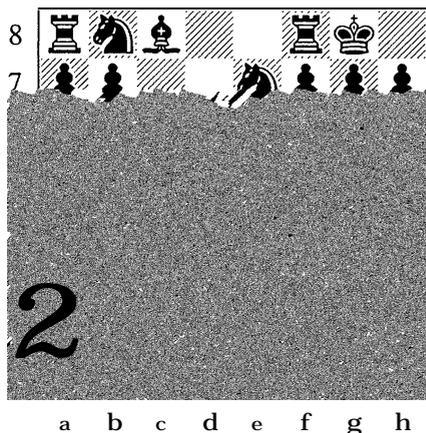
12...e5N 13.0-0 e4 14.♘h4±
12...♖f5 13.♘h4! (13.0-0 ♘f6 14.♗xf6 ♖xf6= **Smirin - Ulibin**, Borzhomi 1988)
13...♖f7 (13...♘f6 14.♘xf5 ♘xg4 15.♘xe7† ♗f7 16.♗xg4 ♖a5 17.♗d2±) 14.♖xe6 ♘f6 15.♖e3 ♘f5 16.♘xf5 ♗xf5 17.♖d2±
Freitas - Dias, Brazil 1996. Black has **some compensation** f r the pawn, but not quite enough.

13.♖xe6 ♘f6

13...♖a5 14.0-0 ♘f6 15.♖e3 ♘f5 16.♖c1 ♘e4 17.♗d2±

14.♖e3 ♘f5 15.♖c1±

Black will struggle to demonstrate **full compensation** for the **pawn**.

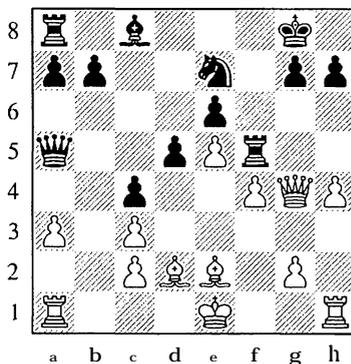


9...d2 c4!

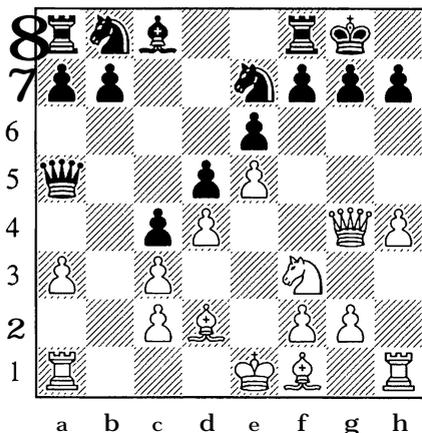
Closing the position and **preventing** ♗d3. It is **hard f r** White to muster an attack without the support of the light-squared bishop, and Black always has the ...f5 resource in case it is needed.

10h4

I also **considered**: 10♗e2 ♘bc6 11.h4 (11.0-0 ♖a4=) 11...f5 (11...♗h8?!N 12.h5 h6=) 12.exf6 (12.♖g3 ♖a4N∞) 12...♖xf6 13.♘e5 ♘xe5 14.dxe5 ♖f5 15.f4

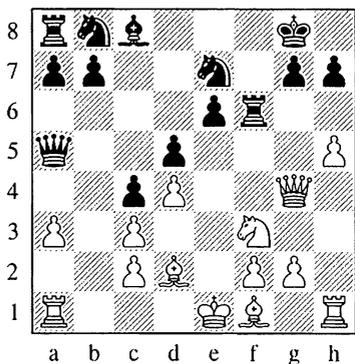


11lis was **Haznedaroglu - Smeets**, Antalya 2004, and here the simple 15...♗d7N♞ looks good f r Black.



10...f 11.Vg5

11.exf6 gxf6 does not trouble Black. Now 12.h5! has been played in both games appearing in my database, but it is not good due to the following innovation. (White should settle for 12.♙c2N when after 12...e5 13.i h5 1 bc6 14.dxe5 f f5 15.Ve8! gf 16.Wh5 the game might end in a repetition, but Black can also continue with 16...f5! when his chances should not be worse.)



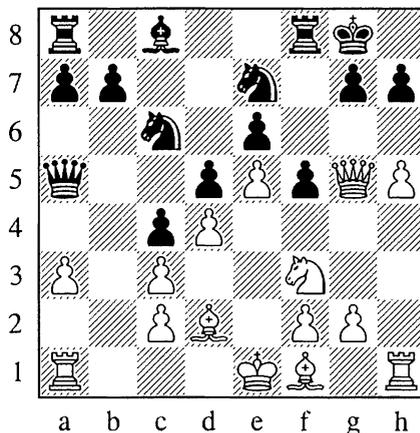
12...e5!N 13.♙g3 (13.♙g5 h6+) 13...♘f5 14.♙h2 exd4 15.cxd4 c3 16.♙f4 ♘c6 17.♙d3 ♘b4! 18.0-0 ♘xd3 19.cxd3 ♙d7 Black's chances are higher.

Moskalenko likes White after 11...a4! could be slightly annoying for White. (11...Cbc6 12.h5 h6 13.l h4 intending ...e2, gg1 and g2-g4 is indeed dangerous for Black.)

12. d1 (12.f a2 \ b5! f roes the rook back to a1.) 12...b5 13.h5! 1bc6 14.hGg6+ Black is holding the kingside together and the plan of ...a5 and ...b4 is not easy to meet.

11...l bc6 12.h5

Now in Oil - Dokhoian, Sverdlovsk 1987, Black should have played:



12...h6N 13.♙f4

13.♙g3 f4! 14.♙g4 ♙a4 15.♙c1 (15.♙a2 ♙b5!) 15...♙xa3 also favours Black.

13... \ a4 14.gaz \ b5 15.i cl \ b1 16.gbz \ a1 17" ,c2

17. \ d2 \ xa3+

17... \ xa :

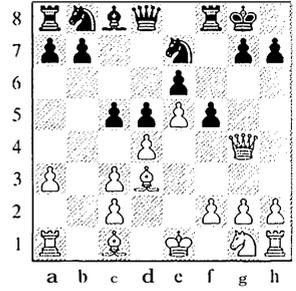
White lacks full compensation for the pawn.

Conclusion

This was our first chapter dealing with the 7. \ g4 0-0 variation. 8.h4 is a harmless sideline, and Black gets promising play by developing and hitting back with a quick ..JG. 8.l f3 can be taken slightly more seriously, but Black has a pleasant choice between transposing to Chapter 19 with 8...l bc6 and keeping the game in independent territory with 8... \ a5! as analysed above.

Chapter 15

8. f5



Move 9 and 10 Sidelines

Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♘xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♙g4 0-0 8.♙d3

8...rs

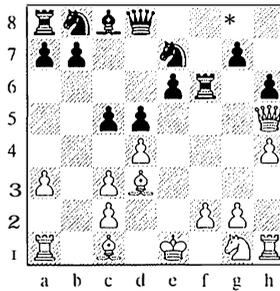
A) 9.♙h3	190
B) 9.♙g3	190
C) 9.exf6 ♗xf6	191
C1) 10.♙h4	192
C2) 10.♙h5 h6	192
C21) 11.h4	193
C22) 11.g4	194
C221) 11...c4	195
C222) 11...♘bc6!	196

B) note 10 11.♘f3!?



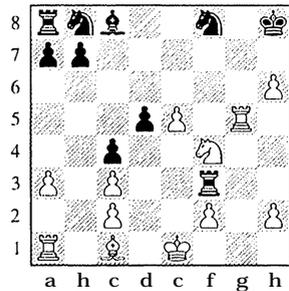
13...♘c4!N

C21) after 11.h4



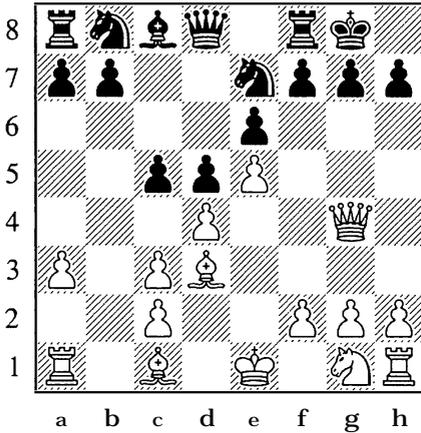
11...♘d7!N

C221) after 22.1 f



2L 1 c6N

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.l c3 i ,b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3
 § xc3t 6.bxc3 l e7 7.\ g4 0-0 8.\ d3



This is White's most challenging move, preparing to create du cats on the kingside. At this point Black can choose between two major systems, and I have made the decision: analyse both of them in the remaining part of the book.

8...l bcG is a major option which can lead to some fascinating positions. Coverage of this move begins in Chapter 19 on page 243.

In this and the following three chapters, we will investigate a different scheme. Some readers may prefer one move over the other; while others may wish to have both options in their repertoire. Have a look at both and make up your own mind.

8...fS

This move has the major advantage of securing some breathing room on the kingside, which dramatically reduces the risk of Black flling victim to a kingside attack. -1le drawback is that, following the likely en passant exchange on f6, the opening of the position has the potential to benefit the side with the bishop pair. Nevertheless, I believe that with careful play Black should be able to achieve a fully acceptable position.

In this chapter we will start by analysing the queen retreats A) 9.V h3 and B) 9.® g3, bef re beginning our discussion of C) 9.exf , which is the main line by f r. Before that though, here is a quick summary of some miscellaneous queen moves.

9.\ h5 was played in Llja - Holstein, Copenhagen 1993. 9...\ a5N 1Q: ld2 \ a4 Simple, but ef cient! A possible continuation is 1L \ g5: f7 12.dxc5 l2a6 13.\ c3i .d7 14.ll f) 8 Kwith at least equal chances for Black.

9.\ h4 occurred in Ott - Jurek, Wucrttcmberg 1994, and here it looks good to play: 9...E ; 8 *2 K Black should not f arrhc endgame, so this is an interesting way to gain time. 1Q \ xd8 (1Q \ f4 t a5 11.l ld2 \ a4= gives Black an easy game. Apart f om the thuar of ...c4, there is also the idea of ...b6 f llowed by la6.) 1Q...: xd8 1J.l2f b6 12.i .c3 cxd4 13.cxd4 § a6= Black has good control over the c4-square.

9.\ d1

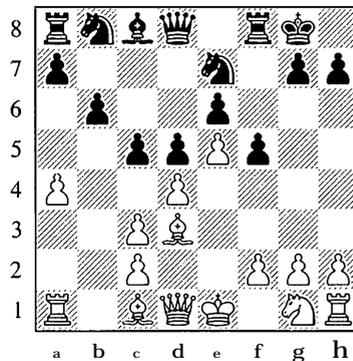
This is solid but also rather passive. Now Black does not have to worry much about any attack on the kingside.

9...b6

A typical device to prepare the exchange of the light-squared bishops.

1Qa4!N

Only 1Ql' h3 has been played here, and af er 10...i .aG 11.l xaG l xaG 12.l fL \ d7= Black was fne in Semenov - Konrge, corr: 2009.

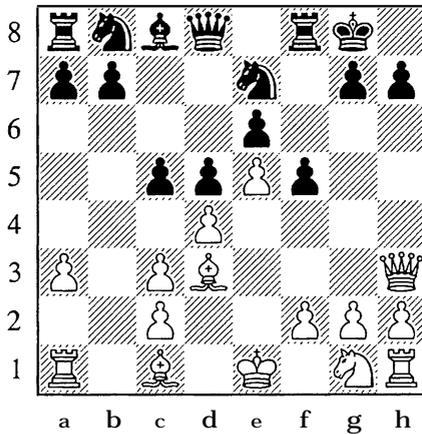


10.. a6 11. b5 xb5 12.axb5 \ d7 13.\ e2 c4

This is the simplest route to equality, although 13...Ec8! 14.1 f3 cxd4 15.cxd4 Ec4 is another interesting idea that deserves attention.

14.1 a3 a6 15. .d6Ea7 !6.bxa6 1 bc6= Intending ...Ef 8.

A) 9.\ h3



Quite an unusual move. White hopes to use the queen for attacking purposes.

9...Wa5 10. .d2 Wa4

Black quickly creates threats on the queenside.

11.dxc5

11.1 f c4 12j e2\ xc2! gave Black a healthy extra pawn in Lapshun - Arencibia Rodriguez, Guelph 2004. White has some compensation in view of his better development, but Black's position is solid.

11...L a6! N

11..1 d7= has been played in several games and is also fine for Black.

12.We3

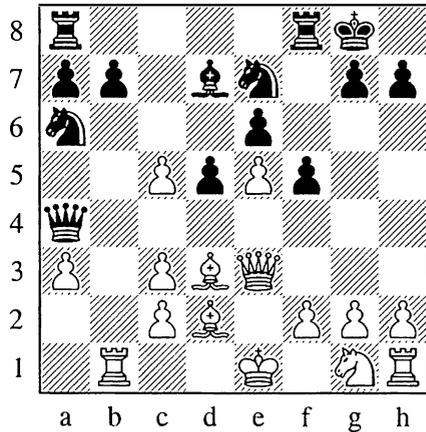
12.1 x6 Wxa6 13.1 e2 1 c6 14.\ e3 \ d7 15.0 0 1 a5 16.Ef)1 mes gives Black a pleasant game.

12...gd7

This is the reason for putting the knight on a6 rather than d7.

13.Eb1

13.1 f3 's met by 13...Eac8= intending ...L xc5.

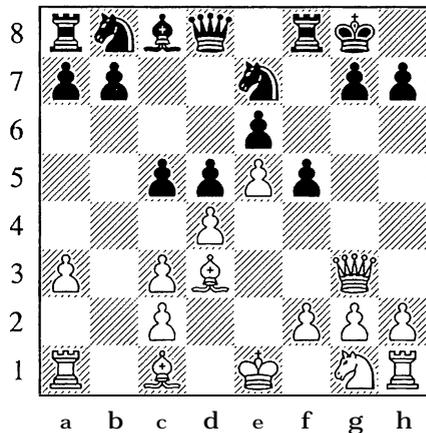


13...f4 14. W h3

14. W d4?! W xa3

14...h6 15.1 B L xc5 16.0 0 c6=

B) 9.Wg3



This move is pretty rare but it has achieved a positive score for White.

9...1 a5 10. d2 \ a4

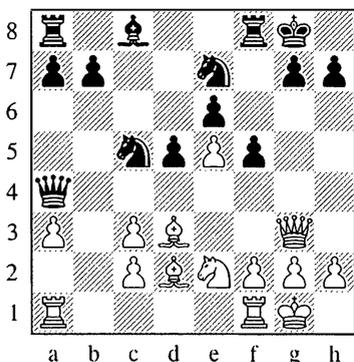
This simple plan is a recurring concept which works well in several lines. The threat is ...c4, winning the c2-pawn.

11. t 8 !?

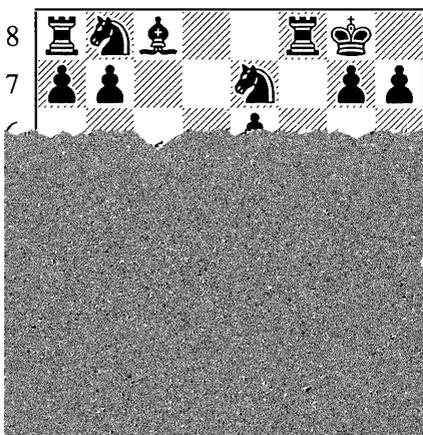
White makes a sacrifice of it.

11.; c1N is passive. Play continues 11...b6 12. t f t bc6 when Black is fine and White must deal with the r1 ear to the d4-pawn.

11.dxc5 1 a6 12.1 e2 12xc5 13.0-0 occurred in Berard - Apicella, Paris 1989, and here Black missed a strong idea:



13...1 e4!N 14.i e3 (14.. .xe4 f e4+) 14...f4! 15.\ h3 12g6 16.\lc1 l xe5 17.11 xf4 t xd3 18.®xd3 j ,d7+ Material is level but Black's better structure gives him the edge.



11...c4 12.. le2 \ xc2 13.; cl

13.0-0 f4! 14.\ g5 t bc6 favored Black in Von Nordheim - Wiebe, Birz 1994.

13...\ b2!

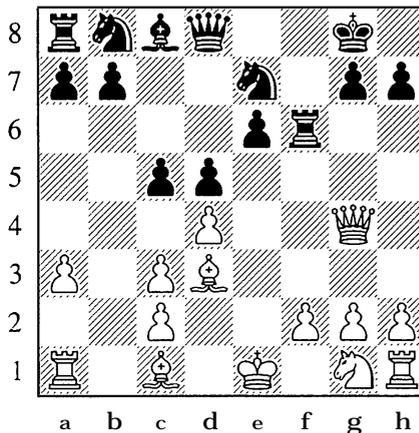
Keeping an eye on the rook.

After the inferior 13...\ a4? 14. hg! White got a dangerous attack in Onischuk - Zhadanov, Moscow 2009.

14.0-0 1 bc6 15.; b1 \ xa3 16.; al \ b2 17.; fcl \ b6

We have been following the game Kiss - Oprisor, corr. 2008. The position is interesting and not easy to assess. White certainly has some compensation, but Black's position is rock-solid and in the aforementioned correspondence game he eventually managed to convert his two extra pawns into a win.

C) 9.exf6 Exf6



From this position White's main continuation is 10.1.g5, and we will deal with it in the next three chapters. In the remaining part of the present chapter we will deal with the rare queen moves C1) 10.\ h4 and C2) 10.\ h5.

10ll f ? can be instantly refuted by 10...e5 11.i.xh? t 1 xh7 12.\ h5! \ g8 resulting

in a huge advantage for Black. A possible continuation is 13. g5 ♖f8 14.c xe5 ' e8 when Black had consolidated and was already winning in Ef ndiyev - Brugnoli, email 1998.

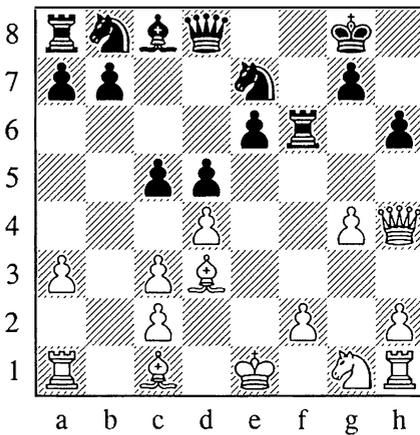
C1) 10.\ h4

This move is hardly ever played, but it is worth paying attention to the way Black deals with the crude attack that follows.

10...h6 11.g4?!

This move has scored extremely highly for White, but with correct defence Black can claim an advantage.

Objectively White should prefer 11.f4 although the position after 11...t bc6 is pretty harmless for Black, for instance: 12.O-O (12.c e5 l ke5 13.dxe5 Ef 14.O-O ' c7N 15.f4 ",d7=) 12...c4 13..,e2 c f5 14.\ h5 \d7 15.l e5l ke5 16.dxe5" e8 17.' h3Ef = R. Hendriks- Morsma, Deventer 1997.



11...cxd4!N

An important improvement over 11...l bc6 as played in Zunker - Stroede, Wiesbaden 1993, and a few other games. It is better to force the issue in the centre immediately.

12.gS

12.cxd4! bc6 13.g5! lf5 14.\ h5 (14.' h3 Ef 15.gxh6 l fxd4!?) 14...g6 15.\Jg4 h5 16.\ d1 ♖f8= also favours Black.

12...l fS

This is the standard defence against the g4-g5 break.

13.i h3

13.' h5 g6 14.' h3 Ef 15.gxh6 e5+ is excellent for Black.

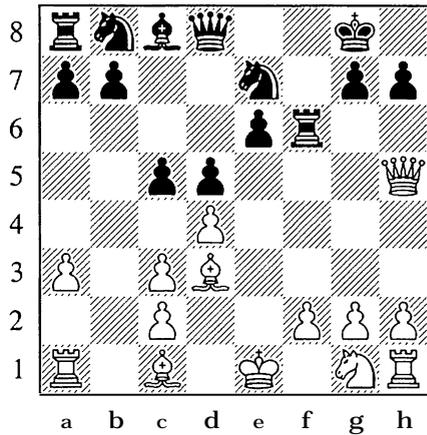
13...E 14.. xfS

14.gxh6 e5+

14...exfS 15.gxh6 f4 16.\ hS ' e7t

White's king is in greater danger than Black's, and it is obvious that his rash attacking plan has backfired.

C2) 10.' hS



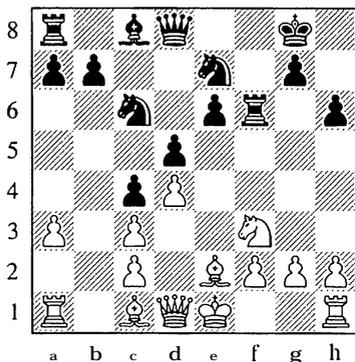
"This is a more significant sideline. In theoretical terms it is not very critical, but we should still pay serious attention to it.

10..h6

Given the choice between ...h6 and ...g6, Black should avoid weakening the dark squares where possible. From this position I considered two attacking tries for White: the rare C21) 11.h4 and the more common C22) 1

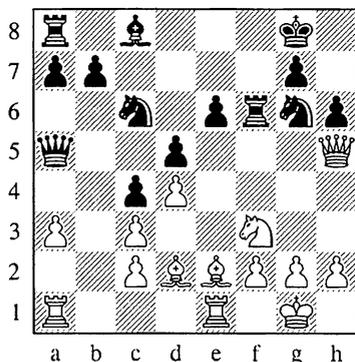
Quieter options give White nothing:

11. \ d1 is passive and gives Black an easy game. 11...1 bc6 12.1 f3 c4 (12...1 c7!?) 13.i .e2 Helm - Kononenko, Germany 2004. Here it looks good f r Black to play:



13...1 a5N 14.i .d2 (14. \ d2 \ a4! blocks the a-pawn, thus keeping the bishop on c1 passive.) 14...1 gG! Preventing a knight jump to e5. 15.0-0 \ d7 16.: b1 \ c7= Black has a solid position, rich in possibilities.

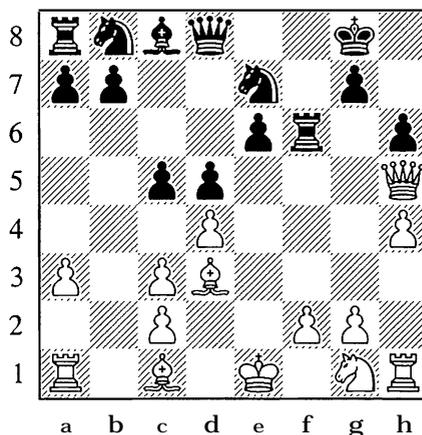
11.1 f3 has been quite popular; but it is harmless. 11...c4 (11...1 bc6 12.0-0c4 13. \ e2 is the same thing.) 12.i e21 bc6 13.0-01 g6 14.: e1 (14.g3 i.d7 15. \ d2 was played in Aveskulov - Ef menko, Alushta 2002 and here 15... \ c7+ gives Black the more harmonious position.) 14... \ a5 15. d2



This was Speisser - A. Ward, corr. 2006.

Here instead of rushing to put the knight on f4, I would prefer to remain flexible and complete development with 15...i d7N intending ...: af with a comfortable position f r Black.

C21) 11.h4



With this move White intends either i g5 or a delayed g4-g5, but it is all rather slow. I only found two examples of this move, both involving Stefan Kindermann on Black's side. Although the German grandmaster won both games, I would like to propose an immediate deviation.

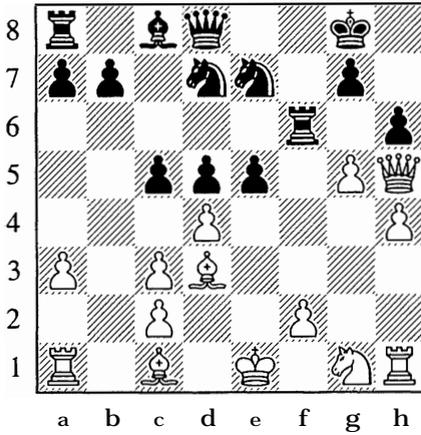
11...1 d7!N

In the respective games saw: 11...c4, Grabert - Kindermann, Dortmund 1993; and 11...1 bc6, Short - Kindermann, Garmisch Partenkirchen (rapid) 1994. Both of those moves should be acceptable f r Black, but I found an especially strong idea f r Black after the text move.

12.g4

12.1 f does not combine well with White's previous move, and after 12...c4 13.i e2 : fs+ intending ...1 fG Black is simply better:

12...e5 13.g5



13...e4!

Black sacrifices an exchange in order to seize the initiative

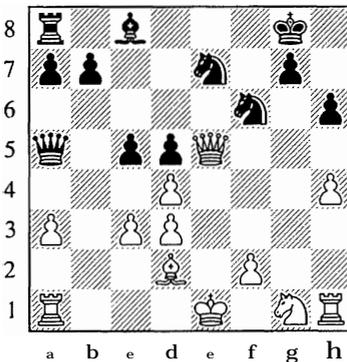
14.g f

14: 1 E f 15.gxh6 1 f6 16\ g5 cxd4 also favors Black.

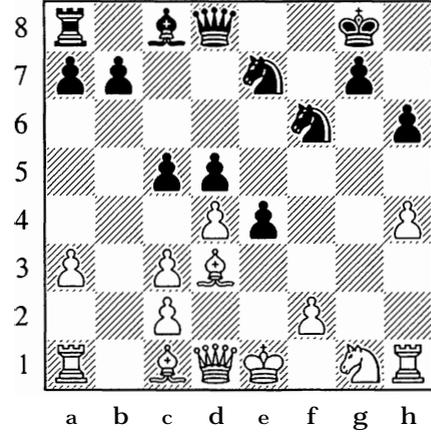
14...1 xf 15.\ d1

After 15\ e2 exd3 16.cxd3 cxd4 17.cxd4 We?+ Black's piece activity and safer king more than compensate for the exchange.

Another nice line continues 15\ e5 exd3 16.cxd3\ a5 17.i h2



17...i h4! 18.f3 Ee8 19.f g4 (19. f2 cxd4+) 19..1 c6 20\ xe8! 1 xe8+ Black is better due to White's lack of development and coordination problems



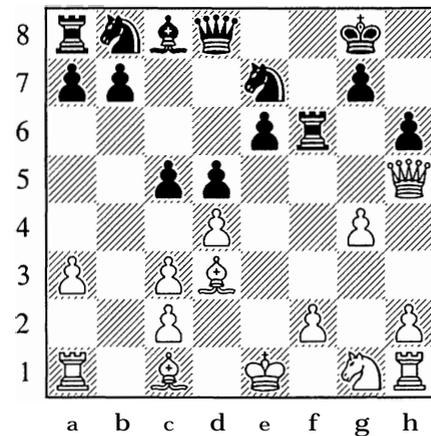
15...exd3 16.c d3 c d4

16...c4 17.dxc4 dxc4 18\ e2 is also quite playable for Black, but I find the text move more convincing.

17.cxd4,\ g4 18.f i h5

Black is far ahead in development and has excellent piece activity. Moreover, White has serious weaknesses in his pawn structure as well as a vulnerable king all of which adds up to more than sufficient compensation for the exchange.

C22) 11.g4



This is the main line, aiming for a direct attack. We have already encountered a similar situation in the earlier line C1, occurring after

10\ h4 h6 11.g4. An important difference is that now after a subsequent g4-g5 White's queen cannot be attacked by ...l f5.

I decided to present two contrasting approaches against White's scheme. C221) 11...c4 is a reliable option, but C222) 11...l bc6! is more dynamic and would be my personal choice.

C221) 11...c4

11lis move aims f r a strategic battle.

12.g5!?

Trying t o stir up some tactics.

Quieter play does not trouble Black:

12.i e2 t !

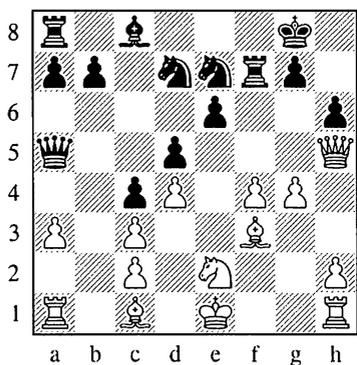
Black has a f w other options at his disposal, but the text move is simplest and best.

13.f

White must build his position slowly, since g4-g5 can always be mer by ...g6!.

13..l h? 14.\ f l a5 15.l e2

White is f rced to develop his pieces in a slightly clumsy manner.

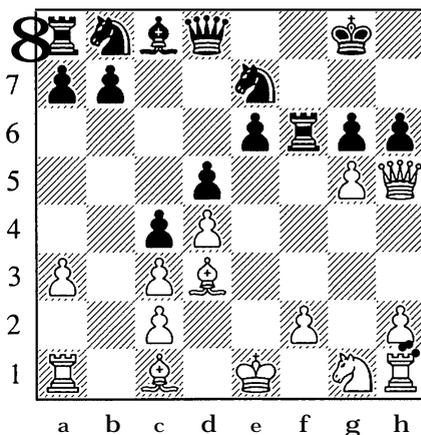


15...d6 16. Wh4 Qd7 17.0-0 De4

Black had the better chances in Areshchenko - Pelletier, Istanbul 2003.

12...g6!

This is the tactical justification for Blad('s play.



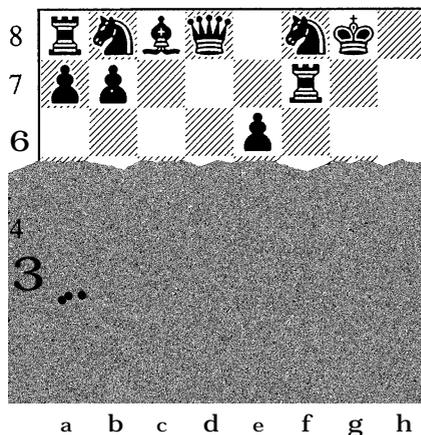
13.l dl

Af er 13.l xh6? Et 14.i xg6 Eg7 15.. .h5 h7 White's bishop was lost in Fir haber - Lehmitz, corr: 1990. Incidentally, Lehmitz scored another victory f om the same position in the same correspondence event.

13.. f 14. xg6!?

11lis is White's only chance to stir up trouble. Both 14.. f1 and 14. .e2 arc met by 14...h5 when Blad('s kingside is secure and his middlegame prospects arc excellent.

14..l kg6 15.l h5 l f 16.l h3



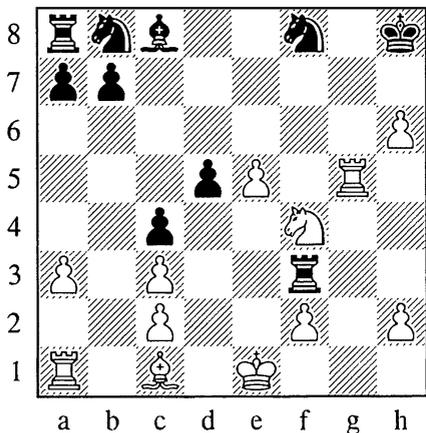
16...e5!

11lc most practical move, giving up another pawn to free Blad('s position and angling f r a

queen exchange. The following moves are not completely forced, but they are logical and find no major improvement on either side.

17.gxh6 1 f6 18.Eg1 t ' h8 19.dxe5 1 f5 20.Eg5 1 f 21.1 xf 8xf 22.t f4

Now it is time for Black to deviate from the game Spiriev - Kishnev, Budapest 1991.



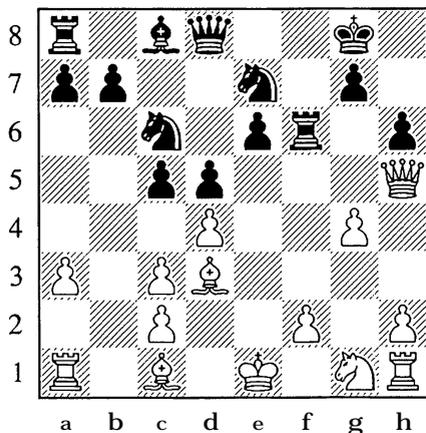
22...dxc6!N

Instead the game saw 22...dxc6?! when 23.f5! was a little awkward for Black.

23.cxd5 c e6

Black's extra piece looks slightly more valuable than White's pawns in this endgame. Overall 11...c4 seems quite viable for Black, but I would still prefer the move presented below.

C222) 11...1 bc6!

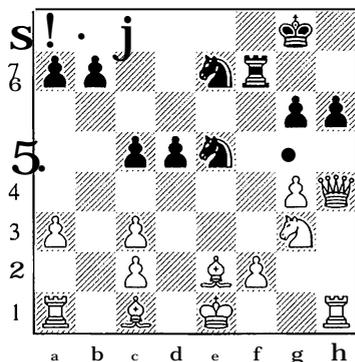


Preparing ...e5 is a direct and dynamic approach, leading to sharp play with excellent winning chances for Black.

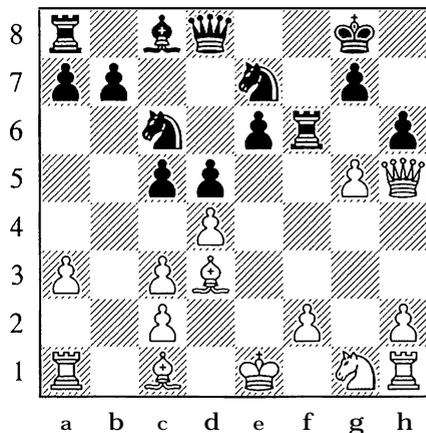
12.g5

White proceeds with his attacking plan. This certainly seems like the principled choice, and has almost always been played.

The rare 12.c e2!? is also possible, when play may continue: 12...e5 13.dxe5 g6 14.1 h4 E f 15.c g3 c xe5 16.1.e2



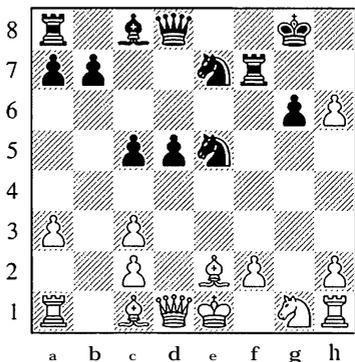
16...dGfN (16..1 a5 17.. d2 V a4 is also perfectly playable, and soon led to equality and a draw in the following game: 18.f4 c c4 19.1 xh6 c xd2 20. xd2 1 xf4 J 21.1 xf4 Exf4 22.Ehf1 Exf1 23.Exf1 y2 y2 Gongora Reyes - Anderson, email 2002) 17.0 0 (17.1 xh6? t h7 is risky for White.) 17...t 3 18.. xhG 1 xg4 19.: ae1 c f5 20.c xf5 1 hf5 2J.i f4: h3 22. Vg5 t f 23.\ kdG c xg5 24.f : e8 Black is at least not worse in this complex endgame.



12...g6 13. \ xh6

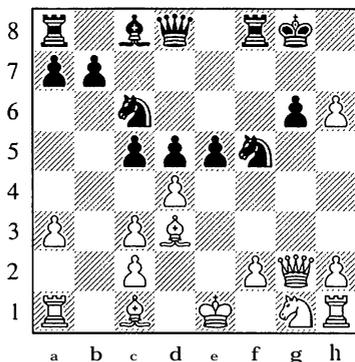
I doubt whether White has anything better than taking the pawn.

13. \ d1 8f 14.gxh6 e5 is excellent for Black. One notable game continued: 15.dxe5 1 x5 16.. e2

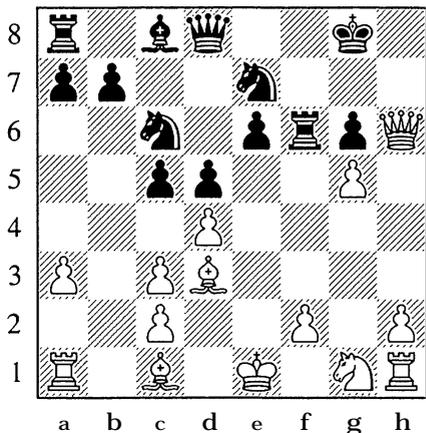


This was Paragua - Barsov, Calvia 2004, and here 16...d4!N (instead of ... \ d5) would have been tremendous for Black.

13. \ h4 has made a plus score for White, but Black should be more than okay with accurate play. 13...ll f5 14. \ h3 (14. \ kf5 Exf5 15. \ xh6 1 e7 gave Black great play for a pawn in Tischbierek - Vladimirov, East Berlin 1989.) 14...E f 15.gxh6 e5 16. \ g2



16...@h?N (16... \ e8 has been played a few times, but is less convincing due to 17.dxc5.) 17.dxc5 (17.dxe5 1 x5 gives Black a serious initiative.) 17...e4 18. \ e2 \ f6t



13..8f 14. \ g6 8g7 15. \ d3 e5

Black can also force an easy draw as in the following game: 15...c4 16. \ e2 : h7 17. \ f6 8f 18.i W6 Y2 Y2 Pecoric - Loegler, email 2001.

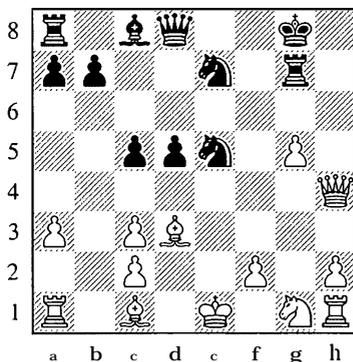
16d c5

In the few games in which this position was reached, White has mainly played:

16.dxe5?

This already seems to be a fatal error, since it opens up the centre and leaves the king on e1 exposed.

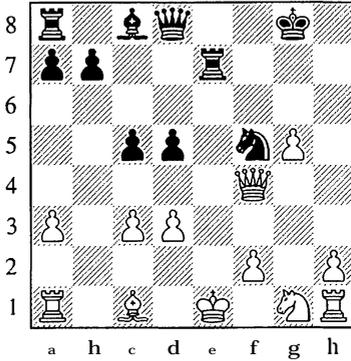
16...l x5 17. \ h4



17...l xd3!N

This novelty seems to be the most accurate. Once the light-squared bishop disappears, White's king will be extremely vulnerable. I will also present my analysis of 17...l f5, as

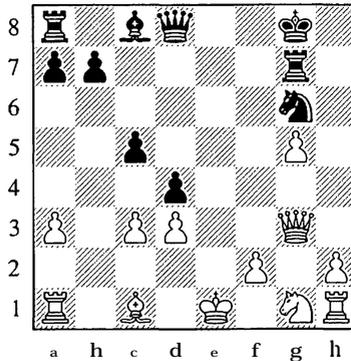
this move is also pretty strong 18i f4 This position occurred in David - Kindemann, Frankfurt 1998. Although White won this game, it was definitely not because of the opening. Best to me seems 18..1 xd3!N 19.cxd3Ee? t



20.1 e2 (20. f1 d4! An important move to restrict the movement of White's pieces 21.c4 1 e3!! 22.S.xe3 [22.fxe3 Ef - +] 22..dxc3 23 g2 1 xd3 24.1 ♔ e2 + There is not much that White can do against the upcoming attack with.... d7-c6 and ...E f8) 20..d4! 21.c4 mb6+ Black dominates the position with his well-placed pieces, while the material imbalance is not relevant at the moment.

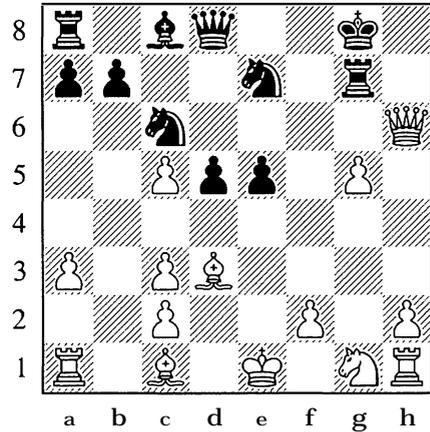
18.cxd3! g6 19.mg3d4+

Intending ...Ee? t when the king hurt is on. Ironically, White's extra kingside pawns are more of a hindrance than an advantage, as Black can use them as a shield f r his own king. A possible continuation is



20.h4Ee? t 21. f1. 22.h5! e5 23.g6 23.c4 mb6 makes way f r the second rook, and af er 24.g6.\xd3! 25 g2 Ef White is in trouble. 23...mcs 24.f dxc3+

Let's return to 16.dxc5 which is White's best chance to reach a playable position

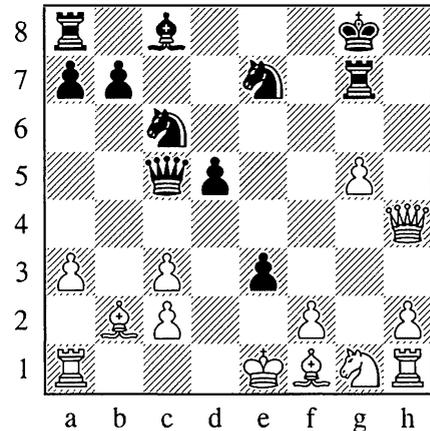


16...mas 17. .bz

17..\d2i xc5t looks pleasant f r Black.

17...e4 18. f1 mxc5 19.mh4 e3!?

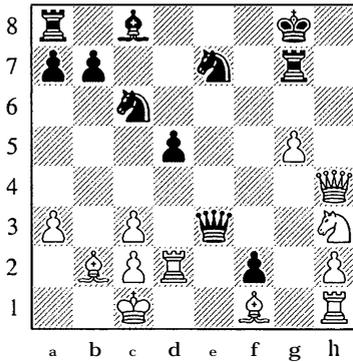
'Ole more relaxed 19..\ e6 intending ...Ef also of eas Black excellent compensation.



20.f ?

This looks f r too passive.

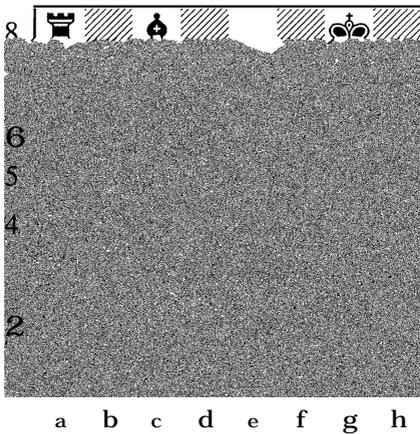
20.0 0-0N is better; when play continues
 20...exf2 21.1 h3 \ e3f' 22.i d2 (22.< b1?
 \ O+)



At this point Black can and probably should take an immediate draw with 22... \ e1! =. (If he is desperate r play for a win he can try 22... ,xh3, bur af er 23.\ xh3 \ eU 24.Ed1 Exg5 25J g2 We5 26.<Jb1 rhc position seems to be slightly more dangerous f r Black.)

20..1 f5 21.'Jh5

21.\ f4 e2! 22.1 xe2 l2e3t



21... .d? 22.0-0-0! e5 23.g6Ec8i

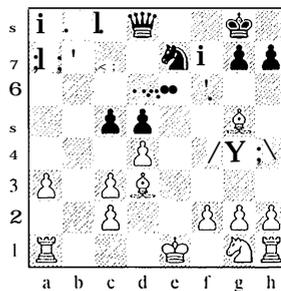
Black had a promising position in Nierobisz - Sivic, corr: 2008

Conclusion

We have completed the first leg of our journey into the popular 8J H3 f5 lines. The slightly unusual queen moves 9.\ h3 and 9.' g3 should not be underestimated, but it is not without reason that 9.exf6 is the main line by far; what could be more natural than clearing space for White's unopposed dark-squared bishop? After the automatic reply 9...Exf6, we considered the two sidelines 10\ h4 and 10\ h5. After the standard reply of 10..h6, it is worth paying close attention to the aggressive plan of g4-g5, by which White tries to use his g-pawn as a battering ram to open the kingside. However; the plan carries obvious risks as White is behind in development with his king in the centre, and we have seen that Black has enough counterattacking resources to r m the tables and seize the initiative in many lines.

Chapter 16

8. f5



11. f3 and 11. h4

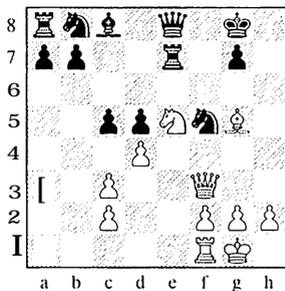
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♘xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7
7.♙g4 0-0 8.♙d3 f5 9.exf6 ♗xf6 10.♙g5

10...♗f7

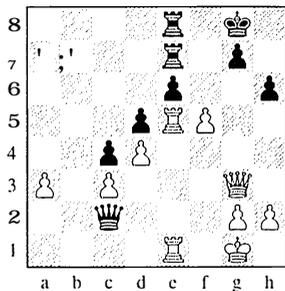
A) 11.♘f3	201
A1) 11...e5	202
A) 11...♘bc6	203
B) 11.♙h4 h6	205
B1) 12.♘f3 ♘bc6	205
B11) 13.0-0	205
B12) 13.♙xe7	206
B2) 12.♙xe7 ♗xe7	207
B21) 13.♘e2	207
B22) 13.♘f3	208

A1) after 17. D



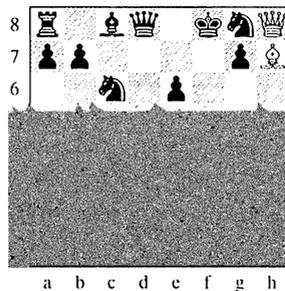
17...Dxc3 IN

A2) after 23. ♙g3



23. ♙g3 IN

B1) no e7 14. ♙e7



14. ♙e7 IN

1. c4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. ♖4 4. e5 c5 5. a3
 6. ♗c3 7. ♗xc3 8. ♖c7 9. g4 10. 0-0 11. ♗f3 f5
 12. ♗xf6 13. ♗xf6 14. i g5

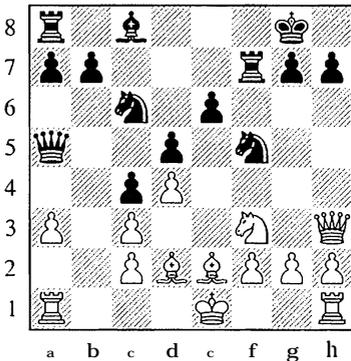
This developing move is the main line by far, and is clearly the most logical, at least when you have ascertained that 10...c5? is not a satisfactory reply. (I won't go into details here, but take my word for it.)

10. J

From this position White's most important option is 11.1 h5, which you can find in the next two chapters. [The present chapter will deal with two significant sidelines in A) 11.C f3 and B) 11.1 h4.

Here are a couple of truly minor alternatives:

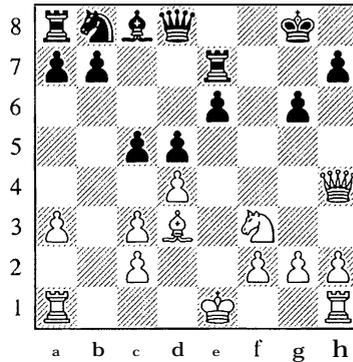
11.1 g3 neither develops a piece nor threatens anything, and Black easily gets a comfortable game: 11...1/ bc6 12. c f c4 13. i. c2 t a5 14. ♗d2 C f5 15. i h3 Murawski - Klementys, Byrom 1995. Here Black could have secured an edge with:



11. J e7!N Sidestepping any 1/ g5 attacks and threatening ...c5. 16.1/ c5 C xc5 17. dxc5 8 + Black has a positional advantage with a considerably better pawn structure.

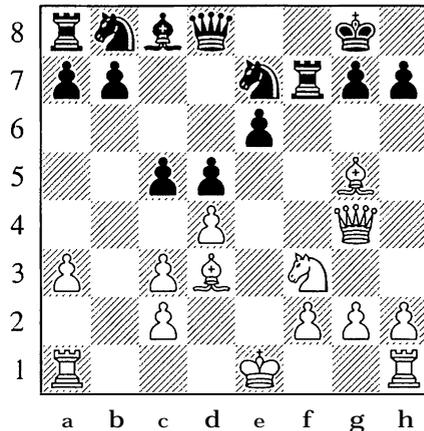
11.1 .xe7?! xe7 only helps Black. Not only has White relinquished the bishop pair, but the ...c5 push is also hard to prevent. 12. Y h4 g6

13. ♖f3 (13. dxc5N e5!) Now in Briro Broche - Llornte Galardy, Cuba 1997, Black should have proceeded with:



13...e5!N 14. dxc5 8xe5! 15. d2 1 xh4 16. C xh4 c4 17. C f ♗e8 18. ♗ac1! \$ f ! 19. i. c2 1/ a6 Black has slightly better chances due to his superior pawn structure. 11e 'French bishop' may be bad, but White's bishop is also restricted by Black's pawn chain on the light squares.

A) 11.C f



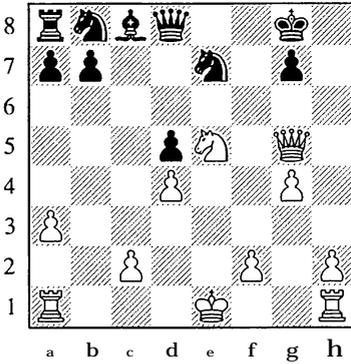
This move invites complications. Black has the option to win material, but in return White obtains full compensation. I will offer my analysis of the sharp A) 11.1 .e5 followed by the more positional A) 11.1 .? bc6

A1) 11...e5

This sharp move forces White to sacrifice a piece.

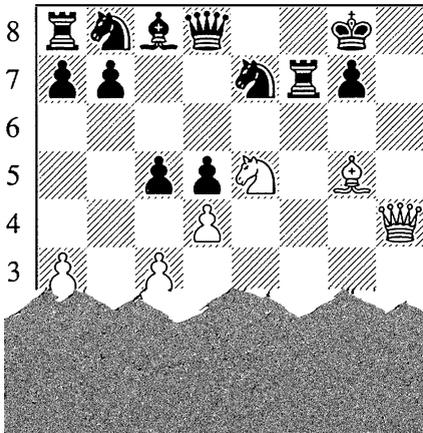
12. xh7! 13. Wh4

13. Wh5! also leads to interesting complications. 13... g5 14. l ke5 f5! 11 le only move. 15. g4 xg5 16. l xg5 cxd4 17. cxd4 (17.0 ON 1 kc6 18. l xd8! 1 kd8 19. cxd4 lj bc6 is also about equal.) Now in Milde - Koch, email 2005, Black should have played:



17...l bc6N 18. l kc6 l kc6 19. Wxd8! l kd8 We have reached an interesting endgame with rook and two pawns versus two minor pieces. I would evaluate the position as dynamically equal, but clearly it is unbalanced enough to enable either side to play for a win.

13... g8 14. l ke5



14... \ e8!

An important move.

15.0 0

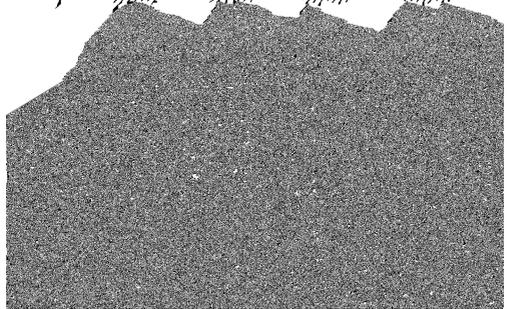
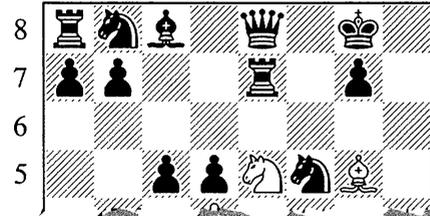
Now Black has to act carefully, as any step in the wrong direction can be fatal.

15... l f !

15... l bc6 ! 6. t xf Wxf 17.. Wke7 V ke7 18. l xe7 t xe7 occurred in Van Willigen - Liebert, email 2006, and now 19. dxc5N: looks good for White. The rook and pawns tend to be stronger than the two minor pieces towards the endgame.

15... f5?N is unsatisfactory: 16. g4 xe5 17. dxe5 t g6 18. l h5 1 e6 19. h3 and with f2-f4 coming next, Black is under pressure.

16. Wh5 e7 17. Wf



17... c7

This move seems just about playable, but it is riskier and would not be my choice.

18. Ef 1 N

In Heymann - Hausmann, Halle 1996, White elected to put the queen's rook on this square, but I think he should keep the option of deploying that piece on b1 or d1.

18...1 c6

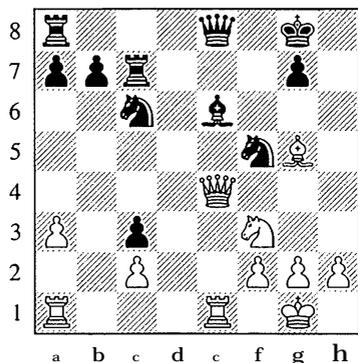
\8...! e6 19.1 d3 Wf 20.1 f4i

19.Wxd5! e6 20.\ e4 cxd4

After 20... c8 21.Wd3 (21.Wd5!= repeats)

White has a three pawns and a strong initiative for the sacrificed piece.

21.1 f3 dxc3



22.h3!

Avoiding tricks on the first rank.

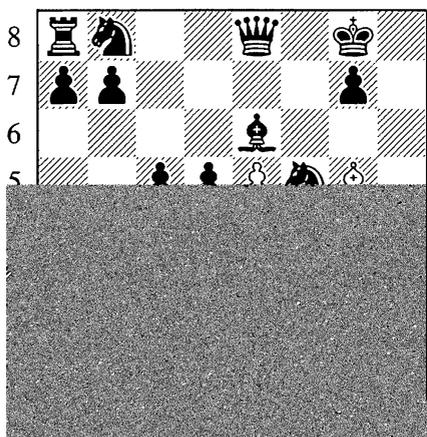
22... b5 23.Wxe6! Wxe6 24.: xe6 l cd4

25.l xd4 l xd4 26.: e4 l xc2 27.: a2 l xa3

28.: xa3 a5 29.i flt

Black can probably hold this rather strange endgame, but there is still a bit of work to do.

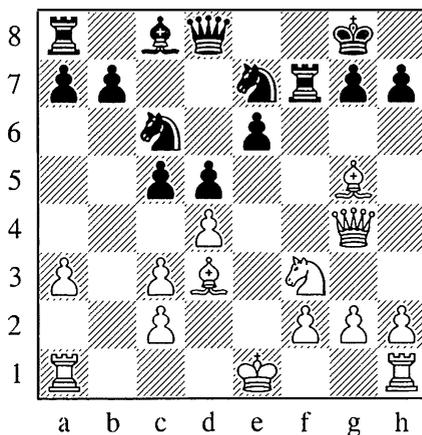
18.d eS e6=



Black has two minor pieces for a rook and two pawns. The material balance and positional

factors make me evaluate the position as roughly equal, although clearly we are a long way from a draw.

A) 1.1.1 bc6



With this move the game takes a more strategic course. From here there have been several hundred games and many different move orders, but Black has a sound position and can mostly rely on positional understanding.

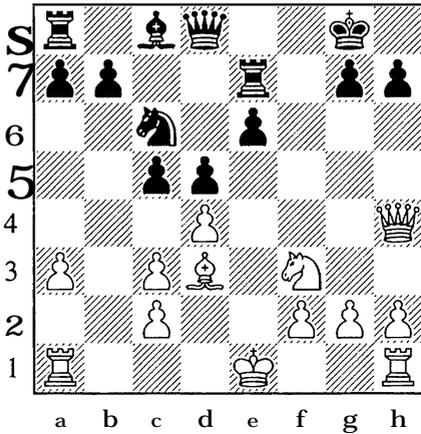
12. xe7

The main continuation. By exchanging at this moment, White forces the enemy rook to a passive position. If he tries to do without the exchange then Black will activate the knight, typically by means of ...Wa5 and ...l f5, as shown in the latter of the following two alternatives:

12... h4 h6 transposes to variation B1 below.

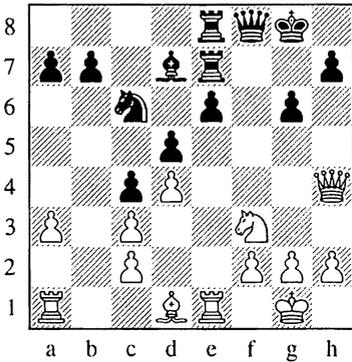
12.Wh5 g6 13.Wh4 c4 14.. e2 Was 15. d2 l f5 16.Wg5 d7 transposes to a line considered later under the move order 11.Wh5 g6 12.Wh4 Was 13.. d2 c4 14.. e2 l f5 15.Wg5 l c6 16.l f3 d7 - see variation A2 of Chapter 17 on page 213.

12...: xe7 13. fh4



13...h6

13...g6 seems unnatural as it further restricts the 'French bishop', but it offers Black a solid game and in practice his results have been fine. The following continuation is logical and has been repeated in several games: 14.0-0 c4 15. e2 <.d7 16.Ef1 ♖f8 17. d1 1ae8 (Another idea is 17...< g7!? intending 18.l e5 ll xe5 19.1xe5 ff6 with equality.)



18.♗e5 ♗xe5 19.♞xe5 ♞f7= It is hard for White to make further progress; the backward pawn on e6 is well protected and White also has some weaknesses on the queenside.

14.0-0 c4 15. g6

15.\e2 d7 gives White nothing, and his own bishop is starting to look just as bad as Black's.

15... d? 16.Ef Uke8 17.. e8\ xe8 18.l eS l xeS 19.1xe5

We have reached a slightly unusual situation with only the major pieces remaining on the board. Black has an obvious weakness on e6, but this can be defended without too much difficulty. Perhaps more importantly, Black is not limited to defending and can also create counterplay against White's vulnerable queenside pawns.

19...\Vf? 20.1ael 1ae8

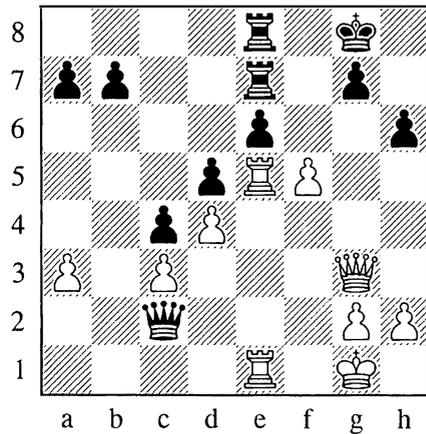
20..Ef ? would be a good move were it not for the trick 21.2xd5!

21.f4

This is the most direct attempt to put pressure on Black's position.

21...i a4! 22.fS Wxc2 23.Vg3

We have been following the game Balashov - Gunawan, Minsk 1986. Here a reliable route to equality would have been:



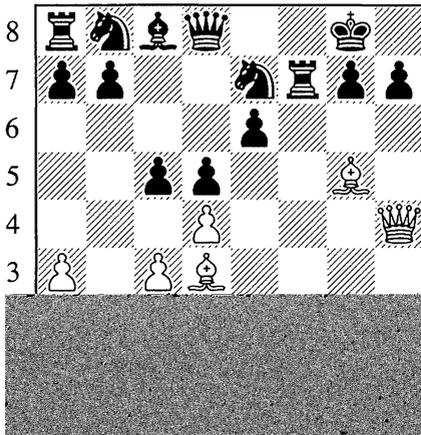
23...♞d3! N 24.fxe6

24.♞1e3 ♞d1† 25.♞e1 ♞d3=

24...@xg3 25.hxg3 Ed8 26.g4 2d6 27.©f g6 28). g3©g7=

Black will play ...s f6 next, and White will be forced to repeat moves with) fl f followed by 2fe1.

B) 11. h4



This is the second most popular move after 11...h5. It has some independent ideas, but overall it does not compare favourably from White's point of view.

11...h6

[his is the difference: Black is not obliged to weaken his light squares with ...g6. From here White can consider both B1) 12.1 f3 and B2) 12...xe7.

B1) 12.1 f

White can rely on this indirect defence, since taking the bishop would be too dangerous at the present moment.

12...1 bc6

Black continues developing. Now ...hxg5 starts to become a more realistic prospect, as shown in some of the following notes. White has tried many different moves here but the two main ones are B11) 13.0-0 and B12) 13.1xe7.

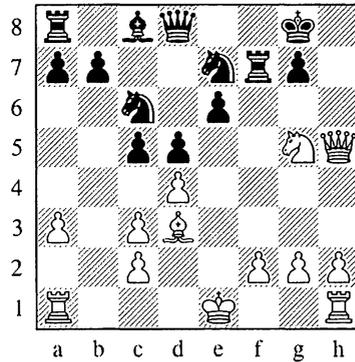
Here are a couple of examples of inferior alternatives:

13...d2? c4 14.1 e2\ c7 15.0-0! f5 16...h5 .1d7+ Dulic - Kovacevic, Pula 2010 Black

has an active position and controls the central squares e4 and e5.

13...h5? hxg5 14.1 kg5

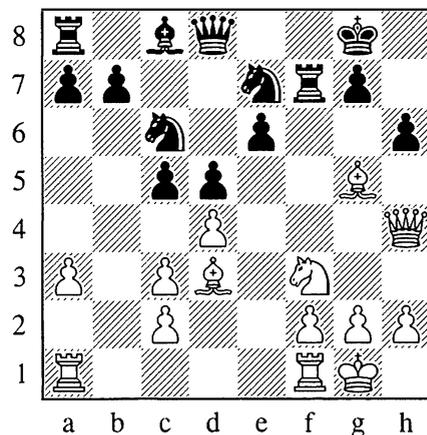
14.1 h? tN c f 15.1 kg5 cxd4 f vours Black. 14...h? N mf8 15.1 kg5! f 16.. d3! g8 17.0-0 c4 18.1 hl me7 19...g6 md6+ Black's king will find safety on the queenside and his material plus gives him an edge.



14...g6! 15.1xf7 gxh5 16.1xd8 1xd8

Black's two minor pieces were obviously stronger than White's rook in Perez Medrano - Baldomero Garcia, Spain 1995.

B11) 13.0-0



For the moment White is maintaining the indirect defence of the bishop, but Black's next move forces a resolution.

13...c4 14.\ke7

Leave the bishop hanging for a moment longer would be pushing White's luck too far, as the following lines demonstrate.



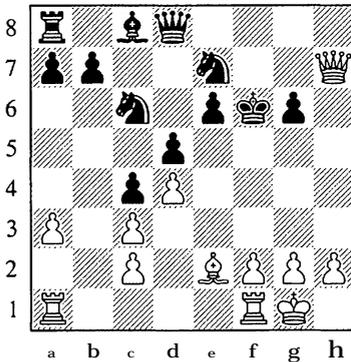
14.g6? gx3 15.gxf3 hxg5 gives White nothing for instance 16. h1 - f8 17. h5! f g8 18i.h7 E. Pedersen - Hyldkrug Denmark 1984. Black has more than one strong continuation here, but the most convincing is

15...gxe7 16.g.g6. d7=

Gallagher - Hertneck Kesketet 1990. Black has solved his opening problems and can look forward to a comfortable endgame. His only weakness is the e6 pawn, which can easily be defended. One promising idea is to bring the king to d6, and there is always the possibility of counterplay against White's weak queenside pawns.

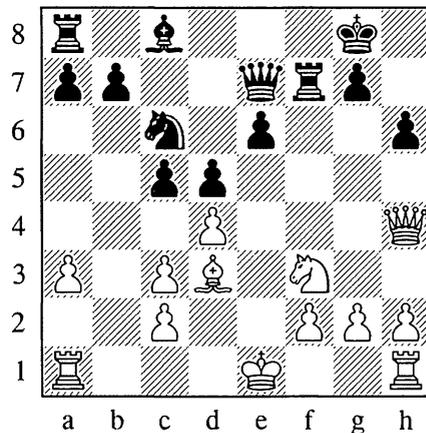
14i.e2!N hxg5 (14... c7 15. xe7 : xe7 is equal, but Black can do better:) 15i. xg5 g6 16i. xf mx f 17. h?i' mf6

B12) 13.\xe7' xe7



18. g4.\h7 19. h3' h8 20. Vg3! f5+

14.. ' xe7



"It is time White hopes to profit from immediate exchanges.

14.i xe7

14.i g3 c4 15. g6 m6 16.0-0 d7 gives Black a comfortable version of what has, by now, become a familiar type of position. As usual, the backward pawn on e6 is not a big problem and is balanced out by White's queenside weaknesses.

14...: xe7 15.dxc5!

15.0-0 e5 gives White nothing, for instance: 16.Cke5 1 xe5 17.dxc5 : xe5 18.f4 (18: f l : xeU 19: xe1 ♖f7= Golic- Dumic, Sombor 2009.) 18...ge6= Vcrrongen- Duplenko, corr: 2011.

15...e5

Black's better structure fully compensates for the pawn deficit.

16. b5

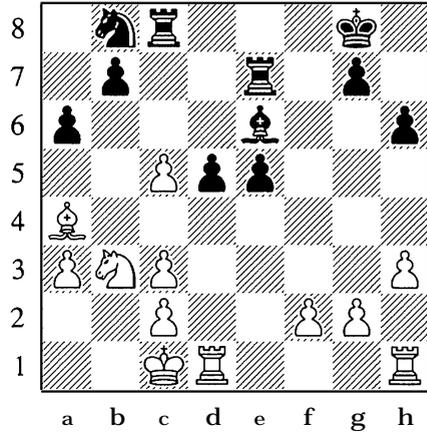
16.c d2 c4 17.s b5 1 e5 18.0-0 (18.c b3 .g4) 18... e6 19.: ael : c8+ Passerori - Bukal, Rome 1985. Black is close to restoring material equality while keeping a positional advantage.

16.. g4 17.c d2 : c8 18.t b3 llb8! 19.h3 .e6

This equalizes cleanly, although 19...f7!? is also quite acceptable.

20.0-0 a6 2L: i4

Forced, as the bishop needs to be ready to eliminate the knight when it arrives on d7.



21...: f ! 22.l a5!

White does not have time to defend the f pawn as ...: f4 is a problem.

22...gc5 23.c b3

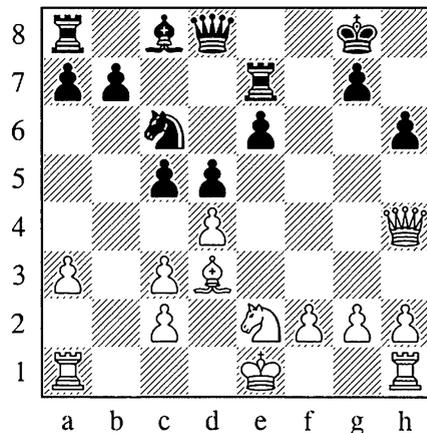
Y - 1

Simmelink - D. Myers, email 2004.

B2) 12.l xe7 : xe7

The immediate exchange has been White's most popular choice, although it has the disadvantage of setting up a quick ...c5 break for Black. White needs to catch up on kingside development, so it is no surprise that his main choices have been B21) 13.c e2 and B22) 13.c f .

B21) 13.l e2 1 c6



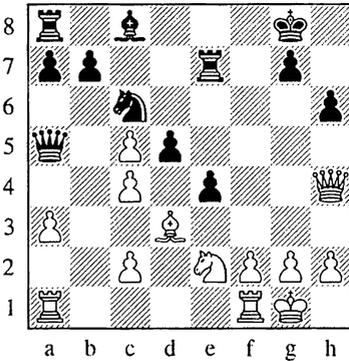
14.f4

This has been White's usual choice, attempting to secure a kingside clamp.

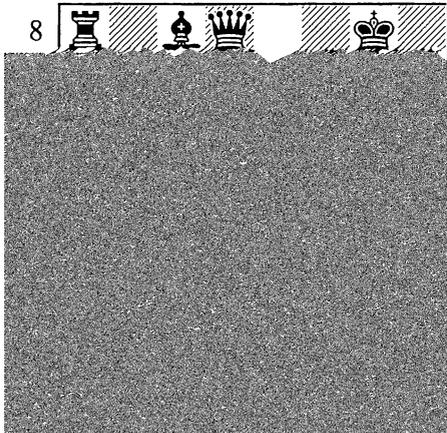
14.0-0 allows Black to choose between a solid and a dynamic option:

a) -n1e straightf rward path is 14...c4 15.\lg6 . h7 16.f4 . b8= as seen in Almasi - farago, Hungary 1993. Black has equal play in a typical pawn structure f r this line.

b) 14...e5!?!leads to interesting complications which should result in equality, as shown in the f llowing correspondence game: 15.dxc5 (15.dxe5! xe5= Erashchenkov - Skorchenko, Krasnodar 2003.) 15...1 a5 16.c4 e4



17.g3!?! ♖xc5 18.cxd5 exd3 19.dxc6 dxc2 20.♙fc1 ♜f7 21.♗d8† ♜f8 22.♗d2 ♖xc6= Karasalo – Horwitz, corr. 2009.



14...1 d6 15.1 g3

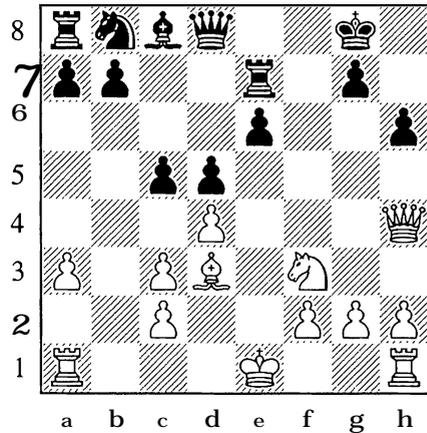
Threatening 1 g6, so Black responds with the usual blocking strategy.

By the way, attempting to prevent Black's next move with 15.dxc5? 1xc5 16.1 g3? would lead to serious problems f r White af er !6...e5!+.

15...c4 16. ♔6.1 d7 17.0-0. e8=

Gunnlaugsson - Johnston, email 2003. Black has f llowed the usual f rmula, and af er exchanging the light-squared bishops he has f w problems.

B22) 13.1 f



13..eS!?

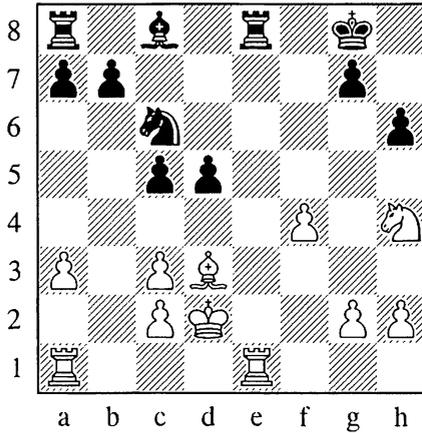
Exposing the drawback of White's move order this is a straightf rward route to equality, although I might also mention that 13..1 c6 14.0-0 c4 15.1 g6 ♗d7 leads t thematic positions with equal chances.

14.dxeS : xe5† 15.♗d2 1 xh4 16.1 xh4 1 c6 17.f4

17: he1 ♗d7... also equal in Markovic - Drasko, Uleinj 1998.

17... eS 18: he1

Another game continued 18...g6 : f
 19.: ael ! d7 20.f5 : ad8 with equality,
 Kovacevic - Drasko, Panormo 1998.



18...♙d7 19.c4 d4=

Here too Black was fine in Pfaff – Horwitz,
 corr. 2009.

Conclusion

This chapter has featured several instances of the blocked pawn structure arising after Black plays ...c4. We have seen one version of this structure with only heavy pieces on the board, and others with a knight and/or a bishop for each side. The general verdict is the same everywhere: Black should not have too much trouble defending his one weakness on e6, and White's damaged queenside structure gives the second player prospects for counterplay, ensuring that White will not have everything his own way.

We saw some other lines where Black was able to free his position with an early ...e5 break and, where circumstances permit, this should also be considered as a viable equalizing method.

Chapter 17

8. f5



11. ♖h5 g6 – Introduction

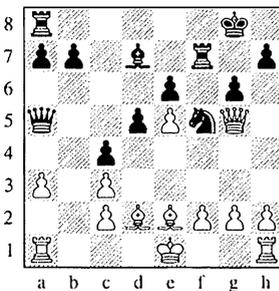
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7
7.♗g4 0-0 8.♙d3 f 9.exf6 ♖xf6 10.♙g5 ♗f7 11.♗h5

11...g6

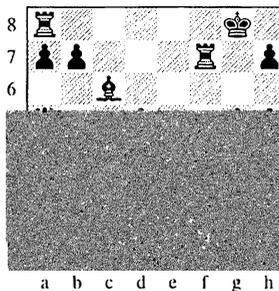
A) 12.♗h4 ♗a5 13.♙d2 c4 14.♙e2 ♘f5 15.♗g5 ♘c6	211
A1) 16.h4?!N	212
A) 16.♘f3	213
B) 12.♗d1 ♘bc6 13.♘f3	216
B1) 13...♗a5	216
B2) 13...♗f8	219

A2) note t 17.g4!



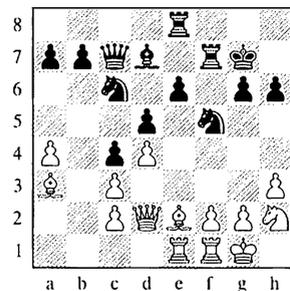
18..d4!N

A2) af er 23.f3



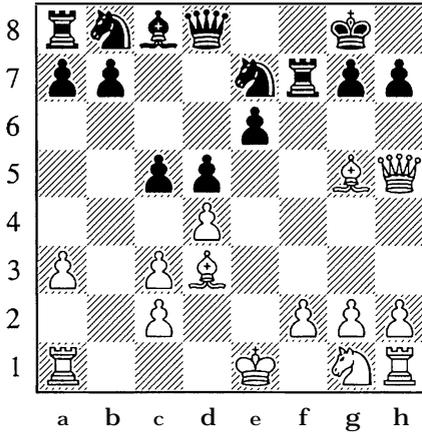
23..d4!N

B2) af er 22..l f5



23. g4!

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.l k3 ; b4 4.eS cS 5.a
i xc3t 6.bxc3 l k7 7.\ g4 0-0 8.i d3 f
9.exf6) x 10.i gS) f 11.\ hS



11...g

From White's point of view, one of the main advantages of having the queen on h5 instead of h4 is that 11...h6? becomes too risky. A key point is revealed after 12.l f l bc6 13. ,h?j! when the queen's position is of paramount importance.

After the text move White must decide where to put his queen, and the first part of the chapter will deal with the sideline A) 12.\ h4. In the second part will introduce B) 12.\ dl, which is by far the most popular move and can be considered White's most challenging response to our repertoire.

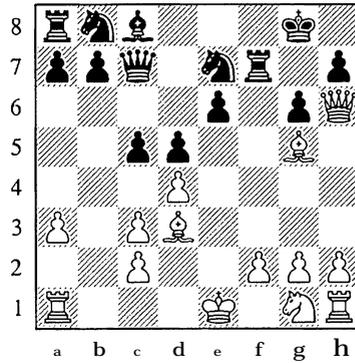
Let us briefly deal with one other minor sideline:

12.\ h6

According to my database this has been played in just three games out of almost a thousand.

12...\ c7!N

12...\ a5 13.i ,d2 c4 14. ,e2 l f5 15.\ g5 transposes to variation A below, but my new idea is more accurate.



13.5.xe7

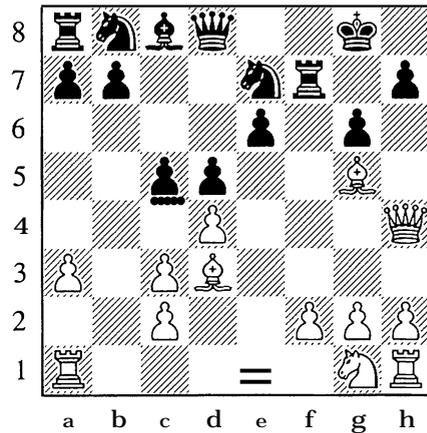
1 is seems like the best try.

After 13.l f ?! cxd4 14.0-0 dxc3 15. h4 (15.meI !! bc6+) 15...e5 !6. g3 :xf 17.gxf3 l bc6 Black' two extra pawns and dominant centre court for much more than the exchange.

13...: xe7 l4.h4 c4 l5 ,e2 e5 i6.h5i f5+

Black is well developed and controls the centre.

A) 12.\ h4



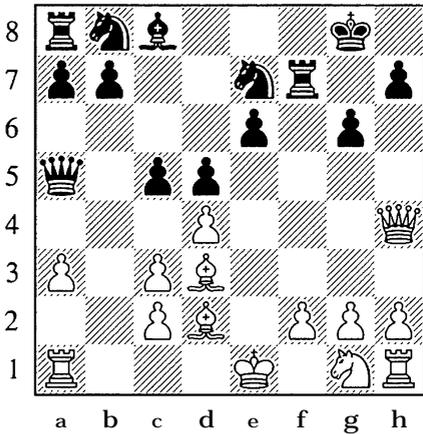
12...\ a

Black unpins the knight while creating a threat of his own.

13.i d2

13.i .xe7?\ xc3! 14.< e2l k6! was a disaster for White in Vonthron - Ortman, Germany 2008.

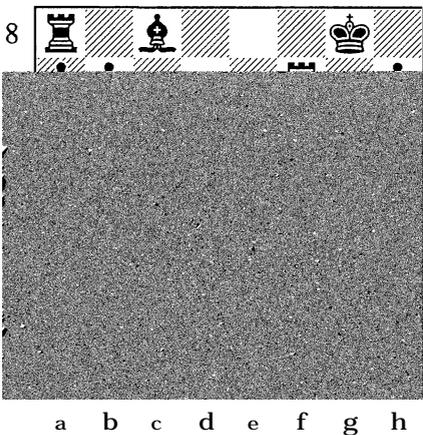
13.1 b2? is also inaccurate; the d3-bishop is left short of squares, forcing White to make an undesirable pawn exchange on the next move: 13...1 bxc6 14.dxc5 c5 15.f3 ' xc5 16.gbl l' f5 17.' f2' xf2:1 18. xf2:1 h6+ Black had the more harmonious position in Biczewski - Uhlmann, Bad Liebenzell 1996.



13...c4 14. e2! f5 15.' g5! b6

These moves are all standard and require no explanation. At this point, however, it is worth considering a couple of options for White, beginning with the direct A1) 16.h4?N before moving on to the standard A2) 16! f .

A1) 16.h4?N



This might look slightly scary for Black, but there are good defensive resources.

16...d7! 17.h5??

This seemingly natural follow-up is actually a fatal error:

The lesser evil is 17.1 f , transposing to 17.h4? in the notes for White's 17th move in line A2 below.

17...h6!

This tactical defence refutes White's concept.

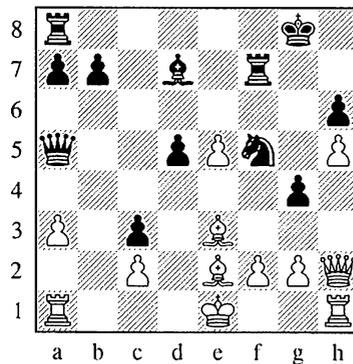
18' f4

18' xg6? gg7 19.' f6: f8 wins the queen.

18' g4 is also hopeless, as after 18...g5 the simple threat of ...c5 cannot be prevented. The awkward position of White's queen will soon force resignation.

18..g5 19.' h2 e5 20.dxe5

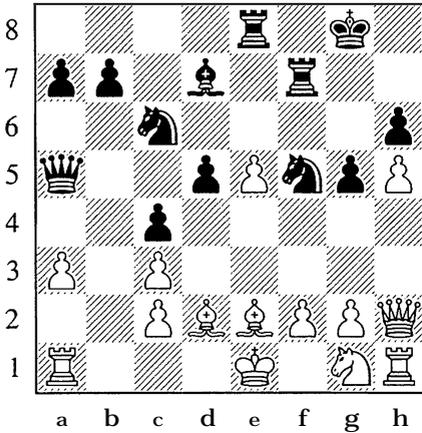
Alternatives are no better; for instance: 20.1 f3 cxd4 21.cxd4 c3 22.\ e3 g4 23.1 b5 0 xe5 24.dxe5



24...g3! 25. Wh3 d4+ +

20...i e5

Black dominates the position and has a won game. Here are a couple of instructive lines.



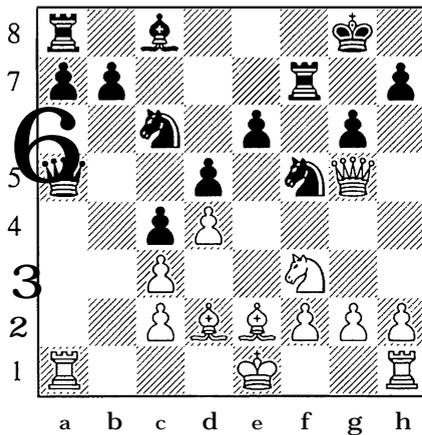
21 f

21.g4 l g7 22.' g3 l xe5 23. fl @ b6 + might hold on a bit longer; but is not enough to save the game.

21...g4 22.l h4 g3 23.f g3 l e3! 24.: cl l xe5 +

Followed by ...l 5g4 with car age.

A) 16l f



Having seen that the direct attack backf res on White, it is obvious that this developing move is needed.

16... d7

Black has more or less completed development and has frm control in the

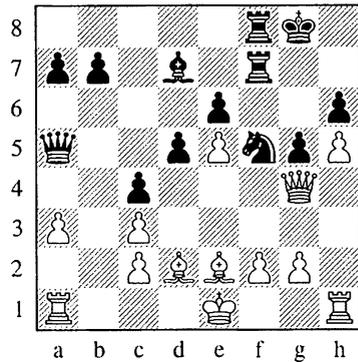
centre. The knight can jump via d6 ro e4 and, if necessary, the queen can retreat to d8 . protect the king.

17.g4?

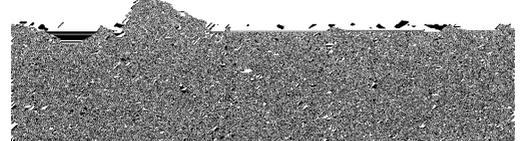
Not f r the frst time, a show of kingside aggression mtr s our to be more dangerous for White than f r Black. Nevertheless, it has been White's most popular choice, and it leads to some interesting complications so. I will keep it as the main line.

Before exploring this move any further, I will present a f w other possibilities.

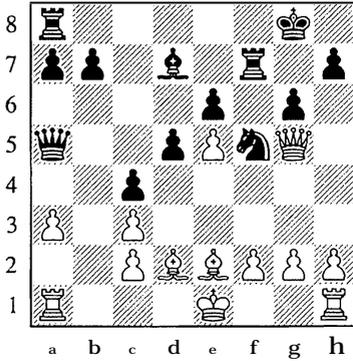
17.h4?! can be compared with the earlier variation A1. Here things arc nor completely disastrous f r White, but Black is still well placed ro deal with any threats on the kingside. Af cr 17...: af + I already pref r Black. 18.h5 h6 19.' g4 g5 20.l e5 l xc5 21.dxe5



This position occurred in Iglesias – Gargiulo, Tres de Febrero 2003. Now 21...g4!N would have been good for Black, for instance: 22.Ξc1



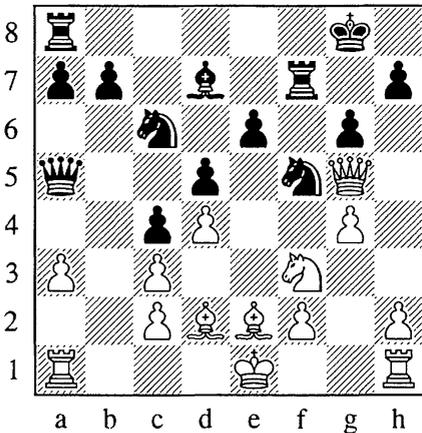
17.l e5?! l xe5 18.dxc5 is a bit premature f om White's point of view. Now in Gdanski - McDonald, Groningen 1986, Black missed a nice idea:



18...d4! 19.cxd4 c3 20...e3 21...g4 22.fxe3; at the moment, but where is he going to put his king?

17.0-0 is the simplest and probably best move, but the following game shows a simple and direct path to equality: 17...h4 18.g4 19.fxe3 (19...e3 20.dxe5 4+ Rosino - Norman, Courmayeur 2011.) 19...c3 20...e3; e8 21...f3 e5 22...xe4 dxe4 23.a4 d5= Van Tricht - Arcenegui Rodrigo, corr. 2009.

Let us now return to the slightly inferior, yet much more interesting position arising after 17.g4?

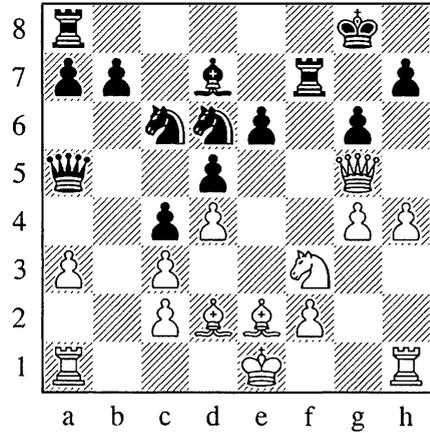


17...d6 18.h4

Having lunged forward with the g-pawn, it

is natural for White to commit himself to the attack.

18...e3 19.f4 19...g5 (19...kd2?!) can also be considered, although White may be able to hold the balance by recapturing with the king 20...xg5; e8 21.f4 Wg7 was slightly better for Black in Eyer - Dorer, Germany 2001. White has no real attacking chances and his position is in danger of becoming overextended.



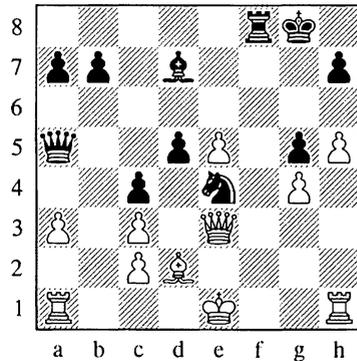
18...h4 19.f4 e3 e5!

Beginning a powerful counterattack.

20.h5

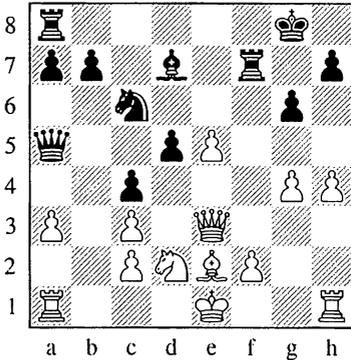
! The best try.

20...e5? turns out badly for White: 20...e5 21.dxe5; xf2 22.h5 g5 23...f3 f of3 24...xf3 ms 25...e3

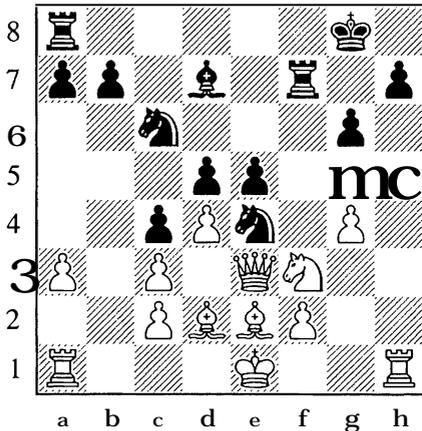


25...E f2!N (25...\ xg4 was better f r Black in Vasilescu- Anitoaie, Predeal 1989, bur the text move is even m onger:) 2G' x f2 C x f2 27.1 x f2 ' b6" - + In strict material terms White is okay, but his weak king is the deciding f ctor:

20.dxe5! also meets with a strong rebural: 20...C xd2 21.C xd2

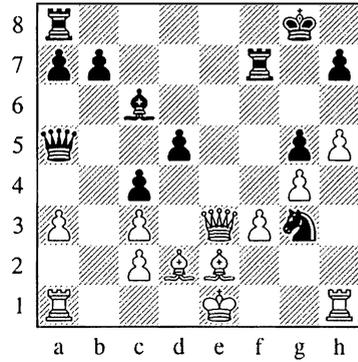


21...dxe5! 22.♞xe5 ♞e8 23.♞d4 (23.dxc4 ♞xe5 24.dxa5 ♟xg4+) 23...♞fe7 24.0-0 ♞xe2 25.♞ab1 ♟c6 26.♞a1 ♞d8 27.g5 ♞d7 0-1 Hanison – Van de Wynkele, email 2000.



20...exd4 21.Cxd4 g5 22.Cxc6?

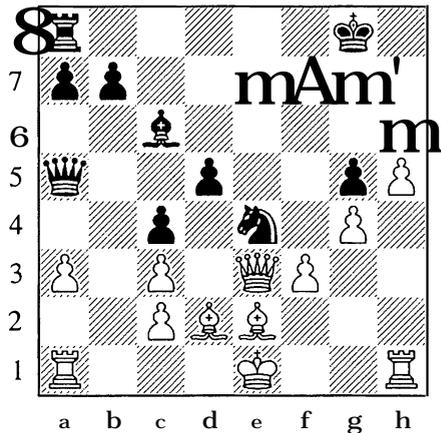
White should pref r the move order 22.f3N C g3 23.Cxc6 ♞xc6, transposing back to the game ref renced below, without allowing the improvement noted in the bolded main line. Play continued:



24.♞h2 h6 25.♞e5 ♞c7 26.♞xc7 ♞xc7 27.♞h3 dxe2 28.♞xe2 White was able to hold this inferior endgame in Alvebring – Hage, email 1999.

22...\kx6 23.f

'Il lis was the actual move order seen in the af rementioned game, Alvebring - Hage, email 1999. Ac this point Black missed a powerf u idea.

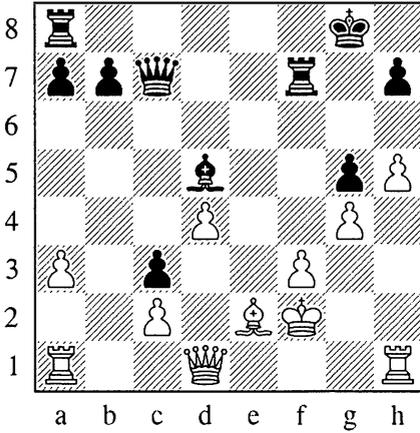


23...d4!N

A strong improvement. In the game Black missed his chance and played 23...C g3, reaching the position f om the note to White' 22nd move.

24.cxd4 Cxd2 25.' xd2 c3 26.' dl 26.' d3' c7!-

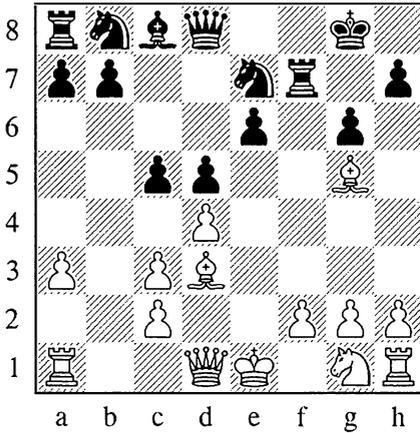
26.. c7 27.< f \,d5



28.♖c1 ♜f4 29.♗e3 ♝c6

Black is dominating the position and has a strong initiative.

B) 12.Vdl



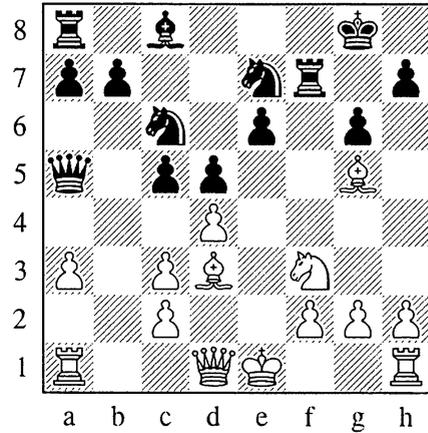
Finally we arrive at the main line, which has been tested in over 900 games. From this position I have chosen the second-most-popular option of 12.. a5! as my recommendation, and you can find it analysed in the next chapter beginning on page 223. However, I also put a lot of effort into analysing 12..t bc6, and I would like to present some of my findings here. I hope that the following section will help you to understand

some of the nuances of these strategically complex positions, which will serve as useful background information before we investigate the main recommendation. Finally, if you also happen to play the white side of this variation, you may find some of the ideas useful against opponents who are unfortunate enough not to have this book!

12..t bc6 13.t f

After this natural reply Black generally chooses between B1) 13.. a5 and B2) 13.. \ f8.

B1) 13.. a5



I gave up this move after losing with it against Jakovenko in 2006. Perhaps it is not quite as bad as I thought at that time, but I still prefer White.

14.\ tz

This is the main continuation. White has achieved a healthy plus score and seems to be at least slightly better in all lines.

14.\ d2!?

With this move White aims for a more active set-up. Jakovenko used it successfully against me, but Black's play can be improved.

14...\ c7?

14...cxd4 15.cxd4 \ xd2t 16.\xd2 gives White a slightrly f vourable endgame.

14...< f5! has been played in several games, and would be my choice if I reached the same position today. I will not go into f rther details here, but I believe that Black has enough resources to maintain the balance.

15.0 0 cxd4

15...Exf3 16.gxf cxd4 17.Ef l e5 18.Eabl± 16.c xd4!

16.cxd4 r xf3! 17.gxf3 < xd4 18.c g2 e5

16..a6

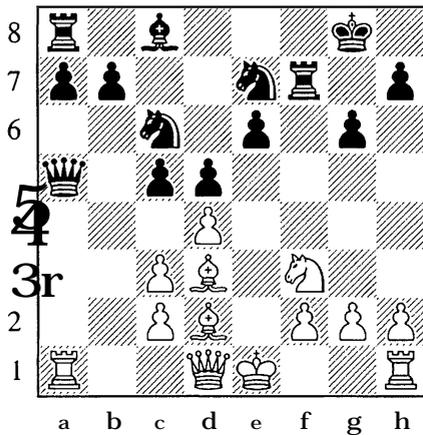
16...e5 17.< b5\ d7 18.c41

17.Eael e5?

17...\ d6 18.< xc6< xc6 19.c4 d4 20.. le41

18.< xc6 bxc6 19.B !< f5 20.\ e2±

Jalovko - Berg, Higen 2006.



14..1 c7

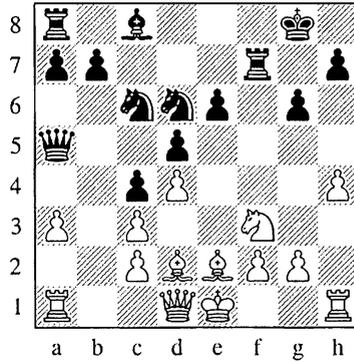
This has been the main line, but recent developments seem to indicate that White has an edge. The same is true af er other moves, such as the two alter atives shown below.

14...c4

Closing the posirion is a solid approach, but White's position is still to be pref rred.

15. le2 < f5 16.h4! < d6

16..&d7 17.h5t



17.< g5!

17.h5 < e4! = is fine for Black, as the centralized knight gives him enough control.

17..Ef5!N

Moskalenko suggested this as an improvement, bur it does not solve Black's problems.

17...Eg7 18.0 0 (18.h5? h6 19.< B g5+ is not what White wants) 18..e5 19.dxe5 ll xe5 20.gf4 : e7 21.Ee\1 Walter- Anreiter; corr. 2011.

18.g4! Ef6 19.h5 h6 20.hxg6 Exg6

20...hxg5 21.. J5!+-

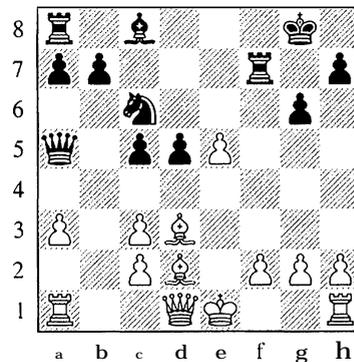
21.tl h3

Black's kingsid has been weakened.

14..e5!?

This is the most straightf rward attempt to solve Black's problems. He hopes to gain activity for the sacrific ed pawn, but White has a good answer:

15.ll xc5 l2xe5 16.dxe5 < c6

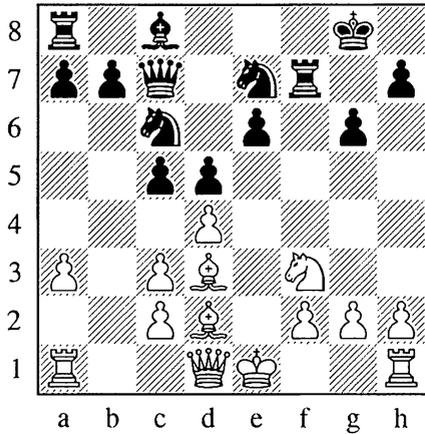


17.0-0!

The main move is 17.f4, but this looks less convincing after 17...c4 18.gxc2 Vc5. Black has prevented White from castling and he has a fir amount of compensation for the pawn. I analysed this more deeply and found that Black was at least okay everywhere. The text move is a more straightforward way for White to keep an edge. He simply returns the pawn in order to castle.

17...1 xe5 18.\ e2;

Csjer yik - Eriksson, corr. 2009. White has a long-term advantage based on the pair of bishops in an open position. In addition, Black's kingside is seriously weakened.



15.0-0

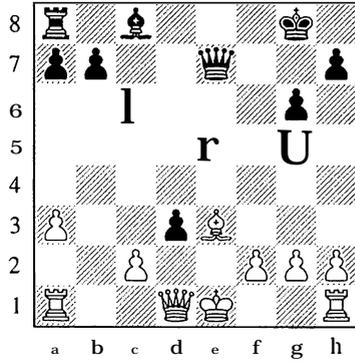
This is White's simplest route to an edge.

Other option is:

15.dxc5!?

This ambitious move has been heavily analysed, and leads to sharp and complicated play of ering chances for both sides. Theoretically speaking, however, this also seems to end up in an advantage for White. The critical line runs as follows:

15...e5 16.l g5 ms 17.c4 e4 18.cxd5 exd3 19.dg\ d7 20.dxe7 i Vxe? t 21.\ d [f5 21...[f4 22.h4±



22.1 f \,e6!?

I tested this move against Kasimdzhanov in 2006. Black gives up a second pawn in pursuit of the initiative.

Perhaps Black should settle for 22...dxc2 23.\ xc2 . .e6 24.0-0, when White is a pawn up with the safer king, but the opposite-coloured bishops offer reasonable drawing chances.

23.\ xd3 \,d5

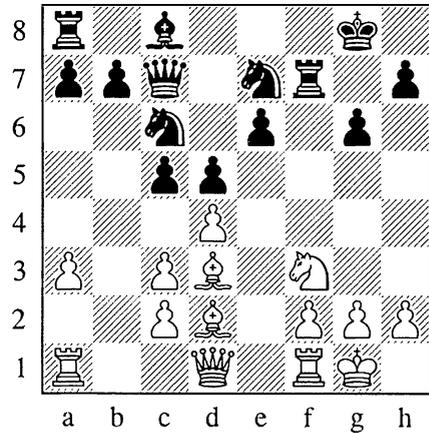
23...[d8 24.\ d ;

24.0-0!

The stronger move giving White an advantage.

24...\ xf 25.gxf) f3 26.h4!±

Kasimdzhanov - Berg, E11inn (rapid) 2006. I managed to draw the game, but would not wish to repeat this position.



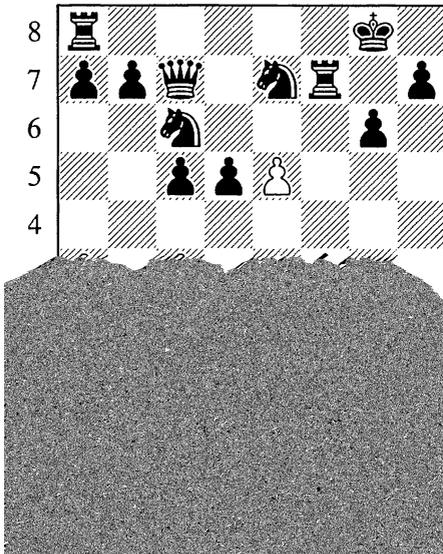
15...e5 16.dxe5 g4!±N

This is my attempt to improve on 1G..l he5 17 e2! . ld7 18.Ee1 Ee8 19.. gS, as seen in Plomp - Liebert, corr: 2006. White has the bishop pair in an open position, and Black's kingside is seriously weakened.

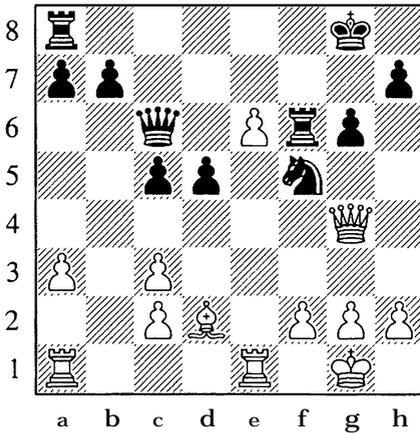
any case, I do not find this line particularly inspiring, especially considering that 15.dxc5!? also seems to bring White an advantage.

82) 13..i f

17j e2. xf

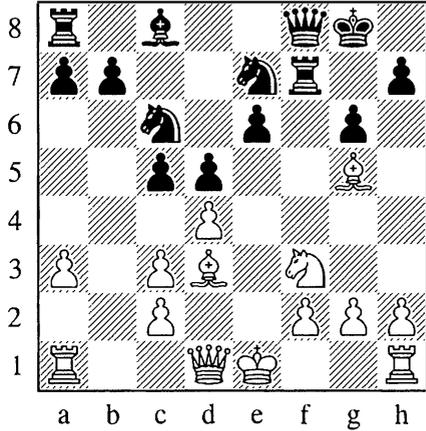


20. g4 Ckg4 21.li xg4 @c6 22.1 el l2J5



23i f Exe6 24: xe6 \ xe6 25: el \ f 26: es

White keeps a slight initiative, although Black may be able to hold the ending. In



This is the most popular move, which has the idea of supporting the weakened dark squares on the kingside and perhaps even playing f r ...hG and ...g5 at some point. Black is rather solid, but practice has shown that White has the better chances here too. I will illustrate the main ideas of the position with the help of a game I won from White's side.

14.0 0c4 15i .e2 h6 16.. cl

The bishop will soon be heading f r the a3-square. White may or may not decide to flick in the move i d2 to gain a tempo by attacking the hG-pawn.

16... ,d?

Previously I had f ced:

1G...g5?!

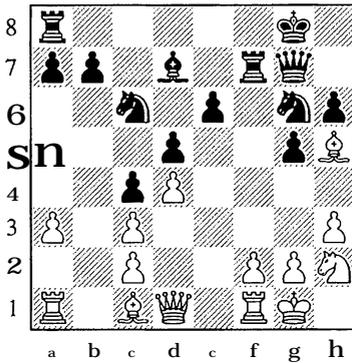
Black seizes space on the kingside, but in doing so he creates weaknesses.

17.h3

Preparing the standard manoeuvre C lh2, a common idea in this type of position.

17...Wg7 18.t lh2 i H7 19.. hS t lg6

White has established a good blockade on the kingside, and now it is time to improve his position in other parts of the board.



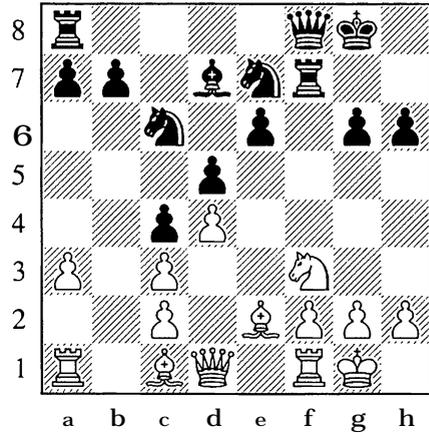
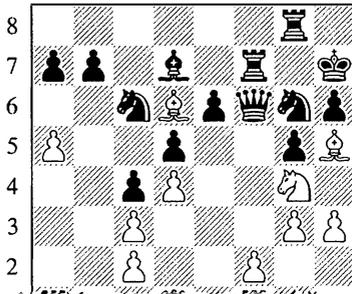
20.a4! i h7 21...a3: g8 22...d6

The bishop has reached an excellent square, and Black should generally try to prevent this manoeuvre if at all possible. Now he is forced to remain passive and wait for White to make progress.

22...: f5 23...g4: f 24.a5

White slowly improves his position move by move.

24...l f4 25.g3! g6 26.l h5 1 f6 27.l g4



17.a4 i h7 18...a3 i fb8!

Preventing...d6. Nevertheless, Black's queen manoeuvres along the eighth rank make a strange impression and it is obvious that White has the more pleasant position.

19...fd2 1 c7

19...l f5 20i abl b6 21.a5t Shirov - Timman, Wijk aan Zee 2003.

20.h3

Slowly improving the position and giving a square for the knight on h2.

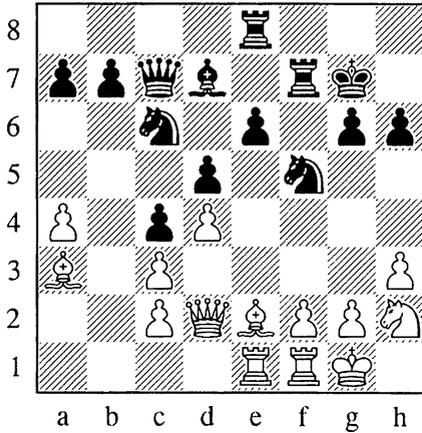
20...cl can be met by 20...C g5.

20...i e8 21. ael cig7!

Black defends well. By improving the position of his king, he gives himself the option of meeting...l h8 when necessary.

22.Ch21 f

Breaking out with 22...e5! does not help. 23.dxe5 C xe5 24.l g4 Cxg4 25...xg4 .xg4 26.Wd4!! Wh7 27...xg4± White has an active position while Black's pieces stand poorly.



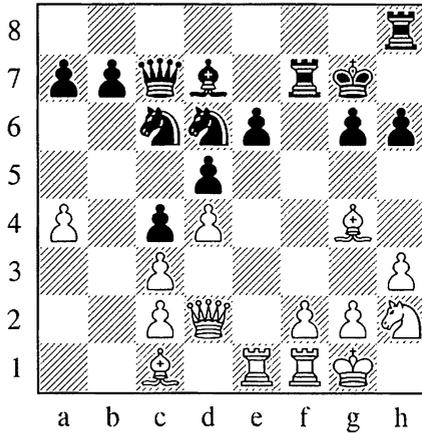
23. ♖g4

A strong move, putting further pressure on Black's position. Although there is no immediate threat, Black finds it difficult in finding constructive moves.

23... ♗h6

The waiting move 23... ♗h6 might have been a better option.

24. ♕c1! ♜h8



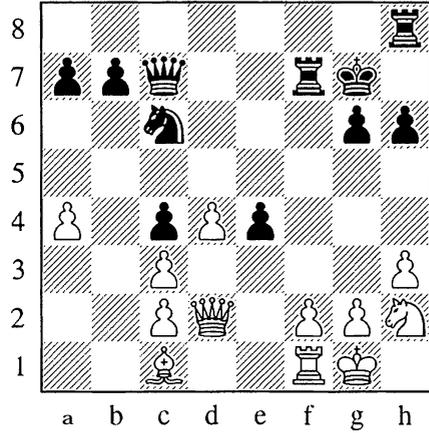
25. ♖k6

It is committed White's exchange sacrifice, but he gets more than enough compensation.

25... ♗xe6 26. ♖xe6 ♗k4 27. ♗xe4!

27. ♗e4 ♗d7 28. ♗xe4 ♗xe4 29. ♖g4 ♗g5. While more normal, it releases some of the pressure on Black's king.

27... ♗xe4



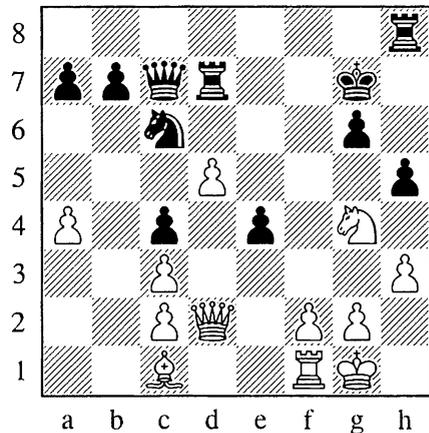
28. ♗d5!

28) ♗d5 was more accurate, followed by ♗g4-e3 with a clear advantage for White.

28... ♗d7
28... ♗e5 29. ♗d4±

29. ♗g4 h5

29... ♗a5? 30. ♗f4! ♗xd5 31. ♗f6† ♗h7 32. ♗h4!±



30.WgS!

30.C e3 would have given White an edge, but the text move leads to an ongoing initiative.

30...hxg4

30...Exd5 31.Wxd5 hxg4 32. .e3 txh3 33.\.d4t C xd4 34.Wxd4!±

31.dxc6 Wxc6 32.Wxg4;

I will cut the game of here, as we have gone well past the stage of opening preparation. White has full compensation for the exchange and although the computer calls the position dead equal, Black's exposed king leaves him with a difficult practical defence. I went on to win in Berg - Drasko, Budva 2009.

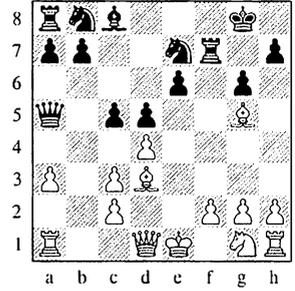
Conclusion

We began by analysing the sideline 12.Wh4, which is not particularly dangerous as White has little chance of utilizing the queen's presence on the kingside to launch a successful attack.

12.Wd1 is deservedly the main line, and can be viewed as the critical test of Black's entire system beginning with 7...0-0 8.i d3 f5. We have examined the main continuations after the most common 12...C bcG line. Even though I am not recommending this path for Black, it is good to understand the main positional themes and appreciate where the problems lie. Having reached the end of that journey, we are ready to move on to my recommendation of 12...Wa5!

Chapter 18

8...f5



12. ♔d1 ♔a5!

Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.t c3! b4 4.e5 c5 5.a ! xc3t 6.bxc3 C e7
 7. g4 0-0 8. d3 f5 9.exf gxf6 10. g5 g1 11. h5 g6 12. dl
 12... a5!

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1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Ck3 i b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3
i xc3t 6.bxc3 Ck7 7.Wg4 0-0 8.i d3 f
9.exf Exf 10.i gS Ef 11.WhS g6 12.Wdl
WAs!

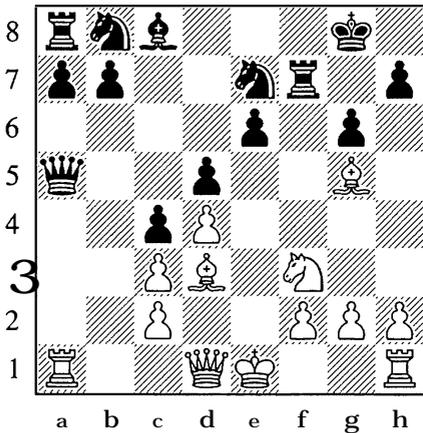
.nlis has nor been as popular as 12...C bcG,
but I believe it to be more precise. 11lc main
point is that the queen's knight may be able
make good use of the d7-square.

White has three plausible replies: A) 13.Cf !?,
B) 13.Wd2 and C) 13.i d2.

A) 13.Cf !?

With this ambitious move White attempts to
ref ute his opponent's concept by ignoring the
attack on the c3-pawn. Black has two main
replies: A1) 13..c4!N and A) 13..Exf !?.
Please note that the immediate 13..Wxc3?
should be avoided, as 14.. fl2 Wb2 15.Eb1
Wxa3 16.Eb3Wa4 17..\b5 Va2 18.Wcl leaves
the black queen in trouble.

A1) 13..c4!N



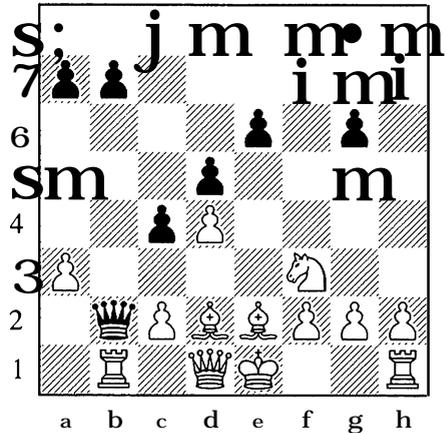
By blocking the centre, Black intends
to capture the c3-pawn under more
favourable circumstances. White obtains full
compensation and Black will be forced to
defend for a while, but his position remains
quite solid.

14.i e2Wxc3t 15.i d2Wb2 16.Ebl !?

An interesting idea, giving up a second pawn
but winning the exchange in return .

!GQ,b4 c bcG 17.Ebl Wa2 18.Eal = forces an
immediate draw.

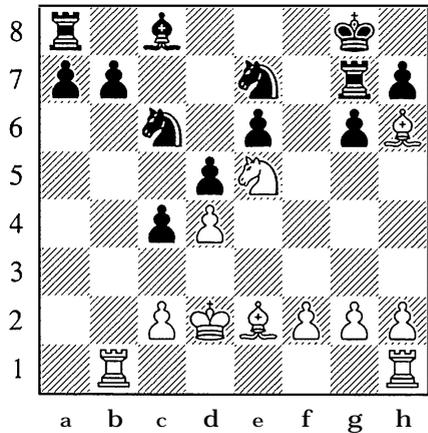
16.0-0 C bc6 17.c3 C f5 reaches a position
where White definitely has compensation for
the pawn, but Black is solid and objectively
seems to be doing fine.



16..' xa3 17.c eS Eg?

The point of White's play is that other rook
moves are impossible due to the threat of a
bishop fork on b4.

18.i h6Wc3t 19.' d2' xd2t 20.©xd2C bc6



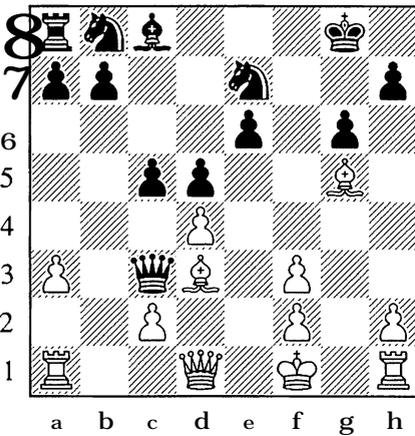
21.fxc6 fxc6 22.i xg7 xg7 23.c3 gb8=

The endgame is balanced, although it would appear that Black has the easier position to play, due to the straightforward plan of mobilizing the queenside pawns.

A) 13..gxf !?

This is the most direct and critical approach, forcing the game into unclear territory. I find this to be the most practical decision, especially in an over-the-board game. White will soon be stuck with a weak pawn structure and a slightly vulnerable king.

14.gf3 ♖xc3 15. f



15...c4!N

15...tbc6 16.dxc5 e5 17.h4± was favourable for White in Rudolf-Jurek, Pardubice 2007.

16.i xe7

16.. e2? tbc6+ is good for Black.

16...cxd3 17.cxd3 ♖xd4

This position arises pretty much by force after the exchange sacrifice on B. Black has an extra pawn as well as the better structure. This in combination with White's uncoordinated pieces and vulnerable king gives Black full compensation. I will offer a few sample lines:

show what might follow next. Certainly some practical games are needed in order to give a definitive assessment of the position, but in my opinion Black has a fully playable position and all three results are possible.

18.h4

Controlling the h3-square and starting an attack on the kingside.

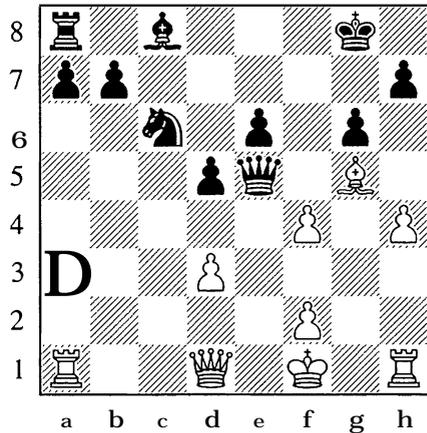
18..f c6 19.i g5 ♖e5!?

This looks like a good move, preventing h4-h5 and switching the queen to f5, where she will be less exposed than on d4.

20.f4

20.' g2 1 d7 2 1.Eb1 b6 22.Ec1 ms reaches an interesting position with everything to play for: Black has a fair amount of compensation for the exchange, both materially speaking and in piece activity.

20.Ec1 \ f5 21.d4 ♙,d7 22.' g2 ms can be assessed in a similar way.



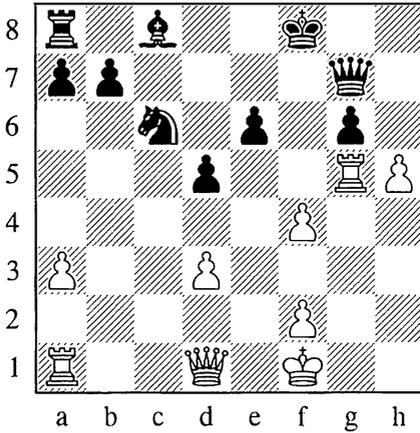
20.. ♖g7! 21.h5 h6 22.gg1 !?

A critical try, sacrificing material in an attempt to break through on the kingside.

22.i h4 e5 23.fx e5 txe5 24.\ b3 i e6 reaches another sharp, open position with

mutual chances. Black keeps a pawn for the exchange and the rook on a8 is about to join the game.

22...hxg5 23.Exg5 < f !



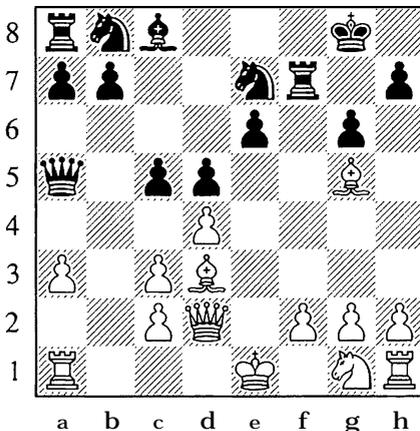
24.♞xg6

24.hxg6 ♖e7 defends.

24...WhSa

Optically the position seems shaky, but it seems to hold together for Black. There are no immediate threats, and if White cannot force anything the two minor pieces could ultimately prove stronger than a rook.

B) 13' d2



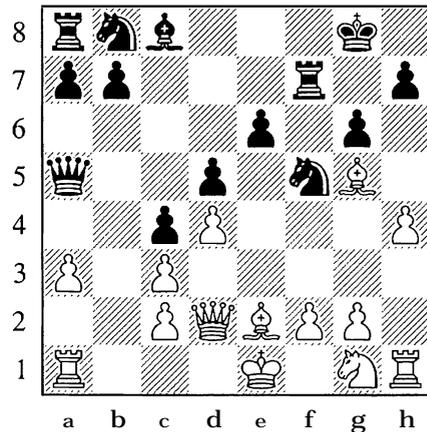
This variation is rather rare, but it can easily transpose to more established theory after 13...l bcG 14.l f , which has already been covered in the note to White's 14th move in variation B1 of the previous chapter. Here I will recommend another set-up for Black, which aims to question the clumsy placement of White's queen on d2.

13..c4! 14.i e2 t f

The point is that, by threatening a quick ...4 d6-e4, Black impedes the standard development of the enemy knight to f3. The two most important replies are B1) 15.h4!? and B2) 15i f4.

15.« covers the e4-square but misplaces the bishop. 15..hG 16.. f4 l cG 17..\g3 This position occurred in Kosmol - Kotsch, Germany 1996, and now the simple 17...i 7N 18.l e2 ♞af8 19.0 1 xg3 20.hxg3 gS 21.< h5 : g7= looks fine for Black.

B1) 15.h4!?



15...t c6 16.hSi d7!

Better than 16..eS?! as occurred in Vugt - Meijer, com: 2005. Black does not have to rush to open the centre, and should continue mobilizing his pieces before deciding what to do. White's attack is unlikely to succeed as he is too far behind in development.

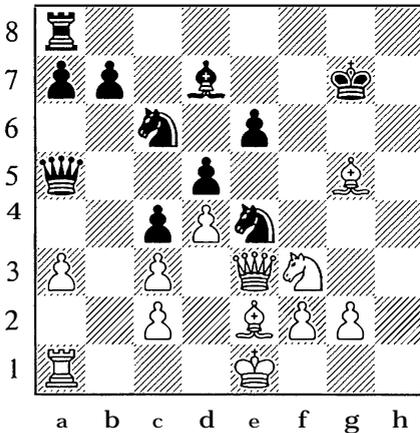
17.1 f

17.hxg6 ♗g6 does not change much, and may transpose after 18.♖f3 ♖d6!

17...1 h6!

Now that the white knight has committed itself Black targets the e4-square.

18.hxg6 ♗g6 19.: h6 1 ♖4! 20.: ♗6t : ♗7 21.: ♗?t c ♗g7 22.\ e3

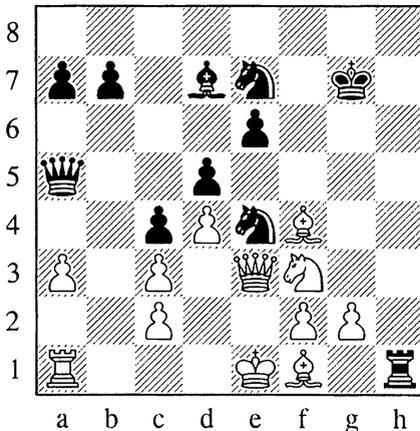


22...: h5!

22...♗xc3†N is roughly equal but Black can take the pawn any time he likes, so instead he brings his last piece into play.

23i f4: h1t 24i f1 l ♖7!?

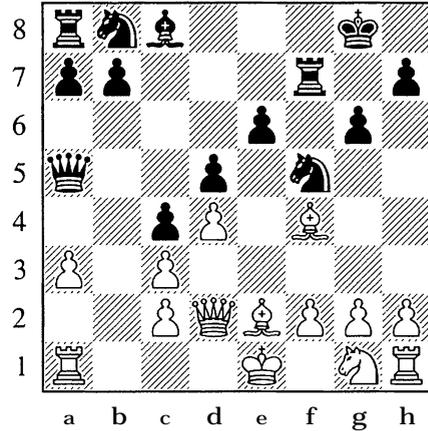
24...♗xc3†N 25.♗xc3 ♖xc3♯ is also good enough for an edge, but Black can play even more ambitiously by keeping the queens on.



25.g4 1 ♗6 26i ♗3i a4t

White was under pressure and went on to succumb in Lange - Hoebel, email 2007.

82) 15i f4



This prevents ...♖d6 but loses valuable time and also opens up tactical possibilities for Black.

15...1 ♖6

White already has to think about how to safeguard the hanging bishop.

16i h3

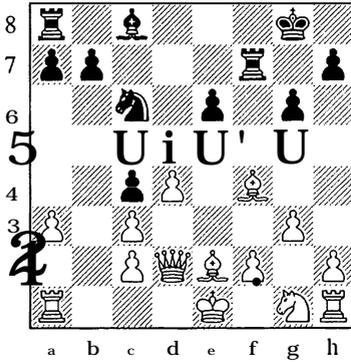
Three other moves have been tried.

16.Cf? ♖fd4 17.cxd4 ♗xf4♯ saw Black win a pawn for insufficient compensation in Mazzilli - Farago, Rome 2005.

16.♗g3 was seen in Decoster - Claesen, Namur 2007. Here it looks logical for Black to play: 16...ne?†N 17.♖f3 ♖xc3 18.hxg3 e5 19.♖xe5 ♖xc5 20.dxe5 ♗xe5 21.0-0 ♗e6= Intending ...ne8 and ... J7.

16.g3

Here I find a nice improvement over the game Brkic - Kovacevic, Bihac 2010.



16...g5N 17.« xg5

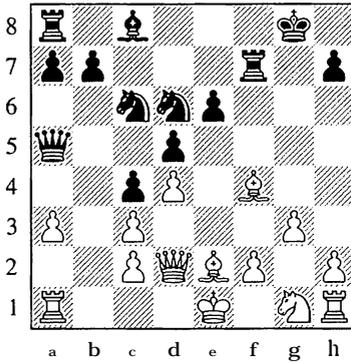
17. e5 l kc5 18.dxe5 l g7=

17...l h6

It is worth investing a pawn to bring the knight to this excellent square, threatening an invasion on e4.

18.H4

18.f3?! is too passive, and Black gets the upper hand after 18... ,d7 19.i J4 l b5 20.a4 : e8 21.. ,e5 l ke5 22.dxe5 l kc3+ intending ...c4.



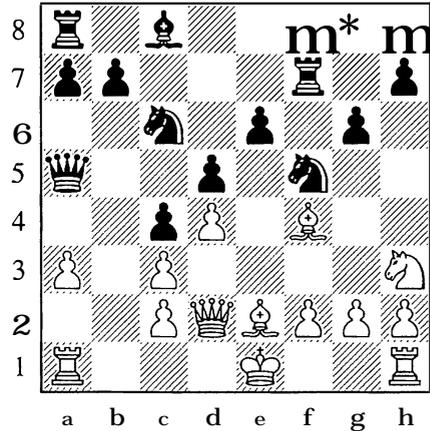
18...e5!

Initiating a forcing tactical sequence.

19.dxe5 l k4 20. \ e3 d4 2J. \ xe4 \ xc3! 22.i fl f5 23. \ d5 l d8 24. \ xc4 \ Wkal T 25. g2 \ xa3 26. \ h5 e4! 27.f3 Jlg6 28. xg6 hxg6 29.e6 Ee7 30.. g5 l de8 3l. xe7 \ xe7

White has survived, but the endgame arising after ... \ xe6 looks at least equal for Black.

Returning to 16.l h3, the position was reached in Mamonovas - Simeone, email 2006, as well as a more recent over-the-board game in 2013. Here Black's clearest equalizing line seems to be:



16..l h4!N 17.i g3

17. g5 l lf5 intends ...t h6, thus leaving White nothing better than 18. \ f4= repeating the position.

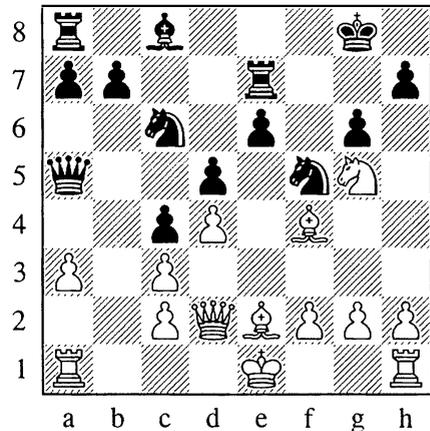
17..l f5!

Challenging White to come up with something better than repeating with 18. f4.

1s.l gs

18.O 0?l If d4+ is no good for White.

18..J e7 19.i f4



19..e5!

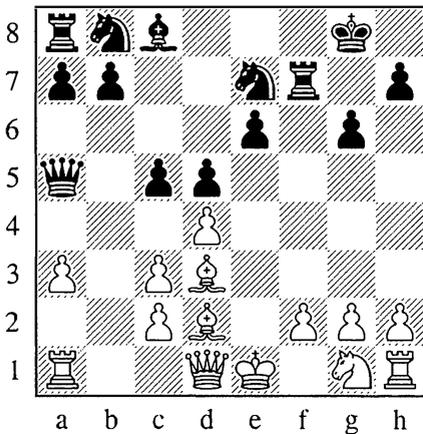
The shuffling of knights and bishops has presented Black with a good moment to carry out this thematic break.

20.d eS h6! 21.l f3 g5 22. g3 e6 23. dl
23.0-0 d4! =

23..' xa3 24.0-0 WaS=

Black has restored material equality while maintaining a healthy blockade on the central light squares. The position is dynamically balanced and both sides have everything to play for.

C) 13. d2



This has been the most popular move by far. This is the moment where I would like to highlight the point behind delaying the development of the b8-knight, by making a significant departure from the main theoretical path.

13...l h7!?

Until recently this move had only ever been tried in a couple of amateur games. That all changed in 2012, however, when Magnus Carlsen employed it against Karjakin. At the time of writing it has only been repeated in one over-the-board game, but I believe in the

soundness of Black's position and expect the popularity of this line to increase. I would also like to mention that I shared some of my ideas with my friend Rickard Dahlstrom, who has rested this line for Black in three correspondence games (all of them referenced later in the chapter), scoring a win and two draws.

What are the advantages of placing the knight on d7 instead of c6? From d7 it still supports the ...c5-break, but has an important secondary purpose of going to f6 and perhaps later e4, especially after a timely ...c4 advance.

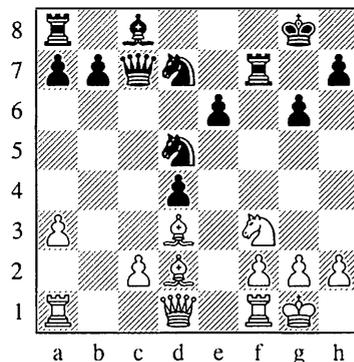
The position after 13...l h7 was discussed in variation B1 of the previous chapter, beginning on page 216.

14.l f3

According to my database, this is the only move to have been played so far. Naturally I anticipated some possible deviations for White:

14.l h3 c4 15.l c2 l b6 16.l g5 transposes to the main line.

14.c4 is a sensible attempt to open the game for White's bishops. 14...Wc7 15.l O cxd4 16.cxd5 l kd5 17.0-0



17...dxe5! 18.dxd4 ♖b6 19.dxc2 (19.♗c3 ♗d7=) 19...dxd3 20.cxd3 e5 21.♞c1 ♗f5=

Black has completed development and achieved an equal position.

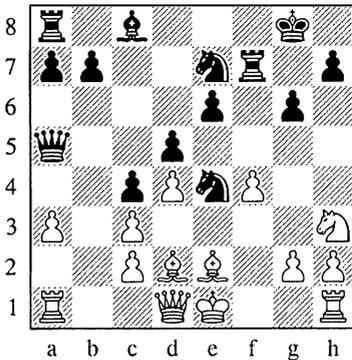
14.f4 c4 15. c2 c f6 J6.c h3?

16.c f3 c c6 17.c g5 [c7 transposes to the main line below.

16...c c4

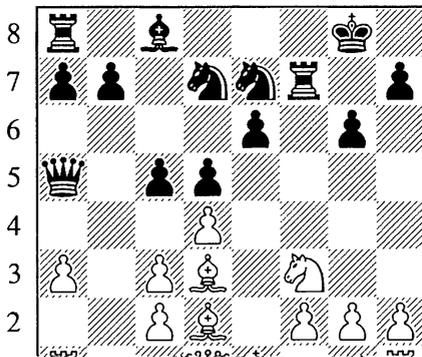
By now we have transposed to an email game, which we will follow for a few more moves.

16... d7 17.0-0 c f5= is also fine for Black, since 18.g4? c d6 only increases his domination over the c4-square.



17.0-0 dxc3 18.dg5 Bg7 19.Ke1 dxe2+ 20.Kxc2 c3 21.Ke1 d5 22.Ke2 d7 23.Bf1 d6

White's compensation for the pawn was questionable in Kuntermann – Gunkel, email 2008.

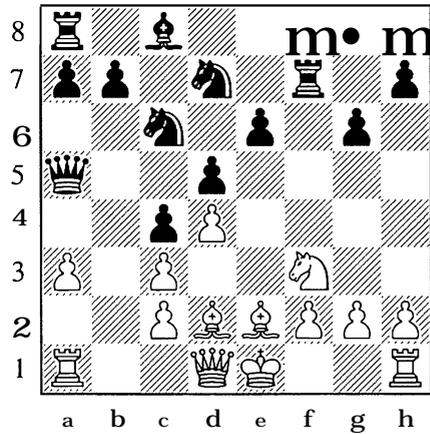


14...c4!

Most precise, avoiding any further possibility of c3-c4 from White.

14...c c6 was played in the stem game Videki - Varini, Trieste 2004. Here White could have played: 15.c4!N (11k game continued 15.0-0 c4 16.Ke2 - see the note to White's 6th move in the main line below.) 15...d c7 16.0-0 c xd4 17.c xd4 cxd4 18.cxd5+ Black will have to take care, as the position is starting to open up for the bishops.

15. e2 C c6



16.1 g5

This was Karjakin's choice, intending to follow up with f2-f4 to prevent ...c5 once and for all. However, it may not be in Black's interests to hurry with that move.

16.0-0 is a sensible alternative, when it is worth considering a) 16...e5 and b) 16...c f6!

a) 16...e5

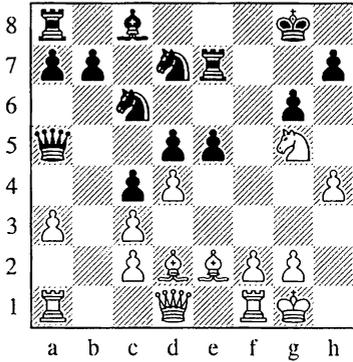
This was Black's choice in the Videki - Varini game, which arose via the move order noted at move 14. The game is not of much theoretical importance and the next few moves contained some inaccuracies on both sides, but there were some interesting moments so I will present a brief extract.

17.' gS?

17.dxe5!N ' dxe5 18.' d4; looks like a good reason for Black to choose the other option on move 16.

17...Ee7 18.h4?!

18.dxe5' dxe5 19.IJ4IJ5=



18...e4!?

⚡...c f6!+

19.h5 gxh5 20.' h3' f6 21.' f : g4

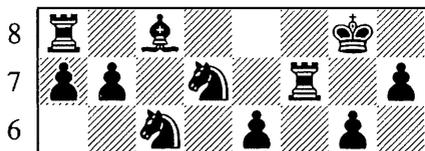
21...h4!?

22.C xh5 3.xh5 23.3.xh5 Ef 24.3.e2 ' h8

25.\ h6 Eg8

The position was unclear although White eventually prevailed in Videki - Varini, Trieste 2004.

b) 16...ZfG! is a better choice, when 17.C g5 Ee7 !8.f4 transposes to variation C2 below. This was the move order that occurred in the Baron - Miton game referenced in the note to Bladés 21st move in line C221 on page 235.



16...! e7 17.f4

Now the ...e5 break has been prevented, but the e4-square is weakened and the dark-squared bishop has been robbed of some of its potential.

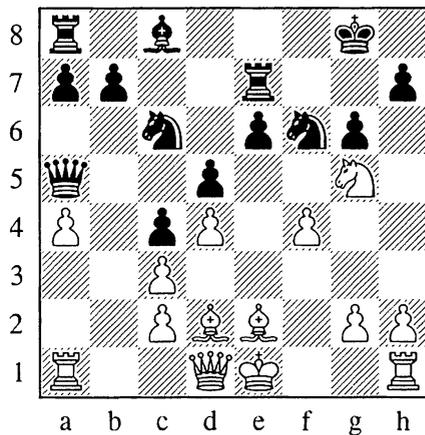
With the white knight committed to the g5-square, Black can consider meeting 17.0-0 with 17...e5! (17...' f6 is also fine of course) 18.dxe5' dxe5= intending ... f5.

17...t f6

From this position C1) 18.a4?N is worth checking, but the best and most natural move is C2) 18.0-0.

18. f could be played, and was the move order seen in a couple of Rickard Dahlström's correspondence games as referenced later. However, after 18... ,d7 (or 18...' a4) White hardly has anything better than transposing to normal paths with 19.0-0.

C1) 18.a4?N



This is often a useful move in the Winawer, but here it is inaccurate as White has yet to achieve proper piece coordination.

18..h6 19.t h3!

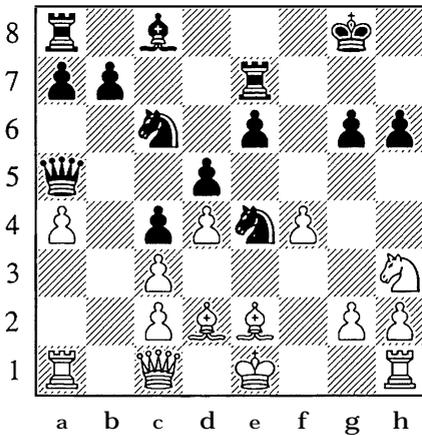
After losing time on the previous move, this is a luxury that White can ill afford.

After 19. f3 e4 Black is at least equal; his knight stands proudly on e4, while White's knight blocks the bishop from coming to f3. Nevertheless, this is the lesser evil for White.

19...t e4 20. cl

20.0 0' xd4+ wins a pawn.

20.i J3 can be met by 20...' xc3+. This is only possible because White has not castled, as otherwise the queen would move to e1, winning a piece.



20...e5!

This thematic move is worth remembering. White is temporarily uncoordinated so Black has every right to sacrifice a pawn for the initiative.

21.dxe5

21.f e5 xh3 22.gxh3 Ef +

21...' xh3 22.gxh3 Bf 23.0 0Bef 24. hl h7

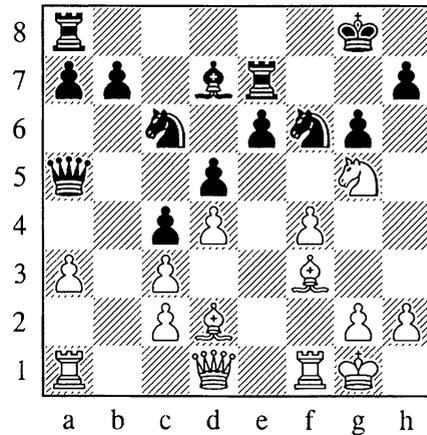
Despite being a pawn down, Black is in full control of the position. White has numerous pawn weaknesses and his bishops suffer from a lack of open diagonals.

C2) 18.0 0! d7

18...i3a4!N is an interesting new direction that deserves attention. The queen prevents the a3-a4 move while forcing one of the enemy pieces to keep an eye on the c2-pawn. A possible continuation is 18...V a4 19.i d7 20.i.e1 hG 21.c h3 Ef 22.Wd2 ' e7 23.S.h4 ' f5 24. xfG ExfG 25. f2 h5 with a solid position for Black.

From here White has two main plans: he can start regrouping his kingside with C21) 19. f or take a step on the queenside with C22) 19.a4, with the idea of rerouting his bishop to a3 in the future.

C21) 19. f



This move has been seen in a few recent correspondence games.

19...' a4

A good alternative is 19...hGN 20. h3Ef = intending ...' e7.

20.t h3

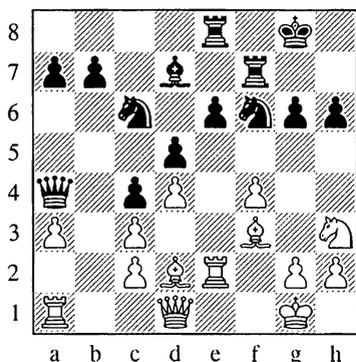
White can try leaving the knight where it is for a few more moves.

20.Ee1 Eae8 21.Ee2

21. h3Ef 22.Eb1 bG 23.Wcl Ef 8 24.t f2

21...hG 22. h3Ef

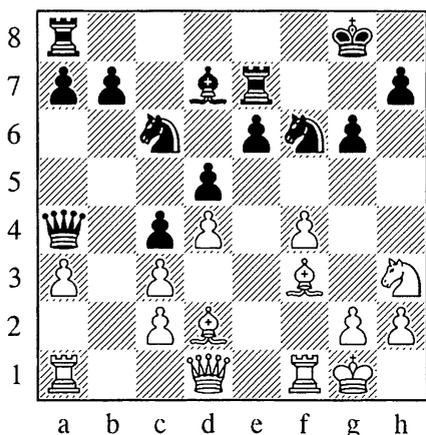
12 B. R. Gonzalez - Dahlström, corr. 2012.



23.f5?!

Trying to exploit the weakness caused by the ...h8 move, but Black has enough resources. 23...g5 24. xg5 hxg5 25.t xg5 exf5 26.c xf1xe2 27.c hG! © h7 28.Wxe2 © xhG

Despite the f reworks, the position remained balanced and was eventually drawn in Dorer-Evans, corr. 2013.



20...♞ae8 21.♟f2

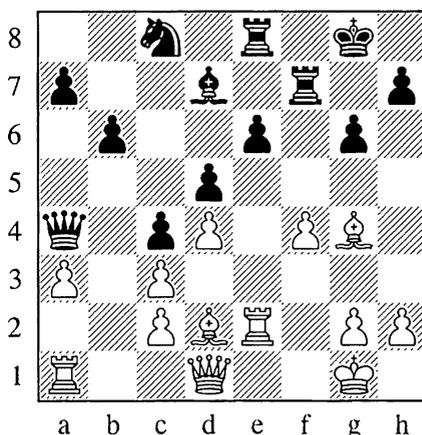
21.♞e1 transposes to 20.♞e1 ♞ae8 21.♟h3 as mentioned above.

21...b6 22.gel

Expanding on the kingside does not lead anywhere special for White, for instance: 22.g4 ♟f8 23.g5 c e8 24.c g4 c dG 25.t fGj' 1xf 26.gxG E17 Black has full compensation for the exchange.

22...gf 23.ge2l ♞724l ♞4l ♞g42S.i xg4 l ♞8

25...t f5 might come to the same thing, although it does give White a chance to exchange on f5 if he wishes, leading to a dry position where the opposite-coloured bishops make a draw highly likely.



26i cl l d6 27.®el l ♞4

The positional pawn sacrifice 27...e5! does not quite work: 28. ,xd7 Wxd7 29.f e5 c e4 Black almost has excellent compensation, but the counter-sacrifice 30.8xe4! dxex4 31.Wxe4 ' f5 32.We2 leaves White with two pawns for the exchange and some winning chances.

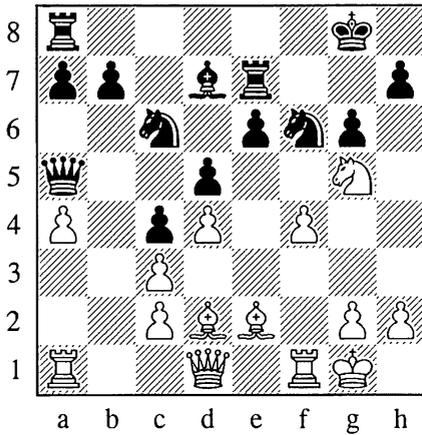
28i f i c6

28...1f5 is also fine, as 29. ,xe4 dxex4 30.1xe4 Wxc2 maintains the balance.

29i xe4 d e4 30.gbl ' as

'The position remained equal in Karacsory - Dahlstrom, corr. 2012, although Black eventually won after White allowed him to double on the f file and play ...g5 at a favorable moment.

C22) 19.a4



This thematic move improves White's situation on the queenside and vacates the a3-square for the bishop. We have reached an important crossroads where Black must decide how to arrange his pieces. **The natural C221) 19...! f** has been played by both Carlsen and Miton, but I consider it a slight inaccuracy for reasons that will be explained. After highlighting the drawbacks of that move, I will introduce the improvement **C222) 19...h6!**, which is where I expect the future of this line to lie.

C221) 19...! f8

It may seem hard to believe that this natural move can be a mistake. However, one clear drawback is that Black's **rooks** may become vulnerable to a **f ut ure!** ,c1-a3 manoeuvre.

20i f d8

Black's idea is to transfer the knight to the f7-square, either to exchange White's knight or to send the knight onward to d6 and later e4 or f5. However, we will see that White can call this plan into question.

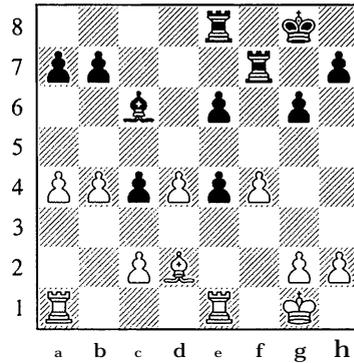
21. e1!

In the following elite encounter, Magnus Carlsen easily held Black's position:

21. ♖c1 ♜f7 22. ♖a3

Preventing ...♞d6.

22...♜ec8 23. ♞xf7 ♜xf7 24.. e ♞c6 25. ♖xb4 ♖xb4 26. cxb4 ♞e4 27. ♞xe4 dxe4=

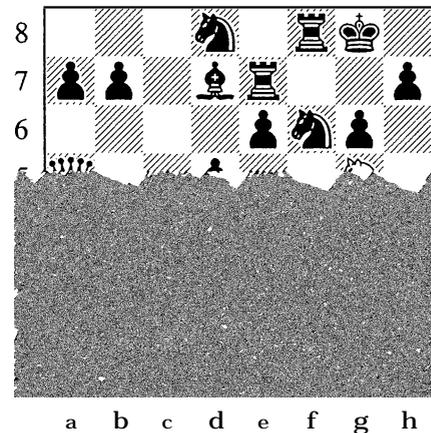


White's slightly better pawn structure brings no advantage here, and the opposite-coloured **bishops ensure** an easy draw.

28. c3 ♞d5 29..1 e ♞f8 30. h3 ♞c7 31. ♞h2 h5 32. h4 ♜f5 33. ♞g3 ♜g8 34. ♞h2 ♜e8 35. ♞g3 ♜g8

♞ ♞ Karjakin – Carlsen, Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2012.

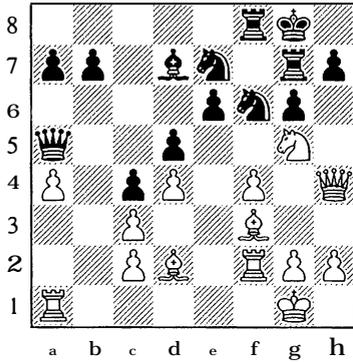
' **he** text move is an important improvement for White, guarding the c3-pawn in order to facilitate the transfer of the bishop to a3.



21...h6!N

21...♞f7? 22. ♞c1 ♞d6 23. ♞a3± is unpleasant for Black.

21...1g7 was successful for Miron but it was not because of the opening. 22.\ h4 1 c6 23.1f2 1 e7 This position was reached in Baron - Miron, Haguenua 2013.

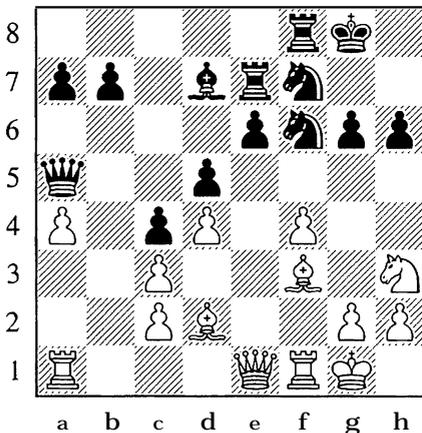


Now the most precise continuation would have been 24.g4!N when White maintains a slight advantage.

Returning to the main line, I wanted to see if Black could improve his chances by taking the opportunity to drive the knight back from g5. Here too though, Black falls slightly short of equality.

22.t h3! F

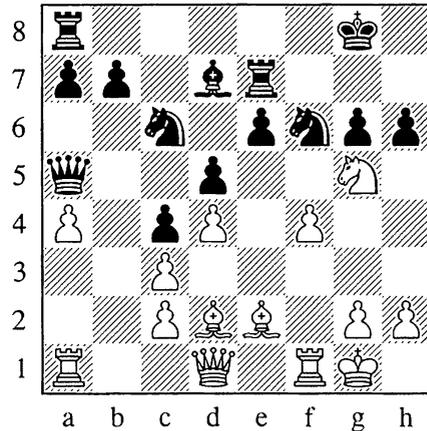
After 22...1 d7 23.1 f2 the knight on d8 is clumsily placed.



23i cl! 1 c8 24i a3 1 ee8 25i b4 ' e? 26a5;

White keeps some pressure. Having seen the problems encountered in this variation, we will see how they can be avoided with the following innovation.

C222) 19...h6!



In order to understand the thinking behind this move, let's recap the problems we saw in the previous variation. Simply put, the knight transfer to d6 was not a fully satisfactory solution, mainly because of the troublesome c1-a3 plan. The same manoeuvre also calls into question the idea of committing the black rook to the f-square.

By driving the knight away from g5 immediately, Black prepares a different set-up with the e7-rook moving to f7. This will bring the rook out of the future line of fire of a bishop on a3, while vacating the e7-square for the knight, which can later go to f5 (or perhaps c8) followed by d6 and e4. The general ideas are similar, but Black avoids running into trouble on the a3-f diagonal.

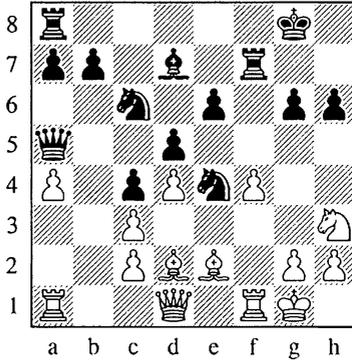
Originally I had this move as my own novelty, but I showed it to my friend Rickard Dahlstrom who then used it in a correspondence game, although he deviated from my main line on the very next move.

20.t h3 1f

This was my main idea, but it is not the only playable line.

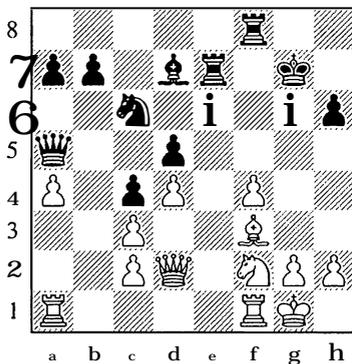
20...t b4!?

Eliminating the dark-squared bishop. Rickard played this and drew a long game, which I will show f r a f w more moves



21. ♖f3 ♘xd2 22. ♗xd2 ♜f8 23. ♘f2
23.f5! backf res af er: 23...l xf5 24.Wxh6?
Wxc3 +
23...< g?

23...h5? is a playable alter ative. Black's bishop on d7 looks a bit sad, but on the other hand he has a solid position and a better pawn structure. Rickard's move leads to a similar situation.



24l g4 h5 25l b3

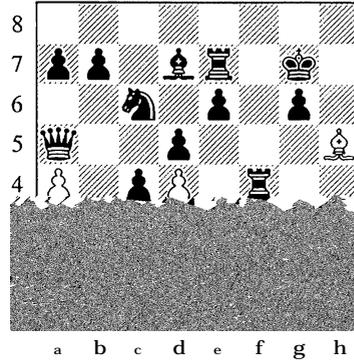
25.l b5 l ke5 26.f e5 < gs 27.Eabl b6 is equal.

25t ♞2 V c7 26.g3 h4 27. ,g2 l h8 is also roughly balanced.

25...l xf4 26. lkh5?

26.l kd5! Exf3 27.Exf3 Wxd5 28: afl e5 is better f r Black.

26.l kc4 Wc7 27.t le5 E\5 28l kd7 Vxd7 29.g4 hxg4 30J hg4 Exf1! 31.Exf1 Ef =

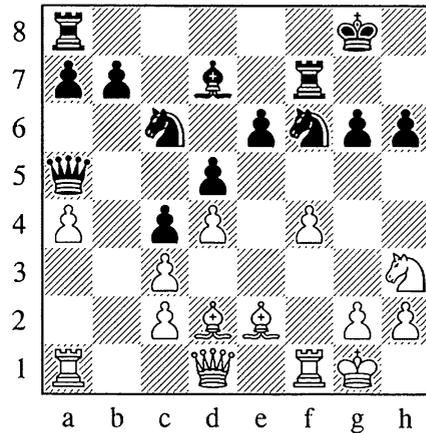


26...e5

26...: xfl† 27.Exf1 Ef 28.i lf3 Wc7 29.g3 Wd5 is playable but strategically a bit risky f r Black.

27.dxe5 l xfl! 28: xfl gxh5 29.Wf2 < h7

'11le position remained sharp but dynamically equal in Tesic- Dahlstrom, corr: 2012



The position af er 20...Ef is untested, but I consider its evaluation to be highly signif cant f r the f ture of the l3...t ld7 line. The ensuing battle will contain both strategic and tactical elements. As we have already discussed, Black's main plan is to manoeuvre his queen's knight

to d6, followed by planting one of the knights on e4, possibly supported by a bishop on c6. White will try to prevent this by putting his knight on f2 and/or bishop on f3. His most dangerous attacking plan involves a timely g2-g4, followed by g4-g5 or f4-f5 to open up the game for his bishops.

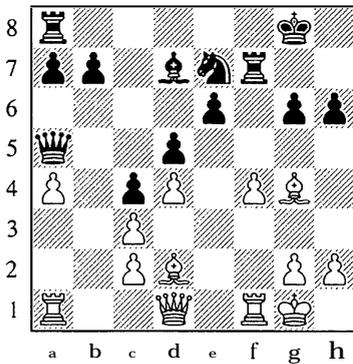
2Li f !

'This is more precise than:

21. ♖f2 ♜c7

Intending ...c f5-d6-e4.

22.c g4 l2xg4 23.! kg4



23...hs 24.. e

After 24J .h3 c f5 25.1 e2 Ee8= Black has no problems.

24...ll f5=

Black has a solid position and can proceed with ...Ee8, ...♗c6 and possibly ...c d6-e4. The light-square blockade is reminiscent of the Kajakin - Carlsen game, but in the present variation White has not been given the opportunities that we saw in variation C 221.

By placing the bishop on f3 immediately, White covers the e4-square and prepares ' e1. He also benefits from delaying the knight's retreat to f2, as the rook manoeuvre g f2-e2 may prove to be a useful option.

21..' e7

Black continues with his plan. The knight is heading fH d6 and later e4.

22Wel !

This flexible move has many purposes. The queen eyes the target on e6 while also overprotecting the c3-pawn. The latter point is of great importance as, apart from clearing the thematic bishop manoeuvre to a3, White also sets up a future f4-f5 break. Finally, the queen guards the h4-square against an incursion from a black knight.

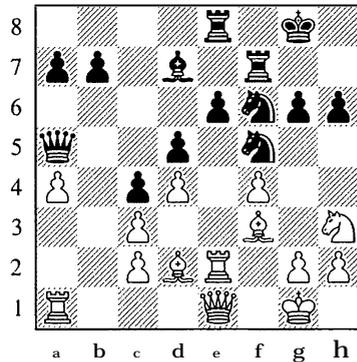
22...1 fS

This straightforward move is best.

22....c6?! might look interesting as the e6-pawn is best left untouched: 23.' xe6? ♗d7 24.Wd6 l,xh3 25.gxh3 c f5+ gives Black a positional edge in view of his excellent control on the light squares and White's bad dark-squared bishop.

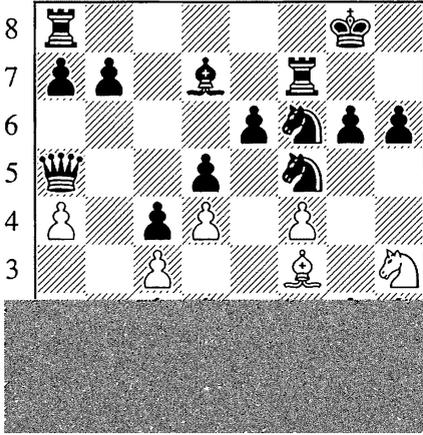
However, White has the strong retort 23.f5! ;

22...EeS!/? is an interesting alternative, overprotecting e6 and thus making ...@c6 a possibility. Black's knight on e7 is still heading for d6, but can choose between going there via f5-d6 or c8-d6 depending on how White continues. However, after 23.g f2! l f5 24.g e2 White can develop some pressure, for instance:



24...c d6 (24...♗g7 25.g4 c d6 26.g5t) 25.1 f2 < g7 26. c1 c6 27.♗a3 c de4 28..xe4 dxe4 (28...c xe4 29.c xe4 dxe4

30.i d6 is excellent for White) 29. d6 and the bishop will become strong on e5.



Although we are well into the middlegame, I decided to explore two distinct directions in which the play may develop. We will analyse the patient C2221) 23. cl followed by the more aggressive C2222) 23.g4.

23. d2 f2 1, c6 24.g4 1 d6 transposes variation C2222.

C2221) 23. cl

White goes for a thematic improvement of his dark-squared bishop before taking action on the kingside.

23..1 g7!

Protecting e6, with the bold idea of grabbing the a4 pawn.

The immediate 23... gxa4?! 24.g4 d7 25.g5 is too risky for Black.

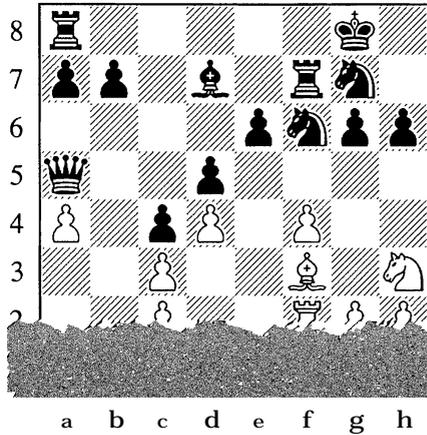
23..1 d6 is a calm alternative which, unfortunately, falls slightly short of equality. 24.. a3 (24.1 f2 \lc6 25. a3 C de4=) 24...ll de4 25. g4 b4 c7 26.a5!± Preventing ...a5 and securing the placement of the bishop on b4. Black has a solid position with control over e4, but limited prospects of counterplay.

White can build his position on the kingside with g2-g4 and gradually prepare a break with f-f5 or g4-g5.

24.Ef

24... a3...xa4 does not trouble Black here.

24.g4 should be met by 24...1 e4! in order to keep the kingside closed in the event of g4-g5 25.) a3: af Black is solid and the rook on a3 is awkwardly placed.



24...b5!

This is the best way to collect the a4-pawn. Black avoids misplacing his bishop, and will benefit from having a passed pawn on a4 and the open b-file for his rook(s).

24..1 e4?! is poor due to 25. gxe4 dxe4 26. e2±.

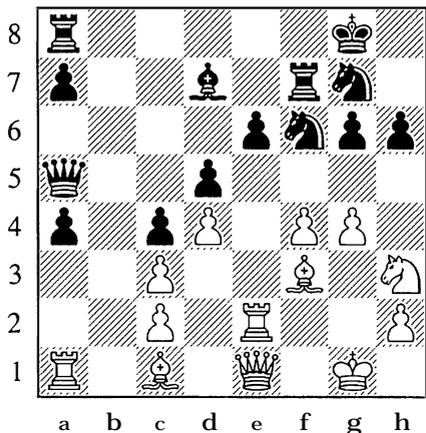
24...1 xa4?! wins a pawn but loses too much coordination. After 25.g4 d7 26. e2 e8 27.. g2 b5 28.f5!± White has a great initiative while the bishop on a4 remains offside.

25.Ee2

25.g4 1 h7! keeps the kingside solid.

25i, a3 bxa4 26: b1 \ d8 intending ...b8 gives Black decent chances.

25..bxa4 26.g4



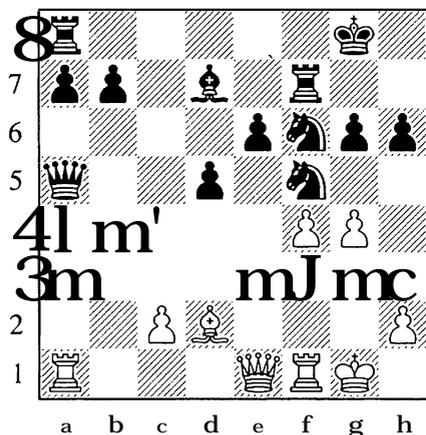
26..1 h?!

Again we see this important defensive move which enables Black to keep the kingside closed.

27.i a3: b8

The game is dynamically balanced. White has the bishop pair and some activity, while Black remains solid and has an extra pawn.

C2222) 23.g4



23..1 d6 24.1 f

24.g5 is premature. After 24..l2f 4 25.gxh6 i af Black is doing fine, thanks to his better pawn structure and grip on the e4-square.

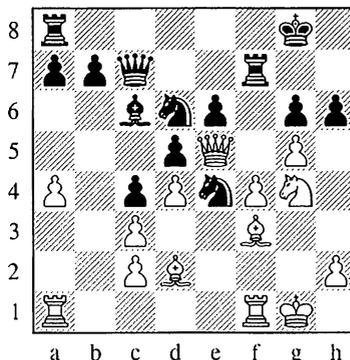
24..i c6 25.g5

Breaking up the kingside is consistent and critical.

25.\ e5

This enables Black to venture a nice exchange sacrifice

25..\ c7 26.g5 Cf 4 27.' lg4



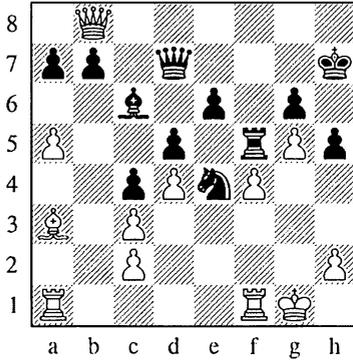
27...h5!

27...' kd2 is risky; 28.' kh6r mm 29.l2xf @xf7 30.' f6! (After 30J5!?' e7! 31.f eG! mgs Black's position holds together, although it is still dangerous.) 30...\Jg8 31.Wxg6! f h8 32.2ae! White has full compensation for the sacrificed material. The computer shows a route to equality, but as a human player I would prefer to avoid this path altogether:

28.' hG! @ h7 29.' kf7 ♖xf7 30..\ b1

Black's strong knight and light-square control provide full compensation for 's m'

35.f5 (35.1 xe6 V e8 36.k e7 i g8 37.i d7 i cS 38.i xd5 V g4t 39. h1 l f2!?!? 40.Exf2 i d1! 4J. g2 i g4f=) 35...exf5 36.i e?t g8 37.i e6! g7 38.i e?t= 32...Ef8 33J 3Ef5 34.i b8



34...e5!

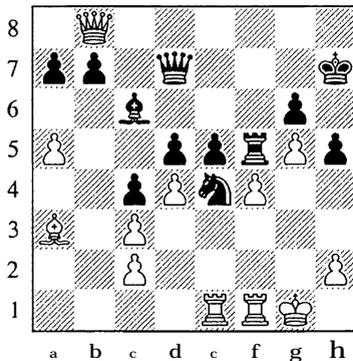
Launching a counterattack. Black is virtually guaranteed a perpetual check, and White must be careful not to fall into a mating attack.

35.♖ae1

35.dxe5?? loses on the spot to 35...Exg5! 36.f g5! g4! 37.c h1 l fl t. 38.♗xf2 d4! + followed by mate next move.

After 35.h4 Black always has a draw in hand with ...Rxc5!, but can consider playing 35...: f !? or 35...l kc3!? first, giving the opponent a chance to go wrong.

35. h1 gives Black many options, none of which lead to more than a draw with best play. One possible line is 35...exd4 36.cxd4 l g3! 37.hxg3ms followed by ...\ h3! with a perpetual.

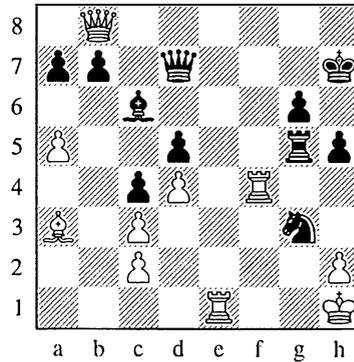


35...exf4

Once again 35...: xg5! 36.f g5 i g4! 37.c h1 l g3! 38.hxg3 \. h3! is a simple perpetual.

35...l \$ and 35...exd4 36.cxd4 Ef8 lead to the same outcome.

36.Exf4 Exg5! 37.c h1 l g3! 1



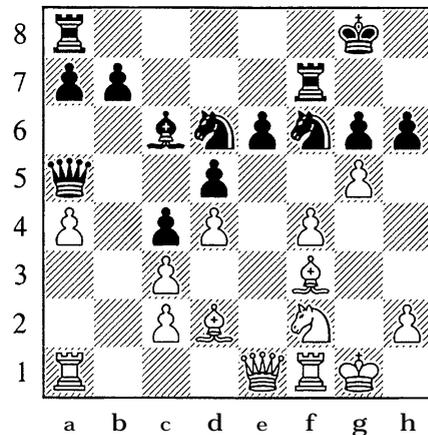
38 c g2

White calmly walks into the discovered check and, slightly surprisingly, holds a draw.

38...l e4! =

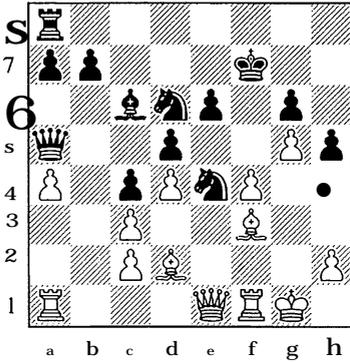
Black should not get carried away with 38...l e2! in view of 39.< f2 l kf4 40.Ee7! and White wins.

Let us return to 25.g5. n lis is a better try for White, who is playing for an attack without sending his queen into danger.



25..l f 4 26g h6

26.l g4 can be compared with the previous note af er: 26..h5 27.l h6! g7 28.l xf c xf



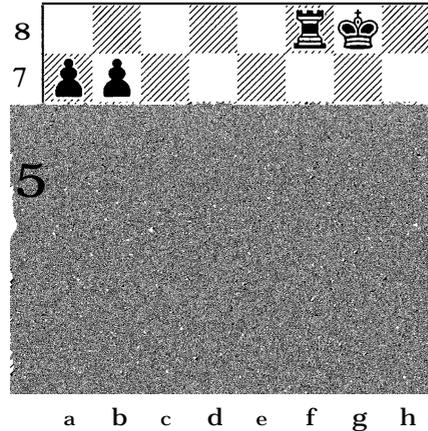
Black has suf cient compensation for the exchange in view of his dominating knight on e4 and control over the light squares. It is hard to see a promising plan for White. The closed nature of the position favours Black's knights over White's bishops. White cannot do much with his extra rook, except perhaps sacrificing the exchange back on e4 at some point. Nevertheless, Black should be careful not to allow a favourable sacrifice on h5. This can be prevented by putting the king on g7 and, if necessary, a rook on h8. Another idea for White is to bring his dark squared bishop into the game via c1 and a3, intending to exchange it on d6 at some point. However, even if White manages to carry out that plan, it should not be too troublesome for Black. Besides, White needs to organize a proper defence of the pawns on c3 and f4 before he can think about moving the bishop away.

26..ga 27.l g4l xd2

I briefly looked at 27..l h7? 28.l e5 : 6 but found it too passive. The text move is more forcing.

28.Wxd2 Exf4

By now we are a long way out of the opening, but I will provide some illustrative lines demonstrating that the position is dynamically balanced.



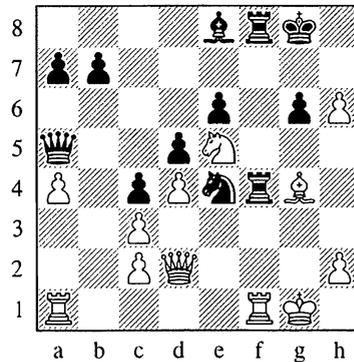
29.gael

29..g2 is best met by 29...; 4f5! (29..l xf1! 30.l xf1 l xf1† 31.i.xf1 ' d8 32.' e3 ' e7 is fine according to the engine, but for a human player this could feel a bit unpleasant) 30.l e5 l h7= when Black remains solid.

29.l e5.l e8

29..l 8f6 30.J g4 l e4 31.l xf4 l kc2 32.l xf6' xc3 is also playable, and ultimately leads to equality after some adventures.

30..'g4 l e4



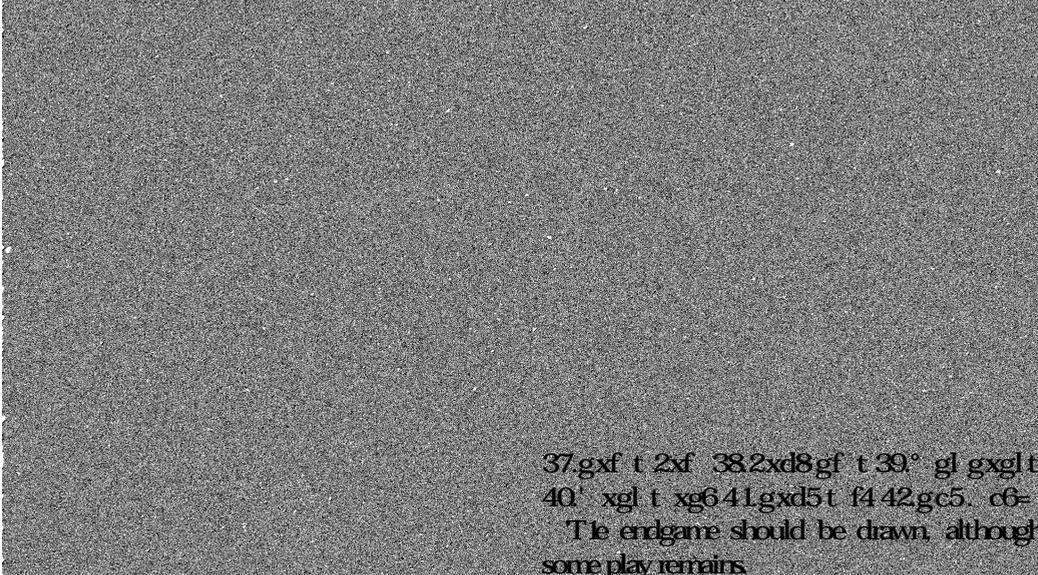
31..xc6†

31.l xf4 l kd2 32.Y xe6" transposes.

3J...Wh7 32! xf4 l xd2 33! xf \ xc3
 34l el!l e4 35Wf1 l -d6=



One way or another, we are heading f r a perpetual check in the not-too-distant future.



37.gxf t 2xf 38.2xd8gf t 39.° gl gxgl t
 40' xgl t xg6 41.gxd5 t f4 42.gc5. c6=
 The endgame should be drawn, although some play remains.

30J he6c h7!

30...! xf3? is initially given by the computer as equal, but the main line leads to a lost endgame f r Black: 31.! xf3 ! xf 32.Wg2 8f5 33l e5 \.e8 34.l xgGt xg6 35. xgGt 8f8 36.h4 l xe5 37.dxe5 \ b6-f 38.Wg2 l e4 39.\ xbGaxb6 40.Wf +

31.° g2

31.l e5!?! 8f6 32l xfG \ xf6 is balanced.

31...t f5 32.t e5 t h4 33.° g3 . xa4 34.t xg6

34! xgG l xf3 35l g?t Wxh6 36l xf /xf3 37./g6t ©h7 38./g?t Wh6= ends in a perpetual.

34...t xf t 35.c hl g4f 36.gd6

Conclusion

It is ends our discussion of the 8. d3 f5 variation. The 12.\ dl line is White's foremost try for an opening advantage, but the bold 12...' a5! offers Black interesting prospects. 13l f !? is an interesting gambit, but both of the proposed solutions are fully satisf ctory f r Black. 13.\fd2 is playable, but after 13..c4! 14. e2 l f5 the threat of ...l d6-e4 f res White to compr mise his development, enabling Black to equalize.

13. d2 is the main line, and then the fresh 13..l d7!?! comes into play. After investigating in some detail, I f und an important improvement which is covered in variation C222. Based on my analysis and a small but growing body of correspondence games, its current theoretical status is healthy f r Black, and I anticipate more practical rests soon.

Chapter 19

8. b6



Move 9 Sidelines

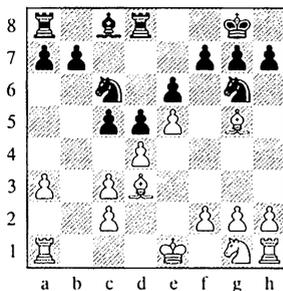
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♙xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♙g4 o-o 8.♙d3

8...♘bc6

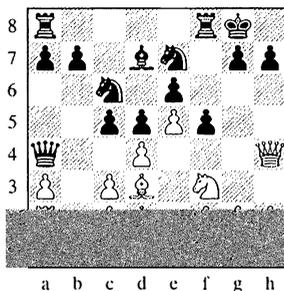
A) 9.h4	244
B) 9.♙h3	245
C) 9.♙h4 ♘g6 10.♙xd8 ♗xd8	246
C1) 11.♘f3	246
C2) 11.♙g5	247
D) 9.♘f3 f5 10.exf6 ♗xf6 11.♙g5	250
D1) 11...e5?!	251
D2) 11...♗f7!	252
E) 9.♙g5 ♙a5 10.♘e2 ♘g6! 11.0-0 ♙a4!	252
E1) 12.♙g3!?	254
E2) 12.f4	255

C2) after 11.g5



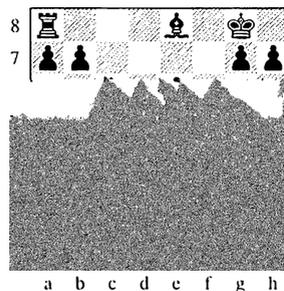
11...i!N

D) norc t 10cxi



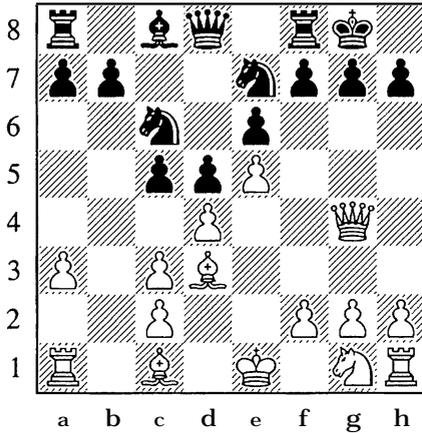
13...cxd4!N

E2) no e t 14...Wf6



181 h3N

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Cc3 \$,b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 \$xc3 6.bxc3 C e7 7. g4 0-0 8,\$,d3 C bc6



Compared with 8...f5, this move has the advantage of keeping the centre closed, thus rendering White's bishop pair less of a threat. The danger is that by leaving the d4-e5 pawn wedge intact, Black accepts a spatial disadvantage on the kingside and offers White some attacking chances. The ensuing positions tend to be both strategically and tactically more complicated than after 8...f5.

In this chapter we will examine five sidelines: A) 9.h4, B) 9. Jh3, C) 9. h4, D) 9.4 f and E) 9.\$,g5.

9. h5 is the main line, coverage of which begins in the next chapter on page 258.

A) 9.h4

It is aggressive but not the most useful move overall.

9...f5!

The simplest reply, leading to an improved version of the 8...d3 f5 positions where the usefulness of White's h2-h4 is in question.

Variation A of Chapter 14 featured a similar position with C g1-f having been played

instead of \$ J-d3. In the former line I recommended a quick ...f6 break, but here 9...f6 would allow 10.\$ hg : f 11.exf6 C f5 12...g5 with murky complications.

10.exf6: xf

Compared with the 8J d3 f5 9.exf6 Exf6 variation, it is obvious that the developing move ...C bc6 is likely to prove more useful than White's h2-h4.

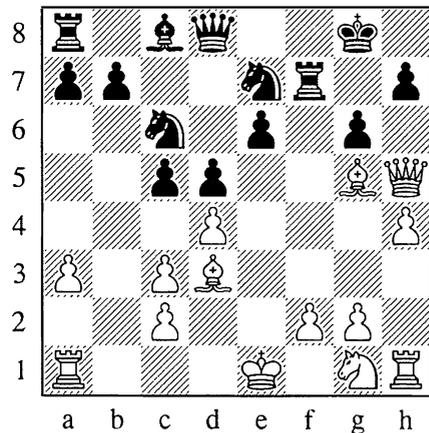
11.g5

11.\ h5 is best met by the somewhat surprising: 11...C f5!N 12.l g5 (12.C e2 c4 13.5 xf5 : xf5 14. g4 e5+) 12...t a5 A nice counter! 13.C e2 Ef +

11...: f !

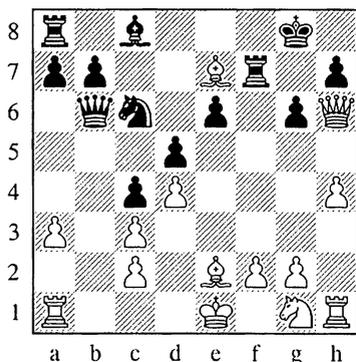
11...e5!N looks interesting and could be tried, but following 12.t h5 e4 13.\$ xfG gxf6 14.\,b5! a5 15.' Ve8! < g? 16.Eb1! xc3! 17.< f! = White is all right according to the computer, while in my human eye it all looks like unnecessary complications.

12. h5g



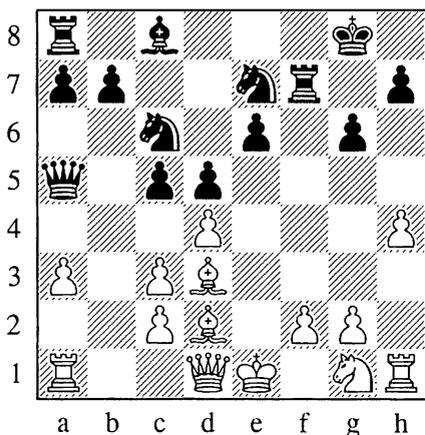
13. ♖d1

13. ♖h6 is well met by: 13...c4!N 14. ♙c2 (14.h5?? ♖a5!-) 14... ♖b6! Threatening ... ♗f5. 15. ♙xe7



15... b2! A nice intermediate move. 16.: d1 \ xc3! 17.: d2 1 xe7 18.h5 ' xa3 19.hxg6 1 xg6 20.C B ' ei t 2L d1 c3 22.1 d3' xh6 23.1 xh6 a5! 24.Zhc3 a4 25.: a3 . d7+ Black remains a pawn up and has an important passer on a4 which limits White's active prospects.

13..' a5 14..\d2



14...e5!

Exploiting the lead in development before White can achieve anything on the kingside.

15.h5

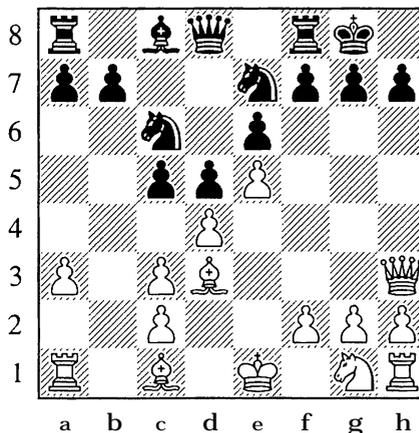
15.c4? is well met by 15...Jd8+ intending to recapture with the queen on d5.

15.dxe5! xe5+ is also more pleasant for Black.

15...e4 16.hxg6! xg6

Rauch - Schwing, Oberwinden 2007. Black is better thanks to his development advantage and active pieces.

B) 9.Wh3



This has been an extremely rare choice, but there is some sense behind it, as explained in the next note.

9...l g6 10.Cf3' a5!

11...c4 is slightly illogical, as after 11. ,xg6 fxg() White's queen is not attacked and, compared with the main line, he has not moved his bishop to the passive c3-square. From here it looks promising for White to play 12.a4! securing the a3-f diagonal for the bishop, as in Sakharov - Furman, Tbilisi 1956.

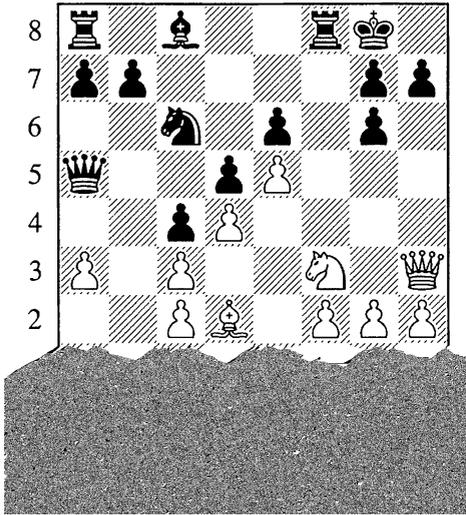
11.0-0

11.J,d2 c4 12.1.xg6 f g6 13.0-0 transposes to the main line below.

11...c4 12i ,xg6 f g6 13. d2

White might also defend the d-pawn tactically by 13.: a2 although the rook looks ridiculously passive here. 13...b5! f d5 move holds White down on the queenside and prepares a possible ...b4 break in the distant future. The chances are about equal but Black's

position is easier to play. The plan for the next few moves is to develop by ...d7 and then double rooks on the f-file.



14.Efcl

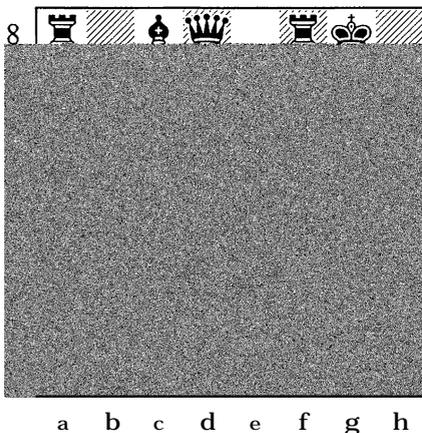
14.l e1 b5 gives Black some initiative.

14.Ea2 l d7 leaves the rook passive on a2, and Black is fine.

14... d7=

Black is fully developed and is ready for further action. The pawn structure is favourable for him but the bishop on d7 is slightly passive, which makes the position equal.

C) 9.i% 4



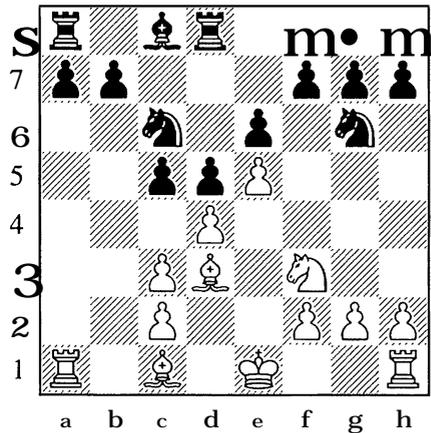
This move invites a queen exchange. On the face of it this does not sound too threatening, but in fact if and it necessary to propose an innovative approach - see variation C1 below.

9...l b6 10.Wxd8 Exd8

As usual in the Winawer, White has the bishop pair while Black has a healthier pawn structure and counterplay on the light squares. White's two main moves are C1) 11.l f and C2) 11... g5.

11... e3 is not the most active move, and Black has several ways to achieve an equal position. All three of the games in my database have continued with 11... d7, which is a perfectly decent option. However, I would like to recommend the interesting new idea 11... h4! with the possible continuation: 12... g5! kg2! 13... bfl f6 14.exf6 gxf6 15... xf6 E 8 16.: g5 l f4= The position is balanced, although I slightly prefer Black's healthier pawn structure and better development.

C1) 11.l f



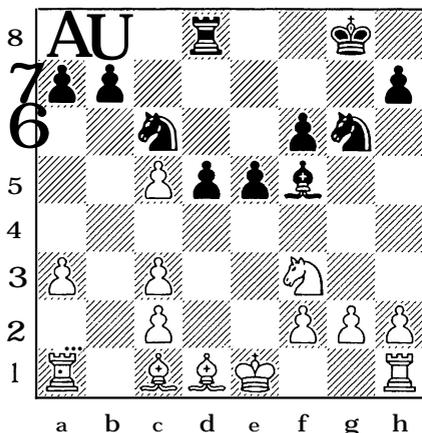
From here Black must consider the possibility of ...xg6 followed by dxc5 winning a pawn, although the second player will be guaranteed at least some positional compensation. There is more than one playable continuation, but the following active choice is my preference.

11...f6!? 12.exf6 g f6 13.dxc5 e5

White is a pawn up with two bishops, but the c-pawns are tripled and Black has a powerful pawn centre.

14.f e2 JS 15..h1

Now in Papa - Marrinovic, -rriesen 2004, Black should have played:



15...f dc8N

The correct choice of rook, vacating the d8-square for the knight.

16.Ebl l2d8 17.. k3l e6! 18. b5

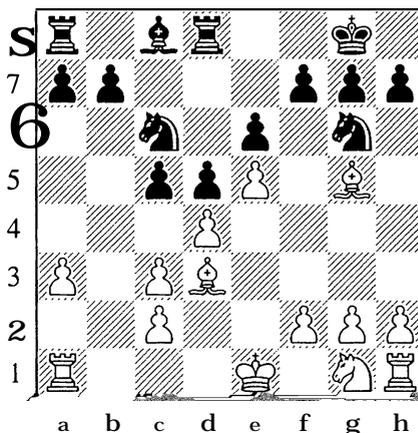
18.fxb7 lxc5t gives Black more than enough counterplay along the c-file.

18... c7

Black's superior pawn formation and better-placed pieces offer full compensation for the small amount of material given.

C2) 11 g5

This is the most common move, developing the bishop with tempo. However, this is not necessarily an advantage as Black may be able to drive the bishop away while gaining time.



11...f6N

So far Black has only tried a couple of quieter rook moves in practice, but after investigating them I came to the slightly surprising conclusion that White was better in all lines. The text move is a direct challenge to White's scheme.

Before going any further, I will show you why I was not happy with the alternatives.

11...ms 12.l f . h7 (12..JG is a principled idea, but after 13.exf6 14..h6 e8 15.dxc5 White was better in Williamson - Burke, corr. 2011.) 13.h4 h6 14. f3 cxd4 15.cxd4 l a5 16.h5 l e7 Cobiella Rodriguez - Gonzalez Menendez, Oviedo 2006, and now 17.g4N looks best, intending 17...l c4 ! 8.g5 l2xe3 19.fxe3 when White's kingside initiative gives him the advantage.

11... e8!N is pretty similar to the above line, but brings a couple of small advantages in developing the e7-square as well as keeping the f6 available as a possible retreat square for the knight on g6. If Black is looking for an alternative to the main line, this would be my suggestion.

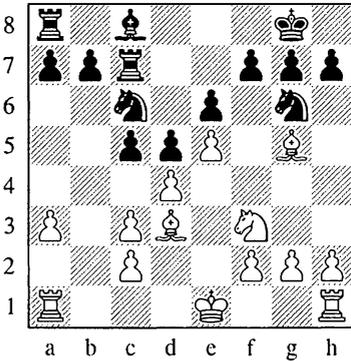
11... d7!?

This interesting move was once played by CAmi. The rook is heading for the c-file.

12.1 f Ec7N

...n is looks like the best try, a'm'llg f r counterplay with... d7 f llowed by ...l a5. 12...h6 13J c3 c4 14.l e2 b5 15.h4 a5 16.h51 ge7 17.g4t is good f r White, who intends g4-g5, which may be prepared by < d2 and Eagl.

12...l ge7 was played in Nijboer - CAmi, Groningen 2003, and now 13.dxc'i!N would have given White some a.d.vanta.g. due t his extra pawn.



13.h4! h6

It is important to prevent the enemy h-pawn from reaching h6.

14.k e3 cxd4

14...d7 15.h5 0 f 16.g4t f vours White. 15.cxd4l a5 16.h51 e7 17.g4 0 c4 18i klt

Black has f und a good home for his knight on c4, bur the problem with the passive bishop on c5 remains. Meanwhile, White is poised to create dangerous kingside threats with g4-g5.

12.exf gxf 13.\xf i f8

Black's pawn sacrifice is justified by the weakness of the d4-pawn. White must either retur the material or make positional co.n.c.e.s.s.i.o.n.s.

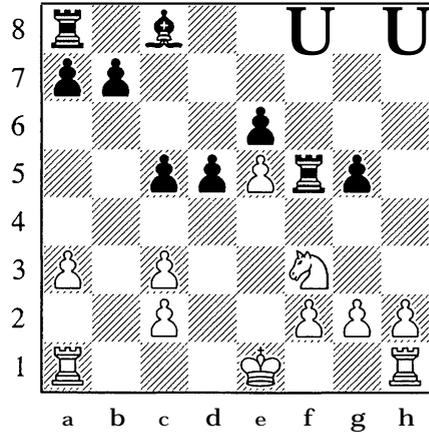
14.\,xg6

Preserving the extra pawn is the critical test, bur one that Black should be quite happy t f ce.

Saf r is 14.\,g5 cxd4 15.cxd4 L xd4 16.L b2 l xe2 17. xe2 ,d7 with approximate equalit ; Black has good central control and active pieces, while White's bishop pair is not too threatening.

14...hxg6 15. ,e5 l xe5 16.d e5 i f5 17.l f g5

Black's activity of ers f ull compensation f r the pawn deficit, as shown by the f llowing short lines.



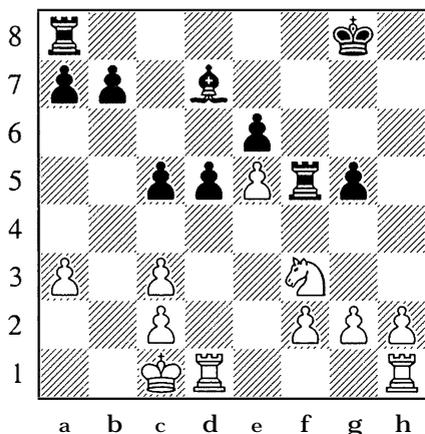
18.0-0-0

18.h4!? g4 19.l h2 i f4! sees Black maintaining control rather than hurrying to regain material. Now rhe e5-pawn can be used as a shield, preventing any invasion by White's rooks. Black's pieces are more active and White has several weak pawns to worry about.

18.h3 i .d7 19.0-0-0 i af Black keeps the initiative and has f ull compensation. Over the next f w moves he can improve his position by putting rhe king on g6 and bishop on c6, slowly increasing rhe pressure.

18...\d7!

Black could play 18..g4 r win back a pawn on e5 or f2, bur af er 19.t e!t White has a usef ul lead in development.



19.c4

It makes sense for White to exchange one of his weak pawns.

19.h3 transposes to 18.h3 above.

19...g4!

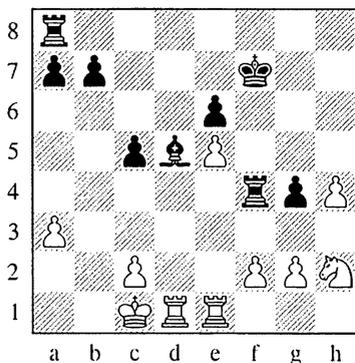
With the bishop already developed, this move becomes more appealing than it was on the previous try.

19...« 6

I spent some time analysing this move, but was not completely happy due to the following line.

20.cxd5 ixc5 21.h4 22.l h2: f4 23: hci! @f!

The king is heading for h5 to protect the g4-pawn. I started by analysing 23...Jg7, but then realized that the f-square gives more flexibility, as in some lines the king can remain there to defend the e6-pawn.



24.g3!

24.gd!? sees White retreating the pawn to fight for the initiative, but after 24...gxf2 25.l xg4 Exg2 26.ll f6 i,c6 27.Ec3 b6 28.Ed6 Ec8 29.h5 Ee2 Black is fine.

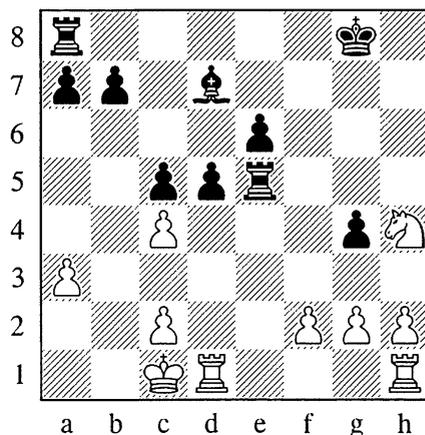
24...Ea4 25.Ed3 @g6 26.l f1 Ef8 27.l e3

Black maintains some compensation, but it is hard for him to do anything active. White's extra pawn is not having much impact on the game at the moment, but that may change if he manages to exchange a few pieces.

20.l h4 Exe5

20...8xf?! is riskier on account of 21.cxd5 i,a4 22.d6!; .

The position is approximately balanced, for instance:

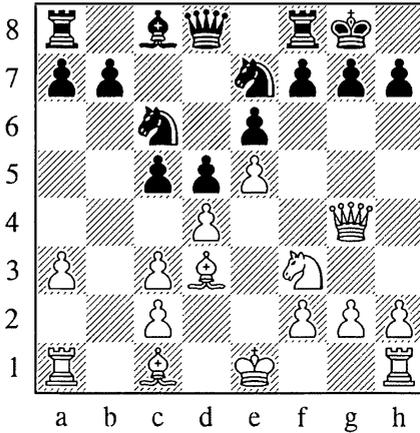


21.h3 ♖e2 22.cxd5 ♖f8! 23.f3 gxf3 24.gxf3 24.♗xf3 ♕a4! =

24. 8f6i

Black's piece activity compensates for the pawn deficit. Apart from a ruined pawn structure White also has a stranded knight on h4. If anyone has winning chances it should be Black, but the most likely outcome is a draw.

D) 9.c f



This move has seldom been seen in high-level games in recent years. In my opinion, however, it deserves a good deal more attention than it has been given.

By the way, the present position can also occur via the move order 8.f3 c bc6 (on page 185 I analysed 8... a5!? as an interesting alternative) 9...d3, as noted earlier in Chapter 14.

9..f5

Black must take kingside countermeasures.

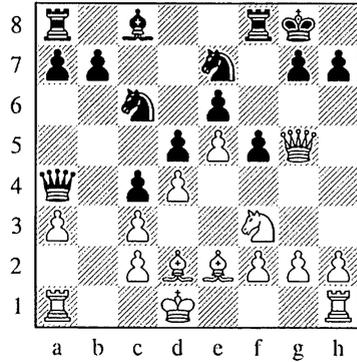
10.exf

By far the most popular choice, although White has also tried an assortment of queen moves. Here is a summary showing the main ideas Black can employ.

10.fg3 i b6 11.dxc5 i Vxc5 12.. d2 c a5= T rai - Del Rio de Angelis, Bratto 2003.

10\ h5 has been played in quite a few games, but so far nobody seems to have tried 1 ... \ b6N 11.dxc5 \ xc5 12J, d2 c a5+ which can be compared with 10i g3 above.

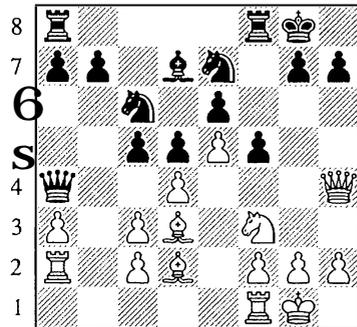
10.\ g5 \ a5 11.. ,d2 c4 12.. ,e2 \ a4 13 \ d1 (13.f a2!N h6 14. \ g3 1 h7=) Waldhauser - Negele, corr. 1995.



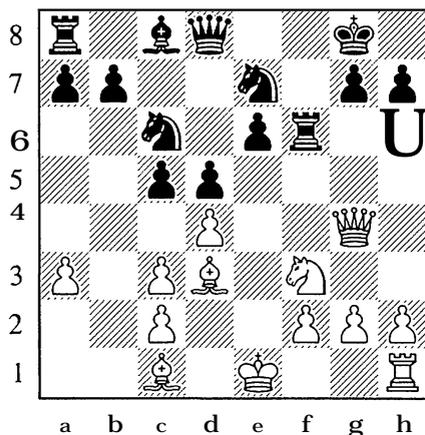
13...a5N Black intends ...b5-b4 or perhaps even ...Ba6-b6.

10W h3 i Wb6 11.dxc5!N (11... ,d ?c4 12.\ e2 i b2 13.1 d2 i b6!+ Kilpatrick - Dgebuadze, Blackpool 2008) 11 .t xc5 12.0- 0!? (12.. d2 J g6=) 12...Wxc3 13.i 2 \ c5 White has some compensation for the pawn, but I would consider it sufficient for equality at best.

A final option is: 10 fh4 V a5 11.. ,d2 i W4 12.f a2 . ,d7 13.0- 0 White has a 100% score from five games from this position, but Black can improve with:



10...Exf



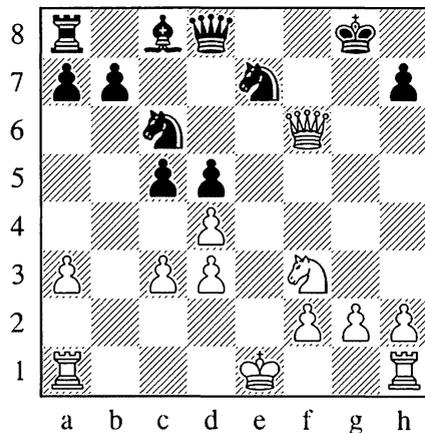
11...g5

After this obvious move Black stands at a crossroads. I spent some time considering D1) 11...e5! but eventually concluded that D2) 11...Ef ! should be preferred.

D1) 11...e5!

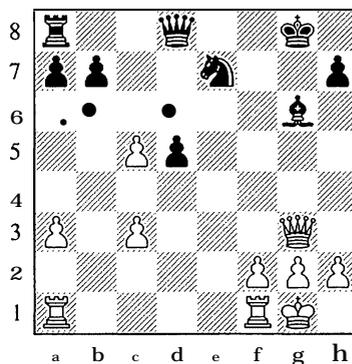
This tempting yet incorrect move leads to a mostly forcing sequence. I will not mention every possible deviation along the way, as I do not want to spend too much time on an inferior continuation. The important thing from our perspective is that Black does not seem to have any way to improve on what follows.

12\ h4e4 13.\xf6 gxf 14\ bxf exd3 15.cxd3



15...cxd4

15...\f5 is a playable deviation, against which 1 f and a useful improvement for White: 16.dxc5! N . .xd3 17.\ eG! g7 18.l ke5! ke5 19.\ xe5! @g8 20.\ g3!c gG 21.0-0;

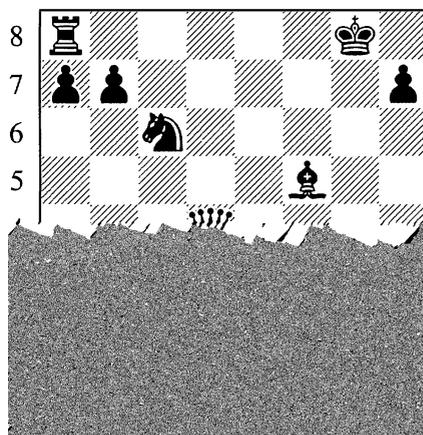


We reach a position with White having rook and two pawns versus bishop and knight. White stands better, as Black's king is vulnerable and the white rooks have several open files on which to operate.

16! kd4! kd4 17.\ xd4! b6

17... f5 18.0-0! b6 19.i d d4 20.cxd4 transposes

18\ e3d4 19.cxd4 f5 20.0-0\ xd4



If and this position mentioned by Watson in the third edition of Play the French with

the comment "It's hard not to prefer Black's pieces". In my opinion **this evaluation fails to take into account the relative safety of the two kings**

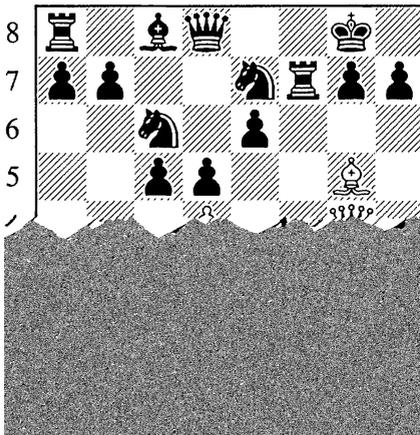
21.1 gSt g6 22.Eabl b6

This position has been reached in several games, including the all-GM encounter Groszpeter – Macak, Hungary 2009, which was eventually **drawn**. However, White's play can easily be improved

23.h4N;

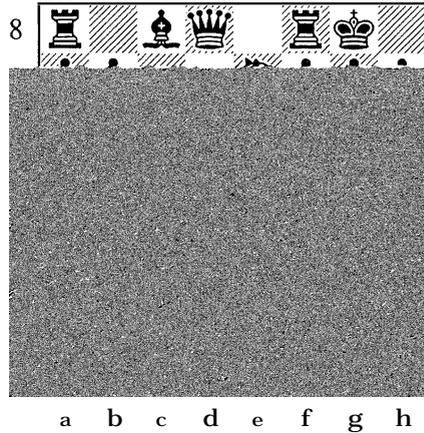
White has a persistent initiative. It is also worth pointing out that even if Black succeeds in exchanging queens, the rook might still get the better of the two minor pieces in a future endgame with pawns on both flanks. For this reason, the next move is the one I recommend.

02) 11...Ef !



Having seen why this move is necessary, it is time to bring this thread of analysis to an abrupt end. The reason is that we have transposed to a position that has already been analysed under the move order 8...d3 f5 9.exf6 Bxf6 10.g5 Bf7 11.f3 d6. For a full discussion of this line, see variation A2 of Chapter 16 on page 203.

E) 9...g5



This rare but aggressive move has scored well for White and must be taken seriously. The immediate threat is...

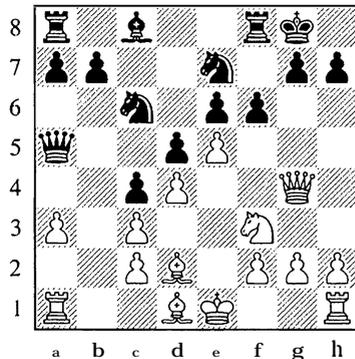
9...1 a5

Black unpins the knight on e7 and searches for counterplay on the queenside.

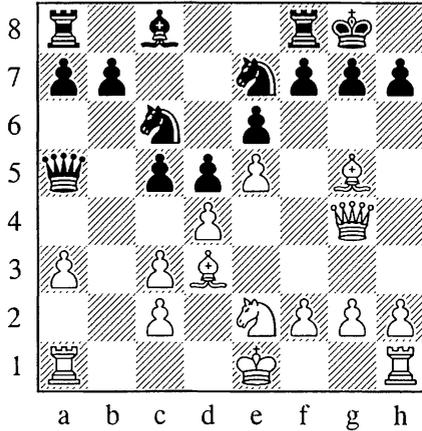
10.f e2

The critical continuation, offering a double-pawn sacrifice in return for a kingside attack.

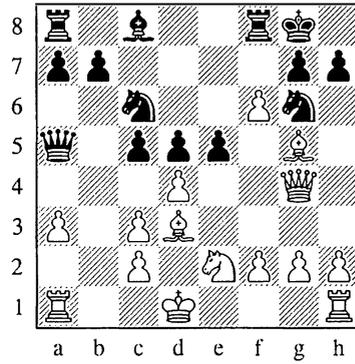
10...d2 does not trouble Black after: 10...c4 11.g2 Bxa4 12.d1 (or 12:c1 N a5 13.f3 Bxa3 14.0-0 Bb2! 15.f d1 a4 16.d e1 Bb6) 12...b5 13.tl f6 14.f3 a5 15.g d2. This was Alderisio - Giachetti, corr 2011, and here I suggest:



15...f e5N 16.dxe5 (16.l xe5 l xe5 17.dxe5 \ b6 18.0-0 \ b2 19.: cl l f5+) !6...l g6 17.\ g3 ♖f5 18.0-0 l gxε5+ White will struggle to prove his compensation f r the pawn.



avoid ...l xd4 while keeping the rook on the h-file. However, the king move can be met by: 11...f5!N (11...\ a4+ was also pretty good f r Black in Sulskis - Nguyen Chi Minh, San Marino 2006.) 12.exf6 e5



13.♙f5 ♙xf5 14.♚xf5 ♜f7!♣ and Black is taking over the initiative.

10...♘g6!

An active move, defending the king and searching for counterplay with ...♘xd4.

I would not recommend 10...cxd4 11.f4 dxc3 12.0-0 when White has achieved a crushing practical score. Perhaps Black can survive with perfect defence, but it's definitely not my cup of tea.

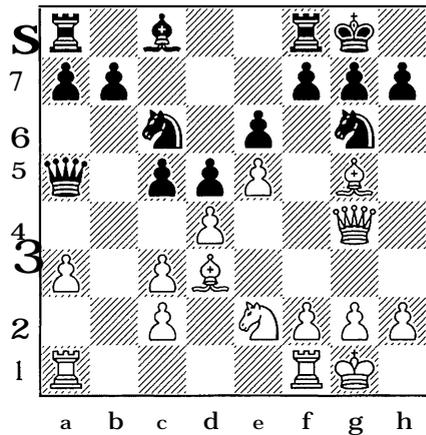
11.0-0

Other moves do not make much sense.

11.f4? overlooks the basic threat: 11...l xd4+ Haznedaroglu - Alavkin, Moscow 2005.

11.h4? is met the same way: 11...l xd4! 12.g3 l xe2 13...xe2 \ c7! (The most precise, although 13...l xe5!? is also excellent f r Black.) 14.0 e7+ White lacked compensation for the pawn in Wallace - PH. Nielsen, Gausdal 1996.

11.< d1!? has been played by the ever-creative grandmaster Sulskis. The idea is to



11...1 a4!

A strong move with several purposes. The queen puts pressure on both d4 and c2, while at the same time creating the tactical trick of ...l xe5. White has two main responses: E1) 12 \ g3! and E2) 12.f4.

12.f is rather tame and after 12...c4 13. xg6 fxg6= the position was balanced in Willenze - LAmi, Wijk aan Zee 2005. It is rather difficult for either side to make progress, although

Black should have slightly the easier time as White has more weaknesses

E1) 12.Wg3!?

So far this has only rarely been seen, but it has been tested by some strong players and has scored well for White.

12...c4!

It is important to force the exchange of the light-squared bishop

Grabbing the pawn by 12...cxd4! is far too dangerous and can be met by either 13.f4 or 13.h4!N with a strong attack for White.

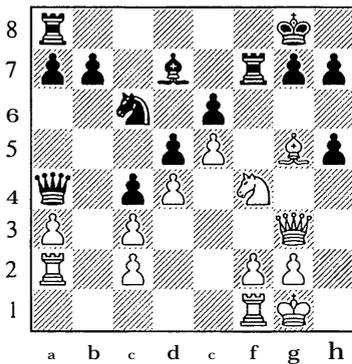
13. ...g6 f g6 14.1 fcl

White has also used the other rook to defend the queenside:

14! a2« d7 15.h4 1 f 16.h5!?

A typical sacrifice.

16...gxh5 17.0 f4



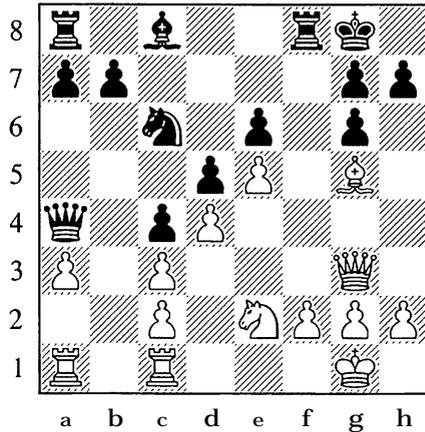
17...! xf4!?

Black responds to his opponent's sacrifice with one of his own! Giving up the rook for the white knight is highly thematic in such positions. Now White is totally naked on the light squares and the formerly passive bishop will grow strong on g6

18. xf4. ,e8 19.Wh3. f 20J g5 1e8

Lenky - Khlusevich, Russia 1994. Black intends to play ... g6 next, with full

compensation. Objectively the position is about equal, but Black has the initiative and the more comfortable game.



14.... d7 15.h4! f 16.f ! af

The inaccurate 16...h6? was played in Robson - Bercys, Richardson 2011. Here White missed the opportunity to claim an advantage after 17.h5 since the bishop cannot be taken for tactical reasons.

17. f !?

White's idea is to walk his king to d2, where it will defend the e2-pawn, thus enabling his rook(s) to swing to the h-file to support the attack.

17...b6

In order to avoid the possible draw that may occur in the main line, Black could consider 17... h5!N, with the point that 18 e1 h6! can be played without having to worry about h4-h5. The continuation might be: 19.\ d2 (19.h5?gxh5+) 19..0 e7 20.0 f4\ h7 21.Wg4 ! f5 with roughly equal chances.

18! e1

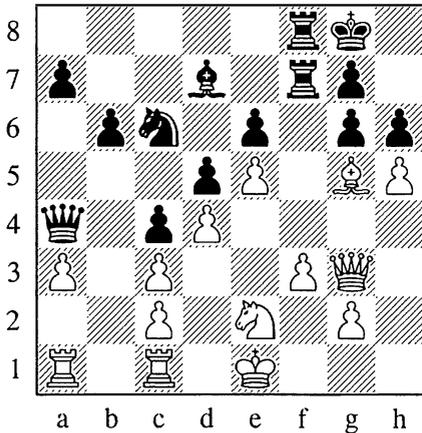
We have been following the game Bologan - Kosyrev, Moscow 2004. At this point it is time for Black to take a bit of space back on the kingside with:

18..h6!N

in the game continued 18..Wa5 19.@ d2 b5 20.Eh1 when White was in control and was able to build up a strong attack.

19.h5!?

19. d2 C e7 20.Wg4 C f5= does not look too threatening.

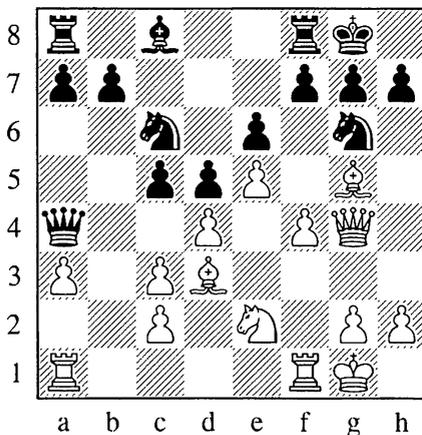


19..Ef5

This forces a draw but the alternative 19...gxh5? 20. .xh6 favors White.

20. .xh6 gxh6 21.Wxg6t Wh8 22.Wxh6t Wg8 23.Wg6t =

E2) 12.f4

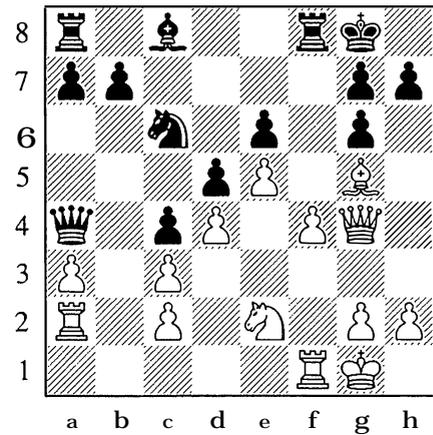


This is by far the most popular continuation.

12...c4 13" xg6 f g6 14.Ea2

14.Efd has been played but it looks rather illogical, as now both of White's rooks are stuck on the queenside. 14...: d7 15.h4 This was Robson - Holt, Wheeling 2013, and here I suggest 15...Ef7N 16.h5 gxh5 17.Wxh5 Eaf8= intending ...h6 when Black is fine, and may look to transfer the bishop via e8 to the kingside in the near future.

After the text move we arrive at a critical position where it is important for Black to make the right decision. White is holding his queenside together with the awkwardly-placed rook on a2, while on the kingside he is poised to launch an attack with h4-h5.



14..Wa5!

This move has hardly ever been played, but I believe it is best. In order to put up proper resistance against the attack, Black should be ready to transfer the queen back to the kingside.

Before going any further, I will show you why I was not happy with the much more popular alternative:

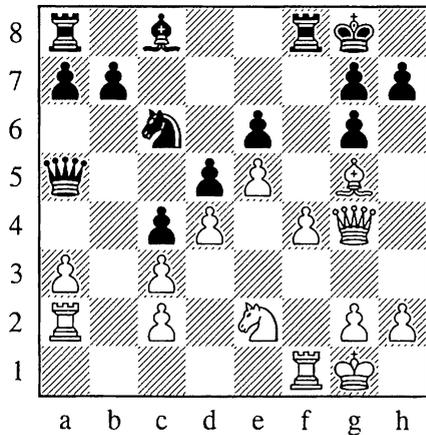
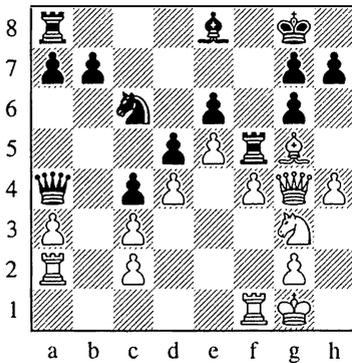
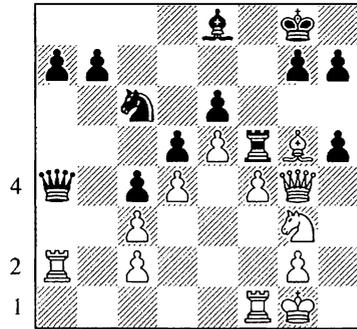
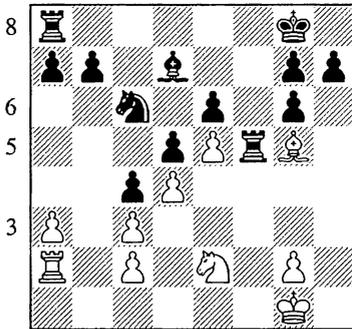
14...:d7 15.h4!

White should strike as quickly as possible before Black can get properly organized.

15..m5

15..1 f limits Black's option; f r instance, it will not be able to play ... eS f r a while. 16.h5 gxh5 17. xh5 l afS 18. g4! With this strong move White keeps his attacking chances without letting Black into the game. (18g4!h6 19. g2! a5! 5fro cck1

esc a
f If gx
a ! ?
't a l

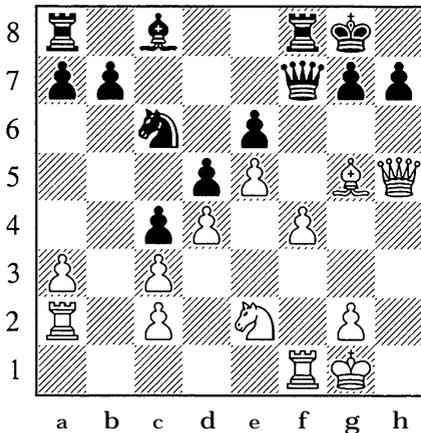


15.h4Vc? 16.h5

White can hardly delay this move, as ...h6 was threatened.

16...g h5 17.Vx SVf

With the queen available to protect the kingside, Black does not face anything like the level of danger seen in the 14... ,d? line above.



18.Vh3h6 19. h4Vf5=

Black was all right in Michielsen - Miedema, Netherlands 2011. As usual, the activation of the bishop via e8 and g6 is an important motif. White would like to prepare f4-f5, but Black is quite well placed to meet this plan. If White exchanges queens then he will lose much of his attacking potential, while if he avoids the swap, the rook on a2 will have to remain passive until White finds some other way to defend the c2-pawn.

Conclusion

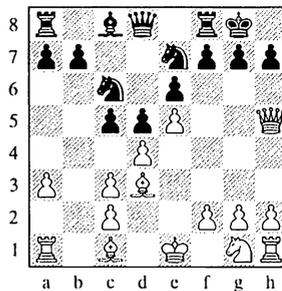
9.h4 is premature, and 9...f5! immediately gives Black a more comfortable version of the 8. d3 f5 variation covered earlier in the book. The rare queen moves 9.V h3 and 9.V h4 are slightly trickier though, and the latter in particular forced me to find a radical innovation in variation C2.

9.l f3 is a serious sideline, and after the standard continuation 9...f5 10.exf : hf6 11.g,g5, Black should avoid the overambitious 11...e5?! in favour of 11... f !, transposing to quite a popular theoretical variation that has already been covered earlier in the book.

Finally, 9.f,g5 is a rare line that must not be underestimated. It is important for Black not to become preoccupied with pawn-grabbing, as White's attack could prove deadly. Instead we should focus on mobilizing the pieces and, if necessary, retreat the queen so that she may assist with the kingside defence.

Chapter 20

8. 1 b6



9° h5

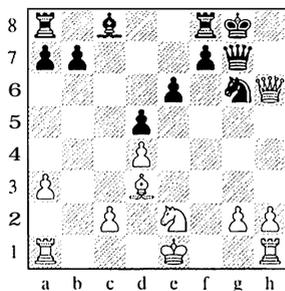
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♙xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♚g4 0-0
8.♙d3 ♘bc6 9.♚h5

9...♘g6

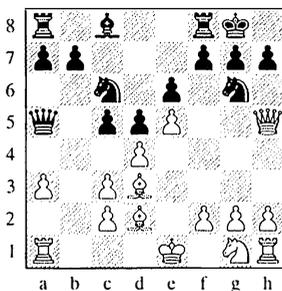
A) 10.♙g5!?	259
B) 10.♘h3 ♚c7	261
B1) 11.♙e3	261
B2) 11.0-0	262

J) note to JQ.. \ a5N



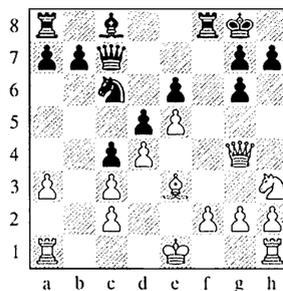
17.Vd N

/) after I 1.♙d2



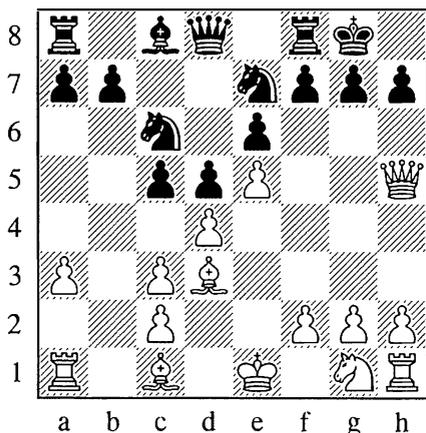
11... \ d?N

B 1) after 13r g4



13..WaN

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 ! b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3
 ! xc3t 6.bxc3 c e7 7.Wg4 0-0 8! d3 c bc6
 9.' h5



Threatening mate in one may be crude, but it is the most effective try for an advantage.

9...c g6

I will mention in passing that 9...h6?? 10.i xh6! gxh6 11.Wxh6 4 f5 12.i xf5 exf5 13.0-0-0! has been analysed out to a virtually forced loss for Black.

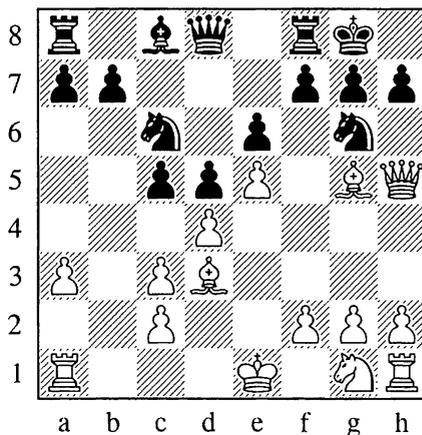
The knight on g6 provides a sturdier defence of the kingside. From here the main move is 10.f4, as discussed in the final three chapters. The remainder of this short chapter will be devoted to two interesting sidelines: A) 10.i g5! and B) 10.c h3.

10.f4 e3 Wa5 11...d2 transposes the variation A below.

10.f4 e2?? is rarely seen, for good reasons. In the database I found only two games, both continuing with 10...c4 which is fine for Black.

However, 10...Wa5!N looks even stronger; for instance: 11.0-0 (11...d2 \ a4+) 11...b6+ followed by ...a6 when Black quickly exchanges his bad bishop, resulting in a positional advantage for him.

A) 10.i g5!?



This tricky move has only been seen once according to the database.

10...a5!N

I have opted for a solid continuation in order to limit White's attacking possibilities.

The computer has other ideas, but you should be aware that engines tend to underestimate White's attacking chances, and often fail to recognize the danger until it's too late. I will mention two such lines for illustrative purposes:

10...Wb6 11.f4 e2 c4 12...xg6 f g6 13.Wg4 \ b2 Black wins a pawn, but after 14.: c1 Wxa3 (14...i d7 15.h4!) 15.h4! White has a strong attack.

10...Wc7

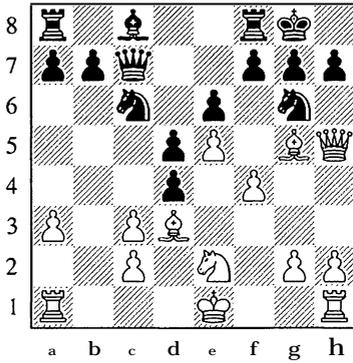
This is the machine's top suggestion, and has been tried once in practice.

11.f4 e2 cxd4

The computer proposes 11...Wa5! as a playable alternative, but it is not worth losing a tempo. 12.0-0 b6 13.f4 i a6 14.Ef3 The attack develops smoothly even without the d3-bishop, for instance: 14...xd3 15: xd3 f8 iG.Eh3 4 r 11: f1+.

12.f4

We have reached a position resembling the line I worried about after 9i.g5 in the previous chapter: White's attack has considerable venom, for instance:



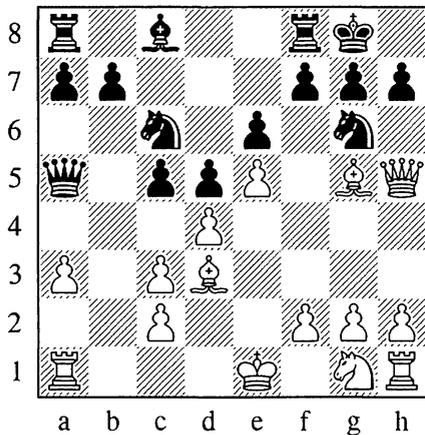
12...h6

12...dxc3 is a possible improvement, but after 13.O O intending Ef White's attack is still going strong

13.\ xh6! ggh6 14.Wth6l lxe5 15.f e5V fe5 J6.cxd4 1fg7

Now in Van der Weide - Barsov, Dieren 2000, White could have stayed on top with 17.1 c3N

Black has survived the attack, but White has a positional advantage.



11...d2

11...e2? is effectively refuted by 11...xd4!

After the text move it may appear that Black must be doing well, having won a tempo. However, he must take care to use it in the right way. In some of the main-line positions involving the blocked centre with ...c4, White often moves his knight (which has previously been moved to f3) back via g1 to e2 and later g3 or f4. If Black is not alert to such nuances, White's tempo loss could turn out to be a tempo gain.

11...! d7N

It is not often that we can play two novelties in consecutive moves, but the previous position has also arisen via another move order:

11...c4? 12.! xg6 f g6 has been played, but after 13.g4N White's tempo loss is fully justified, for reasons explained in the note to White's 11th move above. After 13...\ a4 14. 2 the position resembles the main line below, but White's knight can quickly move to the more favourable e2-square.

11...bN is in the most effective plan, as after 12.l f3.\ a6? 13.l g5 h6 14.i,xg6 f g6 15.\ xg6 hvg5 16.\ xe6! 2f 17.\ xc6: Black does not have enough compensation for the lost pawns.

Instead of 12...\ a6?, Black can try to safeguard his kingside first with 12...l be7, but is a bit too passive. White can either continue the attack with 13.h4 or begin with the prophylactic 13.a4 preventing ...l.a6, with excellent chances in either case.

12.l f

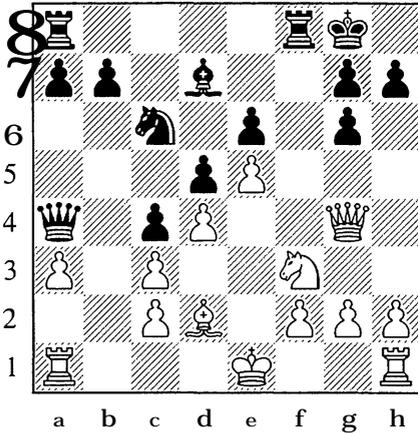
...nlis is the only opportunity for White to play 12.a4, preventing the black queen from occupying this square, as occurs in the main line below. Unfortunately for White, it is too early for such ideas due to 12...Eab8! intending to follow up with ...b5 at some point, perhaps with the inclusion of ...c4 first.

12...c4

With the white knight committed to the f -square, now is the right time to block the centre.

13.i xg6 f g6 14.\ g4 a4!

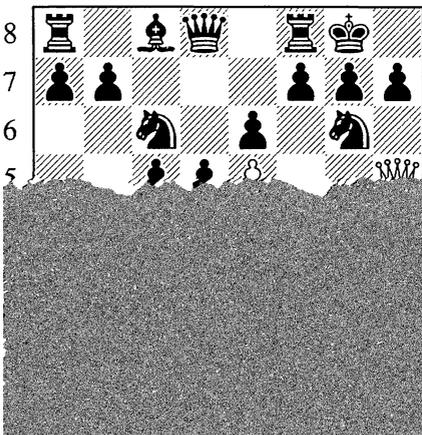
Preventing a3-a4 and tying the enemy rook down to the defence of a3 and c2.



15J a2 f f

Intending ...l af8. Black has a comfortable position and is well placed to ddend against the thematic h4- h5 attack.

B) 10.l h3



'l lis intriguing move has the idea of

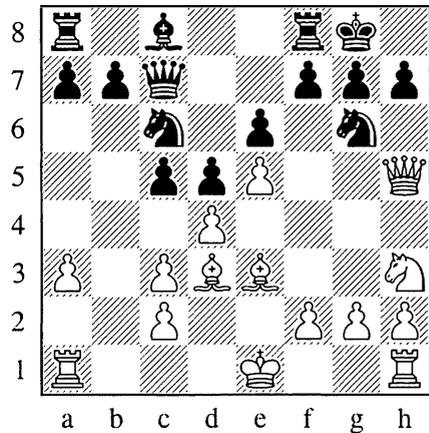
bringing the knight to g5 just as in the main lines, while of ering some independent options f r both sides.

10.. c7

For the moment Black reacts the same as if the knight was on f . Now White can choose between B1) 11.i e3 and B2) 11.O O.

11.1 g5 is analysed under the move order 10l f V c7 11.1 g5 - sec variation D of the next chapter on page 269.

B1) 11.i e3



This was once played by Judit Polgar, but it does not trouble Black too much.

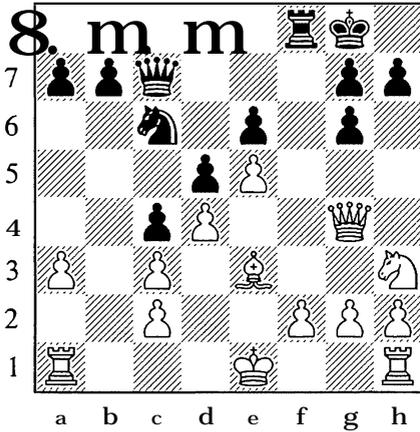
11...c4

11...l2ce7 is playable, but af er 12.f4!? (12.O O c4 13..1.xg6 f gG=) 12...V a5 13.1 d2 White had a slight initiative in a double-edged position, J. Polgar - Hillarp Persson, Malmo 2000.

12i xg6 f g6 13. g4

13.♞h4 b5 14.O O § d7= was perf ctly fine f r Black in Stef nsson - Psakhis, Torshavn 2000. Black has some initiative on the queenside and remains solid on the kingside.

11.c3 text move was played in Joachim-Libeau, Gladnabach 1996. In the position resembles the main theoretical line, but here White's knight is on h3 instead of f3. This difference favors Black slightly, as he does not have to worry about a quick attack based on h4-h5.

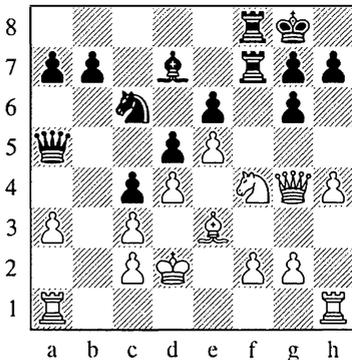


13...1 a5N

This seems fine, although Black could also consider 13...b5?N by analogy with Chapter 23.

14.i d2

14. d2 is possible, but such a move carries certain strategic risks, especially when White's attack is slow to get off the ground. Here is a brief illustrative line. 14... d7 15.1 f4 \$f 16.h4: af Black is well placed to counter the kingside threats, for instance:



17.h5 g5! 18.fxg5?! (18.1 c2 h6+) 18...h6 19.Wg3! xd4! 20. hd4! xf4 Black has a clear advantage, with the more active pieces and a safer king.

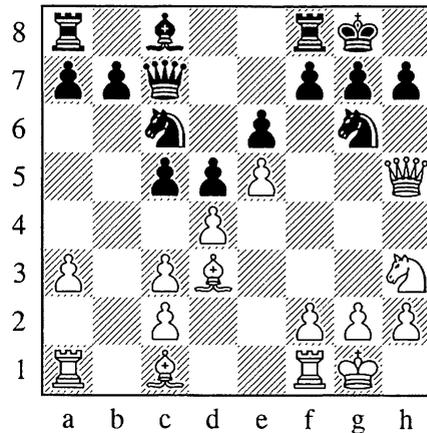
14...1 a4 15.f a2i d? 16.0 0

16.1 f4 : f5 17.h4 8af8 does not worry Black, who is ready to meet h4-h5 with ...g5.

16...b6!?

A useful waiting move, guarding against a possible attack on the b-f file, while also giving the queen a route back via a6 and c8. The position is balanced.

B2) 11.0 0



This has been the more popular choice, but Black has a good answer:

11...c4! 12.i e2

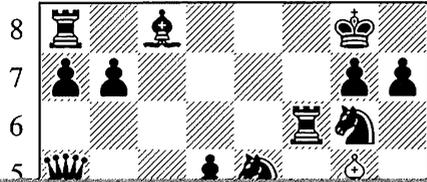
Black's main plan from here is the central break with ...f6, but first he should take the opportunity to disrupt White's position with:

12... \ a5!

Forcing White to decide how to defend the c3 pawn.

12...f6 has been more popular and has been tried by Vitiugov, but White has scored heavily

here and the main line is just a better move all round.



18.c f4 f =

The position is dynamically balanced.

13...d2? fails to 13...C xd4!+ winning a pawn.

13. b2 is the only move t have been tested, but the bishop looks ridiculous. I think Black should play: 13... a4N Preventing a3-a4, which would enable White to liberate the bishop. 14...d1 f6 This move prevents t g5 as well as putting pressure on White's centre. It is worth adding that Black should not necessarily grab a pawn on e5 next move, even if allowed to do so. Instead he should continue developing, in order not t risk handing over the initiative t White. The game is balanced, but Black has a more harmonious position with better piece coordination.

13...f6!

Note the favourable timing of this move: the white queen is exposed on the f-file, and she also obstructs the f-pawn, preventing f-f4.

14.exf : xf6 15.Wg3eS

16...C ge7= is also fine, intending ...d5.

16.d eS C cxeS 17. gS

Conclusion

10.. g5!? is a tricky move, but after 10... a5 11.. d2 5 d7 Black is fine, the key point being to wait for the white knight to come t f3 before blocking the centre with ...c4.

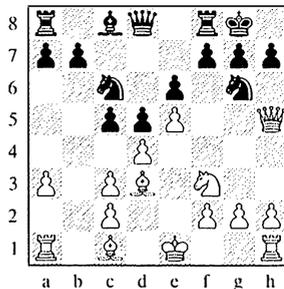
10.C h3 should be met by 1 ... c7. Then 11.C g5 transposes to the next chapter; but White has two main independent options.

11.C e3 c4 resembles the main theoretical line, but Black has a slightly easier time as the knight on h3 obstructs White's most dangerous attacking plan of h4-h5.

11.O-O is the best attempt to take advantage of the knight's placement on h3, but the accurate 11...c4 12.i.e2 \ a5! provides an excellent solution, when Black should have no problems.

Chapter 21

8. b6



10. ♖f3

Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♖c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♗g4 0-0
8.♗d3 ♘bc6 9.♗h5 ♘g6 10.♖f3

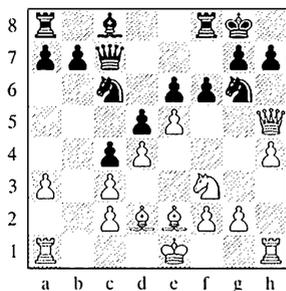
10...♗c7

A) 11.♗d2	265
B) 11.a4	266
C) 11.h4	267
D) 11.♘g5	269
E) 11.0-0 c4	270
E1) 12.♗xg6 fxg6	270
E2) 12.♗e2 f6	272
E21) 13.exf6	272
E22) 13.♗e1!?	273

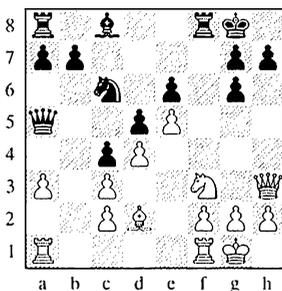
;) nor t 12.0xgG

E1) after 14.\d2

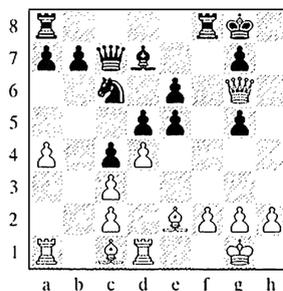
E22) after 17.♗d1



11.L...♗d7!N

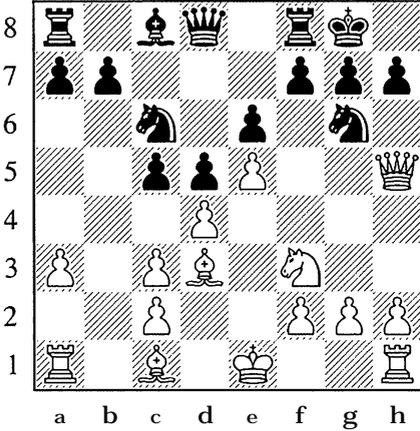


14...b5!N



17...exd4!N

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Cc3 i b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3
i xc3 6.bxc3 C e7 7.\ g4 0-0 8.i d3 C bc6
9.\ hs 1 g6 10.1 f



1 The knight comes to its most natural square, where it supports the centre and threatens to go to g5.

10...\ c7

11.ce7 is quite a respectable sideline, but after 11.dxc5! (11.h4 has also scored well for White) 11...bQ 12.c6! I was unable to find a path to full equality.

The text move is the main move by far. Black takes the focus away from the kingside for a moment, by threatening to take twice on d4. In this chapter we will consider five sidelines: A) 11.i d2, B) 11.a4, C) 11.h4, D) 11.C gS and E) 11.0-0.

11.i e3 is the main line, and will be covered in the final two chapters.

A) 11.i d2

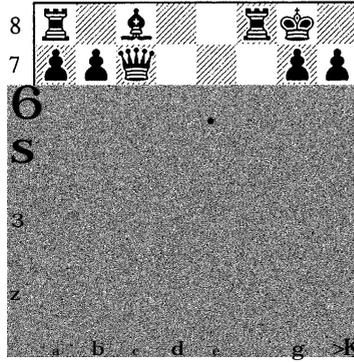
This is rare, but it was once tried by Shirov.

11...c4

Blocking the centre is a typical plan that works just fine here.

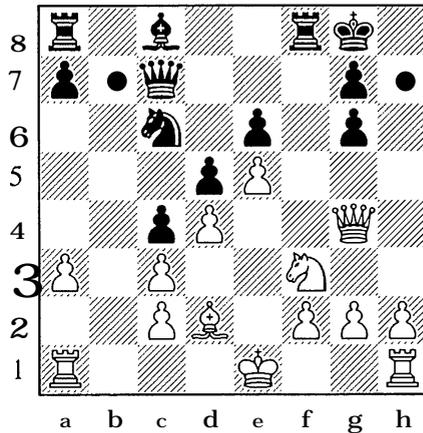
12.i xg6

Another game continued: 12..i e2 f6 13.h4. Now in Poljak - Horwitz, email 2006, the natural continuation would have been:



13.g.d7!N With good chances. It is worth noting that Black does not yet threaten to take on e5 due to 12.g5. However, in the meantime White does not have many attacking ideas while Black's last move prepares ...e8.

12..f g6 13.\ g4



13...bS!+

Funnily enough, in my first draft of analysis I was content with 13...\ 14.h4 I f 15.\ xf5 : xf5 as in Shirov - Yusupov, Leon 2008, when Black did not appear to have any problems. However, when I investigated this type of queenless position more deeply, my

opinion changed - see variation B22 of the next chapter for details.

Unfortunately, my analysis of the main 11..Wc3 variation made it easy to come back and modify the recommendation in this small sideline. The position after the text move is almost identical to the starting position of Chapter 23, except for the position of the bishop on d2 instead of e3. If anything, this small difference is likely to favour Black slightly, as the d4- and f2-pawns are not as well defended, while the king does not have the use of the d2 square.

14.a4?

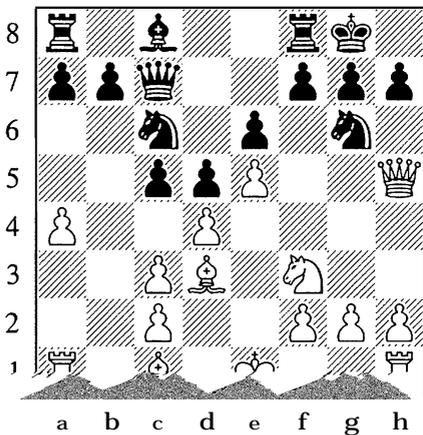
It does seem like the most obvious way to try and take advantage of the bishop's placement on d2. Against other moves, Black can happily follow the recommendations presented in Chapter 23.

14..b4!

Effectively refuting White's last move, due to the following point:

15.cxb4? c3!+

B) 11.a4



I was surprised to find only four games with this interesting move, which was tested by Judit Polgar back in 1993.

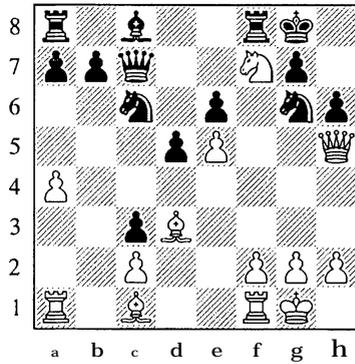
11...cxd4!

Black should carry through with the main idea prepared by his last move.

11...c4?! was played in three of the four games, but blocking the centre makes less sense here, as it presents White's bishop with the a3-f8 diagonal. 12.. .xg6 f g6 Now in Polgar - Gdanski, Budapest 1993, White could have obtained some initiative with 13.\ g5!N intending 13...\ a5 14.t' d2 f followed by \.a3.

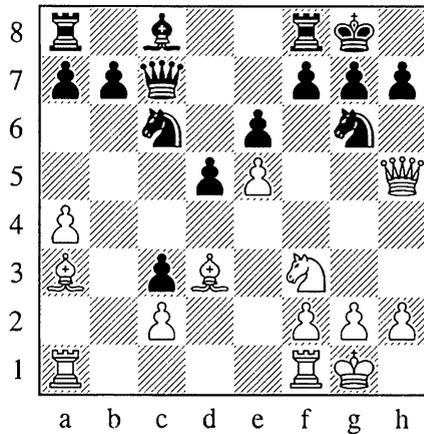
12.O O dxc3 13. a

13.l g5? h6 14.l xf runs into a strong counter:



14...l f4! 15.J xf4 1 xf 16.V xf !' xf 17..g3 l b4+ when Black remains with an extra pawn in the endgame.

Here I found an improvement on the game Liermann - Herrmann, corr: 1994.



13..h6!N

Preventing any troublesome c g5 ideas. Black already has two extra pawns, so he can afford to give up the exchange to dampen White's initiative.

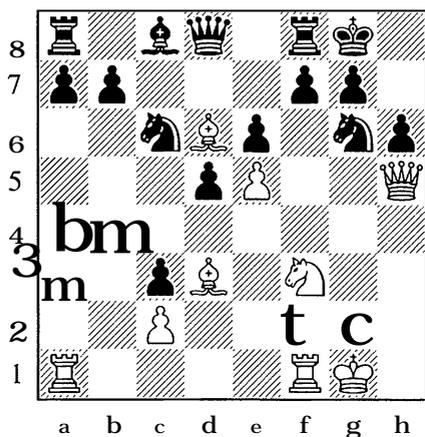
14. d6

14.\,xf c xf gives Black a fine position.

14..' ds

This is the most solid reply, keeping the queen within easy reach of the kingside.

14..\ a5 was my first intention, but after further investigation I was not completely happy after 15.: fd1 c t4 16.' g4 c xd3 17.: xd3 when White has some attacking chances.



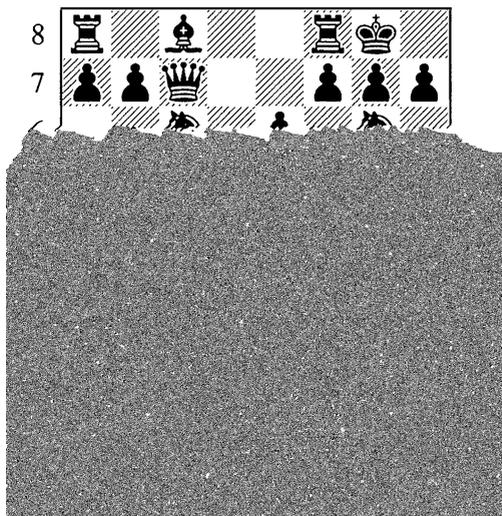
15. x

15.' g4 l gc7 16.: a3 : c8 17.: xc3 l f5 18. ,a3 i d7 is roughly equal; White has the bishop pair and some activity, but Black remains solid and is a pawn up.

15..l xf8 16.: a3' a5 17.: bl a6=

Preventing : b5. Black has a healthy position with two pawns for the exchange.

C) 11.h4



11...c d4

Black should not back down from the challenge. The ensuing positions are sharp and risky for both players, but with accurate play Black should come out on top.

12.s dl

1 is the clearly favored move in practice, although it is condemned by my computer engine.

12.c g5? ' xc5! is no good for White. The only practical encounter continued 13\ c2? \ xe2'1 and Black was winning easily in Cvak - Jurci, email 2005. White should at least try keeping the queens on, but in that case Black continues 13..hG when his kingside is safe and his extra material should decide the game.

12.O O

This has only been played one game, and indeed it looks slightly strange in conjunction with White's last.

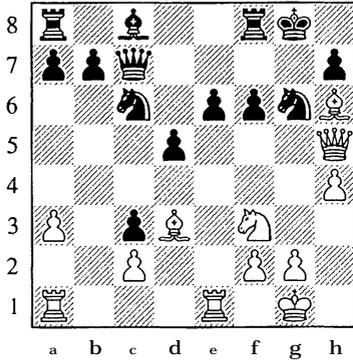
12...dxc3 13.: e1

13.f b1!N could be considered, but Black has a choice of good replies. 13...fG is similar

to the lines given below, while 13...b6? is also quite promising

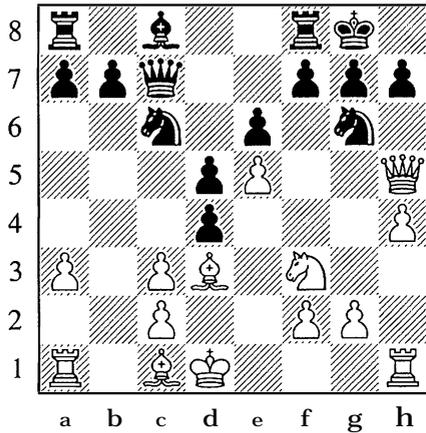
13...f6 14.exf6 gxf6 15.f h6

In the event of 15k xg6 hxg6 16' xg6! ' g7 17.' d3' h7! 18' xc3 e5+ material is level but Black has a great position



15...' f 16.\hf 1 kf +

Draw agreed in Douglas- Joergensen, email 2006. In the final position Black stands better and can play on without much risk.



12...d c3

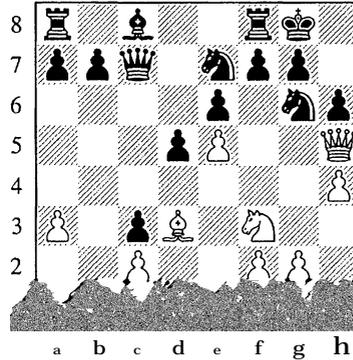
After this obvious move White has a few different options at his disposal.

13J h3

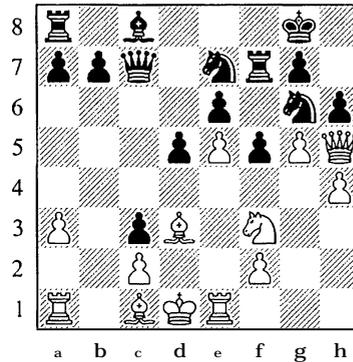
'Il is has been the most popular approach. White mobilizes another piece although there is still no clear threat in sight.

13! g5? f ils to impress after: 13..h6 14.f4 l be7+ Schuhmacher- Hermann, Germany 1999.

13: eI was played in Kharitonov- Hage, email 1999. Here I suggest the logical 13...l be7N when Black is getting ready for the...f6 break. A possible continuation is 14.l g5h6 15.C f3



15...f5! 16.g4 : f + White has some attacking chances, but not enough to justify the two-pawn investment. It is worth mentioning the following important resource: 17.g5



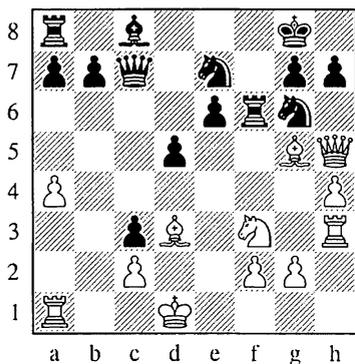
17...l f4! 18. xf4 g6 19.\fxh6: h7 11e white queen is trapped, although Black does not have: rush to capture her; and should instead develop his queenside pieces to avoid opening the kingside prematurely.

13...C ce?!

By overprotecting the knight on g6, Black makes ...f6 a viable option when necessary.

14.1 ♗5

Another game continued: 14.a4 f5 ♖5.exf6? Exf6 16.1 ♗5



16. ♖5! 17. ♗xf6 ♗xf6 18. ♗xg6 ♗xg6 19. ♖e3

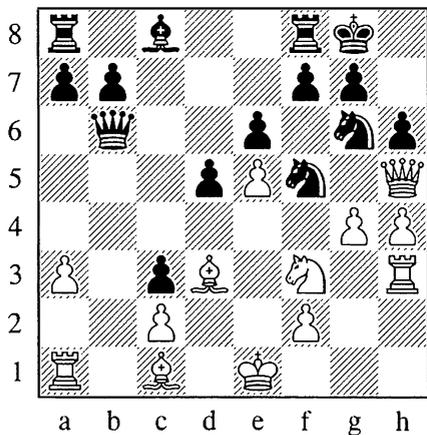
14...h6 15.1 ♗

By provoking Black's last move, White has succeeded in holding up the ...f6 move. However, we will soon see that Black has other resources.

15... ♗b6 16. ♗el 1 ♗f5!

Preparing an extraordinary idea.

17.g4



17... ♗b2!!

This wonderful tactical blow refutes White's set-up.

18. ♗xb2 ♗xb2 19. ♗b1 ♗f4 20. ♗hb2 ♗kh5 21. ♗g h5 b6+

Tritt - Myers, Incer et 2004. Black has a solid extra pawn and should win the endgame with careful play.

D) 11. ♗5



This direct attacking move leads to immediate simplifications.

11...h6 12. ♗kf

12.h4? f5 leads to ♗...cxd4+ when White's centre collapses.

12... ♗xf 13. ♗xg6

13... ♗xg6?? ♗kf2t 14. ♗d1 cxd4 +

13... ♗xg6 14. ♗xg6 cxd4 15. cxd4 ♗kd4

The queenless position is roughly level, but Black's better pawn structure gives him a slightly easier game to play.

16. ♗e3

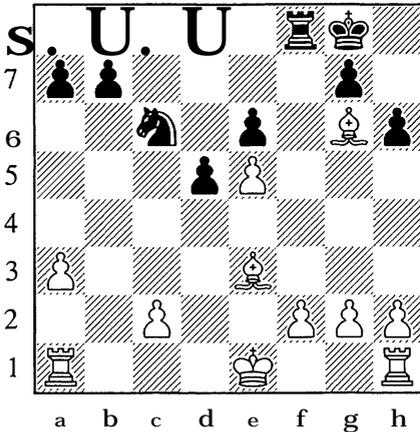
16. ♗e3 ♗f5 17. h4 ♗f7 ♗d2 ♗d7 19. h5, = ♗h4 is more pleasant for Black in Krivic - Haugen, corr. 1999.

16. ♗d3 ♗d7 ♗b2 ♗c6 (After 17... ♗m1 ♗8 ♗8 ♗19. ♗b2 8 4 20... ♗cl a draw was

agreed in Gelfand - Hübner; Wijk aan Zee 1992. The repetition is not forced, but the position is level anyway. 18.0-0 1ac8 19.f4 c a5= Blass- Buczinski, email 2003

16..1 c6

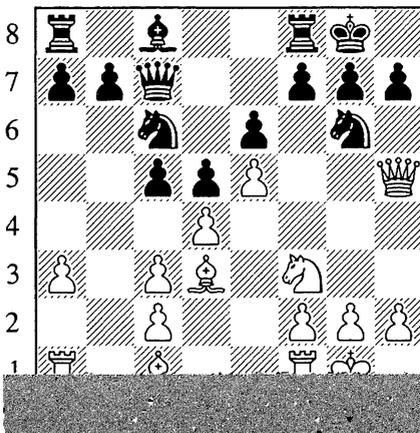
16..c f5 17.i k5 d8 is good enough for approximate equality, but the knight has better prospects on the queenside.



17.f4 b6 18.i d3! a5 19.0-0 i d7=

Hurdle - Diotallevi, corr: 1995. White's bishop pair is fully compensated by Black's better pawn structure. A logical plan for the next few moves is ...1ac8 and ...1 c4, while an exchange of light-squared bishops would of course be desirable.

E) 11.0-0



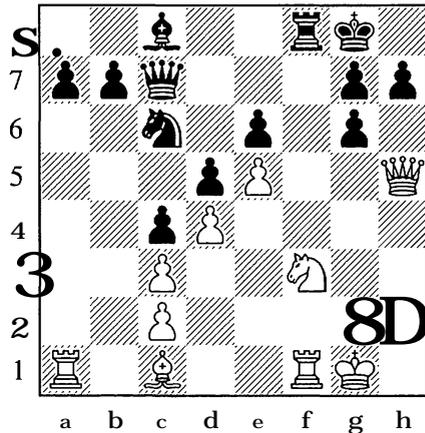
This is the most popular of the sidelines examined in the present chapter. White develops naturally, but rules out attacking ideas based on opening the h-file for the rook.

11...c4

Black gains space and forces a decision from White. We will consider both E1) 12.i xg6 and E2) 12.i e2.

12.c g5? fails after 12..hG 13.c xf cxd3 (13..1 f4N is playable but unnecessary, as after 14.1 xhG! gxh6 15.J xf4 xf4 16.' xhG g4 Black's advantage is smaller than in the game.) 14.1 xhG! gxhG 15.' xgG! ' g7+ Black's knight was worth more than White's three extra pawns in Wiesinger - Koller, corr: 1993

E1) 12.i xg6 f g6



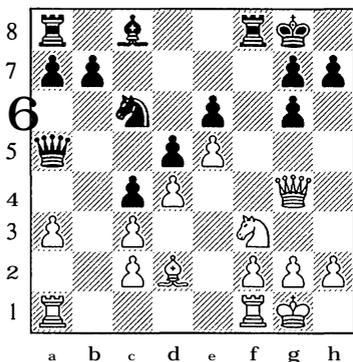
White has tried all four of the available queen moves from here, but none of them are particularly threatening.

13' h3

13' g5 has the idea to retreat the queen to e3 or d2, protecting the c3-pawn. However, this only really makes sense if White has time to activate his bishop via a3, which Black can prevent with the following

manoeuvre: 13..Wa5 14..b2? (14. d2N Wa4 15. a2 d7=) 14...Wa4 15. ac1 d7t White's strategy had clearly failed in Cikkabakkal - Johnston, email 2010.

13.Wg4 is better suited to positions with the rook on h1 to prepare h4-h5. 13..d2 (14. a2N can be met by 14...b5 with similar ideas as commented below.)

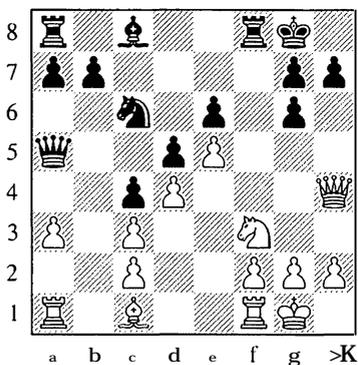


14...b5 Black has a solid position with active prospects on the queenside. His next move is likely to be ...i.d7. Later he can either double rooks on the f file or prepare the ...b4 break with ... ab8 and later ...a5.

13.Wh4

This is quite an unnatural square for the queen, as it invites an exchange sacrifice on f at some point.

13..Wa5

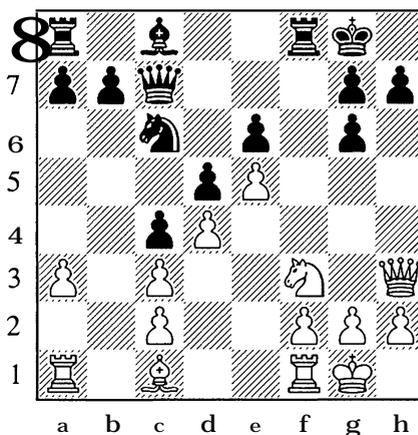


!4. d2

14. a2?! is well met by 14... xf3! 15.gxf Wxc3 16. e3 d7 when Black's extra pawn and superior pawn structure more than compensate for the sacrificed exchange. It might not be easy for Black to earn a full point, but White's position is no fun whatsoever.

!4..Wa4 15. a2 d7

We have been following the game P Slavin - Iridume, Inter et 2005. Black has deprived White of any obvious active plan, and the game is set for a manoeuvring phase. The position is roughly equal, although Black has greater harmony among his pieces and a slightly better structure.



13..Was

Again we see this typical move, which wins a tempo by threatening the c3-pawn while planning to put the queen on a4, preventing White from obtaining the a3-f diagonal for his bishop.

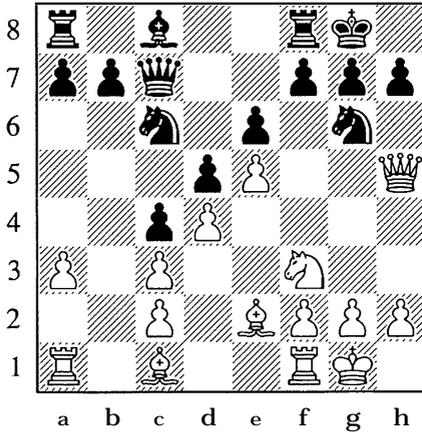
14. d2 hS!N

14...Wa4 15.. a2 «.d7 is also possible; in this case the queen keeps the a2-rook busy for the moment, but becomes slightly static herself.

Pushing the b-pawn is an active way of preventing a3-a4. Now Black's queen also keeps an eye on c3, and can later move away.

allow the long-term plan of ...E**b8** f followed by ...a5 and ...b4. The game is close to level, but Black's side is more pleasant to play, and White does not have too many active ideas.

E2) 12.i e2



This has scored less well for White than the previous line, but to me it seems like a more logical attempt when White has already castled. In the main lines where White takes on g6, the h4-h5 push is a standard attacking plan, but without a rook on h1 it hardly carries the same force.

12...f

Opening the f-file is the usual way to achieve counterplay for Black. Now E21) 13.exf has been White's most popular choice, but I consider the rare E22) 13.Ee1!? to be more challenging. Other moves are easy for Black to handle:

13...e3 d.d7 14.Eab1 Eab8!? (14...b6= is a sensible alternative) 15.exf6 Exf6= Black was doing fine in Wicklund Hansen - Szency, email 2008.

13.a4

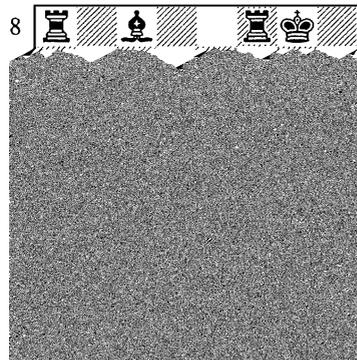
It is logical to open the a3-f8 diagonal for the bishop, but J a3 is not yet possible in view of the ...l f4 f rk.

13...f eS!N

This forcing continuation is an attempt to exploit White's move order:

13...i .d7 is fine, when White's best reply is 14.Ee1!N leading to variation E22 below. Instead after 14.exf6? Exf6 15.t g5? h6 16.t h3? (16.f3 l f4 17.i xf4 Exf4+) 16...WaS Black had a clear advantage in Shetty - Ravi, India 1994.

14.i gS h6



15.Wxg6

15.l xe6 j ,xe6 16.Wxg6 Ee6 17.Wg3 . f5 is also balanced.

15...hxgS 16.\ e3 exd4 17.cxd4 e5 J8.Wxg5 ,1 19.dxe5 i xc2

The position is double-edged but dynamically equal.

E21) 13.exf Exf

White has tried a few different moves here, but none of them are especially challenging.

14.i gS?

The most direct attacking try, but it only helps Black.

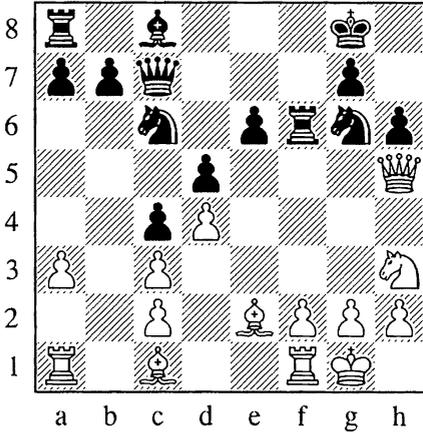
14.i gS is met by 14...l f4 15. xf4 Wxf4= when Black had no problems in Oil - Dolmatov, Groningen 1993.

14.g3 has been the most popular move, stopping ...l f4 but weakening the light

squares on the kingside. After 14...i d7 intending ...gaf Black has a good game and even a small advantage.

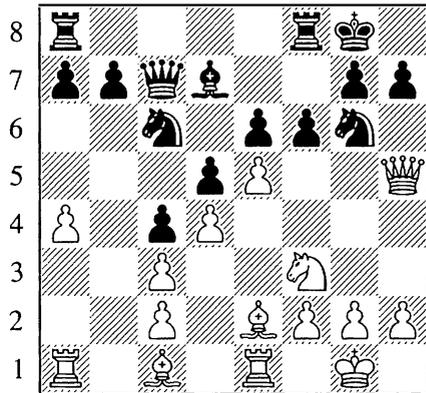
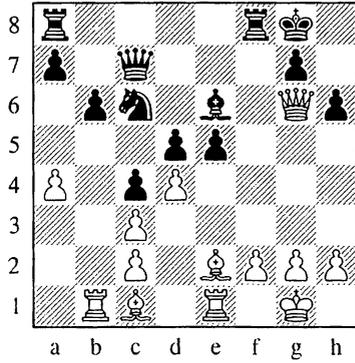
14...h6 15.t h3

White would like to clamp down on the kingside with f2-f4 followed

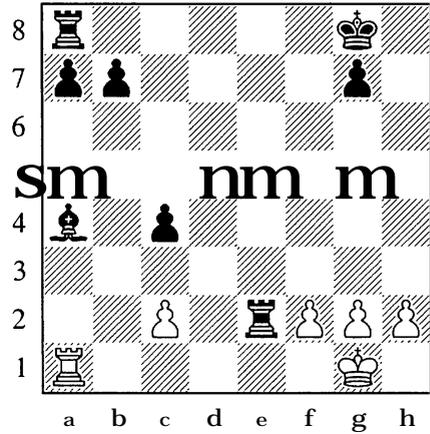
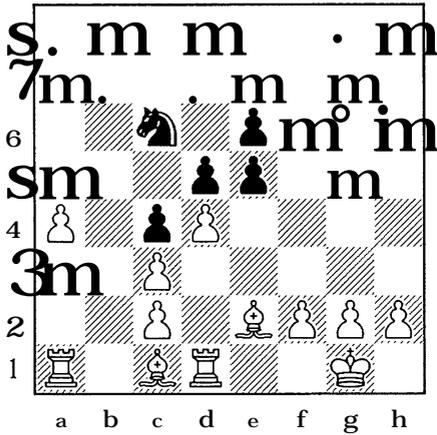


15...e5! 16.dxe5 ♖xc5

Threatening ...♗f5. The best way out is:



This position was reached in Klochan - Vercaemen, email 2004. Now it looks good for Black to play:



25. @f i c6 26. @xe2i xd5=

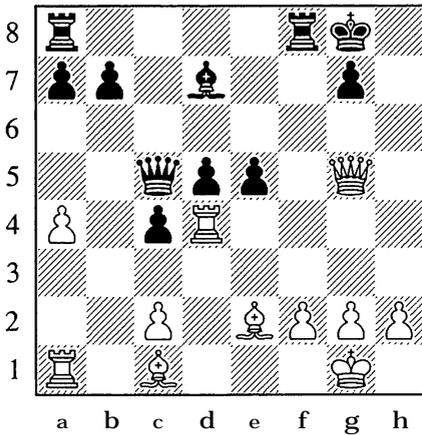
It is hard to see the endgame ending in anything other than a draw.

Conclusion

17...exd4!N 18.cxd4 e5

Black is holding his own in the complications, for instance:

19. ' xg5! kd4 20J d4!' c5!



21. ' xeS

The spectacular 21.Ef4!? exf4 22. .b2 c3 23. a3 Wf6 24. .xfS Exf also leads to a balanced position.

21...Ef 22.i a3 Exe5 23.i xcS Exe2 24.ExdSi xa4

11...d2 is not terribly important; Black should just play 11...c4 and continue more or less as prescribed against 11...d, as discussed in the next two chapters

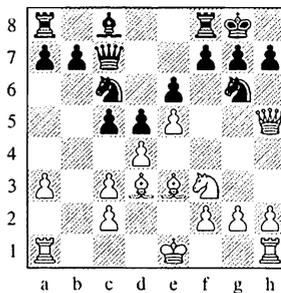
11.a4 and 11.h4 are interesting sidelines, both of which see White sacrificing a couple of pawns to fight for the initiative. Black does well to take the material, but then return some or all of it in order to dampen White's initiative. 11.c g5 is not a bad move, but it leads by force to an endgame where Black has few difficulties

11.0-0 is the most popular of the sidelines examined here. After the standard 11...c4, exchanging with 11. l xg6 fxg6 does not carry much bite, as White is in no position to attack with h4-h5

12.\e2 is more interesting although after 12...f6, the usual reply of 13.exf6 leads nowhere for White. 13.Ee1!? is more challenging and may lead to tactical complications, with equality the natural outcome after accurate play.

Chapter 22

8. b6



11. ♖e3 c4

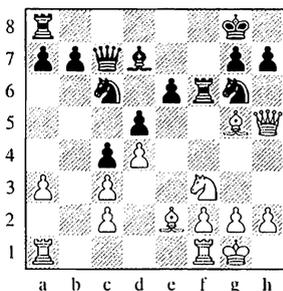
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♗g4 0-0
8.♗d3 ♘bc6 9.♗h5 ♘g6 10.♘f3 ♗c7 11.♗e3

11...c4

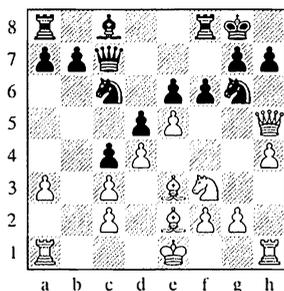
A) 12. ♗e2	276
B) 12. ♗xg6 fxg6	277
B1) 13. ♗h3	277
B2) 13. ♗g4	278
B21) 13... ♗d7	279
B22) 13... ♗f7	280

A) note r 13h4!



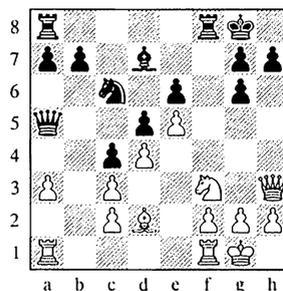
15...1 f!N

A) after 13.h4!



13...♘ge7!N

B1) after 15 0 0



15...b5N

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.t c3 i b4 4.e5 c5 5.a i xc3t 6.bxc3t e7 7.1 g4 0 0 8.i d3 t bc6 9.1 h5 t g6 IQt f 1 c 7 11.i e3

This is the main move. White supports the d4-pawn and also protects f2, which is relevant in some lines involving c g5xf .

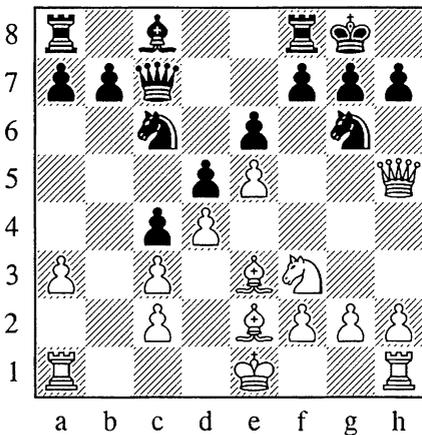
11...c4

The main alternative is 11...1 ce7, which I have used successfully, for instance in defeating Delchev in 2006. Unfortunately, after some study I have concluded that Black is still struggling to achieve equality after 12.h4, \,d7 13.Eb1! as first played in Kajjakin- Yusupov, Amsterdam 2006.

Blocking the centre is the usual plan, and we have already seen a few different versions of it in the preceding chapters. White sometimes retreats with A) 12.i e2, but the main line is B) 12.i xg6

The straightforward 12.c g5? does not work after: 12..h6 13.c xf (or 13.gxg6 f g6 14.i xg6 hxg5+ Zhukov - Belokur, Kiev 2005) 13...cx d3 14.c xh6i gxh6 15.iWg6! i g7+ Brayman- NavaBaro, email 2003.

A) 12.i e2



With this slightly passive move White hopes to make his bishop pair count in the long run.

12..f !

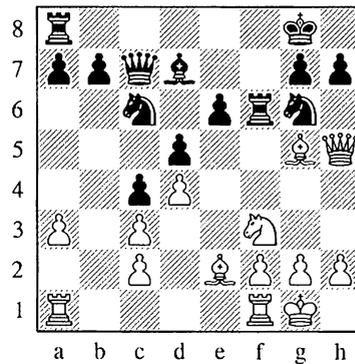
A strong multipurpose move, undermining White's centre, preparing counterplay on the f-file and stopping any ideas of c g5 f r the moment.

13.h4!?

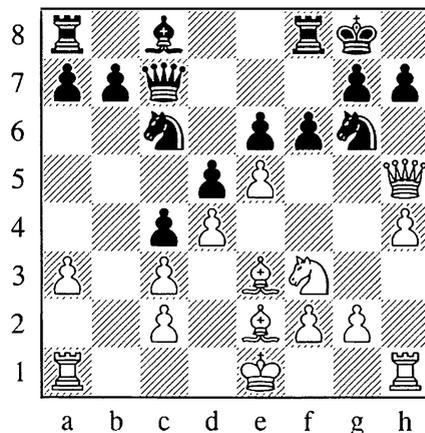
White tries to make use of the fact that he has not castled to start an attack, possibly involving c g5 as a sacrifice.

13.0 0 is safer, and has already been covered under the move order 11.0 0 c4 12.\.e2 f6 13.Jk3 - see 13i .e3 in the notes to variation E2 in the previous chapter.

13.exf6 is rather tame. 13..8xf6 14.0 0.\d7 15.\.g5 Now in Oparin - Yudkevich, Moscow 2008, Black should have played:



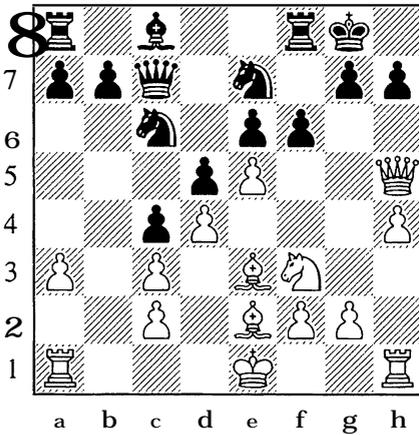
15..C f4!N J6. xf4 Exf4+ Black has the more active pieces and the healthier pawn structure.



13..1 ♗e7!N

A strong novelty, intending ...♗f5, or possibly ...g6 winning the e5-pawn.

13..♙d7 has been played in all four of the games 1 found in the database. Black has scored well, but after the correct 14.0-0!N White has a slightly easier time than in the main line below, although even here Black is at least equal.



14.exf6

Generally this is a move White would prefer to avoid, as it surrenders his space advantage and allows Black's pieces to become more active. However, it is hard to find good alternatives.

14..Exf6 15.0-0

♙e5 does not trouble Black.

15..1 F

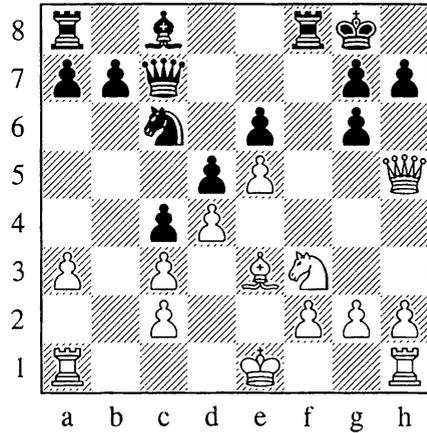
Black has an active game and good prospects.

B) 12.. ♘g6

This is the main line, and by far the biggest challenge for Black after 11..♙c4. White gives up his strong light-squared bishop in order to damage Black's kingside structure. This weakening might not look too serious at first

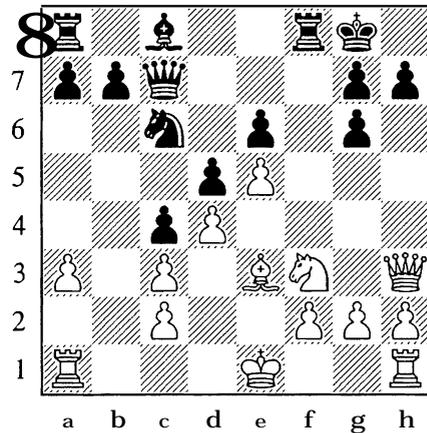
sight, but the picture will change in the event that White manages to launch his h-pawn to h5. In view of White's considerable attacking potential, Black needs to be well prepared before venturing down this path.

12..f ♘g6



From here we will consider the rare B1) 13.♙h3 followed by the main line B2) 13.♙g4.

B1) 13.♙h3



This has been played in a few games, but it is hard to justify White's decision to block the h-pawn. The potential ♗g5 fork, hitting h7 and e6, is not at all dangerous, as after the

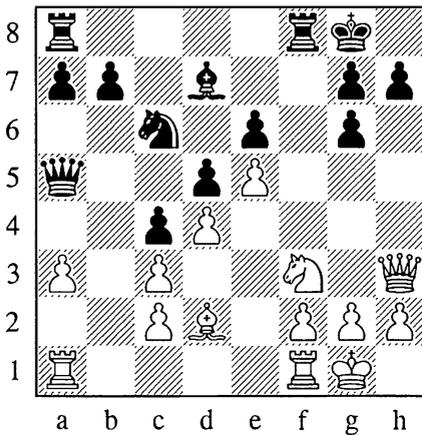
reply ...h6 White can't take on e6 as the knight would land in a fatal pin.

13... a5!?

Another good option is 13...b5? when Black has an improved version of the next chapter; as he does not have to worry about the h4-h5 plan.

14. d2 d7 15.0-0

15. g4N may be a slight improvement, intending h4-h5. However, Black has no particular problems here, and in fact the last move immediately transposes to variation A of Chapter 20, albeit with one extra move played. The move order in Chapter 20 was 13K g5? ' a5N 11. d2 . d7N 12.1 f3 c4 13. xg6 f g6 14. g4, after which 14... a4! was shown to give Black a good game.

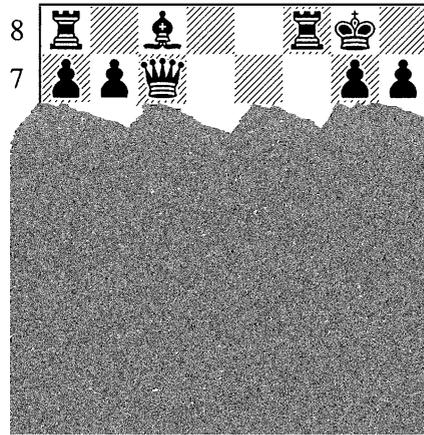


The text move was played in Richard - Karis, email 1999, and it also leads to a transposition of sorts. I refer you to Variation B of Chapter 19, which featured the move order: 9. h3 1. g6 10.1 f3 ' a5! 11.0-0 (1.L1d2 c4 12.. xg6 fxg6 13.0-0 is the same thing) 1 1...c4 12..1xg6 fxg6 13. d2 The position in the present line is identical, except that Black has been given the move....1d7 f r f ee!

15...b5!N

Any sensible move will work fine, but this is my preference. Black is safe on the kingside and has some initiative on the queenside. His main plan is ...: ab8 and later ...a5 followed by ...b4, after suitable preparation. If necessary, the queen can return via d8 to help defend the kingside.

B2) 13° g4



This is the more serious move, intending to attack with h4-h5 in the nearest future. I spent a lot of time investigating the ensuing positions, and found that Black's defence was not easy. The task was complicated by the computer's tendency to underestimate the force of the attack.

Eventually, after a great deal of work, I reached the amazing conclusion that Black's best move has, at the time of writing, hardly ever been tested!

13...b5!

So far this has only been played in a single game, but I believe it is the move that best meets the demands of the position. This is one of the most important theoretical contributions in the book, so it will be given special coverage in the final chapter:

Before then, I will offer a heavily shortened version of my analysis of the two most popular moves, B21) 13... f7 and B22) 13... Wf, to give you an idea of where some of the problems lie.

B21) 13...i d7

This is a popular and seemingly logical developing move, but it has the significant drawback of blocking the seventh rank, making it harder for the black queen to assist the defence.

14.h4 i f5 15.h5

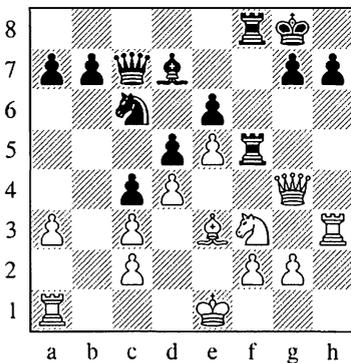
This is the main line, but not the only good move. Khalifman made quite a strong case for 15.l gi!? in 2006, and here too Black faces some challenges.

15...g h5 16i x 5i x 5

Another popular line is:

16...i af 17.8h3!

White avoids the rook exchange, as a subsequent doubling on the h-file will lend more power to the attack. The rook also protects the knight on f3, preventing White's pawns from being damaged by an exchange sacrifice.



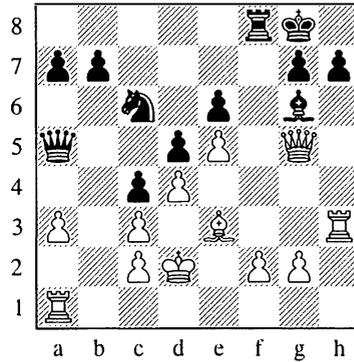
17...S eS 18.' g5 \ a5 19.© d2 8xg5!

19...i g6? was refuted in the following game:
 20.l xh7! . .xh7 21.8ah1 8xf2f 22.\ xf
 8xf2! 23.© cl (&24.© d1!1,xc2! 25.© xc2

© f 26.gf gxf3 27.ghSt © e7 28.\ xf
 1 xd4! 29.cxd4 1-0 Nimtz - De Mauro,
 corr. 1996.

"The exchange sacrifice is a thematic idea in such positions, but it is far from a complete solution to Black's problems.

20.\ xg5. g6



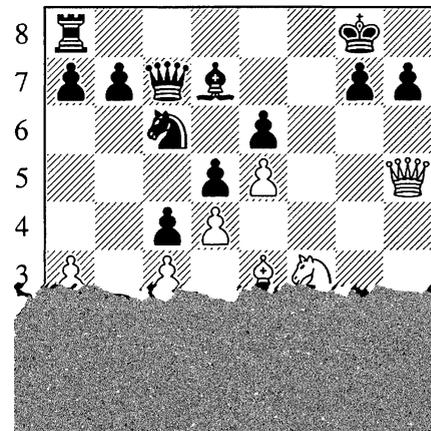
2.J.ghh!

White's kingside attack is at a standstill, so he regroupes his forces with a view to guarding the weak spot on c2.

21...\ a4 22.g hcU

Black is unable to any progress, whereas White can slowly manoeuvre and improve his position. Practice has shown that his winning chances are excellent; see, for instance, the game Gutsche - Ekengren, email 2000.

17.Wxh5



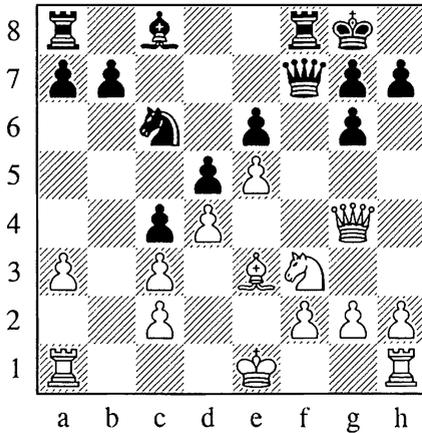
17...i cs 18.1 h3. h3 19.< d2

This is just one move among a f w critical choices. White's intention is clear: he uses his king to guard the weak pawns on c2 and c3, and makes way f r the rook to switch to the kingside.

19...i g6 20.t h4 1 f 21.g4 t b6 22.Ef1 Ef 23.f4

Cami - Wintzer; Amsterdam 2004. It is clear that White is pressing. Perhaps Black can hold this position, but it looks unpleasant to me.

B22) 13...1 f



n.13 has been Black's most popular option, aiming f r an exchange of queens on f5.

14.h4!?

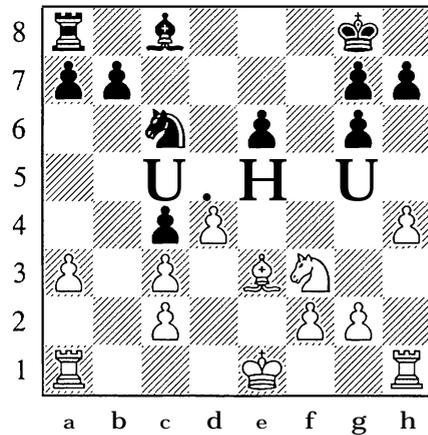
White scores well in the main line with 14.< g5, as well as with the interesting 14.Wd2!?. However, I have chosen to concentrate on the text move to highlight that f ct that Black may encounter problems even when he manages to carry out his main objective of exchanging queens.

14...Vf 15.Vxf Exf

15...gxf5 I6.h5! gives White a useful space advantage on the kingside. Now he can slowly

manoeuvre his pieces and prepare g2-g4 at a time of his choosing. Black has no active counterplay and is more or less limited to defensive manoeuvring.

The text move at least gives Black an open f file to work with, but practice has shown that White has chances to press for a full point here as well, while the best Black can realistically hope f r is a draw af er a long def nce.



16.< e2

A logical f llow-up. White def nds the knight on n, preparing to push with g2-g4 and later h4-h5.

Another idea worth mentioning is 16.< g1!N when there might f dlow 16...b5 17.g4 Ef 18.f4 d7 19.h5 gxh5 20.Exh5 with an initiative f r White.

16...h6

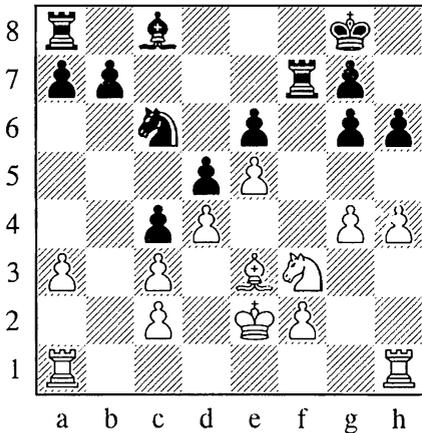
With this move Black prevents Gg5 and prepares to meet h4-h5 with ...g5.

16... ,d7 17.g4 l f 8 18.Ce1 b5 19.Cg2 a5 20.Ehb1 Eab8 21.Wd2 Efc8 22.< f4 Wf 23.h5t was an instructive example of bow White may strengthen his position, Hracek - Stimpel, Bad Wiessee 1999.

17.g4

This is the optimal square for the rook.

17...8f ?! gives White a tempting extra option in 18.h5 g5 19.c xg5! hxg5 20.h6 with amazing compensation for the sacrificed piece, Arvola - Fernandez Romero, Barcelona 2013.



18. ♘ag1

Now after 18.h5 g5 the sacrifice on g5 is less effective.

18... d7 19. C e1 f8 20. f4

White had a promising initiative in Kamsky - Yusupov, Linares 1993. Yusupov elected to sacrifice the exchange on f4, but Kamsky eventually managed to break the fortress. Black should sit tight and defend, but the position is certainly more pleasant for White.

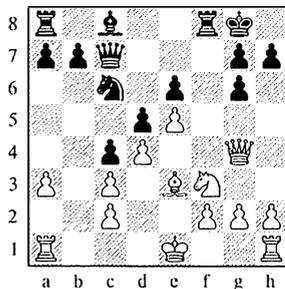
Conclusion

After 11...c3 c4, the retreat 12.f e2 is harmless after 12...f6!, so 12.i kg6 f g6 is normally chosen. 13.Wh3 blocks the h-pawn, taking away the main attacking plan of h4-h5, without achieving any benefit for White as far as I can see.

13.Wg4 is the best move, and leads to perhaps the most critical tabiya in the entire 8...d30 bc6 system. I have shown a few of the problems with the two most popular options of 13...i h7 and 13...5 ♘h7. Having touched briefly on those moves, I invite you to turn the page and see why I prefer the almost-new move 13...b5!

Chapter 23

8. b6



13. ♖g4 b5!!

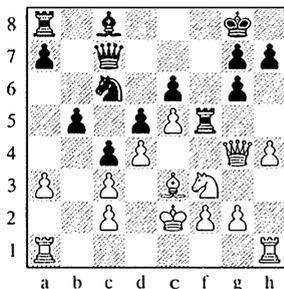
Variation Index

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3† 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♗g4 0-0
8.♗d3 ♘bc6 9.♗h5 ♘g6 10.♘f3 ♗c7 11.♗e3 c4 12.♗xg6 fxg6 13.♗g4

13...b5!! 14.h4 ♗f5!

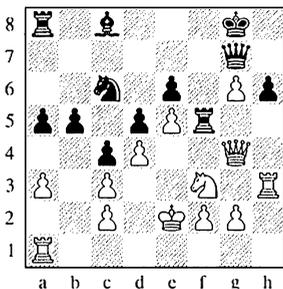
A) 15.♘g1N	283
B) 15.h5N	284
C) 15.♗h3N h6!	285
C1) 16.♔d2	285
C2) 16.♘g1	286
C3) 16.g4	286
D) 15.♔e2 a5!N	288
D1) 16.♘g5	288
D2) 16.♗g5	289
E) 15.♔d2!N a5	291
E1) 16.h5	292
E2) 16.♗g5	293
E21) 16...♗f7?!	293
E22) 16...h6!	295

D) after 15.♗c2



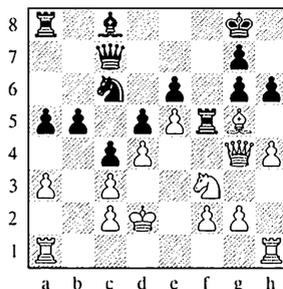
15...a5N

D2) after 20.♗h3



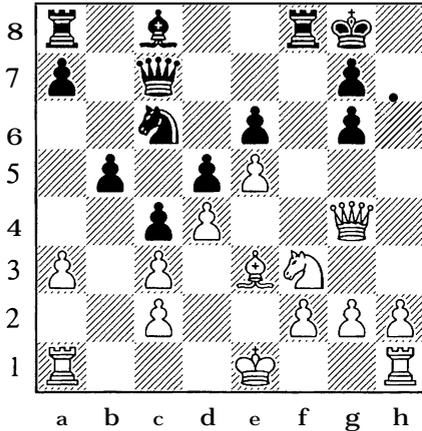
20...h5

E22) after 16...h6!



17...1hxc

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.l k3 i b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 i xc3t 6.bxc3l e7 7.' g4 0 0 8i d3l bc6 9' h5l lg6 10.l f ' c7 11.i e3c4 12i xg6 f g6 13' g4 b5!!



This move has been an extremely rare choice; my database only contains a single example in which it was played: a correspondence game from 1995. However, taking into account the proceedings in variations B21 and B22 of the previous chapter, I believe it is the best and most logical move in the position.

What are the ideas behind advancing the b-pawn? Most obviously, Black is aiming for counterplay by means of ...a5 and later ...b4. An important part of Black's scheme is to avoid placing the bishop on d7 for the next few moves, in order to keep the seventh rank free for the queen. At the same time, the queen should not rush to f7 prematurely, and should only do so when required - typically in response to a quick h4-h5.

To summarize, Black avoids the pitfalls associated with both 13... d? and 13... \ t , while remaining flexible and preparing active counterplay on the queenside.

14.h4

As usual, opening the h-file is the only dangerous plan, and other moves are not worth considering in detail.

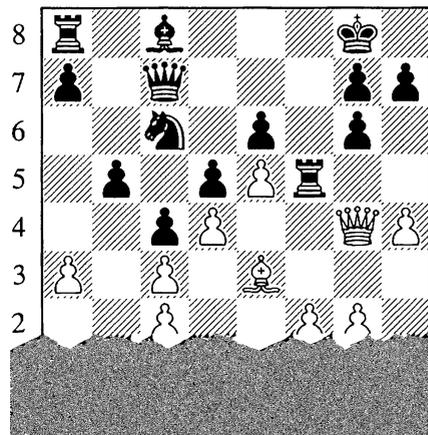
For instance, 14.0-0 is harmless as White is virtually abandoning all hope of a successful kingside attack. Black can continue to build up an initiative on the queenside with 14... 1 b5 f followed by ...a5 and later ...b4.

14.. f !

Black borrows an idea from the 13... d? line, but here of course his queen can still aid the defence via t if needed.

We will analyse five plausible responses, four of which are untested: A) 15.l g1N, B) 15.h5N, C) 15.' h3?N, D) 15.© e2 and E) 15.© d2!N.

A) 15.l g1N



This retreat is thematic, but it allows Black to make excellent use of his 13th move.

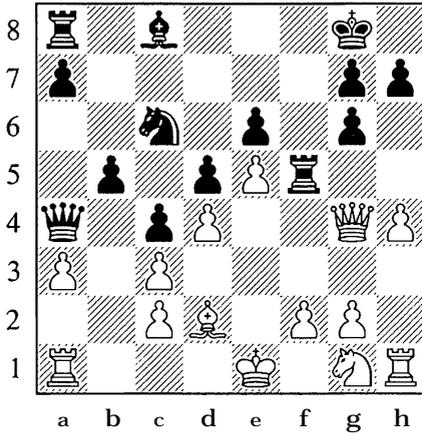
15..' a5! 16.i d2

Khalifin points out the possibility of 16.l e2 b4!+ when Black achieves excellent counterplay and can claim an advantage, with ...b3 the likely follow-up.

The bishop retreat is the lesser evil, but such passive defence only highlights the fact that White's previous move was inaccurate.

16..Wb4

Even 16...b4!? can be considered, as after 17.cxb4 1 a4 18.d a5 Black has an active game and will soon regain the sacrificed pawn.



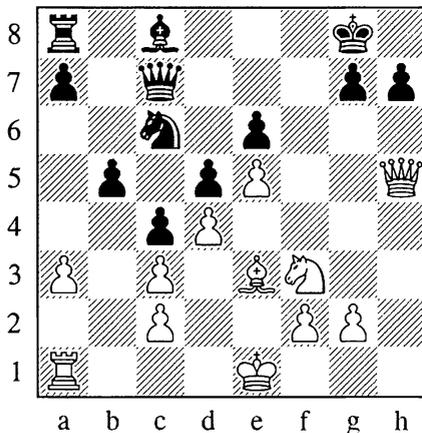
17.Wd1

17.Ea2?b4! 18.cxb4c3 19.\d a5 is already close to fatal for White, due to his total lack of coordination and the exposed king on e1.

17... d7

Black can be happy with the outcome of the opening and his chances are at least equal. White's pieces lack harmony and he is hardly in a position to threaten much on the kingside.

B) 15.hSN gxh5 16.l hhS gxh5 17.WkxS



17...Wf

Reminding us of the importance of leaving the bishop on c8. Now White must either lose time retreating his queen, or settle for an endgame where Black has no problems.

18.Wg4

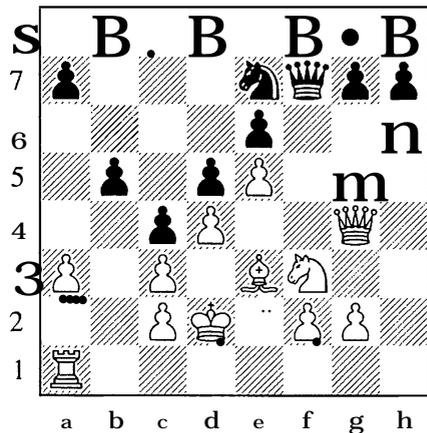
The alternative is 18Wf '1' xf7 19.Eb1 Eb8 20.g4 \,d7 21.' e2 ' g8 22.l h4 h6 23.f4 'J'e7= Both players remain solid and the position is equal. Black has a healthier pawn structure but his possibilities are limited by the need to prevent f4-f5.

18..Ck7

... is a common route for the knight after the exchange of pawns on h5. Black is getting ready to put his queen on g6, after which the knight may go to f5.

19. d2

Protecting the c2-pawn and preparing to switch the rook to the kingside.



19... d7

Having already transferred the queen to the kingside, Black finally develops the bishop and makes way for the rook to come, if needed.

Black could transpose to the later variation E1 with 19...a5? but, when the present move

order appears, the text move is the more accurate choice.

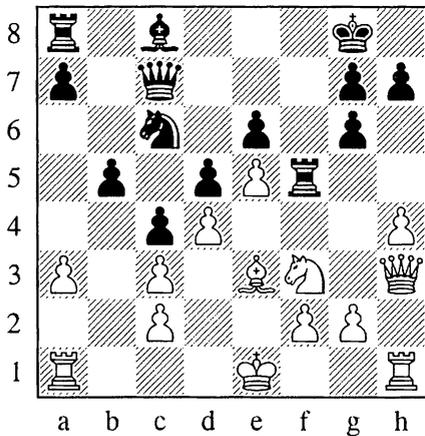
20. h1 ♖g6 21. ♖h3

21. ♗xg6 ♗g6 gives Black no problems.

21...a5=

Black has plenty of pieces available to defend the kingside, and White will soon have to start thinking about the counterattack on the other wing.

C) 15. ♖h3



This was Khalifman's recommendation. White's idea is to force the rook back with g2-g4, then to open the h-file with h4-h5 without allowing an exchange of rooks. If White can achieve all this then he will have a great position, but Black has a clever way to thwart the plan.

15...h6!

This simple prophylactic move enables Black to meet a future h4-h5 with ...g5, blocking the kingside. Note that this is only possible because White's queen is no longer eyeing the g6-pawn. Khalifman did not consider this reply.

I analysed three responses for White: C1) 16. ♗d2, C2) 16. ♗g1 and C3) 16. ♗g4.

C1) 16. ♗d2

With this non-committal move White connects the rooks before deciding whether to proceed with C2-g1-e2 or g2-g4.

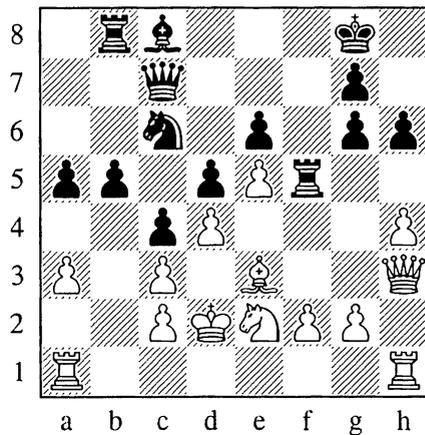
16. ♗d2

1. ♗d2 is also fully adequate, but I like the idea of continuing Black's actions on the queenside.

17. ♗g1

17. ♗g1-f8 does not bring much for White here, as after 18. ♗g5 the sacrifices on g5 will leave the f2-pawn hanging.

17...a5 18. ♗e2



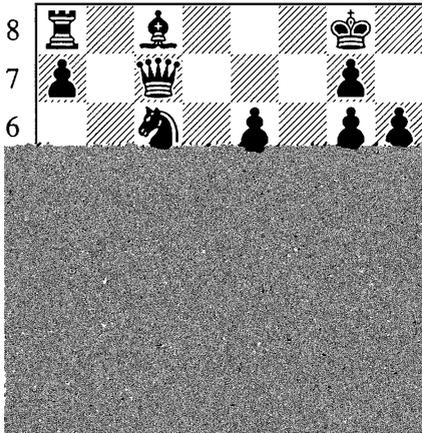
18...b4!

Why wait?

19. ♗b4 a ♗b4 20. ♗b4 ♗b4

Black is first on the attack and White has to concentrate on defence. Objectively the position is balanced, but Black's side looks easier to handle. One interesting idea to keep in mind for Black is a timely ...c3(!) sacrificing a pawn for the initiative. Without the c-pawn Black will be able to install his knight on c4, while the bishop might become active on a6 at some point.

C2) 16l gl



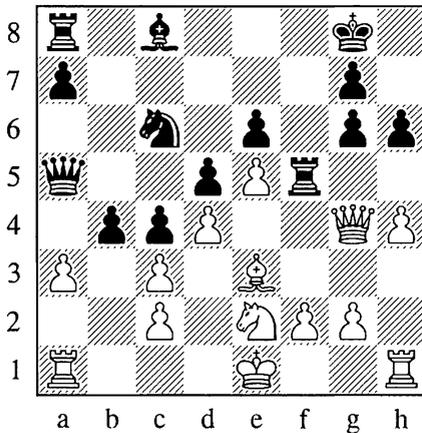
Here White goes for the thematic knight manoeuvre without spending time moving his king

16...Wa5!

Just as in the earlier variation A, Black should seize the opportunity to obtain immediate counterplay by exploiting the undefended rook on a7

16. i, d7 17. c c2 Eaf 18\ g4 c c7 is pretty solid, but it is clear that Black's main focus is defending, while White can continue to build up on the kingside in various ways.

17.1 e2 b4 18Wg4



18..b3!

Sacrificing a pawn for the initiative

19.Wg6: f 20.0 0

The obvious 20.\,xh6 allows the counter-tactic 20.z1 xd4! when White must force a perpetual by means of: 21J xg7 Exg7 22\ c8" ' h7 23\ h5!-

The text move is an attempt by White to keep the game going, but Black should not be disappointed to see it.

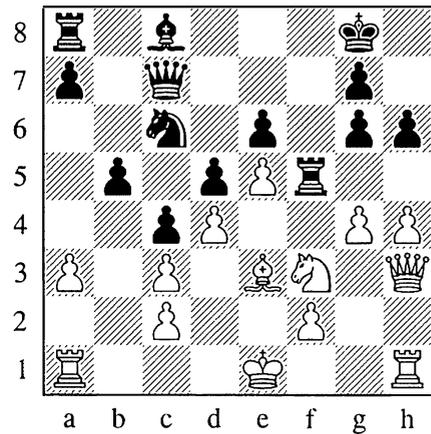
20..1 e7 21.Wg4

21.Wh5 4 f5 is similar:

21..1 f

Black's king is safe, while the dangerous passed pawn on b3 makes things awkward for White. Overall Black has at least enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn

C3) 16.g4



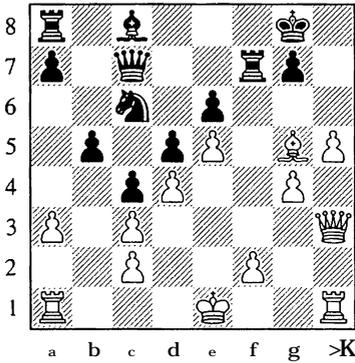
The direct attacking move is the most obvious choice.

16..: f 17.h5 g5 18i xg5

The only natural follow-up to White's last few moves.

18.c xg5 hxg5 19.\$ xg5 c. uld be considered, but it is hard to believe that Black should be

in any danger here. White obviously has a certain amount of compensation, but there are no real threats as h5-h6 can be met by ...g6, after which Black can put his king on h7 to block the advance of the h-pawn if needed. A possible continuation is:



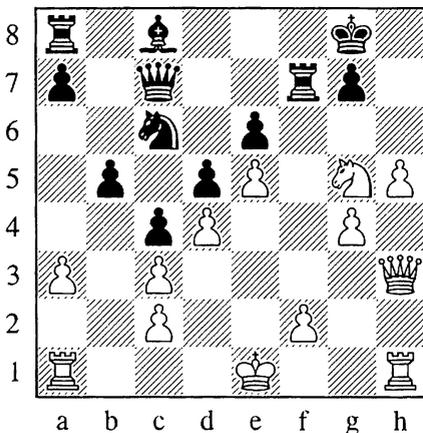
19... a5 20. hG gG 21. ♖E3 Eb8 22. 0-0 b4+ White's compensation is insufficient.

18... hxg5

Black should not back down from the challenge.

18... d7? leads to interesting complications, but after the critical 19. i, e3 \ a5 20. d2 Eaf8 21. C h4 Exf2! 22. xf2 Exf2! 23. d1 C xd4 24. \ e3! C xc2 25. \ xf2 xc3! 26. Ec!! If und that White emerges on top.

19. i kg5



19... f4!

This should bring Black some advantage if followed up correctly.

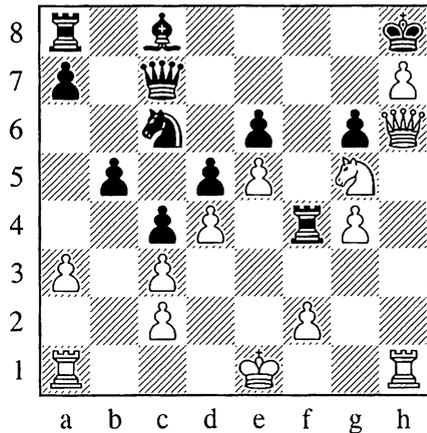
19... f may lead to a balanced endgame after: 20. hG gG 21. hl t h8 22. \ hG \ g7 23. \ xgl t . 2xg7 24. c f 5 d7 25. h8=1 t ! xh8 26. c xh8 ! xh8 27. Exh8 xh8= Material is roughly equal and a draw is likely, in view of the closed position and limited chances for either side to make progress.

20. h6 g6 21. h7t

21. We3 ms 22. fl (or 22. ! h3 Wc7 22... \ c7 favors Black as well.

21... ' hs 22' h6

White has made some progress on the kingside, but Black has just enough time to defend against the major du cats.



22... ♖e7 23. f3

23. ♖xg6 ♔d7 23. f3 comes to the same thing.

23. C h3 ! xg4 24. c f4 Exf4 25. \ xf4 . d7+ Black has consolidated his position while keeping a slight material advantage.

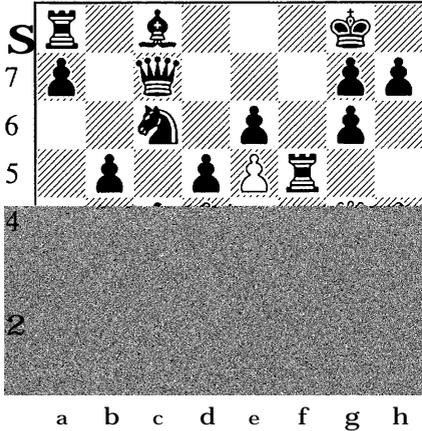
23... i d7

Intending ...Eaf and ...i, e8.

24' xg6 gaf 25. f l id8

Black has consolidated his position and his bishop should be worth slightly more than White's three extra pawns, although converting his advantage will not be easy.

D) 15. e2



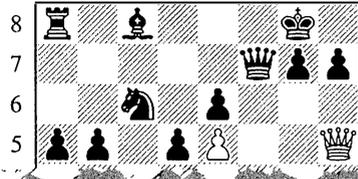
This was played in the only practical encounter involving 13..b5. White holds back the h-pawn for the moment and clears the first rank for the second rook to join the attack.

15...a5!N

15...d7 was the continuation of Gueroff – Lifyand, corr. 1995, but I prefer to keep the second rank free for the queen.

After the text move White must decide how to develop his attack. The two main tries are D1) 16! g5 and O2) 16i gS. Both moves are intended to block the line of communication from f5 to h5, thus enabling White to play h4-h5 without allowing a rook exchange.

16.h5 is similar to variation B, and after 16...gxh5 Qxh5 Exh5 18.Wxh5 Wf7 Black is just in time to challenge White's queen before the rook on a1 comes into the action.



D1) 16! gS

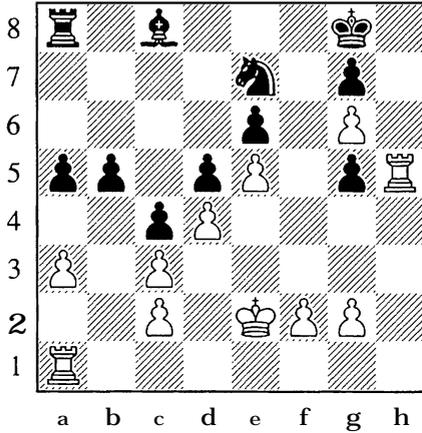
An important moment. By blocking the black rook's path to h5, White prepares to break with h4-h5 without allowing a rook exchange. Needless to say, Black must find a way to obstruct this plan.

16..h6! 17.hs!

If White retreats his knight then 17...Wf7 will assure Black of an excellent game. The text move is critical, but Black is well placed to meet it.

17..' e7! 18.hxg6 gxgS 19.i xgS ' xgS

20. \ xg5 hxg5 21. gh5. e?

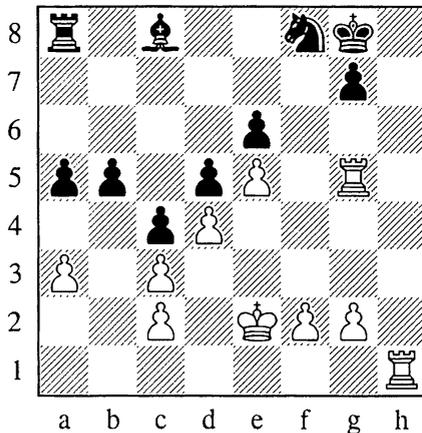


22. gahl

After 22. Exg5 i d7 23. Eh1 . 8 24. EghS t xgG the chances are approximately equal. White is slightly more active, but he is unable to do much with only his rooks left on the board. The only potential breakthrough in sight is f4-f5, but this cannot be prepared easily, and Black should be able either to stop it or to obtain suitable counterplay.

22... xg6 23. gxxg5. f8

23...t hS!?! intending ...t lf7 is another reasonable option.



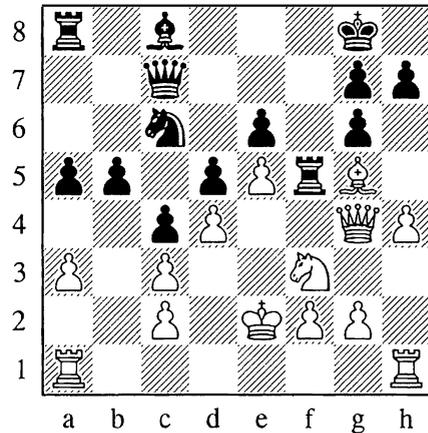
24. ♖gh5 g6

24...t g6 is also fine, inviting a repetition. If White refuses it, then Black keeps a more flexible position with a potential way on on g6 for his bishop.

25. ghst i g7=

Black remains rock-solid and White has no entry points.

D2) 16. gS



This should be compared with the later variation E2 where the white king stands on d2. Depending on how Black continues, the placement of the king may or may not affect the evaluation several moves down the line.

16...1 f ?

This is an extra option that should only be tried in the present line with the king on c2. The reason will only become apparent when we get to move 23.

J6...h6 is a fully playable alternative, and after 17. J.xh6!? (17. J,e3 t e7 is fine for Black) 17...gxh6 18. I xgG1 l g7! we are heading for a forced draw. See the later variation E22 for full details; the position of White's king does not alter the evaluation of any of the lines.

17.hS

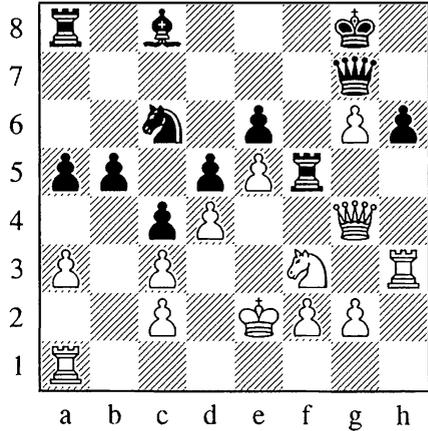
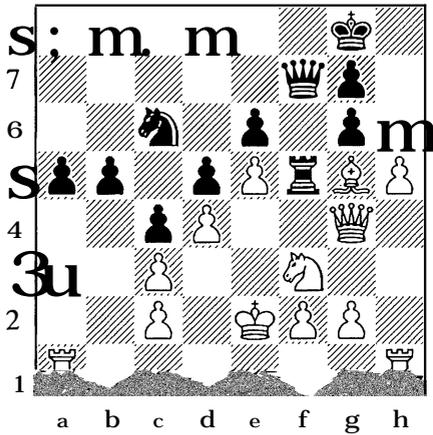
The only critical continuation. Other moves would allow ...h6 with no problems for Black.

18...gxh6 19.hxg6 Wg7 20.Eh3

White has definite compensation for the sacrificed piece, even after a later exchange of queens.

17...h6!

Black should accept the challenge.



20...h5!

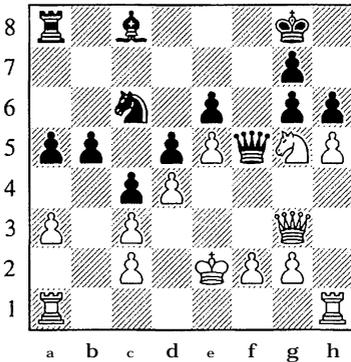
Exchanging a pair of rooks is the safest option.

18i xh6!

It is provides the justification for White's previous play.

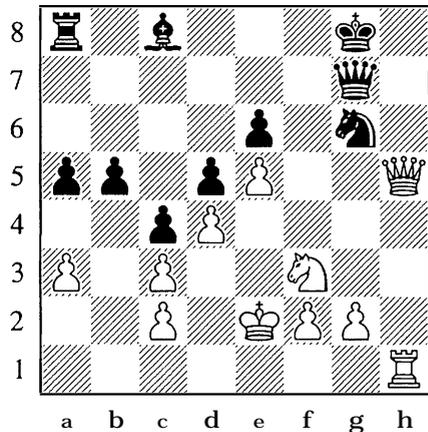
Weaker is 18...g3? xg5 (the simple 18...d7? is also somewhat better for Black.) 19...t kg5W f

I also spent some time analysing the more complicated 20...t le7 21. ah1 \ xg6!. Eventually I concluded that Black could hold the balance here, but the lines are trickier and White also has some ways to force a draw if he wants to, so from a practical perspective I see little value in playing this way.

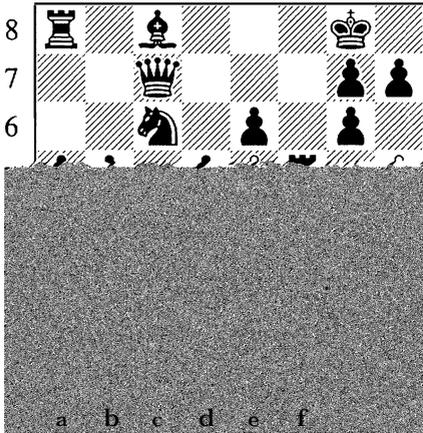


21...Exh5 Exh5 22...Wxh5 Qe7 23...Eh1 Qxg6

20t f3 \ xc21 21t h2 gxh5 22./ acl (22./ xh5 b4+) 22... \ f5 23 \ f3 b4+ Black's strong passed pawn and initiative on the queenside more than compensate for the sacrificed exchange.



E1) 16.h5

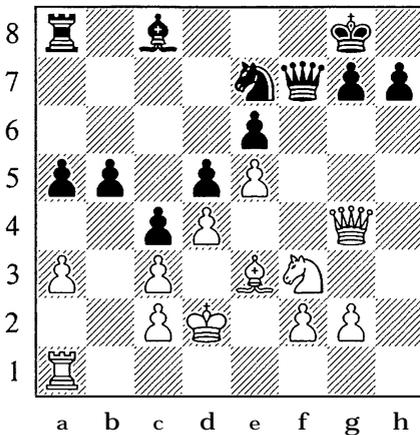


This can be compared with the earlier variation B. The present version represents a marginal improvement for White, for reasons that will shortly be explained. Nevertheless, Black should still be fine as the following rook exchange eases his defensive task.

16...g h5 17.gxh5 gxh5 18. xh5 ' f 19.' g4

19.Wxf ♝xf = leads into a peaceful endgame with equal chances.

19..l e7



It is here that the difference between the earlier variation B and the present line can

be appreciated. The former proceeded with 15.h5N gxh5 !6.: xh5 : xh5 17. xh5 ff 18.Wg4 l e7, at which point White played 19.♝d2 to allow the rook to swing to the kingside. Black's best response was 19...♞d7, but if he were instead to spend time on the non-developing move 19...a5, the game would immediately transpose to the present position.

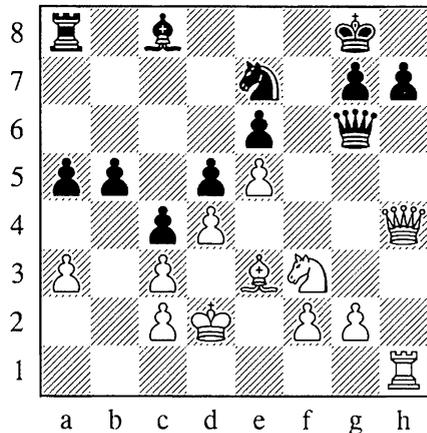
The upshot is that Black has to be slightly more careful in the present line, but fortunately the problems can be solved pretty easily.

20.g h1 ' g6 21.' h4

21.Wg6 l xg6= is harmless, as could be expected.

In the analogous situation in variation B, the white queen move is not ideal here the rook move makes more sense in view of the slight weakness of the eighth rank.

It is also worth noting the position of the white king on d2 instead of e2, as the c2-pawn is defended which allows White to keep the queens on. Even so, he cannot cause much harm on the kingside with only one rook on the board, especially with Black's queen playing such an active role in the defense.



21...♞a7!

A slightly strange-looking move, but it is essential to keep the knight on e7 to defend the kingside. The ability of the rook to defend along the seventh rank is another positive feature of the set-up with 13...b5!! and later ...a5.

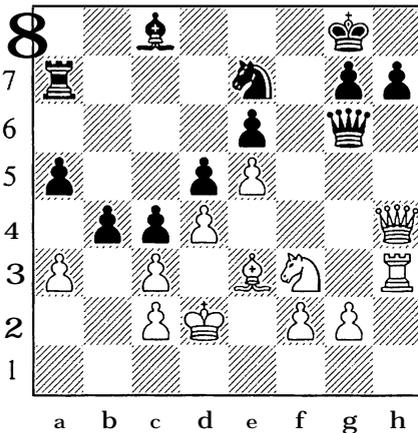
21... ♖6 may look like a satisfactory way to defend d8 and support a future ...b4, but after 22... h3! intending : g3 White is starting to develop some initiative.

22.1 h3?

This attacking move looks tempting, but in fact White should accept that he has no advantage and settle for 22.♖h5, forcing an equal endgame.

22...b4!

Black is the first to create threats against the enemy king.



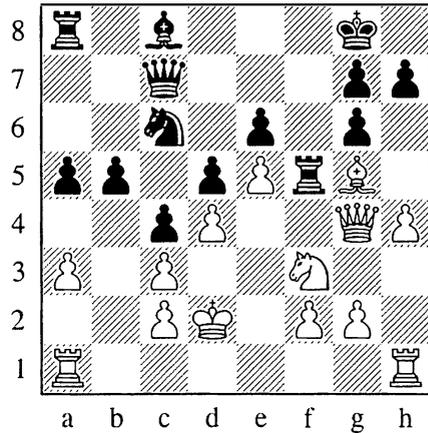
23.1 g3@ e8

Now ...♗f5 is a threat, so White has nothing better than going back with the rook.

24.1 h3h6!

Black could have repeated moves, but he has every reason to play on.

E2) 16. g5



This is the most ambitious attacking try. Compared with variation D2, the position of the white king on d2 instead of c2 works in White's favour in some of the sharper lines, which forces Black to modify his approach.

I have analysed two main options. E21) 16..@ f ?! leads to interesting complications but is ultimately too risky. Fortunately, the solid E22) 16...h6! holds up well.

E21) 16..@ f ?!

Sadly for Black, the treatment from the earlier variation D2 does not work as well here.

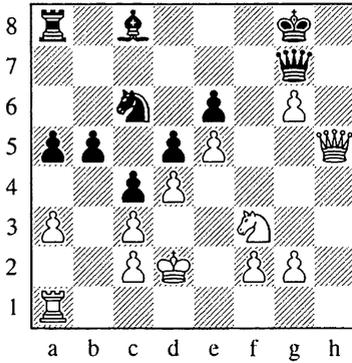
17.h5! b8?

I have given this move main-line status, as it is a direct attempt to make use of the king's placement on d2 by breaking through on the queenside. Objectively though, it is too optimistic.

Let's see what happens if Black tries following the recipe from the aforementioned line 0 2:

17...h6 18: xh6! gxh6 19.hxg6 V g7 20: h4 h5 21.♙xh5 ♙xh5

21...♗e7? 22.♙ah1 ♗xg6 23.♗g5+- 22.♙xh5



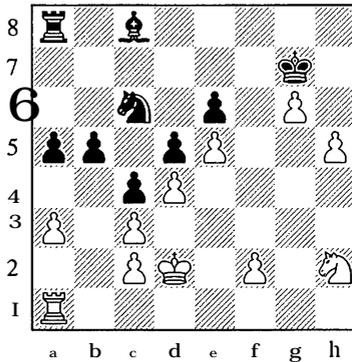
22... fh8

The only chance to survive.

22... ♖e7? 23: h1 c xg6 leaves Black a full tempo down on variation 02, and White wins easily: 24.Eh3 ♕d7 25.Eg3 ♖c8 26.l h4 \ h7 27. g5+

23.g4 xh5 24.gxh5 mg? 25.c h2

25.c g5 is another idea, although Black seems to be able to survive after: 25... c e7 26.l h7 l f5 27.l f6 \ b7 28.r e2 . c6 29.r f3 b4 30.axb4 axb4 31.: xa8 \ xa8 32.cxb4 l xd4! 33.me3 l f5-J= (33...c xc2!)? 34.mf4+)

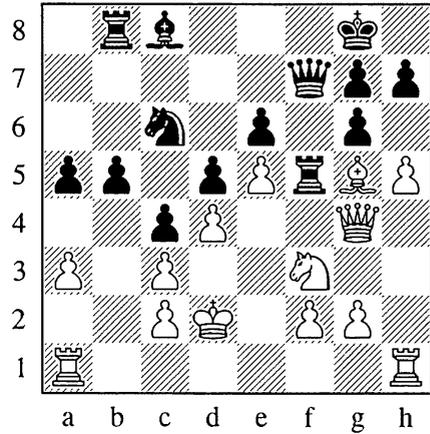


25... ♕c7 26.l g4 c f5 27.♖e2 ♕d7

Here the queenside breakthrough does not work: 27... \ b7 28.m0 b4? 29.axb4 axb4 30.Eb1! White is close to winning.

28.♖f3 ♖f8 29.l fG c6 30.mf4 wh6±

It is possible that Black can hold this endgame, but I would not recommend aiming for such a situation.



18.h6!

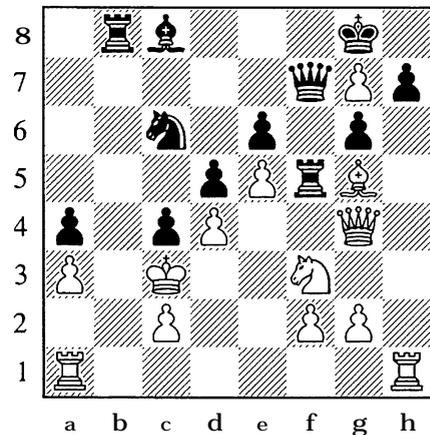
It is the most incisive attacking move, creating serious weaknesses on the dark squares.

18..b4 19.hxg?!

White does best to ignore the queenside, in order to keep the number of open lines there to a minimum.

19..bxc3 20.@xc3 a4

Black' kingside is full of holes, but he has some genuine attacking chances on the other wing. If the position could almost be evaluated as unclear, but unfortunately White has a direct breakthrough.



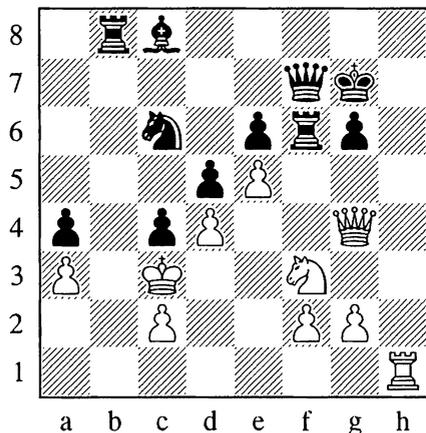
21.Exh?!! @xh? 22.Eh1 t

The less accurate 22. h3 mxg7 22.: h1 transposes to the next note.

22.< kg7 23. f t!

23. Wh3 Wg8 24. l f6 1mf leads to no more than a draw f r White.

23...gxf6



24. ♖g5! ♖f8

24...♙f4 25. ♖h3 ♘f8 26. ♖xf7 ♙xf7 27. ♖g3±

25. gh7t < g8 26. gh8t!

Another attractive tactical f nesse.

26...< g7 27. gxf

White can repeat the position with 27.: h1 ♜ but there is no reason to settle f r a draw.

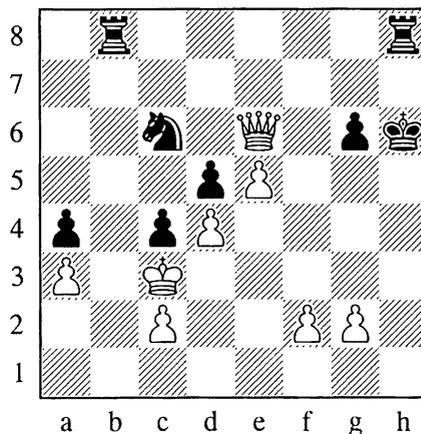
27...gxf

Given a f w moves to consolidate, Black would have a useful material advantage. As things stand though, White can exploit the lack of harmony to make decisive gains.

28. Wh4 gh8 29. Cke6t! xe6 30. Wf6t < h6

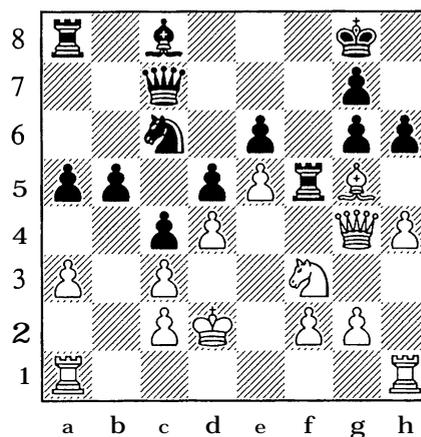
30...mh7 31. Wxe6±

31. Wxe6±



White's queen is rampant and he has several extra pawns, while Black's pieces are uncoordinated and his king is vulnerable. Some play remains, but ultimately White should be able to claim the full point.

E22) 16..h6!



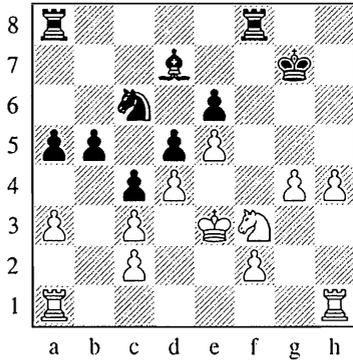
17. x 6!?

17.. e3 0 e7 is quite acceptable f r Black. There is no obvious way f r White to open the kingside, and the ...b4 advance is nm f r f rom becoming a reality.

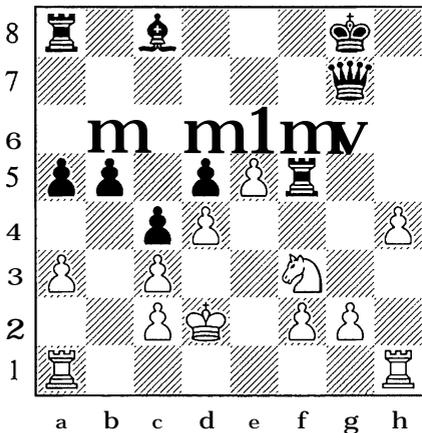
17...g h6 18. Wxg6t Wg7

This is the no-nonsense approach, leading to a forced draw.

18...@f5! can be considered if Black needs to win at all cost. In the equivalent position with the white king on c2 instead of d2, White could get some advantage with 19.g4, but in the present line this would leave the knight hanging on f3. Therefore White must sacrifice for: 19.Wxh6! Wg7 20.Wxg7 t @, g7 21. c3 ; d7 22.g4 ♝f8



Houdini evaluates this position as “0.00”, but in a real game anything could happen. A logical continuation is 23.h5 b4 24.h6† ♔g8 25.axb4 axb4 with dynamic equality but plenty of play remaining.



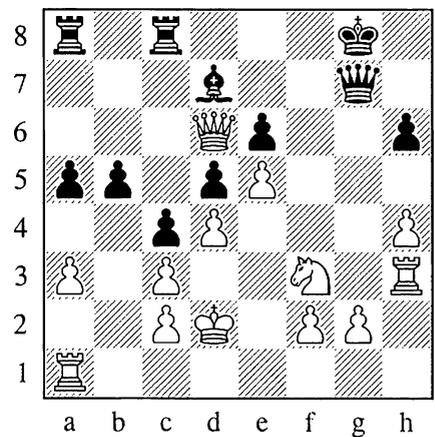
19.WeSt gf 20.Wxc6i d?
 Black is down by two pawns, but he is able to secure a draw because the white queen is short of squares.

21' d6
 21.Wb7 and 21.Wb6 and both met by 21...mhs.

21..i f s
 Threatening to trap the queen.

22.gh3??
 White counters by threatening to pin Black's queen, but the threat is easily sidestepped.

22.a4 b4! does not change anything



22...♝f7! 23.♞g3† ♔h8
 23...♔h7 is the same, except that White has one additional way of taking a draw: 24.♞g1!? ♝c6 25.♞f3 ♝g7 26.♞g3 ♝f7=

24' b6
 Here 24t g1 ?? is a blunder as after 24...Ec6 25.Ef3 Wg7 26.Eg3 Wh7- + the black queen escapes

24...gcb8=
 Followed by a simple repetition

Conclusion

My dissatisfaction with the two main lines of 13..J d7 and 13..♖f7 led me to explore other paths, and gave me the idea that 13...b5!! could be the answer to all Black's problems, despite having been (unfairly) neglected by theory up until now. Having reached the end of the chapter, I cannot think of any reason not to play this move over the board. After the obvious 14.h4: f5 we explored five options for White.

Both 15.t g1 and 15.h5 have obvious drawbacks, although the latter 'only' allows Black an easy route to an equal endgame.

Khalifman's 15. h3!N is more challenging, but the accurate 15...h6! is a strong antidote against White's plan of opening the h-file. Variation C3 examined White's attempts to break through by sacrificing material, but Black remained solid with chances to claim an advantage.

The king moves 15.i e2 and 15. d2! are closely related, and in both cases Black should begin with 15...a5. Then 16.h5 is relatively harmless, and 16.t g5 leads almost by force to an equal position with rook and pawn against knight and bishop.

The other attacking try is 16.♙g5, when Black's choices depend on the placement of White's king. With the king on e2, Black can either head for a complex, roughly balanced middlegame with 16...1 f7, or invite a forced draw with 16...h6. With the king on d2, on the other hand, the first of these plans does not work. Therefore Black should prefer 16...h6!, when 17.⋖ xh6 gxh6 18. xg6! gives him the choice between forcing a draw with 18...g7 and playing on in a double-edged endgame with 18...f !?

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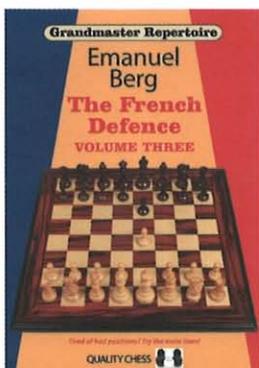
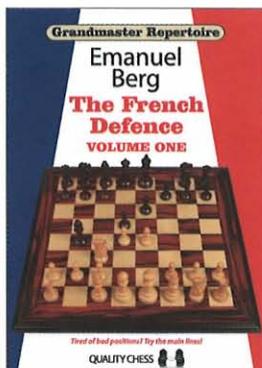
Grandmaster Repertoire

Emanuel Berg The French Defence VOLUME TWO

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