

Peter Lalić

play the accelerated dragon



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Play the Accelerated Dragon

The Accelerated Dragon remains one of Black's most popular choices in the Sicilian, and the attractions are obvious. Black's opening strategy is easy to understand, and his pieces are quickly developed on active squares. Furthermore, White players hoping to attack in the same way as against the traditional Dragon will be shocked by the Accelerated Dragon's greater flexibility and possibilities for a swift counterattack.

In this book, Peter Lalic presents a repertoire for Black based on this line. He outlines a reliable system of development with the aim of choosing clear, consistent plans. Firstly, he demonstrates why the Accelerated Dragon exponent need not fear the Yugoslav Attack. Secondly, if White chooses instead the positional Maroczy Bind approach he emphasizes that positional understanding is far more important than memorization of move sequences. He studies the thematic middlegame and endgame positions which may arise and answers all the frequently asked questions. This book tells you everything you need to know to play the Accelerated Dragon with confidence.

- An Accelerated Dragon repertoire
- Packed with new ideas and critical analysis
- Covers Black's key tactics and strategies

Peter Lalic is the youngest chess player to become an ECF accredited coach, as well as a regular contributor to *Chess Monthly* magazine. He has also represented England on board three of the U-18 Glorney Cup, where four wins and two draws earned him the best player award. Professionally he teaches in schools and private, following in the footsteps of his parents, Grandmaster Bogdan Lalic and Women's Grandmaster Susan Lalic.

Publisher Information

Play the Accelerated Dragon

by Peter Lalic

First published in 2014 by Gloucester Publishers plc.
Northburgh House, 10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT.

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

All other sales enquiries should be directed to Everyman Chess, Northburgh House, 10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT
tel: 020 7253 7887; fax: 020 7490 3708
email: info@everymanchess.com
website: www.everymanchess.com

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EVERYMAN CHESS SERIES Chief Advisor: Byron Jacobs
Commissioning Editor: John Emms
Assistant Editor: Richard Palliser

Typeset and edited by First Rank Publishing, Brighton.
Cover design by Horatio Monteverde.

Introduction

I will make this introduction as simple, straightforward, and fun as possible. That is the spirit of this repertoire for Black, so why not start now?

When White plays the Open Sicilian, the most popular reply is the Dragon, when Black's fianchettoed bishop breathes fire down the long diagonal. I bet you recognise the standard move order:

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6



Frankly speaking, aren't you getting tired of this timeworn tabiya? In virtually every tournament, *Informant*, or *New In Chess* publication, you see the same old moves being regurgitated:

6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6

Considering that there are supposedly more possible positions than atoms in the universe (I'll take the mathematicians' word for it), it is pretty sad that this position has happened in more than 25,000 games, out of the 5.5 million in *Mega Database 2013*. Particularly club players with the white pieces whip out this notoriously double-edged 'Yugoslav Attack', because it is roughly the only approach that they know. White enjoys a positive score of 60% with the routine plan of 0-0-0, g4, h4, h5, and Bh6. In Bobby Fischer's words, "Pry open the h-file, sac, sac... mate!".

The other 40% is shared by Black when he manages enough queenside counterplay, but it all seems like an out-of-control rat race. Perhaps the only chance for some control after 9 0-0-0 is by classically meeting a flank attack with a central thrust like 9...d5!?. However, ...d7-d6 followed by ...d6-d5 wastes a whole tempo in the opening. Besides, what to do if your opponent stops it with 9 Bc4, or springs a sharp novelty around move 15?

By now you're probably wondering: "Isn't there an easier way to play the Sicilian Dragon?". Yes, there is - enter the *Accelerated Dragon*!

Enter the Dragon

I have chosen the title of that celebrated 1973 movie, admittedly just for an excuse to try my best impression of Bruce Lee - although, without the voice or gestures, I guess it's not so impressive.

"To me, the extraordinary aspect of [the Accelerated Dragon] lies in its simplicity. The easy way is also the right way, and [it] is nothing at all special..."

The legendary martial artist was actually talking about fighting (until I tweaked the quotation), though his commendable philosophy can be equally applied to fighting over the chessboard. Einstein also famously said that everything should be made as simple as it can be, but no simpler. Hence our far more direct version:

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6



Observe the critical difference in waiting flexibly with the d-pawn: in the majority of variations, when it does advance, it will accelerate straight to d5. This thematic counterattacking weapon often helps us to release our pieces, detonate the centre, and so erode White's spatial advantage. Many amateurs underestimate this nuance and blindly set up their Yugoslav Attack anyway. In the main line, which arises more than half of the time and goes **5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Be3 Nf6...**

5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Be3 Nf6...



...such naive yet common moves as 7 f3 and 7 Qd2 are practically refuted by a speedy ...d5, as I shall explain in [Chapter One](#).

Promise no.1: Prepared with this repertoire, you'll never have to fear the Yugoslav Attack.

[Chapter Two](#) deals exclusively with 7 Bc4 in the main line, a prophylactic measure against ...d5. I have noticed that other authors, especially when confronted by challenging move orders like this one, sometimes recommend transposing to standard Dragon lines. A good example is the tactical 7...Qa5, which is a playable method of forcing White to abandon opposite-side castling. Any stubborn attempts by him to go queenside do indeed spectacularly fail, as proven by the most powerful engines of today. Yet 8 0-0 makes it a one-trick pony, leaving us slowly manoeuvring in a tense structure, with a misplaced queen and ...d5 no longer working.

That is never my intention, since I promise clear, consistent plans. Fortunately we can stay true to the natural 7...0-0 instead, having plenty of dynamic potential up our sleeves.

Promise no.2: Clear, consistent plans instead of transposing into (sub-)standard Dragons.

[Chapter Three](#) features White trying to avoid all that conflict in the main line. Nonetheless, upon 7 Nb3, look forward to the flank attack ...a5, which is actually strong in any variation when a minor piece retreats to b3. Alternatively, after 7 Be2 0-0 8 0-0 and the immediate equalizer 8...d5!, we have some additional options to liquidate comfortably. I like to offer such cop-outs for those situations when a draw is desirable for your rating, tournament, or team score.

Promise no.3: Flexibility to fight for a win or to simplify for a draw.

[Chapter Four](#) covers all of White's most common deviations from as early as move 5, none of which can really mess with our system.

Promise no.4: A reliable scheme of development (...g6, ...Bg7, ...Nf6, ...0-0 in that order) against almost anything.

Next we move on to the Maróczy Bind.

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6 5 c4



I'm not going to lie to you - in this totally different structure, we are restrained from our freeing move ...d5. This is White's best line, so don't raise your hopes of any quick wins. On the other hand, everything has its drawbacks, including his space-gaining central pawns: you'll learn about gradually tying him down to their defence, posting a knight on e5 or c5, detonating queenside files with ...b5, and many more ideas.

White has committed himself to a highly positional game, void of concrete variations, which favours the player armed with long-term strategy. Therefore, in [Chapter Five](#), we'll understand the Maróczy from a purely technical perspective, by dissecting model games into pawn structures, potential levers, and weak squares, etc.

Promise no.5: Positional understanding, transcending move orders.

Having said that, [Chapter Six](#) reveals one of the best sequences:

5 c4 d6 6 Nc3 Nf6 7 Be2 Nxd4 8 Qxd4 Bg7



This ensures that you have time to execute the aforementioned plans. Via this so-called Gurgenzidze Variation, we can always shake off our cramp by trading one pair of knights. If White maintains the pressure by means of the overly sophisticated 7 Nc2, he risks being too undeveloped, after 7...Bg7 8 Be2 Nd7!?, to deny us the interesting central thrust ...f5. Either way his spatial advantage is not free of charge.

Promise no.6: The most effective variations.

I hope that I have fulfilled my promises, and that you enjoy much success with this new repertoire.

Peter Lalic,
Cheam, London,
April 2013

Chapter One

The Main Line: Yugoslav Attack Attempts

Now that the [Introduction](#) has mapped out our journey, let's push the pedal to the metal.

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6 5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Be3 Nf6



In this main line, White can attempt a Yugoslav Attack via two moves: 7 f3 has scored 40%, and the less popular 7 Qd2 an even worse 35%. However, from my own experience, I can assure you that such inaccuracies are commonplace in your average local league.

Line A) 7 Qd2



7...0-0

Always castle on move 7 (remember promise no.4).

Usually ...Ng4 would take advantage of the neglected g4-square, and simultaneously create an attack on the e3-bishop and a discovery on the d4-knight. Nonetheless, beware 7...Ng4 8 Nxc6.

I'll take this opportunity to mention a recurring question: how to recapture whenever White exchanges knights? We're definitely never going to chicken out with ...Nxd4 in the first place, since that would erroneously centralize his bishop or queen to d4. Instead, we actually welcome the fact that White improves our pawn structure, and normally he must have a concrete justification for doing so. Although now you know to sidestep inferior alternatives like 7...Ng4 too early, I want to complete your understanding of what to avoid and why.

a) Instinct tells us to recapture towards the centre with 8...bxc6, obtaining both a central majority and pressure down the semi-open file towards b2. Unfortunately after 9 Bd4 dynamic factors outweigh the static ones:



a1) After 9...Bxd4 10 Qxd4 0-0 11 f3! Nf6 12 e5! Ne8 13 0-0-0 Black was suffocating in V.Malina-A.Musienko, Kiev

a1) After 9...Bxd4 10 Qxd4 0-0 11 f3! Nf6 12 e5! Ne8 13 0-0-0 Black was suffocating in V.Malina-A.Musienko, Kiev 2002.

a2) You'd better not be tempted by the anti-positional 9...e5?! either.

Especially when the pawn is back on b7, this eyesore makes our beloved bishop blocked, the d-pawn backward, the d6-square a hole, and d5 an enemy outpost. In the recent encounter A.Rubini-R.Blaeser, Val Gardena 2012, I guess White was laughing so hard at the ridiculous 10 Bc5 Qf6? 11 h3! Nh6 12 Bc4 Ng8 13 Rd1 Bf8 that he squandered his '+2' advantage and only drew.

Generally ...e5 is anti-positional, but it can occasionally gain time on d4.

b) Relinquishing castling rights with 8...dxc6 9 Qxd8+ Kxd8 safely enters an equal ending, albeit one resembling a King's Indian Exchange Variation after 10 Rd1+ Kc7 11 Bf4+!? e5 12 Bc1, as in P.Van Asseldonk-V.Colin, Provile 2007. Such tedious symmetry is not in the fighting spirit of our repertoire, so let's return to the more flexible 7...0-0.



White has five plausible moves (in descending order of frequency):

a) 8 f3 transposes to the more regular 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2, which we'll analyse in Line B.

b) 8 0-0-0?! is covered in [Mihalincic-Cebalo](#) and [Brosa Alvarez-Alonso Alvarez](#)

c) 8 Bc4?! in [Stehno-Plachetka](#).

d) 8 Be2 is [Chapter Three](#) (7 Be2 0-0 8 Qd2 reaches the same position).

e) 8 Bh6?? merely loses a piece to 8...Bxh6 9 Qxh6 Nxd4, as in R.Khimulu-H.Lim, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010. Want to know what is really embarrassing? Is it that ten games in total have featured this blooper? No, although that's true. How about that Black has overlooked it in half of them? Well, not only did that example come from the Olympiad, but later Black failed to convert.

Ultimately, if White can slip up so quickly in these serious tournaments, so can your opponents. Let's begin with a lesson from our role model of the Accelerated Dragon (AC/DC), Miso Cebalo, an experienced grandmaster from my father's hometown of Zagreb: [Mihalincic-Cebalo](#).

Line B) 7 f3

[\(View in Game Format\)](#)



White's only drawback is the loose bishop on e3, which we'll usually target with ...Qb6, now that he has stopped ...Ng4.

However 7...Qb6? here would be a horrible mistake, despite being tested by more than a hundred players, amongst whom was a GM. The discovered attack 8 Nf5! has been found only half of the time, but wins a piece through the forced sequence 8...Qxb2 9 Nxg7+ Kf8 10 Na4 Qe5 11 Bh6, as in, for example, I.Vojan-F.Boudalakis, Goa 2006.

In several skirmishes, Black has tried to regain his material with 10...Qa3?, and resigned immediately after the ambush 11 c3! or after 11...Kxg7? 12 Bc5! (T.Dittgen-T.Ihl, Germany 2005), or 11...d6? 12 Bc1! (I.Kun-I.Kelemen, Hungarian League 2003).

The fact that *Deep Fritz 13* evaluates the novelty 10 Kd2!! as '+3' to White means that we need something else. If the centre were to explode, the pawn on f3 would be utterly pointless, and indeed detrimental to the e3-square and the g1-a7 diagonal. Therefore 7...d5 would serve us perfectly, were it not for the awkward pin 8 Bb5!. After 8...Bd7 9 exd5! Nxd4 10 Bxd7+ Qxd7 11 Qxd4, White emerged a pawn ahead in A.Puskin-M.Antipov, Moscow 2007.

9 exd5! Nxd4 10 Bxd7+ Qxd7 11 Qxd4, White emerged a pawn ahead in A.Puskin-M.Antipov, Moscow 2007.
7 f3 prevents ...Ng4, at the cost of leaving e3 susceptible to an inevitable ...Qb6 or ...d5.

7...0-0



This not only guards the g7-bishop and pre-empts the d-file pin, but also stays true to our natural scheme of development. We should prepare for the following:

- a) 8 Qd2?! has scored 35%, yet appeared two-thirds of the time, so we'll explore it in [Peebo-Kupreichik](#), [Fichtl-Averbakh](#) and [Meyer-Cordes](#).
- b) 8 Bc4 should equalize, though it has scored just as badly, for the reasons outlined in [Fischer-Panno](#) and [Nilsson-Geller](#).
- c) 8 Nb3 transposes to the 7 Nb3 0-0 8 f3 of [Chapter Three](#).

□ **Yugoslav Attack Attempts**
 ■ **in Game Format**

[Peter Lalic]

Now that the Introduction has mapped out our journey, let's push the pedal to the metal.

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 g6 5.♞c3 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♟f6 In this main line, White can attempt a Yugoslav Attack via two moves: **7.--**

[7.f3 has scored 40%,]

[and the less popular 7.♞d2 an even worse 35%. However, from my own experience, I can assure you that such inaccuracies are commonplace in your average local league.]

Line A) 7 Qd2

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 g6 5.♞c3 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♟f6 7.♞d2 0-0

Always castle on move 7 (remember promise no.4).

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I'll take this opportunity to mention a recurring question: how to recapture whenever White exchanges knights? We're definitely never going to chicken out with ...Nxd4 in the first place, since that would erroneously centralize his bishop or queen to d4. Instead, we actually welcome the fact that White improves our pawn structure, and normally he must have a concrete justification for doing so. Although now you know to sidestep inferior alternatives like 7...Ng4 too early, I want to complete your understanding of what to avoid and why.

A) Instinct tells us to recapture towards the centre with 8...bxc6 , obtaining both a central majority and pressure down the semi-open file towards b2. Unfortunately after 9.♗d4 dynamic factors outweigh the static ones: -- (After 9...♗xd4 10.♞xd4 0-0 11.f3! ♟f6 12.e5! ♟e8 13.0-0-0 Black was suffocating in V.Malina-A. Musienko, Kiev 2002.; You'd better not be tempted by the anti-positional 9...e5?! either. Especially when the pawn is back

on b7, this eyesore makes our beloved bishop blocked, the d-pawn backward, the d6-square a hole, and d5 an enemy outpost. In the recent encounter A.Rubini-R.Blaeser, Val Gardena 2012, I guess White was laughing so hard at the ridiculous 10.♗c5 ♞f6? 11.h3! ♟h6 12.♗c4 ♟g8 13.♞d1 ♗f8 that he squandered his '+2' advantage and only drew.

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C) 8...--]

[so let's return to the more flexible 7...0-0 . White has five plausible moves (in descending order of frequency): 8.-- (8.f3 transposes to the more regular 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2, which we'll analyse in Line B.; 8.0-0-0?! is covered in our first two games.; 8.♗c4?! in Stehno-Plachetka.; 8.♗e2 is Chapter Three (7 Be2 0-0 8 Qd2 reaches the same position).; 8.♗h6?? merely loses a piece to ♗xh6 9.♞xh6 ♟xd4 , as in R.Khimulu-H. Lim, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010. Want to know what is really embarrassing? Is it that ten games in total have featured this blooper? No, although that's true. How about that Black has overlooked it in half of them? Well, not only did that example come from the Olympiad, but later Black failed to convert. Ultimately, if White can slip up so quickly in these serious tournaments, so can your opponents.)]

□ **Mihalincic,T**

■ **Cebalo,M**

Pula

1997

[Peter Lalic]

Let's begin with a lesson from our role model of the Accelerated Dragon (AC/DC), Miso Cebalo, an experienced grandmaster from my father's hometown of Zagreb.

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 g6 5.♞c3 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♟f6 7.♞d2 0-0 8.0-0-0?!

g4!

[This knight jump is perfectly timed to interfere with White's hoped-for 8...d6?! 9.f3 Yugoslav set-up. You can imagine Chandler Bing from Friends saying, "Could it be any more logical?". White has forgotten about his kingside, and accordingly we exploit that weakness.]

[Check out the analysis of the next game for 8...d5!?, a riskier gambit that epitomises our queenside counterplay.]

Swap off White's e3-bishop for a knight, and your Dragon bishop will reign supreme over the dark squares.

That is why, in 60 out of 80 cases, White has sought at all costs to rescue it:

9.g4 This in-between move may allow White to shift the bishop, yet it has managed an abysmal 20% success rate, as a result of our queenside attack. At least to distract us, he should instead go for broke with a kingside pawn storm.

[a) The immediate 9.h4!? g4xe3 10.fxe3 (not 10.g4xe3? g4xd4 11.g4xd4 g4xd4 12.g4xd4 , losing an exchange) would lead to a complex position. In the long run White is strategically busted; compare his doubled, isolated e-pawns with our perfect structure of fewer pawn islands. Moreover, even if our dream of an ending doesn't come true, we'll benefit from the bishop-pair and e5 outpost. "It is not just the isolated pawn on its own which tends to be weak, but also the complex of squares which surround it." – Aron Nimzowitsch.

Nevertheless, besides structure, material and space, there is another crucial factor in assessing a position. Trainer Mikhalchishin doesn't religiously quote Fischer's "chess is timing" just to name-drop (like I apparently do): 10...-- (Indeed, White's initiative proved dangerous in A.Gueth-S.Buchwald, German League 1999, which continued 10...d6 11.g4e2 g4e5 12.h5 g5? 13.h6! g4h8 14.g4f5 f6? . The anti-positional 12...g5? ceded the f5-square and 14...f6? forever entombed our favourite bishop, so Black never got back on his feet.

; In contrast, A.Sassi-M.Luodonpaa, Finland 2008, was winning for Black before move 20. White incorrectly blocked the kingside with 10...d6 11.h5 g4e5 12.h6? g4h8! , and was bluffing with rags after 13.g4f2 a6 14.g4g3 e6 15.g4e2 b5! 16.g4h5? . The moral of the story? Don't compromise

your king's shelter; play on the opposite wing where you are stronger.)]

[b) Seen in only eight low-rated clashes, 9.g4e2 has scraped an appalling 15%. When White usually employs the same hack-attack anyway, I recommend the nonchalant plan of ...Nxe3, ...Ne5, ...a6, ...b5, and ...Bb7. By ignoring the h-pawn, or awaiting its trade on g6, we make those two tempi spent on h2-h4-h5 wasted, so long as we avoid concessions like ...g5? (asking for h6 and Nf5), ...h5?! (g4! hxg4; h5 blows up the kingside), or ...gxh5? (when White doubles rooks on h5 and h1).]

[c) Nobody over 2200 has bothered keeping the pawn chain intact by means of 9.g4b3?! g4xe3 10.g4xe3 , presumably for fear of a5! . White will struggle against the two raking bishops at g7 and e6, whether he stops our annoying advance with 11.g4a4 (or 11.a4 , as in S.Podgornov-T.Botragyi, Hungarian League 2007. White soon blundered under the queenside pressure by d6 12.g4d5 g4e6 13.g4b5 g4c8 14.g4b6?? g4b4! 15.c3 , when g4xb6 16.g4xb6 g4xb3 17.g4xc8 g4xc8 would have made him switch games from chess to "stuck in the mud".

When a minor piece retreats to b3, harass it with ...a5.)]

9...bxc6 It is common for our light-squared bishop to remain at home until the breakout ...d5. Although that in itself is bad, there are other priorities in the position. Specifically the dark squares are where the action is, so White has bigger fish to fry.

10.f4?! Not the best:

[a) Most tenacious would be 10.g4f4 , though its low 25% record reflects all the weaknesses at a2, c3 and f2. The disappointing 15-move draw Z.Farooqui-B. Cafferty, Coventry 1970, went g4a5! 11.g4c4? g4c5! 12.g4e2? , when instead of the slow d6? , (Black could have destroyed his opponent on both flanks with 12...g4xc3! 13.bxc3 g4xf2 .)]

[b) Ironically 10.g4d4? has been picked most frequently, despite racking up only 20% to g4h6! : 11.-- (11.g4e3 g4xe3 12.fxe3 would force an even better version of the crippled structure that we have already witnessed from 9 h4.; I wish that we could all finish as quickly as S.Zhuk-R.Idrisov, Georgia 2006, in which White resigned upon 11.f4?? e5! , unable to keep both his bishop and queen.)]

10...♖e3 11.♗e3 d6 12.♙c4 ♖a5

13.♞h1 ♞b8 There is nothing special about Black's play, with all due respect to Cebalo. While both sides are simply developing, White cannot change the fact that we have the bishop-pair and extra central pawn. On d6 it adds to our dark-square domination, and of course fantasizes about wreaking havoc on d5.

Converge your long-range bishop and rook on the weak b2-pawn.

14.e5?! ♞b4?!

[14...d5! 15.♙b3 e6 should drive through ... c5, when the pawn duo would further cramp the white minor pieces. In a French Defence, White may be able to blockade the dark squares, but here whatever little co-ordination he has left is cut by 16.♞a4? ♞b4 17.♞c5?? d4! .]

15.♙b3 ♙h6 16.g3 dxe5?! 17.♞b1?

Some tactical phases are so random that they bear no relevance to our opening, and thus I never want to waste space on such messy finishes.

[Suffice it to say that Black unnecessarily muddied the waters and that his opponent could have escaped unscathed by 17.♗e5 ♗e5 18.♞e5 ♞xf4!? 19.♞b1! , (but not 19.gxf4? ♙xf4+ .)]

17...♙g4! 18.♞d3 ♙f5 19.♞dd1 exf4

20.♗e7 f3 21.h3? ♙g5! 22.♗d6

[22.♗xg5?? would obviously drop the queen to ♙xc2+! 23.♙xc2 ♗xg5 .]

22...f2 23.♞f1 ♗b6 24.g4 ♙c8 25.♗e5 ♗e3

26.♗a5 ♞b6 27.♙c4 ♙e6 28.♙d3 ♙f6

29.♞a4 ♞bb8 30.b3 ♞fd8 31.♞b2 ♗d4

32.c3 ♗e3 33.g5 ♙xg5 34.♞c4 ♗f4

35.♞c2 ♞xd3! 36.♞xd3

[After the pin 36.♞xd3 ♙f5 , the rook could not be defended by 37.♞b2? (or 37.♞fd1 f1♗) 37...♗d2+ .]

36...♙f5+ 37.♞e2 ♞e8+

0-1

B34

□ Brosa Alvarez,R

■ Alonso Alvarez,A

Asturias

2001

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 g6
5.♞c3 ♙g7 6.♙e3 ♞f6 7.♗d2 0-0 8.0-0-0?!
d5!?

At first glance it seems reckless to walk straight into White's major pieces doubled on

the d-file. In reality, this is a sound gambit borrowed from the standard move order 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 d5!?. Instead of theoretically debating whom the added move f2-f3 helps or hinders, let's learn a thematic queenside attack that lays the framework for this entire chapter.

9.exd5 He has no choice but to accept, since the latent threats of ...dxe4 or ...d4 would flip the evaluation.

[After 9.♞xc6 bxc6 White would have nothing better than to converge on the main game anyway via 10.exd5 cxd5 11.♞xd5 .]

9...♞xd5 10.♞xc6! Again White correctly chops wood to dodge a disadvantage.

[In J.Pasaribu-Q.Chau Thi Yen, Thailand 2005, 10.♞xd5?! ♗xd5 11.♞xc6 ♗xc6 12.♞b1?! totally reversed the roles of attacker and defender, and after ♙f5! 13.f3 ♞ad8! 14.♙d3 ♙xd3 15.cxd3 three other games have also arrived at this technically losing middlegame. For instance, T.Senetia-T.Georgescu, Romania 2010, saw a FIDE Master easily round up the isolated queen's pawn (IQP).]

10...bxc6 11.♞xd5 White co-operatively plays along like Bugs Bunny to Elmer Fudd, but doesn't have to:

[a) Then again you may wonder about the rather problematic 11.♙d4 . Err, what's up, doc?

A) The sole documented case is K. Dolzhikova-B.Bakalinsky, Kiev 2002, which I must include for the sake of entertainment: 11...♞xc3?! 12.♗xc3 ♙xd4 13.♞xd4 ♗b6 14.h4!? h5 15.f3 c5 16.♞e4 ♙e6?! 17.g4! f5?? 18.♞xe6! was game over, in plain view of ♗xe6 19.♙c4 .;

B) Don't panic, my improvement is the novelty 11...e5!?. My concrete idea after 12.♙c5 is the exchange sac ♙e6! 13.♙xf8?! (more prudent would be 13.♙c4! ♞xc3 14.♗xc3 ♗g5+ 15.♙e3 ♗g4! 16.♙xe6 ♗xe6 , bringing about equality; as usual with our split pawns on the queenside, we have dynamic compensation in the form of a semi-open b-file and a minority attack with ...a5-a4-a3) 13...♗xf8 , when our initiative and dark-square domination confirm an enduring advantage, not to mention the threat of ...Bh6 skewering the queen.

So valuable are the dark squares that we can often sacrifice our rook for White's bishop.;

C) 11...--]

11...cxd5 12.♖xd5 According to the computer, anything else falls into the red.

[Indeed, 12.♗d4? would call for the identical treatment e5! 13.♗c5 ♗e6! and a central pawn avalanche versus the hopeless rooks.]

12...♖c7! Notwithstanding what seems like insufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn, Black has notched up a staggering 75% here. The priority in such opposite-side castling situations is to open lines in front of the enemy king, so this clearance device gives excellent practical chances. Essentially there is a big sign on His Majesty's crown – 'open for business' – and our rooks are lining up at b8 and c8 for some of the action. Meanwhile, unlike in the Yugoslav Attack, White has been too distracted to advance even a single kingside pawn.

"If your opponent has an exposed king, it is frequently worth sacrificing a pawn to be able to bring your rooks into the game, especially if your opponent's rooks are languishing in the corner. Kasparov has made a career out of such sacrifices." – Neil McDonald.

[After 12...♖c7 :

A) More often than not, White has declined the rook with 13.♖c5?! , and soon regretted his vulnerable queen. In M.Milic-D.Pavlovic, Belgrade 2003, Black won a tough battle after ♖b7! 14.♖b5 ♖e4 , (but I prefer simply regaining the pawn with 14...♗xb5 15.♗xb5 ♖b8! 16.a4 a6 17.♗c4 ♗xb2+ .);

B) 13.♖xa8 would force the tactical sequence ♗f5 14.♖xf8+ , when the importance of bishop activity would explain the continuation ♗xf8 15.♗d3 ♗e6 16.♗b1 . Here German GM Rainer Polzin twice chose the mysterious

B1) I recommend the more dependable novelty 16...♗d5!? 17.♖hg1 (moreover I've prepared some tricks for you: 17.f3? drops a pawn to ♗xb2! 18.♗xb2 ♖e5+ 19.♗b1 ♖xe3 ,; while 17.♗xg6?? deserves an imitation of the Three Stooges' "A wise guy, eh?" and the double attack ♗xg2! 18.♖hg1 fxg6 19.♖xg2 ♖b7!) 17...e6 to stabilize an equal position.;

B2) 16...h5!? , which to be honest I cannot comprehend.;

C) 13.--]

Like most of the traumatised victims before him, Brosa Alvarez opted for:

13.♖c5?! ♖b7! 14.♗d4? ♗f5! Now that's what I call a successful opening. White never had time to develop his kingside pieces for a defence, let alone an attack.

15.♖b5

[White's stranded queen would be finally skewered after 15.♗xg7?! ♖fc8! .]

15...♖c7!

[In M.Leonov-Y.Chernov, St. Petersburg 2007, the inferior 15...♖e4?! also targeted the c2-pawn, but 16.♖e2! wriggled out.]

16.c3?

[No matter how desperately White seeks refuge in an ending, his lack of coordination will come around to bite him in the back rank: for instance, 16.♖c4 ♖f4+ 17.♗e3 ♖e5 18.♗d4 ♗h6+! 19.♗b1 ♖fd8! would ruthlessly pin down the bishop and all its defenders. Have you noticed that our moves are all fast? In that sample variation, instead of wasting time to shield his queen, Black gives a check, threatens mate, interjects another check, and activates his rook.

Look for forcing moves, meaning checks and captures, to maintain your initiative.]

16...♖fd8! 17.♗c4? ♖f4+?

[17...♗xd4! 18.cxd4 ♖f4+ 19.♖d2 ♖xd4 would generate a mating net.]

18.♗e3 ♖e4 19.♗d3 ♖xd3 20.♖xd3 ♖xd3

21.♖xd3 ♗xd3 Charlie Sheen's catch phrase sums up this assessment: "Winning!". The rest is a trivial conversion of Black's extra bishop. We have more important things to examine, so let's go.

22.♖d1 ♗f5 23.f3 ♗f8 24.♖d5 ♗e6 25.♖a5

a6 26.♗c2 ♗e8 27.b4 ♖c8 28.♗d2 ♖c6

29.a4 ♗c4 30.f4 ♗f6 31.g3 e5 32.b5 axb5

33.axb5 ♖b6 34.fxe5 ♗xe5 35.♖a7 ♖xb5

36.♗e3 ♗d5 37.♗g5 ♖b7 38.♖a5 ♗e4+

39.♗d2 f6 40.♗e3 ♗f5 41.♗f4 ♗xc3

42.♖a8+ ♗f7 43.♖h8 ♖e7+ 44.♗f2 ♗d4+

45.♗f3 ♗g4+ 46.♗g2 ♖e2+ 47.♗f1 ♖xh2

48.♗d6 ♗e2+ 49.♗e1 ♗c3#

0-1

□ Stehno,P
 ■ Plachetka,J

Litomysl

2003

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6
 5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♘f6 7.♖d2 0-0 8.♗c4?!

What's worse than having a vulnerable bishop? Having two of them. Now we have tactics against the one on c4 as well.

♘g4! 9.♘xc6

[9.0-0-0 ♘xe3 10.fxe3 would transpose to the same crippled structure discussed in Mihalinic-Cebalo. Indeed, after ♘e5 11.♗e2 d6 , we are a tempo up on that aforementioned 9 h4 variation, and fast enough to lock down White's weak squares by 12.h4 h5! .]

9...dxc6! This unstereotyped recapture away from the centre is surprisingly strong, and has chalked up 75% from 30 games.

[The doubly popular 9...bxc6 boasts a slightly less compelling 65%.

Recapturing with ...bxc6 is structurally advantageous, but ...dxc6 offers short-term possibilities for the queen, light-squared bishop, and ...b5.

An example is S.Mayer-A.Shabalov, New York 2000, in which 10.♗d4 more or less equalized. Four-time US Champion Shabalov managed to outplay his weaker opponent with ♗h6!? 11.♖e2 d6 12.f3?! c5 13.♗xc5! dxc5 14.fxg4 ♖d4!

. Therefore, if you share his tactical flair, you might relish the rich imbalances of 9...bxc6. On the other hand, he had to calculate carefully that 15.♖d1? (subsequently 15.h3?! ♗g5! 16.♖d1 ♗h4+ 17.♘f1 ♖e5 exemplified our dark-square strategy; not too shabby) would lose a pawn to 15...♗xg4! 16.♖xg4 (and more deeply that 16.♖xd4? ♗xe2 would cost White at least an exchange) 16...♖xc4 .]

[By preventing Bd4, 9...dxc6 poses White three unenviable choices: to part with the bishop, to waste another move with it, or to trade queens first:

A) After 10.♖d1 , I recommend that you parry the queen threat with the novelty ♖a5!? (in R.Golts-N.McLean, Victoria 1997, 10...♖xd2+?! 11.♗xd2! b5 12.♗e2 ♘e5 let White off the hook, and he won the equal ending 30 moves later) , because White cannot save the bishop:

11.-- (11.♗f4? ♘xf2! 12.♖xf2 ♗xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♖xc3+ 14.♖d2 ♖xc4

wins two healthy pawns.; 11.♗g5? ♘xf2! 12.♘xf2 ♖c5+ 13.♖e3 ♖xc4 14.♗xe7 ♖e8 prefaces a major assault on the insecure white king.; 11.♗d4? ♗h6! 12.♖e2 e5! 13.♗e3 ♘xe3 14.fxe3 ♖c5 is too cruel to talk about.);

B) 10.0-0-0 ♖xd2+! would successfully bag the bishop. For instance, in the technically winning endgame 11.♖xd2?! (11.♗xd2?? ♘xf2 isn't very original, as I've seen newer forks on 'Antiques Roadshow'; the least of the three evils, 11.♘xd2 , could realistically end as only a draw or win for Black; in Z.Lugasi-G.Adam, Hungarian League 2004, the space-gaining ♘xe3 12.♘xe3 b5! 13.♗d3 dominated both White's minor pieces) 11...♘xe3 12.fxe3 .

"The future belongs to he who has the bishops." – Siegbert Tarrasch.;

C) Our flank attack works like a charm against the slow alternative 10.♗f4 , as evident from the fluid development ♖a5 11.0-0 b5! 12.♗e2 ♖d8! 13.♖e1 ♗e6 .;

D) 10.♗g5 is just as effectively met by ♖a5 , since the greedy 11.♗xe7? ♖e8 12.♗d6 ♗xc3 13.bxc3 ♖xe4+ is asking for trouble.;

E) 10.--]

Finally, we come to Stehno's choice and the exchange of queens:

10.♖xd8 ♖xd8 11.♗g5

[The absence of the queens does not reduce our advantage. Whether White relocates the bishop to c1, d2, f4, or g5, he will be run over by ...b5 and active piece play. Moreover, 11.♗c5?! is stifled by b6! 12.♗a3 (the suicidal 12.♗xe7?? loses material to ♖e8 13.♗a3 ♗xc3+ 14.bxc3 ♖xe4+ 15.♗e2 ♗a6) 12...♘e5 13.♗e2 c5! .]

11...b5 12.♗b3 a5! 13.a4! b4 14.♘d1 ♗a6

Threatened with ...a4 trapping his bishop, White has had to give ground. In the endgame, he suffers from all our accumulated trumps: the Dragon bishop zapping down to the fixed b2 weakness, our possession of the only open file, Black's more harmonious piece activity, and the white king stuck in the middle. I'd rather not bore you with an irrelevant investigation into whether or not he can grovel for a draw. Let's just enjoy

the pretty finale.

15.f3 ♖f6 16.♗e3 h6 17.♗h4?! ♗h5!
18.♗xe7 ♗d7 19.♗c5 ♗xb2 20.♗d1 ♗ad8
21.♗xd7 ♗xd7 22.♗c4? ♗c3+ 23.♗f2
♗xc4! 24.♗xc4 ♗d2+ 25.♗e3 ♗xc2 26.♗b6
♗e5! 27.♗d3 ♗xg2 28.♗xa5 c5 29.♗b1
♗f4! Checkmate in two moves will ensue via ...
Re2# or ...g5 and ...Bd4#.

As a rule of thumb, trade queens to weaken
White's queenside, but decline when attacking
the king.

0-1

B34

Line B) 7 f3

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6
5.♗c3 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♗f6 7.f3 White's only
drawback is the loose bishop on e3, which
we'll usually target with ...Qb6, now that he
has stopped ...Ng4.

0-0

[However, 7...♗b6? here would be a
horrible mistake, despite being tested by
more than a hundred players, amongst
whom was a GM. The discovered attack
8.♗f5! has been found only half of the time,
but wins a piece through the forced
sequence ♗xb2 9.♗xg7+ ♗f8 10.♗a4
(the fact that Deep Fritz 13 evaluates the
novelty 10.♗d2!! as '+3' to White means
that we need something else)

A) in several skirmishes, Black has tried to
regain his material with 10...♗a3?

, and resigned immediately after the
ambush 11.c3! or after ♗xg7? (or
11...d6? 12.♗c1! , I.Kun-I.Kelemen,
Hungarian League 2003) 12.♗c5!
, T.Dittgen-T.Ihl, Germany 2005;

B) 10...♗e5 11.♗h6 , as in, for example, I.
Vojan-F.Boudalakis, Goa 2006.]

[If the centre were to explode, the pawn on
f3 would be utterly pointless, and indeed
detrimental to the e3-square and the g1-a7
diagonal. Therefore 7...d5 would serve us
perfectly, were it not for the awkward pin
8.♗b5! . After ♗d7 9.exd5! ♗xd4 10.♗xd7+
♗xd7 11.♗xd4 , White emerged a pawn
ahead in A.Puskin-M.Antipov, Moscow
2007.]

[7 f3 prevents ...Ng4, at the cost of leaving
e3 susceptible to an inevitable ...Qb6 or ...
d5.

7...0-0 not only guards the g7-bishop and
pre-empts the d-file pin, but also stays true
to our natural scheme of development.]

We should prepare for the following: 8.--

[a) 8.♗d2?! has scored 35%, yet appeared
two-thirds of the time, so we'll explore it in
the next three games.]

[b) 8.♗c4 should equalize, though it has
scored just as badly, for the reasons
outlined in the last two games of the
chapter.]

[c) 8.♗b3 transposes to the 7 Nb3 0-0 8 f3
of Chapter Three.]

B34

□ Peebo,K

■ Kupreichik,V

USSR Team Championship

1968

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6
5.♗e3 ♗f6 6.♗c3 ♗g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♗d2?!
d5! Here White has three options, 9 exd5, 9
Nxc6 (Fichtl-Averbakh), and 9 0-0-0 (Meyer-
Cordes), each of which has the same 30%
popularity and score.

9.exd5 ♗xd5

[In such an open position, White is now
regretting the useless f2-f3, which doesn't
even permit 9...♗xd5 10.♗f2?! . That would
be one luxury too far, given our
developmental lead, which can be exploited
with ♗xd4! 11.♗xd4 ♗xd4 12.♗xd4 ♗xc3
13.♗xc3 ♗f5 .]

10.♗xc6

[After 10.♗xd5 ♗xd5 our centralized queen
would pose White another dilemma.
"In choosing an opening plan, players think
most of all of harmonious development for
the pieces, but sometimes leave the
development of the queen out of their
considerations. Yet the queen is the most
valuable and important piece, and the
whole outcome can depend upon how
successfully she plays her role." – Alexander
Kotov.

11.-- (In X.Palleja-N.Spiridonov, Cannes
1990, White tried to get rid of Her Majesty by
11.c4 ♗e5 12.♗xc6 bxc6 13.0-0-0

. However, like rock 'n' roll, she was here to
stay. Thanks to c5! , the Bulgarian GM with
the black pieces prevented Bd4, blunted
his opponent's light-squared bishop by fixing
c4, and pursued the mate threat at b2.

; Upon 11.c3 , in R.Sharma-P.Lalic, Surrey 2012, I leapt at the technically winning endgame ♖xd4! 12.♗xd4 ♗xd4 13.♞xd4 ♞xd4 14.cxd4 ♖d8 , when the IQP was no match for Black's more active army.

; 11.♗xc6 ♞xc6 12.0-0-0 ♗f5 would produce a queenside attack reminiscent of the gambit in Brosa Alvarez-Alonso Alvarez, which more than compensated for the pawn. While the same pressure against c2 is present, so is our b-pawn. That logically explains the computer's evaluation of '+1' in our favour. After 13.♗d3 ♖ad8! 14.♗b1 ♗xd3 15.cxd3

we have transposed to the aforementioned T.Senetia-T.Georgescu, Romania 2010. It is remarkable how frequently our familiar terrain can arise from different move orders in the opening. Learning its core themes prepares us for any possible situation.

; In my recent 4NCL game J.Manger-P.Lalic, British League 2013, White could never recover after 11.♗xc6 ♞xc6 12.c3 ♗f5 13.♗e2 ♖fd8 14.♞c1 . His major pieces were too trapped on the queenside to defend against the kingside attack after ♗d3! 15.♗xd3 ♖xd3 16.0-0 ♖ad8 17.♞e1 ♗e5! .)]

10...bxc6 This is a great example of how pieces trump pawns. The isolated c-pawn certainly isn't pretty, but it does a useful job – a bit like the maid in the sitcom 'Two and a Half Men'. It supports our monster knight, whose threats to c3 and e3 are far more important than any structural technicalities. In the future, after Nxd5 cxd5, it could also spring to life... alas that's where the analogy ends with Big Berta.

In such open positions, piece play is more influential than pawn structure.

11.♗xd5 Otherwise:

[a) More than ten players rated over 2000 Elo have fallen into the practically unstoppable checkmate 11.0-0-0?? ♗xc3! 12.bxc3 ♞a5 . Two GMs enjoyed an easy day at the office: G.Mueller-H.Teske, Altenkirchen 2012, abruptly finished 13.♗b2? (while S.Milosevic-B.Abramovic, Bela Crkva 1990, didn't last longer than 13.♗c4 ♞a3+ 14.♗b1 ♗xc3+ 15.♗a1 ♗e6) 13...♖b8+ 14.♗a1 ♞a3 .]

[b) Against an irritating pin like 11.♖d1 , the sidestep ♞c7 doesn't skip a beat. We can confidently enter 12.♗xd5 cxd5 13.♞xd5 and a faster version of the Alonso

Alvarez gambit.]

[c) 11.♗d4?! would be a forgivable error.

A) I was tempted to recommend our typical exchange sac 11...e5!? 12.♗c5 ♗e6!?, in order to stick with the routine. On the other hand, I never intended to dumb down this repertoire merely for the sake of it. Although this at least equalizes, I honestly see an improvement.;

B) 11...♗xd4! 12.♞xd4 e5! chases down the Royal Family more mercilessly than the paparazzi ever could. Our priority is to detonate the e-file before His Majesty can skip town to Kingsville or Queensville. Black has won all three of the databased games, which followed the natural course 13.♞c5 ♗xc3 14.♞xc3 e4! 15.♗e2 (15.fxe4? ♞h4+ 16.♗d2 would cue the 1966 number one hit 'Keep on Running') 15...exf3 16.♞xf3 (16.♗xf3 ♖e8+ 17.♗f2 ♞b6+! 18.♗g3 ♖e3 19.♞f6 ♗f5 was too easy for Black in I.Voigt-W. Tochtenhagen, Bergheim 2003) .

"If once a man delays castling and his king remains in the centre, files will open up against him, bishops sweep the board, rooks will dominate the seventh rank, and pawns turn into queens." – Irving Chernev. 16...-- (After 16...♞h4+ 17.g3 ♞b4+ 18.♞c3 ♞xc3+ 19.bxc3 , White's doubled, isolated c-pawns basically give us an extra pawn and a risk-free endgame; both J. Borawski-A.Smirnov, Bialystok 2010, and A.Cherenkov-H.Pasalic, Moscow 2011, eventually cashed in on the kingside majority.; If you dislike the high drawing margin of that exchange, then consider the more cold-blooded novelty 16...♗f5! , which dissuades White from castling into 17.0-0 ♞d4+! 18.♗h1 ♞xb2 .);

C) 11...--]

11...cxd5 12.c3 Again there are alternatives:

[a) 12.0-0-0 ♞c7! 13.♞xd5?! ♗f5 would transpose into Brosa Alvarez-Alonso Alvarez except that f3 and ...Bf5 have been thrown in. Whom do you think it benefits? Definitely not White, except for all the ink he'll save... by having to write on his scoresheet only a dozen or so moves, before being obliterated on the queenside.]

[b) Again 12.♗d4 should be rudely greeted with ♗xd4! 13.♞xd4 e5! 14.♞d2 ♗e6 . Everybody knows that pieces gain value as they approach the centre, so I don't need to spell out why our central pawn majority is

practically decisive here. You can play through the model game H.Haavamae-B. Markoja, Mureck 2010, which steamrolled onwards 15.♔d3 ♖b6 16.c3 ♜ab8 17.b3 ♜bc8 18.♞c1 f5 19.♞f2? d4! 20.c4 e4! 21.♔c2 ♜cd8 22.♞d1 ♖a5+ 23.♞d2 ♜e5 24.0-0 d3! 25.♔b1 e3 26.♞de1 f4! 27.♔h1 ♖d4 28.♜b4 d2 29.♞d1 e2! 0-1. The early trade Nxc6 bxc6 gives us a central pawn majority.]

12...e5! 13.♔e2 d4! 14.cxd4? exd4 15.♞d1?

[It is too late for White to castle, since the desperate 15.♔g5 ♜b6 16.0-0?? would lose material to d3+! 17.♔e3 dxe2 18.♔xb6 exf1♖+ 19.♞xf1 axb6 .]

15...♞e8! 16.♔xd4 ♔a6

[I blame f2-f3 all along. Now 16...♔a6 17.♔e3 ♜xd2+ 18.♔xd2! ♞ad8+ 19.♔e1 ♞b8! 20.♔xa6 ♞xb2 21.♞d3 ♔h6! would strip everything bare, and not in a good way.]

17.♔xg7? ♜h4+! 18.g3 ♜h3 0-1

□ **Fichtl,J**
 ■ **Averbakh,Y**
 Kislovodsk 1964
 [Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♟c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♟xd4 g6 5.♟c3 ♔g7 6.♔e3 ♟f6 7.f3 0-0 8.♞d2?! d5! 9.♟xc6 bxc6 10.0-0-0 This will be but a temporary pin. Practice has also seen:

[a) 10.exd5 ♟xd5 would transpose into Peebo-Kupreichik.]
 [b) 10.e5 would alleviate the pressure on our central phalanx, which should be advanced à la défense française, meaning ♟d7 (instead, several titled players have successfully experimented with the rarer retreat 10...♟e8 , to chip away with 11.f4 f6! 12.exf6 ♟xf6 , such as in R.Zelcic-D. Feletar, Pula 2000; although this structure is better at revitalizing our Dragon bishop, the e5 and e6 holes also make it more delicate to handle) 11.f4 e6! . Nobody cares about the weakened f6-square; ...c5 and ...d4 take centre stage, because White is in no fit state to establish a blockade with Nc5 and b4. Having said that, half of the 100 games in this variation have seen the vain attempt 12.♟a4? refuted by the 85%

successful ♟xe5! . After 13.fxe5? ♜h4+ 14.♞f2 ♜xa4 , the German FM playing White in R.Borngaesser-M.Trauth, German League 1983, lost the second pawn, ripe for the picking at e5, and the game to someone lower-rated.

When e4-e5 eases up on d5, advance your central majority with ...e6 and ...c5.]

[c) By now you know exactly how to react to the pin 10.♞d1 : ♜c7! would retain all your options, including the sneaky pawn grab 11.♔d3 dxe4 12.♟xe4 ♟xe4 13.♔xe4 ♔xb2 , as per Y.Faraj-A.Antunes, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988.]

10...♞c7 11.♔f4?

[11.exd5 would be preferable, though ♟xd5 boasts an incredible 90% result from 10 games. It took just ten more moves, after 12.♟xd5 (instead, 12.♔d4 e5! 13.♔c5 ♞d8 put our rook to good use on the d-file, in A.Amangeldiyev-A.Arjun, Iasi 2012) 12...cxd5 13.♞xd5? ♔f5! in B.Bakos-J.Tan, Maribor 2012, for White to be bullied into c2-c3 followed by b2-b3, losing his queen and resigning before mate.]

11...e5! 12.♔h6 ♔e6 13.♔xg7 ♟xg7

14.♔d3 d4! 15.♟e2 c5 The crushing bulldozer c5-d4-e5 speaks for itself. White is so cramped that his pieces block the door to His Majesty's burning castle, and thus cannot reroute to either the queenside defence or kingside offence.

16.c4 ♜ab8 17.g4 ♞b4 18.♟g3 ♞fb8

The Russian GM and author effortlessly adds fuel to the fire, by doubling rooks on our favourite semi-open file.

"Only the player with the initiative has the right to attack." – Wilhelm Steinitz.

19.b3 a5 20.♟f5+!

[White must find an excuse for not resigning, i.e. the last hope 20.♟f5+ gxf5?? 21.gxf5 and a comeback along the g-file.]

20...♔xf5! 21.gxf5 a4! Fuel plus fire equates to dead meat.

22.fxg6 hxg6 23.♔c2 ♖a7 24.♞g5 axb3

25.axb3 ♖a1+ Or should I use the anagram 'dead mate'?

0-1

□ Meyer, T
 ■ Cordes, K
 German League
 [Peter Lalic]

2001

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6

[The position we'll reach has been seen thousands of times, and championed on the black side by such names as Carlsen, Nakamura, Topalov, Radjabov, and Ivanchuk. They always employ the standard move order 2...d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♗e3 ♗g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♖d2 ♘c6 9.0-0-0 d5 .]

3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♘f6 7.f3 0-0 8.♖d2?! d5! 9.0-0-0

I'll let that last point sink in... hey, wait a minute, whose turn is it? Even with that wasted tempo in ...d7-d6-d5, Black equalizes at the highest level, so let's learn how to take advantage of our spare move.

dxe4 10.♘xc6! I am pleasantly surprised that this necessary intermediate move has occurred in only 200 games out of 400, and scored an undeservedly miserable 25%:

[a) The real mystery is that 10.♘xe4?? has managed 30% in 80 cases, considering that ♘xe4 11.fxe4 ♗xd4! 12.♗xd4 ♗g4! is '+2' to Black, no strings attached. Suddenly White realizes that moving his rook would drop the bishop:
 13.-- (The 2200 in R.Diaz-N.Carvajal, Puerto Boyaca 2012, tried 13.♗b5?!
 . You've probably heard of the chess term 'to chop wood', meaning 'to trade pieces'. Well, the finish ♘xd4! 14.♖xd4 ♗xd1 15.♗xd1 ♖a5 16.♖a4 ♖xa4 17.♗xa4 ♗fd8 18.♗d3 ♗xd3 19.cxd3 made the 'Chainsaw Massacre' look like sharpening a pencil.
 ; Two people rated over 2000 resigned immediately after 13.♗e2?? ♗xe2 14.♖xe2 ♘xd4 15.♖e3 e5 16.c3 ♖c7! (S.Roversi-P. Passerotti, Genova 2003, and N.Medvedev-E.Krivoborodov, Moscow 2007).

How has Black missed 11...Bxd4 90% of the time? To swap our treasured Dragon bishop for a knight is understandably so ugly and rare that even experienced players discard it on principle (to name names, the Portuguese IM Frois and the Hungarian FM Zambo). This is such a common psychological fault that I feel compelled to warn you about it. As Groucho Marx used to say, "Pardon me while I have a strange

interlude".

Top players tend to calculate more objectively than you or I do, because they open their minds to all exceptions to the rules. In fact, I have often preached about this open-mindedness in my articles for 'CHESS'. If we cloud our awareness with mental attachments (to the bishop, in this case), we might miss exceptional resources. Especially in a fresh opening like the AC/DC, there are wonderful possibilities for the imaginative player.

Keep an open mind, and you can spot surprising refutations.]]

[b) 10.fxe4 ♘g4! 11.♘xc6 ♖xd2+ would expose White's awkward bishop:

A) the recapture 12.♗xd2 bxc6 13.♗e1 deactivates two pieces, and invites ♘f2 14.♗g1 ; facing someone 200 Elo points higher, in V.Chulivska-A.Benard, French League 2006, Black bottled out with a draw by repetition through ♘g4 (we could play for the win with the troublesome 14...♗d4!?) 15.♗h1 (White rejected the risky 15.♗e2 ♗d4!; and 15.h3 ♗d4! 16.♗h1 ♘f2 17.♗h2 ♗e5 18.g3 ♗xg3 19.♗g2 ♗h4) 15...♘f2;
B) 12.♖xd2 bxc6! has scored 85% from all the tricky pitfalls which await White (12...♘xe3?! would peter out to an opposite-coloured bishop draw, without much room to deviate from 13.♘xe7+ ♘h8 14.♘xc8 ♗axc8 15.♗d7 ♗fd8 16.♗xd8+ ♗xd8 17.♘d5! ♘xd5 18.exd5 ♗xd5 19.♗e2) . Indeed, more than half have tangled themselves in the mess 13.♘d1? ♘xe3 14.♘xe3 .

B1) In J.Nielsen-N.De Firmian, Copenhagen 2004, the American GM couldn't find anything immediate after 14...♗h6?! 15.♗d3 , and drew with someone 500 Elo points lower.;

B2) Although that bishop-pair and overpowering pin should triumph in the long run, the intermezzo 14...♗b8! would have mercilessly provoked another concession.

Before cashing in on your advantage, always look to raise the stakes.

15.-- (In J.Mavritchev-K.Kiik, Jyvaskyla 2000, 15.c4? ♗h6 16.♗d3 f5! 17.exf5 ♗xf5 18.♗a3 ♗e4! constricted White so much that he resigned, powerless to the IM's threat of ...Rf2 and Rxb2.

; Both V.Rocha-J.Egger Mancilla, www.chessring.com

Santiago de Chile 1991, and C.De Menezes-B.De Almeida, Natal 2009, ended with the picturesque squeeze 15.c3? ♗e6! 16.a3? ♗h6 17.♖e2 ♖fd8 18.♖e1 ♗b3! 19.♗a6 ♖b6 .

; 15.b3 batters down the hatches, but the Montenegrin GM in G.Fayolle-N. Nikcevic, Saint Quentin 1998, still prised open an entrance with ♖b4! .);

B3) 14...--]

10...♖xd2+ 11.♖xd2?!

[11.♗xd2 bxc6 12.♗xe4 ♗xe4 13.fxe4 ♗g4 14.♖e1 would improve our bishop with tempo and worsen White's rook, although the simplification could lead to a draw like in A.Matikoziyan-M.Arnold, Los Angeles 2012.]

11...bxc6 12.♗xe4 ♗d5 I must confess to thinking initially that White had almost equalized in this middlegame, until I noticed his shocking score of +3 =25 -53. Although technically he should be able to exploit the c5 and a6 holes in front of our split pawns, tournament praxis shows no defence to our pin along the c1-h6 diagonal.

13.♗g5

[A third of the 80 games to have reached this position featured the tricky 13.♗c5!? ♗h6! 14.c4! :

A) Don't greedily go for 14...♗xd2+?! 15.♗xd2 , when the hemmed-in rooks and bishop would have no say on the dark squares. Ironically our only active piece betrays us: -- (15...♗f4? 16.♗xe7 snatches back the rook, in view of ♖e8 17.♗f6+ ♗h8 18.♗xe8 .; 15...♗f6?! 16.♗xf6+ exf6 17.♗xf8 ♗xf8 is a lose-draw predicament.; 15...f5!? 16.cxd5 fxe4 17.♗c4! exposes our king to his rampant bishops, as Black found out the hard way in U.Happe-K.Walbaum, German League 1995.);

B) 14...f5?! 15.cxd5 fxe4 16.♗c4! would trigger similar explosions, as in M. Markiewicz-D.Szarwacki, Leva 2006.;

C) The Czech GM Tomas Polak might not like this, but I must reveal his secret 14...♗e6!! 15.cxd5 cxd5 . He invented the novel improvement 20 years ago, and has won all three recorded games with it. His perfect precision is indicative of home preparation.

In return for the piece sacrifice, we have an additional pawn, a central majority, a tempo gain on the knight, an absolute pin on the rook, and the open c-file down to

White's king. If that's not enough, then there's no pleasing you.

"As a rule, so-called 'positional' sacrifices are considered more difficult, and therefore more praise-worthy, than those which are based exclusively on an exact calculation of tactical possibilities." – Alexander Alekhine.

Here: 16.-- (16.♗f2? ♖fc8 17.♗d3 ♗f5! 18.b4 a5! 19.♗d1 ♗xd2 20.♗xd2 axb4 21.♗xb4? ♖xa2+ 22.♗e3 d4+

was the beginning of the end in J.Krejci-T. Polak, Moravka 1994.; 16.♗f6+?! exf6 17.♗xf8 ♗xf8 18.♗d1 ♗xd2 19.♗xd2 d4 yielded a free pawn, which C.Fusi-T. Polak, Stockerau 1992, cleanly converted 30 moves later.; 16.♗c3 ♖fc8 17.♗d4 ♖ab8 18.b3?? ♖b4! was a humorously vicious circle in M.Adam-T.Polak, Stockerau 1991. The knight depends on the bishop, which depends on the rook, which depends on the king, which depends on the knight, which depends on the bishop... 19.♗d1 ♗xd2 20.♗xd2 ♖xd4+ put White out of his misery.);

D) 14...--]

13...f6! 14.c4!?

[White must go for broke, instead of ceding the c1-h6 diagonal to 14.♗h4? ♗h6 15.♗c4 ♗xd2+ 16.♗xd2 ♗e6 , which occurred in T. Beluska-N.Dakhundaridze, Prague 2012.] [That said, 14.♗c4?! does set a cunning trap: -- (The forcing sequence 14...fxg5? 15.♖xd5! cxd5 16.♗xd5+ ♗e6 17.♗xe6+ ♗h8 18.♗xg5 ♗h6 19.h4 would bring about a fun, unbalanced ending for White, given his light-squared domination, protected passed pawn coming to c4, and fewer pawn islands, as in D.Colak-I. Vrankovic, Osijek 2012.; Instead, 14...e6! 15.♗h4 ♗h6 would leave White with unresolved debts to pay, so R.Puelma-D. Barria Zuniga, Santiago de Chile 1994, concluded with an immediate suicide. In O. Chwastek-J.Sincl, Orlova 2006, he tried to complicate matters with 16.♗xd5!?, but exd5! 17.♗xf6+ ♗g7 18.♗g4 ♗xg4 19.fxg4 ♗xd2+ 20.♗xd2 ♖ae8 tidied up the bill.)]

14...fxg5 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.♖xd5 ♗e6 17.♖a5 ♖fc8+ 18.♗b1 ♖ab8! That electrified fianchettoed bishop is the main reason that I nicknamed our opening after the legendary rock band AC/DC. Plus it's a cooler abbreviation than AD, which stands for After

Death and Alzheimer's Disease.

19.b3

[In O.Schmidt-D.Hausrath, Moehnesee 2002, White could not weather the storm either, since 19.♖b5? ♗xb5 20.♙xb5 ♖b8! 21.a4 a6! 22.♙xa6 ♗xb2+ opened the floodgates.]

19...♙xb3! "Tactics flow from a positionally superior game." – Bobby Fischer.

20.axb3 ♗xb3+ 21.♙a2 ♖b2+ 22.♙a3 ♖c1!

[White escaped with a draw in J.Bellin-L. Lane, Oberhausen 1966, because 22...♖cc2? 23.♖c5! ♖a2+ 24.♙b3 ♖cb2+ 25.♙c4 let her king out of the box.]

23.♙c4+ ♗xc4 24.♖d1 h6 25.♖d8+ ♙h7

[Instead, J.Nyback-T.Porrasmaa, Tallinn 2001, was terminated by the inescapable a-file 'lawnmower mate' after 25...♙f7? 26.♖xa7?? (but White could have miraculously escaped with 26.♙d6+!! exd6 27.♖xa7+ ♙e6 28.♖xg7) 26...♖c1 27.♙d6+ ♙e6 .]

26.♖xa7 ♖c1! 27.♙f6+ ♙xf6 28.♖xe7+ 0-1

B35

□ Fischer,R

■ Panno,O

Portoroz Interzonal

1958

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♙f3 ♙c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♙xd4 g6 5.♙c3 ♙g7 6.♙e3 ♙f6 7.f3 0-0 8.♙c4 ♗b6!

We logically zoom in on all the Achilles' heels of White's set-up, i.e. his hanging bishops, knight, and b2-pawn.

Aim at the weakest links in White's camp, which are usually the dark squares.

[His previous move seemingly put the kibosh on 8...d5!?, yet this surprising gambit does merit further exploration. Although 8...Qb6 gives a clearer advantage, what about after the trickier move order 7 Bc4 0-0 8 Bb3 a5 9 f3, which shields b2? In that case, Chapter Two will prove that 9...d5!? is not only the best, but also the only route to equality and more. So any gambiteers would find it useful to study this 7 f3 0-0 8 Bc4 move order too. Obviously the Bb3 and ...a5 interpolation is irrelevant and, if anything, just grants Black a free pawn thrust:

A) The point is that after 9.exd5 the pawn could be rounded up by ♙b4 . If White were to cling on to the pawn with

10.♙de2?! (10.♗d2 ♙fxd5 11.♙xd5 ♙xd5 blasts open the centre with the equivalent energy of Peebo-Kupreichik) 10...♗c7! 11.♙b3 ♖d8 , his awkward contortions would be in vain; the pin 12.0-0?! ♙fxd5! 13.♙xd5 e6

would regain the pawn and piece with positional interest, as in J.Shirjaeva-J. Razuvajeva, St. Petersburg 1998.;

B) 9.♙xd5 ♙xd5 still retains some ammunition: 10.♙xd5? (after 10.exd5 ♙b4 11.♗d2 , Black could have simply taken the pawn and a small edge in T. Danova-I.Tomovska, Pernik 1992)

10...♙xd4! 11.♙xd4 ♙xd4 12.♗xd4 e6! would win a piece, and the two games, F. De Cresce el Debs-W.Rocha, Americana 1998, and A.Renilla Merchan-O.Garcia Blanco, Padrun 2008, finished 0-1 before move 25.;

C) You already know from Brosa Alvarez-Alonso Alvarez how to handle the gambit 9.♙xc6 bxc6 10.exd5 ♙xd5 11.♙xd5 cxd5 , which brings about the typical queenless endgame 12.♗xd5 ♗xd5 13.♙xd5 ♖b8 .;

D) 9.♙xd5 ♙xd5 10.♙xd5 could be undermined by the novelty f5!

, whose poison will be put under the microscope in Zhang Pengxiang-Ni Hua.;

E) 9.--]

9.♙b3! It's better to be safe than sorry, though more than half of the 1350 documented cases have gone down several worse paths, which will be tracked in the next game.

♙xe4! This bishop discovery is the most common tactical motif in the Accelerated Dragon.

10.♙d5! With his centre blown out of the water, White must desperately splash around to stay afloat:

[a) 10.fxe4? ♙xd4 11.♙xd4 (11.♙d5!? ♗a5+! 12.♙d2 ♗d8 13.c3 ♙g7

was also smooth sailing for Black in L. Kocsis-M.Baldan, Pecs 1997) 11...♗xd4 12.♗xd4 ♙xd4 would donate us an extra pawn in calm seas. 13.0-0-0 ♙c6! 14.♙d5 ♖b8! didn't rock the boat in I.Diaz Rios-J. Valmana Canto, Albacete 2008.]

[b) After the even worse 10.♙xe4? ♙xd4 11.♙xd4 , the German FM got another winning position out of the opening, with the more aggressive ♙xd4! in A.Barskij-M. Baldan, Oberhausen 1998. White's endangered king and knight stuck in the

centre should be punished, and K.Piorun-M. Walentukiewicz, Leba 2008, pressed forward with 12.♖d2 d5! 13.♗c3 (not the plank-walk 13.♗xd5?! ♜d8! 14.c4 ♗e6) 13...♗xb3 14.axb3 d4! 15.♗e2 e5 .]

[c) The daring 10.♗f5? has laid claim to 30% from 50 games, yet the forcing sequence ♗xc3 11.♖d2 (I should mention too that 11.♗xb6?? ♗xd1 12.♗xg7 axb6 13.♞xd1 would lose a piece for nothing, which explains the Belgian FM's instant resignation to someone unrated in P.Moulin-W.Zimmermann, Toulouse 1990) 11...♞a5 12.♗xg7 ♗b5! 13.c3 (instead, 13.♗h6?! ♞xd2+ 14.♗xd2 gave only temporary life-support to the doomed knight in J.Wrench-R. Starkie, British League 2005,; while 13.♞xa5?! ♗xa5 14.♗h6 ♗xb3 15.axb3 f6! threatened the mop-up ...Rf7 or ...Nd6-f7 in R.Corstjens-S.Halfhide, Rijswijk 2011) 13...♗xg7 14.♗h6+ ♗g8 15.♗xf8 ♗xf8 16.♞h6+ ♗g8 17.♗xf7+!? ♗xf7 18.♞xh7+ ♗f6 19.♞h8+ ♗e6 would finally 'jump the shark' (though not in the disappointing 'Happy Days' sense of the phrase). Next ...d6 would create a flight route from the checks. White cannot really surprise us, but I want to put your doubts to rest. Memorise these critical variations, and you'll guarantee quick wins.]

10...♞a5+ 11.c3 After stealing the central pawn, we can choose from three getaways for our knight: the 250 games in 'Mega Database 2013' are divided into 120 for 11...Nc5, 80 with 11...Nf6, and 50 for 11...Bxd4?!. The latter is an audacious attempt to hold on to the e-pawn, which White threatens to retrieve via Nxc6 and Nxe7.

♗c5

[I do not recommend 11...♗xd4?! 12.♗xd4 , parting with our precious fianchettoed bishop. The abandoned dark squares around our king receive little help from the rest of our army, still sleeping on the other side of the board. Two GMs, the 2650-rated Alexander Motylev and the 2400 Nebojsa Nikcevic, have both lost with Black in precisely 38 moves to people rated 200 Elo points lower: -- (Although 12...♗c5 13.♗c4 ♗e6 14.♗e3 ♞d8 15.♞d2 d6 is equal, you could have expected D.Baramidze-A. Motylev, Hoogeveen 2003, to go downhill quickly, owing to Black's developmental jam.; 12...♗d6 13.g4!? ♞d8 14.h4 ♗e8

15.h5!?, as per M.Saranovic-N.Nikcevic, Podgorica 2010, would certainly freak me out.

Only forfeit your fianchettoed bishop if you can shore up the dark squares from a kingside attack.)]

[Instead, 11...♗f6 is similar to the game continuation; whether the knight is on c5 or f6 is a 'moo' point (it's as unimportant as anything a cow might say).]

12.♗xc6 dxc6 13.♗xe7+ ♗h8 14.♗xc8 ♞axc8 15.0-0 ♞cd8 Virtually everybody enters this simplified ending, whose symmetrical pawn structure should promise nothing more than balanced chances. Then how does one explain the score +8 =33 -29? Psychology plays a significant role in chess, and it is a frequent phenomenon for the opening to decide the end before it even happens on the board. Bearing in mind the stereotype of the first-move advantage, Black tends to feel a token triumph when he equalizes so easily.

16.♞c2 ♞b5

[I suggest 16...♞fe8 as a winning try:

A) The blunder 17.♞fe1?? has been made thrice; it chucks material to ♗d3 , and even more after 18.♞e2?? ♞xe3! 19.♞xe3 ♞b6 , as in J.Tuma-M.Dungl, Kouty nad Desnou 2012.;

B) 17.♗xc5?! is a forgivably naive hope for the drawish tendency of opposite-coloured bishops. However, the Latvian GM in C.Palmer-I.Rausis, Badenweiler 1995, showed his unrated opponent that they actually invigorate a kingside attack. After seizing the open e-file with ♞xc5+ 18.♗h1 ♞e7 19.♞fe1 ♞de8 20.♞xe7 ♞xe7 21.♞d2 ♞e5! , he proceeded to hunt down the dark squares: 22.h3?! ♗f6! 23.♞d1 ♗g7 24.♞d3?? ♞g3 25.♗g1 ♗g5! was too nasty to watch, like the shower scene in 'Psycho', when the footsteps stop and the camera pans away. Meanwhile White's light-squared bishop is just a prop to the bloodcurdling screams on the other colour complex.

"He puts his hope in opposite-coloured bishops, but it is an old truism that they often help the attacker." – Mikhail Botvinnik.;

C) After the more sensible 17.♗f2 ♗xb3 18.axb3 (18.♞xb3 ♞d7 19.♞ad1 ♞ed8 20.♞xd7 ♞xd7 21.♞e1 h6 would reduce to a draw, as in N.Paikidze-H.Vardanian,

Jermuk 2010, although having more pawns on light squares does complement our bishop) , we can still spice it up with 18...♖b5!?:

C1) 19.♖xa7? ♖e2! 20.♗c1 (20.c4?? ♖xc2 21.cxb5 would capitulate even faster to the nifty fork ♖xf2! 22.♙xf2 ♗d4+ 23.♙e2 ♗xa7) 20...♗xb3 secures a decisive initiative.;

C2) White should judiciously head for the draw with 19.♖fe1 ♖xe1+ 20.♖xe1 ♗f6 21.b4 b6 22.♗e2 ♗xe2 , W.Watson-M.Chandler, London 1984.;

C3) 19.--;

D) 17.--]

17.♖fd1 ♙g8 18.♖xd8 ♖xd8 19.♖d1 ♖e8
20.♗f2 a5! 21.♗xc5

1/2-1/2

□ Nilsson,Z

■ Geller,E

Varna Olympiad

[Peter Lalic]

B35

1962

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6
5.♗e3 ♗f6 6.♗c3 ♗g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♗c4 ♗b6
9.♗d2?

[The previous game demonstrated how White can equalize with 9.♗b3! if he has done his homework. Most of your opponents haven't, and therefore pick the erroneous 9 Qd2? just as often.

Here are White's other flawed attempts at protecting b2, in descending order of frequency:]

[a) Only after 9.♗cb5?? a6 10.♗f5!? ♗d8! (in O.Manney-L.Christiansen, Santa Monica 1974, another master got home early with 10...♗a5+ 11.♗d2 ♗d8 12.♗xg7 axb5 13.♗h6? bxc4 14.♗d2 d5) , did the 90 smart alecks realise that they had put two knights en prise for nothing. The Hungarian IM in E.Kahn-V.Malakhov, Budapest 1996, kept a straight face until 11.♗bd4 (11.♗xg7 axb5 didn't help either, R.Ganzhurov-B.Savchenko, St. Petersburg 2002) 11...gxf5 12.♗xf5 d5! when he respectfully resigned to the Russian GM.

"On the chessboard lie and hypocrisy do not survive long. The creative combination lays bare the presumption of a lie." – Emanuel Lasker.]

[b) 9.0-0?! ♗xb2 would hardly be a

poisoned pawn. The queen can return to safety via b4, en route gaining time on the loose knight and bishop. 10.-- (Indeed, 10.♗a4?! ♗b4 put White's pieces offside in M.Gonzalez Amaya-M.Mohamed, Gibraltar 2006.; 10.♗d2? ♗b4 11.♗b3 ♗xe4! won even more material in K.Szalay-V.Kaminski, Toronto 2006.; 10.♗cb5 ♗b4 11.♗e2 ♗a5 didn't worry the Russian GM in N.Nielsen-Y.Yakovich, Aalborg 1993, who soon retreated to d8 and converted his pawn free of charge.; The Polish GM with White in B.Socko-J.Michenka, Frydek Mistek 1997, gave up the chase a dozen moves after 10.♗ce2 ♗b4 11.♗b3 ♗a5! .)]

[c) When he was younger and rated 2285, the Danish GM Jacob Aagaard played 9.♗a4?? in J.Aagaard-J.Simonsen, Copenhagen 1992. The fork ♗b4+! 10.c3 ♗xc4 highlights the bishop's liability, a recent example being J.Hernandez Torralba-C.Guillem Mora, Valencia 2012.]

[d) I must alert you to the devilish 9.a3! , whose control over b4 could be an important subtlety: -- (9...♗xb2?? 10.♗a4! reminds me of the 1972 song 'Stuck in the Middle with You' by Stealers Wheel.; After 9...♗xe4? 10.♗d5! White has scored 80% from 17 games, due to ♗a5+ 11.b4! ♗d8 12.fxe4 .; Fortunately 9...e6! would leave White without Nd5 or any other answer to ... Nxe4.

These little details determine who will end up on top when the complications ignite. Memorise them, and you'll know if and when to enter a certain variation.)]

[e) 9.♖b1?! ♗xe4! 10.♗d5! ♗a5+ is a familiar mechanism. The

A) 11.b4? handed over '+2' to Black in A.Farmani Anosheh-M.Hilzinger, German League 2012, who struck back in the style of John McClane from 'Die Hard': ♗xb4! said "Welcome to the party, pal!", and 12.♖xb4 (not 12.♗xb4?? ♗c3! 13.♗c1 ♗xb1 14.♗xb1 ♗c5! , as in D.Zheng-G.Young, San Francisco 2006) 12...♗c3! 13.♗xc3 ♗xb4 concluded "yippee-ki-yay!";

B) 11.c3 ♗f6 of Y.Niks-E.Fatalibekova, Moscow 2009 resembles Fischer-Panno, except White has nudged the rook instead of castling. Surely that's an even bigger waste of time than learning algebra at school.]

Returning to 9 Qd2:

chesstouring.com

9...♖e4!

[Now that the c3-knight is protected, 9...♗xb2? 10.♖b1! ♗a3 11.♗cb5! is so messy that the Romanian GM in J. Torremarin Gonzalez-M.Suba, St. Cugat 1994, had to scramble a draw versus someone ungraded.]

10.fxe4 That e-pawn may be isolated, but there's nothing better for White:

[a) 10.♗xc6? ♗xd2 is another one of those rollercoasters; White might enjoy a few bumps along the way, yet soon comes to a dead end: 11.♗e7+! (11.♗xb6?? bxc6! 12.♗xd2 axb6 was strategic suicide in S. Crouan-N.Nikcevic, French League 2003) 11...♗h8 12.♗xb6 ♗xc4 13.♗f2 does keep the piece, but ♗xb2 does not keep the peace. The South Korean GM in A. Kim-B.Savchenko, St. Petersburg 2005, couldn't make up for the absent pawn after 14.♗cd5! b6! 15.0-0 ♗b7 16.a4 ♗xd5 17.♗xd5 ♖ac8 .]

[b) 10.♗e4? is wrong for the same reason presented in Fischer-Panno.]

10...♗xd4! 11.♗xd4 ♗xd4 12.♗xd4 ♗xd4 13.0-0-0 ♗c6 14.♗d5! If it weren't for White's short-term initiative, I would wrap up here by pointing to his IKP and pawn deficit. To put it more frankly, "up creek, without paddle". Although the long term is structurally settled, our developmental lag does pose us some technical difficulties: for instance, the e-pawn is threatened by Bb5, Bxc6 and Nxe7.

[Moreover, 14.♗d5 ♖e8?? (whilst 14...a6? 15.♗b6! ♖b8 16.♗xd7 ♗xd7 17.♖xd7 would fizzle out to a draw like in V.Vetoshko-D.Severinov, Nikolaev 2009) would fail to 15.♗c7 .]

14...♗g7! All the top players have elected this best move, including GMs Rogers, Perelshteyn, Antunes, and Markowski. Let's now enjoy the flawless technique of Efim Geller, late winner of the Soviet, Ukrainian and World Senior Championships.

15.♗b5

[The sluggish move 15.♗b3?! allowed smooth development with ♖b8! 16.♖hf1 d6 17.c4 ♗e6 in J.Girard-T. Markowski, Metz 1998.]

15...♖d8!?

[This craftily defends d7, so that 15...♖d8 16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.♗e7?? ♗b7 catches the knight in the light-squared web.]

[15...♖b8 also averts tactics such as Nb6-d7, which are possible after Black kicks the

bishop with the timely 16.♖he1 a6! . K.Li-E.Perelshteyn, Victoria 2012, saw 17.♗xc6 dxc6 18.♗b6 (not 18.♗e7?? ♗e6 incarcerating the knight) 18...♗g4! 19.♖d3 ♖bd8 20.♖de3 e5 .]

16.♖hf1 d6 17.♗c7

[Geller had calculated that 17.♗xc6?! bxc6 18.♗e7?? ♗b7 would again snare the knight.

"Chess is 99% tactics" said Richard Teichmann. This repertoire promises you better chances and often winning advantages. However, your success at converting them depends on concrete calculation at the board.]

17...♗g4!? 18.♗xa8 ♗xd1 19.♗c7 ♗g4

20.♗d5 Trades simplify Black's task of attaining the ideal king and pawn ending. ♖c8 21.♗d2 ♗e6 22.♗xc6 bxc6 23.♗f4 ♖b8 24.b3 ♗d7 25.c4 f5! This idea of undermining White's centre is effective in every phase of the game and precipitates the advance of our pawn majority.

26.exf5 gxf5 27.g3 e5 28.♗d3 ♗f6

29.♖e1 c5! Our pawns control the dark squares, while our bishop roams free along the light squares.

30.♖d1 a5 31.♗c3 ♗e6 32.♗e1 ♗e7

33.♗d3?! h5! White is shuffling as aimlessly as me on a dance floor, so why not gain more space?

34.♖d2 h4! 35.gxh4? Black's flanking concept produces connected passed pawns that crush any last hopes.

♖h8 36.♖g2 ♖xh4 37.♗f2 ♗f6 38.h3 ♖d4 39.♖g3 f4 40.♖f3 ♗g5

0-1

Chapter Two

The Main Line: 7 Bc4

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6 5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Bc4



More experienced players respect the venom of ...d7-d5, with which we refuted 7 f3 and 7 Qd2 in the previous chapter. 7 Bc4 is much less committal, and still threatens to set up the Yugoslav Attack. In order not to let White settle down, we must charge every move with our usual AC/DC electricity. Basically search for the most energetic developing move, and you'll never be far off my theoretical recommendations. Although the following variations are quite thorough to prepare you for deep tactics, you will soon get used to some recurring themes.

7...0-0



The *Mega Database 2013* provides us with the following statistics from 9,000 games:

- 8 0-0 has scored an unimpressive 40% for White from 1,000 games, because the shocker 8...Nxe4! 9 Nxe4 d5 blows away his centre and at least equalizes, as [Chiang-Wallach](#) will reveal.
- 8 Bb3! has scored 57% from 7,000 encounters by thwarting that tactic, and is the priority of the next section.
- 8 f3 (37% from 1,000) transposes to [Fischer-Panno](#) and [Nilsson-Geller](#).
- 8 Qd2?! (37% out of 200) transposes to [Stehno-Plachetka](#).

The Prophylactic 8 Bb3

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6 5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Bc4 0-0 8 Bb3!



This prophylactic move is the sternest test of our repertoire, because White threatens to set up his Yugoslav Attack:

- 8...d6 9 f3 Bd7 10 Qd2 Rc8 11 0-0-0 would obligingly transpose.
- 8...Qa5!? may compel him into 9 0-0, but the cure seems more extreme than the illness. L.Nisipeanu-M.Carlsen,

- b) 8...Qa5!? may compel him into 9 0-0, but the cure seems more extreme than the illness. L.Nisipeanu-M.Carlsen, Sarajevo 2006, became standard Dragon territory, where Black never pushed a pawn beyond the third rank.
- c) 8...d5?! 9 exd5 Na5 looks fishy, as in V.Kupreichik-C.Barlocco, Courmayeur 2011.
- d) The renowned brilliancy R.Fischer-S.Reshevsky, New York 1958, made 8...Na5? unplayable, owing to the queen trap 9 e5! Ne8?? 10 Bxf7+!! Kxf7 11 Ne6!.
- e) 8...Ng4!? would be ideal, were it not for 9 Qxg4 Nxd4 10 Qd1:
- e1) I'd rather run away from 10...Nc6 11 Qd2 Qa5 12 Bh6 d6 13 h4 of P.Dely-J.Tabor, Kecskemet 1972, and not look back.
- e2) Meanwhile, 10...Nxb3 11 axb3 would leave us fighting the a-file pressure, without queenside development, a central break, or even the bishop-pair after 11...b6 12 Bd4!, such as in J.Emms-A.Berg, Gausdal 1996.

8...a5!



Fortunately the threat of ...a5-a4 throws a spanner in the works:

- a) 9 0-0 is covered in [Svidler-Topalov](#), where 9...a4! 10 Nxa4 Nxe4 reunites us with our favourite twins at d7 and e7.
- b) 9 a4 does rule out this tactical possibility, yet also the recapture axb3 in the variation 9...Ng4! 10 Qxg4 Nxd4 ([Butkiewicz-Zwardon](#)). For fear of doubling his pawns with cxb3, White often bails out into the unpromising endgame 10 Nxc6 Nxe3 11 Nxd8 Nxd1 ([Marjanovic-Cebalo](#)).
- c) 9 f3 shuts out both of those breaks, but opens the door to the invasive gambit 9...d5!?, as investigated in [Paganoglou-Santrian](#), [Shirov-Lautier](#) and [Zhang Pengxiang-Ni Hua](#). I recommended this bombshell in [Fischer-Panno](#), and the only difference here is our free move ...a5 versus White's more susceptible bishop at b3.

□ 7 Bc4
 ■ in Game Format
 [Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6
 5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♘f6 7.♗c4

More experienced players respect the venom of ...d7-d5, with which we refuted 7 f3 and 7 Qd2 in the previous chapter. 7 Bc4 is much less committal, and still threatens to set up the Yugoslav Attack. In order not to let White settle down, we must charge every move with our usual AC/DC electricity. Basically search for the most energetic developing move, and you'll never be far off my theoretical recommendations. Although the following variations are quite thorough to prepare you for deep tactics, you will soon get used to some recurring themes.

0-0 The 'Mega Database 2013' provides us with the following statistics from 9,000 games:

8.--

[a) 8.0-0 has scored an unimpressive 40% for White from 1,000 games, because the shocker ♘xe4! 9.♘xe4 d5 blows away his centre and at least equalizes, as Chiang-Wallach will reveal.]

[b) 8.♗b3! has scored 57% from 7,000 encounters by thwarting that tactic, and is the priority of the rest of the chapter.]

[c) 8.f3 (37% from 1,000) transposes to the last two games from Chapter One.]

[d) 8.♖d2?! (37% out of 200) transposes to Stehno-Plachetka.]

□ Chiang,S
 ■ Wallach,K
 Las Vegas
 [Peter Lalic]

2007

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6
 5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♘f6 7.♗c4 0-0 8.0-0

♘xe4! This tactic fulfils our objective of eliminating White's spatial advantage.

9.♘xe4

[Many players prefer to return the piece with the overambitious 9.♗xf7+?! ♖xf7 10.♘xe4 . Our bishop-pair and central majority should gradually trample White to death, but as usual our queenside congestion does give him some temporary tricks:

A) The hasty 10...d5 11.♘g5

of S.Padhya-P.Szabo, Budapest 2012, would let his active knights run riot.;

B) That explains my cautious 10...h6!

11.c3 ♖f8 12.♖d2 ♗h7 in V.Boy Lazoni-P.Lalic, Surrey 2012, where I steadily brought out my pieces to victory.;

C) The improvement 10...♗xd4!! 11.♗xd4 looks so anti-positional that I can't even think of any witty analogies, but it is actually a concrete path to a safe advantage:

C1) If you mix up the move order like the Georgian GM in W.Watson-M.

Chiburdanidze, Brussels 1987, then

11...e5? 12.♗e3 d5 13.♗g5!

would certainly make you regret deserting the dark squares.;

C2) My novelty 11...d5! is a whole other story, since we gain multiple hits on

White's pieces, no matter where they

retreat: 12.♘g3 (or 12.♘g5?! ♖f5

13.♘f3 e5 14.♗e3?! d4! 15.♗d2 e4!

16.♘e1) 12...e5 13.♗e3 d4! 14.♗d2

♖d5! . If I've taught you well so far, I

hope you can appreciate for yourself the beauty of this position.

In opposite-coloured bishop

middlegames, place your pawns on the

same colour as your opponent's bishop,

in order to block his and free yours.;

C3) 11...--;

D) 10...--]

[Instead, 9.♘xc6 could be steered straight

back into the game continuation, via bxc6

10.♘xe4 , as in A.Nabinger-T.Schoenhof,

Altenkirchen 2012.]

9...d5 10.♘xc6 Any alternative would be a grave concession:

[a) In such an open position, to concede the

two bishops with 10.♗xd5? ♖xd5

would constitute strategic suicide, because

our centralized queen would wreak havoc on

the empty light squares:

A) White could grovel with 11.♘c3 ♖c4

12.♖e2 ♖xe2 13.♘cxe2 ♘b4!

like in S.Sollid-A.Romanov, Pattaya 2011, though it's really more passive than solid.;

B) 11.♘xc6? ♖xc6 would further expose

the hanging b2-pawn, which dropped off

after 12.♖d3? (thus the knight had to

shield it in M.Konietzka-A.Rose, Hagen

1999, but 12.♘c3 ♗f5 13.♗d2 ♖fd8

was asking for the minority attack with ...

b5-b4) 12...♗f5 13.f3 ♗xb2 14.♖ab1 ♗g7

in C.Raimann-A.Miclea, Rotenburg 2003.]

C) 11.--]

[b) White needs to recapture the pawn on e4, since 10.♙b5? ♘xd4! 11.♙xd4 dxe4 12.♙xg7 ♗xg7 failed to restore the material balance in A.Felipe Martinez-F.Alonso Rodriquez, Llinars del Valles 2012.]

10...bxc6 11.♙d3

[White must preserve his light-squared bishop, lest he be dominated by 11.c3? dxc4 12.♗a4 ♙e6! 13.♘c5 ♙d5 , J.Kraus-I.Rausis, Calella 1994.]

11...dxe4 12.♙xe4 It is undeniably true that our split pawns are static weaknesses, but they cannot actually be caught. Indeed, we may charge them at White's queenside, which will be pressured along the long diagonal and semi-open b-file.

[For that reason, this position is balanced, and 12.♙xe4 ♗c7 13.c3 customarily ends with a peaceful handshake in master games like M.Tissir-E.Prie, French League 1998. To be honest, it's not particularly exciting, given the high drawing margin of eventual rook trades down the d-file. Fortunately, I have found a rarer follow-up hiding plenty of venom.]

12...♙a6!? 13.♗xd8 It will boost your confidence to know that even many titled players have promptly lost material here: Anybody can plummet into your preparation, so don't fearfully respect your opponent; just look at the board.

[a) More than half of the nine people who were duped into 13.♙xc6?? ♗c8 had FIDE ratings over 2200. The famous Hungarian GM in L.Kwatschewsky-Su. Polgar, Vienna 1986, was rewarded with an 18-move win for calculating that 14.♗xd8 (after 14.♗f3 ♙xf1 15.♗xf1 ♙xb2 , the Brazilian IM with White in H.Van Riemsdijk-A.Antunes, Matanzas 1994, had no compensation for the exchange) 14...♗fxd8 15.♗fd1 ♗xd1+ 16.♗xd1 ♗xc6! 17.♗d8+ ♙f8 18.♙h6 ♗c8 netted her a piece.]

[b) 13.♗e1? ♙xb2 14.♗b1 ♙c3 chucked a pawn in R.Cervera Procas-A.Guzman Moneo, Aragon 1998.]

[c) Another pawn went west after 13.♙d3 ♙xd3 14.♗xd3 ♗xd3 15.cxd3 ♙xb2 16.♗ab1 ♗fb8! in A.Kullberg-H.Hurme, Helsinki 1998.]

13...♗fxd8 14.♗fb1! White needs yet more precision:

[14.♗fd1? is just as popular, though ♙xb2

calls his bluff: 15.♗ab1 (in J.Hector-D. Cramling, Gausdal 1982, White tried 15.♗xd8+ ♗xd8 16.♗b1 , yet those chronic back rank issues meant he couldn't recover the material) 15...♙b5! 16.♗xd8+ ♗xd8 kept control in T.Nguyen Van Toan-D.Pham, Can Tho 2012.]

[b) The Chilean 2300 with white in A.Pineda Polanco-I.P.Vargas Maliqueo, Santiago de Chile 2008, walked right back into the trap 14.♙xc6?? ♗ac8 15.♗fd1 ♗xd1+ 16.♗xd1 ♗xc6! .]

14...♗d6 15.c3 White has ensured his queenside structure remains pristine, and paid the price in piece activity.

♙c4! 16.♗d1 ♙d5 17.♙xd5 cxd5

While trading off his better bishop, we also improve our pawn structure and create the intimidating AC/DC pawn duo. Let the Good Times (and central pawns) Roll!

18.♙d4 e5 19.♙c5 ♗d7 20.♗d2 ♗c8 21.♙b4 ♙h6 22.♗d3 e4 23.♗d4 ♙g7 24.♗d2 d4! 25.♗f1?

[Even after 25.cxd4 ♗xd4 26.♗xd4 ♙xd4 , White would also suffer from his first two ranks.]

25...f5 26.f3?? d3! 27.fxe4? fxe4 28.g4 e3 29.♗g2 e2+! 30.♗e1 d2+! 31.♗xe2 ♗e8+ 32.♗d1 ♗e1+ 33.♗c2 ♗xa1 34.♗xd2 ♗xd2+ 35.♗xd2 ♗xa2 "Two passed pawns advancing on the enemy pieces have brought me more than a dozen points in tournaments." – David Bronstein.

0-1

B35

The Prophylactic 8 Bb3

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.♘c3 ♙g7 6.♙e3 ♘f6 7.♙c4 0-0 8.♙b3!

This prophylactic move is the sternest test of our repertoire, because White threatens to set up his Yugoslav Attack: --

[a) 8...d6 9.f3 ♙d7 10.♗d2 ♗c8 11.0-0-0 would obligingly transpose.]

[b) 8...♗a5?! may compel him into 9.0-0 , but the cure seems more extreme than the illness. L.Nisipeanu-M.Carlsen, Sarajevo 2006, became standard Dragon territory, where Black never pushed a pawn beyond the third rank.]

[c) 8...d5?! 9.exd5 ♘a5 looks fishy, as in V. Kupreichik-C.Barlocco, Courmayeur 2011.]

[d) The renowned brilliancy R.Fischer-S. Reshevsky, New York 1958, made 8...♗a5? unplayable, owing to the queen trap 9.e5! ♖e8?? 10.♙xf7+!! ♗xf7 11.♗e6! .]

[e) 8...♗g4!? would be ideal, were it not for 9.♙xg4 ♗xd4 10.♙d1 . I'd rather run away from the ♗c6 (meanwhile, 10...♗xb3 11.axb3 would leave us fighting the a-file pressure, without queenside development, a central break, or even the bishop-pair after b6 12.♙d4! , such as in J.Emms-A.Berg, Gausdal 1996) 11.♙d2 ♙a5 12.♙h6 d6 13.h4 of P.Dely-J.Tabor, Kecskemet 1972, and not look back.]

[f) 8...a5! . Fortunately the threat of ...a5-a4 throws a spanner in the works:

A) 9.0-0 is covered in Svidler-Topalov, where a4! 10.♗xa4 ♗xe4 reunites us with our favourite twins at d7 and e7.;

B) 9.a4 does rule out this tactical possibility, yet also the recapture axb3 in the variation ♗g4! 10.♙xg4 (for fear of doubling his pawns with cxb3, White often bails out into the unpromising endgame 10.♗xc6 ♗xe3 11.♗xd8 ♗xd1 , Marjanovic-Cebalo) 10...♗xd4 (Butkiewicz-Zwardon).;

C) c) 9.f3 shuts out both of those breaks, but opens the door to the invasive gambit d5!? , as investigated in the final three games of this chapter. I recommended this bombshell in Fischer-Panno, and the only difference here is our free move ...a5 versus White's more susceptible bishop at b3.;

D) 9.--]

B35

□ Svidler,P

■ Topalov,V

Linares

1999

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗c3 g6 3.♗f3 ♙g7 4.d4 cxd4
5.♗xd4 ♗c6 6.♙e3 ♗f6 7.♙c4 0-0 8.♙b3
a5 9.0-0 a4! 10.♗xa4 Best:

[a) After 10.♙xa4?! ♗xe4 11.♗xe4 ♙xa4 12.c3 ♙a8 , the two bishops, a-file pressure, and central majority made K.Dolzhikova-S. Pavlov, Kiev 2003, a walk in the park for Black.]

[b) 10.♙c4?! would fall prey to ♗xe4! , the identical tactic from Chiang-Wallach. The only difference here is our freely

advanced a-pawn, whose ...a3 stab helps us to lever open the long diagonal, as in M. Joseph-N.Pinal, Istanbul 2012.]

10...♗xe4 11.♗b5!

[Instead, 11.♗xc6?! bxc6 would present us with one exquisite pawn island, and a pleasant journey. After 12.♙b6 (12.♗b6 didn't kick up sand either in G.Garcia-M. Turner, London 1994, where ♙b8 13.♗xc8 ♙xc8 sent packing the c8-bishop problem) 12...♙e8 13.f3 ♗f6 , the Estonian GM in M. Yilmaz-K.Kulaots, Istanbul 2010, sat back and watched his d-pawn cruise home.]

11...♙a6! In compensation for our central majority, White does have a serious initiative on the queenside, where our weak squares are threatened with Bb6 and Nc7.

Consequently our first priority is to patch up these holes, by artificial means if necessary. When you have the better long-term prospects, first carefully neutralize your opponent's counterplay.

Black has also tried:

[a) The English star Gawain Jones had so much faith in Black's solid central structure that he twice sacrificed the exchange with 11...♙xa4!? 12.♙xa4 ♙xb2 13.♙b1 ♙g7 . Alas, this has scored 75% for White because our hemmed-in rook and bishop don't pull their weight.

The Ukrainian GM of S.Fedorchuk-G.Jones, Porto San Giorgio 2007, gave Black freedom and an early draw with 14.♙b3 (conversely, the Russian wunderkind in S. Karjakin-G.Jones, Heraklion 2007, wasn't so peace-loving; he relentlessly pursued a queen swap via 14.f3! ♙a5! 15.♙b3 ♗c3 16.♗xc3 ♙xc3 17.♙e1! ♙e5 18.♙d2 ♗d4 19.♙bd1 ♗f5 20.♙f2 ♙c7 21.♙e2 e5? 22.♙c4! , and his rooks prevailed in the end) 14...d6 15.♙e1 ♙f5 16.♙d5 ♗f6 17.♙f3 ♙c8 18.♙d2 ♙e6 .]

[b) 11...d5!? feels loose. Strong players have made it playable, but only through intense preparation. In my humble opinion, there's no point in sweating over such complications: 12.♙b6 (the Russian super-GM in A.Gritsenko-A.Khalifman, Moscow 2009, shortly drew after the fireworks 12.f3!? d4! 13.♗xd4 ♗xd4 14.fxe4 b5 , which few people would enjoy playing, let alone analysing) 12...♙d7 13.♗c7 ♙xa4! 14.♙xa4 ♙xb2 15.♙xd5! ♙xa1 16.♙xe4 ♙b2 is a trendy forcing line in which Black is hard pressed to win, T.Kosintseva-A

Muzychuk, Rostov on Don 2011.]
12.♖e2 d6 13.c4 ♘f6 This has all been seen a hundred times or so, and revolves around the strategic battle between White's lock-down over d5 and b5, and Black's undermining of c4. We plan to untangle and, at the opportune moment, chop off the overshadowing b5-knight.

14.♟fd1 Alternatively:

[a) 14.c5 prematurely loosened White's grip in R.Meessen-M.Jadoul, Belgian League 2002, where the precise retaliation d5 15.♟ad1 ♘a5 16.♙c2?! ♘c4! 17.♙c1 ♜a5 18.♘bc3 ♟e6! 19.♟f3 b5! 20.cxb6 ♘xb6 21.♘xb6 ♟xb6 22.♟d4? e5! liberated Black's army.]

[b) In the GM encounter Y.Zherebukh-V. Belous, Moscow 2012, 14.♟ad1 ♙g4!? 15.f3 ♙d7 16.♘ac3 ♘a5 17.♙c2 ♜b8 bore a resemblance to our main game.]

[c) Another master clash, E.Van den Doel-A. Istratescu, Corinth 2000, saw White first vaccinate himself against any ...Bg4 or ... Ng4 irritations with 14.h3 ♙e6 15.♟ad1 ♜b8 .]

14...♙d7 15.♘ac3 ♜b8!? This interesting concept is quite characteristic for the 9 0-0 line, where slow manoeuvring takes precedence. Though looking odd at b8, the queen is better placed for several reasons: it dodges the d-file X-ray, the f8-rook can swing to the c-file, and the added protection of d6 and b6 might mobilize the e- and b-pawns in the future.

Remember the manoeuvre ...Qb8, to unravel the back rank for ...Rc8.

16.h3 ♟c8 17.a3 ♘e5 I'll always tell you the truth: objectively Black is slightly worse, as a result of his disconnected rook at a6.

Nonetheless, chess is a contest of plans, fought between two mere mortals. White has a spatial advantage, but it is unclear how he can move forward. In contrast, we have caught up with development, and begun applying pressure to c4 and b5.

18.♟ac1 ♙xb5!? **19.cxb5 ♟a8 20.b6 ♟c6 21.♘b5 ♜d8** The big question is whether that doubled pawn is a strength or a weakness. On the one hand, the pawn at b6 is so far advanced that it's closer to turning into a queen than me after lip-syncing to the 90s mega-hit 'Barbie Girl'. On the other hand, it is blockaded and liable to capture, including perhaps the exchange sacrifice ...Rxb6.

22.♘c7 ♟b8 23.♜b5?

[White should organise his majority with 23.♟xc6 ♘xc6 24.♙a4 ♘e5 25.b4

. Now Black gets a head start.]

23...♟xc1 24.♟xc1 e6! 25.a4 d5!

This passed pawn represents the other downside to 19 cxb5.

26.a5 ♘e4 27.♟d1 ♘d6 28.♜c5 ♘f5 29.♙c1 ♙f8 30.♜c2 ♘c6 31.♙d2 ♙d6!

The former FIDE World Champion has gained numerous tempi on White's vulnerable queen, bishop and a-pawn. Now that his opponent's minor pieces are sidelined out of play, he reroutes his fianchettoed bishop for ...Bxc7 or an unexpected kingside attack.

32.♙a4 ♘b4 33.♜b3 ♘d4 34.♜e3 ♘f5 35.♜b3 ♜h4! 36.♟c1?? ♘d4!

[Confucius say, he who activate pieces win tactics (presumably the same applies to Chinese chess). 36...♘d4 37.♜e3 (37.♜d1 would lose to the fork ♘d3) 37...♙f4! would be backed by 38.♜xf4 (alternatively, 38.♜xd4 ♙h2+; or 38.♜e1 ♘d3) 38...♘e2+ .]

0-1

B35

□ **Butkiewicz,L**

■ **Zwardon,V**

Czech League

2012

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.♘c3 ♙g7 6.♙e3 ♘f6 7.♙c4 0-0 8.♙b3 a5 9.a4 ♘g4! 10.♜xg4 ♘xd4 11.♜h4

The queen needs to duck the ...d5 discovery, and on h4 it eyes up our king and e7-pawn.

Others:

[a) 11.♜d1 has scored an innocuous 40%, because we can effortlessly develop with ♘xb3 12.cxb3 d6 13.0-0 ♙e6 . The b3 burden proved so bothersome that 14.♟a3 was chosen in the two high-quality specimens M.Adams-A.Shabalov, London 1991, and H.Klip-I.Wantola, Dutch League 2012.]

[b) 11.♙xd4!? ♙xd4 12.♜g3 d6 13.0-0-0 ♙g7 14.h4! would almost breach our palace, but ♙e6! 15.♙xe6 fxe6 16.h5 ♜e8! monitors the entry points. Black's longer-ranged minor piece and counter-offensive down the c- and f-files carried the day in J. Berger-M.Movsisyan, Stillwater 2009.

A) The doubled isolani stemming from the

17.hxg6 ♜xg6 18.♜xg6 hxg6 19.f3

ssst13.com

♠xc3! 20.bxc3 of A.Patrascu-B.Posedaru, Olanesti 2012, should give Black more winning chances, although probably not quite enough in the drawish presence of four rooks.;

B) Hence the quiet draw in R.Moor-L. Cyborowski, Dresden 1995, after 17.♗b5 ♠c8 18.hxg6 ♗xg6 (18...♗c6!? was Movsisyan's winning try) 19.♗xg6 hxg6 20.f3 .;

C) 17.--]

11...♗xb3 12.cxb3 ♠a6! Out of 150 games, one hundred of them have featured this ingenious rook lift.

13.0-0 ♠e6 From this central outpost, the rook supports both the queenside and kingside laterally. By reinforcing e7 and b6, it facilitates the fianchetto of our light-squared bishop, which will also aim at the e4-pawn. The best chess moves are often multipurpose, and the rook swinging to e6 controls all the critical squares b6, g6, e4, and e7.

14.♠ad1 Due to the lack of immediate conflict in this slow position, move orders are not exactly critical. However, while we progressively build pressure on e4 by ...b6 and ...Bb7, as it happens we might threaten the tactic ...Bxc3 and ...Bxe4.

[Therefore, White often prefers 14.♠fe1 b6 15.♗h6 ♗b7 to defuse our bishop-pair.

There is no reason to stray from our tried and tested plan, which is to unleash the central majority. To this end, the thematic undermining jab ...f5 works a treat: 16.♗xg7 (16.♠e3 ♗f6 17.♗g5 ♗xg5 18.♗xg5 f5! put Black in the driver's seat in the game M.Parligras-A.Istratescu, Bucharest 2000) 16...♗xg7 17.♠e3 f5!? 18.♠ae1 fxe4 19.♗xe4 broke the shackles in the heavyweight fight V.Topalov-B.Larsen, Mesa 1992. However, take care of your exposed king and pawns, which are prone to Ng5 or Qd4+, for instance.]

14...b6 15.♗d4

[After 15.♗h6 ♗xh6 16.♗xh6 ♗b7 17.♠d3 , the prolific Polish GM in J.Shahade-A. Wojtkiewicz, New York 2004, successfully utilized that flanking stratagem f5 once again.]

15...♗b7 16.♗xg7 ♗xg7 17.♠d3

[In R.Robson-E.Perelshteyn, Connecticut 2007, the overoptimistic 17.♠fe1 ♗c7 18.h3 d6 19.f4?! ♗c5+ 20.♗h2?! forgot about the helpless b3-pawn, which the American GM picked off by ♗b4! 21.♗d5 ♗xd5

22.exd5 ♠xe1 23.♠xe1 ♗xb3! 24.♗xe7 , before driving into the technically winning rook endgame ♗xd5 25.f5 ♗xf5 26.♗xd6 ♗f6 27.♗xf6+ ♗xf6 .]

17...h6 18.♠fd1 d6 19.♠h3 g5! The Czech FM erects a wall of dark-squared pawns, thereby logically complementing his departed bishop and remaining light-squared one.

20.♠g3 ♗c8 21.♗g4?! ♗xe4! 22.♗xe4 f5 23.♗xd6! ♠xd6 24.♗e2 ♠xd1+ 25.♗xd1 ♠d8 26.♗e1 ♗f7! Although White has

restored the material balance, Black had calculated far ahead that his combination would force favourable exchanges.

27.♠c3 ♗d7 28.♗f1 ♗d1 29.♠e3 ♗xe1+

30.♗xe1 Despite its relatively high drawing margin, this rook endgame is the dream position in which to take advantage of Black's superior structure. By exchanging off enemy firepower, Black has simplified into a purely technical matter, where the drawback of the doubled pawns can no longer be bluffed away through counterplay. Note that those pawns are not weaknesses in themselves, because they can be defended. More decisive is the actual fact that they are backward and inefficient. Effectively, Black's mobile majority awards him an extra pawn on the opposite wing.

One weakness can usually be held, so outflank your opponent through a second front.

♗f6 31.♠c3 ♠d4 32.♠c6+ ♠d6 33.♠c4 ♗e5 34.♗e2 ♠d4! Black taunts White with king and pawn permutations, which would obviously offer zero tolerance to the defender. Aside from bullying the Polish IM into passive defence, there is also the psychological benefit of showing who's boss.

35.♠c6 ♠b4 36.♠c3 ♗d5 37.♗d2 ♠f4 38.♗e2 h5 39.♠c8 ♠b4 40.♠c3 e5 41.♗d2 ♠d4+ 42.♗e2 ♠e4+ 43.♗d2 ♠d4+ 44.♗e2 g4 My ninth grade computing teacher would be jealous of such cruelty.

45.♠c7 ♠b4 46.♠c3 ♠e4+ 47.♗d2 ♠d4+

This two-fold repetition is another professional technique for grinding down the opponent. While his torture is prolonged, you gain more thinking time on the clock.

"Repeating moves in an ending can be very useful. Apart from the obvious gain of time on the clock, one notices that the side with the advantage gains psychological benefit." – Sergey Belavenets.

48.♗e2 f4 49.♠c8 ♠b4 50.♠c3 e4 51.♗d2

h4 That's a breathtaking kingside majority, which a weaker man might have thrust impulsively. Though tempting, that would be wrong (if only someone could have given Bill Clinton the same advice in 1995). First of all, Black meticulously chained his adversary to b3 and f2, before advancing to the maximum. "When you have the advantage and your opponent has a passive piece set-up, one should not hurry matters. With each move, the likelihood of an error from the defending side increases." – José Raúl Capablanca.

52.♠c2 b5! 53.♞c8

[53.axb5?? ♞xb5 would be a fatal zugzwang, in view of 54.♠c1 (or 54.♠d2 a4!) 54...♞c5 .]

53...bxa4 54.♞d8+ ♠e6 55.bxa4 ♞xa4

This transformation of advantages activates the rook for the big breakthrough.

56.♞h8 f3!? 57.gxf3 gxf3 58.♞xh4 ♞c4+!

59.♠d1

[With the help of some little tactics like 59.♠d2?? e3+! , Black ensures that his advanced a- and f-pawns bring home the full point.]

59...♞b4 60.♠e1? a4! 61.♞h6+ ♠e5

62.♞h7 ♠f4 63.♞h4+ ♠g5 64.♞h8 ♞xb2

65.♞a8 ♠f4 66.h4 ♞b1+ 67.♠d2 ♞b2+

68.♠e1 ♞e2+ 69.♠f1 ♞a2 70.♠e1 ♠g4

71.♞e8 ♞e2+ 72.♠f1 a3

0-1

B35

□ **Marjanovic,S**

■ **Cebalo,M**

Titograd

1984

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♣f3 ♣c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♣xd4 g6

5.♣c3 ♠g7 6.♠e3 ♣f6 7.♠c4 0-0 8.♠b3

a5 9.a4 ♣g4! 10.♣xc6!? Surprised

amateurs tend to stumble into this exchanging line, which puts White on the back foot.

However, with intense preparation, some professionals have used it to equalize.

♣xe3! 11.♣xd8

[White could nick a pawn with 11.♣xe7+?! ♞xe7 12.fxe3 ♠xc3+ 13.bxc3 , but those double doubled pawns mean double the trouble. ♞h4+ 14.g3 ♞xe4 15.♠f2 steals back the pawn and castling rights to boot, and both the GMs in S.Easterbook Smith-I.Rogers, Sydney 1996, and M. Geenen-M.Turner, Athens 1997, were

victorious with our favourite move ♞a6! .

I repeat: when the rook is hemmed-in by the c8 bishop, contemplate the idea ...Ra6!]

11...♣xd1 12.♣d5! White is forced to work hard for his 45% score from 100 games:

[a) Among several hazards, he should avoid the queenside wreckage 12.♞xd1 ♠xc3+! 13.bxc3 ♞xd8 . After 14.0-0 d6 15.e5 in the game T.Rommel-A. Abolianin, Vlissingen 1995, Black won yet again with the rook lift ♞a6! , followed by hounding the doubled pawns on the c-file. Play continued 16.♞d4 ♞c6 17.exd6?! ♞dxd6 18.♞fd1 ♠f8 19.♞xd6 ♞xd6 20.♞xd6 exd6 , reaching a pure bishop ending, which was most likely technically lost. This was confirmed by White's inferior bishop, light-squared weaknesses fixed at a4 and c2, and Black's potential to create an outside passed pawn with ...b5.]

[b) 12.♣xd1?! would preserve the knight, but under worse circumstances; after ♞xd8 13.c3 ♠h6 14.0-0 ♞a6! 15.f4 ♞b6 16.♠c4 e6! the horse would remain locked in its stable. These dynamic hurdles soon sent White sprawling in A.Mousa-A.Amin, Sohag 2009, which continued 17.♠b5 d5 18.♣e3 ♠f8! 19.♞ad1?! ♠c5 20.♞fe1 ♠d7 21.exd5? ♠xb5! 22.axb5 ♞xb5 23.♞d2? ♞xd5! .]

[c) White can't afford a tempo on 12.♣xf7?? ♣xc3 13.♣h6+ ♠h8 14.♣f7+ ♞xf7 15.♠xf7 , because ♣xe4 16.♠d5 ♠xb2! 17.♞b1 ♠c3+ 18.♠e2 ♣c5 would walk off with two points, as in C.Ripolles Garcia-D. Doncevic, Palma de Mallorca 1992.]

[d) The 12.♠xf7+?? of R.Van Meegen-D. Hoogland, Dieren 2011, failed for a similar reason, i.e. ♞xf7 13.♣xf7 ♣xc3 14.♣g5 h6 15.♣f3 ♣xe4 .

"The mistakes are all there, waiting to be made." – Savielly Tartakower.]

12...♞xd8 13.♞xd1

[Nobody has yet dared the dubious incursion 13.♣xe7+?! ♠f8 14.♣xc8 in a FIDE tournament. I can imagine Dirty Harry snarling, "Do you feel lucky, punk?", before whipping out his .44 Magnum and ♣xb2! .]

13...♠f8 14.♣b6 ♞a6! It is compulsory to kick away the knight.

[The d7-pawn is frequently preserved with 14...♞b8 15.c3 , yet the abandoned a5-pawn would receive its last rights after d6? 16.♞d5! . Both A.Rocha-R.Araujo, Canela 1987, and A.Tello Nunez-J.Kuzev, Benidorm

2002, went White's way via ♕e6 17.♖b5 ♕xb3 18.♖xb3 e6 19.♖b5! d5 20.exd5 .]
15.♗xc8 ♖xc8 16.♗xd7 ♖b6 To tell you the truth, opposite-coloured bishops do make this position simply equal. However, you can still outplay your opponent, since the five databased games finished +1 =2 -2, and eight of those players were over 2300.

17.h4 ♕xb2 18.h5 ♗e8 19.♖d3 ♖b4 20.hxg6 hxg6

[20...♖xe4+?! 21.♗d2 hxg6?? 22.c3! would disrupt the co-ordination between our bishop and the long diagonal, specifically the endangered h8-square.]

21.♗d2 ♕f6 22.♖h7 e6 Black's more compact structure, of three pawn islands versus two, confers on him a nagging edge. Plus White's bishop is acting like an oversized pawn at b3, and has even less range than actor Keanu Reeves.

23.♖f3

[The e-pawn is actually quite difficult to hold, since 23.f3? could be struck by the undermining break b5! , when 24.axb5 a4 traps the bishop.

Think about creating an outside passed pawn by latching on to the isolated a-pawn.]

23...♗e7 24.e5 ♕g5+ 25.♗d3? ♖d8+

26.♗c3 ♕f4! 27.♗b2 ♕xe5+ 28.c3 ♖f4

29.♖xf4 ♕xf4 Black's initiative has rewarded him a free pawn, which he will convert by combining his advantages on both fronts.

30.g3 ♕g5 31.♕c2 ♖g8 Firstly Cebalo nips in the bud any possible tactics based on the move Bxg6.

32.♕e4 b6 33.♗c2 ♕f6 34.♕d3 ♕e5

35.♗d2 ♗f6 36.♖h4 ♕d6 37.♗e2 ♕c5

Then he relocates his bishop to an untouchable outpost.

38.♖h7 ♖d8 39.f4 ♕d6 40.♗e3 ♖c8! 41.c4

By bullying another pawn on to a light square, Black has increased his bishop's scope and decreased his opponent's.

♖d8 42.♕e4 ♕c5+ 43.♗e2 ♖d4 44.♕d3

♕d6 45.♗e3 ♕c5 Akin to the last model game, the attacker cold-bloodedly repeats the position.

"You will already have noticed how often Capablanca repeated moves, often returning to positions which he had had before. This is not lack of decisiveness or slowness, but the employment of a basic endgame principle which is 'do not hurry'." – Alexander Kotov.

46.♗e2 e5 47.fxe5+ ♗e6 48.♖h8 ♗xe5 Step-by-step, Black turns his majority into a

passed pawn.

49.♖e8+ ♗f6 50.♖e4 ♖d8 Obviously a pure opposite-coloured bishop ending would be an easy draw.

51.♖f4+ ♗g7 52.♕e4 ♖e8 53.♗f3 f5!

After stamping out the opponent's counterplay, Black is ready to infiltrate.

54.♕c6 ♖e3+ 55.♗g2 ♗f6 56.♖f3 ♖e2+

57.♗f1 ♖c2! 58.g4!? When the defender is tired of being poked and prodded, he tends to lash out.

[Alternatively, 58.♕b5 would let in the king via ♗g5 59.♖d3 ♗g4 .]

58...♖xc4 59.gxf5 gxf5 60.♕d7 f4

Phase one is complete.

61.♕b5 ♖b4 62.♕c6 ♕e3 The bishop and pawn mutually defend themselves.

63.♗e2 ♗e5 64.♖f1 ♗d6 Black plans to lift the b5/f3 blockade.

65.♕e8 ♗c5 66.♖d1 ♖b2+ 67.♗f3 ♕d2

68.♗e2 ♕c1+ 69.♗d3 ♕e3 This to-ing and fro-ing keeps the defender at the board, where he agonises over mating nets, zero winning chances, and how late he'll return home.

70.♗e4 ♗c4 71.♕c6 ♖b4 Cheap tricks, such as the discovery ...Kc5+, feed White's paranoia.

72.♗f3 ♗c3 73.♗e2 ♖b2+ 74.♗f3 ♖c2

75.♕b5 ♖h2 76.♕d7 ♗c2 77.♖d6 ♖h1

78.♗e2 ♖a1 79.♕c6 ♖a3 80.♖d1 ♖c3

81.♕d5 ♖c5 Finally, Black manages to overload the bishop.

82.♕e4+ ♗c3 83.♖a1 b5! 84.axb5 ♖xb5

Phase two is complete. The two passed pawns are theoretically sufficient to win, but Cebalo is in no hurry to prove it.

"A passed pawn increases in strength as the number of pieces on the board diminishes." – Jose Capablanca.

85.♗f3 ♖c5 86.♕g6 ♖g5 87.♕e8 ♖g3+

88.♗e4 ♖g5 89.♕c6 ♖c5 90.♕d5 ♖b5

91.♕e6 ♖b4+ 92.♗f3 ♖b5 93.♗e4 ♕d2

94.♖a3+ ♗b4 95.♖a2 ♕e3 96.♕d7 ♖c5

97.♖a1 ♖c4+ 98.♗f3 ♕d2 99.♖a2 ♖d4

100.♕e8 ♖d3+ 101.♗g4? f3! 102.♕g6

[Otherwise the pawn cannot be halted: for instance, 102.♗g3 ♕e1+ 103.♗h2 f2 104.♗g2?? ♖g3+! 105.♗xg3 f1♙+ .]

102...♖d6! 103.♗xf3 ♖xg6 104.♖xd2 ♖e6!

In this theoretically won ending, the cut-off king is powerless to prevent the promotion of the passed pawn. Alas, this isn't an endgame manual, and anyway I don't want my chatter to spoil the Croatian GM's immaculate technique.

105.♖d4+ ♘b3 106.♖d8 a4 107.♖b8+ ♘a2
 108.♘f2 a3 109.♖b7 ♘a1 110.♖a7 a2
 111.♖b7 ♖c6! 112.♘e2 ♖c1 113.♘d3 ♖b1
 114.♖c7 ♘b2 115.♖b7+ ♘c1 116.♖c7+
 ♘d1 117.♖h7 ♖b3+ 118.♘c4 ♖c3+!
 119.♘d4 ♖a3
 0-1

□ Paganoglou,A
 ■ Santrian,A
 Kallithea 2006
 [Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6
 5.♗c3 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♗f6 7.♗c4 0-0 8.♗b3
 a5 9.f3 d5!?

[This bold gambit is not only the best, but also the only route to equality or more, since 9 f3 cunningly cuts out both 9...a4 10.♗xa4 ♗xe4 (Svidler-Topalov),]

[and 9...♗g4 (as per our last two games).]

[Nevertheless, as we learnt in Chapter One, f2-f3 always weakens e3 and the a7-g1 diagonal, and begs for our favourite counterstrike. 9...d5 allows a grand total of three captures, none of which offers White any advantage. Shirov-Lautier will demonstrate how 10.exd5 ♗b4 leaves the b3-bishop offside,]

[whereas getting rid of it with 9...d5 10.♗xd5 ♗xd5 11.♗xd5 weakens the light squares to f5! (Zhang Pengxiang-Ni Hua). Let us first dispense with the least popular option, which in fact concedes a tangible edge.]

10.♗xd5?! White has scored a miserable 30% from 30 games, by taking off the c3- and f6-knights. Once they no longer block the long diagonal, our AC/DC bishop starts revving up along that "highway to hell".

♗xd5 11.exd5 Otherwise:

[a) 11.♗xd5? would merely lose a piece to the pin ♗xd4 12.♗xd4 ♗xd4 13.♖xd4 e6 , the most recent of the three examples being L.Roessler-K.Tong, Oberhof 2012.]

[b) 11.♗xc6? bxc6 12.exd5 did block that punch, in T.Pym-Y.Kuzubov, Hastings 2005/06, but promptly got "thunderstruck" by the Ukrainian GM's a4! 13.♗c4 a3! right hook.]

11...♗b4 12.c4?! This error scores a deservedly low 35%, but White greedily clung on to the pawn in 16 of the 20 recorded games.

B35

2006

[Instead, he should settle for damage control via 12.c3 ♗xd5 13.♗xd5 ♖xd5 , as in the drawn T.Berta-Z.Eberth, Hungarian League 1996. Still, if anyone is to be preferred, it is Black who is pressing along the light squares, thanks to his bishop-pair and minority attack.]

12...a4! Harry Houdini himself couldn't escape from White's predicament. The reason is that there are too many latent threats against the loose bishop, knight and c4-pawn... besides the fact that he's already dead.

13.♗c2? This is a losing move, despite being chosen two-thirds of the time:

[a) The bishop cannot seek refuge the other way with 13.♗xa4? ♖a5! 14.♗b5 , in view of the double check ♗c2+ 15.♘f2 ♗xe3! 16.♘xe3 ♖b6 . In spite of the two-pawn deficit, our dark-squared initiative confirms an advantage of at least '+3', as the pinned knight will be inevitably snatched by ...e5.

"Even the laziest king flees wildly in the face of double check." – Aaron Nimzowitsch.]

[b) In answer to 13.a3 , the Russian GM in I. Caspi-E.Krivoborodov, Belfort 2005, won with ♗xd5 (however, the new idea 13...axb3! 14.axb4 ♖xa1 15.♖xa1 e5! 16.♗xb3 ♖h4+ 17.♗f2 ♖xc4 is probably more convincing, since White's king and pawns are rendered sitting ducks) 14.cxd5 axb3 15.♖xb3 ♖a5+! 16.♖c3 ♖xd5 in 20 more moves.]

[c) 13.♖d2! is the most tenacious, although Black still won in J.Mas Garces-H.Lopez Rodriguez, Spain 2007, with ♗xd5!? (moreover, my improvement 13...axb3 14.♗xb3 ♖a6! regains the pawn more calmly, thanks to the pin 15.0-0 ♖d6 16.♖ad1 ♗e6!) 14.cxd5 , despite the anti-positional ♗xd4?! .]

13...e5! This hidden resource is the only reason that Black is winning. The knight must depart from its centralized location, from where it covers both the c2-bishop and indirectly the c4-pawn. ...e5 blocks the fianchettoed bishop, but is sometimes tactically worth it.

14.♗b5

[Having said that, the German 2200 in M. Heyne-J.Jurek, Aschach 2001, stubbornly replied 14.dxe6?? ♗xd4 , and now resigned, in view of 15.♗xd4 ♗xc2+ 16.♖xc2 ♖xd4 .]

[Instead, J.Miralles Bruges-F.Diaz Rubj.com

Barcelona 1995, unveiled the sneaky fork
14.♔d2 ♖xc2+ 15.♗xc2 ♜h4+! 16.g3
♜xc4 , nabbing that important defensive
pawn.

An early f2-f3 can haunt White for the rest of
the game; not only does it obviously weaken
the e3-bishop and a7-g1 diagonal, but even
the h4-e1 diagonal is susceptible to ...

Qh4+ tactics.]

14...♜h4+! 15.♔f2 ♜xc4 16.♗c3?

[The correct retreat 16.♗a3 still wouldn't
make White's lost cause worth analysing.]

16...a3! Our favourite flanker takes down the
last dark-square defences.

17.♔b3 axb2?!

[To line up a devastating discovered check
with 17...♗d3+ 18.♔f1 ♜a6! would make a
more compelling argument for resignation.]

18.♔xc4 bxa1♜ 19.♜xa1 ♗c2+ 20.♔d2
♗xa1 21.♞xa1 ♔f5 22.g4? ♞fc8!

The extra exchange is already decisive, but
the Armenian FM converts it with panache.

23.♔b3? ♔h6+! 24.♔e2 ♞xc3 25.gxf5
♞xb3

0-1

B35

□ **Shirov,A**

■ **Lautier,J**

Tilburg

1997

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6
5.♗c3 ♔g7 6.♔e3 ♗f6 7.♔c4 0-0 8.♔b3
a5 9.f3 d5!? 10.exd5 ♗b4 10 exd5 is safer
than the dubious 10 Nxd5?!, which we refuted
in the previous game. By retaining a pair of
knights, White temporarily restrains our
bishops, and has thereby scored a more
respectable 40% from 300 games.

11.♗de2 He cannot afford to hand over the
sacrificed pawn without a fight:

[a) 11.0-0 ♗fxd5 12.♗xd5 ♗xd5 13.♔xd5
♜xd5 14.c3 would look like a "death wish",
and not in the cool way portrayed by
Charles Bronson in that famous 1974 action
movie. White can hope for nothing more
than grovelling for a draw, as in P.Lemmens-
H.Winants, Huy 1993. In all the other nine
cases, he has been painfully ground down
by Black's bishop-pair and minority attack:
-- (The Italian IM in N.Accatatto Martin-F.
Braga, Lorca 2011, modestly traded down
via 14...♞d8 15.♗b5 ♔e6 16.♜xd5 ♔xd5

17.♔b6 ♔c4! 18.♔xd8 ♔xf1 19.♔xf1 ♞xd8
. He went on to convert his technical trumps
of the longer-ranged minor piece, minority
attack, and even the kingside majority that
he queened on move 46.

; I am even more impressed by R.Sadykov-B.
Savchenko, Moscow 2005, where the
Russian GM displayed his dominance over
the light squares through 14...b5! 15.♗b3
♜c4 16.♜e1 ♔f5 , which he turned into the
full point in just a dozen more moves.]

[b) 11.♗db5 has mustered an even worse
30% success rate, as a result of our
customary a4! :

A) 12.♔xa4? would leave most of White's
minor pieces en prise after ♗fxd5

. One of the bishops would actually have
to wave goodbye in the event of
13.♗xd5?? (while the 13.♔c5?

of A.Kerdik-M.Jozefek, Senica 2011, also
loses material to the fork ♗xc3 14.♗xc3
♜a5!) 13...♗xd5 .;

B) 12.♗xa4 ♗fxd5 13.♔d2 ♔d7

14.♗bc3 seemed like a rather superficial
defence in U.Cvetanovic-D.Kalinic, Serbia
2012.;

C) 12.♔c4 could hardly extricate White
from the queenside mess either, and the
Bulgarian GM in E.Paoli-N.Spiridonov,
Agard 1976, chalked up a miniature with
a3! 13.0-0 axb2 14.♞b1 ♔f5 15.♔b3
♞c8 16.♜d2?! ♗xc2! 17.♔xc2 ♔xc2
18.♜xc2?? ♗xd5 19.♔f2 ♗xc3 0-1.

"No matter how much theory progresses,
how radically styles change, chess play
is inconceivable without tactics." –
Samuel Reshevsky.;

D) 12.--]

11...a4! 12.♗xa4 White is forced on to the
back foot without a moment to stabilize:

[a) 12.♔xa4? ♗fxd5 would break the LPDO
rule written by John Nunn:

A) Even the future GM in A.Kogan-Y.Afek,
Ramat Gan 1992, learnt this the hard way.
My friend Artur continued 13.♔d2?! ♜b6
14.a3 ♗xc3 15.♗xc3 ♗c6 16.♔b3 ♗d4!
17.♜c1 ♞a5!? 18.♗e4 ♞e5 19.♔e3 ♔f5
20.0-0? ♔xe4 21.fxe4 ♞xe4 22.♞e1?
♞xe3! (22...♔h6!!) 23.♜xe3 ♗e2+
24.♞xe2 ♔d4 . A clear example of "Loose
Pieces Drop Off!";

B) 13.♔f2 was the lesser evil in A.Cosoi-T.
Stevens, Santiago de Chile 2011, but
Black terminated it like a machine. The
Terminator himself would be jealous of

the exchange sacrifice ♖xa4! 14.♘xa4 ♕f5! 15.♞c1 ♜a5!? . After returning it with 16.c3?? ♘d3+ 17.♙f1 ♘xc1 18.♘xc1 , White couldn't rescue his other piece from the merciless execution: ♞d8! 19.♜b3 ♕h6! 20.♘e2 b5! 21.♘c5 ♘e3+ 22.♗e3 ♗e3 23.♘d4 ♞xd4! , based on 24.cxd4?? ♜d2 .;

C) 13.--]

[b) 12.♗c4? was powerfully countered by ♜c7! 13.b3 axb3 14.cxb3 ♘fxd5! in I.Shornikov-P.Tishin, Kharkov 2010. The Russian GM regained his piece with 15.♘xd5 ♘xd5 16.♗xd5 ♞d8! 17.♞c1 ♜a5+ 18.b4 ♜xd5 19.♜xd5 ♞xd5 20.♘c3? ♞d3! while obtaining a developmental advantage, which became 0-1 before move 30.]

[c) The double-attack motif was well illustrated by P.Gutierrez Barrientos-F. Sierra Canosa, Asturias 2000, which briskly punished 12.♗c5?? by ♘a6! 13.♗xe7 ♜xe7 14.♗xa4 ♘xd5 15.♜xd5 ♗xc3+! 16.bxc3 ♜h4+ .

When the decoy sacrifice ...a5-a4 lures White's bishop on to the loose c4- or a4-squares, keep your eyes peeled for...Qh4+ or ...Qa5+ forks.]

12...♘fxd5 If he is to prove his equality, White must defend accurately against our initiative.

13.♗f2

[Instead, 13.♗d2 appears to withstand the most popular response ♗f5 . Indeed, in S. Tiviakov-M.Turner, Bunratty 1999, the AC/DC specialist trusted it enough to try it as White. He consolidated his extra pawn with 14.a3! ♘c6 15.0-0 b5! 16.♘ac3 , and proceeded to outplay the Scottish GM.]

[I recommend the improvement 13.♗d2 ♗e6!?. Black has won all of the six databased games, whose players have ranged between 2200 and 2500 on both sides:

A) The difference after 14.a3 ♘c6 is that our bishop supports the central knight and eyeballs b3. In G.Wastell-I. Rogers, Canberra 1990, 15.♘c5?! (15.♞b1 did preserve it in M.Ginzburg-G. Guseinov, Patras 2001; nevertheless, the Azerbaijani GM correctly entered the open endgame ♘a5! 16.♗xd5 ♗xd5 17.b3 ♘c6 18.♗e3 ♜a5+! 19.♜d2 ♜xd2+ 20.♗xd2 a pawn down, whence his long-ranged bishops and rooks later carried the

day) 15...♗b2 16.♘e6 ♗e6 17.0-0?! ♗xa1 18.♜xa1 sacrificed too much material.;

B) 14.♘c5?! ♜b6! 15.♘e6 ♗e6 leaves White unable to castle. Gadir Guseinov apparently owes his current 2600+ rating to this lethal weapon, not to mention his attacking precision. B.Galstian-G.Guseinov, Oropesa del Mar 1999, was already strategically decided by 16.♘c3 (later in the same tournament, Guseinov beat a now-2700 super-GM with 16.a3 ♞ad8! 17.♜c1! ♘c6 18.♘f4?? ♘d4 19.♗xd5 exd5 20.♜d1 ♜xb2 21.0-0 ♜xc2 22.♜xc2 ♘xc2 23.♞ac1 ♘d4 24.♞fe1 ♘b3 in the miniature A.

Areshchenko-G.Guseinov, Oropesa del Mar 1999.) 16...♞ad8 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5? 18.♜e2 ♗xb2 19.♗xd5? ♞xd5 20.♞b1 ♞fd8 , and sure enough the h1-rook never needed to be reset for the next round. "As long as my opponent has not yet castled, on each move I seek a pretext for an offensive. Even when I realize that the king is not in danger." – Mikhail Tal.;

C) 14.--]

13...♗f5

[Don't bother with the overambitious 13...♞xa4?! 14.♗xa4 ♜a5 . Indeed, the eminent late Hungarian GM in G.Sax-A.Haik, Smederevska Palanka 1982, obtained a clear advantage with 15.0-0! ♞d8 (if 15...♜xa4 16.c3!) 16.a3! ♘a6 17.♗b3 ♗xb2 18.♜e1! ♜xe1 19.♞axe1 .]

14.0-0 White finally returns the pawn, so as to castle out of trouble.

b5! 15.♘ac3 ♘xc3 16.♘xc3 ♜xd1

17.♞fxd1 ♗xc2

[Being master games, most of them have concluded with an abrupt handshake, such as after 17...♘xc2 18.♞ac1 (kudos to the Slovakian GM in M.Jurcik-J.Plachetka, Stare Mesto 2004, who gradually exploited his bishops after 18.♗xc2 ♗xc2 19.♞d2 ♗b3 20.♘xb5 ♗xa2) 18...♘b4 19.♘d5 ♘xd5 20.♗xd5 ♗xb2 . Having said that, there are still plenty of imbalances with which to outplay your opponent.]

18.♗xc2 ♘xc2 19.♞ac1 ♗xc3 20.♞xc2 ♗f6

Another encounter, L.Kritz-E.Perelshteyn, New England 2007, also stopped here, as a result of the mass liquidation.

"I think it's almost definite that the game is a draw theoretically." – Bobby Fischer.

1/2-1/2

□ Zhang Pengxiang

■ Ni Hua

Beijing

2001

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 g6 4.d4 cxd4
5.♘xd4 ♙g7 6.♙e3 ♘f6 7.♙c4 0-0 8.♙b3
a5 9.f3 d5!? 10.♙xd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xd5

[11.exd5 ♘b4 12.♘de2 is equally popular:

A) The forcing line 12...♙f5 13.♙c1 b5!
14.a3! ♘xc2+ 15.♙xc2 ♙xc2 16.♙xc2 b4
17.♘a4 ♙xd5 was hotly debated in the
90s, but White's 70% success rate makes
me wonder why. Tiviakov himself had a
tough draw with a lower-rated GM in Y.
Yakovich-S.Tiviakov, Port Erin 2001.;

B) I recommend his updated preference
12...e6!?

B1) 13.a3 leads to ♘xd5 14.♘xd5
exd5 15.♙d4! ♙h6! , as in R.
Ponomarev-S.Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee
2007. Most other games are also drawn
here, as White's slightly superior pawn
structure is dynamically balanced by our
two bishops.;

B2) 13.0-0 ♘xd5 14.♘xd5 exd5
15.♙d4 ♙h6 is similar, and N.Short-P.
Kotsur, World Team Championship,
Lucerne 1997, split the point. It is worth
noting that it featured our rook lift 16.♙e1
♙a6! , and so did the master bout G.
Iskov-B.Sahl, Vejle 1982, which Black
eventually won.;

B3) 13.d6?! should also be effectively
met by the ♙a6! of S.Aflalo-S.Gagare,
Porto Carras 2010.;

B4) 13.dxe6?! ♙xe6 turns into a
souped-up version of our Brosa Alvarez-
Alonso Alvarez gambit. On the only two
occasions that White dared to face it, he
failed to survive Black's lead in
development. In J.Wawrzaszek-A.Vaja,
Stillwater 2007, 14.a3 ♙xd1+
(14...♘d5! 15.♙d4 ♘xc3 16.bxc3 ♙e8!
17.♙f2 ♙c7 was an even more
problematic challenge set by the
Peruvian IM in N.Borge-C.Guerrero
Oblitas, Manila Olympiad 1992) 15.♙xd1
deprived him of castling rights.

"It so often happens that, after sacrificing
a pawn, a player aims not to obtain the
initiative for it, but to regain sacrificed
material." – Efim Geller.;

B5) 13.--;

C) 12...--]

11...f5! Having exchanged off White's light-
squared bishop, we should activate our own
unopposed one, by chipping away at the light
squares.

[In fact, his d5-knight is now threatened by
the pin: 11...f5 12.0-0? ♘xd4 13.♙xd4
♙xd4+ 14.♙xd4 e6 was J.Norberg-H.

Lindberg, Gothenburg 2006.]

12.♘xc6 bxc6 13.♘b6 ♙b8 14.♙xd8 ♙xd8
15.♙d1 ♙xd1+ 16.♙xd1 60 out of 100
games in this line have traded straight into
this endgame. By now we are well acquainted
with this split pawn structure, which permits
our rook and bishop to converge on b2. Alas,
as a result of the mass simplification, most
analysis engines rightly evaluate this position
close to '0.00'.

fxe4

[The alternative 16...♙xb2 is chosen just as
frequently, though admittedly I struggle to
understand why. After 17.♘xc8 ♙xc8
18.exf5 gxf5 19.♙e2 White has scored an
astonishing +14 =8 -0, owing to his greater
piece activity and fewer pawn islands. Sure
enough that lonely a5-pawn fell in C.
Rubsamen-K.Wallach, Las Vegas 2012, and
the player whom we first met in Chiang-
Wallach was lucky to draw. In the GM draw
N.Mitkov-M.Cebalo, Cannes 1996, yet
another AC/DC regular lost track of his a-
pawn.]

17.♘xc8

[Super-GM Ivanchuk tried to liven things up
with the pawn sacrifice 17.fxe4 ♙xb2
18.♙e2 ♙e5 19.♙b1!? ♙xh2 , but shook
hands a dozen moves later in V.Ivanchuk-
Su.Polgar, Monaco (blindfold) 1994.]

17...♙xc8 18.b3

[18.fxe4 would transpose to the
aforementioned game, in addition to L.
Perpinya Rofes-J.Moreno Ruiz, Barbera del
Valles 2012, which the Spanish IMs drew.]

18...exf3 19.gxf3 ♙f7 When the Israeli IM
Tsesarsky annotated this game for
ChessBase, this was a novelty. It has been
repeated several times, since it is so natural
to advance His Majesty for the final phase.

[In the past, 19...a4 was a more popular
attempt to get rid of the dark-squared
weakness, but it facilitates White's plan of
trading his queenside majority into a passed
pawn. In the rook ending of 'MChess Pro'-Su.
Polgar, The Hague 1995, the computer
actually pushed that passer to a7 to bring

about resignation.

"If you study the classic examples of endgame play, you will see how the king was brought up as soon as possible, even though there seemed no particular hurry at the time." – Alexander Kotov.]

20.♙e2 ♖e5 21.a4 ♙e6 22.♗b6 ♖a8

23.♙d3 ♗d6 24.♗f2 ♖f8 25.♙e2 ♖f5

The isolated weaknesses on the rooks' files cancel each other out, so it's "much ado about nothing", to quote Shakespeare.

26.h4 ♖e5+ 27.♙d3 ♗d5+ 28.♙e2 ♖e5+

29.♙d3 ♗d5+ 30.♙e2 ♖e5+

1/2-1/2

Chapter Three

The Main Line: Classical Variation

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6 5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Be3 Nf6



After having learnt all about Black's counterattacking resources, you can understand why many players prefer to develop the white pieces more cautiously. [Chapter One](#) proved that White cannot afford the time to castle queenside, because any dreams of a Yugoslav Attack with 7 f3 or 7 Qd2 are soon shattered by our favourite ...d7-d5 thrust. Next, [Chapter Two](#) highlighted the liabilities of White's light-squared bishop. On c4 it actually encourages ...d5, in the form of tactics like 7...0-0 8 0-0 Nxe4!. Meanwhile, upon retreating to b3, it is confronted by the other gambit ...a7-a5-a4. So where else can the bishop go?

Line A) 7 Be2

[\(View in Game Format\)](#)



The first hundred games ever recorded in the main line Accelerated Dragon range from the years 1883 to 1955. Believe it or not, more than 60 of them modestly continued 7 Be2. By contrast, in this digital age it is seen only 15% of the time, and has been eclipsed by the more testing 7 Bc4 (50%). Opening theory has become more and more demanding since 1966, when *Chess Informant* began publishing worldwide. Two decades later, from this increasing thirst for knowledge, was born *ChessBase*, which now offers millions of games at the touch of a button. This isn't a history lesson, but suffice it to say that information technology has changed chess beyond our wildest dreams.

Nowadays there are generally two types of people who play 7 Be2. First is the average club player, whom you will probably meet more often. He simply sticks to the basics and gets out his pieces, especially when surprised by an innovative opening like the AC/DC. Be prepared to pressure such an unambitious opponent from start to finish. You will recognise the familiar structural imbalances, which keep cropping up in the shape of split pawns at a7 and c6.

Second is the theoretical heavyweight, who may have arrived at the same conclusion that Black is hitting hard in those trendier 7 Bc4 lines. Therefore he hangs back in his own corner, and discreetly castles kingside, which is typically labelled the 'classical variation' of any opening. Indeed, within the standard Dragon, it is a fashionable weapon pioneered by Russian super-GMs like Svidler, Kamsky and Timofeev.

Of course, we have no intention of co-operatively transposing into pure Dragon territory, via 7...d6 8 0-0 0-0. On the contrary, we will release the central tension as soon as possible, although some knight trades are admittedly inevitable. As I mentioned in the Introduction, they can work in your favour if you need a draw for your team, tournament or rating points against a stronger opponent. In that case, I will provide you with some sneaky cop-outs to simplify down to an easy draw, but we can also continue to battle for the full point.

Look out for these liquidating lines to force a draw against higher-rated opposition.

7...0-0



We always castle on the seventh move, in order to achieve full harmony before landing the first punch. Now White has four candidates that we need to examine:

- a) 8 0-0 has occurred in 3,000 out of the 5,000 games in *Mega Database 2013*, and scored 40% due to the immediate equalizer 8...d5!. [Zelic-Feletar](#), [Landau-Lalic](#), [Vasile-Peptan](#) and [Heinrich-Karpatchev](#) are devoted to this most common choice.
- b) 8 Qd2 (a 35% score from 1,000 games) is proven even worse by 8...d5! in [Fuller-Miles](#).
- c) 8 Nb3 (45% from 700) transposes to the 7 Nb3 0-0 8 Be2 of [Panagiotopoulos-Papadopoulou](#).
- d) 8 f4 (45% from 200) deserves the attention of [Shahsavari-Sax](#).

Line B) 7 Nb3

[\(View in Game Format\)](#)



This dual-purpose move has scored a respectable 50% from 2,000 games, so don't brush it off too lightly. Not only does removing the knight from d4 sidestep ...Ng4 discoveries, but it unleashes the queen against ...d5. By now, though, you know what to do whenever a piece retreats to b3. If not, [Panagiotopoulos-Papadopoulou](#) and [Pribylova-Blum](#) will reveal all.

□ **Classical Variation**
■ **in Game Format**

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6
5.♗c3 ♗g7 6.♙e3 ♗f6 After having learnt all
about Black's counterattacking resources, you
can understand why many players prefer to
develop the white pieces more cautiously.
Chapter One proved that White cannot afford
the time to castle queenside, because any
dreams of a Yugoslav Attack with **7.f3**

[or 7.♖d2 are soon shattered by our
favourite ...d7-d5 thrust.]

[Next, Chapter Two highlighted the liabilities
of White's light-squared bishop. On c4 it
actually encourages ...d5, in the form of
tactics like 7.♙c4 0-0 8.0-0 ♗xe4!

. Meanwhile, upon retreating to b3, it is
confronted by the other gambit ...a7-a5-a4.
So where else can the bishop go?]

B34

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and Timofeev.

[Of course, we have no intention of co-
operatively transposing into pure Dragon
territory, via 7.♙e2 d6 8.0-0 0-0

. On the contrary, we will release the
central tension as soon as possible,

although some knight trades are
admittedly inevitable. As I mentioned in

the Introduction, they can work in your
favour if you need a draw for your team,

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Look out for these liquidating lines to force

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7...0-0 We always castle on the seventh move,
in order to achieve full harmony before
landing the first punch. Now White has four
candidates that we need to examine: **8.--**

[a) 8.0-0 has occurred in 3,000 out of the 5,
000 games in 'Mega Database 2013', and
scored 40% due to the immediate equalizer
d5! . We have four games devoted to this
most common choice.]

[b) 8.♖d2 (a 35% score from 1,000 games)
is proven even worse by d5! in Fuller-
Miles.]

[c) 8.♗b3 (45% from 700) transposes to the
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[d) 8.f4 (45% from 200) deserves the
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B34

Line A) 7 Be2

[Peter Lalic]

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5.♗c3 ♗g7 6.♙e3 ♗f6 7.♙e2 The first
hundred games ever recorded in the main
line Accelerated Dragon range from the years
1883 to 1955. Believe it or not, more than 60
of them modestly continued 7 Be2. By
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gets out his pieces, especially when surprised
by an innovative opening like the AC/DC. Be
prepared to pressure such an unambitious
opponent from start to finish. You will
recognise the familiar structural imbalances,

B34

□ **Fuller,M**
■ **Miles,A**

London

1975

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6
5.♗c3 ♗g7 6.♙e3 ♗f6 7.♙e2 0-0 8.♖d2

d5! It's not exactly sophisticated, is it? This simple plan works in practically every variation of the main line. Just castle, promptly push a pawn two squares, and you've got it "made in the shade".

9.exd5

[This is half as popular as 9.♖xc6, which precipitates the exchanges bxc6 10.exd5 ♖xd5 11.♖xd5 cxd5 12.c3. Despite roughly equal chances, White must be vigilant to blockade our central phalanx. As a matter of fact, the overwhelming statistic +6 =16 -27 has proven his defensive task to be very difficult in tournament practice.

I suggest that you briskly continue ♖a5, simultaneously dodging the d-file pin, tying down his rook to the defence of a2, and supporting your own a-pawn. After 13.0-0 ♖d8 14.♗fd1, the strategic battle revolves solely around the d4-square. The Serbian IM in L.Fonseca-D.Stamenkovic, Porto Alegre 2011, eventually transformed the d-pawn into a passer, and won a double-rook ending. Nevertheless, beware of creating weaknesses through impatience. Take for instance A.Kubikova-L.Rerabkova, Frymberk 2002, where Black ceded the initiative to e5 15.♗h6 ♗h8 16.♗f3, and soon rushed into some losing complications.

"Lack of patience is probably the most common reason for losing a game." – Bent Larsen.]

9...♖xd5 10.♖xd5?! This inaccuracy has happened in a grand total of 300 out of the 400 databased games.

[Instead, White should seek equality in the aforementioned variation via 10.♖xc6 bxc6 11.♖xd5 cxd5 12.c3.]

10...♖xd4! This sneaky intermezzo already claims Black a slight plus.

[By comparison, the more popular 10...♖xd5 is merely equal. A dozen games have repeated with 11.♗f3 ♖c4 12.♗e2 ♖d5 13.♗f3 ♖c4 14.♗e2, such as the master draw Z.Stojcevski-D.Stojanovski, Struga 2010. That's even more repetitive than an episode of 'Last of the Summer Wine', which is saying something.]

11.♗xd4 The least of the evils. Witness:

[a) 11.c4 ♖xe2 12.♖xe2 would part with the bishop-pair in an open position, as in A. Toste Nieto-J.Campo Echevarria, Figueres 2011.]

[b) 11.♗c4 would preserve that bishop, but

surrender the other one to the discovered attack ♖f5 from M.Kecze-P.Horvath, Heviz 2011.]

[c) The greedy 11.♖xe7+? ♖xe7 12.♗xd4 ♗xd4 13.♖xd4 ♖e8! has been the losing continuation of a dozen games: 14.--

(A few dropped the pinned piece after 14.♖c4?? ♗f5! with the unstoppable threat of ...Rac8. Let's just say, it wasn't the toughest pairing for the Spanish IM behind the black pieces in A.Sempere Gomis-R. Alvarez Ibarra, Pamplona 2002.; The 2000 Elo-rated player in R.Galicki-J.Widera, Polanica Zdroj 2011, had to resign upon 14.♖d2?? ♗g4! 15.0-0 ♖xe2.; If 14.♖e3, Black should keep the queens on the board and the enemy king stuck in the middle by ♖b4+! 15.c3 ♖a4. The miniature P. Sedlacek-P.Petrik, Rychnov 2007, concluded tragicomically 16.♖d2? ♖e4? 17.♗f1 ♗h3! 18.♗f3?? ♖xf3!.)]

11...♖xd5 12.♗xg7 ♖xg2 The fork wins a pawn, since White must give back the piece "one way or another" – which was a rocking 1978 hit by Blondie, by the way.

13.0-0-0 Otherwise:

[a) White shouldn't swap rooks by 13.♗xf8?! ♖xh1+ 14.♗f1 ♖e4+ 15.♗e2 ♗xf8 16.0-0-0 ♗e6, as he would run out of bluffing material. In M.Martinez Cordobes-R. Silva Nazzari, Uruguay 1983, Black managed to take away the queens as well, in order to march his 4-2 kingside majority to victory.]

[b) You might initially consider 13.♖d4? scary, and so did three white players who were rated over 2200. Those derelict dark squares do look like a fianchetto nightmare, until you realise that tactics take precedence. e5! throws a spanner in the works with tempo, and is even more irritating than when people use speakerphone on trains. My mother does it for every single mobile call; don't give her any leniency just because she's a WGM!

"Tactics involve calculations that can tax the human brain, but when you boil them down they are actually the simplest part of chess, and are almost trivial compared to strategy." – Garry Kasparov.

Here:

A) 14.♖d6 would permit us to complete development through ♗xg7 15.0-0-0 ♖e4 16.♗d3 ♖f4+ 17.♗b1 ♗g4.;

B) 14.♗xe5?? would relinquish all White's

threats, thereby allowing the materialistic ♖xh1+. In the event of 15.♙f1 (15.♙d2 talks the talk, but doesn't walk the walk; J. Paszler-V.Kalisky, Asztalos 2007, abruptly finished ♗xa1 16.♙h8 f6 17.♙xf6 ♙e6! 0-1) 15...♙h3 16.0-0-0 ♙xf1 , don't be afraid of ghosts like 17.♙h8 , which are warded off by f6 18.♙xf6 ♗f3! 19.♙h8 ♗f4+ 20.♗xf4 ♙xf4 .;

C) 14.♗xe5? ♖xh1+ again nets decisive material. After 15.♙f1 (15.♙d2 was refuted more than half a century ago, by the famous Russian GM in I. Pogrebissky-V.Simagin, Tula 1950: ♙d8+ 16.♙d3 ♗d5 was more recently copied by a Bulgarian GM in T.Fogarasi-A.Delchev, German League 2011, whose opponent resigned the moment after 17.♗f6? ♙d6) 15...f6! 16.♙xf6 , the Hungarian GM with Black in F.Frink-A.Horvath, Zalakaros 1998, later triumphed after ♙h3? (it was not an easy ride, by any means, but the improvement 16...♙g4! 17.♙d2 ♗c6! would end the race there and then) 17.0-0-0 ♙xf1 18.♗e6+ ♙f7 19.♙c3! .;

D) 14.--]

13...♙xg7 14.h4 ♙f5 Black is a pawn to the good, and the kingside majority protects His Majesty. Still he must react energetically, and the first English Grandmaster was up to the task.

15.h5

[White has lost all six of the documented cases, but 15.♙hg1? is even worse. The Spanish IM in M.Fabre Massana-D.Garcia Roman, Barbera del Valles 2009, snatched the second pawn with ♗xf2 16.♙df1 ♗c5 , before triumphantly simplifying into a rook ending.]

15...♙ac8! 16.♙d3

[16.c3 would too kindly let the queens go as well. After ♗e4! 17.♙d3 ♗xd3 18.♗xd3 ♙xd3 19.♙xd3 ♙fd8 both G.Primavera-R. Cosulich, Sottomarina 1973, and T.Steffen-G.Gabor, Bad Harzburg 2007, were wrapped up in Black's favour.]

16...♙xd3 17.♗xd3 ♗xf2 18.♙d2 ♗f4!

19.♙b1?

[The interjection 19.h6+ ♙g8 of Z.Ahmadi-H.Chavez, Istanbul 2012, would avoid the upcoming unpleasantness. Then again, White's attack would also dissolve, as the queen cannot reach the long diagonal to g7. Besides, even if it could, we would be able to block with ...e5, ...f6, or ...Qf6, in my

descending order of preference.]

19...♙fd8! 20.♗xd8 ♙xd8 21.♙xd8 g5!

The late, great Tony Miles was right to aim for this ending, confident that the three connected passed pawns would win the day. "It often happens that a player is so fond of his advantageous position that he is reluctant to transpose to a winning endgame." – Samuel Reshevsky.

22.h6+ ♙f6 23.♙h8 ♗f3! 24.♙e1? ♙g6! 25.a3

[Black consolidated the kingside by calculating little yet important details, such as back rank mate after 25.♙xe7?? .]

25...e6 26.♙f8 g4 Cliché or not, passed pawns must be pushed.

27.♙g1 ♙xh6 28.♙g8 ♙h5! 29.♙g7 h6

30.♙e1 ♙h4 31.♙h7 h5 To retro gamers out there, this is jokingly called "space invaders".

32.♙e5 g3 33.♙g7 g2 34.♙eg5 ♗f1+

35.♙a2 ♗c4+ 36.b3?

[36.♙b1 ♗g4! would celebrate the coronation anyway.]

36...♗xc2+ 37.♙a1 ♗c1+ 38.♙a2 ♗xg5 0-1

B34

□ **Shahsavar, K**

■ **Sax, G**

Graz

1972

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘f3 g6 4.d4 cxd4

5.♘xd4 ♙g7 6.♙e3 ♘f6 7.♙e2 0-0 8.f4 d5

9.e5 This is the only way for White to retain some tension. The f4-e5 pawn formation is reminiscent of the Advance French, but Black is slightly more flexible here, because he has not spent a move on ...e7-e6. It means that the 'bad bishop' is not trapped behind the pawn chain, and can still operate along the c8-h3 diagonal. Another difference from the French Defence is that once we lever open the centre by ...f6, the dark-squared bishop will pose more threats than if it were on e7. You must shatter White's f4-e5 centre as soon as possible, by ...f6, in order to unleash the Dragon bishop down the long diagonal.

♘e8

[Not 9...♘e4 10.♘xe4 dxe4 , which would needlessly incur doubled pawns. Sure enough White has won more than his fair share, such as A.Van den Berg-M.

Achenbach, Hessen 2011.] chesstouring.com

[The knight on e8 can neatly manoeuvre to c7, and is consistent with the French structure of the next game. Indeed, 9...♖e8 10.♗xc6 bxc6 11.0-0 would actually transpose into Zelic-Feletar.]

10.♗f3 Otherwise:

[a) If White hints at queenside castling with 10.♖d2, think fast! ♗c7?! was too slow by the Russian GM in M.Ponater-S.Savchenko, Gausdal 1993, who was fortunate to win after being clearly worse. (However, 10...f6 11.exf6 ♗xf6 12.0-0-0 ♗g4! 13.♗xg4 ♗xg4 does the trick to release the two bishops, as in the comfortable draw A. Westermeier-J.Weidemann, German League 1982.)]

[b) Against 10.0-0, the same idea of f6 11.exf6 ♗xf6 12.♖d2 ♗g4! worked a treat in D.Scheglov-M.Petrochenko, St. Petersburg 2012.]

10...♗c7 11.♗b3 e6 White has finally coaxed ...e6 by ganging up on d5, albeit at the cost of several tempi. We can use this time to complete queenside development.

12.♗c5 ♠e8 13.♖e2 b6 14.♗d6 ♗a6! The first bishop comes to life and prevents kingside castling.

15.♖e3 ♗e7 16.g4?! ♗c8! This clever retreat drives back the bishop, and makes way for the queen to reclaim those neglected dark squares. Whilst our central pawns dominate the light squares, our minor pieces should govern the space around them. When you are stronger on one colour complex, fight for the other one as well.

17.♗a3 ♖h4+! 18.♗d2?!

[Even without the queens, White would still struggle to hold it together after the undermining blow 18.♖f2 ♖xf2+ 19.♗xf2 g5! .]

18...f6! 19.exf6?! ♖xf6 The second bishop comes to life with decisive effect.

20.g5 ♖d8! By threatening the ...d4 fork, the European Junior Champion never bestows on his opponent a moment's peace to shelter his king.

21.♖f2 ♗d6 22.♗xd6 ♖xd6

Mission accomplished: the Dragon bishop reigns supreme, the central duo blunts all of White's minor pieces, and our harmonious army will do the rest.

23.♗g2 ♠f8 24.♠ae1 ♠xf4 25.♖g3 ♗e5 26.♗c1 ♠f5 27.♖h4 ♠xg5! 28.♗h3

[Do you remember what Bobby Fischer said about how tactics flow from positional

superiority? The fork 28.♖xg5?? ♗f4+ is the legacy of those dark squares.]

28...♗f4+ 29.♗b1 e5 30.♠d1?? ♠h5

31.♖g4 ♗c8! Not such a bad bishop after all. "Looks can be deceptive", or maybe that's just Rosie O'Donnell's chat-up line.

0-1

B34

□ **Zelic,Z**

■ **Feletar,D**

Croatian Team Championship

1996

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 g6 6.♗e3 ♗g7 7.♗e2 0-0 8.0-0 d5! 9.♗xc6

[The more frequent 9.exd5 is the subject of the next three games.]

9...bxc6 10.e5 ♗e8 11.f4 f6! 9 Nxc6 makes this an even better version of the Advance French structure that we analysed in the previous game. First of all, the knight exchange alleviates our spatial cramp. The second benefit of ...bxc6 is that, by taking towards the centre, we now connect d5 to a rock-solid pawn chain. This means that ...e6 is not strictly necessary, until we wish to push the central majority with ...c5. Last but not least, thanks to all this additional flexibility, we can commence our ...f6 counterplay straight away.

12.exf6 ♗xf6 All four recaptures are about equal, so experiment with whichever best suits your style:

[a) 12...♗xf6 was chosen by the Qatari GM in S.Sarsam-M.Al Modiahki, Tunis 2001. He demonstrated that the horse can reach greener pastures via 13.♗f3 ♗g7 14.♗a4 ♗f5! . After 15.♗f2 e5! 16.fxe5 ♗xe5 17.g3?! Black was definitely in the driver's seat.]

[b) 12...exf6 was successfully employed by the Serbian IM in M.Nikolic-D.Radulovic, Obrenovac 2005. Personally I would rather not recapture away from the centre, and in doing so temporarily obstruct fianchettoed bishop. It is a playable alternative, though, as long as Black seizes the open file and e4 outpost without delay.]

13.♗d4 This is a very typical position for the main line, and features many of the themes that you have learnt so far. First and foremost, you should recognize the split pawns at a7

and c6, which open the b-file for the major pieces. We can attack vertically down to b2, as well as horizontally through the rook-lift ... Rb4. Indeed, White's entire fourth rank is rather weak, as a consequence of f2-f4. Then again, if the pawn were not at f4, our central majority could steamroll White like in Peebo-Kupreichik. That explains his preventative plan.

[Out of ten games, eight different moves have been tried after 13.♙d4 ; the fact that they are all about equal shows that it is not a critical position. Having said that, I recommend the more active ♙f5 , since it transposes directly into Aronin-Geller of the next chapter. However, it is useful to see how Darko Feletar handles the passive yet solid French structure. This Croatian IM is a good friend of my father, and has practised both sides of the Sicilian for many years.]

13...e6 14.b3 ♖e7 15.♘a4 ♘e4!

Note the importance of the c5-square. If White achieves a blockade, as in N.Otorbaeva-S.Kurbonboeva, Bishkek 2012, he tends to stand better.

As usual in the French Defence structure, our number one priority is to take control over the dark squares.

16.c4 ♙d7 17.♞c1 ♙xd4+?!

[Black has harmoniously developed his pieces, and needs a pawn break to free them into battle. Hence my suggested improvement 17...e5! 18.fxe5 ♞xf1+ 19.♙xf1 ♙xe5 20.♙xe5 ♞xe5 , which would strand White's rook and knight far away from the upcoming kingside action.]

18.♞xd4 c5 19.♞d3 ♞d6 20.cxd5 exd5 21.♘c3 ♘xc3 22.♞xc3 ♞ac8 23.g3

White has consolidated and holds equal chances in this hanging pawn structure. "Throughout chess history, great debates have raged about the pros and cons of hanging pawns. The debates are nonsense; the answer is cut and dried. If the pawns can be attacked and forced to move forward, they are weak. If they can be defended and remain where they are, they are strong." – Yasser Seirawan.

♞fe8 24.♞d2 ♙f5 25.♙d3 ♙h3 26.♞fe1 ♞xe1+ 27.♞xe1 c4 Both Croatian IMs have been correctly holding the balance, so Black liquidates to a draw.

28.bxc4 ♞c5+ 29.♞f2 ♞xf2+ 30.♙xf2 dxc4 31.♙e4 ♞c5 32.♞c1 ♙e6 33.♞c3

1/2-1/2

□ Landau,J

■ Lalic,P

Hampstead

[Peter Lalic]

2013

I have selected one of my own games, because both players matched the theory with surprising accuracy, considering that we were improvising. The fact that Black's moves came naturally is a testament more to the simplicity of the AC/DC than to my own play. Admittedly, this fifth and final round encounter is a bit nostalgic, in that it awarded me equal first.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.♘c3 ♙g7 6.♙e3 ♘f6 7.♙e2 0-0 8.0-0 d5 9.exd5 ♘xd5 10.♘xc6

[10.♘xd5 is ten times more common, and covered in the next two games.]

10...bxc6 11.♘xd5 cxd5 12.c3

This exchanging sequence is similar to the 10 Nxc6 that we have already discussed in Fuller-Miles, so the same long-term strategy applies: Black should prophylactically immobilize White's pawn majority, while patiently mobilizing his own in the centre.

[I actually learnt this lesson the hard way, the day before, in round two of the same tournament. In G.Moss-P.Lalic, Hampstead 2013, I did beat my 190 ECF-rated opponent (approximately 2150 Elo), though not as a result of the opening. The moment that I let go of 12.c3 e5 , I regretted blinding my bishop's scope towards c3.

A) As I expected, my opponent grasped the opportunity to advance on the queenside and anchor his bishop with 13.♙c5 ♞e8 14.b4! , before equalizing by ♙b7 15.♞b3 ♞g5 16.♙e3 ♞f6 17.♞ad1 ♞ed8 18.♙f3 .;

B) While researching 12...e5 for this book, I noticed that the late British IM Bob Wade was even luckier than I. He won in B. Wilkinson-R.Wade, Bognor Regis 1959, despite almost being checkmated. After 13.♞d2 ♙b7 14.♙f3 ♞d7 15.♞ad1 he impatiently waded into the tactic d4!? 16.♙xb7 ♞xb7 17.cxd4 exd4 18.♙xd4! . -- (Instead of salvaging his sacrificed pawn through 18...♞ad8 19.♞f4 ♙xd4 20.♞xd4 ♞xb2 ,; he greedily grabbed the exchange with 18...♞fd8 19.♞f4 ♞d5? 20.♙xg7! ♞xd1 , whereupon White could have prosecuted those abandoned dark

squares by 21.♙e5! ♖e2 22.♗f6! .

"The true sweetness of chess, if it can ever be called sweet, is to see a victory snatched, by some happy impertinence, out of the shadows of apparently irrevocable disaster." – H.G. Wells.);

C) 13.--]

Thus, when I entered the identical line the next day, without any time for preparation, I had to work out an improvement at the board.

12...♖b8 This is the most flexible and popular continuation.

13.♗d2

[13.♖b1 ♙f5! 14.♙d3 ♙xd3 15.♗xd3 would trade off our more awkward bishop, facilitating the advance of our majority. Indeed, in the final position of N. Diamantopoulos-V.Mourouti, Patras 2000, Black won with connected passed pawns on e4 and d4.]

13...♗a5! 14.♖fd1 ♖d8 15.♙g5!?

[15.f4?! was the optimistic punt of L. Fonseca-D.Stamenkovic, Porto Alegre 2011. The Serbian IM entered a clearly favourable ending via ♙f5! 16.♙d4 ♙xd4+ 17.cxd4 ♗b4! 18.♗xb4 ♖xb4 19.♖d2 ♖db8 20.b3 ♖c8! , whereupon his rook activity won the day.]

15...♖d7!? **16.♙f3 e6** This pristine pawn chain is the reason that I advocate not rushing into ...e5. The light-squared wall suddenly puts White's f3-bishop out of business, whereas we can still target the b-pawn.

[Furthermore, it remains difficult to break loose from his passivity with 16...e6 17.b4?! , given that ♗a3 would freeze a2 and c3 into backward pawns. Even at the time of writing, I find it virtually impossible to conceive a plan for White.

"It is dangerous to maintain equality at the cost of placing the pieces passively." – Anatoly Karpov.]

17.a3?! In his desperation to make progress with b2-b4, my opponent commits his first error.

♖b3! This permanent hole is the epicentre of his structural damage.

18.♖ab1 ♙a6 The last piece enters the war zone, and surrounds the light-squared weaknesses.

19.♗f4? ♖db7! His foundation can no longer be supported, as too much pressure is brought to bear on b2.

20.♙f6 ♗c7! 21.♗xc7 ♖xc7 22.♙xg7

♙xg7 Trades simplify this technical phase.

23.g3 ♖cb7 White's pieces have been reduced to helpless bystanders. This is a thematic tactic in the endgame whenever two active rooks double up against a passive one. It's a bit like the Mexican stand-off that you see in Spaghetti Westerns, except this is totally one-sided. If White does nothing, the b-pawn goes west. If he defends it with the other rook, then the c-pawn goes west. Basically a pawn's going to die either way.

24.♖d4 ♖xc3 25.♖a4? ♙d3 26.♖e1 ♖xb2 27.♖xa7 ♙c4 28.♙g4 ♙f6 29.♙h3 ♖cc2!

Black's on-going initiative is decisive.

"A rook on the seventh rank is particularly deadly if the enemy king is confined to the eighth rank." – Cecil Purdy.

That means it's a mass crime scene when there are two rooks on the seventh rank.

Move along, folks; nothing to see here.

30.♙f1 ♖xf2 31.♙xc4 ♖g2+ 32.♙h1 ♖xh2+ 33.♙g1 ♖bg2+ 34.♙f1 dxc4 35.♖e3 ♖c2 36.♖f3+ ♙g5 37.♙g1 f5 38.a4 ♖hd2 39.♖xh7 ♖a2 40.♖h4 ♖xa4 41.♖f1 e5 42.♖c1 e4 43.♖h8 ♖a3 44.♖c8 ♖xg3+ 45.♙f1 ♖gg2 46.♖8xc4 ♖df2+ 47.♙e1 e3 0-1

B34

□ Vasile,T

■ Peptan,C

Romanian Women's Ch., Sarata Monteoru
[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6 5.♗c3 ♙g7 6.♙e3 ♗f6 7.♙e2 0-0 8.0-0 d5 9.exd5 ♗xd5

This equalizer opens the floodgates for our pieces, and throws White into an uncomfortable situation. The average club player would probably be unnerved by all these sudden threats, while the theoretical expert might get frustrated that he has no advantage to play with.

10.♗xd5 ♗xd5

[I hope that you remember the 10...♗xd4!? intermezzo from Fuller-Miles. Here White has more sensibly castled to guard g2, but it is still worth mentioning if you have only one result on your mind. According to the statistics +33 =120 -47, 60% of the games are drawn, so I bet that I couldn't beat anyone with either colour.]

[The cruel cop-out 10...♗xd4!?

would practically guarantee a draw: chessouring.com

A) The point is that 11.♔d4 ♖xd5 forces White to acquiesce to yet more exchanges. After 12.♔xg7 ♖xd1 it doesn't matter with which rook he takes back, since there's nothing left. Over 30 games ended before move 20, some big names being N.Karaklajic-P.Trifunovic, Zagreb 1961, I.Radulov-A.Adorjan, Wijk aan Zee 1974, and D.Stojanovic-B.Chatalbashev, Belgrade 2010:

A1) The prolific Russian GM in V. Tseshkovsky-S.Nadyrhanov, Krasnodar 1999, tried 13.♖fxd1 ♔xg7 14.♔f3 , to which his GM countryman replied ♕e6! . He then stopped any queenside ambitions in their tracks, by 15.b3 (obviously spotting that 15.♔xb7? ♖ab8 16.♔d5 ♔xd5 17.♖xd5 ♖xb2 would be clearly better for Black) 15...♖ac8 16.c4 b6! 17.♖d2 , before offering another swap-off (and a draw) with ♖fd8 .;

A2) The late Ukrainian GM in A.Moroz-A.Nechaev, Alushta 1999, opted for 13.♖axd1 , which transposed anyway via ♔xg7 14.♔f3 ♕e6 15.b3 ♖ac8 16.c4 b6 17.♖d2 ♖fd8 . To his credit, he strove for another 30 moves to beat his lower-rated opponent, but even a big difference of 250 Elo points is irrelevant in such a simplified position. It's even more boring than 'Gone With the Wind' – damn, there's four hours I'll never get back. White has more pawns on light squares and no entry points along the d-file for his rooks; moreover, when they come off the board, our king has the beeline f6-e5-d4 straight to the centre. "Once upon a time supporters of the Steinitz-Tarrasch school had a very high opinion of a queenside pawn majority. Modern strategy on the other hand categorically denies that such a majority is an independent factor of any importance." – Alexander Kotov.;

A3) 13.--;

B) The seemingly desperate 11.c4 would submit the bishop-pair rather early to ♗xe2+ 12.♖xe2 e6! 13.♗c3 , as in the black win E.Geller-J.Yrjola, Sochi 1984.;

C) After 11.♔c4 , I am impressed by the paradoxical novelty e5!? 12.c3 ♕e6! by the Russian FM in E.Romanov-A.Kraev, Nizhnij Novgorod 1999. The obligatory

13.cxd4 (however, his opponent blundered straight away into 13.♔xd4? exd4 14.♖f3 ♖c8! 15.♔b3 ♖c5! , when the knight was in trouble after all: 16.♗f4 ♔xb3 17.axb3 dxc3 18.bxc3 ♖xc3 wrapped up a pawn and the game 20 moves later) 13...♔xd5 14.♔xd5 ♖xd5 15.dxe5 ♖xe5 should lead to drawish symmetry.;

D) 11.--]

11.♔f3 ♖a5!

[This modern weapon scores better than the roughly equal 11...♖c4 , which has led to draws like S.Tarrasch-P.Lipke, Vienna 1898, and the much more recent WGM clash A. Muzychuk-C.Peptan, Bucharest 2011.]

12.♗xc6

[The next game explains why the moves 12.♔xc6?!]

[and 12.♗b3?! are inferior.]

12...bxc6 Our favourite AC/DC structure, we meet again! This is a good example of when a static weakness like c6 is more than compensated by dynamism. It is undeniably true that the isolated pawn is not worth its full one point. On the other hand, a distinction between the nine-point queens is far more relevant. Whilst ours simultaneously attacks a2 and defends a7, White's labours even to get off the back rank. Our dark-squared bishop also poses more threats than its counterpart, which aims at thin air and cannot help the critical b-pawn.

"The most important feature of the chess position is the activity of the pieces. This is absolutely fundamental in all phases of the game: opening, middlegame and especially endgame." – Michael Stean.

13.c3

[That is why he cannot afford the time to be greedy. 13.♔xc6?! ♖b8 14.♖d5 ♖c7! would leave several objects en prise, as in V.Medunova-L.Deglmann, Arber 2012. After 15.♔a4 ♔xb2 regained the pawn with tempo, by an ironic twist of fate, it was White who ended up with the isolani, except with zero dynamic compensation. Sure enough, the German FM with Black took that fact to the bank, in A.Loemker-M.Balduan, Finsterbergen 2001.]

13...♖b8 14.♖c1 White really needs to go out of his way to maintain the integrity of his queenside:

[a) The 14.b4 ♖a3 of P.Mithrakanth-N.

Wajih, Nashik 1999, would copy the

blockading mechanism that I mentioned in the previous game.]

[b) 14.♖c2 would walk slap bang into ♕f5 , and the Cuban GM in J.Alberola Mulet-R. Hernandez Onna, Mislata 1998, later won after 15.♗e4 ♕xe4 16.♖xe4 ♖xb2 .]

[c) Two people have blundered an exchange by 14.♖e2? ♗a6 15.♖c2? (15.c4 ♖xb2) 15...♗xf1 , one of whom was rated 2000 in K. Slechta-O.Seuss, Davos 2008. To quote 'Allo 'Allo!, "What a mistake-a to make-a!".]

14...♖c7!? The queen has done its job of disconnecting the white rooks, and makes way for the minority attack ...a5-a4-a3 that we learnt in the previous chapter.

[I prefer it to the more common yet inconsistent 14...c5 , which coincidentally failed my Welsh friend recently in V.Melichar-T.Thorpe, Prague 2012.]

15.♖e1 Alternatively:

[a) The 15.b4 of T.Zhang-P.Hummel, Hengelo 2005, does not stop a5 .]

[b) 15.♖d1 merits the same pro-active treatment. The future Russian Women's Champion in A.Stiri-N.Kosintseva, Mureck 1998, won with ♕f5 16.♗c5 a5 .]

15...e5!? The fianchettoed bishop was already limited by the b2-c3 formation anyway, so the pros outweigh the cons. Not only does this central pawn pre-empt both the Bf4 skewer and Bd4 trade, but it threatens to mobilize the majority with ...f5, ...e4, and maybe even ...f4-f3.

16.♗d1 ♗e6 17.♗c5 ♖fd8 18.♗b3 ♗d5

19.♖e3 a5! After some to-ing and fro-ing, Black kicks off the minority attack.

20.c4! ♗e6 21.♖ad1 a4! As usual the decoy sacrifice does the business. By dragging away the defensive piece from b3, it exposes both the b2- and c4-pawns.

22.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23.♗xa4 ♖xb2 Phase one complete: downgrade White's queenside majority.

"An isolated pawn spreads gloom all over the chessboard." – Savielly Tartakower.

24.♖d1 ♖a5 25.♗b3 h5! In anticipation of back rank tricks, the Romanian WGM provides her monarch with some luft, and her opponent does likewise.

26.h3 ♗h7 27.♗b6 ♖a6 28.♗c7! ♗xc4 29.♗xe5 ♖e2! 30.♗xc4?! Having got rid of the c4 isolano, White stumbles at the last hurdle.

[30.♖c5 ♖xe5 31.♖xc4 ♖xc4 32.♗xc4 would resemble a stone-cold draw.]

30...♖xc4 31.♖d4 ♖xd4 32.♗xd4 ♖xa2

33.♗xg7 ♗xg7 Although rook endings have a high drawing margin, the passed pawn makes a big difference.

34.♖c1 ♖a6 35.♗f1 ♗f6 36.♗e2 ♗e6

37.♗f3 ♖a3+ 38.♗e4 ♖a4+ 39.♗e3 ♗d6

40.f3? c5! One step closer, four more to go...

41.♖d1+ ♗c6 42.♖d8 ♖a7 43.♖f8? ♖d7!

This thematic cut-off prevents the enemy king from ever blockading the queening square.

44.g4 c4 45.gxh5 gxh5 46.♖h8? c3!

47.♖c8+ ♖c7 48.♖d8 ♗b5 49.♖b8+ ♗a4 0-1

B34

□ **Heinrich, M**

■ **Karpatchev, A**

Leutersdorf

2000

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗g7

5.♗c3 ♗c6 6.♗e3 ♗f6 7.♗e2 0-0 8.0-0 d5

9.exd5 ♗xd5 10.♗xd5 ♖xd5 11.♗f3 ♖a5

White has made two other attempts to take care of his queenside, neither of which is equal to the 12 Nxc6 of the previous game.

12.♗b3?!

[12.♗xc6?! bxc6 would recklessly concede the bishop-pair; could this position be any more open? White has risked the greedy 13.♗xc6 ♖c7 in a dozen games, and scored the miserable +0 =3 -9.

A) The problem is that he must lose time retreating the knight, and 14.♗b4 hands over the stolen loot anyway: -- (14...♗xb2 successfully split up White's queenside structure in M.Forsberg Conde-J.Santos Latasa, Padron 2008, but 15.♖b1 ♗g7 16.♗d5 ♖d8 17.♗c5! ♗e6! 18.♗xe7+ ♗h8 was complicated.; 14...♖d8 15.♗d5 ♖d7 16.♗c3 ♖e8! is more appealing, at least to my simpler tastes. The Chilean IM in F.Anazco-D. Barria Zuniga, Roque Saenz Pena 1997, later converted his initiative after 17.♖f3 ♗f5 18.♖fc1 a5! 19.a3 ♖ab8 .);

B) 14.♗d4?! would keep both the knight and pawn, alas not for long. In spite of an easy win with

B1) After the relentless assault 14...♗a6! 15.♖e1 ♖ad8! 16.♖g4 h5! White has never survived. The cool double-attack 17.♗e6?? (17.♖f4?? ♖xf4 18.♗xf4 ♖xd4 merely hung a piece in P.Maheux

K.Boehmer, Vancouver 2002) 17...♖c8!
 18.♗g5 ♗xe6 19.♙c5 ♖d5! 20.♗xe6
 ♗xg5 21.♗xa6 ♗xc5 gave a quick win to
 the Russian WGM in Zhang Ying-T.
 Kosintseva, Oropesa del Mar 1998.
 "In general I consider that in chess
 everything rests on tactics. If one thinks
 of strategy as a block of marble, then
 tactics are the chisel with which a
 master operates, in creating works of
 chess art." – Tigran Petrosian.;
B2) 14...♗b8?! in B.Tarhon-P.Lalic,
 Richmond 2012, I propose an
 improvement.;

C) 14.--]

Returning to the equally misguided 12 Nb3:
12...♖c7 Although White gains a tempo on
 our queen, he will have to spend two tempi
 protecting his own queen and pawn.

13.c3 ♖d8! This developing move is
 surprisingly annoying; even more so than
 those public restrooms that you have to pay
 for. Seriously, don't they breach some clause
 of the Geneva Convention, and who carries
 change anyway?

14.♗e2 Otherwise:

[a) 14.♖c2 would lose another tempo to ♙f5
 .]

[b) 14.♖c1 would be humiliated by ♗e5!
 , which pursues all the fragile light squares
 at c4, d3 and f3. After 15.♙e2 Black has a
 plethora of good moves: -- (The Canadian
 FM in A.Sousa-G.Taylor, Novi Sad Olympiad
 1990, won a pawn and the game with the
 ingenious tactic 15...♗c4 16.♙c5 ♙e6
 17.♗e1 ♗d2! 18.♙e3 ♗xb3 19.axb3 ♙xb3
 .; The Australian GM in G.Coratella-I.Rogers,
 Saint Vincent 2001, victoriously attacked on
 both wings, by means of 15...♗g4 16.♙f4
 e5 17.♙g3 ♗e7 18.h3 ♗h6 19.♗e1 ♗f5!
 20.♙h2 a5! .]

14...♙f5 15.♙xc6?

[White should endeavour to unravel with
 15.♗fd1 . Be that as it may, ♗e5! 16.♗d4
 ♗xf3+ would nab the two bishops, as in S.
 Panchenko-S.Savitskiy, Polyarniy Krug
 2006.]

15...♙d3! The Russian GM spots a winning
 combination.

16.♗f3 ♙xf1 17.♙xb7 ♙e2! This devious
 intermezzo rewards him with an extra
 exchange, in case of 18 Qxe2 Qxb7 or not.

18.♖c6 ♗ac8! He wants to simplify on his
 own terms.

19.♗a5! ♗xa5! 20.♙xc8 ♗xa2!

Precise calculation to the end is how
 Karpatchev earned his title. Black exploits the
 vulnerable back rank, in order to transform his
 advantage into a clear pawn.

21.♗e1 ♗xb2 22.g3 a5 23.♙b7? ♗b8

24.♙c8 h5! Do you remember this defensive
 device from the previous game? These
 patterns keep re-emerging because they are
 good.

25.♙a7 ♗d2! 26.♗a1 ♗xc3 All of White's
 pieces are hanging, so the second pawn
 constitutes the final nail in his coffin.

"If the student forces himself to examine all
 the moves that smite, however absurd they
 look at first glance, he is on the way to
 becoming a master of tactics." – Cecil Purdy.

0-1

B34

Line B) 7 Nb3

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6
 5.♗c3 ♙g7 6.♙e3 ♗f6 7.♗b3 This dual-
 purpose move has scored a respectable 50%
 from 2,000 games, so don't brush it off too
 lightly. Not only does removing the knight from
 d4 sidestep ...Ng4 discoveries, but it
 unleashes the queen against ...d5. By now,
 though, you know what to do whenever a
 piece retreats to b3.

B34

□ **Panagiotopoulos,O**

■ **Papadopoulou,T**

Kavala

1998

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6
5.♗c3 ♙g7 6.♙e3 ♗f6 7.♗b3 0-0

Always castle on the seventh move, and then
 let the party begin!

8.♙e2

[500 out of the 600 databased games have
 followed this logical route, yet 8.f3
 is a plausible alternative. Our next game
 will cancel that last bid to castle queenside,
 and then I promise that you'll never have to
 worry about the Yugoslav Attack again.]

8...a5! 9.a4 White must save his knight from
 embarrassment:

[a) For example, 9.a3?! a4 10.♗c1

, as in the old master game S.Zhukhovitsky-m

A.Suetin, Vilnius 1953.]

[b) Even if he tries to make use of the hole at b6 by 9.♠d5!?, the curt retort ♠xd5 10.exd5 a4! is still an appropriate response:

A) After the forced sequence 11.dxc6 axb3 12.axb3 ♠xa1 13.♞xa1, all of the five documented cases have been hard-fought draws. I like how the Israeli GM in S. Lupu-J.Murey, Paris 1990, drummed up his kingside majority through dxc6 14.0-0 ♗e6 15.b4! f5! 16.♞d1 ♞a8 17.c3 ♗b3! 18.♞e1 e5 19.♗b6 e4 .;

B) 11.♠c5?! a3! 12.dxc6 axb2! 13.cxb7? was mercilessly refuted by the Argentine Champion in the game C. Paglilla-J.Emma, Mar del Plata 1979. After ♗xb7! 14.♞b1 ♗xg2 15.♞g1 ♞a5+! 16.♗d2 ♞xa2 17.♠b3, the IM with white suffocated under that advanced passed pawn, (but not 17.♞xg2?? ♞xb1!

18.♞xb1 ♞a1 and promotion ensues. "Good players develop a tactical instinct, a sense of what is possible or likely and what is not worth calculating." – Samuel Reshevsky.);

C) 11.--]

9...d5! 10.exd5 ♠b4 White can never deny us counterplay on both flanks. If he impedes ... a4, then use the newly-created outpost at b4.
11.0-0

[When White clings to the pawn by means of 11.♗f3, -- (I am skeptical of 11...♗f5?! 12.♞c1. It is difficult to restore the material balance, as the statistic +6 =6 -1 has verified.; instead, I recommend the novelty 11...♗g4!? 12.♗xg4 ♠xg4 13.♞xg4 ♠xc2+ 14.♠e2 ♠xa1 15.♞xa1 ♗xc3 16.bxc3 ♞xd5. This forced sequence brings about an intriguing imbalance, i.e. his two minor pieces versus our rook and pawn. Neither of the kings is as susceptible as it might seem, since White's one can scuttle back to g1, whilst our kingside majority can reinforce the dark squares with ...f6 and ...e5. The more important question is whether or not our rooks can gang up on his queenside isolani. Your homework is to practise this complex position with a friend or analysis engine.)]

11...♠fxd5 12.♠xd5 ♠xd5 13.♗d4

Here is another archetypal position, characterised by 3 vs. 2 pawns on the queenside and 4 vs. 3 on the kingside. Essentially, whoever is more active on their side should get the upper hand. The GMs in

R.Babaev-M.Pap, Creon 2008, weren't in the mood, and abruptly agreed to a draw upon 13...Nf6. On the contrary, our main game shows that rich possibilities can abound. To quote George Costanza from the classic Seinfeld, "You're not in the mood; well, you get in the mood!"

"If you are interested in improving, think of a draw offer as an offer to remain ignorant of what you would have learned in the remainder of the game." – Dan Heisman.

♠f4! 14.♗xg7

[After 14.♗f3 ♞c7 15.♗xg7 ♠xg7 16.♞d4+ e5 17.♞c5 ♞xc5 18.♠xc5 in J.Maupin-M. Saucey, French League 2006, the French FM implemented the saucy manoeuvre ♞a7! 19.♞fd1 b6 .]

14...♠xg7 15.♗f3 e5 16.♞xd8 ♞xd8 17.♞fe1

[J.Faure-A.Adorjan, Geneva 1987, continued 17.♞fd1 ♞e8 18.♗e4!? , whereupon the overconfident Hungarian GM blundered a pawn to f5? 19.♗xb7! ♗xb7 20.♞d7+ ♠f6 21.♞xb7. Be careful not to lash out prematurely; make sure to fulfil development first, specifically with the help of that rook-lift.]

17...♞e8 18.♠c5 ♞b8

[18...♞a7 followed by 19...b6 is also equal, but Black prefers not to let the enemy bishop occupy c6.]

19.♞ad1 ♗f5 20.c3 h5! This space-gainer crops up yet again, except for different reasons. Its control over g4 gives our bishop more security, as well as the possibility of trading on that square. The light-squared bishop is valuable because it sometimes threatens ...Nd3, which would be Black's response to 21 Nxb7 or 21 Bxb7.

21.♠d7 ♞bc8 22.♞xe5?? "The technical phase can be boring because there is little opportunity for creativity, for art. Boredom leads to complacency and mistakes." – Garry Kasparov.

[White noticed 22.♠xe5?! f6! 23.♠d7 ♠d3 would get unpleasant, but was too tempted to pinch the pawn the other way. Evidently he forgot about that weak back rank.]

22...♗xd7 23.♞xa5 ♗g4 24.♗xg4 hxg4

Black converted 15 moves later (0-1).

□ Pribylova,R

■ Blum,G

Stauffer

1994

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♝c6
5.♞c3 ♙g7 6.♙e3 ♟f6 7.♞b3 0-0 8.f3 a5!

I hope that you're not getting bored by the sheer simplicity of the AC/DC. Whenever White stops ...d5 with a minor piece on b3, we disturb his defence by ...a5, and only then detonate the centre.

Main line summary: You can always unleash your pieces with ...d5 and/or ...a5. If not, then read these chapters a second time!

9.a4 This knee-jerk reaction will probably be made by most of your opponents:

[a) In the case of 9.♞a4 d5 10.♞b6 ♖b8 11.exd5 ♞b4 , the knight on b6 would actually be more of a liability than an asset:

A) In C.Roerholt-R.Andersen, Esbjerg 2005, Black won after 12.c4 ♙f5! 13.♖c1 ♞d7? , (but why not grab the pawn by 13...♞xa2 14.♖a1 ♞b4 15.♖c1 ♞d7 first?);

B) That explains why the WFM in M. Espinola Martin-F.Sierra Canosa, Aviles 2001, naively took off the bishop with 12.♞xc8?? . Despite the extra pawn, her lack of development was already resignable. After the computer-precise refutation ♖xc8 13.c4 b5! 14.a3 bxc4 15.axb4 ♞xd5! 16.♙c5 cxb3 17.♖xa5 ♙xb2 18.♙a6? ♙c3+ 19.♟f2 , Houdini 3 evaluated her position as '-9'. Somehow she ended up beating her ungraded opponent, which was a worse travesty of justice than when O.J. Simpson got away with double homicide – no matter how funny he was in the 'Naked Gun' comedies.;

C) 12.--]

[b) 9.♙b5 has scored an appalling 20%, owing to d5! 10.exd5 ♞b4 :

A) After 11.♙c4?! a4 12.♞c5 ♙f5! 13.♖c1 Black won in R.Albuquerque-P. Barbosa, Natal 2012, though here a3! 14.bxa3 ♖xa3 15.♙b3 ♞fxd5! would have been even more convincing.;

B) The 11.0-0 of G.Villarreal-M.Borja, Tel Aviv 1964, should be met by ♞fxd5 12.♞xd5 ♖xd5! , in one fell swoop targeting all the hanging pieces at b2, c2 and b5, not to mention e3 after 13.♖xd5

♞xd5 14.♙d4 a4! .;

C) Against 11.d6 , keep pressing with ♙f5 . Then 12.♞d4 (instead, 12.♖c1 seems like a sluggish way to defend c2; after a4 13.♞d4 ♖xd6 14.♞xf5 , in I.Rubel-L.Aronson, Leningrad 1957, Black should have kept the queens on by the identical tactic ♖e6!) 12...♖xd6 13.♞xf5 ♖e6! 14.♖e2 ♖xf5 was the energetic continuation of L.Fusco-A.Chtcherbine, Buenos Aires 2003.;

D) 11.--]

9...d5 10.exd5 ♞b4 11.♖d2?!

[The Ukrainian GM in I.Nyzhnyk-A.Nechaev, Khmel'nitsky 2008, jettisoned the pawn with 11.d6 , no doubt hoping for an IQP after exd6 . (He must have been shocked by the onslaught 11...♙f5! 12.♞d4 ♖xd6! 13.♞xf5 ♖e6 , from which he never recovered.)]

11...♞fxd5 12.0-0-0?? It is a fitting end to this chapter that castling queenside be White's decisive mistake.

♞xc3!! 13.♖xd8

[Pribylova must surrender her king or her castle, as 13.bxc3 ♞a2+ 14.♟b2 ♞xc3! would crown the Dragon bishop.]

13...♞ba2+ 14.♟d2 ♖xd8+ "I cannot play chess without my king's bishop. In its absence the game to me is lifeless and void. The vitalizing factor is missing, and I can devise no plan of attack." – Siegbert Tarrasch.

0-1

Chapter Four

White Deviations

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6



"You must be able to handle a variety of move orders during the first 5-6 moves; otherwise you'll find yourself tricked time and time again." - Edmar Mednis.

Deviations are so called because they deviate from the theoretical norm. This means that they are not as popular, challenging, or sometimes even sound, as the mainlines that we have studied so far. Nonetheless, White can still profit from the element of surprise if you arrive at the chessboard unprepared. Hence the following antidotes, which will guide you into familiar territory.

According to modern tournament praxis, here are all the sidelines that you might meet.

5 Nc3

We have too:

- 5 c4 is the Maróczy Bind, needless to say, which is the topic of the next two chapters.
- 5 Be3 is not worth analysing, as it usually just rejoins the main line via 5...Bg7 6 Nc3.
- 5 Nxc6 is the fourth most common choice, having appeared in 1,500 out of 40,000 games, and scored an unimpressive 40%. White's idea is 5...bxc6 6 Qd4 to target the long diagonal, which [Vestol-Botvinnik](#) teaches you how to counter.
- The 5 Be2! (750 games, scoring 50%) of [Fishbein-Hodgson](#) is a cunning ploy to keep White's other bishop guarding b2, so that 5...Bg7 6 Nb3 Nf6 7 Nc3 0-0 8 0-0 leads to a more flexible version of 5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Nb3 from [Panagiotopoulos-Papadopolou](#).
- 5 Bc4 (700 making 35%) unites with the main line after 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Nc3 0-0.
- The 5 c3?! (350 obtaining 35%) of [Paul-Pop](#) looks even more unambitious than me when I was revising for exams.
- 5 g3 (200 making 50%) is an odd attempt at a Closed Sicilian in an Open Sicilian, and consistently transposes into [Farago-Mueller](#) through 5...Bg7 6 Ne2.

5...Bg7



6 Be3

White needs to defend his knight, for lack of a decent alternative:

- 6 Nb3 (2,000 out of 30,000 games) transposes to [Fishbein-Hodgson](#) via 6...Nf6 7 Be2 0-0 8 0-0.
- 6 Nde2! (1,000 scoring 55%) is even quirker than the actor Jeff Goldblum. Speaking of whom, I dare anyone not to love that guy. Seriously, you have to watch his hilarious interviews with talk show hosts such as Conan O'Brien or David Letterman. Anyway, [Farago-Mueller](#) shows you how to liven up the quieter position arising from 6...Nf6 7 g3.

c) 6 Nxc6 (500 making 35%) is merely an inadequate version of [Vestol-Botvinnik](#), since White has no Qd4 tactics to compensate for our central majority.

6...Nf6



7 Nxc6

This capture has occurred in 2,000 out of 25,000 games, and scored a respectable 50%. [Aronin-Geller](#) explains what to do after 7...bxc6 8 e5.

7 h4!? is the only other interesting move that I have seen, albeit only in blitz and friendly games. [Pontes-De Paiva](#) should quell any fears.

□ White Deviations
 ■ in Game Format

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♟xd4 g6

"You must be able to handle a variety of move orders during the first 5-6 moves; otherwise you'll find yourself tricked time and time again." – Edmar Mednis.

Deviations are so called because they deviate from the theoretical norm. This means that they are not as popular, challenging, or sometimes even sound, as the mainlines that we have studied so far. Nonetheless, White can still profit from the element of surprise if you arrive at the chessboard unprepared. Hence the following antidotes, which will guide you into familiar territory.

According to modern tournament praxis, here are all the sidelines that you might meet.

5.♟c3 We have too:

[a) 5.c4 is the Maróczy Bind, needless to say, which is the topic of the next two chapters.]

[b) 5.♟e3 is not worth analysing, as it usually just rejoins the main line via ♟g7 6.♟c3 .]

[c) 5.♟xc6 is the fourth most common choice, having appeared in 1,500 out of 40,000 games, and scored an unimpressive 40%. White's idea is bxc6 6.♞d4 to target the long diagonal, which Vestol-Botvinnik teaches you how to counter.]

[d) The 5.♟e2!?! (750 games, scoring 50%) of Fishbein-Hodgson is a cunning ploy to keep White's other bishop guarding b2, so that ♟g7 6.♟b3 ♟f6 7.♟c3 0-0 8.0-0 leads to a more flexible version of 5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Nb3 from Panagiotopoulos-Papadopoulou.]

[e) 5.♟c4 (700 making 35%) unites with the main line after ♟g7 6.♟e3 ♟f6 7.♟c3 .]

[f) The 5.c3?! (350 obtaining 35%) of Paul-Pop looks even more unambitious than me when I was revising for exams.]

[d) 5.g3 (200 making 50%) is an odd attempt at a Closed Sicilian in an Open Sicilian, and consistently transposes into Farago-Mueller through ♟g7 6.♟e2 .]

5...♟g7 6.♟e3 White needs to defend his knight, for lack of a decent alternative:

[a) 6.♟b3 (2,000 out of 30,000 games) transposes to Fishbein-Hodgson via ♟f6 7.♟e2 0-0 8.0-0 .]

[b) 6.♟de2!?! (1,000 scoring 55%) is even quirker than the actor Jeff Goldblum. Speaking of whom, I dare anyone not to love that guy. Seriously, you have to watch his hilarious interviews with talk show hosts such as Conan O'Brien or David Letterman. Anyway, Farago-Mueller shows you how to liven up the quieter position arising from ♟f6 7.g3 .]

[c) 6.♟xc6 (500 making 35%) is merely an inadequate version of Vestol-Botvinnik since White has no Qd4 tactics to compensate for our central majority.]

6...♟f6 7.♟xc6 This capture has occurred in 2,000 out of 25,000 games, and scored a respectable 50%.

[7.h4!?! is the only other interesting move that I have seen, albeit only in blitz and friendly games. Pontes-De Paiva should quail any fears.]

Aronin-Geller explains what to do after **7...bxc6 8.e5 .**

B34

□ Vestol,A

■ Botvinnik,M

Moscow Olympiad

1956

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♟xd4 g6

5.♟xc6 bxc6 6.♞d4 White must conjure up some tricks in the short term, lest our big centre mow him down in the long-term.

♟f6 7.e5 ♟d5 8.e6

[There is no turning back, since 8.c4 ♞b6! would slam on the brakes:

A) After 9.♞xb6 ♟xb6 , White would run out of gas, such as in the early draw B. Vaisberg-L.Volpert, Moscow 1959.

However, White drove too far in R.Granat-S.Hegarty, British League 2011, where the strained 10.a4 d6! 11.exd6 exd6 12.a5 ♟d7 13.♟f4?! ♞b8! 14.♞a2 gave Black a clear advantage.;

B) If White avoids the queen trade with 9.♞e4?! , as in the quick loss M.Lucaci-M. Brod, Austrian League 2010, the novelty ♟b4 exploits the critical weakness at c2:

B1) After 10.♟e3? , the forcing variation d5! 11.exd6 ♟f5 12.♞xf5 gxf5 13.♟xb6 axb6 turns the tables.;

B2) The same pawn thrust works a treat for 10.a3 d5! 11.cxd5 (given that 11.exd6?? would lose material to ♟f5!

12.d7+ ♔xd7) 11...♗xd5 .;

B3) 10.--;

C) 9.c5? ♖b4+! 10.♗xb4 ♗xb4 would again leave White worrying about the c2 fork and his overextended pawns at c5 and e5. They both dropped off, as a matter of fact, in the black win V.

Leshchenko-O.Musienko, Kiev 2004.

"Do not bring your queen out too early."

– Francisco Bernardina Calogno.;

D) 9.--]

8...f6 9.exd7+ ♗xd7 In this highly unbalanced position, we have our familiar split pawns on the queenside and majority on the kingside.

10.♗e2

[10.♗c4 should be rudely greeted by e5 , gaining control over the centre and a tempo on the queen to boot: 11.-- (11.♗d1 is the most frequent continuation, having featured in 40 out of 80 games, and scored a miserable 30%. I recommend the logical development ♗e6 12.0-0 ♗g7 13.♗d2 0-0 14.♗e4 ♗e7 , as per the FM draw V.Diogo-J.Ferreira, Vila Nova de Gaia 2011. Another Hispanic FM in R.Gutierrez-L.Garcia, Manizales 1979, patiently regrouped with 15.♗e2 ♗h8! 16.♗b3 f5! 17.♗g5!? ♗g8 , before charging his a- and e-pawns to victory.

; 11.♗h4 doesn't change our plan of ♗g7 12.0-0 ♗e6 . The Serbian IM in S.Ruzicic-M. Popovic, Belgrade 2009, was already better after 13.♗c3 ♗e7 14.♗xd5?! cxd5 15.♗b5+ ♗f7! , when the central pawn duo turned out far more relevant than manual castling.)]

10...e5 11.♗d1 ♗g7 12.c3 While Black naturally completes development, White passively curls up into a ball.

[He would like to kick our dominating knight by 12.0-0 0-0 13.c4 , but that would surrender the d4 outpost to ♗c7 14.♗c3 ♗e6! , as in T.Nguyen Thi Thanh-A.Nguyen T Thanh, Can Tho 2001. In case you were wondering, yes, I did have to turn off my spellchecker a long time ago.]

12...0-0 13.♗a3 f5! The three-time world champion seizes the initiative, and never gives it back.

"Botvinnik himself was always right at the front in chess theory; what becomes known to us today, was known to him yesterday." – David Bronstein.

14.♗c4 ♗e6 15.♗a4 ♗c7 In no matter what

variation, the queen on c7 always seems to complement this structure. It simultaneously protects the split pawns, connects the rooks, and influences the b8-h2 diagonal.

16.♗e3 ♗h8! This preventative measure is very useful, whenever the f-pawn has moved, because it saves His Majesty from the dangerous diagonal. Furthermore, it offers g8 as a retreat square for the bishop, thereby sidestepping the pin that was prohibiting ... Nxe3.

17.♗c5 ♖fb8 18.♗c2 ♗a5! The white bishop is running out of squares, and gets shoved around to the edge of the board.

19.♗d6 ♖d8 20.♗e7 ♖e8! 21.♗h4 f4

22.0-0 ♗f5 23.♗e2 h6 24.f3? e4!

For fear of having his bishop trapped, White gets stampeded by the kingside phalanx.

25.♗xd5

[25.fxe4? would lose decisive material to the fork ♖xe4 26.♗d2 ♖xc4! 27.♗xc4 ♗c5+ 28.♗f2 ♗xc4 .]

25...♗xd5 26.fxe4 ♖xe4 27.♗d1? ♖b8!

Even though White has an equal number of pieces, their relative inactivity leaves him utterly defenceless. They all remain sidelined out of the game, while Black's rooks govern the open files.

28.♗c1? ♖e2! Plus the seventh rank spells game over. The rest is too painful to watch, a bit like soap operas or reality shows.

Television is so full of trash nowadays that I don't even own one anymore.

29.♗f2 ♗e4 30.b3 f3 31.gxf3 ♗d3 32.♗f4

♖be8 33.♗d4 ♗xd4+ 34.♗xd4+ ♗xd4+

35.cxd4 ♗h3 36.♖fc1 ♖g2+ 37.♗h1 ♖ee2

"It must be clearly understood that Soviet players do not seek simple systems in the opening, but try to formulate opening systems in which everything is complicated, distinctive, or new." – Mikhail Botvinnik.

0-1

□ **Fishbein,A**

■ **Hodgson,J**

Stavanger

[Peter Lalic]

B34

1989

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6

5.♗e2!? ♗g7 6.♗b3 ♗f6 7.♗c3 0-0 8.0-0

a5 9.a4 ♗b4! By substituting Be2 for Be3,

White stands better than in Panagiotopoulos-

Papadopoulou. Firstly, he can castle one <http://www.chess.com>

move earlier, thereby dodging any bullets like ...Nxc2+. The second difference is that his c1-bishop has not wasted a move. Not only does it watch over b2, but it is less susceptible to ...Nd5. For all these reasons, we must time our counterplay very precisely.

10.g5! This is the only test, seeing as the alternatives are innocuous:

[a) 10.e3 is asking for d5! . Here 11.e5 (11.exd5 fxd5 would revert straight back into Panagiotopoulos-Papadopoulou) 11...d4 would bring back the interesting French structure:

A) After 12.f4 , White has fared well from dxc3 (and 12...g5!?, a novelty of the first ever Kyrgyz GM, Leonid Yurtaev, who died recently. In D.Barua-L.Yurtaev, Sangli 2000, he beat the Indian GM by isolating the e-pawn with 13.d4 gxf4 14.xf4 d6 .);

B) 12.dxe4 dxe4 13.xd8 xd8 deserts both the c2- and e5-pawns, I. Jurcisin-A.Cvicela, Nove Zamky 1999. "Help your pieces so they can help you." – Paul Morphy.;

C) 12.--]

[b) If White desperately stops ...d5 by 10.f3 , as in J.Tompa-J.Hodgson, Copenhagen 1983, then there is no shame in entering a standard Dragon through d6 . While that bad bishop blocks his f2-f4 plan, we can assault the queenside with our knight anchored at b4. The Colombian GM in N. Carvajal-G.Garcia, Cali 2003, won by the counterattack 11.e1 d7 12.g5 xc8 13.d2 dg4! 14.xg4 xg4 15.d5? xc2! 16.dxe7+? h8 17.dxc6+ fxg6 18.xd8 xd2 19.dxd2 xd8 .]

10...d5! 11.exd5

[In the event of 11.e5 d8 12.f4 , employ the usual f6! to blow open the long diagonal with tempo, as the Russian WFM successfully did in I.Derbentseva-S. Chernikova, Kazan 2003.]

11...h6! 12.h4 g5 13.g3 f5! 14.d4 g6 The English GM personifies the AC/DC spirit. Instead of recovering the d-pawn, which isn't going anywhere, he aggressively develops his last piece. Not only does this bishop zoom in on the usual weakness at c2, but it also shores up the light squares that were forsaken by the space-gaining ...g5. **15.c4?! xc8! 16.b3 fxd5 17.dxd5 dxd5 18.e1?! d4!** Black's army gravitates

to c2 like gold-diggers to Larry King. Given the bishop, rook, and now knight, the upcoming combination is inevitable.

"It is a profound mistake to imagine that the art of combination depends only on natural talent, and that it cannot be learned. Every player knows that all (or almost all) combinations arise from a recollection of familiar elements." – Richard Reti.

19.e5 dxc2! 20.xc2

[White would lose the pawn the same way in case of 20.dxc2 xd1 21.xaxd1 xc2 22.xc2 xc2 .]

20...xc2 21.dxc2 xd1 22.xaxd1 xc2

23.g3 e6! 24.xg7 xg7 The rest is a matter of technique, and the extra pawn is not hard to convert in this double-rook ending.

25.d7 xb2 26.xe6 d8! 27.xd8 fxe6

By swapping off a pair of rooks, Hodgson facilitates the king's march.

28.f2 b4 29.f3 f6

[29...xa4 30.d7+ f6 31.xb7 b4 would also be technically winning, but it is preferable to maintain the pressure. This is an opening book, not an endgame manual, so let's cut to the chase.]

30.d7 b6 31.b7 e5 32.e3 g4 33.b8

b3+ 34.e2 e4 35.e8 d5 36.g8

b4 37.e3 h5 38.d3 b3+ 39.d2 c4

40.b8 d3+ 41.e2 d5 42.e8 e5+

43.d2 b3 44.b8 d5+ 45.c1 c5+

46.f1 xa4 "In a rook and pawn ending,

the rook must be used aggressively. It must either attack enemy pawns, or give active support to the advance of one of its own pawns to the queening square." – Siegbert Tarrasch.

0-1

B34

Paul,M

Pop,A

Baile Felix

2012

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.dxd4 g6

5.c3?! This passive move may temporarily tame the Dragon bishop, but it neglects the critical squares at d5 and e4.

g7 6.e3 f6 This position has been reached in 700 databased games, via both this move order and the more common 5 Be3 Bg7 6 c3 Nf6. I can't comprehend why White wants to waste his advantage of the first move.

Sure enough, nobody over 2450 has tried it, partly due to its dismal score of 30%. We aren't going to complain, and the women's world champion certainly didn't in S. Ranasinghe-Hou Yifan, Khanty-Mansiysk 2012.

7. ♖d2 0-0 8. ♗e2

[8. ♗d3 was the choice of the Hungarian GM in P.Acs-A.Homonnay, Megyei 1997, against somebody rated 300 points lower. After d5! 9. exd5?! ♖xd5 10. ♖xc6 bxc6 11. ♗e2 ♖xe3 12. ♗xe3 , he lost the bishop-pair and the game in under 25 moves.]

8...d5! As usual, we castle on the seventh move and counterstrike on the eighth.

9. exd5

[9. ♖xc6 bxc6 10. e5 ♖d7 11. f4 f6! would produce another souped-up Advance French. After 12. exf6 exf6 13. 0-0 the German GM in H.Eschle-S.Kalinitshew, Boeblingen 2006, activated his rooks to the maximum through ♗e8! 14. ♗f2 ♗c7 15. g3 ♗b8 , and won a dozen moves later.]

9...♖xd5 10. ♖xc6 ♖xe3!?

[In J.Friedman-A.Wojtkiewicz, Ledyards 2006, Black preferred 10...bxc6 11. ♖c4 ♖xe3 12. ♖xe3 ♗b8 to catch the bishop, and went on to convert a longwinded endgame.]

11. ♖xd8 ♖xd1 12. ♗xd1 ♗xd8 This forced sequence of exchanges results in a clearly advantageous endgame for Black.

"When you trade, the key concern is not always the value of the pieces being exchanged, but what's left on the board." – Dan Heisman.

13. ♖e4 ♗e6 14. ♗xd8+ ♗xd8 15. a3 ♗d5!

The two bishops rule the open board.

16. ♗f3 b6 17. ♖d2 ♗e6 18. ♖e2 ♗h6!

Don't forget that our fianchettoed bishop can often turn to the h6-c1 diagonal, whenever it is restricted by a pawn on c3 or e5.

19. ♗d1 f5! On the subject of pawn majorities, I am aware that I rant even more than the infamous Mel Gibson. Nevertheless, it is important to use these trumps in every phase of the game.

20. ♗c6 ♗d6 21. ♗b5 ♗d5 22. ♗c4?? ♗xd2+!

Une petite combinaison wins a piece by discovered attack.

0-1

□ **Farago,S**

■ **Mueller,R**

Balatonbereny

[Peter Lalic]

B34

1995

1.e4 c5 2. ♖f3 ♖c6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♖xd4 g6 5. ♖c3 ♗g7 6. ♖de2!? ♖f6 7. g3

[7. g3 is a slightly tricky move: -- (White has scored a positive 60% from 7...0-0 8. ♗g2 , as in V.Korchnoi-I. Bondarevsky, Leningrad 1963, and S. Movsesian-E.Bacrot, Dresden Olympiad 2008, because ...d5 is subsequently impossible.; That is why Black often settles for ...d6 sooner rather than later, like in F. Vallejo Pons-V.Anand, Benidorm (rapid) 2003, and most games converge on the tense position 7...d6 8. ♗g2 0-0 9. 0-0 .; He has also sought counterplay with 7...b5!? 8. ♗g2 ♗b8 . You can find the high-quality games V.Atlas-S.Tiviakov, Kallithea 2002, and V.Georgiev-S.Tiviakov, Calvia Olympiad 2004, on the Internet, like all the others that I have cited in this book.]

However, the problem with all those standard Dragons is that it is difficult to release the tension. Fortunately our favourite AC/DC move works after all.

7...d5!? 8. exd5

[In the recent master encounter M.Perez Candelario-R.Aloma Vidal, Naval Moral 2011, 8. ♖xd5?! could have been pinned by the novelty ♗g4! .

A) the naive 9. ♗g2 would be blown away by ♖xd5 10. ♗xd5 (not 10. exd5? ♖d4! winning material) 10...♗b6! , when the threats of ...Bxe2, ...Rd8, ...Nb4, and ... Bxb2 grant Black a clear advantage;

B) Black's development lead arising from 9. ♖xf6+ ♗xf6 10. ♗xd8+ ♗xd8 11. c3 ♗f3! 12. ♗g1 ♗xe4 would regain the pawn with interest.

"The defensive power of a pinned piece is but imaginary." – Aron Nimzowitsch.]

8...♖b4 This dynamic position is similar to the last game of Chapter Three, except that the white knight is worse on e2 than b3.

9. ♗g2

[White has also tried to cling on to the pawn by 9. ♖f4 , against which I suggest the no-nonsense development 0-0 . D.Kononenko-D.Lineykin, Dnipropetrovsk 2003, continued 10. a3 ♗g4! 11. ♗e2 (not 11. f3?? ♗xf3! 12. ♗xf3 ♖xc2+ 13. ♖d1 ♖xa1) 11... ♗xe2

12.♔xe2 (any other capture would allow 12... Nbx d5) ♖a6 . White's stranded king and hemmed-in queenside provide us with easily sufficient compensation for the pawn, which can be recouped anyway by the plan ...Nc7, ...Qd7, and ...Rfd8.]

9...♙f5! So often is c2 an Achilles' heel.

10.♗d4

[10.0-0 ♗xc2! 11.♖b1 0-0 12.b4 would not snare the knight, as the Russian GM successfully proved in M.Saltaev-S. Nadyrhanov, Tashkent 1992. After ♖c8! 13.♖b3 ♗d7 14.h3 h5! White was too distracted by the strategic weaknesses at c3, c4, and d5.]

10...♙g4 11.♖d2

[Otherwise, 11.f3?! ♙c8 12.0-0 ♗fxd5 13.♗xd5 ♗xd5 would equalize comfortably, as in J.Antonio-H.Meza, Banfield 2004.]

11...♗bxd5 12.♗xd5 ♗xd5 13.♗b5 ♖b6!

The German FM has achieved his opening goal of detonating the centre.

[He calculated accurately that 13...♖b6 14.♙xd5?! (the skewer 14.♖xd5? ♖d8! 15.♗c7+!? ♖xc7 16.♖b5+ ♖d7 17.0-0 ♖xc2 would also favour him) 14...♖xb5 would interfere with kingside castling.]

14.0-0 ♗f6 15.a4 0-0 Black has finished development, and can start his minority attack.

16.♖e3 ♙d7 17.♗c3 ♖b4 18.♖f4 a5!

[He only accepts a queen swap on his own terms, i.e. 18...a5 19.♖xb4?! axb4 20.♗a2 ♖xa4 collecting a pawn.]

19.♖a3 ♙e6 20.♖f3 ♖ad8 21.♗a2 ♖c4

22.c3? ♗g4! White has entombed two pieces on the queenside, so it is high time to strike on the other flank.

23.h3? ♗e5 24.♖xb7 ♖e2! Whilst all the defenders are scattered, Black moves in for the kill.

25.♙f4 ♖d7 26.♖b5 ♙c4 27.♖b6 ♗f3+!

28.♙xf3

[28.♔h1?? ♖d1! would force mate in three. The rest is a wipe-out, which even I could wrap up against Carlsen.]

28...♖xf1+ 29.♔h2 ♙d4 30.cxd4 ♖xf2+

31.♔h1 ♖xd4 32.♖c6 ♙d5 33.♖xd5 ♖xd5

34.♙xd5 ♖d8 35.♙f3 e5 36.♙g5 e4 37.♙g4

♖d3 38.♖c3 h5 39.♖xd3 exd3 40.♙d7

♖f3+ 41.♔h2 ♖d5 "Attack! Always Attack!" –

Adolf Anderssen.

0-1

□ Aronin,L

■ Geller,E

USSR Championship, Moscow

1950

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6

5.♗c3 ♙g7 6.♙e3 ♗f6 7.♗xc6 bxc6 8.e5

♗g8 White temporarily forces back our knight, albeit at the cost of two long-term concessions. First and foremost is his e-pawn, which almost requires as much attention as the Kardashians. For Pete's sake, literally, they are one of those many celebrity families that destroy my faith in humanity. On a more positive note, 7 Nxc6 allows us to recapture towards the centre, and thus re-establish the AC/DC majority of which you have hopefully grown fond.

9.f4

[The only alternative is 9.♙d4 f6 :

A) 10.exf6 ♗xf6 would give us the two central pawns from Chiang-Wallach. The Vietnamese WIM in W.Medina-H.Nguyen Thi Mai, Ho Chi Minh City 2012, gradually steamrolled them forwards with 11.♙c4 ♖a5 12.0-0 d5! 13.♙b3 e6 .

"If the defender is forced to give up the centre, then every possible attack follows almost of itself." – Siegbert Tarrasch.;

B) 10.f4 ♖a5! has awarded Black a plus score:

B1) 11.♖d2 was selected in G.

Kasparov-V.Ivanchuk, Prague (rapid) 2002, by the greatest player in history, in my humble opinion. His prepared gambit was correctly accepted by fxe5 12.fxe5 c5! 13.♙e3 ♙xe5 , which later ended in a draw.;

B2) If White supports the pawn with

11.♖e2 , then fxe5 12.♙xe5 ♗f6

13.0-0-0 0-0 develops efficiently. Upon

B2a) after 14.♙d4 d5! , the pawn is practically untouchable in view of 15.♖xe7? (so I.Kurnosov-S.Tiviakov, Krasnoyarsk 2003, held the balance with 15.♖e1 ♖f7 16.a3 ♗h5!) 15...♙g4!;

B2b) 14.♖c4+ ♔h8 15.♙e2

, the Belorussian GM in D.Szoen-A.

Fedorov, Warsaw 2005, triumphed

with the powerful, positional pawn

sacrifice d6! 16.♖xc6 ♖b8 17.♙d4

♖b4 18.♗b1?! ♙e6 , when all his

pieces aimed at the enemy king;

B3) 11.--;

C) 10.--]

9...f6 10.exf6

[Instead, 10.♗d4 would enter the
aforementioned variation.]

10...♗xf6 11.♗e2 0-0 12.0-0 d5! 13.♗d4

We have transposed directly into Zelic-Feletar,
which is a testament to the AC/DC's reliability.

♗f5 14.♗f3

[The usual dark-square strategy applies, so
the 14.♗a4 of M.Klichev-V.Pugachov,
Dubna 2007, should be met by ♗d7
15.♗xg7 ♗xg7 .]

14...♗b8 15.g4?! The six-time world
championship candidate has lured White into
weakening his king.

♗c8 16.♗b1 ♗b4! 17.a3 ♗xd4! Again the
dark squares are the number one priority.

"The chief characteristics of Geller's creativity
are an amazing ability to extract the very
maximum from the opening, and a readiness
to abandon positional schemes for an open
game rife with combinations, or vice-versa, at
any moment." – David Bronstein.

18.♗xd4 ♗xg4 19.♗xa7 e5 20.♗xg4 ♗xg4

21.fxe5 ♗f3! He does not let his opponent
trade off any firepower.

22.♗e3 d4 23.♗d2? ♗xe5! In the words of
Yasser Seirawan, when you are attacking,
"Invite everyone to the party!"

24.♗xf3 ♗xf3 25.♗e1 ♗f5 26.♗e4 ♗h4

27.♗e2 ♗f4 28.♗e1 ♗xh2+! The rook is
overloaded to the defence of the royal couple,
and both of them perish on the dark squares.

29.♗h1 ♗g3+!

0-1

B34

□ Pontes,A

■ De Paiva,P

Sao Paulo

2009

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6

5.♗c3 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♗f6 7.h4!?

Flank openings have enjoyed a recent surge
of popularity, led by aggressive maniacs like
GM Simon Williams. Mind you, this hack-
attack isn't as foolish as it appears at first
glance, and his ex-girlfriend was winning
before move 15 with it.

[In A.Wilson-C.Atako, Hastings 2007/08,
7.h4 ♗a5 8.f3 0-0 9.♗d2 ♗xd4?!
10.♗xd4 d6 11.g4! ♗e6 12.h5! a6

13.hxg6 hxg6 14.g5 ♗d7?? 15.♗h2!

was the kind of Yugoslav Attack that we
never want to face. Yikes, I haven't seen
that much mating going on since a Miley
Cyrus music video.]

7...0-0 As per schedule, we castle on the
seventh move.

[7...d5 was premature in A.Alekhine-V.
Nenarokov, Moscow 1918, which the fourth
World Champion refuted with startling
efficiency.]

8.h5!? White can't afford to touch the brakes,
lest he backtrack into a suspicious main line.

[For instance, changing gears with 8.♗c4?
would crash head on into the typical decoy
♗xe4! 9.♗xe4 d5 . It should come as no
surprise that O.Boran-V.Mrna, Piestany
2004, finished 0-1 in a mere dozen more
moves.]

8...d5! There are definitely no bonus points for
picking our favourite pawn lever, especially in
this situation.

"Meet a wing attack with a central
counterattack," as in practically every chess
strategy book known to man.

[Meanwhile, despite its objective soundness,
8...♗h5!? should lose points for excessive
bravery. I certainly don't blame the other
three players to have reached this position
for steering clear of 9.g4! ♗f6 10.g5 .]

9.hxg6 hxg6 10.♗xc6 bxc6 White is forced
into liquidating the centre, and with it any
prospects of a kingside attack.

11.exd5 ♗xd5 12.♗xd5 ♗xd5

[12...cxd5 would converge with the GM
draw B.Ivanovic-N.Nikcevic, Niksic 2000.]

13.♗xd5 cxd5 That central duo and minority
attack look very familiar.

14.0-0-0 ♗d8 15.c3

[B.Bauer-M.Feige, Leutersdorf 2000,
diverged via 15.♗g5 f6 16.♗h6 ♗g4
and led to an eventual black victory.]

15...e5! The majority must be pushed.

16.♗e2 ♗e6 17.♗g5?! It is understandable
that White struggles for a plan, but this is a
step in the wrong direction. He merely
encourages our rooks to go where they belong,
after castling on opposite sides: bearing down
the open b- and c-files towards His Majesty.

♗dc8 18.♗b1 ♗ab8 19.♗a1 e4 20.♗e3??

White has been wasting tempi left and right,
while we have achieved maximum co-
ordination, so it is time to strike with a
tactical blow. Can you find it?

♗xc3! 21.♗xa7?

chesstouring.com

[The cute mate 21.bxc3?? ♗xc3#
would be a fitting tribute to the
fianchettoed bishop.]

21...♖b7?

[Alas, even better would be the spectacular
sacrifice 21...♖c1+!! 22.♖xc1 ♖xb2
, constructing an unstoppable windmill
mate.]

22.♗d4 ♗xd4 23.♖xd4? ♖c2 Once again,
rooks on the seventh win the day.

24.♗a6 ♖bxb2 25.a4 ♖a2+ 26.♕b1 ♖cb2+

27.♕c1 ♖xf2 28.♕b1

0-1

Chapter Five

Maróczy Bind: Strategic Ideas

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6 5 c4



This is a whole other story, compared to the rich, open positions that we have studied so far. They were overflowing with active pieces, forcing initiatives, and shocking sacrifices, all of which required deep analysis. Meanwhile, the Maróczy Bind is at the opposite end of the theoretical spectrum. As I warned you in the [Introduction](#), 5 c4 basically kills our thematic ...d5 counterstrike, and with it any dynamism for the foreseeable future. That means you can forget about any AC/DC miniatures.

Nevertheless, the good news is that this simple structure practically plays itself, because it tends to remain static for the next ten, fifteen or even twenty moves. Therefore, you will consistently reach a fine middlegame, with the help of just a few tried and tested principles. Do you remember when Einstein said that "Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler"? Indeed, as a time-trouble addict myself, I learnt the hard way not to over think such straightforward positions. If there were ever an episode of CSI called *Clock Scene Investigation*, my character would end up either in a body bag or as the chalk outline on the floor.

Outline

Speaking of outlines, let us draw one for these strategic ideas. Whether you employ one or all of them in a game, they all share the same common goal: to negate White's spatial advantage. As the diagram below illustrates, although his centre temporarily cramps our style, it is vulnerable to the following long-term plans:



- 1) Trading pieces to relieve congestion.
- 2) Manoeuvring through a dark-square strategy.
- 3) Provoking b2-b3 for further weaknesses.
- 4) Undermining c4 with ...b7-b5.
- 5) Flanking e4 via ...f7-f5.

1) Trading Pieces

It's certainly not as fun as that 80s comedy, but trading pieces is the number one antidote to the symptoms of a spatial disadvantage. Besides, what would Eddie Murphy or Dan Aykroyd from *Trading Places* know about the Maróczy Bind anyway? The fact is that, with fewer pieces treading on each other's toes, you will be able to manoeuvre more comfortably within your first three ranks. First of all, here is an exemplary game by one of the best players of the early 20th century.

[Swiderski-Maroczy](#)

Now let us see how easily this rule of thumb is applied at a much lower level. As a result of this final game in the Glorney Cup, I clinched the best player award with 5/6 while representing England on board 3.

[Murchadha-Lalic](#)

2) Dark-Square Strategy

As we ascertained way back in [Shahsavar-Sax](#) and [Zelic-Feletar](#), when White is strong on one colour complex, he must be weak on the other as a consequence. In this case, his pawns on c4 and e4 hold a lock down over the light squares, so we should focus on the surrounding dark squares like c5, d4 and e5.

[Whitaker-Janowski](#)

A month before our next encounter, played in a county match, I made a New Year's resolution to start playing the Sicilian Defence. I studied Tiviakov's ChessBase DVD on the Maróczy Bind, and the rest was history.

[Law-Lalic](#)

3) Provoking b2-b3

If you want to cause yet further dark-squared weaknesses, then obviously you need to force more pawns on to light squares. Normally White volunteers f2-f3 himself, to support e4, but b2-b3 requires a little more persuasion. The trick is to bring so much pressure down to bear on c4, that he runs out of pieces with which to uphold it. Inevitably, b2-b3 will leave behind gaps at a3 and c3, thereby letting our AC/DC bishop reign supreme over the entire long diagonal.

[Nijboer-Tiviakov](#)

[Rogers-Lalic](#)

4) ...b7-b5

To cut a long story short, ...b7-b5 is to the Maróczy Bind what ...d7-d5 is to the main line. It is the quintessential pawn lever that, in one fell swoop, blows open both White's centre and the c-line. After provoking b2-b3, we can now unleash our major pieces on the cavity at c3.

[Rodriguez Lopez-Strikovic](#)

[Kanevsky-Lalic](#)

5) ...f7-f5

Usually our counterplay is directed towards the queenside, where our AC/DC bishop and minority attack converge with devastating effect. Indeed, in order to prevent the ...b7-b5 lever, White would need to displace all his forces there. In that event, I recommend flanking him on his weaker side via ...f7-f5. Being a more double-edged tool to chip away at his centre, though, it does entail both pros and cons.

[Furman,S - Spassky,B 0-1](#)

[Krush,I - Li Ruofan 1-0](#)

□ Swiderski,R
■ Maroczy,G
Monaco
[Peter Lalic]

B38

1904

1.e4 c5 2.c4 ♘c6 3.♗f3 g6 4.d4 cxd4
5.♗xd4 ♕g7 I prefer not to devote too much
space on variations, since long-term plans are
far more valuable. Nonetheless, I must point
out that despite being the first game ever
attributed to this position, it followed the rarer
sequence 1 e4 c5 2 c4 Nc6 3 Nf3 g6 4 d4
cxd4 5 Nxd4 Bg7.

6.♕e3 ♗f6 7.♗c3 d6 8.♕e2 ♕d7 9.0-0 0-0
10.h3 Here you can see why Black gets a bad
rap in the Maróczy: those central pawns seem
to bind him from head to foot. The g7-bishop
is obstructed by the f6-knight, whose d7
retreat is interrupted by the other bishop,
which in turn is hemmed in by the c6-knight.
Boy, even writing about it is painful.
Fortunately, a painless solution exists: to get
rid of the surplus steed.

Generally our knights tread on each other's
toes, so I recommend trading off a pair as
soon as possible.

♗xd4! 11.♕xd4 ♕c6 All of a sudden, our
whole army comes together. It reminds me of
that Beatles song: "One thing I can tell you is
you gotta be free... come together, right now,
over me."

12.♖d3 ♗d7! Don't get overly attached to the
fianchettoed bishop, which should offer itself
for its dominating counterpart.

13.♕xg7 ♗xg7 14.b4 This steamroller
reveals the only downside to the bishop on c6.
b6 15.♖fd1 a5! Black strikes back, posing a
question to the potentially overextended b4-
pawn.

16.a3 axb4 17.axb4 Swapping pawns also
helps to open a file for our rooks.

♖c7 18.♗d5 This so-called Marco hop is
sometimes a strong prelude to exd5 and
pressure on the e7-pawn. Why not rename it
to the "Polo hop"? You know, because of the
hole in the centre. Anyway, here White
cannot double rooks on the e-file, and so he
merely encourages another favourable
exchange.

♕xd5 Such a domineering stallion must be
put to sleep.

19.♖xd5 ♖xa1! 20.♖xa1

Mission accomplished: almost everything has
left the board, apart from our superior minor

piece and his hanging pawn formation.

f5! Apparently Black was so eager to release
his last unit that he stabbed at the centre
without delay, despite the obvious light-
squared concessions. This double-edged
sword is discussed more extensively in the
final section of this chapter.

21.♖e6 ♗e5 22.exf5 ♖xf5 The centre is
dismantled, as more pawns return to the
chess box.

23.♖a8 ♖f8 24.♖xf8 ♗xf8 It took the
Hungarian Grandmaster just two dozen moves
to liquidate to an ending, where his queen
and knight combination is stereotypically
better than the queen and bishop.

25.c5? For fear of being gradually ground
down, White lashes out in a desperate attempt
to counterattack along the light squares.

dxc5 26.f4 ♗f7 27.♕c4 ♖xf4 As the winds
die down, it is easier to batten down the
hatches.

28.bxc5 bxc5 29.♖c8+ ♗g7 30.♖xc5 ♖e5

31.♖c8 ♗d6! 32.♖g8+ ♗h6 33.♖f8+ ♗g5!

We can even march our monarch forwards
without any danger, given that White has zero
compensation for the pawn deficit. The rest is
a matter of technique, so there is no need to
rush our material advantage.

The Maróczy Bind demands careful patience,
particularly in the endgame.

34.♕f1 ♖e3+! Forcing White to part with his
sole remaining aggressor seals his fate.

35.♖f2 ♖xf2+ 36.♗xf2 ♗f4 37.♕d3 ♗e4+

As an amusing aside, this is the ultimate
trade offer that White really cannot accept,
lest he enter a terminal king and pawn ending.

Okay, it's not as funny as my own jokes, of
course, but give old Géza a break. He was
both a great chess player and a professional
engineer... and I'm neither.

38.♗e2 g5 39.♕c2 h5 40.♕b3 e5 41.♕f7

h4 There's hardly anything to say, as the
pawns push themselves.

42.♕c4 ♗f6 43.♗f2 ♗e4 44.♕f7 ♗d3

45.♕g6+ e4 46.♕f5 ♗d2 The passed e-pawn
finally advances so far that it is time to give
up the chase.

47.♕xe4 ♗xe4+ 48.♗f3 ♗d3

0-1

□ Murchadha,O

■ Lalic,P

Glorney Cup, Daventry

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6
5.c4 d6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.♗e3 ♘f6 8.♗e2 0-0
9.0-0 ♘xd4

[You will recognise the same positions cropping up again and again; indeed, I could have transposed directly into the previous game via 9...♗d7 . Alas, I didn't have a satisfactory answer to 10.♘c2!?

, which would have stranded me high and dry without an active plan. This cold-blooded retreat is the main reason that I don't vouch for this variation, as I even regretted allowing it the move before. The next chapter will specify the precise move order to secure the vital trade.]

10.♗xd4 ♗e6 11.f4 ♖c8! As you might be able to tell from my unconvincing variation, at that time I was a relative novice to this opening. I had picked up only one piece of advice, yet it evidently served me well: start chopping wood, and don't stop until the end. That is why I am still quite proud of this quirky queen shuffle, which is a homage to Maróczy's 17...Qc7. While simultaneously pre-empting f4-f5, controlling g4 and attacking c4, I tempt my opponent into the Marco hop.

12.♘d5 ♗xd5 Be it on c6 or e6, all that our short-sighted bishop is good for is hacking off White's more promising knight.

Being so constricted by the central pawns, the brightest future for our light-squared bishop is to trade itself for a knight.

13.exd5 ♘d7 White cannot avoid the third exchange, as his centralized bishop is pinned to the b-pawn.

14.b4 ♖c7 15.♔h1!

[My opponent wisely shuffles his king off the g1-a7 diagonal, where I was dreaming of forcing off the queens by 15.-- ♗xd4+ 16.♖xd4 ♖b6! .]

15...a5! I can't be the only one experiencing a sense of déjà-vu.

16.a3 axb4 17.axb4 ♗xa1 How does that Monty Python song go?

18.♖xa1 ♗xd4 "I'm a lumberjack, and I'm okay..."

19.♖xd4 ♗a8 Actually, I ought to confess to never having seen Swiderski-Maroczy when I played this encounter, and yet I seemed to be

B36

2012

copying it to the letter; I wasn't lying when I said that this simple structure practically plays itself. I am slightly better in this position than Maróczy, having staked the first claim to the a-file.

[White should defend with 19...♗a8 20.♗a1 , but instead commits a highly anti-positional error.]

20.f5?! In general, White's attacking chances lie on the kingside, but they aren't worth the gaping black hole at e5. This is a real nightmare (sic) for the bad bishop.

The only minor piece that should remain is White's bad bishop, which ends up restricted by his light-squared pawns. Meanwhile, in an ideal world, our good knight will plant itself at the outposts c5 or e5.

b6 21.h4! After gambling with his structure's future, White quite rightly has to keep rolling the dice. While my investments are tied up in positional causes on the queenside, he could hit the jackpot if g6 falls through.

♗a2! 22.fxg6 hxg6 23.♗d3 ♘f6!

This tactical finale calls for some analysis.

[23...♘e5 would concede a perpetual check, even without the pinned bishop. After 24.h5! ♗d2 25.hxg6 fxg6 26.♖f4! ♗xd3 27.♖f8+ ♔h7 28.♖f4 g5 29.♖f5+ ♔h6 30.♖f8+ I had seen enough.]

24.h5? ♘xh5 25.♖f3

[Afterwards my opponent explained to me that he had confused his calculations. He had imagined the perpetual 25.♗xg6 fxg6 26.♖f8+ ♔xf8 27.♖h8+ ♔f7 28.♖h7+ ♔e8 29.♖xg6+ ♔d7 30.♖e6+ ♔e8 31.♖g8+ and completely blanked out the knight on h5.]

25...♖a7 I hope in vain to exchange off his most lethal weapon, by way of the back rank.

26.♖g4 ♘f6 27.♖g5 ♖d7! Seemingly retracing my steps, I set a devious trap, having already visualized the winning intermezzo on move 30.

28.♗xg6?!

[One can forgive White for praying for the repetition 28.♗xg6 fxg6? 29.♖xg6+ ♔f8 30.♖h6+ ♔e8 31.♖h8+ ♔f7 32.♖h5+ .]

28...♖g4!! You can tell how obsessed I am with trading pieces.

29.♗xf7+? ♔f8

[This is the only move that wins material, since the alternatives 29...♔xf7?? 30.♖xg4]

[and 29...♔h8?? return the favour.]

30.♖xg4 ♗a1+! Voilà la nuance hesstouring.com

31.♔h2 ♖xg4+ Black fights back with his own deadlier checks.

32.♕g3 ♜e5 This deep fork terminates the complications, as Black earns an exchange for his calculation.

33.♙h5+ ♜xf3 34.♙xf3 ♖b1 35.b5 ♖b2

36.♙g4 ♖c2 37.♙d7 ♖xc4 With five minutes left over from my starting time of two hours, I converted 35 moves later (0-1).

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□ Whitaker,N

■ Janowski,D

New York

1913

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♜c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6
5.c4 ♙g7 6.♙e3 ♗f6 7.♗c3 0-0 8.♙e2 d6
9.0-0 ♙d7 10.f3

[Once again 10.h3 would have transposed into Swiderski-Maroczy, but both players had far more ambitious intentions.]

10...♖c8 11.♗d2 ♗a5 12.♖ad1 ♗h5?!

I don't want to analyse this opening from a theoretical perspective, since it was obviously primitive a whole century ago.

[As a matter of fact, White could have obtained a clear advantage by means of the modern manoeuvre 12...♗h5 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.c5! dxc5 15.♗a4! c4 16.♗c5 , shattering our queenside structure beyond repair. From the hole at c5, the monster knight would dominate both the d7-bishop and isolated c-pawn.

If you have pawns on c6 and d6, White might threaten c4-c5 to capture the outpost by Na4xc5. So long as you can sidestep with ...d5, you should welcome this release of tension.]

13.h3?! This anti-positional move is a triple whammy: in addition to wasting a tempo in the opening, it picks up a second kingside pawn, and puts it down on yet another light square. The latter is what triggers White's demise, as the old Polish master hunts him down along the newly-weakened dark squares.

♖fe8?! 14.♗xc6 bxc6 15.♙xa7?

[Missing the aforementioned 15.c5 variation, the American master naively took the bait. It's rather ironic, because he later became a notorious conman, who befriended Al Capone whilst imprisoned in Alcatraz. I kid you not.]

15...c5! Suddenly White's most important defender is stuck behind enemy lines, without a way back to save its monarch.

16.♙b6 ♖b8 17.♙a5 The reasoning behind such a positional pawn sacrifice is that this bishop is currently worthless. Therefore, to all intents and purposes, White temporarily gives away three points to get just one, which is a mathematically raw deal.

♗h4! 18.♙d3? As usual the light-squared bishop is of no help, and is actually more of a hindrance, since it clogs up the entire White camp.

♗h5! The knight joins the party, and brings a somewhat unwelcome guest.

Your fianchettoed bishop can also switch diagonals towards a mating attack, like in the King's Indian.

19.♗b5 ♖xb5! This exchange sacrifice can be explained with basic arithmetic: the number of attacking pieces, divided by the number of defensive pieces, equals Black's total kingside advantage. Before the ratio was 3:2 (Black's queen, knight and d7-bishop versus White's queen and king). Although theoretically the rook is more valuable than the knight, logic proves otherwise. On b8 it adds nothing to the kingside, and thus is correctly substituted for the knight that could lend support from e2.

20.cxb5 ♙d4+ That forcing sequence has increased the ratio of attackers to 4:2 (QNBB vs. QK).

21.♖f2 ♙xh3! Janowski doesn't give his opponent enough time to counterbalance the equation with Bf1 or Bc3.

22.♙c3?

[22.gxh3 ♗f4! would regain material with an unstoppable initiative in the event of 23.♔f1 ♗xd3 24.♖h2 (not 24.♗xd3?? ♗xf2#) 24...♗xb2 .]

22...♙xg2 23.♔xg2 ♗f4+ 24.♗xf4

[The queen must surrender herself for the sake of her husband, who would otherwise be tortured by 24.♔g1?? ♙xf2+ 25.♔f1 (anything but the fork 25.♗xf2? ♗h3+!) 25...♙g3 26.♔g1 ♗xd3 .]

24...♗xf4 25.♙xd4 cxd4 In order to avert mate, White bails out into a lost ending, where the holes at e3 and g3 will haunt His Majesty until his dying day.

26.♖c2 g5 27.♙e2 g4! 28.♖xd4 gxf3+

29.♙xf3 ♔h8! 30.♖dc4 ♖g8+ He never hesitates to send back-up to finish the job.

You should care not for your pieces that leave

the board, but for those that remain around the enemy king. The greater they outnumber the defenders, the greater your prospects of checkmate.

31.♔f2 ♖h2+ 32.♕e3 ♗g1+ 33.♟f2 ♗g5+
I have only ever seen such intrusive checks at airport security.

34.♕d3 ♗xb5 A fork snatches another pawn for good measure.

35.b3 f5 36.♕d2 f4! Every little helps, so a passed pawn certainly adds to the ratio.

37.♟c3 ♗a5 38.♕d3 ♟g3 39.a4 d5

40.exd5 ♗b6 There isn't much left to say, as you can tell when I descend to quoting supermarket slogans.

41.♕e2 ♗d4 42.♟d3 ♗b2+ 43.♕f1 ♗b1+

44.♟d1 ♗xb3 Pawns start dropping like ripe fruit from a tree.

45.♕h5 f3 46.♟fd2 ♗e3 47.♟f2 ♟h3

Finally the harvest comes to fruition.

48.♟xf3 ♟xf3+ 49.♕xf3 ♗xf3+

0-1

□ Law,S

■ Lalic,P

Hertfordshire

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6

5.c4 ♕g7 6.♕e3 ♘f6 7.♘c3 d6 8.f3 0-0

9.♕e2 ♘xd4 10.♕xd4 ♕d7 11.0-0 ♕c6

12.♗d2 a5! Tiviakov's theoretical recommendation is multipurpose: it reclaims a bit of space on the queenside, prevents the b4-b5 squeeze, and starts conquering the dark squares one by one.

13.♘d5 ♘d7! He taught me well to trade off White's linchpin as soon as possible.

14.♕xg7 ♘xg7 15.f4 ♕xd5 I quickly whipped off the knight for the same reason; it influences the dark squares much more than my bishop.

Eliminate enemy pieces that can shore up the dark squares.

16.exd5 ♗b6+ The lady in black looks good in the same colour, and rushes to the g1-a7 diagonal to point out the drawback of f4.

17.♕h1 ♘c5 18.g4?! My aggressive opponent commits another pawn to a light square, in the hope of a kingside attack that White so often relies upon in this variation.

♟ac8 19.♕f3 ♘g8 I retreat my king prophylactically, before embarking on my own

adventures.

20.♟ae1 ♟c7 21.♟e2 ♗b4! Unlike in the previous examples of the Marco hop, here White has managed to generate some counterplay against e7, so I am obliged to distract him ASAP.

22.♗xb4 axb4 23.b3 ♟a8 The opening strategy has been a success: by executing the right exchanges, I have reduced White to grovelling in an ending. While his rooks are tied to the backward a-pawn, his bad bishop remains locked within the light-squared pawn chain. Consequently it can never disturb my horse, which will gallop to its heart's content around all the dark-squared outposts. As you will see, my next plan is to locate even greener pastures at e5 and g5.

24.♕g2 b6 25.♟d1 h6 I leisurely consolidate my position, and leave him sweating under a bit of time pressure. He had just 17 minutes left as opposed to my whole hour. It is rare for me to build up such a big advantage on the clock, so I must have watched the DVD very attentively.

26.h4 f6 27.♕g3 ♕f7 28.♕g2 ♟a3!?

In spite of objective equality, I try to pose as many problems as possible.

29.♕f2! He noticed my sneaky threat of ...Na4!, exploiting the pin to gang up on the a-pawn via ...Nc3 and ...Rca7.

♟ca7 30.♟dd2 ♟a8 31.♕f3 g5! Although the position is helpfully blocked for my knight, one sole weakness at a2 is currently insufficient for victory. Hence this well-timed winning attempt, right before the first time control.

While knights definitely prefer blocked positions, the rest of your army still requires open lines to move in for the kill.

32.hxg5 hxg5 33.f5?! This seems almost as generous as my grandparents, Peter and Sylvia.

[If White has to give away another outpost at e5, then he should at least redeem one at f5 for his bishop, through 33.fxg5 fxg5 34.♕g3 ♘d7 35.♕e4! .]

What a pretty picture – every single pawn is on the colour that I dreamt. If there is ever a screenplay of this book, an appropriate title might be 'Géza and the Amazing Technicolour Dream Complex'.

33...♟h8 34.♕g1 ♟h3 35.♕g2 ♟h4

At long last, behold the second weakness!

36.♕g3 ♟a8 37.♟h2 ♟ah8 38.♟xh4 gxh4+! Imbalances are essential to keeping the

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2012

defender under pressure.

39.♔h3 ♖d7 40.♞c2 ♜e5 Never stop finding ways to improve your army.

41.♙e2 ♗g7 42.♞c1 ♜f7 43.♙f3 ♜g5+!

I borrowed this W-shape manoeuvre from the well-known bishop and knight checkmate. On its latest and greatest outpost, the knight disrupts the blockade of my outside passed pawn.

44.♗g2 ♞a8 45.♞c2 ♔h6 46.♗f2 ♜f7!

47.♔e3 ♗g5! This king march crowns the dark-square strategy, as White's rook is finally overloaded by the triple threat of ...Rxa2, ...Nf7-e5xg4 and, finally, the advance ...h3.

48.♞h2 ♜e5 49.♔e4 ♞a7 50.♙d1 ♞a3

As Bobby Fischer so sweetly put it, "Chess is war over the board. The object is to crush the opponent's mind." So never feel ashamed to prolong their agony, like I am doing with such cruel waiting moves.

51.♙f3 ♜d7 52.♙d1 ♞a8 53.♔e3 ♞h8

54.♗f3 ♜e5+! After some cautious to-ing and fro-ing, I cash my chips into a winning rook ending.

"Bad bishops protect good pawns." – Mihai Suba.

Sometimes you have to exchange White's bishop, in order to convert your positional advantage into extra material.

55.♗f2 ♜xg4+ 56.♙xg4 ♗xg4 57.♞g2+

♗xf5 The king continues its victory parade.

58.♞g7 ♞a8! 59.♞xe7 ♞xa2+ 60.♗g1 ♞b2

61.♞e6 ♞xb3 Better safe than sorry, I carefully neutralize all White's pawns before promoting my own.

62.♞xd6 ♞c3 63.♞xb6 ♞xc4 64.d6 ♔e6

65.d7+ ♗xd7 66.♞xf6 ♗c7 67.♗f1 b3

0-1

□ **Nijboer,F**

■ **Tiviakov,S**

Dutch Championship, Rotterdam

2000

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♜f3 ♜c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♜xd4 g6

5.c4 ♜f6 6.♜c3 d6 7.♙e2 ♜xd4 8.♞xd4

♙g7 This is the Gurgenedze System that I recommend in the next chapter, with the purpose of trading a pair of knights as early as possible.

9.0-0 0-0 10.♞e3 ♙e6 11.♞b1 ♞b6!?

[Black's slight development lead allows him to double his pawns, in view of a swift

counterattack akin to A.llic-S.Torres, Belgrade 2010. There 11...♞b6 12.♞xb6 axb6 13.f4?! ♞fc8 14.b3 b5! granted him a sizeable advantage, which only increased after the thematic discovery 15.f5 ♙d7 16.a3 gxf5 17.exf5 ♞c5! 18.g4? ♜xg4! .]

12.♞d3 ♞fc8! Obviously the semi-open c-file is a good place to start pressuring the pawn. Note that the queen always moves out of the way first, because the f8-rook is the more natural choice. The reason is that its colleague should support the a-pawn, in case of Be3 or a minority attack.

13.b3 Black begins to outplay his opponent from this equal position, by targeting the fresh holes on the queenside.

Whenever a pawn moves forward, focus on the squares that it used to control: these must now be weaker as a consequence.

♜d7 Besides aiming for the dark squares at c5 and e5 that we have already learnt about, the knight also uncovers the bishop's gaze down to c3.

14.♜d5 ♙xd5 This trade is becoming even more predictable than all those low-budget action movies from the 90s, like 'Hard Target' and 'Sudden Death'. Having said that, in the latter's finale, there's nothing sweeter than watching Jean Claude Van Damme beat up a woman in a penguin mascot, before throwing her into an industrial dishwasher.

15.exd5 ♞a5 16.♙b2 ♙xb2 17.♞xb2 ♞a3! After having liquidated White's bishop-pair into the ideal configuration of good knight versus bad bishop, the Russian GM slowly creeps into the crevices.

18.♞d2 a5! The game continues to resemble mine versus Stephen Law, in which the solitary backward a-pawn was not yet costly enough. Hence this minority attack, designed to probe deeper into enemy territory.

19.♞e3! The Dutch GM correctly reminds us of our own liability, which we cannot afford to lose, lest d6 also collapse.

When White opens the e-file using the Marco hop, make sure that you can protect your backward pawn in time. If he triples major pieces, with the so-called Alekhine's gun, consider deploying ...Re8, ...Rc7 and ...Kf8 in an emergency.

♞e8 20.♙g4 ♜f6 21.♙h3 The bad bishop resigns itself to just dominating the knight. It can't attain successful employment by itself, so it tries to sabotage its counterpart, thereby reminding me of Jay Leno.

a4! It is time to strike while Nijboer is preoccupied with the other flank.
22.g3 axb3 23.axb3 ♖b4 24.♞c1 ♠a3!
 The rook adopts an extra part-time job: in addition to ruling over the only open file, it also keeps an eye on the hanging b-pawn.
25.♞d3 b6 26.♔g2 ♠a2 27.♞d4! ♖a3 28.♞f4! White musters some active counterplay, with the help of tactical threats such as c5 and Rxf6.
♖c5 29.♖e1 ♠a8 These waiting moves make him overestimate his position.
30.b4!? **♖c7 31.♖d2 ♠a7 32.♔g1 ♠ea8 33.c5?** After lingering for so long on the back foot, White over enthusiastically jumps forward at the first opportunity.
bxc5 34.bxc5 ♠a1! White pinned his hopes on the c-pawn and, by an ironic twist of fate, now he is pinned to it, by the same rook that kept harassing his b3-pawn.
35.♔f1? ♠xc1 36.♖xc1 ♖xc5 37.♖xc5 dxc5 38.d6!? In a last bid for freedom, he jettisons the lifeless pawn. Alas, the tactics favour the superior minor piece, since play is confined to one side of the board.
♔h5! 39.♞f3 exd6 40.♔c4 ♠a7
 White's initiative has been defused, so there is no longer any compensation for his two-pawn deficit.
41.h4 ♔g7 42.g4 ♔f6 43.g5 ♔g4 44.♔d5 ♔e5 The knight takes care of everything from its favourite vantage point.
45.♞f6 ♠a1+ 46.♔g2 ♠d1! 47.♞xd6 ♔d3! This X-ray discovery will inevitably pick up a piece. Or "pick up a penguin", if Jean-Claude Van Damme decides to advertise at an even lower budget.
48.♞f6 ♔e1+ 49.♔f1 ♔c2+ 0-1

□ Rogers, T
 ■ Lalic, P
 London
 [Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♔f3 ♔c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♔xd4 g6 5.c4 d6 6.♔c3 ♔f6 7.♔e2 ♔xd4 8.♖xd4 ♔g7 9.♔e3 0-0 10.♖d2 ♔e6 Here the bishop is perfectly placed to eyeball the c4-pawn and chop off the knight if it lands on d5.
11.♞c1 Nimzowitsch would feel proud to see White insert this prudent prophylaxis. As well as ducking out of the hazardous long diagonal,

the rook overprotects c3 and c4.
♖a5 This Gurgendze main line is put under the theoretical microscope from Spassky-Petrosian onwards.
12.b3 ♞fc8 I follow my own advice from the previous game, and marshal my major pieces towards the queenside.
13.0-0 a6 This preparatory move is a hint of the interesting events to come in the next game.
14.♔d5!? We have studied the Marco hop enough to understand how important it is. Depending on the situation, the knight can threaten a combination of Nb6, Nxe7+, and Qxa5. Furthermore, this tactic is especially worth analysing, considering how frequently the queens find themselves at d2 and a5.
 [Imagine that the rooks were on c8 and f8 instead, and then you'll realize why I warned against ...Rac8 in the first place. In that case, 14...Qxd2? would drop a critical pawn to the forcing in-between check 15 Nxe7+! Kh8 16 Bxd2. Therefore, to shelter both his hanging queen and e7-pawn, Black would be cornered into 14...Qd8 15 Bb6!. On the other hand, in this game, I had prepared the vacant f8-square for 14.♔d5 ♖xd2 15.♔xe7+?? ♔f8! , when White couldn't save both his queen and knight. It wasn't dangerous on the last move either, for ... Qxd2+ would have forced White's uncastled king to get out of my own check first. When the Marco hop discovers an attack on your queen, beware the intermezzo Nxe7+.]
14...♖xd2 15.♔xd2 ♔xd5
 [Both captures are equal, but 15...♔xd5 looks more boring than the cooking channel. For instance, the Austrian GM in L.Espig-V. Beim, Berlin 1997, coupled it with an immediate handshake.]
16.exd5 a5! I was carrying out these plans step-by-step: first trading pieces, then manoeuvring through a dark-square strategy, and next exploiting b3.
17.♔f3 b6 You might be wondering why this little pawn move keeps cropping up. Its benefits are threefold: securing a5, putting the kibosh on c4-c5, and potentially clearing the seventh rank for the defensive rook-lift to a7.
18.♞f1 ♞c7 19.♞e2 ♔f8 The king centralizes itself for the ending, whilst en route taking care of our only conceivable weakness.
 The only structural disadvantage to ...Bxd5; exd5 is our backward e-pawn, which must

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never be moved or taken, under practically any circumstance.

20.♟f1 ♘d7 Whenever I am stuck for a plan, I ask myself one simple question: "What is my worst piece?" Basically, the knight sticks out like a thin, well-dressed person with a good complexion in McDonalds... which is usually me. Not only is it dominated on f6 by White's light-squared control, but it hems in our prized possession.

21.♞e1?! a4! Right at the moment that my opponent disco-ordinates his men, I apply a well-timed wrench to the left side.

22.b4? In his desperation to batten down the hatches, he leaves c4 wide open.

♞e5! When it rains, it pours.

23.♞e4?? ♘d3+ The octopus floods in through all the holes.

24.♞e2 ♘xc1+ Mayday.

25.♞xc1 f5 Abandon ship.

0-1

B36

□ **Rodriguez Lopez,R**

■ **Strikovic,A**

Mondariz

1997

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.c4 ♟f6 6.♟c3 ♘xd4 7.♞xd4 d6 8.♞e2 ♟g7 9.♞e3 0-0 10.♞d2 ♞e6 11.0-0

[This developing move seems more natural than 11.♞c1 of the previous game, yet it is only just about as popular. Zontakh-Velimirovic covers it in more detail.]

11...♞a5 This is another very typical position, in which Black has already achieved an exchange of knights. By the way, don't worry; the Marco hop doesn't work here, even though our rook remains on f8. The point is that there isn't one to be forked on c8 either.

[Accordingly, 11...♞a5 12.♟d5?! ♞xd2!

13.♟xe7+ ♟h8 14.♞xd2 ♟xe4

was the more than adequate riposte of the WGM in M.Folkova-L.Ptacnikova, Nymburk 1994. She won that first round of the Czech Women's Championship, and went on to clinch the title.]

12.♞fc1 ♞fc8 13.b3 a6 When White defends with his b-pawn, the only way to attack c4 further is with our own.

14.f3?! b5! Black knew what he wanted to do, and calculated precisely how to do it. Then again, with his queen, rook and bishop all

homing in on c3, the resultant tactics should come as no surprise.

You may even turn ...b5 into a positional pawn sacrifice, like the Benko Gambit. Black's dynamism is often so powerful down the a- and c-files, that a concrete follow-up is not strictly necessary.

15.cxb5

[White had a tricky decision to make about his c-pawn. Trying to block the long diagonal with 15.e5? dxe5 16.cxb5 axb5 17.♟xb5 ♞xc1+ 18.♞xc1 ♟d5! caused him to suffer a kind of Benko in M.Lorenzini-C.Minzer, Villa del Parque 1998.]

[Alternatively, the late Russian GM in V. Arbakov-V.Belikov, Alushta 2002, was

fortunate to draw after 15.♟b1?! b4!

16.♞d4 ♟d7 17.♞xg7 ♟xg7 18.a3 ♞c5+

19.♟h1 a5! , which put his toy horse back in the box.]

15...axb5 Suddenly all our long-range pieces are activated like laser beams zapping through space. Hence the b-pawn's immunity in the following instructive variations.

16.♞ab1

[16.♞xb5?? would be overloaded by our favourite discovered sacrifice ♟xe4!

17.♟xe4 ♞xa1 18.♞xa1 ♞xb5 .]

[The other capture 16.♟xb5?? would also lose material to ♞xd2 17.♞xd2 ♞xc1+ , owing to the tactical blow 18.♞xc1 (or the skewer 18.♞xc1? ♞xa2 19.♞d1 ♞xb3) 18...♟xe4! 19.♞b1 ♞xa2! .]

16...♞xc3!! A spectacular exchange sacrifice forces another victim to the long diagonal, whilst eliminating the guardian of a2 with tempo.

17.♞xc3 ♞xc3 18.♞xc3 ♟xe4!

This discovery seizes momentum and a spare pawn to boot.

19.♞c7 ♟c3 Such a three-pronged fork shows why a knight can easily be worth as much as a rook, if not more so in close quarter combat.

20.♞e1 ♞xa2 One...

21.♟f1 ♟d5 Attack...

22.♞a7 ♞xa7 After...

23.♞xa7 ♞c3 Another.

24.♞c1 b4 This interesting endgame is roughly equal, as the knight and two central pawns compensate for the rook, which searches in vain for an open file.

25.g3 ♟f6 26.♞b1 ♟f5 27.♞c1 h5!

It is always handy to gain space free of charge.

Above all in the endgame, pawns increase in value with each step closer to their queening square.

28.h3 ♖f8 According to the same truism, the king should make itself useful on the quieter battlefield.

29.g4 ♙e6 **30.♖b1** The rook is reduced to looking after a measly foot soldier.

d5 **31.g5?!** Blocking the kingside produces outposts for the knight, and no passages for the rook.

♗d7 **32.f4** d4! Encasing White's bishop.

33.♖f2 ♙e8 His Majesty tiptoes along with some evil ideas.

34.h4 ♖d8 **35.♙d3** ♖c7 In the inspiring words of Travis Bickle, "I just wanna go out. I really, you know, I got some bad ideas in my head."

36.♙e4 ♖d6 **37.♖e2** ♙g4+ **38.♖d3?!** e5! The Serbian became a grandmaster by utilizing his forces to the fullest.

39.♖f1 ♙e6 Strikovic never wants his opponent to feel relaxed, and endeavours to point out every weakness.

40.♖c2? exf4 To the Spanish IM's disappointment, he could not recapture on f4 due to the king fork.

41.♙d3 ♖e5 **42.♖f2** ♙g4 **43.♙b5** ♖e4! The king will shepherd home the two passed pawns.

0-1

□ Kanevsky,S

■ Lalic,P

London

[Peter Lalic]

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2013

1.e4 c5 **2.♗f3** ♗c6 **3.d4** cxd4 **4.♗xd4** g6 **5.c4** d6 **6.♗c3** ♗f6 **7.♙e2** ♗xd4 **8.♖xd4** ♙g7 **9.♖d1?!** Somehow this modest retreat looks like a bigger waste of time than watching cute cat videos on YouTube. Trust me, I would know.

[The next chapter explores the only serious alternatives, 9.♙e3 ,]

[, 9.♙g5]

[and 9.0-0 .]

9...0-0 **10.0-0** ♙e6 **11.♙e3** ♖a5 **12.♖d2**

♖fc8 I organise the usual set-up to lure the pawn forward. When you are surprised by a substandard move, there is no reason to mix up your strategies.

13.b3 b5! Since White wasted a move

retreating his queen, my counterstrike is fast enough to forego any ...a6 or ...Rab8 preparations. From now on White must defend vigilantly against this initiative.

[Take, for instance, M.Andersen-S.Savitskiy, Herceg Novi 2006, where 13...b5

14.♗xb5?! ♖xd2 15.♙xd2 ♗xe4 16.♙e3?! ♙xa1 cost him an exchange and the game shortly afterwards.

If White fails to develop himself in time for ...b5, you need not spend a preparatory move on ...a6.]

14.b4! My opponent finds the only way to interfere with my assault on c3. Albeit at the ruin of his pawn chain, at least he finally gets to lunge off the back foot.

♖xb4 **15.♖ab1** ♖a5 I probe him a bit, with the intention of inducing some errors. To his credit, he reacts accurately.

16.♖xb5 ♖a3 **17.♖b3** ♖a5 **18.♖b5** ♖d8 After a bit of jabbing back and forth, the dust settles on a slight advantage for Black, in view of the isolano at c4.

19.c5! In the hope of liquidating the c-pawn into a symmetrical ending, he is right to "Drop it like it's hot". I rue the day that I cannot express myself more eloquently than Snoop Dogg.

♗d7 Yet again c3 hinders White, as the pawn is pinned to the knight.

20.♗a4 dxc5 Whenever we cannot push onwards with ...d5, we must acquiesce to the exchange on c5.

21.♗xc5 ♗xc5 **22.♖xd8+** ♖xd8 **23.♙xc5?** Dubious.

[23.♖xc5 ♙d4 24.♙xd4 ♖xd4 25.a3 should be enough to draw.

Don't worry if your opponent liquidates your attacking potential. So long as you keep setting him problems, with the help of our favourite plans, there will always be roads for him to become lost in.]

23...♖d2! The rook on the seventh is as invasive as ever.

24.♙f3??

[White falls down at the last hurdle, though he probably wouldn't enjoy stopping the outside passed pawn after 24.♖e1 ♖xa2 either.]

24...♙c4 However elementary this fork, the defender can easily be distracted by his burdens at a2 and e4.

25.♖bb1 ♙xf1 **26.♖xf1** ♖xa2 If losing the exchange knocked him out, then this capture delivers his Last Rites.

27.♠d1 ♖a1 28.♠xa1 ♗xa1 29.♗xe7 ♗d4
 30.♗h4 a5 31.♗e7 ♗b2 That is the final nail
 in the coffin.
 32.♗d1 a4
 0-1

B38

□ Furman,S

■ Spassky,B

USSR Championship, Moscow

1957

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4

[For the sake of completeness, the game actually began 1.♗f3 c5 2.c4 g6 3.e4 ♗g7 4.d4 cxd4 5.♗xd4 ♗c6 , which goes to show how often the Maróczy Bind can arise.]

[That is why it is worth understanding it for the Symmetrical English opening (1.c4 c5) as well.]

[Likewise the queen's pawn openings contain the Petrosian variation of the Queen's Indian Defence (1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 b6 4.a3 ♗a6 5.♖c2 ♗b7 6.♗c3 c5 7.e4 cxd4 8.♗xd4),]

[and the Classical variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defence (1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♗b4 4.♖c2 c5 5.dxc5 , followed by e4).]

The Maróczy Bind can arise from several different openings, including the Symmetrical English, the Petrosian variation of the Queen's Indian Defence, and the Classical variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defence.]

1...c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6
 5.c4 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♗h6! This sideline makes no effort to disguise its intentions. What do we want? The ...f5 break! When do we want it? After an appropriate amount of kingside development.

[Besides, the knight is sitting surprisingly pretty on the edge, since 6...♗h6 7.♖d2? ♗g4! would make White regress to his recurring nightmares of Chapter One.]

7.♗c3 0-0 It does bring back fond memories for us, when we used to castle on the seventh move and lash out on the eighth.

8.♗e2 f5! If you nostalgically miss those swashbuckling attacks of the mainline, then I recommend investigating this surprise weapon. It was fashionable in the 50s among such famous Soviet masters as Sokolsky, Veresov, and Gurgeniidze himself.

9.exf5 Threatened with ...f4 or ...fxe4, White feels compelled to give up his centre.

♗xd4! This impartial intermezzo lets go of the precious fianchettoed bishop, for the same reason as Chiang-Wallach – time is of the essence. Therein lies the peril of making sweeping statements: ultimately, every move counts, so you don't have infinite tempi to achieve all your goals.

Don't get obsessed over the AC/DC bishop, especially in the Maróczy Bind.

10.♗xd4 ♗xf5 The knight improves itself with tempo.

11.♗c5 d6 12.♗a3 ♗fd4 13.0-0 ♗f5

So does the light-squared bishop, which otherwise tends to be the most troublesome minor piece.

14.♖c1 ♖d7 15.♗d5 ♖f7 16.b3 ♖af8

17.♗b2 e5 Do you remember Dan Heisman's quote from the previous chapter? It applies to more scenarios than you might expect: "When you trade, the key concern is not always the value of the pieces being exchanged, but what's left on the board." In this case, after parting with our best minor piece, we have actually maximized the potential of all the remaining ones. Our pawn centre bolsters the knight at d4, the queen and bishop team up on the light squares, and the rooks double up on the semi-open file.

18.b4 ♗e6 19.♗d3?! ♗g4! The future world champion pounces upon the almost imperceptible mistake.

20.f3? ♗xf3! It is a fitting tribute to Black's opening strategy, that the mating attack starts and ends by detonating the f-line.

21.gxf3 ♗xf3+ 22.♗h1 ♖h3 23.♖f2??

Killing two royal guards should give plenty of enduring compensation for the piece anyway, but the two Russian GMs create a more explosive finale.

♗e1!!

[This interference device cuts the communication of White's major pieces. If the overloaded rook retreats to safety on the second rank, 23...♗e1 24.♖d2 (yet, if it runs in the other direction, 24.♖xf7 ♖g2# delivers the kiss of death) 24...♖f1+ 25.♗xf1 ♖xf1# hits the back rank like a football to the groin.]

0-1

□ Krush,I

■ Li Ruofan

Khanty-Mansiysk (rapid)

[Peter Lalic]

B38

2012

1.e4

[This game too stemmed from the
aforementioned Symmetrical English, via
1.c4 c5 2.♟f3 ♟c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♟xd4 g6
5.e4 .]

1...c5 2.♟f3 ♟c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♟xd4 g6
5.c4 ♟g7 6.♟e3 ♟f6 7.♟c3 d6 8.♟e2 0-0
9.0-0 ♟d7 10.f3 ♟xd4 11.♟xd4 ♟c6
12.♟d2 ♟d7

[The Singaporean WGM deviates from
Tiviakov's recommendation of 12...a5
, with which I dominated the dark squares in
Law-Lalic.]

13.♟e3 f5?! Instead she prefers to undermine
the centre straight away, in spite of its
theoretically suspicious reputation.

14.exf5 ♟xf5 The difference between this
counterattack and Spassky's is that here
White is fully developed. As a result, there
aren't so many pros to make up for the usual
cons of ...f5. There is a sensible reason that I
used to teach my primary school pupils not to
move "foolish Freddy". Basically it exposes
the king to the a2-g8 diagonal, not to mention
the surrounding light squares. Obviously the
tenth world champion made the most of his
redeeming features, such as the semi-open f-
file, but our knight is the real problem here. It
can neither harass the enemy bishop, nor
stumble upon a decent outpost. For example,
...Nf6 leaves the rook hanging in no man's
land, ...Ne5 is kicked by f4, and ...Nc5 by b4.
All of this means that the queen cannot sit
pretty at d7, from where she shores up the e6
hole and makes way for the other rook to
swing to the kingside.

Only commit your f-pawn when your kingside
counterplay compensates for any light-
squared weaknesses like e6.

15.b4! To add insult to injury, the knight also
blocks the bishop's retreat to d7.

b6 16.♟ac1 This pretty, pretty good
prophylaxis should curb your enthusiasm for
the Dragon bishop.

a5 17.a3 ♟c8? Even the traditional trading
plan of ...Rxa1 is thwarted.

18.f4! The American WGM ruthlessly
punishes Black for precariously perching yet
another piece on the h3-c8 diagonal.

axb4 19.axb4 ♟b7 20.♟b5 d5?

Desperate times call for desperate measures,
but suicide is never really an option. Call a
Samaritan, or talk to Frank... But I don't
recommend advice from Freddie; he's too
foolish.

21.♟g4 The light squares crumble around
Black's king in just 20 moves, even on board
four of the Women's World Cup.

♟f6

[She is forced to give up an exchange,
seeing as 21...♟f8 22.♟e6+ ♟h8 23.cxd5
is just as resignable.]

22.♟xf5 gxf5 In such an open position, the
material advantage is decisive.

23.cxd5 ♟xd5 24.♟xc8 ♟xc8 25.♟d4 ♟h6
White simply liquidates into a winning ending.

26.♟e5 By threatening trades along the way,
Krush continues to improve her pieces.

♟c4 27.♟d4 ♟xb4 28.♟xf5 His Majesty
has to sell off yet more of his castle walls.

♟f8 That certainly isn't the AC/DC bishop that
we have come to know and love.

29.♟c1 ♟b3 30.♟d4 ♟d5 31.♟f3 ♟d3

At such a high level, all this kicking and
screaming is in vain.

32.♟d1 ♟a6 33.♟d4 e6 34.h3 ♟d6

35.♟e3 ♟xf4 Although White makes it look
harder than it should be, her victory is never
really in doubt.

36.♟e1 ♟xh3+ 37.♟h1

[She just had to avoid the perpetual
37.gxh3?? ♟g3+ 38.♟h1 ♟xh3+ 39.♟g1
, (and definitely not 39.♟h2?? ♟b7+ .)]

37...♟b7 38.gxh3 ♟d5 39.♟e5 ♟c6 40.♟f1
♟c4 41.♟g5+ White should have done this a
long time ago.

♟f7 42.♟f4+ No queens means no funny
business.

♟xf4 43.♟xf4 b5 44.♟h2 b4 45.♟e5 ♟g6
46.♟h4+ What a crush.

All of these strategic ideas are risk-free,
except for the double-edged ...f5.

1-0

Chapter Six

Maróczy Bind: Gurgenidze Variation

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6 5 c4 d6 6 Nc3 Nf6 7 Be2 Nxd4 8 Qxd4 Bg7



This move order is designed to facilitate the strategic ideas that we have just learnt about. First and foremost, it ensures the vital trade of knights, because White has hardly enough time to intervene with Nc2 or Be3. The former could be knocked off balance by an unavoidable ...f5 jab. Meanwhile the latter attempt to centralize his bishop, through the recapture ...Nxd4; Bxd4, could be rudely interrupted by the in-between kick ...Ng4. The following theory explains how these crucial details guide us back into familiar territory.

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6 5 c4 d6



Despite being seen less than 1% of the time, this nuance is most flexible for fans of Tiviakov's 5...Bh6!? rarity. You might fancy his idea of trading bishops, with the intention of dominating the dark squares, but not so early as move five. Now, though, if White plays the natural yet imprecise 6 Be3, you can gain a tempo with the novelty 6...Bh6!?.

6 Nc3 Nf6

The knight must be ready for 7 Be3?! Ng4!. In V.Rizhov-G.Soppe, Coria 2004, the Argentine IM refuted 8 Bg5? by means of the double attack 8...Qb6!, and earned a free pawn from the forcing sequence 9 h3 Nxf2! 10 Kxf2 Qxd4+ 11 Qxd4 Nxd4. Thus the only way to save the bishop is 8 Nxc6 bxc6 9 Bg5, which improves our pawn structure like in [Chapter Four](#). As a matter of fact, the Russian GM had to fight back to draw in I.Nepomniachtchi-T.Dovramadjiev, Internet 2006.

7 Be2

This developing move has been chosen in 5,000 out of 6,000 games in *Mega Database 2013*, and scored an impressive 60%. Accordingly, it is the main focus of our investigation.

7 f3 is a less popular way of stopping ...Ng4. Virtually all of the 400 games predictably continue 7...Nxd4 8 Qxd4 Bg7 9 Be3 0-0 10 Qd2 Be6 11 Rc1 Qa5, until this fork in the road. The complicated Marco hop, 12 Nd5!? Qxa2! 13 Nxe7+ Kh8, is scrutinised in [Kourkounakis-Istratescu](#), while 12 Be2 Rfc8 13 b3 a6 transposes into the main tabiya of this chapter.

The rebellious retreat 7 Nc2 should be met by the logical development 7...Bg7 8 Be2 0-0 9 0-0 Nd7.



While jumping *en route* to greener pastures at c5 and e5, the knight uncovers a threat of ...Bxc3!?. Although we don't actually intend to part with our AC/DC bishop, White still opts for the passive 10 Bd2 two-thirds of the time, for fear of doubled isolated pawns. After he defends e4 with 10...Nc5 11 f3, we can undermine it through our fifth strategic idea. Indeed, [Stellwagen-Ijijushenok](#) proves 11...f5! to be more than sound in this specific position, as White's minor pieces trip over each other to protect his central holes. Even against the more circumspect 10 Be3 Nc5 11 f3, the identical counterstrike also works a treat in [Darmanovic-Solak](#).

7...Nxd4!

This well-timed capture is the key to the Gurgenidze Variation.

8 Qxd4

It is imperative to force the queen on to this vulnerable square, whence it will soon have to waste a tempo retreating.



8...Bg7 9 Be3

Three-quarters of the time, White moves the bishop out of the way first, just so that Her Majesty doesn't block it in while parking back at her ideal spot. From d2 she will look after both the queenside and surrounding dark-squared weaknesses.

9 Bg5 is half as popular, and tends to converge once again with 9...0-0 10 Qd2 Be6 11 Rc1 Qa5 12 f3 Rfc8 13 b3 a6. [Garbisu de Goni-Tiviakov](#) and [Luukkonen-Pucher](#) rationalize why the bishop is certainly no better on g5 than e3, within the variations 14 Nd5 and 14 Na4 respectively.

Having said that, a quarter of players prefer 9 0-0 0-0 10 Qd3, to overprotect the loose c4- and e4-pawns. Then I recommend counterattacking through the traditional ...Nd7-c5, ...a6, and ...b5 manoeuvres, as per [Ornstein-Popov](#).

9...0-0

Kingside development is always prioridad numero uno, before commencing any of our five plans.

10 Qd2 Be6

Our problem piece settles on its most promising square, and begins pressuring c4 to trigger b2-b3.

11 Rc1

11 f3 merely meets up with the text via 11...Qa5 12 Rc1 Rfc8 13 b3 a6.

So does 11 0-0, except after the tricky 11...Qa5 12 Rb1!?. This started appearing in the early 90s, and became fashionable ever since. Unfortunately the same thing happened with baggy jeans and piercings, and now look where we are. [Zontakh-Velimirovic](#) highlights the significance of clamping down on White's pawn by 12...Rfc8 13 b3 a6 14 Rfc1 Qb4, before implementing the minority attack.

11...Qa5 12 f3 Rfc8 13 b3 a6



This is the tabiya of the Gurgenzidze Variation: to all intents and purposes, the position towards which most modern tournament praxis gravitates. Having provoked b2-b3 with our favourite set-up, we load weapon number four: blowing open the c-file and spatial cramp through ...b5. For instance, 14 0-0 b5! compels White to bail out into the typical Maróczy endgame 15 Nd5 Qxd2 16 Bxd2 Nxd5 17 cxd5. Out of one hundred games, the statistic +6 =80 -14 goes to show that White has obviously lost his opening advantage. After the important intermezzo 17...Bd4+! 18 Kh1 Bd7, most titled players have shaken hands within just a few more moves, in view of the foreseeable rook trades. Examples of such black players include the Russian GM in K.Garagulya-A.Khasin, Smolensk 2000, the French GM in F.Handke-E.Prie, Mitropa 2000, and more recently the Croatian GM in D.Brancovic-O.Cvitan, Paracin 2012.

14 Na4

14 Nd5 is only half as popular, since it is a waste of the white pieces to force another drawish ending by 14...Qxd2+ 15 Kxd2 Nxd5 16 cxd5 Bd7. [Spassky-Petrosian](#) shows how you can't lose.

14...Qxd2+ 15 Kxd2

White forces off the queens, in order to survive the queenside counterplay and improve his king.

15...Nd7 16 g4!

He must try to maintain his spatial superiority, as the alternatives of [De Vreugt-Tiviakov](#) hand over the initiative.

16...f5!



When White sidelines his knight, we lash out on the other wing. Conversely, back on move 9, if he had posted his bishop at g5 instead of e3, then we would first defend with 16...Kf8. Our final game, [Luukkonen-Pucher](#), makes this distinction.

17 exf5

[Alekseev-Zvjaginsev](#) should quell any fears of 17 gxf5 gxf5 18 Rhg1, since the king can sidestep the open g-file by 18...Kh8.

17...gxf5

Out of the one hundred databased games to reach this rich position, almost all of the players were rated over 2200, whose moves are analysed in [Jakovljevic-Stanojski](#).

□ **Gurgenidze Variation**
 ■ **in Game Format**

[Peter Lalic]

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6
 5.c4 d6**

[Despite being seen less than 1% of the time, this nuance is most flexible for fans of Tiviakov's 5...♗h6!? rarity.]

[You might fancy his idea of trading bishops, with the intention of dominating the dark squares, but not so early as move five. Now, though, if White plays the natural yet imprecise 5...d6 6.♗e3, you can gain a tempo with the novelty ♗h6!? .]

[The move order 5...d6 6.♗c3 ♗f6 7.♗e2 ♗xd4 8.♗xd4 ♗g7 is designed to facilitate the strategic ideas that we have just learnt about. First and foremost, it ensures the vital trade of knights, because White has hardly enough time to intervene with Nc2 or Be3. The former could be knocked off balance by an unavoidable ...f5 jab.

Meanwhile the latter attempt to centralize his bishop, through the recapture ...Nxd4; Bxd4, could be rudely interrupted by the in-between kick ...Ng4. The following theory explains how these crucial details guide us back into familiar territory.]

6.♗c3 ♗f6

[The knight must be ready for 6...♗f6 7.♗e3?! ♗g4! . In V.Rizhov-G.Soppe, Coria 2004, the Argentine IM refuted 8.♗g5? (the only way to save the bishop is 8.♗xc6 bxc6 9.♗g5, which improves our pawn structure like in Chapter Four; as a matter of fact, the Russian GM had to fight back to draw in I.Nepomniachtchi-T.Dovramadjiev, Internet 2006) by means of the double attack 8...♗b6! , and earned a free pawn from the forcing sequence 9.h3 ♗xf2! 10.♗xf2 ♗xd4+ 11.♗xd4 ♗xd4 .]

7.♗e2 This developing move has been chosen in 5,000 out of 6,000 games in 'Mega Database 2013', and scored an impressive 60%. Accordingly, it is the main focus of our investigation.

[7.f3 is a less popular way of stopping ...Ng4. Virtually all of the 400 games predictably continue ♗xd4 8.♗xd4 ♗g7 9.♗e3 0-0 10.♗d2 ♗e6 11.♖c1 ♗a5, until this fork in the road. The complicated Marco hop, 12.♗d5!? (while 12.♗e2 ♖fc8 13.b3 a6 transposes into the main tabiya of

this chapter) 12...♗xa2! 13.♗xe7+ ♗h8, is scrutinised in Kourkounakis-Istratescu.]
 [The rebellious retreat 7.♗c2 should be met by the logical development ♗g7 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♗d7 . While jumping en route to greener pastures at c5 and e5, the knight uncovers a threat of ...Bxc3!?. Although we don't actually intend to part with our AC/DC bishop, White still opts for the passive 10.♗d2 (even against the more circumspect 10.♗e3 ♗c5 11.f3, the identical counterstrike also works a treat in Darmanovic-Solak) two-thirds of the time, for fear of doubled isolated pawns. After he defends e4 with 10...♗c5 11.f3, we can undermine it through our fifth strategic idea. Indeed Stellwagen-Iljushenok proves ♗f5! to be more than sound in this specific position, as White's minor pieces trip over each other to protect his central holes.]

7...♗xd4! This well-timed capture is the key to the Gurgenidze Variation.

8.♗xd4 It is imperative to force the queen on to this vulnerable square, whence it will soon have to waste a tempo retreating.

♗g7 9.♗e3 Three-quarters of the time, White moves the bishop out of the way first, just so that Her Majesty doesn't block it in while parking back at her ideal spot. From d2 she will look after both the queenside and surrounding dark-squared weaknesses.

[9.♗g5 is half as popular, and tends to converge once again with 0-0 10.♗d2 ♗e6 11.♖c1 ♗a5 12.f3 ♖fc8 13.b3 a6 . Garbisu de Goni-Tiviakov and Luukkonen-Pucher rationalize why the bishop is certainly no better on g5 than e3, within the variations 14.♗d5 (and 14.♗a4 respectively.)]

[Having said that, a quarter of players prefer 9.0-0 0-0 10.♗d3, to overprotect the loose c4- and e4-pawns. Then I recommend counterattacking through the traditional ...Nd7-c5, ...a6, and ...b5 manoeuvres, as per Ornstein-Popov.]

9...0-0 Kingside development is always *prioridad numero uno*, before commencing any of our five plans.

10.♗d2 ♗e6 Our problem piece settles on its most promising square, and begins pressuring c4 to trigger b2-b3.

11.♖c1

[11.f3 merely meets up with the text via ♗a5 12.♖c1 ♖fc8 13.b3 a6 .]

[So does 11.0-0, except after the tricky

♖a5 12.♖ab1!? . This started appearing in the early 90s, and became fashionable ever since. Unfortunately the same thing happened with baggy jeans and piercings, and now look where we are. Zontakh-Velimirovic highlights the significance of clamping down on White's pawn by **♜fc8 13.b3 a6 14.♜fc1 ♖b4** , before implementing the minority attack.]

11...♖a5 12.f3 ♜fc8 13.b3 a6 This is the tabiya of the Gurgenidze Variation: to all intents and purposes, the position towards which most modern tournament praxis gravitates. Having provoked b2-b3 with our favourite set-up, we load weapon number four: blowing open the c-file and spatial cramp through ...b5.

[For instance, **13...a6 14.0-0 b5!** compels White to bail out into the typical Maróczy endgame **15.♗d5 ♖xd2 16.♗xd2 ♗xd5 17.cxd5** . Out of one hundred games, the statistic **+6 =80 -14** goes to show that White has obviously lost his opening advantage. After the important intermezzo **♗d4+!** **18.♗h1 ♗d7** , most titled players have shaken hands within just a few more moves, in view of the foreseeable rook trades. Examples of such black players include the Russian GM in K.Garagulya-A. Khasin, Smolensk 2000, the French GM in F. Handke-E.Prie, Mitropa 2000, and more recently the Croatian GM in D.Brancovic-O. Cvitan, Paracin 2012.]

14.♗a4

[**14.♗d5** is only half as popular, since it is a waste of the white pieces to force another drawish ending by **♖xd2+ 15.♗xd2 ♗xd5 16.cxd5 ♗d7** . Spassky-Petrosian shows how you can't lose.]

14...♖xd2+ 15.♗xd2 White forces off the queens, in order to survive the queenside counterplay and improve his king.

♗d7 16.g4! He must try to maintain his spatial superiority, as the alternatives of De Vreugt-Tiviakov hand over the initiative.

f5! When White sidelines his knight, we lash out on the other wing. Conversely, back on move 9, if he had posted his bishop at g5 instead of e3, then we would first defend with **16...Kf8**. Our final game makes this distinction.

17.exf5

[Alekseev-Zviaginsev should quell any fears of **17.gxf5 gxf5 18.♖hg1** , since the king can sidestep the open g-file by **♗h8** .]

17...gxf5 Out of the one hundred databased

games to reach this rich position, almost all of the players were rated over 2200, whose moves are analysed in Jakovljevic-Stanojoski.

B36

□ **Kourkounakis,I**

■ **Istratescu,A**

Chania

2000

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6

[This game actually arose from the standard Dragon via **2...d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.f3 ♗c6 6.c4 ♗xd4 7.♖xd4 g6 8.♗c3** .]

3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6 5.c4 d6 6.♗c3 ♗f6 7.f3 Having prevented ...Ng4, White now threatens to support the knight with Be3. Then it would be less desirable for us to centralize his bishop through ...Nxd4; Bxd4, so we must chop immediately.

♗xd4 8.♖xd4 ♗g7 The following developing moves constitute our ideal set-up in the Gurgenidze Variation.

9.♗e3 0-0 Of course the king always seeks shelter without hesitation. What's more, it needs to look after the fianchettoed bishop, if it is to threaten a discovered attack on the queen.

10.♖d2 ♗e6 The other bishop also sets its sights on the queenside.

11.♜c1 ♖a5 So does our strongest piece.

12.♗d5!? Our old nemesis jumps from the shadows once more, packing plenty of venom.

[This is one of the few Marco hops that we cannot simply hack off. The reason is that, after the inevitable sequence of exchanges **12.♗d5 ♖xd2+?! 13.♗xd2 ♗xd5 14.cxd5 ♜fc8 15.♖xc8+ ♖xc8 16.g3!** , White scores a frightening **+12 =7 -0**. Basically blame his bishop-pair, more active king, and space advantage. The grandmasters in G. Borgo-A.Vaulin, Paks Atom 1999, and T. Ghitescu-N.Spiridonov, Pernik 1976, managed to grovel for a draw, but the one in L.Barczay-L.Ftacnik, Zalaegerszeg 1979, wasn't so lucky.]

12...♖xa2! To avoid such a long and painful ending, at any cost, we must retain our queen for the counterattack.

13.♗xe7+ ♗h8 While we have fully developed our army, White has not spared the time to rescue his king from the middle.

Active piece play becomes the order of the day, so for once we don't mind the IQP.

Indeed, its sacrifice would open up the d-line for our rooks to join the fray.

"He who fears an isolated queen's pawn should give up chess." – Siegbert Tarrasch.

14.♙e2 Hence White's understandable urgency to castle out of danger.

[The 14.♙d4 of E.Sveshnikov-A.Beliavsky, Moscow 1973, is roughly equal. Two other games from the same year copied the deforestation ♖ae8 15.♘d5 ♙xd5 16.cxd5 ♖c8! 17.♙e2 ♖xc1+ 18.♗xc1 ♘d7 19.♙xg7+ ♔xg7 20.♗c3+ ♔g8 21.0-0 . Both the GM draws L.Polugaevsky-U. Andersson, Hilversum 1973, and F. Gheorghiu-W.Hug, Las Palmas 1973, ended right there and then, as White's inferior minor piece was compensated by his superior pawn structure.]

14...♘g8! This hypermodern knight retreat isn't just an excuse to make ...Kh8 look useful. On the contrary, it simultaneously gets rid of its more active counterpart, and unleashes the AC/DC bishop on to the hanging pawn.

15.♘xg8

[The Russian super-GM in V.Zvjaginsev-E. Solozhenkin, St. Petersburg 1998, tried the more tenacious 15.♘d5 . However, after swapping the b-pawns by ♙xd5 16.cxd5 ♗xb2 17.♗xb2 ♙xb2 18.♖b1 ♙e5! 19.♖xb7 a5 , he could only draw, as a result of the outside passed pawn.]

15...♔xg8 16.♙d4 ♙xd4 17.♗xd4 ♗a5+!

[White loses his castling rights, as 17...♗a5+ 18.♗c3 (and 18.♖c3 would allow Her Highness into the b6- or a1-squares respectively.)]

18.♔f2 ♗e5 The queen bounces off the cushion back to the aid of the IQP, which is sitting prettier than it looks at first sight.

19.♗xe5

[Ganging up with 19.♖hd1 ♗xh2 20.♗xd6 ♗h4+ merely swaps it for a royal guard on h2, as in the early draw H.Liebert-W. Schmidt, Lublin 1972.]

[Meanwhile 19.♖cd1 neglects the c-pawn to the ♖fc8! of J.Timman-H.Ree, Amsterdam 1972. After the defensive precautions 20.b3 ♖c6 21.♖d2 , Black thrust forward the rook-lift ♖b6! 22.♗e3 f5! 23.exf5 ♗xe3+ 24.♔xe3 ♖xb3+ , and proceeded to push his outside passed pawn to victory in K.Pytel-J.Bednarski, Polanica Zdroj 1972. By the way, is anyone else getting the feeling that this line was quite popular around that time?]

19...dxe5 20.c5 White should be able to hold this endgame, in spite of the rating gap of 200 points, because his more centralized king makes up for his slightly worse bishop.

♖fd8 21.♖hd1 a5 22.♔e3 ♖xd1 23.♙xd1 ♖c8 24.♙a4 ♔f8 Nothing is really happening, so both sides sensibly play to improve their pieces.

"If your opponent cannot do anything active, then don't rush the position; instead you should let him sit there, suffer, and beg you for a draw." – Jeremy Silman.

25.♙b5 ♔e7 26.c6?! The Greek IM becomes impatient, and throws away his more advanced pawn.

bxc6 27.♖xc6 ♖xc6 28.♙xc6 ♔d6

The drawback of these exchanges is that Black's king gains ground with tempo.

29.♙a4 ♔c5 30.♙c2 g5! Of course such a simplified bishop ending is drawn, but the Romanian GM tries his best to grind it out. He begins by fixing the enemy pawns on light squares, where they restrict the scope of White's bishop, and are accessible to his own.

31.g3 ♔b4 32.f4 f6! From now on the blockaded e-pawn can never find respite on a dark square.

33.fxe5 fxe5 34.♔d2 ♙f7 35.♔e3 ♙b3

36.♙b1 ♙a4 37.♙a2 ♙b3 38.♙b1 ♙a4

39.♙a2 So long as b3 is controlled, the king cannot make any progress without exchanging pawns. Being too stubborn to give up his last winning potential and split the point, Black sees nothing better than to repeat the position back and forth.

♙b5 40.♔d2?? White cracks under the pressure, presumably on the last move of the time control.

[He actually could have stayed on the diagonal with 40.♙d5! ♙c4 41.h4 gxh4 42.gxh4 , because the king and pawn ending ♙xd5?? 43.exd5 ♔c5 44.♔e4 ♔d6 45.h5 would be winning for him, due to zugzwang. Therefore, even if the king were to arrive at b3, it would be frozen to the defence of the bishop.

"One bad move nullifies forty good ones." – Israel Horowitz.]

40...♙c4! Such passivity is terminal.

41.♙b1 ♔b3 42.♔c1 ♙f1 43.♙c2+ ♔c4

44.♔d2 ♔d4 This opposition wins the e-pawn and the game.

45.♙d1 ♙d3 46.♙f3 ♙xe4 47.♙g4 ♙d5

48.♙f5 h6 49.♙c2 e4 The passed pawn pushes itself.

50.♔e2 ♖c4+ 51.♔d2 e3+ 52.♔e1 ♗c5
 53.♙f5 ♗b4 54.♙c2 ♙b5 55.♙d1 ♙d3
 56.h4 gxh4 57.gxh4 e2
 0-1

B37

□ **Stellwagen,D**

■ **Iljiushenok,I**

Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad

2010

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6

5.c4 ♗f6 6.♗c3 d6 7.♗c2 The most principled way to make use of a spatial advantage, logically, is to keep as many minor pieces on the board as possible. Hence this idealistic attempt to retain all eight. Then again, so early in the opening, is it really worth it to waste a precious tempo deactivating the knight? That is the question we hope to pose to White.

♙g7 8.♙e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♗d7 10.♙d2

He feels compelled to protect his queenside from the shattering ...Bxc3; bxc3, seeing as the doubled isolated c-pawns would certainly compensate for our missing fianchettoed bishop. Having said that, we don't really fancy abandoning the dark-squared holes around our king either.

[As the chapter introduction outlined, that is why the more active 10.♙e3 is addressed in the next game.]

10...♗c5 11.f3

[This natural defensive move was always the main line, though the positional pawn sacrifice 11.b4!? ♙xc3 12.♙xc3 ♗xe4 13.♙b2 is currently trendy.

A) Indeed, I cannot deny that White's bishop used to wreak havoc on the dark squares after 13...♙e6 14.b5! . All ten archived games fell foul of the same ♗e5? 15.♙d4! ♗f6 16.f4 ♗ed7 17.g4! refutation, whose dual threat of f5 or g5 suddenly wins a piece. Examples of such victims include the German GM in L.Van Wely-J.Gustafsson, Dieren 1999, the Armenian IM in M.Prusikin-S.Petrosian, German League 2001, and even our Maróczy Bind hero in P.Svidler-S.Tiviakov, Kallithea 2002. Whilst annotating the latter for ChessBase, the Israeli IM Ilya Tsesarsky even had the nerve to attach two question marks to 11...Bxc3 as a result!;

B) Fortunately, more recently, Black has managed to shut down the long diagonal with 13...e5 :

B1) In the event of 14.♙f3 ♗f6 15.♙xc6 bxc6 16.f4 , the Russian GM in V. Malakhov-D.Kryakvin, Novokuznetsk 2008, beat someone higher rated with the counterattack ♙b6+ 17.♔h1 ♗e4! 18.♙e1 f5 19.fxe5 dxe5 20.♙xe5 ♙a6! 21.c5 ♙b7 22.♙f3 ♙ae8! .;

B2) Against the equally popular 14.♙e1 , the Argentine GM in G.Milos-H. Spangenberg, Potrero de los Funes 1995, lost with the messy ♙g5? (instead, I recommend completing development with the 14...♙e6 of M.Lauer-A.Kliche, German League 2010; by distracting White with his overextended c-pawn, we hold on to our slight material advantage in the tactical variation 15.♙d3 f5 16.♙xe4?! fxe4 17.♙xe4 ♙f4!) , which could have been steamrolled by 15.♙d3! f5 16.f3 ♗f6 17.c5! .

"A sacrifice is best refuted by accepting it." – Wilhelm Steinitz.;

B3) 14.--;

C) 13.--]

11...f5! Strategic idea number four is much more fun when we have the initiative.

12.b4 He should stop our bishop from recapturing on f5, whence it would eye up the light-squared holes at c2 and d3.

[In the IM draw H.Schaufelberger-R.Garcia, Skopje Olympiad 1972, 12.exf5 ♙xf5 13.♔h1 ♗d3! 14.b3 ♗f4 15.♙c1 ♗xe2 16.♗xe2 yielded the bishop-pair.]

12...♗e6 13.exf5 ♙xf5!

[The Russian prodigy improves upon all the older games, whose 13...gxf5 unnecessarily weakened the kingside. Take, for instance, A.Wojtkiewicz-P.Konguvel, Kolkata 1999, and A.Strikovic-A.Villavicencio Martinez, Pamplona 2009, where both Eastern European GMs soon overthrew the vulnerable monarch.]

14.♗d5!? ♗ed4! It is important to solve our own developmental problems before being greedy. Don't forget that "charity begins at home". It's a useful phrase... Especially for selfish people like me, who use it against those door-to-door charity collectors. Hey, if I don't make enough voluntary donations, do they really think that emotional extortion will work?

15.♠d3?!

[The Dutch GM could still restore normality with 15.♠c1 , but hopes to create complications for his opponent who is rated 200 points lower.]

15...♗xc2 16.♙xc2 ♕xa1 17.♖xa1 ♜f7

18.♙c3 However vulnerable our dark squares may appear at first sight, White can never switch around his queen to checkmate on h8. Actually his exchange sacrifice is compensated more by our pieces hemmed in on the queenside. Therefore, once our rooks connect on the f-line, we should be able to convert our material advantage.

"Good offence and good defence both begin with good development." – Bruce A. Moon.

♙e6 19.♙e4 ♙f5! Trading pieces is the number one concept of this entire chapter, so we need no added incentive to liquidate his attacking potential into a winning endgame.

20.♜e1?! ♙xe4 21.♜xe4 e5! The backward e-pawn leaps into the centre with great effect, akin to the 11 b4 Bxc3 12 Bxc3 Nxe4 13 Bb2 e5 sideline. As well as jamming up all of White's long-range instruments, it spruces up the prospects of both our queen and knight.

22.f4?! While this tempting thrust seems to wrench apart the long diagonal, in actual fact, it merely opens a fresh file for our rooks.

♗e7! 23.fxe5

[He can no longer hold on to his precious Marco knight, be it through the kingside attack 23.♗xe7+ ♖xe7 24.fxe5 dxe5 25.♜xe5 ♖h4! ,]

[or the cold-blooded defence 23.♗e3 ♜xf4 24.♜xf4 exf4 25.♗g4 ♗f5! .]

23...♗xd5 24.cxd5 dxe5 25.♜xe5

Having whittled down the compensation to a solitary passed pawn, it is fair to call the rest a matter of technique.

♖b6+ 26.♙d4 ♖xb4 27.h3

White's weakness of the back rank crops up yet again.

♜af8 28.♖c3

[He acquiesces to the ultimate exchange, fearing tactics like 28.-- ♜f1+! 29.♖xf1 ♖xd4+ .]

28...♖xc3 29.♙xc3 ♜c8 Now that the centre has collapsed, the rooks prove their superiority along the newly opened files.

30.♙d4 b6 31.d6 ♜d7 32.♜e6 ♜c2!

The isolano is best rounded up from behind. Not only is His Majesty cut along the seventh rank, but the bishop cannot watch over it from a secure outpost, such as e7.

"Rooks belong behind passed pawns." – Siegbert Tarrasch.

33.♜f6 ♜e2 34.♗f1 ♜e4 35.♙c3 ♜f7 36.g3 ♜e6! And you thought that I was desperate to trade pieces.

0-1

B37

□ Darmanovic,S

■ Solak,D

Podgorica

2008

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4

[This model game reached the identical position to the previous one, albeit via the symmetrical English move order 1.♗f3 c5 2.c4 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6 5.e4 .]

1...c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6

5.c4 ♙g7 6.♗c2 d6 7.♙e2 ♗f6 8.♗c3

♗d7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♙e3 ♗c5 11.f3 f5!

Be it on e3 or d2, the bishop doesn't alter our usual plan no.5.

12.exf5 ♙xf5

[Having said that, I don't vouch for the 12...♜xf5?! of A.Istratescu-G.Ardelean, Bucharest 2000. The difference here is that White can gain time on our loose pieces through the simple centralization 13.♖d2 ♙e6 14.♜ad1 a5 15.♜fe1 ♖f8 16.b3 ♜d8 17.♙f1 ♙e5 18.♗b5 ♜h5?! 19.f4!

. Indeed the Romanian GM, whom we have recently seen in action on the other side of the board, notched up a quick victory after the blunder ♙g4? 20.fxe5 ♗e4?? 21.♖d5+

.

"It is not a move, even the best move that you must seek, but a realisable plan." – Eugene Znosko-Borovsky.]

13.♗d4 ♙d7

[I prefer this flexible waiting move to the older 13...♗xd4 14.♙xd4 ♙xd4+ 15.♖xd4 , which leaves the bishop out on a limb. The Polish IM in J.Adamski-B.Serwinski, Lublin 1969, went on to exploit it, after initially centralizing with ♗e6 16.♖e3 ♗g7 17.♜ad1! b6 18.♜fe1 .]

14.♖d2 This way we gain a tempo on the aforementioned variation, since both sides must eventually connect their rooks.

[In the event of the alternative 14.♗d5 , I am disappointed by the passive retreat ♗e6 (instead, I suggest lunging after the dark squares with the novelty 14.♗xd4

15.♙xd4 ♙xd4+ 16.♖xd4 e5!?! ; in the fighting spirit of the AC/DC, but also a Sicilian Najdorf or Kalashnikov, we aim to plunge a knight into the Q5 hole, and chop off its counterpart) 15.♗xe6 ♙xe6 16.♖d2 ♙f7?! of I.Provotorov-VM.Kozlov, St. Petersburg 2000. The Russian 2300 was lucky to swindle a draw, and betrayed the way of the Dragon.]

14...♗xd4 15.♙xd4 ♙xd4+ 16.♖xd4

"Chop chop boom"... That's the sound of deforestation, which we like to hear. But it's also the title of a 1955 song by one of my favourite doo-wop quartets, which I like to hear.

♗e6 17.♖f2 ♙c6 Although White's spatial advantage remains to some degree, we have found equality in our slightly better bishop and central pawn duo.

18.♖fe1 ♖a5?!

[The Turkish GM misses a neat trick to nab the bishop with 18...♗f4 . The hidden point is that the retreat 19.♙f1?? would fail spectacularly to ♗h3+!! 20.gxh3 ♖xf3 21.♖d4 e5! , when the queen could not keep covering the diagonal against the decisive ...Qb6+.

"Combinations have always been the most intriguing aspect of chess... They are the poetry of the game; they are to chess what melody is to music." – Reuben Fine.]

19.♙f1! ♗g5 20.♗d5! Despite being rated 400 points lower, Solak's opponent begins to outplay him.

♙xd5?! 21.cxd5 If that bishop looks ugly to you, then the dominated knight requires medical attention.

♖ae8 22.♖ac1 ♖f5 23.f4?! White gets over-excited, when he should calmly double up on the backward e-pawn.

♗f7 24.♖e3 ♗f8 25.♙c4 ♖c5!

Now the initiative is neutralized, his pawns become rather precarious.

26.♙b3 ♖xe3+ 27.♖xe3 ♖xf4 28.♖c7!

Nevertheless, the active rooks ought to muster enough counterplay to stay within the high drawing margin.

♗e5 29.♖xb7 ♖c8 30.♖c3! White takes no unnecessary risks against his much more highly-rated adversary.

♖xc3 31.bxc3 a5 32.♖a7 ♖e4 33.♗f2

♗d3+ 34.♗f3 ♖e5! 35.♖xa5 ♗e1+ 36.♗f2

♗d3+ 37.♗f3 ♗e1+ A perpetual check brings about the fair result.

1/2-1/2

□ Ornstein,A

■ Popov,L

European Team Championship, Skara 1980

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4

[Once again the symmetrical English was employed via 1.c4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗f6 3.♗c3 g6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♗xd4 ♗c6 6.e4 d6 .]

1...c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6

5.c4 d6 6.♗c3 ♗f6 7.♙e2 ♗xd4 8.♖xd4

♙g7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♖d3!?! Considering that c4 and e4 are White's only weaknesses, this is a logical retreat for the queen. However, it is asking for our scheduled ...Nc5 and ...b5, which should go ahead like clockwork.

♙e6 11.♙e3

[The 11.♙d2 of V.Smyslov-V.Korchnoi, Moscow 1961, doesn't make much difference, for lack of any immediate conflict.]

[Instead, 11.♗d5 is a poor man's Marco hop, which can just be ignored by ♗d7

. In the recent mismatch A.Skvortsov-A.

Mastrovasilis, St Petersburg 2011, the Russian 2100 kept picking a fight with

12.♙g5?! , but soon regretted the forcing

sequence ♙xd5 13.♖xd5 ♙xb2 14.♖ab1

♙f6! 15.♙xf6 ♗xf6 16.♖xb7 ♗d7

. Having saddled him with a bad bishop

and additional pawn island, the Greek

Grandmaster on the other side of the table

proceeded to conquer the dark squares.

"Though most people love to look at the

games of the great attacking masters, some

of the most successful players in history

have been the quiet positional players.

They slowly grind you down by taking away

your space, tying up your pieces, and

leaving you with virtually nothing to do!" –

Yasser Seirawan.]

11...♖a5 12.♖ac1

[If he swaps off our bishop by means of

12.♙d4 ♖fc8 13.b3 ♗d7 14.♙xg7 ♗xg7

15.f4 , then I advocate shoring up the dark

squares with f6 , as per the old master

game H.Hecht-J.Dueball, Dortmund 1973. It

is important to defend against both the

advances f4-f5 and e4-e5.]

12...♖fc8 Simply stick to the plot of provoking

b2-b3.

13.b3 ♗d7 14.♖d2

[White should maintain as much tension as

possible, so 14.♙d4 ♗c5 15.♖e3 ♗d7

16.f4 ♖xd4 17.♗xd4 ♗b6 18.♗xb6 ♘xb6 exhibited too much generosity in A.Grischuk-Ni Hua, Paris Disneyland (rapid) 1996. Fewer than a dozen moves later, the child prodigies peacefully left the building, presumably with some ulterior motive to do with the venue. Maybe it's just me, but I would always choose Mickey Mouse over chess.]

14...♘c5 15.f3 Like in the previous games, we threaten to remove the defender with ... Bxc3.

a6 Having achieved our ideal piece development, we are ready to execute no.4.

16.♙g5

[In the heavyweight struggle S.Kudrin-E. Iturrizaga Bonelli, Cali 2007, the Venezuelan GM snapped off the ladies with the help of the pin 16.♙d4 ♗b6! 17.♖fd1 ♙xd4+ 18.♗xd4 ♘d7! 19.♗xb6 ♘xb6 , before gradually grinding out a longwinded ending.]

16...♖c7 17.♖fd1 ♖ac8 18.♘d5

The Swedish IM blinks first, at the sight of the doubled rooks menacing ...b5.

♗xd2 19.♖xd2 ♙xd5 20.♖xd5 As usual, the Marco hop causes a chain reaction of exchanges, albeit not necessarily in White's favour.

♘e6 21.♙e3 ♙b2?! 22.♖b1 ♙c3

In such a rigid position, the ultimate goal is to trade on c5. Not only would it eliminate the bishop-pair, but also leave our good knight dominating his bad bishop.

[This leads me to believe that the Bulgarian IM had planned ...Bb2-a3-c5, but only just noticed the 22...♙a3?! 23.b4! trap. Subsequently the forced exchange sacrifice ♖xc4 24.♙xc4 ♖xc4 25.b5 would amount to insufficient compensation. "Strategy requires thought, tactics require observation." – Max Euwe.]

23.b4! Voilà la raison why we need a pawn on the fourth rank. Be it the prophylactic ...a5 or ...b5 gambit, we must distract White from gaining yet more space.

♖a8?! A sign that things have gone wrong.

24.♖b3 ♙f6 25.g3 ♖cc8

[This was the last chance for 25...b5!? , when either 26.cxb5 (or 26.c5 dxc5 27.bxc5 ♖ac8) 26...axb5 27.♙xb5 ♖xa2 would liberate the rooks.]

26.c5! dxc5 27.bxc5 ♘c7 28.♖d7

Now it's the other way around, as White's major pieces crash through.

♘e6 29.e5 ♙xe5 30.♖xe7 ♙f6 31.♖d7

♘xc5 32.♙xc5 ♖xc5 33.♖bxb7 He should have grabbed the b7-pawn earlier, before his attacking potential was reduced. Indeed, White cannot come to terms with the sudden turn of events, and soon blunders under the psychological pressure.

♖e8 34.♙d3 ♖e1+ 35.♙g2 ♖d1 36.♙xa6 ♖c2+ King safety becomes the order of the day, as long as opposite-colour bishops are zooming around an open board.

37.♙h3 ♖h1 38.♖xf7?? h5! This mating net seals his fate.

39.g4 ♖hxh2+ 40.♙g3 g5! "You have to have the fighting spirit. You have to force moves and take chances." – Bobby Fischer.

0-1

B36

□ **Zontakh,A**

■ **Velimirovic,D**

Pozarevac

1995

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6

5.c4 ♘f6 6.♘c3 d6 7.♙e2 ♘xd4 8.♗xd4

♙g7 9.♙e3 This is the most natural

developing move, and consequently the one to expect in your own tournament games.

0-0 10.♗d2 The point is to tuck Her Majesty behind the battery, whence she watches over her soldiers in all directions.

♙e6 11.0-0 ♗a5 12.♖ab1!? This odd little shuffle supports b2, ducks out of the long diagonal, and menaces the b-pawn storm. Having said that, as with any rare finesse, the best response is to stay true to your plan.

♖fc8 13.b3

[13.b4!? ♗d8 14.c5 from the master draw R.Hanel-H.Stefansson, Vienna 1991, seems rather premature. Then I suggest the novelty dxc5 15.♗xd8+ ♖xd8 16.bxc5 b6!?

. After unleashing our long-range pieces by 17.cxb6 axb6 , White would be ill-advised to accept the positional pawn sacrifice with 18.♙xb6?! ♖dc8! . Subsequently he would have to give back the pawn by 19.♘b5 (or even more material in case of the double discovered attack 19.♖fc1?? ♘d7) 19...♘xe4 .

"In life, as in chess, one's own pawns block one's way. A man's very wealth, ease, leisure, children, books, which should help him to win, more often checkmate him." – Charles Buxton.]

13...a6 14.♖fc1 ♗b4!? The b-pawn needs to be blockaded, seeing as the more popular alternatives are actually rather dubious:

[a) Some strong theoreticians have tested 14...b5?! , alas in vain. After 15.b4! ♗d8 16.cxb5 axb5 17.♙xb5 there is no clear compensation for the pawn. --
(For example, in A.Ivanov-W.Paschall, New England 1996, the exchange sacrifice 17...♖xc3?! 18.♗xc3 ♜xe4 19.♗c6 failed to disturb the connected outside passed pawns. Before the Russian-American GM could steamroll them forwards with a2-a4-a5, he was gifted ♜c3?? 20.♖xc3 ♖c8 21.♖a3! and an even faster victory, due to Black's weak back rank.; In the elite encounter V.Ivanchuk-A.Khalifman, Yalta 1995, 17...♖a3 18.♙f1 ♖xc3?! 19.♖xc3 ♖xa2 was also insufficient, as the Ukrainian super-GM marched his passer to victory with 20.♗c1 ♜xe4 21.♖a3 ♖xa3 22.♗xa3 d5 23.b5! d4 24.♖d1 ♙f5 25.b6 .; The top American of this decade even tried to resurrect the line more recently in L.Dominguez Perez-H.Nakamura, Wijk aan Zee 2010. 17...♖a3 18.♜d5 ♖xc1+?! was a novelty that the Serbian IM Dejan Mozetic had already analysed in his notes for 'Chess Informant'. After 19.♗xc1 ♖xa2 20.♜xf6+ ♙xf6 21.♙c4 ♖a8 22.♙xe6 fxe6 23.b5! , Hikaru somehow managed to draw the almost technically lost endgame. "What is the object of playing a gambit opening? To acquire a reputation of being a dashing player at the cost of losing a game." – Siegbert Tarrasch.)]
[b) Alternatively, preparing the break with 14...♖ab8 could just be embarrassed by the threefold repetition 15.♙a7 ♖a8 16.♙e3 ♖ab8 17.♙a7 ♖a8 18.♙e3 ♖ab8 , as in E.Tang-T.Vincent, Winnipeg 2004.]

15.a3!?

[It is worth the time to elicit yet another queenside concession, though we obviously don't intend to trap Her Majesty via 15.a3 ♗xa3? 16.♖a1 ♗b4 17.♖a4! ♗xb3 18.♖d1! like in the short U14 World Championship game, M.Roganovic-R.Delivre, Belfort 2005.]

15...♗a5 16.f3

[The 16.b4 of A.Timofeev-A.Kochyev, St. Petersburg 2001, cedes control over c4, and should be side-stepped by ♗d8 17.c5 d5 .]

16...♜d7 17.♜d5 Now that the queen seriously threatens to capture on a3, the Ukrainian GM trades it off via the Marco hop.

♗xd2 18.♙xd2 ♙xd5 We are always grateful to dispose of the cramped light-squared bishop.

19.cxd5 ♙d4+! This in-between check is a common motif in such endgames.

20.♙f1 h5 Since the centre remains blocked, we turn our attention to the wings.

21.g3 ♙f8 Nothing is really happening yet, so both sides patiently manoeuvre.

22.a4 ♖ab8 23.♙g2 ♙e8 24.a5 ♜d8 His Majesty centralizes himself.

25.b4 ♜f6 26.♙d3 ♜e8!? The knight finally finds a useful outpost at b5.

27.b5 axb5 28.♙xb5 ♖xc1 29.♖xc1 ♜c7 30.♙d3 Especially after so much simplification, the bishop-pair cannot gain an edge over our tight pawn formation.

♜a6 31.♖c4 ♙c5 32.♖a4 ♖c8 33.f4 ♙a7 34.♙b1 It's just a waiting game.

♙b8 35.♙f3 ♖c5 36.♙e3 ♖c3 At least now one black piece gets active.

37.♙e2 ♙c7 Here comes another to point at the potentially overextended a-pawn.

38.♙d4 ♖c1 39.♙d3 h4!? The Serbian GM jettisons a pawn to force matters along.

40.gxh4 ♖h1 41.♙xa6 ♖xh2+ 42.♙f3 bxa6 The net result now is just more fair trades.

43.♙f2 ♖h1 44.f5 ♜d7 45.fxg6 fxg6 46.♙g4 ♖h2?!

[He should keep simplifying through the continuation 46...e6 47.♙b6 ♙xb6! 48.axb6 ♖g1+ 49.♙f3 exd5 50.exd5 ♙c8 51.♖xa6 ♙b7 .]

47.♙b6 ♖g2+ 48.♙f4 ♖b2 49.♙xc7 ♙xc7 50.♖c4+ ♜d7 51.♖c6! The Ukrainian GM grasps his chance for activity.

♖h2 52.♙g3 ♖e2 53.♙f3 ♖h2 54.♖xa6 ♖xh4 55.♖a8 ♖h7? Rook endings are infamous for their high drawing margin, but not when the defender's rook and king have no targets.

"Endings of one rook and pawns are about the most common sort of endings arising on the chess board. Yet though they do occur so often, few have mastered them thoroughly. They are often of a very difficult nature, and sometimes while apparently very simple, they are in reality extremely intricate." – José Raúl Capablanca.

56.♙g4! ♖h5 57.♖g8??

[57.♖a7+ ♜d8 58.a6 ♖h7 59.♖b7 ♙c8 60.e5! dxe5 61.d6 would coerce V.elimirovic

into fatal passivity.]

57...♖h1! Instead, Black is in the nick of time to rush behind the outside passer.

58.a6 ♖a1 59.♖a8 ♖a4 60.♗f3 ♗c7 61.a7 ♗b6 62.♖b8+ ♗xa7 The bomb is finally defused, so there's nothing left to worry about.

63.♖e8 ♗b6 64.♖xe7 ♗c5 65.♖e6 g5

66.♗g4 ♖a1 67.♗xg5 ♖f1 68.♖f6 ♖h1

69.♗f5 ♖h5+ The extra pawn is irrelevant, since it cannot become passed.

70.♗g6 ♖h4 71.♖e6 ♖f4 72.♗g5 ♖f1

73.♖f6 ♖h1 74.♖f4 ♖h8 75.♗g6 ♖e8

1/2-1/2

□ Spassky,B

■ Petrosian,T

World Championship (Game 3), Moscow

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6

5.c4 d6 6.♗c3 ♗f6 7.♖e2 ♗xd4 8.♞xd4

♗g7 9.♖e3 0-0 10.♞d2 ♖e6 11.♖c1 ♞a5

12.f3 ♖fc8 13.b3 a6 This high-quality

specimen actually reached our tabiya via another move order, but it helps to reiterate the AC/DC repertoire.

14.♗d5 As we have seen time and again, the Marco hop is a common cop-out for White, when he doesn't mind conceding his advantage of the first move.

[The more respectable 14.♗a4 is covered later in much more detail.

"To play for a draw, at any rate with white, is to some degree a crime against chess." – Mikhail Tal.]

14...♞xd2+ 15.♗xd2 ♗xd5 16.cxd5 ♖d7

17.♖xc8+ ♖xc8 18.♖c1 ♖xc1 19.♗xc1

After a forcing sequence of exchanges, the dust settles on a rather barren ending.

♗f8

[Two decades later, the challenger faced 19...f5 in B.Spassky-G.Sosonko, Tilburg 1981, and immediately shook hands.]

20.♗c2 When there's nothing else to do, why not improve your worst piece?

[In M.Gurevich-O.Brendel, Frankfurt 2000, the Turkish GM was in a creative mood with 20.♖b6 , and surprisingly lost to somebody rated 300 points lower.]

20...e6 21.a4 exd5 22.exd5 ♗e7 23.♖d3

♖e5 24.g3 ♗e8 The ninth world champion shuffles to and fro, possibly resorting to passive-aggressive psychology.

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25.♗d2 ♗e7 It's nice to see two Soviets sharing the same sense of humour. Legend has it that this was the first and last smile during the Cold War, but I'm skeptical; we're talking about Moscow, so any sign of emotion must have been a rumour.

26.♖b6 ♖e8 27.f4 ♖g7 28.g4 ♖d7 29.h3

h5 30.♖e2 hxg4 31.hxg4 Being only the third game of the world championship could explain the caginess.

♖b2 32.♗e3 ♖c1+ 33.♗f3 ♖b2 34.♖d3

♖c3 35.f5 gxf5 36.♖xf5 ♖xf5 37.gxf5

Trading appears to be the buzzword of this chapter.

♗d7 38.♗e4 ♖e1 39.♗d3 ♗c8 40.♗c4

♖d2 41.b4 ♖e1 42.b5 ♖d2 43.♖d4 ♖e1

"I think the draw quotient has always been high in world championship matches because of the amount of effort people put into neutralizing each other's openings. It's just now with computers that it has reached a new level." – Magnus Carlsen.

1/2-1/2

B36

□ Garbisu de Goni,U

■ Tiviakov,S

Arco

1998

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6

5.c4 ♗f6 6.♗c3 d6 7.♖e2 ♗xd4 8.♞xd4

♗g7 9.♖g5 Let us see whether the bishop makes any difference here.

0-0 10.♞d2 ♖e6 11.♖c1 ♞a5 12.f3 ♖fc8

It certainly can't divert us from routinely provoking b2-b3.

13.b3 a6 The good news is that this system works against everything, making the move orders easier to remember.

14.♗d5 ♞xd2+ 15.♗xd2 ♗xd5 16.cxd5

♖d7 At first glance, the hanging pawn seems to make the bishop better on g5.

[However, 16...♖d7 17.♖xe7??

is impossible because of the skewer ♖h6+! 18.♗d3 ♖xc1 , regardless of any donations that you might receive at blitz.]

17.♖xc8+ ♖xc8 18.♖c1

[Now 18.♖xe7 ♖h6+ 19.♗e1 is possible, despite hemming in his most powerful piece with his uncastleable king (that's my invention for the dictionary). -- (The Czech IM in J.Banas-L.Dobrovolsky, Trnava 1983, chose 19...♖c2 20.♖xd6 ♖xa2 21.♖e5

♙e3 22.h4 h5?! in response, and soon went downhill after 23.g4! .; Instead, I prefer 19...♖c1+ 20.♙d1 , as played by the Hungarian GM in G.Horvath-A.Groszpeter, Zalaegerszeg 1991, if accompanied by the second pawn sacrifice f5!? 21.♙xd6 fxe4 . Then White cannot recapture, in view of the decisive pin 22.fxe4? ♙g4 . Before you exclaim, "That's gross, Peter", I must remind you that most of White's pieces are bolted to the back rank, so it's not surprising.

"The first principle of attack – don't let the enemy develop!" – Reuben Fine.]

18...♖xc1 19.♙xc1 f6 There is no harm in temporarily obstructing the bishop, given that the pawn will invariably be thrust to the fifth rank anyway.

[The Russian GMs in E.Pigusov-A.Khasin, Tashkent 1986, packed it in upon 19...♙f8 20.♙e3 e6 . Meanwhile the other GM draw A.Chernin-J.Fedorowicz, Wijk aan Zee 1991, didn't even get that far.]

20.♙f4 f5 This typical endgame is so symmetrical that the only strategic idea available is number five. All of the other ten games were also drawn; some quicker than others.

21.♙d2 ♙f7 22.♙d3 fxe4 23.fxe4 ♙f6

24.♙e2 g5!? Rated over 200 points higher than his opponent, the Russian GM tries in vain to create imbalances. Alas it's a stone cold draw, no matter what happens.

25.♙e3

[A recent example is L.Martin Perez-F.Nieto Farreny, Catalunya 2011, where 25.♙h5+ ♙g7 26.♙e3 was much of a muchness.]

25...♙g6 26.♙b6 ♙e5 27.g3 h5 28.♙e3 h4 At least we lay claim to our first spatial advantage.

29.♙d4! The Spanish IM takes his opportunity to simplify matters even further.

♙f6 30.♙f1 hxg3 31.hxg3 ♙g4 32.♙c4 b5

33.♙f1 e6 The only potential pawn lever.

34.dxe6 ♙xe6 35.♙e2 ♙e7 36.♙xe5 dxe5

37.♙d2 ♙d6

[Whereas Kourkounakis-Istratescu had some prospects of infiltrating through the dark squares, here there is nothing left to do after the blockade 37...♙d6 38.♙c3 ♙c5 39.b4+ ♙b6 40.a3 .

"The fatal hour of this ancient game is approaching. In its modern form this game will soon die a drawing death – the inevitable victory of certainty and mechanisation will leave its stamp on the

fate of chess." – Emanuel Lasker.]
1/2-1/2

B36

□ **De Vreugt,D**

■ **Tiviakov,S**

Dutch Championship, Rotterdam

2000

[Peter Lalic]

Here is another game by our AC/DC expert, which is far more interesting this time. He develops so harmoniously as to achieve all five of our goals.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.c4 ♘f6 6.♘c3 d6 7.♙e2 ♘xd4 8.♖xd4 ♙g7 9.♙e3 0-0 10.♖d2 ♙e6 11.♖c1 ♖a5

Plan no.2 – manoeuvring through a dark-square strategy.

12.f3 ♖fc8 No.3 – provoking b2-b3 for further weaknesses.

13.b3 a6 We have already learnt about all the deviations from this tabiya.

14.♘a4 This is the more ambitious way of forcing off the queens.

♖xd2+ 15.♙xd2 ♘d7 No.1 – trade pieces to relieve congestion.

16.♖c2

[White should pre-empt the upcoming counterattack by means of 16.g4

, to which the last three games are devoted.

The following are the rarer alternatives:]

[a) Sergei faced 16.♖hd1 in K.Georgiev-S. Tiviakov, Groningen 1994, and instinctively retorted f5 . After 17.exf5 , he favoured gxf5 because the bishop would not gain a tempo on the rook at c2 anyway. G.Cabrilo-A.Meszaros, Arad 2012, recently shared the same plan of 18.♙d3 ♙f7 19.♘c3 b5! .]

[b) In the case of 16.f4 , I don't understand the most common ♖ab8 (thus I recommend the prophylactic 16...♖c7 , with the dual purpose of guarding against the Nb6 fork and Bf3xb7 menace; the GM draw Z.Hracek-M.Jirovsky, Karlovy Vary 2004, finished a bit early with 17.♖hd1 ♖b8 18.♙f3 ♖bc8 19.♘b6) , even though it featured in top draws such as B.Spasky-B.Parma, Dortmund 1973. The fact of the matter is that White could force a draw with the perpetual 17.♙a7 ♖a8 18.♙e3 ♖ab8 19.♙a7 , unless you have an adequate alternative.]

[c) Boris himself tried the new 16.♘c3 in B.Spasky-G.Sosonko, Tilburg 1981

Then we can simplify via b5

(or counterattack as usual with 16...f5
17.exf5 gxf5 like in the game J.Rubinetti-S.
Arambel, Mar del Plata 2002) 17.♘d5 ♕xd5
18.cxd5 ♕b2! 19.♖xc8+ ♖xc8 , as per P.
Charbonneau-I.Ivanov, Montreal 2002.]

16...f5! No.5 – flanking e4 via ...f7-f5 – which
is most applicable when White is engaged on
the queenside.

17.exf5

[If White maintains the tension with 17.♕d3
, then we should in turn continue improving
our pieces. Thus I submit ♖f8 from the GM
contest T.Petrik-A.Wirig, Mitropa 2004. Not
only does the rook run away from the Nb6
fork, but it returns to support the f-pawn.
"The process of making pieces in chess
do something useful (whatever it may be)
has received a special name: it is called
the attack. The attack is that process by
means of which you remove obstructions." –
Emanuel Lasker.]

17...♕xf5 18.♖cc1

[In U.Boensch-J.Degraeve, German League
2006, the German GM elected 18.♕d3
. His French GM opponent proceeded to
execute computer-like precision throughout,
beginning with b5! 19.♗b6 ♘xb6 20.♕xb6
♕h6+ 21.♕e3 ♕xd3 22.♗xd3 bxc4+
23.bxc4 ♕xe3 24.♗xe3 ♖ab8
, and eventually rounded up the isolated c-
pawn.]

18...♗f7

[I prefer to keep going forwards, in stark
contrast to the peculiar retreat 18...♕e6
, from the white win B.Andonov-D.Djoric,
Serbia 2005.]

19.h4! The Dutch GM correctly launches a
pawn storm on our king, while we plan our
own on the other flank.

♖ab8 20.h5?!

[Having said that, first he should batten
down the hatches with 20.♗c3 .]

20...b5! No.4 – undermining c4 with ...b7-b5.

**21.hxg6+ ♕xg6 22.cxb5 axb5 23.♗c3
♖a8! 24.a4**

[The Russian GM targets the weakest link in
the enemy chain, ruling out both 24.♗xb5?
♖xa2+ 25.♗d1 ♖xc1+ 26.♕xc1 ♕c2+
27.♗e1 ♕xb3 ,]

[and obviously 24.♕xb5?? ♕xc3+
25.♖xc3?? ♖xa2+ .]

24...♕xc3+! He converts his positional
advantage into a material one, having
correctly assessed that it is worth

surrendering the fianchettoed bishop.

"The task of the positional player is
systematically to accumulate slight
advantages and try to convert temporary
advantages into permanent ones, otherwise
the player with the better position runs the risk
of losing it." – Wilhelm Steinitz.

25.♖xc3 ♖xc3 26.♗xc3 bxa4 Although it's
just a pawn, don't forget about the connected
centre that we still have for the long term.

27.♕b5 ♖c8+! Tiviakov is also not too
attached to permanent advantages, and
knows when to turn his attention to the
temporary initiative.

28.♗b2?! ♖c2+ The rook on the seventh
rank is as dangerous as ever.

29.♗a3 axb3! 30.♕xd7 b2 Owing to
White's poor co-ordination, the monster
passed pawn more than compensates for the
sacrificed piece.

31.f4

[31.♖b1 ♖c3+ 32.♗b4 ♖xe3 33.♖xb2
would return the material with interest;]

[the lesser evil compared to 31.♕d4?? ♖c1!
.]

31...e6 32.g4 ♕e4! The bishop locks its
sights back on the promotion square.

33.f5?? Desperation is understandable.

♕xh1 34.fxe6+ ♗g6

0-1

B36

□ **Alekseev,E**

■ **Zvjaginsev,V**

Kazan

2005

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6

5.c4 ♗f6 6.♗c3 d6 7.♕e2 ♗xd4 8.♖xd4

♕g7 9.♕e3 0-0 10.♖d2 ♕e6 11.♖c1 ♖a5

12.f3 ♖fc8 13.b3 a6 14.♗a4 ♖xd2+

15.♗xd2 ♗d7 16.g4! This position has been
widely contested during the last decade.

White's minority attack takes on the central
duo.

f5! 17.gxf5

[The more prevalent 17.exf5 is examined in
the next, penultimate game.]

17...gxf5 18.♖hg1 ♗h8 With his own king
perched precariously in the middle, White
admirably argues that "two can play at that
game". Nonetheless, ours can safely tuck
itself away in the corner.

"There came a time when I realized that the

ability to defend was insufficient for a good chess player. You can't be dependent upon your opponent's will, but must try to impose your will on him." – Victor Korchnoi.

19. ♖c3

[19. ♖d3 is a natural defence, because we don't want his bishop to snipe b7 and h7 from the commanding outpost at e4:

A) That is why I warn you not to touch 19... ♗e5 with a barge pole. White has won every single one of the databased games with the exchange sacrifice 20. ♖xg7! ♗xg7 21. ♖d4 . Not only does his bishop reign supreme over the dark squares, but the other one will reach e4 after an inevitable ...fxe4; not to mention Nb6 to recover material. Victims included the FIDE World Champion in R.Vaganian-R. Ponomarev, Calvia Olympiad 2004, and the German GM in A.Rotstein-L.Vogt, Austrian League 2002.;

B) Instead, I propose the temporary gambit 19...f4!?. Nobody has dared to play

B1) all of the ten games have continued 20. ♖f2 with equality, whether you choose the ♖f6 of the GM draw C.Bauer-Z.Stanojoski, Crete 2007, (or the 20... ♖f7 of D.Collas-R.Edouard, Chartres 2005);

B2) 20. ♖xf4 in an Elo-rated tournament, due to the exchange sacrifice ♖f8 21. ♗e3 ♖xf4! .;

C) 19...--]

19... ♖f8 Whenever the pawn struts its stuff, the rook automatically gravitates to its rear.

20. ♖d5! As you have learnt repeatedly, the Marco hop is White's most powerful weapon. It is useful to bag the bishop-pair, particularly in this open position.

"The knight of QB3 is under obligation, the moment the enemy gives him the chance, of undertaking an invasion of the centre by N-Q5." – Aron Nimzowitsch.

♖xd5 21. exd5 f4 22. ♖f2 ♗e5 Blocking the f3-pawn not only makes it a weakness, but also secures a knight outpost on e5.

[The Armenian GM in V.Akopian-E.Ghaem Maghami, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007, did his best to unsettle it with the help of 22... ♗e5 23. c5!? dxc5 24. ♖xc5 , but jettisoned his newly-isolated d5-pawn to ♖ad8 25. ♖d1 ♖d7 26. ♗e1 ♖fd8 27. ♖d4 ♗g6 28. ♖b4 b5 29. ♖e4 ♖xd5 30. ♖xd5 ♖xd5 , before splitting the point a dozen moves later.]

23. ♖g5 ♖f6 24. ♖gg1 ♖g7 25. ♖c2 ♖f5 26. h4 ♖f6 27. ♖cc1 In view of the relatively blocked structure, the Russian GMs are content in peace (for once).

♖h5 28. ♖g2 ♖g8 29. ♖h2

1/2-1/2

B36

□ **Jakovljevic, V**

■ **Stanojoski, Z**

Belgrade

2007

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4

[This is yet another game that transposed from the Symmetrical English via 1. ♗f3 c5 2. c4 ♗c6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♗xd4 g6 5. e4 ♗f6 6. ♗c3 d6 .]

1...c5 2. ♗f3 ♗c6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♗xd4 g6 5. c4 d6 6. ♗c3 ♗f6 7. ♖e2 ♗xd4 8. ♖xd4 ♖g7 9. ♖e3 0-0 10. ♖d2 ♖e6 11. ♖c1 ♖a5 12. f3 ♖fc8 13. b3 a6 14. ♗a4 ♖xd2+ 15. ♗xd2 ♗d7 16. g4 f5 17. exf5 gxf5 18. h3

For the sake of his stranded king's safety, White wants to keep as many files closed as possible, so we must strive to blow them open.

♖f8 Almost everybody is fond of this multipurpose switcheroo.

19.f4 Virtually all of the one hundred recorded games agree upon this defence, which is designed to block out the ...f4 clamp on the dark squares.

♖ad8

[GMs like Tiviakov and Van der Weide used to play 19... ♗f6 , but switched to this more threatening X-ray.]

20.g5 In such a dynamically unbalanced position, there is not a moment to lose.

[20. ♗c3 should be promptly blown apart by the d5! pawn lever:

A) The forcing exchange sacrifice 21. cxd5 ♗f6 22. ♖b6 ♗xd5!? 23. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 24. ♗xd5 ♖xd5 of the long GM draw F. Corrales Jimenez-E.Perelshteyn, Saint Louis 2012, offers overwhelming practical chances along the open d-file, as Gadir Guseinov has demonstrated on several occasions. I suggest studying the Azerbaijani GM's games with an analysis engine, in order to prepare more deeply.

"The preparation for active rook play entails what is called the opening of lines, which largely depends on pawn play, especially on the proper use of levers." [gom.com](http://www.gom.com)

Hans Kmoch.;

B) In the event of 21.gxf5 ♖xf5 22.cxd5 (not 22.♗g4? d4!) 22...♗f6 , His Majesty would still be staring down a gun barrel. The Slovakian GM with white got the better of M.Tratar-T.Reich, Austrian League 2008, though his 23.♗g4?! (the GM draw M.Palac-S.Krivoshey, Oberwart 2001, ended more peacefully with 23.♖hg1 ♗xd5 24.♗xd5 ♖fxd5+ 25.♔e1) could have been rudely greeted by 23...♗xg4 24.hxg4 ♗xc3+! 25.♔xc3 ♖fxd5 . The opposite-colour bishops would only intensify this initiative, not to mention the double threat of ...Re3+ and ...Bxg4.;

C) 21.--]

20...d5! 21.cxd5 ♗xd5 22.♖hd1 e5

[The 22...b5 of L.Nisipeanu-A.Khalifman, Las Vegas 1999,]

[and the 22...♗c6 of R.Swinkels-A.Pijpers, Neckar 2012, are equally good.]

23.♔e1 The king finally escapes the danger zone, yet its new destination is also lacking pawn cover.

♗c6 24.♗xa6! He bravely snatches the rook's pawn, despite its irrelevance to where the action's going on.

"When your house is on fire, you can't be bothered with the neighbours. Or, as we say in chess, if your king is under attack, don't worry about losing a pawn on the queenside." – Garry Kasparov.

exf4 25.♗xf4 ♗e5! The attacker's position is much easier to play: simply push pieces towards the monarch, and open the e-file to boot.

[In A.Goloshchapov-K.Van de Weide, Hoogeveen 2001, he erroneously allowed his attacking potential to be hopelessly liquidated through 25...♖de8+?! 26.♔f1 ♖e4 27.♗c4+! ♗h8 28.♗d6 ♖c8 29.♗d5! ♖d4? 30.♖xd4 ♗xd4 31.♗xc6 ♖xc6 32.♖xc6 bxc6 .]

26.♗e2 ♗g6 27.♖xd8

[The Russian WGMs in A.Galliamova-E.Korbut, Samara 2005, had a messier meeting, as 27.♗c7 ♖a8 28.♖c4 f4 29.♔f2 f3 30.♗f1 ♗e5 31.♖b4 kept plenty of firepower on the board. However, after ♖fc8? 32.♗xe5! ♗xe5 33.♗b5 ♗xb5 34.♖xb5 Black found herself in a technically losing endgame.]

27...♖xd8 28.♗e3 ♖c8 29.♔f2 f4 30.♗b6 ♗e5 31.♗d1?? Although the Bosnian IM was objectively never worse, he was always set

challenging problems. In a practical game, they can add up to psychological pressure, tiredness and time trouble, which may explain his blunder. Chess might be more physical than popular culture would lead us to believe. ♗d3+ "I failed to make the chess team because of my height." – Woody Allen.

0-1

B36

□ **Luukkonen,T**

■ **Pucher,S**

Saint Vincent

2005

[Peter Lalic]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6 5.c4 ♗f6 6.♗c3 d6 7.♗e2 ♗xd4 8.♖xd4 ♗g7 9.♗g5 Now let us investigate whether the bishop on g5 changes anything in the 14 Na4 variation.

0-0 10.♖d2 ♗e6 11.♖c1 ♖a5 12.f3 ♖fc8

13.b3 a6 14.♗a4 ♖xd2+ 15.♔xd2 ♗d7

16.g4 Just like in Garbisu de Goni-Tiviakov, the only visible difference is the hanging e7-pawn:

[a) However, once again, 16.♗xe7?! would drop an exchange to the skewer ♗h6+ 17.♔c2 ♗xc1 18.♖xc1 . Although here White is almost fully compensated by the extra pawn and IQP, his Irish FM opponent in E.Cortes Nadal-J.Ryan, Andratx 2007, soon amassed a clear advantage. Then he went wrong and deserved to lose, but that's another story.

"What would chess be without silly mistakes?" – Kurt Richter.]

[b) 16.h4 is the most frequent alternative to 16 g4, the point being to block the ...Bh6+ skewer in the aforementioned variation. That means the backward pawn is now hanging, so I put forward the customary jab f6 17.♗e3 f5 of G.Sax-U.Andersson, Haninge 1990. After 18.exf5 gxf5 , in A.Vaisser-A.Antunes, Tilburg 1994, the Portuguese GM went on to win with our fourth strategy of 19.♗d3 ♖ab8 20.♗c3 ♗c5 21.♗d5 ♔f7 22.g4 ♗xd3 23.♔xd3 b5! .]

[c) 16.♗c3 fits the regular treatment of f6 17.♗e3 f5 , as in J.Geller-R.Edouard, Rohde 2005.]

16...f6 17.♗e3 f5 Suddenly we have transposed into the identical position from the previous game.

18.exf5 gxf5 19.h3 ♖f8 You should www.chess.com

recognise the same move order, which is important to remember for your preparation. "Modern professionals do not have the right to be forgetful – it is 'life-threatening'." – Garry Kasparov.

20.f4 ♖ad8 There is our favourite X-ray trick.

21.g5 d5 22.c5?!

[Earlier we analysed the slightly preferable 22.cxd5 .]

22...d4! Besides becoming a passed pawn, it kicks back the enemy forces with tempo.

23.♟f2 ♟d5 24.♟c4! White must try to swap off our more active units.

♟xc4 25.♞xc4 e5! This is how to make the most of your mobile central majority.

26.fxe5 ♜xe5 27.♞b4 ♞f7 28.h4 f4

Passers must be pushed, and two are even better than one.

29.♜b2 d3 30.♞d1?? ♜g4! Goodnight!

"Life's too short for chess." – Henry James Byron.

0-1