

Grandmaster Repertoire

Gawain
Jones

**The
Dragon**

VOLUME TWO



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Grandmaster Repertoire

The Dragon 2

By

Gawain Jones



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The Dragon 2

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All sales or enquiries should be directed to Quality Chess UK Ltd,
Suite 247-248, Central Chambers, 11 Bothwell Street, Glasgow G2 6LY, UK
Phone +44 141 204 2073
e-mail: info@qualitychess.co.uk
website: www.qualitychess.co.uk

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Key to symbols used

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

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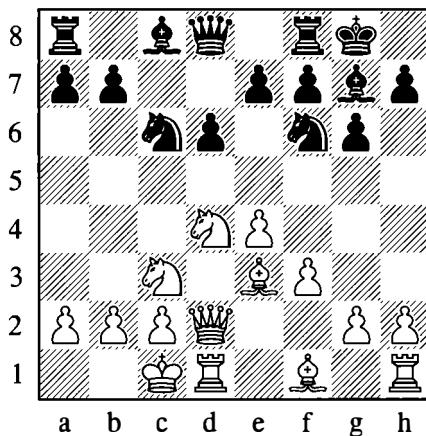
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Williams: *Killer Dragon 1 & 2*, Ginger GM 2011

Introduction to 9.0-0-0

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

I would, however, like to say a few things about the most important topic of the present volume, namely the position after the opening moves: **1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 g6 6.♗e3 ♗g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♞d2 ♗c6 9.0-0-0**



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

9...d5

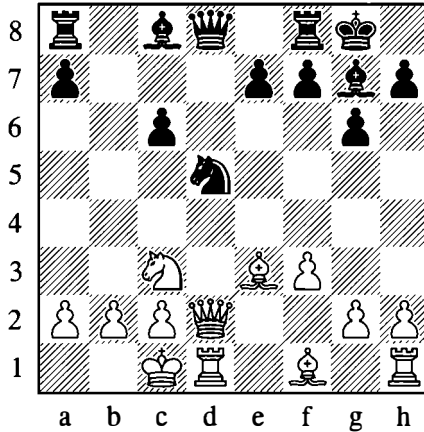
Typically in the Dragon, when we get the chance to execute the ...d5 break we should take it.

10.exd5

10.♗b1 received a flurry of interest some years ago, but in Chapter 5 I will show a good way to neutralize it.

10.♞e1 used to be popular but then fell out of fashion. However, it has recently attracted the attention of some strong players. The positions after 10...e5 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.exd5 ♗xd5 have definite similarities to the old main line; see Chapter 6 for further details.

10...♗xd5 11.♗xc6 bxc6



12. ♕d4

12. ♖xd5 cxd5 13. ♗xd5 ♜c7 is covered in Chapters 3 and 4. Taking the material, whether just the pawn or grabbing the black rooks for the white queen as well, is dangerous for White. The open lines on the queenside give Black easy counterplay against White's king.

The text move is White's main try and, in my view, the current main line of the entire Dragon.

12... ♗xd4

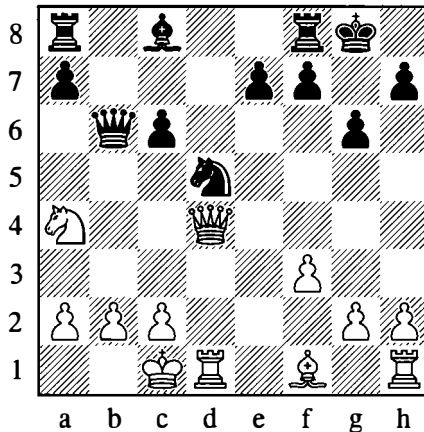
12... e5 13. ♗c5 ♗e6 used to be the main line but Black was suffering rather.

13. ♗xd4 ♗b6

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

14. ♖a4

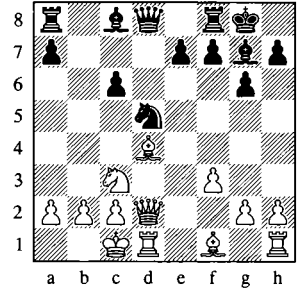
White's other tries are covered in Chapter 1.



From this important position I have covered two options in detail. The slightly offbeat 14... ♗a5 15. b3 ♗e6! is presented in Chapter 1 and the more popular 14... ♗c7 can be found in Chapter 2.

Chapter 1

9.0-0-0



Introduction and 14...♙a5

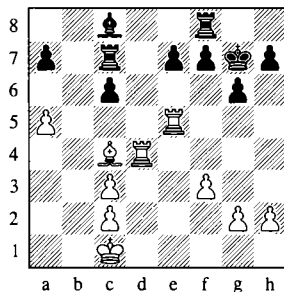
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 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 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♙d4 ♙xd4 13.♚xd4

13...♚b6

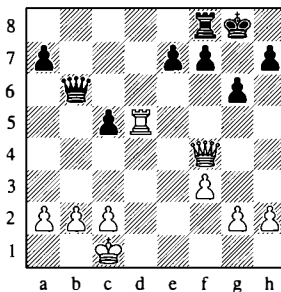
A) 14.♘xd5 cxd5	8
A1) 15.♚xd5	9
A2) 15.♚xb6	11
B) 14.♙c4!?	11
C) 14.♘a4 ♚a5 15.b3 ♙e6!?	13
C1) 16.g3	13
C2) 16.♙c4	15
C3) 16.♚d2 ♚c7	16
C31) 17.♘c5	17
C32) 17.c4	17
C4) 16.♚c5	18
C5) 16.h4	19
C6) 16.♚e5 ♚b4	21
C61) 17.c4	22
C62) 17.♙b2	24

B) note to 14...♘e3



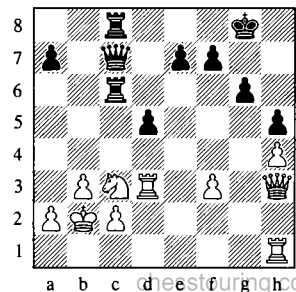
20...f6!N

B) after 21.♙c8!N



21...♙c8!N

C2) after 26.♚h3



26...d4!N

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 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

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

10.exd5 ♗xd5 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.♙d4

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

12...♙d4

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

13.♞xd4 ♞b6

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

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

14.♞e5

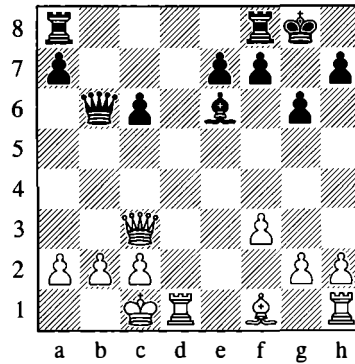
Black has two logical ways to meet this rare move.

14...♗xc3N

This feels the most correct to me.

14...e6!N is the more ambitious option. If the pawn gets stuck here then Black will be left with a terrible bishop. However, after 15.h4 Black can obtain counterplay with 15...f6 16.♞e1 ♖b8 17.b3 ♞c5 18.♗e4 ♞a3† 19.♗b1 e5 and the bishop escapes. 20.♙c4 ♙e6 21.h5 g5 22.h6 ♗h8∞ With a highly unclear middlegame.

15.♞xc3 ♙e6



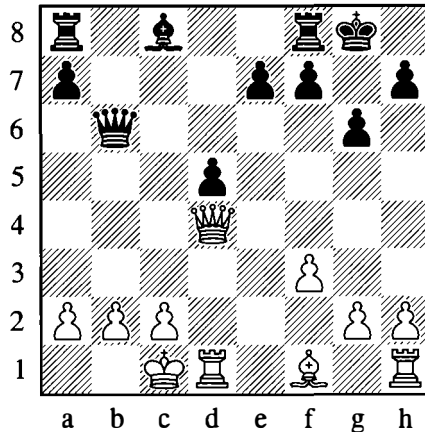
16.h4 ♖d8 17.♙d3

17.h5 ♖xd1† 18.♗xd1 ♖d8† 19.♗c1 ♞d4 is no problem for us.

17...♞d4 18.♞xd4 ♖xd4 19.♙e4 c5 20.♖xd4 cxd4 21.♖d1 ♖d8=

The ending should be fine for Black, who is ready to start pushing his central pawns.

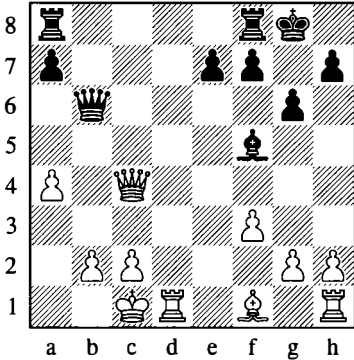
A) 14.♗xd5 cxd5



Since White cannot really get away with grabbing the d-pawn, repairing Black's structure cannot be considered a critical test. Nevertheless, it is worth familiarizing yourself with A1) 15.♞xd5 and A2) 15.♞xb6.

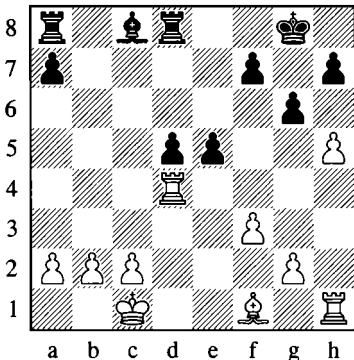
15.♞e5! If White wants to play this move he should do it on the previous turn. 15...♙e6 16.♙d3 (16.h4 f6N 17.♞f4 ♖fb8†) 16...♖fb8N 17.h4 f6 18.♞c3 ♖b7† Black's kingside is quite safe as he can meet 19.h5 with 19...g5.

15.a4?! has been played in a couple of engine games. I suppose White is hoping for an improved version of the 15.h4 endings but Black does not have to oblige. 15...♗c7! 16.♗xd5 ♕e6 17.♗e4 ♕f5 (17...♞ab8!N might be even stronger) 18.♗c4 ♖b6



Black has strong pressure. White has tried 19.♗c3 ♖fc8 20.♕c4, but Black can now reach a favourable ending with: 20...♞xc4 21.♗xc4 ♞c8 22.♗e2 ♞xc2† 23.♗xc2 ♕xc2 24.♕xc2 ♗c5† 25.♕d3 ♖b4 26.♞d2 ♗xa4†

15.h4 has been played in quite a few correspondence and engine games, but it does not really put any pressure on Black. I think the most sensible antidote is 15...♞d8 16.h5 ♗xd4 17.♞xd4 e5 when the position is equal, although I would prefer Black as I like the central pawns. Play may continue:

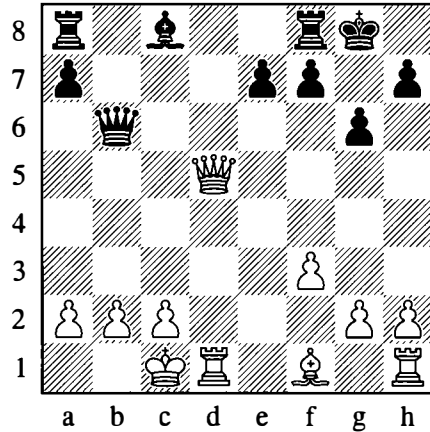


18.♞a4 (18.♞dh4 ♕f5 19.hxg6 ♕xg6= Bernal Varela – Ortiz, email 2009) 18...♕g7 19.♕a6

♕e6 20.♞e1 ♕f6= Skulason – A. Kristjansson, email 2010.

Finally, 15.♕b1 ♞d8 16.h4 ♗xd4 17.♞xd4 e5 18.♞a4 ♕g7= was similar to 15.h4 above in fischerfanatic3 – frauholle, engine game 2012.

A1) 15.♗xd5



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

15...♕e6 16.♖b5

The inaccurate 16.♗e4?! was seen in Balanov – Golubev, Ukraine 1999. 16...♞ac8!N would have been awkward for White, as Black threatens both to take on a2 and to hit the c2-pawn with ...♕f5.

16.♗d4 ♖a5 17.a3

17.♕c4 ♖fd8 18.♗e4 ♕xc4 19.♗xc4 ♗g5† 20.♕b1 ♗xg2† Black has regained his pawn and now has an edge as White's remaining kingside pawns are weak.

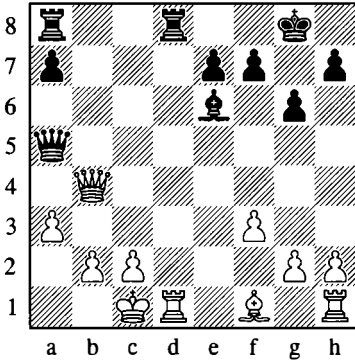
17...♞fd8

17...♞ac8!N also seems fine.

18.♖b4?!

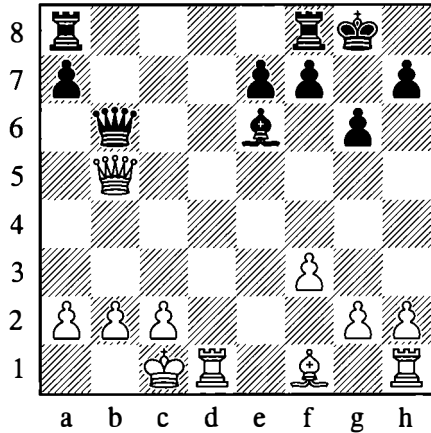
18.♗e3N had to be tried, but White understandably did not want to allow 18...♞xd1† 19.♕xd1 ♗d5† 20.♕d3 ♖a2.

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



18...♖g5† 19.♞d2 a5 20.♖c3 ♞ac8 21.h4 ♖f4 22.♔d1?! ♙d5! 23.♖xa5 ♙xf3†!

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



16...♖f2

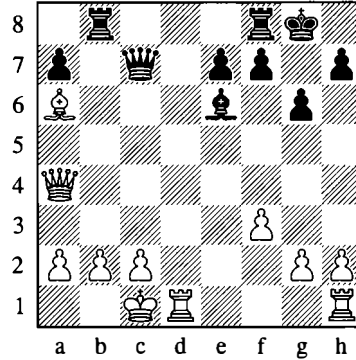
This was my choice when I encountered this variation. A promising alternative is:

16...♖c7 17.♖a4

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

17...♞ab8 18.♙a6?!

18.♙d3 transposes to 17.♙d3 above.



18...♞b6 19.♔b1 ♖c5 20.♙d3 ♞fb8

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

21.b3 a5 22.♔b2 ♞b4 23.♖a3 a4 24.♞he1 axb3 25.cxb3 ♖d4† 26.♔c1 ♙xb3

0-1 Dziel – Gmuer, corr. 1997.

17.♙d2 ♖e1†

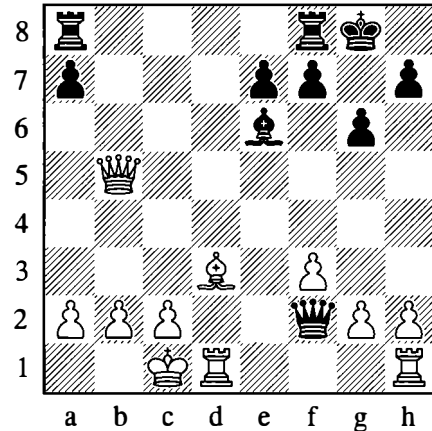
17...♖e3! is a way to avoid the repetition.

18.♙d1 ♖f2

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

19.♙d3

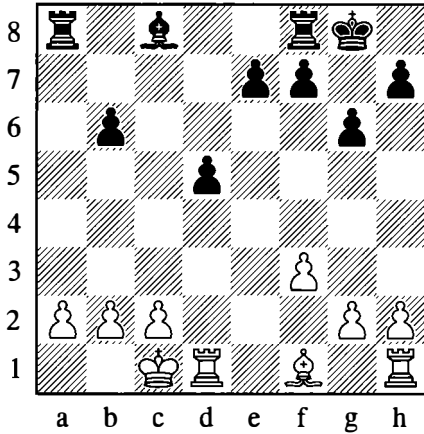
In Baramidze – Jones, Warsaw 2013, there wasn't really a good reason not to play:



19...♖xg2N 20.♙e4 ♞ac8

With a comfortable game for Black.

A) 15. ♖xb6 axb6



This simplistic continuation gives White equality at best.

16.a3

16. ♖b1 ♗b7 17. ♗b5 ♖g7 18. ♗he1 ♖f6 19. f4 e6 Only Black could be better in Nadig – Smerdon, Canberra 2009.

16. ♗xd5 ♗e6 17. ♗d1 (As Chris Ward noted, White can't go after the b6-pawn with 17. ♗b5? in view of 17... ♗xa2 18. ♗xb6 ♗a1† 19. ♖d2 ♗d8† when the pin along the back rank wins material) 17... ♗xa2= Black has regained the pawn with a comfortable game.

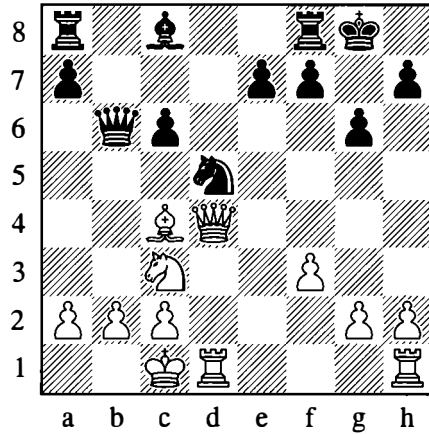
16... ♗d8 17. ♗d4

17. ♗b5 ♗a5 18. a4 e6 19. ♖d2 ♗d7 was also fine for Black in Lazan – Daurelle, email 2006.

17... ♗d6 18. ♗b5 e5 19. ♗b4 f6=

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

B) 14. ♗c4!

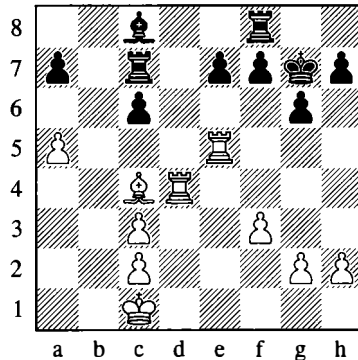


This is much rarer than the main line but it has been the choice of a lot of strong GMs, including Ivanchuk who used it to defeat Carlsen, so we obviously need to take it seriously.

14... ♗e3

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

14... ♗xd4 was Magnus's choice. After 15. ♗xd4 ♗xc3 16. bxc3 White's structure has been compromised but Black has been left rather passive. I can't believe that Black should really be worse, but he does need to be accurate for a few moves. 16... ♗b8 17. ♗e1 ♗b7 18. ♗e5 ♗c7 19. a4 ♖g7 20. a5 Here I would go for:



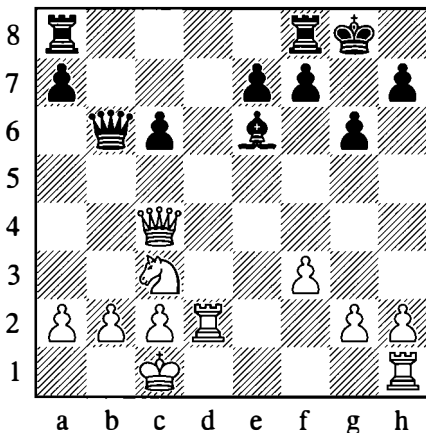
20...f6!N (Instead Magnus chose 20...♗f6, but soon found himself very passively placed. 21.♖c5 e6 22.h4 h6 23.f4 h5 24.♗d2 ♗e7 25.♗e3 ♖d8 26.g3 Ivanchuk – Carlsen, Leon [rapid] 2009. The game should have been drawn as White cannot make much progress, but Black can do nothing but sit and wait, which is never much fun.) 21.♖c5 e5 22.♖d6 ♗d7 23.g4 g5= Compared to the game, Black has a bit more space and can try to force the enemy pieces backwards.

15.♖d2

15.♗a4 is a temporary pawn sacrifice. 15...♗xd4 16.♖xd4 ♗f5 17.♗b3 ♗xg2 18.♖g1 e5 19.♖c4 ♗f4 20.♖e1 ♖fe8 21.♖xc6 ♖e7= White regained his pawn but he had no advantage, and Black eventually prevailed in J. Todorovic – Ristic, Kraljevo 2011.

15...♗xc4 16.♗xc4 ♗e6

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



17.♗f4

17.♗h4 was played in a high-rated encounter.

White attacks the e7-pawn but now the queen won't find it as easy to get to the long diagonal.

a) The young American played 17...♖ab8 18.b3 c5!? but I was unable to find equality for Black after: 19.♗xe7 (19.♗d5N ♗a5! exploits the location of White's queen: 20.♗xe7 ♗g7 21.♗d5 ♗xd5 22.♖xd5 ♗xa2=) 19...c4 This was Dominguez Perez – Robson, Lubbock 2011, and now 20.♗d6!N would have been good for White.

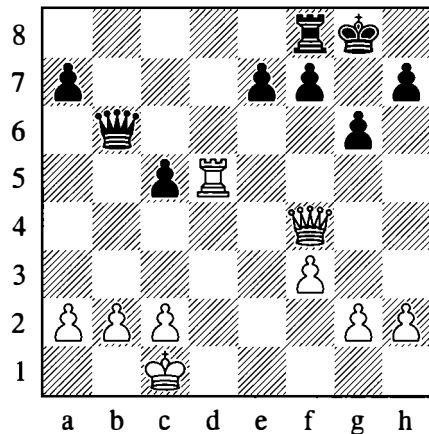
b) Instead I propose 17...♖ad8N 18.♖hd1 ♖xd2 19.♖xd2 ♖d8 when White has no more than a tiny edge.

17...c5

17...♖ab8 18.b3 c5 was played in the high-level game Alekseev – Grandelius, Jerusalem 2015, but I think it's better to move the c-pawn immediately.

18.♗d5 ♗xd5 19.♖xd5 ♖ad8 20.♖hd1 ♖xd5 21.♖xd5

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



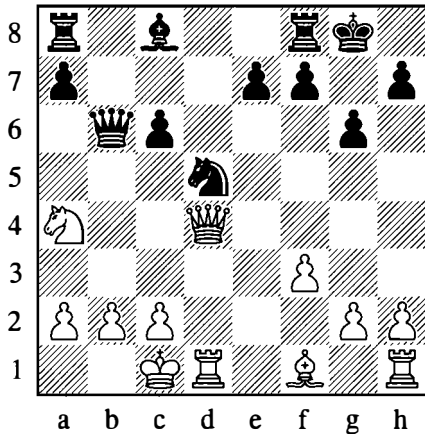
21...♖c8!N

Preparing to advance the c-pawn.

22.a3

22.♖c4 ♜e6 is fine for Black.

22...c4 23.♖d4 ♜c7 24.g3 ♜b7=

C) 14.♘a4

This has been by far White's most popular choice. Exchanging on d4 would gift White an easy endgame advantage, so Black is left with a choice between two queen moves. Since we are dealing with a popular and critical variation, I decided to cover both of them.

14...♖a5

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

15.b3

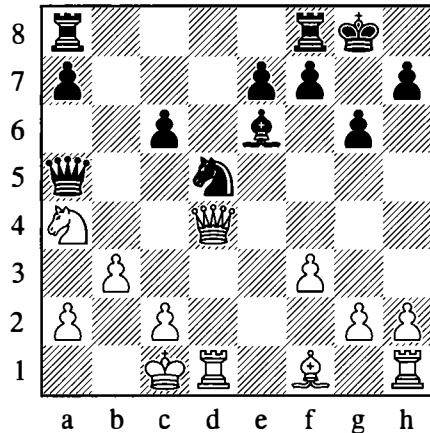
The threat was ...e5, so White was obliged to defend the knight.

15...♙e6!?

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

15...♙f5?! used to be the main line until it became clear that 16.♖c5! is strong. It is worth mentioning the simple tactical point that 16...♖c7?? is impossible due to 17.♙xd5. This highlights one advantage of putting the bishop on e6.

15...♖c7 is the most popular move, which can be compared with the next chapter. Black argues that b2-b3 is a potential weakness which stops White from putting his bishop on b3. Nevertheless, White's free move also has some positive attributes, and after 16.c4 White has scored highly in correspondence and engine games.



Returning to our main line, I considered six possible replies: C1) 16.g3, C2) 16.♙c4, C3) 16.♖d2, C4) 16.♖c5, C5) 16.h4 and C6) 16.♖e5.

C1) 16.g3

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

16...♞fd8 17.♞c5 ♞c7

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

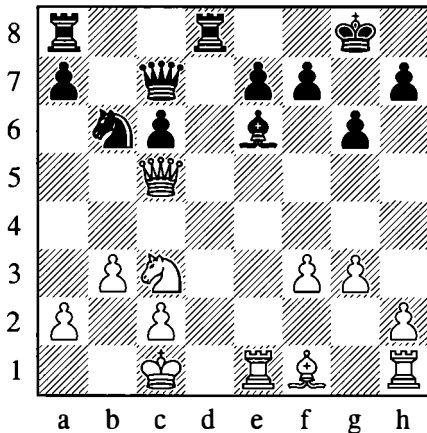
18.♞e1!?

White prepares an interesting exchange sacrifice.

I also considered 18.♗d3N when 18...♞ab8 looks sensible, with the idea of ...♖b4.

18...♖b6 19.♖c3

This position was reached in Sjugirov – Timofeev, Taganrog 2011. As I pointed out on ChessPublishing, Black's safest continuation is:

**19...♖d5N**

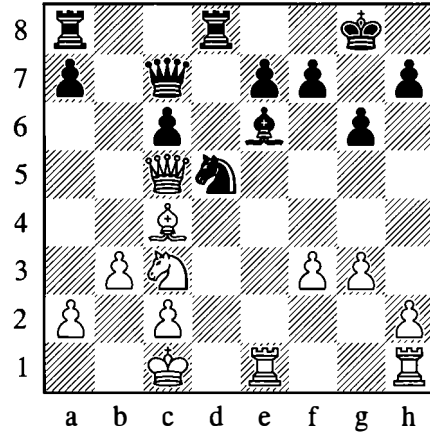
If Black can exchange the knights then he won't have any problems at all.

The game continued 19...a5 20.♞xe6! ♟xe6 21.♗h3 ♖d7 22.♞xe7 ♞e5 23.♞xe6† ♞xe6 24.♗xe6† ♖g7 and Black eventually won, but at this point White has the slightly better ending.

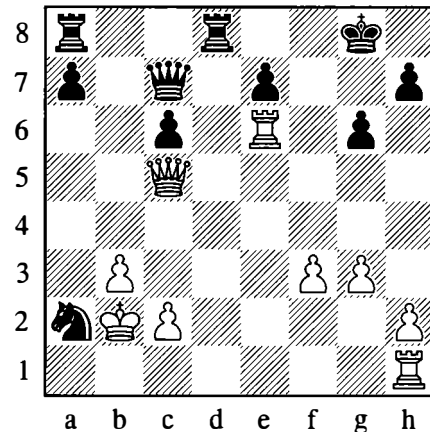
20.♗c4!?

20.♞xe6? ♟xe6 21.♗h3 does not work here due to 20...♞e5†.

20.♖b2 ♖xc3 21.♞xc3 ♗d5 is equal.

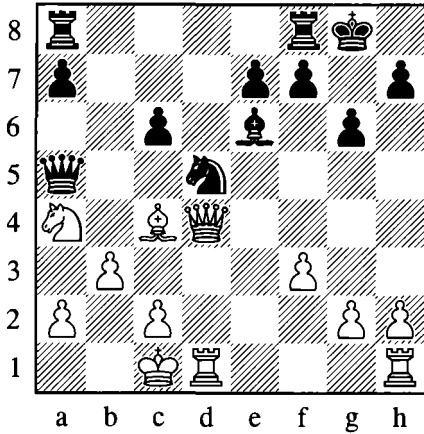
**20...♖xc3 21.♗xe6 ♖xa2†**

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

22.♖b2 ♟xe6 23.♞xe6**23...♞b6! 24.♞xe7 ♖b4 25.♞xg6†! ♟xg6 26.♞e6† ♖g7 27.♞e7†=**

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

C2) 16.♗c4

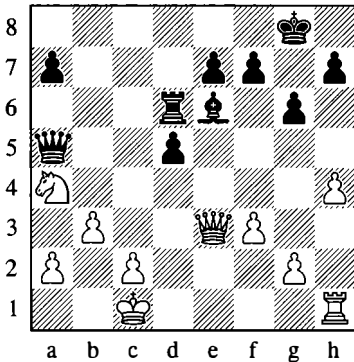


This was Mickey Adams' choice when I surprised him with this line in 2011.

16...♗f8 17.♖c5

Two other moves have been tried:

17.♗xd5 ♗xd5 18.♖e3 ♗ad8 19.h4 ♗d6 20.♗xd5 cxd5 Black is active enough, as the following lines demonstrate.

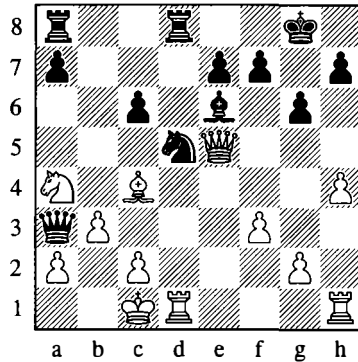


21.h5 (21.♖d4N ♗d7 22.♗c3 f6 23.f4 ♖b6 24.♗d1 ♖xd4 25.♗xd4 ♗c6 White won't be able to stop ...e5 so Black has more than enough play) 21...d4 22.♖d2 ♖xd2† ½–½ Siefring – A.C. Martin, email 2000.

17.♖e5 ♖b4 18.h4 ♖a3†

The following is a good illustration of what

Black must avoid: 18...h5?! 19.♗b2 ♗ab8 20.♗xd5! cxd5 21.♗d4 This position is very like the main line we'll see in variation C62. However, with our pawn already on h5 White's attack is much faster and so we have to exchange queens. 21...♖d6 22.♗e1 ♗bc8 23.♖xd6 ♗xd6 24.b4± cfm – pharaomum, engine game 2014. White is in complete control and his knight will completely dominate Black's bishop. If Black could break with ...e5 his position would be fine, but that will be extremely difficult to achieve.

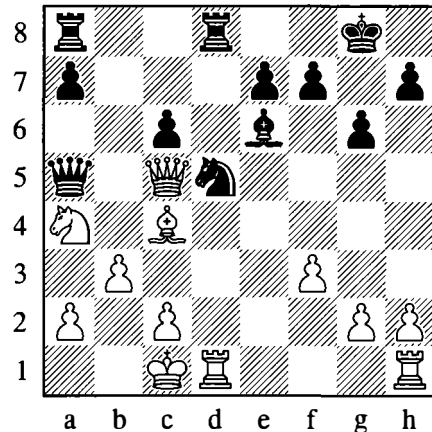


19.♗b1 ♗b4 20.♖b2 ♖xb2† 21.♗xb2 ♗f5!

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

22.♗d3 ♗xd3 23.♗xd3 ♗xd3

½–½ Kraft – Canamas Soler, email 2009.

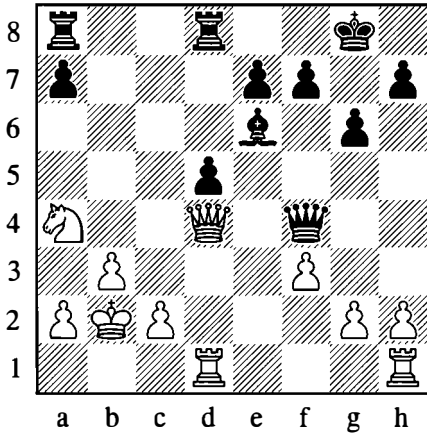


17...♖c7 18.♙xd5

My game against Adams continued: 18.♖b1 ♟f4 (This felt simple and logical, although 18...♗f4!? has also been played successfully) 19.g3 ♙xc4 20.♗xc4 ♜d5 21.♞he1 ♚b6 22.♗e4 ♜xa4 23.♗xa4 e6 24.♗e4 ♞d5= Adams – Jones, Sheffield 2011.

18...♗f4! 19.♖b2 cxd5 20.♗d4

This was tried in a recent all-GM battle. 20.c3 ♙d7 21.♗xd5 ♙xa4 22.♗xd8† ♞xd8 23.♞xd8† ♟g7 24.bxa4 ♗xa4 ½-½ Kitson – Isaev, email 2005, was an easy draw for the second player.



20...♗c7

Black plays for the initiative.

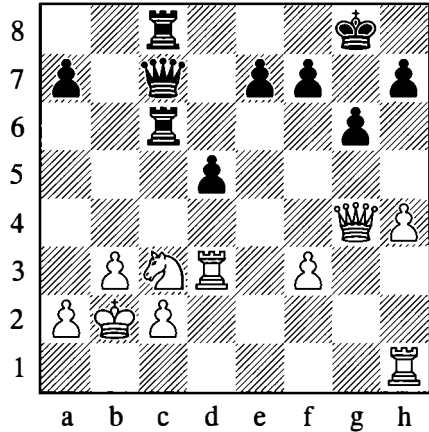
21.g4?!

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

21...♞ac8 22.♜c3 ♞d6 23.h4 ♞c6 24.♞d3 ♙xg4! 25.♗xg4

25.fxg4 e5† was Black's idea.

White should have tried 25.♜xd5 although 25...♞xc2† 26.♖a1 ♗d6 still leaves Black on top, since 27.fxg4?! ♗a3! forces White to return the knight to prevent mate.



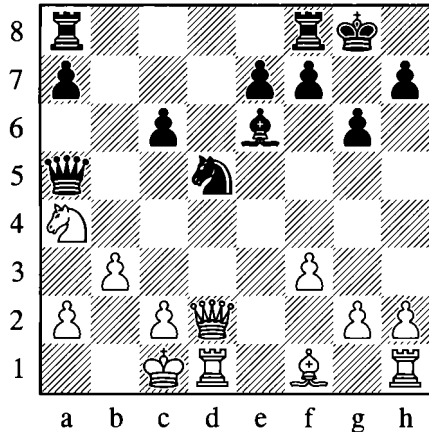
25...h5 26.♗h3

In Istratescu – Chatalbashev, Graz 2015, White's defensive idea was to meet 26...♞xc3N with 27.♗xc8† although even here Black is clearly better. However, Black has an even stronger move available.

26...d4!N

With a decisive advantage.

C3) 16.♗d2



This is a logical move, offering a queen exchange while keeping the c5-square free for the knight.

16...♗c7

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

C31) 17.♗c5 ♖ad8!

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

17...♗fd8!? also looks sensible: 18.♖e1 (18.♗xe6 ♗e5! is similar to our main line) 18...♗d6 19.♗xe6 ♗a3† 20.♗b1 ♗b4 21.♗c3 ♗xa2† 22.♗c1 fxe6 23.♗c4 ♗a3† 24.♗b2 ♗xc2! 25.♗xe6† ♗f8 26.♗xa3 ♗xa3 27.♖e4 ♗g7 A draw was agreed in Mauro – Isaev, email 2005. However, the text move is even more accurate.

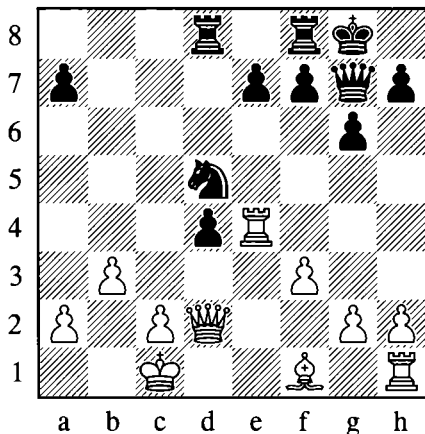
18.♗xe6

18.♖e1 can be conveniently met by 18...♗c8.

18...♗e5! 19.♗d4 c5 20.♖e1

This position was reached in Helbich – Isaev, email 2005. On ChessPublishing I suggested the improvement:

20...♗g7!?N 21.♖e4 cxd4



22.♖xd4

The point is that 22.♗xd4? ♗f6 is winning for Black.

22...♖d6†

White has big problems down the long diagonal.

C32) 17.c4

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

17...♗f4

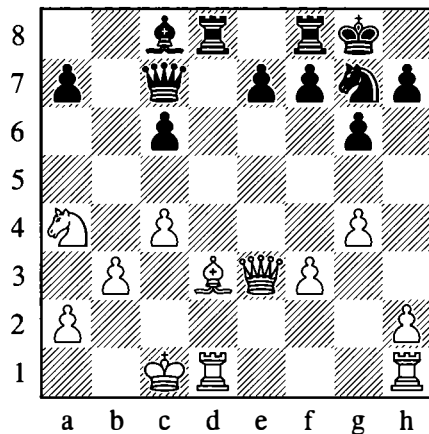
In this structure the knight doesn't have much potential on f6, so instead it aims for the g7-square.

18.g3 ♗h5 19.♗e3 ♗g7

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

20.g4 ♖ad8 21.♗d3 ♗c8

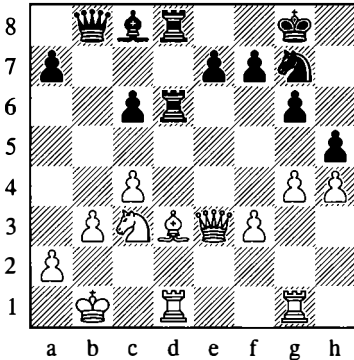
Now that the a8-rook has been developed, Black can drop his bishop back to allow the knight to use the e6-square.



22.♗c5

22.♗b1 ♖d6 23.♗c3 ♗fd8 24.h4 h5 shows Black's defensive idea: With the knight on

g7 White finds it hard to progress his attack. 25. ♖hg1 ♜b8!? Black waits. His pieces can't really be improved but the same can be said for White's.



26. ♜b2 hxg4!? Black decides to force the issue, arguing that the king is actually slightly worse placed on b2. 27. fxg4 ♜d4 28. h5 ♜h2† 29. ♜e2 ♜xe2† 30. ♙xe2 ♜e6 31. hxg6 f6!? 32. ♜ge1 ♜f4 33. ♙f3 ♜d3† 34. ♜xd3 ♜xd3 35. ♙xc6 e6 With dynamic equality in Strengell – Walczak, email 2009. The game was subsequently drawn but, in a practical encounter, all three results would be possible.

22. ♜b2 is similar: 22... ♜d6 23. h4 h5 24. gxh5 ♜e6 25. ♜g1 ♜hx5 26. ♜c5 ♜f6 27. ♜e3 ♜e8= futur – sferenc, engine game 2013.

22... ♜d6

22... f5!? is a more aggressive attempt, lashing out in the centre. 23. h3 e5 24. ♙c2 e4!? 25. ♜xd8 ♜xd8 26. fxe4 fxg4 27. hxg4 ♙xg4 28. ♜d3 ♜e7= hüseyin Pahnin, – purepower, engine game 2012.

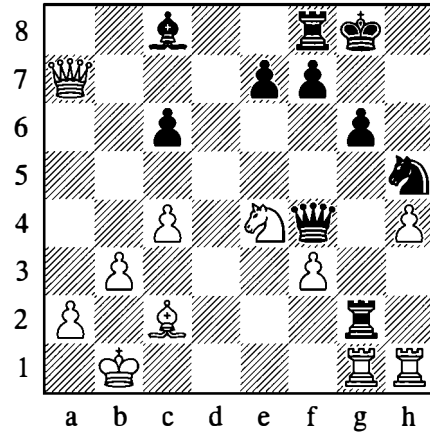
23. h4 ♜b6 24. ♜de1 h5!?

24... ♜e6 is also fine, and after 25. ♜e4 ♜xe3† 26. ♜xe3 ♜d7 27. ♙c2 ♜fd8= Black went on to draw fairly easily in Kurgansky – Kazantsev, email 2009.

25. gxh5 ♜hx5 26. ♙c2 ♜a5 27. ♜b2 ♜d2

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

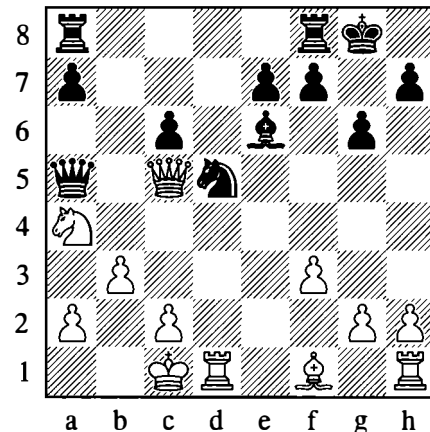
28. ♜e4 ♜g2 29. ♜eg1 ♜e5† 30. ♜b1 ♜f4 31. ♜xa7



31... ♜xc2! 32. ♜xc2 ♜xf3 33. ♜e1 ♙f5 34. ♜e3 ♜g2† 35. ♜c3 ♜xa2

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

C4) 16. ♜c5



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

16... ♜c7

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

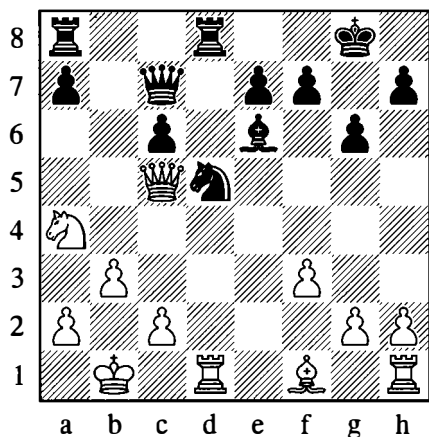
17.♖b1

17.g3 ♜fd8 transposes to variation C1.

17...♜fd8

It's nice to be consistent.

17...♞ab8 was the choice of the young Levon Aronian in the stem game with 15...♙e6. Play continued: 18.g3 ♜e5 19.f4 ♜e4 20.♙c4 Grigoriant – Aronian, Moscow 1995. Here Levon grabbed the pawn with 20...♘xf4!? (On ChessPublishing I suggested 20...♙f5N 21.♞c1 ♜g2 when Black threatens to take on c2 due to the loose rook on h1) 21.♞he1 ♜xc4 22.♜xc4 ♙xc4 23.gxf4 with an equal ending; White's initiative makes up for his pawn deficit.



18.♙a6 ♜d6 19.♞d1

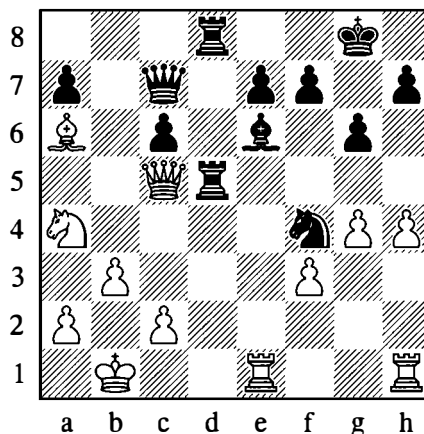
Comparing this to the Sjugirov – Timofeev game we saw in variation C1, this rook sidestep doesn't seem as logical as White is hardly threatening to capture on e6.

19...♞ad8

19...♞b8!N seems like a sensible alternative.

20.g4 ♘f4 21.h4 ♜d5

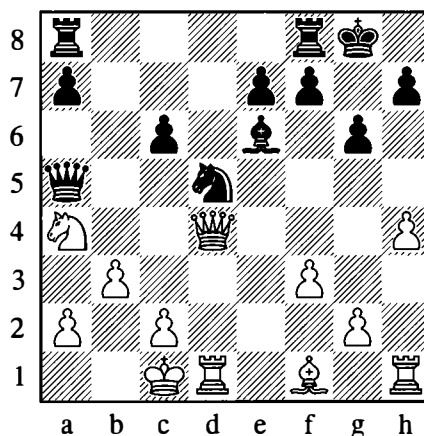
Fighting for squares on the kingside with 21...h5!N also looks good to me.



22.♜c3 ♜a5 23.♙c4 ♜xc3 24.♘xc3 ♜d4 25.♙xe6 ♘xe6=

Guimaraes – Neubauer, Rio de Janeiro 2011.

C5) 16.h4



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

16...♞ad8

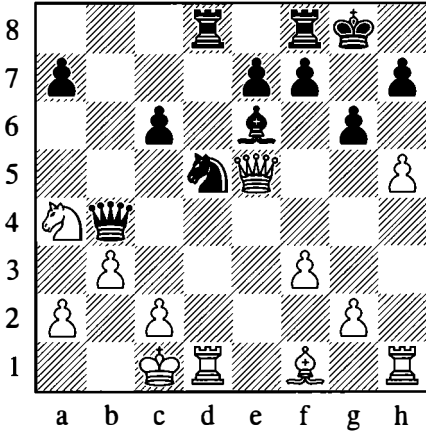
16...♜fd8 has also worked out fine for Black. 17.♜e5 ♜b4 18.♖b2 (18.h5 ♜a3+ 19.♜b2 is similar to our main line and will probably transpose) 18...♘b6 19.♞xd8+ ♜xd8 20.♘xb6

♖xb6 21.h5 ½-½ Supino – Senzacqua, email 2011.

17.♖e5

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

17...♖b4 18.h5



18...♗f5!?

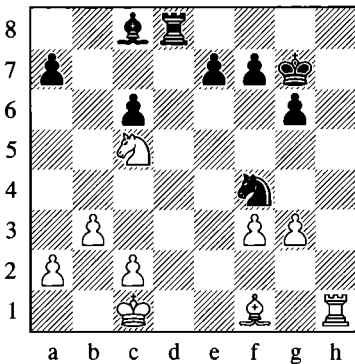
I think this is a good novelty. From f5 the bishop combines attack and defence.

Previously Black has acquiesced to the queen exchange:

18...♖a3† 19.♖b2 ♖xb2† 20.♗xb2 ♗f4

White has succeeded in carrying out the queen trade but now he has to spend some time defending his first rank.

21.♞xd8 ♞xd8 22.hxg6 hxg6 23.♗c1 ♗g7 24.♗c5 ♗c8 25.g3



25...♞d5!

25...♗e6 26.♗xe6† ♗xe6 27.♞h4 should probably be a draw but Black will have to suffer for a long time.

26.♗d3

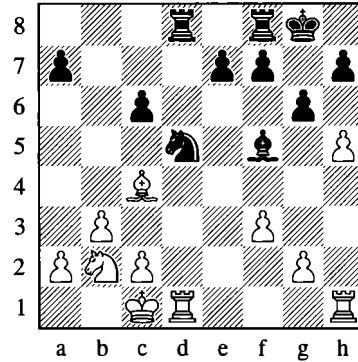
26.b4N is more critical. I think Black should play 26...♗h5 27.g4 ♗f4 when he should draw without any real difficulty, as he can generate a passed pawn easily enough.

26...♗xd3† 27.♗xd3 ♗f5=

Black had no problems in moonfleet – katzenmaier, engine game 2012.

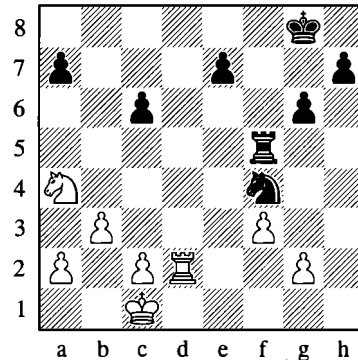
19.g4

19.♗c4 ♖a3† 20.♖b2 ♖xb2† (20...♖d6!?) 21.♗xb2 (21.♗xb2 ♗e3?)

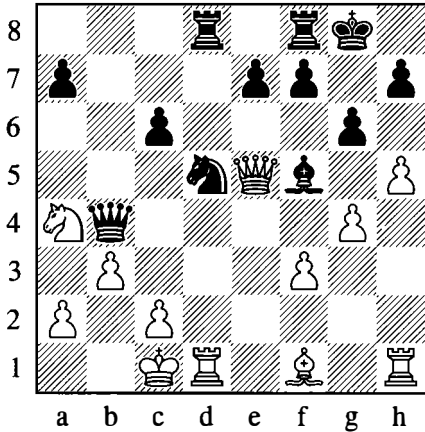


21...♗c3 22.♞xd8 ♗xa2† 23.♗b1 ♗c3† 24.♗c1 gives Black at least a perpetual.

19.hxg6 ♗xg6 20.♗d3 ♖f4† sees Black enter an ending that should be fine for him. 21.♖xf4 ♗xf4 22.♗xg6 ♞xd1† 23.♞xd1 fxg6! 24.♞d2 ♞f5



Black has more pawn islands but the pressure against the g2-pawn makes it easy to create a passed h-pawn. 25.♖c3 (25.g3 ♖e6 26.f4 h5=) 25...♙g5 26.g4 h5=



19...♙xc2!

This sacrifice forces a draw.

20.♙xc2

20.h6 ♖a3† 21.♙xc2 ♖b4†= shows the basic drawing mechanism.

20...♖a3!

White has nowhere to hide, for instance:

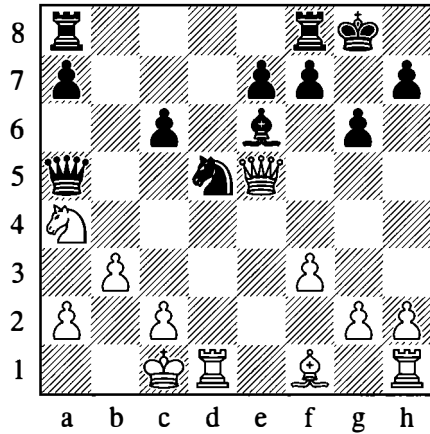
21.♙d2

21.hxg6 ♖b4† 22.♙c3 ♖xa2† 23.♙c2 ♖b4† 24.♙c3= is another route to a draw.

21...♖b4† 22.♙d1 ♙xd2† 23.♙xd2 ♙d8† 24.♙e3 ♖c1† 25.♙f2 ♖d3† 26.♙xd3 ♖xh1 27.♖c5 ♙d5 28.♖xc7 ♖h2†=

Finally White must accept the inevitable.

C6) 16.♖e5



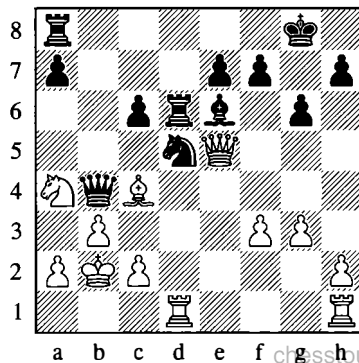
This is White's most common try; he pins the knight and threatens c2-c4.

16...♖b4

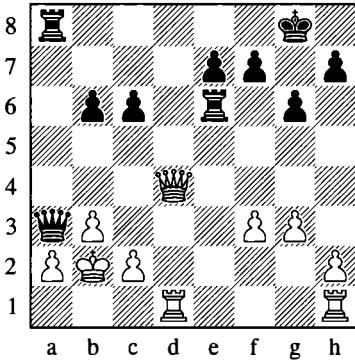
White has two main approaches: C61) 17.c4 and C62) 17.♙b2. The main point of the latter move is to prevent a check on a3 and thus prepare to develop the bishop on c4.

17.h4 ♙ad8 transposes to variation C5.

Timofeev repeated this variation recently – a positive indication that Black's set-up is in a healthy state. That game continued: 17.g3 ♙fd8 18.♙c4 ♙d6 19.♙b2? An unfortunate blunder. (19.h4N was to be preferred, when Black has a choice of replies. 19...♙ad8 20.h5 ♖a3† 21.♖b2 ♖xb2† 22.♖xb2 ♖c3= is one of the simpler ones.)



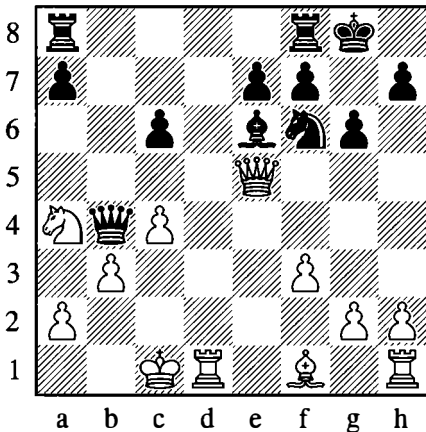
19...♖b6! Unfortunately for White, he has no choice but to trade knights and open up the a-file for the rook. 20.♖xb6 axb6 21.♗xe6 ♜xe6 22.♞d4 ♞a3†



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

C61) 17.c4 ♖f6

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



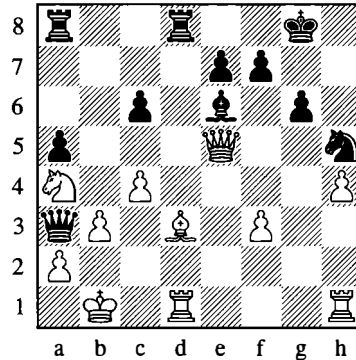
18.♞d3

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

18.♗e2 ♖d7 19.♞c3 a5 20.f4 ♞a3† 21.♞b2

♞b4 White could find nothing better than repeating: 22.♞c3 ♞a3† ½-½ Bohak – Goncharov, email 2009.

Nor did 18.g4 put any pressure on Black: 18...♞fd8 19.♗e2 a5 (19...♖d7N also looks fine) 20.h4 h5 21.gxh5 ♖xh5 22.♗d3 ♞a3† 23.♖b1



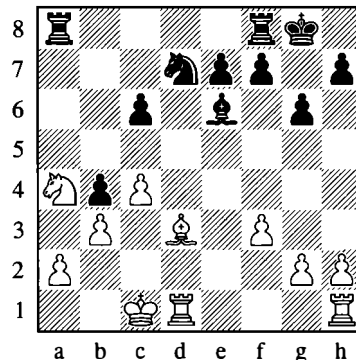
23...♞xd3! 24.♞xd3 ♗f5 25.♞hd1 f6 26.♞c5 ♞xc5 27.♖xc5 ♖f4= Sivokho – Isaev, email 2005.

18.♞c5 a5!

This is a recurring theme in this line: if White wishes to exchange queens, he will have to improve Black's structure.

19.♗e2

19.♗d3 ♖d7! 20.♞xb4 axb4

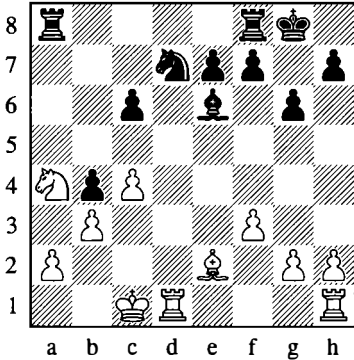


This has been tested a few times but White has been unable to put any pressure on Black,

and the second player even managed to win a game himself. Black's plan is to exchange knights and then put pressure on the a2-pawn, for instance: 21.♖he1 ♖a5 22.♙c2 ♘c5 23.♘xc5 ♗xc5= r a z o r – question mark, engine game 2013.

19...♘d7 20.♗xb4 axb4

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



21.f4 ♖a5

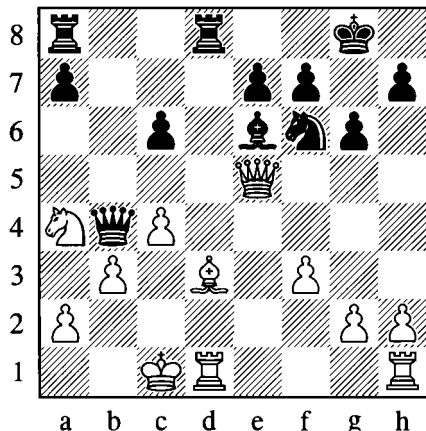
21...♖a6 22.♗he1 ♘b6 23.♘xb6 ♗xb6 was also level in oops – centurio, engine game 2014.

22.♗he1 ♘c5 23.♘xc5 ♗xc5 24.♙f3 ♖a8=

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

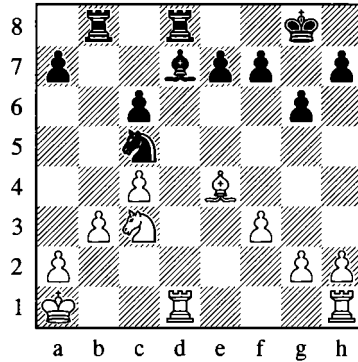
18...♗fd8

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



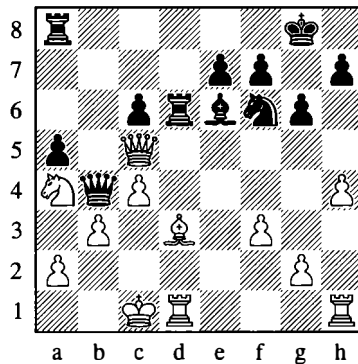
19.♗c5

19.♘b2 ♖ab8 20.♘a1 ♘d7 21.♗c3 ♗xc3+ 22.♘xc3 ♘c5 23.♙e4 ♙d7



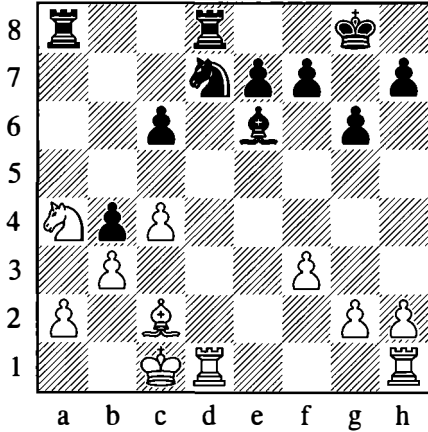
24.♙c2 f6 25.♘b2 a5 26.♘e4 ♘e6 27.♗d2 ♙e8 28.♗hd1 ♗xd2 29.♗xd2 c5= unbridled – herzsjemz, engine game 2013.

19.h4 ♗d6 20.♗c5 (20.♙c2 ♖ad8 21.♗xd6 ♗xd6 22.♗xd6 exd6 was equal in Waters – Goncharov, email 2009) 20...a5! Once again, Black permits a queen exchange on his own terms.



21.♙c2 ♘d7 22.♗g5 ♗xd1+ 23.♗xd1 ♖b8 24.♗f4 ♖b7 25.♗d4 h5 26.♙e4 ♗a3+ 27.♗b2 ♗xb2+ 28.♘xb2 ♗c7 29.♘c3 ♘g7 1/2-1/2 Santamaria Perez – Amico, email 2011. Black's position is slightly passive but everything is defended, and White was evidently unable to find a way to make progress.

19...a5 20.♙c2 ♘d7 21.♗xb4 axb4



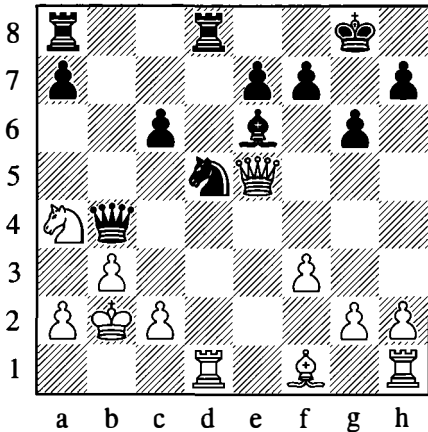
22. R d2

22. R h e1 ♔ f8 23. R d4 c5 24. R d2 ♜ a c8 25. g4 ♜ c7= has occurred in a couple of correspondence games but Black had no problems.

22... R d b8 23. R e1 ♜ b7 24. ♔ d1 ♜ a5=

Here too, Black was fine in Bernal Varela – Sidenko, email 2009.

C62) 17. ♔ b2 ♜ f d8



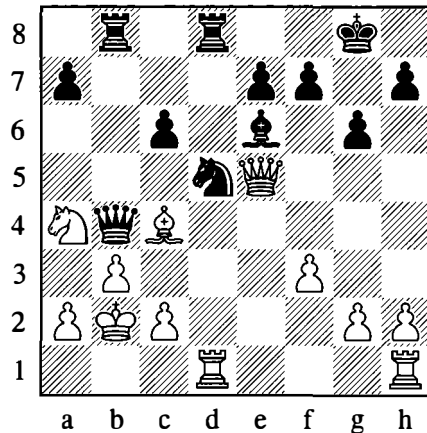
Black has tried a few different rook moves, but this one feels like the most logical to me.

18. ♔ c4

After this move the game becomes surprisingly double-edged.

18. R d4 ♜ d6 19. ♜ x d6 e x d6 (Black has also drawn all his games with 19... R x d6 but I don't see a reason not to improve our structure) 20. ♔ c4 ♔ c7 21. R h d1 d5 22. ♔ f1 ♔ g7 23. c4 ♜ e8 24. ♔ c5 ♜ e7 25. c x d5 ♔ x d5 leonidas i – derecho, engine game 2012. Black still has the slightly worse structure but the bishop has become strong on d5, while the rest of Black's pieces also have good futures. Black is fine.

18... R a b8



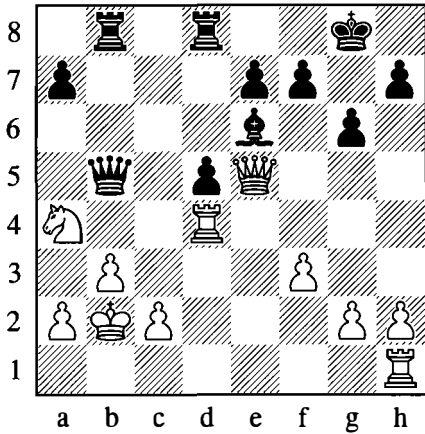
19. ♔ x d5!

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

19... c x d5 20. R d4 ♜ b5!

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

20... ♜ d6?! 21. ♜ x d6 ♜ x d6 22. R e1 is another endgame that Black should avoid. The bishop has no future and it will be hard to break out with ...e5.

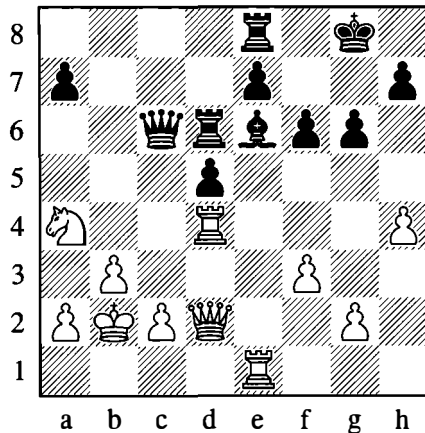


21.♗e1

The battle now revolves around the e5-square. If White can prevent ...e5 then things may become miserable for Black but, happily, I don't think he can accomplish his aim. Black's plan is to defend his bishop and play ...f6, before retreating the bishop to f7 and finally carrying out ...e5.

If White goes for the attack straight away with 21.h4N we can play 21...♖c6 22.h5 f6 23.♗e2 g5. The kingside remains closed and Black can turn his attention to the central break with ...♗d6, ...♗e8, ...♕f7 and finally ...e5.

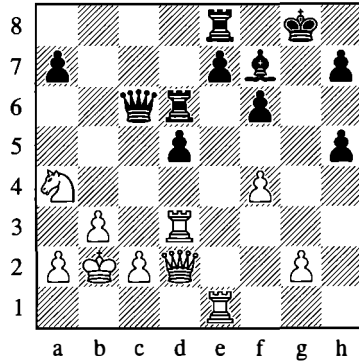
21...♗d6 22.h4 f6 23.♗e2 ♖c6 24.♗d2 ♗e8



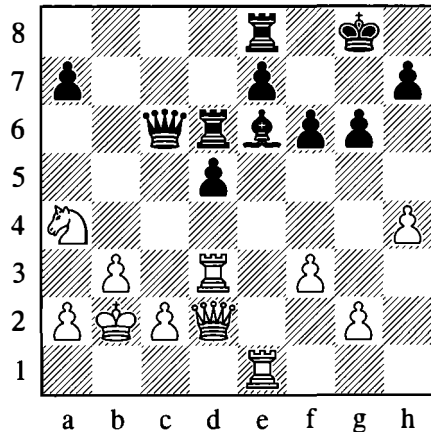
The first phase of the plan is complete.

25.♗d3

In another game White tried to distract Black with 25.h5 but the second player was unruffled: 25...gxh5 26.♗d3 ♕f7 27.f4 asterix_2006 – derecho, Internet 2012, Here I see no reason not to carry out the thematic plan:



27...e5N I prefer Black's chances. (Instead Black continued rearranging his pieces with 27...♖d7 28.♗g3+ ♖h8 29.♗d4 ♗c6 30.♗ge3 a5 31.♗1e2 ♗d6= and the game was eventually drawn.)



25...♕f7 26.f4 ♗d7!

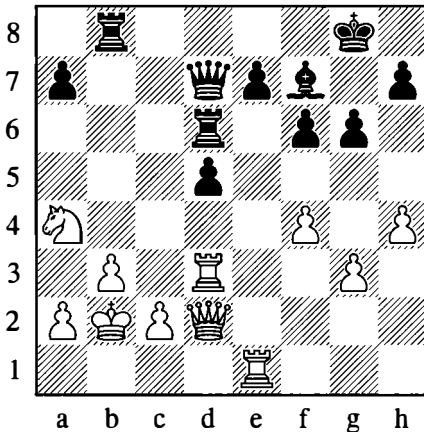
On this occasion I think we should wait a little longer.

The immediate 26...e5 is possible but we have to watch out, as Black's king may become

slightly vulnerable. 27.fxe5 fxe5 28.♘c3 ♖dd8 29.♗g5 ♗c7 30.h5 ♗e7 31.♗xe7 ♖xe7 32.h6± The far-advanced pawn is a slight thorn in Black's side in the endgame, and White also has some pressure against our centre. In hugodave – the viper, engine game 2012, Black held the draw, but the defensive task might prove unpleasant over the board.

27.g3 ♖b8

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



28.♘c1

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

28...♖c8 29.♖de3 ♖e6 30.♗d4 ♗c7 31.♖1e2 ♖xe3 32.♗xe3 ♖e8 33.♗c5 ♗d7=

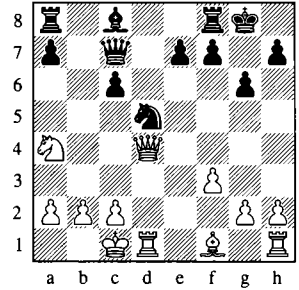
The position remained equal in unbridled – pharaomum, engine game 2014.

Conclusion

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

Chapter 2

9.0-0-0



Main Line with 14...♔c7

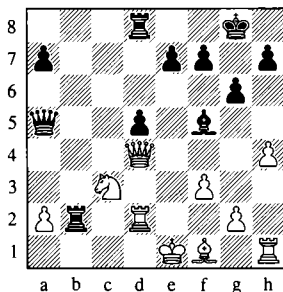
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 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 10.exd5 ♗xd5 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.♙d4 ♙xd4
 13.♚xd4 ♚b6 14.♗a4

14...♚c7

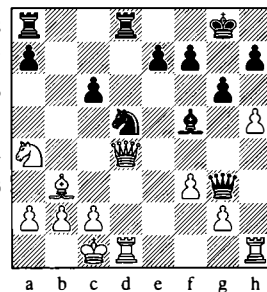
A) 15.♗c5 ♘d8	28
B) 15.h4 ♘d8	30
B1) 16.c4?	31
B2) 16.b3?!	32
B3) 16.♙c4	33
C) 15.♙c4 ♘d8	33
C1) 16.♙b3	35
C11) 16...♙f5	35
C12) 16...♙e6!?	37
C2) 16.♗c5 ♙f5 17.♙b3 ♗f4	39
C21) 18.♚c4	39
C22) 18.♚f2 ♘xd1† 19.♘xd1 ♘d8	40
C221) 20.♘xd8†	41
C222) 20.♘e1!?	44

B1) after 21.♘d2



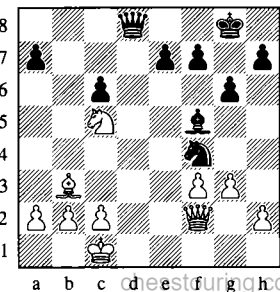
21...e5!

B3) after 18.h5



18...♗f4!N

C221) after 21.g3

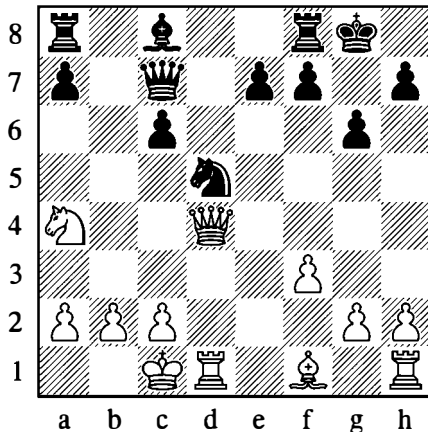


21...♚d4!?

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 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 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xc6 bxc6
12.♙d4 ♙xd4 13.♗xd4 ♖b6 14.♘a4

Although 14...♗a5 seems pretty reliable, I would also like to present a more thoroughly tested line which I have used successfully in several games.

14...♖c7

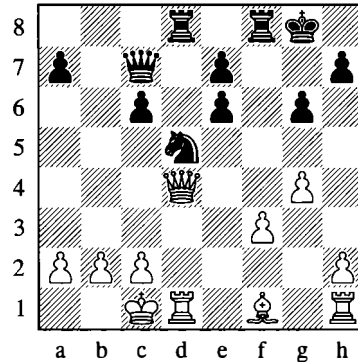


This is not mentioned at all by Golubev in *Experts*, which is understandable as the move was not known as a serious option at the time. That all changed in 2009 when Magnus Carlsen adopted it. We will analyse **A) 15.♘c5**, **B) 15.h4** and the main line **C) 15.♙c4**.

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

15.g3 is a typical move but it is normally played once the f1-bishop is developed. 15...♙f5 (15...♗d8N doesn't appear to have been played but it makes sense to me and is likely to transpose elsewhere.) 16.g4 ♙e6 17.♘c5 ♗ad8! 18.♘xe6 fxe6 This position has certain similarities to the 9.g4 variation covered in the first volume. Black's structure

looks extremely ugly but White can't really exploit it without a knight or a dark-squared bishop. Black has pressure against the weak f3-pawn and his knight is very strong. A practical example continued:



19.♖e4 ♗d6 20.♙e2 ♗a5 21.♙c4 ♗f4 22.♖e2 ♗xc4!? 23.♗xc4 ♘e3 24.♗c3 ♗xc3 25.bxc3 ♘xd1 26.♗xd1 ♔g7 Both sides have been left with incredibly ugly structures in a drawn endgame, Nestorovic – Kanarek, Krakow 2011.

A) 15.♘c5

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

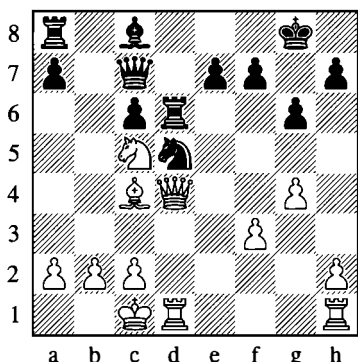
15...♗d8 16.c4!?

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

16.♙c4 transposes to variation C2.

16.h4 is covered on page 30 – see 16.♘c5 in the notes to variation B.

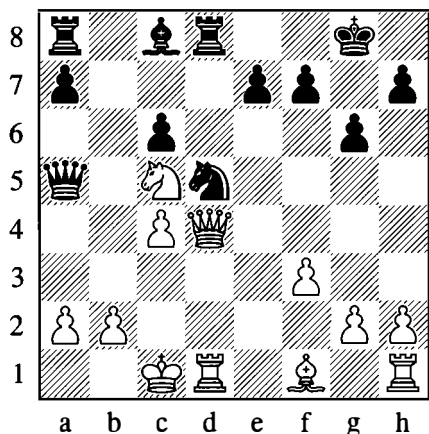
16.g4 can be met by 16...♗d6, a typical idea which prepares to develop the bishop to e6 without compromising Black's structure. I tend to prefer to avoid touching the e7-pawn in these positions. This way the rook is solidly defended on d6, and Black's queen keeps an eye on White's loosened kingside along the h2-b8 diagonal. 17.♙c4



17...♘b6 18.♖e4 ♘xc4 19.♗xc4 ♙e6 20.♘xe6 ♞xe6= This is a typical defensive mechanism. If Black is able to exchange all the minor pieces then the c5-outpost tends not to be so relevant, so Black doesn't have any problems. Black's potentially weak queenside pawns are offset by White's on the kingside.

16...♗a5!

16...e5 is also possible if you don't feel like sacrificing, but there is no reason to avoid it – Black gets a great position.

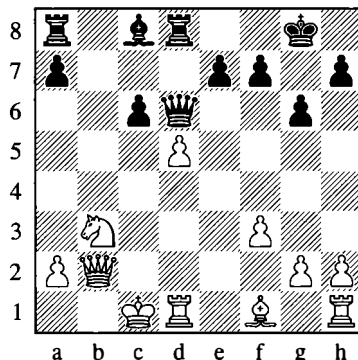


17.♘e4N

17.cxd5? ♞xd5 18.♘b3 ♗d8!-+ is an important nuance pointed out by Chris Ward.

17.b4!? is perhaps White's best try. 17...♗xb4 (As Ward points out, Black could already make an immediate draw with 17...♗a3† 18.♗b2

♗e3† 19.♗d2 ♗a3†=) 18.♘b3 ♗a3† 19.♗b2 ♗d6 20.cxd5

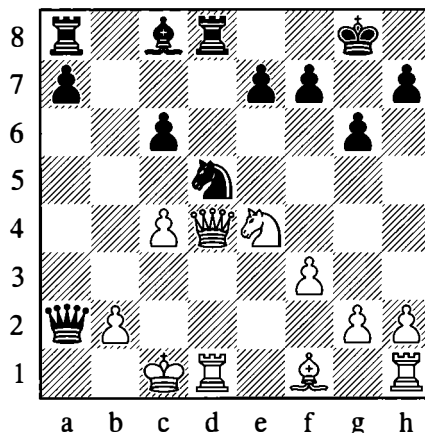


20...a5! This has been tested in a few computer games and Black has scored 4/5, indicating that, even with precise play, White's position is tough to defend.

The text move is another computer attempt but it looks risky.

17...♗xa2

This offers good attacking chances but it is not the only decent option; 17...♙f5!? 18.cxd5 cxd5 19.♘c3 ♞ac8 also looks dangerous.

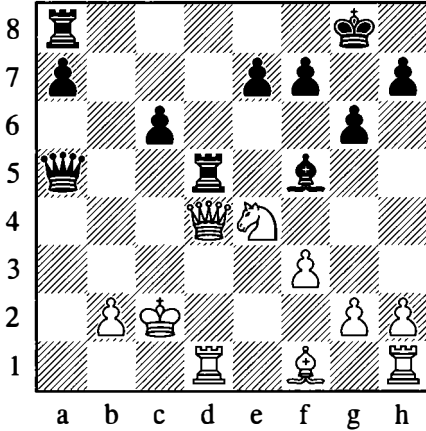


18.cxd5

18.♘c3 ♗a1† 19.♘d2 gives Black a pleasant choice: he can continue attacking with 19...♗xb2† or force a favourable ending with

19...e5!? 20.♞xa1 exd4 21.♘xd5 cxd5 22.c5 ♞b8.

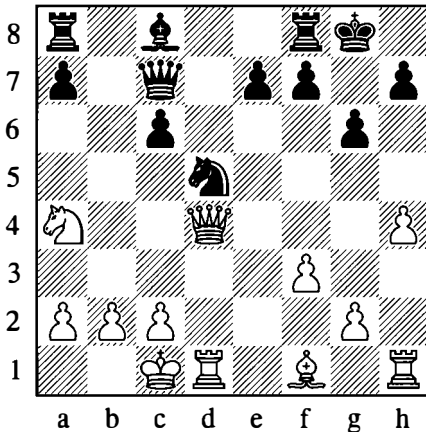
18...♞xd5 19.♘c3 ♚a1† 20.♙c2 ♜f5† 21.♘e4 ♚a5



22.♚c3 ♚a4† 23.b3 ♚a2† 24.♙c1 ♞xd1† 25.♙xd1 ♚b1†

Black already has two pawns for the piece and can pick up a third if he wishes; meanwhile White will struggle to develop his kingside.

B) 15.h4



This is a thematic way of playing against Dragon structures, especially once the g7-bishop has been exchanged, but on this

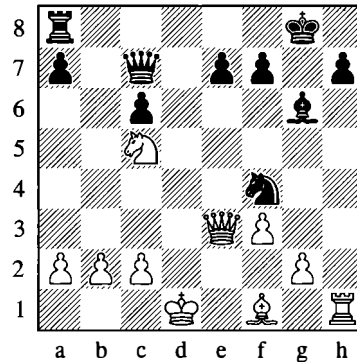
occasion Black has the more dangerous attack. Black can often defend as he would in the Topalov Variation with ...♜f5xg6.

15...♞d8

We start with a normal developing move. White's most important replies are **B1) 16.c4?**, **B2) 16.b3?!** and **B3) 16.♙c4**. Even though the first two are not good moves, it is worth analysing them to understand how Black should capitalize.

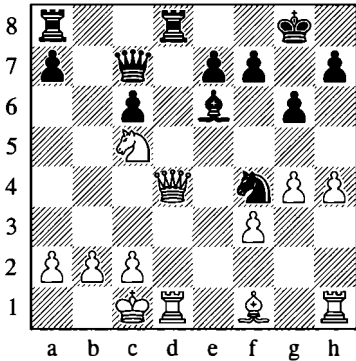
16.♘c5 ♜f5 17.♙d3 ♘f4 18.♚f2 ♙xd3 19.♘xd3 ♘xd3† 20.♞xd3 ♞xd3 21.cxd3 ♞d8♞ Lepikhov – Lecroq, corr. 2013. White no longer has the better structure and his king is more vulnerable.

16.h5 ♜f5 17.hxg6 ♙xg6 The bishop does a good job, both defensively and aggressively. 18.♘c5 ♘f4 19.♚e3 ♞xd1† 20.♙xd1



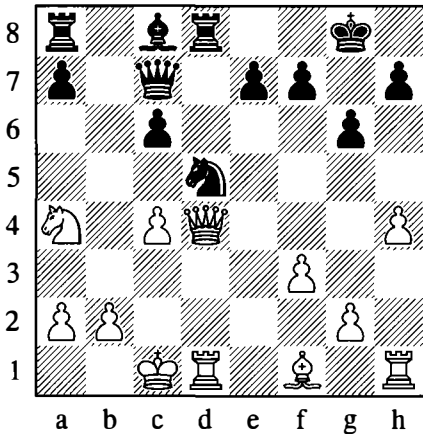
Here I found an improvement over Rodin – Travkina, Voronezh 2012: 20...♘d5N 21.♚d2 ♞d8 22.♙c1 ♚b6♞ favours Black.

16.g4 ♙e6 17.♘c5 ♘f4 shows another typical defensive device. The knight will be well placed on e6, especially after White has ceded an outpost on f4.



18.♞xe6 ♞xe6 19.♞e3 ♞xd1+ 20.♔xd1 ♞b6 21.♞xb6 axb6 22.a3 ♞d8+ (22...♞d4N 23.♞h3 ♞d8 is also good) 23.♙d3 ♞f4 24.♔d2 e5 Black had the slightly better endgame in Barnsley – Rubinas, email 2008.

B1) 16.c4?



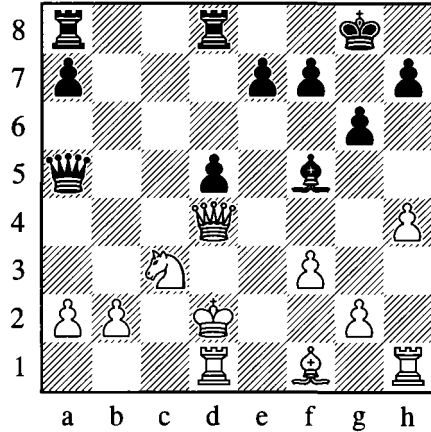
As we saw in variation A, once we put our rook on d8 we need to check this pin, but it is normally far too risky.

16...♙f5! 17.cxd5 cxd5+ 18.♔d2

18.♞c3 e5 immediately regains the piece, as does 18.♞c3 ♞f4+ 19.♞d2 ♞xa4.

18...♞a5+! 19.♞c3

After 19.♔e2 e5 20.♞d2 ♞xa4+ Black was a pawn up and still had an attack in jetro – bouddha#77, engine game 2012.



19...♞ab8 20.♔c1

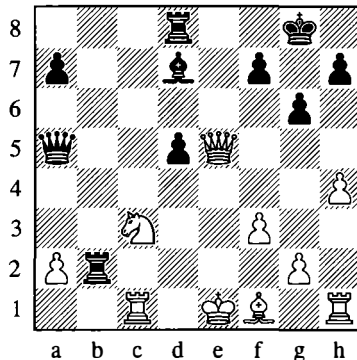
20.b3 runs into 20...e5! 21.♞xe5 ♞e8 22.♞d4 ♞b4 23.♞xd5 ♞d8 and Black wins.

20...♞xb2

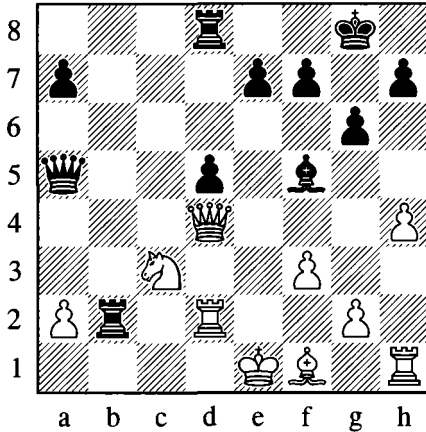
This position has been reached in a couple of correspondence games. Black's attack is too strong.

21.♞d2

In the later game White tried 21.♞c1 but after 21...e5! 22.♞xe5 ♙d7! he was in a lot of trouble. The remaining moves were:



23.♞f4 ♞e8+ 24.♔d1 ♞b4 25.♞d2 ♙a4+ 26.♞c2 d4 27.♞e4 ♞b1+ 28.♔e2 d3+! 29.♔f2 ♞b6+ 30.♞c5 ♞b2 0-1 J. Gomes – Lopes, email 2012.



21...e5!

Again this idea of opening up the e-file is extremely strong. White has nowhere to hide his king.

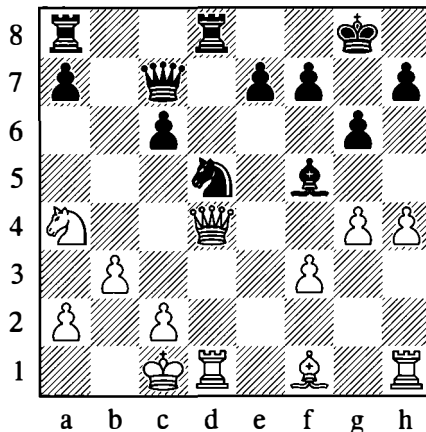
**22.♖xe5 ♜xd2 23.♗xd2 ♞b4 24.a3 ♞b2†
25.♕e1 ♜c8 26.♙e2 ♜xc3-+**

Black scored a sizeable upset in Herrmann – Nicholls, email 2005.

B2) 16.b3?!

Considering the fact that ...♞a5 is often played to provoke this move, White is now just a tempo down on normal positions.

16...♙f5! 17.g4



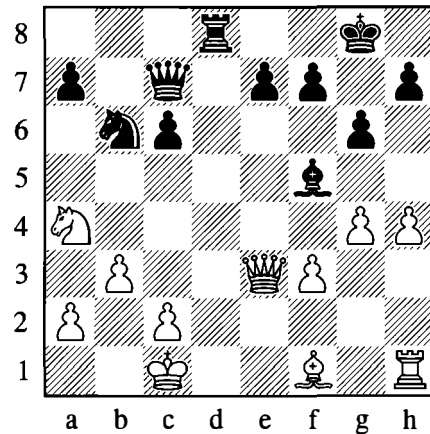
17...♖b6!N

This is not quite as entertaining as the game continuation but objectively it looks like the stronger move.

After 17...♙xc2!? 18.♗xc2 ♜ab8 Black's attack is stronger than it may first appear. 19.a3 (This is forced, as 19.♗c1? ♖b4 20.♞e4 ♖xa2† 21.♗c2 ♖b4† 22.♗c1 ♜xd1† 23.♗xd1 ♞d6† 24.♗c1 ♜d8 would see Black penetrating to decisive effect.) 19...♖b4† 20.axb4 ♜xd4 21.♜xd4 ♞g3 22.♙e2 ♞g2 23.♞e1 ♞f2 24.♜dd1 ♞xh4 An interesting position has arisen. Black currently has queen and two pawns against rook and two minor pieces and can pick up a third on b4, while White's king is still open. The game Luers – Santo, email 2009, ended in a draw.

Clearing the c-file with 17...c5!?N also looks tempting, but one strong move is enough.

18.♞e3 ♜xd1† 19.♗xd1 ♜d8† 20.♗c1

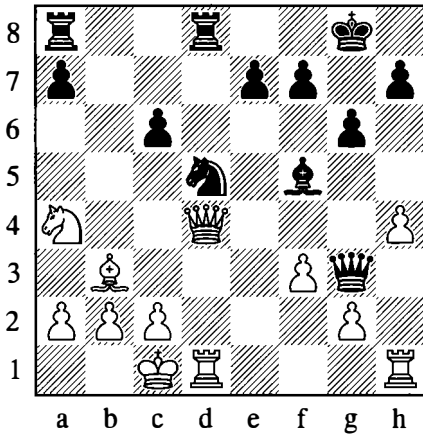


**20...♞d6! 21.gxf5 ♞a3† 22.♖b2 ♖a4!
23.♙d3**

23.♞e5? loses to 23...♜d5.

23...♞xb2† 24.♗d2 ♞c3† 25.♗e2 ♖c5†

White's exposed king means he will be under pressure for a long time.

B3) 16.♔c4 ♕f5 17.♕b3 ♖g3!

Black exploits the dark-square weaknesses in White's camp. Now g2-g4 is prevented and the g2-pawn is a target.

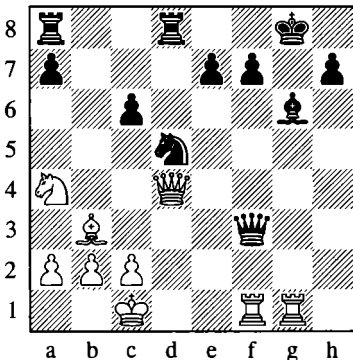
18.h5

18.♖d2?! ♘f4! 19.♖b4 (19.♖xd8† ♜xd8 20.♜xd8† ♘g7 (Ward); White has an inferior version of our main line and is losing the g2-pawn immediately.) 19...e6 20.♖e7 ♜xd1† 21.♜xd1 ♘g2 22.a3 ♖xh4→ White had nothing to show for his two-pawn deficit in Blomqvist – P.H. Nielsen, Helsingor 2011.

18...♘f4?!N

I like this suggestion of Ward.

18...♖xg2 is playable; after 19.hxg6 ♕xg6 20.♜hg1 ♖xf3 21.♜df1 White had some pressure but it was two pawns sacrificed.



In jamwan – teutates, engine game 2013, Black played 21...♖e2, but I would prefer not to allow White to gain time redeploying his errant knight. Instead 21...♖h5N 22.♘b1 ♖h6 makes sense. The queen will come to g7, giving the black king good protection.

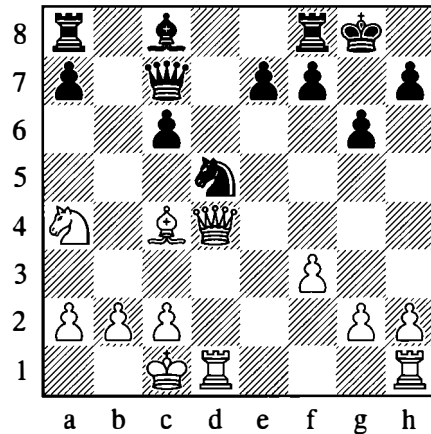
18...e5?!N is another sensible move, but I will focus on the main line.

19.♖xd8† ♜xd8 20.♜xd8† ♘g7 21.h6† ♘f6

White must retreat his active rook in order to defend the g2-pawn.

22.♜d2

With a complicated middlegame. White has two rooks against a queen, but Black's queen and knight are superbly placed. The evaluation will hinge on whether the h6-pawn is a strength or a weakness; personally I would slightly prefer Black.

C) 15.♕c4

White usually develops his bishop before doing anything else.

15...♜d8

White may consolidate with C1) 16.♕b3 or play actively with C2) 16.♘c5.

16.h4 transposes to variation B3.

16.♙xd5 Allowing Black to improve his structure may look like a poor decision but White is trying to take control of the dark squares, rather like in variation C62 of the previous chapter. 16...cxd5 17.♘c3 ♖b7 18.♞he1 ♞d7 19.f4 ♞c8= Black has good central control and will be able to generate counterplay on the queenside. Should White's attack become dangerous Black can always exchange queens on c5 or c4.

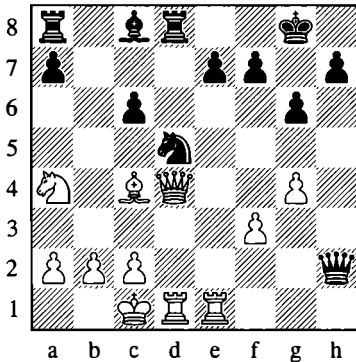
16.♞he1 ♞xh2!

Black needn't fear any ghosts on the kingside.

17.g4

17.♞h1? ♞xg2 18.♞h4 h5 gives White hardly anything for the two pawns, as pointed out by Richard Pert.

White can try and regain the pawn straight away with 17.♞xe7? but after 17...♙f5! he will lose material.



17...♙e6!N

This recommendation of Richard Pert looks simplest. His line continues:

18.♘c5 ♘f4 19.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 20.♞xd8+ ♖g7 21.♙xe6

In the event of 21.♘xe6+ fxе6! Black's h-pawn will become powerful.

21...♞f2!F

16.g4

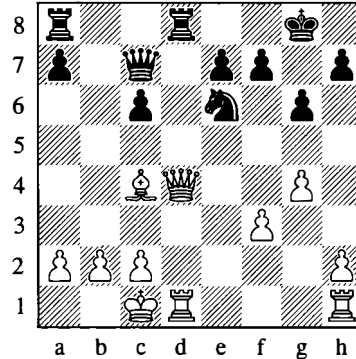
White prevents the deployment of the bishop to f5 but concedes the f4-outpost.

Black's plan should come as no surprise.

16...♙e6 17.♘c5 ♘f4 18.♘xe6

18.♘a6 ♞d6 19.♞xd6 exd6 20.♙xe6 ♘xe6 was level in blackborn – bouddha#77, engine game 2012.

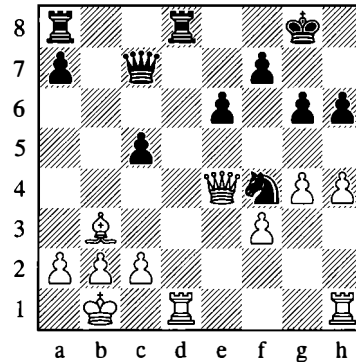
18...♘xe6



19.♞e3 ♘f4

19...♞f4 should also be fine, as long as after 20.♞xf4 ♘xf4 21.♞he1 e6 22.♞e4, as in I. Popov – Zakharov, Taganrog 2013, Black keeps it solid with 22...♘d5N.

20.h4 e6 21.♖b1 h6 22.♙b3 c5 23.♞e4



23...h5!∞

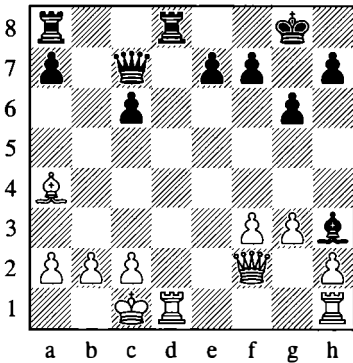
Black had decent prospects in darkraider – crgiorgio, engine game 2013.

16.g3 ♙h3!

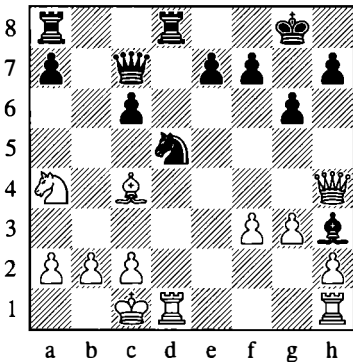
The bishop may look strange here but it is hard for White to trap it, and the threat of ...♙g2 may prove annoying.

17.♙h4

A recent game continued: 17.♙f2 ♖b6
18.♘b3 ♗xa4 19.♘xa4



19...c5! If Black can play this move, he tends not to have any problems. 20.♙e3 ♘e6
Yeletsky – Abdyjapar, Moscow 2015.



17...♙a5!N

This was Ward's suggestion.

17...♘g2! was played in Garbisu de Goni – Huerga Leache, Bergara 2012, but 18.♙hg1!N makes 18...♘xf3? impossible as the bishop is trapped after 19.♙df1 ♘h5 20.g4. Instead 18...♗e3 would have to be tried, but it looks suspicious to me.

17...♘f5 is not bad though, and in the following game Black held comfortably: 18.♙he1 ♙ab8 19.♘b3 h5 20.a3 e6 21.♗c5 ♙b6 22.♙c4 ♙a5 23.♗e4 ♘xe4 ½–½ Grout – Hryniw, corr. 2014.

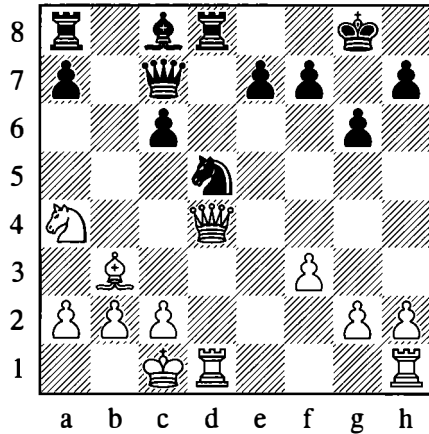
18.♙xh3

18.♘b3?! now allows 18...♘g2! as the bishop will no longer be trapped.

18...♙xa4 19.♘b3 ♙a5=

The knight is definitely the stronger minor piece.

C1) 16.♘b3



Depriving White of this option is the reason why Black sometimes throws in ...♙a5 to provoke b2-b3 before dropping back to c7. I do not consider it a problem though, and will present two playable solutions: **C11) 16...♘f5** and **C12) 16...♘e6!?**

C11) 16...♘f5

This was Magnus Carlsen's choice and is likely to transpose elsewhere.

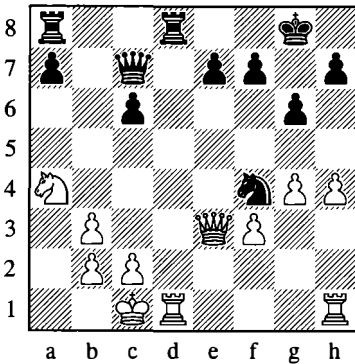
17.g3

Played by Grischuk against Motylev.

17.h4 transposes to variation B3.

17.♗c5 is probably White's best, transposing to variation C2.

Instead 17.g4 was played by Ivanchuk, but now Magnus made good use of the new outpost. 17...♗f4 18.♙e3 ♘e6 19.h4 ♘xb3 20.axb3



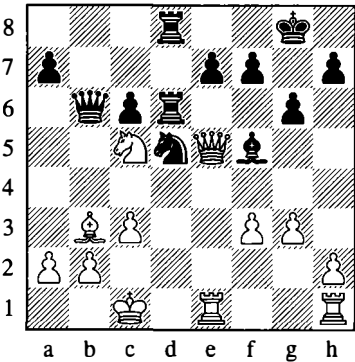
20...♕g2 21.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 22.♗e4 ♜f4+ Black had no problems in Ivanchuk – Carlsen, Leon 2009. (22...♗d5!?N is also a possibility if Black doesn't want to trade queens immediately, when the computer slightly prefers Black.)

17...♗d6

We have already encountered this thematic move.

18.♗he1

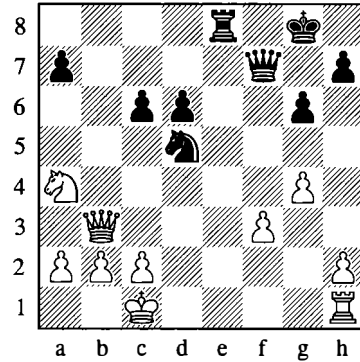
18.♕c5 also fails to put much pressure on Black: 18...♗ad8 19.♗del ♜b6 20.c3 ♕f6 21.♗e5 ♕d5



22.♕e4 ♗e6 23.♗d4 c5 24.♗f2 ♗xe4 25.fxe4 c4 26.♗xb6 ♕xb6 27.♗c2 ♗ed6 28.♗d1 ♖xd1+ 29.♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 30.♗xd1 ½–½ Biedermann – Liskevich, corr. 2013.

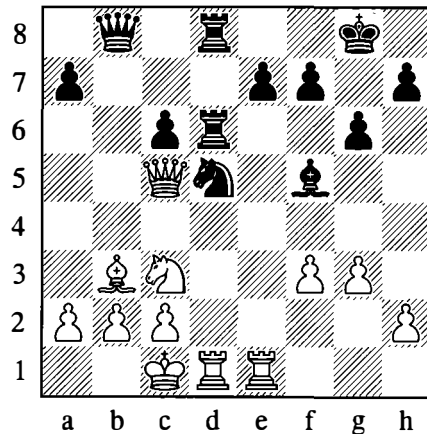
Another interesting line is: 18.g4 ♕f6!? 19.♗e3 ♗e6 20.♖xd6 exd6! A strong pawn sacrifice. 21.♗xe6 ♗e8 22.♗xf7+ ♗xf7 23.♗b3 ♕d5 Black has the more active pieces and

pressure against the backward f3-pawn, and has also got rid of his structural weaknesses.



24.a3 ♕g7 25.♗d1 ♗e3 26.♗c4 ♖xf3 27.♗xc6 ♕e3 28.♗e1 ♕xg4 29.♗xd6 ♖f1 30.♗d4+ ♕g8 31.♖xf1 ♗xf1+ 32.♕d2 ♕xh2 33.♗d8+ ♗f8 ½–½ Pommerel Brouwer – Romm, email 2009.

18...♗ad8 19.♗c5 ♜b8 20.♕c3



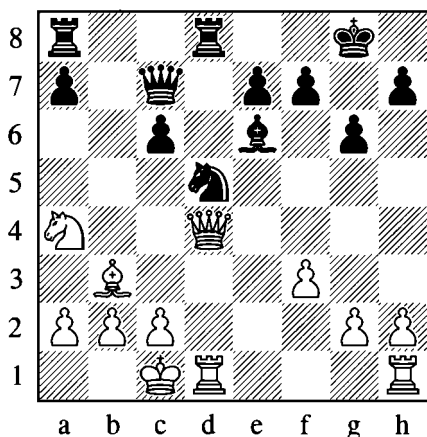
20...♕xc3

20...♗b7 was played in Grischuk – Motylev, Odessa 2010, but I prefer the text move.

21.♗xc3 ♖xd1+ 22.♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 23.♕xd1 ♗b6=

Black had sufficient counterplay with the queen pestering White's kingside pawns in el-shaddai – question mark, engine game 2013.

C12) 16...♗e6!?



This is the simplest. We continue our plan of exchanging our bad bishop.

17.♖c5

17.♖f2 ♖f4 18.g3 ♗xb3 19.axb3 ♖e6 (Peter Heine Nielsen's suggestion of 19...♖d5 is also fine) 20.f4 ♖a5 was equal in saf_21 – alerich, engine game 2012.

17...♖f4 18.♖xe6 ♖xe6 19.♖e3 ♖f4

Job done. Now the knight returns to d5.

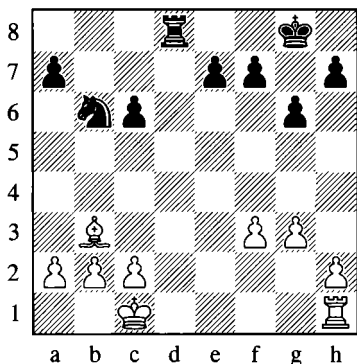
20.g3

Exchanging a pair of rooks doesn't make a big difference:

20.♗xd8† ♗xd8 21.g3 ♖d5 22.♖c5 ♖b6

Black does not have to exchange queens immediately but it does no harm.

23.♖xb6 ♖xb6



If the minor pieces were exchanged then Black would have to be a bit careful, as White would be able to put his rook on c5 or a6, tying down Black's rook, and then bring his king into the game. However, the knight keeps the dark squares under control and thus prevents White from implementing this plan. Meanwhile the bishop on b3 is rather ineffective.

24.♗e1 c5

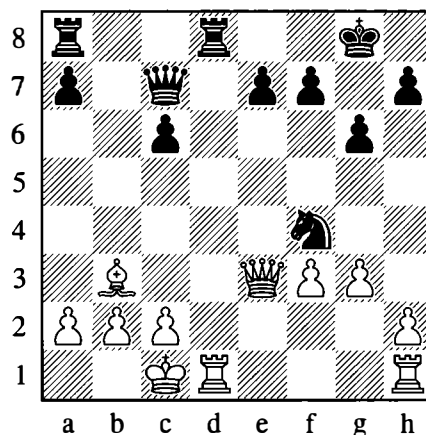
24...e6 should also be fine; Black just has to soak up some pressure for a couple of moves.

The text move seems more accurate though – White gets no advantage whatsoever.

25.a4 ♗d7 26.a5 ♖c8 27.♗c4 ♖f8 28.b3 e6

29.♗b5 ♗c7 30.♖b2 ♖e7 31.♖c3 ♖d6=

Primakov – Olofsson, corr. 2012.



20...♖d5

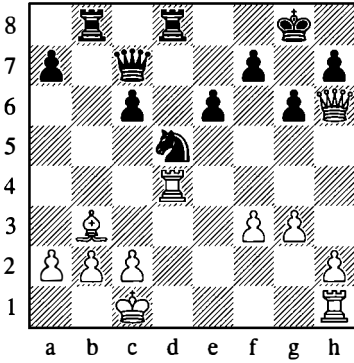
The knight does a good job of both defending the queenside weaknesses and preventing White from using his b3-bishop to stir up any attack on the kingside.

21.♖g5

White has tried lots of different squares for his queen but none of them have put any pressure on Black.

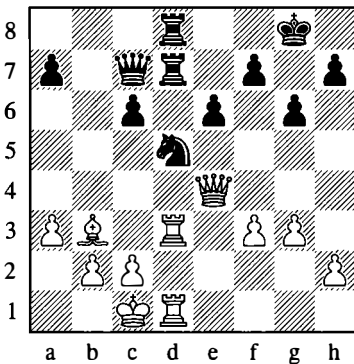
21.♖c5 ♖b6 22.♖xb6 axb6 23.a3 ½–½
Khvorostyanov – Saenko, email 2011.

21.♖h6 e6 22.♞d4 ♖ab8 White's position looks aggressive but Black can defend by moving either the pawn or the knight to f6.

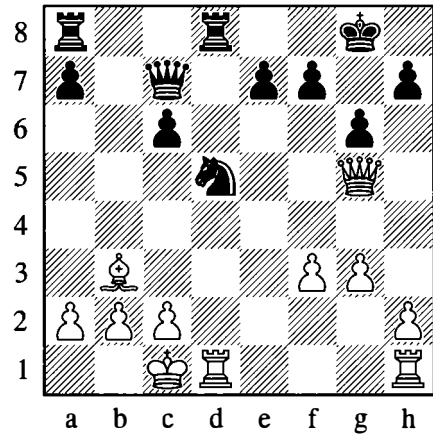


23.c3 ♖b7 24.♞hd1 c5 25.♞c4 ♞d7 26.♞e1 ♞d6 27.♞h4 ♟f6 28.♗f4 ♞e7 29.♗g5 ♞d3 30.♞f1 ♟g7= C. Smith – Hryniw, corr. 2014.

21.♗e4 e6 22.a3 (22.f4 ♟f6 23.♗f3 c5 24.♟c4 ♖ab8 25.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 26.♞d1 ♞xd1+ 27.♗xd1 ♞c6= Rublevsky – Cmilyte, Aix-les-Bains 2011) 22...♞d7 23.♞d3 ♞ad8 24.♞hd1



24...♟b6 25.♞xd7 ♞xd7 26.♞xd7 In this position from Hou Yifan – Cmilyte, Beijing 2013, I would prefer 26...♟xd7N to keep an eye on the dark squares. Black need not fear 27.♟a4 as 27...♗b6 gives her sufficient play, while 27...c5 is also fine.



21...e6 22.♞hd1

22.♞d4 ♞d7 23.♞hd1 was played by England's top GM, but he evidently saw no advantage for White as a draw was agreed here in Adams – P.H. Nielsen, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

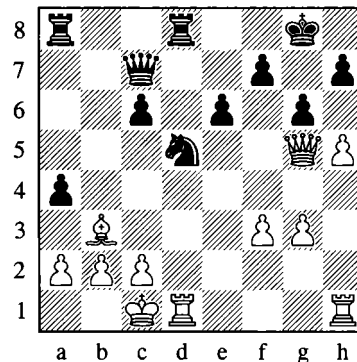
22.h4 a5N

Ward's suggestion.

22...h6!? 23.♗xh6 ♞xg3 24.h5 ♗f4+ 25.♗xf4 ♟xf4 26.hxg6 ♟xg6 worked out okay in Hagen – Pavlidis, Plovdiv 2012.

22...♟g7!?N with the idea 23.h5 h6 24.♗h4 g5 also looks fine.

23.h5 a4



24.hxg6 fxg6 25.♟xd5

25.♟c4 can be met by 25...a3.

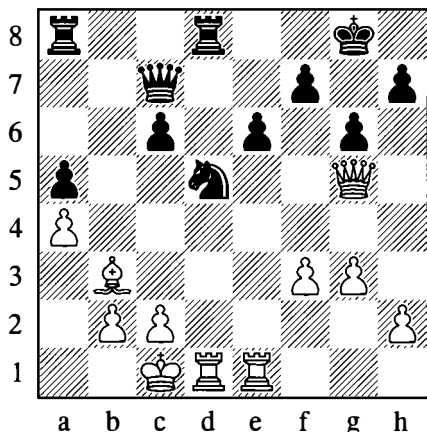
25...cxd5=

Ward's line ends here. Black has more pawn

islands but his queenside counterplay is strong, and he has nothing to fear in the endgame.

22...a5 23.a4

This position was reached in Leko – Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2013, another high-rated battle between two renowned theoreticians.



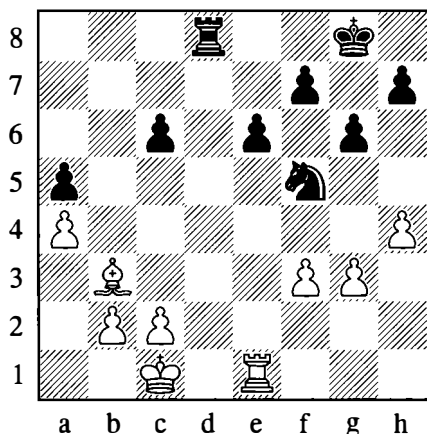
23...♞b6N

Nielsen’s recommendation looks sensible to me. The point is to deal with White’s attack in the following way:

24.h4 ♞f2! 25.♞f1

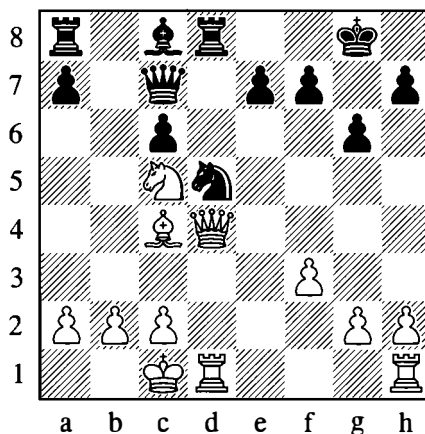
This is the only way to defend the f3-pawn but the ensuing endgame favours Black.

25...♞e3† 26.♞xe3 ♖xe3 27.♞xd8† ♞xd8 28.♞e1 ♖f5



The knight is so much more useful than White’s bishop, while White’s kingside pawns are weak.

C2) 16.♖c5



This is currently regarded as the critical line.

16...♗f5 17.♗b3

17.g4? ♗xc2! 18.♖xc2 ♖b4† is the tactical point behind Black’s last couple of moves.

17...♖f4

17...♖b6 is the other main option but I prefer the text move.

Please note, however, that 17...h5? 18.g4! was disastrous for Black in Karjakin – Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2013.

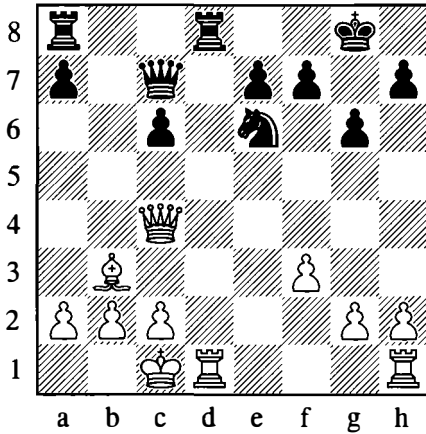
White may proceed with **C21) 18.♞c4** or **C22) 18.♞f2**.

C21) 18.♞c4

White targets the f7-pawn but allows us to get a typical position with knight versus bishop.

18...♗e6 19.♖xe6 ♖xe6

This position has been tested in quite a lot of engine and correspondence games, and Black has no issues.

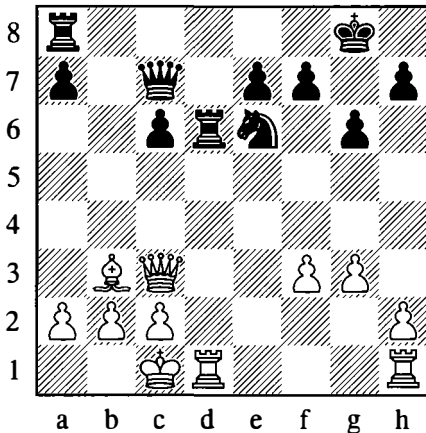


20.g3

20.c3 ♖d6 21.h4 ♖ad8 22.h5 ♖xd1+ 23.♙xd1 ♔g7 24.hxg6 hxg6 25.♗h4 ♗f4+ 26.♗xf4 ♘xf4= nzxt – jansts, engine game 2014.

20.h4 ♗f4+ 21.♗xf4 ♘xf4 22.♞de1 e6 23.g3 ♘d5= neapus – aghi, engine game 2013. Black's dark squares look weak but White has no pieces left with which to exploit them.

20...♞d6 21.♗c3

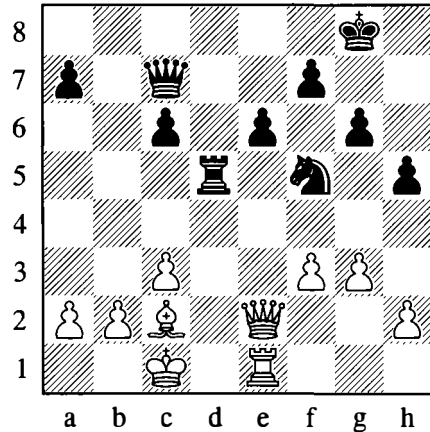


21...♘g7!?

Keeping the knight on the board is the ambitious choice.

21...♞ad8 22.♙xe6 ♞xe6 23.b3 ♞ed6 24.♞xd6 ♞xd6 25.♞e1 ♞d5 saw Black successfully hold the draw in Granski – Lecroq, corr. 2012. However, such positions contain an element of danger, as a queen exchange might result in a bad rook endgame where White can exploit the weakness of our queenside pawns.

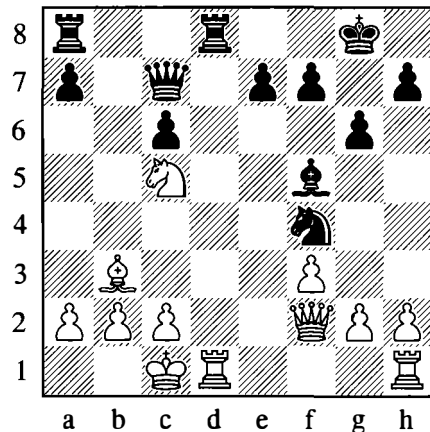
22.♞he1 ♞ad8 23.♗c5 ♘f5 24.c3 h5 25.♙c2 ♞d5 26.♞xd5 ♞xd5 27.♗f2 e6 28.♗e2



28...h4!? 29.♙b3 ♞d8 30.g4 ♗f4+ 31.♔c2 ♘d6 32.♞d1 c5 33.h3 ♗g3

Black had conjured up some counterplay and went on to win in bjchess – cordo, Internet 2014.

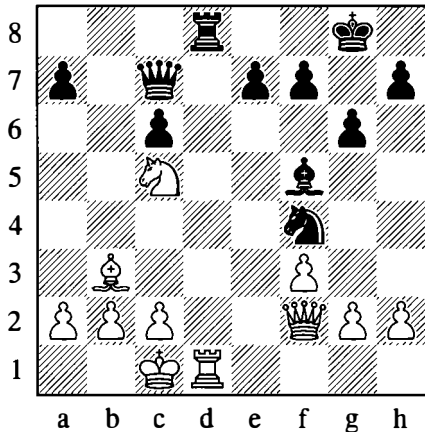
C22) 18.♗f2



18...♞xd1† 19.♞xd1 ♞d8

This is the most consistent follow-up.

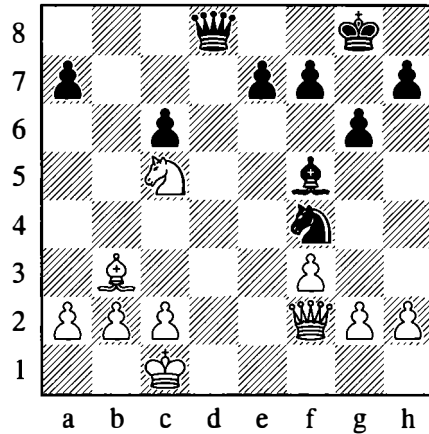
19...h5!? is a useful waiting move, effectively asking White how he intends to improve his position. 20.g3 ♘d5 21.c4 (21.♙xd5 cxd5 22.♞xd5 sees White pick up a pawn but 21...♞c8 gives Black plenty of activity, poisoned_pawn – jamwan, engine game 2012.) 21...♘f6 22.♗d4 ♞e8 23.a3± Black's position is passive but several engine games have all ended in draws, with White being unable to find a way through.



When I had this position my opponent opted for **C221) 20.♞xd8†**. The alternative is **C222) 20.♞e1!?**, avoiding further simplification for the time being.

The odd-looking 20.♞f1!? has been tested in a computer game. I presume White's idea is to meet 20...h5N with 21.g4 but 21...♙c8 seems fine for Black, as the f4-knight is so strong. 22.♗e3 ♘d5=

In the game Black played 20...g5!?, which also worked out reasonably well: 21.g3 ♘d5 22.a3 e6 23.♞d1 ♘b6 24.♞xd8† ♗xd8= nzxt – frauholle, engine game 2014.

C221) 20.♞xd8† ♗xd8

Let me offer a word of warning: this variation will be analysed more deeply than any other in the entire repertoire. The opening leads straight to an ending and, with further exchanges possible, some lines can be analysed all the way to a final result. The present position has been tested a few times in correspondence and engine games and it seems to be drawn.

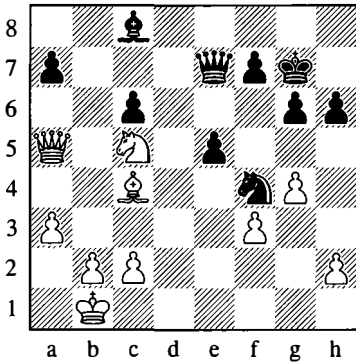
21.g3

21.g4 ♙c8 reaches an odd type of equilibrium: White's knight dominates the c8-bishop but Black's knight has a superb outpost on f4. The b3-bishop isn't doing much and Black aims to generate counterplay on the kingside. The following four lines show how the position might play out:

a) 22.h4 ♖g7 23.♙c4 ♗d6 24.♘b3 ♙e6 25.♙xe6 ♗xe6= With the bishops exchanged, Black has no problems.

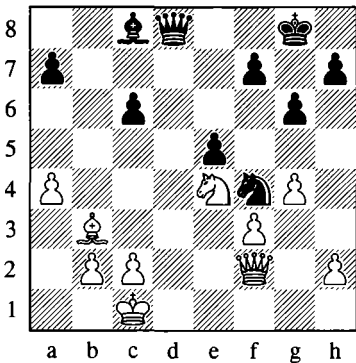
b) 22.♗d2 ♗d6! The most direct. 23.♗xd6 (23.♘e4N ♗e5! is the important idea: 24.♗d8† ♖g7 25.♗xc8 ♗d4= White cannot prevent perpetual check.) 23...exd6 24.♘d3 ♘xd3† 25.cxd3 g5 The endgame was equal in question mark – aghi, engine game 2013.

c) 22.a3 ♖g7 23.♙c4 ♚c7 24.♗d4† e5
 25.♗e3 ♖g2 26.♗g5 h6 27.♗d2 ♖f4 28.♖b1
 ♗e7 29.♗a5

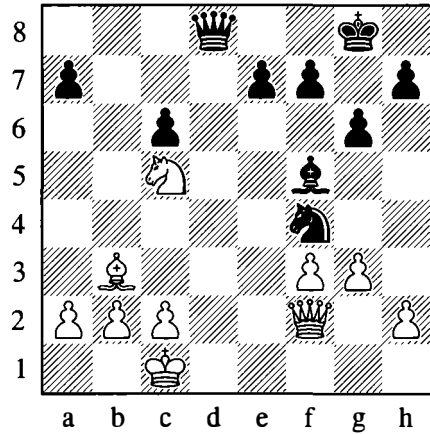


29...g5!? 30.♖e4 f5! 31.gxf5 ♙xf5 Black was starting to generate counterplay, and after 32.♗e1 h5 33.♙b3 ♖h6 34.♖a2 ♙g6 35.♗c3 ♙xe4! 36.fx4 ♗f6 he had a pleasant advantage. The f4-knight is by far the superior piece and Black has an easy plan of creating a passed pawn, intagrاند – katzenmaier, engine game 2012.

d) 22.a4 e5 I tend not to like playing this too early but, with the rooks exchanged, control of the d6-square isn't so relevant. 23.♖e4 (23.♗e3 ♗e7 24.♖d3 ♖xd3† 25.♗xd3 c5 26.♙d5 ♖g7 27.♖b1 ♗d6 28.♗b3 f6= Kovac – Miciak, corr. 2013.)



23...♗e7 24.a5 ♖g7 25.♗c5 ♗xc5 26.♖xc5 ♖f6 27.♖e4† ♖e7 28.♙xf7! ♖e2† 29.♖d1 ♖d4 30.♙c4 ♖xf3 31.h3 h5= Knallo – W32BlasteR, Internet 2014.



21...♗d4!?

A neat trick to exchange queens. Black even wins a pawn temporarily, but it should just be a draw.

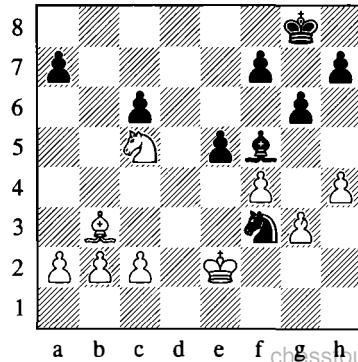
21...♖d5 also looks respectable: 22.g4 ♙c8 23.♖d3 ♙a6 ½-½ Kukk – Voll, email 2012.

22.♗xd4 ♖e2† 23.♖d2

23.♖d1 ♖xd4 24.f4 ♖f3 25.h4 25.♙a4N also needs checking but Black is in time. 25...♖xh2 (25...♙g4!?) 26.♙xc6 (26.♖e2 ♙g4† 27.♖f2 ♙d1!)= 26...♖f8 27.b4 e5 28.a4 ♖e7 29.fx4 ♖g4 30.a5 ♖xe5 31.♙d5 ♖d6 32.c4 ♙e6 The endgame is balanced.

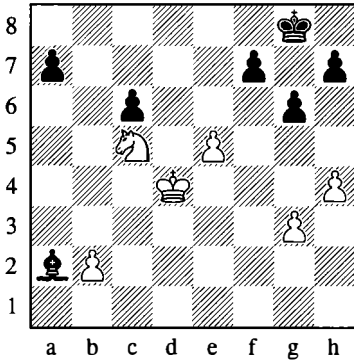
25...e5 26.♖e2N

I checked this to see if White could improve over 26.fx4 ♖xe5 27.♖d2 ♖f8 28.♖c3 ♖e7 29.♖d4 ♖f3† 30.♖e3 ♖e5= as in amonfriz – jamwan, engine game 2013.



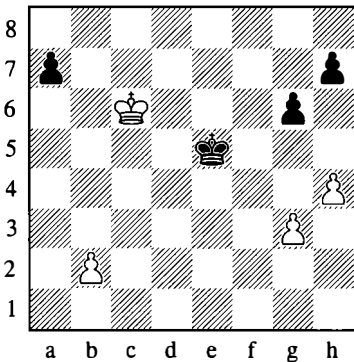
26...♖d4† 27.♗e3 ♗xc2 28.fxe5 ♗xb3 29.♗xd4!
 29...axb3 ♖f5+=
 29...♗xa2

Sacrificing a pawn to activate the king was White's only real try, but he does not have many winning chances. A possible finish is:



30.♖d7 ♗g7 31.♖b8 ♗d5 32.♗c5 f6 33.♖xc6 ♗xc6 34.exf6† ♗xf6 35.♗xc6 ♗e5

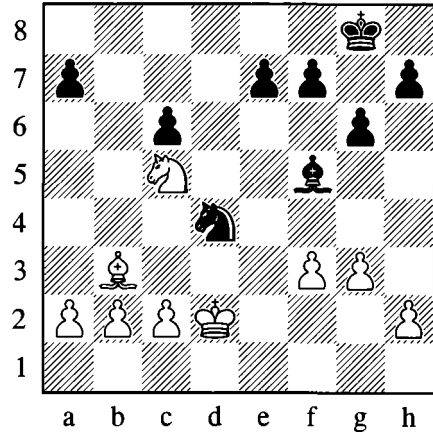
Another drawing line is: 35...g5 36.♗b7 gxh4 37.gxh4 ♗e5 38.♗xa7 ♗d5 39.h5 ♗c4 40.♗b6 ♗b3 41.♗c5 ♗xb2 42.♗d4 h6 43.♗e5 ♗c3 44.♗f6 ♗d4 45.♗g6 ♗e5=



36.♗b7 ♗d5 37.♗xa7 ♗c4 38.♗b6 ♗b3 39.♗c5 ♗xb2 40.♗d4 ♗c2 41.♗e5 ♗d3 42.♗f6 ♗e4 43.♗g7 ♗f3 44.♗xh7 ♗xg3 45.♗xg6 ♗xh4

You can't say this isn't a comprehensive repertoire!

23...♖xd4



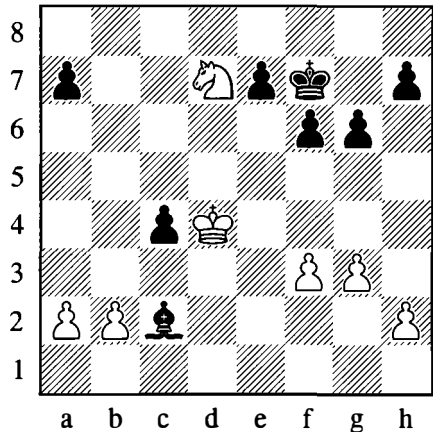
24.♗e3 ♖xc2† 25.♗xc2 ♗xc2 26.♖d7

26.♖a6 f6 27.♖b4 ♗a4 28.b3 c5 29.♖a6 ♗c6 30.f4 ♗f7 31.♖xc5 e5= Dorthan – Lecroq, corr. 2011.

26...f6 27.♖b8 c5 28.♖d7

28.♖c6 ♗f7 29.♖xa7 ♗e6 30.♖b5 ♗d5 31.♖c3† ♗c6 32.g4 g5 33.f4 gxf4† 34.♗xf4 ♗d3= The ending was played for another sixty moves but the result was never in doubt in meister_hanfei – the viper, engine game 2012.

28...c4 29.♗d4 ♗f7



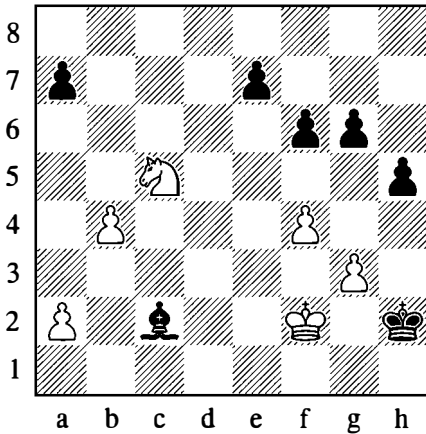
30.f4?

Needing a win in the tournament, my opponent plays too ambitiously.

He should have been happy with 30.♔xc4 e5 31.♖c5 ♗d1 32.f4 exf4 33.gxf4 g5= with a likely draw.

30...♔e6 31.♖c5† ♔f5 32.♔xc4 ♔g4 33.♔d4 ♔h3 34.♔e3 ♔xh2 35.♔f2 h5 36.b4

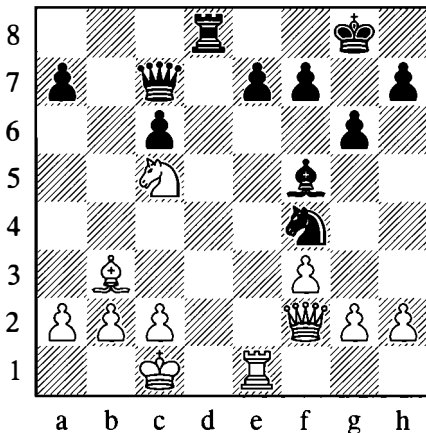
At this point my opponent offered me the draw as that was all I needed to win the tournament, but I managed to calculate to the end.



36...g5 37.fxg5 fxg5 38.♖e6 g4 39.♖f4 h4 40.gxh4 g3† 41.♔e3 e5 42.♖e2 g2 43.♔f2 ♗d1 44.♖g1 e4

0-1 Korneev – Jones, Bunnratty 2014.

C222) 20.♞e1!?



This is the latest word, as played by Efimenko against Van Kampen in 2014. As White hasn't managed to generate any winning chances in the endgame, the decision to keep some pieces on the board is understandable.

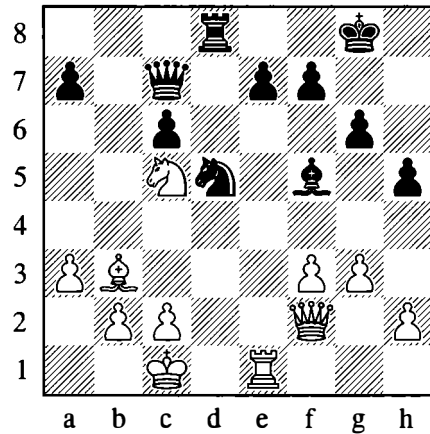
20...h5

Stabilizing the bishop.

20...♖d5 21.g3 h5 was the actual move order of Efimenko – Van Kampen, but it allows White the additional option of 21.g4!N.

21.g3 ♖d5 22.a3

This is mostly a waiting move but it may prove useful for White to have the a2-square to hide his king. Both sides have their pieces on more or less optimal squares.



22...♞b6

Pinning the knight and activating the queen a little makes sense to me.

Most of the engine games have proceeded with:

22...e6

Blocking in the b3-bishop and preventing any g3-g4 tricks.

23.♞d1 ♞e7

Instead after 23...♖b6?! 24.c3 ♞xd1† 25.♗xd1 ♖d7 26.♖xd7 ♞xd7 it may look

as if Black is getting closer to the draw, but 27.♚d2! led to a rather unpleasant ending in Chamaev – Grego, corr. 2013. Perhaps Black can hold somehow but I would steer away from this.

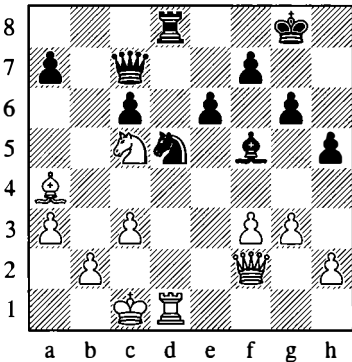
The text move appears slightly passive but it's not clear how White should make progress. Black's eventual idea is to break with ...e5-e4 or encourage White to create some holes on the kingside. White will eventually advance on the queenside but he has to be careful to keep his king secure.

24.♙a4

24.c3 ♖e8 25.♙c2 ♙xc2 26.♗xc2 e5 27.c4 ♘f6 28.♚e3 a5 29.h3 e4 30.f4 ♗g7= White wasn't able to do anything without allowing Black's e-pawn to become dangerous in letchatsspain – katzenmaier, engine game 2013.

24...♚c7 25.c3

25.♙d2 ♖c8 26.c3 ♖e8 27.♙d1 e5 28.c4 ♘f6 29.♙c2 ♚e7!? 30.♙xf5 gxf5 31.♖e2 e4 32.fxe4 ♚e5 33.♗c2 ♖e7 34.♘b3 ♚e6 35.♘d2 fxe4∞ Black's plan has come to fruition here too. This position has actually occurred in two games, both of which ended in draws.

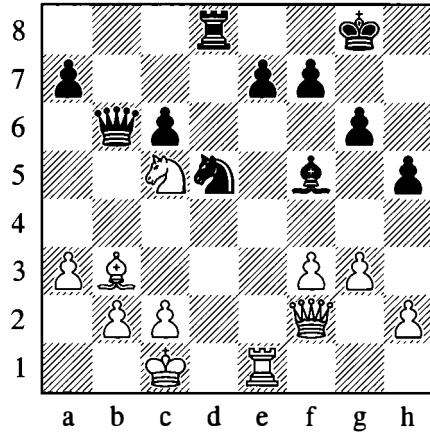


25...♗g7N

25...a5 has been played in all the games so far but I would prefer to leave the pawn on a7. Control of b6 may prove useful and having the pawn on a5 makes it much easier for White to create a passed pawn.

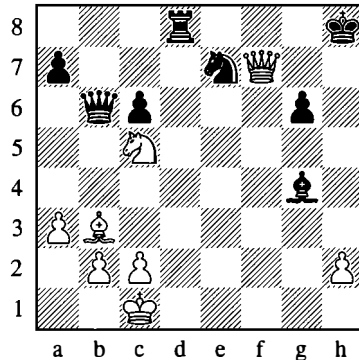
26.♙c2 ♙xc2 27.♗xc2 e5 28.c4 ♘b6 29.♙xd8 ♚xd8 30.♘d3 ♚e7

Black's position remains respectable.



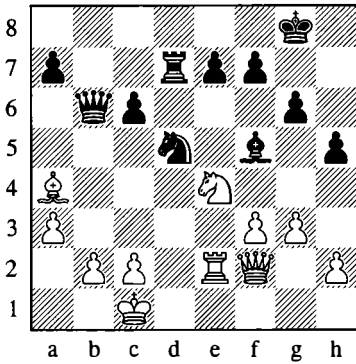
23.♚d4

23.g4!N is obviously critical but Black's position holds up fine: 23...hgx4 24.fxg4 ♙xg4 25.♙xe7 ♘xe7 26.♚xf7+ ♗h8

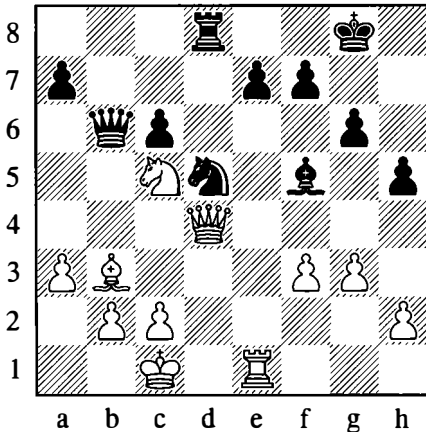


27.♚f6+ ♗h7 28.♚xe7+ (28.♚h4+ ♗g7) 28...♗h6 The engine confirms that White has no more than a perpetual check.

23.♖e2N I also thought I should check what happens if White doesn't rush anything. A possible line is: 23...♙d6 24.♘e4 (24.g4? no longer works as 24...hgx4 25.fxg4 ♙xg4 26.♙xe7 ♖f6-+ covers everything.) 24...♙d7 25.♙a4



25...fxe4 26.fxe4 (26.♖xb6 ♘xb6 27.♞xe4 ♞c7 28.♙b3 e6 29.f4 c5 30.c4=) 26...♞xf2 27.♞xf2 ♘e3 28.♞d2 ♞c7 29.♞e2 ♘c4 30.e5 ♘b6 31.♞e4 ♘f8 32.♙b3 e6 Black is not worse.



23...e6!N

23...♘f6?! was Robin's choice in Efimenko – Van Kampen, Doha 2014, but this allowed White to put his queen on the strong c3-square.

23...♙h3!? was the waiting move adopted in Felix 2 – Pedrodamiano, engine game 2014, where Black went on to hold the draw.

The text move keeps everything secure, leaving Black with a solid position. I will mention a couple of plausible lines.

24.♞d1

An important point is that 24.g4? hxg4 25.fxg4 ♙xg4 doesn't work for White.

24.♖b1N ♘e7 25.♞e5 ♘d5 26.♘e4 ♙xe4 27.fxe4 ♘c7 28.♞f1 ♞d7 is equal.

24...e5! 25.♞f2 ♘f6 26.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 27.♞e3 ♞e7 28.♘d3 e4 29.fxe4 ♘xe4 30.♘f2 ♘f8 31.♘xe4 ♙xe4=

Once again, Black has freed his position and obtained an equal endgame. At the moment this line seems to be White's best chance to put Black under pressure. Black's position is indeed a little passive, but it is also extremely solid. You should be patient and remember that it is also difficult for White to improve his position.

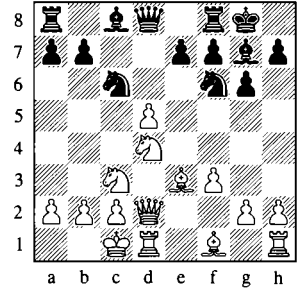
Conclusion

10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♙d4 can arguably be considered the main line of the entire Dragon. Black generally has to play more slowly than in other Dragon lines, which may explain why White has chosen it so often. However, Black keeps a solid position with sufficient counter-chances.

14...♞c7 is a topical move which continues to hold up well. The main lines with 16.♙b3 appear to have been neutralized effectively, both with 16...♙e6 and 16...♙f5, so I suspect 16.♘c5 will become increasingly popular. Black has to be patient here, but White also has to take care to prevent Black from breaking out. Perhaps if White plays perfectly we will have to suffer a little, but I'm confident that Black can hold without too much difficulty.

Chapter 3

9.0-0-0



White takes on d5

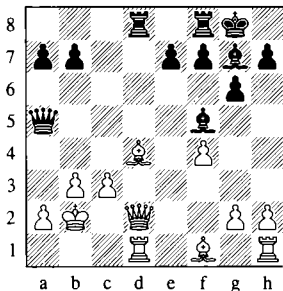
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 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 10.exd5

10...♘xd5

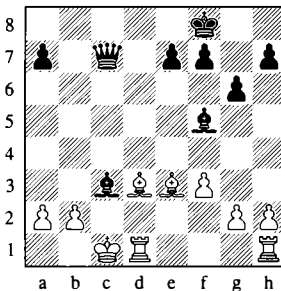
A) 11.♘xd5	48
B) 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♘d5 cxd5 13.♚xd5 ♚c7	49
B1) 14.♚xa8 ♙f5 15.♚xf8† ♖xf8 16.♙d2 h5 17.♙e2	50
B11) 17...♙f6!?	52
B12) 17...♚b8!?	53
B13) 17...♖g8	54
B2) 14.♚c5 ♚b7 15.♙d4 ♙f5!	54
B21) 16.♚a3	55
B22) 16.♚b5?!	56
B23) 16.♙d3	57

A) note to 12.♘xc6



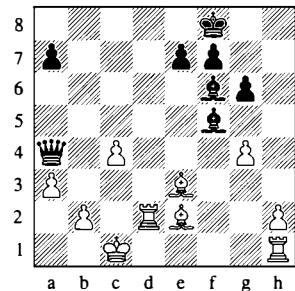
17...♙d4!N

B1) note to 16.♙d2!



17...♙d4!N

B12) after 22.fxg4



22.c1♙e4!N [Nuring.com](http://www.Nuring.com)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 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 10.exd5 ♗xd5

As the title suggests, this chapter will deal with those lines where White swaps knights on d5. We will quickly deal with A) 11.♗xd5 before analysing the main topic of B) 11.♗xc6.

A) 11.♗xd5

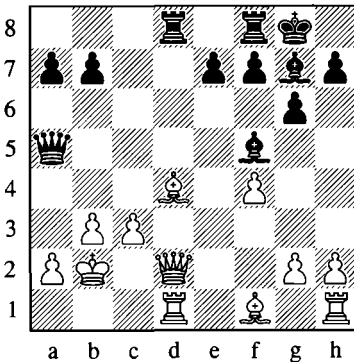
This is seen from time to time, but is probably just White getting his move order wrong.

11...♣xd5 12.♗xc6

12.♗b3?! has often been played but 12...♣e5!♠ is extremely awkward for White.

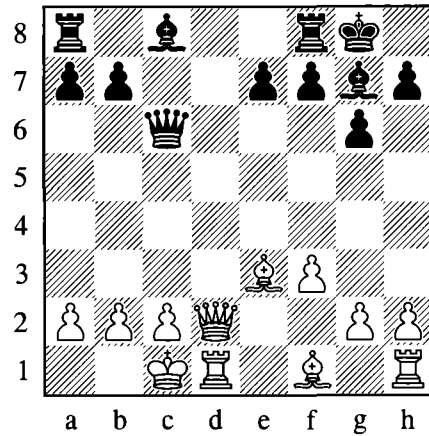
12.c4 ♣d6 13.♗b5 ♣b8♠ is also excellent for Black.

12.♖b1 ♗xd4 13.♗xd4 ♗e6 14.b3 (14.c4 ♗f5+ 15.♖a1 ♣xd4 16.♣xd4 ♗xd4 17.♗xd4 ♗fd8♠ gives Black a great endgame) 14...♗ad8 15.c3 ♗f5+ 16.♖b2 ♣a5 17.f4 In Yuuki – Duchesne, Lucerne (ol) 1982, Black could have won with:



17...♗xd4!N 18.cxd4 ♣b6 Followed by ...♗d8xd4; White is defenceless against the bishop pair.

12...♣xc6



13.♗h6

This bishop exchange is the only logical continuation.

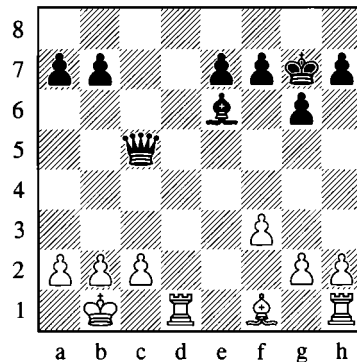
13.♗d4? ♗d8-+

13.♣d5 ♣f6! favours Black.

13.♣b4 was tried against me in a quick game but after 13...♗f5 14.♗d3 ♣e6 15.♗d4 ♗xd3 16.♗xd3 ♣xa2 17.♣a3 ♣xa3 18.bxa3 I was already clearly better in Dolukhanova – Jones, Warsaw (rapid) 2010.

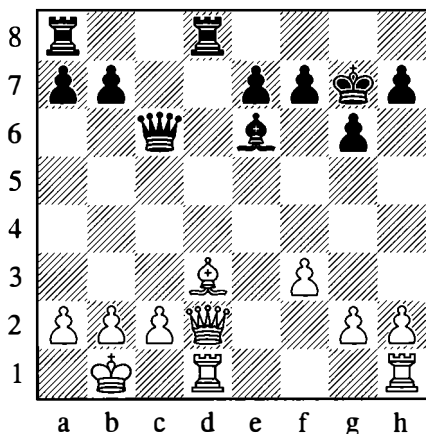
13...♗e6 14.♗xg7 ♖xg7 15.♖b1 ♗fd8 16.♗d3

16.♣xd8? ♗xd8 17.♗xd8 ♣c5 18.♗d1 White has two rooks for the queen but his pieces are then horribly tied up:



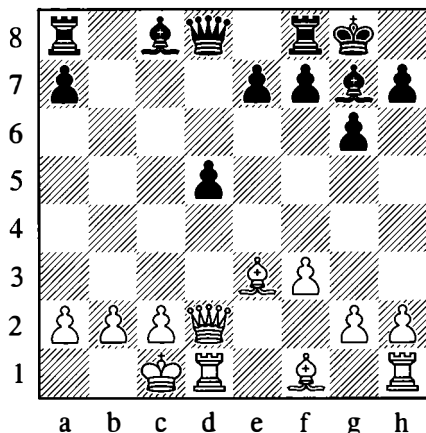
18...♟f2! White can't release his kingside without giving at least one pawn. 19.b3 ♙f5 20.♞c1 h5 21.h3 h4 22.a4 a6 23.a5 ♜d2 24.♔b2 ♞xa5 25.♞d1 ♞e5+ 26.♔b1 ♞g3+ Michalik – Ahn, Germany 1995.

This was played in Duboue – Stephan, Sautron 2009. I would double rooks with:



16...♞d4N 17.♞he1 ♞ad8
Black is comfortably placed.

B) 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♘d5 cxd5



13.♞xd5

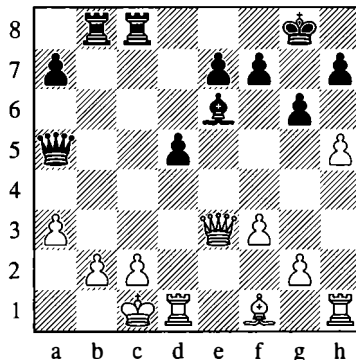
These days this pawn is taken so rarely that it's easy to forget that 9...d5 is actually a pawn sacrifice!

13.♙h6

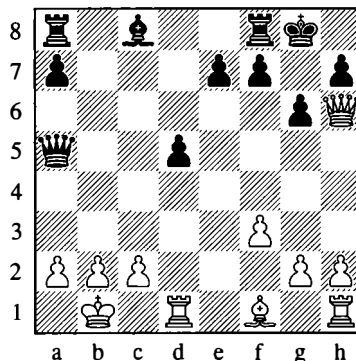
Trading the bishops is White's only logical alternative.

13...♙xh6! 14.♞xh6 ♞a5 15.♔b1

15.a3 ♞b8 16.♞e3 ♙e6 17.h4 ♞fc8 18.h5



In Koehn – Fraser, Stirling 2014, Black traded queens, but 18...♞a4!N would have been excellent for him. The point is that 19.♙d3 d4 20.♞h6 ♙f5! 21.♙xf5 (21.hxg6 ♞xc2! 22.♙xc2 ♞xc2 is mate!) 21...gxh5 22.♞g5+ ♔f8 23.♞xf5 ♞b3! is terrible for White.



15...e5 16.h4

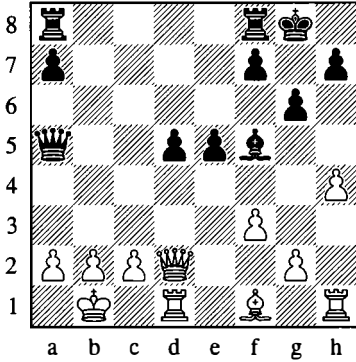
16.♙d3 ♞c7!N prepares to defend along the seventh rank, and after 17.h4 f6 18.h5?! g5 White is in trouble, playing without his queen.

16...♙f5

A good square for the bishop, combining attack and defence.

17.♖d2

17.g4?N is the move White would like to play but Black has a decisive attack: 17...♙xc2+! 18.♗xc2 ♖ab8! 19.h5 ♗xb2+! 20.♗xb2 ♗b8+ 21.♗c2 ♗xa2+ 22.♗c3 ♗b3#

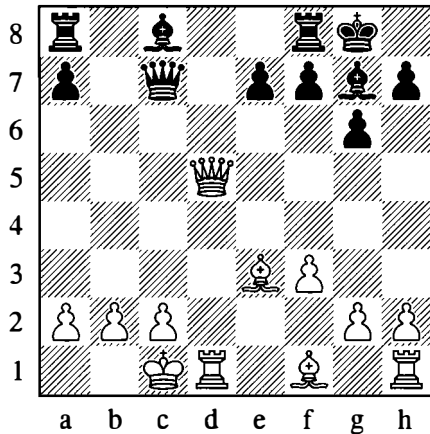


17...♗xd2 18.♗xd2

In Rios Parra – Clavijo, Antioquia 1995, the most logical continuation would have been: 18...♗fd8N

Black is a little better with his central control.

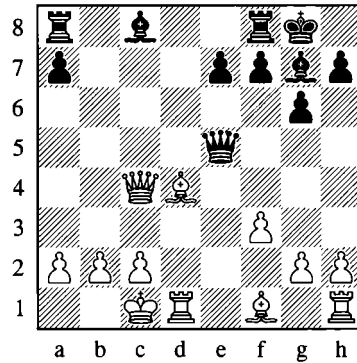
13...♗c7



Leaving the a8-rook hanging is a standard procedure. We will analyse B1) 14.♗xa8 followed by the main line of B2) 14.♗c5.

14.♗c4?! is an unfortunate choice of square for the white queen. 14...♗e5! 15.♙d4?! (15.♗d4?

♗b8!-+ or 15.♗c3 ♗xc3 16.bxc3 ♙e6 17.c4 ♗ab8 ♖ Pasapera – Vera Siguenas, Lima 2012.) Here the strongest continuation is:



15...♗g5+!N 16.♗b1 (16.♗d2 ♙h6 17.♙c3 ♗d8 ♖) 16...♗d8 17.♙e2 ♙e6 18.♗c5 ♗xg2 ♖

B1) 14.♗xa8

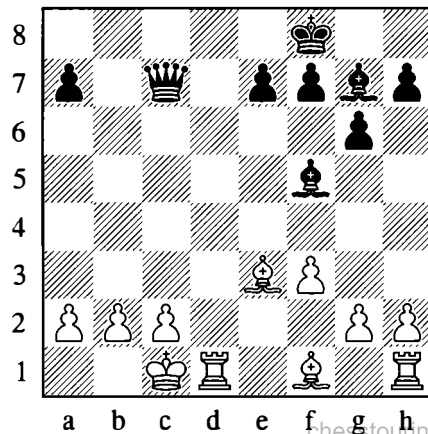
This capture is hardly ever played these days.

14...♙f5

The threat of mate on c2 forces White to give up his queen.

15.♗xf8+ ♗xf8

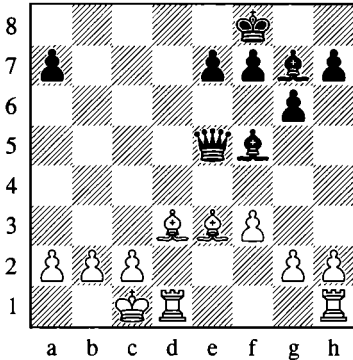
White has a decent material advantage, with two rooks and a pawn for the queen. On the other hand, White is well behind in development and it is not easy to defend against the threats to his king.



16.♞d2!

This is White's only decent move. Black has lots of interesting continuations, all of which seem fine for him. Most of them involve giving the king some room so that we no longer have to worry about the back rank and can start attacking with the queen.

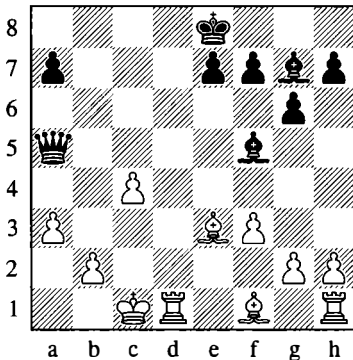
16.♞d3?! ♜e5



17.♞d2 (17.♞xf5? ♜xc3† 18.♞b1 ♜b6! 19.b3 gxf5–) 17...♞xd3 18.♞xd3 ♜xb2‡

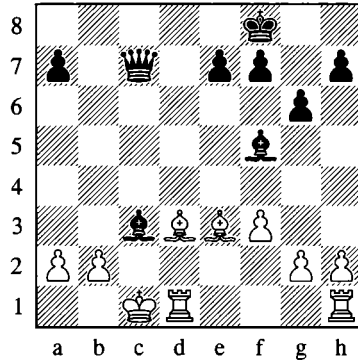
16.♞c4?! ♞xb2†! Creating luft for the king. 17.♞xb2 ♜xc4‡

16.c4? is far too loosening. 16...♜a5!N 17.a3 ♞e8! This looks odd but now the queen is free to roam without worrying about back-rank mates.



18.♞e2 (18.c5 ♜a4 19.♞d2 ♜b3–) 18...♞xb2†! 19.♞xb2 ♜e5† Black is winning.

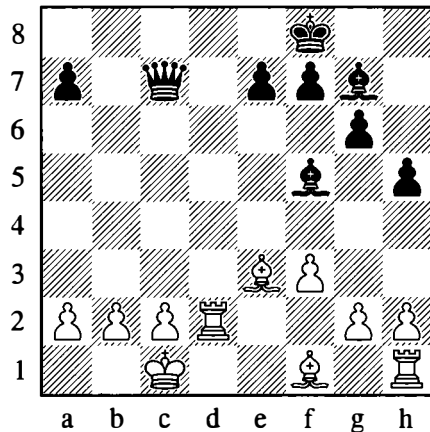
Finally, 16.c3? ♞xc3 17.♞d3 was seen in Nguyen Thuy Bao – Le Duc Mai, Ho Chi Minh City 2001, and here Black could have obtained a winning position with:



17...♞d4†!N 18.♞d2 ♜a5† 19.♞e2 ♜e5 20.♞e4 ♜b5† 21.♞d3 ♜xb2† 22.♞d2 ♜b5† 23.♞f2 ♞xe3† 24.♞xe3 ♞e6–+

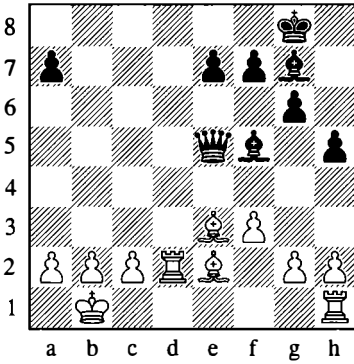
16...h5

The most popular. Black prevents g2-g4 and prepares to run the king to safety on h7.



17.♞e2

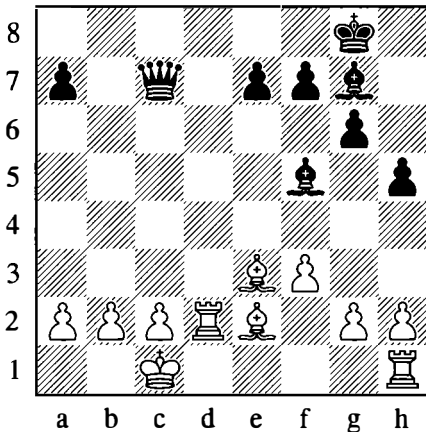
17.♞c4?! again fails to 17...♞xb2† 18.♞xb2 ♜xc4‡; 17.♞b1 is not so bad but after 17...♞g8 the two king moves have favoured Black, whose queen is now free to move. 18.♞e2 (18.♞d3? loses, as usual, to 18...♜e5 Deschamps – Liard, Nantes 2012) 18...♜e5



19.♙d4 ♜f4 20.♞hd1 ♙xd4 21.♞xd4 ♜xh2
 22.♙f1 h4 Bernal Varela – Daurelle, email
 2010. White has managed to develop his rooks
 but had to give one pawn back. Black has a
 pleasant advantage as White is tied to the
 defence of the g2-pawn. Black can easily
 advance his pawn majority but White will
 struggle to utilize his queenside pawns and
 keep his king safe.

After the text move Black has more than one
 satisfactory option but it is hard to choose a
 clear favourite. I have therefore decided to
 cover **B11)** 17...♙g8, **B12)** 17...♙f6! and
B12) 17...♜b8! so you can choose the one
 you like the most.

B11) 17...♙g8



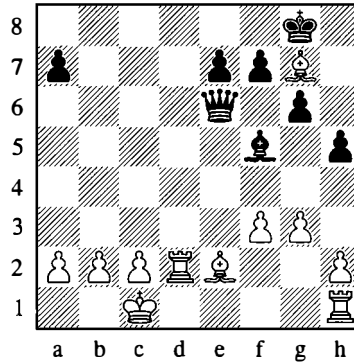
This natural move has been the most
 common choice. Now we can activate the

queen without having to worry about the back
 rank.

18.♞hd1!

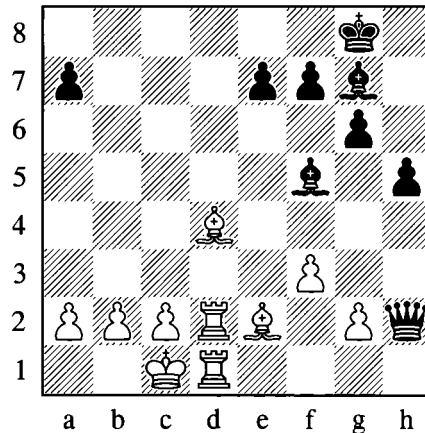
White should connect his rooks as quickly
 as possible, even if it means jettisoning the h2-
 pawn.

18.g3? defends the pawn but now Black can
 show another sneaky point behind the king
 sidestep. 18...♜e5! 19.♙d4 ♜e6 20.♙xg7



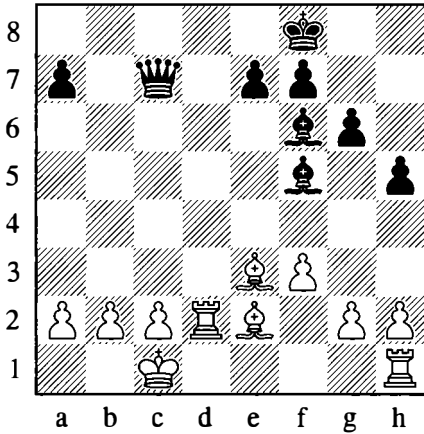
20...♜xa2! Since the last move did not come
 with check, Black can play this intermezzo.
 21.♞d8+ ♙xg7 22.♞dd1 ♜a1+ 23.♙d2 ♜xb2-
 + Grigore – Sebe Vodislav, Bucharest 2003.

18...♜e5 19.♙d4 ♜xh2



20.♙xg7 ♙xg7 21.♙c4 ♜f4 22.b3 h4=
 Nosek – Kuchta, email 2002.

B12) 17...♔f6!?



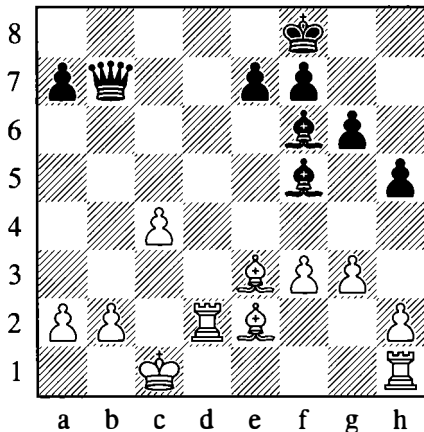
This is a different way to give the king an escape square.

18.g3?!

18.♞hd1N is necessary, just as in the previous line. On ChessPublishing I gave 18...♞xh2 19.g4 hxg4 20.fxg4 ♞h3!?. (20...♔e6 is also possible) 21.♔xa7 ♔xg4∞ with an extremely unclear position. Both sides have three connected passed pawns!

18...♞b7! 19.c4?!

19.♔d4 would give Black a choice between 19...♔g5 winning the exchange, or 19...e5 continuing to attack, when 20.♔c3 ♔g5 is now even stronger.

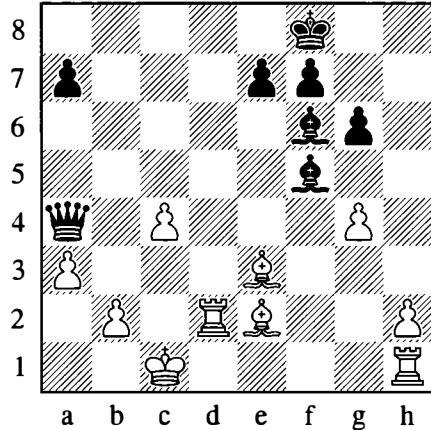


19...♞a6 20.a3 ♞a4!

This is a useful idea to remember. White has severe problems defending against the queen infiltrating via b3 and a2.

21.g4 hxg4 22.fxg4

On ChessPublishing I recommended to keep attacking with:



22...♔e4!N

22...♔xg4 was played in Kislik – Husari, Budapest 2010, picking up a couple of pawns but allowing White’s king to escape.

23.♞f1 ♔c3! 24.♞d8† ♔g7 25.♔d3

When I revisited this position with a stronger engine, I found a new idea.

25...♔a5!

Improving over my ChessPublishing analysis.

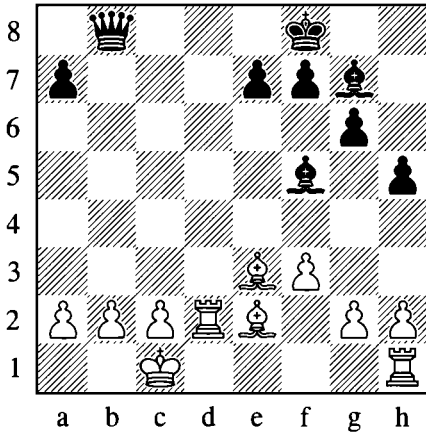
26.♞f4!

This is White’s best try but it is not enough to save him.

26...♔xd3 27.♞xd3 e5 28.♞e4 f5 29.gxf5 gxf5 30.♞h4 ♔e1!–+

The rook is forced off the fourth rank and so White starts to drop material.

B13) 17...♖b8!?



This is another interesting option.

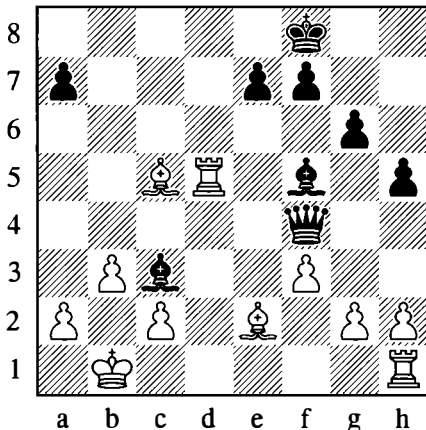
18.b3

18.c4? has been played, but fails to 18...♙c3! when the following game finished abruptly: 19.♗hd1 ♖e5! 20.♙g1 ♙xb2! 21.♗xb2 ♖c3† 22.♗c2 ♖xc2# Vojdanisaghir – Dastan, Kayseri 2010.

18...♙c3

18...♗g8!? is also playable but it seems logical to gain a tempo while giving the king an escape square.

19.♗d5 ♖b4 20.♙c5 ♖f4† 21.♗b1



21...♖g5!?

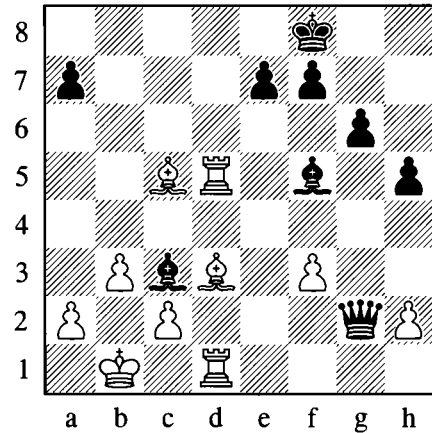
21...♙f6N also looks promising. White will have to be careful with such an open king.

22.♙d3

22.g3? ♙xc2† is of course the idea.

22...♖xg2 23.♗d1!?

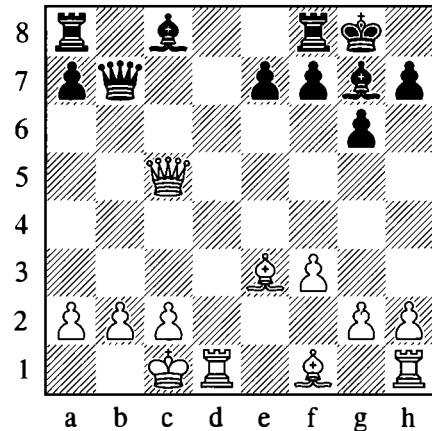
23.♗g1N had to be tried. On ChessPublishing I gave the continuation 23...♖xf3 24.♗d8† ♗g7 25.♙xf5 ♖xf5 26.♙xe7 ♖h3 when I prefer Black, but it's still a fight.



23...♙e6 24.♗d8† ♗g7 25.♙e4 ♖xh2 26.♙xe7 h4†

Savchur – Cruzado Duenas, corr. 2000.

B2) 14.♖c5 ♖b7



Black has been torn between putting the queen here and on b8. On the one hand, from b8 the queen sometimes threatens to come to the powerful e5-square. However, it deprives either rook of the b8-square, and White can sometimes play the annoying ♖a6, trapping in the rook on a8.

White has tried various ways of dealing with the threat to the b2-pawn. 15.b3, 15.c3 and 15.♖a3 are all important options which will be discussed in the next chapter. In the rest of this chapter we will see what happens when White tries to use his bishop to neutralize the pressure on the long diagonal.

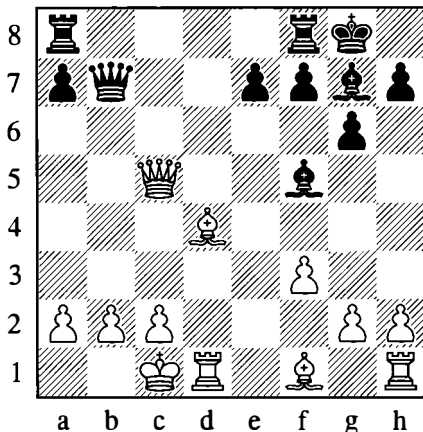
15.♕d4

This is White's most natural way of defending the b2-pawn, but now he runs into trouble on the c-file.

15.♕e2?! makes little sense, though it transposes to an obscure variation covered later on page 192.

15.♖b5?! is unnecessarily passive. 15...♗xb5 (15...♗c7 leaves White with nothing better than returning to c5, but Black has no reason to repeat.) 16.♕xb5 ♖b8 17.♕c4 ♕xb2† 18.♔d2 a5⚡ Black has the better endgame as his pieces are more active, while the c-pawn is more of a weakness than a strength.

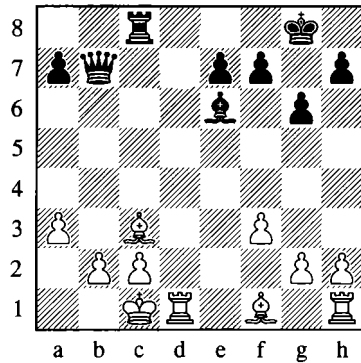
15...♕f5!



Threatening a nasty skewer along the c-file. White's main options are **B21) 16.♗a3, B22) 16.♗b5?!** and **B23) 16.♕d3.**

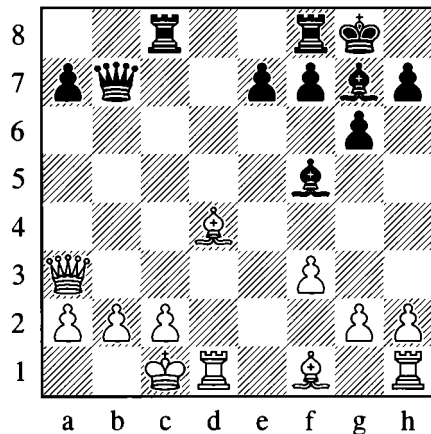
16.c4? is, as usual, too weakening: 16...♖f8 17.♗a3 e5 18.♕e3 ♖ab8 Black's attack is too strong.

16.♕xg7 ♖fc8! 17.♗xc8† (17.♗c3 is White's best but after 17...♖xc3 18.♕xc3 ♕e6N Black's queen trumps White's pieces) 17...♖xc8 18.♕c3 ♕e6 19.a3



19...♖xc3! Not forced, but definitely attractive. 20.bxc3 ♗c7 21.c4 This was Saranga – Rathnasekara, Ambalangoda 2012, and here 21...♗e5!N 22.♔b1 ♗c3⚡ would have been strong.

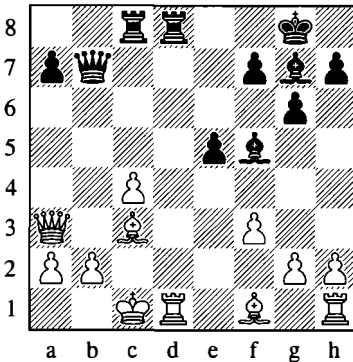
B21) 16.♗a3 ♖ac8!



17. ♖d3

17.c3? runs into 17... ♗h6†.

17.c4 e5 18. ♖c3 (18. ♖e3 e4 19.f4 Cid – Guimaraes, Belo Horizonte 1997, 19... ♗g4N 20. ♗d2 ♗fd8†) We have been following Barburzynska – Dzionk, Leba 2008. Here on ChessPublishing I commented that 18... ♗fd8!N was simply winning.



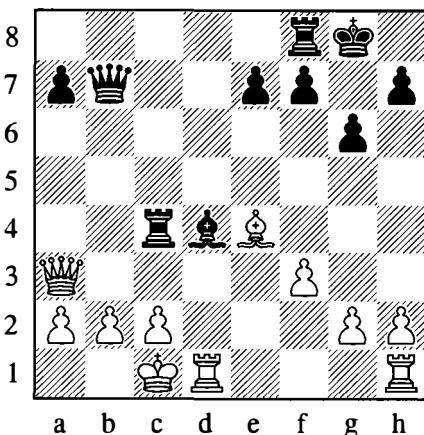
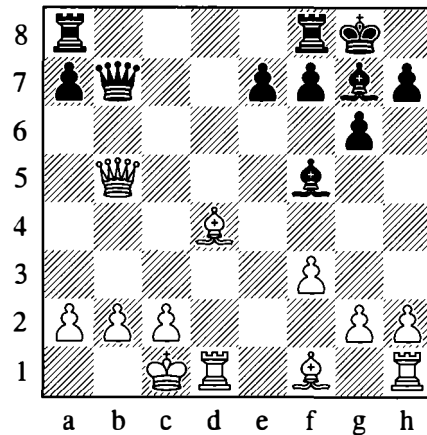
White has no way to deal with the chronic weaknesses on the c1-h6 diagonal, for instance: 19. ♖a5 (19. ♖d2 e4-+; 19. ♖e2 ♖b6! -+) 19... ♗h6† 20. ♖d2 ♗xd2 21. ♗xd2 e4-+

17... ♗xd4 18. ♗xf5 ♗c4

18... ♗c3!? is interesting but such measures are not necessary here.

19. ♗e4

In Bonacic – Doberitz, Osnabrueck 2012, Black could have put his opponent under serious pressure with:

**19... ♖c7!N 20.b3 ♗b8†****B22) 16. ♖b5?!**

This is White's most common attempt but it leads him into serious trouble.

16... ♖c7! 17. ♖c5

White has to admit his mistake on the previous move.

17. ♖c4? loses quickly to 17... ♖f4† 18. ♖b1 ♗fc8.

17. ♖b3? ♗fd8N 18. ♖e3 (18. ♖xg7 ♖f4†-+) 18... ♗db8! also wins for Black.

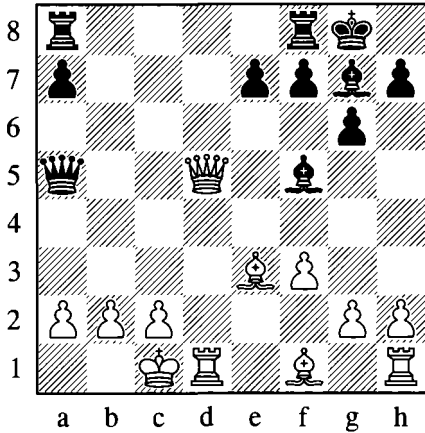
17. ♖e2?! is not much better; the queen looks so ugly here it's not surprising that Black can break through: 17... ♗h6† 18. ♖b1 ♗fc8 19. ♖c3 ♖g7!-+

17... ♖f4† 18. ♖e3 ♖a4 19. ♖c4 ♖a5

The queens have danced around but it's clear that Black's pieces are far better coordinated than their counterparts.

20. ♖d5

20. ♖d2 ♖b6 21. ♖b3 ♗fc8 22.c3 ♖a5 23.c4 ♖a6 24. ♖e3 ♗ab8 was another rout in Tokabayev – Barkov, Chelyabinsk 2010.



20...Qac8!

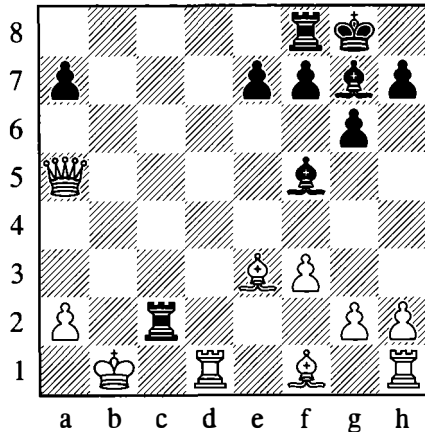
The queen no longer needs to move.

21. ♖xa5 ♜xc2† 22. ♜b1 ♜xb2† 23. ♜c1

23. ♜a1 ♜b1# A. Martin – D. Fernandez, Las Vegas 1996.

23...♜c2† 24. ♜b1

In Lodi – Percze, Hungary 2011, the fastest route to mate would have been:

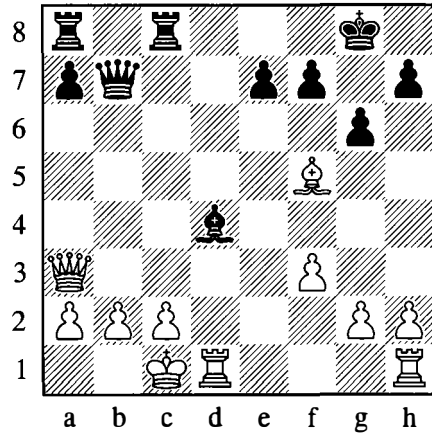


24...♜c2† 25. ♜d3 ♜b8†

As pointed out by Chris Ward.

B23) 16. ♜d3 ♜fc8 17. ♖a3 ♜xd4 18. ♜xf5

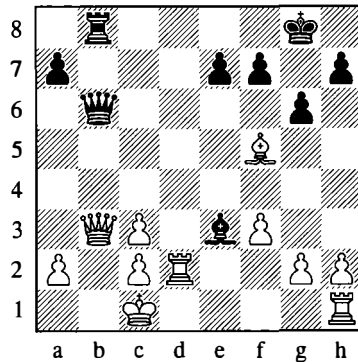
This runs into a powerful tactical motif.



18...♜c3! 19. ♜e4

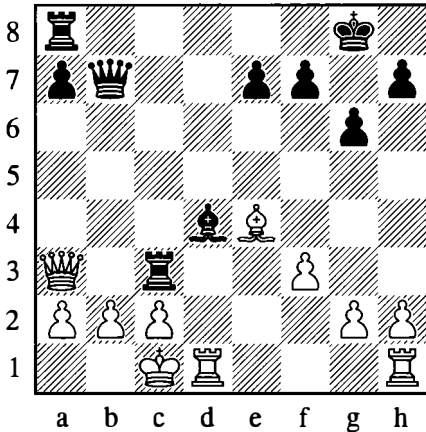
19. bxc3 ♜e3† 20. ♜d2 ♜b8 is also tough for White:

a) 21. ♖b3? ♖c7 22. ♖a3 ♖b6 23. ♖b3



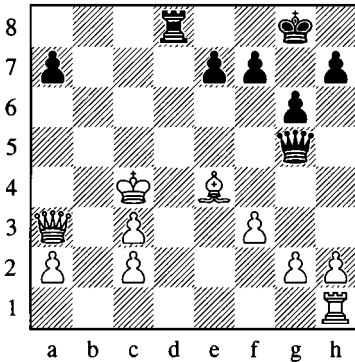
23...♖d6! Another queen tango with Black coming out on top. 24. ♜hd1 ♜xb3 25. cxb3 gxf5+ Anilkumar – Buttell, England 2012.

b) 21. ♜d1N had to be tried. After 21...♜xd2 (21...gxf5!?) 22. ♜xd2 ♖d5† White has to give the bishop as 23. ♜d3? ♖g5† wins the h1-rook, as pointed out by Ward.



19...♖b5 20.b3

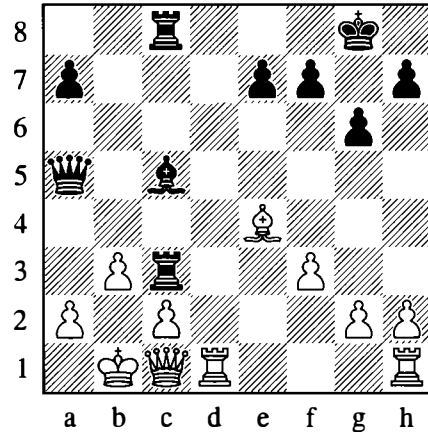
Taking the rook is worse now than on the previous move: 20.bxc3?N ♙e3† 21.♗d2 ♗b8 22.♙d1 ♙xd2 23.♙xd2 ♖g5† 24.♙d3 ♗d8† 25.♙c4



25...♗xg2! White is losing further material. 26.♗b1 (26.♗xe7 ♗c8† or 26.♗e1 ♗d2!) 26...♗e2† 27.♙c5 ♗c8† 28.♙d4 ♗c4† 29.♙e5 ♗xh2† 30.♙d5 ♗c7--+

20...♙c5 21.♗b2 ♗c8 22.♙b1 ♗a5 23.♗c1

In Grochowski – Nowakowski, email 2011, the strongest continuation would have been:



23...♙e3N 24.♗b2 e6†

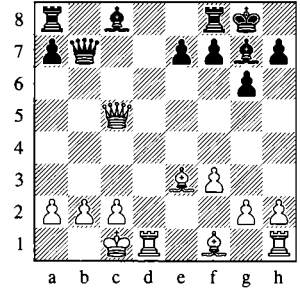
Black completely dominates the position.

Conclusion

White rarely takes the proffered pawn these days. In return for the slight material deficit Black has a long-term initiative and a lot of pressure against the b2- and c2-pawns. Taking the two rooks for the queen is risky for White, who must play with great care just to keep equality – one slip is all it takes for Black's attack to crash through. Just remember to create some space for the black king. Even when White declines the rooks and limits himself to an extra pawn, he has no theoretical advantage and his position is difficult to handle over the board.

Chapter 4

9.0-0-0



15.b3, 15.c3 and 15.♙a3

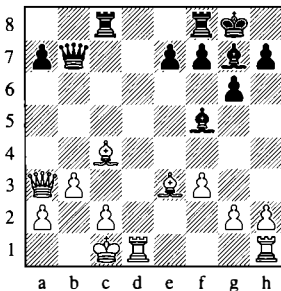
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 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 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♘xd5 cxd5
 13.♚xd5 ♚c7 14.♚c5

14...♚b7

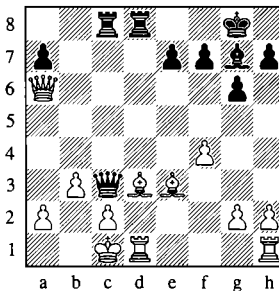
A) 15.b3 ♙f5	60
A1) 16.♚b5	60
A2) 16.♙d3	61
B) 15.c3 ♙f5	64
B1) 16.♙d3?!	65
B2) 16.♚b5	66
B3) 16.♚a3 ♜ab8 17.♙a6 ♚c6 18.♙d3 ♚d5!	67
B31) 19.♙xf5?!	68
B32) 19.♙c2	69
C) 15.♚a3 ♙f5 16.♙d3 ♜ab8 17.b3 ♚c6! 18.♙xf5 ♚c3!	70
C1) 19.♙d3?	73
C2) 19.♚c5!	74

A) note to move 16



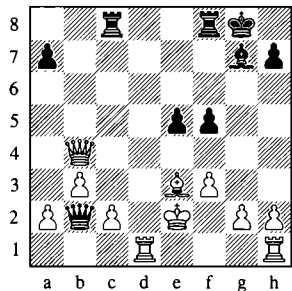
17...♜c6!N

C1) note to 20.♜hf1



21...♚b2+N

C2) note to 21.♘e2

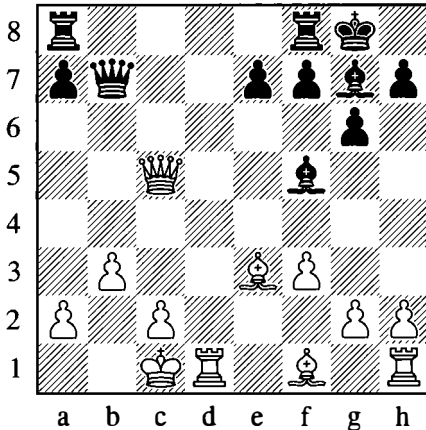


25.n.f4!N

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 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 10.exd5 ♞xd5 11.♞xc6 bxc6
12.♞xd5 cxd5 13.♞xd5 ♞c7 14.♞c5 ♞b7

In this chapter we will deal with White's three main defensive tries of A) 15.b3, B) 15.c3 and C) 15.♞a3.

A) 15.b3 ♙f5



It's important to remember to move the a8-rook to c8 in this line. This avoids a potential skewer along the h1-a8 diagonal and prevents a rook from landing on d8 with check. White's most important replies are **A1) 16.♞b5** and **A2) 16.♙d3**.

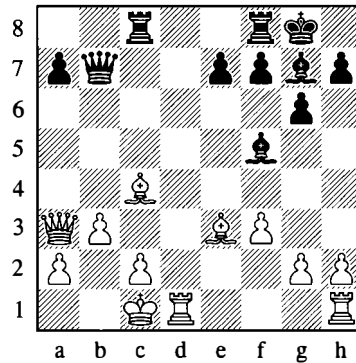
16.♞a5 ♞ac8 17.♙d3 simply transposes to variation A2.

16.♙c4 is well met by 16...♞ac8! and now:

a) 17.♞d5? allows the queen to penetrate: 17...♞b4! 18.♙d4 e6 19.♞d7 In Breneis – Meier, Illmitz 2004, 19...♞xc4!N 20.bxc4 ♙h6† would have led to mate.

b) 17.♞xa7? is far too greedy: 17...♞xc4! 18.bxc4 ♞b2† 19.♞d2 In Soberski – Prosch, Neumuenster 2002, 19...♙xc2N would have been absolutely crushing.

c) 17.♞a3 This is really the only safe square for the white queen, and was played in Tormos – Vidal Gonzalez, Orense 1997.



Here I like 17...♞c6!N. Black defends along the sixth rank and prepares to either double on the c-file or put the other rook on b8, while keeping the possibility of sacrificing on c4.

A1) 16.♞b5 ♞c7

16...♞ac8 is also playable here. However, after 17.♞xb7 ♞xc2† 18.♞b1 Black has no more than a perpetual: 18...♞b2† 19.♞c1 ♞c2† 20.♞b1 ♞d2† 21.♞c1 ♞c2† 22.♞b1 ½-½ Andreoni – Stella, Bratto 2008.

17.♙c4

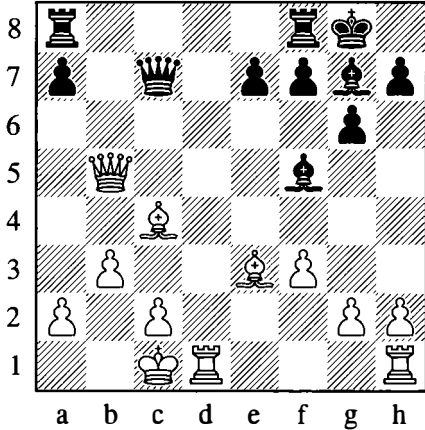
This seems to be White's best, attempting to block up the queenside.

17.♙d3? ♞c3! It's generally terminal for White if he allows the black queen to invade on his weak dark squares. 18.♞c4 ♞b2† 19.♞d2 ♞ac8 0-1 Fuellgrabe – Su.B. Hansen, Berlin 1996.

17.c4? was played in Delorme – Georgescu, Agneaux 2002, and now 17...♞ad8N 18.♙e2 ♞d6! is extremely good for Black. One point is that White cannot play 19.♞xd6 as after 19...♞xd6+ Black's queen once again infiltrates on the dark squares.

17.♖c5 was played in Ruiz – Contreras, Santiago 2002, but after 17...♖xc5N 18.♗xc5 ♜fc8 19.g4 ♝xc5 20.gxf5 ♝xf5 Black has the slightly more comfortable ending.

20.♗d1 ♖a1† 21.♗e2 ♖xh1 22.♗xc8 ♖xg2† 23.♗f2 ♝xc8= With rough equality.



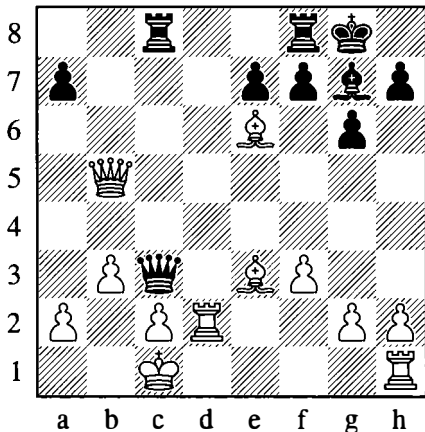
17...♖xc8!N

17...♖fc8 18.♗d5 ♗e6 19.♖c5 ♖d6 20.♗d3 led to an eventual draw in Kowalczyk – Grabowski, email 2011. As mentioned earlier, I generally prefer to move the queen’s rook to c8 in this variation.

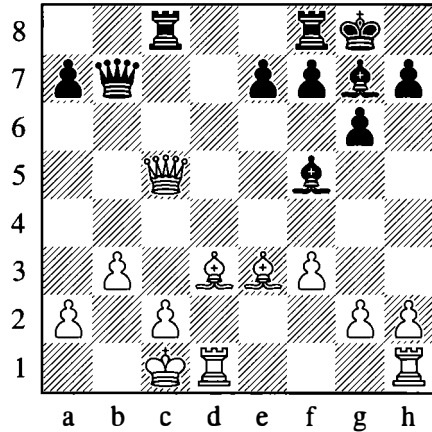
18.♗d2

With the ‘correct’ rook on c8, 18.♗d5 ♗e6 19.♖c5 ♖d6 20.♗d3? now runs into 20...♗h6!, as White cannot take on c8 with check.

18...♗e6! 19.♗xc6 ♖c3



A2) 16.♗d3 ♖ac8!



Remember it’s this rook! A lot of strong players have either forgotten or been aware of this point and moved the one from f8.

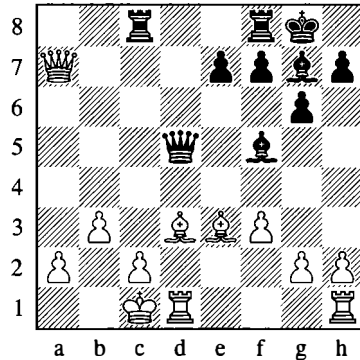
17.♖a5

17.♖xa7?!

Again this is too greedy.

17...♖d5!N

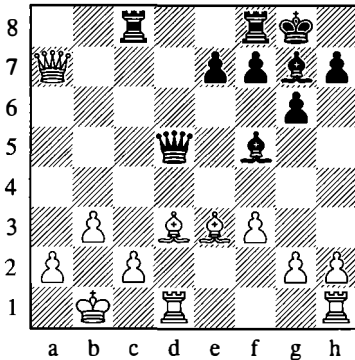
I actually played 17...♗xd3 once, and after 18.♖xb7 ♝xc2† 19.♗b1 ♖b2† the game was agreed drawn. However, Black has every reason to play on.



18.♗b1

18. ♖xf5 ♜xf5 19.c4 ♞e5 (19... ♞a8 20. ♞c5 ♞f6 21. ♖d4 e5 22. ♖xe5 ♞xe5 23. ♞xe5 ♖xe5+ also favours Black, as the bishop should be more powerful than the pawns.) 20. ♞d4 ♞a5 21. ♞d2 ♞xc4! 22. bxc4 ♞a3+ 23. ♖c2 ♞xa2+ 24. ♖d3 ♞d8+ 25. ♖e2 ♞xd2+ 26. ♞xd2 ♞xc4+ Black can press in this ending forever.

After the text move Chris Ward showed a good continuation for Black.



18... ♞xc2! 19. ♖xc2

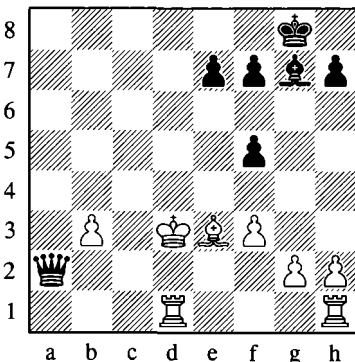
19. ♖xc2? ♖xc2+ 20. ♖xc2 ♞c8+ loses immediately.

19... ♞a8

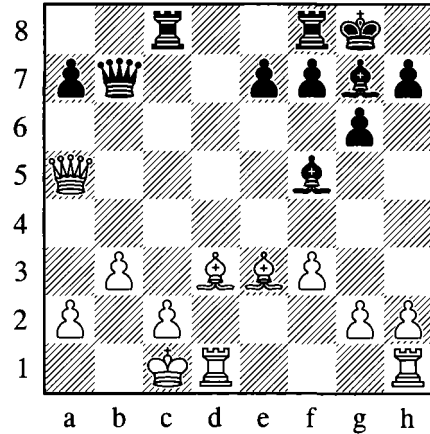
This forces White to give up the queen.

19... ♞c8+!? is also interesting, retaining the initiative. 20. ♖d2 ♖xd3 21. ♖e1 h5! 22. ♖f2 (22. ♞a6 ♞c1!+) 22... ♞c2+ 23. ♖g1 ♞e5 24. h4 ♞b2+ Black is doing well as 25. ♖f2? fails to 25... ♞xf2 26. ♞xf2 ♖d4+.

20. ♞xa8+ ♞xa8 21. ♖xf5 ♞xa2+ 22. ♖d3 gxf5+



Black has a great endgame, as Ward points out.



17... ♞c3!

White is forced to give Black an uncontested dark-squared bishop.

18. ♖xf5

White has no choice, as 18. ♞he1? ♖xd3 19. ♞xd3 ♞xd3 20. cxd3 ♞c8+ 21. ♖c5 ♞d5 wins.

18... ♞xe3 19. ♖e4

19. ♖d3 was played in Ilic – Aherne, Ohrid 2009, when Black missed the chance for 19... ♞e5!N 20. ♞d2 ♞b6+. Once again, White cannot prevent Black's queen from becoming extremely active.

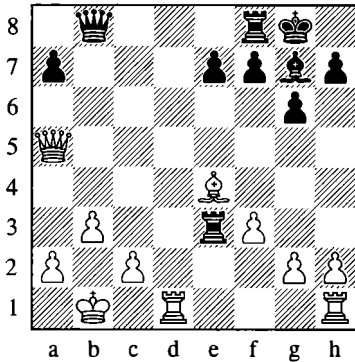
19... ♞b8

This has been something of a tabiya in correspondence and engine games. White has an extra pawn but his chronic dark-square weaknesses force him to tread carefully.

20.g3

20. ♞g5?! has been tried in a couple of correspondence games but 20... ♞b6!N is excellent for Black.

20. ♖b1



This has not yet been tested in an over-the-board game but it has had quite a lot of correspondence outings.

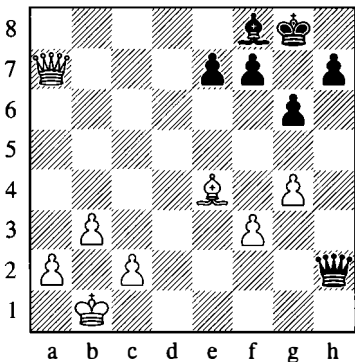
20...♗f4

20...f5! is also interesting.

21.♞d8 ♞e2 22.♞xf8†

22.g4 ♔f6 23.h4 ♞xd8 24.♞xd8† ♔g7
25.g5 ♔c3 26.♞d3 ♞e3 27.♞d1 ♞g3 was
agreed drawn in Traczewski – Sherwood,
email 2009, but Black could have played on
as White was completely tied up.

22...♔xf8 23.g4 ♞xh2 24.♞xh2 ♞xh2 25.♞xa7



In this line it's quite common to get these sharp endgames. White is still a pawn up and has three connected passed pawns, but his king is still vulnerable and the h-pawn is fast.

25...e6 26.a4 ♞d2

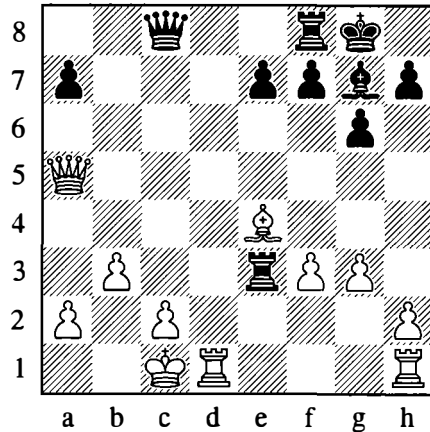
26...♞e5! also looks fine.

27.♞c7 ♔d6 28.♞c8† ♔g7 29.♔a2 ♔b4
30.♔b2 ♔e7 31.♞c7 ♔f6† 32.♔a3 ♔c3 33.a5

♔xa5 34.♞e5† ♔g8 35.♞b8† ♔g7 36.♞e5†
½–½ Gach – Sirotkin, email 2010.

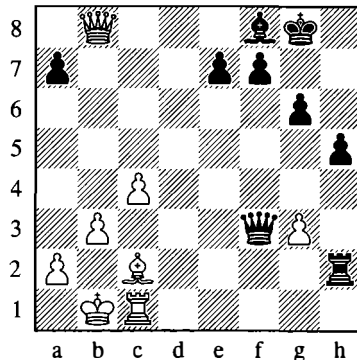
20...♞c8!?

This is a normal idea. White has to guard against Black activating his queen and so weaknesses are provoked.



21.g4

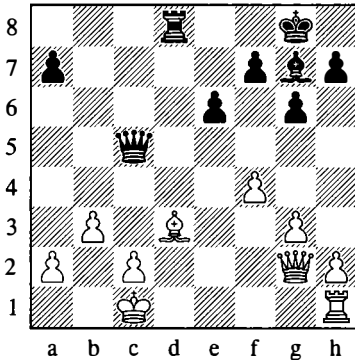
I have already mentioned that 21.c4? is almost always a terrible move. 21...♞e6 22.♞d8 ♞f6 23.♞xf8† ♔xf8 24.♔b1 ♞e2 25.♔c2 h5 26.♞d8 ♞xf3 27.♞c1 ♞xh2 28.♞b8 In Yang Kaiqi – Lu Shanglei, Qinhuangdao 2011, Black could have won with:



28...e5!N 29.♞xe5 ♔h6 30.♞d1 ♔g7–+

The following is a good indication of how Black can improve his position: 21.♞d5 ♞e2

22.♔d3 ♖g2 23.f4 e6 24.♗c5 ♗b7 25.♗e1 ♗d8
26.♗e4 ♗e7 27.♗xg2 ♗xc5+ Despite it being
a correspondence game, White's defensive task
was still too difficult.



28.♔d2?! e5! 29.♗f1 exf4 30.♗xf4 ♔h6 31.♗e4
♗f2+ 32.♔c3 ♔g7 0-1 Lenz – Hryniw, corr.
2012.

21.h4 ♗e6!?

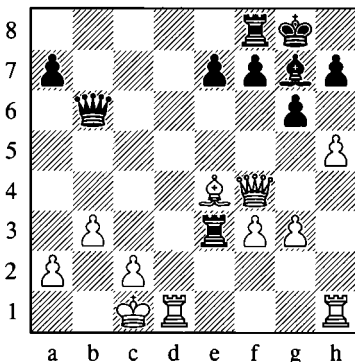
21...h5 has also scored well.

22.♗g5

22.♗xa7N gives Black a variety of possibilities, 22...♗e2 being one good option; Black has various drawing motifs, while White has to play accurately not to allow something more severe. (22...♗xe4!? 23.fxg4 ♗e5 also looks like a draw, for example: 24.♗d7 ♔h6+ 25.♔b1 ♔g7=)

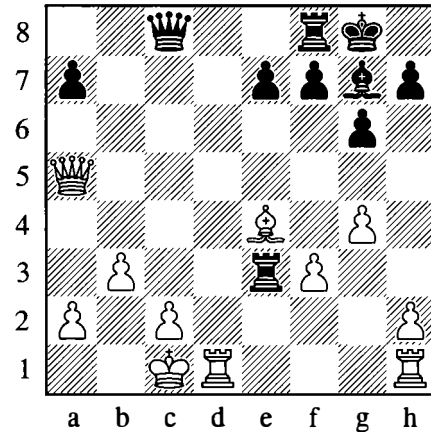
22...♗b6 23.h5 ♔f6 24.♗h6 ♔g7 25.♗f4?!

White should go back with 25.♗g5, but Black can still play for more than a draw with 25...♗e2N.



25...♗c5! 26.hxg6 hxg6 27.♔d3 ♔c3 28.b4
♗xb4 29.♗xb4 ♔xb4 30.♔e4 ♔a3+ 31.♔d2
♔c5 32.♔c1 ♗b8+

Fernandez Ponce – Gorin, email 2011.



21...♗e6 22.g5

22.♗xa7 ♗e2 23.♔d3 ♗e5 24.♔xe2 ♗a1+
½-½ Van tricht – Bennborn, corr. 2014,
shows a typical drawing idea.

22...h5!

This position has been tested in a lot of correspondence and engine games. The consensus seems to be that, even with computer assistance, it is far more difficult to convert the pawn advantage than to attack White's vulnerable king. Black has scored well by combining attacking on the queenside with picking off the loose kingside pawns.

B) 15.c3

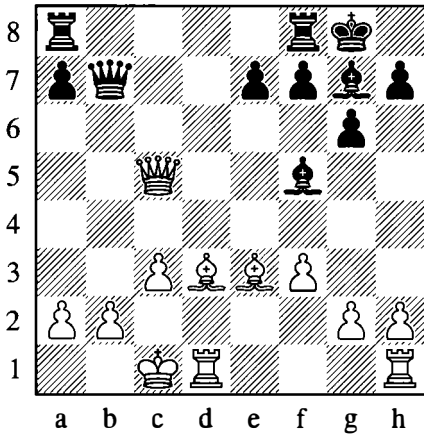
This has been criticized by various sources. Opening up the b1-h7 diagonal is indeed risky, but it's probably not so bad if followed up correctly.

15...♔f5

Immediately emphasizing the above point; ideas of sacrificing on c3 are already on the cards. White may react with **B1) 16.♔d3?**, **B2) 16.♗b5** or **B3) 16.♗a3**.

16.♖d5 ♖c7 17.♗d3 occurred in Baars – Stadler, email 2005, but it has little independent significance, as 17...♗xc3N 18.♖c5 immediately transposes to the note on 17.♗d3 in variation B2.

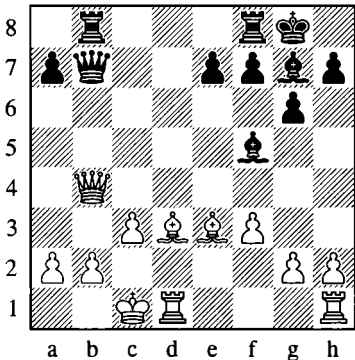
B1) 16.♗d3?



This is White's most natural move but he does not have enough time to spare for it.

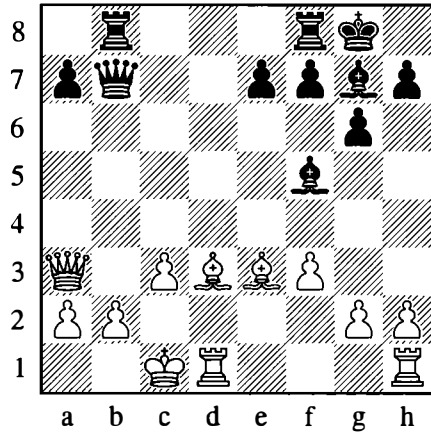
16...♖ab8 17.♖a3

17.♖b4 was played in Malmstroem – Cherner, email 2003. This avoids the idea seen in the main line below, but White is still in trouble after:



17...♖d7!N 18.♗xf5 ♖xf5 19.♖a3 (19.♖e4 ♖a5†) 19...♖b5† We have actually transposed to a position examined in the note to White's

21st move in variation B31 via 16.♖a3 ♖ab8 17.♗a6 ♖c6 18.♗d3 ♖d5 19.♗xf5 ♖xf5 20.♗d2 ♖b6 21.♗e3?! ♖b5!; see page 68.



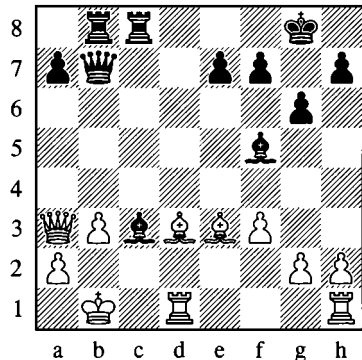
17...♗xc3!
Here we go!

18.bxc3

White's alternatives are even worse.

18.♖b3? ♗xb2†! 19.♗xb2 ♖c6 was easily winning in Kuran – Schwarhofer, Graz 2005.

18.b3? ♖fc8 19.♗b1 was played in Pikler – Louhivaara, Helsinki 1995, and now:



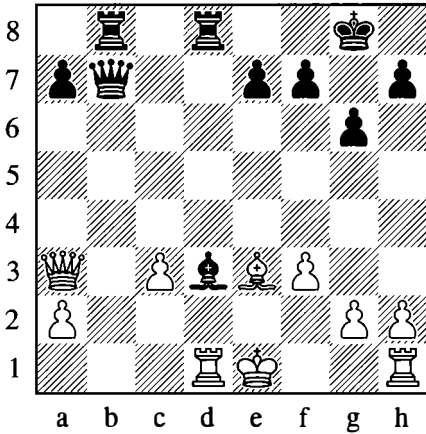
19...♖d5!N is, apparently, mate in ten.

18.♖xc3? ♖fc8 19.♖xc8† occurred in Sulic – Sprenger, Hassloch 1997. Here on

ChessPublishing I recommended 19...♖xc8†!N
20.♔b1 ♖c3 when White can resign.

18...♙xd3 19.♔d2 ♜fd8 20.♔e1

We have been following Huber – Schwarhofer,
Graz 2004. As I pointed out on ChessPublishing,
Black has two strong continuations.



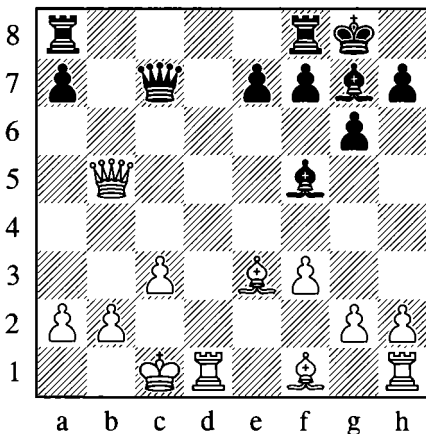
20...♖b2N

There is also 20...♞d6!N with the idea
of ...♞a6xa2, and after 21.♔f2 ♞a6 22.♖c5
♞xa2† 23.♞d2 ♞xd2† 24.♙xd2 ♞c8‡ White
faces a difficult defence.

**21.♖xb2 ♞xb2 22.♞d2 ♞b1† 23.♞d1 ♞xd1†
24.♔xd1 ♙f1† 25.♔c2 ♙xg2 26.♞e1 a6‡**

Black has good winning chances.

B2) 16.♖b5 ♖c7



17.♖c4

The drawing attempt 17.♖c5?? has been
played, but Black wins immediately with
17...♖xc5 18.♙xc5 ♙h6†.

17.♙d3 allows 17...♙xc3! although White can
escape to a merely slightly worse position with
18.♖c5 ♖xc5 19.♙xc5 ♜fc8 20.♙xf5 ♞xc5
21.bxc3 ♞xf5‡ (21...gxf5!N) as in Vonhoff –
Grennefors, email 2004.

17...♖e5

A reasonable alternative is:

17...♖b8! 18.♙f4

White's best option is probably to repeat
with 18.♖b5.

18.g4 occurred in Gonzalez Fuertes –
Canamas Soler, email 2010, and here
18...♙e6N would have been more
comfortable for Black.

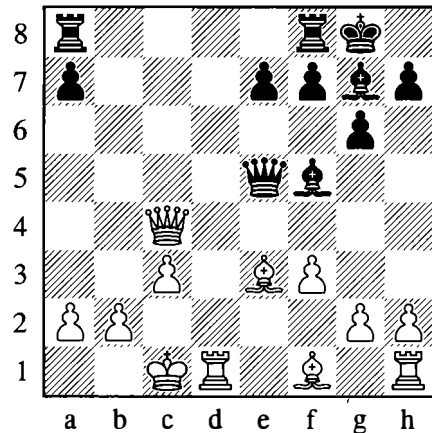
18...♖b6

18...e5!N looks promising.

**19.♖b5 ♖f2 20.♙d3 a6 21.♖a5 ♙xd3
22.♞xd3 ♖xg2**

½-½ Llorach Gracia – Lovholt, email 2008.

This position is actually given in Chris Ward's
original *Winning with the Dragon*, which was
published over twenty years ago.

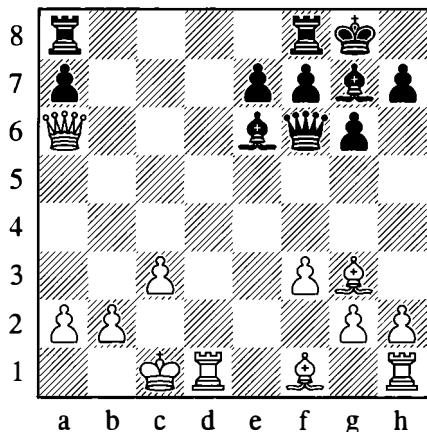


18.♙f4

18.♗d2? was played in the stem game Byvshev – Beilin, Leningrad 1955. Black's strongest reply is 18...♖fc8!N 19.♖a4 ♗xc3† 20.bxc3 ♗b8→ with a crushing attack.

18...♖f6 19.♖a6 ♗e6 20.♗g3

Alves – Cleto, corr. 1995, was eventually drawn, but Black could have obtained some pressure with:



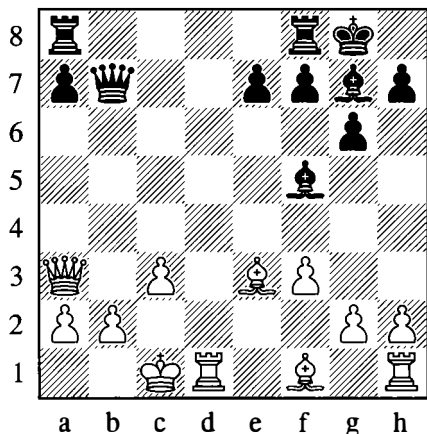
20...♗ad8!N 21.♗e2

The natural 21.♗d3? is refuted by 21...♗h6†! 22.♗b1 ♗xd3! 23.♗xd3 ♗f5 24.♖xf6 ♗xd3† and Black wins.

21...♖g5† 22.♗b1 ♖e3‡

Black has more than enough compensation for the pawn.

B3) 16.♖a3



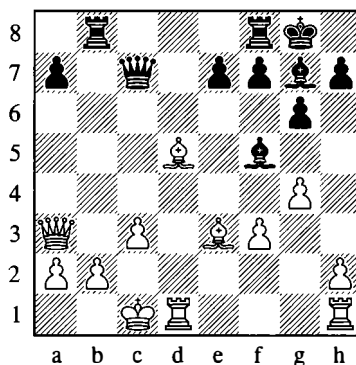
This seems to be White's best. The queen defends the b2-square and it is not so easy for Black to drive it away. However, White still has to watch out for sacrifices on c3, as well as the plan of rerouting the g7-bishop to harass the queen.

16...♗ab8 17.♗a6

17.♗d3? transposes to variation B1.

If White tries to develop his kingside with something like 17.♗e2N then 17...♗e5!? is an interesting idea to target the white queen. (17...a5 is also promising.)

An interesting engine game continued: 17.♗c4 ♖c6 (17...♗e5!? is also interesting) 18.♗d5?! (18.♗d3 should really be played, transposing to the main line) 18...♖c7 19.g4



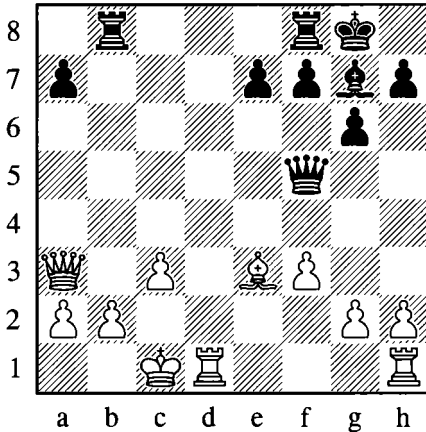
19...♗xb2! 20.♖xb2 ♗xc3 21.♖b3 ♗b8 22.♗xf7† ♗g7 23.gxf5 ♗xb3 24.♗xb3 ♗d4† 25.♗b1 ♗xe3 26.fxg6 hxg6† lady encantada – jetro, engine game 2012. White cannot compete on the darksquares and will therefore have to suffer.

17...♖c6 18.♗d3 ♖d5!

When I reached this position I forgot my analysis and played 18...♖fc8!?, as many others have done. I went on to win but, with accurate play, White can defuse Black's initiative.

The text move brings us to the tabiya of the line with ♖c5-a3 and c2-c3, at least in computer-assisted chess. Black has good central control and an ongoing initiative on the queenside. We will analyse both **B31) 19.♙xf5?! ♞xf5** and **B32) 19.♙c2**.

B31) 19.♙xf5?! ♞xf5



Despite this being the more common choice for White, I think he has some problems.

20.♙d2

This looks passive but White feels he has to guard the c3-pawn.

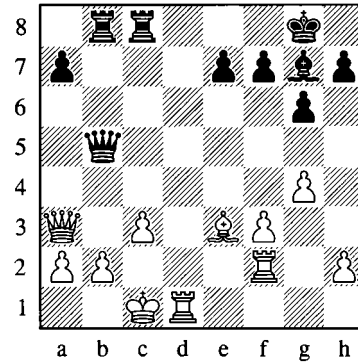
20.h4 h5 does not change much.

20.♞he1? loses to 20...♙xc3! since after 21.bxc3 ♞b1† 22.♙d2 ♞b2† White no longer has a hiding square for his king.

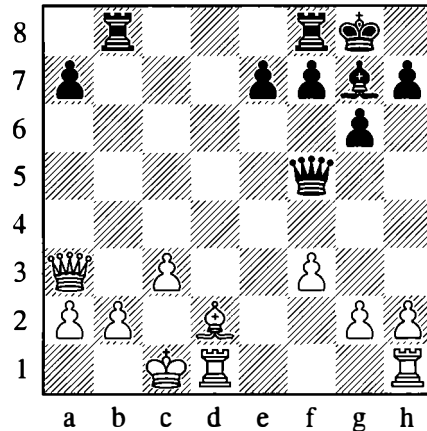
20.♞c5?! was played in Wrzalek – Wozniak, Polanica Zdroj 2009, the only over-the-board game I could find. Black now missed the strong 20...♙xc3!N 21.♞xf5 (21.♞xc3 ♞fc8; 21.bxc3 ♞b1† 22.♙d2 ♞d8†–+) 21...♙xb2† 22.♙c2 gxf5 with a clear extra pawn.

20.♞hf1!? is a typical computer move. White actually only has a small selection of moves that

don't allow a killing sacrifice on c3. 20...♞fc8 21.g4 ♞b5 22.♞f2



22...e6! Opening the way for the bishop. 23.h4 ♙f8 24.♞xa7 e5 Black has an extremely powerful initiative.



20...♞b6! 21.♙e3?!

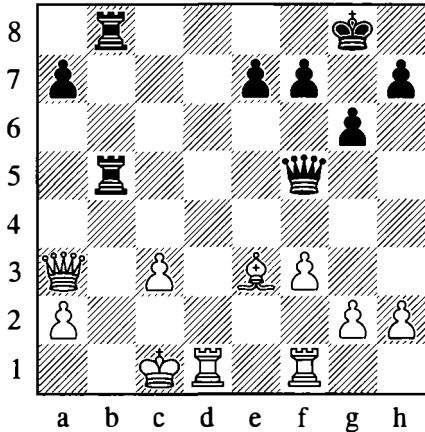
21.♞he1 is better, although 21...♞fb8 22.♙e3 ♞b5 23.♞xe7 ♙f6 24.♞d7 ♞xd7 25.♞xd7 ♞xb2 26.♙d2 ♞xa2 still favoured Black in grenel – numerobis, engine game 2012.

21...♞b5 22.♞hf1 ♙xc3!

Again we see this tactic.

23.bxc3 ♞fb8!

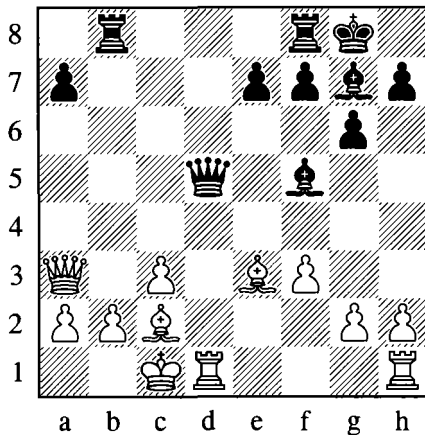
A quiet move, bringing the final piece into the attack. White is forced to give back the piece.



24.♔d2 ♝d8† 25.♙d4 e5 26.g4 ♜f6 27.♟f2 exd4

fvcc2 – bouddha#77, engine game 2012.

B32) 19.♙c2

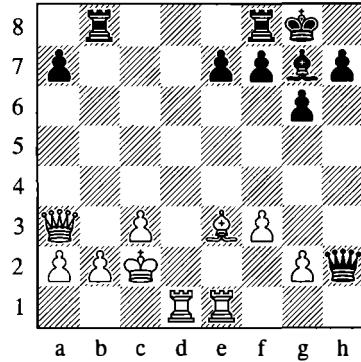


This is the better option, but Black has two decent replies.

19...♞b5

This is the more aggressive choice, with ideas of infiltrating via the e2-square.

19...♞e5 enables Black to regain the sacrificed pawn on the kingside. 20.♞h1 ♙xc2 21.♔xc2 ♞xh2



22.♙xa7 (22.♞d2 ♞e5 23.♞c5 ♞e6=) 22...♞xg2† 23.♞d2 ♞g3 24.♞xe7 ♞a8 25.♞d7 ♞xf3 26.♞e4 ♞f6 27.♙d4 ♞a6 This was agreed drawn in Lounek – Isaev, email 2007, but in a practical game any result would be possible.

20.♞d2

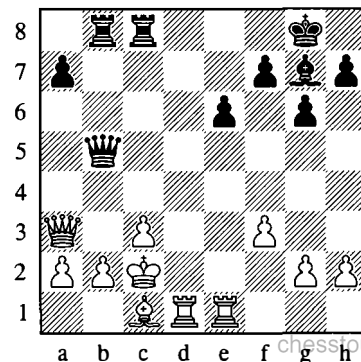
20.♙xf5?! ♞xf5 transposes to variation B31 above.

20.♙b3 ♞e2 21.♞h1 ♞xg2 22.♞d2 ♞xf3 23.♞xe7 a5 Material parity is restored, while White still has the more vulnerable king.

20.♞h1 ♙xc2 21.♔xc2 ♞fc8 22.♙c1 22.♞d3 ♙e5 23.♙c1 ♙d6 24.♞xa7 ♞a8 25.♞d4 ♞xa2 26.♞d5 ♞a6 gave Black strong pressure for the pawn in Leben – Ji. Houska, email 2008.

22...e6

Black safeguards the e-pawn and now has ideas of dropping the bishop back to f8 to dislodge the white queen.



23.♞e4

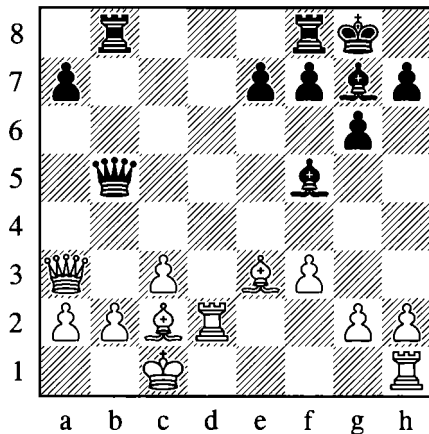
A good example of how Black can improve his position is: 23.♞d3 a5 24.♟f4 ♞b7 25.♞ed1 ♟f6 26.♟d6 a4 27.g3 ♞c4 28.h4 h5 29.♞c1 e5 30.♞d5 ♞e2 31.♞5d3 ♟g7! 32.♞1d2 ♟h6 33.f4 ♞e1† 34.♞d1 ♞e4 35.♞c2 exf4 36.gxf4 ♞b5 37.♞c1 ♟xf4† 38.♟xf4 ♞xf4† 39.♞b1 ♞xh4† Wilczek – Ham, email 2008.

23...♞d8

This makes sense as White can no longer challenge for the d-file.

24.c4 ♞b6 25.♞xd8† ♞xd8 26.♞e3 ♞d6 27.h4 ♞d1† 28.♞b1 a5

With the queen on d1 Black had a strong bind and full compensation in Borowiec – Lilleoren, email 2006.



20...♟xc2

Black has a choice of decent lines:

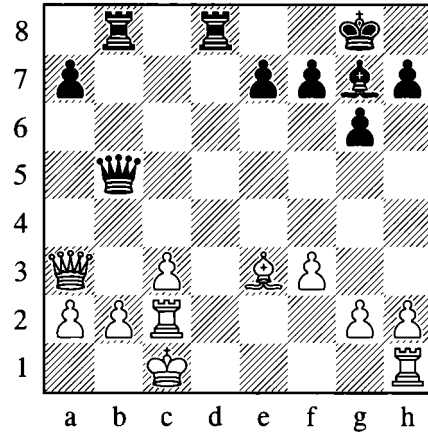
20...♞fc8 has been played in the vast majority of correspondence and engine games. 21.♟xf5 ♞xf5 22.♞c2 ♞e5 23.♞e1 (23.♟d2 ♞b5) 23...♞xh2 Black has regained his pawn and has scored well.

20...♟xc3!N is another move that appeals to me. 21.♞xc3 (The point of course is that 21.bxc3?? allows 21...♞b1† 22.♟xb1 ♞xb1#) 21...♞fc8 22.♞a3 ♞c6 Black regains the piece.

23.♞d1 ♟xc2† 24.♞e2 ♞b7 25.♞f2 ♟f5 I gave this line on ChessPublishing and thought the position was roughly level.

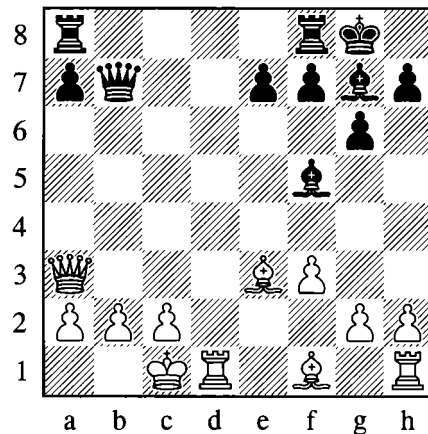
21.♞xc2 ♞fd8

Black's play in the following game seems entirely logical.



22.♞c5 ♞a6 23.♞xa7 ♞e6 24.♞d1 ♞dc8 25.♞d3 ♞a8 26.♞b6 ♞xa2 27.♞cd2 ♞a1† ½–½ Krueger – Daurelle, email 2010.

C) 15.♞a3 ♟f5



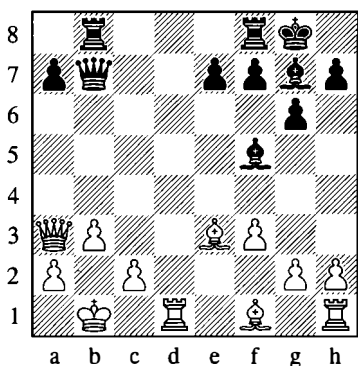
This is the consistent choice, putting a lot of pressure on the b2- and c2-pawns.

16.♙d3

16.♙d4 transposes to variation B21 of the previous chapter on page 55.

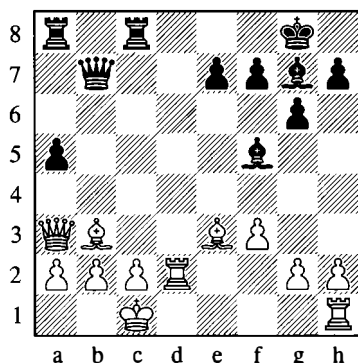
16.♙a6 ♖c6 17.♙d3 ♖ab8 18.c3 transposes to variation B3 on page 67, where 18...♗d5! is best.

White does not have enough time for: 16.♗b1? ♖ab8 17.b3 (17.♙c1N would allow the killing 17...♙xc2†!! 18.♗xc2 ♖fc8† 19.♗b1 ♖xc1†→) In Tumurbator – Hollis, Budva 1963, the most accurate finish would have been:



17...♖fc8N 18.♙d3 ♖c6!→ White has to give a piece to defend against the threats to c2 and on the long diagonal.

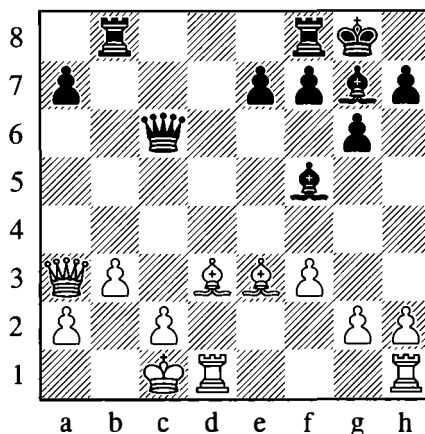
16.♙c4 ♖fc8 17.♙b3 a5 18.♖d2 (18.c3 was played in Gense – Helstroffer, France 2002, and here Black missed the chance for 18...a4N 19.♙c2 ♙f8!→ when the queen is trapped on a3.) From this position the oldest living GM showed the way forward.



18...♗c7! 19.g4 a4! 20.♙xf7† ♗xf7 21.gxf5 ♖ab8 22.fxg6† hxg6 23.c3 ♙xc3! 24.bxc3 ♗xc3† 25.♗xc3 ♖xc3† 26.♖c2 ♖xe3† Black converted his extra pawn in Ravinsky – Averbakh, Sverdlovsk 1951.

16...♖ab8 17.b3 ♖c6!

I like this direct approach. Black is even willing to give a piece in order to penetrate on the dark squares.

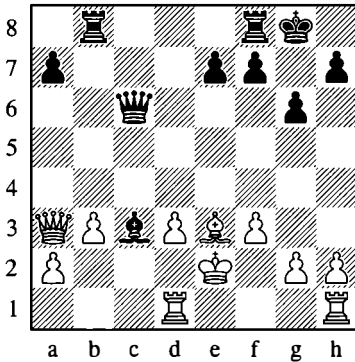
**18.♙xf5**

18.♗c5 ♖f6 19.♙xf5 ♗b2† transposes to variation C2.

18.c4? By now you should know that I never think much of the c-pawn push, as the squares around White's king become too vulnerable. 18...♗f6! 19.♙xf5 ♖c3† 20.♗b1 ♗xe3→ Black has decisive pressure along the long diagonal.

18.♗xe7?N Grabbing another pawn would obviously be far too greedy. 18...♗c3! 19.♙xf5 gxf5 20.♗c5 ♗b2† 21.♗d2 ♖bc8→ Black has a crushing attack, as given by Ward.

If White tries to evacuate the king straightaway with 18.♗d2?!N he runs into trouble. 18...♙xd3 19.cxd3 ♙c3† 20.♗e2



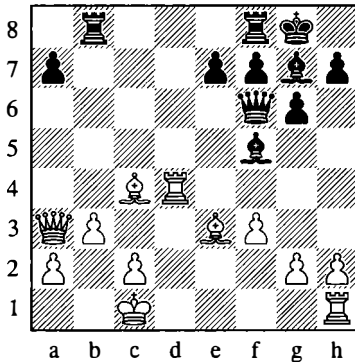
20...♙e6 21.♔f2 ♖b5!±

18.♙c4

This is a more sensible way of blocking Black's access to the c3-square, but Black can play in the same manner.

18...♙f6 19.♗d4

As Chris Ward observed, 19.♙d4? loses to 19...♙g5† 20.♔b2 ♙xc2! 21.♔xc2 ♗xg2† when White is dropping material as he won't be able to recapture on d4.



19...♗bd8 20.♗hd1 ♗xd4 21.♗xd4 ♙e5
22.♙f2 ♗c7! 23.g3!

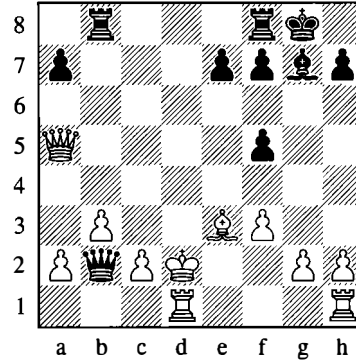
White is obliged to sacrifice the exchange as 23.♗d1 ♙f4† 24.♔b1 ♗e5± is lousy for him.

23...♙xd4 24.♙xd4 e5

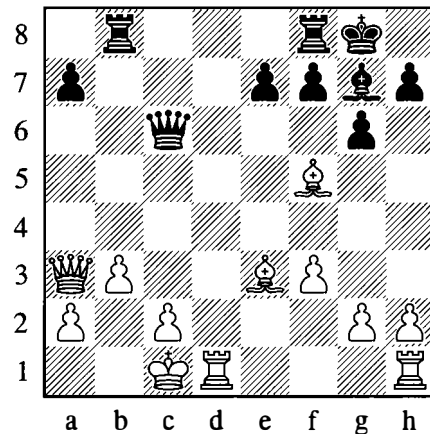
In Joutsu – Jaederholm, email 2007, White successfully held on for a draw.

18.♙a5 might be White's best try. The

queen joins in the fight for some of the dark squares and is less easy to swat away. 18...♙f6 (18...♗fc8!? 19.♙xf5 gxf5 would also give Black good compensation.) 19.♙xf5 ♗b2† 20.♔d2 gxf5



21.♔e2! (21.♙xf5?! transposes to the note to White's 21st move in variation C2) 21...♗fc8 22.♗c1 ♗xc2† 23.♗xc2 ♙xc2† 24.♙d2 ♗c7= There have been a lot of games in this position, none of which were contested over the board.

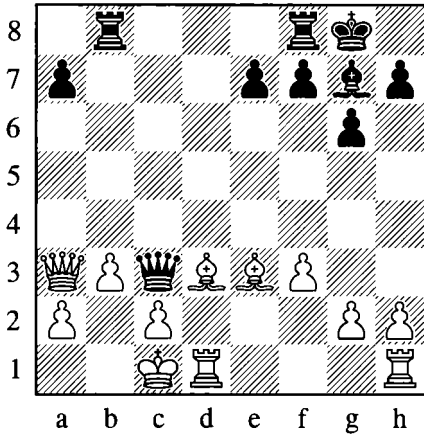


18...♗c3!

This strong idea was discovered by Golubev. Black ignores the bishop and gets on with his attack.

White may respond with C1) 19.♙d3? or C2) 19.♙c5!.

C1) 19.♗d3?



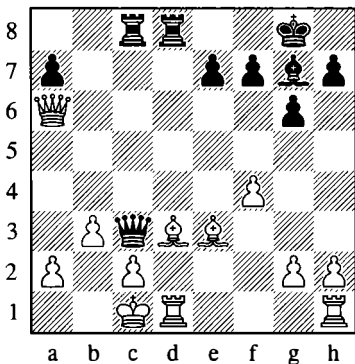
This may seem like an automatic choice but it leads to serious trouble for White.

19...♜bc8!

Putting more pressure on c2 and preventing White from offering the exchange of queens. Black's simple plan is to play ...♜fd8xd3.

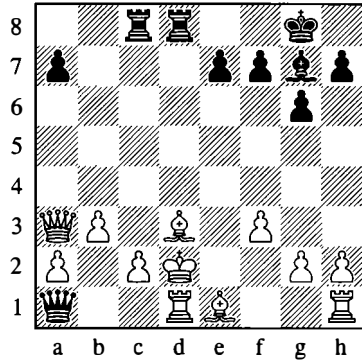
20.♜hf1

20.♖a6 ♜fd8 21.f4 occurred in Meszaros – Smolen, Slovakia 2003, and here Black could have won with:

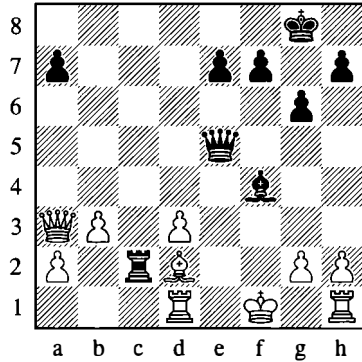


21...♖b2†N 22.♗d2 ♖xc2† 23.♗e1 ♖xg2 24.♜f1 ♜c2!-+

20.♗f2 is far too slow: 20...♜fd8 21.♗e1 ♖al† 22.♗d2

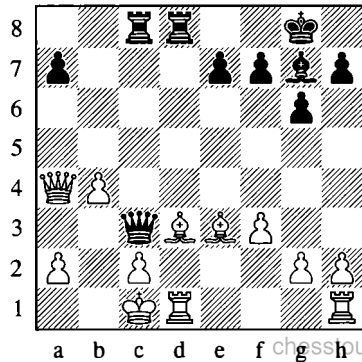


22...♜xd3†! 23.cxd3 ♗h6† 24.f4 (Another game ended abruptly: 24.♗e2 ♖e5† 25.♗f1 ♜c2 0-1 Widner – Streiter, Hall in Tirol 2009) 24...♗xf4† 25.♗e2 ♖e5† 26.♗f1 ♜c2 27.♗d2 Petrik – Cernousek, Tatranske Zruby 2003.

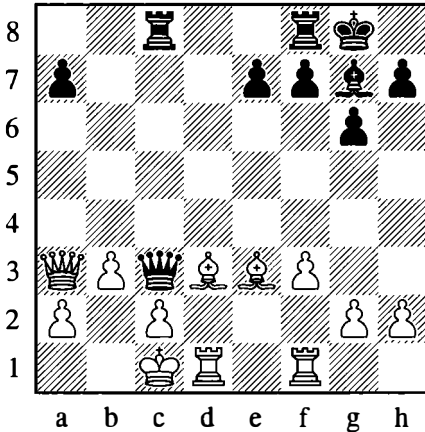


Black is winning with almost any move, but the most efficient is 27...♗e3!N 28.g3 ♖h5! 29.♗g2 ♗xd2 with forced mate.

20.♖a4 ♜fd8 21.b4 is the best attempt; White manages to defend the c2-pawn but the position is still terrible for him:



21...♞xd3 22.♞xd3 ♖a1† 23.♔d2 ♜xh1⚡
Savu – Cimicki, email 2006.



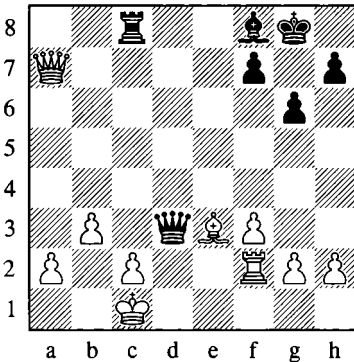
20...♞f8 21.♞f2 ♞xd3 22.♞xd3 ♜xd3

In the all-GM game Luther – Polzin, Jenbach 2009, Black erred with 22...♞e1†?.

The text move is better; Black regains the piece while keeping a ferocious attack.

23.♜xa7

23.♜xe7N doesn't save White either:
23...♔f8 24.♜xa7



24...♔a3†! 25.♜xa3 ♜xe3† 26.♞d2 ♞d8-+

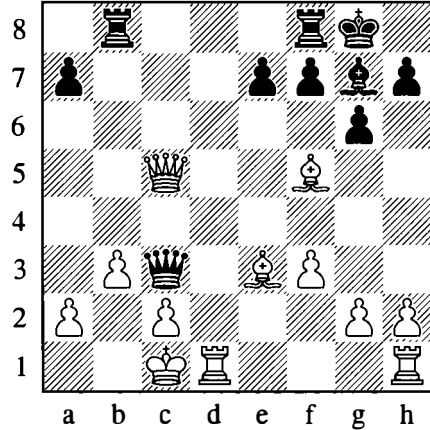
23...♜c3 24.♜b6

24.♔d1N is the only move but after 24...♜a1† 25.♔e2 ♞xc2† 26.♔d2 ♔d4 White is still completely lost.

24...♜e1#

This was the abrupt end of Karthikeyan – Saiyn, Maribor 2012.

C2) 19.♜c5!



Giving back the bishop is White's best defence.

19...♜b2† 20.♔d2 gxf5

The position is similar to that after 18.♜a5 in the note on page 72, but this version is better for Black as he will gain time against the white queen.

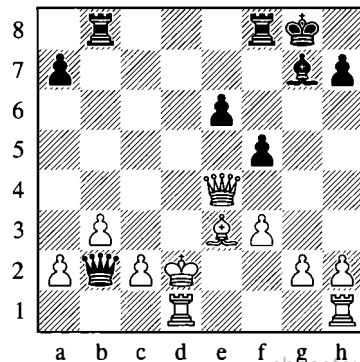
21.♔e2

Running with the king is White's best try.

21.♜xf5?! e6! 22.♜e4 f5!

The most dynamic punishment.

22...♞bc8 23.♔e2 would transpose to the note on 23.♜e4?! in the main line.



23.♖f4

23.♖xe6? is a big mistake, as White will lose a lot of material down the open e-file.

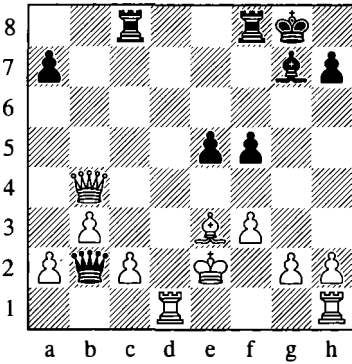
23.♖c4? ♜bc8 24.♙c5 ♜e5 25.♙xf8 ♜xc4 26.♙xg7 ♝d4† → Dvorak – Svanda, Znojmo 2003.

23...♜bc8

23...♙e5 24.♜g5† ♘h8 has also worked well for Black.

24.♘e2 e5 25.♜b4

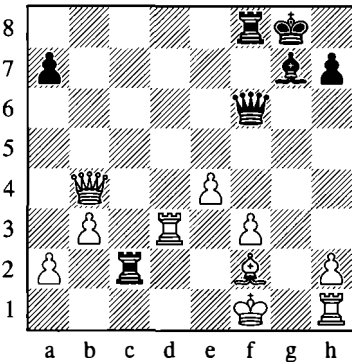
In Karthikeyan – Chiku Ratte, Caldas Novas 2011, Black should have continued pushing White back with:



25...f4!N 26.♙f2 e4! 27.fxe4 f3†!

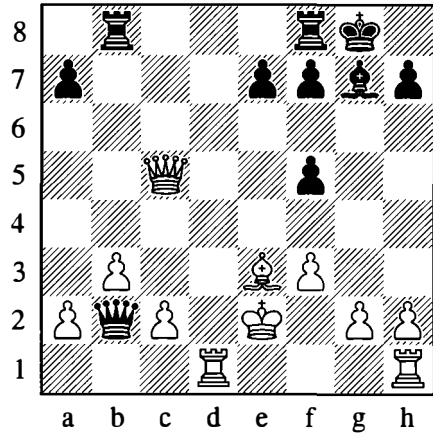
It's all about the initiative!

28.gxf3 ♜f6 29.♝d3 ♜xc2† 30.♘f1



30...♜a6! 31.♜d6 ♜xd6 32.♜xd6 ♜xf3 →

A beautiful winning line.



21...♜bc8

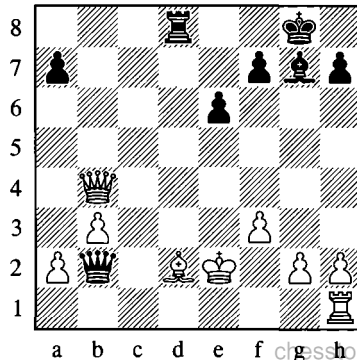
Using this rook means White won't have ♝d8† ideas. On this occasion 21...♜fc8 is also fine: 22.♜xf5 ♜xc2† 23.♝d2 ♝xd2† 24.♙xd2 ♜xa2 25.♜c1 ♜a6† 26.♜c4 ♝d8 27.♙e3 e6 28.♜c2 ♜d6 29.♜c8 ♜a6† ½-½ Handke – Polzin, Germany 2001.

22.♜xf5 e6 23.♖f4

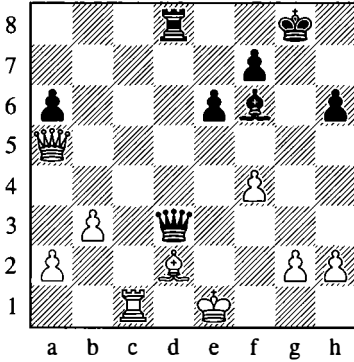
23.♜a5? ♜xc2† 24.♘f1 ♜fc8 25.♜xa7 ♜e5 0-1 Kemperman – Van Leuken, email 2008, was a disaster for White.

After 23.♜d3 ♜c3 24.♜d7 ♜xa2 25.♝d2 ♜xc2 White should be able to neutralize Black's slight initiative; the position is equal but it's still Black who is trying for more.

23.♜e4?! ♜xc2† 24.♝d2 ♝xd2† 25.♙xd2 ♝d8 Black forces White to spend another tempo defending his bishop. 26.♜b4

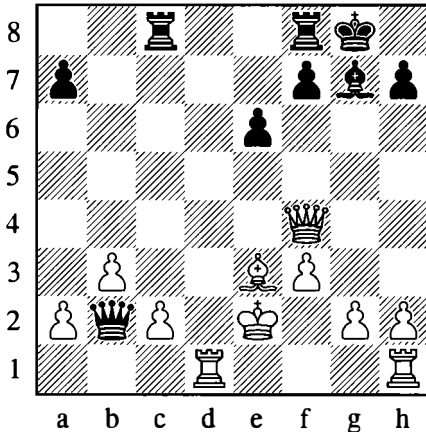


26...♔h6! Provoking another weakness. 27.f4
 ♖c2 28.♞c1 ♜d3† 29.♕e1 ♔g7! And back
 again. 30.♞a5 h6 My engine tells me Black is
 already winning as White is virtually paralysed.
 31.♞c5 ♔f6 32.♞c4 a6 33.♞c1



33...♔h4†! Provoking yet another weakness.
 34.g3 ♔f6 35.♞c7 ♜b1† 36.♕e2 ♞g1 37.♞h5
 ♞g2† 38.♕e1 ♜xd2†→ Carvaga – Efendiyev,
 email 2009.

The text move seems like the most sensible
 option for the queen.



23...♞xc2† 24.♞d2 ♞xd2† 25.♔xd2 ♜xa2
 26.♞a4 ♜b2 27.♞xa7

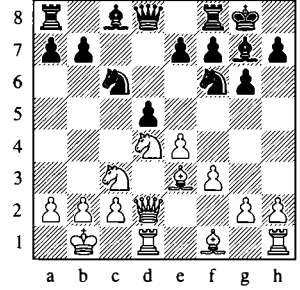
½-½ Murlasits – Walter, email 2009.

Conclusion

All three of the variations examined in this chapter contain important points to remember. A good example is the 15.b3 line where, somewhat counterintuitively, it is the a8-rook that should go to c8. Next we considered 15.c3 ♔f5, and after 16.♞a3 there is an important idea a few moves later in 18...♞d5!, which I myself forgot to play in one of my own games. Finally we considered 15.♞a3, when Black obtains a dangerous attack with the help of Golubev's piece sacrifice. Just as in the previous chapter, White has no advantage in any of these lines, and a single mistake may prove fatal for him.

Chapter 5

9.0-0-0



10.♔b1

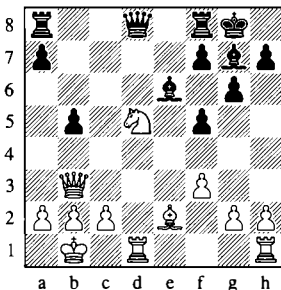
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 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 10.♖b1 ♗xd4 11.e5! ♗f5 12.exf6

12...exf6!

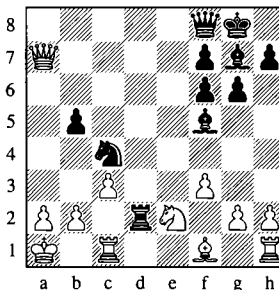
A) 13.♗xd5 ♗xe3 14.♞xe3 ♕e6 15.♕c4 f5	79
A1) 16.♞c5	80
A2) 16.♗c3	81
A3) 16.c3	82
B) 13.♕c5 d4! 14.♕xf8 ♞xf8	85
B1) 15.♗e2	87
B2) 15.♗b5 ♗e3	88
B21) 16.♞c1 ♕h6!	88
B211) 17.f4	89
B212) 17.♞xd4	90
B22) 16.♞e1 f5!	91
B221) 17.♗xd4 f4	92
B2211) 18.g3	93
B2212) 18.c3	94
B222) 17.f4	95

A) note to move 16



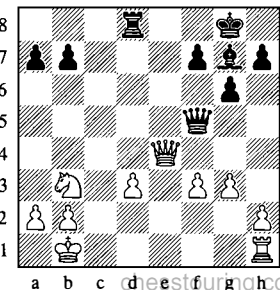
17...f4!N

B1) after 21...♞xa7



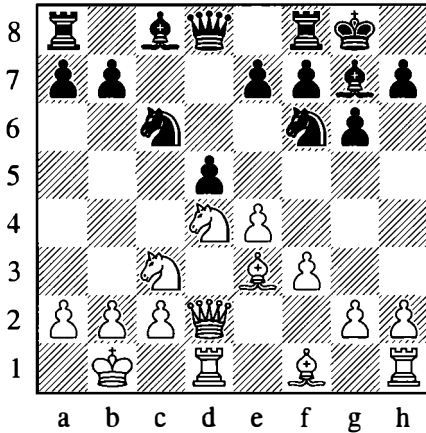
21...♞d7!N

B2211) after 25...♞b5!N



25...♞b5!N

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 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 10.♗b1



This subtle semi-waiting move often plays an important role in the Dragon; see Chapters 1 and 10 in the first volume for a few examples. In the present position White not only moves his king to a safer square, but also tactically prevents ...dxe4. This line was topical a few years ago but Black appears to have neutralized it, so most White players have moved elsewhere.

10...♗xd4

10...dxe4?? loses to 11.♗xc6 when 11...♚xd2 is no longer check, and so White can retain his piece advantage with 12.♗xe7†.

11.e5!

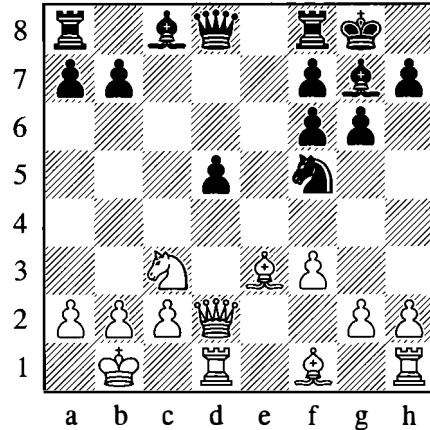
This is White's point.

White gets nowhere with 11.♙xd4 dxe4 12.♙xf6 (12.♚e1 ♚a5 13.fxe4 ♙e6 14.♙xf6 exf6 15.♗d5 ♚a4† Kirillova – Solovjova, St Petersburg 2006; 12.fxe4 ♙e6=) 12...♚xd2 13.♚xd2 ♙xf6 14.♗xe4 ♙e5 with easy equality for Black.

11...♗f5 12.exf6 exf6!

For a long time the attention was focused on

the queen sacrifice 12...♙xf6 13.♗xd5 ♚xd5 14.♚xd5 ♗xe3 15.♚d3 ♗xd1 16.♚xd1. Black definitely has some compensation but if White plays accurately he will be able to exert lasting pressure.



The text move was neglected for a while, probably due to a combination of its ugly appearance and the fact that it commits Black to an exchange sacrifice. However, a deeper investigation reveals that Black has excellent counter-chances. We will start by checking **A) 13.♗xd5** before moving on to the critical **B) 13.♙c5**.

13.♚xd5 does not challenge Black at all. 13...♚xd5 (Keeping the queens on the board is also interesting: 13...♚e8!N 14.♙c5 ♗e3 15.♙xe3 ♚xe3=) 14.♗xd5 ♗xe3 15.♗xe3 ♙e6= Saldano Dayer – Saborido Bua, La Coruna 1999.

13.♙f2

This retreat is rather passive but White does at least keep the e3-square under control.

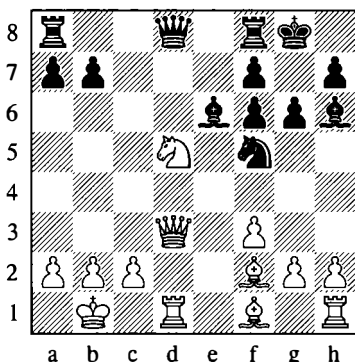
13...♙e6

13...d4! is also interesting. I think the critical line runs 14.g4!N ♙h6! 15.f4 ♚a5! 16.♗e4 ♚xd2 17.♚xd2 ♙xf4 18.gxf5 ♙xd2 19.♗xd2 ♙xf5 20.♗b3! (I gave 20.♙xd4 on ChessPublishing but I think it's better for

White to have a knight on d4). We have reached a complex position with rook and two pawns against two minor pieces. My engines favour Black slightly but I tend to prefer the pieces.

14.♘xd5 ♕h6! 15.♗d3

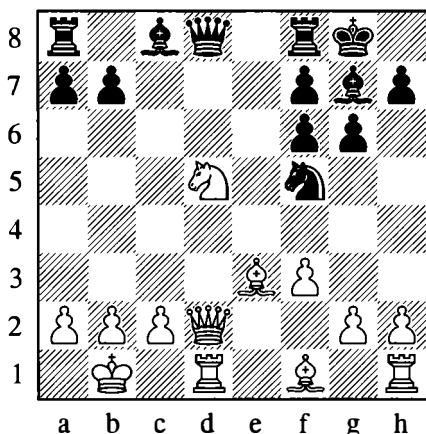
In Schaefer – Zelbel, Dortmund 2010, a logical continuation would have been:



15...♕xd5N 16.♗xd5 ♕e3 17.♕e1 ♗xd5
18.♖xd5 ♖fd8 19.♖xd8† ♖xd8=

Black's activity easily makes up for White's bishop pair and better pawn structure.

A) 13.♘xd5



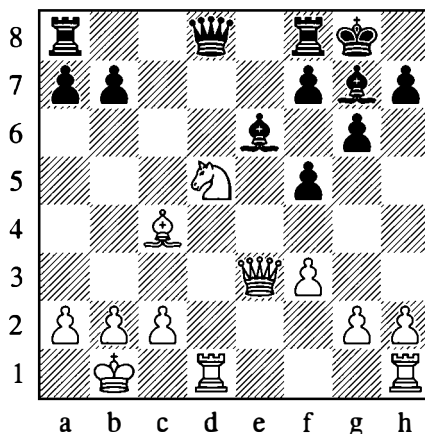
Having failed to prove anything in the main lines, White has turned to this simple capture in some games, especially in correspondence and engine praxis.

13...♘xe3

It makes sense to grab the bishop pair although Black has also been holding his own with 13...♕e6.

14.♗xe3 ♕e6 15.♕c4 f5

White has a big knight on d5 and, taking into account the doubled f-pawns, can claim to have an extra half pawn or so. In return Black has an uncontested dark-squared bishop and prospects for counterplay on the queenside. Black will normally trade on d5 at some point and play with opposite-coloured bishops. This tends to give Black the easier game as he can attack on the dark squares, safe in the knowledge that most endgames should be easy to draw.

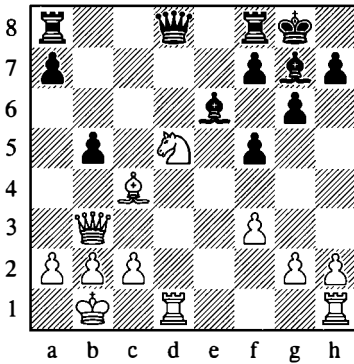


White has tried lots of moves but none of them really challenge Black. I will focus on A1) 16.♗c5, A2) 16.♘c3 and A3) 16.c3.

16.g3 ♖e8 17.♗a3 ♕d7!? 18.♘c3 ♗c7 19.♗b3 ♕c6 20.♘b5 ♕xb5 21.♗xb5 ♖e7 22.♕b3 a6 was level in nemas123 – crgiorgio, engine game 2014.

16.♗b3 b5!?

16...♖c8 17.♗b4 ♕xd5 18.♕xd5 ♗c7 is also completely fine for Black.



17.♙e2?!

As Chris Ward observed, taking the pawn leads to disaster for White along the b-file:

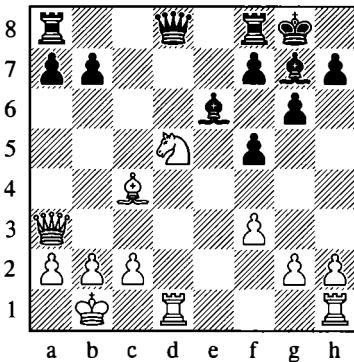
17.♙xb5? a6 or 17.♜xb5? ♖b8.
 17.♜b4 is perhaps White's best: 17...♞e8
 18.♘f4 (Ward mentions 18.♙xb5? ♖b8?)
 18...♜f6 19.♙xe6 fxe6 20.♞d7 a6=

In the recent game Carlstedt – Trent, Aarhus 2015, Black missed a strong idea.

17...f4!N

As pointed out by Ward. Now it will be difficult for White to support the knight on d5, and Black can follow up by targeting the g2-pawn with ...♜g5.

16.♜a3



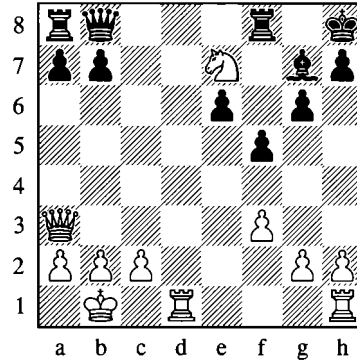
16...♜b8!N

This new idea leads to interesting play. The queen gets off the d-file, prepares ...b5 and ties down the h1-rook to the defence of the h2-pawn.

17.♘e7+

17.♜b3 ♞e8 18.c3 ♜e5 19.g3 (19.♞he1?! ♜xh2?) 19...♞ad8 20.♞he1 ♜b8 is equal.

17...♙h8 18.♙xe6 fxe6



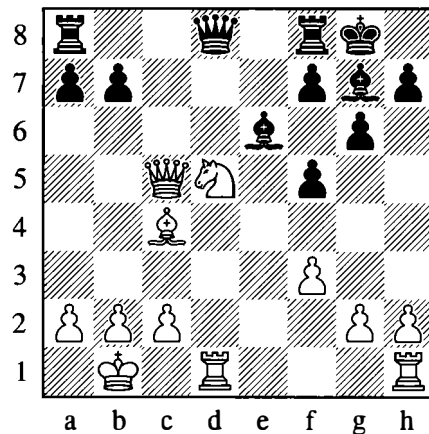
19.♜d6

19.♞d7?! ♞d8 20.♘xg6+ (20.♞hd1? ♞xd7 21.♞xd7 ♜xh2?) is only good enough for a draw: 20...hxg6 21.♞xg7 ♙xg7 22.♜e7+ ♙h8 23.♜f6+ ♙h7 24.♜e7+=

19...♜xd6 20.♞xd6 ♙f6 21.♞xe6 ♞ad8 22.♞he1 ♞d2 23.♞e2 ♞fd8=

Despite Black's pawn deficit he has no problems, as the e7-knight is extremely awkwardly placed.

A1) 16.♜c5

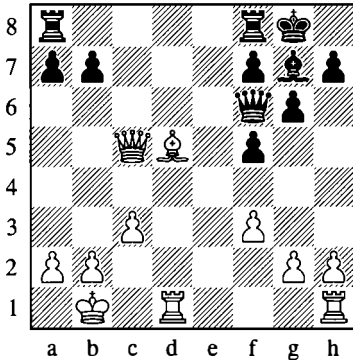


16...♙h8?!

By sidestepping from the knight check Black

intends to keep both bishops on the board for a while longer.

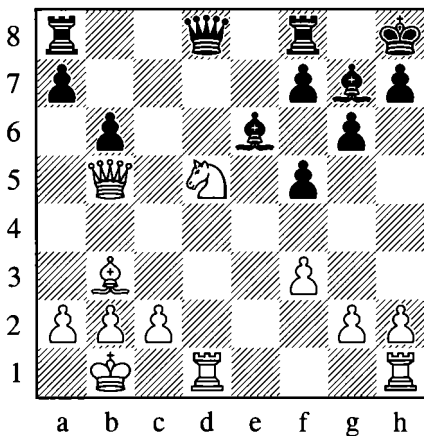
It's also possible to take on d5 immediately: 16...♙xd5 17.♙xd5 (17.♗xd5 ♖c8 18.♗xd8 ♗xc5 19.♗xf8† ♖xf8 20.♙d3 ½-½ Smeets – Bakre, Dieren 2012) 17...♗f6 18.c3



18...b6 19.♗a3 ♖ae8 20.g4 ♗e2 21.h4 fxg4 22.fxg4 ♗f2 23.♖a1 a5 24.h5 ♗f4∞ Black ultimately prevailed from this complicated position in dinkelberger – frauholle, engine game 2013.

17.♙b3 b6 18.♗b5

18.♗f2N ♗b8! 19.h4 ♗d8 20.h5 ♗e5= shows a nice way for Black to regroup.

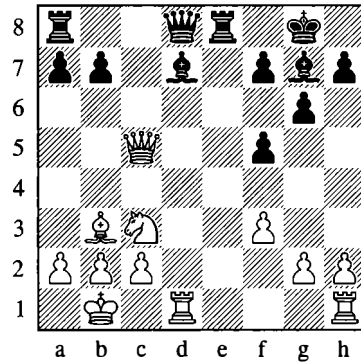


18...♗c8 19.c3 ♗c5 20.♗d3 ♗a8= Bernal Varela – Ortiz, email 2010.

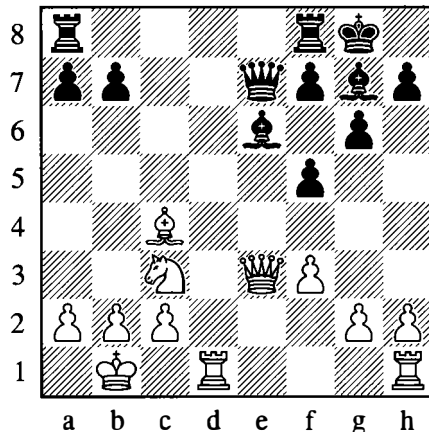
A2) 16.♙c3 ♗e7

This is the simplest response, although if you feel like sacrificing your queen then 16...♙xc4! can be considered.

The ugly-looking 16...♙d7!? is the maximalist approach. 17.♙b3 (Against 17.♙b5N it's important that Black has 17...♗e8!, when Ward's line continues: 18.♗xe8 ♙xe8 19.♙xe8 ♗fxe8 20.♙d5 ♗e2=) 17...♗e8 18.♗c5



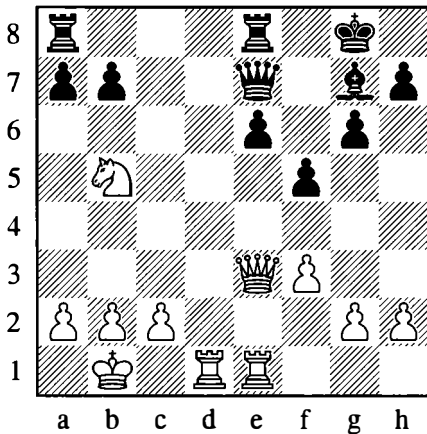
18...a5 19.♗c4 ♗f8 20.♗he1 b5 21.♗d5 b4 22.♗xd7 bxc3 23.♙xf7† ♖h8 24.♗xd8 ♗axd8 25.♙d5 ♗d7 26.♗e3 cxb2= zor – ocirema, engine game 2014. This way of playing is fine with engine assistance but I can imagine most players feeling anxious about having their bishop pinned for so long.



17.♙xe6 fxe6 18.♖he1 ♜fe8 19.♘b5

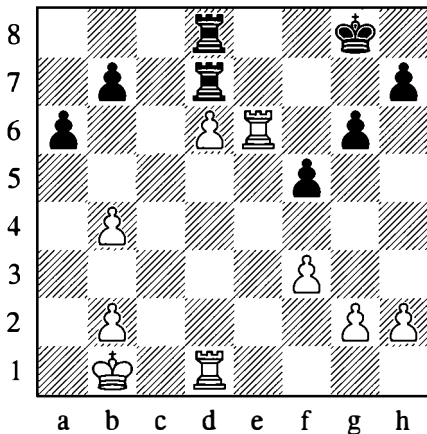
After 19.♘d5 ♜f7 20.♘f4 e5 21.♘d5 e4= White had failed to put Black under any pressure whatsoever in zor – ocirema, engine game 2014.

19.♙d3 occurred in zor – ocirema, engine game 2014. Here I like Ward’s suggestion of 19...♙ac8N, not fearing: 20.♜xa7 ♙xc3 21.♙xc3 ♙xc3 22.bxc3 ♜c7∞ With an exposed king and a crippled pawn majority, I don’t think White can be better.



19...♜b4 20.♜b3 ♜xb3 21.axb3 ♙e7 22.c4 a6 23.♘d6 ♙d8 24.b4 ♙ed7 25.♙xe6 ♙f8 26.c5 ♙xd6 27.cxd6

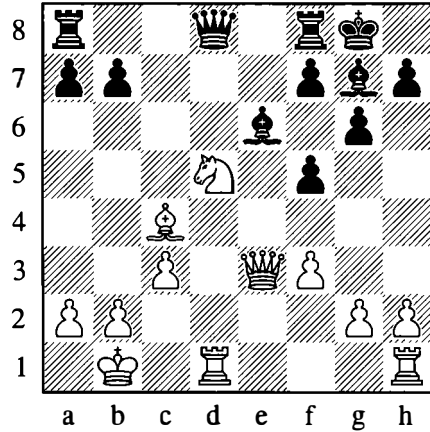
This logical sequence occurred in Andreikin – Morozevich, Moscow 2013. Black’s easiest continuation would have been:



27...b5N 28.♙c2 ♙f7=

With a drawn endgame.

A3) 16.c3



16...♙e8!?

This move keeps a little more tension in the position.

16...♜h4

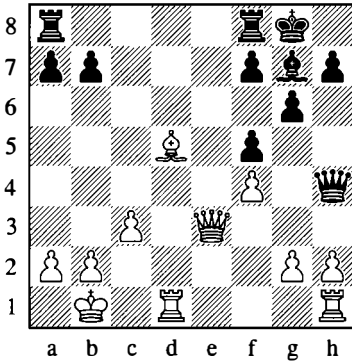
This has been played in a lot of engine and correspondence games, most of which have been drawn. The queen gets off the d-file with a gain of tempo. It is worthwhile encouraging f3-f4, as pawns on dark squares will be easier to attack in a future endgame. Objectively Black is fine but he may have to suffer a little to make the draw.

17.f4

17.♙b3 ♙xd5 18.♙xd5 ♜fe8 19.♜c5 ♙e5 20.a3 (20.♜b5 ♜b8 has been played in quite a few games, but Black has held all of them without much difficulty.) 20...♜e7 21.♜b4 ♜c7 22.♜c4 ♜xc4 23.♙xc4 ♙ae8 24.♙d7 ♙5e7 25.♙hd1 ♙h6 26.g3 ♙e3 27.♙c2 h5 28.h3 ♙g7 29.b4 ♙f2 30.g4 hxg4 31.hxg4 fxg4 32.fxg4 ♙h4= DeepBlueOcean – Pharaohum, engine game 2014.

17...♙xd5 18.♙xd5

18.♙xd5 ♙ae8 19.♜d2 ♜e7 20.♙b3 ♙d8 21.♙e1 ♙xd5 22.♙xd5 ♜c7= razor-question mark, engine game 2013.



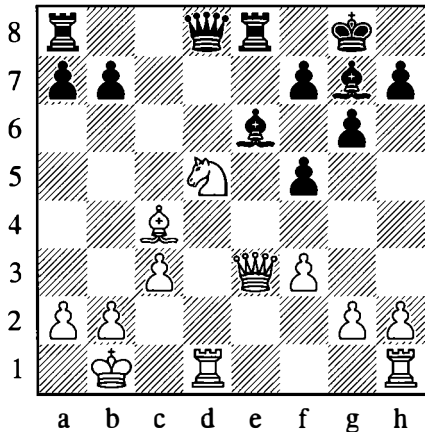
18...♟f8 19.♞d2
 19.♞f3 ♟ab8 20.g3 ♟e7 21.♞f2 b5
 22.♟h1 ♞c7 23.♟e3 was seen in bandit
 176–671 – jamwan, engine game 2012, and
 here I would opt for 23...a5N with an equal
 position.

19...♟ad8 20.g3 ♞f6 21.♞f2 b5 22.♞d2
 murx – idontknow, engine game 2012.

Again it was a good moment for:

22...a5N=

Starting to get some counterplay.



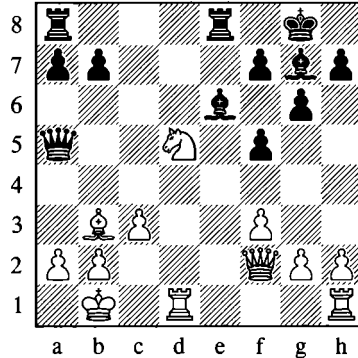
17.♞f4

I previously wrote that I thought this was
 White's best chance in the entire 10.♔b1
 complex, but I still don't think Black has
 anything to worry about.

17.♞f4 is no problem for us. On
 ChessPublishing I recommended 17...♞a5N

18.♟h1 ♟ed8 19.♞e3 ♟xd1† 20.♟xd1 ♟d8
 when Black is comfortable.

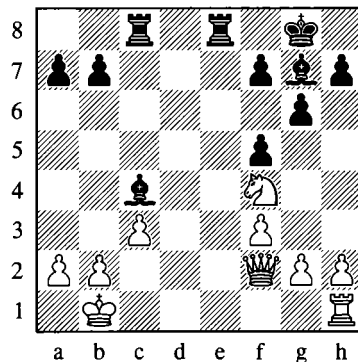
17.♞f2 ♞a5 18.♔b3?! (18.♞d2N ♟ad8 19.♟hd1
 ♟d7= was necessary) In Rivas Garcia – Martin
 Gonzalez, Catalonia 2012, Black missed a chance
 to make things awkward for his opponent:



18...♟ed8!N 19.♞e7† ♔f8 20.♞h4 ♔xb3
 21.axb3 h5

17...♞c7

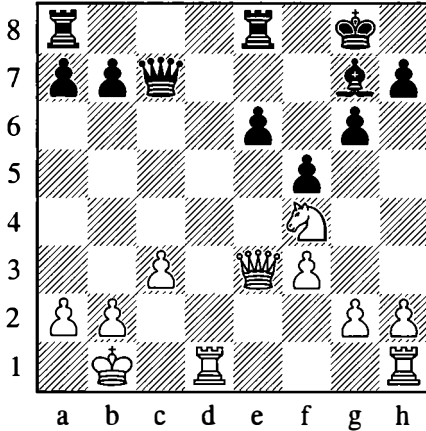
Now that White has played the weakening
 c2-c3, the following queen sacrifice is quite
 interesting: 17...♔xc4!? 18.♟xd8 ♟axd8
 19.♞c5 ♟c8 White has a small material
 advantage but it will be difficult for him to
 utilize it. 20.♞f2 It is worth considering the
 following suggestion of Chris Ward:



20...a5!N (After 20...♟cd8 21.♟e1 ♔e5 22.g3
 White eventually ground out the full point in
 fischerfanatic3 – katzenmaier, Internet 2012.)

21.♖e1 ♜d8!?! I think Black's position is fully playable but it's a matter of taste; I happen to quite enjoy sacrificing my queen!

18.♙xe6 fxe6



This position has undergone an awful lot of correspondence and engine testing. All the correspondence games have been drawn, while in the all-computer battles Black has won four to White's one, with lots of draws. Meanwhile, over the board Black has scored 2½/3. The verdict is that Black is doing fine with his strong bishop and extra central pawn, even if the king feels slightly looser than would like. It is best to keep the pawn on e6 for a while to avoid giving White an outpost on d5.

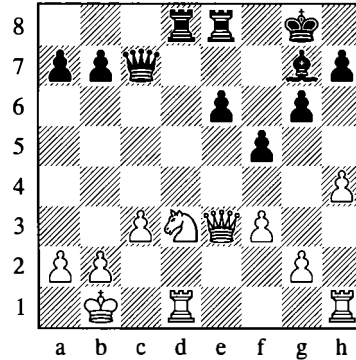
19.♞he1

This has been played in all three over-the-board encounters.

19.♘xe6?? is impossible due to 19...♞c6 20.♞he1 ♞e7+ when White has no way out of the pin.

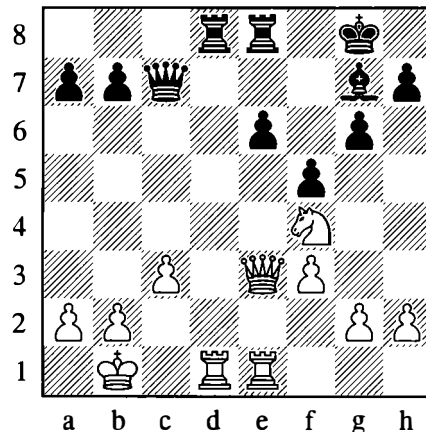
19.g3 has been the choice of a lot of engines, but both 19...b5 and 19...♞ac8 have proved fine for Black. The issue for White is that the e6-pawn is never really hanging as he will not be able to get his knight out of the pin along the e-file.

19.h4 is White's most direct approach but he does not have time to create any threats. 19...♞ad8 20.♘d3 (20.♞xd8 ♞xd8 21.♘d3 h5 22.♘f2 b5 23.g3 ♞d6 24.♞g5 e5 25.♞d1 ♞c6= *_beware_* – frauholle, engine game 2012.)



20...♞d6!?! 21.♞xa7 ♞ed8 22.♘f2 ♞xd1† 23.♞xd1 ♞xd1† 24.♘xd1 h5= White has picked up a pawn but is left with a vulnerable kingside. Both correspondence games were drawn fairly quickly.

19...♞ad8



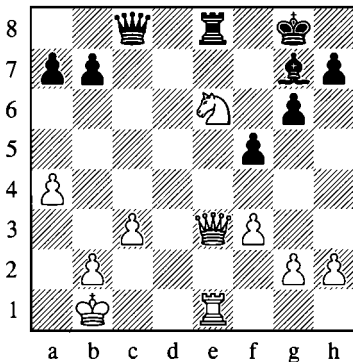
20.♞xd8

20.g3 occurred in Slingerland – Pijpers, Leiden 2013, and here I like 20...♞xd1†N 21.♞xd1 ♞c6 when Black is fine.

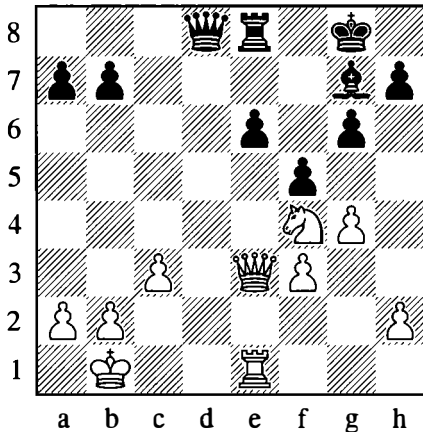
20...♙xd8 21.g4

Another game was soon drawn after 21.♙e2 ♜d6 22.g3 ♙c6 23.♞d1 ♔f6 24.♞d3 a5 25.♙d1 ♖f7 26.♞d6 ½–½ Marczell – Haugen, email 2011.

21.♞xe6 ♙c8 22.a4 was dinkelberger – frauholle, engine game 2013 – the only example I found where White actually captured the e-pawn. My engine informs me that Black is clearly better after:



22...b6!N 23.g4 h6!♣ Preparing ...♖f7.



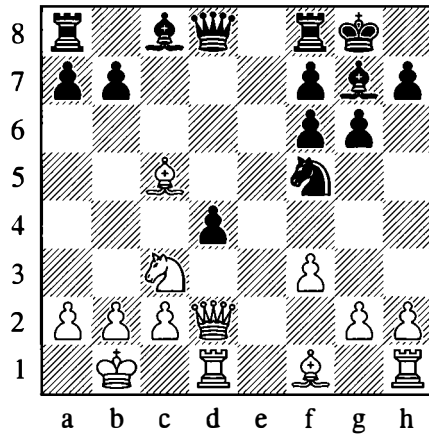
21...♙g5!?

21...e5 is also fine as White won't be able to get his knight to d5 easily.

22.♞d3 ♙xe3 23.♞xe3 ♖f7

½–½ Ressler – Aleksandrov, corr. 2013.

B) 13.♙c5 d4!



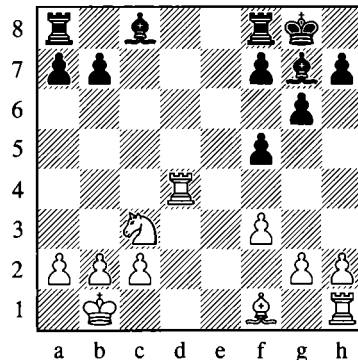
This is the big idea behind the ...exf6 capture. Black gives up the exchange in return for control of the e3-square and strong play on the dark squares.

14.♙xf8

Taking the material is the only way to challenge Black's play.

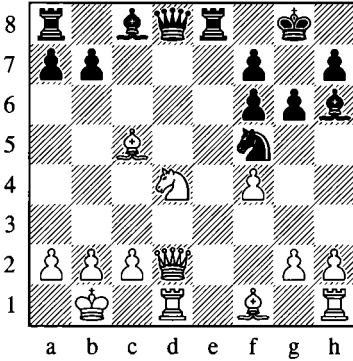
14.g4? allows 14...♞e3! 15.♙xf8 ♞xd1♣.

14.♙xd4? is illogical, as White simply gets a worse version of the 13.♞d5 line that has just been examined. 14...♞xd4 15.♙xd4 ♙xd4 16.♞xd4 f5



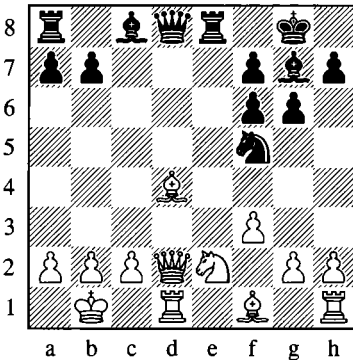
17.♞b4 ♞d8 18.♙d3 b6 19.♞b5 ♙b7♣ Lach – Kanarek, Zabrze 2015.

14. ♖b5?! ♜e8! 15. ♜xd4 ♘h6 16. f4 (16. ♖c3 ♜e3♣ wins material since 17. ♜e1? ♜d5-+ is even worse for White, as Ward points out) This position was reached in Jessel – Ward, Douglas 2005. I think the most accurate continuation would have been:



16... ♖c7!N 17. ♖c3 ♜e3 18. ♜e1 ♘xf4♣

14. ♜e2?! is a passive square for the knight. 14... ♜e8 15. ♘xd4 (15. ♜xd4 transposes to 14. ♖b5?! above) In Jimenez de la Torre – Nicolas Zapata, Linares 2013, Black could have claimed a clear advantage with an idea we have seen before:



15... ♘h6!N 16. f4 ♘e6♣

14. ♖f2

This was played in Willemze – Janssen, Wijk aan Zee 1996, one of the first games in the entire line. I found an immediate improvement:

14... ♖a5!N

Black suddenly has a venomous attack.

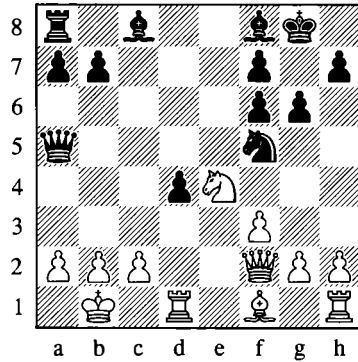
15. ♘xf8

15. ♘xd4 ♘e6 16. a3 ♜xd4 17. ♜xd4 ♣-+

15.b4 is the engine's ugly suggestion. It is not surprising that 15... ♖a3 16. ♖b5 ♖a4 17. ♜c7 ♘d7 18. ♜xa8 ♜c8! is excellent for Black, as White's king is wide open.

15... ♘xf8 16. ♜e4

16. ♖b5 ♘e6 17. a3 a6 18. ♜xd4 ♘c5-+



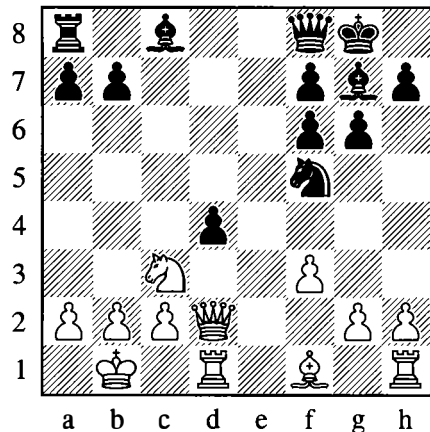
16... ♘e6 17. b3

17.a3 ♘xa3! 18. bxa3 ♖xa3 gives Black a decisive attack.

17... ♖b6! 18. ♜xf6♣ ♘g7 19. ♜e4 ♜e3 20. ♜e1 a5♣

White will have a hard time defending.

14... ♖xf8

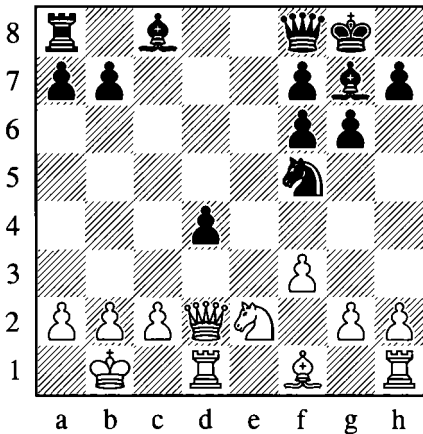


White must decide where to put his knight, the main candidates being **B1) 15.♗e2** and **B2) 15.♗b5**.

15.♗e4?! fails to put pressure on the d4-pawn and allows Black to play ...f5 with tempo. 15...♗e3 16.♞e1 f5 17.♗f2 ♙e6 18.♗d1 f4+ Della Morte – Moskow, Villa Martelli 2007.

15.♗d5 was prematurely agreed drawn in Stankovic – Elez, Divcibare 2009. The game might continue: 15...♞c5N 16.c4 (16.g4 ♞xd5 17.gxf5 ♙xf5 18.♞xd4 ♞xf3+) 16...♙e6 17.♞b4 b6 18.♞xc5 bxc5 Despite the queens being exchanged, Black still has fine compensation. A timely trade on d5 will probably enable him to pick up a second pawn for the exchange, leaving him with some advantage thanks to the strong e3-outpost.

B1) 15.♗e2



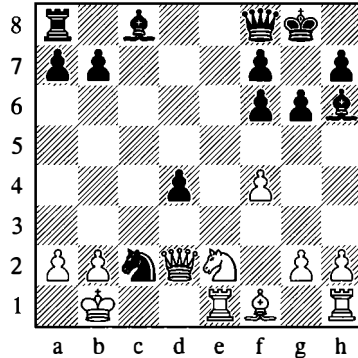
This is rather a passive choice, and will make it hard for White to extricate his bishop from f1.

15...♗e3!?

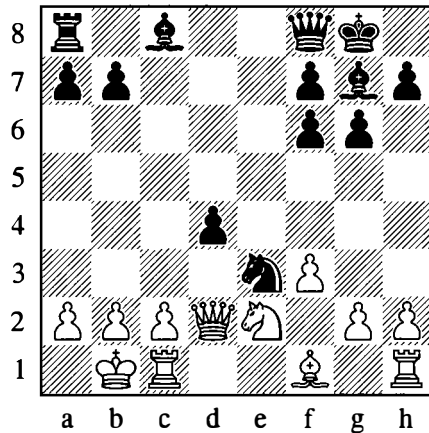
15...♙e6N is analysed in depth by Bragesjo and also looks reasonable for Black. However, I suggest following the example of Jobava, who used the text move with powerful effect.

16.♞c1

16.♞e1?! ♙h6! is surprisingly awkward for White. The following game did not last long: 17.f4 ♗xc2!



18.♞c1 (18.♖xc2N ♙f5+ 19.♖b3 [19.♖d1 ♞c5+] 19...♙e6+ 20.♖c2 d3+! 21.♖b1 dxe2 22.♙xe2 ♞d8+) 18...♗e3 19.g3 ♙f5+ 20.♖a1 ♙e4 21.♞g1 ♞d8 22.g4 ♗c2+ 23.♞xc2 ♙xc2 24.♗xd4 ♞c5 0–1 Montero Fernandez – Oliva Castaneda, Havana 2010.



16...♗c4!

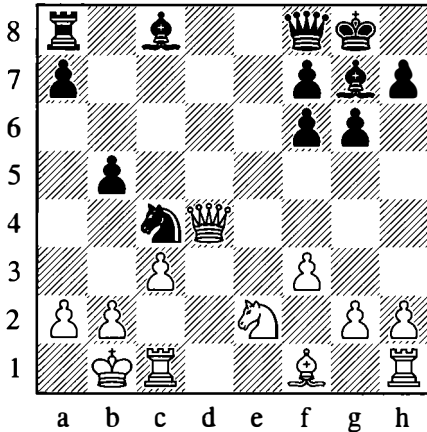
The creative Georgian GM forces White to take the pawn on d4, after which the g7-bishop will become extremely powerful.

17.♞xd4 b5 18.c3

18.♗f4? f5 19.♞d5 ♙b7!! 20.♙xc4 (Black's cunning point is that 20.♞xb7 allows

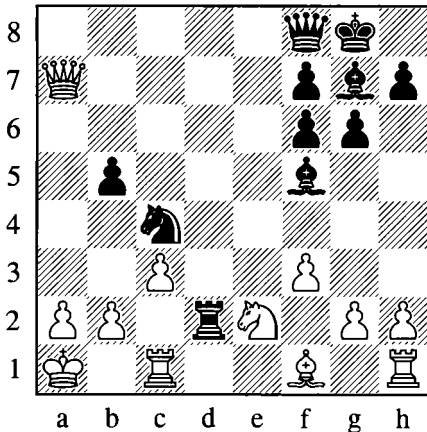
20...♖d2† 21.♔a1 ♜xb2† 22.♔xb2 ♞b4†
 23.♔a1 ♞c3#) 20...♙xd5 21.♙xd5 ♖b8 was
 winning for Black in Ly Hong Nguyen –
 Nguyen Duc Hoa, Ho Chi Minh City 2010.

18.♞c3!N looks like the only way for White
 to survive, but Black still has great counterplay
 after 18...♙h6 19.f4 ♙b7.



18...♙f5† 19.♔a1 ♔d8 20.♞f2
 As Rogozenko observes, 20.♞xa7? loses to
 20...♖a8 21.♞b7 ♞d8! when White has to give
 her queen to prevent mate along the a-file.

20...♔d2 21.♞xa7
 We have been following Lahno – Jobava,
 Dubai 2004, where Black could have won with
 a powerful retreat:

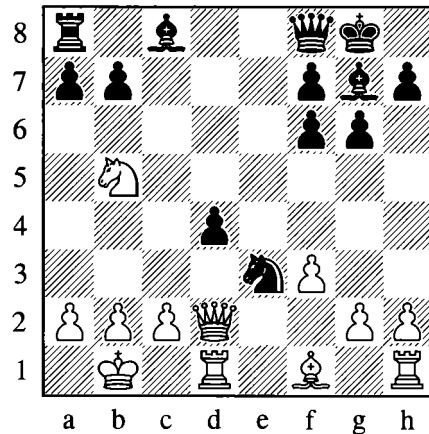


21...♔d7!N 22.♞a6
 After 22.♞f2 ♖d2! White has to give up a
 lot of material to prevent mate along the a-file.
 An illustrative line is: 23.♖d4 ♔xd4! 24.♞xd4
 ♖b3†! 25.axb3 ♞a8†-+

22...♞b8 23.♖d4 ♖a7 24.♞xb5
 24.♖c6 ♞f4! wins. The text move allows
 Black to catch the king, but giving up the
 queen would also be hopeless for White.

24...♖xa2†! 25.♔xa2 ♞a7† 26.♔b3 ♖d2†
 27.♔b4 ♙f8†
 With mate to follow.

B2) 15.♖b5 ♖e3

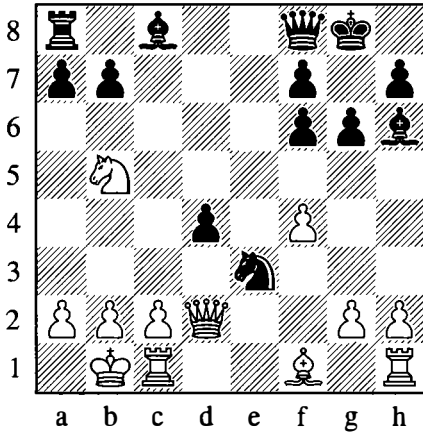


From here it is important to remember how
 to deal with both B21) 16.♔c1 and B22)
 16.♔e1, and to note how the differing rook
 placement may affect the play.

B21) 16.♔c1 ♙h6!

The potential skewer enables Black to win back
 some material. White may try B211) 17.f4 or
 B212) 17.♞xd4.

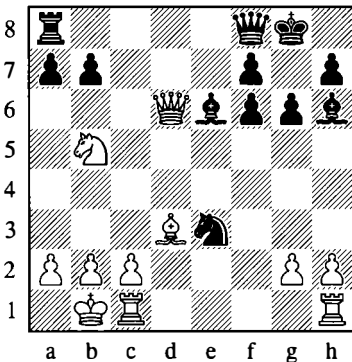
B211) 17.f4



White gives back a pawn to keep the exchange. This has been tried from time to time but is not too challenging.

17...♙xf4 18.♞xd4 ♙h6 19.♝c7

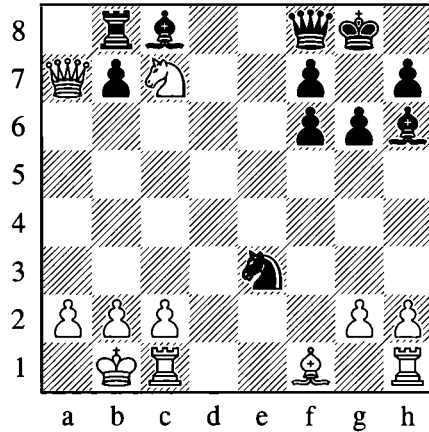
19.♙d3N is a sensible developing move but 19...♙f5! 20.♞d6 ♙e6! keeps White under pressure. Despite the extra exchange, it is hard for White to do anything with the knight on e3 dominating the board. The game might continue:



21.♞xf8† ♙xf8 22.g3 a6 23.♝c3 ♝d5 24.♙cd1 ♝xc3† 25.bxc3 f5 26.♞he1 ♙c8 27.c4 f4 Black's kingside majority gives him the better chances.

19...♞b8 20.♞xa7

White has a full extra exchange but he has no coordination whatsoever.



20...♙d7

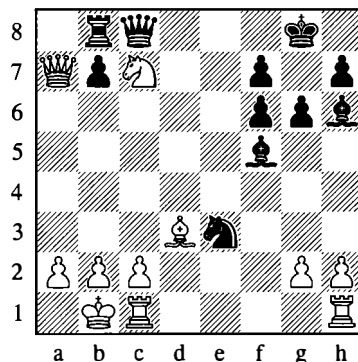
20...♙f5 21.♙d3 transposes to the next note.

21.♞e1!?

White had to try:

21.♙b5 ♙f5 22.♙d3 ♞c8!?

22...♙d7N is a safe alternative when White had better repeat, as 23.♞ce1 ♞c8 24.♞c5 ♝xg2 25.♞e4 ♙f8 26.♞b6 ♙c6 27.♙d4 ♝e3 favours Black; 22...♞d8N was suggested by Tomas Bragesjo, who analyses it to a draw.



23.♝b5 ♙a8 24.♞d4 ♙e6 25.a3 ♞c6

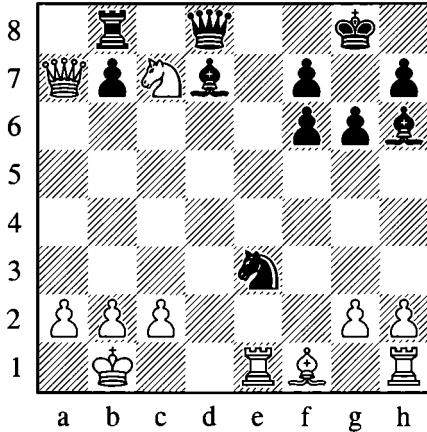
25...♝xg2!N could also be considered. 26.♞b4 ♝d5 27.♞d6 ♙xc1 28.♞xc1 ♞xd6 29.♝xd6 b6=

Vaitzel – Karason, email 2009.

21...♖d8

The knight is now trapped.

21...♘xc2! ♞ is also interesting, and after 22.♔xc2 ♜c8 23.♗b1! ♜xc7 24.♙d3 ♙e6+ Black has more than enough compensation.

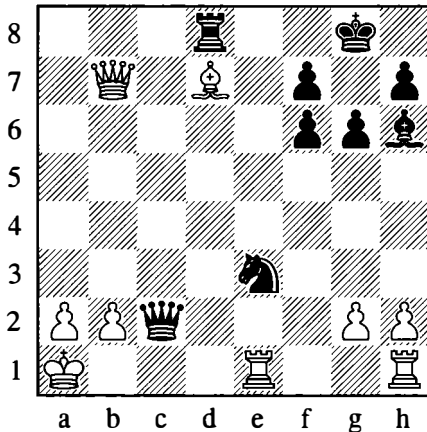


22.♙b5

This is White's only chance, as 22.♖b6? runs into 22...♘xc2! 23.♗xc2 ♙f5+ 24.♗b3 ♖d2 and Black wins.

22...♖xc7 23.♙xd7 ♖xc2+ 24.♗a1 ♜d8 25.♖xb7?!

25.♜xe3 ♞ was a better try although 25...♜xd7 26.♜e1 ♙f4 27.g3 ♙e5+ leaves Black with a pleasant position, as I noted on ChessPublishing.



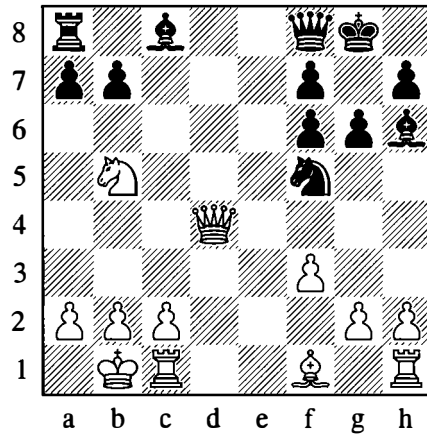
25...♖c4

Black wins back the material while keeping a strong attack.

26.♜c1 ♘c2+ 27.♗b1 ♙xc1 28.♜xc1 ♘a3+! 29.bxa3 ♖d3+ 30.♗b2 ♜xd7

White was unable to hold the ending in Paragua – Lu Shanglei, Ho Chi Minh City 2012.

B212) 17.♖xd4 ♘f5



White has tried a few different spots for the queen but none of them give him an advantage.

18.♖c3

This was tested at the highest level in 2009 when Short used it against Carlsen.

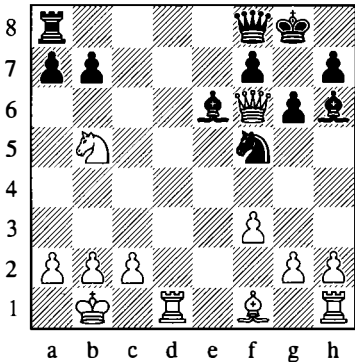
18.♖f2?! is too passive: 18...♙e3 19.♖e1 ♙xc1 20.♖xc1 ♖c5 21.♘c3 ♙e6 22.♙d3 ♜d8 23.g4 ♘d4 24.♘e4 ♖a5+ Thomsen – Moreira, email 2007.

18.♖d1?! ♙e6 19.♙d3 ♖c5 20.♘c3 ♜d8 21.♖e2 ♘d4 22.♖f2 ♙xc1 23.♜xc1 ♖a5+ Biryukov – Sadykov, Moscow 2012. Again the respective activity of the pieces is more important than the pawn structure.

18.♖xf6 ♙e6 19.♜d1

a) After 19.♘c7N Black has an immediate draw: 19...♙xa2† (19...♙g7 is Bragesjo's move, which he shows is also a draw) 20.♗xa2 ♙g7 21.♞g5 ♙xb2! 22.♗xb2 ♞b4† with perpetual.

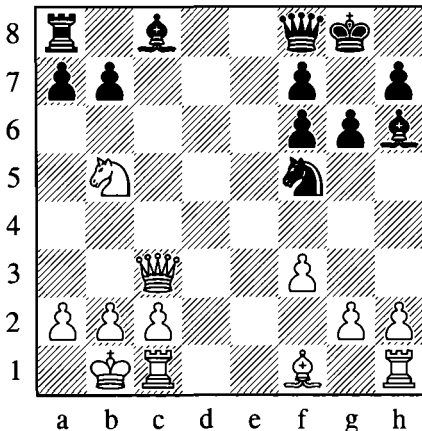
b) 19.♙d3?!N would be dangerous for White: 19...♙g7 20.♞g5 a6 21.♘c7 ♞b4! (Black can force a draw with 21...♙xa2† 22.♗xa2 ♙xb2 as in the previous variation, but he can and should play for more.) 22.c3 ♞d6 23.♘xe6 (23.♘xa8 ♙h6 24.♞g4 ♞xd3† 25.♙c2 ♘e3 26.♞e4 ♞d8!†) 23...♞xd3† 24.♗a1 fxe6†



19...♙g7 20.♞g5 ♙h6

A draw was agreed in Filippov – Vakhidov, Tashkent 2011. As Bragesjo observed, White is clearly worse should he attempt to play on. 21.♞g4? ♘e3 22.♞d4 ♘xd1 23.♞xd1

Bragesjo continues with 23...♙d8 but an even stronger move is: 23...♙g7!†



18...♙xc1 19.♗xc1 ♙d7 20.♙d3 ♙c8

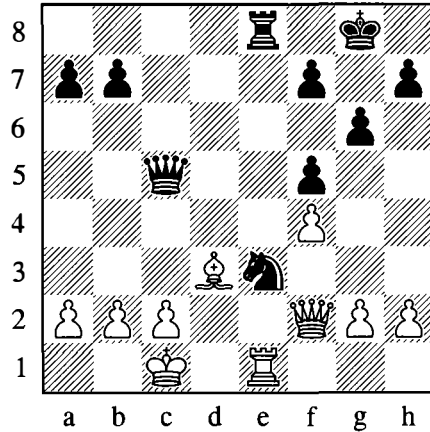
20...♘e3!?N can be considered, but Black is in no particular need of an improvement.

21.♞d2

21.♞xf6N is rather dangerous: 21...♙xb5 22.♙xb5 ♞h6† 23.♗b1 ♞d2 24.♙c1 ♞xg2 25.♙d7 ♙f8 26.♙xf5 ♞xf3 Only Black can be better in this ending.

21...♙xb5 22.♙xb5 ♞c5 23.♙d3 ♘e3 24.♙e1 ♙e8 25.♞f2 f5 26.f4

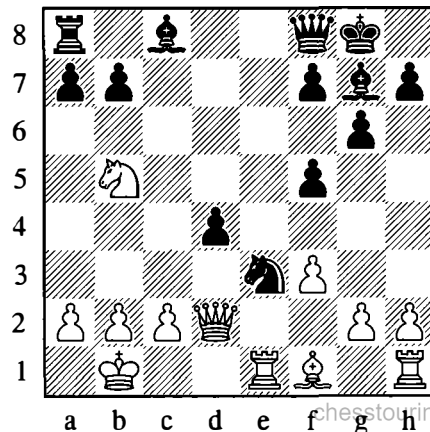
Otherwise Black would have cemented his knight on e3.



26...♞d4 27.g3 ♙e6 28.♞d2 ♘g4†

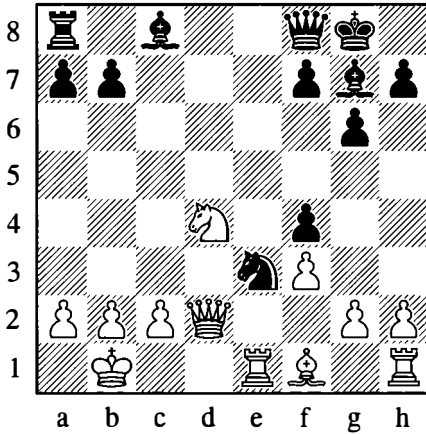
Nigel did well to hold on to the half point in Short – Carlsen, London 2009.

B22) 16.♙e1 f5!



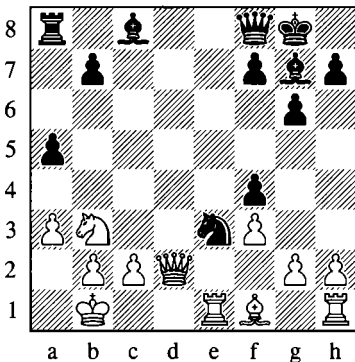
With the rook on e1 there are no skewer ideas, so it is better to cement the knight on e3. White can either play **B221) 17.♘xd4** immediately or attempt to disrupt Black's plan with **B222) 17.f4**.

B221) 17.♘xd4 f4



The e3-knight dominates the board and White can't really get anywhere without giving back the exchange, which will leave Black with good compensation for the pawn. White's two main options are **B2211) 18.g3** and **B2212) 18.c3**.

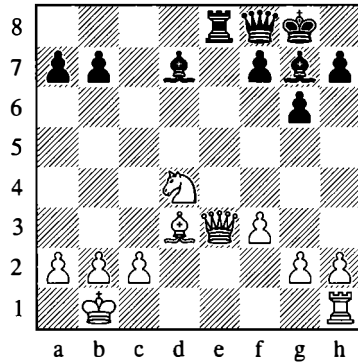
After 18.♘b3 a5! 19.a3 Black missed a good chance in C. Van Oosterom – Bakker, Delft 2012.



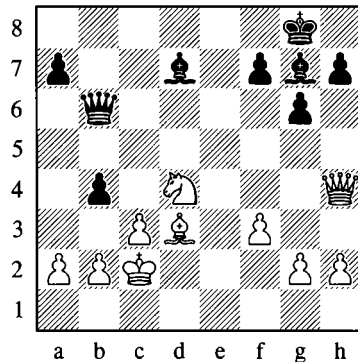
19...♙e6!N This would have given White

some problems. The point is that his bishop will no longer be so secure on d3, as Black can exchange on b3, forcing the c2-pawn away from its defence. After 20.♙d3 ♖d8 21.♘xa5 b6 22.♘b3 ♜d6+ White is under heavy pressure.

White has also tried giving back the exchange immediately: 18.♙xe3 fxe3 19.♜xe3 ♙d7 20.♙d3 ♖e8 White has an extra pawn but Black has developed all his pieces and has lasting pressure.

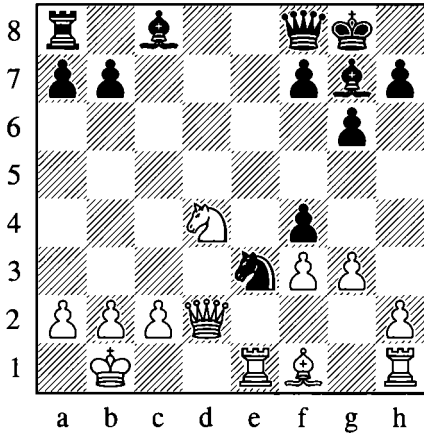


21.♜f2 (21.♜f4 ♙e5 22.♜e4 ♜d6 23.c3 b6=) 21...♜c5 22.c3 b5 23.♙e1 ♖xe1+ 24.♜xe1 b4 25.♜h4 ♜b6 26.♙c2 So far Black had done everything right in Landa – Gustafsson, Baden-Baden 2012, but here he missed a good chance:



26...♙a4+!N 27.♘b3 (27.b3 bxc3) 27...a5+ With a huge initiative.

B2211) 18.g3

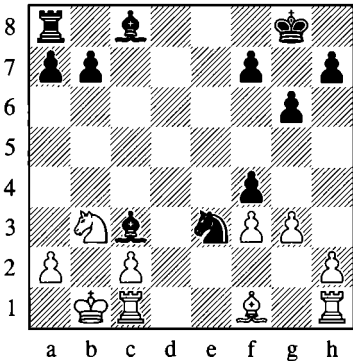


White attempts to dislodge the knight from its post.

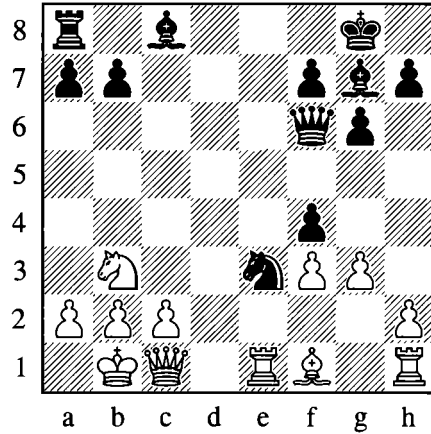
18...♞d8 19.♘b3 ♞f6 20.♞c1

20.c3? ♙f5† 21.♘c1 ♞d8 22.♞f2 ♞c6 was already completely crushing in Arenas Vanegas – Guerrero, Medellin 2010, indicating just how tricky White’s position is.

20.♞c3?! is also pretty miserable. 20...♞xc3 21.bxc3 ♙xc3 22.♞c1 In Bagi – G. Toth, Budapest 2010, Black missed the extremely strong:



22...a5!N Simply getting on with the attack. After 23.gxf4 b6 the b3-knight is short of squares; in fact White is running out of moves in general.



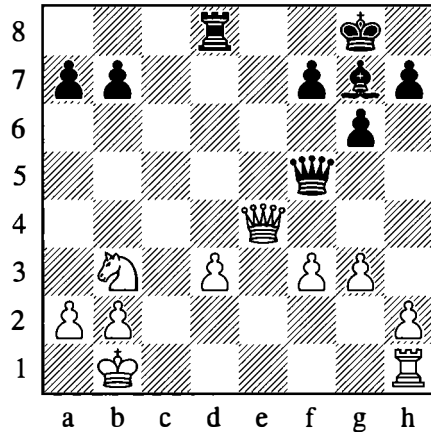
20...♙f5 21.♙d3 ♙xd3 22.cxd3 ♞f5 23.♞xc3

The pressure on White’s position forces him to give the exchange back anyway.

23...fxe3 24.♞xe3 ♞d8 25.♞e4

As I noted on ChessPublishing, 25.♞d1 a5! is rather awkward for White.

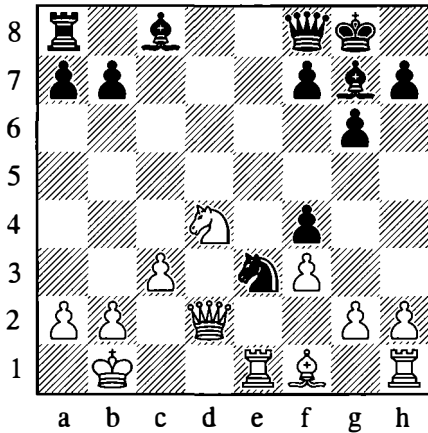
In Minchev – Laskov, email 2009, Black let his opponent off the hook by taking on d3 and allowing the queen trade. A stronger continuation is:



25...♞b5!N 26.♞c4 ♞e5

With an ongoing initiative.

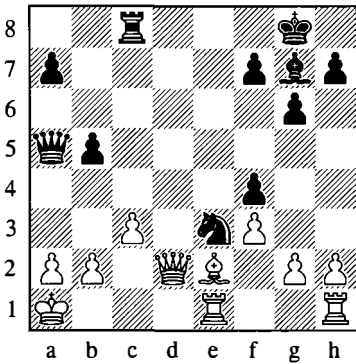
B2212) 18.c3



Supporting the knight is sensible.

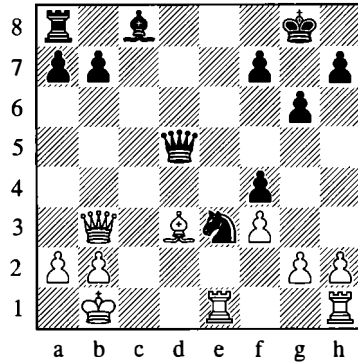
18...♖d6 19.♗xe3

The following engine game is a good indication of what might befall White should he stubbornly refuse to return the exchange: 19.♖c1 ♗e6 20.♘xe6 ♜xe6 21.♖b1 ♞b6 22.♖a1 ♝d8 23.♞c1 ♞a5 24.♗e2 ♝c8 25.♞d2 b5



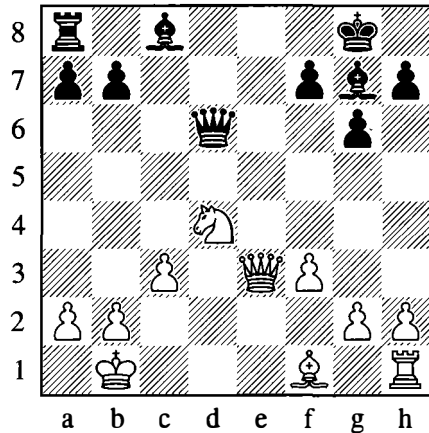
26.♝d1 White decides it is necessary to give back the exchange after all. 26...♗f6 27.♖b1 b4 28.♞d7 ♞c5 29.c4 ♘xd1 30.♝xd1 ♖g7+ khosea – scivu, engine game 2014.

Another good example continued: 19.♗d3 ♗xd4 20.cxd4 ♞xd4 21.♞c3 ♞d5 22.♞b3 ♞d4 23.♞c3 ♞d5 24.♞b3



24...♞d4 (Black can also play on: 24...♞d6!?N 25.♞a3 ♞xa3 26.bxa3 ♗e6 27.♗e2 ♝d8 with good compensation) 25.♞c3 ½-½ sparta 300 – schachagent, engine game 2014.

19...fxe3 20.♞xe3



20...♗xd4

Black swaps off his strong bishop in order to weaken White's structure.

20...♗d7!?N would also give Black good compensation. One line runs: 21.♗c4 ♝e8 22.♞d3 ♗xd4 23.♞xd4 ♗f5+ 24.♖a1 ♞xh2 25.♝d1 ♞xg2 26.♞f6 ♗e6 27.♗xe6 fxe6 28.a3 ♞e2 29.♝d7 ♞f1+ 30.♖a2 ♞c4+ =

21.cxd4

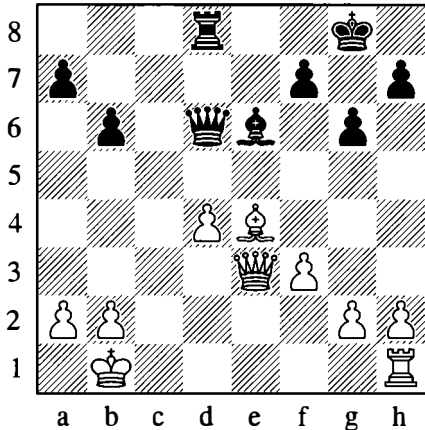
White is advised to keep the queens on the board.

The endgame after 21.♚xd4N ♕f5† 22.♖c1 ♚xd4 23.cxd4 ♜c8† 24.♖d1 h5= should be a draw, but White will have to suffer.

21...♕e6 22.♕d3 ♝d8 23.♕e4 b6!?

Black is happy to provoke a structural imbalance.

23...♚b4N would immediately reach a drawn position: 24.♚c3 (24.♝d1? ♕xa2†!) 24...♝xd4=



24.♝d1!?

It would have been safer for White to give the d4-pawn to reach a drawn ending.

24...♚xh2 25.d5 ♚e5 26.f4 ♚h5 27.♕f3 ♕g4 28.♚e7

28.♕xg4 ♚xg4 29.♚d2 ♝d6= is a safer approach for White.

28...♝c8 29.d6 ♚f5†

29...♚c5!N also looks promising.

30.♕e4?

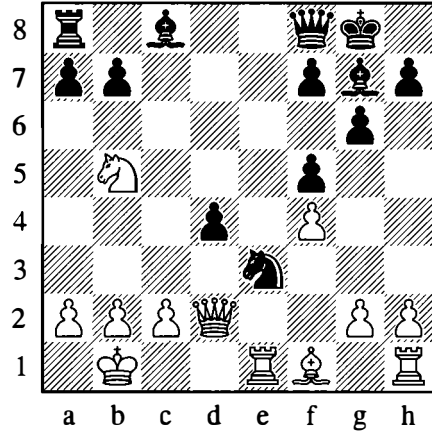
White cracks. The passive-looking 30.♖a1!N was necessary, although 30...♚c2! (30...♚xf4 31.♝b1! ♝c1 32.♕xg4 ♝xb1† 33.♖xb1 ♚xg4 will end in a draw, as the d6-pawn is too strong for Black to play for a win while the white king has nowhere to hide) 31.♚e1 ♕d7 still favours Black.

In Soro Paez – Kuderinov, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010, Black should have played:

30...♚xf4!N

With a big advantage. Perhaps Black missed that after 31.d7? ♕xd7 White cannot recapture the bishop.

B222) 17.f4



This is perhaps the sharpest variation in the entire chapter, so it should be studied carefully. White prevents the advance of the f-pawn and prepares to undermine the strong knight.

17...♚c5 18.c3

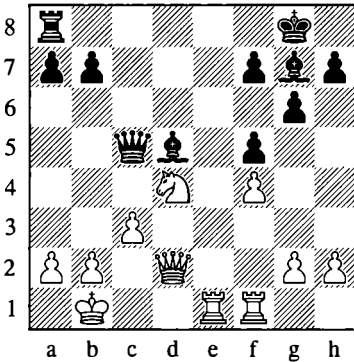
This is White's only way to fight against the knight.

Giving Black enough time to complete his development with something like 18.♕d3?N ♕e6-+ would be horrible for White.

18.b4? ♖xf1 (18...♚c6!N might be even better) 19.♝e8† ♕f8 20.♚e1 ♚xb5 21.♚e7 ♚xe8 22.♚xe8 ♖d2† 23.♖c1 ♖c4† gave Black a much better version of the type of position seen after 18.c3 in Kraiouchkine – Vakhidov, Burdur 2010.

18...♖f1

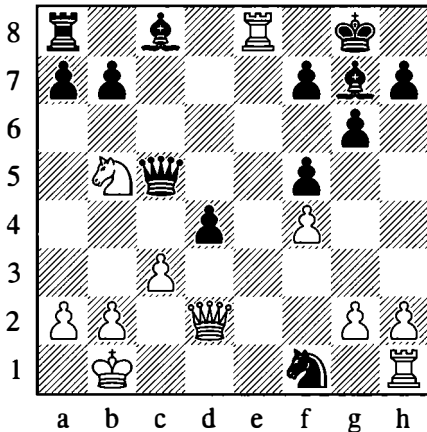
18...♙e6!? is an interesting alternative. After 19.♖xd4 ♜xf1 20.♞hxfl ♙d5



White should be a little better with the extra exchange but Black's bishops are very useful and he has some attacking chances. Stephen Ham had two correspondence games here and drew both. 21.g4!? was an aggressive choice tried in the only over-the-board game Schut – Ocantos, Maastricht 2010. 21...fxg4 22.f5 Here Black should have completed his development with 22...♞d8N with a roughly equal position.

19.♞e8†

White's next few moves are forced.

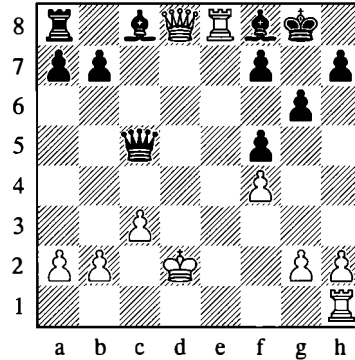


19...♙f8 20.♞xd4

White has tried 20.♞xf1? a couple of times but after 20...♞xb5 Black is in time to defuse White's initiative: 21.♞fe1 b6 22.♞xd4 ♙b7+

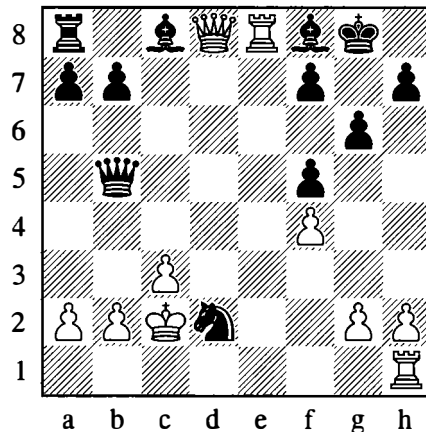
20...♞xb5 21.♞d8 ♖d2† 22.♙c2

22.♙c1 gives Black an additional option: 22...♞c5!? (22...♞xe8 would transpose to the main line) 23.♙xd2



23...♙d7 (23...♙g7 also seems okay) 24.♞xa8 (24.♞xd7 ♞xe8 25.♞xe8 is the same) 24...♙xe8 25.♞xe8 ♞d5† 26.♙c1 ♞xg2= This seems to lead to a draw, as I mentioned on ChessPublishing. Black will pick up all White's kingside pawns and White cannot generate any attacking chances of his own, as his king is too vulnerable.

Returning to the main line, Black will shortly have to give up his queen for the rook on e8. He will be left with three pieces against a queen, but will face a slight challenge in completing development.

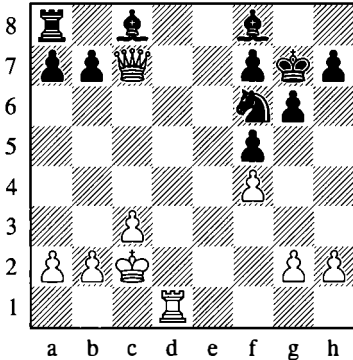


22...♖a4!?

23...♖xe8

The immediate capture is also fully playable and might be the easiest approach.

23.♖xe8 ♖e4 24.♞d1 ♖f6 25.♗d8 ♔g7 26.♖c7



26...b5!

With the king on c2 this works well for Black.

27.♞d8

27.♖c6 ♖b8 28.♖c7 ♖a8 would be an immediate draw.

27...♔b7 28.♞xa8

28.♞xf8? ♔e4† is the reason that this line works with the king on c2 but not c1.

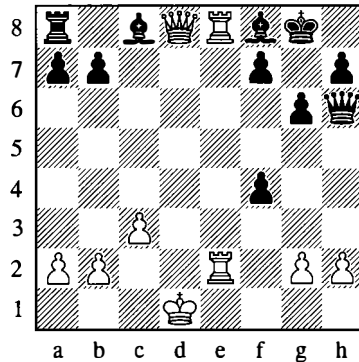
28...♔xa8 29.g3 ♔e4†

We are left with an interesting material imbalance. In general the minor pieces should outgun the queen, as long as White isn't able to rush his queenside pawns up the board. In the four games I have found from this position, Black has scored an encouraging two wins and two draws, so we may conclude that his kingside pawn mass is at least as dangerous as White's queenside pawns.

23.♔c1

It might seem strange, but taking the knight with 23.♔xd2 is rare. The reason is that Black no longer has to give up his queen and, once the f4-pawn has been taken, Black will be threatening to develop his queenside more

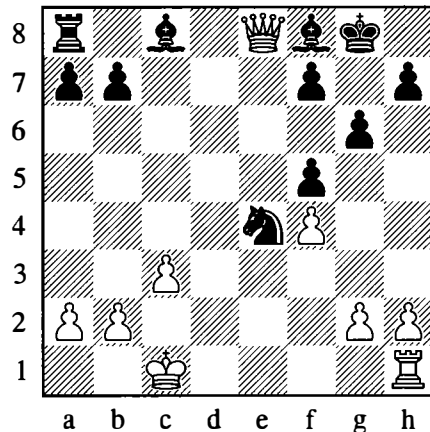
quickly. 23...♖xf4† 24.♔d1 (24.♔c2?!N ♖h6 25.♞he1 f4† favours Black; the threat of ...♔f5† is troubling for White) 24...♖h6 25.♞he1 f4 26.♞le2 White has to block the check on g4.



26...b6 27.♖d5 ♖b8 28.♗d6 ♖a8 29.♖c6 ♖b8 30.♖c7 ♖a8 31.h3 (31.♞xc8N ♞xc8 32.♖xc8 ♖xh2 is extremely messy) 31...♔xh3 32.♞xa8 ♔g4 33.♖c4 ♖h5 34.♔e1 ♖h1† 35.♔f2 ♖h4† 36.♔g1 ♔xe2 37.♖xe2 ♔g7 38.♖e5† f6 ½-½ Walter – Froewis, email 2010.

23...♖xe8 24.♖xe8 ♖e4

The position is similar to that after 22..♖xe8, but the placement of the king on c1 makes for some subtle differences. If Black could get fully coordinated then his three pieces would outgun the queen, but he is still tied up at the moment.



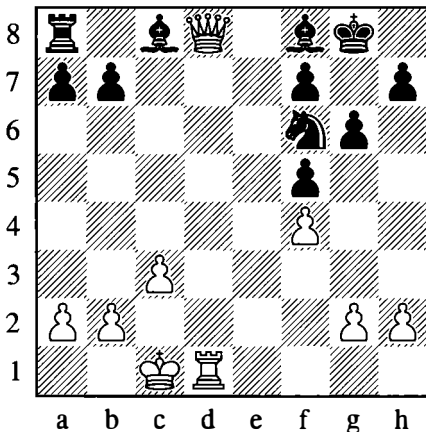
25. ♖d1 ♜f6

Black has to prevent White from doubling on the eighth rank.

26. ♖d8!?

26. ♖e5 ♜d7 27. ♖e8 would just repeat the position. Instead 27. ♖e3 ♜c5 28. ♖d8 ♜e6 29. ♖e8 was tried in Cuellar Elisvan – Guerrero, Cali 2010, and here 29... ♜g7N 30. ♖d8 ♜e6 would have drawn immediately.

26. ♖b5 has been the engines' attempt at keeping the game going. 26... ♙e7 27. a4 a5 It makes sense not to allow White's a-pawn to advance too far. 28. ♜c2 ♜f8 29. b3 ♜e4 30. ♖e5 ♙f6 31. ♖c7 ♜g7 32. c4 ♙e6 33. ♖xb7 ♖c8 34. ♖b6 ½-½ spiti – frauholle, engine game 2014.

**26... ♜g7**

26... ♜e4 was tried in the stem game Nisipeanu – Radjabov, Bazna 2009, but I think the king move is more accurate.

27. ♖c7

White makes way for the rook to come to d8.

27... ♙e6

Let me remind you that 27...b5? does not work with the king on c1, as after 28. ♖d8 ♙b7

29. ♖xf8!+– there is no check on e4, and so the b7-bishop drops.

28. ♖xb7 ♖c8 29. ♖xa7

29. ♜c2 seems an odd choice, and after 29... ♙c5 30. c4 ♙e3 31. b3 ♙xf4 32. ♖xa7 ♙xh2 Black certainly wasn't worse in Khokhlov – Storkebaum, email 2011.

29... ♙c5

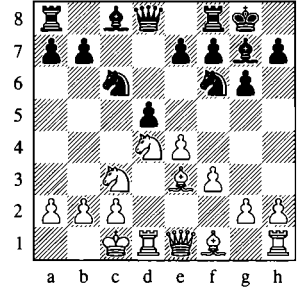
The position remained double-edged but roughly balanced in Tsirakovsky – Candy, email 2010. This is quite a typical position for the variation starting with 17.f4. White has three connected passed pawns but Black is ready to start picking off his kingside. White would like to exchange rooks to safeguard his king, followed by running his passed pawns as fast as possible. Meanwhile Black will look to combine a harvest of White's kingside pawns with threats against the king.

Conclusion

10. ♜b1 has long been quite a critical way of meeting 9...d5. However, with 12...exf6! Black appears to have neutralized White's set-up and no elite players have tried it in the last couple of years. 13. ♜xd5 is a safe approach but it does not cause any major problems. 13. ♙c5 is of course critical but Black gets strong counterplay. Keep in mind the difference between 16. ♖e1 and 16. ♖c1 – something I forgot when I had the position in one of my own games! 16. ♖c1 f5 17.f4 is the sharpest section of the chapter and should be studied carefully, but Black's chances are not worse.

Chapter 6

9.0-0-0



10. ♔e1

Variation Index

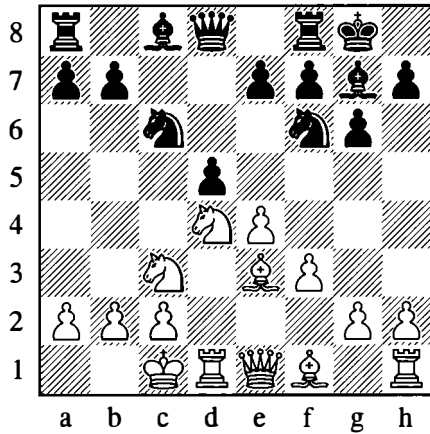
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 0-0
8.♚d2 ♗c6 9.0-0-0 d5 10.♚e1 e5 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.exd5

12...♗xd5

A) 13.♗e4	101
B) 13.h4	101
C) 13.♙c4 ♙e6	102
C1) 14.♗b1!? ♚b8 15.♗e4 f5! 16.♗g5 ♙c8 17.h4 h6 18.♗e4!	104
C11) 18...fxe4	105
C12) 18...♚c7N	110
C2) 14.♗e4 ♚c7 15.♙c5 ♚fd8	113
C21) 16.♗g5?!	114
C22) 16.h4	115
C23) 16.♚h4 h6 17.g4 ♚d7 18.g5 h5	116
C231) 19.♗f6+!?	117
C232) 19.♚d2	118
C24) 16.g4 ♗f4	119
C241) 17.♚c3 ♙d5	120
C2411) 18.g5	120
C2412) 18.♗b1	121
C242) 17.♙xe6 ♚xd1+!	123

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 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 10.♚e1

This move dropped out of the limelight some years ago but it recently experienced a resurgence, having been used by Fabiano Caruana among others. Romain Edouard also employed it against me in our match in December 2014. The queen retreat may look odd, but White's idea is to utilize the pin along the d-file to force some concessions.



10...e5

10...e6 is a popular alternative but I am sticking with the more active main line.

11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.exd5

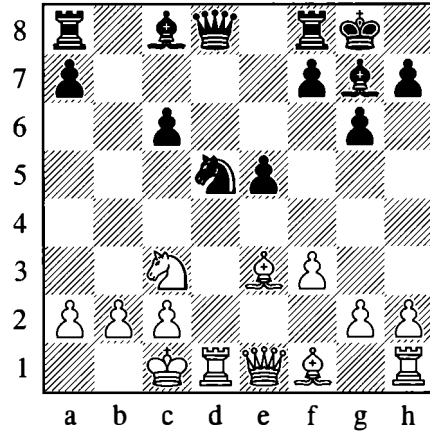
White should take the opportunity to damage Black's structure.

12.♙c5?! gives Black more than one good option: 12...♞e8 (12...♙e6?! looks like a dangerous exchange sacrifice; Black gets the centre, two powerful bishops and play down the b-file.) White has normally proceeded with 13.exd5?! cxd5 14.♙b5 but after 14...♞e6♠ Black has a great position.

12...♗xd5

Keeping the structure intact with 12...cxd5 may look more natural but the problem is that

Black cannot maintain his impressive centre. The main line continues 13.♙g5 ♙e6 14.♙c4 ♚c7 15.♙xf6 dxc4 16.♙xg7 ♗xg7 when Black's position is playable (indeed Magnus Carlsen once played this way) but rather passive.



White may proceed with A) 13.♗e4, B) 13.h4 or C) 13.♙c4.

13.♙c5?

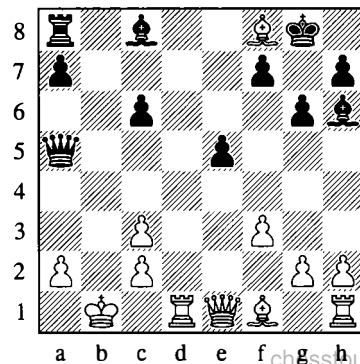
Vacating the c1-h6 diagonal has serious consequences.

13...♙h6♠! 14.♗b1 ♗xc3†

This is the point; White has to destroy his structure and weaken his king.

15.bxc3 ♚a5 16.♙xf8

White may as well take the exchange, as 16.♙b4 ♚b6 17.♗a1 c5 18.♙a3 ♙e6♠ left him in a miserable position with level material in Hinson – Kleinman, Montreal 2010.



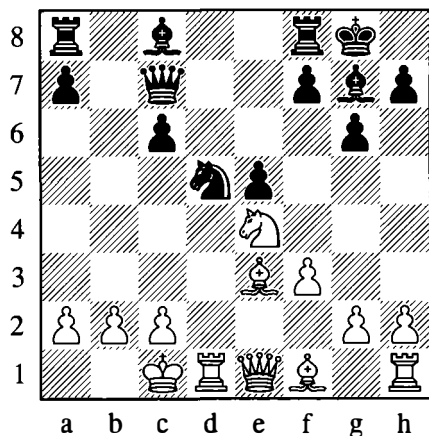
16... ♖e6! 17.c4

After 17. ♖xh6 ♖a3! White can't escape the mating net.

17... ♖b8† 18. ♖a1 ♖xe1 19. ♖xe1 ♖d2 20.a4 ♖xe1 21. ♖a3 ♖c3† 22. ♖a2 f5‡

Black has regained the exchange while keeping a big advantage in the ending.

A) 13. ♖e4 ♖c7



Once the knight has gone to e4, White is ready to place his bishop on c5, so Black reacts by preparing to move his rook to d8 in one go.

14. ♖c5 ♖d8 15.g4

15. ♖h4? f5‡ was poor for White in Perdek – Demidenko, Polanica Zdroj 2001.

15. ♖c4?! is well met by 15... f5!N 16. ♖c3 ♖e6‡.

15... ♖e6 16. ♖b1

Now Black will have the better light-squared bishop.

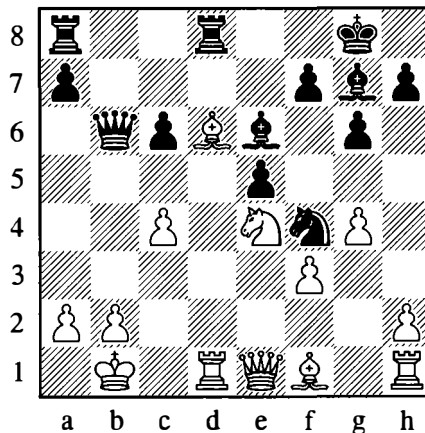
16. ♖c4 transposes to variation C24 on page 119.

16... ♖f4

16... ♖f6!N also offers comfortable equality.

17. ♖d6 ♖b6 18.c4

In this position from Huzman – Rechlis, Tel Aviv 1996, I suggest:



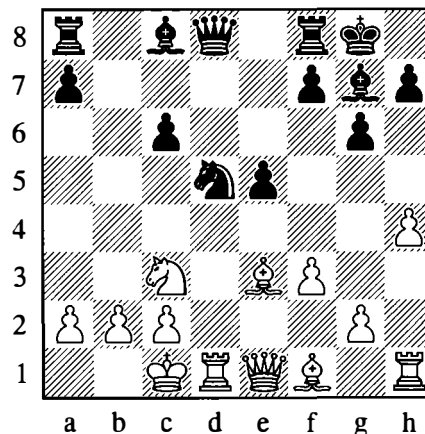
18... ♖d5!N 19.cxd5 cxd5 20. ♖c5

20. ♖e7 ♖db8 also works out well for Black.

20... ♖c7 21. ♖c1 dxe4 22. ♖xe4 ♖ab8

Black has regained the piece and has good attacking chances.

B) 13.h4

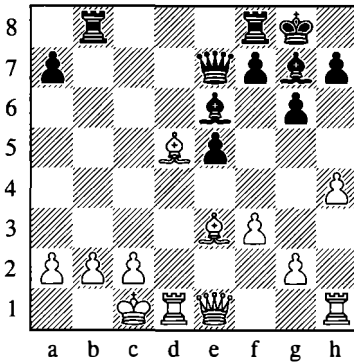


This was played against me last summer. After a long think, I came up with a promising pawn sacrifice.

13... ♖e7!? 14. ♖xd5

With the knight no longer pinned, 14.h5N allows 14...♖xe3 15.♗xe3 ♕e6 when Black is comfortable.

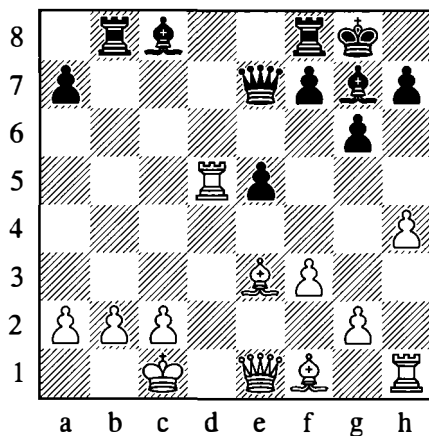
14.♖c4 was tried in the only previous game, which continued: 14...♕e6 15.♖xd5 cxd5 16.♖xd5 ♖ab8 White has picked up a pawn but Black has strong counterplay; the b2-pawn is especially vulnerable.



17.♗g5 ♗d7 18.♖b3 ♗b5 19.♖b1 a5 20.♖c1 ♖xb3 21.cxb3 a4 22.bxa4 ♗xa4 Black maintained some initiative for the pawn in Dubko – Repp, corr. 2012.

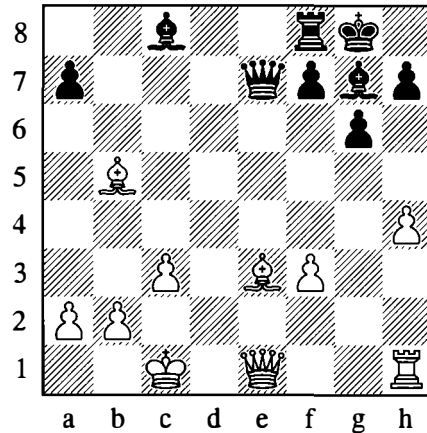
14...cxd5 15.♗xd5 ♖b8

In a tricky position, my opponent erred with:



16.♖b5?! ♖xb5 17.♖xb5 e4! 18.c3 exf3 19.gxf3

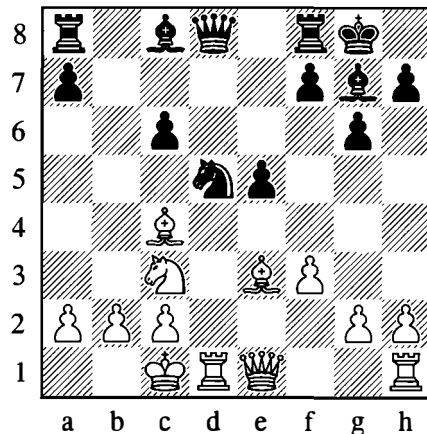
In Ochsner – Jones, Helsingor 2014, the most accurate continuation would have been:



19...♗e6!N

As suggested by Ward. Black forces a further weakening of White's position, with fantastic play.

C) 13.♖c4



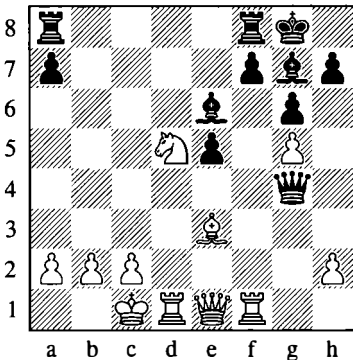
The pawn structure is the same as that in the old main line, which arises after 10.exd5 ♖xd5 11.♖xc6 bxc6 12.♖d4 e5 13.♖c5. Nowadays that variation is considered to be better for White, but the 12...♖xd4 variation (as covered in the first two chapters) is holding up well. This goes some way towards explaining the resurgence of 10.♗e1, as White looks for

another route to what he considers a desirable structure. However, this is a better version for Black as White has voluntarily spent a tempo retreating his queen. White can try to regain the tempo by playing ♕c5, as the bishop can go straight from e3 without making a pit-stop on d4. However, as we will soon see, it would be premature for White to move his bishop on the next turn, and if he prepares it then Black will have time for ...♞c7 and ...♞d8, leading to a more harmonious position than in the old main line.

13...♕e6

White's two main options are **C1) 14.♖b1!?** and **C2) 14.♗e4.**

14.g4?! is a typical idea but White has got his move order wrong. 14...♞f6! is a powerful reply, escaping the pin and targeting the f3-pawn. 15.g5 ♞xf3 16.♕xd5 cxd5 17.♞f1 ♞g4 18.♗xd5



In Goessling – Konson, Germany 1998, 18...♞e4!N would have put White under strong pressure.

14.♕c5?!

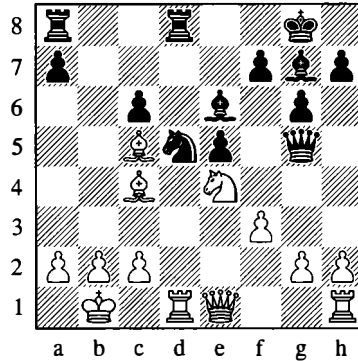
Vacating the c1-h6 diagonal this early spells trouble for White.

14...♞g5†! 15.♖b1 ♞fd8 16.♗e4

White does not have time for 16.g3? in view of 16...♗xc3† 17.♞xc3 e4! 18.♕d4 ♞xd4

19.♞xd4 c5 with decisive material gains for Black.

16.♗xd5 cxd5 17.♕f1 is obviously a disgusting way to play, and after 17...♞ac8N White has serious problems.



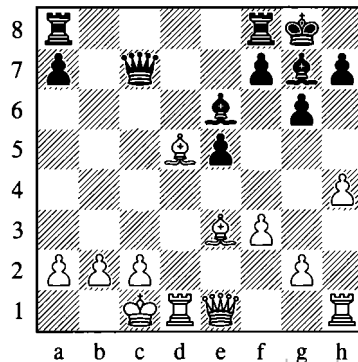
16...♞xg2 17.♞g1

17.h4 ♞xf3 18.♞d3 ♞h5 19.♞g1 ♗f4 20.♞xd8† ♞xd8 21.♕xe6 ♗xe6+ White had very little play for the two pawns in Mortensen – Borge, Copenhagen 1997.

17...♞xf3 18.♞f1 ♞xd1†! 19.♞xd1 ♗c3† 20.♗xc3 ♞xd1† 21.♞xd1 ♕xc4

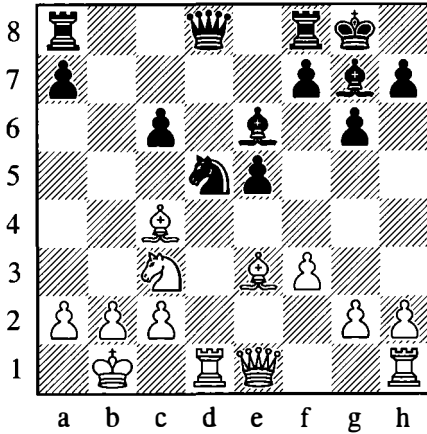
Black has a winning ending.

14.h4 is not such a bad move, but Black should do fine against it. 14...♞c7 We should have no qualms about sacrificing the c6-pawn to open up lines towards White's king. 15.♗xd5 (15.♕b3 doesn't worry Black either: 15...h5 16.♗xd5 cxd5 17.♕xd5 ♕xd5 18.♞xd5 ♞c4 19.♞d2 ♞xa2= Pascoal – Moura, email 2011) 15...cxd5 16.♕xd5



Black has various options, but I rather like 16...♖ac8N 17.c3 ♗xd5 18.♞xd5 ♚c4 19.♞a5 e4 20.fxg4 ♜fe8 when Black has activated all his pieces and has more than enough compensation.

C1) 14.♗b1!?



This is one of the latest developments in the 10.♚e1 variation, and was Romain's choice against me in our match last year. White makes a useful waiting move and asks Black how he'll continue.

14...♞b8

This is the most direct approach.

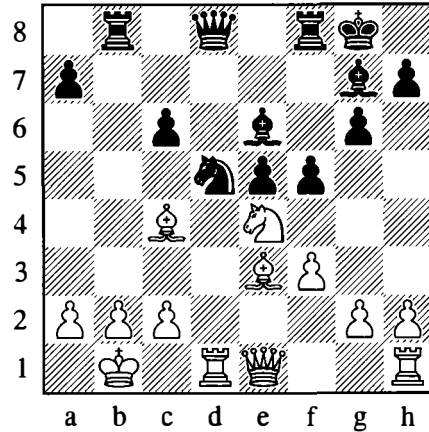
15.♖e4

Obviously we should be happy if White gets greedy: 15.♗xa7N ♞b7 16.♗c5 e4! would leave Black with a venomous initiative – look at all the open lines!

15...f5!

I think Black should strive for counterplay by unlocking the g7-bishop.

15...♚c7 looks normal but after 16.♗c5 ♞fd8 17.g4 Black is rather passive. In a similar situation in variation C24 we continue with 17...♖f4, but here that drops the exchange to 18.♗xe6 ♖xe6 19.♗d6.



16.♖g5

After 16.♖c5 ♗f7 White has a pretty outpost for his knight but it is not clear what else he has achieved. Meanwhile the black bishops both look menacing.

16.♗xa7!?

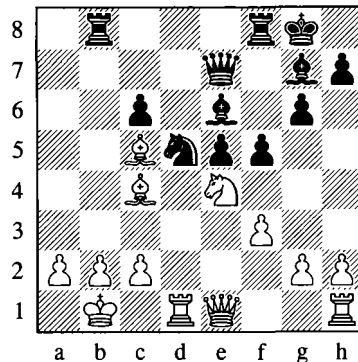
Grabbing the a-pawn always carries some risk, but it makes a bit more sense here than on the previous move.

16...♚e7!

White's idea is that 16...♞b7? is no good here due to 17.♖c5.

17.♗c5

17.♗xb8 ♞xb8 is similar. White will still need to give back material as 18.♖c3 e4 gives Black an extremely dangerous attack, for example: 19.♗b3 ♖xc3† 20.bxc3 c5 21.fxg4 f4!†



17...♞b7 18.♙b3 fxe4 19.♙xf8 ♜xf8 20.fxe4
♜f4 21.g3 ♙xb3 22.axb3 ♜e6=

I think the position is dynamically equal. White has a rook and two pawns for the minor pieces but his king is slightly vulnerable due to the open a-file. The g7-bishop isn't great at the moment but, as always, it has potential.

16...♙c8

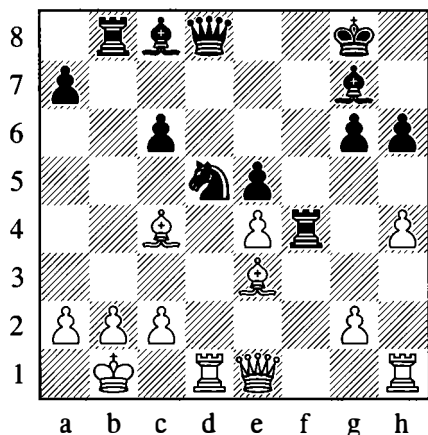
It's a shame to have to retreat our bishop but we'll gain time back on the knight.

17.h4 h6 18.♜e4!

White exploits the pins to return the knight to the centre. Since this has become an important theoretical line, I shall offer two solutions: C11) 18...fxe4 and C12) 18...♞c7!N.

18...♙e6 was my choice in Edouard – Jones, London (2) 2014, but White was a little better.

C11) 18...fxe4 19.fxe4 ♜f4



I got the chance to play this recently against the talented German junior Jonas Lampert.

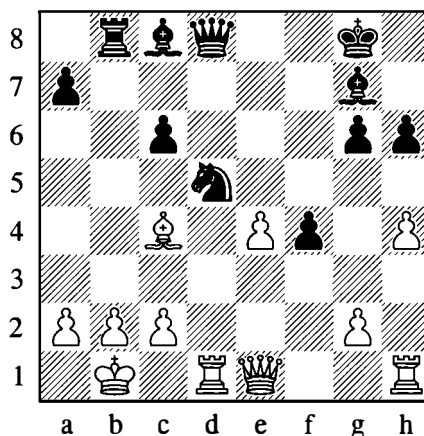
20.♙xf4

Initially I marked this move as dubious but in fact it seems White can survive. However, he needs to defend accurately and Black has at least a draw.

An engine encounter continued: 20.♙xa7 ♞b7 21.♙c5 ♙g4 22.♞d3 ♜h7 23.g3 ♞f3 24.exd5 ♞xd3 25.cxd3 cxd5 26.♙b3 ♙f5= At the cost of a pawn Black had a beautiful position with a huge centre and strong attacking chances in buster1978 – pharaomum, engine game 2014.

Chris Ward considers 20.♙c1. I think Black's most accurate reply is: 20...♞b6 21.♙b3 (21.h5 ♞b4+) 21...a5 The position is unclear but, as White generally cannot get away with taking on f4, I think Black is doing well.

20...exf4



21.c3!

I had overlooked this possibility, so from now I was on my own.

21.exd5? ♞xb2+ 22.♜c1 ♞b6 gives Black a winning attack.

21.♙b3?! ♞f6 22.c3 ♞xb3! 23.axb3 ♜e3 also gives Black a great position.

21...♞b6

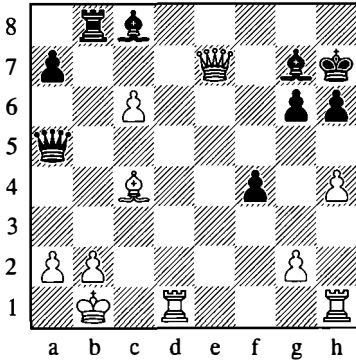
Initially the engine recommends:

21...♞a5

However, I was concerned about my own king's safety.

22.exd5 ♙xc3 23.dxc6†

John Shaw points out that 23.d6† ♚h7
24.♚e7† ♙g7 25.♚a1 ♜xb2 26.♚xg7†
♚xg7 27.♚xb2= should also lead to a draw.
23...♚h7 24.♚e7† ♙g7



25.♙g8†!

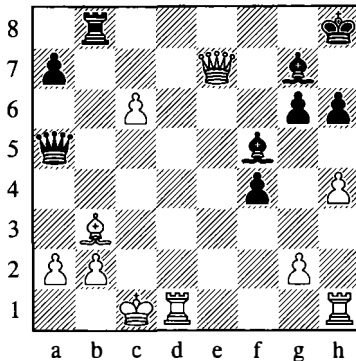
Winkling the black king out.

25...♚h8!?

25...♚xg8 26.♚d8† ♚xd8 27.♜xd8† ♚h7
28.c7 is likely to be a drawn ending.

26.♙b3 ♙f5† 27.♚c1

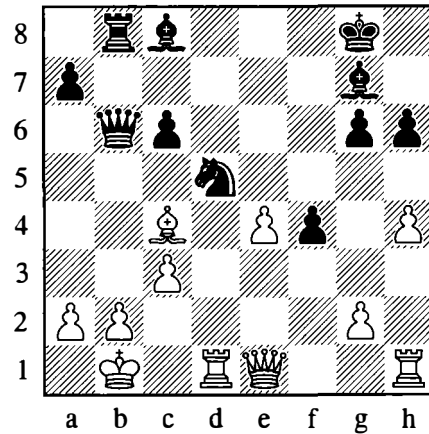
Another interesting position has arisen.
Black has a lot of play for the exchange but
with accurate play I think White holds on to
the draw, for instance:



27...♚b6

27...♜c8! is also possible, but the final result
should be the same.

28.♜d6 ♚c5† 29.♚d1 ♙g4† 30.♚e1 ♚c1†
31.♚f2 ♚c5†=



22.♚d2!

Jonas defends well. White's alternatives fail:

22.♙b3 a5†

22.♚e2 ♙a6! Counter-pins! White can grovel
with 23.♜d2 ♙xc4 24.♚xc4 ♙xc3 25.exd5
♙xd2 26.♚c2, but Black has all the winning
chances after 26...cxd5 27.♚xd2 ♚g7 with a
clear extra pawn.

22.♜d2 ♙xc3 23.♙b3 ♙xd2 24.♚xd2 ♚b4
25.♚xb4 ♜xb4 26.exd5 cxd5 27.♙xd5† ♚g7
Once again Black has a pleasant ending.

22...♚c5

22...♚a5! looks strange but Black can argue
that the queen was better placed on e1, as now
there will not be a check on e8. 23.♜c1 leaves
yet another extremely complicated position
which my engine assesses as '0.00'.

23.♙b3

Trying to simplify to an ending leads to
disaster: 23.♙xd5†? cxd5 24.♚xd5† ♚xd5
25.♜xd5 (25.exd5 ♙xc3-+) 25...♙b7 White
loses material.

We have reached what might be the most
critical position of my game against Lampert.
Black currently has two pieces for rook and
pawn, but the d5-knight is dropping. However,

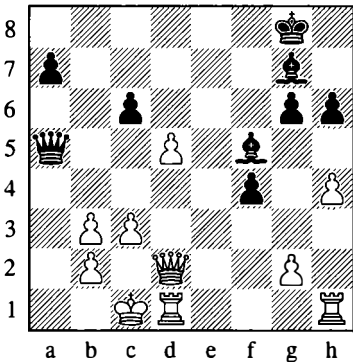
Black's bishops are superb and all his pieces are going to coordinate in the attack.

23... ♖h7

I decided to get out of the pin.

23... ♖xb3? 24. axb3 ♖e7? (Against 24... ♖e3 Jonas was planning 25. ♗d8† ♗f8 26. ♖d6±) 25. ♗xf4 Black has three pieces against two rooks, but White has a couple of extra pawns and, more importantly, Black's attack has been dampened while White has become more active. White should win.

I also considered 23... ♗e6, which is similar the game. This way Black avoids White's h4-h5 ideas but allows something else a few moves later. 24. exd5 ♗f5† 25. ♖c1 ♖xb3 26. axb3 ♗a5 White now has the additional option of:



27. ♗xf4! (27. ♗e2 ♗xc3 28. ♗e8† ♖h7 29. ♗e7† would be a direct transposition to the game) 27... ♗xc3 28. ♗b8† ♖h7 29. ♗b7† ♗g7∞ (29... ♖h8=) Yet another crazy position!

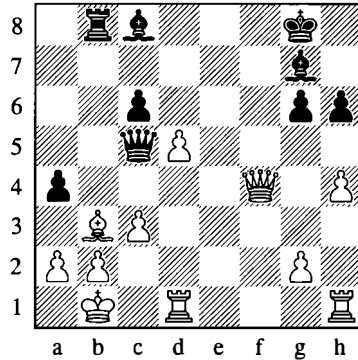
23... a5! ?N

This is another logical move, and possibly Black's best. The aim, of course, is to open the b-file.

24. exd5 a4 25. ♗xf4

25. dxc6†?! axb3 26. ♗d5† ♗xd5 27. ♖xd5 ♗f5† 28. ♖xf5 gxf5† reaches a tough endgame for White.

25. ♗xa4?! ♗xc3 26. ♖c1 ♖xb2†! 27. ♗xb2 ♗f5† is also unpleasant for White.



25... ♗f5†! 26. ♖c1

26. ♖a1 ♖a8 27. ♗c4 a3 28. dxc6† ♖h7 is dangerous for White.

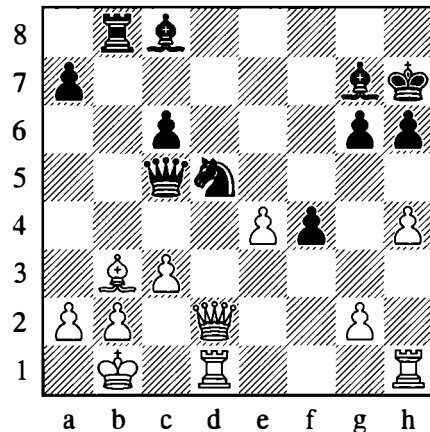
26... ♖xb3

26... ♖e8! and 26... ♖b5! are also possible.

27. axb3 a3!

Black has a dangerous attack for the sacrificed material.

The rest of the game is not so relevant for opening preparation, as we are already well into the middlegame, with both sides having possible improvements along the way. However, I will include the next phase of the game with annotations, as they will highlight some tactical themes which I hope will benefit the reader.



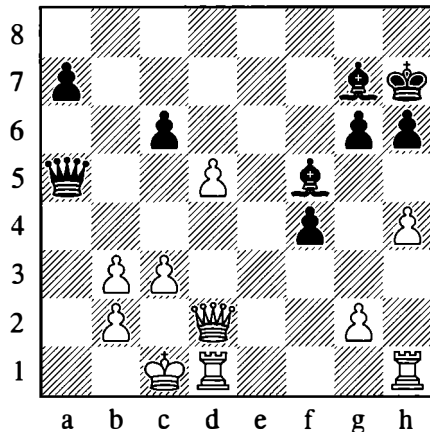
24.exd5

My opponent took the piece pretty quickly.

I was also concerned about 24.h5!? when White can generate some threats of his own. 24...dxc3† (24...d3?! was my hope during the game but 25.♖d8! is strong; 24...f6!? 25.hxg6† ♔g7 was another interesting idea I was considering.) 25.bxc3 gxh5∞ White's king still seems to be the more vulnerable and so, at least practically, Black must be better.

24...f5† 25.♔c1 ♖xb3! 26.axb3 ♗a5

I'm two exchanges down but my bishops coordinate wonderfully and White's king is now fending for itself.

**27.♗e2!**

Again my young opponent finds the only defence.

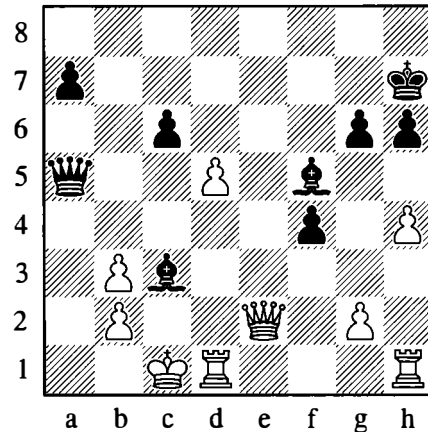
27.♗xf4? loses to 27...♙xc3 since – compared with the 23...♙e6 line in the notes above – this time White has no checks. After 28.♗a4 ♗c5 White can't prevent mate.

27...♙xc3!

Preventing the white king from running.

Of course I had a deep look at the tempting: 27...♗a1 †?! 28.♔d2 ♗xb2† 29.♔e1 ♗xc3†

(29...♗xb3 30.d6! worried me) 30.♔f1 cxd5 Black has regained some material but White's king is relatively safe and I couldn't see a way to continue attacking; indeed the engine prefers White.

**28.♗e7† ♙g7 29.♗a3 ♗b6**

Compared with the previous note, White's queen is misplaced on a3 and so his king does not have as much protection. Although the position is easier for Black to play, White still has good drawing chances, as Black's king is never entirely happy, especially if the g7-bishop disappears.

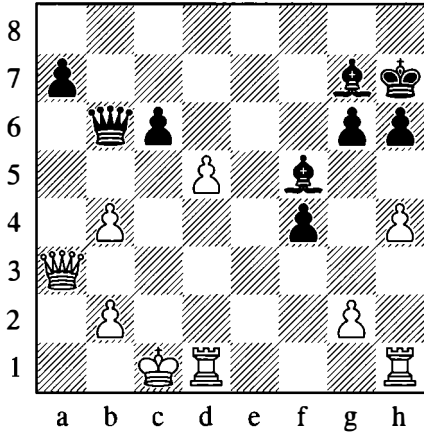
29...♗b5!? is also possible but I didn't want to allow White to activate his rook with 30.♗he1 cxd5 31.♗e7.

30.b4

Jonas prepares to return his queen to battle but he had overlooked my next.

I also wondered about 30.d6!? when White creates some counterplay. My opponent didn't want to have to place his queen on such a passive square after 30...♗e3† 31.♗d2 ♗e4 32.♗a2 but matters are still far from clear. In the post-mortem we looked at the fascinating (and subsequently computer-approved) line: 32...♙d4 33.b4! It transpires White's queen

was not so misplaced after all. 33...♔g7 34.d7 ♕e3 35.♞g8†! ♔xg8 36.d8=♞†= White obtains a perpetual.



30...a5!?

After spotting the associated tactical motif, it was hard to refrain from this move.

I was also toying with: 30...cxd5 31.♞xd5 ♞c6† 32.♞c5 ♞xg2 33.♞d1 Here I would have liked to play 33...f3? but 34.♞c7+– turns the tables completely; it is vital not to allow White to activate his pieces. Instead Black should prefer 33...h5!∞ when the position remains messy.

31.♞xa5

31.bxa5? is the move Black dreams about. 31...♕xb2†! 32.♞xb2 ♞c5† 33.♔d2 ♞e3# After discovering this pretty mate in my analysis, I was trying to get it to work in every line.

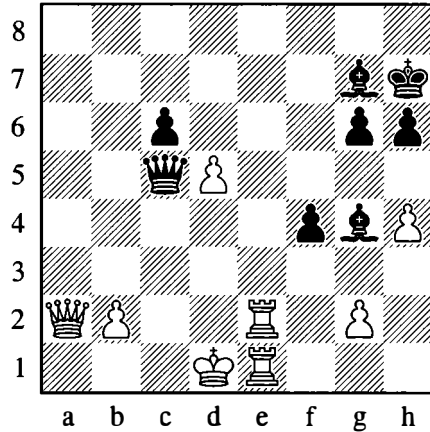
31.h5!?! is another move I was pondering. Of course the engine also gives this as '0.00'.

31...♞e3† 32.♞d2 ♞e4

Playing for the win, but still not really risking anything.

32...♕xb2† 33.♔xb2 ♞xd2† 34.♔a1 would just be a draw as Black's king is too vulnerable.

33.♞a2 ♞xb4 34.♞e1 ♞c5† 35.♔d1 ♕g4† 36.♞de2



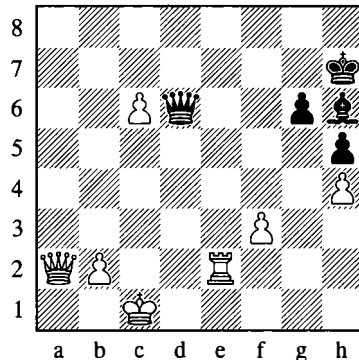
36...h5!?

Giving my king some space but also, more importantly, preparing to post the bishop on h6 in some lines.

I evaluated 36...cxd5 37.♔d2 as playable for him.

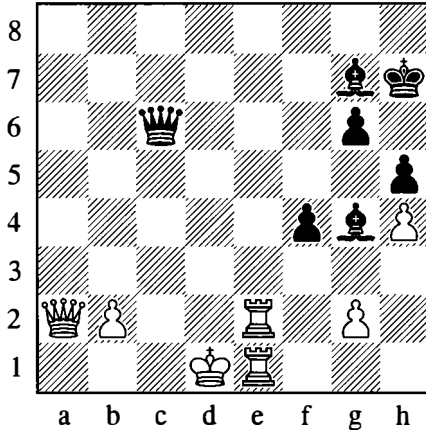
37.dxc6 ♞xc6

Apparently the engine on the live broadcast site indicated that 37...♞d6†!?! was winning, based on the tactic 38.♔c1 ♕xe2 39.♞xe2 f3!. However, a deeper check with my stronger engine revealed that this too would be a draw: 40.gxf3 ♕h6†



41.f4! (41.♔c2 ♞xc6† 42.♔d3 [42.♔d1 ♞c1#] 42...♞xf3†+– was the computer's

cunning point; with White's pieces all on light squares he finds it tough to play against the h6-bishop.) 41...♖xf4† 42.♔c2 ♖f5† 43.♔c3 ♖f3† 44.♔b4 ♖xe2 Black has succeeded in winning the rook but 45.♖f7† ♔g7 46.c7= is just a draw, as the c7-pawn is too strong.



38.♖f7 ♖b5 39.♖e7

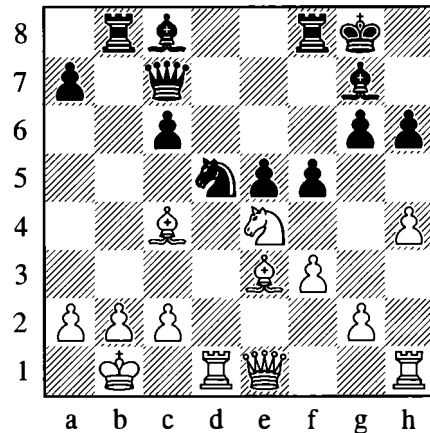
39.♖xf4 is playable, but White obviously needs to be extra careful on the c1-h6 diagonal. I saw that I had a minimum of 39...♗d3† (39...♖xb2! is likely to be a draw too, but I can play for a while longer) 40.♗d2 ♖b1† 41.♖c1 ♗d3†= with an immediate draw.

39...♖xb2 40.♖c5 ♖b1†

40...♖f6 was a sensible alternative, aiming to pick up the h4-pawn. 41.♔d2 ♔xe2 42.♔xe2 ♖xh4 Material is level and the game should be a draw.

Having reached move 40, we each received an extra fifteen minutes, plus the 30-second increment. Of course we were both soon back in time trouble. At one point Jonas allowed me a winning chance but I failed to capitalize, and it eventually finished as a draw in Lampert – Jones, Wunsiedel 2015.

C12) 18...♖c7N



During the match with Romain, Richard Palliser and I prepared to play this should Romain repeat the line. This is a less forcing continuation than capturing the knight. Often Black will sacrifice a pawn with ...e4 in the spirit of the King's Indian, opening the long diagonal and creating an outpost on e5.

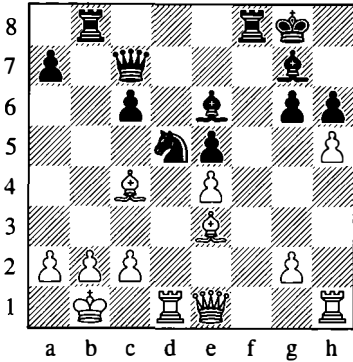
19.♘c5

19.♔b3? would be a big mistake due to 19...fxe4 20.fxe4 ♖xb3!.

19.♔c1 is not very threatening. The following sample line shows some of Black's ideas to obtain counterplay: 19...♖e8 20.♘c3 (20.h5 g5 21.♘c3 ♔e6 is also fine) 20...♔e6 21.♘xd5 cxd5 22.♔xd5 ♔xd5 23.♖xd5 e4 With promising play for Black.

19.♘c3 fails to impress, as White won't be able to win the pawn: 19...♔e6 20.♔b3 (20.♘xd5?! cxd5 21.♔xd5? ♔xd5 22.♖xd5 loses to 22...♖b7) Black has a pleasant choice between 20...♖fe8= and 20...e4!.

19.h5 gives us another choice: 19...fxe4! Taking the bait. (19...g5 might transpose to our main line after 20.♘c5 ♔h7) 20.fxe4 ♔e6



21.hxg6 (21.exd5 cxd5 22.♙b3 g5=) 21...♖f4
 22.♙xe6† ♖xe6 23.♙xh6 ♖bd8 White has
 three pawns for the piece but I am not
 impressed by his attack.

19.♙c5!?

Once again Black has a choice.

19...fxe4!?

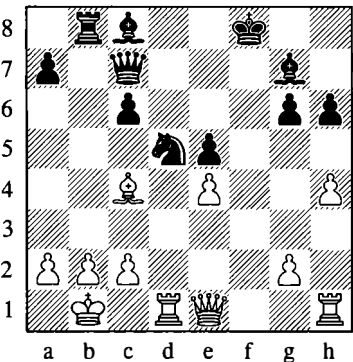
The most ambitious, attempting to refute
 White's last move.

19...♗d8 20.♖c3 ♙e6= is the most natural
 and safest way to play.

20.♙xf8

20.fxe4 ♗f4

20...♗xf8 21.fxe4

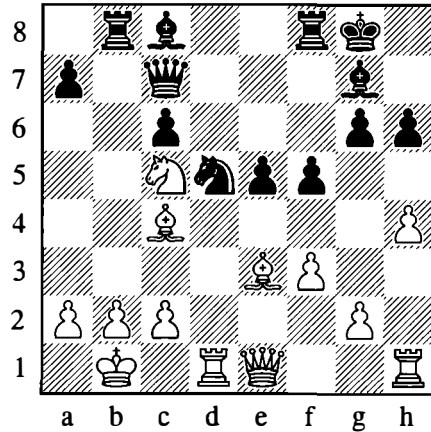


21...♖f6

21...♖f4 22.g3 ♖h5 23.♗e3 ♗e8∞ looks
 strange but, with ...♖f6 coming, the king
 should be safe enough.

22.♗f1 ♙g4 23.♗d3 ♗e8∞

Black's king looks exposed but I don't think
 White can exploit it, and Black's strong minor
 pieces give him good long-term chances.



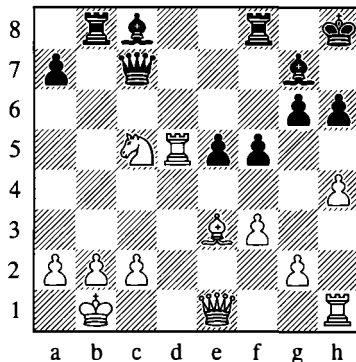
19...♗h7

It's hard to decide which square is better for
 the king.

19...♗h8 20.♙xd5

20.♙b3 ♖xe3 21.♗xe3 ♗b5 Black threatens
 ...♗b6, and after 22.♗he1 (if White retreats
 the knight, Black can proceed in exactly the
 same way) 22...e4! 23.fxe4 f4 24.♗g1 ♙g4∞
 Black has excellent counterplay.

20...cxd5 21.♗xd5



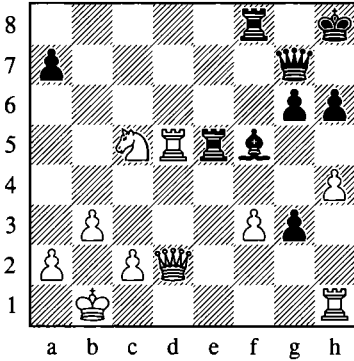
21...f4

21...♗c6?! 22.♗d2 f4 23.♙f2 e4 24.♙d4! is
 one key difference – now Black cannot take
 the rook as it's check on g7.

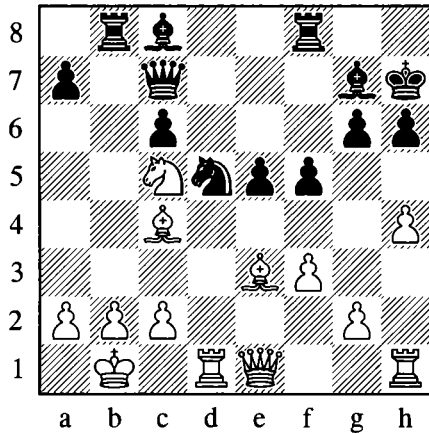
22.♙d2 e4

As often happens, a seemingly wild position eventually turns out to be equal.

23.♔c3 e3 24.♔xg7 ♖xg7 25.b3 ♕f5 26.g4 fxg3 27.♗xe3 ♜be8 28.♞d2 ♞e5



29.♞g1 ♞xd5 30.♗xd5 ♜c3 31.♞e4 ♔xe4 32.♗xe4 ♞xf3 33.♗xg6 ♗g7 34.♗e4 ♞f2=



20.h5

Softening up Black's kingside looks to be the critical test.

20.♔xd5?! cxd5 21.♞xd5 The pawn grab is riskier with the king on h7. 21...♗c6 22.c4 (22.♞d1? f4 23.♔f2 e4!-+) 22...f4 23.♔d2 ♔f5† 24.♔a1 ♞fd8⚡ Black has strong pressure for a mere pawn.

20.♔b3 ♞xe3 21.♗xe3 h5!= Giving away the g5-square isn't such a big concession after we

have got rid of the dark-squared bishop, as the knight on c5 has no easy route to g5. Black's position looks comfortable.

20...g5 21.c3

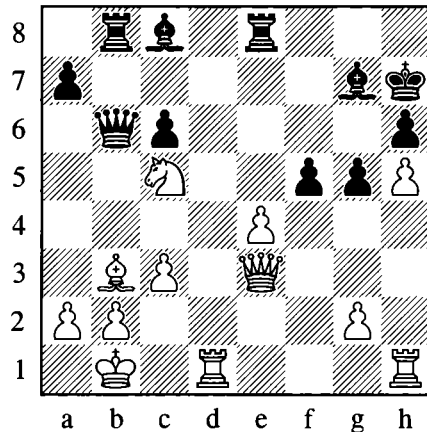
21.♔b3 ♞e8 Preparing the pawn break. (The immediate 21...e4!? could also be considered.) 22.c3 e4 23.fxg4 ♞xe3 (23...fxe4!?) 24.♗xe3 ♞b6 We have transposed to the main line.

21...♞b6

21...e4!? Playing the pawn break immediately enables White to exchange bishops with 22.♔d4, when the game remains sharp. A sample continuation is: 22...♞b6 23.b3 (23.♞a4 ♗a5 24.♔b3 ♞e8=) 23...♔xd4 24.cxd4 f4∞ Black has decent chances but I would feel more secure having the g7-bishop on the board to guard my king.

22.♔b3 ♞xe3 23.♗xe3 e4!? 24.fxg4 ♞e8

With a better kingside structure and bishop pair on an open board, Black has good compensation for the sacrificed pawn.



25.♗g1!?

This subtle move seems to be White's best.

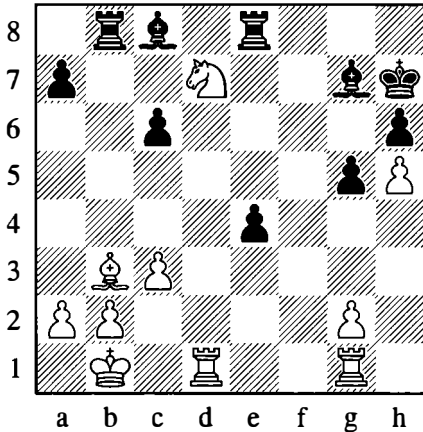
25.♗f2 f4 26.♞d6 ♔g4∞ gives Black full value for a pawn. The pin on the knight is annoying

and Black is ready to fight for the centre with ...♖bd8, while his bishops do a great job guarding the king.

25...fxe4

25...f4 26.♘d7! is White's point, although it's unclear if he has any substantial winning chances after 26...♗xg1 27.♗hxg1 ♖b7 28.♙f7! ♙xd7 29.♗xd7 ♗xd7 30.♙xe8 ♗d6. Still, even if this is a draw, I don't want us to have to suffer in an endgame.

26.♘d7 ♗xg1 27.♗hxg1



27...♗xb3!?

The most forcing continuation. The e-pawn and bishop pair will provide Black with good compensation.

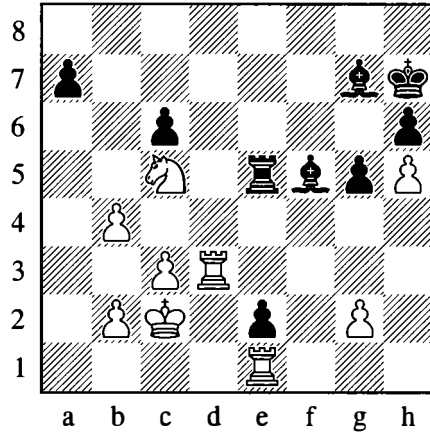
28.axb3 e3 29.♗ge1 e2 30.♗d3

White has no real choice, as 30.♗d2?! ♗d8≠ is not what he wants.

30...♗e7 31.♘c5 ♙f5

Black can regain the exchange any time, but he should look to improve his pieces before rushing to grab the material.

32.♙c2 ♗e5 33.b4



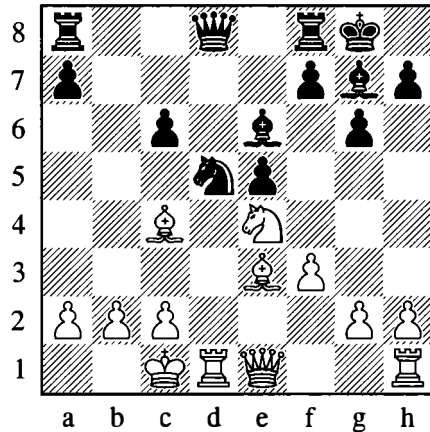
33...g4! 34.♙d2 ♙f6!

This is much stronger than simply restoring material parity, when Black would have to suffer a little.

35.♗xe2 ♙g5† 36.♗de3 g3=

White is too tied up to exploit his extra pawn, and he even has to watch out for ...♙h3 ideas.

C2) 14.♘e4

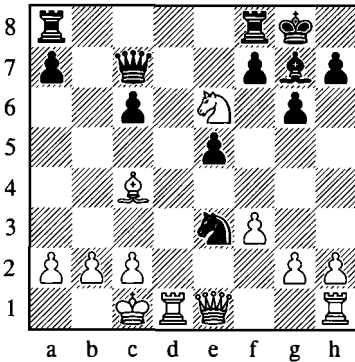


This is the traditional continuation. White's plan is to sit on the position and stifle Black's counterplay. He will advance his h- and g-pawns, to which Black often responds ...h6. White will then close the kingside with either

h4-h5 or g4-g5, keeping the g7-bishop out of the game. With the kingside closed off, he hopes eventually to make his queenside majority count. Obviously Black has his own active ideas, including counterplay along the b-file as well as the ...f5 break, which weakens our kingside but forces White's knight to retreat, enabling us to open the long diagonal for the dormant g7-bishop.

14...♖c7 15.♙c5

15.♘g5? fails tactically to a sequence worth remembering: 15...♘e3! 16.♘xe6 (16.♖h4 is better but White is still struggling: 16...h6 17.♘xe6 fxe6 18.♙xe6† ♘h8 19.♗d7 ♖b6 20.♖e7 ♜g8 21.♙xg8 ♜xg8† Veres – Toeroek, Hungary 1998)



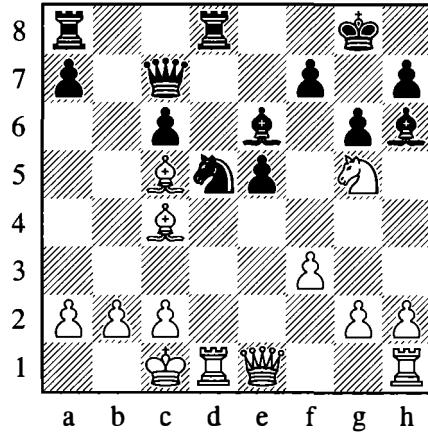
16...♖b6! 17.♘xf8 ♘xc4! 18.♖c3 ♖a6 19.♖b3 ♜xf8→ Timman – Fedorov, Wijk aan Zee 2001.

15...♞fd8

As mentioned earlier, the availability of this rook move is the main reason why the present variation is more palatable for Black than the old main line of 10.exd5 ♘d5 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♙d4 e5 13.♙c5.

We will analyse four options: **C21) 16.♘g5?!**, **C22) 16.h4**, **C23) 16.♖h4** and **C24) 16.g4**.

C21) 16.♘g5?! ♙h6!



Not for the first time, White runs into trouble on the h6-c1 diagonal.

17.♖h4 ♘g7!

The king may look strange here but White is in trouble due to his loose pieces.

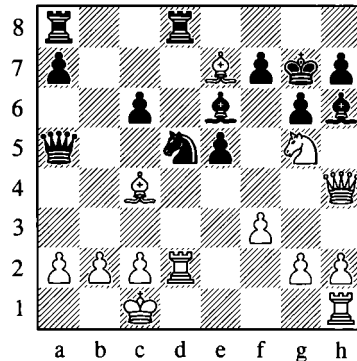
18.♙xd5

18.♘b1 ♘c3† 19.bxc3 ♙xc4 20.♖xc4 ♙xg5†

18.♗d2N ♖a5! 19.♙e7

19.♙a3 ♘f4 20.♗d8 ♖xd8!→ Black picks up the knight.

White should give up the exchange with 19.♗d5 ♙xd5 20.♙e3 but after 20...♙xg5 21.♙xg5 ♗d6 22.♗d1 f6 23.♙d2 ♖a4 Black should win.



19... ♖xd2†! 20. ♗xd2 ♜xe7†

White has paid too high a price for the queen. The finish might be:

21. ♗c3 ♙xc4 22. ♜e4 ♜f5 23. ♖f6† ♗g8
24. ♗xc4 ♜e3† 25. ♗c5 ♙f8† 26. ♗xc6 ♜dc8†
27. ♗d7 ♜d5–+

18. ♙b3N may be White's best try but he is still in trouble. Black has lots of possibilities but the simplest is: 18...f6 19. ♖xh6† ♗xh6 20. ♜xe6 ♖d7 21. ♜xd8 ♖xd8 22. c4 ♖a5

18... ♙g5† 19. ♖xg5 f6

Golubev was lucky enough to get this position twice!

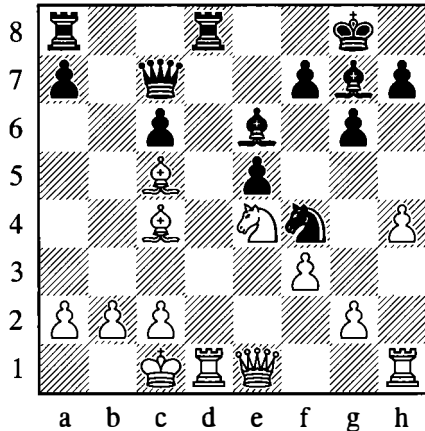
20. ♖e3

20. ♖d2 cxd5 21. ♙a3 d4 22. ♗b1 a5 Van der Weide – Golubev, Chemnitz 1998.

20...cxd5 21. ♜d2 ♜ac8 22. ♙a3 d4–+

Lambert – Golubev, Germany 1996.

C22) 16.h4 ♜f4!



This has been a rare choice in this specific position but it is a thematic idea which works well here.

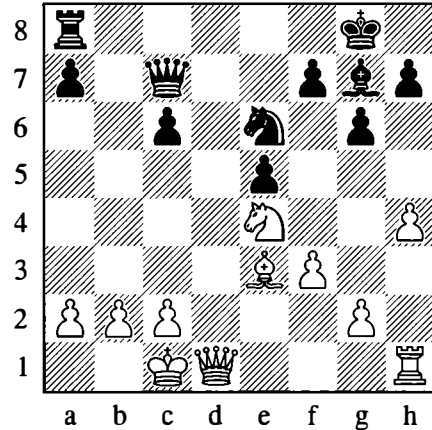
17. ♙xe6 ♜xd1†!

It is useful to exchange these rooks as

otherwise the bishop will take up a dominating post on d6.

18. ♖xd1 ♜xe6 19. ♙e3

In this position I found a logical new idea.



19...f5!N

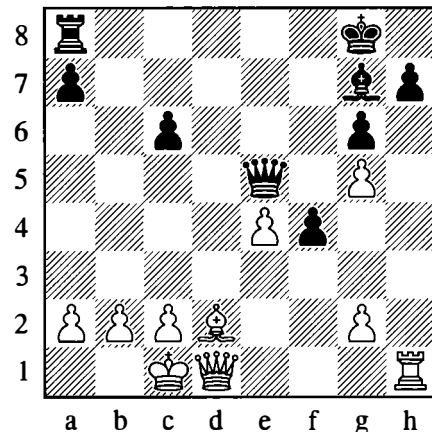
I think this is the right time to allow the g7-bishop out before it gets caged in with g4-g5.

20. ♜g5

20. ♖d6 ♜e8 21. ♖xc7 ♜xc7 22. ♜d6 ♜e6 23. ♜c4 a6 reaches a balanced endgame.

20... ♜xg5 21. hxg5 f4 22. ♙d2 e4! 23. fx e4 ♖e5

23... ♜b8!? is also reasonable.



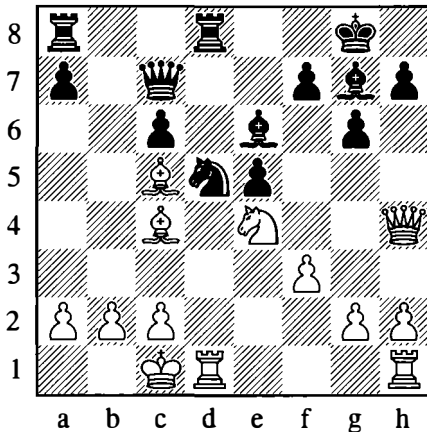
24. ♖c3 ♜xg5 25. ♞d7!

After 25. ♖xg7 f3† 26. ♞d2 ♜xd2† 27. ♜xd2 fxg2 28. ♞g1 ♜xg7 Black's connected passed pawns make the endgame extremely dangerous for White.

25... ♖xc3 26. ♞xh7† ♜f8 27. ♞b7! ♖xb2†

The game is likely to end in a perpetual.

C23) 16. ♞h4



This was the choice of both Caruana and the young Kramnik.

16...h6 17.g4 ♞d7

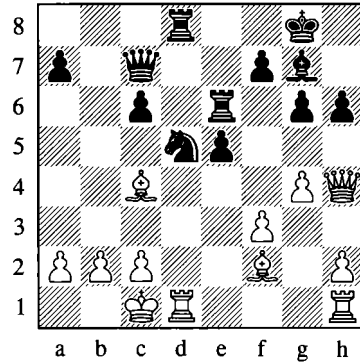
I think this move makes the most sense. Our plan is to double on the d-file and then play ...♜f4 to relieve the pressure.

18.g5

This move is committal but normal for this line. With the pawn on g5 we're unlikely to be able to get ...f5 to work, so our bishop will be stuck on g7 for a while. However, we do have outposts on both f4 and f5 and the structure tends to favour Black in the long term.

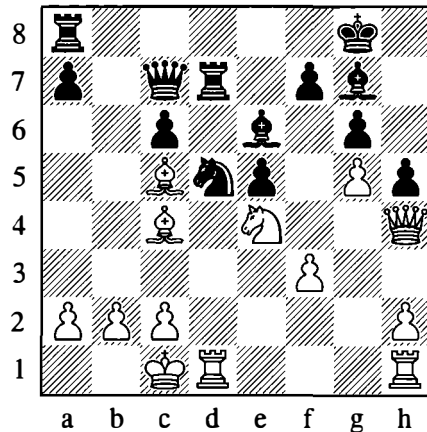
It's worth noting that 18. ♖a3N can be met by 18... ♞ad8!?. There is no need to fear 19. ♜c5 as 19...e4! gives Black good play.

An interesting game continued: 18. ♖f2 ♞ad8 19. ♜c5 ♞d6 20. ♜xe6 ♞xe6 White has the bishop pair but it has come at a price. Without the e4-knight, it will be hard to keep the g7-bishop out of the game.



21. ♖xa7? was asking far too much of White's position in Frisk – Omarsson, Copenhagen 2006. Black missed the chance to play 21...e4!N 22.fxe4 ♞xe4 23. ♖b3 ♞a8 with a decisive attack.

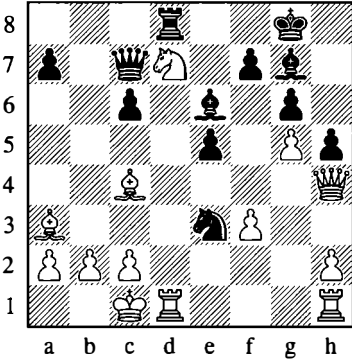
18...h5



Of course we should keep the kingside closed. White has tried lots of different approaches here but Black's position has proven to be quite resilient. The two main options are C231) 19. ♜f6†!? and C232) 19. ♞d2.

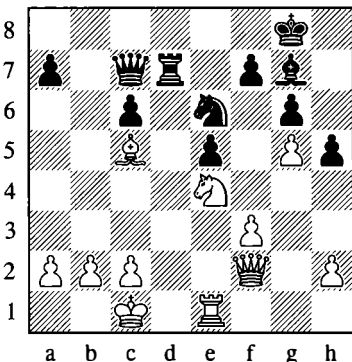
19.♖hg1 ♖ad8 20.♗de1 ♗a5 21.a3 ♘f4
22.♙xe6 ♘xe6♞ Moylan – Azarova, Dresden
(ol) 2008.

19.♙a3 ♖ad8! 20.♘c5 ♘e3! 21.♘d7 occurred
in Muhammad – Cvitan, Biel 2013. Black's
most accurate continuation is:



21...♙xc4!N 22.♘f6† (22.♗de1 ♗xd7 23.♗e3
♗d2†→) 22...♙xf6 23.gxf6 ♘xd1 24.♗xd1
♗xd1† 25.♘xd1 ♙d5 Black has a small edge
but it should be a draw.

19.♗f2 ♖ad8 20.♗he1 ♘f4 21.♗xd7 ♗xd7
22.♙xe6 ♘xe6= reached a fairly typical
position for this line in cfm – jschindler,
engine game 2013.



Black's knight does a good job on e6 and his
control over the d-file makes it tough for White
to undertake anything active. Black's queen
placement is flexible: it can either remain on

the queenside or target White's kingside pawns
via the h3-c8 diagonal.

C231) 19.♘f6†?

This knight jump is obviously a critical try but
Black needn't be worried.

19...♙xf6! 20.gxf6

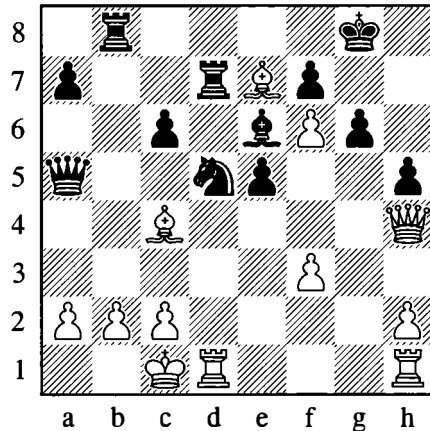
The dark-squared bishop can be considered a
'problem piece' in this structure, so exchanging
it for the strong enemy knight is no bad thing.
As long as Black avoids any mating threats he
should be doing well.

20...♗a5 21.♙e7

21.♗f2?! ♗a4! 22.♙b3 ♗f4† 23.♘b1
♖ad8 24.♘a1 a5 25.♗g3 ♗xf6♞ worked out
perfectly for Black in Bontems – Pirrone,
email 2006.

21...♗b8!

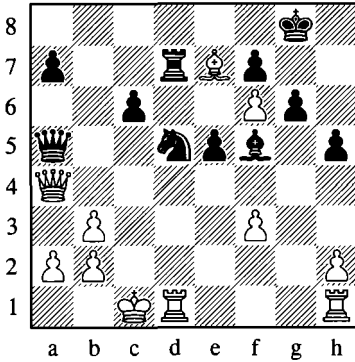
It turns out that Black has some dangerous
attacking ideas of his own.



22.♗e1

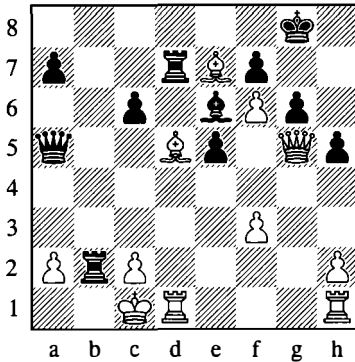
This is White's safest continuation.

22.♙b3N would allow 22...♗xb3! 23.cxb3
♙f5! with a powerful attack. A spectacular
finish could be: 24.♗a4? (24.♙a3 ♗d8♞)



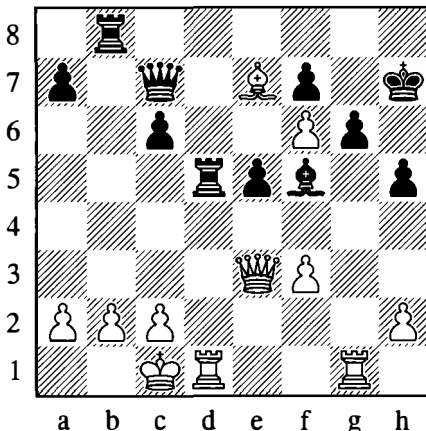
24...♖c3!! 25.♚xa5 ♜e2 mate!

22.♚g5N ♜xb2! 23.♙xd5



23...♙xd5 (23...♜xc2† 24.♜xc2 cxd5!?) is an interesting way to play for a win) 24.♜xb2 ♚xa2† 25.♜c3 ♚c4† 26.♜b2 ♚a2† with a draw.

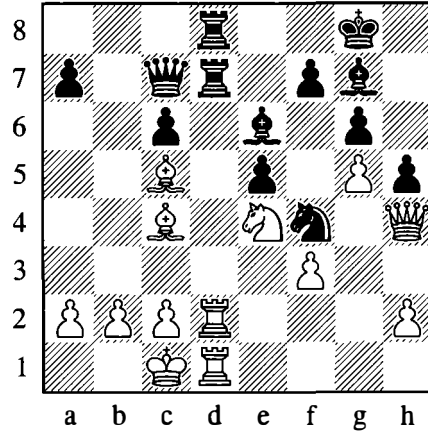
22...♚c7 23.♙g1 ♙f5 24.♚e2 ♜h7 25.♙xd5 ♜xd5 26.♚e3



26...♜d4! 27.♚c3 ♜b5 28.b3 ♚b6 29.♙g1 ♜bd5†

Black was starting to take control in jml26 – the viper, engine game 2012.

C232) 19.♜d2 ♜ad8 20.♜hd1 ♜f4



Black carries out a thematic plan that we encountered earlier in the chapter.

21.♙xe6 ♜xd2 22.♜xd2 ♜xd2 23.♜xd2

23.♜xd2?! ♜xe6 (23...♚d8!†?N is also promising) 24.c3?! was played in Luther – Tolnai, Budapest 1992, and now 24...♚a5!N 25.♙a3 ♚d5† would have won the a2-pawn.

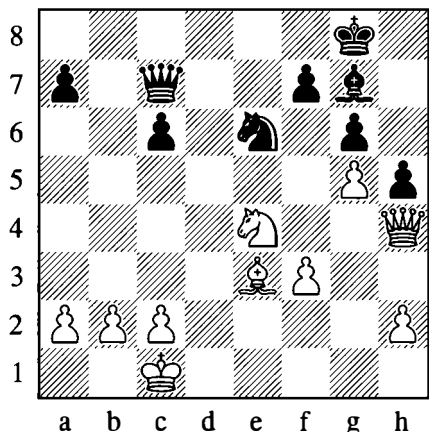
23.♙xf7†!N is also unimpressive: 23...♚xf7 24.♜xd2 ♚xa2 25.♜b3 a5†

23...♜xe6 24.♙e3 e4!?

An interesting pawn sacrifice.

24...♚d8 is absolutely fine if Black wishes to play more solidly: 25.a3 c5 26.♚c4 ♜xg5 ½–½ Krueger – Simmelink, email 2003.

25.♜xe4



25... ♗c5!N

This multipurpose move targets the h2-pawn, while giving the king some space and ensuring that ♖f6† will not block the bishop. Black also enables his queen to move away from the h2-b8 diagonal without allowing White's queen to penetrate along it.

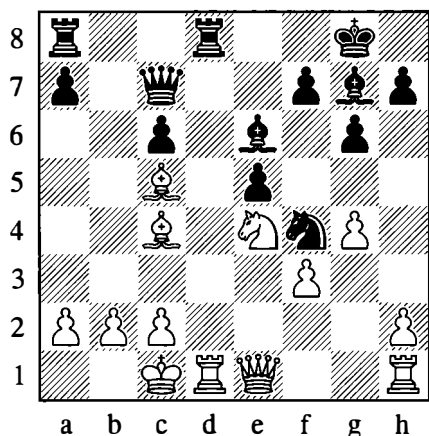
26.h3

26. ♖f6† ♗h8

26... ♖b7

Black has excellent play for the pawn.

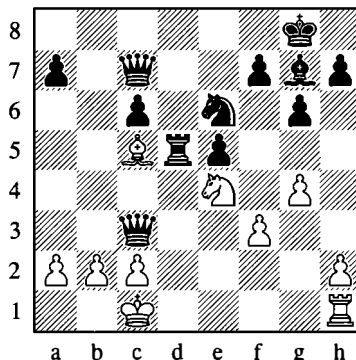
C24) 16.g4 ♖f4



Again we see the same knight manoeuvre.

White's two most important responses are C241) 17. ♖c3 and C242) 17. ♗xe6.

The following is a good illustration of what can happen if White starts to drift: 17. ♗xd8† ♗xd8 18. ♗xe6 ♖xe6 19. ♖c3 ♗d5= Black has comfortably equalized but White should still be okay. However, he was obviously trying to trade pieces and did not see the danger.



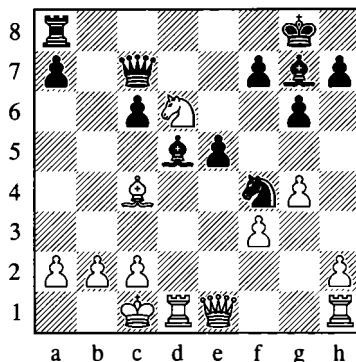
20. ♗d1?? f5! 21.gxf5 gxf5 22. ♗xd5 cxd5 0-1 Tassopoulos – Neubauer, Rijeka 2010.

17. ♗d6?

This is a logical move to consider and has been chosen by some fairly strong players, but it is an error.

17... ♗xd6! 18. ♖xd6 ♗d5

White has big problems with his errant knight.



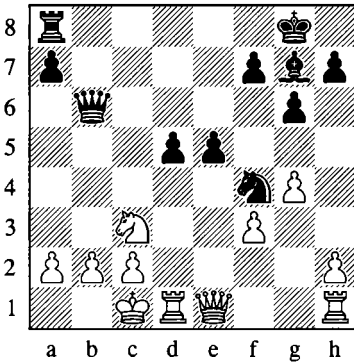
19. ♖b5 ♖b6 20. ♗xd5

20. ♖a3 does not help White either:

20...e4!N (20...Bb8 21.b3 Bc5 is also enough for a winning position, Simacek – Tupy, Plzen 1995) 21.Qb3 e3! The e-pawn is simply too powerful. There is not much White can do against the coming advance of Black's a-pawn. 22.Qb1 a5 23.Bg3 e2 24.Bd1 g5+

20...cxd5 21.Qc3

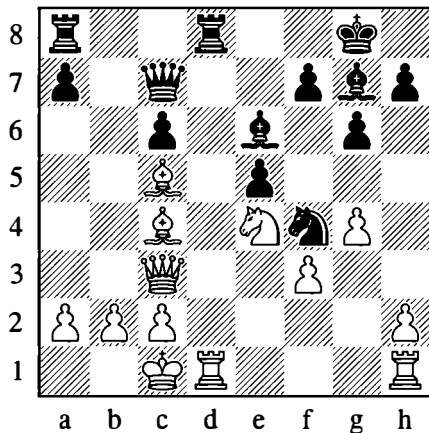
White has managed to extricate his knight but in doing so he has given Black a huge initiative. The quickest way to capitalize is:



21...e4!N 22.fxe4 Bb8

Black is winning, since b2-b3 loses the knight due to the fork on e2.

C241) 17...Bc3



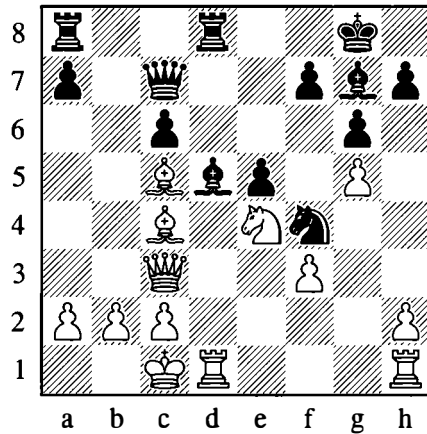
This was Peter Svidler's choice a couple of times. White maintains the tension.

17...Qd5

Black makes sure that an exchange of light-squared bishops will improve his structure, while at the same time vacating the e6-square for the knight. We are now ready to double on the d-file or perhaps even play ...f5. White has two options of roughly equal value: **C2411) 18.g5** and **C2412) 18.Qb1**.

18.h4 f5 Since White did not prevent it, I think we should advance this pawn. 19.gxf5 gxf5 20.Qd3 (20.Qd2 Qe6 Carpentier – Spagnoli, email 2003) 20...Bf7 It looks difficult for White to exploit the open g-file, while Black has good central control and typical counterplay against the b2-pawn.

C2411) 18.g5



This has been White's most common choice. It is rather committal, but it is understandable that he wishes to prevent ...f5 for good.

18...Qe6 19.Qc3 Qd4

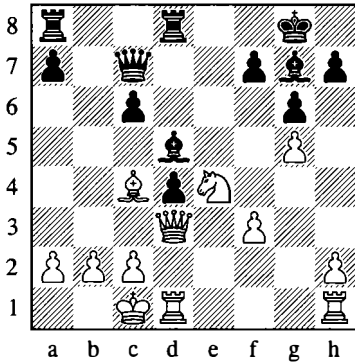
Black has succeeded in rerouting the knight to a prime location in the centre of the board.

20.h4

This is how correspondence players have approached the position. I checked a few other moves as well:

20.♖b1 was played in Panchanathan – Gashimov, Nakhchivan 2003. In the game Black exchanged bishops and grabbed the f3-pawn but White obtained some initiative for it. I would prefer sidestepping the pin with 20...♗b7!N when Black is doing well, and is now truly threatening to take on f3.

In another game White evidently felt that the knight was too much of a nuisance and so played 20.♗xd4 exd4 21.♗d3, but this was a significant concession. In Herrera Rodriguez – Granada Velez, Medellin 2010, Black exchanged bishops on c4, but there was no need to rush with this. A better approach would have been:



21...♗ab8N Black has the better chances, for instance: 22.♗xd5 cxd5! 23.♗f6† (23.♗f2 ♗d6†) 23...♗xf6 24.gxf6 ♗dc8†

20...♗e7

Opening up possibilities of taking on f3.

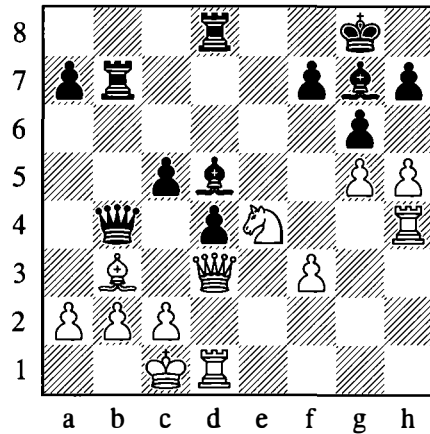
21.♗xd4

21.♖b1 ♗e6! 22.♗b3 occurred in Mehar – Lokesh, Chennai 2009, and here I see no reason not to grab a pawn with 22...♗xf3N.

21...exd4 22.♗d3 ♗ab8

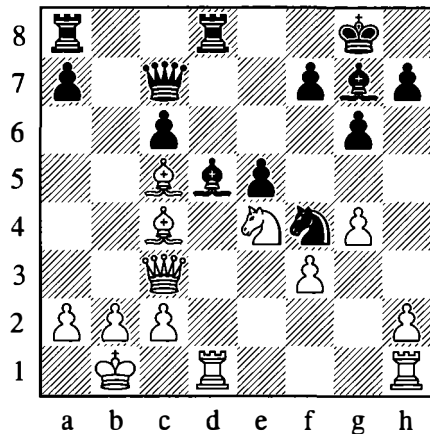
Black's counterplay along the b-file comes fast enough to provide equal chances. One example continued:

23.h5 ♗b4 24.♗b3 ♗b7 25.♗h4 c5



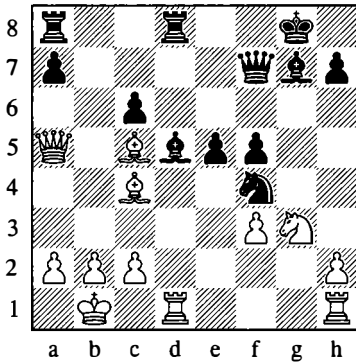
26.♗f6† ♗xf6 27.gxf6 ♗xb3 28.axb3 ♗b6
29.hxg6 fxg6 30.♗c4† ♖h8 31.♗e4 ♗xf6
½–½ Filipchenko – Schilling, email 2008.

C2412) 18.♖b1



18...♗d7

18...f5! is a more energetic continuation, after which the position becomes extremely sharp. 19.gxf5 gxf5 20.♗g3 ♗f7 21.♗a5 The only game to reach this position, Achermann – Sazon, email 2011, was agreed drawn at this point. Play might have continued:

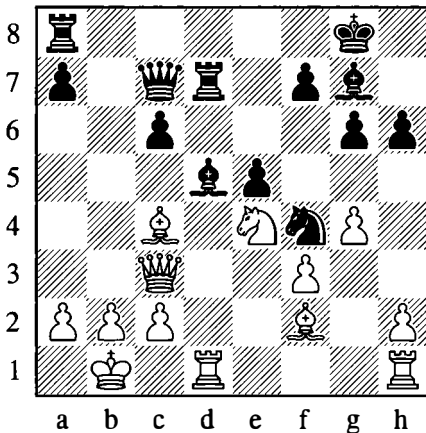


21...Rd8N (21...Rd7N should also be investigated) 22.♙xd5 (22.♙b3 ♖b5 23.♗a3 ♖xb3!? 24.axb3 ♙xf3∞) 22...cxd5 Black has a big centre, so White has to find a way to challenge it before he finds himself dominated. 23.♖he1 ♖b7 24.♗e2 ♗g6 25.f4 ♖c8∞

The rook move is a more circumspect approach that is also fully viable.

19.♙f2 h6

Black takes control of the g5-square and prepares to double rooks on the d-file without being harassed by ♙h4.



20.♙h4

Instead 20.h4 ♖ad8 21.a3 ♙xe4 22.♖xd7 ♙xc2† 23.♗xc2 ♗xd7 is quite a typical sequence. White has some squares for the pawn and so enough compensation, but not enough to worry Black. 24.h5 g5 25.♖c1 ♖b8 26.♗e4

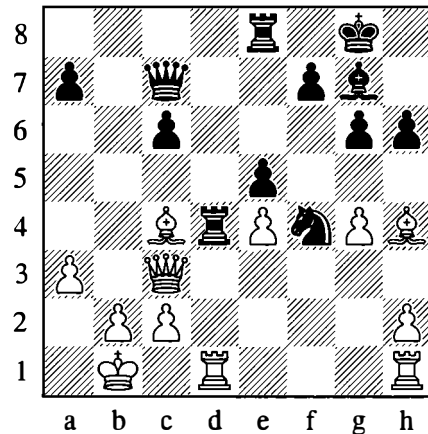
a5 27.♖c2 a4 28.♙c5 ♗d1† 29.♖c1 ♗d7 30.♖c2 ♗d1† 31.♖c1 ½-½ Traut – Bach, email 2009.

20...♖e8 21.a3

21.♗f6† ♙xf6 22.♙xf6 is nothing to worry about as White's pieces will be swiftly expelled. 22...♙xc4 (22...♗d6!? 23.♙h4 ♗e6 also looks fine) 23.♗xc4 (As Rogozenko notes, 23.♖xd7? fails to 23...♙xa2† 24.♗xa2 ♗xd7 25.♙xe5? ♗d5†) 23...♗d5=

21...♙xe4 22.fxe4 ♖d4

Black has given up his light-squared bishop but, in return, he has established control over the central dark squares.



23.♖he1!N

23.♙d3 was the harmless continuation of Svidler – Alterman, Bad Homburg 1997. Black has many good moves but I rather like 23...♙f8!N, intending ...♖b8 and ...♖a4 with pressure against the a3-pawn. Chances are balanced.

The text move is an interesting novelty proposed by my engine. White's point is revealed after:

23...♗g2 24.♗g3!

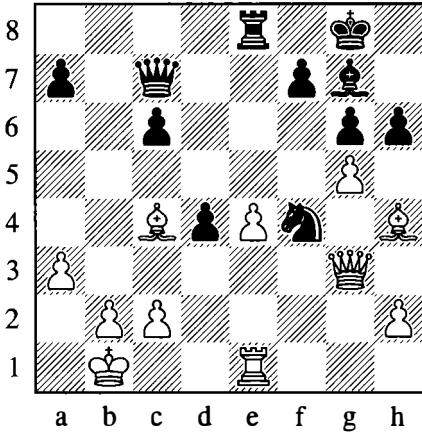
The pin along the h2-b8 diagonal ensures that White doesn't lose material. I think Black should just drop the knight back.

24...♟f4

If White wants to play for more than a draw he has to try:

25.♞xd4 exd4 26.g5

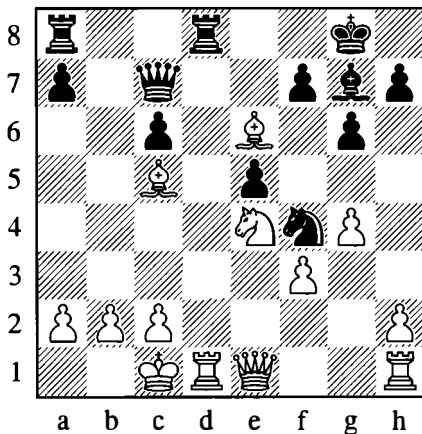
This is quite a risky way of playing, as Black can start a dangerous counterattack with:



26...♞e5! 27.gxh6 ♜b8 28.b3 d3 29.cxd3 ♞d6 30.♝a2 ♜b7∞

Black has strong pressure for the sacrificed pawns, and it is hard to imagine White's king ever feeling safe with the long diagonal completely open.

C242) 17.♞xc6



17...♞xd1!

An important intermezzo.

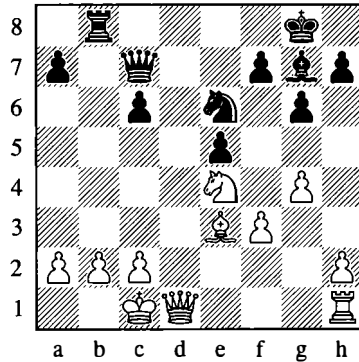
17...♟xe6 18.♞d6± has been shown to be rather unpleasant for Black, as the a8-rook struggles to get into the game.

18.♞xd1 ♟xe6 19.♞d6

19.♞d6 is no longer effective as the bishop isn't secure. 19...♞a5 20.♝b1 (20.a3?! ♞d8⚡) In Bogner – Vasilev, Neuhausen 2004, 20...♞d8N would be have been comfortable for Black.

19.♞e3 ♜b8

The b2-square is always White's vulnerable spot in these positions. This line is rather rare so I've given a few examples of how logical play might continue.



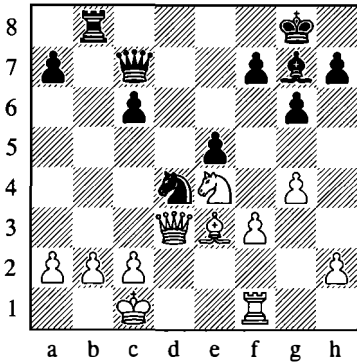
20.♞d3

20.h4N ♟d4 21.♝b1 (21.h5 f5∞) 21...f5 22.gxf5 gxf5 23.♟c5 ♞b6 24.♞xd4 exd4 25.♟b3 a5 is level.

20.g5N ♞b7 21.b3 a5 22.a4 (22.h4 a4 23.h5 c5 offers Black sufficient counterplay) 22...♟d4 23.h4 ♞b4 24.♞xd4 exd4 25.♞d3 h5=

20...♟d4 21.♞f1

Matsuura – Robson, Boca Raton 2008. Here I would favour:



21...♖a5N

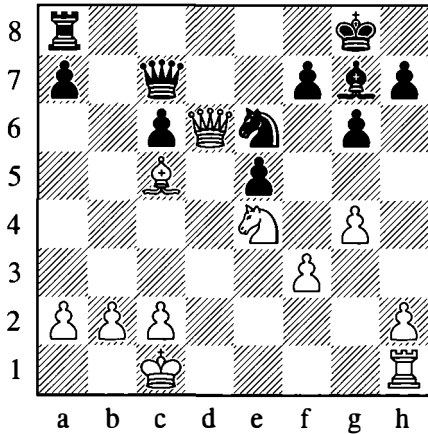
21...f5!?N 22.gxf5 gxf5 is another idea.

22.♖b1 ♖d5 23.g5

23.h4 f5 is unclear.

23...a5

Black's pieces are active enough to compensate for his slightly worse structure.



19...♗xd6

The endgame is fine for Black.

19...♗b7!?N

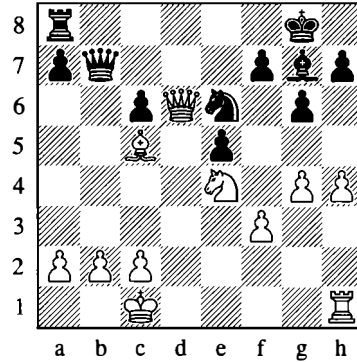
This could be a good alternative if you wish to retain the queens. Here are some possible variations:

20.h4

a) 20.g5 ♟xg5! is a nice trick which would likely come as a shock to White. 21.♟xg5 ♖f8 22.♗xe5 ♖g7 23.♗e7 ♗xb2† 24.♖d2 ♗c3† 25.♖e2 (25.♖d1? ♗a1† 26.♖e2

♗xh1-+) 25...♗c4†! 26.♖d2 ♖f8 Black regains the piece with a slight advantage in the ending.

b) 20.♞d1 ♗b5!? The c5-bishop is starting to look a little loose, for example: 21.b3 ♖f8 22.♗xe5 ♟xc5 23.♟f6† ♖h8 24.♟e8† Black can either repeat with 24...♖g8 or play for more with 24...f6!? 25.♗xf6† (25.♟xf6?? ♟xb3†) 25...♖g8 26.♞e1 ♗b7= when I find it doubtful that White has enough for the piece.



20...♗a6!?

20... ♗b5 would be similar to 20.♞d1 above.

21.a3

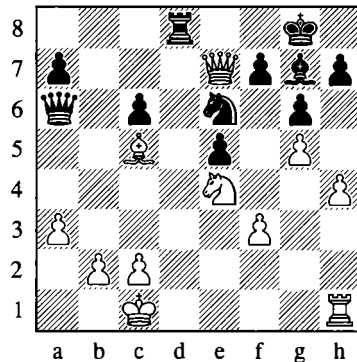
21.♖b1? ♞d8 22.♗e7 ♖f8 23.♗f6 ♗e2-+

21...♞d8 22.♗e7 ♖h6†

22...♗c4!? is another idea.

23.g5 ♖f8 24.♗f6 ♖g7 25.♗e7

Black can either repeat or try:

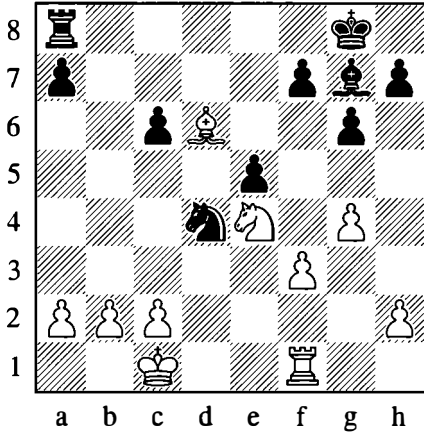


25...♗e2!? 26.♖f2 ♗xf3 27.♞e1=

White has compensation for the pawn.

20.♙xd6 ♖d4 21.♞f1

21.g5!? ♖xf3 22.h4 ♖d4 23.c3 ♖f5 24.♙c5 h5 25.♙f2 was seen in Fercec – Havas, Pula 2011, and here I would play 25...♗f8N 26.♞d1 ♗e7= to prevent White's rook from coming to the seventh rank. Black will follow up with ...f6 to start activating the bishop. White probably has enough compensation to maintain the balance, but nothing more.



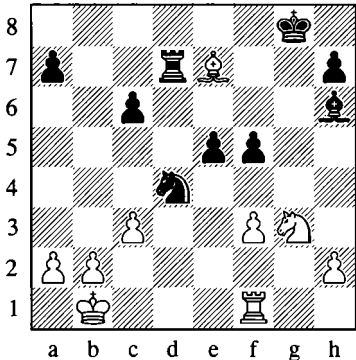
21...f5 22.gxf5 gxf5 23.♖d2

This is the correct route for the knight.

23.♖g3?!

White targets the f5-pawn but leaves his king rather exposed.

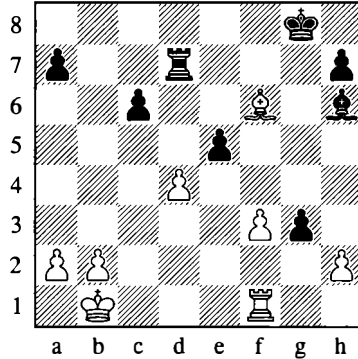
23...♞d8 24.♙e7 ♙h6†! 25.♗b1 ♞d7 26.c3 26.♙c5 ♖xf3! is White's problem.



26...f4! 27.cxd4

27.♖e4? was seen in Delgado Crespo – Gaponenko, Elista (ol) 1998, and here Black should have taken the opportunity for two connected passed pawns with 27...♖xf3!N as 28.♖f6†?! ♗f7 29.♖xd7 ♖d2† 30.♗c2 ♖xf1 simply loses for White.

27...fxg3 28.♙f6

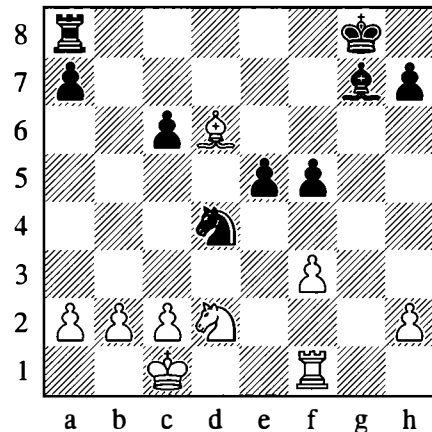


28...exd4N

28...gxh2N 29.♙xe5 ♙g7 30.♙xh2 ♞xd4 should be a draw, but Black can press for a while with the outside passed pawn and more active pieces.

29.hxg3 ♗f7 30.♙e5 ♙e3=

With the strong d-pawn and bishop, Black has decent chances to play for the whole point.



23...♞d8 24.♖c4 e4 25.fxe4 fxe4 26.c3 ♙h6† 27.♗b1 ♖f3=

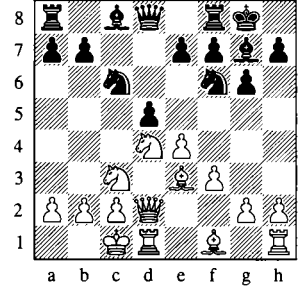
jamwan – the viper, engine game 2012.

Conclusion

10.♖e1 is a positional approach. White intends to prevent any counterplay before exploiting our slightly inferior structure. The best antidote generally involves taking the d-file and positioning our pieces as actively as possible. Always look for a suitable opportunity to break with ...f5, as that will not only knock White's knight away from the strong e4-square but also set up an ...e4 advance to activate our g7-bishop, which may spend some time hibernating in this line. Pay particular attention to 14.♝b1!, which is the most fashionable line at the time of writing.

Chapter 7

9.0-0-0



Offbeat Alternatives

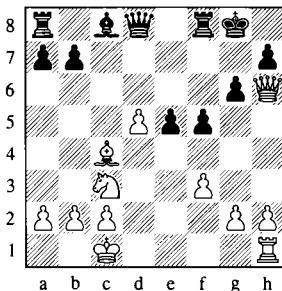
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♗e3 ♗g7
7.f3 0-0 8.♞d2 ♘c6 9.0-0-0

9...d5

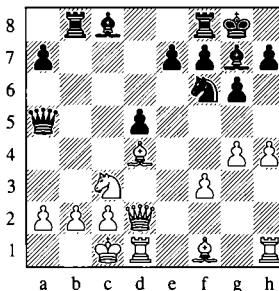
A) 10.♗e2	129
B) 10.♗h6	130
C) 10.h4	130
D) 10.♘xc6 bxc6	133
D1) 11.h4	134
D2) 11.♗h6	135

B) after 15.♗c4



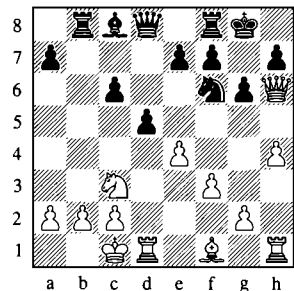
15...♞f6N

D1) after 14.g4



14...♘e4!N

D2) note to 13.e5



13.c♞a5!Nuring.com

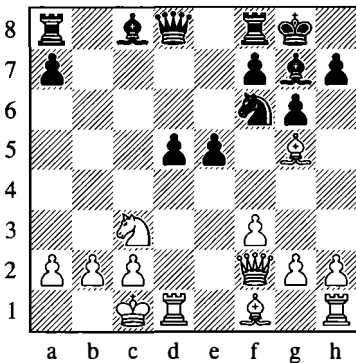
1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♟f6
 5.♞c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♚d2 ♞c6
 9.0-0-0 d5

In this final chapter on 9.0-0-0 d5, we will deal with the rare options: **A) 10.♙e2**, **B) 10.♙h6**, **C) 10.h4** and **D) 10.♞xc6**.

10.♞xd5 ♞xd5 11.♞xc6 bxc6 12.exd5 cxd5 would transpose to variation B of Chapter 3.

10.♞b3?! puts absolutely no pressure on Black. After 10...dxe4 11.♚xd8 ♞xd8 12.♞xd8† ♞xd8 13.♞xe4 (13.fxe4 b6†) 13...♞xe4 14.fxe4 b6† the endgame favours Black, as he will be able to put pressure on the e4-pawn.

10.♚f2? e5 11.♞xc6 bxc6 gives White a much worse version of the 10.♚e1 line, as 12.exd5 can now be met by 12...cxd5† when 13.♙g5 no longer comes with a discovered attack on the e5-pawn. The following game is a good illustration of how bad White's position has already become:

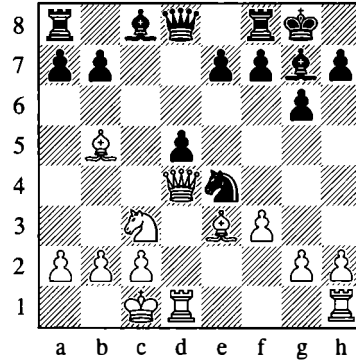


13...d4 14.♚h4 ♚b6 15.♞e4 ♞xe4 16.fxe4 ♙e6 17.♞b1 ♟fc8 18.♙d3 ♞ab8 19.♙c1 ♟c3! 20.♞d2 ♙xa2†! 21.♞xa2 ♞a3† 22.♞b1 ♚a5 0-1 Sanchez Piquero – Gonzalez Valdes, Asturias 1987.

10.♙b5?!

This move encourages Black to trade knights but the ensuing structure favours Black.

10...♞xd4 11.♙xd4
 11.♚xd4 ♞xe4!N

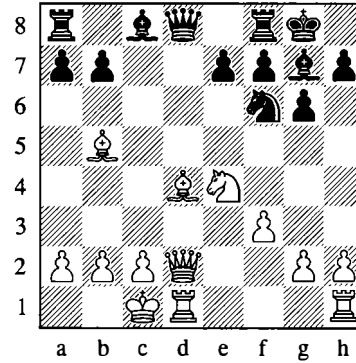


12.♚xd5 ♞d6† Black will gain time against White's queen and has good attacking prospects.

11...dxe4 12.♞xe4

12.♙xf6? ♚xd2† 13.♞xd2 exf6† White loses material due to the threat of ...♙h6.

12.fxe4 ♙e6† also favours Black due to White's loose e4-pawn and the potentially strong outpost on e5.



12...♞xe4 13.fxe4 ♙xd4 14.♚xd4 ♚a5 15.♚a4 ♚c7†

Paolini – Casafus, Buenos Aires 1994.

10.g4 dxe4! 11.♞xc6

This is White's only way to maintain the balance.

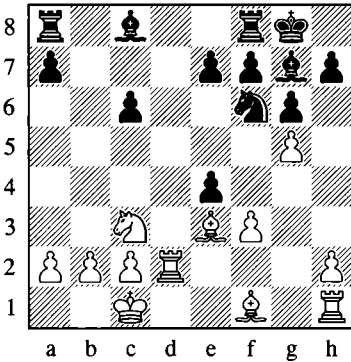
11.g5 seems consistent with White's last, but 11...♞d5† is just good for Black.

11. ♖f2 ♜xd4 12. ♙xd4 ♚a5 ♠ left White a pawn down in Soltes – Baranek, Slovakia 1998.

11... ♖xd2† 12. ♜xd2?!

12. ♙xd2N would have stopped the knight from going to d5 with tempo. 12... bxc6 13.g5 ♜d5 14. ♜xe4 a5=

12... bxc6 13.g5



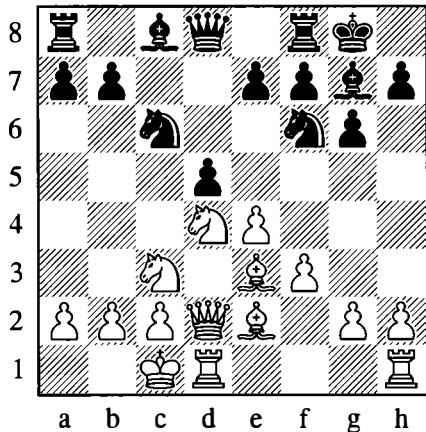
13... ♜d5! 14. ♜xd5 cxd5 15. ♜xd5

In Strater – Toel, Duisburg 2005, there was no reason not to take the pawn:

15... exf3N

With a clear advantage to Black.

A) 10. ♙e2



White connects his rooks but this inoffensive move does not challenge Black at all.

10... ♜xd4 11. ♙xd4 dxe4 12. fxe4

12. ♖g5 was played in Munksgaard – Carlstedt, Odense 2012. White's last didn't actually threaten anything, so I would simply develop with 12... ♙e6!N.

12. ♜xe4 ♜xe4 13. fxe4 ♙xd4 14. ♖xd4 ♚a5 was already more pleasant for Black in Bertusi – Havas, Novi Vinodolski 2009.

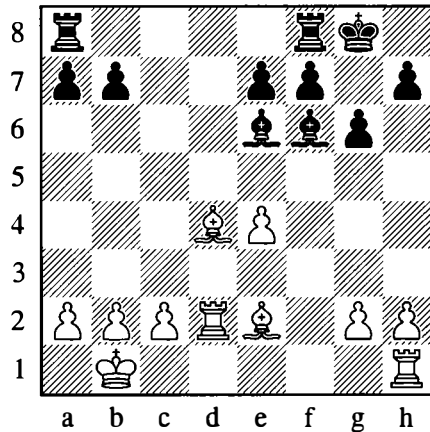
12... ♖a5 13. ♜b1 ♙e6 14. ♜d5

14. ♙xf6 is probably White's best, but it's clear that he is already angling for a draw. 14... ♙xf6 (14... exf6!? is also interesting) 15. ♜d5 ♚a4 (15... ♖xd2N 16. ♜xf6† exf6 17. ♜xd2 ♜fd8=) 16. ♖e3 ♜fd8= jin38 – cordo, Internet 2013.

14... ♖xd2 15. ♜xf6†

After 15. ♜xe7†! ♜h8 16. ♜xd2 ♜xe4 17. ♙xg7† ♜xg7 18. ♜d4 ♜f6 White's knight is extremely offside.

15... ♙xf6 16. ♜xd2



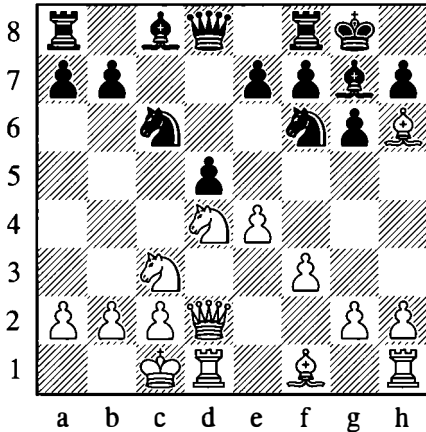
16... ♜ad8!

This accurate move gave Black the better chances in Prestage – Vaassen, email 2003. The reason for preferring the queen's rook is revealed after:

17. c3N ♙xd4 18. cxd4 ♜f5

Black has the more pleasant ending.

B) 10.♔h6



White immediately decides to trade bishops but he loses control of the centre.

10...♙xh6

10...dxe4 is a straightforward alternative which comfortably equalizes: 11.♔xg7 ♗xg7 12.♖xc6 (12.fxe4 ♖xd4 13.♗xd4 ♜xd4 14.♗xd4 e5 15.♗c4 ♔d7= Holmsten – Gamback, Stockholm 1999) 12...♗xd2† 13.♖xd2 (13.♗xd2 bxc6 14.fxe4 ♔e6=) 13...bxc6 14.♖xe4 ♖xe4† 15.fxe4 ♗d8† 16.♔d3 ♔g4= Sulskis – Gomez, Calvia 2006.

11.♗xh6 ♜xd4 12.♗xd4

12.e5?? is a typical intermezzo in these structures, but here it just loses to 12...♖f5! as in Simovic – Pletanek, Decin 1997.

12...e5

White's best chance is to sacrifice the exchange.

13.♗xd5!

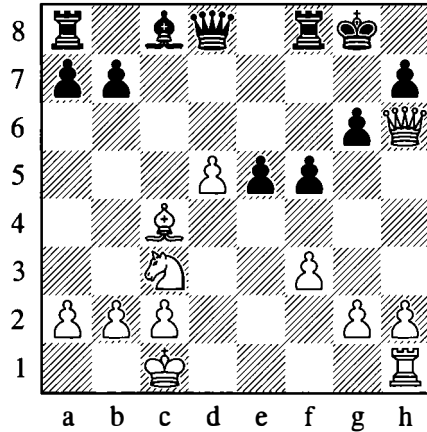
Instead 13.♗d1 is much more common but 13...d4† is comfortable for Black.

13...♖xd5 14.exd5

White has compensation for the exchange but no more.

14...f5 15.♔c4

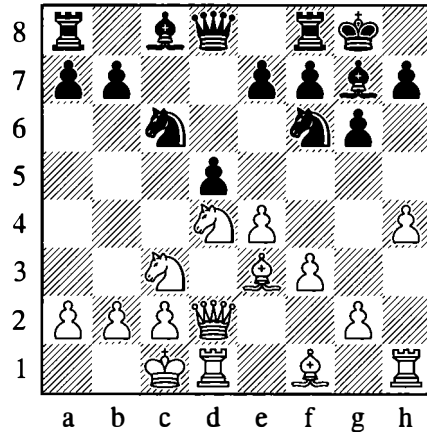
In Schulz Streeck – Soujon, Germany 1997, Black should have played:



15...♗f6N

Controlling several important squares. Black has a solid position with good chances to build on his material advantage.

C) 10.h4



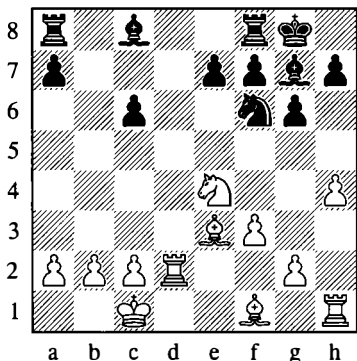
White immediately goes for the kingside attack, but it is not at all dangerous as Black's central play is already underway.

10...dxe4 11.h5

After 11.fxe4?! ♖g4 White's kingside has too many holes.

11.♖xe4? has been played a few times but 11...♗xe4 12.fxe4 ♕xd4!N 13.♕xd4 ♕g4!-+ wins material.

11.♖xc6 ♜xd2† 12.♞xd2
12.♕xd2?! bxc6 13.fxe4 ♖g4 14.♞e1 ♕e6 favoured Black in Roux – Goulenok, Montigny le Bretonneux 1999.
12...bxc6 13.♖xe4

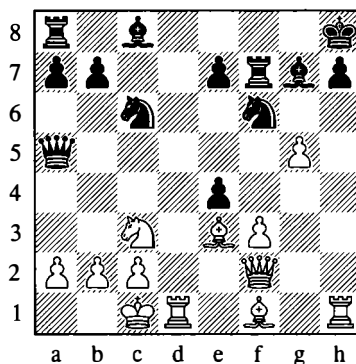


13...♖xe4N
13...♖d5!? is the move if you wish to keep more material on the board. White should reply: 14.♕c5N (In Murray Ortiz – Ericsson, Guarapuava 1995, White immediately erred with 14.♕d4? ♕h6†) 14...♞b8 White has the slightly better structure but Black's piece activity is enough to maintain the balance. (14...♕h6?! is less accurate in view of 15.c4 ♖f6 16.♖xf6† exf6 17.♕xf8 ♖xf8 18.♕d3±.)

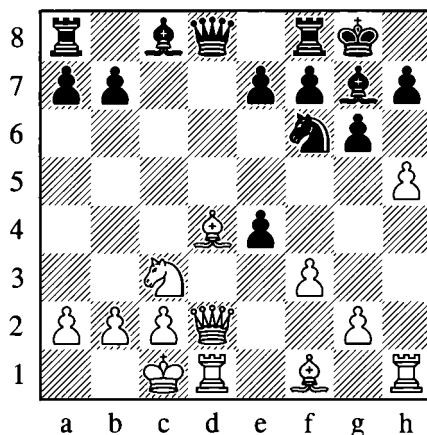
14.fxe4 ♕e6
The endgame is balanced, for instance:
15.♕a6 ♞ab8 16.b3 h5 17.♖b1 ♕e5 18.♕c5 ♞fe8=

11...♖xd4 12.♕xd4
12.h6 ♕h8 (12...♖e6?!N could also be considered) 13.♕xd4 exf3 14.gxf3 occurred in Escofet Fernandez – Izquierdo, Uruguay 1982. I think 14...♜c7!N is best, taking control over the c4-square, with an edge to Black.

12.hxg6? is an enterprising piece sacrifice but White's attack is not strong enough. 12...♖c6 13.gxf7† ♖h8 14.♞f2 ♜a5 15.g4 ♞xf7 16.g5



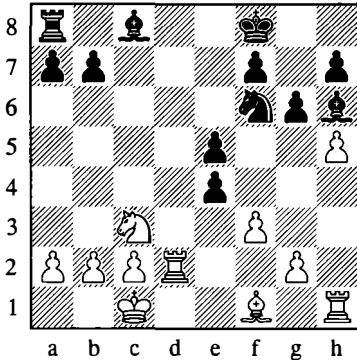
16...♖g4! 17.♞h4 ♕xc3!-+ Rasidovic – Riemersma, Caorle 1989.



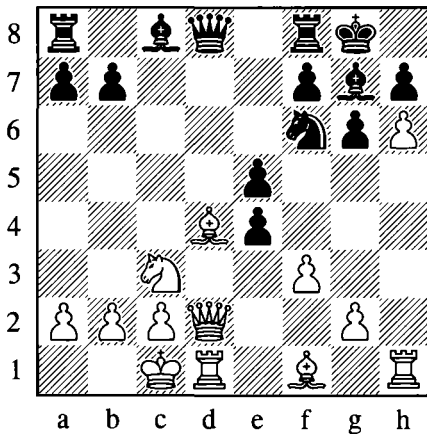
12...e5!
This is the simplest way to defuse White's initiative.

13.h6
13.♕xe5 ♜xd2† 14.♞xd2 favours Black after: 14...e3! 15.♞d3 (15.♞d6?! ♖xh5 16.♕xg7 ♖xg7 17.g4 ♖g3† Britton – W. Watson, London 1982) 15...♖xh5 16.♕xg7 ♖xg7 17.♞xe3 ♖g3 18.♞g1 This was Donchev – Semkov, Varna 1982, and now Belov's suggestion of 18...♕e6N gives Black slightly better chances in the ending.

13. ♖c5 has only been tested in correspondence play but it seems to be White's best. The position liquidates into an equal ending: 13... ♗xd2† 14. ♝xd2 ♕h6! 15. ♕xf8 ♜xf8



16. hxg6 ♕xd2† 17. ♜xd2 hxg6 (17... fxg6!? 18. ♘xe4 ♘xe4† 19. fxg6 h5 was also level in Bujan Mosteiro – Diani, email 2009) 18. ♘xe4 ♜e7 19. ♘xf6 ♜xf6 20. ♝h8 b6 21. ♕c4 ♕b7= Jenull – Thannheiser, email 2007.

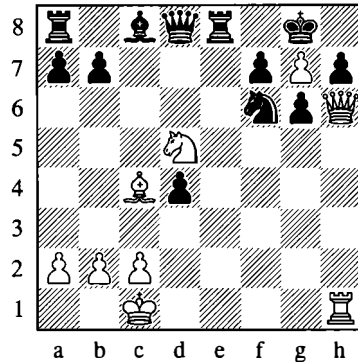


13... exd4! 14. hxg7 ♝e8!

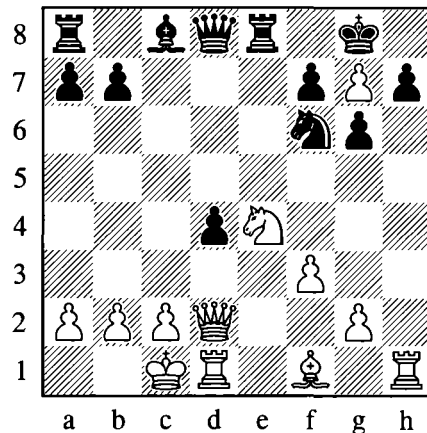
The position might look scary with a pawn on g7 but White cannot exploit it.

15. ♘xe4

In another game White went all in for mate: 15. ♗h6 exf3 16. ♕c4? (16. gxf3 ♕f5=) 16... fxg2 17. ♘d5 gxh1=♗ 18. ♝xh1



White has sacrificed everything for a speculative attack. However 18... ♝e1†!+ must have come as a cold shower in Llaneza Vega – Moranda, Herceg Novi 2005. (In fact 18... ♘h5!N is also winning: 19. ♝xh5 ♝e1† 20. ♘d2 ♝d1†! 21. ♜xd1 ♕g4† 22. ♕e2 ♕xh5+)



15... ♘xe4 16. fxg6 ♗f6!

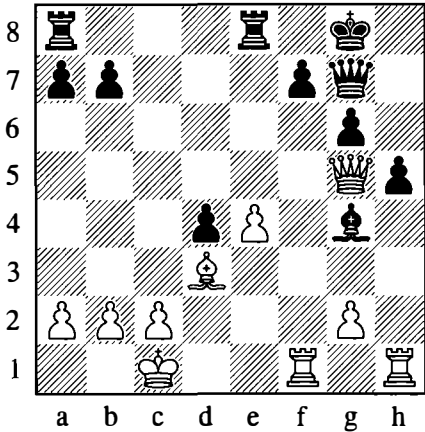
With the queen coming to the aid of the king, Black has nothing to fear.

17. ♕d3

17. ♗xd4 ♗f4† 18. ♜b1 ♕g4 19. ♝e1 ♝ad8 20. ♗xa7 ♗xe4!≠ Hernaez Fernandez – Montella, corr. 2003.

17... ♕g4 18. ♝df1 ♗xg7 19. ♗g5 h5

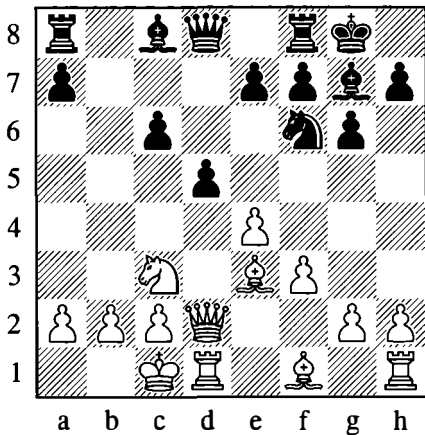
Black is safe on the kingside and is still a pawn up, but White has just enough activity to hold on to equality.



20. Bf6 Bc6 21. Bhf1 Bxf6 22. Bxf6 Bc8
23. e5 Bc6=

Zupec – Ravnik, email 2006.

D) 10. dxc6 bxc6



The knight exchange strengthens Black's centre and opens the b-file. In return, White hopes to gain time for his kingside attack. He may proceed with **D1) 11. h4** and **D2) 11. g6**.

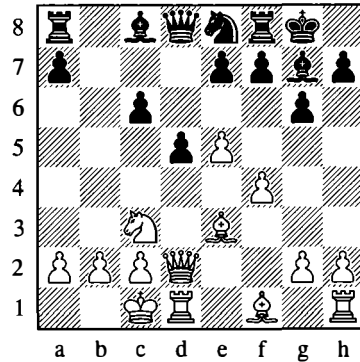
11. g4 ♖c7!N 12. g5 ♘h5 13. exd5 ♝d8⁺ is promising for Black.

11. exd5 may transpose to the main lines if Black recaptures with the knight, but 11... cxd5 seems like a logical way to limit White's

options; there is nothing better than 12. ♘xd5 ♘xd5 13. ♗xd5, transposing to variation B of Chapter 3.

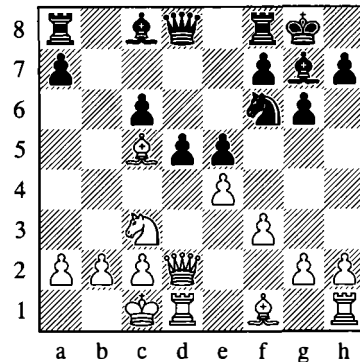
11. ♗c4 White exploits the pin to bring his bishop to b3. 11... e6 12. ♗b3 ♗b7= On the one hand the bishop blocks Black's play down the b-file, but it also finds itself shut out of play by Black's central pawns.

11. e5 ♘e8 would be good for White if he could keep the bishop hemmed in, but Black can fight back immediately. 12. f4 (12. ♗f4 was tried in Niewold – Decallonne, corr. 1989, but 12... ♘c7!N followed by ... ♘e6 looks strong)



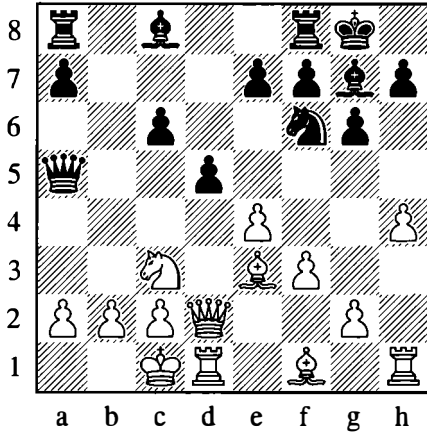
12... f6 13. exf6 In Shurunov – Sarana, Dagomys 2009, 13... ♗xf6N would have been the right recapture. Black intends ... ♗a5, ... ♗b8 and ... ♘d6, with a good position.

A final option is: 11. ♗d4 e5! 12. ♗c5



12...♙e6!N (I find 12...d4 a bit too committal, even though it worked extremely well in its only practical encounter: 13.♙xf8?! ♜xf8 14.♘b1?? ♙h6 0-1 Pereira – Teixeira, Vila Real 2005) 13.♙xf8 ♜xf8 Black has great play for the exchange; just look at his central dominance and easy play down the b-file.

D1) 11.h4 ♖a5!



Black's quick play along the b-file means his attack is faster.

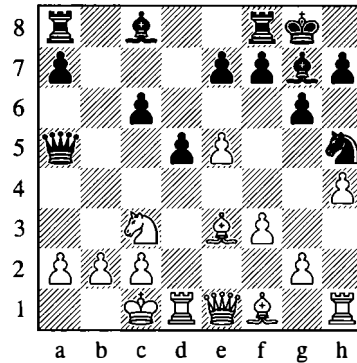
12.exd5

12.♘b1 has been tried, but after 12...♞b8 the pressure against b2 forced White to play 13.b3 in Stratil – Dobias, Bratislava 1992. Here I like 13...♞b4!N, putting pressure on the e4-pawn. 14.e5 (14.exd5 ♞d8♞) 14...♘h5 White has to sacrifice the pawn as 15.f4? ♘g3 16.♞g1 f6! would be terrible for him.

12.h5 was played in M. Filippov – Ponomarev, St Petersburg 2009, when Black should have taken the offering: 12...♘h5!N 13.♙h6 (13.g4 ♘g3-+) 13...♙xc3! 14.♜xc3 ♜xc3 15.bxc3 ♞d8♞

12.e5 ♘h5 13.♜e1!N (13.♙h6 d4! 14.♘b1 ♜xd2† 15.♙xd2 occurred in Al Haysamy – Chaudry, Singapore 1987. After the correct

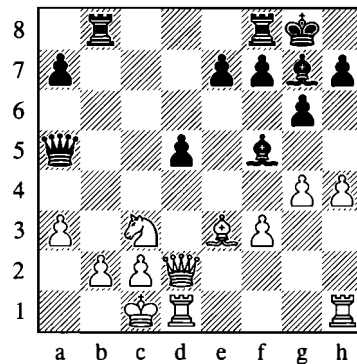
15...♘g3N 16.♞g1 ♙xe5† White is in trouble.) The text move is White's only way to defend, but Black can maintain the pressure with:



13...♞b8! 14.♘d5 (14.g4 ♙xe5 15.gxh5 ♞xb2-+) 14...♜xa2 15.♘xe7† ♘h8 16.♜c3 ♙e6♞ White is still struggling.

12...♞b8 13.♙d4

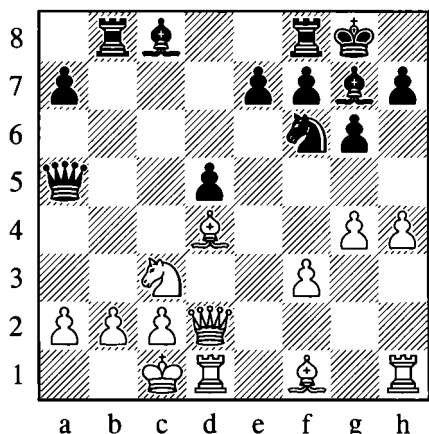
After 13.♙c4 ♘xd5! 14.♙xd5?! cxd5 White was in deep trouble and did not last much longer: 15.a3 ♙f5 16.g4



16...♞xb2! 17.♘xb2 ♞b8† 18.♘a2 ♙xc3 19.♜c1 d4 0-1 Zelic – Nikolin, Pula 1984.

13...cxd5 14.g4

Here I found a powerful improvement over Parfenov – Kornev, Kurgan 2001.



14...♖e4!N

A surprising but effective piece sacrifice.

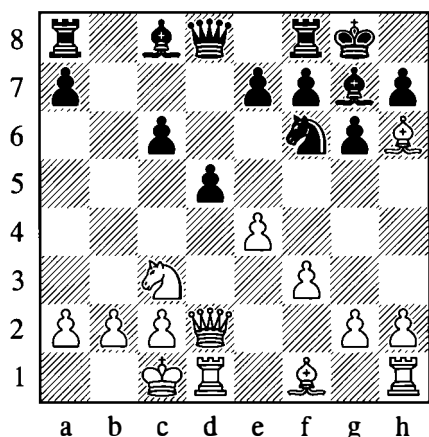
15.fxe4

15.♗xc4 ♖xa2

15...e5! 16.♗f2 d4

White cannot afford to lose the a2-pawn, so Black will regain the piece with an excellent position.

D2) 11.♗h6



Compared to the earlier variation B, the bishop exchange makes more sense when Black cannot simply capture on e4. On the other hand, the open b-file gives Black attacking chances of his own.

11...♗xh6 12.♖xh6 ♖b8

This position is double-edged, with both sides playing for mate.

13.e5

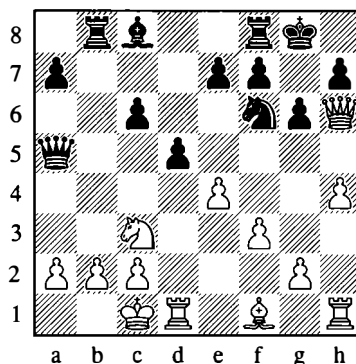
This is White's main try.

13.h4

This is obviously a critical plan, but Black has a strong novelty.

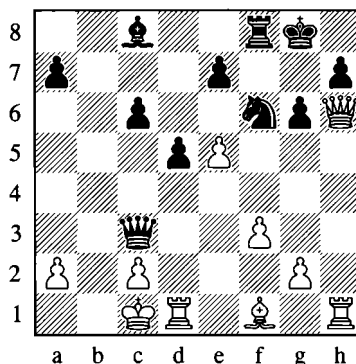
13...♗a5!N

Instead 13...♗e6 14.e5 ♗h5 15.g4 ♗g3 16.♗d3 ♗xh1 17.♖xh1 was dangerous for Black in Doci – Misovic, Slovakia 2002.



14.h5 ♖xb2! 15.♗xb2 ♖b4† 16.♗c1 ♖xc3 17.hxg6 fxg6 18.e5!

18.exd5 ♗f5 19.♗d3 (19.♗d3 ♖a3† 20.♗d2 ♗xd3 21.cxd3 ♖xa2† 22.♗e1 ♖xg2 23.♖h3 ♖xh3 24.♖xh3 ♗xd5†) 19...♗xd3 20.♗xd3 ♗f7 21.dxc6 ♖c8† Black's king is safe on f7 and his attack remains extremely strong.



My engine thinks White is holding a draw here but Black has many different tries. One possibility is:

18...♙f5 19.♙d3 ♙xd3 20.♞xd3 ♞xe5

Perhaps White can hold, but the position feels much easier for Black to play.

13...♘d7 14.h4

14.♙d4!N is another interesting try. 14...♞e8 15.e6! (15.♞h4 ♘f8♣ doesn't get White anywhere) 15...♘f6 16.exf7♠ ♘xf7∞ The position is complicated but I like the potential of Black's central pawns.

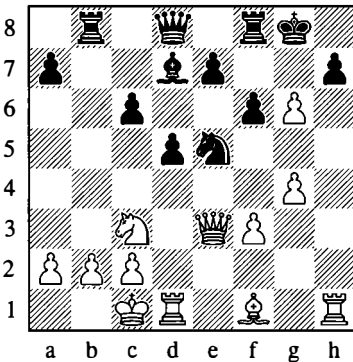
14...♘xe5 15.h5 ♙f5 16.g4 f6!

This is the crucial idea that holds Black's position together. The bishop is inedible.

17.♞f4?

After 17.gxf5? g5! White's queen is trapped and he will have to give at least a rook to extricate it.

17.♞e3!N looks like the best square for White's queen. 17...♙d7 18.hxg6

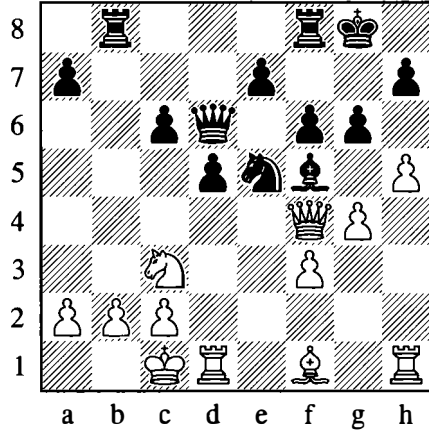


18...♞b6! Forcing the exchange of queens. (18...hxg6 19.f4! is dangerous) 19.gxh7♠ (19.♞h6? loses to 19...♞xb2♠ 20.♘d2 ♘xf3♠ 21.♘d3 ♘g5!-+) 19...♘h8 20.♞xb6 axb6 White is temporarily a pawn up but the h7-pawn is dropping. I like Black's compact structure, but White should be able to retain equality.

17.♞d2N is less accurate than the above line, as f3-f4 is no longer such a big threat. 17...♙e6 18.hxg6 hxg6 19.♙d3 ♘f7♣ Black's king can find sanctuary in the centre.

17...♞d6!

The threat of a discovered check forces White to lose time with his queen, giving Black vital extra time for his counterattack.



18.♞e3 ♞b4! 19.gxf5?! ♞xb2♠ 20.♘d2 d4! 21.♞e4 ♞xc3♠ 22.♘e2 gxf5

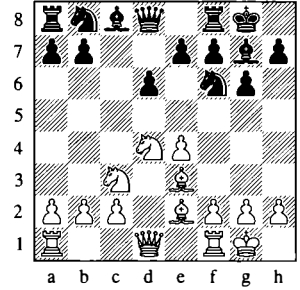
0-1 Gonell Aparici – Marin, Manresa 1995. Twenty years later, this energetic display from the Romanian GM remains a model demonstration of Black's chances.

Conclusion

Most of White's alternatives on move ten are not dangerous as Black can simply take the pawn on e4. 10.♘xc6 bxc6 is more interesting as the pin on the d-file prevents ...dxe4, but Black obtains strong counterplay along the b-file, making this a risky way for White to play. Pay particular attention to 11.♙h6, as it is the sharpest line considered in this chapter.

Chapter 8

Classical Variation



9th Move Alternatives

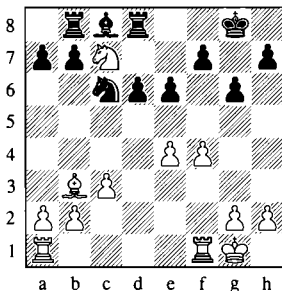
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♙e2 ♙g7 7.♙e3 0-0 8.0-0

8...♘c6

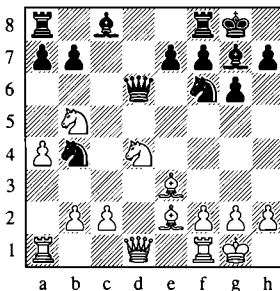
A) 9.f4 ♖b6! 10.♗d3 ♘g4	138
A1) 11.♘d5	139
A2) 11.♙xg4	140
B) 9.♕h1 d5!	142
B1) 10.♘xc6	142
B2) 10.exd5	143
C) 9.h3	144
D) 9.a4	145
E) 9.f3	146
F) 9.♗d2 d5	147
F1) 10.exd5 ♘xd5	148
F11) 11.♘xc6	149
F12) 11.♘xd5	149
F2) 10.♗fd1	151

A2) after 18.♙b3



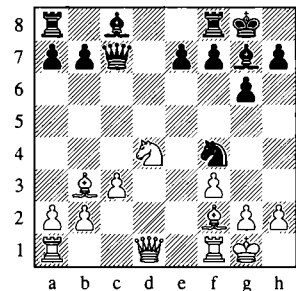
18...b5!N

D) after 12...♘cb5



12...♘d7!N

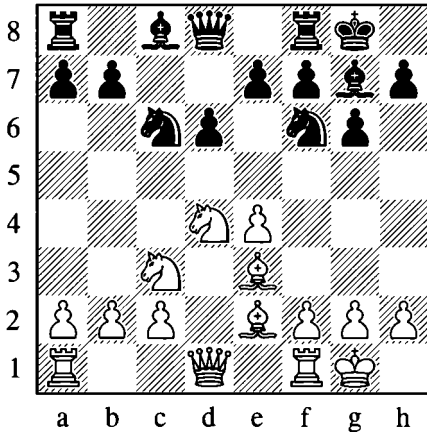
E) after 15.♙b3



15...♙e5!N [nouring.com](http://www.nouring.com)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6
5.♗c3 g6 6.♙e2 ♙g7 7.♙e3 0-0 8.0-0 ♗c6

The Classical Variation is popular, as White can play the same set-up against virtually all Sicilian variations. However, I don't believe it is particularly challenging against the Dragon. The d5-square is often key in the Dragon and White's set-up has done nothing to fight for control of it. Black already threatens the thematic break ...d5, after which he would have no problems.



In this chapter we will consider six options for White: A) 9.f4, B) 9.♖h1, C) 9.h3, D) 9.a4, E) 9.f3 and F) 9.♗d2.

9.♗b3 prevents 9...d5 and is the main line. This will be examined in the next chapter.

A) 9.f4

This is probably the trickiest move to face in the whole chapter. We can't automatically play ...d5 here, but White's last weakened his bishop on e3:

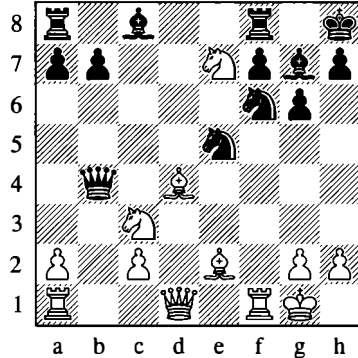
9...♗b6!

This neutralizes the line. Not only are we hitting b2 but, more importantly, there is now a lot of pressure on d4.

10.♗d3

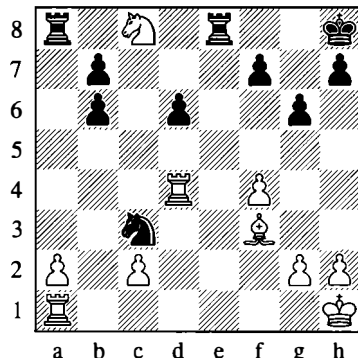
The only good way for White to deal with Black's threats. 10...♗e4 no longer works as it doesn't hit the queen.

10.e5?! is known as the Zollner Gambit – I don't believe it is sound. 10...dxe5 11.fxex5 ♗xe5 12.♗f5 ♗xb2 13.♗xe7+ ♖h8 14.♙d4 ♗b4!



This is a useful move to remember in the sequence. 15.♙e5 (15.♗xc8?! ♖d8! 16.♗b5 ♖axc8+) 15...♗xe7 16.♗d4 ♗h5 17.♙xg7+ ♗xg7+ White has insufficient play for the pawn.

10.♗d2?! fails to: 10...♗e4! 11.♗xc6 (11.♗xe4 ♙xd4+) 11...♗xd2 (11...♗xc6+ is also possible. We might lose a few tempos with our queen but the extra central pawn is key.) 12.♗xe7+ ♖h8 13.♙xb6 axb6! (More convincing than 13...♗xf1 14.♙f2 ♗d2 15.♖d1 when White garners decent compensation.) 14.♖fd1 ♙d4+ 15.♖h1 ♙xc3 16.bxc3 ♗e4 17.♖d4 ♗xc3 18.♙f3 ♖e8 19.♗xc8



19...♖xa2! 20.♟f1 ♖xc8 21.♟xd6 b5♣ Black had good winning chances with his extra pawn in Meyer – Schulz, Germany 1993.

10.♘a4

This is a tacit draw offer but Black can play for more:

10...♟b4

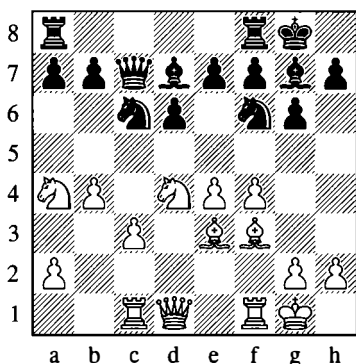
10...♟a5 would force 11.♘c3 when Black can simply repeat with 11...♟b6.

11.c3 ♟a5 12.b4 ♟c7

We have given White an extra c2-c3 and b2-b4, but they don't really fit into his plans. Now the knight is misplaced on a4 and e4 still needs defending.

13.♙f3 ♙d7 14.♞c1

14.♘b2?! ♘xd4 15.cxd4 ♟c3 16.♟c1?! (16.♟b3 was better, but after 16...♟xb3 17.axb3 ♘g4 18.♙xg4 ♙xg4♣ the bishop pair gives Black the better chances.) 16...♟xb4 17.♘d3 ♟a5♣ Black quickly converted his extra pawn in Coleman – Charbonneau, Stillwater 2007.



14...♞ac8 15.a3 ♟b8 16.♘b2 ♘xd4 17.cxd4 ♞xc1 18.♟xc1 ♘g4 19.♙xg4 ♙xg4 20.♟d2 d5!♣

Black had taken over in Westerinen – Miles, Metz 1985.

10...♘g4

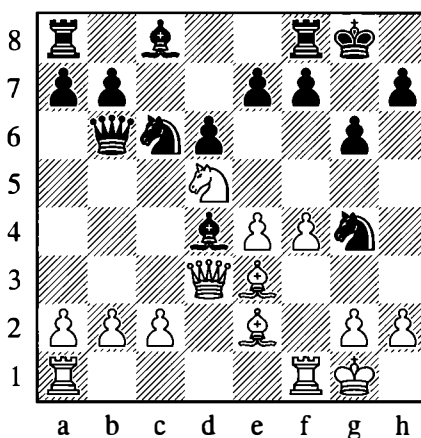
10...♟xb2 is possible, but 11.♞ab1 ♟a3 12.♘xc6 bxc6 13.♘d5! ♟xd3 14.♘xe7♣ ♖h8 15.cxd3 as in Radulski – Chatalbashev, Sunny

Beach 2006, should be a little better for White, even if the game quickly ended as a draw.

Now an interesting material imbalance arises after A1) 11.♘d5, while with A2) 11.♙xg4 White hopes for a slight positional edge.

A1) 11.♘d5 ♙xd4!

In return for his queen Black gets three pieces, and practice has proved that they're at least equal to White's queen.



12.♘xb6

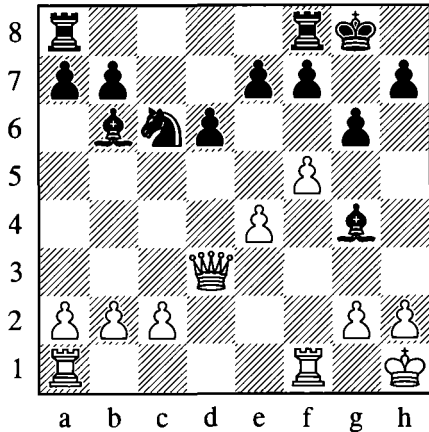
White still has the opportunity to bail out with: 12.♙xg4 ♙xe3♣ 13.♟xe3 ♟xe3♣ (13...♟xb2!♣ has been tried if Black wants to keep more life in the position, but it looks a little dangerous after 14.f5!♣N) 14.♘xe3 ♙xg4 15.♘g4= The position is completely equal.

12...♙xe3♣ 13.♖h1 ♙xb6 14.♙xg4 ♙xg4

After a forced sequence we've reached a situation where Black has a knight and two bishops for the queen. In my view Black will be clearly better if he can coordinate his pieces.

15.f5

This is therefore White's only try in this variation – trying to trap the light-squared bishop.



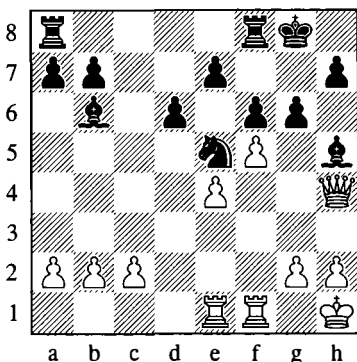
15...♙h5

This was both the choice of Reshevsky and three recent high-rated computer engines. They were all successful.

16.h3

16.a4 ♖ac8 17.a5 ♙d4 18.c3 ♙g7 19.h3 gxf5 20.exf5 f6 Saving the bishop. White lacks enough pieces to successfully attack. 21.♗e3 ♙f7 22.♖h2 ♖c7 23.♙a3 a6 24.♙a4 ♜e5♠ Black had coordinated its pieces in Gull – Hiarcs, engine game 2013. The rest of the game was typical computer weirdness but Black was always on top.

16.♙ae1 f6 (16...♜e5 17.♗h3 f6 was the actual move order but it makes sense to make the f7-square available for the bishop straight away) 17.♗h3 ♜e5 18.♗h4



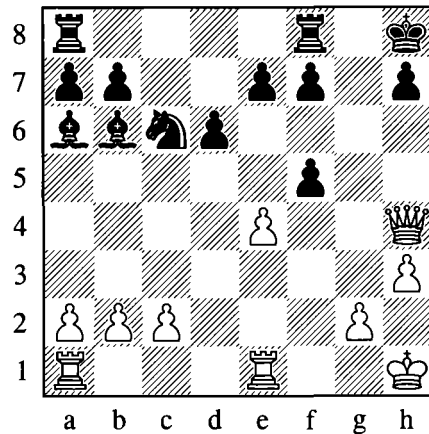
18...♙g4! 19.♙f4 (19.h3 g5♠ and Black's bishop escapes as 20.♗h6? ♜f7+ traps the queen.) 19...h5 20.fxg6 ♜xg6 21.♙xg4 hxg4 22.♗xg4 ♖f7♠ Horowitz – Reshevsky, New York 1951.

16...gxf5 17.♗g3♠

17.exf5 f6 18.♙fe1 ♙f7 19.a4 ♜e5 20.♗b5 ♙ab8 21.♗b4 ♖h8 22.a5 ♙c5 23.♗h4 a6 24.b4 ♙a7♠ Once again Black was perfectly coordinated in Houdini 1.5a – Stockfish 2.2.2, engine game 2012.

17...♖h8 18.♗h4 ♙e2 19.♙fe1 ♙a6

White has succeeded in preventing Black's usual ...f6, ...♙f7 plan, but the bishops coordinate well and White still lacks any realistic attacking chances.

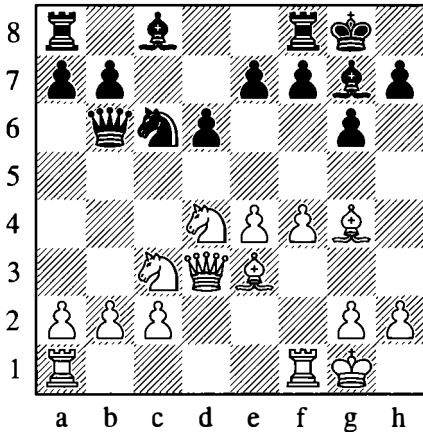


20.exf5 ♙d4 21.♙ab1 ♙f6 22.♗e4 ♜e5 23.♙e3 ♖ac8 24.b3 ♙g8♠

Spark – Stockfish 1.8, engine game 2010.

A2) 11.♙xg4

Since the main line is more pleasant for Black, White has recently switched to this.

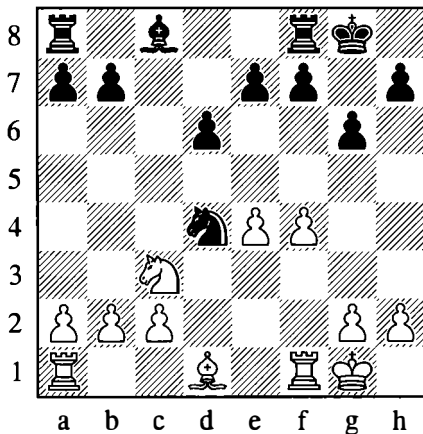


11...♙xd4! 12.♙xd4 ♖xd4† 13.♗xd4 ♘xd4
This position should just be equal.

14.♙d1

14.♙xc8 ♜fxc8 accelerates our development and only Black can be better here.

The text move looks odd but it is White's only real try to claim anything at all from the opening. White is trying to claim he has the slightly better bishop, and that the d5-outpost will prove significant. His plan is to play ♘d5, c2-c3 and bring the bishop back to a more active square.



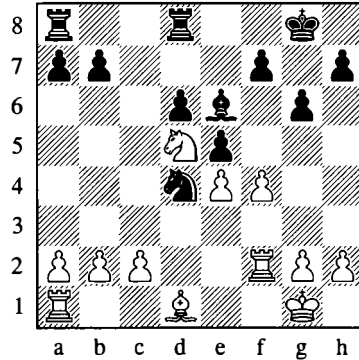
14...♜d8

This sensible move was the choice of the

strong Danish GM, Peter Heine Nielsen, who actually authored a DVD on the Dragon.

15.♘d5

15.♜f2 could be an improvement for White, although 15...e5 16.♘d5 ♙e6 looks a sensible way of developing.



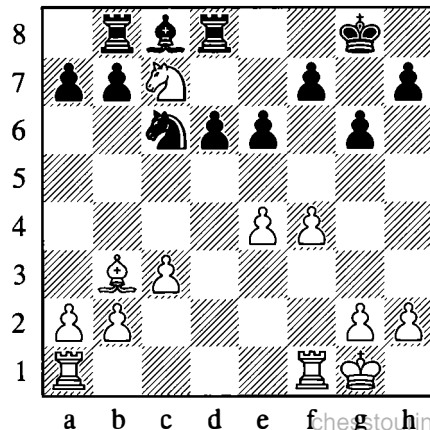
17.g4!? (17.c3 ♙xd5 18.exd5 ♘f5 19.fxe5 dxe5 20.♙f3 ♘d6 21.♜e1 ♜e8= The knight is strong on d6 and Black is ready to start advancing his pawns.) 17...exf4 18.c3 ♘c6 19.♘xf4 ♙c4 20.♙b3 b5= Our control of the e5-square keeps the position together – it's more important than White's d5-outpost.

15...e6 16.♘c7

16.♘e7† ♗f8 17.♘xc8 ♜axc8 18.c3 ♘c6=

16...♜b8 17.c3 ♘c6 18.♙b3

This was M. Petrov – P.H. Nielsen, Helsingor 2011, when I've previously suggested:

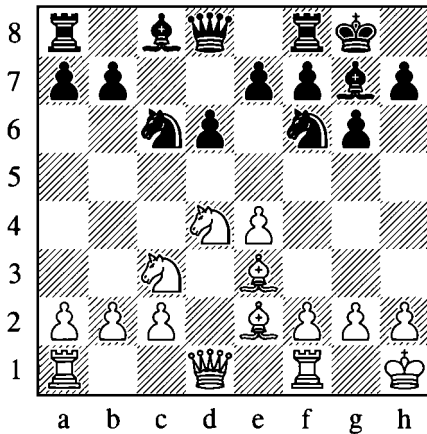


18...b5!N

White would have regretted not exchanging knight for bishop.

B) 9.♘h1

This move looks strange, but hopefully you'll understand it as we've just examined 9.f4. White gets out of the way of the annoying ...♗b6 ideas and prepares to push. Kramnik and Adams have both played this way, but it is simply harmless.

**9...d5!**

This equalizes immediately.

The series of exchanges is less severe after **B1) 10.♖xc6**, while **B2) 10.exd5** can lead to mass simplifications.

B1) 10.♖xc6 bxc6 11.e5

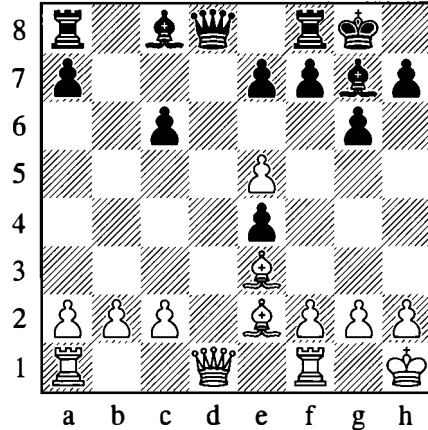
White's alternative if he wishes to keep more pieces on the board.

11...♗e4 12.♗xe4

12.f4! is a little more interesting and ambitious. However, if 12...♗xc3 13.bxc3 f6 (or 13...♗a5 as given by Khalifman) 14.exf6 ♗xf6 15.♗d4 Mijovic – Lekic, Bar 2008, I prefer Black's superior structure after 15...♗d6N.

12...dxe4

This position was actually Marin's inspiration for a line he recommended in his *The English Opening* series, only with colours reversed! The pawn on e5 is much more vulnerable than the one on e4.

**13.♗xd8**

13.♗d4 is safer but 13...♗d5! is a good response: 14.f4 exf3 15.♗xd5 cxd5 16.♗xf3 e6 (16...♗xe5 17.♗xd5 ♖b8 18.♗h6 ♗g7 19.♗xg7 ♘xg7= is also possible) 17.♗d4 ♗a6 18.♖f2 f5 19.exf6 ♗xf6 20.♗xf6 ♖xf6 This was marginally better for Black with its passed pawn, but White held the draw in Protector – Critter, engine game 2013.

13...♗xd8 14.♖fd1

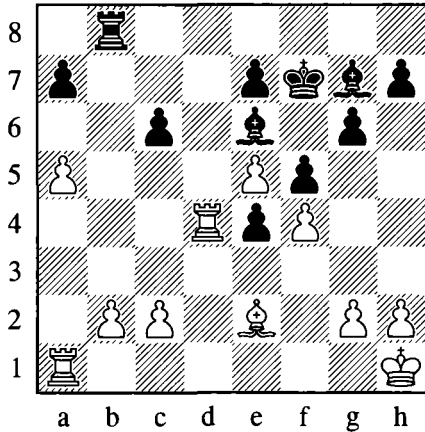
This was Mickey's treatment of the position.

14...♗e6 15.♗d4 f5 16.a4 ♘f7 17.a5 ♗xd4!

A strong exchange sacrifice. Sacrificing the rook is a common theme in the Dragon, but it's normally for the knight, either on c3 or d5. Here it works beautifully: the g7-bishop is often worth a rook in its own right, and Black will get at least one pawn.

18.♗xd4 ♖b8! 19.f4

19.♖b1 ♗xe5 20.♖a4 ♖d8!

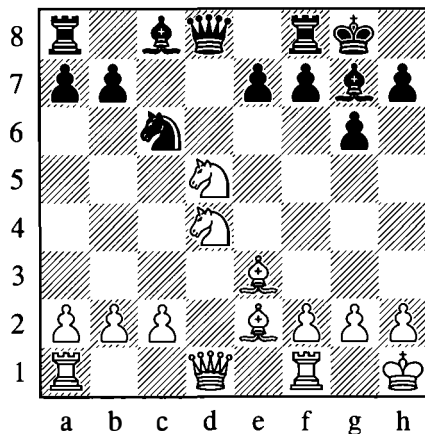


19...exf3 20.♙xf3 ♖xe5 21.♞d3 ♞xb2
 22.♞e1 ♙d6 23.♙xc6 ♞xc2 24.♙d5 ♙xd5
 25.♞xd5 ♞a2

The bishop and two pawns are too strong. The a5-pawn is also vulnerable, and it dropped off within a few moves in Adams – Khalifman, Las Palmas 1993.

B2) 10.exd5 ♖xd5 11.♖xd5

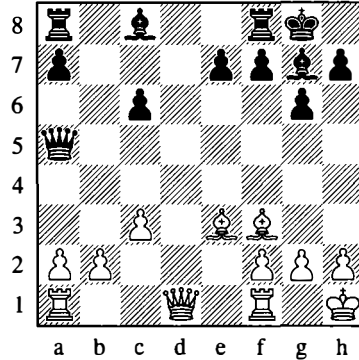
11.♖xc6 bxc6 12.♖xd5 (12.♙d4 ♖xc3) 12...cxd5 has been played a few times, but Black must be better with a 2–0 pawn majority in the centre.



11...♖xd4

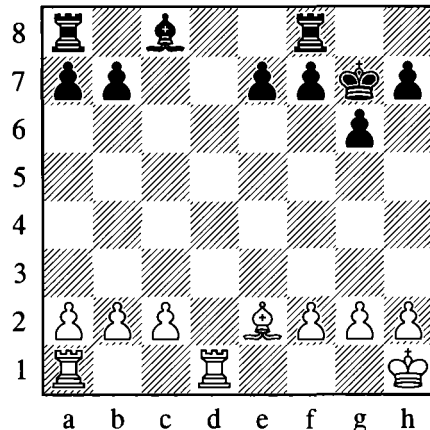
This was my choice upon reaching the above position.

11...♞xd5!? is interesting and keeps a little more life in the position: 12.♙f3 ♞a5 13.♖xc6 bxc6 14.c3 (As Dearing observes, allowing White to take on c6 is a typical theme in these Classical lines. In return for the pawn Black gains time to target White's queenside, and here after 14.♙xc6?! ♞b8 White won't be able to hold onto his b2-pawn anyway, and c2 will also be vulnerable.)



14...♞b8 15.♞c1 (15.b4 ♞a3) 15...c5= This position has been seen a few times: Black's activity and pressure on the b2-pawn compensate for his fractured queenside structure. It is about balanced, but I'd prefer to be on the Black side as I think it's a lot easier to play.

12.♙xd4 ♞xd5 13.♙xg7 ♞xd1 14.♞fxd1 ♖xg7=



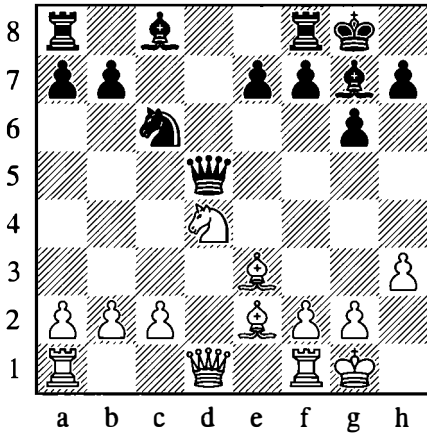
I'd reached an equal but not yet drawn endgame in Storey – Jones, Coulsdon 2008, and I managed to convert the full point.

C) 9.h3

This is similar to variation B2 above.

9...d5 10.exd5 ♖xd5 11.♗xd5 ♜xd5

Here we can play 11...♗xd4 as well, but the endgame is a slightly better version for White. 12.♗xd4 ♜xd5 13.♗xg7 ♜xd1 14.♗xd1 ♗xg7 15.♗fe1 The move h2-h3 is more useful than ♗h1, but I still think the position is equal.



12.♗f3

12.♗xc6 ♜xc6= is of course nothing to fear.

12...♜a5 13.♗xc6

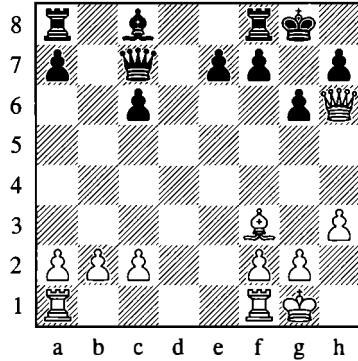
The highest-rated game to reach this position continued with the wet 13.c3 ♗xd4 14.♗xd4 ♗d8 15.♜e2 ♗xd4 16.cxd4 ♗e6 17.♗fd1 ♗d7 18.d5 ♗xd5 19.♗xd5 ♗xd5 20.♜xe7 ½–½ Romanenko – Kudrin, New York 2011.

13...bxc6

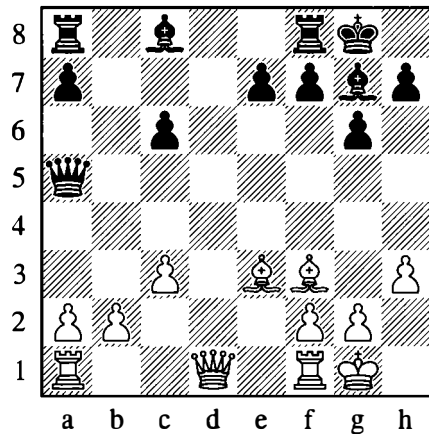
This position is similar to that arising from 9.♗h1 d5 10.exd5 ♖xd5 11.♗xd5 ♜xd5. The pawn move is slightly more useful than the king sidestep, but Black still has adequate activity.

14.c3

14.♜c1 Surprisingly a lot of computers have contested this position. 14...♜c7 15.♗h6 ♗xh6 16.♜xh6 was Protector – Komodo, engine game 2014, and now the most straightforward route to equality seems to be:



16...♗e6N Followed by putting the bishop on d5. (Instead Komodo played more energetically with 16...e5 17.♗ad1 f5! 18.♗d2 e4 19.♗e2 ♗e6 which also looks interesting.) 17.♗fe1 ♗d5 18.♗e2 c5=



14...♗a6

You should be aware that playing identically with 14...♜b8 15.♜c1 c5 is possible, although 16.♗d1 ♗e6 isn't quite as painless as before: White has 17.♗d5 ♗f5 18.g4! usefully exploiting 9.h3. Our bishop is forced to retreat to c8, and I don't think we have quite

enough counterplay against White's king to compensate for the loose c5-pawn.

15.♞e1

In over-the-board play White has only tried 15.♙e2, when 15...♞fd8 16.♞c2 ♙xe2 17.♞xe2 ♞ab8= was comfortable for Black in R. Pert – Holland, London 1994.

15...♞fd8 16.♞c1 ♞c7 17.♙h6 e6 18.♞e3 ♙xh6 19.♞xh6 ♙c4 20.b3 ♙d5 21.♙e2 c5=

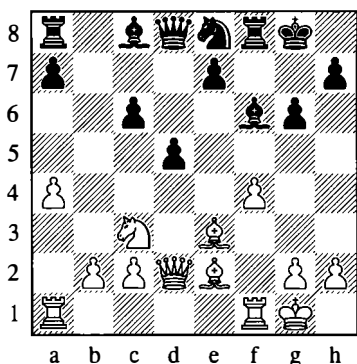
Deep Junior Yokohama – Naum, engine game 2014.

D) 9.a4

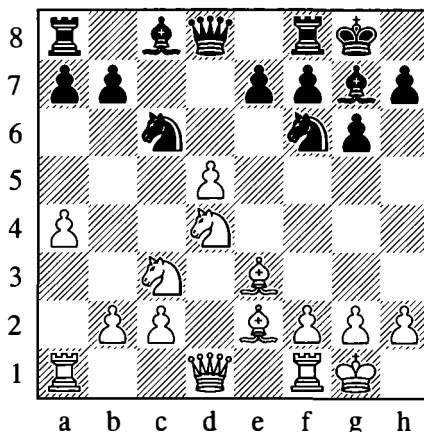
Another semi-waiting move from White. This move is rare in human chess, but has been seen a few times in engine vs engine battles. Again I see no reason to refrain from our usual course of action:

9...d5 10.exd5

10.♙xc6 bxc6 11.e5 (11.exd5 ♙xd5 12.♙xd5 cxd5 13.c3 ♞b8 14.♞d2 ♞c7= Zappa Mexico – Deep Sjeng, engine game 2010, is again a position where humans would prefer Black with the central pawns.) 11...♙e8! (I prefer this to 11...♙e4 as then the move a2-a4 helps White, although I still think Black is fine here too) 12.f4 f6 13.exf6 ♙xf6 14.♞d2 This was Chiron – Protector, engine game 2014, and now I'd opt for:



14...♙f5N 15.♞ad1 ♙d6 Black's pieces are well coordinated and the move a2-a4 doesn't look to have much relevance. If White wants to do anything he probably has to try 16.g4, but this is always extremely double-edged. I prefer Black's centre.



10...♙b4!?

I decided to recommend a slightly different continuation than before. 10...♙b4 is also possible in the 9.h3 and 9.♙h1 lines but I think it makes most sense here. Now it's harder for White to shift the knight from b4, and c2-c4 ideas don't work as well with the pawn committed to a4.

10...♙xd5

Of course this is possible here too, but then at least White can argue a2-a4 had some use.

11.♙xd5 ♞xd5

11...♙xd4 12.♙xd4 ♞xd5 13.♙xg7 ♞xd1 14.♞fxd1 ♙xg7 looks completely equal as usual. 15.♙f3 ♙e6 16.b3 ♞ac8 17.c4 b6=

12.♙xc6 bxc6!?

12...♞xc6 13.c3 ♙e6 14.♙f3 ♞c7 15.a5 feels a touch better for White, Stockfish – Protector, engine game 2012.

13.♞xd5 cxd5 14.♞ad1 e6 15.b4 ♙d7 16.b5 ♙c3 17.f4 ♞fc8=

Black had slowed White's advance on the queenside. Now it's difficult for either side

to make progress, Alex_11– Wolverine 81, engine game 2011.

11.d6

This is White's usual reaction to ...b4 in similar positions.

11.♙f3 ♖bxd5 12.♜xd5 ♜xd5 13.♙g5 h6 14.♙h4 ♜f4= Black has already equalized. After 15.♙g3 (15.c3 g5 16.♙g3 e5 17.♙xf4 exd4=) the engine even decided to get ambitious with 15...g5!?! in Spark – Deep Junior, engine game 2012.

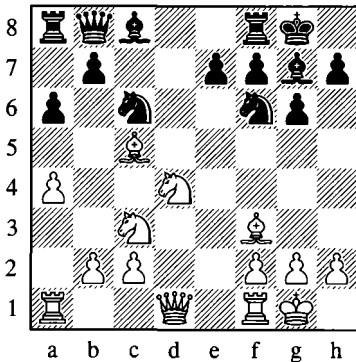
11.♞d2 doesn't challenge Black either: 11...♜bxd5 12.♜xd5 ♜xd5 13.♙h6 ♙xh6 14.♞xh6 ♞b6 15.♜b5 ♙f5= Chiron – Bouquet, engine game 2014.

11...♞xd6 12.♜cb5

12.♜db5

This has been played a couple of times, but Black is already better after:

12...♞b8! 13.♙c5 ♜c6 14.♙f3 a6 15.♜d4?! 15.♜a3 ♙e6 16.h3 ♞d8 17.♞e2 ♜d4 18.♙xd4 ♞xd4♞ was also pleasant in Cao – Bodek, Crossville 2011.

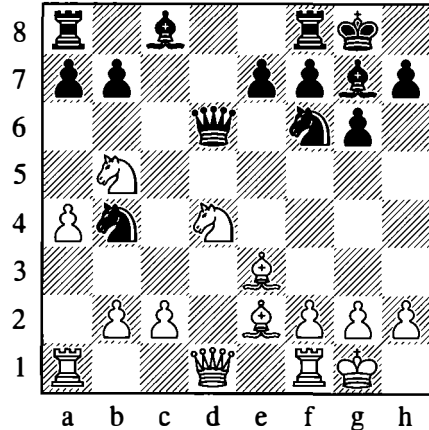


15...♜xd4 16.♞xd4?

16.♙xd4 was necessary, but 16...♞d8 would force White to find: 17.♜d5! ♜xd5 18.♙xg7 ♜xg7 19.c4! White is still clearly worse though. 19...♙e6 20.cxd5 ♙xd5! 21.♙xd5 e6♞ Black will have a clear extra pawn.

16...♜g4

White resigned in Matoewi – Obodchuk, Dresden (ol) 2008, as he can't defend both his queen and the mate on h2.



12...♞d7!N

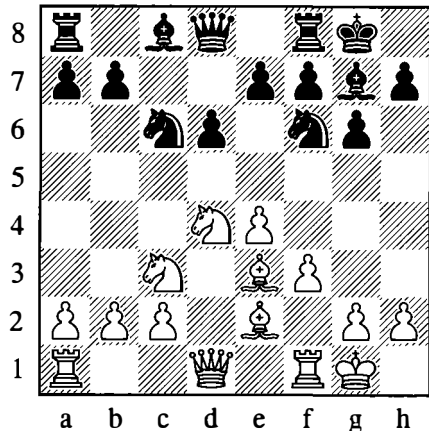
Black has the following idea:

13.c4 a6 14.♜c3 ♜g4♞

Gaining the advantage of the bishop pair.

E) 9.f3

Combining ♙e2 with f2-f3 always looks wrong to me. It won't surprise you when I recommend:

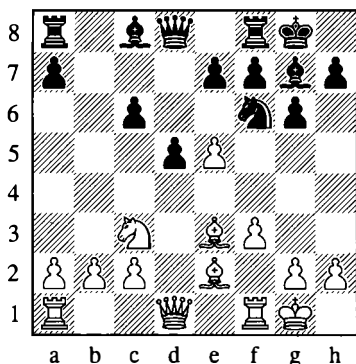


9...d5 10.exd5

This gives us the usual choice.

10.♖b3 would be a move too late. We can choose either to develop with 10...♗e6, or 10...dxe4 11.fxe4 ♖xd1 12.♙axd1 ♗g4N. The e5-outpost and long-term weakness of the e4-pawn promise Black the better chances.

10.♖xc6 bxc6 11.e5 (11.exd5 looks a terrible way of playing, especially with the pawn on f3. 11...♖xd5 [11...cxd5!? also looks tempting] 12.♖xd5 cxd5 13.c3 ♖b8 14.♗d2 a5 15.b3 ♗d6 16.♙ad1 ♗d8 Black was obviously better in Strelka – Critter, engine game 2012.) Here we can no longer put our knight on e4, but there is another good option:



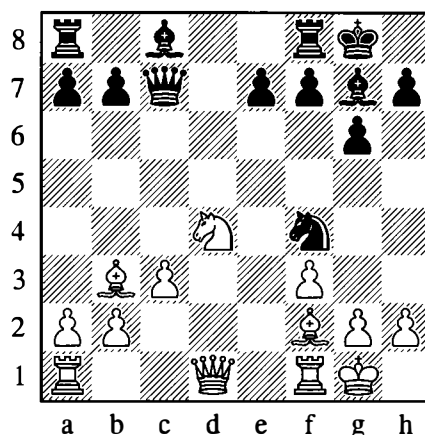
11...♖e8 12.f4 f6 13.exf6 ♗xf6 Critter – Rybka, engine game 2012. We have reached the same position as we saw in the 9.a4 line, except with the pawn back on a2. That certainly doesn't favour White, so Black is comfortable.

10...♖b4

With the bishop vulnerable on e3, I'd be tempted to go for this.

11.♗c4 ♖bxd5 12.♖xd5 ♖xd5 13.♗f2 ♖f4 14.c3 ♗c7 15.♗b3

This was Brunelli – Inkiow, Pedavena 2005, when the following sequence is clearly better for Black:

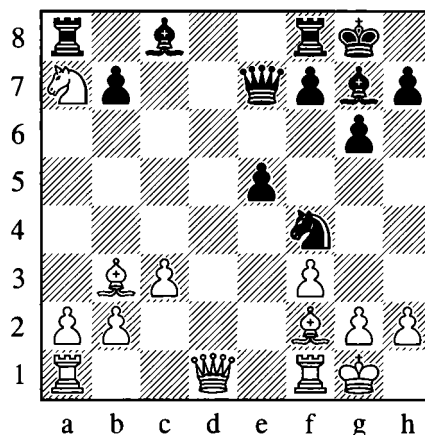


15...e5!N 16.♖b5 ♗e7

The a7-pawn can't be taken.

17.♖xa7?

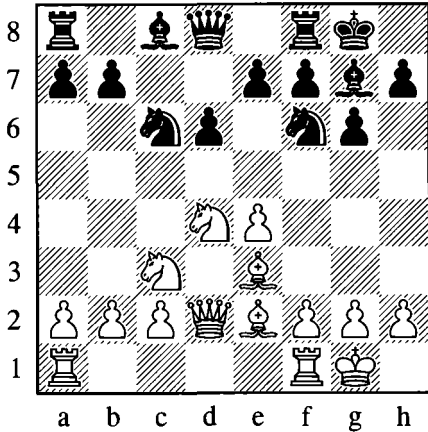
17.♗xa7? ♗d7 18.a4 ♗xb5 19.axb5 ♙xa7 20.♙xa7 ♗c5†+–



17...♗g5! 18.g3 ♖h3† 19.♗g2 ♖xf2 20.♙xf2 ♙xa7+–

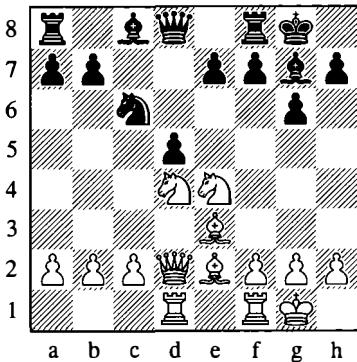
F) 9.♗d2

Various moves are now possible. 9...♖g4 – forcing White to exchange off his light-squared bishop – and 9...♗d7 are often played, but I think the critical test is:

**9...d5**

White's most common reply is F1) **10.exd5**, though I think F2) **10.♖fd1** is more challenging.

10.♖ad1 may seem like the more natural rook to put in the centre, but the difference is that 10...♗xe4 is now playable. 11.♗xe4 (11.♗xc6? would have been strong with the rook on a1, but here 11...♗xd2 12.♗xd8 ♗xf1+ is winning)



11...♗xd4! 12.♗xd4 dxe4 13.♖c3N (13.♖e3 ♗xd4 14.♗xd4 ♖b6 was equal in Ostrauskas – Farberis, Vilnius 1948!) 13...♖a5= White can't keep queens on the board and retain his dark-squared bishop, so we don't need to worry about the dark-square holes around our king. White probably has enough to hold the draw but no more.

10.♗xc6 bxc6 11.e5

11.exd5 ♗xd5 transposes to variation F1 1.

11.♖ad1 ♖c7 12.exd5 ♗xd5 transposes to the note to White's 12th move in variation F1 1.

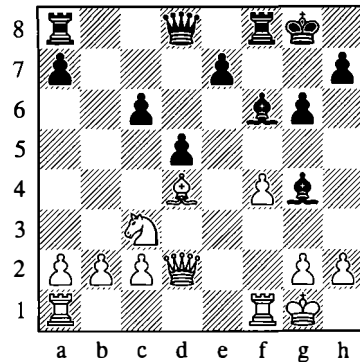
Black now has an additional opportunity:

11...♗g4 12.♗xg4 ♗xg4 13.f4

13.♗h6 ♗xe5!? was a tempting exchange sacrifice. After 14.♗xf8 as in Fuchs – Maedler, Aschersleben 1963, I would personally go for: 14...♖xf8N 15.♗fe1 ♖b8= Black's bishops dominate.

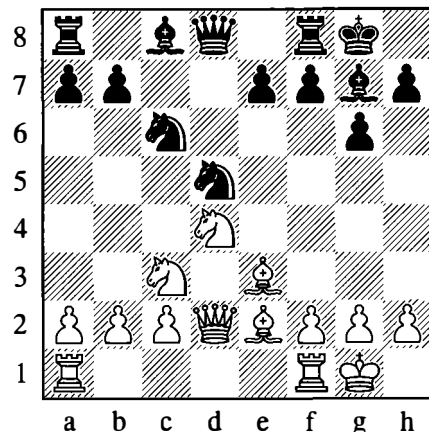
13...f6 14.exf6 ♗xf6 15.♗d4

Medina – Xu Huahua, Manila 2013.



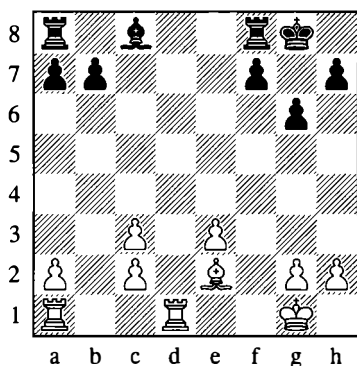
15...♗xd4†N 16.♖xd4 ♖b6=

This favours Black as White must take on b6, repairing our structure. Not 17.♖f2? ♗xf4!.

F1) 10.exd5 ♗xd5

White can choose which knight to capture:
F11) 11. ♖xc6 or F12) 11. ♖xd5.

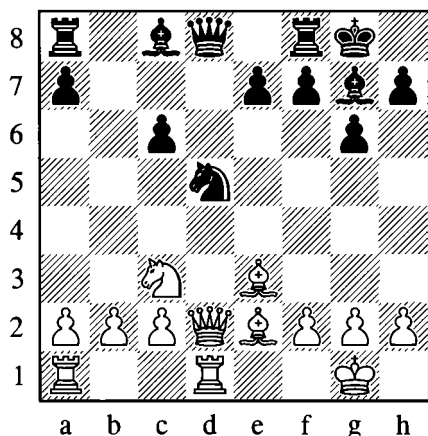
11. ♜fd1 Giving up the dark-squared bishop promises White nothing at all. 11... ♖xe3 12. ♖xc6 ♜c7 13. ♖xe7† ♜xe7 14. ♜xe3 ♜xe3 15. fxex3 ♙xc3 16. bxc3 White's fractured structure gives Black full compensation for the pawn deficit.



16... ♙e6 17. c4 ♜ac8 18. ♜ab1 ½–½ Penrose – W. Watson, Chester 1979.

F11) 11. ♖xc6 bxc6 12. ♜fd1

12. ♜ad1 ♜c7 13. ♖xd5 (13. ♙d4 e5 14. ♙c5 ♜d8 is similar to 12. ♜fd1) 13... cxd5 14. ♜xd5 ♙e6 White may be two pawns up at the moment, but they're about to be hoovered up: 15. ♜c5 ♜xc5 16. ♙xc5 ♙xb2 17. ♙xe7 ♜fe8 18. ♙c5 ♙xa2= This has been the way for a couple of GMs to steer the game into dead drawn territory.



12... ♜c7 13. ♙d4

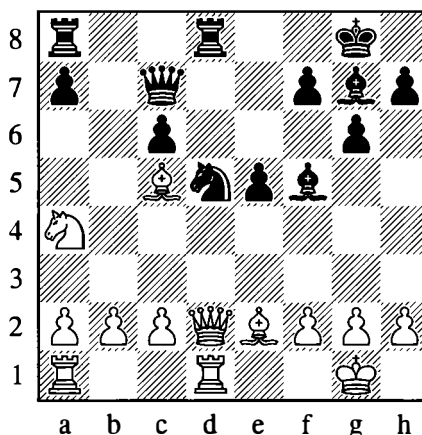
This was another approach that I faced in praxis.

13... e5 14. ♙c5 ♜d8

The position has similarities to some of those we examined in the section on the Yugoslav Attack with 9.0–0–0 (see Chapters 2 and 6). However, this is a favourable version for Black: he has more central control and, with the king over on the kingside, White cannot generate play there. Black, on the other hand, can still attack on the queenside.

15. ♖a4? ♙f5†

The position was already pleasant for me and the game didn't last long:

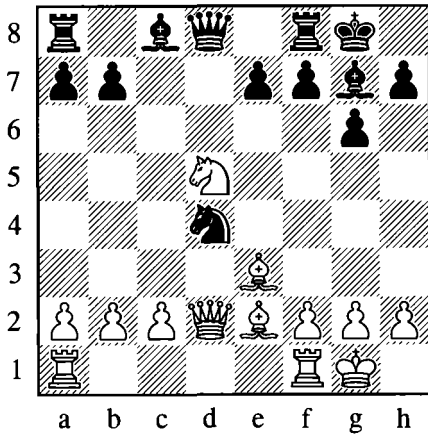


16. ♙a6 ♜ab8 17. c4 ♖b4 18. ♜xd8† ♜xd8 19. ♜xd8† ♜xd8 20. ♙xb4 ♜c7 21. b3 e4 22. ♜e1 ♙d4

0–1 A. Rizouk – Jones, Hinkley 2012. Further comments to this game can be found in the thematic introduction on pages 11–12 of the first volume.

F12) 11. ♖xd5 ♖xd4!

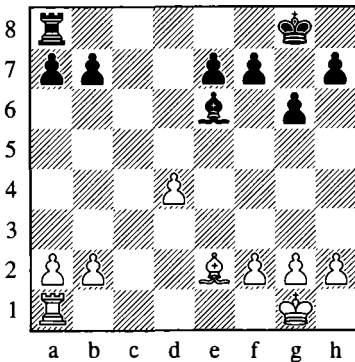
Here 11... ♜xd5 12. ♙f3 isn't so good for Black. We can't go to a5 with our queen and White's extra tempo is quite useful.



12.c4

White has to stop trading pieces or he could start getting into trouble.

12.♙xd4 ♜xd5 13.♞fd1 ♞d8 14.c3 ♙xd4 15.♞xd4 ♞xd4 16.♞xd4 ♞xd4 17.cxd4 ♙e6



The ending might look drawish but Black actually has 5/5 in Megabase from this position! White has played for a draw, but now has a tough ending to defend with his weak d4-pawn and more passive pieces.

12...e5

12...♞xe2† is a decent alternative, when 13.♞xe2 e6 14.♞c3 ♙d7 15.♞ad1 ♞c7 16.♙d4 ♙c6= is extremely solid.

13.♞ad1

13.f4

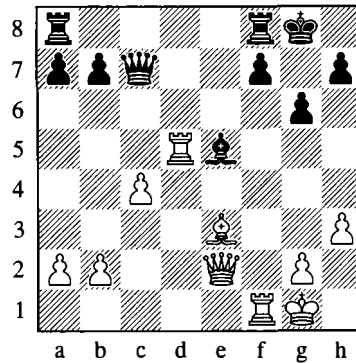
This position was an old battleground with Petrosian, Averbakh and Gufeld all defending Black's cause.

13...♙e6 14.fxe5 ♞xe2† 15.♞xe2 ♙xd5 16.♞ad1 ♙xe5

16...♙xc4 17.♞xc4 ♞c8!= as played in Wortmann – Bogenschuetze, Bendorf 2006, is also fine.

17.♞xd5 ♞c7 18.h3

18.g3 allows Black an immediate perpetual with: 18...♙xg3 (18...♞fe8!?) 19.hxg3 ♞xg3†=

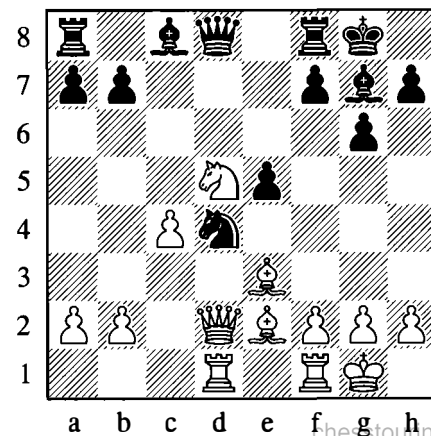


18...♞fe8 19.b3 ♞ad8 20.♞xd8 ♞xd8 21.♙h1 a6 22.♙g5 ♞d7 23.♞e1 f6 24.♙h6 ♞d6 25.♞f1

Illescas Cordoba – Rachels, New York 1987. Black would have had a small edge with his centralized bishop had he played:

25...♙f7=

Instead of blundering with 25...♞d3?? 26.♞xf6!+.

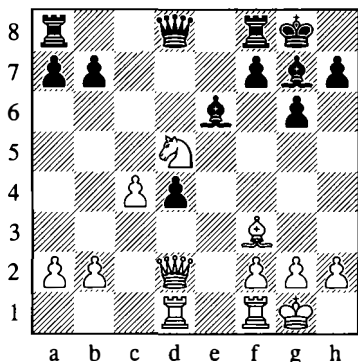


13...♙c6 14.♙xd4

14.♘f4 ♙f5=

14...exd4 15.♘f4

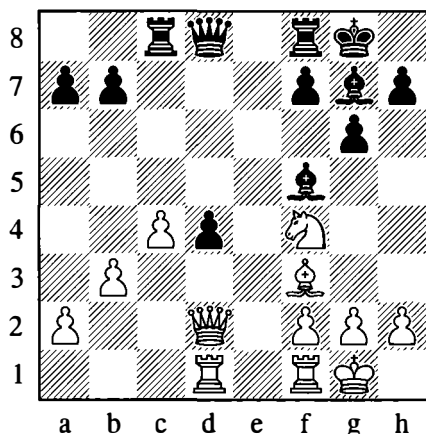
15.♙f3 Nguyen Van Huy – Vakhidov, Bandar Seri Begawan 2011, gave Black the opportunity to take the initiative with:



15...b5!N 16.♘f4 (16.b3 bxc4 17.bxc4 ♖c8) 16...♙xc4 17.♗fe1 ♙xa2 18.♙xa8 ♜xa8. The bishop pair and two pawns are worth more than the exchange.

15...♙f5 16.♙f3 ♖c8 17.b3

Kamsky – Radjabov, Bazna 2009. Here Teimour should have chosen the following pawn break:



17...b5!N 18.cxb5

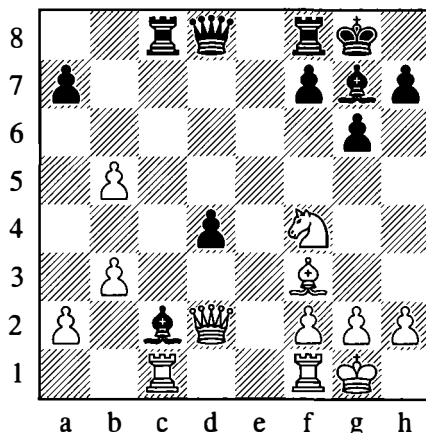
18.♙d5 ♖e8

18...♙c2!

The pawn arriving on d3 is going to be annoying for White.

19.♖c1

19.♗d1 is probably better, but after 19...d3 20.♙c6 a6 21.a4 ♙xb3 22.♗e3 ♙h6! 23.♗xd3 ♙xf4 24.♗xd8 ♙xd2 25.♗xd2 ♙xa4 26.♙b7 ♙xb5 27.♙xc8 ♙xf1 28.♜xf1 ♖xc8 White still needs to work hard for the draw.

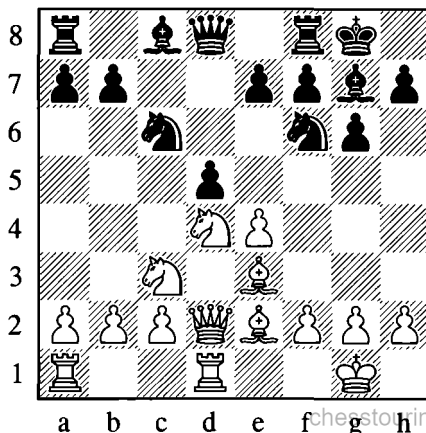


19...d3 20.♙c6 ♙h6! 21.g3 ♜f6 22.♜g2 ♖fd8 23.♗fe1 ♜b2

White is completely tied up.

F2) 10.♖fd1

This was played against me recently and I think is White's best try, but it is not enough for an advantage.



10...♖xd4 11.♗xd4

11.♗xd4 dxe4 12.♗f4 ♖a5=

11...♖xe4 12.♗xd5 ♖d6

Black has a good score here with Eddie Gufeld scoring 2/2 over 50 years ago!

13.♗b3

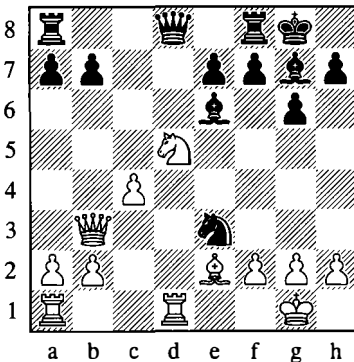
13.♗d4 didn't get White anywhere either. 13...♗e6 14.♗c5 b6 15.♗g5 ♖c8 16.♗xg7 ♗xg7 17.♗e5† ♗g8 18.♗d2 ♖c5 19.♗f4 ♗c7 20.♗ad1= ½-½ Heberla – Tiviakov, Baden-Baden 2011.

13...♗e6 14.♖d5 ♖f5 15.♗f3

As usual grabbing the b7-pawn isn't advisable: 15.♗xb7?! ♖b8≠

15.c4 ♖xe3

Here both of Gufeld's opponents decided to grab the queen:

**16.♖f6†?!**

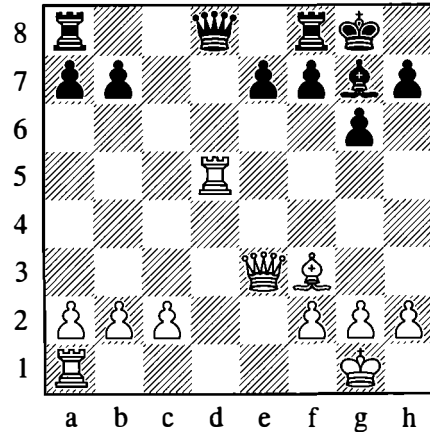
16.♗xe3 ♗xd5 17.♗xd5 ♗b6 18.♗d2?! was another quick draw in Makropoulou – Gaponenko, Mardin 2011, although actually Black should have played on. White's pieces become rather misplaced after 18...e6 19.♖b5 (19.♗d3 ♗ad8≠) 19...♗c7≠. 16.fxe3 ♗xd5 17.♗xd5 ♗c7 18.♗ad1 ♗e5 19.g3 ♗d6= is also nothing for White.

16...♗xf6 17.♗xd8 ♗axd8 18.♗xe3 ♗xb2≠

Gufeld went on to prove the rook, bishop and pawn more than match the queen.

15...♖xe3 16.♗xe3 ♗xd5 17.♗xd5

17.♗xd5 ♗c7 18.c3 ♖fd8=

**17...♗c7 18.c3 b6 19.♗ad1 ♗ad8 20.♗xd8**

½-½ Kovchan – Jones, Zalakaros 2014.

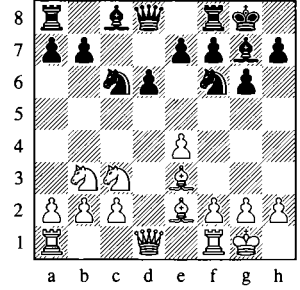
Conclusion

The Classical Variation used to be a lot more popular, but it still crops up from time to time – especially if White wasn't expecting a Dragon. If White doesn't drop his knight back to b3 – which will be the topic of the next chapter – then the ...d5 break will normally equalize.

I have covered a wide range of options for White so as to keep us fully prepared; there are some interesting tactical skirmishes to keep the game lively, while in other cases there will be a succession of exchanges. The level positions that arise are by no means all drawn though; there are several examples throughout the chapter of Black going on to outplay his opponent from an equal game.

Chapter 9

Classical Variation



9. ♖b3

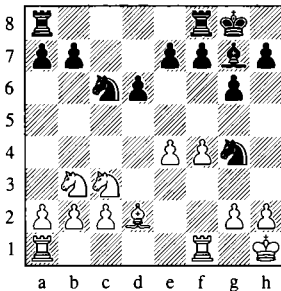
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♙e2 ♙g7
7.♙e3 0-0 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.♘b3 ♙e6 10.f4

10...♚c8

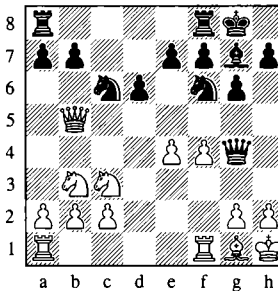
A) 11.h3	155
B) 11.♔h1 ♙g4!?	157
B1) 12.♙xg4	158
B2) 12.♙f3	159
B3) 12.♙g1	161

B1) note to 13.♚d2



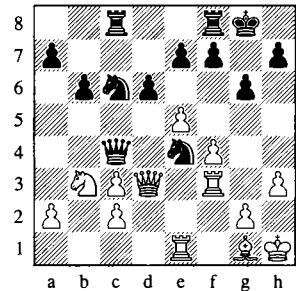
14...a5!N

B3) note to 14.♚d2



14...♘h5!N

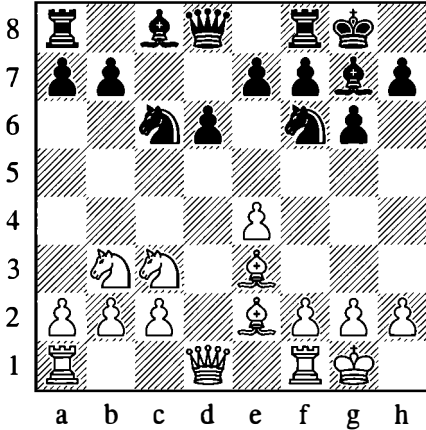
B3) after 22.♚d3



22.c♗xd3N www.chess22.com

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6
 5.♗c3 g6 6.♙e2 ♙g7 7.♙e3 0-0 8.0-0 ♗c6
 9.♗b3

In the previous chapter we saw that we threatened the ...d5 break against most of White's alternatives. 9.♗b3 has both temporarily stopped the pawn break and prepared f2-f4, as the annoying ...♙b6 pin is no longer possible.



9...♙e6

The most logical square for the bishop. Black renews the threat of ...d5 and also eyes the c4-square so that ...♗e5/a5-c4 ideas can be considered.

10.f4

The only logical continuation.

10.♙d2 allows us to equalize immediately with: 10...d5 11.exd5 ♗xd5 12.♗xd5 ♙xd5 13.♙xd5 ♙xd5=

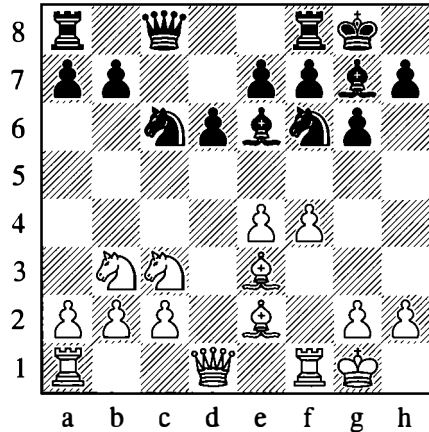
10.f3 was apparently once tried by Vitali Golod, but the move looks so ugly to me. Again 10...d5 is a good reply – as it is against almost every White move.

The next most common move is the bizarre 10.♗d4, which I don't think will give you any sleepless nights. I don't feel I need to

give too much analysis here. Suffice it to say that 10...♙c8 is probably not the best move – except perhaps on a psychological level. 10...♗xd4, 10...♙d7, 10...d5 and 10...♙c8 are all good options.

10...♙c8

Black has alternatives, but let's follow Kasparov's choice. Normally in the Dragon we would stick our rook on c8, but here we're taking control of the h3-c8 diagonal and also preparing to bring our rook to d8.



At this point **A) 11.h3** is White's main alternative to **B) 11.♖h1**.

11.♙f3

This has been played by a few strong players, simply ignoring Black's idea.

11...♗g4 12.♙c1

The choice of Tal and Asrian – both fearsome attacking players – but it's hard to feel that this is very threatening.

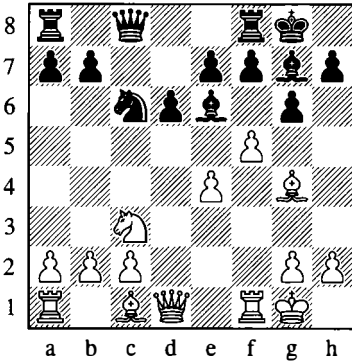
12.♙xg4 ♙xg4 13.♙d2 ♙e6= Having traded off his light-squared bishop, White can hardly claim any advantage.

12...♙xb3 13.♙xg4

13.axb3 ♙d4† 14.♖h1 ♗f2† was Black's idea.

13...♙e6 14.f5

Now my preference is for:



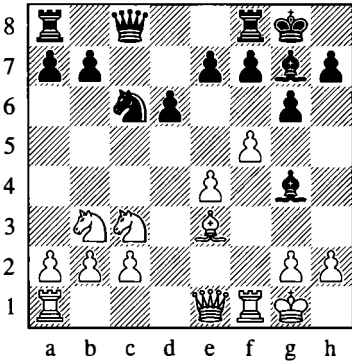
14...♗xc3! 15.bxc3
 15...fxe6 ♗d4† 16.♖h1 fxe6̄
 15...♗d7 16.♗h6 ♗d8N̄

A slightly better square for the rook than 16...♗e8 in Siefiring – Lagerlof, email 1998. With our knight on e5 I don't see how White breaks through with his attack. We can also play ...f6 if necessary.

11.♚e1 a5

Here this makes sense.

White's idea is that after 11...♖g4 12.♗xg4 ♗xg4 he can play 13.f5 with a murky position.



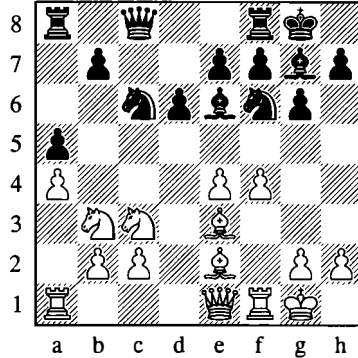
This is probably not bad for Black after 13...gxf5 14.h3 f4! but there's no need to allow it.

White now normally continues:

12.a4

12.♗d1 ♖g4!N is a clever move order, as now the rook will be attacked when White takes on g4.

12.♚h4? a4 13.♖d4 was Durao – Reuben, Bognor Regis 1959. Now after 13...a3N̄ Black's queenside play has arrived far faster than White's attack.



12...♖b4

Black has a nice spot for his knight.

13.♖d4 ♗c4 14.f5 d5 15.e5 ♖d7 16.fxg6N
 16.e6 fxe6 17.fxg6 (17.♖xe6 ♖xc2!̄)
 17...♗xf1† 18.♚xf1 hxg6̄
 16...fxg6 17.♗xf8† ♖xf8=

Again White will have some problems defending his e5-pawn.

Finally, the immediate 11.♚d2 has been played. A typical continuation is: 11...♗d8 12.♗f3 ♗c4 13.♗f2 (13.♗fe1 ♖g4̄) 13...♖g4 14.♗xg4 ♚xg4 Black's bishop pair grants him the better prospects.

A) 11.h3

Now we no longer have access to the g4-square, but White has weakened his kingside and has to be careful not to allow a sacrifice on h3.

11...♗d8 12.♗f3

White is trying to prevent our freeing ...d5 break.

12.♚e1 d5 13.e5 This doesn't work for White here as we have 13...d4! 14.exf6 ♗xf6̄.

12.g4 is an aggressive choice that's really asking for too much from White's position. 12...d5 13.e5 ♖e4 14.♗xe4 dxe4 15.♚e1 g5! White's centre collapsed in Sammut Briffa – Yurtaev, Manila (ol) 1992. The ...g5 motif is a useful one to remember.

12.♗d3 has been tried in a few engine games. The immediate 12...d5 is possible but the simplest looks to be 12...♗xb3 13.axb3 d5 14.e5 d4=.

12.♖d4

Bringing the knight back to d4 feels like a huge concession. Black should continue with simple moves.

12...♖xd4 13.♗xd4 ♗c4

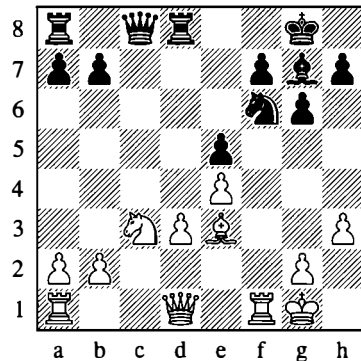
13...d5 14.e5 ♖e4= is also satisfactory.

14.♗d3

14.♗xc4 ♚xc4 15.♚d3 ♜dc8=

14.f5 isn't threatening either: 14...d5! 15.e5 ♖e4 16.f6 exf6 17.exf6 ♗f8! Liberzon – Kudrin, Beersheba 1984.

14...e5! 15.fxex5 dxe5 16.♗e3 ♗xd3 17.cxd3 Rotstein – Franza, Cesenatico 1999. Now best is:



17...♜d6N=

Followed by doubling on the d-file.

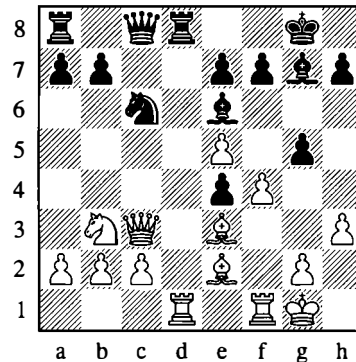
12.♚d2 d5 13.e5 ♖e4 14.♖xe4 dxe4 15.♚c3 15.♚e1 feels like a tempo wasted, but at least White prevented the strong ...d4 idea. 15...b6 Controlling the c5-square. (15...g5!?

16.c3 gxf4 17.♜xf4 ♗d5 18.♗g4 ♖h8 19.♗g5 ♗xe5 20.♜h5 f5∞ was a murky position which I think can safely be called unclear. A draw was the final result in BlackMamba – Protector, engine game 2014.) 16.c3 f6= The position looks about balanced.

15...g5!?

This looks a bit safer with the queen over on c3.

16.♜ad1

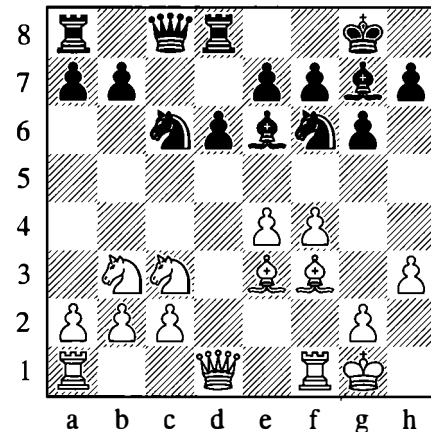


16...gxf4N

There is no great need to exchange rooks first with 16...♜xd1 as in Kirkov – Bychkov, corr. 2010.

17.♗xf4 ♚c7=

Black has sufficient counterplay with pressure on the e5-pawn.



12...♗c4! 13.♜f2 e5!

We've seen this idea before: it's worth remembering this motif when White has to allow the pawn trade. Now Black will have a strong outpost on e5.

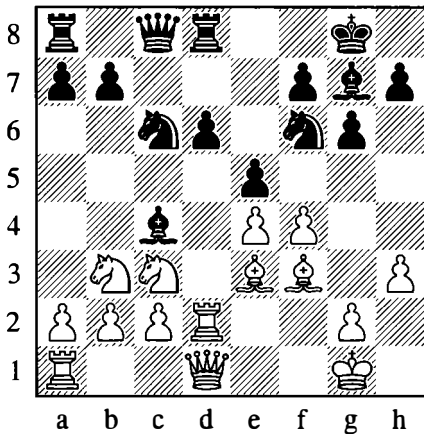
14.♞d2?!

This has been played in nearly all the games to reach this position.

14.♖d2 was David Navara's try to resuscitate this line, but after 14...exf4 15.♙xf4 as in Navara – Evdokimov, Warsaw 2005, 15...♙e6N 16.♖d5 ♙xd5 17.exd5 ♖e5♞ looks comfortable for Black.

14.♙d2 b5N is simple. (14...d5! has been played in the couple of games to reach this position: I think it's good for Black but it is messy.) 15.♞d1 (15.f5 d5 16.exd5 b4!♞) 15...exf4 16.♙xf4 ♖e5♞

14.f5 doesn't help White. 14...gxf5 15.exf5 d5♞ Black has a huge centre.



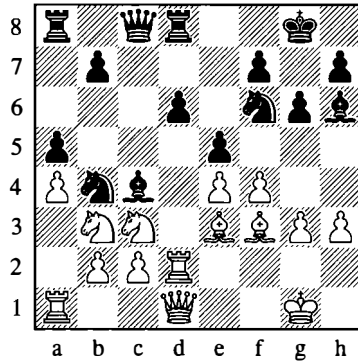
14...♙h6!

This strong move was first played by Geller nearly 60 years ago.

15.♞xd6

15.g3N Trying to keep the pawn on f4 might be best, although 15...a5! (15...♙xh3 16.♞h2

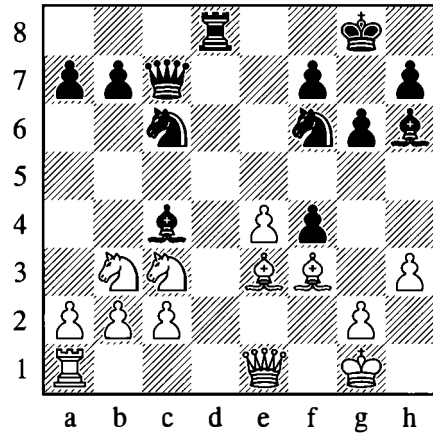
♙xg3† 17.♞g2= looks like it's only enough for a draw) 16.a4 ♖b4 with ideas of ...d5 is much better for Black. One line could continue:



17.♙b6 ♙xb3! 18.cxb3 ♙xh3 19.♙xd8 ♞xd8 20.♞g2 exf4 (20...d5!♞) 21.e5 fxe3 22.exf6 ♙e3† 23.♖f1 ♞e8 24.♖e2 ♞e6♞ Black has a huge attack.

15...♙c7 16.♞xd8† ♞xd8 17.♙e1 exf4

17...♙xf4♞ is also good.

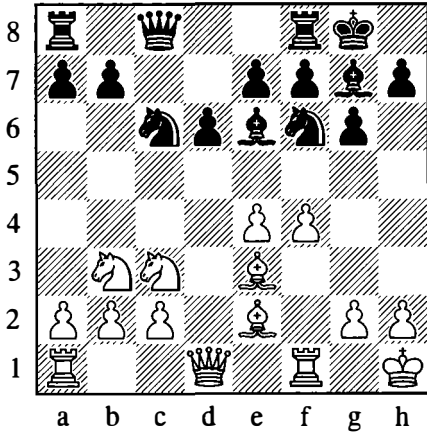


18.♙f2 ♖e5♞

Kotov – Geller, Kiev 1957.

B) 11.♖h1

The king steps into the corner so that his dark-squared bishop has access to g1 after a ...♖g4 jump.



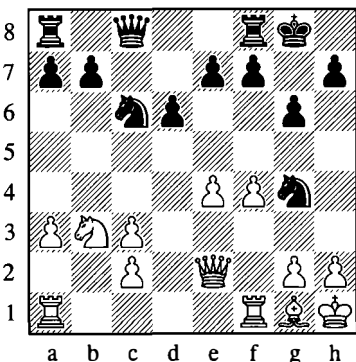
11...Bg4!?

11...Bd8 preparing ...d5 is the main line, but I quite like the bishop exchange. White's attack is lessened, and after a few exchanges we hope to target the e4-pawn and play down the semi-open c-file.

We will examine White's responses in order of increasing popularity: **B1) 12...Bg4**, **B2) 12...Bf3** and **B3) 12...Bg1**.

12. Bxd2 Bxe2 13. Bxe2 Bg4 is similar to 12...Bg4 and will probably transpose.

12.a3 A slightly peculiar waiting move. Pete Wells followed our plan with: 12...Bxe2 (It's also possible to improve our position with 12...Bd8 and ask White exactly how he's going to proceed) 13. Bxe2 Bg4 14. Bg1 (14. Bd2 is safer although we can start generating play with 14...f5!?) 14...Bxc3 15.bxc3



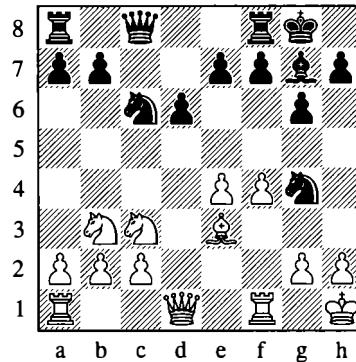
This was A. Hunt – Wells, Birmingham 2002. Rogozenko gives 15...Bf6N 16.f5 Bxe5 17.Bd4 Bxc6 18.Bd2 as unclear, but I'd prefer Black.

B1) 12...Bg4

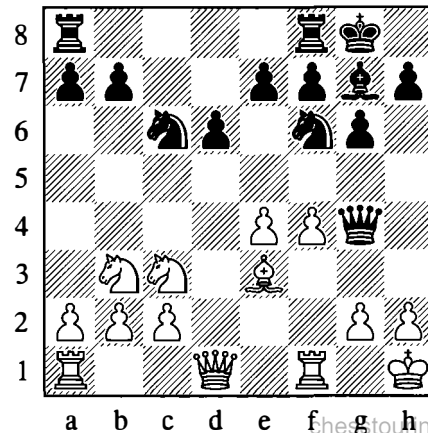
This move presents us with an interesting choice. Recapturing with the knight will be similar to variation B3, while with the queen is more like variation B2.

12...Bxc3

12...Bxc3

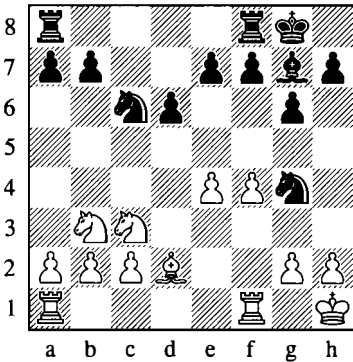


13. Bg1 (13. Bd2 wouldn't actually prevent 13...Bxc3, as 14. Bxc3 Be3 15. Bxd3 Bxf1 16. Bxf1 f6+ hardly gives White enough compensation) 13...Bxc3 14.bxc3 Bf6 The position is similar to the variation B3 but is perhaps a slightly better version for White, as it's useful for Black to have the queen already on g4.



13.♚d2

Trading queens is simply bad for White. 13.♚xg4 ♘xg4 14.♙d2 was Asrian – Yakovich, Smolensk 1997, when Black should have chosen:



14...a5!N White has problems on the queenside as 15.a4 ♘b4 16.♙ac1 ♙fc8 is unpleasant.

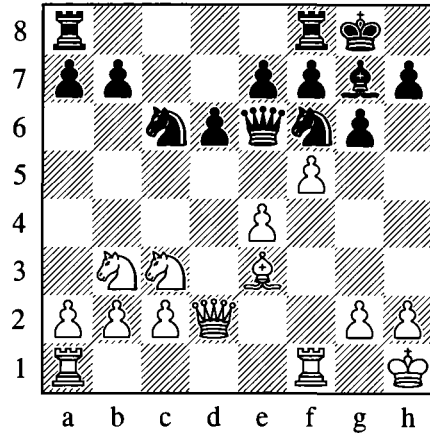
13.♚e1 ♘h5!N looks strong. Our plan is the same as we'll see in the note to White's 15th move in variation B3: simply ...♙ac8 followed by capturing on c3.

13...♚e6

13...♘h5!N must also be possible here, but we're a tempo down on similar positions as White hasn't played either ♚e1-d2 or ♙g1-e3.

14.f5

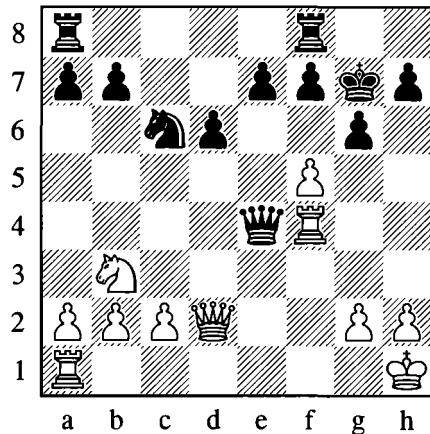
14.♚d3 ♘b4 15.♘d4 ♘xd3 16.♘xe6 ♘f2† 17.♙xf2 ♙xe6‡ This pawn clump may look ugly, but we've already seen how useful it can be – particularly in the 9.g4 Yugoslav Attack in Volume 1. The e6-pawn does a good job of defending the vulnerable d5-square, and Black has play down the semi-open f-file. White has no good way to attack the e6-pawn and so it's hard to call it a weakness. On the other hand, it will be easy for us to attack f4 and e4 with ...♙ac8-c4.

**14...♚c4 15.♙h6 ♘xe4**

15...♘e5‡ is a safer alternative.

16.♘xe4 ♚xe4 17.♙g7 ♖xg7 18.♙f4

18.♙f3N looks a bit scarier but Black can defend: 18...♙ac8 19.♙h3 h5! 20.♙xh5 ♙h8‡ Black is the one attacking.

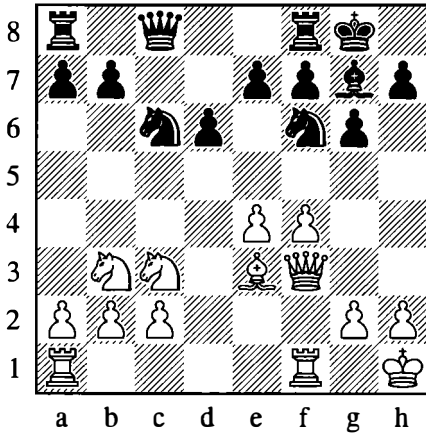
**18...♚e5 19.♙e1 ♚xb2 20.♙h4 h5‡**

White didn't really have any compensation for the two pawns in Holmsgaard – Yakovich, Koge 1997.

B2) 12.♙f3 ♙xf3 13.♚xf3

13.♙xf3 doesn't seem natural to me. I looked at a few options, but 13...b5 seems most sensible. Black would of course be happy to trade

his b-pawn for the e-pawn. The only game to reach this position continued: 14.♘d2?! (14.♖d3N is better but Black is comfortable after 14...♗b7) 14...b4 15.♘e2 ♘g4 16.♗b1 ♘xe3 17.♗xe3 Ladisic – Payen, Paris 1992. After 17...♘d4N Black is on top thanks to his strong bishop and space advantage.



13...♗g4

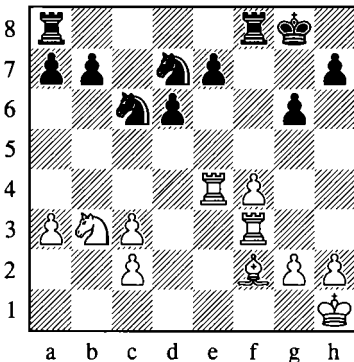
A straightforward way of playing.

14.♗ad1

This has been White's most common reply.

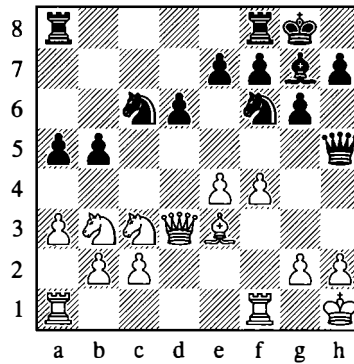
14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 ♘d7 16.♘d1 ♗fc8 Black already had an edge in Rydstrom – Mikkelsen, Ballerup 2014. (16...f5!N is also possible.)

14.a3 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 ♘d7 16.♗f2 f5! 17.♗e1 fx4 18.♗xe4 ♗xc3!? 19.bxc3 (19.♗xc3 ♘f6 20.♗e1 ♘d5⌘ picks up the pawn.)



19...♘f6 20.♗e2 ♘d5 21.g3 ♘e5 22.♗d2? (22.c4 was White's only chance, although he's obviously struggling after 22...♘xf3 23.cxd5 g5⌘) 22...♘b6 0–1 Bryzgalin – Brodsky, Krasnodar 2002. A quick win for Black, proving this line isn't so safe for White!

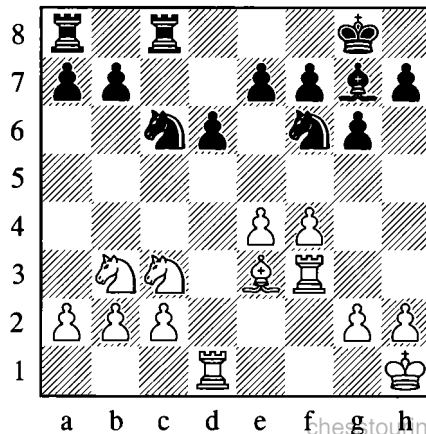
14.♗f2 White would like to keep the queens on the board, but unfortunately for him 14...♗h5 is rather awkward: 15.♗d2 b5 16.a3 a5 17.♗d3 Serper – Piket, Adelaide 1988, and now Black would have been completely dominating after:



17...b4!N 18.axb4 ♘xb4 19.♗d2 ♗fc8 Black is even threatening to take on e4 here, for example: 20.♗g1 ♘xe4 21.♘xe4 ♗xc2 22.♗e1 ♗d5 23.♗f3 ♗xb2⌘

14...♗xf3 15.♗xf3 ♗fc8

15...♘h5!N is interesting here too.

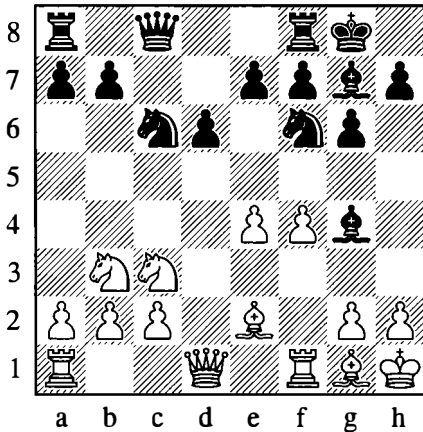


16.h3?! b5! 17.♖xb5 ♖xe4 18.c3 ♜ab8
19.♗5d4 ♗xd4 20.♗xd4 a5 21.♗g1 f5

The e4-knight dominates the board and Black has a lot of pressure down the b- and c-files, Zozulia – Starostits, Winterthur 2004.

B3) 12.♗g1

This move might look strange as the bishop wasn't attacked, but White doesn't have so many useful moves. With the bishop on g1 White has ideas of ♖d5 and pressure on e7 down the e-file. The bishop is also out of the way of a subsequent ...♖g4.



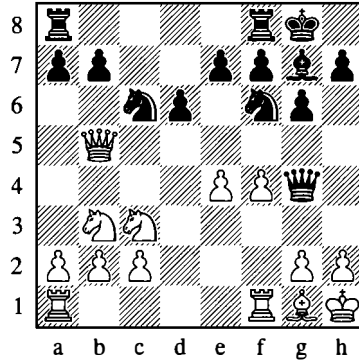
12...♗xc2 13.♝xc2 ♜g4

Exchanging pieces might not feel in the spirit of the Dragon, but we're leaving our powerful bishop on the board. Without the queens on the board it's easier to put pressure on White's centre and queenside. Meanwhile his kingside intentions dissipate.

14.♝d2

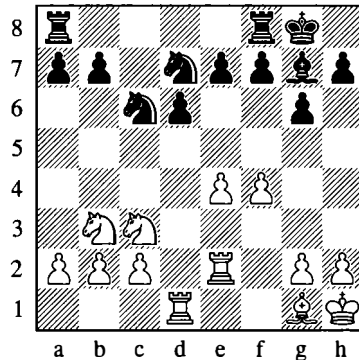
Taking the above note into account, it is understandable that most White players choose to keep the queens on.

14.♝b5 White goes after our b7-pawn but we can simply carry on with our own plan:



14...♖h5!N 15.♝xb7 ♜fc8 16.♖d5 ♗xb2
17.♜ab1 ♗g7

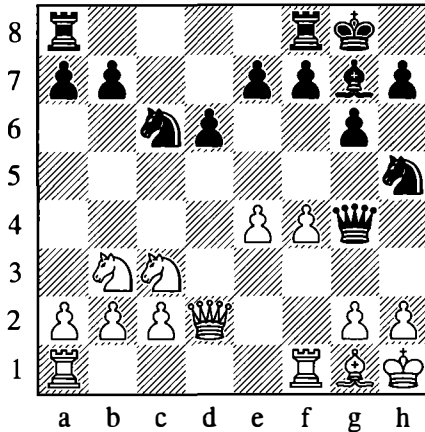
14.♜ae1 ♝xe2 15.♜xe2 ♖d7 16.♞d1 (In an engine battle White refused to allow its structure to be compromised: 16.♖b5 a6 17.♖5d4 ♖xd4 18.♖xd4 e5 19.fxe5 ♖xe5= Black has no problems at all – he has strong minor pieces and d6 is no weaker than e4, JML26 – Blank Queen, engine game 2012.)



16...♗xc3! 17.bxc3 ♖b6 18.g4 ♖a4 19.♞d3
♜fc8 20.e5 dxe5 21.fxe5 ♖d8 22.♞ed2 b6
23.♞d7 ♖f8 White's pawns were about to drop off in Serras Uriá – Alonso Moyano, Sabadell 2007.

14...♖h5!

Black exploits the bishop dropping back to g1. Now the f4-pawn isn't defended as well as he'd like, and we prepare to cripple White's structure with ...♗xc3.

**15. ♖f3****15. ♕e3**

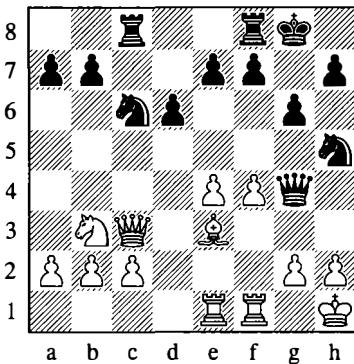
White defends against our threat, but it's still not easy for him to shift our queen away and we can continue to drum up play.

15... ♖ac8 16. ♖ae1 ♕xc3!

Again this exchange is strong.

17. ♗xc3

17... bxc3 b6 is similar to the main line.

**17... ♗h4!**

We threaten ... ♖g3† while at the same time vacating the g4-square for our other knight.

18. ♔g1

Or 18... ♕c1 ♖e5 when White has to allow his structure to be destroyed anyway: 19. ♗h3 ♗xh3 20. gxh3 ♖c6 21. c3 f5!†

18... ♖e5 19. ♗d2 ♖c4 20. ♗f2

20... ♗c1 ♖xe3† wins a pawn as White can't protect both b2 and f4.

20... ♗xf2† 21. ♖xf2 ♖xb2 22. ♕xa7 ♖c4†

White's pieces don't coordinate well at all, and we're likely to win the a-pawn with a great position.

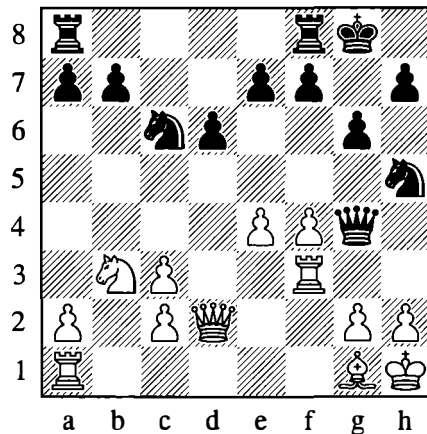
15... ♕xc3!

A powerful idea: White's pieces are overworked defending f4 and so he has to recapture with the pawn.

15...f5 was the start of overambitious play from Black against a young future World Champion, Kasparov – Gufeld, Baku 1978.

16. bxc3

We have given up our Dragon bishop, but in return White has vulnerable pawns on c3, e4 and f4. We have to be careful with our king's safety, but with the bishop back on g1 it's not so easy for White to exploit our weaker dark squares. Our plan is to put our rooks on c8 and d8, reroute the queen to c4 via e6, drop the knight back to f6 and break with ...d5. I don't think White is in time to prevent this.

**16...b6**

16... ♖ac8 is a slightly more accurate move order. After 17. ♖e1 b6 we would transpose back to the main game.

17. ♖e1 ♖ac8 18. h3 ♗e6 19. ♙d4 ♗c4 20. ♙g1

A sign White's last move didn't really work.

20. f5 ♖xd4 21. ♖xd4 ♗c5 22. ♗d3 ♗e5 ♣ Now Black's queen dominates and we can continue by doubling rooks on the c file.

20.g4 ♖xd4!?

20... ♖g7 is also possible, but improving White's structure is only temporary.

21. cxd4 ♖f6

White's centre looks impressive, but the c2-pawn is hanging:

22. c3

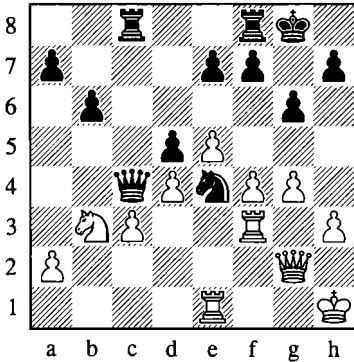
22.g5 ♖h5 23. c3 d5 ♣

22... d5! 23. e5

23. exd5 ♗xd5 24. ♗d3 ♖c7 25. ♖e5 ♗d6 ♣ leaves White rather overextended.

23... ♖e4 24. ♗g2

I don't think White's attack is as threatening as it might look; it's difficult to break through and his own king will be just as vulnerable as ours. Meanwhile, our play on the queenside is fast. We will follow my engine's recommendation:



24... ♗a4

24... ♖xc3! is interesting. It looks like a blunder as we lose the knight after 25. ♖c1 ♗b4 26. ♗d2, but actually after 26... ♖xa2 27. ♖xc8 ♖xc8 28. ♗xa2 a5 ♣ only Black can be better. Our pawns are fast and White's king is rather vulnerable. The d4-pawn is also likely to drop.

25. ♗b2 b5! 26. a3

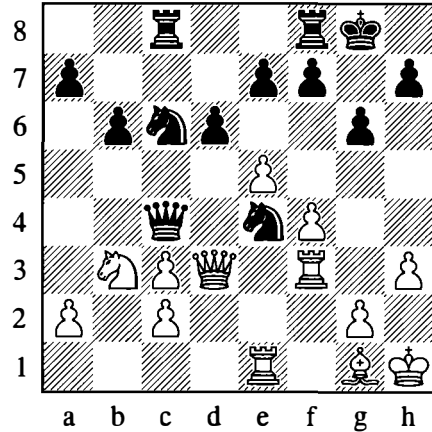
26. ♖d2 b4! 27. ♖xe4 dxe4 28. ♖xe4 bxc3

29. ♖xc3 ♖xc3 30. ♗xc3 ♗xa2 ♣

26... a5 27. f5 b4 28. cxb4 axb4 ♣

20... ♖f6 21. e5 ♖e4 22. ♗d3

We have been following Varas Gonzalez – Diez Fraile, Zornotza 2010. So far Black has played, well but here he should have continued with:

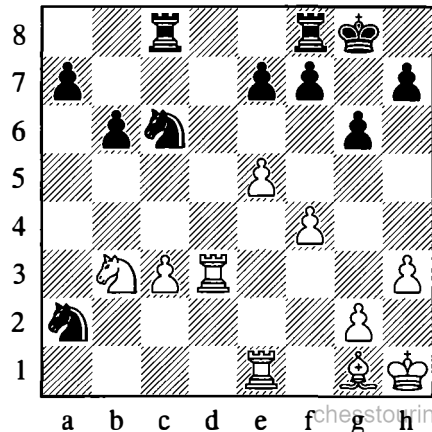


22... ♗xd3N 23. ♖xd3 d5!

If White doesn't take on d5 then he will be left with chronic weaknesses down the c-file.

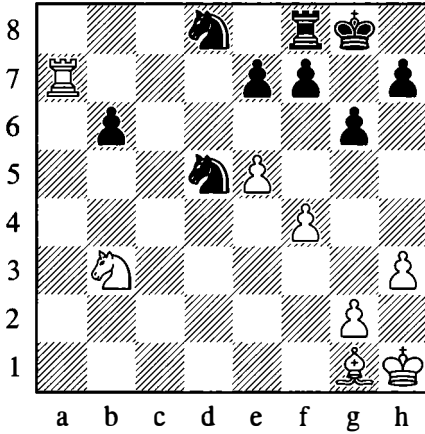
24. ♖xd5 ♖xc3 25. ♖d3 ♖xa2 26. c3

Perhaps Diez Fraile was worried that his knight would be trapped following this move, but Black has a neat escape:



26...♖d8 27.♞a1 ♜xc3! 28.♞xc3 ♘xc3
29.♞xa7 ♘d5

Conclusion

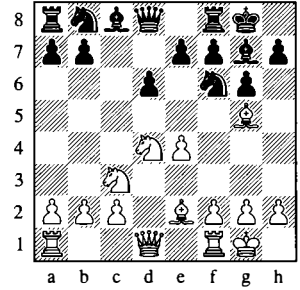


Black has emerged a pawn up with great winning chances.

When White drops his knight back to b3, I like the plan of 9...♗e6 and 10...♝c8 – playing to exchanging light-squared bishops. Any attacking hopes White might have had are vanquished, and we often go in to a pleasant queenless middlegame. In the positions where the queens stay on the board, Black's active piece play leaves us in great shape.

Chapter 10

Classical Variation



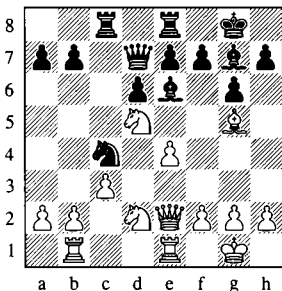
Karpov Variation

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 g6 6.♕e2 ♕g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♖g5
 8...♗c6 9.♗b3 ♖e6

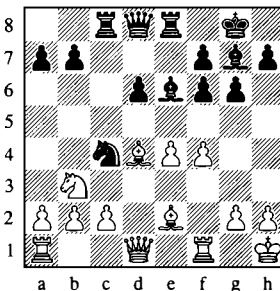
A) 10.♖e1	166
B) 10.♗d2	167
C) 10.f4	168
D) 10.♗h1 ♗a5!?	170
D1) 11.♗d5	171
D2) 11.f4 ♗c4 12.f5 ♗xb2	172
D21) 13.♗e1!? ♕d7 14.♗h4 ♖c8	173
D211) 15.♖f3	174
D212) 15.♗d5N	176
D22) 13.♗c1	177

A) after 18.♗d2



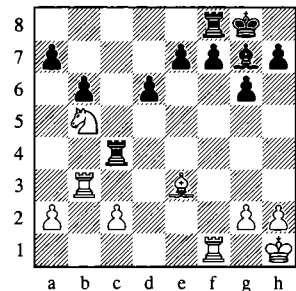
18...♕xd5!N

D1) after 15.f4



15...♕d7!N

D22) note to 19.c4!N



25.c4!N Nuring.com

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♟f6
5.♞c3 g6 6.♞e2 ♞g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♞g5

As the title of the chapter suggests, Karpov was the great proponent of these ♞g5 lines. White's bishop on g5 does a better job of controlling the ...d5 break and so has been more popular than the pure Classical Variation in recent years. White is hoping to put Black in a bind, but I believe we get adequate counterplay on the queenside.

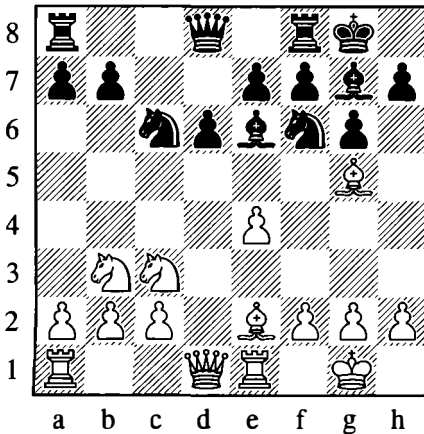
8.♞b3 ♞c6 9.♞g5 simply transposes.

8...♞c6 9.♞b3 ♞e6

At this branching point White has played A) 10.♞e1, B) 10.♣d2, C) 10.f4 and D) 10.♞h1.

A) 10.♞e1

This move used to be extremely rare, but then Kramnik played it in a rapid game against Aronian in 2011 and suddenly I had to face it three times in quick succession. I don't believe it should set Black any real problems though.



10...♞c8

10...d5 was Aronian's choice in Kramnik – Aronian, Moscow (rapid) 2011, but he had to suffer slightly to hold the draw. Objectively I think this is okay, but I'd prefer to play something with better winning chances.

11.♞f1

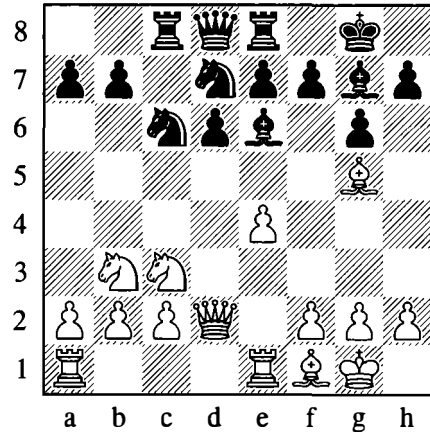
11.h3 ♞e8N 12.♣d2 ♞d7 wouldn't be much different.

11...♞d7

As we've already seen, this is a sensible rerouting. The knight heads for c4.

12.♣d2 ♞e8

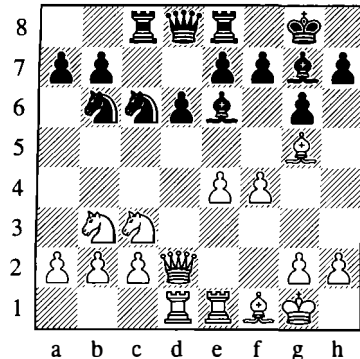
Not letting White trade dark-squared bishops with ♞h6.



13.♞ab1

This was tried in a battle of 2600s.

Aronian switched colours to play this with White in 2013, although only in blitz. 13.♞ad1 ♞b6! Highlighting the fact that it's not easy for White to contest control of the c4-square. 14.f4 Aronian – Radjabov, Stavanger (blitz) 2013. Here the logical continuation is:

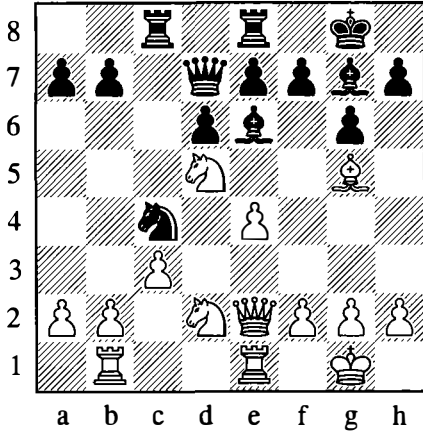


14...♖c4N 15.♙xc4 (15.♚c1 ♖b4) 15...♙xc4 Black has a pleasant edge with the bishop pair.

13...♖b6!

Again this was a good response.

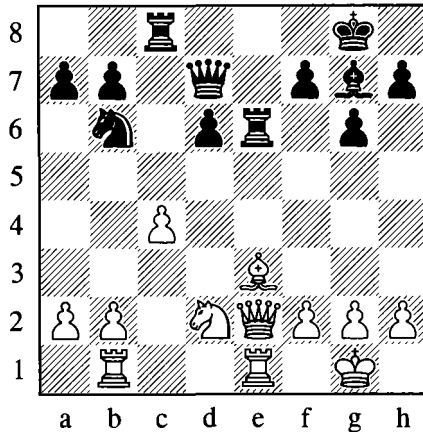
14.♖d5 ♖e5 15.c3 ♖ec4 16.♙xc4 ♖xc4 17.♚e2 ♚d7 18.♖d2



18...♙xd5!N

Instead of 18...b5 19.♖xc4 ♙xc4 as in Andriasian – Fier, Jermuk 2013.

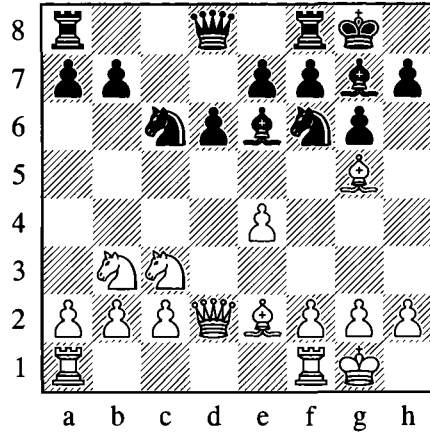
19.exd5 ♖b6 20.c4 e6 21.dxe6 ♙xe6 22.♙e3 22.♚d3 ♙xe1† 23.♙xe1 ♙xb2



22...d5

B) 10.♚d2

Here we can play with the same plan:



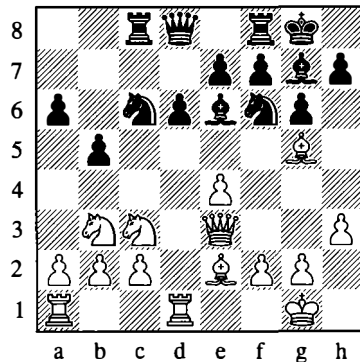
10...♙c8

Starting with 10...♙e8 is also possible, but I don't think we should be worried by the bishop trade.

11.♙h6

11.f4 can be met by 11...b5!

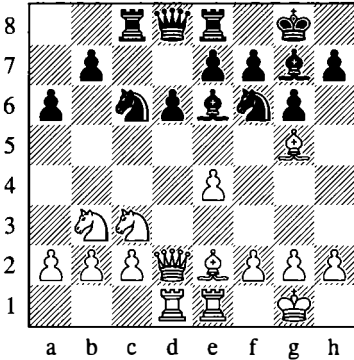
11.♙fd1 a6 12.h3 b5 13.♚e3 was seen in Kosteniuk – Pavlidou, Belgrade 2013.



With the e4-pawn defended White was now threatening ♖d5, so Black should have played 13...♖d7N= or 13...♖e5!N – both of which prevent the knight jump as pawns would be hanging.

In practice 11.♞ad1 has been the most common, but again we can play in the same style with: 11...a6 (11...♟e5 has been Black's usual reply and is also fine of course) 12.♞c1 b5 13.a3 ♝e8=

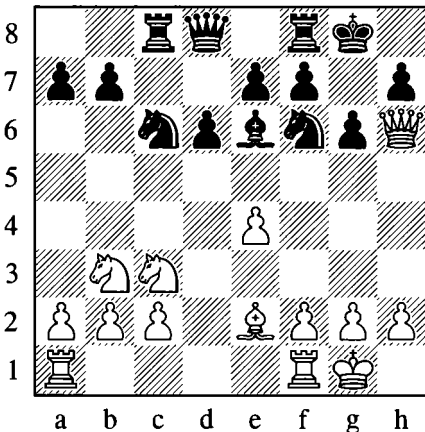
11.♞fe1 ♝e8 12.♞ad1 a6 It's useful to wait for White to drop his bishop back before moving the knight from f6.



13.♟f1 Now that e4 is defended and White is threatening ♟d5, it's time for 13...♟d7. We will continue with our typical plans of putting a knight on c4 or ...b5-b4.

11...♟xh6 12.♞xh6

With his knights over on the queenside White isn't going to generate an attack, so his queen is simply misplaced.



12...♟e5

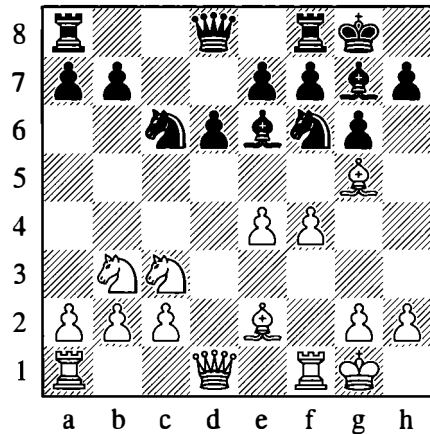
12...♞b6! ♞ controlling e3 is also interesting.

13.♞e3 a6

Black is more comfortable.

C) 10.f4

With the bishop on g5 instead of e3, this move is rather premature.



10...b5!

This is the reason: Black's counterplay starts quickly on the queenside.

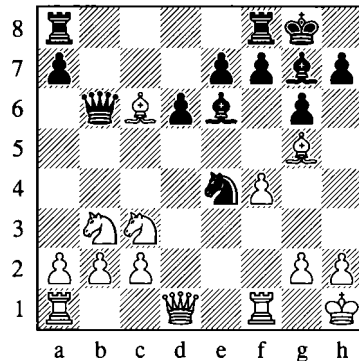
11.♟f3

11.♟xb5?! ♞b6† 12.♟h1 ♟xe4!

The point behind Black's pawn break.

13.♟xc6

Black now has a couple of options available:



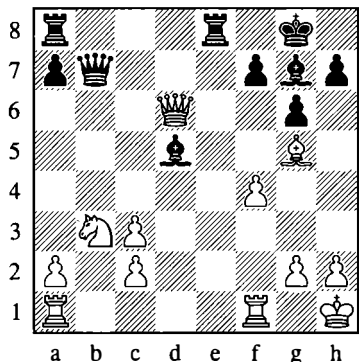
13...♖xc3?

The more combative approach.

13...♜xc6 results in a slightly better ending: 14.♘a5! (14.♙xe7?! ♘xc3 15.bxc3 transposes to the sub-note with 14.bxc3?! below) 14...♘xc3 15.♘xc6 ♘xd1 16.♘xe7† ♘h8 17.♙axd1 ♙xb2 Our bishop pair and outside passed pawn give us decent winning chances, although objectively it should be drawn.

14.♜f3!

The natural 14.bxc3? ♜xc6 15.♙xe7 ♜fe8 16.♜xd6 ♜b7! 17.♙g5 ♙d5 leaves White unable to defend his kingside.



18.♙f2 (18.♘c5 ♙xg2† 19.♔g1 ♜c8! 20.♔xg2 ♜g4† 21.♔h1 ♜e2 22.♜d5 ♜h3!-+) 18...♙e6 19.♜c5 ♜c8 20.♜a3 ♜ce8 21.♜c1 ♙xc3-+

14...♙ac8 15.♙xe7 ♙xc6 16.♙xf8 ♔xf8 17.bxc3 ♙xc3 18.♜d1 ♙e3 19.♙b1 ♙c3

White has an extra exchange but is totally tied up. My engine prefers Black, and I'd much prefer to play on that side too.

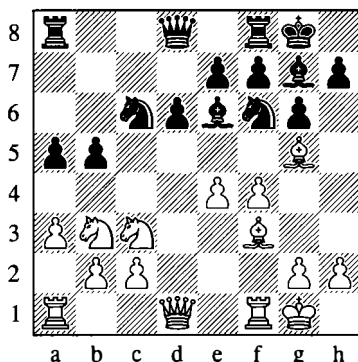
11.a3

Morozevich's try when he had this position, but it hardly looks critical.

11...a5 12.♙f3

12.♔h1?! b4 13.axb4 (13.♘d5 ♘xe4 14.♙b5 ♘xg5! 15.♙xc6 ♜c8 16.♙b7 ♙b8† doesn't help) 13...axb4 14.♙xa8 ♜xa8 15.♘d5 (15.♙xf6 ♙xf6 16.♘d5 ♙xb2†)

Bondoc – Spulber, Eforie Nord 1997. On ChessPublishing I pointed out that 15...♘xe4!N 16.♙f3 ♙xd5 17.♜xd5 ♘xg5 18.fxg5 ♜c8 19.♙e4 e6 20.♜xd6 ♙xb2 would have left Black a clear pawn up, as 21.♜d7 can be met with 21...♘e5!.

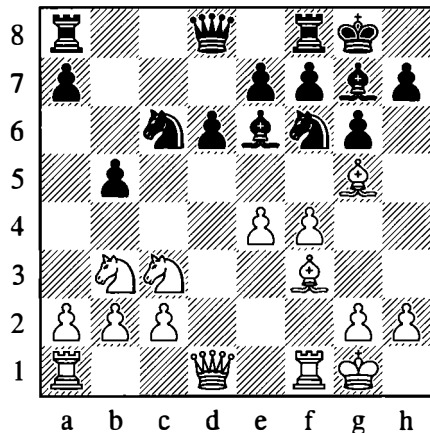


12...a4 13.♘c1 ♘d7 14.♘d3

Morozevich – Ivanchuk, Dagomys 2008.

14...♘d4N†

Returning to the main line, I recommend playing as Ivanchuk did and rerouting the knight:



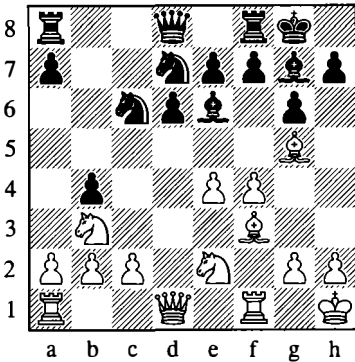
11...♘d7!

Black has strong pressure down the long diagonal.

12.♙b1

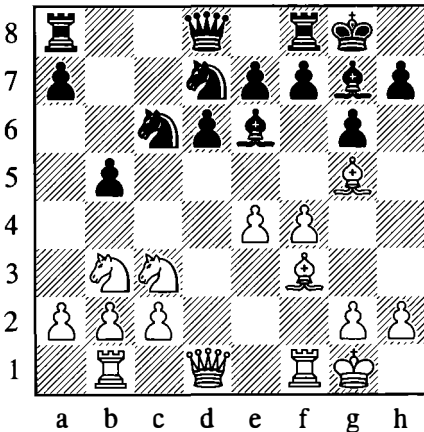
12.e5 dxe5 13.♙xc6 ♖b6† 14.♗h1 ♜xc6‡
 Krivec – Collas, Varna 2002.

12.♗h1 b4 13.♘e2



13...♞c8 (13...♙xb2 was already possible but Black decided instead to tie up White)
 14.♘bd4 ♘xd4 15.♘xd4 ♙c4 16.♞f2 ♖b6
 17.♞d2 ♞fe8‡ White is extremely passive,
 Loskutov – Sher, St Petersburg 1996.

Again I'd continue in a similar vein as Ivanchuk in the above game against Morozevich:



12...a5 13.♗h1N

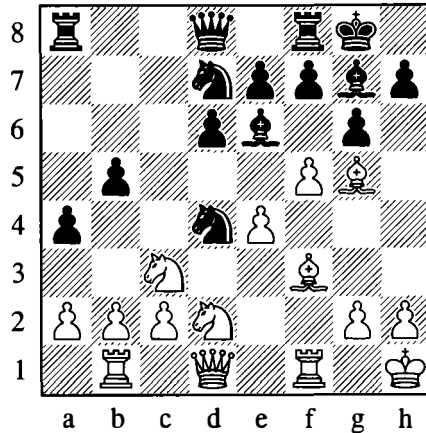
13.♘d5 a4 14.♘c1 ♙xd5 15.exd5 ♘d4‡
 Paolozzi – Muir, Mexico City 1980.

13...a4 14.♘d2 ♘d4

Black has a comfortable position.

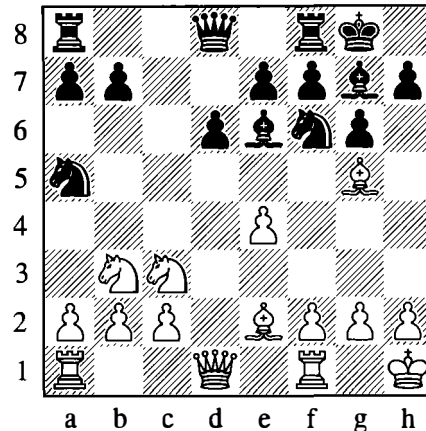
15.f5

White is instigating tactics, but they work out well for Black:



15...gxf5 16.exf5 ♙xf5 17.♙xa8 ♜xa8
 18.♙xe7 ♞e8 19.♙xd6 ♙xc2 20.♖h5 ♘f6
 21.♖g5 h6 22.♖g3 ♘f5‡

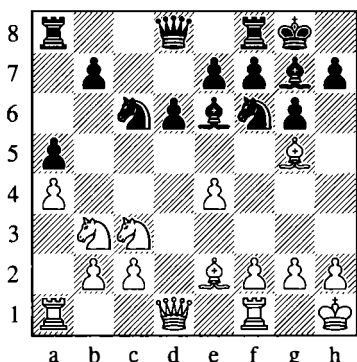
D) 10.♗h1 ♘a5!?



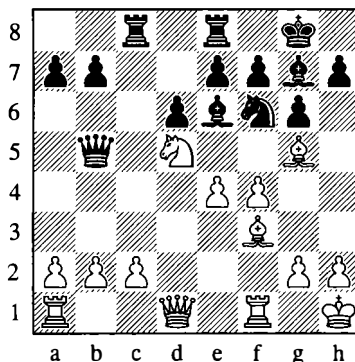
I think this is an interesting idea and quite a critical test of White's opening. We're going to attack b2 as fast as possible, while White gets on with it on the kingside. Chris Ward recommends this approach in his original *Winning with the Dragon*, and I think I saw the idea there twenty years ago!

If you don't fancy the following piece sacrifice 10...a5 is a decent alternative. One recent game continued: 11.a4 It might look like moving the a-pawns has favoured White, but now Black can use the b4-square for his knight and it will be easier to get in the ...d5 break.

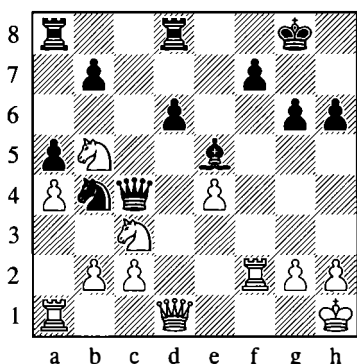
be a good idea. Black's queenside play flows naturally: 11...♞xa5 12.f4 ♞ac8 13.♗f3 ♞fe8 14.♘d5 This has been seen a couple of times. Here 14...♞b5!N♞ is strong as White doesn't have a good way to defend his queenside pawns:



11...♞c8 12.f4 ♞d8 13.♗f3 ♘b4 14.♘d4 ♗c4 15.♗e2 h6 16.♗h4 e5 17.♘db5 exf4 18.♗xc4 ♞xc4 19.♗xf6 ♗xf6 20.♞xf4 ♗e5 21.♞f2



15.b3 (15.♞b1?! ♘d5 16.exd5 ♗f5♞; 15.♗xf6 exf6 16.♞b1 f5♞) 15...♘d5 16.exd5 ♗f5 17.c4 ♞a5♞



11.♘d4 Another strange-looking move. I think control of c4 is more important than control of d4. 11...♗c4 12.♗xc4 (12.f4 ♞c8= or 12.b3 ♗xe2 13.♘dxe2 ♘c6= Faibisovich – Malmdin, Rogaska Slatina 2012) 12...♗xc4 13.b3 ♘a3 I don't think White has any way of exploiting our knight on a3, and it's actually quite a nuisance for him as we will put pressure on c2.

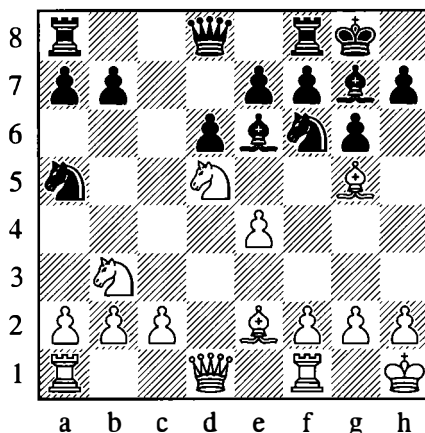
D1) 11.♘d5

21...d5♞ Black had an edge and went on to win in Cubas – Tiviakov, Tromso (ol) 2014.

White may try to cut across our plan of occupying c4 with **D1) 11.♘d5**, while **D2) 11.f4** is the main line.

11.e5?! doesn't work well for White: 11...♘xb3 12.exf6 exf6 13.♗xf6 ♞xf6 14.axb3 d5♞

11.♘xa5 White has moved his knight four times to Black's two and so this really shouldn't



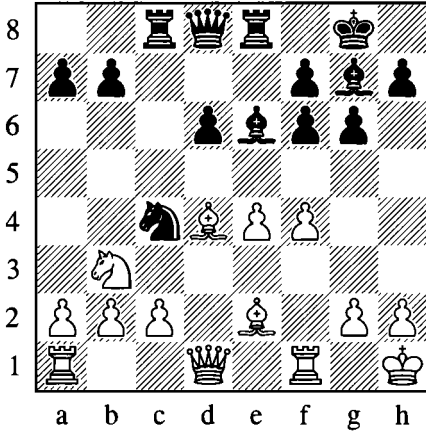
11...♞e8!?

I like this rare move: e7 is defended and so the pawn on e4 is again hanging.

12.♘xf6†

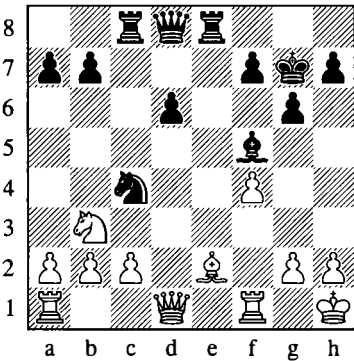
12.f3 ♘xd5N 13.exd5 ♙d7= White's pawn on f3 makes an odd impression.

12...exf6 13.♙e3 ♘c4 14.♙d4 ♞c8 15.f4



15...♙d7!N

This is a subtle improvement on: 15...f5 16.♙xg7 ♘xg7 17.exf5 ♙xf5

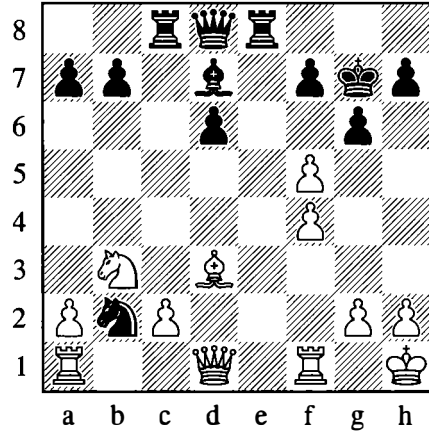


18.♞d4† ♞f6 19.♙xc4 ♞xd4 20.♘xd4 ♞xc4 21.♘xf5† gxf5= Kotsur – Utmanunov, Elista 2000. Black has the uglier structure, but our rooks are active – which is the key in double rook endings.

16.♙d3

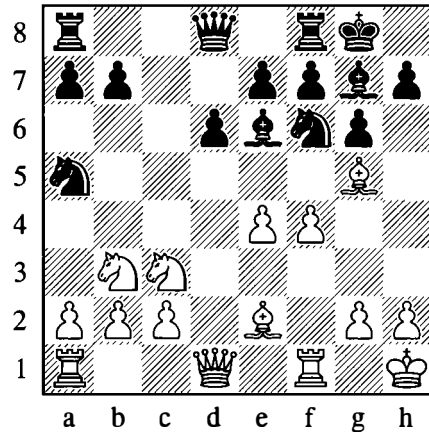
16.♙f3 f5 17.♙xg7 ♘xg7 18.♞d4† ♘g8 19.♞ae1 fe4 20.♙xe4 ♞b6 21.♞xb6 ♘xb6†

16...f5! 17.♙xg7 ♘xg7 18.exf5 ♘xb2!†



This is the point: White can't check on d4 and so Black is clearly better.

D2) 11.f4

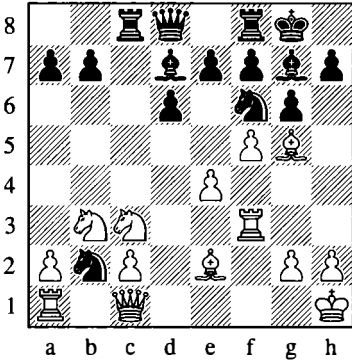


11...♘c4 12.f5

White has to accept the complications. What follows is completely logical play from both sides.

12.♙xc4?! is hardly critical: 12...♙xc4 13.♞e1 ♞c8†

12.♖c1 If White takes time out to defend b2 then we can reply 12...♞c8 with no problems. One game continued: 13.f5 ♔d7 14.♞f3 ♚xb2! (14...b5N was calmer, with an edge) Vonthron – Oesterle, Germany 1992. Black was inspired to sacrifice the piece anyway! White declined the offer but lost without much of a fight.

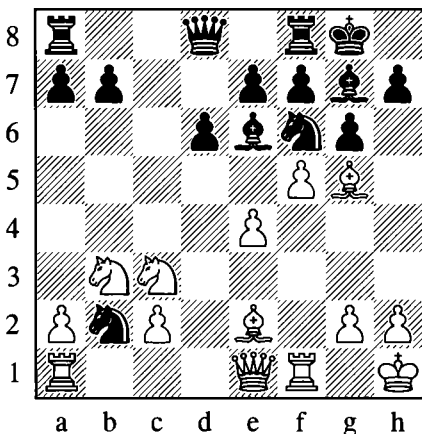


He should have tried 15.e5N, but Black is still for preference after 15...dxe5 16.♔xf6 exf6 17.♖xb2 ♔xf5.

12...♚xb2

White sometimes tries going for an attack with D21) 13.♖e1!?, though more common is D22) 13.♖c1.

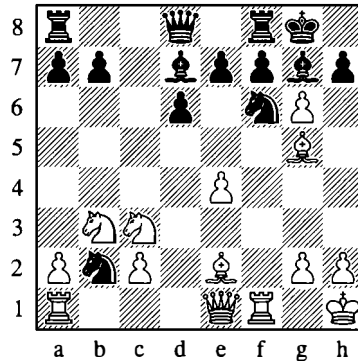
D21) 13.♖e1!?



I have to say I considered this move dubious at first, but White has more attacking chances than I'd thought. It was briefly popular in the early 90s until Khalifman showed an accurate defence, and if Black knows what he's doing he shouldn't be in danger.

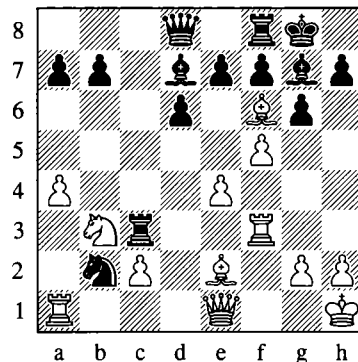
13...♔d7 14.♖h4

14.fxg6?! was Romanov – Savickas, Belfort 2005.



Black should have recaptured with 14...hxg6N. I don't see any way that White is going to double on the h-file, so there's no need to compromise our structure.

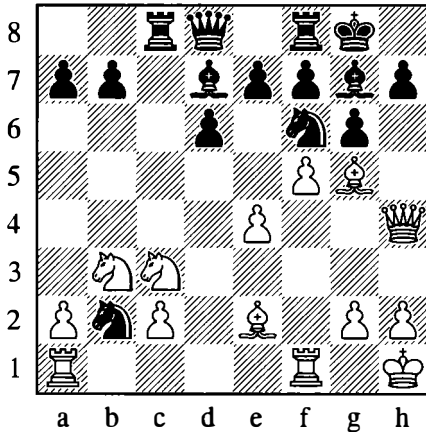
14.a4? Attempting to trap the knight is simply too slow. 14...♞c8 15.♞f3 ♞xc3! 16.♔xf6 E. Bauer – Oesterle, Wuerttemberg 1995.



16...♔xf6N 17.♞xc3 ♔xc3 18.♖xc3 ♚xa4+

14...♞c8

This was Khalifman's improvement over 14...♖a4, which he'd played the previous year.



Every game to reach this position has continued **D211) 15.♖f3**, but we should also consider the untested **D212) 15.♖d5N**.

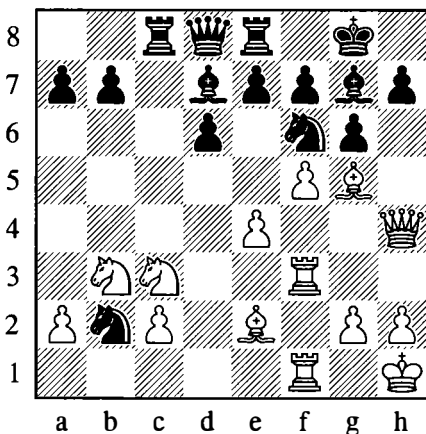
D211) 15.♖f3 ♖e8!

A strong idea: Black defends e7 and prepares the typical Dragon exchange sacrifice of ...♖xc3, which neutralizes White's attack.

16.♖af1

16.fxg6 fxg6 17.♖d5 ♖xd5 18.exd5 ♖xc2♣ doesn't get White anywhere.

16.♖h3 ♖xc3! 17.♖xc3 ♖xe4 18.fxg6 hxg6 19.♖f3 ♖xg5 20.♗xg5 ♗c7♣ Leconte – Calzetta Ruiz, Cannes 2003.



16...♖xc3!

The sacrifice might not be 100% obligatory yet, but it makes Black's life easier.

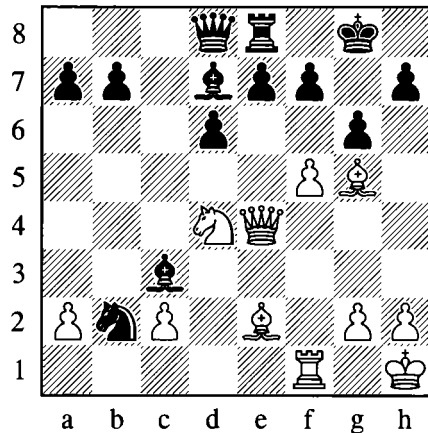
17.♖xc3 ♖xe4 18.♗xe4!

White's best try is to keep the initiative at all costs.

18.fxg6 is too early: 18...hxg6 19.♖cf3 (19.♗xe4 ♖xc3 20.♗f3 ♖f6♣ and Black easily defends) 19...♖xg5 20.♗xg5 Kruszynski – Inkirov, Copenhagen 1988. After 20...♖f6N♣ White's attack has been stopped.

18...♖xc3 19.♖d4

An interesting position has arisen. Black is a pawn up, but the knight is offside on b2 and White has some dangerous attacking ideas. Khalifman opted for a continuation that simplified the position, but I've also had a look at a couple of alternatives.



19...d5

This seems to force a drawish ending.

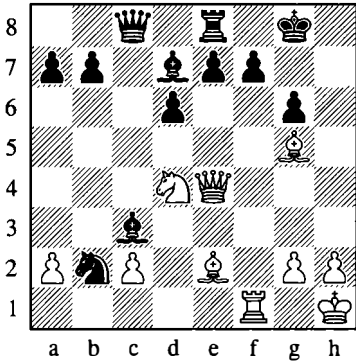
19...♗c8!?

A multi-purpose move: Black prepares to activate (and hopefully trade) the queen, gets out of the pin of the g5-bishop and puts some pressure on f5.

20.fxg6

20.♟f3 ♖c5 21.♞xb7 ♕a4 22.fxg6 hxg6
 23.♞f5! ♖c6 24.♞xe7 ♜xe7 25.♞xe7 ♖xf3
 26.gxf3 (26.♖xf3 ♖e5) 26...♞f5 Black
 suddenly has the safer king.

20...hxg6



21.♞xf7!N

21.♞d5 ♖e6 22.♞xe6 ♞xe6 23.♞xe6 fxe6
 24.♖g4N (Black went on to win comfortably
 after 24.♖b5 ♜f8 in Florez Lorena – Rubio
 Doblas, corr. 1991) 24...♞g7 25.♖xe6 ♖f6
 White has some pressure for the pawn and
 will probably be able to angle for a drawn
 endgame.

21...♞xf7 22.♖h5! ♖f5! 23.♞xf5 gxh5
 24.♞d5† e6 25.♞xd6† ♞g7 26.♞f3 ♜f8
 27.♞xc8 ♜xf3 28.gxf3

Black has the slightly better chances in this
 ending due to his more active king and safer
 pawns, but again it probably should be a draw.

19...♖xd4!N

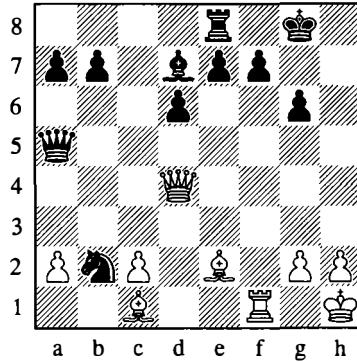
This looks incredibly dangerous but I think
 it is playable, and might even be Black's
 best.

20.fxg6!

20.♞xd4 ♞b6 21.♞c3 ♜c8 White won't be
 able to keep his queen on the long diagonal,
 so Black's dark squares aren't such a problem.
 I think Black is clearly better but of course
 care is required.

20...hxg6 21.♞xd4 ♞a5! 22.♖c1

22.♖h6 ♞e5 The queen covers everything.



22...♞a4 23.♖c4 ♖f5 24.g4! e5! 25.♞xd6
 ♞b6 26.gxf5

26.♖b3 ♖e4† 27.♞g1 ♖d5†

26...♞xc4 27.♞d7 ♜d8 28.♞xb7 gxf5 29.♞xf5
 ♞d5† 30.♞xd5 ♜xd5†

Yet again we've reached an endgame where
 Black has the better chances. These lines are
 fascinating to analyse, but are also dangerous
 to play unless you've studied them carefully.
 Khalifman's choice is the safest.

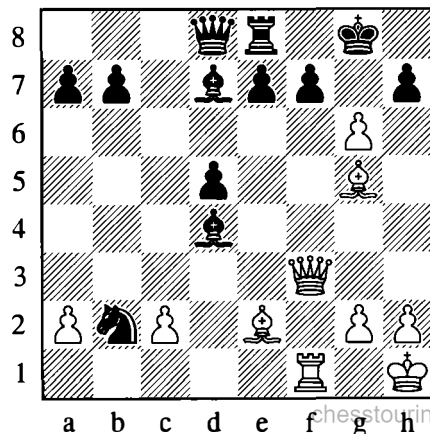
20.♞f3!

20.♞e3?! ♖xd4 21.♞xd4 ♞b6! 22.♞xd5
 ♖xf5† Black can follow up with ...♖e6 and
 ...f6 with a fairly safe king.

20.♞xd5? Taking the pawn allows Black to
 force the queen exchange: 20...♖a4! 21.♞xd8
 ♜xd8†

20...♖xd4 21.fxg6

This may look dangerous, but Khalifman
 had it all under control.



21...♙f6! 22.gxf7† ♚xf7 23.♙c1

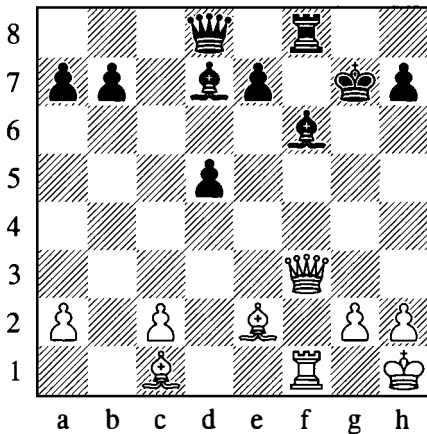
23.♙h6 ♚g8! 24.♚g3† ♚h8 25.♚xf6 ♖g8
White is forced into yet another slightly worse ending. 26.♖f8 ♚xf8 27.♙xf8 ♖xg3 28.hxg3 e6 This one should be a draw, as White can trade down to opposite-coloured bishops: 29.♙c5 e5 30.♙d6 ♜c4 31.♙xc4 dxc4 32.♙xe5†=

23...♚g7 24.♙xb2 ♖f8

White has reclaimed the sacrificed piece but Black's king is now also secure. The stem game continued:

25.♙c1

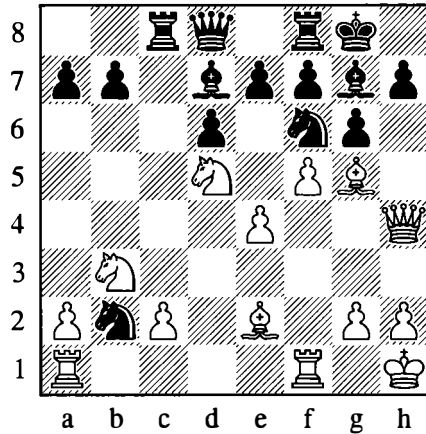
25.♙xf6† exf6 26.♚xd5 was agreed drawn in Werle – Molinari, Leiden 1999. This is White's safer option, as in the game Black starts to get some chances.



25...♚h8 26.♚xd5 ♙c6 27.♚h5 ♚d5
28.♚xd5 ♙xd5=

The game is still more or less equal and was eventually drawn in Kotronias – Khalifman, Bled 1991.

D212) 15.♜d5N



This has yet to be played but is dangerous. Again I'll give a couple of options.

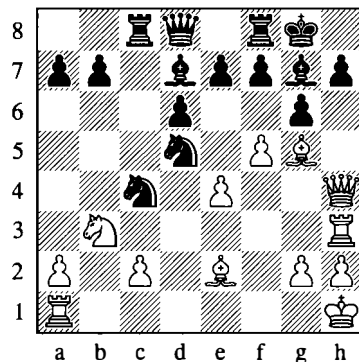
15...♜xd5

15...♜c4 16.♖f3 ♜xd5 17.♖h3!

This seems to draw.

After 17.exd5 f6 Black has time to fend off the attack:

- a) 18.♙h6 ♜e5 19.♖h3 g5 20.♙xg5 ♙xf5→
- b) 18.♙c1 ♜e5 19.♖h3 ♙xf5 20.♚xh7† ♚f7 21.♙h6 ♖g8†
- c) 18.♖h3 h5†



17...h5 18.♙xh5! ♜f6 19.♙e2 ♖e8 20.♙h6 ♙h8 21.♙g5

White has to repeat.

21.♙f8? ♜h5 22.♙xh5 e5!→ is a neat defence. 21...♙g7=

16.exd5 ♖b6!?

16...f6 17.♗c1 ♜xc2 18.♞d4 ♜xe2 19.♞xe2 ♞d3∞ results in a complicated position. The pawn on f6 creates a big hole on e6, but our knight on e5 should cover everything. Material is balanced and I think we can say it's dynamically equal here.

17.c3!

The positions are extremely complicated but likely around level.

17.♗xe7 ♗xf5 looks to be better for Black, for example: 18.♞xf5 gxf5 19.♞g5 h6! 20.♞xf5 ♞e3 21.♗xf8 ♜xf8 22.♗h5 ♞e5∞

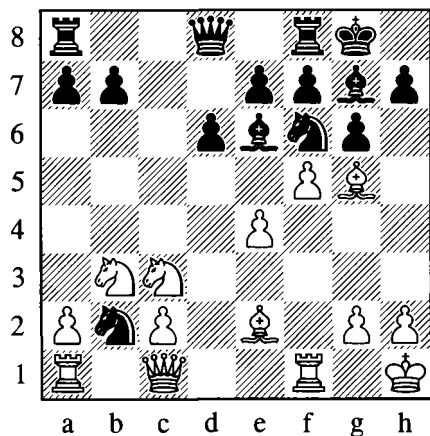
17...♗xf5

17...f6 18.♗c1 ♞a4 19.c4 ♞a6∞

18.♞xf5 gxf5 19.♞d4 ♗xd4 20.cxd4 f6 21.♗h6 ♞h8 22.♗xf8 ♜xf8=

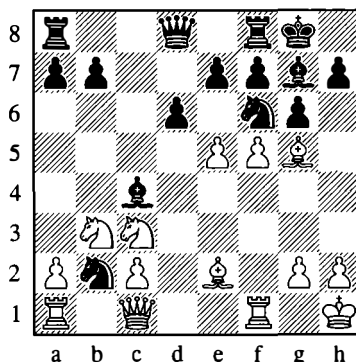
Of course there is still a lot of play left.

D22) 13.♞c1



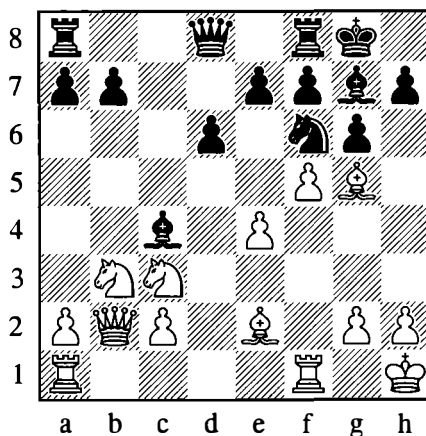
13...♗c4 14.♞xb2

14.e5? has been recommended, but it fails tactically:



14...♗xe2! 15.♞xe2 ♞e4 16.f6 exf6 17.exf6 ♜e8∞ Both sides have hanging pieces but the tactics work for Black. 18.fxg7 ♞xg5 19.♞xb2 ♜xe2 Black has a decisive advantage.

White doesn't have time for 14.fxg6?! either. 14...fxg6 15.♞xb2 ♗xe2 16.♞xe2 ♞xe4 Now White has no f5-f6 and so he has to give back the piece: 17.♞xf8∞ ♞xf8 18.♞bd4 ♞xg5 19.♞xb7 e5∞



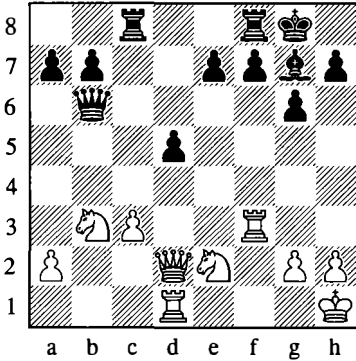
14...♗xe2 15.♞xe2 ♞xe4 16.f6 ♞xf6

This is the critical position of this variation. We have three pawns for the piece, our Dragon bishop remains, and we have a good structure and central control: I believe this is full compensation.

17.♞bd4

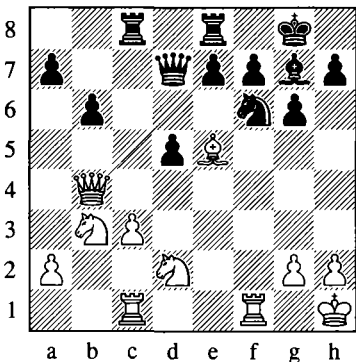
17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.c3 (18.♞xf6N has to be

considered, but I don't think White has time to bring his knights round to strong squares and so Black is better. In particular that knight on b3 isn't doing much.) One game proceeded: 18...♙g7 19.♗d1 ♖b6 20.♗d2 ♗ac8 21.♗f3 d5! Black uses the fact that the rook on d1 is now undefended to grab some space.



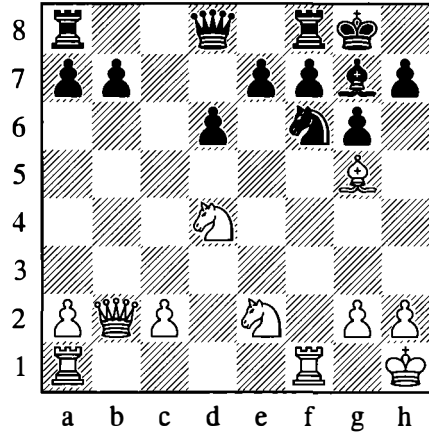
22.♗d3 e6 23.♗bd4 ♗c4 24.♗f1 ♗a4 25.♗c1 ♗c8 26.♗f2 ♗c7 27.♗f3 f5 28.♗h4 ♗f7 29.♗g3 e5 Black had taken over the centre in Guliyev – Asauskas, Warsaw 2005.

17.c3 was played in a battle between two Dragon experts. 17...♗c8 18.♗ac1 ♗d7 (I'd take the opportunity to centralize my knight with 18...♗e4N 19.♙e3 b6 20.♗d2 ♗c5=) 19.♗d2 d5 20.♗a3 b6 21.♗d4 ♗c5 22.♗b3 ♗c7 23.♙f4 ♗cc8 24.♙e5 ♗fe8 25.♗b4



25...♙h6!? 26.♙xf6 exf6 27.♗d4 f5 Black is better, despite the fact that his structure has

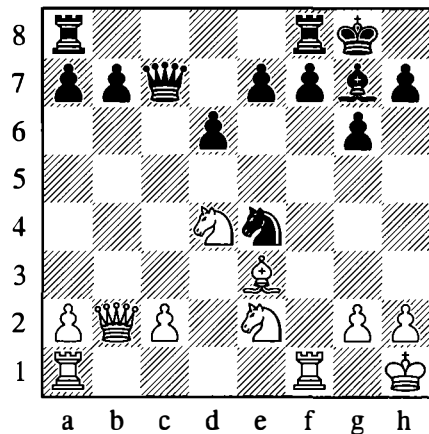
been worsened, as his pieces are so active. Matters got worse for the Dutch GM as he tried to get some play with 28.c4?!, which was met by 28...♗a4! in Van der Wiel – W. Watson, Mondorf 1991.



17...♗e4

17...♗b6!?N is an interesting idea. If White trades queens, Black gets good play down the a- and c-files.

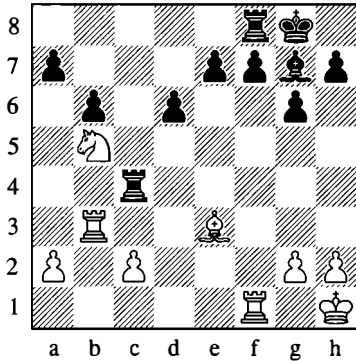
18.♙e3 ♗c7



19.c4!N

This is my engine's suggestion, fighting for control of the centre. Black has a few different ways to react – depending on opponent and mood.

19.♖ab1 b6 20.♗b3 ♜ac8 21.♙d5 ♘c3
 22.♘xc3 ♗xc3 23.♖b3 ♗c4 24.♗xc4 ♜xc4
 25.♘b5



This was Fishbein – Zenyuk, Philadelphia 2013, where both sides had played logically so far. Black, perhaps due to being the lower-rated player, tried to steer the game towards a draw with 25...♜xc4 26.♘xa7 ♜xa2, but was a little worse after 27.♘c6!

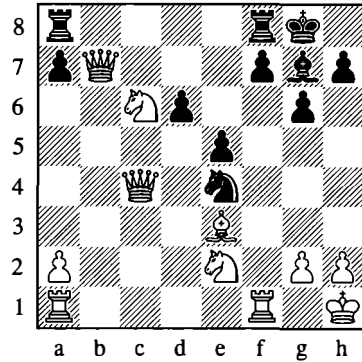
Instead 25...♜a4!N should have been preferred, not allowing White's knight to become active. Then 26.a3 ♜c8 27.♜c1 d5= is probably a draw with perfect play, but I would always take Black – pushing the pawns is far easier than trying to stop them!

19...e5!?

This is the most concrete.

Perhaps simplest is 19...♜ac8 20.♜ac1 b6 21.♗b3 ♗b7. Black is solid and I think it will be difficult for White to do much with his extra piece.

19...♗xc4 20.♗xb7 e5 21.♘c6 (21.♗xe4 exd4 22.♘xd4 ♜ae8 23.♗f4 ♜xe3 24.♗xe3 ♗xd4 25.♗xd4 ♘xd4=)

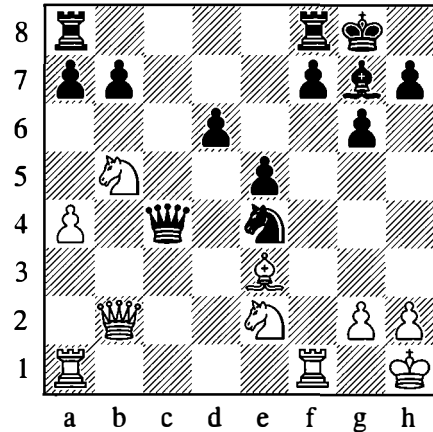


21...♜ae8 22.♘g3 ♘xg3† 23.hxg3 f5∞ The position is extremely complicated. We're giving up our a-pawn and allowing White a passed pawn but, on the other hand, White's king isn't completely secure and we can attempt a pawn storm.

20.♘b5 ♗xc4 21.a4

Trying to close the net on our queen.

21.♜fd1 ♜ac8 22.♜ac1 ♗e6=



21...♜ac8! 22.♘xa7

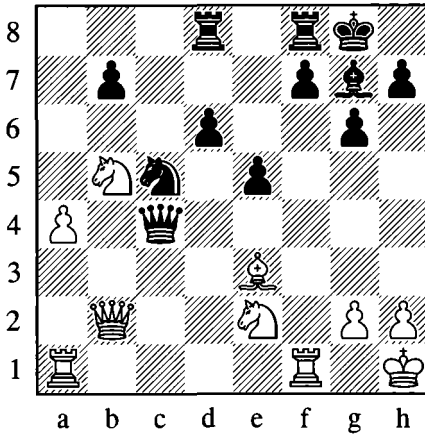
22.♜ac1 ♗d3‡

22.♜fc1 ♗d3 23.♜a3 ♜xc1†+–

22...♜cd8 23.♘b5

23.a5 ♜d7=

23...♖c5=

Conclusion

Our pieces are active and White will have to play accurately to prevent Black taking over the initiative.

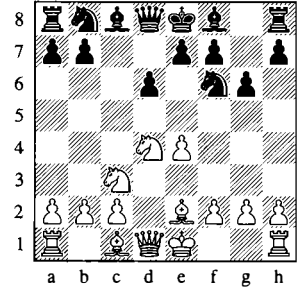
With the Karpov Variation, White is trying to keep things simple and play a positional game. However, if he doesn't play the critical main line then our play on the queenside comes quite quickly. The main lines I have given are sharp – hopefully taking White players out of their comfort zone.

12.♚e1 has been neglected by theory for a while. It's more dangerous than thought, but Black has various ways to get at least a draw.

Instead with 12.♚c1 White wins a piece for three pawns, but I think we have full compensation and excellent practical chances.

Chapter 11

Classical Variation



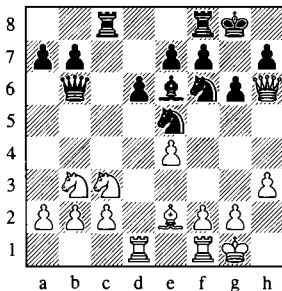
Quiet Set-ups with ♖e2

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♗e2
6...♗g7

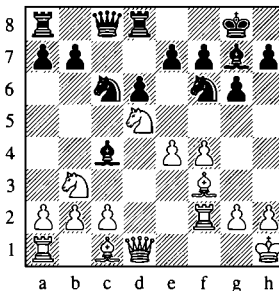
A) 7.♗g5	182
B) 7.0-0 0-0	183
B1) 8.f4	183
B2) 8.♘h1	184
B3) 8.♗e1 ♘c6 9.♘b3 ♗e6 10.♗f1 d5	184
B31) 11.exd5	185
B32) 11.♘c5	186

A) after 14.h3



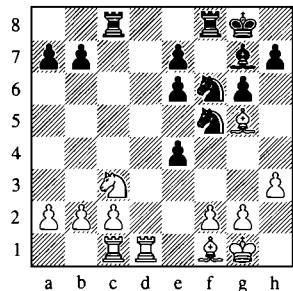
14...♗xc3!N

B2) after 13.♘d5



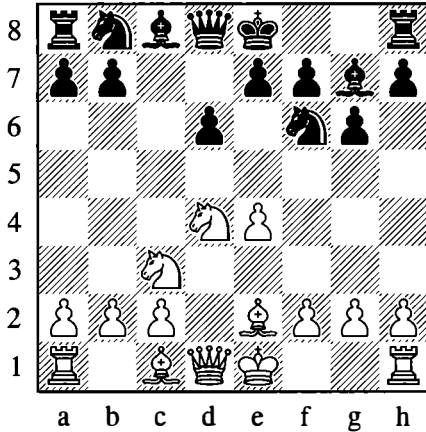
13...♗e6!N

B32) after 17.h3



17.c1♘d6N [Nuring.com](http://www.Nuring.com)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6
5.♗c3 g6 6.♗e2 ♗g7



This chapter will examine A) 7.♗g5 and lines after B) 7.0-0 which weren't covered in the previous three chapters.

7.♗e3 0-0 8.0-0 ♗c6 is simply the Classical Variation – see Chapters 8 and 9.

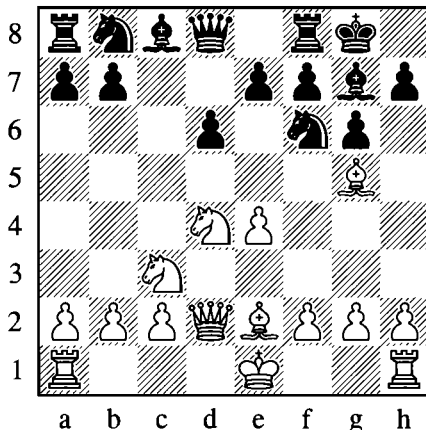
A) 7.♗g5

This is likely to transpose to the Karpov Variation, but I will briefly show how play might proceed if it does not.

7...0-0 8.♞d2

An alternative plan for White that is not at all scary.

For 8.0-0 see the previous chapter.



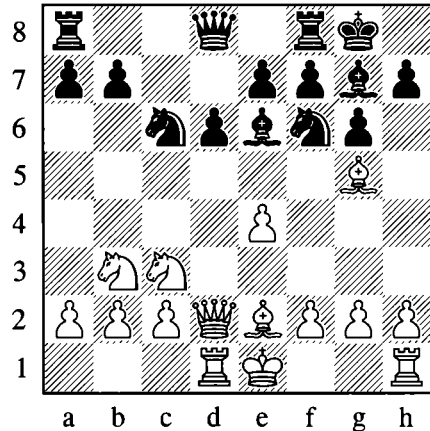
8...♗c6 9.♗b3

9.♗xc6 bxc6 10.♗h6 ♗xh6 11.♞xh6 ♞b6 ♞ Black is comfortable.

9...♗e6 10.♞d1

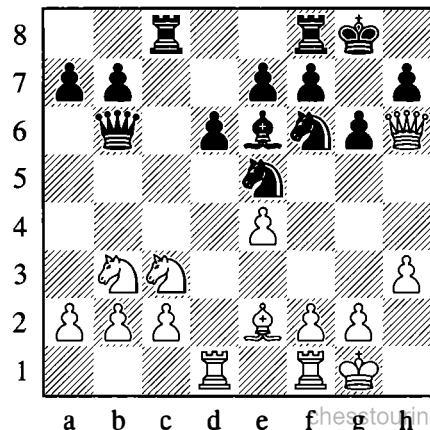
Exchanging bishops with 10.♗h6 wastes too much time: 10...♗xh6 11.♞xh6 ♞b6! ♞ Black will follow up with ...a5 and it will be difficult for White to defend his queenside pawns.

10.0-0 would again transpose to the Karpov Variation – see variation B of the previous chapter.



10...♞c8 11.♗h6 ♗xh6 12.♞xh6 ♗e5 13.0-0 ♞b6 14.h3

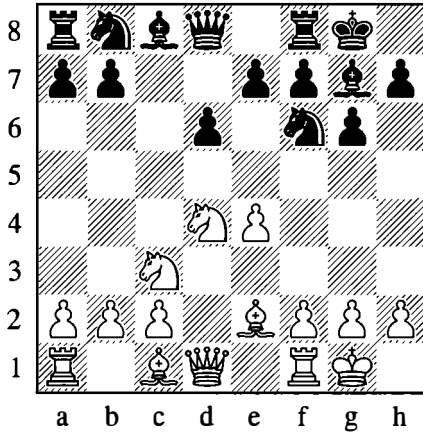
In Volokitin – Sakaev, Moscow 2001, Black should have chosen the thematic Dragon exchange sacrifice:



14...♖xc3!N 15.bxc3 ♖xe4

Black has a great position.

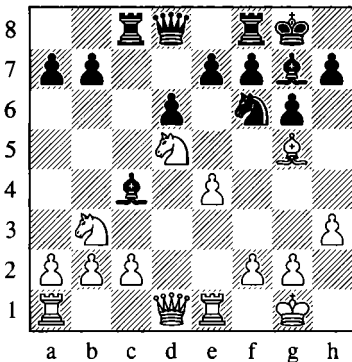
B) 7.0-0 0-0



White's independent tries at this point are:
B1) 8.f4, B2) 8.♖h1 and B3) 8.♖e1.

8.♖b3 is likely to transpose elsewhere after 8...♖c6.

8.h3 is a somewhat aimless move: 8...♖c6 9.♖b3 (9.♖e3 transposing back to variation C of Chapter 8 would be more logical) 9...♖e6 10.♖e1 ♖c8 11.♖f1 ♖e5 12.♖g5 ♖c4 13.♖xc4 ♖xc4 14.♖d5 Chrzaszcz – Szmyd, Polanica Zdroj 2009.

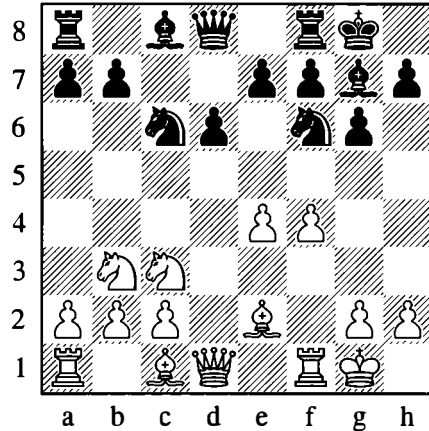


14...♖xd5N 15.exd5 ♖e8. The bishop pair gives Black an edge.

B1) 8.f4 ♖c6 9.♖b3

9.♖e3 – see variation A of Chapter 8.

Here we can use a tactic we've already seen against the Karpov Variation:



9...b5! 10.♖f3

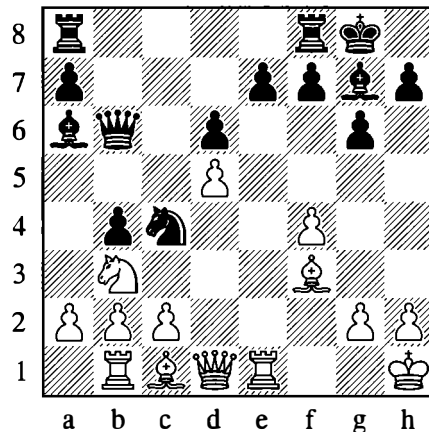
10.♖xb5?! ♖b6+ 11.♖h1 ♖xe4

10.a3 prevents the ...b4 advance, but 10...♖b6+ 11.♖h1 a5= is comfortable for Black.

10...b4 11.♖d5 ♖xd5 12.exd5 ♖b6+

Exploiting the weakening of the g1-a7 diagonal.

13.♖h1 ♖a5 14.♖e1 ♖c4! 15.♖b1 ♖a6

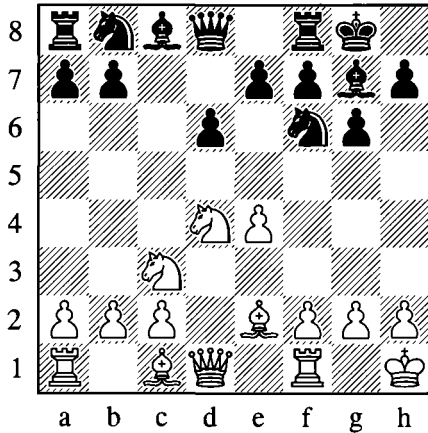


This was D. Schneider – Perelshteyn, Internet 2009, when Black already had a pleasant advantage. Taking the pawn looks extremely dangerous:

16. Bxc7 Bac8 17. Bxc8 Bxc8

B2) 8. Qh1

Another line that is likely to transpose elsewhere.



8... Qc6 9. Qb3

9.f4? is premature as we have a nice tactic: 9... Qxe4 ! 10. Qxc6 Qxc3 11. Qxd8 Qxd1 Black nets a pawn.

9... Qe6 10. f4

10. Qg5 would transpose to a position looked at in variation D of Chapter 10.

10... Qc8 11. Qf3

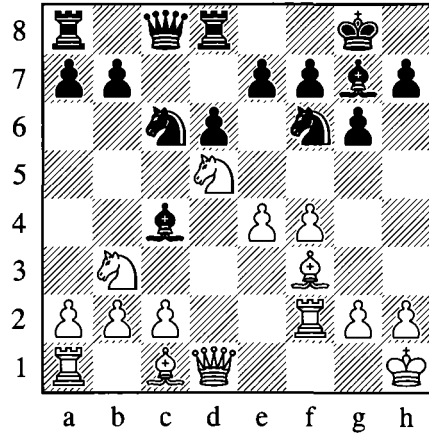
White should play 11. Qe3 transposing to variation B of Chapter 9.

11... Qc4 ! 12. Bf2

12. Re1 Bd8 13. Qd5 e6 14. Qxf6 Qxf6 15. c3 e5! A typical motif in the Sicilian when White has played f2-f4. Black carves out the e5-outpost for his knight.

12... Bd8 13. Qd5

Black now has a strong novelty.



13... Qe6 !N

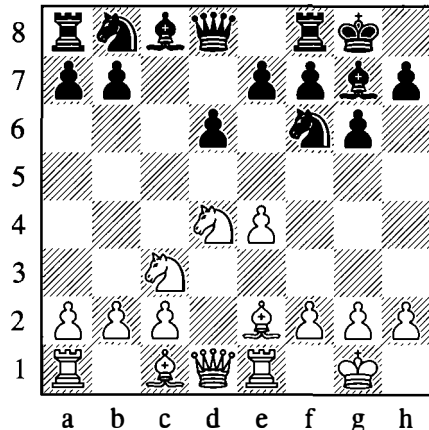
Let's see what happens if White grabs the exchange:

14. Qc7 Qc4 15. Qxc4 Qxc4 16. Qxa8 Bxa8 17. Qd2 Qd5

Black has more than enough compensation: he has active pieces, a good structure and the bishop pair.

B3) 8. Re1

Apart from developing the bishop to e3 or g5 (Classical and Karpov), this is probably White's next most logical move. He develops a piece and prepares to drop the bishop back to f1.

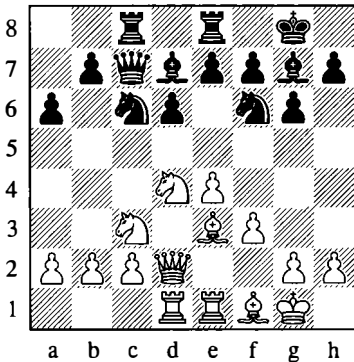


8...♖c6 9.♗b3

The immediate 9.♗f1 is unusual here. It was seen in a high-rated battle between Nepomniachtchi and Nakamura, but it was only an online blitz game. I would continue 9...♗xd4 10.♞xd4 ♔e6 with a level game.

9.♗f3 This alternative knight retreat has been played from time to time, but the knight struggles to perform a good role on f3. A young Levon Aronian continued: 9...a6 10.♗f1 b5 11.h3 ♔b7 12.♗f4 G. Kuzmin – Aronian, Ubeda 1998. Here Black may as well develop with 12...♞c8N, as 13.e5?! dxе5 14.♗xe5 b4♣ would leave White in some trouble.

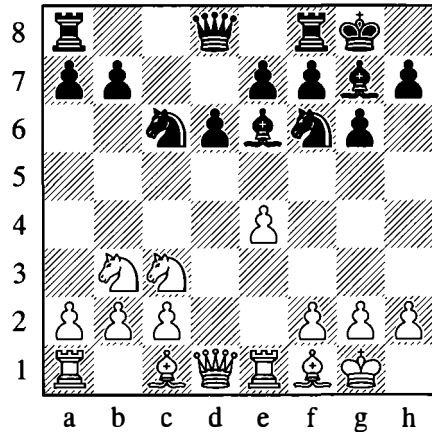
9.♗e3 does not combine well with the rook on e1, and it's not clear how White plans to continue. While our usual ...d5 is playable, it would at least allow White to make some use of the rook on e1. Therefore I think simply developing with 9...♗d7 is more logical, for example: 10.♞d2 ♞c8 11.♞ad1 a6 12.f3 ♞e8 13.♗f1 ♞c7=



Black has played useful developing moves. White clearly couldn't find a good plan and lashed out with 14.g4?! in Borik – Giorgadze, Dortmund 1979, but this was far more likely to weaken his own king than generate an attack.

9...♗e6 10.♗f1

10.♗g5 is simply a transposition to variation A of Chapter 10.



10...d5

This thrust is, as usual, the critical test of White's approach.

Exchanging with B31) 11.exd5 can hardly be critical, while with B32) 11.♗c5 White at least challenges our set-up.

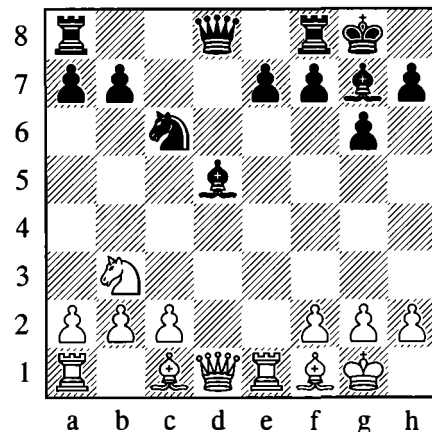
B31) 11.exd5

White accepts he won't get any advantage out of the opening.

11...♗xd5 12.♗d5

12.♗e4 ♞b6!N 13.c3 ♞ad8♣ Black has an edge with his lead in development.

12...♗xd5

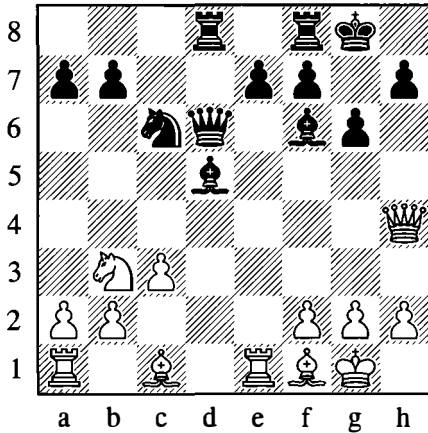
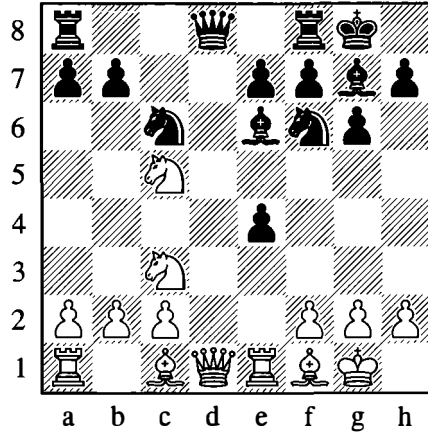


13.c3

13.c4?! chronically weakens the long diagonal: 13...♙e6 14.♘c5 ♜xd1 15.♞xd1 ♙g4 16.f3 ♞ad8! 17.♙e3 Ermenkov – Los, Groningen 1990. There was no need to defend the b7-pawn and so 17...♙f5N would have favoured Black.

13...♜d6 14.♙g4 ♞ad8 15.♜h4 ♙f6

15...b6!?N is an interesting alternative. This useful move controls the c5-square and ensures the b3-knight remains out of play. 16.♙g5 f6 17.♙e3 e5∞ leads to a complex position.



16.♙g5 ♙xg5 17.♜xg5 e5 18.♞ad1 ♜c7=

Although White later went on to win in Grischuk – Gashimov, Moscow (blitz) 2009, at this point Black was fine.

B32) 11.♘c5

White intends on damaging our structure but we'll have enough activity to compensate.

11...dxe4

If you're worried about your structure being harmed then 11...♙g4 is also playable – and has been played more often. However, I don't feel Black has any problems with his 'Irish pawn centre', and it is White who actually has to be careful.

12.♜xd8

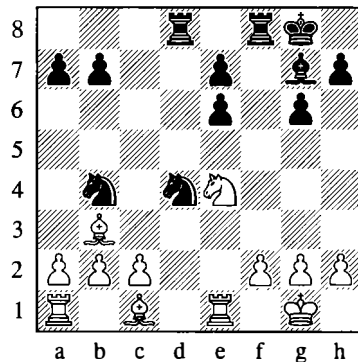
12.♘xe6 allows the intermezzo: 12...♜xd1! 13.♞xd1 fxe6 14.♙c4 ♔f7! It isn't easy for White to regain his pawn, and we have plenty of play down the c- and f-files, as well as the long diagonal.

12...♞ad8 13.♘xe6 fxe6

White has the bishop pair and we have a terrible structure, but thankfully that's not the whole story. It is still not so simple for White to regain his pawn, and we have plenty of open lines and activity for our pieces.

14.♙g5

The line 14.♙c4 ♘d4! 15.♙b3 ♘d5! 16.♘xe4 ♘b4 shows how quickly White can get into trouble in this position. The German GM could not defend the c2-pawn and was already in trouble.



17.c3 (17.♗g5 is probably White's best try, although 17...♖bxc2 18.♗xc2 ♖xc2 19.♗xe7 ♖xa1 20.♗xa1 ♗xb2 21.♗b1 ♗c8! 22.♗xf8 ♖xf8 leaves White with a difficult defence) 17...♖xb3 18.axb3 ♖c2 Black won material in Schmaltz – Smerdon, Brisbane 2005.

14...♖d4

The knight is well placed here, not only hitting c2 but also defending e6.

15.♗ac1 ♗c8

The other GM game to reach this position continued with 15...h6, which was also fine for Black: 16.♗xf6 exf6 17.♖xe4 f5 18.♖c5 b6 19.♖xe6 ♖xe6 20.♗c4 ♗xb2 21.♗cd1 ♖g7 A draw was agreed in Bauer – Hamdouchi, Belfort 2002.

16.♗ed1?!

It was probably time for White to steer the game towards a draw:

16.♖xe4N

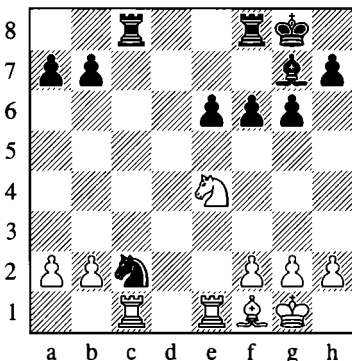
The following line is interesting:

16...♖xc2

16...♗xc2 is also possible.

17.♗xf6! exf6

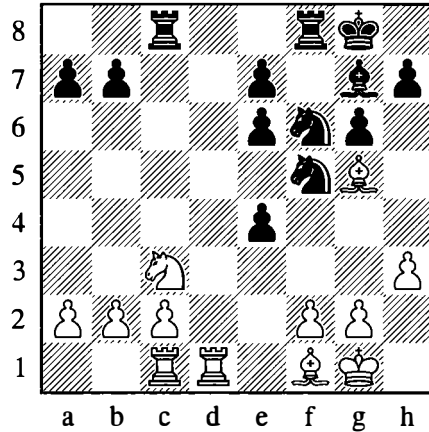
17...♖xe1 18.♗c3 ♗xc3 19.♖xc3 The knight on e1 is trapped. My engine assesses this as equal but I feel White's two minor pieces may outgun the rook and pawns here.



18.♖d6 ♖xe1 19.♖xc8 ♗h6 20.♖e7+ ♖g7! 20...♖f7? 21.♗c7 is awkward. 21.♗xe1 ♖f7 22.♗c4 ♖xe7 23.♗xe6+ ♖d7=

16...♖f5 17.h3

In V. Onischuk – Khalifman, St Petersburg 2011, they agreed a draw, but Khalifman should really have played on with:



17...♖d6N

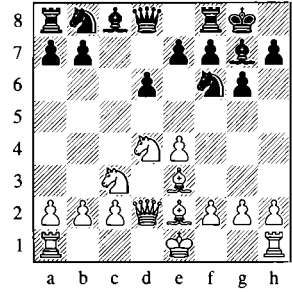
White hasn't much compensation for the pawn.

Conclusion

In the more positional lines of the Dragon the battle often revolves around the d5-square. In the set-ups with ♖e2 we should strive to break with ...d5 whenever possible. Our main line goes 7.0-0-0-0 8.♗e1 ♖c6 9.♖b3 ♗e6 10.♗f1 d5 11.♖c5, when Black's active piece play more than makes up for his shattered pawn structure.

Chapter 12

Classical Variation



Yugoslav Attack Hybrid

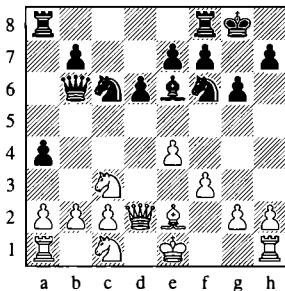
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 g6 6.♙e2 ♙g7 7.♙e3 0-0 8.♚d2

8...♗c6

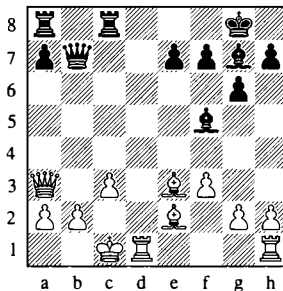
A) 9.h4	189
B) 9.♗b3	190
C) 9.f3	191
D) 9.0-0-0 ♗g4 10.♙xg4 ♙xg4 11.f3 ♙d7	193
D1) 12.h4 ♗e5	194
D11) 13.♚e2	195
D12) 13.b3 ♚c8 14.♘b1 ♚e8	196
D121) 15.♗ce2!?	197
D122) 15.h5	199
D2) 12.♗xc6 bxc6 13.♙h6 ♚a5 14.♙xg7 ♘xg7 15.h4 h5	200
D21) 16.e5!?	202
D22) 16.g4!?!N hxg4	203
D221) 17.e5!?	203
D222) 17.h5	204

B) note to 12.♚e3



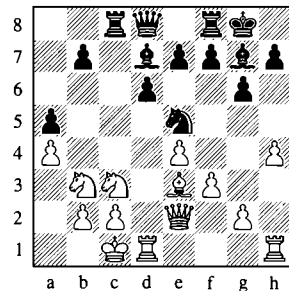
14...d5!N

C) after 17.c3



17...a5!N

D1) after 15.a4



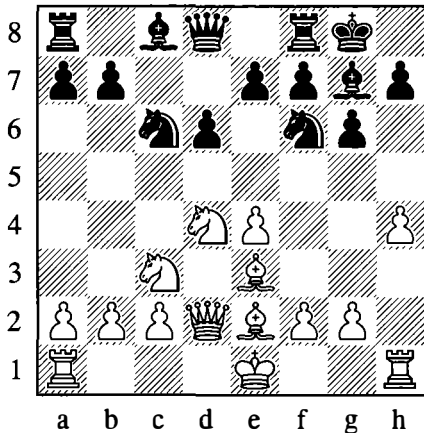
15...♙xc3!N

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♖f6
5.♗c3 g6 6.♗e2 ♗g7 7.♗e3 0–0 8.♣d2 ♗c6

As the title suggests, in this chapter we will consider lines where White mixes a Classical and Yugoslav Attack set-up – placing his bishops on e2 and e3. I will give a quick run through of A) 9.h4, B) 9.♗b3 and C) 9.f3 before moving on to the main section D) 9.0–0.

A) 9.h4

This is rather toothless here. We should counter it with our typical break.

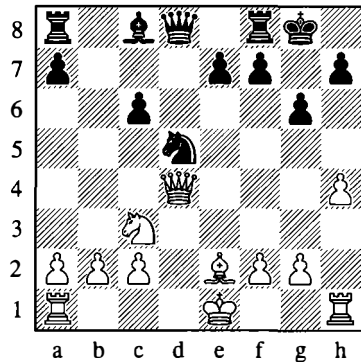


9...d5! 10.exd5

10.♗xc6 bxc6 11.e5 (11.0–0?! ♖b8N looks dangerous) 11...♗g4 12.♗xg4 ♗xg4 13.♗h6?! ♗xh6N (13...♗xe5 also looks good for Black) 14.♣xh6 ♣b8! The fork ensures we win a pawn.

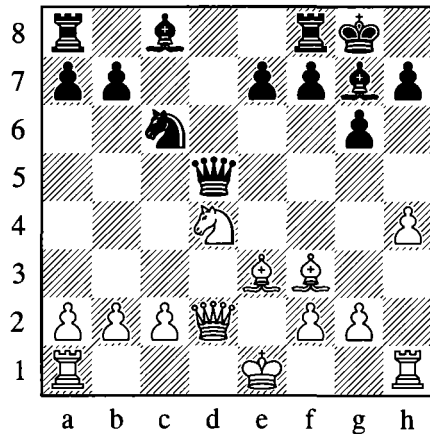
10...♗xd5 11.♗xd5

11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.♗d4 This position resembles a 9.0–0–0 Yugoslav Attack but with ♗e2 and h2-h4 rather than 0–0–0 and f2-f3. This should favour Black as White's king is still in the centre. We can exploit that immediately with: 12...♗xd4N 13.♣xd4



13...e5! 14.♣c5 (14.♣xe5? ♖e8 15.♣d4 ♗a6 drops a piece) 14...♣b6 15.♣xb6 (15.♗a4 ♣b4†! 16.♣xb4 ♗xb4) 15...axb6 16.♗xd5 cxd5 Black has a pleasant ending.

11...♣xd5 12.♗f3



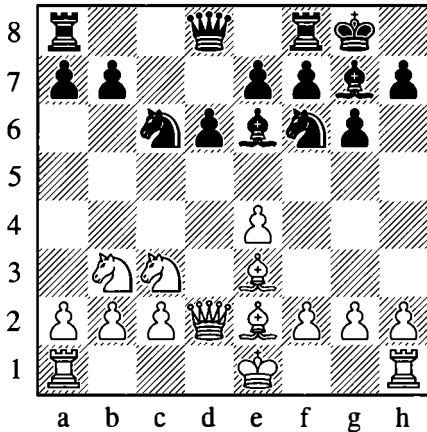
12...♣c4

12...♣e5!? is also fine if Black wants to keep the game going. The pawn on h4 looks rather misplaced.

13.♗e2 ♣d5 14.♗f3 ♣c4

A draw was agreed here in Firman – Ipatov, Lvov 2007.

B) 9.♘b3 ♙e6

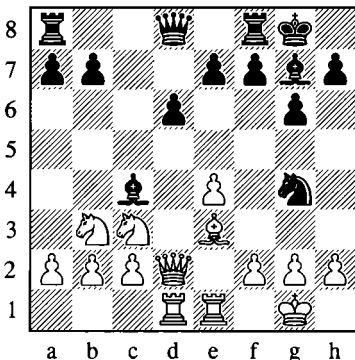


10.♙h6?!

Aiming to transpose to a normal Classical with 10.0-0 is safer, though as I mentioned at the start of Chapter 9, Black can immediately equalize with 10...d5.

10.f3 The combination of ♙e2 and f2-f3 always makes a strange impression. 10...d5 immediately equalizes, but I'd be tempted to play for more with 10...♞c8.

10.♞d1 ♘a5 was played in a Danish GM encounter. 11.0-0?! (11.♘xa5 ♞xa5= was better) 11...♘c4 12.♙xc4 ♙xc4 13.♞fe1 Larsen – Cu. Hansen, Reykjavik 1986. Here I'd go for the second bishop with 13...♘g4N, and if White moves it:



14.♙f4 (14.♙d4?! ♙h6!) 14...♞c8 15.h3 ♙xc3?! 16.bxc3 ♘e5

10.0-0-0 As we'll see later in the chapter, with the bishop on e2 we're not playing ...d5 so it seems a bit of a waste of time for White to drop his knight back to b3. 10...♞c8 11.h4?! I. McDonald – Sreeves, Edinburgh 2009. Here 11...♘b4!N is strong: the threats are ...♘xa2 and ...♞xc3. 12.♘b1 ♘xe4! 13.♘xe4 ♞xc2 14.♞xc2 ♘xc2 15.♘xc2 ♙f5 16.♙d3 a5+ leaves White with a badly exposed king.

10...♙xh6 11.♞xh6 a5

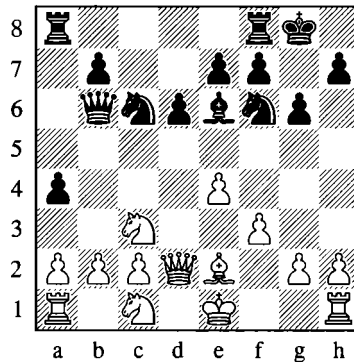
Things are already becoming tricky for White.

We could also start with 11...♞b6!.

12.♞e3

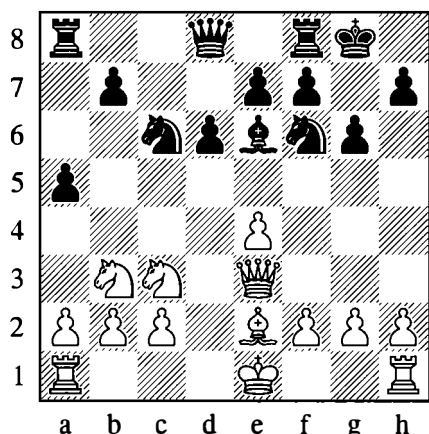
12.h4?! a4 13.♘d2 ♘d4 14.♙d1 a3+ Preiser – Tomann, Dortmund 1993.

12.♞d2 ♞b6! 13.f3 a4 14.♘c1 Pipitone – Sters, Condino 2009.



14...d5!N The most energetic. 15.exd5 ♘xd5 16.♘xd5 ♙xd5+ White is in serious trouble with his king stuck in the centre.

12.a4 ♞b6+ hardly helps matters.

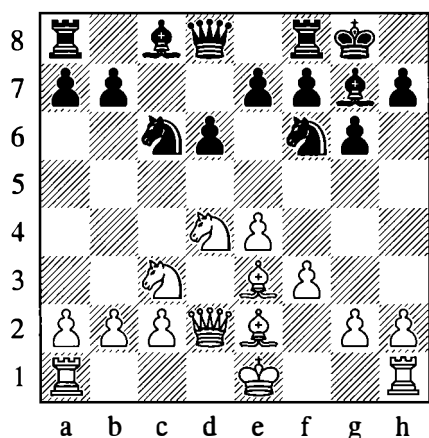


12...a4 13. Qd4 Qxd4 14. Bxd4 a3 15. b4 Bc7

White was tied down to defending his a2-pawn forever in Odeev – Motylev, Moscow 1999.

C) 9.f3

As I wrote in the previous line, I don't like the combination of Qe2 and f2-f3 .



9...d5!

Yet again this move looks right.

10. Qxc6

10.0–0–0 transposes to variation A of Chapter 7 on page 129.

10. exd5 Qxd5

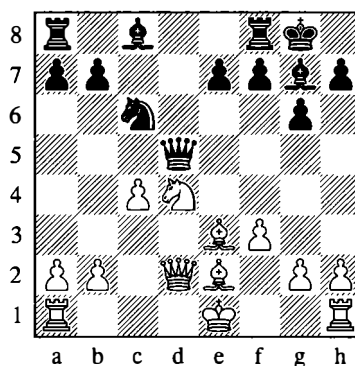
This position has been played surprisingly often, but it's simply a worse variation of the 9.0–0–0 Yugoslav Attack.

11. Qxd5

11. Qxc6 bxc6 transposes to the note on 11. exd5 below.

11... Bxd5 12. c4

12. Qxc6 Bxc6 Again Black is extremely comfortable.



12... Bxd8N

Keeping pressure on the knight.

13. Qxc6

13.0–0–0 Qxd4 14. Qxd4 Qxd4 15. Bxd4 Bxa5

13... bxc6 14. Bd1 Bxd2† 15. Bxd2 Bb8

Black is slightly better.

10... bxc6 11.0–0–0?!

I don't think it's in White's interests to make it a race when he has lost a tempo with Qe2 .

11. e5 This is the only way I can see for White to argue for the inclusion of f2-f3 . At least now our knight can't jump into e4, although 11... Qe8 12. f4 f6 13. exf6 Qxf6 feels more comfortable for Black.

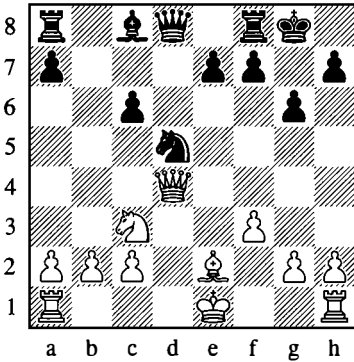
11. exd5 Qxd5 12. Qd4

12. Qxd5 is more common, but after 12... cxd5 13. c3 Bd6 14.0–0 a5 we must be happy.

12...♙xd4

12...♗f4!?N bags the g-pawn but is a little messy: 13.0-0-0 ♗xg2

13.♖xd4



13...e5!

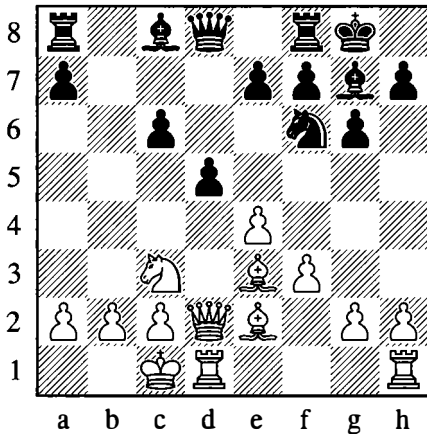
Playing as we did with the pawns on h4 and f2.

14.♖c5 ♖b8

Of course 14...♖b6N can also be played, but we're looking for more.

15.b3 ♗b4 16.♙d1 ♙f5

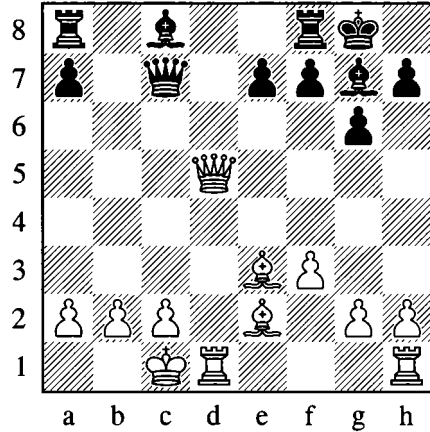
Bagdasarian – Gochelashvili, Anapa 2010.



11...♖c7 12.exd5 ♗xd5 13.♗xd5 cxd5 14.♖xd5

14.♙h6 ♙f6! was a nice response in Brezovsky – Taborsky, Czech Republic 1998. The point is that 15.♙xf8 can be met with 15...♖e5! – threatening both ...♖xb2# and ...♙g5.

This position can actually be reached from a Yugoslav Attack (Chapter 3) where White has played the bizarre 14.♙e2?!

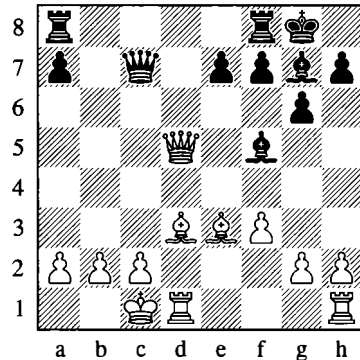


14...♙f5 15.♖c5

This queen move is forced.

15.♖c4? Nguyen Van Hai – Chung Juen Seng, Vung Tau 2004, should have been met by 15...♖e5!N 16.♙d4 ♖f4† 17.♗b1 ♖fc8+.

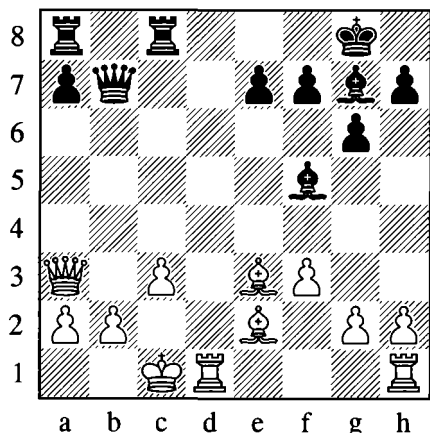
15.♙d3 was Mavrogianis – Abel, Stuttgart 1993. Best is:



15...♖fc8!N 16.♙xf5 ♙xb2†! 17.♗xb2 ♖c3† 18.♗c1 ♖xe3† 19.♙d2 gxf5

15...♖b7 16.♖a3 ♖fc8 17.c3

In Enferadi – Babaev, Lahijan 2005, Black missed a strong reply:

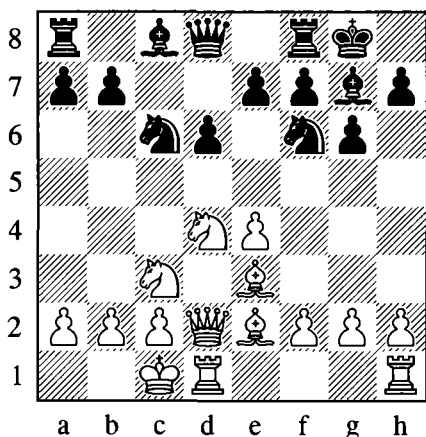


17...a5!N

With the amusing threat of ...♝b4!

D) 9.0-0-0

This is, of course, extremely similar to the 9.0-0-0 lines of the Yugoslav Attack. In White's favour he has already developed his light-squared bishop, though admittedly not to such an aggressive location. The drawback is that White doesn't have such good control over the g4-square. This line became quite topical a couple of years ago but interest seems to have waned again.

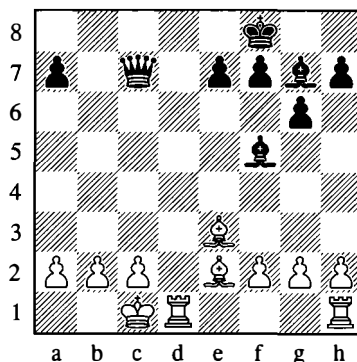


9...♘g4

Exploiting the key difference between f3-f3 and ♕e2 – White is forced to give up one of his

bishops. However we do have to be careful; the f6-knight is a good defender of our king and so without it we have to be accurate.

9...d5 This break is what we're normally trying to achieve in the Dragon, but here ♕e2 will be more useful than f2-f3. If you wish to play this way the critical line runs: 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♘xd5 cxd5 13.♝xd5 ♝c7 14.♝xa8 ♕f5 15.♝xf8† ♖xf8

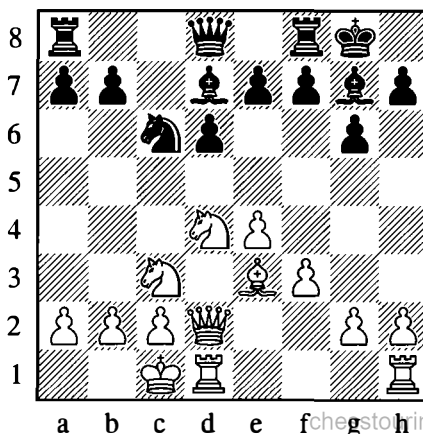


The position is extremely similar to the 9.0-0-0 Yugoslav of course, but White has already developed his bishop and so has decent chances for an advantage with 16.♗d2.

10...♘g4

Generally White doesn't have much of an attack if he can't get rid of the g7-bishop. Hence he has to hold on to his bishop on e3.

10...♘g4 11.f3 ♕d7



White's main options are **D1) 12.h4** and **D2) 12.♖xc6**.

12.g4?!

This has been surprisingly common but doesn't really fit in with White's plan. We're not meeting 12.h4 with 12...h5 anyway and so this is a wasted tempo. The f3-pawn might also prove vulnerable.

12...♖e5 13.h4

13.b3 would be better, but 13...♖a5 still favours Black: 14.♖d5 (A big downside of 12.g4 is revealed after 14.♖b1? ♖xf3!-+)
14...♖a3† 15.♖b1 e6̄

13...♖c4 14.♖e2 ♖c8̄

In positions with attacks on opposite flanks one tempo can prove fatal. Here the g4-pawn isn't contributing anything to the attack while we're about to cash in on the queenside.

12.♖b1

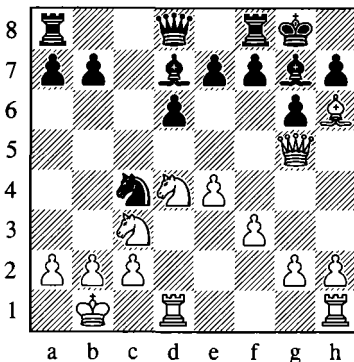
The move order used by a lot of strong players but it is likely to transpose.

12...♖e5 13.♖h6?

The correct 13.b3 ♖c8 14.h4 transposes to variation D12.

13...♖c4 14.♖g5

14.♖c1 ♖xb2! is a pretty tactic: 15.♖xb2 (15.♖xg7 ♖xd1-+) 15...♖xd4 16.♖xd4 ♖b6† Black is doing well.



14...♖b6 15.♖b3 ♖f6

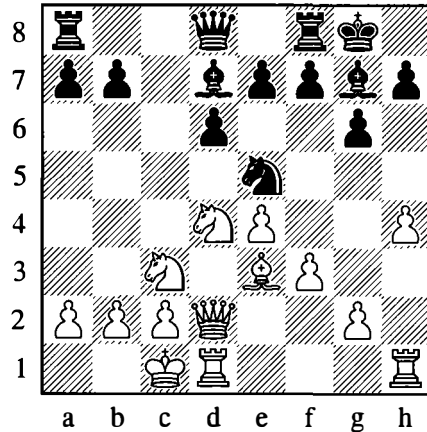
15...♖xc3 16.bxc3 ♖fe8̄ might be even stronger but is also messier.

16.♖d5 ♖xg5 17.♖xb6 ♖xh6 18.♖xc4 ♖fc8

Black has a pleasant edge with the bishop pair in the ending.

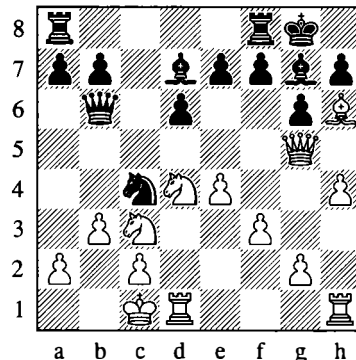
D1) 12.h4 ♖e5

Thematic. Our knight will get to c4 much faster than normal, as White doesn't have a bishop covering the light squares.



White can stop an immediate knight invasion on c4 with **D11) 13.♖e2**, though **D12) 13.b3** is a more permanent solution.

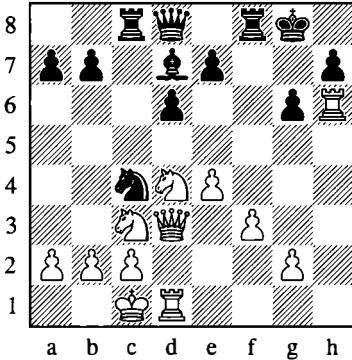
White doesn't have time for: 13.♖h6? ♖c4 14.♖g5 ♖b6 15.b3 (15.♖b3 ♖f6 16.♖g3 ♖fc8 gives Black a huge attack)



15...♖f6! 16.♖d5 (16.♖g3 ♖xd4 17.♖d5 ♖c5 18.bxc4 ♖fe8-+) 16...♖fc8 17.bxc4 e6

18.c5 dxc5 19.♖xd7 cxd4+ Black's attack breaks through.

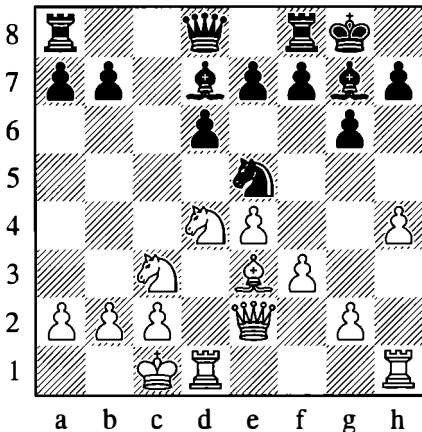
13.h5 ♘c4 14.♗d3 ♜c8 looks great for Black. 15.hxg6 (15.♗g1 was Meijer – Spiler, Bussum 2013, and now 15...♖a5N 16.hxg6 ♖b4! 17.♘b3 ♘xb2!-+) 15...fxg6 16.♗h6N This drops material, but otherwise Black is clearly better. 16...♗xh6† 17.♙xh6



17...e5! Hitting the knight and threatening ...♗g5† picking up the rook. White has some compensation but it shouldn't be adequate, for example: 18.♙dh1 exd4 19.♖xd4 ♗g5† 20.♗b1 ♙f7 21.f4 ♖c5 22.♙xg6† ♗f8 23.♖h8† ♗e7 24.♙g8 (24.♘d5† ♖xd5-+) 24...♙xg8 25.♖xg8 ♗e6†

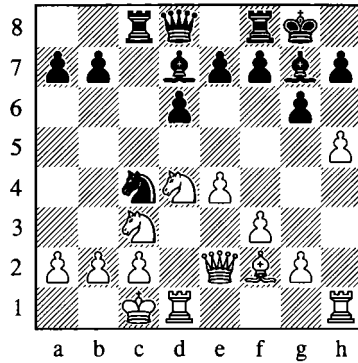
D11) 13.♖e2

This has been White's most common move but I think it's far too slow.



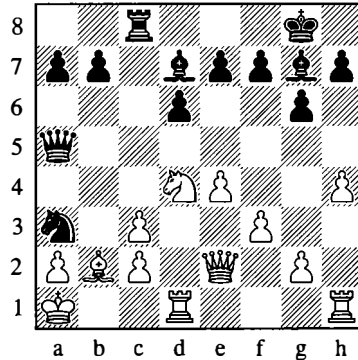
13...♙c8 14.♘b3

14.h5 ♘c4 15.♗f2 was Podolsky – Reshetniak, Illichivsk 2006.



After 15...♖a5!N White doesn't have a good defence to 16...♘xb2.

14.♗b1 ♘c4 15.♗c1 ♘a3†N 16.♗a1 ♙xc3! 17.bxc3 ♖a5 18.♗b2 ♙c8†

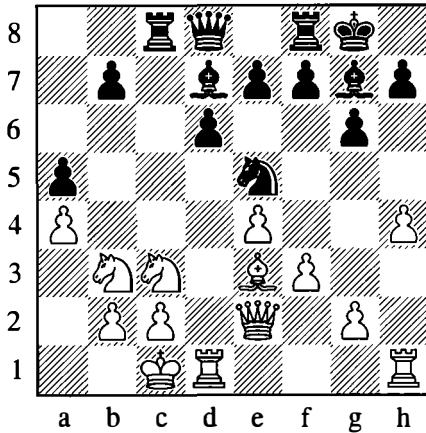


We have a strong attack and we are already threatening to capture on c3. If you don't like this position then perhaps the Dragon is not for you...

14...a5! 15.a4

15.♗d4 a4 16.♗a1 looked really ugly in Morycka – Jelinek, Svetla nad Sazavou 1998. White is simply playing a piece down. I'd recommend 16...e6N taking control of the d5-square: Black is clearly better.

This far has been Pogonina – Pushkarev, Serpukhov 2003.



15...xc3!N

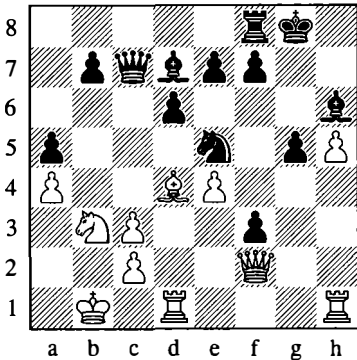
Rather an obvious novelty. Black will get at least a pawn for the exchange, along with a dangerous attack.

16.bxc3 ♖c7 17.♙d4 h5

There is no rush to take the pawn on a4. We can afford to spend a tempo to slow White's attack.

18.♞dg1

18.g4 hxg4 19.h5 ♙h6† 20.♔b1 gxf3 21.♗f2 g5



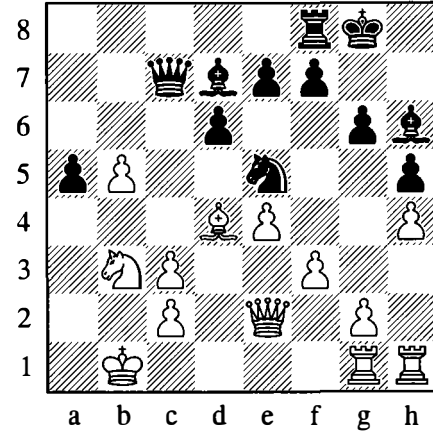
White's attack has been stalled and we can revert to attacking on the queenside, for example: 22.♙xe5 dxe5 23.♗xf3 ♙e6 24.♔b2 ♞c8 25.♞hg1 ♔h7 26.♞d3 b5! Black has coordinated perfectly and can combine a queenside attack with advancing the g-pawn.

18...b5! 19.axb5 ♙h6† 20.♔b1

20.♙e3 ♙xb5†

20.♔d1 ♞b8 21.b6 ♞xb6! 22.♙xb6 (22.g4 a4--)

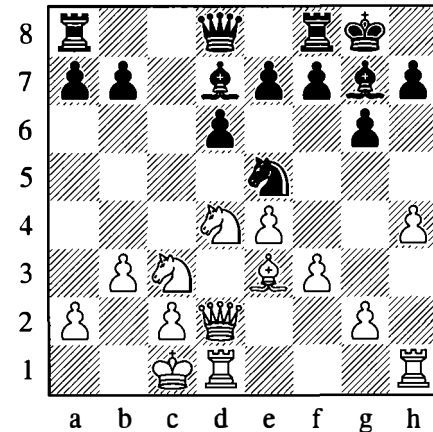
22...♗xb6 Despite his extra two exchanges White is completely lost.



20...♘c4†

I don't think White will last long.

D12) 13.b3



This looks weakening but, as we've just seen, it's important for White to prevent our knight jumping into c4.

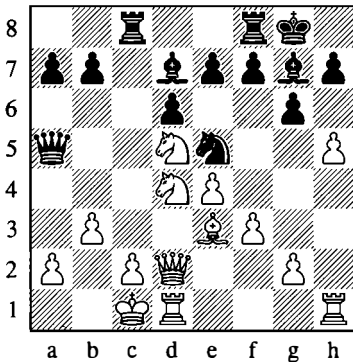
13...♞c8 14.♔b1

14.h5

White has rarely played this immediately.

14...♖a5 15.♘d5!

15.♘b2 is extremely risky but seems just about playable. The most straightforward reply is probably 15...♜fe8, when I don't think White can actually get away with keeping the queens on the board. 16.hxg6 fxg6 17.♘d5 ♖xd2 18.♞xd2 e6 19.♘f4 b5= I'd prefer to be on the Black side of the board.



15...♖xd2†

I couldn't find a particularly encouraging path after 15...♖xa2 16.♘xe7† ♘h8 Schwarte – Louro, email 2007. Now 17.♖b4!N looks dangerous, for example: 17...♘d3† 18.♞xd3 ♖a1† 19.♘d2 ♖xh1 20.♘xc8 ♙xc8 (20...♖xg2† 21.♘e2 ♙xc8 22.♖xd6 gxh5 23.♖e7+–) 21.♘e2 ♖xh5 22.g4±

16.♞xd2

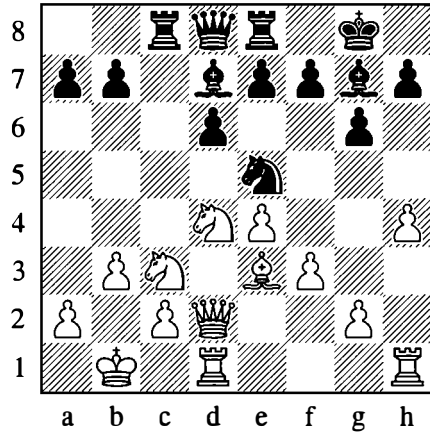
16.♘d2 ♜fe8 17.c4 e6 18.♘c3 a6 19.a4 We're in a typical Maroczy bind structure which should be okay for Black after 19...f5.

16...♜fe8

With a similar position to variation D122 below.

14...♞e8

Black defends the e7-pawn and prepares ...♖a5.



White can stop Black's queen arriving on a5 with **D121) 15.♘ce2!?** or continue more positionally with **D122) 15.h5**.

15.♘de2 ♖a5 16.♘d5 ♖xd2 17.♞xd2 was seen in Yu Yangyi – Morylev, Beijing 2012. I think Black can improve with 17...♘c6N, defending both the a7- and e7-pawns. After 18.h5 f5= Black has good counterplay.

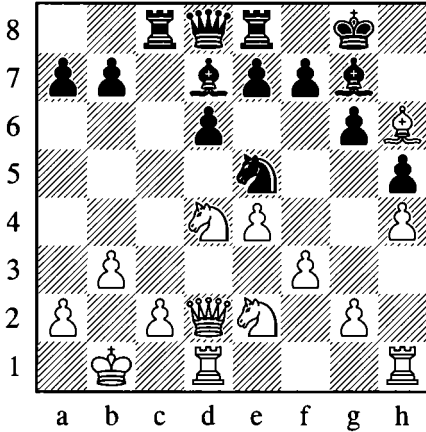
D121) 15.♘ce2!?

This keeps the queens on the board and so is the most aggressive option. It is rarely seen but I would still advise studying the next few moves carefully, as the position becomes extremely complicated.

15...h5 16.♙h6

The immediate 16.g4N should also be examined, but I think with 16...♖b6! Black is doing well. My analysis continues 17.♙h6 (17.gxh5 ♘c4 18.♖c1 ♘xe3 19.♖xe3 e5!± Black picks up a piece and White has insufficient play; 17.♖c1 ♘c4 18.♙h6 transposes to our main line.) 17...♘c4 18.♖c1 ♘a3†! 19.♖xa3 ♙xh6 20.gxh5 e5 White's knight is trapped and I don't think he gets enough for it: 21.hxg6 exd4 22.♞xd4 ♜e6±

The text move was seen in Kazantsev – An. Moiseenko, Voronezh 2013, when for some reason Black allowed the trade of bishops. Instead I think we should play:



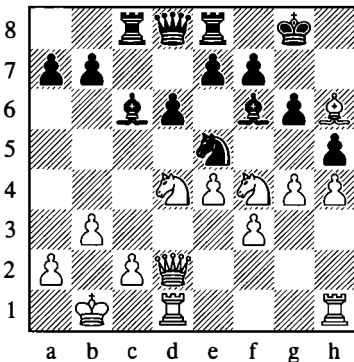
16...♙f6N

The position is complex so I've analysed it in some depth.

17.♙g5

17.g4 hxg4 18.h5 Here this isn't threatening, as after 18...gx3 19.♘f4 we have 19...g5!?. This is a typical defensive idea in Soltis-style structures.

17.♘f4 ♗c6 The bishop controls the d5-square and dissuades g2-g4 from White. The point is: 18.g4?



18...♘f3! 19.♘xf3 ♗xe4 and Black wins.

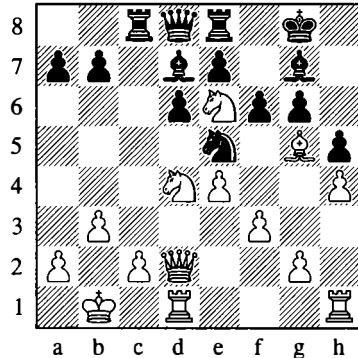
Likewise I think we should meet 17.♘c3 with: 17...♗c6 18.♗g5 (18.g4 ♖b6!?) 18...♗g7 19.f4 (19.g4? fails here too: 19...♘xf3! 20.♘xf3 ♗xc3 21.♗xc3 ♗xe4+) 19...♘g4 20.f5 ♗a5 Black is starting to take over.

17...♗g7

White is not forced to repeat the position, but if he plays on then Black is not worse, as the following lines show.

18.g4!?

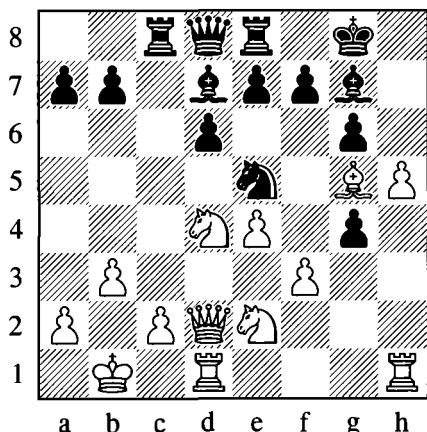
18.♘f4 f6! 19.♘fe6 (19.♘de6 ♘c4! is similar. 20.bxc4 ♖b6† 21.♗c1 ♗xe6 22.♘xe6 fxg5 23.♘xg7 ♗xg7 24.♗c3† ♗f7 25.hxg5 ♗c5 26.e5 ♗xc4 27.♗xc4† ♗xc4 28.exd6 exd6 29.♗xd6=)



19...♘c4! 20.♗c1 (20.bxc4 ♖b6† 21.♗c1 ♗xe6 22.♘xe6 transposes to 19.♘de6 above) 20...♗xe6 21.♘xe6 ♗a5? The knight may look good on e6, but it is White's only aggressively placed piece and is easy to remove. On the other hand, Black's attack is starting to look powerful.

18...hxg4 19.h5

This complicated position has definite similarities to the Soltis Variation. Therefore, I think the strongest move is one borrowed from the Soltis:



19...Rc5!

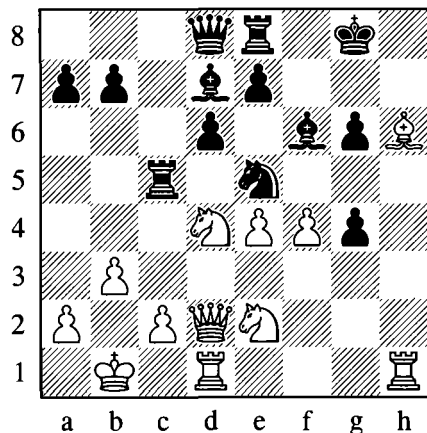
The rook is a good defender along the fifth rank and threatens to exchange queens on a5.

20.hxg6 fxg6 21.g6h6

21.f4 g7 holds Black's position together.

21...g6 22.f4

Here we have a choice:



22...d3

This is the more forcing move.

22...d7 is also possible. 23.f5 g5 24.Rh5 e6
The position is still highly complicated, but I don't think Black's chances are worse after 25.fxe6 gxe6 26.Rf1 g7.

23.dxf3

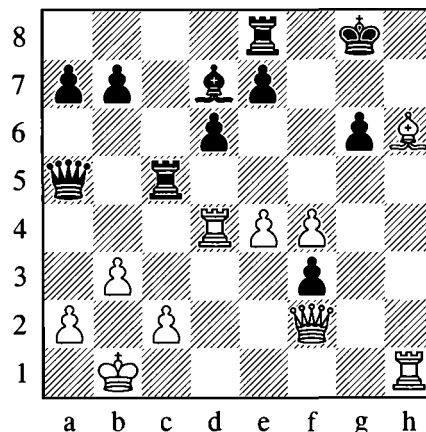
23.Wd3 dxd4 24.dxd4 e5 is about equal.

23...gxf3 24.d4 Wa5! 25.Wf2 gxd4

25...g4 is an interesting alternative.

26.Rxd4

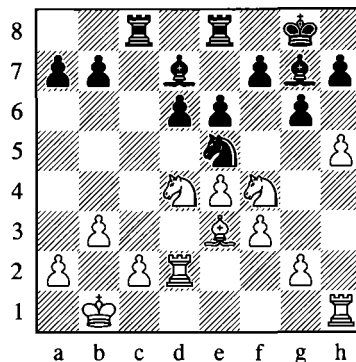
26.Wxd4 Wc3 27.Wf2 Rec8 28.Rh2 g4 looks fine.



26...Rec8 27.c4 Rh5 28.Wxf3 Rh1+
29.Wxh1 Wh5 30.Wxh5 gxh5=

D122) 15.h5 Wa5 16.dce2

An even younger Anish Giri tried 16.d5 Wxd2 17.Rxd2 e6 18.d4 in Giri – Pachta, Vienna 2008. I think Black's most accurate is:



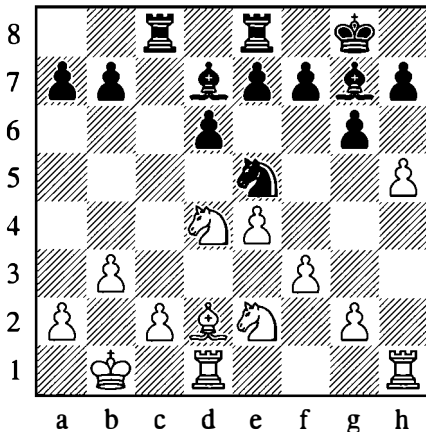
18...g5!N 19.d3 (19.dh3!?) f6 20.d2 g8

21.♖e2 a6 is an odd position but should be fine for Black) 19...♖xd3 20.♜xd3 h6 21.c4 a6 22.♖c2 ♗f8= Black can dismantle White's bind with both ...f5 and ...b5.

Meanwhile it's too late to try and keep the queens on the board. 16.♖de2? ♖c4! is a strong blow: 17.bxc4 ♜xc4 18.hxg6 hxg6 19.♗d4 ♞b4† 20.♙a1 ♗xd4 21.♖xd4 ♞xc3† 22.♞xc3 ♜xc3†

16...♞xd2 17.♗xd2

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



17...b5N

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

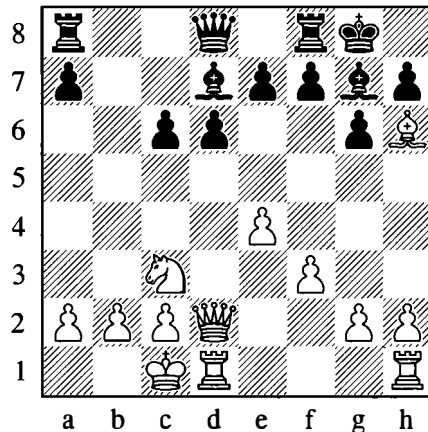
D2) 12.♖xc6

This exchange is normally a terrible idea for White. It allows Black to improve his structure, taking control of the d5-square (often the most tender square in Black's camp), and provides Black with a semi-open b-file on which to attack. However, this is probably White's critical test. The knight trade allows White to exchange the dark-squared bishops and so leaves our king without its main defenders.

12...bxc6 13.♗h6

The logical continuation.

13.♗d4 is the alternative way to try and trade. I quite like 13...f6!?N which is an intriguing way to keep the bishop pair. The game might continue 14.h4 ♞a5 when White's attempts to batter his way through don't seem convincing: 15.h5 gxh5 16.♗e3 ♜ab8 17.♞h4 ♗e8= Black can consolidate the kingside and still has attacking chances on the queenside.

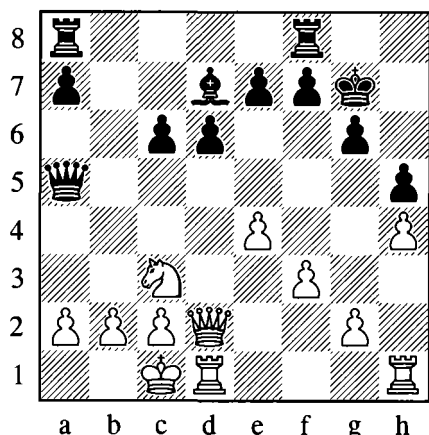


13...♞a5 14.♗xg7

Normally White's attack is more dangerous if he can advance his h-pawn before trading on g7 so we can't meet it with ...h5. However, here 14.h4N can be met with: 14...♗xc3 (14...♗f6!? is an interesting exchange sacrifice that also looks decent) 15.♞xc3 ♞xc3 16.bxc3 ♜fd8= Black is marginally better with his superior structure.

14...♙xg7 15.h4 h5

This is the tabiya of the variation. Our plan is simply to attack down the b-file. White's plans involve either trying to open up our kingside or reach a slightly better ending. The second plan can be achieved if White manages to play e4-e5 and forces us to cede the c5-square for his knight.

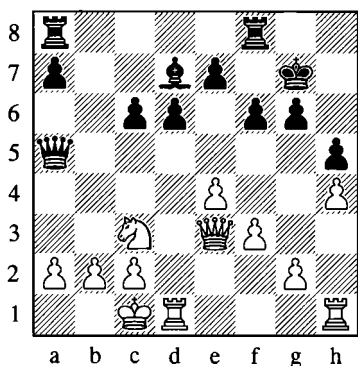


We should consider the immediate **D21)** **16.e5!** and also the new move **D22)** **16.g4!?**N.

16.♖g5 ♜xg5† 17.hxg5 This structure can sometimes be annoying in the Dragon as White can try to get pressure down the h-file, perhaps combined with e4-e5. I'd break free of any potential bind now with 17...f6 18.gxf6† ♜xf6= entering an equal ending.

16.♗d4† f6 17.♗e3

17.♞hg1 looked far too slow in Silva – Silveira, Salvador 2009. 17...♞ab8N 18.♜b1 ♙e6 19.g4 ♞b4 20.♗e3 hxg4 21.fxg4 ♗b6†



17...♞ab8 18.b3 ♗b6 19.♗d3

If White had taken with 19.♗xb6 I was intending to recapture with the rook, as I wasn't sure how to evaluate 19...axb6 20.a4. True, we have what looks like a nice

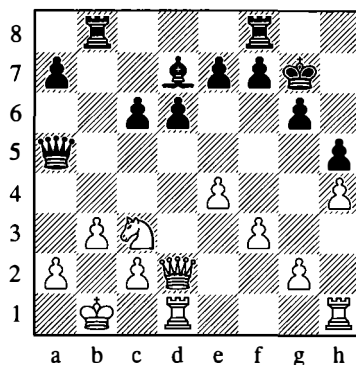
structure, and we're almost certainly not worse, but I worried about an ending with all the rooks traded where White has the potential to create a passed pawn with b3-b4 and a4-a5.

19...♗c5

I was at least equal in E. Paehtz – Jones, Douglas 2014.

16.♞he1 was seen in Smirin – Corrales Jimenez, Rockville 2013. I would start to get some counterplay down the b-file with: 16...♞ab8N 17.♜b1 (17.e5 d5† reaches the structure White is aiming for, but now he has no way to trade queens and thus no way to get his knight to c5.) 17...♞b4 18.b3 ♞fb8=

16.♜b1 ♞ab8 17.b3 as played in F. Meyer – Zeldin, Ruhrgebiet 2004, was hardly threatening. I'd probably take my time and play:



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

16.♞dg1 ♞h8 17.g4

This was Passeier – A. Becker, Germany 2007. I would start our queenside counterplay with:

17...♞ab8N

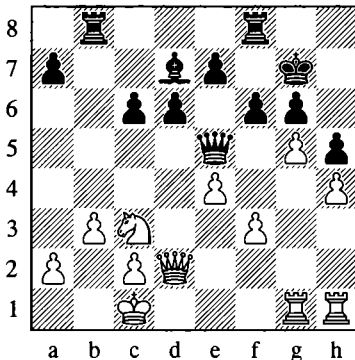
Our kingside looks solid enough.

18.♖d4†

18.gxh5 ♖xh5 19.♞g5 ♜xg5 (or 19...♜b4!?)
20.♞xh5 ♜xb2† 21.♔d1 ♜a1† 22.♔e2
♜xh1 23.♞h6† ♔f6 which doesn't give
White more than a perpetual) 20.♞xg5
♞xg5 21.hxg5 f6=

18...f6 19.g5 ♞h8 20.b3 ♜e5 21.♞d2

21.♜xa7 is an extremely risky pawn grab:
21...♜xc3 22.♞xd7 ♜a1† 23.♔d2 ♞d4†
24.♔e2 f5 White's position looks dangerous.



21...fxg5 22.♞xg5 ♜f4 23.♞hg1 ♔h7!

Black is fine, as 24.♞xg6 can be met with
24...♔g4!

D21) 16.e5!?

Probably White's trickiest attempt.

16...d5

16...♜xe5?! 17.♞he1 ♜f6 18.♔e4 would be
awkward for us.

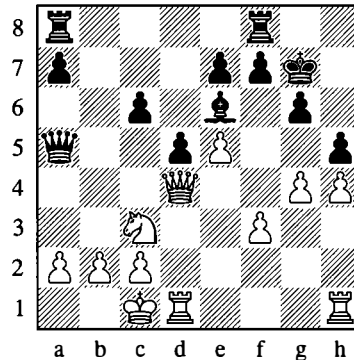
17.♞g5N

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

17.g4 ♞h8 18.♞g5 ♔f8 A typical Dragon
rerouting. Our h8-rook does a good job of
slowing White's attack and we can start playing
on the queenside. One sample line could be:
19.♞d4 ♞b8 20.a3 (20.♞f4 ♔e8 I don't see
how White gets any further – his queen isn't

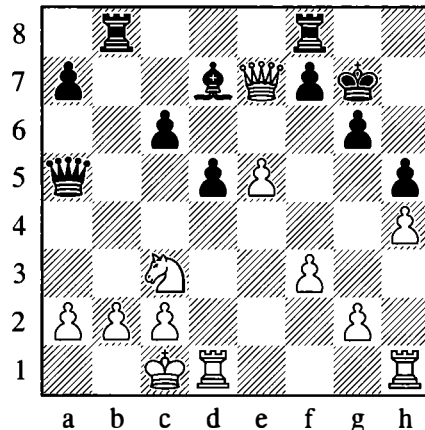
actually that usefully placed) 20...♔e6 21.♞a4
♜b6 22.♞b4 ♜c7 23.♔e2 ♞xb4 24.axb4 ♜b6
25.♞f4 ♔e8+ Black is starting to outplay
White, who is rather planless.

17.♞d4 ♔e6 18.g4? In Memmel – Simon,
Schweinfurt 2013, Black should have played:



18...c5!N 19.♜a4 ♜xa4 20.♔xa4 hxg4 21.fxg4
(21.♔xc5 gxf3+) 21...♔xg4 22.♞dgl (22.♞xd5
♔f3+ is the problem) 22...♔f5+

17...♞ab8 18.♜xc7



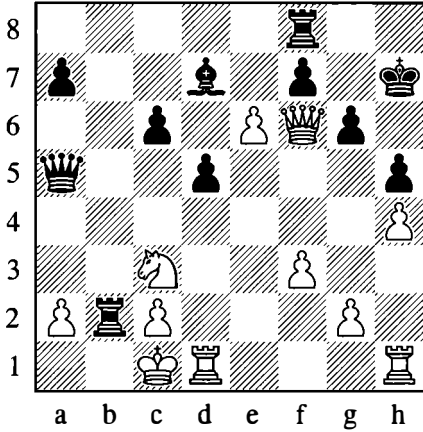
18...♞xb2! 19.♞f6†

19.♔xb2? ♞b8† 20.♔c1 ♜xc3 21.♞xd7
♞b2 22.♞d2 ♞xa2+

19...♔h7 20.e6!

20.♔xb2?! is still too early: 20...♜b4† 21.♔c1

♖xc3 22.g4 c5 23.♗f4 (23.gxh5 ♕f5–+) 23...d4



20...d4! 21.♗xd4

21.exd7?? ♜xc2 22.♕xc2 ♖xc3† 23.♕b1 ♜b8#, 21.♜xd4?? ♖xc3–+

21...♖a3 22.♖a4

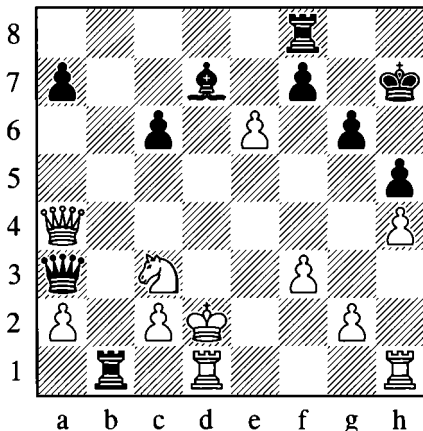
22.♕b1! ♜xb1† 23.♕xb1 ♕xe6 24.c4 ♜b8† 25.♕a1 ♕xc4 26.♞d2 ♜b4 27.♞b2 ♜a4 28.♖d2 ♕d5– White is the exchange for a pawn up but the d5-bishop dominates.

22...♜b1†

A pretty sacrifice that White should probably decline.

23.♕d2

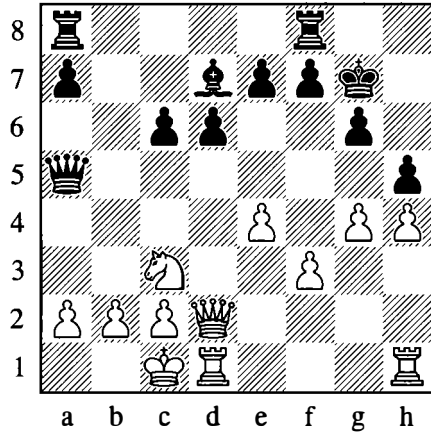
23.♕xb1 ♜b8† 24.♖b3 ♜xb3† 25.axb3 ♕xe6–



23...♜xd1† 24.♜xd1 ♖xa4 25.♕xa4 ♕xe6= With a level ending.

D22) 16.g4!N

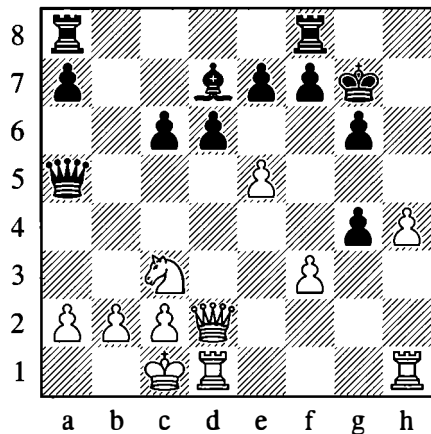
This hasn't been played but feels like White's most ambitious try.



16...hxg4

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

D221) 17.e5!?



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

17...gxf3

17...♖xe5 might be playable here, but it still feels a bit risky after 18.♗de1 ♜f6 19.h5 (or 19.♖e4) 19...♗h8 20.fxg4 (20.♖e4 ♜e5) 20...♗xg4 21.h6† ♗g8. My engine informs me it's all a draw though.

18.exd6

18.h5 ♜xe5 19.hxg6

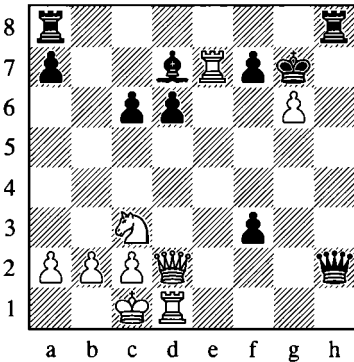
After 19.♗de1 ♜f5 20.hxg6 ♗h8 21.♗hf1 e5!? 22.♖xd6 ♜f4† 23.♗b1 ♗h3 our f3-pawn suddenly becomes powerful, although the machine shows it's still equal with accurate play.

19...♗h8 20.♗he1 ♜h2!

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

21.♗xe7

21.♖d4†?! e5! 22.♖xd6 f2 is excellent for Black.



21...♖xd2† 22.♗xd2

22.♗xd2 ♗h1† 23.♗d1 ♗xd1† 24.♖d1 ♗e6̄

22...♗e6̄

Black has the better chances in the ending.

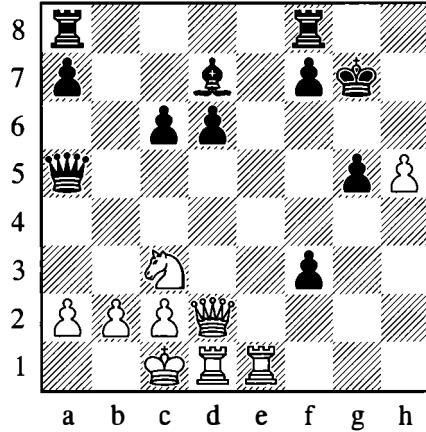
18...exd6 19.h5 g5!

A typical response blocking up the kingside.

20.♗he1

20.♗hg1 f6̄

20.♖xd6 ♗e6 21.♖e4 ♜f5 22.♖g3 ♜f4† would again get those queens off the board.

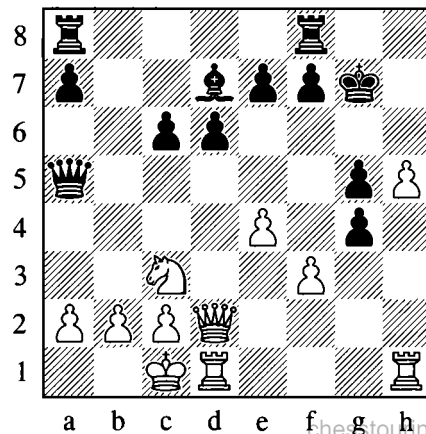


20...♗e6 21.♖d4† ♗h7 22.h6 ♗g8 23.♖e4 ♜f5 24.♖f6† ♗xh6 25.♖xg8† ♗xg8 26.♖xd6 ♗g6

We have successfully fought off White's attack and can look forward to the rest of the game with confidence. Those g- and f-pawns do a great job defending our king as well as threatening to promote.

D222) 17.h5 g5!

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



18.h6†

18.f4? gxf4 19.♖xf4 f6‡ doesn't get anywhere.

18.♗dg1 can be met with 18...♔h6 19.fxg4 ♗e5!‡. We'll follow up with ...f6; our king is completely safe and we can play on the queenside without risk.

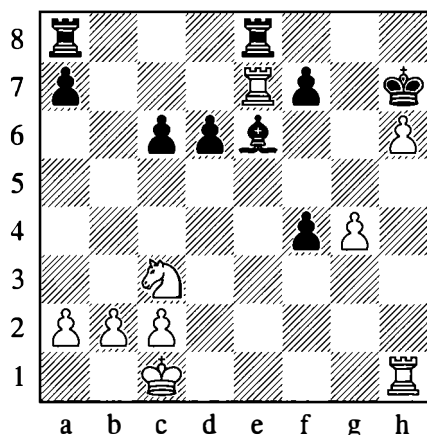
18...♔h7 19.e5!

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

19.fxg4 ♗e5 is fairly similar to the position after 18.♗dg1. Our plan doesn't change.

19...♗xe5 20.♗de1 ♗f4 21.♗xf4 gxf4 22.♗xe7 ♗e6 23.fxg4 ♗fe8

23...d5!?

**24.♗xe8 ♗xe8 25.♗e4 ♗d8**

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

Conclusion

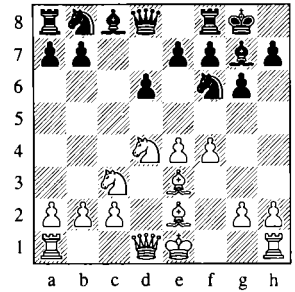
The Classical-Yugoslav Attack Hybrid with ♗e2 and ♗e3 is an important and popular line. After my recommendation of 9...♗g4 the positions become sharp and should be looked at carefully. White has two main tries: 12.h4 and 12.♗xc6.

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

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

Chapter 13

Classical Variation



Rabinovich Attack

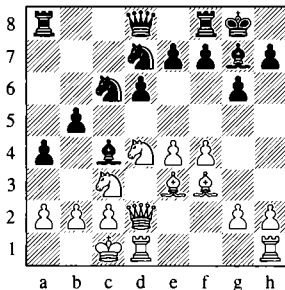
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 g6 6.♙e2 ♙g7 7.♙e3 0-0 8.f4

8...♗c6

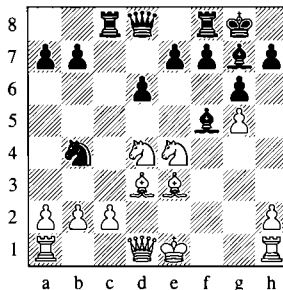
A) 9.♙d2	207
B) 9.♗b3 ♙e6	208
B1) 10.♙f3	208
B2) 10.g4 ♖c8	209
B21) 11.h4?!	210
B22) 11.f5 ♙d7	211
B221) 12.0-0	211
B222) 12.g5	212
B23) 11.0-0 ♗a5 12.f5 ♙c4	213
B231) 13.♙d3	215
B232) 13.♗xa5	215
B233) 13.♙xa7	216
B24) 11.g5 ♗d7	217
B241) 12.♙d2	218
B242) 12.h4	219

B1) note to 12.a4



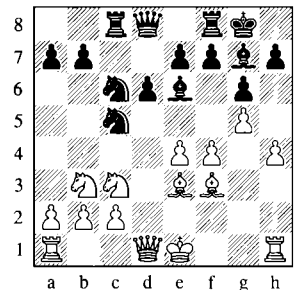
15...♗xd4N

B222) after 15.♗d4



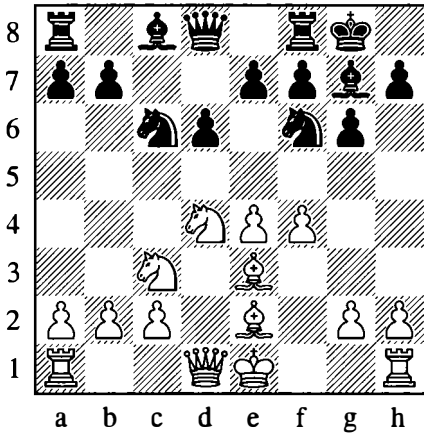
15...d5!N

B242) after 13.♙f3



13...b5!N

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6
5.♗c3 g6 6.♙e2 ♙g7 7.♙e3 0–0 8.f4 ♘c6



We should check A) 9.♙d2 before moving on to the more popular B) 9.♗b3.

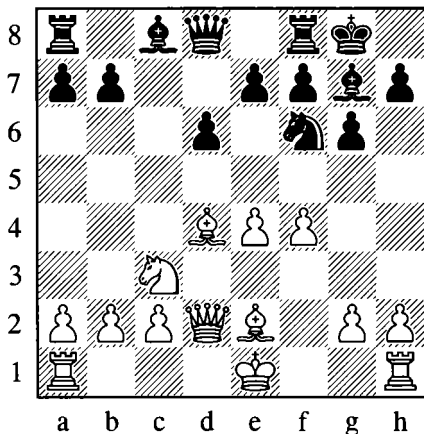
9.0–0 would transpose to variation A of Chapter 8.

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

A) 9.♙d2

This seems odd in conjunction with f2-f4 as now the g4-square feels vulnerable. We can immediately neutralize White's set-up:

9...♗xd4 10.♙xd4



10...e5!

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

11.fxe5

11.♙e3 ♗g4!♣N

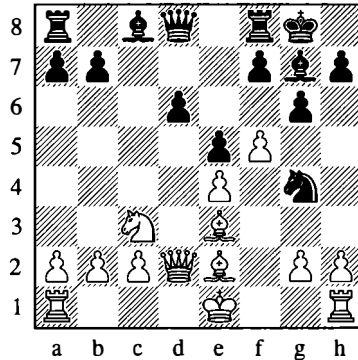
I think this is the most accurate. White will have insufficient play for the loss of the bishop pair.

11...exf4 is also a good option. 12.♙xf4?! (White has to come up with the unplayed 12.♙d4N to try and keep the balance) 12...♙e8♣ White is dropping a pawn.

12.f5

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

12.♙xg4 exf4!♣ is an important intermezzo to remember.



12...♗xe3 13.♙xe3 gxf5 14.0–0–0 fxe4 15.♙xe4

15.♗xe4 d5♣

15...♙e6 16.♙c4 ♙c8♣

We can defend with ...♙g5-g6 if necessary. White has some compensation due to the outpost on d5 but it's not enough.

11.♙f2

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

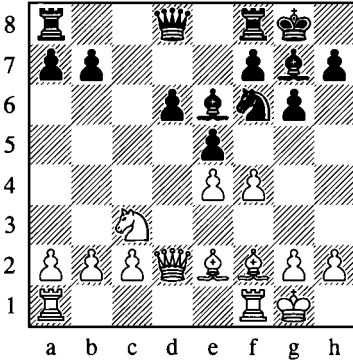
11...♙e6

11...♙h6!♣ is also interesting but a lot sharper.

11...♘g4?! would be a mistake here: we can't meet 12.♙xg4 with 12...exf4 as it no longer hits the dark-squared bishop, and 12...♙xg4 13.f5! leaves our bishop perilously short of squares.

12.0-0

This position was agreed drawn in Pacl – Poloch, Ostrava 1981. I would have played on with:

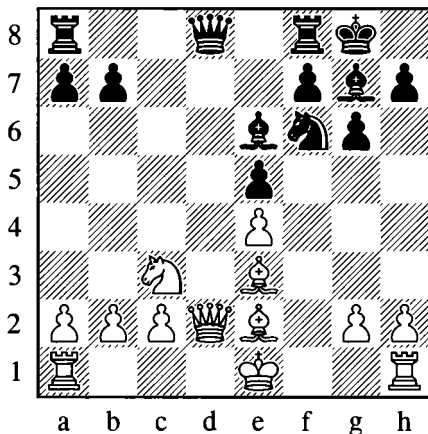


12...d5N 13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.♘xd5 ♙xd5 15.♖ad1 ♙c6

Black has the better side of equality.

11...dxe5 12.♙e3 ♙e6

12...♞xd2† 13.♙xd2 ♙e6= as seen in B. Socko – Beliavsky, Ohrid 2001, was also fine, but I think it is slightly more accurate to encourage White to make the trade.



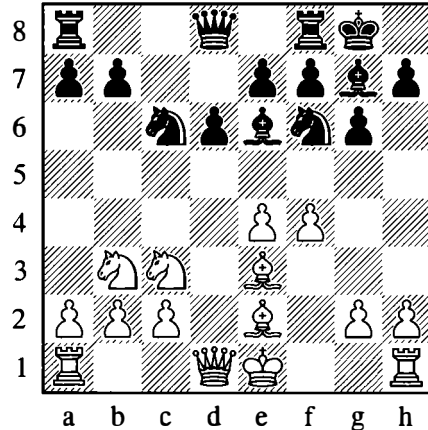
13.♞xd8

White has nothing better, as 13.0-0-0 ♞a5! looks rather uncomfortable for him.

13...♞fxd8 14.0-0 h6 15.♖ad1 a6=

Gruber – Biriescu, Wattens 1999.

B) 9.♘b3 ♙e6



White has occasionally played B1) 10.♙f3, but it is usual to continue aggressively with B2) 10.g4, which is the real starting position for the Rabinovich Attack.

10.0-0 would simply transpose to Chapter 9.

B1) 10.♙f3

This is unusual before castling.

10...♙c4

A critical try.

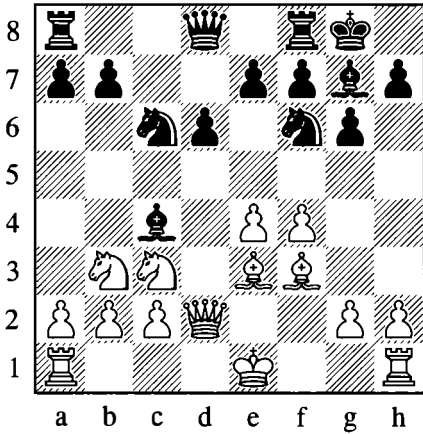
10...♘d7?N is an interesting idea that Houdini often pops up with in these structures. The aim is simply to reroute the knight round to c4: 11.0-0 ♘b6 12.♞c1 ♘c4 13.♙f2 ♞d7=

11.♞d2

11.♘d5 e5! Ripping open White's position.

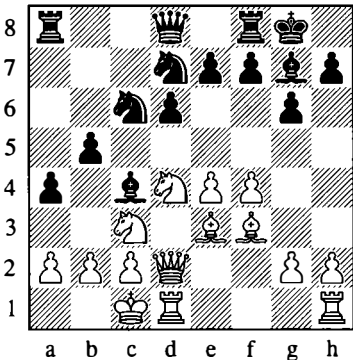
12.♖d2 ♕xd5 13.exd5 exf4 14.♕xf4 ♜e8†
 White was forced to relinquish castling rights and Black should have been winning in Couso – Erdogan, Kallithea 2002.

11.♖d2 ♕a6 leaves White struggling to castle in either direction.



11...a5 12.a4

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



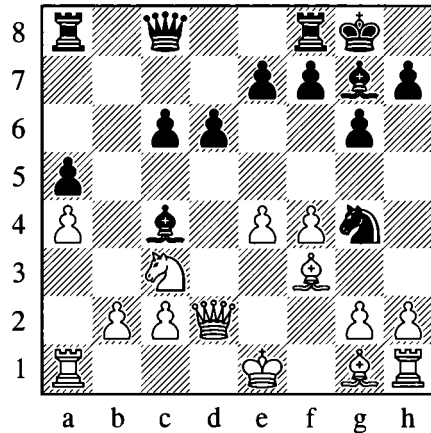
This was Ruskjar – H. Kristensen, Norresundby 1992. Black got carried away with 15...b4?!, but instead the simple 15...♖xd4N 16.♕xd4 e5!† would leave him with a fantastic position.

After 12.♖d5 ♖d7 it is surprisingly difficult for White to defend the b2-pawn, Sebastian – Berndt, Hamburg 1997.

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

12...♜c8 13.♖d4 ♖g4 14.♖xc6 bxc6 15.♕g1

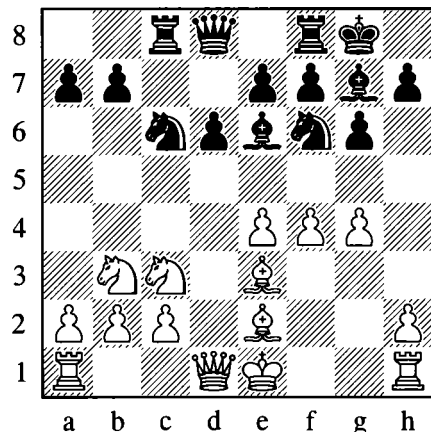
Inarkiev – Motylev, Moscow 2002. I like the look of:



15...♠N

Black has a strong initiative.

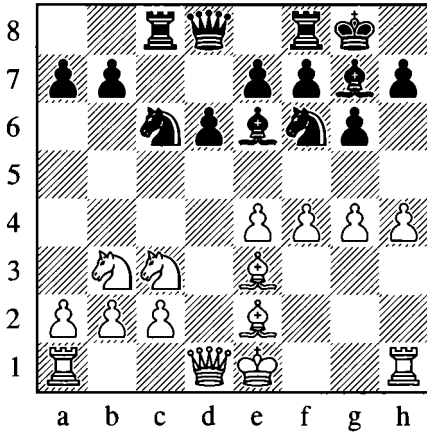
B2) 10.g4 ♜c8



White has tried four moves in this position and we will check them all: **B21) 11.h4?!**, **B22) 11.f5**, **B23) 11.0-0** and **B24) 11.g5**.

B21) 11.h4?!

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



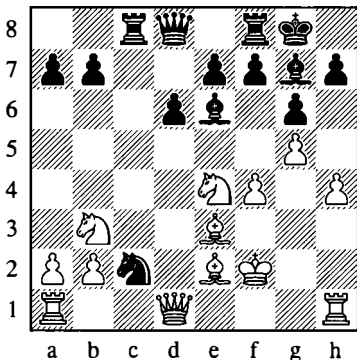
11...d4?!

Black has already set up a lot of threats.

11...b5N also looks promising, for example: 12.g5 d4 13. e4 g4 14.f5 b4 15. d2 e2 16. d7 d4 17. d5 e5

12.a3

12.g5 d4! We've already seen this idea that Black prepared with his last. White's position collapses. 13. d4 d4 14. f2



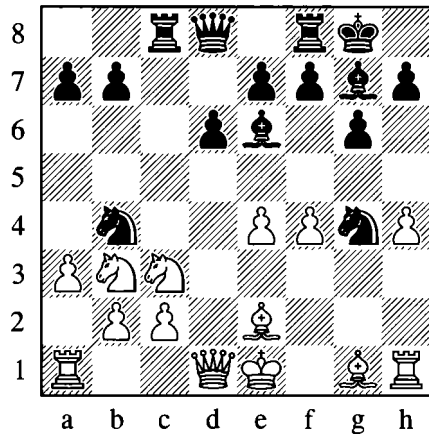
We have a lot of strong options, but the most forcing looks to be: 14... e3 15. axb3 d5! 16. d3 d4 17. e4 d4 18. d2 d3 19. e3 e4 20. f2 e3 21. d4 e3 Black has a large material advantage.

12.0-0 d4! This time we'll take the other pawn. 13. e4 d4 14. e4 d4 15. d2 d3 16. d2 d3 17. e3 e4 18. f2 e3 19. d2 d3 20. e3 e4 21. d4 e3 Black has a large material advantage.

12...d4! 13. e4!

13. e4? loses immediately: 13... e4 14. e4 d4 15. d2 d3 16. d2 d3 17. e3 e4 18. f2 e3 19. d2 d3 20. e3 e4 21. d4 e3 Black has a large material advantage.

13. d4 d4 14. d4 d4 With two knights hanging it looks like we might be in trouble, but we have a clever reply: 14... d3 15. d2 d3 16. d2 d3 17. e3 e4 18. f2 e3 19. d2 d3 20. e3 e4 21. d4 e3 Black has a large material advantage.



13... e3! 14. bxc3

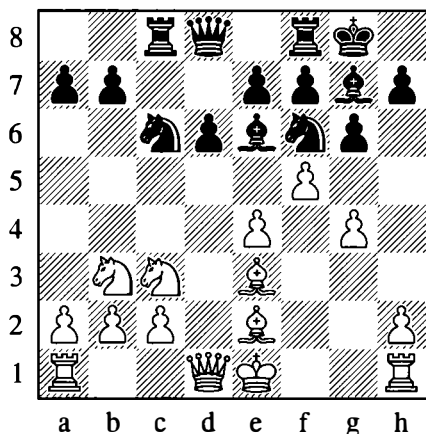
14. axb4 d3+

14... e3+ 15. f1 d6 16. axb4 e4 17. e4 d4

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

B22) 11.f5

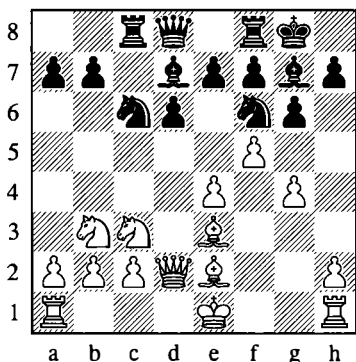
I suppose it makes sense to gain a tempo on the e6-bishop, but giving away control of the e5-square is risky.



11...♗d7

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

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



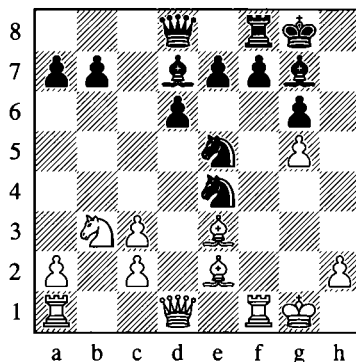
12...b5! White cannot hold on to both his g4- and e4-pawns and so his position will crumble. 13.g5 (13.a3 a5 hardly changes anything) 13...b4 14.gxf6 bxc3 15.bxc3 ♖xf6† Krutsky – Horak, Kouty nad Desnou 2014.

B221) 12.0-0

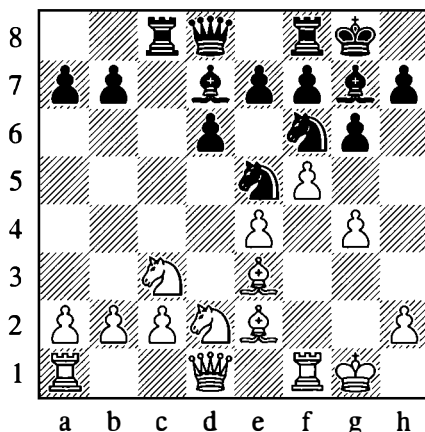
This feels like the strangest time of all to switch plans, having just ceded the e5-square.

12...♖e5 13.♘d2

13.g5? has been White's most common move but it just loses. 13...♞xc3! 14.bxc3 (14.gxf6 ♜xe3 15.fxg7 ♜xg7+ is no better) 14...♘xe4 15.fxg6 hxg6 White's position has already collapsed. This position has been reached eleven times, with White's many different attempts garnering just half a point. One example continued:



16.♞e1 ♘xc3 17.♗d4 ♘xe2† 18.♞xe2 ♞c8 19.♟f4 ♗c6 20.♞f1 ♘f3† 21.♜f2 ♘xd4 22.♘xd4 ♗d5 23.♞b5 ♗xd4† 24.♞xd4 ♞f5† 0-1 Fuglsang – Petursson, Copenhagen 1997.

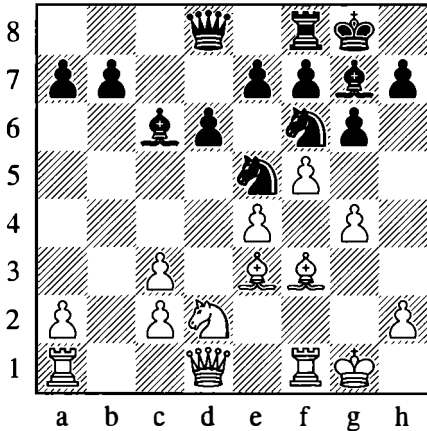


13...♖xc3!?

This exchange sacrifice is still promising for Black.

14.bxc3 ♖c6 15.♗f3

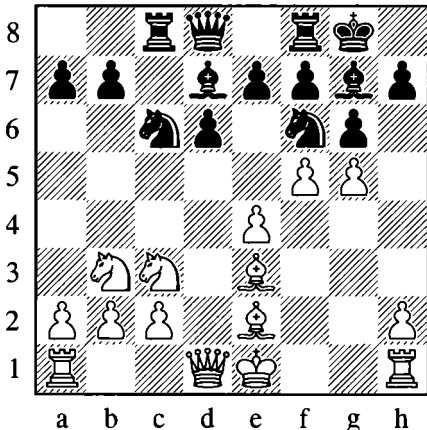
After 15.♗d4 ♜xe4 16.♜xe4 ♖xe4 17.♗d3 ♗d5 Black had good compensation, but following 18.g5? gxf5! 19.♗xf5 e6 he was winning. White tried 20.♗e3, to defend both the g5-pawn and indirectly defend the bishop on f5, but 20...♜c4 21.♗f4 ♖b6† 22.♞f2 ♜e3 forced resignation in Kotsur – Al. Sokolov, Nizhnij Novgorod 1998.



15...d5†

Black will regain at least a pawn for the exchange and White's position is extremely loose. Black has scored 5/6 from this position.

B222) 12.g5



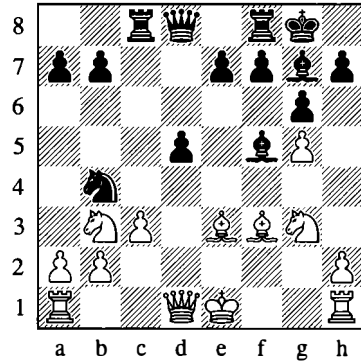
This has been played in virtually all the games to reach this position, but Black has done nothing to justify White's aggression.

12...♜xe4!

This has only been played once, but it looks a strong piece sacrifice to me. White players who choose this variation obviously want to attack, so it makes sense to wrest the initiative away from them.

13.♜xe4 ♗xf5 14.♗d3

14.♗f3N d5 (14...♗xb2 15.♞b1 ♗g7 is also better for Black. We have three pawns for the piece and White's king will struggle to find safety.) 15.♜g3 ♜b4 16.c3



16...♜c2† 17.♜f2 ♜xe3 18.♜xe3 ♖b6† 19.♜e2 ♗d7† Black's attack is extremely dangerous.

14...♜b4!

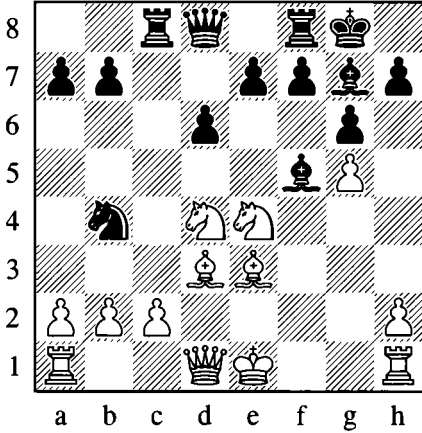
Strongest, although 14...♗xb2N is playable here too.

15.♜d4

15.0-0N d5 16.♜ec5 (16.♜f6†!?) This attempt to bail out is my engine's suggestion: 16...exf6 17.♗xf5 gxf5 18.c3 ♞e8! 19.♗d4 ♜c6 White has no real compensation for his material deficit.) 16...♗h3 17.♞f2 b6 18.♜a6 ♜xd3 19.cxd3 d4 20.♗d2 ♖d7† White's pieces are completely scattered and his king lacks defenders.

15.♖c3N ♘xd3† 16.cxd3 ♙xc3† 17.bxc3 ♚xc3 18.0-0 ♚xd3 19.♚e2 ♚d7+ The four pawns are worth more than the knight here.

Our main line has followed Schuh – Imhof, Austria 1998. Here I like:



15...d5!N

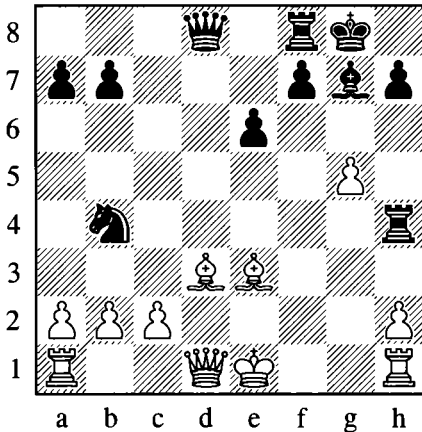
Black looks to be winning.

16.♖xf5

16.♖f2 ♙xd3 17.♖xd3 ♙xd4! regains the piece after 18.♖xb4 ♙xe3 or 18.♙xd4 ♖xc2†.

16...dxe4 17.♙xe4 gxf5 18.♙xf5 e6 19.♙e4 ♚c4 20.♙d3 ♚h4

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

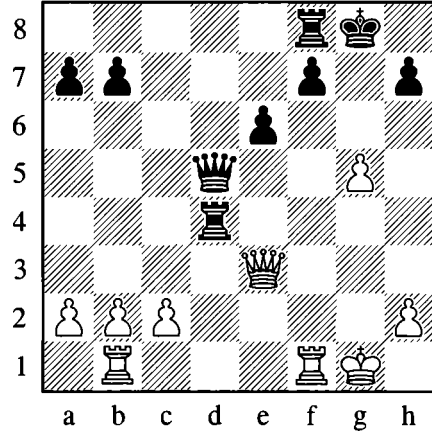


21.♚b1 ♙d4 22.♙xd4 ♖xd3† 23.♚xd3 ♚xd4 24.♚e3 ♚d5

White has no way to hold on to his queen:

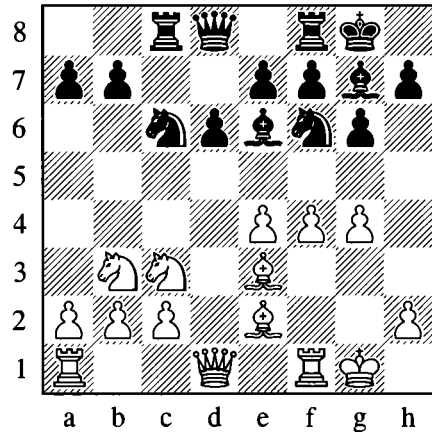
25.0-0

25.♚g1 ♚e4 wins immediately.



25...♚g4† 26.♖f2 ♚g2† 27.♖e1 ♚e4+†

B23) 11.0-0



Castling feels odd after White's previous; but it may actually be his best try.

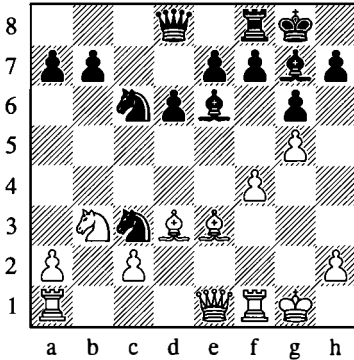
11...♖a5

Black's most common response. It may look like the move is simply preparing ...♖c4, and

that is one idea, but we are also lining up the typical exchange sacrifice ... ♞xc3 .

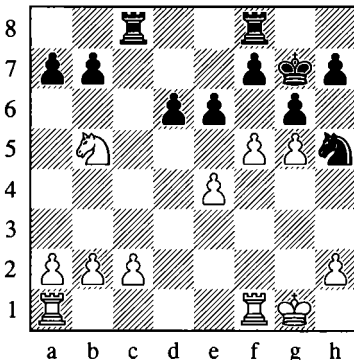
12.f5

12.g5?! walks into the sacrifice. 12... ♞xc3 ! 13.bxc3 ♜xe4 14. ♙d3 ♜xc3 15. ♞e1 ♜c6 Black already has a large advantage and White had to throw in the towel only a few moves later:



16.f5?! gxf5 17. ♙xf5 ♙xf5 18. ♞xf5 ♞d7 19. ♞f1 ♜e2 ! 20. ♜h1 ♙xa1 21. ♜xa1 ♞e6 0-1 Yu Shaoteng – Wang Zili, Beijing 1997.

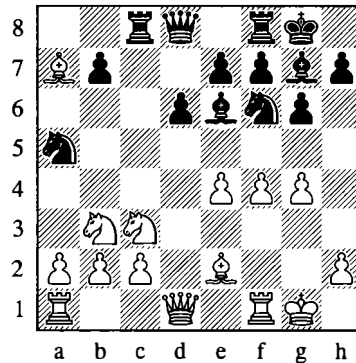
12. ♙d4 This defends against ... ♞xc3 and means that ... ♜c4 won't come with tempo. Therefore Black's best is probably: 12... ♙c4 (White's approach also has a practical problem – after 12... ♜c6 his best is to return the bishop to e3) A game that reached this position continued 13.g5 ♙xe2 14. ♞xe2 ♜h5 15. ♙xg7 ♜xg7 16.f5 e6 17. ♜xa5 ♞xa5 18. ♞b5 ♞xb5 19. ♜xb5 Paakkonen – Jouhki, Joensuu 1997.



19... exf5 N 20. exf5 ♞xc2 21. ♜xd6 ♞xb2 Black has the better chances in the ending with his extra pawn.

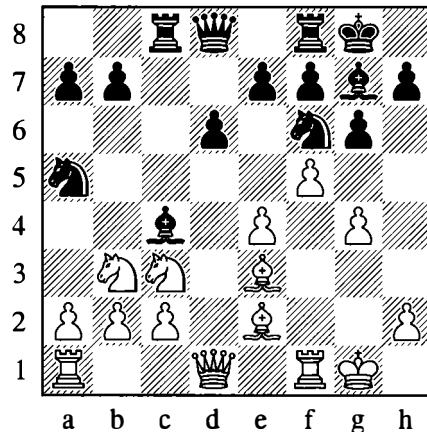
12.e5 ♜e8 13. exd6 ♜xd6 wasn't an inspiring exchange of pawns for White in Alarcon – Robbiano Taboada, Lima 1993. Without an e-pawn White will struggle to generate any attacking chances, so the g- and f-pawns are simply misplaced.

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



12... ♞xc3 !N 13.bxc3 ♜xe4 14. ♙d4 ♜xc3 15. ♙xc3 ♙xc3 With great compensation for the exchange.

12... ♙c4



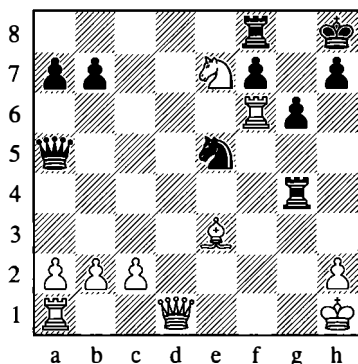
Again White has a choice of moves: **B231) 13.♙d3**, **B232) 13.♘xa5** and **B233) 13.♙xa7**.

13.♙d4 ♗xe2 14.♞xe2 ♖c6 15.♙e3 ♜d7 was pleasant for Black in Simon – Za. Varga, Gyor 1991. White really needs to crash through immediately or his chronic dark square weaknesses will cost him.

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

B231) 13.♙d3 ♜d7

13...d5!?N is also interesting. The game seems to burn out to a roughly equal position after some crazy complications. 14.e5 ♜d7 15.♜xa5 ♞xa5 16.♙xc4 ♞xc4 17.♜xd5 ♜xe5 18.♜xe7 ♜h8 19.f6 ♞xg4 20.♜h1 ♙xf6 21.♞xf6

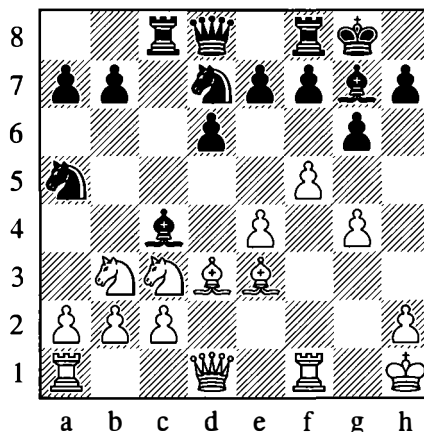


21...♞b4! The threat of 22...♞e4 forces White to give back the piece: 22.♜xg6 ♜xg6 23.♞d5 ♞e7=

14.♜h1

14.♙xa7 is probably critical, but 14...b5 15.♙e3 ♜e5 gives Black great compensation. For example: 16.♞e2 b4 17.♜d5 ♙xd5 18.exd5 ♜ac4 19.♙d4 ♜xd3 20.cxd3 ♙xd4 21.♜xd4 ♞b6

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

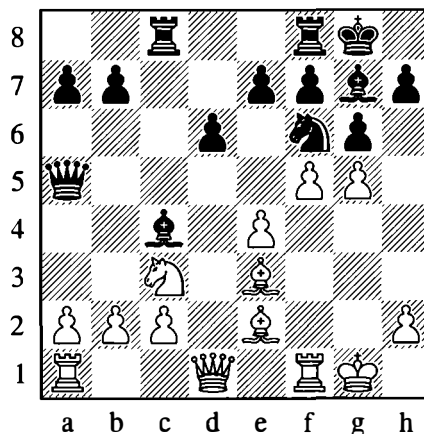


14...a6N

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

B232) 13.♜xa5 ♞xa5 14.g5

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



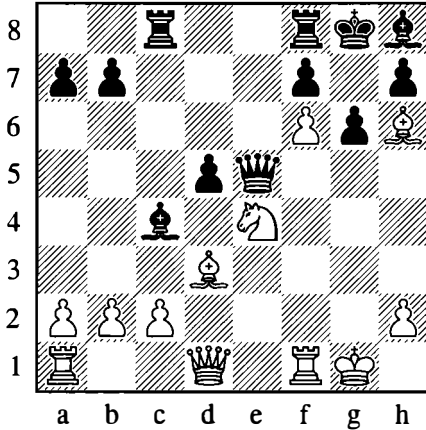
14...♜xe4! 15.♜xe4 ♞e5 16.♙d3 d5

Thanks to the pin we'll regain the piece with an excellent position. White's only way to try and complicate is as follows:

17.f6N

Black won quickly after 17.fxg6 hxg6 in Gatto – Lanz Calavia, corr. 1988.

17...exf6 18.gxf6 ♖h8 19.♖h6



19...dxe4 20.♖xc4 ♜fd8!

Black still regains the piece.

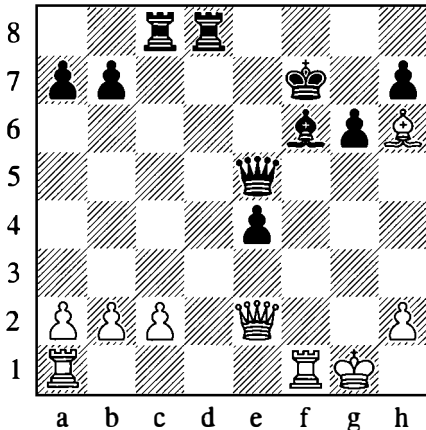
21.♖xf7†

21.♞e2 ♞d4††

21...♗f7 22.♞e2 ♖xf6

22...♞c6† is a safe option.

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

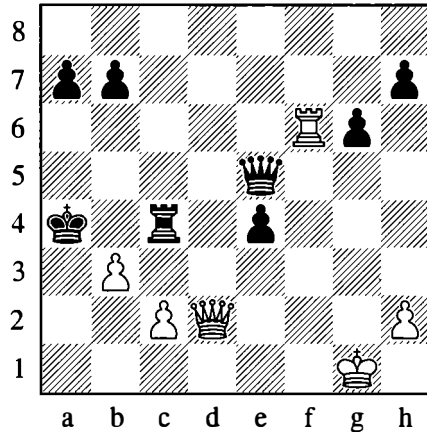


23.♞xf6†! ♗xf6 24.♞f1† ♗e6 25.♞g4† ♗d5†

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

26.♖g5 ♗c6 27.♞f6† ♗b5! 28.♞e2† ♞c4 29.a4† ♗a5! 30.♖d2† ♞xd2 31.♞xd2† ♗xa4 32.b3†

32.♞d7† ♗a5 33.♞d2† ♞b4 and White runs out of checks.



32...♗a3 33.♞c1† ♗b4

The computer informs me that 33...♗a2! is even stronger, as 34.♞f1 ♞c5† 35.♗h1 ♞xc2 36.♞a1† ♗xb3 37.♞b1† ♗c4 is apparently completely winning for Black. White has no way to generate threats against our nomadic king.

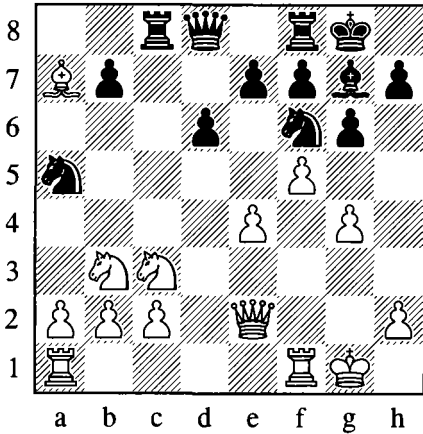
34.♞d2† ♞c3 35.♞d6† ♞c5

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

B233) 13.♖xa7

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

13...♖xe2 14.♞xe2



14...d7!N

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

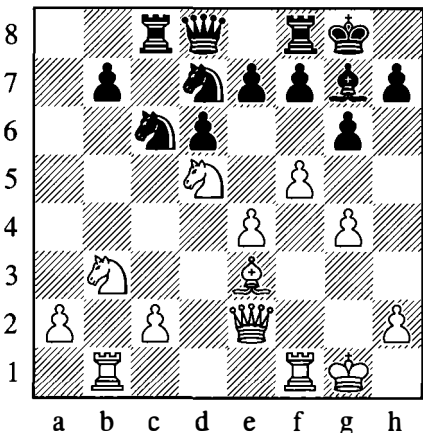
15. d5

15. d4?! doesn't really work: 15...xb3 16. xg7 xa1 17. xf8 xf8 18. f2 e5

15. d1 defends the b2-pawn but is rather passive. 15...b6 16. xa5 c7! 17. b3 xa7 Black's powerful bishop and strong outpost on e5, coupled with White's loose kingside, surely provide more than enough compensation for the pawn.

15...c6 16. c3 xb2 17. a1 g7

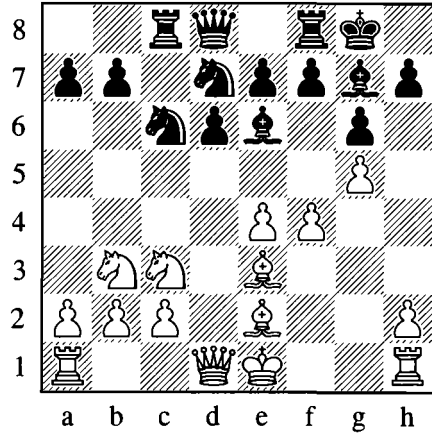
White's attack may look threatening, but we can defuse it with a well-timed ...e6, for example:



18.g5 e6! 19.f6 exd5 20.fxg7 xg7 21.exd5 ce5

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

B24) 11.g5 d7



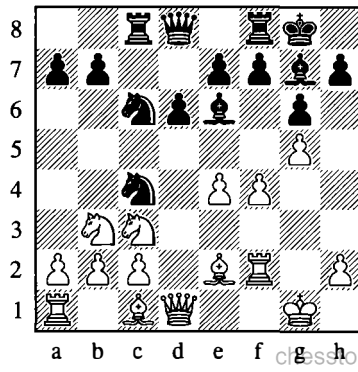
White chooses between B241) 12. d2 and B242) 12. h4 in almost equal measure according to my database.

12.0-0

This feels to me as though White has suddenly got cold feet. As I observed earlier, the plan of ...d7-b6-c4 is an interesting one in these structures, so Black's normal response should come as no surprise:

12...b6 13.f5

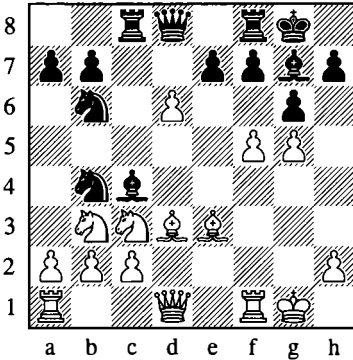
White has tried 13. f2, attempting to keep his position together, but Black continues: 13...c4 14. c1



14...b5! 15.f5 ♔d7 16.♞xb5 ♞xb2 17.♞f1
♙e5⌘ Black was dominating in Lastin –
Yakovich, Elista 1995.

13...♙c4 14.♙d3 d5! 15.exd5 ♞b4 16.d6

This was all seen in Jarvenpaa – Kosmo,
Helsinki 2008, where Black's most accurate
continuation would have been:



16...♞d4d5!N 17.♞xd5 ♞xd5 18.♙f2 ♞xd6⌘
Black holds a clear advantage.

Last summer I happened to reach this
position again and was surprised by 12.♞d4.
I continued: 12...♞c5 (12...♞b6N 13.♞xe6
♞xe3 14.♞xf8 ♙xc3† 15.bxc3 ♞xc3† 16.♞f2
♞c5⌘ was another tempting option) 13.♞xc6
(13.♞xe6 fxe6 was my intention, putting
pressure on the f4-pawn) 13...♙xc3† 14.bxc3
♞xc6 15.f5 gxf5 16.exf5 ♙xf5 17.0–0 ♞c8
18.♞e1 ♙xc2 19.♞h4 ♞e6 20.♙f3 ♞e4 White
didn't have much of an attack for the two
pawns in Hinrichs – Jones, Helsingor 2014.

B241) 12.♞d2 ♞c5!

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

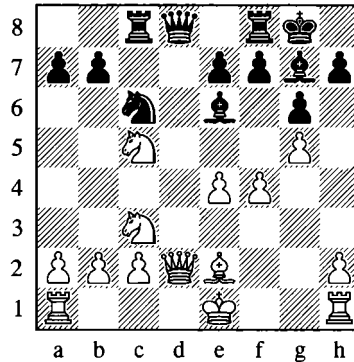
13.♙f3

13.♞xc5N dxc5 14.♞xd8 (14.♙xc5 ♞a5!)
14...♙fxd8 15.♙xc5 ♞d4 is given by Chris
Ward, who comments: "There would be
serious pressure against White's queenside."

In fact, White also has to watch out to keep his
f4-pawn protected. With an uncontested dark-
squared bishop, Black stands better.

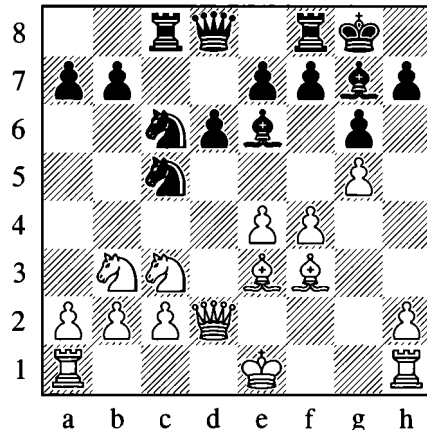
13.♞d4 Moving the knight again feels
extremely unnatural. 13...♞a5! Black already
has a large advantage, but after 14.a3?
♞xd4! 15.b4 (or 15.♙xd4 ♞xe4! 16.♞xe4
♞xd2† 17.♞xd2 ♙xd4–+) 15...♞xe2! he was
completely winning in Maly – Van Asseldonk,
Liberec 2009.

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



14...♙d4! 15.♞xe6 ♙f2† 16.♞d1 fxe6 17.♙c4
♞xd2† 18.♞xd2 ♞cd8† 19.♞e2 ♙xf4⌘

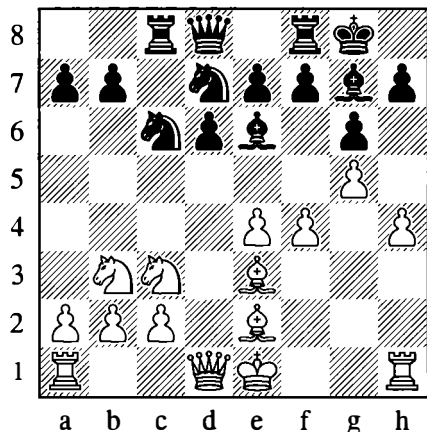
The text was played in Yakovich – Grigoryan,
Moscow 2011. I recommend:



13...b5!N

Black has a dangerous initiative.

B242) 12.h4



12...d5!

When I had this position I remembered my idea was to play ...d5 at some point, but I prefaced it with the weaker 12...b4.

13.f3

13.d4?! was played in Cueto Chajtur – Silva Lillo, Santiago 1990. The same move was bad after 12.d2 and even worse here. After 13...b6!N White would have to drop his knight back again: 14.b3 (14.dxe6 runs into 14...xb2! when the tactics work for Black) 14...b4! White loses material.

We should check what happens if White grabs the pawn:

13.dxc5N dxc5 14.dxd8

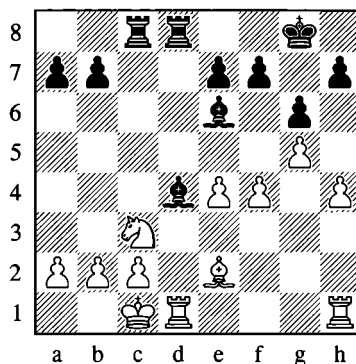
The immediate 14.dxc5? is met by: 14...a5! 15.d3 ffd8 16.d2 (16.d3 doesn't help either: 16...b4 17.e5 f5 18.0-0 dxc2! 19.dxc2 dxd3 20.dg2 dxf1+) 16...b6 17.c1 dxd2! 18.dxd2 (18.dxd2 dxb2 19.d1 dxc3+) 18...b4 Black's attack is crushing.

14...fxd8 15.dxc5 d4 16.dxd4 dxd4

Black will regain the pawn with an edge.

17.0-0

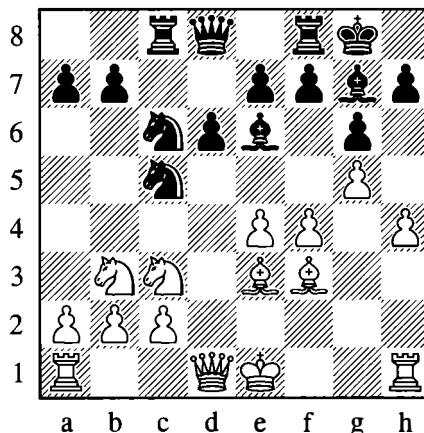
17.d3 dxc3 18.bxc3 dxc3 19.a4 d7!
20.d2 d5



17...d3! 18.d1 dxd1 19.dxd1 dxf4

We can press in the ending with the bishop pair.

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



13...b5!N

White's last was purely defensive so we can simply create additional threats. Of course ...b4 is one idea, but in fact ...d4 is even more annoying.

14. ♖xc5

White doesn't have enough time to make anything from his early aggression on the kingside, as 14.h5?! can be met by 14...♖a4! and we crash through on the queenside.

14. ♖d4 is an improvement over 13. ♖d4, but Black is still in control with 14...♞a5±.

14...dxc5 15. ♞xd8

15. ♗xc5?! ♞a5! is again extremely strong.

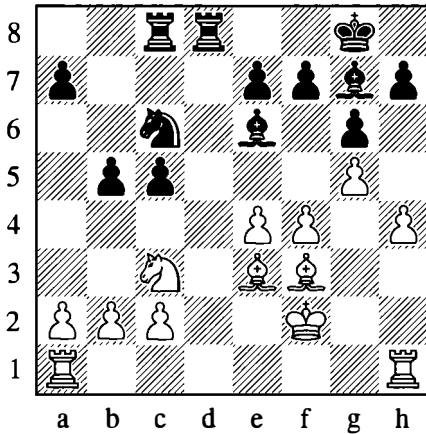
15...♞fxd8 16. ♔f2

16. ♗xc5?! fails to: 16...♗xc3† (or the immediate 16...♖e5) 17.bxc3 ♖e5! 18.fxe5 ♞xc5 We'll regain the pawn and leave White with a lousy structure in the ending.

Taking the other pawn is better, but 16. ♖xb5 ♗xb2 17.♞b1 ♗g7 18.e5 a6 19.♖c3 ♖d4 20.♗e4 f6! still favours Black.

Conclusion

I believe the Rabinovich Attack to be rather dubious, as so often White's position becomes precariously loose. The arising positions are certainly exciting, but Black will almost always have a positional or tactical resource to keep things in his favour. 12...♖c5! is an important move to remember in the final variation of the chapter, and an improvement on the following move shows how pleasant a game Black has – even against White's best efforts.

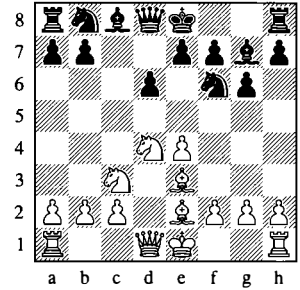


16...♖d4

Black has perfect coordination and White will have to play passively to hold on to his queenside pawns.

Chapter 14

Classical Variation



Other Aggressive Options

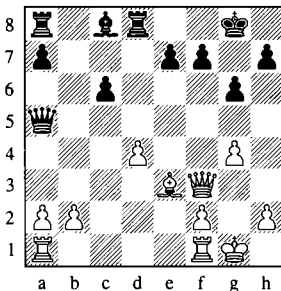
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 g6 6.♕e2 ♕g7 7.♕e3

7...0-0

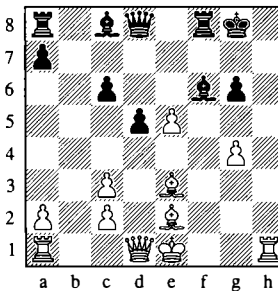
A) 8.♗b3	222
B) 8.g4 d5	223
B1) 9.exd5?!	223
B2) 9.e5	224
C) 8.h4 ♗c6 9.h5 d5	226
C1) 10.♗xc6	226
C2) 10.hxg6	227

B1) after 16.♣f3



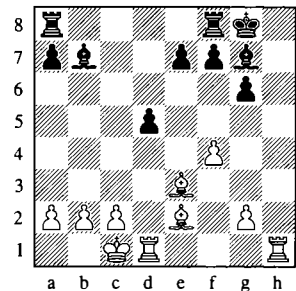
16...♣b5N

B2) after 17.fxе5



17...♕h4!N

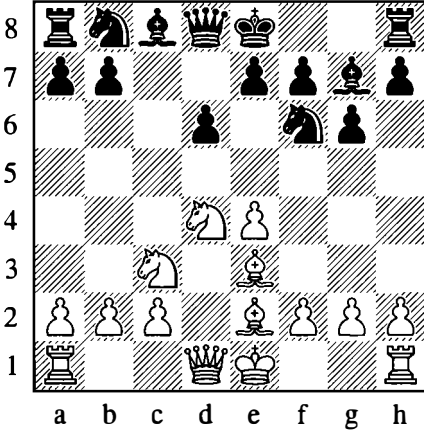
C2) after 16.f4



16...♣f8N www.chess.com

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6
5.♗c3 g6 6.♙e2 ♙g7 7.♙e3

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



7...0-0

I should note that with the lines I've chosen you can also start with 7...♗c6. This cuts out most of this chapter, as 8.g4? is no longer playable. (8.h4 transposes to the previous note) 8...♗xg4! 9.♙xg4 (9.♗xc6 ♗xe3 10.♗xd8 ♗xd1 11.♙xd1 ♗xd8) 9...♙xg4 10.♚xg4 (10.♗xc6 ♙xd1 11.♗xd8 ♙f3 12.♗xf7 ♗xf7 13.♙g1 ♙e5) 10...♗xd4 Black is a clean pawn up.

We will briefly cover **A) 8.♗b3**, before moving on to the aggressive pawn thrusts **B) 8.g4** and **C) 8.h4**.

8.f3 ♗c6 9.♚d2 transposes to variation C of Chapter 12.

A) 8.♗b3

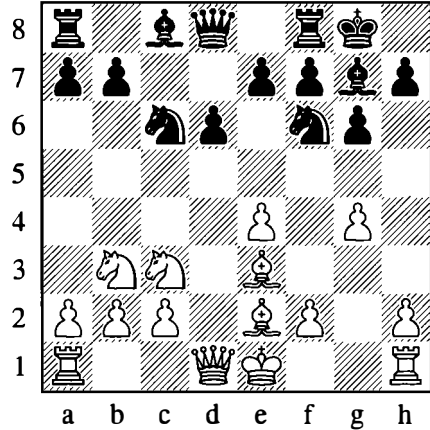
From time to time White starts this way.

8...♗c6

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

9.g4

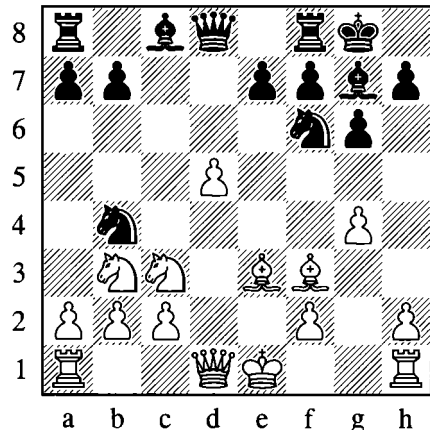
9.h4 is the other independent try, but now I don't see much logic for the knight dropping back to b3. 9...h5 seems the most sensible: 10.f3 ♙e6 11.g4?! (The sacrifice doesn't work out but 11.♚d2N d5 12.exd5 ♗xd5 13.♗xd5 ♚xd5 is nothing for White.) 11...hxg4 12.♚d2 d5 13.0-0-0 dxe4 14.♙e1 ♚c7 15.fxg4 ♗xg4+ White had given two pawns and his pieces were also going backwards in Venalainen – Tarjan, Nice 1974.



9...d5!

Our normal plan for meeting g2-g4.

10.exd5 ♗b4 11.♙f3



11...♙g4!

The key move to remember.

12.♙xg4 ♖xg4 13.♗xg4 ♖xc2† 14.♔e2 ♖xa1 15.♗xa1 ♙xc3 16.bxc3 ♗xd5

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

B) 8.g4

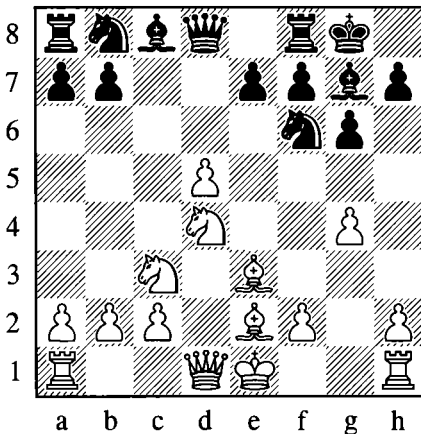
This line has similarities to the Rabinovich Attack. However, as White has not yet dropped his knight back to b3 we can strike back in the centre immediately with:

8...d5

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

B1) 9.exd5?!

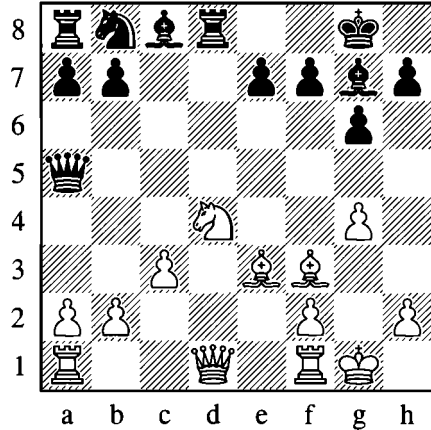
This feels really wrong to me; what is the pawn on g4 doing with an open centre?



9...♖xd5 10.♖xd5 ♗xd5 11.♙f3 ♗a5† 12.c3 ♗d8 13.0-0

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

13.♗e2? loses at once: **13...♙xd4 14.♙xd4 ♗xd4 15.b4 ♗c7 16.cxd4 ♗c3† 17.♗d2 ♗xf3 0-1** Zminda – Gajdamowicz, Wroclaw 2011.

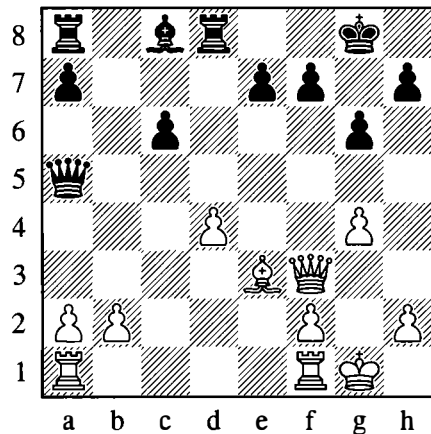


13...♙xd4! 14.cxd4 ♖c6 15.♙xc6

I don't like this move either, but White is worse anyway. For example, **15.d5 ♖e5†** or **15.♗c1 ♗xa2†** or **15.a3 ♙e6†**.

15...bxc6 16.♗f3

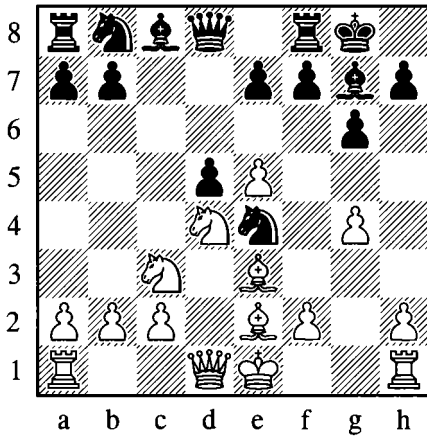
H. Bosboom – Haridas, Brighton 2013.



16...♗b5N 17.b3 ♙e6†

White will be subjected to a miserable defence.

B2) 9.e5 ♖e4



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

10.f4

White's only ambitious continuation.

10.♖xe4 dxe4

This promises White nothing.

11.e6

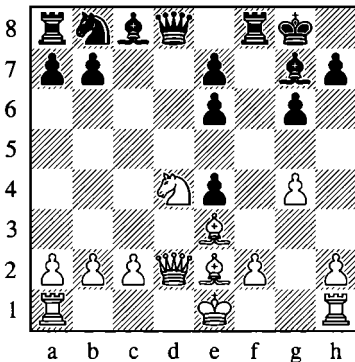
11.f4? exf3 12.♗xf3 in Jonas – Percze, Hungary 2010, should have been met by: 12...♖d7!N 13.e6 ♖e5 14.0-0 ♖c4! Black wins material.

11...fxe6

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

12.♞d2

Kiltti – Salmensuu, Finland 2005.



12...♖c6N

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

13.0-0-0 ♗xd4

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

14.♗xd4 ♖xd4 15.♞xd4 ♞xd4 16.♞xd4 ♞xf2

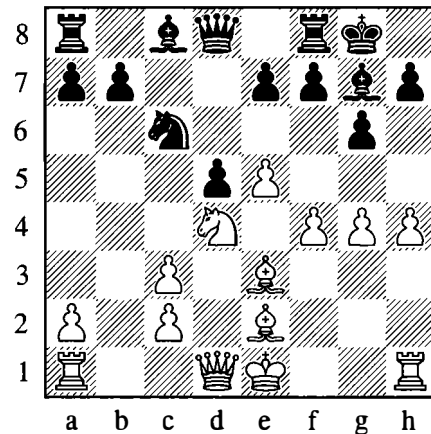
17.♞xe4 b6

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

10...♖xc3 11.bxc3 ♖c6 12.h4

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

Personally I think 12.0-0N is more sensible, but it's not really in the spirit of White's hyper-aggressive opening. If White does choose to play slowly I would probably continue with 12...♖a5 (12...g5!?) 13.♞b1 b6 followed by ...♗b7, ...♞d7 and ...♖c4. White has to watch out for us opening the position with ...f6 and I don't see his plan.



12...f6!

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

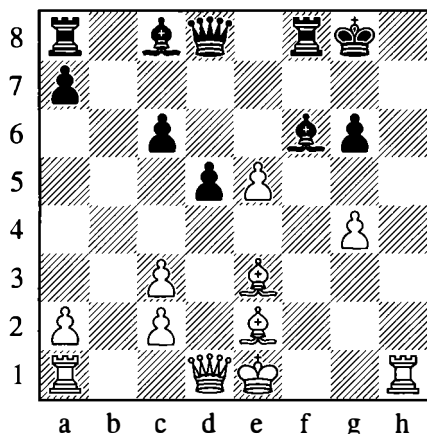
13.exf6 ♗xf6 14.h5 e5 15.♖xc6 bxc6

16.hxg6

16.fxe5 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{x}e5$ 17.hxg6? White had to defend c3, but he was already clearly worse in any event. 17... $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{x}c3\uparrow$ 18. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{d}2$ $\text{\textcircled{f}}\text{f}6$ 19.gxh7 \uparrow $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{h}8$ 20. $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{c}1$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{a}6$ 21. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{h}2$ $\text{\textcircled{f}}\text{f}1\uparrow!$ 0–1 Balaskas – Andreacos, Athens 1993.

16...hxg6 17.fxe5

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

**17... $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{h}4\uparrow\text{!N}$**

Instead Black won quickly after: 17... $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{x}e5$ 18. $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{c}3$ $\text{\textcircled{f}}\text{f}6$ 19.0–0–0 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e}6\text{?!}$ (19... $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{d}7\text{!}$ was a better route, as the bishop doesn't get in the way so much after 20. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{h}6$ $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e}8$) 20. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{h}6$ $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{f}7$ 21. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{f}1$ (21.g5!) 21... $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{c}6$ 22. $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{d}1\text{?!}$ (22. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{d}4\text{!}$ would have put Black under pressure) 22... $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{ab}8$ 23. $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{d}2$ c5 24. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{g}5\text{?}$ c4 25. $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{c}3$ d4 26. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{f}6$ dxc3 \uparrow Here White resigned but, as you can see, the game was not perfect.

18. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{xh}4$

I think this is White's best practical chance.

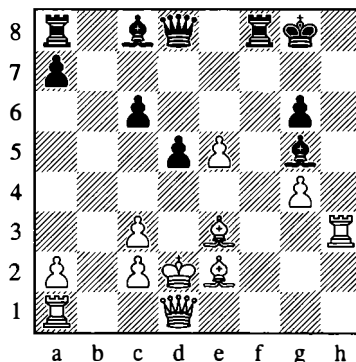
18. $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{d}2$ $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{g}5\text{!}$

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

19. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{h}3$

19. $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{c}1$ g1 d4! also looks good for Black.

20. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{g}5$ $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{c}3\uparrow$ 21. $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{e}1$ dxc3 22. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{d}1$ $\text{\textcircled{f}}\text{f}xe5$ Now White is forced to trade queens with 23. $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{h}2$, when 23... $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{xh}2$ 24. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{xh}2$ $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{b}8\bar{\text{f}}$ gives Black good winning chances in the ending.



19... $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{x}e3\uparrow$ 20. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{x}e3$ d4 21. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{c}4\uparrow$ $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{g}7$ 22. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e}4$ dxc3 \uparrow 23. $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{x}c3$ $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{a}5\uparrow$ 24. $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{b}2$ $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{b}4\uparrow$ 25. $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{c}1$ $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{a}3\uparrow$ 26. $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{b}1$

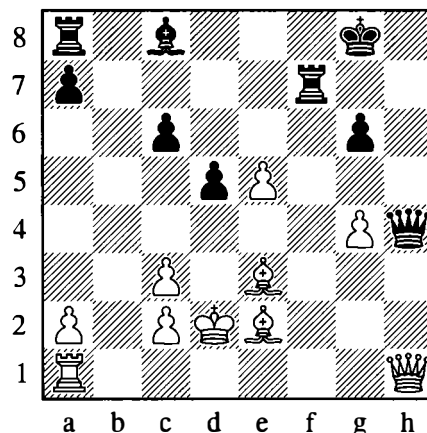
The engine now started to realize that Black was simply winning.

26... $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{a}6$ 27. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{b}3$ $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{f}1$ 28. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e}1$ $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{af}8$

We will net White's queen.

18... $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{xh}4\uparrow$ 19. $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{d}2$ $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{f}7$

Our queen on h4 prevents any White attack. He would probably be well advised to offer the trade:

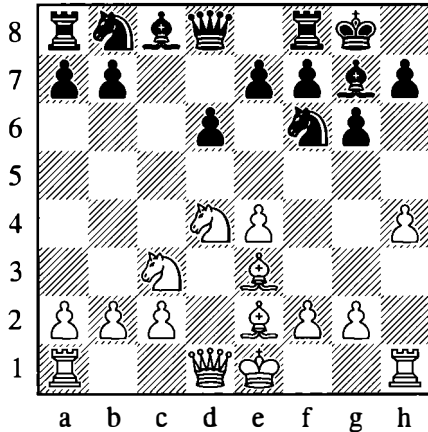
20. $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{h}1$ 

20...♞xh1 21.♞xh1 ♜h7 22.♞g1 ♜h2

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

C) 8.h4

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



8...♘c6

This actually transposes to a position that was played twice in the 1958 World Championship match between Smyslov and Borvinnik.

9.h5 d5

The thematic centre counter to a flank attack. White has two options: C1) 10.♘xc6 and C2) 10.hxg6.

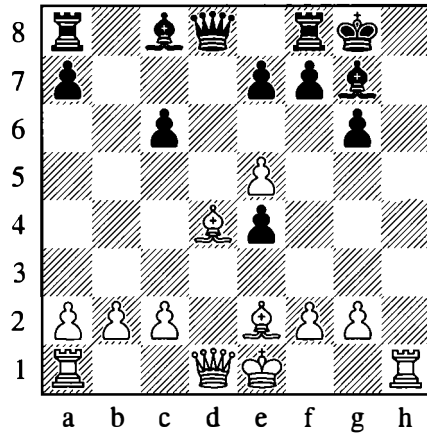
C1) 10.♘xc6 bxc6 11.e5 ♘e4 12.♘xe4 dxe4 13.hxg6

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

13...hxg6 14.♙d4

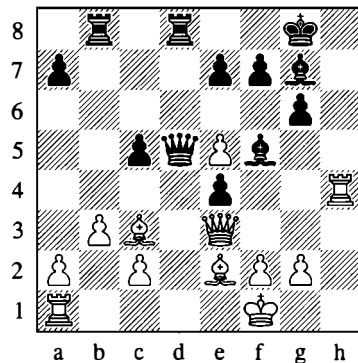
14.♞xd8 was the ex-World Champion's more recent choice. After 14...♞xd8 15.♙f4 ♙e6 16.♞d1 ♞d5 17.♞xd5 cxd5 18.♘d2 d4

Black was comfortable. The prodigy went on to beat the legend in Smyslov – Bacrot, Albert (3) 1996.



14...♞d5

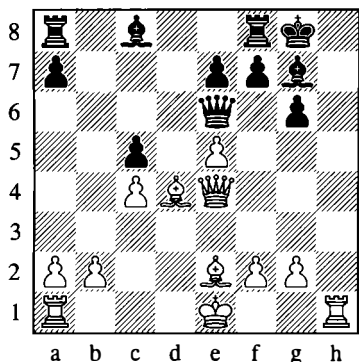
14...♙e6! also looks sensible. 15.♙c3 (15.♞d2 c5 16.♙c3 ♞xd2† 17.♘xd2 f6N is fine for Black) A computer battle continued: 15...♞d5! 16.♞c1 ♜fd8 17.♞e3 c5 18.♞h4 ♙f5 19.♘f1 ♞ab8 20.b3



20...♞b4! Here the dark-squared bishop is worth a rook. An enterprising move from the engine! 21.♙xb4 ♞xe5 22.♞d1 ♞xd1† 23.♙xd1 cxb4 24.♞xa7 ♞a1 White's loose king and scattered pieces promised Black good compensation in Hiarc3 13.2 – Naum 4.2, engine game 2011.

15.♞d2

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



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

15...♖d8 16.♖d1 ♗xa2! 17.♗f4

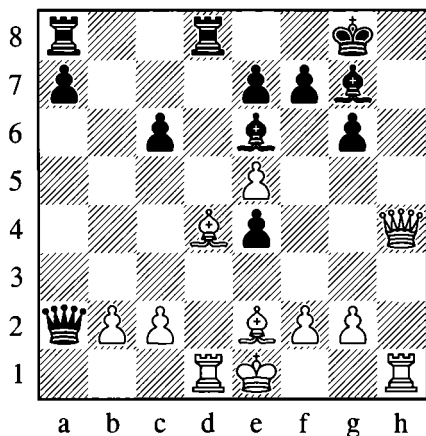
Galakhov – Ziatdinov, Tashkent 1977. Here I like:

17...♙e6N

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

18.♗h4

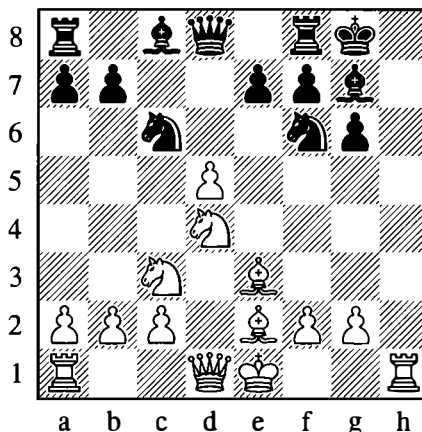
18.♗xc4 ♗a4



18...♖xd4! 19.♖xd4 ♗xb2 20.♗xe4 ♙d5
Black has superb winning chances.

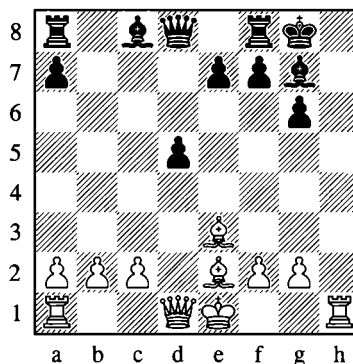
C2) 10.hxg6 hxg6 11.exd5

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



11...♗xd5 12.♗xc6 bxc6 13.♗xd5 ♗xd5

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



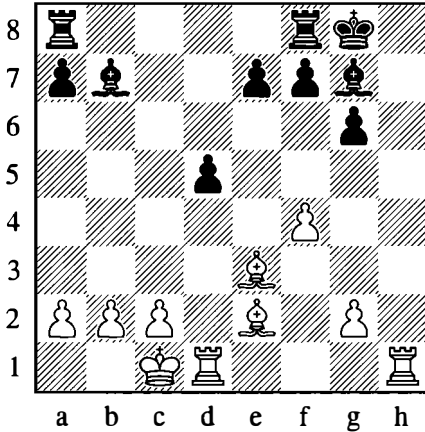
a) 14.♙h6 can be met with 14...♙xb2 15.♙xf8 ♗a5† 16.♗f1 ♗xf8 17.♖b1 ♗xa2 and Black is not worse.

b) 14.♗d2 ♗d6 15.♖d1 ♖d8 16.♙f3 ♙a6 would prevent White from castling. After 17.♗a5 d4! Black has a dangerous initiative.

c) 14.c3 ♗c7 15.♗d2 ♖d8 is unclear.

14. ♖xd5 cxd5 15. 0-0-0 ♗b7 16. f4

This was all played in Smyslov – Botvinnik, Moscow (5) 1958. An improvement over Botvinnik's play would be:



16... ♗fc8N

With an equal position.

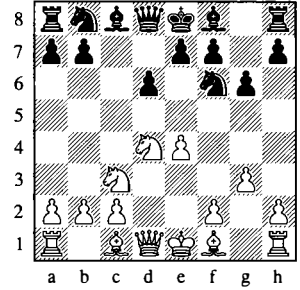
Conclusion

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

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

Chapter 15

Fianchetto Variation



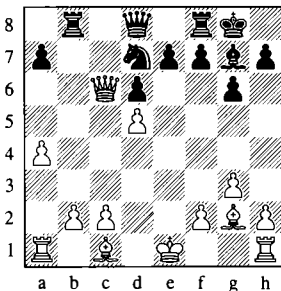
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Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.g3 ♘c6 7.♔g2
7...♘xd4 8.♙xd4 ♔g7

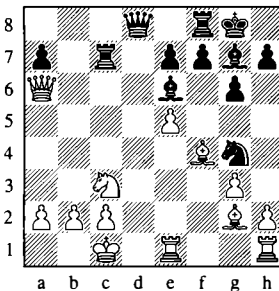
A) 9.a4 0-0	231
A1) 10.♙b4	231
A2) 10.a5	232
B) 9.e5 ♘g4 10.f4 ♘h6 11.♔d2!?	233
B1) 11...♘f5	234
B2) 11...0-0 12.0-0-0 ♔g4 13.♙de1 ♔e6	
14.♔xb7!?	235
♙b8 15.♔d5 dxe5 16.fxe5	
B21) 16...♘f5N	236
B22) 16...a5N	238
C) 9.0-0 0-0	239
C1) 10.h3 ♔e6	240
C11) 11.♙b4	240
C12) 11.♙d1	241
C2) 10.♙d3	241

A1) note to 11.e5N



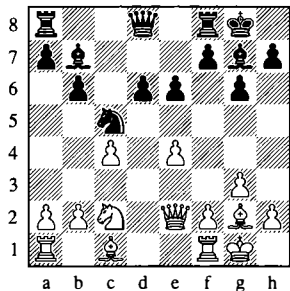
14...♘c5!N

B2) note to 14.♔xb7!?



18...♙xc3!N

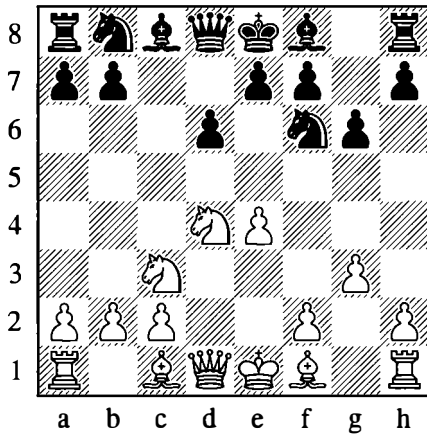
C2) after 15.♘c2



15.♘d7!N

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♖f6
5.♗c3 g6 6.g3

The Fianchetto Variation is not one of the most common lines against the Dragon, but is still chosen from time to time by players who want to avoid the highly theoretical lines. White tries to control the centre and slowly neutralize Black's play. It's a line I've always enjoyed facing, as Black can generate a quick initiative – unusually for the Dragon – on the kingside.



6...♗c6

I prefer this move order, immediately challenging the d4-knight.

6...♗g7 7.♗g2 ♗c6?! would run into trouble:
8.♗xc6 bxc6 9.e5! Some strong players have intentionally allowed this, but it's more accurate not to give White the possibility.

7.♗g2

For 7.♗de2 see the next chapter.

7.♗b3 doesn't feel right to me as the knight isn't doing a great deal on the queenside. 7...♗g7 8.h3 ♗e6 9.♗g2 was Howell – Holland, England 2012, when 9...♗c8N would reach positions similar to those examined in the next chapter, but with our bishop more active on e6 and the white knight on the wrong circuit.

White can no longer play for his ideal b2-b3, c2-c4 set-up very easily.

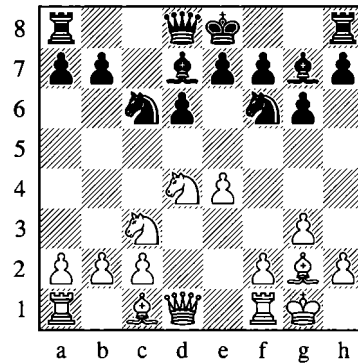
7...♗xd4

I prefer exploiting White's move order with this, after which White loses time trying to find a safe location for his queen.

Black has an additional option:

7...♗d7 8.0-0 ♗g7

We threaten 9...♗xe4! and so White has to do something with his loose knight on d4.



9.♗de2

9.♗e3?! ♗g4! is pretty horrible.

9.♗f3 has mainly been tried in computer play. 9...0-0 10.♗e1 ♗g4 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 ♗c8 13.♗b1 ♗d7 14.♗d1 ♗xc3! Not necessary but tempting. 15.bxc3 ♗c7 16.♗e3 ♗fd8 17.h4 b6 18.h5 This appears to be something of a tabiya in computer chess. White's initiative seems to just about counter his dreadful structure, and results have been fairly balanced.

9...♗c8 10.♗f4

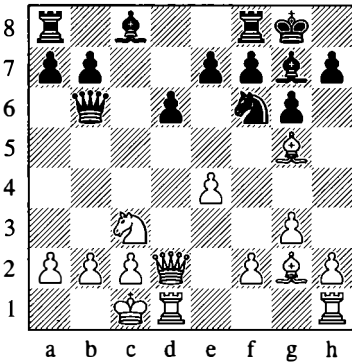
We have transposed to a position we will examine in variation B of the next chapter on page 245.

8.♗xd4 ♗g7

White has a lot of different squares for his queen but Black can play in a similar manner against all of them with good prospects.

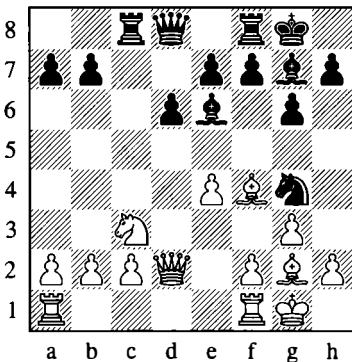
White can try expanding on the queenside with **A) 9.a4**, while **B) 9.e5** has recently been played at a high level and must be checked carefully. Finally, **C) 9.0-0** is White's most common choice by far.

9.♔g5 0-0 10.♖d2 (for 10.0-0 see the note on 10.♔g5 in variation C) 10...♗b6?! 11.0-0-0?! It was better to give the pawn, as now Black has a typical queenside attack while White has nothing on the kingside.



11...♗e6 12.♗e3 ♖a6 13.a3 ♜fc8 14.♗d4 b5 15.♗f1 ♝ab8 White was unable to slow Black's attack and had to resign a few moves later in Galego – Li Chao, Reykjavik 2014.

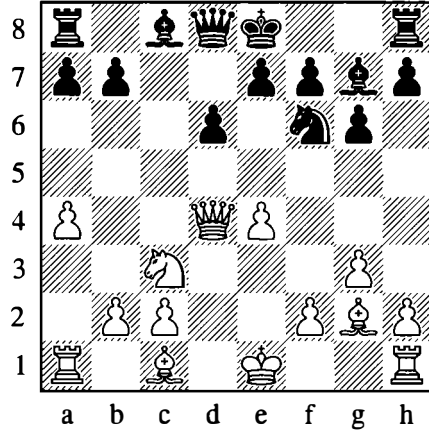
9.♗e3?! was tried once by Vassily Ivanchuk, against none other than Garry Kasparov, but this is the wrong square for the bishop. 9...0-0 10.♖d2 ♘g4 11.♗f4 ♗e6 12.0-0 ♝c8



Black was comfortable in Mrva – Szalanczy, Budapest 1993.

A) 9.a4

This move is seen from time to time. White grabs some space on the queenside.



9...0-0

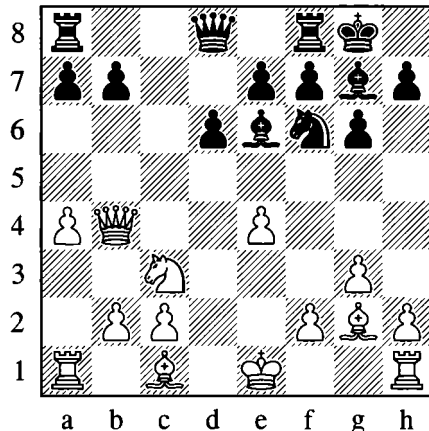
We immediately reach another split: White can play **A1) 10.♖b4** or **A2) 10.a5**.

A1) 10.♖b4

White attempts to slow our development by putting pressure on b7.

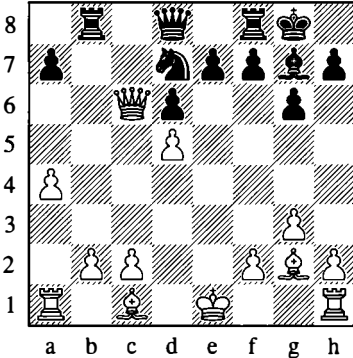
10...♗e6!?

This still looks playable to me.



11.e5N

11. ♖xb7 ♘d7 12. ♘d5?! (12.0-0 is better but Black still has good compensation for the pawn after 12...a5) 12... ♜b8 13. ♖c6 ♙xd5 White was already in trouble, but after 14.exd5? Black could have ended matters immediately in Zawadzki – Izoria, Litohoto 1999:



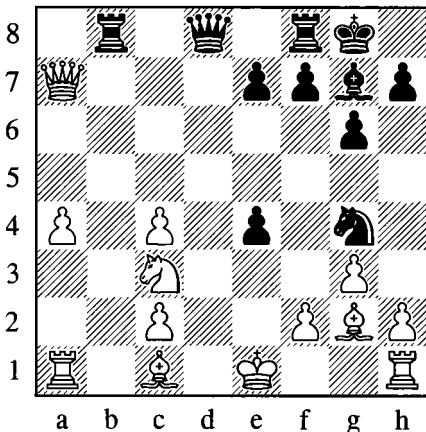
14... ♘c5!N There is no escape route for the white queen.

11...dxe5 12. ♖xb7 ♜b8

12...e4 13.0-0 ♖c8 also gives Black decent play.

13. ♖xa7 ♙c4!? 14.b3 e4 15.bxc4 ♘g4=

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



16. ♘d5 ♙xa1 17.0-0 ♜a8

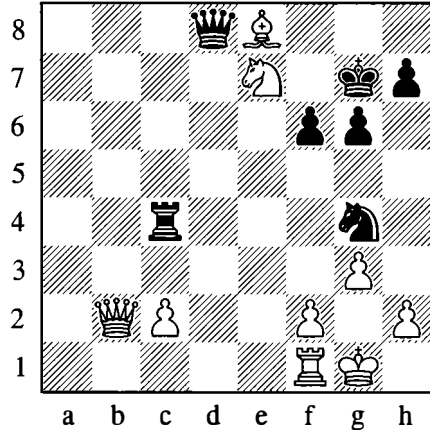
The game could potentially burn out with:

18. ♘xe7† ♘g7 19. ♖b7 ♜xa4 20. ♙xe4 ♜e8

21. ♙b2† ♙xb2 22. ♖xb2† f6 23. ♙c6 ♜xc4

24. ♙xe8

24. ♖b3 ♘e7=



24... ♖xc7

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

25. ♖b8

25. ♙b5? ♜b4 26. ♖a3 ♘xf2†

25... ♜xc2 26. ♙a4=

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

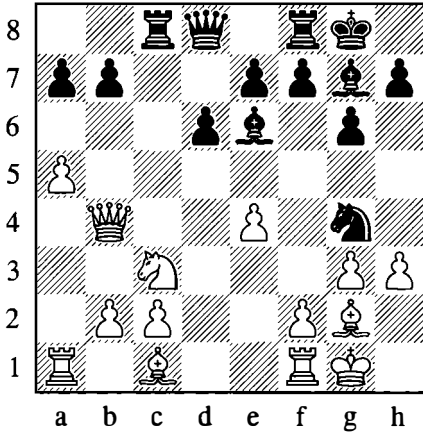
A2) 10.a5 ♙e6 11. ♖b4 ♜c8! 12.0-0

12. ♖xb7 ♜c7 13. ♖b4 ♙c4† White's king is stuck in the centre, granting Black more than enough compensation for the pawn.

12... ♘g4 13.h3

13. ♖xb7 ♜c7 14. ♖b4 ♖d7† is similar to the main line.

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

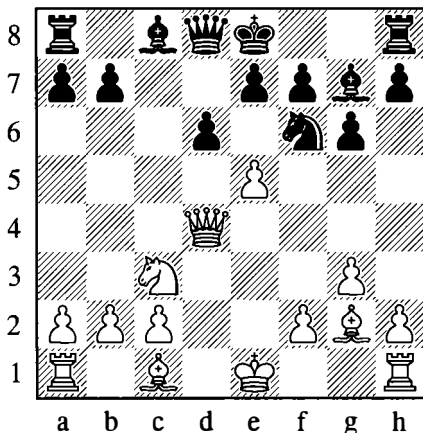


13...dxe5N 14.xb7 c7 15.xb4 d7
16.h2 c4 17.a3 c5

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

B) 9.e5

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



9...d2!

This square seems the most logical to me.

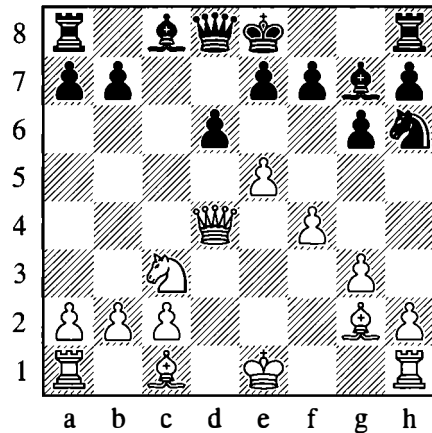
10.f4

10. a4+?! d7 11. b3 xe5 12. xb7 b8 13. xa7 c6 14. e3 d4 Black must be much better. True, White is a pawn up, but Black dominates the centre and White will struggle to defend his pawns and develop his queenside.

10...d6

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

10...0-0 11.h3 d6 12.g4 might be okay, but the knight looks rather awkward.



11...d2!?

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

11.h3 d5 is obviously not working.

After 11.0-0 0-0 White is in danger of being overextended. (Chris Ward gives 11...d5 12. f2 dx e5 13. d1. I believe Black's position is playable, but White has quite dangerous compensation for the pawn.) The reason behind delaying ...d6f5 can be seen after 12. d1 g4!.

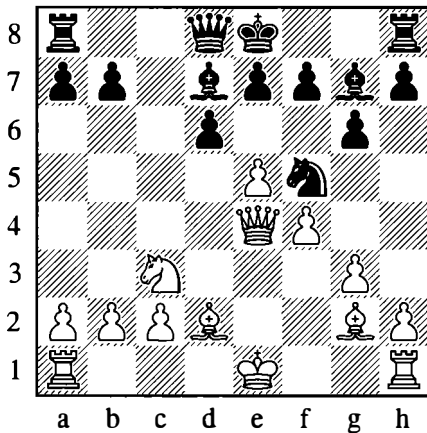
Now **B1) 11...♖f5** is a quieter continuation, but I will also present some of the fascinating computer-assisted lines that arise after **B2) 11...0-0**.

B1) 11...♖f5

This is probably the safer option – for both sides.

12.♖e4 ♗d7!?

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



13.♖xb7 ♖b8 14.♖xa7 ♖xb2 15.0-0-0!

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

15...♖b8 16.♖xb8† ♖xb8

Black still has strong pressure despite the queen exchange.

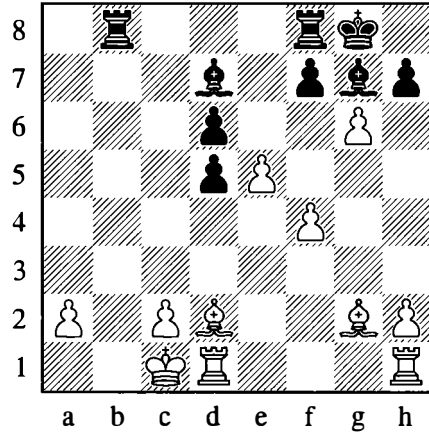
17.♖d5 0-0 18.g4 e6 19.gxf5

19.♖f6† was tried in the other game to reach this position. 19...♗xf6 20.exf6 ♖h4 21.♖hg1 ♖fc8 22.♗e1 ♗a4 23.♗d2 ♖xg2 24.♖gxc2 ♗c6 White still has his extra pawn but he's unlikely to be able to exploit it. His structure isn't great, Black still has decent queenside pressure, and if the rooks get exchanged we have a drawn

opposite-coloured-bishop ending. In Yucateco – Jin38, engine game 2015, Black had no problem holding the draw.

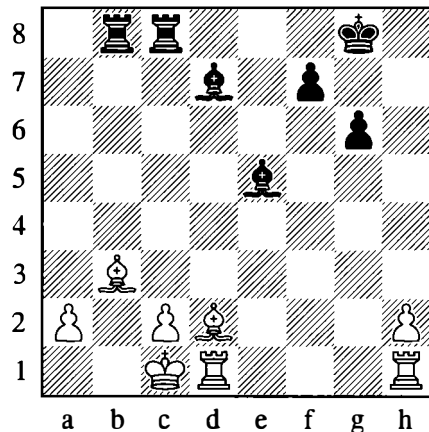
19...exd5 20.fxg6

20.f6 can be met with 20...♖fc8! 21.fxg7? ♗f5†.



20...hxg6 21.♗xd5 ♖fc8 22.♗b3 dxe5 23.fxe5 ♗xe5

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



24.♗e3 ♗f5 25.♗d5 ♖xb3! 26.axb3 ♖xc2† 27.♖d1 ♗a2 28.♖xe5 ♗g4† 29.♖c1 ♗a1† 30.♖d2 ♖xh1=

They were left in a drawn endgame in JPN – Jin38, engine game 2015.

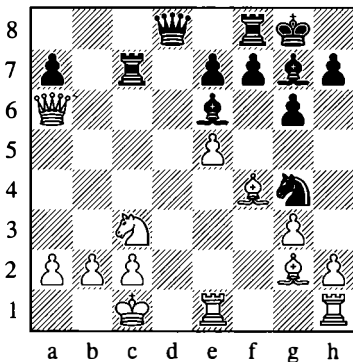
B2) 11...0-0 12.0-0-0 ♘g4
13.♞d1 ♘c6 14.♙xb7?!

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

14.a3 Here I'd centralize the knight. 14...♘f5N (14...dxe5, happily exchanging queens, has been Black's choice in a couple of games. 15.♞xd8 ♞fxd8 16.fxe5 ♞d7 17.♙f4=) 15.♞f2 dxe5 16.fxe5 ♘d4↑ Black has good attacking chances.

14.♞b4 ♞c8 15.♞xb7 ♞c7 16.♞a6 dxe5 17.fxe5 ♘g4 18.♙f4

Here I would be itching to play:



18...♞xc3!?N

18...♞c5 19.♞xa7 ♞c8 20.♞b6 ♘xe5 21.♙xe5 ♙xe5 22.♙b7 ♞c7 23.♞xc7 ♙xc7 Black had enough compensation for the pawn in Hannibal 1.4b – Houdini 4, engine game 2014.

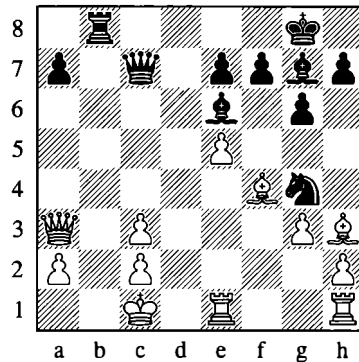
19.bxc3 ♞c7 20.♞a3 ♞b8

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

21.♙h3!

This seems to be forced.

21.h4 a5! The point is to prevent White from challenging on the b-file. 22.h5 ♞b6→

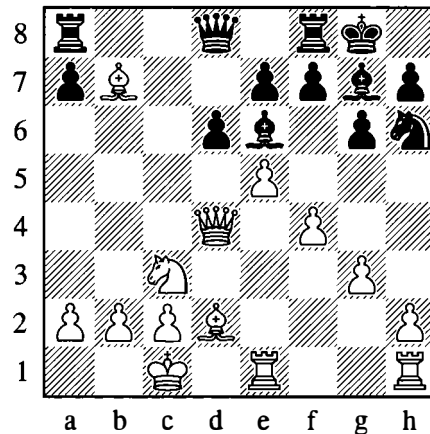


21...♞b7

21...♞b7?!

22.♞b4 ♞c8

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



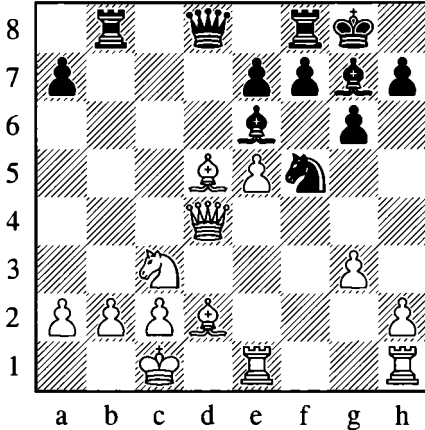
14...♞b8 15.♙d5 dxe5 16.fxe5

I analysed this position for quite a long time. Black has many plausible-looking continuations and I've offered a couple of interesting lines: **B21) 16...♘f5N** and **B22) 16...a5N**.

16...♞b6 was the choice in Stockfish 6 – Chiron 2, engine game 2015, but feels a bit unnatural to me.

B21) 16...♟f5N

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



17.♞d3

17.♞e4 ♞b6 18.b3

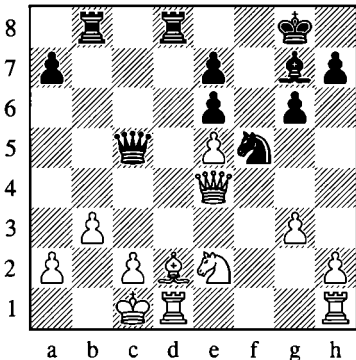
18.♙b3 ♘d4 looks like excellent compensation.

18...♞fd8 19.♞d1 ♞c5 20.♙xe6 fxe6=

Black's structure looks ugly, but the e5-pawn is dropping and he will have a strong initiative. The engine reckons that to stay equal White has to find:

21.♘e2

21.♞he1?! fails to 21...♞xd2!



21...♙xe5

Black has lots of options.

21...♘d6! is also interesting. Of course the

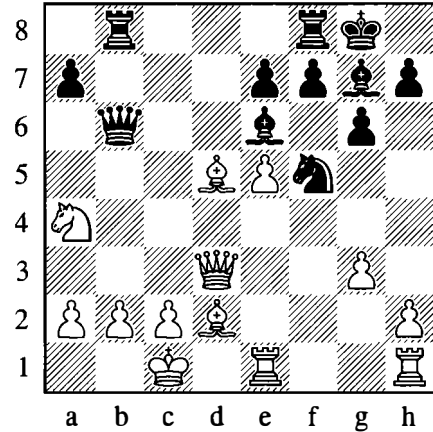
knight is poisoned: 22.exd6 ♞a3† 23.♙b1 ♞b2#

22.♙b1 ♞xd2! 23.♞xd2 ♘d6 24.♞g4 ♘c4

Black has the easier position.

17...♞b6 18.♘a4

18.b3?! ♞fd8† The pin is extremely awkward.

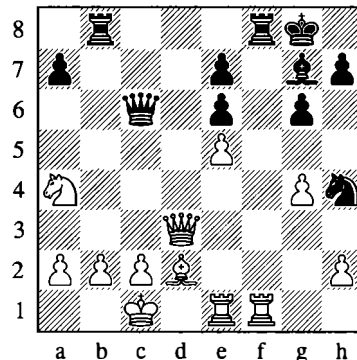


18...♞c7 19.♙xe6 fxe6

An interesting position: White is a pawn up and has the better structure, but Black's pieces are active and he can generate dangerous attacking chances. The e5-pawn is loose and likely to drop, when all of Black's pieces will be contributing to the attack. I've offered a few sample variations.

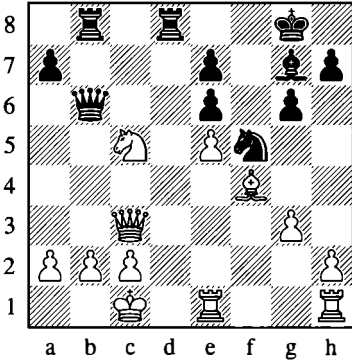
20.♞hf1

20.g4 ♘h4 21.♞hf1 ♞c6



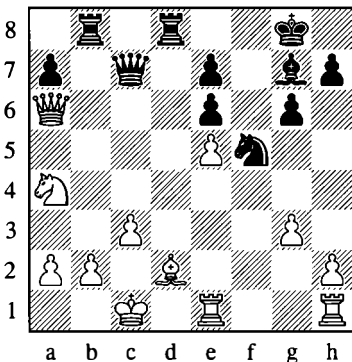
22.♖e4 ♜xe4 23.♟xf8† ♟xf8 24.♟xe4 ♟f1†
 25.♟e1 ♟f2= Black's play on the kingside will
 come quickly.

20.♟f4 White supports his e5-pawn, but now
 his queen and knight will get hit around.
 20...♟fd8 21.♞c3 ♞b7 22.♝c5 ♞b6



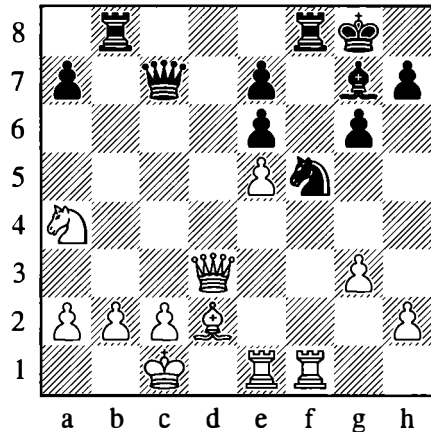
23.a3!? Preparing to support the knight on c5.
 (23.♝b3 ♟bc8 24.♞a5 ♞c6 25.c3 ♟d5 26.♞a3
 ♟xe5!? 27.♟xe5 ♟xe5=) 23...a5 24.♟d1 ♟dc8
 25.b4 axb4 26.axb4 ♞xb4 27.♞xb4 ♟xb4
 28.♝xe6 ♟bc4 29.♟d2 h6 30.h4 ♟8c6= Black
 has ongoing pressure and is certainly not
 worse.

20.c3 ♟fd8 21.♞a6
 The only square for the white queen.
 21.♞c2? ♟xd2! 22.♞xd2 ♟h6→



21...♟d4!
 Black has dangerous threats.

22.♟hf1
 22.♞xe6†? ♟h8 23.♞a6 ♟bb4 24.b3 ♟xa4!
 25.bxa4 ♟h6!→
 22.b3 ♟bd8 23.♟f4 ♟xa4 24.♞xa4 ♞xc3†
 25.♟b1 g5 26.♟xg5 ♟xe5 27.♟xe5 ♞xe5=
 22.♟hg1 ♟h8!? is unclear.
 22...♟bb4 23.♞xe6† ♟h8 24.♟xf5 gxf5 25.b3
 ♟e4 26.c4 ♟exc4† 27.bxc4 ♟xa4 28.♞xf5
 ♞xc4†
 28...♟xc4†!
 29.♞c2 ♞xc2† 30.♟xc2 ♟xa2+=



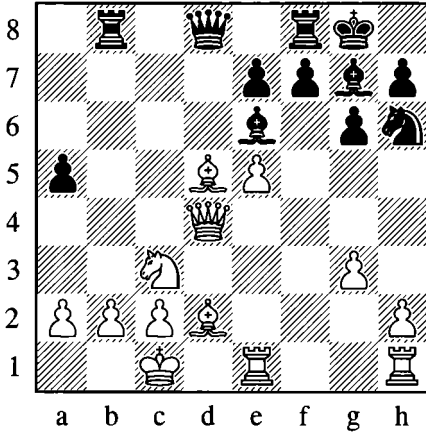
20...♟bc8!?
 20...♟fd8 21.♞c3 ♞d7 22.♝c5 ♞d5 23.♝b3
 a5 24.♞xa5 ♟b5 25.♞c3 ♟xe5 26.♞d3 ♞xd3
 27.cxd3 ♟xd3 Black has regained material
 parity but is probably a touch worse due to
 his inferior structure – though I don't think it
 should be the end of the world.

21.c3 ♞a5 22.♞e4 ♟fd8 23.b3
 23.g4 ♝d4 24.b3 ♝b5→ White has to watch
 out for sacrifices on both d2 and c3.

23...♟d5
 The e5-pawn is dropping. The position is
 highly complex, but I certainly don't think
 Black's practical chances are worse with White's
 queenside so loose.

B22) 16...a5N

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

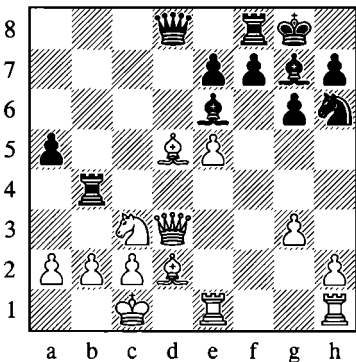


17. ♕f4

I concentrated on this approach as this is how Stockfish played the stem game.

17. ♖b1 ♜f5 18. ♖d3 ♖c7 19. ♗xe6 fxe6 This feels like a better version of variation B21. White can try to block up the queenside with 20. ♜b5 ♖b7 21. c4, but Black will at least regain the pawn: 21... ♗fd8 22. ♖c2 ♜d4 23. ♜xd4 ♗xd4 24. ♗c3 ♗xc4=

17. ♖e4 ♗b4 (17... ♖d7!? would ask White how he plans to continue) 18. ♖d3 (18. ♖g2 ♖d7 19. h3 ♜f5=)



18... ♜g4 (18... ♖b6 19. ♗xe6 ♖xe6 20. ♜d5 ♗b7= also gives Black reasonable compensation) 19. ♗xe6 ♖xd3 20. cxd3 fxe6 Black regains the pawn with an equal position, as 21. ♗f4?! ♜f2! wins the exchange.

17.a3 This could be White's automatic reaction, but the inclusion of the a-pawn moves favours Black: 17... ♗c8 18. ♖e4 ♗f5 19. ♖g2 ♖b6 Black has strong counterplay.

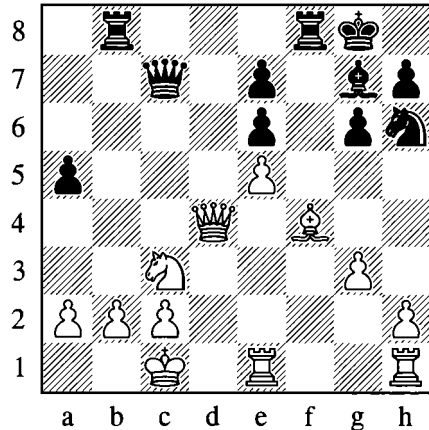
17... ♖c7 18. ♗xe6

18. ♗d1 ♗f8 19. ♗h1 ♗b4 20. ♖d2 ♜f5 Black has strong pressure for the pawn.

18. ♗b3 ♗b4 19. ♖f2 ♗f8 also looks dangerous.

18... fxe6

Again we have this odd structure. It may look ugly, but Black's e6-pawn does a useful job controlling the d5-square and Black's pieces all have a lot of potential. Watch out for ...g5 ideas in certain positions to activate the g7-bishop. The game might continue:



19. ♖d3

19. ♗d1 ♜f7=

19... ♗fd8 20. ♖a6 ♗dc8 21. ♖xe6† ♜h8

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

22. ♖e4

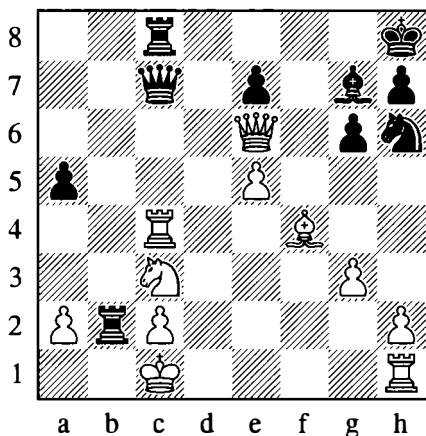
22. ♖d2 a4 23. ♖hf1 ♘f5 Black has a strong initiative.

22... ♖xb2

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

23. ♖c4

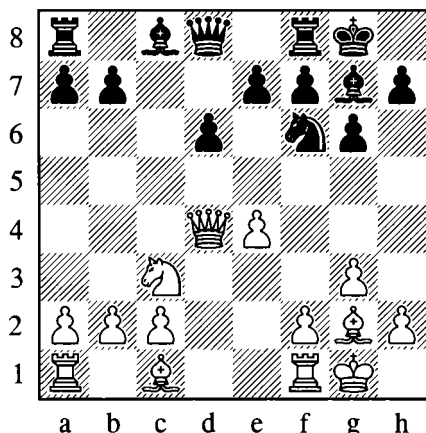
The point behind White's last, otherwise he would be in a lot of trouble.



23... ♖xc4 24. ♖xc4 ♖xc4 25. ♘xb2 ♖g4=

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

C) 9.0-0-0

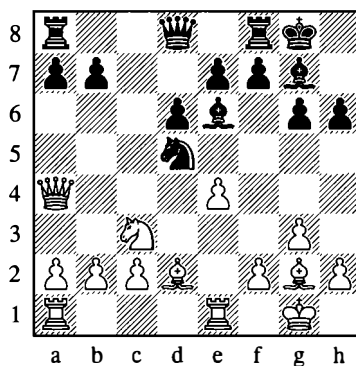


White can prepare to retreat his queen with **C1) 10.h3** or immediately move from the line of fire with **C2) 10. ♖d3**.

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

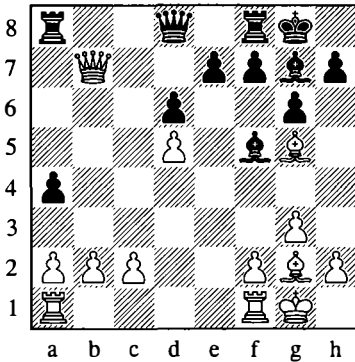
10.a4 is of course similar to 9.a4. 10... ♖e6 11. ♖b4 a5 12. ♖xb7 ♘d7 is simply a different move order to reach a position given in the note to White's 11th move in variation A1, in which Black has good compensation.

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



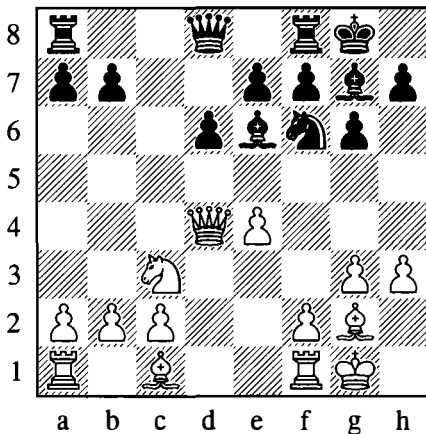
13... ♘xc3N 14. ♖xc3 ♖xc3 15. bxc3 ♖c7=

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



15...♖b8! 16.♗xb8 ♜fxb8. Black's queenside pressure proved too much in the elite encounter, Adams – Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 1998.

C1) 10.h3 ♘e6



White's choice of queen moves comes down to C11) 11.♗b4 or C12) 11.♗d1.

C11) 11.♗b4 ♗c8!

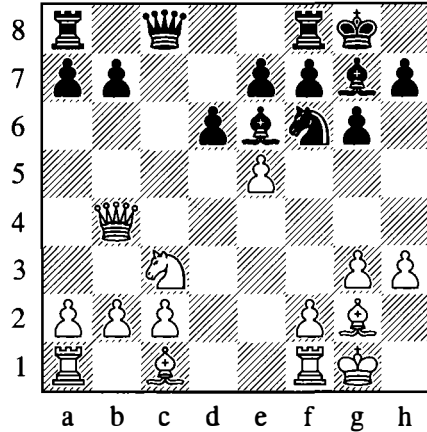
Defending b7 and eyeing the h3-pawn.

12.e5

This was once played against me.

12.♘h2 allowed Boris Gelfand to seize the initiative with: 12...a5! 13.♗a3 b5! White had nothing better than 14.♘d5 ♘xd5 15.exd5 ♗xc2 in Svidler – Gelfand, Polanica Zdroj 2000.

12.♘g5 was played in Kashtanov – Bocharov, Dos Hermanas 2004. Black has lots of tempting moves, but the simplest would be: 12...h6N 13.♘e3 (13.♘xf6 ♘xf6 is obviously lousy for White) 13...a5 Black wins the h3-pawn for free as 14.♗b6 ♘d7 15.♗b5 ♘c4 wins the exchange.

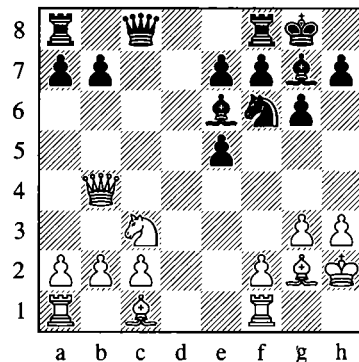


12...dxе5 13.♗xe7

13...♙b7?! ♗b8! and the pin nets Black material.

13.♗xb7?! drops a pawn after 13...♗xb7 14.♘xb7 ♘xh3.

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

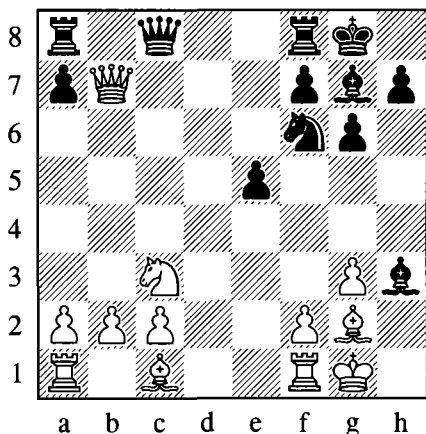


13...♙d8! 14.♗xb7 ♗xb7 15.♘xb7 ♗ab8 16.♘c6 ♘f5 17.♘a4 ♘e4 The pressure on

White's position means it's difficult for him to develop his queenside.

13...♙xh3 14.♖xb7

This was Heidenfeld – Jones, Bunnratty 2011, when simplest would have been:

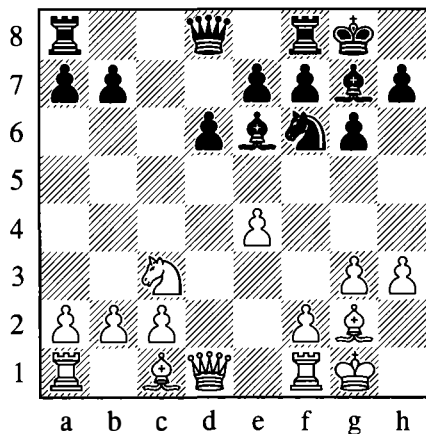


14...♖xb7N 15.♙xb7 ♖ab8 16.♙g2 ♙f5!?

Black is winning the c-pawn.

C12) 11.♖d1

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



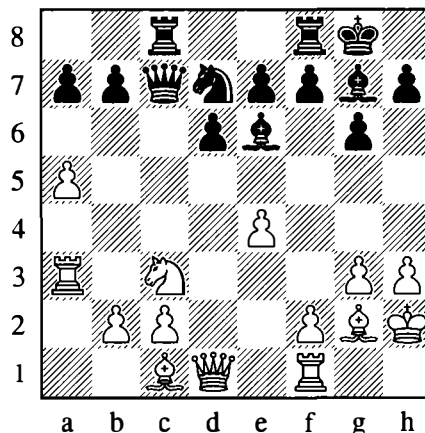
11...♖c8 12.♙h2 ♖c4 13.a4

13.♘d5 ♘xe4 14.♘xe7† ♙h8 leaves the white knight caught behind enemy lines.

13...♖ac8 14.a5 ♘d7 15.♖a3 ♖c7!?

Preparing Black's next.

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

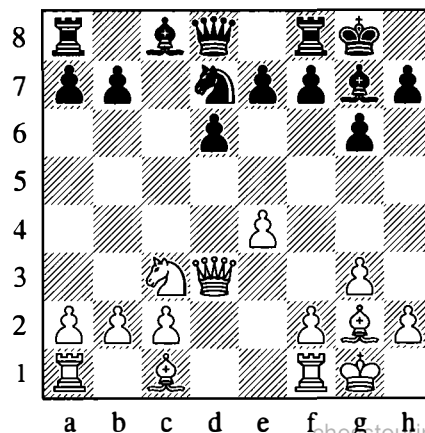


16.f4 ♙xc3! 17.♖xc3 ♖xa5

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

C2) 10.♖d3 ♘d7

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

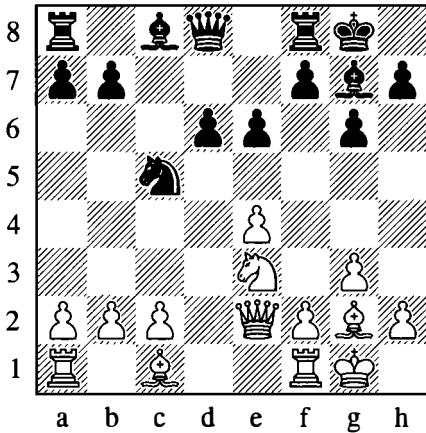


11. ♖d5

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

11... ♗c5 12. ♜e2 e6 13. ♗e3

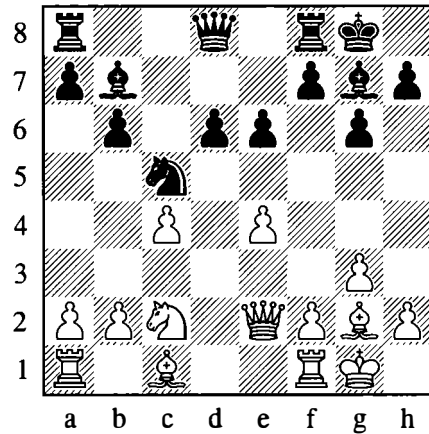
13. ♗b4 b6 14. c4 ♗b7 was similar in Mihalincic – A. Saric, Zagreb 2014.

**13... b6 14. c4 ♗b7**

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

15. ♗c2

Stefanek – Blehm, Krynica 1998. Here I suggest:

**15... ♗d7!N**

With the following idea:

16. ♗d1 f5!?

Black has taken over the initiative.

Conclusion

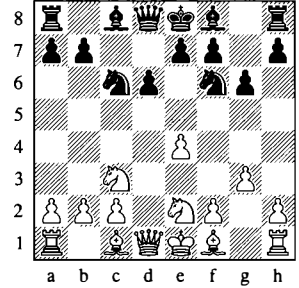
With the Fianchetto Variation, White tries to sidestep the sharp tactical lines of the Dragon. His plan is for a positional game, where he can slowly create a bind and prevent the usual Dragon break of ...d5. With the lines I've suggested he doesn't get off so easily, and has to solve real problems right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

The sharp 9.e5 featured in variation B is an exception to White's usual positional approach. However, I believe my analysis should allow you to meet this critical line with confidence.

Allowing the knight exchange on d4 leads nothing for White, so he usually plays 7. ♗de2 – as covered in the following chapter.

Chapter 16

Fianchetto Variation



7. ♘de2

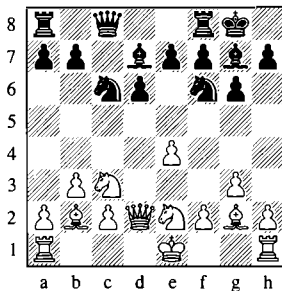
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.g3 ♘c6 7.♘de2

7...♙d7!? 8.♙g2 ♖c8

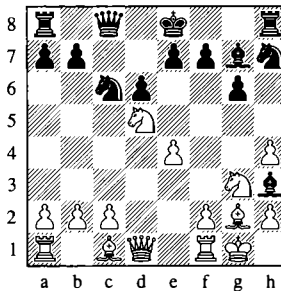
A) 9.b3	244
B) 9.♘f4	245
C) 9.♘d5	245
D) 9.0-0	246
E) 9.h3 ♙g7	248
E1) 10.♙e3	248
E2) 10.♘f4	249
E3) 10.a4	250
E4) 10.b3	252
E41) 10...h5!?	252
E42) 10...0-0 11.♙b2 ♖b8!?	254
E421) 12.♖b1	254
E422) 12.♖d2 b5 13.0-0-0 ♖a6 14.♗b1 ♖fc8	256
E4221) 15.f4	256
E4222) 15.g4	258

A) after 11.♖d2



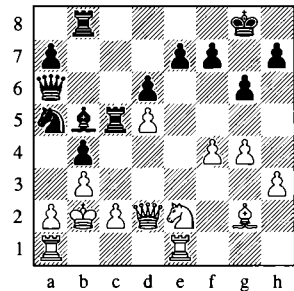
11...b5!N

D) after 14.♘g3



14...♘f6!N

E4222) after 21.♖a1!



21.h4c4!N www.chessking.com

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 g6 6.g3 ♗c6 7.♗de2 ♔d7!?

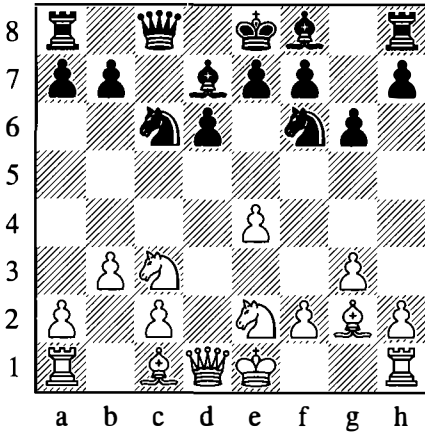
When White chooses the Fianchetto Variation he is hoping to avoid the complexities of a typical Dragon battle and simply develop his pieces. We're not going to let him have such an easy life! Our plan is ...♙c8, ...♘h3 and perhaps ...h5-h4. Surprisingly, this caveman approach isn't so easy to defend against.

8.♘g2 ♙c8

White has a wide range of moves at this point: A) 9.b3, B) 9.♗f4, C) 9.♗d5, D) 9.0-0 and E) 9.h3.

A) 9.b3

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



9...♘g7 10.♘b2 0-0

Instead 10...♘h3 11.♘h3 ♙xh3 12.♗f4 doesn't really get Black anywhere yet, although he could consider the strange-looking 12...♙h6!? as 13.0-0 allows 13...♗xe4. However, matters still aren't completely clear following 14.♗xe4 ♘xb2 15.♗xd6†!

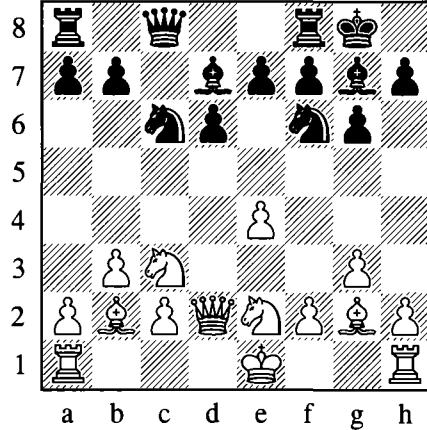
If you feel inspired by the piece sacrifice offered later in this chapter then 10...h5 would

be the correct move order – transposing to variation E41 after 11.h3.

11.♙d2

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

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



11...b5!N 12.0-0-0

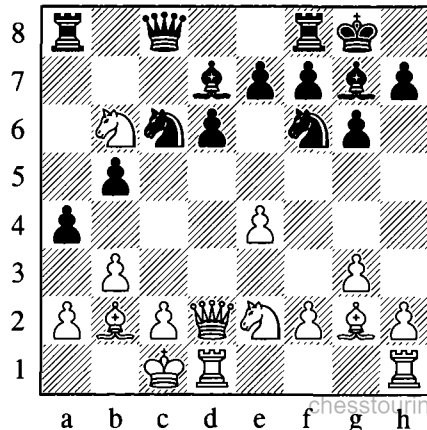
12.♗xb5?! ♗xe4!

12...a5 13.♗d5 a4

The position already looks dangerous for White.

14.♗b6

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



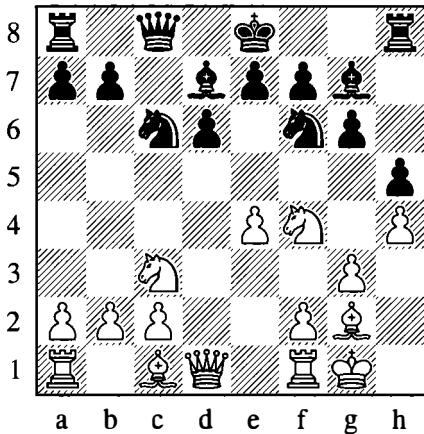
14...♙a6 15.♘xa8 ♜xa8

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

B) 9.♘f4 ♖g7 10.0-0 h5 11.h4

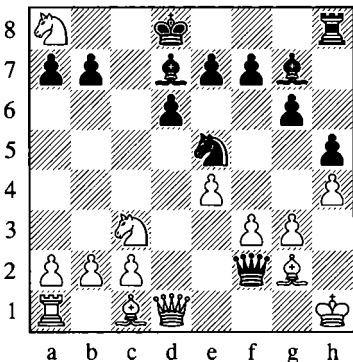
11.h3 transposes to variation E2.

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



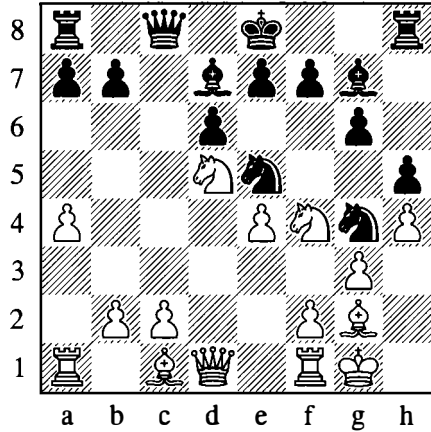
11...♘g4 12.♘cd5

12.♘fd5 was Koh – Chua Zheng Yuan, Singapore 2009, when 12...♘ce5N is likely to be similar to the main line. In the event of 13.f3?! ♙c5† 14.♗h1 ♘f2† 15.♞xf2 ♙xf2 16.♘c7† ♗d8 17.♘xa8 White is temporarily a piece ahead but the knight is trapped in the corner:



17...♙xg3 18.♖g5 (18.♖e3 ♘g4! 19.fxg4 ♖e5!-+) 18...♘g4! 19.fxg4 ♖e5 20.♗g1 f6 21.♖c1 ♜! Black is left with what is probably a decisive attack.

12...♘ce5 13.a4



13...e6N

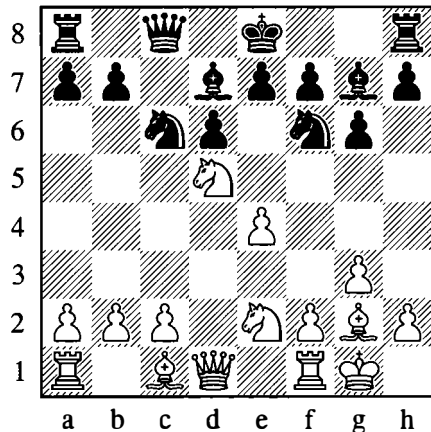
I prefer this to the overly ambitious 13...g5?! of De Jong – R. Burnett, Groningen 1997.

14.♘c3 ♙c5♠

Black has good control of the position.

C) 9.♘d5 ♖g7 10.0-0

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

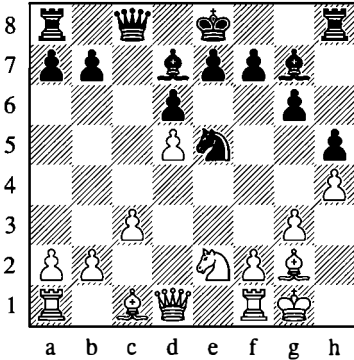


10...h5 11.h3

This is extremely provocative.

11. ♖g5 transposes to variation D.

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



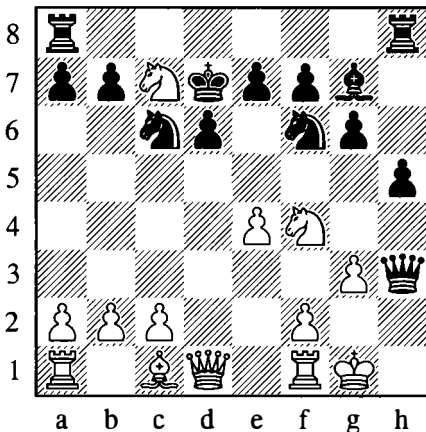
13... ♖g4!N I prefer Black, although White shouldn't be too much worse after 14. ♖a4† ♖d7 15. ♖xd7† ♖xd7.

11... ♖xh3

I think we should take the bait.

12. ♖xh3 ♖xh3 13. ♖c7† ♖d7 14. ♖f4

This move is the reason White doesn't lose immediately, as would be the case after 14. ♖xa8?? ♖g4.



14... ♖g4 15. ♖xa8 ♖xa8

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

16. ♖d3N

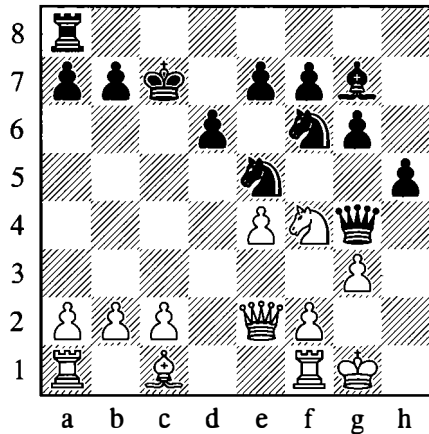
16. ♖xg4† hxg4 17. ♖e3 ♖xe4 Ermenkov – Velimirovic, Baile Herculane 1978.

16... ♖e5 17. ♖b5† ♖c7

White had better trade queens with:

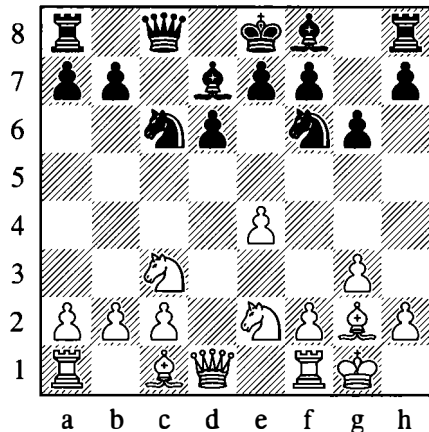
18. ♖e2

But of course e4 drops here too.



18... ♖xe2 19. ♖xe2 ♖xe4†

D) 9.0-0



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

9...h5 10. g5

10.h4 g7 11.g5 0-0 followed by ...e8 and ...e5 is comfortable for Black. Note that 12.d5 dx5 13.exd5 e5 14.e7? doesn't work, as 14...e8 15.xd6? (15.g5 c4) 15...c4 16.f4 xb2 17.e1 xc2+ wins material.

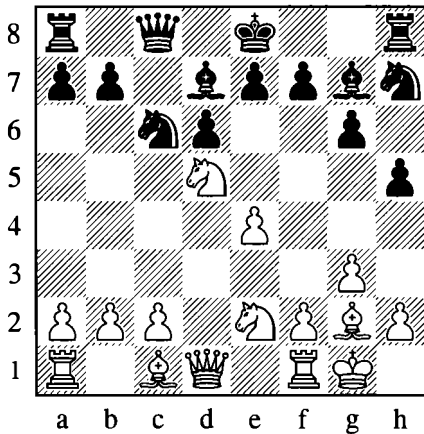
10...g7 11. d5 d7!

Shifting the bishop away.

12. c1

A sad move to have to play.

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



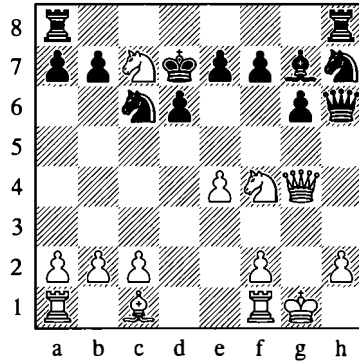
12...h4 13. gxh4

13.c3 is probably better, but after 13...hxg3 White is obliged to play the ugly 14.fxg3 (14.hxg3 f6 followed by ...h3 is far too strong).

13...h3 14. d3

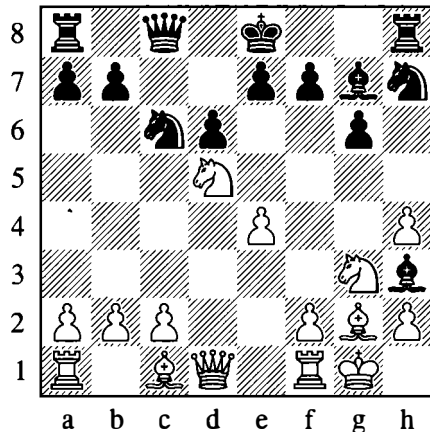
Grabbing the exchange looks like a death wish. On ChessPublishing I gave the line

14.xh3 xh3 15.c7+ d7 16.f4 xh4 17.d2 h3 18.f4 h6+ as extremely dangerous for White. The critical line runs: 19.g4+ (19.xa8 f6 20.h3 g5 and Black crashes through)



19...f5! 20.g3 (20.xg6 xg6+ 21.xg6 xc7+ or 20.exf5 d5!+) 20...d5 21.xa8 e5 Black's attack has reached decisive proportions.

Our main line was seen in Kofidis – Atalik, Ilioupolis 1995, when I still like:



14...f6!N 15. g5 dx5 16.exd5 e5

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

E) 9.h3

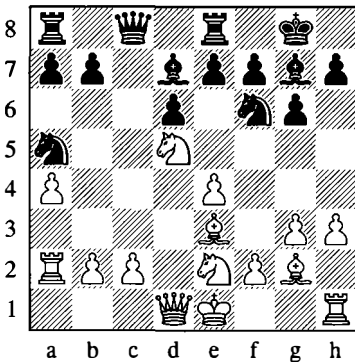
White normally decides that he doesn't want to allow our bishop into h3, but now he has some problems castling kingside.

9...♙g7

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

White has tried a variety of moves at this point, and our focus will be on **E1) 10.♙e3**, **E2) 10.♘f4**, **E3) 10.a4** and **E4) 10.b3**.

White can jump straight in with 10.♘d5, but it's risky as he hasn't played the preparatory moves to deal with the pressure on the long diagonal. An early game continued: 10...0-0 11.a4 ♜e8 12.♙e3 ♘a5! 13.♞a2 (White is a tempo too slow as 13.b3? drops the exchange: 13...♘xd5 14.exd5 ♙xa1)

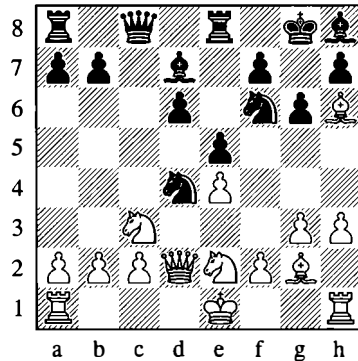


13...♘c4 14.♙c1 ♘d5 15.exd5 e5 16.dxe6 ♙xe6 17.b3 ♘e5+ Black had a pleasant initiative in Kagan – Speelman, Skara 1980.

10.g4 White covers the h3-pawn but still isn't really threatening to castle short. One of the earliest games in the line continued: 10...♞b8 11.g5?! I dislike this committal move as White cedes squares and leaves the h3-pawn vulnerable. 11...♘h5 12.♘d5 f5! 13.♙f3?! fx4

14.♙xh5 gxh5+ 15.♘g3? ♘d4!-+ 16.♘f6+ ♙xf6 17.♞xh5+ ♘d8 18.gxf6 ♞c4 19.fxe7+ ♘c8 20.♞b1 ♘xc2+ 21.♘d1 ♘d4 22.♘d2 ♞d3+ 23.♘e1 ♘c2# Mestel – Speelman, Hastings 1978.

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



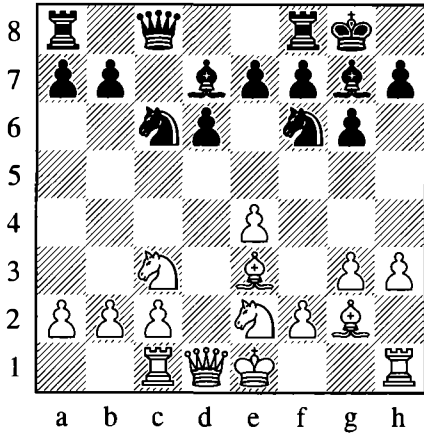
15...b5! 16.♞c1 b4 17.♘d5 ♘xd5 18.exd5 Berzinsh – Jones, Sunningdale 2007. Here the simplest would be 18...♘xe2N 19.♞xe2 e4+ winning a pawn, as 20.♞b1?! still allows 20...♙xb2!.

E1) 10.♙e3 0-0 11.♞c1

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

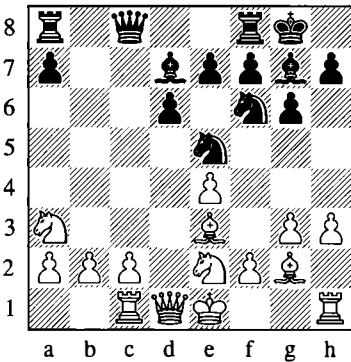
11.♞d2 b5! is promising for Black, and can be compared with the main line.

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



11...b5! 12.b3

12.♟xb5?!N isn't advisable: 12...♟e5
 13.♟a3 (13.♟bc3 ♟c4 14.b3 ♟xe3 15.fxex3
 ♟c5♠ White's position looks extremely ugly)



13...♟c6! 14.f3 (14.♟c3 ♟b7♠ White cannot
 defend both the e4- and b2-pawns.) 14...d5!♠
 Black has great play for the pawn.

This position has been reached a couple of
 times. In both games Black played 12...♟b8
 followed by ...a5, but that weakened the
 b6-square and so Black was vulnerable to
 ♟d5-b6. Instead, I quite like rerouting the
 knight again:

12...♟b4N 13.a3

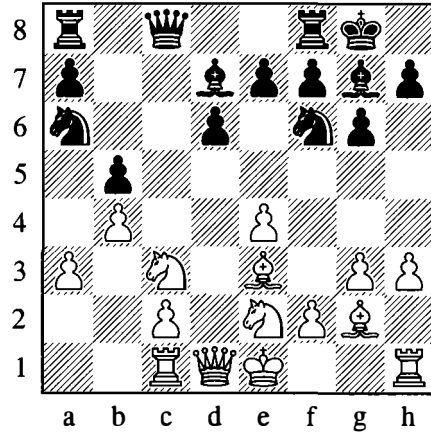
13.♟d2 ♟e8 14.a3 ♟a6 is similar.

13...♟a6

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

14.b4

White stops our idea, but now we have:

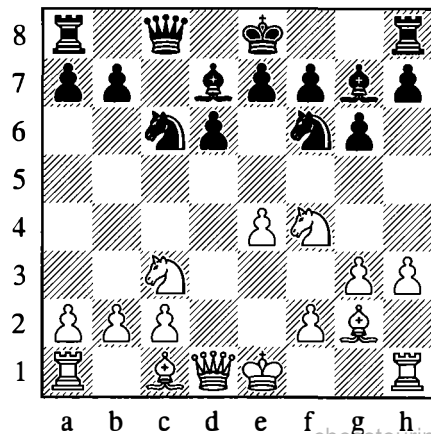


14...♟c7

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

E2) 10.♟f4

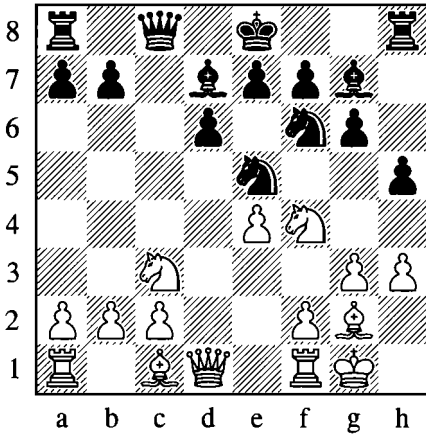
This is quite logical. White is defending the
 h3-pawn in order to try and castle, and also
 has ideas of planting a knight on d5.



10...h5 11.0-0

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

11...♚e5

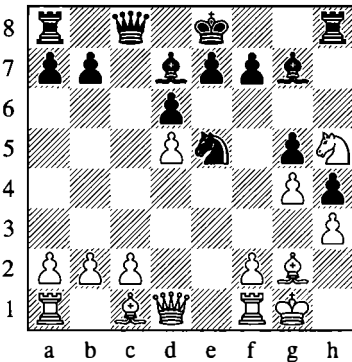


12.♙cd5

12.♚e2 h4!? (12...0-0 with a roughly equal game is also possible of course) 13.g4 ♚fxg4! 14.hxg4 ♙xg4 15.f3 ♙d7 looks quite scary. The position has similarities to variation E41.

12...♙xd5 13.exd5 ♔f8

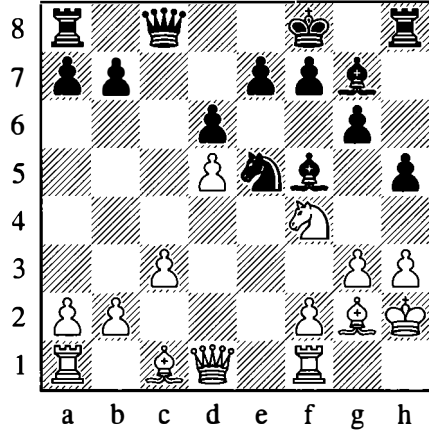
It was also possible to go for White's throat straight away with: 13...h4N 14.g4 g5 15.♙h5 (15.♙d3 f5!)



15...♙xh5! (15...♙h6 followed by ...f5 is also dangerous for White) 16.gxh5 ♙xh3 Black has a strong attack.

14.♙h2 ♙f5 15.c3

Andrey Ivanov – Kislinsky, Rodatycki 2006. Here we can reply calmly:

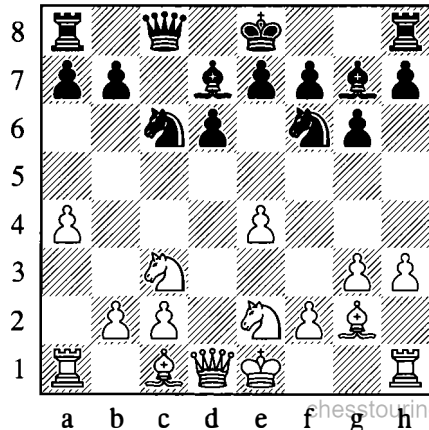


15...♙f6N

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

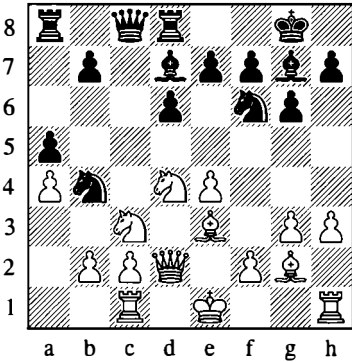
E3) 10.a4

The choice of one of the world's top ten in a recent game.



10...0-0 11.♙g5

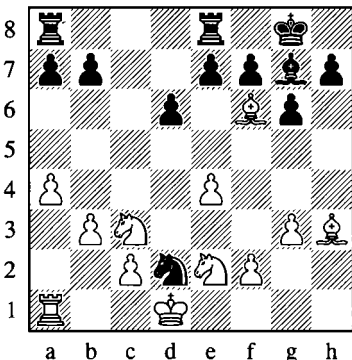
11.♙e3 is White's usual choice. 11...♞d8 12.♞d2 ♟b4 13.♞c1 a5 14.♟d4 Short – Mestel, Hastings 1982. Here I like rerouting the knight:



14...♟a6N 15.b3 (15.g4 ♙c6 16.0-0 ♟c5= also looks totally fine for Black. White can cripple our structure with 17.♟xc6 bxc6 18.♙xc5 dxc5 but he's likely to run into trouble on the dark squares. Meanwhile, the b2-pawn has suddenly become vulnerable.) 15...♟c5 White will still be forced to play 16.g4 should he ever wish to castle. Black can play in analogy with the above note to 15.g4 with 16...♙c6=.

11...♞e8 12.♞d2 ♟e5 13.b3 ♞b8

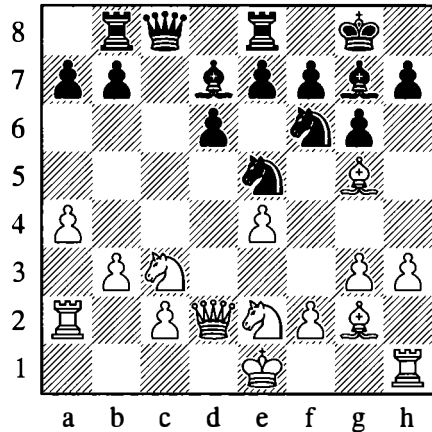
13...♙xh3!N is the engine's choice, but Hou Yifan was evidently not convinced that 14.♞xh3 ♞xh3 15.♙xh3 ♟f3† 16.♟d1 ♟xd2 17.♙xf6! (17.♙xd2?! ♟xe4!†) would favour her. Black can get rook and two pawns for the two pieces with:



17...♟xe4 (17...♟xb3?! 18.♙xg7! ♟xa1 19.♙d4± and the knight on a1 will drop) 18.♟xe4 exf6 19.♟4c3∞ In my experience I find engines tend to overvalue the rook against two minor pieces. Here it tells me it's equal, but I think only White has winning chances and so it was a good decision to avoid these complications.

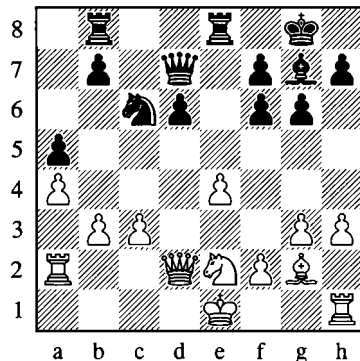
14.♞a2

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

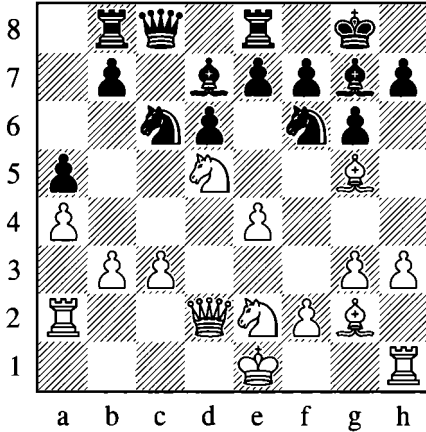


14...♟c6! 15.♟d5 a5 16.c3

16.♙xf6 should have been preferred, but it's still not so easy for White to castle. 16...exf6 17.♟b6 ♞c7 18.♟xd7 ♞xd7 19.c3 (19.0-0?! f5 20.exf5 ♟b4! traps the rook) Here Black has various options, but I like:



19...♖e6 20.♖b2 b5= Black has sufficient counterplay for the slightly ugly structure. We have pressure on White's queenside and will be able to break with ...f5 at some point.



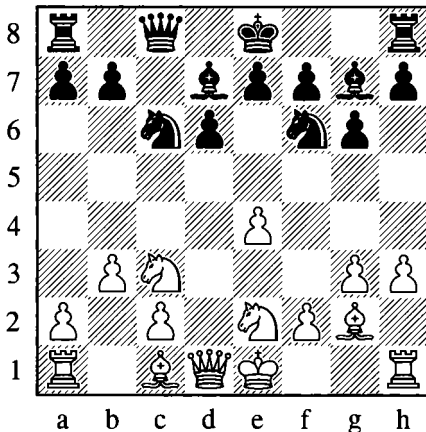
16...b5!

Now there's no time for ♖b6.

17.axb5 ♜xb5 18.♖d1 ♖b8 19.♞a3 ♝xd5 20.exd5 ♜e5 21.0-0 a4! 22.♜d4 ♞xb3! 23.♜xb3 ♜c4

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

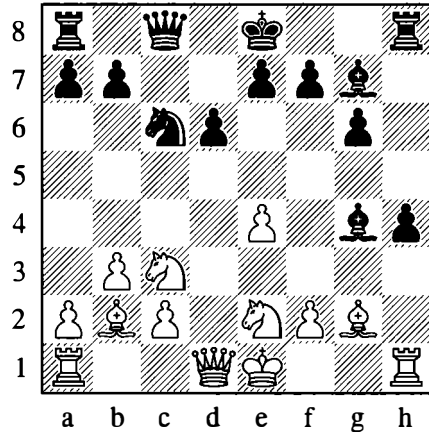
E4) 10.b3



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

E41) 10...h5!? 11.♞b2 h4 12.g4 ♜xg4! 13.hxg4 ♞xg4

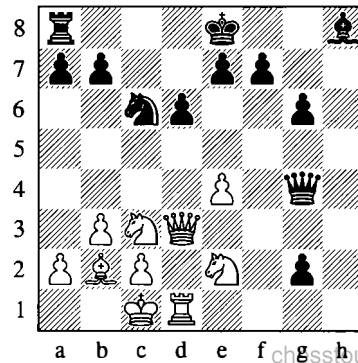
This position has been reached four times at the time of writing. In return for the invested piece Black has two pawns, a lead in development and the initiative.



14.♞f1

This is logical, allowing the bishop to drop back to h1.

14.f3 h3 15.fxg4 hxg2 16.♞xh8† ♞xh8 17.♖d3 ♖xg4 18.0-0-0 Suarez Gomez – Medarde Santiago, Lisbon 2014.



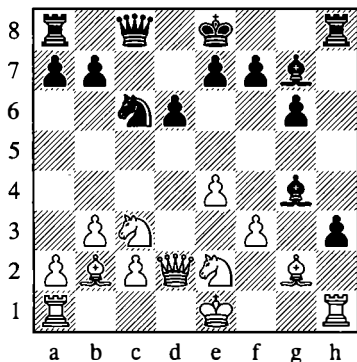
A very complex position has arisen, with Black having three pawns for the piece. The crucial question is whether the pawn on g2 is a strength or will it drop off? My engine helpfully evaluates the position as 0.00 after various moves for Black.

14.♟d2?!

Ignoring Black's threat doesn't look advisable.

14...h3 15.f3N

Chris Ward offers this as an improvement on 15.♟f1? ♟e5! 16.♟d4? (16.0–0–0 had to be tried, but 16...♟f3 is still good for Black) 16...♟f3!–+ with the dual threat of taking the rook and 17...♟h6 trapping the queen, Zivkovic – D. Radovanovic, Belgrade 2014.



15...♟b4?!

This intriguing suggestion of my engine might be strongest.

As Ward mentions, 15...hxg2 16.♟xh8† ♟xh8 17.fxg4 ♟xg4 is a better version of 14.f3 for Black, as the queen is misplaced on d2.

16.fxg4

16.♟xh3 ♟xh3 17.♟xh3 ♟xh3 18.0–0–0 ♟g2

16...♟xg4

The following moves all seem forced.

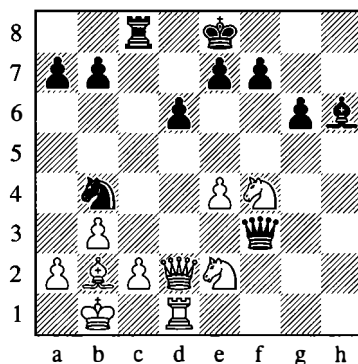
17.♟xh3 ♟xh3 18.♟xh3

18.0–0–0?? ♟h6–+

18...♟xh3 19.0–0–0 ♟h6 20.♟f4 ♟f3

21.♟ce2 ♟c8! 22.♟b1

22.♟xb4? ♟xe2!–+



22...♟xf4 23.♟xf4 ♟xc2 24.♟d4 ♟h2 25.♟e1

25.♟d5? ♟c6 26.♟d3 ♟g2–+

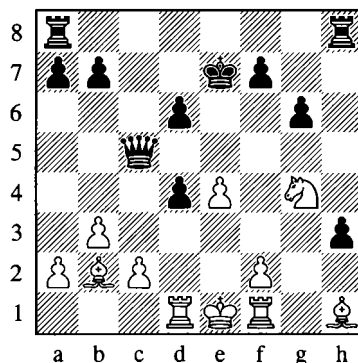
25...♟c6 26.♟e3 ♟xe3 27.♟xe3

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

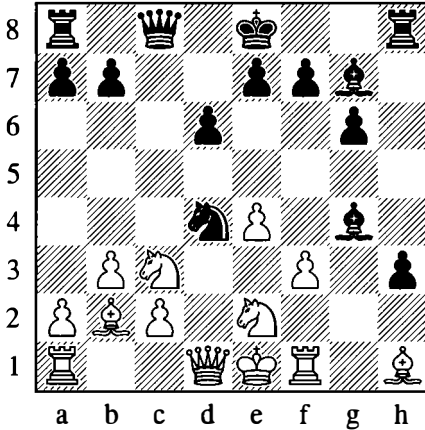
14...h3 15.♟h1 ♟d4 16.f3N

This would have been consistent with White's previous couple of moves.

16.♟xd4? ♟xd4 17.♟xd4 White was obviously scared and decided to give back material; sometimes three pieces can outgun the queen and two pawns, but here White's king still isn't entirely secure, while the h3-pawn is obviously strong. 17...♟c5 18.♟d5 e5! 19.♟f6† ♟e7 20.♟xg4 exd4 21.♟d1 Movsesian – Likavsky, Czech Republic 2005. Black should have thrown in:



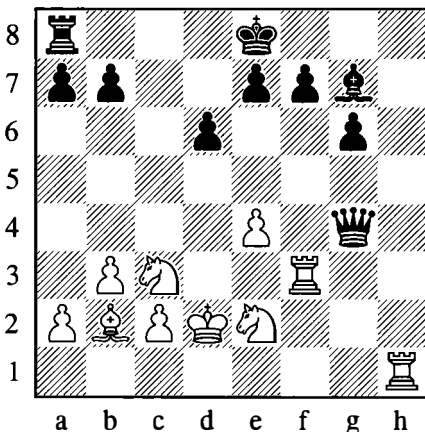
21...♖g5N Forcing White to go passive.
 22.♘h2 (22...♙f3 h2 is awkward) Only now
 should Black play: 22...♗a5† 23.♗d2 ♜hc8
 24.♘d1 ♗xa2 25.♙xd4 a5! 26.♘g4 a4→
 Black has the stronger attack.



16...♘xf3† 17.♙xf3

17.♗xf3? ♙xf3 18.♙xf3 h2 19.♘d2 (19.♙h1 ♗g4†) 19...h1=♗! 20.♙xh1 ♙h6† 21.♘d3 ♗h3† 22.♘g3 (22.♘c4 a5!→ closes the net on the white king) 22...♗xg3† 23.♗f3 ♗xf3† 24.♙xf3 ♙g7† The rook and two pawns outweigh the minor pieces in this ending.

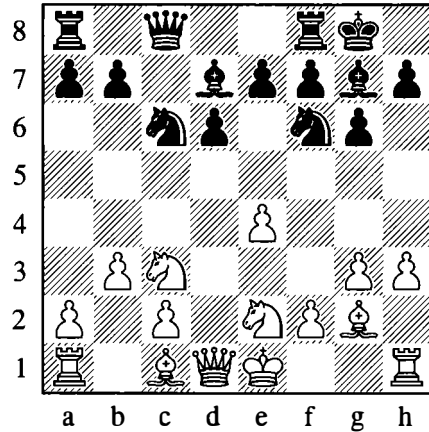
17...♙xf3 18.♗xf3 h2 19.♘d2 h1=♗
 20.♗xh1 ♗xh1 21.♗xh1 ♗g4=



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

E42) 10...0-0

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



11.♙b2 ♗b8!?

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

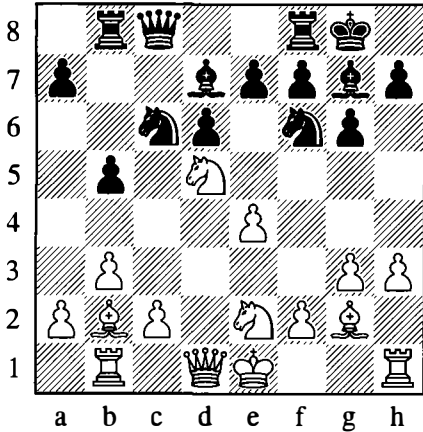
At this point White has tried E421) 12.♗b1 and E422) 12.♗d2.

12.♘d5?! allowed 12...♘xd5 13.♙xg7 ♘e3! 14.fxe3 ♘xg7 in Rohonyan – Aksionova, Dnipropetrovsk 2002. Black has a pleasant advantage, with the better structure and a fantastic outpost on e5.

E421) 12.♗b1

Preparing to move the knight.

12...b5 13.♘d5



13...♟e5!?

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

13...♟xd5 14.exd5 ♟xb2 15.♞xb2 ♟d8 16.♞d2 was Morwani – Ca. Hansen, Aalborg 1991. Simplest would be: 16...e5N 17.dxe6 ♟xe6 18.0–0 (18.♞xd6?! ♞e8♞ followed by 19...♟g5 is problematic) 18...♟c6= The slight weakness on d6 shouldn't be a problem as Black's pieces are better coordinated.

14.♟xf6†

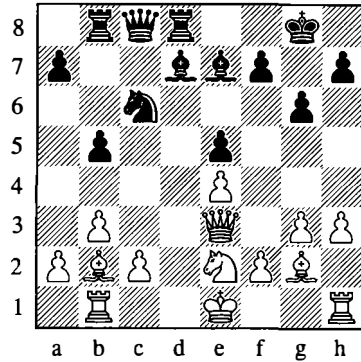
14.h4?! is premature, as 14...♟xd5! 15.exd5 ♟b4 forces White to make the big concession 16.c3. After 16...♟a6 17.0–0 ♟f5 18.♞a1 ♟c5♞ Black dominates.

14...♟xf6 15.0–0

This was played against me.

Declining the pawn is also possible, but Black is fine. For example: 15.♟c3N ♟e6 16.♟d5 ♟g7= White's knight looks nice, but he still has to resolve the issue of his king and watch out for Black taking on d5 and playing ...♟b4.

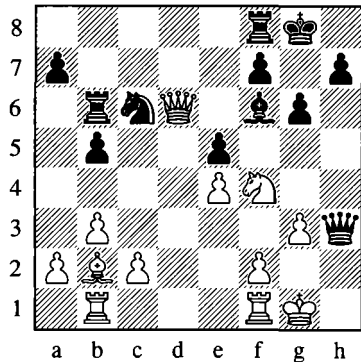
15.♞xd6N ♟e7 16.♞d2 ♞d8 17.♞e3



17...♟b4! 18.c3 ♟a5= With the dark-squared bishop coming back into the game, Black has good play for the pawn. White would like to play 19.♞h6, defending h3 and preparing castling, but 19...♟d4!♞ would cut across his plans.

15...♟e7

I also analysed 15...♟xh3N 16.♟xh3 ♞xh3 17.♞xd6 ♞b6! 18.♟f4! when I missed I could continue:



18...♟e7! 19.♞xg6† hxg6 20.♟xh3 ♞a6= Black will regain the pawn with a roughly equal position.

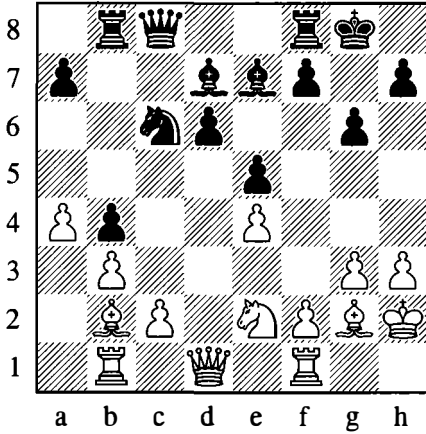
15...♞d8N is also interesting.

16.♟h2 b4

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

17.a4

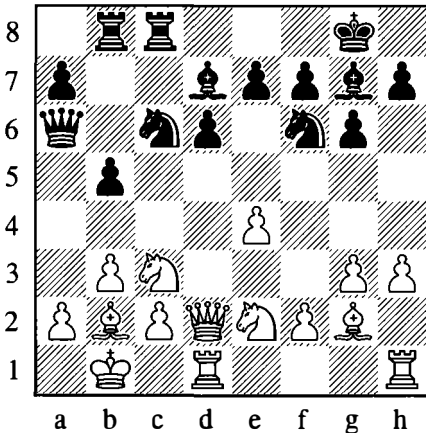
In Kochetkova – Jones, Reykjavik 2015, I should probably have played the immediate:



17...♙c6N

To be followed by ...f5. The position is double-edged.

**E422) 12.♖d2 b5 13.0-0-0 ♗a6
14.♘b1 ♝fc8**



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

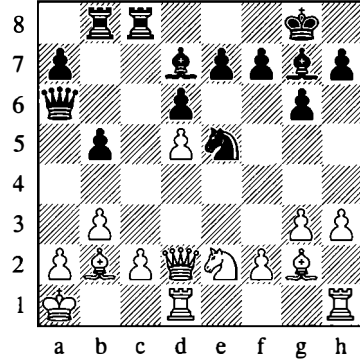
Simon Williams continues his line with:
15.♘d5N

This is too committal, but also instructive.
15...♘xd5 16.exd5 ♘e5 17.♘a1

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

After 17.♝he1? ♘c4! 18.bxc4 bxc4 19.c3 ♝c5 20.♘a1 ♝a5 21.♘c1 ♝ab5 Black has a decisive attack.

17.♘d4? ♘c4! is also horrible.

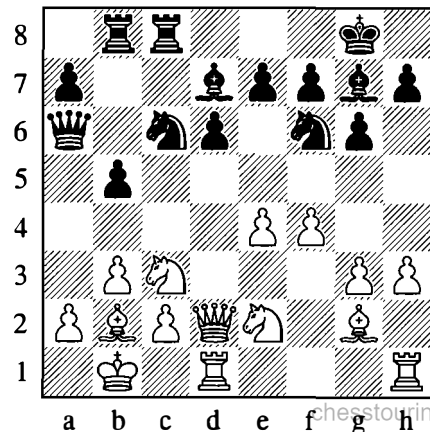


17...♘c4 18.bxc4 ♙xb2† 19.♘xb2 bxc4†
20.♘a1 c3 21.♘xc3 ♗a3 22.♙b1 ♗xc3†
23.♗xc3 ♗xb1† 24.♙xb1 ♗xc3

This endgame should be drawn, but Black can press.

E4221) 15.f4

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



15...♞a5N

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

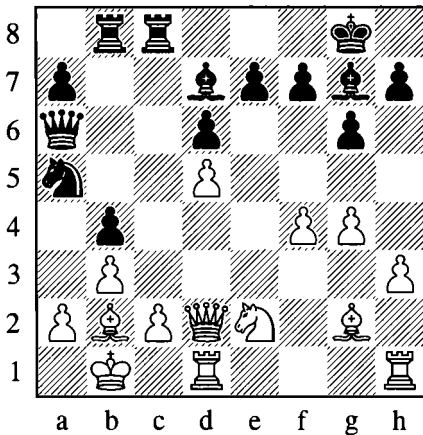
15...b4N is also a viable option: 16.♞d5 ♞xd5 17.exd5 ♟xb2 18.♞xb2 (18.dxc6? ♞a3! 19.cxd7 ♞c5-+ and White is powerless to prevent 20...♞a5) 18...♞d8= With the pawn on d5, White would rather have his pawn on g4 rather than f4. Here he doesn't control the f5-square and his pieces are rather restricted. Black will continue with some combination of checking on a3 and doubling rooks on the c-file.

16.g4

16.e5 b4! 17.exf6? (This doesn't work, but neither 17.♞d5 ♞xd5 18.♟xd5 ♞c5 nor 17.♞e4 ♞xe4 18.♟xe4 ♞b7! poses any problems for Black) 17...bxc3 18.♞xc3 ♞c4!-+

16...b4 17.♞d5 ♞xd5 18.exd5

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



18...♟c3!

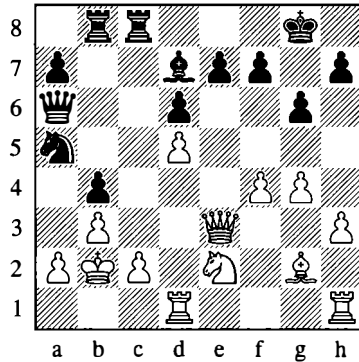
Giving up a pawn to open lines towards the opponent's king isn't unusual in the Dragon, but here Black is also happy to trade his dark-squared bishop for a knight.

19.♞xc3

19.♞e3?!

Declining the offer doesn't slow down Black's attack particularly:

19...♟xb2 20.♞xb2



20...♞c3! 21.♞d2

21.♞xc3? ♞c4†! 22.bxc4 ♞a3† 23.♞a1 bxc3 24.♞c1 ♞b2 White is forced to give his queen with 25.♞b1 when 25...♞xb1† 26.♞xb1 ♞a4-+ wins material.

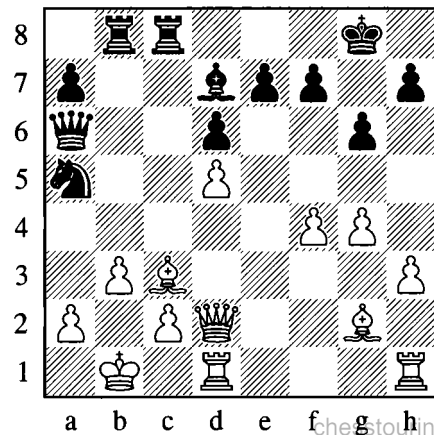
After 21.♞xe7? ♞c4† 22.bxc4 ♞a3† 23.♞b1 b3!-+ Black mates.

21...♞bc8 22.♞d4 ♟b5 23.♟e4 ♞8c5

The attack is dangerous.

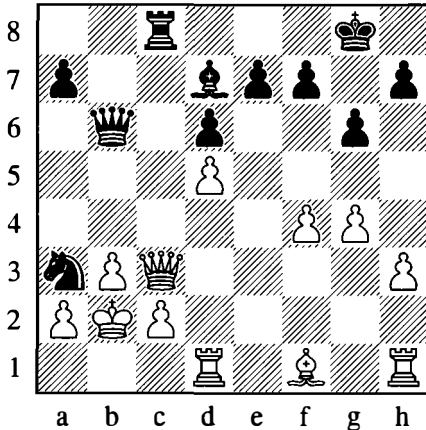
19...bxc3 20.♟xc3

20.♟f1? should be met with: 20...♞xb3! 21.cxb3 (21.axb3?! ♞a5 22.♞e1 ♞xb3! 23.cxb3 c2† 24.♞c1 cxd1=♞† 25.♞xd1 ♞xd5†-+) 21...♞a5 22.♟xc3 ♞xc3=



20...♖c4 21.♗d4 ♖a3† 22.♗b2 ♜xc3!
23.♝xc3 ♞c8 24.♙f1 ♞b6

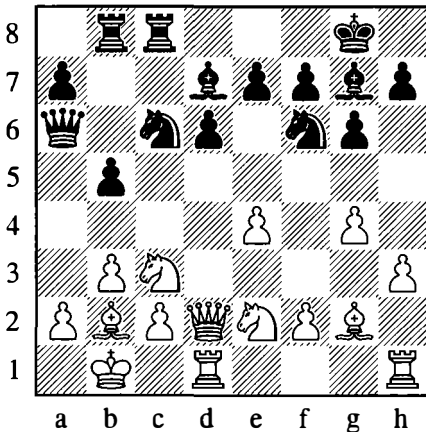
White has to give up the queen to prevent Black's attack from breaking through.



25.♝xc8† ♙xc8 26.♗xa3 ♝f2=

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

E4222) 15.g4



15...♖a5

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

15...♖e8

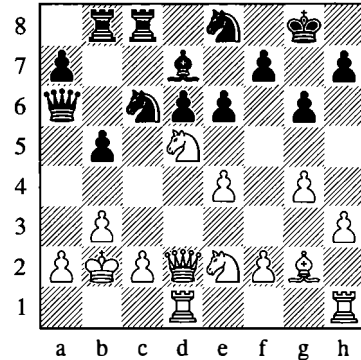
Stephen Gordon has played this – rerouting the knight so that when White plays ♖d5, he's not obliged to change the structure.

16.♖d5

16.f4!?

16...♙xb2 17.♗xb2 e6

17...b4!?



18.♖e3!N

This is a strong improvement, and I've been unable to find a way for Black to break through.

18.♖b4?! ♖xb4 19.♝xb4 ♞c5 20.h4 ♞bc8 21.♞c1 e5 22.g5 ♖g7 23.♙h3 ♙hx3 24.♞xh3 ♖e6 25.♗d2 was agreed drawn in Tiviakov – Gordon, Germany 2013, but the English GM really should have continued with 25...♞b7N 26.♞e3 a5!±.

18...♖e5

18...b4 19.f4 ♞b5 20.♗b1 ♞a5 21.♖c1 ♞c5 22.g5±

18...♞b6 19.f4 a5 20.a3±

19.♗a1 ♝a3 20.f4±

15...e6!N

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

16.♝xd6

16.f4 b4 17.♖a4 ♖a5 (17...e5!± with the idea of ...♖d4 is also interesting) 18.g5 ♖e8 19.♙xg7 ♗xg7 20.♖b2 ♖c7

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

16...b4 17.♞d5!

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

17...exd5 18.♙xf6 ♖xe2 19.♙xg7 ♜xg7
20.♞he1

20.♞xd7? ♞d4+→

20...♞xf2 21.♞f1 ♞xg2 22.♞f6† ♜g8

23.♞xf7† ♜h8 24.♞f6† ♜g8=

16.♞he1N

16.f4 transposes to variation E4221.

16.g5?! b4!†

In a friendly rapid tournament, my strong opponent tried:

16.e5!? b4 17.♞e4

17.exf6 bxc3 18.♞xc3 ♞c4!†

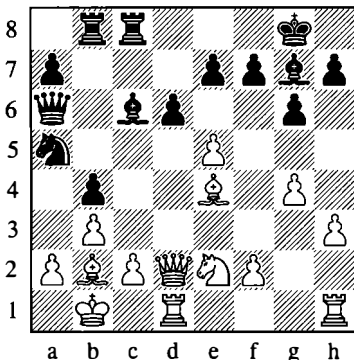
17...♞e4

17...dxe5N 18.♞xf6† ♙xf6 19.♞xd7 ♞xe2

20.♞d2 White has decent compensation for the pawn with his powerful bishop pair.

18.♙xe4 ♙c6

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

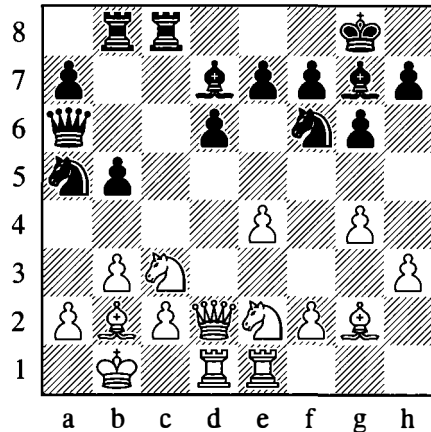


19.♙xc6 ♞xc6 20.exd6 ♙xb2 21.♜xb2

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

21...♞d8N

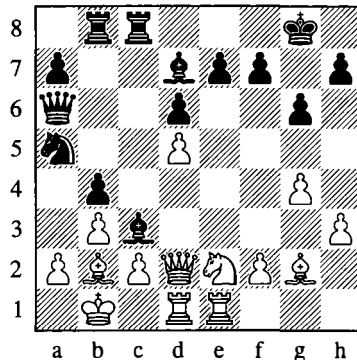
The position is roughly equal.



16...♞c5!

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

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



a) 19.♞xc3 bxc3 20.♙xc3 ♞c4 21.♞d4 ♞a3†
22.♜b2 ♞xc3 23.♞xc3 ♞c8 24.♙f1 ♞b6
25.♞xc8† ♙xc8 26.♜xa3 ♞xf2 This is of course extremely similar, but is a slightly better version for White with his rook already active on e1. Nevertheless, this position is completely playable for Black and again my engine gives various 0.00 assessments.

b) 19. ♖f4

This is an alternative path, but Black has:

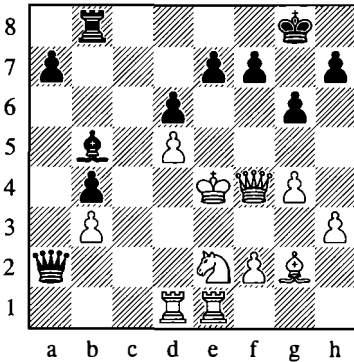
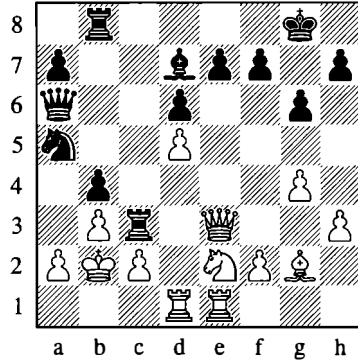
19... ♖xb3! 20. axb3 ♙xb2 21. ♖xb2 ♜xc2†
22. ♖xc2 ♞a2†

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

23. ♖d3

23. ♖c1 ♜c8† 24. ♞c4 ♜xc4† 25. bxc4 b3--
23... ♙b5† 24. ♖e4

24. ♖d4 ♞b2† 25. ♖e4 ♞c2† is the same.



24... ♞c2† 25. ♖f3

25. ♖e3 ♞xb3† 26. ♖e4 ♞c2† (26... ♙xe2!?)
is also possible if Black wishes to play for more) 27. ♖e3=

25... ♙xe2† 26. ♜xe2 ♞xb3† 27. ♜e3 ♞xd1†
28. ♖g3

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

28... ♞c1! 29. ♜xe7 ♞xf4† 30. ♖xf4 b3 31. ♙e4 a5

Black's queenside pawns hold the draw.

c) 19. ♞e3 ♙xb2

White's rook is en prise on e1, but 19... ♙xe1? isn't advisable as Black's king is terribly insecure. In fact, White already has a decisive advantage after simply recapturing.

20. ♖xb2 ♜c3

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

21. ♞c1!

This is an important difference.

The careless 21. ♞d4? allows 21... ♖c4†! 22. bxc4 ♞a3† 23. ♖b1 ♙a4 24. ♜d2 ♜c8! and Black's attack breaks through.

21... ♜c5

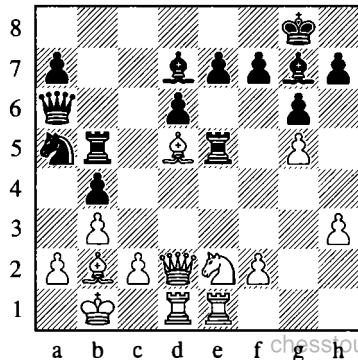
Black doesn't have any tricks and so is forced to drop back. White should have some advantage, as the knight is rather misplaced on a5 if we can't get any sacrifices to work.

17.f4

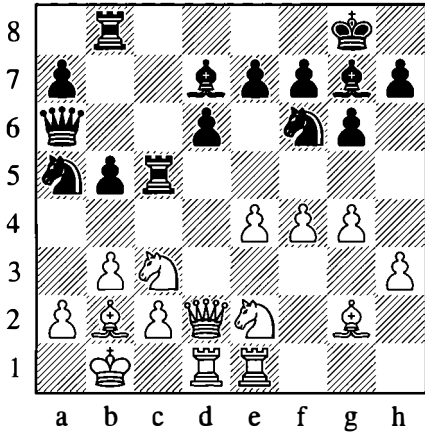
This seems the most logical for White.

I also looked at 17.g5 b4! 18. ♖a4 (18.gxf6? bxc3 19. ♖xc3 ♖c4!† is a typical motif in this line) 18... ♖xe4! 19. ♙xe4 ♙xa4 20. ♙xg7 (20.bxa4?? ♖c4) 20... ♖xg7 21. bxa4 ♖c4 when we have a strong attack for the piece invested.

17.e5!?! An interesting computer suggestion. However, after 17... ♜xe5 18.g5 b4! 19. ♖d5 ♖xd5 20. ♙xd5 ♜b5! I don't think many humans would fancy playing White.



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



17...b4

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

18.♘d5 ♘xd5 19.exd5 ♙xb2

19...♙c3 is also possible, but then ...♙c5 would have been a wasted tempo.

20.♙xb2 ♙b5

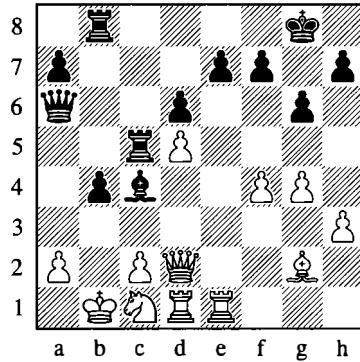
Black is already threatening the sneaky ...♘c4†, and White has to be very accurate to prevent the mate threats.

21.♙a1!

This seems to be White's best defence.

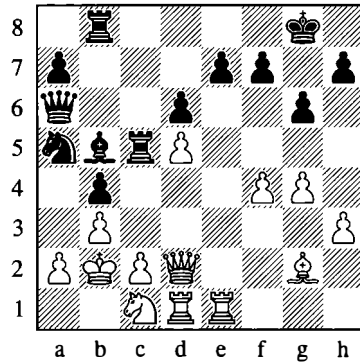
21.♙e4? loses immediately to: 21...♘c4†! 22.bxc4 ♙a3† 23.♙a1 ♙xc4 24.♘c1 ♙xa2! 25.♘xa2 (25.♙e3 is White's best, but Black is completely winning after either 25...♙c3 or 25...b3) 25...♙a5 26.c4 bxc3 Black will mate within a few moves.

21.♙b1? also doesn't prevent us crashing through with: 21...♘c4! 22.bxc4 ♙xc4 23.♘c1



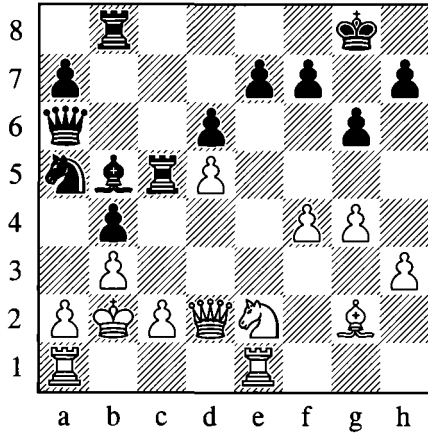
23...♙a3! White cannot deal with the threat of 24...♙xa2† followed by 25...b3, for example: 24.♙e3 ♙xa2† 25.♘xa2 b3 26.cxb3 ♙xb3† 27.♙xb3 ♙xb3† 28.♙a1 ♙c2 29.♙xc2 ♙xc2 30.♙f3 ♙f2 31.♙e4 ♙e3 32.♙c2 ♙xh3 White's pawns are all dropping.

21.♘c1 is a sensible-looking defending move, but even here we can continue as before:



21...♘c4†! 22.bxc4 ♙xc4 23.♙e3 White defends against our initial threat, but 23...♙bc8! followed by ...♙a4 puts a lot of pressure on White's position.

21.♙b1 A good defensive try. Here I think it's time to play: 21...♙xe2 22.♙xe2 ♙xe2 23.♙xe2 ♙c7= Black will follow up with ...♘b7-c5 and ...a5.

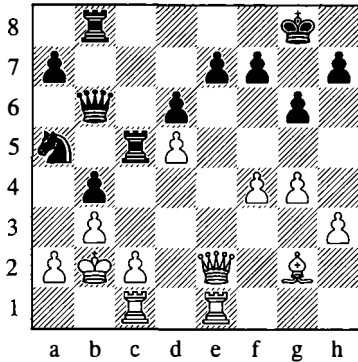


21...♙c4!?

As putting the knight on c4 no longer works with the a-pawn defended, this seemed a logical try. The bishop is of course poisoned and now White will find it hard to defend his d5-pawn.

21...♘c4†? doesn't really work here: 22.bxc4 ♗a3† 23.♙b1 ♖xc4 24.♘d4 ♙a4 25.♞e3 ♞c3 26.♘b3 We still have some pressure, but I'm sceptical that it's enough to justify the piece.

21...♙xe2 is the computer's top suggestion, but after: 22.♗xe2 ♗b6 23.♞ac1! (23.♗xe7 allows a draw with 23...♞bc8 24.♞ac1 ♖xc2† 25.♞xc2 ♗d4† 26.♙b1 ♞xc2 27.♙xc2 ♗c3† 28.♙b1 ♗d3†=)



23...♞bc8 24.♗d2 White has taken control and reached the kind of position he's been aiming for.

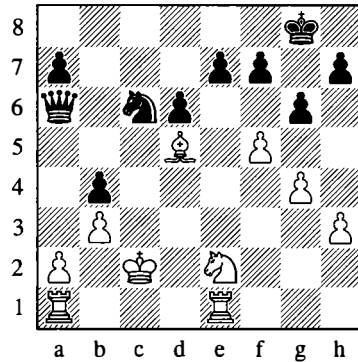
The problem with the immediate 21...♞bc8 is that 22.♘d4 seems to keep White's position together.

22.f5

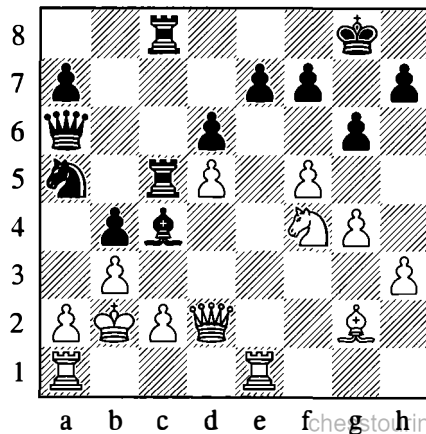
White gets on with it on the kingside which seems critical.

22...♞bc8 23.♘f4

If White sees what we're up to then he might try covering the c2-square with 23.♙e4. Then I think Black should go for the sacrifice: 23...♙xd5 24.♙xd5 ♖xc2† 25.♗xc2 ♖xc2† 26.♙xc2 ♘c6



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

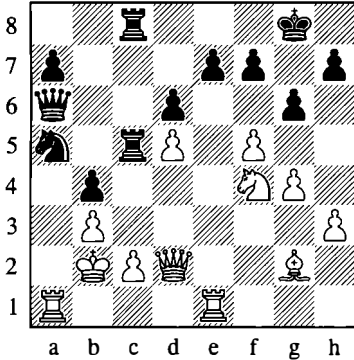


23... ♖xb3!

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

24.cxb3

24.axb3? This recapture would actually leave White in a lot of trouble after:



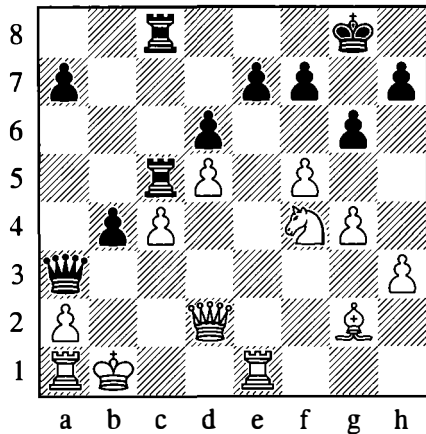
24... ♖xc2† 25. ♗xc2 ♘xc2† 26. ♕xc2 ♖c8† –+

24... ♘c4†!

It was time for the typical knight sacrifice.

25.bxc4 ♖a3† 26. ♕b1

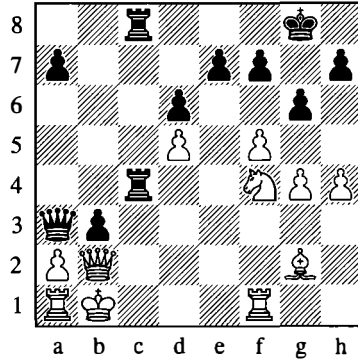
26. ♕c2? ♖xc4† 27. ♕d1 ♖c2 –+



26... ♖xc4 27. ♕e4

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

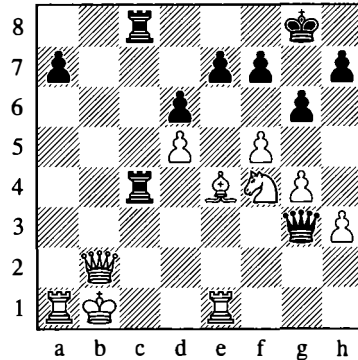
27. ♕d1 was its immediate suggestion, but 27... ♗g3 forks the two minor pieces. There is nothing better than 28. ♖f1 ♖a3 when White has no way of making progress. One amusing sample line continues: 29.h4 b3 30. ♗b2



30... ♖b8! 31.axb3 (31. ♗xa3?? bxa2† 32. ♕xa2 ♖c2† 33. ♗b2 ♖xc2† 34. ♕a3 ♖b6 and White has no defence to the mate in one) 31... ♗xb3 32. ♗xb3 ♖xb3† 33. ♕a2 ♖b6= White cannot escape the checks.

27...b3 28. ♗b2

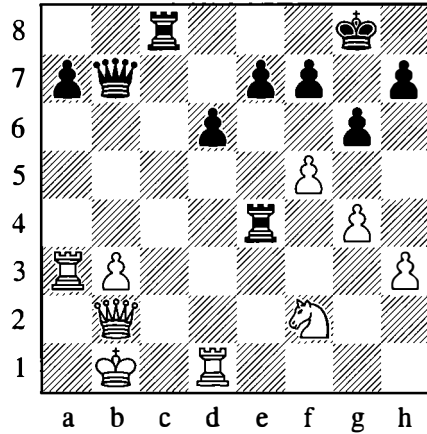
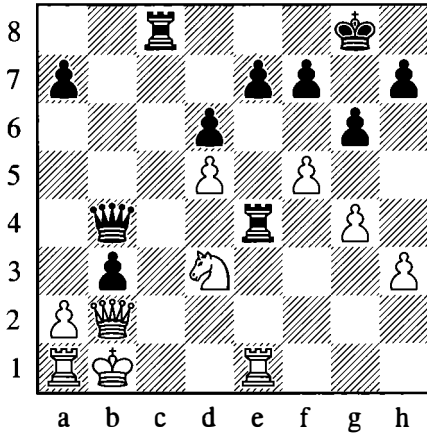
28.axb3 ♗xb3† 29. ♗b2 ♗g3 would again see White's pieces overworked. In fact, the only way for him to retain the balance would be:



30. ♖f1! ♖xe4 31. ♖a3! ♖e3 32. ♖xe3 ♗xe3 33. ♖c1 Desperately trying to trade pieces. 33... ♗e4† 34. ♕a1 ♖a4† 35. ♕b1 ♗e4†=

28... ♗b4 29. ♘d3 ♖xe4!

That's one piece back.



30.♖d1

For humans, 30.♖c1 would be more logical. 30...♖xc1† 31.♘xc1 bxa2† 32.♖xa2 ♜c5☞ White has managed to coordinate his pieces somewhat and shouldn't get mated immediately. However, we're about to get three pawns for the piece and, with his king so loose, I don't think White can realistically think about winning this position.

30...♜b5 31.axb3!

31.♜xb3?! Another sensible-looking move, but after 31...♜e8! White is worse. 32.♘b2 ♖b8 33.♜d3 leaves Black with a choice between 33...♜a4 34.a3 ♖e3 35.♜xe3 ♜xd1† 36.♜c1 ♜xd5☞ and 33...♖xb2† 34.♘xb2 ♜b8† 35.♜b3 (35.♘c2 ♜c7† 36.♘d2 ♜a5† 37.♘c2 ♜c5† doesn't help) 35...♖b4☞.

31...♜xd5 32.♘f2 ♜b7 33.♖a3

The rook is not yet en prise as 33.♘xe4? ♜xe4† 34.♘a2 ♖c2 picks up the queen.

33...♖e3☞

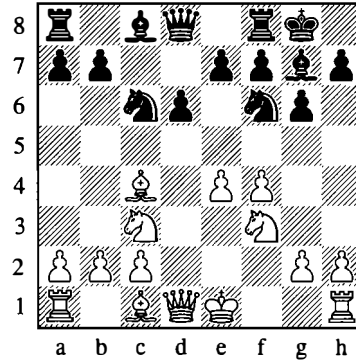
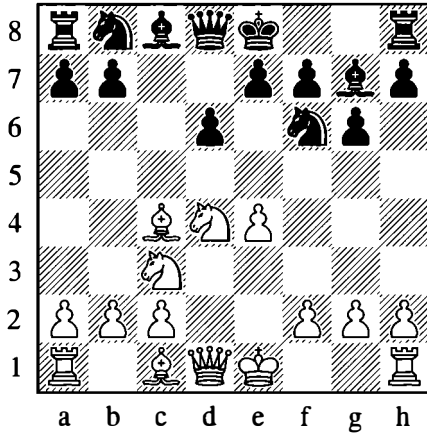
I think it's time to end the line. White (with computer precision) has avoided being mated, but in the process has had to give back a large part of his material advantage. Black still has by far the more active pieces, as well as the safer king and two pawns for the piece. Black has great compensation,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

Conclusion

In the Fianchetto Variation most players go for 7.♘de2. I like the idea of 8...♜c8, not allowing White to play on auto-pilot. It is risky for White to castle kingside but, as we've seen, the king isn't completely safe on the queenside either. I've offered a few alternatives: 10...h5!? is a prelude to a dangerous piece sacrifice, while 15...e6!N also looks interesting. In all of these lines White's play is certainly not easy and he has to defend with the utmost care.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6
5.♘c3 g6 6.♗c4 ♗g7

that White's king is going to get into trouble than Black's. 7...0-0 8.♘f3 ♘c6



Neither A) 7.♗g5 nor B) 7.♗e3 should cause us any difficulties, but we should check them anyway. C) 7.0-0 is the main line.

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

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

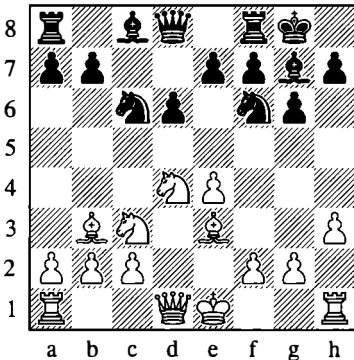
A) 7.♗g5

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

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

7...0-0 8.♙d2

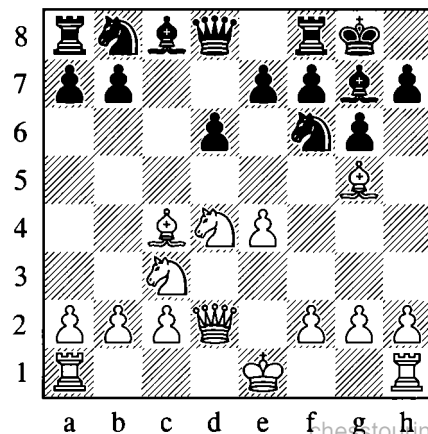
This is another independent approach. White is trying to play a Yugoslav Attack while doing without f2-f3 and so gaining a tempo.



8.0-0 transposes to variation C1.

9...♘a5 10.0-0 b6!? 11.♘d5 e6 12.♘xf6+ ♙xf6 13.c3 ♗b7 14.♗c2 ♘c4 15.♗c1 d5

Black was better in Diamant – B. Smith, Lubbock 2010.



7.f4 looks rather premature. It's far more likely

8...♗c6

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

9.♗xc6

9.0–0–0 ♗xe4

9...♗xd4N 10.♖xd4 h6 is a good alternative.

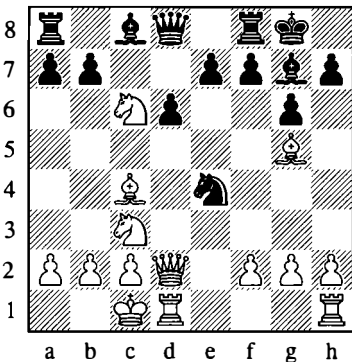
10.♗xc6

10.♗xe4 ♗xd4 11.♖h6 ♖xh6 12.♖xh6 ♗f5

13.♖g5 was Fomani – Wikner, Jonkoping

1988. After 13...♖c7N 14.♖b3 ♖e6

White's attack shouldn't be too dangerous.



10...♗xd2

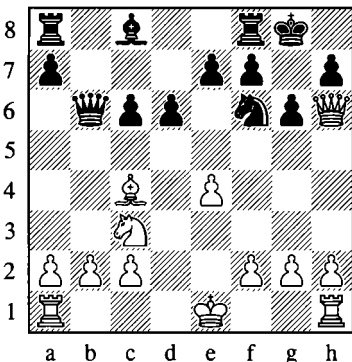
10...♖xc3!N is probably even stronger.

11.♖xf7 ♗xf7 12.♗xd8 ♖xd8 13.♖xd2 ♖e6

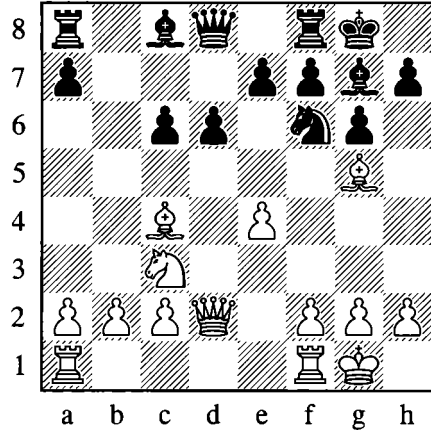
Zegers – Postma, Twente 2007.

9...bxc6 10.0–0

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



12.♖b3?! Missing one of Black's two threats. (12.♖c1 d5 is also miserable) 12...♖xf2! 13.♗xf2 ♗g4 14.♗g3 ♗xh6 Azevedo – Santiago, Joao Pessoa 2013.



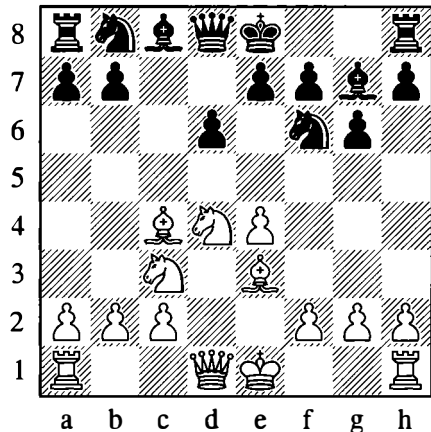
10...♖b8 11.♖b3

11.♖ab1 was tried in a recent game, but 11...♖c7 12.f4?! d5! 13.♖xf6 ♖xf6 14.e5 ♖g7 15.♖d3 f6 already saw the young GM struggling in Antipov – Gaehwiler, Pune 2014.

11...♗d7=

B) 7.♖e3

A slightly odd move order. If White wants to play the Yugoslav Attack then developing the dark-squared bishop first is more flexible.



7...0-0

Against this particular move order 7...♖g4 is a possibility, but I feel 8.♗b5† ♕f8 9.0-0 is quite dangerous. Black will have the bishop pair and White a terrible structure, but the pressure down the f-file is dangerous.

8.h3

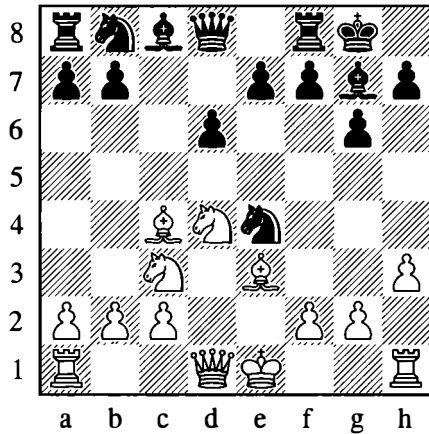
8.f3 would be a Yugoslav Attack; 8.♗b3?! ♖g4†.

8.♝d2?! ♖g4! This is now good for Black. White doesn't have a ♗b5† trick and so he'll have no compensation for Black's bishop pair. White has tried to retain his bishop with 9.♗g5, but after 9...h6 10.♗h4 ♗xd4! 11.♝xd4 e5! 12.♗xd8 exd4† Black wins material.

8...♖xe4

A good way to exploit White's move order.

8...♖c6 will transpose elsewhere after either 9.0-0 or 9.♗b3.



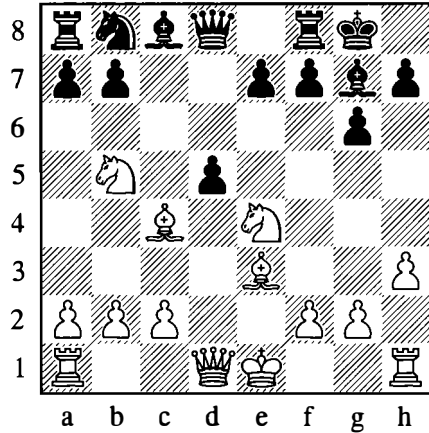
9.♖xe4

9.♗xf7† ♝f7 10.♖xe4 ♖c6 11.0-0 ♝b6! (11...♗xd4 12.♗xd4 d5 followed by ...e5 is also fine) 12.c3 (12.♖b3 ♝b4 13.♖g5 ♝f5† favours Black. We have the bishop pair and the centre.) 12...♝xb2 I don't see a way for White to exploit the queen's location. 13.♞e1 ♖xd4 14.♗xd4 ♗xd4 15.cxd4 (15.♝xd4 ♝b6†)

15...♗d7 16.a4 b6† I don't think White has enough play for the pawn.

9...d5 10.♖b5

10.♗d3?! dxe4 11.♗xe4? loses at once to 11...f5! 12.♗f3 f4+.

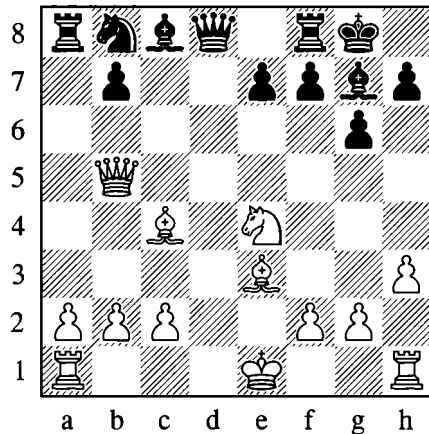


10...a6

10...dxc4 giving the exchange is also possible. 11.♝xd8 ♝xd8 12.♖c7 ♗f5 13.f3 ♖a6 14.♖xa8 ♗xb2 15.♞b1 c3= Black had two pawns for the exchange and rough equality in Deren – Abdelmoumen, email 2006.

11.♝xd5 axb5! 12.♝xb5

12.♝xd8 ♝xd8 13.♗xb5 ♗f5†, 12.0-0-0!? ♝a5 13.♝xb5 ♝xb5 14.♗xb5 ♝xa2=

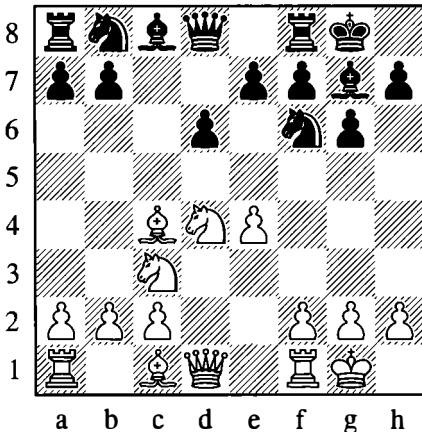


12...♙d7 13.♖b3 ♘a4 14.♗d3 ♖a5†
15.♙d2 ♗c7

Black had a strong initiative for the pawn in Felicio – Gonzaga Grego, email 2008.

C) 7.0-0 0-0

Let's compare this position to the one with the bishop on e2. In White's favour he has pressure down the a2-g8 diagonal against the black king and f7-pawn – which slows our typical break ...d5. On the other hand he now has to watch out for ...♗xe4 ideas followed by ...d5, forking bishop and knight. The g4-square is also more vulnerable and so White will generally need to spend a tempo on h2-h3. The bishop on c4 will probably have to move again as we can easily hit it with ...♗c6-e5/a5 or ...♗c8. The c4-bishop and d4-knight both want to drop back to b3, so White's pieces don't coordinate well.



We will consider **C1) 8.♙g5** and the most common **C2) 8.♗e1**.

8.h3 ♗c6 9.♙e3 transposes to 8.♙e3 immediately below.

8.♙e3 ♗c6 9.h3 ♗xe4 is also possible here. (9...♙d7 is again likely to transpose elsewhere) 10.♗xe4 (10.♙xf7† ♗xf7 11.♗xe4 was already

covered in the note to White's 9th move in variation B) 10...d5 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.♙d3 dxe4 13.♙xe4 ♗c7=

8.f4? As usual, this is far too early: 8...♗b6! 9.♙h1 (9.♙e3 ♗g4-+) 9...♗xe4!†

8.f3 looks wrong when linked to castling kingside. White's king becomes rather exposed and it's tough to come up with a good plan for him. 8...♗c6 9.♙e3 ♙d7 10.♗d2 ♗c8 11.♙b3 ♗e5 12.♗f2 ♗c4 Black is already comfortable.

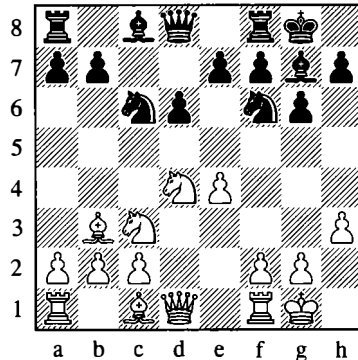
8.♙b3 ♗c6

White has his typical problem with the knight.

9.h3

9.♗xc6 bxc6 is, as usual, comfortable for Black.

For 9.♗e1 see variation C22.



9...♗xd4

It makes sense to take the knight before White gets time to defend it with ♙e3.

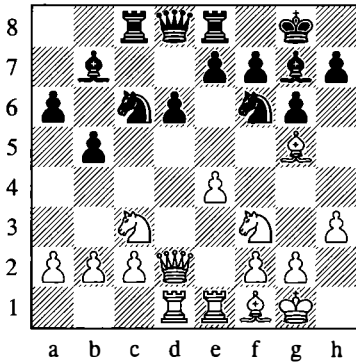
9...a5!? immediately is also interesting, with the idea 10.♙e3 a4.

10.♗xd4 ♗d7 11.♗d1 ♗c5 12.♗e1 a5=

With a typical, roughly equal position.

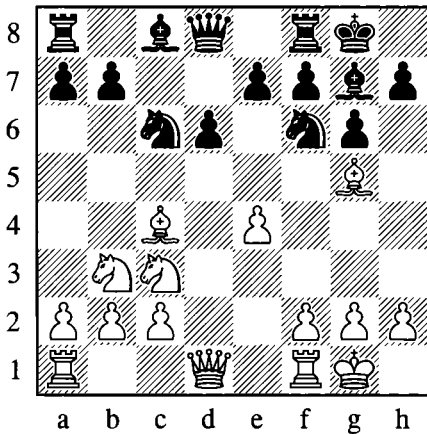
8.♗f3 was tried fairly recently by a strong, young GM, but developing normally is a sufficient antidote. 8...♗c6 9.h3 a6 10.♗e1 b5 11.♙f1 ♙b7 12.♙g5 ♗e8 13.♗d2 ♗c8 14.♗ad1

Yu Yangyi – Khusnurdinov, Zaozhuang 2012.
Here I like:



14...Qa5!N This looks good as we don't need to fear 15.e5 dxe5 16.Qxe5 ♖xd2 17.♗xd2 Qc6, when the position is level.

C1) 8.♗g5 Qc6 9.Qb3



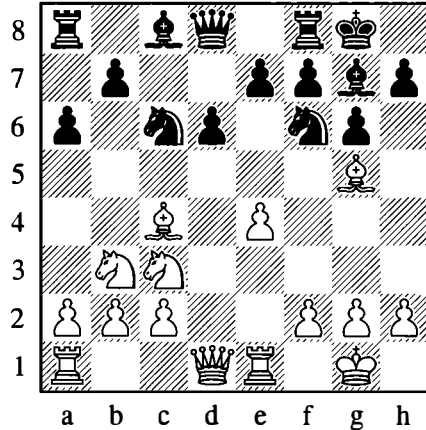
9.Qxc6 This move always feels like a big concession in the Dragon. 9...bxc6 10.♖d7 This position is examined in variation A.

9.♗b3 h6 10.♗h4 ♖b6!N would exploit White's h4-bishop being rather offside. We can follow up with ...♗c5 and playing on the queenside.

9.♞e1 transposes to the note on 9.♗g5 in variation C2 below.

The position would be a normal Karpov Variation with the bishop back on e2 but, as usual in these variations, the bishop is now rather loose. When I had this position I chose:

9...a6 10.♞e1
10.a4 b6=



10...b5 11.♗f1 ♞e8 12.Qd5 Qxd5 13.exd5 Qe5 14.a4 ♗g4 15.♖d2 ♗d7 16.axb5 axb5 17.c3 Qc4 18.♗xc4 bxc4 19.Qd4 ♞xa1 20.♞xa1 ♖b6=

Tischbierek – Jones, Porto San Giorgio 2003.

C2) 8.♞e1 Qc6

We have reached another split, with White's options being **C21) 9.Qb3**, **C22) 9.♗b3** and **C23) 9.h3**.

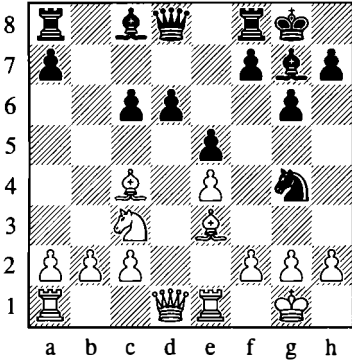
9.♗g5 Qxd4 10.♖xd4 h6 11.♗xf6 (11.♗d2 Qg4 12.♖d3 Qe5+) 11...♗xf6 12.♖e3 Qh7 13.♞ad1 ♗d7=

9.Qxc6 is generally a move we're happy to see. After 9...bxc6 we now control the d5-square, which is generally our weakest point in the Dragon, and have play down the semi-open b-file: 10.♗g5 ♞b8 11.♗b3 Qd7=

9.Qf3 gives White a worse version of 10.Qf3 (variation C231) as we can now play: 9...♗g4

10.h3 ♕xf3 11.♖xf3 ♘e5 12.♗e2 ♘xc4
13.♖xc4 Black is already a little better with the superior bishop.

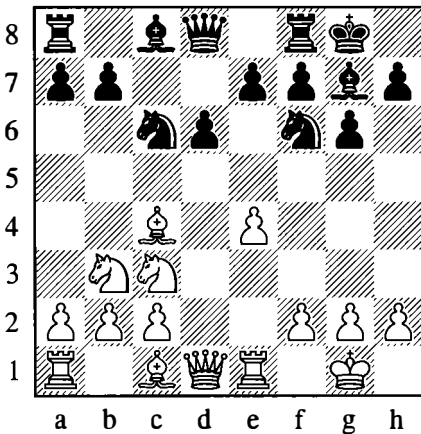
9.♗e3?! is premature as 9...♘g4! is awkward to deal with: 10.♘xc6 bxc6 11.♗d4 e5 12.♗e3



12...d5!N This is practically winning, as 13.exd5 ♖h4 14.h3 (14.♗c5 ♖xh2† 15.♗f1 e4!→) 14...♘xe3 15.♗xe3 ♖xc4 wins a piece.

C21) 9.♘b3

This looks rather clumsy with the bishop on c4. Anna Muzychuk tried an interesting idea:



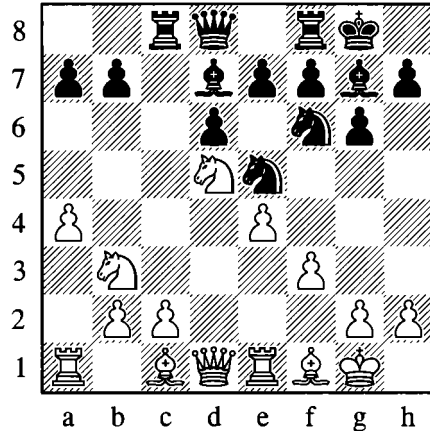
9...♘e5 10.♗f1 ♗g4! 11.f3 ♗d7

Black claims that the pawn on f3 and king on g1 don't work well together.

12.a4 ♗c8 13.♘d5?!

This is a typical idea for White in Classical Dragons, but with the pawn on f3 it doesn't work so well.

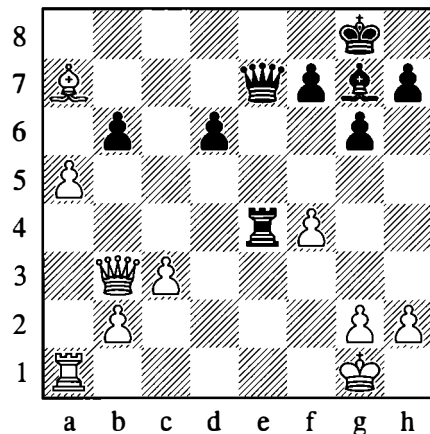
13.♗e3 a6 14.a5 ♘c4 15.♗xc4 ♗xc4= is safer.



13...♘d5 14.exd5 ♗e8 15.c3 e6!

Opening up lines to exploit Black's lead in development and White's vulnerable king.

16.f4?! ♘c4 17.♗xc4 ♗xc4 18.dxe6 ♗xe6
19.♗xe6 ♗xe6 20.♗e3 ♗e4 21.♗xa7 b6!
22.a5 ♗xb3 23.♖xb3 ♖e7!

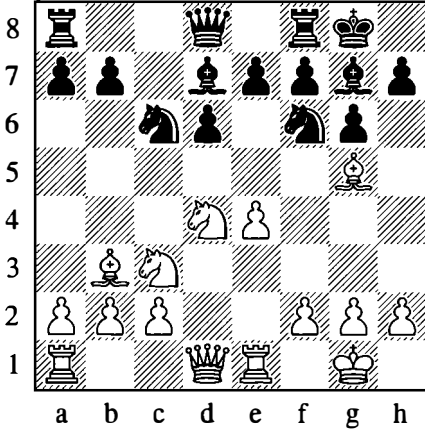


The double attack won material in Vega Gutierrez – A. Muzychuk, Tromso (ol) 2014.

C22) 9.♟b3 ♞d7 10.♞g5

10.h3 is examined in variation C233 below.

10.♞xc6 ♞xc6 11.♞g5 h6 12.♞h4 ♞d7
13.♞d5?! g5! 14.♞g3 ♞xb2 15.♞b1 ♞g7 16.h4
♞e5= White had insufficient compensation
for the pawn in Zhang Zhong – Jakovenko,
Taiyuan 2006.

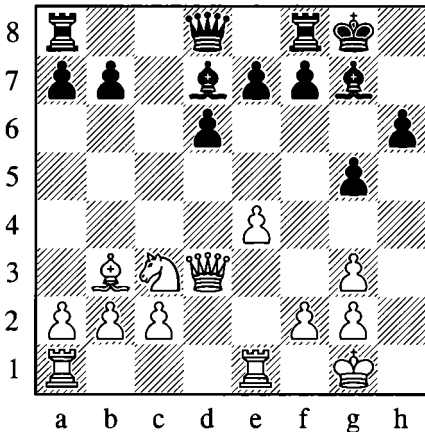


10...h6 11.♞h4

We can now grab the bishop pair.

**11...♞xd4 12.♞xd4 g5 13.♞g3 ♞h5 14.♞d3
♞xg3 15.hxg3**

Here I like:



15...♞c6N 16.♞a1 e6

If White grabs the pawn we will obtain
fantastic compensation:

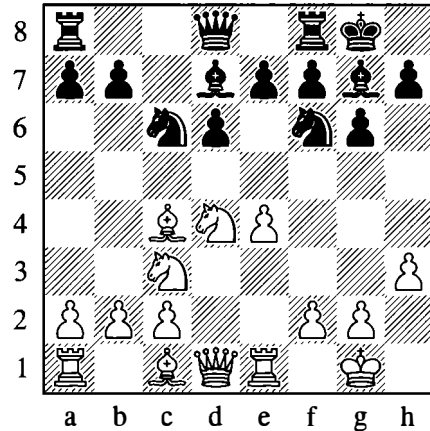
17.♞xd6 ♞xd6 18.♞xd6 ♞e5 19.♞d3 ♞g7=

The bishop on e5 dominates, and our plan is
to open up the h-file with ...h5-h4 and ..♞h8.

C23) 9.h3

White takes control of g4.

9...♞d7



Once again White has a choice, the main
options being C231) 10.♞f3, C232) 10.♞e3,
C233) 10.♞b3 and C234) 10.♞g5.

C231) 10.♞f3

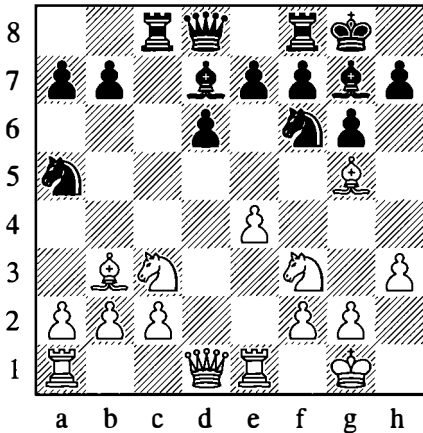
This works better than normal with the bishop
on c4 but it is still not dangerous.

10...♞c8 11.♞b3

11.♞f1 ♞a5 12.♞e3 ♞e6 13.a3 d5! Black
had taken the initiative in T.L. Petrosian –
Mamedov, Dresden (ol) 2008.

11...♞a5 12.♞g5

12.♞d5 ♞c4=



12...h6N

I prefer this, keeping a bit more tension.

12...♘c4 13.♙xc4 ♜xc4 14.e5 dxe5 15.♘xe5 ♞c7 16.♚d4 ♙f5 17.♚xa7 ♙xc2= was fine for Black in Zelcic – A. Kovacevic, Bizovac 2009.

13.♙h4

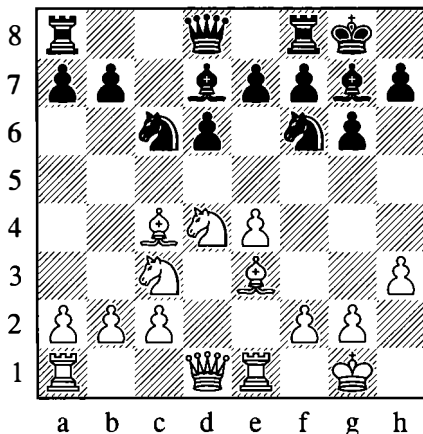
13.♙e3 can be met by 13...♚c7= followed by our usual plan of ...b5.

Only now should we exchange on c4:

13...♘c4 14.♙xc4 ♜xc4=

15.e5 dxe5 16.♘xe5? is no longer playable as the bishop drops.

C232) 10.♙e3



A sensible developing move, but it is not challenging. It prevents the problems we see in variation C234, but the bishop isn't really well placed here.

10...♜c8 11.♙b3 ♘a5

A usual plan in the Dragon: Black is probably going to put that knight on c4, but also keeps open the possibility of taking on b3.

12.♚d3

12.♘f3 a6 13.♚d2 b5 14.♙h6

This move is rare, but it was actually played against me just as I finished this book.

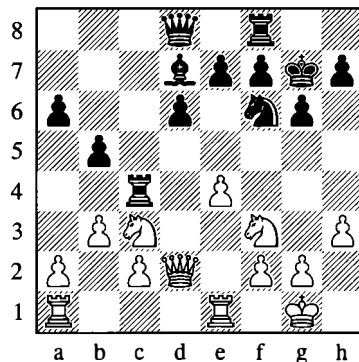
I played a logical continuation:

14...♘c4

Initially I had intended to recommend 14...♙c6 with an equal position, Brasoy – Paulsen, Karasjok 2004.

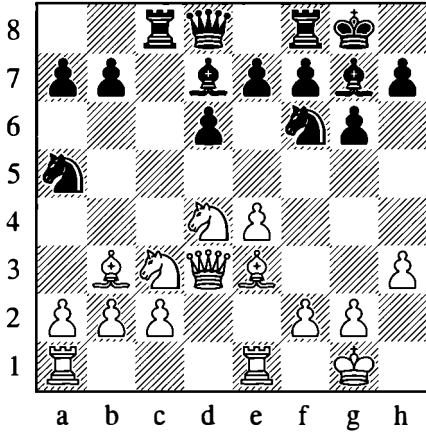
15.♙xc4 ♜xc4 16.♙xg7 ♘xg7 17.b3

17.e5 would be safer, but is just equal after 17...dxe5 18.♘xe5 ♞c7 19.♙ad1 ♚c8=.



17...♙c6! 18.♘d5 e5! 19.♘xf6 ♚xf6 20.♙e3 ♞fc8

Emms – Jones, Hinckley Island 2015. The position is approximately equal but is easier for Black to play. In John's time trouble I managed to push ...a5-a4 and eventually broke with ...d5.



12...a6 13.♞ad1

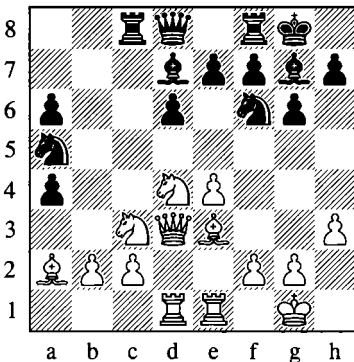
13.♞d5 ♞xd5 14.exd5 b5 15.♞ad1 ♞e8 and Black is already fine. After the further 16.♙g5?! ♞c4 17.♙c1 ♞c5 White was struggling in Reite – Agdestein, Trondheim 2004.

13.♙g5 Moving the bishop twice can hardly be the refutation of the line: 13...♞e8 14.♞ad1 b5 15.♞e2 h6 16.♙xf6 ♙xf6 17.♞d5 ♙g7 18.c3 e6 19.♞e3 ♞b6 Black was taking over in Houdini 2.0c – Strelka 5.5, engine game 2012.

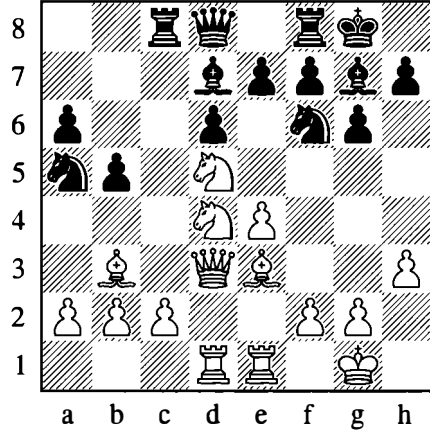
13.f4 has ideas of e4-e5, so Black normally responds with: 13...♞c7 14.♞f3 ♙c6= Black will follow up with the usual ...b5.

13...b5 14.♞d5

14.a4 can be met with 14...bxa4! 15.♙a2 (15.♙xa4 ♞xc3! and 15.♞xa4 e5! 16.♞e2 ♙b5 17.♞xd6 ♞xd6 18.♞xd6 ♞xe4 19.♞d5 ♞xb3 20.cxb3 ♞b8 are both unpleasant)

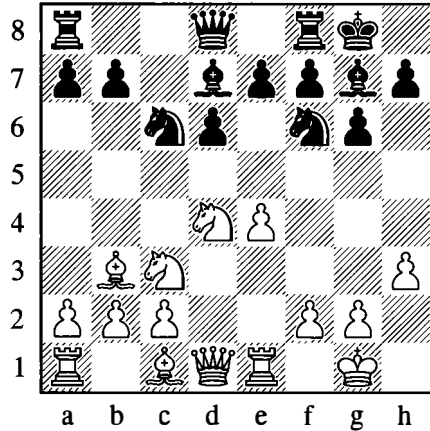


15...♞b7! A good rerouting of the knight. 16.♙c1 ♞c5 (The immediate 16...♞b6 is more accurate) 17.♞g3 ♞b6 18.♞d5? ♞xd5 19.exd5 ♙xd4! 20.♞xd4 ♞b3 21.♙xb3 ♞xd4 22.c3 ♞c5 23.♙a2 ♞fe8 0–1 Gavrilkis – Miroshnichenko, Kallithea 2008.



14...♞c4 15.♙c1 ♞c5= Black has no worries.

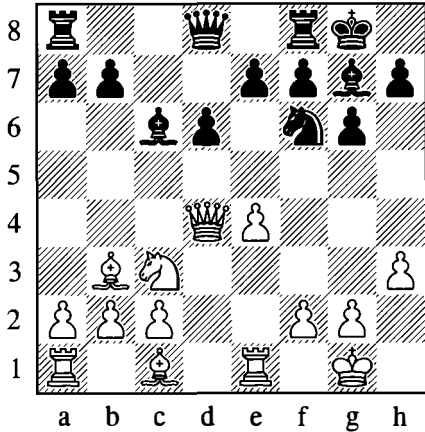
C233) 10.♙b3



White defends his loose bishop, but after the following line I don't believe Black has any problems:

10...♞xd4 11.♞xd4 ♙c6

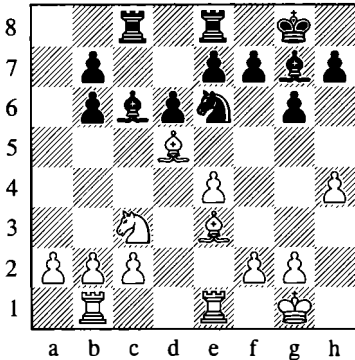
Our plan is to play ...♞d7, ...b5 and ...a5.



12. ♖d1

It seems odd to come all the way back with the queen, but now at least ...♖d7-c5 won't come with a tempo as it would with the queen on d3. Also, the bishop on c1 isn't obstructed as it would be with the queen on e3.

12. ♖d3 ♖d7 13. ♕g5 ♖c5 14. ♗e3 ♗e8 15. ♕d5 ♗b6 16. ♗ab1 ♗ac8 17. h4 ♖e6 18. ♗xb6 axb6 19. ♕e3

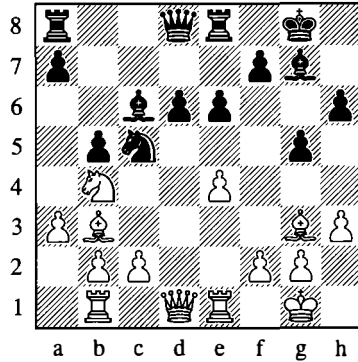


Middelburg – R. Fridman, Germany 2003. Here 19...b5N favours Black.

12. ♗e3 ♖d7 13. ♕d2 ♖c5= Aloyzas Kveinys has played this position as White a couple of times for some reason, but Black is already comfortable.

12...b5 13. ♖d5

13. a3 ♖d7 14. ♖d5 ♖c5 15. ♕g5 ♗e8 16. ♗b1 h6 17. ♕h4 g5 18. ♕g3 e6 19. ♖b4 was played in McShane – Tiviakov, Calvia (ol) 2004:



19...♕xe4!N looks strong. 20. ♕xd6 ♖xb3 21. ♗xe4 ♗b6! 22. ♕e5 (22.cxb3 ♗ad8♞ regains the piece) 22...♗ed8 23. ♖d3 ♖c5 24. ♗e3 ♖xd3 25.cxd3 ♗ac8♞ Black is better: with a rook on d5 White won't have any opportunity to attack our king.

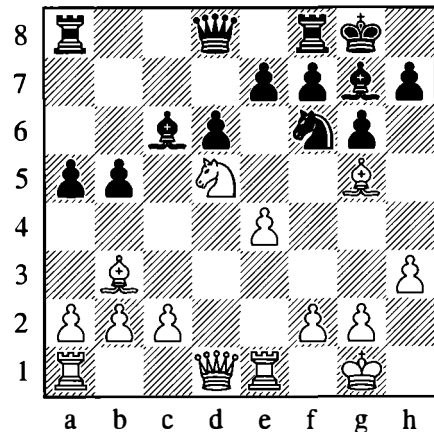
13...a5

The immediate 13...e6= is also fine.

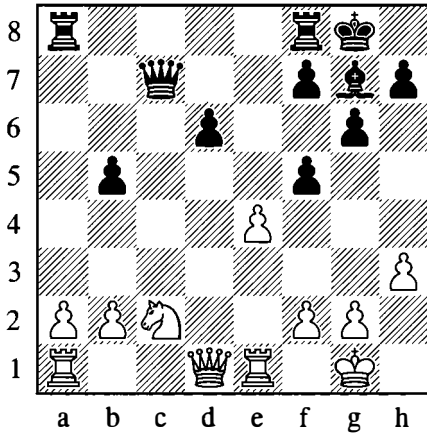
14. ♕g5

14.a3 was Su.B. Hansen – W. Watson, Germany 1999, when simplest is 14...e6N.

We have been following Wedberg – Carlsson, Linkoping 2001, and here I like:



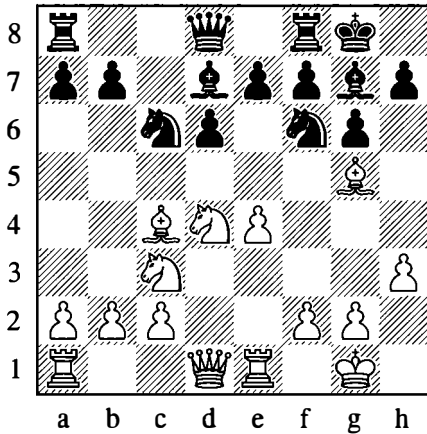
14...a4!N 15.♗xf6 exf6 16.♖b4 axb3
17.♗xc6 ♜c7 18.♖b4 bxc2 19.♗xc2 f5



Black has a favourable position with the stronger minor piece.

C234) 10.♗g5

This used to be the main line, but recently White has found himself with some problems.



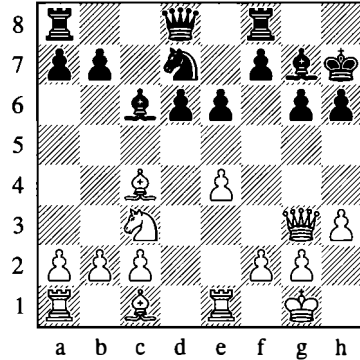
10...♗xd4 11.♜xd4 h6!

This is the issue. White doesn't have a good square for his bishop.

12.♗d2

The most natural move to keep the bishop pair, but White now runs into problems as his pieces don't coordinate well.

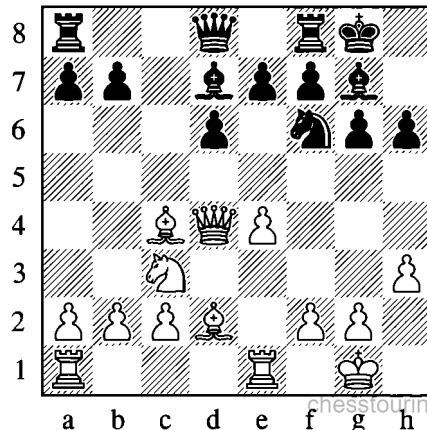
12.♗c1 is perhaps the best square, accepting that the development of the bishop was premature. White can argue that we've weakened our kingside slightly, but I don't think it justifies the loss of two tempos: 12...♗c6 13.♜d3 ♗d7 14.♜g3 ♖h7 15.♜h4 e6 16.♜g3



Ljubojevic – Anand, Monte Carlo (rapid) 1998. Here I think Vishy should have targeted the e4-pawn with 16...♗c5N.

12.♗h4 g5 13.♗g3 ♗h5 14.♜d3 ♗xg3 15.♜xg3 ♜c8 16.♗b3 ♗xc3!?! (There was nothing wrong with keeping the bishop with 16...♗e5N 17.♜e3 ♜c5) 17.bxc3 ♜a5 18.♜e3 ♜e5 Su.B. Hansen – Malakhov, Helsingor 2008. Black eventually exploited his superior structure.

12.♗xf6 ♗xf6 13.♜d3 White threatens 14.e5 with a discovered attack on g6, so I think we should play 13...♗e5N with an edge.



12...♖g4! 13.♗d3?!

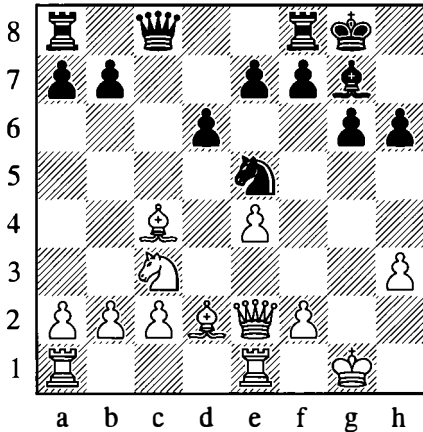
13.♗d5 would stop Black's attack, but Black has a pleasant edge after 13...♖c6 14.♗d3 ♖e5 15.♗f1 ♖xc4 16.♗xc4 ♜c8.

13...♖e5 14.♗c2 ♖xh3!

The hit which refuted this line. It transpires that White's pieces are badly placed to defend his king.

15.gxh3 ♗c8

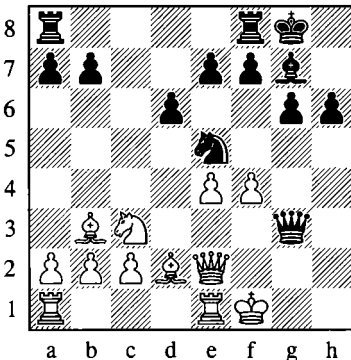
I think that White needs to find an odd move to stay in the game:



16.♖b5!N

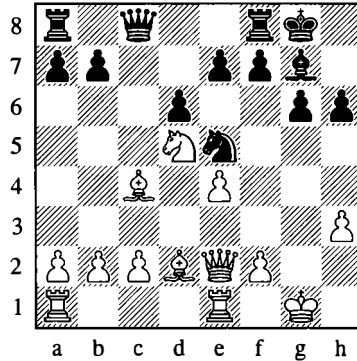
The point is that the bishop isn't attacked after we take on d2.

16.♖b3? This natural move loses on the spot: 16...♗xh3 17.f4 ♗g3† 18.♔f1 (18.♗g2 ♖f3† 19.♔f1 ♗xg2† 20.♔xg2 ♖xd2) would actually transpose)



18...♖g4! 19.♗g2 ♖h2† 20.♔g1 ♖f3† 21.♔f1 ♗xg2† 22.♔xg2 ♖xd2→ McShane – Su.B. Hansen, Copenhagen 1999.

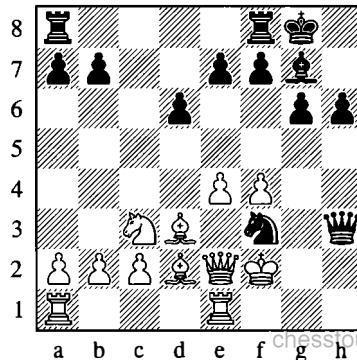
16.♖d5 seeking some counterplay was tried the second time this position was reached:



a) 16...♗xh3!? 17.f4 ♗g3† (17...♖f3†N 18.♔f2 ♖xe1 19.♗xe1 e6 20.♖c3 ♜fc8 is another option that looks better for Black) 18.♔f1 ♖g4 19.♗g2 ♖h2† 20.♔g1 ♖f3† 21.♔f1 ♖h2† 22.♔g1 ♖f3† 23.♔f1 ♗xg2† 24.♔xg2 ♖xd2 25.♖xe7 ♔h7 26.♖d3 ♜fe8 27.♖d5 ♜ac8 28.c3 ♖c4 Black was a little better but White held the draw in H. Hunt – Hodgson, Scarborough 1999.

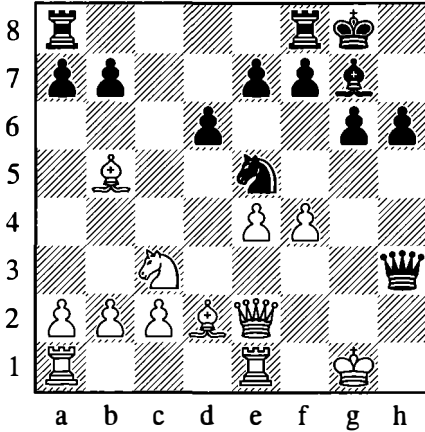
b) Instead 16...♗xc4N is simpler: 17.♖xe7† ♔h7 18.♗xc4 ♖xc4 19.♖c3 ♖xc3 20.bxc3 ♔g7 Black has a pleasant endgame.

Meanwhile 16.♖d3N isn't so strong, as the bishop obstructs White's defence: 16...♗xh3 17.f4 ♖f3† 18.♔f2



18...♖xd2! 19.♗xd2 (19.e5 has to be tried, but 19...♗h2† 20.♕e3 ♖g3† 21.♕xd2 ♗xf4† 22.♕d1 ♗xe5= must favour Black with four pawns for the knight) 19...♗h2† 20.♕e3 ♕d4†! White's queen drops.

16...♗xh3 17.f4



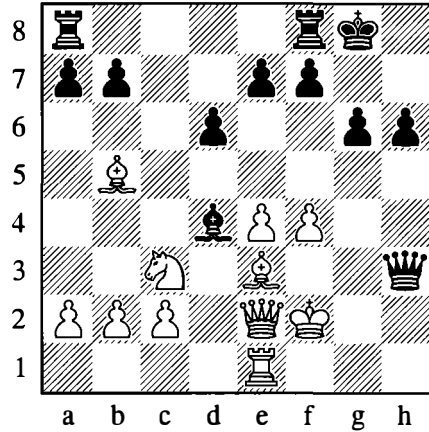
17...♖f3†

17...♗g3† 18.♗g2 ♖f3† 19.♕f1 ♖h2† 20.♕g1 ♖f3= is now just a draw, as 21.♕f1 ♗xg2† 22.♕xg2 ♖xd2 23.♗ad1 traps the knight.

18.♕f2 ♕d4† 19.♕e3 ♖xel

19...♗h2† 20.♕xf3 ♗h3† 21.♕f2 ♗h2†= is another draw.

20.♗xel



20...♕xc3!? 21.bxc3 ♗ac8

With a messy position. We have rook and two pawns for the bishops and White's king is still rather exposed. I would take Black.

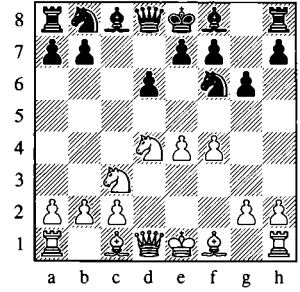
Conclusion

Putting the bishop on c4 slows down the ...d5 break, but the c4-bishop and d4-knight don't combine well and force White to make concessions. You should remember the idea of ...♖xe4 and ...d5 as a way to open up the position.

The final line of the chapter, arising after 7.0-0 0-0 8.♗e1 ♖c6 9.h3 ♕d7 10.♕g5, is an especially complex affair. My suggested novelty on move 16 helps to keep White in the game, but I still prefer Black's chances.

Chapter 18

Minor Lines



Levenfish Variation

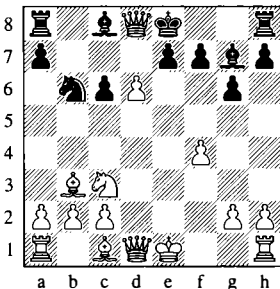
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.f4

6...♘c6

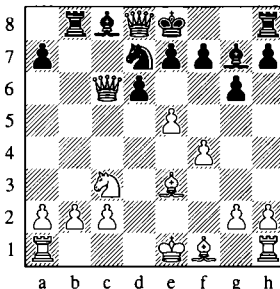
A) 7.♗c4	280
B) 7.♘b3	281
C) 7.♗b5 ♗d7	282
C1) 8.♗e3	284
C2) 8.♗xc6	285
D) 7.♘f3	286
E) 7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.e5 ♘d7	288
E1) 9.♖f3 ♗g7	288
E11) 10.♖xc6	289
E12) 10.♗b5!?	291
E2) 9.exd6 exd6	292
E21) 10.♖d4	293
E22) 10.♗e3 ♗e7 11.♖d2 0-0 12.0-0-0 d5	295
E221) 13.h4	296
E222) 13.g4	297

A) after 11.♗b3



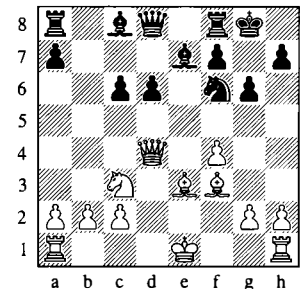
11...0-0!N

E11) after 11.♗e3



11...♗xb2!N

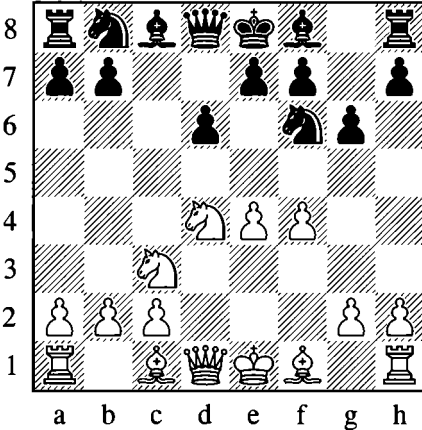
E21) after 13.♗f3



13...♗g4!N

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♟f6
5.♞c3 g6 6.f4

The Levenfish used to be fairly popular but it has fallen into disuse for the past few decades. White has a few tricks but as long as they are sidestepped Black will have excellent chances.



6...♞c6

It is important to prevent a quick e4-e5. 6...♞bd7 has also done well, but I have chosen to recommend the traditional development of the knight to c6.

We will analyse five options, the last of which is by far the most important: **A) 7.♞c4**, **B) 7.♞b3**, **C) 7.♞b5**, **D) 7.♞f3** and **E) 7.♞xc6**.

7.♞e2 is likely to transpose to some sort of Classical Variation. 7...♞g7 8.♞e3 (8.♞b3 is variation B below) 8...0-0 We have reached the Rabinovich Attack in Chapter 13.

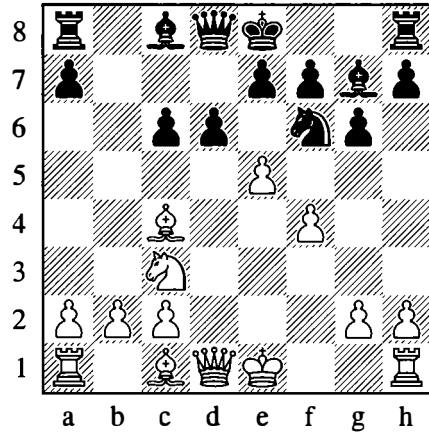
Also after 7.♞e3 ♞g7 White has nothing better than transposing to some other variation, for instance with 8.♞e2 0-0 as above.

A) 7.♞c4 ♞g7 8.♞xc6

8.♟f3 0-0 9.0-0 actually reaches a position I mentioned briefly at the start of Chapter 17, where Black is doing well after 9...b5!.

8...bxc6 9.e5

White's attack might look threatening but Black has everything under control.



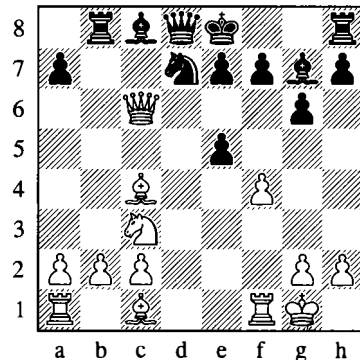
9...♞d7!

This move is rare but it simply looks good for Black.

10.exd6

10.e6N needs checking but 10...fxe6 11.♞xe6 ♞b6♯ leaves White's king in more danger than Black's.

10.♞f3 has not been played in this exact position, but 10...dxe5 immediately transposes to a game which continued: 11.♞xc6 ♞b8 12.0-0 In Ahmed – Onabogun, Abuja 2003, Black should have played:

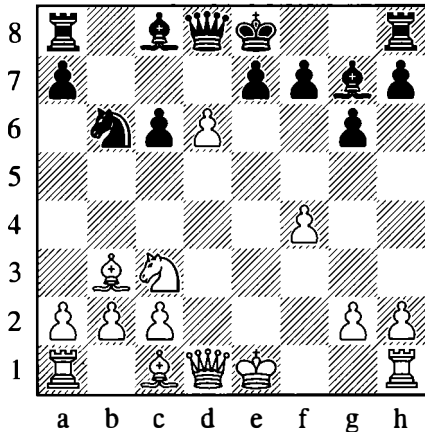


12...♞b7N 13.♞a4 0-0! With a great position.

Taking the pawn is risky: 14.♞xa7 (14.♙e3 ♘b6†) 14...♘b6 15.♙e2 (15.♙b3 ♞d4† 16.♘h1 ♞fd8† Black totally dominates the board) 15...exf4 16.♙xf4 ♙d4† 17.♘h1 e5 18.♙h6 ♞e8 Black has more than enough for the pawn.

10...♘b6 11.♙b3

Here I found a strong novelty to improve on Krizek – Janda, Czech Republic 2006.



11...0-0!N 12.dxe7?!

This must be the critical test of Black's last move, but objectively it is a mistake.

After 12.0-0 exd6† the fact that Black has castled before recapturing the pawn means that White is unable to force a queen exchange with ♞e2†.

12...♞xe7† 13.♞e2 ♞h4† 14.g3

14.♞f2? ♞e8† 15.♘e2 ♞e7 is already winning for Black.

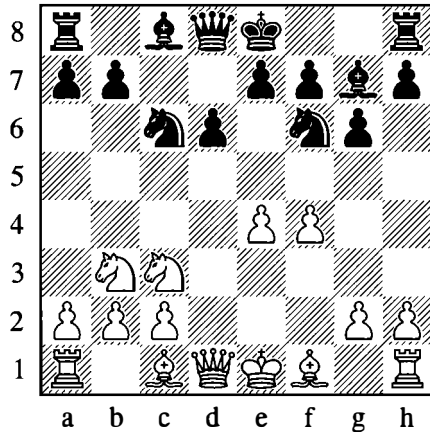
14...♞h3

White is in trouble, for instance:

15.♙e3 ♙g4 16.♞f1 ♞h5 17.♞f2 c5! 18.0-0 ♞fe8†

The threats are ...♞xe3 and ...c4, and 19.♙xc5? loses immediately to 19...♙xc3 20.bxc3 ♞e2.

B) 7.♘b3 ♙g7



8.♙e2

8.♙d3 0-0 9.0-0 is examined in variation A of the next chapter.

8.♙e3?!

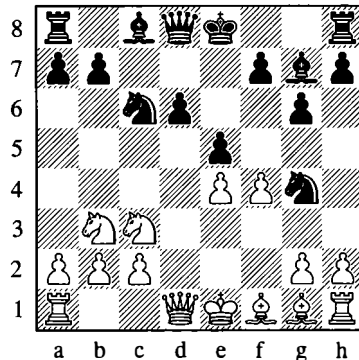
Black can exploit White's move order with:

8...♘g4

8...0-0 9.♙e2 would again transpose to the Rabinovich Attack – see variation B of Chapter 13.

9.♙g1 e5!

Carving out a strong outpost on e5.



10.♙e2

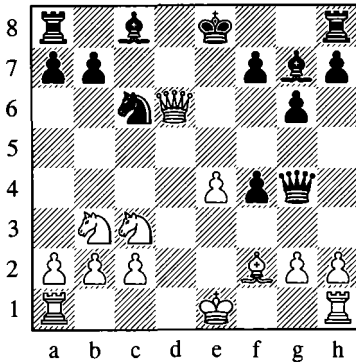
10.fxe5 ♙xe5 11.♞f3 was Ermenkov – Gaprindashvili, Albena 1985, and now after 11...♞h4†N 12.g3 ♞f6† White's structure is rather ugly.

10. ♖f3 exf4 11. h3 is even worse; in Galioro – Todorov, Porto San Giorgio 2000, Black could have obtained a clear advantage:

11... ♖e3! N 12. ♗xe3 ♗xc3† 13. bxc3 fxe3 14. ♖xe3 ♖h4† 15. g3 ♖e7 ♣ White has nothing to compensate for his lousy structure.

10... exf4 11. ♗xg4 ♖h4† 12. ♗f2 ♖xg4 13. ♖xd6

Somehow White has scored 2/2 from this position. However, after the improvement...



13... ♗xc3†! N 14. bxc3 ♖xg2
Black should be winning.

8...0-0

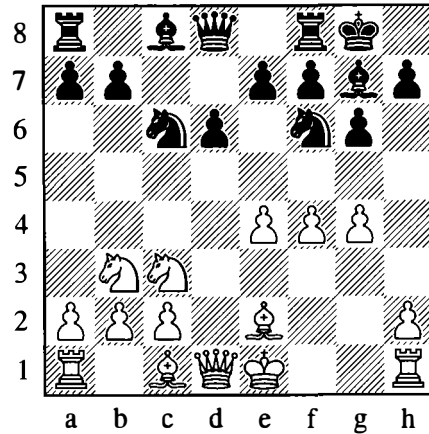
This is likely to transpose elsewhere. Black may also try and cut across White's plans with 8... ♖b6!?

9.g4!?

For 9. ♗e3 see variation B of Chapter 13.

9.0-0 transposes to variation B1 of Chapter 11.

9. ♗f3 was tried once by Alexander Morozevich but after 9... a5! N 10. a4 ♖b6 Black is doing well, as 11. ♖e2 ♖b4! 12. ♗e3? fails to 12... ♖xc2†.



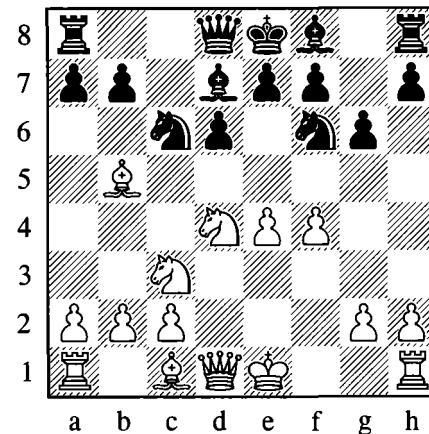
9...a5! 10.a4

10.g5 a4! was great for Black in Gershon – Lederer, Tel Aviv 1994. The tactical point is that 11. gxf6 N ♗xf6 12. ♖d2?? allows 12... ♗h4† 13. ♖f1 ♗h3† 14. ♖g1 ♖b6 mate!

10... ♖b4 11.g5 ♖d7 12. ♖b5 ♖c5 ♣

White is rather overextended.

C) 7. ♗b5 ♗d7



White's two main options are C1) 8. ♗e3 and C2) 8. ♗xc6.

8. ♖xc6?!

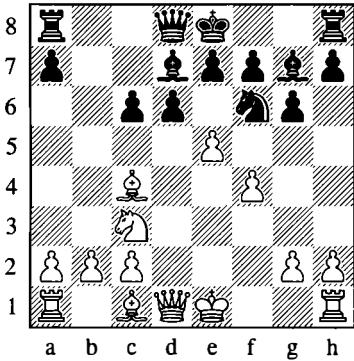
This doesn't really fit in with White's previous move.

8...bxc6

8...xc6 is also completely fine.

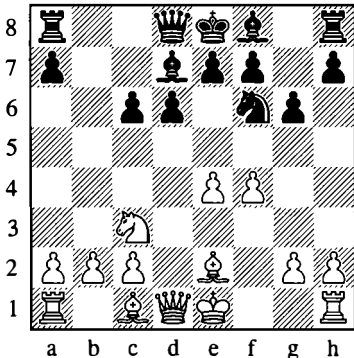
9.xe2

9.c4 g7 10.e5?!



This is what White would like to play, but after 10...dxe5 11.fxe5 g4 he gets very little play for the pawn.

The text move controls the g4-square but White's play does not make a good impression. He is effectively playing an inferior version of variation E, having played the tame e2 instead of the active e4-e5, while giving Black the free move ...d7.



9...Bb6!N

The straightforward 9...g7 is also fine.

The text move prevents White from castling. White would probably have to try:

10.e5 dxe5 11.fxe5 d5 12.dxd5 cxd5

13.Bxd5 Bb8

Black has excellent play for the pawn.

8.d3 g7

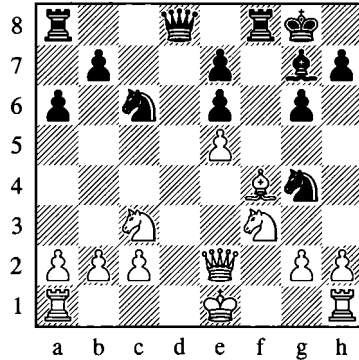
Here too, Black is comfortable, for example:

9.Be2 0-0 10.e5?!

This advance is the whole point of the Levenfish Variation. Unfortunately for White, it hardly ever works.

10...dxe5 11.fxe5 g4 12.f4 a6 13.c4 e6!

14.xe6 fe6

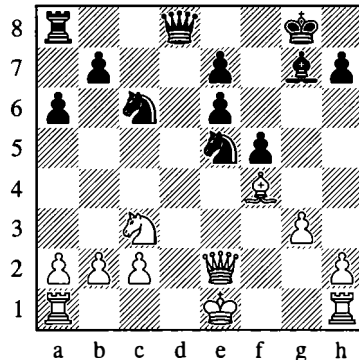


15.g3N

15.d2? was played in Sax – Ivanovic, Vrbas 1980, when 15...d4!N 16.dxd4 Bxd4 would have given Black a decisive advantage. The text move is necessary to hold onto the e5-pawn, at least temporarily. I like the following idea for Black.

15...f5!? 16.dh4 dxe5! 17.dxf5 gxf5

Black has excellent play for the sacrificed exchange, for instance:

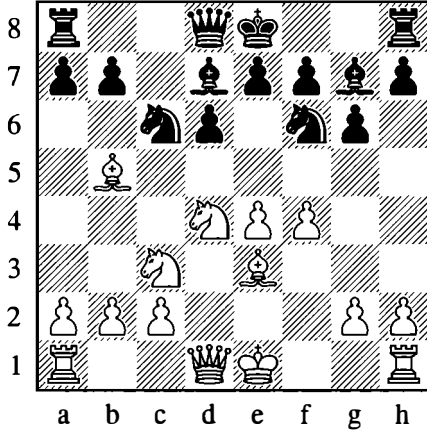


18.0-0 Bb6† 19.Be3 Bxe3† 20.xe3 d4

21.c1 b4

Black will have two pawns for the exchange and his pieces will dominate the board.

C1) 8.♙e3 ♘g7

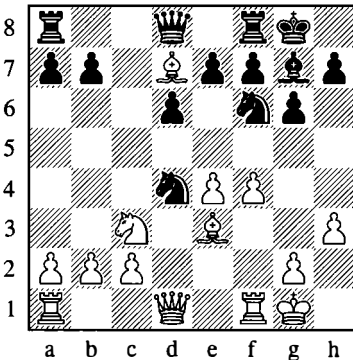


9.0-0?

This has been the most common choice but it leads to big trouble for White.

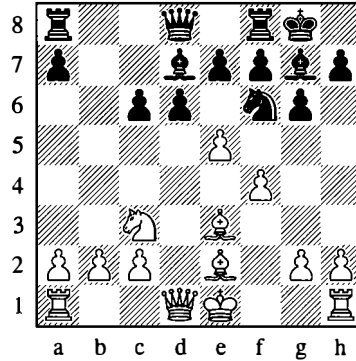
9.♚d2 is the lesser evil but White has mixed up several plans, and normal play will give Black the better chances.

Likewise White could try 9.h3 but 9...0-0 is more comfortable for Black, not least because 10.0-0 ♖xd4 wins a pawn after 11.♙xd7 (or 11.♙xd4 ♙xb5 12.♖xb5 ♖xe4)



11...♖xc2! 12.♚xc2 ♖xd7

After 9.♖xc6 bxc6 10.♙e2 White has prevented our ...♚b6 idea, but 10...0-0 is comfortable for Black. It is worth adding that 11.e5?! still doesn't work:

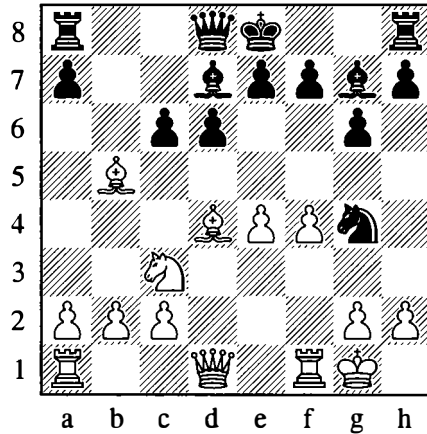


11...♖d5! 12.♖xd5 cxd5 13.♚xd5 ♙e6 14.♚e4 ♙f5 We regain the pawn with a good position.

9...♖g4! 10.♖xc6

10.♙xc6 ♖xe3 is not good for White.

10...bxc6 11.♙d4



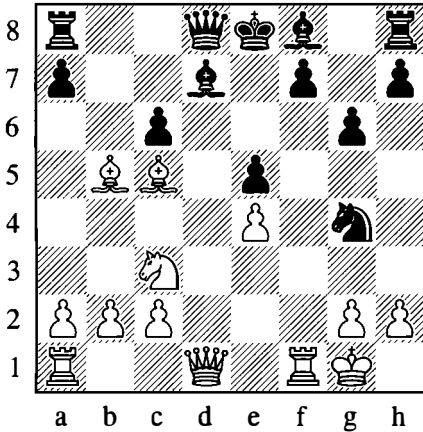
11...e5! 12.fxe5 dxe5

White is dropping material. His trickiest attempt is:

13.♙c5 ♙f8!N

This is the most practical reply although

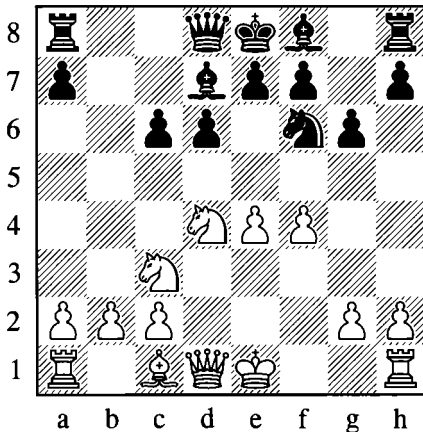
13...cxb5, as played in Do Thi Thuy – Phan Nguyen Mai, Vung Tau 2004, should also be winning.



14.♙xf8 ♜xf8 15.♙e2 ♘e3 16.♗d6 ♘xf1 17.♗xe5† ♖e7 18.♗xc7 ♕xe7 19.♞xf1 ♙e6

Black has a big advantage in the endgame.

C2) 8.♙xc6 bxc6



This is the most sensible continuation but White is unable to crash through.

9.e5

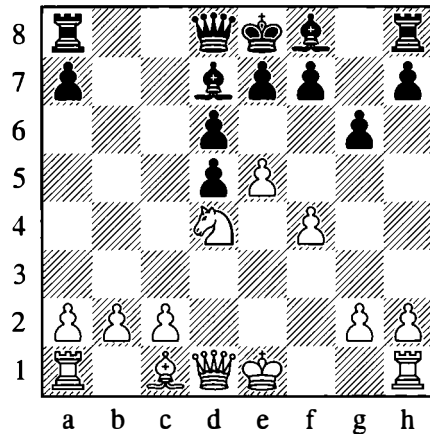
Again the only logical follow-up.

9...♘d5! 10.♘xd5

10.♘e4?! ♙g7 11.exd6 0–0 12.0–0 exd6 is simply good for Black, as 13.♘xd6? loses a piece to 13...♙g4! 14.♗xg4 ♙xd4† 15.♖h1 ♗xd6.

Another game continued 10.exd6 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 c5! 12.dxe7?! ♗xe7† 13.♘e2 ♖d8 14.♗d3 ♙c6 15.♗g3 ♙g7 and White was already in big trouble. The further error 16.0–0? was played in Johansson – Nilsson, Stockholm 1961, when Black could have won a piece with 16...♗xe2N 17.♖e1 ♖d1.

10...cxd5



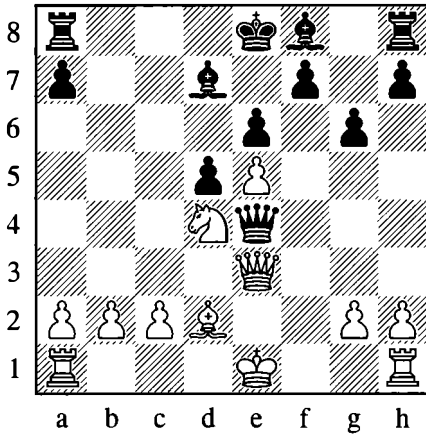
11.♗f3

11.exd6 e6! is an important point; Black maintains his structure and has a pleasant edge with the bishop pair.

11.0–0 ♙g7 12.exd6 (Again 12.♗f3 can be met with 12...e6) 12...♗b6 13.♙e3 ♗xd6 Black had his customary edge in L. Horvath – B. Papp, Hungary 2010.

11...e6 12.♙d2 dxe5 13.fxe5 ♗h4† 14.♗f2 ♗e4† 15.♗e3

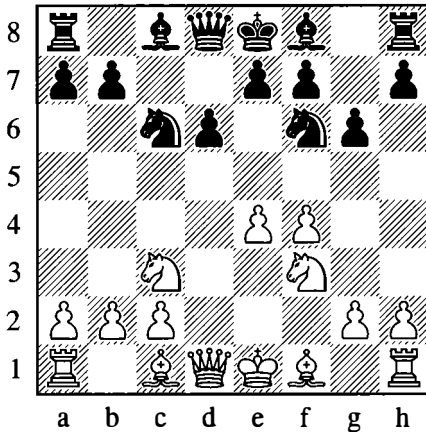
This was all seen in the old game Chaplinsky – Tolush, Riga 1952. Here Eddie Dearing, quoting Arttila Schneider, recommends:



15...♟xg2!N 16.0-0-0 ♚c8 17.♞dgl ♞e4
18.♟xc4 dxe4 19.♞e1 ♞c4

Black's powerful bishops give him fine prospects in the endgame.

D) 7.♟f3



This has recently been tried by some strong players. White opts for some sort of hybrid of the Open Sicilian and Grand Prix Attack.

7...♟g7 8.♟d3

8.♟c4 0-0 reaches a position discussed briefly on page 266 in the note on 7.f4.

8...♟b6!?

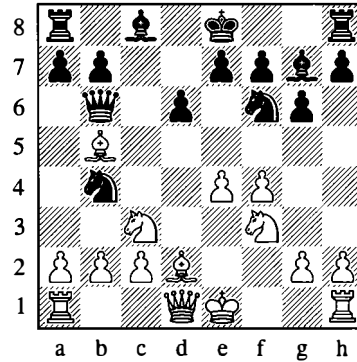
This is the critical test of White's set-up. The

idea is to make it as awkward as possible for White to castle.

9.♞e2

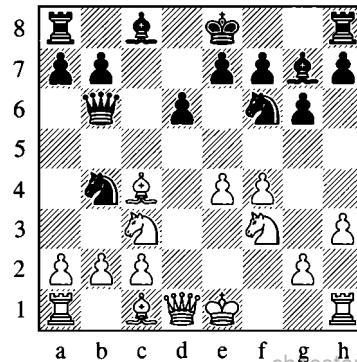
White hopes to develop his bishop on e3 after defending the b2-pawn. Other moves are no better:

9.♟d2 ♖b4!N seems a logical novelty.
10.♟b5† (Attempting to castle with 10.♞e2 0-0 11.♟e3? fails to the surprising 11...♖xc2† 12.♟xc2 ♟xb2 13.♖d2 ♖xe4†! 14.♖xe4 ♟b4† 15.♖d1 ♟xa1†)

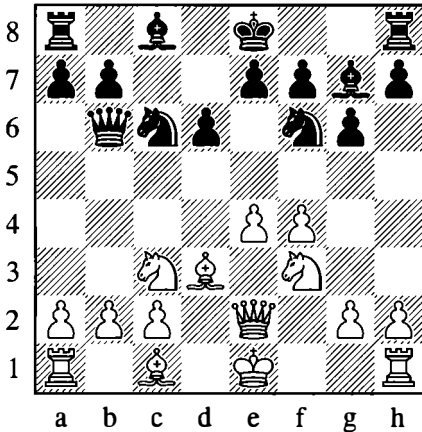


10...♟d7 11.♟xd7† ♖xd7 12.a3 ♖a6! This looks strange but Black is guarding the c7-square against a possible ♖d5. 13.♞b1 ♖c7

9.h3 takes control of g4 but cedes the g3-square. Once again 9...♖b4!N is promising; 10.♟c4 (10.♖a4 ♟a5 11.♖c3 ♖xd3† 12.cxd3 b5†; 10.♟e2?! ♖h5! is rather awkward. White could try 11.♟b5† but 11...♖f8! 12.a3 ♖a6! leaves White in trouble.)



The text move is better although 10...♖h5! still favours Black, as 11.♗e2 can be met with 11...d5!



9...0-0 10.♞b1

White defends b2 and so prepares ♕e3.

White can offer a queen trade with 10.♞e3 but this doesn't put any pressure on Black at all. 10...♞xe3† 11.♕xe3 ♖b4 (11...b6!?) 12.h3 b6 13.a3 ♖xd3† 14.cxd3 ♕b7 15.♞c1 A draw was agreed in Hübner – Sosonko, Wijk aan Zee 1986, although Black had the easier game.

10.♞f2 is similar, but White misses the chance to develop his bishop while recapturing. 10...♞xf2† 11.♗xf2 In Hojjatova – Menzi, Batumi 2010, 11...♖b4N would have given Black fine prospects.

10.♕d2 has also been played but Black can simply grab the pawn. 10...♞xb2 11.♞b1 ♞a3 12.0-0 a6 13.♗h1 In Kraus – Z. Haba, Czech Republic 2012, the logical 13...b5N would have left White with little to show for his pawn deficit.

10.♗d1

This can be met with the same formula as in our main line.

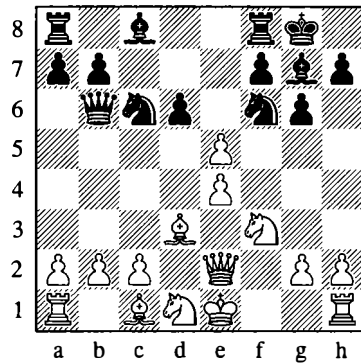
10...e5!

10...♖b4! also makes some sense.

11.fxe5

11.♕e3 ♖d4 12.♞d2 ♗g4 13.♕xd4 exd4 14.0-0 ♕d7 Black already has a nice edge but it's amazing how quickly the experienced GM playing White loses. 15.♞e1 ♞fe8 16.h3 ♖f6 17.♞f2 ♕c6 18.b3 ♖xe4 19.♕xe4 ♕xe4 0-1 Art. Minasian – Komljenovic, Oviedo 1993.

The main move was played in Mrdja – Rezan, Sibenik 2009. As I pointed out on ChessPublishing, Black can improve with:

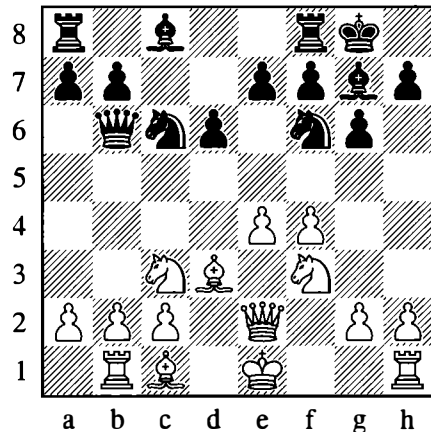


11...♖xe5!N

The stronger recapture.

12.♗e5 dxe5 13.♕e3 ♞b4† 14.♕d2 ♞d6 15.0-0 ♗h5

Black has the easier game.



10...e5!

I like this classic way of playing against White's e4- and f4-pawns.

11. ♖e3

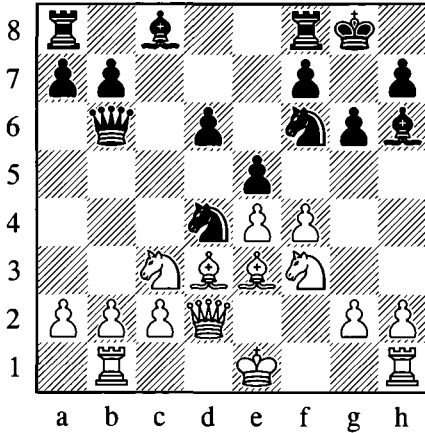
This doesn't work out too well, but 11. ♖f2 ♗xf2† 12. ♖xf2 ♖b4 also favours Black.

11... ♖d4 12. ♗d2N

After 12. ♖xd4? exd4 13. ♖d1 ♗e8 14. ♖f1 ♖xe4 Black was completely winning in Konev–Tamayo, Benasque 2000.

12... ♖h6!

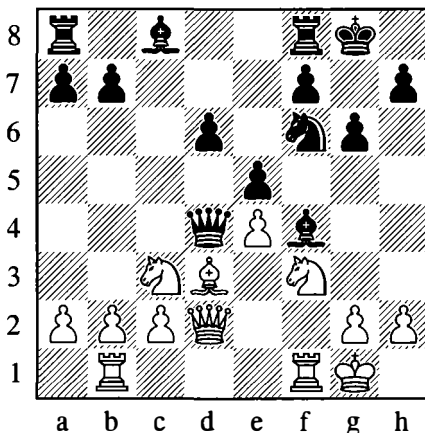
This keeps White under pressure.



13.0-0!

13. fxe5? ♖xe3 14. ♗xe3 ♖xc2† would be embarrassing for White.

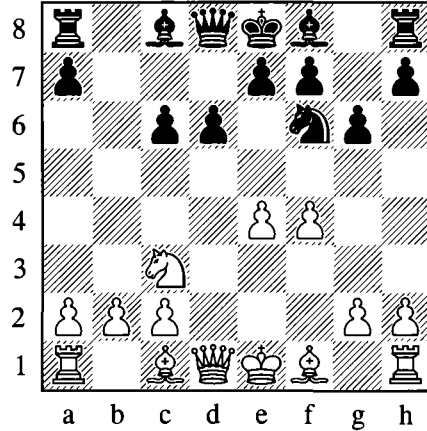
13... ♖xf4! 14. ♖xd4 ♗xd4†!



15. ♖xd4 ♖xd2 16. ♗xf6 exd4 17. ♖b5 ♖e6

Black's strong bishops give him the better prospects.

E) 7. ♖xc6 bxc6



This is White's normal continuation. He improves Black's structure but hopes to crash through in the centre before we can complete our development. If his attack fails then Black can count on a pleasant middlegame.

8.e5

This is White's only logical continuation, without which his last move makes no sense.

8... ♖d7

White may try E1) 9. ♗f3 or E2) 9. exd6.

9. ♖c4 ♖g7 takes us back to variation A.

E1) 9. ♗f3

Black has an array of choices. Defending the c6-pawn is okay, but I prefer the more dynamic possibility of sacrificing it for the initiative.

9... ♖g7

9... dxe5!?

This is likely to transpose to our main line, but it also sets a subtle trap.

10.♖xc6

10.♗c4 ♗g7 transposes to the note on 10.♖f3 in variation A.

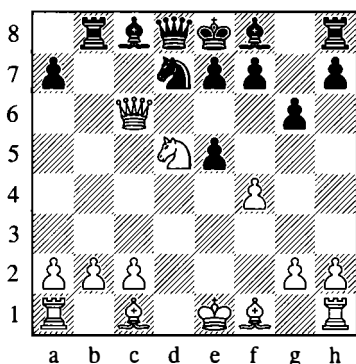
The best continuation is 10.♗b5 ♗g7 11.♗xc6 ♖b8 – see variation E12 below.

10...♖b8 11.♗d5?

11.♗e3 ♗h6!? is complicated but Black is certainly not worse.

11.fxg5 ♗g7 also feels more pleasant for Black.

The advantage of this move order for Black is that this knight jump looks tempting but is, in fact, seriously flawed.

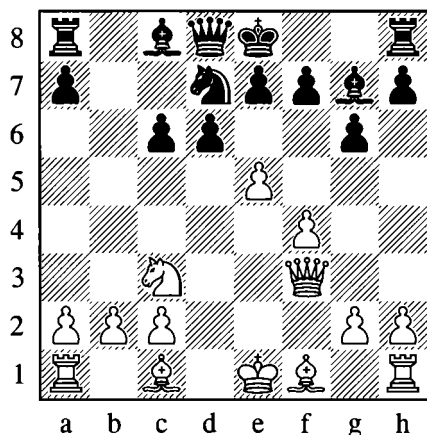


11...♗g7 12.♗c4

12.♗c7† ♗f8 gets nowhere for White and he will have to take care not to lose the knight, for example after 13.♗d3? ♗b7 14.♖c4 ♖c8.

12...0-0 13.♗e3 ♗b7+–

White was dropping material in Istrati – Gara, Oropesa del Mar 1999.



At this point **E11) 10.♖xc6** is the obvious move, but we should also consider **E12) 10.♗b5!?**.

10.exd6 0-0! 11.dxe7?! is an extremely hot pawn to grab. 11...♖xe7† 12.♗f2 (12.♗e2 ♖e8+ is a chronic pin) In L. Lukacs – Szakaly, Hungary 2011, 12...♗c5N 13.♗e3 ♖e8 would have given Black a clear advantage.

E11) 10.♖xc6 ♖b8 11.♗e3

11.exd6

As usual in these variations, taking the pawn on d6 is asking for trouble.

11...0-0 12.♖c7

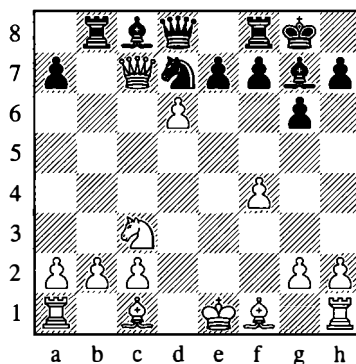
Other moves are no better:

12.♗a6 ♗b6 13.♗xc8 ♖xc8 14.♖b7 Vicente Soler – Rodriguez Rey, Spain 1984.

14...♖xd6N 15.0-0 ♗xc3 16.bxc3 ♖xc3†

12.♗e3 ♖xb2 13.0-0–0 Duran Vallverde – Rodriguez Rey, Spain 1984. 13...♖b7N

14.♗d4 ♗xd4 15.♖xd4 exd6†



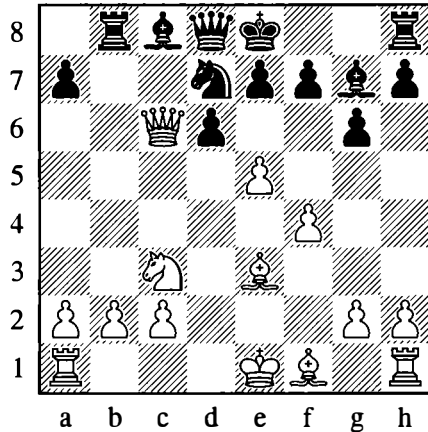
12...♖e8!N

Keeping the queens on makes sense to me, although 12...exd6 13.♖xd8 ♖xd8† is also tempting; despite the queen exchange, Black still has a dangerous initiative. A correspondence game which reached this position didn't last long: 14.♗c4 ♖e8† 15.♗f1 a6 16.♗d1 ♗b7 17.c3 d5 18.♗b3 d4 19.f5 ♗c5 20.fxg6 hxg6 21.♗f4 ♖bd8

22.h4 ♖e4 23.♗c7 ♜de8 24.♘f2 ♖e2 0-1
Zimniok – John, email 2001.

13.♗e2 exd6 14.♞xd6 ♗b7

Black has fantastic compensation.



11...♞xb2!N

Black has castled in a couple of correspondence games but capturing the pawn must be critical.

12.♘b5

12.0-0-0 ♜b8 13.♗xa7 ♜b7 14.♗d4 dxе5
15.♗xe5 0-0

12.♘d5!? is tricky but 12...♜b8! seems to favour Black. (12...0-0 13.♞xc8 is White's idea, although even here Black is fine after 13...♞xc8 14.♘xe7 ♗h8 15.♘xc8 ♞xc8.)

12...0-0 13.♞c3

This is a typical computer line and I'm not convinced that it's really playable for a human.

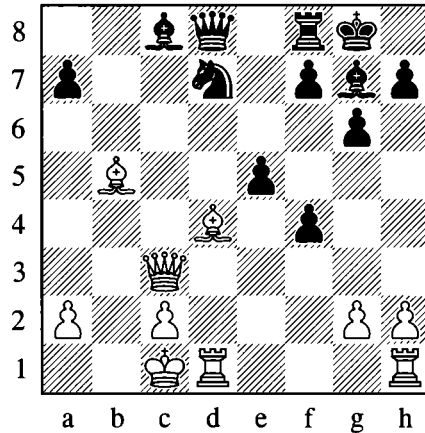
13...♞xb5 14.♗xb5 dxе5 15.0-0-0

15.0-0 exf4 16.♗d4 e5 17.♗xa7 ♞g5 gives Black a strong pawn mass and a kingside initiative.

15...exf4 16.♗d4 e5

16...♘f6 17.♞c5 e6 also looks reasonable for Black. These positions are obviously messy but

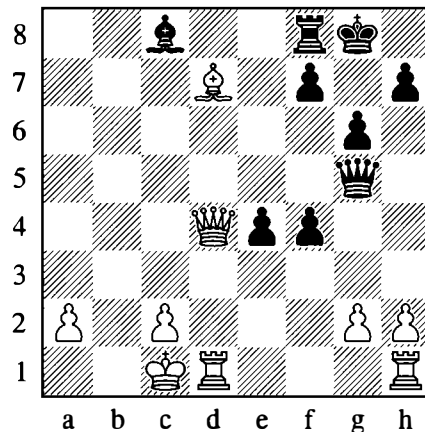
we have the far safer king, so White's position is the more difficult to handle.



17.♗xa7 e4 18.♗d4

The following line caught my imagination.

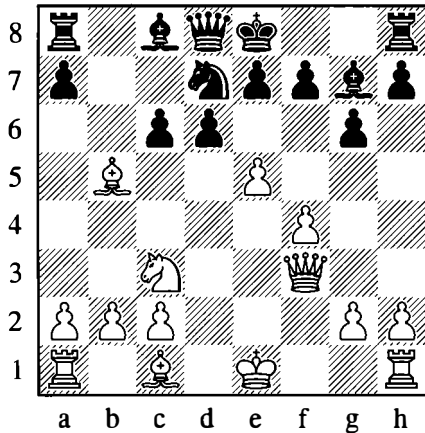
18...♗xd4!? 19.♞xd4 ♞g5 20.♗xd7



20...f3† 21.♗b1 ♗xd7 22.♞xd7 ♜b8†
23.♗a1 f2

Despite White's extra rook he certainly isn't better. Black's connected passed pawns are dangerous while White has to watch out for his king's safety. My engine evaluates the position as dead equal.

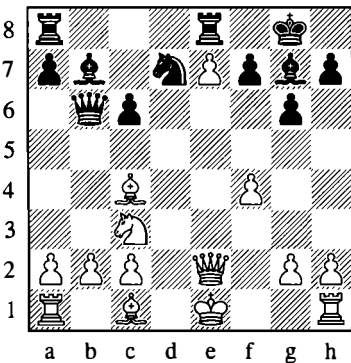
E12) 10.♙b5!?



This time White prefers to capture on c6 with the bishop.

10...♞b8

10...♙b7 also favours Black. 11.exd6 (11.♙xc6 ♙xc6 12.♞xc6 dxe5 13.0-0 0-0) 11...♞b6! 12.♞e2?! 0-0! 13.dxe7 ♞fe8 14.♙c4?!

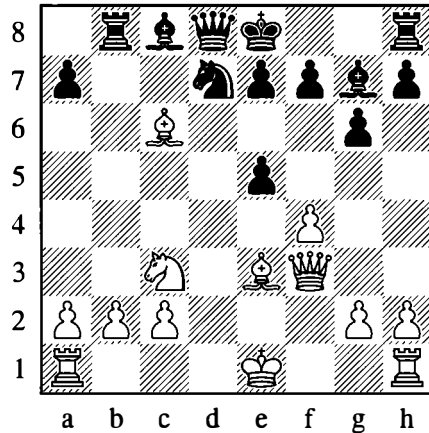


14...♞b4! Again White's extra pawn has come at a high price. 15.0-0 ♞xe7 16.♞d3 ♘c5 17.a3 ♞b6 18.♞f3 ♘b3† 19.♙h1 ♘xa1+ Voltschok – Kwiatkowski, Kiev 1959.

11.♙xc6 dxe5 12.♙c3!?

White is more or less forced to go for the sharp option. Instead after 12.0-0 0-0 13.♙d5 ♙a6 14.♞d1 ♞c7 15.♙b3 e6 16.♞f2 ♘f6!

17.h3 ♘h5† Black had easily built up a clear advantage in Gil – Standke, email 2010.

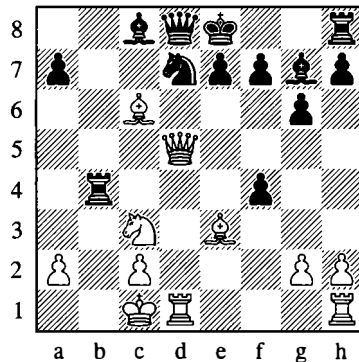


12...♞xb2 13.0-0-0 ♞b4

This is Dearing's recommendation in *Play the Sicilian Dragon*. The position is complicated but Black has the upper hand.

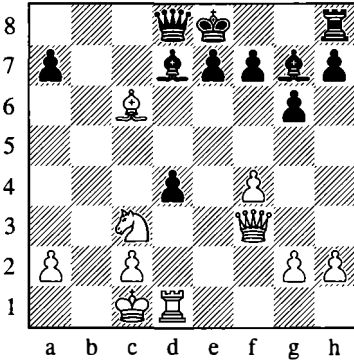
14.fxe5

14.♞d5 was played in the only practical encounter to reach this position, Weinzettl – Ager, Austria 1981. At this point 14...exf4!N would have given Black the better of the complications, as the following lines show:



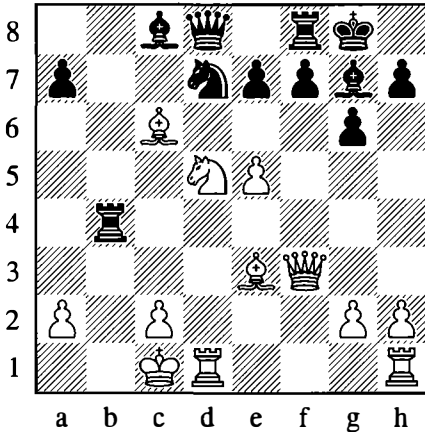
15.♙d4 (15.♞c5 ♞b7! 16.♙d4 0-0 17.♙xg7 ♘xc5 18.♞xd8 ♞xd8 19.♙xb7 ♙xb7-+) 15...♞xd4! 16.♞xd4 e6 17.♞c5 ♙xd4 18.♞xd4 0-0 19.♞d1 ♞a5-+

14. ♖xd7! N ♗xd7 15. ♗d1 bales out and is probably the most sensible approach. Best play continues: 15... ♗d4! 16. ♗xd4 exd4



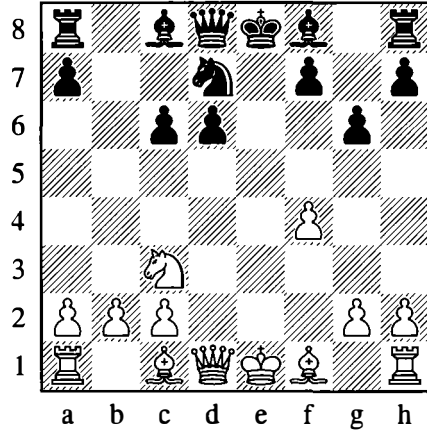
17. ♗xd7† ♗xd7 18. ♗a8† ♗d8 19. ♗xd8† (19. ♗c6† ♗f8†) 19... ♗xd8 20. ♖b5 ♗c8 Black has the better ending but objectively it should be a draw.

14...0-0 15. ♖d5



15... ♖xe5! 16. ♖xb4 ♗a5 17. ♗f4 ♖xc6 18. ♖xc6 ♗a3† 19. ♗d2 ♗c3† 20. ♗c1 ♗xc6 Black had an overwhelming advantage in Szafranski – Vassia, email 2000.

E2) 9. exd6 exd6

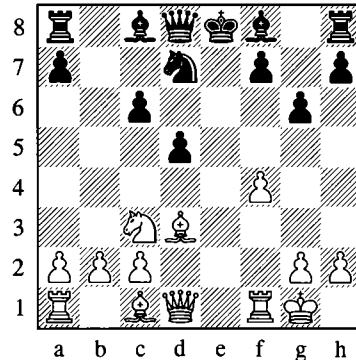


It is worth considering E21) 10. ♗d4, but the most popular continuation has been E22) 10. ♗e3.

10. ♗e2 puts absolutely no pressure on Black. 10...d5 11. ♗e3 (11.0-0 ♗g7 12. ♗e3 0-0†) 11... ♗g7 12. ♗d4 This was Estrada Degrandi – Toran Albero, San Rafael 1951, and now 12...0-0N leaves Black with a typical advantage; the b2-pawn is especially vulnerable.

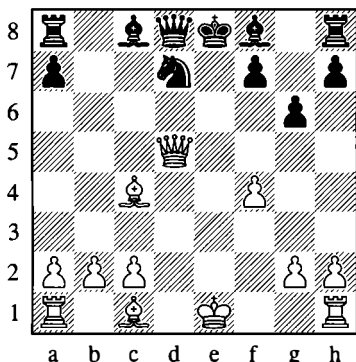
Likewise 10. ♗f3 d5 is simply excellent for Black.

10. ♗d3 gives us a pleasant choice between 10... ♖c5† and the more typical: 10...d5 11.0-0



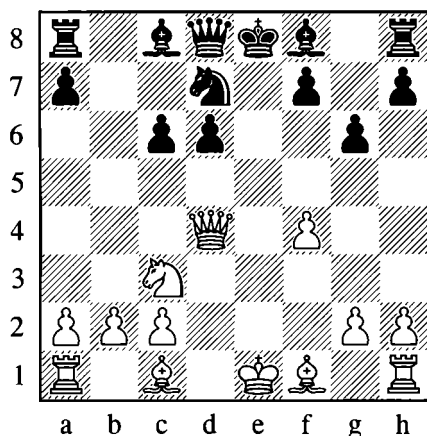
11... ♗c5†N 12. ♗h1 0-0†

10.♙c4 doesn't prevent 10...d5! either. The only critical line to check is 11.♘xd5 cxd5 12.♚xd5 as in Fejzovski – Goulenok, Paris 1993, but Black can refute his opponent's play with:



12...♙b4!N 13.c3 ♚h4† 14.g3 (14.♙f1 ♙c5!-+; or 14.♙d1 0-0 15.cxb4 ♘b6 16.♚c5 ♚d8† 17.♙c2 ♘xc4 18.♚xc4 ♚f2† and White can resign) 14...♚e7† 15.♙e2 (15.♙d1 0-0! also gives us a decisive attack) 15...♚b8 16.cxb4 ♙b7 17.♚d4 0-0 18.♚f1 ♚fe8 19.♚f2 ♘f6 Black has a crushing attack.

E21) 10.♚d4



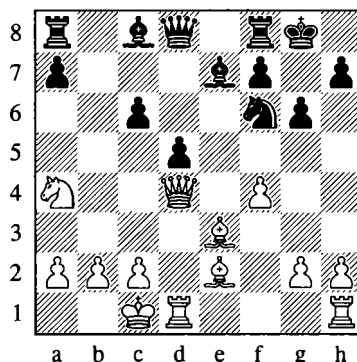
This was the young Kasparov's attempt but, despite his famed preparation, he was quickly worse.

10...♘f6 11.♙e3 ♙e7 12.♙e2 0-0

White has managed to force Black to develop his bishop to e7 rather than g7, but this isn't a big deal for us. White's f4-pawn gets in the way of his attack and his pieces don't coordinate well.

13.♙f3

13.0-0-0 has been played in a couple of computer battles but Black's play is straightforward: 13...d5 14.♘a4 (14.♚a4 ♚c7 15.♚hf1 a6 16.h3 ♚b8 17.a3 ♚e8 18.♙d4 ♘d7 19.♙b1 ♙d6 20.♙f3 ♙b7 21.♙a7 ♚a8 22.♙g1 ♘c5 23.♙xc5 ♙xc5† saw Black take over completely in el-shaddai – crgiorgio, engine game 2013)



14...♘e4 15.♙f3 ♙f6 16.♚xe4 dxe4 17.♚xd8 ♚xd8 18.♙xe4 ♙e6 19.♘c5 ♙d5† Black eventually converted the extra exchange in gereksiz – gamestar, engine game 2012.

13.0-0 d5

Our plan is simply to advance our central pawns, and there doesn't seem to be much White can do about it.

14.♚a4

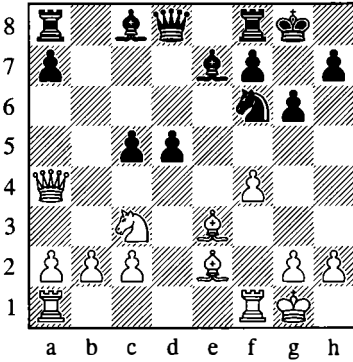
14.♚d2 ♚b8 15.♙xa7 ♚xb2 16.♚ab1 ♚xb1 17.♚xb1 c5 18.♙f3 occurred in Klykow – Gaponenko, Wroclaw 2004, and after 18...d4!N Black completely dominates.

14.b4 ♙f5 15.♚ac1 saw White attempting to slow the central advance in Gireman – Shashwat, Nagpur 2012, but 15...a5!N

would have been winning for Black.

14...c5

14...♖b8! is also good for Black.



15.♖ad1

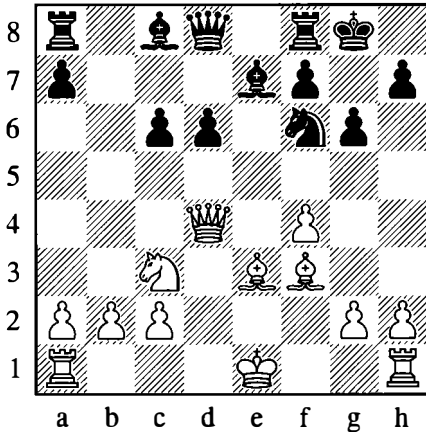
15.♗f3 ♖b8 16.♗xa7 ♖b7 17.♗a8 ♗d7

15...d4 16.♗f2

In Shtyka – Kadatsky, Internet 2006, the easiest way forward would have been:

16...♗b6!N

This simply picks up the b2-pawn as 17.♘b5? ♗d7 18.♗b3 ♖ab8 only makes matters worse for White.



13...♘g4!N

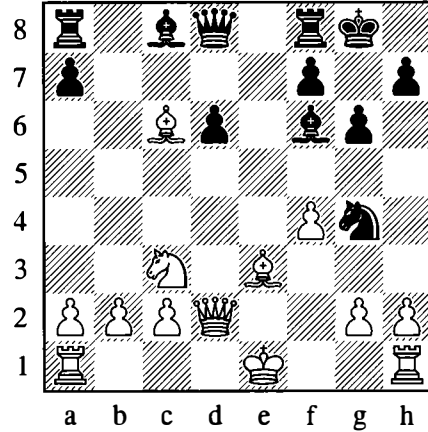
13...d5 was played in Kasparov – Balashov, Moscow 1981, when a draw was soon agreed. Black can get a good game by using the same plan as shown above when White castles. However, I think my novelty is even stronger.

14.♗xc6

14.♗xg4 ♗xg4 15.0-0 ♗f6 is comfortable for Black.

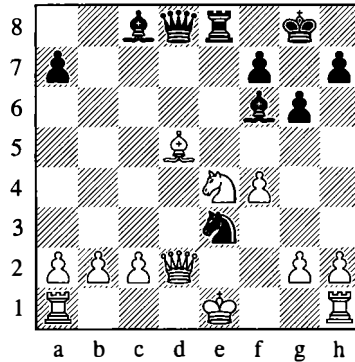
14...♗f6 15.♗d2

After 15.♗xa8 ♗xd4 16.♗xd4 ♗e7† 17.♘d2 d5! White's king is unlikely to survive.



15...♘e3 16.♗xe3

16.♗xa8? loses by force: 16...♗e8 17.♘e4 d5! 18.♗xd5 (18.♘xf6† ♗xf6 19.♗f2 ♘c4 is no better)

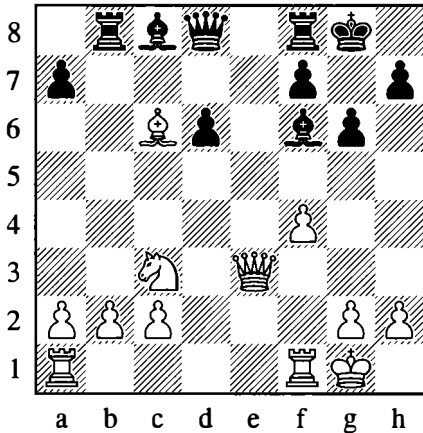


18...♘g2†! 19.♗f2 (19.♘d1 ♗xe4 20.♗xe4 ♗g4† 21.♗c1 ♗xb2† 22.♗xb2 ♗xd2→) 19...♗xe4 Black has a crushing initiative.

16...♖b8 17.0-0

17.♘d5 ♗a6!† traps White's king in the centre of the board.

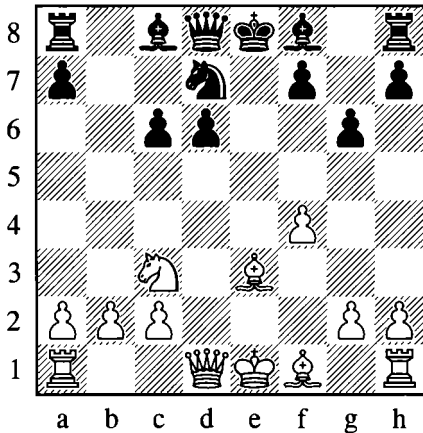
17.0-0 ♖a5 18.♞xd6 ♘e6† also gives us a dangerous attack.



17...♞b6 18.♞xb6 ♞xb6 19.♙d5 ♞xb2 20.♟e4 ♙d4† 21.♞h1 ♞xc2†

Black has good winning chances in the ending with the extra pawn.

E22) 10.♙e3

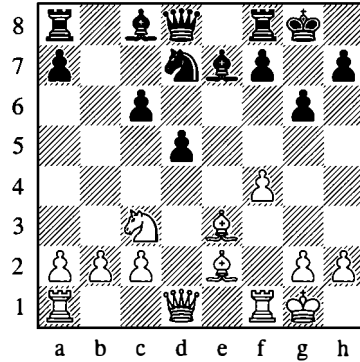


White threatens 11.♙d4 so it makes sense for us to develop and castle as quickly as possible.

10...♙e7 11.♞d2

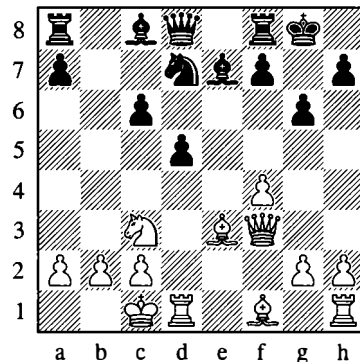
This is White's usual approach as he wishes to castle queenside.

11.♙e2 prepares short castling but puts absolutely no pressure on Black. 11...0-0 12.0-0 (Or 12.♞d2 d5 13.0-0 ♞e8 14.♙f3 ♙d6 15.♞h1 ♞b8 16.b3 ♟c5† Patterson – Berza, email 2010.) 12...d5



13.♞e1?! ♞e8 14.♞f2 This was Gnauk – Ersoez, Germany 2003, and after 14...♙h4!N 15.♞f3 ♞e7 16.♙f2 ♙xf2† 17.♞xf2 ♟f6 18.♞ae1 ♞b4† Black has taken over.

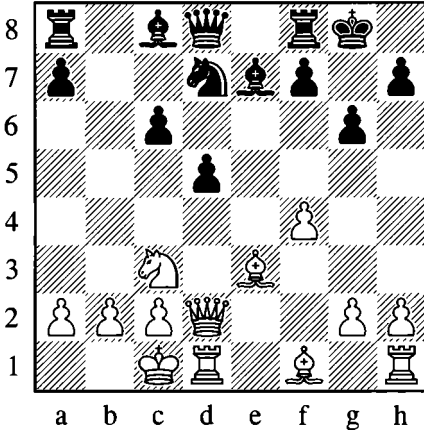
White has also tried 11.♞f3 but once again Black gets a fine game by following the same plan. 11...d5 12.0-0-0 0-0 The queen may look more active on f3 than on d2 but, after the knight goes to f6, the threat of ...♙g4 may force White to move his queen again.



13.g4 (13.h4 ♟f6 14.♙e2 h5 15.♞g3 Lindinger – Golubev, Hamburg 1999. 15...♟g4N 16.♙d4 c5 17.♙e5 d4†) 13...♙f6 14.♙d4 ♙xd4 15.♞xd4 ♞b8 16.♞d2 ♞b6 17.b3 ♞b4

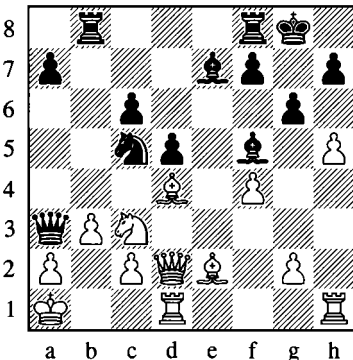
18.♔e2 ♖f6 The legendary Dutch GM was taking over in Tarjan – Timman, Venice 1974.

11...0-0 12.0-0 d5



Practice has shown that White's attack is not dangerous. Black controls the centre and can aim to either advance his d-pawn or attack along the b-file. Just as in the last note, White must decide which pawn to advance in order to generate an attack. We will consider **E221) 13.h4** and **E222) 13.g4**.

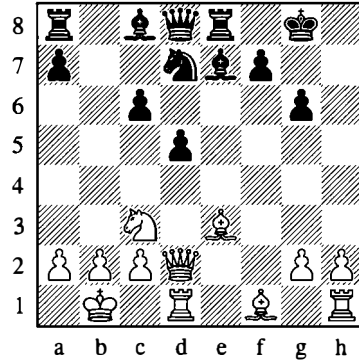
Another good example continued: 13.♔e2 ♗a5 14.h4 ♖b8 15.h5 ♖c5 16.♔d4 ♗b4 17.b3 ♔f5 18.♗b2 ♗a3+! 19.♗a1 (19.♗xa3 ♖xb3+ 20.♗b2 ♖xd2+)



19...♔f6! 20.♖b1 (20.♔xf6 ♔xc2! was the point, when Black is better after both 21.♖b1

♔xb1 22.♖xb1 ♖xb3 and 21.♗xc2 ♖xb3+)
20...♔xd4+ 21.♗xd4 ♗b4 22.♗b2 ♗xd4+
23.♖xd4 ♔e4+ Berecz – Lovakovic, email 2010.

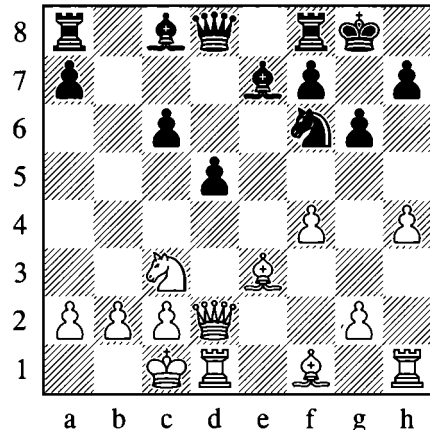
Finally, 13.f5 has also been tried. 13...♗e8 (13...♖e5N 14.fxg6 fxg6+ also looks reliable) 14.fxg6 hxg6 15.♗b1



In Bogdanovich – Matveev, Moscow 2005, 15...♔f6!N would have been safest. 16.h4 ♗e7 17.♔d4 ♖b8 18.h5 ♗b4 Our counterplay comes in time, and after 19.b3 ♗xd4 20.♗xd4 ♔xd4 21.♖xd4 g5+ Black has a promising endgame.

E221) 13.h4 ♖f6!

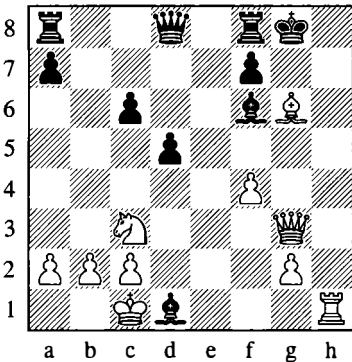
From here the knight controls h5 and also prepares to jump to g4 to harass the e3-bishop.



14.h5

This pawn sacrifice is typical against the Dragon but on this occasion it doesn't work. However, it's hard to offer White any better alternatives.

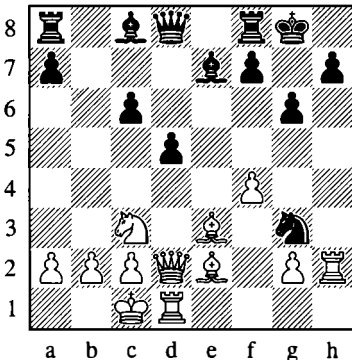
14.♖e2 ♘g4 (Playing à la Golubev with 14...h5N, blocking up the kingside and winning f5 as an outpost, is also superb for Black) 15.h5 ♘xe3 16.♗xe3 ♕f6 17.hxg6 hxg6 18.♗d3 ♗g4 19.♗g3 ♗xd1 20.♗xg6



20...♗e8! 21.♗h7+ ♖f8 22.♘xd1 ♗b8+ Black's king was quite safe as White could not attack on the dark squares in starcraft_ii, – squee, engine game 2013.

14...♘h5 15.♗f2

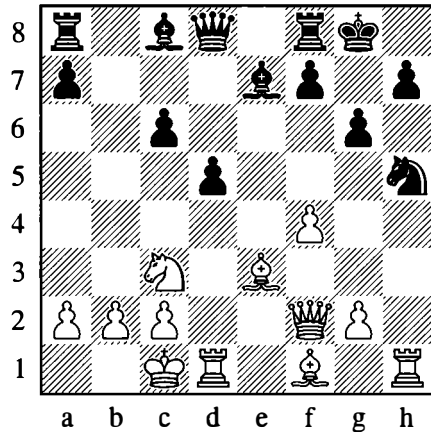
15.♗e2 ♘g3 16.♗h2 occurred in S. Christensen – J. Nielsen, Aalborg 1999.



After 16...♗e8N White has nothing to show

for his pawn deficit while the knight is strongly placed on g3. Black is simply winning.

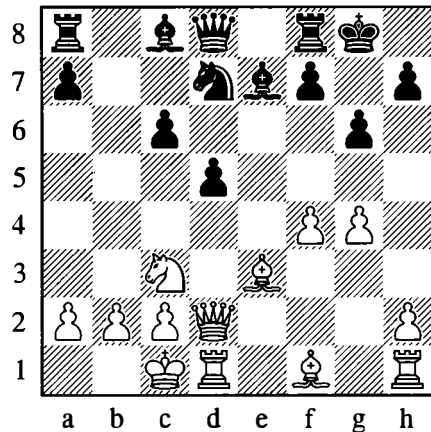
The text move was played in Salinnikov – Kargin, Novosibirsk 1999. Here I would prefer:



15...♘f6N 16.♗e2 ♘g4 17.♗xg4 ♗xg4 18.♗de1 ♗f6+

With a clear extra pawn.

E222) 13.g4



13...♗a5

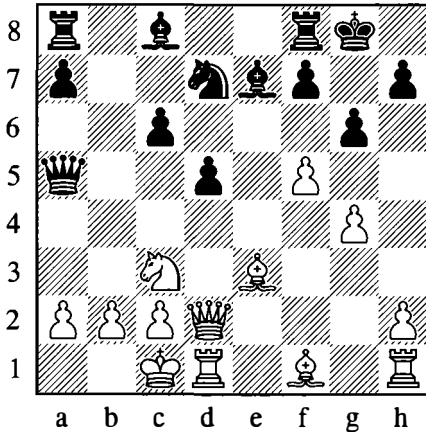
If you wish to keep an eye on the kingside you can also start with 13...♗e8!?. The idea is to wait for 14.h4N before jumping our knight over to the kingside with 14...♘f6 15.g5 ♘h5+.

White avoided this outcome with 14.g5 in I. Popov – Ulko, Moscow 2007, but his last move loses flexibility on the kingside, and 14...♙c5N 15.♙d4 ♙xd4 16.♖xd4 ♗b6 leaves Black with a comfortable advantage.

14.f5

14.♙b1 was played in Friedel – Steigman, San Francisco 2000. After the natural 14...♗b8N 15.♙a1 ♖e8 Black completely dominates the board while White's attack is getting nowhere, for example: 16.♙d4 c5⚡; or 16.h4 ♟f6 17.g5 ♟g4 18.♙d4 ♙c5⚡; or 16.♙g2 ♗b4 17.♗c1 ♙f6⚡.

14.♗f2 doesn't slow our attack either. 14...♗b8! 15.♙d4 Magaldi – Roselli Mailhe, Uruguay 1986. 15...♙d8!N A peculiar-looking move, but an extremely strong one. The main point is to threaten ...c5 without White being able to counter with ♟xd5 hitting the e7-bishop. Black is already winning.

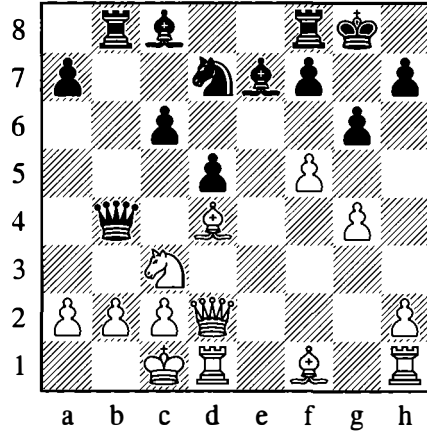


14...♗b8 15.♙d4

15.fxg6 fxg6 16.♙b5?! ♗xb5 17.♟xb5 ♗xb5 18.♙h6 ♖f7 was just completely winning in Vinogradov – Arakelov, Kostroma 2008. The database gives the result of this game as a White win but I suspect a data error.

15...♗b4

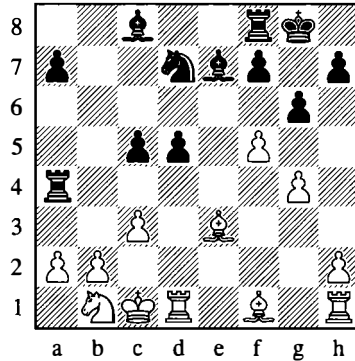
The safest option is 15...♙c5N, when the exchange of dark-squared bishops diminishes White's attack. Play may continue 16.h4 ♗b4 17.b3 ♙xd4 18.♗xd4 a5 and Black has a small edge.



16.b3N

White should probably try this.

16.♟b1 gives Black a risk-free advantage: 16...c5! 17.♗xb4 ♗xb4 18.c3 ♖a4 19.♙e3



In Nguyen Van Thanh – Pham Chuong, Ho Chi Minh 2013, 19...♟b6!N would have left Black with a clear advantage, as White cannot defend both g4 and a2.

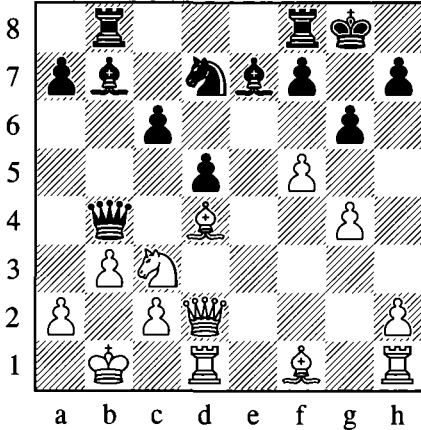
16...♙b7

Black overprotects d5 in readiness to play ...c5.

16...♙c5 is likely to transpose to the note to Black's 15th move above.

17.♖b1

17.h4? loses to 17...c5. After the text move the critical line appears to be:



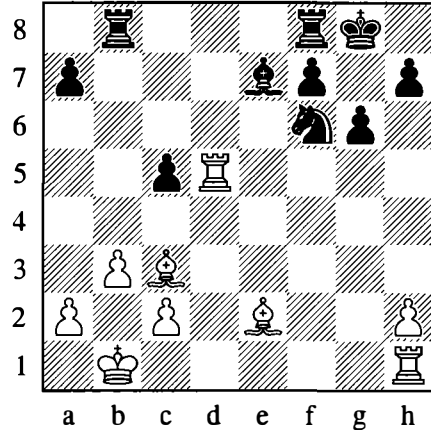
17...c5 18.♘xd5! ♙xd5 19.♙c3 ♖xg4

19...♙g5!? looks like a forced draw: 20.♖xg5 ♗xc3 21.♙xd5 ♗f3 22.fxg6 hxg6 23.♙d6 (23.♙g1 ♗f2 24.♙h1 ♗f3=) 23...♗xh1 24.♙xg6† fxg6 25.♗xg6† ♖h8 26.♗h6† ♖g8=

20.♙e2

20.♗xd5 ♘f6 21.♙xf6 ♙xf6 Black has the safer king and the threat of a rook to d8 is awkward for White.

20...♗xf5 21.♗xd5 ♗xd5 22.♙xd5 ♘f6



23.♙xf6 ♙xf6 24.♙xc5 ♙bc8

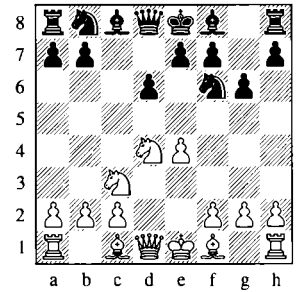
The game should probably end in a draw, but Black can press for a while with no risk. His bishop can go to c3 to keep the white king boxed in, and he also has the more mobile pawn majority.

Conclusion

The Levenfish was popular a few decades ago and a fair amount of theory built up on it. However, its reputation remains dubious and accurate play promises Black the better chances in most variations. In recent years a few strong players have tried 7.♘f3 to reach a reasonably active position without much theory. However, 8...♗b6!? is a convincing answer which cuts across White's approach and gives him immediate problems to solve.

Chapter 19

Minor Lines



6th Move Deviations

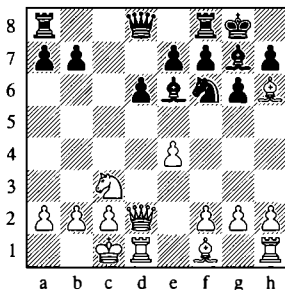
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.d4 f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.d4xd4 d6f6 5.d4c3

5...g6

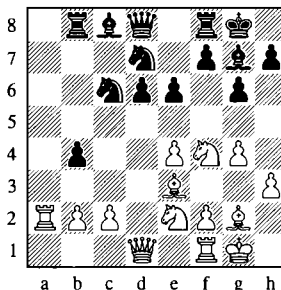
A) 6.♔d3	301
B) 6.h4	302
C) 6.d5	303
D) 6.♔b5†	304
E) 6.♔g5 ♔g7 7.♚d2 d6c6	305
E1) 8.0-0-0	307
E2) 8.d6b3	308
F) 6.h3! ♔g7	310
F1) 7.♔e3 0-0 8.♚d2 d6c6	310
F11) 9.g4	311
F12) 9.0-0-0	312
F2) 7.g4 d6c6	314
F21) 8.d6de2	314
F22) 8.♔e3	315

E1) after 11.♔h6



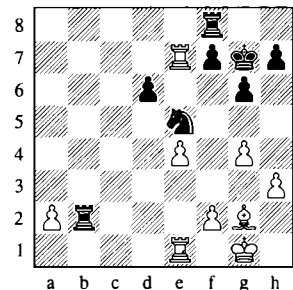
11...♔xh6!N

F21) after 16.d6df4



16...b3!N

F22) after 21.♚xe7



21:h:♚a8!N www.chess.com

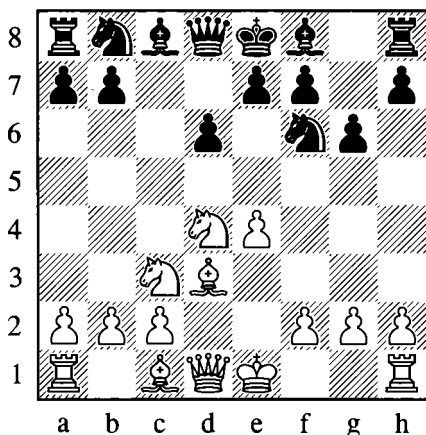
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♖f6
5.♗c3 g6

The lines examined in this chapter are rare and generally not dangerous, but it's still useful to have some idea of how to deal with them. We will analyse A) 6.♗d3, B) 6.h4, C) 6.♗d5, D) 6.♗b5†, E) 6.♗g5 and F) 6.h3!?

6.♗f3 doesn't put any pressure on Black.
6...♗c6 7.♗c4 ♗g7 8.0-0 0-0 9.h3 a6=

6.♗de2 is a strange move order to play the Fianchetto Variation as Black is not obliged to develop his knight to c6. However, we may as well simply transpose with 6...♗c6 7.g3, as covered in Chapter 16.

A) 6.♗d3



This is an odd square for the bishop. I like the idea of immediately exploiting it with:

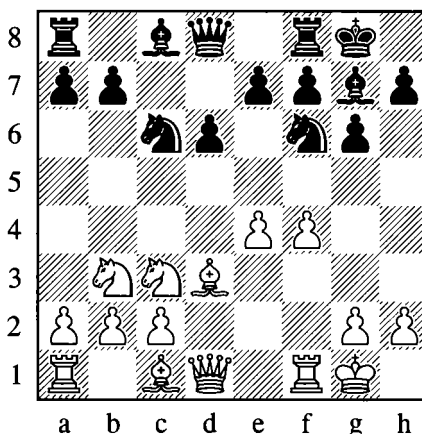
6...♗c6 7.♗b3

7.♗e3 ♗g4! is awkward for White.

7.♗xc6 bxc6 is obviously fine for Black.

7...♗g7 8.0-0-0 9.f4

This is at least a consistent follow-up.



9...a5!

Also interesting is:

9...b5!?N

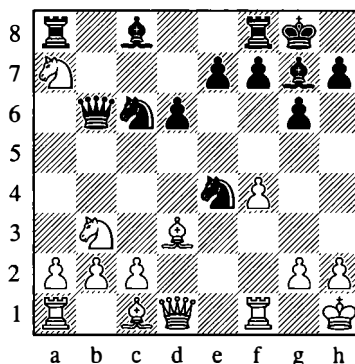
Borrowing an idea from the Classical where White plays f2-f4 prematurely.

10.♗xb5

10.♗xb5?! actually transposes to a position examined in Chapter 11 – see 10.♗xb5?! in the notes to variation B1 on page 183.

10...♞b6† 11.♗h1 ♗xe4 12.♗xa7

12.♗xe4 ♞xb5 13.♞f3 ♗d7 must favour Black with his central pawns.



12...d5 13.♗xe4

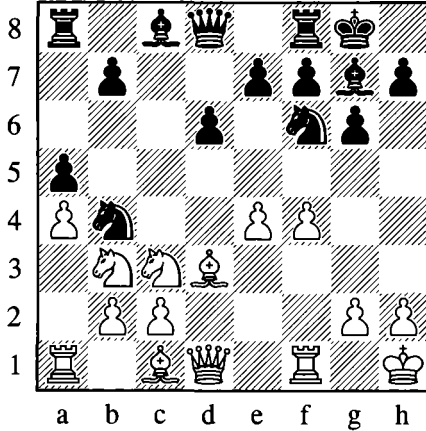
13.♗xc8 ♗f2†! 14.♞xf2 ♞xf2 15.♗xe7† ♗xe7†

13...dxe4 14.♗xc8 ♞xc8 15.c3 ♞b5

Black's queenside pressure yields sufficient compensation and White will struggle to complete his development.

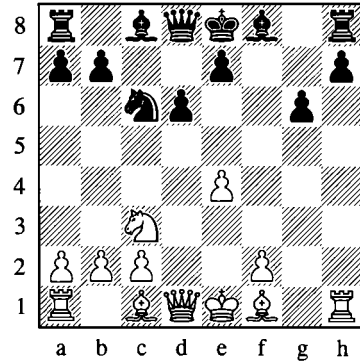
10.a4 ♖b4 11.♙h1

Here I found an improvement over Gonzalez Perales – Sanchez Saez, Mislata 2012.



6...♖c6 7.♙c4

7.h5?! is really going all-in. 7...♖xh5 8.g4 ♖xd4 9.gxh5 ♖c6 10.hxg6 fxg6



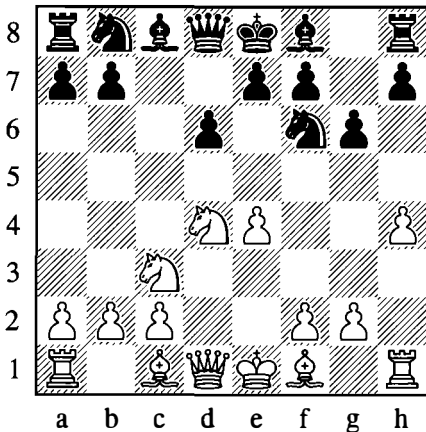
11.♙h6?! ♙xh6 12.♖xh6 ♖b6 Black already had a decisive advantage in Velimirovic – W. Watson, Bor 1986.

11...♖b6N

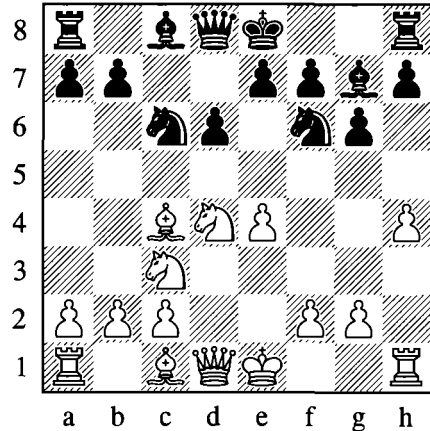
Black's position looks preferable, based on the following line:

12.f5 d5! 13.fxg6 hxg6 14.exd5 ♖fxd5 15.♖xd5 ♖xd5

B) 6.h4



7...♙g7



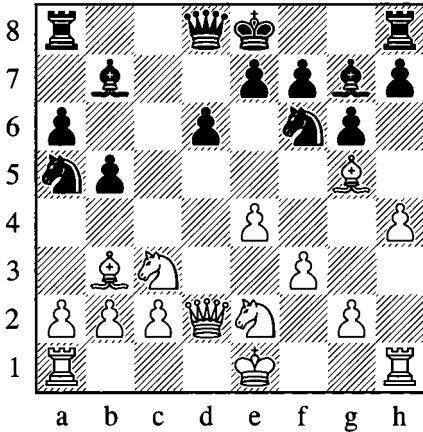
8.♖de2

8.♖xc6 bxc6 9.e5 is nothing to worry about. In Meszaros – Parkanyi, Eger 1990, 9...♖g4!N 10.exd6 exd6 would have been better for Black.

8...a6 9.f3 b5 10.♙b3 ♙b7 11.♙g5 ♖a5 12.♖d2

This position was reached in Manea – Corsino, Vienna 2012. I would continue:

This looks like coffeehouse chess and is a move best left for blitz.



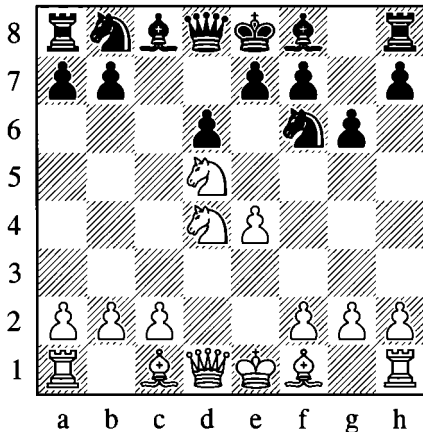
12...♖c8N

Black has the best possible version of a Dragadorf (Dragon-Najdorf hybrid).

13.♗h6 ♕xh6 14.♖xh6 ♘xb3 15.cxb3 ♗b6

Both kings are stuck in the centre for the time being, but Black can continue to make progress on the queenside while White's kingside play isn't really getting anywhere.

C) 6...♘d5



This move only makes sense if we capture on e4.

6...♘xd5!?

This attempts to refute the knight jump.

6...♗g7

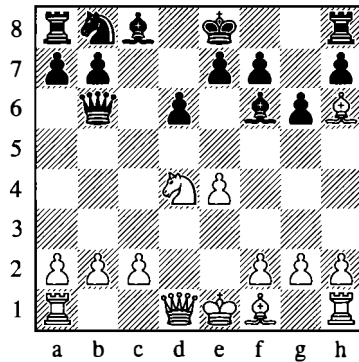
This straightforward developing move is also sensible.

7.♘xf6†

7.♗b5† is more common in practice but 7...♗d7 8.0-0 0-0 puts absolutely no pressure on Black.

7...♗xf6 8.♗h6 ♖b6!

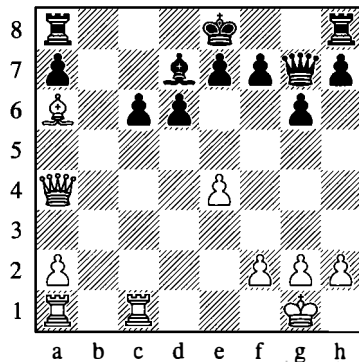
Black wins a pawn. Ireland's Andrew Smith has attempted to prove White's compensation three times, but has yet to save even half a point.



9.c3 ♖xb2 10.♗b5† ♗d7

10...♘d7 also favoured Black in A.P. Smith – Tiviakov, Port Erin 2001, but I like the text move – which was also Simon Williams' suggestion – even more. Interestingly, both of Smith's subsequent opponents went for the bishop move and followed the same route until move 20!

11.0-0 ♘c6 12.♖a4 ♖xc3 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.♗c4 ♗g7 15.♖f1 ♗e5 16.♗xg7 ♖xg7 17.♗a6



17...c5!N

17...Bb8 18.f1 0-0 19.Wxa7 Bfd8 led to further defeats of Smith at the hands of Richard Webb and James Holland, in 2009 and 2010 respectively. The text move is even stronger though.

18.f5 fxb5 19.Wxb5+ c6 20.Wb7 Bd8

Black follows with ...We5 and ...c6g7, with a winning position.

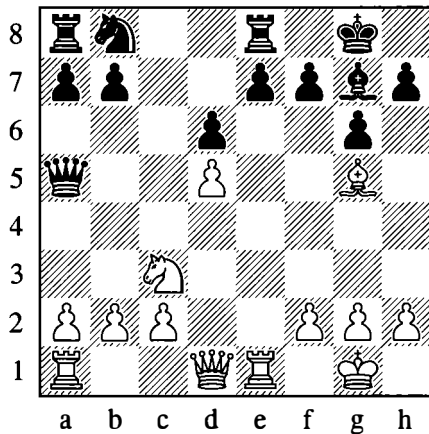
7.f5

7.exd5?! Wa5+ wins a pawn for insufficient compensation: 8.f2 (8.Wd2 Wxd5 9.Wc3 We5!N 10.f3 c6 11.f4 Wf6) 8...Wxd5 9.f5 a6 10.f3 Wxd1+ 11.Bxd1 Bg8 Sebban – Sintes, Provence 1991.

7...f2 8.exd5 f5 9.f3 Wa5+ 10.f3 g7 11.0-0 12.Bc1 Be8 13.f5

13.f2 is a calmer choice but Black has no problems after 13...f7.

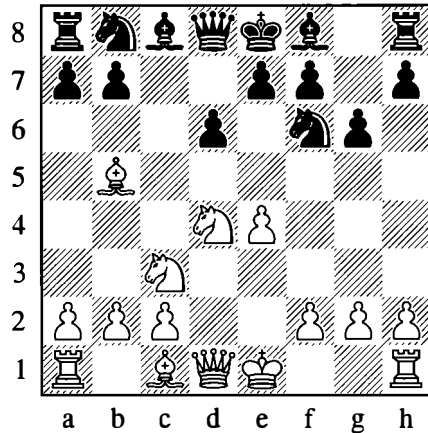
At this point my engine has no fear and proposes:



13...f3!N 14.bxc3 e5

With a knight on d7 White will find it hard to generate any mating threats, and White's queenside pawns are extremely vulnerable.

D) 6.f5



If White is so keen to check the king, then why not do it on move three?

6...f2

6...f7 is also possible of course.

7.f5

This is White's most aggressive option, though it is nothing to worry about.

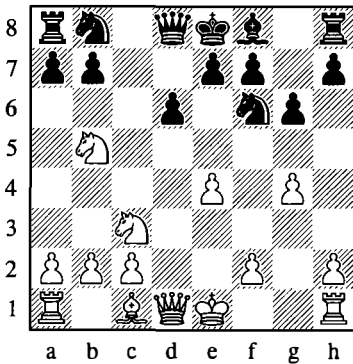
7.We2 f7 8.0-0 0-0= leads to a non-critical version of the Classical.

7.f7+ has been White's most common choice but 7...f7 8.0-0 f7 gives Black comfortable equality.

7.f3 f5 8.f5 a6 9.f4 d4 f7 10.0-0 f7= is obviously nothing to worry about.

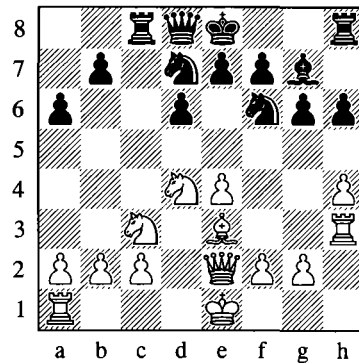
7.0-0 f7 8.f3 0-0 9.f3 has been played a few times but 9...f5N 10.f5 a6 11.f3 f7, followed by ...Bc8, ...b5 and rerouting the knight to c4, gives Black easy play.

Finally, the extremely loosening 7.g4! is another move best left for blitz. 7...f5 8.f5 As I suggested on ChessPublishing, Black is doing well after:

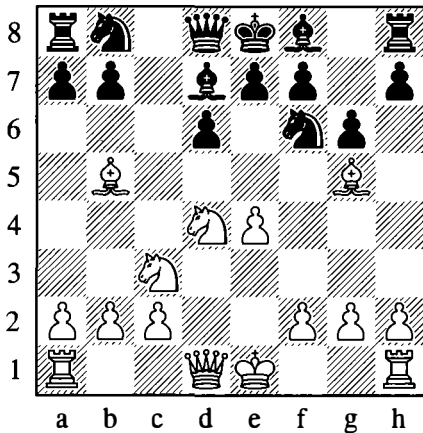


8...a6N 9.♘d4 ♙g7 10.g5 ♜fd7 11.h4 ♞c6
White has wasted two tempos exchanging light-squared bishops. If you are at all worried about his kingside attack you can simply delay castling and play on the queenside.

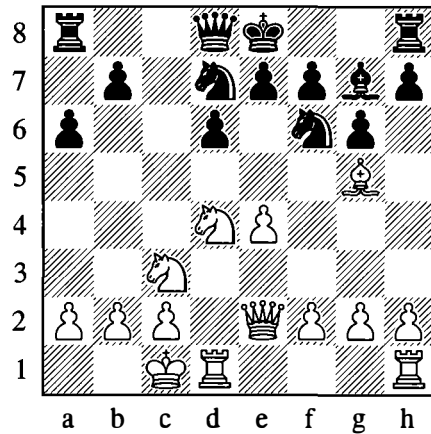
Kiev 1995, 11...h6!N would have left White without a good square for his bishop: 12.♙e3 (12.♙xf6 ♜xf6; 12.♙d2 b5)



12...♙xc3! 13.bxc3 ♜xe4 14.♙xh6 ♜xc3



7...♙g7 8.♞e2
8.♙xd7 ♜bxd7 9.0-0 0-0 is also fine for Black.

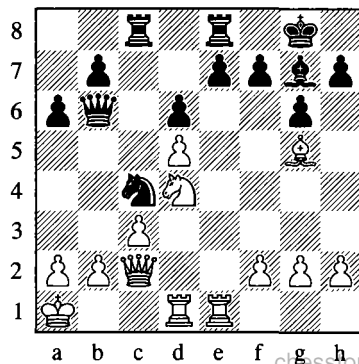


10...♙c8 11.f4
11.♘d5 was played recently but disastrously: 11...0-0 12.♙b1 ♜xd5 13.exd5 ♜e5 14.c3 ♞b6 15.♙a1 ♜c4 16.♙h1 ♙fe8 17.♞c2?

8...a6
There are plenty of good alternatives but we might as well be consistent.

9.♙xd7 ♜bxd7 10.0-0-0
10.f4?! has been played a few times but 10...♘h5!N followed by ...h6 wins the f4-pawn.

10.h4 ♙c8 11.♙h3 is an exotic way to deter the exchange sacrifice on c3. In Frolov – Golubev,



17...♙xd4! 18.♞xd4 ♖a3 19.♞e4 ♘c2†! 0–1
Cigan – Cvitan, Slovenia 2014.

11...♞xc3!

Defusing White's initiative and opening up White's king.

12.bxc3 ♞c7

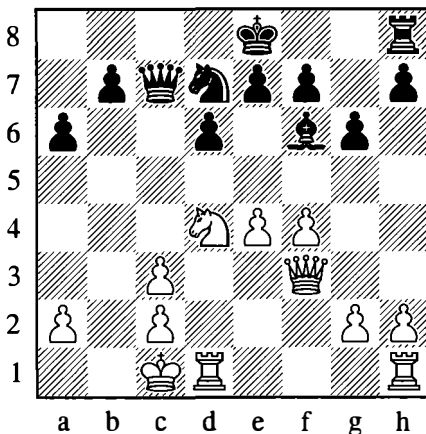
I actually faced this line recently, although only in rapid, and chose 12...♞a5 which also looks decent.

13.♙xf6

Also after 13.♘b3 ♘b6 14.♞d3 0–0 15.♞f3 ♘a4 16.♞hd1 ♞c8 17.e5 ♘e8 18.♞h3 ♙f8 19.♞e1 dxe5 20.fxe5 ♘xc3‡ Black was obviously doing well in A. Mueller – Aleksandrov, email 2010.

13...♙xf6 14.♞f3

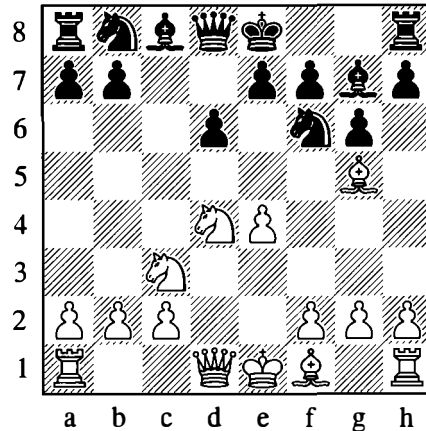
We have been following Grover – B. Smith, Rethymnon 2009. I suggest continuing as Aleksandrov did in the aforementioned game:



14...♘b6N

With superb compensation.

E) 6.♙g5 ♙g7



7.♞d2

White has tried several other moves, none of which are especially taxing.

7.♙b5† ♙d7 transposes to variation D above.

7.♙c4 transposes to variation A of Chapter 17.

7.♙e2 transposes to variation A of Chapter 11.

7.f3 ♘c6 8.♘b3 ♙e6 leaves White with nothing better than 9.♞d2, which transposes to 9.f3 in the notes to variation E2.

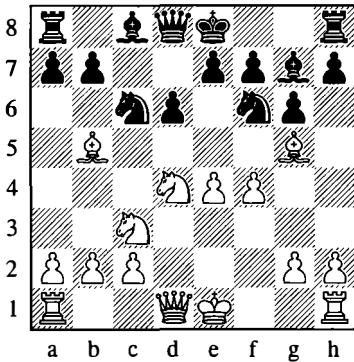
7.f4

This is a fairly aggressive set-up, but it's hard to believe White will be able to crash through with e4-e5 with his king stuck in the centre.

7...♘c6 8.♙b5

8.♘b3 ♙e6 9.♞d2 transposes to 9.f4 in the notes to variation E2 below. (9.♞f3 ♞c8‡ is hardly an improvement for White.)

8.♘xc6?! bxc6 9.e5 is premature: 9...♘g4 (There is also 9...dxe5 10.♞xd8† ♘xd8 11.fxe5 ♘g4 12.0–0–0† ♘e8‡ when White has insufficient compensation for the pawn) 10.♞f3 ♞b6 11.0–0–0 ♞b8‡



8...0-0!N

This temporary sacrifice gives White serious problems.

9.♟xc6

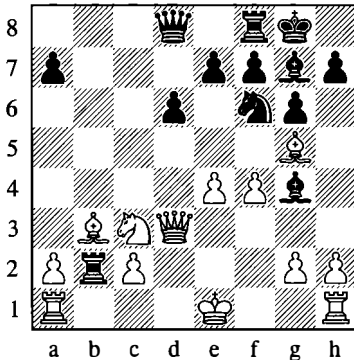
9.e5 ♟g4!±

9...bxc6 10.♟xc6 ♟g4 11.♞d3 ♜b8 12.♟a4

White cannot castle immediately as 12.0-0? ♞b6† wins the bishop.

12...♞xb2 13.♟b3?

This is the obvious follow-up but it fails tactically.



13...♟xe4! 14.♟xe4 ♞xb3 15.axb3 ♟xa1±

7...♟c6

With the bishop on g5 it makes sense to target the slightly loose knight on d4. White may try **E1) 8.0-0-0** or **E2) 8.♟b3**.

E1) 8.0-0-0 ♟xd4

8...♟xe4!± wins a pawn but gives White some initiative.

9.♞xd4 0-0 10.♞d2

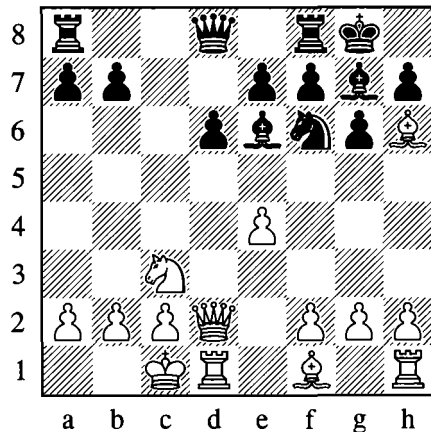
10.e5 ♞a5! is a useful idea to remember.
11.♟xf6 dxex5! 12.♞xe5 ♞xe5 13.♟xe5 ♟xe5±

10.♟c4 ♞a5 11.♞d2 was seen in Baumgardt – Werner, Germany 1995, and now 11...♟e6!N would have virtually forced White to exchange on e6. 12.♟xe6 (12.♟b3?! ♟xb3 13.cxb3 ♟xe4! 14.♟xe4 ♞xa2± grants Black a dangerous attack) 12...fxe6± Black can combine attacking on the queenside with play down the f-file.

10...♟e6 11.♟h6

11.♟b1 ♞a5 allowed White to exchange queens in Krasnici – Nguyen Luu, Germany 2001, but the simple improvement 11...♞c8!N gives Black a fine position.

Now Black can improve on Zoubeir – Lesbros, Hammamet 2010.



11...♟xh6!N 12.♞xh6 ♞c8

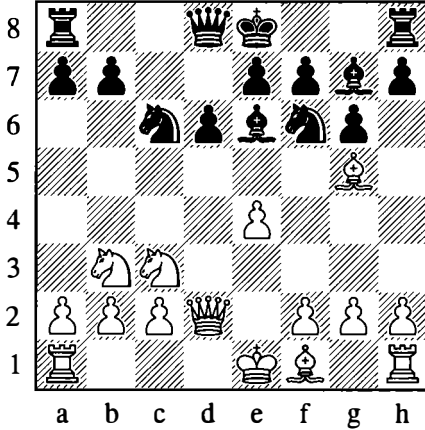
White is a long way from delivering mate, so it makes sense to divert his queen from the centre.

13.♞e3

White has nothing better; for instance, 13.h4?! ♖xc3 14.bxc3 ♜g4 15.♗d2 ♞b6 leaves him in trouble.

13...♞a5

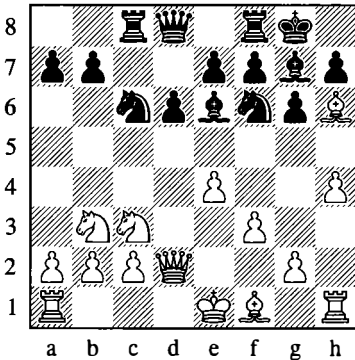
E2) 8.♘b3 ♙e6



9.0-0-0

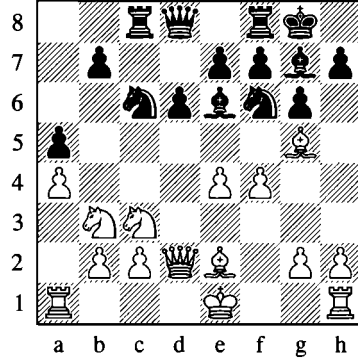
9.♙h6 0-0 is comfortable for Black, who enjoys a significant lead in development.

9.f3 ♜c8 10.♙h6 0-0 11.h4?! (11.♙xg7 ♜xg7 12.0-0-0 is better, when the position is similar to the main line below) White cannot get away with playing so aggressively while behind in development, as our counterplay in the centre and on the queenside comes too quickly:

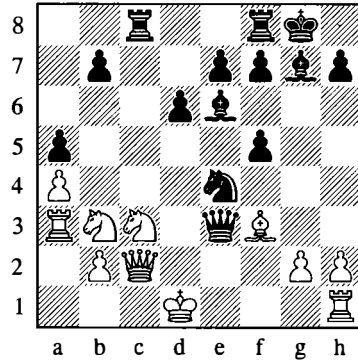


11...♙xh6 12.♞xh6 ♘b4 13.♞d2 (13.0-0-0? ♙xb3 14.axb3 ♞a5-+; 13.♜c1 d5) 13...d5

9.f4 was tried once by Simen Agdestein but he was obviously suffering the effects of jetlag, as his position soon went disastrously wrong: 9...0-0 10.♙e2 a5! 11.a4 ♜c8 (The immediate 11...♞b6, preventing White from castling kingside, is also strong)



12.♜a3 ♘b4 13.♙f3 ♞b6 White is already completely busted. 14.f5 gxf5 15.♙e3 ♘xc2† 16.♞xc2 ♞xe3† 17.♜d1 ♘xe4



18.♙xe4 fxe4 19.♘c1 ♙g4† 20.♘1e2 ♞d3† 0-1 Agdestein – Tindall, Canberra 1997.

9.♙e2

This might transpose to an offbeat line of the Karpov Variation.

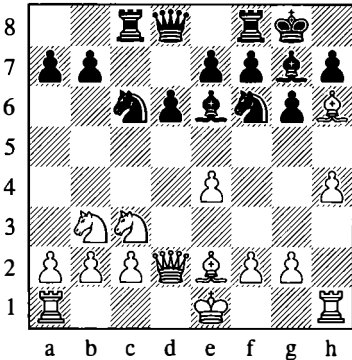
9...♜c8 10.♙h6

10.0-0 0-0 is variation B2 of Chapter 10.

10...0-0 11.h4

11.♙xg7 ♜xg7 12.h4 (12.0-0 ♘e5) 12...h5 13.f3 was seen in Seehaus – Guth, Bad Homburg 2011. After 13...d5!N White's

pieces don't coordinate particularly well, while all of Black's are on strong squares.



11...d5!N

Once again, this thematic break is simplest. 12.exd5 ♟xd5 13.♖xd5 ♜xd5 14.♝xd5 ♘xd5 15.♙xg7 ♚xg7

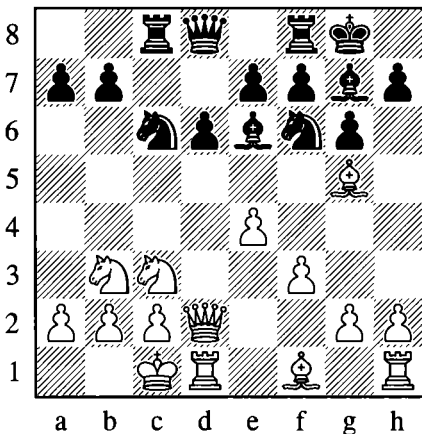
Black is at least equal.

9...♞c8

Compared to a usual Yugoslav Attack, the premature ♖b3 has allowed us to develop our bishop actively on e6, so Black is already doing well.

10.f3 0-0

In this position the young Ruslan Ponomarev agreed a draw with White against Miso Cebalo, despite outrating him by a good 150 points, so he can't have been too optimistic.

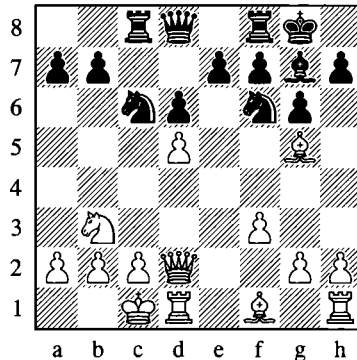


11.♙h6

11.♙b1 has been played a couple of times. I think I'd play 11...♖e5N 12.h4 h5 with a position that resembles a Soltis Variation. However, with White's bishop much more passively placed on f1, it's hard to see why Black should have any problems.

11.g4 ♖e5 12.♙e2 was played in Sage – Fossan, Aalborg 1987, when 12...♖c4N looks the most logical (12...b5!?N is also interesting). White is forced to exchange with 13.♙xc4 ♙xc4, when Black has a straightforward plan of advancing his b-pawn.

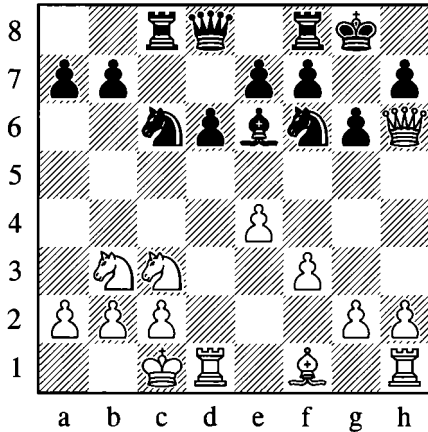
Finally, 11.♖d5? ♙xd5 12.exd5 was played in Feierabend – Kleinschmidt, Soemmerda 1957, when it seems both players overlooked the following trick:



12...♖xd5!N The knight is immune, as after 13.♝xd5? ♖b4 14.♝e4 ♞xc2† 15.♝xc2 ♖xc2 16.♙xc2 ♝c8†! 17.♙d2 (17.♙b1 ♝f5†) 17...♝e6 Black's attack is too strong.

11...♙xh6 12.♝xh6

In Caizapanta – Woetzel, Germany 1998, the most logical continuation would have been:



12...d5N

Opening up the c-file for the rook.

13.♖e3

13.h4 ♜xc3! 14.bxc3 ♜c7 gives Black the usual fantastic compensation.

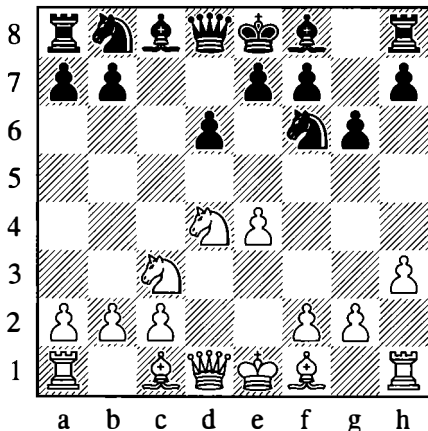
13...♗xb3 14.axb3 ♜a5 15.♕b1

Black's easiest continuation is to go for a pleasant queenless middlegame with:

15...♜c5

We can also play for an attack with 15...♗c6!?, when 16.♗d5 ♗xd5 17.♜xd5 ♜c7 reaches a dynamically equal position.

F) 6.h3!?



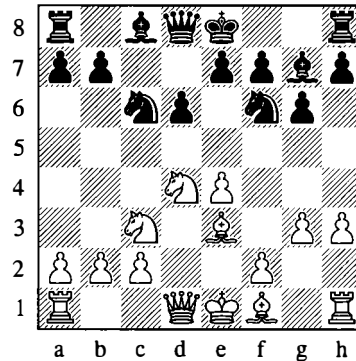
This is an interesting move. White is not yet declaring his intentions. The line could transpose into a Classical Variation, a weird type of Yugoslav Attack or an Accelerated Fianchetto. It is much rarer, however, than the same idea versus the Najdorf.

6...♗g7

White's main options are **F1) 7.♗e3** and **F2) 7.g4**.

7.♗c4 transposes to the note on 7.h3 at the start of Chapter 17.

7.g3 ♗c6 8.♗e3 (8.♗de2 ♗d7 9.♗g2 ♜c8 transposes to variation E of Chapter 16) White's unusual move order has enabled him to maintain his knight on d4 but we shouldn't be worried. Alexander Motylev showed a good way forward for Black:



8...♗d7 9.♗g2 0-0 (Playing by analogy to Chapter 16 with 9...♜c8!? is also possible.) 10.♜d2 ♜a5 11.0-0 ♗e5 12.b3 ♜f8 13.♗ce2 ♜xd2 14.♗xd2 ♗c6 The endgame was easier for Black in Rade – Motylev, Kallithea 2008.

F1) 7.♗e3

This position is more commonly reached via a 6.♗e3 ♗g7 7.h3 move order. White is playing a hybrid system which resembles the Yugoslav Attack, but the present version is less

dangerous as White has deprived himself of the h4-h5 plan.

7...0-0 8.♖d2

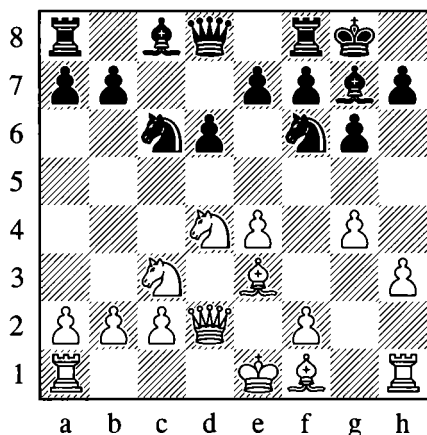
8.♗c4 transposes to variation B of Chapter 17.

8.g4 ♖c6 is covered under variation F22 below.

8...♖c6

White may proceed with **F11) 9.g4** or **F12) 9.0-0-0**.

F11) 9.g4



This was played fairly recently against Baadur Jobava, and the Super-GM countered perfectly.

9...d5!

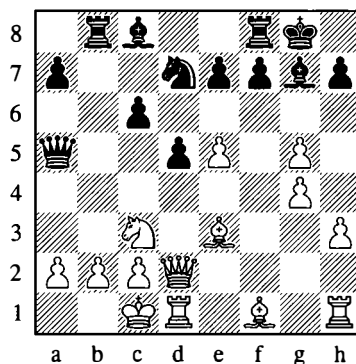
This highlights another disadvantage of h2-h3. In the analogous position with f2-f3, the text move would be impossible as g4-g5 would win a pawn, but here the e4-pawn lacks protection.

10.0-0-0!

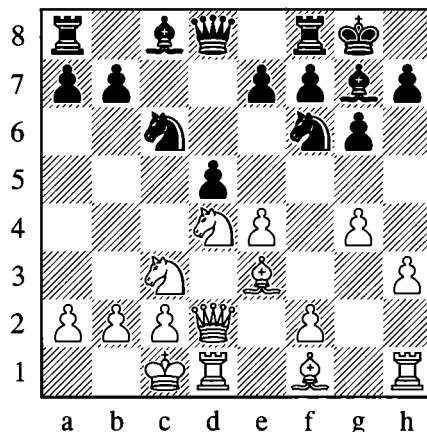
This seems to be White's only way of bailing out to an equal position.

10.exd5 ♖xd5 favours Black.

Jobava's game continued: 10.♖xc6 bxc6 11.0-0-0 ♖b8 12.e5 ♖d7 13.f4 g5! 14.fxg5 ♗a5



15.a3? (15.♗f4 was necessary but after 15...♖xb2! 16.♖xb2 ♖xe5 Black has a huge attack) 15...♖xe5 16.♗e2 ♗e6 0-1 Popilski – Jobava, Warsaw 2013. Black isn't any material up but his queenside threats are overwhelming.



10...♖xc4!?

This move invited a forcing simplification to a double-edged endgame.

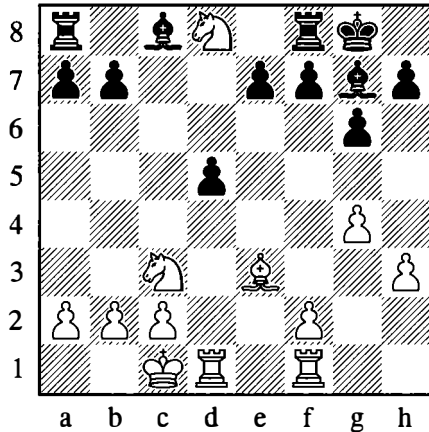
10...♖xd4N is more straightforward: 11.♗xd4 (After 11.♗xd4?! ♖xe4 12.♗xd5 ♖d6 I feel Black's queenside play will put White under significant pressure) 11...♖xe4 12.♖xe4 dx4 With easy equality.

11. ♖xc6!?

White takes up the challenge.

11. ♖xe4 dxe4 12. ♖xc6 ♜xd2† 13. ♞xd2 bxc6 14. ♖c4 is equal.

11... ♖xd2 12. ♖xd8 ♖xf1 13. ♞hxfl



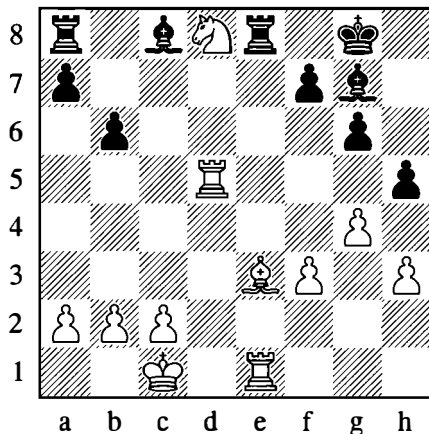
13...e6!? 14. ♖xd5 exd5 15. ♞xd5

A most peculiar endgame has arisen. White is a pawn up, but the big question is whether the d8-knight is a liability or a strength. The following email game indicates that the position is dynamically balanced.

15...h5

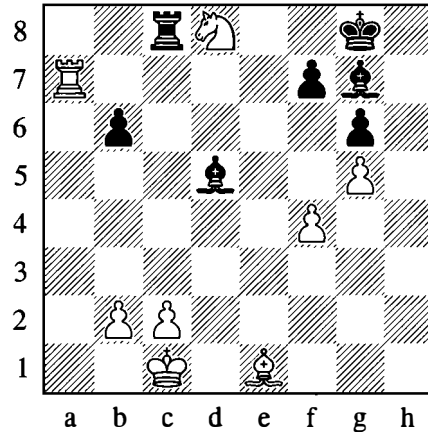
15...f5!?

16.f3 b6 17. ♞e1 ♞e8



18. ♖f2 ♞xe1† 19. ♖xe1 hxg4 20. hxg4 ♖a6 21. f4 ♞c8 22. g5 ♖c4 23. ♞d7 ♖xa2 24. ♞xa7 ♖d5

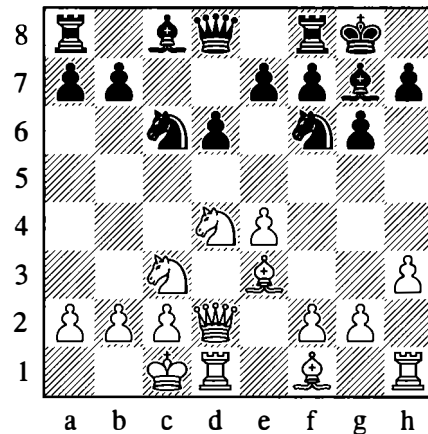
The knight has remained on d8 the entire time. White can keep it safely defended, but his pieces are too tied up to offer any winning chances with the extra pawn.



25. ♞d7 ♖e4 26. c3 ♖f5 27. ♞d5 ♖e4 28. ♞d6 ♖f3 29. ♞d7 ♖g4 30. ♞d5

½–½ Kurylo – Korabliov, email 2010.

F12) 9.0–0–0



This is a better try but we shouldn't be worried, as our queenside counterplay flows easily.

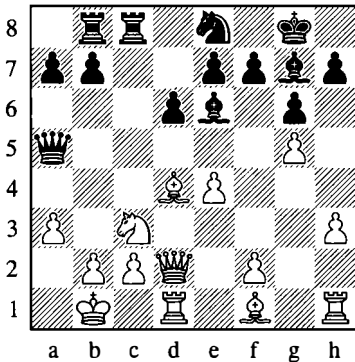
9...♖xd4 10.♙xd4 ♘e6

This position reminds me of the 9.g4 Yugoslav Attack with 10.0-0-0 ♖xd4, as featured in variation C of Chapter 14 in the first volume. White generally has to exchange queens as our attack is faster.

11.g4

11.♖b1 ♗a5 12.♖d5 (12.a3 transposes to 11.a3 below) 12...♗xd2 13.♖xe7† (13.♖xf6†= was necessary) 13...♖h8 14.♙xd2 ♖xe4 15.♙xg7† ♖xg7 16.♙e2 ♖f6 White's knight was trapped in Ramsdal – Bruun, Helsingor 2013.

11.a3 has been tried in a couple of correspondence games. 11...♗a5 12.♖b1 (12.g4 leads to the main line below) ♙fc8 13.g4 ♙ab8 14.g5 ♖e8



15.♖d5 ♗xd2 16.♙xd2 ♙xd5 17.exd5 ♙xd4 18.♙xd4 This equal ending was agreed drawn within a few moves in Khorunzhy – Borwell, email 2011.

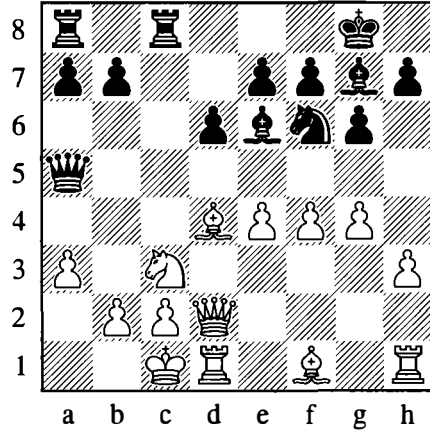
11...♗a5 12.a3

12.g5 ♖h5 13.♙xg7 (After 13.a3? ♙xd4 14.♗xd4 ♗xg5† 15.♖b1 ♙fc8 the Dragon expert was a clear pawn up in Sahu – Ward, Isle of Man 1996) 13...♖xg7 14.♖b1 ♙fc8 15.♖d5 ♗xd2 16.♙xd2 ♙xd5 is another balanced endgame.

12...♙fc8 13.f4?!

This is White's only aggressive plan but it's risky.

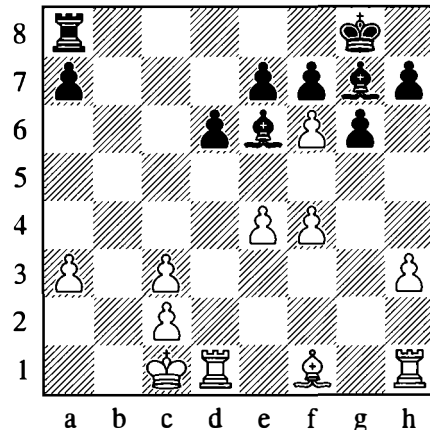
13.♖b1 transposes to the note on 11.a3 above.



13...b5! 14.g5 b4!

This forcing continuation gives Black the better game.

15.gxf6 bxc3 16.♙xc3 ♙xc3 17.♗xc3 ♗xc3 18.bxc3



18...♙h6! 19.fxc7 ♙xf4† 20.♖b2 ♙b8† 21.♖a1 ♙e5

Despite being the exchange down Black has the better chances, as the bishops are so strong and White's structure is horrible.

In B. Johansson – Fagerstrom, email 2009, Black was able to grind out the full point.

F2) 7.g4

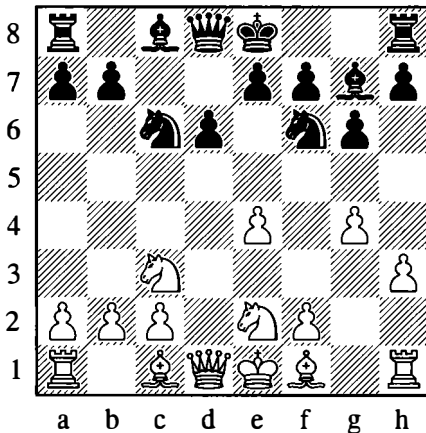
This is an aggressive form of the Fianchetto Variation but it is unlikely to strike fear into Dragon players' hearts.

7...♖c6

White can either play F21) 8.♗de2 as in Chapter 16, or support the knight with F22) 8.♙e3.

8.♙g2 ♖xd4 9.♗xd4 0–0♭ gave Black a favourable version of the normal Fianchetto Variation in I. Stark – Goebel, Germany 2002. White's additional space on the kingside is less relevant than Black's extra developing move.

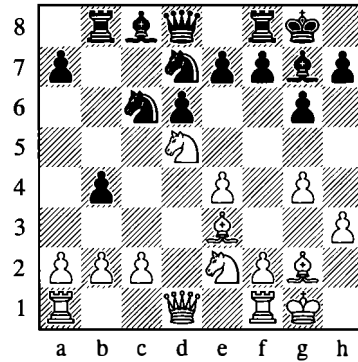
F21) 8.♗de2



This has been the more popular choice but it allows Black quick queenside counterplay.

8...0–0 9.♙g2 ♗b8 10.0–0

10.♙e3 b5 11.0–0 (11.♗d4 ♖xd4 12.♙xd4 occurred in Kosanovic – A. Kovacevic, Szekszard 1994, and now after 12...b4N 13.♗d5 ♙a6!♭ White won't find sanctuary for his king) 11...b4 12.♗d5 ♗d7!



This is generally the preferred way to meet White's knight jump. Black is already better, and after 13.♗d4?! ♙xd4! 14.♙xd4 e6 he was winning a piece in Figuero Toro – Rusev, Navalmoral 2008.

10.a4

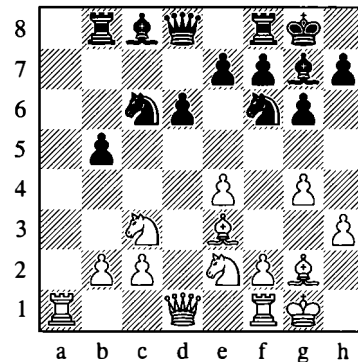
This fails to slow down our queenside play.

10...a6

10...b6N is an alternative way of playing.

11.0–0 b5 12.axb5 axb5 13.♙e3

13.♗d5 ♗d7! left White's knight attacking air. 14.♗b1 ♙b7 15.b3 e6 16.♗dc3 In Mendoza – Martinez Romero, Medellin 2012, 16...b4N 17.♗a4 ♗c5♭ would have favoured Black.



13...♗d7?!

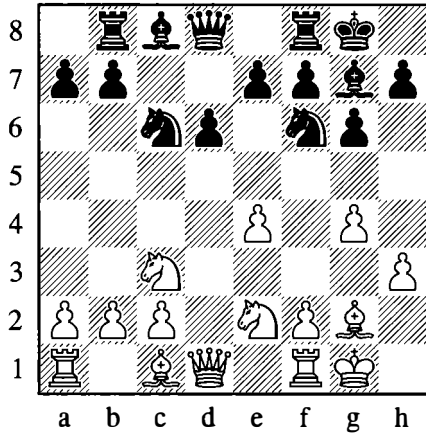
The typical 13...b4 14.♗d5 ♗d7 is fine, but targeting the b2-pawn also makes sense.

14.♗c1 b4 15.♗a4?!

Black stands better after 15. ♖d5 e6 16. ♗df4 ♜c7 but this was the lesser evil.

15... ♙a6 16. ♞e1 ♜c7 17. ♗f4 e6+

Black was in full control in Rogic – Brkic, Pula 2008.

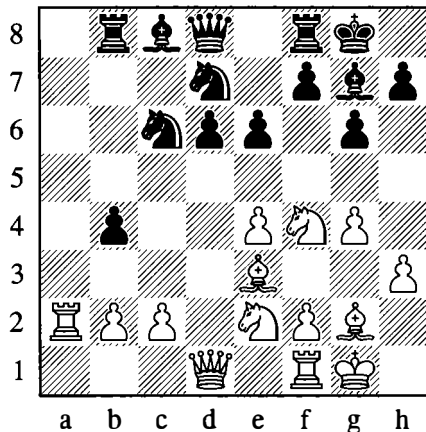


10...b5

Black's queenside play flows smoothly, just as it does in the similar positions mentioned above.

11.a3 ♗d7 12. ♙e3 a5 13. ♞a2 b4 14.axb4 axb4 15. ♗d5 e6 16. ♗df4

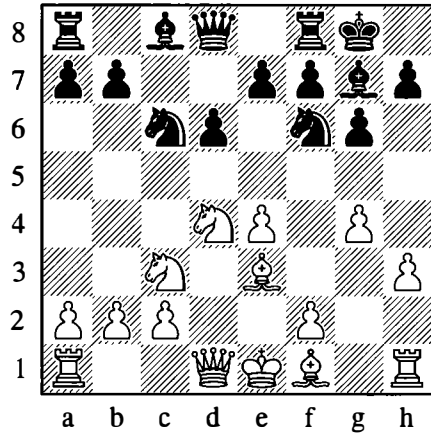
In Kononenko – Tukhaev, Evpatoria 2007, Black should have continued:



16...b3!N 17.cxb3 ♗c5

With strong pressure.

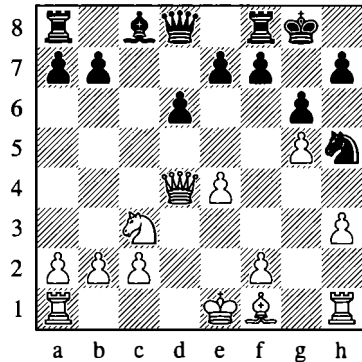
F22) 8. ♙e3 0-0



9. ♙g2

9. ♜d2 takes us back to variation F11.

9.g5?! is seldom a good approach for White. Not only are his attacking options limited by the rigid structure, but he has also ceded a big hole on f4 and his pawns are at risk of becoming weak in a future endgame. 9... ♗h5 10. ♜d2 ♗xd4 11. ♙xd4 ♙xd4 12. ♜xd4



12...e5! Now that Black has traded dark-squared bishops, this central advance gives him a favourable version of a Najdorf. 13. ♜e3 ♙e6+ Odeev – Annaberdiev, Istanbul 2010.

9... ♗xd4 10. ♙xd4 ♜a5 11. ♜d2

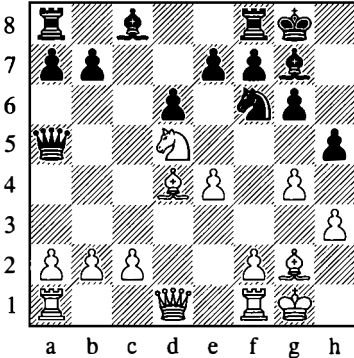
11.0-0 h5!N

Now that White has committed his king, this looks an interesting combative approach.

12.♖d5

I think this is White's only way to retain the balance.

In the event of 12.♙xf6 ♙xf6 13.♖d5 hxg4 14.♖xf6† (or 14.hxg4 ♖g7) 14...exf6 15.hxg4 ♖g7 Black has the safer king and the better prospects.



12...♖xd5

12...hxg4! is sharp: 13.♖xe7† ♖h7 14.♖xc8 ♙axc8 15.hxg4 ♖xg4! 16.c3 (16.♙xg7 ♙h5 17.♙xd6 ♖xg7 gives Black splendid compensation) 16...♙h5 17.♙e1 With a messy position.

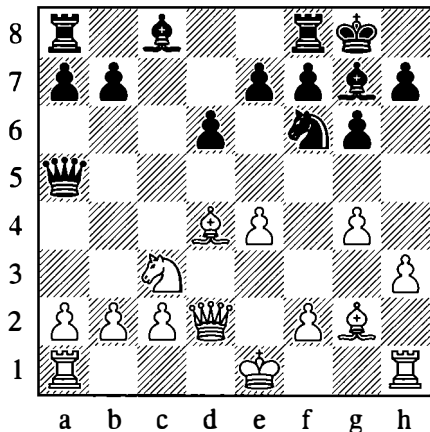
13.exd5 hxg4 14.♙xg7

14.hxg4 ♙a4! 15.♙xg7 ♖xg7

14...♖xg7 15.♙d4† e5 16.dxe6† ♙e5

17.♙xe5† dxe5 18.exf7 ♙xf7

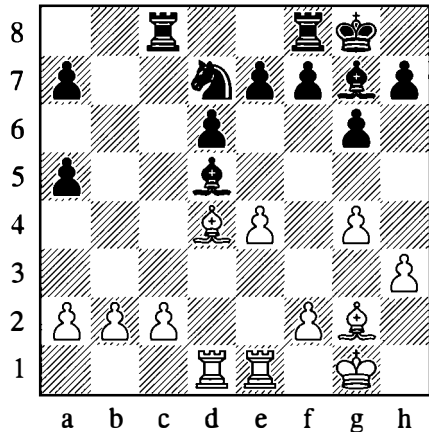
With a level ending.



11...♙e6 12.0-0 ♙ac8

12...h5!N is tempting here as well: 13.g5 ♖d7 14.f4 (14.♙ad1 ♙xd4 15.♙xd4 ♙xg5 16.f4 ♙c5 does not give White full compensation) 14...♙ac8 15.f5 ♙xd4† 16.♙xd4 ♙c4 17.♙f2 ♖e5 The strong knight keeps Black's position together. White is at definite risk of over-expansion.

13.♙ad1 b6 14.♙fel ♖d7 15.♖d5 ♙xd5 16.♙xa5 bxa5

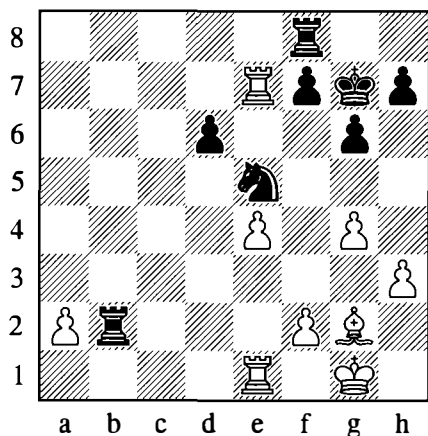


17.♙xg7

17.exd5N is slightly more accurate although 17...♙xd4 18.♙xd4 ♙xc2 19.♙xe7 ♖c5 20.♙xa7 ♙xb2 21.♙xa5 ♙e8 leaves Black with at least enough compensation. The g2-bishop is no longer contributing much to the game.

17...♖xg7 18.♙xd5 ♙xc2 19.♙xa5 ♙xb2 20.♙xa7 ♖e5 21.♙xe7

In Bachmann Schiavo – Milos, Villa Martelli 2010, Black should have preferred:

**21...♖a8!N**

Despite the reduced material, White is under considerable pressure.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, all of White's offbeat tries can be met by logical moves. After 6.♘d5 you simply have to remember not to take on e4, while after 6.♙b5† and 7.♙g5 it's worth remembering the effectiveness of the exchange sacrifice on c3 in case White tries to play aggressively. Of the lines examined in this chapter, 6.h3! is probably the most interesting. White keeps his options open but none of the transpositions are particularly threatening.

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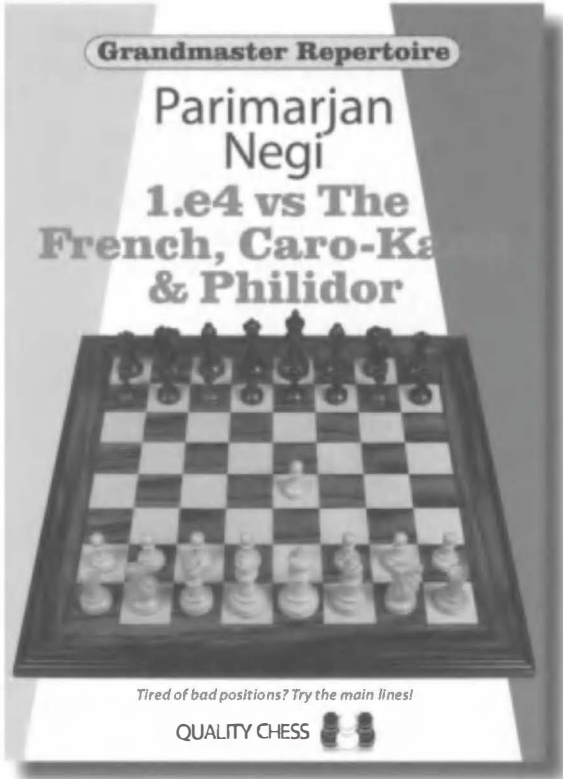
E222) 13.g4 297

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- A) 6.♗d3 301
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Negi on 1.e4



Reaction to 1.e4 vs The French, Caro-Kann & Philidor:

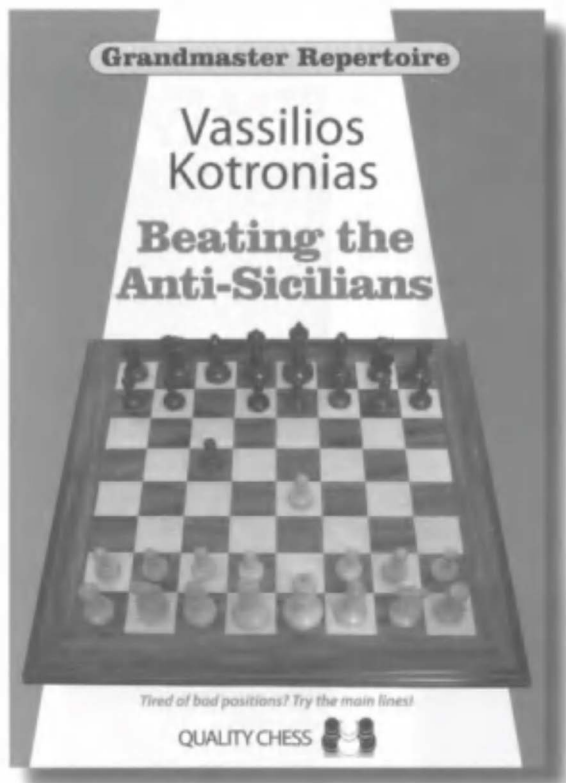
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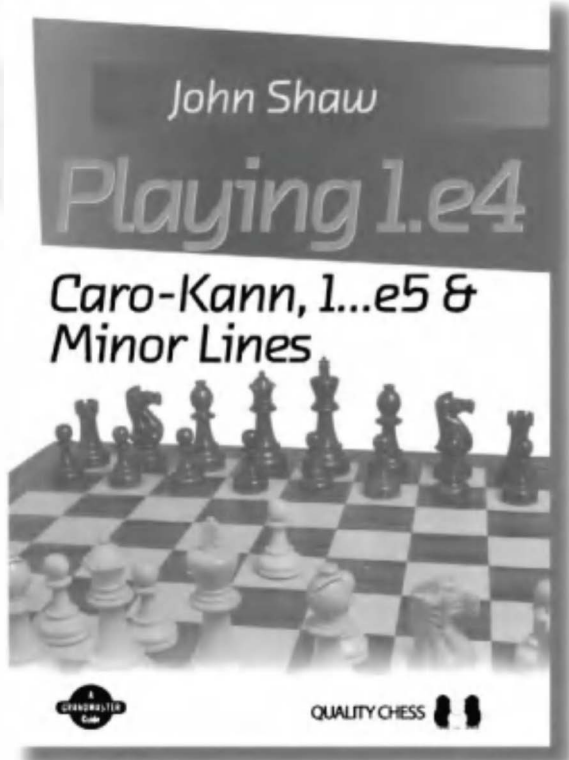
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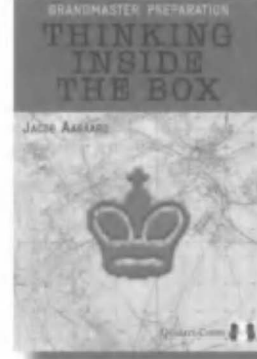
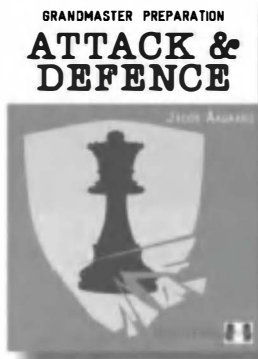
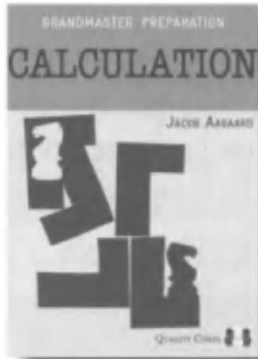
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