Grandmaster Repertoire

2B

Boris Avrukh

1.d4 Dynamic Systems



Tired of bad positions? Try the main lines!

QUALITY CHESS

chesstouring.com

Table of Contents

Title page
Preface
Key To Symbols and Bibliography

Dutch

Chapter 1 - Stonewall 5...Be7
Chapter 2 - Stonewall 5...Bd6
Chapter 3 - Classical Introduction
Chapter 4 - Classical 7...Ne4 & 7...Qe8
Chapter 5 - Leningrad Introduction
Chapter 6 - Leningrad 7...c6 & 7...Ne4
Chapter 7 - Leningrad 7...Qe8
Chapter 8 - St Petersburg

Benoni Systems

Chapter 9 - Czech Benoni Sidelines
Chapter 10 - Czech Benoni Mainlines
Chapter 11 - Closed Benoni
Chapter 12 - 1.d4 c5 2.d5 e6
Chapter 13 - Miscellaneous Lines

Benko Gambit

Chapter 14 - Sidelines
Chapter 15 - 5...Bxa6
Chapter 16 - 5...g6

Budapest Gambit

Chapter 17 - Fajarowicz
Chapter 18 - 3...Ng4 Sidelines
Chapter 19 - 3...Ng4 Mainlines

Modern Defence

Chapter 20 - 4...c5 & 4...Bg4
Chapter 21 - Main Line

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4

chesstouring.com

Chapter 22 - Old Indian
Chapter 23 - Pseudo Queens Indians
Chapter 24 - Black Knights Tango

Minor Lines

Chapter 25 - 1...d6
Chapter 26 - English Defence
Chapter 27 - 1...e6 2.c4 Bb4
Chapter 28 - b-Pawn Systems
Chapter 29 - Odd Ideas

Variation Index

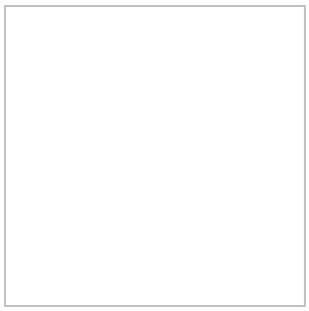
chesstouring.com

Grandmaster Repertoire 2B

Dynamic Systems

By

Boris Avrukh



Quality Chess
http://www.qualitychess.co.uk

First edition 2019 by Quality Chess UK Ltd
Copyright © 2019 Boris Avrukh

Dynamic Systems

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher.

Paperback ISBN 978-1-78483-046-5
Hardcover ISBN 978-1-78483-047-2

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

Distributed in North and South America by National Book Network
Distributed in Rest of the World by Quality Chess UK Ltd through
Sunrise Handicrafts, ul. Szarugi 59, 21-002 Marysin, Poland

Typeset by Jacob Aagaard

chesstouring.com

Proofreading by Colin McNab & John Shaw
Edited by Andrew Greet
Cover design by www.adamsondesign.com
Cover photo by www.capture365.com

chesstouring.com

Preface

After what has seemed like a uniquely long year, I have completed the fourth and final volume of the updated *Grandmaster Repertoire* series on 1.d4. Those familiar with the first three books in the series already know that the current one does not feature any flagship openings such as the Queen's Gambit, Grünfeld or King's Indian. Instead, it tackles the no-less-difficult challenges of the Dutch Defence, the Benko and Budapest Gambits, the Modern Defence, and various other systems which are slightly out of the mainstream, but which are nonetheless capable of posing serious practical problems, as I have observed in my experience as a coach. To meet the various challenges, I have proposed the following advancements over my previous work:

Dutch Defence
I recommend meeting the Stonewall, Classical and Leningrad systems of the Dutch in broadly the same way as in my 2010 book *Grandmaster Repertoire 2 – 1.d4 Volume Two* (henceforth abbreviated to *GM 2*), but with a multitude of updates and refinements to improve White's play, as well as correcting some move-order and transpositional issues which I previously overlooked.

Benoni Systems & Benko Gambit
Against the Czech Benoni and various 1.d4 c5 systems, I have once again provided an improved version of my previous coverage. In the case of the Benko Gambit though, I have abandoned the Fianchetto Variation in favour of the main line with 6.♘c3 and 7.e4. I believe this poses more serious problems for Black, and am looking forward to future developments in this variation.

Budapest Gambit
I am happy to change my original prescription of 4.♘f3 in favour of 4.♗f4, in light of the discovery of 4...g5 5.♗d2!, after which White's position seems extremely promising.

Modern & Other Defences
The final part of the book contains a mix of updates and brand new recommendations. One such instance occurs after 1.d4 d6, when I am no longer recommending 2.♘f3 – not that there is anything wrong with that move, but a game between L'Ami and Mamedyarov inspired me to choose 2.c4 instead. The resulting type of position is one that I find both interesting and advantageous for White.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to the entire team at Quality Chess, with whom I have been working intensively since 2007! My collaboration with them has greatly contributed to my career as a chess coach and helped enshrine my name among the pantheon of opening theoreticians. I am forever grateful to QC for offering me such a platform. Having now completed my

chessloaning.com

tenth book, I have decided to a take a break from writing to pursue other chess-related projects, and I have no doubt the wisdom I have gleaned from my time as a QC author will prove invaluable in my future endeavours.

Boris Avrukh
Chicago, February 2019

chesstouring.com

Key to symbols used

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

Bibliography

Alterman: *The Alterman Gambit Guide – Black Gambits 1*, Quality Chess 2011
Avrukh: *Grandmaster Repertoire 2 – 1.d4 Volume Two*, Quality Chess 2010
Avrukh: *Grandmaster Repertoire 1A – The Catalan,* Quality Chess 2015
Avrukh: *Grandmaster Repertoire 2A – King's Indian and Grünfeld*, Quality Chess 2018
Bauer: *Play 1...b6*, Everyman Chess 2005
Cherniaev & Prokuronov: *The New Old Indian*, Everyman Chess 2011
Eingorn: *A Rock-Solid Chess Opening Repertoire for Black*, Gambit 2012
Gutman: *Budapest Fajarowicz*, Batsford 2004
Johnsen, Bern & Agdestein: *Win with the Stonewall Dutch*, Gambit 2009
Karolyi: *Play the Dutch! Part 2: Systems with g3*, Chess Evolution 2018
Lakdawala: *The Modern Defence: Move by Move*, Everyman Chess 2012
McDonald: *Play the Dutch*, Everyman Chess 2010

chesstouring.com

Moskalenko: *The Diamond Dutch*, New In Chess 2014
Moskalenko: *The Fabulous Budapest Gambit* (new ed.), New In Chess 2017
Palliser: *How to Play Against 1 d4*, Everyman Chess 2010
Palliser, Williams & Vigus: *Dangerous Weapons: The Dutch*, Everyman Chess 2009
Perunovic: *The Modernized Benko Gambit*, Thinkers Publishing 2018
Pinski: *The Benko Gambit*, Quality Chess 2005
Schuyler: *The Dark Knight System*, Everyman Chess 2013
Tay: *The Old Indian: Move by Move*, Everyman Chess 2015
Taylor: *The Budapest Gambit*, Everyman Chess 2009
Zude & Hickl: *Play 1...d6 Against Everything*, New In Chess 2017

Periodicals

Secrets of Opening Surprises
The Week in Chess

Electronic/Internet resources

ChessBase Magazine
ChessPublishing.com

chesstouring.com



Dutch



Stonewall – 5...♗e7

Variation Index

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♘f3 d5 5.0–0 ♗e7 6.c4 0–0

7.♘bd2

A) 7...♘e4 9

B) 7...♘c6 8.b3 11

B1) 8...♘e4 12

B2) 8...a5 9.a3 ♗d7 10.♗b2 13

B21) 10...♗e8 13

B22) 10...♘e4 15

C) 7...c6 8.♘e5 16

C1) 8...b6 16

C2) 8...♗d7 17

C3) 8...♘bd7 9.♘d3 ♘e4 10.♕c2 18

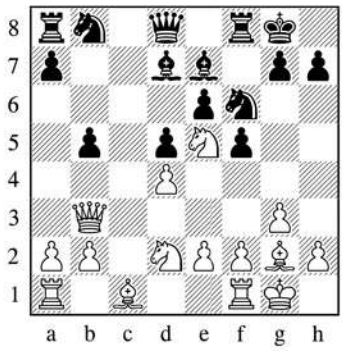
C31) 10...♕e8 20

C32) 10...♗f6 21

C33) 10...♘xd2 23

chesstouring.com

C2) after 10...cxb5



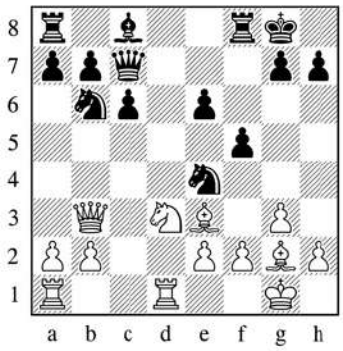
11.♘df3!N

C31) note to 11.♘f3



16.fxg5!N

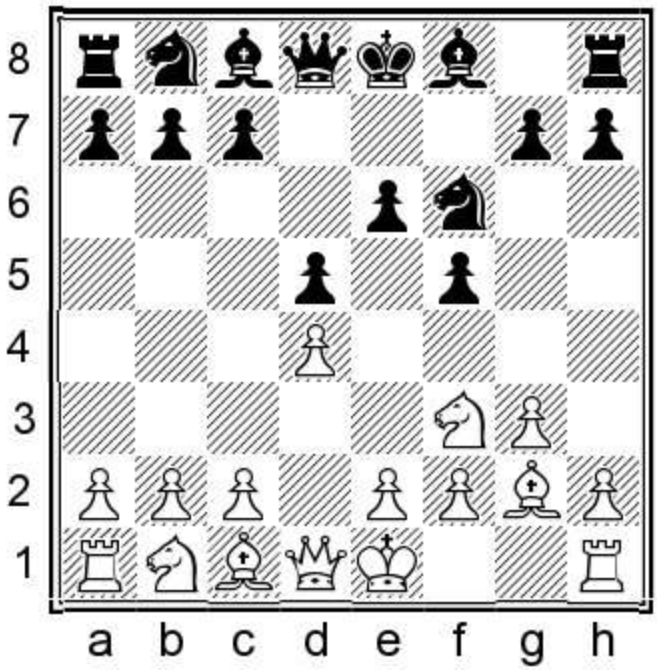
C32) after 16...♕c7



17.♗d4!N

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♘f3 d5

This is the Stonewall variation of the Dutch, a solid set-up which I believe is slightly underrated. Artur Yusupov is the only top grandmaster who has consistently employed this variation at the highest level.



5.0-0

Many move orders are possible from here, but in the great majority of games Black develops his bishop to e7 or d6 in the next move or two. 5...♗d6 is the most active and popular move, and we will analyse it separately in the next chapter. Before then, the current chapter will deal with the more modest bishop development, plus any minor alternatives.

5...♗e7

Many legal moves have been tried from here, and there is no point in analysing all of them.

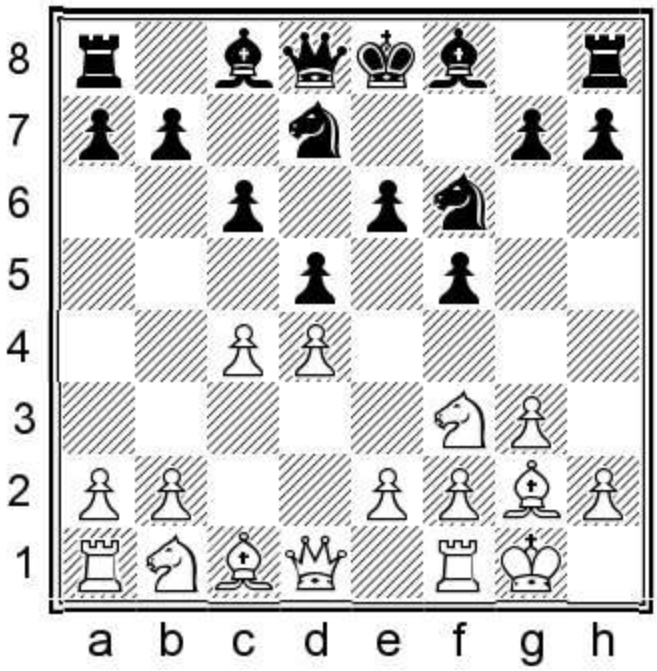
The most meaningful alternative is:

5...c6 6.c4 ♘bd7

Of course, most games have continued with one of the standard bishop moves to e7 or d6. However,

chessstrong.com

there is some purpose in developing the knight first. If we respond by moving the b1-knight to c3 or d2, Black can develop his bishop in a way that leaves our knight on the 'wrong' square for the proposed repertoire, so we should find another way to continue.



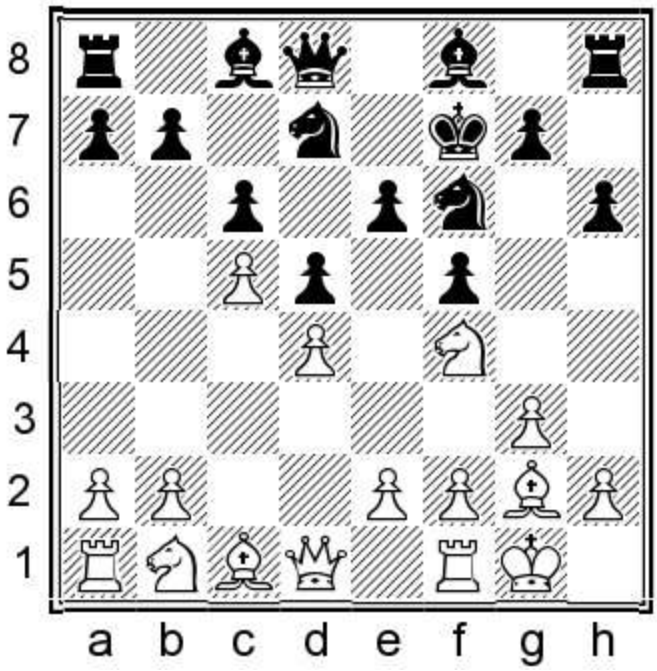
7.♘g5!?

I like this aggressive approach.

7...♘b6

In the event of 7...♘b8 White can benefit from the gain of tempo: 8.♘c3N 8...♗d6 9.♕b3 (9.♘f3 transposes to the next chapter but it makes sense to try for more) 9...0-0 10.♗f4! ♗xf4 11.gxf4 b6 12.♖fc1 White has a better version of the kind of positions we will examine in the next chapter.

8.c5 h6 9.♘h3 ♘bd7 10.♘f4 ♔f7



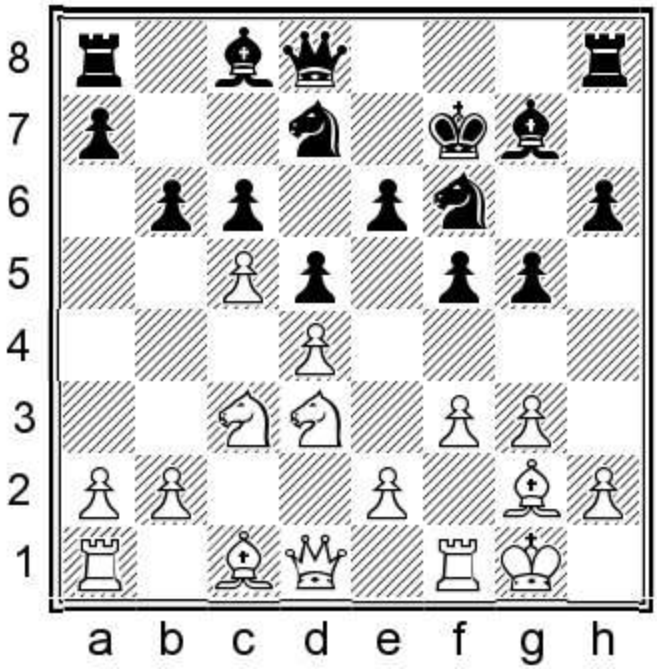
It would seem strange if Black could misplace his king like this without paying a price somehow.

11.♘c3 g5

11...e5 12.dxe5 ♘xe5 would allow 13.e4! fxe4 14.♘xe4 when the opening of the position clearly favours White.

12.♘d3 ♗g7 13.f3 b6

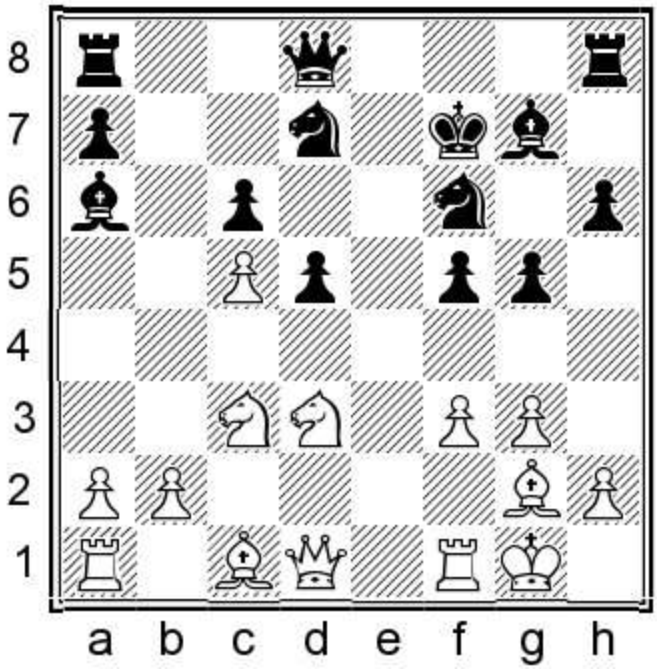
Scarella – Goldschmidt, Buenos Aires 1992. Here I found an improvement:



14.e4!N 14...bxc5

14...♗a6 15.cxb6 axb6 16.♗e3 is also promising for White.

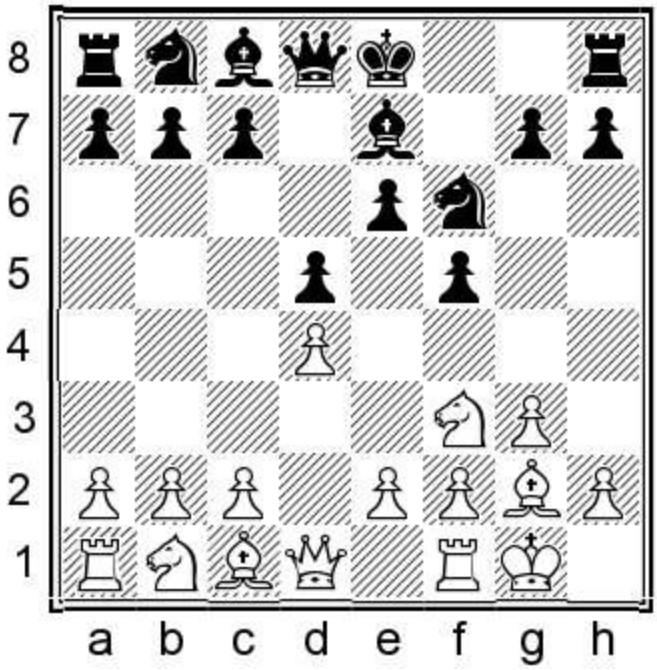
15.dxc5 ♗a6 16.exf5 exf5



17.♗h3! ♗xd3 18.♕xd3 ♘xc5 19.♕xf5 ♕d7 20.♗e3↑

White's bishops are rather powerful.

chesstouring.com

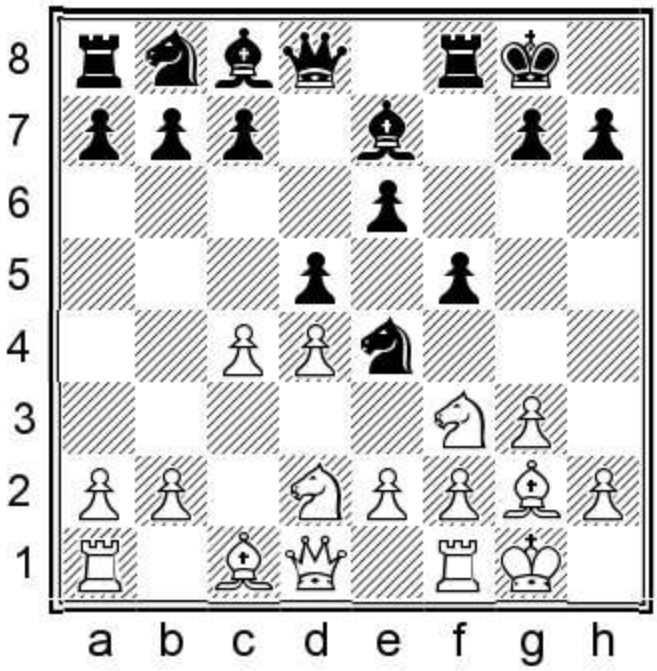


6.c4 0-0 7.♘bd2

I recommended this natural set-up in *GM 2* and I still like it today.

We will analyse the slightly unusual **A)** 7...♘e4 and **B)** 7...♘c6, followed by the most popular **C)** 7...c6.

A) 7...♘e4



8.♘e5 ♘d7

Challenging the strong knight is the most natural idea. Here are a few other options:

8...♘xd2 9.♗xd2 c6 10.♕c2 ♘d7 11.♘d3! transposes to variation C33 on page 23. chesstouring.com

8...c6

This seems a slightly odd way to follow on from Black's previous move. White can try to exploit this with:

9.♘xe4!?

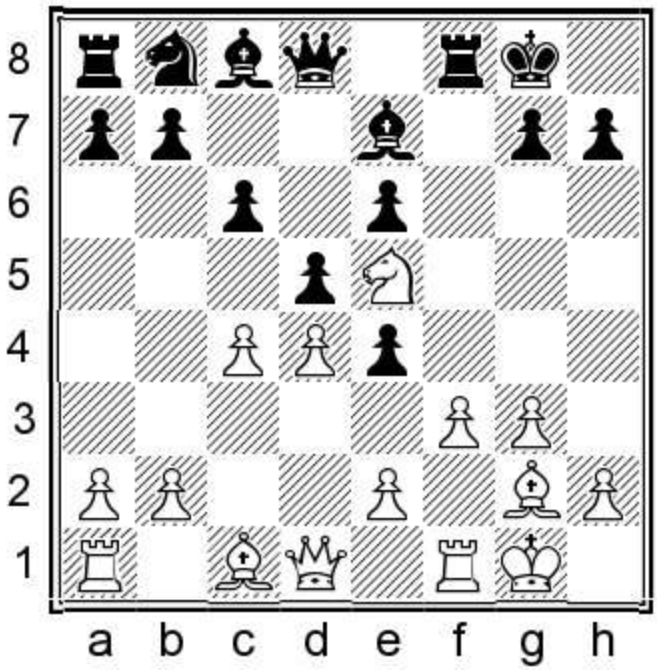
There is nothing wrong with 9.♘df3, when 9...♘d7 transposes to the note to Black's 9th move in the main line below.

9...fxe4

9...dxe4 10.f3 exf3 occurred in Kiss – Lorinczy, Nyiregyhaza 2003, when White should have continued 11.exf3N 11...♘d7 12.f4± with the better game.

10.f3

The opening of the centre obviously favours White's better-developed pieces.



10...♘d7

10...exf3 11.♘xf3! dxc4 12.♕c2 b5 13.♗f4 ♘a6 14.a3⩲ gave White tremendous compensation for the pawn in Boelling – Lunek, corr. 2003.

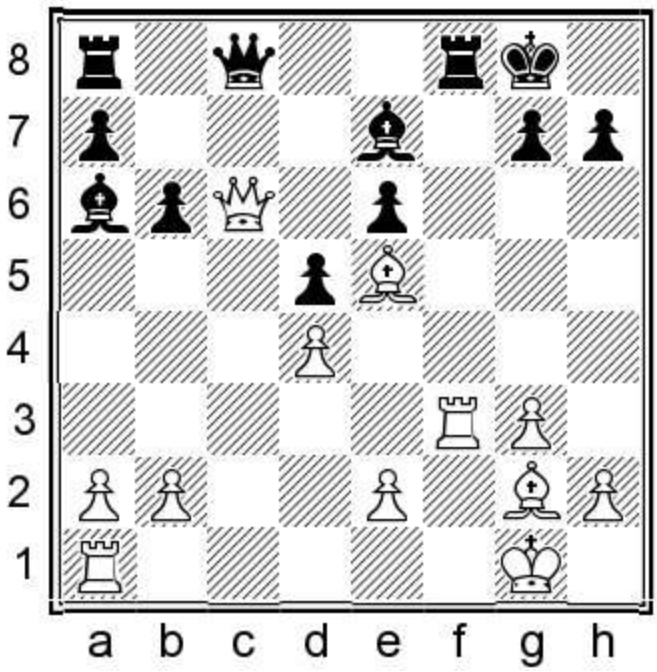
11.♗f4!

Simple development works well. A good illustrative game continued:

11...♘xe5 12.♗xe5 exf3 13.♖xf3 b6 14.♕c2 ♗a6 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.♕c6! ♕c8

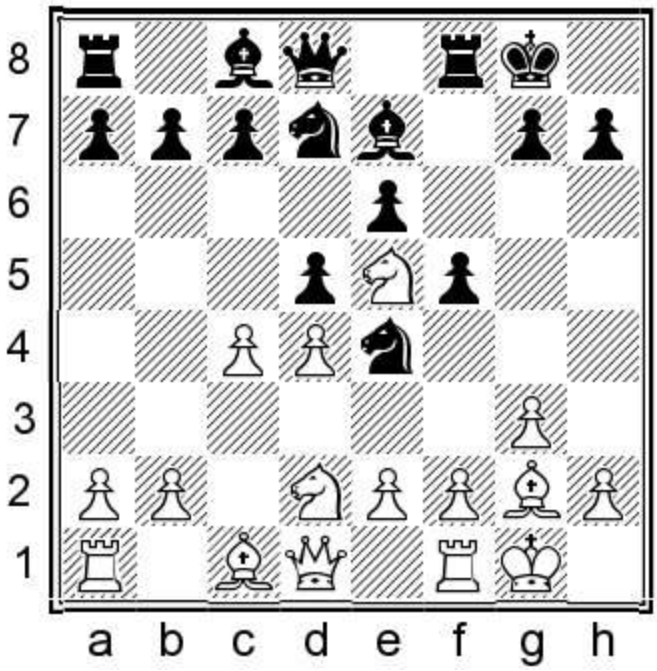
In Kowalska – Wielosz, Przelazy 2007, White should have continued:

chesstouring.com



17.♖c1!N 17...♕xc6 18.♖xc6 ♗xe2 19.♖xf8† ♔xf8 20.♗h3!±

White has a serious advantage.



9.♘df3 ♘xe5

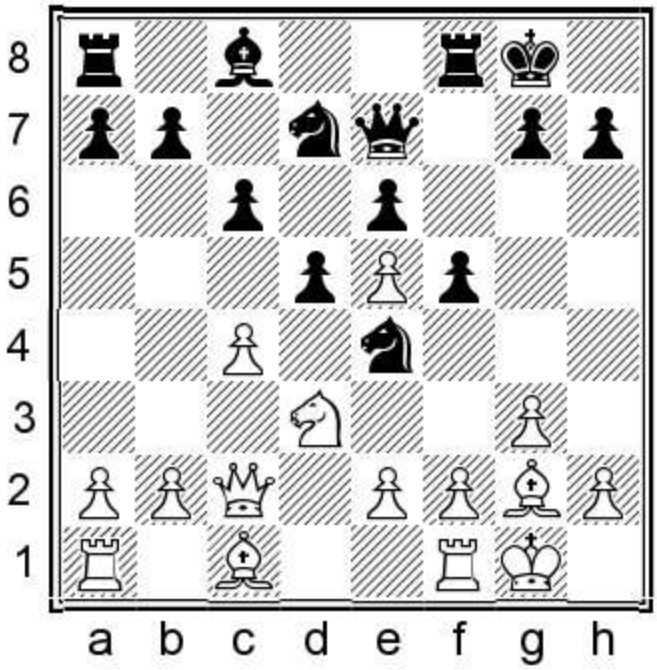
I also checked:

9...c6 10.♕c2

This position has been reached in lots of games, but it's obvious that White is doing well. I like the following model game:

10...♗f6 11.♘d3! ♕e7 12.♘fe5 ♗xe5 13.dxe5

chesstouring.com



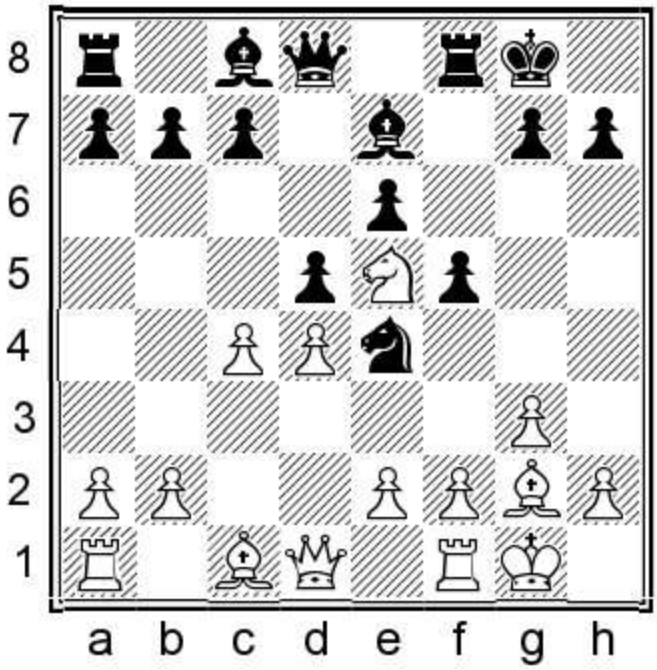
13...b6

13...♘ec5 14.♖e1 b6 15.b3 also offers White a pleasant edge.

14.♗e3 a5 15.♖ac1 ♗b7 16.f3 ♘g5 17.c5±

White was in full control in Lilleoren – Gouw, corr. 2006.

10.♘xe5



10...c5

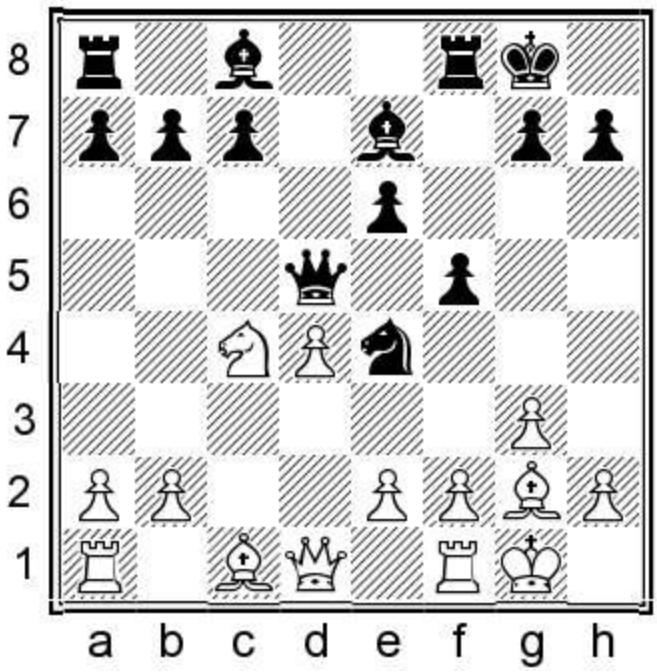
This seems like a logical way to utilize the fact that ...c6 has not yet been played, but it does not equalize.

10...♗f6 11.♗e3 c6 12.♖c1 ♕c7 occurred in Soederberg – Lunek, corr. 2005, when 13.f3N 13...♘d6

chesstouring.com

14.b3± would have maintained a pleasant edge for White.

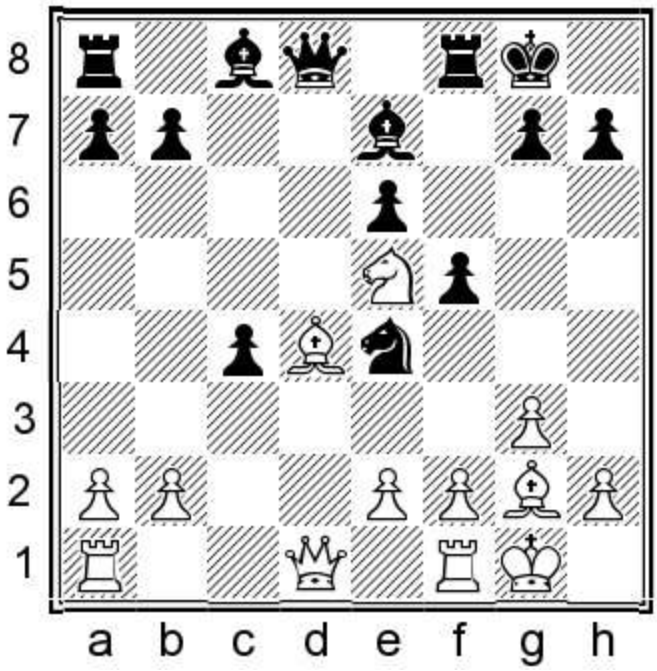
10...dxc4 11.♘xc4 ♕d5 was seen in Jimenez Alonso – Kazakhov, email 2000, and now I would like to offer the following improvement:



12.♕c2!?N 12...♕xd4 (12...b6 13.♗f4 ♗b7 14.♖fd1± is positionally better for White) 13.♗e3 ♕f6 14.♖fd1⩲ White has more than enough compensation.

11.♗e3 cxd4 12.♗xd4 dxc4

In Holzhey – Rennert, email 2005, White should have continued:

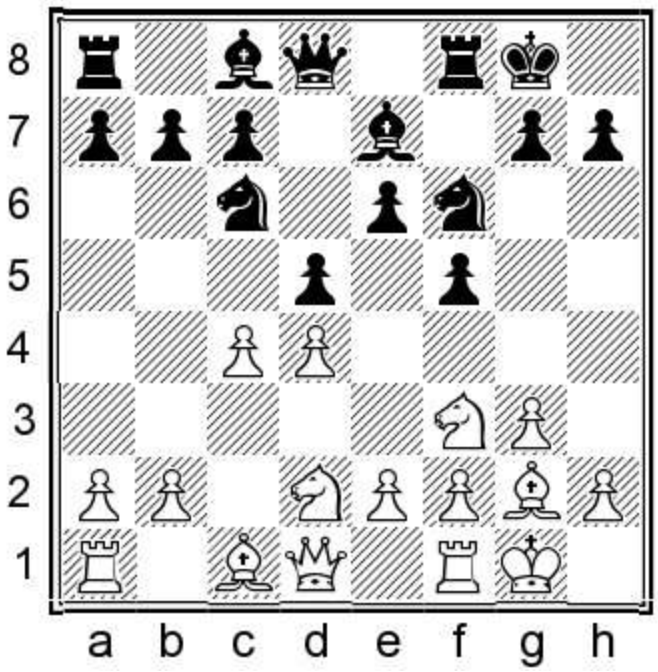


13.f3N 13...♘d6 14.f4! ♗d7 15.b3⩲

With great compensation for the pawn.

chesstouring.com

B) 7...♘c6



I consider this the most serious of the sidelines where Black refrains from playing ...c6. It was once played by Nigel Short, among other strong players.

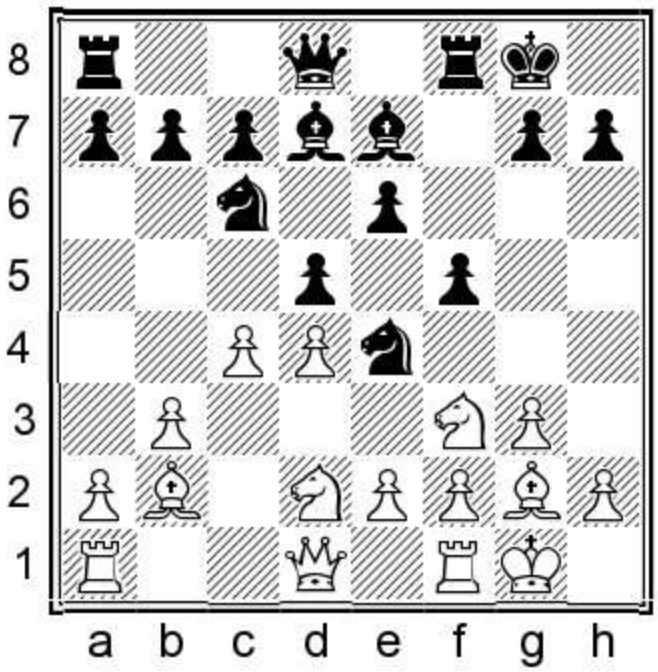
8.b3

Black has tried several moves but we will focus on the main options of **B1)** 8...♘e4 and **B2)** 8...a5.

B1) 8...♘e4 9.♗b2 ♗d7

9...a5 10.a3 transposes to the note to Black's 9th move in variation B2 below.

chesstouring.com



10.♘e1!

We will see more of this thematic plan throughout the chapter. White's knights will be perfectly placed on d3 and f3.

10...♗e8

It is also worth mentioning:

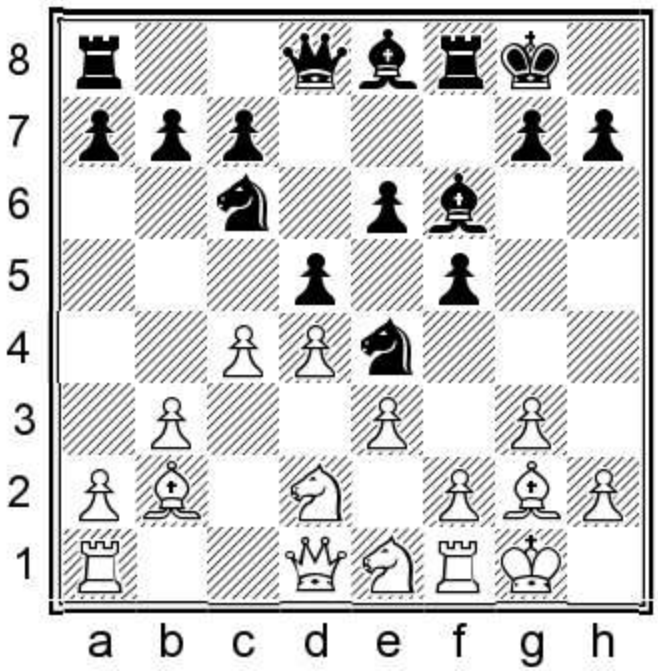
10...♗f6 11.e3!

11.♘df3 was played in an older game, when 11...dxc4!N 12.bxc4 ♘a5 would have given Black decent counterplay.

11...♗e8

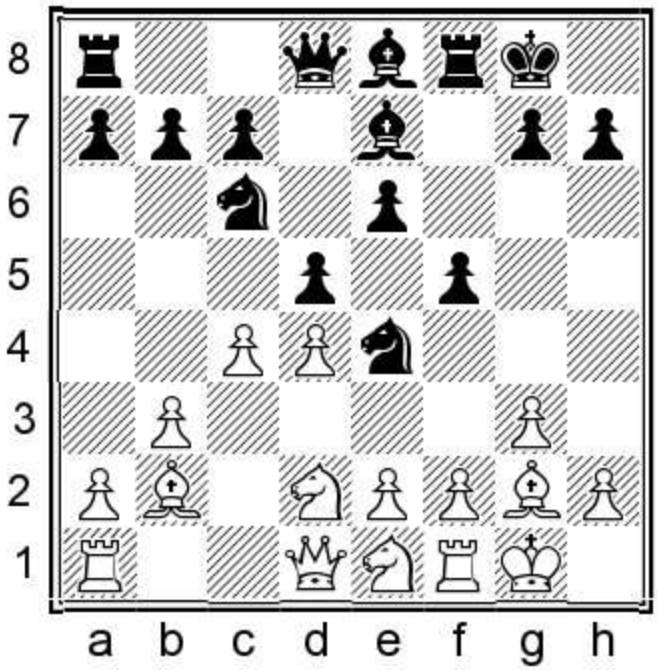
11...♘e7 is hardly a desirable move and White obtained a nice edge after 12.♘d3 a5 13.f3 ♘xd2 14.♕xd2 in Kengis – Deev, Podolsk 1990.

chesstouring.com



12.♘d3 ♗f7 13.f3 ♘xd2 14.♕xd2±

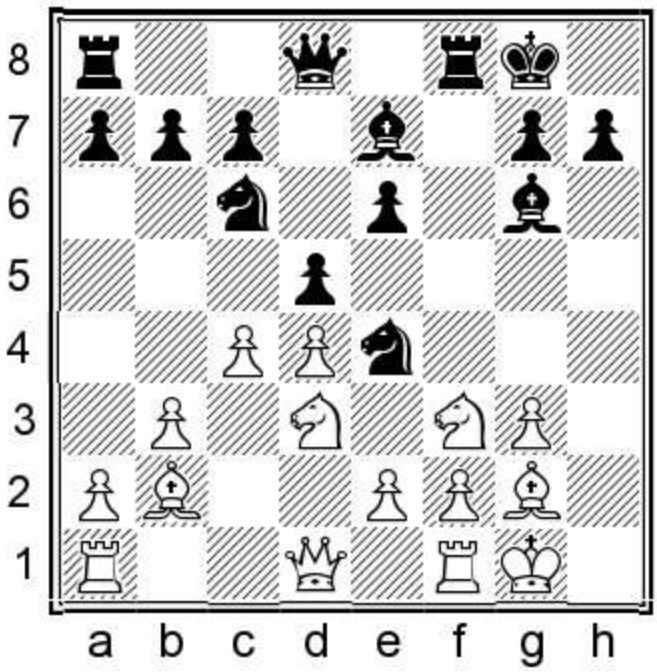
White's advantage was beyond any doubt in Vanheirzeele – Porper, Edmonton 2010.



11.♘df3 a5

The most recent game continued 11...f4 but it's not dangerous for White. 12.♘d3 fxg3 13.hxg3 ♗g6 This occurred in M. Bensdorp – J. Rapport, Mulhouse 2016, and here the following improvement looks natural to me:

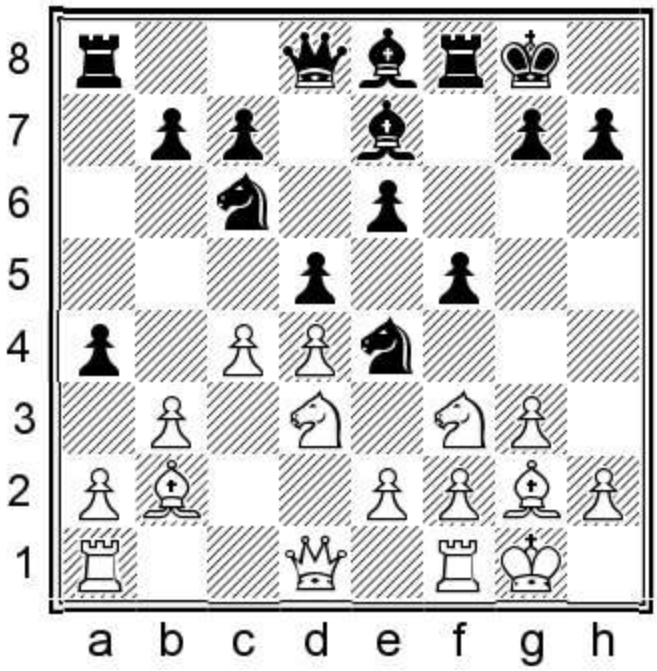
chesstouring.com



14.♘f4N 14...♗f5 15.♘d2! White intends to trade off the active enemy knight, and is ready to meet 15...g5 with 16.♘xe6! ♗xe6 17.♘xe4 dxe4 18.d5± when she is obviously doing well.

12.♘d3 a4

This position occurred in Golubovic – Vucic, Bol 2014. White's most logical continuation is:

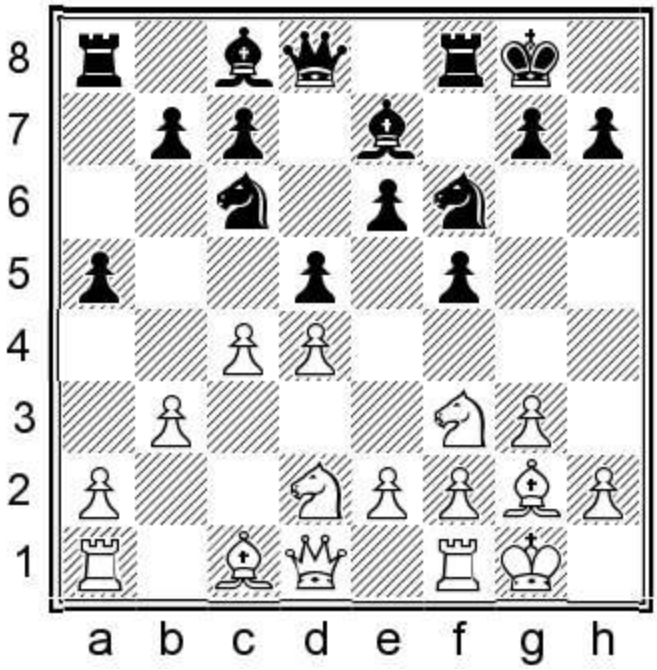


13.♖c1N 13...♘b4 14.♘xb4 ♗xb4 15.♕c2 ♕e7 16.♘e5±

With a pleasant positional edge.

B2) 8...a5

chesstouring.com

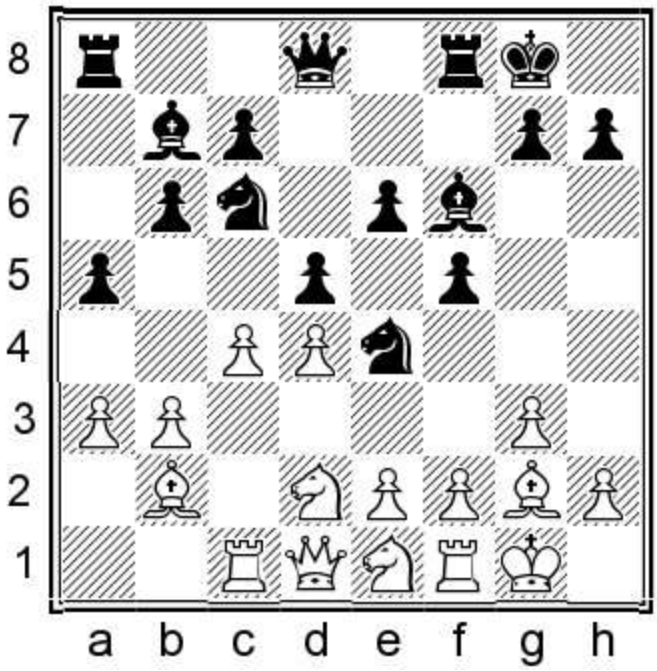


9.a3

White gets ready to meet ...a4 with b3-b4.

9...♗d7

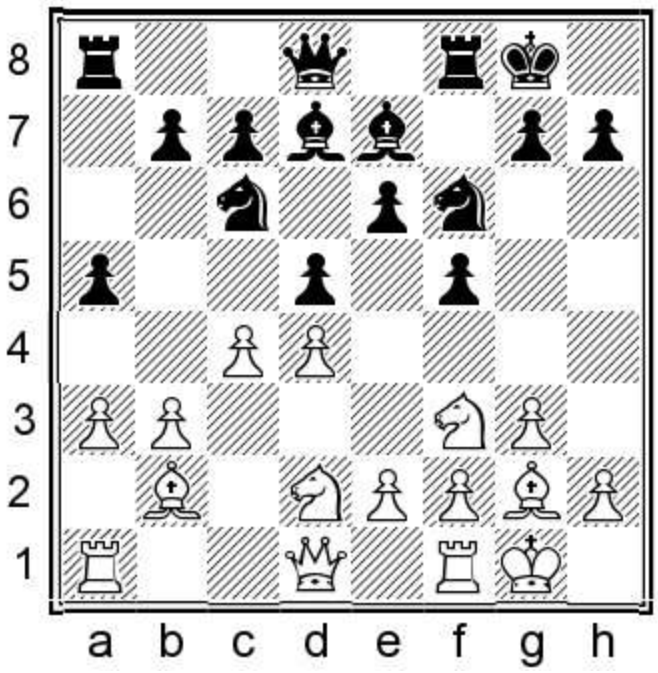
I also considered: 9...♘e4 10.♗b2 b6 (10...♗d7 transposes to variation B22) 11.♖c1 ♗b7 12.♘e1 White thematically prepares to deploy his knights on the ideal d3- and f3-squares, but there is an important nuance. 12...♗f6



13.cxd5! A well-timed capture. (13.♘df3 allows the surprising 13...dxc4! 14.bxc4 a4!∞ followed by 15...♘a5 with interesting counterplay for Black, as in Husemann – Kolanek, email 2011) 13...exd5 14.♘df3 ♖c8 15.♘d3± White had a useful pull in Piasetski – Padurariu, Hoogeveen 2012.

chesstouring.com

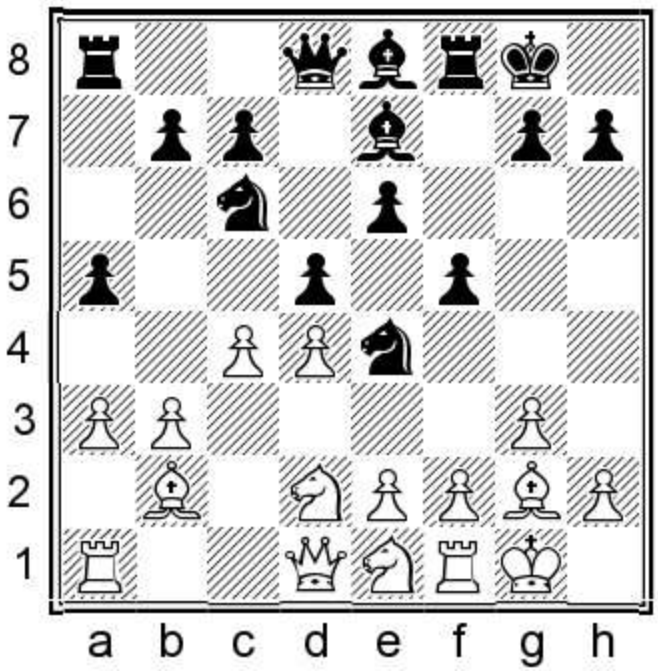
10.♗b2



Black has two worthy options: he can manoeuvre his bishop with **B21)** 10...♗e8 or activate his knight with **B22)** 10...♘e4.

B21) 10...♗e8 11.♘e1 ♘e4

Black inserted 11...a4 12.b4 before playing 12...♘e4 in Shuvalov – Balashov, Moscow 2011. White should have continued normally by means of 13.♖c1N 13...♗h5 14.♘df3 ♗f6 15.cxd5 exd5 16.♘d3 with a typical positional plus.



12.♖c1!

chesstouring.com

The most precise.

12.♘df3 was seen in M. Novikov – Grigoriev, St Petersburg 2007, when Black missed the opportunity to play 12...a4!N 13.cxd5 exd5 14.b4 ♘b8∞ when he gets some squares on the queenside.

12...♗h5 13.♘df3 ♗f6 14.♘d3

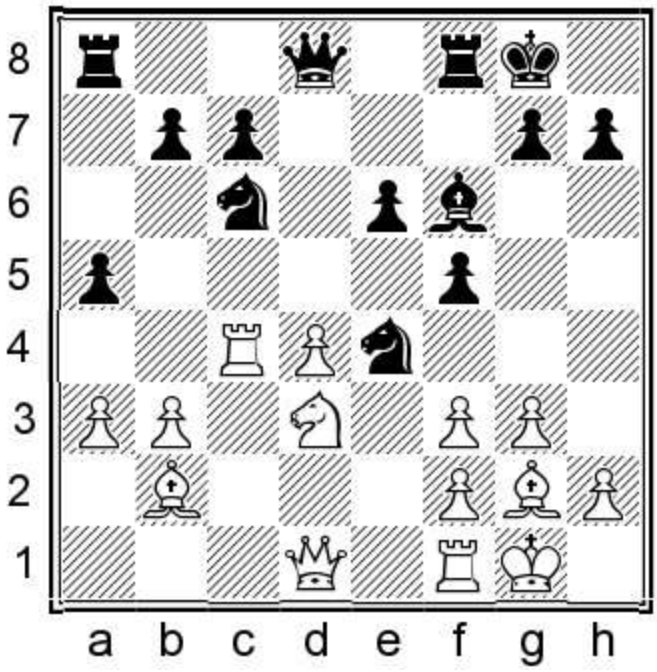
White has achieved his optimal piece arrangement against the Stonewall structure.

14...dxc4

The rather pointless 14...g5?! happened in Kirov – Minzer, Benasque 1995, when the simple 15.cxd5N 15...exd5 16.♘fe5± would have been strong.

15.♖xc4 ♗xf3 16.exf3!N

White missed this dynamic opportunity and took back with the bishop in Illescas Cordoba – Cramling, Gran Canaria 1989.



16...♘d6 17.♖c2 ♗xd4

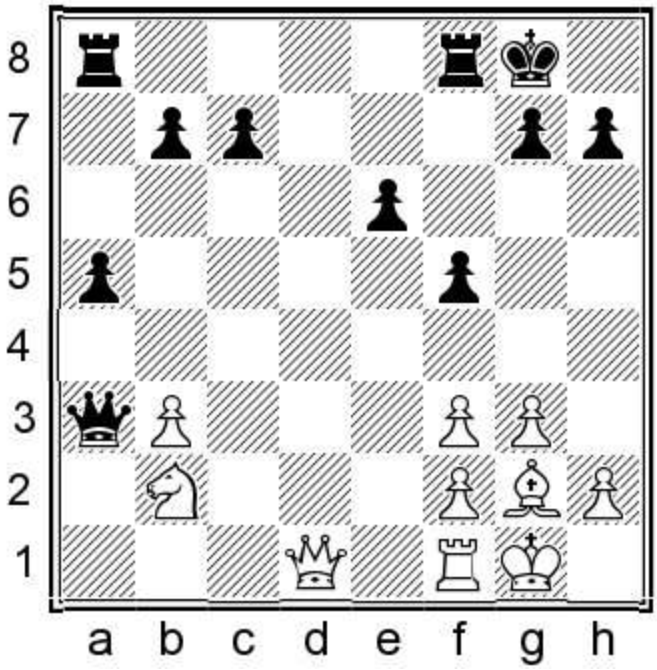
Other options do not bring Black any relief either:

17...♘xd4 18.♗xd4 ♗xd4 19.♘f4± wins the exchange.

17...♘b5 18.f4! ♘bxd4 19.♖d2 puts Black under serious pressure.

18.♖xc6! ♗xb2 19.♖xd6 ♕xd6 20.♘xb2 ♕xa3

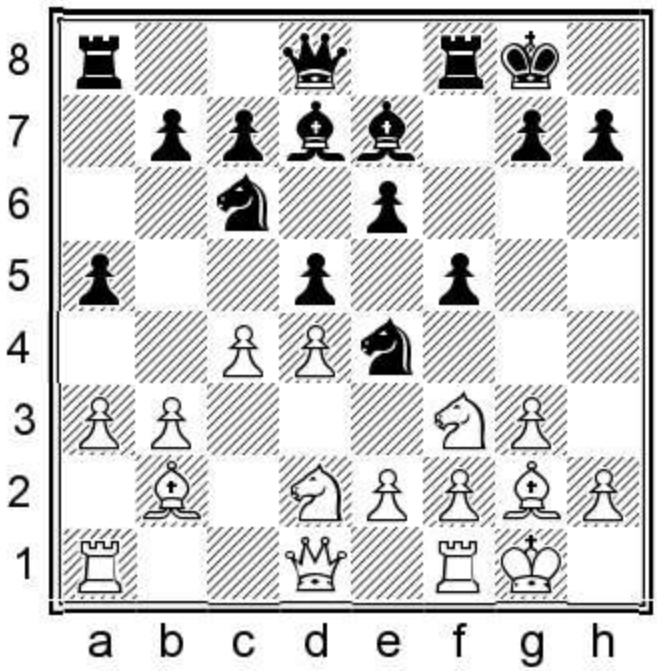
chesstouring.com



21.♕c2 c6 22.f4±

White's two minor pieces should prove to be much stronger than the black rook.

B22) 10...♘e4



11.♘e1

I suggested this as a novelty in *GM 2* and it has since been employed a few times.

11...♗f6

11...♗e8 was covered in variation B21 above.

chesstouring.com

11...a4

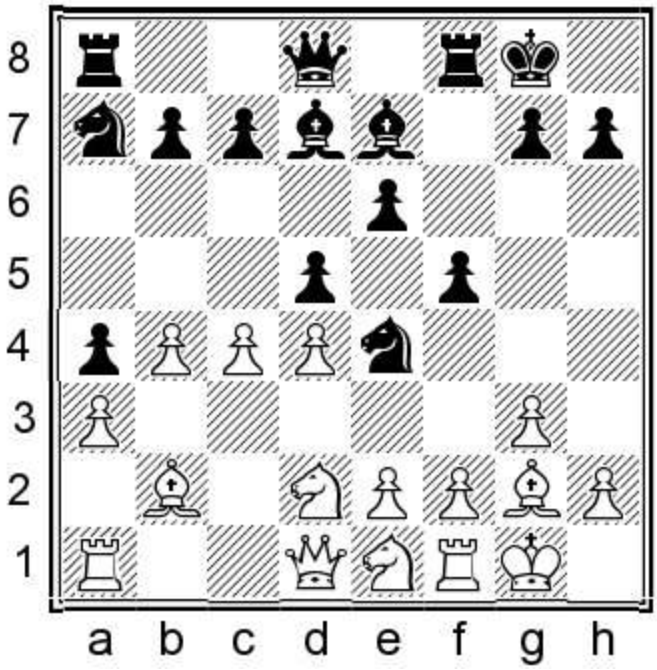
This seems a critical try but it turns out well for White.

12.b4

12.cxd5?! exd5 13.b4 ♘a7 gave Black some useful queenside squares in Ftacnik – Narciso Dublan, Barcelona 2013.

12...♘a7

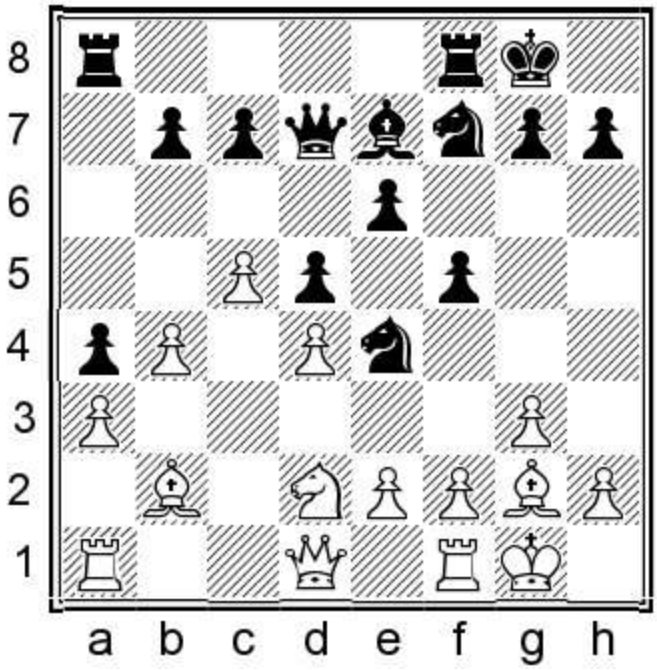
Presumably Ftacnik exchanged on d5 because he was afraid of losing a pawn, but 12...♘xd2?! 13.♕xd2 dxc4 is hardly a good idea for Black, since 14.d5! clearly favours White.



13.♘ef3

13.♘d3!?N is not bad either.

13...♘c8 14.♘e5 ♘cd6 15.c5 ♘f7 16.♘xd7 ♕xd7

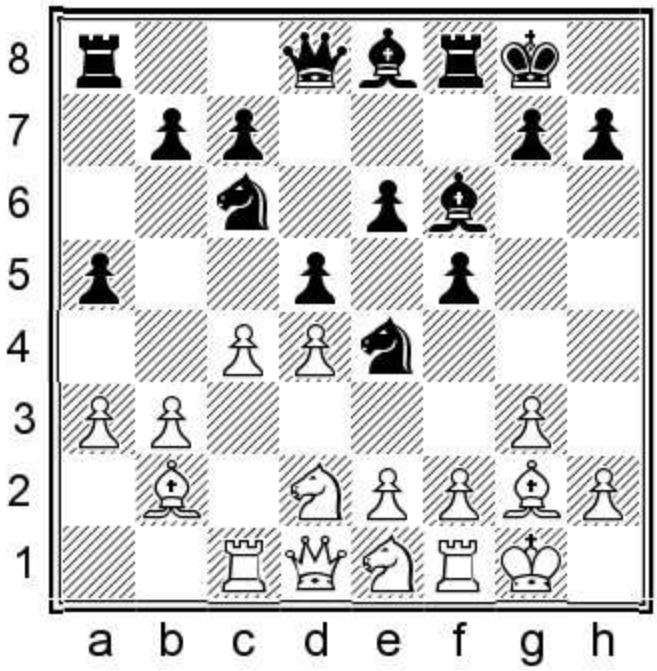


chesstouring.com

17.♘xe4 fxe4 18.f3! exf3 19.exf3 ♗f6 20.f4±

Despite White's eventual defeat in Matamoros Franco – Narciso Dublan, Seville 2014, his position was clearly more pleasant at this stage.

12.♖c1 ♗e8



13.e3!

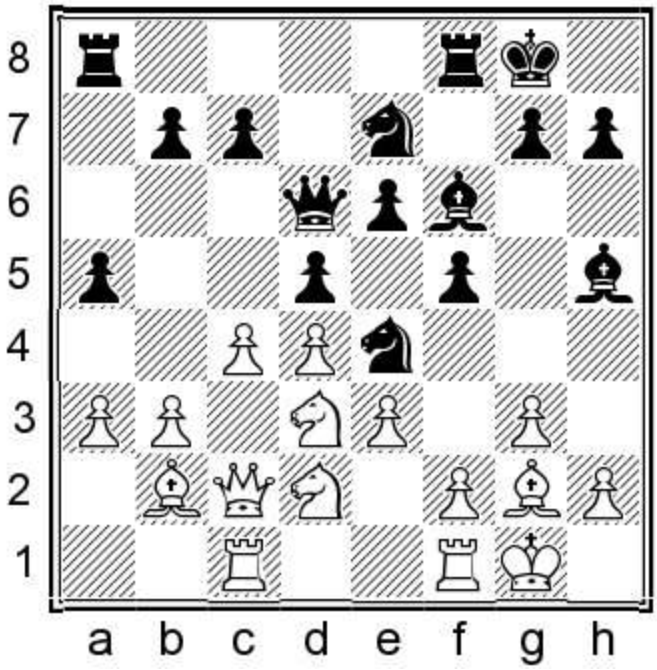
It is useful to strengthen the d4-pawn. White will continue with his plan of ♘d3, ♘f3 and so on, while Black will find it hard to create counterplay.

13.♘df3 is less accurate in view of 13...a4 14.b4 dxc4 15.♖xc4 e5! when Black obtained interesting play in Ftacnik – Spraggett, Szirak 1986.

13...♗f7

Another instructive example continued: 13...♘e7 14.♘d3 ♗h5 15.♕c2 ♕d6

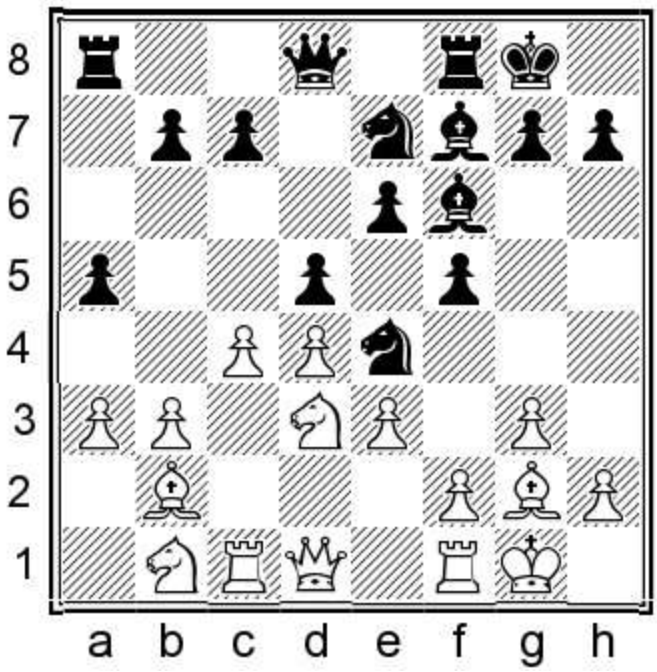
chesstouring.com



16.♘b1! White wants to prepare f2-f3, so he avoids giving Black the easy option of a knight exchange. 16...♘g5 17.f3± White had a clear positional advantage in Poleschi – Huzen, email 1999.

14.♘d3 ♘e7 15.♘b1!?

Again this idea looks promising, although the simple 15.f3 ♘xd2 16.♕xd2± would also leave White with the better position.



15...g5 16.f3 ♘d6

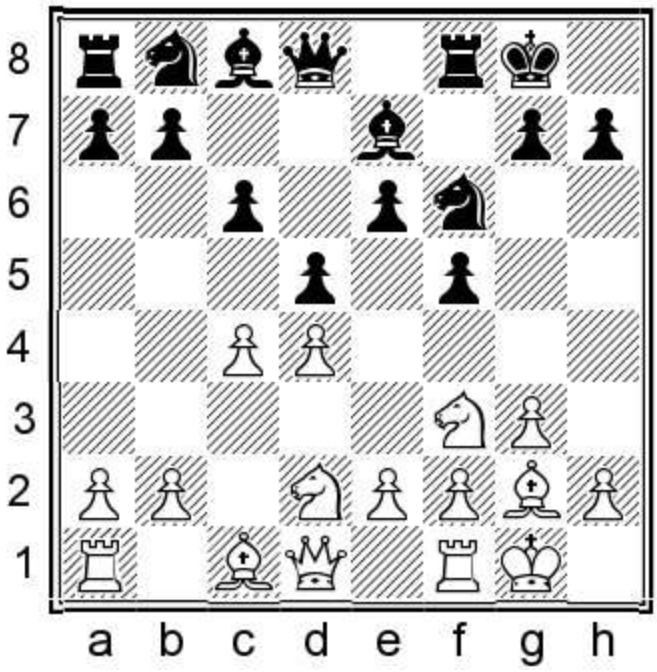
We have been following Raznikov – Sadler, Oslo 2011, which featured a different move order but transposed to our line at move 13. White has several decent moves here but I think the most natural is:

chesstouring.com

17.♘d2N

White retains the better chances.

C) 7...c6



8.♘e5

White makes room for the second knight to come to f3, while the advanced knight may either remain on its current outpost or drop back to d3, depending on how Black plays. We will consider **C1)** 8...b6 and **C2)** 8...♗d7, followed by the main line of **C3)** 8...♘bd7.

8...♘e4 has been covered on page 9 – see 8...c6 in the notes to variation A.

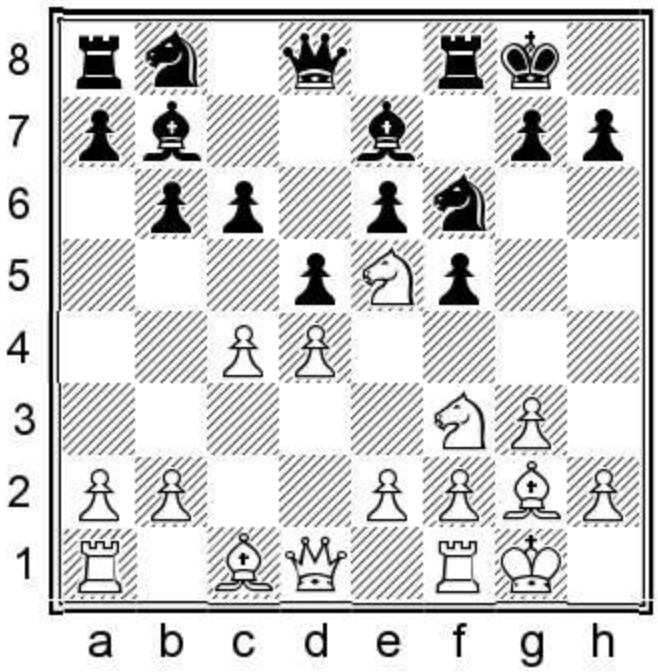
C1) 8...b6

Black intends a queenside fianchetto followed by eventually freeing his position with ...c5. I developed the following line for White:

9.♘df3 ♗b7

9...♘e4 10.♕a4N 10...♗b7 transposes to our main line below.

chesstouring.com



10.♕a4!?N

Previously 10.♕c2 has been tried, but the text move seems more active to me.

White gets nothing special after 10.♘g5 ♕c8 followed by ...♘e4.

10...♘e4

Also after 10...c5 11.cxd5 exd5 (or 11...♗xd5 12.dxc5 ♗xc5 13.♘d3±) 12.♗g5 White is slightly better.

11.♗e3

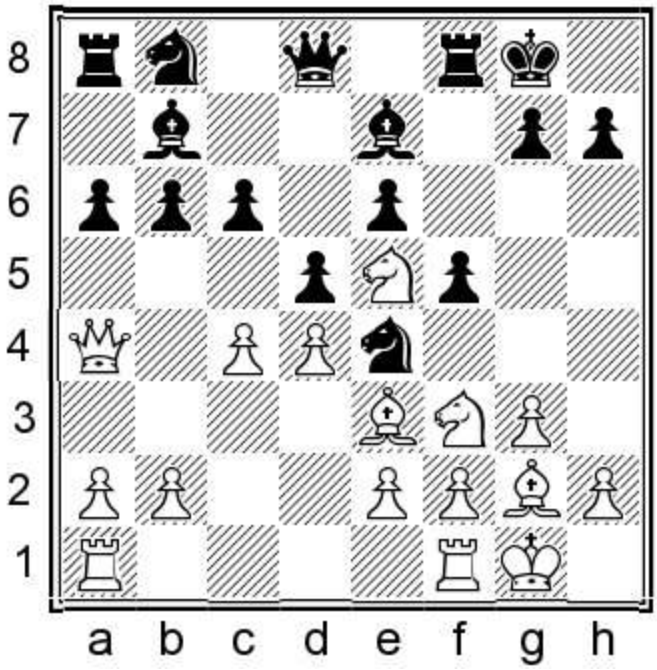
With this move, we briefly transpose to an existing game.

11...a6

11...c5N 12.♖ac1 ♗d6 13.♖fd1 ♕e7 14.h4 ♘a6 15.♗f4± also favours White.

This position was reached in Wirig – Bricard, Pau 2012. White should have continued:

chesstouring.com



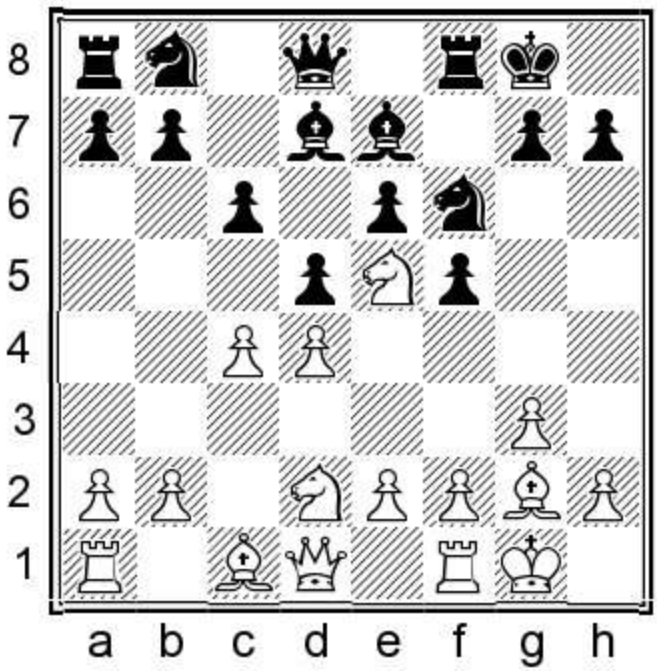
12.♖fd1!N

White strengthens his grip on the centre, as the following attempt is nothing to worry about:

12...b5?! 13.♕b3! ♘d7 14.a4!±

Black has serious problems on the queenside.

C2) 8...♗d7

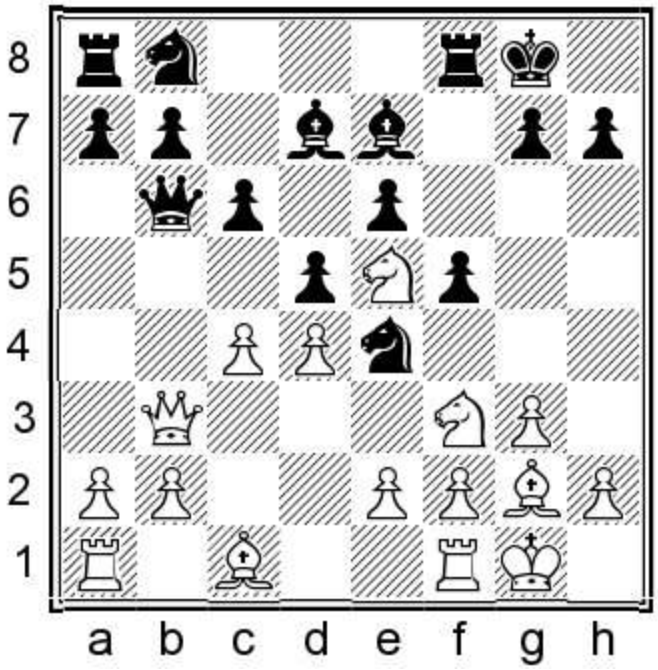


This is a thematic method of development in Stonewall positions, but in this particular case White has an effective way to meet it.

chesstouring.com

9.♕b3! b5

Another game continued 9...♕b6 10.♘df3 ♘e4 (Black cannot continue his plan, since 10...♗e8? is met strongly by 11.♘g5! and now in Sola Sendra – Serra Soto, Tarrega 2015, White should have continued:



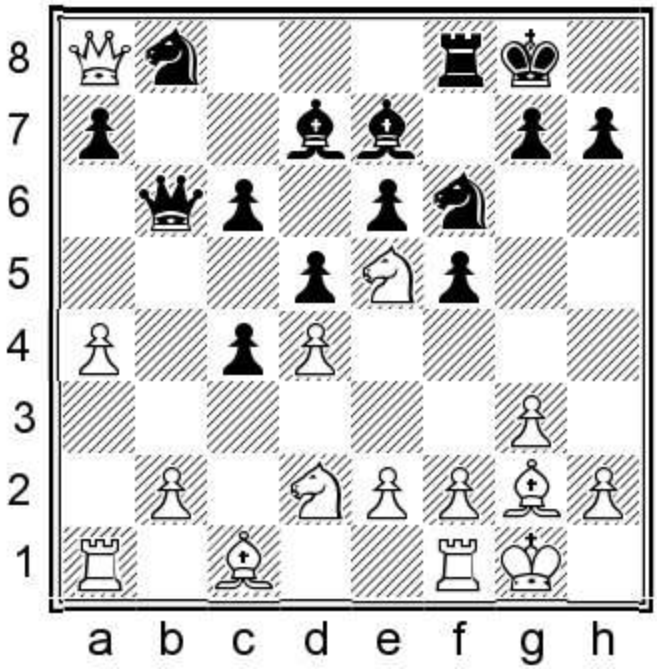
11.♕c2!N With the following point: 11...♗e8 12.b4! a5 (12...♗xb4 runs into 13.♖b1 ♕a5 14.a3± and White breaks through to b7) 13.c5 ♕c7 14.bxa5 ♖xa5 15.♖b1 White has a pleasant edge.

10.cxb5

Today I favour this simple approach.

10.a4!? is a surprising tactical idea which I recommended in *GM 2*. It brought White a crushing victory in one game, but Black's play can be improved. The critical line continues: 10...bxc4 11.♕b7 ♕b6 (11...♕c8N should lead to the same thing) 12.♕xa8

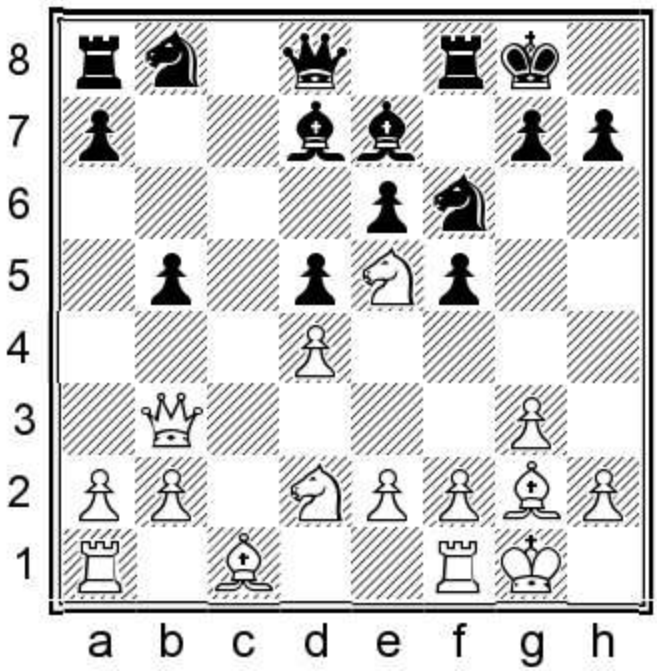
chesstouring.com



12...♕c7!N (12...♘a6? 13.♘xd7 ♘xd7 14.♘xc4! is a line from my previous work, and indeed after 14...♕c7 15.♗f4 e5 16.♗xd5† Black resigned in Petrukhina – Gurkin, Novokuznetsk 2011) 13.♘dxc4 ♘a6 14.♕xf8† ♗xf8 15.♘xd7 ♘xd7 In *GM 2* I continued the analysis and claimed a slight edge for White, but now I am more inclined to consider the position unclear.

10...cxb5

Here I found a simple improvement:



11.♘df3!N

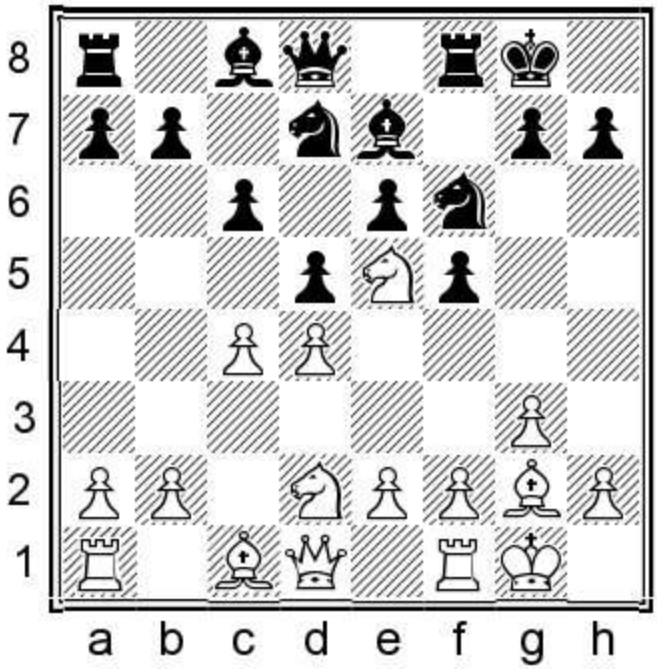
White won in good style after 11.♘xd7 ♕xd7 12.♘f3 a6 13.♘e5 ♕a7 14.♗e3 ♘fd7? 15.♗xd5! exd5 16.♕xd5† ♔h8 17.♘f7† ♖xf7 18.♕xf7+– in Baumgartner – Dohr, Austria 2003, but Black could have played much better, for instance with 12...a5N, when White's advantage is not so great.

chesstouring.com

11...a5 12.♗f4±

White has easy pressure against the numerous holes in Black's queenside.

C3) 8...♘bd7



9.♘d3

White avoids unnecessary simplifications and retreats the knight to its perfect post, from which it controls the important f4- and e5-squares.

9...♘e4

This is the main continuation, though of course Black has tried several alternatives. Here is a selection of them:

9...b6 10.♕a4 ♕c7?! misplaces the queen. (10...♗b7 11.♘f4 ♔f7 was the lesser evil although 12.♘f3 ♘e4 13.♗e3 still favours White) 11.♘f3 ♘h5 12.♗d2 In J. Collins – Halper, New York 1958, White was ready to target the enemy queen with ♖ac1, with an obvious advantage.

9...♗d6 loses a tempo; the same position has occurred many times in the database with Black to move. A model example continued 10.♕c2 ♘e4 11.♘f3 ♕e7 12.♗f4 ♗xf4 13.♘xf4 ♘d6 14.b3 ♘f6 15.♖ac1 ♗d7 16.♕b2± with a thematic advantage for White, Moranda – Castaldo, Warsaw 2010.

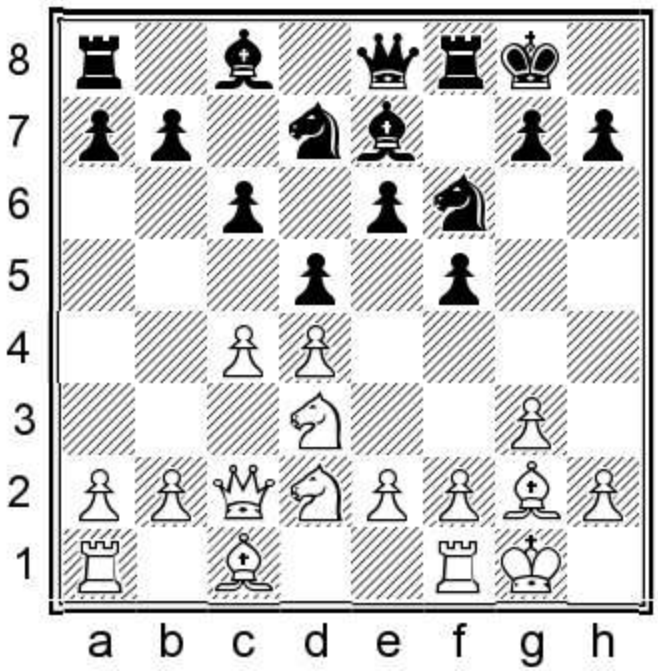
9...♕e8

This has been the second-most-popular choice but it does not make much sense, since White is ready to meet ...♕h5 with ♘f4.

10.♕c2!

chesstouring.com

I like this move because it stops Black from smoothly developing his queenside.



10...♕h5?!

It is hardly a good idea to allow ♘f4 with gain of tempo.

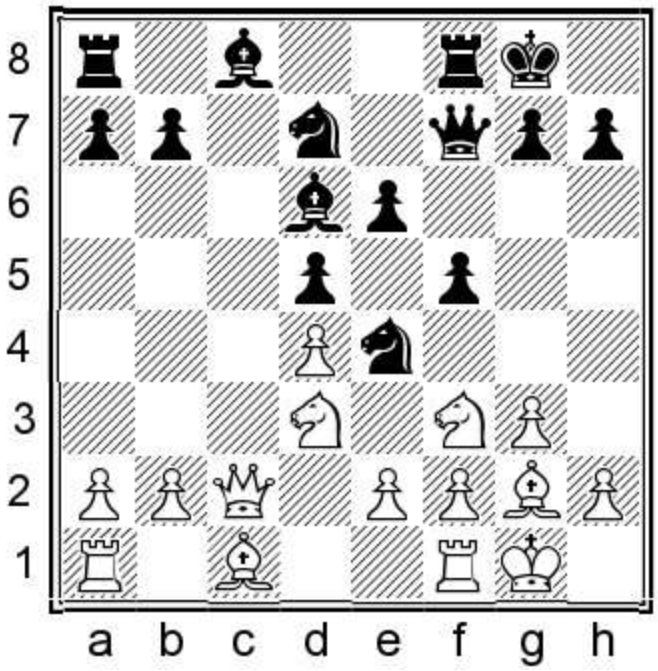
10...b6? loses material after 11.cxd5 when the queen penetrates to c6, as in Bellmann – Kirste, corr. 1993.

Black's best option is 10...♘e4, which converts to variation C31 below.

11.♘f4 ♕f7 12.cxd5!

This illustrates another benefit of the queen on c2: it is generally useful to force Black to recapture on d5 with the c-pawn, especially when his knight has already gone to d7.

12...cxd5 13.♘f3 ♘e4 14.♘d3 ♗d6

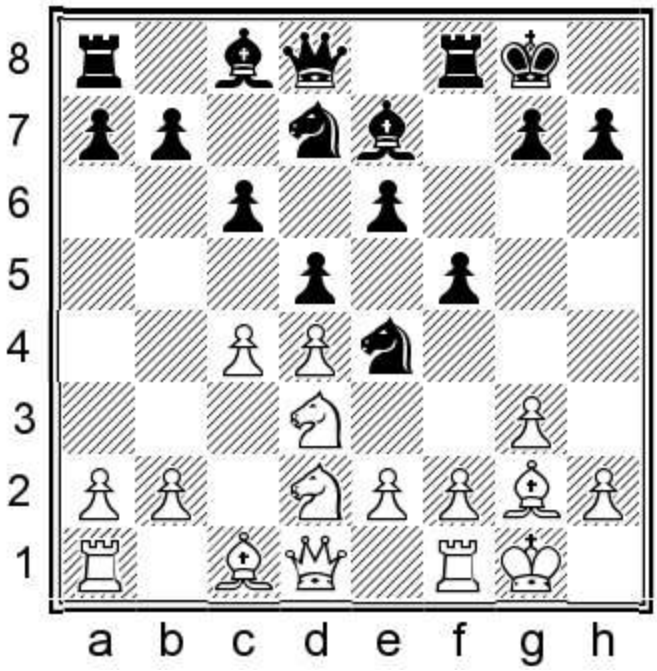


In Varga – Kajnih, Eger 1994, White should have continued:

chesstouring.com

15.♗f4N 15...♗xf4 16.♘xf4

With an obvious positional superiority.

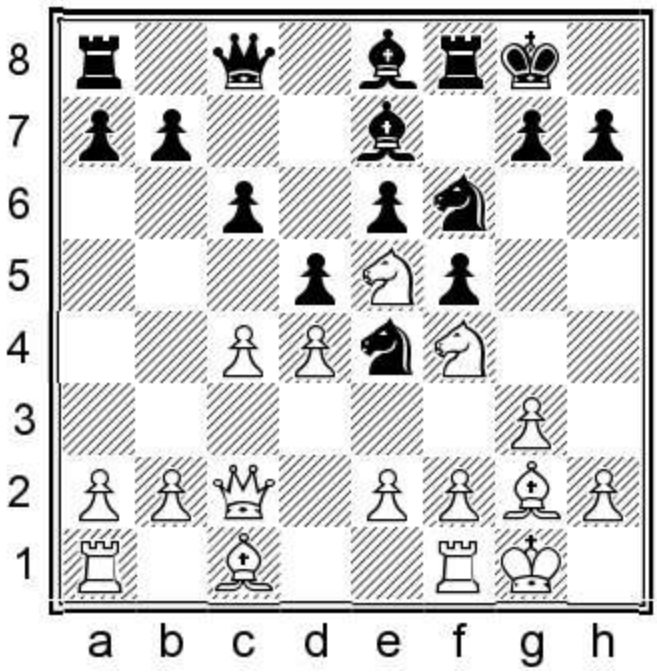


10.♕c2

White needs to defend the c4-pawn in order to continue his plan with ♘f3. The text move also prevents 10...b6? due to 11.cxd5 followed by ♕c6, just as in the previous note.

Black has tried many moves here but I consider **C31)** 10...♕e8, **C32)** 10...♗f6 and **C33)** 10...♘xd2 to be the three most important.

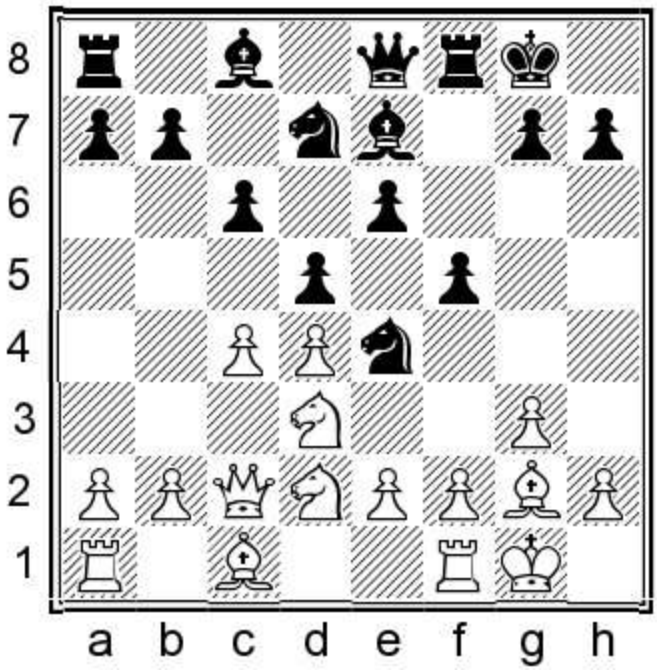
10...♘df6 11.♘f3 gives White an easy game. The main direction is 11...♗d7 12.♘fe5 ♗e8 13.♘f4! when 13...♕c8 is forced. I believe White should not rush to take action, but should instead just continue developing:



chesstouring.com

14.b3N An illustrative line is: 14...g5 15.♘fd3 ♘d7 16.f3 ♘d6 17.♗a3 ♕d8 18.♘xd7 ♕xd7 19.e4±

C31) 10...♕e8



11.♘f3

This seems like the most logical and thematic move.

A worthy alternative is:

11.f3!? ♘xd2

11...♘d6!? has scored less well but is perhaps a more challenging response. I think White should play 12.♖e1N, preparing the e2-e4 break. Play may continue 12...♗f6 13.c5 ♘f7 14.♘b3 e5 15.e4 with complicated but promising play for White.

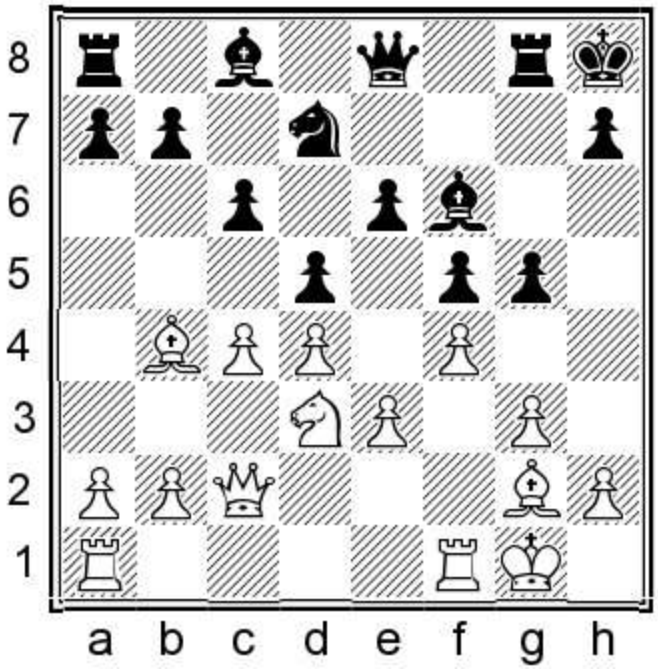
12.♗xd2 ♗f6 13.e3

White has a pleasant game, as shown by the following example.

13...♔h8 14.f4 g5 15.♗b4 ♖g8

In Cramling – Campora, Oropesa del Mar 1996, White missed a strong continuation:

chesstouring.com



16.fxg5!N 16...♗xg5 17.cxd5 exd5

17...♗xe3†? 18.♔h1 cxd5 19.♖ae1 ♗xd4 20.♖xf5 is great for White.

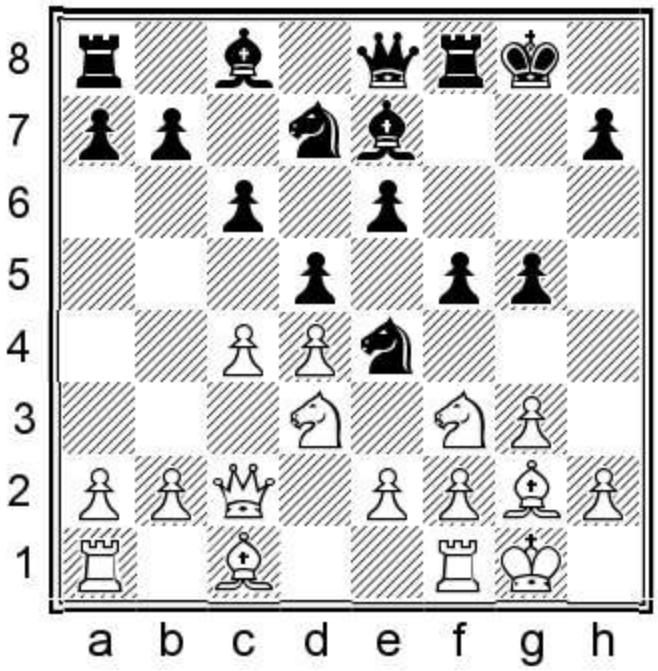
Also after 17...cxd5 18.♘f4 White is clearly better.

18.♖ae1 ♘f6 19.♗d6!±

White enjoys a clear advantage.

11...g5

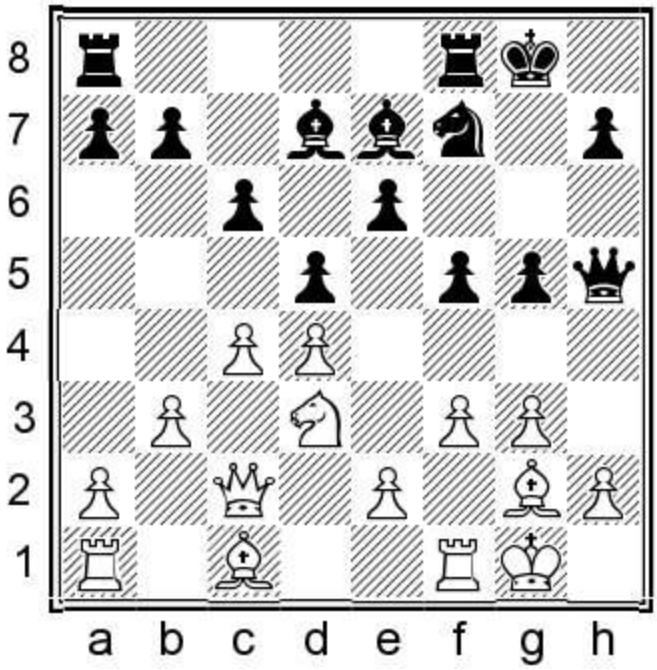
This has been the most popular choice, but Black's play on the kingside is not dangerous at all. White has several good ways to continue but I will just mention a couple of thematic examples.



12.♘fe5 ♕h5 13.f3 ♘d6 14.b3 ♘e8

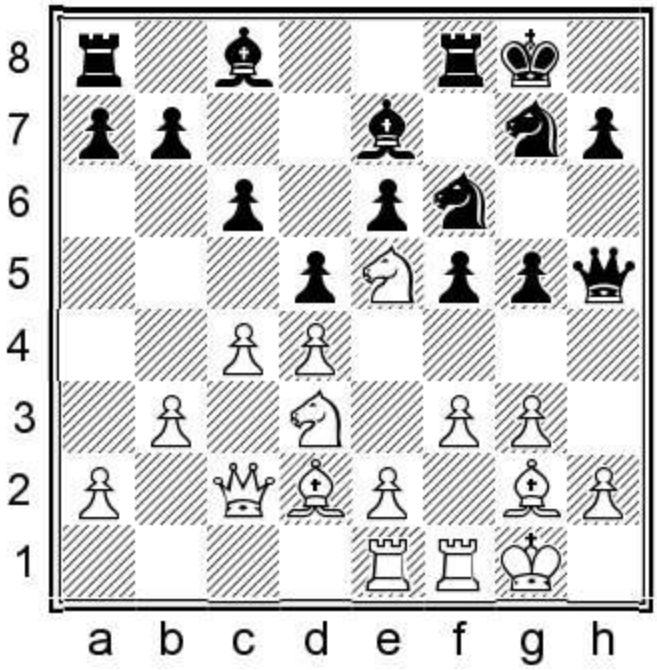
chesstouring.com

In the event of 14...♘f7 15.♘xd7 ♗xd7 White is ready for the thematic break:



16.e4! dxe4 17.fxe4 ♖ae8 18.♗b2± Ignacz – Charpenel Elorduy, Budapest 2007.

15.♗d2 ♘g7 16.♖ae1 ♘f6

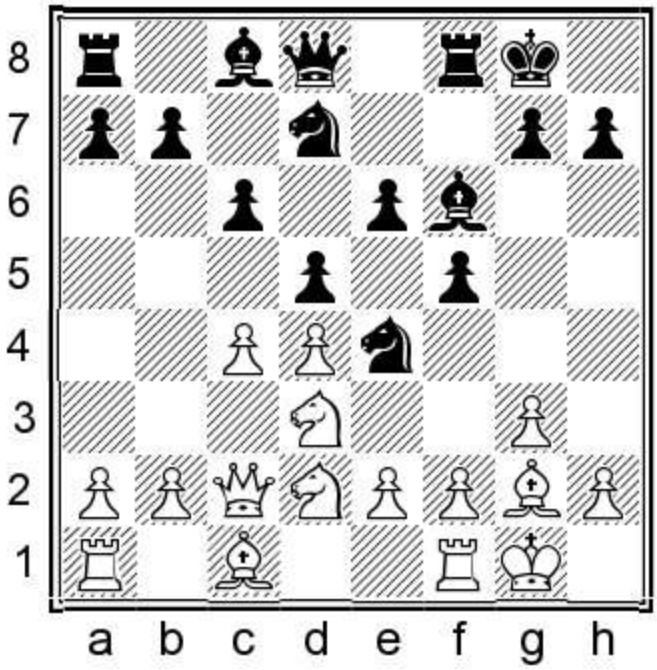


17.♕c1 h6 18.♗b4 ♗xb4 19.♘xb4±

White was much better in Cvitan – Sebestyen, Pula 2002.

C32) 10...♗f6

chesstouring.com

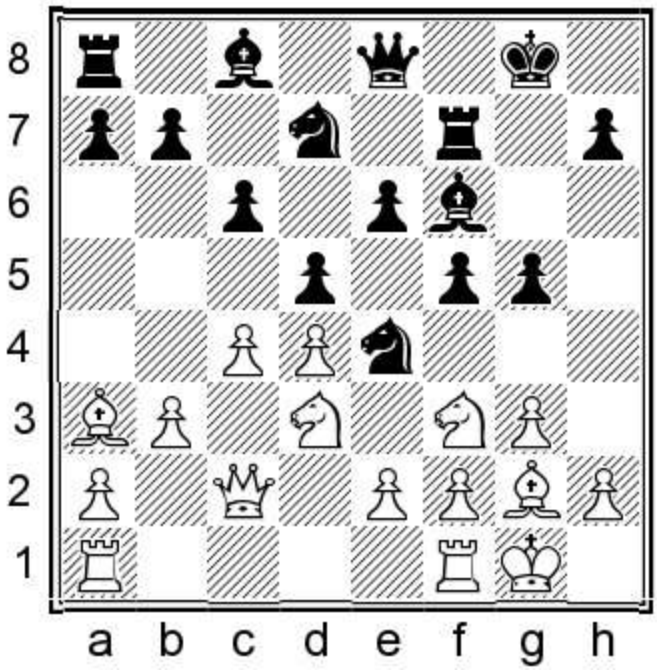


With this move, Black looks more towards the centre and queenside than in the previous variation.

11.♘f3 dxc4!?

In most cases, breaking the Stonewall structure does not turn out well for Black – which is probably one reason why I overlooked the text move in *GM 2*. However, this is a rare case where we should take the idea seriously, as it has the concrete idea of grabbing the d4-pawn. Here are some other examples:

11...♕e8 12.b3 g5 (the more common 12...♔h8 is covered under the 11...♔h8 move order below) 13.♗a3 ♖f7

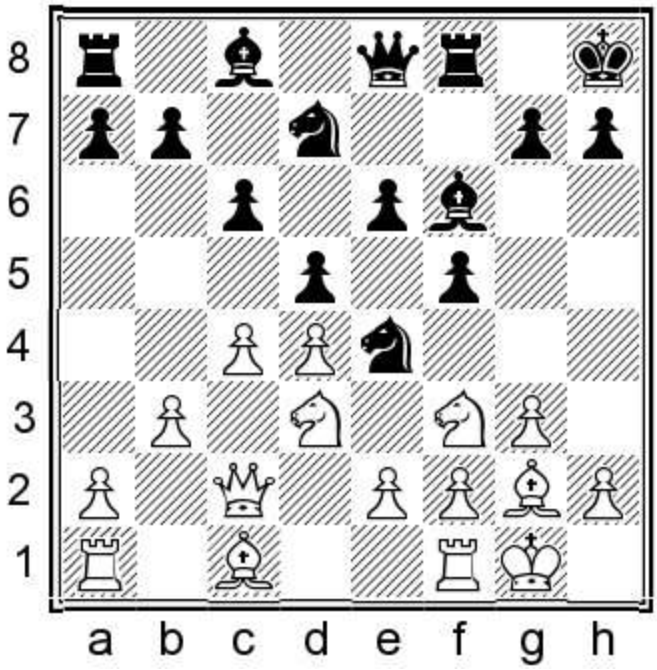


14.♘fe5! This comes with particularly strong effect here, and after 14...♘xe5? 15.dxe5 ♗e7 16.♗xe7 ♕xe7 17.cxd5 exd5 18.f3+– White won a piece in Adrian – Roos, France 1994.

chesstouring.com

11...♔h8 12.b3 ♕e8

12...dxc4?! is an inferior version of the 11...dxc4 main line; after 13.bxc4 c5 14.♗b2 cxd4 15.♘xd4 ♘dc5 16.♘xc5 ♘xc5 17.♖ad1 White was clearly better in Rajskij – Akopian, Yerevan 1988.

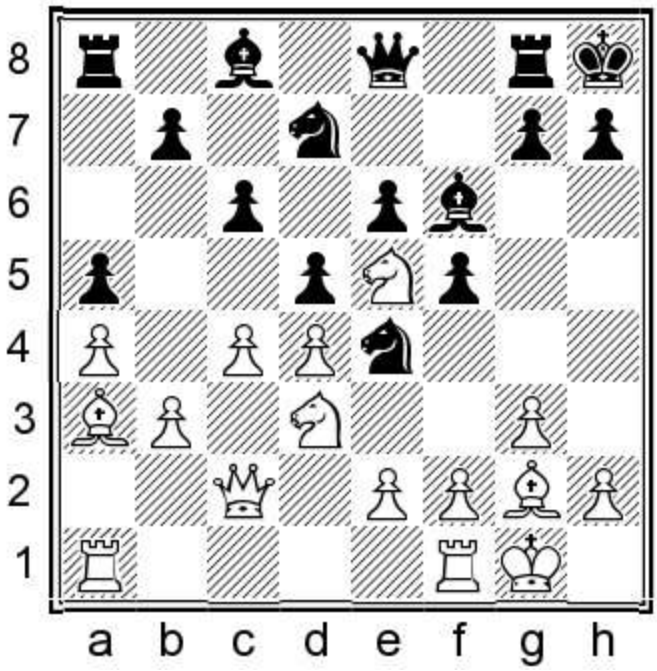


13.a4

This was recommended by Kasparov as an improvement over his game against Short, even though 13.♗a3 ♖g8 14.♖ac1 a5 15.♗b2 ♕h5 16.a4 was significantly better for him in Kasparov – Short, Brussels 1987.

13...a5 14.♗a3 ♖g8 15.♘fe5

White is in complete control, as the following game illustrated:

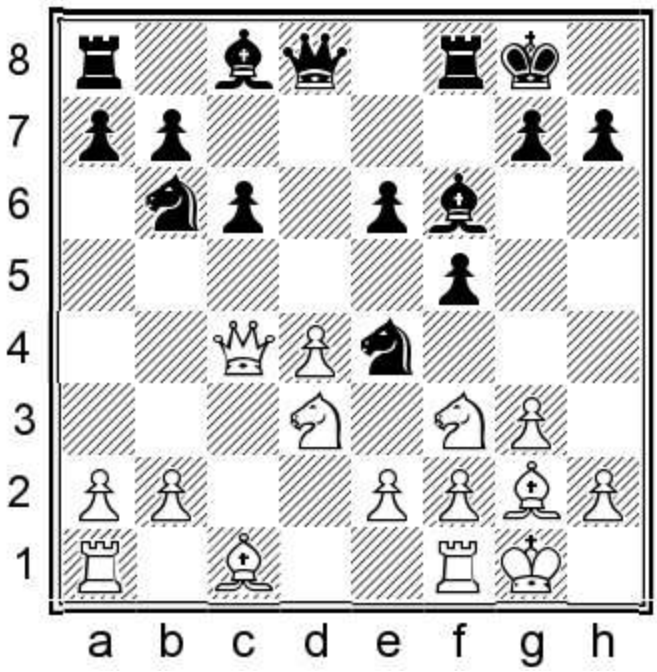


15...♘xe5 16.dxe5 ♗d8 17.f3 ♘g5 18.♗b2 ♖b8 19.♗d4

chesstouring.com

White was clearly better in Toshkov – Batchinsky, Geneva 1989.

12.♕xc4 ♘b6



13.♕b3

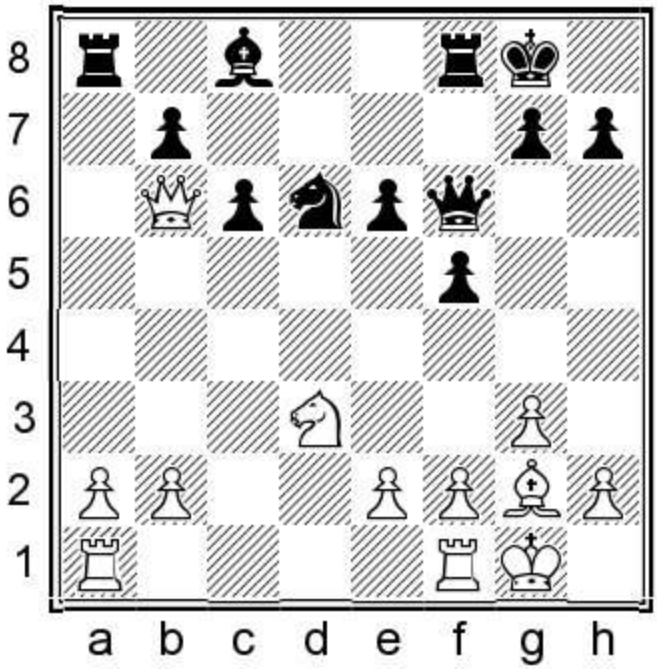
This is the best square for the queen.

13...♗xd4 14.♘xd4 ♕xd4 15.♗e3 ♕d8

This is Black's latest try.

15...♕f6 16.♗xb6 axb6 17.♕xb6 ♘d6 occurred in Antonenko – Aryutkin, corr. 1997. I would recommend:

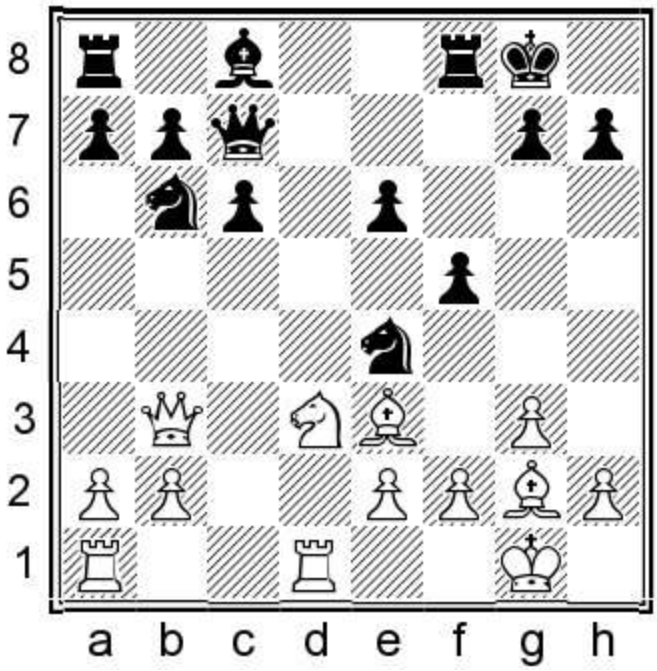
chesstouring.com



18.a4!?N 18...e5 19.a5 e4 20.♘c5 With some initiative for White.

16.♖fd1 ♕c7

This occurred in Kuna – Faber, email 2012. I believe White should have continued:

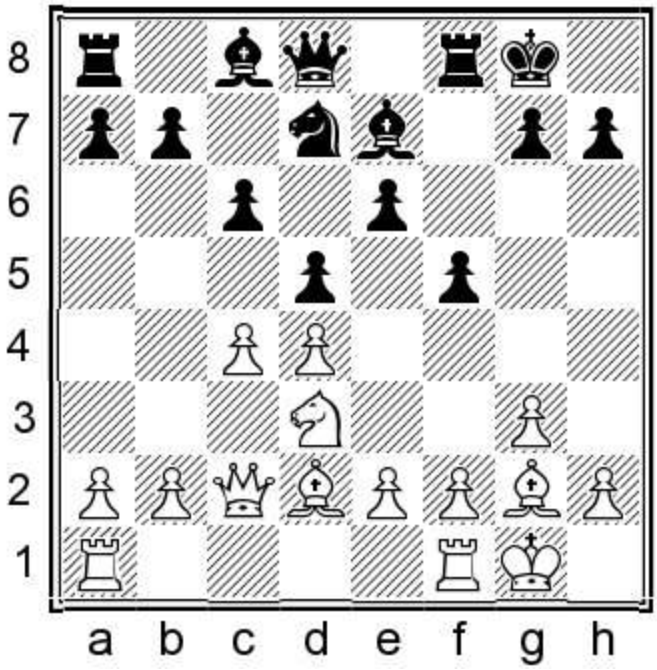


17.♗d4!N 17...♘d5 18.♖ac1⩲

With fantastic compensation for the pawn.

C33) 10...♘xd2 11.♗xd2

chesstouring.com



This exchange renders Black's position less cramped, but trading off the active knight on e4 is something of a concession.

11...♘f6

Black could also try:

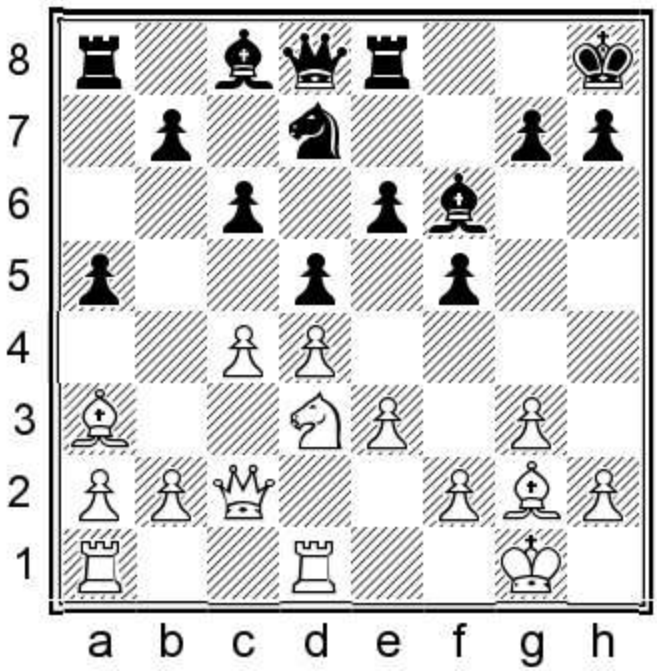
11...♗f6 12.e3 ♔h8

12...a5 13.a4 b6? proved unfortunate after 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.♕c6+– when Black was losing material in Tosic – Kralevski, Skopje 2016.

13.♗b4 ♖e8 14.♖fd1

A good alternative is 14.♖ac1 a5 15.♗a3, when White enjoys a stable positional superiority.

14...a5 15.♗a3

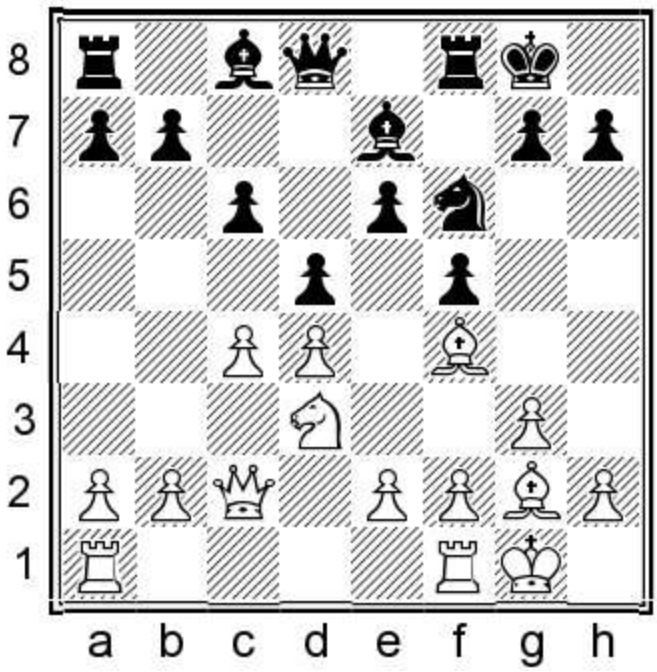


chesstouring.com

15...b5 16.cxd5 cxd5 17.♗d6! ♗b7 18.♖ac1 ♖a6 19.♕c7±
White was clearly better in Tratar – Bevilacqua, Trieste 2009.

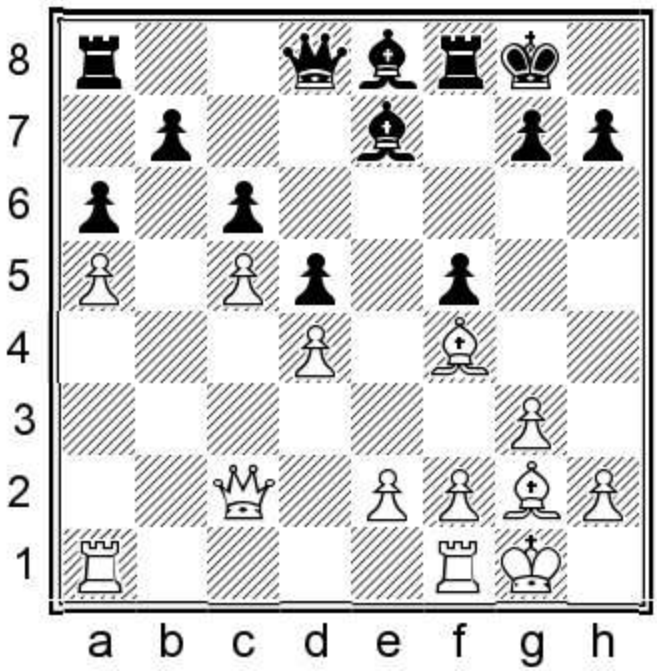
12.♗f4

Expanding on the queenside with 12.b4!? is another promising plan. A model game continued 12...♗d7 13.a4 ♖c8 14.♗f4± with a nice positional pull for White, Dreev – Megaranto, Jakarta 2013.



12...♗d6

12...♗d7 enables White to start some activity on the queenside by means of 13.a4! ♗e8 14.a5 a6 15.b4 when the only game was a model example for White: 15...♘d7 16.cxd5 exd5 17.♘c5 ♘xc5 18.bxc5



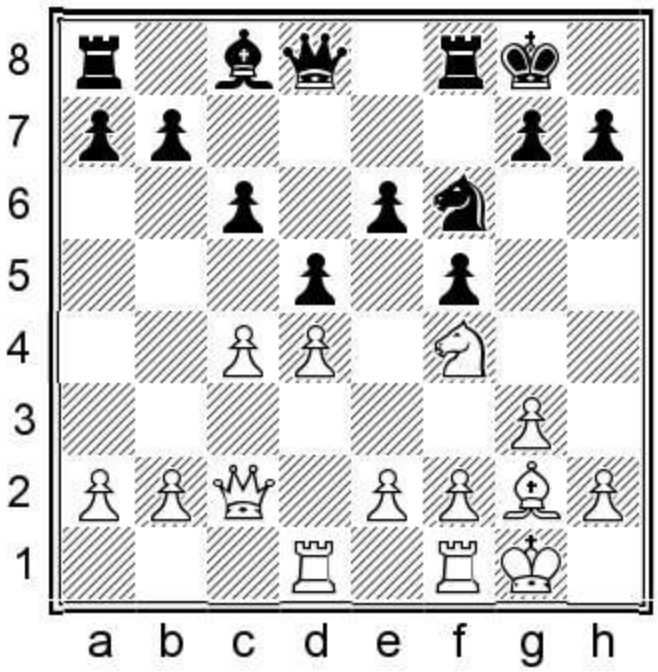
18...g5 19.♗e5 ♗g6 20.♕b2 ♖a7 21.♕b6 ♕a8 22.f3± White was positionally dominating in Fuss –

chesstouring.com

Istomin, corr. 2009.

13.♖ad1 ♗xf4 14.♘xf4

Trading the dark-squared bishops is one of White's main positional goals in the Stonewall structure.

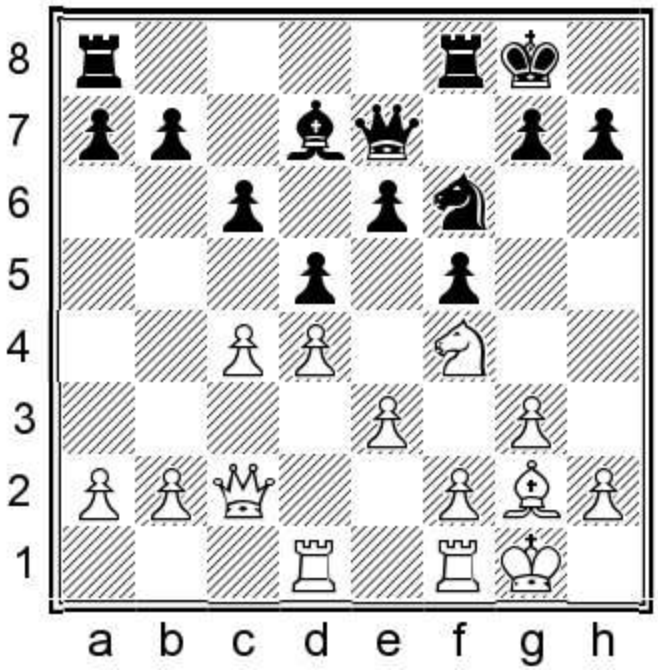


14...♗d7

14...g5 15.♘d3± was similarly promising for White in Hardicsay – Rusniok, Austria 2001. His pieces are optimally placed for either queenside play or a central break with e2-e4.

15.e3 ♕e7

This occurred in Pantsulaia – Mohannad Farhan, Dubai 2008. Here I suggest:



chesstouring.com

16.♘d3N 16...♗e8 17.b4 ♗h5 18.♖b1±

With a pleasant advantage.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the topic of the Dutch Stonewall, and was mostly focused on the solid but slightly passive set-up involving ...♗e7 (as opposed to the more active ...♗d6, which can be found in the next chapter). I suggest developing the queen's knight to d2, after which White's plan mostly revolves around manoeuvring his knights to the optimal d3- and f3-squares. Obviously there are some subtle details in some of the lines, but in general White has a promising game with good chances to exploit his opponent's weaknesses in the long run.

chesstouring.com



Dutch



Stonewall – 5...♗d6

Variation Index

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♘f3 d5 5.0–0 ♗d6 6.c4 c6 7.♘c3 0–0 8.♕c2

A) 8...dxc4 27

B) 8...♗d7 28

C) 8...♘bd7 29

D) 8...♕e8 32

E) 8...♕e7 35

F) 8...♘e4 9.♖b1 39

F1) 9...♗d7 40

F2) 9...a5 42

F3) 9...♘d7 10.b4 45

F31) 10...♘df6 46

F32) 10...b6!? 48

F33) 10...b5!? 50

F4) 9...♕e7 10.b4 51

F41) 10...♗xb4 52

F42) 10...♘d7 53

F43) 10...♗d7 55

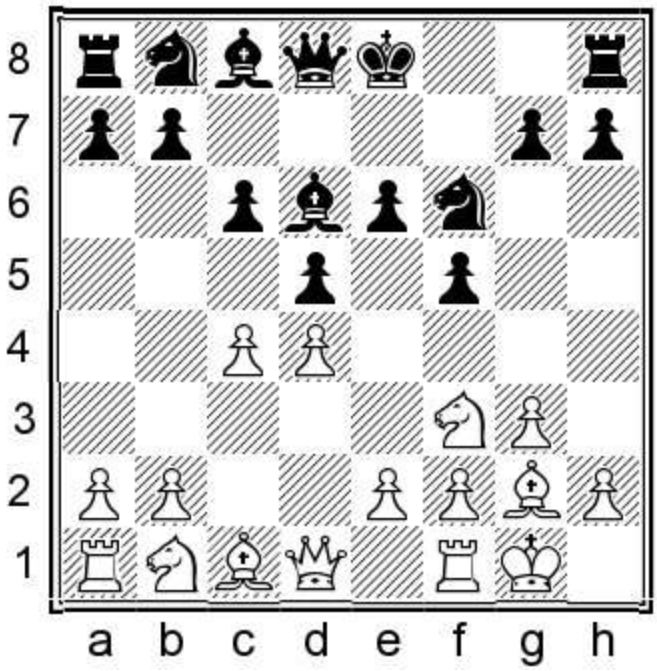
chesstouring.com

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♘f3 d5 5.0-0 ♗d6

This is the most active and popular set-up for Black.

6.c4 c6

6...0-0 should be met by 7.♘c3 (rather than 7.b3 b6!?, which has been recently become quite fashionable for Black) when Black has nothing better than transposing to our main line with 7...c6.



7.♘c3 0-0 8.♕c2

This is the main tabiya of the chapter. I decided to stick with the same set-up as I recommended in *GM 2*. It became pretty fashionable after that book was published, so naturally there are a number of updates and refinements.

We will analyse six main options: **A)** 8...dxc4, **B)** 8...♗d7, **C)** 8...♘bd7, **D)** 8...♕e8, **E)** 8...♕e7 and **F)** 8...♘e4.

A rare alternative is:

8...a5 9.b3!?

White changes the direction of his play, utilizing the fact that Black has slightly weakened his queenside.

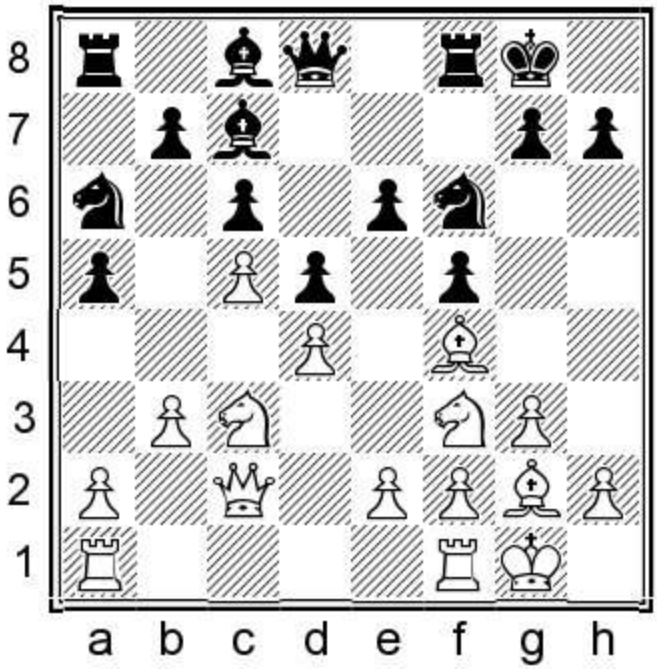
9...♘a6 10.c5

This move often works well when Black has moved his a-pawn, since a subsequent ...b6 will only weaken his queenside further.

10...♗c7 11.♗f4

As we already know, exchanging the dark-squared bishops is White's main strategic idea in the Stonewall structure.

chesstouring.com



11...♘d7

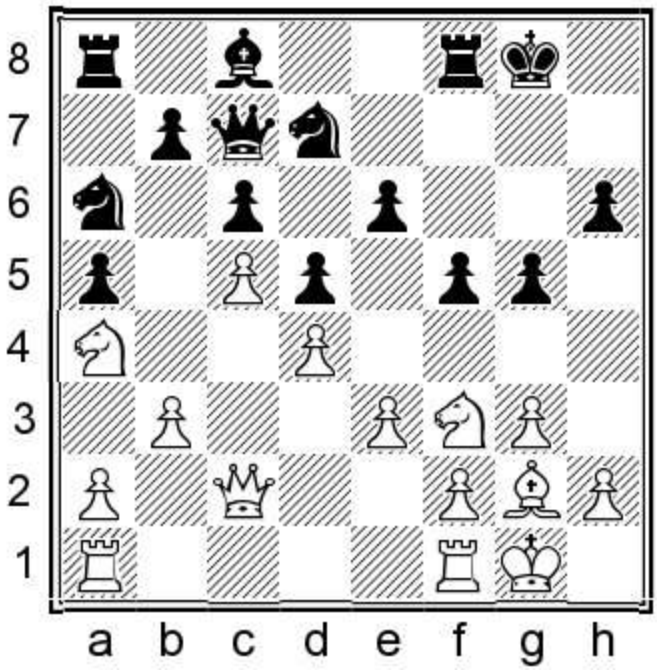
Another game saw: 11...♗d7 12.♗xc7 ♕xc7 13.♘a4 ♗e8 14.♘b6 ♖a7 A sad necessity, but otherwise the a5-pawn would be lost after ♕c3. This position occurred in Pulvett Marin – Sevenyuk, La Massana 2015, and now 15.♘e5N 15...♘b8 16.♘d3 ♘bd7 17.♘xd7 ♘xd7 18.♕c3 ♗h5 19.f3 would have retained a pleasant advantage for White.

12.e3!?

12.♘a4 is also worthy of consideration.

12...h6 13.♘a4 g5 14.♗xc7 ♕xc7

White's positional advantage was obvious in Pelletier – Kelecevic, Switzerland 1996. A minor improvement over the game would be:

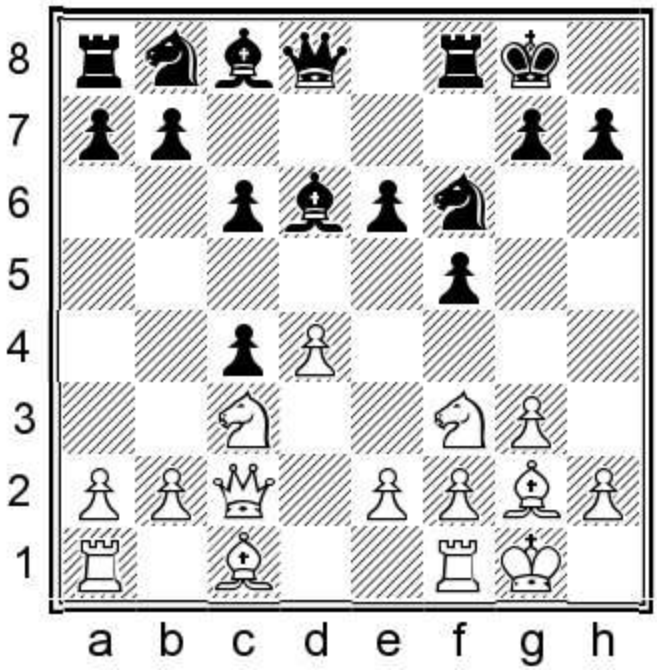


15.♕d2!N 15...♖e8 16.♖ac1±

chesstouring.com

Black cannot play 16...e5? in view of 17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.♘b6 ♖b8 19.♕xa5± winning a pawn.

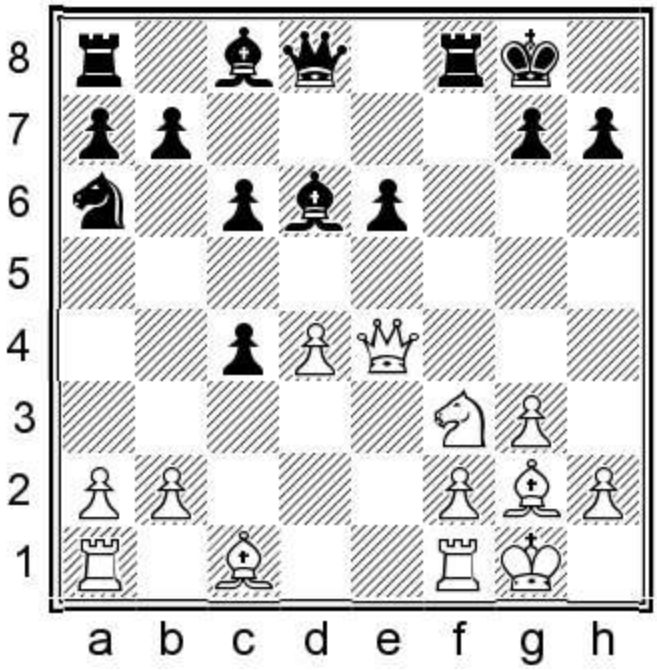
A) 8...dxc4



This is certainly a principled move, but breaking up the Stonewall pawn chain is almost always a bad idea for Black.

9.e4 ♗e7

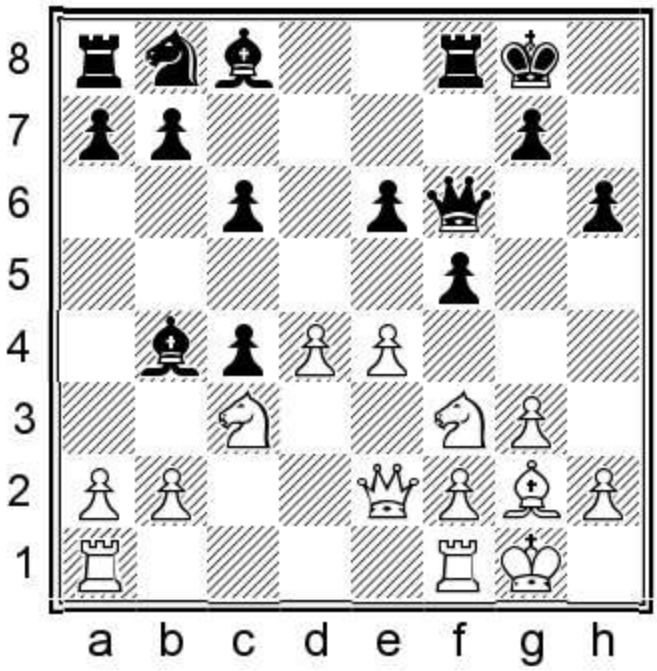
I also checked 9...fxe4 10.♘xe4 ♘xe4 11.♕xe4 ♘a6 and now a small improvement is:



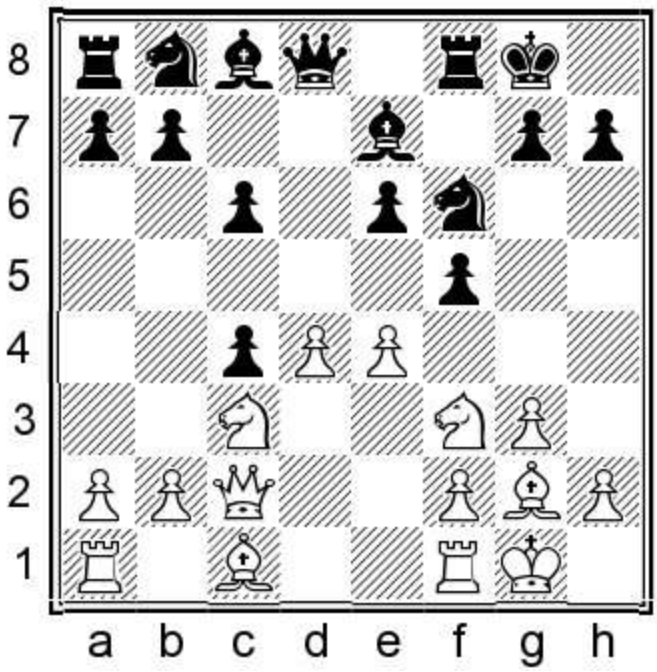
12.♗g5!N (strongest, although 12.♗d2 ♗d7 13.♕c2 ♘c7 14.♕xc4 ♘d5 15.♖ae1± was also clearly better for White in Vatansever – Gupta, corr. 2011) 12...♕b6 13.♘e5! With a serious advantage.

chessstouring.com

Black has also tried 9...♗b4, but in the following encounter White convincingly built up her advantage: 10.♗g5 h6 11.♗xf6 ♕xf6 12.♕e2! (a strong move, although 12.♘e2!?N is also highly promising)



12...♗xc3 13.bxc3 b5 14.a4 ♗b7 15.exf5 exf5 16.♘e5 a6 17.axb5 axb5 18.♖xa8 ♗xa8 19.♕a2! The penetration of White's queen proved decisive in Cmilyte – Rozhkova, Dagomys 2008.



10.exf5!N

This concrete approach seems most promising, although White is better after any sensible move.

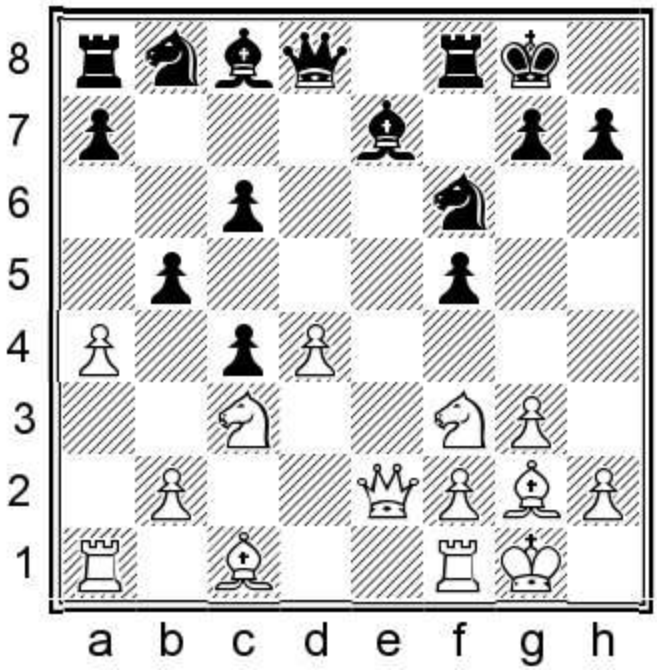
10...exf5 11.♕e2 b5

Black also suffers after 11...♔h8 12.♖e1 ♗d6 13.♕xc4 followed by ♘e5.

chesstouring.com

12.a4

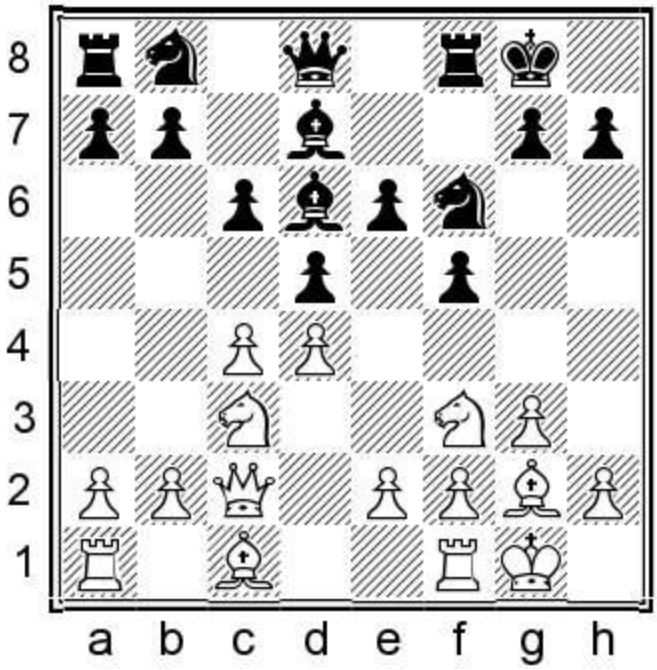
A good alternative is 12.♘e5 a6 (defending against ♘xb5) 13.♗xc6 ♖a7 14.♖d1 with a solid edge for White.



12...b4 13.♕xc4† ♔h8 14.♘e2 ♗a6 15.♕c2

White is clearly better.

B) 8...♗d7



This is a popular and thematic Stonewall idea: Black intends to activate his light-squared bishop, which is undoubtedly a problematic piece in this type of pawn structure, via the e8-h5 route.

chesstouring.com

9.♕b3!

When I reanalysed this line for the present book, it was to my great surprise that I discovered that this blunt move leads to a clear advantage.

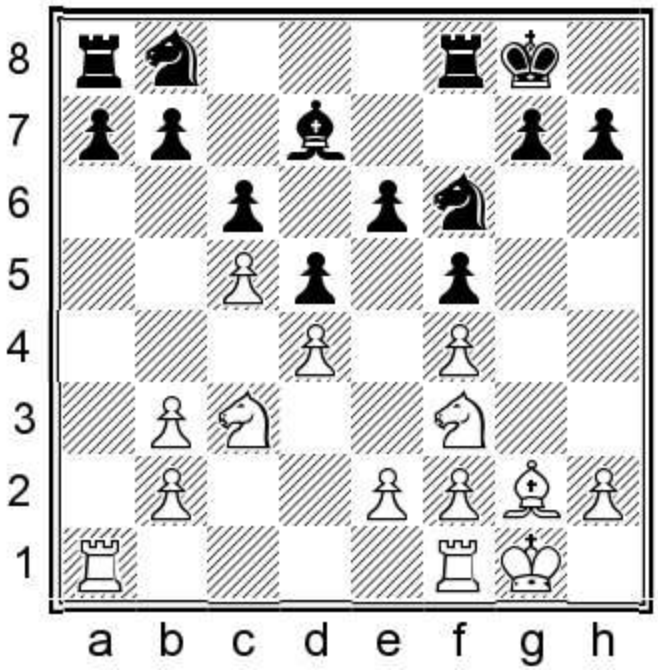
In *GM 2* I recommended 9.♖b1 followed by b2-b4, which has since been tested in many games and leads to complex play. By the way, 9.♗g5!? would also be worth considering, but the text move is simpler and more convincing.

9...♗c8

I believe Black's best approach is to admit that his previous move was unfortunate.

9...b6 has not been played, and indeed 10.♘e5↑ looks pretty bad for Black.

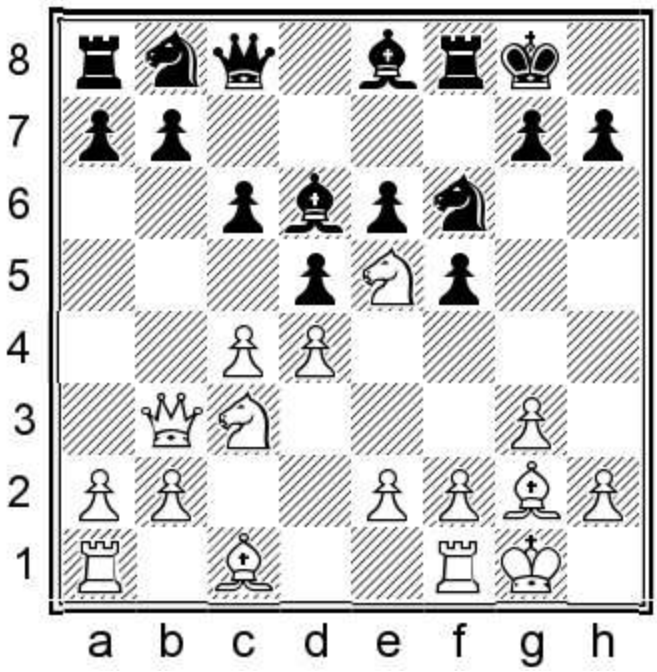
9...♕b6 10.c5 shows the main point of White's previous move. There is only one game from here, which continued: 10...♕xb3 11.axb3 ♗c7 12.♗f4 Not the only good move, but it works fine. 12...♗xf4 13.gxf4



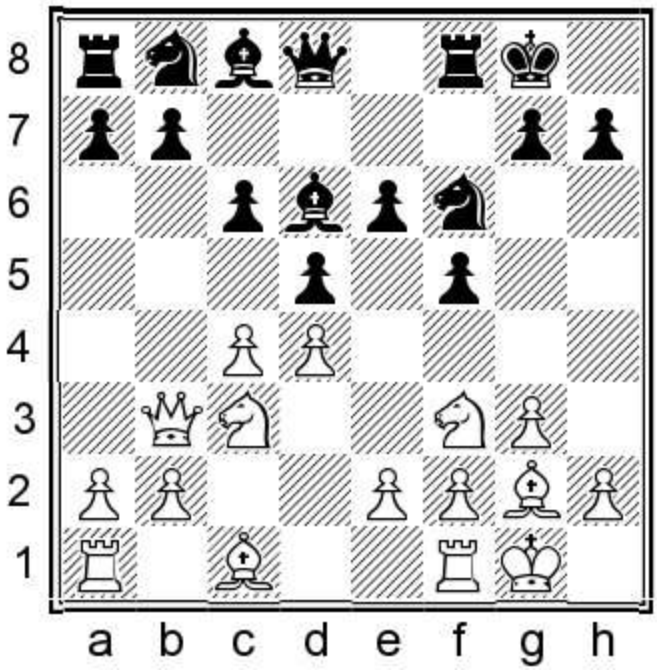
13...♘a6 14.♘e5 ♘c7 15.f3 ♗e8 16.♔f2 a6 17.e3 ♘d7 18.♘d3± White has a clear positional advantage. In Bai Jinshi – Ulibin, Groningen 2016, a highly experienced Stonewall player was unable to hold Black's position and White eventually broke through.

9...♕c8 occurred in S. Nguyen – H. Nguyen, Dong Thap 2003, and now 10.♘e5!N would have been strong. The point is that the natural 10...♗e8 runs into:

chesstouring.com



11.cxd5! exd5 (11...♗xe5 12.dxc6! does not help Black) 12.♘xd5! White wins material.



10.♗g5 ♘bd7 11.cxd5!

This capture is well timed, since Black no longer has the option of developing the knight to c6 after taking back with the c-pawn. Of course, White still needs to have an idea in mind after the other recapture.

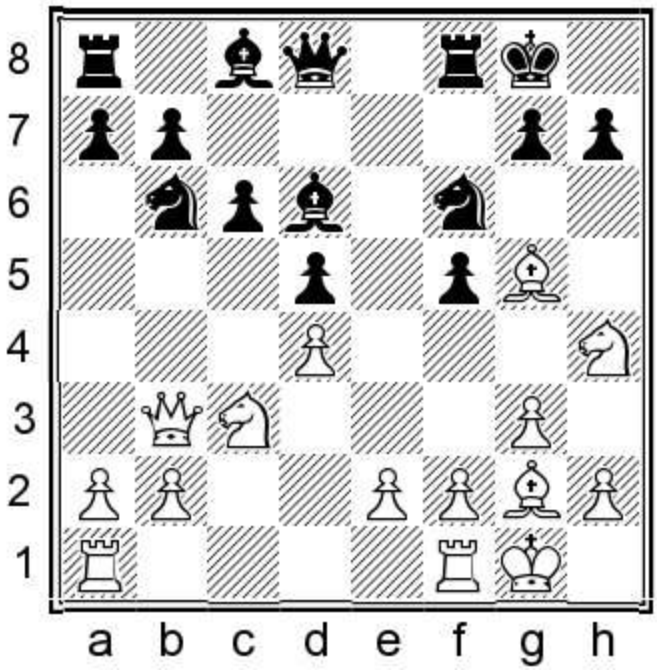
11...exd5

11...cxd5 remains untested; I suggest 12.♖fc1 a6 13.♘a4! and White maintains solid pressure.

12.♘h4 ♘b6

chesstouring.com

This occurred in Gonzalez Garcia – Alvarez Pedraza, Monterrey 2015, when White lost the thread with 13.a4?. Much stronger would have been:



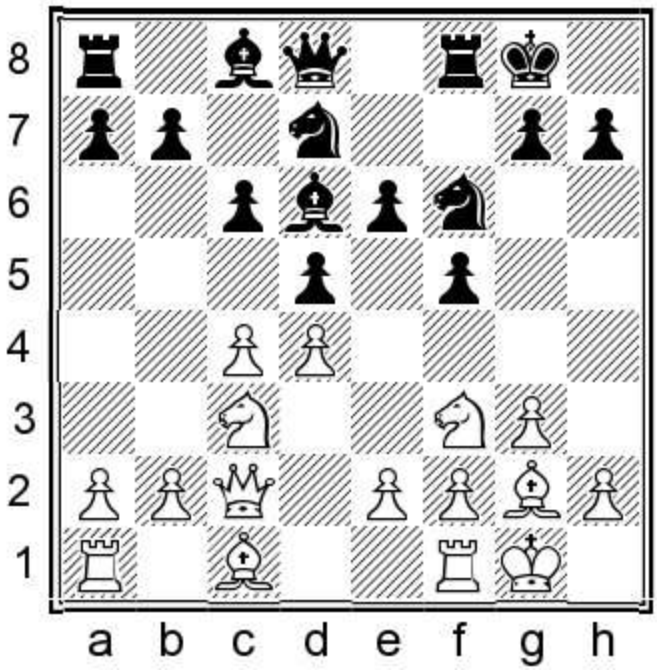
13.e4!N

White has excellent prospects. A sample line is:

13...fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♗e7 15.♘c5 ♘c4 16.♖fe1↑

White's pieces are extremely active.

C) 8...♘bd7



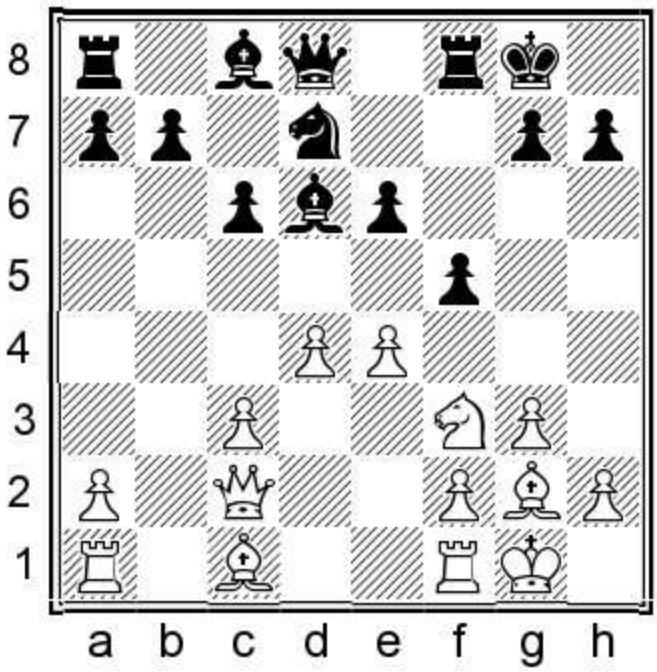
This allows White to release the central tension in a favourable manner.

chesstouring.com

9.cxd5 cxd5

Black hardly has enough for the pawn after: 9...exd5?! 10.♕xf5 ♘e5 11.♕c2 ♘xf3† 12.exf3! I like this recapture as it give White's king some extra protection. Even though Black has achieved a win and two draws out of the three games from this position, he does not have much compensation for being a pawn down.

9...♘xd5?! breaks up the pawn chain, leading to the usual problems for Black after: 10.e4 ♘xc3 11.bxc3

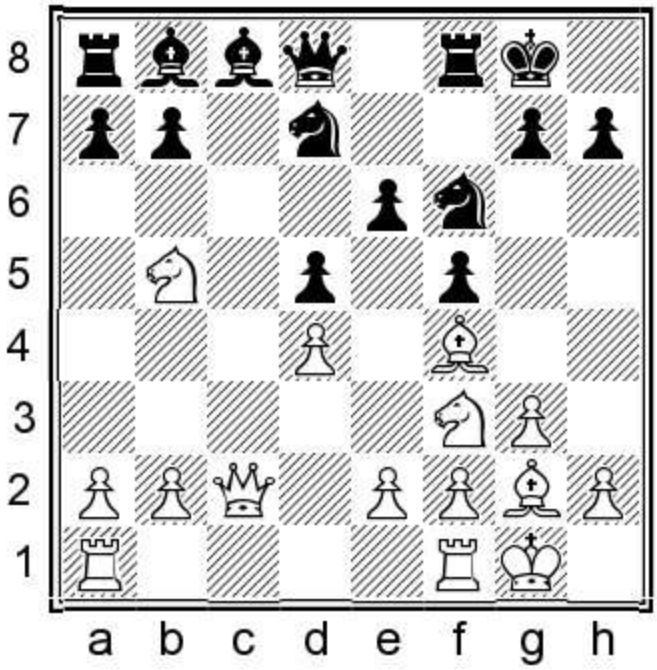


11...fxe4 (11...♘b6 12.a4± also led to an obvious positional advantage for White in Abregu – Araoz, Buenos Aires 1993) 12.♕xe4 A recent example continued 12...♘f6 13.♕e2 ♕c7 14.c4 b6 15.♗b2± and White had a great position in Jishitha – Golsta, Montevideo 2017.

10.♘b5 ♗b8 11.♗f4

White must play energetically to prove his advantage.

chesstouring.com



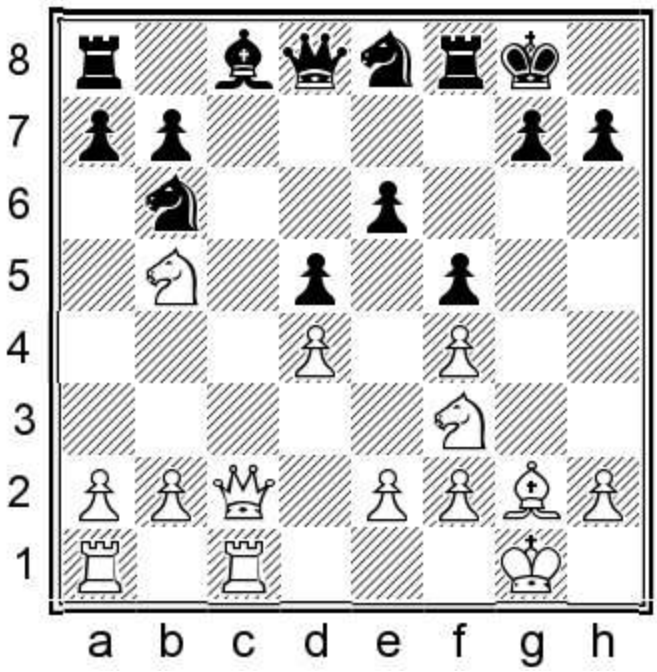
11...♗xf4 12.gxf4 ♘b6

Black's other logical attempt to relieve the pressure is:

12...♘e8 13.♖fc1 ♘b6

13...♕b6 14.♕b3 ♘df6 15.♘e5 ♖b8 16.e3± made things easier for White in Baryshpolets – Galinsky, Kiev 2005.

I neglected to consider the text move in *GM 2*, but it has been tested in four games, all of which ended in draws. A useful improvement is:



14.♕c5!N

The four games all continued with 14.♘c7 ♘xc7 15.♕xc7 ♘c4 16.♕xd8 ♖xd8 17.b3 ♘d6, and in each case Black was able to neutralize the slight pressure.

14...♗d7

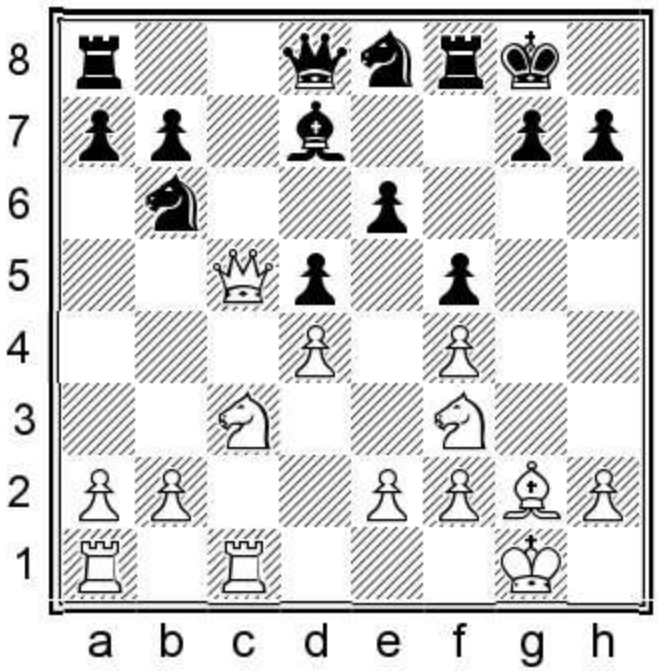
chesstouring.com

14...♘c4?! runs into the powerful 15.♘e5 ♘xe5 16.dxe5 with a clear edge.

14...a6 15.♘c7 gives White an improved version of the note above. For instance, 15...♘a4 (15...♘xc7 16.♕xb6 ♘b5 17.♕xd8 ♖xd8 18.a4 ♘d6 19.♘e5 leaves Black under pressure) 16.♕b4 ♘xc7 17.♕xa4 ♗d7 18.♕b4 and White maintains a positional pull.

15.♘c3

15.♘d6!? ♘xd6 16.♕xd6 ♘c4 17.♖xc4! dxc4 18.♘e5 is an attractive idea which forces Black to defend precisely. Best play looks like 18...♗c8 19.♕c5 ♕b6 20.♘xc4 ♕xc5 21.dxc5⩲ with excellent compensation, although I believe Black should be able to hold with accurate defence.



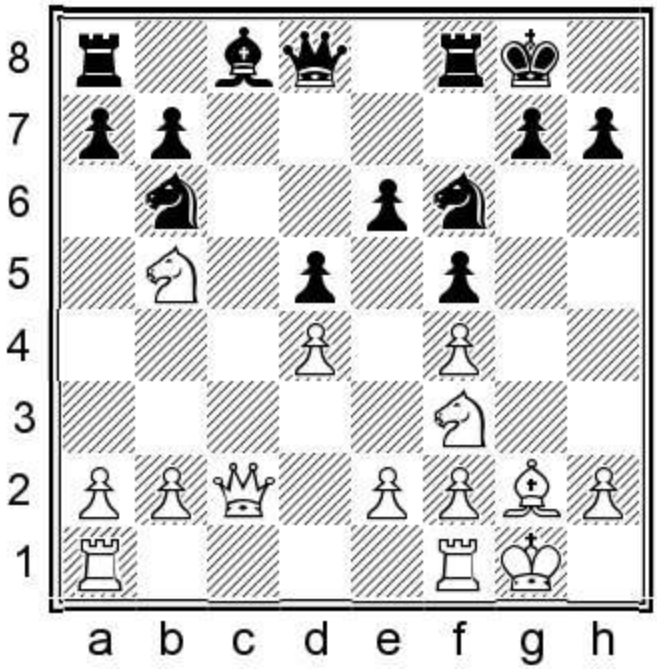
15...♘f6 16.b3 ♗e8

16...♘e4 17.♕a5 ♗e8 18.e3 transposes.

17.e3 ♘e4 18.♕a5 ♗h5 19.♘e5±

White's chances are clearly better.

chesstouring.com

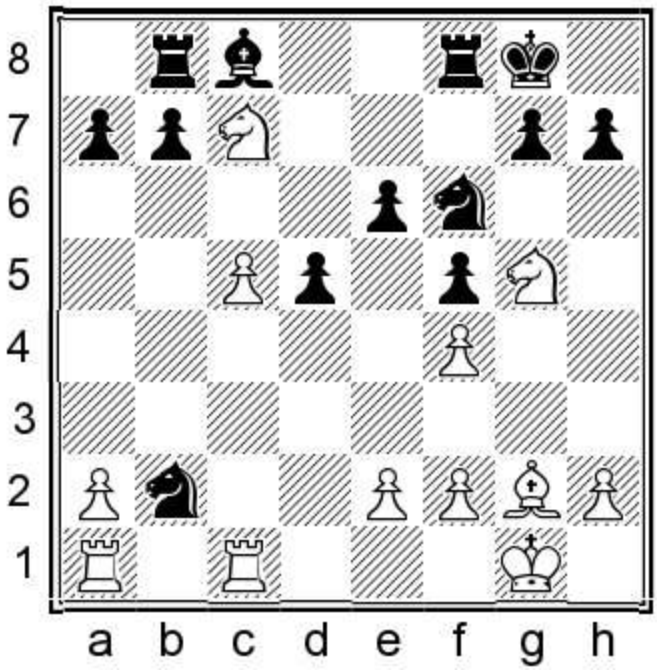


13.♘c7 ♖b8 14.♘g5! ♕d6

14...♕e7 15.♕c5 gives Black nothing better than 15...♕xc5, transposing to the note below.

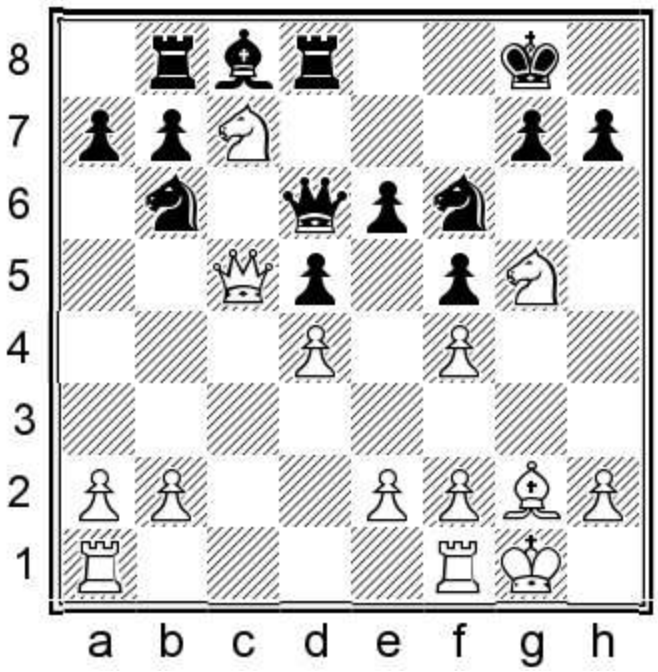
15.♕c5 ♖d8

It's important to mention 15...♕xc5 16.dxc5 ♘a4 17.♖fc1 ♘xb2 which occurred in Lopez Rojas – Buese, Vellmar 2017. I think White's most convincing continuation is:



18.♖ab1!N 18...♘c4 (18...♘a4 19.c6 is much worse for Black) 19.♘gxe6 ♗xe6 20.♘xe6 ♖f7 (20...♖fe8 21.♘c7! is close to winning for White) 21.e3± White's advantage is obvious.

chesstouring.com



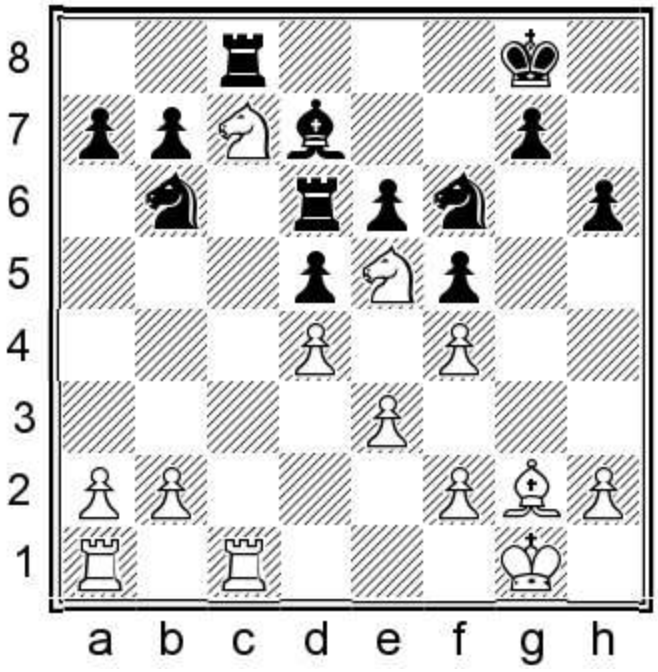
16.♖fc1!

My novelty from *GM 2* has now been tested in two correspondence games, the results of which confirm White's advantage.

White failed to pose serious problems after 16.♕xd6 ♖xd6 17.♘b5 ♖d8 18.a4 h6 19.♘f3 ♗d7= in Bogoljubow – Tartakower, New York 1924.

16...h6 17.♕xd6 ♖xd6 18.♘f3 ♗d7 19.♘e5 ♖c8 20.e3

Up to now, both games followed my previous analysis. You certainly don't need to memorize all this, but I will include a few more moves to illustrate how White's advantage can be increased.



chesstouring.com

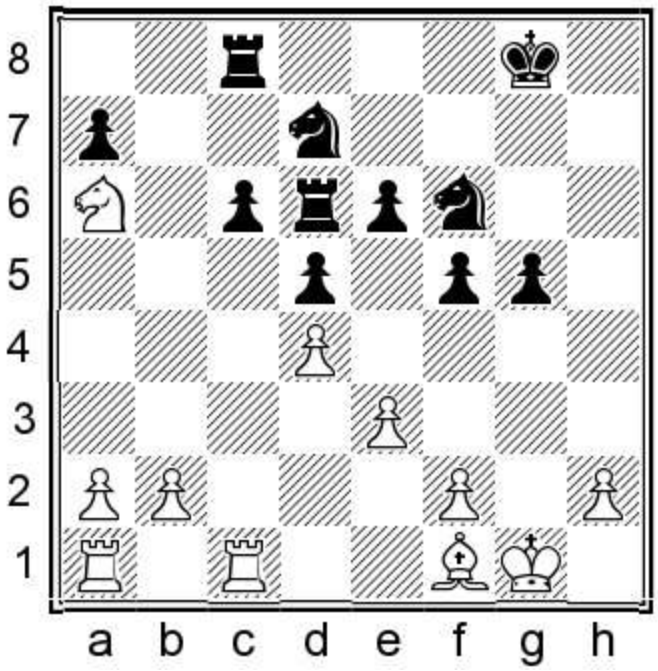
20...g5

After 20...♗c6 21.♘xc6 bxc6 22.♘a6 g5 23.fxg5 hxg5 24.♖c3 ♔f7 25.♖ac1 White was much better in Vieito Soria – Domenche Redondo, corr. 2014.

21.fxg5 hxg5 22.♗f1

22.♖c5!?N was also worth considering.

22...♗c6 23.♘xc6 bxc6 24.♘a6 ♘bd7

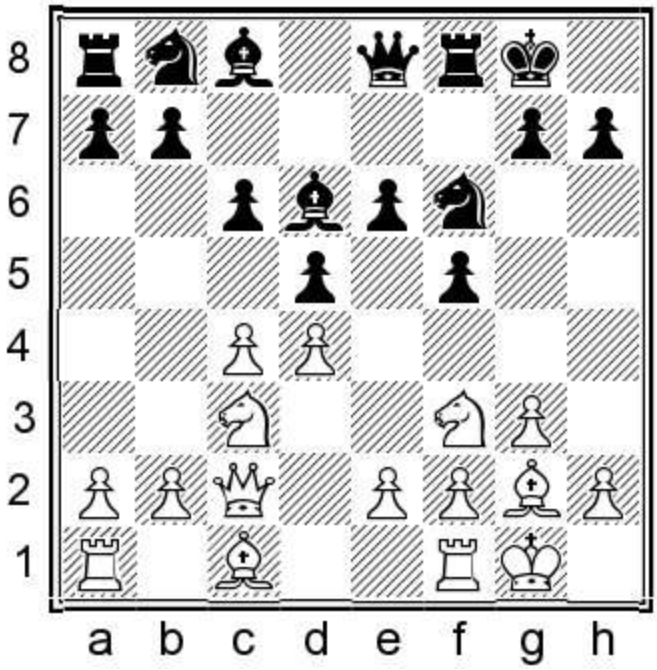


25.b4 e5 26.♖c2 ♔f7 27.b5±

Black was unable to hold the bad endgame in Lagergren – Manarin, corr. 2015.

D) 8...♕e8

chesstouring.com



9.c5!?

This is a major change from *GM 2*, where I recommended 9.♖b1, which also happens to be the only move considered by Johnsen & Bern in their coverage of Black's 8th move. I now regard the text move as a clearer and more convincing route to an advantage.

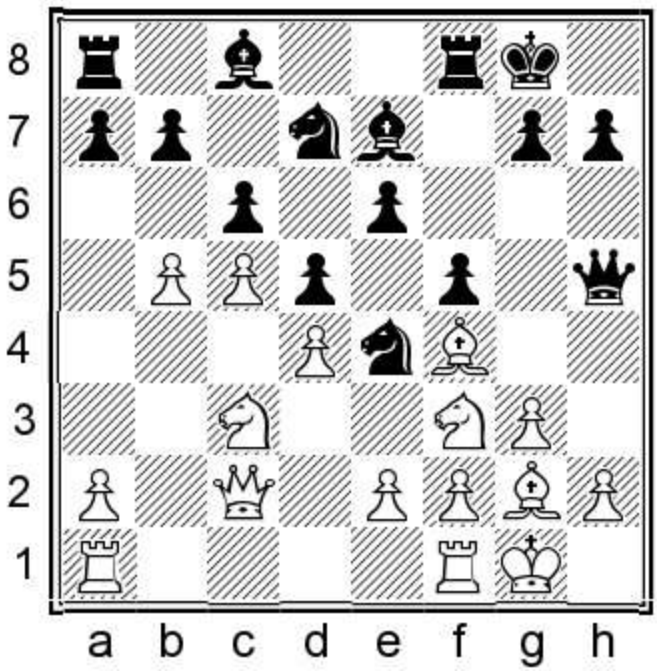
9...♗c7

Occasionally Black has chosen the other retreat square:

9...♗e7 10.♗f4

White posts his bishop on a fine diagonal. There is only one game from here, which continued:

10...♕h5 11.b4 ♘bd7 12.b5 ♘e4



This was Kasianov – Eliseev, Russia 1996. Instead of exchanging on c6 immediately, I would like

chesstouring.com

to recommend the following improvement:

13.♖ab1N

Maintaining the tension for the time being. I found the following remarkable line:

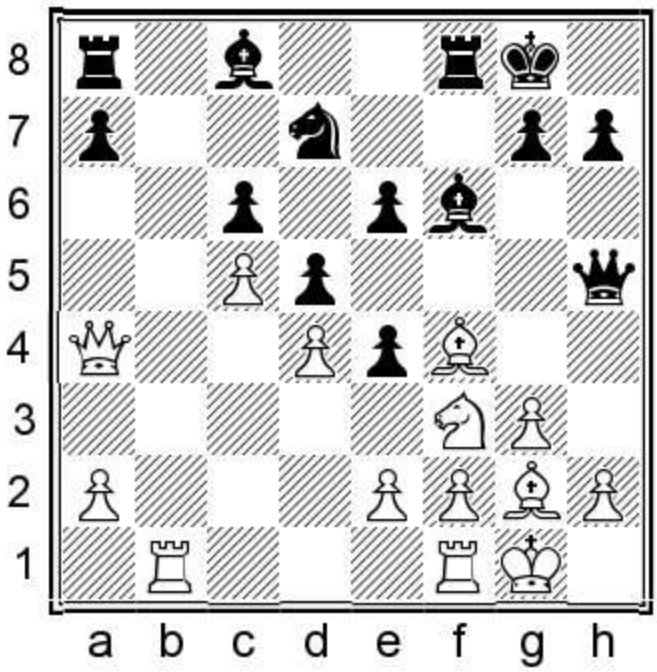
13...♗f6

13...g5 is not dangerous after 14.♗c7! when the bishop occupies a surprisingly fantastic square.

14...g4 15.♘e1 ♖f6 16.♗f4 White is clearly better.

14.♘xe4 fxe4 15.bxc6 bxc6 16.♕a4!

This leads to a pretty forced sequence.



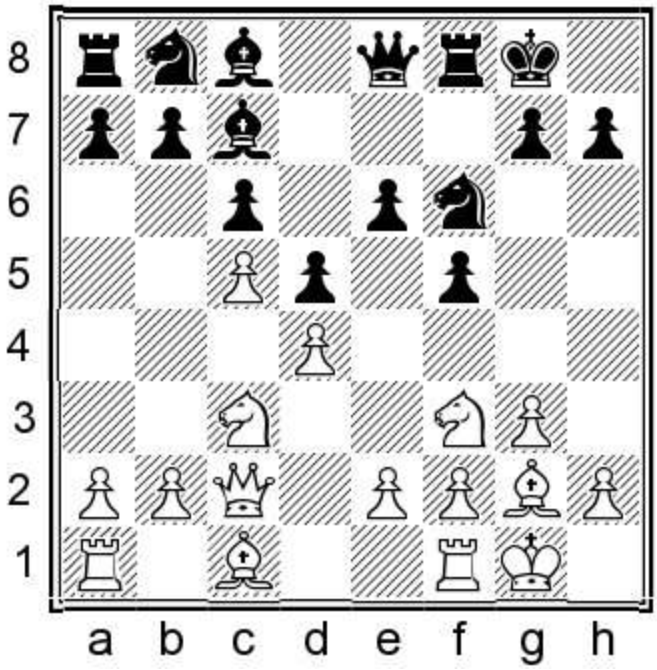
16...a5 17.♕xc6 ♖a6 18.♕c7 exf3 19.♗xf3 ♕f7 20.c6

White wins back the piece while keeping some advantage, for instance:

20...♗xd4 21.cxd7 ♗xd7 22.♖fc1

White is clearly better, thanks to his piece activity and more compact pawn structure.

chesstouring.com



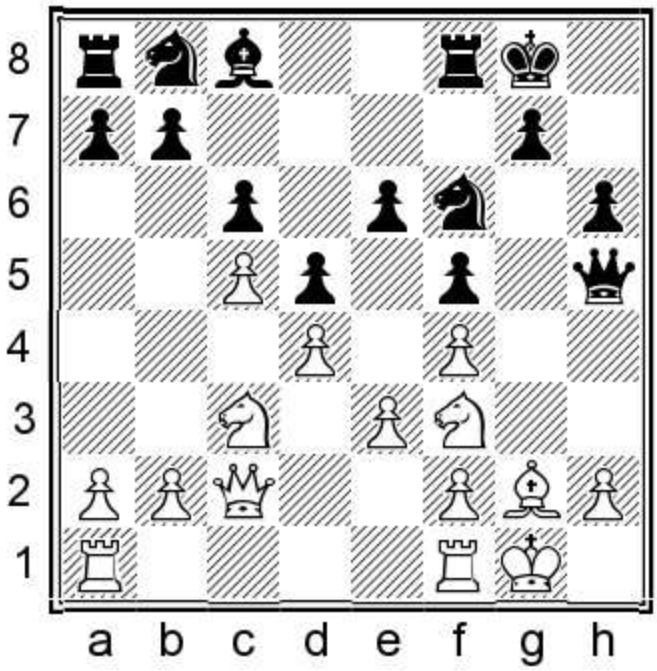
10.♗f4 ♗xf4 11.gxf4

The slight weakening of the kingside structure is of little consequence.

11...b6

This has been Black's usual choice, aiming to develop the bishop on a6. I examined two other options:

11...♕h5 12.e3 h6 occurred in Herraiz Hidalgo – Pizarro Segura, Benasque 1999, when White should have continued:

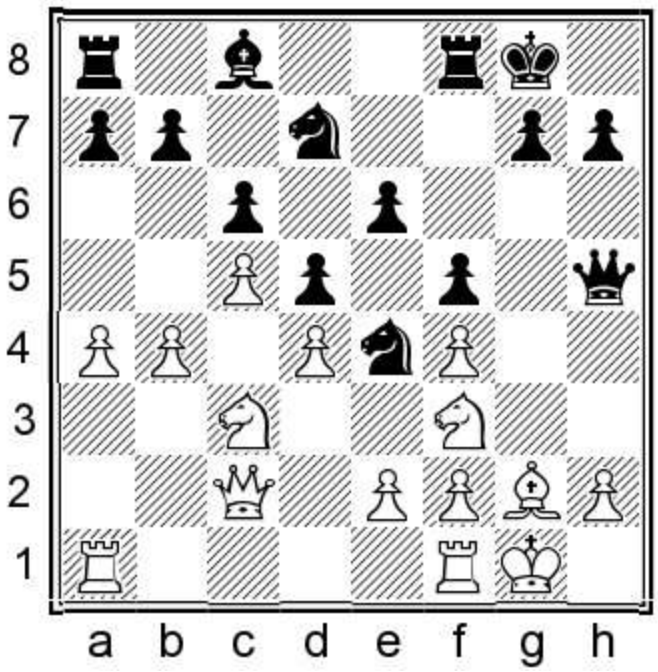


13.b4N The queenside play gets underway, and 13...g5 is met convincingly by 14.♘e2!±.

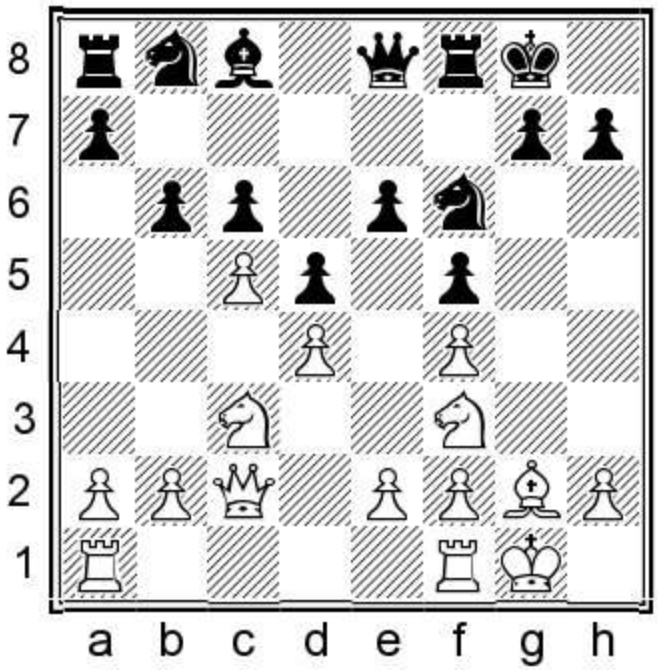
11...♘bd7 12.b4 ♘e4 13.a4 ♕h5 was seen in Shestakov – Kantsler, Belgorod 1989. Black's attack with

chesstouring.com

...♖f6 may appear troublesome, but White has an effective way to neutralize it:



14.e3!N 14...♖f6 (14...♘xc3 15.♕xc3 ♖f6 does not help Black after 16.♔h1 ♖h6 17.b5± when his kingside play has pretty much come to a standstill) 15.♘e2! ♖h6 16.♘g3 This defensive knight manoeuvre is well worth remembering. White is clearly better, as his queenside initiative will develop smoothly.

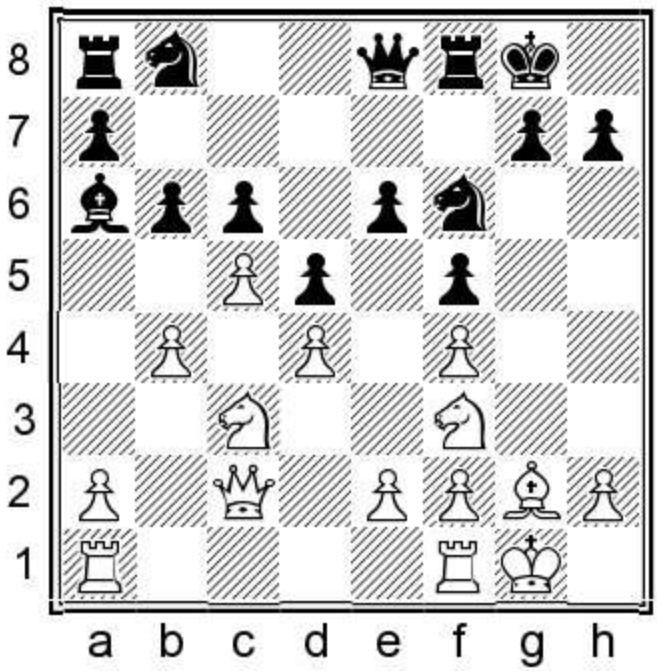


12.b4 ♘bd7

12...♘e4 occurred in Petraitis – Arulis, corr. 1999, and now I like 13.cxb6!?N 13...axb6 14.a4 ♗b7 15.a5± when Black is clearly under some pressure.

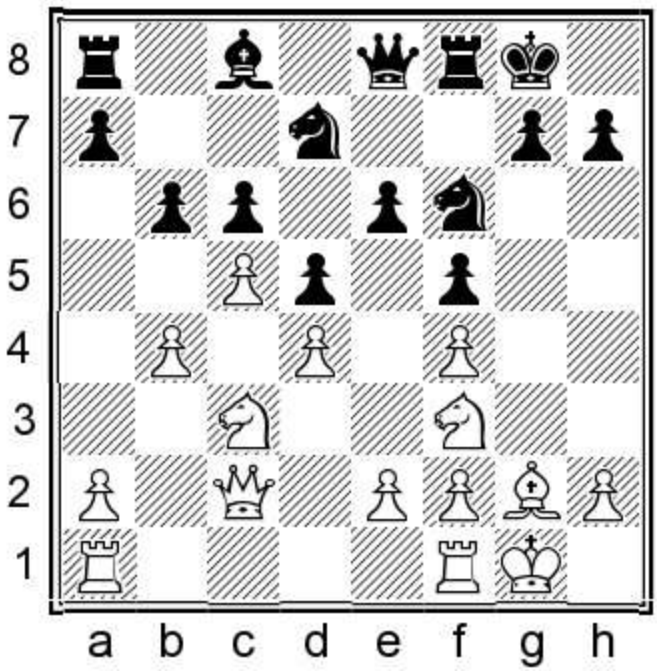
12...♗a6 was tried more recently in Macchiagodena – Arnold, corr. 2016. My new idea is:

chesstouring.com



13.a4!?N 13...bxc5 14.dxc5!? I like White's chances in this pawn structure, for instance: 14...♘bd7 15.♖fc1±

This position was reached in Cech – Pos, Czechoslovakia 1989. I found an interesting new idea for White:



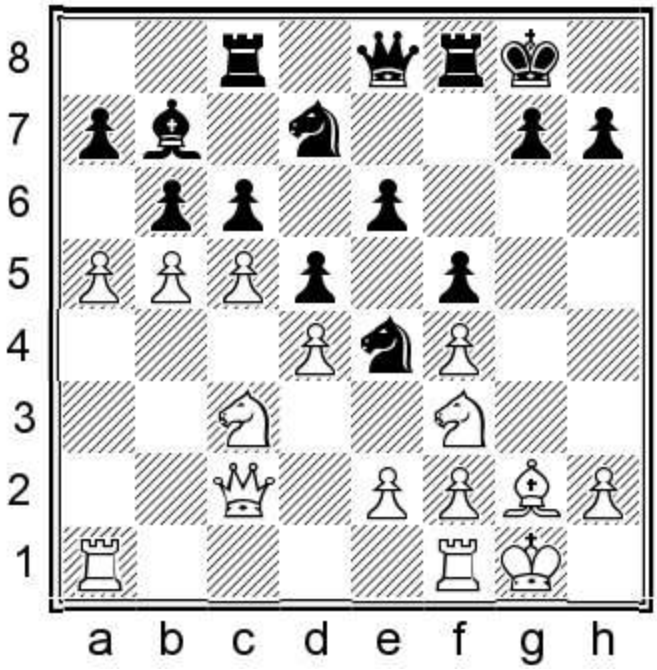
13.a4N 13...♘e4 14.b5!? ♗b7

14...bxc5?! 15.bxc6 ♘b8 16.♘b5! is problematic for Black.

15.a5! ♖c8

This is the best defensive try, but now White can utilize the a-file.

chesstouring.com



16.axb6 axb6 17.♖a7 ♗a8

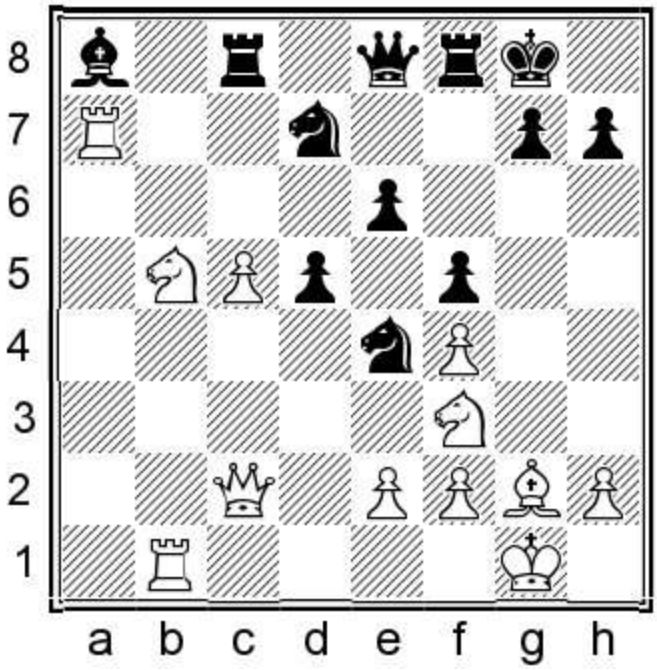
Black appears to be consolidating but White has a trick up his sleeve.

18.♖b1! cxb5

Obviously 18...bxc5? 19.b6! is not an acceptable option for Black.

19.♘xb5 bxc5 20.dxc5

Black faces surprisingly serious problems, for example:



20...♕d8

20...♘dxc5 21.♘e5↑ offers White fantastic compensation.

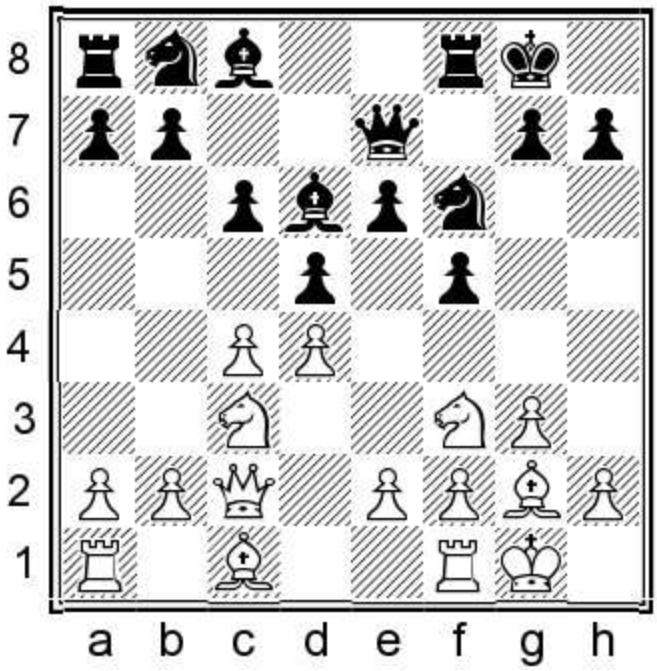
chesstouring.com

20...♖xc5 21.♕b2! is also excellent for White.

21.♘bd4 ♘exc5 22.e3↑

In all these lines, White's initiative is worth more than the sacrificed pawn.

E) 8...♕e7



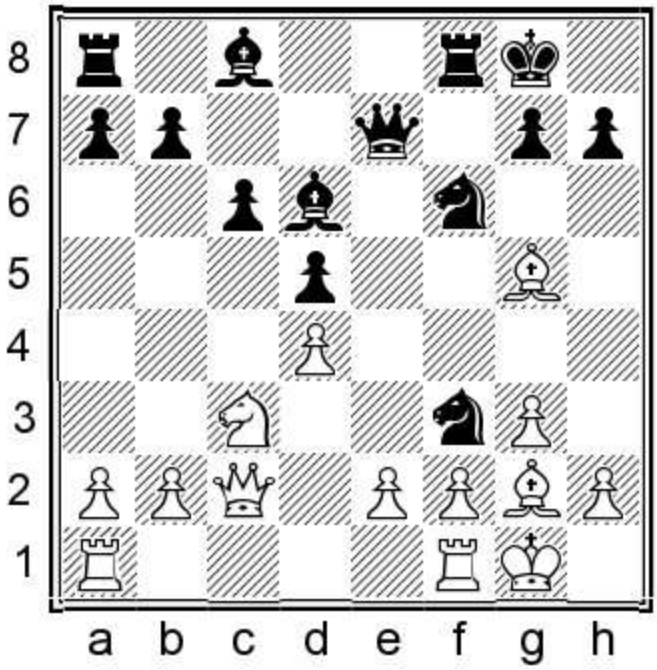
Black is ready to meet White's plan of ♖b1 and b2-b4, so this is the right moment to change direction.

9.♗g5!? h6

The most natural reply, but I would like to mention two other possibilities:

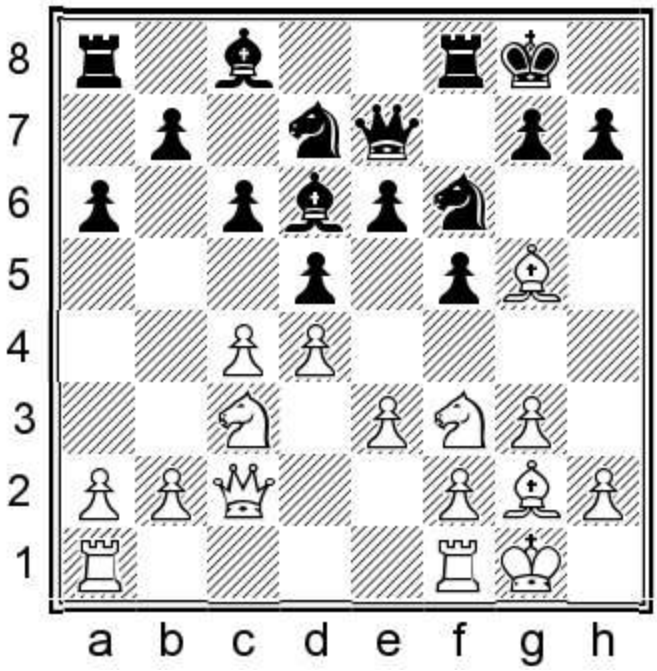
9...♘bd7?! is well met by 10.cxd5! when White enjoys a better version of variation C. 10...exd5 (This time 10...cxd5 runs into 11.♘b5 when Black will have to give up his valuable dark-squared bishop, so he is more or less forced to take his chances with a pawn sac.) 11.♕xf5 ♘e5 12.♕c2 ♘xf3† In Baenziger – Ranfagni, Porto Mannu 2017, White's easiest solution would have been to fortify his kingside with:

chesstouring.com



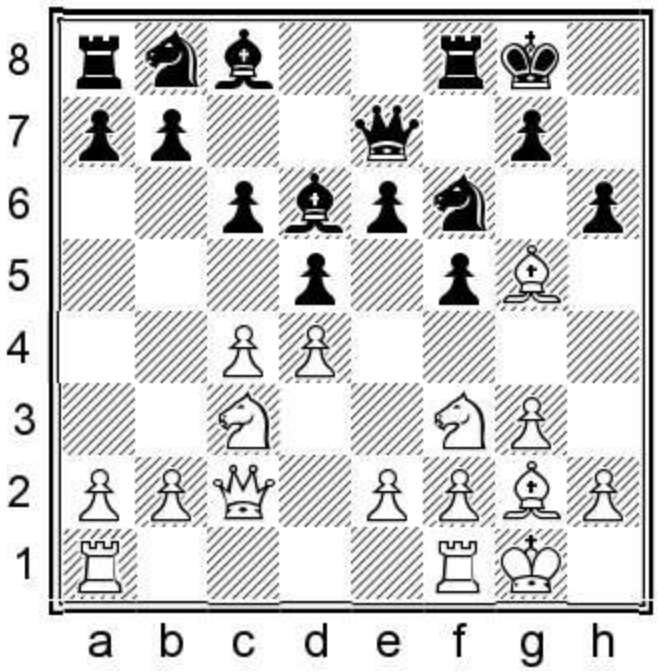
13.exf3!N 13...h6 14.♖fe1 ♕f7 15.♗e3 Black has no real compensation for the pawn.

9...a6 10.e3 ♘bd7 occurred in D. Berczes – Kritz, Dallas 2013, and now I would suggest:



11.a4!?N 11...h6 (Black cannot afford to play 11...a5?! in view of 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.♘b5, eliminating the dark-squared bishop) 12.♗f4 With clearly better chances for White.

chesstouring.com



10.♗f4!

The weakness of the g6-square might be a factor in the long term, especially if White's knight lands on e5. That is why it was worth sending the bishop on a slight detour to g5.

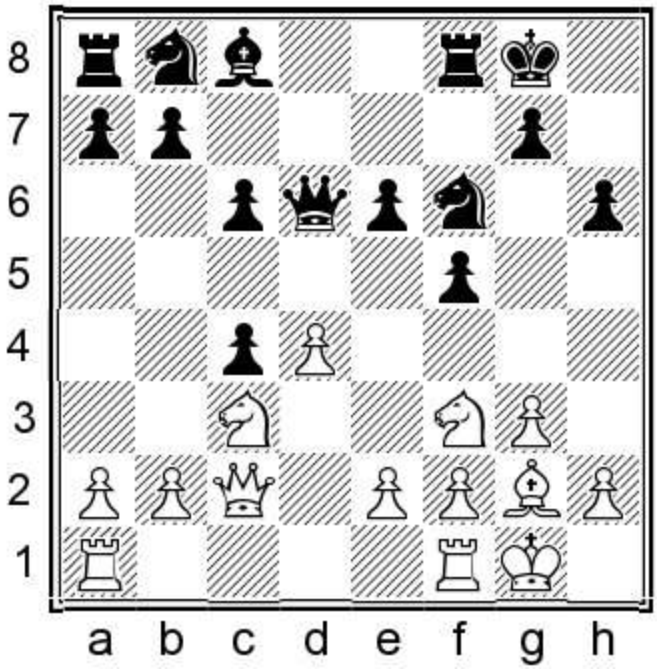
Exchanging on f6 is less challenging: 10.♗xf6 ♕xf6 11.♖ab1 a5 12.a3 ♘d7 13.b4 axb4 14.axb4 Now in Huzman – Ulibin, Antwerp 1993, Black should have played: 14...dxc4N 15.b5 (15.e4 e5 also gives Black nothing to worry about) 15...c5 16.♘a4 cxd4 17.♕xc4 ♔h8 18.♘xd4 e5∓ Followed by ...e4 and ...♘e5.

10...♗xf4

In *GM 2* I called this move inferior but I underestimated it, as White still has to find some good moves to keep the upper hand.

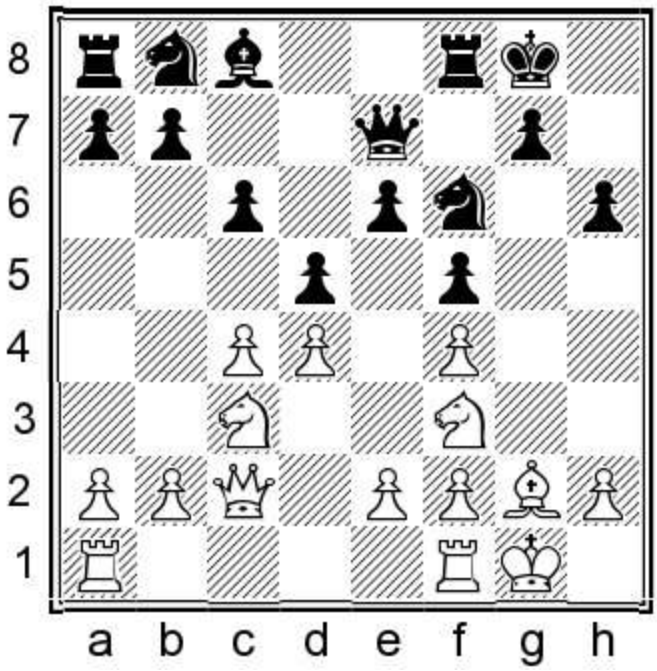
Previously I gave 10...dxc4 as my main line but this move is, as usual, not a good idea at such an early stage. 11.♗xd6 ♕xd6 occurred in Quinn – Meister, Bad Wiessee 2010, and now White should have opted for:

chesstouring.com



12.e4!N With a powerful initiative for the pawn, for instance: 12...fxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♕xe4 ♘d7 15.♖fe1 ♘f6 16.♕c2 b5 17.b3 cxb3 18.axb3⩲ White's chances are clearly preferable, as Black has too many weaknesses.

11.gxf4

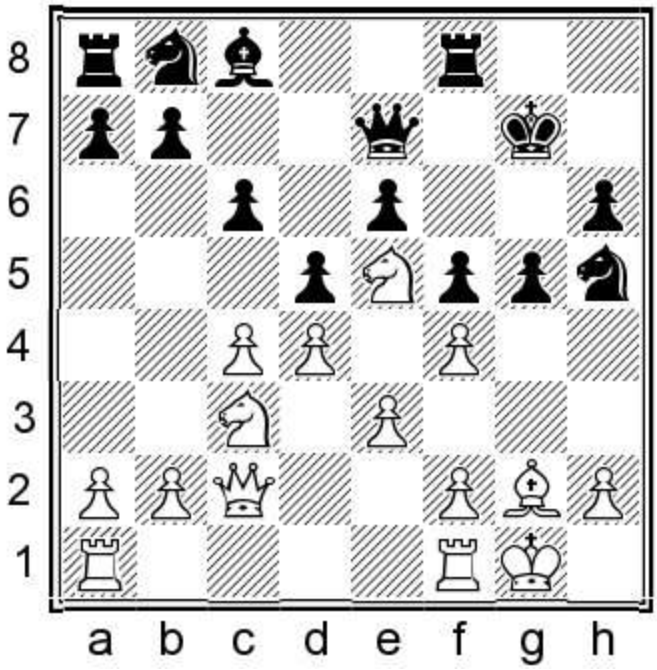


11...♗d7

This has been Black's most popular and best-scoring continuation, although he has a wide choice of plausible moves:

The aggressive 11...♘h5 12.e3 g5 fails to impress. Here is a nice illustrative example: 13.♘e5 ♔g7?!

chesstouring.com



14.cxd5 exd5 15.♗xd5! gxf4 (15...cxd5 16.♘xd5 ♕d8 17.♘c7 is also much better for White) 16.♗f3 White was already winning in Terhuven – Fistoul, Dortmund 2016.

11...♘e4 12.♘e5 ♕e8

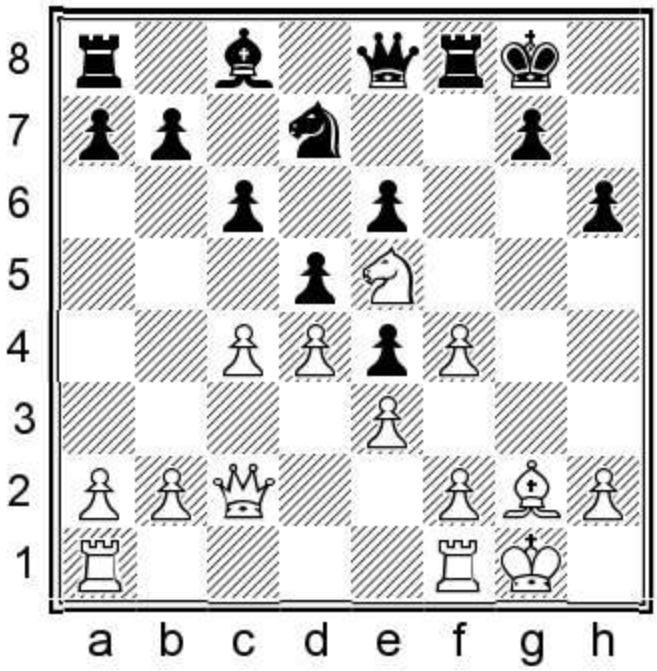
12...♕f6 is convincingly met by 13.♘xe4! fxe4 14.e3 ♘d7 15.f3 exf3 16.♘xf3± with a clear positional advantage for White, as in Krause – Horn, Kiel 2015.

13.♘xe4

There is no reason to delay this move.

13...fxe4 14.e3 ♘d7

In Neininger – Kretner, Frankfurt 2017, White should have continued with his strategic idea:



15.f3!N 15...♘xe5

chesstouring.com

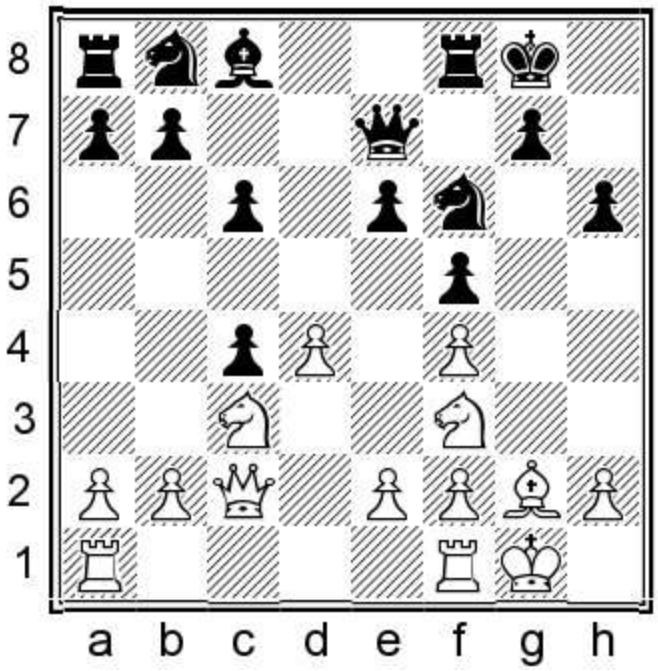
15...exf3 would allow the extra option of recapturing with the knight.

16.dxe5 exf3 17.♖xf3

White has a promising attacking position.

11...dxc4!?

Normally this move is inadvisable but in this concrete situation it makes more sense, since Black is able to secure the d5-square for his knight.



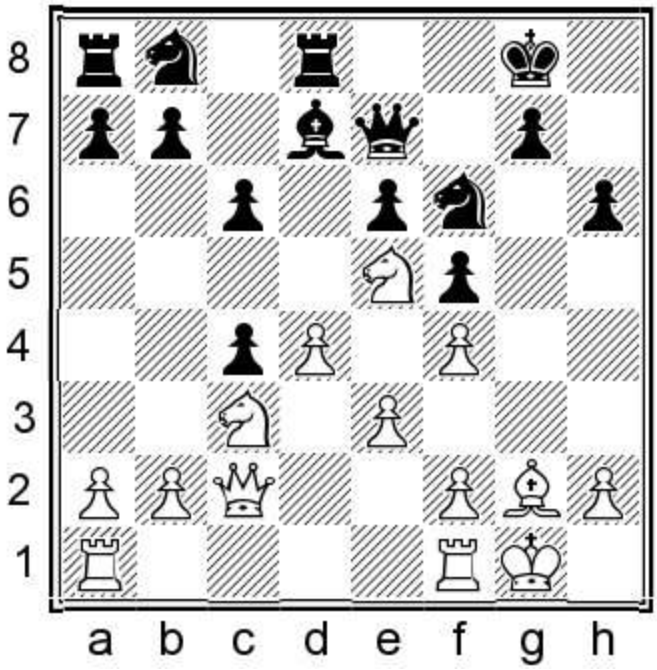
12.♘e5 ♖d8 13.e3 ♗d7

Black has tried two other moves:

13...♘d5 14.♘xc4 ♘d7 15.♔h1 ♘7f6 16.♘e5 ♗d7 17.♖g1 ♗e8 18.♗f3 ♖ac8 19.♖g2 ♖c7 20.♖ag1, was a model example of how White can develop his advantage in this pawn structure, Krause – Boe, Bargteheide 2016.

13...♘bd7 14.♘xc4 ♘b6 (14...♘d5 transposes to the line above) 15.♘e5 ♗d7 16.♕b3 ♗e8 17.a4 ♘bd5 18.a5± put Black under positional pressure in Ott – Hahn, Hannover 2014.

chesstouring.com



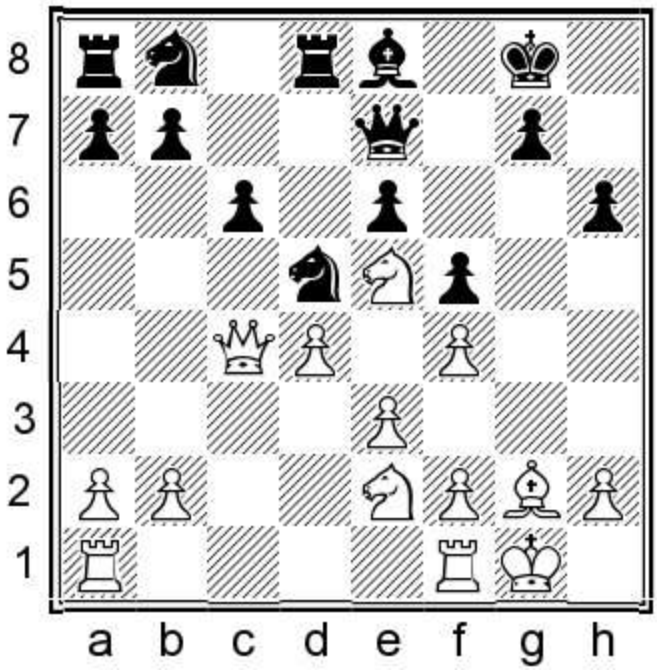
14.♘e2!?

This seems stronger than 14.♕e2, which is mentioned by Moskalenko.

The simple 14.♘xc4N also offers an edge, for instance: 14...♗e8 15.♕b3 ♘a6 16.♘e2±

14...♗e8 15.♕xc4 ♘d5?!

15...♘bd7N would have been a better choice although 16.♘d3 ♗f7 17.♕c3± maintains a pleasant edge for White.



16.♕b3! ♘a6 17.a3 ♖ac8 18.♖ac1±

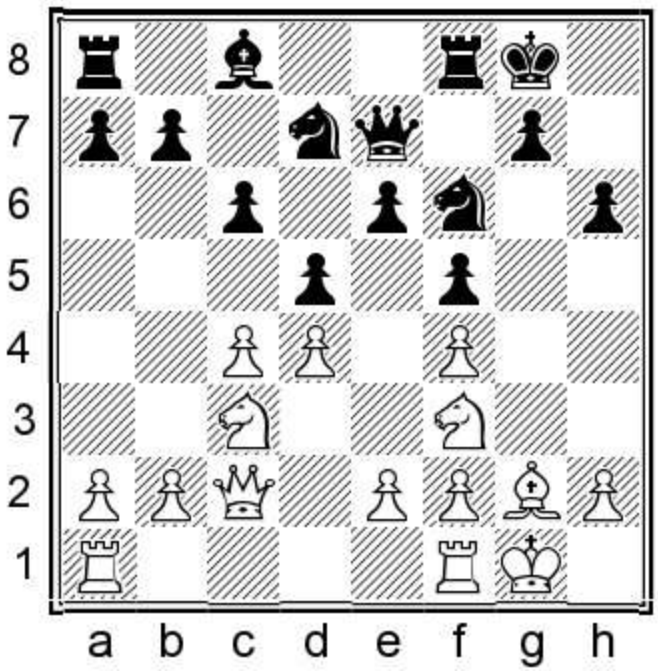
White enjoyed a clear positional advantage in Cornette – Picard, Montpellier 2015.

A final alternative option is:

11...♘bd7

chesstouring.com

Once again, we can echo the approach of variation C with:



12.cxd5! ♘xd5

Both of the alternative recaptures have also been tried:

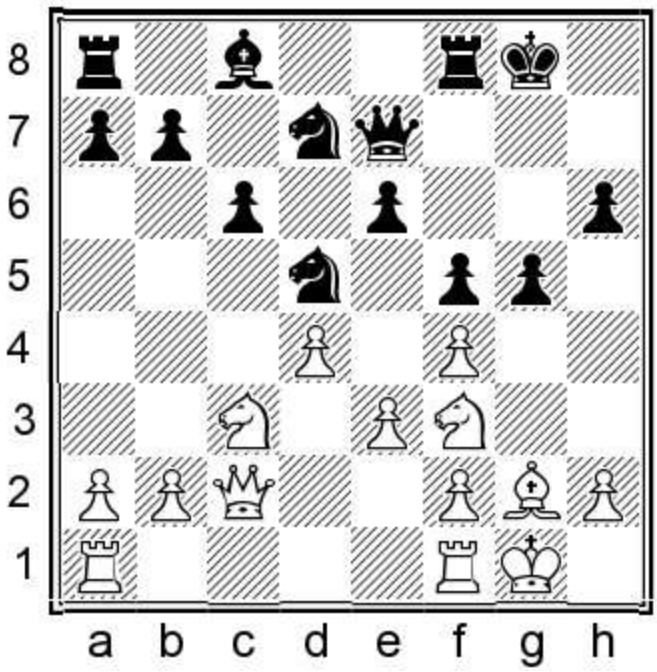
12...cxd5 13.♘b5 ♘b6 14.♕c5 ♕d8! Otherwise White is much better. 15.♘e5 ♘fd7 In Ravi – Phadke, Mumbai 2017, White should have continued 16.♕b4N 16...♘xe5 17.dxe5 ♗d7 18.♘d4 with a pleasant positional advantage.

12...exd5 13.♘h4! (13.♕xf5 ♘e4∞ is far from clear) 13...♕d6?! A mistake in a worse position. 14.♘xf5 ♕xf4 15.♘e7† ♔f7 16.♘g6± White gained material in Schreiner – Eichhorn, Bad Gleichenberg 2013.

13.e3 g5

We have been following Borisovs – Bishop, email 2011. The position is rather complicated but I like White's chances after:

chesstouring.com

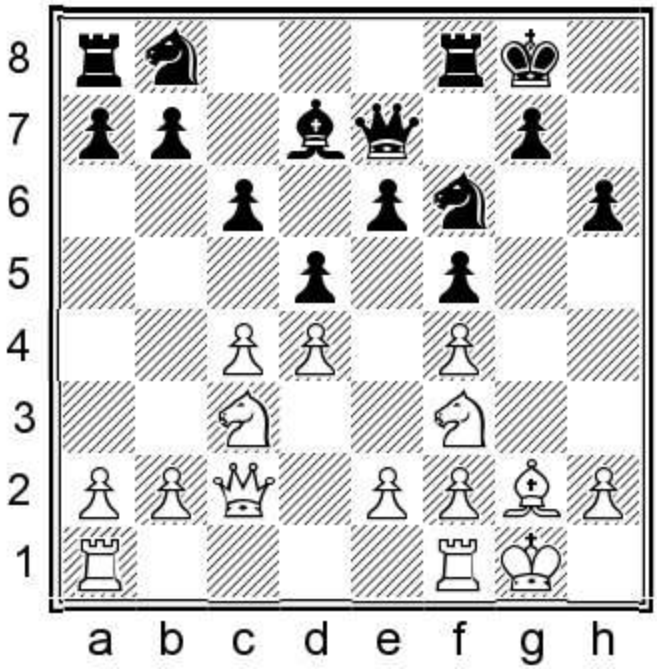


14.♖fe1!N 14...g4

14...b6 15.fxg5! hxg5 16.e4↑ gives White a serious initiative.

15.♘e5 ♘xe5 16.dxe5±

White has a nice pull.



12.♘e5 ♗e8 13.♕b3!

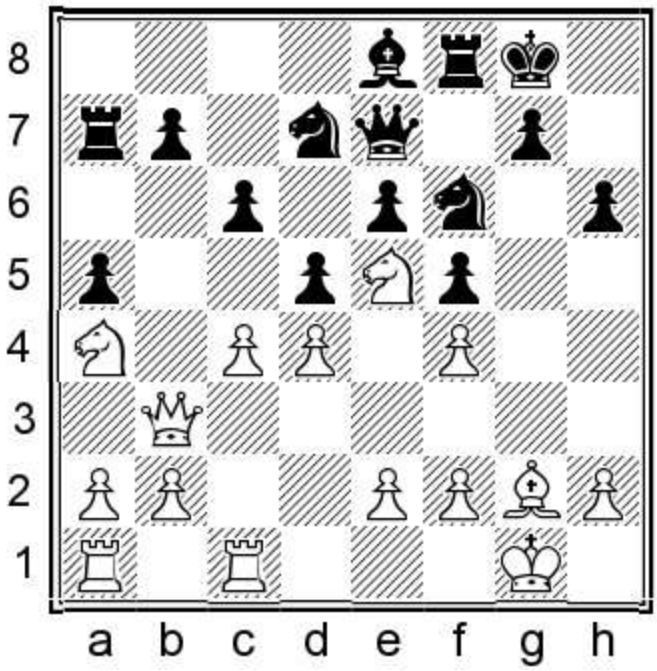
It is important to play this move in order to prevent Black from easily completing development with ...♘bd7.

13...♗h5

13...a5!? is an interesting try but White keeps an edge after: 14.♖fc1 ♖a7 15.♘a4 ♘bd7 (15...dxc4 runs

chesstouring.com

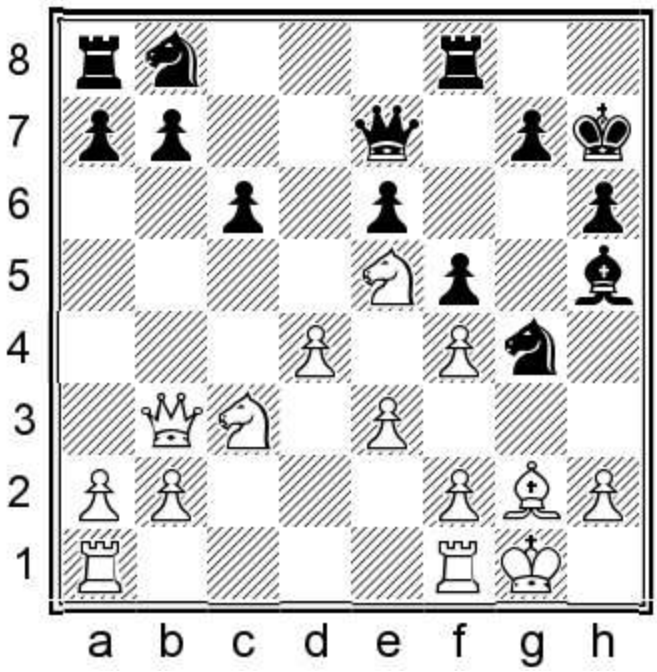
into 16.♕b6 ♖a6 17.♕c5! with a clear advantage) This occurred in Spicer – Targonski, corr. 2011, and now I suggest the following improvement:



16.♕e3!?N 16...♗h5 17.♖c2! With ongoing positional pressure.

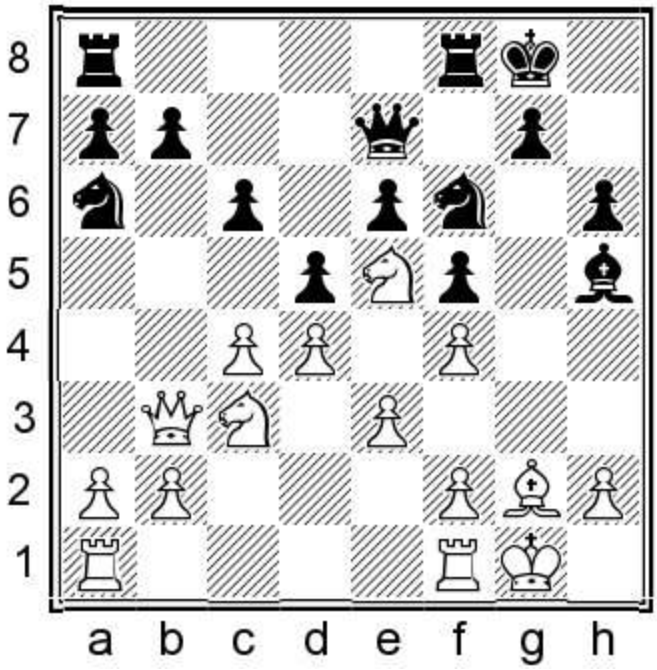
14.e3 ♘a6

Another example continued: 14...dxc4 15.♘xc4 ♔h7 16.♘e5 ♘g4



17.♘d3! ♘a6 18.♖ac1 White maintained the more pleasant position in Jorgensen – J. Larsen, corr. 2010. We have been following Korchmar – Najdin, Taganrog 2015. I believe this was the right moment to clarify the pawn structure:

chesstouring.com



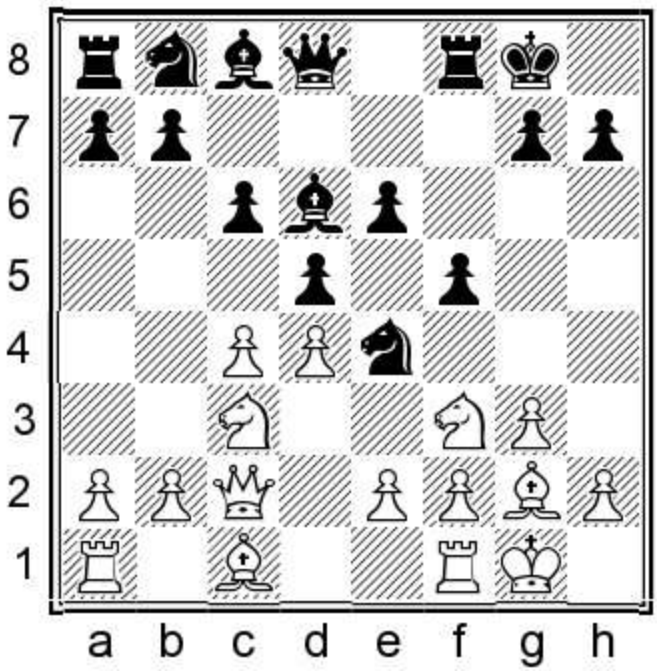
15.cxd5!?N 15...exd5

15...cxd5 would help White to seize the initiative on the queenside after 16.♖fc1.

16.♖ac1±

White keeps the better game.

F) 8...♘e4



This is by far Black's most popular option.

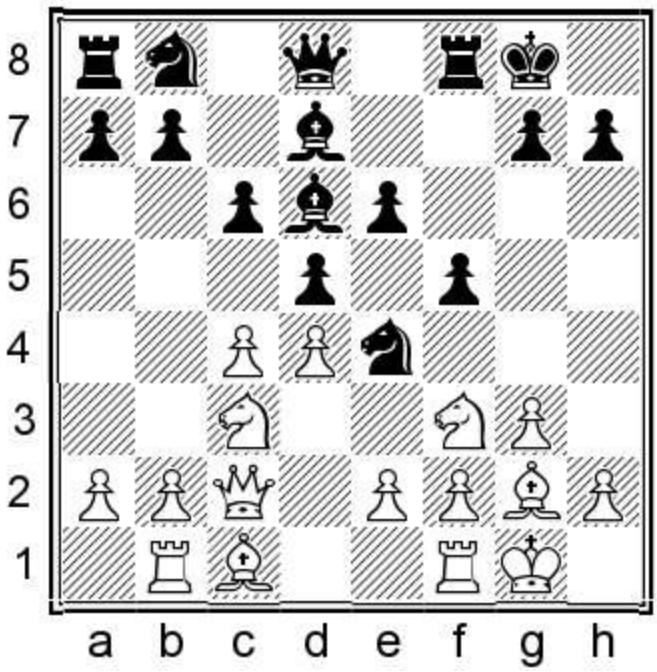
9.♖b1

chesstouring.com

Preparing b4-b5. We will examine four main possibilities for Black: **F1)** 9...♗d7, **F2)** 9...a5, **F3)** 9...♘d7 and **F4)** 9...♕e7.

F1) 9...♗d7

This is a reasonable move, but it enables White to carry out his plan to good effect.



10.b4 ♗e8

Black has also tried:

10...b5 11.c5 ♗c7 12.a4 a5

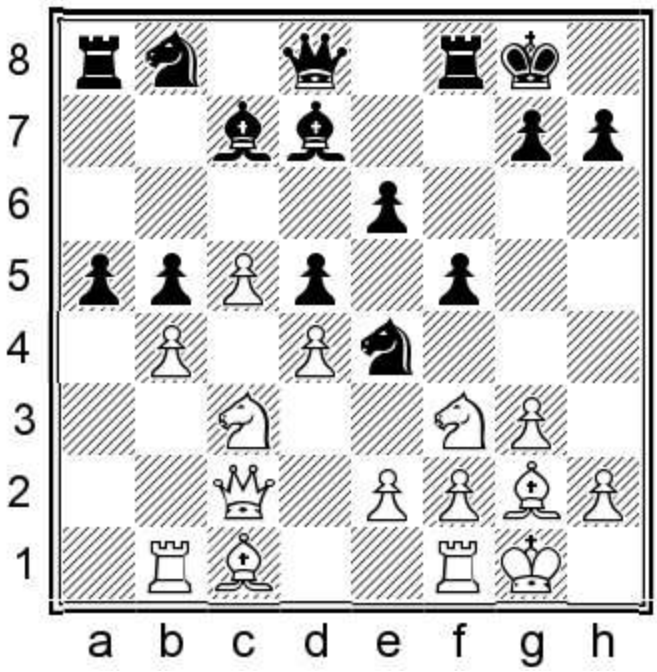
12...bxa4 was played in Gerstner – Meister, Bad Wiessee 2010, when the natural 13.♘xa4N 13...a5 14.♗f4 would have given White a clear advantage.

13.axb5 cxb5

13...♘xc3 14.♕xc3 axb4 occurred in Mu Ke – Manaog, Ho Chi Minh City 2013, when 15.♖xb4N 15...cxb5 (or 15...♗a5 16.b6 ♘a6 17.♗a3±) 16.♖b3± would have been excellent for White.

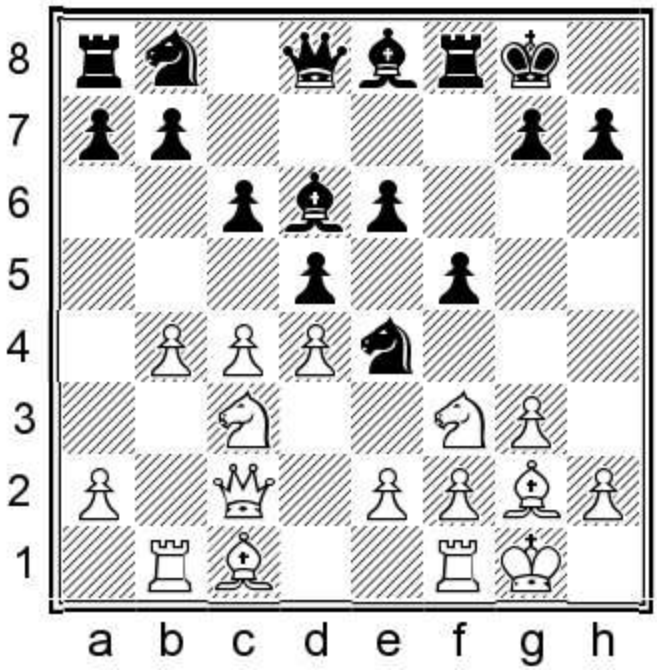
Now in Kristiansen – Jorgensen, Borup 2012, White should have played:

chesstouring.com



14.bxa5!N 14...♘xc3 15.♕xc3 ♖xa5 16.♗d2 ♘c6 17.e3±

The b5-pawn is an obvious weakness.



11.b5 ♘d7

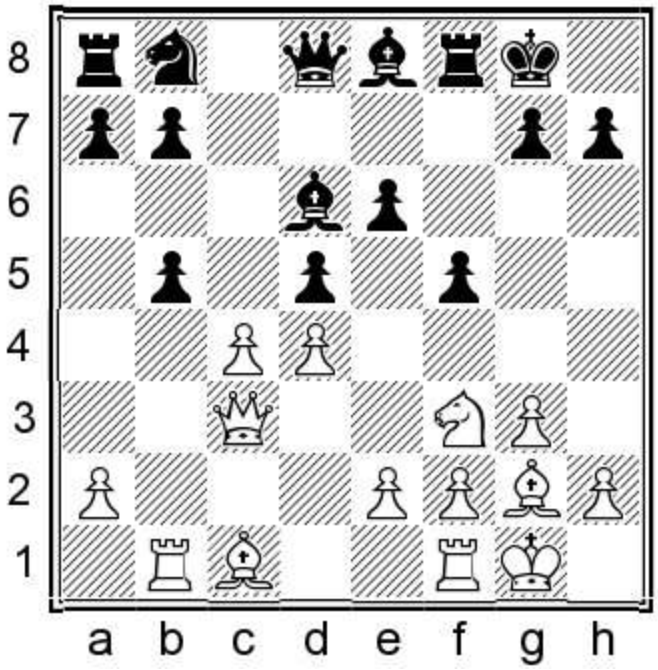
I checked two other options:

11...♘xc3 12.♕xc3 cxb5?!

12...♘d7 13.bxc6 bxc6 has occurred twice, when the natural 14.♗a3N 14...♗xa3 15.♕xa3 ♘b6 16.♘e5± would secure White's clear positional advantage.

The text move has been Black's most popular choice but it should lose almost instantly.

chesstouring.com



13.♘g5!

White overlooked this move in three out of four games so far.

13...♕c8 14.♘xe6! ♖f6 15.♘c5+–

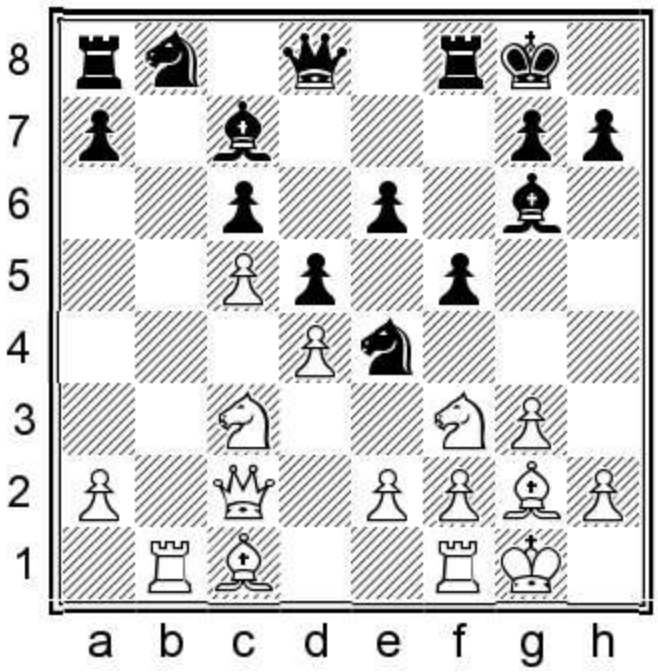
Black's position was collapsing in Romm – Manduch, corr. 2013.

11...♗g6!?

Quite a tricky move, setting up veiled threats towards White's queen and rook.

12.c5 ♗c7 13.bxc6 bxc6

This position occurred in Rohde – Gaujens, corr. 2006. I found a remarkable continuation:



14.♘xe4!N 14...fxe4

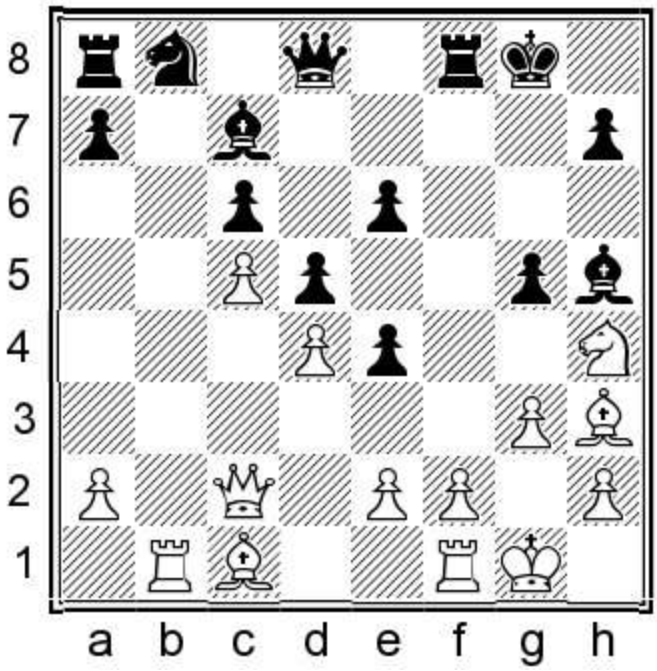
14...dxe4? makes White's task of proving an advantage much easier: 15.♗g5 ♕e8 16.♘d2±

15.♘h4 ♗h5 16.♗h3! g5?!

chesstouring.com

This is certainly the critical move to consider.

16...♖e8 is objectively the lesser evil but after 17.♖b7 ♕c8 18.♖b3 followed by f2-f3 White's advantage is beyond doubt.



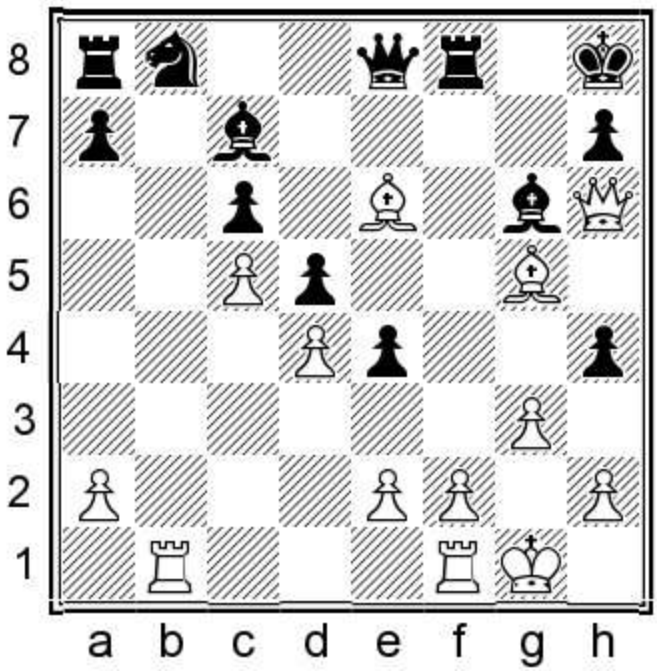
17.♕d2!

A fantastic tactical resource.

17...gxh4

17...h6 18.♗xe6† ♔h8 19.g4! is close to winning for White.

18.♕h6 ♕e8 19.♗xe6† ♔h8 20.♗g5 ♗g6



21.f4! exf3 22.♖xf3

With a decisive attack.

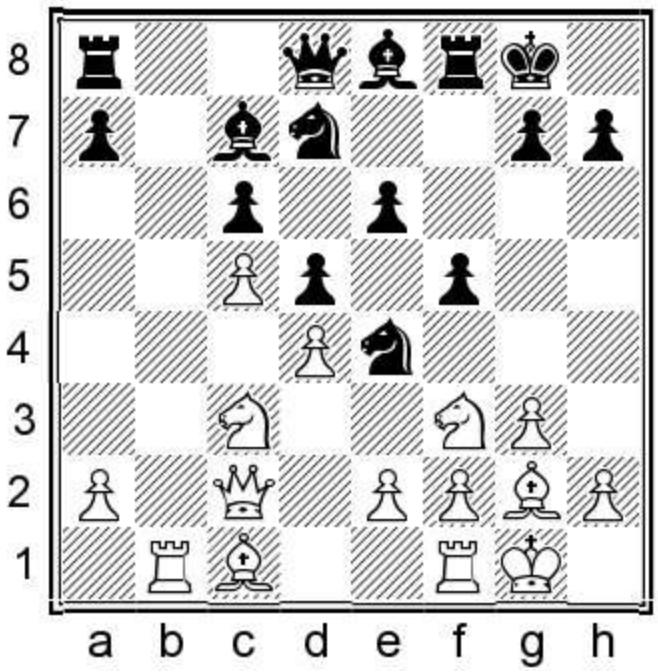
chesstouring.com

12.bxc6 bxc6 13.c5!?

Initially I liked the look of 13.♘xe4 fxe4 14.♘g5 ♖f6 15.c5 ♗c7 16.f4 as recommended in *GM 2*. However, after 16...♗h5 17.e3 h6 18.♘h3 ♕c8 19.♘f2 ♖f8 20.♕a4 ♗d8 Black's position turns out to be hard to crack, and he held a draw fairly solidly in Ritsema – Poljak, corr. 2014.

13...♗c7

This position has been reached in two games. I came up with a new concept:



14.♖b3!?N 14...♗g6

In the event of 14...♖b8 I suggest 15.♘a4! intending to manoeuvre the knight to the ideal d3-square. Play may continue 15...f4 16.♘b2 ♗g6 17.♘d3 with the better game for White.

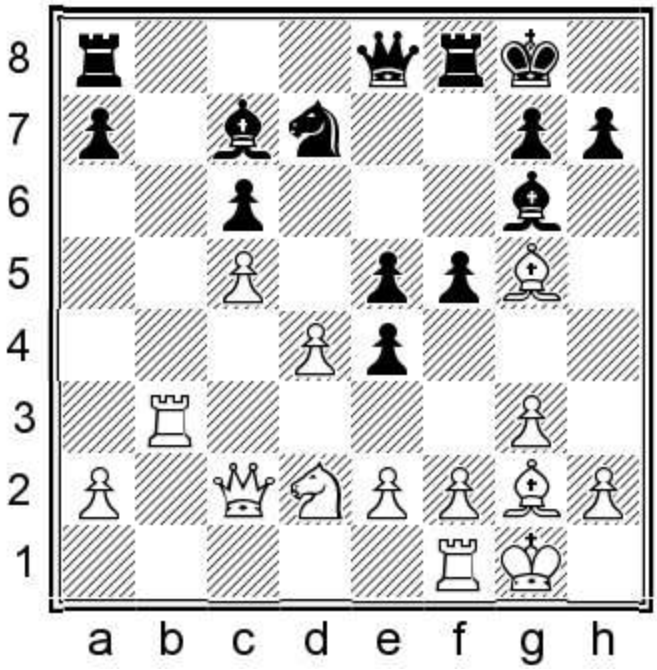
15.♘xe4 fxe4

I also considered:

15...dxe4 16.♗g5 ♕e8 17.♘d2 e5

17...h6 18.♗f4 only helps White. For instance, 18...e5 19.♖b7! ♕c8 20.♖xc7 ♕xc7 21.dxe5 with great play for the exchange.

chesstouring.com

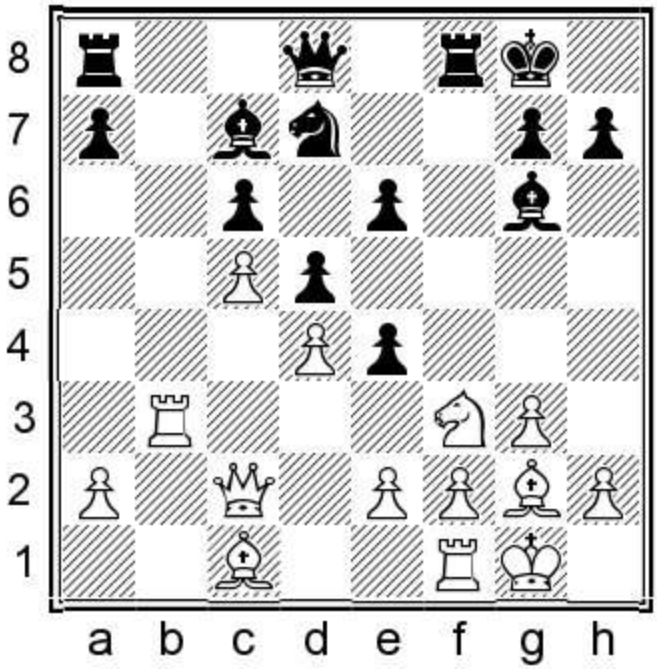


18.dxe5 h6 19.♗e3!

19.♗f4 ♗xe5 makes life easier for Black.

19...♘xe5 20.♖b7 ♖f7 21.♗f4±

Black remains under annoying pressure.



16.♘h4 ♗f7

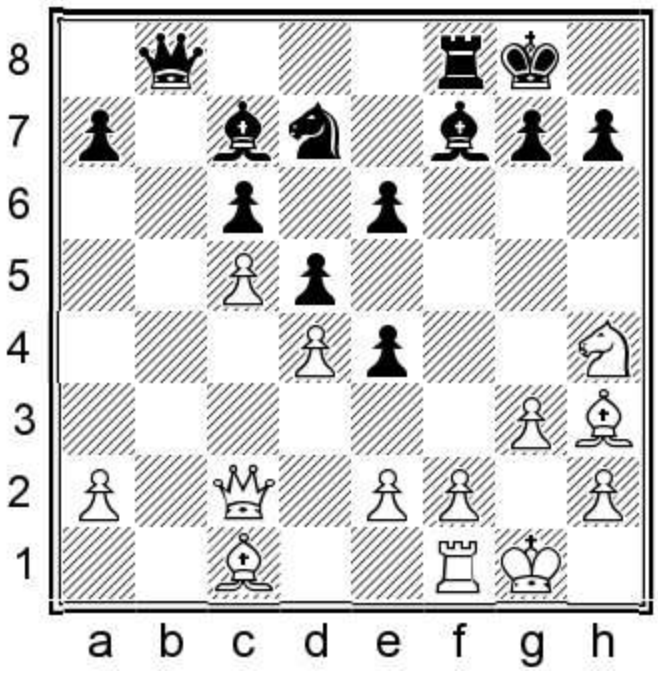
16...♗h5 looks more active, but the e6-pawn becomes a target. After 17.♗h3 e5 18.♖b7 exd4 19.♗b2↑ the pawn transformation is clearly favourable for White.

17.♗h3 ♖b8 18.♖xb8

18.♗e3!? ♖xb3 19.axb3 is another idea worth considering.

chesstouring.com

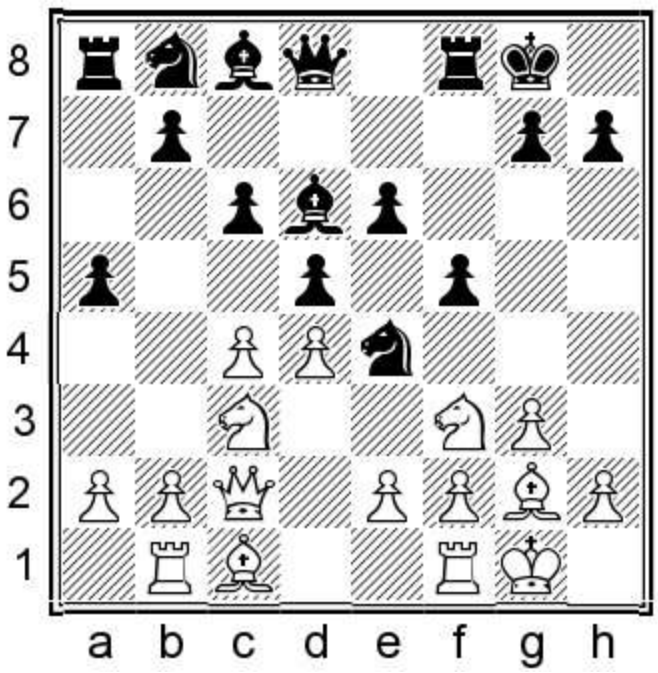
18...♕xb8



19.♗d2 ♘f6 20.♖b1 ♕a8 21.♘g2 ♖b8 22.♖b3

White has a small but lasting advantage, and can improve his position with ♕c1 followed by ♗f4, while Black is more or less doomed to passive defence.

F2) 9...a5



10.c5!?

Now I believe in this straightforward approach.

10.a3 was my previous recommendation. I am not aware of any concrete problem with it, but it leads to a complex position with many options for Black, whereas the text move enables White to dictate the play

chessbooring.com

to a greater extent.

10...♗c7 11.♗f4 ♗xf4

This has been Black's usual choice.

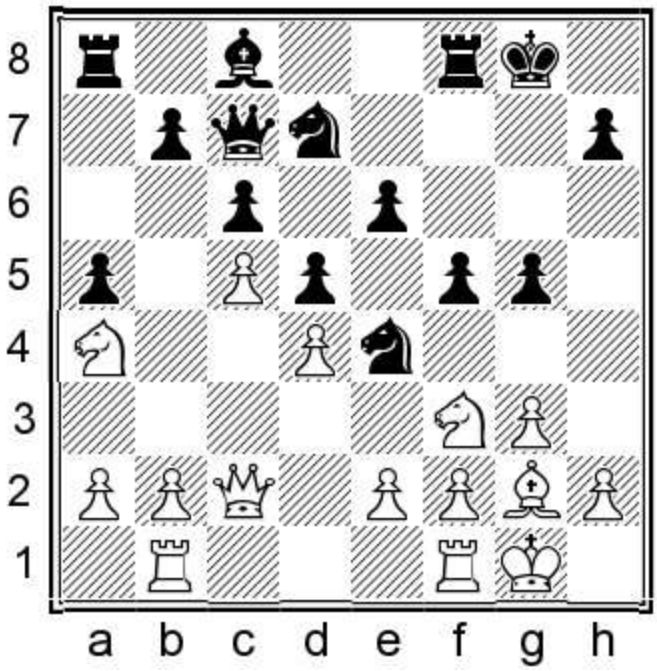
In one game, Black avoided changing the kingside structure in favour of:

11...♘d7 12.♘a4 g5

12...♗xf4 13.gxf4 transposes to the main line below.

13.♗xc7 ♕xc7

In Nishant – Bhakti, Prague 2016, White should have played:



14.b3!N

Preparing to put the queen on b2, where it will help to establish control over the e5-square.

14...e5!?

This looks critical, as Black will not be able to free himself if he allows ♕b2 followed by ♘e5.

15.dxe5 f4

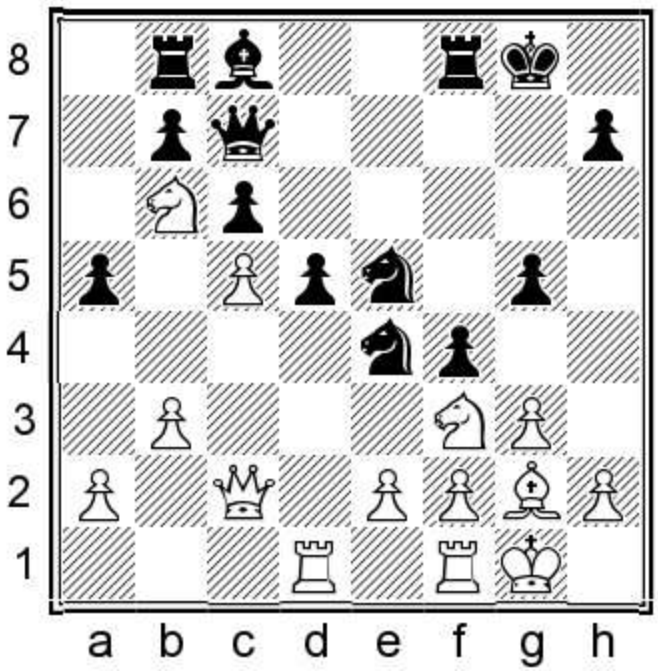
I also considered: 15...♘xe5 16.♘d4 f4 I don't see another way to meet the threat of f2-f3. 17.♘b6 ♖b8 18.♗xe4! dxe4 19.♘xc8 ♕xc8 20.♕xe4± With an extra pawn.

16.♖bd1!

16.e6 ♘df6 17.♘b6 ♖b8 18.♘xc8 ♖bxc8 19.♘d4 ♕e5∞ is rather messy.

16...♘xe5 17.♘b6 ♖b8

chesstouring.com



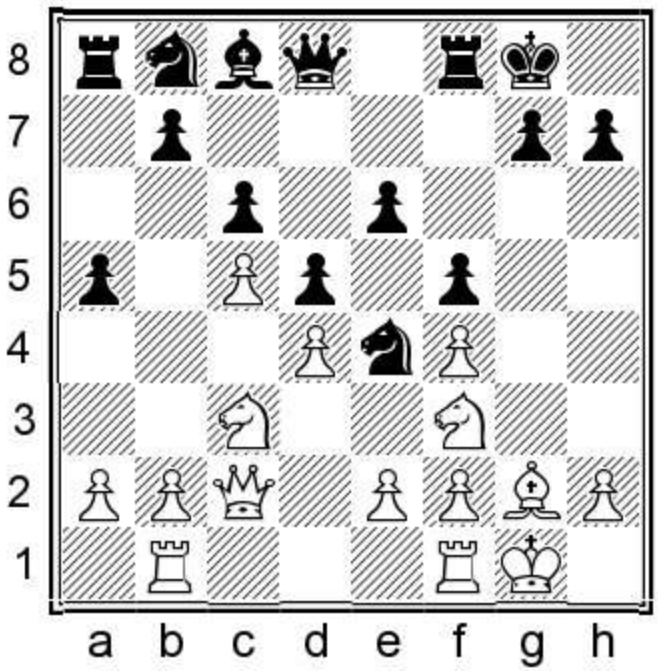
18.♘xd5!?

This sacrifice seems highly promising.

18...cxd5 19.♖xd5 ♘xf3† 20.exf3! ♘f6 21.♖xg5† ♔h8 22.♕c3↑

White has three pawns for the piece, plus the initiative and a safer king.

12.gxf4



12...♘d7

12...b6?! is a positional error, and after 13.cxb6 ♕xb6 14.♘a4 ♕c7 15.♘e5 ♘a6 16.a3± it was clear that Black had only weakened his own position in Michiels – Stuer, Gent 2015.

After the text move, Moskalenko evaluates the position as equal but I prefer White's chances, based on

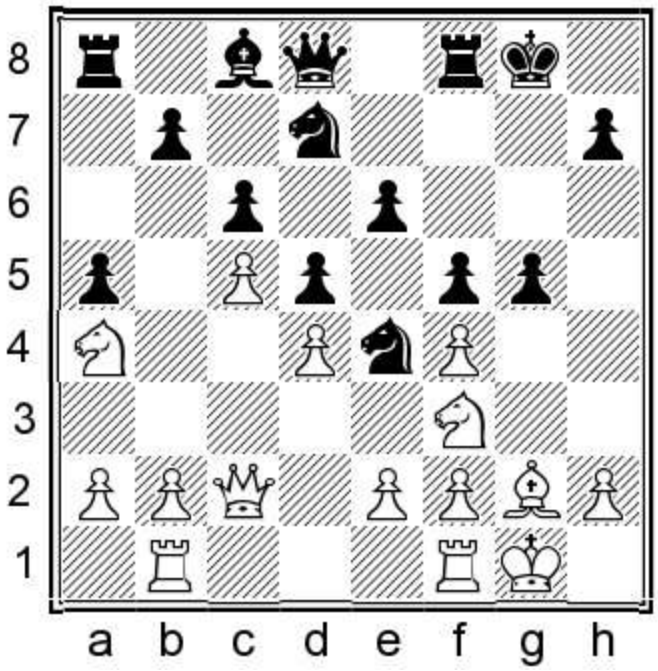
chesstouring.com

the following analysis.

13.♘a4 ♖f6

Black may also try:

13...g5



14.fxg5!N

This is more accurate than the game continuation of 14.♘xg5 ♘xg5 15.fxg5, when Black could have obtained interesting counterplay with 15...f4!N.

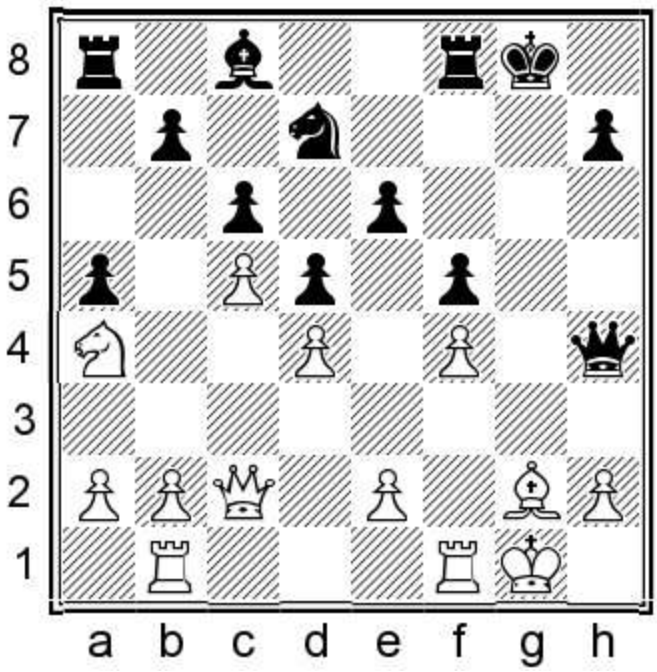
14...♘xg5 15.♘xg5 ♕xg5

Now we rejoin the game, having avoided the nuance pointed out in the above note.

16.f4 ♕h4

In Clemens – Vogel, Hoogeveen 2016, a simple and strong continuation would have been:

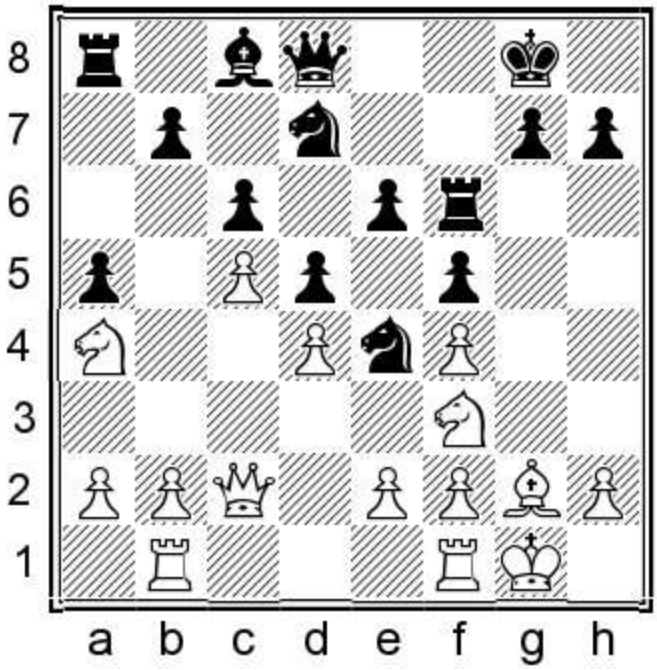
chesstouring.com



17.♖f3N 17...♔h8 18.♕c3 ♘f6 19.♘b6±

White is clearly better.

Here I found a new concept:



14.e3!?N

Initially I favoured the defensive plan of 14.h3 ♖h6 15.♔h2, as played in Ludevid Masana – Cvak, corr. 2016. In that case Black does not have much of an attack, but White's play is a little slow and Black was able to neutralize the pressure in the correspondence game. I believe the text move to be more precise.

14...♖h6

14...♖g6 can be met by 15.♔h1 when it is not clear what Black is doing.

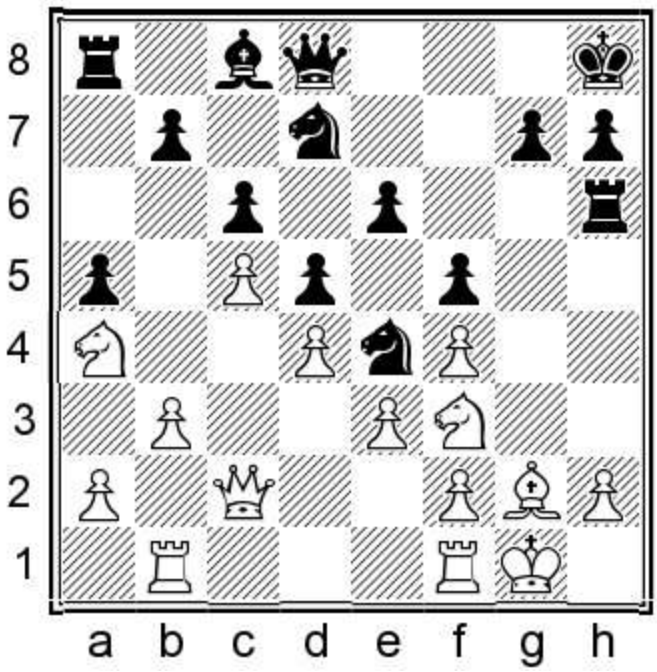
chesstouring.com

15.b3!?

It is useful to put the rook on the second rank. For the time being White can improve his position patiently, having in mind that Black is pretty much paralysed on the queenside, as moving the d7-knight would help White to increase the pressure by means of ♘b6, ♘e5 and f2-f3.

15...♔h8

The straightforward 15...g5 16.♘xg5 ♘xg5 17.fxg5 ♕xg5 can be met by: 18.f4 ♕h4 19.♗f3 ♘f6 20.♘b6 ♖b8 21.♕f2± White forces a favourable queen trade.



16.♔h1 ♕e8 17.♖b2 ♕h5 18.h3!

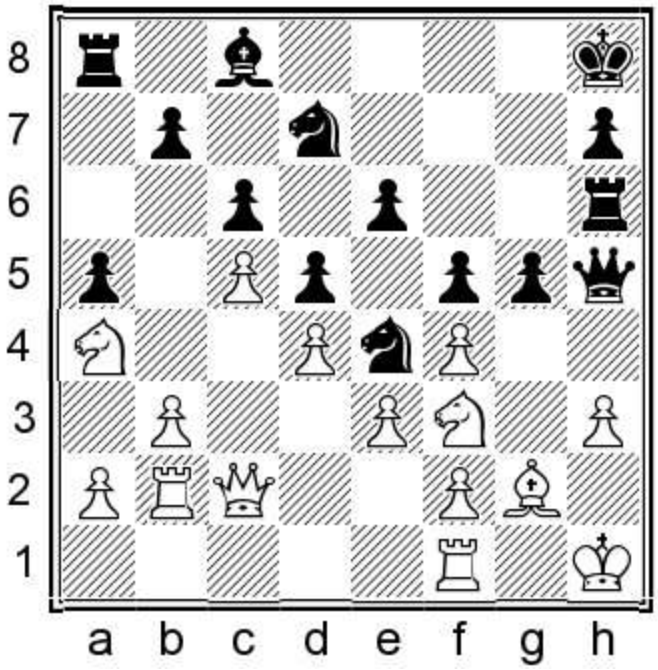
White has to play this now, otherwise ...g5 will lead to a crushing attack.

18...g5

I cannot see any other useful preparatory moves for Black.

18...♘df6 allows 19.♘b6 ♖b8 20.♕e2! followed by ♘e5.

chesstouring.com

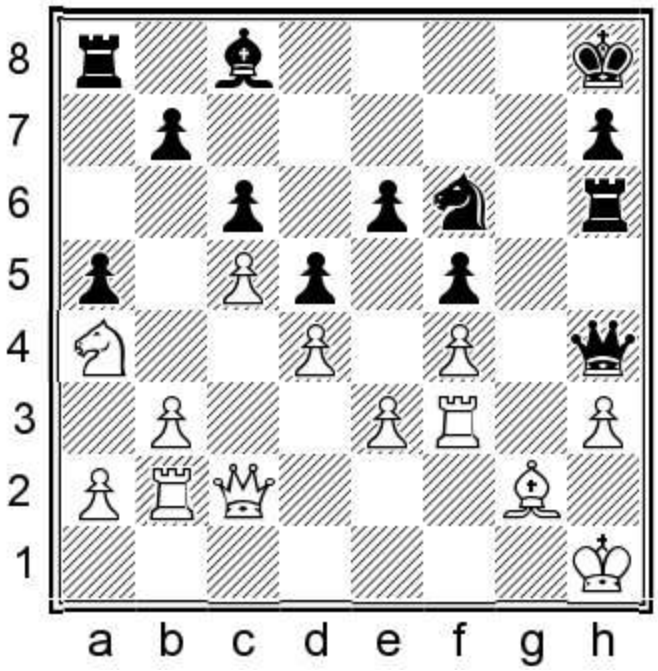


19.♘xg5 ♘xg5 20.fxg5 ♕xg5 21.f4 ♕h4

I also considered 21...♕g3 22.♕f2 ♕g4 23.♕e1 ♘f6 24.♘b6 ♖b8 25.♖f3 ♗d7 26.♔g1 ♕g7 27.♖g3± and White is in full control.

22.♖f3 ♘f6

22...♕e1† 23.♗f1 ♘f6 24.♕f2 is similar.



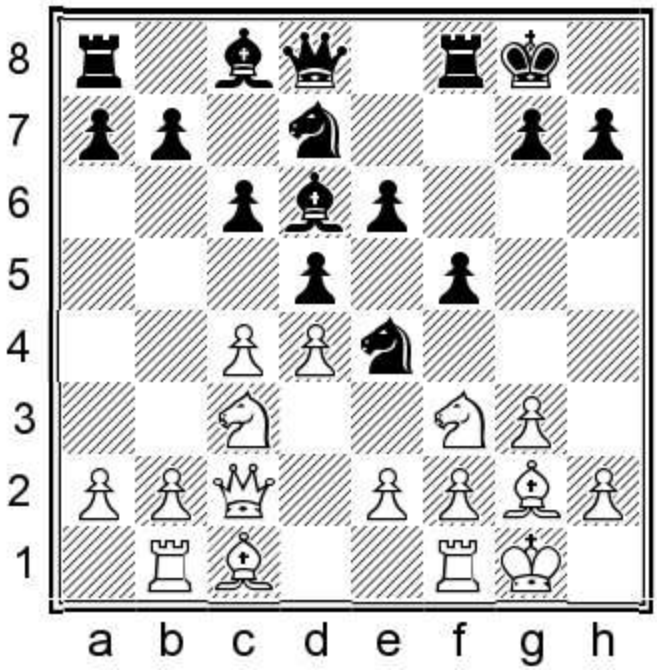
23.♘b6 ♖b8 24.♕f2±

Black has no real attacking chances and must either exchange queens or retreat and allow White to occupy the g-file. It's quite possible that his position can be held in some way, but he is likely to be doomed to passive defence. In the event of a queen trade White has various ideas: perhaps he will break

chessstudying.com

with b3-b4, but he may even consider marching his king to the queenside to target the a5-pawn.

F3) 9...♘d7



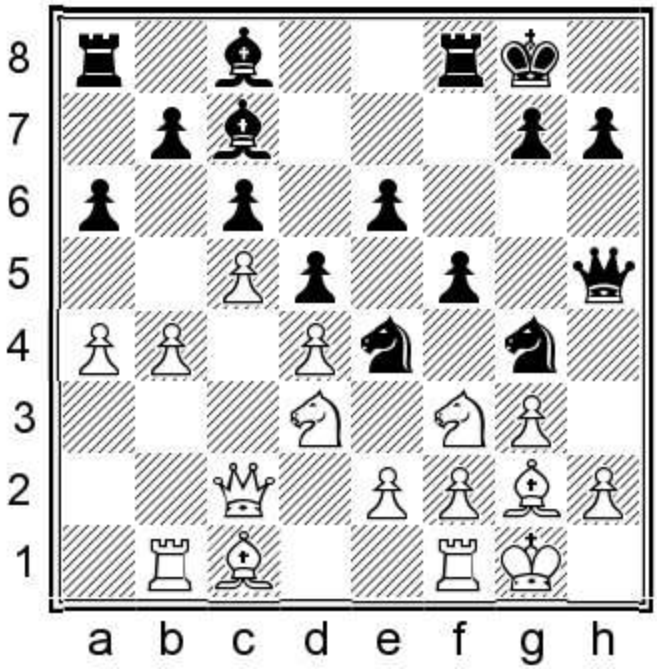
This is another natural move, and one which has the potential to be theoretically challenging.

10.b4

We will examine **F31)** 10...♘df6 followed by the more critical options of **F32)** 10...b6!? and **F33)** 10...b5!?.

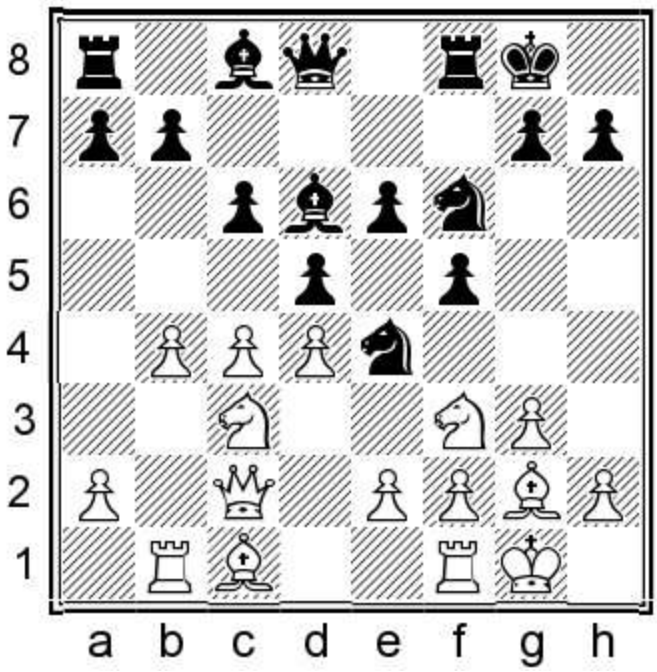
10...a6 can be met by the straightforward 11.a4, when a model game continued: 11...♘df6 12.c5 ♗c7 13.♘d1! As the reader has probably already noticed, manoeuvring the knight to d3 is highly thematic in this structure. 13...♕e8 14.♘b2 ♕h5 15.♘d3 ♘g4 In Akmalov – Podkopaev, Voronezh 2014, the strongest continuation would have been:

chesstouring.com



16.♗f4N 16...♗xf4 17.♘xf4 White carries out the favourable bishop trade while conveniently gaining a tempo against the queen. After 17...♕h6 18.♘d3 ♗d7 19.h3 ♘gf6 20.h4 ♘g4 21.♕c1± White maintains clearly better chances.

F31) 10...♘df6



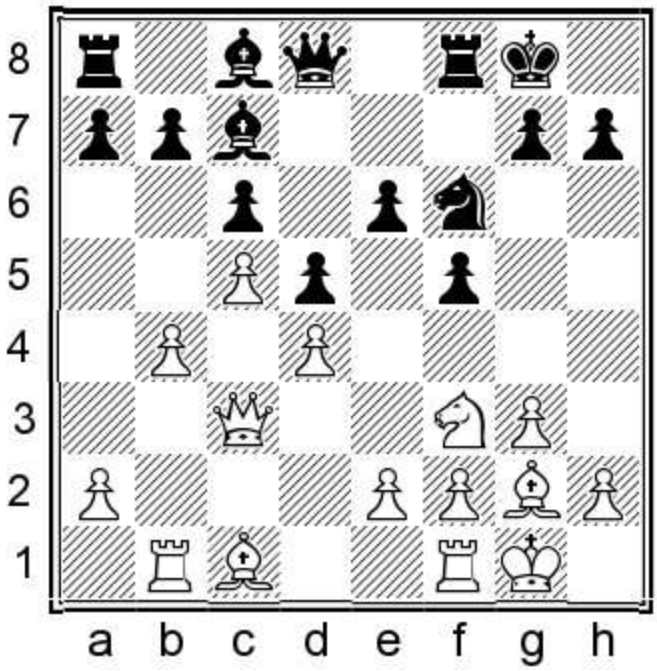
11.c5!

White should avoid the natural-looking 11.b5 as it would allow Black to force favourable simplifications: 11...♘xc3 12.♕xc3 cxb5! 13.c5 (13.♖xb5 b6! also does not promise White much) 13...♘e4 14.♕c2 ♗e7 15.♖xb5 b6! 16.cxb6 ♗d7 17.♖b2 axb6= Stefansson – Radjabov, Torshavn 2000.

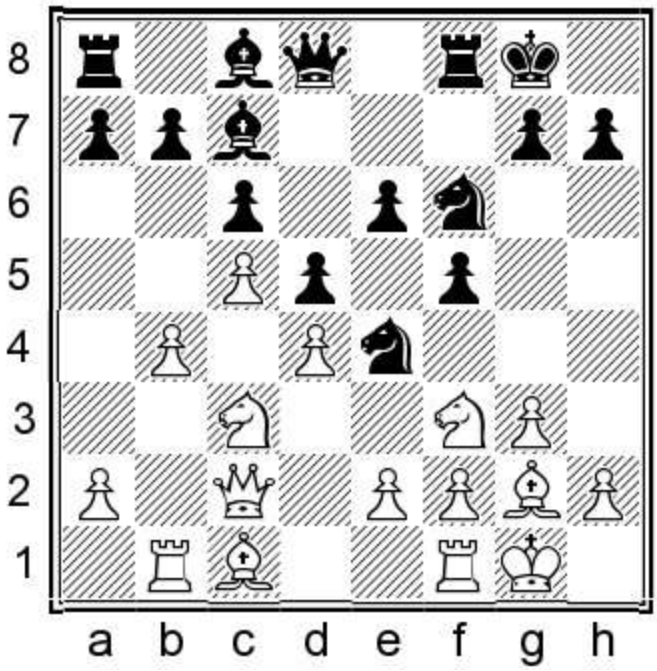
chesstouring.com

11...♗c7

Black has tried 11...♘xc3 12.♕xc3 ♗c7 in three games. White has a pleasant choice, and can consider a new idea:



13.a4!?N Focusing on developing some initiative on the queenside. (There is nothing wrong with 13.♗f4, leading to a pleasant version of the main line below, where Black has traded off his active knight earlier than he might have wished.) 13...♘e4 14.♕c2 ♕f6 15.b5± White maintains the better game.



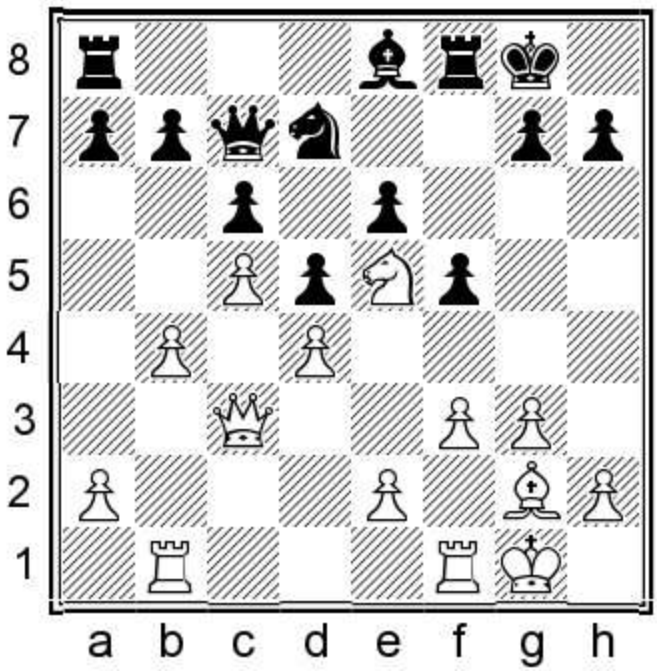
12.♗f4

White can consider a move like 12.a4 here as well, but I will focus on the thematic bishop trade.

12...♗xf4

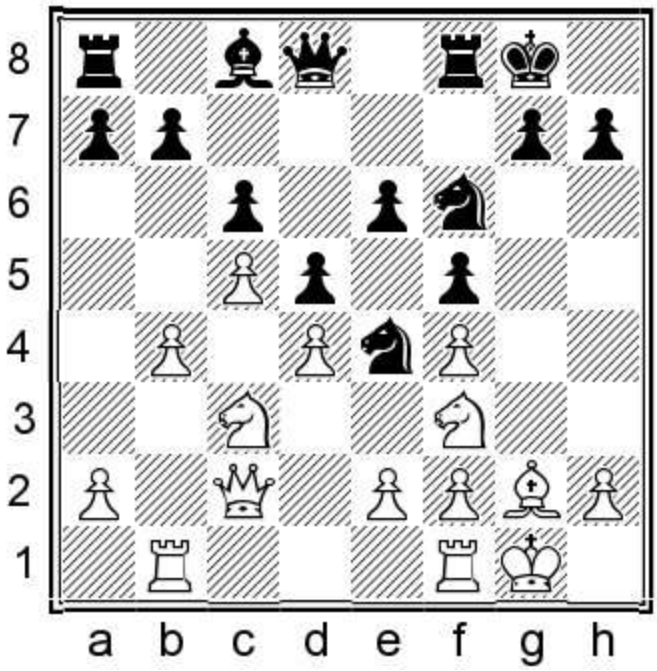
chesstouring.com

Another good example continued: 12...♗d7 13.♗xc7 ♕xc7 14.♘e5 ♗e8 15.f3 ♘xc3 16.♕xc3 ♘d7



17.♘d3! ♗g6 18.♖b2 ♖fe8 19.f4± White had a free hand to develop his initiative on the queenside in Tworuszka – Kornasiewicz, Poland 1999.

13.gxf4



13...♗d7

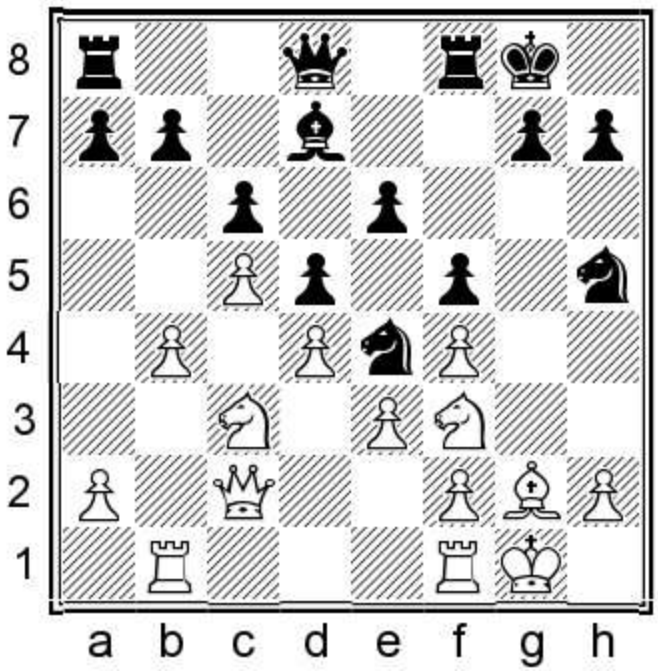
Black does not fare any better after other moves, for instance:

13...♕c7 14.e3 ♘xc3 15.♕xc3 b5 is recommended by Moskalenko as being equal but 16.♖fc1 ♗b7 17.a4 bxa4 18.♗f1 ♕f7 19.♘e5 ♕h5 20.f3± left White in full control in Schreiber – Welzenheimer, corr. 2011.

13...♘h5 14.e3 ♗d7 occurred in Du Maire – Starke, Germany 2015. This would have been a great

chesstouring.com

moment for:



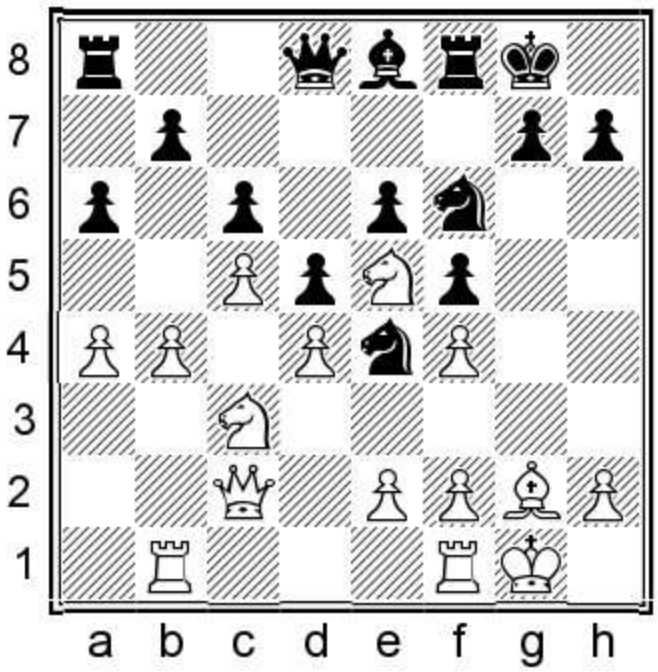
15.♘xe4!N 15...fxe4 16.♘e5 ♗e8 17.f3± Leading to a favourable transformation of the pawn structure for White.

14.♘e5 ♗e8

Moskalenko also claims 14...♘xc3 15.♕xc3 ♘g4 to be equal, but 16.♘f3! keeps a clear advantage for White, as he benefits from having provoked the exchange of the strong e4-knight.

15.a4 a6

Now we have a strong positional idea.



chesstouring.com

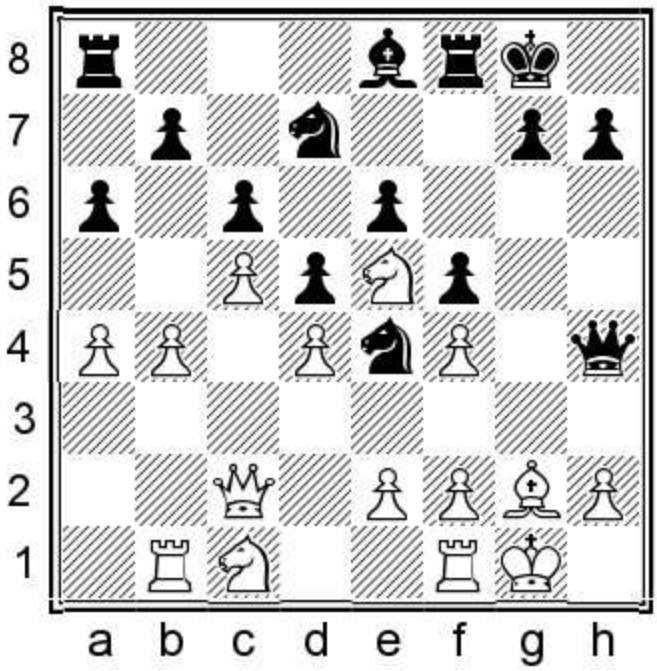
16.♘a2!

White intends to transfer the knight to d3, while also creating the threat of trapping Black's knight with f2-f3.

16...♘d7 17.♘c1 ♕h4

It is important to mention that Black cannot play 17...♘xe5, since after 18.dxe5! d4 (otherwise f2-f3 would trap the knight) 19.♘a2± Black will lose a pawn.

Here I found a simple improvement:



18.♘xd7N

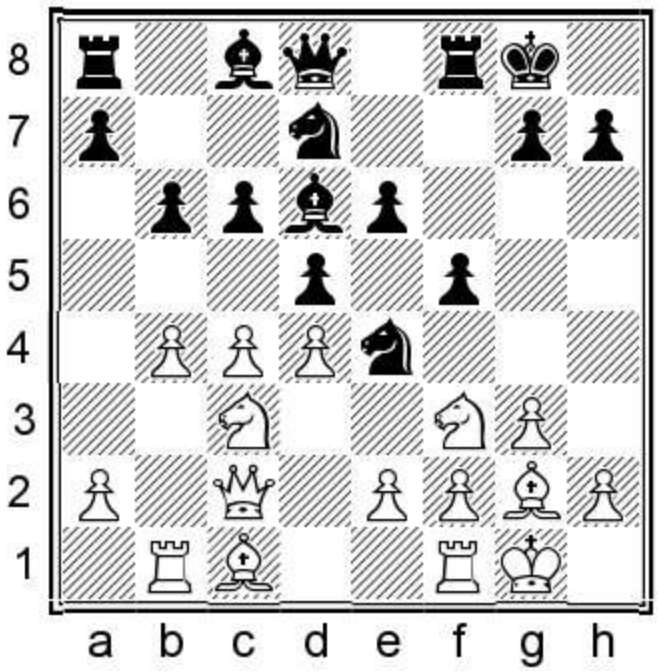
18.♘cd3?! was slightly inaccurate in Grabuzova – Burchardt, Germany 1995, since it allows Black to create counterplay with 18...♘xe5!N 19.dxe5 d4.

18...♗xd7 19.f3 ♘f6 20.♘d3 ♘h5 21.e3 g5 22.♕f2 ♕xf2† 23.♔xf2

White is clearly better, the only question being whether or not he will find a way to break through the defences.

F32) 10...b6!?

chesstouring.com



This is not the most obvious move but it has become quite trendy in the last few years. The following move is unusual but it seems quite promising to me:

11.♗e3!?

11.b5 is the obvious try but after 11...♕c7 12.♗d2 ♘xc3 13.♗xc3 cxb5 14.cxd5 exd5 Black was fine in Rogos – Moll, corr. 2016.

11...♗b7

This was played in the only game.

I also checked the natural alternative:

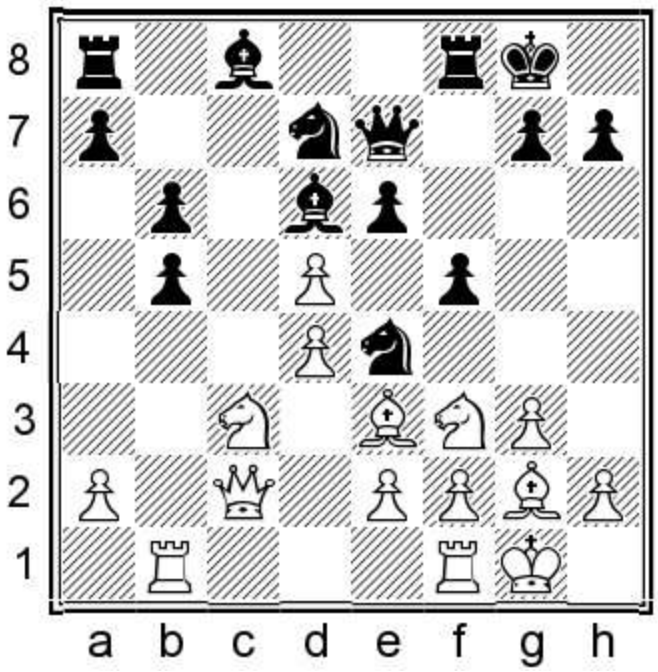
11...♕e7N 12.b5 cxb5

12...♗b7 13.bxc6 ♗xc6 14.cxd5 ♗xd5 15.♘xd5 exd5 16.♕b3± results in a pleasant edge for White.

13.cxd5!

13.♘xb5 ♗a6 14.♘xd6 ♕xd6 is less clear.

chesstouring.com

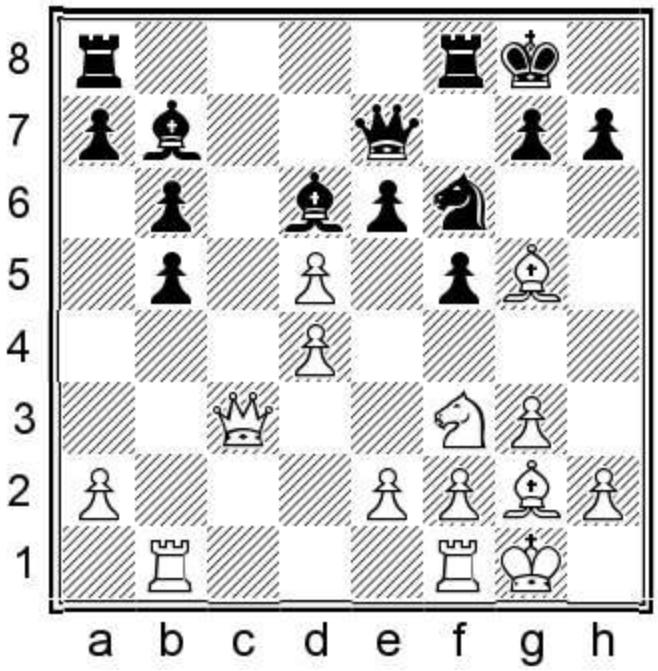


13...♘xc3

I also considered 13...♘df6!? 14.dxe6 ♘xc3 15.♕xc3 ♗xe6 16.♖xb5 ♖ac8 (16...♗xa2 17.♘h4! is unpleasant for Black) 17.♕a1 when Black definitely has some activity, but not enough to claim sufficient compensation for the pawn.

14.♕xc3 ♘f6 15.♗g5 ♗b7

In the event of 15...exd5 16.♗xf6 ♖xf6 17.♘e5! White seizes the initiative.



16.♗xf6! ♖xf6

16...♕xf6?! 17.dxe6 is even worse for Black.

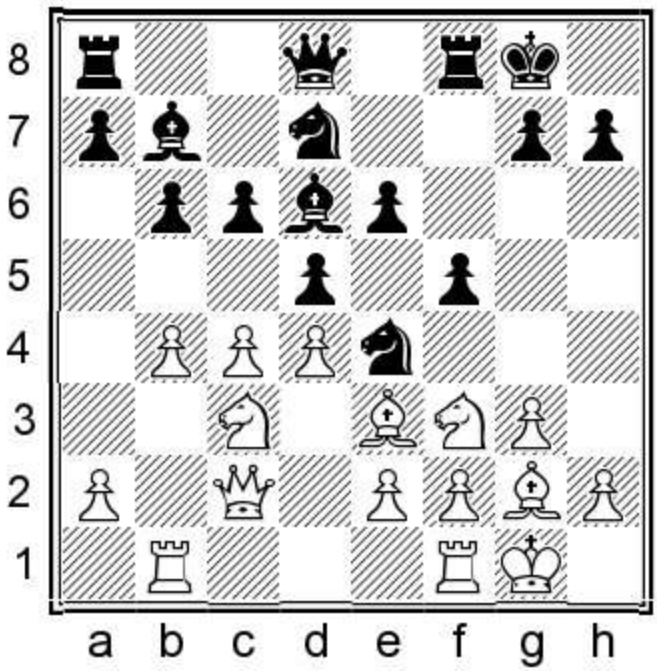
17.♘g5!

With the following idea:

17...♗xd5 18.♗xd5 exd5 19.♕c6

chesstouring.com

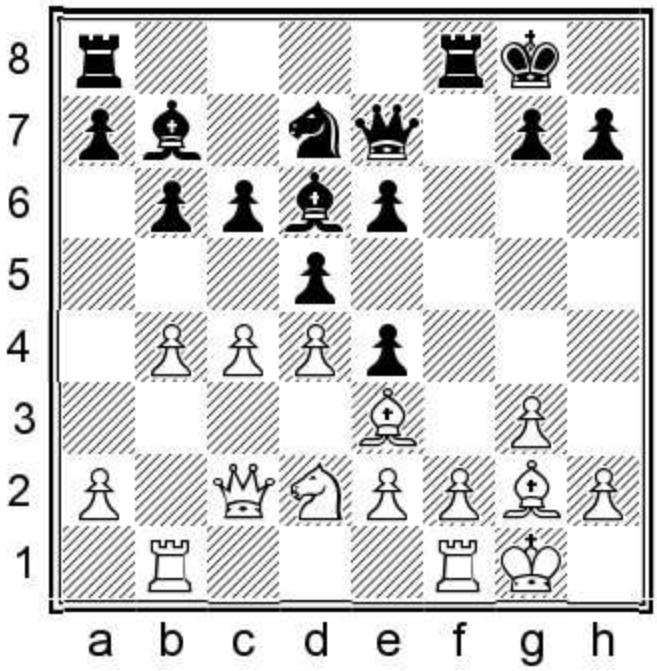
White regains the pawn with a clear positional advantage thanks to his superior structure.



12.♘xe4 dxe4

We continue to follow the correspondence game.

12...fxe4N enables White to preserve a nice edge after: 13.♘d2 ♕e7

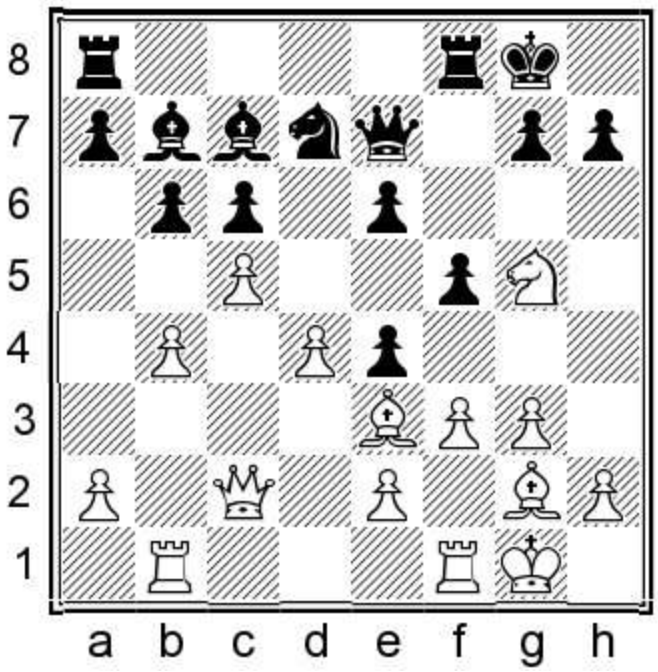


14.c5! ♗c7 15.f3 exf3 16.exf3 e5 17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.♗d4± With an obvious positional advantage.

13.♘g5 ♕e7 14.c5 ♗c7 15.f3

Normally I would stop here and evaluate the position as favourable for White. However, it is worth including a few more moves from the game.

chesstouring.com



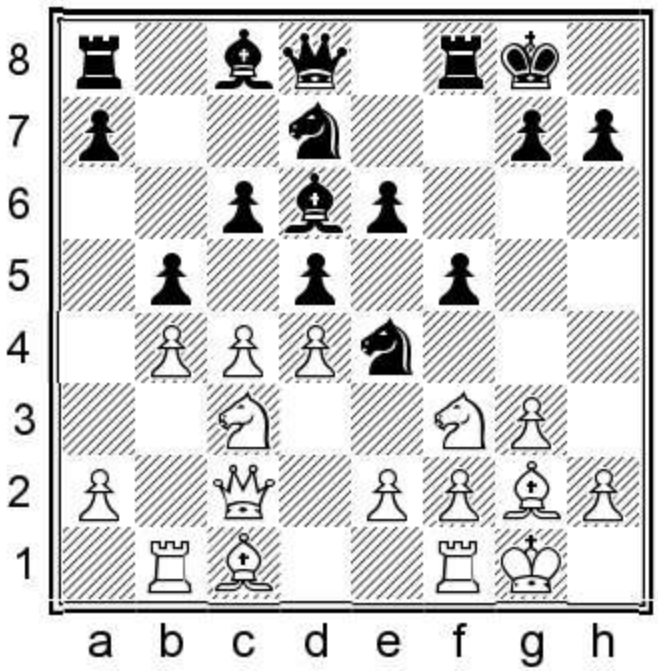
15...h6 16.♘h3 exf3 17.♗xf3

Also after 17.exf3!?N 17...♘f6 18.♘f4 ♕f7 19.♖fe1± White is positionally better.

17...♘f6 18.♗f4!

White had a clear positional edge in Manninen – Owens, corr. 2015.

F33) 10...b5!?



This is a most interesting attempt to fight back on the queenside, which was recommended in the 2009 book *Win with the Stonewall Dutch* and tested in numerous games since. After some trial and error, I now believe I have found a powerful antidote to it.

chesstouring.com

11.cxb5 ♘xc3 12.♕xc3 cxb5 13.♗g5!

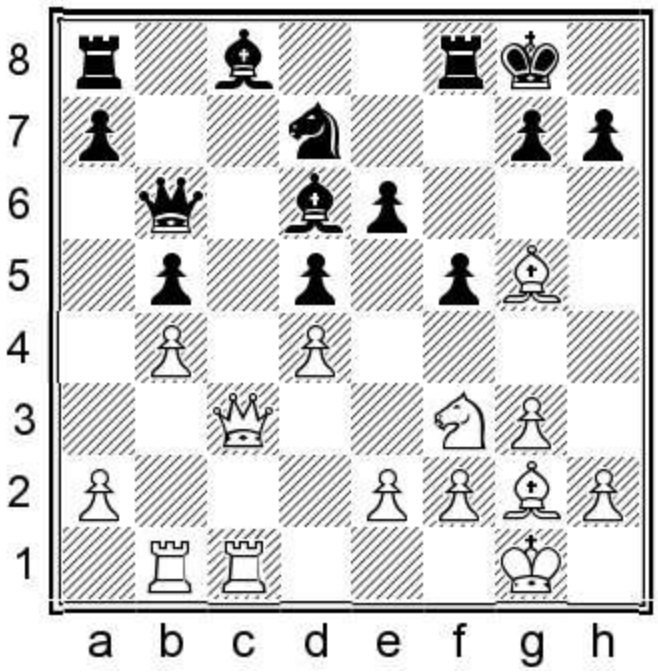
Originally I recommended 13.♕c6 but failed to take into account the possibility of 13...♘b6! 14.♕xb5 ♘c4⩱ when Black has full compensation for the pawn.

13...♕b6

Black generally refrains from 13...♕c7?! in view of 14.♕xc7N 14...♗xc7 15.♖fc1 with an easy initiative.

14.♖fc1!

Sometime after *GM 2* was first published, the healthy sales figures demanded a reprint. Having become aware of the 13.♕c6 ♘b6! pawn sac noted above, I took the opportunity to update this variation accordingly, but recommended 14.♕e3 instead of the text move. At the time I believed it to be a useful novelty, as after 14...♖e8 15.♘e1 Black seemed to be under pressure. However, I overlooked the fact that 15...♕b7! is a reliable response, as has since been demonstrated in several correspondence games. Fortunately, the simple text move turns out to be strong after all.

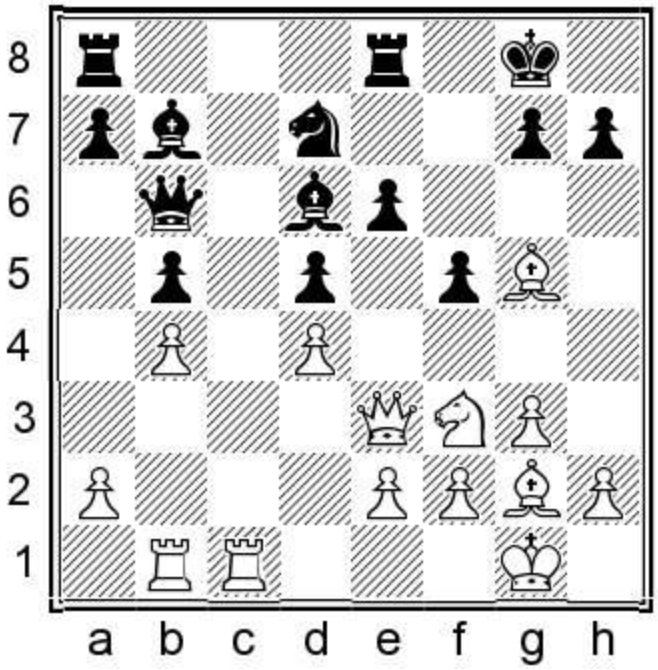


14...♗b7

14...♕b8 can be met by 15.♕c6 ♘b6 16.♕xb5 ♗d7 as occurred in Krug Cortegoso – Moskalenko, La Roda 2013, and now 17.♕d3!N looks most precise. Moskalenko evaluates 17...h6 as unclear but after 18.♗e3± I do not believe Black has enough for the pawn.

15.♕e3 ♖fe8

chesstouring.com

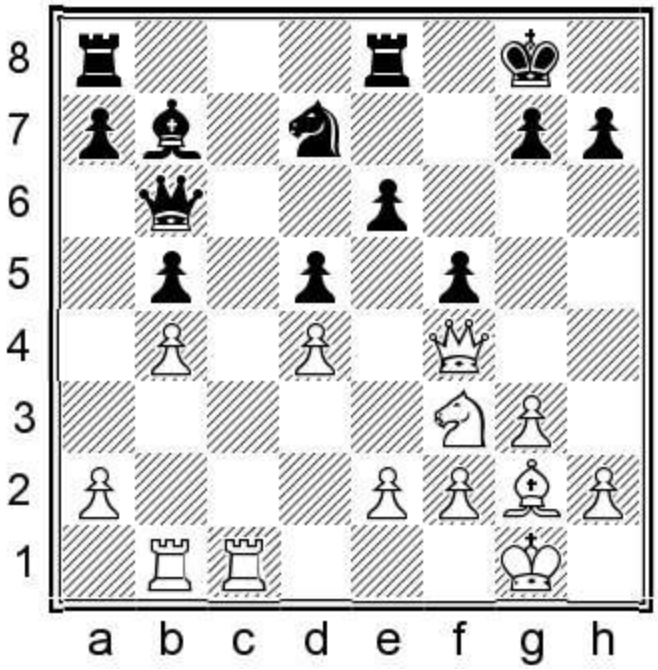


16.♗f4 ♗xf4

16...♗f8 is hardly an improvement; after 17.♘e1 ♖ac8 18.♘d3 ♖c4 19.♘c5 ♘xc5 20.bxc5 ♕a6 21.♕d2± White's passed pawn gave him a clear plus in Matthiesen – Bromann, Denmark 2010.

17.♕xf4!

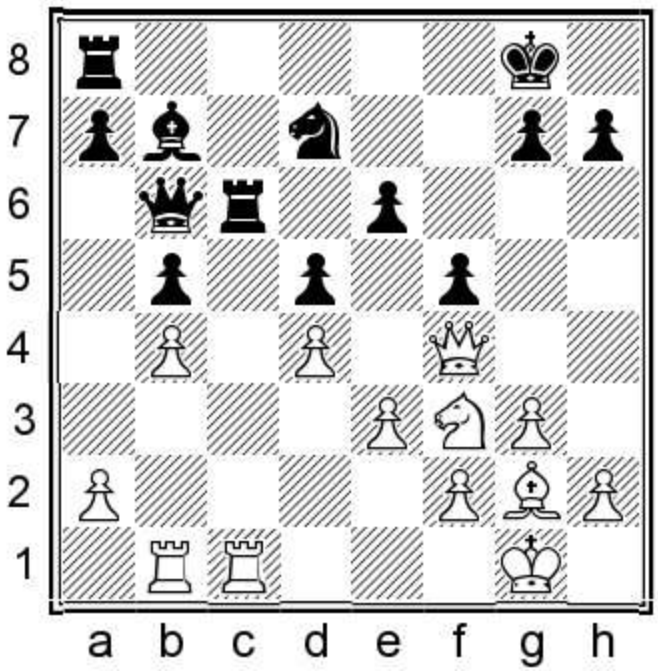
In the *GM 2* reprint, I rejected 14.♖fc1 on the basis of 17.gxf4 ♕d6 18.♘e5 ♖ac8 when Black had no problems in Kerek – C. Horvath, Aggtelek 1997. Somehow I failed to consider the text move, but it is a clear improvement, as evidenced by White's impressive score (+4 =4 –0 at the time of writing).



17...♖ac8

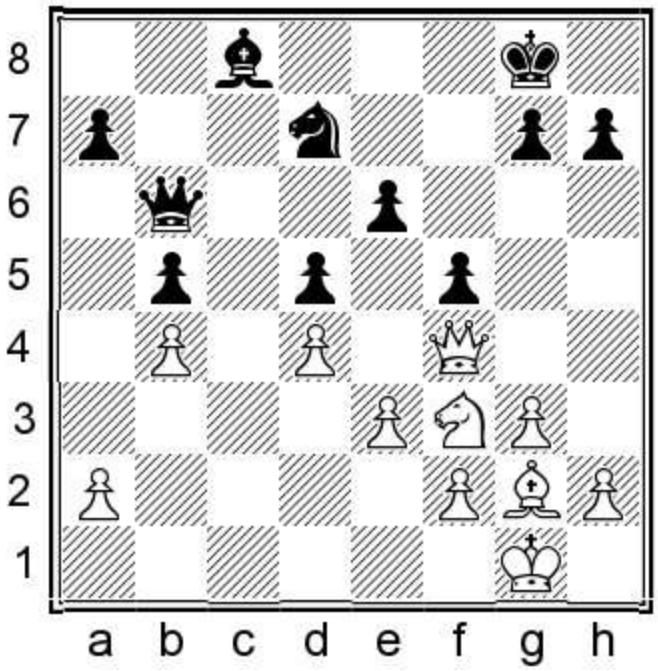
Black has also tried the other rook: 17...♖ec8 18.e3 ♖c6 Gross Winter – Velker, corr. 2011, and here a

convincing improvement would be:



19.♘d2N 19...♖ac8 20.♖xc6 ♕xc6 21.♘b3 ♘b6 22.♘c5 ♘c4 23.♖a1± Followed by a2-a4.

18.e3 ♖xc1† 19.♖xc1 ♖c8 20.♖xc8† ♗xc8

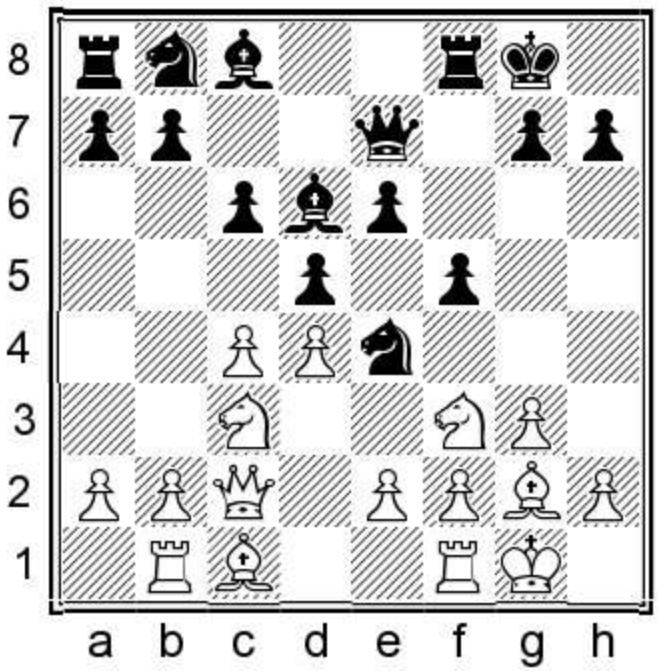


21.♘e1! ♕b8 22.♕f3!±

By keeping the queens on the board, White improves his chances of stretching the defence to breaking point. In Colpe – Schroeder, Hamburg 2017, Black tried to get away with invading along the c-file and grabbing a pawn, but this allowed White's queen and knight to penetrate with decisive effect.

F4) 9...♕e7

chesstouring.com



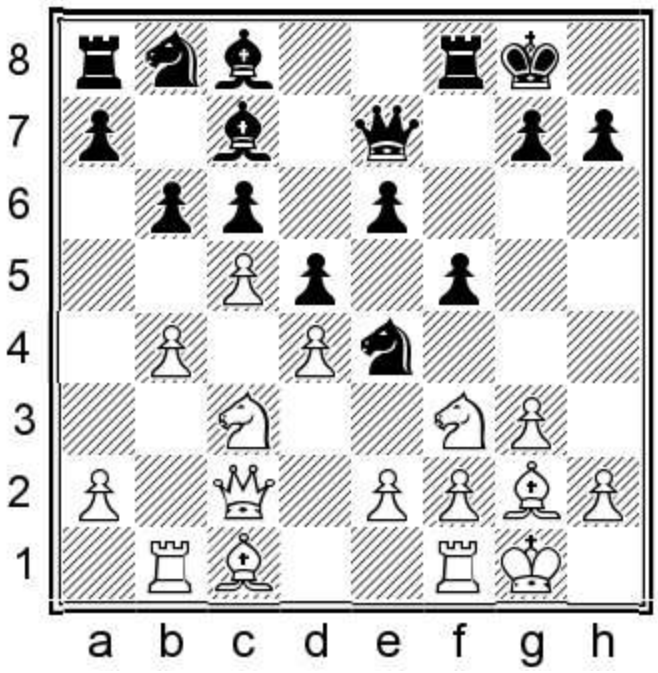
10.b4!

It is helpful for White that this move is tactically justified and requires no further preparation. We will analyse **F41)** 10...♗xb4, **F42)** 10...♘d7, **F43)** 10...♗d7 and **F44)** 10...b5.

A rare alternative is:

10...b6 11.c5 ♗c7

White has opted for the bishop exchange on f4 in all three games, but he can pose Black more immediate problems with:



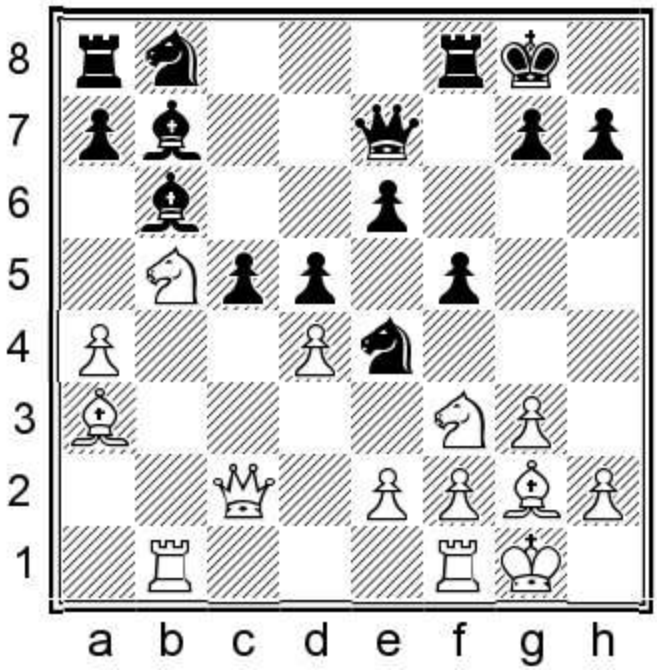
12.b5!N 12...♗b7

I also considered: 12...bxc5 13.♗a3 cxb5 (13...♗d6 14.♘xe4 fxe4 15.dxc5 ♗c7 16.♘d2±) 14.♘xb5 ♗a6 15.♗xc5 ♘xc5 16.dxc5 ♘c6 17.e3 ♖fc8 18.a4!± White's queenside pressure is more relevant

chesstouring.com

than Black's bishop pair.

13.a4 bxc5 14.♗a3 cxb5 15.♘xb5 ♗b6



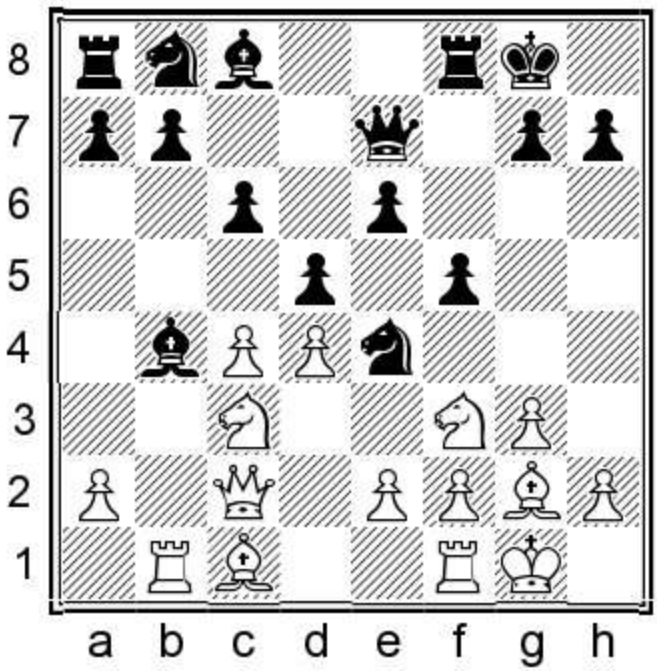
16.a5

16.♘e5 also leads to some edge but one good option is enough.

16...♗xa5 17.♗xc5 ♘xc5 18.dxc5 ♘c6 19.♕a4

White has a strong initiative and is likely to regain the pawn or achieve some other concrete gain in the near future.

F41) 10...♗xb4

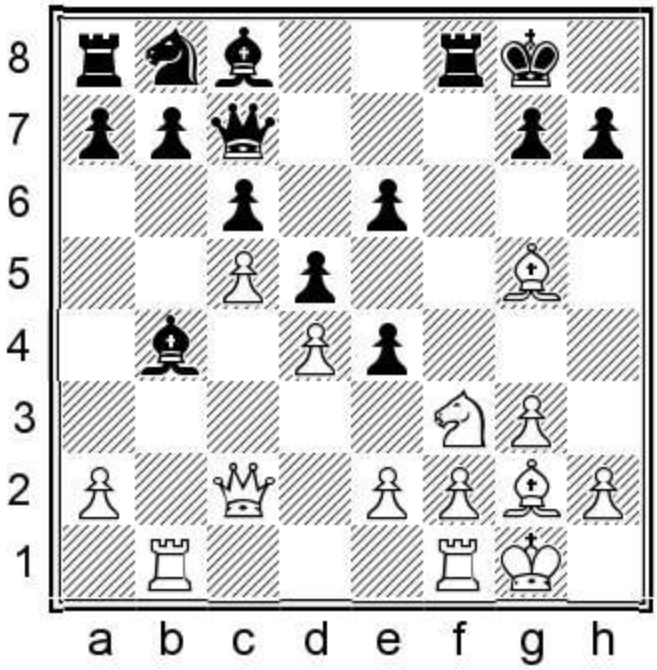


Obviously this is the first main move that should be examined.

chesstouring.com

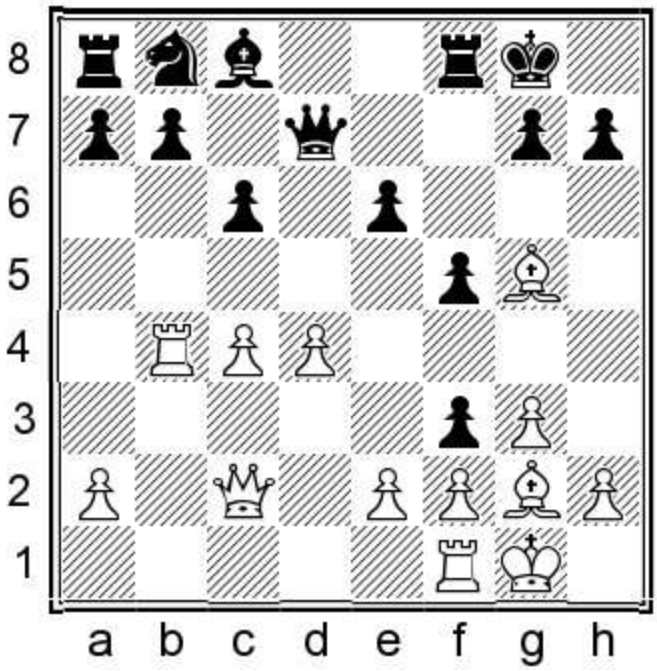
11.♘xe4 dxe4

No better is: 11...fxe4 12.♗g5 ♕d6?! This is asking for trouble. (12...♕f7N is the lesser evil although 13.♖xb4 exf3 14.♗xf3 leaves White with clearly superior pieces) 13.c5 ♕c7



14.♖xb4 (14.♘e5!? is also strong and has led to two victories in practice) 14...exf3 15.♗xf3± White has a clear positional advantage, since Black is left with both structural problems and poor minor pieces, Tsvetkov – Permin, Voronezh 2016.

12.♗g5 ♕d7 13.♖xb4 exf3

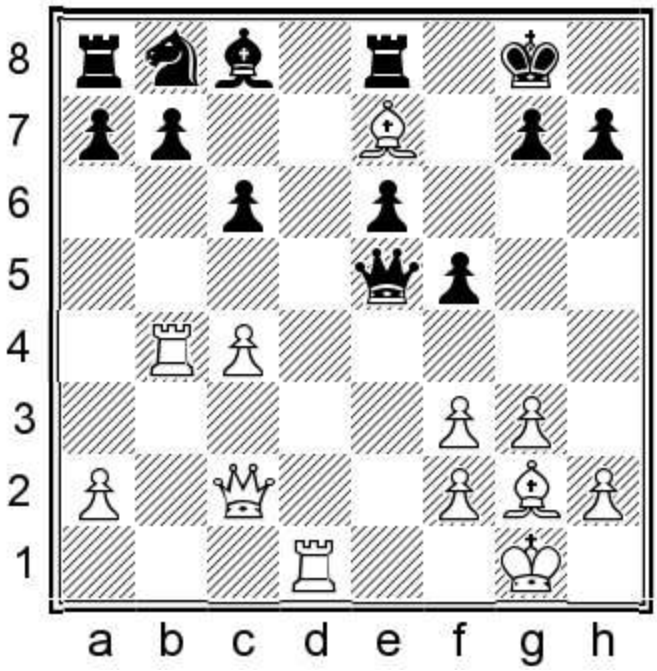


14.♗xf3

In *GM 2* I rejected this move, but now I consider it a pleasant choice between two options of roughly equal promise.

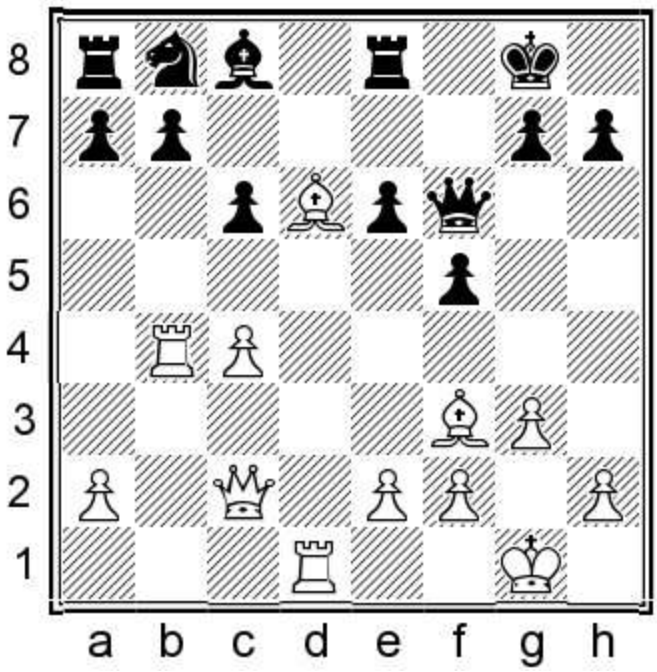
chesstouring.com

My previous recommendation of 14.exf3!?N is still worthy of consideration, as demonstrated by the following lines: 14...♕xd4 15.♗e7 ♖e8 16.♖d1 ♕e5



17.f4 ♕c7 (or 17...♕a5 18.♖a4 ♕c7 19.♗d6± and White gets the pawn back with a positional edge) 18.♗d6 ♕f7 19.♗xb8 c5 20.♖a4 ♖xb8 21.♖xa7 ♕c7 22.♕c3± White regains the pawn, while retaining a clear positional superiority.

14...♕xd4 15.♗e7 ♖e8 16.♖d1 ♕e5 17.♗d6 ♕f6



18.♗xb8! ♖xb8 19.♗xc6

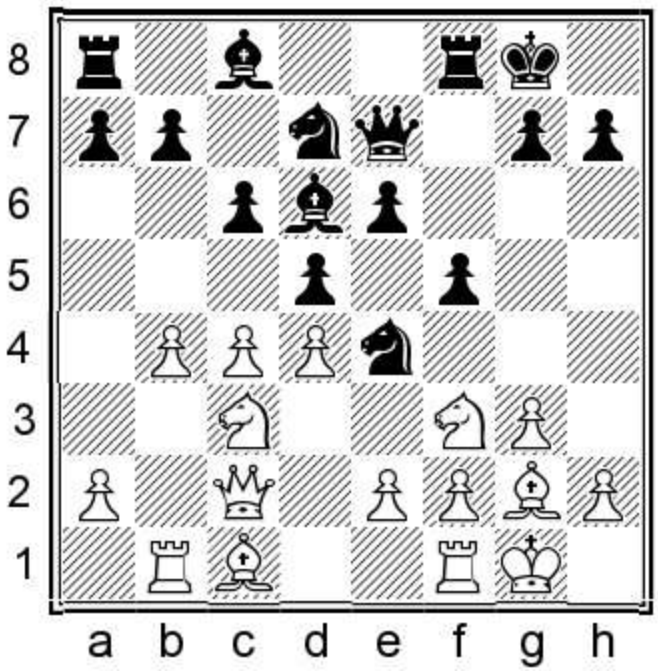
The game score ends here in my database, but it's hard to believe Black resigned in Sakalauskas – Samolins, Lithuania 2003. Play might continue:

chesstouring.com

19...♖f8 20.c5±

Despite the material equality, Black is under serious positional pressure.

F42) 10...♘d7



11.b5 ♘xc3

An important alternative is:

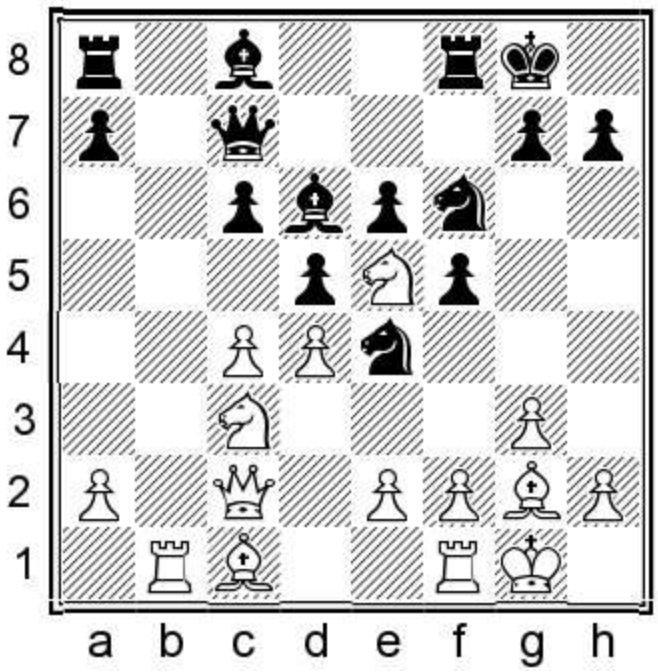
11...♘df6 12.bxc6

In *GM 2* I recommended 12.c5 ♗c7 13.♗f4 and noted the text move as an interesting alternative, but now I like it as the main line.

12...bxc6 13.♘e5!? ♕c7

This position was reached in Ferrara – Claverie, Buenos Aires 2003, as well as an Internet game from 2017. Both times White traded knights on e4, but an improvement is:

chesstouring.com



14.♗f4!N 14...g5

This seems like the critical try, but Black will pay a price for loosening his kingside. 14...♘d7 is well met by: 15.♘xe4! fxe4 (or 15...dxe4 16.c5! ♘xc5 17.f3! exf3 18.♗xf3 ♗d7 19.♖fc1±) 16.cxd5 ♘xe5 17.dxe5 cxd5 18.♗xe4! White wins a pawn thanks to this nice tactical trick.

15.♘xe4 ♘xe4 16.♗c1 ♗xe5

I also checked 16...h6 17.f3 ♘f6 18.e4! and White is clearly better.

17.dxe5 ♕xe5

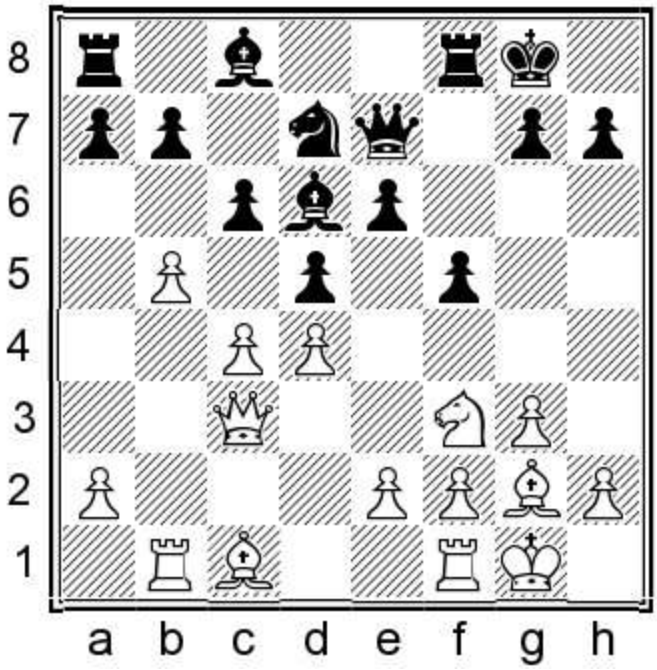
Taking the pawn is the only critical test, but it pretty much loses by force:

18.cxd5 cxd5 19.♕c6 ♖b8 20.♖xb8 ♕xb8 21.♗a3 ♖d8 22.♗xe4 fxe4 23.♗e7 ♗d7 24.♕c1!

And White wins.

12.♕xc3

chesstouring.com



12...cxb5

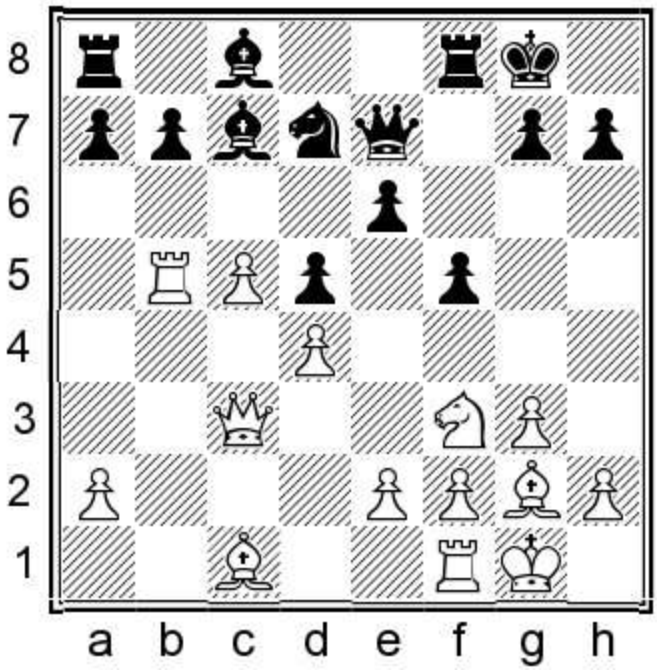
After 12...♘f6 13.bxc6 bxc6 14.♘e5± White's advantage was obvious in Salem – McLaren, Isle of Man 2016.

13.c5!

An important change from my previous work.

In *GM 2* I gave 13.cxd5, as happened in Matveeva – Thipsay, Jakarta 1993, but failed to consider 13...b4!N 14.♕b3 ♘b6!∞ when Black's pieces are coordinating pretty well.

13...♗c7 14.♖xb5



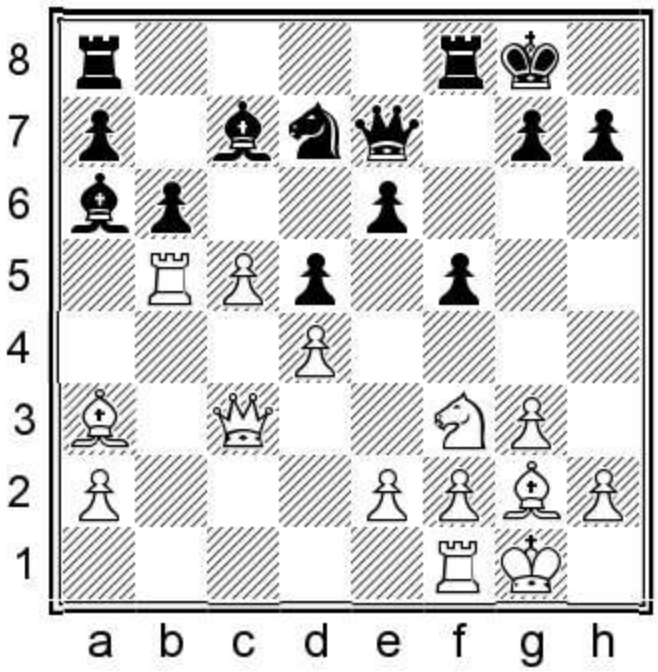
chesstouring.com

14...b6

After 14...♘b8 15.♗f4 ♘c6 16.♖fb1 ♗xf4 17.gxf4± White's advantage was beyond any doubt in Curi – Viera, Colonia del Sacramento 2015.

15.♗a3 ♗a6

This occurred in Kolaric – Khoudgarian, Tromso (ol) 2014. I believe White's most accurate continuation would have been:



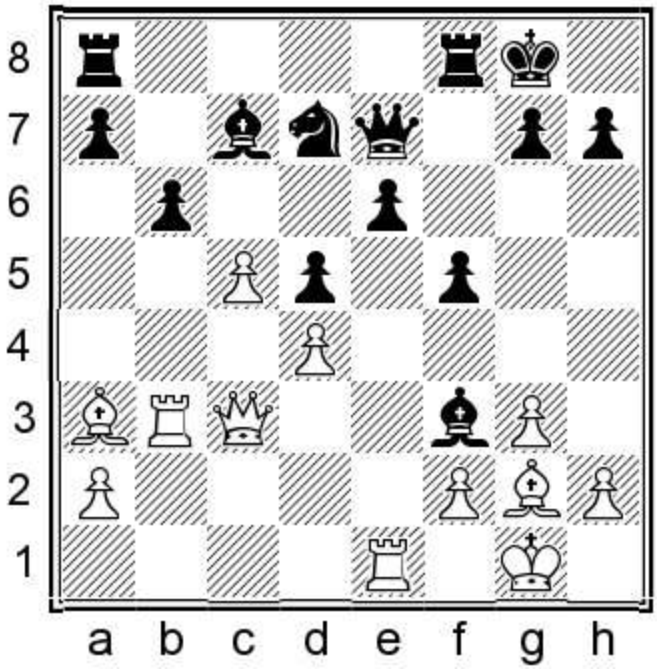
16.♖b3!N

There is no need to protect the e2-pawn and the rook is more active here than on b2, where it went in the above game.

16...♖fc8

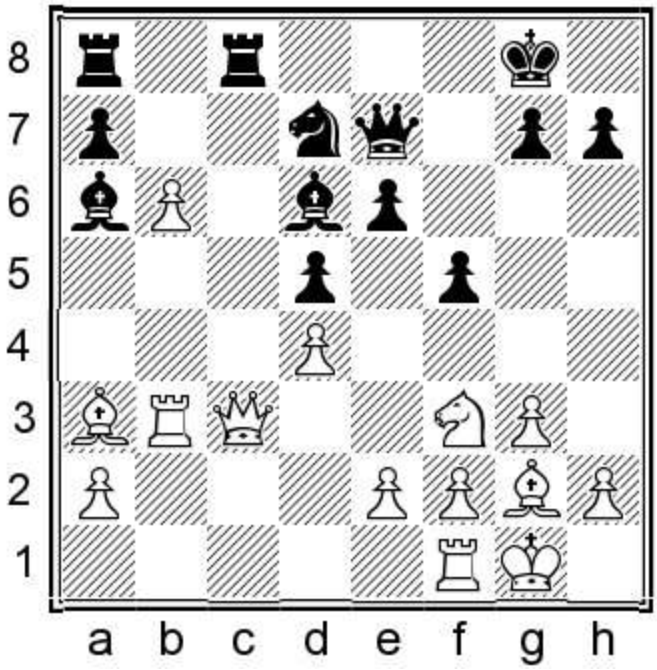
16...♗xe2? is refuted by: 17.♖e1 ♗xf3

chesstouring.com



18.cxb6! ♗d6 19.b7 ♖ab8 20.♗xf3 ♗xa3 21.♗xd5! Black is busted.

17.cxb6 ♗d6

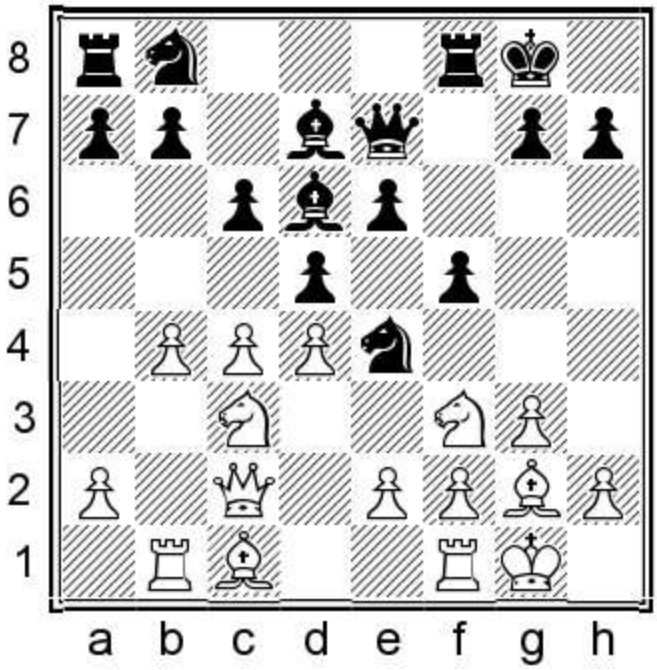


18.b7! ♗xb7 19.♕a5 ♘b6 20.♗xd6 ♕xd6 21.♘e5±

White's pressure remains pretty annoying for the opponent.

F43) 10...♗d7

chesstouring.com



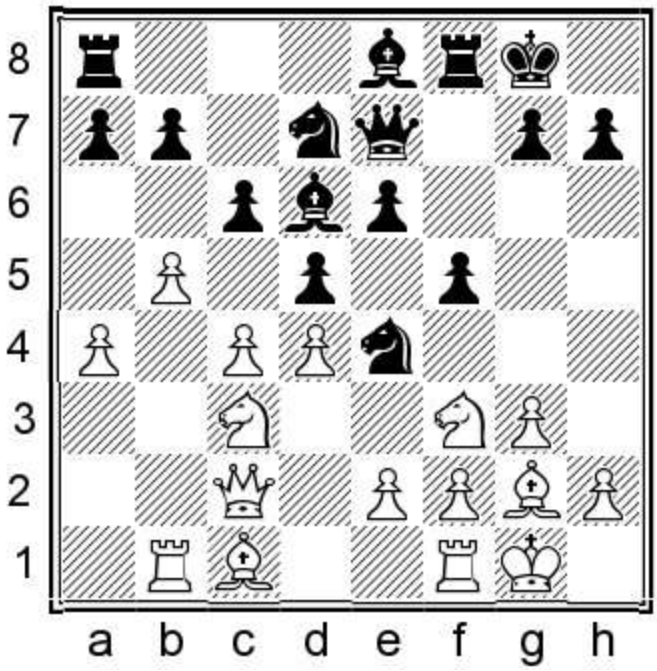
This is a reasonable developing move but it does nothing to slow down White's queenside initiative.

11.b5 ♘xc3

This is the usual choice. Other options are:

11...b6 has occurred twice in practice. I believe White should not rush with any committal decisions, but rather continue 12.a4N± with an excellent position.

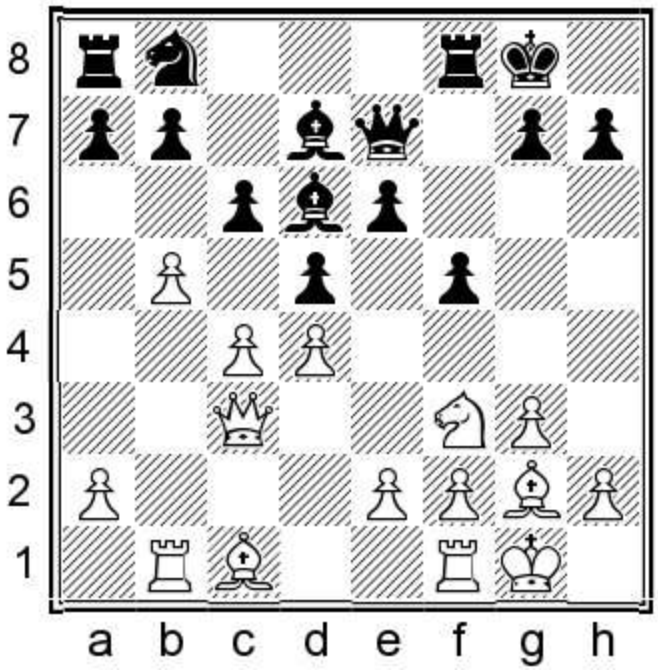
11...♗e8 12.a4 ♘d7 has resulted in two wins for White, but the middlegames were not so clear. However, the following idea is a nice improvement:



13.a5!N 13...♘df6 (or 13...a6 14.bxc6 bxc6 15.♘a4! and White has great play on the queenside) 14.bxc6

♗xc6 (14...bxc6 15.c5 ♗c7 16.♖b7 also puts Black under pressure) 15.♘e5 with an obvious advantage to White in all these lines.

12.♕xc3



12...cxb5

This has the obvious follow-up to Black's previous move.

12...dxc4? has only been tried once, and after 13.♘e5! ♗xe5 14.dxe5 White was already strategically winning in Alshameary Puente – Simon Padros, Barcelona 2017.

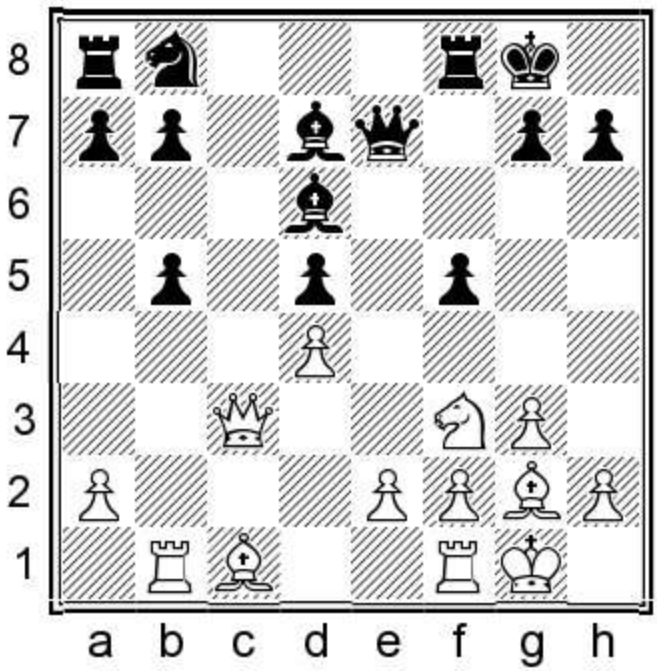
13.cxd5!

This is the only way to fight for an advantage. Instead, 13.cxb5 ♖c8 14.♕d3 a6= gave Black a comfortable game in Mattick – Gleizerov, Berlin 1996.

13...exd5

13...b4?! 14.♕b3 a5 15.♘e5!± was unpleasant for Black in Hoang Thanh Trang – Zimina, St Petersburg 2009.

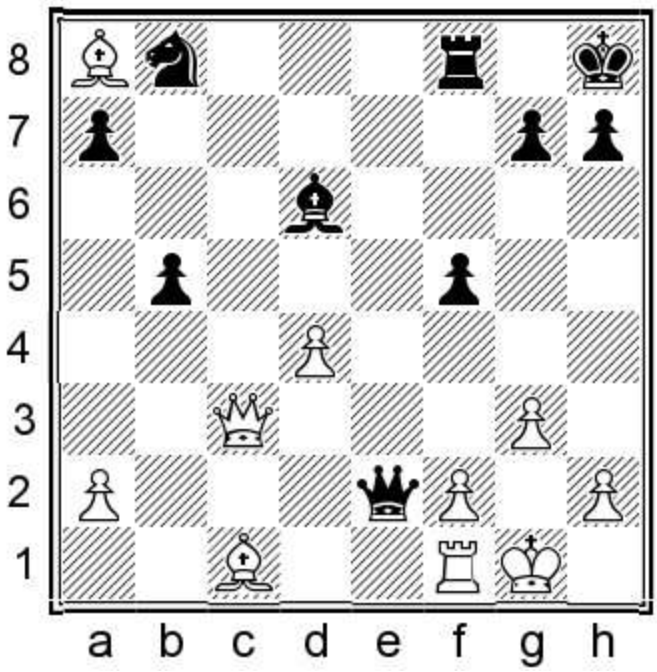
chesstouring.com



14.♘e5! ♔h8

This is Black's best try, which I neglected to mention in *GM 2*. It does not solve his problems though.

14...♗c6 allows 15.♘xc6 bxc6 16.♖xb5! with the following justification: 16...cxb5N (after 16...♔h8 17.♖b2± White's positional advantage was self-evident in Baryshpolets – Shumilov, Kiev 2005) 17.♗xd5† ♔h8 18.♗xa8 ♕xe2



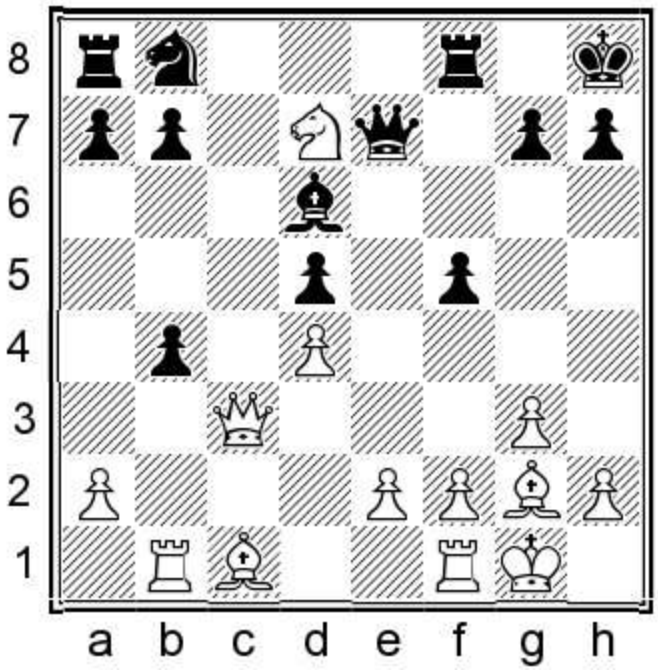
19.♗a3! ♕e7 20.♖e1 ♕f6 21.♗d5± White is much better.

15.♘xd7 b4

In the event of 15...♕xd7 16.♕b3 a6 17.♕xd5 ♘c6 18.e3 ♕e7 19.♗d2 White's positional advantage is obvious; this has occurred in three games and Black has yet to avoid defeat.

chesstouring.com

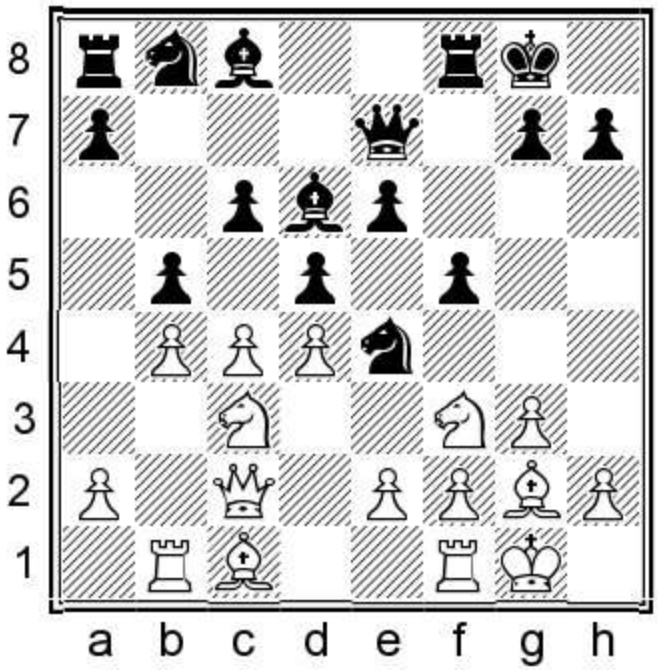
The text move was played in Alferov – Lupynin, corr. 2008. White should have responded with:



16.♕b3N 16...♘xd7 17.♕xd5 ♘b6 18.♕b5±

With a pleasant advantage.

F44) 10...b5



This has been used by some strong GMs and is reminiscent of variation F33, but Black hopes that having the queen on e7 will prove more useful than a knight on d7.

11.cxb5 ♘xc3 12.♕xc3 cxb5 13.♗f4 ♗xf4

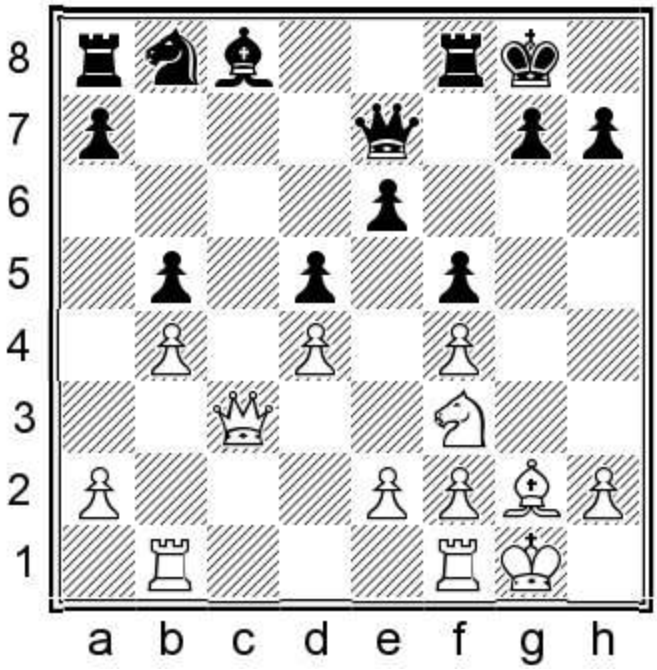
chesstouring.com

Black should take the opportunity to damage White's pawn structure slightly, otherwise he is doomed to suffer, as happened in the following games:

13...♗d7 14.♗xd6 ♕xd6 15.♖fc1 ♘a6 16.♘e5± Ris – Nothnagel, Germany 2010.

13...♗b7 14.♗xd6 ♕xd6 15.♕c5 ♕b6 16.♘e5± Li Chao – Nie Xinyang, Harbin 2016.

14.gxf4



14...♘d7

14...♗d7 was an innovation by a high-level GM, but 15.♕c5 ♕xc5 16.bxc5 a5 17.a3± left him facing a difficult endgame in Edouard – Fressinet, Agen 2016.

15.♕c7! ♖e8 16.♕a5!

Improving over 16.♕c6 which was played in Golod – Ulibin, Biel 2009. This idea of mine from *GM 2* has since received a practical test.

16...♕d6

This was Black's choice in the game.

16...a6

I only considered this move in *GM 2*, and my analysis of it still holds up fine.

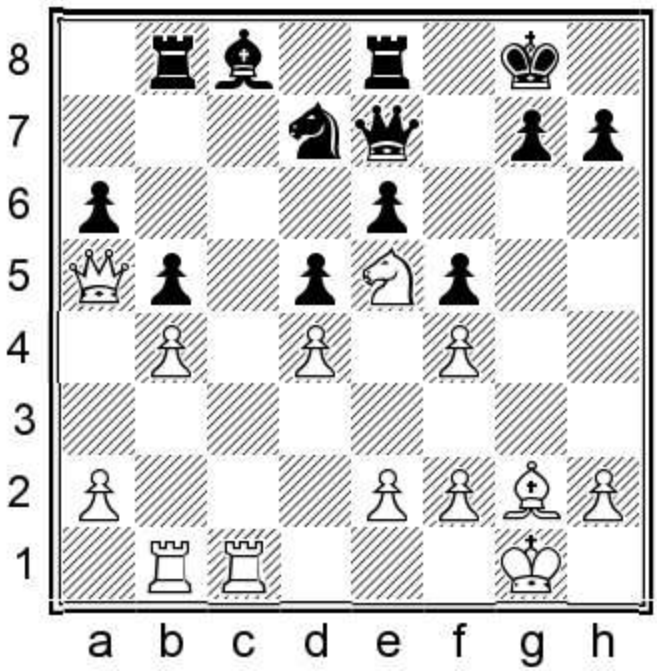
17.♖fc1 ♖b8

I also examined 17...♘f6 18.♘e5 ♗d7 19.♖c7 ♖ec8 20.♖bc1± when White is in complete control.

18.♘e5

18.♖c7 ♕d8 19.♘e5 ♘b6 20.♖c6 ♘c4 21.♕xd8 ♖xd8 22.e3± also offers White the better chances, as he can eliminate Black's knight at a suitable moment.

chesstouring.com

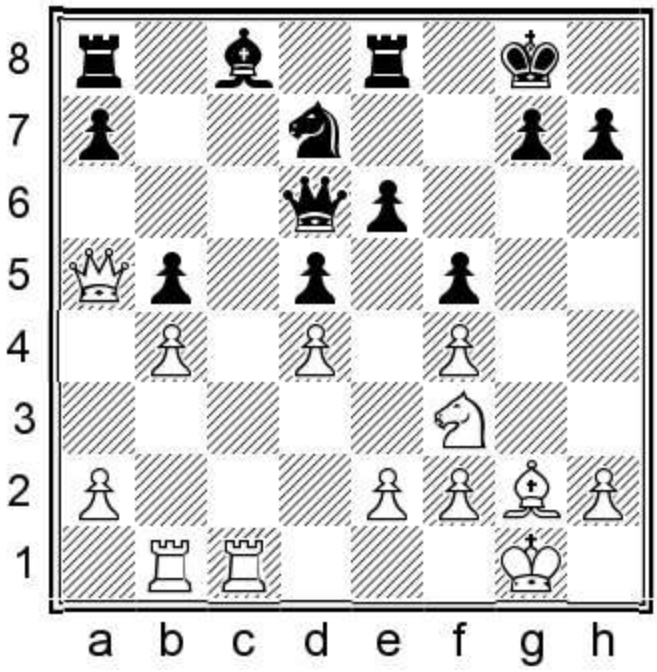


18...♘xe5 19.fxe5 ♕h4 20.♕c7 ♖b7 21.♕c6 ♖d7 22.♕b6

White has the advantage thanks to his control of the c-file.

17.♖fc1!?

17.e3N is also good.



17...♘b6 18.♕xb5 ♗d7 19.♕c5 ♕xf4 20.e3 ♕h6 21.♘e5±

Trubchaninov – Spichkin, Moscow 2017.

Conclusion

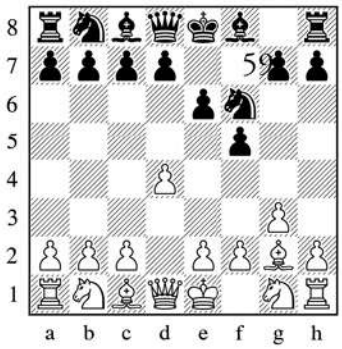
chesstouring.com

As I have mentioned before, the Stonewall is an underrated opening: despite the glaring weakness of the e5-square, it is not at all easy for White to prove an advantage, although my recommended set-up certainly poses Black plenty of challenges. White's principal plan still involves a queenside attack with b4-b5, but we should be ready to switch to a more closed game with c4-c5 and ♗f4 against certain set-ups. It was quite a challenge to deal with the abundance of theoretical developments that have taken place since *GM 2*, but I believe any player equipped with the analysis in these pages will be able to cause definite problems for Stonewall players.

chesstouring.com



Dutch



Classical – Introduction

Variation Index

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6

4.c4

A) 4...♗b4† 60

B) 4...♗e7 5.♘f3 0-0 6.0-0 63

B1) 6...b6 64

B2) 6...♘e4 65

B3) 6...d6 7.♘c3 66

B31) 7...♘c6?! 66

B32) 7...a5 8.b3 68

B321) 8...♘a6 69

B322) 8...♘e4 9.♗b2 70

B3221) 9...♗f6 70

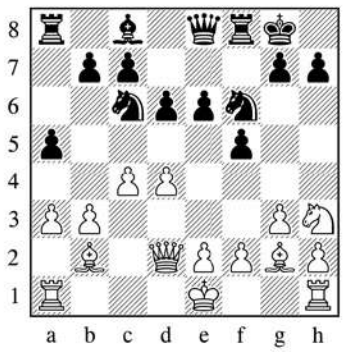
B3222) 9...♘xc3 10.♗xc3 71

B32221) 10...♘d7 71

B32222) 10...♕e8 72

chesstouring.com

A) note to 6...d6



11.d5!N

A) note to 8...a5



12.♗a5!N

B3221) note to 11...♘c6

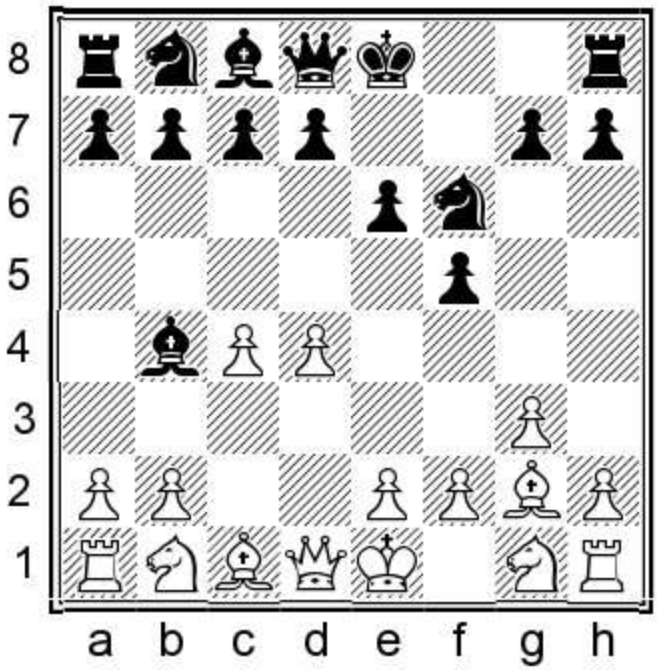


13.e5!N

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.c4

Both this chapter and the next will focus on Dutch lines involving the e6-d6 pawn formation. We will analyse **A)** 4...♗b4† followed by the more popular **B)** 4...♗e7. I should clarify that we would ordinarily avoid the former option by playing 4.♘f3, but we should be ready for it in case Black employs the quite popular move order of 1.d4 e6 2.c4 f5.

A) 4...♗b4†



5.♘d2!

5.♗d2 would offer Black a lot of freedom: he could trade bishops immediately, maintain the tension with 5...♕e7 or 5...a5; or play 5...♗e7 followed by ...d6 or even ...d5, when the placement of the bishop on d2 instead of c1 has both pros and cons.

I really like the text move, as it avoids giving Black so many options and leads to a situation where

chesstouring.com

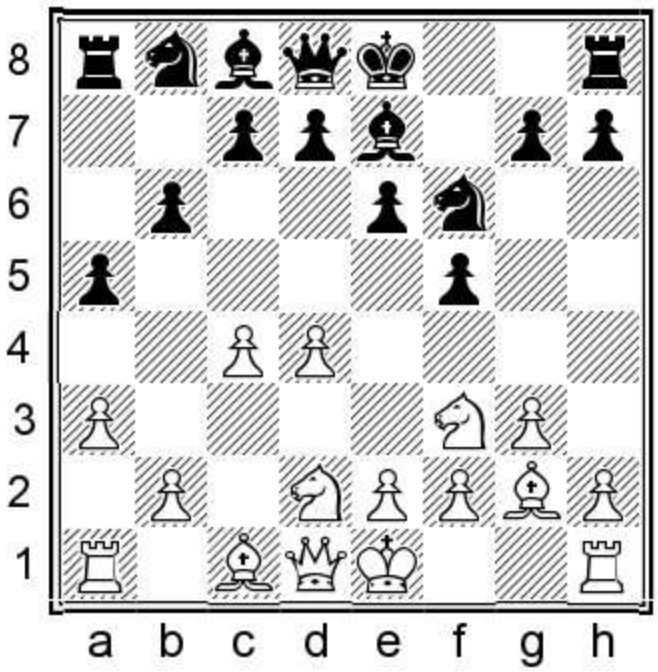
Black's bishop will be misplaced on b4, regardless of the set-up he chooses.

5...0-0

It is hard to believe Black has anything better than castling, but I would like to mention the following alternative:

5...a5 6.♘gf3 b6 7.a3! ♗e7

White's point is that 7...♗xd2† runs into 8.♘xd2! when Black has no time for ...♗b7.



8.♘e5 ♖a7

8...c6 is obviously met by 9.e4.

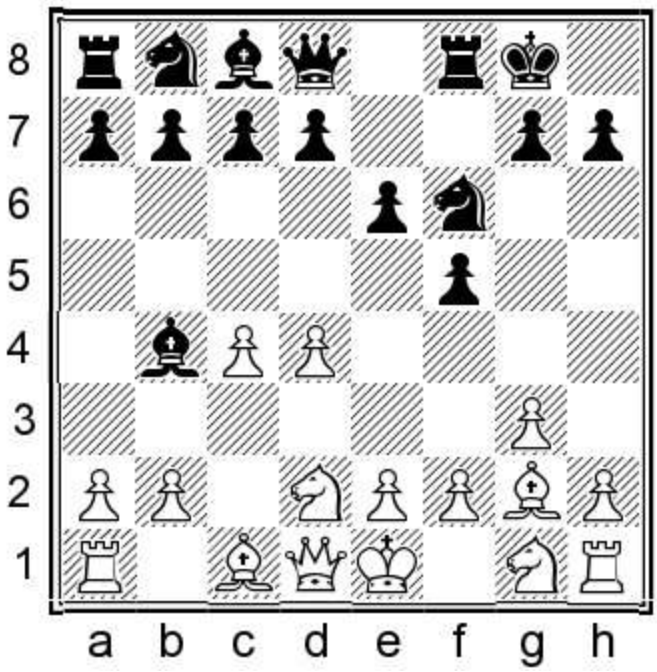
9.e4 ♗b7 10.d5! 0-0

10...fxe4? proved to be a worse choice in the earlier game: 11.♘xe4 exd5 12.♘xf6† ♗xf6 13.0-0! d4?! 14.♗xb7 ♖xb7 15.♕h5† g6 16.♘xg6 hxg6 17.♕xg6† ♔f8 18.♖e1! d5 19.♖e6 ♘d7 20.♗f4 and Black resigned in Svidler – Williams, Bunratty 2008.

11.0-0 ♘a6 12.♖e1 ♘c5 13.exf5 exd5 14.cxd5 ♗xd5 15.♗xd5† ♘xd5 16.♘b3 c6 17.♘d4±

White was better in Sciarretta – Bishop, corr. 2011.

chesstouring.com



6.♘h3!

This method of developing the knight is a well-known motif in many Dutch lines, and it works especially well in this instance.

6...d6

This has been Black's usual choice. I checked two other options:

6...♘c6 7.a3!

7.d5 ♘e5 8.♕b3 is a promising alternative but the text move seems more convincing.

7...♗xd2† 8.♕xd2

Also interesting is 8.♗xd2!?N 8...d6 (8...♘xd4 runs into 9.♗b4 and White wins the exchange) 9.d5 ♘e5 10.♖c1 and I like White's position.

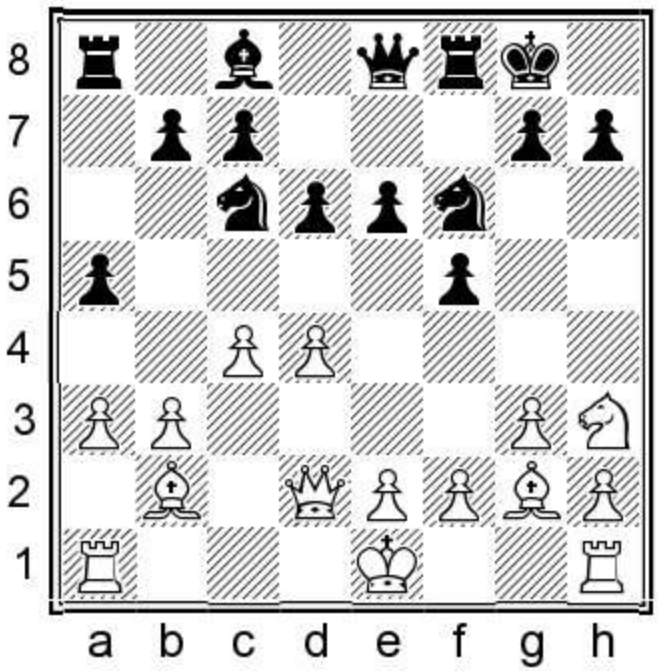
8...a5 9.b3

9.d5!? is also worth considering.

9...♕e8 10.♗b2 d6

In Pataki – Naumkin, Balatonlelle 2002, White should have played:

chesstouring.com



11.d5!N 11...♘e5 12.♖c1
With a pleasant edge.

6...d5 7.0-0 c6

7...♗xd2?! is hardly a good idea. In Dvinskikh – Kharitonov, Kirov 2015, the simplest option would have been 8.♕xd2N, as there is no need to fear 8...dxc4 9.♕c3 when White is clearly better.
This version of the Stonewall version is clearly favourable for White, due to Black's misplaced dark-squared bishop.

8.♕c2 b6

The main alternative is 8...♕e7 9.♘f4 (9.♘f3 is also good) 9...♗d6 10.♘d3 b6 as occurred in J. Horvath – Korsunsky, Montecatini Terme 1999. Here I would suggest 11.b4!N 11...♗b7 (11...♗xb4 12.♘xb4 ♕xb4 13.a4 ♖e8 14.♗a3 ♕a5 15.♖fb1 is pretty unpleasant for Black) 12.c5 ♗c7 13.♘f3 ♘bd7 14.♖b1 and White has a pleasant pull.

9.♘f4 ♖e8 10.♘f3 ♗b7 11.♘d3 ♗d6

11...♗f8 12.♗g5 is also promising for White.

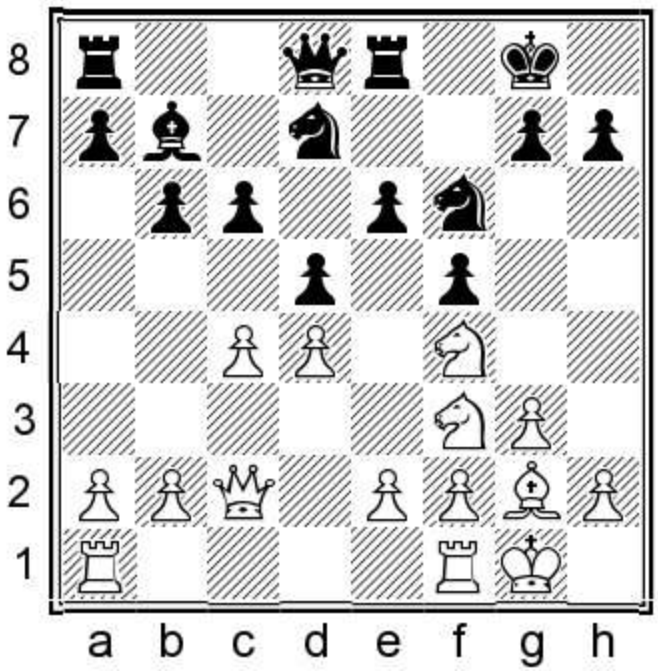
12.♗f4

As we have already seen, this is a thematic idea against the Stonewall structure.

12...♗xf4 13.♘xf4 ♘bd7

Now I propose the following improvement over Iotov – Kritz, Herndon 2012:

chesstouring.com

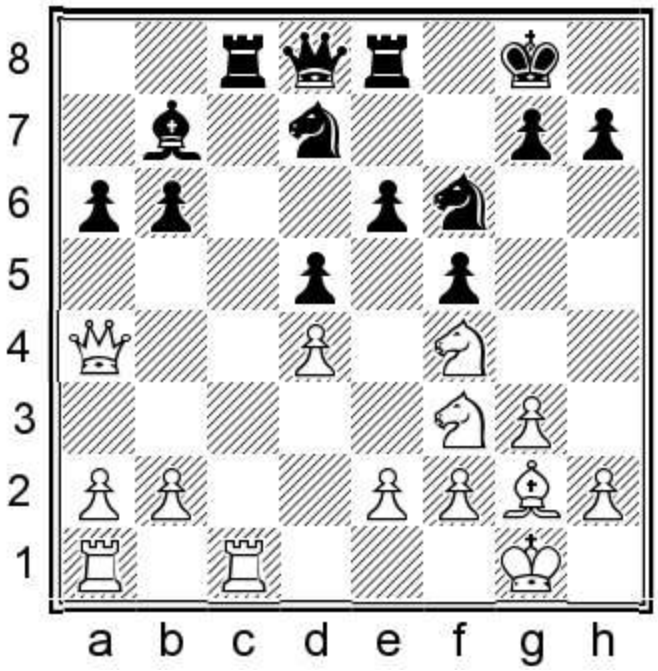


14.cxd5N 14...cxd5

14...♘xd5 offers White more than one good option: 15.♘xd5 (15.♘d3 ♖c8 16.♕a4 is also promising) 15...cxd5 16.♖fc1 ♖c8 17.♕a4 a6 18.♕a3 with a pleasant advantage.

15.♖fc1 ♖c8 16.♕a4 a6

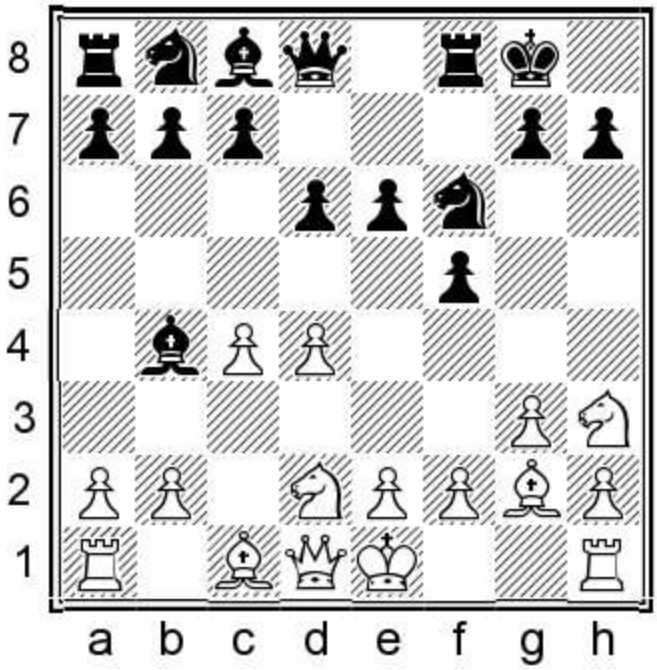
16...a5 17.e3 does not change much.



17.♖xc8 ♕xc8 18.e3 ♕c7 19.♗f1

White is in full control.

chesstouring.com



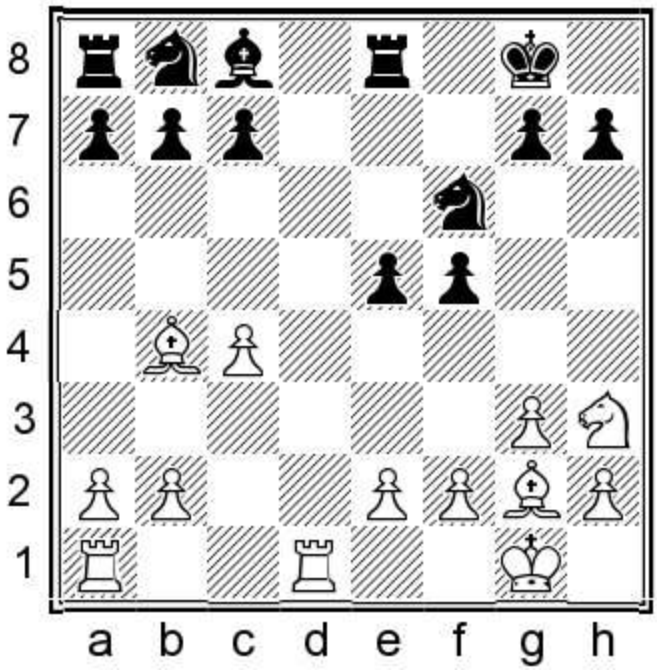
7.0-0 ♗xd2

Unfortunately for Black, 7...e5 would run into 8.♘b3! when the problematic position of his dark-squared bishop becomes apparent. After 8...exd4 9.♘xd4 ♗c5 10.♘f4 ♖e8 11.b3 c6 12.♗b2± White had a typical advantage due to the favourable pawn structure in Pohlig – Wiacek, corr. 2002.

8.♗xd2 a5

I will take this as the main line, although of course Black has other options at his disposal.

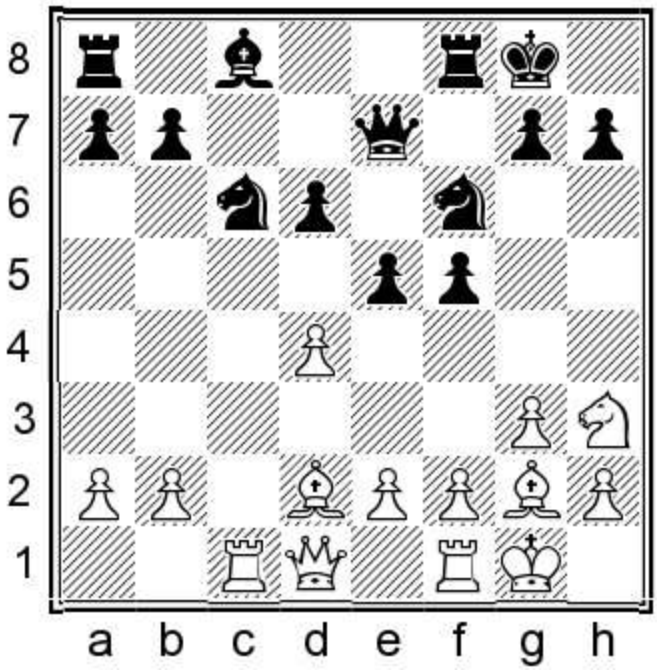
8...e5 has been played a few times but it only helps White to open the position for his bishop pair. 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.♗b4 ♕xd1 11.♖fxd1 ♖e8 Now in Gladyszev – Rusanov, Dagomys 2010, White missed a nice idea:



chesstouring.com

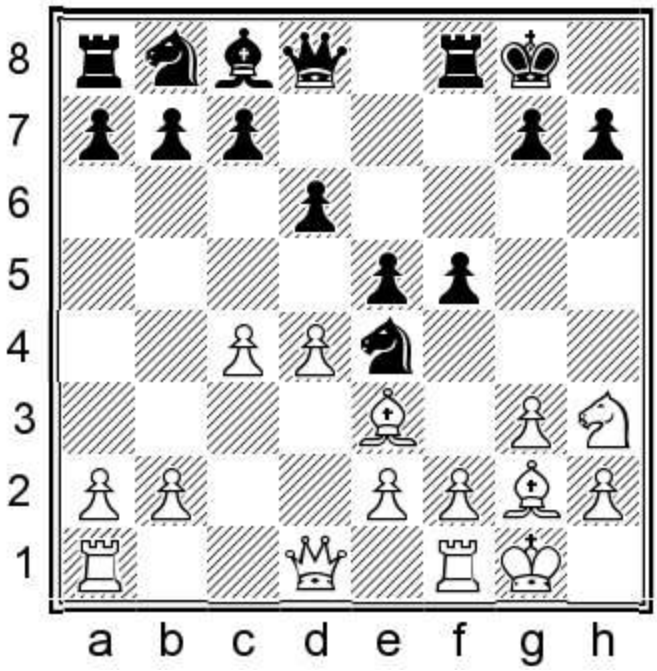
12.♗a5!N 12...♘a6 (after 12...c6 13.b3 the weakening of the d6-square is significant) 13.b4 Black is clearly under pressure.

8...♕e7 9.♖c1 (9.♘f4 looks pretty good as well) 9...e5 10.c5! sees White once again opening the game for the bishop pair. 10...♘c6 11.cxd6 cxd6 In Milov – D. Johansen, Suncoast 1999, White should have continued the policy of opening lines with:



12.dxe5!N 12...dxe5 13.♘g5 e4 14.♕b3† ♔h8 15.♗e3± With much better chances.

8...♘e4 9.♗e3 e5 occurred in Zatonskih – Repplinger, Germany 2013, when White could have applied the same concept as the above example with:



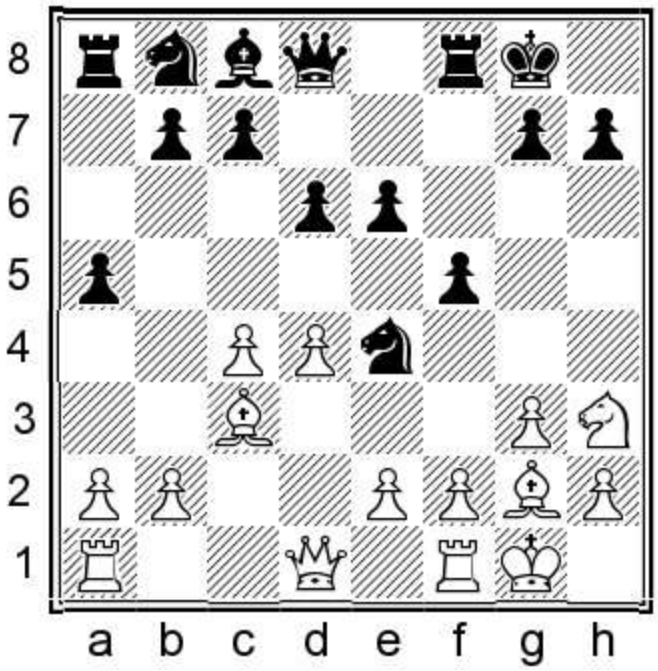
10.c5!N 10...♘c6 11.♕b3† ♔h8 (or 11...d5 12.f3 ♘f6 13.dxe5 ♘xe5 14.♗d4 ♖e8 15.♘f4 c6 16.e4±)

chesstouring.com

12.d5 ♘e7 13.f4! exf4 14.♘xf4 ♘xc5 15.♕c3 and White retains a clear advantage.

9.♗c3 ♘e4

Here I propose a modest improvement:



10.♕c2N

I find this more straightforward than 10.♖c1, which was played in Kogan – Glek, Otranto 2011.

10...♘c6 11.♘f4 ♘xc3

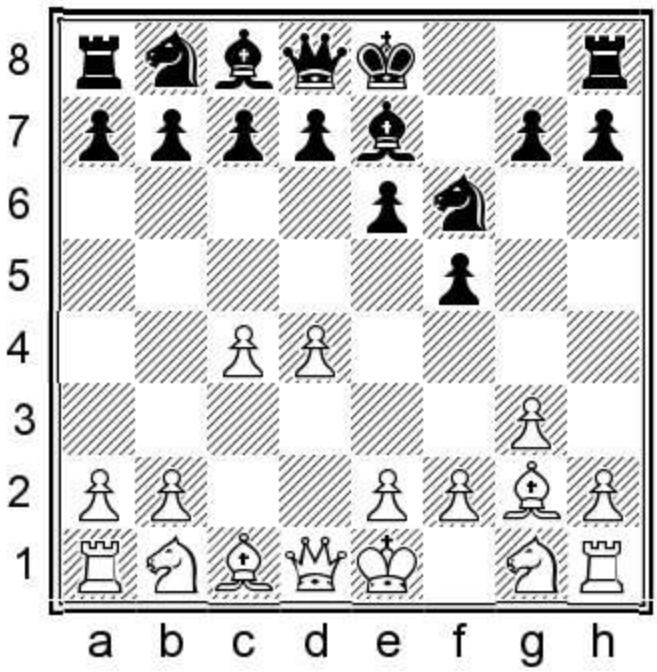
Unfortunately for Black, he is not ready for 11...e5? in view of 12.dxe5 ♘xc3 13.♕xc3 dxe5 14.♗xc6 exf4 15.♖ad1 and White is much better.

12.♕xc3 ♕f6 13.e3±

White enjoys a pleasant positional edge.

B) 4...♗e7

chesstouring.com



The development of the bishop to e7 is considered to be slightly passive, which is probably the main reason why it is seldom played at GM level.

5.♘f3 0-0 6.0-0

Now **B1)** 6...b6 and **B2)** 6...♘e4 are worth mentioning but **B3)** 6...d6 is clearly Black's first choice.

In the event of 6...c6 (or 6...d5 immediately) 7.♘bd2 d5 (I don't see much point in 7...d6, since after 8.♕c2 White is ready to play e2-e4 next) we have reached a line of the Stonewall, which was covered in variation C of Chapter 1.

6...♕e8

This queen manoeuvre is thematic for this structure, but I don't see much point in doing it without first moving the d-pawn.

7.♘c3 ♕h5

7...d6 transposes to variation B of the next chapter.

8.d5!

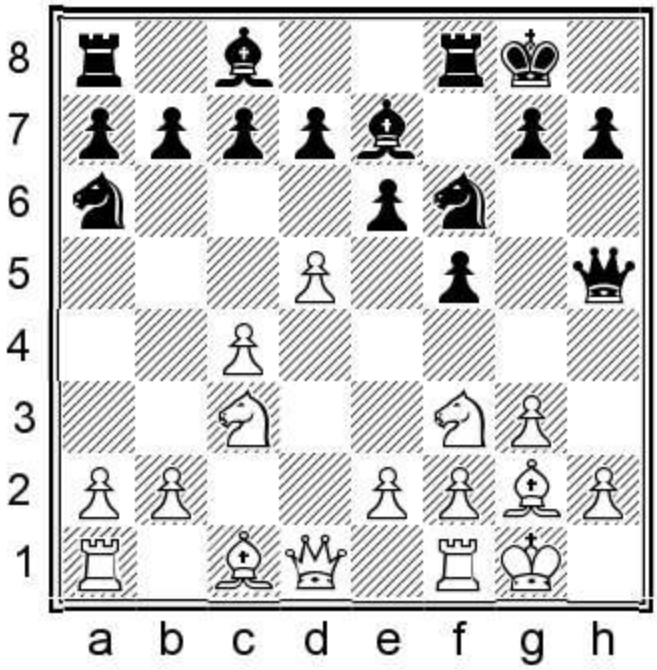
Not only gaining space in the centre, but also disrupting Black's coordination.

8...♘a6

8...d6 9.dxe6 ♗xe6 10.♘d4 ♗c8 11.b4 was clearly better for White in Ball – Zaradic, Edmonton 1975.

This position has occurred four times in tournament practice, but for some reason nobody went for the following natural move:

chesstouring.com



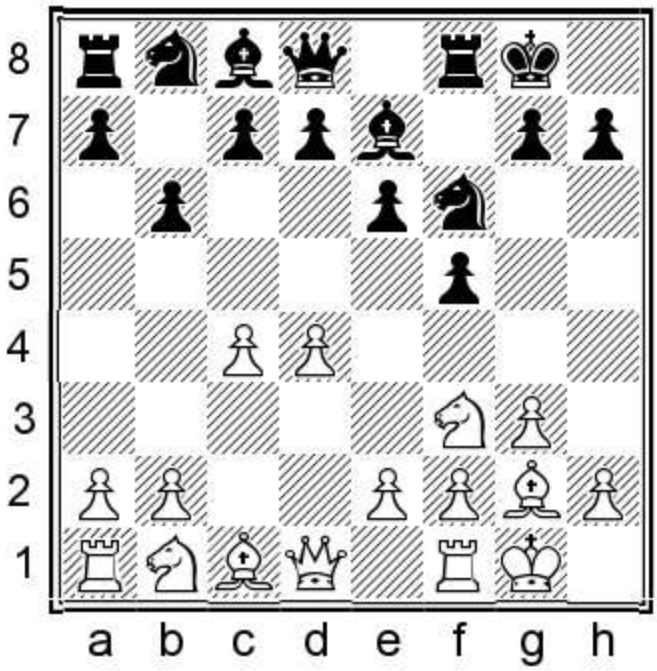
9.♗f4N

The recommendation from *GM 2* still looks good to me. White maintains a clear advantage, for instance:

9...d6 10.dxe6 ♗xe6 11.♘d4 ♗c8 12.♕d2

Black will have a hard time dealing with White's pressure on the queenside.

B1) 6...b6



Black hopes to post his bishop on b7, thus reaching a hybrid of the Dutch and Queen's Indian defences where he controls the central squares d5 and e4. However, White can strike first.

chesstouring.com

7.♘e5!?

My new approach.

7.d5 was my previous recommendation and although White has good chances for an advantage there too, 7...♗b7 appears to be playable for Black and many games have been played from that position.

7...c6

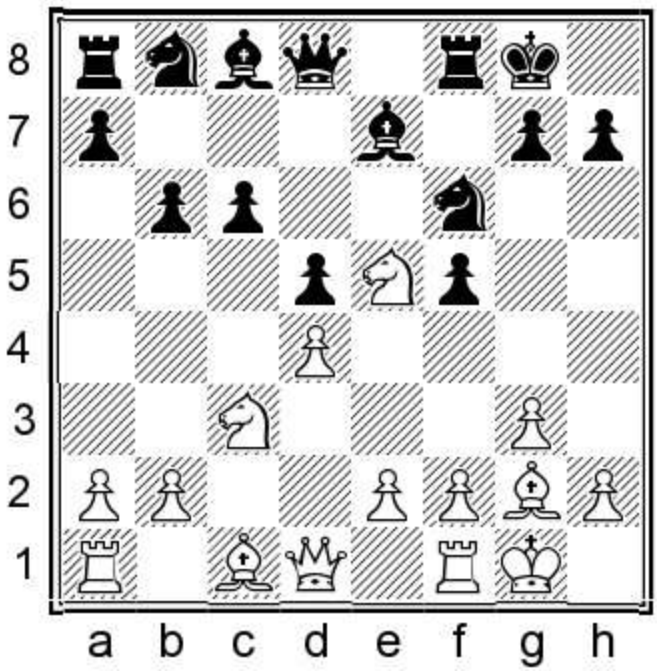
7...d5 obviously leads to a favourable Queen's Indian structure for White after 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♘c3, when Black has weakened himself with ...f5.

8.♘c3 d5

Otherwise White is ready for e2-e4.

9.cxd5 cxd5

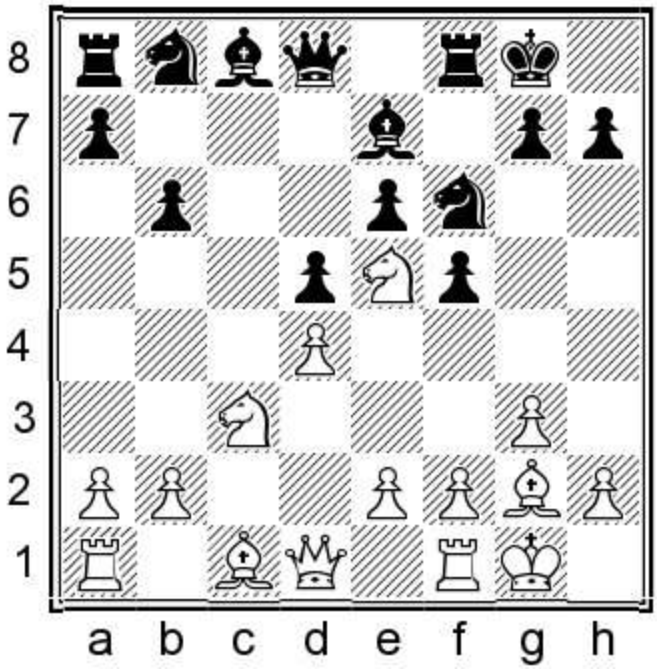
9...exd5 was seen in Mihet – Gramaticu, Eforie Nord 1999, when White should have started with:



10.♕c2!?N Keeping an eye on the f5-pawn and thus preventing ...♗b7. 10...♗e6 11.b3 Again, White has a highly favourable version of a Queen's Indian structure.

The text move was played in Hellenberg – Wantola, Leiden 2008. Natural and strong would have been:

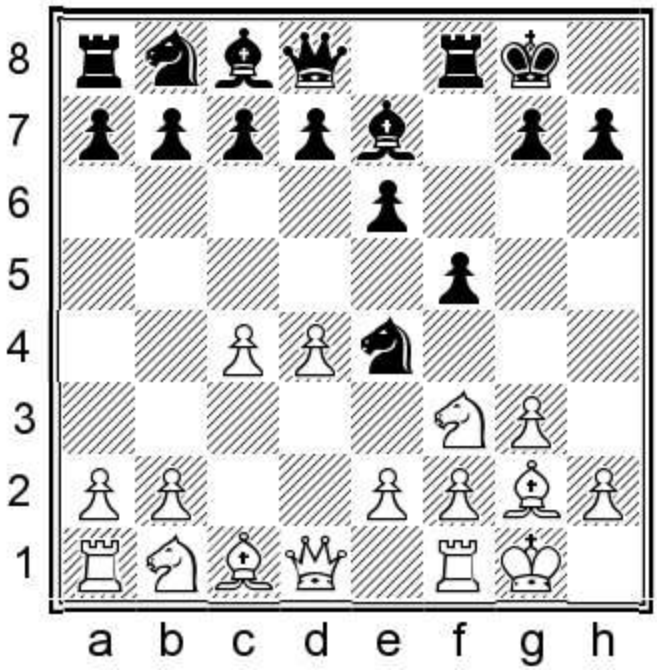
chesstouring.com



10.♗f4N 10...♗b7 11.♖c1

White has an obvious positional plus. Black is also not helped by the fact that 11...♘c6? is impossible due to the thematic 12.♘xd5! tactic, winning material.

B2) 6...♘e4



Here I like the following plan for White.

7.♘bd2 ♗f6

7...d5 8.b3 ♘c6 takes us back to variation B1 of Chapter 1 on page 12.

chesstouring.com

8.♘xe4!

This is more challenging than my previous recommendation of 8.b3.

8...fxe4 9.♘e5 d5

9...d6?! is hardly a good idea in view of 10.♘g4 d5 11.♘xf6† ♕xf6 12.f3 and White was much better in Antonova – Mamedjarova, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010.

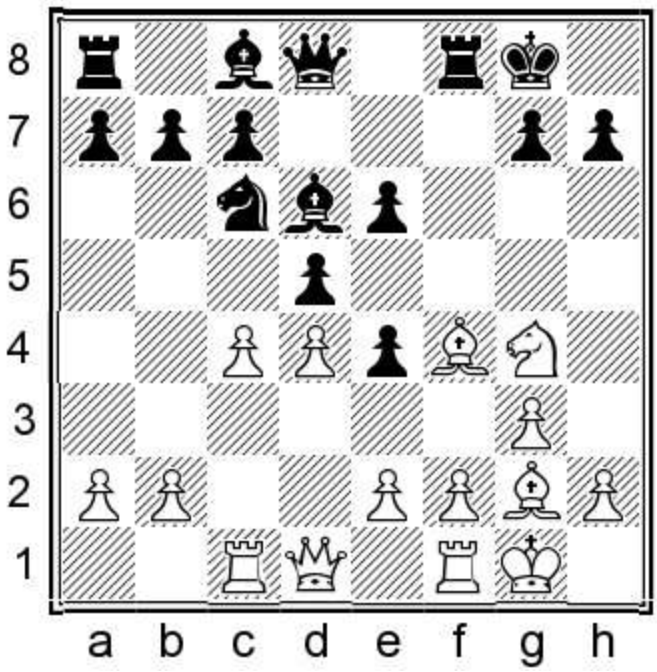
10.♘g4 ♗e7 11.♗f4

White has clearly better chances, with a simple plan of undermining Black's pawn chain by means of f2-f3, which will expose Black's e6-pawn as well as the weakness of the e5-square.

11...c5

I checked two other moves:

11...♘d7 happened in Radovanovic – D. Eggleston, Coulsdon 2006. After 12.f3!N 12...exf3 13.♗xf3 dxc4 14.♕c2 White's advantage is beyond any doubts.
11...♘c6 12.♖c1 ♗d6 occurred in Hera – C. Horvath, Hungary 1999, when White should have continued:

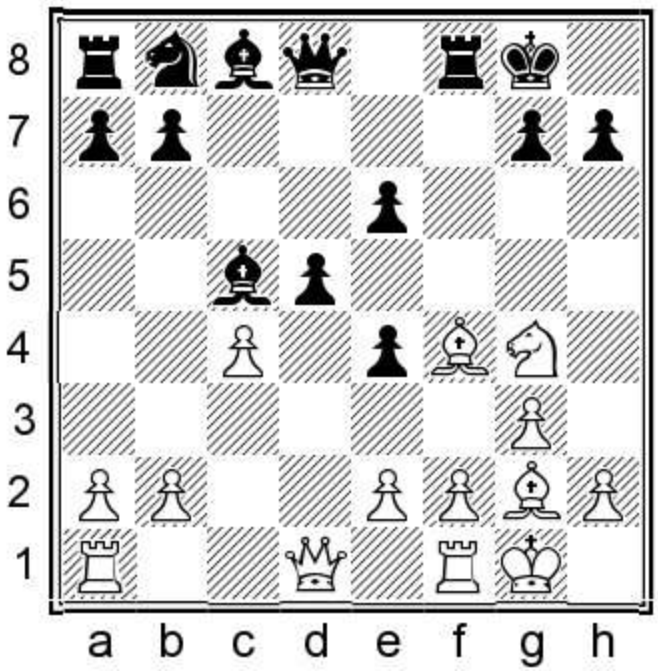


13.♘e5!N This move is surprisingly powerful; for instance, 13...♗xe5 14.dxe5 ♘e7 15.♗g5! with a clear advantage.

12.dxc5 ♗xc5

This position has been reached in several games but for some reason White has never chosen:

chesstouring.com



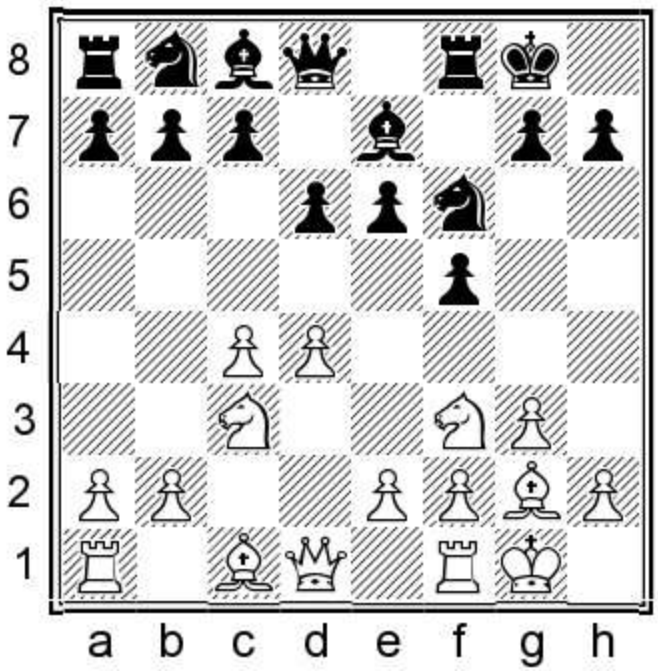
13.♖c1N

White has an excellent game, for instance:

13...♘a6 14.♕d2

With an obvious advantage.

B3) 6...d6 7.♘c3



This will be our tabiya for the Classical Dutch, at which point Black is at an important crossroads. In the remainder of this chapter we will consider **B31)** 7...♘c6?! and **B32)** 7...a5.

chesstouring.com

The two most important options of 7...♘e4 and 7...♕e8 will be examined in the next chapter.

B31) 7...♘c6?!

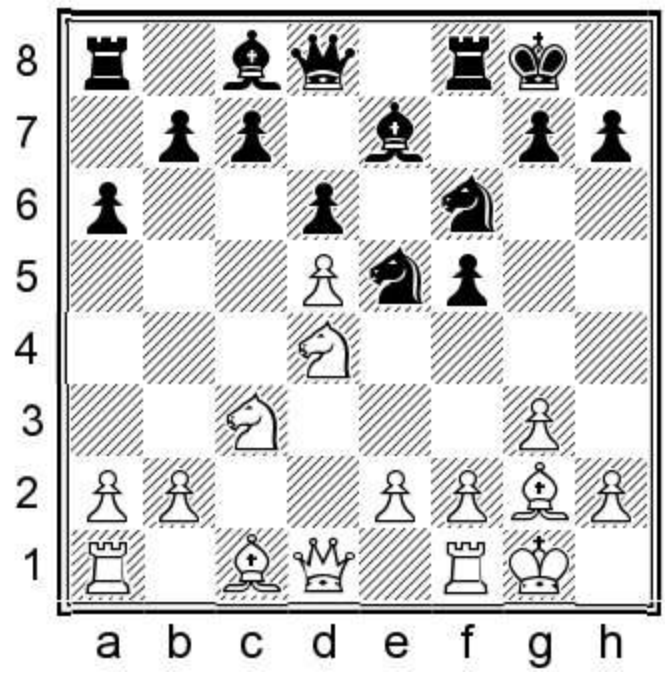
This is well known to be a dubious choice in view of:

8.d5!

Damaging Black's pawn structure. As I noted in *GM 2*, Classical Dutch expert Simon Williams covered this variation from Black's point of view in a chapter of *Dangerous Weapons: The Dutch*, but not many players have followed his suggestion, with good reason.

8...♘e5

After 8...exd5?! 9.cxd5 ♘e5 10.♘d4! White has amassed a terrific score. In *GM 2* I ended the analysis here, but this time I would like to add a recent game, which can be considered a model example for White: 10...a6



11.f4! ♘g6 12.♕d3 ♘g4 13.e4! ♘h6 14.exf5 ♘xf5 15.♘e6 ♗xe6 16.dxe6 c6 17.♗h3+– White already had a decisive advantage in Tsitsulin – Tambunan, corr. 2016.

The only other option worth mentioning is:

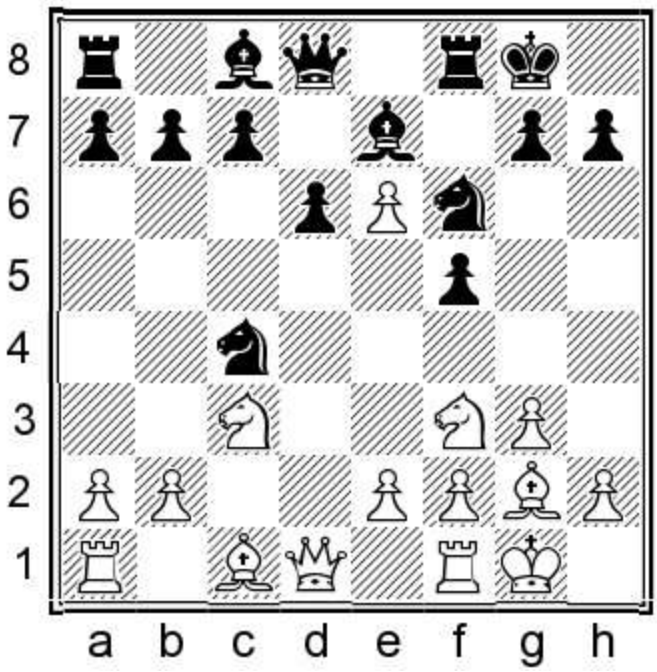
8...♘a5 9.dxe6!?

9.♘g5N is also fine, as Black hardly has anything better than transposing to our main line with 9...♘xc4 10.♘xe6.

9...♘xc4

9...♗xe6 10.b3± leaves White with a clear positional advantage.

chesstouring.com



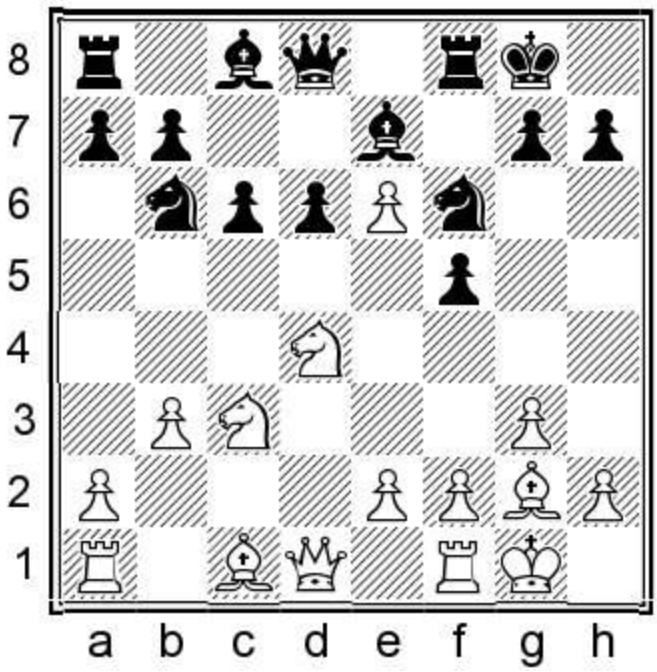
10.♘d4 c6

This has been Black's usual choice; he does not have anything better.

11.b3 ♘b6

11...♘e5 12.f4 ♘eg4 13.♘xf5 ♗xe6 occurred in Zaradic – Pakosta, Vancouver 1971. Williams quotes the full game and indeed Black went on to win in good style, but at this stage the simple 14.♘d4N 14...♗d7 15.e4± would have given White an obvious advantage.

In Pogan – Hering, Hofheim 2014, White should have played:



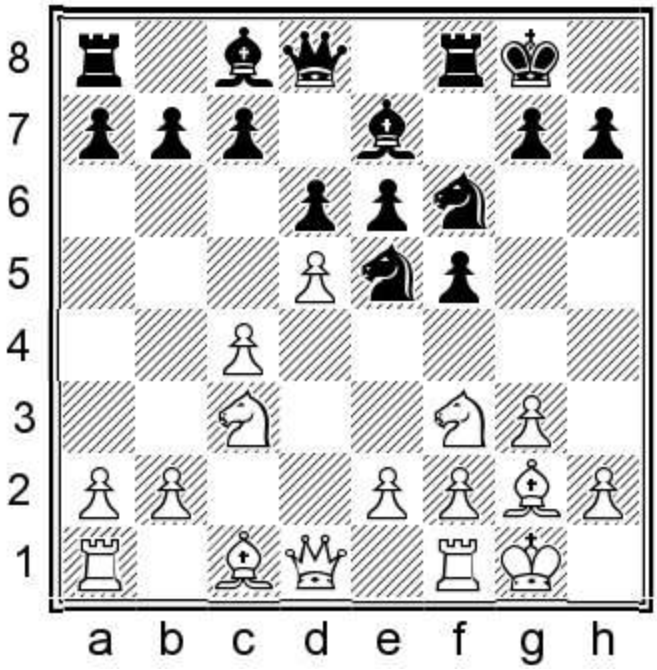
12.♘xf5N 12...d5

After 12...♗xe6 13.♘xe7† ♕xe7 14.♗a3 ♖ad8 15.e4± the evaluation is about the same.

13.a4! ♗xe6 14.♘xe7† ♕xe7 15.♗a3 c5 16.a5 ♘bd7 17.♘xd5±

White enjoys a clear advantage.

chesstouring.com



9.♘d4! ♘xc4

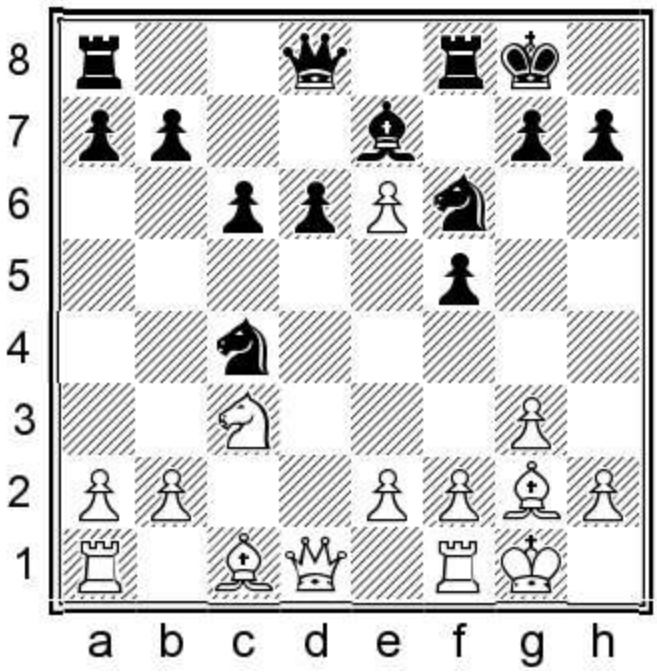
9...exd5?! 10.cxd5 transposes to the 8...exd5?! line in the notes above.

10.♘xe6!?

10.dxe6 is a decent alternative which transposes to the 8...♘a5 analysis above. However, it is hard to resist trading the knight for Black's light-squared bishop.

10...♗xe6 11.dxe6 c6

Black does not have much choice, but now White picks up a pawn.

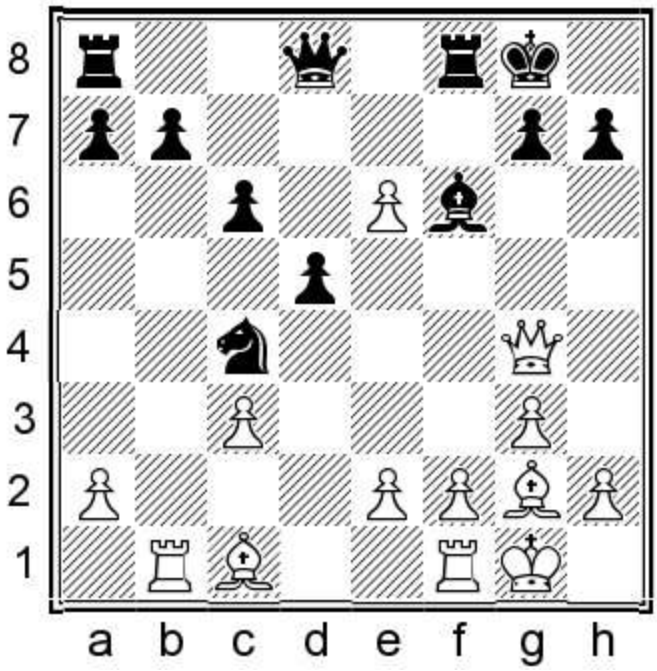


12.♕d3 d5 13.♕xf5 ♗c5

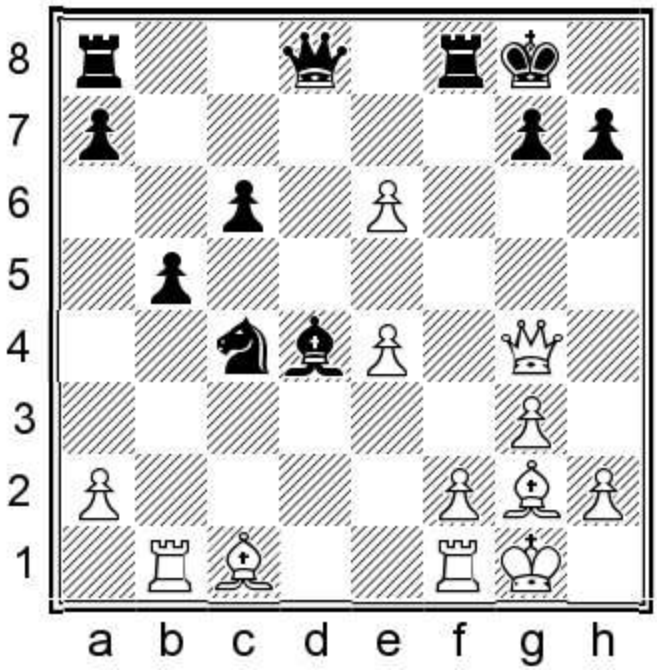
chesstouring.com

In *GM 2* I discussed a variety of options for Black but since his position is clearly dubious and hardly anyone has dared to play it, I will not go into unnecessary detail in this volume. The text move is worth mentioning, as it was recommended by Williams and was tried in one of the more recent games.

Black has usually continued 13...♘e4 14.♕g4 ♘xc3 15.bxc3 and achieved dismal results, for instance: 15...♗f6 16.♖b1



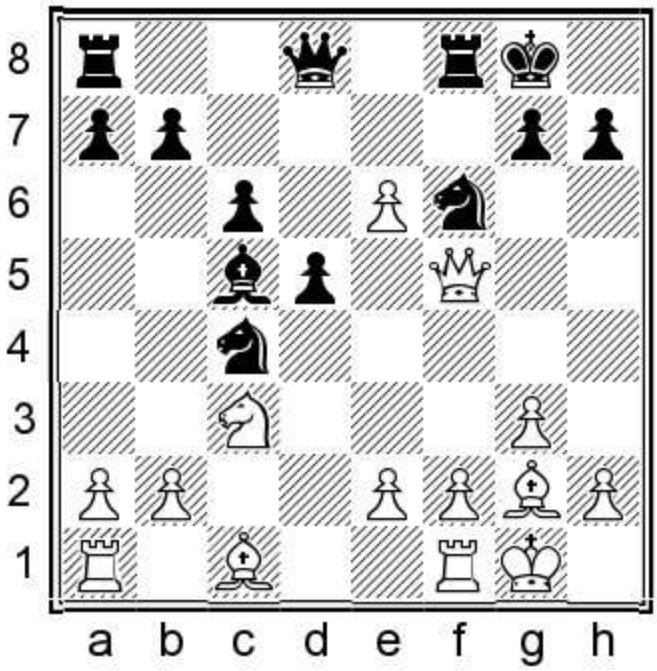
16...b5 (16...♘d6 occurred in Najer – Gavritenkov, Krasnodar 1997, and after the natural 17.e4!N, intending 17...♘xe4 18.♗xe4 dxe4 19.♖xb7!, White's advantage is beyond doubt) 17.e4 d4 18.cxd4 ♗xd4 This position occurred in Laustsen – V. Stefansson, Reykjavik 2017, and now the engine shows an elegant solution:



19.e5! ♘xe5 (19...♗xe5 20.♗xc6 is hopeless for Black.) 20.♕e4+– With an overwhelming advantage.

chessdump.com

Williams' recommendation was tried in J. van Foreest – Liu, Groningen 2015, and now I suggest the following improvement:



14.b3!N 14...♘d6

14...♘e4? 15.e7! ♕xe7 16.♘xd5! is a nice tactical point.

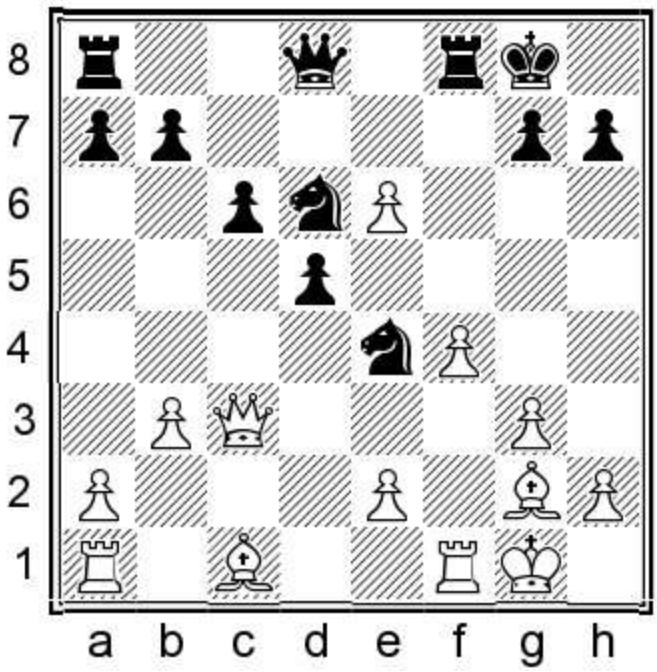
14...♘b6 15.♕c2 ♕e7 16.♗h3 leaves Black with no real compensation for the pawn.

15.♕c2

White is clearly better, for instance:

15...♗d4 16.♕d3 ♗e5 17.f4 ♗xc3 18.♕xc3 ♘fe4

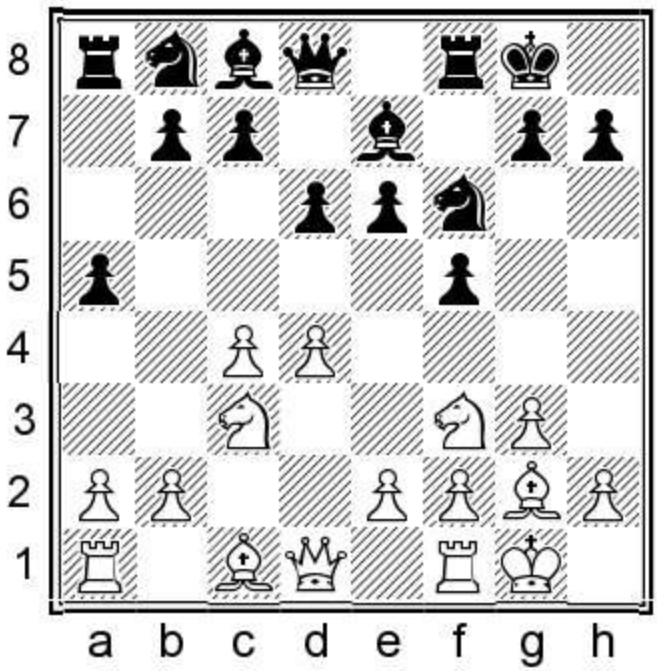
chesstouring.com



19.♗xe4 ♕b6† 20.♔h1 ♘xe4 21.♕e5±

White will follow up with f4-f5, maintaining the extra pawn on e6 and an obvious advantage.

B32) 7...a5



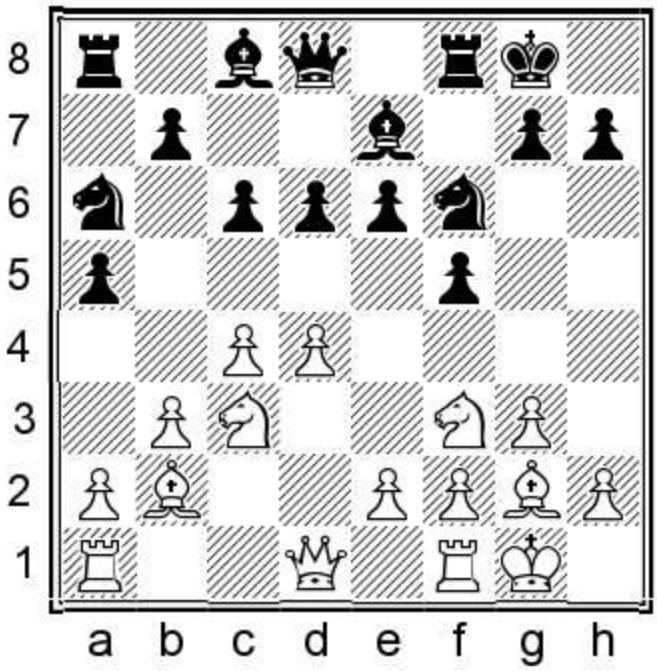
8.b3

I am happy to stick with my previous recommendation. We will examine two major options: **B321)** 8...♘a6 and **B322)** 8...♘e4.

8...♕e8 transposes to variation B4 of the next chapter on page 86.

chesstouring.com

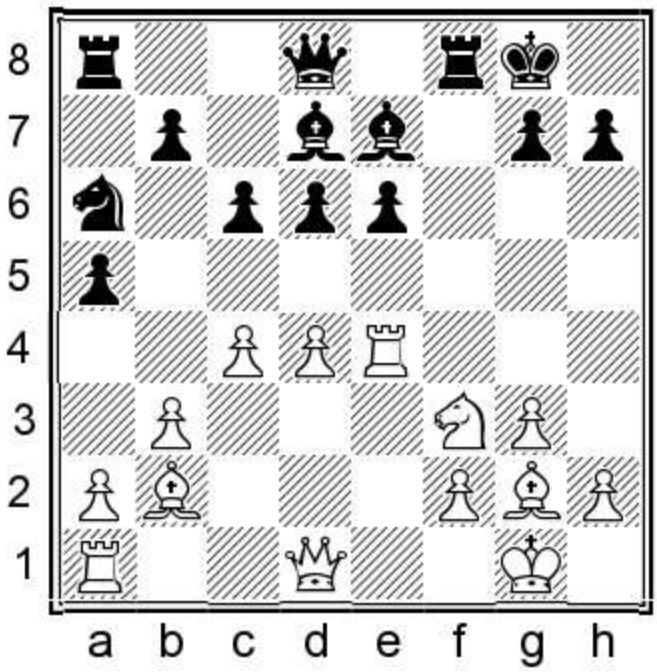
9...♕e8 again leads to the next chapter – see variation B43 on page 89.



10.♖e1 d5

Converting to the Stonewall seems to be Black's best option.

10...♗d7 leads to an easy advantage for White after 11.e4 fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♖xe4, for example:

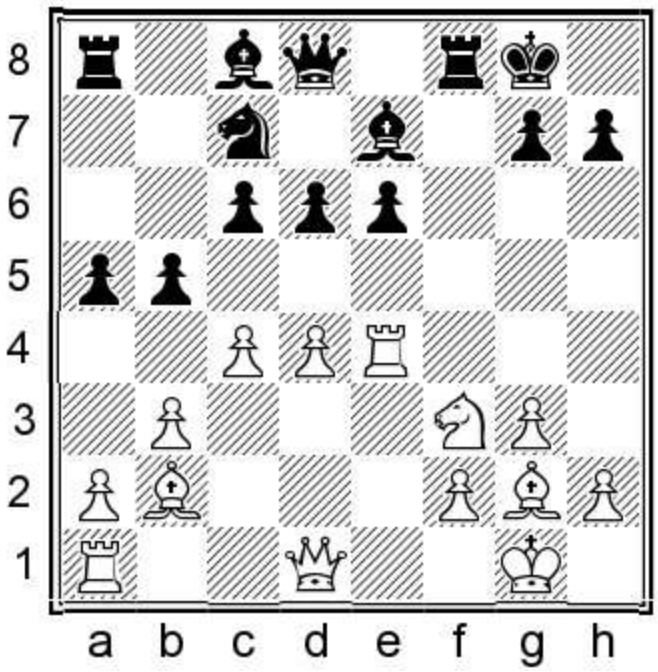


13...♗f6 14.♕d2 b5 15.♖c1 ♕e7 16.h4 bxc4 17.bxc4 c5 18.♘e5! White seized the initiative in Lautier – J. Roos, Rouen 1987.

10...♘c7 11.e4 fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♖xe4 b5 has occurred in a few games here. The following new

thesquare.com

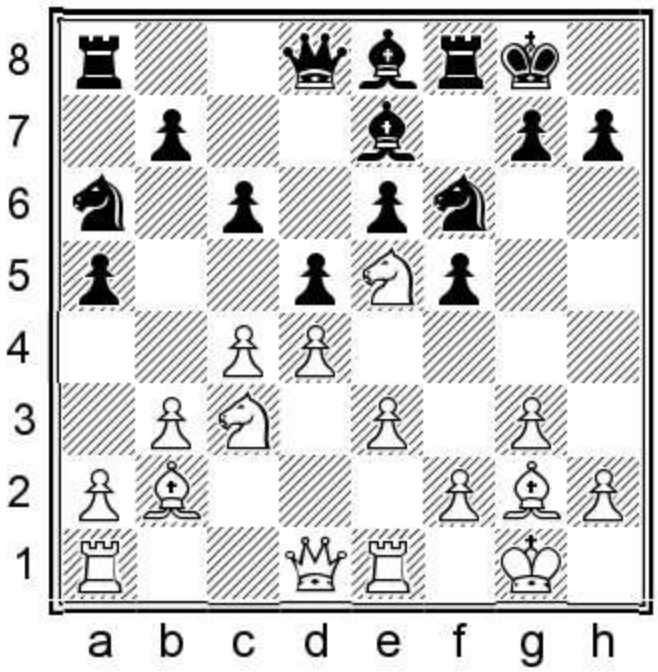
idea looks strong to me:



14.♖c1N 14...a4 15.c5!± With a clear positional advantage.

10...♘e4 11.♕c2 d5 is similar to the main line; after 12.a3 ♗d7 13.e3 ♗f6 14.♘e5 ♖c8 15.♘e2± the a6-knight was clearly misplaced for the Stonewall structure in Bartos – Hausner, Ostrava 2011.

11.e3 ♗d7 12.♘e5 ♗e8



13.a3 ♗d6 14.f3

The continuation of this game was fine, although my personal preference would be 14.♘d3N 14...♗h5 15.♕c2± with a pleasant edge.

chesstouring.com

14...b5 15.♘e2±

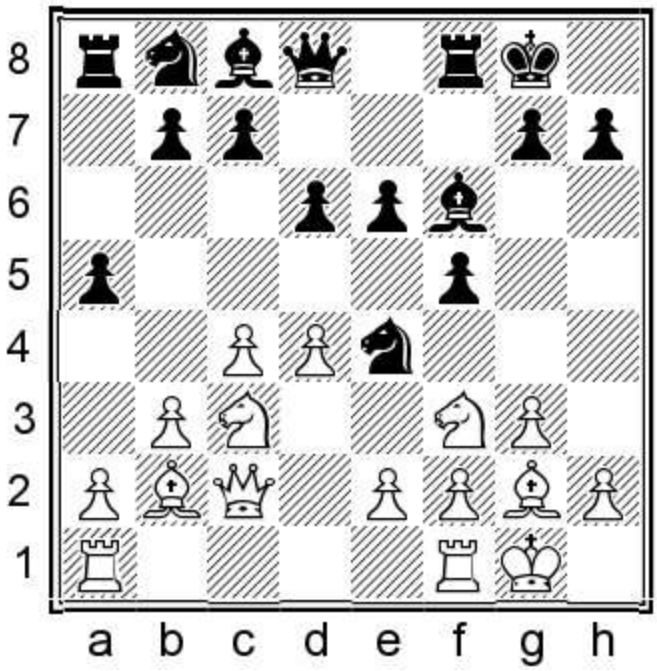
In Lecuyer – J. Roos, Rouen 1987, White retained a typical long-term edge against the Stonewall structure, especially with the knight misplaced on a6.

B322) 8...♘e4 9.♗b2

Unlike variation A of the next chapter, here I prefer not to swap knights at once, since after 9.♘xe4 fxe4 10.♘d2 d5 11.f3 the inclusion of the ...a5 and b2-b3 moves offers Black additional resources, such as 11...e3!? 12.♘b1 c5 13.♗xe3 cxd4 14.♗xd4 ♘c6 with counterplay.

Now **B3221)** 9...♗f6 is the main alternative to **B3222)** 9...♘xc3.

B3221) 9...♗f6 10.♕c2



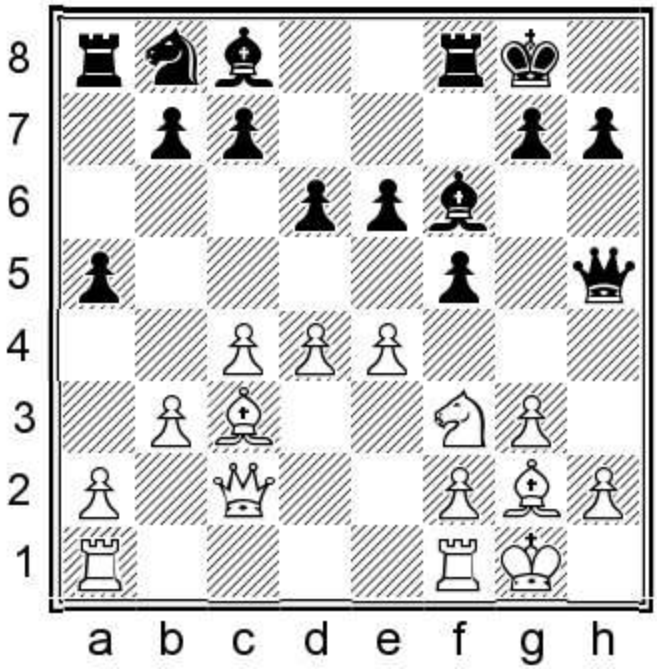
10...♘xc3

10...d5 offers White a favourable version of the Stonewall. A good illustrative example continued 11.e3 c6 12.a3 ♗d7 13.♘e2 ♘a6 14.♘f4 g5 15.♘d3± with a classical advantage for White in Postny – Girinath, Chennai 2011.

11.♗xc3 ♘c6

A few games continued 11...♕e8 but White remains clearly better after 12.e4 ♕h5 (12...f4?! fails to 13.gxf4 ♕g6 14.♕e2 ♕g4 15.♕e3!± as in Jaszkiwskyj – Bourne, Coventry 2013) and now in Ghaem Maghami – Girinath, Dubai 2007, White should have continued:

chesstouring.com



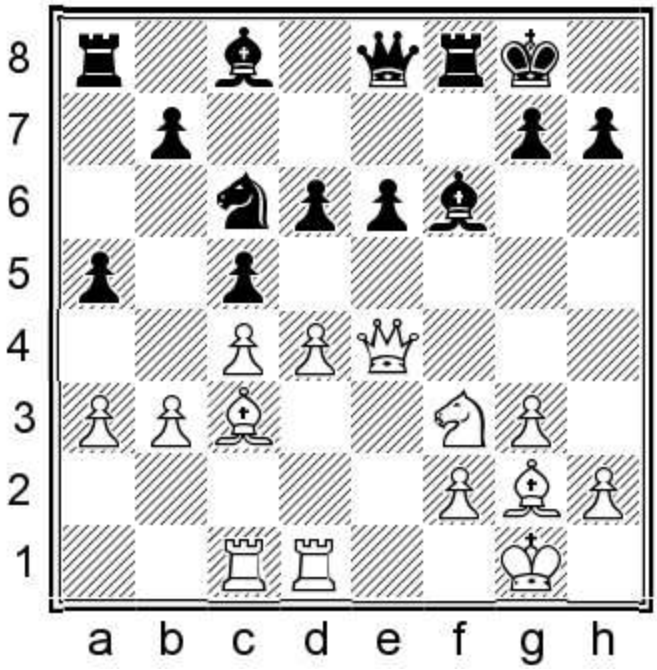
13.e5!N 13...dxe5 14.dxe5 ♗e7 15.♘d4!± With an obvious advantage due to Black's undeveloped queenside.

12.e4

There is no point in postponing this thematic advance.

12...e5

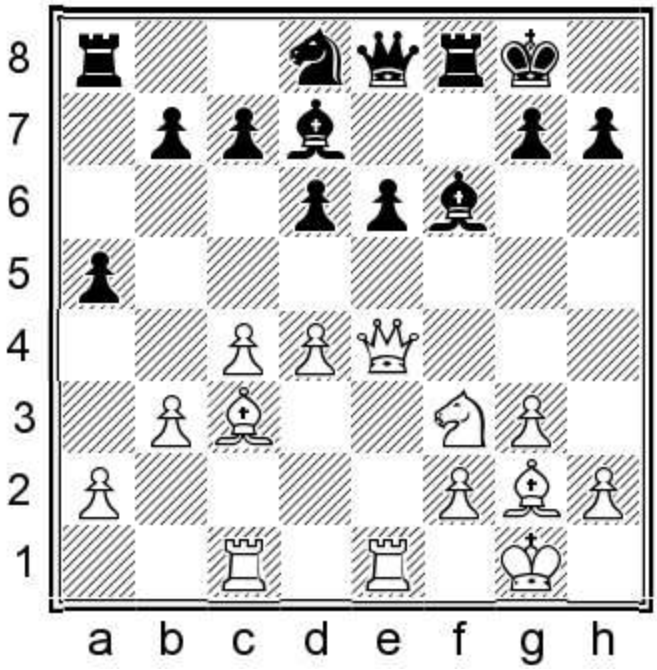
12...♘b4 does not change the evaluation, as was demonstrated in the following encounter: 13.♕e2 c5 14.♖fd1 fxe4 15.♕xe4 ♕e8 16.a3 ♘c6 17.♖ac1



Black's position is already uncomfortable, and after the further inaccuracy 17...♕h5?! 18.d5!± he faced serious difficulties in Erdos – Ianov, Zalakaros 2006.

chesstouring.com

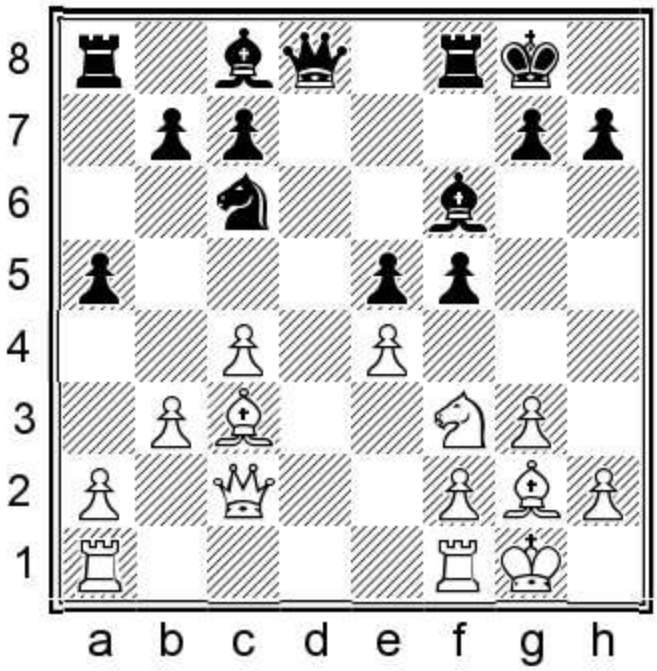
12...fxe4 13.♕xe4 clearly favours White, as shown by the illustrative examples: 13...♕e8 (after 13...d5 14.♕e2 ♘e7 15.♘e5± White's positional advantage is obvious, Vandeputte – Abma, Groningen 2017) 14.♖fe1 ♗d7 15.♖ac1 ♘d8



16.♘d2 ♕h5 17.♕e3 ♗g5 18.f4± Ruck – Williams, Tallinn 1997.

13.dxe5 dxe5

13...♘xe5 occurred in Bemporad – Cerioni, Milan 2011, when 14.♘d4!N would have been best, since Black's thematic sacrifice with 14...f4 does not work: 15.gxf4 ♘g6 16.f5 ♘f4 17.♖ae1±



14.♖ad1 ♕e8 15.exf5 ♕h5

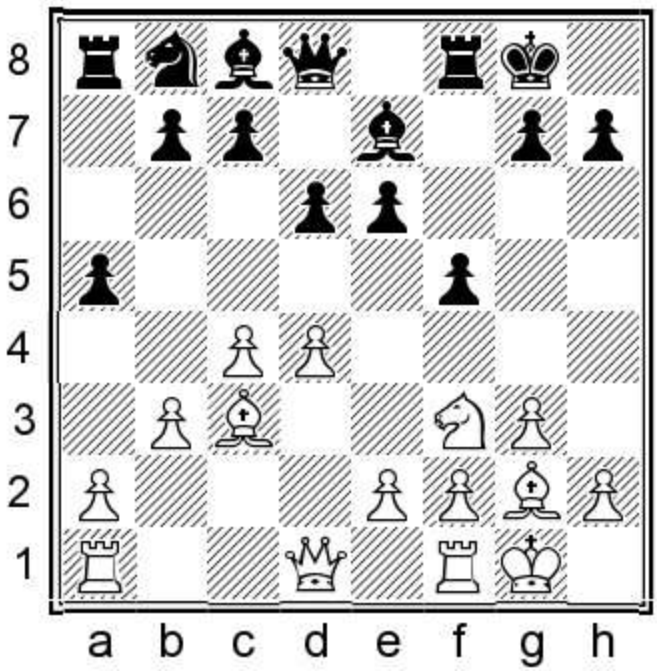
After 15...e4 16.♖de1 ♗xf5 17.♗xf6 ♖xf6 18.♘h4± the e4-pawn should fall.

chesstouring.com

16.♕b2! ♗xf5 17.♘xe5 ♘xe5 18.♗xe5

White won a pawn for nothing in Jurek – Pick, Klatovy 2017.

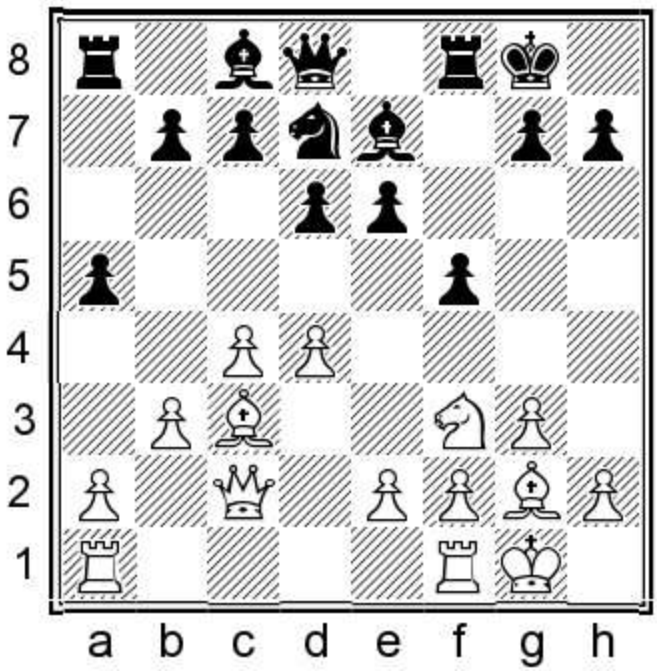
B3222) 9...♘xc3 10.♗xc3



The final split for this chapter is between **B32221)** 10...♘d7 or **B32222)** 10...♕e8.

10...♗f6 11.♕c2 leads back to variation B3221 above.

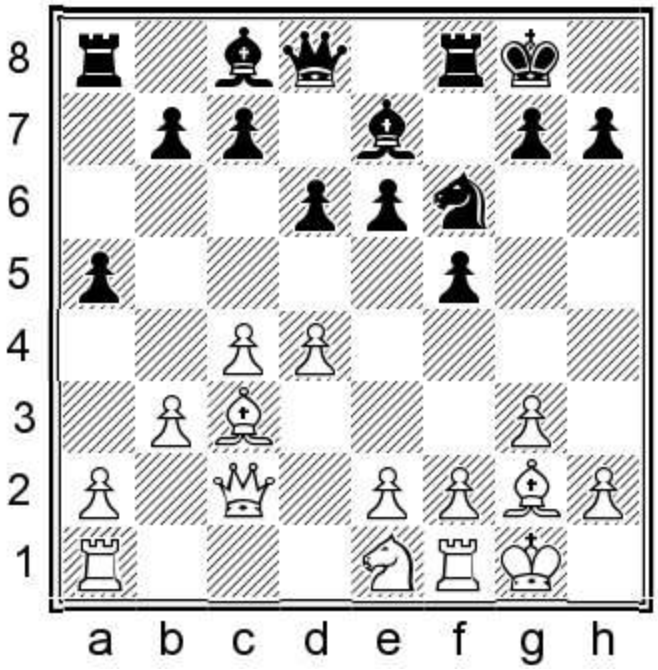
B32221) 10...♘d7 11.♕c2



chesstouring.com

11...♕e8

In the event of 11...♘f6 I suggest 12.♘e1!?N (rather than 12.♘d2 intending e2-e4, which runs into 12...d5!) when the white knight will be better placed in the event that Black reverts to a Stonewall structure. Here a few lines I examined:



12...d5 (12...♕e8 13.♘d3 g5 14.f3! is clearly better for White) 13.♘d3 ♘e4 14.♗b2 White has a comfortable Stonewall position.

12.a3!?

I like this subtle approach.

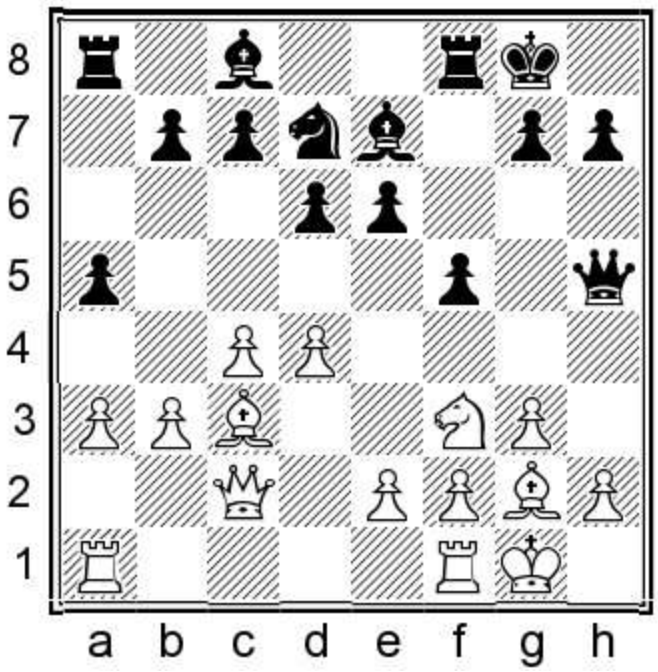
There is no point in rushing with 12.e4, as 12...f4! 13.e5 dxe5 14.dxe5 ♕h5 leads to the kind of double-edged game that Classical Dutch players tend to enjoy.

12...♕h5

This has been played in all games so far.

In the event of 12...♘f6 we can once again play 13.♘e1!? as in the note to move 11 above.

chesstouring.com



13.b4 a4 14.♘e1 e5

Black tried the aggressiv14...g5 15.e3 ♘f6 in Sagar – Kaufman, Kecskemet 2010, when White should have continued with the natural 16.♘d3N, keeping everything under control.

15.dxe5 dxe5

15...♘xe5 16.♘f3! is positionally better for White.

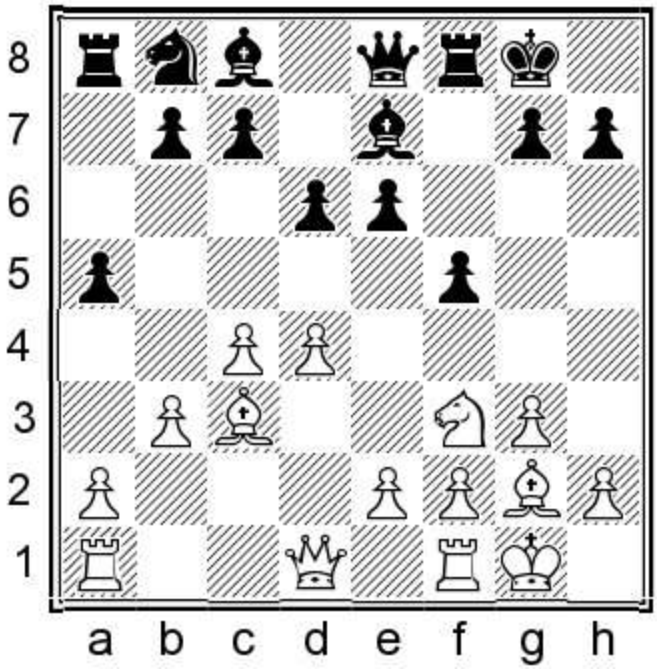
It appears that Black has succeeded in carrying out his desired central advance, but White is actually well prepared to deal with it.

16.♗d5†! ♔h8 17.♘d3 ♗f6 18.b5 ♕e8 19.c5

Black was under significant pressure in Grammatica – Vujadinovic, email 2013.

B32222) 10...♕e8

chesstouring.com



11.♘e1!?

Williams does not consider this move in his *Dangerous Weapons* chapter devoted to the 7...a5 variation.

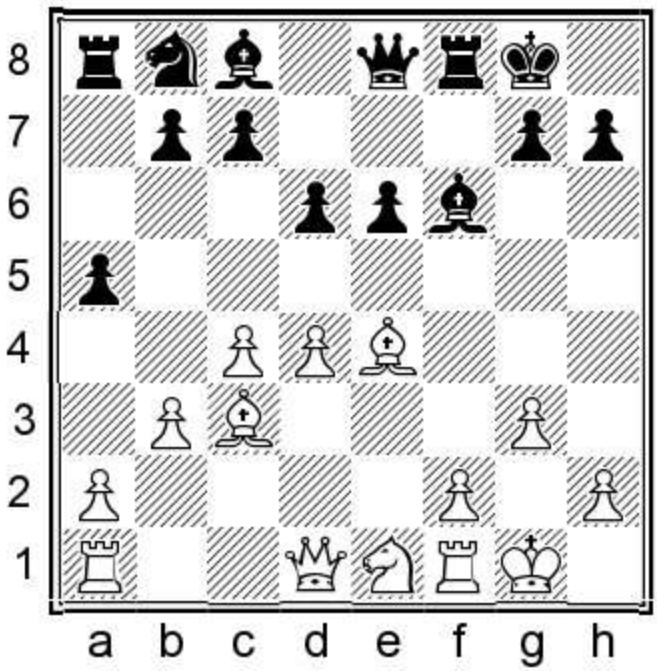
11...♘d7

11...♘c6 gives us the opportunity to play 12.f4!? ♗f6 13.♕d2 ♔h8 14.♘c2 ♕f7 15.e4± when White achieved everything he could dream about in this opening in Czebe – Praveen Kumar, Chennai 2013.

11...♗f6 12.e4!

As a general rule, this advance of the e-pawn is well timed when Black cannot react with ...f5-f4.

12...fxe4 13.♗xe4



chesstouring.com

13...♘c6

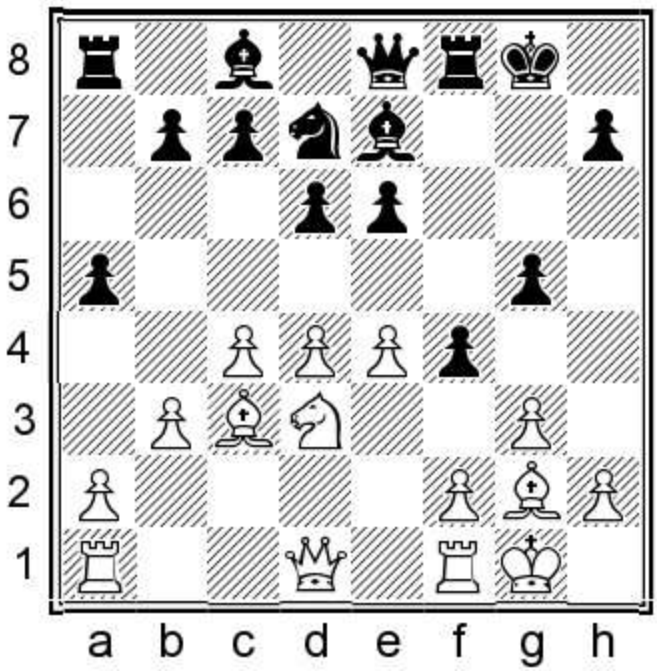
13...e5 14.dxe5 ♗xe5 happened in Broomfield – Phillips, West Bromwich 2003, and now I found a strong idea: 15.♕d5†!N 15...♗e6 (15...♔h8?! is even worse after 16.♗xe5 dxe5 17.♘d3 ♘d7 18.♗g2± when the e5-pawn is terribly weak) 16.♕d3 ♗xc3 17.♕xc3 ♘c6 18.♘g2± White has an easy plan to develop his initiative with ♖e1, ♘f4 and so on.

14.♘g2 ♕f7 15.♘e3

White maintained useful positional pressure in Brzezinski – Sarakenidis, corr. 2013.

12.♘d3 ♘f6

White had an easy advantage after 12...g5 13.e4 f4 in M. Taylor – Ackley, Thanet 2008, when the simplest continuation is:

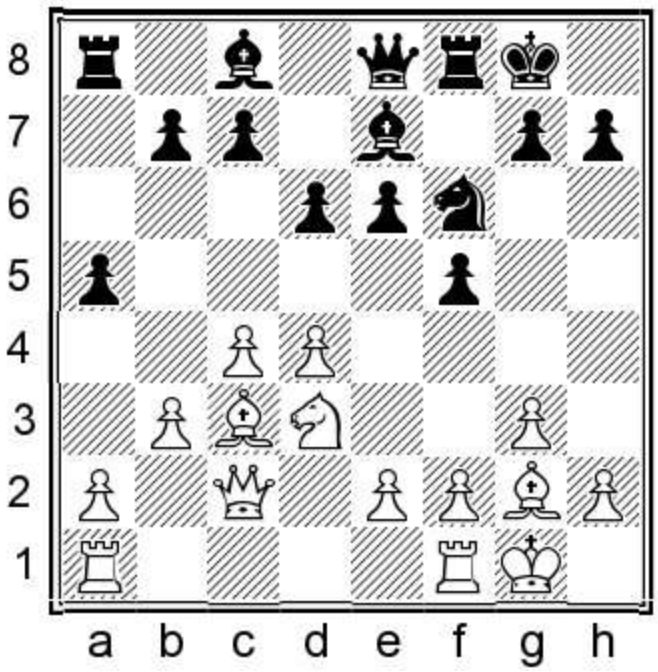


14.gxf4N 14...gxf4 15.♗f3! Followed by ♔h1 and ♖g1(†) with a clear advantage.

13.♕c2

White has a pleasant game, for instance:

chesstouring.com



13...♘e4 14.♗b2 a4 15.f3 ♘g5 16.♕d2 ♗f6 17.♖ae1±

In Wettstein – Blake, corr. 2011, White was much better coordinated for future play in the centre.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the topic of Black's e6-d6 pawn structure in the Dutch. We started by considering 4...♗b4† and found that White has excellent chances, as long as he responds with 5.♘d2!. Next we saw a number of sidelines after 4...♗e7 5.♘f3 0-0 6.0-0, none of which comes close to equalizing. 6...d6 7.♘c3 a5 is the most important of the options considered in this chapter. I recommend meeting it with 8.b3 and 9.Bb2, which can generally be followed by preparing e2-e4 and/or manoeuvring the f3-knight to d3, with fine prospects for White.

chesstouring.com



Dutch



Classical – 7...♘e4 & 7...♕e8

Variation Index

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.c4 ♗e7 5.♘f3 0–0 6.0–0 d6

7.♘c3

A) 7...♘e4 8.♘xe4 fxe4 9.♘d2 d5 10.f3 75

A1) 10...exf3 76

A2) 10...♘c6 11.e3! exf3 12.♘xf3 78

A21) 12...♗f6 78

A22) 12...b6 80

B) 7...♕e8 8.b3 81

B1) 8...♘c6 81

B2) 8...♘bd7 82

B3) 8...♕h5 84

B4) 8...a5 9.♗b2 86

B41) 9...♕h5 87

B42) 9...c6 88

B43) 9...♘a6 10.♖e1 89

B431) 10...c6 90

B432) 10...♕h5 90

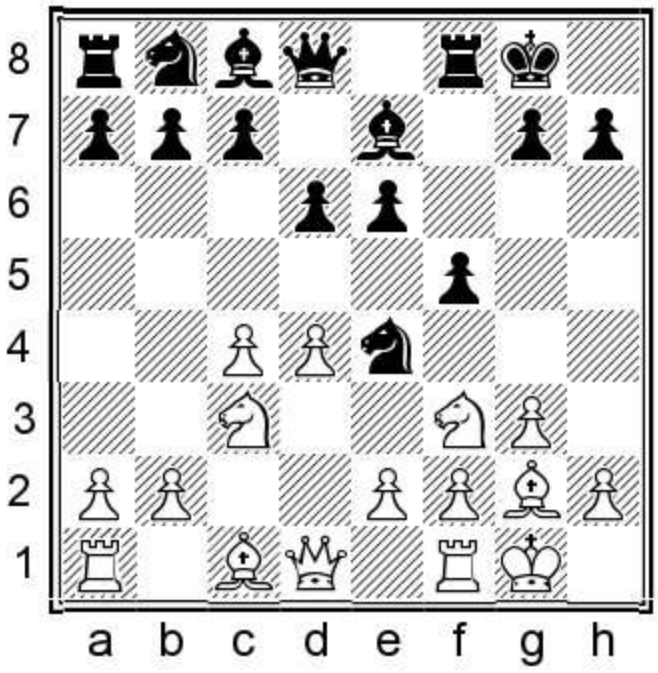
B433) 10...♕g6 91

chesstouring.com

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.c4 ♗e7 5.♘f3 0-0 6.0-0 d6 7.♘c3

This chapter will deal with the two most important options of **A)** 7...♘e4 and **B)** 7...♕e8.

A) 7...♘e4



I still believe this to be Black's most challenging move, and the only line of the Classical Dutch which I would be slightly concerned about facing. Therefore it is important for White to know a bit of precise theory here.

8.♘xe4

Undoubtedly the critical response.

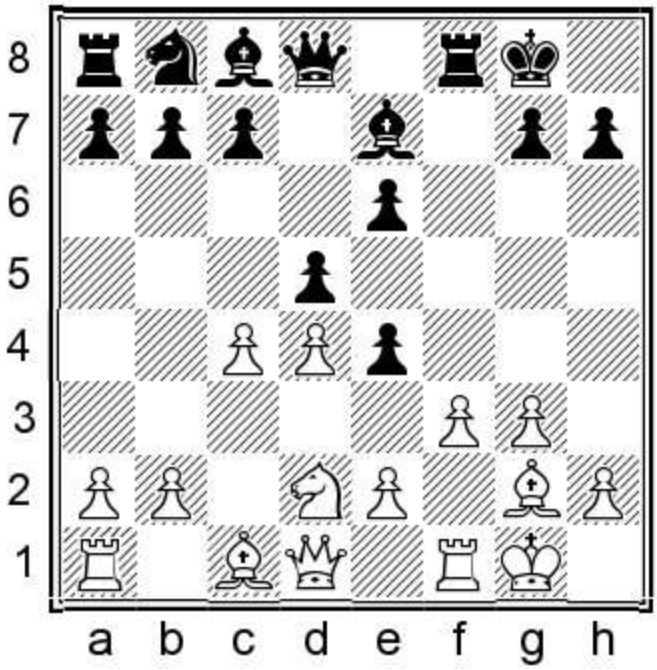
8...fxe4 9.♘d2

The natural alternative is 9.♘e1, but after 9...d5 10.f3 dxc4 11.fxe4 ♖xf1† Black seems to have sufficient counterplay.

9...d5 10.f3

This is the point of White's strategy – he has no intention of allowing Black's e4-pawn to live.

chesstouring.com



Now **A1)** 10...exf3 is a reasonable alternative, but **A2)** 10...♘c6 is the most challenging continuation.

10...c5?!

This has been tried by some strong players but is rather dubious.

11.fxe4 ♖xf1† 12.♕xf1 dxe4

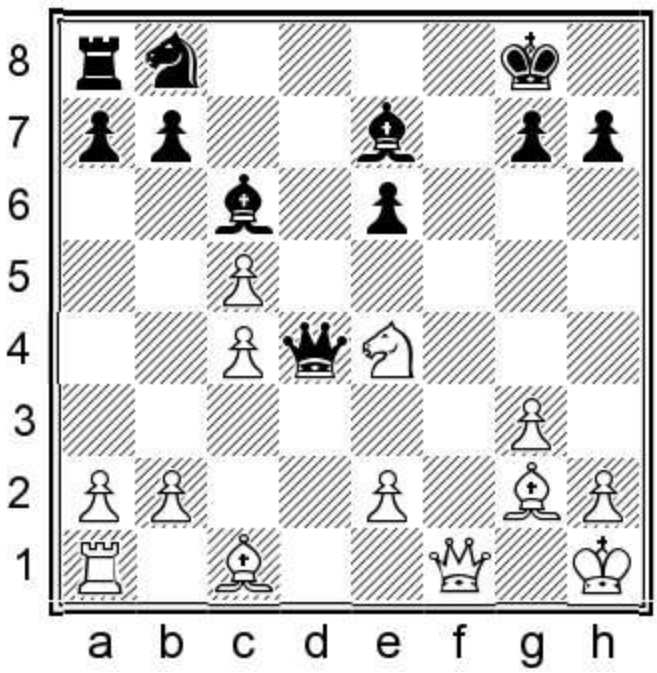
12...dxc4 13.d5±

13.dxc5 ♕d4†

13...♘a6?! was no challenge at all after 14.♘xe4 ♘xc5 15.♗e3+– in Santos Ruiz – Fernandez Montero, Linares 2018.

14.♔h1 ♗d7 15.♘xe4 ♗c6

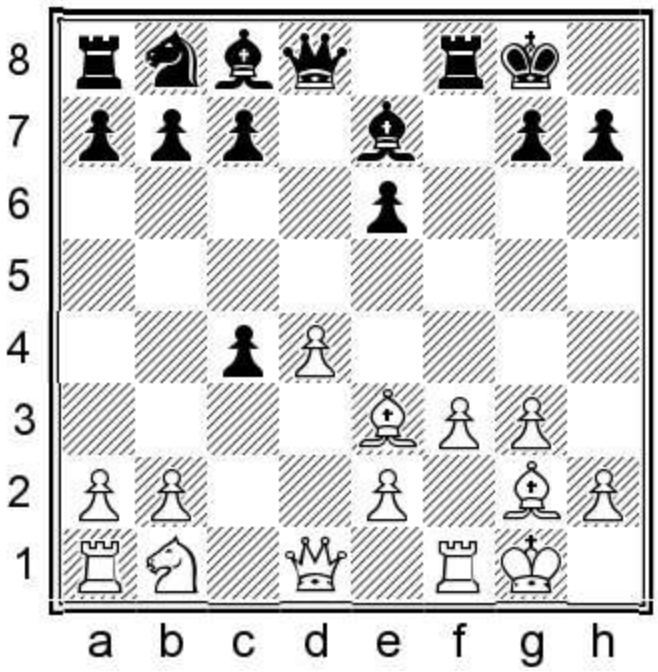
Now in Iljin – Obukhov, Alushta 2008, White missed the strongest continuation:



chesstouring.com

16.♗g5!N 16...♗xe4 17.♗xe7 ♗xg2† 18.♔xg2 ♘c6 19.♗d6±
White keeps his extra material as well as the stronger minor piece.

Black would also be ill-advised to try:
10...e3?! 11.♘b1 dxc4 12.♗xe3

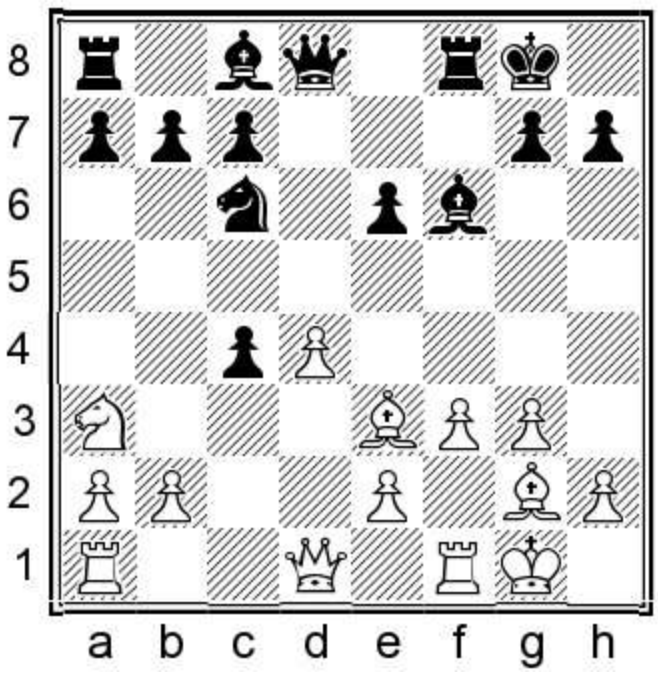


12...♗f6

12...♘c6 13.f4! ♘b4 14.♗f2 ♖b8 15.a3 ♘d5 16.e4 ♘f6 17.♘c3± gave White a solid positional plus in Aleksandrov – Harshkou, Minsk 2016.

13.♘a3 ♘c6

13...c5?! made things even easier for White after 14.dxc5 ♗xb2 15.♕xd8 ♖xd8 16.♖ad1 ♖f8 17.♘xc4+– in Schandorff – Bleis, Copenhagen 2007.



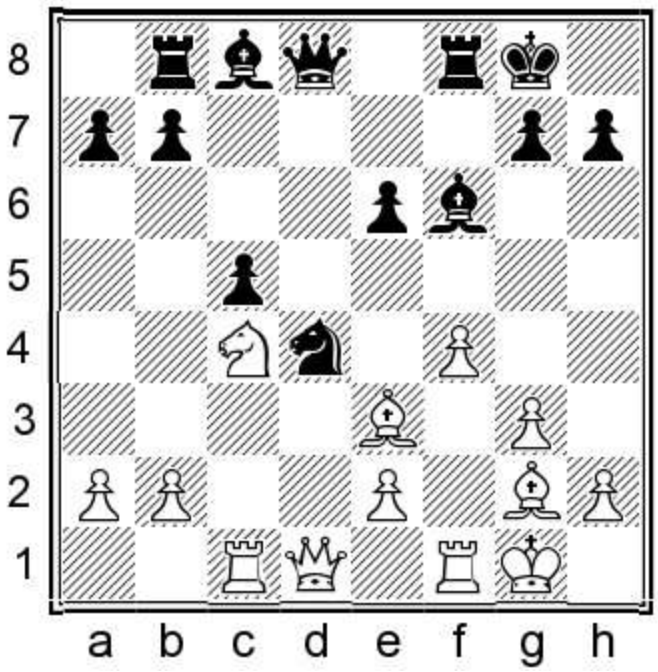
chesstouring.com

14.♘xc4 ♘xd4 15.f4

White's positional superiority is beyond any doubt.

15...c5 16.♖c1 ♖b8

In P. Taylor – Shachar, Isle of Man 2007, the simplest solution would have been:



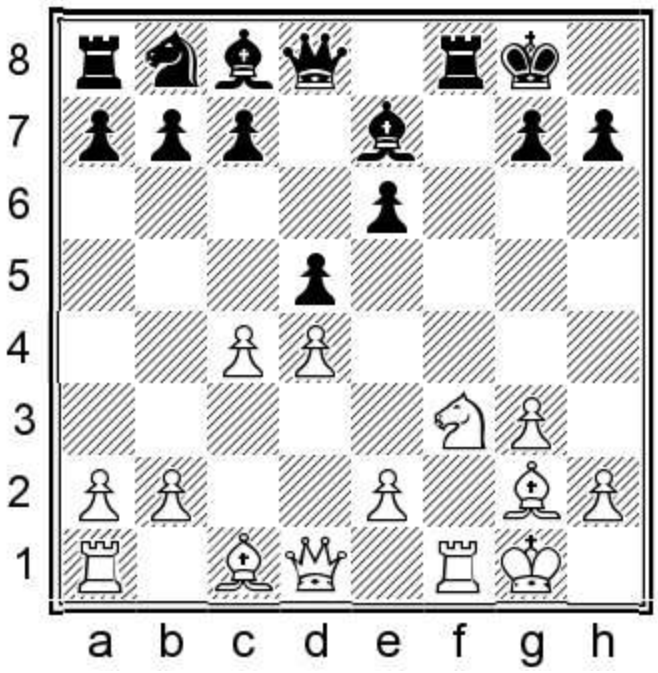
17.♘e5!N

White has a great position, as shown by the following instructive line:

17...♗xe5 18.fxe5 ♖xf1† 19.♗xf1 b6 20.♗xd4 cxd4 21.♗h3!

Black will find it hard to complete development without losing material.

A1) 10...exf3 11.♘xf3



chesstouring.com

11...♘c6

This is Black's usual choice.

The most popular alternative is:

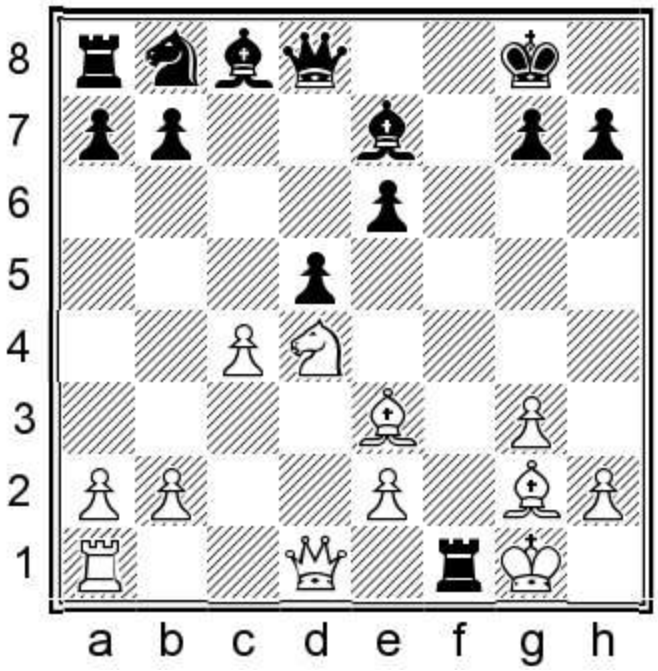
11...c5 12.♗e3!

The opening of the position favours White, due to the activity of his minor pieces.

12...cxd4

12...♗f6 is a more recent try, which failed miserably after 13.dxc5 ♗xb2 14.♖b1 ♗f6 15.cxd5 exd5 16.♘g5!+– in Ragnarsson – Oyama, Isle of Man 2017.

13.♘xd4 ♖xf1†



14.♔xf1!N

I gave this improvement in *GM 2* but the line up to this point does not appear to have been repeated since then.

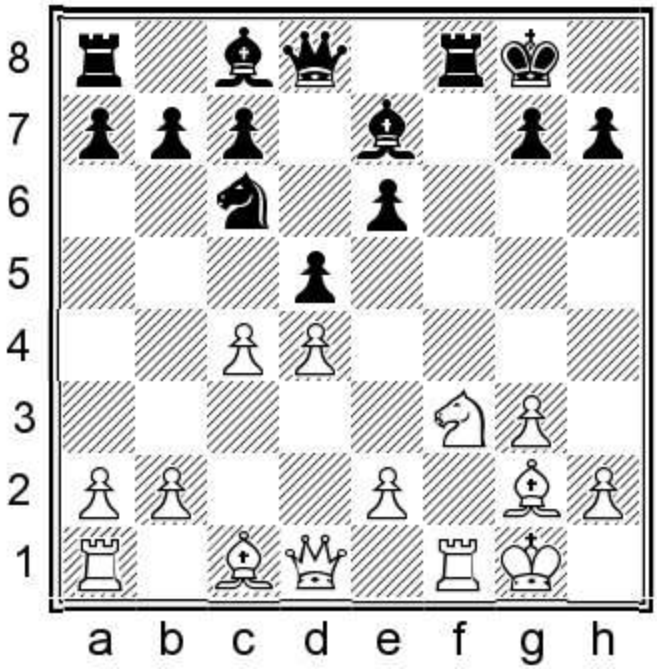
14...♘c6

The point is that 14...dxc4 runs into the powerful 15.♘xe6! ♕xd1† 16.♖xd1 and White will emerge with at least one extra pawn, as occurs after 16...♘c6 17.♗d5 ♔h8 18.♗xc4.

15.cxd5 exd5 16.♕b3±

Black loses a pawn.

chesstouring.com



12.b3

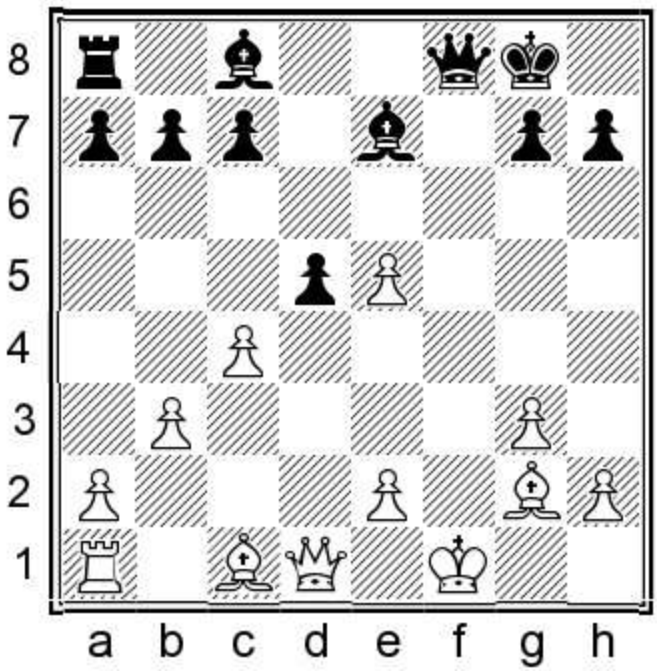
Nobody has played 12.e3!?N here, but it transposes to variation A2 below.

12...♗f6

I checked three other moves:

12...b6 has been played in a bunch of games, and each time White fianchettoed his dark-squared bishop. However, a much stronger option is 13.♗f4!N 13...♗d7 14.♕d3 with an excellent game for White.

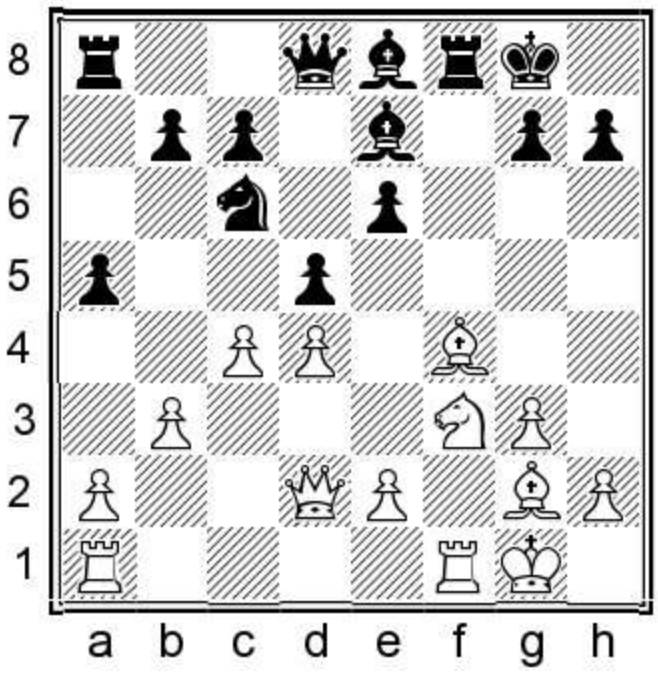
The ultra-active 12...e5 does not quite work for Black. 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.dxe5 ♖xf1† 15.♔xf1 ♕f8† happened in Relange – Bricard, Besancon 1999, when White should have continued:



chesstouring.com

16.♗f3!N 16...dxc4 17.♕d5† ♔h8 (or 17...♕f7 18.bxc4±) 18.♕xc4 ♗h3† 19.♔g1 ♗c5† 20.♔h1 c6 21.♗b2 and White's extra pawn is quite significant.

12...a5 13.♗f4 ♗d7 14.♕d2 ♗e8 occurred in Brynell – Grahn, Bugibba 2011. My improvement is:



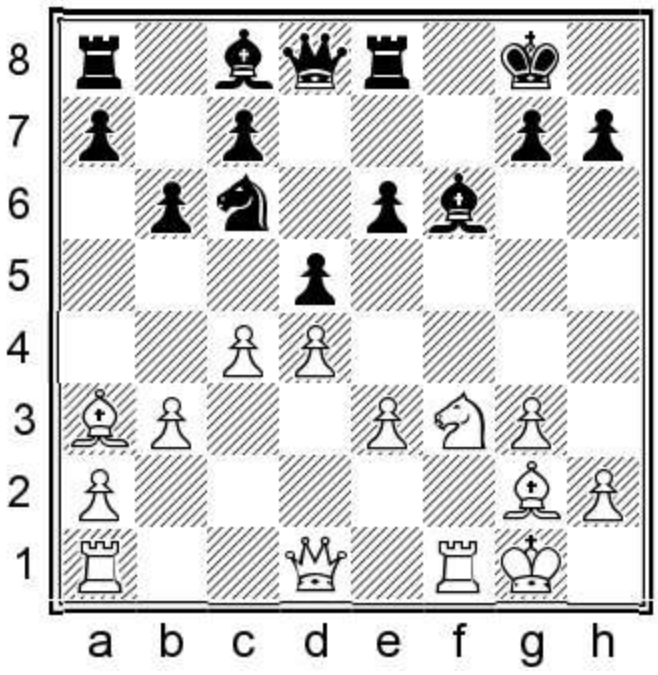
15.♗h3N 15...♗f7 16.♕e3↑ White keeps a solid advantage.

13.♗a3 ♖e8 14.e3

White maintains some positional pressure here too, as the following line demonstrates.

14...b6

We have been following Maletin – Ovechkin, Nizhnij Tagil 2005. A powerful improvement is:



chesstouring.com

15.♘h4!N 15...♗xh4

15...♗b7 is well met by 16.cxd5 exd5 17.♖f5! ♘e7 (17...♘a5 18.♕h5+–) 18.♖xf6! gxf6 19.♕g4† ♔h8 20.♖f1→ with overwhelming play for the exchange.

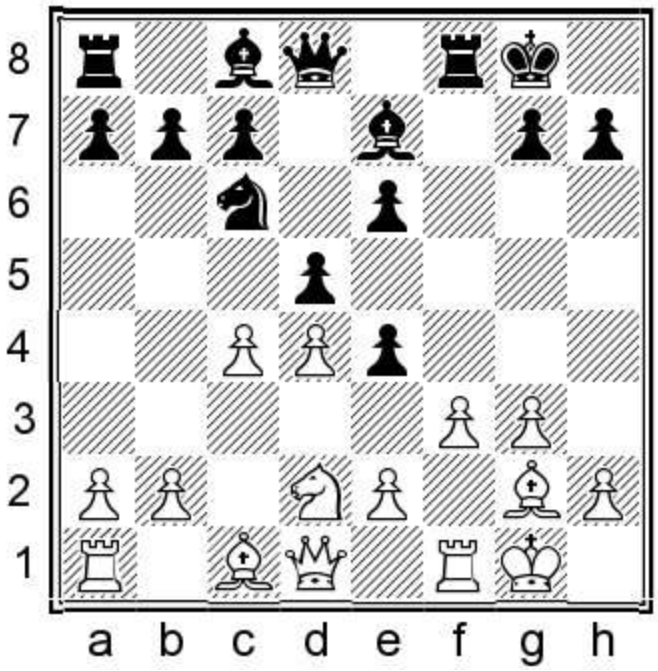
16.gxh4 ♘e7

16...♗b7 17.cxd5 exd5 18.♕h5 ♘e7 19.♕f7† ♔h8 20.♖ac1 gives White a decisive advantage in piece activity.

17.♕f3 ♗b7 18.♖ac1±

White is clearly better.

A2) 10...♘c6



This is the main line. Now we have a major change from my previous recommendation.

11.e3!

11.fxe4 ♖xf1† 12.♘xf1 dxc4 13.♗e3 was my suggestion from *GM 2*, but Dutch expert Simon Williams subsequently introduced 13...♗d7! as an improvement for Black. Since then it has taken over as the main line, and it leads to double-edged play, whereas the text move leads to an edge for White in a more straightforward type of position.

11...exf3

11...♗g5 doesn't make sense in view of 12.♕e2.

12.♘xf3

The position resembles a Catalan, except that the f-pawns have been removed. **A21)** 12...♗f6 and **A22)**

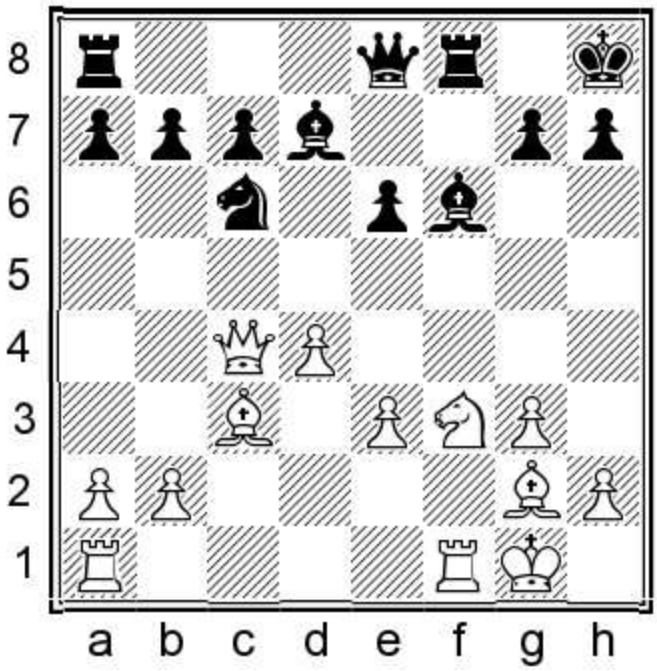
chesstouring.com

12...b6 are the only moves Black has tried.

A21) 12...♗f6 13.♗d2 a5

This is a logical way for Black to take some queenside space. I checked two other options:

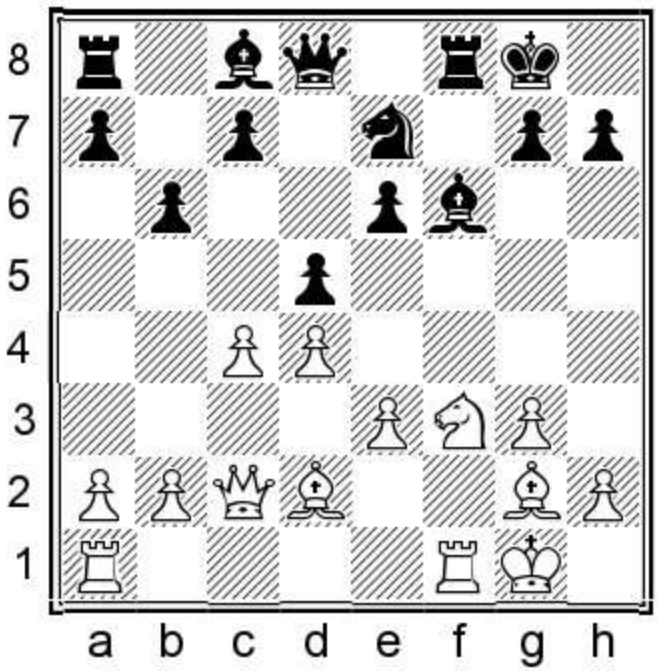
13...dxc4 runs into 14.♕a4 when White regains the pawn with a nice edge, as shown in the following game: 14...♔h8 15.♗c3 ♕e8 16.♕xc4 ♗d7



17.♘e5!? ♘xe5 18.dxe5 ♗g5 19.♖xf8† ♕xf8 20.♗d4 c6 21.♖f1 ♕e8 22.♗c5+– White obtained a winning advantage with surprising quickness in Basson – Balmelle, email 2013.

13...♘e7 was a more solid approach in A. Mastrovasilis – Oganisjan, Yerevan 2014. White should have developed normally with 14.♕c2N, when play might continue: 14...b6

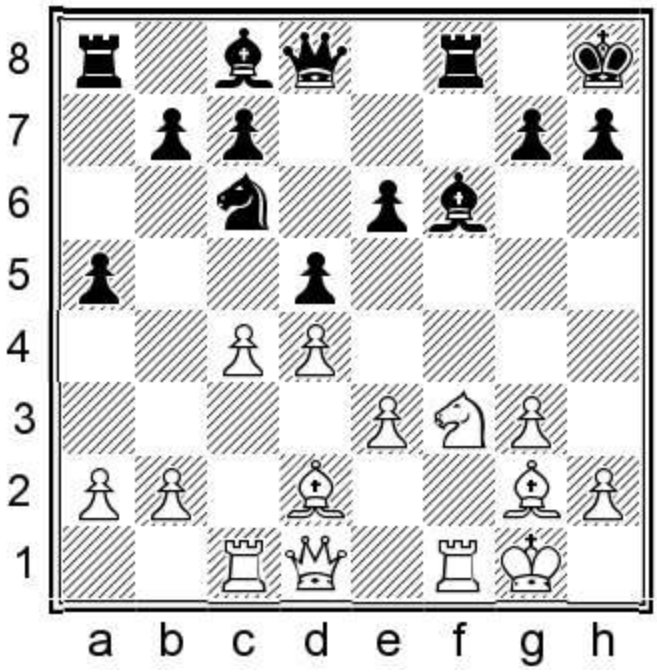
chesstouring.com



15.e4! dxe4 16.♕xe4 ♖b8 17.♖ae1 ♘f5 18.♗c3± With a clear positional advantage.

14.♖c1 ♔h8

We have been following Schmid – Halkias, Wunsiedel 2014. White has a few ways to keep the more pleasant position, but I like the following plan of improvement:

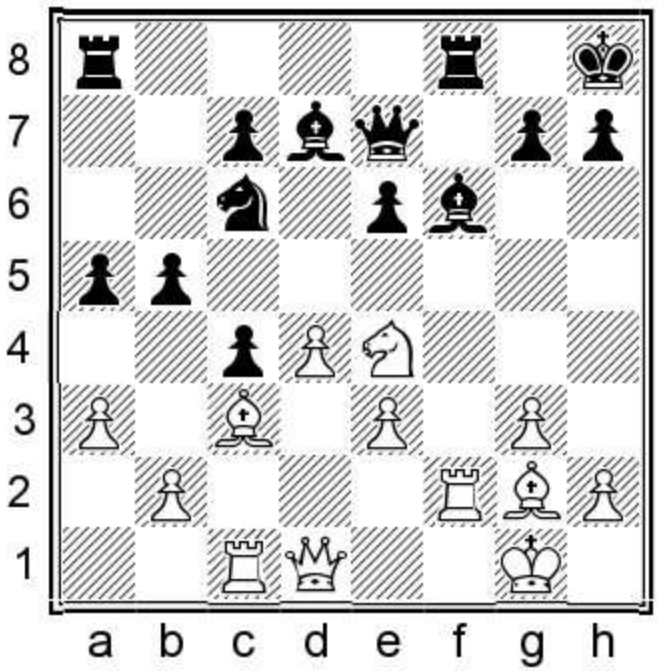


15.♖f2!?N 15...♕d6 16.a3 ♗d7 17.♗c3

White strengthens his centre and is still not worried about the capture on c4, due to the following illustrative line:

17...dxc4 18.♘d2 b5 19.♘e4 ♕e7

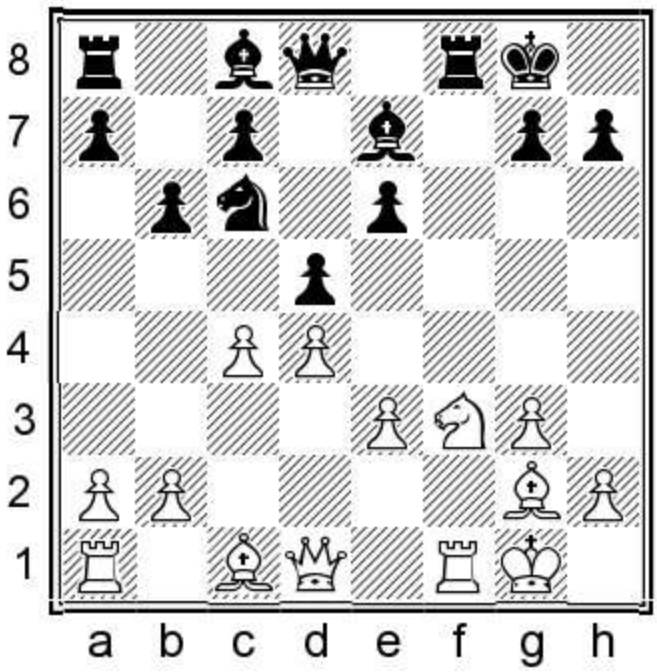
chesstouring.com



20.♕h5! ♖ab8 21.♕c5!±

White is clearly better.

A22) 12...b6



13.♗d2 ♗b7

This is the obvious follow-up to Black's previous move.

Another game saw:

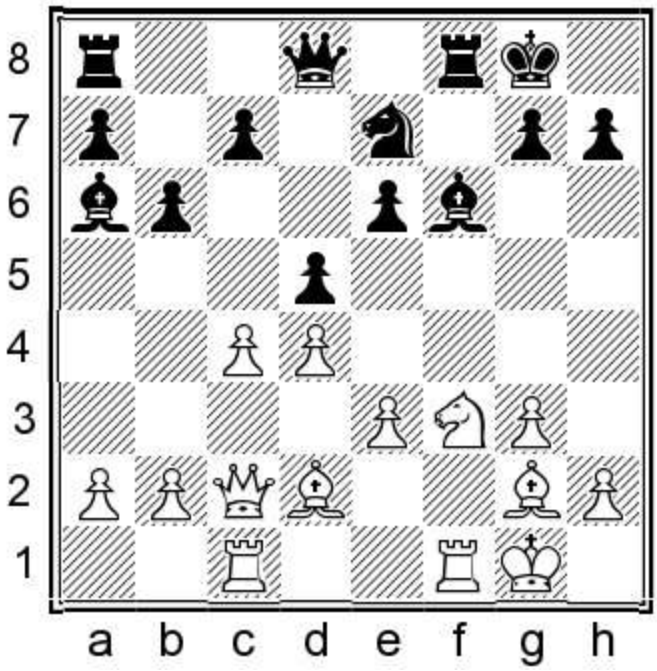
13...♗f6

Fridman – Pap, Llucmajor 2017. I like the following improvement for White:

14.♖c1N 14...♘e7

chesstouring.com

Or 14...♗b7 15.cxd5! exd5 16.b4 ♕d6 17.♕b3± when Black finds himself under positional pressure.
15.♕c2 ♗a6



16.e4! dxe4

16...♗xc4 17.e5 ♗xf1 18.♗xf1 ♘f5 19.exf6 ♕xf6 20.♕c3± turns out well for White.
17.♕xe4 ♕d7 18.b4

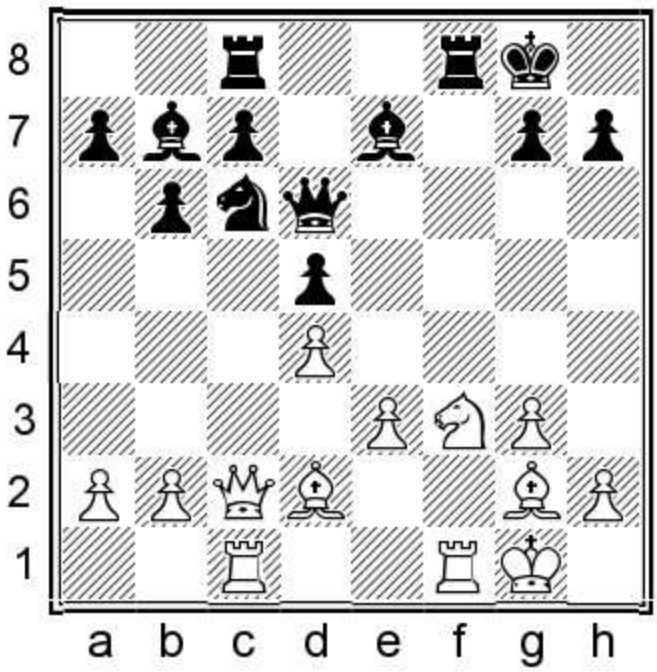
White enjoys a solid positional edge.

14.♖c1 ♕d6 15.♕c2 ♖ac8

At first glance this appears pretty solid for Black, but White came up with an impressive tactical idea in a correspondence game.

16.cxd5 exd5

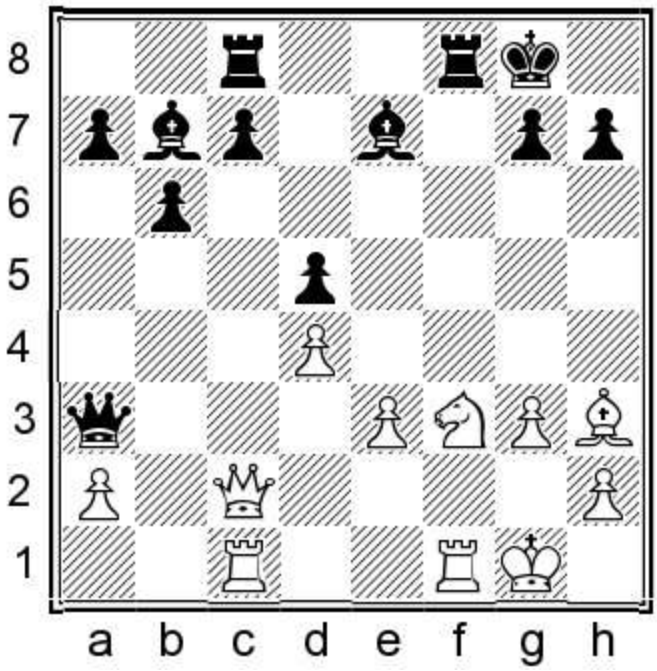
chesstouring.com



17.b4! ♘xb4

Other moves would leave Black under positional pressure.

18.♗xb4 ♕xb4 19.♗h3 ♕a3

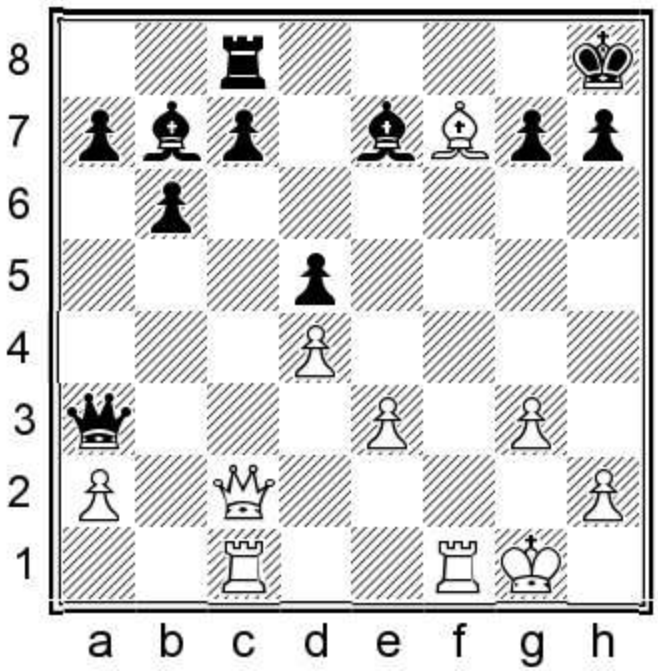


20.♘e5!

A vital nuance, without which Black would have had fair compensation for the exchange.

20...♖ce8 21.♗e6† ♔h8 22.♘f7† ♖xf7 23.♗xf7 ♖c8

chesstouring.com



24.♗e6!

Surprisingly, White does not need to waste time defending the e3-pawn.

24...♖d8

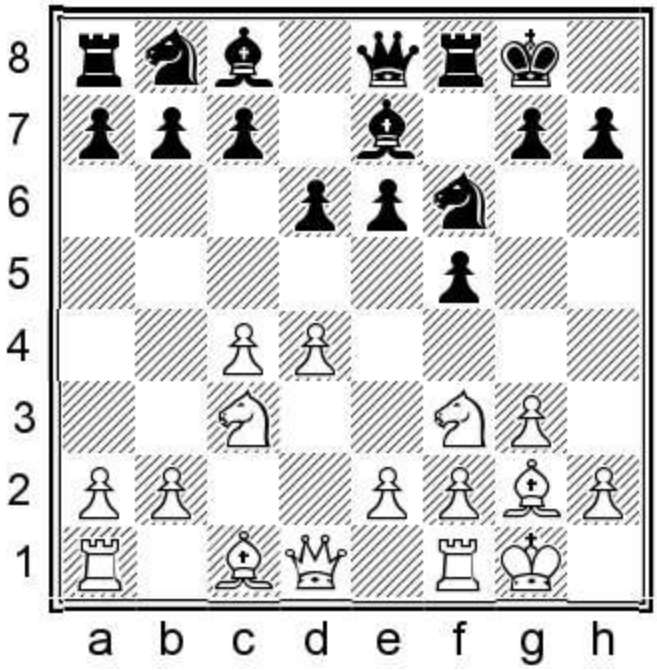
24...♕xe3† 25.♕f2 ♕xe6 26.♖ce1! ♕f6 27.♕e3 also leads to a serious advantage for White.

25.♖f3 c6 26.♗g4 ♗f6 27.♔g2±

Black had little compensation for the exchange and resigned only ten moves later in Oppermann – Prystenski, corr. 2016.

B) 7...♕e8

chesstouring.com



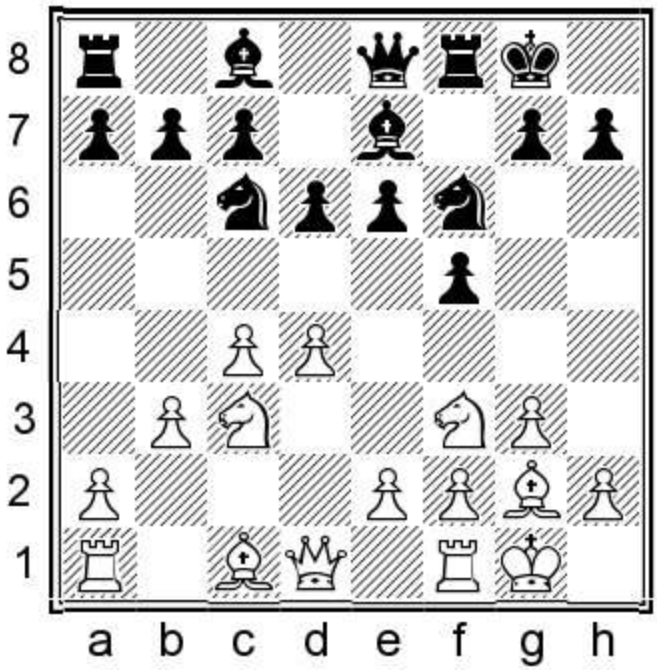
This is Black's most popular choice; the queen is heading for h5 or g6, trying to seize some initiative on the kingside.

8.b3

I still like this move, which prepares to develop the bishop on b2, or perhaps a3, depending on how Black proceeds.

We will analyse four main options: **B1)** 8...♘c6, **B2)** 8...♘bd7, **B3)** 8...♕h5 and finally the most popular **B4)** 8...a5.

B1) 8...♘c6



chesstouring.com

This meets with the typical reply:

9.d5! ♘d8

Alternatives are worse:

9...♘e5?! 10.♘xe5! dxe5 11.♘b5 ♗d8 12.♗a3 ♖f7 13.dxe6 ♗xe6 14.♗xb7 ♖b8 15.♗g2± Young – B. Ward, corr. 2016.

9...exd5?! 10.cxd5 ♘e5 11.♘d4!

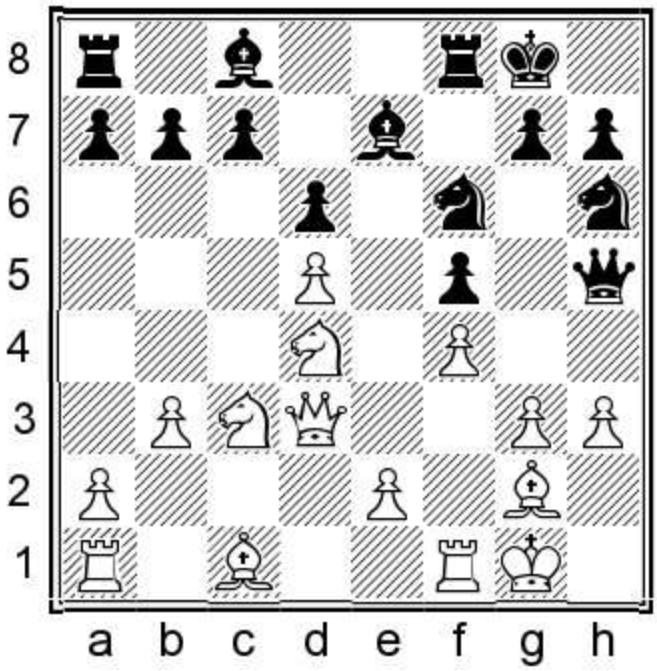
White has a highly favourable pawn structure. Here is one illustrative example:

11...♕h5 12.f4!?

12.e3 is also good.

12...♘eg4 13.h3 ♘h6 14.♕d3

White has an obvious positional advantage, and Black's next move significantly eases his task.



14...♘e4? 15.g4!

Black surely overlooked this.

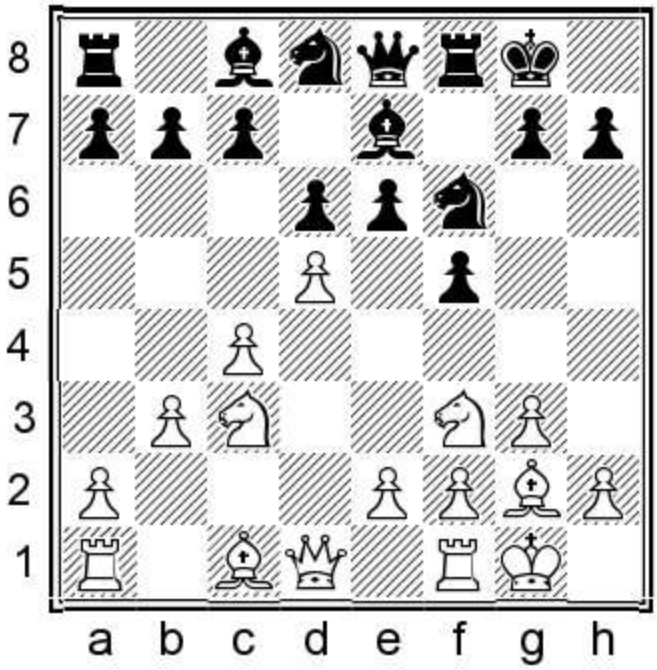
15...fxg4

Trying to complicate matters, but to no avail.

16.♗xe4 gxh3 17.♗xh7† ♔h8 18.♔h1 ♗h4 19.♕g6

1–0 Adamski – Christensen, Copenhagen 2000.

chesstouring.com



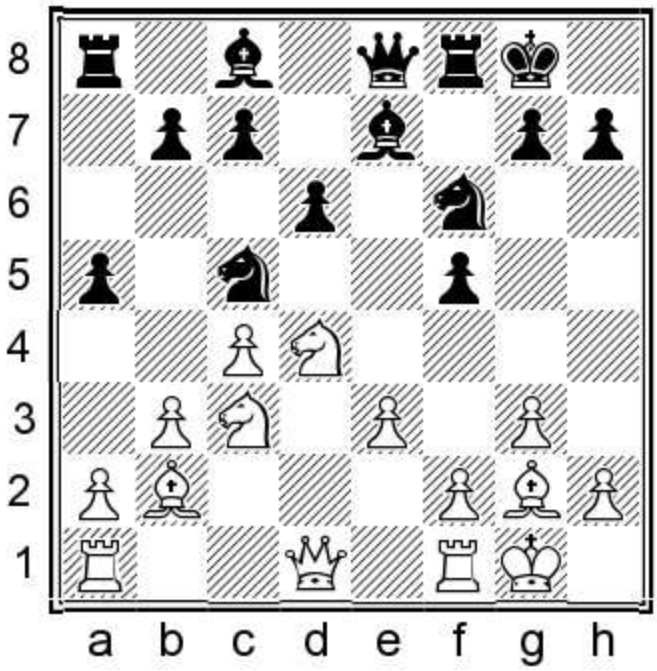
10.dxe6!

A simple, strong decision, establishing a favourable pawn structure.

The seemingly tempting 10.♘b5?! allows 10...♘xd5! 11.♘xd6 ♗xd6 12.cxd5 e5 with a reasonable game for Black.

10...♘xe6 11.♘d4 ♘c5 12.♗b2 a5 13.e3

White has an easy advantage, for instance:

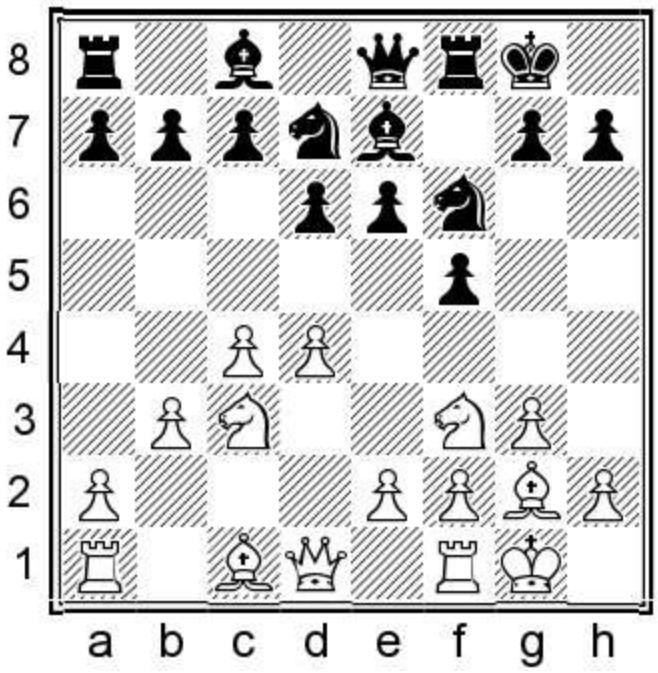


13...c6 14.♕c2 ♘g4 15.♖ad1±

Savon – Rogovskoy, Orel 1997.

chesstouring.com

B2) 8...♘bd7



Black tries to prepare ...e5 without exposing his knight to the d4-d5 advance, but his position is cramped and his pieces lack coordination.

9.♕c2!

Preparing e2-e4 while also preventing ...e5, which would now leave the f5-pawn hanging.

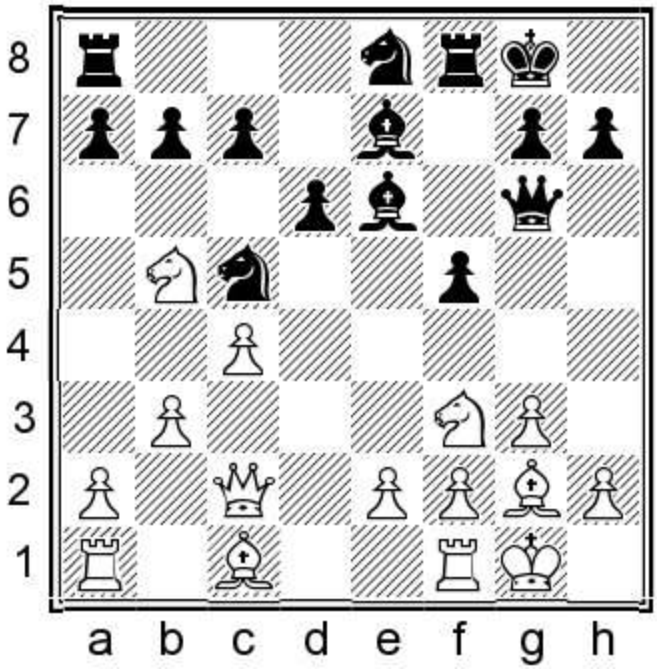
9.♗b2 ♕h5 10.♕c2 allows Black to carry out his plan with 10...e5!, leading to double-edged play.

9.♘g5 ♗d8 10.d5 appears tempting but is actually not so troubling for Black after 10...e5 11.♘e6 ♖f7, when he is ready to swap off the strong knight with ...♘f8.

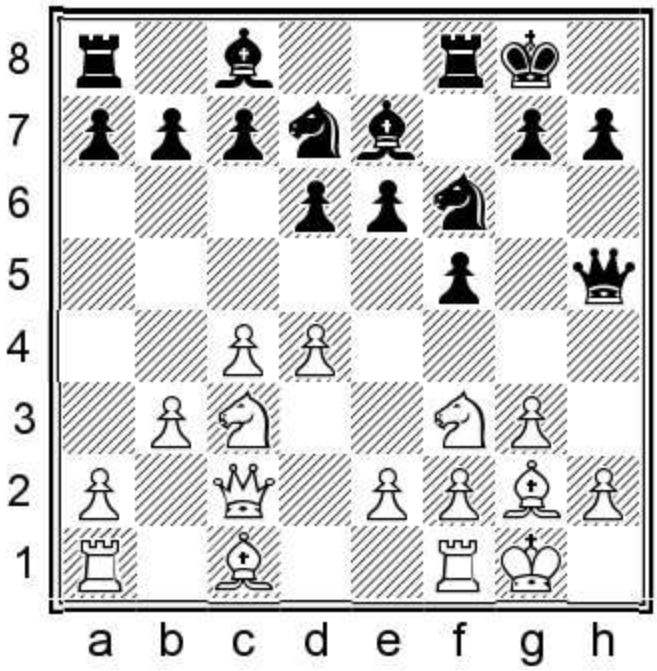
9...♕h5

Alternatively, 9...♕g6 runs into: 10.d5! ♘c5 (the main point of White's last move is that 10...e5? loses the f5-pawn after 11.♘h4) 11.dxe6 ♗xe6 12.♘b5! ♘e8

chesstouring.com



This occurred in Aponte – Sequera Paolini, Venezuela 1999, and now the calm 13.e3!N 13...c6 14.♘bd4± would have led to a pleasant positional advantage for White.



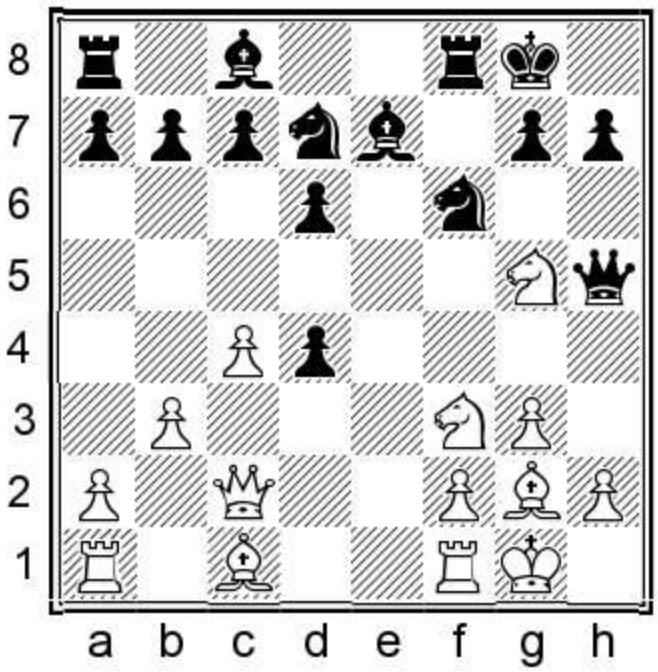
10.e4

Everything is ready for this thematic break.

10...fxe4 11.♘xe4 ♘xe4

Black actually opted for 11...e5?! in three out of four games, but 12.♘eg5! is a powerful reply. 12...exd4 was played in Weber – Schulte, Bad Wiessee 2001, and now White should have continued:

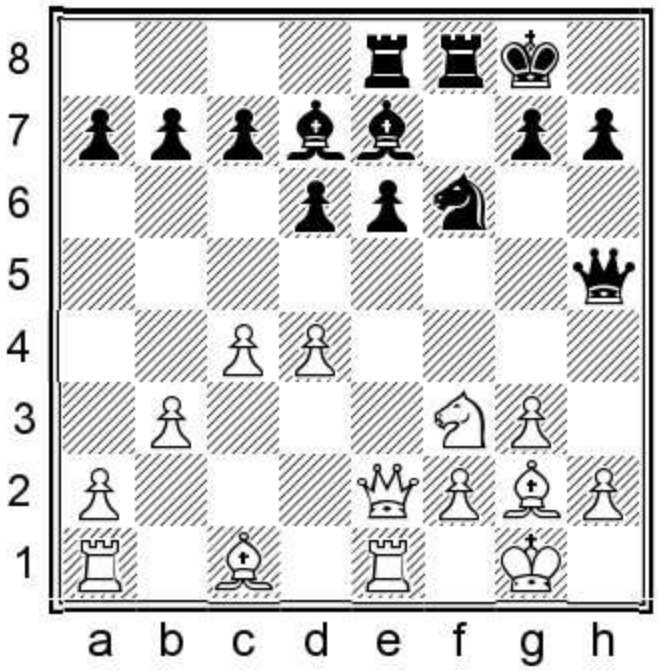
chesstouring.com



13.♘xd4!N Presumably White was afraid of 13...♘g4 but after 14.h3! ♗xg5 15.♗xg5 ♕xg5 16.♗d5† ♔h8 17.♘e6!+– his position is winning.

12.♕xe4 ♘f6 13.♕e2 ♗d7 14.♖e1 ♖ae8

In Teijeiro Barros – Moreno Culebras, Mondariz 1997, White missed the strongest continuation:



15.♘g5!N 15...♘g4

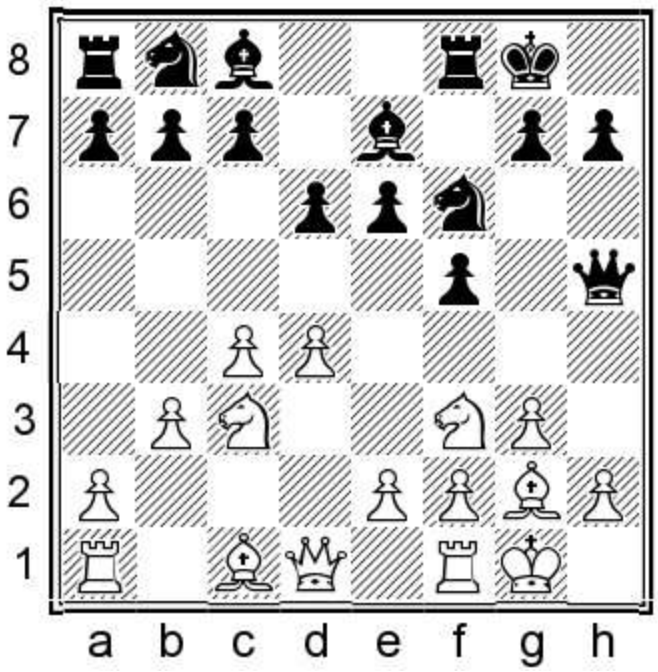
15...♕xe2 16.♖xe2± wins a pawn for White, as both e6 and b7 are hanging.

16.h3 ♗xg5 17.hxg4 ♕g6 18.♗e4 ♕f6 19.♗b2±

White has an obvious positional advantage.

chesstouring.com

B3) 8...♕h5



This is quite a popular choice, but there is a downside to committing the queen so early.

9.♗a3!

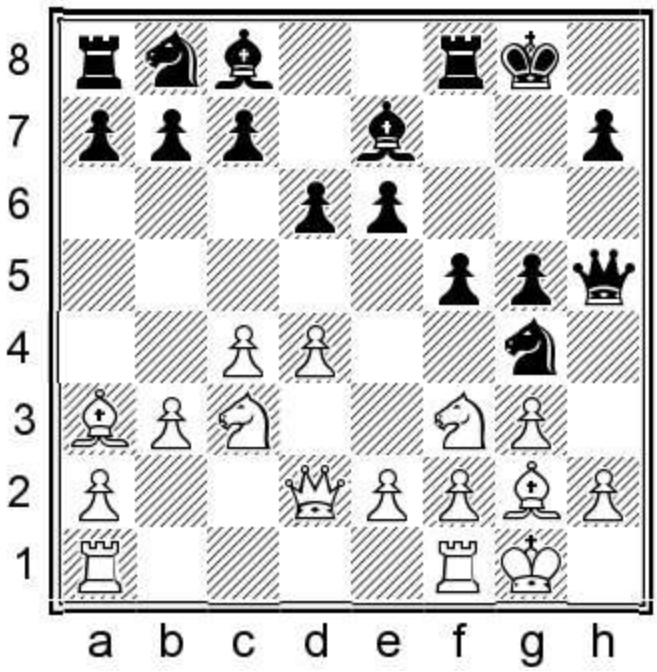
Setting up tactical motifs based on the undefended bishop on e7.

9...a5

I will take this as the main line, but Black has tried a variety of options, none of which has brought him much success.

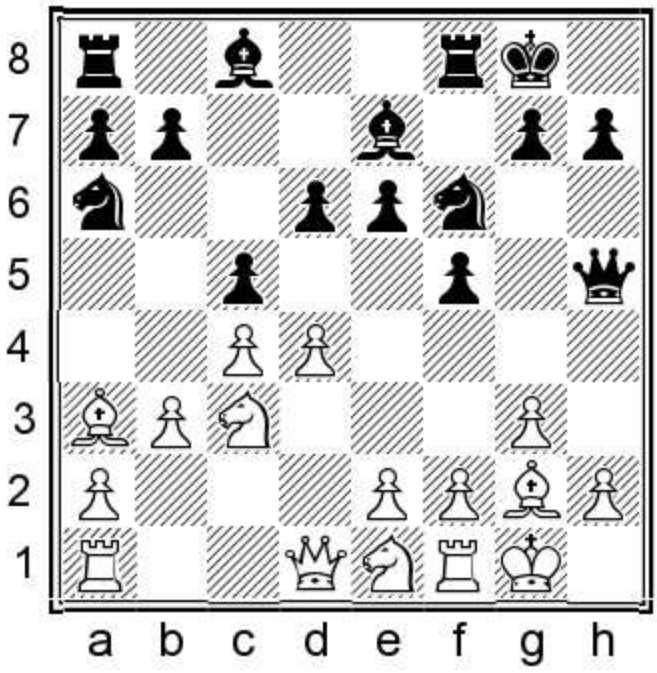
9...g5?! is too weakening; White can simply play 10.♕d2 with the following idea: 10...♘g4 (10...g4N 11.♘e5! shows one of the key tactical points of the bishop on a3; play may continue 11...c5 12.♘d3 cxd4 13.♘b5± and Black is in trouble)

chesstouring.com



11.d5! e5 12.h3 ♘h6 13.♘xe5± White simply won a pawn in Bognar – Kun, Aggtelek 1997.

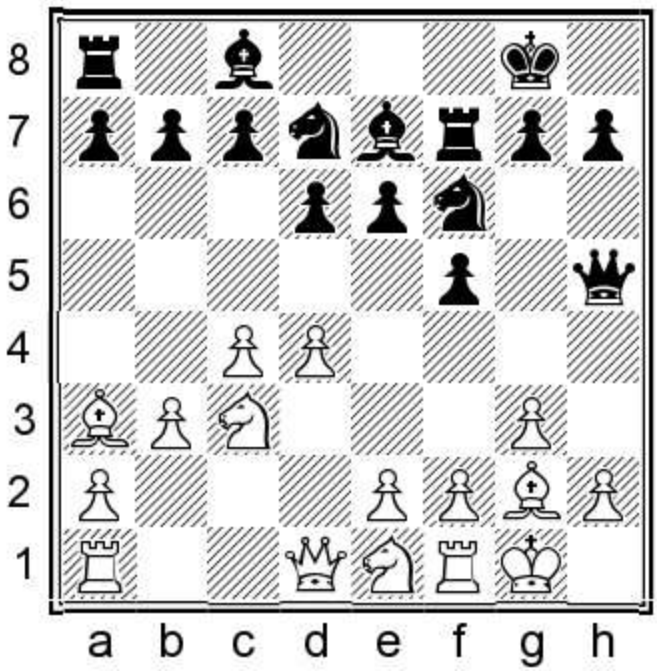
9...♘a6 10.♘e1!? Yet again, this manoeuvre makes a lot of sense to me. 10...c5



11.e3! ♕xd1 12.♖xd1 In P. Wang – T. Taylor, Los Angeles 2010, the arising endgame was unpleasant for Black, mainly due to the pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal.

9...♘bd7 can also be met by the rare but powerful 10.♘e1!?, clearing the long diagonal and heading towards the excellent d3-square. 10...♖f7 (10...♕f7 can be met by 11.f4! followed by e2-e4 at a suitable moment) Now in Hjorth – Bryntse, Sweden 1975, White should have continued:

chesstouring.com



11.♘d3!N This is the most logical follow-up, especially taking into account that 11...e5 (11...g5 12.♕d2± is also great for White) runs into 12.♘d5! and White wins material; for instance, 12...♗d8 13.dxe5 dxe5? 14.♘xe5! ♘xe5 15.♘f4 and Black can already resign.

9...♖f7

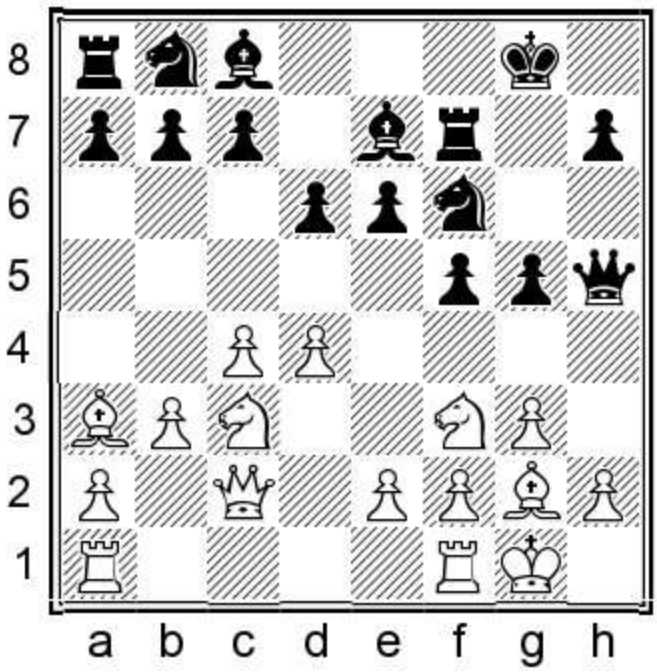
Defending the e7-bishop is a sensible idea, but White can establish an advantage with mostly simple moves.

10.♕c2 g5

10...♘c6 allows a favourable transformation of the pawn structure by means of 11.d5 exd5 12.♘xd5 ♗d8 13.♘f4 ♕h6 as in Elliott – Alvarez Villar, email 1997, and now I like 14.h4!N± in order to neutralize any ...g5 ideas.

The text move was played in Liebert – Poenisch, Germany 2001. I developed the following logical plan for White:

chesstouring.com

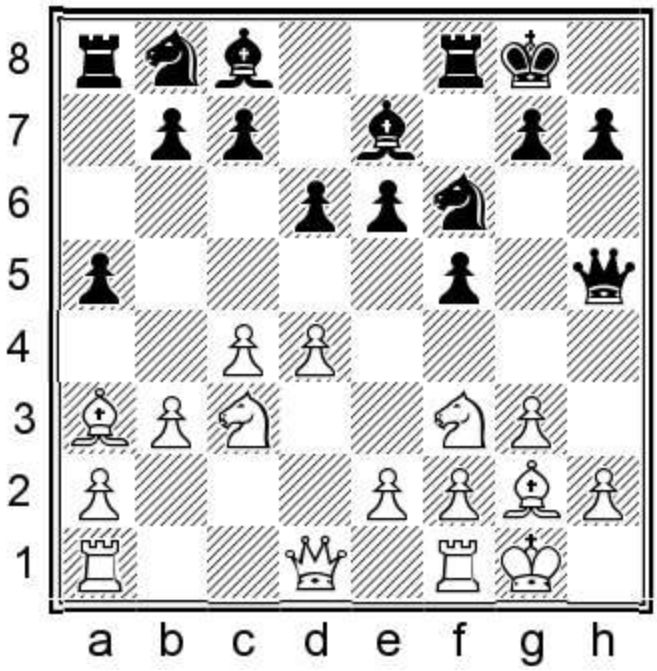


11.♖ad1N 11...♘bd7 12.♗c1!

Prior to the e2-e4 advance, White has to remove the bishop from the exposed a3-square in order to avoid a tactical shot with ...d5. Now nothing can stop White's thematic central break.

12...h6 13.e4 fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♘xe4 15.♕xe4 ♘f6 16.♕d3

White has a pleasant advantage.



10.e3 ♕h6

This is Black's most recent try but it does not change anything.

10...♘a6 can also be met by 11.d5 ♘b4 12.dxe6 ♗xe6 as in Hartston – Schneider, Berlin 1980, when White has a great position after the simple 13.♗b2N±.

chesstouring.com

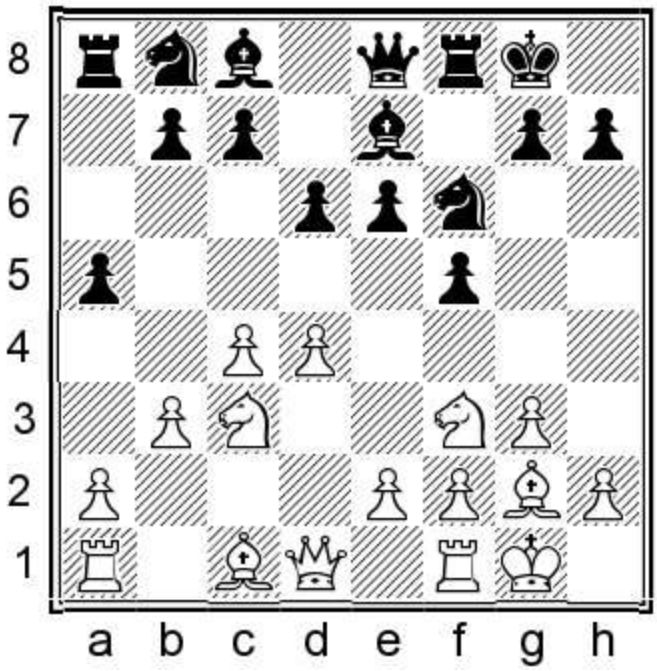
11.d5 exd5 12.♘xd5 ♗d8 13.♘xf6† ♗xf6 14.♕d5† ♔h8

We have been following Ptacnikova – Bergsson, Reykjavik 2013. Here I suggest:

15.♖ac1N

With a clear positional advantage for White.

B4) 8...a5



9.♗b2

Since the e7-bishop is currently defended, there is not much point in developing the bishop to a3 here.

Black's three most important options are **B41)** 9...♕h5, **B42)** 9...c6 and **B43)** 9...♘a6.

9...♘c6

This move runs into the typical strong response:

10.d5 ♘b4

10...♘e5?! was refuted easily by means of 11.♘xe5 dxe5 12.♘b5!± in Bertholee – Van de Mortel, Dieren 1991.

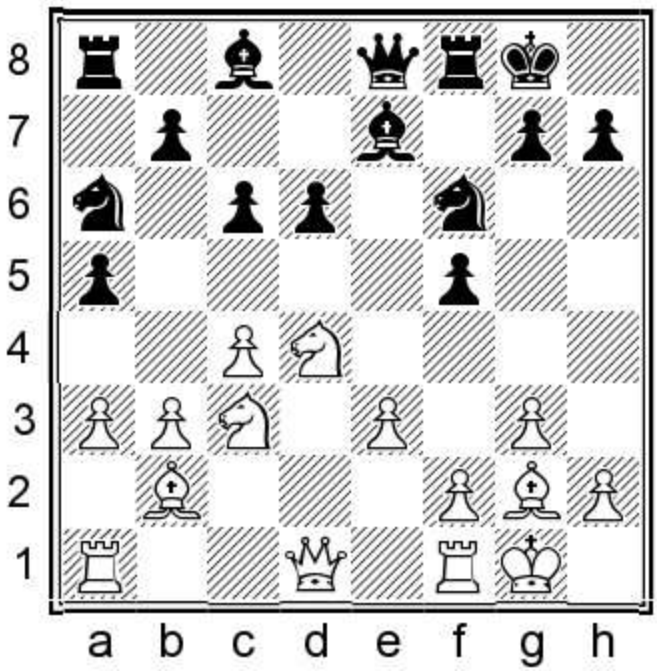
10...exd5 11.cxd5 ♘e5 12.♘d4 ♗d7 13.e3 also led to a clearly inferior position for Black in Kragelj – Lovati, Arco 2001.

10...♘d8 11.dxe6 ♘xe6 reaches a thematically favourable structure for White. A logical continuation is 12.e3 ♘c5 13.♘d4, transposing to variation B1.

11.dxe6 ♗xe6 12.♘d4 ♗c8 13.e3 c6 14.a3 ♘a6

This occurred in Cruz – De las Heras, Buenos Aires 1964. A natural and strong continuation would have been:

chesstouring.com



15.♘a4N 15...♗d8 16.♕c2

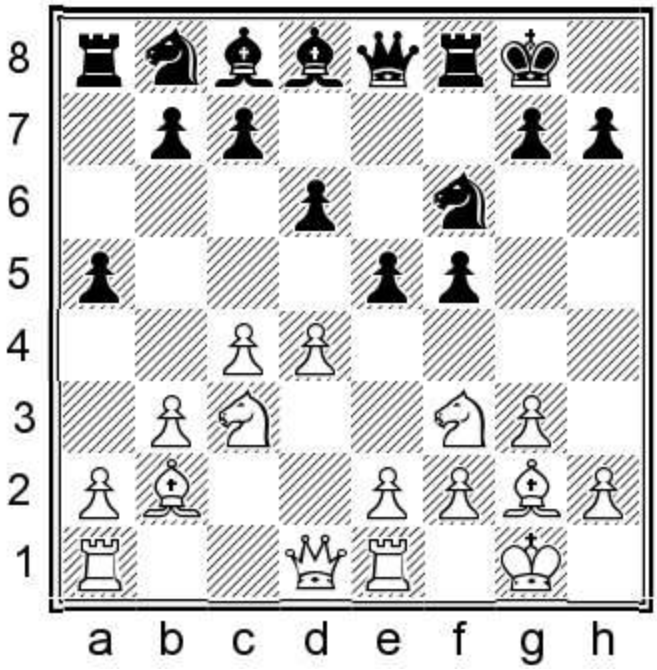
With a stable positional plus for White.

9...♗d8

This is a pet line of GM Shtyrenkov. Black wants to carry out the thematic ...e5 advance but White has an extremely effective way to counter it.

10.♖e1! e5

Otherwise Black's set-up would be pointless.



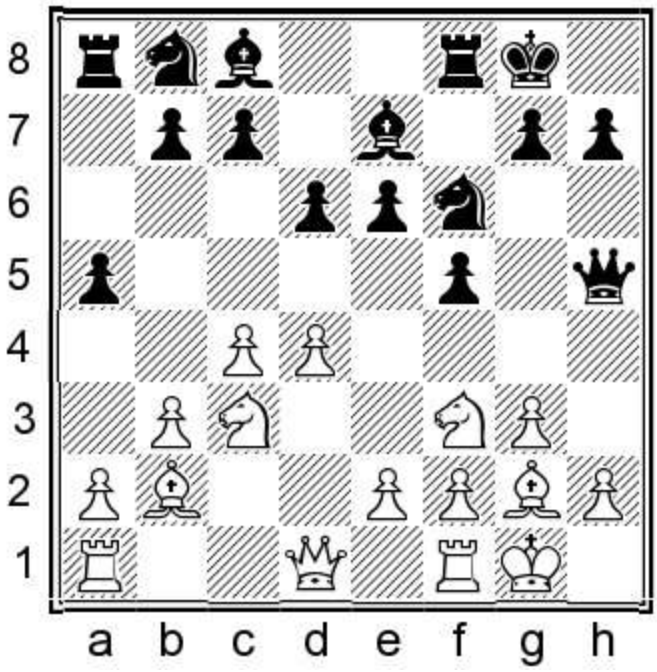
11.e4! ♘c6

11...fxe4?! is worse in view of 12.dxe5! dxe5 13.♘xe4 ♘c6 14.♘xe5! ♘xe5 15.♘xf6† gxf6 16.f4 and White wins a pawn while seriously exposing the enemy king.

chesstouring.com

12.exf5 ♗xf5 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.♘d5 ♘d7 15.♕d2 ♗g4 16.♘g5 ♕h5 17.♘e4±
White obtained a clear positional edge in Krivoshey – Shtyrenkov, Alushta 2003.

B41) 9...♕h5

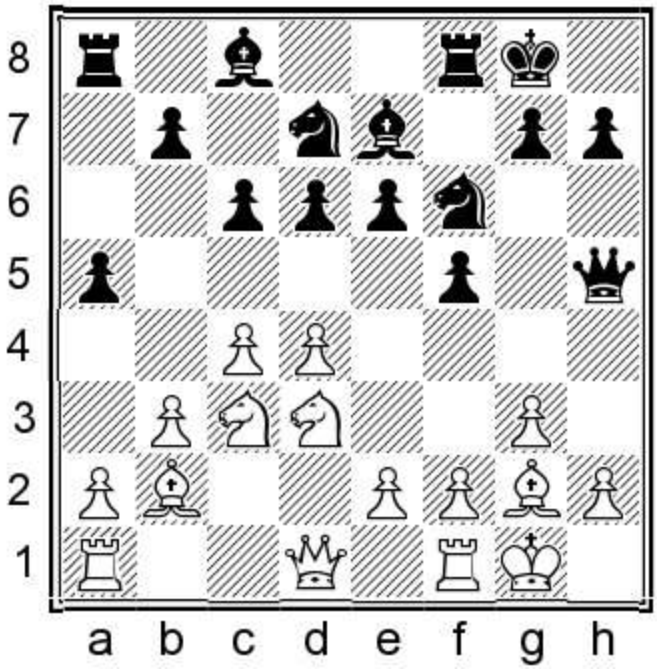


10.♘e1!?
This is neither the most popular nor the highest-scoring of White's options, but I find it the most appealing. The knight is once again heading again to d3, where it will be perfectly placed to control various central squares. At the same time White opens a path for his light-squared bishop and supports the e2-e4 advance.

10...c6
I checked several other possibilities:

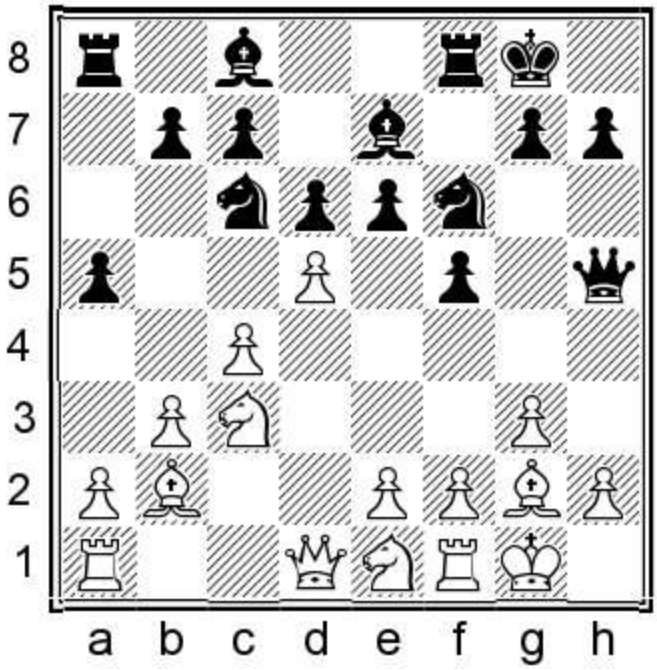
10...♘bd7 11.♘d3 c6?! is too slow and passive. In Seidemann – Just, Fuerstenwalde 1981, White missed a great opportunity to exploit Black's temporary loss of control over the e6 square:

chesstouring.com



12.♘f4!N 12...♕f7 13.d5± Black is in big trouble.

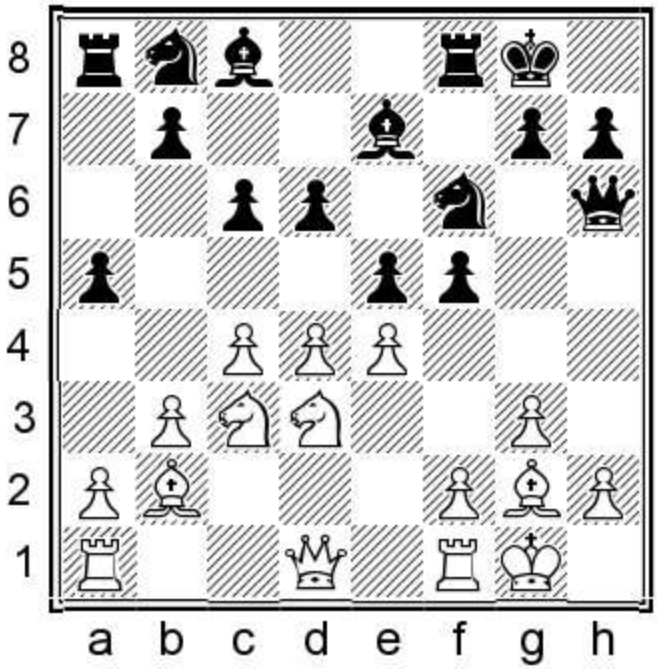
10...♘c6 was a provocative choice in Efimov – Naumkin, Asti 1996. I don't know why White refrained from the natural reply: 11.d5!N



11...exd5 (another line runs 11...♘e5 12.♘b5! ♘e8 13.c5! with a nice initiative for White) 12.♘xd5 ♘xd5 13.cxd5 ♘b4 14.♖c1 The arising pawn structure promises White a lasting advantage, thanks to the permanent weakness of the c7-pawn.

10...♕h6 11.♘d3 c6 12.e4 e5 occurred more recently in Bruno – Paltrinieri, Porto San Giorgio 2013, when White missed a powerful idea:

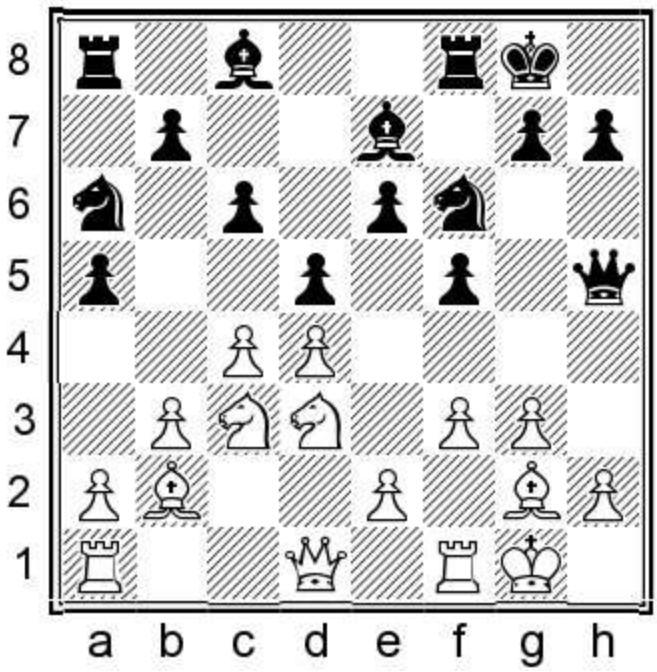
chesstouring.com



13.♗c1!N 13...g5 (in case of 13...f4 14.dxe5 ♘g4 15.h3 ♘xe5 16.♘xf4± it's just a pawn up for White) 14.dxe5 ♘g4 15.h3 ♘xe5 16.f4± White's advantage is obvious.

11.♘d3 e5

11...d5 gives Black an unfortunate version of the Stonewall. 12.f3 ♘a6 occurred in Estremera Panos – Pomes Marcet, Oropesa del Mar 1996, and now I developed the following plan for White:

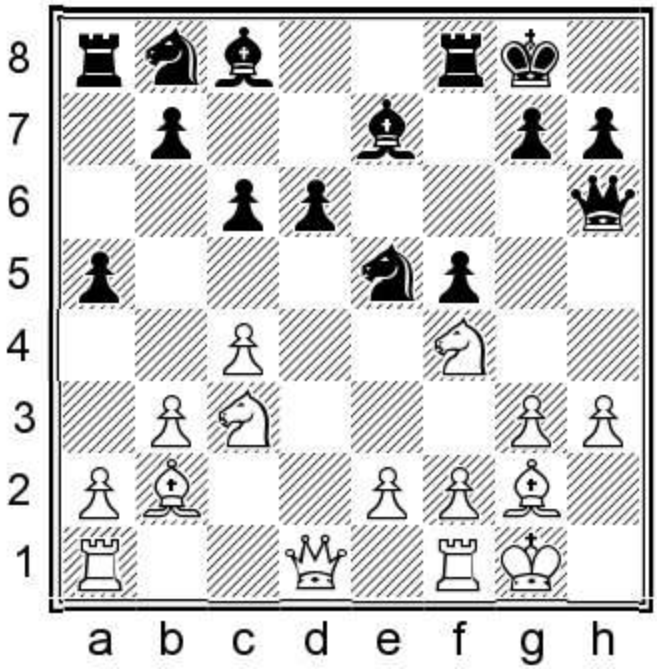


13.♕d2N 13...♘b4 (13...♖b8 and any similarly non-committal moves are strongly met by 14.e4±) 14.♘e5± White's advantage is beyond any doubt.

12.dxe5 ♘g4 13.h3 ♘xe5 14.♘f4 ♕h6

Here my preference would be:

chesstouring.com



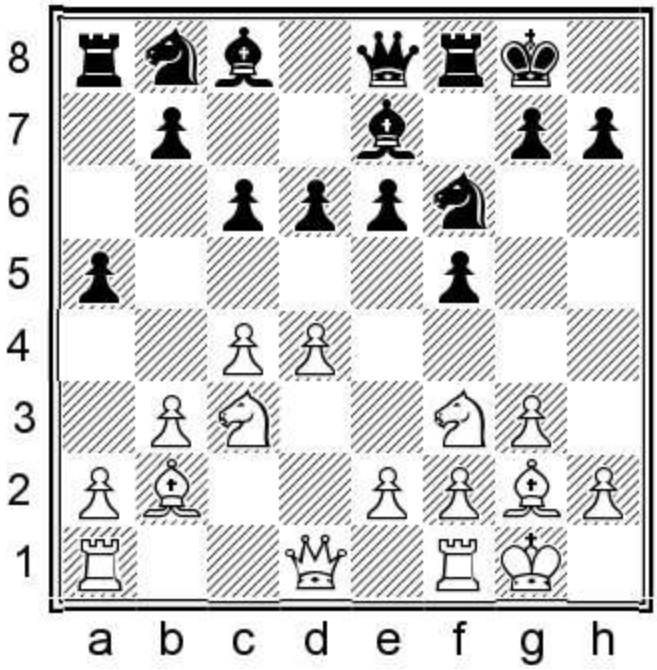
15.e3N

In Pilarska – Maccapan, corr. 2011, White preferred the super-aggressive 15.c5!? and went on to win, but only after some serious complications. This approach may appeal to some readers, but I believe the text move to be a simpler choice for most practical players, especially considering that White has nothing to fear from the following attacking plan:

15...g5 16.♘h5 g4 17.♘f4!

White is clearly better.

B42) 9...c6



chesstouring.com

10.♖e1

White prepares the thematic e2-e4.

10...d5

10...♘a6 transposes to variation B431 on page 90.

10...♘e4 runs into the forcing 11.♘xe4 fxe4 12.♘d2 d5 13.f3 exf3 (after 13...e3 14.♘b1 the e3-pawn will surely fall) 14.exf3± with an excellent game for White, Hoang Thanh Trang – Kun, Budapest 2005.

The text move sees Black switching to a Stonewall structure, which seems like his most reasonable option. With that being said, my opinion is that the Stonewall structure almost always promises White slightly better prospects, and this is no exception.

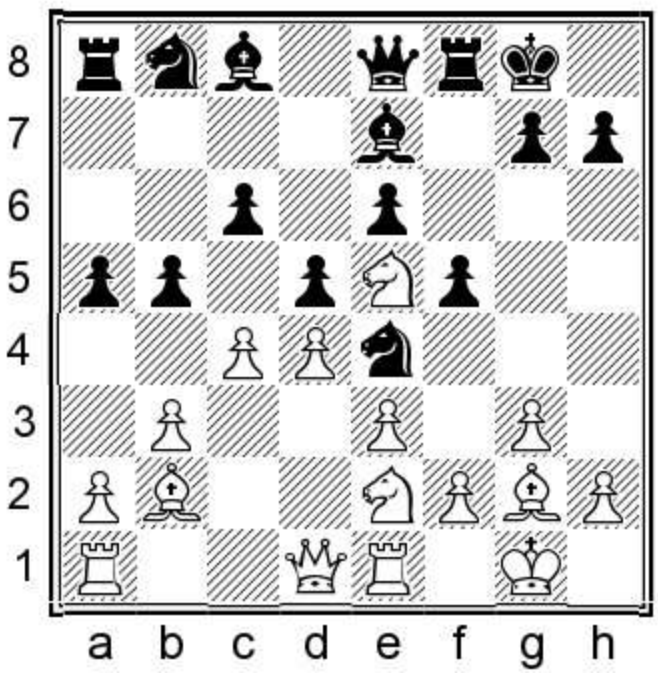
11.e3 b5

After 11...b6 12.♘e5 ♗a6 13.♖c1 ♖a7 14.♘e2 White was clearly better in Straub – Zatonskih, Kiev 1998.

The text move is more active but it has the drawback of weakening Black's position on the queenside, as was demonstrated in the following encounter.

12.♘e5 ♘e4 13.♘e2

13.♖c1!?N is also worth considering, and if 13...♘xc3 14.♗xc3 ♗b7 15.♕d2 White maintains the better game.

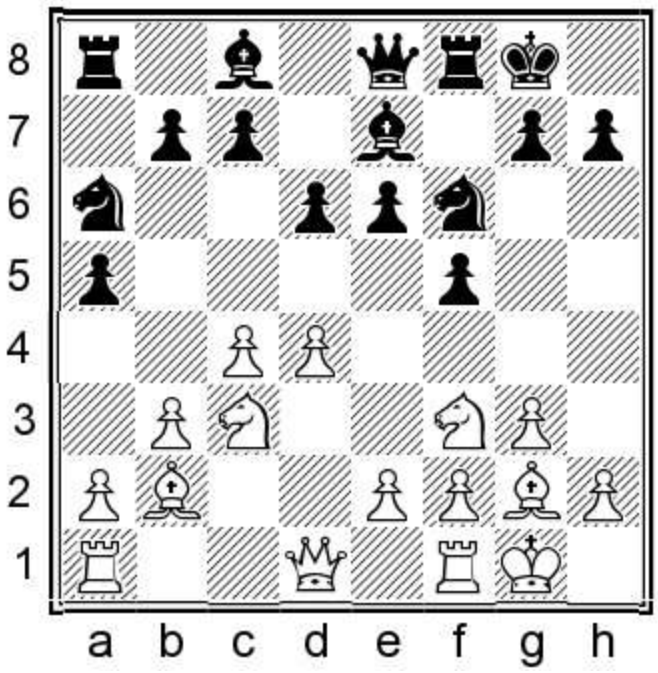


13...♗f6 14.f3 ♘d6 15.cxb5 cxb5 16.♖c1 b4 17.♘f4

White enjoyed an obvious positional superiority in Chuchelov – Spice, Eupen 1997.

chesstouring.com

B43) 9...♘a6



10.♖e1

White prepares the thematic e2-e4 advance.

Black's most natural replies are **B431)** 10...c6, **B432)** 10...♕h5 and **B433)** 10...♕g6.

I also considered:

10...♘e4 11.♘d2!

White is fighting for control over the e4-square.

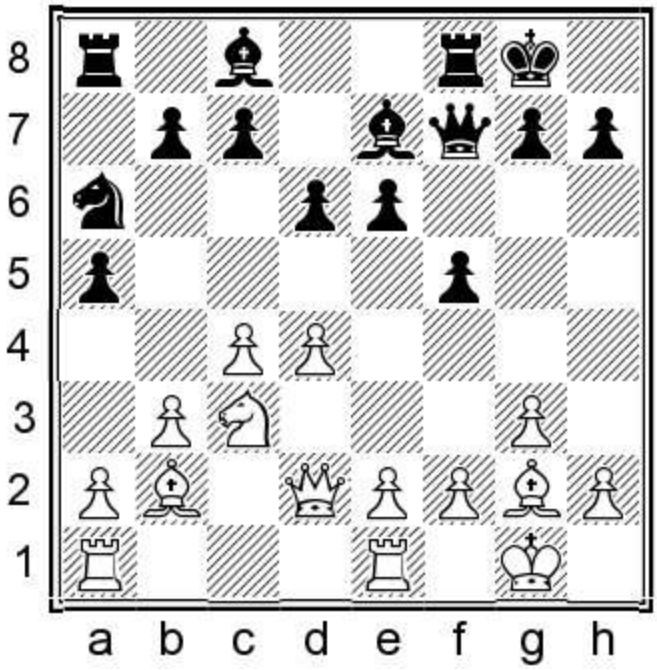
11...♘xd2

Also after 11...♘xc3 12.♗xc3 Black can do little to stop White's plan. 12...♘b4 13.a3 ♘c6 14.d5 ♘d8 occurred in Fries – Bohn, Germany 2016, and now White's play can be easily improved by means of 15.e4!N 15...e5 (15...f4 runs into the powerful 16.e5±) 16.exf5 ♗xf5 17.♘e4± with a classical advantage.

12.♕xd2 ♕f7

I would also like to mention 12...c6 13.e4 ♕h5 14.exf5 ♕xf5 15.♘a4 ♗d8 16.♖e3!± when White obtained a clear positional advantage in Sulyok – Bachofner, Hartberg 2004.

chesstouring.com



13.f4!

Avoiding 13.e4 f4.

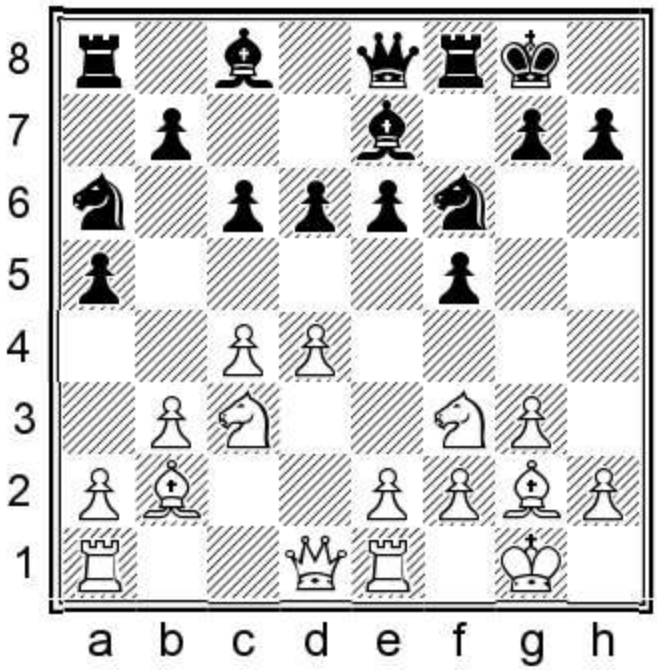
13...c5?!

A mistake in a difficult position.

14.d5 e5 15.fxe5 dxe5 16.d6 ♗d8 17.♘b5+–

White was strategically winning in Sumin – Goodfellow, Benidorm 2012.

B431) 10...c6

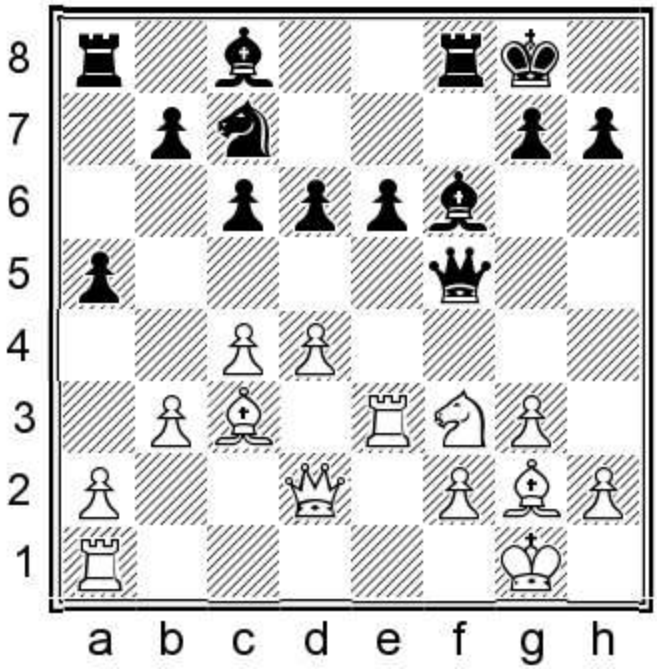


Now White gets a pleasant advantage by carrying out his plan.

chesstouring.com

11.e4 fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♖xe4 ♗d7

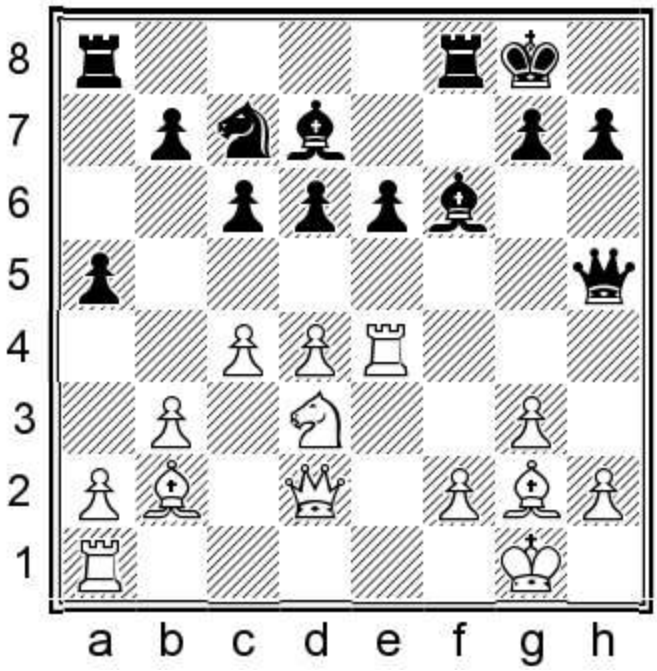
Another direction is: 13...♕h5 14.♖e3 ♕f5 (14...♗d7 15.♕e2 ♖ae8 16.♖e1 ♗d8 17.♗c3± and White is just better Phillips – Jugelt, Hamburg 1993) 15.♕d2 ♗f6 16.♗c3 ♘c7



17.a4! Preventing any counterplay connected with ...a4. 17...♗d7 18.♘e1 b6 19.♘d3 ♖ae8 20.♖ae1 ♕h5 21.f4± White was firmly in control in Babula – Bunzmann, Austria 2007.

14.♕d2 ♕h5 15.♘e1 a4

15...♗f6 16.♘d3 ♘c7 occurred in Neckel – Pichler, corr. 1983, when White should have continued:

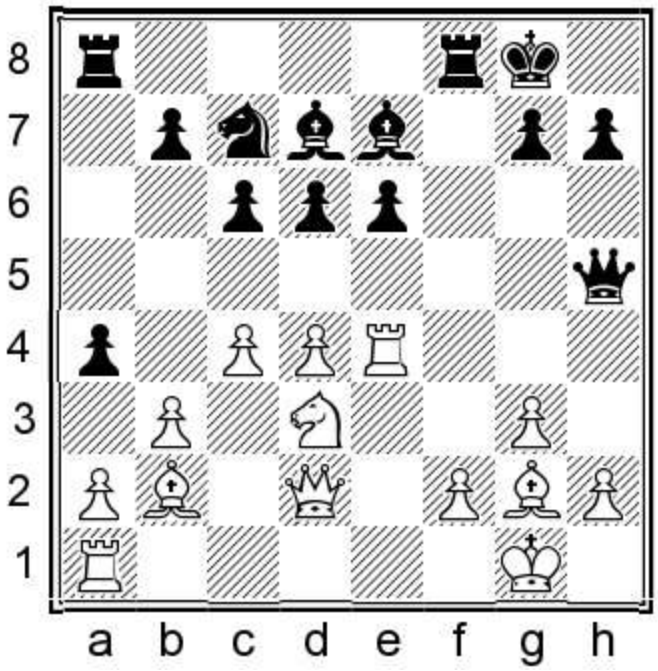


17.♖ae1N 17...b5 18.a4! b4 19.♖4e2± With much better chances.

chesstouring.com

16.♘d3 ♘c7

We have been following Halliwell – De Meye, corr. 2010. Here I like:



17.♖ae1N 17...axb3 18.axb3 b5 19.c5 ♘d5 20.♖4e2±

With a serious positional advantage.

B432) 10...♕h5 11.e4 fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♖xe4

As usual, White enjoys a pleasant advantage after carrying out the e2-e4 break.

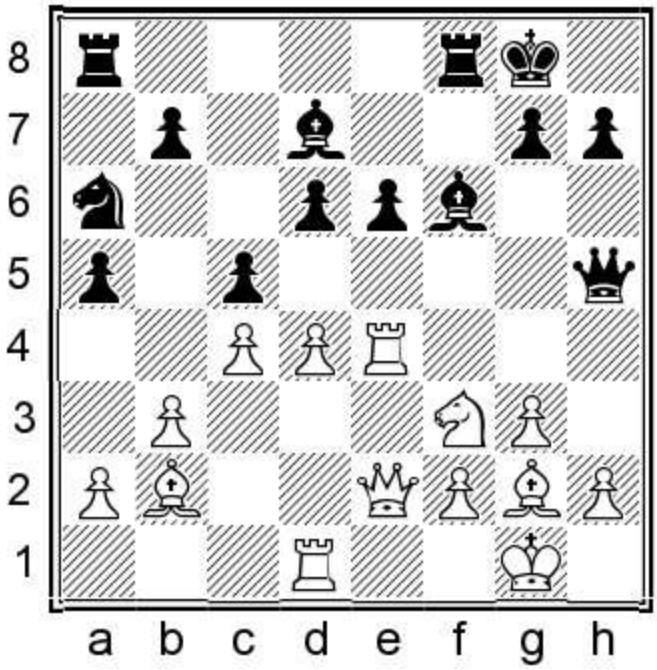
13...♗f6

13...♗d7 14.♖e3 c6 transposes to Phillips – Jugelt in the notes to variation B431 above.

14.♕e2 ♗d7

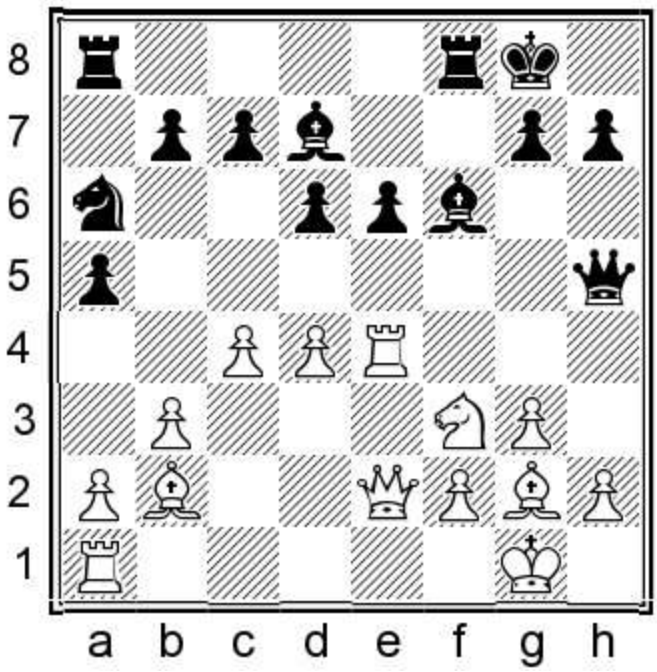
14...c5?! is too weakening, and White found a nice tactical trick in the following encounter: 15.♖d1 ♗d7

chesstouring.com



16.♘e5! ♕xe2 17.♖xe2 ♗c8 18.♘f3 White has easy play against the weak pawns on e6 and d6. 18...a4 19.dxc5 dxc5 20.♘e5± White's advantage was indisputable in Damljanovic – Gundersen, Eupen 1999.

This position was reached in Kholmov – Chistiakov, Tbilisi 1949. I still like the following improvement:



15.♘d2!?N

15.h4!?N is also worth considering.

15...♕xe2

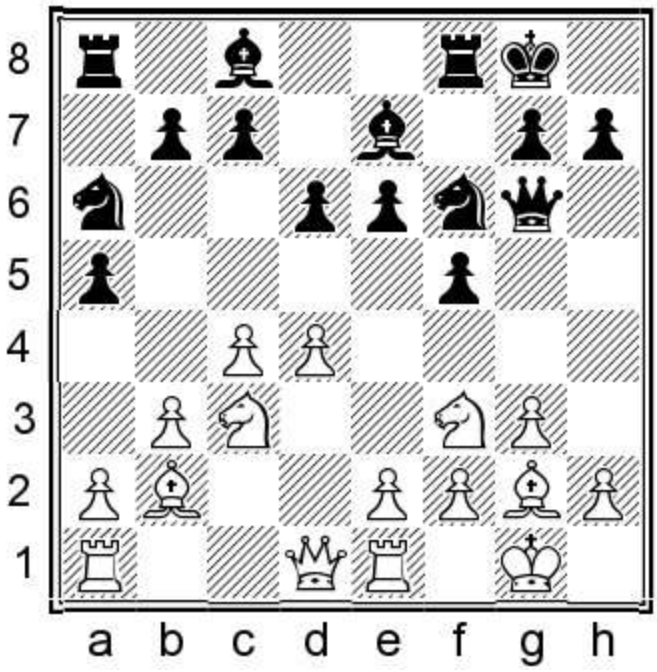
15...♕g6 16.♖d1 is also not much fun for Black.

chesstouring.com

16.♖xe2 ♖ab8 17.♘e4 ♗e7 18.♗c3 b6 19.f4

White has ongoing positional pressure thanks to his overwhelming spatial superiority.

B433) 10...♕g6



11.e4!

It turns out that Black's last move does not prevent White's plan at all.

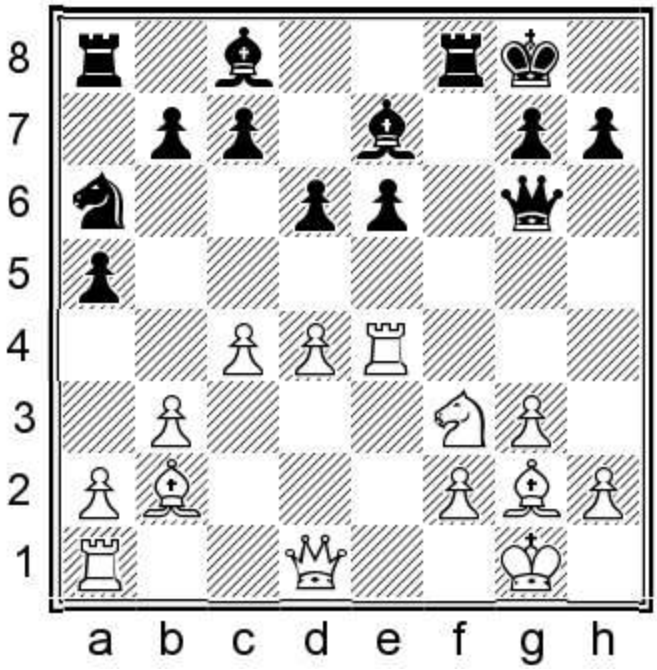
11...♘xe4

11...fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♖xe4 leads to the same thing.

11...f4 runs into 12.e5! ♘g4 13.exd6 cxd6 14.♕d2 fxg3 15.fxg3 ♘b4 16.♖ad1± with an obvious advantage, as occurred in Ab. Khasin – Sivertsev, corr. 1968.

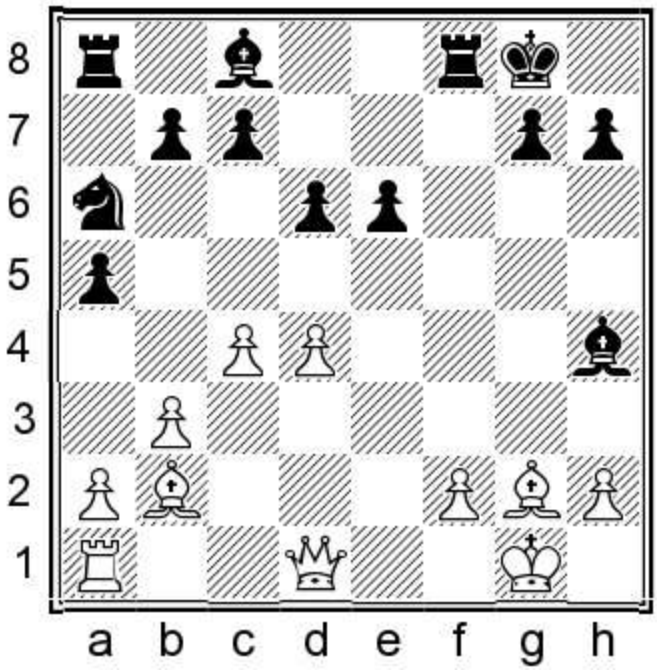
12.♘xe4 fxe4 13.♖xe4

chesstouring.com



13...♘b4

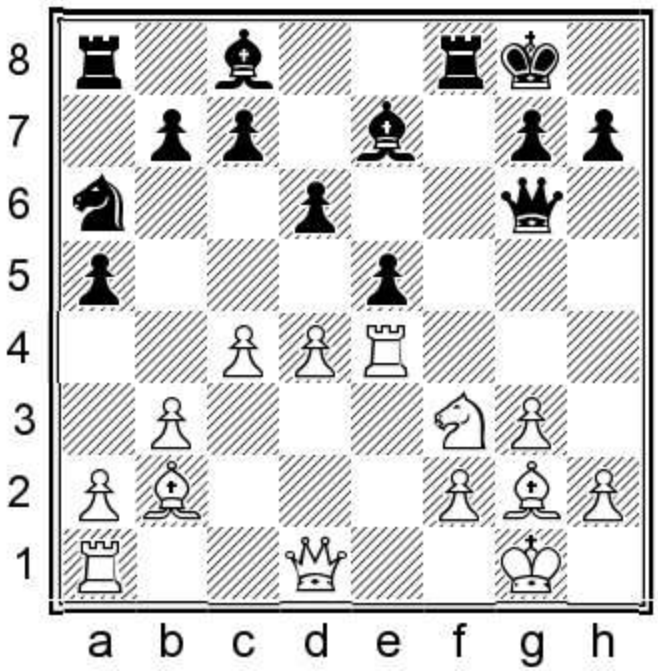
It is important to see what happens when Black trades his queen for some pieces: 13...♕xe4?! 14.♘h4 ♕xh4 15.gxh4 ♗xh4 Black played this in a few games with decent results, until a correspondence game demonstrated the refutation of Black's concept:



16.♗e4! ♗xf2† 17.♔g2 g6 18.♕g4 ♗e3 19.♖f1 ♗h6 20.♖xf8† ♗xf8 21.h4! In view of the decisive attacking threats, Black resigned in Engel – Nieuweboer, corr. 2007.

I also considered:
13...e5

chesstouring.com



14.♘h4!

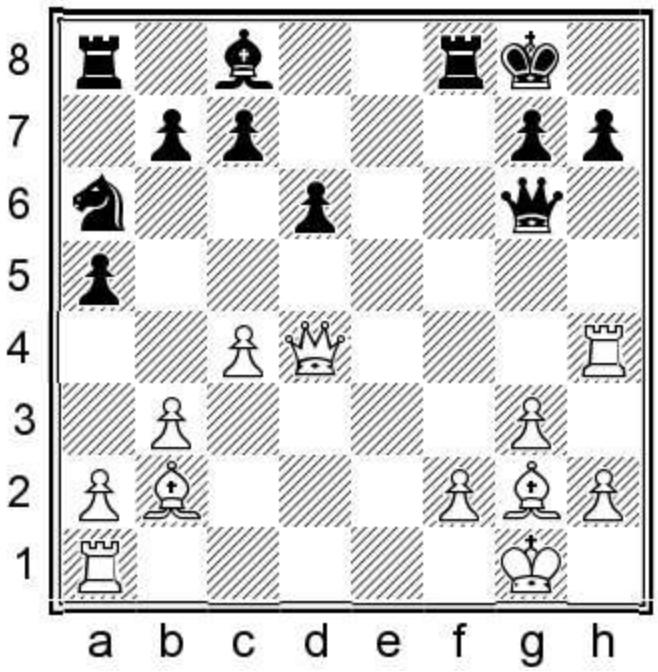
The easiest way to prove White's advantage.

14...♗xh4

14...♕f7 did not help after 15.♕e2! g5?! 16.dxe5 gxh4 17.e6+– when Black's position was hopeless due to the threat of ♖g4† in Yrjola – Pyhala, Espoo 1985.

15.♖xh4 exd4 16.♕xd4

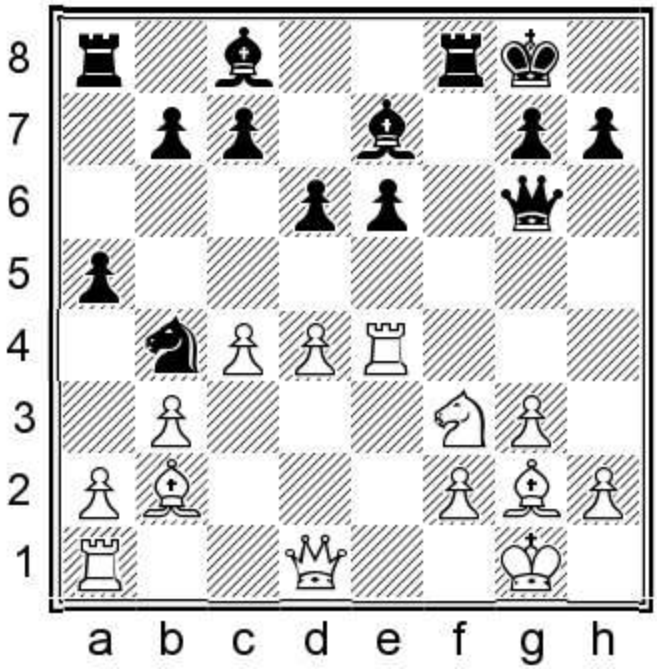
White is much better, and it's no wonder that he achieved a quick victory in the following game:



16...♘c5 17.♖e1 ♘d3? 18.♕d5† ♔h8 19.♗e4

Black resigned in Lomineishvili – Rychagov, Moscow 1997.

chesstouring.com



14.♕e2 ♗f6

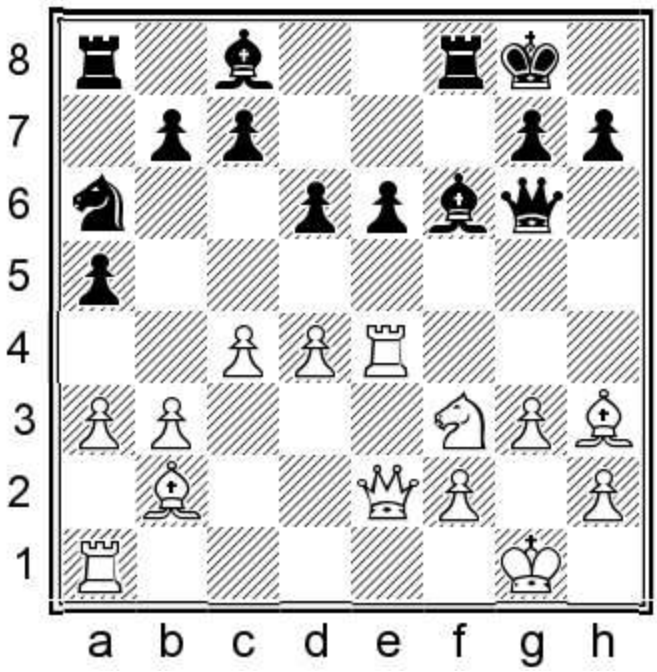
Black has nothing better, for instance:

14...e5? fell flat after 15.dxe5 ♗f5 16.exd6 ♗xe4 17.dxe7 ♖fe8 18.♘e5 ♗d3 19.♕d2 ♕d6 20.a3+– in Chuchelov – Spice, Clichy 1995.

14...♕h5 15.a3 ♘a6 16.♘d2 ♕xe2 17.♖xe2 c6 18.♖ae1± and the weak e6-pawn was an obvious problem for Black in Rieke – Moser, Oberwart 2000.

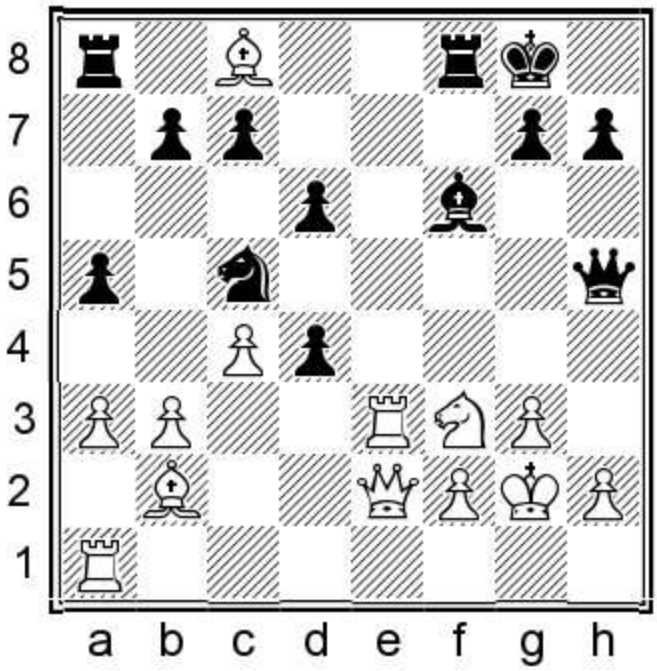
15.a3 ♘c6

15...♘a6 16.♗h3! makes it hard for Black to defend the e6-pawn, for instance:



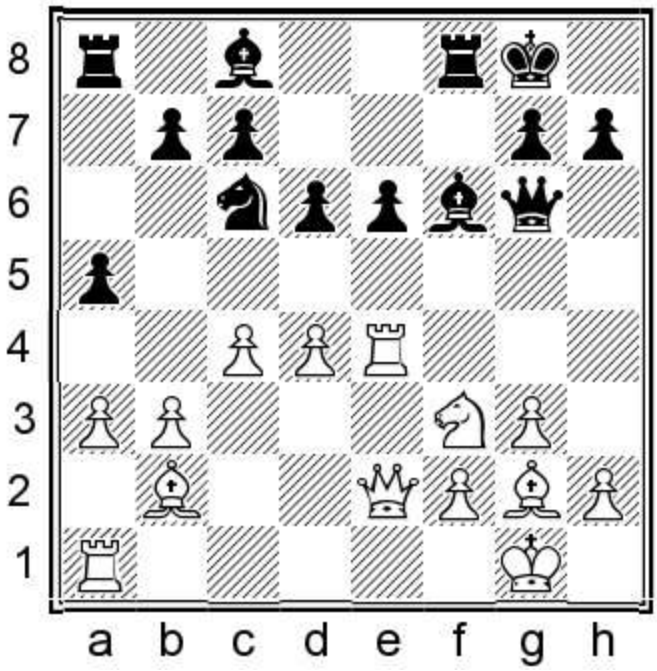
chesstouring.com

16...♘c5 17.♖e3 ♕h5 18.♔g2! e5 19.♗xc8 exd4 Now in Contin – Caruso, Monselice 2003, White should have continued:



20.♗xb7!N 20...dxe3 21.♗xa8 ♖xa8 22.♗xf6 gxf6 23.♕xe3 White emerges with an extra pawn and a winning position.

The text move is a slight improvement but White maintains serious pressure after:



16.♖e1 ♗d7 17.♗h3 ♘d8 18.♖f4!?±

White's positional advantage was indisputable in Haidenbauer – Oker, corr. 2014.

Conclusion

chesstouring.com

This chapter has dealt with the two most important variations of the Classical Dutch. 7...♘e4 is Black's most theoretically challenging option and the theory has moved on a lot since *GM 2*. After the critical continuation of 8.♘xe4 fxe4 9.♘d2 d5 10.f3 ♘c6, we have a major change of direction with 11.e3!, which seems to offer White excellent prospects.

Then we looked at 7...♕e8 8.b3 when there are many variations but the general picture tends to be the same: either White carries out the e2-e4 break or Black avoids it by making a concession of some kind. Either way, White obtains a pleasant positional advantage.

chesstouring.com



Dutch



Leningrad – Introduction

Variation Index

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.0–0 0–0

6.b3

A) 6...♘e4 97

B) 6...c5 98

C) 6...d6 7.♗b2 100

C1) 7...♘c6 101

C2) 7...a5 8.c4 103

C21) 8...♘a6 103

C22) 8...c6 105

C3) 7...e5?! 8.dxe5 107

C31) 8...♘fd7 107

C32) 8...♘g4 9.♘a3 109

C321) 9...♘xe5 109

C322) 9...♘c6 111

C4) 7...e6 8.c4 ♕e7 9.♘c3 111

C41) 9...♘c6 112

C42) 9...c6 113

C5) 7...h6 8.c4 ♕e8 9.♘bd2 g5 10.e3!? 114

chesstouring.com

C51) 10...e5 117

C52) 10...♘a6 118

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘f3 ♗g7

The Leningrad arguably has the best theoretical reputation of any Dutch system, and several strong GMs play it from time to time.

5.0-0 0-0

Other move orders are possible but Black hardly has anything to gain from postponing castling for a significant period. I will just mention one such possibility:

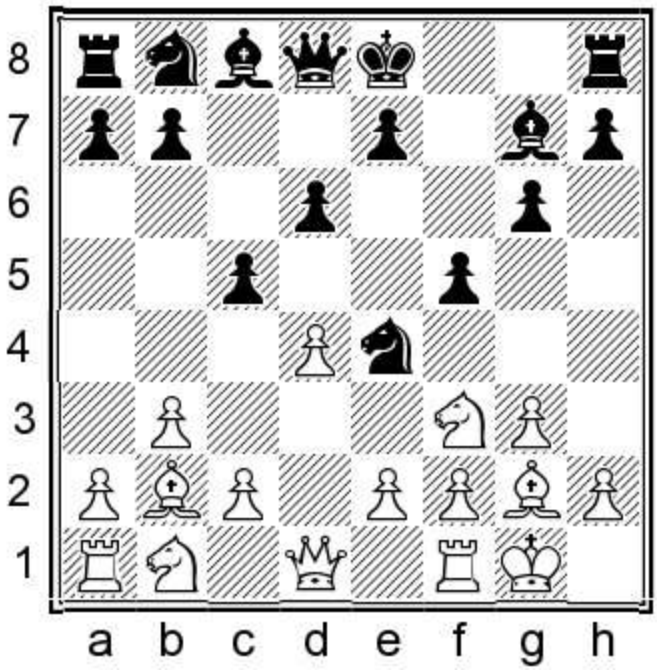
5...d6 6.b3 c5

6...0-0 7.♗b2 transposes to our main line.

7.♗b2

But not 7.dxc5 ♘e4 8.c3 ♘xc5 with reasonable play for Black.

7...♘e4



8.♕c1!N

In *GM 2* I suggested 8.c4, angling for a transposition to one of the lines analysed later, but now I prefer the text move. White wastes no time in releasing the tension over the long diagonal.

8...cxd4

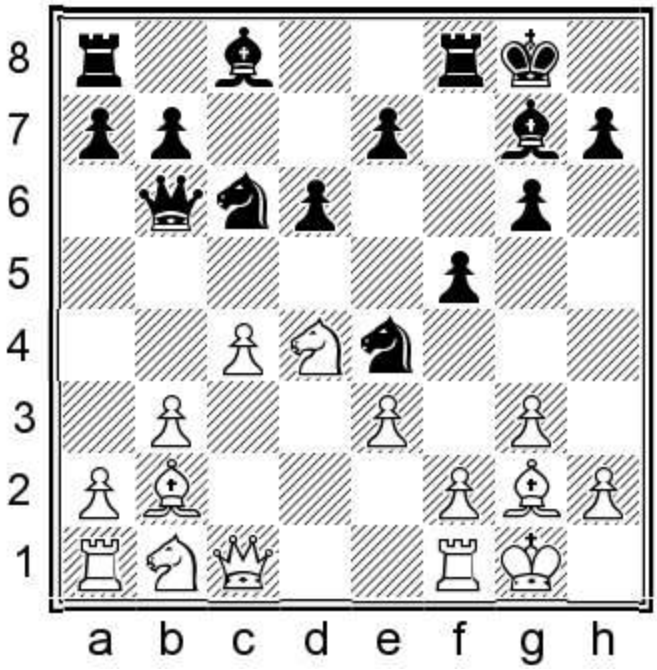
8...0-0 can be met by 9.dxc5 ♗xb2 10.♕xb2 ♘xc5 11.♘c3! with the better game for White.

9.♘xd4 0-0

Black's position looks somewhat vulnerable. We have just transposed to a game, the continuation of which confirms this assessment:

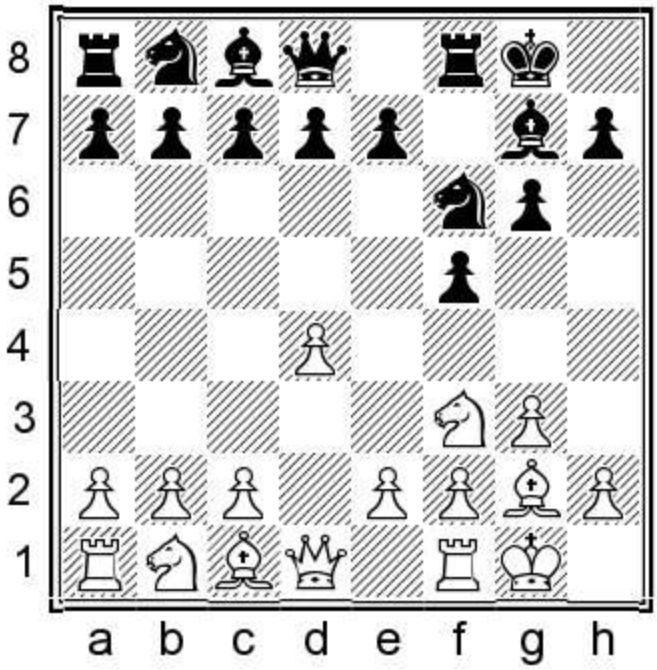
10.c4 ♕b6 11.e3 ♘c6

chesstouring.com



12.♘xc6! bxc6 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.♘d2 ♘xd2 15.♕xd2

The vulnerability of Black's pawn structure gave White a clear positional advantage in D'Amore – Scalcione, Bratto 2013.



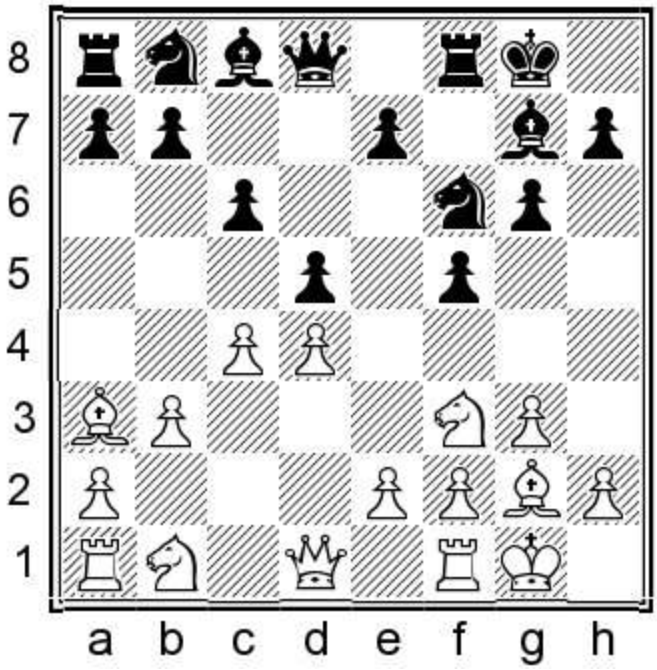
6.b3

I still like the same general plan from *GM 2*: White starts with a queenside fianchetto and will only then decide what to do with the b1-knight and c-pawn.

We will consider **A)** 6...♘e4 and **B)** 6...c5 before moving on to the standard continuation of **C)** 6...d6.

6...d5 7.c4 c6 has occurred in over forty games but Black does not have a good version of the Stonewall structure. Among other promising options, I like 8.♗a3!? when a good example continued:

chesstouring.com

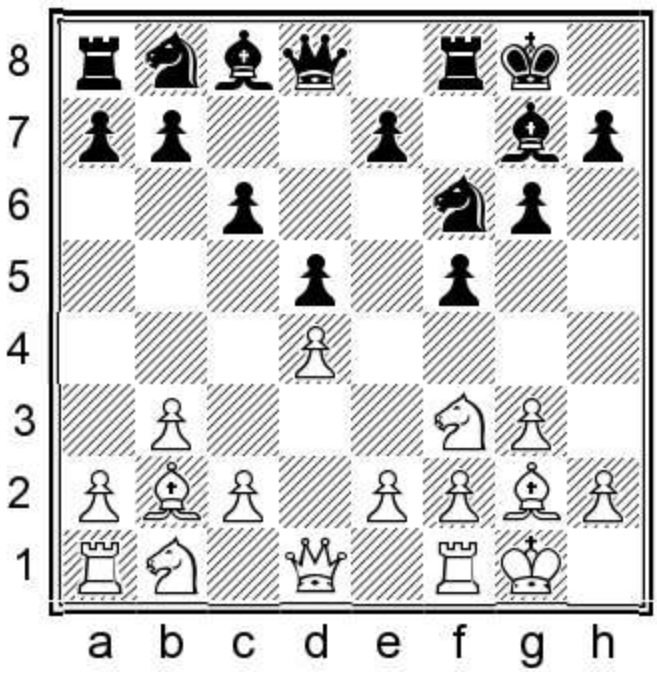


8...♔h8 9.e3 ♗e6 10.♕d3 ♘e4 11.♖c1 ♘d7 12.♘c3 White had an excellent game in Van Wely – Garcia Ilundain, Linares 1995. One of the key ideas to look out for is a well-timed capture on d5, followed by ♕b5 after Black recaptures with the c-pawn.

Another possible Stonewall variant is:
6...c6 7.♗b2 d5

7...d6 would transpose to variation A of the next chapter.

By waiting for the bishop to go to b2 before committing to the Stonewall, Black avoids the ♗a3 plan of the above game, as well as other potentially troublesome ideas such as ♗f4. White is still better though; I especially like the idea of postponing c2-c4 for a while, as in the following examples.



chesstouring.com

8.♘bd2 ♘e4

After 8...♔h8 we will follow a model game in which White steadily built up his position. 9.♘e5 Clearly a natural move. 9...♗e6 10.e3 (10.c4!? is obviously a good alternative but White is not obliged to rush with this pawn move) 10...♘bd7 11.♘d3 a5 12.a4 ♗g8 13.c4 ♘e4 14.♖c1 ♕b6 15.♘f3 ♕a6 16.♕c2 ♖ac8 17.♖fd1± White had a pleasant edge and went on to win a good game in Neverov – Rendle, Hastings 2008.

9.♘e5!? ♘d7

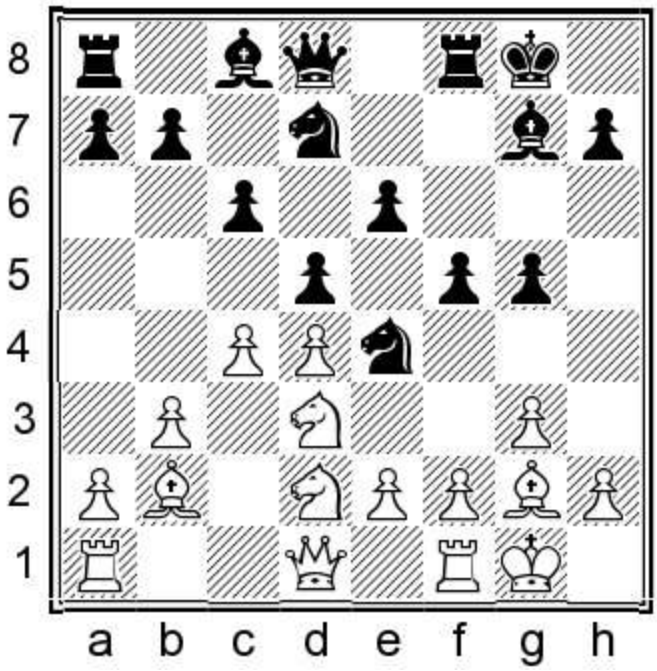
Another good example continued 9...♗e6 10.♘df3 ♘d7 11.e3 ♘df6?! (a better idea for Black would be 11...♘xe5N 12.♘xe5 ♖c8 although 13.f3 ♘d6 14.a4 sees White retain a pull) 12.♘e1 ♖c8 13.♘1d3 ♔h8 14.a4 a5 15.c4± and White was clearly better in Fraschini – Castro Molero, Catalonia 1996.

10.♘d3 e6

10...♘df6 is Black's latest try in this line but it failed to impress after 11.♘f3 ♕e8 12.♘fe5 g5 13.f3 ♘d6 14.c4± with a classical positional advantage for White, Lenic – Hoang Thanh Trang, Hungary 2013.

11.c4 g5

This occurred in Dobai – J. Horvath, Eger 1999. Simple and natural would have been:

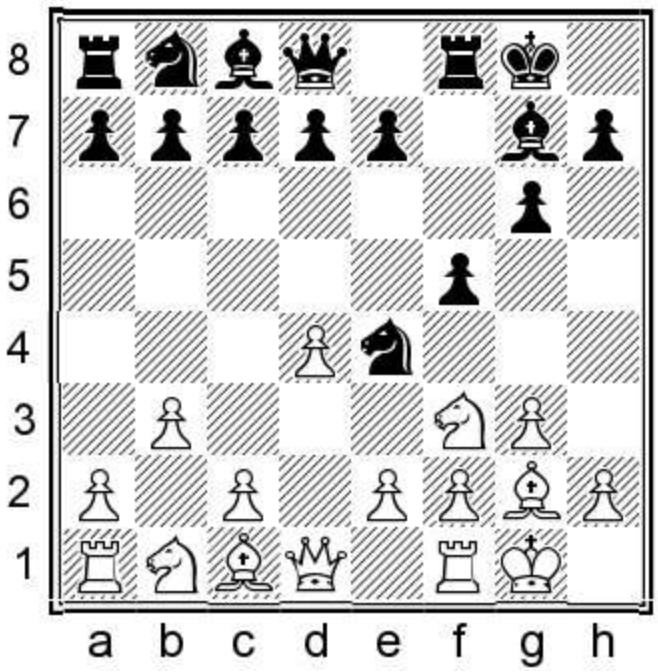


12.♖c1N 12...b6 13.f3 ♘xd2 14.♕xd2 ♗b7 15.e4±

White has achieved virtually everything he can dream about against the Stonewall structure.

A) 6...♘e4

chesstouring.com



7.♗b2 d5

This specific move order is recommended by McDonald in *Play the Dutch* and has been used by some strong GMs. Unlike the above lines involving ...d5, Black avoids the ♗a3 option from the Van Wely game, and refrains from the passive ...c6 until White commits to c2-c4. For those reasons, it may well be Black's best version of the Leningrad Stonewall – but I am still not impressed by it.

7...d6 transposes to variation B of the next chapter.

7...c5 should be met by 8.c4 (8.♘bd2 ♘c6 9.e3 d5 10.c4 e6 is pretty unclear) 8...♘c6 9.e3 transposing to variation B below.

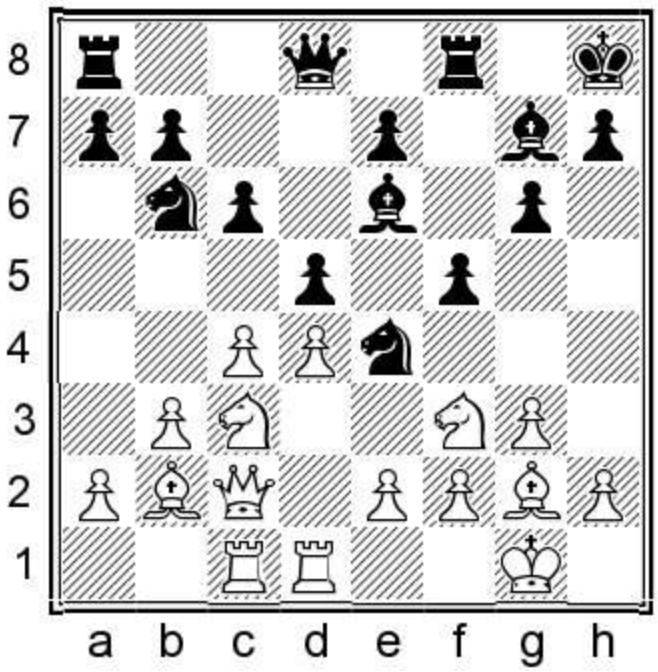
8.c4 c6

White has tried a number of set-ups but I like the following plan.

9.♘c3 ♗e6 10.♕c2 ♘d7

The main alternative is 10...♔h8, after which I like the following game: 11.♖fd1 ♘d7 12.♖ac1 (12.e3 followed by ♘e2 also looks good for White) 12...♘b6

chesstouring.com

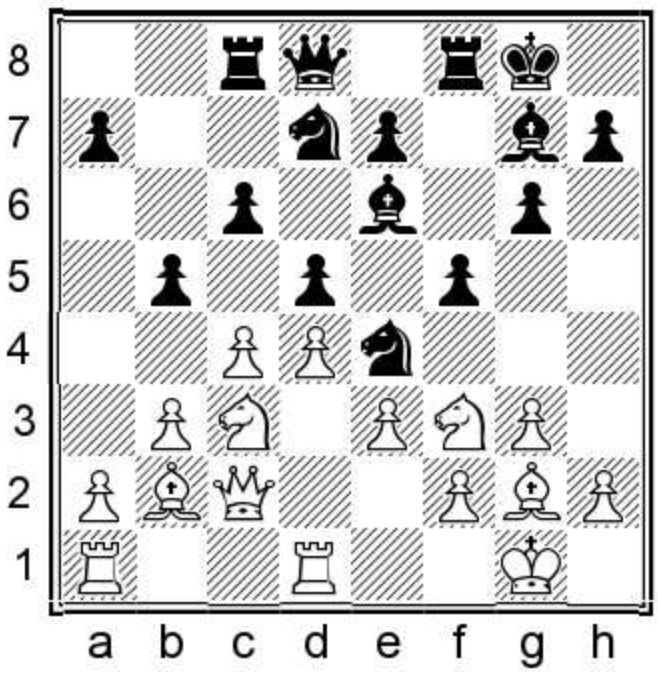


13.♘e5 ♖c8 14.e3 ♕e8 15.♘e2 White obtained a pleasant edge in Zubov – Malaniuk, Kharkov 2007.

11.e3 ♖c8 12.♖fd1 b5

Both games featured this move.

I also checked 12...♔h8N 13.♘e2 ♗g8 14.♘e5 and White is better.



13.♕e2

Interestingly, the same player opted for 13.c5 in a subsequent correspondence game against a different opponent; White won that game too, but I prefer the text move.

chesstouring.com

13...dxc4 14.♘xe4 fxe4 15.♘g5 ♗d5 16.♘xe4

Having broken up his opponent's centre, White enjoyed a positional advantage in Grammatica – Kurowski, corr. 2014.

B) 6...c5 7.e3

I am happy with this recommendation from *GM 2*. However, I would also like to point out an interesting alternative:

7.dxc5!? ♘e4

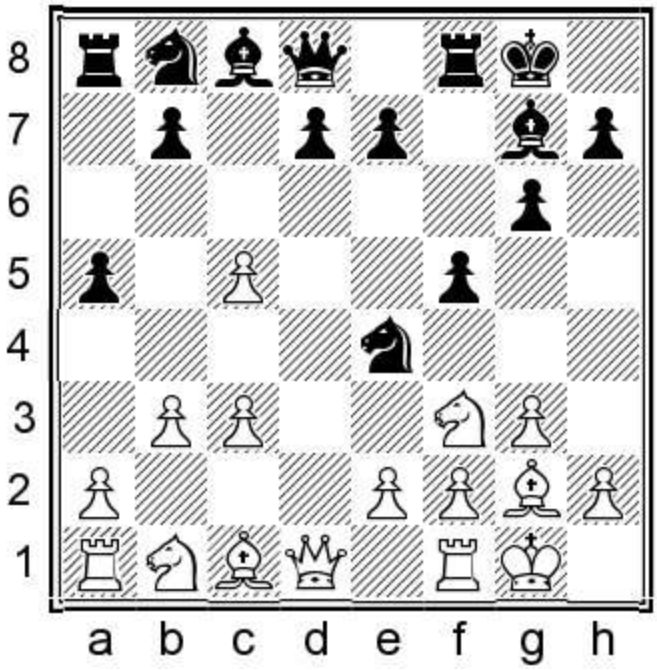
7...♘a6 has been played in two games. 8.♗e3!?N seems like a good novelty with the following logical continuation: 8...♘e4 9.♗d4 ♘axc5 10.♗xg7 ♔xg7 11.♕d4† ♔g8 12.♘fd2! ♘e6 13.♕b2± White is positionally better.

8.c3 a5

8...♘a6?! is strongly met by 9.b4! and after 9...♔h8 10.♕b3± Black was unable to regain the pawn in Alvarado – Jerez Lopez, Las Palmas 2013.

The natural 8...♘xc5N runs into 9.♕d5† ♘e6 10.♗b2 ♘c6 11.♘a3± when White will slowly but surely prepare c3-c4 with a positional advantage.

In Handler – Manhardt, Ratten 2014, White should have continued:



9.♘g5!N 9...♘xc5 10.♕d5† ♘e6 11.♗e3 ♘c6 12.♘a3! ♗xc3 13.♖ad1↑

White's initiative more than compensates for the small material deficit.

7...♘c6 8.♗b2 ♘e4 9.c4 d6

This has been Black's best-scoring move so I will keep it as my main line.

9...e6

This is the main alternative, and now I like a rare but interesting idea:

chesstouring.com

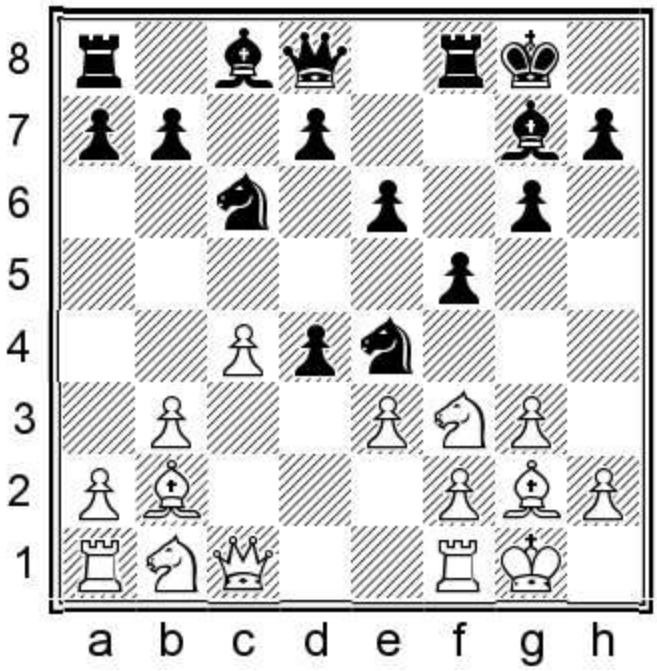
10.♕c1!?

My previous recommendation of 10.♕e2 offers good chances of an advantage as well.

10...cxd4

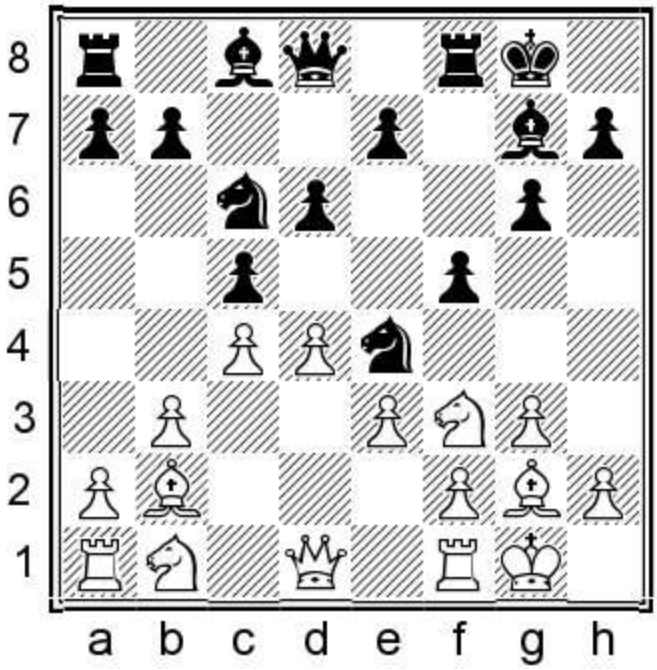
10...b6 11.dxc5 ♘xc5 12.♗xg7 ♔xg7 occurred in Richter – Tokarev, email 2009, and now the simple 13.♘c3N would retain a pleasant edge for White.

We have been following Schreiber – Manthey, Binz 2014, and now I have the following improvement in mind:



11.♘xd4!N 11...♘xd4 12.♗xd4 ♗xd4 13.exd4 d5 14.♘d2±

With a pleasant pull.



10.♘c3 e6

10...♕a5 was played in Romanishin – Nikac, Bar 2008, and now the simple 11.♕d3!N would have

chesstouring.com

secured a promising position, for instance: 11...♘f6 (11...♘b4 is pointless in view of 12.♕b1) 12.d5 ♘b4 13.♕e2± With a pleasant advantage for White.

A fairly popular alternative is:

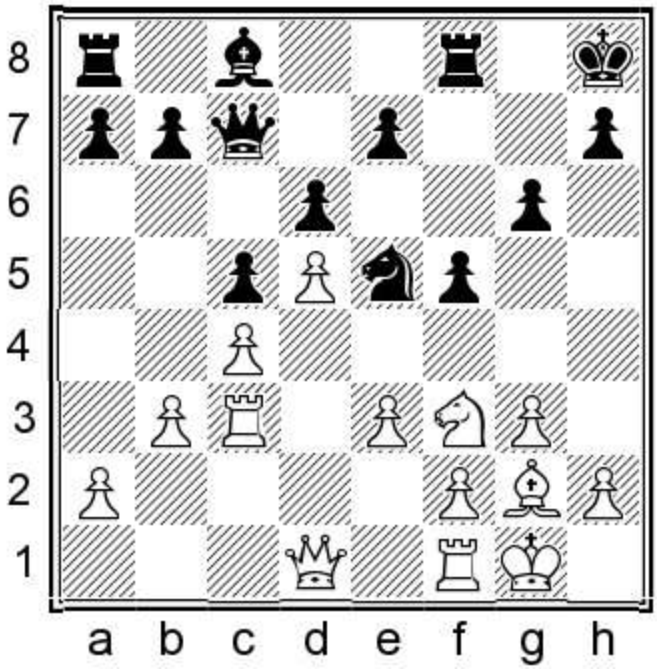
10...♘xc3 11.♗xc3 ♔h8

The tempting 11...e5 runs into 12.dxc5! dxc5?! (12...e4N would be the lesser evil, although after 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.♘d4 dxc5 15.♘xc6 bxc6 16.f3! exf3 17.♕xf3 White will carry out the e3-e4 advance, leading to a pleasant advantage thanks to Black's damaged queenside structure) 13.♕d5†! ♕xd5 14.cxd5 ♘b4 15.♗xe5 ♘xd5 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♖ac1 ♘b4 17...b6? loses material immediately to 18.♘g5!+–) 18.♖xc5 ♘xa2 19.♘g5! White had a decisive advantage in Tunik – Besedin, Irkutsk 2012.

12.♖c1 ♕c7

12...e5?! is again premature in view of 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.♕xd8 ♖xd8 15.♘g5! ♖f8 16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.♖fd1± and White is clearly better.

13.d5 ♗xc3 14.♖xc3 ♘e5



15.e4!N

I still like this recommendation from *GM 2*, although 15.♘g5 was also good for White in Prohaszka – Renner, Deizisau 2011.

15...f4

15...♘xf3† 16.♖xf3! also favours White.

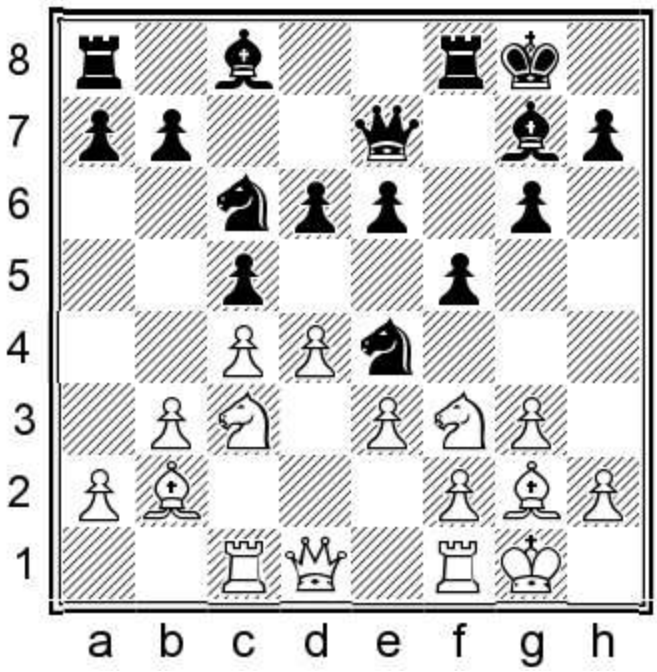
16.♕d2 fxg3 17.hxg3

White keeps the better chances thanks to his central space advantage and safer king.

11.♖c1 ♕e7

This position has arisen in three games, but White has yet to find the best continuation:

chesstouring.com



12.♘xe4!N 12...fxe4 13.♘d2

White has a nice advantage, thanks to the following line.

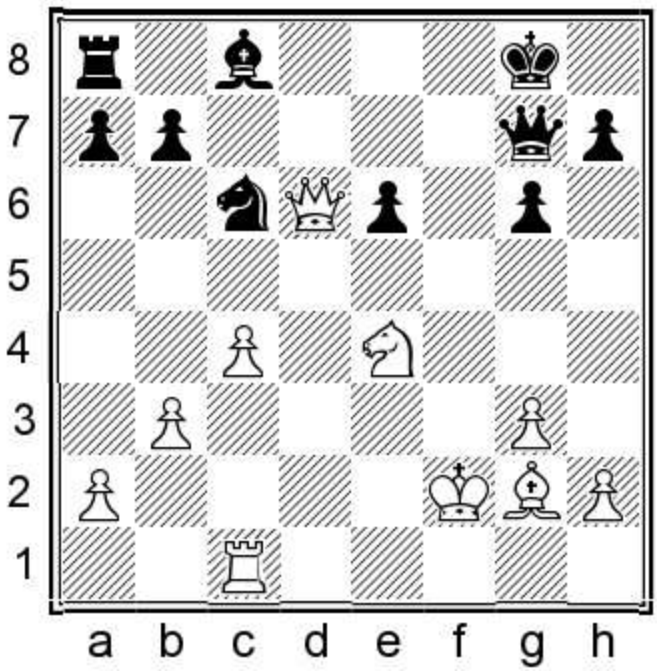
13...cxd4 14.♘xe4 dxe3 15.♗xg7

15.♗a3!? is also promising but one good option is enough.

15...exf2†

15...♔xg7 16.fxe3±

16.♖xf2 ♖xf2 17.♔xf2 ♕xg7 18.♕xd6

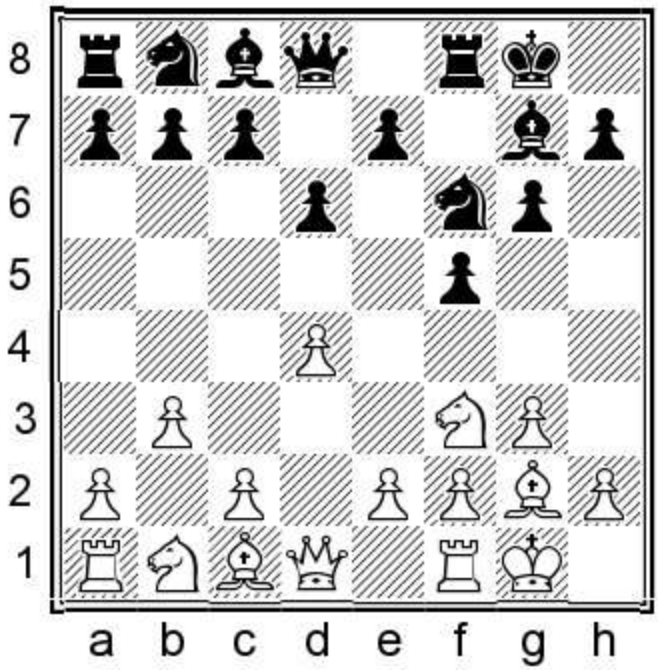


chesstouring.com

18...♕b2† 19.♕d2 ♕xd2† 20.♘xd2±

The arising endgame is unpleasant for Black.

C) 6...d6



7.♗b2

Now we have a major branching point. The present chapter will deal with a variety of second-tier options: **C1)** 7...♘c6, **C2)** 7...a5, **C3)** 7...e5?!, **C4)** 7...e6 and **C5)** 7...h6.

7...c6 and 7...♘e4 are important options which will be covered in Chapter 6, while 7...♕e8 will be our main line, which can be found in Chapter 7.

7...♘a6

This move has been played in several games but it usually just transposes to one of the major lines.

8.c4 e5?!

8...c6 9.♘bd2 transposes to variation A4 of the next chapter.

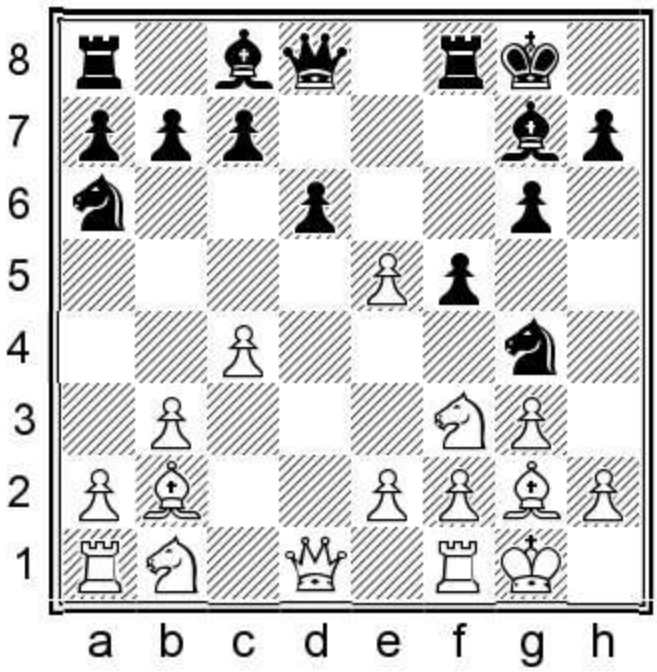
8...♕e8 will be covered in variation D of Chapter 7.

The text move is an independent try but it is clearly premature.

9.dxe5 ♘g4

In Van Wely – Nikolic, Yerevan (ol) 1996, White should have continued:

chesstouring.com



10.♕d5†!N 10...♔h8 11.♘c3 ♘xe5

11...dxe5 12.♕xd8 ♖xd8 13.♘g5 ♖f8 14.e4 gives White a useful initiative.

12.♕d2±

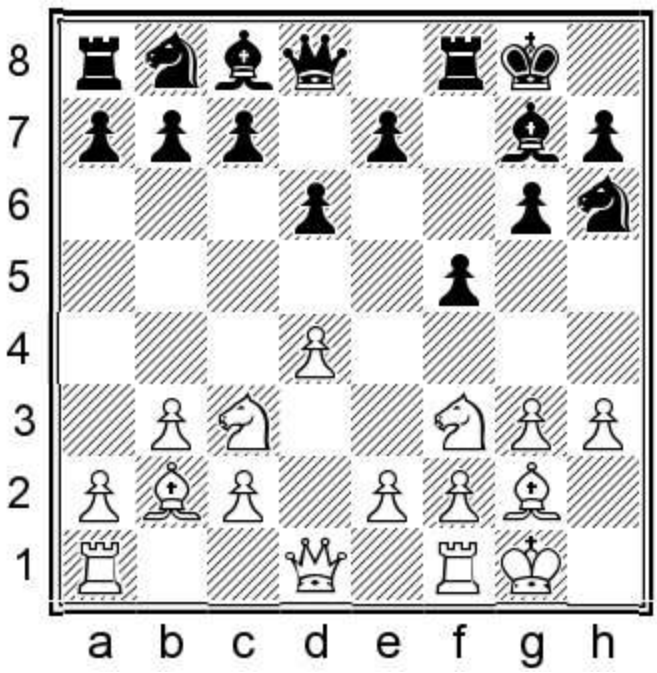
As we already know, this pawn structure invariably favours White.

7...♘g4!?

This tricky method of preparing ...e5 has occurred in a serious number of games. White should react with:

8.h3 ♘h6 9.♘c3!

Surprisingly there is only one game here, although Black's next move transposes to another game which we will then follow for a few more moves.



chesstouring.com

9...f4

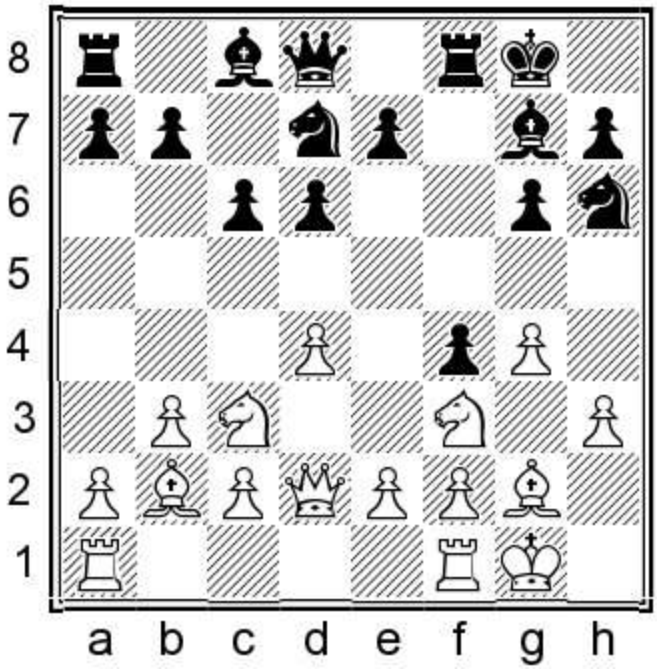
If 9...♘f7N 10.e4 White is definitely better.

10.g4!

There is no reason to allow Black to open files on the kingside, as occurred after 10.gxf4 ♖xf4 in Timoshenko – Vyzmanavin, St Petersburg 1996.

10...c6 11.♕d2 ♘d7

In Ftacnik – M. Gurevich, Jakarta 1996, a natural, strong and effective continuation would have been:

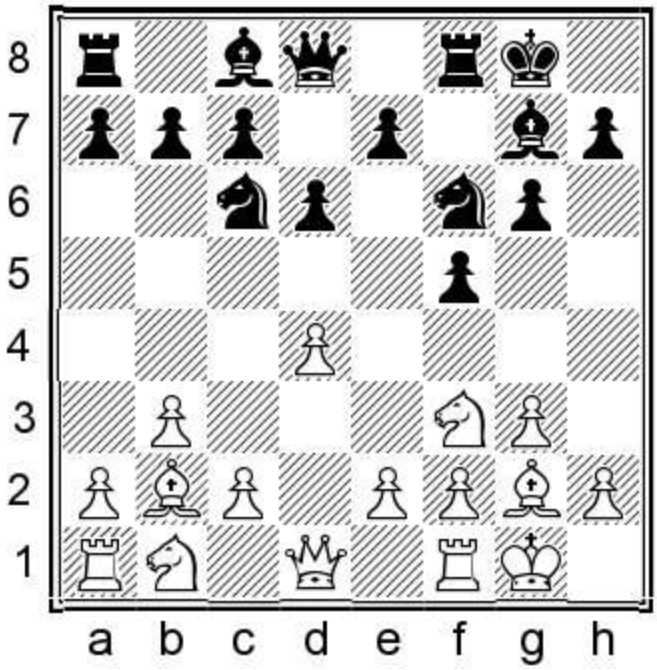


12.♘e4N 12...♘b6 13.e3! fxe3 14.fxe3

White is clearly better.

C1) 7...♘c6

chesstouring.com



8.d5

I consider this the most challenging move, although 8.♘bd2 also deserves attention.

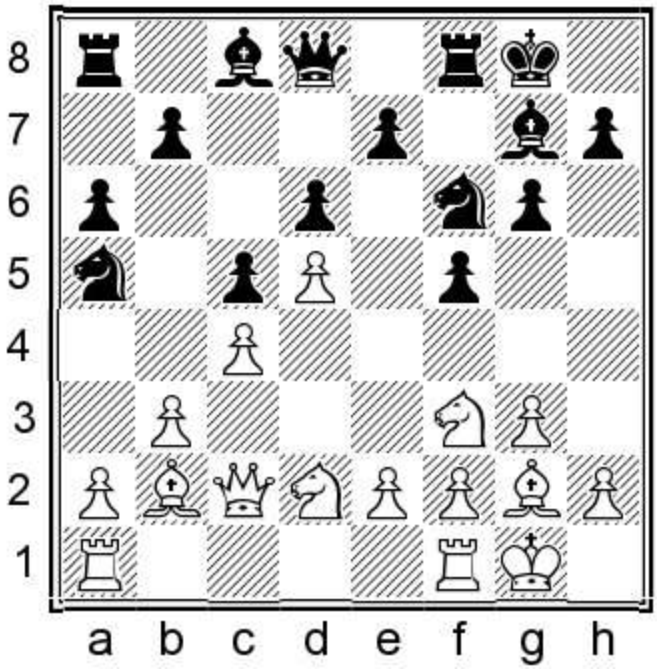
8...♘b4

Black may also try:

8...♘a5 9.c4 c5 10.♘bd2!

The ability to develop the knight on d2 again proves to be a useful option.

10...a6 11.♕c2



The position resembles the Yugoslav Variation of the King's Indian Defence but with one big structural difference: Black's pawn is on f5 instead of f7. In my opinion this detail clearly favours

chesstouring.com

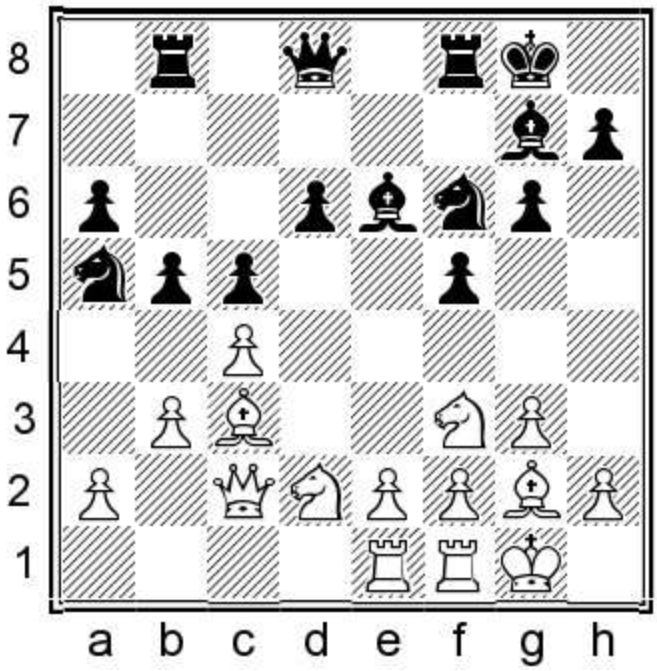
White, since it weakens the e6-square and makes the e2-e4 advance more powerful.

11...b5 12.♖ae1

Also worthy of consideration is 12.♘g5!?N 12...♖b8 13.♗c3 followed by penetrating with the knight to e6.

12...♖b8 13.♗c3 e5 14.dxe6 ♗xe6

We have been following Podzielny – Wieder, Schwaebisch Gmuend 2000. I see no reason to refrain from the central break which White has clearly been preparing:



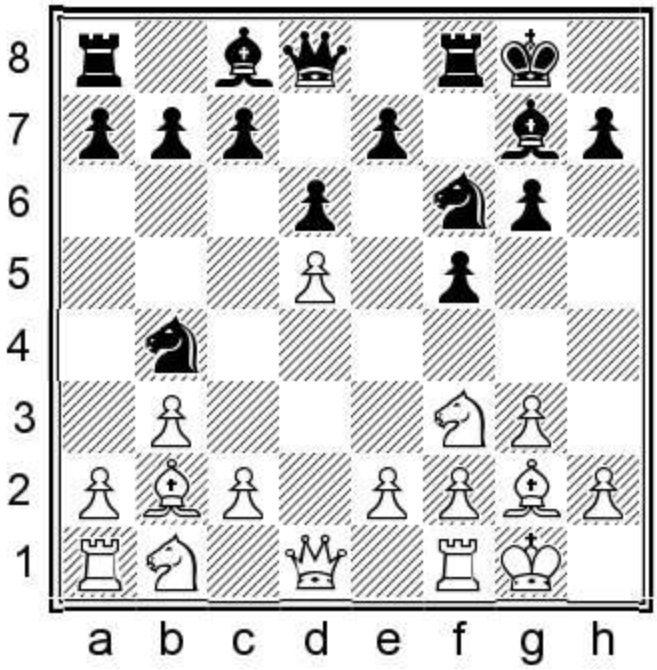
15.e4N 15...♘c6

15...fxe4?! is inferior, and 16.♘xe4 ♗f5 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♘xf6† ♕xf6 19.♕d2! b4 20.♘g5± underlines the misplaced position of Black's knight.

16.e5 dxe5 17.♘xe5 ♘xe5 18.♗xe5 ♖b6 19.♖e2!±

Despite some simplifications, Black remains under serious pressure.

chesstouring.com

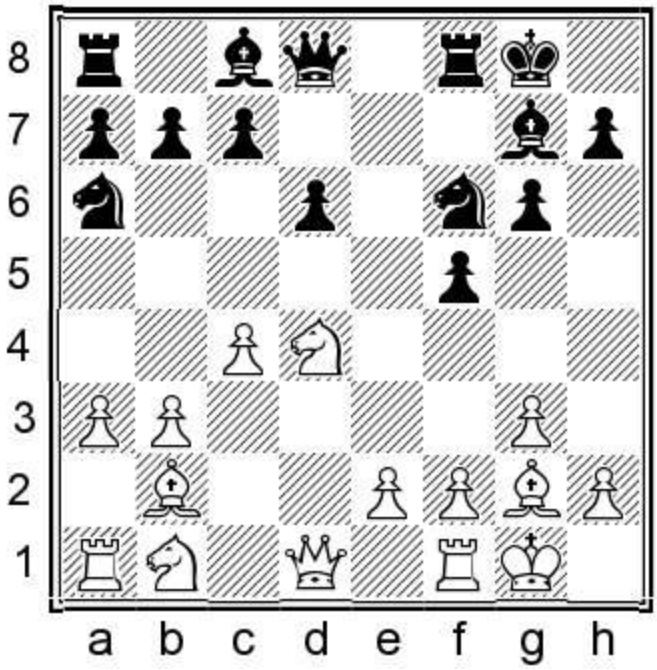


9.c4 a5

I checked two other options:

9...c5 10.a3 ♘a6 11.♘c3 ♖b8 12.♕c2 ♗d7 13.♘d2 ♘c7 14.b4 b6 15.e3± left Black in a solid but quite passive position in Cramling – Rivas Vila, Vila Real 2001.

9...e5 10.dxe6 ♗xe6 reaches a favourable pawn structure for White, since it's much easier for him to develop his play on the queenside than for Black to counter on the opposite flank. (10...♘c6 could be the lesser evil although 11.♘d4! ♘xd4 12.♗xd4 ♕e7 13.♘c3 c6 14.♕d3 ♗xe6 15.♖ad1± still favoured White in Rukavina – Zelic, Sibenik 2006) 11.♘d4 ♗c8 12.a3 ♘a6 In Bernard – Bauer, Clichy 1997, White could have played:



chesstouring.com

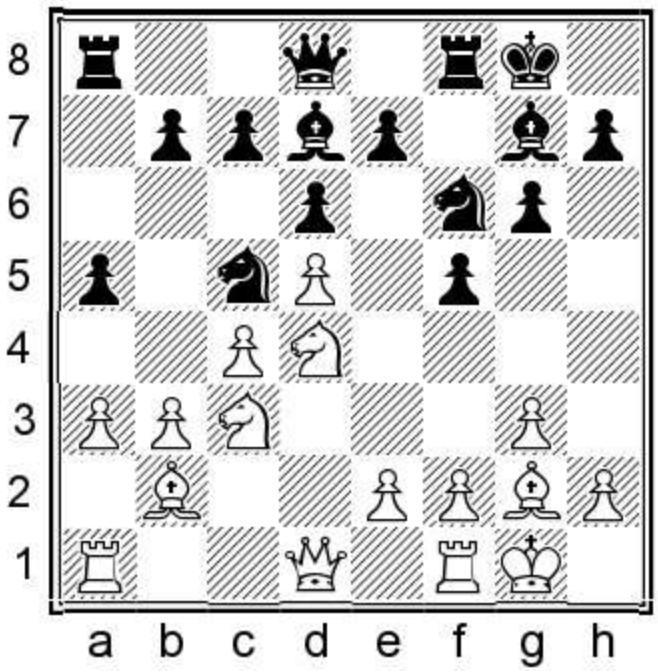
13.b4! Black has a problem with his misplaced knight, and the attempt to improve it with 13...c6 runs into 14.b5! cxb5 15.♘xb5 with serious queenside pressure.

10.a3 ♘a6 11.♘c3

This time the knight belongs on c3.

11...♗d7 12.♘d4 ♘c5

We have been following Rodriguez Lopez – Lopez Pereyra, Pontevedra 2004. The general structure and piece placement looks pretty thematic for the Leningrad Dutch, but White has a better version than usual because the black knight has spent four tempos rather than two to get to c5. I suggest a slightly earlier novelty than the one given in *GM 2*:



13.e3!N

Freeing the e2-square for a knight tour. Play may continue:

13...♕e8 14.♘ce2! e5

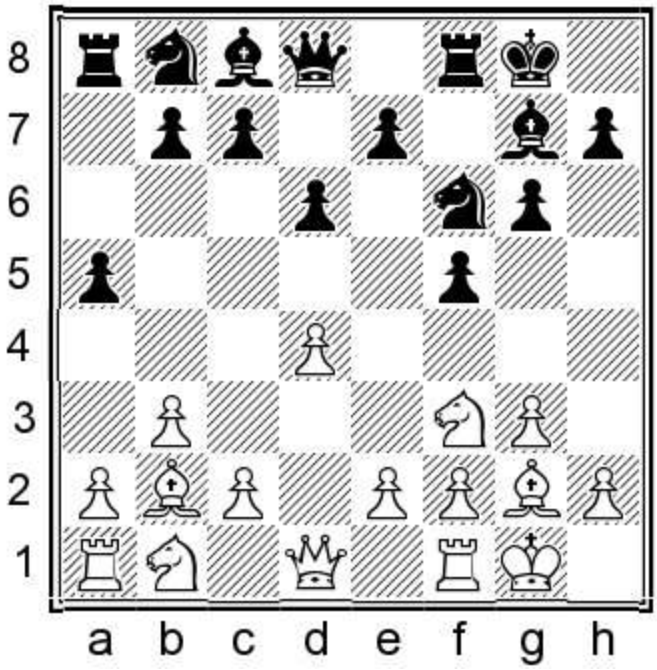
14...c6 15.b4 ♘ce4 16.♘f4 sees White clamp down on the e6-square.

15.dxe6 ♗xe6 16.♘xe6 ♕xe6 17.♘f4±

With two bishops and a favourable pawn structure, White is obviously better.

C2) 7...a5

chesstouring.com

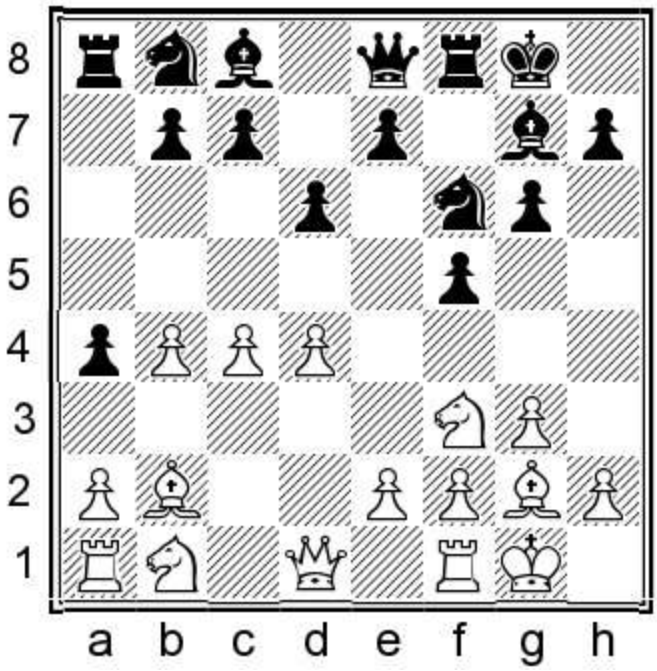


8.c4

There is no reason to settle for 8.♘bd2 a4, when Black's queenside play could become annoying.

Black has two main options: he can develop his knight immediately with **C21)** 8...♘a6 or keep it more flexible with **C22)** 8...c6.

There is not much point in Black advancing the a-pawn at this stage: 8...a4 9.b4! ♕e8 (a recent model example continued 9...c6 10.a3 ♘bd7 11.♘c3 ♘b6 12.♘d2 ♗e6 13.c5 dxc5 14.bxc5 ♘bd5 15.e3± with a clear positional advantage for White, Nyback – Nijboer, Germany 2016)

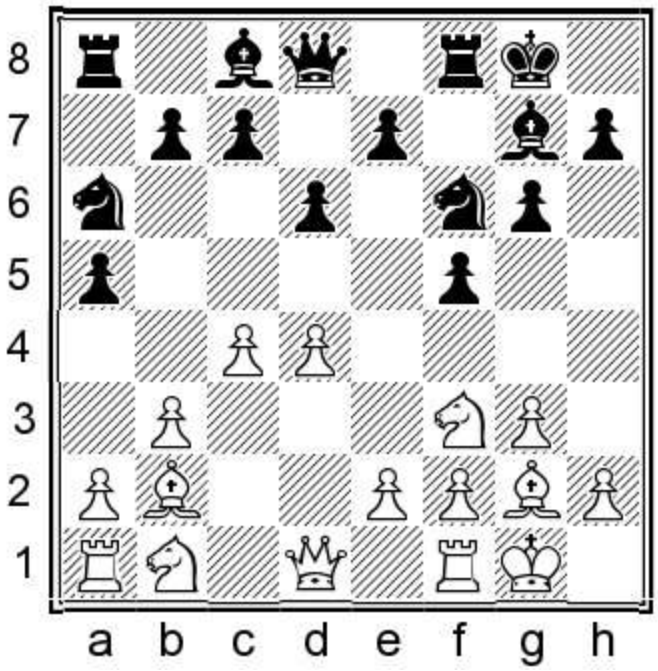


10.♘a3! This is why we avoided committing the knight to the d2-square on move 8. 10...c6 11.♖b1 h6 This was Delchev – Biliskov, Zadar 2001, and now I like 12.b5!N when White is obviously better, as

chesstouring.com

Black has failed to obtain any decent counterplay.

C21) 8...♘a6



9.♘c3!

This is clearly the right square for the knight.

Black is doing well after 9.♘bd2 c6 (even 9...e5!? 10.dxe5 ♘d7! looks interesting for Black) 10.♕c2 ♕c7 11.a3 ♖e8! with great results in practice.

9...c6

An important detail occurs after:

9...♕e8 10.e4!

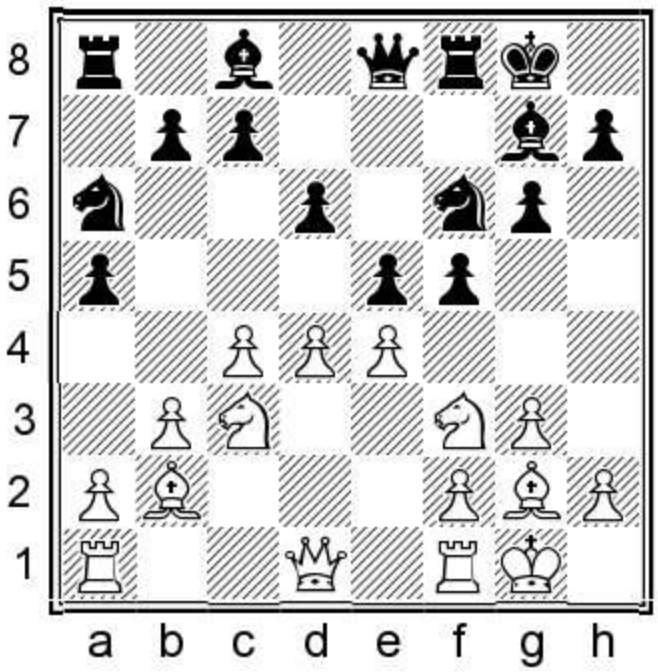
White can carry out this central break without additional preparation. Considering how effective this move is, it's really strange that it has only occurred in one game.

10...e5

10...fxe4N would be met by 11.♘g5 and White regains the pawn with the better game.

After the text move, I found a strong improvement over Navara – Nikolic, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005:

chesstouring.com



11.exf5!N 11...♗xf5

11...e4 12.♘g5 gxf5 13.f3 breaks up Black's centre.

11...gxf5 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♘h4 e4 14.f3↑ is also clearly better for White.

12.♖e1 ♖d8 13.h3!

White maintains the better chances.

After the text move we reach a popular position; I was surprised to see the number of GM-level games that arrived here. Quite a lot of them featured an early ...c6, but there is no transposition to the next chapter since I recommend meeting 7...c6 with 8.♘bd2.

10.♖c1

White has a wide choice of options but I decided on this logical developer.

10...♗d7

Black's main alternative is:

10...♕c7

Here I found a surprising idea.

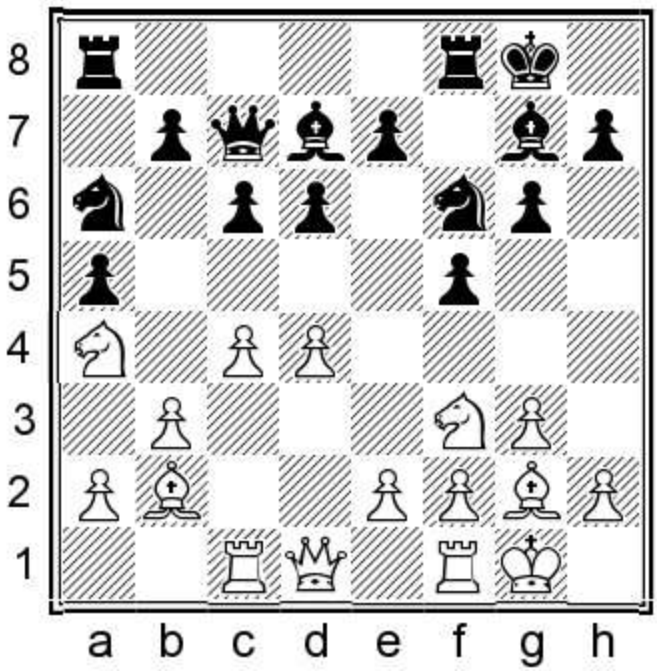
11.♘a4!?

The natural 11.d5 has been White's usual choice.

11...♗d7

11...♖e8N is the logical alternative but 12.d5 e5 13.dxe6 ♗xe6 14.♘g5± still favours White. This position occurred in Eberlein – Lutz, Biel 1992. The following continuation looks logical to me:

chesstouring.com

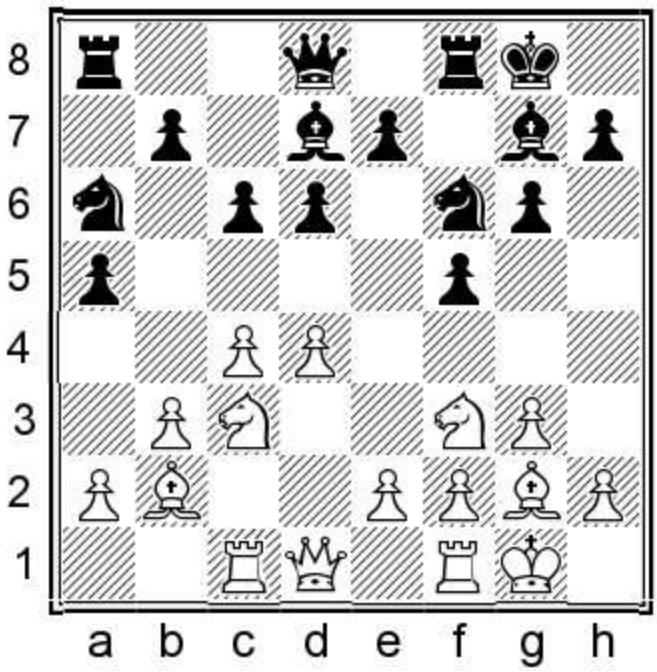


12.d5N 12...e5 13.dxe6 ♗xe6 14.♘g5! ♗d7

Black cannot play 14...♖ae8? in view of 15.♗xf6! ♗xf6 16.♘xe6 ♖xe6 17.♗d5! winning material.

15.♗d4

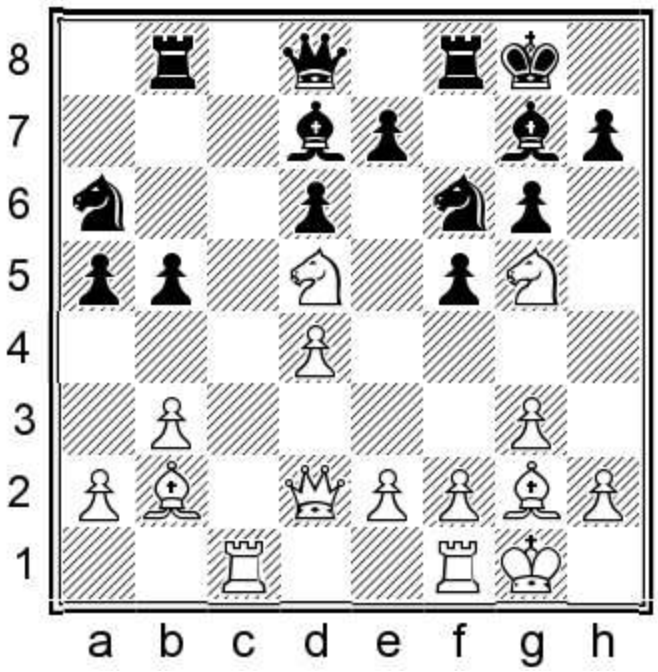
With a nice edge for White.



11.♕d2 ♖c8

11...b5 is an obvious alternative but White has an effective way to counter it: 12.cxb5 cxb5 13.♘g5 ♖b8 14.♘d5!

chesstouring.com



14...♗h6 (Black quickly ran into trouble after 14...h6 15.♘xf6† ♗xf6 16.♘h3 ♔h7 17.♘f4 b4 18.e4! in Bukal – Borngaesser, Berlin 1984) The text move was seen in Mednis – Peschardt, Copenhagen 1991. White should have continued 15.h4N 15...♖e8 16.e3 ♘xd5 17.♗xd5† e6 18.♗f3± with the better chances.

12.♖fd1 b5

This is the logical follow-up to Black's previous move but White is well prepared to meet it.

13.cxb5

The immediate 13.♘e5!?N may be even stronger.

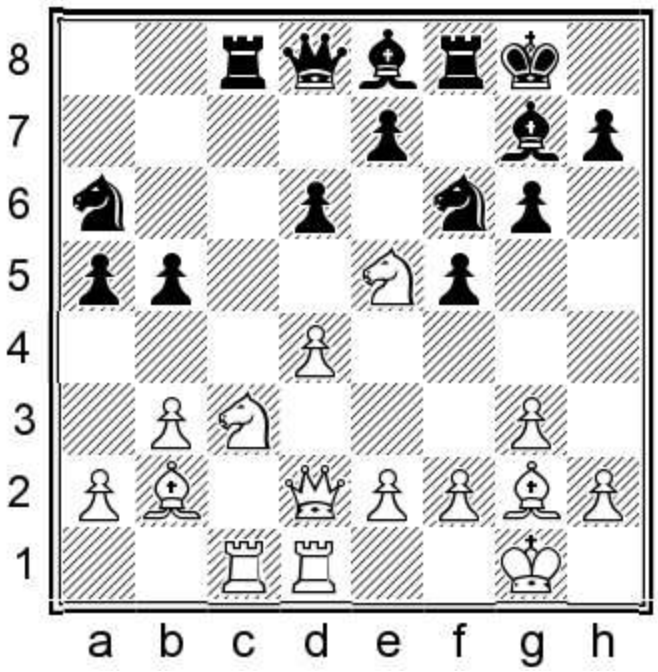
13...cxb5 14.♘e5!

Now we can see the value of White's 12th move.

14...♗e8

In Gelfand – Nakamura, Baku 2014, White missed a powerful idea:

chesstouring.com



15.♗b7!N

Marin pointed out this move in *ChessBase Magazine* 163.

15...dxe5

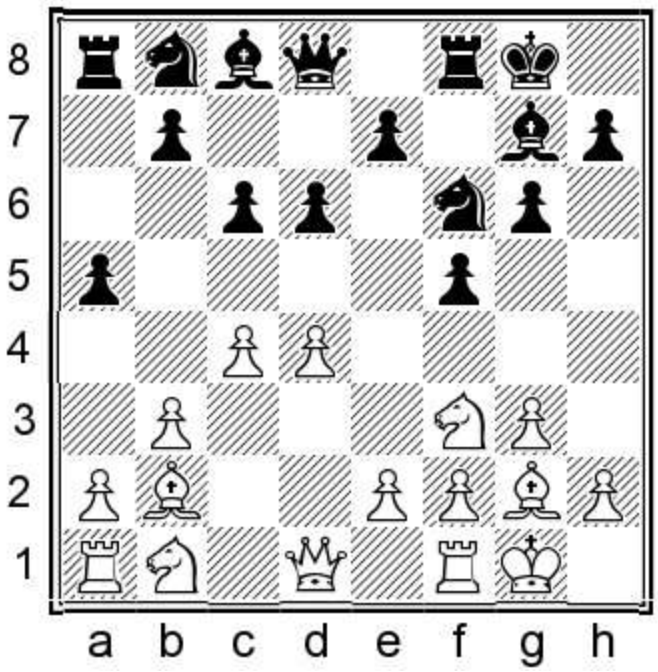
After 15...♘c7 White should probably refrain from capturing the exchange and simply play 16.a4! ♖b8 17.♘c6 ♗xc6 18.♗xc6 b4 19.♘b5± with an obvious positional advantage.

16.♗xc8 ♕xc8 17.dxe5 ♘g4 18.♘d5 ♕b7 19.e6

White dominates the board.

C22) 8...c6

chesstouring.com



9.♘c3

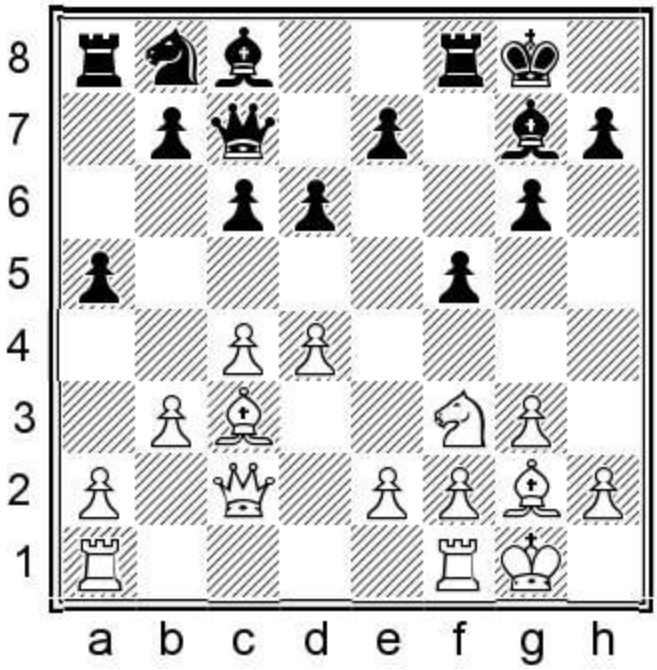
Once again we avoid 9.♘bd2, as the position after 9...♘a6 has already been mentioned as promising for Black in the note on 9.♘bd2 c6 in the previous variation.

9...♕c7

This will be our main line, although the most popular choice has been 9...♘a6, which transposes to variation C21 above. Here are a couple of other options:

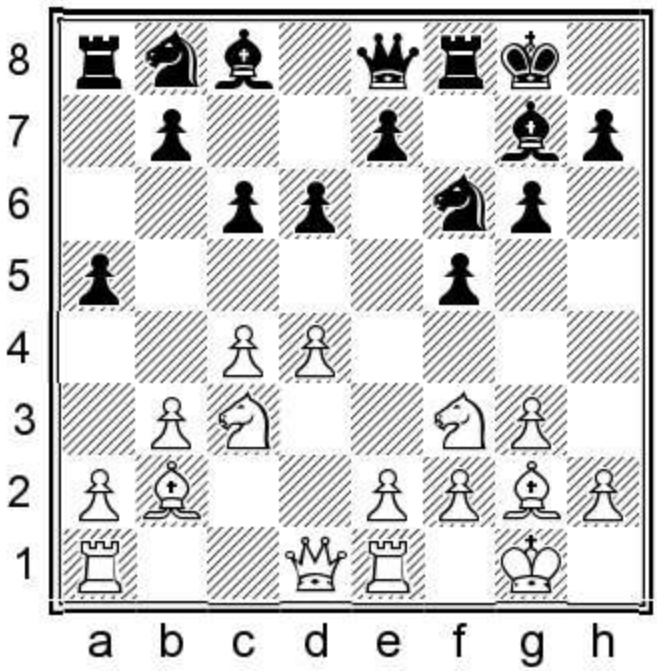
9...♘e4 10.♕c2 ♘xc3 (10...d5 is not a particularly good version of the Stonewall. 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.♘e5 ♘a6 occurred in Kurajica – Menvielle Laccourreye, Las Palmas 2017, and now the natural 13.♖fc1N 13...♘b4 14.♕d1 would have maintained a nice edge for White) 11.♗xc3 ♕c7 (11...♘a6 12.♕d2 a4 13.♖fd1 was also pleasant for White in Rahman – Murshed, Dhaka 2010)

chesstouring.com



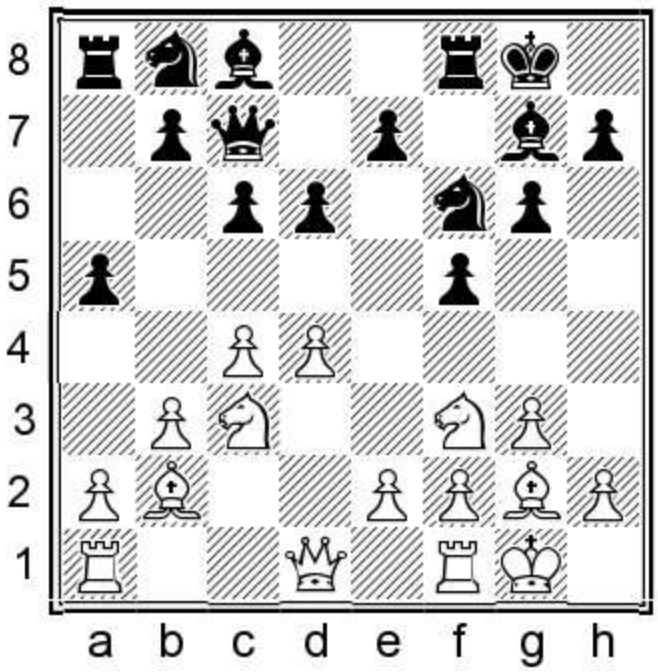
12.e4 f4 13.d5! ♗xc3 14.♕xc3 ♗g4 15.♘d4 White was clearly better in Jumabayev – Wang Hao, Zaozhuang 2012.

9...♕e8 has, rather surprisingly, achieved great results for Black, but after 10.♖e1 White's position seems promising, for instance:



10...♘a6 (White is ready for 10...♘e4N 11.♘xe4! fxe4 12.♘g5 d5 13.f3 and 10...e5N 11.e4 fxe4 12.dxe5! dxe5 13.♘g5, with a clear plus in both cases) 11.e4 fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♖xe4 ♗f5 This position has been reached in three games, but for some reason White never played the most natural 14.♖e3!N when his position is excellent.

chesstouring.com



10.♕d2!?

10.d5 has been much more popular but on this occasion I don't mind allowing ...e5, since Black's last few moves on the queenside do not combine well with central action.

10...♘a6

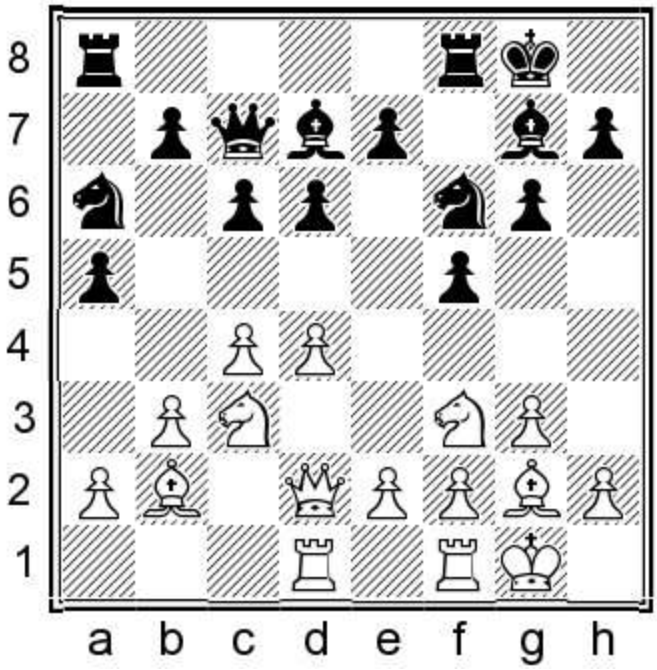
White is ready to meet 10...e5N with 11.d5 when Black's queen is rather misplaced on c7.

11.♖ad1 ♗d7

Once again 11...e5 12.d5 is good for White. The only example from this position continued 12...c5 13.♘g5! ♗h6 14.f4 with a clear advantage, Rotstein – Zoller, Bad Bevensen 2002.

This position has occurred four times in practice, but White never achieved anything special out of the opening. Surprisingly, nobody has chosen the most natural move:

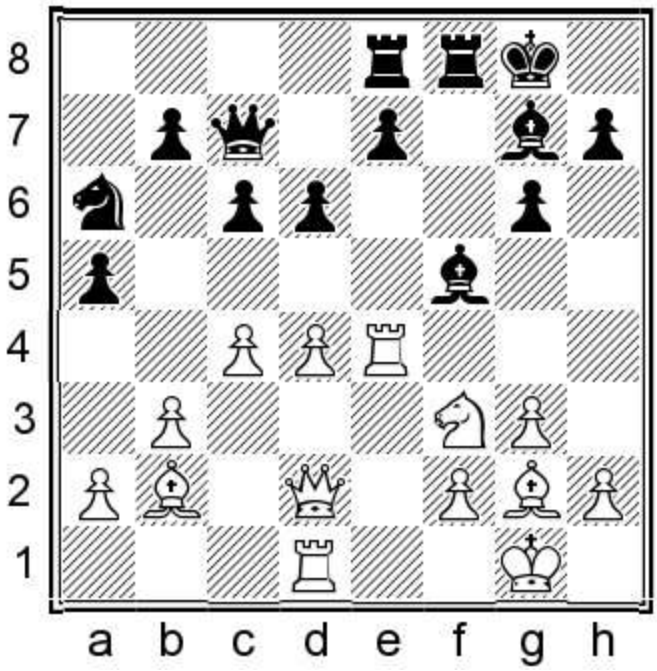
chesstouring.com



12.♖fe1!N

Developing the last piece while preparing the thematic e2-e4. It seems to me that the critical line is:

12...♖ae8 13.e4 fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♘xe4 15.♖xe4 ♗f5



Now I like the idea of putting the rook on its favourite square, even if it means sacrificing the exchange!

16.♖e3!? ♗h6

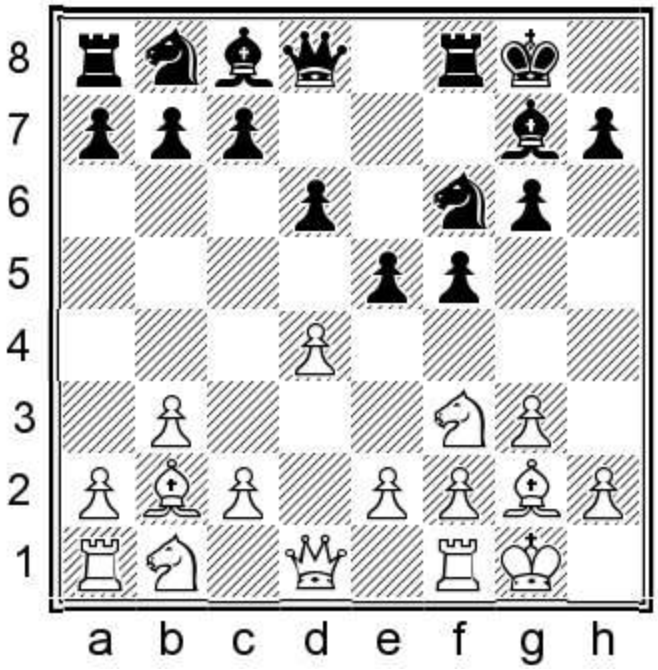
16...e5 17.dxe5 dxe5 18.♖de1 ♗h6 19.♕c3 gives White an improved version of the same idea.

chesstouring.com

17.♕e2 ♗xe3 18.♕xe3≅

White enjoys a lasting initiative for the material, and it will not be easy for Black to defend the long diagonal.

C3) 7...e5?!



Black would certainly like to play this move, but it doesn't really work.

8.dxe5

Now **C31)** 8...♘fd7 is the alternative to the more common **C32)** 8...♘g4.

C31) 8...♘fd7 9.♘a3!

This move demonstrates the flexibility of White's set-up. The knight is heading for c4.

9...♘c6

9...♘xe5N has not been played here but it transposes to variation C321 below.
In the event of 9...dxe5 10.♕d5† ♔h8 11.♘xe5 ♘xe5 12.♗xe5 ♕xd5 13.♗xg7† ♔xg7 14.♗xd5± White emerges a pawn up.

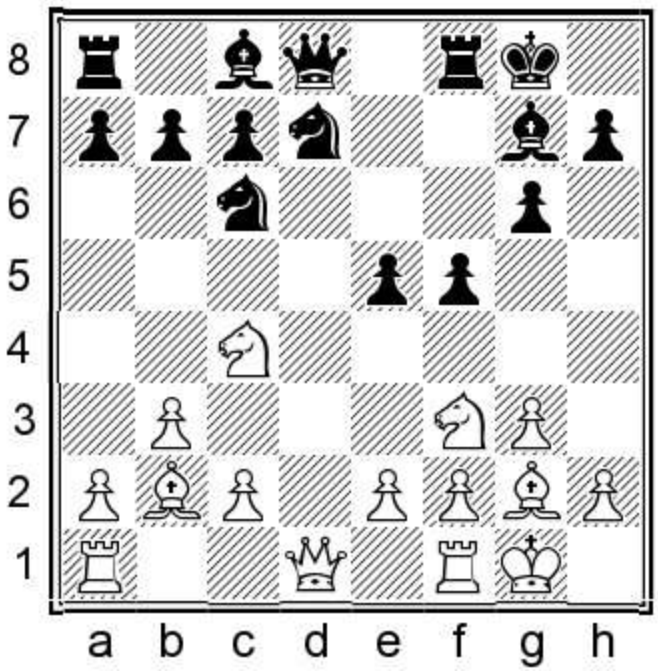
10.♘c4 ♘dxe5N

I neglected to mention this move in *GM 2*. Although it's a novelty, it transposes to a number of games in which Black reacted to an early ♘bd2 with ...e5.

10...dxe5

This occurred in Michna – Dworakowska, Warsaw 2004. Thematic and strong would have been:

chessdiscoveries.com



11.e4!N

I also checked 11.♕d5† ♔h8 12.♖ad1 but found it less convincing after 12...♕e8.

The novelty looks very strong for White, as Black is seriously tied up with the defence of the e5-pawn. Here are some illustrative lines:

11...♘c5

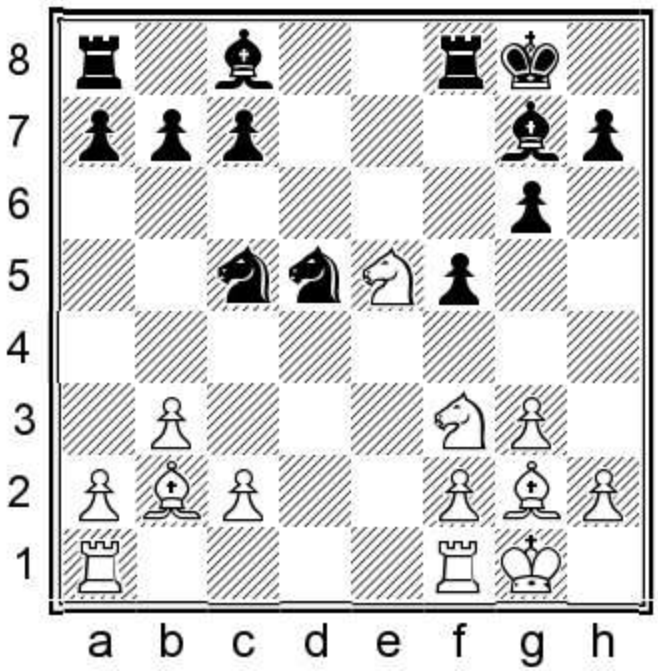
In the event of 11...♘f6 12.♕xd8 ♖xd8 13.♘fxe5 ♘xe5 14.♗xe5 ♘xe4 15.♗xc7 ♖d7 16.♗e5!± Black loses a pawn.

11...♕e8 12.exf5 gxf5 13.♘fxe5! ♘dxe5 14.♖e1± is a similar story.

12.♕d5†! ♕xd5 13.exd5 ♘b4

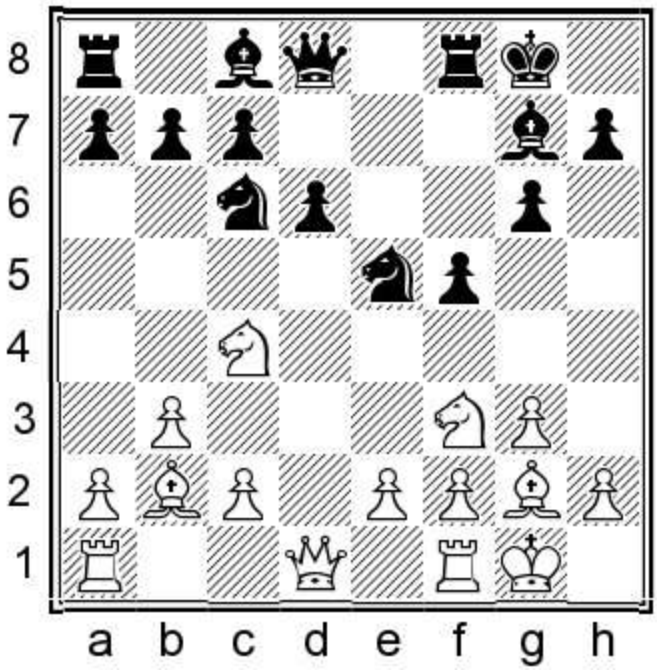
13...e4 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.dxc6 exf3 16.♗xf3 also sees White pick up a pawn.

14.♘cxe5 ♘xd5



chesstouring.com

15.♗a3! b6 16.♘g5 ♗b7 17.♗xc5 bxc5 18.♖ae1 ♖fe8 19.♘d3
Here too, Black loses a pawn.

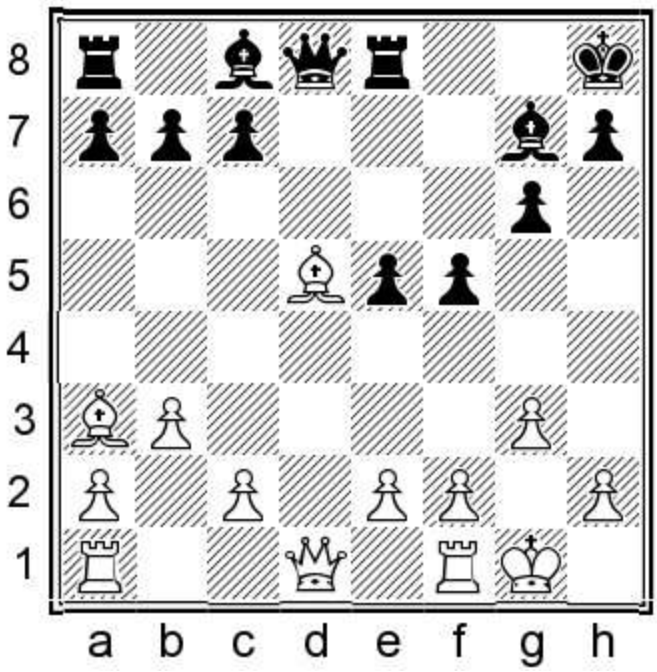


11.♘fxe5 ♘xe5 12.♘xe5 dxe5
12...♗xe5 obviously loses material after 13.♕d5†.

13.♗a3!
This could come as an unpleasant surprise for Black.

13...♖e8 14.♗d5† ♔h8
Obviously 14...♗e6 15.♗xb7 ♖b8 16.♗c6± was poor for Black in Khurtsidze – Kummerow, Essen 2004.

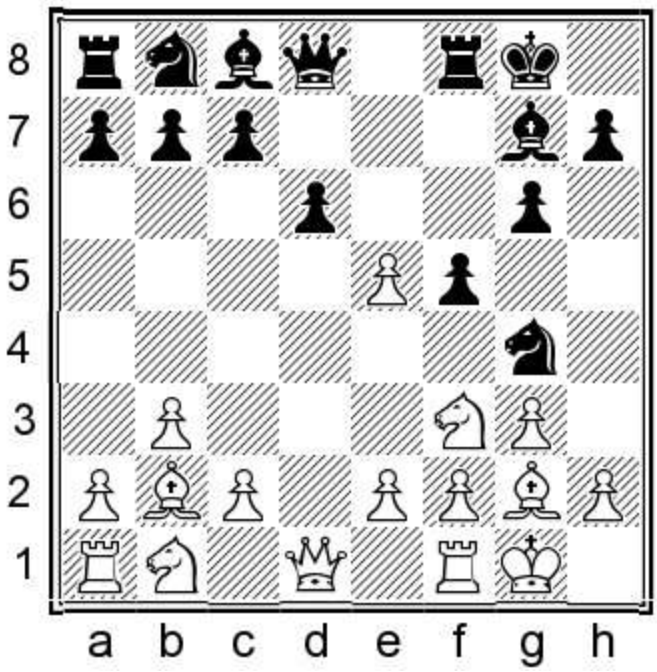
chesstouring.com



15.♗f7! ♖f8 16.e4!? f4 17.♗xf8 ♕xf8 18.♗c4 ♗h3 19.♖e1 ♕f6 20.♕f3±

White was simply the exchange up in Borges Mateos – Gonzales, Santa Clara 2000.

C32) 8...♘g4



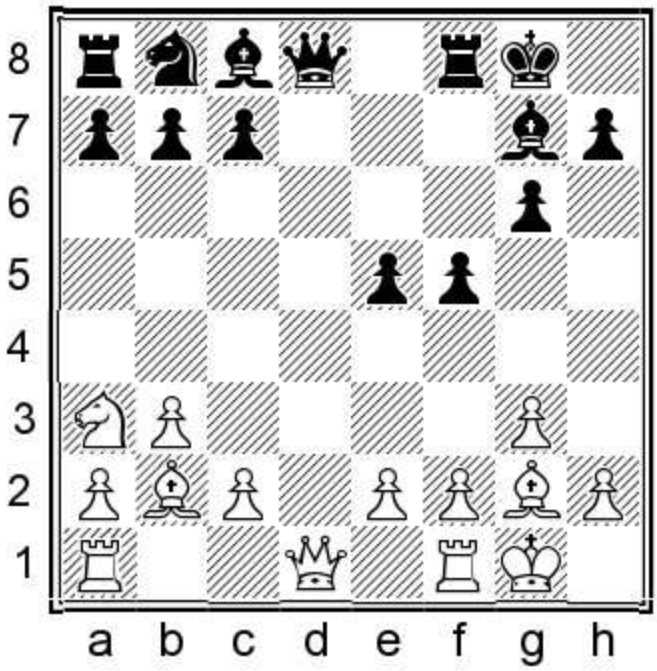
9.♘a3!

Again this method of developing the knight works perfectly. Black may react with **C321)** 9...♘xe5 or **C322)** 9...♘c6.

9...dxe5? is never played due to 10.♕xd8 ♖xd8 11.h3 and White wins a pawn.

chesstouring.com

10...♗xe5? is impossible in view of 11.♕d5†+– winning at least a pawn.

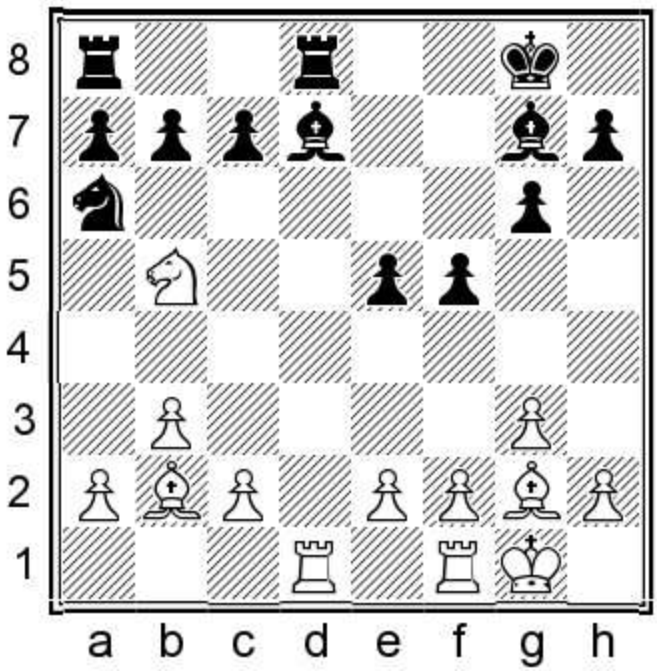


11.♕xd8 ♖xd8 12.♘b5

Black has a surprisingly hard time coping with White's initiative.

12...♘a6 13.♖ad1 ♖e8

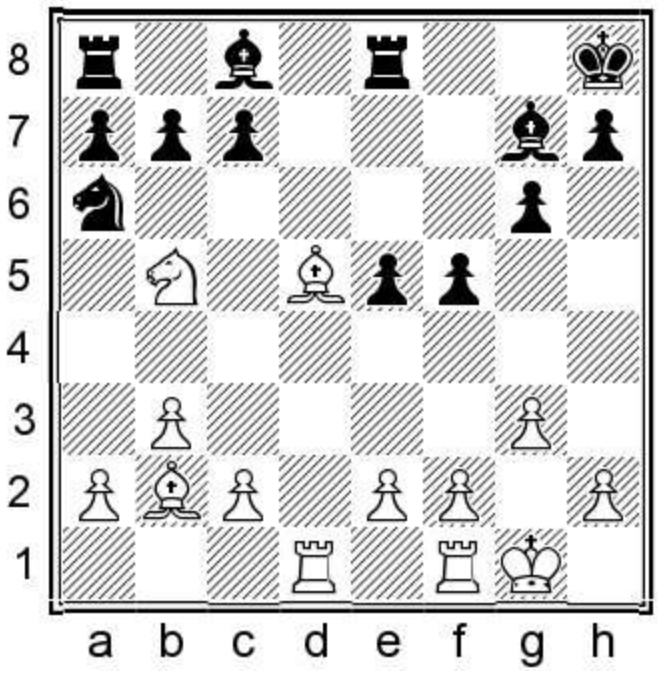
The main point is that 13...♗d7, as played in Komljenovic – Milla de Marco, Malaga 2002, is refuted by:



14.♖xd7!N 14...♖xd7 15.♗xb7 ♖b8 16.♗xa6 ♖b6 17.♗c8 ♖d8 18.♘xa7+–

chesstouring.com

14.♗d5† ♔h8

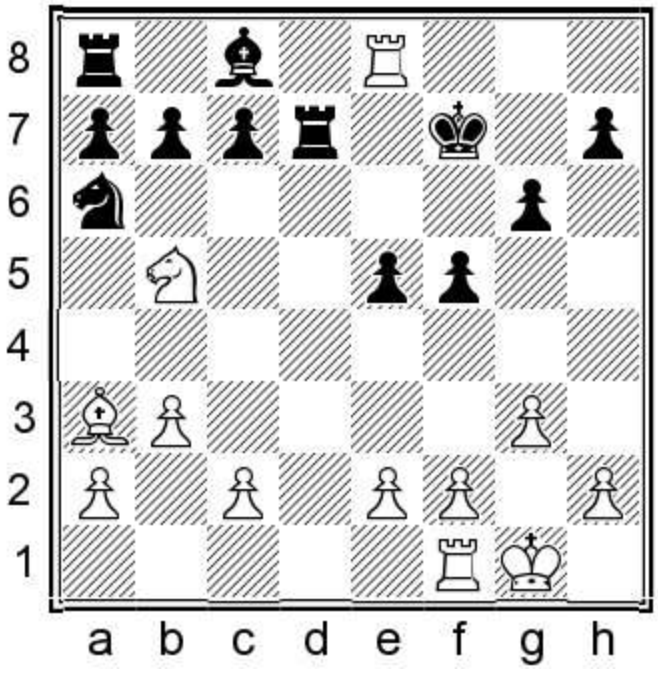


15.♗f7! ♖f8 16.♗a3

Obviously this was the key tactical point behind White's previous move.

16...c5

No better is: 16...♖xf7 17.♖d8† ♗f8 18.♗xf8 ♖d7 19.♖e8 ♔g8 20.♗a3† ♔f7



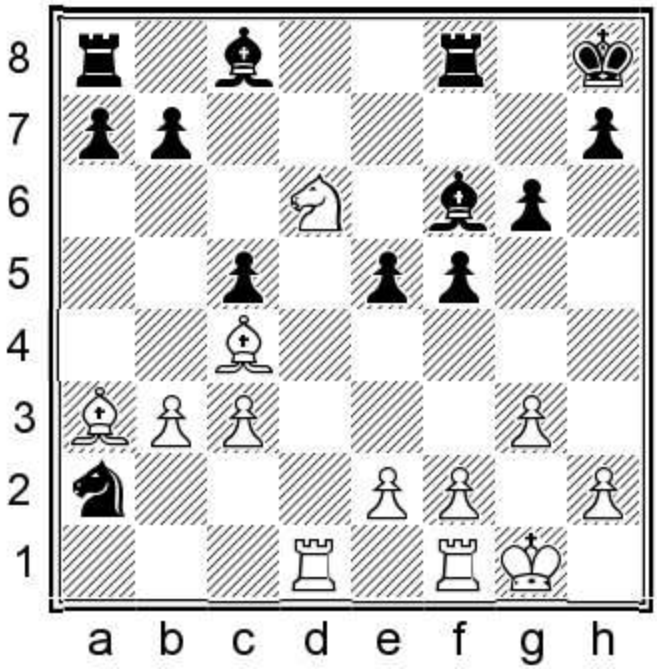
21.♖f8†! (more convincing than 21.♖xe5) 21...♔g7 22.♘xa7! ♖xa7 23.♖xc8 White has every chance of turning his advantage into a win.

17.♗c4 e4

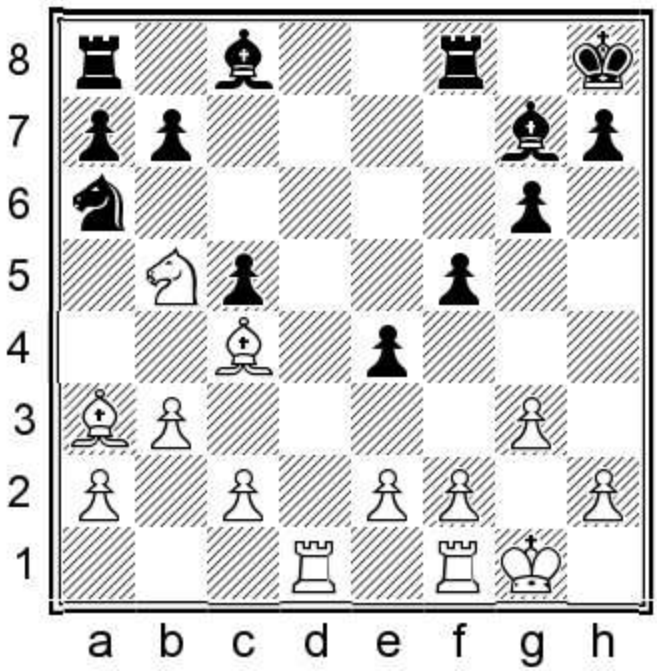
chesstouring.com

Black can hardly do anything against White's penetration along the d-file.

He tried 17...♗f6 18.♘d6 ♘b4 19.c3 ♘xa2 in Gretarsson – Tavoularis, Budapest 2010. Although White won the game anyway, he missed the strongest continuation here:



20.♘b5!N 20...a6 (otherwise ♖a1 will trap the knight) 21.♘c7 ♖b8 22.♗xc5 With a decisive advantage.



18.f3!

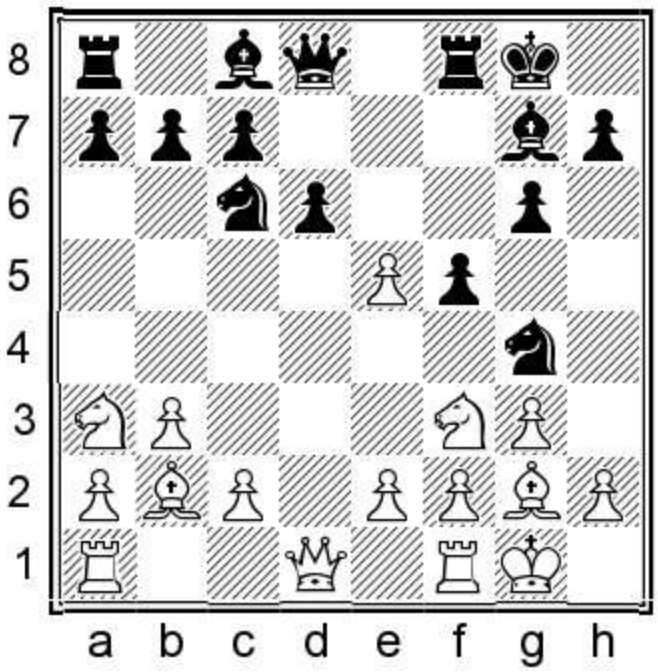
18.♘d6 was played in another game but there is no need to rush with that move.

18...exf3 19.exf3 f4 20.g4 b6 21.c3 ♗b7 22.♘d6+–

White's advantage was overwhelming in Kuligowski – Dybowski, Naleczow 1986.

chesstouring.com

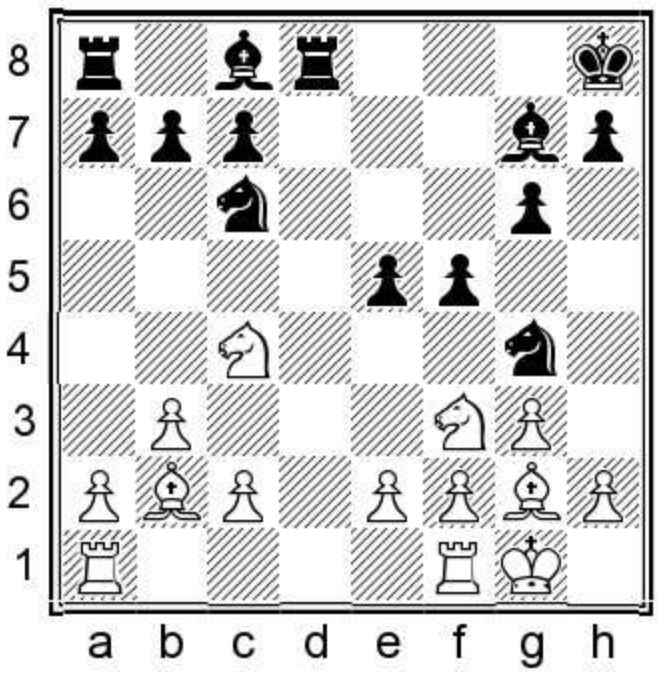
C322) 9...♘c6



10.♕d5† ♔h8 11.♘c4 dxe5

11...♘gxe5 is no better: 12.♘fxe5 dxe5 (12...♘xe5 13.♘xe5 dxe5 14.♗xe5 ♕xd5 15.♗xg7† ♔xg7 16.♗xd5± also left Black a pawn down in Von Buelow – Rangel, Rio de Janeiro 2013) 13.♕xd8 ♖xd8 14.♗xc6 bxc6 15.♘xe5± White was a healthy pawn up in Reeh – Juhnke, Germany 1988.

12.♕xd8 ♖xd8



13.♘g5!

This recommendation from *GM 2* is no longer a novelty.

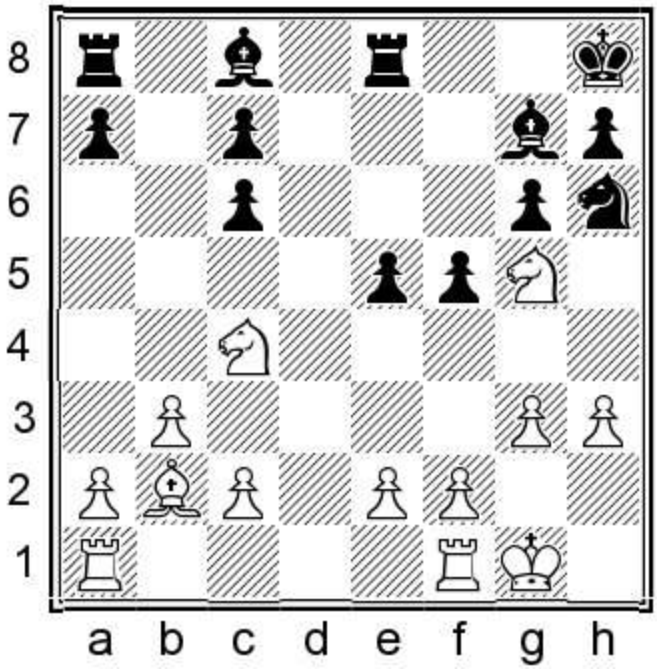
chesstouring.com

13...♖e8 14.h3

There is little to choose between the game continuation and my previous suggestion of 14.♗xc6N 14...bxc6 15.f3 ♘h6 16.♘a5± with a large positional advantage.

14...♘h6 15.♗xc6 bxc6

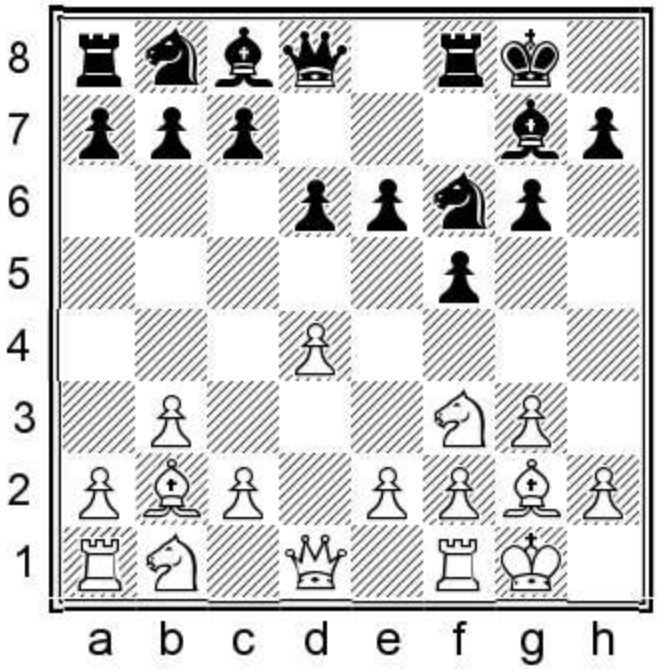
In Hirneise – Lentrodt, Bad Liebenzell 2010, White should have continued:



16.♖ad1N 16...e4 17.♗d4!±

With a clear positional edge.

C4) 7...e6



chesstouring.com

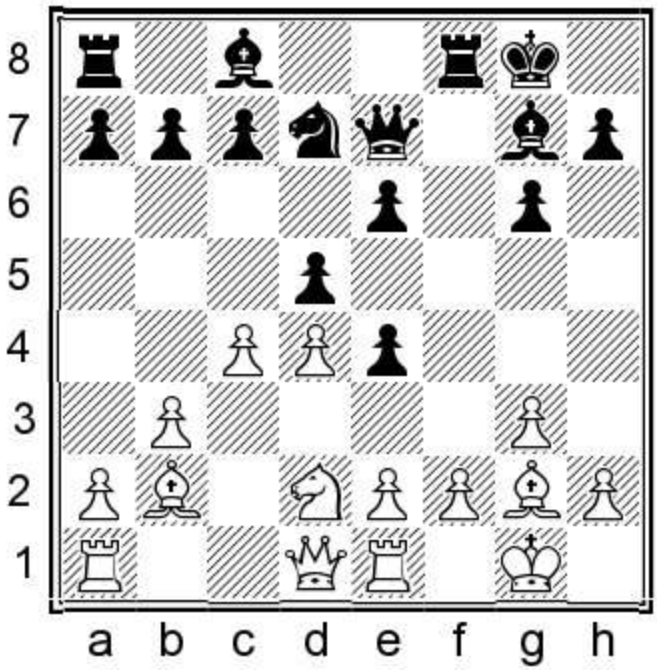
This is a pet line of Ukrainian grandmasters Anna and Mariya Muzychuk.

8.c4 ♕e7 9.♘c3

Since Black is clearly preparing ...e5, White's knight belongs on c3 where it keeps an eye on the d5-square.

Black's two most important options are **C41)** 9...♘c6 and **C42)** 9...c6.

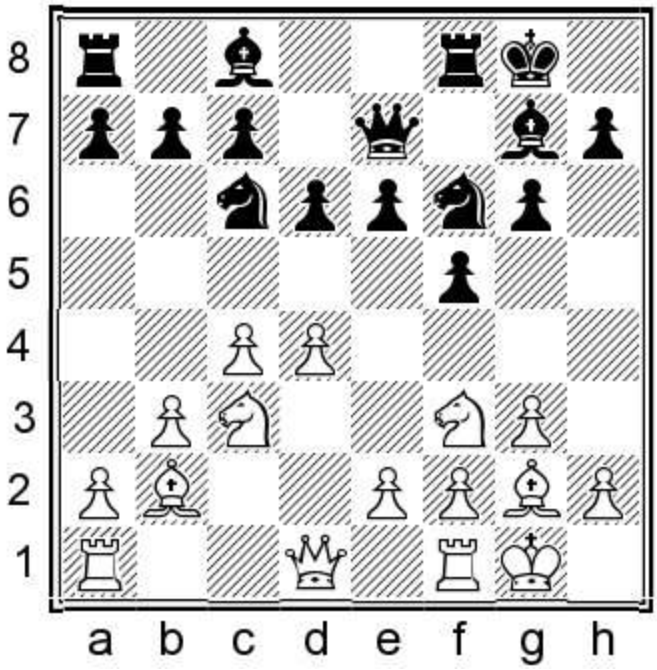
9...♘bd7 is the main alternative but 10.♖e1 is a strong reply, intending to carry out e2-e4 quickly. 10...♘e4 is therefore logical but White gets a fine game after: 11.♘xe4! fxe4 12.♘d2 d5



13.f3! exf3 (13...♗h6N doesn't change the evaluation: 14.fxe4 ♗e3† 15.♔h1 ♘f6 16.♖f1 ♘g4 17.♗f3 ♘f2† 18.♖xf2 ♗xf2 19.cxd5 exd5 20.exd5±) 14.exf3 c6 15.f4 ♘f6 16.a4 ♕c7 17.♘f3 ♘e4 18.♘e5± White's positional advantage was obvious in Tratar – M. Muzychuk, Bled 2008.

C41) 9...♘c6

chesstouring.com



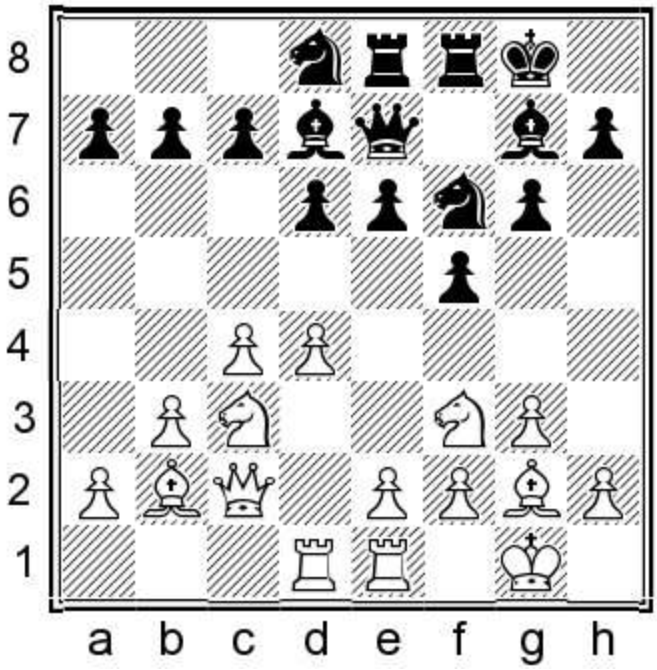
10.♕c2

10.d5 is also promising for White.

10...e5

10...♘d8?! is too passive; the simple 11.e4 fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♕xe4 ♘f7 14.♖fe1 ♕f6 15.♖e2± was much better for White in Butnorius – Ashby, Gibraltar 2007.

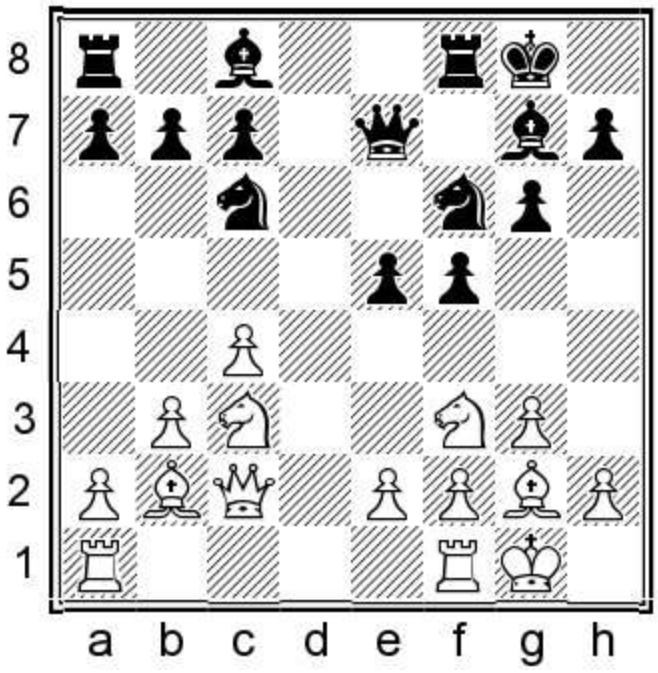
10...♗d7 11.♖ad1 ♖ae8 12.♖fe1 Simple and efficient; now e2-e4 will come with great effect. 12...♘d8 (12...♕d8 13.e4 fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♘xe4 15.♕xe4 ♘e7 16.♕c2±)



13.e4 fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♘xe4 15.♕xe4 ♗c6 16.♕e2 ♕f6 17.♖d3! White was clearly better in Ki. Georgiev – Halkias, Aix-les-Bains 2011.

chesstouring.com

11.dxe5 dxe5



12.♘d5! ♘xd5

12...♕d6 was played in Johannsson – Menvielle Lacourrelle, Havana (ol) 1966, and now I discovered a remarkable line: 13.♖ac1!N 13...e4 14.♖fd1! ♕c5 15.♘g5 h6 16.♘h3 g5 17.♕d2↑ and Black's queen is still misplaced.

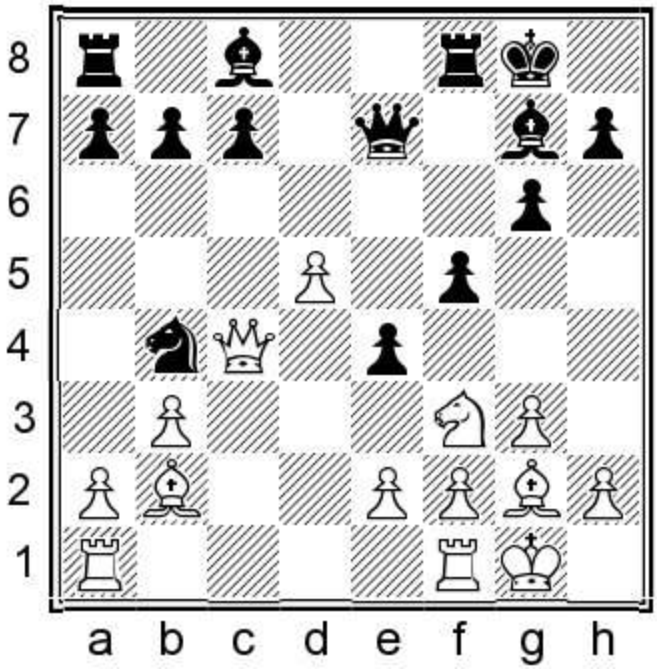
13.cxd5 ♘b4

13...♘b8 14.e4 f4 occurred in Real de Azua – Reis, Mar del Plata 2012, and now the natural 15.♖fc1N 15...c6 16.a4↑ would have enabled White to seize the initiative on the queenside.

14.♕c4 e4

We have been following Sanz Ogaya – Valldeoriola Puigdoller, Mollet del Valles 2016. White should have played:

chesstouring.com



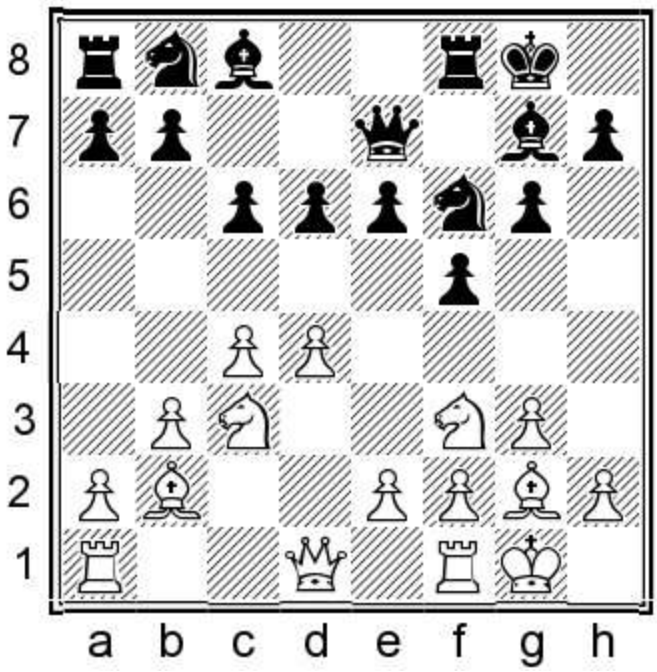
15.♗xg7N 15...♔xg7 16.♘d4 ♖d8 17.d6!

An important tactical nuance.

17...♕xd6 18.♘b5 ♕e7 19.♘xc7 ♖b8 20.♖ad1 ♘c6 21.♘d5 ♕e5 22.♘f4↑

Black remains under serious pressure, with f2-f3 coming next.

C42) 9...c6

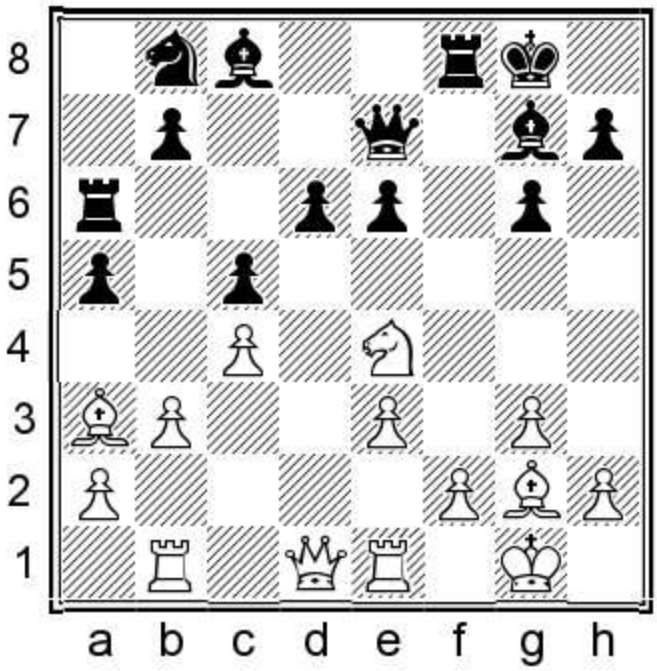


This way Black avoids any problems on the d5-square but delays the development of his queenside pieces.

chesstouring.com

10.♗a3 c5

10...a5 11.♖e1 ♘e4 12.♘xe4 fxe4 13.♘d2 ♗xd4 14.♘xe4 c5 15.♖b1 ♖a6 16.e3 ♗g7 occurred in Meenakshi – M. Muzychuk, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010, when White should have played the simple:



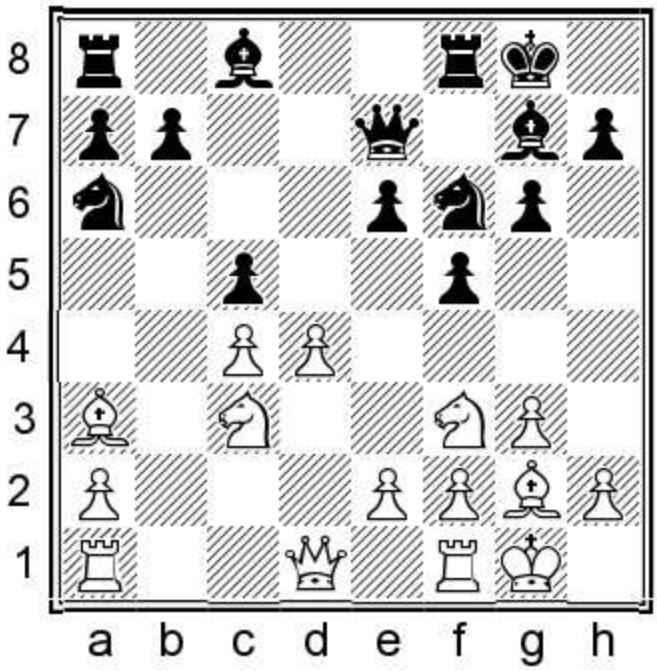
17.♕d2N 17...♖d8 18.♖ed1± Black will have a hard time keeping her pawn structure from collapsing.

11.b4!

I still find this the most convincing way forward for White.

11...♘e4

Black tried 11...♘a6 12.bxc5 dxc5 in Kabatianski – Tomaszewski, Germany 2006, when White should have played:

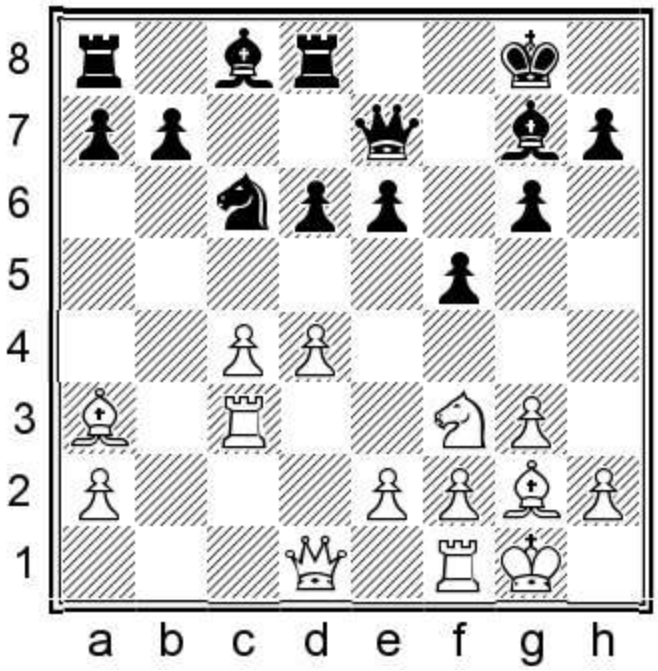


chesstouring.com

13.♘e5N 13...♖d8 14.e3± With an obvious positional advantage.

12.♖c1 cxb4 13.♗xb4 ♘c6 14.♗a3 ♘xc3 15.♖xc3 ♖d8

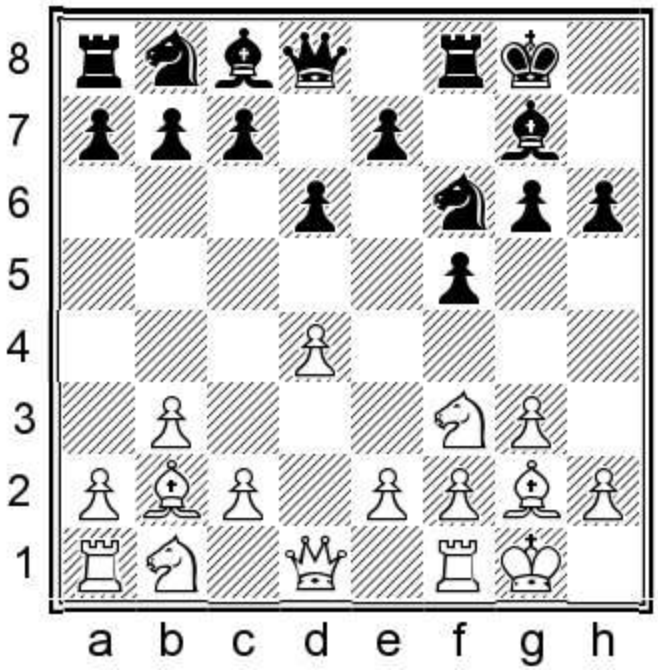
In Sasikiran – A. Muzychuk, Antwerp 2009, most precise would have been:



16.♕d2!N 16...♕f6 17.♖d3

With a clear positional advantage.

C5) 7...h6



8.c4 ♕e8

After 8...g5 9.♘bd2 Black hardly has anything better than 8...♕e8, which transposes to the main line

chesstouring.com

below.

9.♘bd2 g5

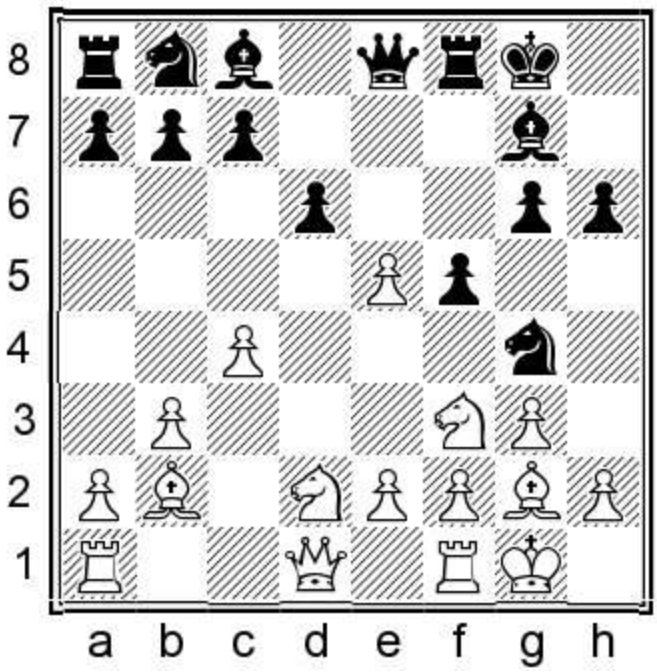
9...c6 transposes to variation A3 of the next chapter on page 124.

9...e5

I neglected to consider this in *GM 2* but it's a thematic move, although it turns out that White is well placed to deal with it.

10.dxe5 ♘g4

The untested 10...♘fd7N is a logical try, but I found a nice idea against it: 11.♘d4! ♘xe5 (the key point is that 11...dxe5 runs into 12.♘e6!) 12.♕c2± White has reached the desired pawn structure. Here I was excited to discover a remarkable resource:



11.c5!N

White can equally play 11.♕c2, when Black has nothing better than 11...♘xe5, as occurred in all three of the existing games in this line. At this point White can play 12.c5!N, transposing to the analysis below. Nevertheless, advancing the c-pawn a move earlier has greater visual appeal and potential shock value.

11...♘xe5

11...dxc5?! 12.♘c4! leaves the g4-knight in trouble.

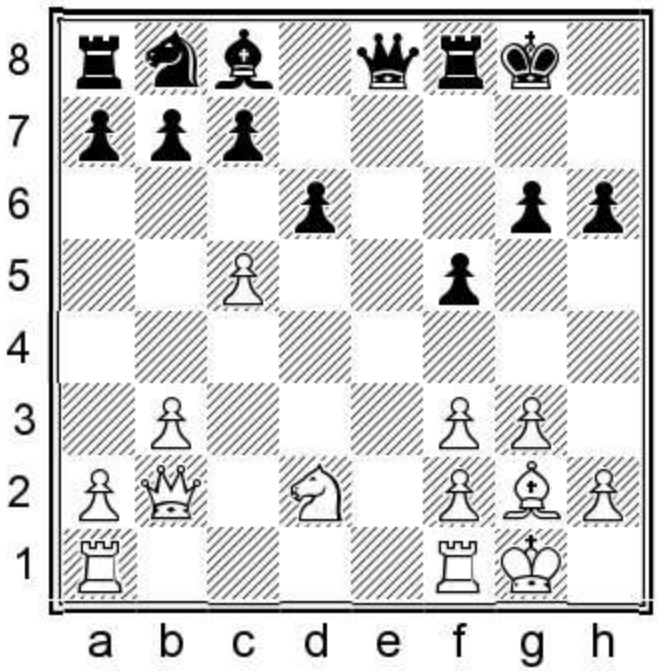
11...dxe5 12.h3 also looks pretty bad; for example, 12...e4 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.hxg4 exf3 15.♘xf3 fxg4 16.♕d4† ♔h7 17.♘e5! with a clear plus for White.

12.♕c2 ♘xf3†

After 12...dxc5 13.♖ae1! ♘a6 14.♘xe5 ♗xe5 15.♘c4 ♗xb2 16.♕xb2± White will soon be ready to open things up with ♘e5, f2-f4 (ensuring that Black will not be able to play ...f4 himself) and finally e2-e4. Black's extra pawn has virtually no effect on the game and his problems are serious.

13.exf3! ♗xb2 14.♕xb2

chesstouring.com

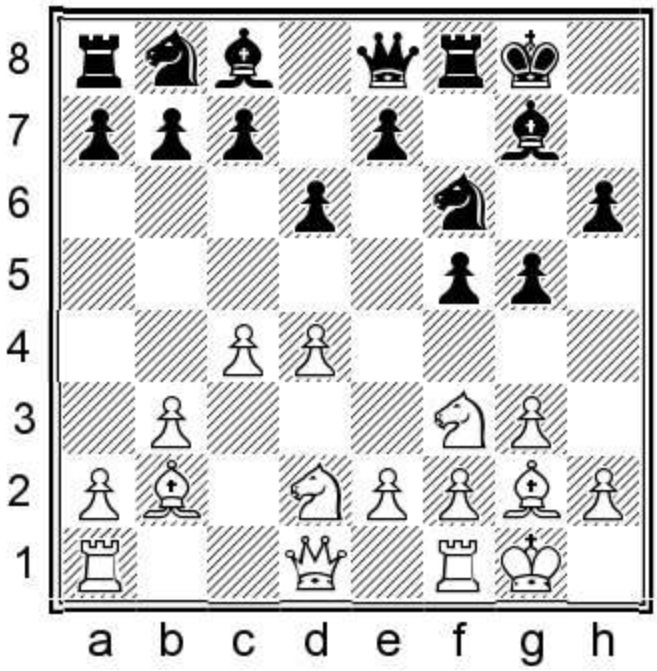


14...dxc5

14...♕e5 brings little relief after 15.♕xe5 dxe5 16.♖fe1 ♘c6 17.♘c4 ♖e8 18.f4 e4 19.f3± and White wins an important central pawn.

15.♖fe1 ♕f7 16.f4 ♘d7 17.♖ad1±

White has amazing central control and his chances are much better.



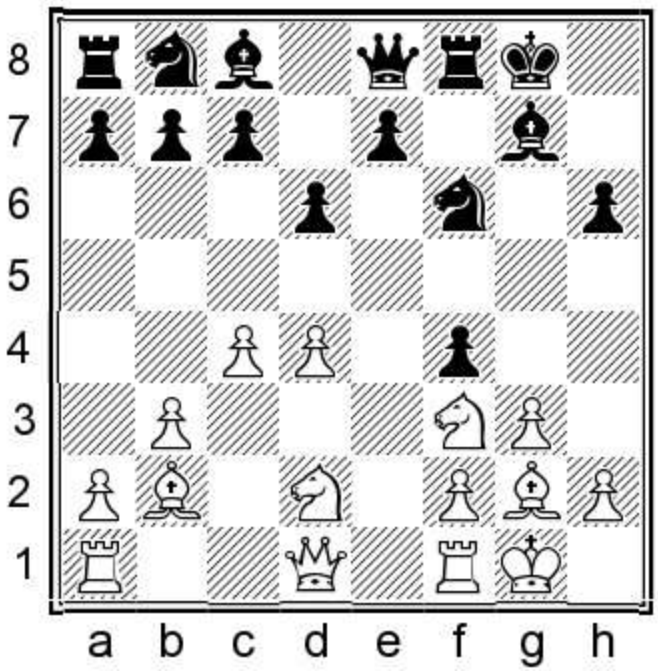
10.e3!?

Once again I prefer this to the other logical plan of ♕c2 followed by e2-e4. Instead White intends to stabilize his position in the centre and kingside, in preparation for a queenside expansion. This idea had been tested in several games since *GM 2* was published, so there are quite a few updates to the following analysis.

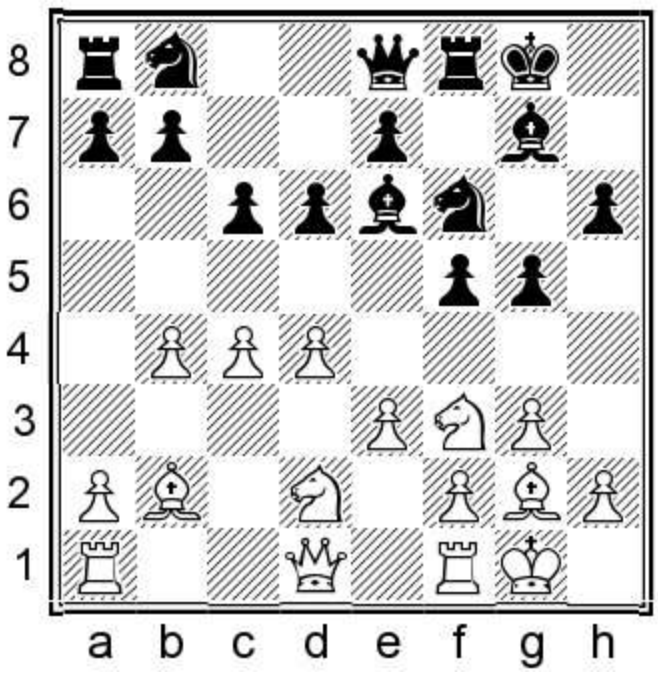
chesstouring.com

I believe Black's most important options are **C51)** 10...e5 and **C52)** 10...♘a6, although many other moves have been tried.

10...f4?! seems premature. 11.exf4 gxf4 occurred in Mohota – Fossum, Gibraltar 2004, and now I like the following idea:



12.♕e2N 12...♘a6 13.♖ae1 Attacking the e7-pawn, and if 13...♕h5 14.♘h4! White keeps everything under control and stands clearly better.
10...c6 11.b4!? is my novelty from *GM 2*, which has since been tested in a correspondence game: 11...♗e6 (my previous illustrative line continued 11...♕h5N 12.♖c1 when White is well prepared to meet 12...f4?! with 13.exf4 gxf4 14.♖e1 ♖f7 15.c5!±)



12.d5! This is a great moment for White to strike in the centre. 12...cxd5 13.♘d4 ♗d7 14.cxd5 ♘a6

chessbase.com

15.♕b3 ♘c7 16.f4± White enjoyed a clear positional advantage in Wittal – Daenen, email 2011.

10...a5 11.a3

I do not see any point in switching plans with 11.d5, since after 11...c5! Black obtained a decent position in Powell – Posazhennikov, Telford 2005.

11...♕g6

Black also failed to equalize in a couple of more recent examples:

After 11...c6 12.♕c2 ♘h5?! 13.d5 e5 14.dxe6 ♗xe6 15.♗xg7 ♘xg7 16.♘d4± Black had obviously lost the opening battle in Brynell – Logdahl, Stockholm 2010.

11...♕h5 12.♕c2 ♗d7 13.b4 c6 14.♖fc1± left White comfortably better in Grammatica – Cottarelli, corr. 2011.

12.♕c2 c6

This occurred in Hornung – Egorov, Augsburg 1995. As I noted in *GM 2*, White should have continued:

13.b4N

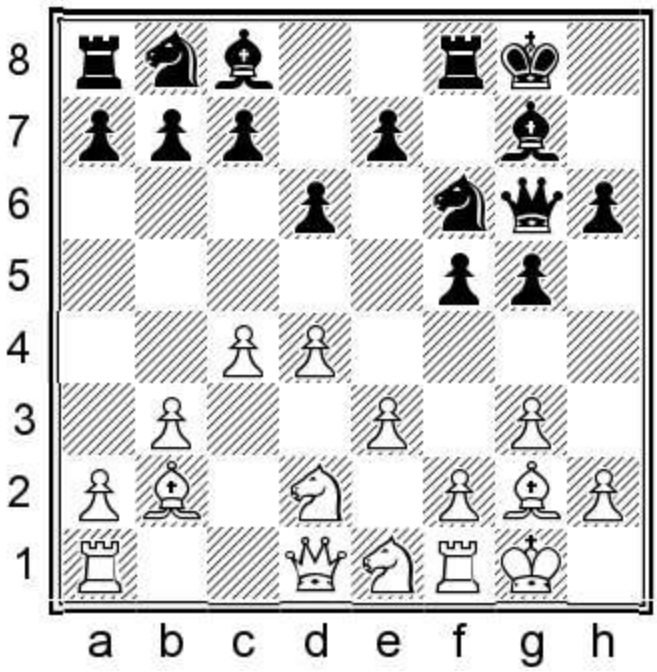
With promising play on the queenside.

10...♕h5 11.♘e1!

This shows another advantage of White's 10th move.

11...♕g6

This is the logical reply, since a queen swap would deprive Black of any attacking chances on the kingside. Now in Matthiesen – M.A. Jensen, Helsingor 2011, White posted his queen on c2, but I would prefer:



12.♕e2N

I find this the best square for the queen.

Please also note that there is no reason to allow 12.♘d3 f4.

12...♘e4

12...e5?! does not really work for Black after 13.dxe5 ♘fd7 14.f4 dxe5 15.♗d5†! ♔h8 16.fxg5

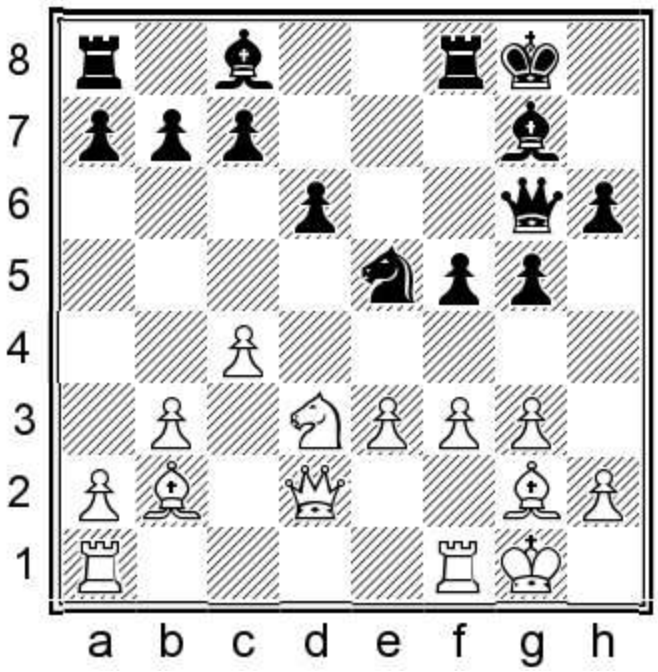
chesstouring.com

when both 16...hxg5 17.g4 and 16...♕xg5 17.e4 are clearly better for White.

The text move seems like a better try for Black, but he still has a hard time after:

13.♘d3 ♘d7 14.f3 ♘xd2 15.♕xd2 e5 16.dxe5 ♘xe5

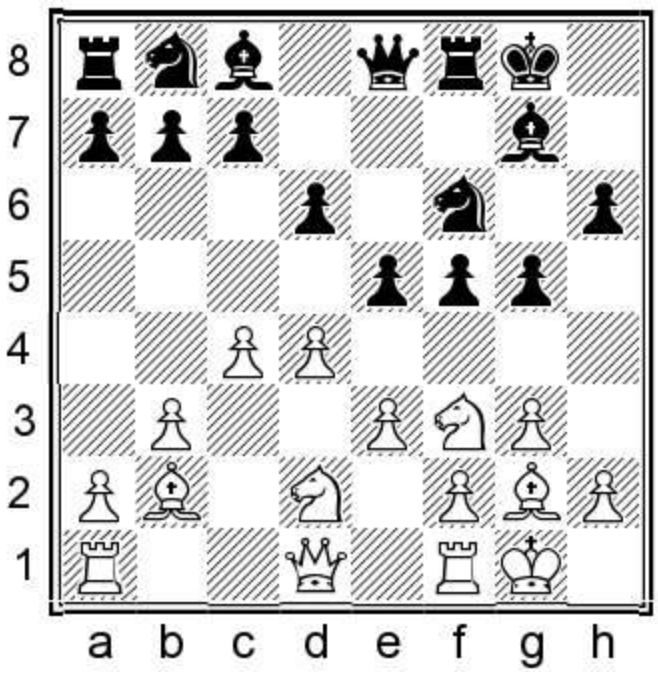
16...dxe5 17.♕a5!± wins a pawn.



17.f4! ♘xd3 18.♗xg7 ♕xg7 19.♕xd3±

Black is in trouble.

C51) 10...e5



White should always be always prepared for the ...e5 advance in the Leningrad, and this particular version of it has been tried a few times since *GM 2* was published.

chesstouring.com

11.dxe5 ♘g4

11...♘fd7 12.♘d4 ♘xe5 (12...dxe5? runs into 13.♘e6!+–) 13.♕c2 transposes to our main line, and was the actual move order of the Mkrtchian – Shahinyan game quoted below.

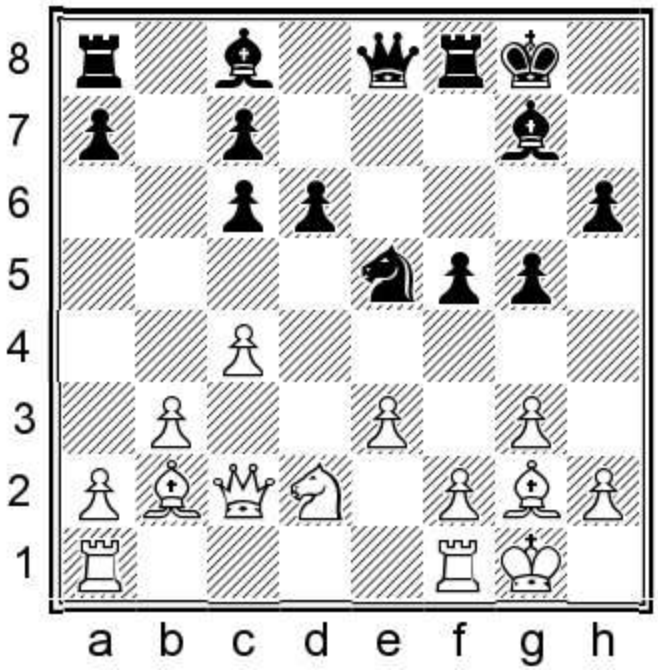
12.♕c2 ♘xe5

12...dxe5? 13.h3 is hardly acceptable for Black.

13.♘d4 f4

This is a logical try, since slower play in this pawn structure will invariably offer some advantage for White.

13...♘bc6 14.♘xc6!? bxc6 occurred in Mkrtchian – Shahinyan, Jermuk 2012, and now White missed an extremely strong idea:

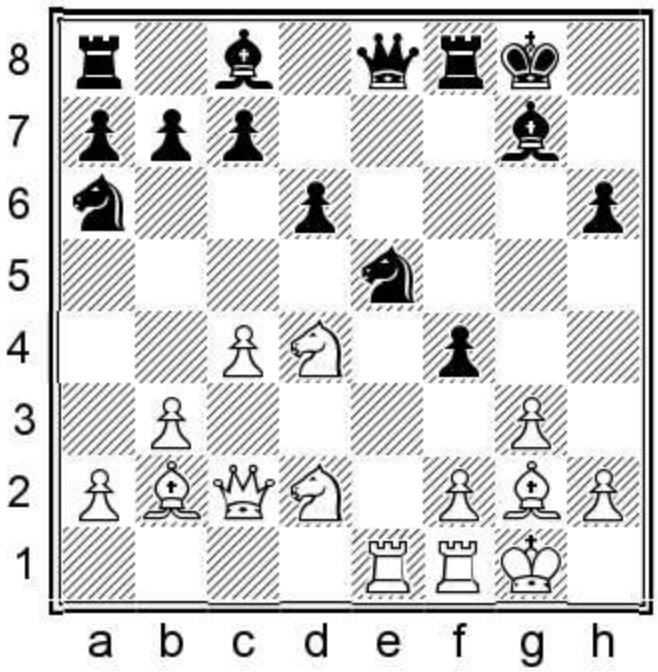


15.f4!N 15...♘g4 (or 15...♘d3 16.♗xg7 ♕xe3† 17.♔h1 ♔xg7 18.♘f3 and Black's pieces are totally uncoordinated, while his king is extremely vulnerable) 16.♗xg7 ♕xe3† 17.♔h1 ♔xg7 18.♘f3 ♕e7 19.♖ae1 White will follow up with h2-h3, when Black's position is close to collapsing.

14.exf4 gxf4 15.♖ae1 ♘a6

This position occurred in Bluebaum – Reinemer, Dresden 2011. I like the following improvement:

chesstouring.com



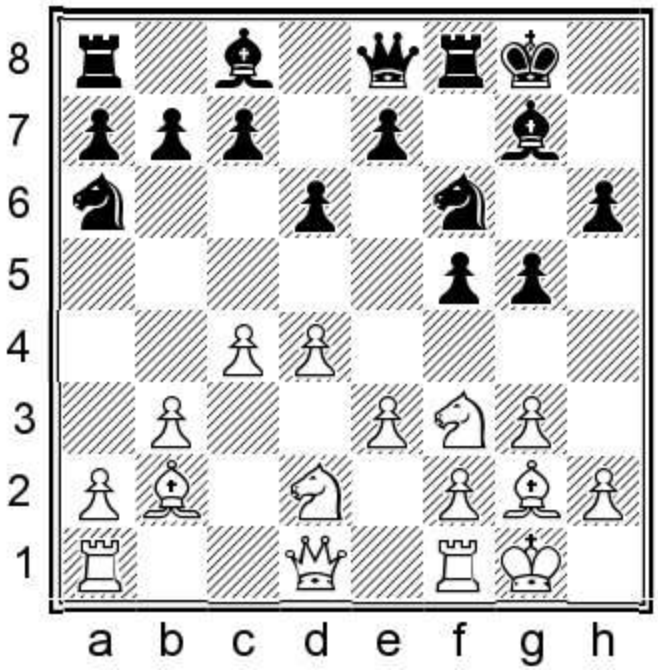
16.♗c3!

Preventing the ...♘b4 jump.

16...♘c5 17.♘2f3

With a clear positional plus.

C52) 10...♘a6



11.a3

Previously I recommended 11.♗c3 followed by a piece regrouping with ♕c2, ♘e1 and so on. White has every chance of an advantage there too, but now I slightly prefer the idea of pawn play on the queenside.

chesstouring.com

11...c6 12.b4 ♘c7

12...e5?!

Once again, it is worth checking that this move doesn't work.

13.dxe5 ♘d7

13...dxe5!? 14.♘xe5 ♘g4 is a tricky idea, but it is refuted by 15.b5! (15.♘d3 ♘xe3! is Black's idea) 15...♘c5 16.♗d4! and White remains a pawn up.

14.♕b3 dxe5?!

14...♘xe5 is the lesser evil, but after 15.♘d4 we have the thematic pawn structure which always favours White.

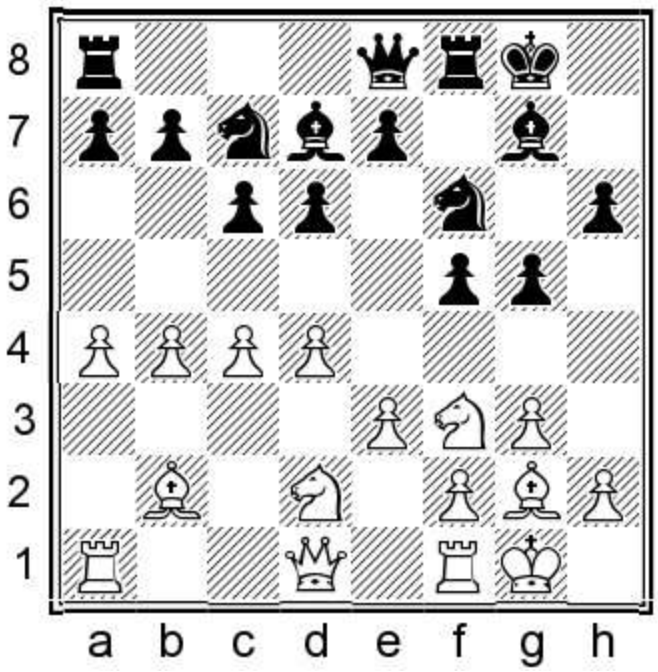
15.e4! f4 16.c5† ♔h8 17.♘c4±

With a huge advantage.

13.a4 ♗d7

13...a6N would have been better, although 14.♖c1 ♗e6 15.♘e1± still maintains the better game for White.

We have been following Gill – Cherniaev, Isle of Man 1998. An obvious improvement would be:



14.b5N 14...♘e6 15.♕c2

White is clearly better.

Conclusion

We started our Leningrad coverage by checking a few Stonewall variants followed by the attempt to create play on the long diagonal with 6...c5. Neither plan should worry White, who has more than one

chesstouring.com

good way of playing against each of them. We then started looking at 6...d6, which is the gateway to the main lines of the Leningrad, most of which will be covered in the next two chapters. As for the various sidelines after 7.♗b2, on virtually every turn White must keep an eye on the ...e5 possibility, but the good news is that Black has no way of forcing this pawn break under favourable circumstances. Perhaps the most theoretically challenging line of this chapter is 7...h6 8.c4 ♕e8 9.♘bd2 g5, but after 10.e3!? I still like White's chances a lot.

chesstouring.com



Dutch



Leningrad – 7...c6 & 7...♘e4

Variation Index

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.0–0 0–0 6.b3 d6

7.♗b2

A) 7...c6 8.♘bd2 120

A1) 8...a5 120

A2) 8...♕c7 122

A3) 8...♕e8 124

A4) 8...♘a6 9.c4 126

A41) 9...♖b8 126

A42) 9...e5 127

B) 7...♘e4 8.♘bd2 129

B1) 8...c5 129

B2) 8...♘xd2 9.♕xd2 131

B21) 9...♘d7 131

B22) 9...♘c6 133

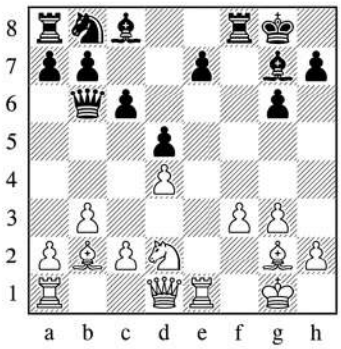
B3) 8...♘c6 9.♘e1 135

B31) 9...d5 136

B32) 9...♘g5 137

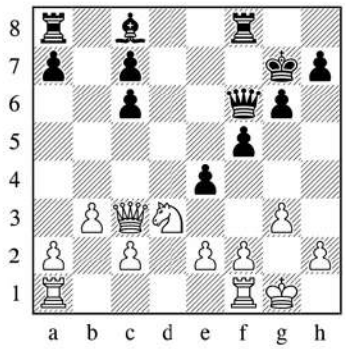
chesstouring.com

A2) note to 12...♕b6



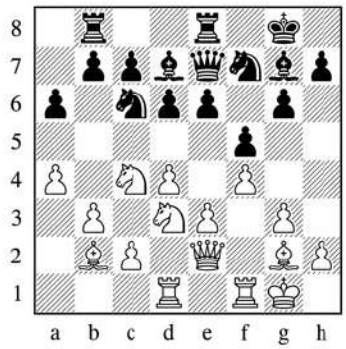
14.♔h1!N

B22) note to 10...♕e8



16.♘e5!N

B32) note to 12...♖b8



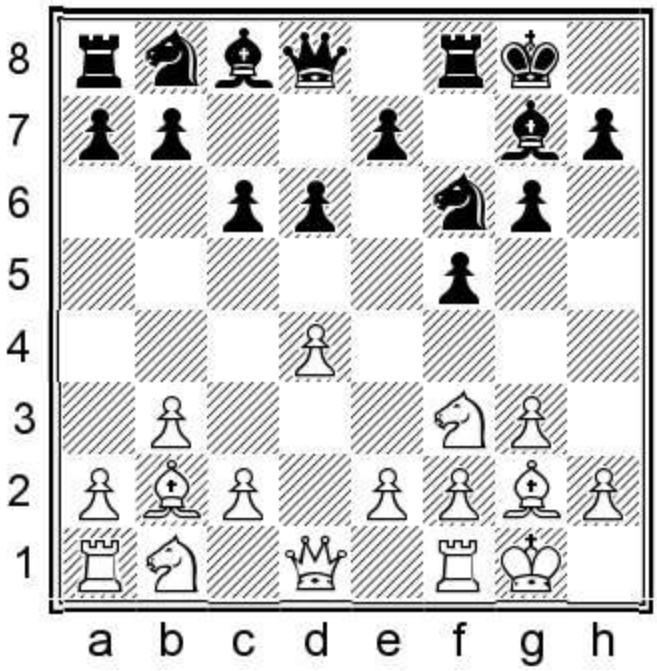
17.♕f2!N

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3 d6 7.♗b2

This chapter will deal with the important options of **A)** 7...c6 and **B)** 7...♘e4.

As mentioned previously, the main line of 7...♕e8 will be the subject of the next chapter.

A) 7...c6



8.♘bd2

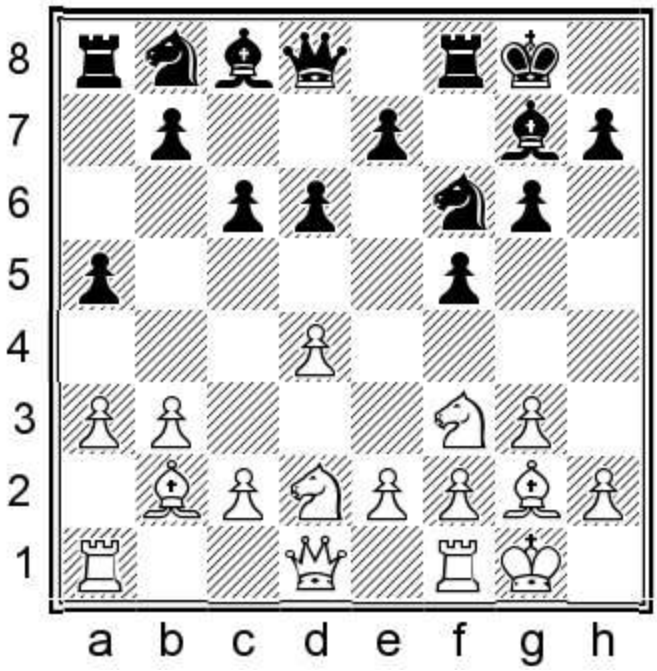
8.c4 is a popular alternative, and we will actually reach this position in variation B323 of Chapter 8 on page 187, via a different move order. However, I prefer the text move when the present move order occurs, as it gives White the option of preparing a quick e2-e4.

We will analyse **A1)** 8...a5, **A2)** 8...♕c7, **A3)** 8...♕e8 and **A4)** 8...♘a6. Many transpositions are possible between the last two of these lines and the next chapter, as the moves ...c6, ...♕e8 and ...♘a6 can be played at different times and in any order. I have endeavoured to keep track of the different move orders

and will point out the main transpositions as we go along.

A1) 8...a5 9.a3!

A logical move, although Moskalenko only mentions 9.c4 and 9.e3 in *The Diamond Dutch*.
I must admit I was planning to recommend 9.c4, after spending some time analysing 9...a4 10.♕c2 when White has excellent chances. However, I then noticed a problem: 9...♘a6! transposes to a line which I prefer to avoid, for reasons explained on page 103 – see 9.♘bd2 c6 in the note to variation C21 of the previous chapter.

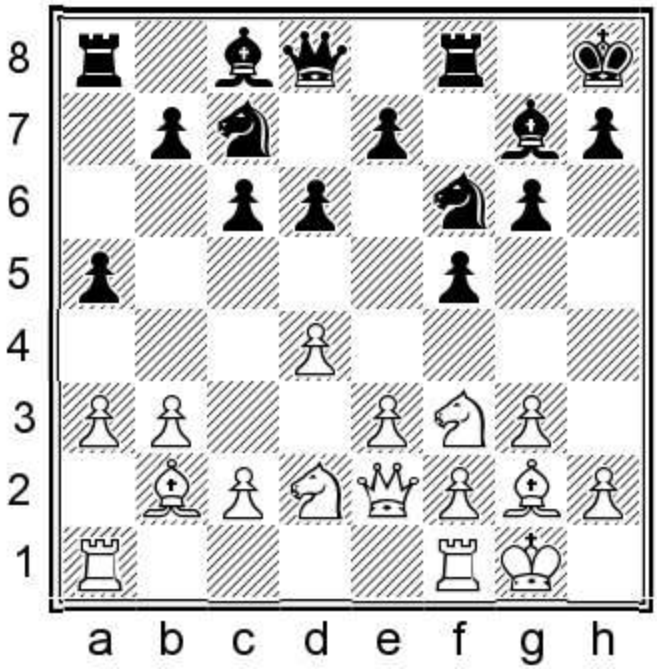


9...♘a6 10.e3 ♕c7

I considered a couple of other options:

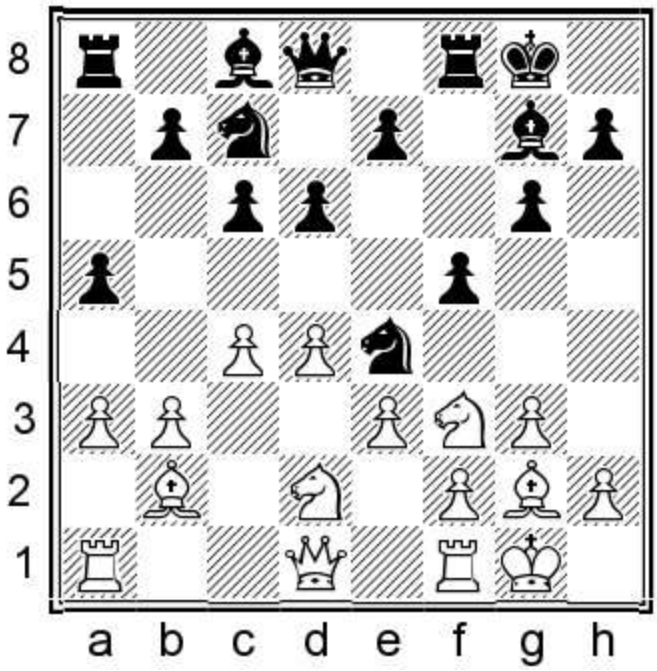
Karolyi offers 10...♘c7 when 11.♕e2 would be my suggestion. Black responded with 11...♔h8 in Sanguineti – Pelikan, Buenos Aires 1968, when White should have continued:

chesstouring.com



12.c4N This works well. One illustrative line is 12...♘d7 13.e4! f4 14.e5! dxe5 15.♖ad1↑ with a promising initiative for the pawn.

10...♘e4 11.c4 ♘c7 (11...♗d7 was played in Robatsch – Knezevic, Stary Smokovec 1987, and now I see no reason to delay challenging the knight: 12.♕c2N 12...♘xd2 13.♕xd2 and White enjoys a pleasant edge after something like 13...♘c7 14.♖fd1±) Now in Fridman – Mar. Bartel, Poznan (blitz) 2014, White should have played

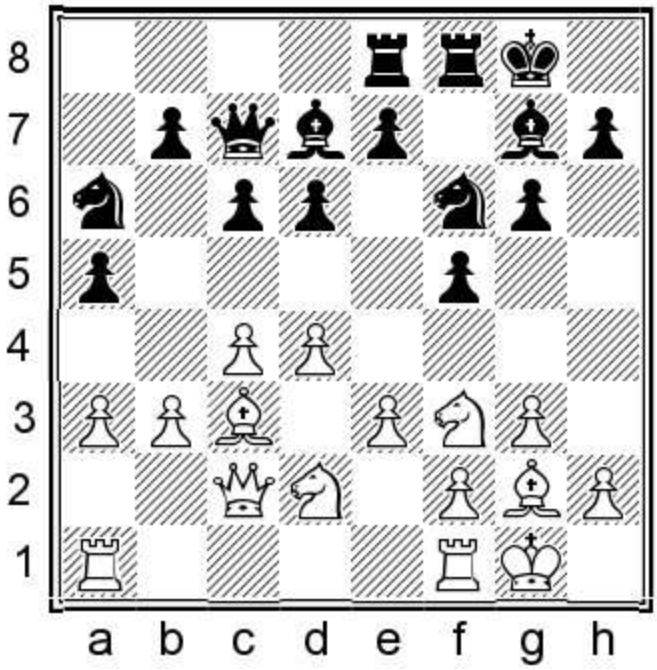


12.♕c2N A likely continuation is 12...♘xd2 13.♕xd2 ♕e8 14.a4! and White is obviously better.

11.c4 ♖e8

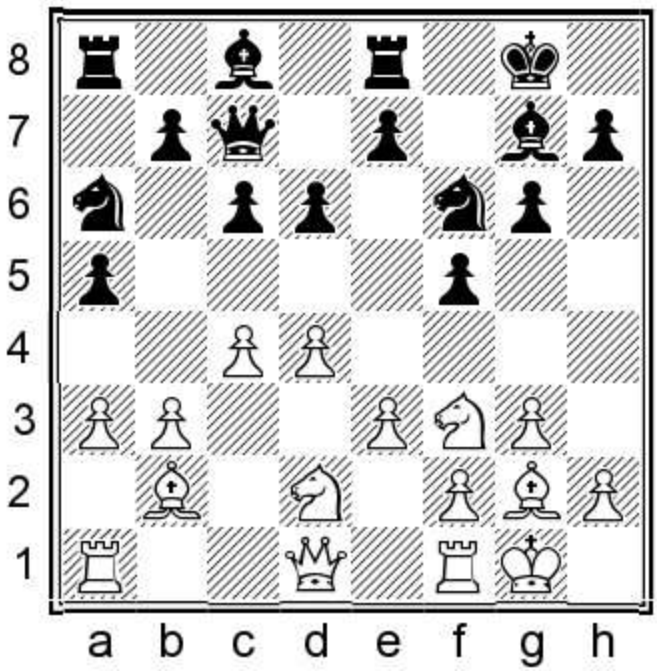
Another game saw 11...♗d7 12.♕c2 ♖ae8, Akesson – Winge, Stockholm 1987. Here I believe White should have played 13.♗c3!?N with the following nice point:

chesstouring.com



13...e5 14.c5! e4 (14...dxc5 is met by 15.♘xe5 cxd4 16.exd4 followed by ♘dc4 with a clear advantage) 15.cxd6 ♕xd6 16.♘e5 The weakness of the a5-pawn causes a serious headache for Black.

This position occurred in Wissinger – Oschetzki, Bad Woerishofen 2002. I suggest the following improvement:

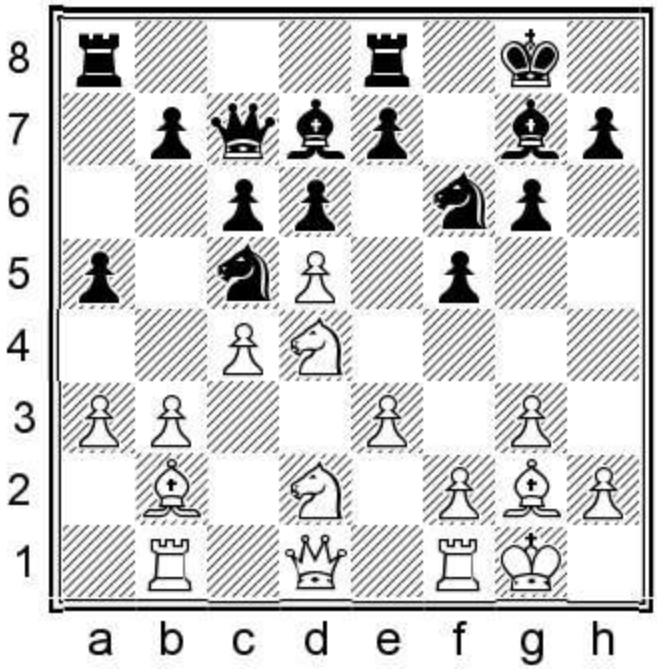


12.d5!?N 12...♗d7

Black can accept the pawn sacrifice by means of 12...cxd5 13.cxd5 ♘xd5 but White gets more than enough play after: 14.♖c1 ♕d8 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♘d4 ♘ac7 17.♘c4 ♖a6 18.♕d2!⩲ With a powerful initiative.

chesstouring.com

13.♘d4 ♘c5 14.♖b1



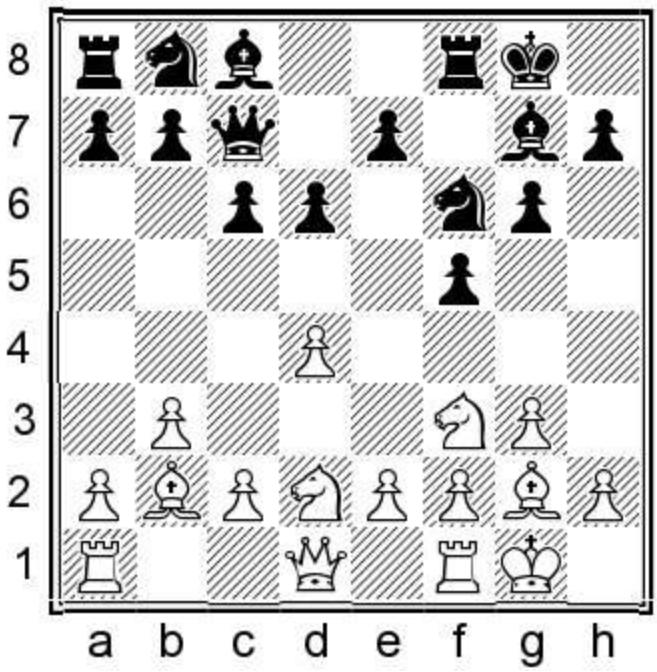
14...e5

I don’t see a better idea for Black, but now we get our typical favourable pawn structure after:

15.dxe6 ♘xe6 16.♘xe6 ♗xe6 17.♕c2±

White enjoys a slight but long-term advantage.

A2) 8...♕c7



This may seem like a strange square for the queen but there have been over a hundred games with this move, including one with Nakamura on the black side.

chesstouring.com

9.♖e1

It is logical to prepare e2-e4 without delay. Karolyi mentions this move in a note but agrees it is troublesome for Black.

9...♘e4

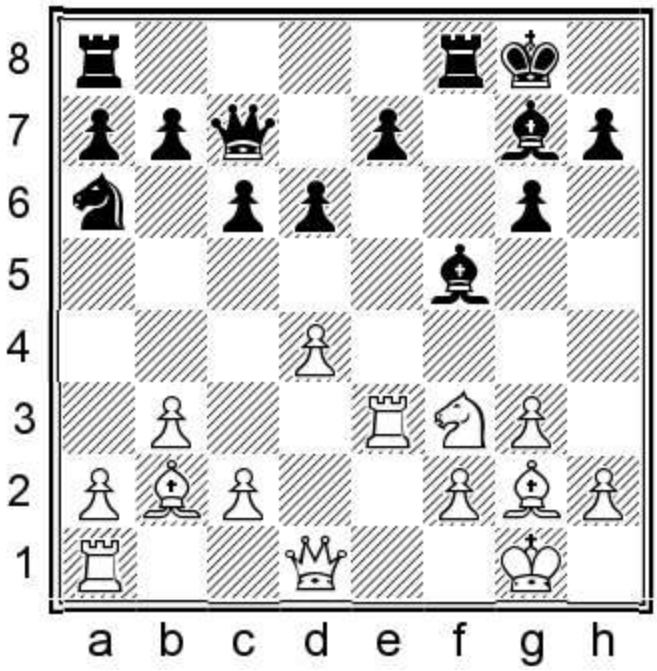
Obstructing White's central advance is the most challenging move, but I will mention a few alternatives:

9...a5 has been played a few times but for some reason White never replied with 10.e4N. It looks promising, since 10...fxe4 11.♘xe4 ♘xe4 12.♖xe4 ♗f5 13.♖e3± leaves White with a classical advantage, while the ...a4 advance will not bring Black much, if any, counterplay.

9...♘a6

This move invites the same natural sequence:

10.e4 fxe4 11.♘xe4 ♘xe4 12.♖xe4 ♗f5 13.♖e3



13...♖ae8

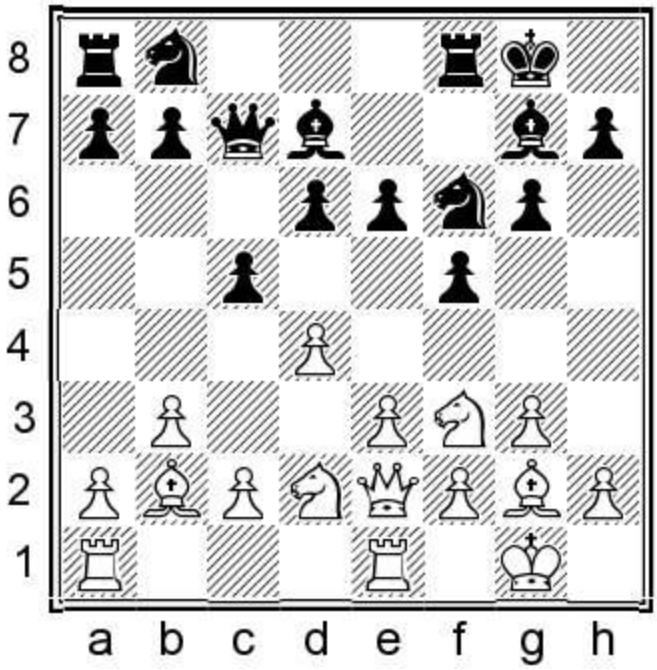
13...♘b4?! occurred in Csom – Marasescu, Pecs 1998, when 14.♘h4!N would have been strong since the c2-pawn is untouchable: 14...♗xc2? (14...e5 is the lesser evil but after 15.♘xf5 gxf5 16.♕d2± Black's opening strategy has clearly failed) 15.♕d2+– Followed by a2-a3, winning material.

14.♘h4 ♗d7 15.♕e2±

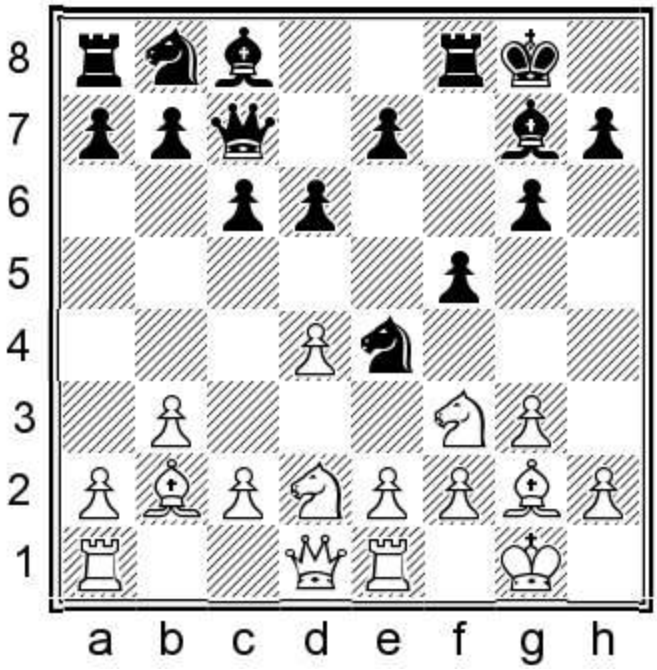
White enjoyed a pleasant advantage in Obolenskikh – Korkus, corr. 2012.

Finally, 9...c5N is suggested by Karolyi but I seriously doubt that Black can solve his problems this way. 10.e3 ♗d7 11.♕e2 e6 (11...♘a6 also favours White after 12.♖ad1 or 12.e4!?)

chesstouring.com



12.dxc5! (Karolyi mentions 12.♖ad1 as leading to equality; I have my doubts about this too, but the text move seems simpler) 12...♕xc5 13.♖ac1 ♘c6 14.♖ed1± Black has too many weaknesses and White has several tempting ideas including ♘c4, ♘e1-d3, a2-a3 and b2-b4, and so on.



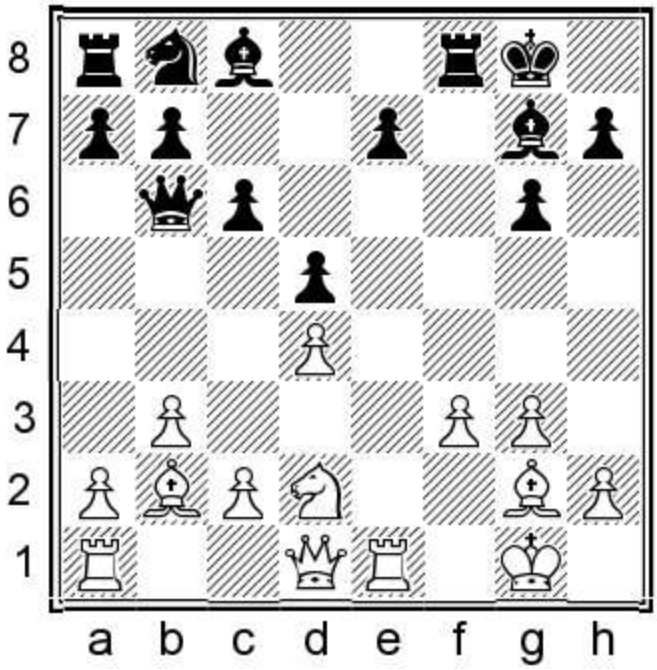
10.♘xe4 fxe4 11.♘d2 d5 12.f3

Breaking up the enemy centre is completely natural and thematic.

12...♕b6

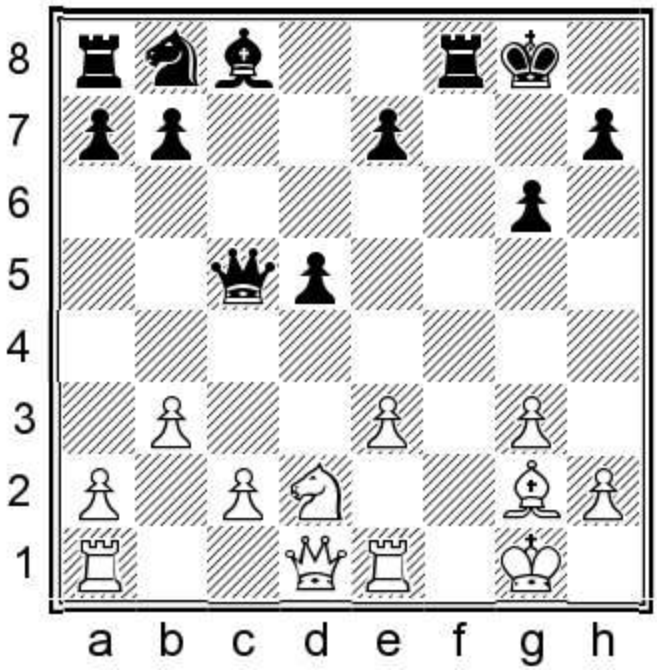
12...exf3 13.exf3 ♕b6 was seen in Steckner – Klostermann, Germany 1990. White should have responded with:

chesstouring.com



14.♔h1!N 14...♖e8 (14...♗xd4 is too risky in view of 15.♘c4! dxc4 16.♗xd4± and White's threats on the dark squares are too dangerous) 15.♘f1 ♘d7 16.♘e3± White's positional edge is obvious.

13.fxe4 ♗xd4† 14.♗xd4 ♕xd4† 15.e3 ♕c5 16.exd5 cxd5



17.b4!

An important resource.

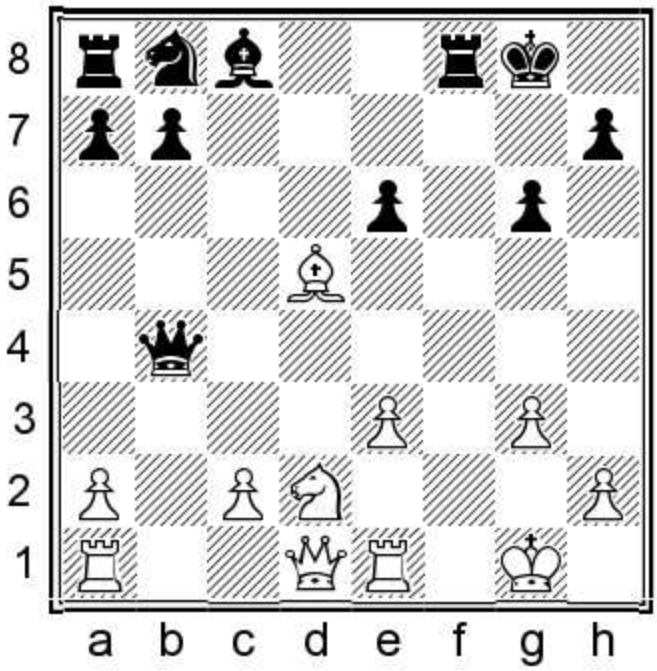
17...♕xb4

17...♕d6 18.♘b3 does not look good for Black.

chesstouring.com

18.♗xd5† e6

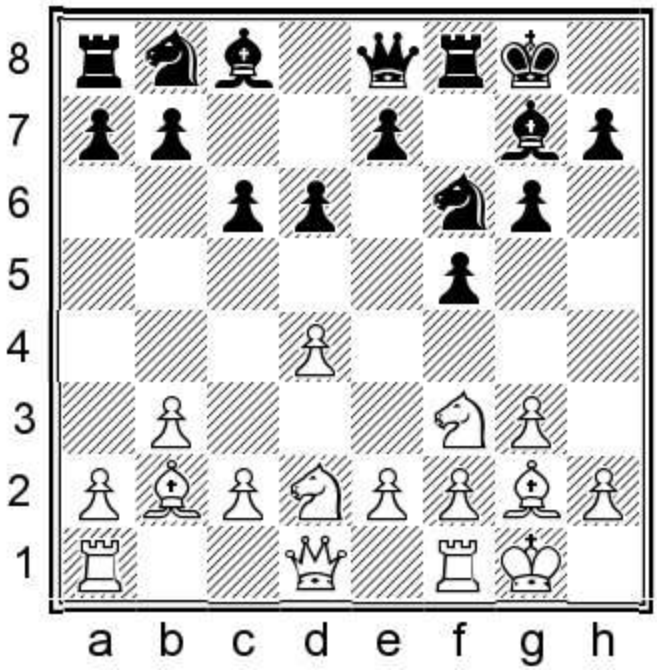
In Jirka – Rendle, England 2011, the most accurate continuation would have been:



19.♖b1N 19...♕e7 20.♗g2±

White maintains a pleasant edge, thanks to the Catalan-style pressure of the light-squared bishop.

A3) 8...♕e8



9.c4 h6

9...♘a6 10.♕c2 transposes to variation D2 of the next chapter on page 155.

9...e5? 10.dxe5 ♘g4 doesn't work in view of the thematic 11.♗a3!± as seen in Ianov – Stepanets, Policka

chesstouring.com

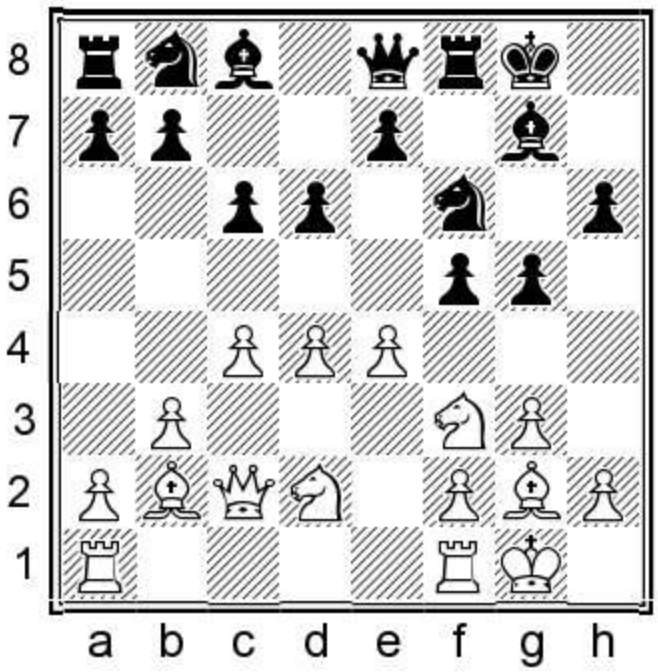
1996.

10.♕c2 g5

10...♘a6 is again possible and again covered via another move order – see variation D22 of the next chapter on page 157.

11.e4

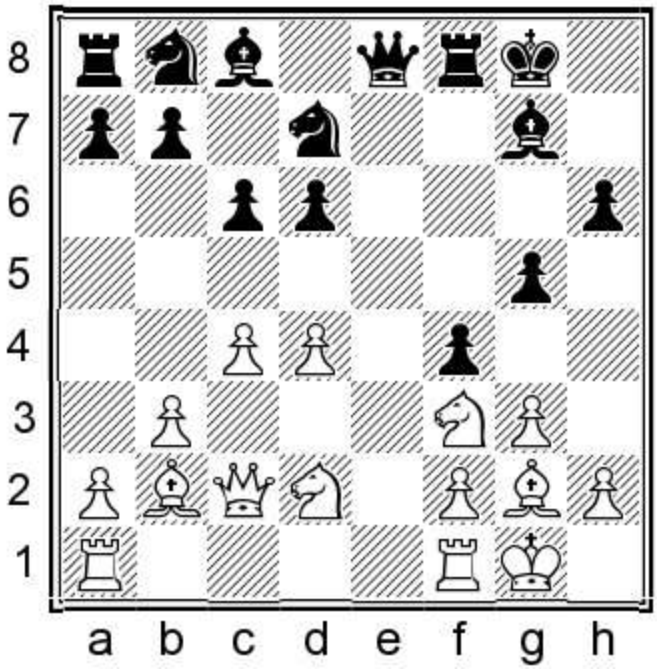
Another concept is 11.e3 followed by play on the queenside, like in variation C5 of the previous chapter. The two lines are quite similar but here I prefer the direct plan of e2-e4. The difference is that Black has already spent a tempo on ...c6 here, which means that his attempts to obtain kingside counterplay are much less effective.



11...fxe4

11...f4? is a perfect example of an idea which would have led to unclear play in the analogous position resulting from the 7...h6/8...♕e8 line from the previous chapter, as in that case Black would have already activated his queen with ...♕h5 instead of wasting a tempo with ...c6. Here Black's strategy falls flat after 12.e5! ♘fd7 (12...♘h5 13.♘e1! ♗f5 14.♗e4 is also great for White) 13.exd6 exd6 and now in Czibulka – J. Horvath Hungary 1999, White could have broken through by simple means:

chesstouring.com



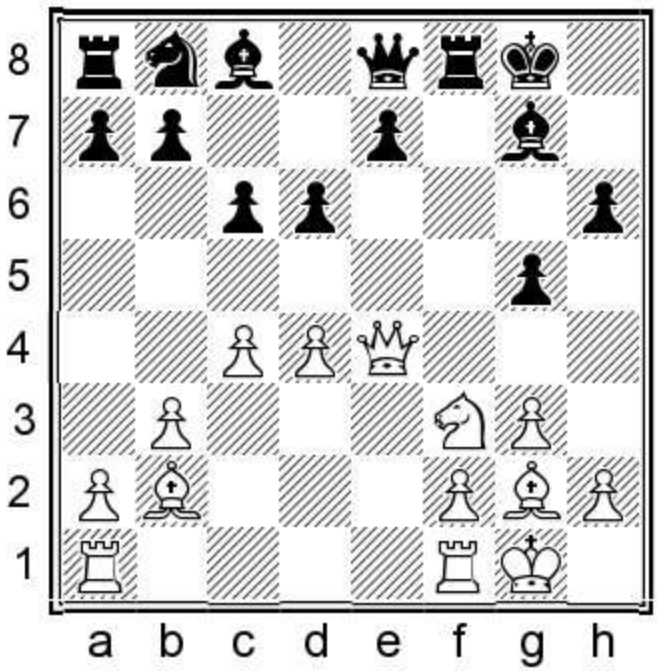
14.♖ae1N 14...♕f7 15.♘e4 ♕g6 16.♗a3+– Black's position collapses.

12.♘xe4 ♘xe4

In the event of 12...♕g6 13.♘xf6† ♕xf6 14.♖ae1 ♗f5 (14...♘a6 also leads to variation D1 of the next chapter) 15.♕d2 ♘a6 16.♖e3 we transpose to variation D1 of the next chapter – see page 154 for the continuation with 16...♖f7.

13.♕xe4

After carrying out the e2-e4 advance and opening the e-file, White tends to be positionally better due to the permanent weakness of Black's e-pawn. Here are some illustrative examples:



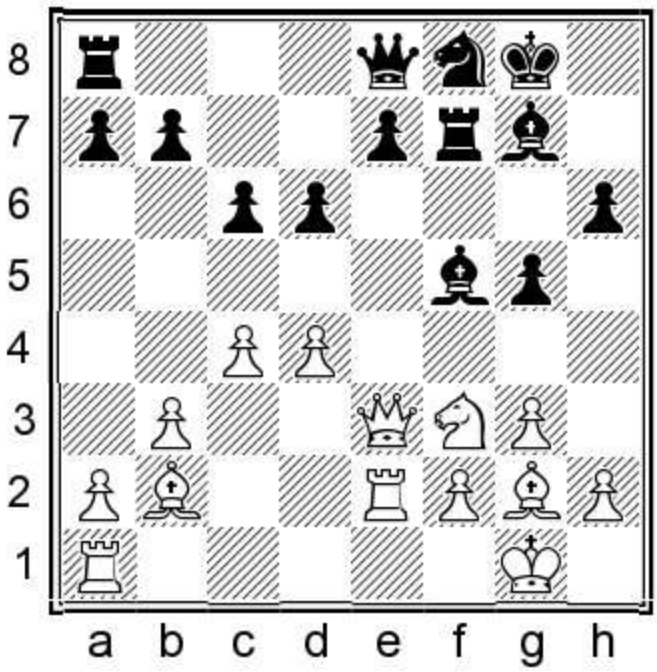
chesstouring.com

13...♗f5 14.♕e3 ♘d7

14...♘a6 15.♗c3 transposes to variation D22 of the next chapter – see page 158 for the continuation .

15.♖fe1 ♕g6

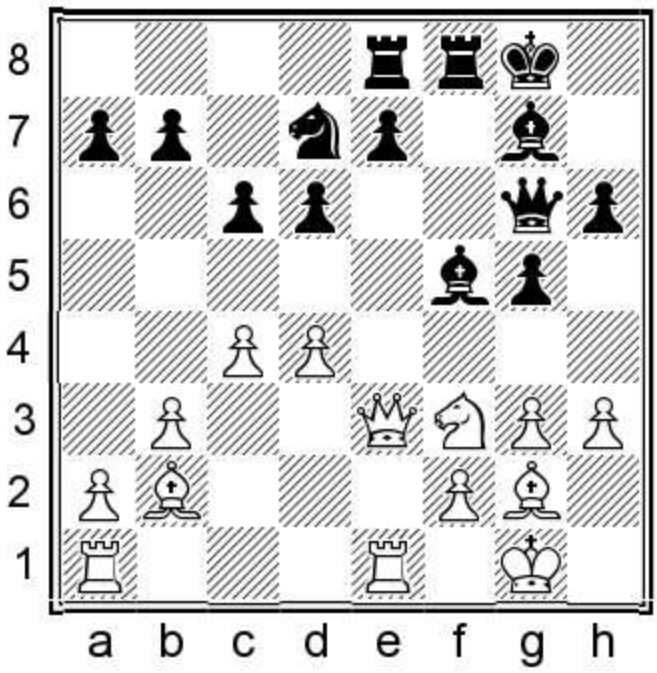
In the event of 15...♖f7 I suggest building up with: 16.♖e2N (For some reason, White has opted for 16.h3 in both games from this position, which seems unnecessary to me.) One illustrative line is: 16...♘f8



17.h4! g4 18.♘h2± White is clearly better.

16.h3 ♖ae8

Now in Garifulin – Pasko, Evpatoria 2006, White missed a strong idea:



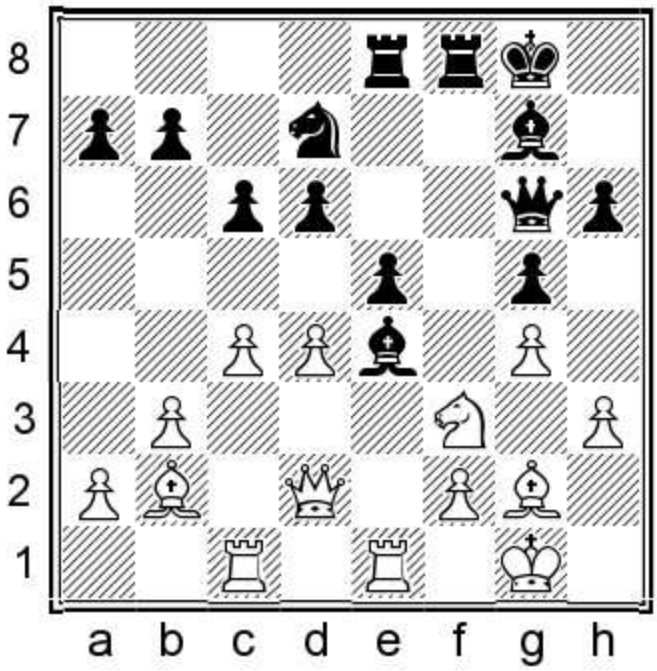
chesstouring.com

17.g4!N 17...♗c2 18.♖ac1

Black starts to experience problems, due to the bad position of his light-squared bishop.

18...e5 19.♕d2 ♗e4

Now White carries out an elegant tactical idea:



20.♘h4! gxh4 21.♗xe4 ♕f7

21...♕g5 22.♕xg5 hxg5 23.♗f5!± brings White a near-decisive advantage.

22.♗f5 exd4 23.♖xe8 ♖xe8 24.♗xd4±

Black is under serious pressure.

A4) 8...♘a6 9.c4

I still like this move. Moskalenko only considers 9.♖e1. Karolyi also fails to mention the text from the diagram position, although he does reach this line in a different chapter of his book.

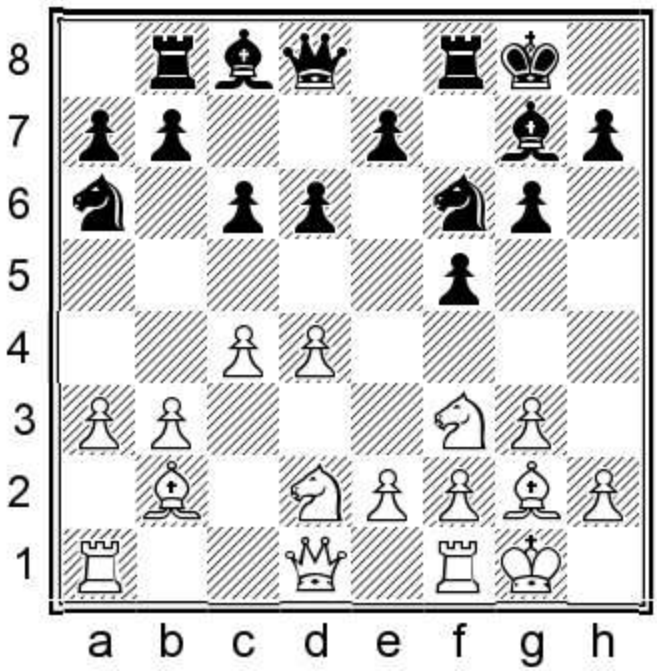
I noticed that **A41)** 9...♖b8 has been tried by some strong players, although **A42)** 9...e5 remains Black's most popular choice.

9...♕e8 10.♕c2 will be examined under variation D2 of the next chapter.

9...♘c7 10.♕c2 is similar to the note to Black's 10th move in variation A41 below, but the fact that White has not had to spend a tempo on a2-a3 should help him slightly.

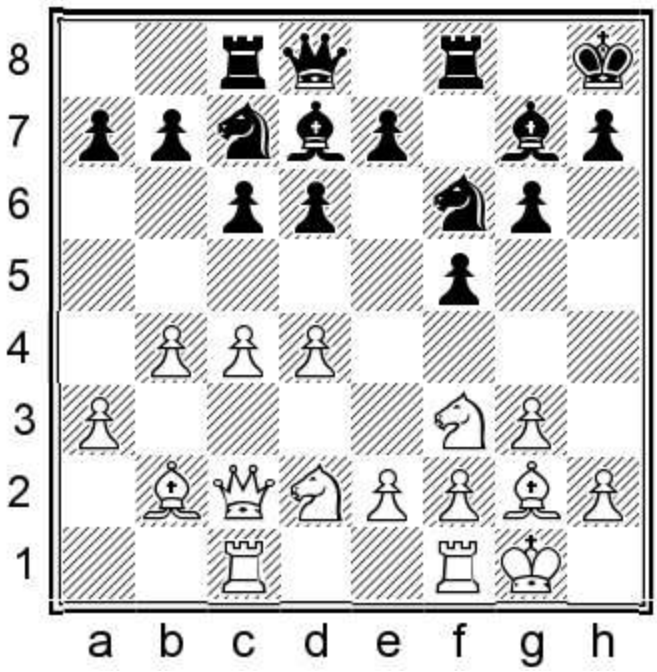
A41) 9...♖b8 10.a3

chesstouring.com



10...b5

Delaying this move does not seem attractive. For instance, 10...♘c7 11.♕c2 ♗d7 12.♖ac1 ♔h8 13.b4 ♖c8 occurred in Kantorik – Nicolini, Tatranska Lomnica 1998, and now I like:



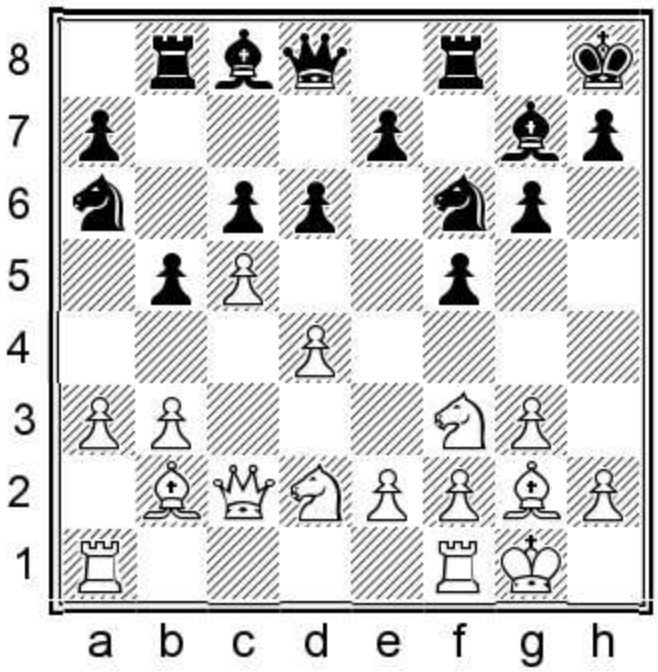
14.e3N 14...b5 15.♕d3!± With a pleasant advantage.

11.♕c2 ♗d7

11...♕e8 transposes to variation D32 of the next chapter on page 160.

11...♔h8 has yielded good results for Black but I found an interesting novelty: 12.c5!?N

chesstouring.com



12...♗d7 (12...d5?! 13.♘e5 ♗b7 14.b4 ♘d7 15.♘d3 is not at all nice for Black) 13.♘e1 ♘c7 14.♘d3 ♘cd5 15.e3± White has the more pleasant game.

12.e3

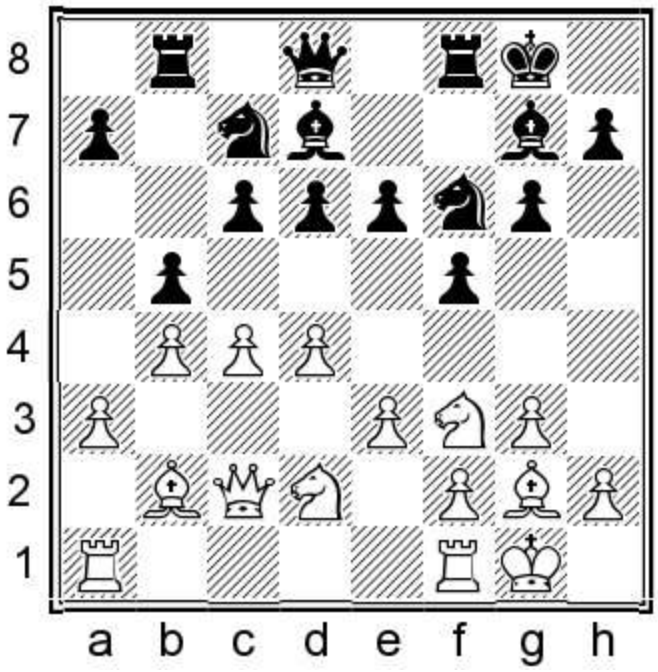
I only found one game from here, which we will follow for a few moves.

12...♘c7

12...c5 runs into the elegant idea of 13.b4! cxb4 14.c5♾ with a promising initiative.

13.b4 e6?!

In Harika – M. Muzychuk, Sochi 2015, White missed a powerful idea:

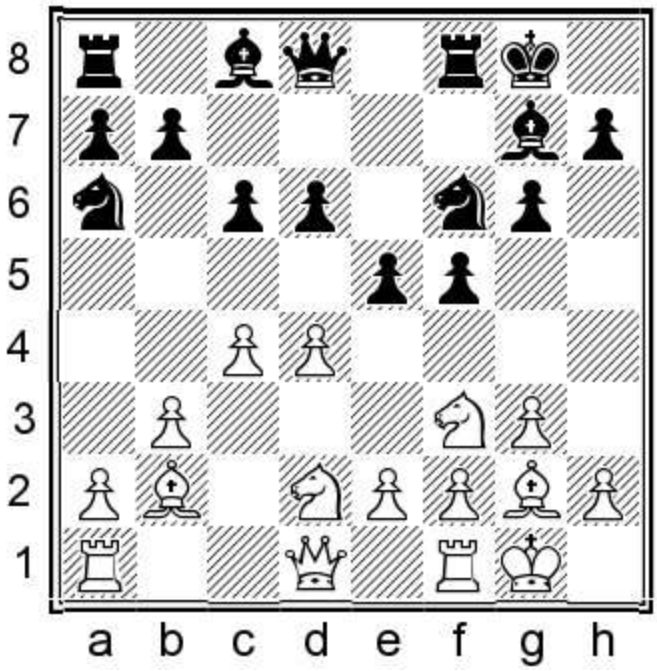


chesstouring.com

14.c5!N 14...d5 15.♘e5±

With a clear positional advantage.

A42) 9...e5



10.dxe5 ♘d7

As always, the alternative is:

10...♘g4

Here I favour a more ambitious approach than before.

11.♗a3!

In *GM 2* I gave 11.♕c2 ♘xe5 (11...dxe5? loses material for Black after 12.h3±) 12.♖ad1 ♕e7 13.a3 when White certainly has chances for a plus, but overall the play is quite double-edged.

11...♘xe5

We have transposed to the main line below.

11.♗a3!

Previously I recommended 11.♘d4 ♘xe5 12.a3 as being favourable to White, but the improvement 12...♕e7! led to unclear play after 13.b4 c5 14.♘b5 ♗e6∞ in Klauner – Schulz, corr. 2011.

11...♘xe5

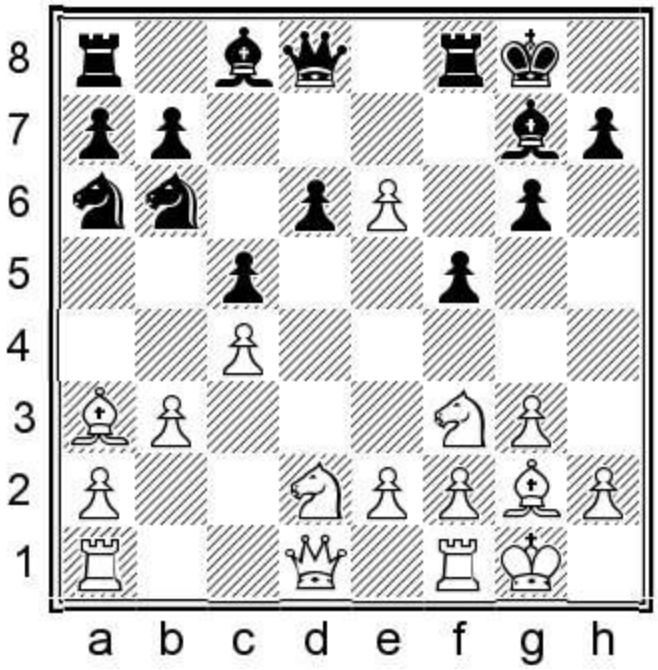
Black has tried two other options:

11...c5 12.e6 ♘b6

In the event of 12...♘e5N 13.♖c1 ♖b8 White has the nice idea of 14.♘b1! ♗xe6 15.♕d2± followed by ♘c3, when his positional advantage is obvious.

This position was reached in Korobov – Anton Guijarro, Poikovsky 2017, and here I found a useful

improvement:



13.♖c1N 13...♗xe6 14.♘e1!

With the following point:

14...d5 15.♘d3 ♖c8 16.♘b1!

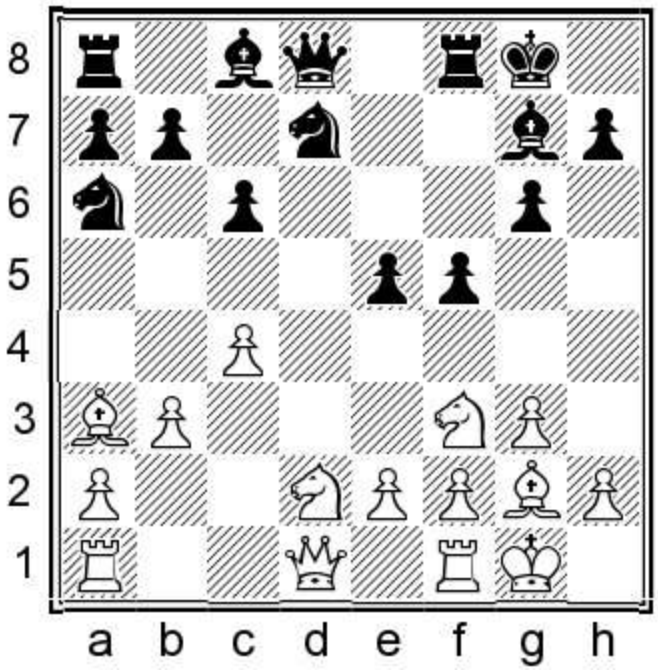
This surprising retreat offers White a solid edge. An important tactical point is:

16...dxc4 17.♗xb7 cxd3 18.♗xa6±

White wins material.

11...dxe5

This attempt to seize the initiative with an sacrifice exchange falls short.



12.♗xf8 ♘xf8

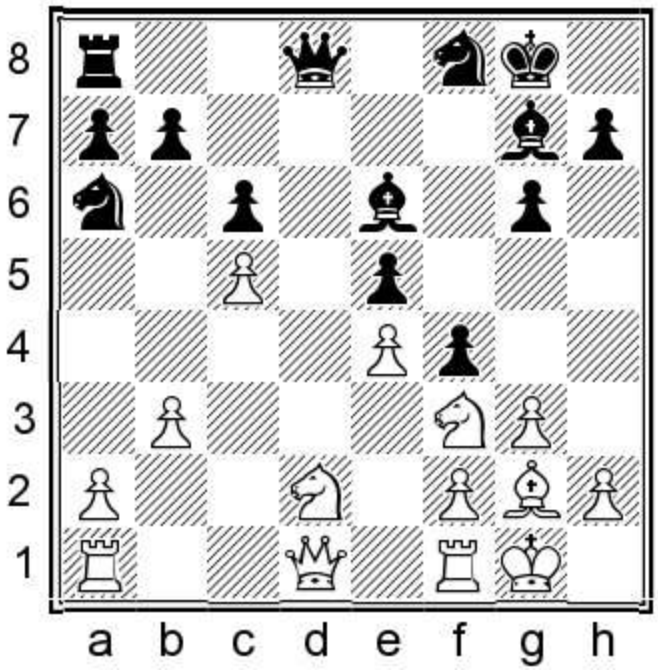
chesstouring.com

Black tried 12...♕xf8 13.e4 ♘dc5 in Schmitz – E. Ragozin, Germany 1999, and now 14.a3!N would have been strong. The idea is obviously to follow up with b3-b4, and if 14...fxe4 15.♘g5 White is much better.

13.e4 f4 14.c5! ♗e6

14...♘xc5N can be met by 15.b4 ♘a6 16.♘c4 with a clear plus.

Now in Alexandrova – E. Ragozin, Alushta 2000, White should have played:



15.♖c1N 15...♕e7 16.♕c2 ♘b4 17.♕b1 ♖d8 18.♖c3!

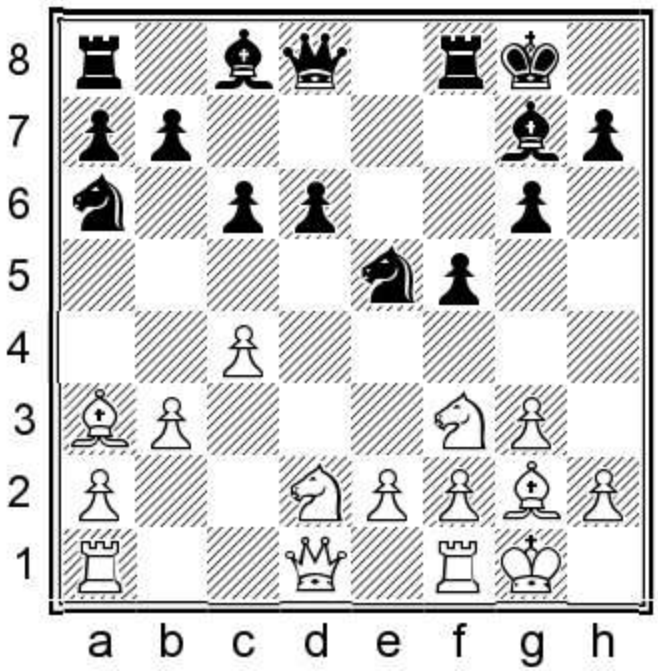
Covering the d3-square.

18...g5 19.♖d1±

Black does not have enough for the sacrificed material.

This position has been reached in several games, some of which arrived here via the 10...♘g4 move order. Karolyi also recommends Black's position in his recent book. I found quite an important novelty:

chesstouring.com



12.b4!N

12.♘xe5 ♗xe5 13.♘f3 ♗xa1 14.♕xa1⩲ seems like a tempting exchange sacrifice but I rejected it in *GM 2* as being too speculative. Indeed, after 14...♘c5 White certainly has compensation but I am not convinced that he can claim any objective advantage.

12...♘xf3†

This must be the critical reply.

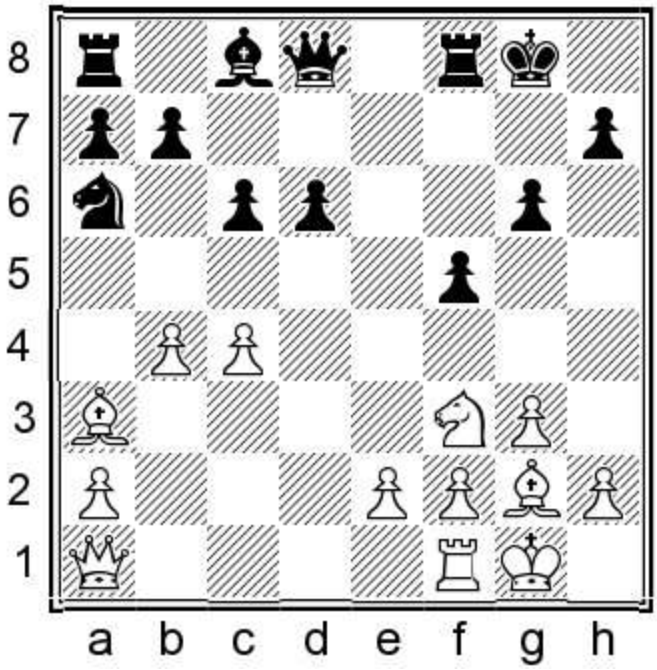
12...♕e7 13.♖b1± leads to a pleasant game for White.

After 12...♘c7 13.b5! White's initiative plays itself, for example: 13...cxb5 14.♘xe5 ♗xe5 15.♖b1 ♗e6 16.♘f3↑ White has excellent prospects.

13.♘xf3 ♗xa1 14.♕xa1

The position resembles the exchange sacrifice noted at move 12, except that here White has a pawn on b4 instead of b3. This significantly improves White's prospects, as Black will not be able to activate his knight via c5-e4. Play might continue:

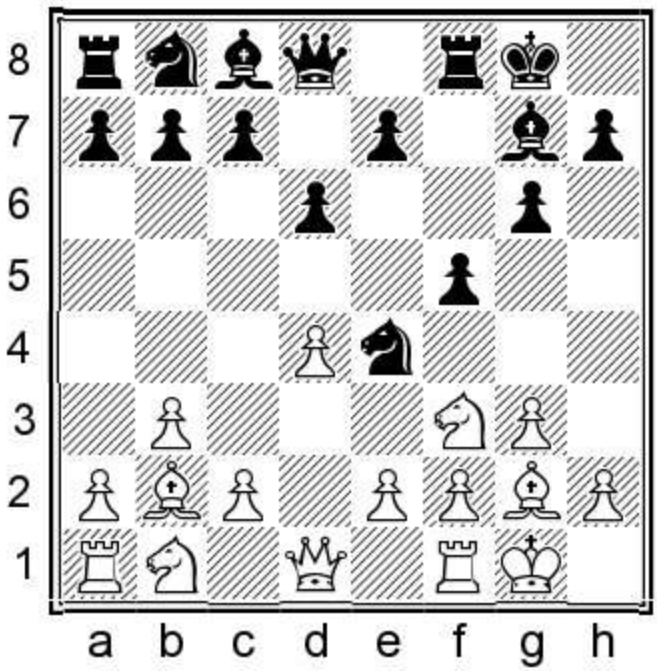
chesstouring.com



14...♕e7 15.♖d1↑

White has more than enough play for the exchange.

B) 7...♘e4



This is another serious option which has been debated in a lot of games since *GM 2* was published.

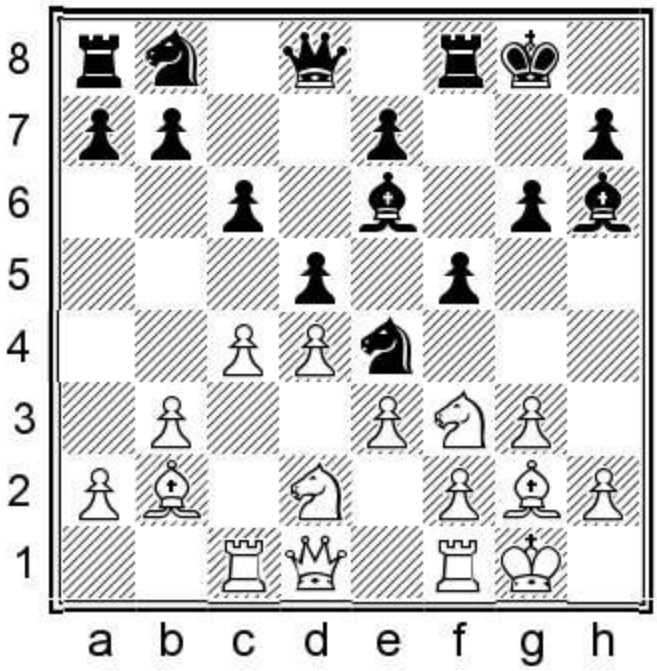
8.♘bd2

Black's most important options are **B1)** 8...c5, **B2)** 8...♘xd2 and **B3)** 8...♘c6.

8...d5 is a playable but rather odd choice, losing a tempo to reach a Stonewall set-up. White should continue 9.c4 c6 10.♖c1 with promising play, for instance: 10...♗h6 (10...♗e6 11.e3 ♔h8 12.a3 ♘d7

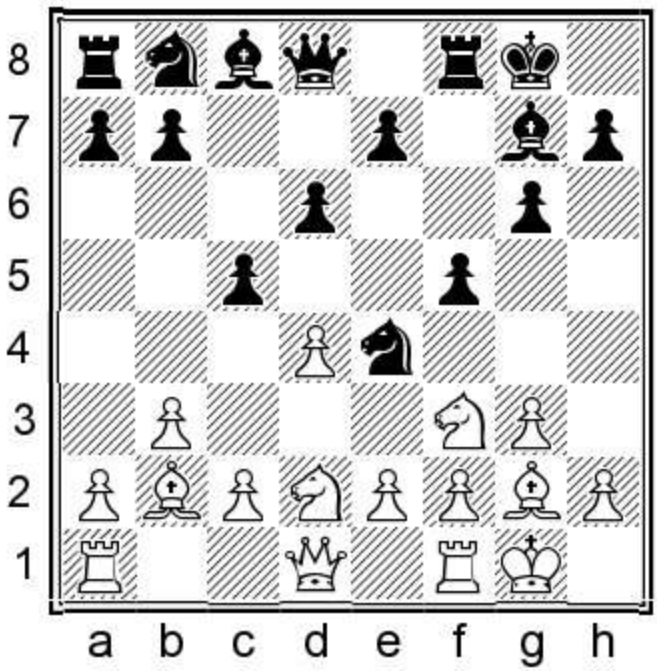
chessbrains.com

13.♘e1± also gave White a pleasant game in Sharavdorj – Byambaa, Ulaanbaatar 2011) 11.e3 ♗e6 This was Bareev – Palatnik, Voronezh 1987, and now I like:



12.♕c2N An illustrative line is 12...♘a6 13.a3 ♖c8 14.♘e5 ♗g7 15.♘d3 when White has significantly improved his position, while Black has failed to obtain any real play.

B1) 8...c5



This resembles variation B of the previous chapter. There are some minor differences, but White still has fine prospects.

9.♕c1!

chesstouring.com

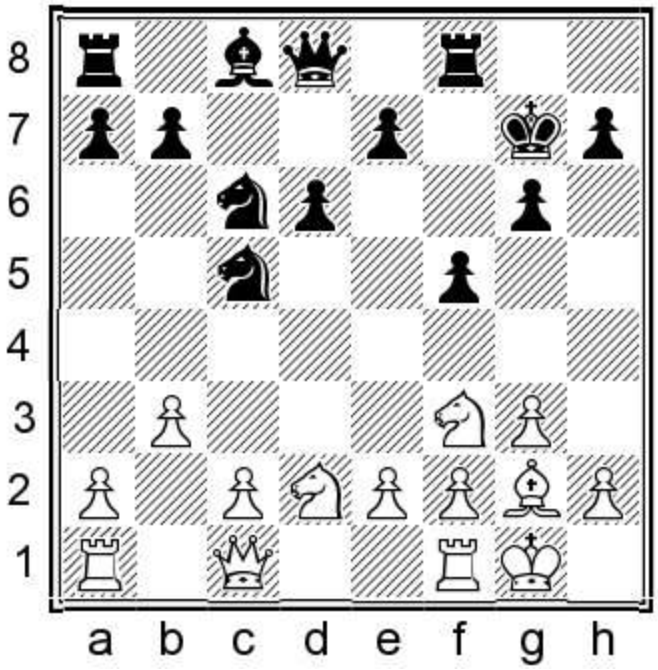
By defending his dark-squared bishop, White immediately neutralizes Black's pressure on the long diagonal.

9...♘xd2

I examined three alternatives:

9...cxd4 has not been tested, probably because of 10.♘xe4! fxe4 11.♘xd4 d5 12.c4 when Black's centre comes under fire.

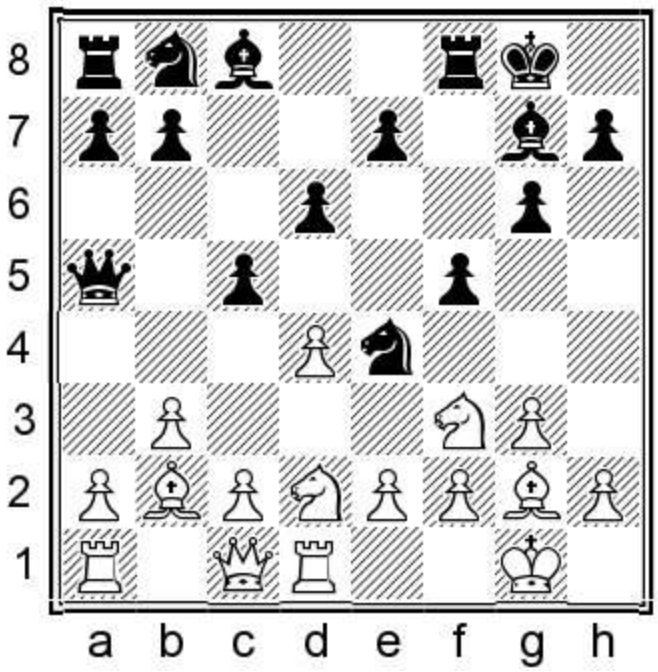
9...♘c6 is well met by: 10.dxc5!N (I have no doubt that 10.d5, as played in Fries – Eisenbeiser, Germany 2014, also assures White of the better game, but I find the text move even more convincing) 10...♘xc5 11.♗xg7 ♔xg7



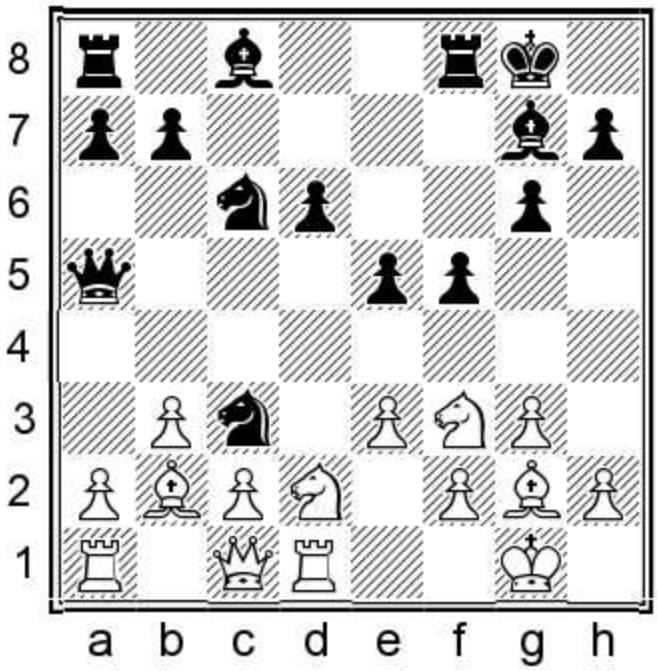
12.b4! An important follow-up. 12...♘d7 13.♖d1± White has a nice positional advantage.

Finally, after 9...♕a5 10.♖d1! Black has managed to hold two draws, but the statistics alone are quite misleading:

chesstouring.com



10...cxd4 (after 10...♘xd2 11.♖xd2 ♘d7 12.c4 ♘f6 13.♖d1 ♗d7 14.dxc5 ♕xc5 15.♘e1± White obtained a pleasant advantage in Garscha – Pereverzev, corr. 2010) 11.♘xd4 e5 12.♘4f3 ♘c6 13.e3 ♘c3

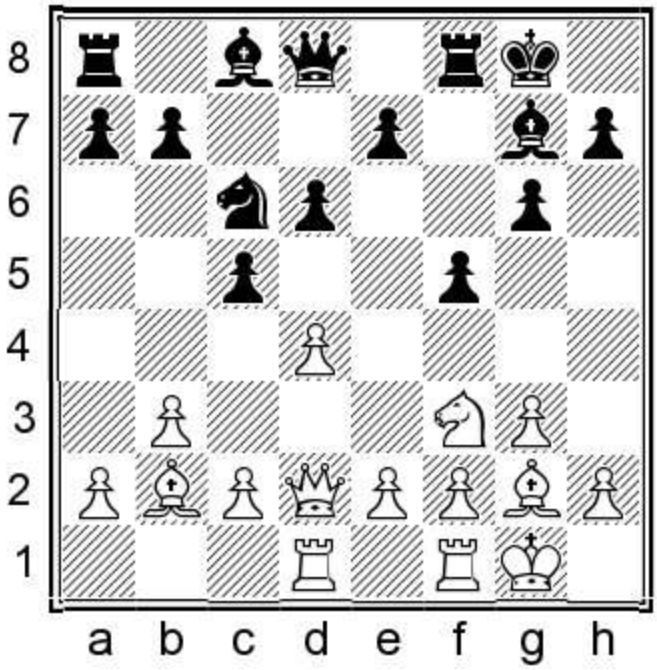


14.♘c4 ♘e2† 15.♔f1 ♘xc1 16.♘xa5 ♘xa5 17.♖axc1± White's advantage was obvious in Querci – Andersen, corr. 2010.

10.♕xd2 ♘c6 11.♖ad1!

This is another of my improvements from *GM 2* which has since been put into practice.

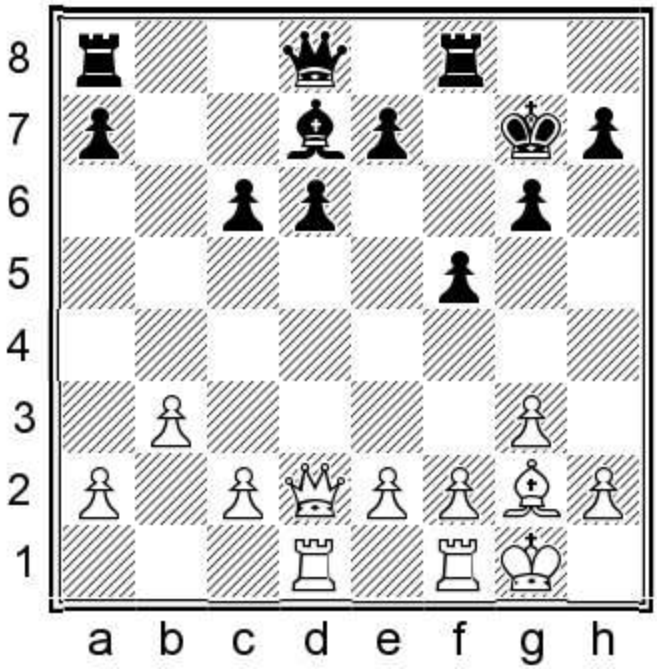
chesstouring.com



11...cxd4 12.♘xd4 ♗d7 13.♘xc6!?

White could have kept a solid positional advantage with any normal move, but in the game he spotted a tactical opportunity.

13...bxc6 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7

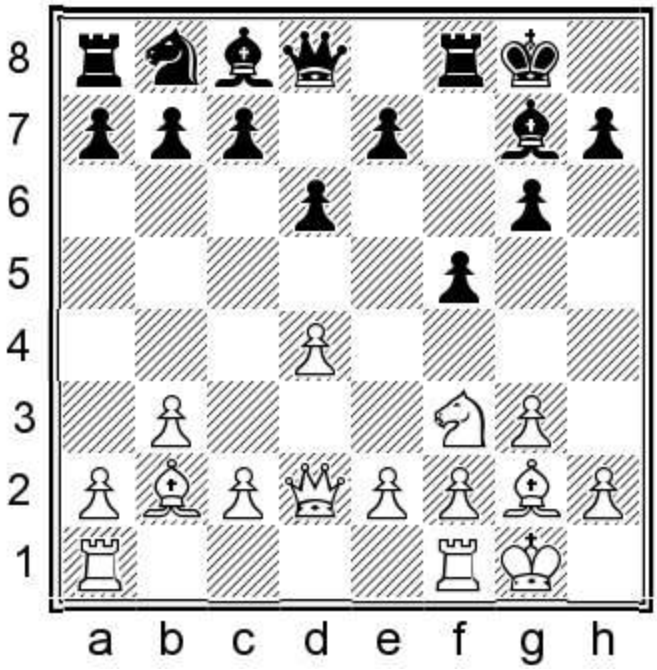


15.♗xc6! ♗xc6 16.♕c3† ♖f6 17.♕xc6 ♖c8 18.♕a6 ♖xc2 19.♕xa7 ♖xe2 20.♖fe1±

Despite the level material, White had the clearly better endgame thanks to his strong passed pawns in Hedman – Wieweg, Sweden 2017.

chesstouring.com

B2) 8...♘xd2 9.♕xd2



Now Black can choose between **B21)** 9...♘d7 and **B22)** 9...♘c6.

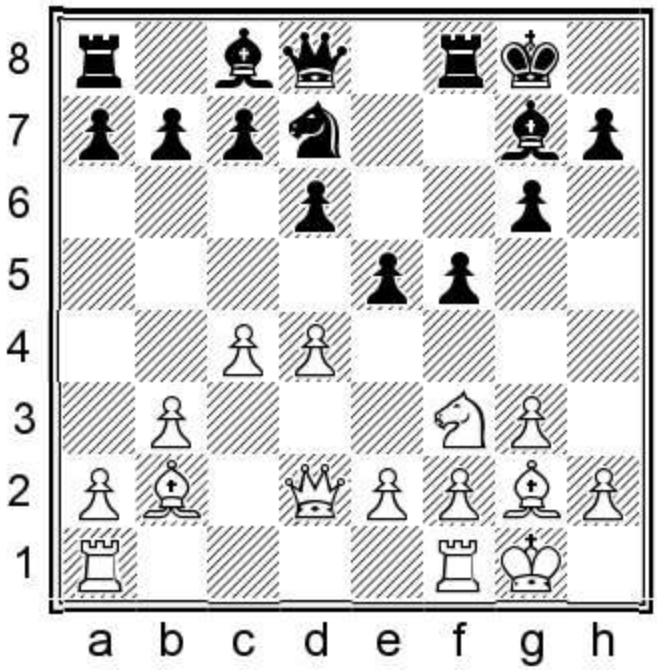
B21) 9...♘d7

This is nowhere near as popular as the line below, but bringing the knight to f6 is still pretty logical.

10.c4 ♘f6

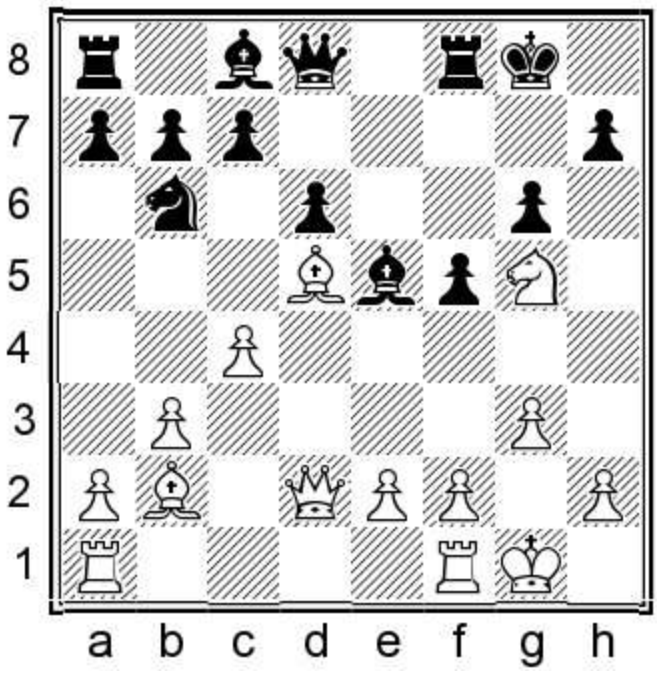
I checked two other moves:

10...e5? is an unfortunate choice. In Claus – Haase, Kassel 2000, White missed an opportunity to seize a serious advantage:



chesstouring.com

11.♘g5!N 11...♘b6 12.dxe5 ♗xe5 (or 12...dxe5 13.♕xd8 ♖xd8 14.♖ad1 ♗f6 15.f4!±) 13.♗d5†!



The key move. Unexpectedly, Black is unable to avoid material losses, since 13...♔g7 (13...♔h8 14.♘f7†+−) runs into 14.♗xb7! and White wins.

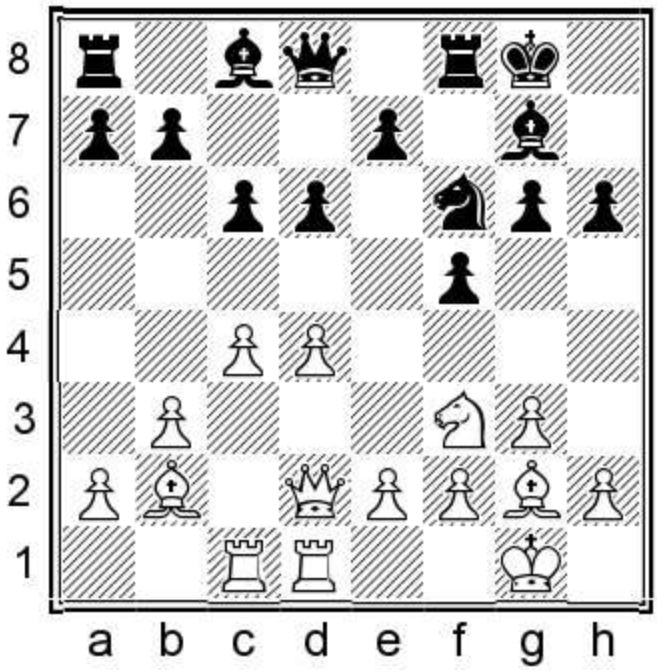
10...c6

Here I suggest a change of direction with:

11.♖fd1

11.♘g5 ♘f6 12.d5 was my previous suggestion but Black subsequently improved with 12...♕e8! 13.♘h3 h6∞ in Tsekouras – Krongraf, corr. 2013.

11...♘f6 12.♖ac1 h6



13.e3

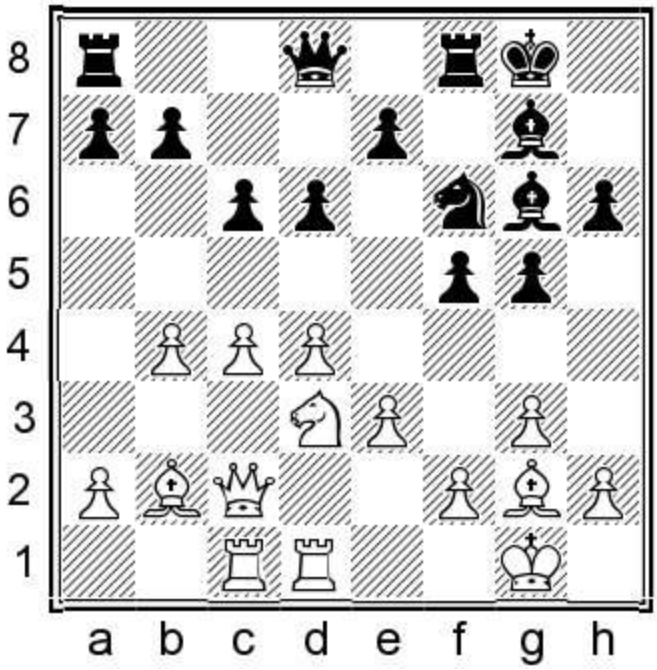
chesstouring.com

13.♘e1N 13...g5 14.♘d3 looks also good for White.

13...♗d7 14.♘e1 g5 15.♘d3

We have seen this thematic regrouping many times; White's knight is optimally placed on d3, while the light-squared bishop is more active.

15...♗e8 16.♕c2 ♗g6 17.b4±



White has a pleasant edge, which increased after Black's inaccuracy

17...f4? 18.exf4 gxf4 19.♕b3!

Black suffered from serious weaknesses and his position soon fell apart in Korobov – Murey, Jerusalem 2015.

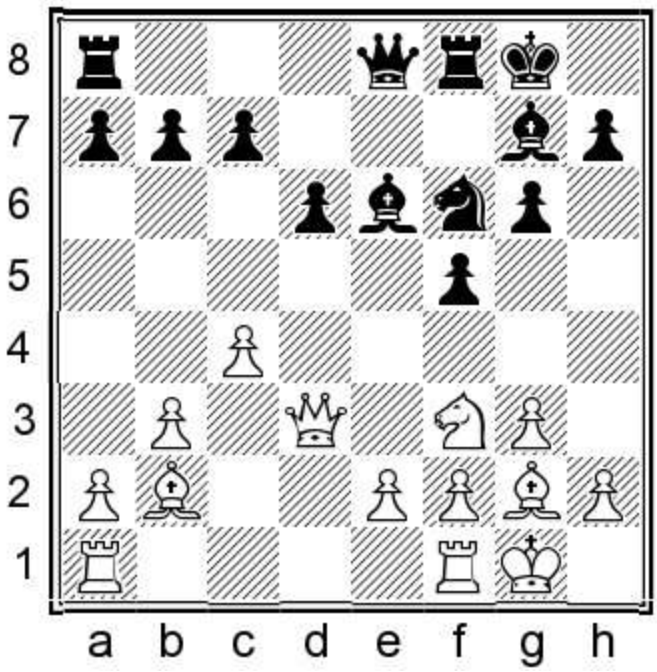
11.d5

White intends to play ♘d4 with a clamp, so Black has to do something.

11...♘e4

Another good example continued 11...♕e8 12.♕d3 e5 13.dxe6 ♗xe6 and now in Lin Ta – Ang, Singapore 1987, White should have played:

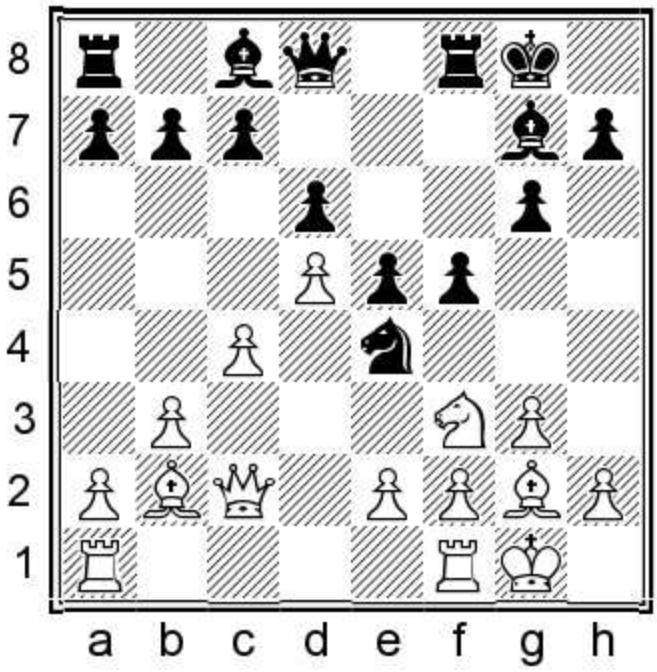
chesstouring.com



14.♘g5!N 14...♗c8 15.♖ad1 h6 16.♘h3 g5 17.f4 White is better for sure.

12.♕c2 e5

12...♗xb2 13.♕xb2 e5 14.dxe6 is the same thing.



13.dxe6 ♗xb2 14.♕xb2 ♗xe6 15.♘d2!

The knight swap enables White to step up the pressure against Black's queenside.

15...♘xd2 16.♕xd2 ♕c8

16...♖b8? lost a pawn after 17.♕e3! ♕e7 18.♕xa7 in Medic – Boric, Porec 1998.

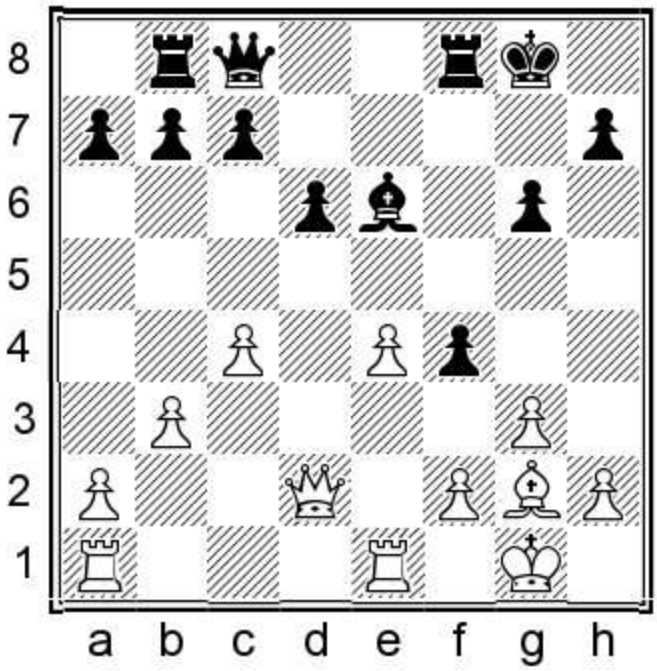
chesstouring.com

17.♖fe1!

Now the e2-e4 advance will come with a lot of force.

17...♖b8 18.e4 f4

We have been following Zilberman – Gonzalez Acosta, Calvia (ol) 2004. The most precise continuation, which I overlooked in *GM 2*, would have been:



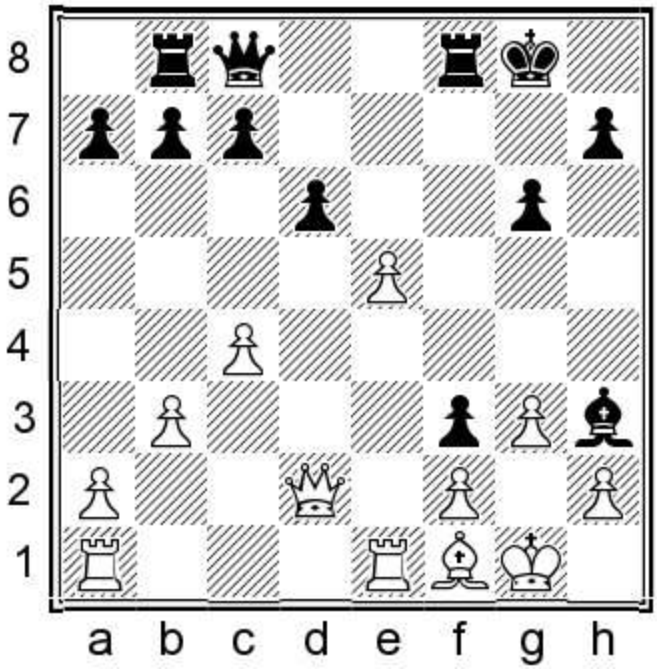
19.e5!N 19...f3 20.♗f1

Black will not be able to defend the weak pawns on d6 and f3. An important point is:

20...♗h3?

This may appear scary at first glance, but it is not a real threat due to:

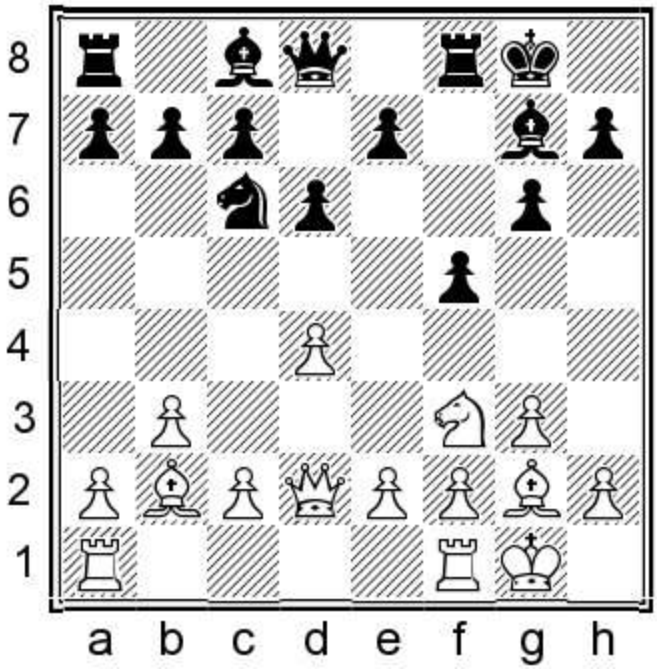
chesstouring.com



21.exd6! ♗xf1 22.d7

With a winning advantage.

B22) 9...♘c6



10.♘e1!

It is important to take measures against the ...e5 advance.

10...♕e8

10...e5?!

This has been tried by some strong players but White is well placed to deal with it.

chesstouring.com

11.♗xc6!

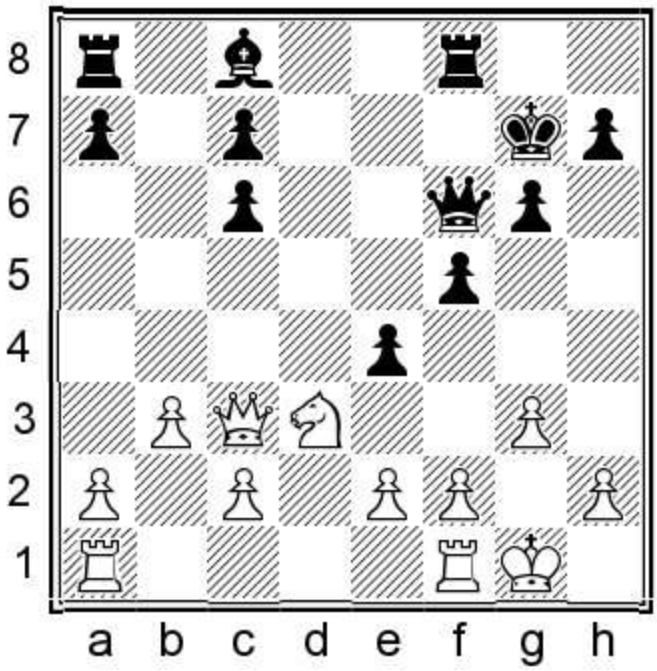
White can also throw in a check on d5, but I don't see that it makes any difference.

11...bxc6 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♘d3 e4

Also after 13...♕e7 14.♕c3! Black is in trouble.

14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.♕c3† ♕f6

This position has been reached in four games but White missed the strongest continuation in all of them.



16.♘e5!N

16.♕xf6† ♔xf6 17.♘c5 ♖d8 18.♖fd1 ♖d5! gives Black decent chances to hold.

16...♗e6

The main tactical point is that 16...♖e8 runs into 17.♕xc6 and White wins a pawn.

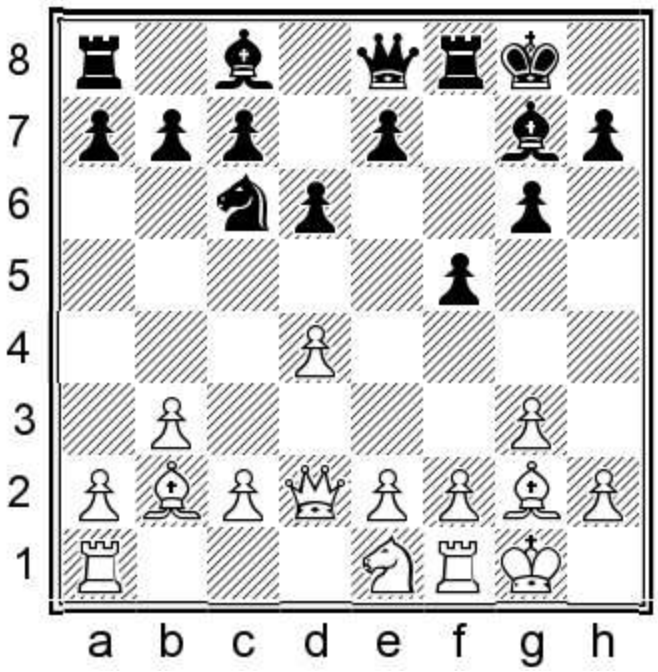
17.f4!

A small refinement on my previous analysis. The idea is to stop any potential counterplay connected with the ...f4 advance.

17...exf3 18.exf3±

With a clear positional advantage.

chesstouring.com



11.f4!

In *ChessBase Magazine* 66, Stohl correctly pointed out that 11.e4 fxe4 12.♗xe4 e5 13.dxe5 ♗xe5! is harmless for Black, and White has continued to avoid playing in this way.

11...e5

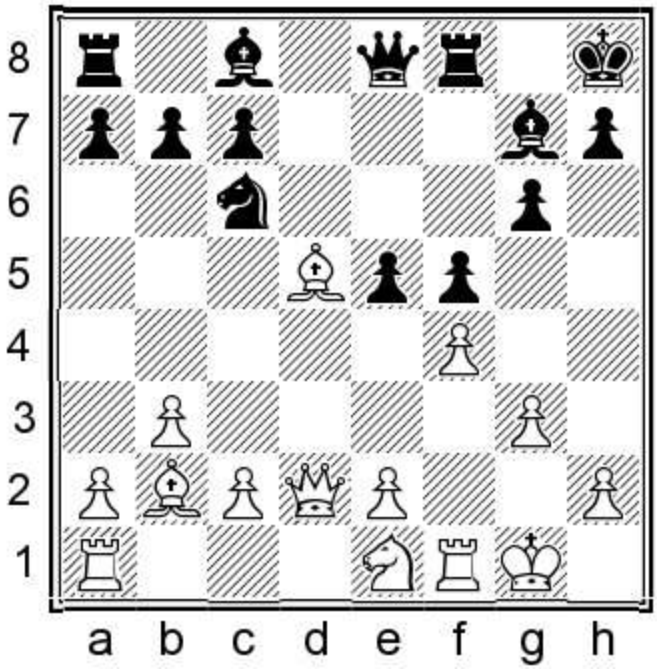
11...♗d7 was played in Cardon – Nijboer, Netherlands 2004. Thanks to White's previous move, there is no longer any reason to refrain from 12.e4!N. For instance, 12...fxe4 13.♗xe4 ♗h3 14.♖f2± and White is clearly better.

12.♗d5†!

This intermediate check is an important nuance.

12...♔h8 13.dxe5 dxe5

chesstouring.com

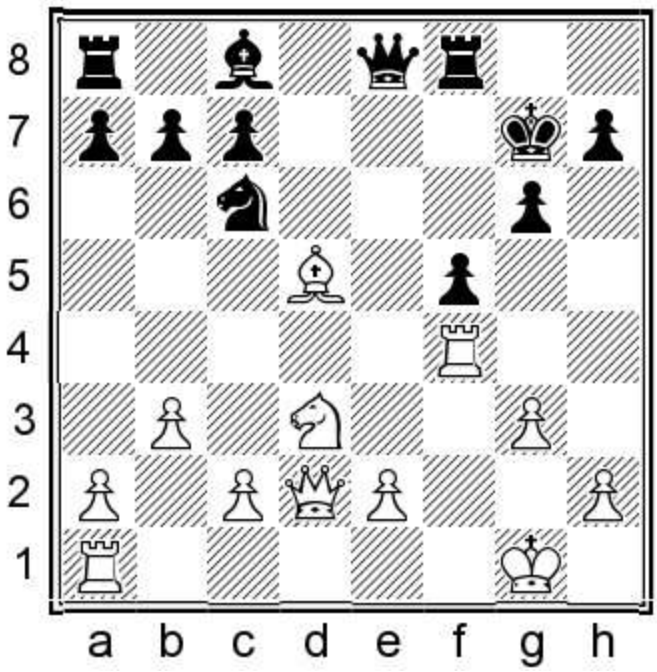


14.♘d3 exf4

Black is not helped by 14...e4 15.♗xg7† ♔xg7 16.♕c3† ♖f6 17.♘c5! and White dominates.

15.♗xg7† ♔xg7 16.♖xf4!

My recommendation from *GM 2* has been played in three games so far.



16...♕d8

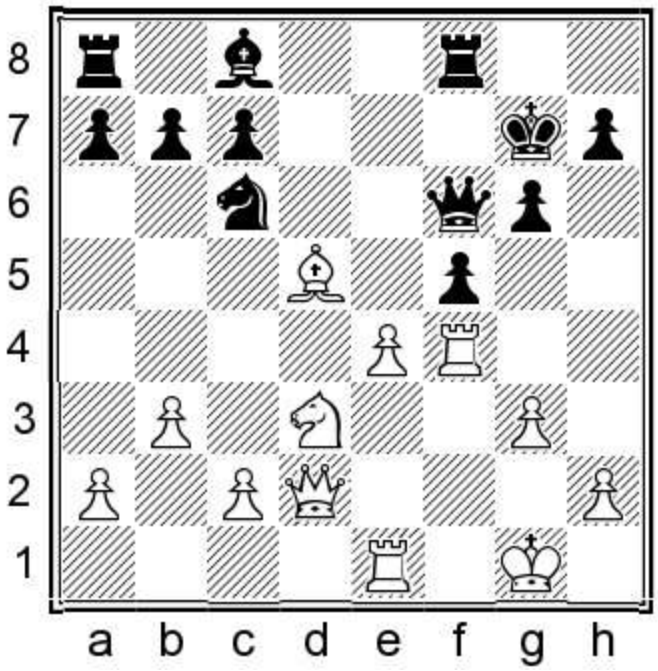
16...♗e6 led to an eventual draw in Lindgren – Lindberg, Sweden 2012, but at this point 17.e4!N would have given White a huge advantage.

16...♕e7 occurred in Berry – Zeidler, England 2011. White should have continued with the strategy of

chesstouring.com

opening up the centre: 17.e4!N Black has nothing better than 17...♕f6, transposing to the main line below.

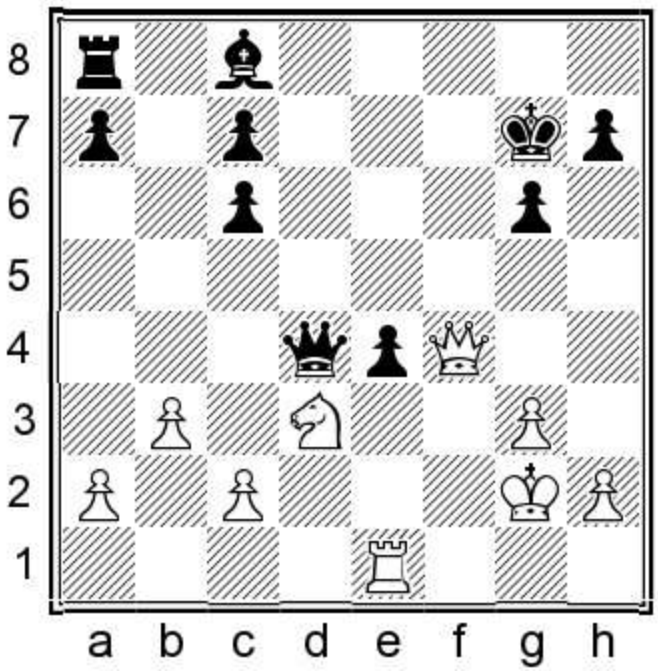
17.e4 ♕f6 18.♖e1



18...♕d4†

18...♘e7 19.♖f2! prevents a possible check on b6, and after 19...♘xd5 20.exd5± White is much better.

19.♔g2 fxe4 20.♗xc6 ♖xf4 21.♕xf4 bxc6



22.♖xe4

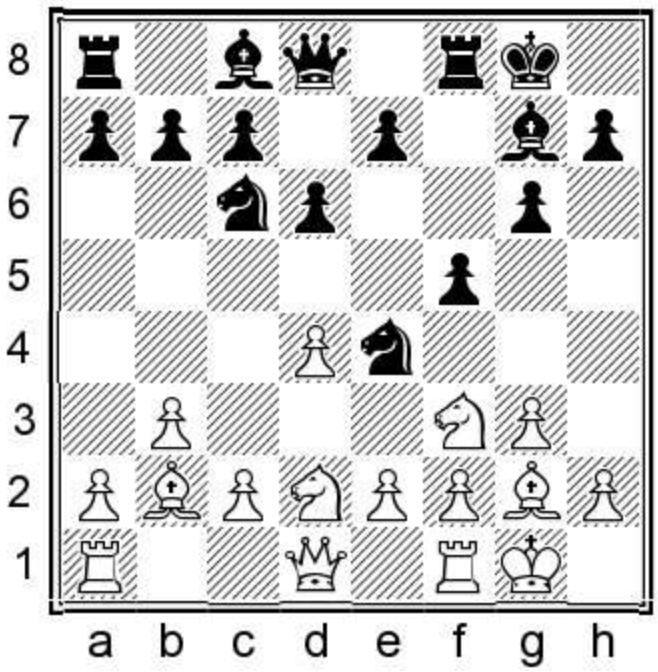
22.♕xe4N 22...♕xe4† 23.♖xe4± is similar.

chesstouring.com

22...♕d6 23.g4 ♕xf4 24.♖xf4 ♗e6 25.♖a4±

White successfully converted his endgame advantage in Shimanov – T. Petrosian, Dubai 2015.

B3) 8...♘c6



9.♘e1

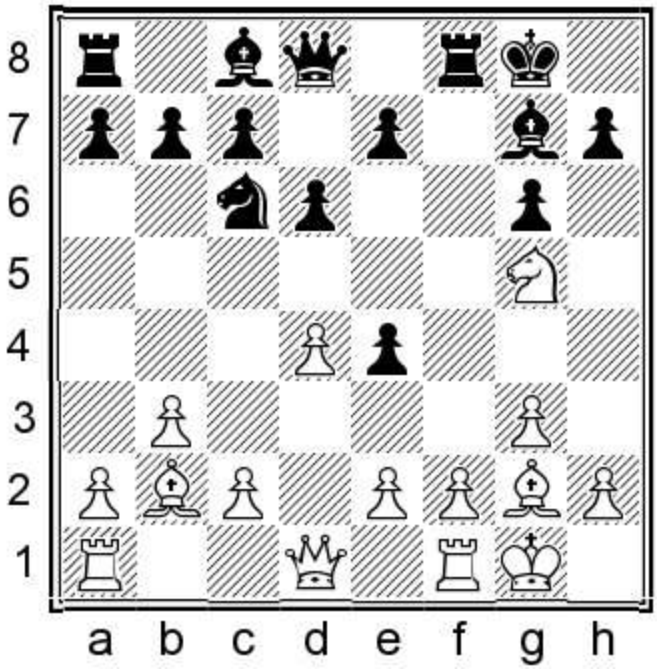
I will keep this as my main recommendation.

However, I would also like to mention a much rarer yet rather interesting alternative:

9.♘xe4!? fxe4 10.♘g5

10.♘e1 d5 11.c4 has been played a few times; for instance, after 11...dxc4 12.e3 White obtained the better chances in Caruana – Ivanchuk, Reggio Emilia 2010. However, Black later improved with 11...♗f5! and didn't experience any problems in L'Ami – Pruijssers, Netherlands 2014.

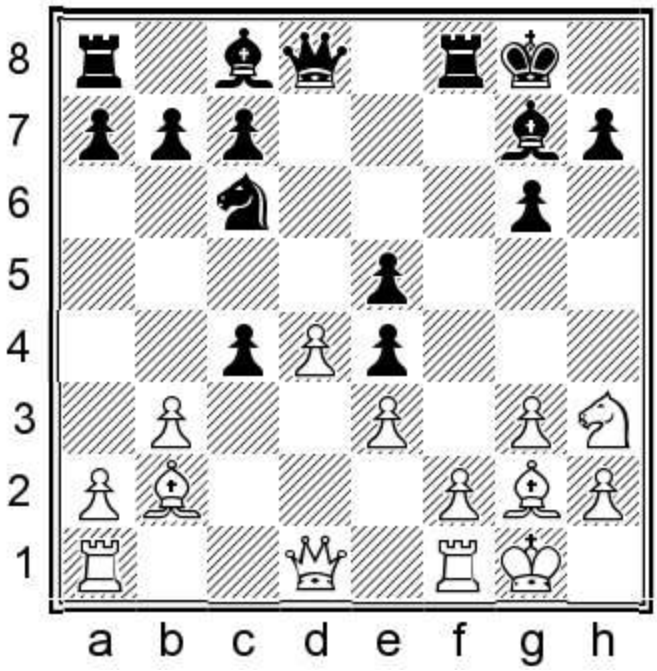
chesstouring.com



10...d5 11.c4 e6 12.♘h3 dxc4 13.e3

GM Leonid Milov has reached this position twice with Black. In the second game, he opted for: 13...e5

13...cxb3 14.♕xb3 ♕d5 was his choice two years earlier in Stips – L. Milov, Fuerth 2014. It is understandable that he wasn't satisfied with the position he reached, since after 15.♖fc1!N⩱ White compensation looks fantastic; moreover, the e4-pawn will soon fall.



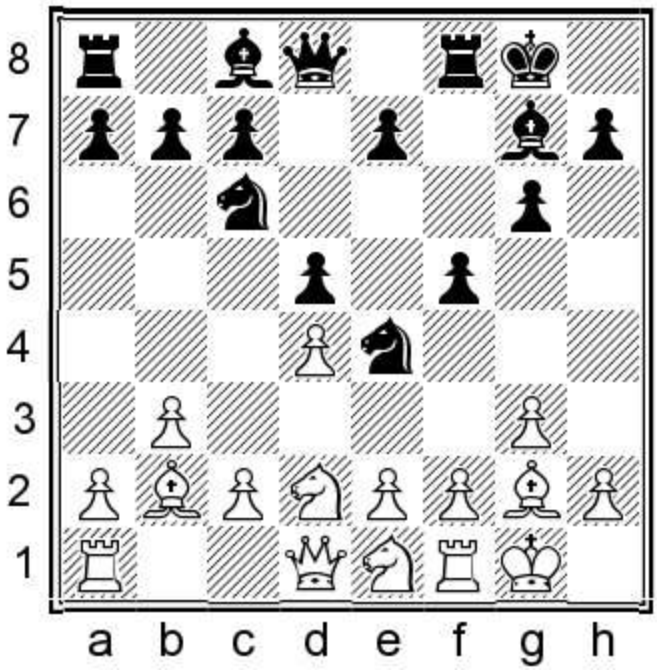
14.♗a3! exd4 15.♗xf8 ♕xf8 16.bxc4

A complex position had been reached in Legde – L. Milov, Frankfurt 2016, but I am not convinced that Black has full compensation for the exchange.

Returning to our main line, Black's main options are **B31)** 9...d5 and **B32)** 9...♘g5. chesstouring.com

9...♘xd2 10.♕xd2 transposes to variation B22 above.

B31) 9...d5

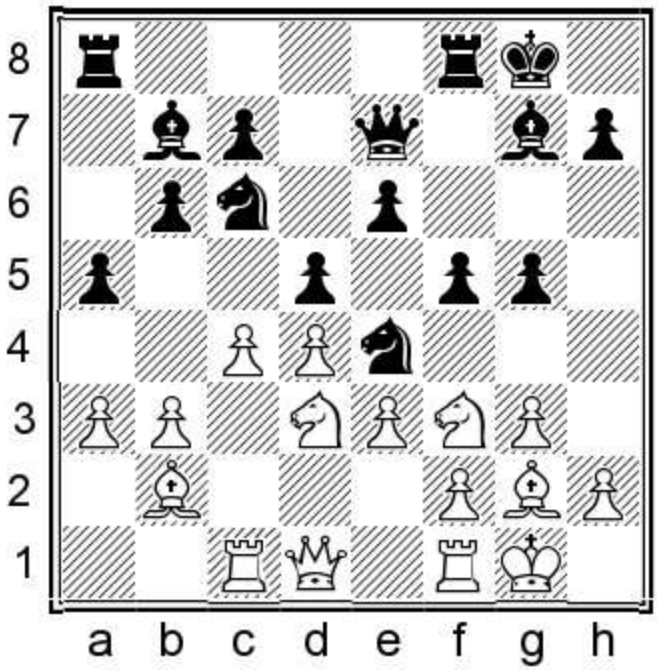


Once again, we see another variant of the Stonewall plan.

10.♘df3 f4

Black tries to play actively – but perhaps too actively for his own good.

10...b6 is safer although Black will have a hard time finding active counterplay, for instance: 11.♘d3 e6 12.e3 a5 13.c4 ♗b7 14.♖c1 ♕e7 15.a3 g5

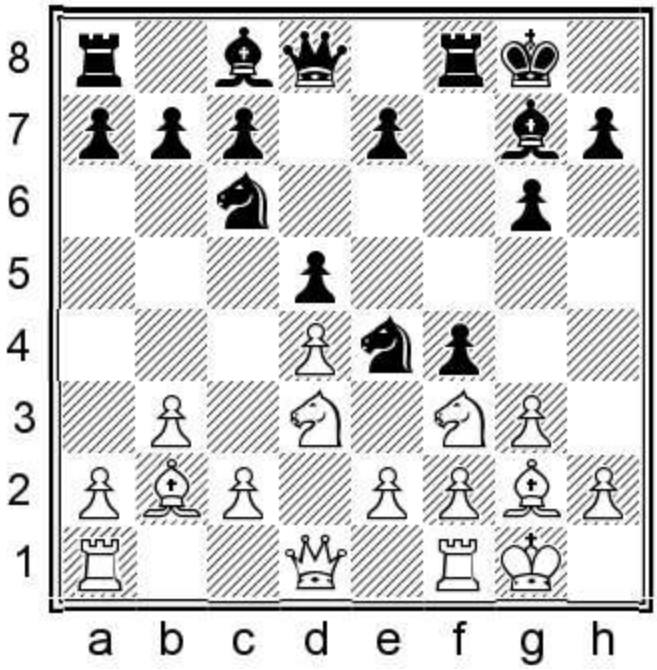


chesstouring.com

16.cxd5 exd5 17.♕c2 g4 18.♘fe1 ♖ac8 19.♘f4 ♘d8 20.♘ed3± Amanov – Steinfl, Las Vegas 2010.

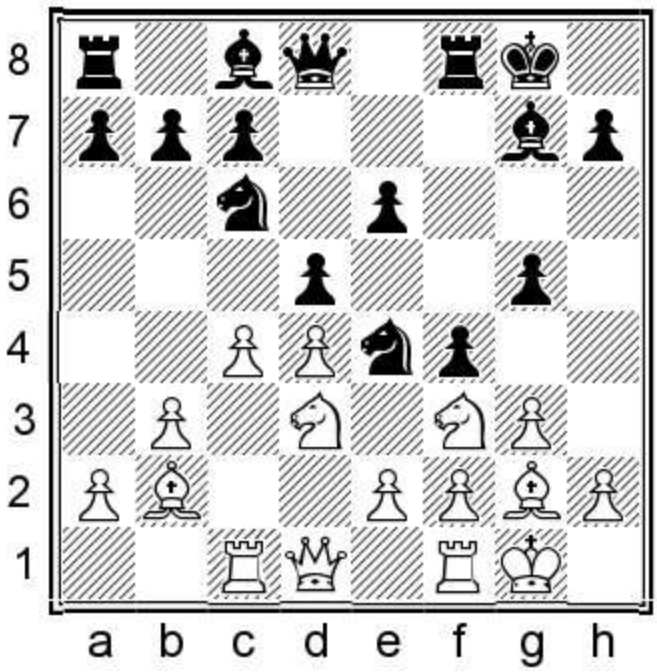
11.♘d3

Another well-played game continued 11.gxf4!? ♖xf4 12.♘d3 ♖f5 13.c4 e6 14.e3 a5 15.♖c1 ♕e7 16.♘fe5 ♘xe5 17.♘xe5 c6 18.f4 ♘d6 19.♗a3 ♗f8 20.♕c2 a4 21.♗xd6 ♕xd6 22.♗h3 ♖f6 23.bxa4± and Black suffered in Shulman – P. Wang, Las Vegas 2010.



11...fxg3

Another good example continued: 11...g5 12.c4 e6 13.♖c1 As often happens, Black's kingside advances brought him no dividends and only weakened his position on the kingside. White proved his advantage in the following game:

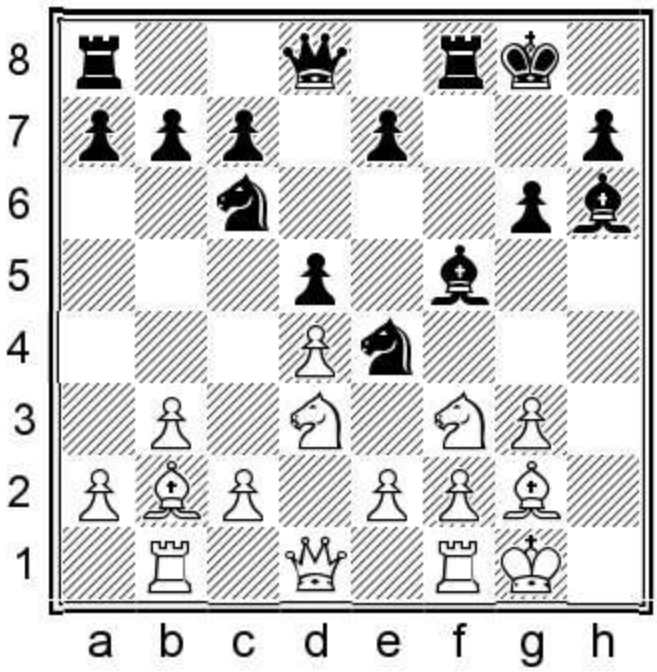


13...♘e7 14.♘d2 ♘d6 15.e3 fxe3 16.fxe3 ♘df5 17.♕e2± Lputian – M. Gurevich, Jurmala 1983.

chesstouring.com

12.hxg3 ♗f5 13.♖c1 ♗h6 14.♖b1

Certainly White has no intention of allowing 14.e3 ♗g4.



14...♗g7N

14...♗e6?! allowed White to seize the initiative with 15.♘c5! ♘xc5 16.dxc5 ♗f5 17.b4 ♗g7 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.b5 with a clear advantage in Cramling – Ziska, Calvia 2006.

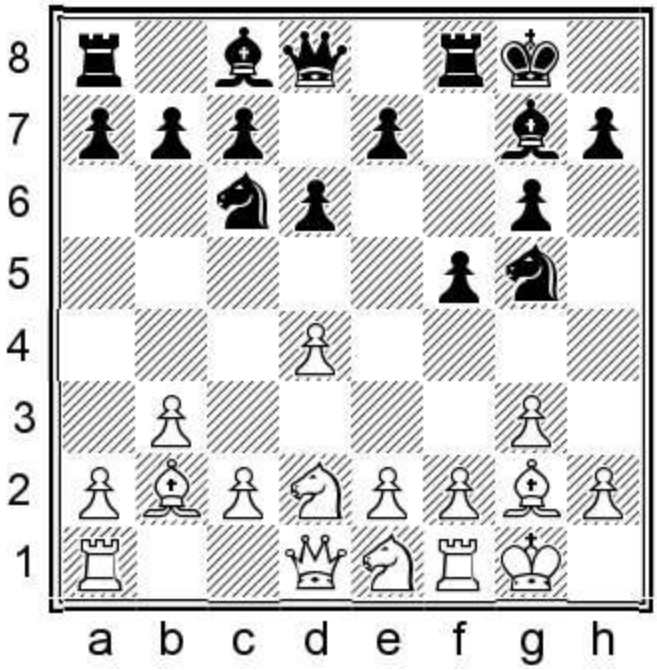
The text move is a better try but Black still falls well short of equality. For example:

15.c4 e6 16.♖c1±

White's position is clearly preferable.

B32) 9...♘g5

chesstouring.com

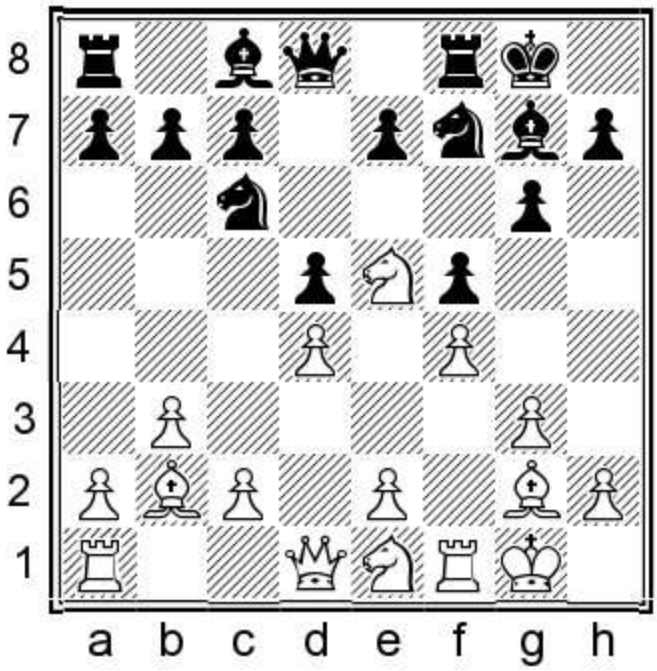


This move was unknown when *GM 2* was published, but has since become a main line with more than thirty games on the database, more than half of which have involved players rated over 2500 on Black's side. I believe White should drive the knight away and then improve his pieces.

10.f4 ♘f7 11.♘c4 e6

This is Black's most popular move, intending to relocate his knight to e7 at a suitable moment. Other moves are less reliable, for instance:

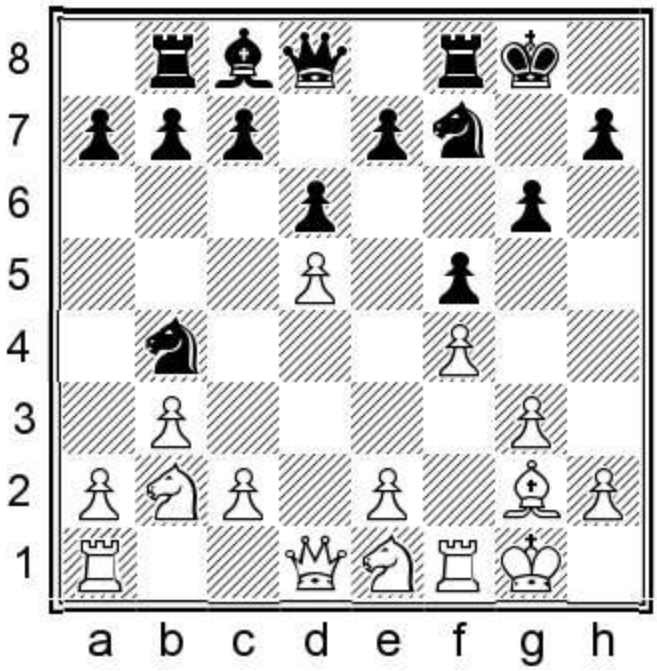
11...d5 was played in Vega Gutierrez – Lodici, Spoleto 2016, when 12.♘e5!N would have been best, with the following point:



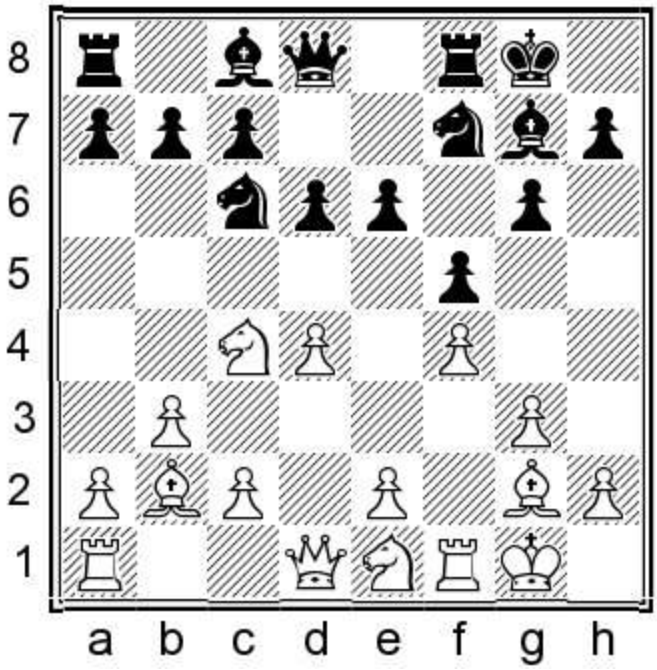
12...♘cxe5 13.dxe5 e6 14.♘d3 b6 15.c4 ♗b7 16.c5± White is obviously better.

chesstouring.com

11...♖b8 occurred in Babula – Swicarz, Pardubice 2017, and now White had a nice opportunity to play 12.d5!N when the following line looks logical: 12...♗xb2 13.♘xb2 ♘b4



14.e4 e5 15.♕d2 ♘a6 16.exf5 ♗xf5 17.♘ed3 ♕f6 18.♘c4± With a pleasant edge for White.



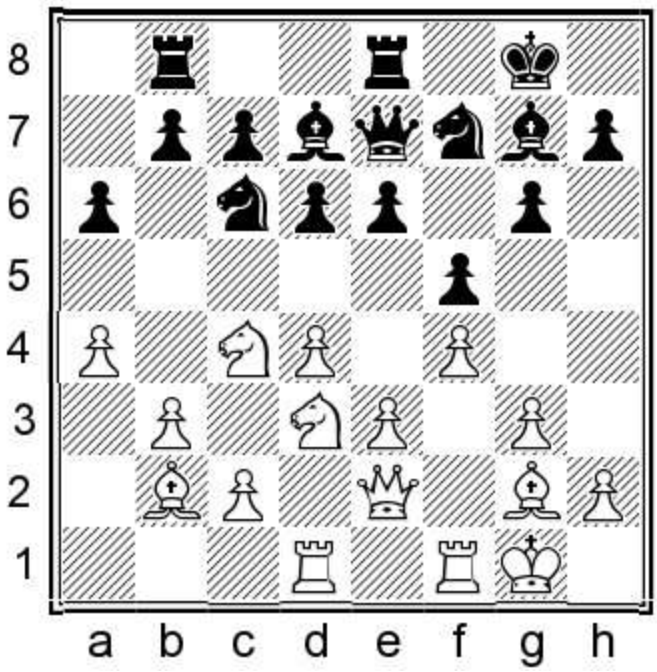
12.e3

We should strengthen the d4-pawn in order to prepare ♘d3.

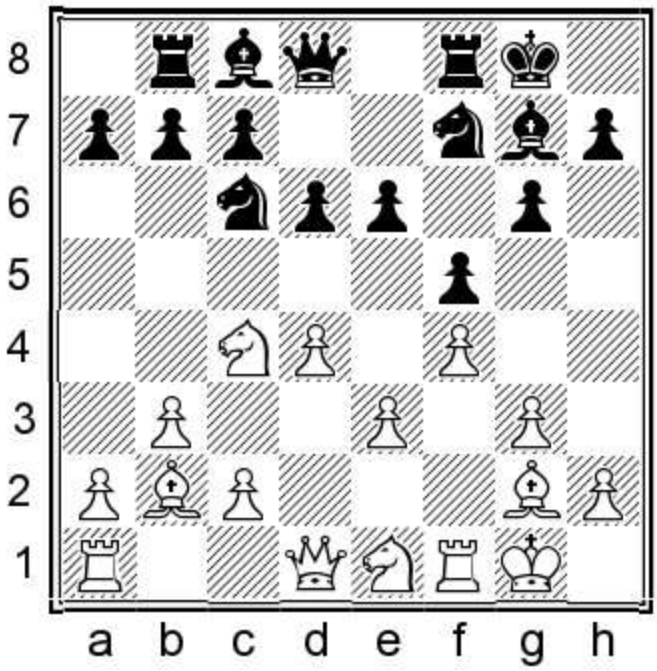
12...♖b8

A similarly popular alternative is: 12...♗d7 13.♘d3 ♖b8 (13...b5 14.♘d2 ♖b8 transposes to our main line below) 14.♕e2 ♖e8 15.♖ad1 ♕e7 16.a4 a6 In Wiersma – Nijboer, Amsterdam 2011, White should have continued:

chesstouring.com



17.♕f2!N Reinforcing the d4-pawn in preparation for e3-e4. 17...b5 18.axb5 axb5 19.♘d2 b4 20.e4± White keeps the better chances.



13.♘d3

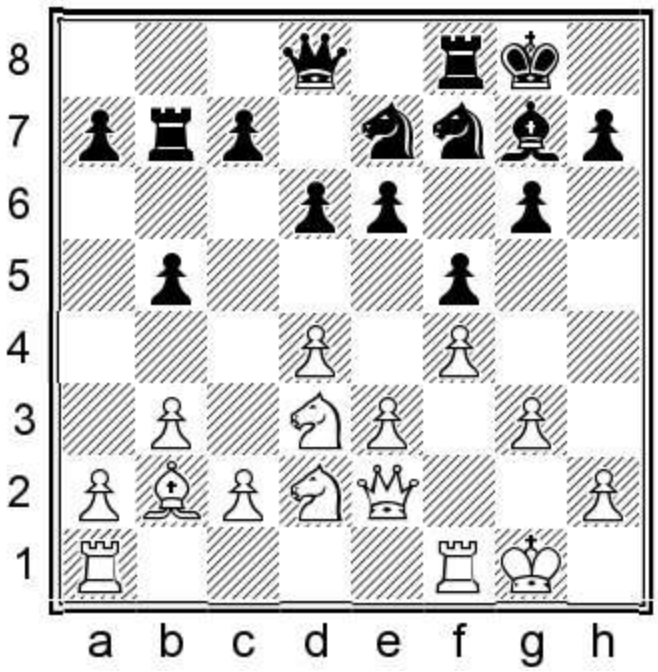
13.♗xc6!?N 13...bxc6 14.♘a5 is not ridiculous; the engine favours White although it may underestimate the long-term danger to the king after trading off the light-squared bishop. Besides, if Black wanted to avoid this possibility he could easily opt for the 12...♗d7 13.♘d3 b5 move order, as noted above.

13...b5

Black may also try: 13...♘e7 14.♕e2 b5 (14...b6!?N seems pretty solid although I still prefer White after 15.♖ad1 ♗b7 16.♗xb7 ♖xb7 17.♘d2 c5 18.c4±) 15.♘d2 ♗b7 16.♗xb7 ♖xb7 In Iturrizaga Bonelli –

chesstouring.com

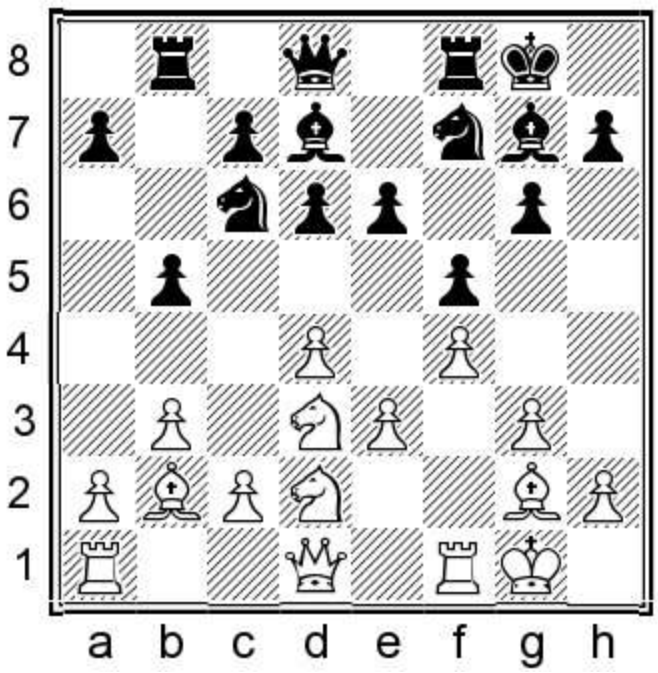
Pruijssers, Vlissingen 2017, White should have continued:



17.e4N 17...c5 18.dxc5 ♗xb2 19.♘xb2 dxc5 20.♘f3± White keeps the slightly better game.

14.♘d2 ♗d7

This position has been reached in two games, via slightly different move orders. I would like to offer a natural novelty:



15.♕e2N

This seems like the most flexible improving move.

15...e5

This is the critical move to consider, but White is well placed to meet it.

chesstouring.com

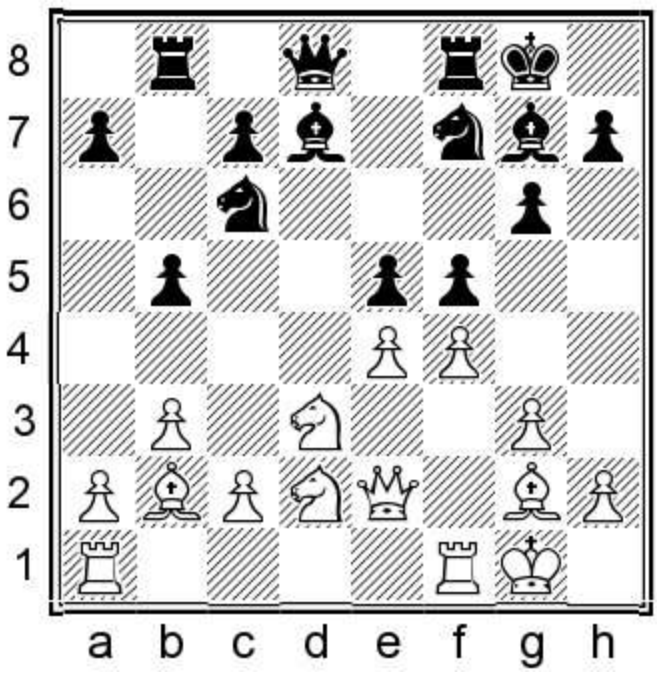
15...♘e7 allows 16.e4 fxe4 17.♘xe4 with better chances for White.

15...♕e7 can be met by 16.c4 bxc4 (16...b4? 17.♖ae1± is much better for White) 17.♘xc4 with a nice edge for White.

Another idea is 15...♖e8 to prepare ...e5, but 16.♖fd1 shuts down that idea. Black might switch plans with 16...a5 but then 17.a4 b4 18.c3± sees White open up the queenside to good effect.

16.dxe5 dxe5 17.e4!

The arising tension favours White due to his much better piece coordination. A sample line is:



17...♘d4? 18.♗xd4 exd4 19.e5±

Black's bishop pair is irrelevant as he has too many weaknesses. White can clamp down on c5 with b3-b4 and ♘b3, with complete positional domination.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with two important options after 6...d6 7.♗b2. Firstly, 7...c6 is pretty solid although this pawn move on the queenside means that White generally does not have to worry about kingside counterplay in the early stages. After 8.♘bd2 we saw White getting an advantage with normal positional moves in most lines, although variation A42 with 8...♘a6 9.c4 e5 was a special case, where my main line featured an important novelty connected with an exchange sacrifice. The second major part of the chapter was devoted to 7...♘e4 8.♘bd2 when Black generally either trades on d2 or retains the tension with 8...♘c6, after which 9.♘e1 ♘g5 is especially trendy. Many of these variations have been contested at GM level, but my analysis shows that White has good chances for an advantage.

chesstouring.com



Dutch



Leningrad – 7...♕e8

Variation Index

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.0–0 0–0 6.b3 d6 7.♗b2 ♕e8

8.c4

A) 8...e5 9.dxe5 ♘g4 10.♘c3 142

A1) 10...dxe5 143

A2) 10...♘xe5 145

B) 8...♘c6 146

C) 8...♘e4 9.♘bd2 148

C1) 9...♘xd2 148

C2) 9...c6 150

D) 8...♘a6 9.♕c2! 151

D1) 9...h6 153

D2) 9...c6 10.♘bd2 155

D21) 10...♗d7 156

D22) 10...h6 157

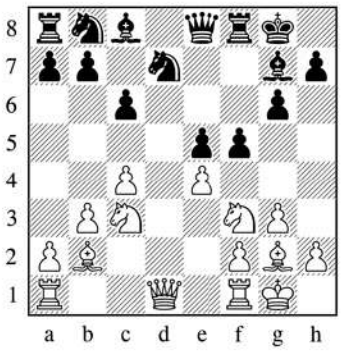
D3) 9...♖b8 10.♘bd2 159

D31) 10...c5!? 159

D32) 10...b5 160

chesstouring.com

A) note to 9...♘g4



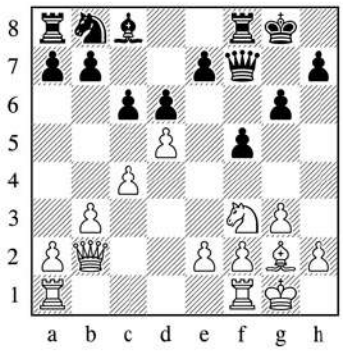
12.♗a3!N

A1) after 13...♕d8



14.♕e2!N

C1) note to 10...♘d7



13.e4!N

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3 d6 7.♗b2 ♕e8

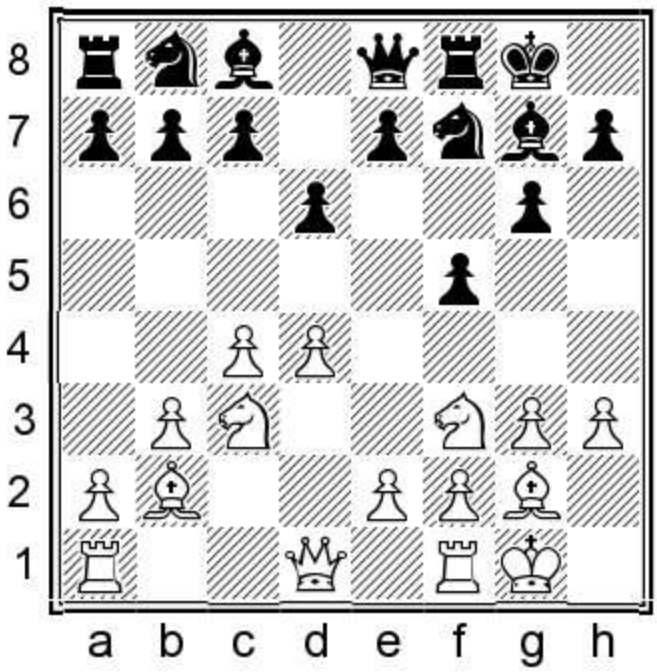
According to the database this has been played in marginally fewer games than 7...c6, but I consider it the main theoretical continuation. The queen has several uses on e8: it supports the pawn breaks ...e5 and possibly ...b5, and may later emerge on g6 or h5 in order to support Black's kingside play.

8.c4

As you would expect, Black has a wide choice. We will focus on four main options: **A)** 8...e5, **B)** 8...♘c6, **C)** 8...♘e4 and **D)** 8...♘a6.

8...h6 was examined in variation C5 of Chapter 5, while 8...c6 9.♘bd2 takes us back to variation A3 of the previous chapter.

8...♘g4 has the idea to prepare a quick ...e5, but White is fully armed for such a development: 9.h3 ♘h6 10.♘c3 ♘f7 (10...e5 11.dxe5 dxe5 transposes to variation A1 below)

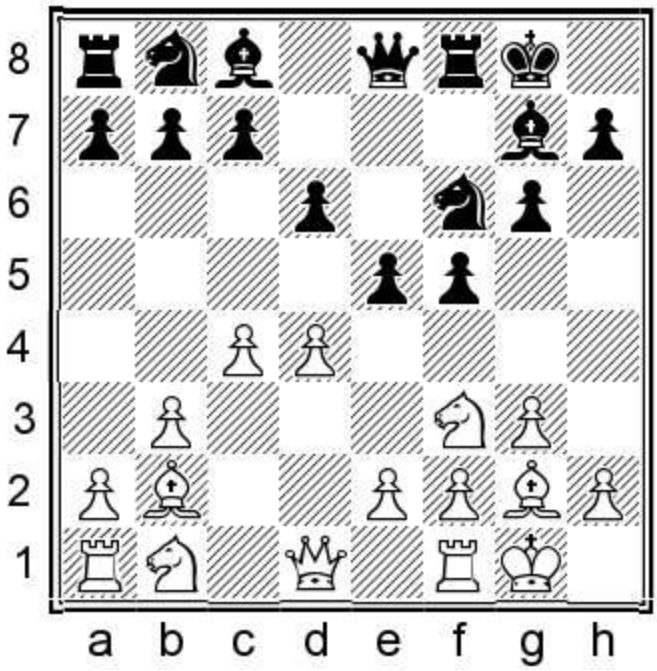


11.d5! c5 12.♕c2 ♘a6 13.♖ae1 With e2-e4 coming next, White had much better prospects in Headlong –

chesstouring.com

Lyell, Birmingham 2002.

A) 8...e5



Black has tried this break in quite a lot of games, which is slightly surprising, as objectively speaking it's premature here.

9.dxe5 ♘g4

A rare alternative is:

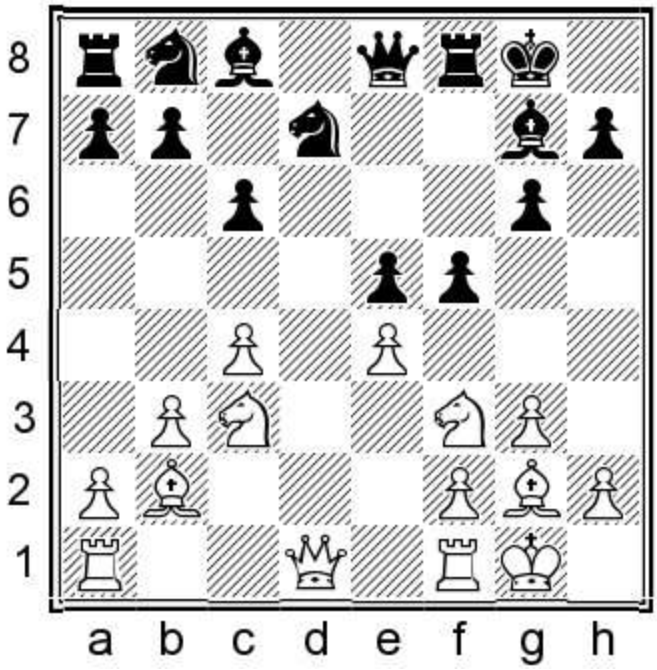
9...♘fd7 10.♘c3 dxe5

10...♘xe5 transposes to variation A2.

11.e4 c6

This position has arisen just twice. Black's set-up is positionally sound but he is significantly behind in development, so White should look to open the position. My suggestion from *GM 2* still looks good:

chesstouring.com

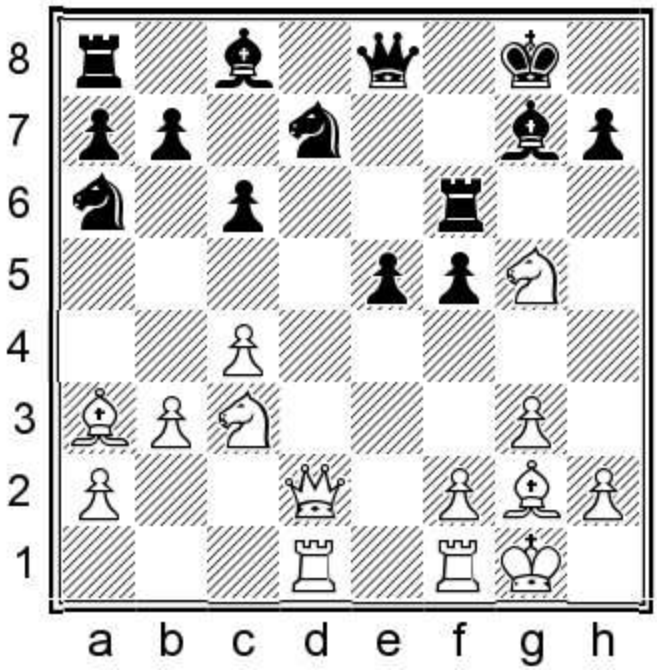


12.♗a3!N 12...♖f7

Another line is 12...♖f6 13.exf5 gxf5 (13...e4? is easily refuted by means of 14.♘xe4! ♕xe4 15.♘h4 ♕e8 16.♖e1 ♘e5 17.f4+–) 14.♕c2 ♘f8 15.♖ae1 e4 16.♘g5 and Black cannot prevent the f2-f3 break, which will open the play in White's favour.

13.exf5 gxf5 14.♘g5 ♖f6 15.♕d2 ♘a6 16.♖ad1

Black has trouble getting coordinated, for instance:



16...h6

16...e4?! 17.f3! is the same idea under even worse conditions for Black.

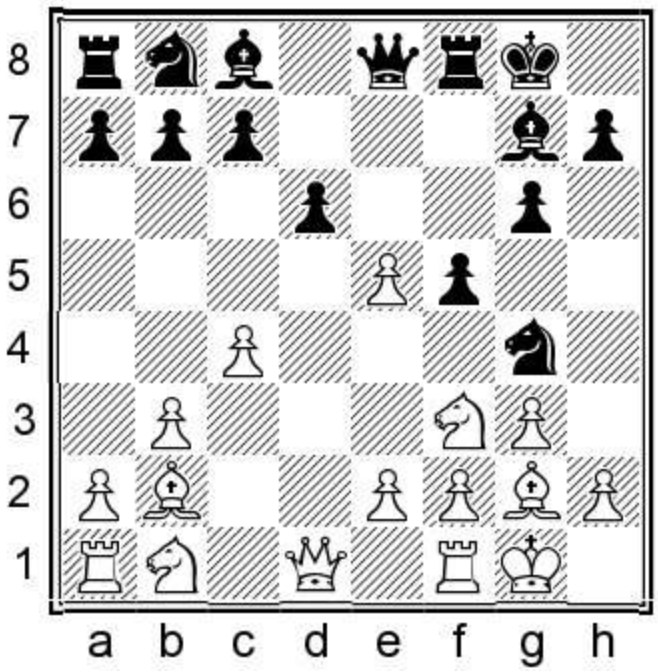
17.♘f3 e4 18.♘h4 ♘e5 19.f3

The key strategic idea.

19...exf3 20.♘xf3

chesstouring.com

With a serious advantage for White.



10.♘c3

We will analyse **A1)** 10...dxe5 and **A2)** 10...♘xe5.

A1) 10...dxe5 11.h3 ♘h6

11...♘f6? 12.♘d5 wins a pawn at least.

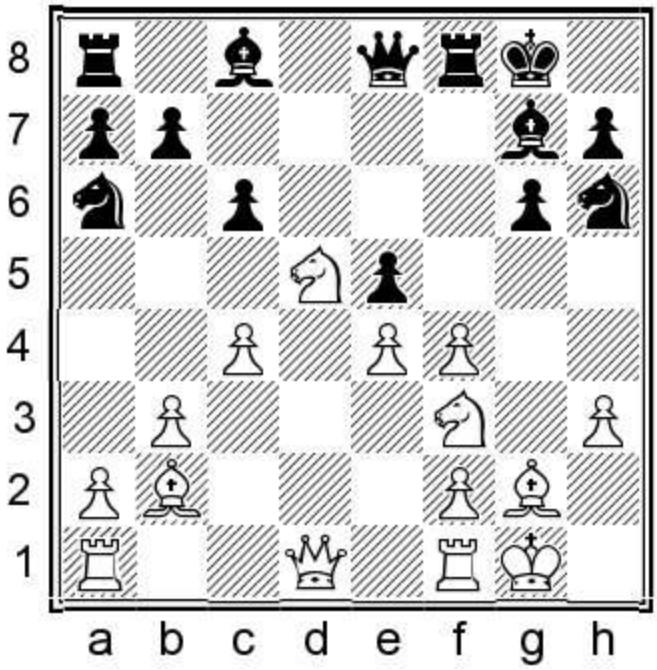
The situation is similar to the note above, in the sense that Black would be doing well if he had time to catch up on development and coordinate his pieces. So once again, we will threaten to open the centre in order to provoke some positional concessions.

12.e4 ♘c6

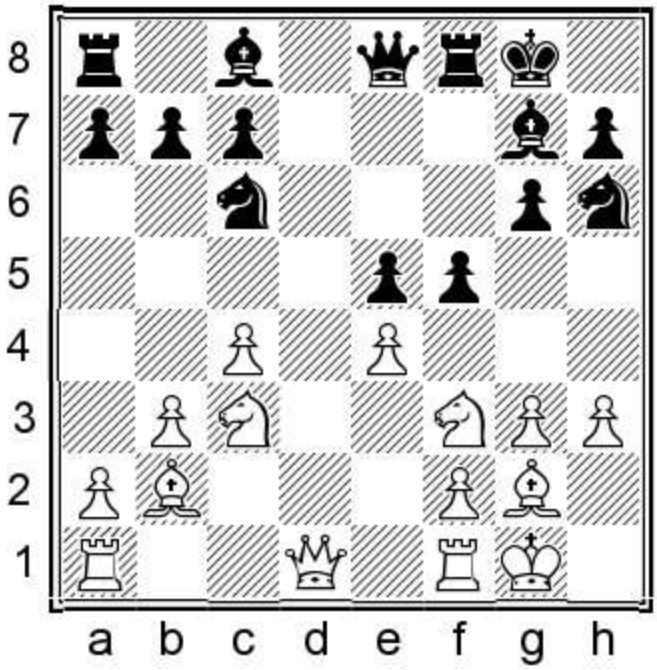
12...c6 13.exf5! clearly favours White after 13...gxf5 (or 13...♗xf5 14.g4 ♗e6 15.♘e4±) 14.♗a3 ♖f7 15.♖e1 due to Black's poor coordination.

12...f4 appears to be a natural reaction but White is ideally placed to meet it with: 13.♘d5! ♘a6 14.gxf4 c6 (14...exf4? 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♕d4† ♔g8 17.♘f6†+− makes things simpler for White)

chesstouring.com



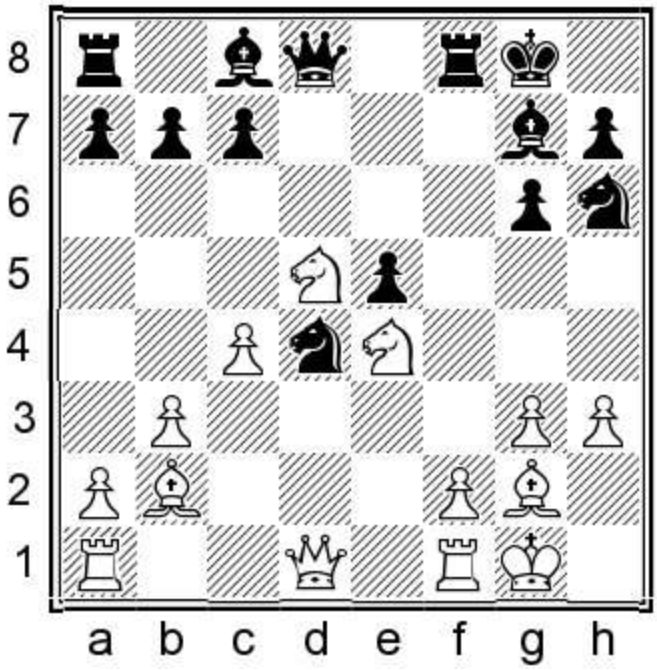
15.fxe5!? The piece sac is natural and powerful. (15.♗xe5!?N 15...cxd5 16.cxd5± is another version of the same idea) 15...cxd5 16.exd5 With three pawns for the piece and a mobile pawn mass in the centre, White was already strategically winning in Mamedyarov – Reinderman, Warsaw 2005.



13.♘d5 ♕d8

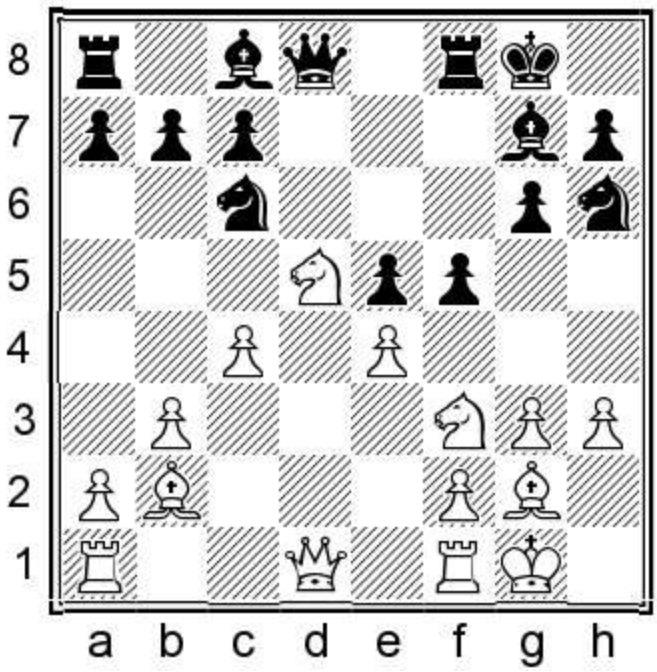
In his annotations for *ChessBase Magazine*, Michael Roiz gave the line 13...fxe4 14.♘g5 ♕d8 15.♘xe4 ♘d4 as a possible improvement for Black, but White has a powerful idea at his disposal:

chesstouring.com



16.f4! Undermining the knight. The following line is critical: 16...c6 17.fxe5 cxd5 18.♘f6†! (even stronger than 18.♖xf8† which I gave in *GM 2*) 18...♗xf6 19.♕xd4 ♗g7 20.♗xd5† ♔h8 21.e6! ♖g8 22.♕f2± Black is in serious trouble.

This position was reached in Bewersdorff – Tisdall, Gausdal 1990. A clear improvement is:



14.♕e2!N 14...♘f7

Or 14...fxe4 15.♕xe4 ♗f5 16.♕e3 ♘f7 17.g4 ♗e6 18.♖ad1 and White's advantage is obvious.

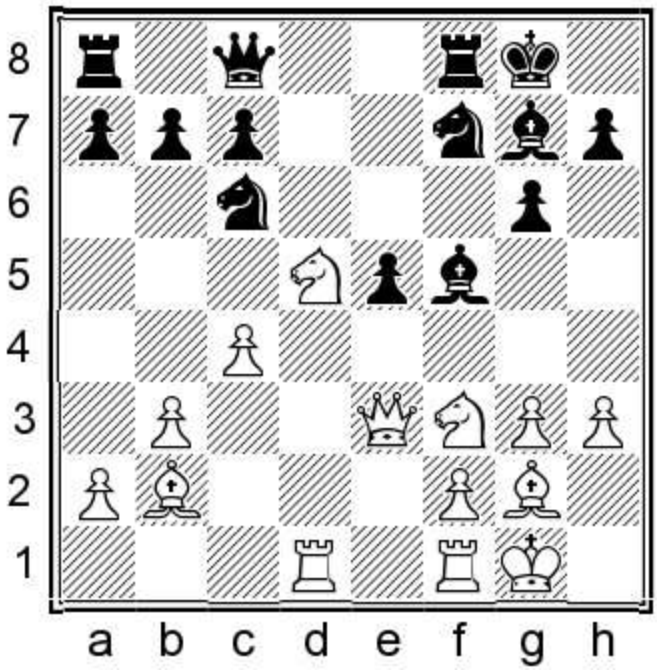
15.♖ad1

In *GM 2* I called this unpleasant for Black. This time I extended the line slightly:

chesstouring.com

15...fxe4 16.♕xe4 ♗f5 17.♕e3 ♕c8

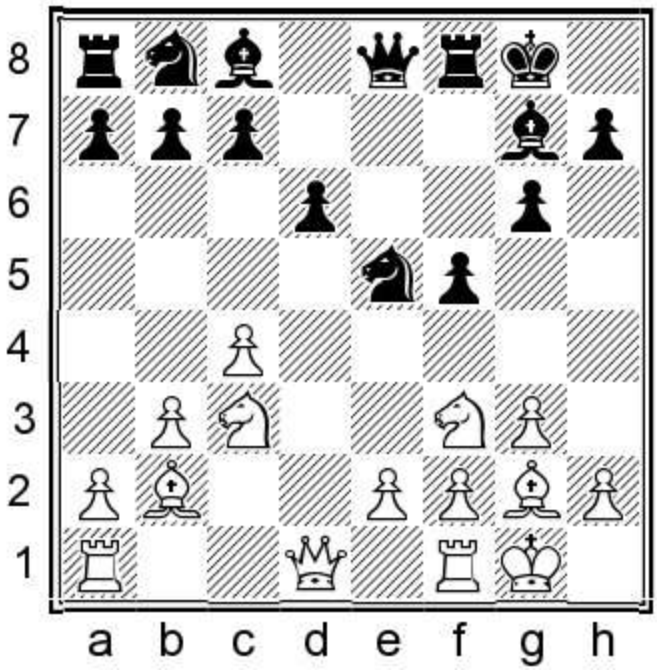
Black's last few moves were virtually forced.



18.g4! ♗e6 19.♖fe1±

The difference in piece activity and coordination is significant.

A2) 10...♘xe5



As I have stated repeatedly, I believe that this pawn structure invariably favours White. Black's queenside pawn structure has no flexibility and if he tries advancing his pawns on the other flank he risks exposing his own king. Another strategic issue is the d5-square: the white knight will be powerful on d5, but the ...c6 move will weaken the d6-pawn. A final important point is that a knight trade on f3 will often

chesstouring.com

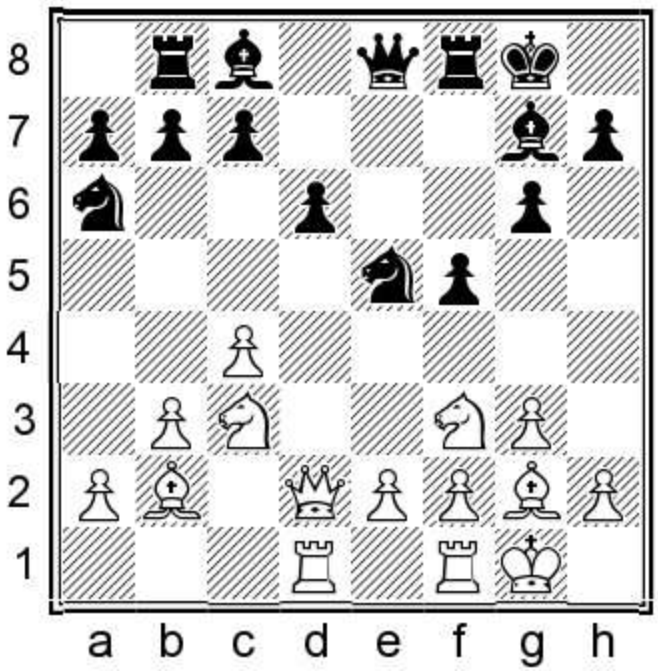
allow White to play ...exf3 to good effect, as the open e-file can be used to harass Black's queen and exploit the weak e6- and e7-squares.

11.♕d2

Black has a hard time dealing with White's simple plan of centralizing the rooks and plonking the knight on d5, as the following lines illustrate.

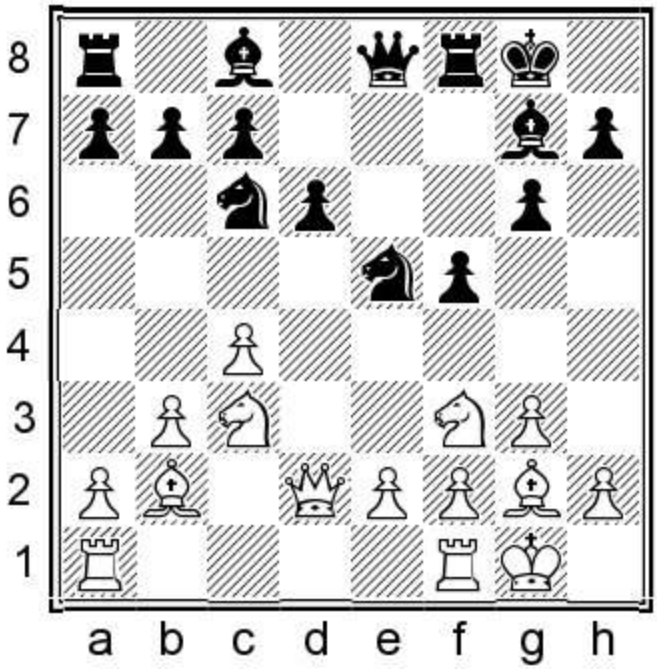
11...♘bc6

11...♘a6 12.♖ad1 ♖b8 (12...♘xf3† 13.exf3! adds the open e-file to White's trumps: 13...♘c5 14.♖fe1 ♕d8 15.b4 ♘d7 16.♘d5± and Black was already in serious trouble in Lputian – Malaniuk, Sverdlovsk 1987)



13.♘b5! ♘f7 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.♖fe1 ♗d7 16.♘c3 ♗c6 17.♘d5 White was clearly better in Maia – Rangel, Cuiaba 2017.

chesstouring.com



12.♘d5 ♕d8

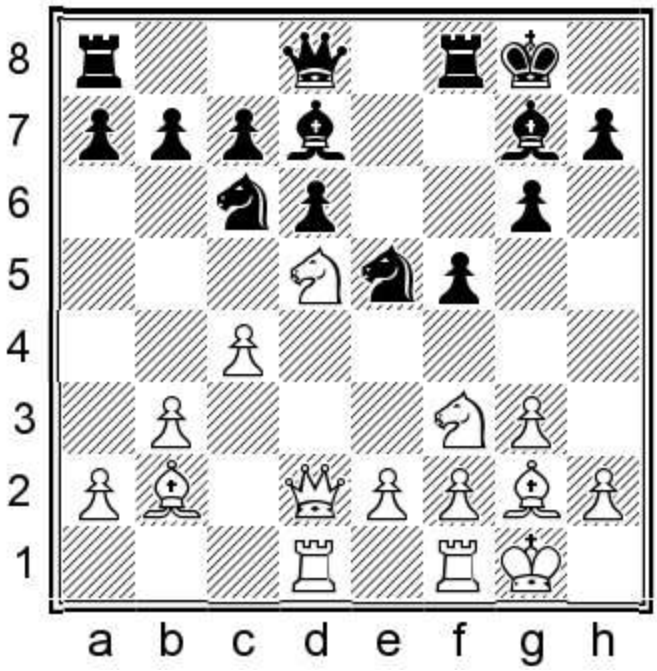
12...♘xf3† 13.exf3! works perfectly again: 13...♕f7 14.♗xg7 ♕xg7 15.♖ae1 b6 16.♖e3 ♗b7 17.♖fe1± Ikonnikov – Cherin, Conegliano 2008.

13.♖ad1

Black's position is not at all easy to handle, as was demonstrated in the following encounters:

13...♗d7

13...♘xf3† meets with the usual strong reply: 14.exf3! ♗e6 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♕c3† ♔g8 17.f4 h6 18.♖fe1 ♗xd5 19.cxd5 ♘e7 20.♖c1 White was already winning in Vidit – Heidrich, Pardubice 2010.

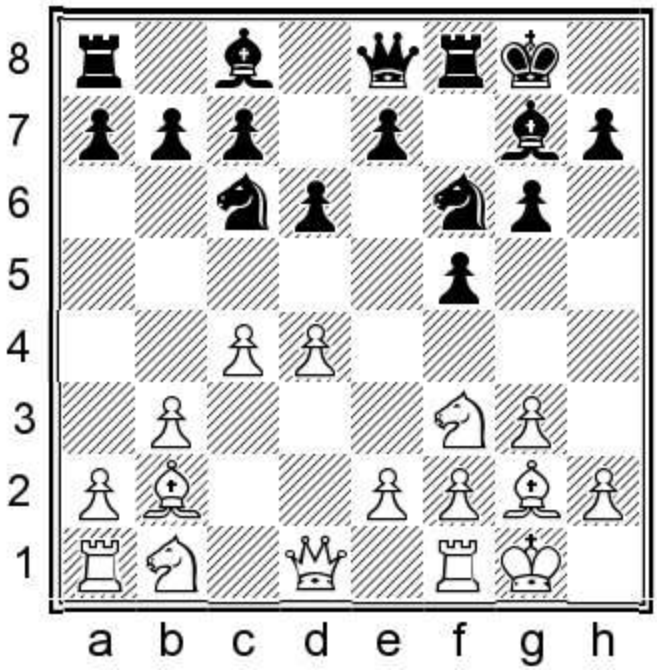


chesstouring.com

14.♘xe5 ♗xe5 15.c5! ♗e6 16.♘f4 ♗f7 17.cxd6 cxd6 18.♗a3±

White's positional advantage was beyond any doubt in Harikrishna – Zhang Zhong, Tiayuan 2005.

B) 8...♘c6



This is quite an interesting idea, taking into account that Black's 7th move vacated the d8-square for the knight.

9.d5

This is the most principled continuation. There is no point in allowing Black to play ...e5 without a fight.

9...♘d8

9...♘b4?! makes no sense to me. 10.a3 ♘a6 11.b4 ♗d7 happened in Prohaszka – Sivuk, Paleochora 2011, and now 12.♘c3N would have been natural. A possible continuation is 12...c6 13.♖e1! ♘e4 14.dxc6 bxc6 15.♖c1± and White maintains a pleasant advantage.

10.♘c3 e5

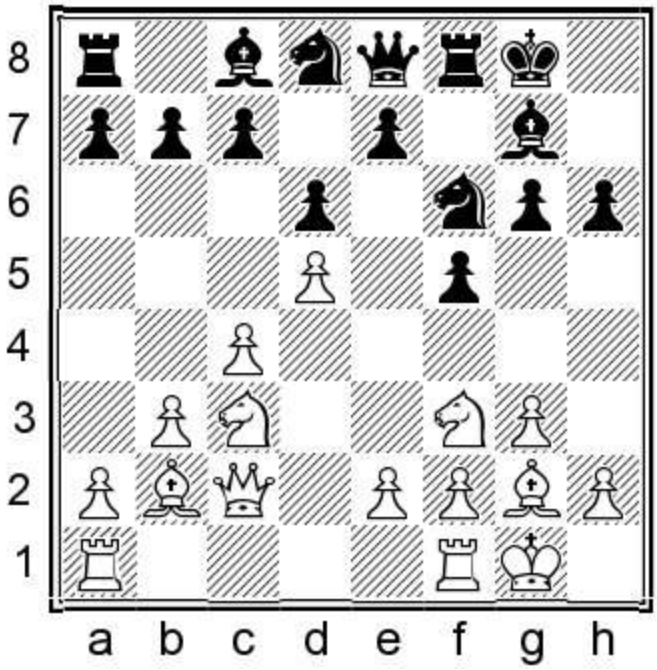
This is Black's main idea and I don't see much point in delaying it, as White has a lot of useful moves available. For example:

10...♗d7 11.♕c2 e5 12.dxe6 ♘xe6 transposes to the main line below.

10...h6 11.♕c2

11.♘b5!?N is an interesting alternative which forces the awkward 11...♕d7.

chesstouring.com

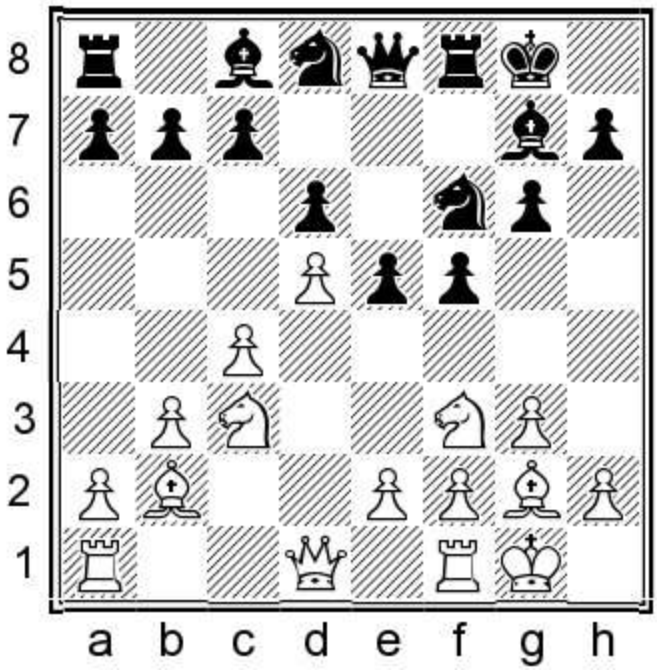


11...♕f7

11...g5 occurred in Goiriz – Perez Pietronave, Villa Ballester 2006, when 12.♘d4!N would have been strong. For instance, 12...♕h5 13.e3 f4 14.gxf4 gxf4 15.♘ce2! when Black's kingside activity has backfired and White's advantage is almost decisive.

12.e3 ♗d7 13.♖ad1 c6 14.♘d4 ♖c8 15.♕e2±

In Smejkal – Kalinitschew, Porz 1992, it was not clear what Black had achieved by delaying ...e5.



11.dxe6 ♘xe6

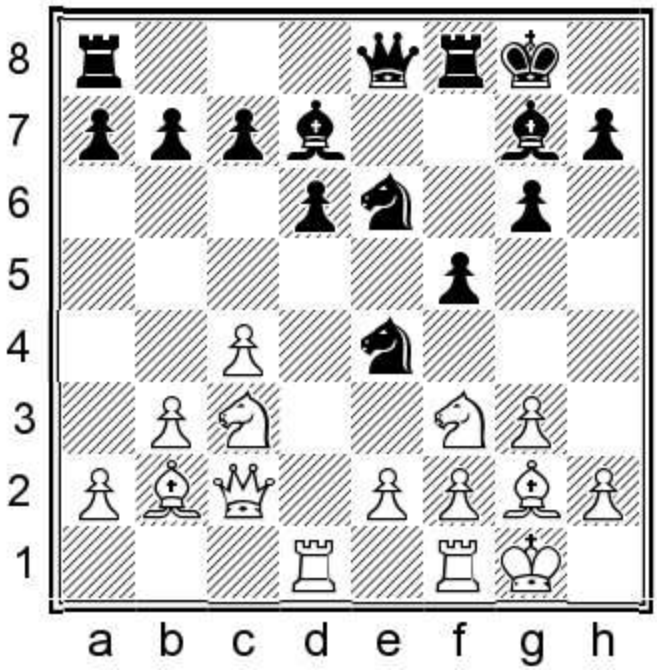
Despite the well-placed knight on e6, this thematic pawn structure still promises White a small but long-term edge, due to his much easier play on the queenside.

chesstouring.com

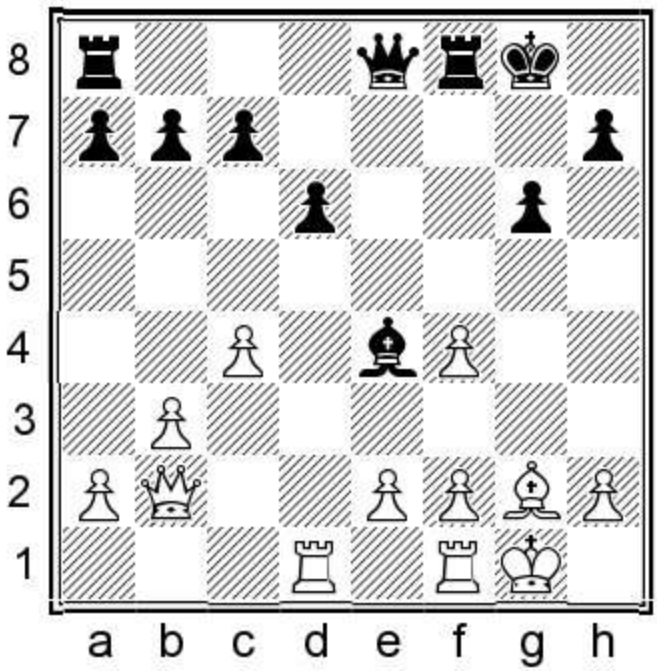
12.♕c2 ♗d7

Black has tried various other ideas, for instance:

12...♘e4 13.♖ad1 ♗d7?! occurred in Inkiov – Barbero, Plovdiv 1986, when White should have continued:



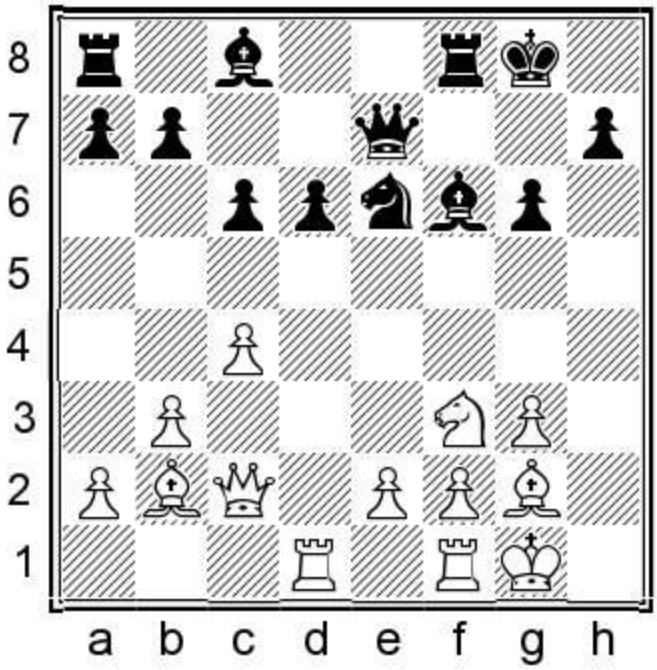
14.♘xe4!N 14...fxe4 15.♘d2 With a clear advantage, for instance: 15...♗xb2 16.♕xb2 ♗c6 (or 16...♘c5 17.b4 ♘a4 18.♕d4±) 17.♘xe4 ♘f4 18.gxf4 ♗xe4



19.♖d4! Black must either remain a pawn down or take further risks with 19...♖xf4 20.♕d2! ♗xg2 21.♖xf4 ♗xf1 22.♕d5† ♔g7 23.♔xf1 when White is much better.

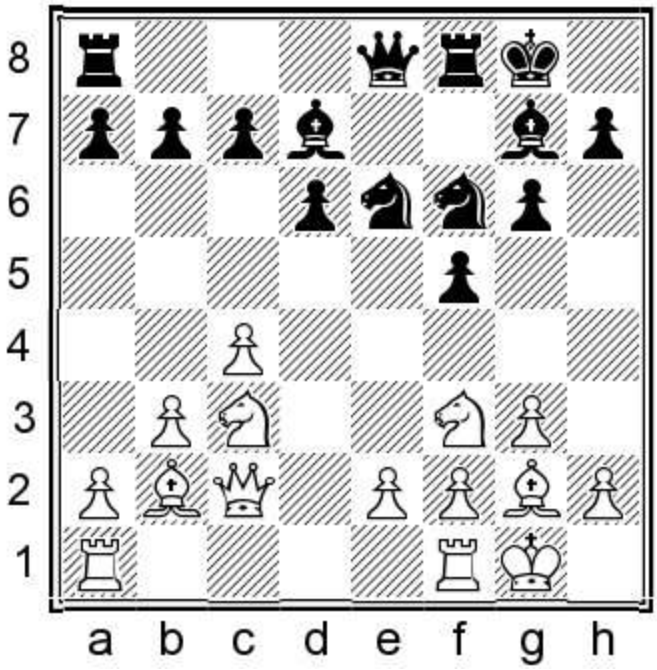
12...f4 13.♘d5 fxg3 14.hxg3 c6 This move weakens the d6-pawn but it was hard for Black to live with the powerful knight. 15.♘xf6† ♗xf6 16.♖ad1 ♕e7 Now in Bagirov – Kalinitschew, Giessen 1993, White should have continued:

chesstouring.com



17.♗xf6 ♖xf6 18.♕c3 With a pleasant advantage.

12...a5 13.♖ad1 ♘c5 occurred in Lorparizangeneh – Lu Shanglei, Albena 2015, when a good continuation would have been: 14.♘d4N 14...c6 15.e3± With a pleasant edge for White.



13.♖ad1 ♗c6 14.♘d5 ♕f7 15.e3

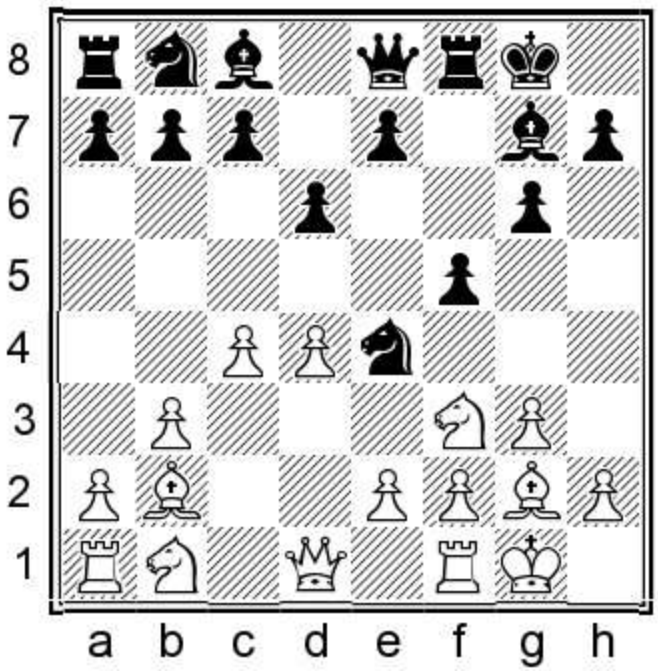
15.b4!? looks pretty good as well.

15...♖ae8 16.b4±

We have been following Hausrath – Van Beers, Antwerp 1997. Even though Black has achieved what looks like an optimal arrangement of his pieces, White retains the better chances due to his strong knight and the mobility of his queenside pawns.

chesstouring.com

C) 8...♘e4



9.♘bd2

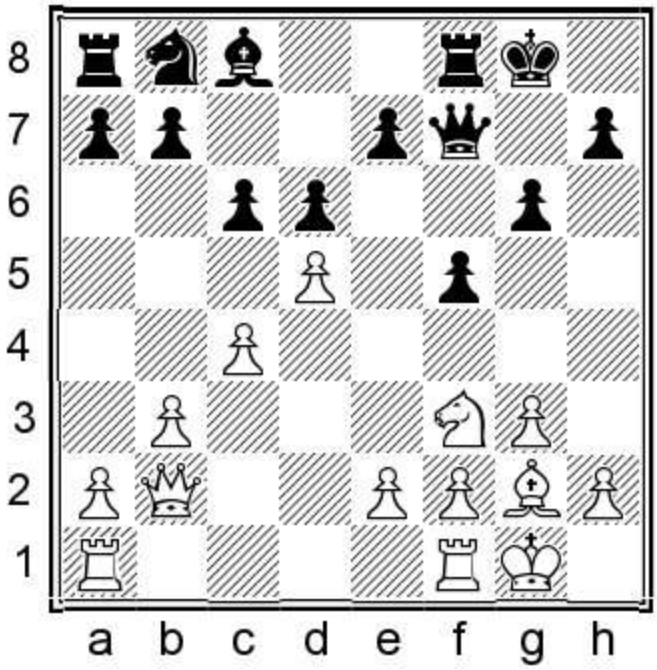
We will analyse **C1)** 9...♘xd2 and **C2)** 9...c6. For some reason the first move has been much more popular, but the second is the more theoretically challenging option.

C1) 9...♘xd2 10.♕xd2 ♘d7

Other options are no better, for instance:

10...c6 11.d5 ♗xb2 12.♕xb2 ♕f7 (12...cxd5 13.cxd5 ♘d7 14.♖ac1 ♘f6 occurred in Von Wantoch Rekowski – Deglmann, Munich 2007, when the obvious 15.♘d4!N± would have sealed White's positional edge) Now in Boehm – Kuhnert, Bavaria 2007, White missed the strongest continuation:

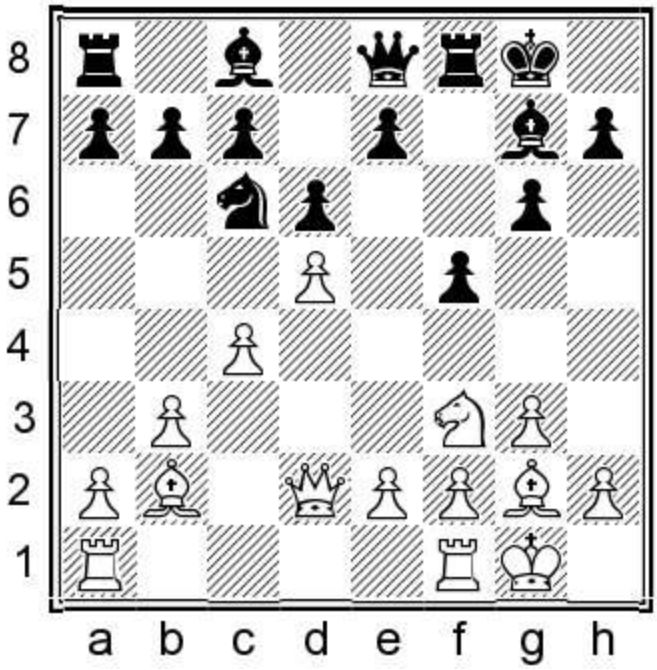
chesstouring.com



13.e4!N 13...fxe4 14.♘g5 ♕g7 15.♕d2!? With an obvious advantage for White.

10...♘c6 11.d5

Black is struggling here too, for instance:



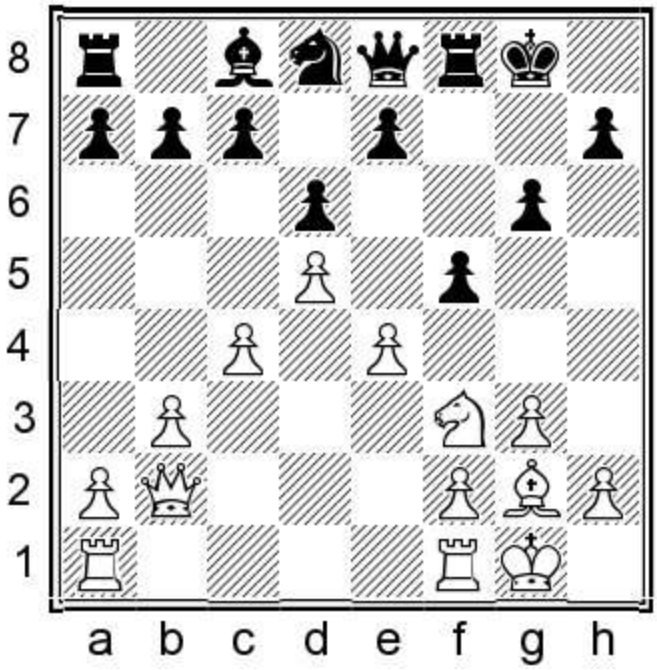
11...♗xb2

The passive 11...♘d8?! is even worse: 12.♗xg7 ♔xg7 13.e4! e5 14.dxe6 Obviously the opening of the centre favours White. 14...♕xe6 15.♘d4 ♕f6 16.exf5 ♗xf5 17.♖ae1± Masse – Nikulich, Montreal 2014.

11...♘e5 12.♘d4 ♗d7 13.f4 ♘g4 14.e4 c5 15.dxc6 bxc6 16.exf5 gxf5 17.♖ae1 was also clearly better for White in Necada – Krouzel, Czech Republic 1995.

12.♕xb2 ♘d8 13.e4

chesstouring.com



13...e5

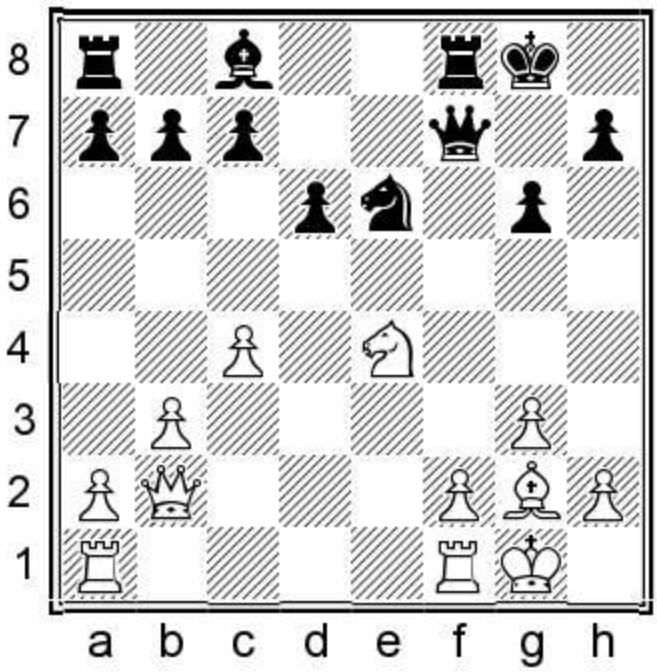
13...fxe4N 14.♘g5 is not much of an improvement for Black.

14.dxe6 fxe4

14...♕xe6 occurred in Krush – Einarsson, Reykjavik 2012, and now the most convincing would have been 15.exf5!N 15...♕xf5 16.♖ae1 ♘e6 17.♘d4 ♘xd4 18.♕xd4± and White wins material.

15.♘g5 ♘xe6 16.♘xe4 ♕f7

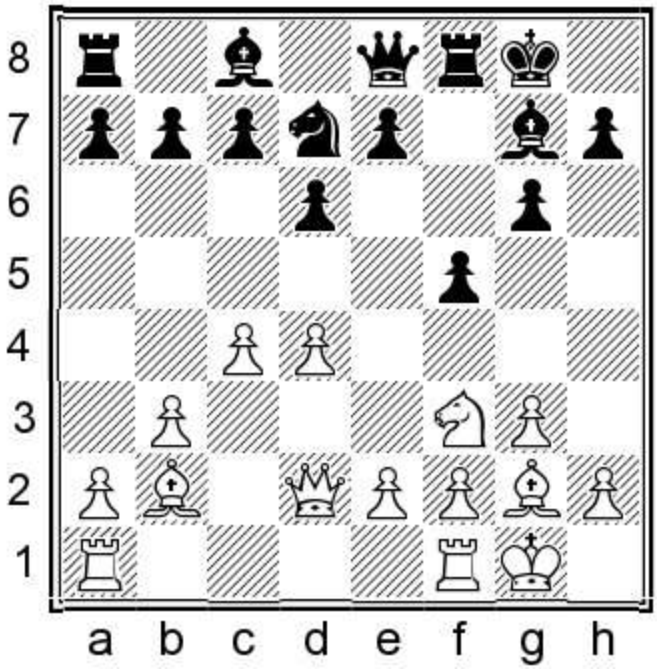
We have been following Pietsch – Siedentopf, Germany 2016. My suggestion would be:



17.♘c3!N 17...♕g7 18.♖ae1±

With a substantial advantage for White.

chesstouring.com

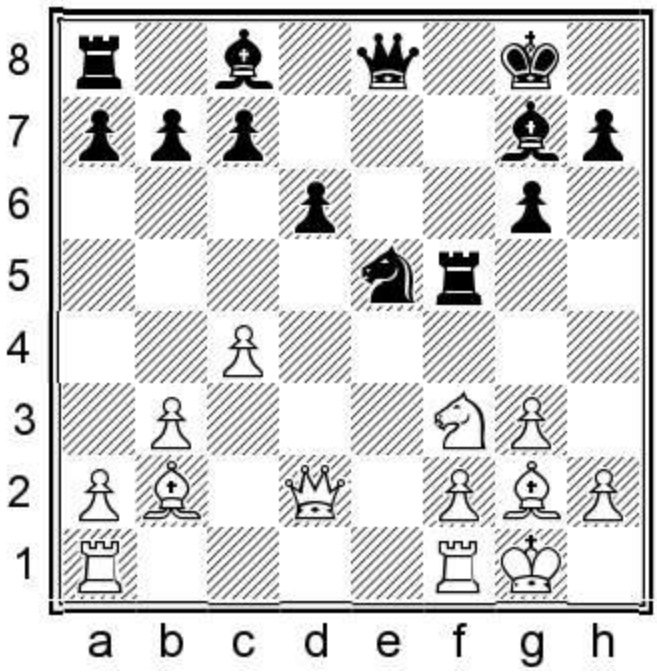


11.e4!

This thematic idea works perfectly here.

11...fxe4

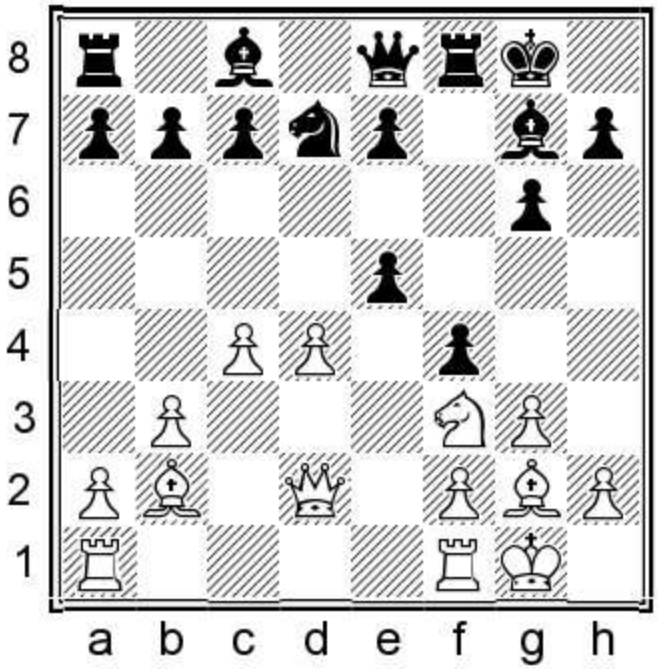
11...e5 12.exf5 ♖xf5 13.dxe5 ♘xe5 occurred in Richardson – Casaschi, London 2012, when White should have played:



14.♘d4N 14...♖f8 15.f4 ♘f7 16.♖ae1 ♕d8 17.♗d5+– With an overwhelming advantage.

11...f4 is also pretty bad. 12.e5 dxe5 This was Harika – Boric, Cappelle-la-Grande 2011. Out of several strong moves, my preferred option is:

chesstouring.com



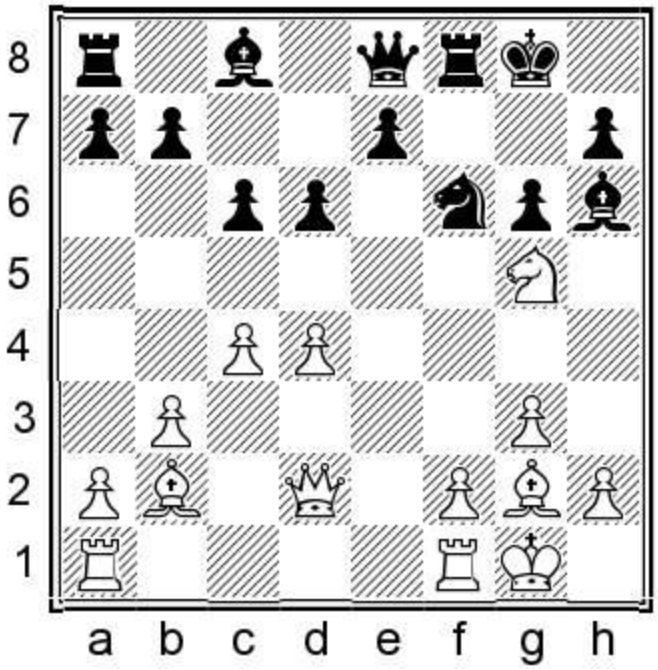
13.♖ae1!N 13...c6 (13...exd4 14.♘xd4 is even worse for Black) 14.d5! cxd5 15.cxd5 White will regain the pawn while keeping Black under heavy positional pressure.

12.♘g5 ♗h6

After 12...♘f6 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♗xe4 e6 15.f4 a6 16.♖ae1± White maintained a clear positional advantage in Navara – Bosboom-Lanchava, Dubai 2005.

13.♗xe4 ♘f6 14.♗g2 c6

Black eventually recorded a successful result in Golod – M. Gurevich, Venacu 2006, but this had nothing to do with the merits of his opening play. My favourite idea for White is:

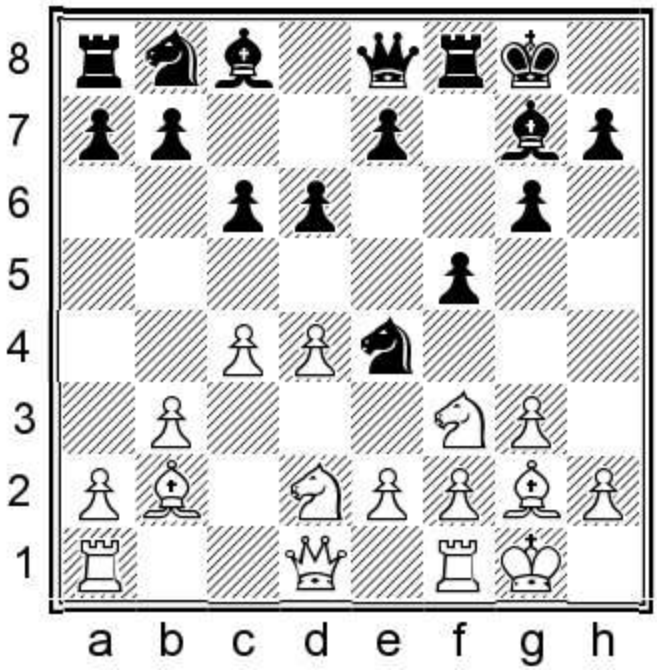


chesstouring.com

15.f4!N 15...♗f5 16.d5±

With an obvious advantage for White.

C2) 9...c6



10.♘xe4!

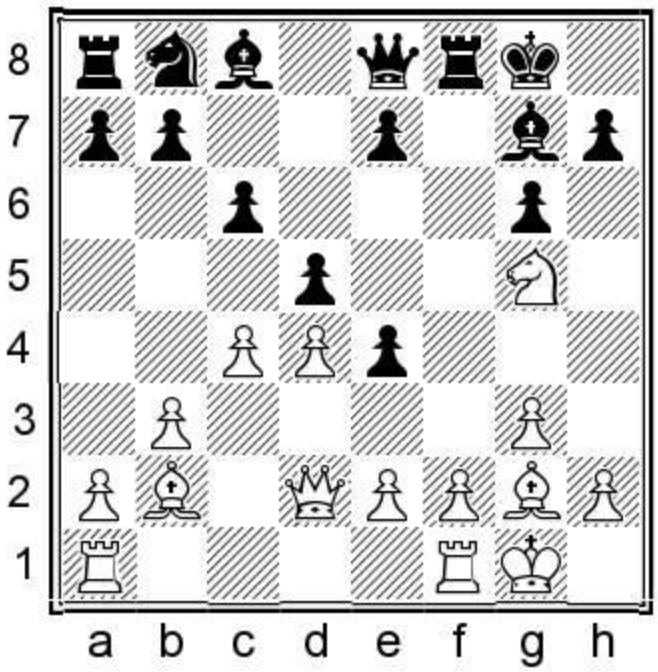
Definitely the most principled and strongest continuation.

10...fxe4 11.♘g5 d5 12.♕d2!

Another of my novelties from *GM 2* which has since been tested in a few games. White is making a necessary improvement to his position before carrying out the f2-f3 break.

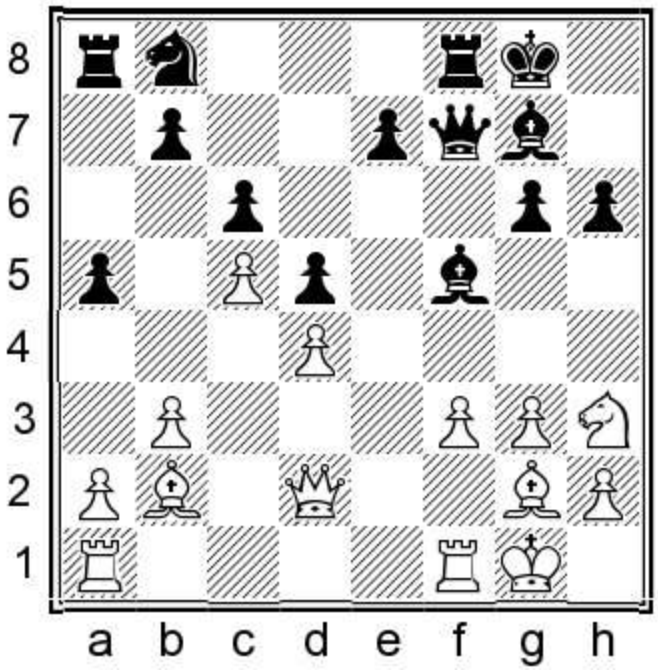
The immediate 12.f3 allowed Black to obtain counterplay by means of 12...h6 13.♘h3 exf3 14.exf3 dxc4 15.bxc4 c5! in Benkovic – Meijers, Biel 2005.

chesstouring.com



12...♗f5

The other game continued: 12...h6 13.♘h3 ♗f5 14.f3 Obviously White should not leave the enemy pawn on e4. 14...exf3 15.exf3 ♕f7 16.c5 a5 (16...♘a6 17.♖ac1 g5 18.♘f2 ♖ae8 19.♖fe1 e6 20.♖e3± also gives White a positional edge)

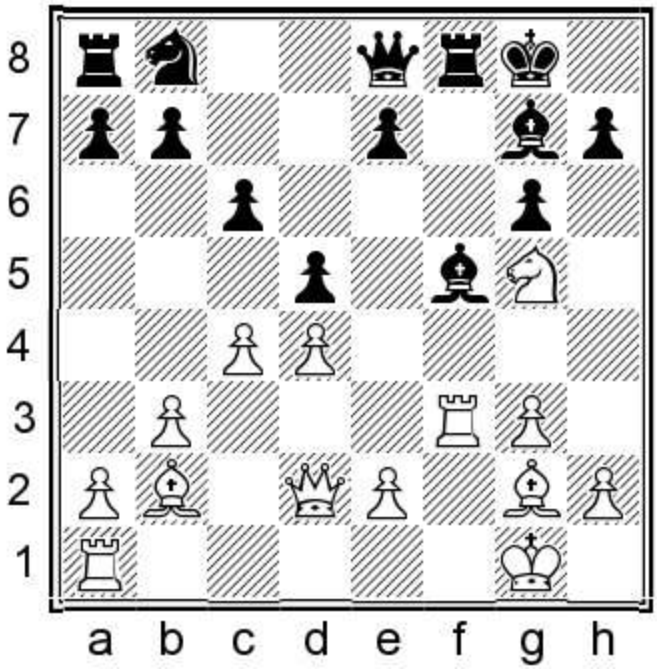


17.♖ae1 a4 18.b4 a3 19.♗c3 ♘a6 20.♘f2 ♘c7 21.♘g4 g5 22.♘e5± White went on to convert his positional advantage in Guidoni – Feldis, corr. 2015.

13.f3 exf3 14.♖xf3!N

14.♘xf3 was played in Ellis – Maslakov, corr. 2015, but I find the text move more active and appealing.

chesstouring.com



14...♕d7

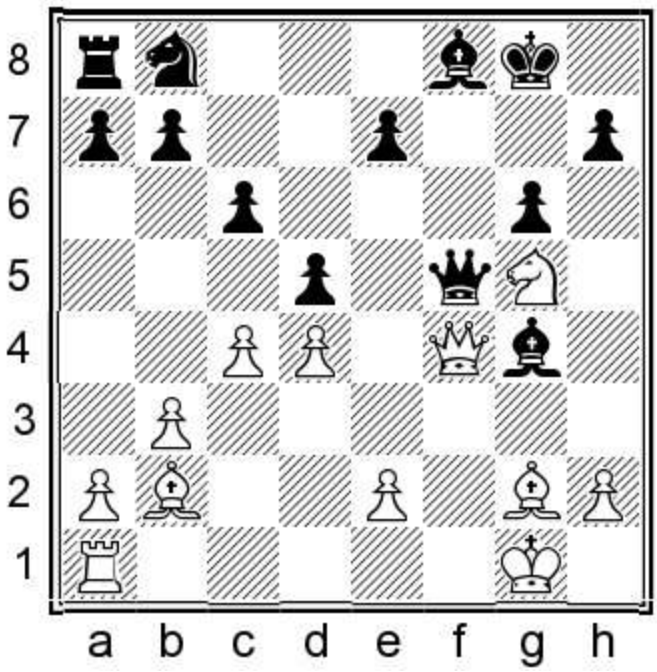
14...♘a6 makes things worse for Black after 15.g4!.

15.g4!

The key idea, seizing the initiative on the kingside.

15...♗xg4 16.♖xf8† ♗xf8 17.♕f4 ♕f5

17...♗f5 runs into the powerful 18.e4! dxe4 19.d5!→ when White's attack is most probably decisive.

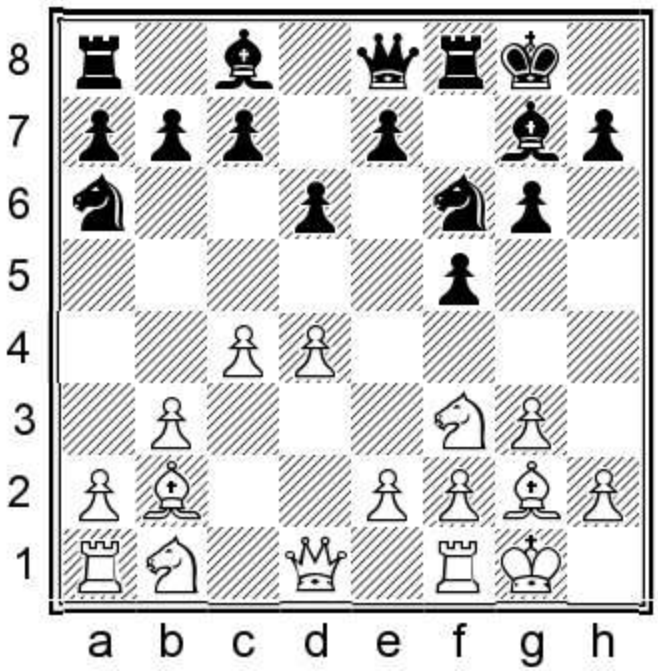


18.♕xf5 ♗xf5 19.cxd5 ♗h6 20.h4±

White is obviously better.

chesstouring.com

D) 8...♘a6



9.♕c2!

9.♘c3 allows the opponent to carry out his desired 9...e5 advance, and after 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.e4 f4 I like Black's chances.

In *GM 2* I gave a brief line of analysis after 9.♘bd2 (which, by the way, remains White's most popular choice in the database) and commented that it was also a reasonable try for an advantage. However, I later came to realize that 9...c5! is a powerful antidote, which has yielded great results for Black.

The text move is a flexible choice which avoids committing the knight for the moment, while also defending the b2-bishop, thus taking away Black's possible plan of ...e5, meeting dxe5 with ...♘g4 or ...♘d7. The only real argument against it might be the possibility of a timely ...♘b4, which will certainly be examined.

Black has three main options: **D1)** 9...h6, **D2)** 9...c6 and **D3)** 9...♖b8.

9...c5

This move has been tried by some strong players, but it is not as effective when White's knight can go to c3 (or even a3) instead of d2.

10.♖d1!?

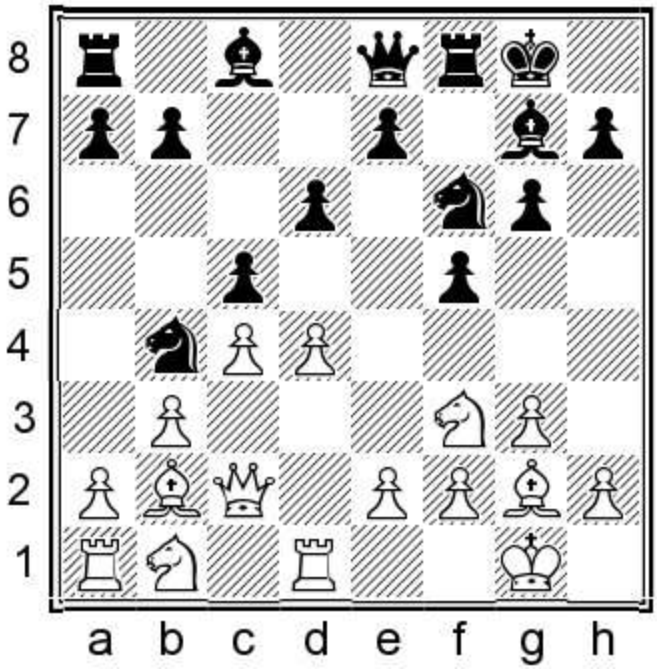
This move has only been played in one game but I like it.

10...♘b4

I also examined 10...♗d7N 11.e3 ♖b8 12.♘a3 ♘e4 13.♕e2± when White is happy enough.

In Haluschka – Heiden, email 2004, White should have continued with:

chesstouring.com



11.♕c1N 11...cxd4

11...b6 12.♘c3 ♗d7 13.e3 is also nice for White.

12.♘xd4 ♕f7 13.♘c3±

With a pleasant edge for White.

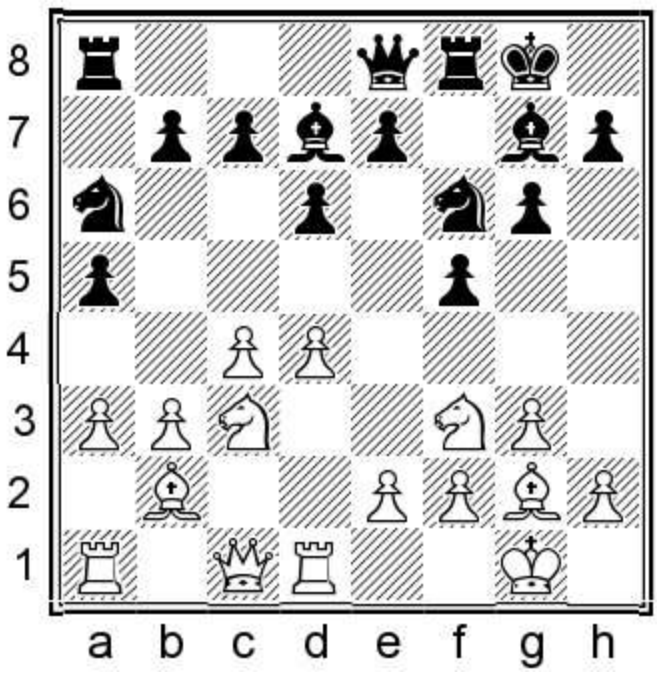
9...♘b4

Obviously this move should also be considered.

10.♕c1

Previously I recommended 10.♕d2 as an improvement but, despite a reasonably successful showing of a win and a draw from two correspondence games, I slightly prefer the text move now.

10...a5 11.♘c3 ♗d7 12.a3 ♘a6 13.♖d1



chesstouring.com

13...c5

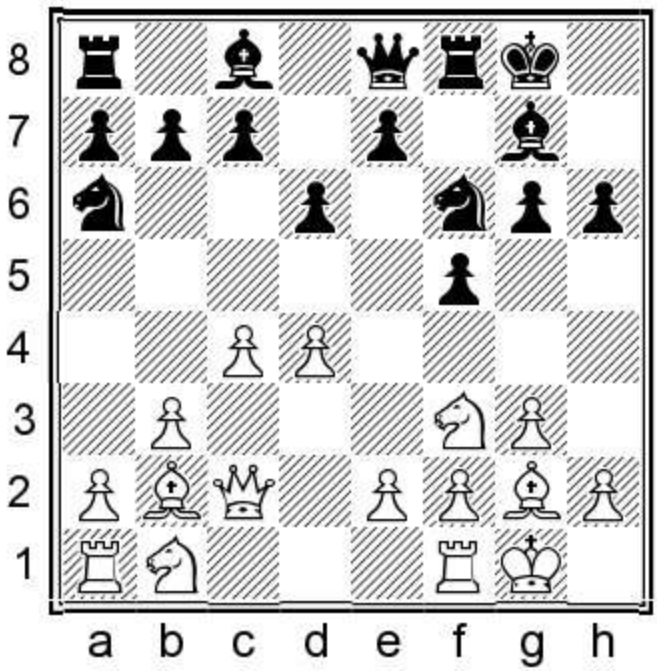
White is well prepared for 13...e5?! 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.♘xe5! ♕xe5 16.♗xb7 leading to a clear advantage after something like 16...♕e8 17.♗xa8 ♕xa8 18.♘d5±.

13...c6 runs into 14.♘a4!, reminding Black that he no longer controls the b6-square. After 14...♕d8 15.♘d2± White has the more pleasant game.

14.e3 ♗h6 15.♕c2±

White remained better in Fortune – Peled, corr. 2005.

D1) 9...h6



Black can go for the ...h6/...g5 plan at almost any time in the Leningrad.

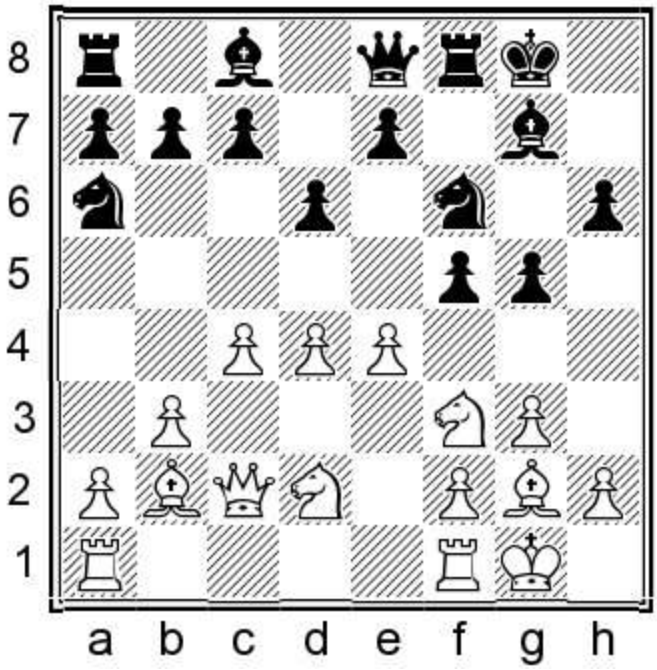
10.♘bd2 g5

10...c6 transposes to variation D22 on page 157.

11.e4

White should strike in the centre without spending any more time on preparation.

chesstouring.com



11...fxe4

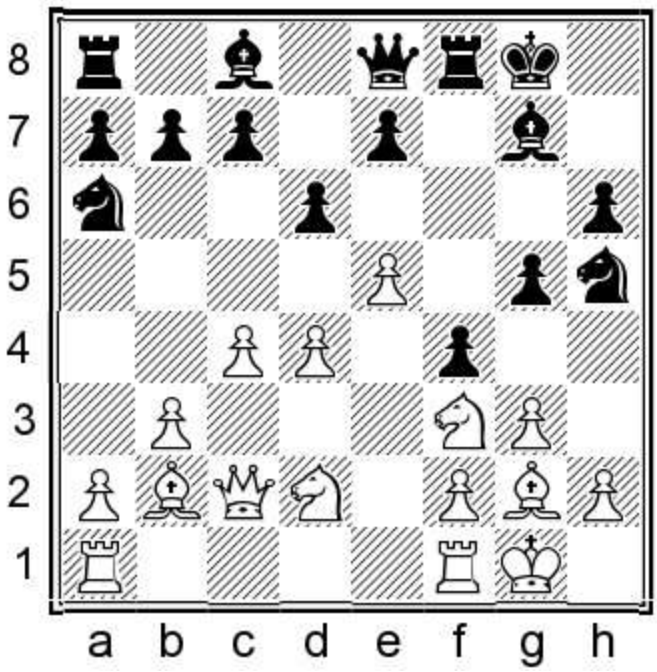
An interesting position arises after:

11...f4!? 12.e5!

12.gxf4?! is clearly the wrong idea, and 12...♘h5! promises Black excellent play on the kingside.

12...♘h5

In Zagorskis – Manik, Hlohovec 1994, the strongest continuation would have been:



13.♖ae1!N

This is more convincing than my previous recommendation of 13.♘e1N. It turns out that Black's two active ideas are nothing to worry about.

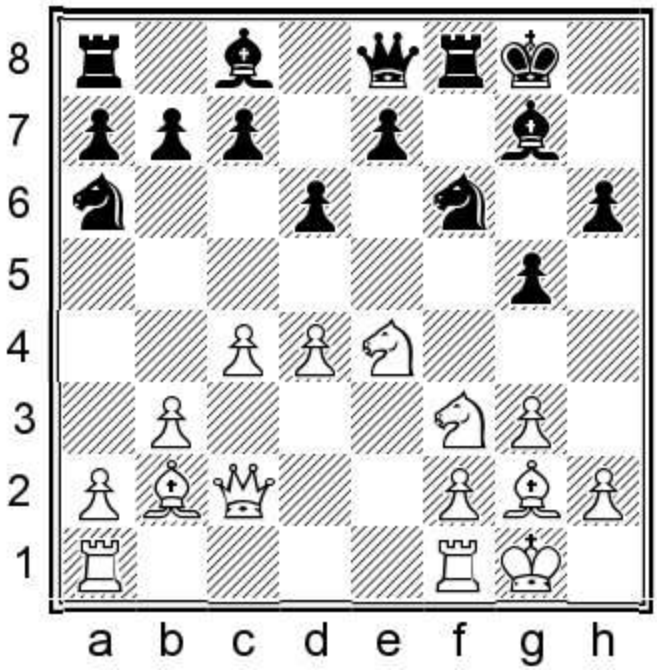
13...♗f5

After 13...g4 14.♘h4 f3 15.♗h1± the bishop is currently in a bad spot, but Black's whole position is

chesstouring.com

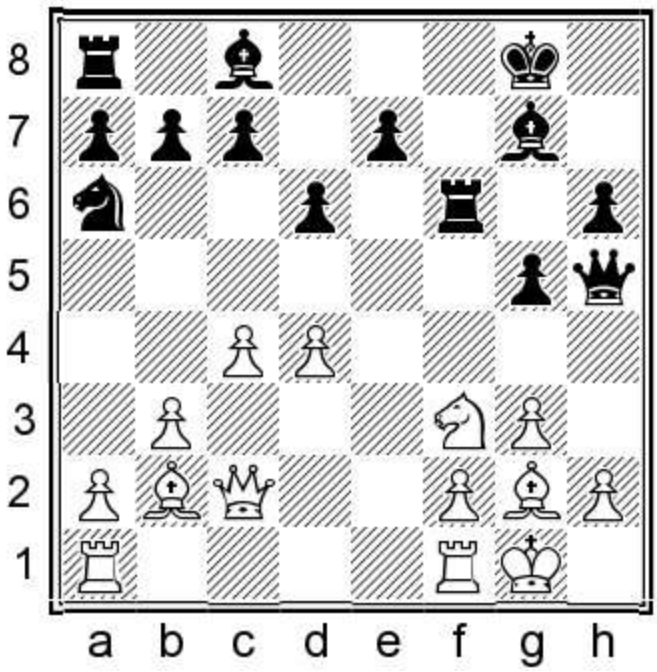
in disarray.
14.♕c3 ♖d8 15.♕a5!
White is clearly better.

12.♘xe4



12...♕g6
In the event of 12...♘xe4 13.♕xe4 Black cannot play 13...♗f5 because the b7-pawn will hang.

12...♕h5 also doesn't work well for Black. 13.♘xf6† ♖xf6 In Ivakhinova – Sivuk, St Petersburg 2013, White had a strong idea at her disposal:



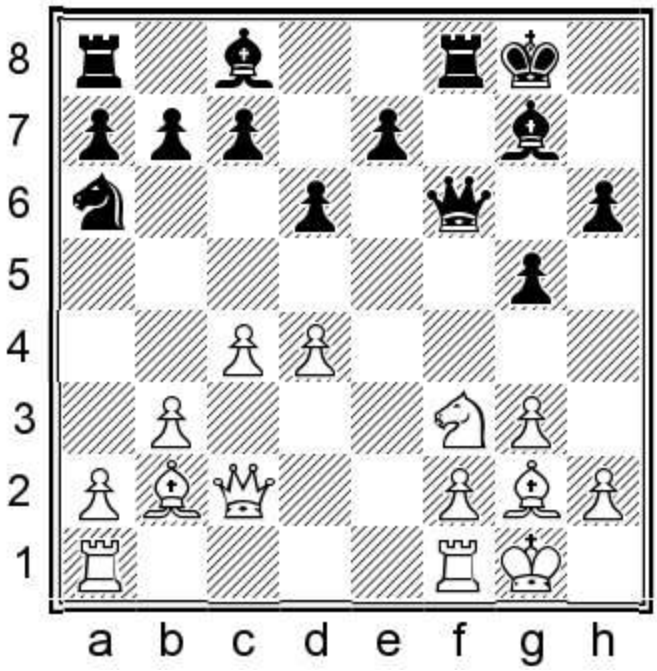
14.♘e1!N 14...♖f7 (even worse is 14...♗f5?! 15.♕d2 c6 16.d5! and White wins material) 15.♗e4! ♘b4

chesstouring.com

16.♕d2 a5 17.♘g2 White is clearly better.

13.♘xf6† ♕xf6

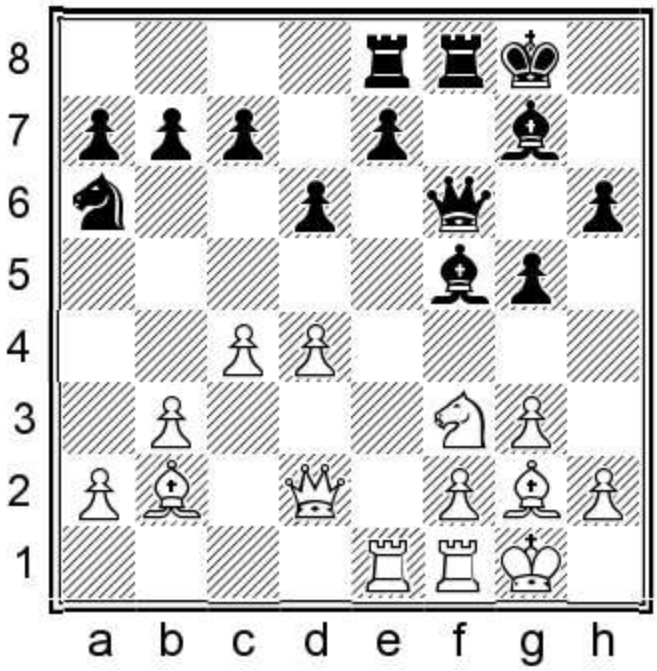
13...♖xf6?! 14.♕xg6 ♖xg6 15.♖fe1 clearly favours White, since Black's rook is obviously misplaced on g6.



14.♖ae1 c6N

Despite being a novelty, this transposes to a bunch of existing games. This position may also be reached via variation A3 of the previous chapter, as was noted at the foot of page 124.

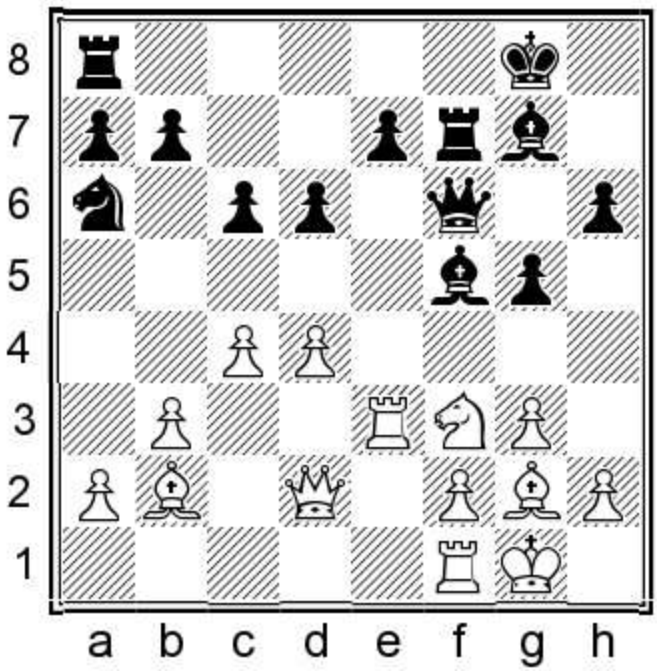
14...♗f5 15.♕d2 ♖ae8 was played in Bagirov – M. Gurevich, Helsinki 1992, when White should have continued with his usual plan:



chesstouring.com

16.♖e3!N 16...e6 17.♖fe1 With a pleasant edge for White.

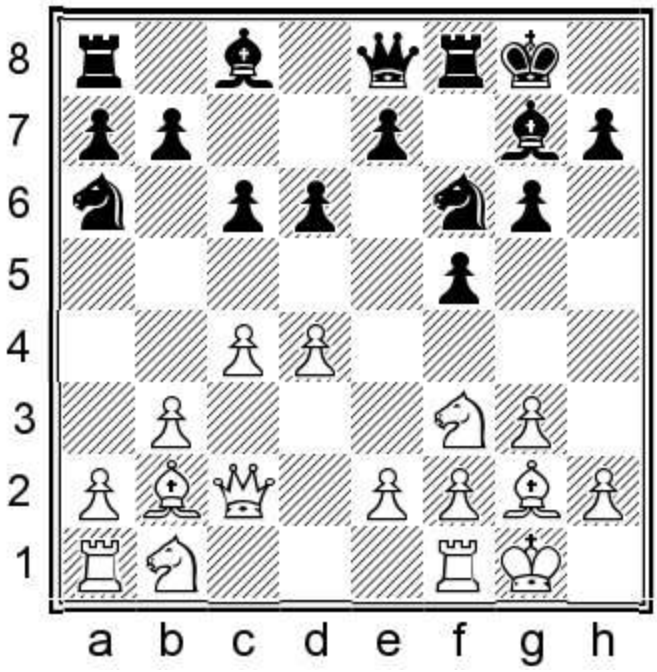
15.♖e3 ♗f5 16.♕d2 ♖f7



17.♖fe1 ♖e8 18.♗c3!

With d4-d5 now on the cards, White enjoyed a nice positional advantage in Dreev – Motwani, Berlin 1991.

D2) 9...c6



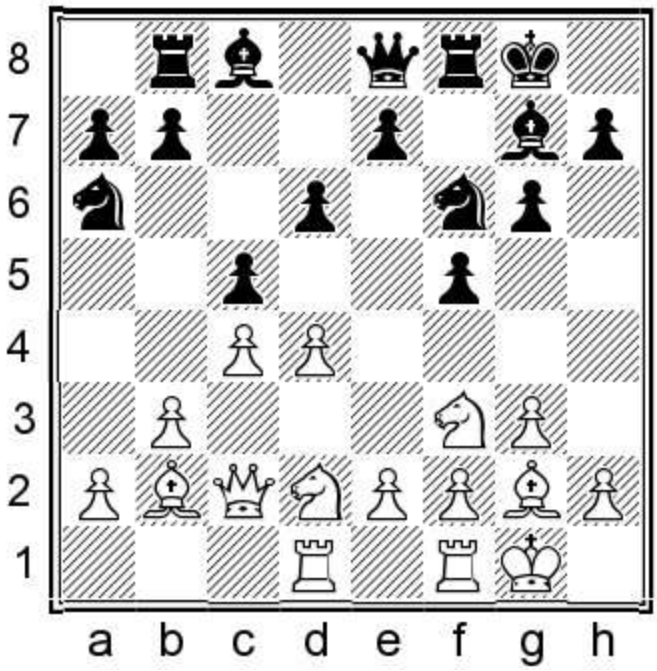
10.♘bd2

This is undoubtedly the right square for the knight, since 10.♘c3?! e5 offers Black easy play.

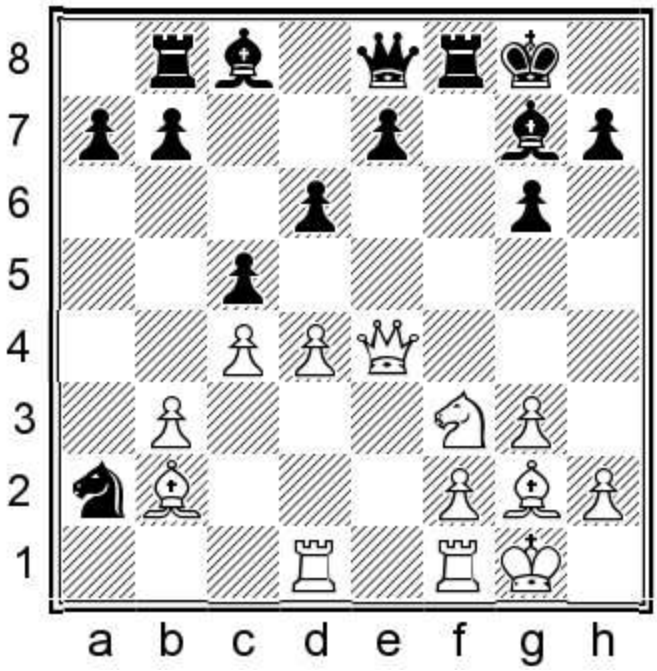
chesstouring.com

Black may continue developing on the queenside with **D21)** 10...♗d7 or on the kingside with **D22)** 10...h6.

10...c5!? is pretty unusual but has been tried by a couple of serious players. It has already been noted that 9.♘bd2 c5! would have been excellent for Black, so it's reasonable to wonder if Black can play it a tempo down. However, after 11.♖ad1 ♖b8, as played in Pogorelov – Bondar, Mondariz 1999, White can exploit the extra tempo with:



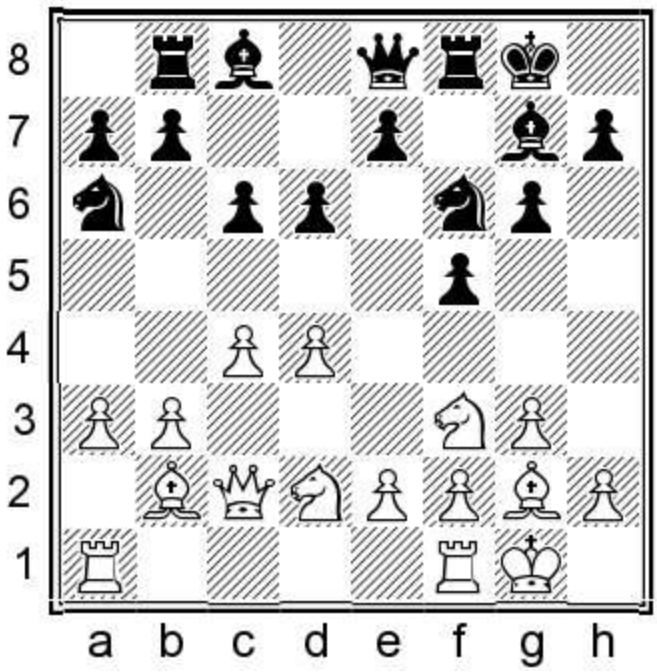
12.e4!N 12...♘b4 13.♕b1 fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♘xe4 (Black should prefer 14...♗f5 although 15.♘fg5!± still promises White the better game) 15.♕xe4 ♘xa2 This is the critical line to check, but it seems too risky for Black after:



chesstouring.com

16.♖d2! ♘b4 17.dxc5 ♗xb2 18.♖xb2 dxc5 19.♖e2 White has an overwhelming initiative for a mere pawn.

Finally, I also checked:
10...♖b8 11.a3



11...♘c7

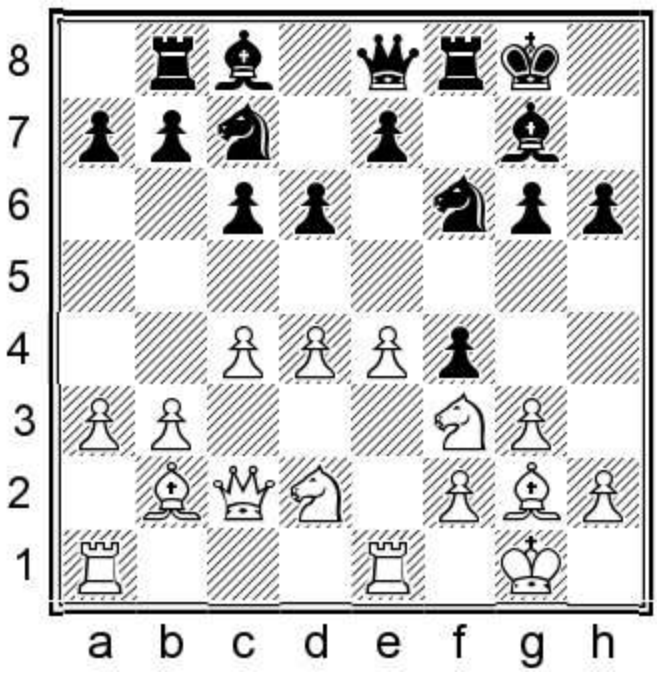
11...b5 is more consistent, when 12.♖ac1 ♗d7 13.b4 transposes to variation D32 below.

12.♖fe1 h6 13.e4

White is well prepared for this break.

13...f4

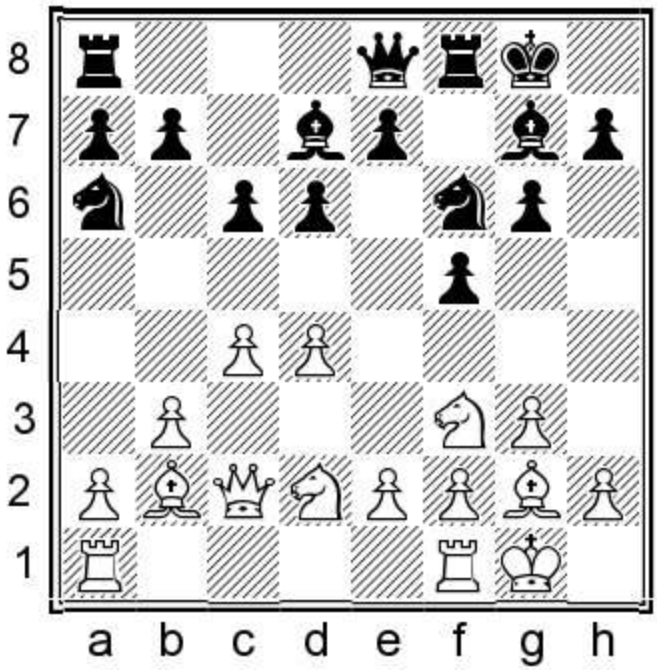
Most probably Black should have settled for 13...fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♘xe4 15.♕xe4 ♗e6, although White enjoys a pleasant edge after 16.♖ac1±.



chesstouring.com

14.e5! dxe5 15.♘xe5±
White obtained a clear plus in Suslov – Murgia, Ohrid 2017.

D21) 10...♗d7

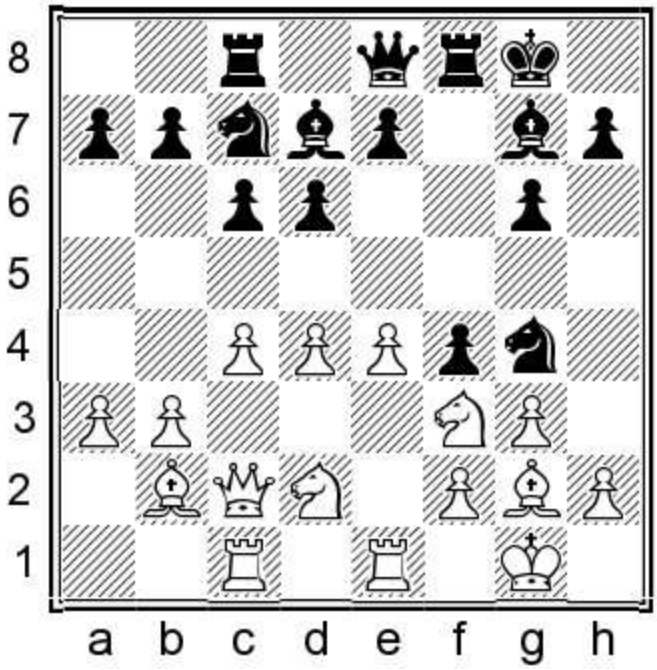


11.a3
It is always useful to restrain the a6-knight.

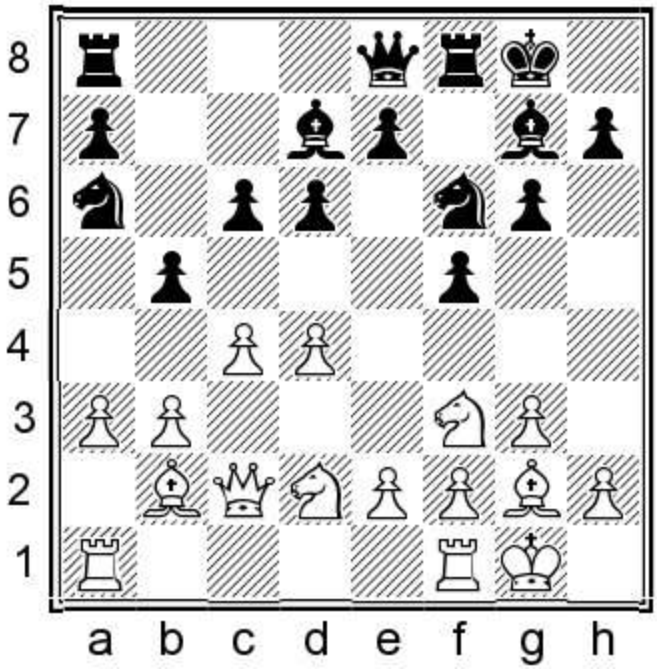
11...b5
Black's other options are not impressive at all, for instance:

11...h6 12.e4 ♘xe4 13.♘xe4 fxe4 14.♕xe4 ♗f5 15.♕e3 ♕f7 16.♘h4! and White was better in Strikovic – Hidalgo Santana, El Sauzal 2003.
11...♘c7 12.♖ac1 ♖c8 13.♖fe1 ♘g4 14.e4 f4 occurred in Clemens – Straver, Leiden 2017, when White should have continued:

chesstouring.com



15.h3!N 15...♘h6 16.g4± With an obvious advantage.



12.♘e1!

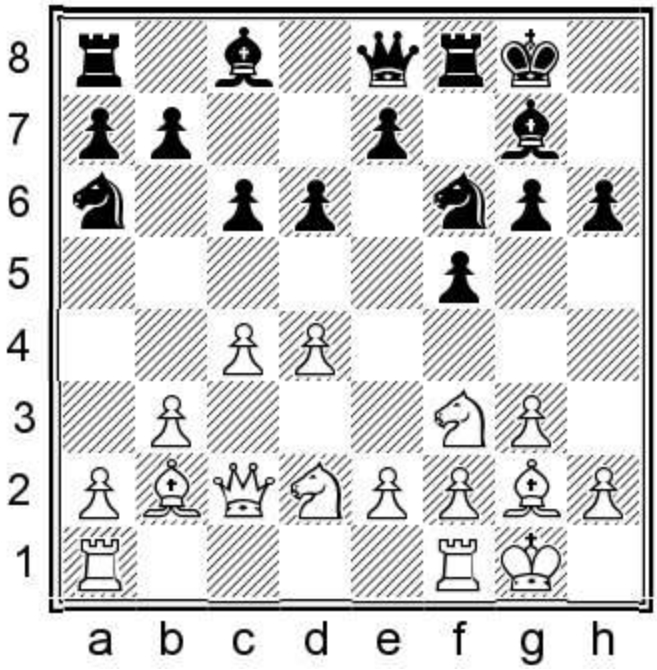
It is worth remembering that White does not only have the single plan of carrying out the e2-e4 break! Transferring the knight to d3 is another thematic way to strengthen his position. A good example continued:

12...♖b8 13.♘d3 ♘c7 14.e3 bxc4 15.bxc4 ♕f7 16.♖ab1

White's positional advantage was obvious in Vivante Sowter – O'Connell, corr. 2015.

D22) 10...h6

chesstouring.com



This is Black's most popular choice, intending to improve his prospects on the kingside.

11.♗c3!?

I still favour this subtle move which I recommended previously. Here are two brief lines showing why I was not fully satisfied with White's other options:

a) 11.e4 fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♕xe4 ♗f5 14.♕e2 (or 14.♕e3 ♘b4 15.♘e1 e5! with counterplay) 14...g5! 15.d5 ♗xb2 16.♕xb2 c5 was double-edged in Pilaj – De la Riva Aguado, Turin (ol) 2006.

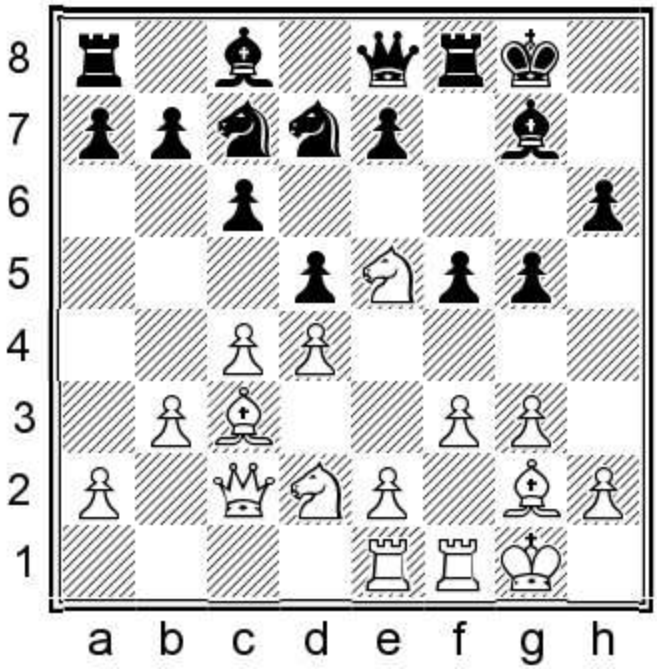
b) Black also manages to create counterplay after: 11.♖ae1 g5 12.e4 ♘b4! 13.♕c3 a5! The drawback of White's 11th move becomes apparent: the a2-pawn is hanging, and after 14.a3 Black has 14...♘xe4 15.♘xe4 fxe4 16.♖xe4 ♗f5 with counterplay, as in Cmilyte – T. Kosintseva, Istanbul 2003.

11...g5

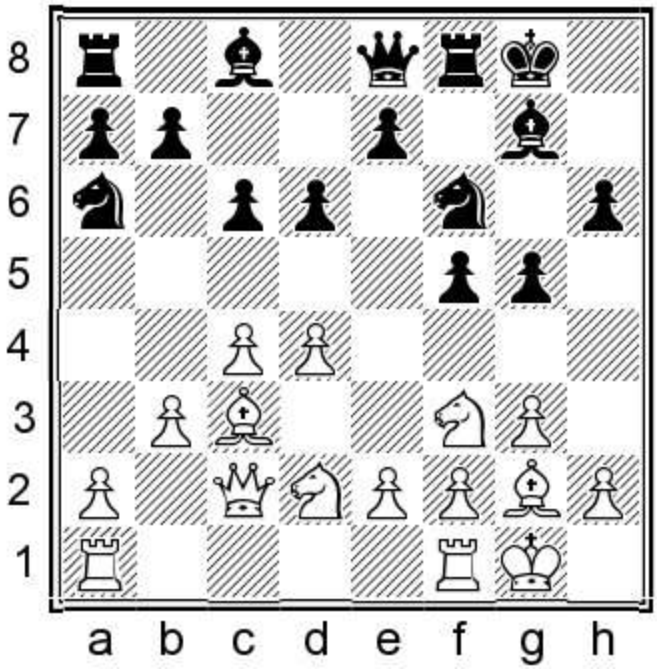
This is Black's most logical and popular choice.

I found two games where Black steered the play in a different direction: 11...♘c7 12.♖ae1 d5 Otherwise e2-e4 comes with great effect. 13.♘e5 g5 14.f3 ♘d7

chesstouring.com



15.♘d3! b5 16.e4± White's opening strategy had clearly succeeded in Liedl – Binder, corr. 2012.



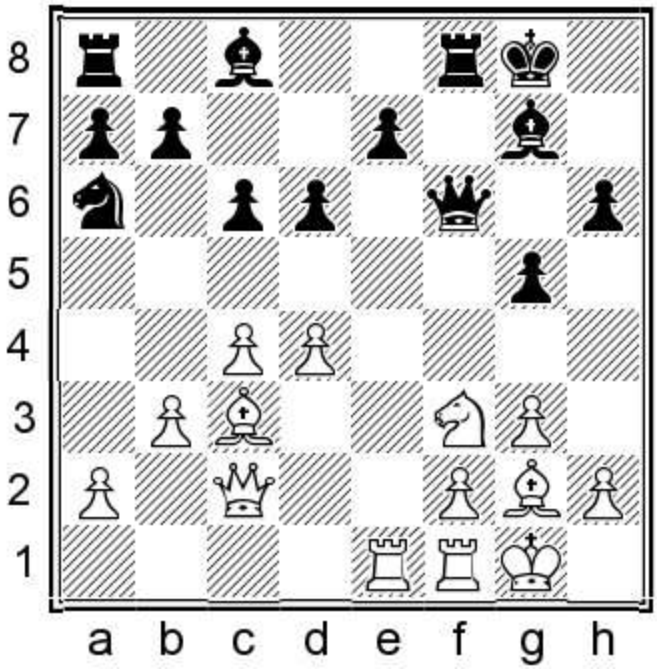
12.e4 fxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4

As usual in such positions, Black can also consider:

13...♕g6 14.♘xf6† ♕xf6 15.♖ae1

My improvement from *GM 2* has received a practical test.

chesstouring.com

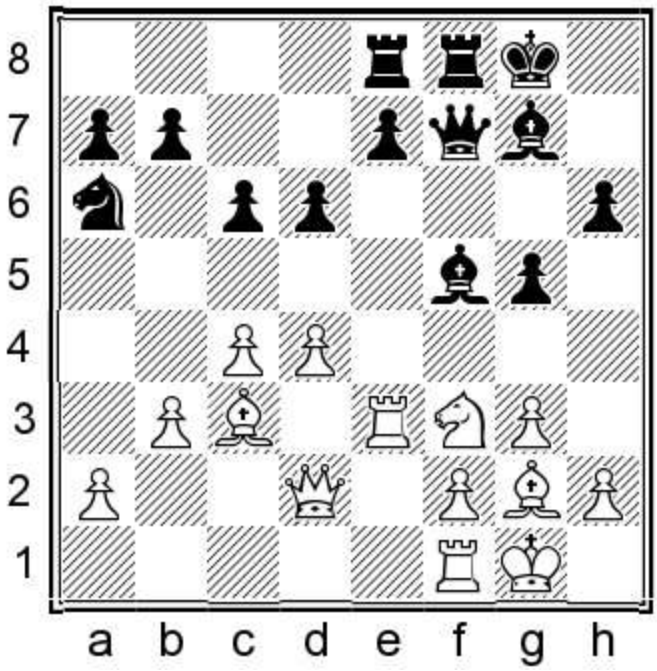


15...♗f5 16.♕d2 ♖ae8

16...e6 17.♖e3± was my previous analysis.

17.♖e3 ♕f7

White subsequently overpressed and lost in Agaragimov – Dzhumaev, St Petersburg 2010, but the outcome had nothing to do with the opening. This would have been a great opportunity for:

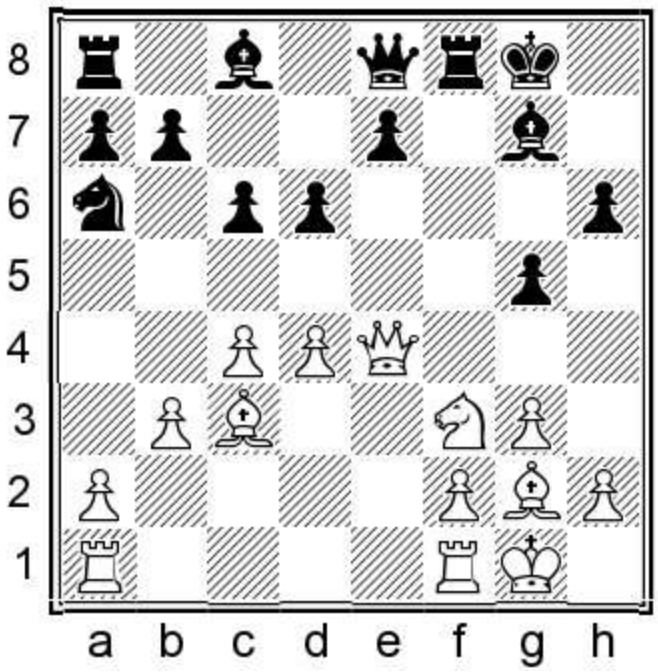


18.d5!N 18...c5 19.♗xg7 ♕xg7 20.♖fe1±

With a solid positional plus.

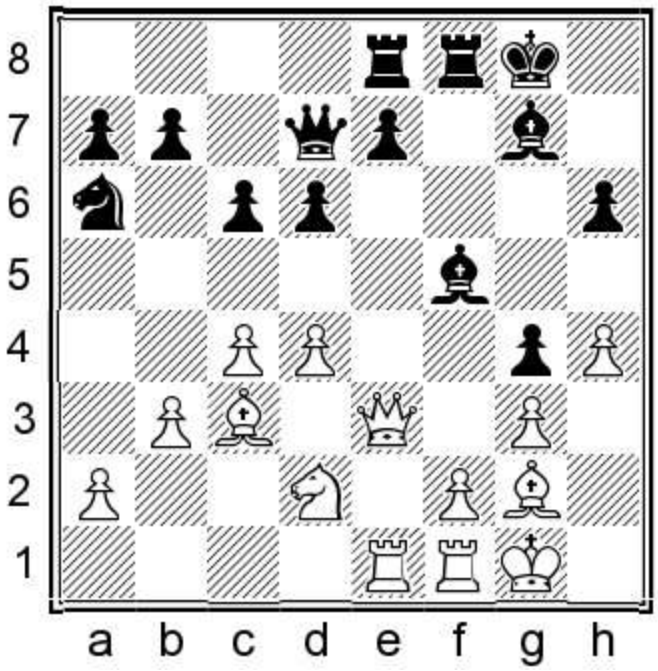
14.♕xe4

chesstouring.com



14...♗f5 15.♕e3 ♕g6

15...♕d7 has been played in several games. I still like my previous suggestion of 16.♖ae1!?N which awaits a practical test. Play may continue: 16...♖ae8 17.h4 It is useful to weaken Black's kingside. 17...g4 18.♘d2



18...♘c7 (18...d5 19.f3! is also promising for White) 19.d5 A well-timed decision. 19...♗xc3 20.♕xc3 e5 21.dxc6 bxc6 22.b4 White has easy play on the queenside.

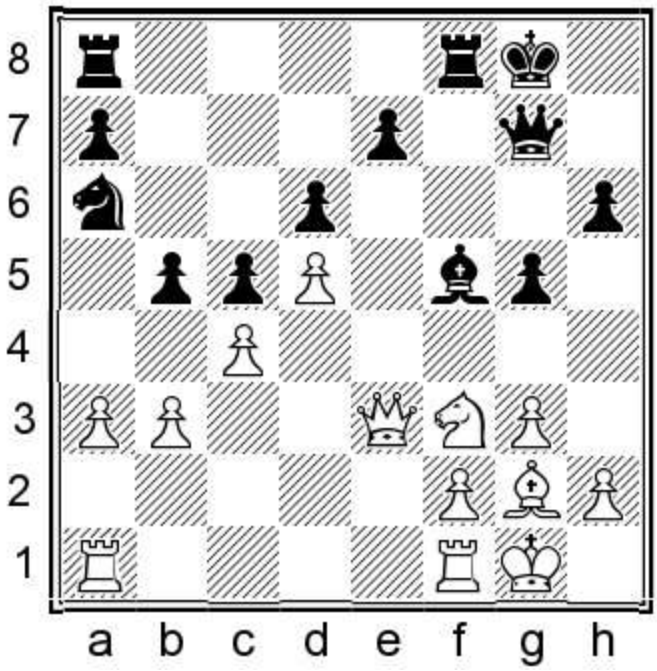
16.d5 c5 17.a3 b5!?

Rather than defending a passive position, Black took a practical decision to try and obtain counterplay. In the game it worked okay, but White's play can be improved.

chesstouring.com

18.♗xg7 ♕xg7

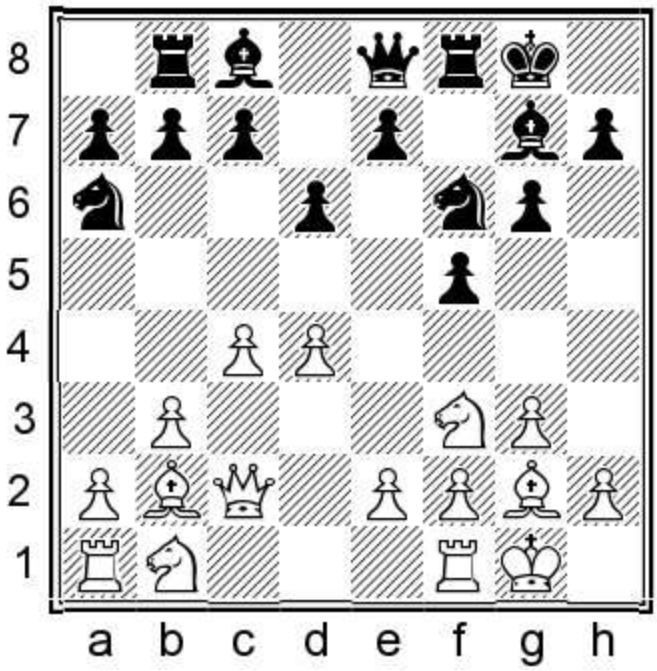
In Wagner – Piorun, Bad Wiessee 2014, White missed the following nice idea:



19.cxb5N 19...♘c7 20.b4! ♘xd5 21.♕b3 e6 22.bxc5 dxc5 23.♖fe1±

With a large positional advantage due to Black's ruined pawn structure.

D3) 9...♖b8



This is Black's most popular continuation. Since White is planning to develop his knight to d2, Black hopes to profit by gaining some queenside space with ...b5.

10.♘bd2

chesstouring.com

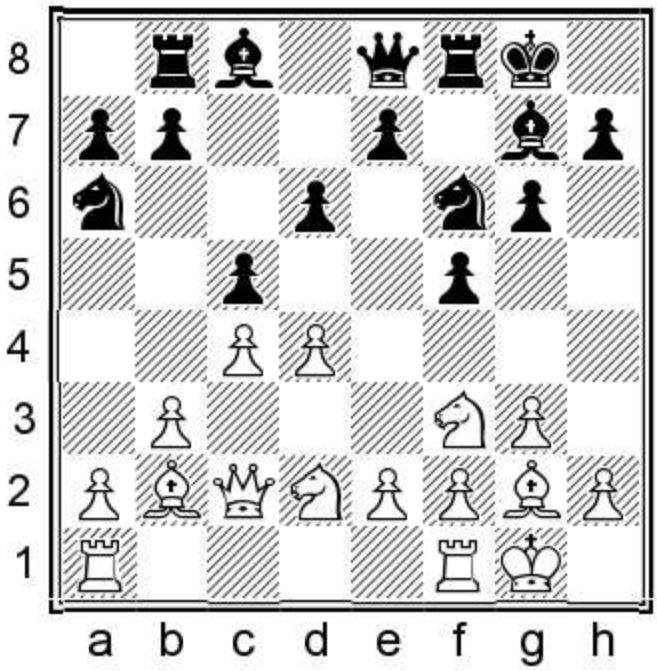
Despite Black's plans, this remains the most flexible square for White's knight.

D31) 10...c5!? has been tried by some strong players but **D32)** 10...b5 is more popular and looks more natural to me.

10...c6 reaches a position on page 155 – see 10...♖b8 in the notes.

D31) 10...c5!?

Black's last few moves may appear disjointed, but it has already been noted on page 152 that 9.♘bd2 c5! would have been good for Black, and on page 155 we even saw Black trying the same idea a tempo down after 9.♕c2 c6 10.♘bd2 c5!?. This version falls in between the two extremes: Black has a better version of the note on page 155 since ...♖b8 is of some value to him, but his position is not as good as the version from page 152, and I believe White maintains the better chances with natural play.



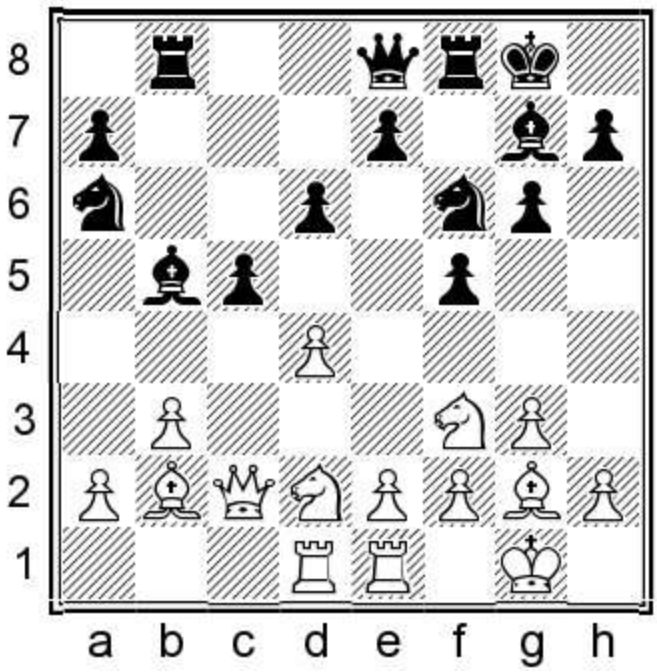
11.♖ad1 ♗d7

White is well prepared for 11...b5 12.dxc5 ♘xc5 13.cxb5 ♖xb5 14.♘d4! with a useful initiative.

12.♖fe1 ♘b4

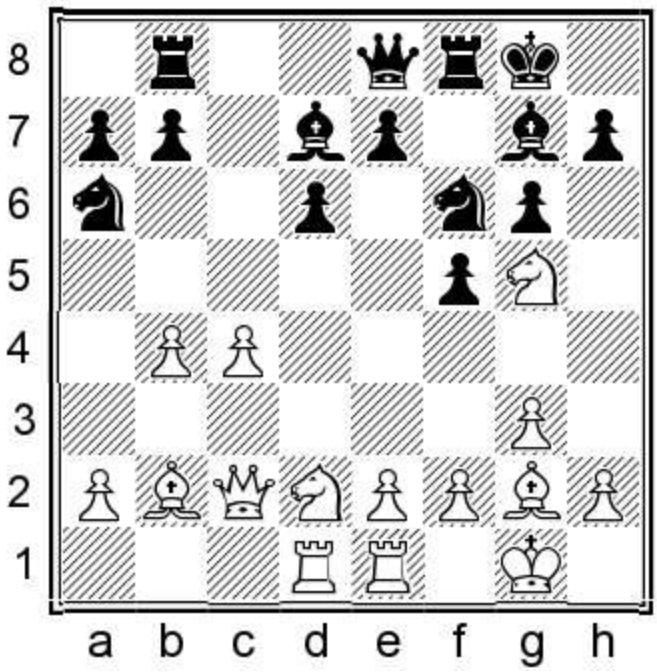
Again White is ready for 12...b5, as the following game demonstrated: 13.cxb5 ♗xb5 (13...♖xb5 14.♕b1! also looks excellent for White)

chesstouring.com



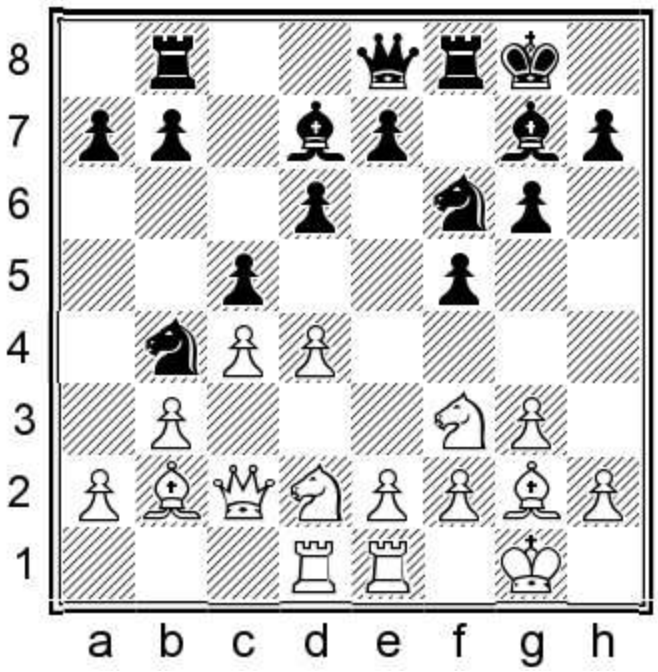
14.a4! ♘b4 15.♕c1 ♗a6 16.dxc5 ♖c8 17.♕c3 dxc5 18.♘c4± White obtained a solid advantage in Hracek – Bologan, Tromso 2013.

12...♕f7 13.dxc5 ♘xc5 14.♘g5! ♕e8 15.b4 ♘a6 occurred in Witzschel – Starke, corr. 2014. I think White should have continued:



16.♕c3N 16...h6 17.♘gf3 e5 18.e4 White is clearly better.

chesstouring.com



13.♕b1 cxd4 14.♘xd4 ♕f7

Please pay attention to the following idea, as it is extremely effective and yet would be easy to overlook.

15.♘4f3!

Improving over 15.♗c3 as played in Schiffer – Lutz, Groningen 1995.

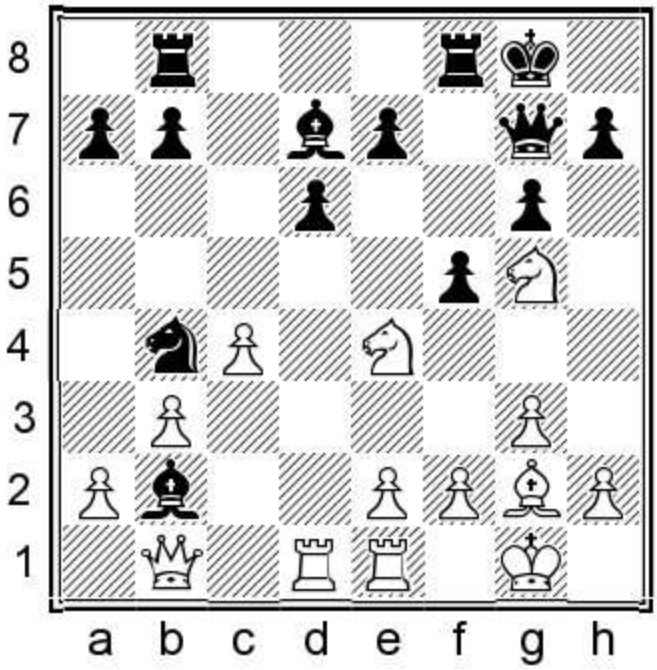
The text move is my novelty from *GM 2*. It received a successful test in a correspondence game, which continued:

15...♘e4?!

My previous analysis continued: 15...h6 16.c5! A temporary pawn sacrifice, underlining Black's poor coordination. 16...dxc5 17.♘e5 ♕e8 18.♕c1 ♘a6 19.e4! White has fantastic play for the pawn.

16.♘xe4 ♗xb2 17.♘fg5 ♕g7

chesstouring.com



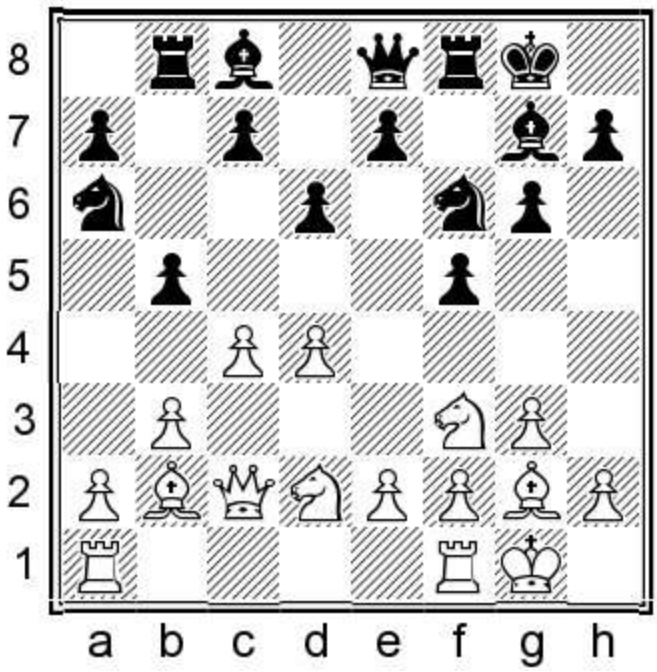
18.♘c5!

An elegant refutation of Black's play.

18...dxc5 19.♖xd7 ♕f6 20.♖ed1+–

Black resigned just seven moves later in Grube – Hempel, email 2010.

D32) 10...b5



Black naturally follows his plan.

11.a3 c6

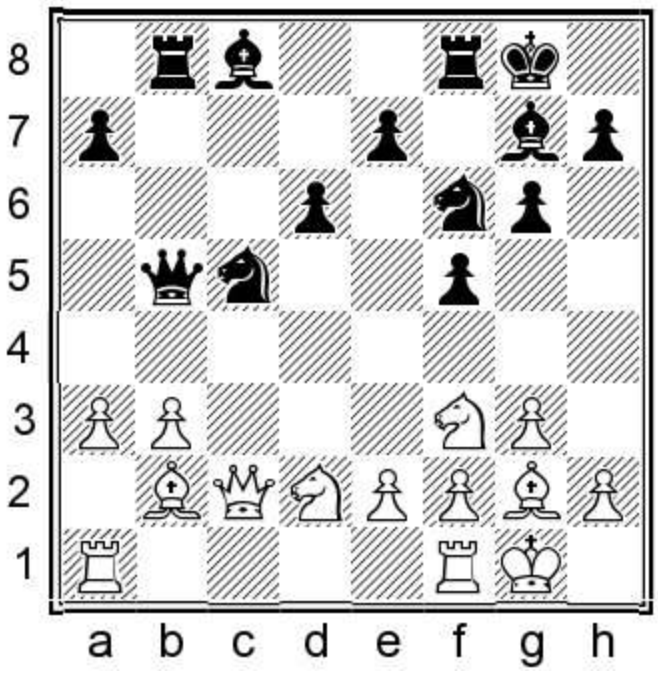
chesstouring.com

I checked three other possibilities:

11...c5?!

Opening further queenside lines is too risky.

12.dxc5 ♘xc5 13.cxb5 ♕xb5



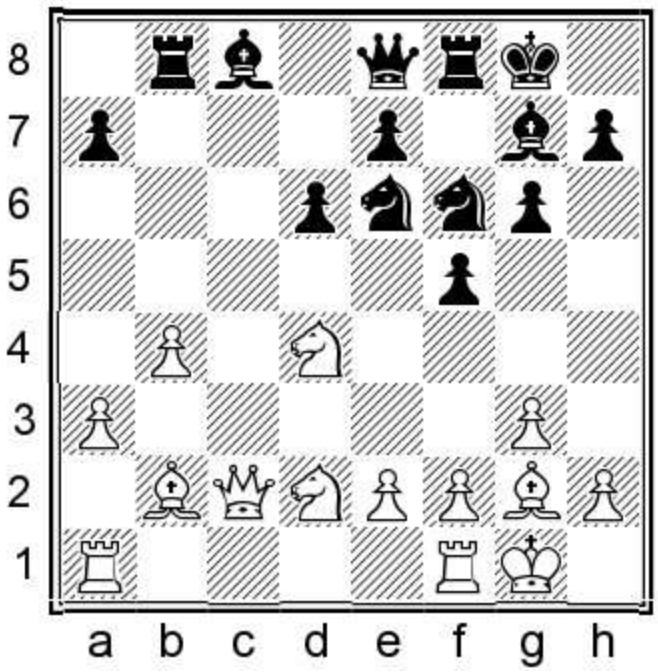
14.♘d4! ♕e8

Even worse is 14...♕d7 15.b4 ♘ce4 16.♘xe4 fxe4 Heigermoser – N. Yusupov, Bavaria 2015, and now the simple 17.♘c6!N 17...♖b6 18.♖ac1 ♗b7 19.♘a5 would have stabilized White's clear advantage.

15.b4 ♘e6

15...♘ce4 does not improve the assessment for Black: 16.♘c6 ♖b6 (or 16...♘xd2 17.♕xd2 ♖b7 18.♖ac1±) 17.♘xa7 ♗b7 18.♘xe4 fxe4 19.♗d4 and White was already winning in Khismatullin – A. Mastrovasilis, Chalkis 2010.

chesstouring.com

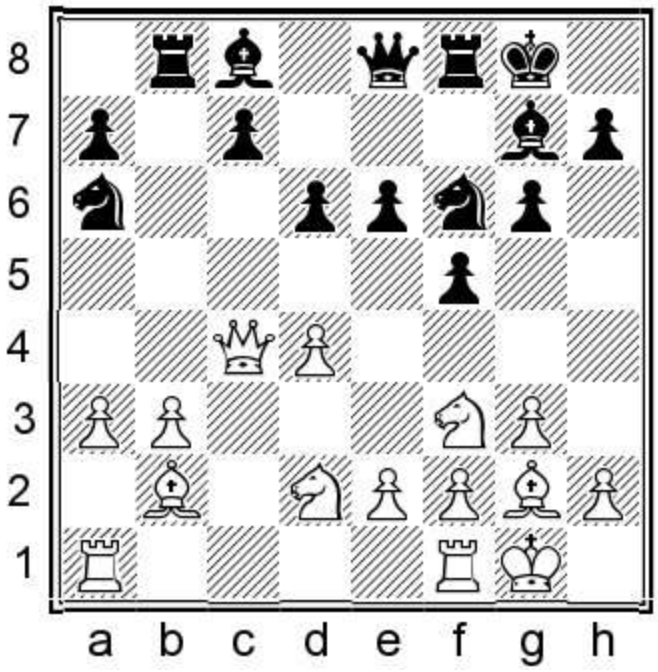


16.♕b3 ♕f7 17.♘c6 ♖b7 18.♖ac1 ♖c7 19.♖c2

White enjoyed a pleasant advantage due to her strong knight on c6 in Cramling – E. Berg, Malmo 2001.

11...bxc4 12.♕xc4† e6

12...♕f7 13.♕c2 e6 14.b4 gave White a nice positional advantage in Kukula – Nent, email 2010.



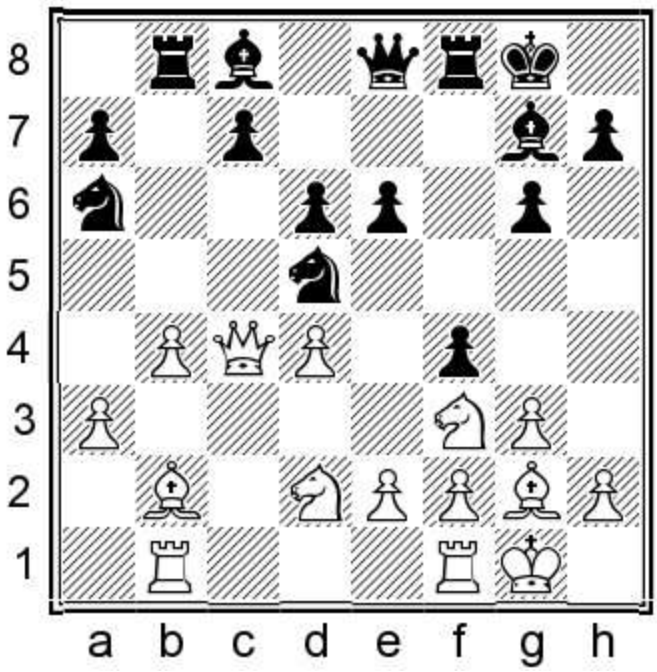
13.b4 ♘d5

After 13...♖b6 14.♖ac1 ♗b7 15.e3 ♗d5 16.♕c2± White secured a pleasant positional edge in Jacobs – Schorra, email 2004.

14.♖ab1 f4

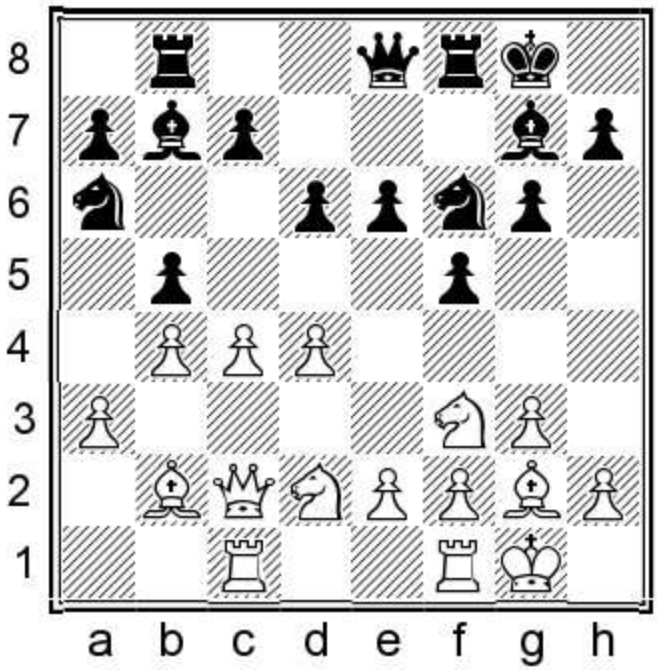
In Pugh – Buessing, corr. 2010, White should have played:

chesstouring.com



15.♖fe1!N 15...♖b6 16.e4 fxe3 17.fxe3 ♗h6 18.♕d3
With a solid edge.

Finally, I also considered:
11...♗b7 12.b4!
This is more accurate than 12.♖ac1 when, instead of transposing to the line below with 12...e6 13.b4, Black can steer the game in another direction with 12...b4, which has led to solid results for him in two correspondence games.
12...e6 13.♖ac1
White slowly improves his position on the queenside, while Black suffers from the misplaced knight on a6.



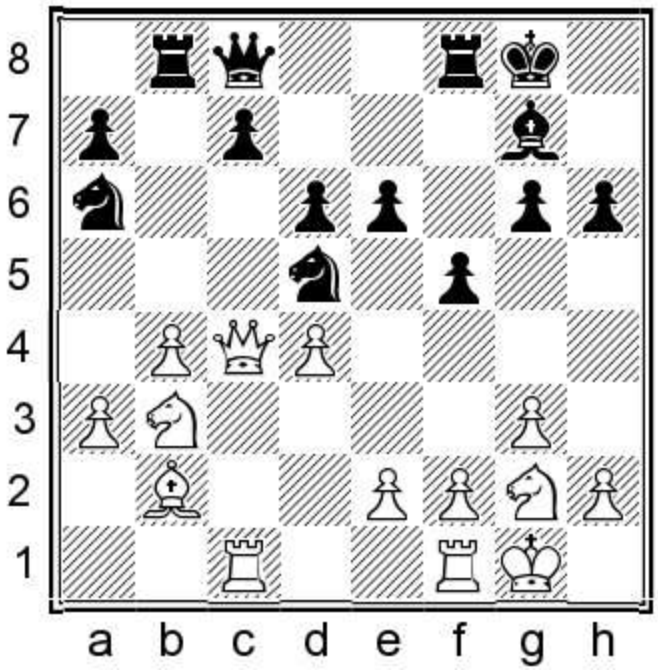
chesstouring.com

13...bxc4

After 13...♘e4 I sugges14.e3 bxc4 15.♘xc4 g5 and now in Kristensen – Bocanegra Moreno, corr. 2005, White missed a strong idea: 16.♘a5!N 16...♗d5 17.♘d2 ♘xd2 18.♕xd2 ♗xg2 19.♔xg2 With an obvious positional superiority.

14.♕xc4 h6 15.♘b3 ♕c8 16.♘h4 ♗xg2 17.♘xg2 ♘d5

This was Sundararajan – Sharma, New Delhi 2007. A powerful idea is:

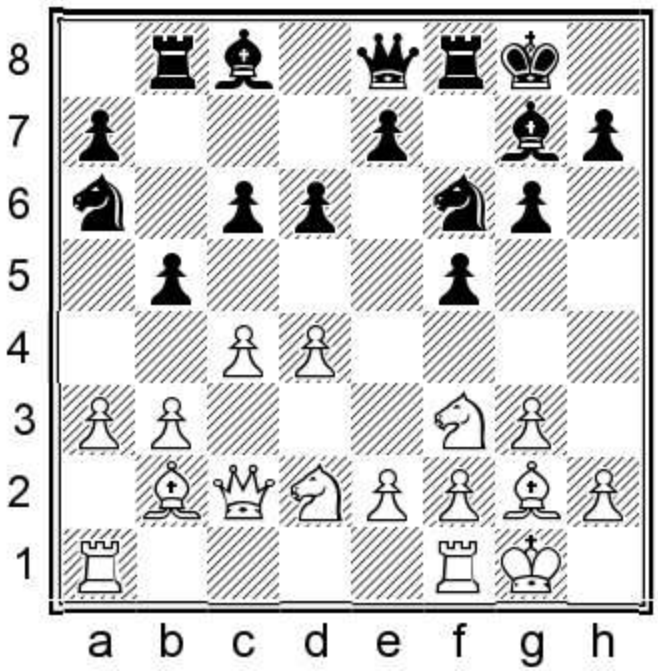


18.♘a5!N

In *GM 2* I recommended the prophylactic 18.♗a1N, but there is actually no need to fear Black's next move:

18...c5 19.e4! fxe4 20.♕e2

With a great advantage for White.



chesstouring.com

12.♖ac1

White can also start with 12.b4 which most probably is just a transposition after 12...♘c7 13.♖ac1 ♗d7. However, unlike the 11...♗b7 line in the note above, there is no need to rush with b3-b4 here.

12...♗d7

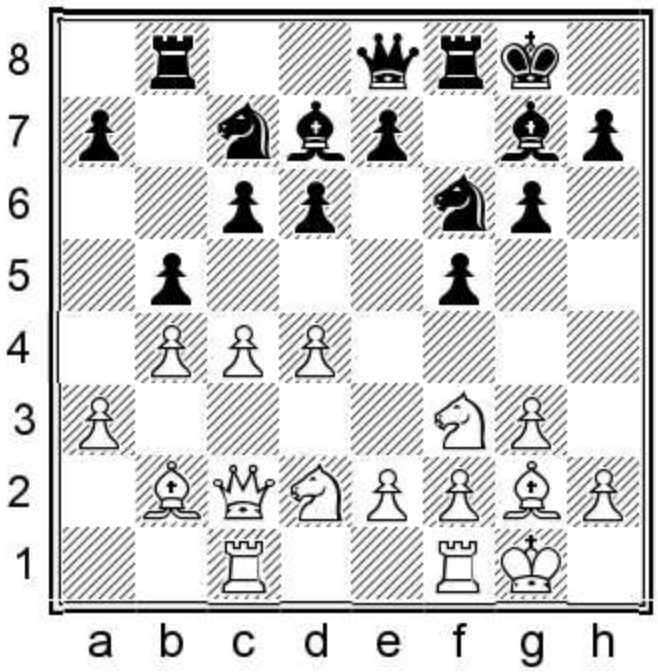
This seems the most logical follow-up.

12...b4 is not something to worry about here. White reacted well with 13.♖a1!, and after 13...♕d7 14.♘e1 bxa3 15.♖xa3 ♘b4 16.♕c1 he enjoyed a clear positional plus in Hollands – Pichushkin, corr. 2013.

Black has also tried 12...h6, when 13.♘e1! g5 14.♘d3 was a nice manoeuvre. 14...♗d7 15.e3± White enjoyed the better prospects with her knight controlling several key squares in Cramling – Movsziszian, Vila Real 2001.

13.b4 ♘c7

Again Black's alternatives are not very impressive. For example, 13...♔h8 14.♘b3 ♘e4 and now in Harika – Sowray, London 2013, White should have played 15.♘fd2!N 15...♘xd2 16.♕xd2± with an obvious advantage.



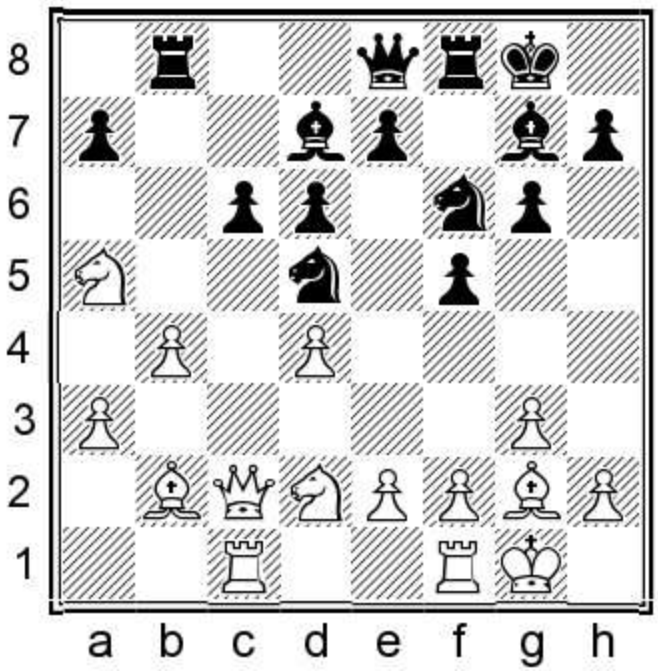
14.cxb5!

An important moment. White exploits the fact that Black cannot recapture with the c6-pawn, which means it will be left as a long-term weakness.

14...♖xb5

14...♘xb5 15.♘b3 also leaves White with a comfortable edge, for instance: 15...♘c7 16.♘a5 ♘cd5 17.♘d2

chesstouring.com



17...♗h6 18.e3 ♖c8 19.♕d3 ♖c7 20.♖c2± Maia – Wansink, corr. 2012.

15.♘b3 ♘cd5 16.e3 ♘e4

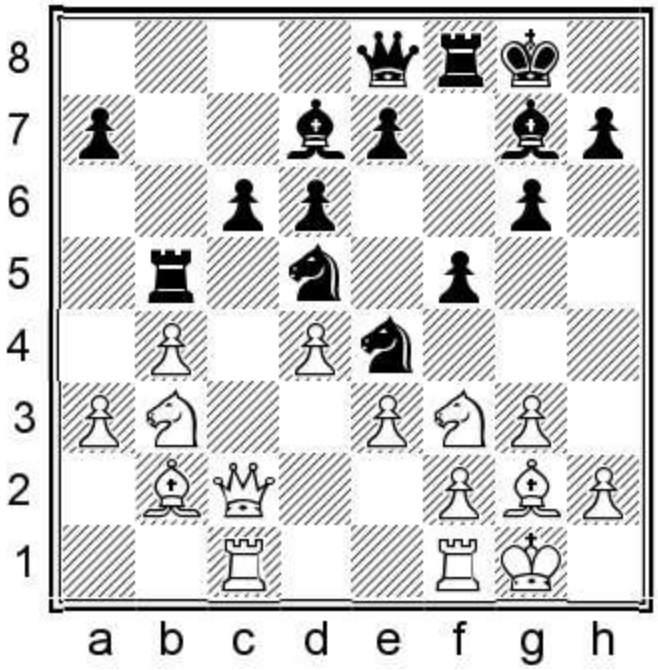
Since *GM 2* was published Black has tried a few different options here, none of which brought him much relief. For example:

16...♕b8 17.♘fd2 ♖c8 18.♖fe1 is a line I mentioned in *GM 2*, when White's ideas include f2-f3 and e3-e4, or ♗f1. Black tried 18...♗e6 in Kavutskiy – P. Wang, Los Angeles 2010, when 19.♘a5!± would have been strongest, since 19...c5? 20.e4 only makes matters worse for Black.

16...h6 17.♘fd2 g5 18.♖fe1 ♔h8 19.♘a5 ♖b6 20.♘ac4 ♖b8 21.f3± gave White a dominant position in Banusz – Bonafede, Fano 2013.

16...♖b8 17.♘a5 ♖c8 18.♕d3 ♗h6 19.♖c2 ♕f7 20.♘d2± White was clearly better in Mickevicius – Anikeev, corr. 2015.

chesstouring.com



17.♘fd2!

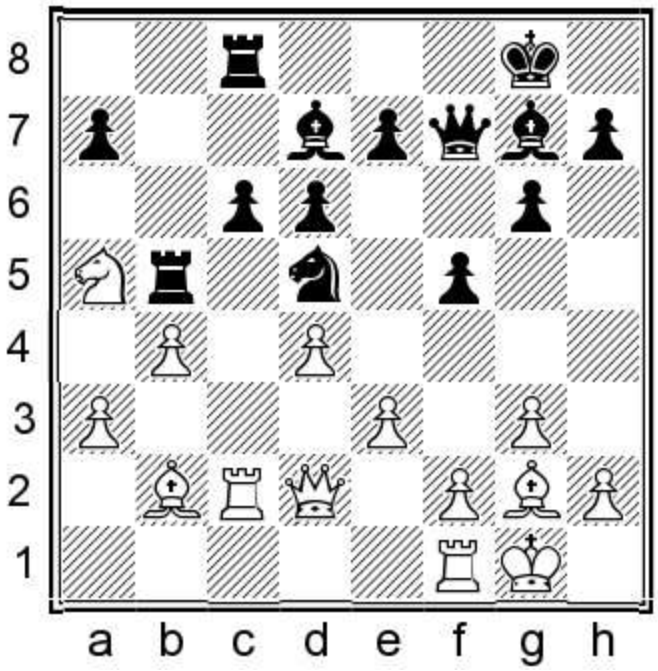
Forcing a favourable knight exchange.

17...♘xd2

17...♘ef6 doesn't help Black at all. 18.♘a5 ♕f7 19.♕d3 ♖c8 occurred in S. Colin – Vohl, corr. 2010, and now the simple 20.♖c2N would have given White a clear advantage.

18.♕xd2 ♕f7 19.♘a5 ♖c8 20.♖c2

White's play is both natural and strong.



20...♖b6 21.♖fc1 ♗f8 22.♕d3 e6

chesstouring.com

We have been following Ruck – Pflug, Austria 2004. I believe White's best way forward would have been:

23.f3!?N

Intending e3-e4. Black has serious problems and White dominates the board.

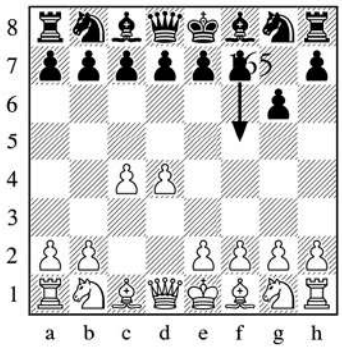
Conclusion

7...♕e8 is arguably the most challenging way for Black to meet our set-up, as the queen supports a possible ...e5 advance while also preparing to emerge on g6 or h5 later. After 8.c4 we saw that the immediate 8...e5 is premature, so Black should proceed with one of the various possible knight moves, of which 8...♘a6 is the most important. I still favour 9.♕c2! as the most accurate move to keep the b1-knight flexible, while anticipating the possible ...c5 plan which has become quite popular lately. Black has several options but I prefer White in all variations, although he certainly needs to know some of the finer details if he is to make the most of his chances.

chesstouring.com



Dutch



St Petersburg

Variation Index

1.d4 g6

2.c4

A) 2...f5?! 3.h4! 166

A1) 3...♗g7 4.h5 166

A11) 4...d6 166

A12) 4...c5 168

A2) 3...♘f6 4.h5 170

A21) 4...♗g7 171

A22) 4...♘xh5 172

B) 2...♗g7 3.♘f3 174

B1) 3...d6 174

B2) 3...c5 176

B3) 3...f5 4.g3 ♘f6 5.b3! 181

B31) 5...c5 181

B32) 5...d6 6.♗b2 0-0 7.♗g2 183

B321) 7...e5 184

B322) 7...♘e4 186

B323) 7...c6 8.0-0 187

chesstouring.com

B3231) 8...e5 188

B3232) 8...♕c7 189

1.d4 g6 2.c4

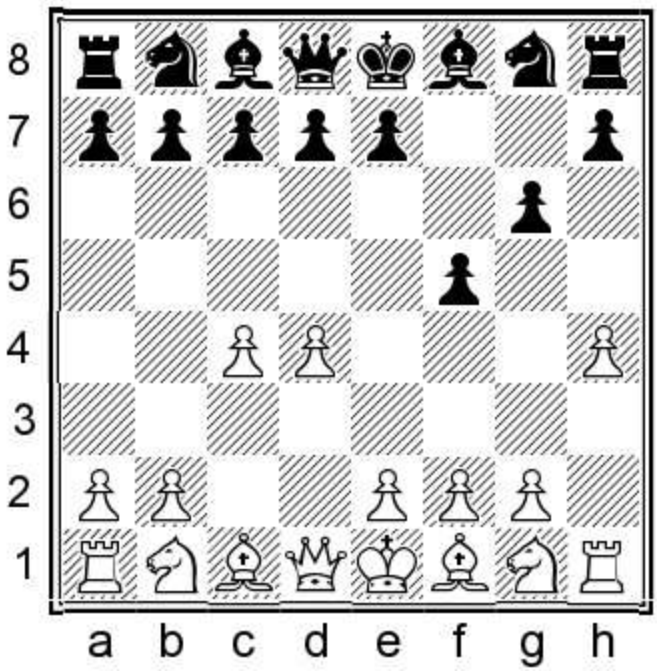
In this chapter we will consider a number of ways in which Black can start with a Modern Defence move order but then switch plans with ...f5, aiming for a version of the Leningrad Dutch that is not part of our repertoire. As Black is toying with a "modern" version of the Leningrad, the St Petersburg Dutch seems an appropriate term for his scheme.

We will examine the crude **A)** 2...f5?! followed by the more flexible **B)** 2...♗g7.

A) 2...f5?!

This attempt to reach the Leningrad walks into a strong counterpunch.

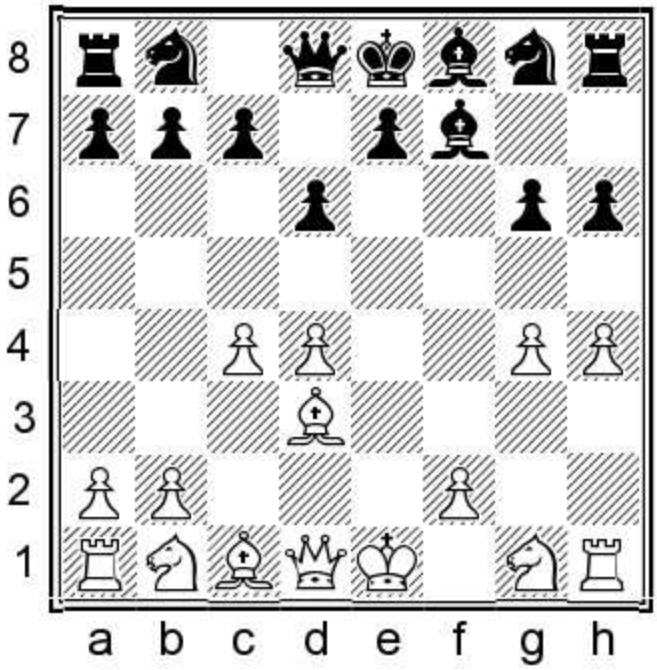
3.h4!



Black already faces a difficult situation, with **A1)** 3...♗g7 and **A2)** 3...♘f6 his main options.

3...h6 runs into the powerful 4.e4! d6 (the pawn is untouchable: 4...fxe4? 5.♕g4 ♔f7 6.h5+–) 5.exf5 ♗xf5 6.g4 ♗e6 7.♗d3 ♗f7 as occurred in Barle – T. Horvath, Sukhumi 1970. White's positional superiority is not in question and a good continuation would have been:

chesstouring.com



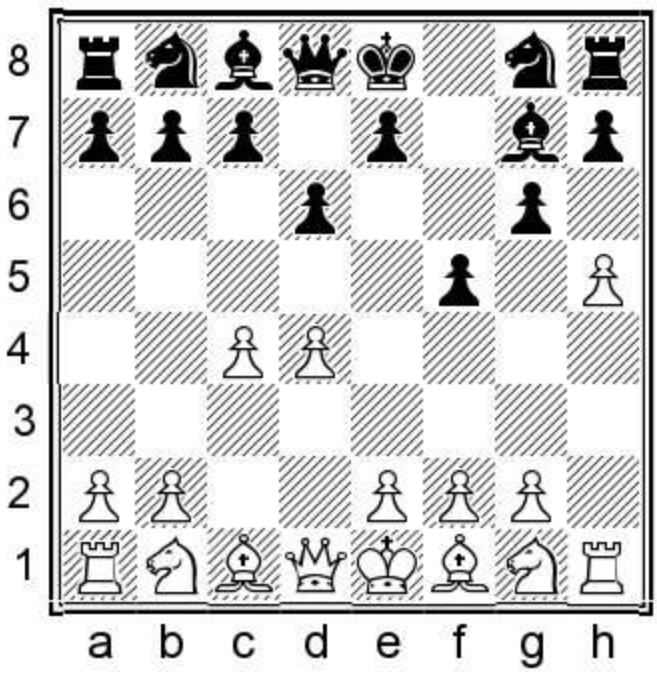
8.♘f3N 8...♗g7 9.♘c3 e5 10.d5 ♘d7 11.♗e3 ♘e7 12.♘d2 White maintains a clear advantage.

A1) 3...♗g7 4.h5

Depending on the circumstances, White can either open the h-file or play h5-h6 to force the black bishop to a poor position. We will analyse **A11)** 4...d6 and **A12)** 4...c5.

4...♘f6 converts to the later variation A21 on page 171.

A11) 4...d6

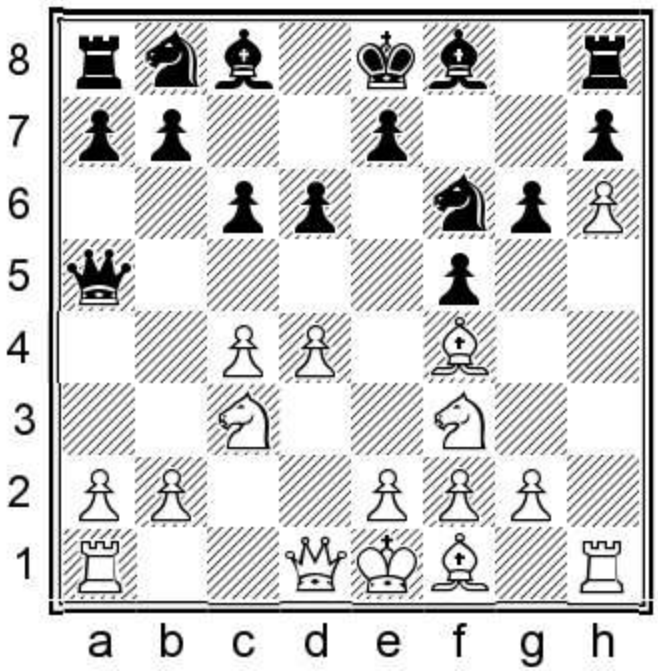


chesstouring.com

5.♘f3 ♘c6

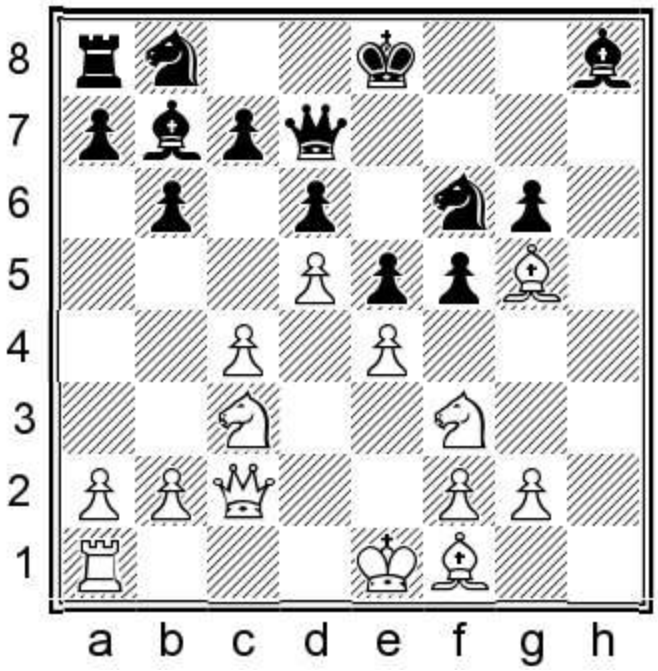
I checked two other options:

5...c6 6.♘c3 ♘f6 7.h6! ♗f8 8.♗f4 ♕a5 occurred in Guimaraes – Cuesta Navarro, Mondariz 1996. Natural and strong would have been:



9.a3N 9...♘e4 10.b4 ♕c7 11.♕d3 With a solid edge for White.

5...e6 6.♘c3 ♘f6 7.hxg6 hxg6 8.♖xh8† ♗xh8 9.♗g5 ♕d7 10.♕c2 b6 11.e4 is a good example showing efficient play by White. 11...♗b7 12.d5! e5?! Black's last move was a mistake in a difficult situation. In Torres Rosas – Ali Marandi, New York 2017, White missed an elegant way to decide the game:



13.c5!N 13...bxc5 14.♗b5 c6 15.♗a4! ♘a6 16.0-0-0+– The pressure on Black's position is becoming

chesstouring.com

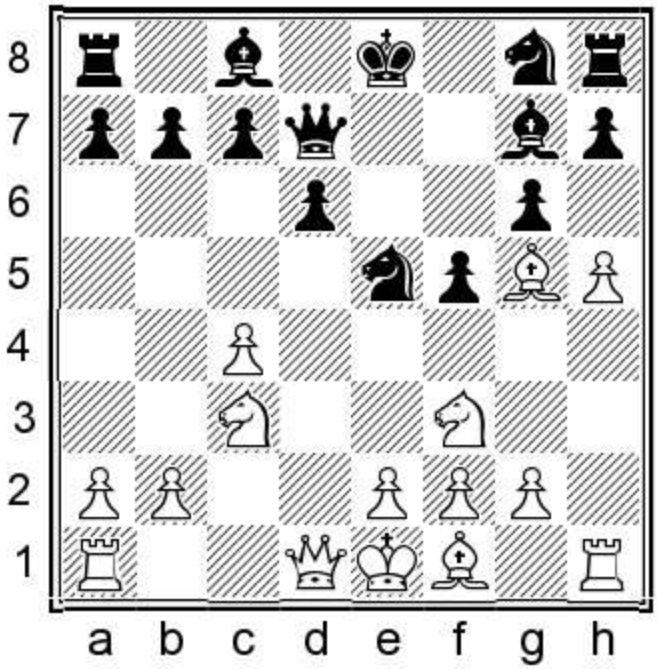
intolerable.

6.♘c3 e5

This has been played in almost all the games and is consistent with Black's previous move, but it's extremely dangerous for him.

7.♗g5 ♕d7 8.dxe5! ♘xe5

Even worse is: 8...dxe5? 9.♘b5! Threatening to exchange queens, after which Black will be unable to maintain the defence of the c7-pawn. 9...♕f7 10.♕d5! Black unavoidably loses material.



9.♘xe5 dxe5

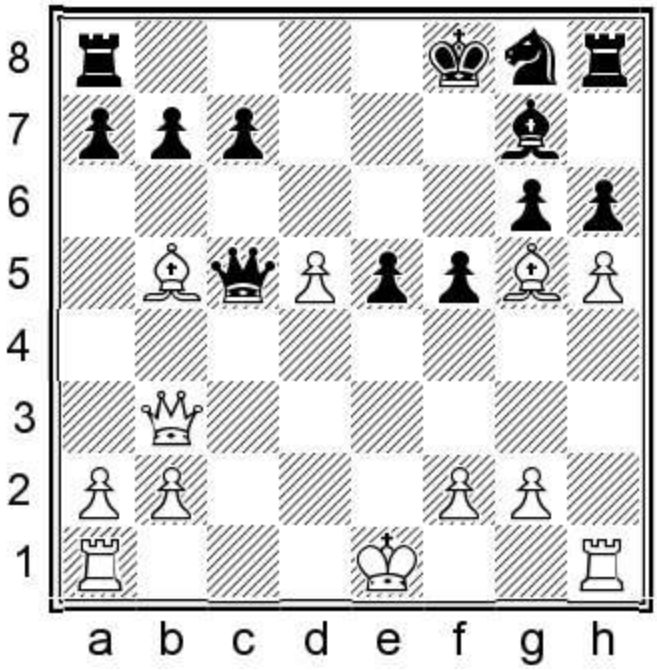
9...♗xe5N is objectively a better try, but after 10.hxg6 hxg6 11.♖xh8 ♗xh8 12.♕d2 Black's position looks shaky due to his exposed king and undeveloped pieces.

10.♘b5N

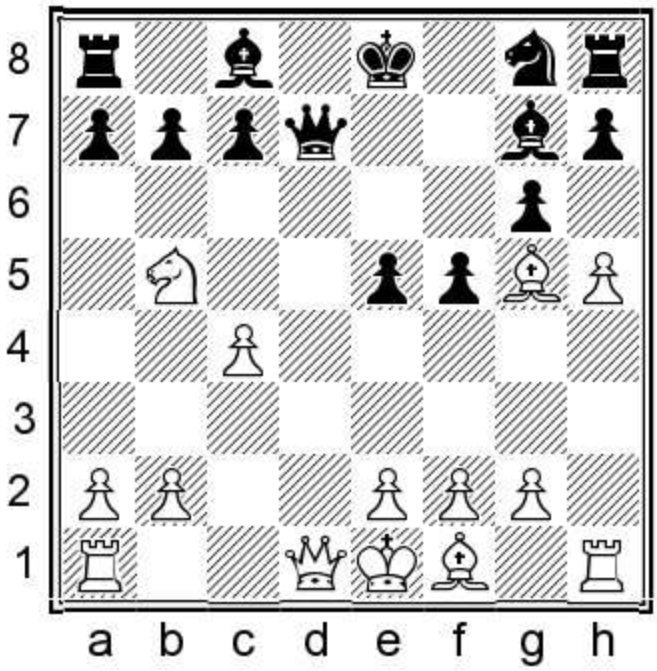
I will keep my recommendation from *GM 2* as the main line, although White has more than one way to prove his superiority.

The game continuation was also pretty convincing: 10.♕b3!? ♕c6 11.e4! ♗e6 12.♘d5 h6 13.c5! This should have been crushing. 13...♗xd5 14.exd5 ♕xc5 15.♗b5† ♔f8

chesstouring.com



White subsequently went astray and lost in Quintana Fernandez – Cenal Gutierrez, Asturias 1996, but here the simple 16.♖c1!N 16...♕d6 17.♗e3 b6 18.♖c6+– would have produced the ‘right’ result.



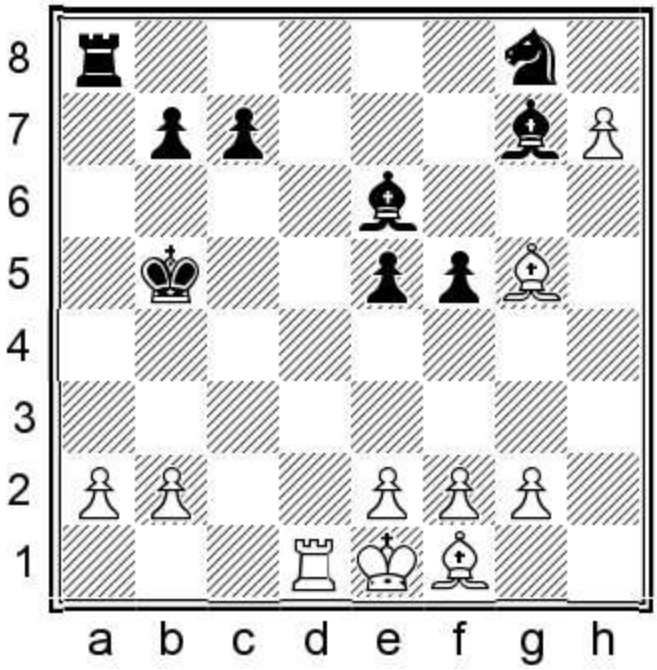
10...a6 11.♕xd7† ♔xd7 12.♖d1† ♔c6 13.hxg6! axb5

13...hxg6? 14.♖xh8 ♗xh8 15.♖d8! wins immediately.

14.cxb5† ♔xb5 15.♖xh7 ♖xh7 16.gxh7 ♗e6

Black must return the extra piece, since 16...♘f6? loses to 17.♗h6!.

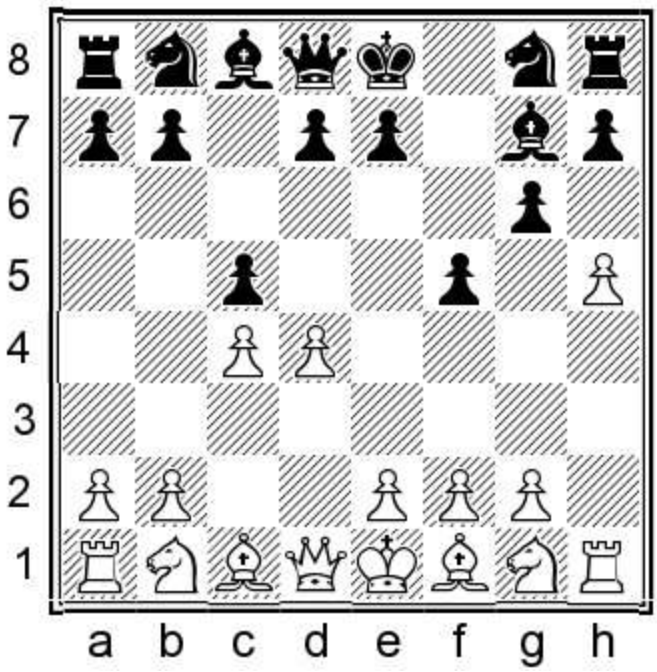
chesstouring.com



17.e4† ♔c6 18.hxg8=♕ ♖xg8 19.exf5 ♗xf5 20.♗c4

White's position is technically winning, due to his extra pawn.

A12) 4...c5



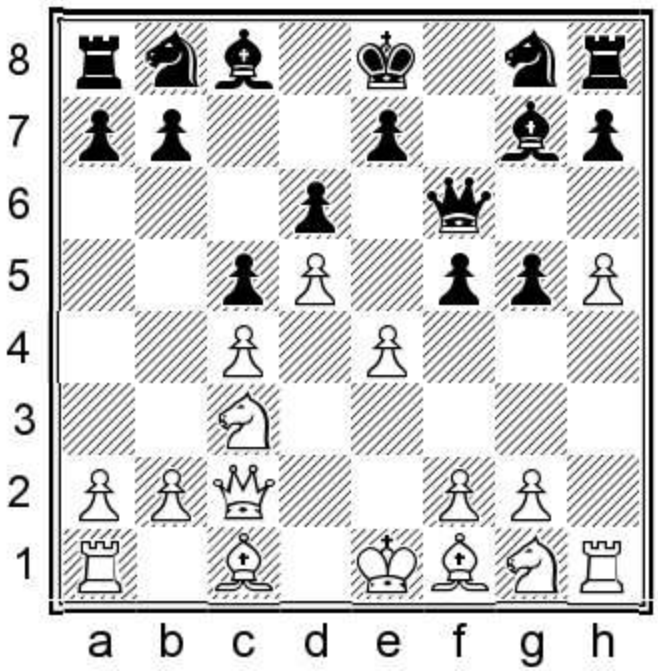
This seems like a better try for Black, although the kingside tension is still not pleasant for him.

5.d5 d6

I neglected to consider this move in *GM 2*, but it seems to be Black's best.

5...♕b6 6.♘c3 favours White. For instance, 6...g5 7.♕c2 ♕f6 8.e4 d6 occurred in Conquest – E. Berg,

Saint Vincent 2000, when White should have continued:



9.exf5N 9...♗xf5 10.♗d3 ♗xd3 11.♕xd3 ♘d7 12.♘ge2 ♘e5 13.♕c2 With a clear advantage.

5...♕a5†

This idea also falls short.

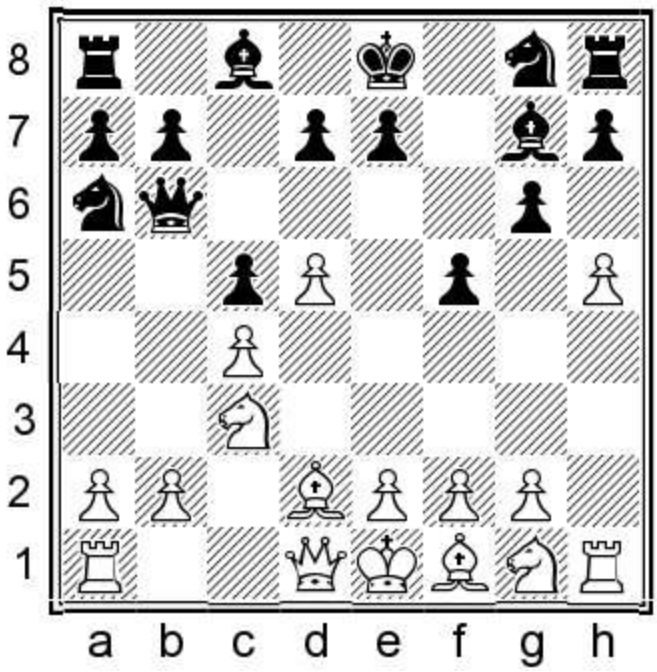
6.♗d2

The most natural reaction, but it would also be worth considering 6.♘c3!?N, since after 6...♗xc3† 7.bxc3 ♕xc3† 8.♗d2 ♕g7 9.♘f3 White has powerful compensation for the missing pawn.

6...♕b6 7.♘c3 ♘a6

More challenging is 7...♕xb2, as seen in Savina – Pustovoitova, Taganrog 2011, but at the same time it's pretty dangerous, since after 8.♖h3!N 8...♕b6 9.♖b1 ♕d8 10.e4, White has a serious initiative.

chesstouring.com



8.♘f3N

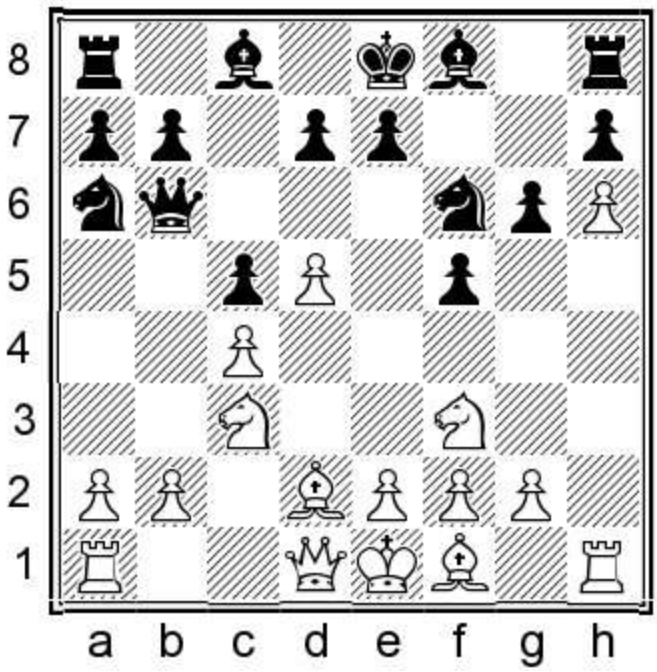
In Leider – Bruhn, Travemuende 2004, White preferred 8.♕c2?!, which is too soft and invites a disruptive ...♘b4 jump.

The text move is a simple improvement, after which it is not clear how Black can complete his development, for instance:

8...♘f6

8...♕xb2 is still too dangerous: 9.♖b1 ♕a3 10.♖b3 ♕a5 11.d6!,

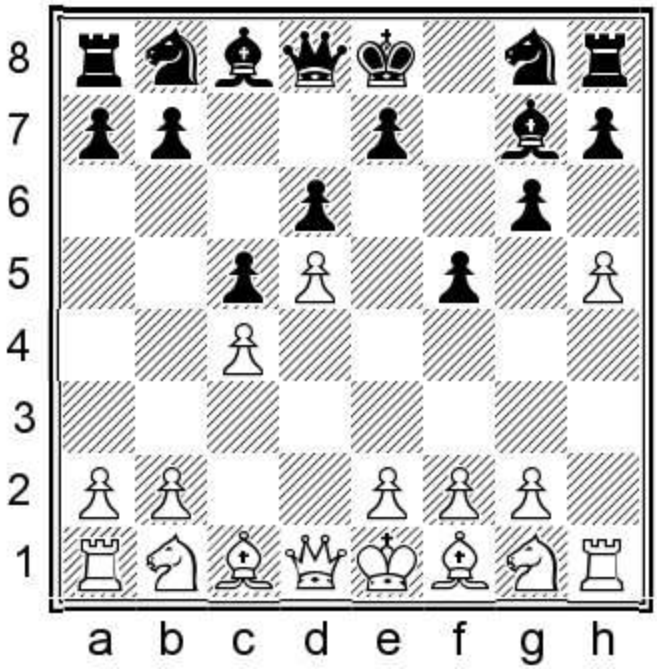
9.h6 ♗f8



10.e4! fxe4 11.♘g5→

White's initiative is already close to decisive.

chesstouring.com



6.♘f3!

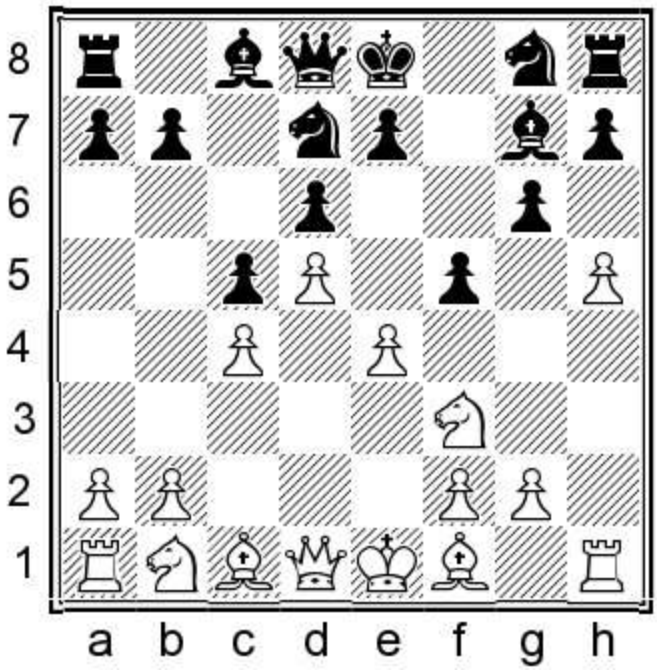
Avoiding 6.♘c3 ♗xc3† 7.bxc3 ♕a5 when Black has decent counterplay, with 8.hxg6? hxg6! being an important tactical point.

6...♘d7

6...gxh5? occurred in Rawlings – Aragones Cerezo, corr. 2012, when 7.♘h4!N 7...♘f6 8.♕c2 ♘e4 9.♘d2± would have brought White a serious advantage.

7.e4!?

I find this more attractive than the slower 7.♕c2, from Greig – Troia, corr. 2014.



chesstouring.com

7...fxe4 8.♘g5 ♘df6

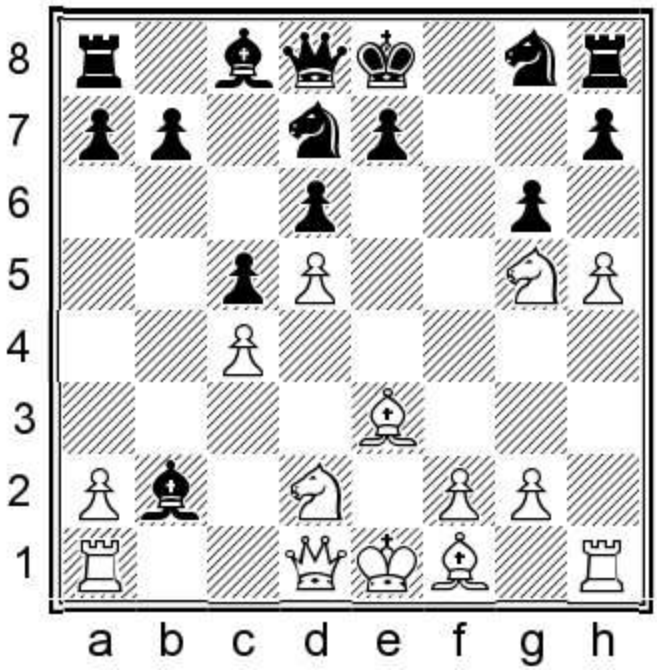
I also checked:

8...e3!?N

An interesting try, but with powerful play White retains the advantage:

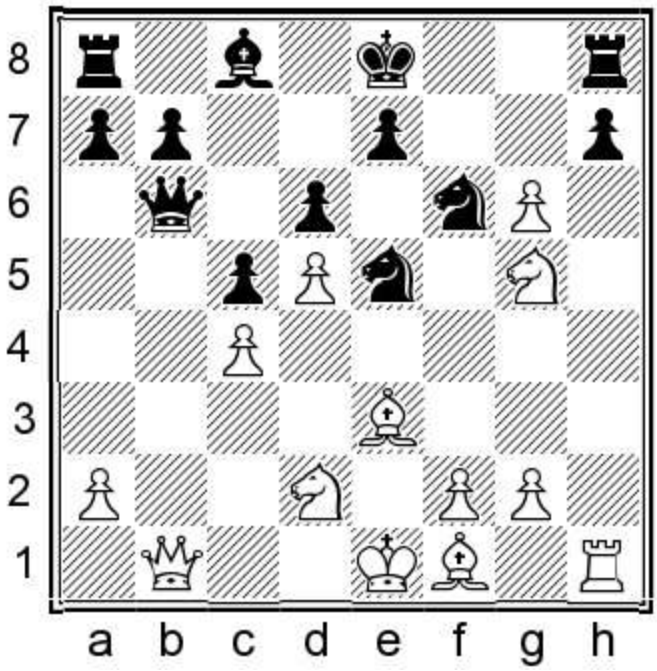
9.♗xe3 ♗xb2 10.♘d2

This seems the most efficient choice, although 10.♘e6 ♕b6 11.♘d2 ♗xa1 12.♕xa1 ♘gf6 13.♗e2 ♘f8 14.♘g7† ♔f7 15.h6 is also highly promising for White.



10...♗xa1 11.♕xa1 ♘gf6 12.hxg6 ♘e5 13.♕b1 ♕b6

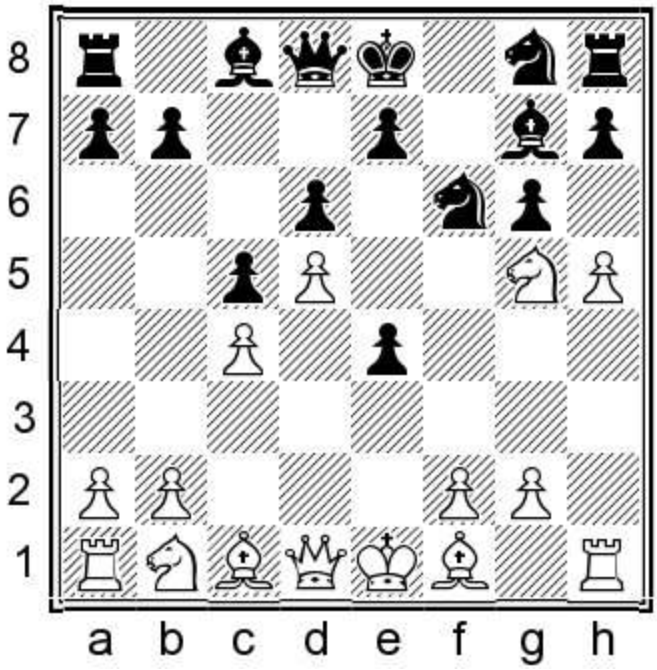
13...♘xg6 14.♕xg6†! hxg6 15.♖xh8† ♔d7 16.♖xd8† ♔xd8 17.♘e6† is close to winning for White.



14.♕c2 h6 15.♗f4 ♖g8 16.♗xe5 dxe5 17.♖xh6

White is much better.

chesstouring.com



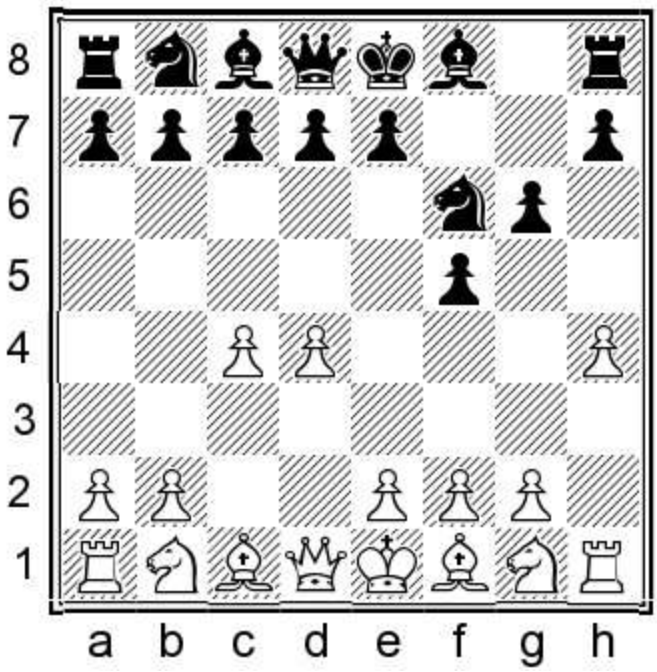
9.♘c3 ♘xh5

9...♘h6 10.♗e2 also gives White an obvious initiative.

10.♘cxe4

Black was under unpleasant pressure in Zordick – Petersons, corr. 2017.

A2) 3...♘f6



This has been the most popular choice, although it does not prevent White's next move at all.

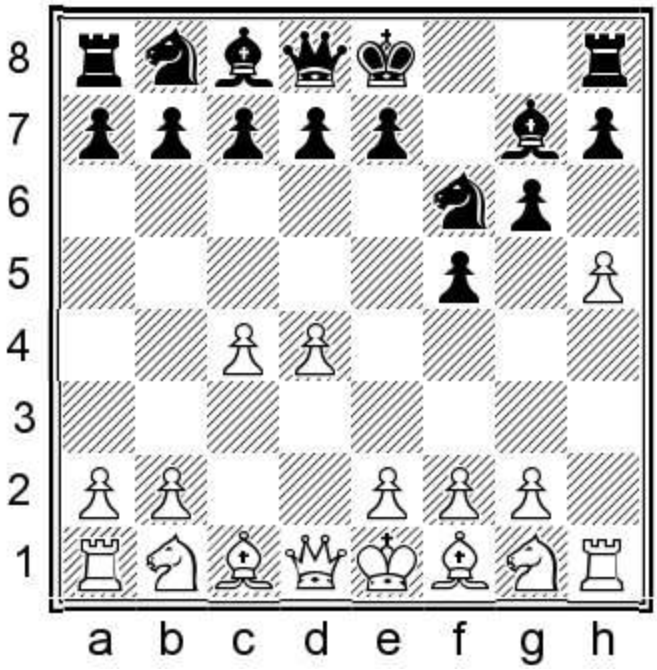
4.h5

chesstouring.com

Black may react with **A21)** 4...♗g7 or **A22)** 4...♘xh5.

4...gxh5?! obviously ruins Black's pawn structure, and after 5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.♗g5 0-0 7.e3 d6 8.♘h3 c6 9.♘f4± White regained the pawn with an obvious advantage in Dao – Petran, Hungary 1995.

A21) 4...♗g7



Objectively this move may be Black's best try, although is has not been played so often and has scored terribly.

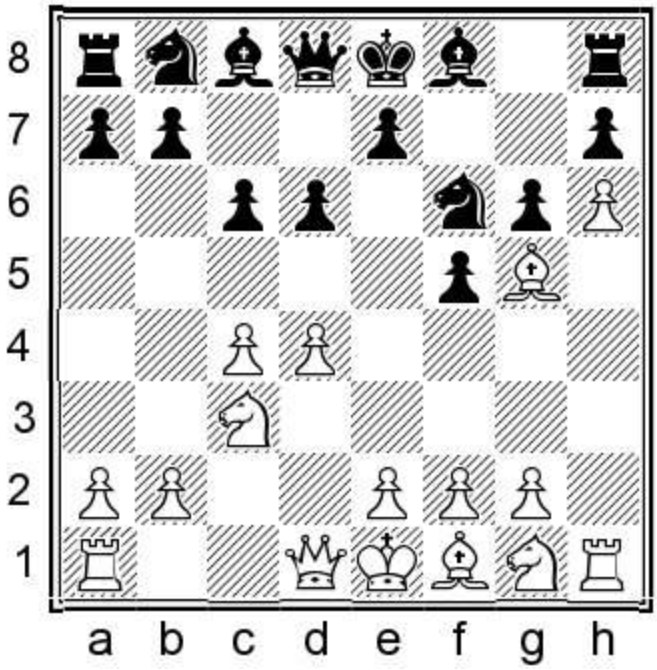
5.h6

Driving the enemy bishop to its original square is both tempting and strong.

5...♗f8 6.♘c3 d6

Another good example continued 6...c6 7.♗g5 d6 Tryggestad – Svensson, Helsingor 2016, and now White should have played:

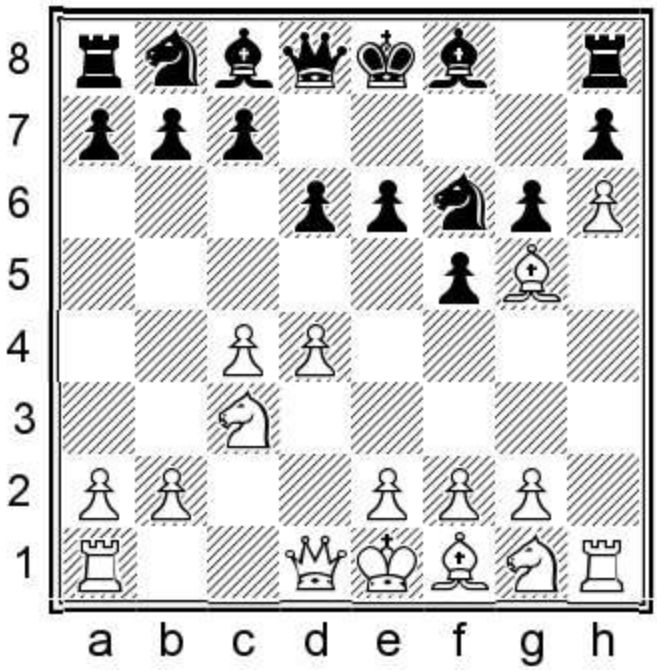
chesstouring.com



8.♘h3N 8...♘a6 9.♕d2± With an excellent position.

7.♗g5 e6

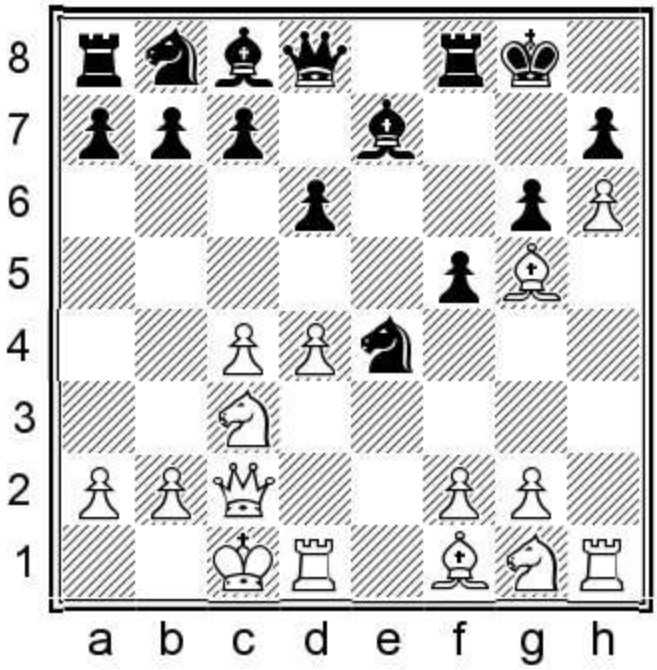
7...c6 has been played in some games, but it just transposes to the previous note.



8.e4! fxe4

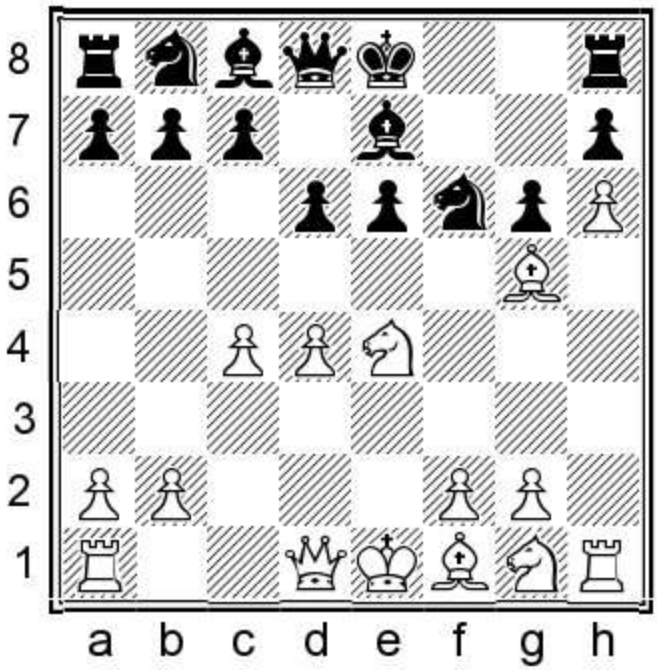
Black has also tried 8...♗e7, without much success. A good example continued: 9.exf5 exf5 10.♕c2 0-0 11.0-0-0 ♘e4 A natural attempt to reduce the pressure through exchanges.

chesstouring.com



12.♗xe7 ♕xe7 13.♘f3 ♘xc3 14.♕xc3 ♕f6 15.♖e1 ♗d7 16.c5→ Despite the simplifications, White still managed to seize a dangerous initiative in Gausel – Vidarsson, Reykjavik 1993.

9.♘xe4 ♗e7



10.♘c3!

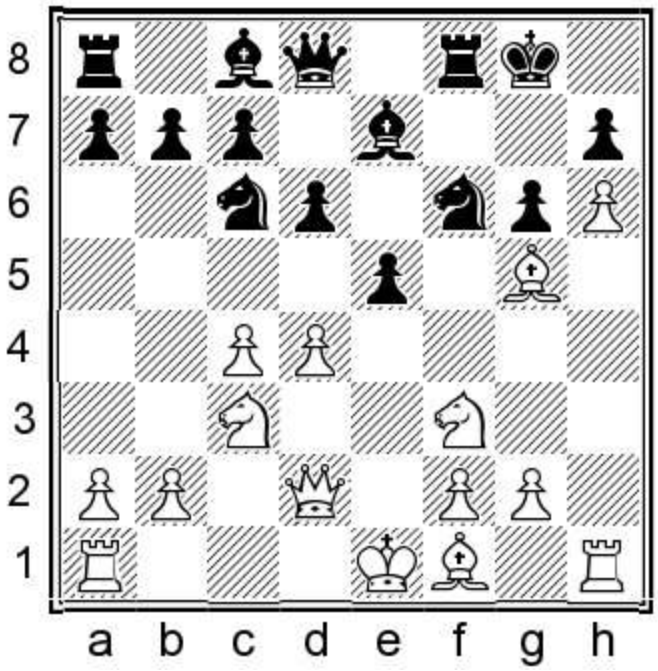
I like the idea of avoiding unnecessary exchanges.

10...♘c6 11.♘f3 0-0 12.♕d2 e5N

In the event of 12...♘d7 I would suggest 13.♗xe7N (13.♗e3!? a5 14.0-0-0 was also clearly better for White in Kucuksari – Seo, Stockholm 2018) 13...♕xe7 14.0-0-0 with a big advantage.

chesstouring.com

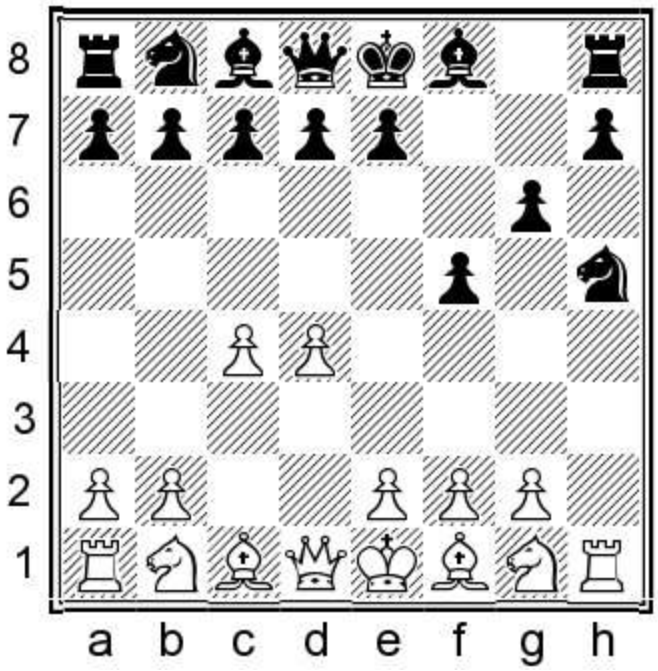
The text move seems like a better try but it hardly solves Black's problems after:



13.0-0-0 ♗g4 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.♗d3

With an excellent position for White.

A22) 4...♘xh5



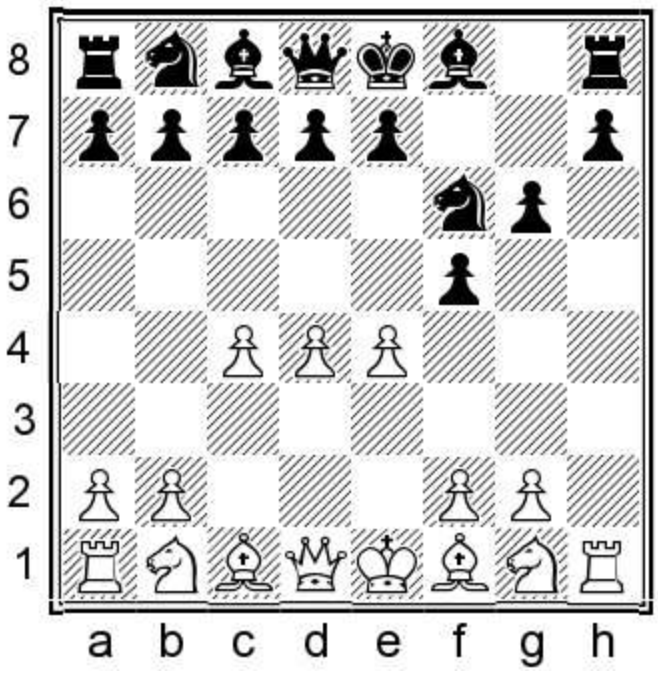
This has been the most popular choice and it appears critical, but White seizes a dangerous initiative with the help of a thematic exchange sacrifice.

5.♖xh5

By the way, 5.e4!? is quite promising as well, for instance: 5...♘f6N (5...d6 6.exf5 ♗xf5 7.g4 ♗e4

chessfuturing.com

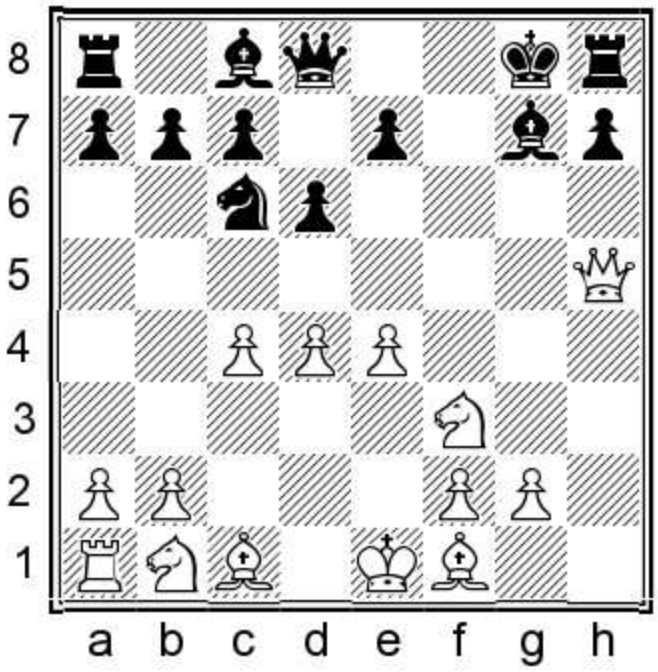
8.♖h3 ♗xb1 9.♖xb1 ♘g7 10.♗d3 was great for White in Lalith – E. Toth, Pardubice 2012)



6.exf5 gxf5 7.♗g5 ♗g7 8.♘c3 d6 (8...0-0 is well met by 9.♕f3 intending ♕h3) 9.♘ge2 0-0 10.♘f4↑ White has more than enough play for the sacrificed pawn.

5...gxh5 6.e4 d6

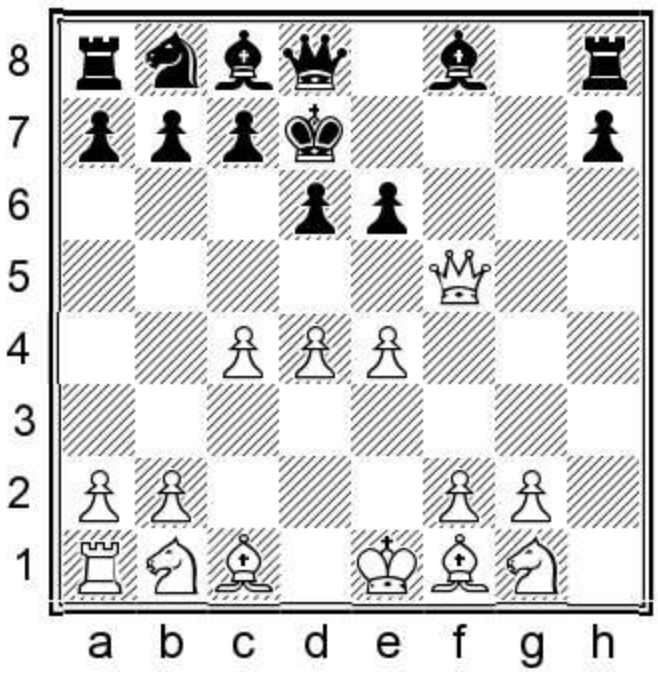
Black's only other idea is: 6...♗g7 7.♕xh5† ♔f8 8.♕xf5† ♔g8 9.♘f3 d6 10.♕h5 ♘c6 (a more recent game continued 10...h6 11.♘c3 c6 12.♗e3 ♗e6 13.0-0-0 ♗f7 14.♕g4 ♘d7 15.e5 when White's natural play yielded a decisive initiative in Komov – Savic, Budva 2013)



11.♗e3 ♗d7 12.♘c3 ♗e8 We have been following Obsivac – Civin, Olomouc 1995. An obvious improvement would be 13.♕h3!N 13...e5 14.dxe5 ♘xe5 15.♘h4± when White's initiative is worth much more than the sacrificed exchange.

chesstouring.com

7.♕xh5† ♔d7 8.♕xf5† e6

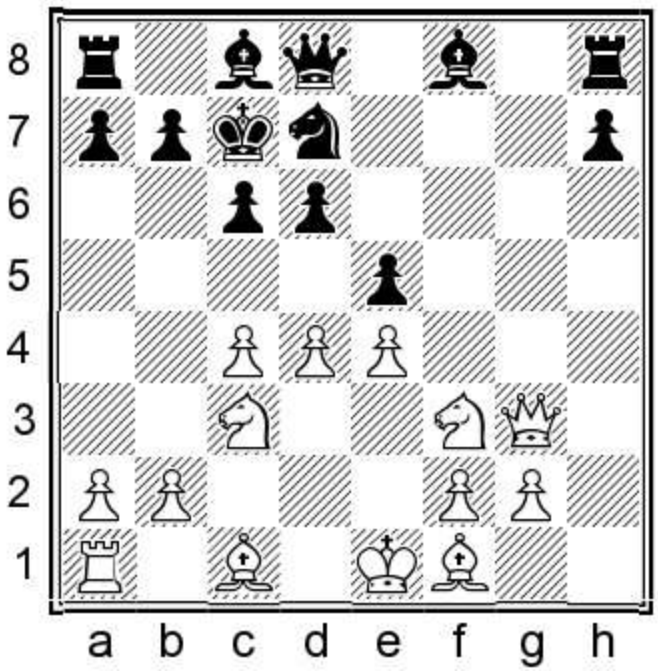


9.♕h3

Despite his modest practical score of 50%, White has a dangerous initiative and more than sufficient play for the tiny material sacrifice.

9...b6

9...c6 10.♘f3 ♔c7 11.♘c3 e5 12.♕g3 ♘d7 occurred in Atalik – Skembris, Kastoria 1996, and here White could have struck with:

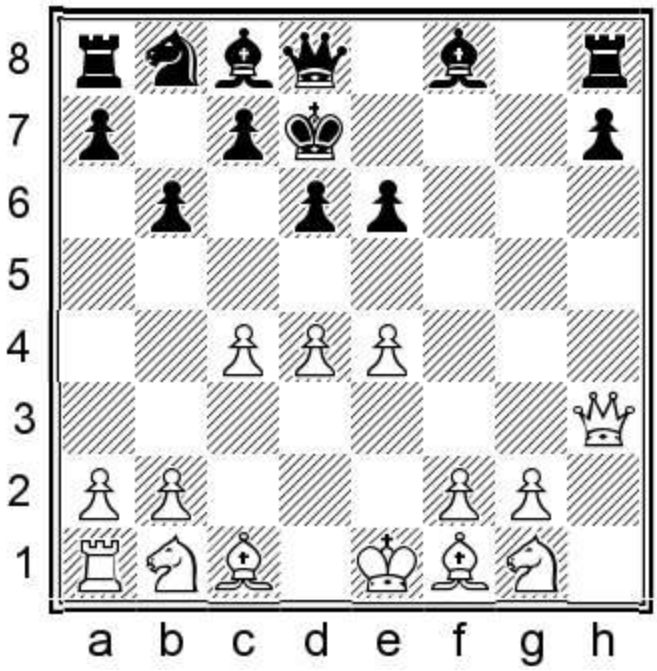


13.c5!N It is hard to believe Black can keep his position together. An illustrative line is 13...♕f6 14.♗g5

chesstouring.com

♕e6 15.0-0-0 ♖g8 16.cxd6† ♗xd6 17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.♖xd6! with a winning attack.

The text move was Black's latest try in a correspondence game but it did nothing to change his fortunes.



10.c5!

An extremely powerful move.

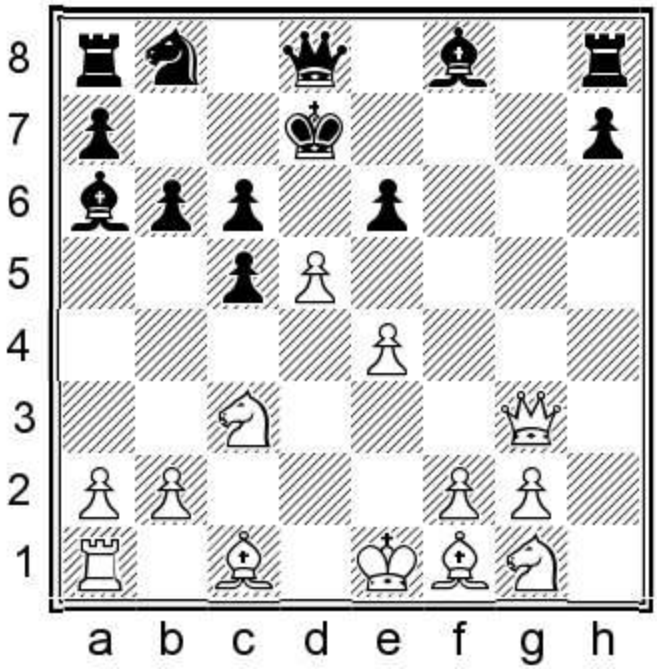
10...dxc5 11.d5 c6

Black defends well, as you would expect in a correspondence game, but White attacks with just as much precision.

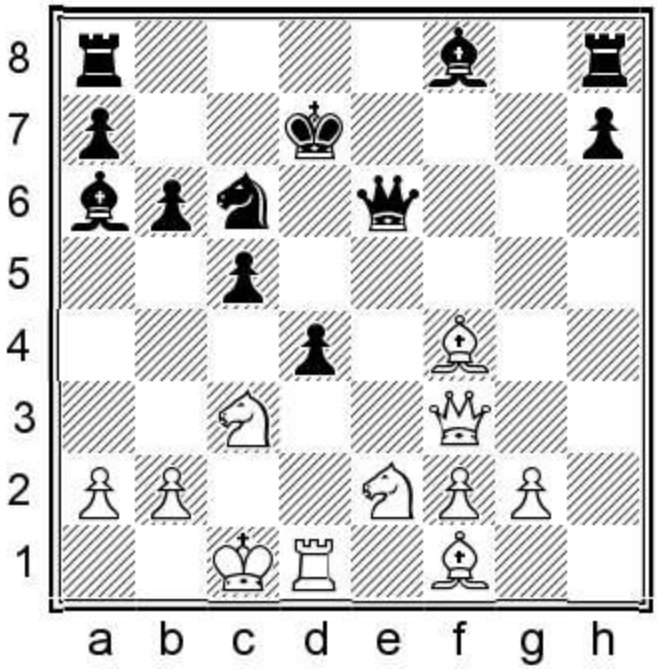
12.♕g3! ♗a6 13.♘c3

White wants to bring his rook to d1 to catch the king. It turns out that Black can throw a few obstacles in the way of this plan, but he cannot prevent it.

chesstouring.com



13...cxd5 14.exd5 exd5 15.♗f4! ♕e8† 16.♘ge2 d4 17.♕f3 ♕e6 18.0-0-0 ♘c6

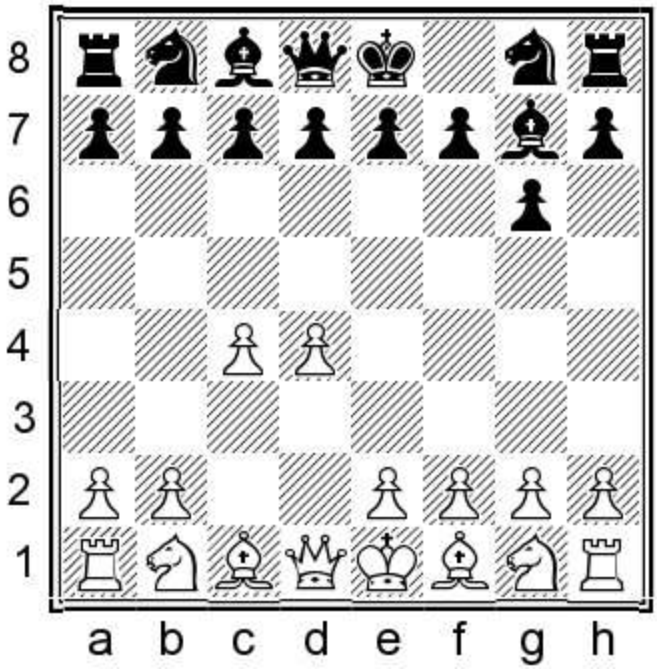


19.♘xd4! cxd4 20.♗xa6+–

Black's exposed king remained the decisive factor in Kazoks – Cumming, corr. 2014.

B) 2...♗g7

chesstouring.com



This is a more sophisticated move order, delaying ...f5 until a more opportune moment.

3.♘f3

3.e4 can be met by 3...d6 followed by transposing to a King's Indian, but avoiding our fianchetto repertoire.

3.♘c3 allows Black to switch plans with 3...♘f6!?, after which 4...d5 will lead to a Grünfeld line outside of our repertoire, unless White opts for 4.e4, which is a King's Indian, but again outside of our repertoire.

We will analyse **B1)** 3...d6, **B2)** 3...c5 and **B3)** 3...f5.

B1) 3...d6 4.♘c3

4.g3 was my previous recommendation but 4...c5 presents a problem for our repertoire. 5.d5 is the move I would want to play, but 5...b5 6.cxb5 a6 7.bxa6 ♘f6 reaches a line of the Benko Gambit which I am no longer recommending.

4...f5

Alternatives such as 4...♘d7, 4...c5 and 4...♗g4 will be covered later under the Modern Defence. After the text move we are unable to play either our main or our backup line against the Leningrad, but it doesn't matter because White has something else which is even better:

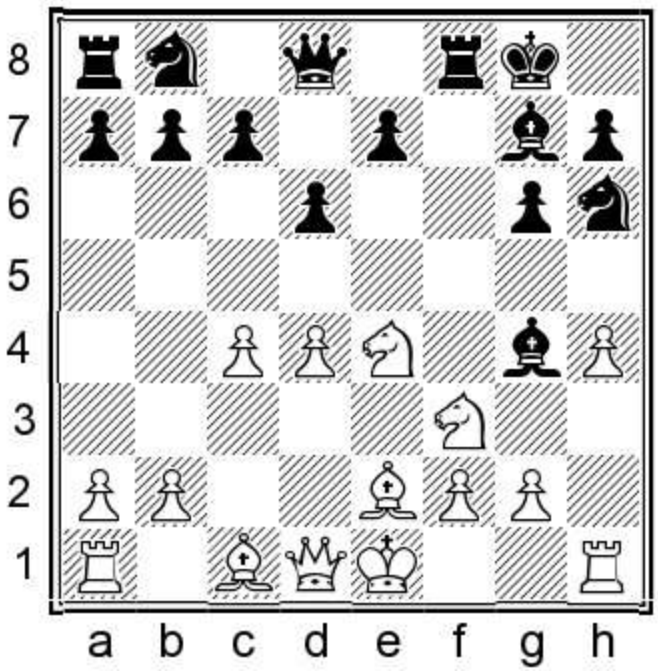
5.e4! fxe4

Other moves are even worse:

5...♘h6 invites the aggressive 6.h4! when Black is already in great danger. 6...fxe4 7.♘xe4 ♗g4 8.♗e2 0-

chesstouring.com

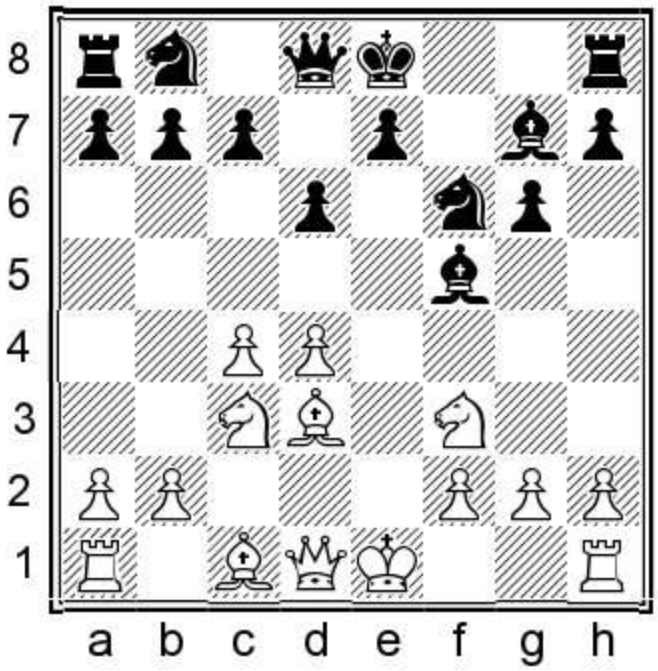
0 occurred in three games, when a natural improvement is:



9.h5!N This poses unsolvable problems for Black. For instance, 9...gxh5 (9...♗xh5? loses on the spot to 10.♗xh6 ♗xh6 11.g4+– and White wins a piece) 10.♗xh6 ♗xh6 11.♘fg5! with a crushing attack.

5...♘f6 6.exf5 ♗xf5 7.♗d3!

The bishop trade will favour White.



7...♕d7

7...♗g4 8.♗e2 transposes to note to Black's 7th move in the main line below.

7...♗xd3 8.♕xd3 0-0 9.0-0 ♕d7 has occurred in a few games. My suggestion is 10.♗g5N 10...♘c6 11.d5 ♘b4 12.♕e2 ♘h5 13.♖ad1± with an easy advantage for White.

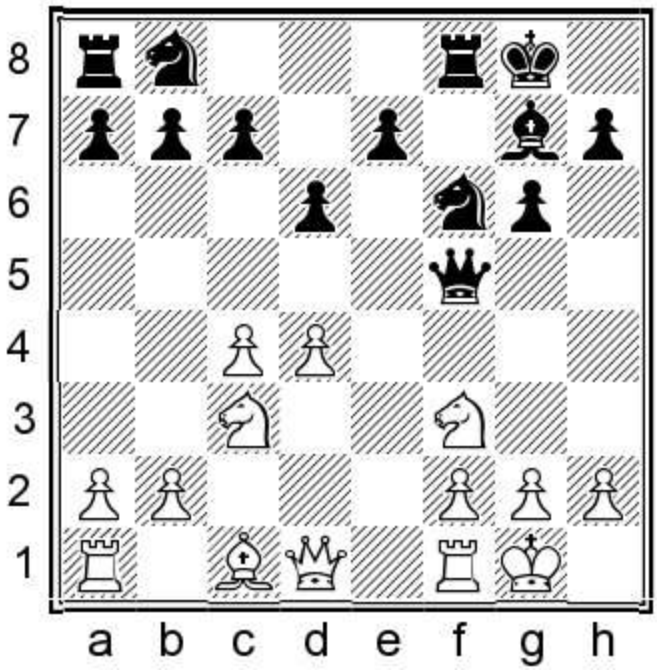
8.♗xf5!

chesstouring.com

The easiest solution.

8...♕xf5 9.0-0 0-0

In Mertanen – Koskinen, Finland 2000, White should have played:



10.d5!N

Fixing the weakness on e6 and threatening ♘d4.

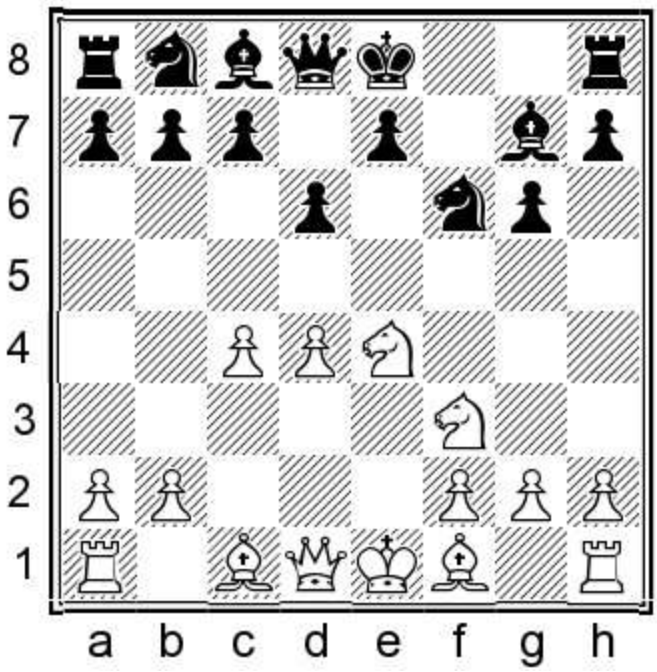
10...e5

This is Black's most obvious try, but it does not solve his problems after:

11.♘g5±

And the knight arrives on e6 anyway.

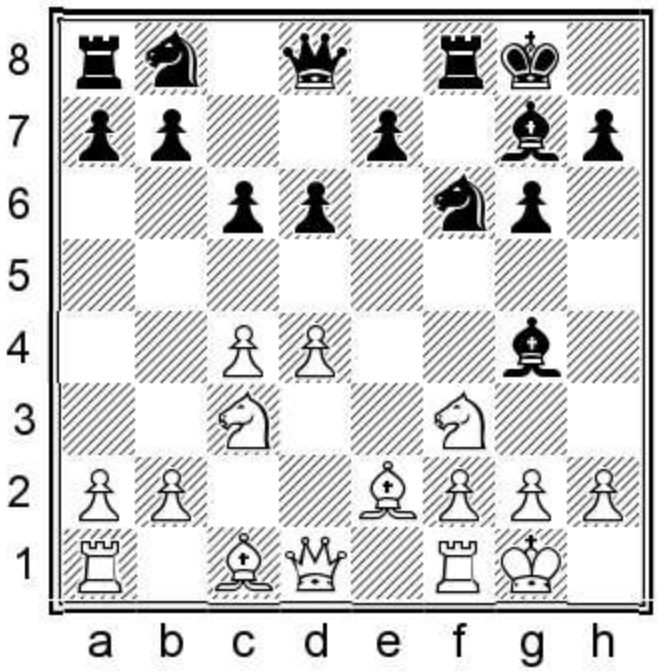
6.♘xe4 ♘f6



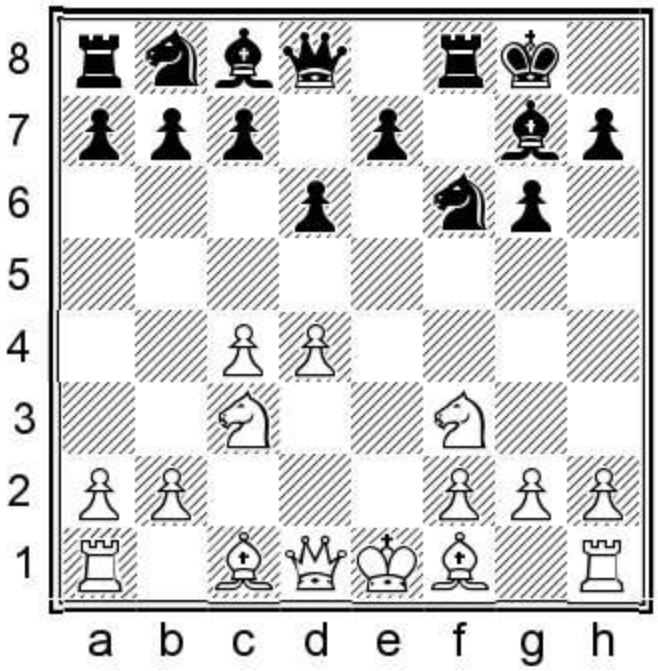
chesstouring.com

7.♘c3 0-0

7...♗g4 seems pointless: 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 c6 (I also checked 9...♘c6 10.d5 ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘e5 12.♗e2 c6 13.♗e3± and White obtains a clear positional edge) In Boudkeev – Jeske, Rostock 2011, White should have played:



10.h3!N 10...♗f5 (10...♗xf3 11.♗xf3 looks ugly for Black) 11.♗e3 ♘a6 12.♕d2± White enjoys a pleasant advantage, due to Black's weaknesses and lack of counterplay.



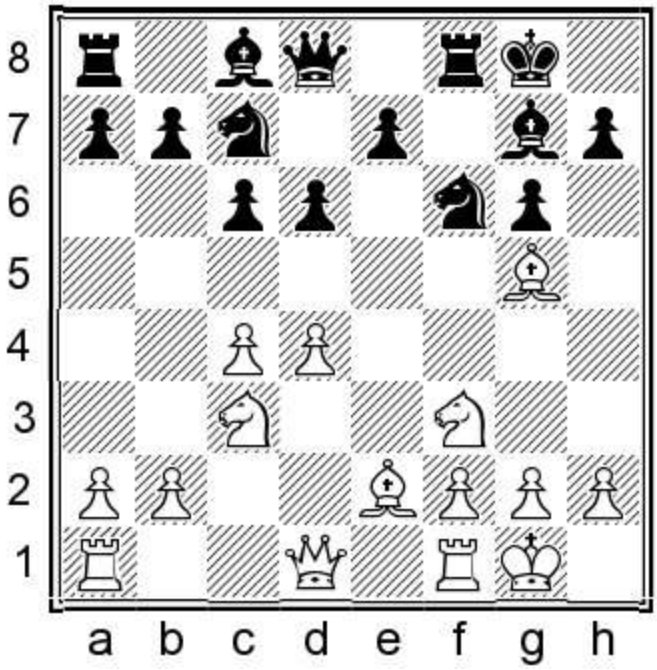
8.♗e2 c6

Black tried 8...♘c6 9.d5 ♘b8 10.0-0 e5 in Sanchez – Carrillo, Bucaramanga 2012. I believe that instead of taking en passant, White should have preferred 11.♗e3N with an excellent version of a King's Indian structure, due to his firm control over the e4-square. An illustrative line is 11...♘h5 12.g3! ♕e7 13.♕d2 ♘d7 14.♘g5 and White is comfortably better.

chesstouring.com

9.0-0 ♘a6 10.♗g5 ♘c7

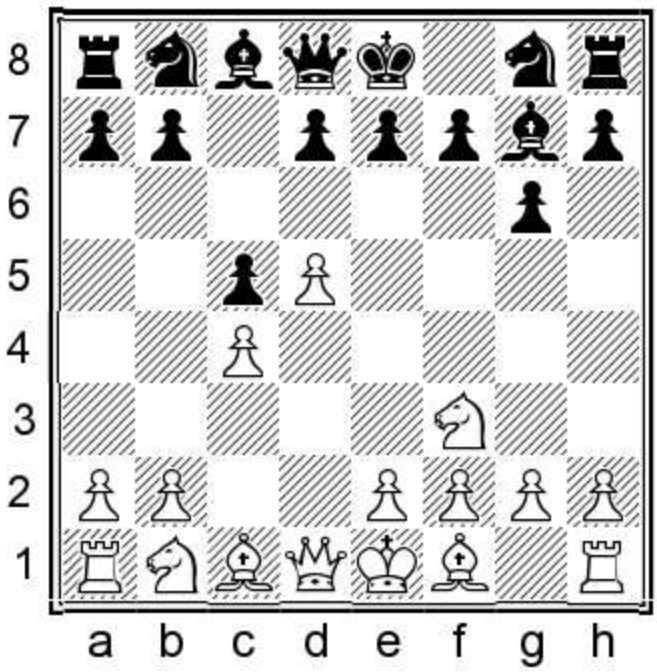
In Flores – Aberbach Peltzman, Villa Ballester 2005, White should have continued:



11.♕d2N 11...♗f5 12.♖ad1

White enjoys a pleasant edge.

B2) 3...c5 4.d5



4...f5

This leads to a strange hybrid of the Leningrad Dutch and Benoni. I was surprised at the number of games in which it has occurred.

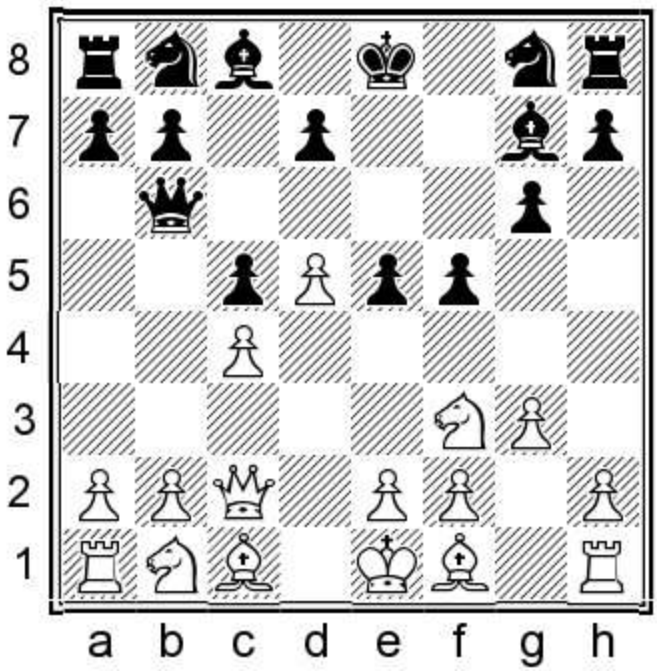
chesstouring.com

4...b5 5.cxb5 a6 6.bxa6 should eventually transpose to our repertoire against the Benko Gambit. For instance, 6...♘f6 (6...♗xa6 7.♘c3 d6 8.e4 ♗xf1 9.♔xf1 ♘f6 is variation B of Chapter 15 on page 297) 7.♘c3 0-0 (or 7...♕a5 8.a7!) 8.a7! ♖xa7 9.e4 and we have transposed to variation B of Chapter 16 – see page 313 for the continuation from here.

Against 4...d6 we should play 5.♘c3 in order to fit with our repertoire. (5.g3 might run into 5...b5 6.cxb5 a6 when we reach a Benko line which I no longer recommend) 5...f5 (5...♗xc3† is examined in variation A of Chapter 20 on page 367) 6.g3 ♘f6 7.♗g2 We have transposed to the main line below.

5.g3 d6

5...♕b6 doesn't make much sense to me, although it has occurred in eight games. 6.♕c2 e5 is Black's idea, when a model game continued:



7.e4 d6 8.♘c3 ♘e7 9.♗g5 fxe4 10.♘xe4 ♗g4 11.♘fd2 White was clearly better due to his control over the e4-square in Zhou Jianchao – Nepomniachtchi, Moscow 2012.

6.♗g2 ♘f6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.0-0 ♘a6

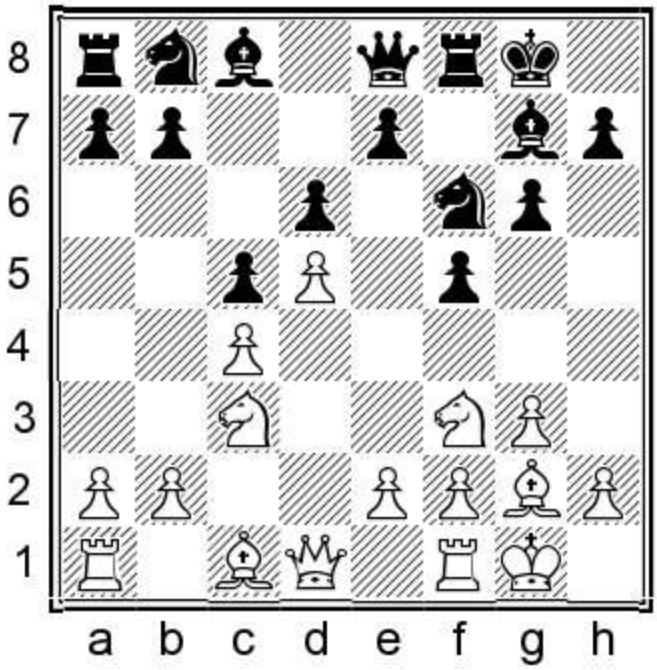
This is by far Black's most popular continuation.

Black has tried a lot of different moves but the following alternative is the only one which really makes sense to me:

8...♕e8

In this case, an immediate central break seems promising for White:

chesstouring.com



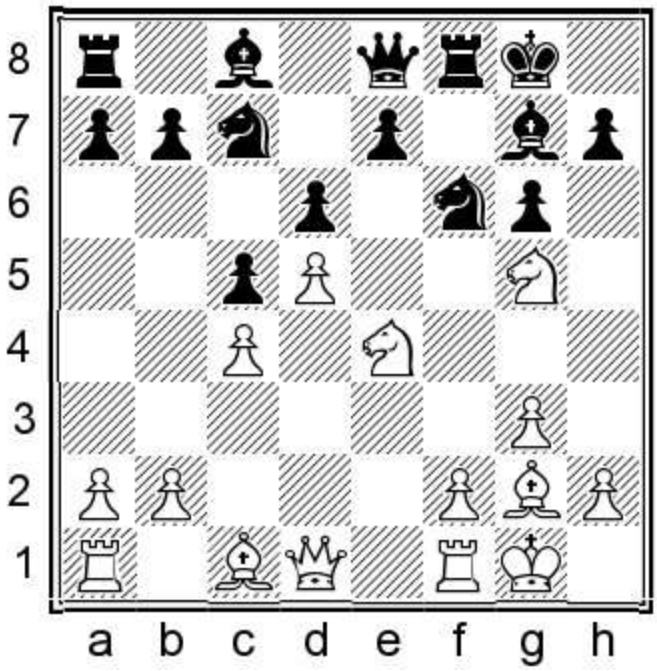
9.e4! fxe4

Black tried 9...♘xe4 10.♘xe4 fxe4 11.♘g5 ♗f5 in Kragelj – Weisenburger, Bad Wiessee 2000, and here I found a powerful novelty: 12.g4!N 12...♗d7 13.♗xe4 ♘a6 14.h4 White has a dangerous initiative on the kingside, with the queen potentially transferring across the third rank.

10.♘g5 ♘a6

I also checked 10...♗g4 as played in Burmakin – Weisenburger, Bad Wiessee 2003. White should have simply played 11.♕b3N 11...♘a6 12.♗d2, followed by picking up the e4-pawn with some advantage.

11.♘cxe4 ♘c7



12.♘xf6† ♖xf6

12...exf6 is also pretty bad in view of 13.♖e1 followed by ♘e6.

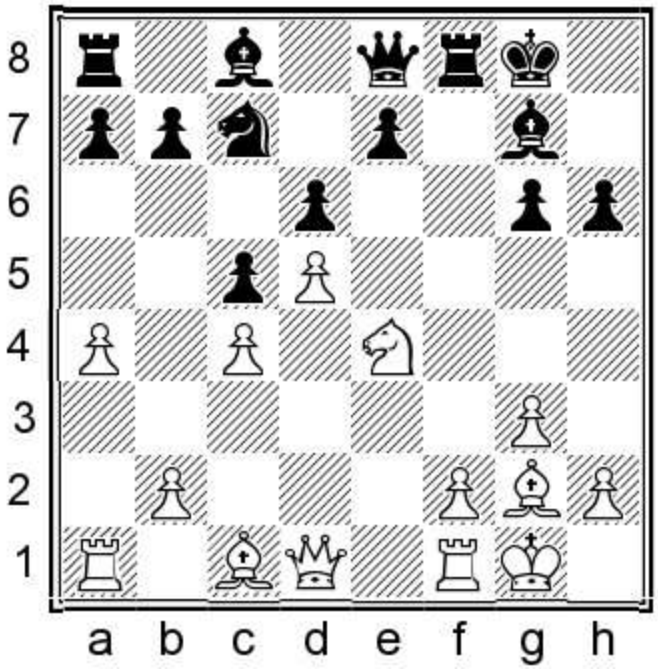
chesstouring.com

13.a4!

A powerful idea, not only preventing the ...b5 break but also preparing a rook swing to the kingside.

13...h6 14.♘e4 ♖f8

In Pap – Matlakov, Belfort 2005, White should have played:

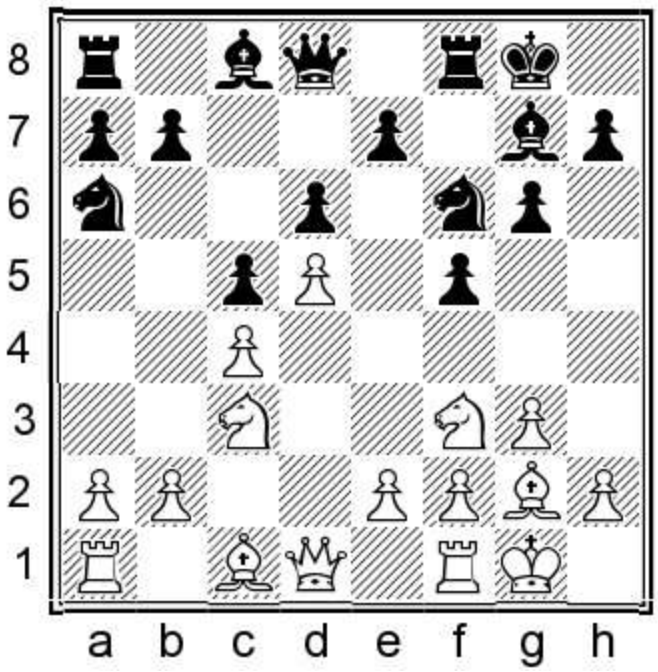


15.♖e1N 15...♕f7

15...♕d8 16.♗d2 is highly pleasant for White.

16.♖a3!

The rook is coming to f3 with great effect.



9.♖b1!

White's best plan is to prepare b2-b4, exploiting the fact that Black fixed the queenside structure with ...c5 so early in the game.

chesstouring.com

9...♘c7 10.a3

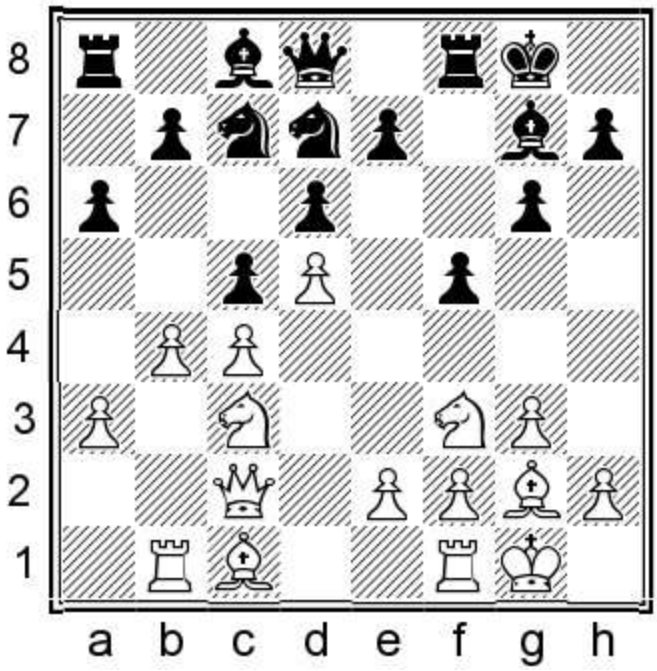
And now we have a serious crossroads for Black.

10...♖b8

I will take this as the main line, although there are three other continuations worth mentioning.

10...a6 11.b4 ♘d7 12.♕c2

Black's best try would have been:



12...cxb4N

12...♘e5? proved an unfortunate choice after 13.♘xe5 ♗xe5 14.bxc5 dxc5 15.♘a4 ♗d6 16.♗e3+– and Black ended up in a strategically lost position in Taboada – Scruton, corr. 1996.

13.♖xb4!

An instructive moment.

13.axb4 a5 is less clear.

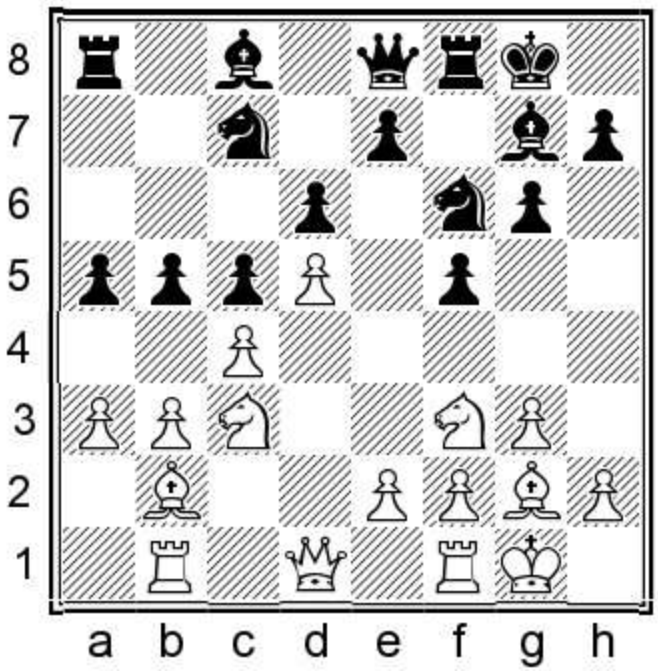
13...♘c5 14.♗e3 ♖b8 15.♗d4

White is clearly better.

Another instructive line is:

10...a5 11.b3 ♕e8 12.♗b2 b5

chesstouring.com

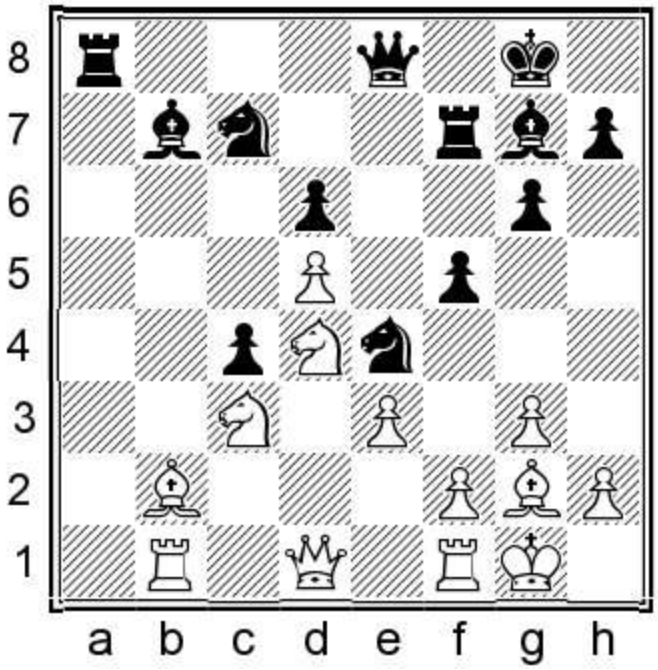


13.b4!

A well-timed break.

13...axb4 14.axb4 bxc4 15.bxc5 ♘e4 16.cxd6 exd6 17.♘d4 ♖f7 18.e3 ♗b7

White must lose the d5-pawn, but he is ready to regroup his pieces effectively.

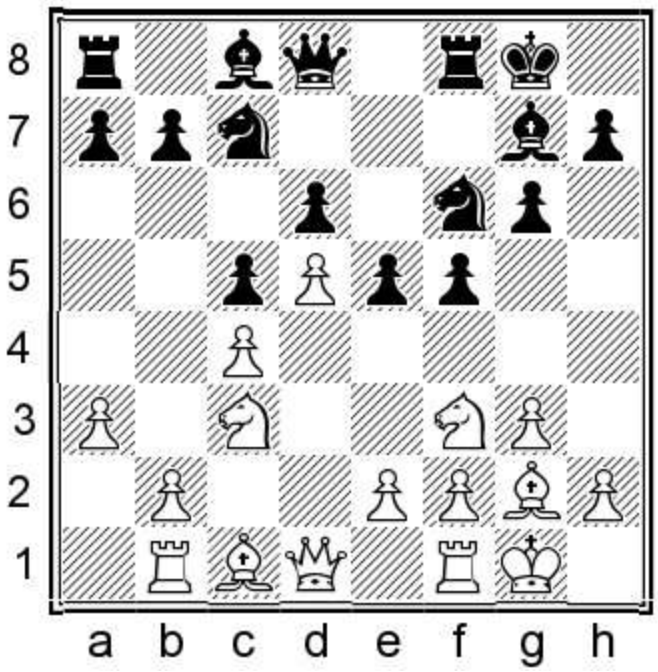


19.♘xe4 fxe4 20.♘e2! ♗xb2 21.♖xb2 ♗xd5 22.♕d4 ♖d8 23.♖d1±

White enjoyed a clear positional advantage in Buettner – Dietrich, email 2014, which was a just reward for the amazing quality of his play.

10...e5

chesstouring.com



11.dxe6

This is the only way to fight for the advantage.

11...♘xe6

11...♗xe6 should be met by the natural 12.♗f4N, which for some reason has yet to be played. 12...♘fe8 (12...♗xc4?! 13.♗xd6 ♖e8 14.♘e5 ♗a6 15.♕b3† ♘e6 16.♖fd1 is even worse for Black) 13.♕d3 h6 14.h4± White enjoys a clear positional advantage.

The text move demands an aggressive approach from White:

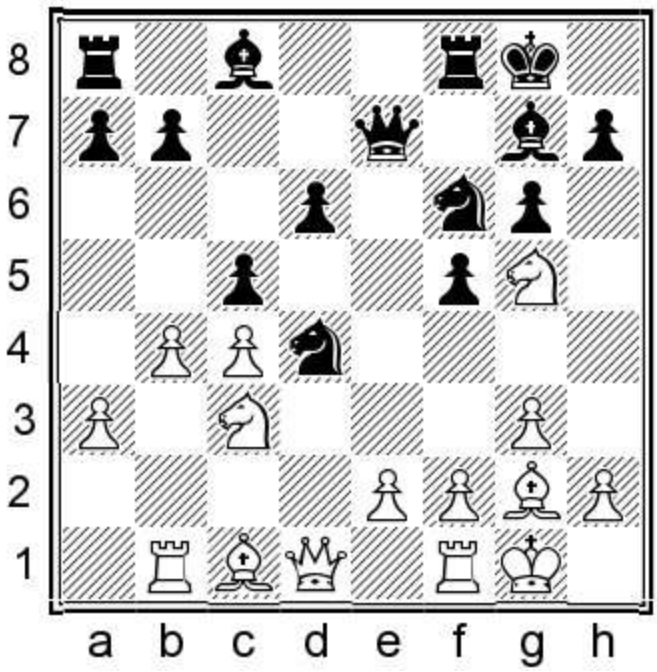
12.♘g5! ♕e7

12...♘d4 was tried in another game, when 13.♘h3N± would have been one of many promising moves for White.

13.b4! ♘d4

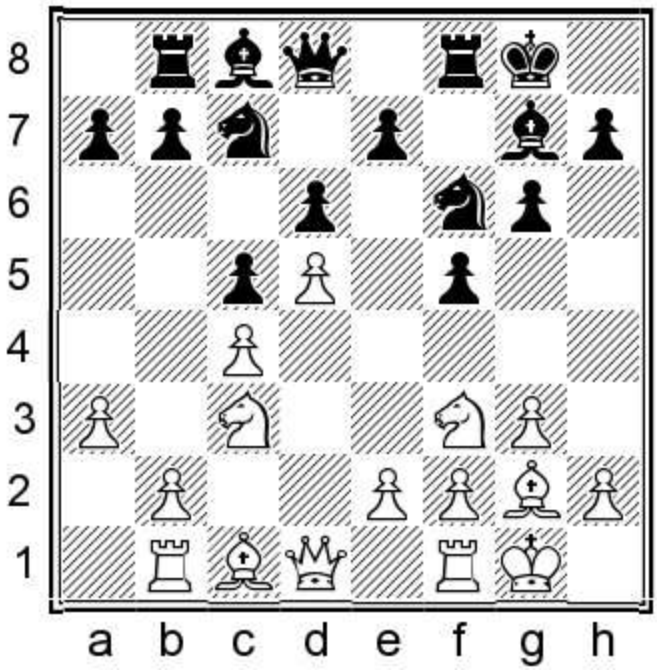
In Bosiocic – Smirin, Trieste 2012, White should have continued:

chesstouring.com



14.bxc5N 14...dxc5 15.e3 ♘e6 16.♘xe6 ♕xe6 17.♘d5±

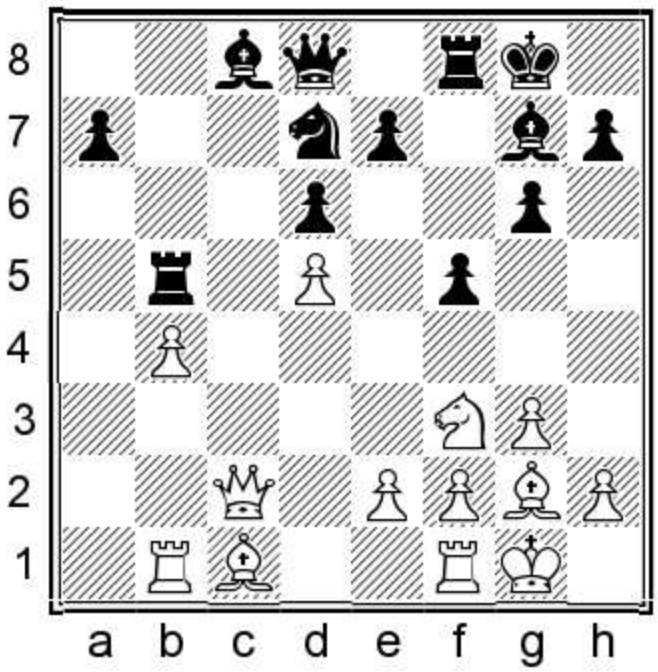
With a clear positional advantage.



11.b4 cxb4

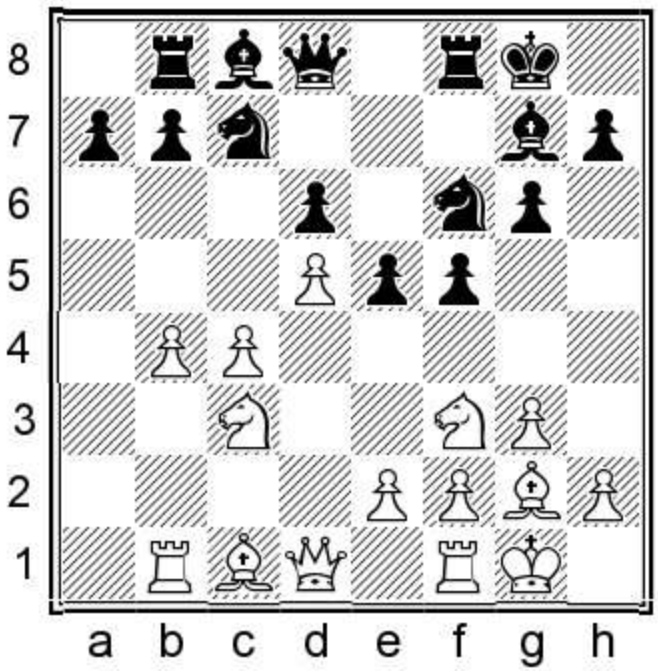
I also considered: 11...♘d7 12.♕c2 cxb4 13.axb4 b5 This thematic try unfortunately fails to work well for Black. 14.♘xb5 ♘xb5 15.cxb5 ♖xb5 In Mohr – Robatsch, Austria 1994, White missed a strong idea:

chesstouring.com



16.♗e3N 16...♘b6 17.♗d4! ♖xd5 18.e3 Black is going to lose some material due to the loose rook on d5.

12.axb4 e5



13.dxe6 ♗xe6 14.♕d3

Black's position is too exposed, as the following lines demonstrate.

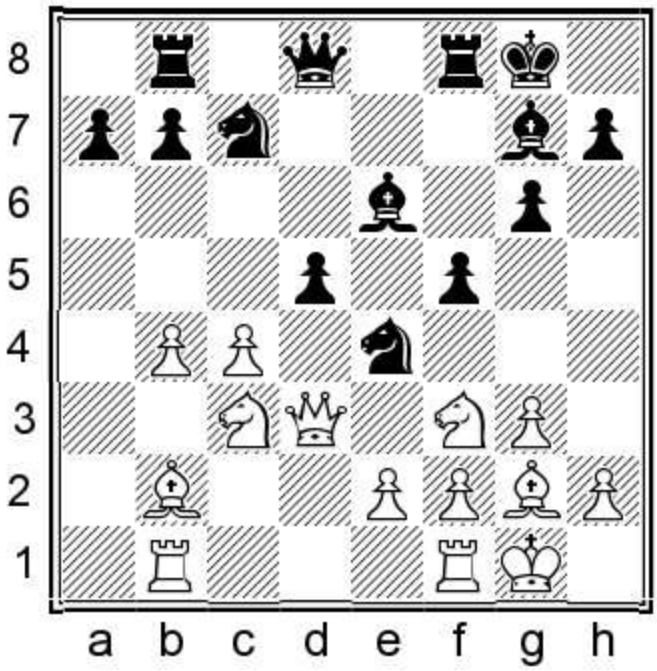
14...♘e4

14...d5 15.♗f4 ♘e4 16.♘xd5+– led to a loss of material for Black in Tichy – Karlik, Czech Republic 1998.

chesstouring.com

15.♗b2 d5

This position was reached in Fedder – Borngaesser, Ostend 1975, and one subsequent game. White's strongest continuation is:

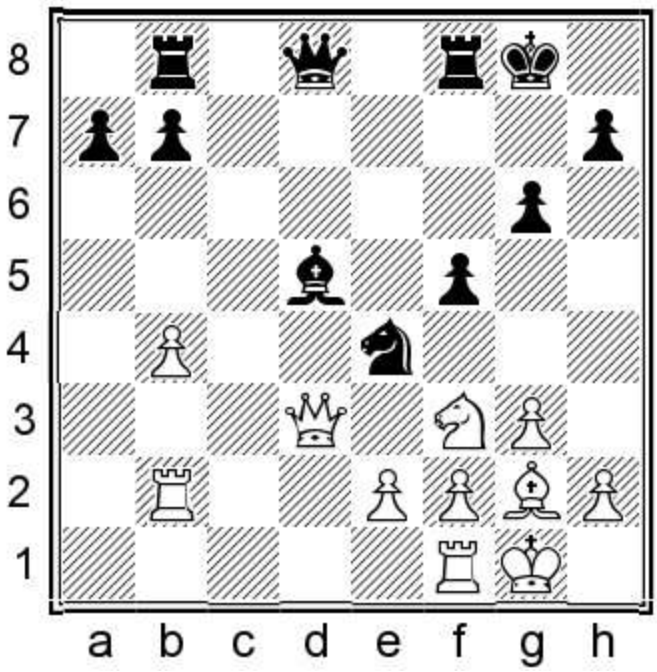


16.♘xd5!N

With the following point:

16...♗xb2 17.♖xb2 ♘xd5 18.cxd5 ♗xd5

18...♕xd5 runs into 19.♕e3!± attacking the a7-pawn while also threatening ♘d2. One way or another, Black must lose a pawn.

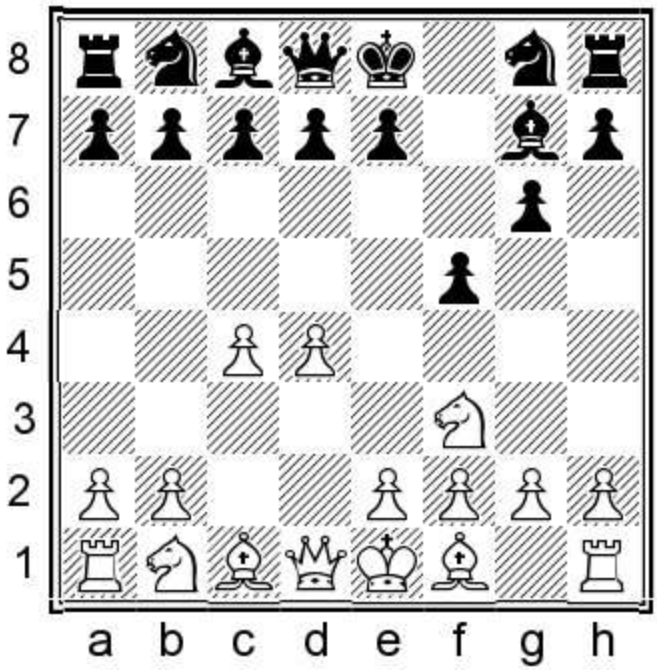


19.♘g5 ♘f6 20.♕a3! ♗xg2 21.♔xg2 ♕d5† 22.♘f3

chesstouring.com

Despite the simplifications, Black's position remains rather vulnerable.

B3) 3...f5



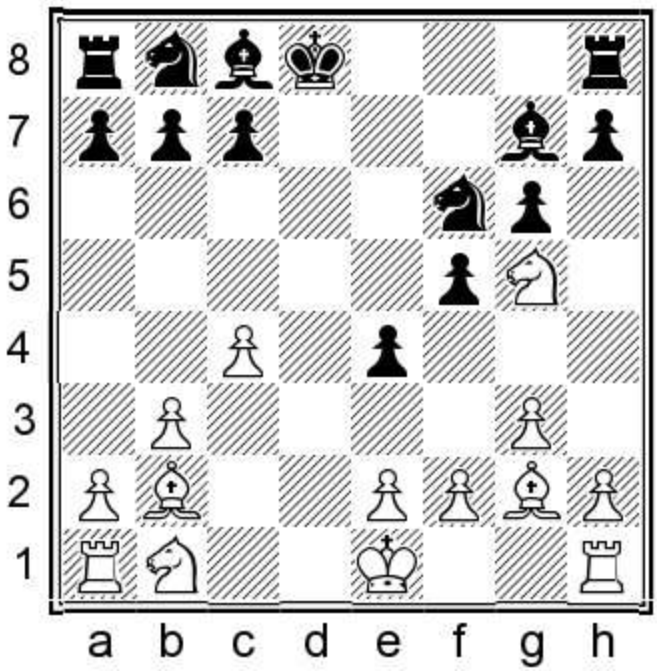
This is a tricky way of reaching the Leningrad Dutch, since we cannot play our usual variation with b2-b3 and ♗b2 coming before c2-c4. Therefore it is important to be ready with an alternative option.

4.g3 ♘f6 5.b3!

We are aiming for the same general scheme as in *GM 2*, but with a more precise move order.

I only recently realized that 5.♗g2 d6 6.b3 can be adequately met by 6...e5! 7.dxe5 dxe5 8.♕xd8† ♔xd8 9.♗b2 e4 as played in Ruiz – Foygel, USA 1997. 10.♘g5!N was my improvement in *GM 2* but I checked it again and realized that Black is okay after:

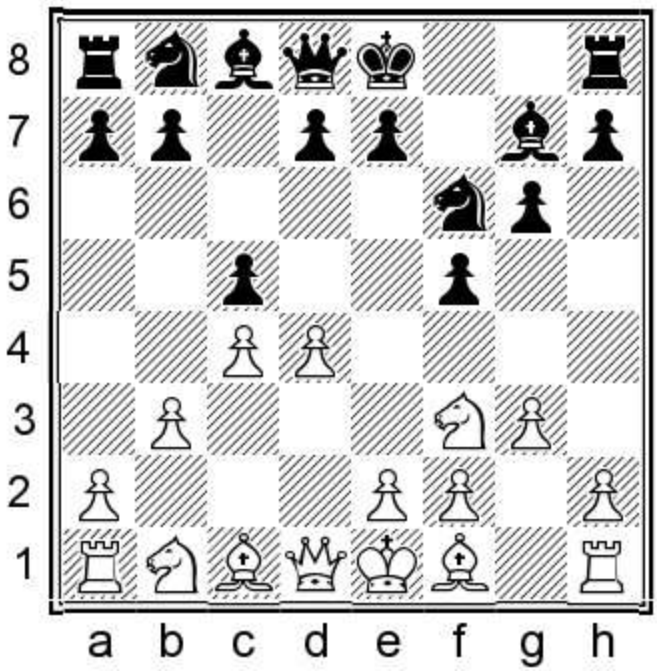
chesstouring.com



10...♔e7 11.♘c3 c6 12.0-0-0 h6 13.♘h3 ♘a6 14.f3 exf3 15.exf3 ♔f7 My previous analysis continued from here with the verdict that Black was under pressure. However, I now believe that White has nothing special and Black should be able to complete his development and equalize with accurate play.

We will analyse the unusual **B31)** 5...c5 followed by the more common **B32)** 5...d6.

B31) 5...c5



6.♗b2 ♘e4 7.♗g2N

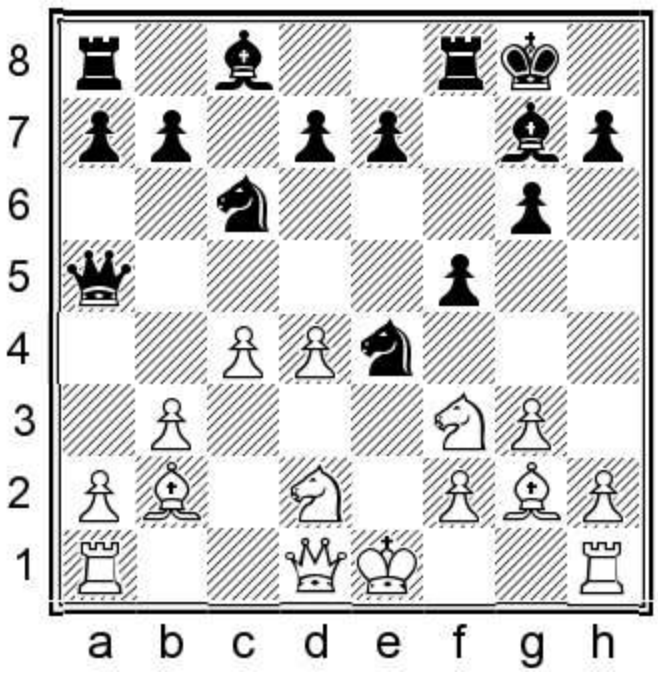
It seems odd that such an obvious move could be a novelty, but we will soon transpose to lots of games once both sides have castled.

chesstouring.com

7...♘c6

I felt it was important to check the following challenging line:

7...♕a5†!? 8.♘bd2 ♘c6 9.e3 cxd4 10.exd4 0-0



11.0-0!

It seems that White has to go for this pawn sacrifice in order to fight for the advantage.

In the event of 11.a3 ♘xd2 12.♕xd2 ♕xd2† 13.♔xd2 d6∞ Black is doing alright.

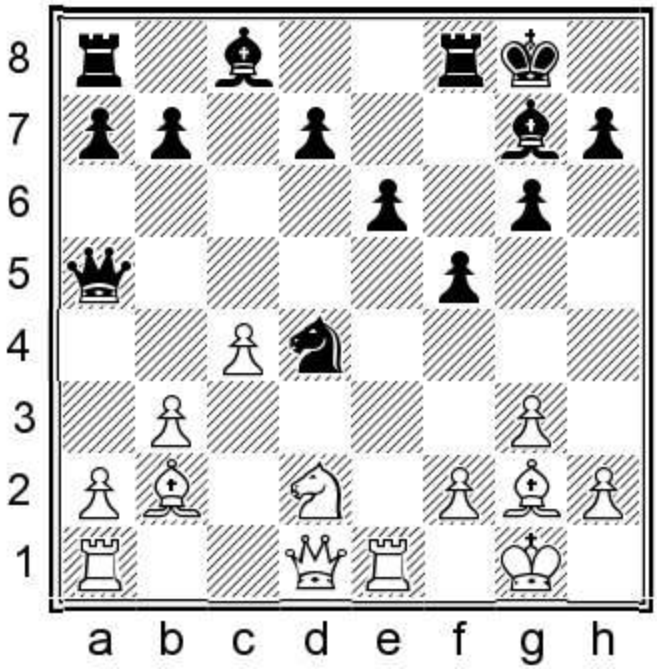
11...♘xd2 12.♘xd2 ♘xd4

12...♗xd4 13.♗xd4 ♘xd4 seems like a worse version for Black: 14.♖e1 e6 (after 14...♕c5 15.a3! White has a promising position, with b3-b4 coming next) 15.♘e4! White's chances are clearly better after both 15...♘c6 16.♘d6 and 15...fxe4 16.♕xd4 d5 17.♖ad1.

13.♖e1 e6

After 13...♕c5 I like the following idea: 14.♖b1!? a5 Otherwise b3-b4 will be strong. 15.♕c1 ♘c6 Now White has a choice between 16.♗xc6 ♗xb2 17.♗d5† ♕xd5 18.♕xb2 ♕f7 19.♕e5⩲ and 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♕b2† ♔g8 18.♘f3⩲, with excellent compensation for the pawn in either case.

chesstouring.com



14.c5!

A remarkable idea, which boosts White's initiative.

14...♕xc5 15.♖c1 ♕e7 16.♘c4 ♘b5

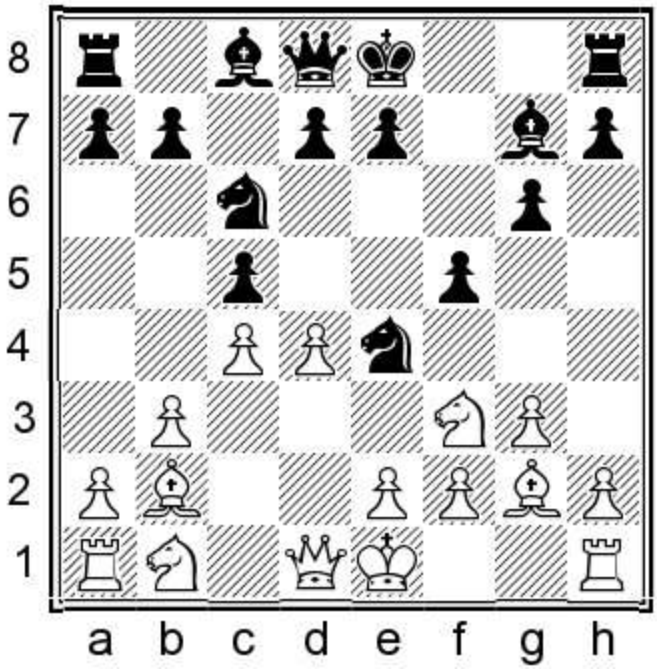
Safeguarding the knight while preventing the unpleasant ♗a3.

17.♗xg7 ♕xg7

17...♔xg7 18.a4± is hardly acceptable for Black.

18.a4 ♘d4 19.♘d6 ♘c6 20.♕d2

White enjoys fantastic compensation for two pawns.



8.0-0 0-0

Suddenly we reach a position with more than 80 games.

chesstouring.com

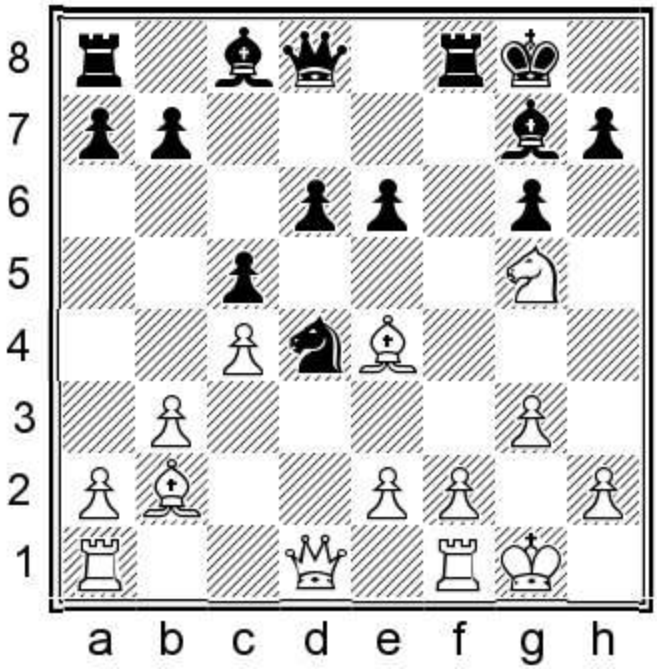
9.♘bd2!?

9.e3 has been a much more common choice, and it actually takes us back to variation B of Chapter 5 on page 98. White is certainly doing well there too, but there is an argument for doing away with e2-e3 in favour of rapid development.

9...♕a5

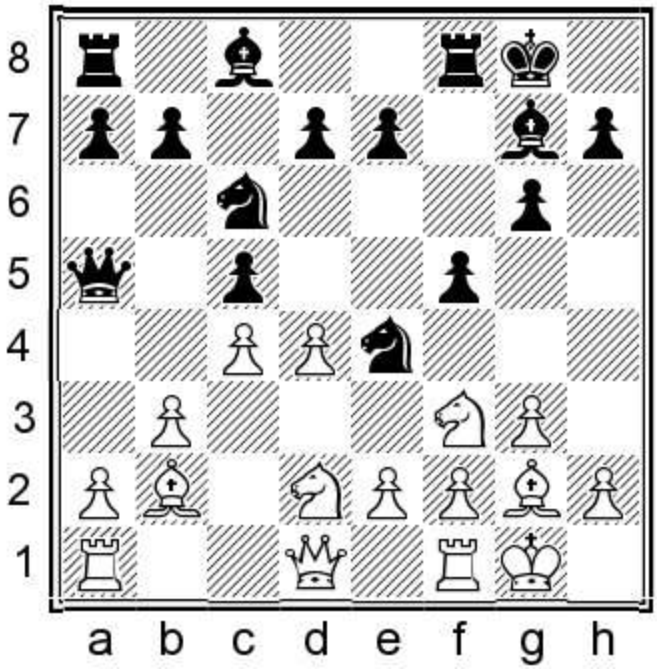
This has been Black's usual choice.

Another direction is 9...d6 when I like the rare but principled 10.♘xe4!? fxe4 11.♘g5 ♘xd4 12.♗xe4 e6 as seen in Birnbaum – Jung, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2005. Here I suggest the following straightforward approach:



13.e3N 13...♘f3† 14.♘xf3 ♗xb2 15.♖b1 ♗f6 16.h4 Black is under positional pressure, regardless of the bishop pair.

chesstouring.com



10.♘xe4!?

Once again, I like this forcing approach.

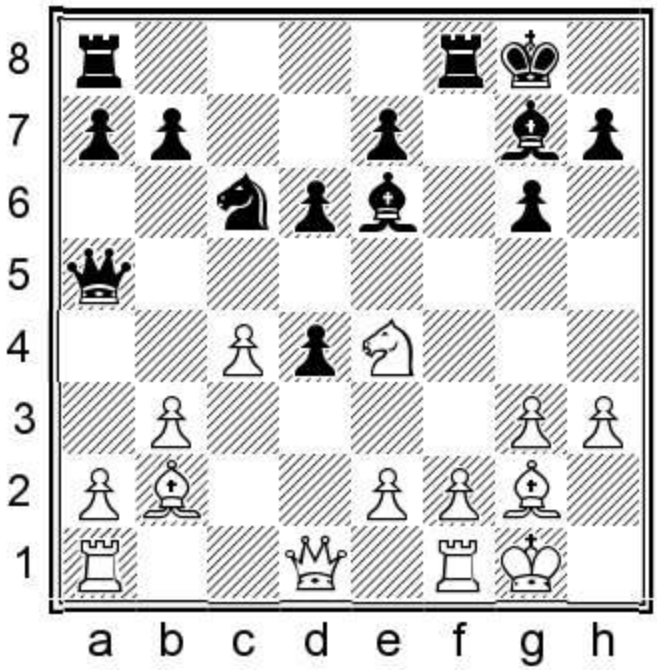
10.e3 is playable too. 10...♘xd2 11.♘xd2 cxd4 occurred in Yip – Bodi, Budapest 2013, and now 12.exd4N would have been best, with an exact transposition to the 7...♕a5† line in the notes above.

10...fxe4 11.♘g5 cxd4 12.♘xe4 d6 13.h3!

Other moves have been played but I believe the text to be the most accurate.

13...♗e6

I also like White's position after 13...♗f5 14.g4 or 13...h6 14.a3 ♗d7 15.b4 ♕c7 16.♖c1.



chesstouring.com

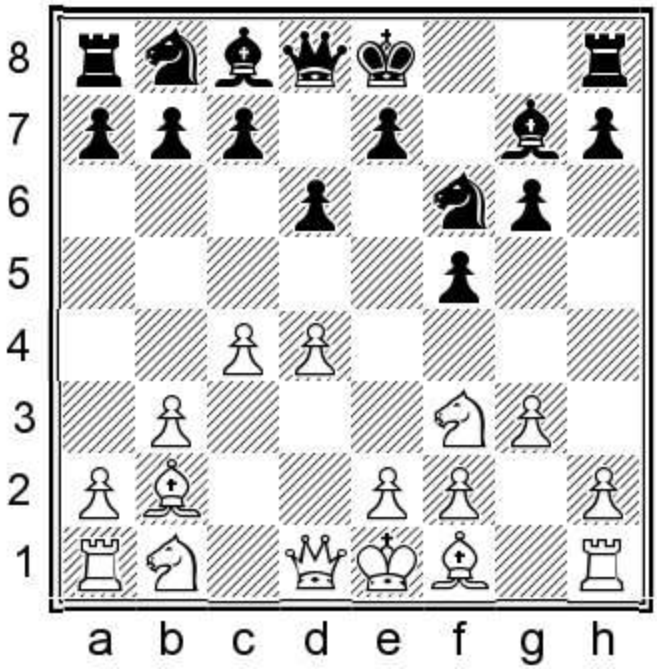
14.f4!?N

Another good choice would be 14.♕e1 ♕xe1 15.♖fxe1 as in Holroyd – Firnhaber, corr. 2017. Black managed to hold on for a draw in this high-level game, but he was under pressure throughout.

14...h6 15.a3

White keeps the better chances.

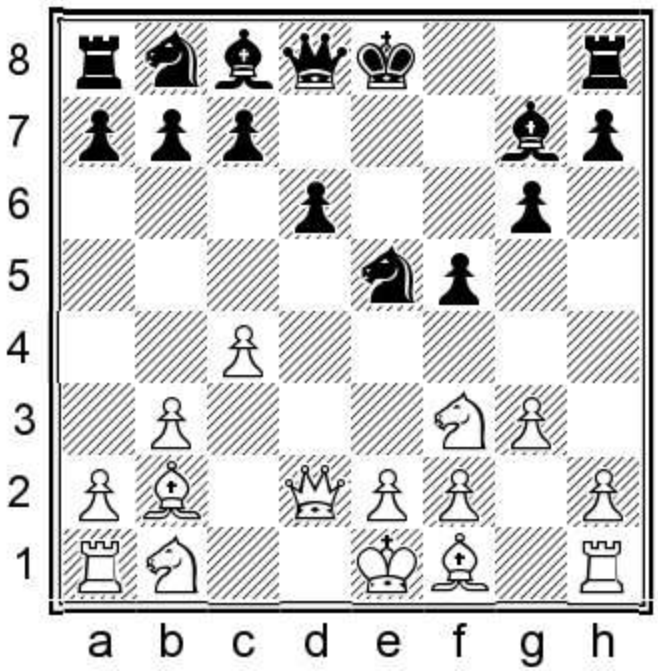
B32) 5...d6 6.♗b2



6...0-0

Just as in the main Leningrad lines, Black can carry out the ...e5 advance at almost any turn. On this occasion, 6...e5 7.dxe5 ♘g4 is well met by 8.♕d2! to force 8...♘xe5. Now in J. Schneider – Silber, Germany 2002, White should have continued:

chesstouring.com



9.♗g2N 9...0-0 10.♘c3 With a pleasant advantage, due to the characteristically favourable pawn structure.

7.♗g2

Now we need to analyse **B321)** 7...e5, **B322)** 7...♘e4 and **B323)** 7...c6.

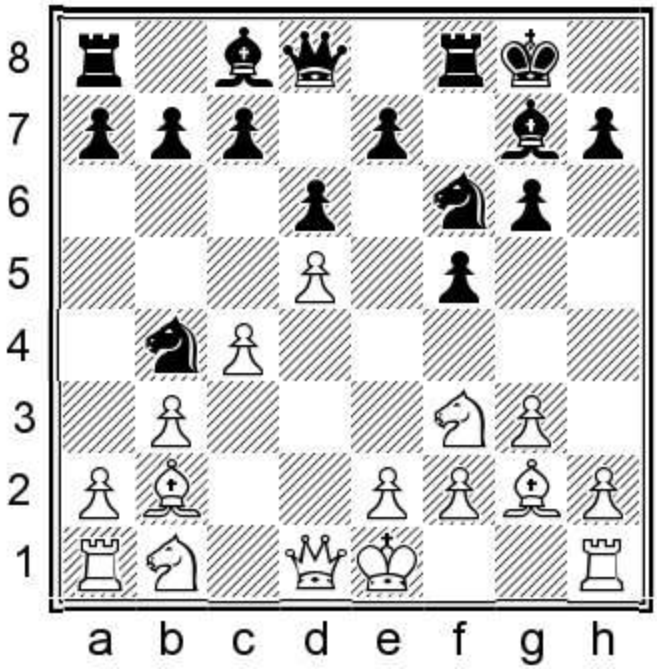
7...♕e8 8.0-0 takes us back to Chapter 7, while 7...♘a6 8.0-0 has been covered on page 100 – see 7...♘a6 8.c4 in the notes to variation C of Chapter 5.

A minor alternative is:

7...♘c6 8.d5 ♘b4

After 8...♘b8 a model game continued 9.♘d4 a5 10.♘c3 ♘a6 11.0-0 ♘c5 12.e3 ♘g4 13.♕c2 ♗d7 14.♖ad1± with an obvious advantage for White in Archangelsky – Henson, Montreal 1998.

chesstouring.com



9.a3 ♘a6 10.b4 ♕e8

10...e5 looks like a better choice although 11.dxe6 c6 12.♕c2 ♗xe6 13.0-0± still offers White the more pleasant game.

11.♘d4 ♘e4 12.♘d2! e5

In Middendorf – Schoessler, Hamburg 1969, White should have continued:

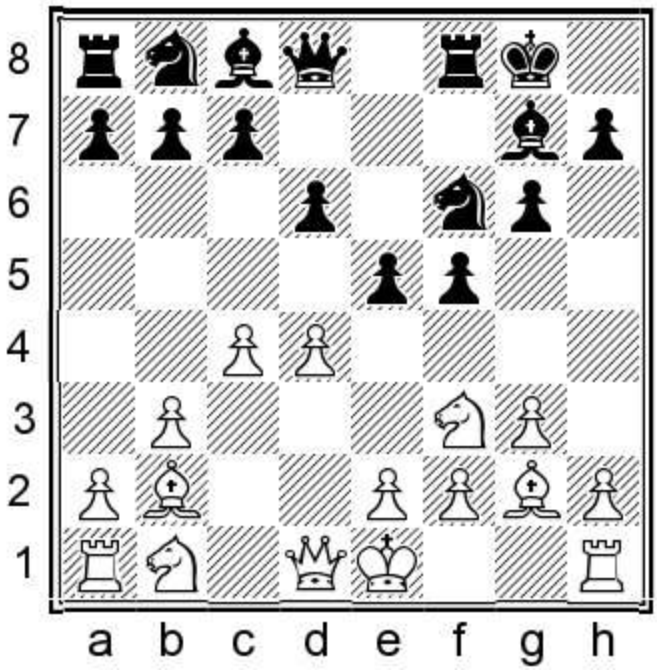
13.♘xe4N 13...fxe4

Or 13...exd4 14.♘g5 ♕e7 15.♕d2 with a clear edge.

14.♘b5 e3 15.f3

White is obviously better, as the e3-pawn is more of a weakness than a strength.

B321) 7...e5

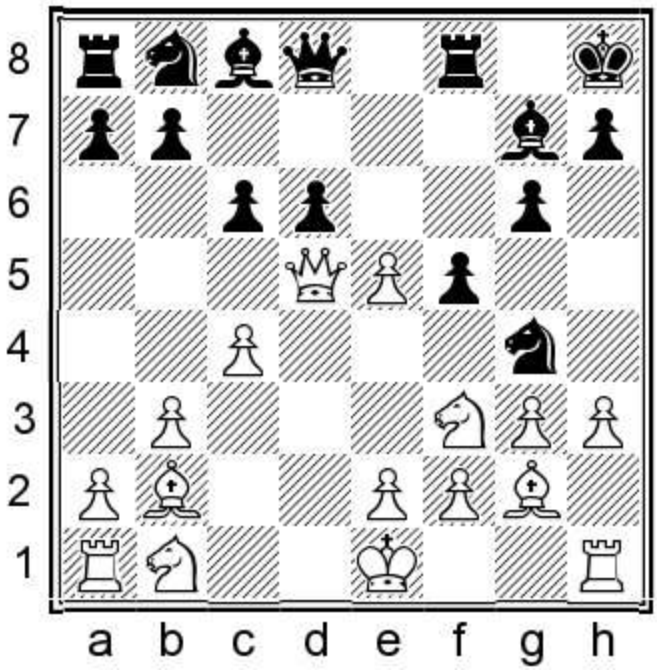


chesstouring.com

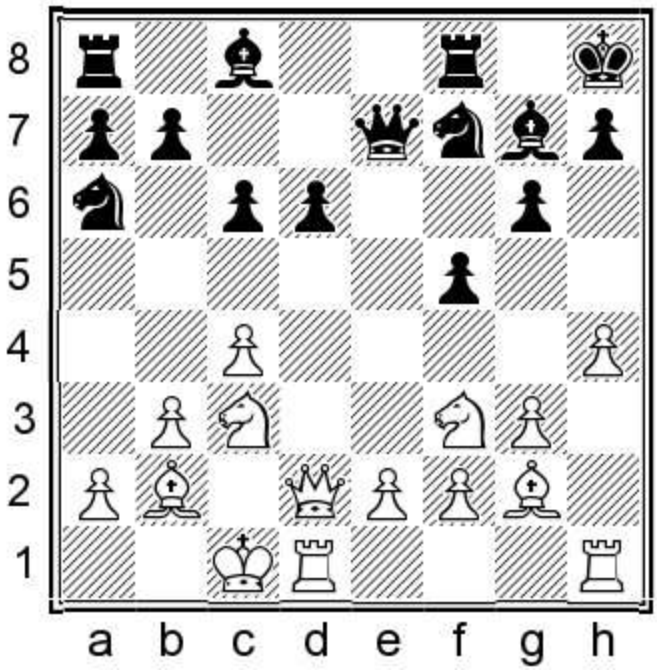
As usual, we need to consider this move, although this is not a good version of it for Black.

8.dxe5 ♘fd7

8...♘g4 is strongly met by: 9.♕d5† ♔h8 10.h3! c6 (after 10...♘xe5 11.♘xe5 dxe5 12.♗xe5 ♕e7 it is important that White has 13.♗c3!± when he remains a pawn up)



11.♕d2 ♘xe5 12.♘c3 Again the pawn structure is clearly favourable for White. 12...♘a6 13.0-0-0!? White can even exploit that fact that he did not castle too early on the kingside. 13...♘f7 14.h4 ♕e7 Unfortunately in Brattetveit – Martinsen, Norway 2004, White was unable to maintain the excellent level of his opening play and eventually lost. Here he should have continued:

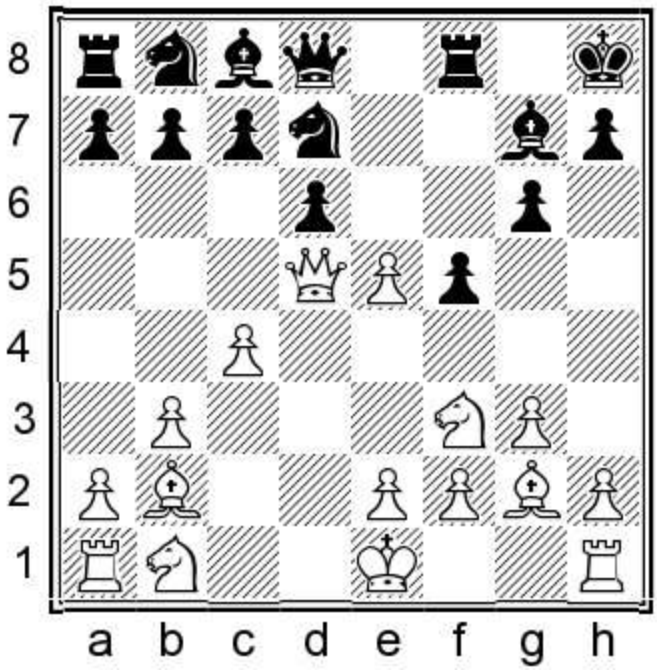


15.h5N 15...g5 16.h6! ♗f6 17.♖h5 ♔g8 18.♘d4± Black is under unpleasant pressure.

chesstouring.com

9.♕d5† ♔h8

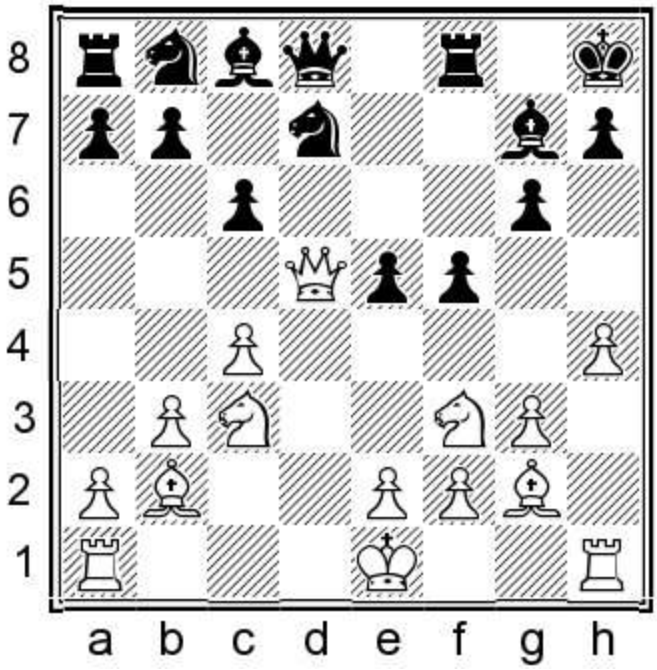
This was Duer – Deglmann, Austria 2004, and now I suggest the following improvement:



10.♕d2!N

This is my favourite idea, although White is spoiled for choice.

10.♘c3!?N is also rather promising. The natural 10...dxe5 transposes to another game, which continued 11.h4 c6. Now in Panno – Pelikan, Rio Hondo 1966, White should have played:



12.♕d6N 12...♕f6 13.0-0-0 ♕xd6 14.♖xd6 White has the better endgame.

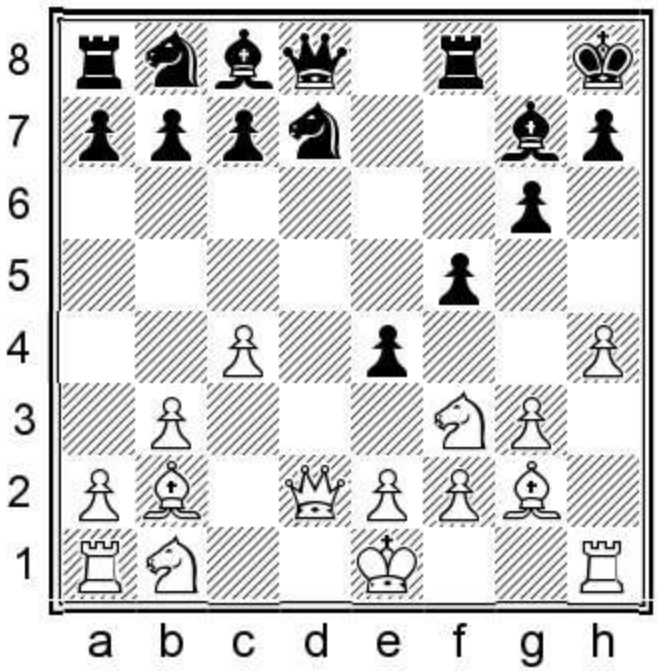
10...dxe5

10...♘xe5 11.♘c3 reaches the typical pleasant structure for White.

chesstouring.com

11.h4! e4

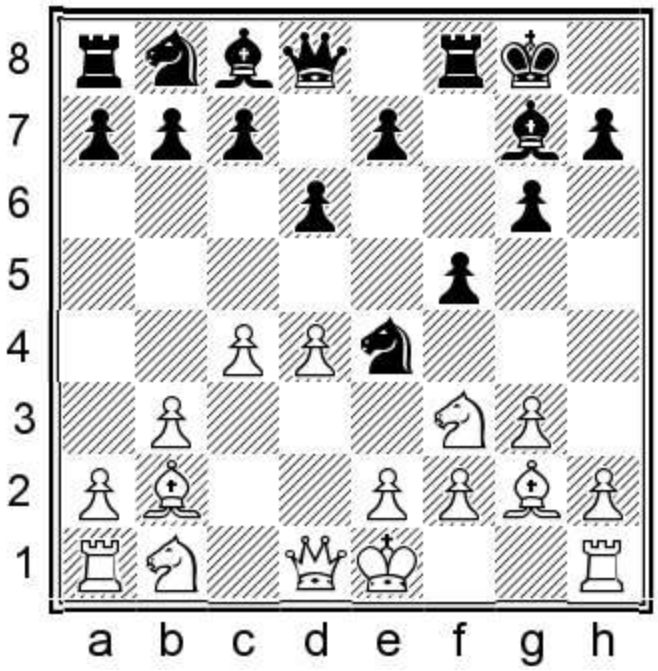
11...h6 is no better in view of 12.♘c3 c6 13.0-0-0 ♕e7 14.h5 g5 15.♕d6↑ with promising play for White.



12.♘g5 ♗xb2 13.♕xb2† ♕f6 14.♘c3 ♘e5 15.0-0-0

White enjoys an obvious initiative due to his lead in development and safer king.

B322) 7...♘e4

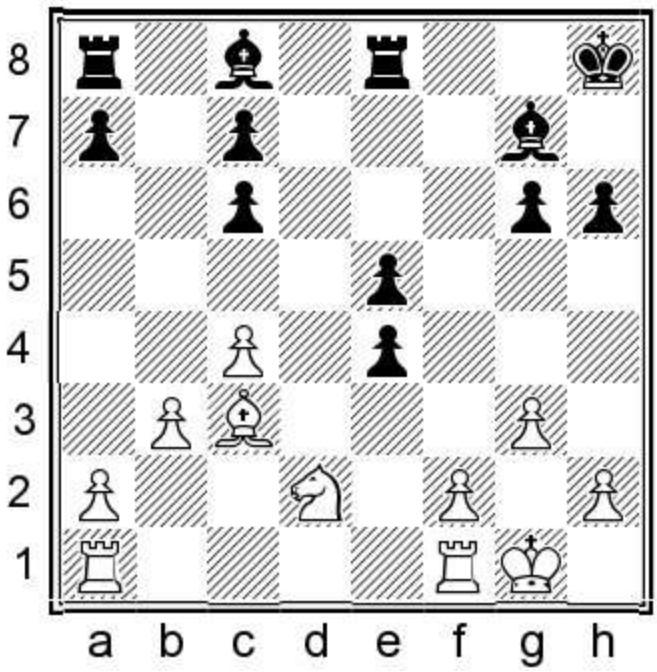


8.♘c3!?

A change of direction from *GM 2*.

chesstouring.com

Previously, after 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.♘c3 e5 10.dxe5 ♘xc3 11.♗xc3 dxe5 12.♕d5† ♔h8 13.♕xd8 ♖xd8 14.♘g5 ♖e8 15.♗xc6 bxc6 I came up with the novelty 16.e4. White has achieved a perfect 3/3 with it, so the idea was not without merit, but it turns out that Black can equalize with precise play after: 16...h6 17.♘f3 fxe4 18.♘d2

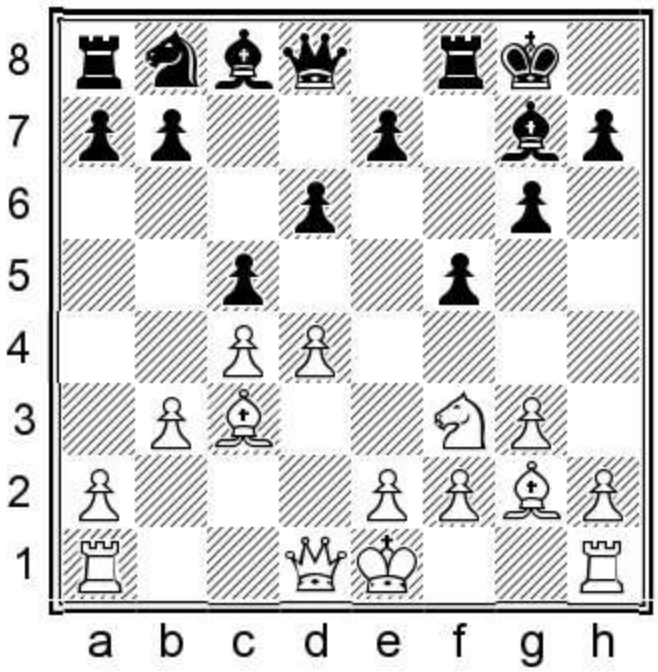


18...e3!N (18...♗f5 19.♖fe1! was unpleasant for Black in Khademalsharieh – Saber, Gibraltar 2016) 19.fxe3 e4 20.♗xg7† ♔xg7 21.♖f4 ♗f5 22.♖af1 (or 22.g4 ♖ad8 and Black equalizes) 22...♖ad8 23.♖1f2 h5= Black is fine. In *GM 2* I continued the analysis, but gave an overambitious line which underestimated Black's counterplay. The correct result should be a draw after normal play.

8...♘c6

8...♘xc3 9.♗xc3 c5?! happened in Van Dongen – Friot, Bescanon 1999. White is pleasantly better after:

chesstouring.com



10.0-0N 10...♘c6 11.♖c1± The ...c5 and ...f5 moves do not combine well.

9.♖c1!?

A useful preparatory move, anticipating a possible clash in the centre.

9.0-0 transposes to the 8.0-0 line noted above, which I now prefer to avoid.

I also considered 9.♘xe4 fxe4 10.♘g5 but found it pretty unclear after: 10...e5 11.♘xe4 (or 11.d5 ♕xg5 12.dxc6 bxc6N 13.♗xe4 ♗d7 14.0-0 a5∞) 11...exd4!N For some reason Black has always captured with the knight. 12.♕d2 h6∞

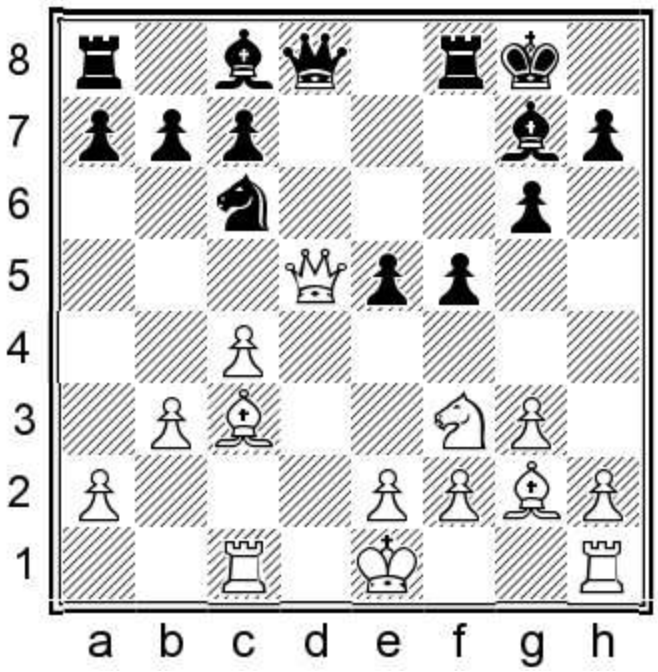
9...♘xc3

The alternative is 9...e5N 10.dxe5 ♘xe5 (10...♘xc3 11.♗xc3 transposes to our main line) 11.0-0± when White obtains the thematically favourable pawn structure.

10.♗xc3 e5 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♕d5†!

Obviously this is White's only chance to fight for the advantage.

chesstouring.com



12...♔h8 13.♕xd8 ♖xd8 14.♘g5

This is the main point behind White's 12th move.

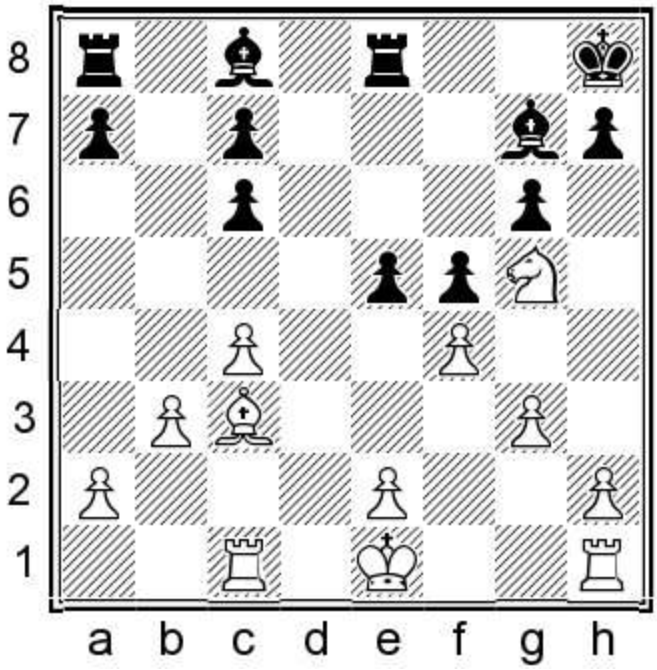
14...♖e8 15.♗xc6

Already a well-known idea from my previous work. The position is almost the same as in the 8.0-0 line noted above, but here White has played ♖c1 instead of castling, which helps him.

15...bxc6 16.f4!

A great strategic decision. White will be happy to trade dark-squared bishops and reach an endgame with the superior minor piece. Of course, if White had already castled then this move would have lost the e2-pawn.

chesstouring.com



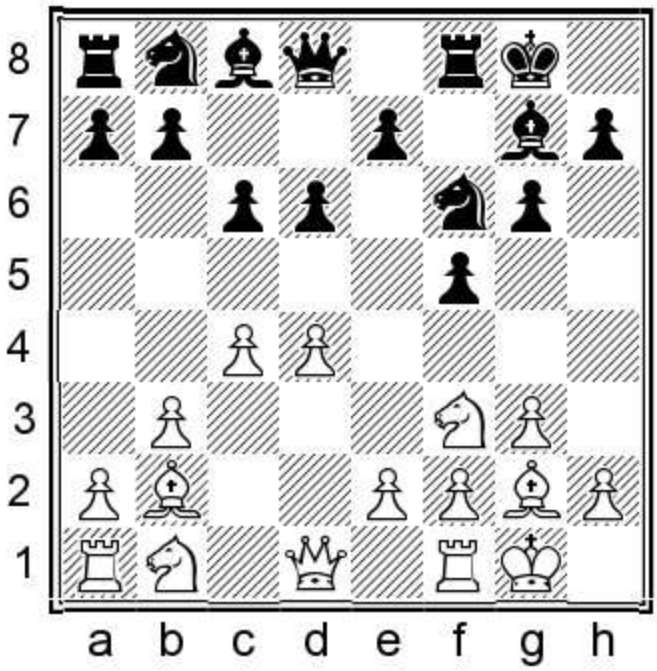
16...exf4

16...♔g8N should be met by 17.♗xe5 ♗xe5 18.fxe5 ♖xe5 19.♔f2 and White is better.

17.gxf4 a5 18.♔f2

The arising endgame is unpleasant for Black, and it's not surprising that he was unable to hold it in A. Saric – Potapov, Pardubice 2014.

B323) 7...c6 8.0-0



We have almost transposed to variation A of Chapter 6, but here White has played an early c2-c4 instead of ♘bd2. Although I prefer the latter option when given the choice, I like White's chances here as

well.

Black's most important options at this point are **B3231)** 8...e5 and **B3232)** 8...♕c7.

Several other plausible moves lead directly to earlier chapters. For instance: 8...♕e8 9.♘bd2 is variation A3 of Chapter 6 on page 124; 8...♘a6 9.♘bd2 is variation A4 of Chapter 6 on page 126; and 8...a5 is variation C22 of Chapter 5 on page 105.

The other main independent possibility is:
8...♘e4 9.♘bd2 ♘a6

9...d5 can be found on page 129 – see 8...d5 9.c4 c6 in the notes to variation B of Chapter 6.

9...♘xd2 10.♕xd2 ♘d7 has been covered on page 131 – see 10...c6 in the notes to variation B21 of Chapter 6.

10.♕c2 ♘xd2

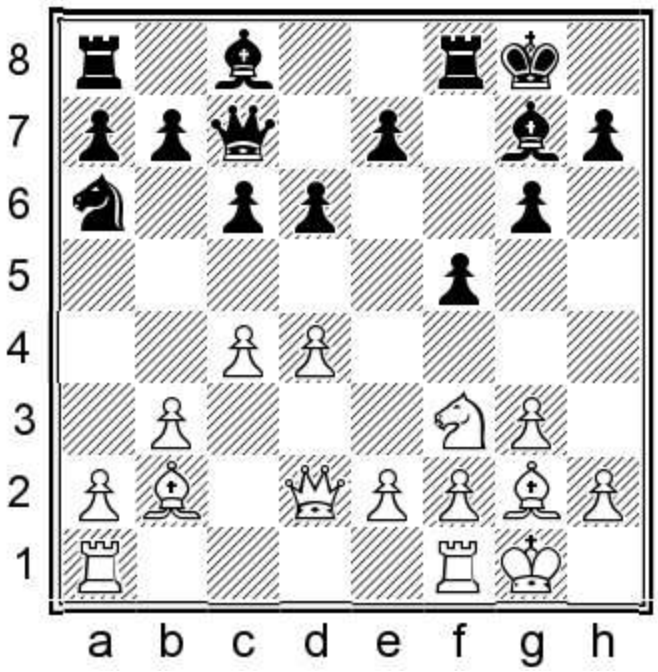
10...♘b4 11.♕c1 d5 occurred in Buhmann – Silva, Torres Vedras 2011; after the simple 12.♘e5N White's advantage is obvious.

11.♕xd2

Black has gained a tempo with ...♘a6 but it is not clear if this is actually beneficial to him. For instance:

11...♕c7

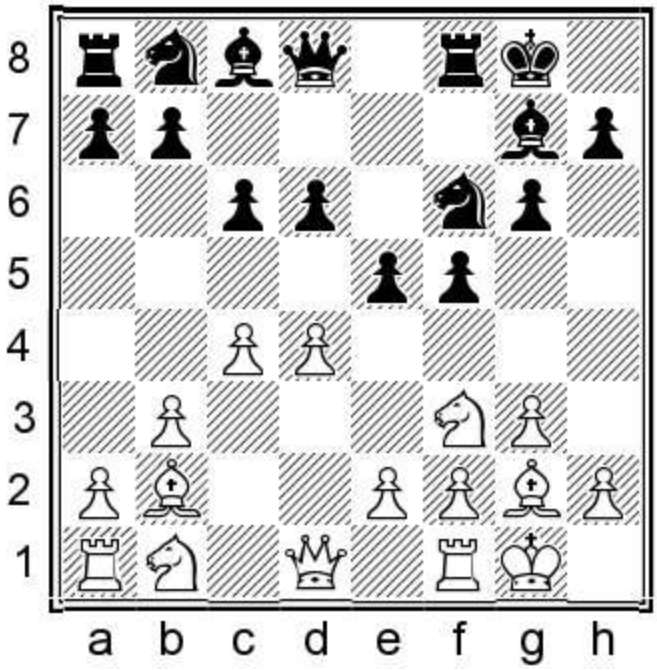
In Hanisch – Horstmann, Germany 2007, White could have played:



12.b4!N 12...e5 13.b5 ♘b8 14.e4
With a promising position.

B3231) 8...e5

chesstouring.com



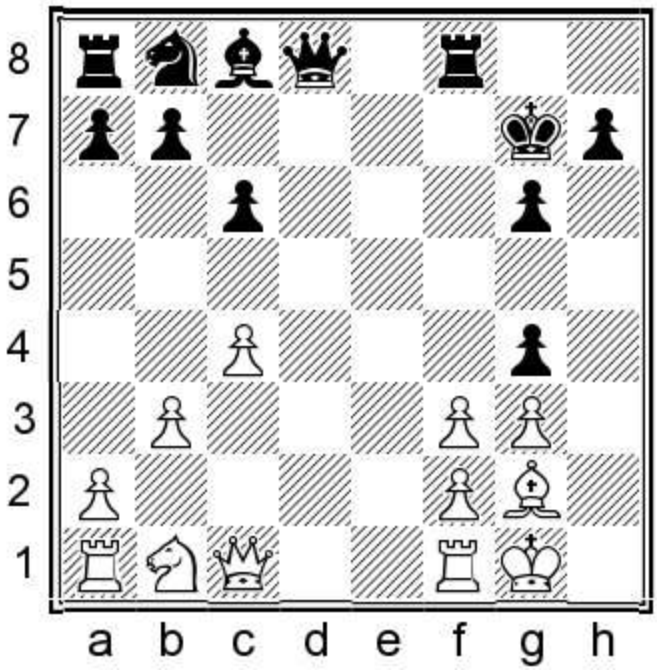
As always, we should be ready for this move.

9.dxe5 ♘g4 10.♕c1

10.♕c2 is similar and may transpose.

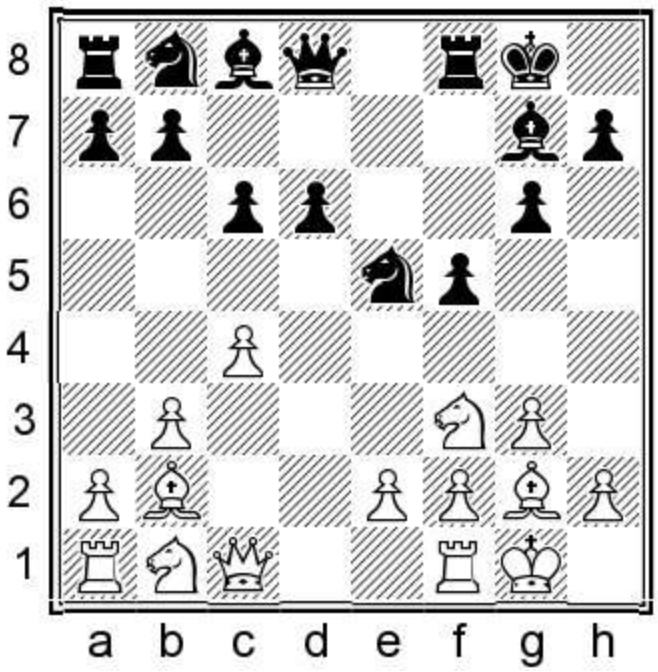
10...♘xe5

10...dxe5 leads to a pretty forcing line: 11.h3 e4 12.♗xg7 ♔xg7 13.hxg4 exf3 14.exf3 fxg4 Now in Elissalt Cardenas – Valdes, Isla Guitart 1994, White should have continued:



15.♘d2N 15...♘a6 (15...♕d4 runs into 16.b4! ♘a6 17.♖d1 and Black's queen is clearly misplaced) 16.♘e4 gxf3 17.♕c3† ♔g8 18.♗xf3 ♗f5 19.♖ad1 ♕e7 20.♘d6 White is clearly better.

chesstouring.com



11.♖d1

White enjoys the typical positional edge associated with this pawn structure.

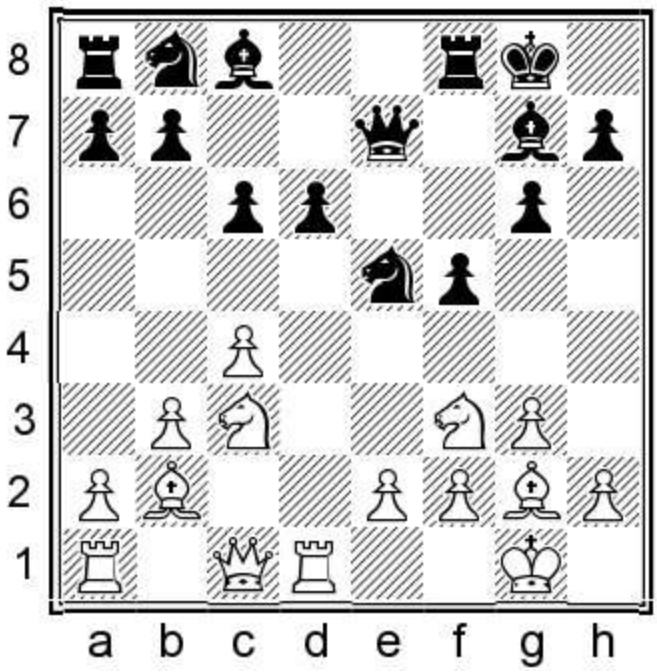
11...♕e7

11...♘xf3† 12.♗xf3 ♗xb2 13.♕xb2 ♕f6 14.♘c3 ♘d7 15.♖d2 ♘e5 16.♖ad1 ♘f7 17.♗g2 also gave White a stable plus in Donchenko – Danner, Rogaska Slatina 2012.

12.♘c3

It is also worth considering 12.♘xe5!? dxe5 (or 12...♗xe5 13.f4 ♗xb2 14.♕xb2 ♘d7 15.♘c3 ♘f6 16.♖d3! with a clear edge to White) 13.♗a3! c5 14.♘c3 ♘a6 15.♘d5 with the better chances thanks to the great outpost on d5.

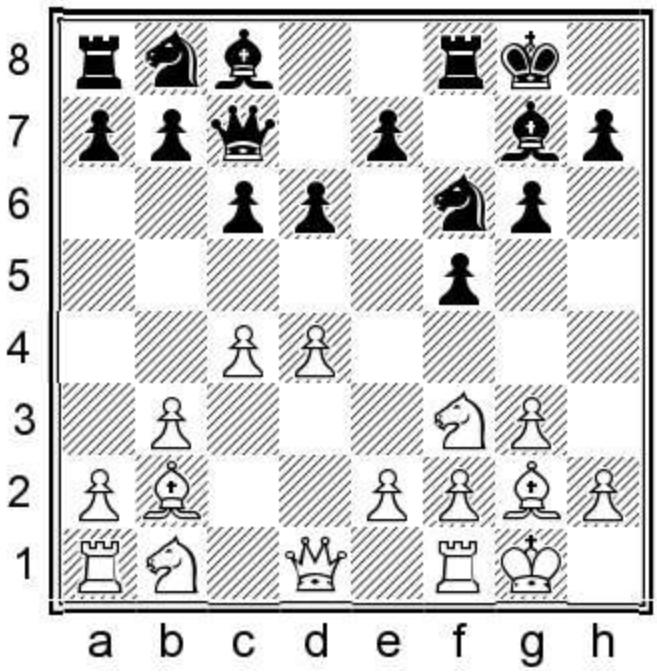
chesstouring.com



12...♘a6 13.♕d2 ♘f7 14.♘a4 ♘c7 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♘c3±

White enjoyed a pleasant, lasting advantage in Secheres – Barbu, Mamaia 2015.

B3232) 8...♕c7



This is the most popular option for Black, at least among the moves which do not immediately transpose to another part of the book.

9.♘bd2

9.d5 ♘a6 10.♘c3 e5 11.dxe6 ♗xe6 looks like a reliable line for Black, which has been played by many strong grandmasters.

chesstouring.com

9...♖e8

I also considered two significant alternatives:

9...♘a6 10.a3

Naturally we restrict the knight, which looks oddly placed with the queen already on c7.

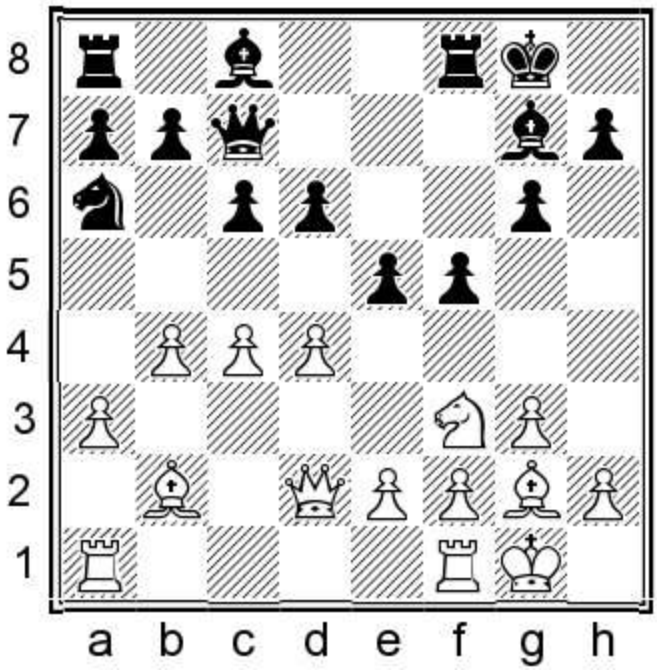
10...♘e4

10...♗d7 11.b4 ♖ae8 12.♕b3 ♔h8 13.♖ae1!? e5 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.e4 f4 occurred in Beil – Dobrovolsky, Hrazany 1974, when the simple 16.c5N 16...♗e6 17.♕c3 followed by ♘c4 would have yielded White a clear positional advantage.

10...♖e8 11.b4 e5 is a thematic plan but White is perfectly placed to meet it: 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.e4 ♗d7 14.c5± Cramling – J. Christiansen, Gibraltar 2015.

11.b4 ♘xd2 12.♕xd2 e5

Now in Danielian – A. Muzychuk, Tbilisi 2011, White could have continued:



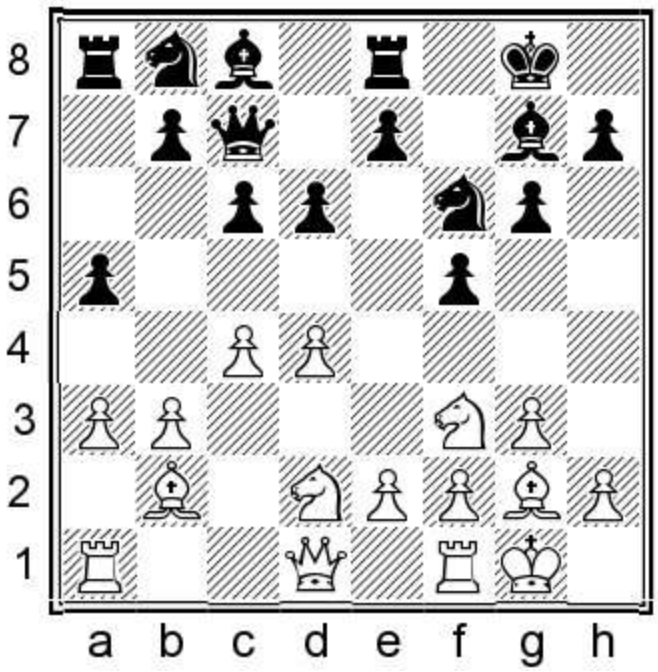
13.b5!N 13...♘b8 14.e4 f4 15.a4

Seizing the initiative.

9...a5 10.a3 ♖e8

Another game continued 10...♘a6 11.b4! ♔h8 12.b5 ♘b8 13.♖c1 and White was clearly better in Bohak – Frank, corr. 1994.

chesstouring.com



11.♖e1

Although White does not particularly need an improvement, it could be interesting to try 11.b4!?N, as I like White's chances after both 11...axb4 12.axb4 ♖xa1 13.♕xa1 and 11...e5 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.e4.

11...e5 12.dxe5

12.e4N is worth considering as well.

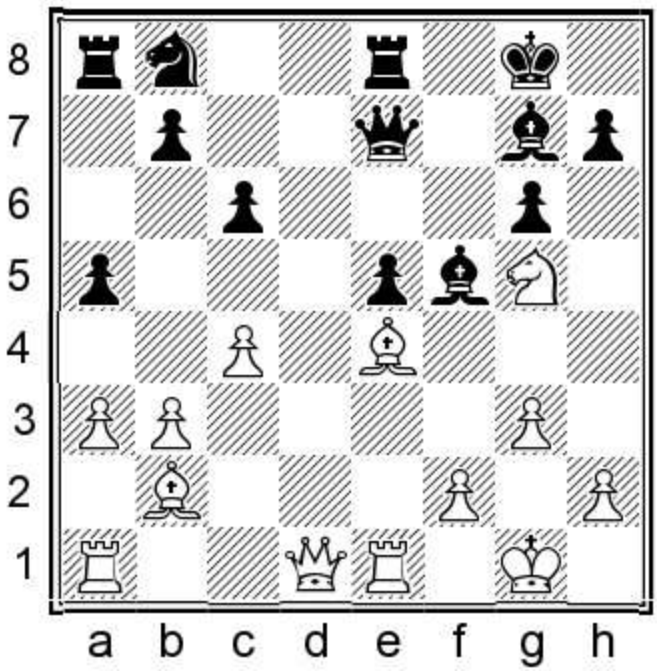
12...dxe5 13.e4 fxe4

A later game continued 13...♘bd7 14.b4 c5 and now in Hansch – Schnabel, Germany 2015, White should have continued 15.exf5N 15...gxf5 16.♘h4! ♘f8 17.♕c2± when Black's position is starting to collapse.

14.♘g5 ♗f5 15.♘dxe4 ♘xe4 16.♗xe4! ♕e7

In Van de Griendt – Timmerman, Enschede 1993, White missed a strong idea:

chesstouring.com

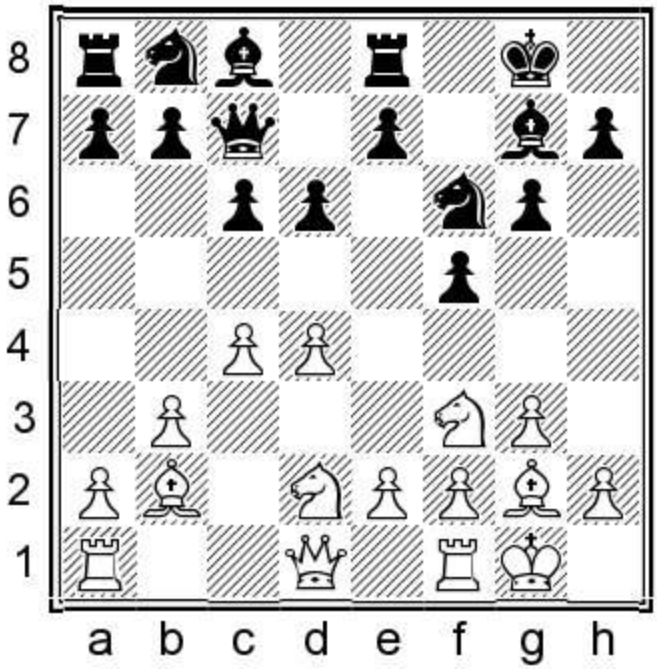


17.♗xf5!N 17...♕xg5

17...gxf5? 18.♕h5 leads to quick collapse of Black's position.

18.♗c2 ♘a6 19.h4±

With a clear positional advantage.



10.♖e1 e5

Delaying this advance only helps White. For instance, 10...♘a6 11.e4 fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♖xe4 ♗f5 14.♖e3 e5 (14...♘b4 ran into 15.♘h4! in Strikovic – Garcia Bugallo, Sanxenxo 2017) 15.dxe5 dxe5 16.♕e2 and Black was under serious pressure in Sebenik – Cherniaev, Biel 2014.

11.e4

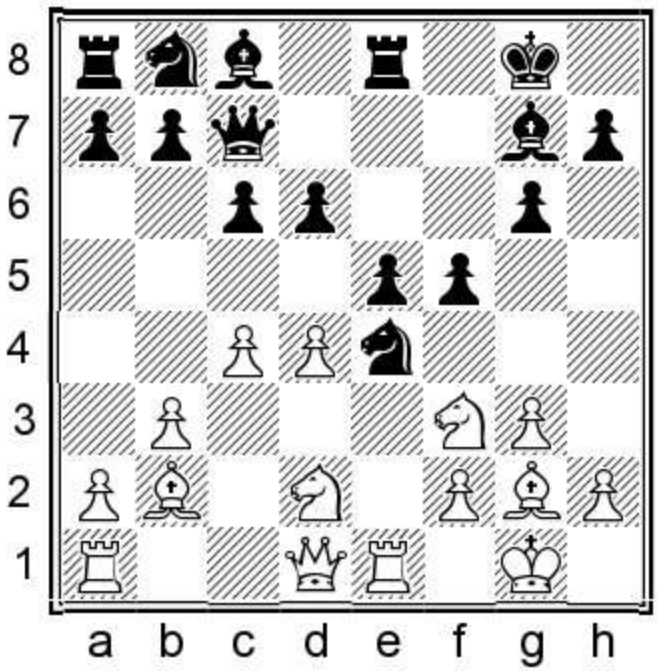
chesstouring.com

Now Black has to make a difficult choice.

11...♘xe4

11...exd4 12.exf5 ♗xf5 was played in S. Horvath – Kozyryev, Eger 2003, when 13.♘xd4N would have been clearly better for White.

11...fxe4 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♘g5 ♗g4 14.♕c2 ♘bd7 15.c5 ♗f5 was seen in Ghosh – Filev, Kavala 2015, when the natural 16.♘dxe4N 16...♘d5 17.♖ad1± would have given White an obvious advantage.



12.dxe5

Karolyi covers this line but only considers 12.♘xe4.

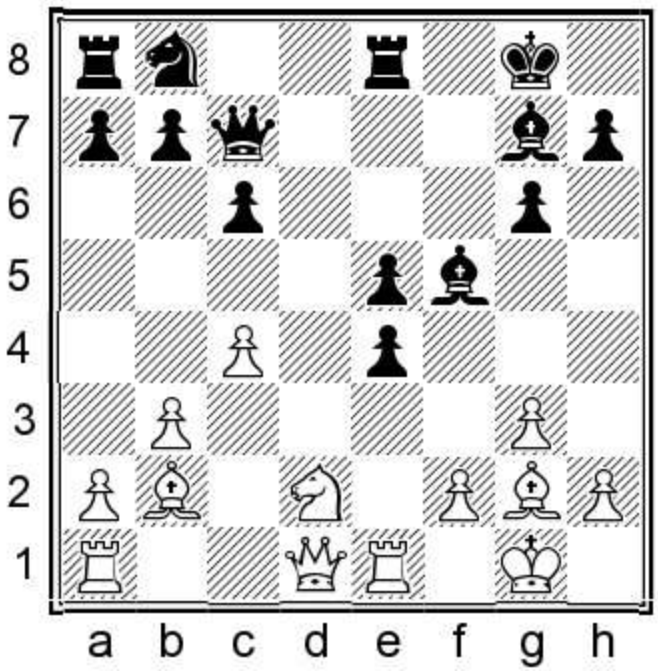
12...dxe5

Much worse is 12...♘xd2? 13.♕xd2 dxe5 as seen in Lindgren – Lundin, Sweden 2015. White was better in the game and went on to win, but 14.♖xe5!N 14...♗xe5 15.♘xe5+– would have yielded a decisive initiative.

13.♘xe4 fxe4 14.♘d2 ♗f5

We have been following Nihal – Potapov, Moscow 2017. Here White should have played:

chesstouring.com



15.g4!N 15...♗e6 16.♘xe4

With a clear positional advantage.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with a number of variations in which Black responds to 1.d4 g6 2.c4 by converting to a Leningrad Dutch. 2...f5?! is by far the clumsiest of them in view of the thematic 3.h4!, when 3...♘f6 does not stop White from pressing ahead with 4.h5.

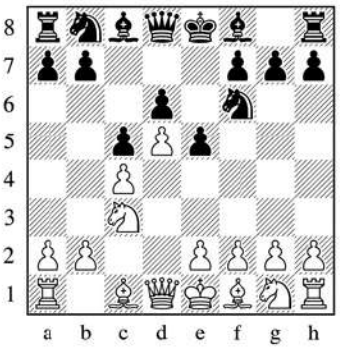
The more important move order is 2...♗g7 3.♘f3, when Black has a few options. 3...d6 and 3...c5 are playable, although neither of them really lends itself to a good version of the Dutch after a subsequent ...f5.

A more serious proposition is 3...f5 4.g3 ♘f6, when 5.b3! is an important finesse in the move order. Our main line continues 5...d6 6.♗b2 0-0 7.♗g2 when play may or may not transpose to our Leningrad coverage from the previous chapters. The fact that we have played c2-c4 instead of castling does offer Black a few extra options, but White still has every chance of emerging from the opening with some advantage.

chesstouring.com



Benoni Systems



Czech Benoni – Sidelines

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5 (3...a6) **4.♘c3 d6**

5.e4

A) 5...g6 6.♗e2 193

A1) 6...h5 193

A2) 6...♘bd7 194

A3) 6...a6 7.♗g5 195

A31) 7...♗g7 196

A32) 7...h6 197

A4) 6...♗g7 199

B) 5...♘bd7 6.♗d3 201

B1) 6...g6 202

B2) 6...♗e7 7.♘ge2 203

B21) 7...g6 204

B22) 7...h5 205

B23) 7...♘f8 8.♘g3! 207

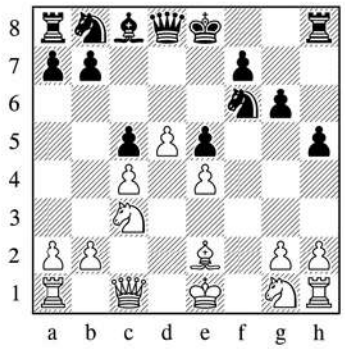
B231) 8...♘g6 208

B232) 8...g6 209

B24) 7...0-0 210

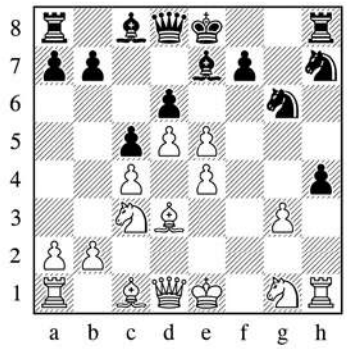
chesstouring.com

A1) note to 7...exf4



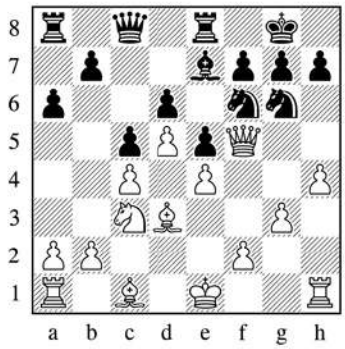
10.♕g5!N

B22) after 14...♘g6



15.e6!N

B231) after 13...♕c8



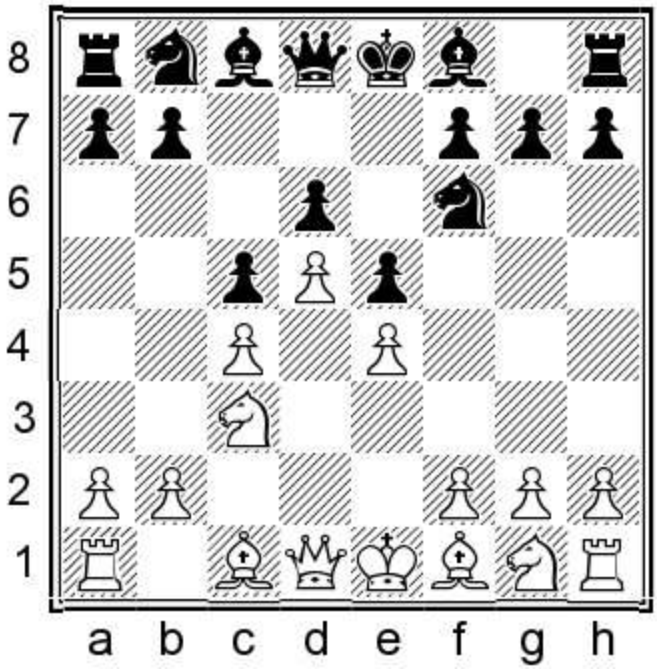
14.♕f3!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5

This is the Czech Benoni – quite a popular choice among players who prefer to avoid a theoretical debate in favour of a closed manoeuvring game. In *GM 2* I remarked that it was a pretty rare choice at GM level, but more recently I have noticed many more games involving grandmasters, although a number of them have been rapid or blitz encounters.

3...a6 is a move which doesn't really have a name or fit neatly into any of the other chapters. The simplest reply is 4.a4, with an inevitable transposition into the Modern Benoni, Czech Benoni, or whichever other variant of this opening Black may opt for.

4.♘c3 d6 5.e4



Black has three main options which are worth considering. The main line of 5...♗e7 will be covered in the next chapter; and before then, we will analyse **A)** 5...g6 and **B)** 5...♘bd7.

chesstouring.com

A) 5...g6

With this move, Black converts to a King's Indian set-up with a blocked centre. I consider this an inferior version for Black, as White has plenty of time and freedom to choose a favourable set-up for his pieces.

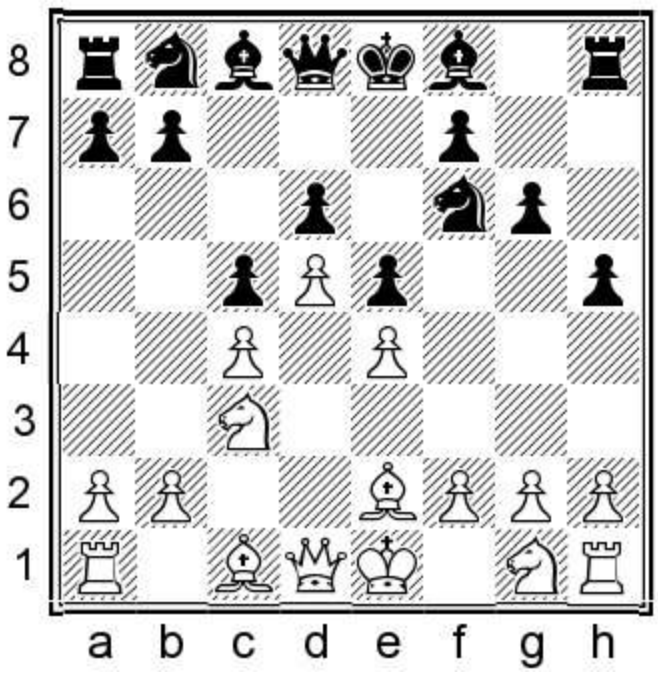
6.♗e2!

I like this flexible move, which maintains the option of pushing the kingside pawns. For readers who do not wish to 'punish' Black's chosen move order and instead want to simplify their repertoire choices, it is possible to play 6.g3 with a likely transposition to the Reluctant Benoni chapter in *Volume 2A*.

As we will see throughout this and the next chapter, the blocked centre enables Black to delay his normal developing moves and mix in some pawn moves on either flank, trying to confuse White. In such situations it is practically impossible to check every option and move order, but by analysing the most important lines it should be enough to build up a good understanding of the position.

We will consider four main options: **A1)** 6...h5, **A2)** 6...♘bd7, **A3)** 6...a6 and **A4)** 6...♗g7.

A1) 6...h5

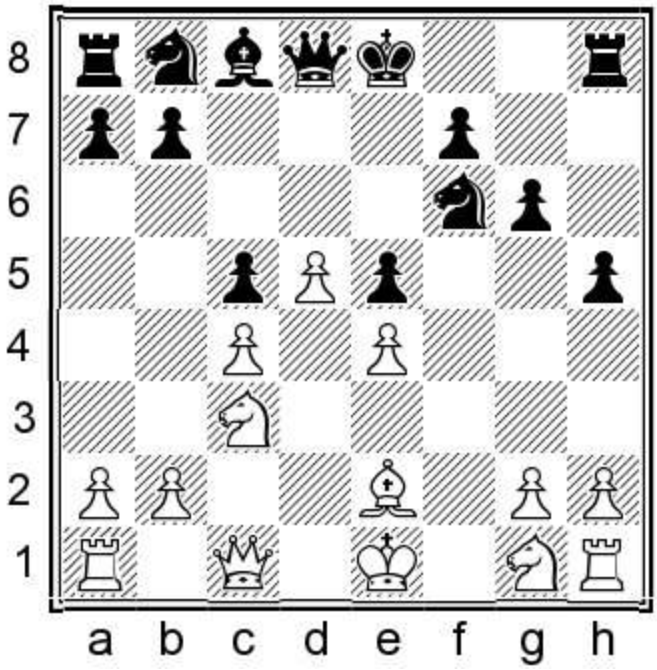


This move has the idea to gain some kingside space while preparing to trade the dark-squared bishops. I favour an aggressive response for White, which has only been tried in two games so far.

7.f4!? exf4

The more recent outing saw 7...♗h6?! 8.fxe5 ♗xc1 9.♕xc1 dxe5 and now in Raetsky – Gritsenko, Voronezh 2013, White missed a strong follow-up:

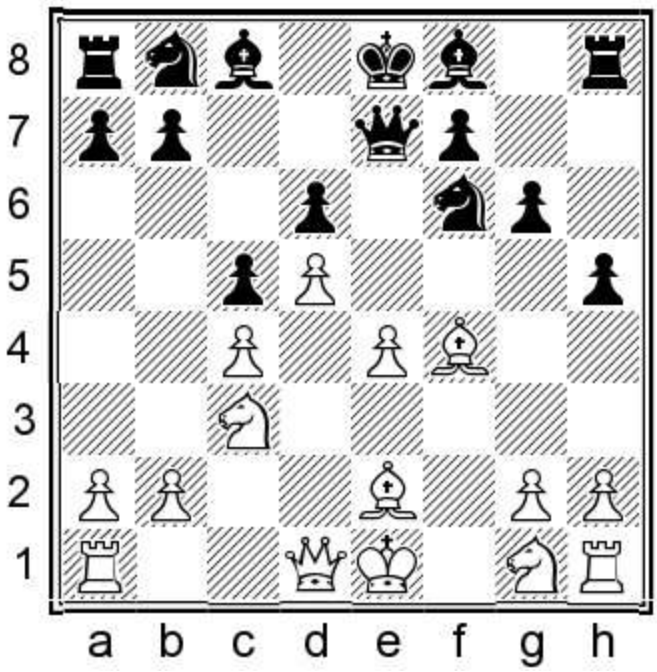
chesstouring.com



10.♕g5!N 10...♕e7 11.♘f3 ♘bd7 Presumably both players thought Black would be okay here, but White has another powerful shot. 12.♘b5! 0-0 13.0-0 With the following nice point: 13...a6 14.d6! ♕d8 15.♘c7 ♖b8 16.♘e6! fxe6 17.♕xg6† ♔h8 18.♘g5 With a decisive attack.

8.♗xf4 ♕e7

In Hulak – Ib. Saric, Sibenik 2007, White should have played:



9.♘f3!N 9...♗g7

Eating the central pawn is risky to say the least: 9...♘xe4 10.♘xe4 ♕xe4 11.♕d2 Followed by 0-0 and ♖ae1, with a dangerous initiative.

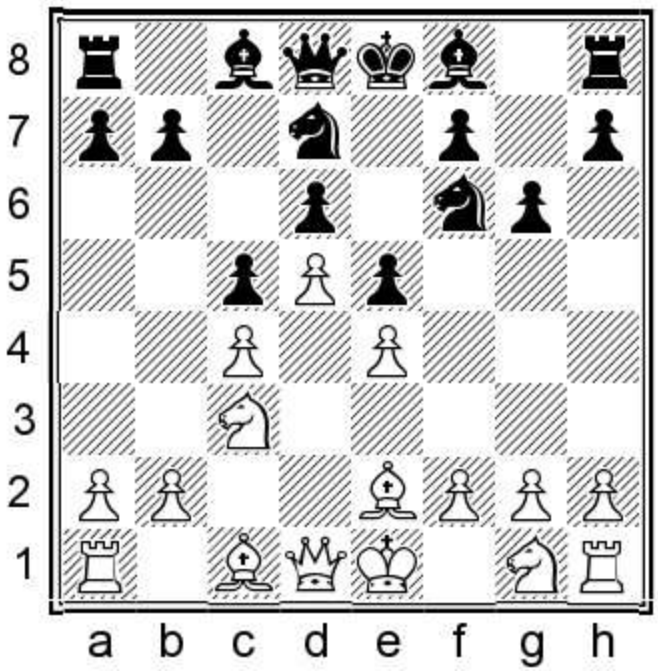
chesstouring.com

10.0-0 0-0 11.♗g5 ♘bd7 12.h3±

White has a pleasant advantage.

A2) 6...♘bd7

Black is keeping things flexible on the kingside.

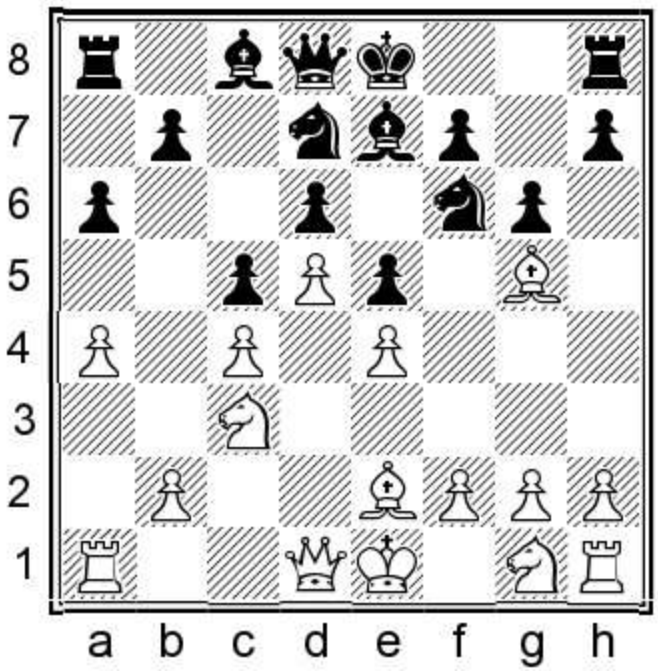


7.♗g5 ♗e7

Breaking the pin and setting up ...♘xd5 ideas.

Not much changes after: 7...a6 8.a4 ♗e7 (8...♗g7 was well met by 9.h4!? h6 10.♗e3 ♘f8 11.g4 ♗d7 12.f3± in Petersen – J. Nielsen, Denmark 1986)

chesstouring.com



9.♗d2! (9.♗e3!N transposes to our main line below and is similarly strong) 9...0-0 10.♗h6 ♖e8 11.g4! Black came under serious pressure in Psakhis – Mestel, Graz 1981.

8.♗e3!

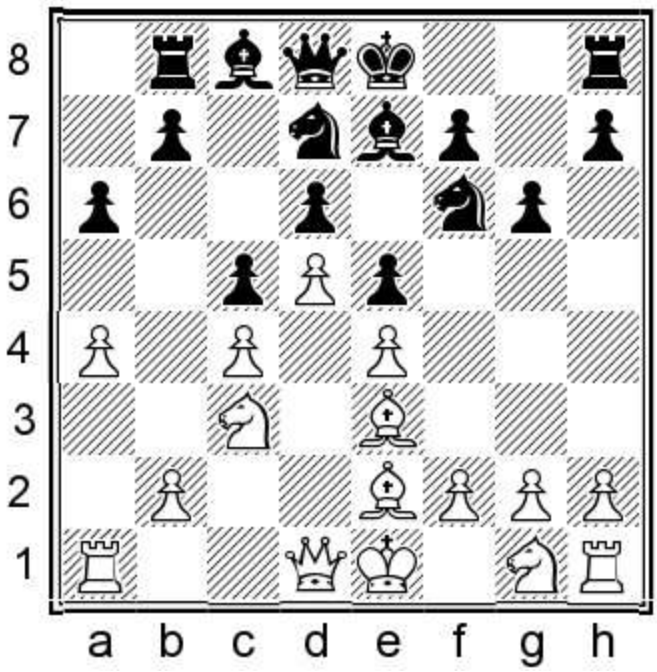
Black is ready to meet 8.♘f3 with 8...♘h5! when he will either exchange the dark-squared bishops or go with the knight to f4.

After the text move White has not really wasted a tempo, as Black has been lured into a weird hybrid of the Czech Benoni and King's Indian, where the moves ...♗e7 and ...g6 do not really go together. It's true that Black often plays ...♘e8, ...g6 and ...♘g7 after castling, but White can disrupt this plan with a well-timed ♗h6, as we will see in our main line. If Black castles too soon, White may even be tempted to launch an attack by opening the h-file.

8...a6 9.a4 ♖b8

We have been following Speelman – Zilberman, London 1991, in which Black once again opted for a wait-and-see strategy. I think White should have completed development as follows.

chesstouring.com



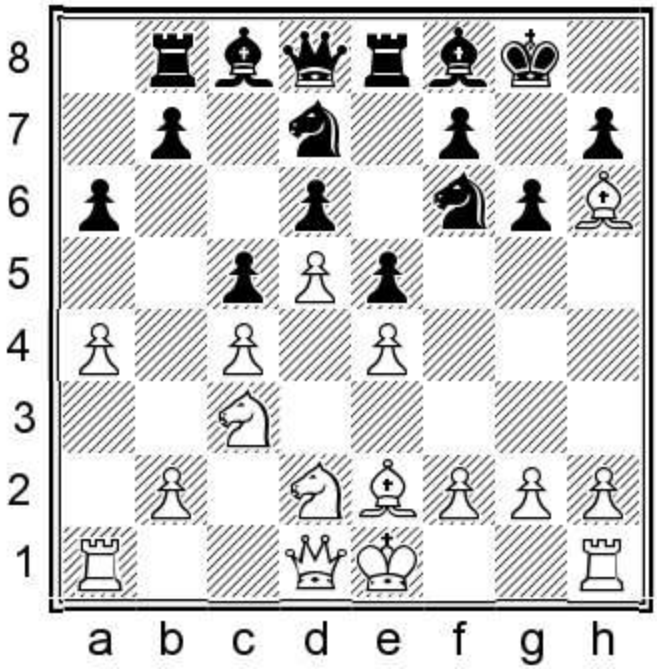
10.♘f3N 10...0-0

It seems to me that 10...♘g4 11.♗d2 h5 12.h3 ♘gf6 13.0-0 does not make much sense for Black, as his kingside has been weakened by the ...h5 move.

11.♗h6!

Preventing the thematic ...♘e8-g7 manoeuvre, which might justify Black's set-up.

11...♖e8 12.♘d2 ♗f8



13.♗e3!

Of course there is no reason for White to trade dark-squared bishops.

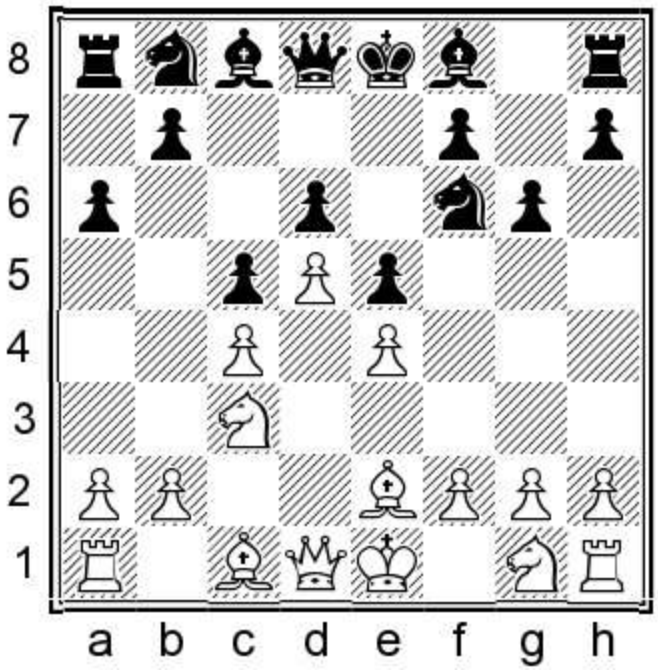
chesstouring.com

13...♗g7 14.g4!±

White's chances are clearly better.

A3) 6...a6

Black plays a noncommittal waiting move.



7.♗g5

Often I recommend meeting ...a6 with a2-a4. White could do the same thing here and remain slightly better, but it's obvious that ...b5 is not a threat for the time being, so we will start with a useful developing move.

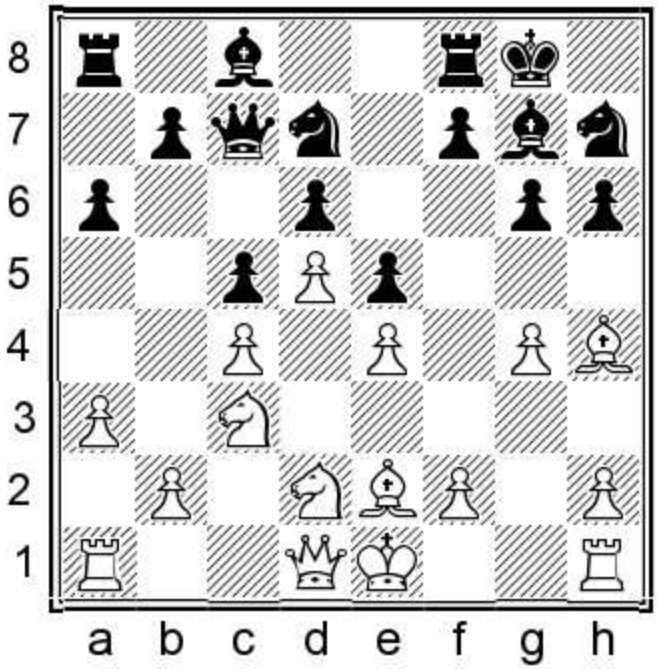
We will consider **A31)** 7...♗g7 and **A32)** 7...h6.

7...♘bd7N has been covered under 7...a6 in the notes to variation A2 above.

A31) 7...♗g7 8.♘f3 h6

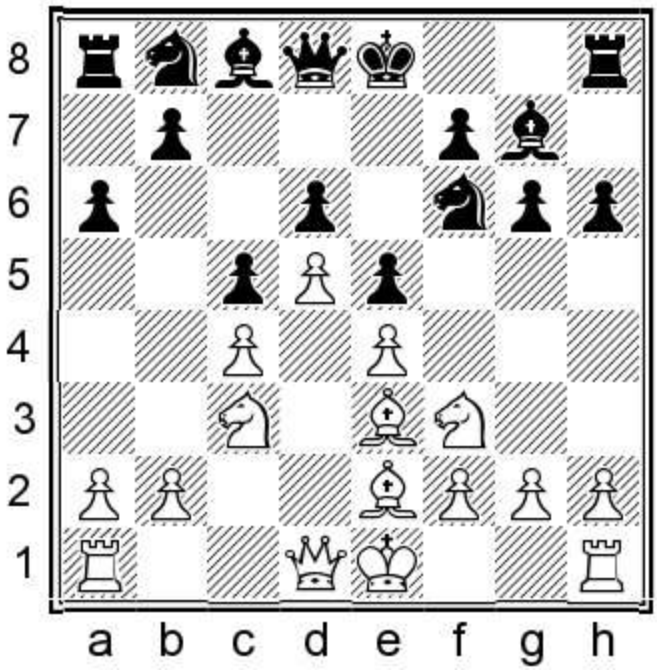
8...♘bd7 should be met by 9.♘d2, reaching White's optimal arrangement for the minor pieces in this line. White controls the h5-square, while maintaining active possibilities on both flanks. A model game from the young Kramnik continued: 9...h6 10.♗h4 0-0 11.a3 ♕c7 12.g4 ♘h7

chesstouring.com



13.♗g3 f6 14.h4 ♖b8 15.♗d3 ♘b6 16.h5 g5 17.f3± Kramnik – B.R. Gonzalez, Sao Paulo 1991. White has a strategically winning position, as the blocked kingside structure still enables his knight to go to f5, while he has complete freedom to develop his play on the queenside.

9.♗e3



9...0-0

9...♘g4 10.♗d2 0-0 gives us the option of 11.h3 (11.0-0 transposes to the main line below) 11...♘f6 12.g4!? with promising play for White.

10.0-0

chesstouring.com

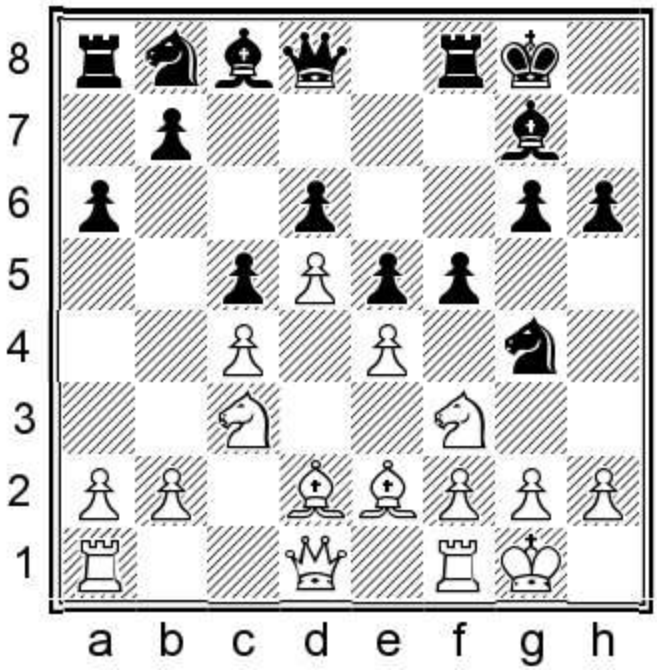
Obviously 10.♘d2 is also worth considering.

10...♘g4

This seems like the critical try.

10...♘h5 is well met by 11.g3 when Black cannot play 11...f5? as the thematic 12.♘h4± wins material.

11.♗d2 f5

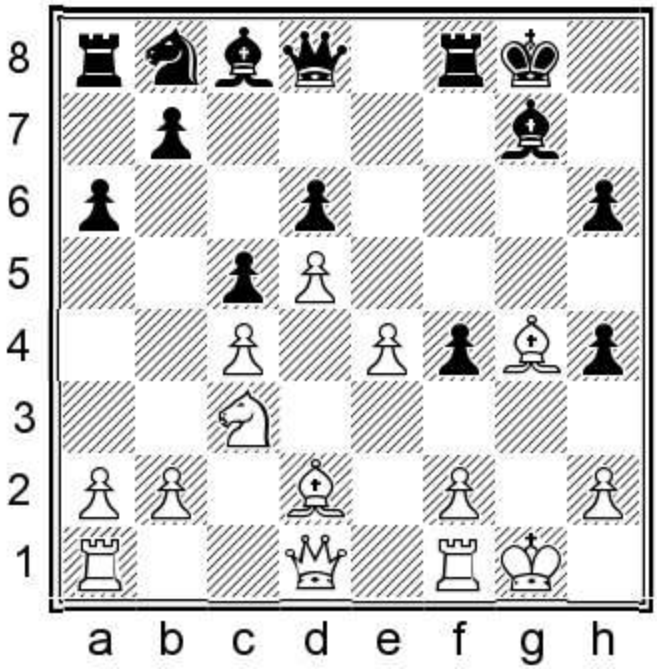


We have been following Labollita – Altamirano, Buenos Aires 2001. Here I found a strong improvement, which is thematic for such positions:

12.g3!N 12...♘f6

The alternative is: 12...f4 13.♘h4 g5 14.♗xg4 (14.♘f5 is also enough for a solid advantage) 14...gxh4 15.gxf4 exf4

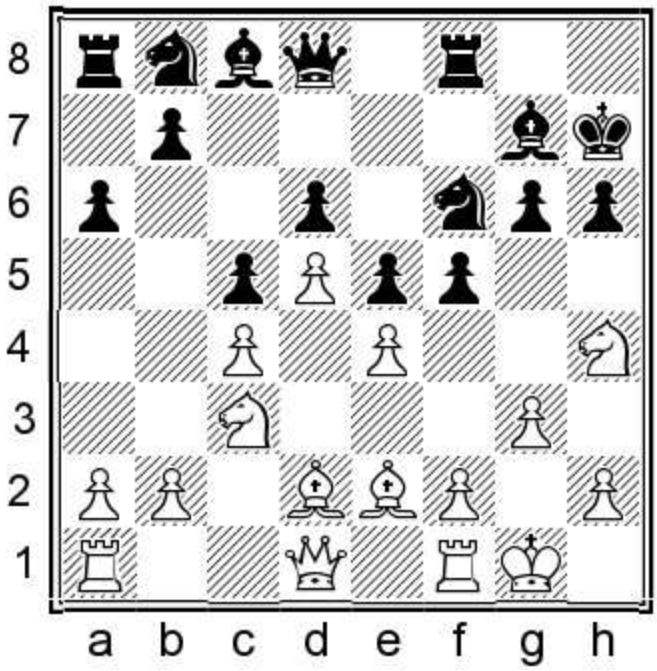
chesstouring.com



16.♔h1! ♘d7 17.♘e2 The knight is heading towards e6, with much better chances for White.

13.♘h4 ♔h7

Another nice illustrative line continues 13...♕e8 14.exf5 gxf5 15.♕c2 ♘h7 16.f3!± and somehow Black is unable to deal with the threat of ♗d3.

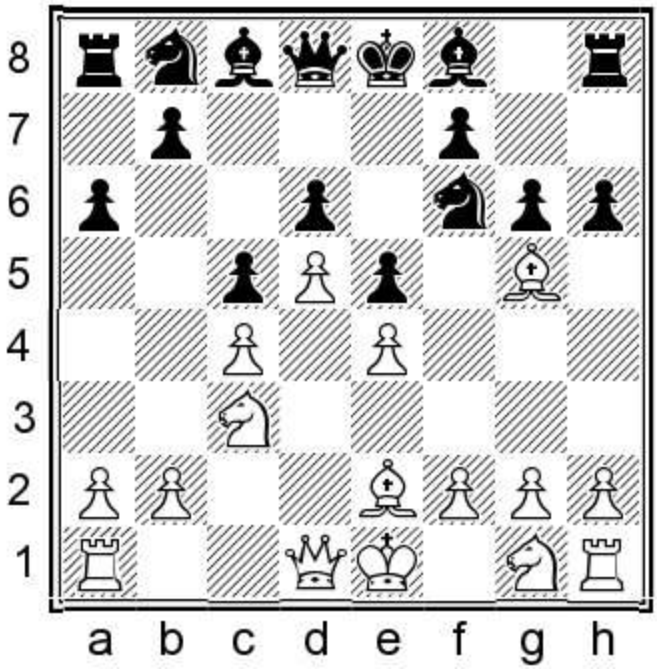


14.exf5 gxf5 15.♕c2±

Black's attempted kingside play has only weakened his position.

A32) 7...h6

chesstouring.com



8.♗e3 ♗g7

Another model Kramnik game continued:

8...h5

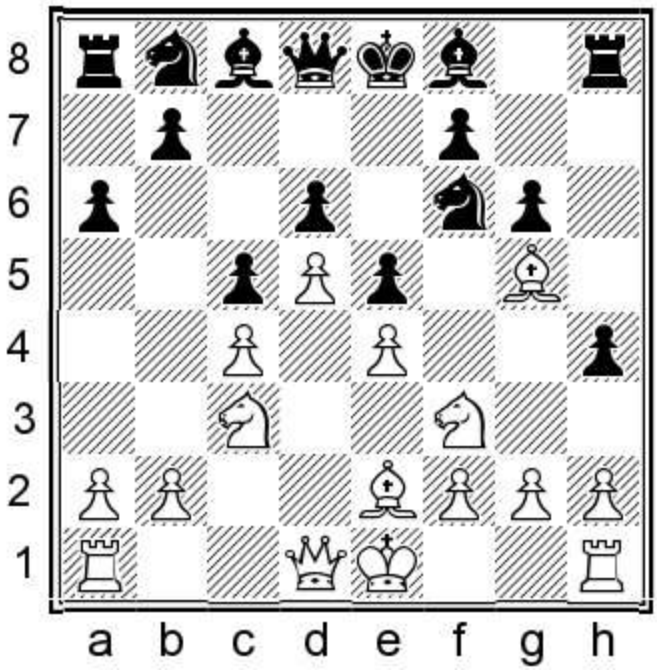
Quite a thematic idea in such positions.

9.♘f3 h4?!

But this is a step too far. Most probably, Black forgot to consider White's next move.

9...♗h6N is an improvement although 10.♗xh6 ♖xh6 11.♕d2 ♖h8 12.♘g5 clearly favours White, as Black has lost the right to castle.

10.♗g5!



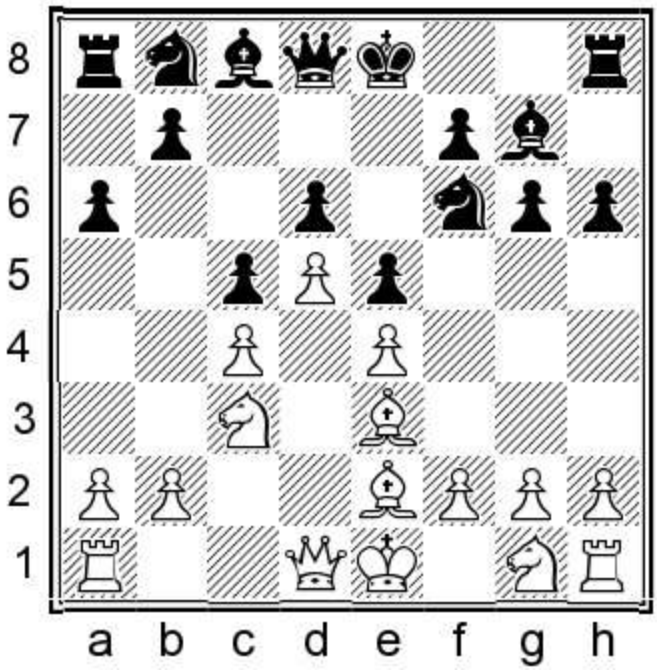
10...♗e7?

10...h3 was the lesser evil although 11.g3 leaves Black's h-pawn as a long-term weakness.

chesstouring.com

11.♗xh4 ♗g4 12.♗xf6 ♗xf6 13.♘d2±

White was a healthy pawn up in Kramnik – Piket, Zurich (rapid) 2001.



9.h3!?

9.♘f3 is a perfectly good move which transposes to variation A31 above. The text move is also decent and was my recommendation in *GM 2*, so I decided to keep it in the present book (along with a few minor updates) to give the reader a choice of options.

9...♘bd7

The most recent game continued 9...h5 10.♕d2 ♘bd7 11.♘f3 ♕c7 12.0-0 0-0 Ferro – R. Garcia, Buenos Aires 2012. White is well-prepared to start his queenside offensive with 13.a3!N, while it is much harder for Black to get his kingside counterplay off the ground due to the weaknesses created by the ...h5 move.

Another line is:

9...0-0 10.♕d2N

It makes sense to prod the h6-pawn before doing anything else.

10...h5

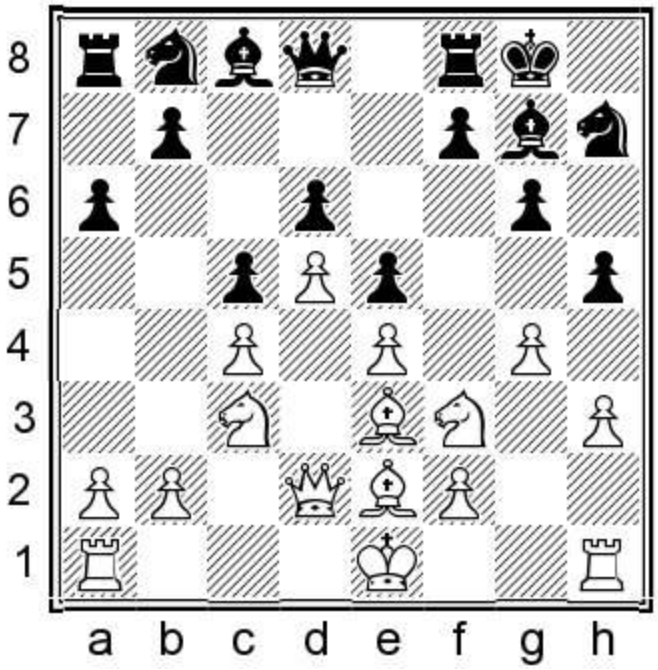
10...♔h7 transposes to a few games; I like 11.g4± with a good version of a King's Indian for White, as in Raedeker – Rotstein, Halle 2007.

11.♘f3

White has a favourable position as it will hardly be possible for Black to carry out the ...f5 advance. For example:

11...♘h7 12.g4!

chesstouring.com



With the following point:

12...hxg4 13.hxg4 ♗xg4? 14.♖xh7! ♗xf3

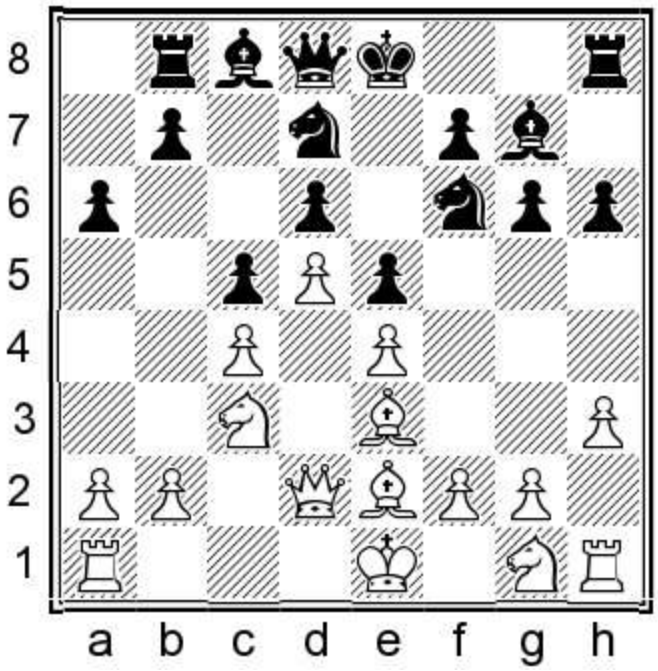
14...♔xh7 15.♘g5† wins.

15.♖xg7† ♔xg7 16.♗h6† ♔g8 17.♗xf3

White is winning.

10.♕d2 ♖b8

This position has arisen in three games and in all of them White played 11.a4, which is not the most useful way to spend a tempo. Instead I prefer:



11.♘f3N 11...h5

chesstouring.com

Black has no satisfactory way to carry out the ...b5 advance. For instance:

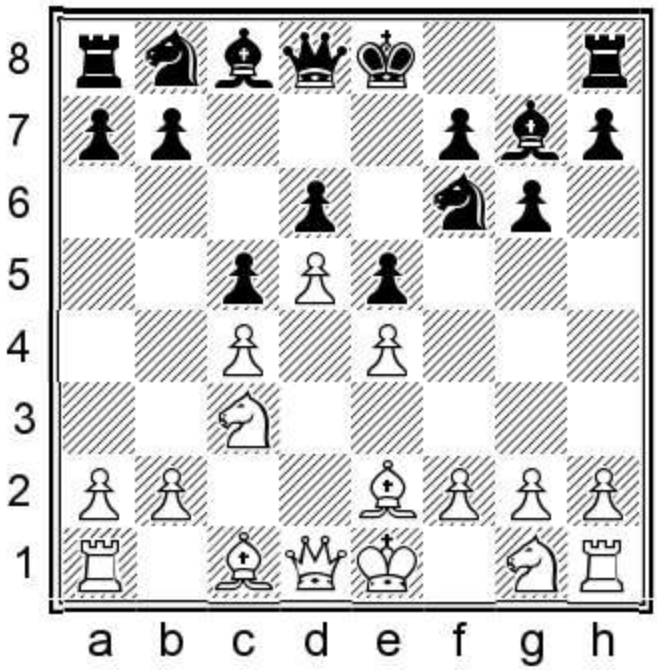
11...b5 12.cxb5 axb5 13.♗xb5 ♖xb5 14.♘xb5 ♘xe4 15.♕d3 does not give Black enough for the exchange.

11...♕a5 12.0-0 b5? is refuted by 13.♘xb5! and White wins material.

12.♘g5 0-0 13.g4 h4 14.a3±

According to my understanding of the King's Indian White should be better, as he is free to develop a queenside initiative while Black's kingside play remains blocked.

A4) 6...♗g7



7.h4!

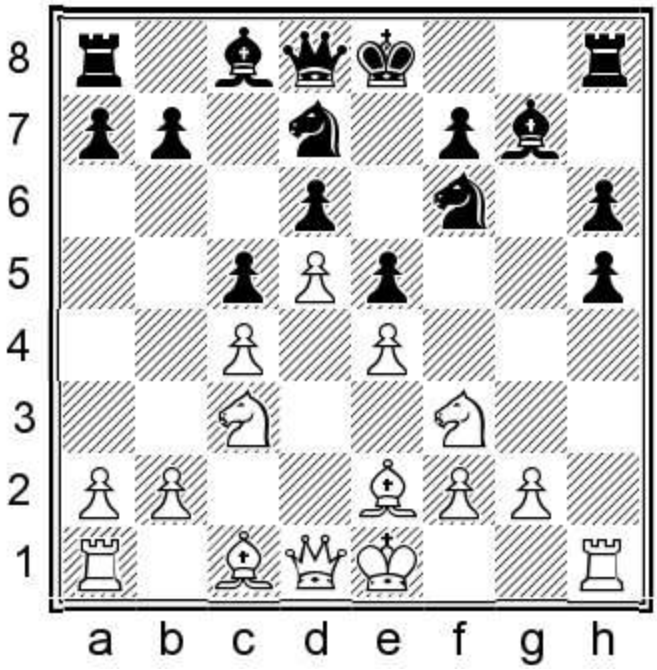
Unlike the normal King's Indian, White can utilize the blocked centre to clarify the situation on the kingside.

7...h5

White's task is much easier after other moves, for instance:

7...0-0 8.h5 ♘a6 9.♗e3 ♘c7 10.g4± enabled White to develop a dangerous offensive on the kingside in Akobian – Bachin, Istanbul 1998.
7...h6 8.h5 gxh5 (8...g5 9.g4± led to a thematic structure and the usual strategic nightmare for Black in Atalik – Schorr, Boston 2001) 9.♘f3 ♘bd7

chesstouring.com



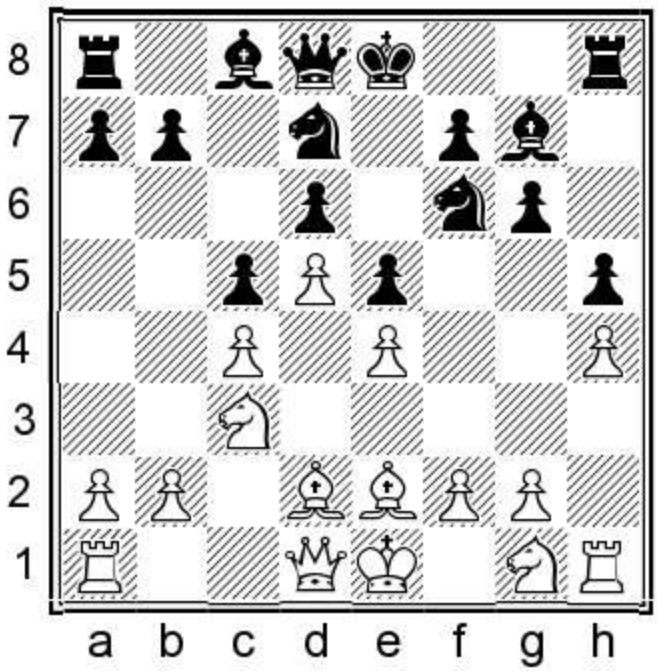
10.♘h4! ♘f8 11.♗xh5 ♘xh5 12.♕xh5± White's positional achievements on the kingside gave him a clear advantage in Zhou Jianchao – Lan Zilun, China 2013.

7...♘bd7 8.♗g5!?

Of course White can also play 8.h5, and after 8...♘xh5 9.♗xh5 gxh5 10.♕xh5 ♘f6 11.♕h4 he was better again in Florian – Egelhof, email 2010.

8...h6 9.♗d2 h5

The following game is quite instructive.

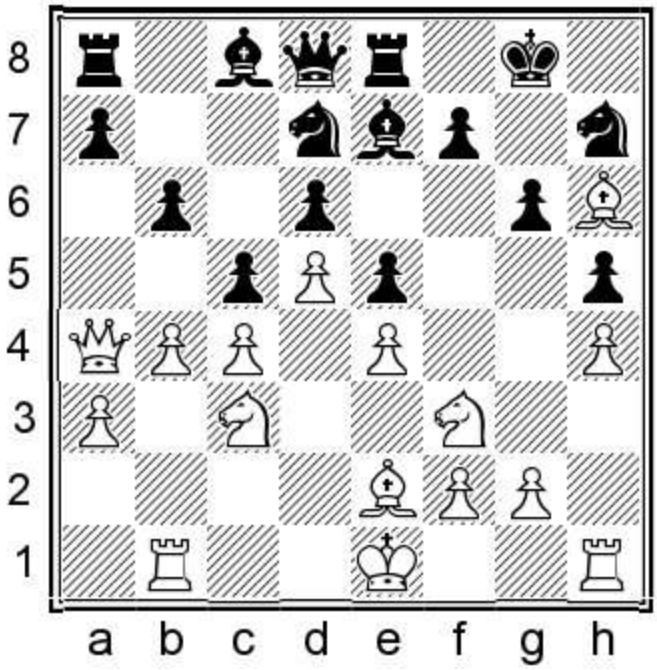


10.♘f3 ♘h7 11.a3 ♗f6 12.b4 ♗e7 13.♖b1 b6 14.♕a4!?

The natural 14.g3N would be good as well.

14...0-0 15.♗h6 ♖e8

chesstouring.com



16.g3 a6 17.♘d2 ♘df6 18.f3 ♗d7 19.♕b3 ♕c7 20.♔f2 ♖eb8 21.♖hc1

Black had a cramped, passive position in Goryachkina – Demchenko, Jerusalem 2015.

8.♗g5

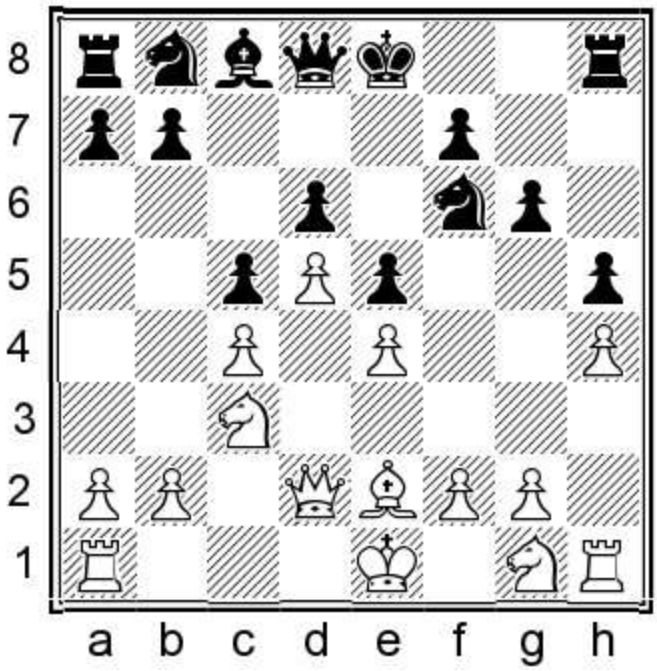
Black is paying the price for weakening the g5-square.

8...♘bd7

It is also worth mentioning the alternative:

8...♗h6 9.♗xh6 ♖xh6 10.♕d2 ♖h8

Black can no longer castle and will have to spend two more tempos securing his king with ...♔f8-g7.



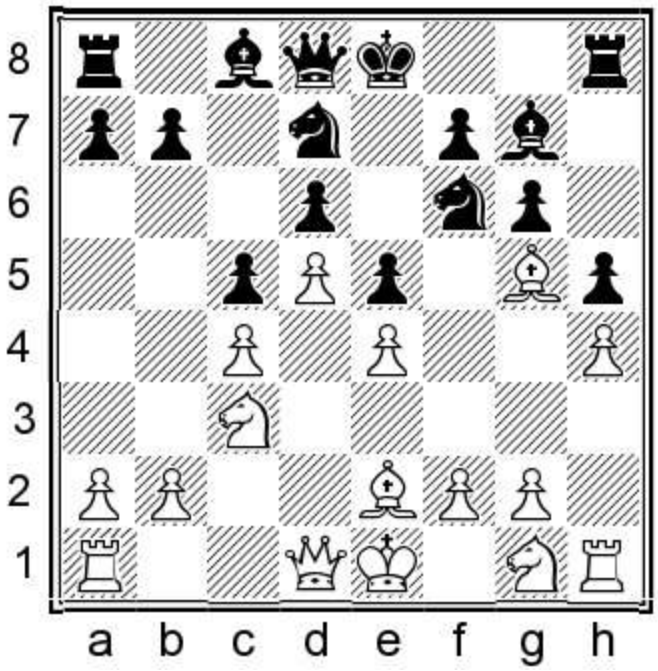
chesstouring.com

11.0-0-0N

I prefer this straightforward continuation over 11.♘h3 ♗xh3! 12.♖xh3 a6 13.a3 ♘bd7 14.b4 ♔f8 when Black had a fairly stable position in Iashvili – Mchedlishvili, Tbilisi 1998.

11...♘bd7 12.♘f3

White will follow up by improving the knight with either ♘g5 or ♘e1-d3, followed by the f2-f4 break, which may or may not be prepared with g2-g3. White clearly has the better chances.



9.♕d2 a6 10.f3

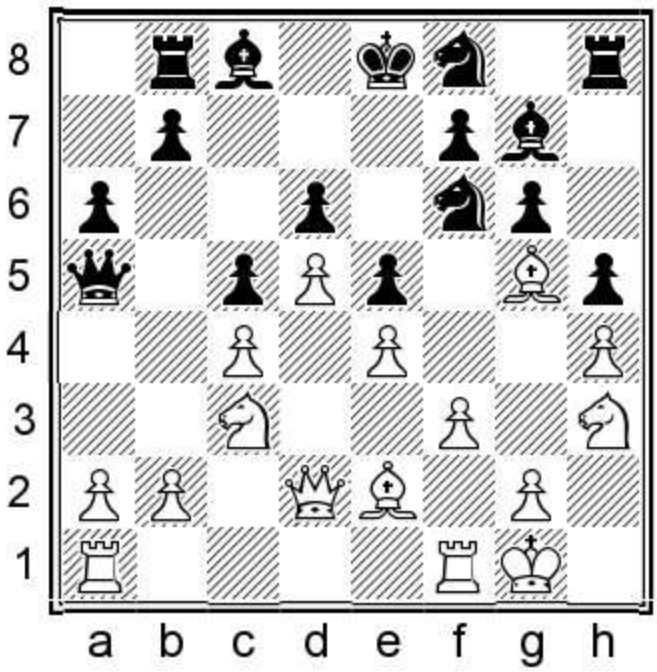
White's set-up resembles the Averbakh Variation against the King's Indian.

It is also possible to play in Sämisch style with 10.♗d3N followed by ♘ge2.

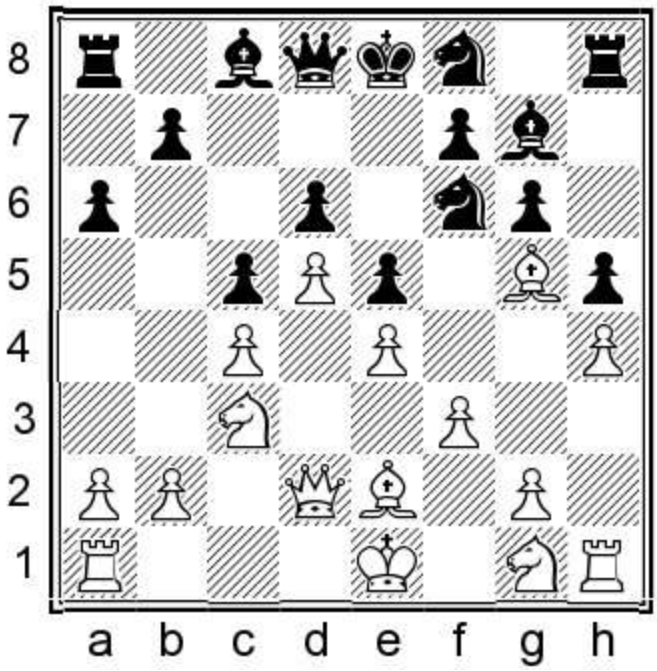
10...♘f8

Black's latest try is: 10...♖b8 11.♘h3 ♕a5 12.0-0 ♘f8 (Black cannot play 12...b5? in view of the well-known tactical trick 13.♘xb5! ♕xd2 14.♘xd6† ♔e7 15.♘xc8†± winning material)

chesstouring.com



13.♘f2 ♘8h7 14.♗e3 0-0 15.a3 ♘d7 16.g3 ♕d8 17.b4 f5 18.f4± White's chances were clearly better in Meister – Sailer, Munich 2012.



11.♘h3 ♘8h7 12.♗e3

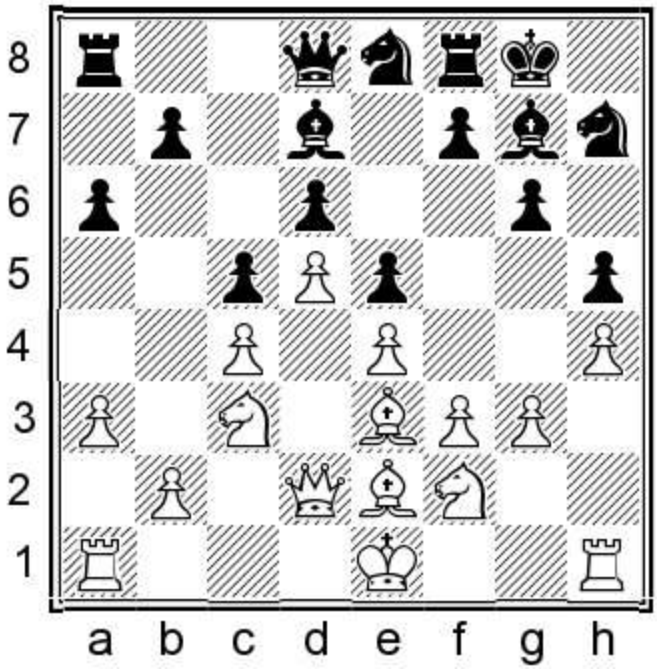
Black's set-up looks strange to me, with a clearly misplaced knight on h7. No wonder White was clearly better in the following example.

12...♗d7 13.♘f2 0-0 14.g3 ♘e8 15.a3!?

White plays flexibly and retains the option of castling on either side.

The direct 15.g4N also deserved serious attention.

chesstouring.com



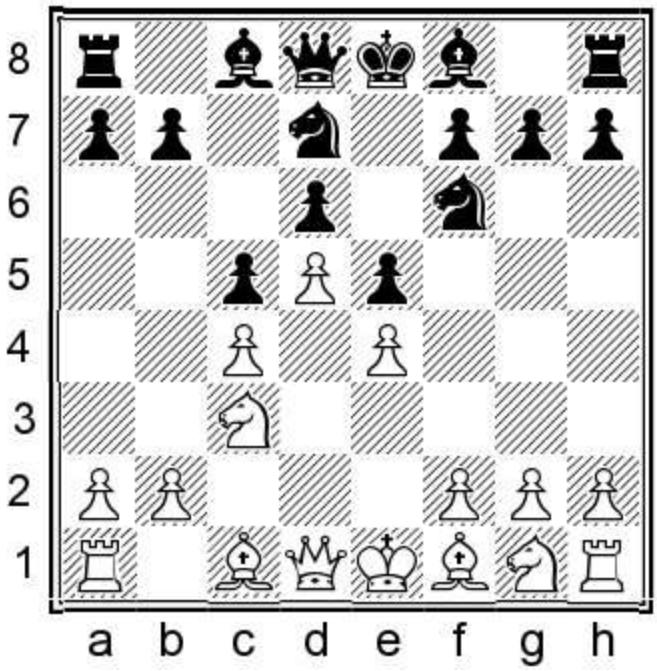
15...b5?

A strange pawn sacrifice. 15...f5 was a better try, although 16.exf5 gxf5 17.f4! still favours White due to the weak h5-pawn.

16.cxb5 axb5 17.♘xb5

Black had no compensation for the missing pawn in Dorfman – Spielmann, Gonfreville 2006.

B) 5...♘bd7



This is a modern and fashionable interpretation of the Czech Benoni. Black is waiting for White to determine his set-up before deciding whether to develop his dark-squared bishop on e7 or g7.

chessbookstoring.com

6.♗d3

I decided to keep the same recommendation as in *GM 2*, although for slightly different reasons.

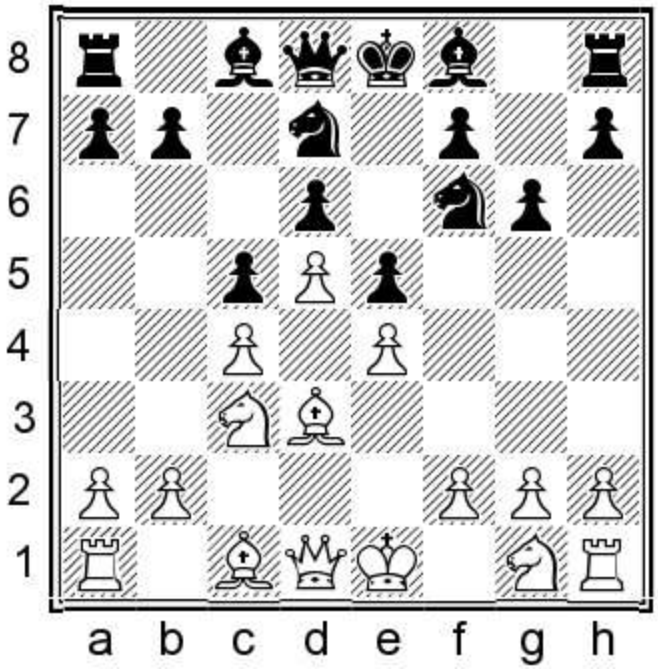
On page 131 of *GM 2*, I explained that I was rejecting 6.g3 on account of 6...g6, after which 7.♗g2 ♗g7 8.♘f3 0-0 9.0-0 seemed to lead to satisfactory play for Black. However, I overlooked that Black could have reached the exact same position via the Reluctant Benoni chapter, as covered in another chapter in the same book! I corrected this mistake when updating the repertoire, and you can find this position analysed in Chapter 16 of *Volume 2A* – on page 318, to be precise.

The upshot is that 6.g3 followed by ♗g2 is a perfectly satisfactory repertoire choice. If Black develops his bishop to e7, we will play ♘ge2, as covered in the next chapter; and if he instead opts for a fianchetto, we will play ♘f3, transposing to the Reluctant Benoni coverage.

So why bother to cover 6.♗d3 as well? Somehow, I could not escape the feeling that Black's early ...♘bd7 makes the f5-square an inviting target, making the plan of ♗d3 followed by ♘ge2-g3 too tempting to refuse. Ultimately of course, it is up to the reader to decide if the benefits of this plan make it worth learning it as an extra option, rather than simplifying the repertoire by playing g2-g3 regardless.

Obviously Black still has to decide how to develop his dark-squared bishop, so we will consider **B1)** 6...g6 and **B2)** 6...♗e7.

B1) 6...g6

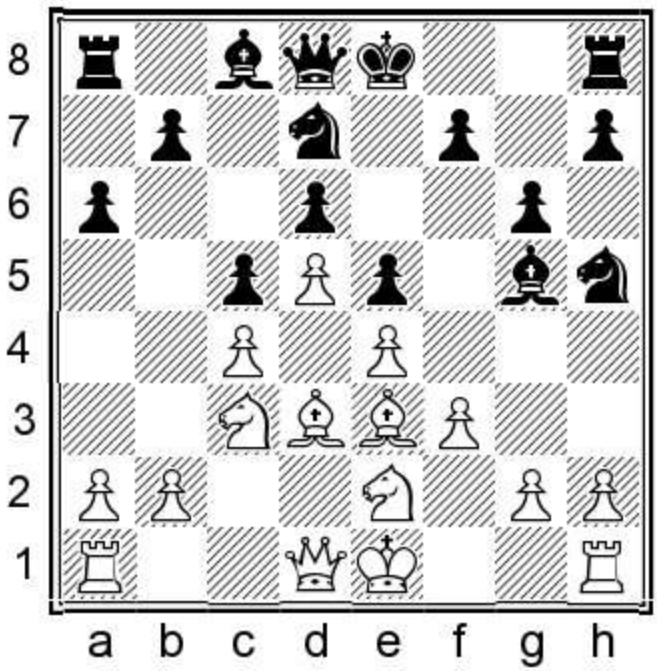


This move addresses the problem of the weak f5-square, but is similar to variation A in that Black gets quite a passive version of a King's Indian. The following set-up looks promising for White.

chesstouring.com

7.♗g5 ♗g7

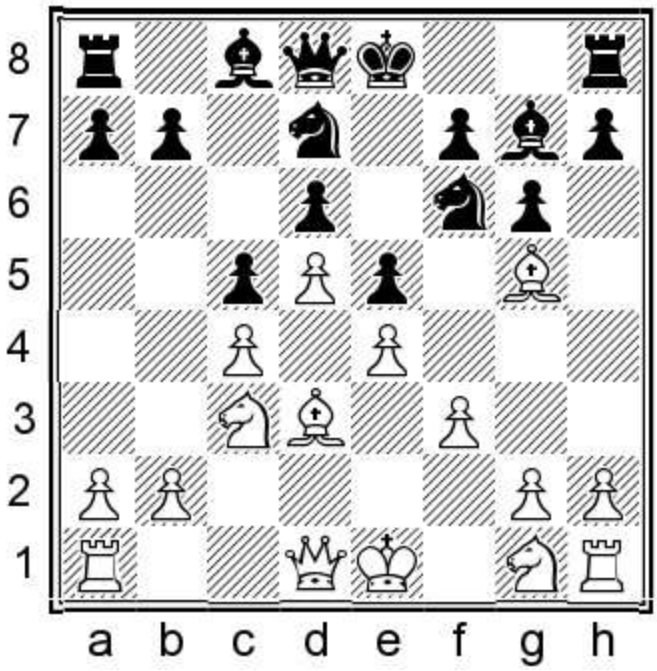
Another game continued: 7...a6 8.f3 (there is also nothing wrong with the natural 8.♘ge2) 8...♗e7 9.♗e3 (Black was threatening either ...♘xd5 or ...♘xe4) 9...♘h5 10.♘ge2 ♗g5 The exchange of dark-squared bishops is not such a big deal and White maintained a pleasant edge after:



11.♕d2 h6 12.g3 ♗xe3 13.♕xe3 ♖b8 14.a4± Sindler – Obsivac, Ostrava 2014.

8.f3

White has a favourable version of a Sämisch King's Indian, as Black lacks his usual counterplay on the queenside. The following practical examples clearly indicate Black's problems.

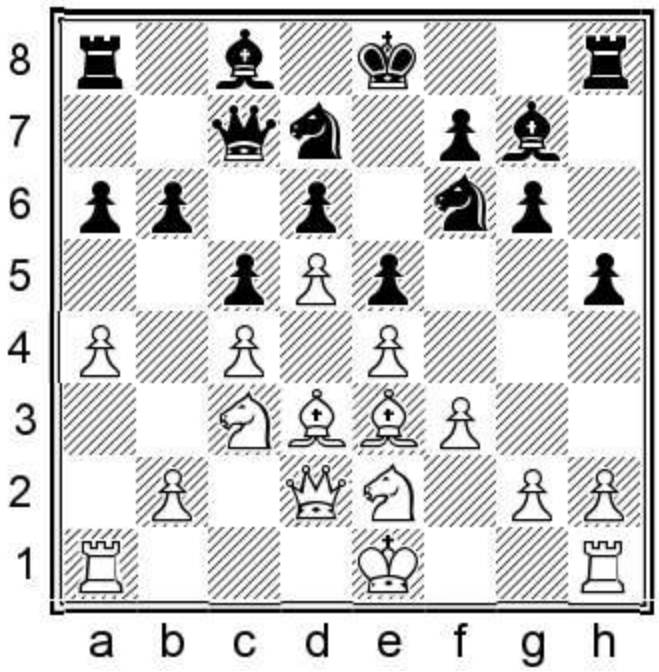


8...a6 9.♘ge2 h6

chesstouring.com

9...♕c7 10.a4 h6 11.♗e3 h5 12.♕d2 b6 occurred in Petursson – Bjarnason, Reykjavik 1989, when an

excellent regrouping would have been:



13.♘d1!N± White's knight is heading to f2, where it may support an attack with g2-g4 in the event that Black castles short. The other knight will go to c3, and White keeps the option of castling on either side. White clearly has the more pleasant game and Black has no counterplay in sight.

10.♗e3 h5 11.♕d2

White develops his queen while preventing ...♗h6.

11...h4

Otherwise White can play h2-h4 himself.

12.♗g5!

Now Black's h-pawn becomes a weakness.

12...♕c7 13.a4 ♘h5

An understandable try to complicate the game, as 13...h3 14.g4! clearly favours White.

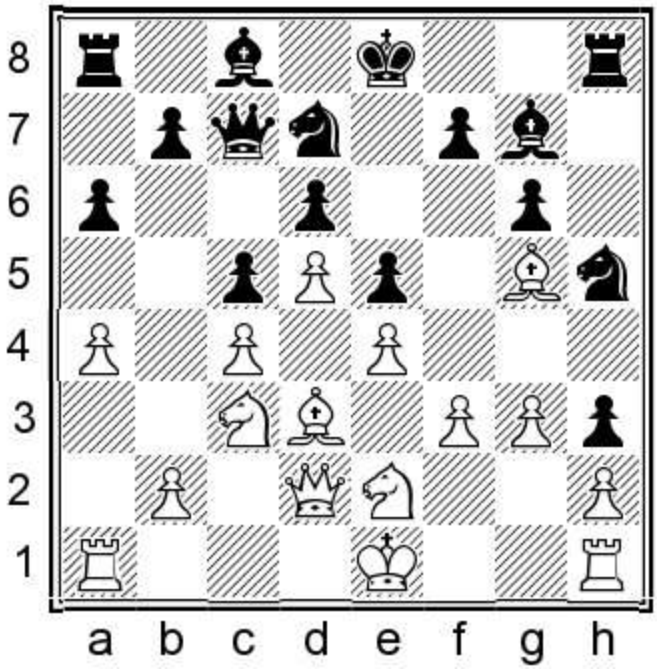
14.g3

White has no intention to give up his dark-squared bishop, even though after 14.♗xh4 ♘f4 15.♘xf4 ♖xh4 16.g3 ♖h8 17.♘g2 it is not clear if Black has sufficient compensation.

14...h3

We have been following Calvo Minguez – Diez del Corral, Montilla 1976. Once again, White should have proceeded with the following thematic manoeuvre:

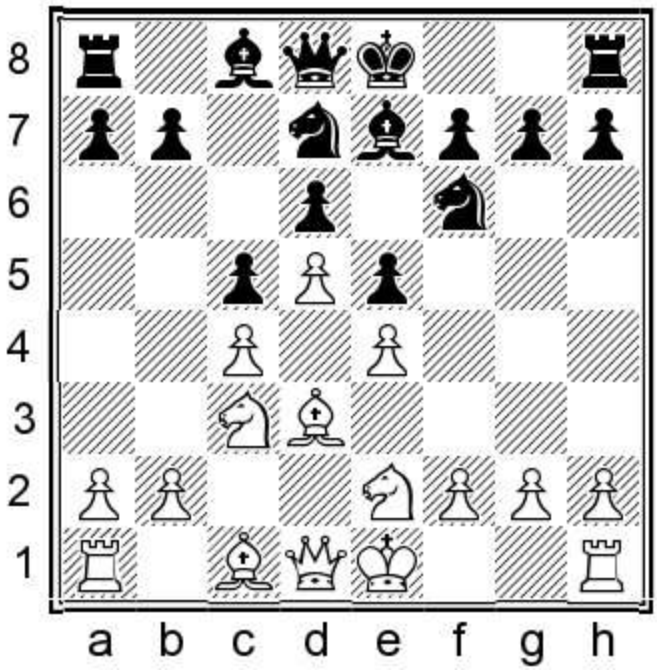
chesstouring.com



15.♘d1N

Followed by ♘f2. White is clearly better, and should be able to round up the h3-pawn with ♘g1 and ♗f1 at some point.

B2) 6...♗e7 7.♘ge2



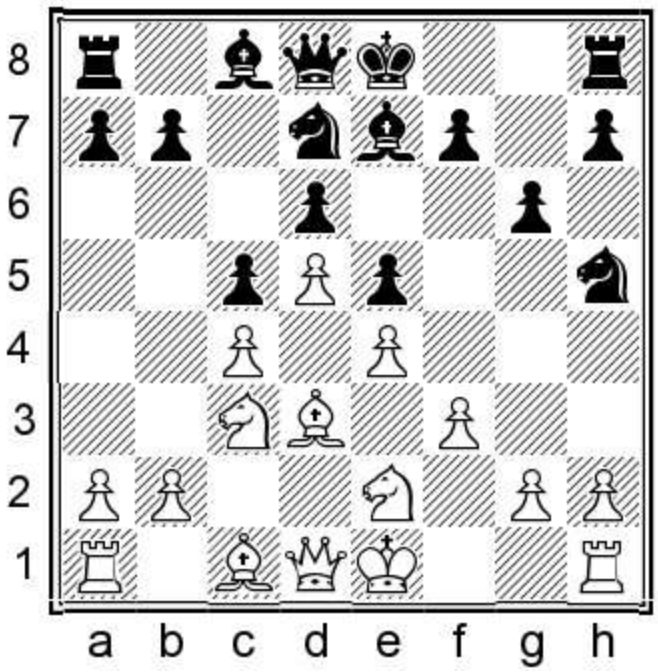
Now Black has a choice between four main options: **B21)** 7...g6, **B22)** 7...h5, **B23)** 7...♘f8 and **B24)** 7...0-0.

7...a6 can be met by 8.a4, when the insertion of those two moves does not change much.

chesstouring.com

B21) 7...g6 8.f3 ♘h5

8...h5 should be met by 9.h4!N, a novelty from *GM 2* which has still not been played. There is no reason to allow Black to gain space with ...h4. Play may continue 9...♔f8 10.♗e3 ♔g7 11.♕d2 ♘e8 12.g3, transposing to the 8...g6 line in the notes to variation B22 below.



9.♗e3 ♗g5

Black executes his main idea of trading dark-squared bishops, but remains with a somewhat passive position. The following encounter proves that it's much easier to play with White.

10.♕d2 ♗xe3 11.♕xe3 a6

11...0-0 happened in Motornov – Townsend, Rethymno 2014, when 12.h4!N 12...♕f6 13.g3± followed by 0-0-0 would have given every chance of carrying out a successful attack.

12.h4!

In *GM 2* I noted that 12.0-0 was also playable, but now I like the aggressive approach much more.

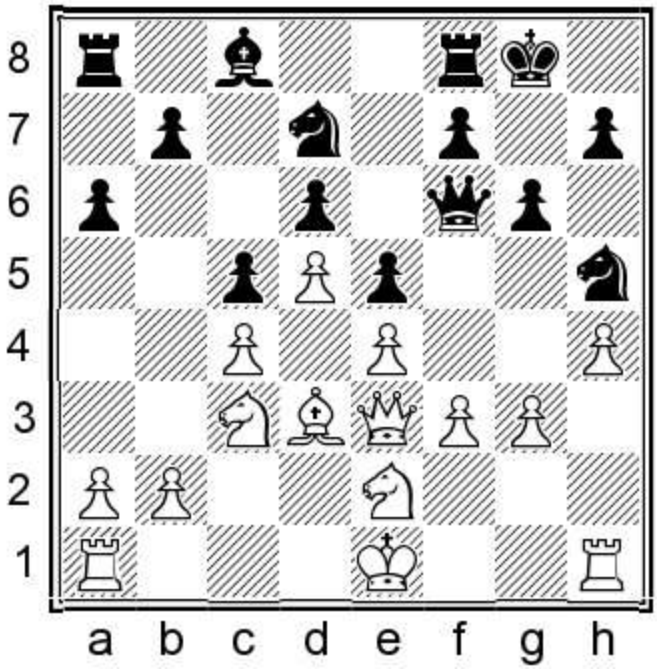
12...♕f6

White was threatening g2-g4, so Black prepares ...♘f4.

13.g3 0-0

When reanalysing this variation, I realized White should not rush to castle queenside and launch an attack. Instead, we should remain flexible and prevent Black's potential counterplay with the following improvement:

chesstouring.com



14.a4!N

In *How to Play Against 1 d4*, Richard Palliser rightly points out that after 14.0-0-0 ♖b8 15.f4 (15.♖h2!? N) Black is not obliged to exchange on f4, as occurred in Harikrishna – Sahu, New Delhi 2001, but should instead keep the kingside closed with 15...♕g7N 16.f5 ♘df6, when things are indeed not so clear.

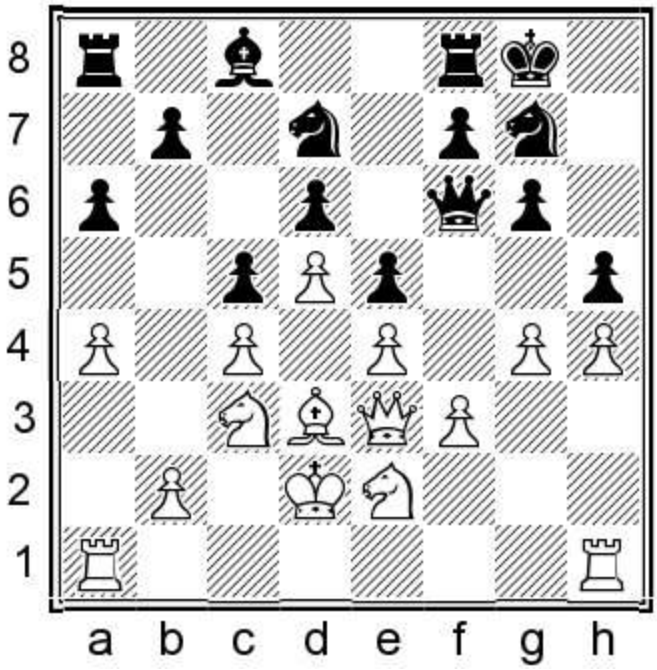
After the text move Black has little chance of carrying out a successful ...b5 break. If Black shifts his attention too far from the queenside, White may even carry out his own attack there with b2-b4. Meanwhile, White has every chance to develop an initiative on the kingside. Here is one approximate line:

14...♘g7

In the event of 14...b6 I like 15.♔d2 as well.

15.g4 h5 16.♔d2!

chesstouring.com



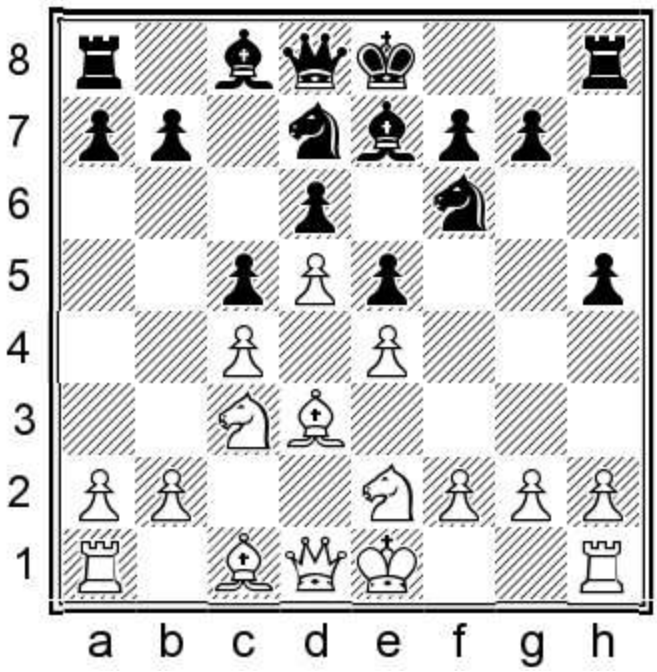
16...♕e7 17.♖ag1 ♘f6 18.♕h6

White has a serious initiative, for instance:

18...hxg4 19.h5! gxh5 20.♘g3

Black is in trouble.

B22) 7...h5



This move is connected with the usual ideas of gaining kingside space with ...h5-h4 and making the kingside a less comfortable home for our king.

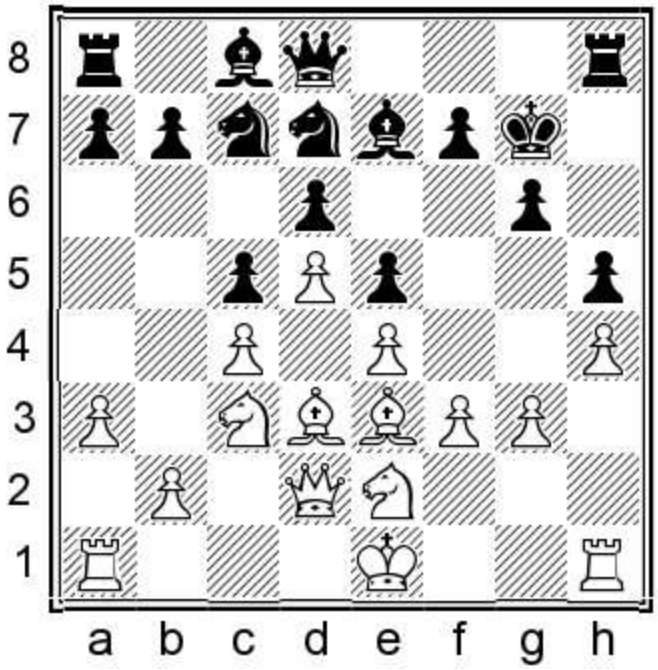
chesstouring.com

8.h4!

As I have already explained, it is well worth preventing the further advance of the h-pawn, which would allow Black more space on the kingside. Here is a good example of what can happen if White refrains from doing so: 8.f3 h4 9.♗e3 g6 10.♕d2 ♔f8 11.0-0-0 ♔g7 12.g3 a6 13.♖hg1 b5⇄ Black had decent play in Markos – Bezold, Pulvermuehle 2006.

8...♘f8

Another instructive game continued: 8...g6 9.g3 ♔f8 10.f3 ♔g7 11.♗e3 ♘e8 12.♕d2 ♘c7 13.a3 White is in control; he can start developing his play on the queenside, while Black has little to offer on the other flank. On the contrary: it is White who has more active possibilities on the kingside, as the game demonstrates.



13...♘a6 14.♖b1 ♘b6 15.b3!? (15.b4N is also promising. However, taking into account the poor placement of the enemy knights, White decides to switch his attention to the kingside.) 15...♗d7 16.♘g1 ♘c8 17.♘h3 ♘c7 18.♘f2 a5 19.f4± White was much better in Wojtaszek – Lopez Martinez, Pamplona 2010.

I also found a game from 2013 involving a novel plan:

8...a6 9.f3 ♘g8!?

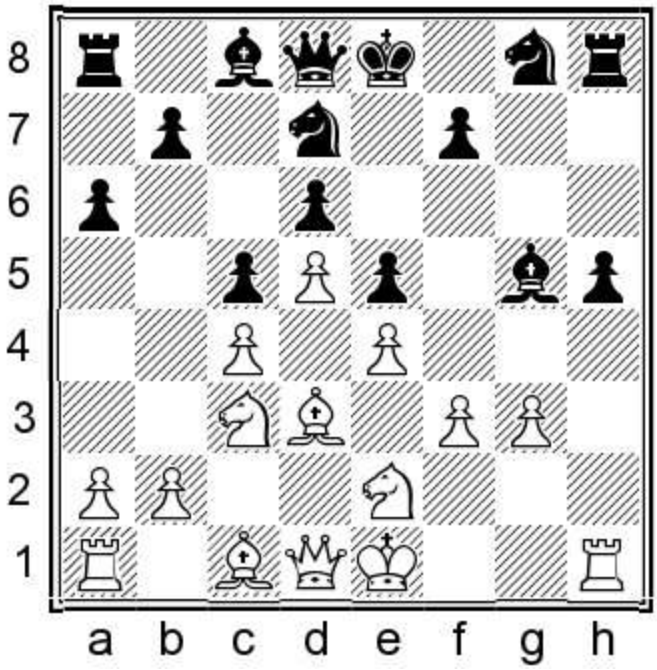
Black tries to obtain counterplay with a quick ...g5.

My line from *GM 2* continued: 9...g6 10.♗e3 ♔f8 11.♕d2 ♔g7 12.g3 Overprotecting the h4-pawn. 12...♘e8 In Iskusnyh – Onoprienko, Moscow 2006, in my opinion White could have started to play on the queenside by means of 13.a3N followed by b2-b4, with better chances thanks to his space advantage and the lack of enemy counterplay.

10.g3 g5 11.hxg5 ♗xg5

In Mchedlishvili – Lomsadze, Tbilisi 2013, White missed a convincing way to obtain a clear advantage:

chesstouring.com

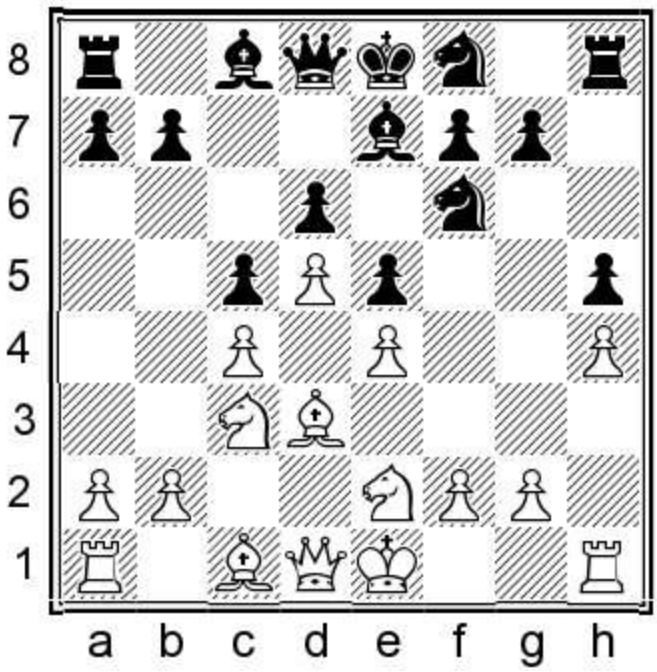


12.♗xg5N 12...♕xg5 13.♕d2 ♕xd2†

13...♕f6 14.♕e3 is also clearly better for White.

14.♔xd2 ♘f8 15.g4 h4 16.♘g3! ♘g6 17.♘f5 ♗xf5 18.exf5 ♘f4 19.♖h2±

White will soon round up the h-pawn.



9.f3 ♘6h7!?

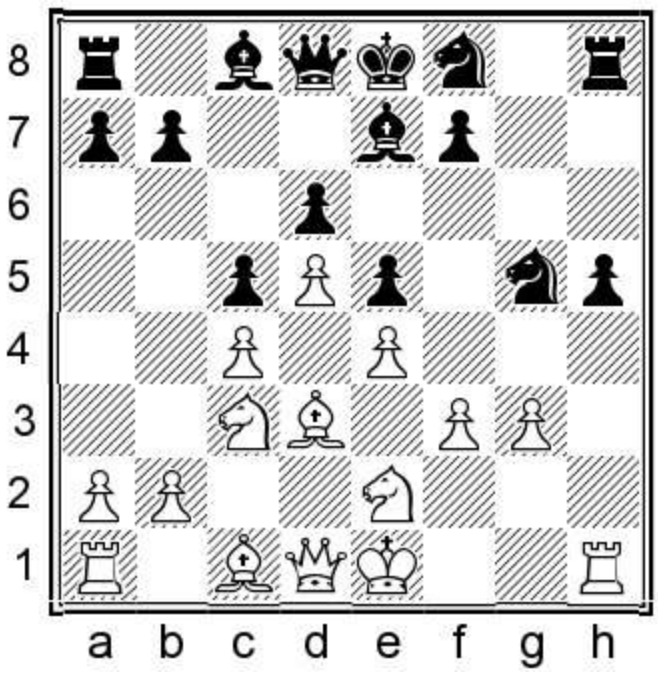
9...♘g6 10.g3 leaves the knight seriously restricted: 10...♗d7 11.a3 ♔f8 12.♗e3 ♔g8 13.b4± White was clearly better in Gozzoli – Finegold, Internet (rapid) 2017.

10.g3 g5

Quite a logical way to create counterplay. Compared with the Mchedlishvili – Lomsadze game noted above, Black's knight will play a more active role in the game.

chesstouring.com

11.hxg5 ♘xg5



12.♘g1

This may appear awkward, but White is planning to strike with f3-f4.

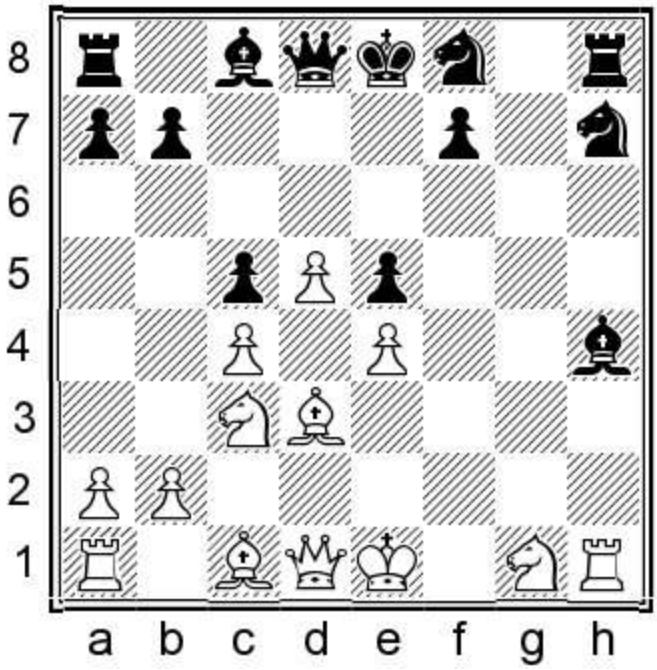
12...h4

An earlier game continued 12...♘g6? 13.f4 exf4 14.gxf4 ♘h7 15.♖xh5± and White won a pawn in Zapata Arbelaes – Gregoire, Medellin 2014.

13.f4 ♘gh7 14.fxe5 ♘g6

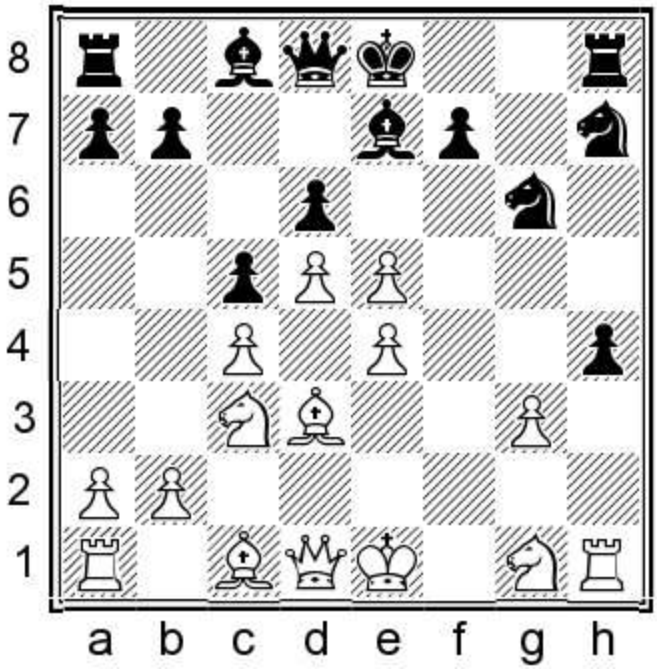
14...dxe5? is bad in view of: 15.gxh4 ♗xh4†

chesstouring.com



16.♔d2! ♘g6 17.♔c2± The open kingside is in White's favour.

The text move was an interesting sacrifice in Sowray – Vakhidov, Birmingham 2016. White can refute his opponent's concept with the following remarkable line:



15.e6!N 15...fxe6 16.e5! ♘xe5

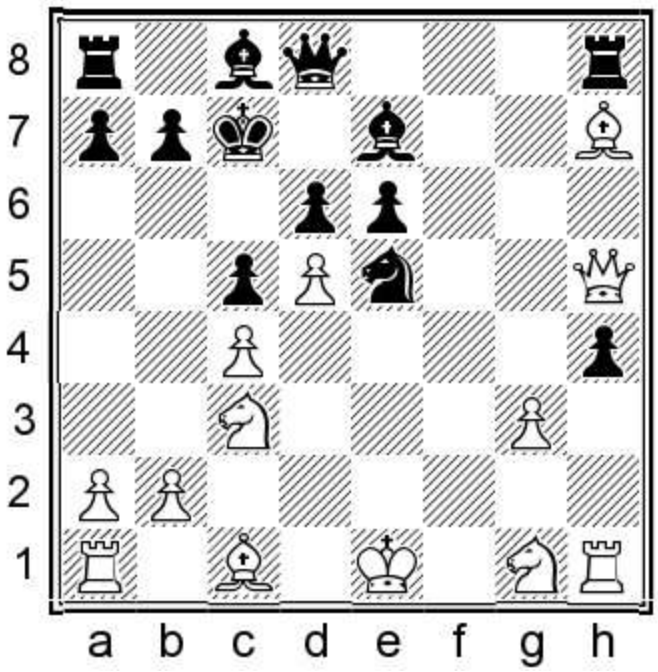
After 16...♘hf8?! 17.♘f3 White is dominating.

17.♕h5† ♔d7

17...♘f7? loses to 18.♗g6.

chesstouring.com

18.♗xh7 ♔c7

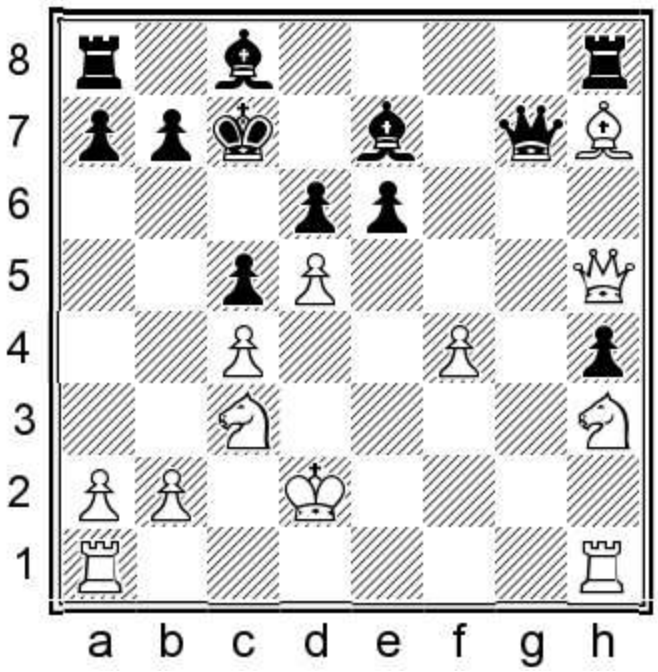


19.♗f4!

Black has nothing better than the following line:

19...♘d3† 20.♔d2 ♘xf4 21.gxf4 ♕f8 22.♘h3 ♕g7

Finally Black regains the piece, but White has additional resources.



23.dxe6 ♖xh7

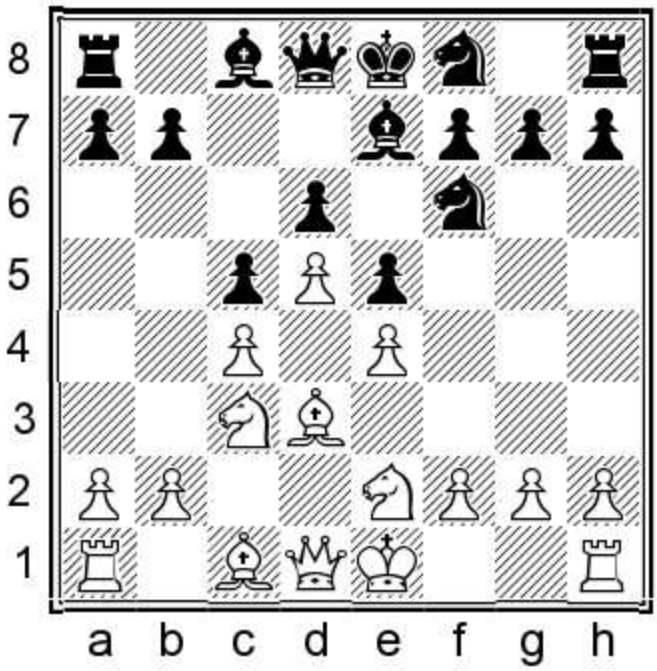
After 23...♗xe6 24.♕g6+– White saves the piece.

24.♕d5!+–

chesstouring.com

With total domination.

B23) 7...♘f8



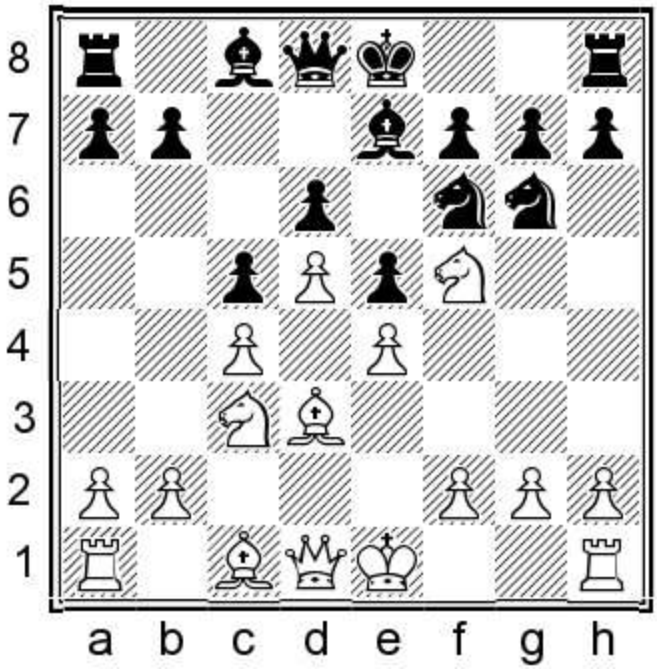
This has been Black's most popular choice. The knight seems to be heading for g6, although Black can also modify his plan as we will see.

8.♘g3

Now Black has a tough choice between **B231)** 8...♘g6, allowing White's knight to go to f5, or preventing it with **B232)** 8...g6, which restricts the movement of the knight on f8.

B231) 8...♘g6 9.♘f5

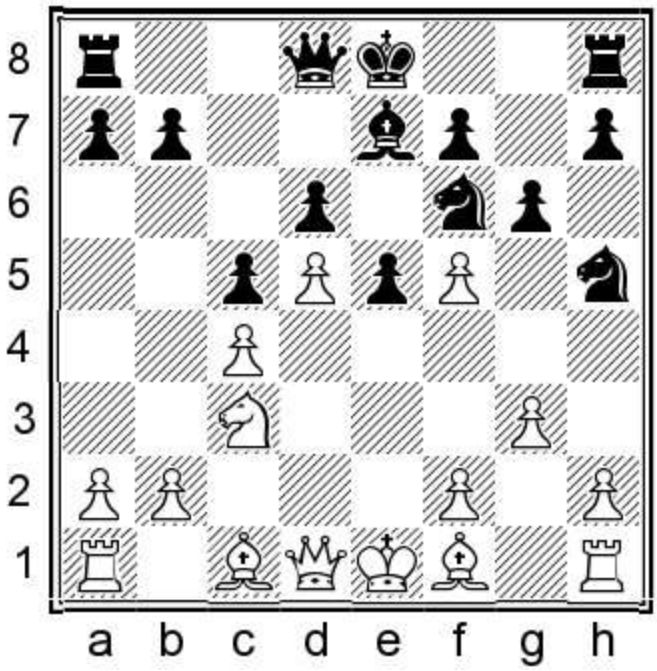
chesstouring.com



Black's position looks dubious to me, and practical results only reinforce this viewpoint.

9...0-0

9...♗xf5 10.exf5 ♘f4 doesn't work in view of 11.♗f1! when Black has serious problems with his knight. A good example continued: 11...g6 12.g3 ♘4h5

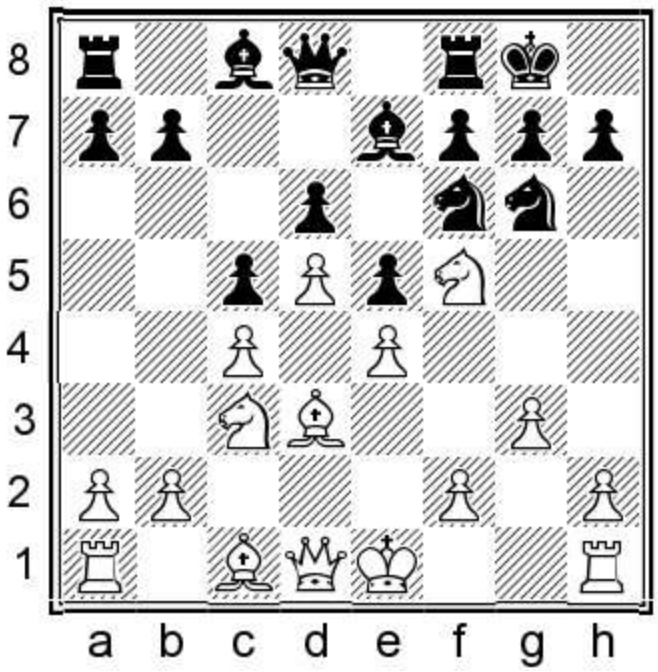


13.g4! ♘f4 14.♗xf4 exf4 15.g5 ♘h5 16.f6± Black already had to give up material in J. Myers – Pizzato, Brisbane 1995.

10.g3!

Black's knight is misplaced, while White's knight on f5 is really annoying for Black.

chesstouring.com



10...♖e8 11.♕f3 a6

This recent try does little to improve Black's chances. Here are a few other examples:

11...♗xf5 should be met by 12.♕xf5N±. (Instead 12.exf5?! e4! gave Black an acceptable position in Shen Yue – Suarez Triguero, Madrid 2017.)

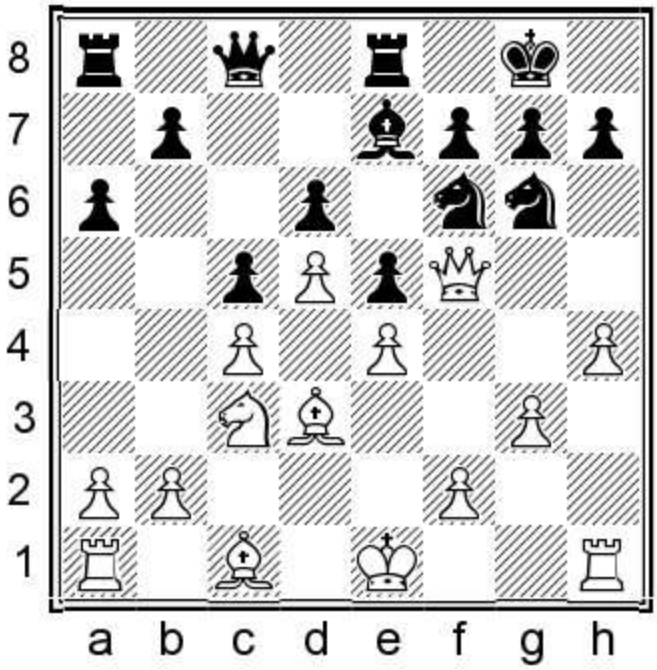
11...♗f8 12.♗g5 ♗xf5 13.♕xf5 ♗e7 14.h4 h6 15.♗d2 and White kept a pleasant positional advantage in Hauchard – Chevallier, France 1992.

11...h6 12.h4 ♗f8 13.♗e3 a6 14.a3 ♘h7 15.b4 b6 16.♖b1 Black was struggling on both flanks in Atalik – Abdul Wahab, Moscow (ol) 1994.

12.h4 ♗xf5 13.♕xf5 ♕c8

We have been following Vidal Zamora – Gromovs, Platja d'Aro 2016. I believe White could have maximized his advantage by keeping the queens on the board with:

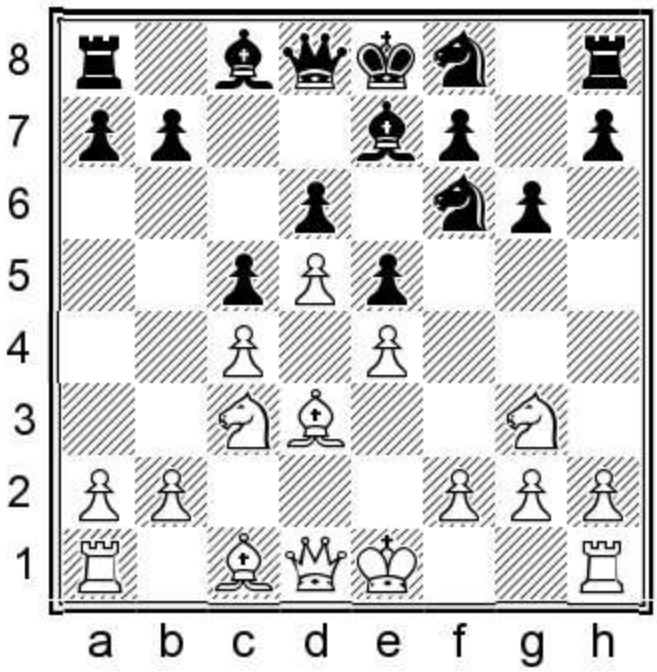
chesstouring.com



14.♕f3!N 14...♕g4 15.♕e3

White is clearly better, with two bishops and a significant space advantage.

B232) 8...g6



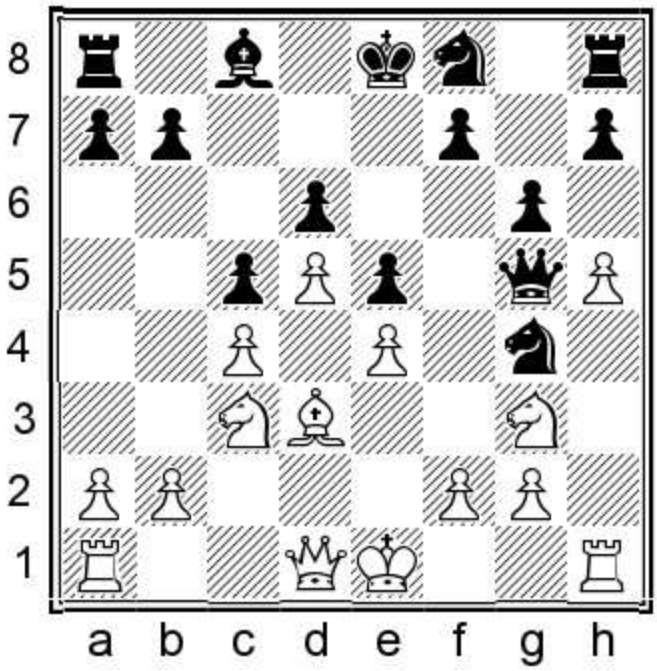
9.h4!

I like this move, as it prevents Black from seizing space on the kingside with ...h5-h4, as happened in the following game: 9.f3 h5 10.♗e3 h4 11.♘ge2 ♘h5 12.♕d2 ♘h7 13.g3 ♘g5 Black had decent activity in Leitao – Pelikian, Sao Paulo 1995.

9...h5

chesstouring.com

I also examined: 9...♘g4N 10.h5 ♗g5 Black executes his main positional idea but pays a high price for it, as his pieces are too passive, especially the knight on f8. 11.♗xg5 ♕xg5



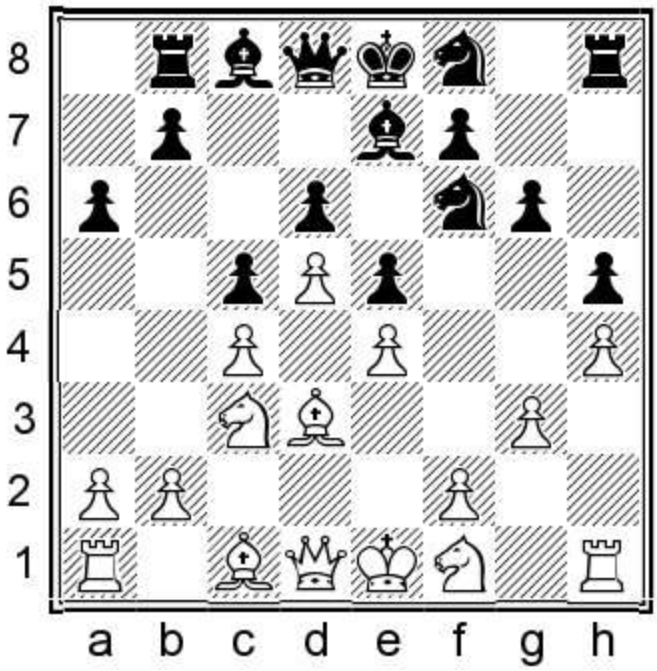
12.♘b5! ♕d8 13.f3 ♘f6 14.♕d2 (14.♕a4?! ♗d7 is less clear) 14...a6 15.♘c3 White is obviously much better.

10.♘f1

Black was threatening to attack the h4-pawn by moving his knight from f6.

10...♘g4

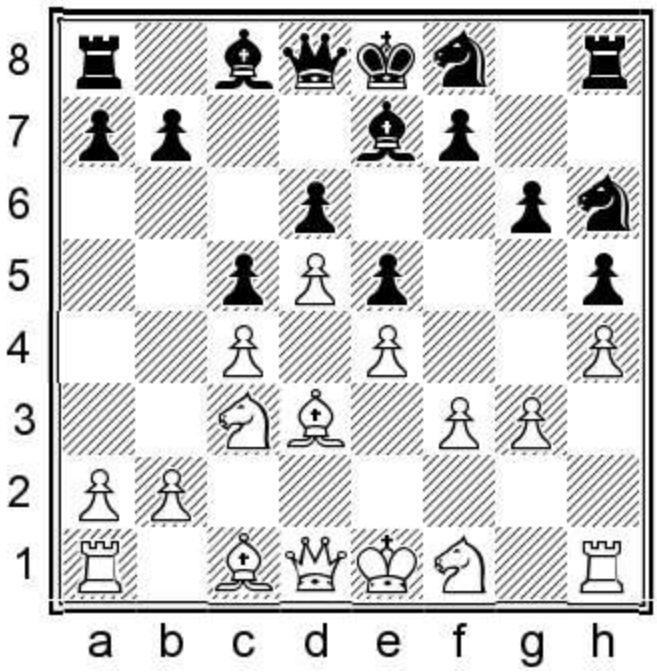
Black's latest try was 10...a6 11.g3 ♖b8, as in Supino – Messina, Naples 2015. I suggest the following improvement:



chesstouring.com

12.♕e2N 12...♗d7 13.f3 ♘8h7 14.♘e3 White is obviously much better coordinated.

11.f3 ♘h6 12.g3



12...a6

An important point is that Black cannot play 12...f5? because of 13.♗xh6! ♖xh6 14.exf5 gxf5 (14...♗xf5 15.♘e3 leaves White with a clear positional advantage thanks to his total control over the e4-square) 15.♕c2 f4 16.0-0-0 when the game opens up in White's favour, as Black's king is still stuck in the centre.

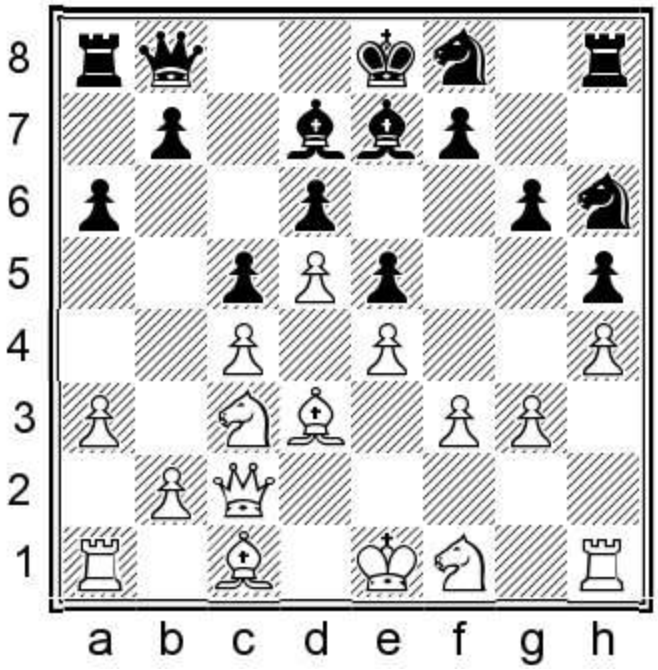
13.♕c2 ♗d7 14.a3

Having prevented ...f5, White starts his play on the queenside.

14...♕b8

We have been following L. Szabo – Ristoja, Helsinki 1975. It's not clear why White refrained from the following natural move:

chesstouring.com



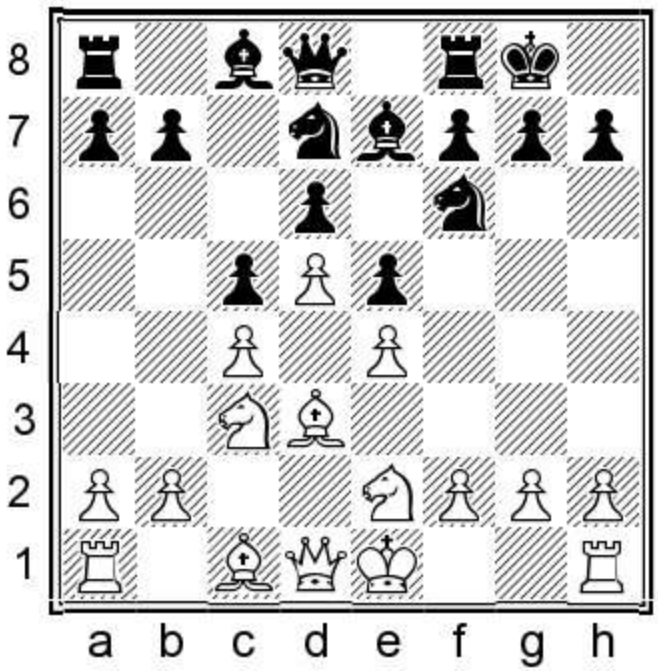
15.b4N

White is doing well, for instance:

15...b5?! 16.bxc5 dxc5 17.♖b1 b4 18.axb4 cxb4 19.♗e3! ♕c7 20.♘a2 a5 21.c5

With a decisive advantage.

B24) 7...0-0



This position has occurred in well over a hundred games, taking into account transpositions.

8.♘g3 ♘e8

chesstouring.com

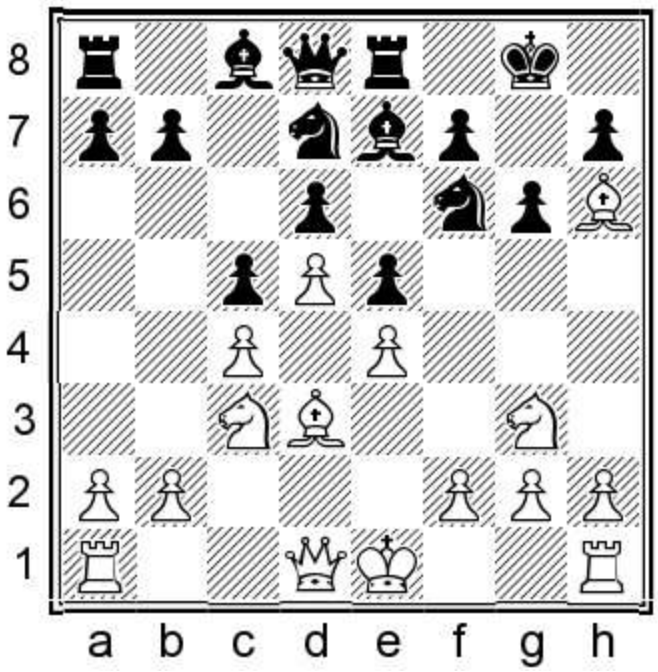
This is by far Black's most popular choice, although of course I checked some other options:

8...♖e8 9.♘f5 ♗f8 10.♗g5 virtually forces Black to give up his light-squared bishop. 10...♘b6 11.♕f3 ♗xf5 12.♕xf5± Cohen – Van Riemsdijk, Guarapuava 1992. White's space advantage and bishop pair are important factors.

8...g6

This move covers the f5-square but enables White to start an attack with:

9.♗h6 ♖e8



10.h4! ♗f8 11.♗xf8N

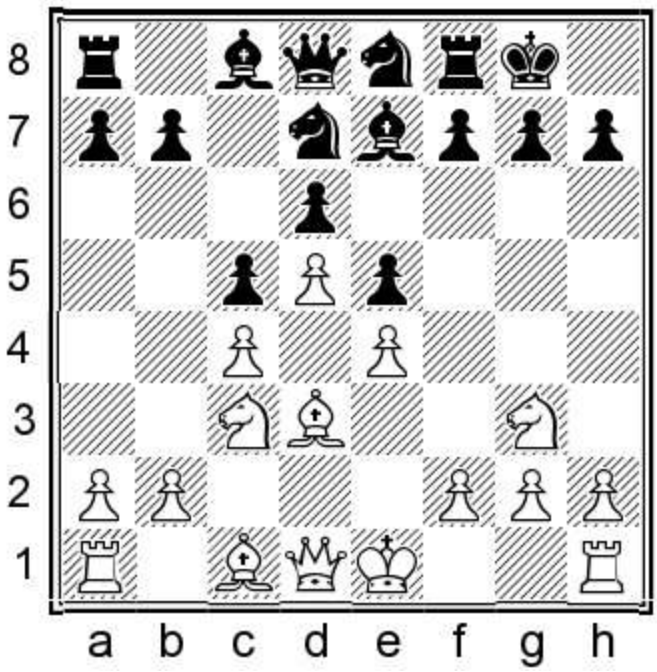
Officially a novelty, although I already recommended it in *GM 2*.

11.h5? ♗xh6 12.hxg6 ♗g5 13.g7 was the crazy continuation of Burrus – Harman, corr. 2016, when 13...♘b6N would have been winning for Black. It's strange to see such an unsound sacrifice in a correspondence game; perhaps White suffered a kind of mouse slip and 'forgot' to exchange bishops before playing h4-h5.

11...♘xf8 12.h5

White has dangerous attacking chances.

chesstouring.com



9.♘f5

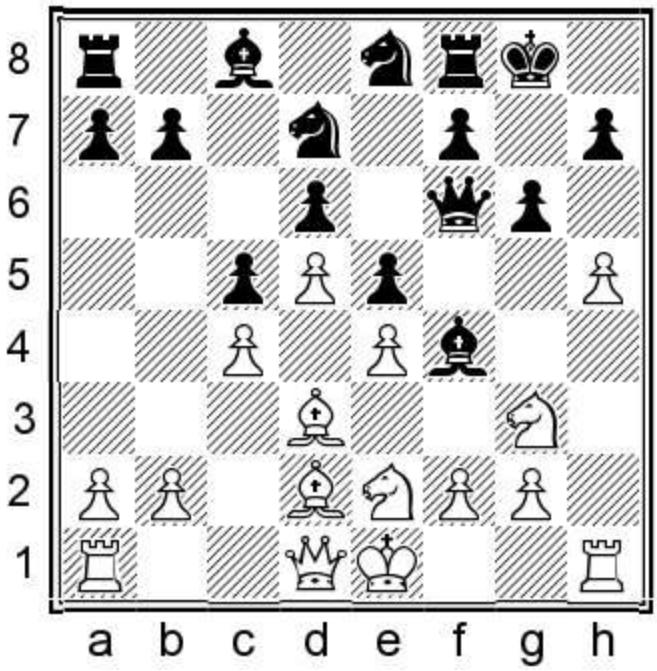
This move should offer White some advantage, even though his practical results with it have not been so good.

Another interesting possibility is:

9.h4 g6 10.h5 ♗g5 11.♗d2

In *GM 2* I noted that 11.♗xg5 ♕xg5 12.♕d2 ♕xd2† 13.♔xd2± gave White a small but stable edge in Katov – Janev, Razgrad 2006, but now I find the text move more appealing.

11...♗f4 12.♘ce2 ♕f6



13.♕c1 ♗xd2† 14.♕xd2 a6 15.f3 ♖b8

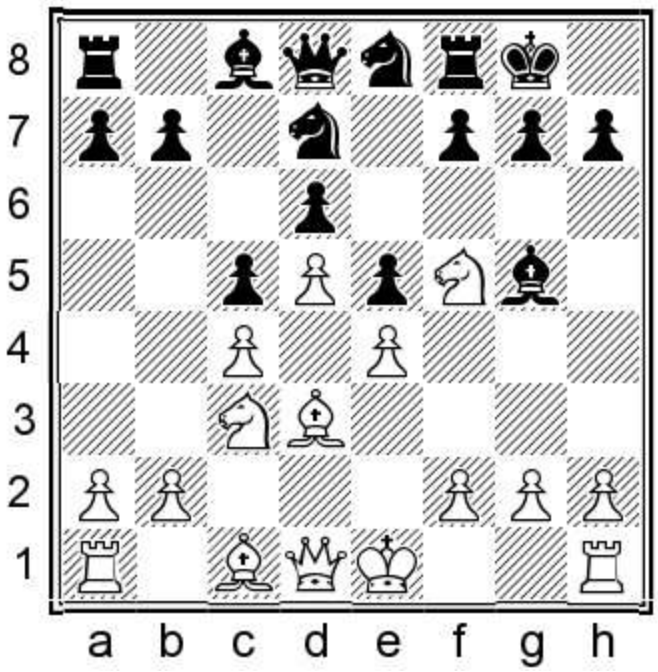
In Pros Heras – Ruiz Marana, Vila Real 2001, White should have played:

chesstouring.com

16.a4!N

Preventing any queenside counterplay and maintaining a useful space advantage.

9...♗g5



10.♗xg5 ♕xg5 11.h4!

The most aggressive.

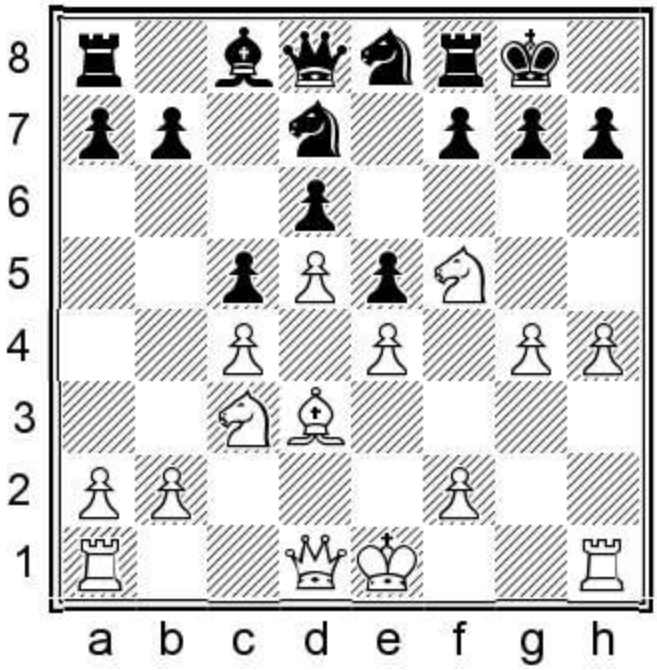
11...♕d8

Obviously 11...♕xg2?? is impossible due to 12.♘g3! when Black is helpless against the threat of ♗f1, winning the queen.

12.g4

Black's position looks unpleasant. Usually he responds with:

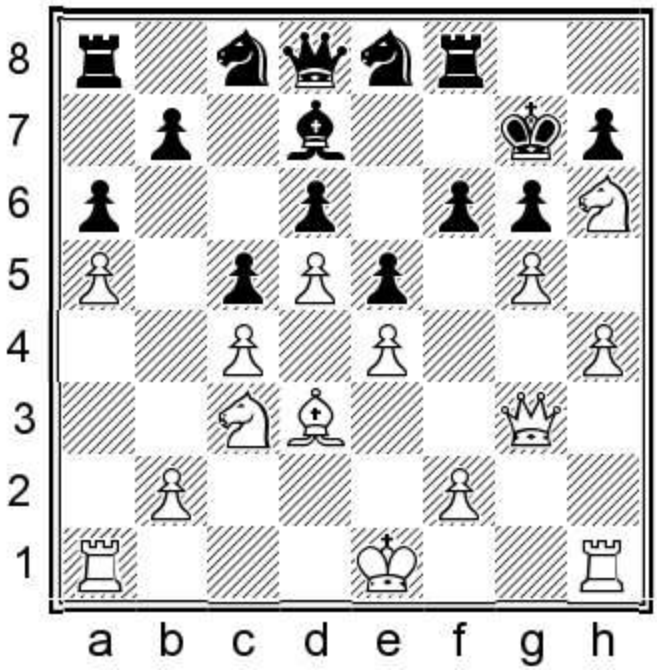
chesstouring.com



12...g6 13.♘h6† ♔g7 14.g5

White has a dangerous initiative on the kingside, as was demonstrated in the following game.

14...a6 15.a4 f6 16.♕g4 ♘b6 17.♕g3 ♗d7 18.a5 ♘c8



19.♕h2! ♕e7 20.h5

Black was unable to keep his position together in Rivera de Leon – Barria Valdes, corr. 2015.

Conclusion

The Czech Benoni is a tricky opening to analyse, as both sides have so many options and move orders

chesstouring.com

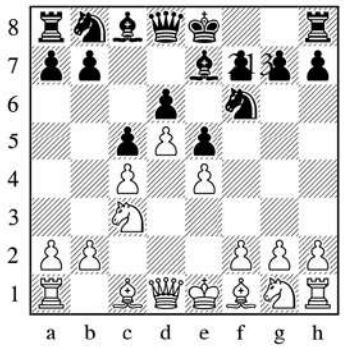
available. Still, it seems fair to conclude that 5...g6 gives Black a suboptimal version of a King's Indian. There is nothing wrong with a fianchetto set-up for White; but should this particular move order arise, I like the plan of 6.♗e2 followed by ♗g5 even more.

In the event of 5...♘bd7 White again has the option of transposing to another part of our repertoire with 6.g3, but I have chosen to stick with my previous recommendation of 6.♗d3 followed by ♘ge2. An important rule is that the modern plan of ...h5 should always be met by h2-h4, to prevent Black from gaining further space on the kingside. As always, it could be useful to know some fine details, but in general White has the more pleasant game due to his space advantage and attacking possibilities, potentially on either flank.

chesstouring.com



Benoni Systems



Czech Benoni – Main Lines

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5 4.♘c3 d6 5.e4 ♗e7

6.g3

A) 6...h5 214

B) 6...♘a6 215

C) 6...0-0 7.♗g2 217

C1) 7...♘a6 8.♘ge2 ♘c7 9.0-0 217

C11) 9...a6 218

C12) 9...♖b8 219

C2) 7...♘e8 220

C3) 7...♘bd7 8.♘ge2 222

C31) 8...♘e8 223

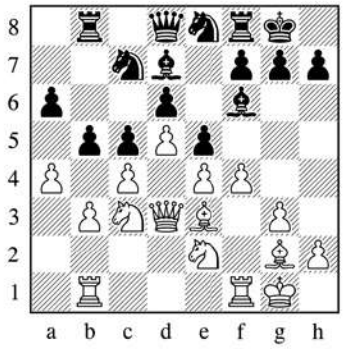
C32) 8...a6 9.a4 226

C321) 9...♘e8 226

C322) 9...b6 228

chesstouring.com

C11) note to 11...♘d7



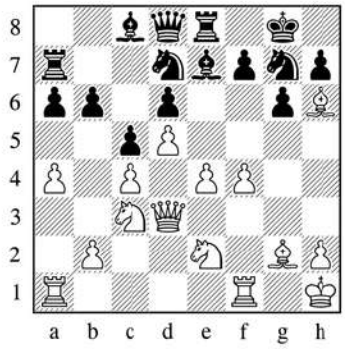
16.b4!N

C321) note to 15...f5



21.g4!N

C322) after 15...♖e8



16.♗h3!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5 4.♘c3 d6 5.e4 ♗e7

This is Black's most popular choice and I consider it the main line of the Czech Benoni.

6.g3

I believe that this is White's most promising set-up. The usual plan of development will be ♗g2 and ♘ge2, although White should be ready to adapt his plan against certain options Black may try.

Black has tried all kinds of moves and, as usual, there is no point in trying to analyse all of them. Instead I will focus on **A)** 6...h5 and **B)** 6...♘a6 as the most significant sidelines, followed by the main line of **C)** 6...0-0.

An independent alternative is:

6...♘bd7 7.♗g2 h5

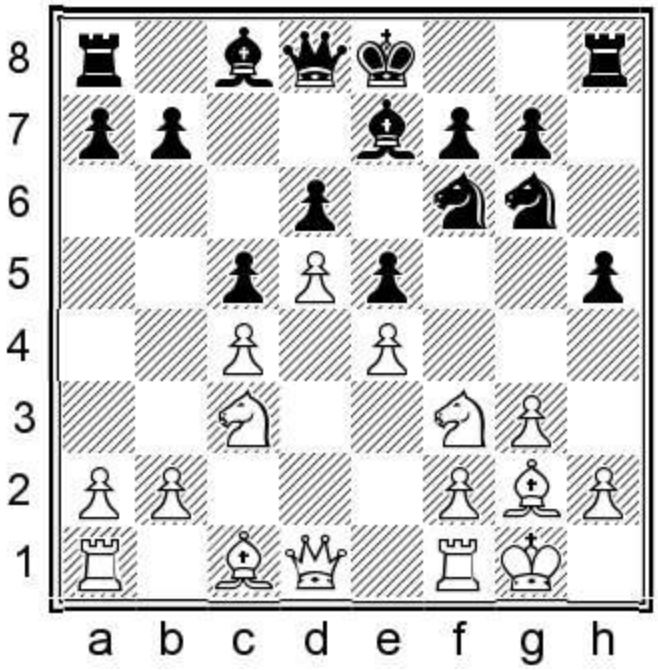
7...0-0 transposes to variation C3.

8.♘f3

It is logical to prevent ...h4 without committing our own h-pawn yet. Here is a model game which I really like:

8...♘f8 9.0-0 ♘g6

chesstouring.com



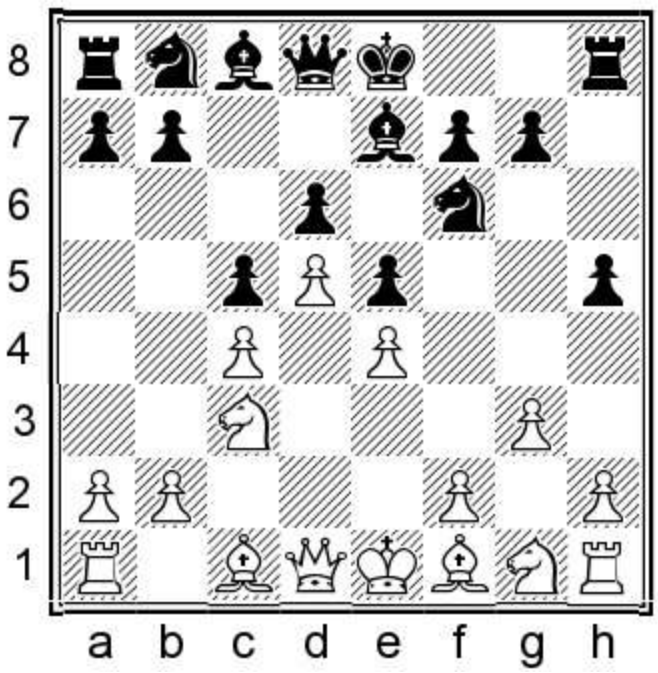
10.h4! ♗d7

10...♗g4 occurred in Hradeczky – Vadasz, Budapest 1972, when 11.♕d3N would have been logical, after which White is ready to play ♘g5 anytime.

11.♕e2 ♖b8 12.♖b1 a6 13.b4 cxb4 14.♖xb4 ♕c8 15.♗d2±

In Riazantsev – Anissimov, Moscow 1997, White had already started his queenside play with good effect, while the kingside remained under control.

A) 6...h5



7.h4

Compared with the previous note, 7.♘f3 gives Black the option of 7...♗g4 when ...h4 is still on the

chessdating.com

menu. White can fight for an advantage here too, but the text move is simpler.

7...♘a6

This is Black's most popular choice, though it seems quite passive to me.

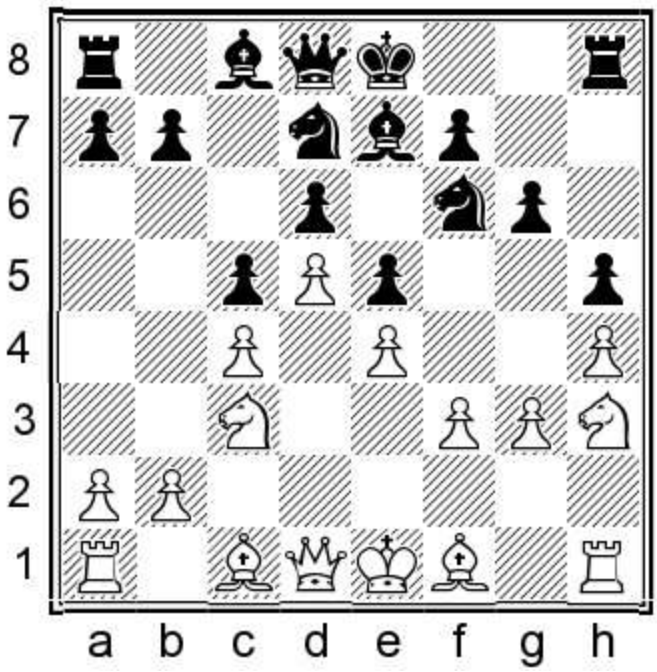
I also considered:

7...♘bd7 8.♘h3 g6

The knight manoeuvre 8...♘f8 9.f3 ♘g6 is not too impressive. A good example continued 10.♗e3 ♗d7 11.♕d2 a6 12.a3 ♘h7 13.b4 b6 14.♖b1 ♖b8 15.♗d3± and White's advantage was obvious in Gromek – Sznapik, Bydgoszcz 1976.

9.f3

There is also nothing wrong with the immediate 9.♘g5N.



9...♘h7

The latest game continued 9...a6 10.a3 b6 11.♗e3 ♔f8 12.b4 ♔g7 13.♗d3 ♖b8 14.♕d2± and White had a pleasant edge in Chatalbashev – M. Petrov, Sunny Beach 2013.

10.♗e3 a6 11.♕d2 ♘df6 12.♗e2 ♗d7

This was Browne – Finegold, Las Vegas 1994, and here I suggest the simple continuation:

13.♘f2N

White retains a nice advantage.

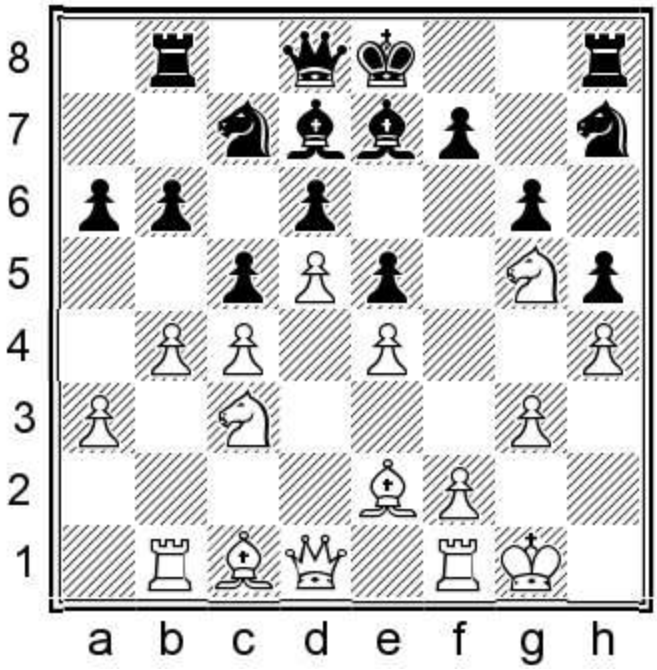
8.♘h3!

I recommended this as a novelty in *GM 2* and it has since been tested in a couple of games.

8...♘c7 9.♘g5 g6

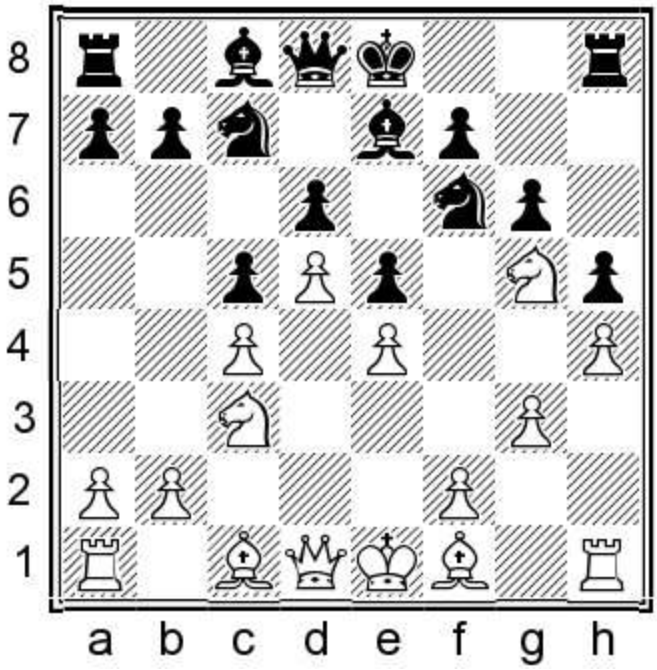
9...a6 does not change much. 10.♗e2 g6 11.a3 ♗d7 12.b4 b6 13.♖b1 ♖b8 14.0-0 ♘h7 was seen in Miljkovic – Kosanovic, Palic 2014. Simple and natural would have been:

chesstouring.com



15.♘xh7N 15...♖xh7 16.♗e3 ♔f8 17.♕d2 White is clearly better.

The text move was played in Dierssen Garcia Barredo – Valles Moreno, San Sebastian 2013. Here I would recommend:

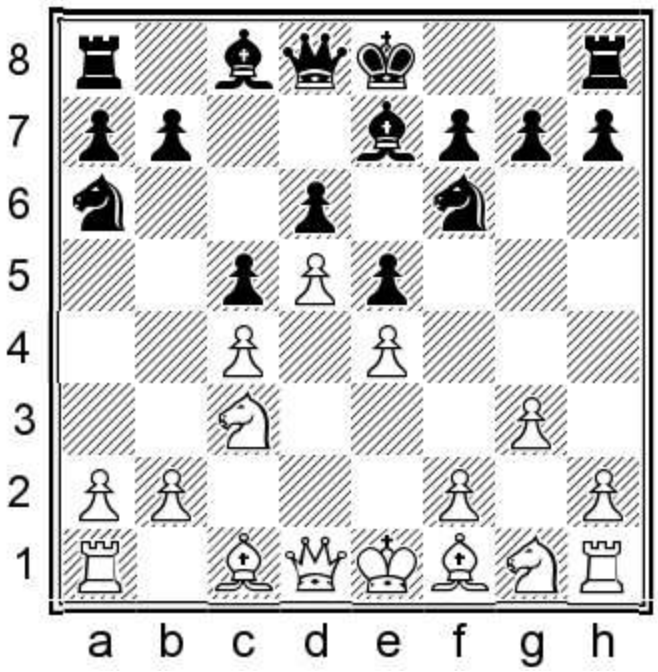


10.♗e2N 10...0-0 11.0-0 ♘h7 12.♘xh7 ♔xh7 13.♔g2

White has a pleasant advantage, and can soon commence his thematic queenside play.

B) 6...♘a6

chesstouring.com



This has been tried by some strong players and is connected with some sophisticated ideas, which will be explained shortly.

7.♗g2

This natural developing move is fine.

Nevertheless, 7.h4!? is a tempting alternative. For instance, 7...♘c7 8.a4 ♘a6 9.♗h3 ♘b4 10.♔f1 and White had the more pleasant game in Cornette – Hoolt, Cappelle-la-Grande 2013.

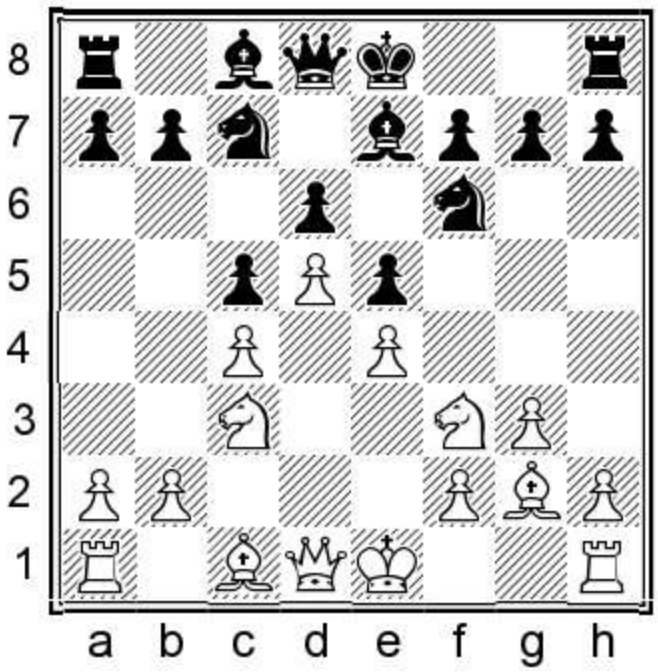
7...♘c7!?

This is a slightly tricky move order. Black's idea is to avoid any committal decisions on the kingside.

8.♘f3!

The point of Black's play is revealed after 8.♘ge2 h5! when 9.h4 a6 10.a4 b6∞ is pretty double-edged. Compared with variation A above, White does not have the attractive ♘h3 idea available.

chesstouring.com



8...0-0

The ...h5 plan loses its effectiveness when the knight is on f3, so Black may as well castle.

9.0-0 ♖b8

This will be our main line. I checked a few other options:

9...a6 10.a4 b6 11.♘e1 ♖b8 transposes to our main line.

9...♘fe8 10.♘e1 a6 11.a4 b6 12.♘d3

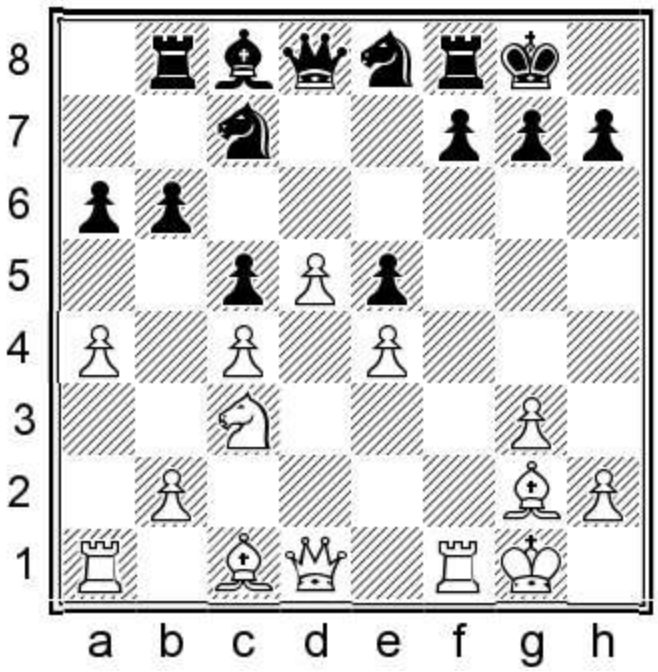
The knight comes to its ideal square, where it supports both of the f2-f4 and b2-b4 breaks.

12...♖b8 13.f4 ♗f6 14.fxe5 ♗xe5

14...dxe5 15.b4 ♘d6 16.♕b3± does not really help Black.

15.♘xe5 dxe5

chesstouring.com

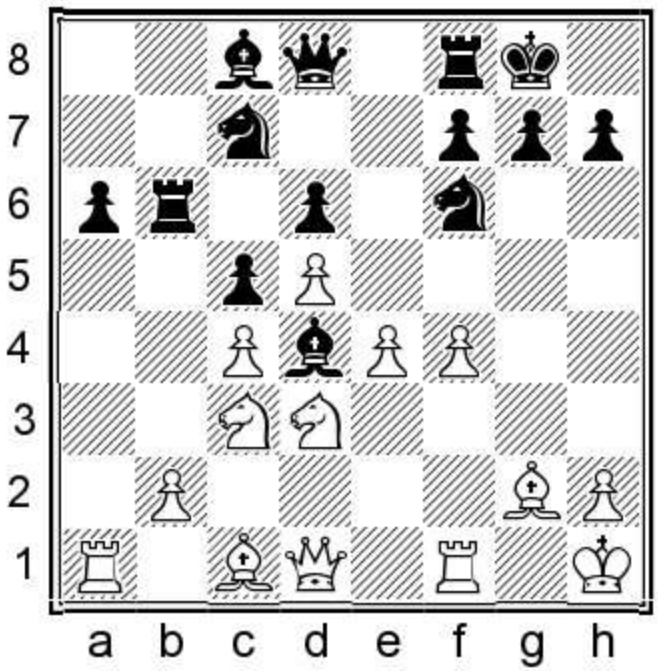


16.a5! b5 17.♗e3 bxc4 18.♗xc5 ♘d6 19.♘a4±

White was much better in L. Popov – Piket, Wijk aan Zee 2001.

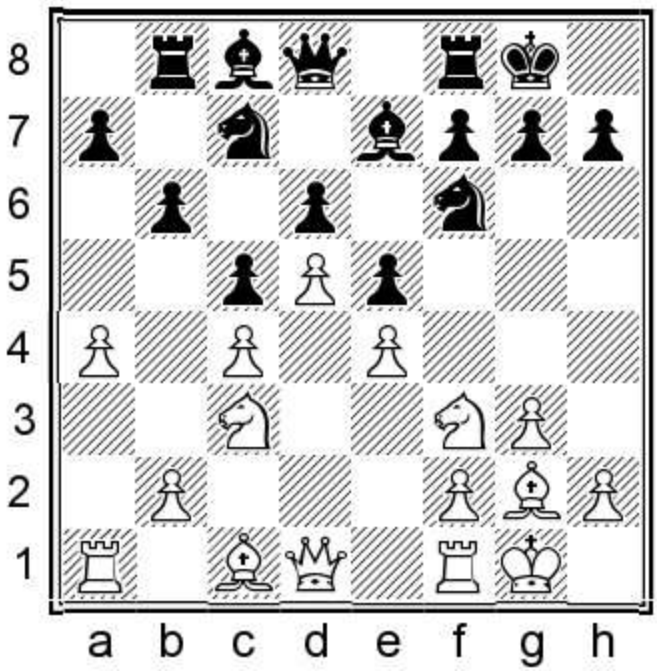
10.a4 b6

10...a6 11.a5 b5 12.axb6 ♖xb6 13.♘e1 offers White a comfortable edge. A good illustrative game continued: 13...♘fe8 14.f4 ♗f6 15.♘d3 exf4 16.gxf4 ♗d4† 17.♔h1 ♘f6



Now in Radashkovich – Lederman, Nathanya 1973, 18.♗f3!N 18...♖e8 19.♖e1± would have secured White's advantage.

chesstouring.com



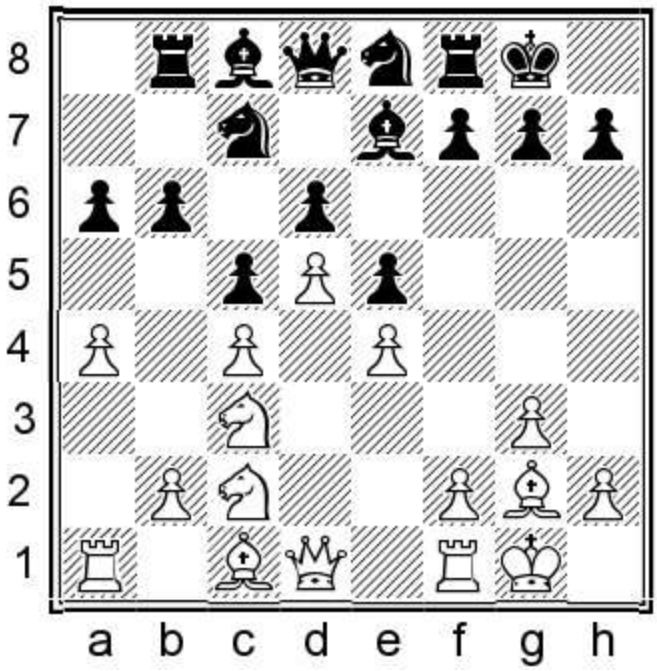
11.♘e1 a6 12.♘c2!

Getting ready to fight fire with fire on the queenside.

12...♘fe8

12...b5 13.b4! shows why the knight went to c2 instead of d3. Play may continue 13...♘d7 14.♖b1 bxc4 15.♗a3 and White develops his initiative on the queenside.

In Lupulescu – Bonte, Iasi 2014, White should obviously have continued with:



13.b4N 13...f5

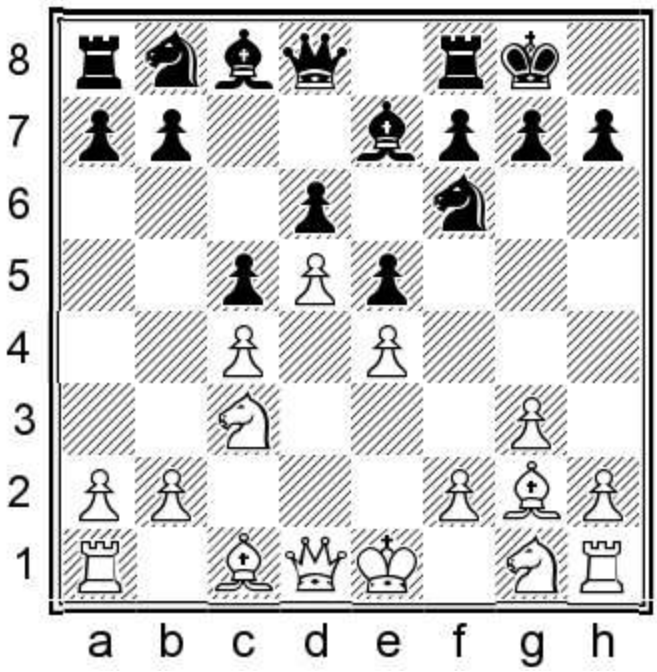
13...a5 14.bxa5 bxa5 15.♘b5 offers White a pleasant edge, as Black can never capture on b5.

chesstouring.com

14.exf5 ♗xf5 15.b5!

Now it is quite logical to close off the queenside. White has an obvious advantage, due to his control over the e4-square and Black's cramped position.

C) 6...0-0 7.♗g2



We will analyse **C1)** 7...♘a6, **C2)** 7...♘e8 and **C3)** 7...♘bd7, the last two of which can easily transpose to one another.

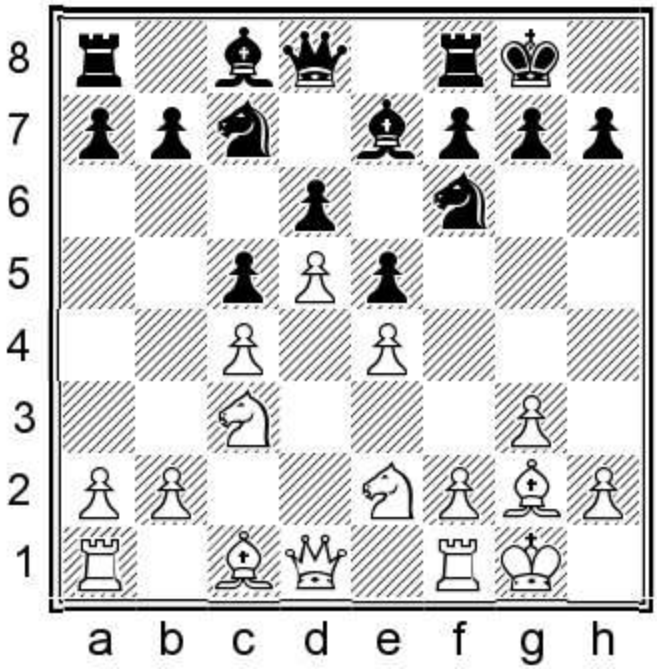
7...a6 does not require special attention, as after 8.a4 the play will almost certainly transpose to one of the main lines.

C1) 7...♘a6

This way of developing the knight is thematic in Benoni openings, but in this instance it is rather passive.

8.♘ge2 ♘c7 9.0-0

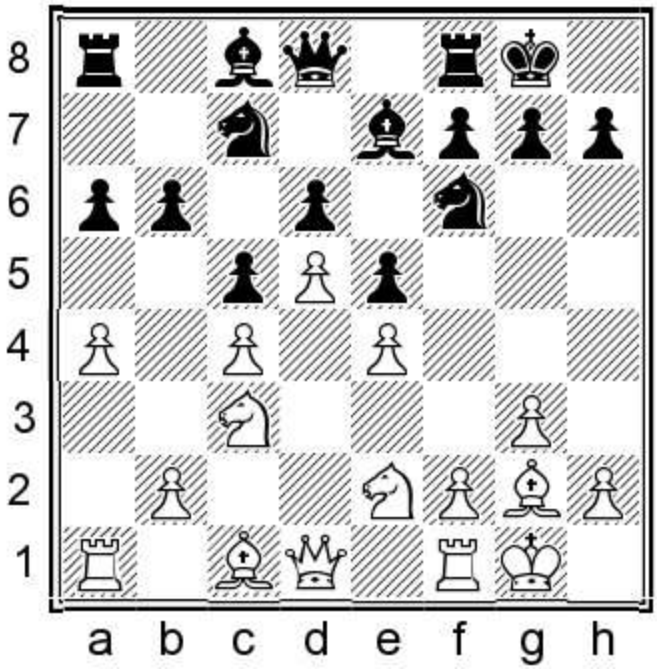
chesstouring.com



It is worth considering **C11)** 9...a6 and **C12)** 9...♖b8.

C11) 9...a6 10.a4 b6

10...♖b8 transposes to variation C12 below.



11.f4 ♘d7

Another option is:

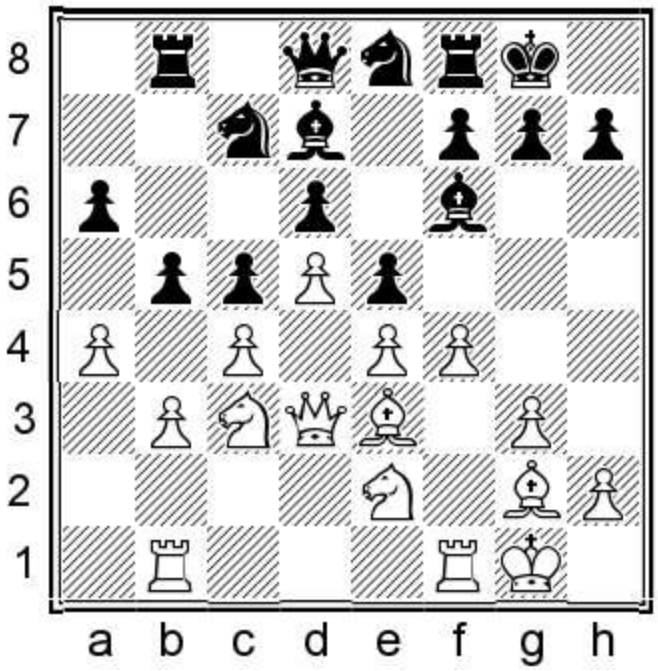
11...♖b8 12.♕d3

White should maintain the central tension and improve his pieces.

12...♘fe8 13.♗e3 ♗d7 14.b3 ♗f6 15.♖ab1 b5

chesstouring.com

This occurred in Da Silva – Rocha, Belo Horizonte 2012. White missed a great opportunity to open things up on the queenside by means of:



16.b4!N

The critical line continues:

16...cxb4 17.♖xb4 bxa4

17...a5 is well met by 18.♖xb5! ♘xb5 19.axb5± with fantastic compensation for the exchange.

18.♖xb8 ♕xb8 19.♖b1 ♕c8 20.♕c2 a3 21.♖a1±

White will regain the pawn while keeping a clear advantage.

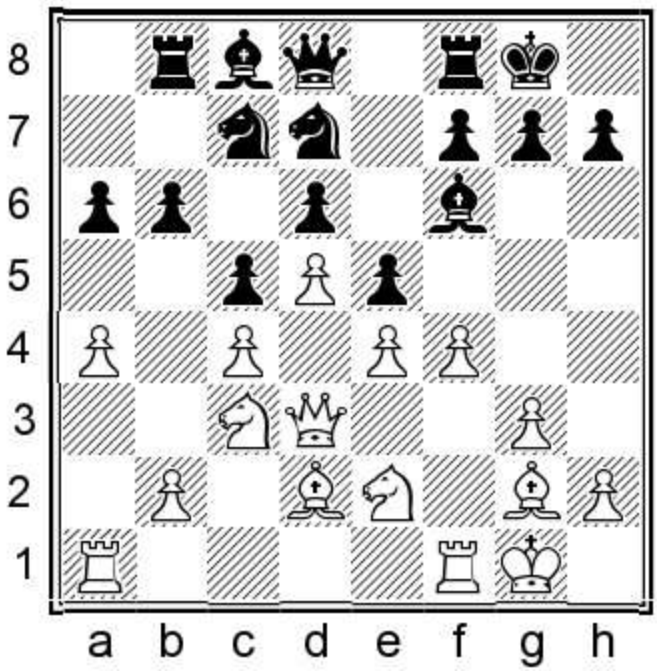
12.♕d3

The reader may already have noticed that this is an excellent square for the queen.

12...♖b8 13.♗d2 ♗f6

Another good example continued 13...♖e8 14.b3 ♗f6 15.♖ab1 (the immediate 15.f5N is also promising for White) 15...♘f8 16.f5 ♗g5 17.♗e1 ♘d7 18.h4 ♗e7 19.♗d2± and White's space advantage was the defining feature of the position in Davis – Hayakawa, corr. 2005.

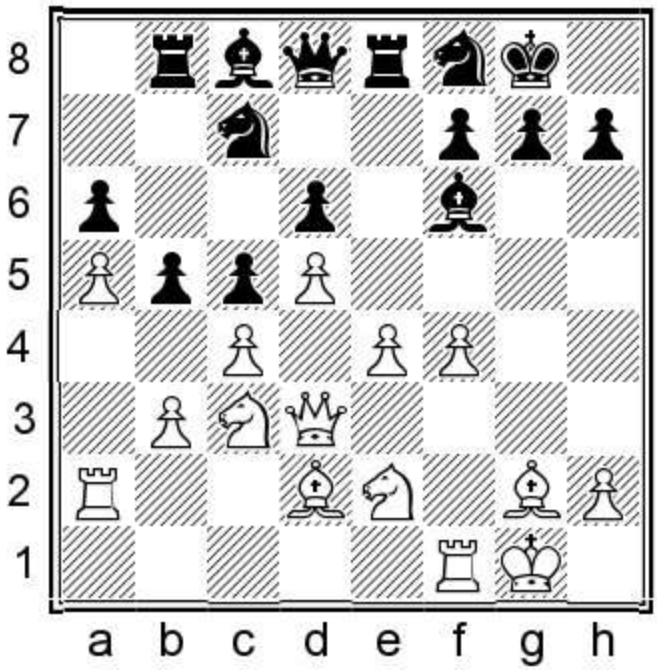
chesstouring.com



14.♖a2 ♖e8 15.b3

Black lacks counterplay and thus decides to open the centre, but this does not help much.

15...exf4 16.gxf4 ♘f8 17.a5 b5



18.e5!

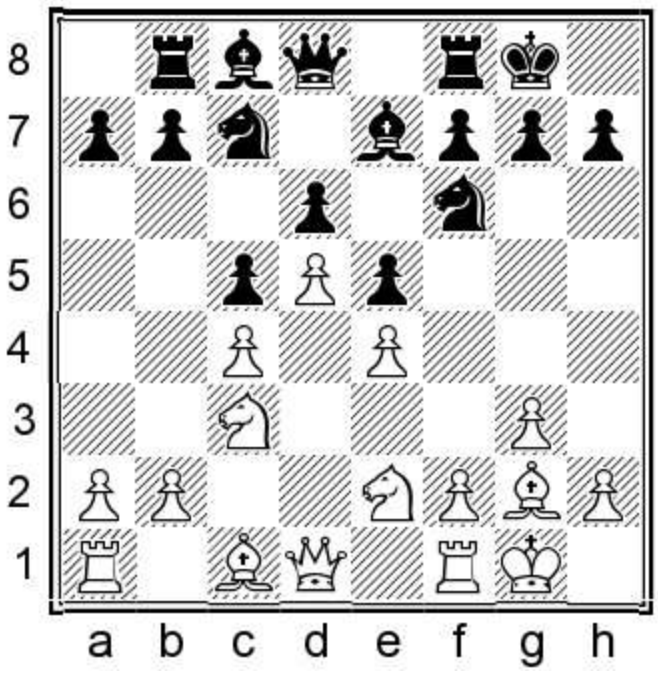
A thematic pawn sacrifice.

18...dxe5 19.f5

White was ready to follow up with ♘e4, with complete domination in Avrukh – Veinger, Israel 1999.

chesstouring.com

C12) 9...♖b8



10.a4 a6

10...♘a6 has the idea to transfer the knight to the weakened b4-square but the manoeuvre costs time and the knight will be out of play. For instance, 11.f4 ♘d7 12.♗e3 (12.f5 is also promising) 12...♘b4 13.♕d2 ♗f6 14.f5 and White has a clear plan of a kingside attack, while Black is doomed to passivity, Sonntag – Braga, Cadiz 1991.

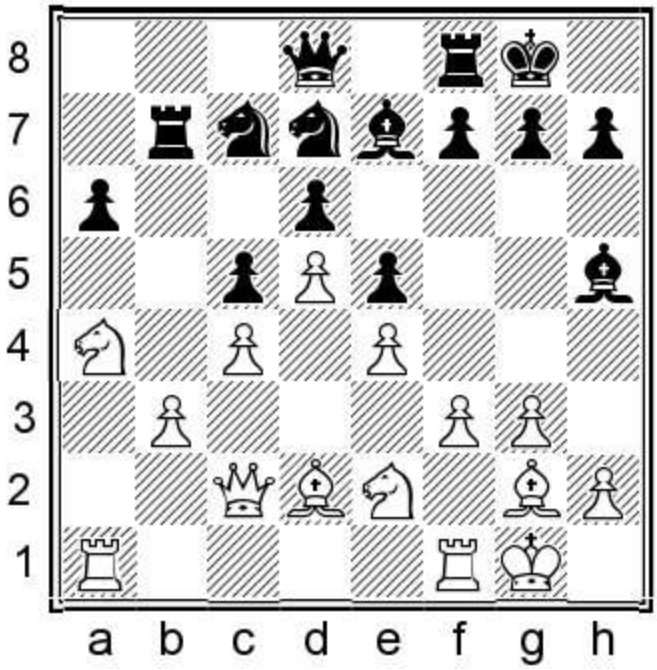
11.a5 b5 12.axb6 ♖xb6

Black has opened the b-file but is a long way from getting real counterplay on the queenside.

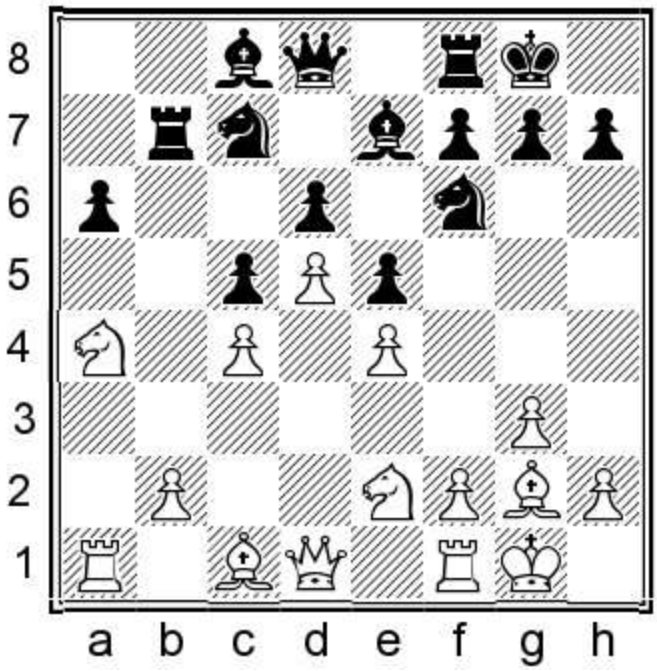
13.♘a4 ♖b7

Another nice example continued: 13...♖b4 14.b3 ♗g4 15.f3 ♗h5 16.♗d2 ♖b7 17.♕c2 ♘d7

chesstouring.com



18.♗h3 h6 19.♗a5 ♗g5 20.♕d3 Covering the e3-square. 20...♖e8 21.♖fb1 ♗g6 22.b4!± White had an overwhelming advantage in A. Maric – S. Maksimovic, Cetinje 1993.



14.♗d2

Black's main problem is the passively placed knight on c7.

14...♗d7 15.♗c3

Now Black will have to watch out for possible sacrifices in the centre, such as ♘xc5 or ♗xe5.

15...♘a8

Also after 15...♘fe8 16.f4 f6 17.♕d2 ♕b8 18.f5 ♖f7 19.h4 Black was clearly suffering in Gulko – Mar,

chessstorming.com

San Mateo (rapid) 1989.

The text move was played more recently but it hardly changes the evaluation.

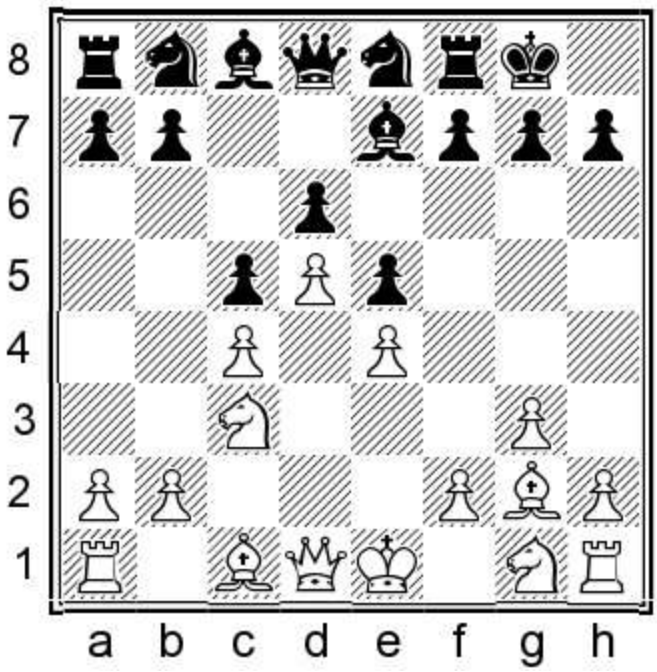
16.♕d3

I like also 16.b3!?N 16...♕b8 17.♖a3 ♘b6 18.♘b2 with a clear advantage.

16...♕e8 17.♘xc5! dxc5 18.♗xe5↑

White initiative was extremely powerful in Malek – Oganisjan, Moscow 2011.

C2) 7...♘e8



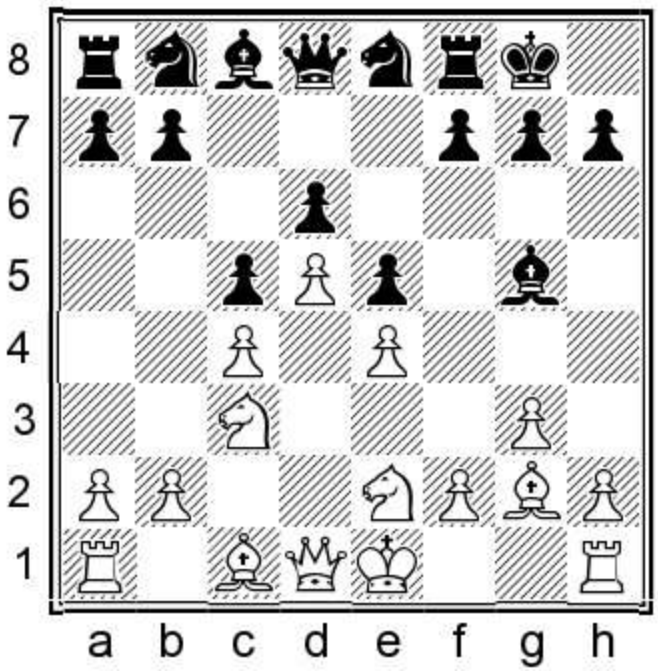
8.♘ge2 ♗g5

8...♘d7 will be covered under variation C31 below, while 8...a6 9.a4 does not really change anything. Aside from those moves, there are two other options worth considering:

8...f5 9.exf5 ♗xf5 allows White to maintain control over the e4-square. For instance, 10.0-0 ♘d7 11.♘e4 h6 12.♘2c3± with a pleasant edge, as in Benko – Zwaig, Havana (ol) 1966.

8...g6 should be met by: 9.♗h6 ♘g7 10.♕d2 It is essential to prevent Black from trading bishops with ...♗g5. A likely continuation is 10...♘d7 (or 10...f5 11.0-0 ♘d7) 11.0-0, transposing to variation C31 below.

chesstouring.com



9.f4

Trading bishops would be a definite achievement for Black, so the text move is the critical response.

9...exf4 10.gxf4 ♗h4†

This seems consistent and has been a popular choice, but it leads to trouble for Black.

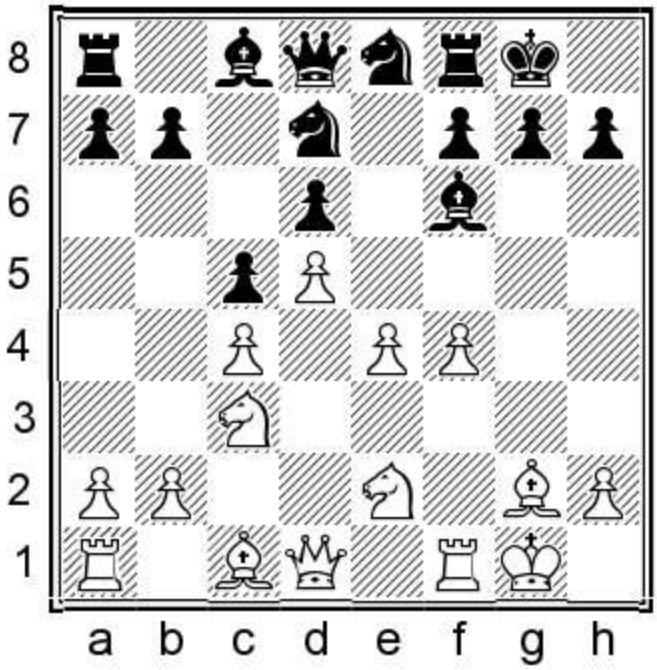
Perhaps the lesser evil is:

10...♗f6 11.0-0 ♘d7

White should also be ready for 11...♗g4 12.♕d3! ♗xe2 13.♕xe2 ♘d7 14.♗e3 ♘c7 as in Sonis – Valencia Jimenez, Barcelona 2015, and here White should have played 15.♕d2N 15...a6 16.a4± with a solid edge.

Here I found a new way to improve White's play.

chesstouring.com



12.♕d3!N

Stronger than 12.♗e3, as played in Klimov – Gubajdullin, Russia 2008, which I noted in *GM 2*.

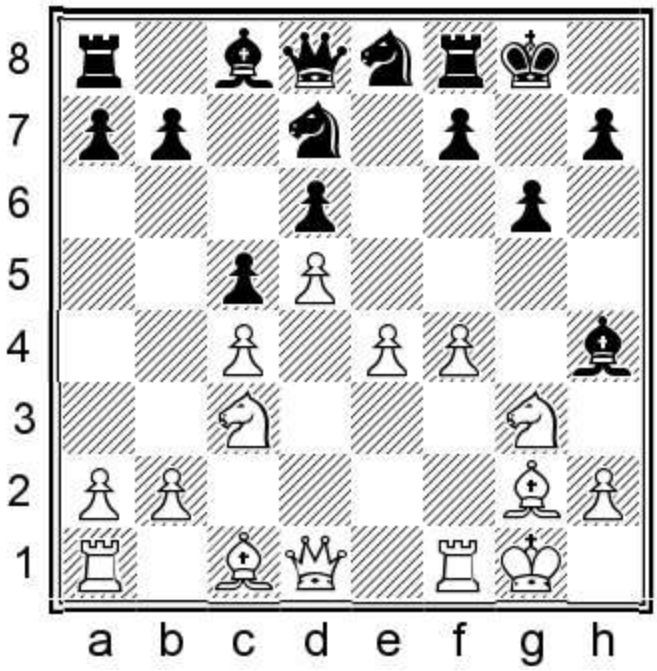
12...g6 13.♗d2 ♗g7 14.♖ae1±

White has the better chances due to his strong centre and well-mobilized forces.

11.♘g3 f5

This is the main point of Black's previous play.

After 11...♘d7 12.0-0 g6 Black has scored 2/2, but this obviously had nothing to do with the outcome of the opening. A good continuation is:



13.♕d3N 13...♘g7 14.♗d2 White has a pleasant game, since 14...f5 can be met by 15.exf5 gxf5 16.♖ae1,

chessdownload.com

retaining some advantage.

12.0-0!

It's important to know that the apparently attractive central advance is rather unclear:

12.e5 dxe5 13.fxe5 ♘d7!

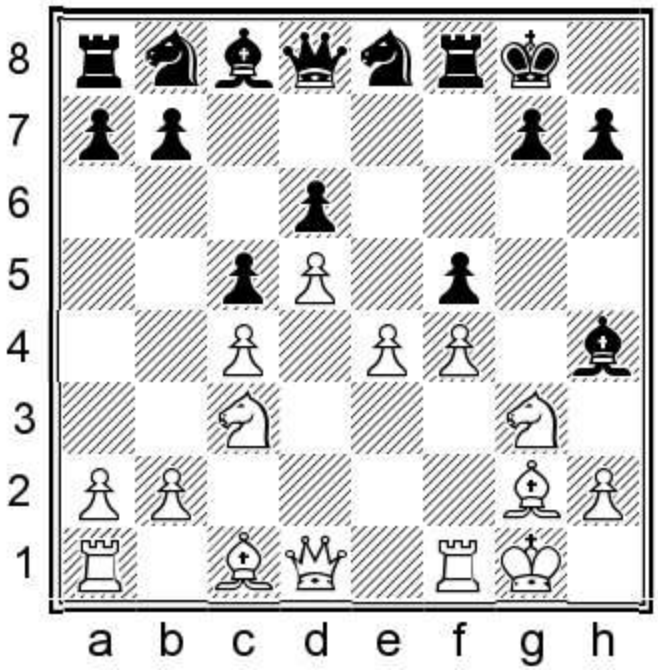
13...f4? allows White to a seize powerful initiative after 14.0-0 fxg3 15.♖xf8† ♔xf8 16.hxg3, when the following encounter is a good example of White's attacking ability: 16...♗e7 17.d6 (17.♗e3 ♔g8 18.♘e4, is also good enough) 17...♘xd6 18.exd6 ♕xd6 19.♘d5 ♘c6 20.♗f4 ♕d8 21.♕h5 Black could not withstand White's offensive in S. Schneider – Koehn, Hallsberg 1993.

14.e6

14.♗f4? runs into 14...g5! and Black wins a pawn.

14...f4 15.exd7 fxg3

With wild complications, Von Herman – Urban, Budapest 1991.



12...fxe4

In the event o12...♗f6 White should favour the simple 13.♕d3N (rather than 13.exf5 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 when, in Hoang – Csom, Budapest 1997, 14...♘d7!N would not have been clear at all) 13...fxe4 14.♘cxe4 with a clear advantage.

13.♘cxe4

White has a clear advantage in piece mobility, which counts for much more than the theoretical weakness of his kingside pawns.

13...♘d7

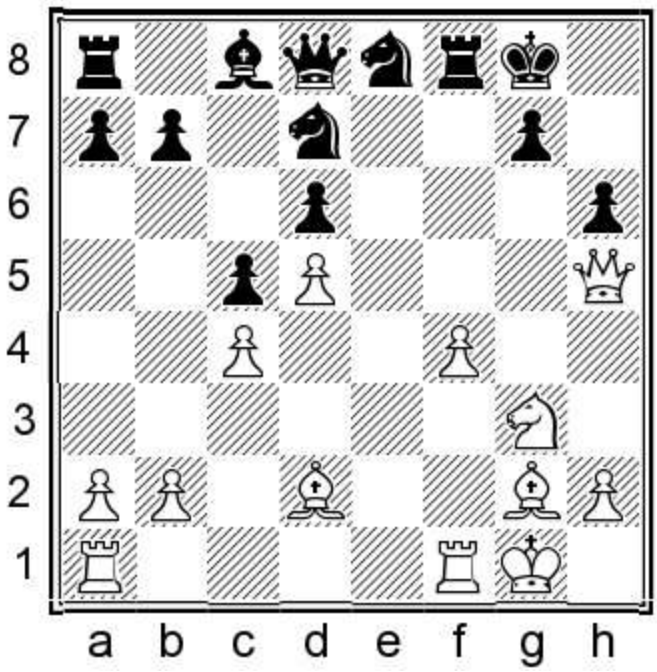
Other moves do not change the evaluation, for instance:

chesstouring.com

13...♘f6? 14.♘g5! ♗xg5 15.fxg5 ♘g4 16.♗f4+– gave White an overwhelming advantage in Sevostianov

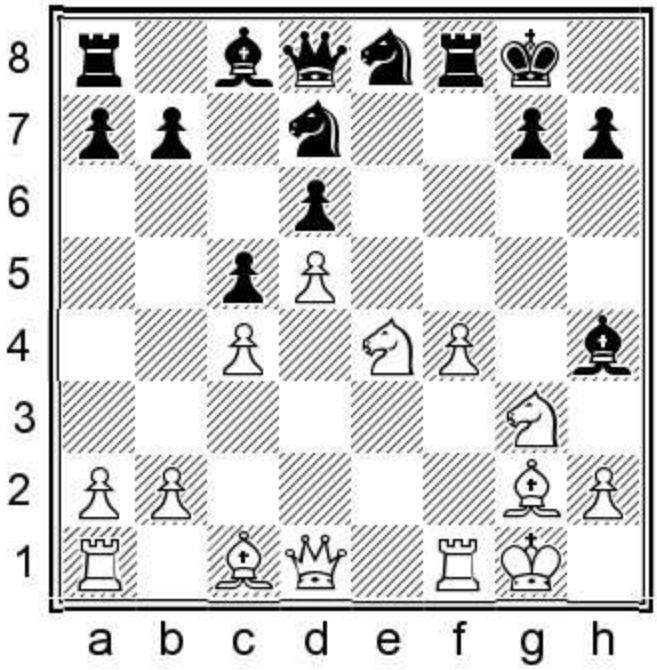
– Malyi, Chervonograd 2012.

13...h6 14.♗d2 ♘d7 15.♕h5 ♗xg3 has occurred twice. In both games White recaptured with the h-pawn in order to repair his structure, and kept an edge. However, 16.♘xg3!N would have been even stronger, for instance:



16...♘df6 17.♕e2 b5 18.b3± White is much better.

After the text move I found a new idea which improves on five games, as well as my previous analysis in *GM 2*.



14.♘g5!N

Wasting no time in creating direct threats.

chesstouring.com

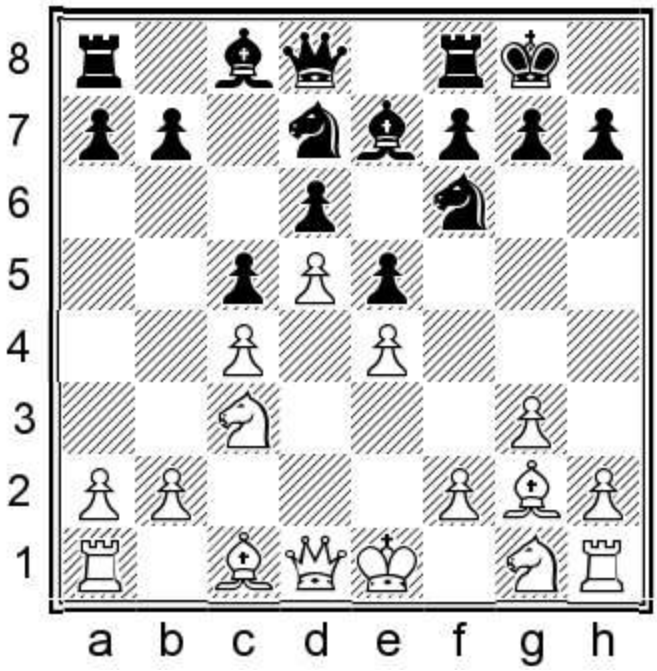
14...♗xg5

14...♘b6?! 15.♕d3 is even worse for Black.

15.fxg5 ♖xf1† 16.♕xf1 ♘e5 17.♗f4 ♘g6 18.♖e1±

White's advantage is beyond any doubt.

C3) 7...♘bd7



I will take this as the main line, although this move and ...♘e8 can be played in either order.

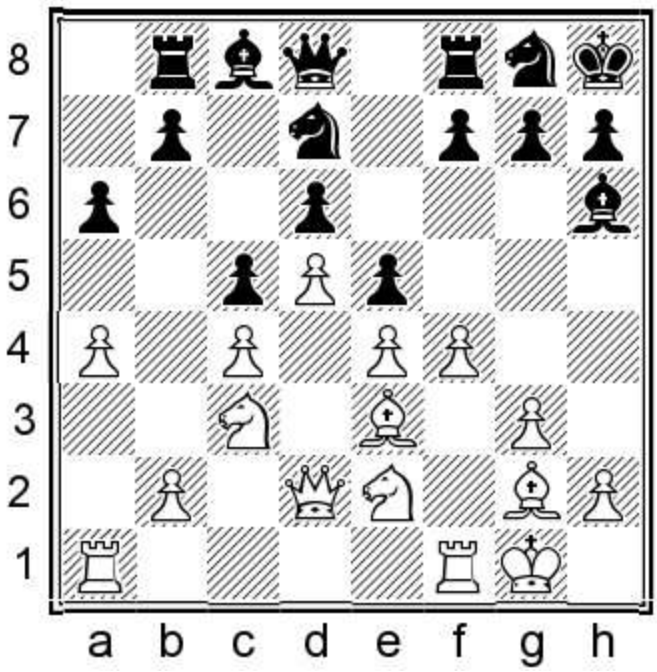
8.♘ge2

As mentioned earlier, I consider this White's most ambitious set-up against the Czech Benoni. By leaving the f-pawn unblocked, White prepares f2-f4 in the near future.

We will analyse **C31)** 8...♘e8 and **C32)** 8...a6. The two lines may proceed in parallel for several moves, but eventually there will come a point where the inclusion of ...a6 and a2-a4 causes some divergence.

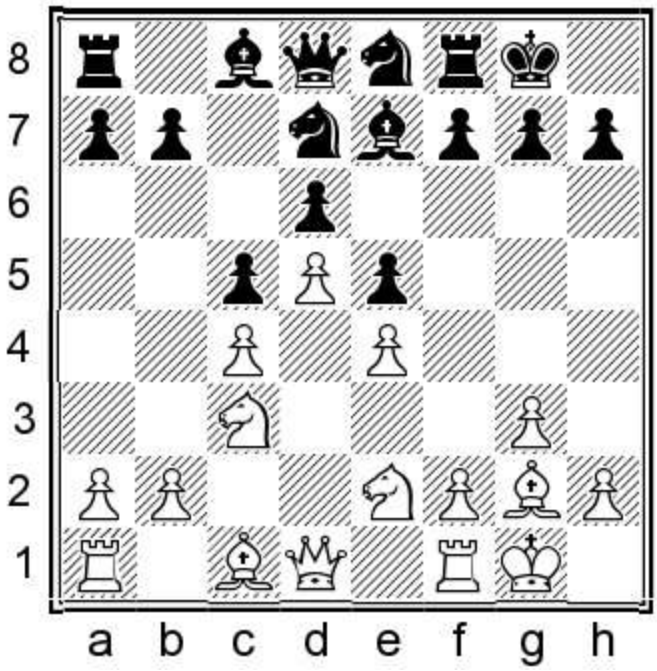
8...♔h8 9.0-0 ♘g8 is hardly a serious alternative, and White obtains the advantage with natural play: 10.♗e3 ♗g5 11.f4 ♗h6 12.♕d2 a6 (12...exf4 13.gxf4 f5 14.♖ae1 also favours White) 13.a4 ♖b8 This occurred in Blagojevic – Damljanovic, Paracin 2011, and now White should have continued:

chesstouring.com



14.f5!N 14...♗xe3† 15.♕xe3± Black has achieved a minor victory in trading the dark-squared bishops, but this does not alter the fact that White has fine attacking chances on the kingside.

C31) 8...♘e8 9.0-0



9...g6

9...a6 10.a4 leads to variation C321 below.

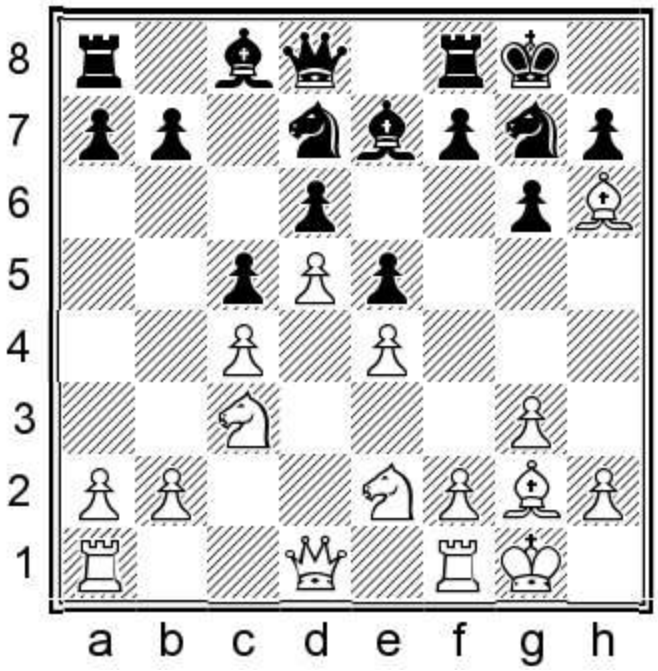
10.♗h6!

White should take the opportunity to post his bishop on the most active square possible.

chesstouring.com

The drawback of the less ambitious 10.♗e3 becomes clear after: 10...♘g7 11.♕d2 f5 12.f4 fxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘f5! Of course this would be impossible with White's bishop on h6. 14.♗f2 exf4 15.♘xf4 ♘e5 16.b3 ♗g5 17.♘xg5 ♕xg5 Black had a decent position in Roselli Mailhe – Ermenkov, Dresden (ol) 2008.

10...♘g7



11.♕d2

White should not rush with 11.f4 in view of 11...exf4 12.gxf4 ♘f6 13.h3 ♘fh5! when the game was rather unclear in Bucsa – Neagu, corr. 2010.

11...♘f6

Black continues with the thematic Czech Benoni regrouping plan of ...♔h8, ...♘g8 and eventually ...f5.

It would be a mistake to play:

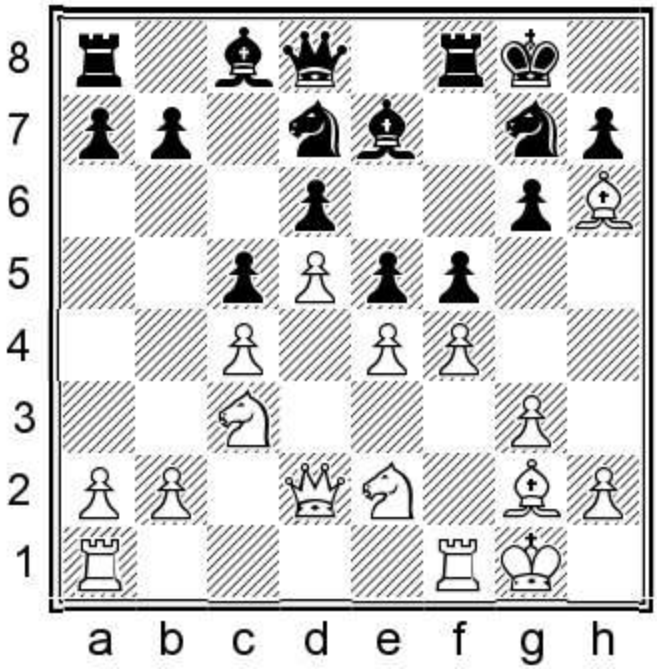
11...f5?!

The immediate pawn break is obviously premature.

12.f4

White is much better prepared for any tactical exchanges which may ensue.

chesstouring.com



12...♖f7

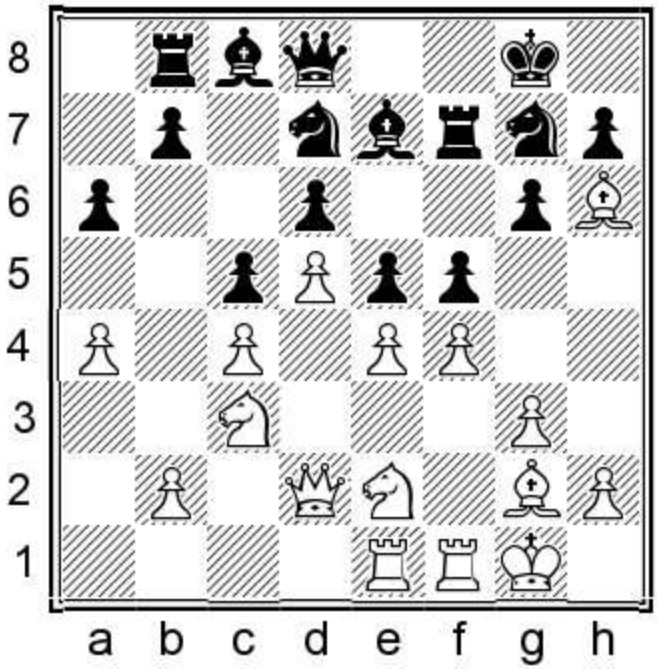
I checked two other possibilities:

12...♗f6 13.♖ae1 a6 occurred in Rust Lux – Schaefer, Germany 1993. Instead of wasting time on a2-a4, White should have played: 14.exf5N 14...gxf5 15.♘d1! Heading for e3. 15...b5 16.♘e3 ♘b6 17.b3 With much the better game for White.

12...exf4 has occurred in a few games but for some reason no one responded with 13.♘xf4!N which is clearly strongest. A possible continuation is 13...♘e5 14.♘e6! ♗xe6 15.dxe6 ♘xc4 16.♕d5 ♘b6 17.♕xb7 and White has a large advantage.

13.♖ae1 a6 14.a4 ♖b8

14...♘e8?! is a strange choice. In Schuster – Andre, Magdeburg 2014, White missed 15.exf5N 15...gxf5 16.g4! fxg4 17.♘g3!, with a near-decisive attack.

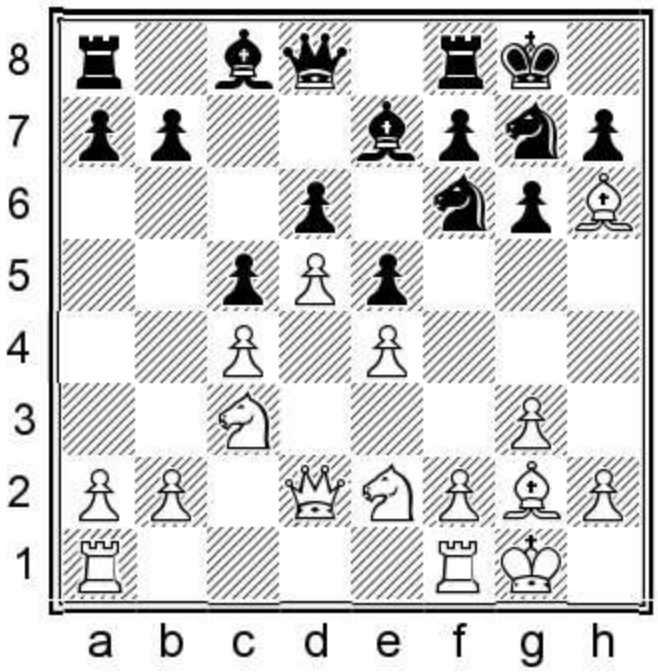


chesstouring.com

We have been following Krueger – Werchan, Bad Wildbad 1997. Here White could have increased the pressure on Black in the centre by means of:

15.♗h3!N 15...♗f6 16.♔h1

White is obviously much better prepared for the imminent opening of the position.



12.h3

Obviously White has to prevent ...♘g4.

12...♔h8 13.♖ae1

White should not rush with 13.f4 in view of 13...♘g8 when he has to give up the dark-squared bishop.

13...♘g8

13...a6 14.a4 converts to variation C321.

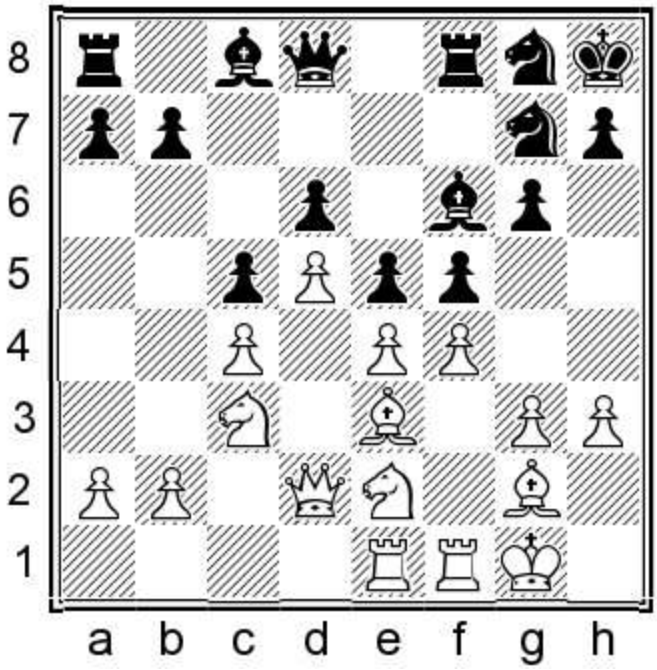
14.♗e3 f5 15.f4

Both sides have carried out their initial plans. The tension in the centre is favourable for White, as any opening of the position will highlight the difference between White's well-mobilized forces and Black's undeveloped queenside. These points are well illustrated in the lines that follow.

15...♗f6

15...exf4 was tried in Zahartsov – Srbis, Split 2013. I don't see any reason to avoid the most natural 16.♘xf4!N 16...♗f6 17.exf5 ♘xf5 18.♗f2 ♘d4 19.♘e4 ♗g7 20.g4! when Black's position is surprisingly bad, as he can hardly move.

chesstouring.com



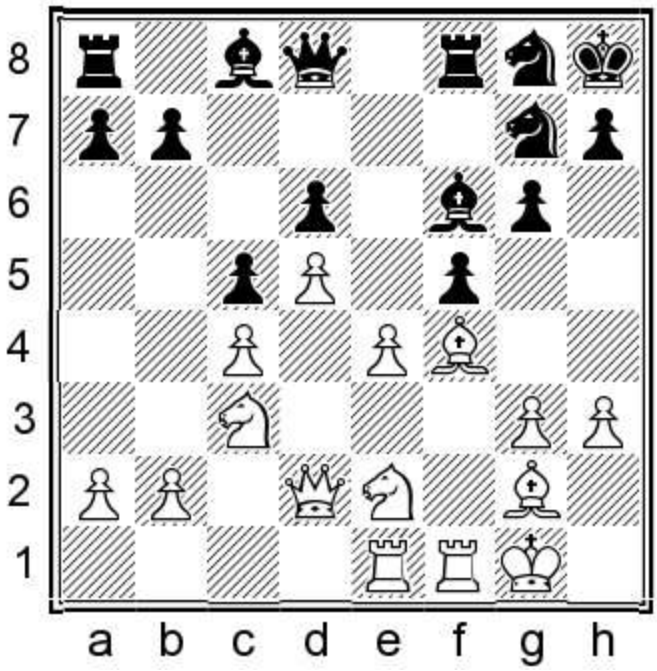
16.fxe5!

I found this move when working on *GM 2* and it was played just before that book was published. It improves on the slower 16.♔h2, as had been played in a couple of older games. White's pieces are already perfectly mobilized and he has so far scored 100% in five games with this move.

16...♗xe5 17.♗f4! ♗f6

This seems like Black's only chance to reach a playable position.

Other moves are much worse. For example, 17...♗xf4? 18.♘xf4 g5 19.♘d3 fxe4 20.♘xe4 h6 21.♖xf8 ♕xf8 occurred in Sumets – Klimov, Urmia 2016, and now the simple 22.♕c3N+− would have given White a decisive advantage.



chesstouring.com

Now instead of 18.exf5, which I recommended in *GM 2*, I am really impressed with the following idea which was found by a 2100 player:

18.♘b5!? ♘e8 19.exf5 a6

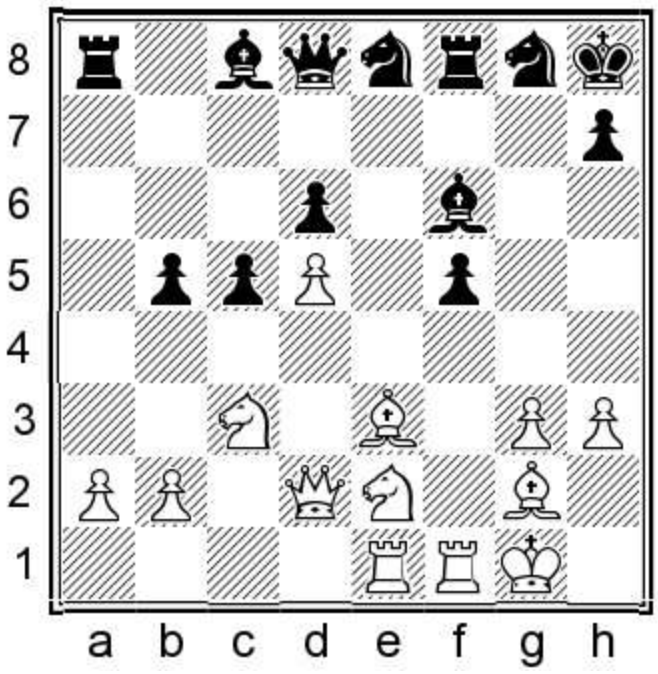
19...gxf5 20.♗e3 is likely to transpose, as it is hard to imagine Black will refrain from ...a6 for much longer.

20.♘bc3 gxf5 21.♗e3 b5

Understandably, Black tries to create some counterplay.

22.cxb5 axb5

We have been following Dilleigh – C. Jones, Paignton 2013. Up to now White had done everything right, but here he missed a strong idea:

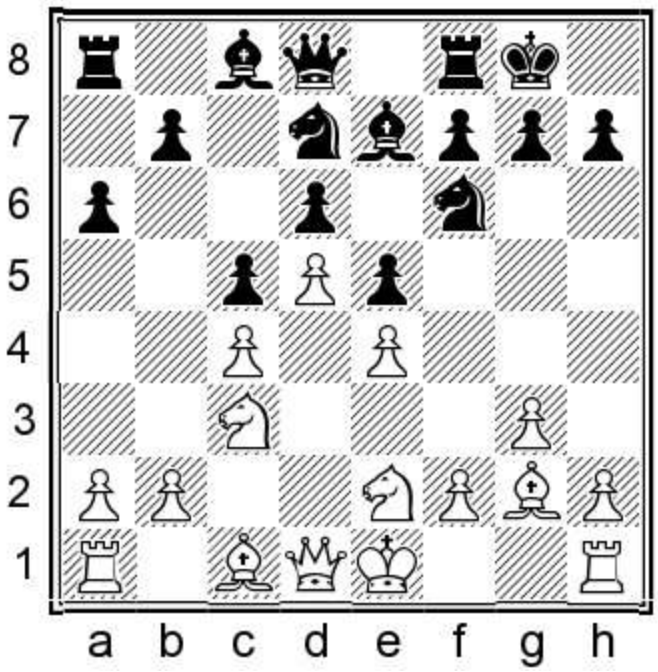


23.b4!N 23...cxb4 24.♘xb5 ♕a5 25.♘bd4 ♕xa2 26.♕xb4±

Despite some simplifications Black's situation is still perilous, due to the weaknesses in his position and White's clear spatial superiority. One obvious idea is ♘f4, heading for e6.

C32) 8...a6

chesstouring.com



Black can insert ...a6 at almost any moment in the Czech Benoni, and normally I recommend meeting it with a2-a4 to keep things simple. I decided to make this particular move order my main line though, as the previous variation saw our knight move to b5 on move 18, so it is logical to compare that line to the analogous position with the moves ...a6 and a2-a4 included, to see how White should proceed when the ♘b5 idea is unavailable.

9.a4

I see no reason to give Black the option of 9.0-0 b5!? 10.cxb5 ♕a5⇄ with Benko-style compensation.

Now Black has two main ideas: **C321)** 9...♘e8 and **C322)** 9...b6.

C321) 9...♘e8 10.0-0 g6

10...b6 leads to variation C322 below.

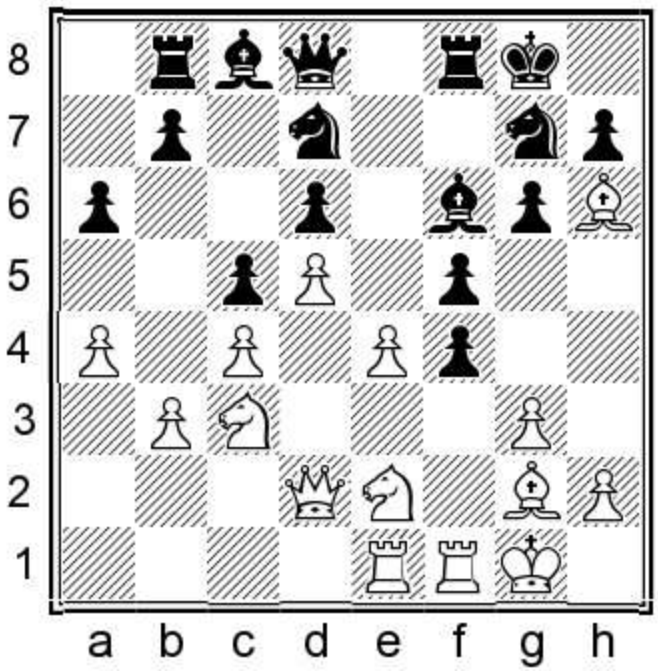
11.♗h6

For the time being, we will proceed in exactly the same manner as in variation C31 above.

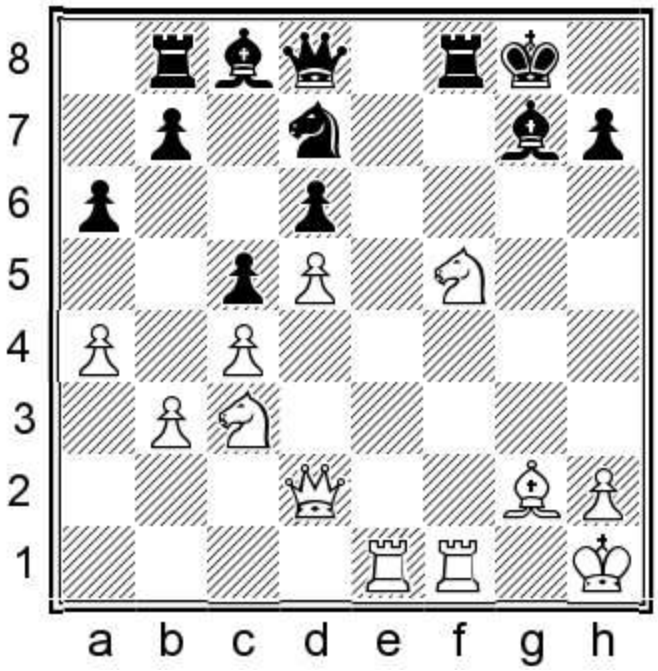
11...♘g7 12.♕d2 ♘f6

An older game continued 12...♖b8 13.b3 f5 14.f4 ♗f6 15.♖ae1 exf4 and now in Kushnir – Lazarevic, Belgrade 1968, White should have continued:

chesstouring.com

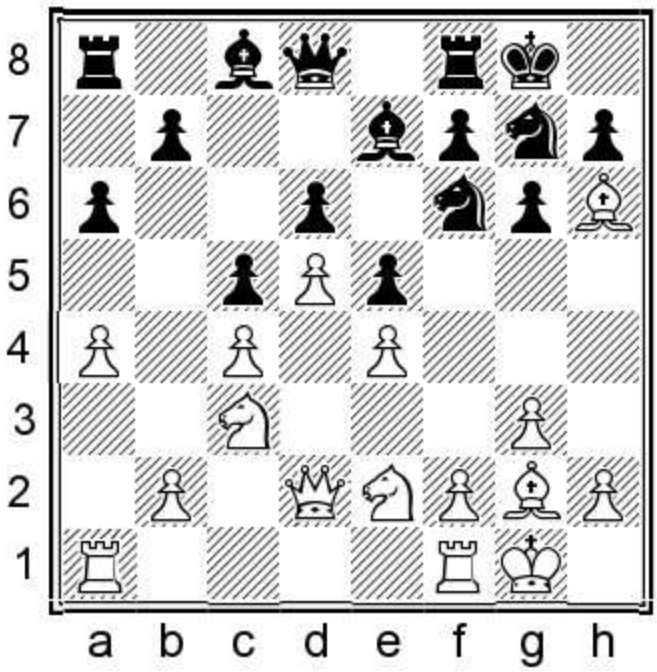


16.exf5!N 16...fxg3 17.♘xg3 ♗d4† 18.♔h1 gxf5 19.♗xg7! ♗xg7 20.♘xf5 White's initiative is too strong. For instance:



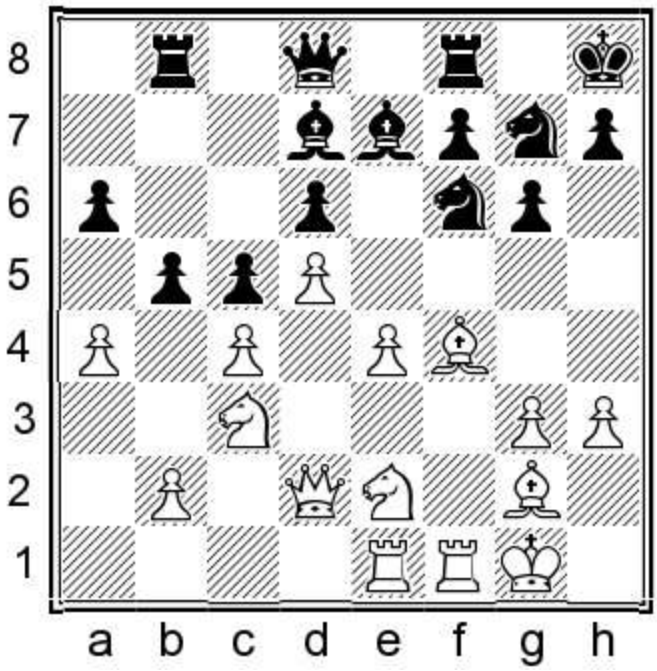
20...♘e5 21.♘xg7 ♖xf1† 22.♖xf1 ♔xg7 23.♘e4 White is winning; the main threat is ♖f6, and Black has no good way to meet it.

chesstouring.com



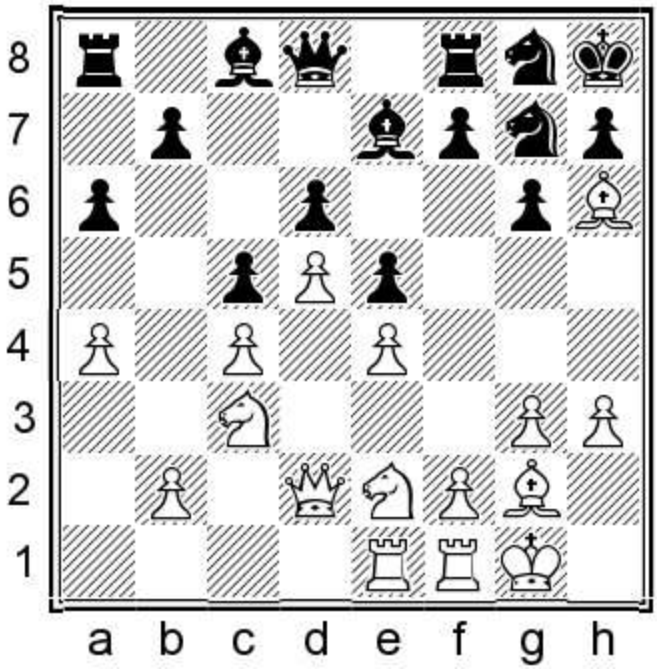
13.h3 ♔h8 14.♖ae1 ♘g8

Another model example continued: 14...♗d7 15.♗e3 (as we know, 15.f4? runs into 15...♘g8!) 15...♖b8 16.f4 exf4 17.♗xf4 b5



18.axb5 axb5 19.e5 ♘fe8 This occurred in Plischki – Palek, Marianske Lazne 2017, and now the simple 20.♘e4!N± would have left White's advantage in no doubt.

chesstouring.com



15.♗e3 f5

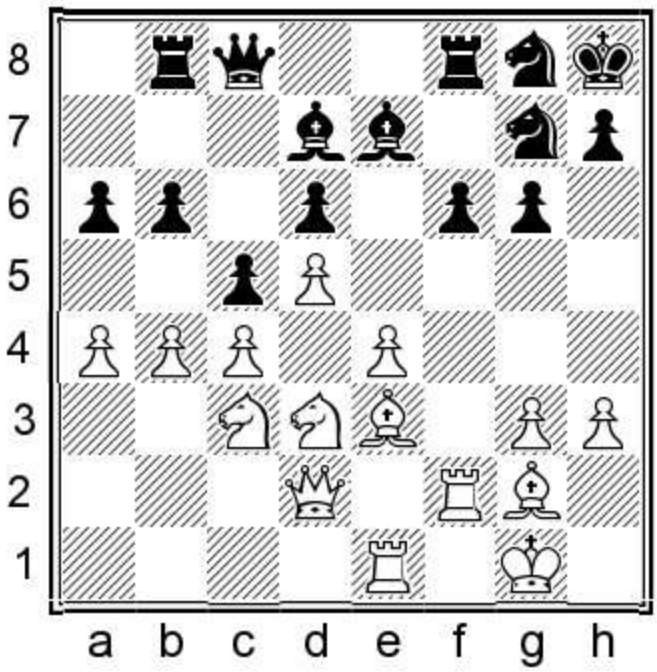
Another post-*GM 2* game continued:

15...b6 16.f4 ♖b8 17.♖f2 exf4 18.♘xf4 ♗d7 19.♘d3 f6

Otherwise the e4-e5 break will come with great force.

20.b4! ♕c8!

We have been following Panelo Munoz – Roy Chowdhury, Badalona 2012. Black's last move threatened h3 directly and c4 indirectly, and White failed to find the most accurate response:



21.g4!N 21...cxb4

21...h5? 22.♘f4!→ is hardly an option for Black.

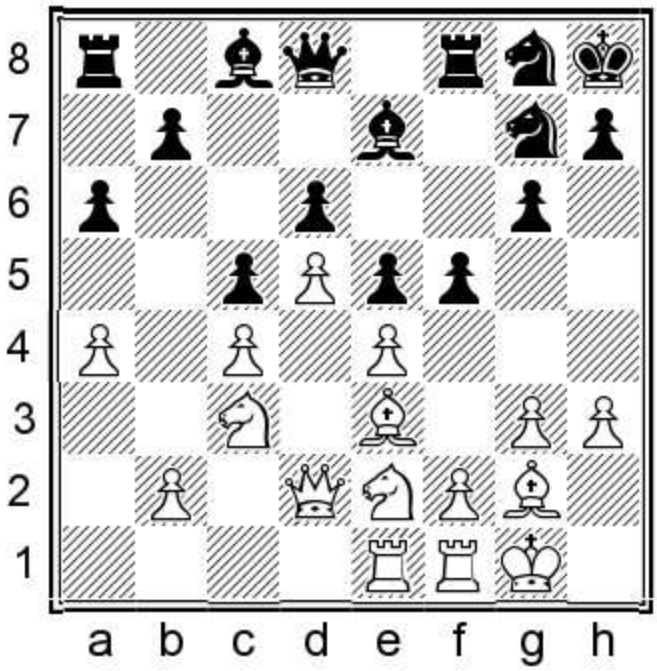
22.♘xb4 a5

The immediate 22...♕xc4? loses to 23.♘c6! ♗xc6 24.♗f1!+– and the queen is trapped.

chesstouring.com

23.♘c2 ♕xc4 24.♘a3 ♕c8 25.♘cb5±

The missing pawn is of no consequence and White's positional advantage is overwhelming.



16.f4 ♗f6 17.fxe5 ♗xe5

The next move is a novelty, but it's exactly the same idea as in variation C31 above.

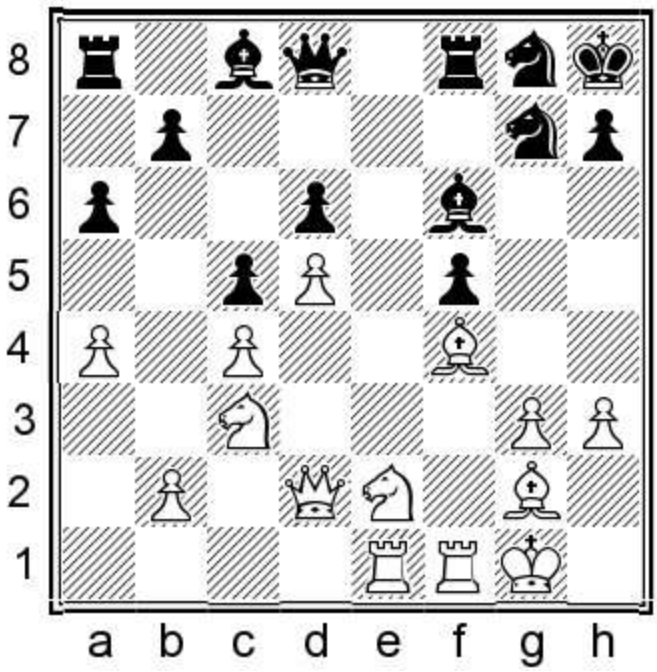
18.♗f4!?N

The game continuation is also pretty good: 18.exf5 ♘xf5? (18...gxf5N would have been better, although 19.♗g5 followed by ♘f4 offers White a clear positional advantage) 19.♗g5 ♗f6 20.♘e4 ♗xg5 21.♘xg5+– White's kingside initiative was too strong in Spiegel – Finz, Austria 1994.

18...♗f6 19.exf5 gxf5

The earlier inclusion of ...a6 and a2-a4 means that White does not have the option of ♘b5, but there is another attractive option:

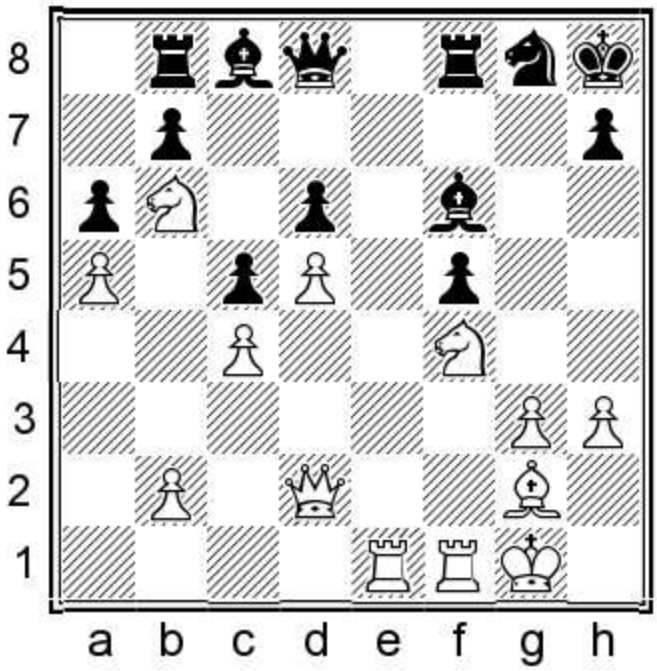
chesstouring.com



20.a5!

Intending ♘a4-b6 and possibly b2-b4. A possible continuation is:

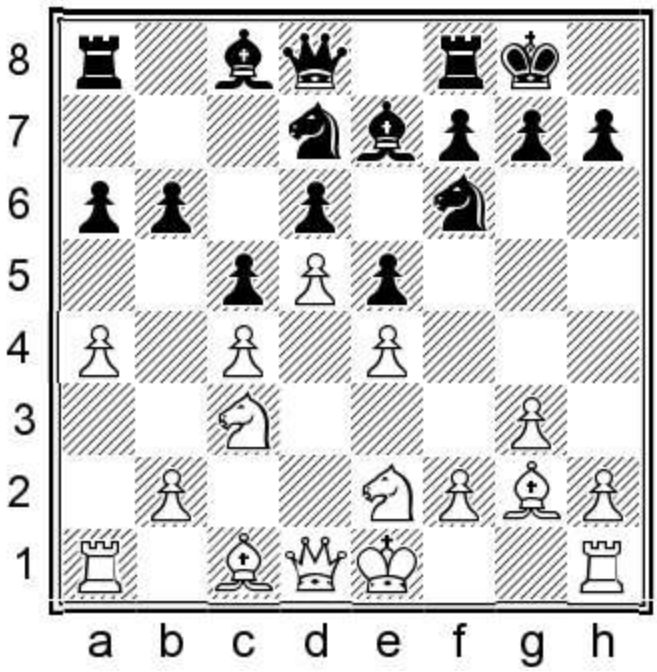
20...♘h5 21.♘a4 ♖b8 22.♘b6 ♘xf4 23.♘xf4



With a clear advantage for White.

C322) 9...b6

chesstouring.com



The previous variation showed how effective a timely a4-a5 might be, so it is quite logical for Black to take steps against it. The last move also opens the seventh rank, allowing Black's rook to join the action via a7 in some lines.

10.0-0 ♘e8

10...♖b8 11.f4 ♘e8 12.♕d3 ♘c7 takes us back to variation C11 on page 218.

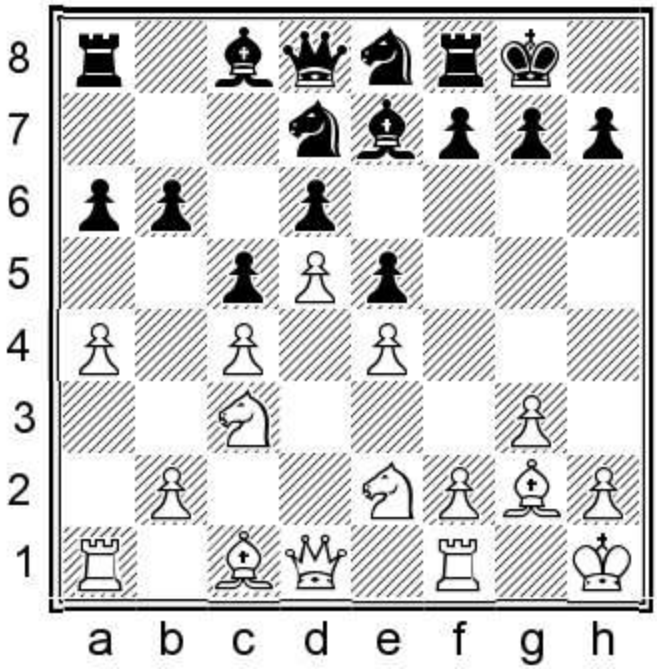
The current move order forces White to make a tricky decision. He can either play f2-f4 immediately, or make some useful move in order to wait for ...g6, which he can then meet by playing ♗h6 followed by f2-f4. I believe that the second strategy is more dangerous for Black.

11.♔h1

11.h3!? has achieved an excellent practical score and may also be worth investigating, but I am happy to stick with the recommendation from *GM 2*.

I also looked at 11.f4 of course, but it seems to me that 11...exf4 12.gxf4 ♖a7 offers Black adequate play.

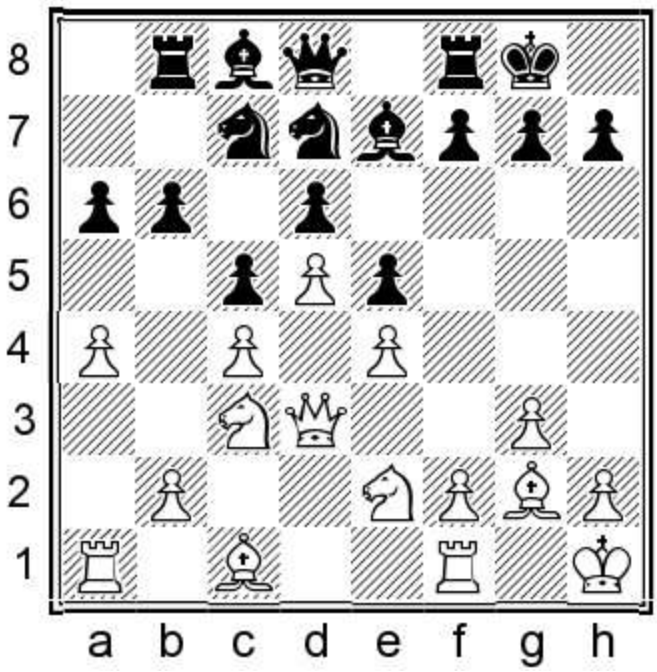
chesstouring.com



11...♖a7

This was once recommended by Mihail Marin and has been tested in five games at the time of writing.

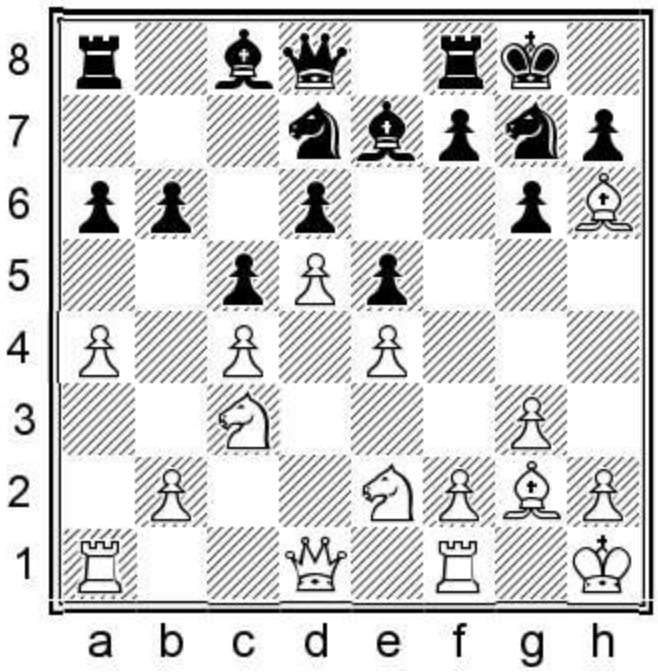
11...♖b8 was played in Averbakh – Lublinsky, Moscow 1952, and it also transposes to a more recent game. The latter continued 12.♕d3 ♘c7, and now in Kolaric – Vojak, Malinska 2015, I think White should have continued with:



13.♗d2N The same recipe as in our main line below. Play continues 13...g6 14.b3 ♗f6 15.♖ae1 when we reach a thematic type of position, in which White almost always stands better. For example: 15...♗g7 16.f4 f5 17.exf5 gxf5 18.g4! White is clearly better.

11...g6 12.♗h6 ♘g7

chesstouring.com

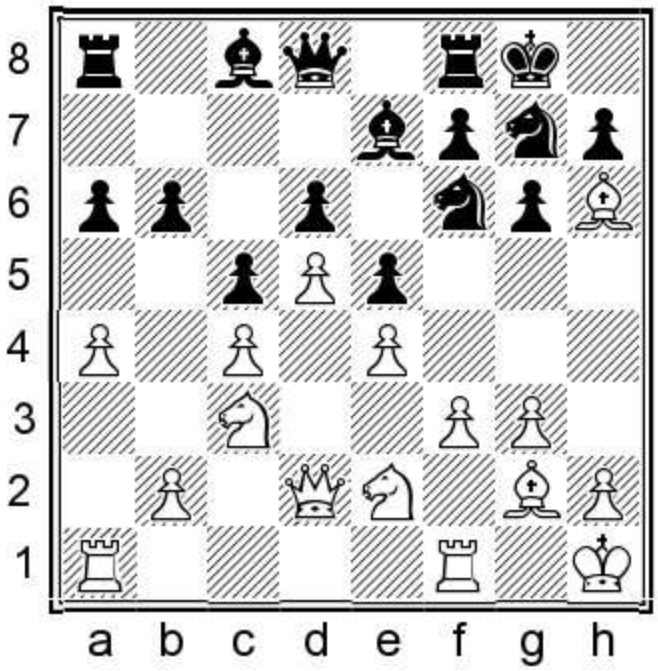


13.♕d2!

13.f4 was my recommendation in *GM 2* but I now consider it slightly premature in view of 13...exf4 14.gxf4 ♘f6! with unclear play.

13...♘f6 14.f3!?

An interesting idea, although there is nothing wrong with the natural 14.h3N.



14...♗d7 15.♖ab1 ♖b8 16.b4 ♕c7

I also considered 16...cxb4N 17.♖xb4 ♕c7 18.♖fb1 a5 19.♘b5! ♗xb5 20.♖xb5 ♘d7 21.♗h3 ♘c5 22.♘c3 when White keeps a positional advantage.

17.b5!?

White opts to block the queenside, since he has good chances on the other flank.

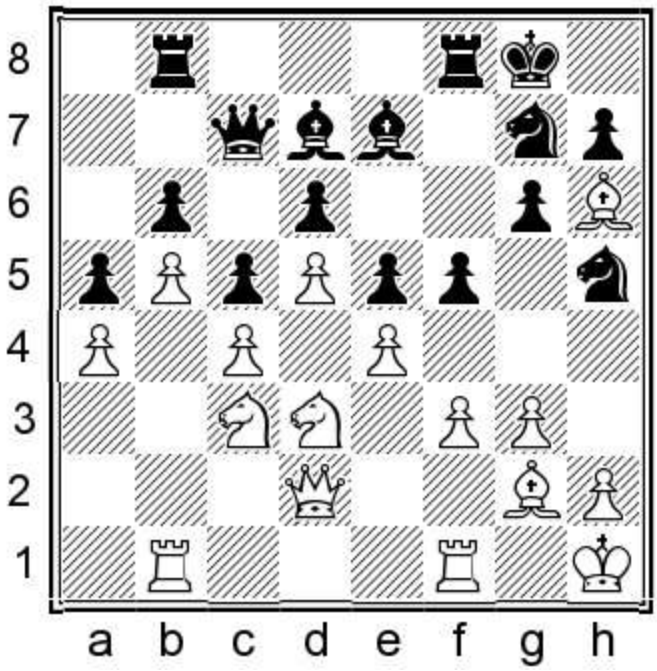
17...a5

chesstouring.com

17...axb5 18.cxb5! leaves White with great prospects on the queenside. 18...♔h8 19.♘d1 The knight heads for the perfect c4-square. 19...♘g8 20.♗e3 f5 21.♘b2 ♘f6 22.♘c4± White's advantage is obvious.

18.♘c1 ♘fh5 19.♘d3 f5

All this happened in Kasimdzhanov – Nisipeanu, Vitoria Gasteiz 2007. An important improvement is:

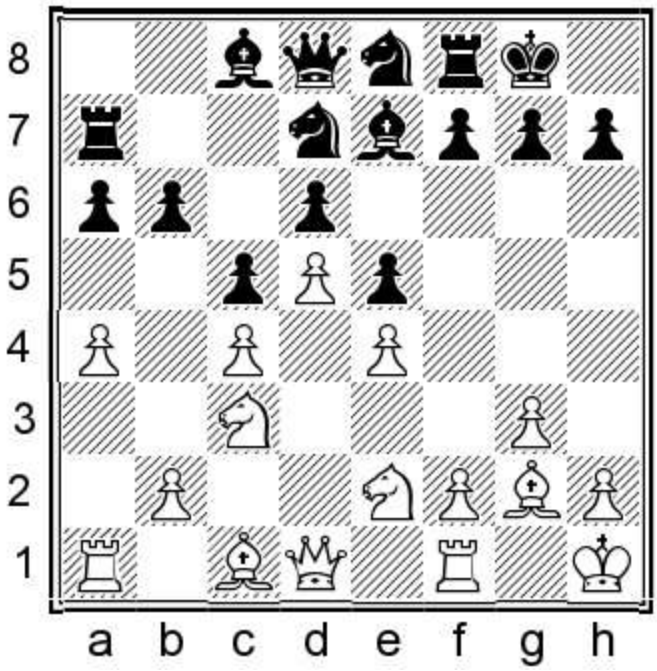


20.exf5!N 20...gxf5

20...♗xf5 21.♖be1 is also clearly better for White.

21.♗h3 ♖f7 22.g4↑

With a promising initiative.



12.♕d3!

chesstouring.com

White's queen is often well placed on d3, as we have already seen in some of the earlier variations.

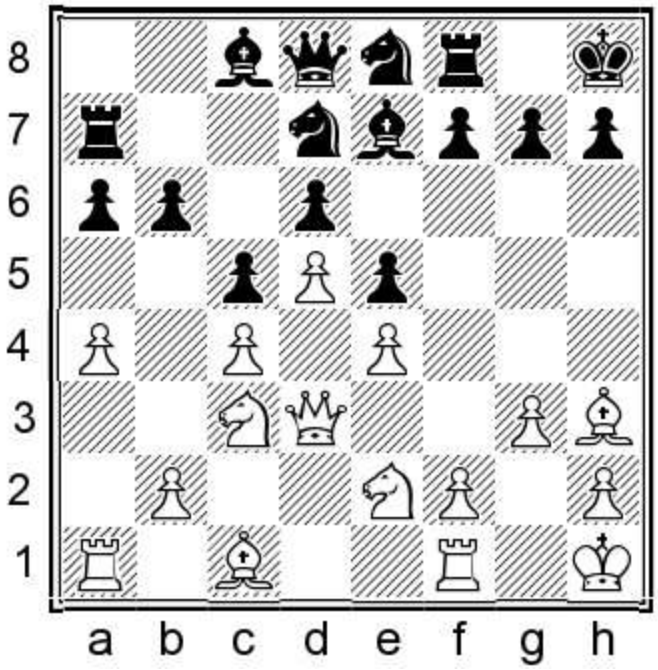
12.f4 is once again premature in view of 12...exf4 13.gxf4 ♗f6 with a reasonable game for Black. For instance, 14.♘g1 ♗xc3! 15.bxc3 f5 with decent counterplay.

12...g6

It seems to me that Black has nothing better than switching to his main plan, as he is running out of useful waiting moves.

Here is another example where Black kept waiting:
12...♔h8 13.♗h3!?

13.♗d2N would be normal.

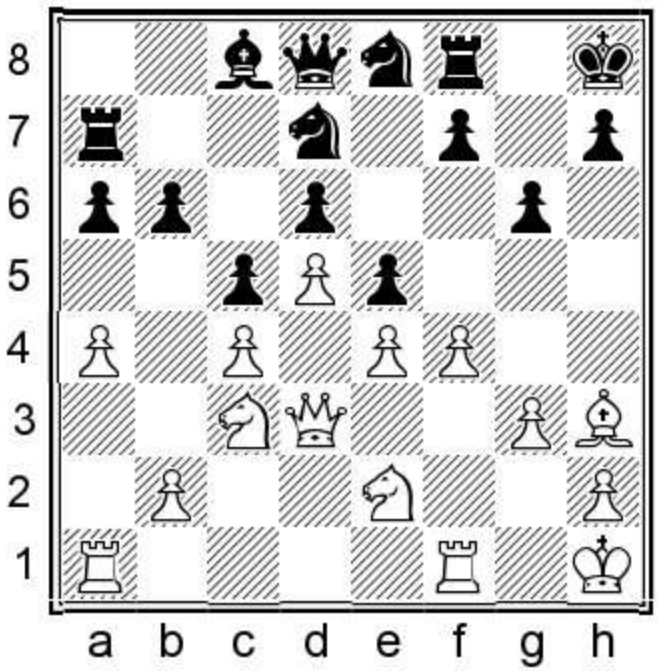


13...g6

13...♘df6 14.♗xc8 ♕xc8 15.♗d2 ♘c7 16.f4 offers White better chances as usual.
14.♗h6 ♖g8

14...♘g7 15.f4 also favours White.
15.f4 ♗f8 16.♗xf8 ♖xf8

chesstouring.com

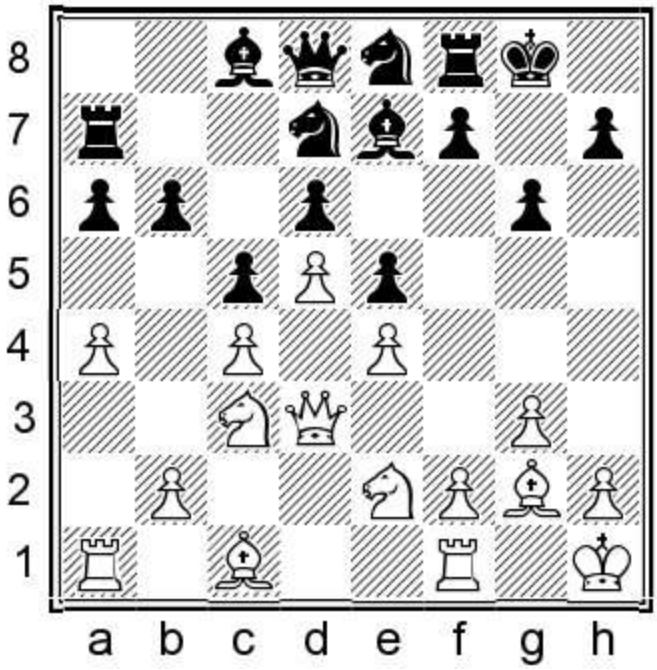


17.♘g1!?

17.f5N was simple and strong as well.

17...♕e7 18.♘f3 ♖b7 19.♕d2±

Black was clearly under pressure in Sebenik – Atlas, Austria 2012.



13.♗h6 ♘g7 14.f4 exf4

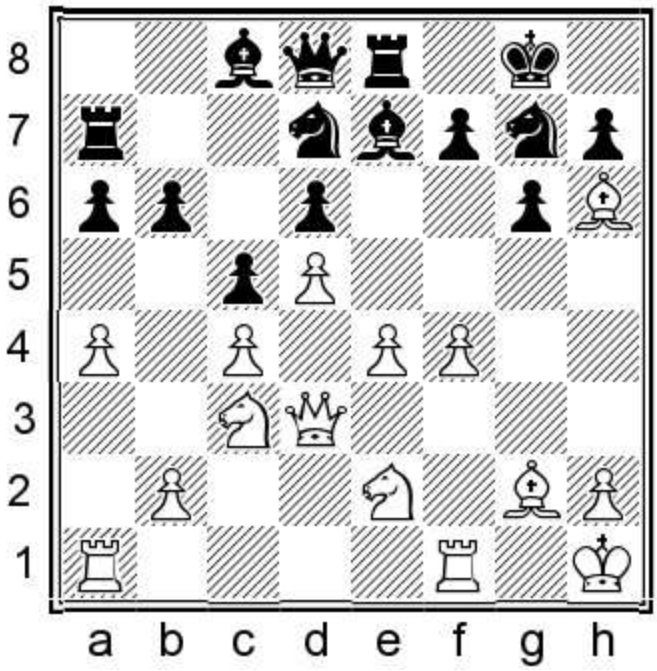
In the event of 14...f5 White can exert pressure with 15.♗h3!, for instance: 15...fxe4 16.♘xe4 exf4 17.♗xd7! ♗xd7 18.♘xf4 ♗f5 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.♘e6† ♗xe6 21.dxe6± White is close to winning.

15.gxf4 ♖e8

15...f5 is strongly met by 16.♗h3! again.

chesstouring.com

15...♘f6!?N may be Black's best bet, although White still maintains the better chances after 16.♗f3 ♘g4 17.♗xg4 ♗xg4 18.e5!.



IM Palliser recommended the text move in *How to Play Against 1 d4*, commenting that the plan of ...♗h4, ...♘f6 and ...♖ae7 should offer Black a decent game. It was subsequently tested in Grammatica – Saevareid, corr. 2011, although in that encounter Black played ...♘f6 on the next move and dropped the bishop back to f8. In any case, I think White's play can be improved with:

16.♗h3!N 16...♗f8

16...♗h4 looks rather risky after 17.♕f3 (17.♖g1!?) 17...♘f6 18.f5!? with excellent attacking chances for White.

17.♖f3 ♘f6 18.♖g1→

White has every chance of building a successful attack.

Conclusion

Developing the bishop to e7 is the most traditional and popular way for Black to handle the Czech Benoni. I still favour 6.g3 against it. After dealing with a few of Black's creative attempts, we mostly focused on the main line of 6...0-0 7.♗g2, where White completes development with ♘ge2 and 0-0, while Black generally aims for a regrouping plan involving ...♘bd7, ...♘e8 and ...g6. Although the f2-f4 advance often features in White's plans, it is important not to rush with it. Instead, White should wait for ...g6 to be played, in order to meet it with ♗h6 followed by f2-f4, when the active bishop on h6 improves his prospects. Other general points to remember are that the queen is generally well placed on d3, and the light-squared bishop can be activated via the h3-square in certain situations. If White appreciates these and other subtleties of the position, he will have excellent chances of success.

chesstouring.com



Benoni Systems



Closed Benoni

Variation Index

1.d4 c5 2.d5 e5 3.e4 d6

4.♗b5†!?

A) 4...♗d7 5.a4! 233

A1) 5...a6 234

A2) 5...g6 235

A3) 5...♗e7 236

B) 4...♘d7 5.a4 238

B1) 5...♗e7 6.♘f3 ♘gf6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.0-0 239

B11) 8...a6 239

B12) 8...♘e8 241

B2) 5...g6 6.♘c3 242

B21) 6...♗h6 242

B22) 6...♗g7 7.♘f3 244

B221) 7...♘e7 244

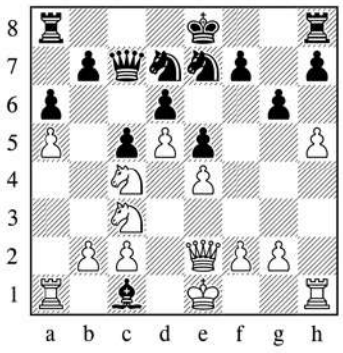
B222) 7...♘gf6 246

B2221) 8.0-0 246

B2222) 8.♘d2!?N 247

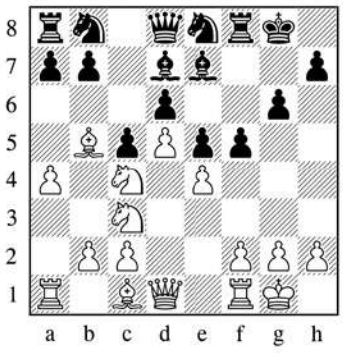
chesstouring.com

A2) note to 7...♘f6



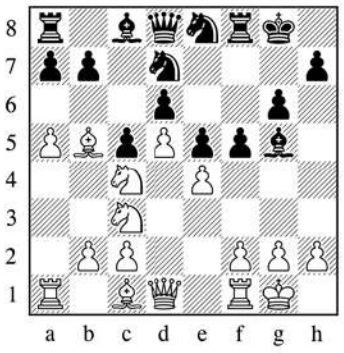
15.hxg6!N

A3) after 10...f5



11.♗h6!N

B12) after 11...f5



12.♗xg5!N

1.d4 c5 2.d5

Black has many possibilities from this position. In *GM 2* I grouped them all together in one chapter under the title "Old Benoni", but this time I have split the material. The present chapter will focus on the Closed Benoni, which occurs after:

2...e5

This is related to the Czech Benoni but there are some differences, as explained below. Before then, here is a summary of Black's other options:

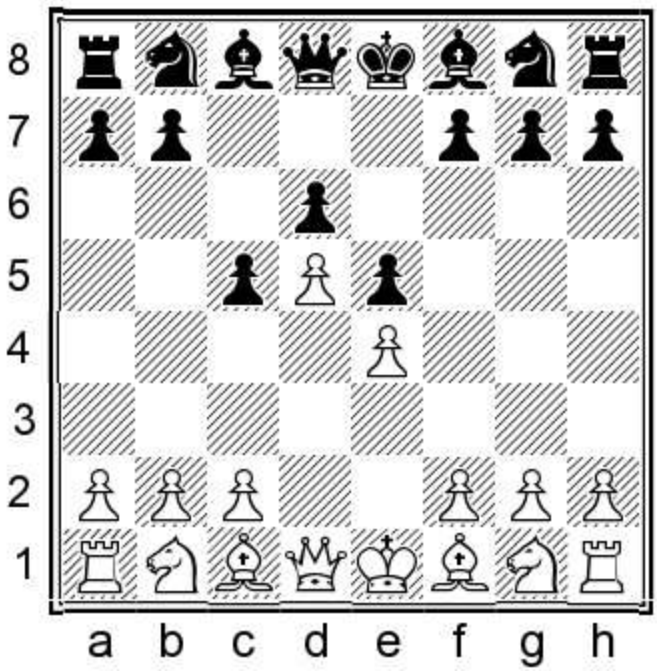
2...g6 and 2...♘f6 are irrelevant, as they will transpose to other chapters after 3.c4.

2...e6 will be analysed in the next chapter.

Finally, Chapter 13 will cover the rare options of 2...b5 and 2...f5, along with the Modern Benoni structure where Black avoids ...♘f6.

3.e4 d6

chesstouring.com



It is worth taking a moment to consider the pawn structure and the associated plans for both sides. If possible, White should refrain from playing c2-c4, as this would rob his knights of a useful outpost and generally reduce his active prospects on the queenside. It's important to appreciate that Black would not be obliged to play 4...♘f6, transposing to the Czech Benoni, but instead he can and should play 4...♗e7 in order to carry out his main positional plan of exchanging dark-squared bishops with ...♗g5.

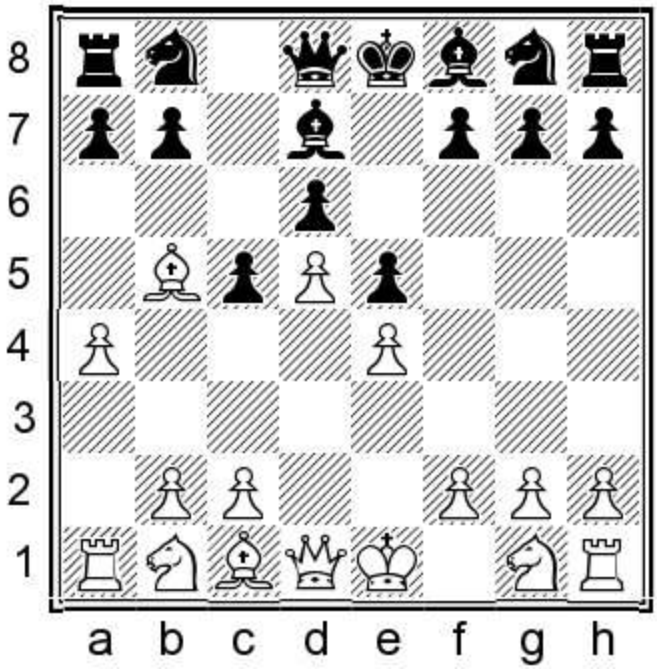
4.♗b5†!?

4.♘c3 has been White's most popular choice by far, but I find the text move to be the best way of combating the ...♗e7-g5 plan. Against normal developing moves, Black can play ...♗e7, and if ♘f3 (to prevent ...♗g5) then ...♗g4 will enable Black to eliminate the knight and carry out the ...♗g5 plan. By checking on b5 immediately, we force one of Black's pieces to go to d7 and thus eliminate the entire ...♗g5 scheme.

Black may respond with **A)** 4...♗d7 or **B)** 4...♘d7. In general, nothing has happened to alter my overall assessment from *GM 2*, although of course there have been some new games which I will mention along the way.

A) 4...♗d7 5.a4!

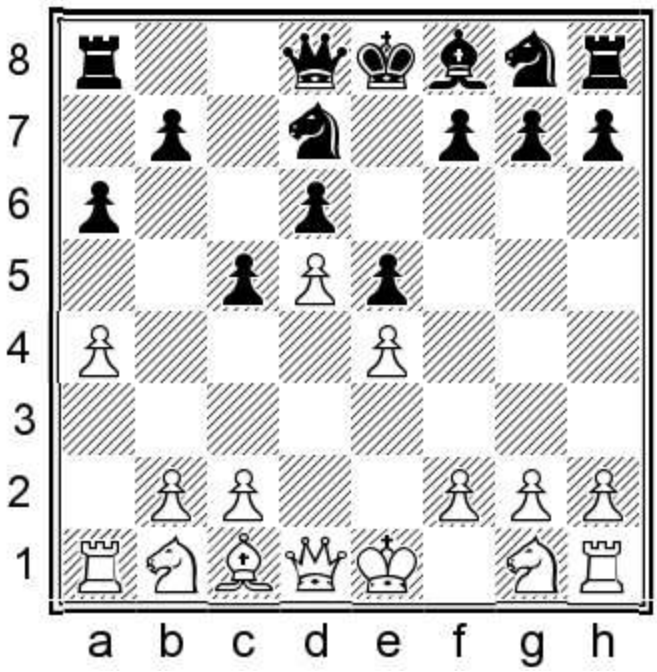
chesstouring.com



Since Black's light-squared bishop is slightly misplaced on d7, it is logical for White to maintain the tension with a move which is always useful in these positions. Exchanging on b5 would be an obvious concession that would activate White's rook along the a-file, so instead Black should choose between **A1)** 5...a6, **A2)** 5...g6 and **A3)** 5...♗e7.

5...♘f6 6.♘c3 is fairly popular as well, but it will almost certainly transpose to one of the main lines after 6...g6, 6...a6 or 6...♗e7.

A1) 5...a6 6.♗xd7† ♘xd7



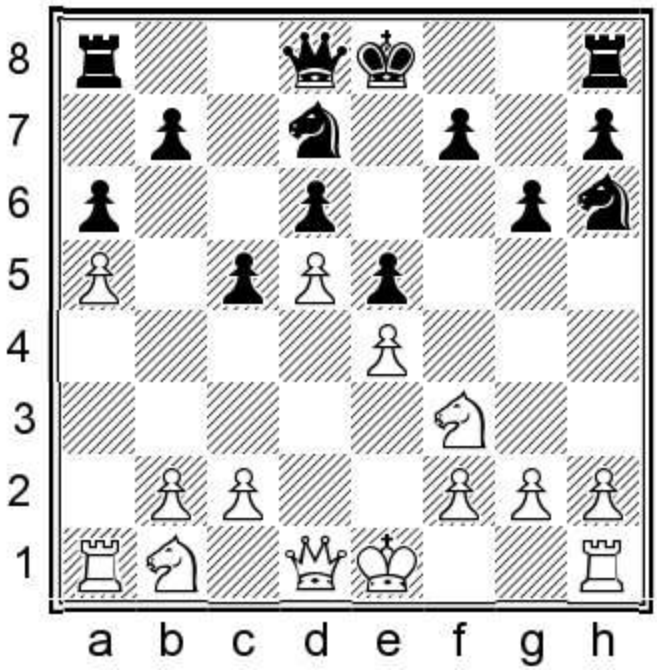
7.a5!

chesstouring.com

It is well worth spending a tempo to fix Black's queenside structure, as this ensures that White will have targets to attack in the future.

7...♗e7

7...g6 8.♘f3 ♗h6 is a sensible alternative, trading the dark-squared bishops. 9.♗xh6 ♘xh6 This happened in Laketic – Munizaba, Ruma 2017, and now I like the following improvement:



10.♕c1!N 10...♘g4 11.0-0 0-0 12.♘c3 ♔g7 (12...f5?! 13.h3 ♘gf6 14.♘g5± leaves Black with too many weaknesses) 13.h3 ♘gf6 14.♘d2 b5 15.axb6 ♘xb6 16.♕d1± The queen is heading for e2, followed by increasing the pressure on the a-pawn.

8.♘f3 ♘gf6 9.♘c3 0-0

9...b5?! is too weakening. 10.axb6 ♕xb6 (also after 10...♘xb6 11.♕e2 ♕c8 12.0-0 0-0 13.♖a5! White is much better) 11.♘d2 0-0 12.♘c4 ♕c7 13.♘a5 ♗d8 14.♕e2± White's advantage was obvious in Muehlebach – Kaeding, Bad Ragaz 1992.

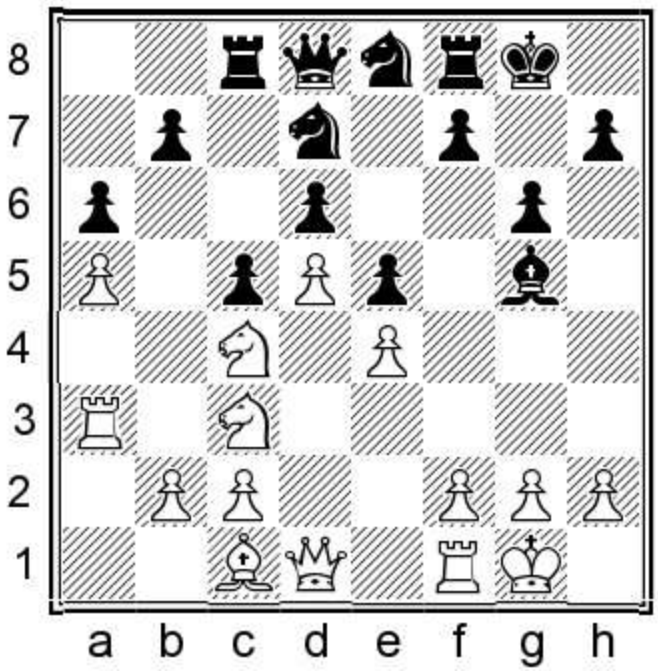
10.♘d2 ♘e8 11.♘c4 ♗g5

Another game went 11...b5 12.axb6 ♘xb6 13.♘a5! ♗g5 14.♘c6 ♕f6 15.0-0 and once again, Black had no compensation for his queenside weaknesses in Gnechko – Uogele, Velke Losiny 2013.

12.0-0 g6 13.♖a3 ♖c8

Here I found a way to improve on White's play in Vrana – Weiss, Austria 2015.

chesstouring.com

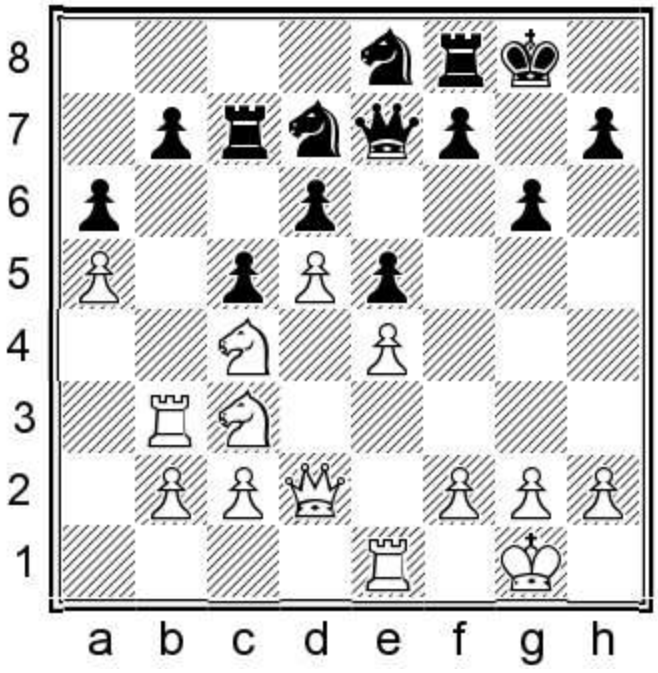


14.♖b3N 14...♖c7 15.♗xg5 ♕xg5 16.♕d2 ♕e7

The endgame arising after 16...♕xd2 17.♘xd2 f5 18.exf5 gxf5 19.f4 is much better for White.

17.♖e1

White keeps a positional bind and is well placed to deal with the following attempt by Black to obtain counterplay:

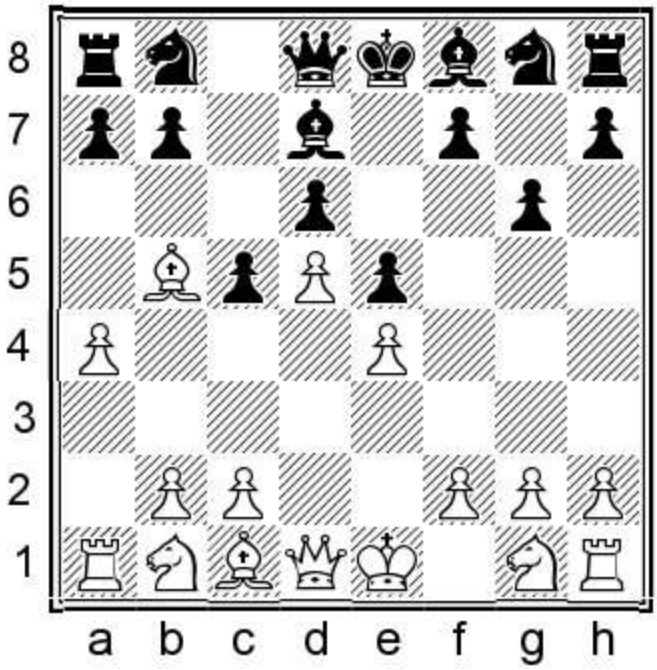


17...f5 18.exf5 gxf5 19.f4 e4 20.♘d1!±

With a clear positional plus.

chesstouring.com

A2) 5...g6

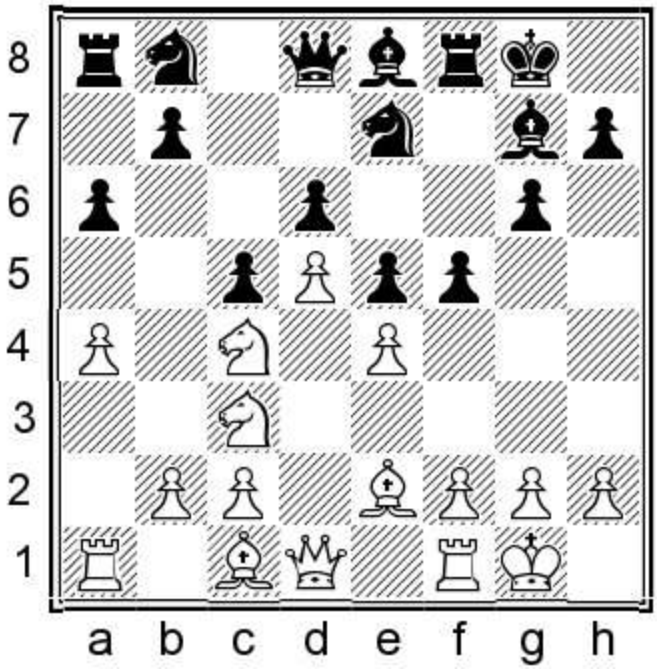


6.♘c3

This is a useful change from *GM 2*, where I awarded 6.f4 an exclam. Black should react with 6...exf4 7.♗xf4 as in Korotylev – Malakhov, Moscow 1995, and when I reanalysed this line for the present book, I realized that 7...♗h6!N was far from clear.

6...♗g7

6...a6 is well met by 7.♗e2!, keeping Black's queenside pieces clogged up. A model game continued: 7...♗g7 8.♘f3 ♘e7 (White is ready to meet 8...♗g4N with 9.♘d2! heading to c4) 9.♘d2 0-0 10.♘c4 ♗e8 11.0-0 f5



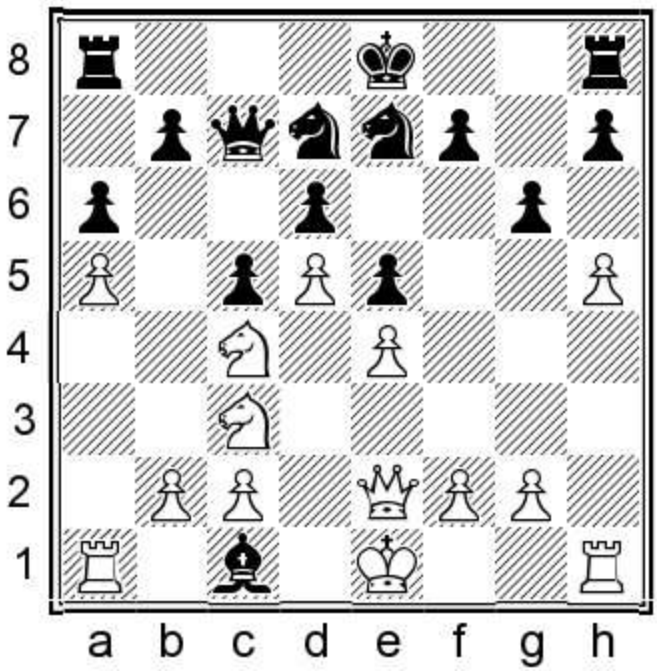
In Adamko – Balala, Slovakia 2016, there could hardly have been a better moment for 12.f4!N± when

chesstouring.com

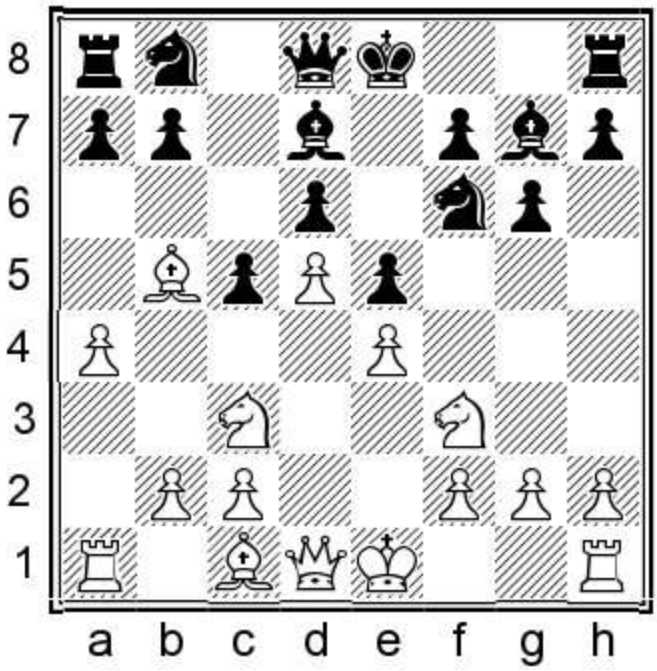
White's pieces are much better placed to handle the ensuing opening of the position.

7.♘f3 ♘f6

In the event of 7...♘e7 I really like 8.h4! which has been played only once, but is often an effective weapon when Black combines a kingside fianchetto with developing his knight to e7. The game continued 8...a6 9.♗e2 ♗g4 10.♘d2 ♗xe2 11.♕xe2 ♘d7 12.h5 ♕c7 13.a5 ♗h6 14.♘c4 ♗xc1 and now in Shariyazdanov – Barnaure, Oberwart 2003, White could have played the following finesse:



15.hxg6!N 15...fxg6 (15...♗f4? 16.gxf7† ♔xf7 17.g3+– is terrible for Black) 16.♖xc1± White enjoys more space, a more compact pawn structure and a safer king.



8.♗e2!?

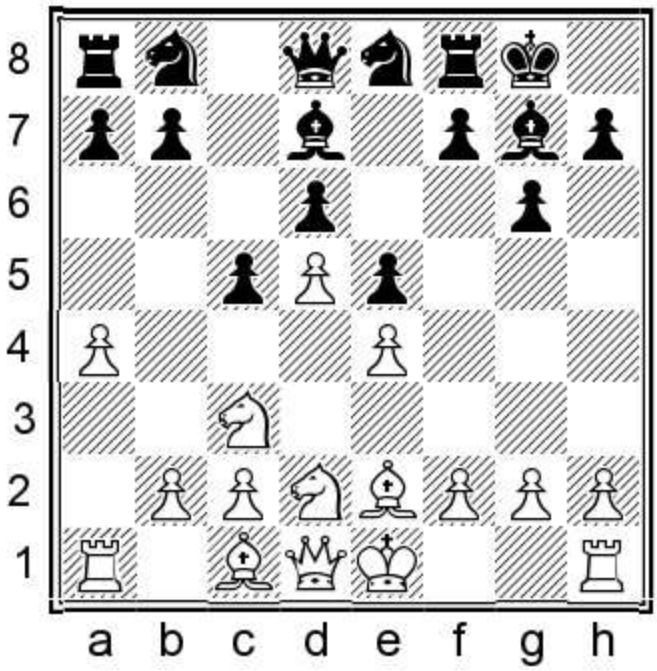
chesstouring.com

The bishop has done its job on b5, and I would prefer not to exchange on d7 as this would only help to

develop the b8-knight. It is also useful to delay castling for the moment, as will become clear in the next note.

8...♘a6

I also considered 8...0-0 9.♘d2 ♘e8 as played in Ranniku – Kozlovskaya, Leningrad 1981, and now I like:



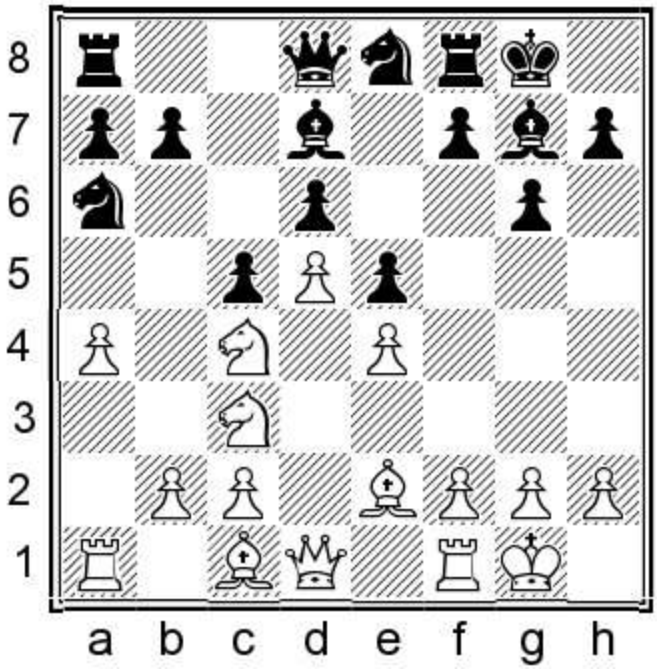
10.h4!N Once again, this idea works perfectly when there is no knight on f6. An illustrative line is 10...f5 11.h5 f4 12.hxg6 hxg6 13.♘c4 ♘a6 14.♗g4! with clearly better chances for White.

After the text move I only found one game, which continued logically with:

9.♘d2 0-0 10.0-0 ♘e8 11.♘c4

White's knight is superbly placed here.

chesstouring.com



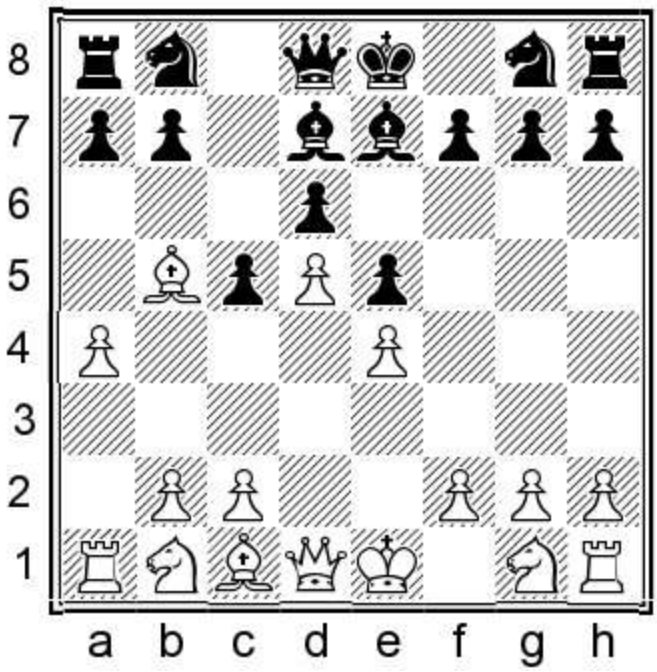
11...♘ac7

11...f5 is strongly met by 12.f4! once again.

12.f4 f6 13.f5±

White obtained a huge strategic advantage in Gulko – Aijala, Oerebro 1966.

A3) 5...♗e7



6.♘f3 ♘f6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.♘d2!

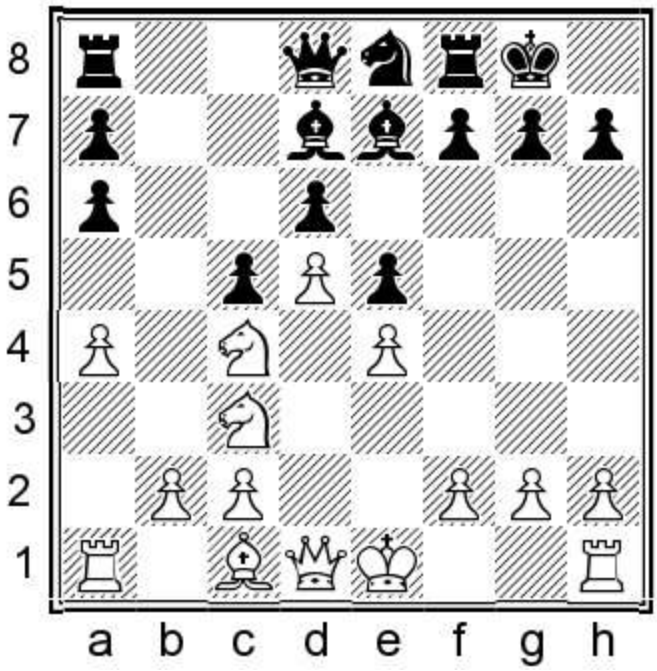
There is no reason to allow 8.0-0 ♗g4, when Black can attempt his thematic plan of exchanging bishops on g5.

chesstouring.com

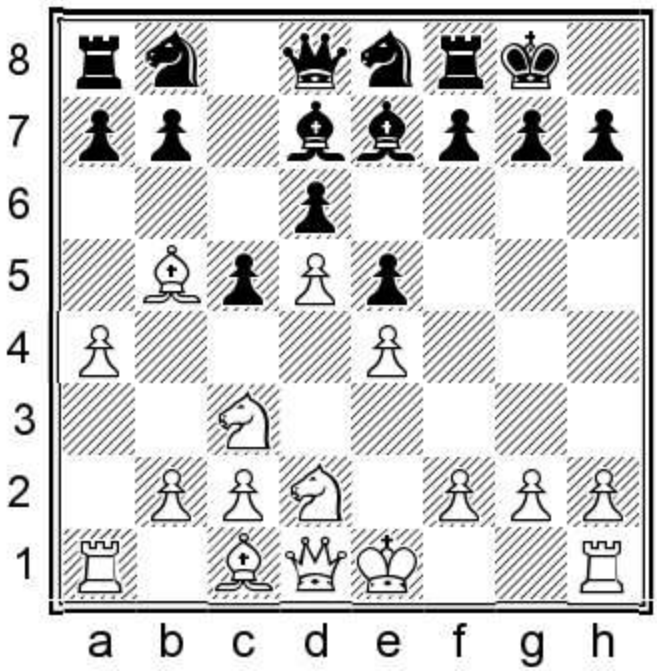
8...♘e8

Black's most obvious plan is to prepare the ...f5 break.

8...♘a6 runs into the surprisingly strong 9.♗xa6! bxa6 10.♘c4 ♘e8 as occurred in Nihal – Chakravarthi Reddy, Bhubaneswar 2016. Here White should have continued:



11.0-0N There is still no need to worry about 11...f5 due to the thematic 12.f4! exf4 13.♗xf4 g5 14.♗g3 f4 15.♗f2 ♗f6 16.♖e1!± when Black is unable to prevent the e4-e5 break.

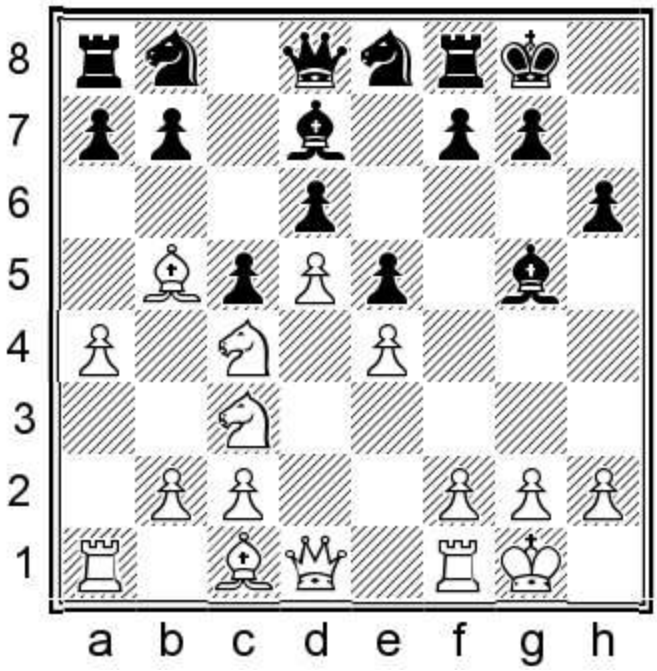


9.♘c4 g6

9...a6 10.♗xd7 ♘xd7 11.a5 takes us back to variation A1.

chesstouring.com

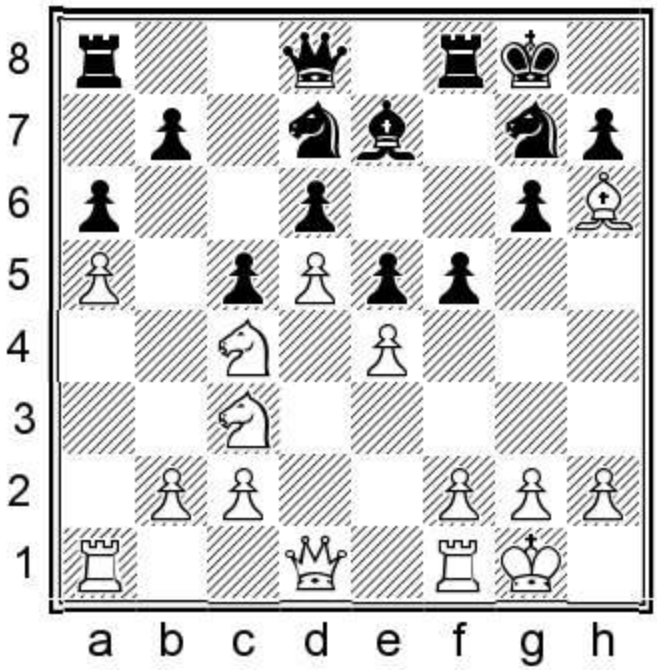
9...♗g5 is thematic, but Black will still suffer from a somewhat cramped position and a lack of counterplay. A good example continued: 10.0-0 h6



11.♖a3!? ♗xc1 12.♕xc1 a6 13.♗xd7 ♘xd7 14.a5 b5 15.axb6 ♘xb6 16.♘a5 ♘f6 17.♕d1± White was in full control in Vassallo Barroche – Suarez Triguero, Andorra 2007.

10.0-0 f5

10...a6 can be met by 11.♗xd7 ♘xd7 12.♗h6 ♘g7 and now the thematic 13.a5 fixes some targets on the queenside. Black responded with 13...f5 in Danielian – Aleskerov, Dubai 2005, when the most precise response would have been:

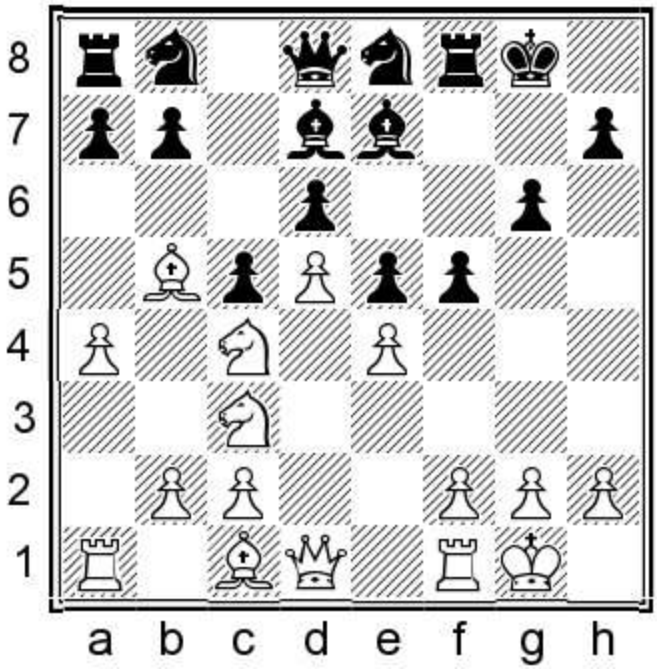


14.exf5!N 14...gxf5 15.f4 e4 16.g4!± With a serious initiative for White.

This position was reached in Shtyrenkov – Khudyakov, Alushta 2003. My suggested improvement from

chesstouring.com

GM 2 is equally valid today:



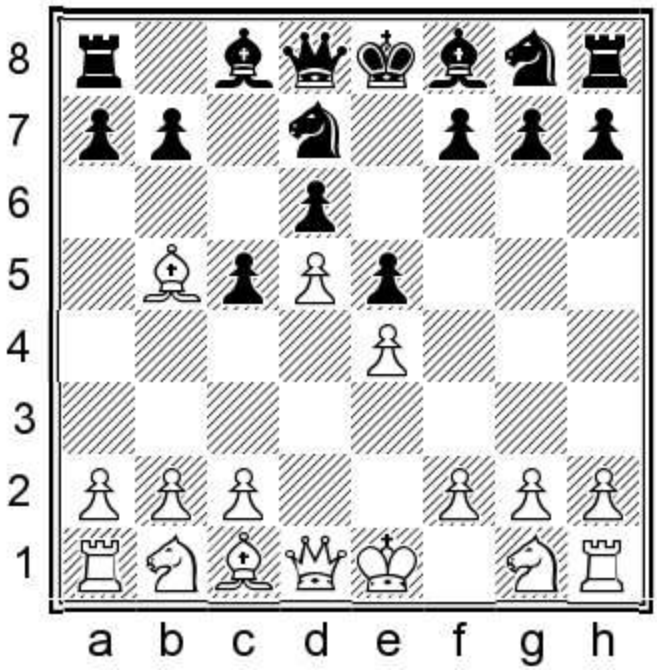
11.♗h6!N 11...♖f7 12.f4 a6

12...exf4 13.e5 looks horrible for Black.

13.♗xd7 ♘xd7 14.exf5 gxf5 15.♕h5±

Black is extremely vulnerable on the kingside.

B) 4...♘d7



This is the more challenging option. White is unlikely to want to cede the bishop pair by exchanging on d7, so he will probably have to lose time retreating the bishop at some point. On the other hand, Black's

...♗g4 ideas have been disrupted and he has lost the option of ...♘a6-c7.

5.a4

Black has several possible move orders but the main choice concerns the development of his dark-squared bishop. Therefore we will take **B1)** 5...♗e7 and **B2)** 5...g6 as the two main options.

5...♘f6 6.♘c3 does not really change anything: Black will soon have to make a choice regarding the bishop, thus transposing to one of the two main lines.

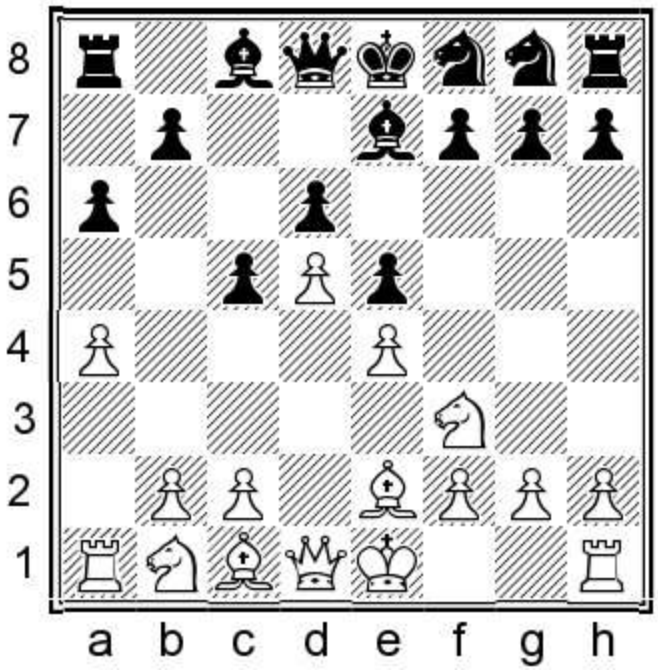
5...a6 6.♗e2

This is also highly likely to transpose, unless Black tries to make use of the unpinning of the d7-knight with:

6...♗e7 7.♘f3 ♘f8!?

This is creative, but perhaps a bit too artificial.

7...♘gf6 8.♘c3 0-0 9.0-0 is covered under variation B11 below.



8.♘c3 ♘g6 9.a5 ♗g4

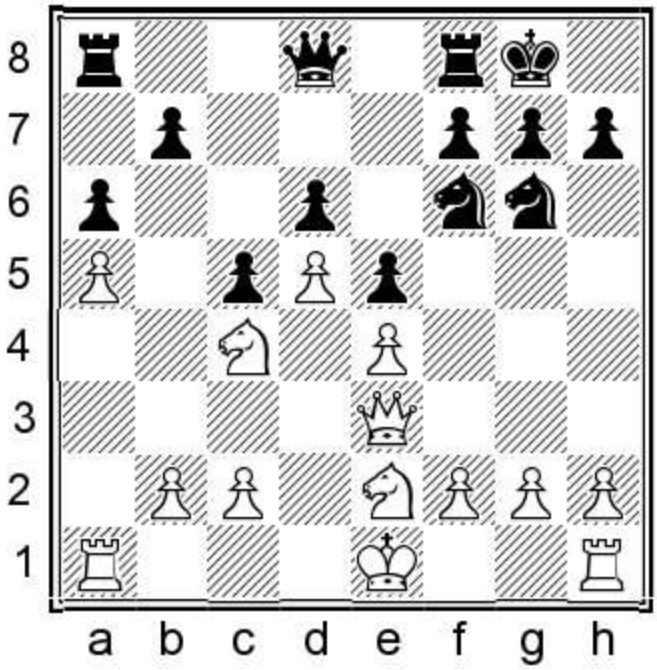
9...♘f4N can be met by 10.♗xf4 exf4 11.♕c1 g5 12.♘d2 ♗f6 13.♘c4 ♘e7 14.h4 with some advantage for White.

10.♘d2 ♗xe2 11.♘xe2

White recaptures with the knight in order to cover the f4-square.

11...♗g5 12.♘c4 ♗xc1 13.♕xc1 ♘f6 14.♕e3 0-0

chesstouring.com



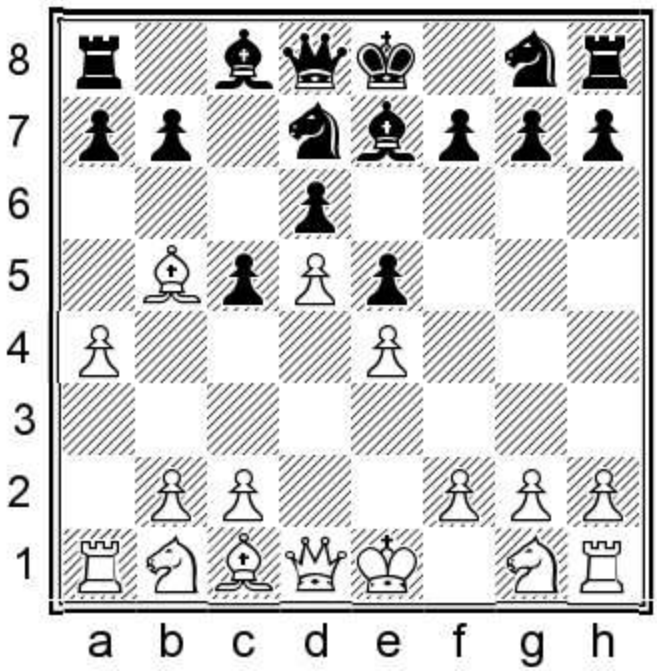
15.h4!

15.0-0 offers White an edge but the text move is even stronger.

15...♘e7 16.h5 h6 17.♘g3 ♖c8 18.0-0±

White was clearly better thanks to the powerful knight on c4 in Arun Prasad – Nun, Pardubice 2011.

B1) 5...♗e7

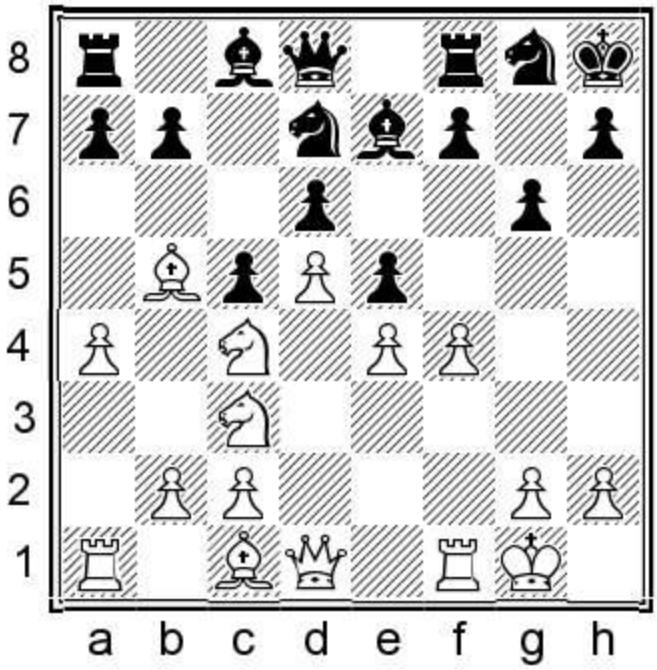


6.♘f3 ♘gf6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.0-0

Once again Black has tried many moves, but the two main options are chasing the bishop with **B11)** 8...a6 and ignoring it in favour of preparing kingside play with **B12)** 8...♘e8.

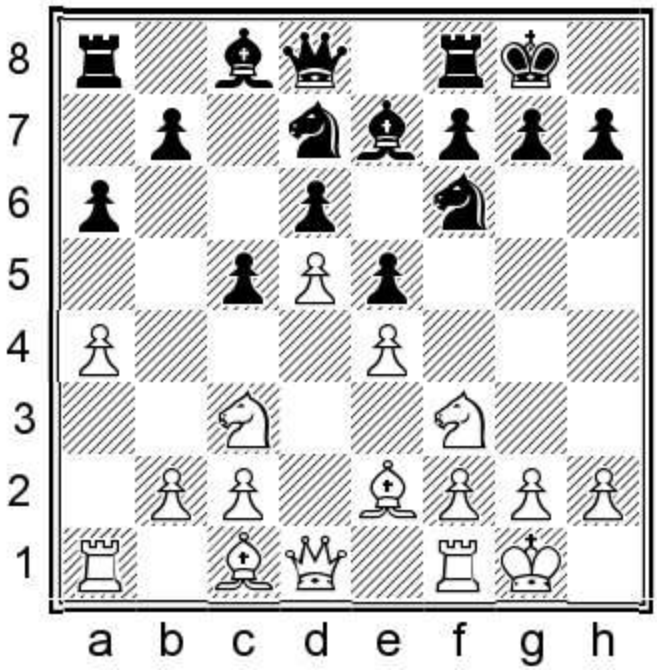
chesstouring.com

8...♔h8?! was the choice of Caruana when he tried this line in a blitz game, but the experiment did not end well for him: 9.♘d2 g6 10.♘c4 ♘g8 11.f4 (White is also significantly better after 11.♗xd7!? ♗xd7 12.f4 f6 13.f5±)



11...exf4 12.♗xf4 ♘b6 13.e5 ♘xc4 14.♗xc4 dxe5 15.♗xe5† f6 16.♗g3± White had clearly won the opening battle in Aronian – Caruana, Internet (blitz) 2018.

B11) 8...a6 9.♗e2



9...♘e8

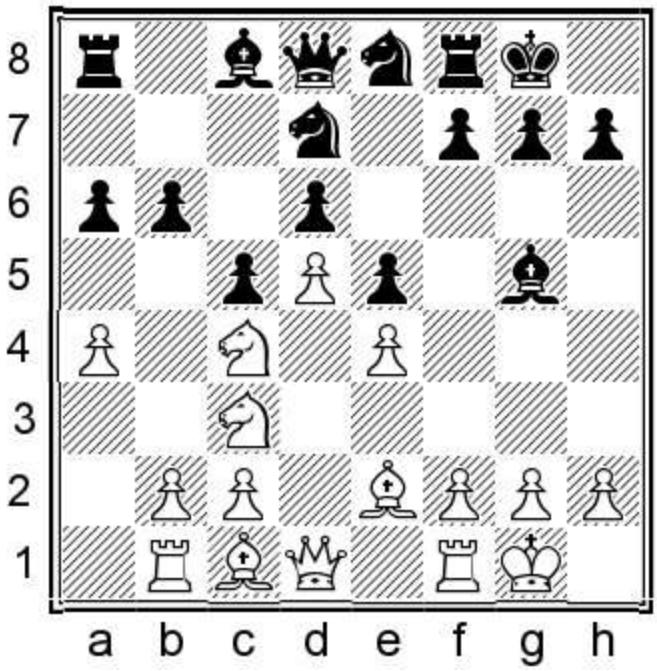
A natural alternative is:

9...b6

chesstouring.com

Black avoids having his queenside pawns fixed in a rigid structure, but White still finds it easy to develop his play on that side of the board.

10.♘d2 ♘e8 11.♘c4 ♗g5 12.♖b1



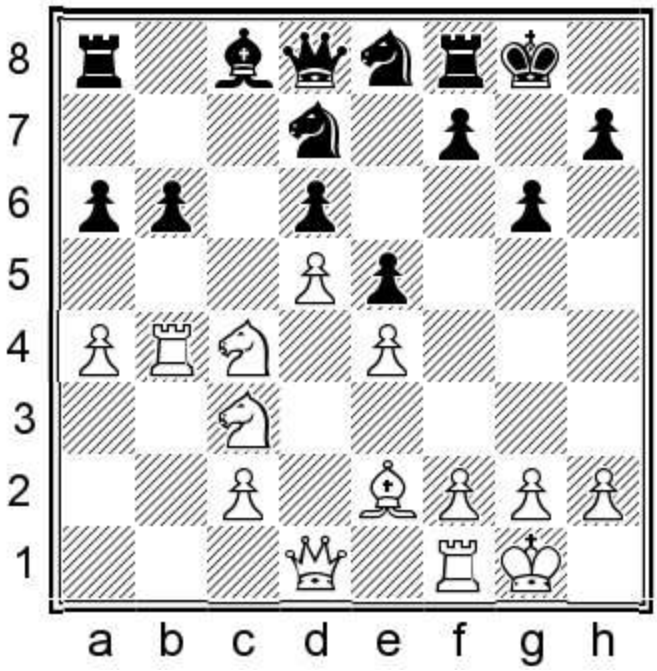
White prepares b2-b4, and there is not much Black can do to stop it, as ...a5 would be too weakening.

12...g6

Another good example continued 12...♗xc1 13.♕xc1 ♕e7 14.b4 g6 15.♕e3 and White was much better in Roiz – Daudzvardis, Biel 2005.

13.♗xg5 ♕xg5 14.b4 cxb4 15.♖xb4 ♕d8

We have been following Wittal – Traut, email 2013. I like the following plan for White:



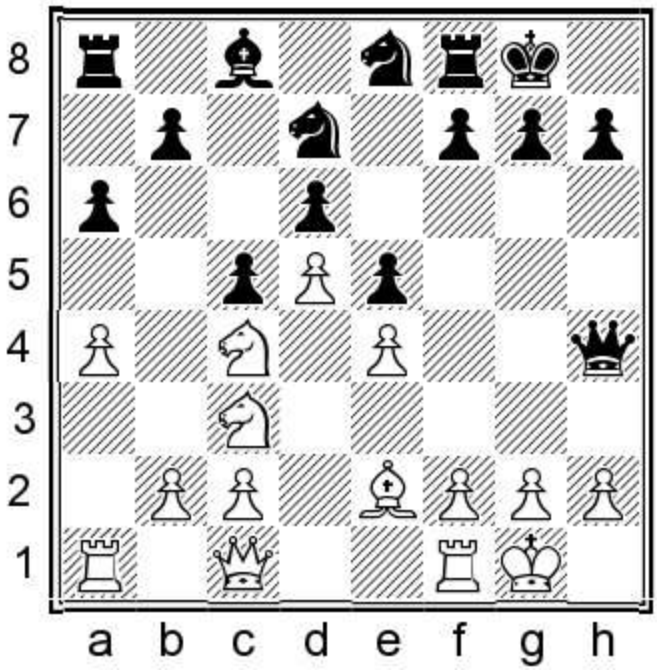
16.♖b2N 16...a5

chesstouring.com

16...f5 17.exf5 gxf5 18.f4 ♕c7 19.♕d3 clearly favours White.
17.♘e3 ♘c7 18.♕d2 ♗a6 19.♗d3!
White maintains good pressure on the queenside.

10.♘d2 g6

10...♗g5 is a logical alternative but trading bishops does not solve all of Black's problems. 11.♘c4 ♗xc1 (11...b6 transposes to the previous note) 12.♕xc1 ♕h4 In Mikhalev – Debowska, Mondariz 2003, White could have simply continued his plan with:



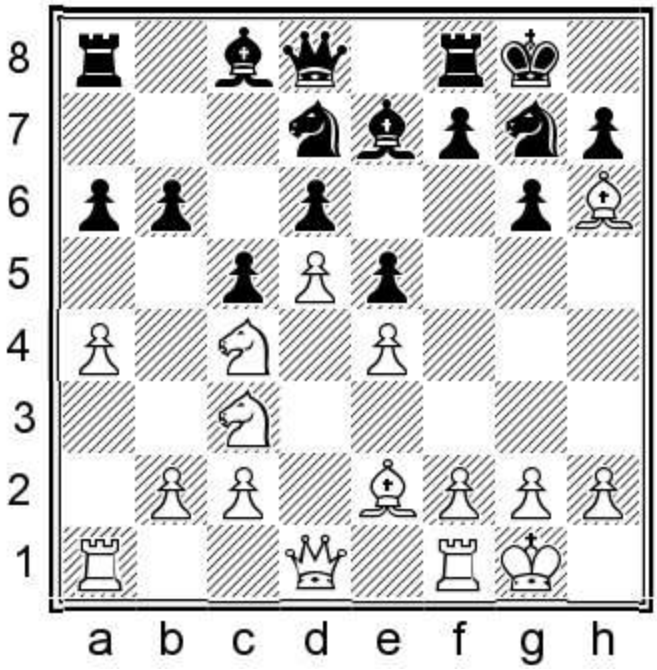
13.a5!N It is hard for Black to create counterplay, while White has easy play all over the board. For instance, 13...g6 14.g3 ♕e7 15.f4 f5 16.♗d3 and White is clearly better.

11.♘c4 ♘g7

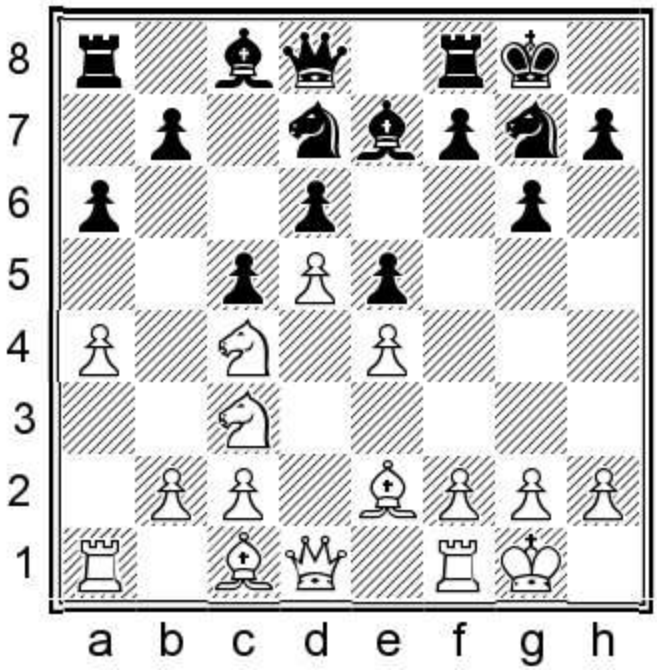
Black is preparing ...f5, but the perfect position of the knight on c4 and Black's passive pieces on the queenside make any opening of the position clearly favourable for White.

11...b6 has yielded good results to Black, but White has an excellent game. 12.♗h6 ♘g7 This position has arisen in a few games but nobody has gone for the following simple continuation:

chesstouring.com



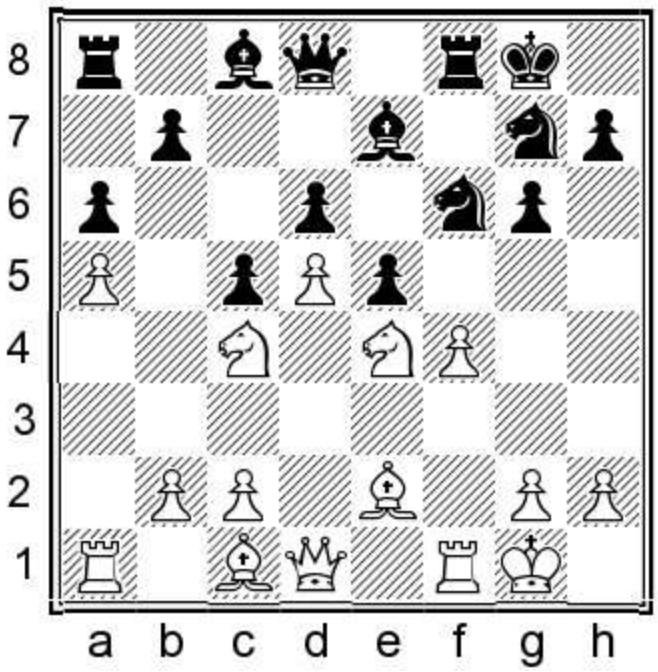
13.♕d2N (13.g4!?N is also worth considering) White has the simple idea of meeting 13...f5 with 14.f4! when the opening of the position works in White's favour.



12.a5 f5 13.f4! ♕c7

13...fxe4? 14.♘xe4 ♘f6 occurred in Jaworski – Mammadov, Ustron 2003, when White could have already decided the issue with:

chesstouring.com

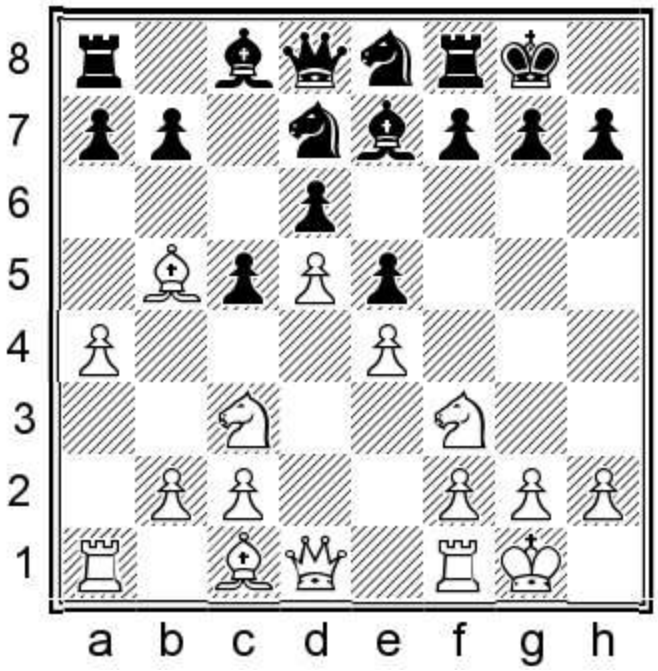


15.♘exd6!N 15...♗xd6 16.fxe5 With a crushing advantage.

14.exf5 gxf5 15.♗e3 ♗f6 16.♕d2

White maintained a solid edge in Bonte – Geiger, Arad 2013.

B12) 8...♘e8



Unlike the previous variation, here Black avoids touching his queenside pawns for as long as possible.

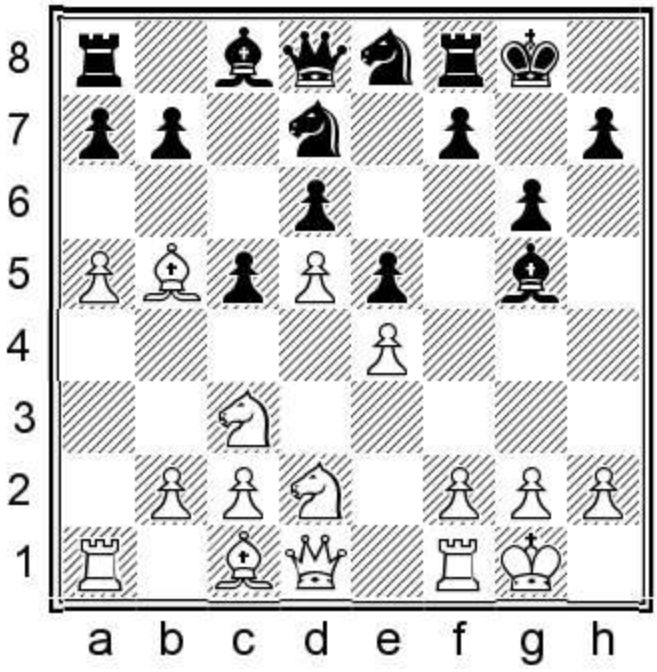
9.♘d2 g6

9...♗g5 10.a5 is similar to the main line and could easily transpose after 10...g6. chesstouring.com

10.a5 ♗g5

Activating and exchanging the bad bishop is a typical plan for Black in this system.

I also checked 10...f5, but it will take Black a long time to develop meaningful kingside play, whereas it's much easier for White to make inroads on the queenside: 11.a6 b6 12.♗c6 ♖b8 13.♘b5 ♘c7 14.♘xa7 ♗xa6 15.c4 ♘f6 16.exf5 gxf5 17.b3±



11.♘c4

I recommended this move in *GM 2* and it has been tested in a few games.

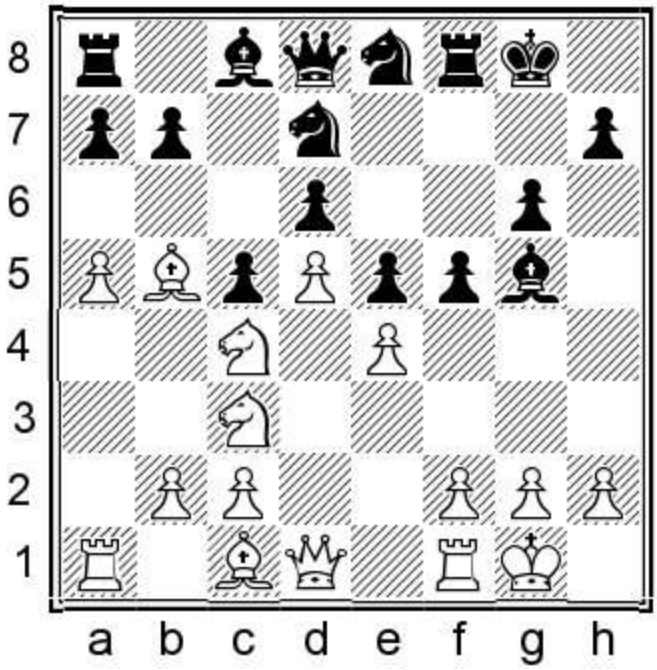
Even though I prefer the main move, I will mention a second attractive idea: 11.a6!? bxa6 12.♗xa6 ♗xa6 13.♖xa6 ♘b6 14.♕e2 White had a pleasant edge in Miton – Ivkov, Ottawa 2007.

11...f5

My line from *GM 2* continued: 11...♗xc1 12.♕xc1 a6 13.♗xd7 ♗xd7 14.♘b6 It is worth playing this before ...♗b5 comes. 14...♖b8 15.f4 f6 16.♖b1 White intends b2-b4, with an obvious edge thanks to his space advantage.

After the text move White continued with 12.a6 in a couple of games, which is not bad and most probably leads to some advantage. However, I like the following idea much more:

chesstouring.com



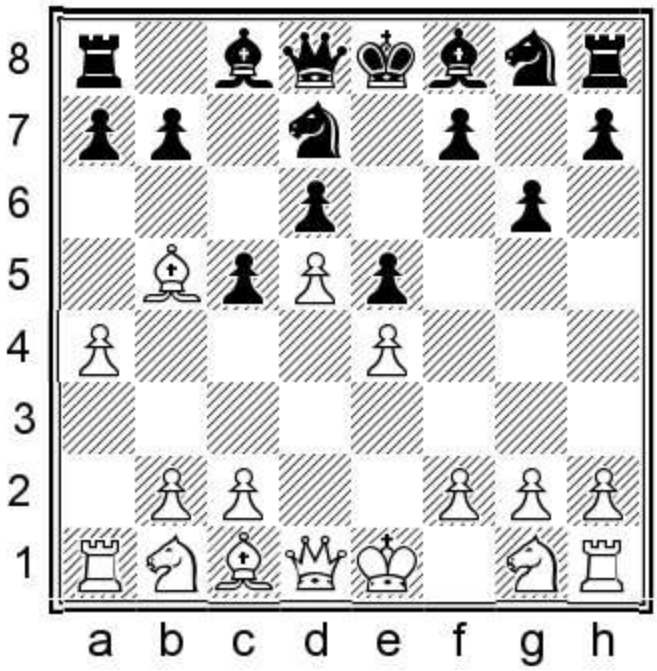
12.♗xg5!N 12...♕xg5 13.exf5 gxf5

I do not consider seriously other recaptures, since White is always better when he controls the e4-square in such positions.

14.f4! ♕g7 15.fxe5 ♘xe5 16.♘xe5 dxe5 17.d6±

White is much better.

B2) 5...g6



6.♘c3

It is worth checking **B21)** 6...♗h6 before moving on to the more normal **B22)** 6...♗g7.

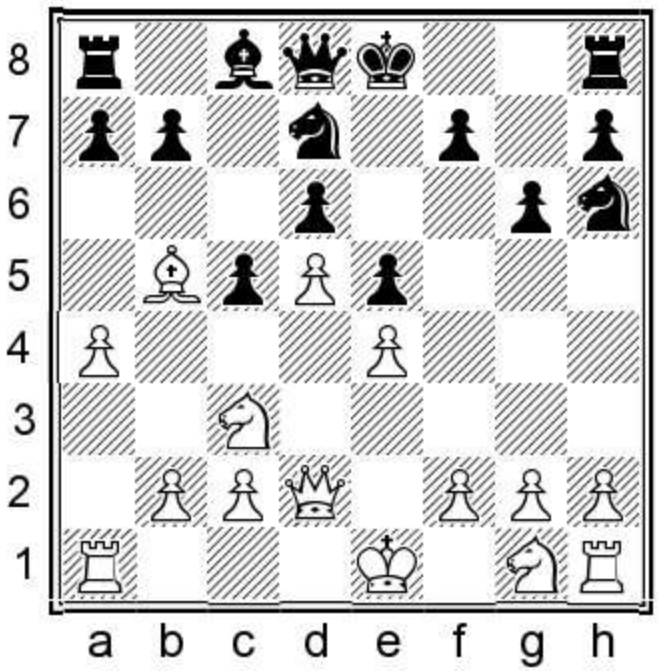
chesstouring.com

6...a6 7.♗e2 has little independent significance and will usually transpose to one of the main lines in which these moves appear later.

B21) 6...♗h6

Trading the dark-squared bishops is positionally desirable for Black, but it does not fully solve his problems.

7.♗xh6 ♘xh6 8.♕d2



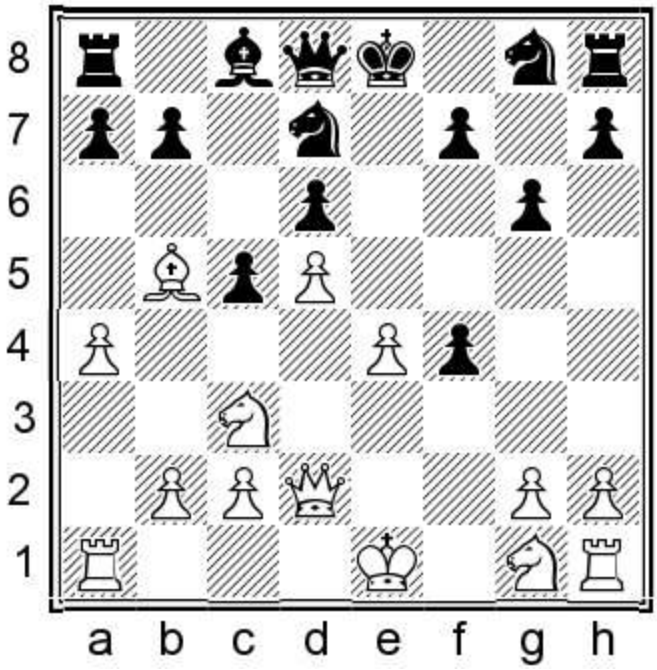
8...♘g8

In the event of 8...♘g4N I would like to recommend 9.a5, grabbing more space on the queenside. After 9...0-0 10.♘f3 White's position is much easier, as Black is struggling to create counterplay. For instance, 10...f5 11.h3 ♘gf6 12.♘g5± and Black's attempt to play actively backfires.

9.f4 exf4

My suggested improvement from *GM 2* remains just as valid today:

chesstouring.com

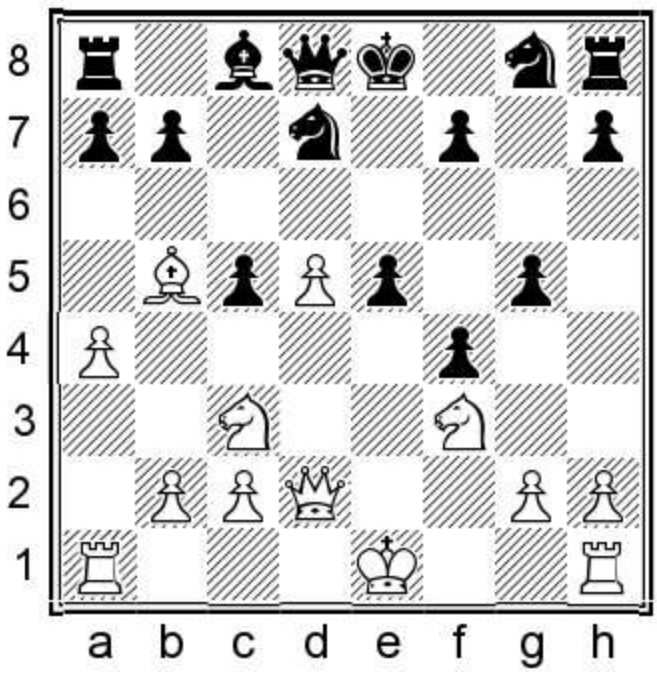


10.♘f3!N

10.♕xf4 ♕f6 11.♕g3 was played in Khenkin – Rogers, Baden 1998, when 11...♕e7 12.♘f3 ♘gf6 13.0-0 ♘h5! would have led to unclear play.

10...♘gf6

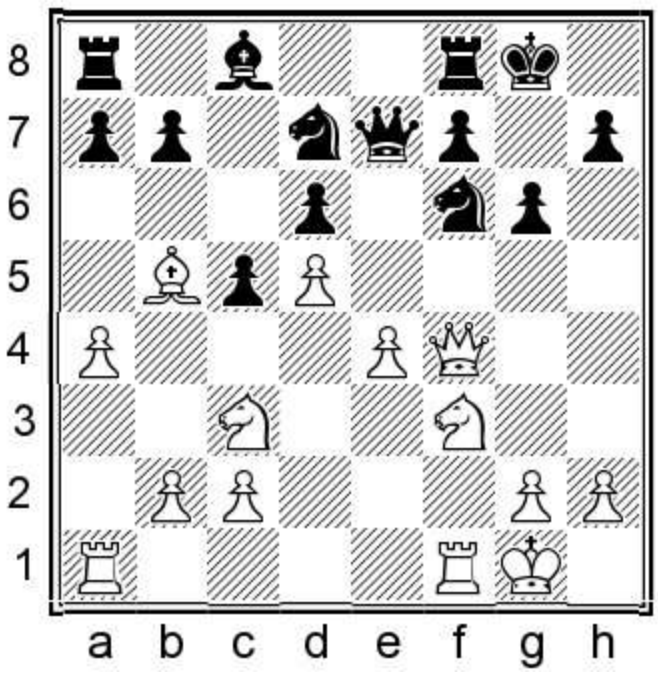
10...g5? is much too risky; the position resembles a King's Gambit, where the absence of Black's dark-squared bishop makes it impossible to protect his kingside weaknesses. 11.e5! is extremely powerful, for instance: 11...dxe5 (or 11...g4 12.e6 gxf3 13.0-0 with a crushing attack)



12.h4! (this is much stronger than 12.♘xe5, which I gave as the main line in *GM 2*) Black has no way to keep his kingside together. For instance, 12...f6 (12...g4 and 12...gxh4 are both met by 13.♘xe5) 13.hxg5 fxg5 14.0-0-0+– and White will soon smash through to the king.

chesstouring.com

11.♕xf4 ♕e7 12.0-0 0-0

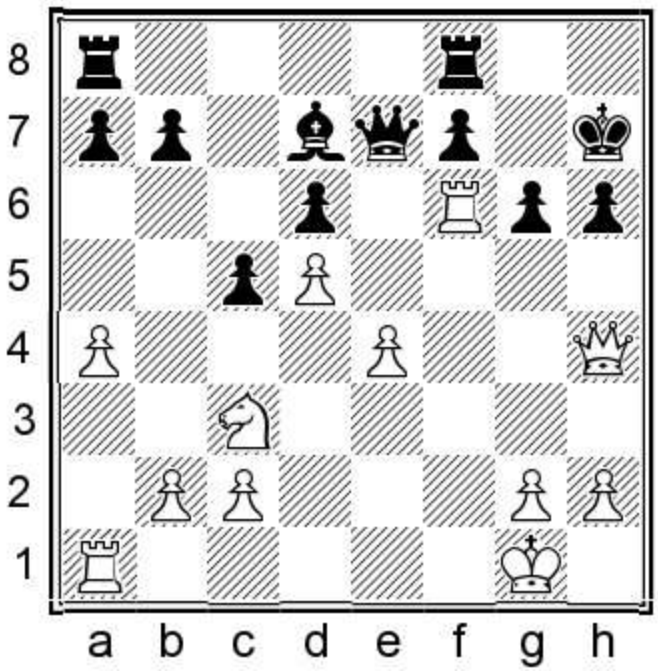


13.♕h4!

White is clearly better, as demonstrated by the following line, which is virtually forced.

13...♔g7 14.♗xd7 ♗xd7 15.♘g5 h6 16.♘h7! ♔xh7 17.♖xf6

The endgame after 17.♕xf6 ♕e5 18.♘b5 ♗xb5 19.♕xe5 dxe5 20.axb5 also better for White, but there is every reason to be more ambitious.



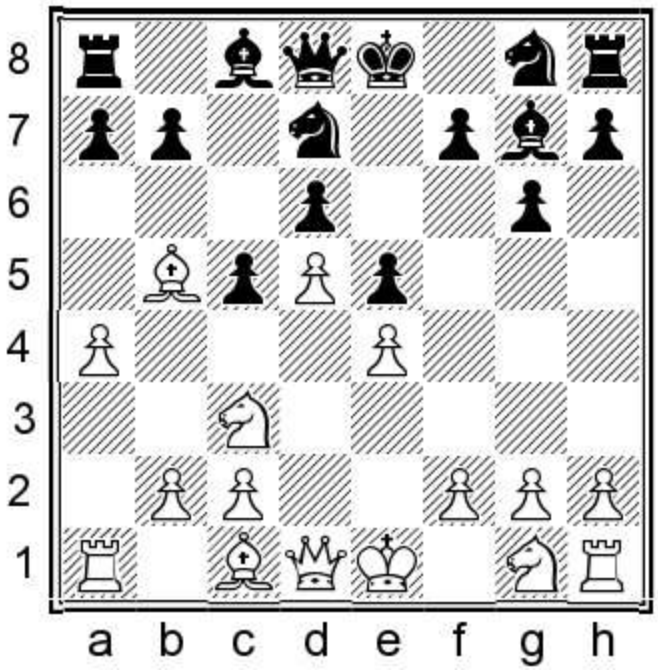
17...♕e5 18.♖af1 ♗e8 19.♔h1±

White should be able to either break through directly on the kingside or provoke some other kind of

chessthurisaz.com

concession which will decide the outcome.

B22) 6...♗g7



As I mentioned earlier, this is much more common than the previous variation.

7.♘f3

Black can develop his kingside knight with **B221)** 7...♘e7 or **B222)** 7...♘gf6.

B221) 7...♘e7

I did not consider this move in *GM 2*, but it has been Black's most popular choice. It runs into a powerful idea though.

8.h4!

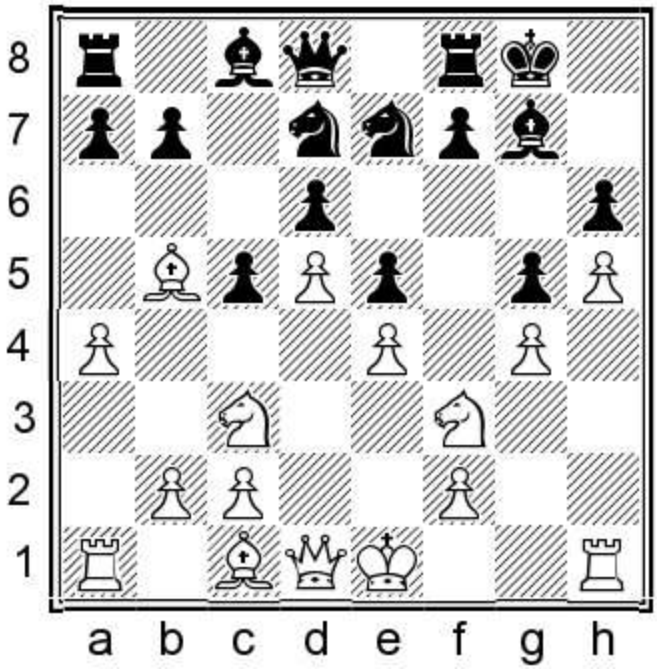
This is a pet idea of mine in positions where Black combines a kingside fianchetto with ...♘e7. It works extremely well here.

8...a6

Here are a few model examples after Black's other tries:

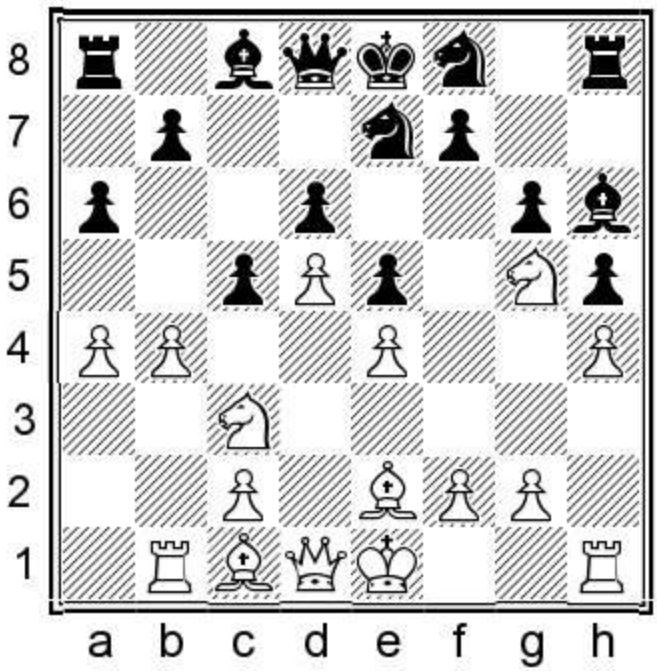
8...h6? enables Black to keep the kingside closed but at a serious positional cost. 9.h5 g5 10.g4! 0-0 In Stumm – M. Martin, Lambsheim 2017, White should have continued:

chesstouring.com



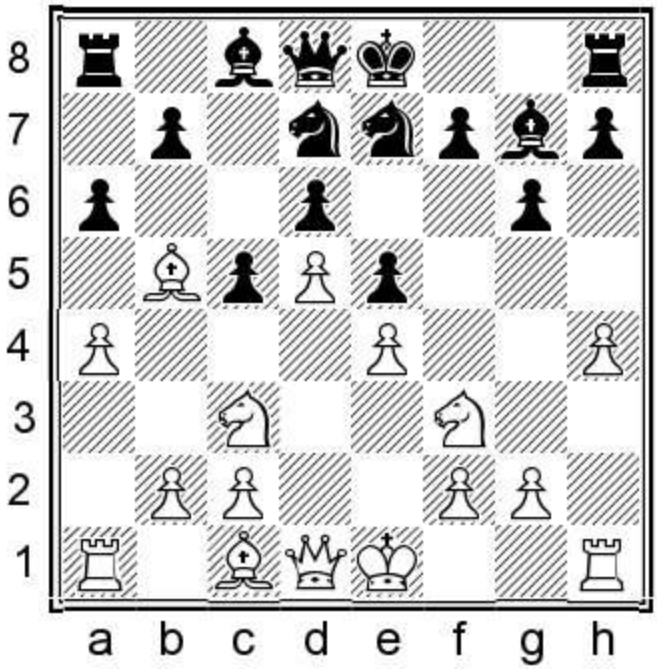
11.♘d2N 11...♘f6 12.f3 With a strategically winning position.

8...h5 is not as bad as the line above but it is still a concession, as Black will find it much harder to prepare ...f5. I like the following example: 9.♘g5 a6 10.♗e2 ♘f8 11.♖b1!? ♗h6 12.b4



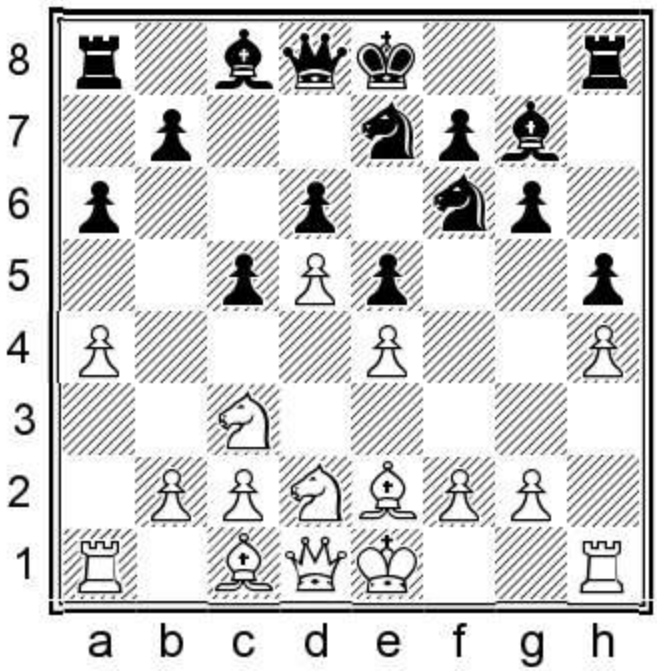
12...f6 13.♘f3 ♗xc1 14.♕xc1 ♘d7 15.♘d2 White seized the initiative on the queenside in Kaunas – Minelga, Platelia 2001.

chesstouring.com



9.♗e2 h5

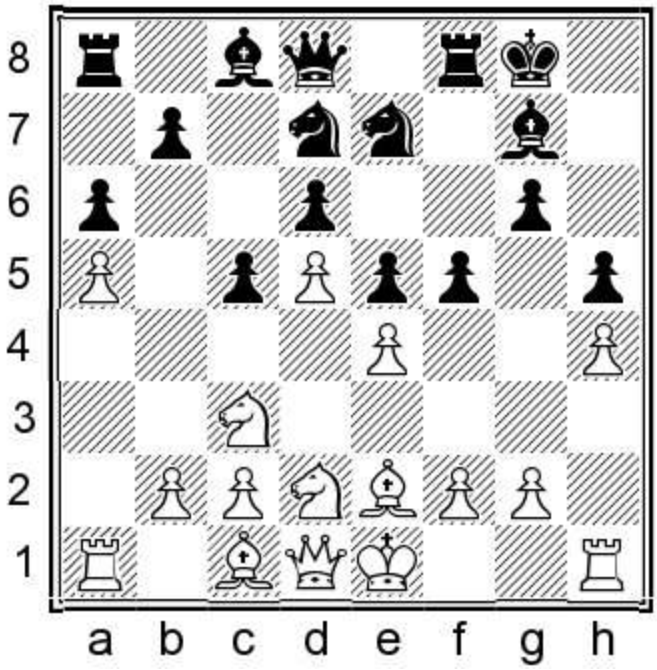
Quite similar is 9...♘f6 10.♘d2 h5, as played in Murillo Tsijli – Gonzalez Acosta, Costa Rica 1997. My suggested improvement is:



11.a5N 11...♗d7 12.♘c4 ♘c8 13.♗g5± With a pleasant edge for White.

10.a5 0-0 11.♘d2 f5

chesstouring.com

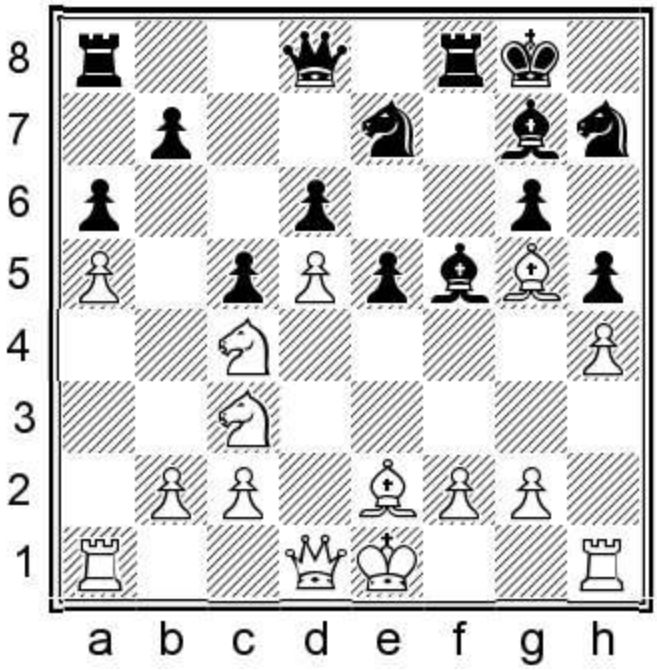


12.♘c4 ♘f6 13.exf5

13.f3 looks good as well.

13...♗xf5 14.♗g5 ♘h7

For some reason, in Mirzoeva – Kotanjian, Dubai 2011, White allowed her bishop to be exchanged on g5. An obvious improvement is:

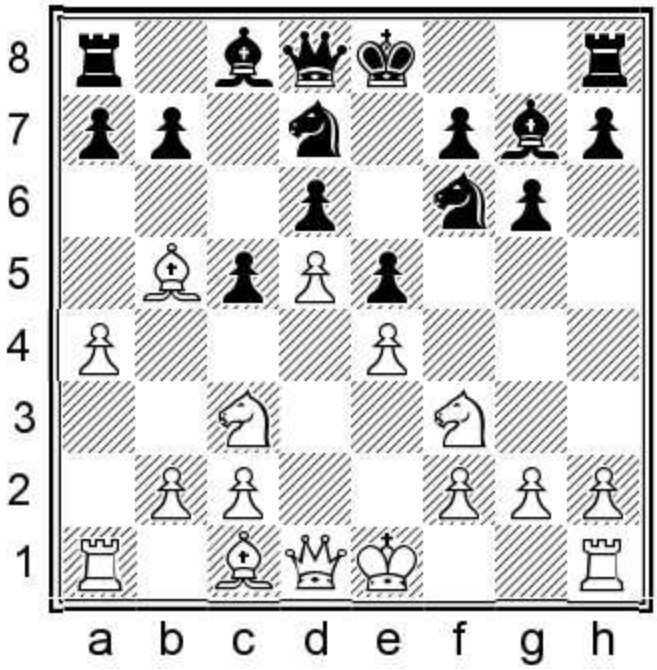


15.♗e3N 15...♘f6 16.f3

With a clear positional advantage for White.

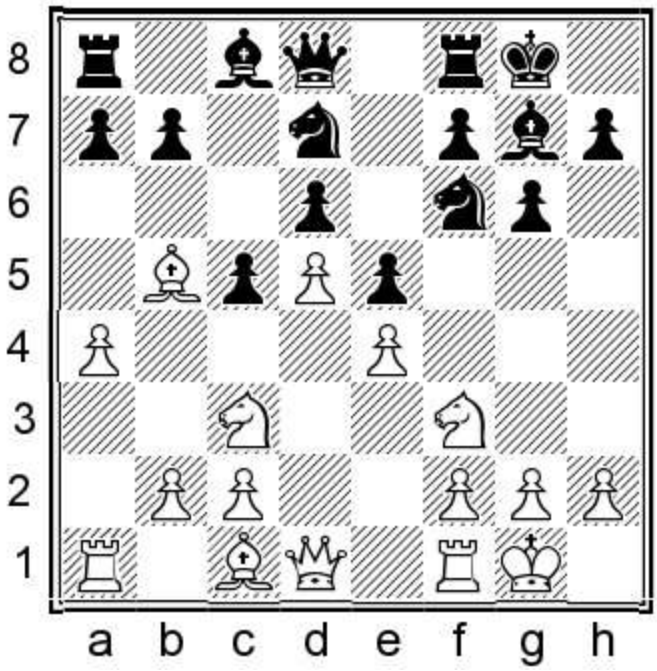
chesstouring.com

B222) 7...♘gf6



From here I found two worthwhile ideas for White. **B2221)** 8.0-0 is a good and natural option, while **B2222)** 8.♘d2!?N is a fresh idea with plenty of appeal.

B2221) 8.0-0 0-0



Here I would like to recommend a move which is unusual, but quite thematic in certain variations of the King's Indian.

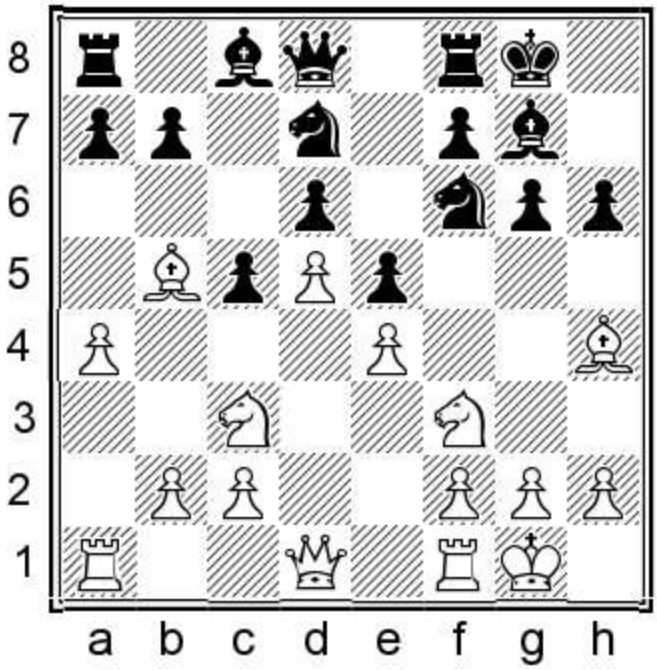
9.♗g5!?

9.♘d2 seems less convincing after 9...♘e8, which I did not consider in *GM 2*. For instance, 10.♘c4 a6 11.♗xd7 ♗xd7 12.a5 ♗b5! led to unclear play in Tomazini – Kalajzic, Hum na Sutli 2015.

chesstouring.com

9...h6 10.♗h4

Only one game has reached this position. It continued:

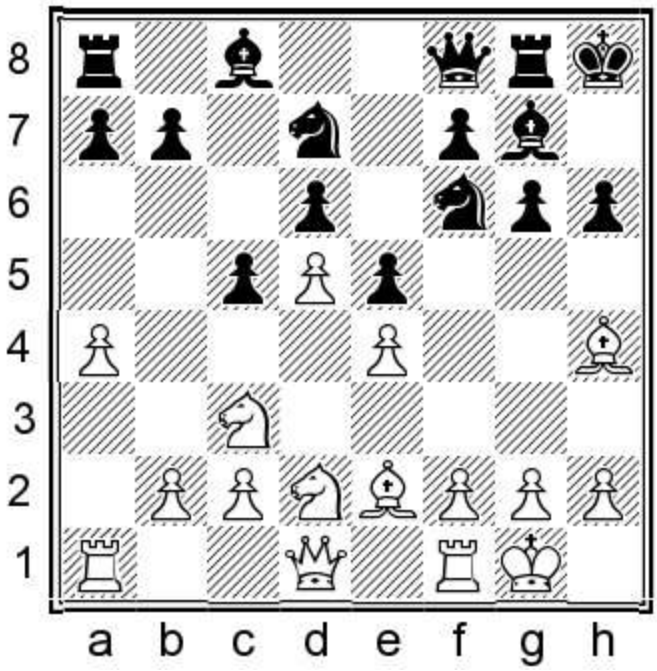


10...♔h8

10...g5N 11.♗g3 ♘h5 is an obvious idea, but White is well prepared to meet it with: 12.♘d2 ♘f4 13.♖e1! The d2-knight is heading for f5, and White is better.

11.♘d2 ♖g8 12.♗e2 ♕f8

We have been following Blagojevic – Sahovic, Niksic 1996. Black is clearly preparing to move the knight away from f6 and play ...f5. I suggest meeting this idea with:



chesstouring.com

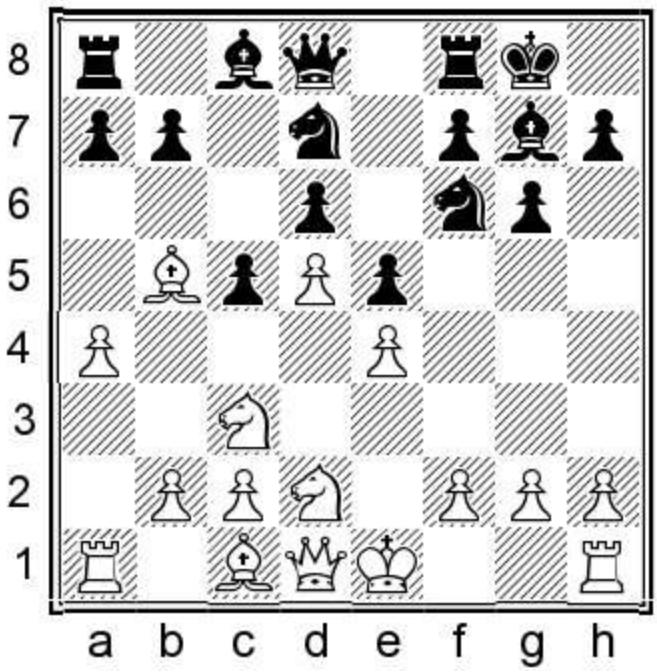
13.♔h1!?N 13...♘h7 14.g4! ♗f6

14...f5?! 15.gxf5 gxf5 16.exf5 ♘df6 17.♗d3! gives White a clear advantage.

15.♗xf6† ♘dxf6 16.♖g1

White is clearly better. It is hard for Black to generate any counterplay on the kingside, while White has no such problems on the queenside.

B2222) 8.♘d2!?N 8...0-0



Although White's 8th move is untested, it immediately transposed to an existing game, Postojev – Hoellmann, Einhausen 2009, in which 9.a5 was played. Instead, I would like to propose a new plan.

9.♗e2!N

The bishop was not doing much on b5, so there is something to be said for recentralizing it and keeping an eye on the kingside, preventing ...♘h5 in the process. The main point of White's last two moves is to remain as flexible as possible. By continuing to postpone castling, White keeps the option of advancing his kingside pawns.

9...♘e8

Preparing ...f5 is Black's most obvious idea.

Another line which I find logical is:

9...a6

This transposes to a few existing games where Black chased the bishop from b5 at an earlier stage.

10.a5

10.g4!?N is also worth considering, and after 10...♘e8 11.h4 we have another transposition to an

chesstouring.com

existing game. It continued 11...f6 12.♘c4 ♖b8 when, in Montoro – Chtcherbine, Villa Ballester 2003, 13.a5!N would have been strong. An illustrative line is 13...b5 14.axb6 ♘xb6 15.♘a5! ♗d7 16.h5 with a huge advantage for White.

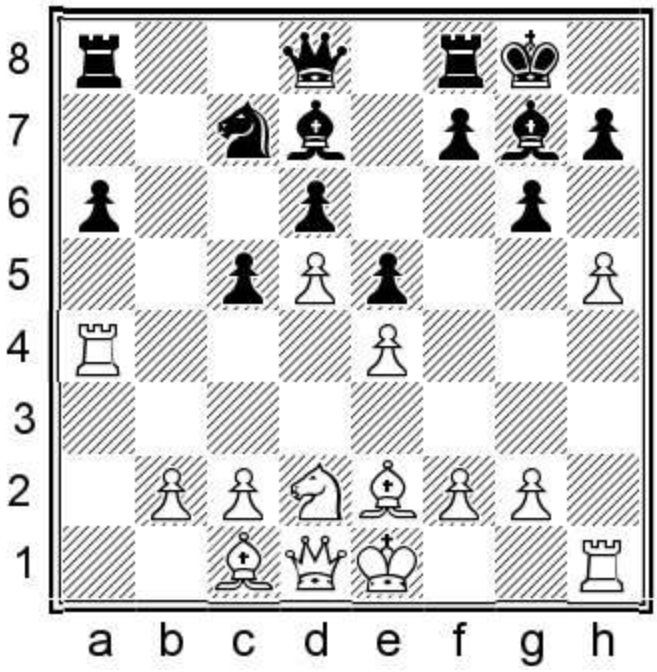
10...♘e8

After 10...b5 11.axb6 ♘xb6 White can revert to a normal plan with 12.0-0!, when he has an easy plan of attack on the queenside.

11.h4!

Just as in our main line, this advance is the key idea. We will follow a model game, where White's play makes a great impression.

11...b5 12.axb6 ♘xb6 13.h5 ♘c7 14.♘a4 ♘xa4 15.♖xa4 ♗d7



16.♖a3! ♘b5 17.♖g3 a5 18.c3 a4 19.♘c4 ♖a7 20.♗g4

White's unusual yet remarkably effective play gave him a great advantage in Khenkin – Tibensky, Kaskady 2002.

10.h4!

This is the big idea behind delaying castling.

10...f5

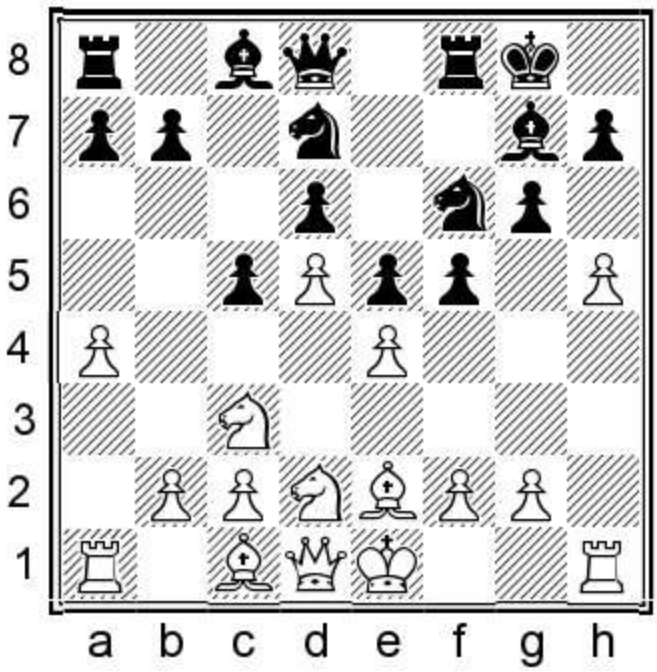
10...h5 can be met by 11.g4!? hxg4 12.♗xg4 f5 13.♗f3 with promising play for White on the kingside.

11.h5 f4

This seems like a logical way to take some space and keep the kingside relatively closed. I checked two other options:

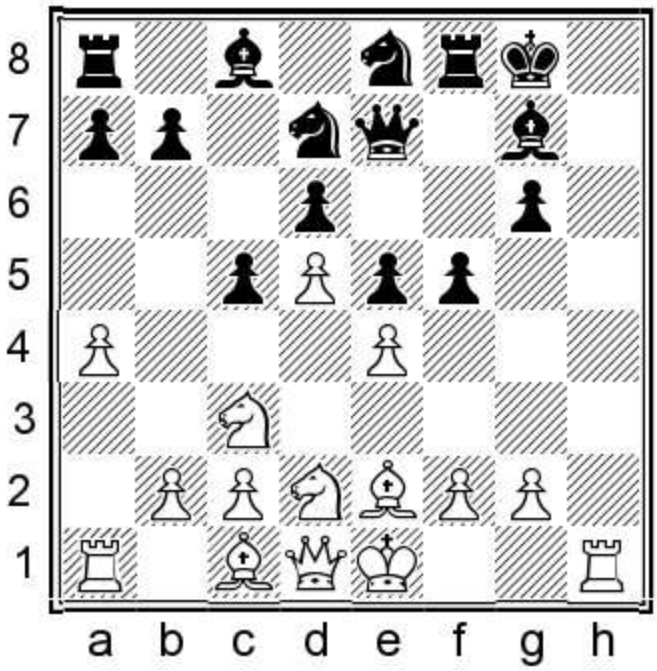
11...♘ef6? runs into a surprising refutation:

chesstouring.com



12.h6! ♗h8 13.exf5 gxf5 14.g4!+– With a crushing attack.

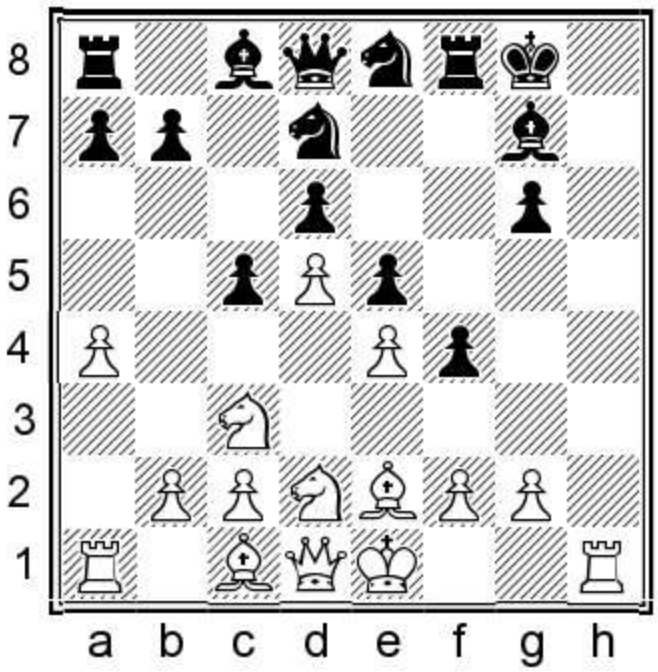
After 11...♕e7 12.hxg6 hxg6 the best continuation is:



13.g4! White has excellent play once again.

12.hxg6 hxg6

chesstouring.com



13.♗g4 ♘df6 14.♗xc8 ♖xc8 15.♘c4 ♕d7 16.♕f3±

White's positional advantage is obvious. The plan of delaying castling requires more practical tests; but on the basis of Igor Khenkin's game, plus my analysis shown above, it looks rather attractive.

Conclusion

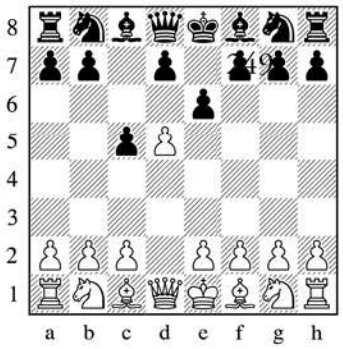
The Closed Benoni is a solid system; however, it has a positional drawback compared to the Czech Benoni, as White can profit from the fact that his pawn remains on c2 rather than c4. After 1.d4 c5 2.d5 e5 3.e4 d6, White can already draw attention to this point with the disruptive 4.♗b5†!?, when both of Black's responses entail a drawback of some kind, although 4...♘d7 seems like his overall best bet.

Throughout the various lines, the usefulness of the ♘f3-d2-c4 manoeuvre was clear, highlighting once again why it helps White to have the pawn on c2 instead of c4. Depending on how Black plays, White may simply castle and attack on the queenside, although we also saw a number of lines where it makes sense to delay castling and prod Black on the kingside with a well-timed advance of the h- and/or g-pawns.

chesstouring.com



Benoni Systems



1.d4 c5 2.d5 e6

Variation Index

1.d4 c5 2.d5 e6

3.♘c3

A) 3...♘f6 4.e4 d6 5.♗b5†!? 250

A1) 5...♘bd7 251

A2) 5...♗d7 253

B) 3...exd5 4.♘xd5 255

B1) 4...♘f6 255

B2) 4...♘e7 256

B3) 4...d6 258

C) 3...d6 4.e4 258

C1) 4...exd5 258

C2) 4...a6 5.a4 260

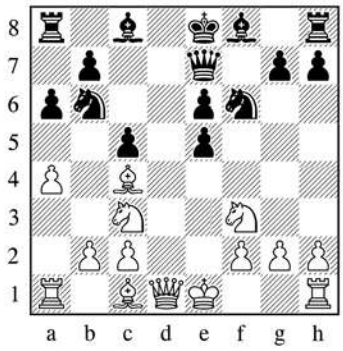
C21) 5...g6 260

C22) 5...exd5 261

C23) 5...♘f6 262

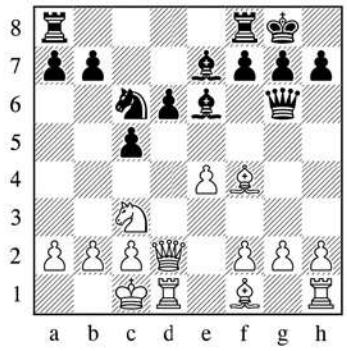
chesstouring.com

A1) note to 9...♘b6



11.♕e2!N

C1) after 11...0–0



12.h4!N

C23) after 7...♗e7



8.♘e2!N

1.d4 c5 2.d5 e6

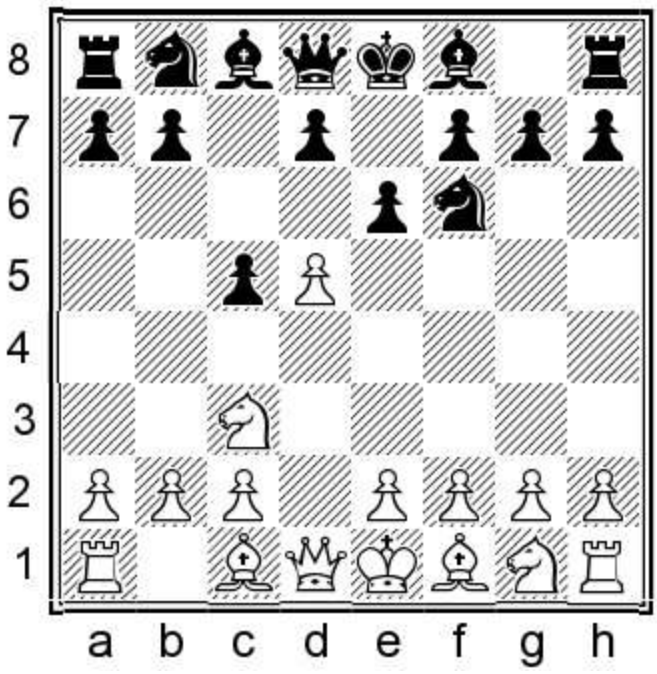
As far as I am aware, there is no name for this specific move order, although it could transpose to some well-known schemes. For instance, 3.e4 would be a Franco Benoni, but instead our repertoire choice will be:

3.♘c3

3.c4 is playable and will be discussed in variation B of the next chapter, where we reach the same position after 1...e6 2.c4 c5 3.d5. However, I believe that when Black opts for the move order of this chapter, the text move is the best way to maximize White's chances.

We will examine three options for Black: **A)** 3...♘f6, **B)** 3...exd5 and **C)** 3...d6.

A) 3...♘f6



chesstouring.com

4.e4 d6

This is Black's best bet.

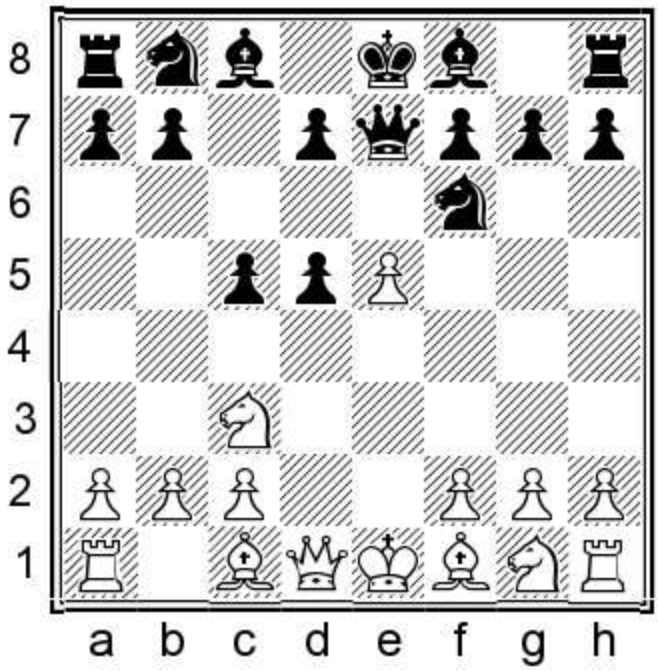
White should be happy to see:

4...exd5? 5.e5!

It seems to me that Black is already in serious trouble, for instance:

5...♕e7

5...♘g8 6.♕xd5 gives White a clear development advantage. One illustrative example continued 6...♘c6 7.♘f3 d6 8.♗b5 ♘ge7 9.♕xd6 ♕xd6 10.exd6 ♘f5 11.♗f4 ♗xd6 12.♗xd6 ♘xd6 13.♗xc6† bxc6 14.0-0-0± with a huge positional advantage, Smejkal – Savon, Wijk aan Zee 1972.



6.♕e2 ♘g8

6...♘e4 7.♘xd5 ♕xe5 8.c4+– is hopeless for Black, who has lost all ten games from this position.

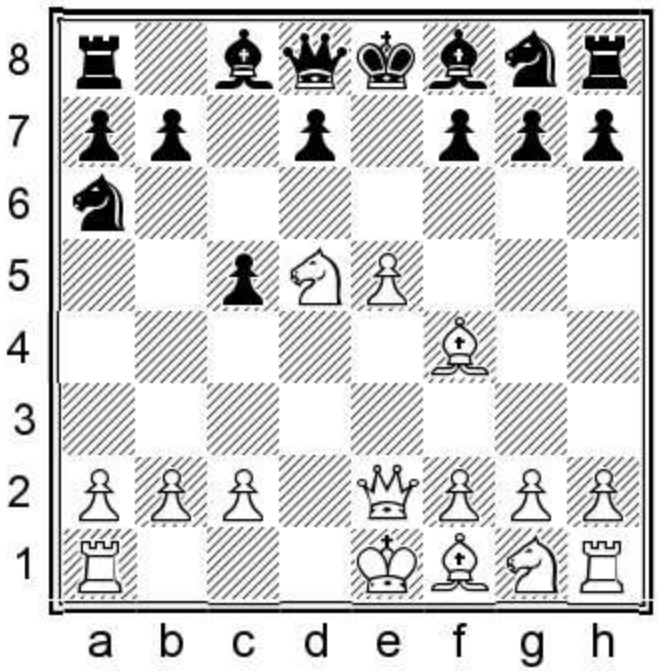
7.♘xd5 ♕d8 8.♗f4!

Threatening e5-e6 followed by a check on c7.

8...♘a6

In Jedrocha – Olechnicka, Szklarska Poreba 2016, White should have continued:

chesstouring.com



9.0-0-0N 9...♘e7 10.♘f6† gxf6 11.exf6+–
Black has little chance of survival.

5.♗b5†!?

This has been less popular and has achieved a lower percentage score than 5.♘f3, but I believe it is a good idea to disturb Black's coordination.

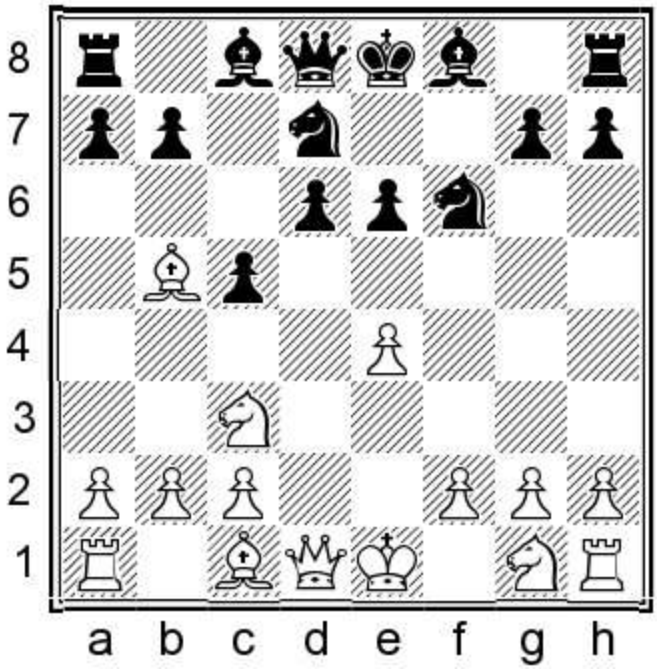
Black may respond with **A1)** 5...♘bd7 or **A2)** 5...♗d7.

A1) 5...♘bd7

This move is strategically risky.

6.dxe6 fxe6

chesstouring.com

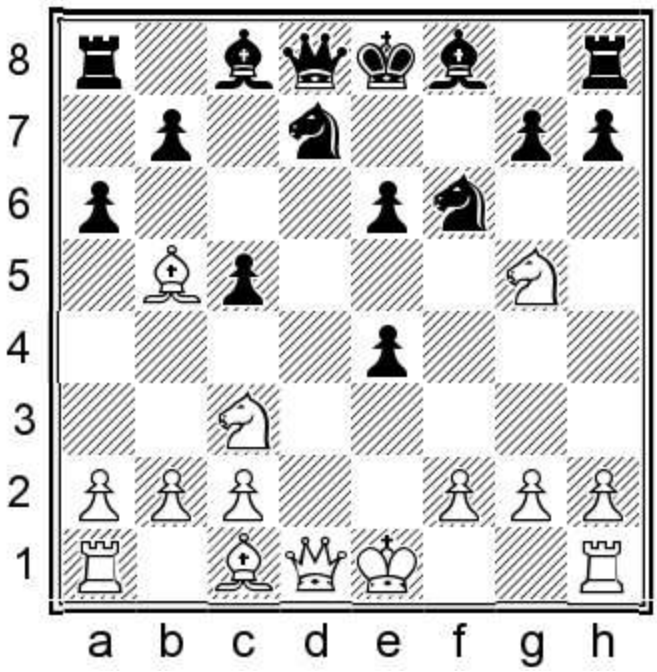


7.e5!

Damaging Black's pawn structure.

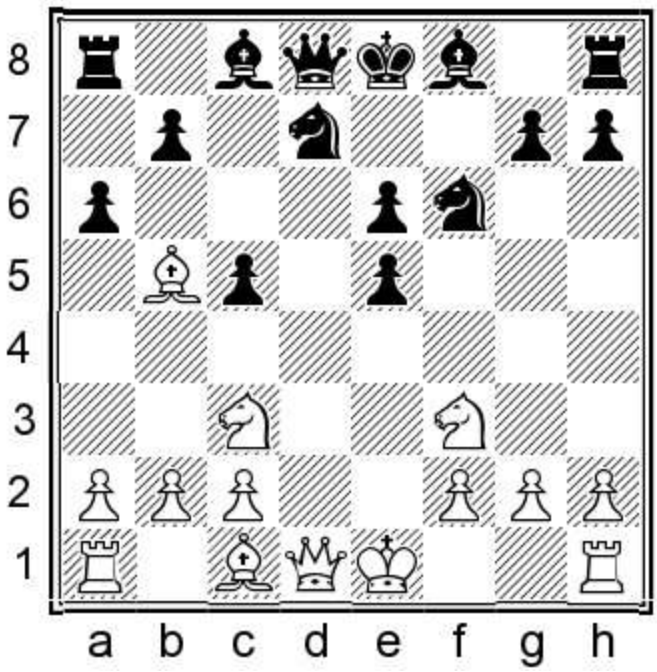
7...dxe5 8.♘f3 a6

8...e4 also brings Black no relief. 9.♘g5 a6 This occurred in Quiroga – Diaz, Carilo 2004, when White missed the strongest continuation:



10.♘xe6N 10...♕b6 11.♗c4 ♘e5 12.♘d5! It is easy to miss such a move. Play may continue 12...♘xd5 13.♕h5† ♘f7 (13...♘g6 14.♕xd5 does not change much) 14.♕xd5 ♗xe6 15.♕xe6† ♕xe6 16.♗xe6 and White is clearly better, thanks to his pair of bishops and the weak e4-pawn, which is likely to fall soon.

chesstouring.com



9.♗c4 ♘b6

Another option is:

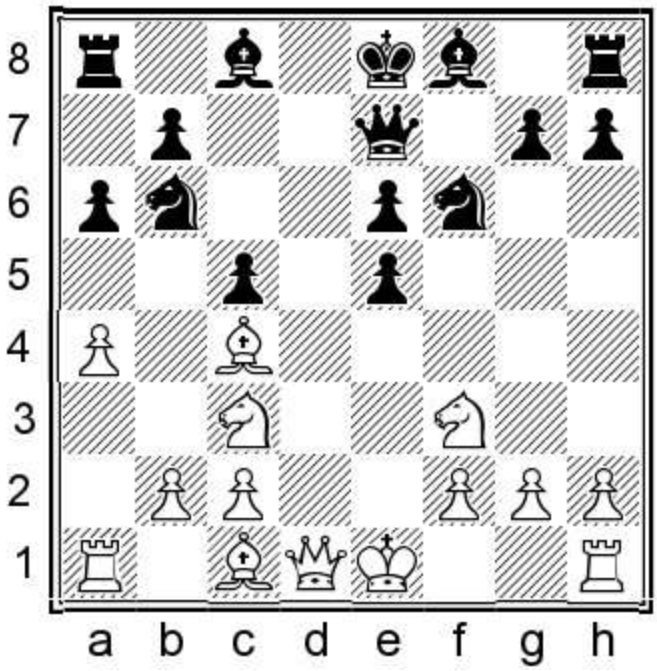
9...♕e7 10.a4

It is important to prevent ...b5.

10...♘b6

10...g6 11.0-0 ♗g7 occurred in Gomez Esteban – Ruiz Gomez, Subijana de Alava 2001, when 12.♕e2N 12...0-0 13.♗g5± would have been simple and strong.

The text move is Black's best try, but I found a convincing improvement over the two existing games:



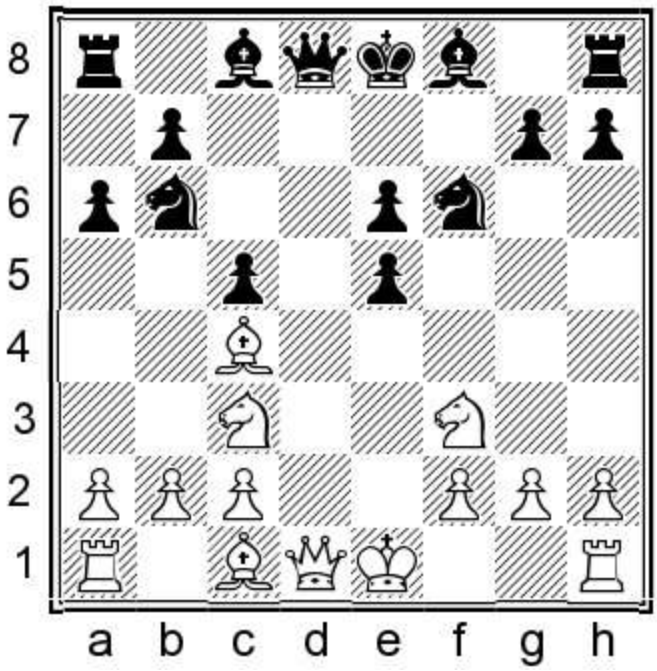
11.♕e2!N 11...♘xc4 12.♕xc4 ♕c7 13.0-0 ♗e7

13...♗d6 is met by 14.♖d1 0-0 15.♘g5! with a serious advantage.

chesstouring.com

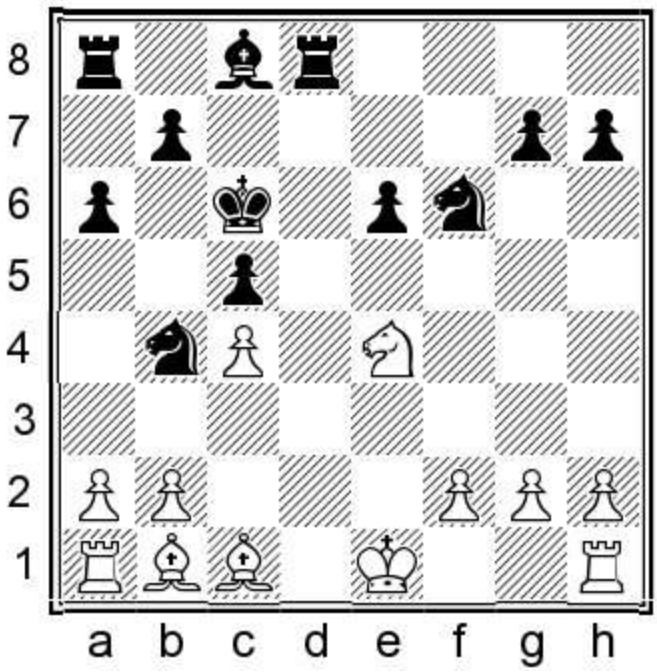
14.♖e1

White's superiority is clear, as he regains the pawn while Black remains with obvious targets in his pawn structure.



10.♕xd8† ♔xd8 11.♘xe5 ♘xc4

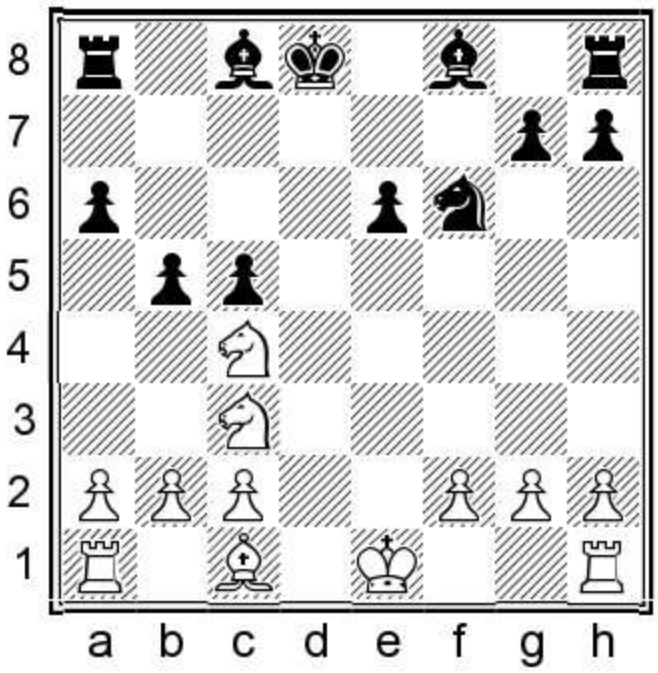
The alternative is hardly acceptable: 11...♗d6?! 12.♘f7† ♔e7 13.♘xd6 ♔xd6 14.♗d3 leaves White with a serious advantage, thanks to his bishop pair and Black's weakened structure. An instructive example continued: 14...♘bd5 15.♘e4† ♔c6 16.c4 ♘b4 17.♗b1 ♖d8



This was Biaggi – Szmetan, Buenos Aires 1992, when White missed the simple 18.♗e3!N 18...♘d3† 19.♗xd3 ♖xd3 20.♔e2± followed by capturing the c5-pawn.

chesstouring.com

12.♘xc4 b5



13.♘e5!

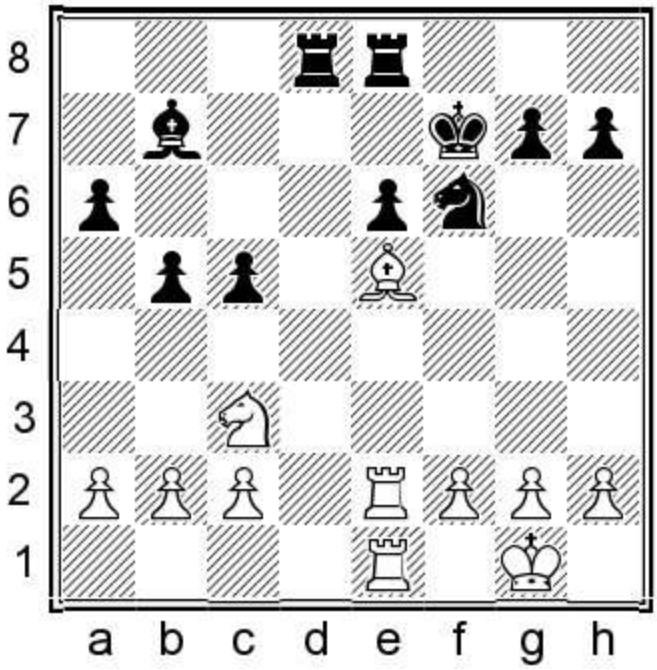
This was a novelty in *GM 2*, which has since been tested. By keeping the knight alive, White causes his opponent maximal problems.

After 13.♘b6 ♖b8 14.♘xc8 ♖xc8 15.♗f4 ♗e7 16.0-0-0† ♔e8 17.♖he1 ♔f7 White kept a slight edge in Cosma – Voiska, Tusnad 2004, but Black's position looks defendable to me.

13...♔e8! 14.0-0 ♗b7

After 14...♗d6 15.♗f4 ♗xe5 16.♗xe5 the presence of opposite-coloured bishops does little to ease Black's suffering, as demonstrated in the following game: 16...♗b7 17.♖fe1 ♔f7 18.♖e2 ♖ad8 19.♖ae1 ♖he8

chesstouring.com

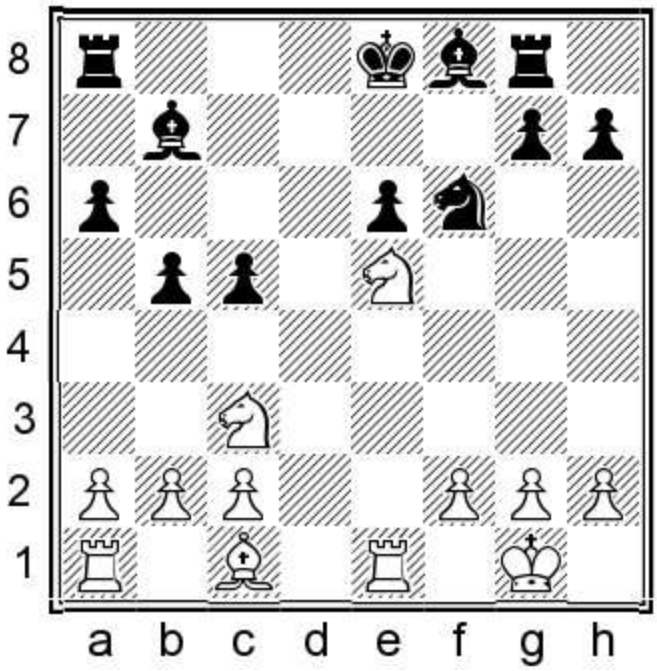


Even though White prevailed in Mikkonen – Muhonen, corr. 2014, I would suggest 20.f3!N as the most logical continuation for over-the-board play. This restricts both of Black's minor pieces, leaving White with a pleasant, risk-free advantage.

15.♖e1 ♖g8

I also examined 15...♖d8 16.f3 ♗e7 17.♗g5± and White keeps a pleasant edge, thanks to his better pawn structure and safer king.

We have been following Husemann – Latib, email 2013. Here I like the idea of changing the queenside structure with:



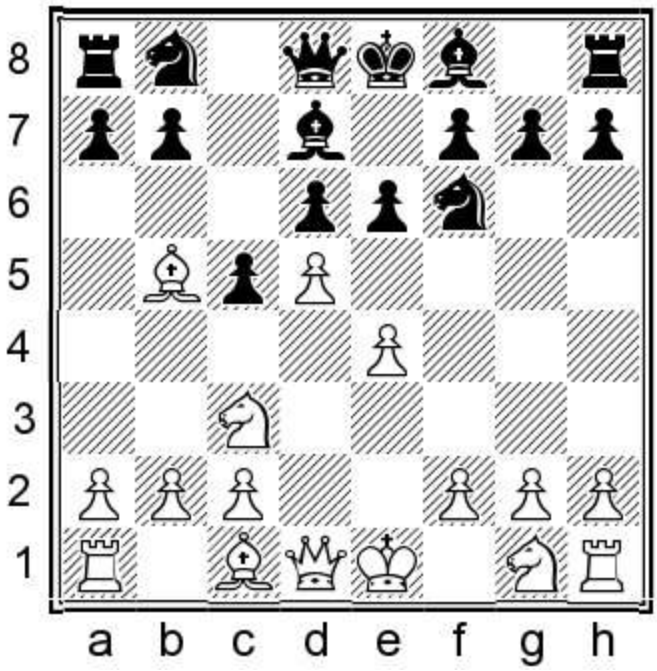
16.a4!?N 16...b4 17.♘d1 ♗e7 18.b3 g5 19.♗b2±

White keeps the better chances; his knight will come to e3 next and the c4-square will be a useful

chesstouring.com

outpost.

A2) 5...♗d7



This is a safer choice for Black than the previous variation.

6.a4

I recommend the same path as in *GM 2*, with only a few minor refinements coming later in the opening.

6...exd5

6...♗e7 7.♘f3 0-0 8.0-0 has occurred in a few games; each time, Black found nothing better than 8...exd5, when 9.exd5 transposes to our main line.

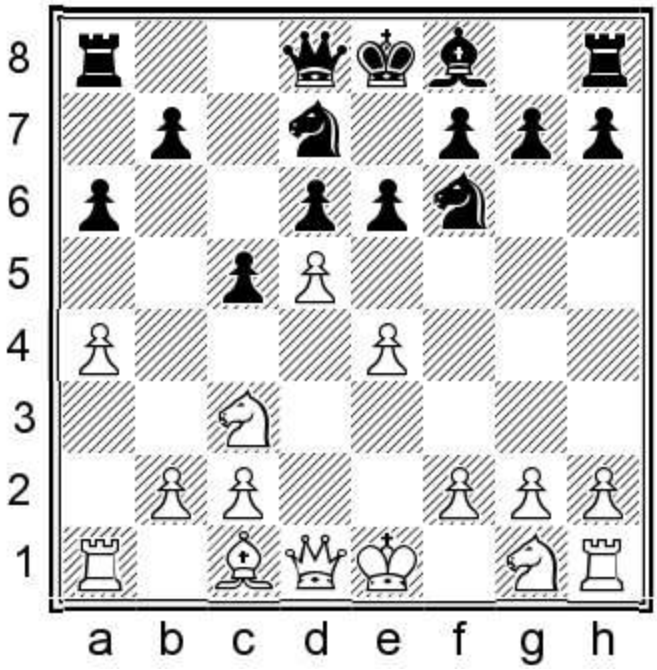
6...a6?!

This is another way for Black to maintain the central tension, but in the following line it backfires on him:

7.♗xd7† ♘bxd7

Obviously 7...♕xd7N 8.♘f3 leaves Black's queenside pieces misplaced.

chesstouring.com



8.dxe6! fxe6 9.♘f3

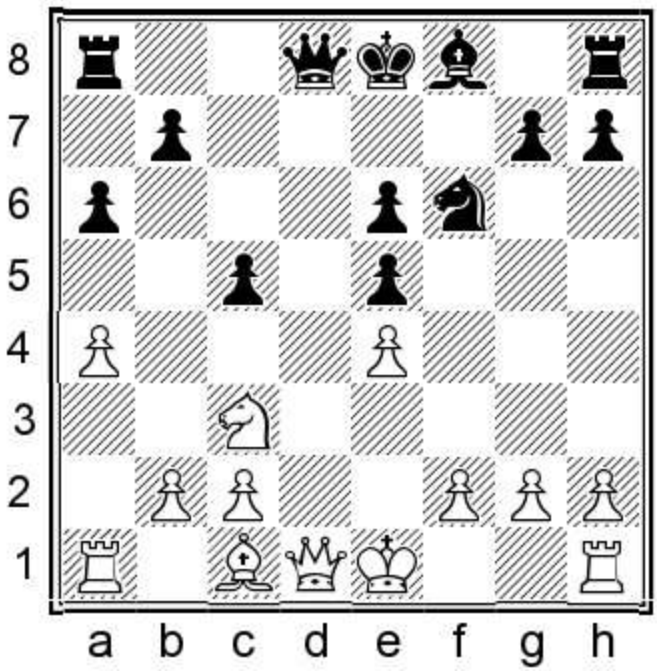
Black's pawn structure looks flexible, but in fact it's rather vulnerable.

9...♘e5

I also examined: 9...♗e7 10.0-0 h6 (Black has to make this prophylactic move, as after 10...0-0? 11.♘g5 he is already doomed) 11.♕e2 White threatens to damage the enemy structure with e4-e5, while 11...e5?! 12.♘h4 0-0 13.♘f5± only makes things worse for Black.

10.♘xe5 dxe5

Here I suggest:



11.♕xd8†N

11.♕e2 followed by ♕c4 gave White some advantage in Fulgenzi – Campos, Villa Ballester 1997, but I like the text move even more.

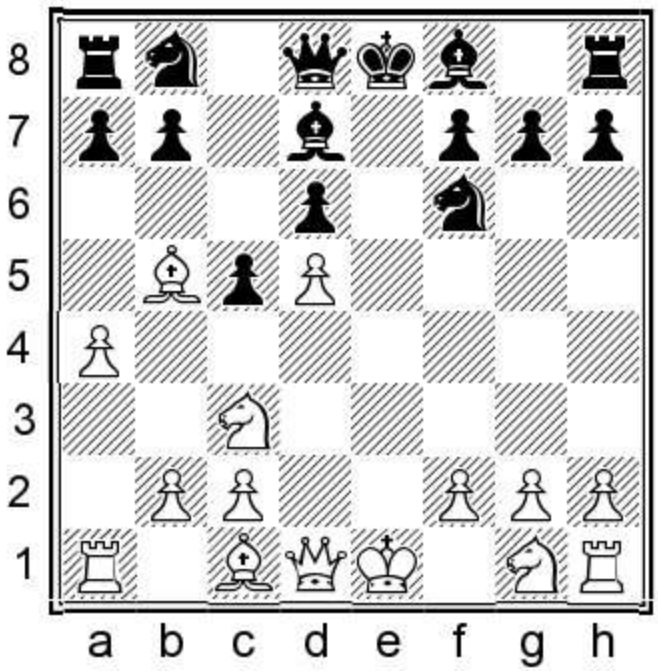
chesstouring.com

11...♖xd8 12.a5!

Black faces an unpleasant endgame due to his numerous weaknesses.

7.exd5

There is no point in trying to hold the d5-outpost: 7.♘xd5 ♘xd5 8.♕xd5 ♘c6 9.♘f3 ♗e7 10.c3 0-0 11.0-0 ♗e6 12.♕d1 d5= and Black easily solved his opening problems in Mochalov – Dyachkov, Orel 1995.



7...♗e7 8.♘f3 0-0 9.0-0 ♘a6

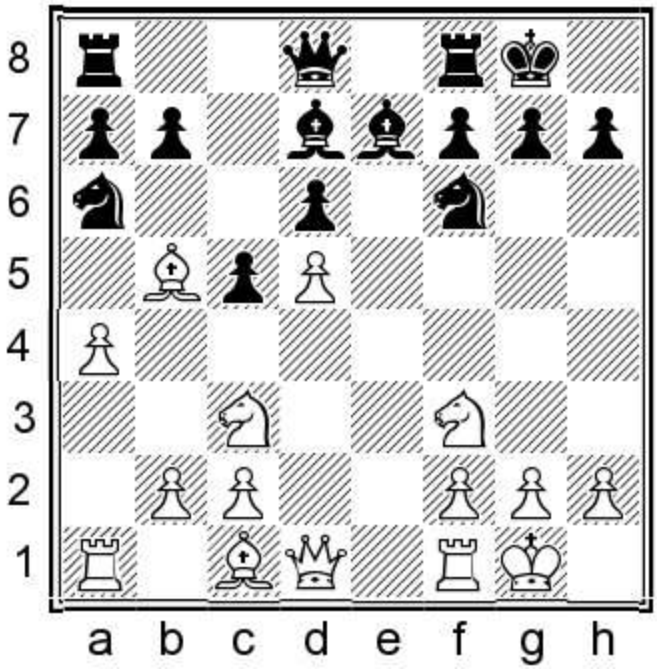
This is Black's usual choice. Here are some other options:

9...♗xb5 is a slight concession, as it enables White to activate his rook. 10.axb5 ♘bd7 11.h3 ♘b6 12.♖e1 ♖e8 This occurred in Baltar Iglesias – Bello Filgueira, Ourense 2007, and now the simple 13.♕d3N 13...h6 14.♗f4± would have retained a pleasant edge for White, thanks to his space advantage.

9...♖e8 10.h3 ♘a6 resembles our main line after: 11.♗xa6! bxa6 12.♘d2 ♖b8 13.♘c4 ♖b4 14.b3 ♕c7 15.♗f4 ♗f5 16.♖e1 White had a solid advantage in Spelec – Brunnsteiner, Graz 2004.

9...♗g4 10.a5 a6 was tried in a more recent game, but White responded well: 11.♗e2! ♘bd7 12.♘d2 ♗xe2 13.♕xe2 b5 14.axb6 ♘xb6 15.♕d3 ♖a7 16.♘c4 ♘xc4 17.♕xc4± White had a clear positional advantage in Castiglione – Bronis, Slovakia 2017.

chesstouring.com

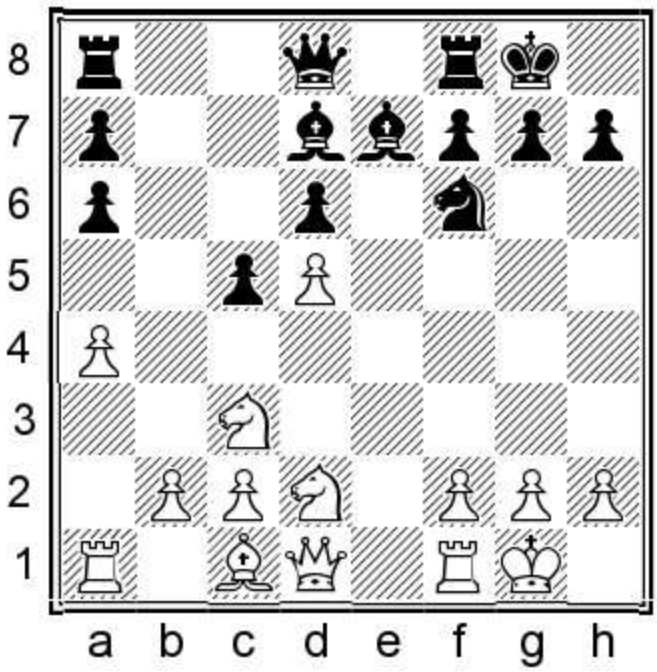


10.♗xa6!

10.♖e1 would retain a slight edge but the text move is the most principled and ambitious choice. The arising position favours White: he has a superior pawn structure and the wonderful c4-outpost for his knight, which more than makes up for the loss of the bishop pair.

10...bxa6 11.♘d2

This seems most accurate to me, although 11.b3 ♗f5 12.♘d2 ♘d7 13.♘c4 ♗f6 14.♗b2 ♘b6 15.♘e3 ♗g6 16.♕d2 ♖e8 17.a5 ♘d7 18.♘a4 also gave White a pleasant advantage in Vaganian – Agzamov, Moscow 1983.



11...♖b8 12.♘c4

chesstouring.com

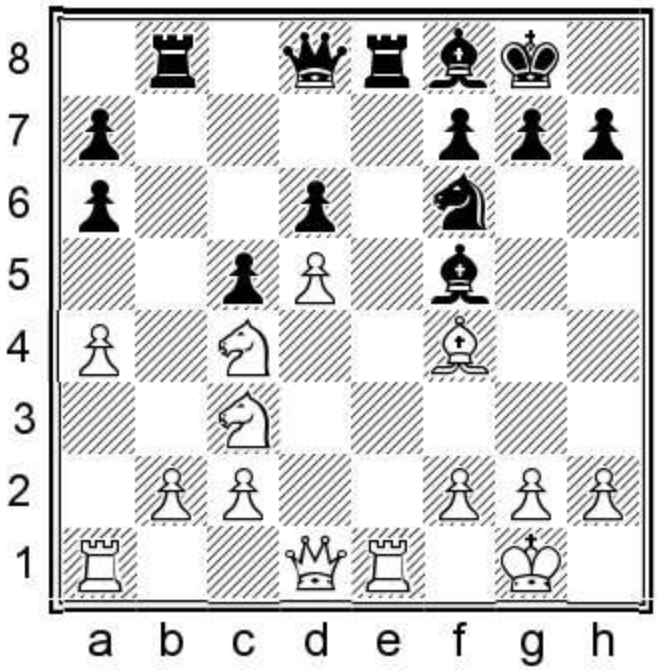
The following game is a good example of White's strategy.

12...♗f5 13.♖e1 ♖e8 14.♗f4

The d6-pawn is an important target for White's minor pieces.

14...♗f8

We have been following N. Pedersen – Ge. Papp, Budapest 2006. White has a few good options but my suggestion is:

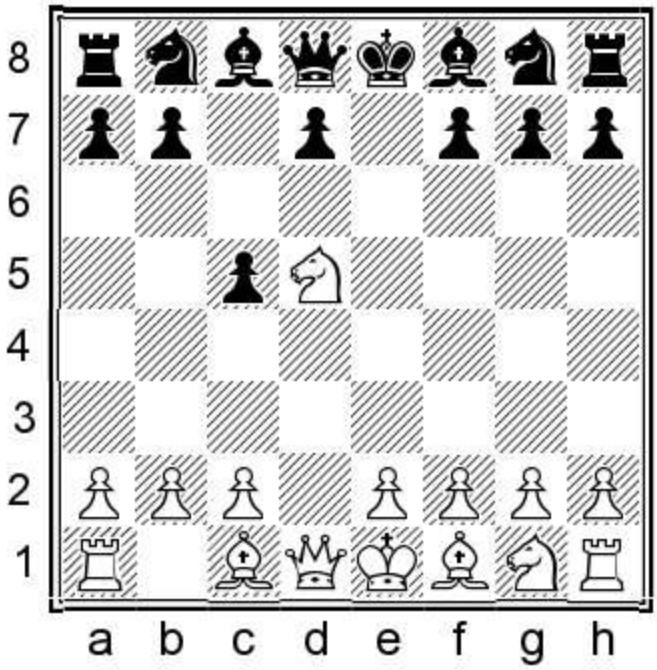


15.♕d2N

White maintains a solid advantage.

B) 3...exd5 4.♘xd5

chesstouring.com



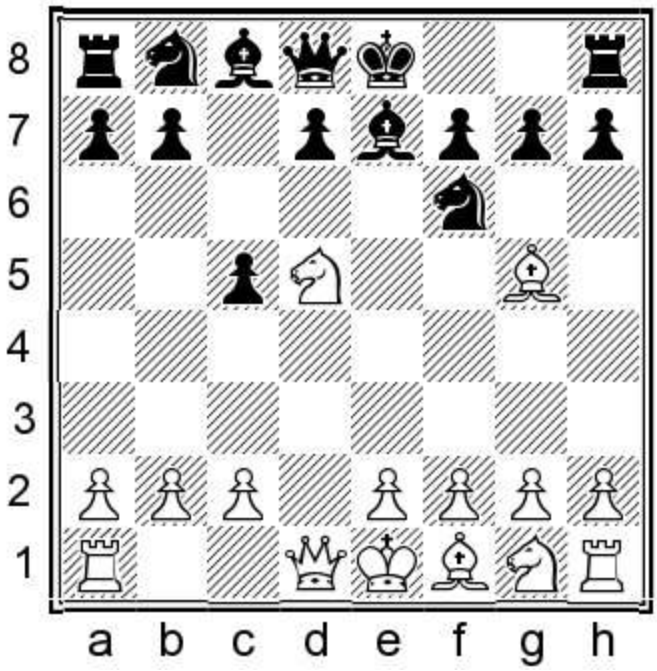
By clarifying the centre in this way, Black gives us a powerful outpost on d5 and a lot of flexibility. We will consider **B1)** 4...♘f6, **B2)** 4...♘e7 and **B3)** 4...d6.

B1) 4...♘f6

This is a slightly inaccurate move order, as it allows:

5.♗g5! ♗e7

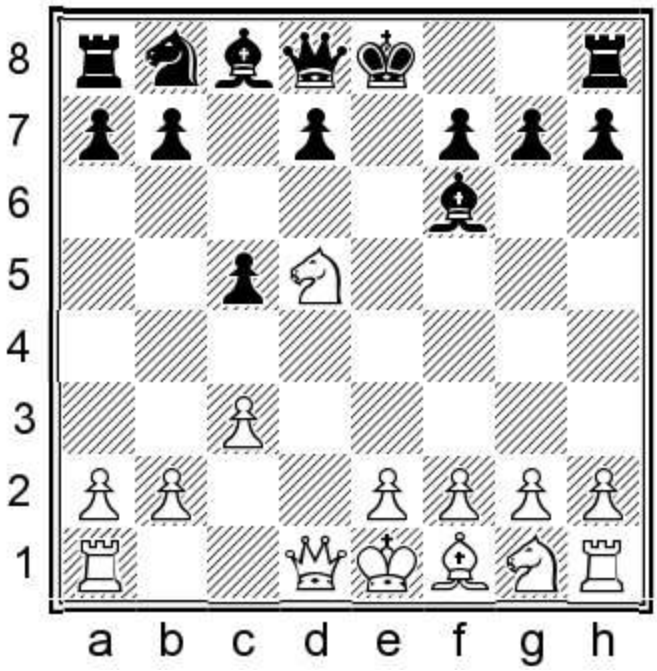
5...♕a5†?! has been played a few times but no one has found 6.b4!N 6...cxb4 7.♗xf6 gxf6 8.e3 with a powerful initiative for White.



chesstouring.com

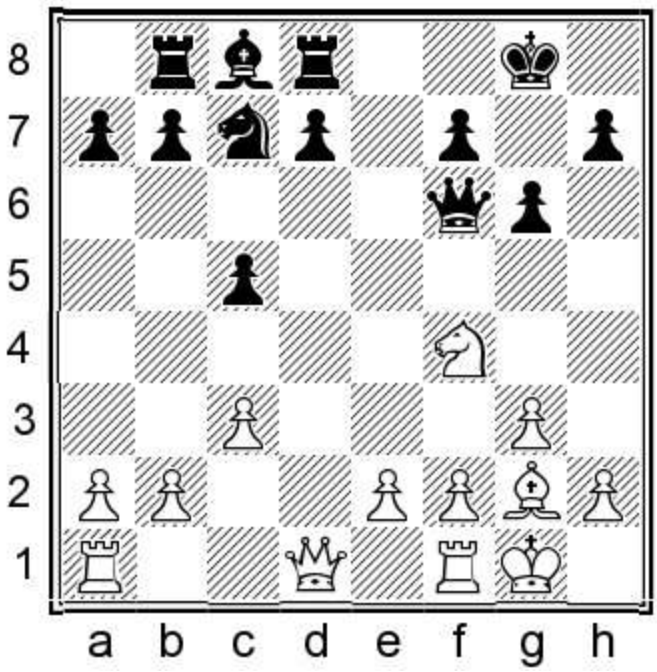
6.♗xf6 ♗xf6 7.c3

White's control over the d5-square gives him a pleasant edge, as we will see.



7...0-0 8.g3 ♘c6

8...♘a6 was tried in a more recent game but White reacted well: 9.♘h3 ♖b8 10.♗g2 g6 11.♘xf6† ♕xf6 12.♘f4 ♘c7 13.0-0 ♖d8



14.e4 d6 15.♕a4 a6 16.♖ad1 White maintained a solid edge in Cifuentes Parada – Cruz Ravina, Barcelona 2012.

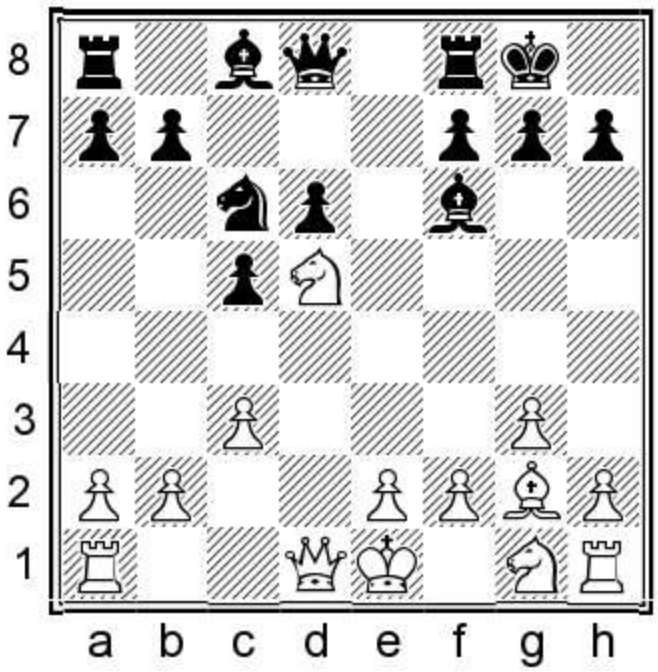
9.♗g2 d6

9...g6 occurred in Gheorghiu – Behle, Lenk 1990, when White should have played more energetically:

chesstouring.com

10.♘xf6†N (even 10.h4!?N would be worth considering) 10...♕xf6 11.♘h3± Heading to d5, with a nice advantage.

We have been following Kaps – Mrdja, Montecatini Terme 2005. I still like my previous recommendation:



10.♘f3N

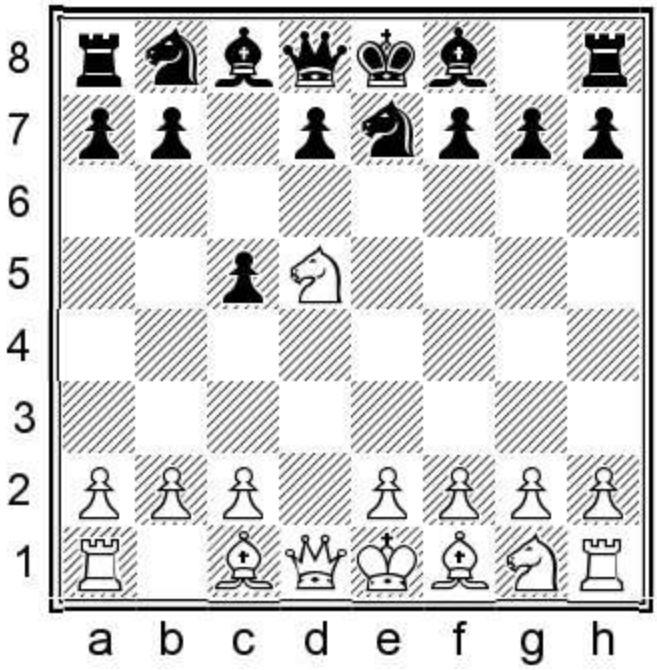
10.♘h3!? is also interesting.

10...♖e8 11.0-0 g6 12.♘d2 ♗g7 13.♘c4

White maintains a pleasant edge.

B2) 4...♘e7

chesstouring.com



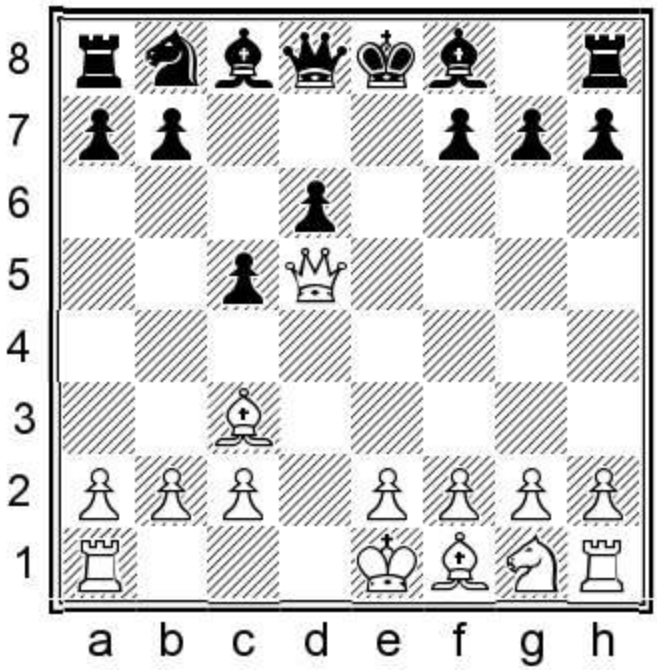
This also allows:

5.♗g5

Pinning the knight and putting Black at a crossroads.

5...♘bc6

Black cannot solve his opening problems with 5...♕a5† 6.♗d2 ♕d8 in view of 7.♗c3! ♘xd5 8.♕xd5 d6, at which point I found a nice improvement over Vaganian – Quinteros, Biel 1985:

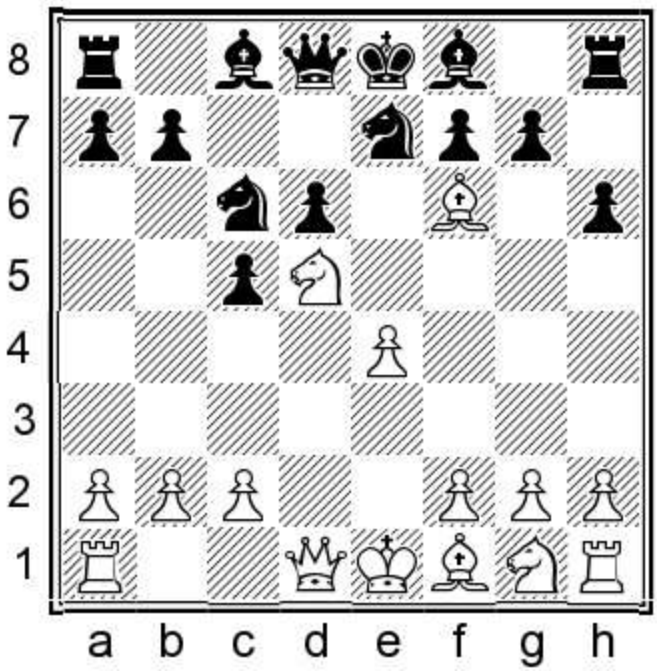


9.♘h3!N The knight takes the most direct route towards the d5-square. 9...♘c6 (9...♗xh3? 10.♕xb7 wins a pawn – although even if this tactic was not available, the simple 10.gxh3 would give White a clear positional edge) 10.♘f4 ♕e7 11.e3 ♗e6 12.♕f3 0-0-0 13.0-0-0± White has obviously won the opening

chesstouring.com

battle.

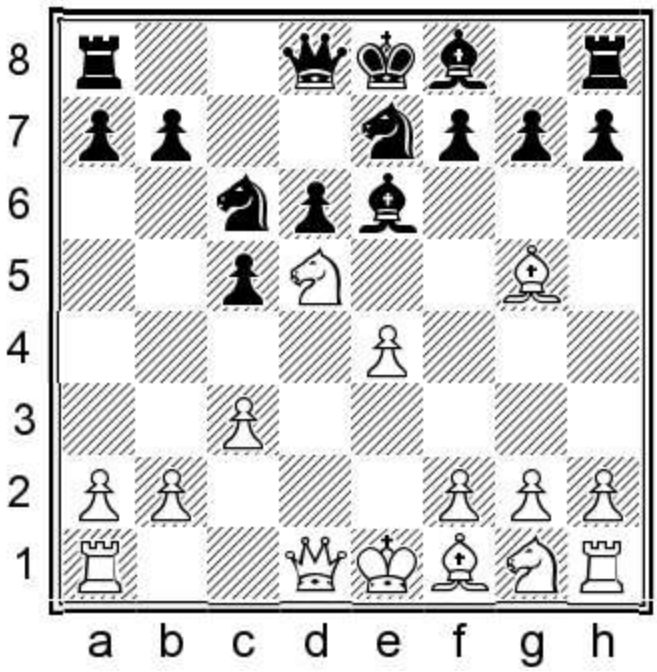
5...h6 is met by the remarkable 6.♗f6! when it is not easy to get rid of the pin. 6...♘bc6 7.e4 d6 occurred in Khalifman – Katalymov, Bad Woerishofen 1996, when White should have played:



8.♘e2!N 8...♗e6 9.♘ef4 Black is under serious pressure.

6.e4 d6 7.c3 ♗e6

In Akselrod – Katalymov, Tomsk 2003, White should have continued:

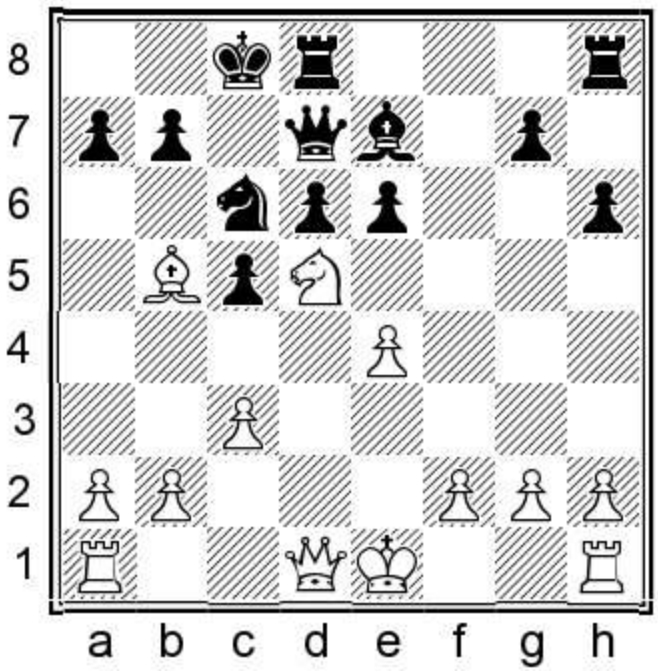


8.♘e2!N 8...♕d7 9.♘ef4 0-0-0 10.♗b5 h6 11.♗xe7 ♗xe7 12.♘xe6

12.0-0 ♗g5 13.b4↑ is also worthy of consideration.

chesstouring.com

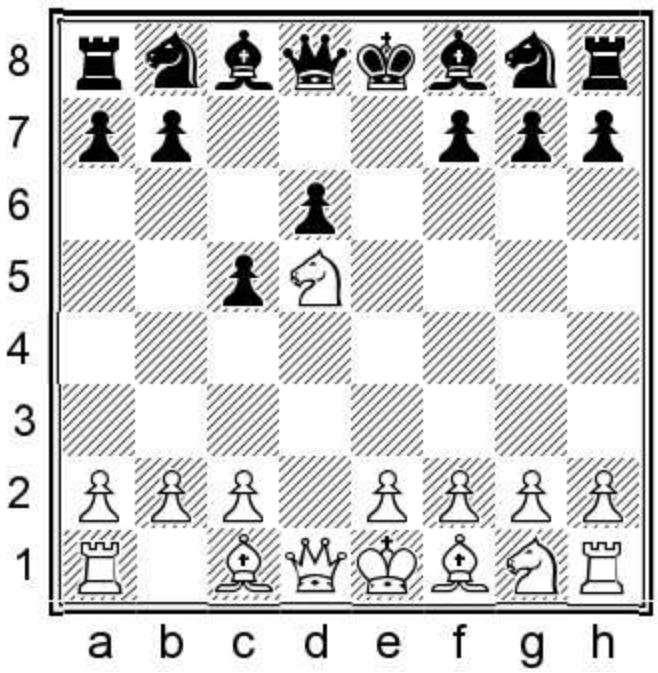
12...fxe6



13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.♘xe7† ♕xe7 15.0-0

Black is clearly worse due to the exposed position of his king, and White has the simple plan of opening lines with ♖b1 and b2-b4.

B3) 4...d6



5.g3!?

5.e4 transposes to variation C1 below, and 5.♘f3 is also common. However, when Black chooses this particular move order, I believe White should take the opportunity to increase his control over the d5-square by fianchettoing his bishop.

chesstouring.com

5...♘f6

5...♘e7 occurred in Abramovic – Vegh, Satu Mare 2018, when 6.♘h3!N would have been best. A sample line is 6...♘xd5 7.♕xd5 ♘c6 8.c3 ♗e6 9.♕d1 d5 10.♘f4± and White remains better.

6.♘xf6†!N

6.♗g2 ♘xd5 7.♗xd5 ♘c6 8.♘f3 ♗e6 was less convincing in Fedorovsky – Billerbeck, Internet 2004.

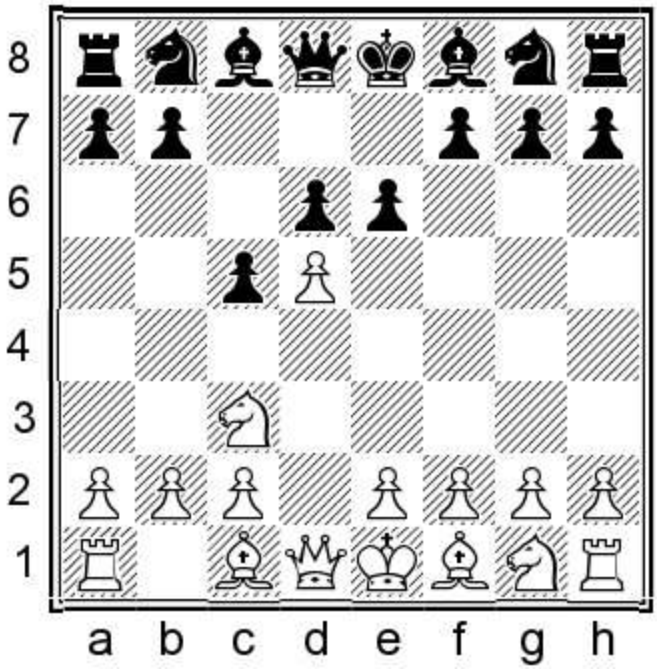
6...♕xf6 7.♘h3!

This is the key follow-up to White's previous move. The knight is heading for f4, establishing control over the d5-square. For instance:

7...♘c6 8.♗g2 ♕d8 9.♘f4 ♗e7 10.c3 0-0 11.0-0

White keeps a pleasant positional advantage.

C) 3...d6



4.e4

We will consider **C1)** 4...exd5, followed by **C2)** 4...a6.

4...♘f6 takes us back to variation A.

C1) 4...exd5 5.♘xd5 ♘f6

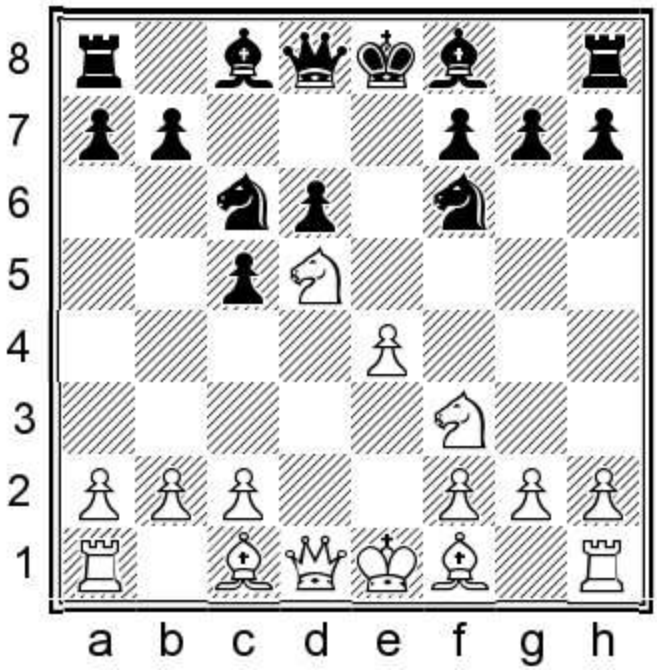
This seems like Black's best try.

chesstouring.com

I also considered:

5...♘c6 6.♘f3 ♘f6

No better is: 6...♗e6 7.♗c4 ♘f6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♘g5! ♗xd5 10.exd5 ♘e5 11.♗b5† ♔f8 (the problem for Black is that 11...♘ed7 runs into 12.♘e6! fxe6 13.dxe6 0-0 14.exd7 with a serious advantage) 12.f4 ♘ed7 13.♗e2 h6 14.♘f3± White was obviously better in Wehmeier – Mrdja, Cesenatico 2001.

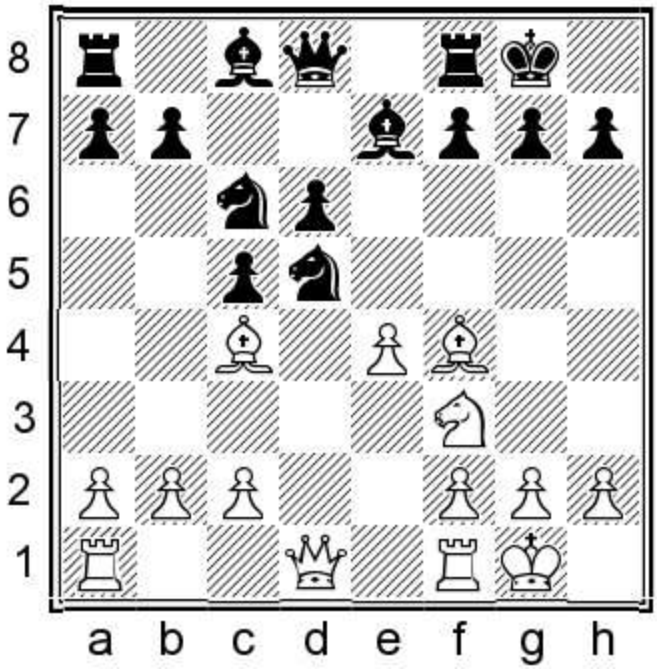


7.♗c4 ♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♗f4!

Forcing Black's reply.

9...♘xd5

Obviously 9...♘xe4? is impossible in view of 10.♖e1 and Black loses material.



chesstouring.com

10.exd5!N

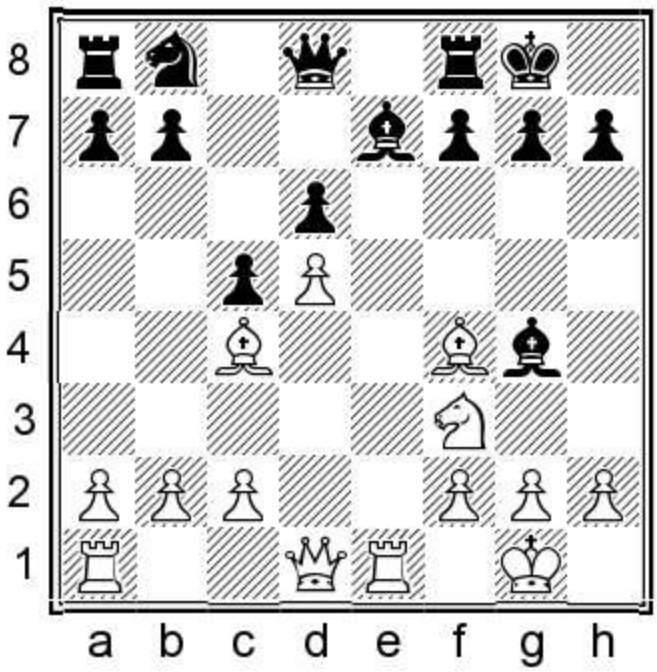
I find this more convincing than 10.♗xd5 ♘b4 11.♗b3 ♗e6 12.♕e2 ♕d7 13.♖ad1 ♖ad8 when White was only slightly better in Killer – Wettering, corr. 2011.

10...♘b8

10...♘a5 11.♗d3 leaves Black's knight poorly placed.

11.♖e1 ♗g4

11...♘d7 is met by the unpleasant 12.♕e2! with the following point: 12...♘b6 13.♕xe7 ♘xc4 14.♕e4! ♘b6 15.♘g5 g6 16.♗d2!± With a dangerous attack.



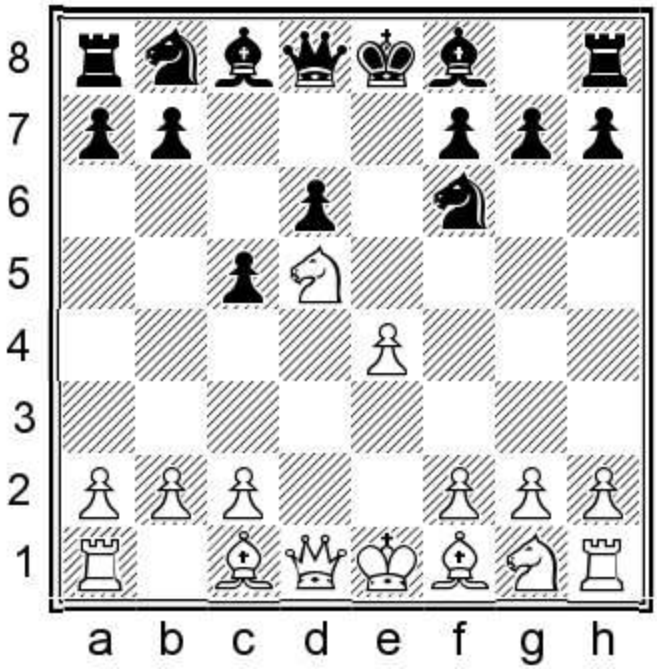
12.♕d3

12.h3!? is also not bad.

12...♘d7 13.♘d2

White's chances are much better, thanks to his space advantage.

chesstouring.com



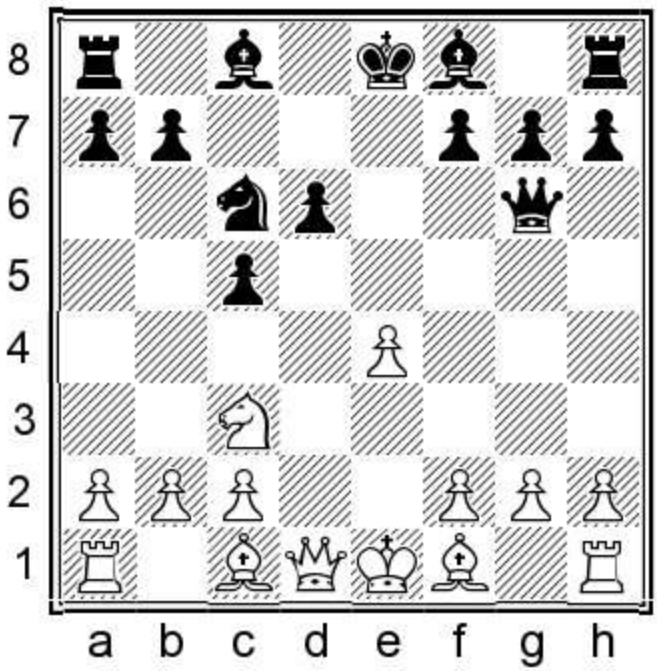
6.♘xf6†!

I now prefer this move over 6.♘f3, which was my previous recommendation.

6...♕xf6 7.♘e2!

This innovation from Lenderman is the key follow-up to the previous move. The knight is heading towards the d5-square.

7...♘c6 8.♘c3 ♕g6



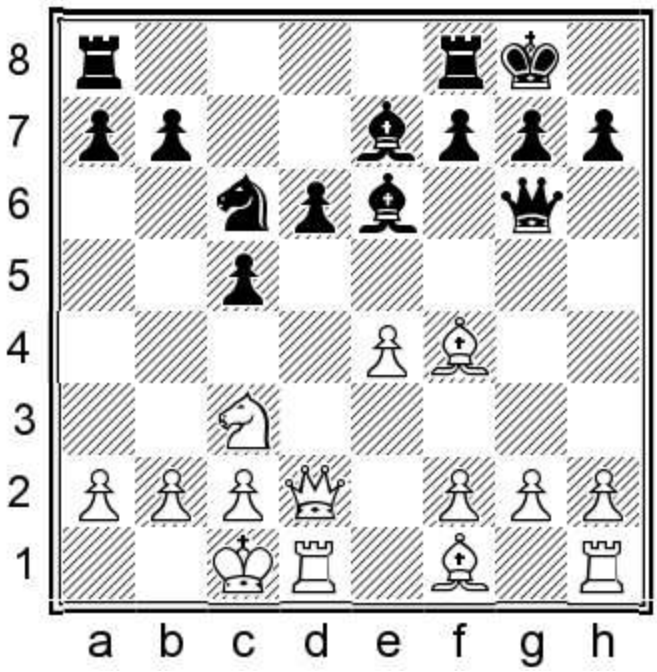
9.♗f4

9.h4!?N looks like an interesting alternative.

chesstouring.com

9...♗e6 10.♕d2 ♗e7 11.0-0-0 0-0

We have been following Lenderman – Bryant, Las Vegas 2010. Here White missed a powerful idea:



12.h4!N 12...f5

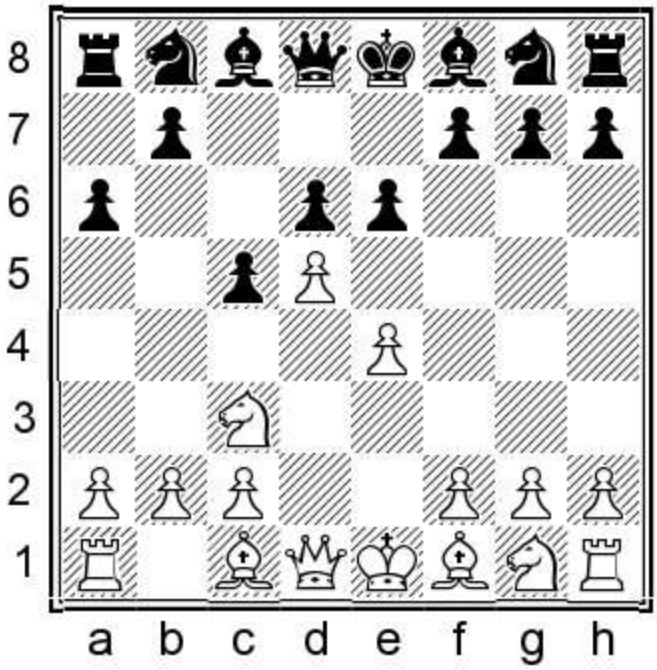
12...h5 can be met by 13.♗xd6 ♖ad8 14.♕f4± and White is a pawn up; note that the pawn on h4 prevents Black from winning the queen with ...♗g5.

13.h5 ♕f7 14.exf5 ♕xf5 15.g3 ♘d4 16.♗g2±

White is much better.

C2) 4...a6

chesstouring.com



This seems like Black's most flexible choice.

5.a4

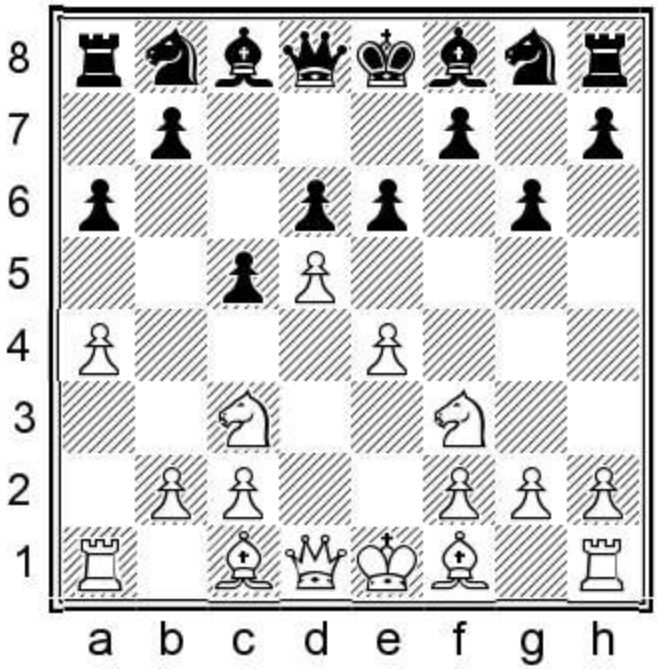
Even though ...b5 was not necessarily a big threat, it is useful to prevent it while keeping all options open for the other pieces. In particular, White can consider developing his bishop on c4 now that he does not have to worry about ...b5.

Black has three main ideas: **C21)** 5...g6, **C22)** 5...exd5 and **C23)** 5...♘f6.

5...♗e7 hardly changes anything. The simplest reply is 6.♗c4, when Black hardly has anything better than 6...♘f6, which transposes to the note to Black's 6th move in variation C23 below.

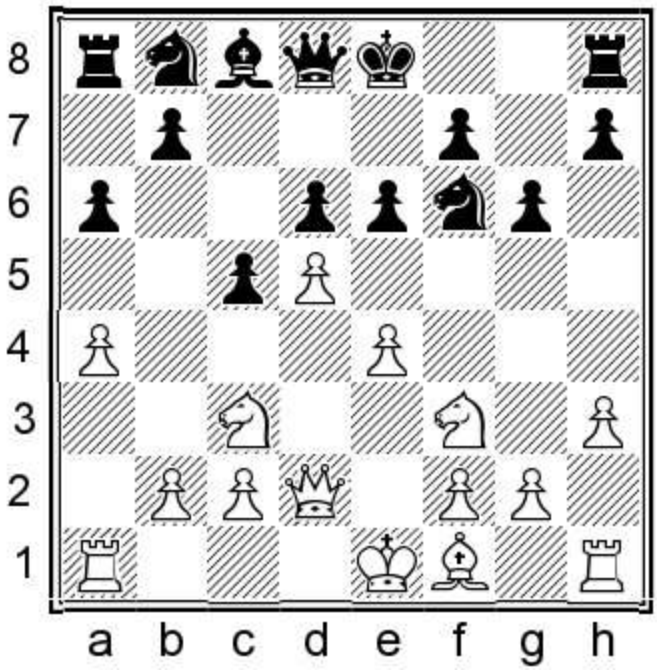
C21) 5...g6 6.♘f3

chesstouring.com



6...♗g7

6...♗h6?! was a strange choice in Stohl – Lanc, Czechoslovakia 1990. White could have obtained a big advantage with: 7.♗xh6N 7...♘xh6 8.♕d2 ♘g4 9.h3 ♘f6



10.dxe6 ♗xe6 11.0-0-0± The d6-pawn falls.

7.♗c4!

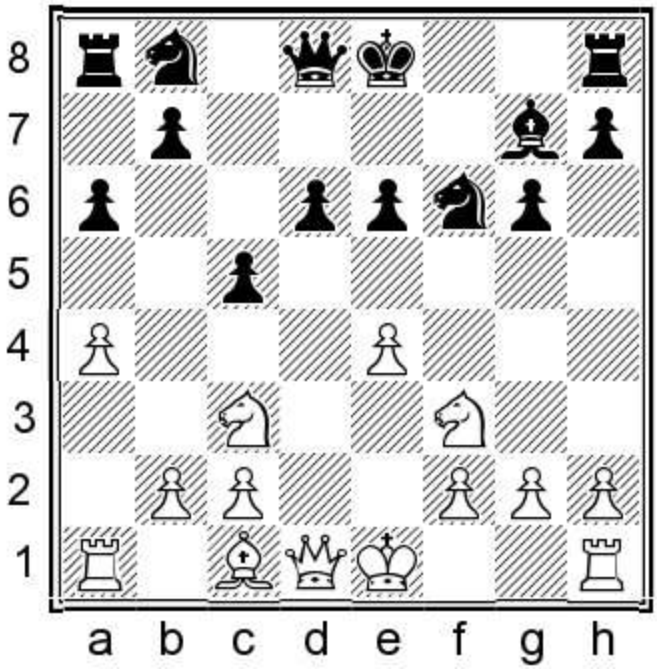
7.dxe6 ♗xe6 8.♗f4 does not work in view of the annoying 8...♕b6! 9.♖b1 ♘c6 with decent counterplay for Black.

7...e5

chesstouring.com

7...exd5? 8.♕xd5! ♕e7 9.♘g5 ♘h6 10.♗f4± is much better for White.

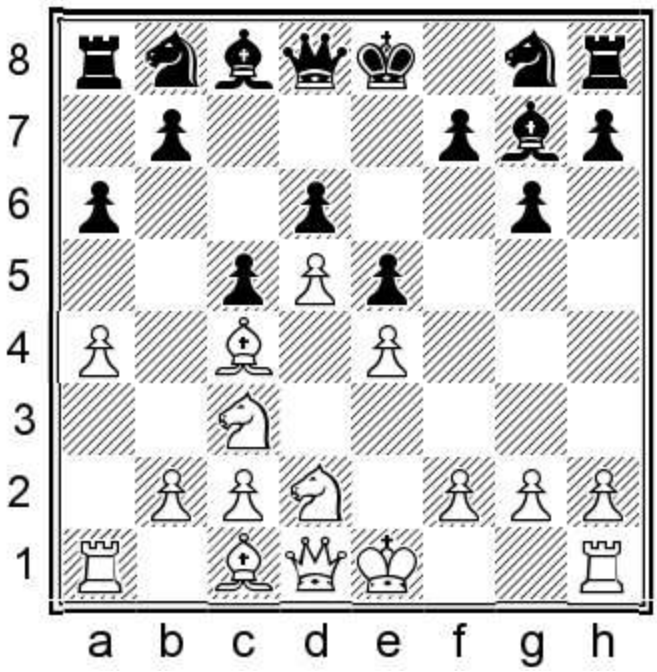
7...♘f6?! allows 8.dxe6! ♗xe6 9.♗xe6 fxe6 as in Malyszek – Meyer, email 2014, when White should have continued with the simple and strong:



10.e5!N 10...dxe5 11.♕xd8† ♔xd8 12.♘xe5 With an obvious advantage.

8.♘d2

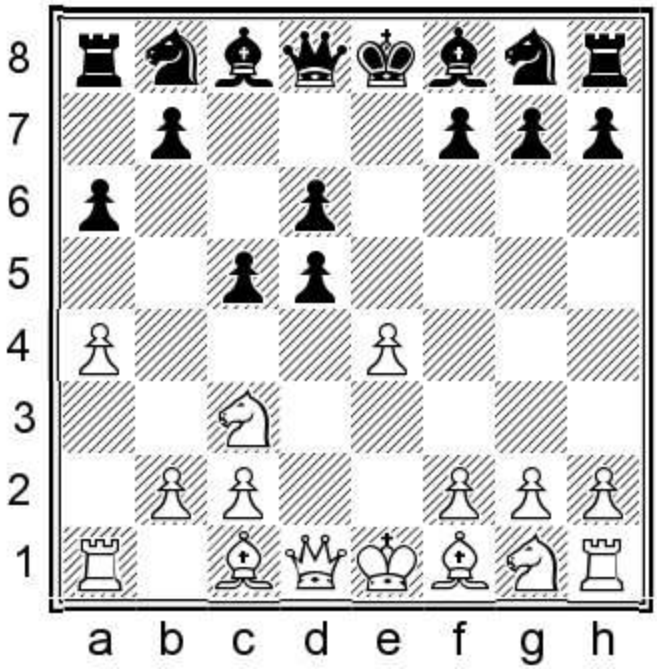
A model game continued:



8...♘e7 9.♗e2 ♘d7 10.a5! b5 11.axb6 ♘xb6 12.♘a4 ♗d7 13.♘xb6 ♕xb6 14.♘c4 ♕b8 15.f4!±

White obtained a serious advantage in Prusikin – Bade, Nuremberg 2005.

chesstouring.com



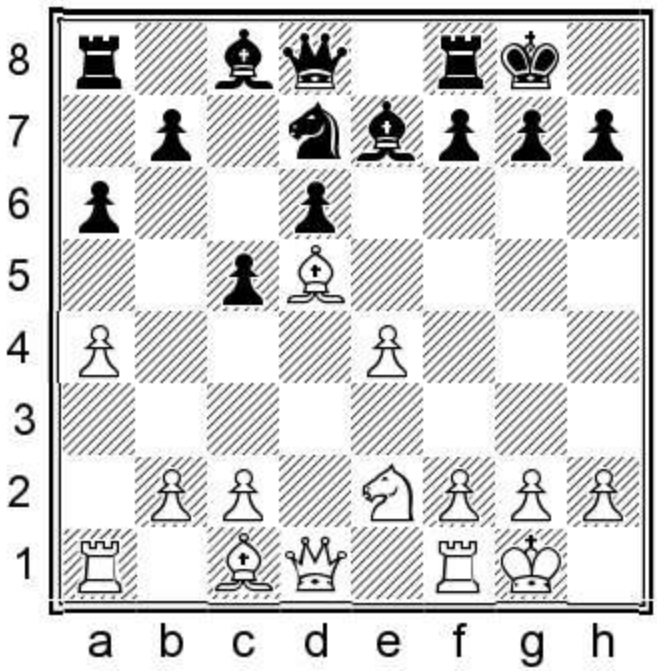
6.♘xd5

6.exd5?! would justify Black's opening play after 6...g6 when his knight may be developed to e7 – exactly what we should strive to avoid.

The text move is much more consistent with our strategy.

6...♘f6

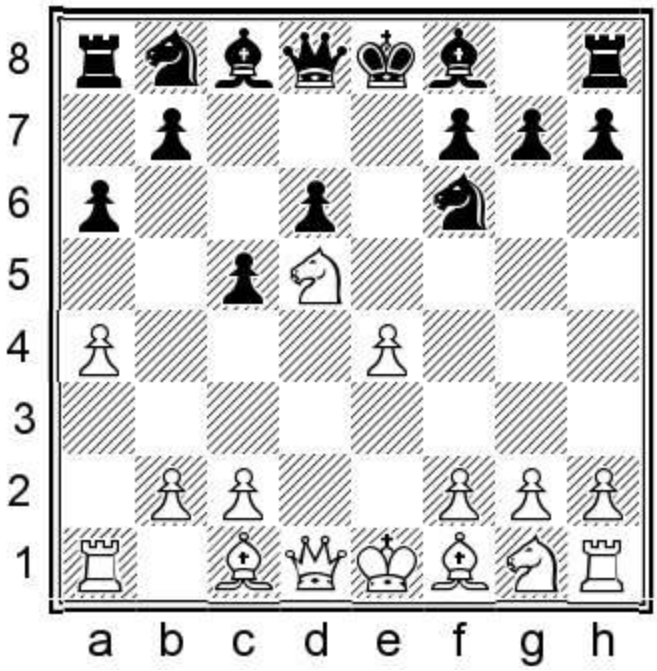
6...♘e7 7.♗c4 leaves Black without many options. 7...♘xd5 8.♗xd5 ♗e7 9.♘e2! (more accurate than 9.♘f3) 9...0-0 10.0-0 ♘d7 This occurred in Schlosser – Zelcic, Passau 1994, when White should have continued:



11.a5!N 11...♖b8 12.♗f4 ♘f6 13.♘c3 ♗e6 14.♖e1 With a pleasant advantage.

chesstouring.com

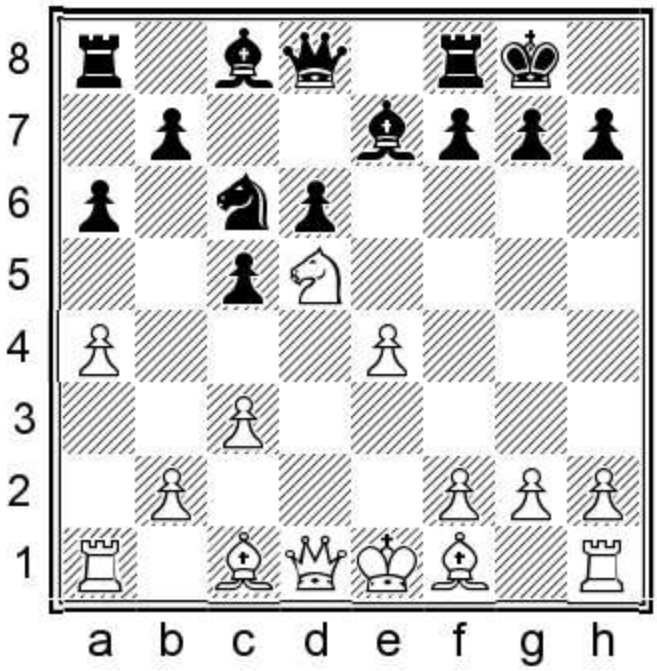
We have been following Maciejczak – Fraczek, Mrzezyno 2011. I believe White can improve upon the game, not to mention my own analysis from *GM 2*, by means of:



7.♘xf6†N 7...♕xf6 8.♘e2!

Aiming for d5 as usual. Here is an illustrative line:

8...♘c6 9.♘f4 ♕d8 10.♘d5 ♗e7 11.c3 0-0

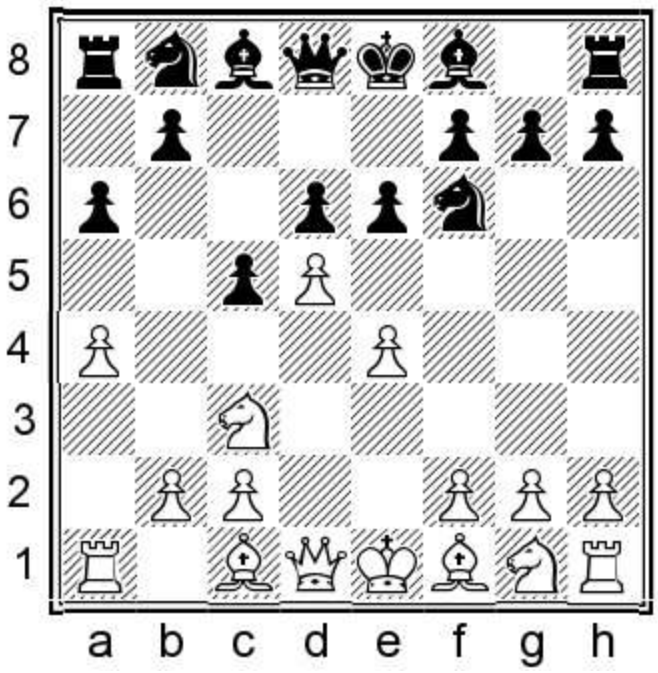


12.♗e2 ♗e6 13.0-0 ♖e8 14.♗e3±

White keeps a pleasant advantage.

chesstouring.com

C23) 5...♘f6



6.♗c4!

It is important to deploy the bishop on its best square.

6...exd5

6...♗e7 does not change much after 7.♘ge2 0-0N (or 7...exd5 8.♘xd5N) 8.0-0 exd5 8...e5 9.a5 is promising for White) 9.♘xd5 and we transpose to our main line.

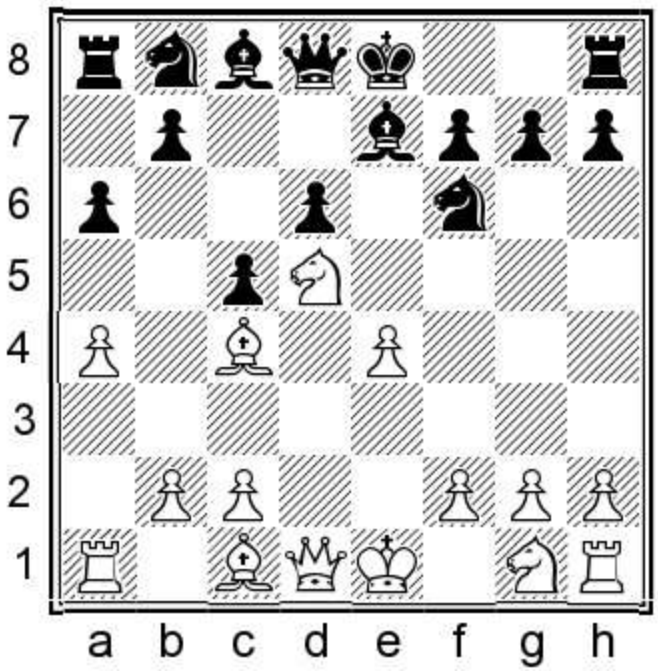
7.♘xd5

As usual, we will strive to maintain control over the d5-outpost.

7...♗e7

7...♘c6 occurred in Kauranen – Pietinen, Finland 2015, and now (instead of the harmless 8.♗g5) I suggest 8.♘e2!N 8...♗e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♘ec3 ♖e8 11.♖e1 with ongoing positional pressure.

chesstouring.com



8.♘e2!N

In Hellmayr – Wagner, Austria 2014, White played 8.f3 before developing the knight to e2, but it is no problem to sacrifice the central pawn.

8...0-0

After 8...♘xe4 White can either transpose to the main line below with 9.0-0 0-0 or try 9.♖a3!?, which also looks promising.

9.0-0 ♘xe4

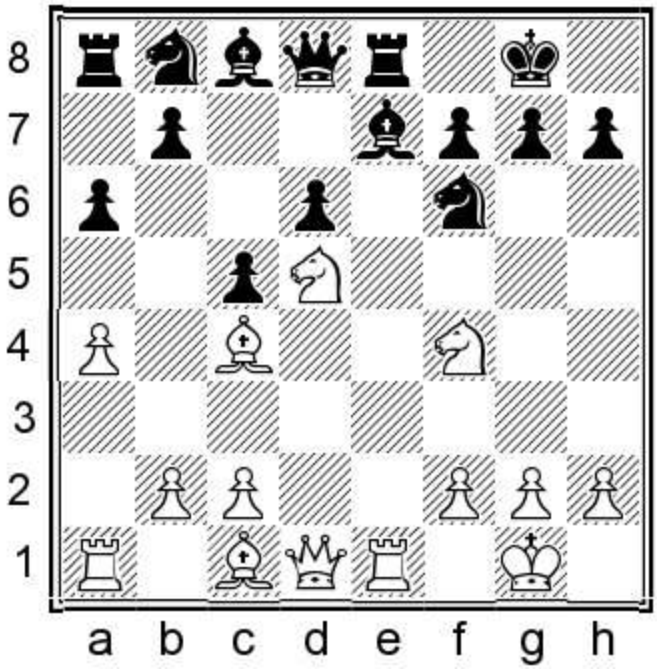
9...♘c6 transposes to the note on 7...♘c6 above.

9...♘bd7 10.♗f4 looks great for White as well.

Taking the pawn is an important option for us to consider, but White has a number of interesting ways to develop his initiative. Here is one such line:

10.♖e1 ♖e8 11.♘ef4 ♘f6

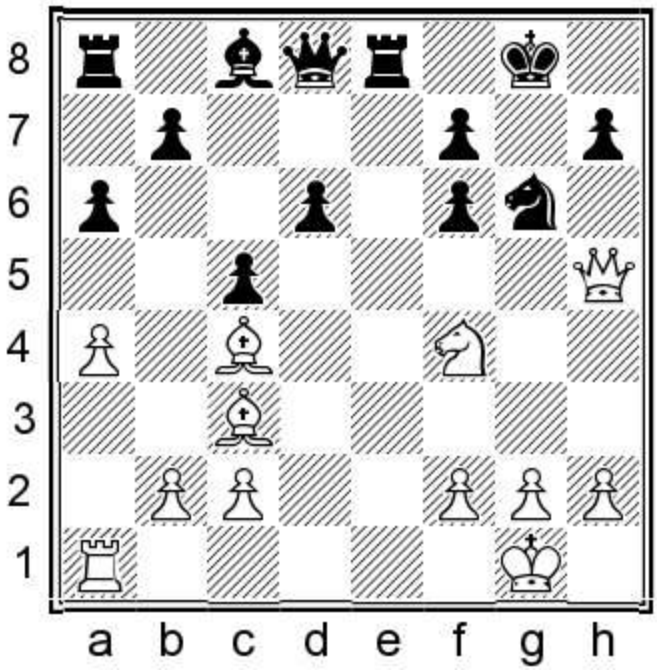
chesstouring.com



12.♗d2!

White has dangerous tactical ideas, for instance:

12...♘c6 13.♖xe7! ♘xe7 14.♘xf6† gxf6 15.♗c3 ♘g6 16.♕h5



With a powerful attack.

Conclusion

This chapter dealt with an assortment of lines after 1.d4 c5 2.d5 e6 3.♘c3. First we had 3...♘f6 4.e4 d6, when 5.♗b5†!? offers White good prospects, although his subsequent plans depend very much on which

minor piece Black moves to d7.

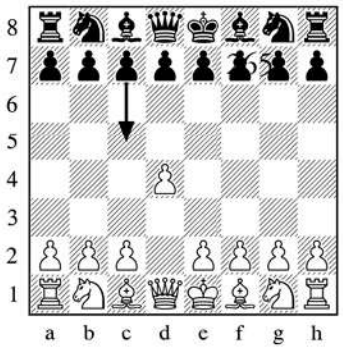
Next we looked at 3...exd5 4.♘xd5, which does not seem like a good choice for Black, since the early clarification of the pawn structure offers White an outpost on d5 and many good options. To maximize his chances, he should keep in mind the possibility of developing the g1-knight via h3 rather than f3, in order to reinforce his control over d5.

Finally, 3...d6 seems like Black's most flexible option, which we meet with 4.e4. Then 4...exd5 5.♘xd5 gives White a pleasant position, even if the early e2-e4 means he loses some options compared with the earlier variation B3. Instead it looks preferable for Black to throw in 4...a6 to provoke 5.a4, when at least Black no longer has to worry about a troublesome check on b5. Nevertheless, my analysis shows that White keeps the better prospects here as well.

chesstouring.com



Benoni Systems



Miscellaneous Lines

Variation Index

1.d4

A) 1...c5 2.d5 266

A1) 2...b5 3.e4 266

A11) 3...♕b6 266

A12) 3...a6 267

A2) 2...f5 3.e4! fxe4 4.♘c3 ♘f6 5.g4! h6 6.♗g2 270

A21) 6...e6 271

A22) 6...e5 272

A23) 6...d6 273

B) 1...e6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 exd5 4.cxd5 d6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♘f3 274

B1) 6...♗g7 275

B2) 6...a6 7.a4 ♗g7 8.g3 277

B21) 8...♘h6 277

B22) 8...♘e7 278

chesstouring.com

A21) after 8...exd5



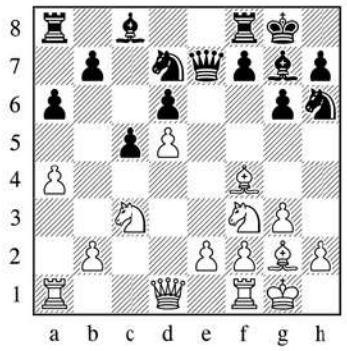
9.♘f4!N

B1) after 12...♗g4



13.♗e3!N

B21) after 11...♕e7



12.♖b1!N

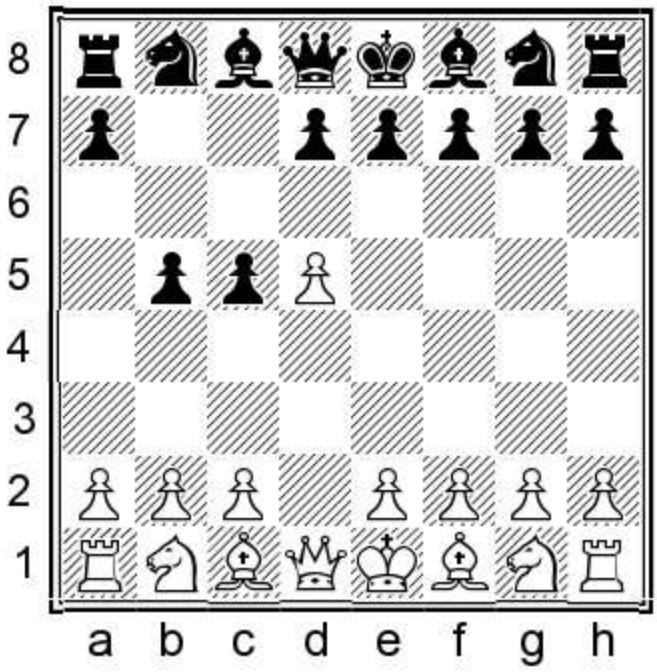
1.d4

This chapter will deal with a final few Benoni variants which did not fit into any of the previous chapters. We will start by looking at a couple of rare options after **A)** 1...c5, before finishing with **B)** 1...e6 2.c4 c5, which can lead to a Modern Benoni structure where Black develops the g8-knight to a square other than f6.

A) 1...c5 2.d5

We will analyse two deservedly rare options: **A1)** 2...b5 and **A2)** 2...f5.

A1) 2...b5



Rather a dubious concept, allowing White to take over the centre. No wonder that this move is hardly ever used by serious players.

chesstouring.com

3.e4

We will consider **A11)** 3...♕b6 followed by the more popular **A12)** 3...a6.

A11) 3...♕b6 4.a4!

Black already has to make a tough choice.

4...b4

The alternative is:

4...bxa4

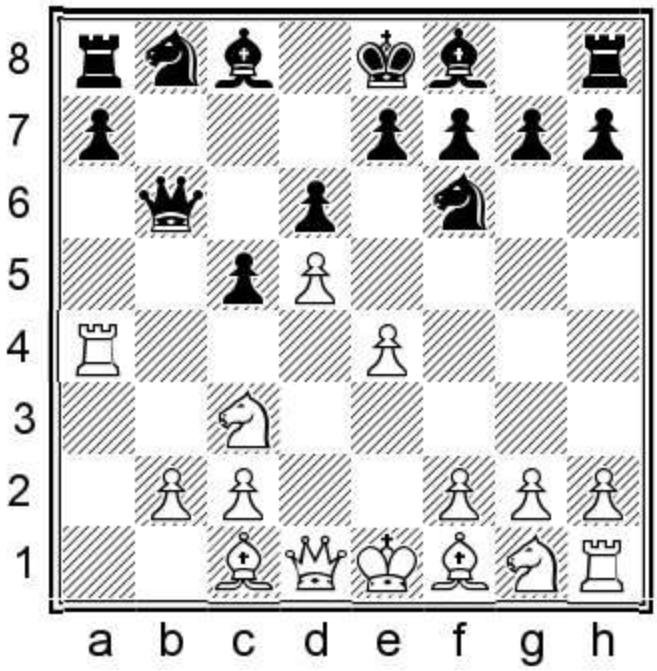
Damaging the queenside structure is a clear positional concession. A nice example continued:

5.♖xa4

5.♘c3 is also fine.

5...d6 6.♘c3 ♘f6?!

6...g6N was the lesser evil, though after 7.♘f3 ♗g7 8.♗e2 ♘d7 9.0-0 ♘gf6 10.♘d2 White is clearly better.



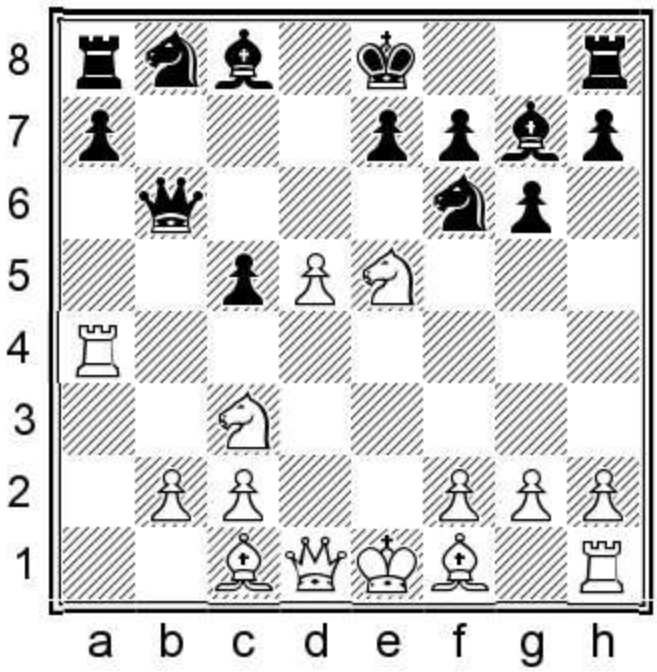
7.♘f3 g6 8.e5!

This thematic pawn break puts Black in serious trouble.

8...dxe5 9.♘xe5 ♗g7

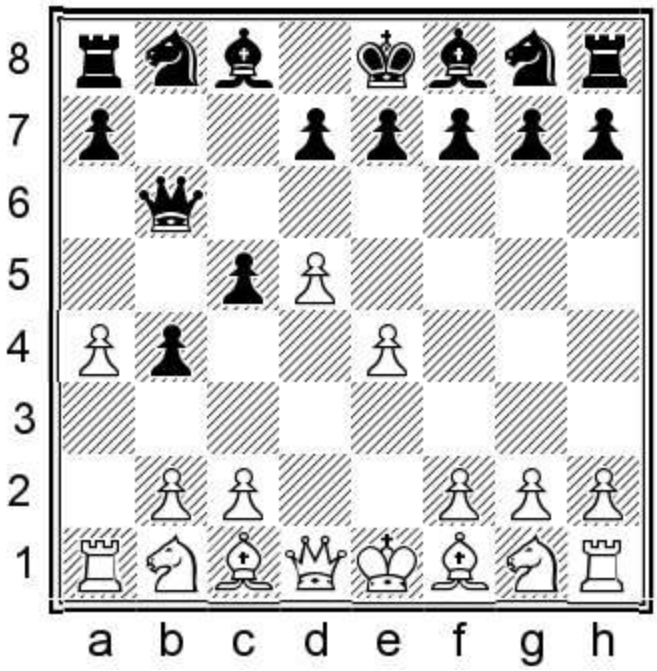
In Loncar – Radulovic, Sibenik 2008, a simple and strong follow-up would have been:

chesstouring.com



10.♗e2N 10...0-0 11.0-0 ♗b7 12.♖a3! ♘a6 13.♗f4±

White obviously has a great position.



5.♘d2

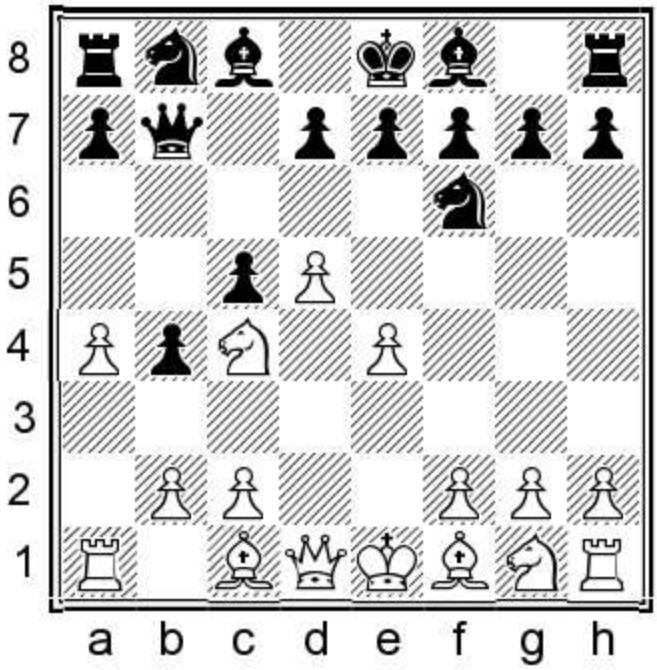
White's knight is heading for the perfect c4-square.

5...d6

Other moves make it harder for Black to complete development. For instance:

5...♘f6? 6.♘c4 ♕b7

chesstouring.com

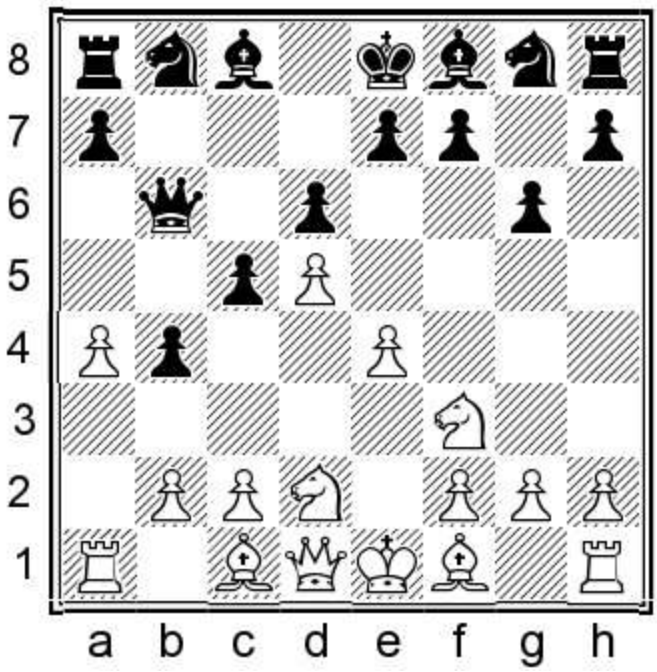


7.e5! ♘g8 (White's central pawn is untouchable, as 7...♘xd5? 8.♘a5 wins) 8.f4 White had a huge advantage in Covlea – Bogza, Bucharest 1994.

5...♗a6 6.♘c4 ♕g6 7.♕f3! d6 8.♘h3 ♘d7 9.♗f4 (threatening ♘xd6†) also posed massive problems to Black in Birjukov – Porozhniak, Golubitskaya 2014.

6.♘gf3 g6

This position has occurred in a couple of games. White's most powerful continuation is:



7.♗b5†N 7...♗d7 8.♘c4 ♕b7 9.e5!

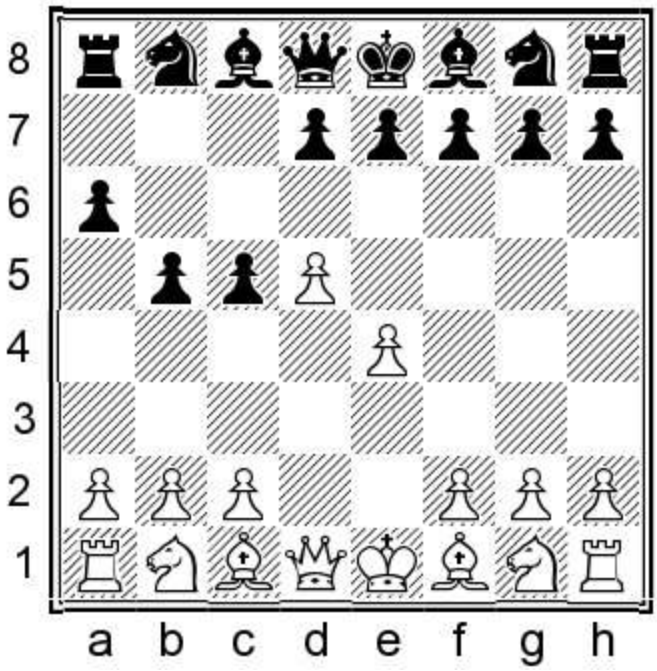
With the following idea:

chesstouring.com

9...♗xb5 10.axb5 ♕xb5 11.♕e2+–

Black's position collapses.

A12) 3...a6



4.a4

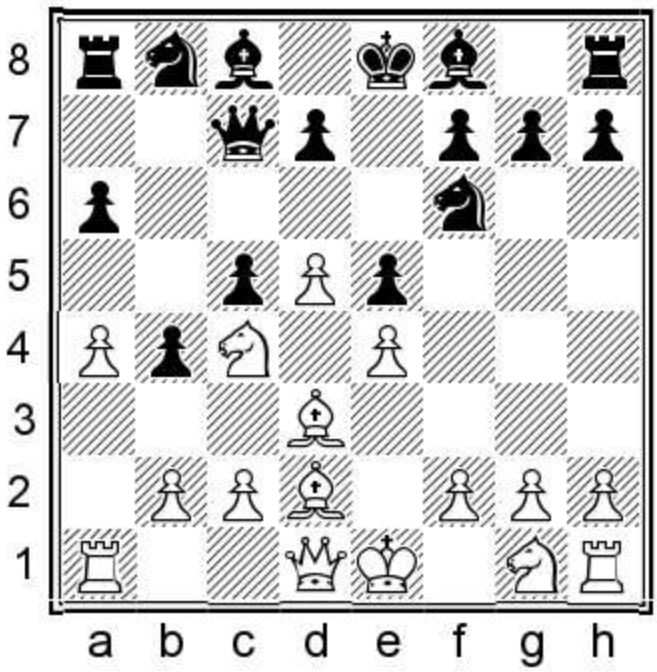
Once again, this is White's key positional idea to win control of c4 and soften Black's queenside.

4...b4

Black hardly has any other playable moves.

4...♕a5†? 5.♗d2 b4 is pointless in view of 6.♘a3!, when Black fails to prevent the knight from coming to c4 and White gains a lot of time. 6...♘f6 7.♗d3 e5 8.♘c4 ♕c7 has occurred twice in practice, but both times White missed the strongest continuation:

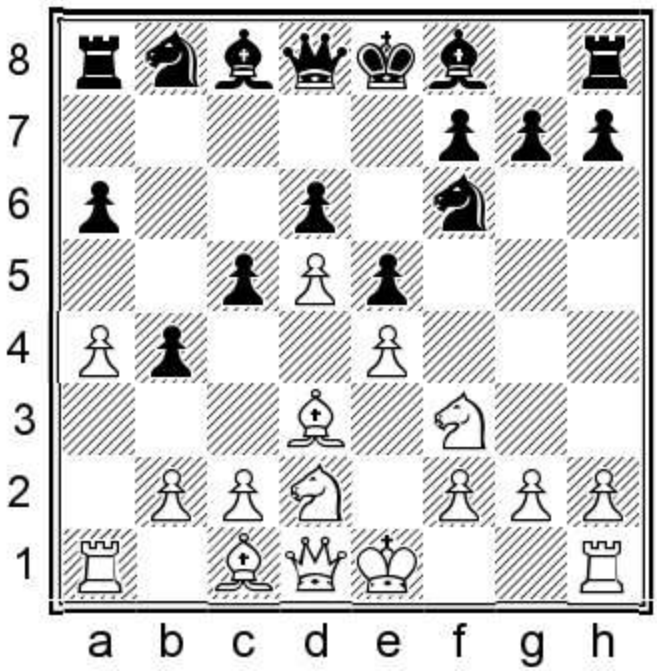
chesstouring.com



9.f4!N 9...d6 (9...exf4 runs into 10.♕e2! d6 11.♗xf4 when Black cannot prevent the decisive e4-e5 break) 10.fxe5 dxe5 11.♘f3 ♗g4 12.0-0 ♘bd7 13.♕e1+– Black's position will soon collapse.

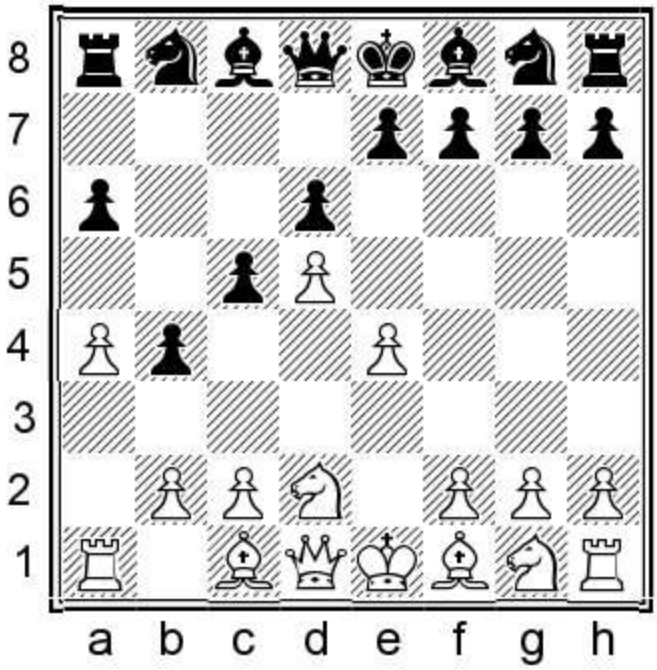
5.♘d2 d6

It is also worth checking what happens if Black develops his bishop to e7 instead of g7: 5...♘f6 6.♗d3 d6 7.♘gf3 e5 (7...g6 8.a5 ♗g7 9.♘c4 transposes to the main line below)



8.a5! An important positional decision. White not only fixes Black's pawn on a6, but also gets more space on the queenside for developing his play. One instructive example continued 8...♗e7 9.h3 0-0 10.♘c4 ♗d7 11.♘b6 ♖a7 12.c3 bxc3 13.bxc3± and White's positional advantage was obvious in Khenkin – Alias Ginel, Santa Cruz de la Palma 2005.

chesstouring.com

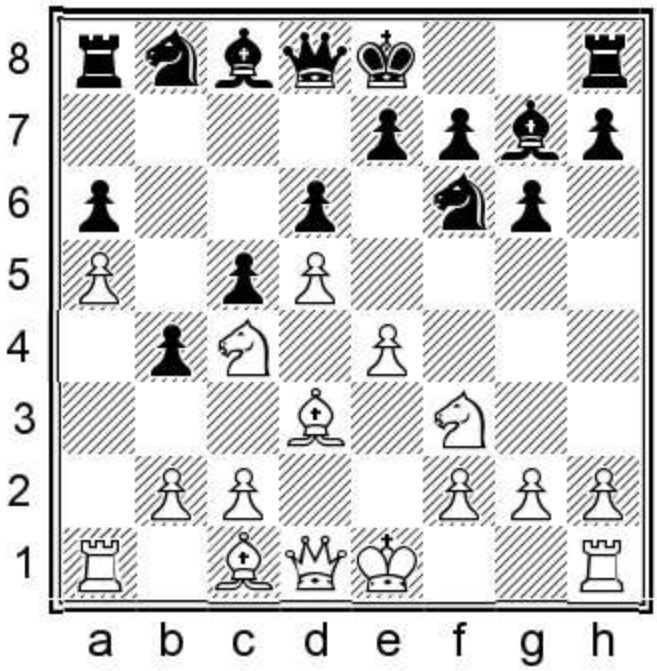


6.♘c4 g6 7.♗d3 ♗g7 8.a5!

Once again, this is a strong positional move, for the same reasons as described above. I believe White should almost always stand better if he manages to secure his knight on c4 in this structure.

8...♘f6 9.♘f3

White has no need to fear ...♗g4, so 9.h3?! 0-0 10.♘f3 is a waste of time. In Gritsak – Kot, Warsaw 2006, Black could have played 10...e6!N 11.0-0 exd5 12.exd5 ♗b7 with counterplay.



9...♘bd7

This has been played in all three of the games to have reached this position.

chesstouring.com

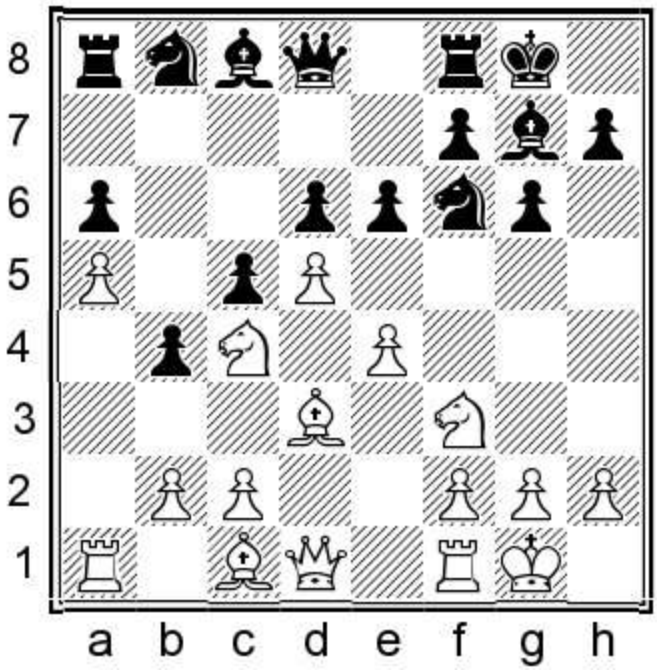
9...0-0N

This move order offers Black a few more options, without changing the overall evaluation of the position.

10.0-0 e6

10...♘bd7 transposes to the main line below.

10...♗g4 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♕xf3 ♘bd7 13.♕e2 ♕c7 14.♗g5± also gives White a most pleasant position.



11.♗f4!

Compared with the 9.h3?! line noted above, White can utilize his extra tempo to seize the initiative.

11...exd5

11...e5 is well met by 12.♗d2 followed by c2-c3, with the usual favourable play for White.

12.exd5 ♘e8

Black cannot play 12...♘xd5?, as after 13.♗xd6 ♖e8 14.♗xg6! White wins material.

13.♖e1 ♗b7 14.♗f1

White is clearly better, as Black is tied to the defence of the d6-pawn.

10.0-0

10.h3 has been played in some games, and is likely to transpose after both sides castle.

10...0-0

10...♘g4 11.♗f4 is certainly better for White; although if you prefer not to allow this possibility at all, then 10.h3 also seems fine, as noted above.

11.h3

I recommended this prophylactic move as a novelty in *GM 2*, and it has since been tested in one game.

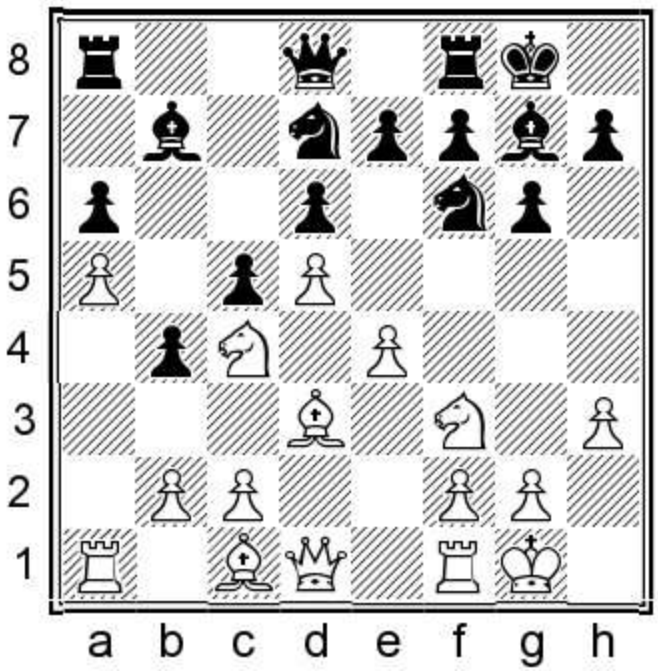
chesstouring.com

11.c3?! bxc3 12.bxc3 ♘g4 gave Black more counterplay than he is entitled to in this variation in Link – Richter, Dortmund 2003.

11...♗b7

11...♖b8N 12.♗f4 gives White a pleasant advantage, as I noted in *GM 2*.

The text move was played in Coman – Uzuneanu, Braila 2016. White has several good moves but perhaps the most flexible is:

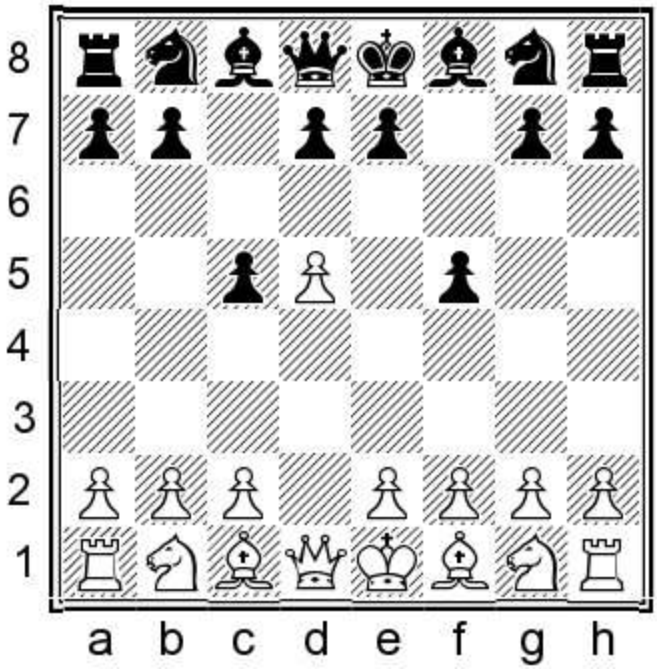


12.♖e1N±

Improving the rook and overprotecting the e4-pawn. White will probably develop his bishop to f4 or g5 next, and can prepare to open the queenside with c2-c3 at his leisure.

A2) 2...f5

chesstouring.com



This move has been tried in a serious number of games, including by several strong GMs. I consider it dubious though.

3.e4!

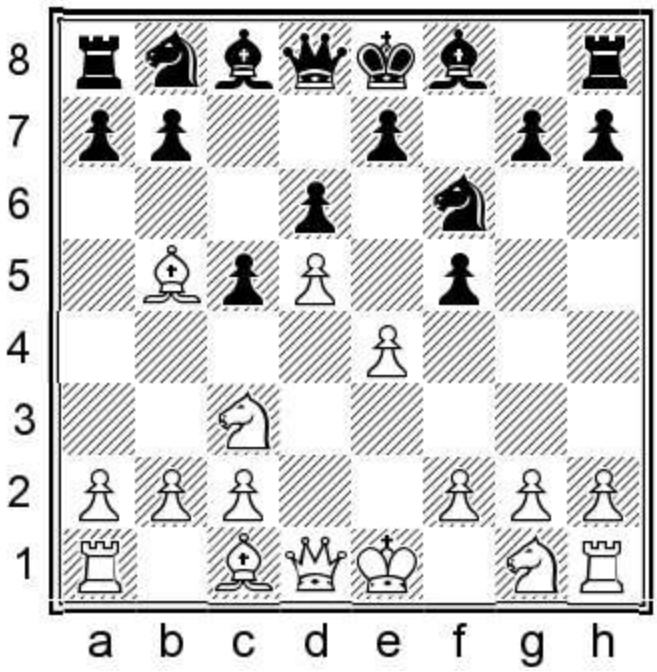
This aggressive approach comes close to refuting Black's opening choice.

3...fxe4

3...d6?!

This inferior move has occurred in several games. Black gets into trouble after:

4.♘c3 ♘f6 5.♗b5†!

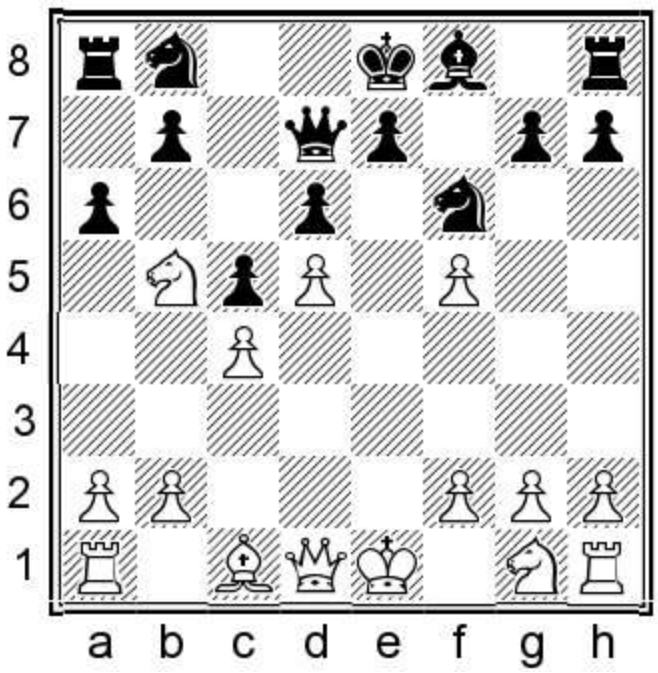


5...♗d7

chesstouring.com

Black's position was also no fun after 5...♔f7 6.♘f3 fxe4 7.♘g5† ♔g8 8.♘gxe4± in Zaitseva – Prudnikova, Elista 1995.

6.exf5 ♗xb5 7.♘xb5 ♕d7 8.c4 a6



9.♕a4!

An important finesse which poses Black serious problems. For instance:

9...♘xd5 10.♘f3 ♔f7 11.♘g5† ♔g8 12.cxd5 ♕xb5 13.♕c2+–

White was strategically winning in J. Ivanov – S. Kasparov, Delft 2012.

4.♘c3 ♘f6 5.g4!

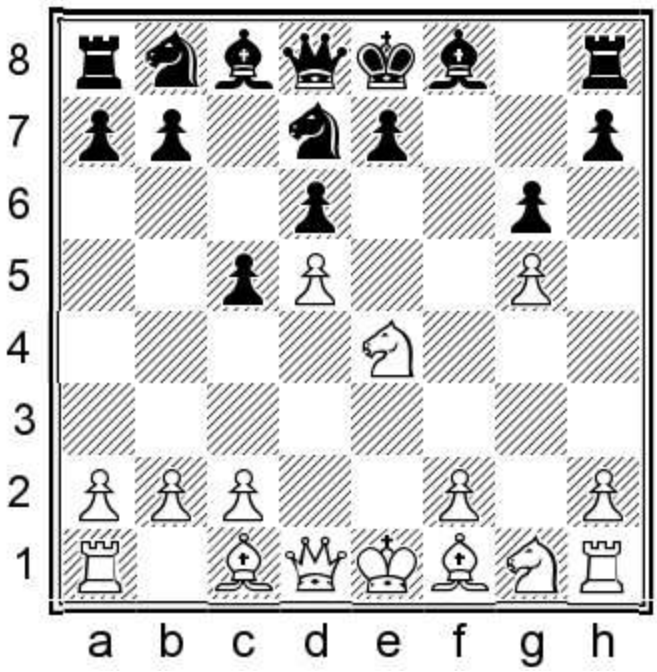
It is hard to refrain from such an attractive move.

5...h6

Black's other options are inferior, for instance:

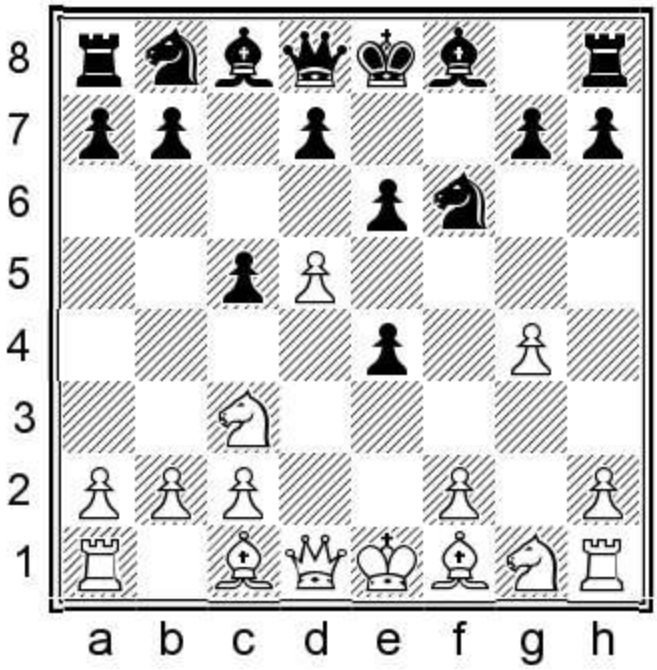
5...d6 6.g5 ♘fd7 (6...♘g4? runs into 7.♗b5† and after 7...♔f7 8.♘xe4 White is obviously much better) 7.♘xe4 g6

chesstouring.com



This has occurred in two games; I am not sure why White refrained from the immediate 8.h4!N 8...♗g7 9.h5 with a serious initiative.

5...e6 has been played several times, but White never found the strongest reply:

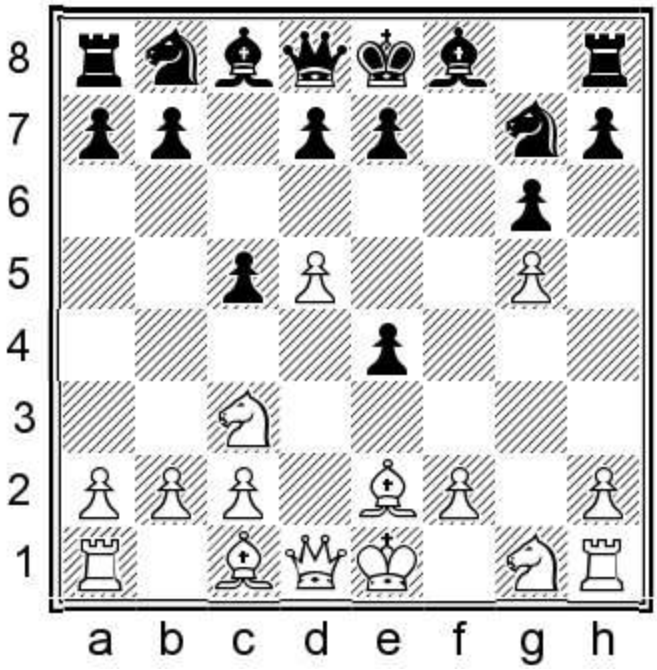


6.♘h3!N 6...♗d6 (6...♘xd5 7.♘xd5 exd5 8.♕xd5 ♘c6 9.♗g5! ♕a5† 10.♗d2 is also clearly better for White) 7.♗g2 ♕e7 8.dxe6 0-0 9.g5 ♘e8 10.♘xe4± With an obvious advantage.

5...g6 6.g5 ♘h5 7.♗e2 ♘g7

7...♕b6 should be met by 8.♗xh5N 8...gxh5 9.♘h3! ♗g7 10.♘f4 0-0 11.♕xh5, with a clear advantage to White.

chesstouring.com



8.h4!N

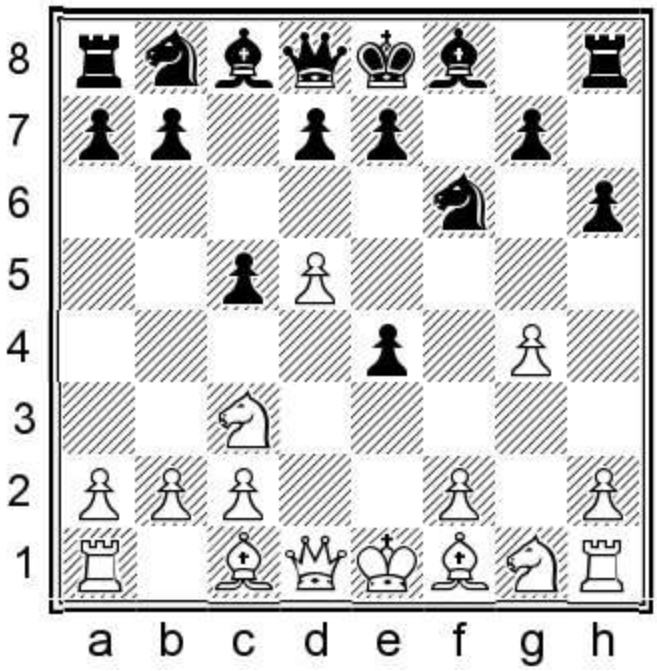
White took on e4 in a few games but I prefer to advance the h-pawn first. It is hard to suggest anything playable for Black, for instance:

8...d6

8...♘f5 9.h5 ♗g7 10.♘xe4 d6 11.♘h3 does not help Black.

9.♘xe4 ♗f5 10.♘g3±

White has a serious advantage.



6.♗g2

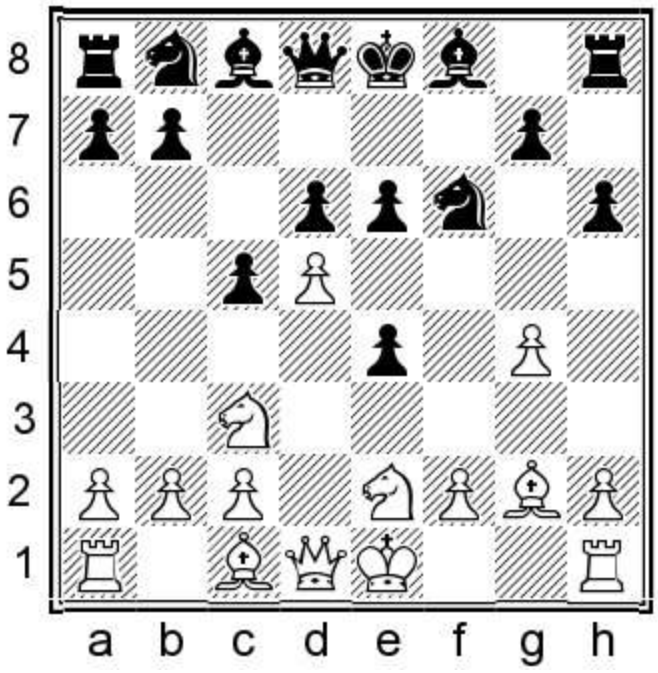
White is not only hitting the e4-pawn, but also threatening h2-h4 and g4-g5. Black may try **A21)** 6...e6, **A22)** 6...e5 or **A23)** 6...d6.

6...♕b6 occurred in Conquest – Becerra Rivero, Cienfuegos 1996, when 7.h4N would have been

chesstouring.com

natural and strong. For instance, 7...d6 8.g5 ♘fd7 (8...hxg5? is worse in view of 9.hxg5 ♖xh1 10.♗xh1 followed by a check on h5) 9.♗xe4→ White's initiative is rather powerful.

A21) 6...e6 7.♘ge2 d6



8.h3!?

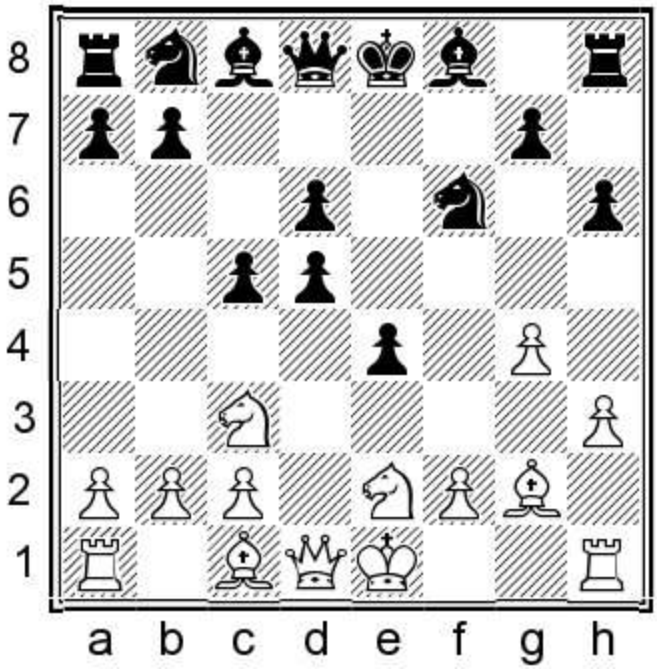
On this occasion, it is worth stabilizing the kingside before deciding how to develop the attack.

8...exd5

Another direction is 8...♘bd7 9.dxe6 ♘e5 10.♘xe4 ♗xe6 11.♘f4 ♗f7 12.♘xf6† ♕xf6 13.♗xb7 ♖b8 14.♗g2± when White picked up a pawn while maintaining a positional advantage in Schlosser – Bischoff, Austria 1997.

The text move has occurred three times in practice. White's play can be improved with:

chesstouring.com



9.♘f4!N 9...♘c6

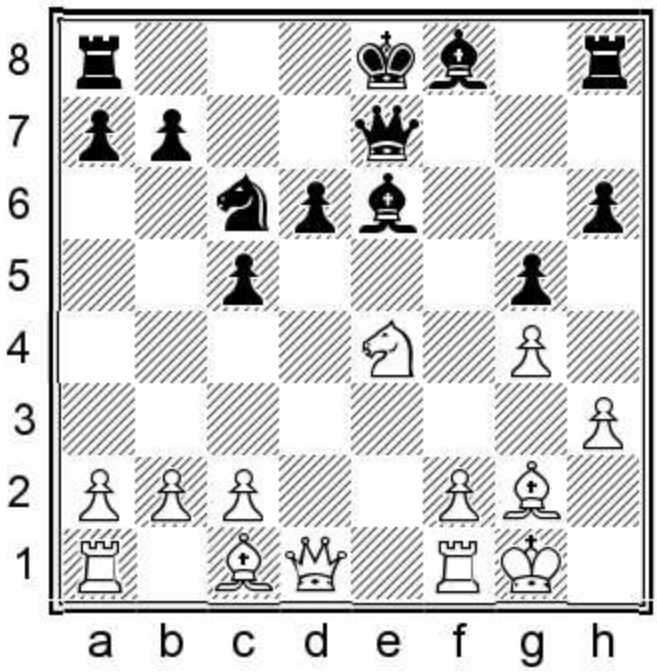
After 9...d4 10.♘xe4 Black's position is terrible.

10.0-0 g5

I also checked 10...♘e7 11.♖e1 when Black's centre collapses.

11.♘fxd5 ♗e6 12.♘xf6† ♕xf6 13.♘xe4 ♕e7

Black seems to have survived the first wave of the attack but an unpleasant surprise lies in store.



14.b4!

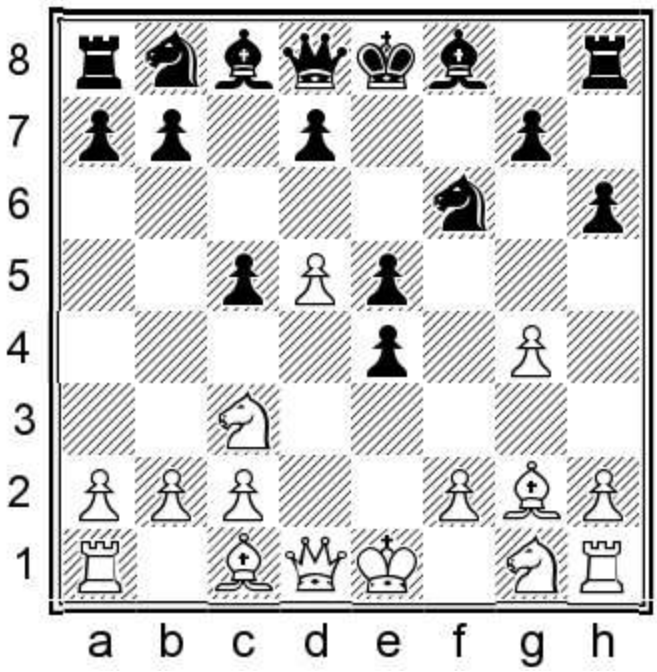
With the following point:

chesstouring.com

14...cxb4 15.♗b2 ♘e5 16.♕d4

Black's position is miserable.

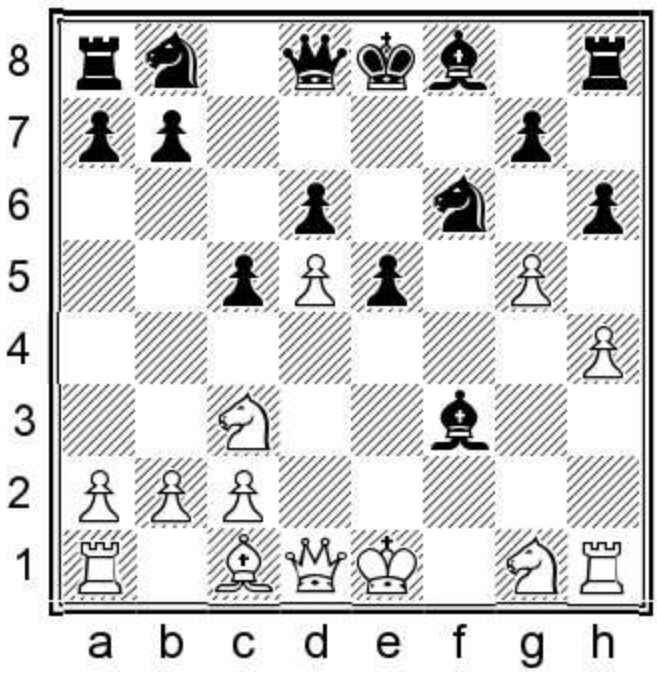
A22) 6...e5



This enables White to obtain a huge attack by simple means.

7.h4 d6 8.g5 hxg5

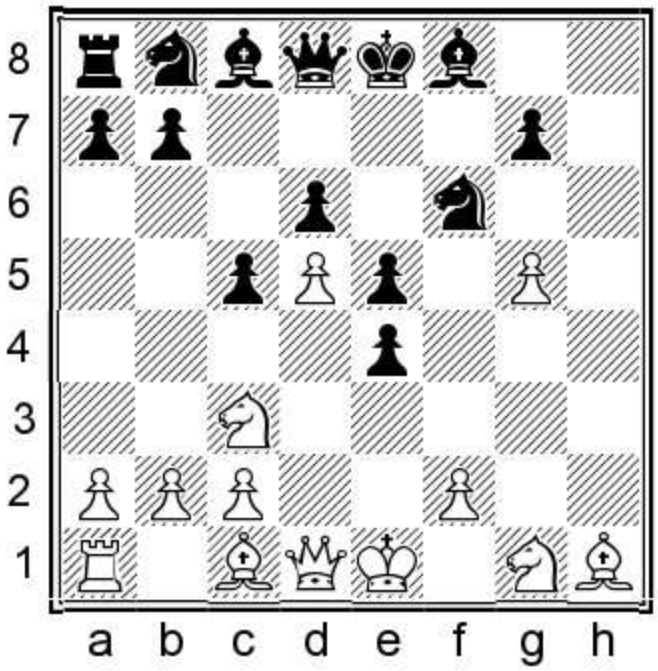
8...♗g4 9.f3! exf3 10.♗xf3 ♗xf3 occurred in Fedorovsky – Walter, Wunsiedel 2016, and here White should have continued:



chesstouring.com

11.♘xf3!N 11...hxg5 12.♘xg5 Black is in serious trouble. For instance, 12...♕d7 13.♘e6 ♘a6 14.♕d3 ♕f7 15.♗g5! and White's advantage is close to winning.

9.hxg5 ♖xh1 10.♗xh1



10...♗g4

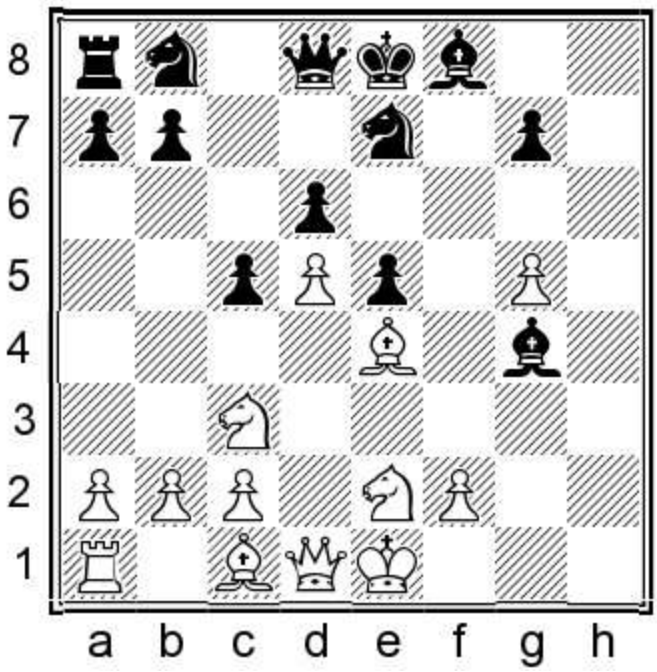
White has a few options here but the most convincing seems to be:

11.♘ge2 ♘g8 12.♗xe4 ♘e7

12...♗e7? proved disastrous for Black after 13.♗g6† ♔d7 14.♕d3+– in Toshkov – Kuczynski, Saint John 1988.

All this happened in Steel – M. Levitt, Cape Town 1995. A natural and strong continuation would have been:

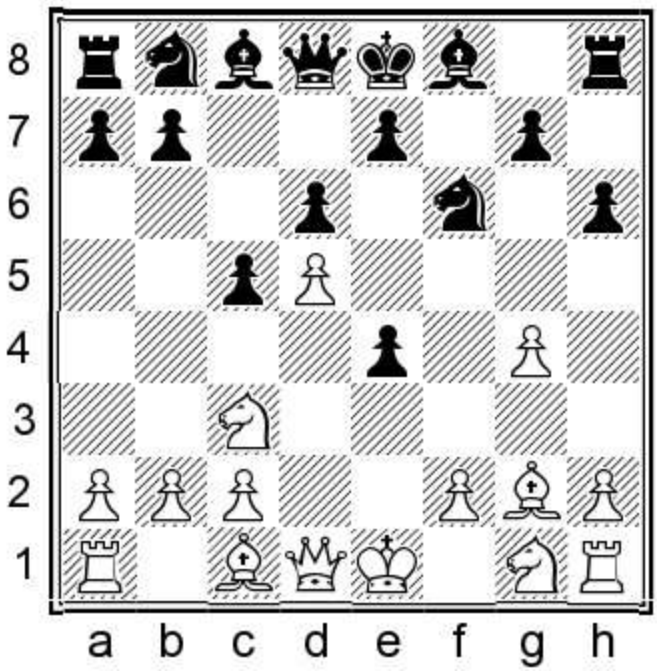
chesstouring.com



13.f3N 13...♗f5 14.♘g3 ♕d7 15.f4! ♗g4 16.♗f3 ♗xf3 17.♕xf3

With a huge advantage for White.

A23) 6...d6



7.♘xe4!

White can afford to sacrifice a pawn.

7...♘xg4

Certainly the most principled reply.

chesstouring.com

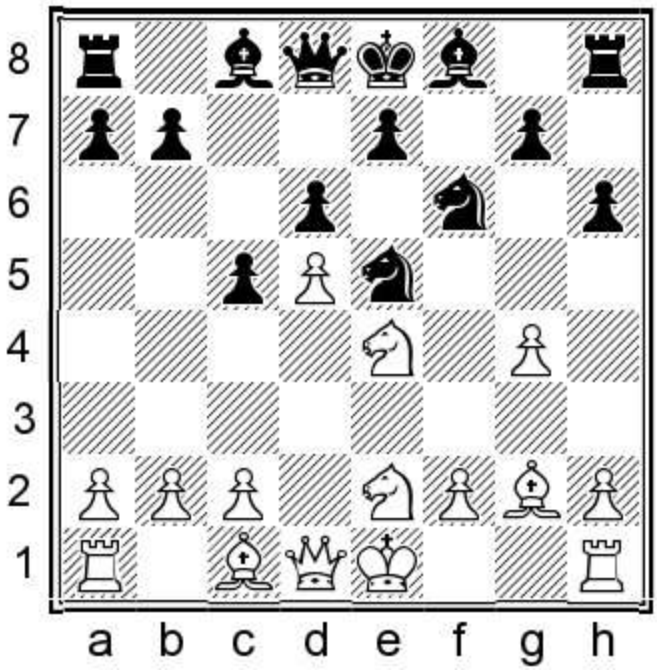
I also examined:

7...♘bd7

This happened in Meyer – Hantke, Guetersloh 1952. My suggestion is:

8.♘e2N 8...♘e5

Another possible line is 8...g5 9.h3 ♘e5 (9...♗g7 10.♘4g3!± also looks great for White) 10.f4 gxf4 11.♘xf4 and it's hard to see how Black can handle this position.

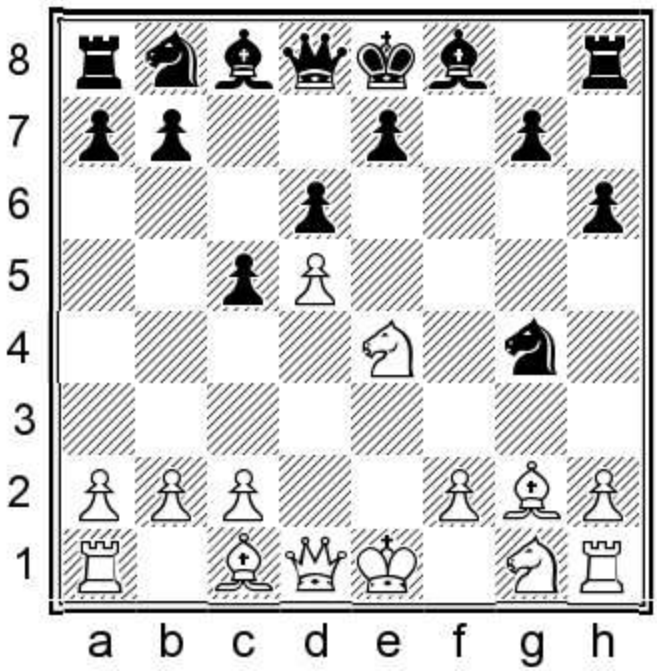


9.f4! ♘exg4

9...♘g6 runs into the surprisingly strong 10.h4! ♗xg4 11.♕d3!, exploiting the vulnerability of the g6-knight.

10.h3 ♘xe4 11.hxg4 ♘f6 12.g5 ♘g4 13.♗f3±

Black is in serious trouble.



chesstouring.com

8.♕e2!N

I find this to be significantly stronger than 8.♗f3 and 8.h3, which have been played in the two games to reach this position so far.

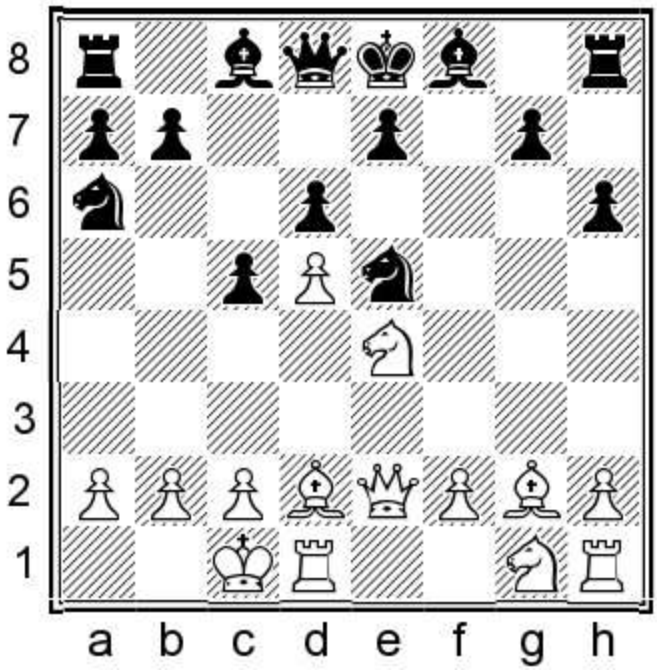
8...♘e5

8...♘f6 9.♗h3! ♗xh3 10.♘xh3 ♘a6 11.♘f4 gives White a decisive advantage.

9.♗d2!

Simply continuing with development.

9...♘a6 10.0-0-0



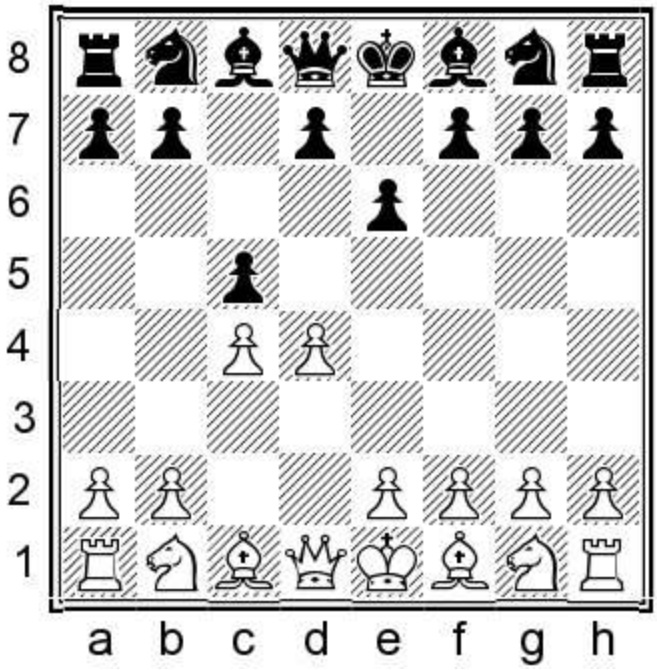
10...♕b6 11.♗c3

White's strategy has succeeded and Black's position is miserable.

B) 1...e6 2.c4 c5

This move order is quite likely to transpose to a Modern Benoni, but Black occasionally avoids this by developing his knight to e7 or h6.

chesstouring.com

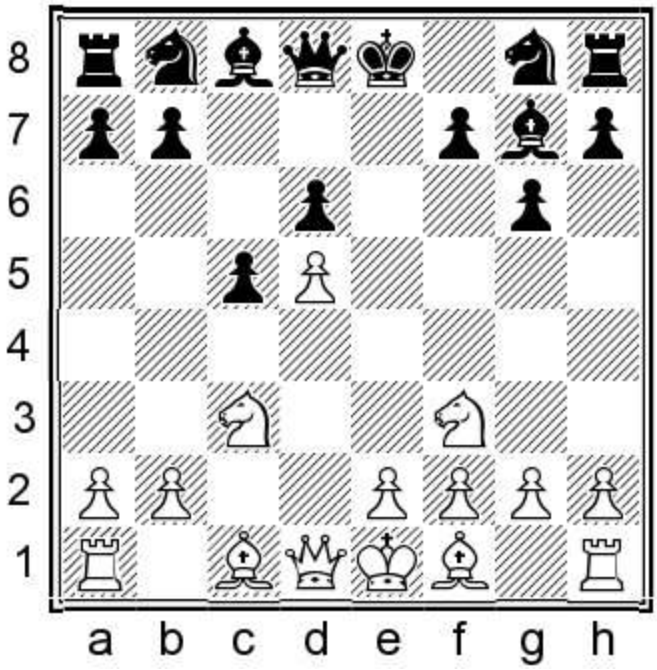


3.d5 exd5 4.cxd5 d6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♘f3

Obviously Black could have transposed to a Modern Benoni by playing ...♘f6 at any time. If he wishes to avoid it, then **B1)** 6...♗g7 and **B2)** 6...a6 are his main options.

B1) 6...♗g7

This natural-looking move offers White a tempting possibility.



7.♕a4†!

Of course White can play 7.g3 with similar play to variation B2 below, but I find the text move even more appealing.

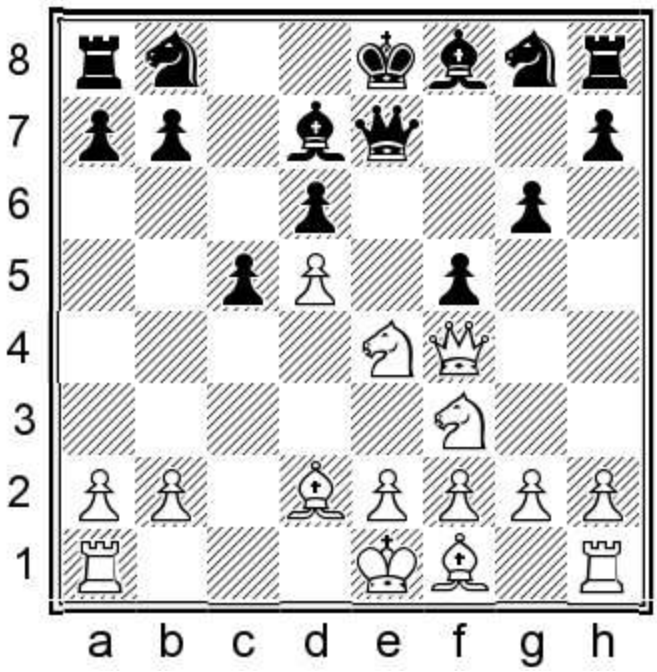
chesstouring.com

7...♘d7

7...♕d7? 8.♘b5 is not a viable option for Black, but there are two other plausible moves:

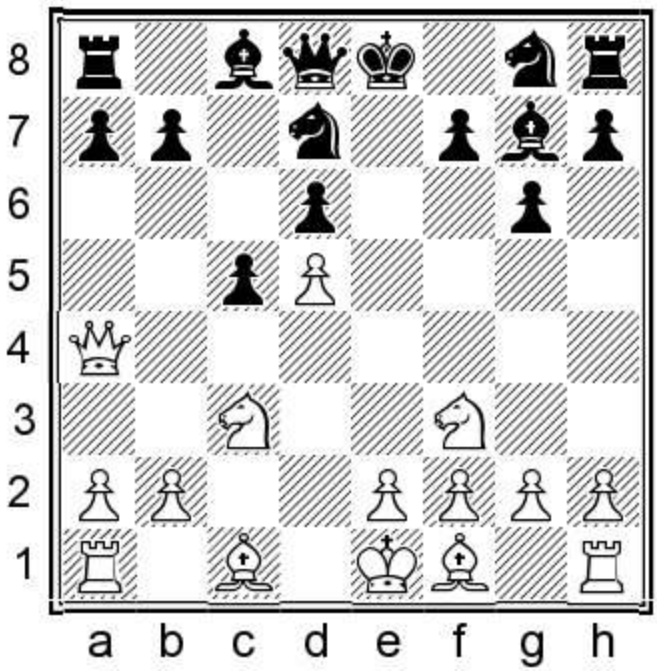
7...♔f8 occurred in D. Rombaldoni – Genocchio, Pesaro 2003, when it would have been good for White to proceed with normal development: 8.e4N 8...♘d7 (or 8...a6 9.♗f4±) 9.♗f4 ♕e7 10.♗e2 a6 11.0-0± Black has no real compensation for his misplaced king.

7...♗d7 has been the most common choice but after 8.♕f4! White gets a great position by targeting the d6-pawn: 8...♕e7 9.♘e4! ♗f8 (I also checked 9...♘f6!?N 10.♘xd6† ♔f8 but White maintains the advantage with the precise 11.♕e5!) 10.♗d2 Black's position is pretty bad, especially in view of the following tactical point: 10...f5



11.♘xd6†! ♕xd6 12.♕xd6 ♗xd6 13.♗c3 ♘f6 14.♗xf6 0-0 15.♗e5+– White was a healthy pawn up in Tarasov – Strelnikov, Kostroma 2014.

chesstouring.com

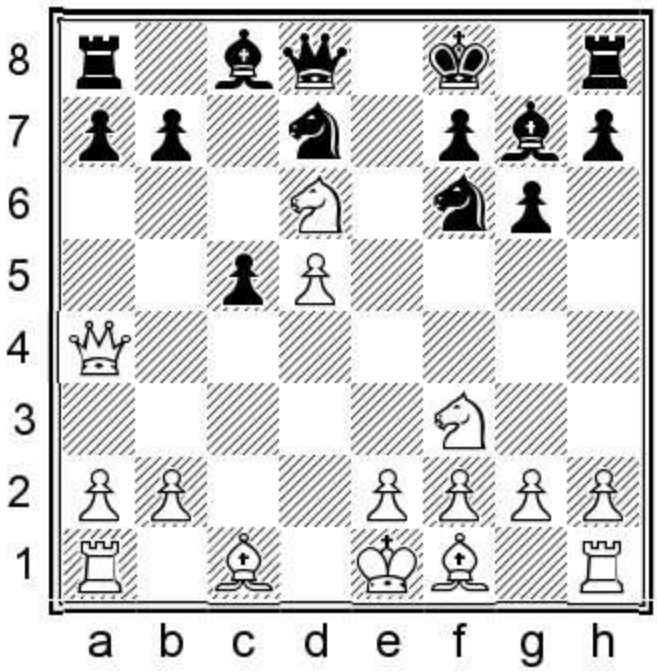


8.♘b5

Obviously this is the point of White's previous move.

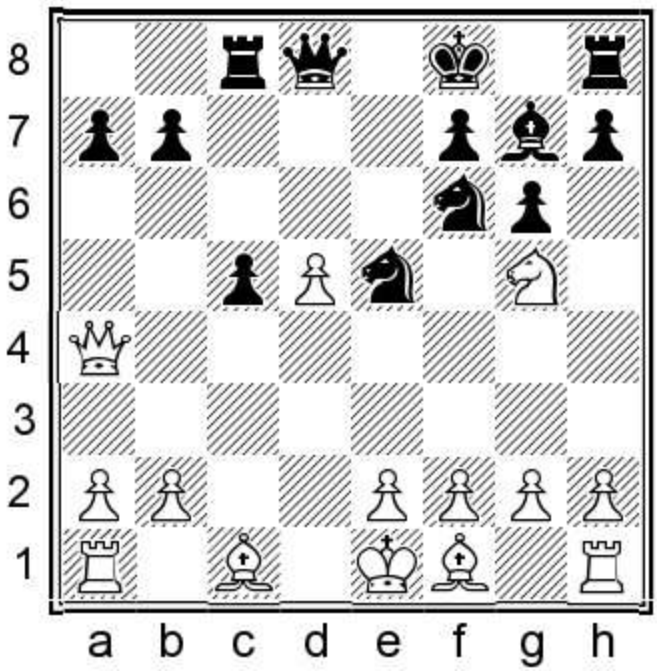
8...♘b6

Black has also tried 8...♘gf6 9.♘xd6† ♔f8 when White's most convincing solution is:



10.♘g5!N (improving on 10.♕f4, which has been played in two games) 10...♘e5 (10...♘b6?! 11.♘dxf7 ♘xa4 12.♘xd8 ♘xd5 13.♘de6† gives White an even greater advantage) 11.♘xc8 ♖xc8

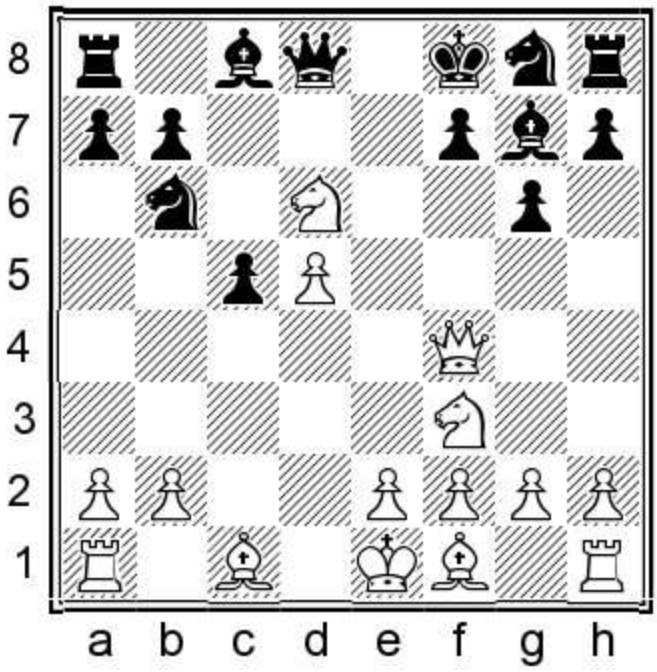
chesstouring.com



12.f4 ♘ed7 13.e4 h6 14.♘f3 c4 This is Black's only real chance, but after 15.e5 ♘xd5 16.♗xc4± White remains a pawn up, since 16...♘7b6 can be met by 17.♕a3†.

9.♘xd6† ♔f8 10.♕f4

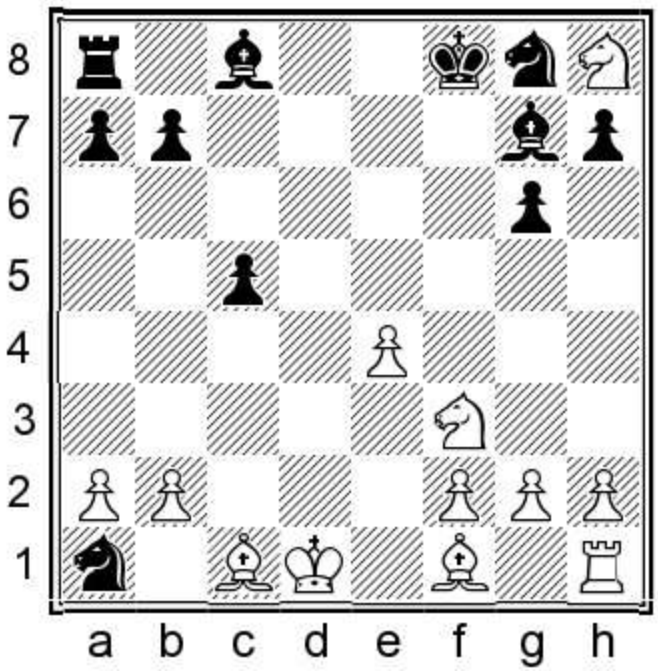
Defending the knight while threatening mate.



10...♘f6

I also examined: 10...♕e7 11.e4 ♘xd5 12.♕xf7†! ♕xf7 13.♘xf7 ♘b4 14.♘xh8 ♘c2† 15.♔d1 ♘xa1

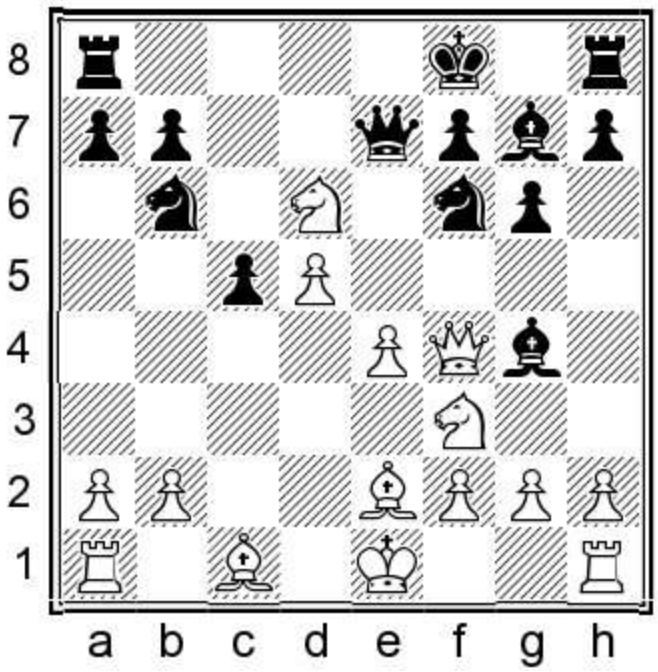
chesstouring.com



16.♗e3! ♗xh8 17.♗xc5† ♘e7 18.♗d3 ♗xb2 19.♗d4± White will soon capture the enemy knight, emerging with an extra pawn.

11.e4 ♕e7 12.♗e2 ♗g4

This position was reached in Szabolcsi – Szalanczy, Budapest 2014, and one subsequent game. Both times White castled, but a significant improvement is:



13.♗e3!N 13...♗xf3

13...♔g8 14.♗xc5 gives Black nothing better than transposing to the next note with 14...♗xf3.

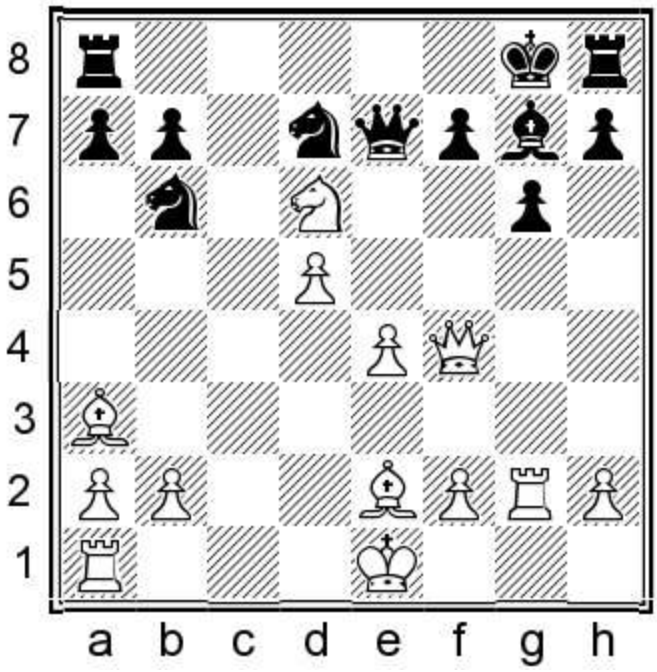
14.♗xc5! ♘fd7

chesstouring.com

14...♔g8 15.gxf3± is great for White.

15.♗a3 ♗xg2 16.♖g1 ♔g8 17.♖xg2

White has an extra pawn plus the bishop pair. It is worth mentioning a small tactical point:



17...♗e5 18.♘f5! ♕xa3 19.♕xe5 ♕b4†

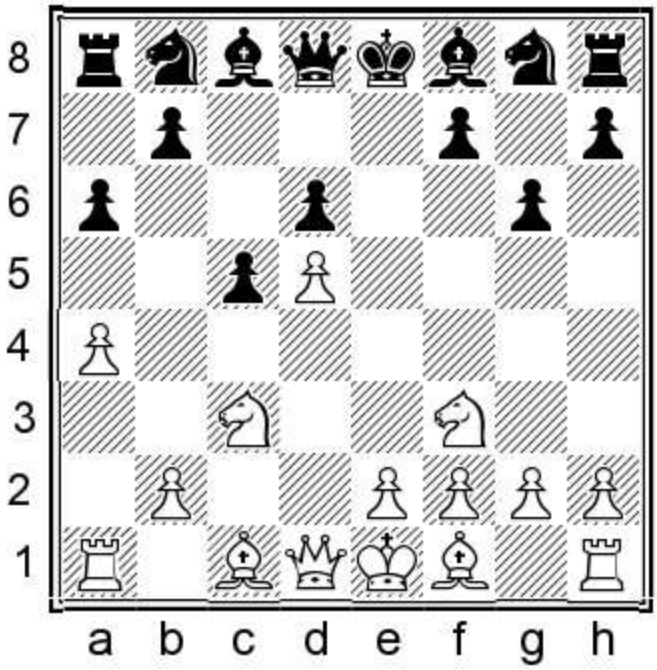
19...♘xe5 20.bxa3±

20.♕c3 ♕xc3† 21.bxc3±

White keeps his extra pawn.

B2) 6...a6 7.a4

chesstouring.com



By inserting these moves, Black avoids any funny business involving a check on a4.

7...♗g7

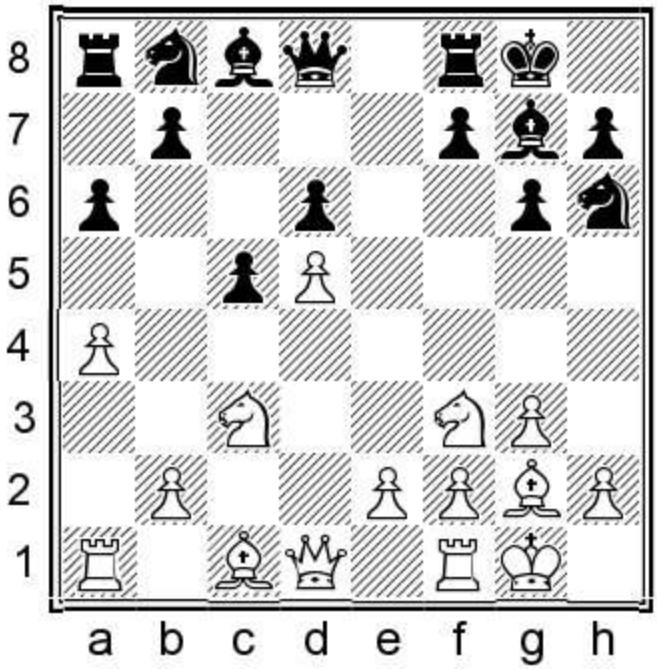
Once again, 7...♘f6 8.g3 would transpose to a normal Benoni, as was covered in *Volume 1A*.

8.g3

Obviously we need to maintain compatibility with our repertoire against the Modern Benoni, as Black could still develop his knight to f6. But should he wish to go for something different, he may try **B21)** 8...♘h6 or **B22)** 8...♘e7.

B21) 8...♘h6 9.♗g2 0-0 10.0-0

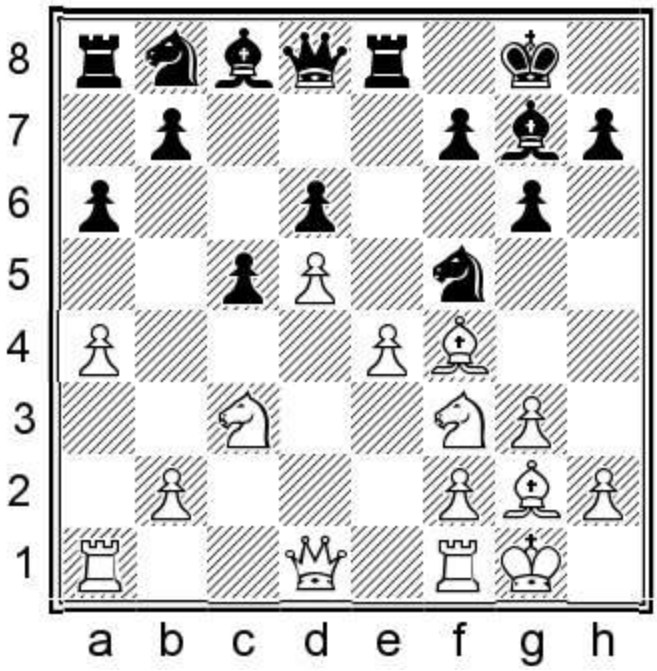
chesstouring.com



10...♘d7

This is the most natural choice.

Alternatively, 10...♘f5 11.♗f4 ♖e8 has occurred in two games, and now 12.e4!N is an improvement which I really like. The likely continuation is:



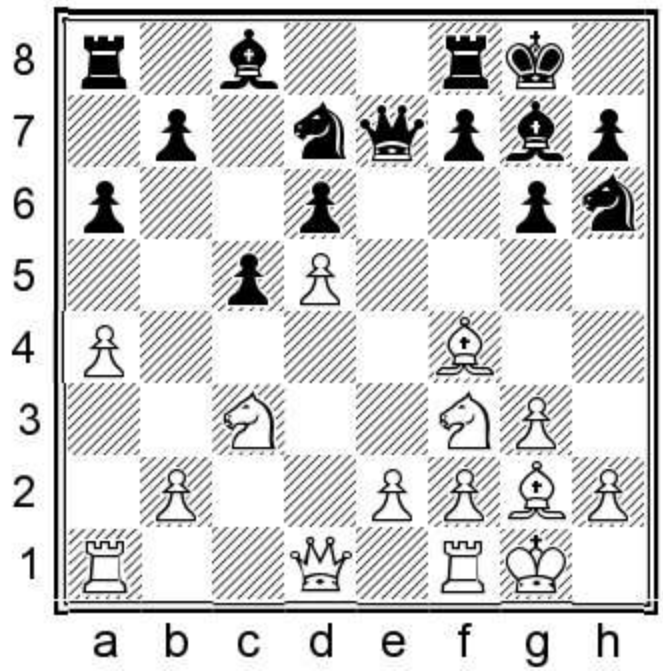
12...♘d4 (Accepting the pawn sac is too dangerous: 12...♗xc3?! 13.bxc3 ♖xe4 14.♕d2± with overwhelming compensation.) 13.♘xd4 cxd4 (13...♗xd4 14.♕d2 also offers White a nice edge) 14.♘e2± White is clearly happy.

11.♗f4 ♕e7

chesstouring.com

Only one game reached this position, Ashworth – Surtees, Bournemouth 2016. I propose a new move,

although the general idea is quite thematic.



12.♖b1!N 12...♘f5

I checked two other moves:

12...♘g4 actually transposes to a variation from our Modern Benoni repertoire, where the knight went to g4 via f6 instead of h6. See page 396 of *Volume 1A*, where I have shown that 13.♗g5! is promising for White.

12...♖b8 13.♕d2 ♘g4 14.b4 cxb4 15.♖xb4 ♘c5 16.a5 reaches the kind of position White strives for with the ♖b1 plan. White's advantage is clear, due to Black's problematic pawn structure.

13.♗g5!

13.♕d2 looks promising but I like the text move even more.

13...♕e8

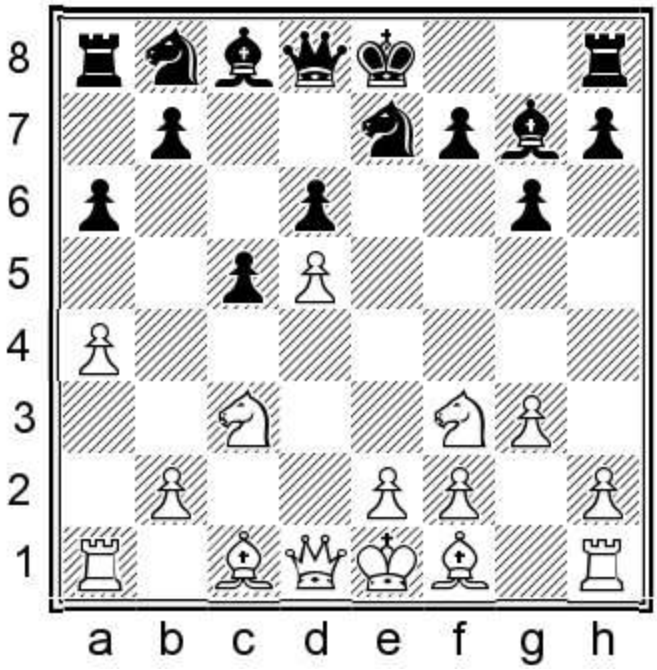
13...f6?! is met by 14.♗d2 followed by b2-b4; White has an even better version of the 12...♘g4 line, as at least there Black could follow up with ...f5.

14.e4 ♘d4 15.♘xd4 cxd4 16.♘e2 ♘c5 17.♗f4

Black will have to either give up a pawn for unclear compensation or make some positional concessions to retain material equality.

B22) 8...♘e7

chesstouring.com

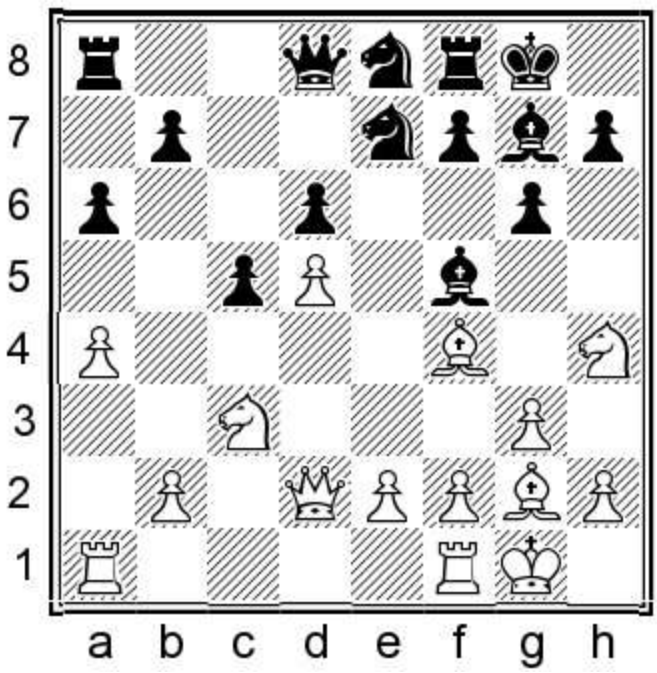


9.♗g2 0-0 10.0-0 h6!?

We already saw in the previous variation that a well-timed ♗g5 could prove disruptive for Black, so there is something to be said for ruling it out.

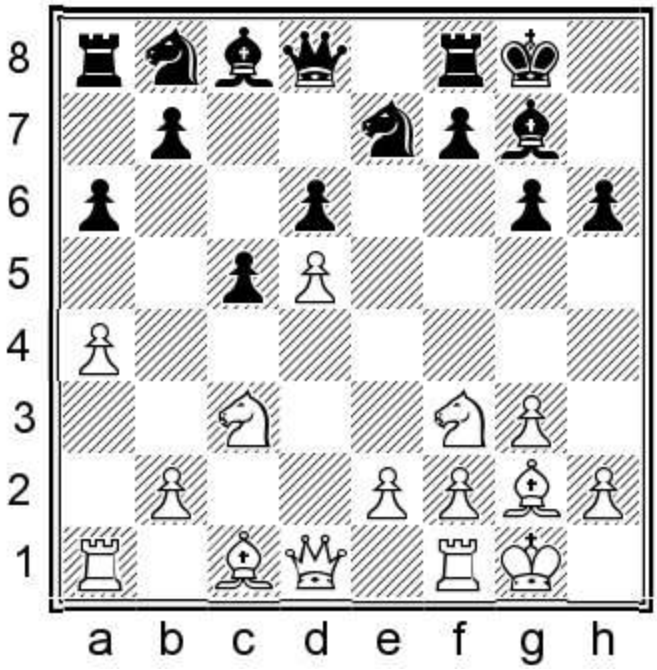
10...♘f5 has been covered in the note to move 10 in variation B21 above.

The other most natural continuation is: 10...♘d7 11.♗f4 ♘f6 (11...♘e5?! is inferior in view of 12.♘xe5 dxe5 13.♗e3! c4 14.a5 ♗f5 15.♕d2 ♕d7 16.♖fd1± and White was positionally much better in Berezina – C. Foisor, Dubai 2010) 12.♕d2 ♗f5 13.♘h4 ♘e8 Now in Papadopoulou – Vasilevich, Rijeka 2010, the simplest continuation would have been:



14.e4N 14...♗d7 15.♗h6± With an obvious plus for White.

chesstouring.com

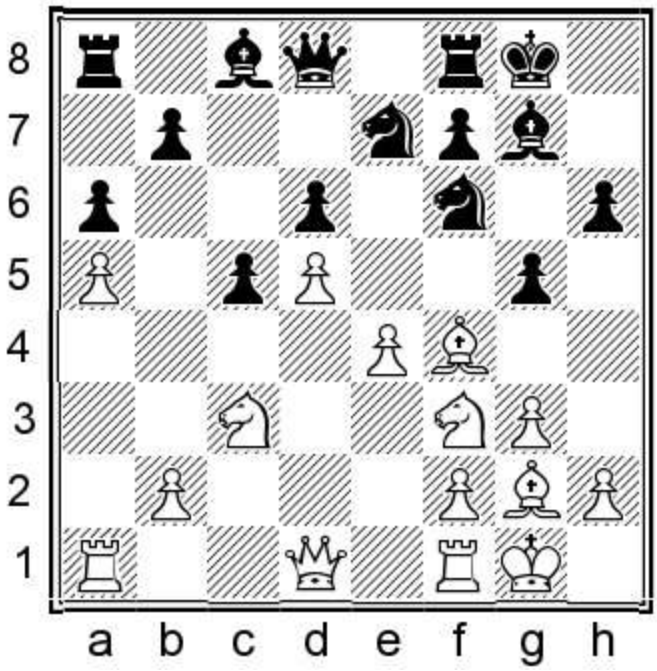


11.a5!?N

I find this more appealing than 11.♘d2 and 11.h4, which are the only moves to have been tried so far.

11...b5

I also examined: 11...♘d7 12.♗f4 ♘f6 13.e4 g5 (13...♗g4 14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 brings Black no relief due to the poor placement of the e7-knight. This is in stark contrast to normal Benoni positions, in which trading the light-squared bishop often helps Black.)

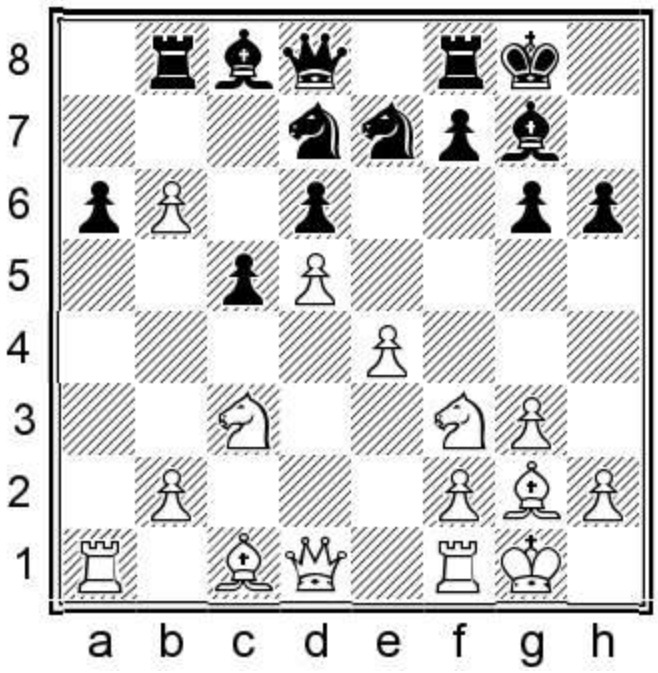


14.♗xd6! ♕xd6 15.e5 ♕d8 16.exf6 ♗xf6 17.♘d2± White is clearly better.

12.axb6 ♘d7 13.e4 ♖b8

chesstouring.com

13...♘xb6 14.♖e1 ♖b8 15.h4 also results in a pleasant edge for White.

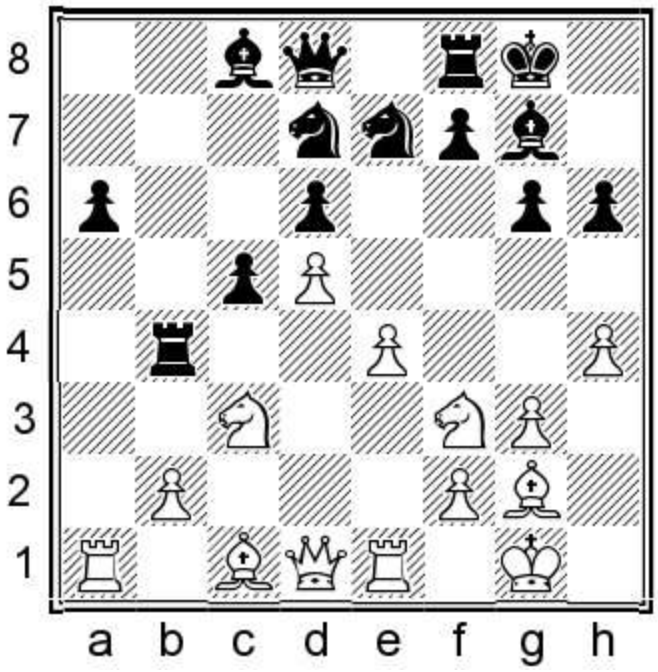


14.h4!

It is useful to rule out ...g5, which would help to improve Black's problem knight.

14...♖xb6 15.♖e1 ♖b4

I also considered 15...♘f6 16.♘h2 ♖e8 17.♘a4 ♖b8 18.♗d2!± when the bishop is heading for c3, where it cements the queenside and secures White's positional advantage.

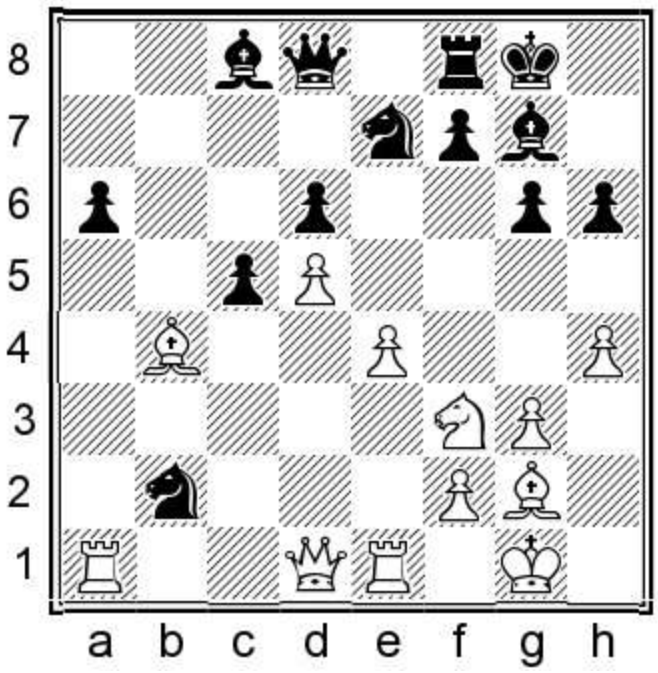


16.♘a4 ♘b6 17.♗d2 ♘xa4

17...♖xa4 18.♖xa4 ♘xa4 19.♕xa4 is clearly better for White.

chesstouring.com

18.♗xb4 ♘xb2



19.♗a5! ♘xd1 20.♗xd8 ♖xd8 21.♖axd1±

It is hard to believe Black has sufficient compensation for the exchange.

Conclusion

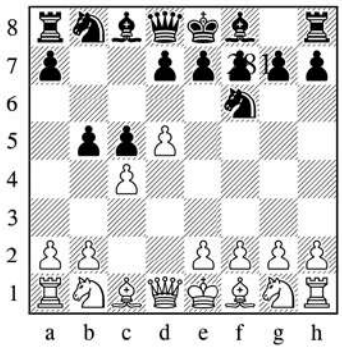
This chapter brings to an end our coverage of Black's various Benoni systems. After 1.d4 c5 2.d5, Black premature queenside expansion with 2...b5 can be punished by 3.e4 when, no matter how Black deals with the threat to the b5-pawn, White will follow up with a quick a2-a4 to secure control of the c4-square, with a clear advantage. We then considered the provocative 2...f5, which is strongly met by 3.e4! fxe4 4.♘c3 ♘f6 5.g4!, when White has good chances to build a crushing initiative directly from the opening.

Finally, we analysed 1...e6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 exd5 4.cxd5 d6 5.♘c3 g6, when Black plays a Modern Benoni structure without his knight on f6. If Black neglects to play an early ...a6, then it's useful to keep in mind the possibility of ♕a4† as in variation B1, which disrupts Black's development and wins a pawn in many lines. Even in variation B2 where Black avoids this early trouble, the unusual placement of his knight does not particularly help him. In some lines White gets a good game by following the same plan as in the normal Benoni, while in others the knight simply proves misplaced on e7, with its movements limited by the pawns on d5 and e4.

chesstouring.com



Benko Gambit



Sidelines

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5

4.cxb5

A) 4...e6 5.♘c3 exd5 6.♘xd5 ♗b7 7.e4! 282

A1) 7...♘xd5 283

A2) 7...a6 8.bxa6 ♘xa6 9.♗c4 ♘b4 10.♘f3 284

A21) 10...♘fxd5 285

A22) 10...♘bxd5N 286

B) 4...a6 5.bxa6 e6 6.♘c3 exd5 7.♘xd5 287

B1) 7...♗xa6 288

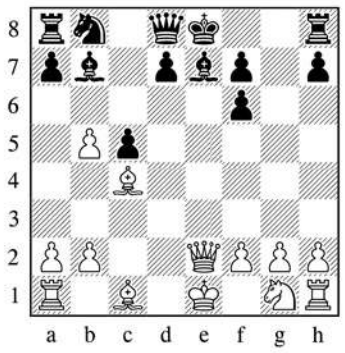
B2) 7...♘xa6 289

B3) 7...♘xd5 290

B4) 7...♗e7!? 291

chesstouring.com

A) note to move 7



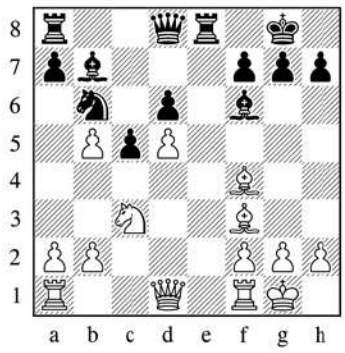
11.♗f4!N

A1) note to 8...d6



10.♗d3!N

A1) after 14...♗f6



15.a4!N±

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5

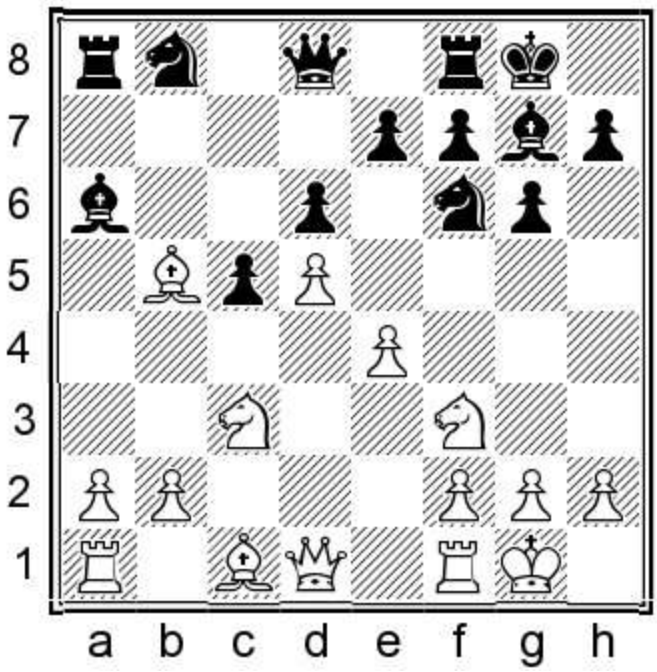
Once again I recommend accepting the gambit, but there will be an important change of direction from my previous work, as we will no longer be following up with a kingside fianchetto.

We will consider **A)** 4...e6 but **B)** 4...a6 is definitely the main move.

4...g6

Occasionally Black delays his counterplay in favour of completing his kingside development first. As a rule, White follows the same general plan as in the main lines, but gets an easier version, so it's enough to give just a few brief examples.

5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.e4 d6 7.♘f3 0-0 8.♗e2 a6 9.0-0 axb5 10.♗xb5 ♗a6



11.♕e2!

This is the most precise way of implementing the "light-squared strategy" which I will refer to again, both in this chapter and what follows.

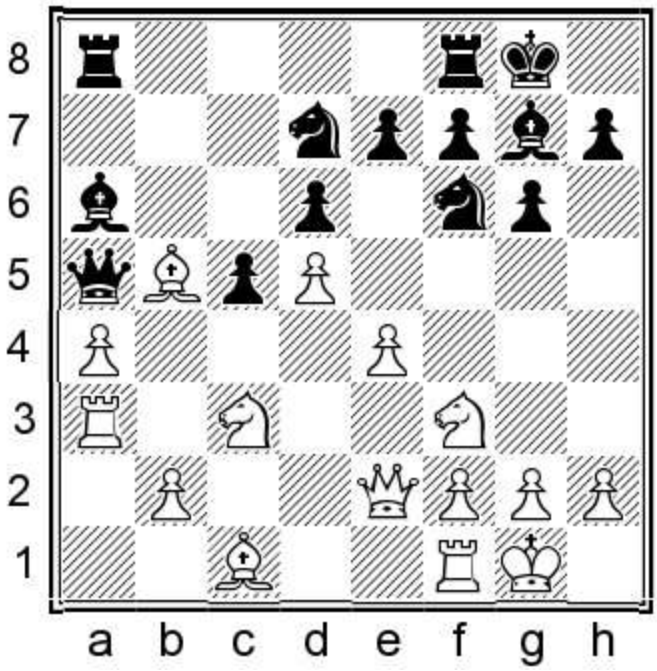
11...♕a5 12.a4 ♘bd7

chesstouring.com

Another good example continued: 12...♗xb5 13.♘xb5 ♕b4 14.♘c3 ♘bd7 15.♗d2 ♖fb8 16.♖fb1 ♕b7 In Martinez Rodriguez – Renteria Becerra, Mondariz 2011, the simple 17.♘b5N 17...♘e8 18.♗c3± would have secured White a big advantage.

13.♖a3!

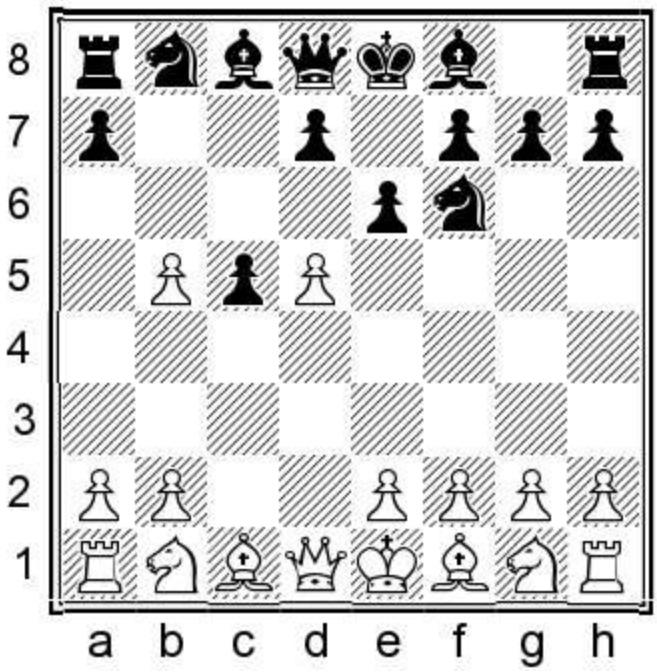
A thematic move in this type of Benko position.



13...♘e8 14.♗g5 ♗xc3 15.♗xa6 ♕xa6 16.♕xa6 ♖xa6 17.bxc3 ♘ef6 18.♘d2±

White remained a healthy pawn up in Krysa – Torella, Neuquen 2017.

A) 4...e6



Playing ...e6 is not unheard of in the Benko Gambit, but usually it happens after White has committed himself in some way that makes Black's central action especially appealing. In the present situation,

chesstouring.com

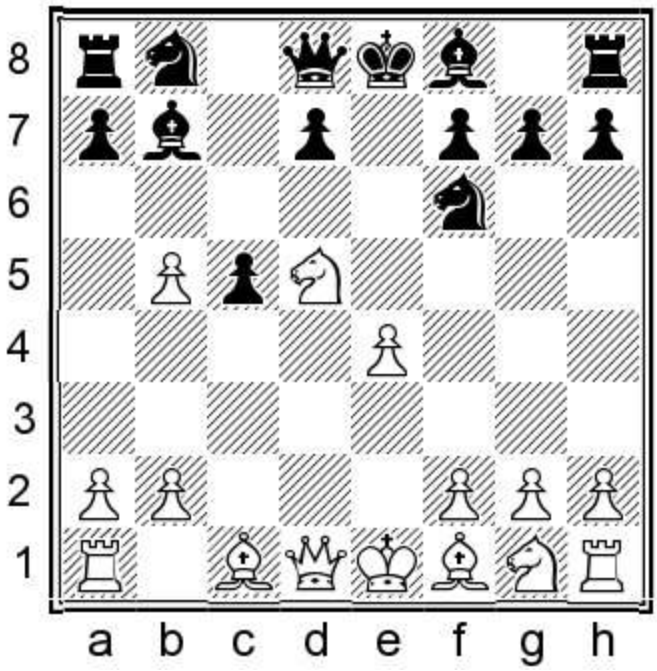
Black's plan is not so easy to justify.

5.♘c3 exd5

5...♗b7?! 6.e4 is hardly playable for Black.

6.♘xd5 ♗b7 7.e4!

7.♘xf6† ♕xf6 is also playable but I prefer the text move.



A1) 7...♘xd5 is worth considering but I consider **A2)** 7...a6 the most serious option.

Accepting the central pawn is suicidal:

7...♘xe4? 8.♗c4!

White's initiative plays itself.

8...♗e7

8...♗d6 9.♕g4 0-0 10.♗h6 ♗e5 11.♘f3 ♗xb2 12.0-0 ♘d6 13.♗g5 gave White a decisive attack in Huuskonen – Bostrom, Finland 1977.

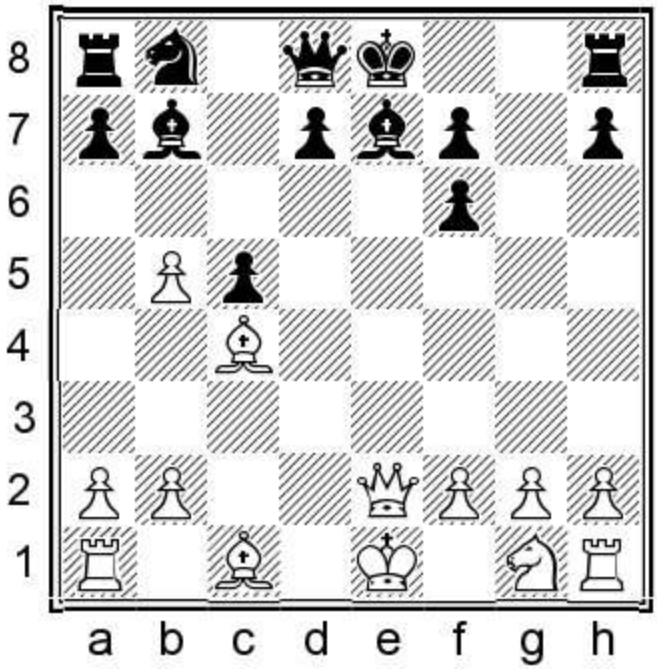
9.♕e2 ♘f6

9...♘d6 10.♗g5 f6 11.♗f4 ♘xc4 12.♕xc4 d6 13.0-0-0, was also bad news for Black in Kunze – Partys, Rijeka 2010.

10.♘xf6† gxf6

White has more than one winning move but my preference is:

chesstouring.com



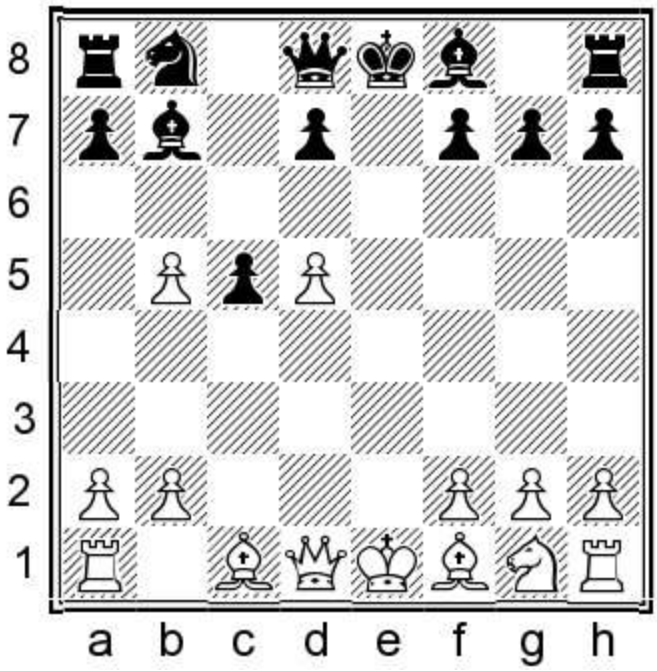
11.♗f4!N 11...♕a5†

11...♗xg2 loses to 12.♗xf7† (or 12.0-0-0+–) 12...♔xf7 13.♕h5† when White can either win back the bishop or go straight for the king.

12.♔f1 d5 13.♖e1 ♕d8 14.♗d3

White has a crushing initiative.

A1) 7...♘xd5 8.exd5

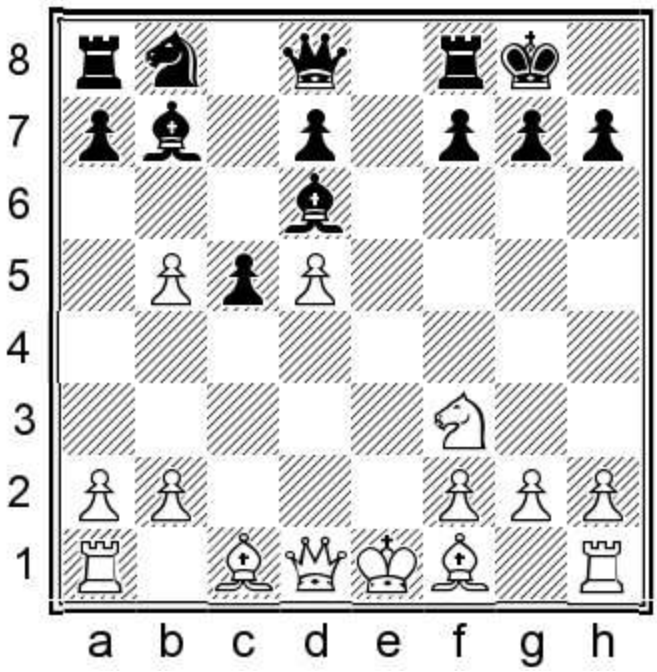


8...d6

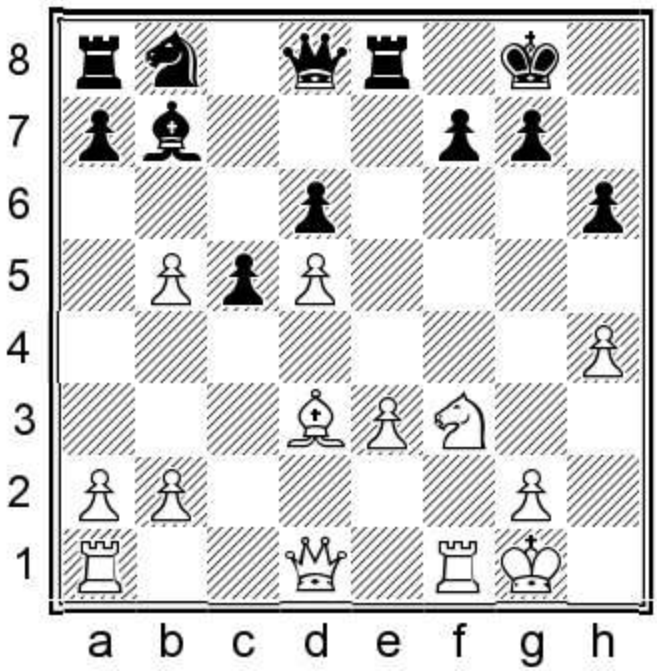
8...♗d6 9.♘f3 0-0 was tried in one of the more recent games in this line, Spindelboeck – Theuretzbacher, Austria 2017. White developed his bishop to e2 but he should have played more actively

chessbomb.com

with:



10.♗d3!N 10...♖e8† 11.♗e3 There is no reason to worry about 11...♗f4 12.0-0 ♗xe3 13.fxe3 d6, when the surprising 14.h4! enables White to seize the initiative on the kingside. The key point is revealed after: 14...h6

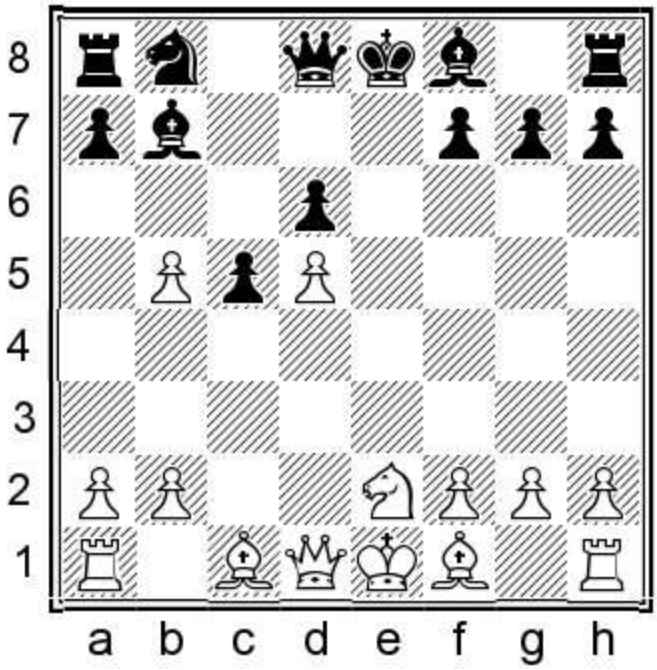


15.♘g5!! hxg5 16.♕h5 With a crushing attack.

9.♘e2!

The knight is heading to c3 in order to cement the d5-pawn.

chesstouring.com



9...♗e7 10.♘c3 0-0 11.♗e2 ♘d7

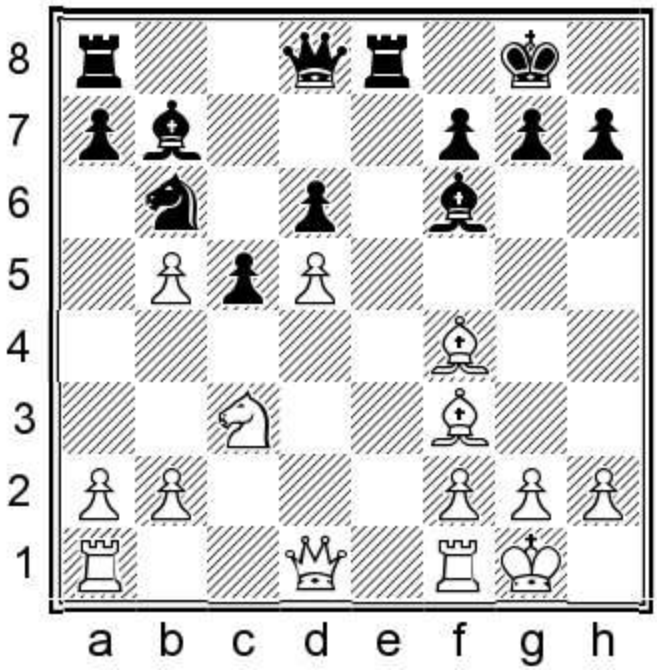
11...a6 has also not yielded much success for Black; after 12.0-0 axb5 13.♗xb5 ♘d7 14.♗f4± he failed to create any compensation in Neelotpal – Boidman, Hofheim 2014.

12.0-0

International Master Dimo Werner has played this position four times with Black. His last attempt continued:

12...♖e8 13.♗f4 ♘b6 14.♗f3 ♗f6

Here I found a logical improvement over Citak – D. Werner, Budapest 2007:

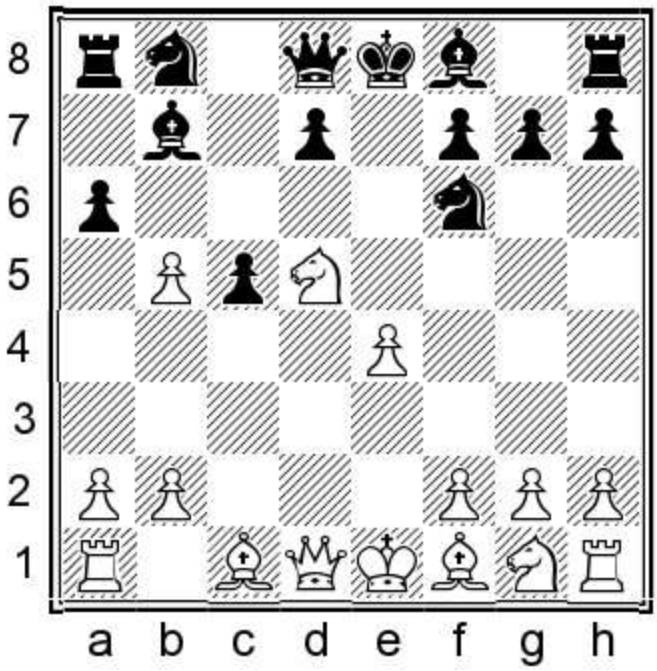


chesstouring.com

15.a4!N±

White is obviously better.

A2) 7...a6



Compared with the previous line, Black keeps a bit more tension in the position, although White should still have the better chances.

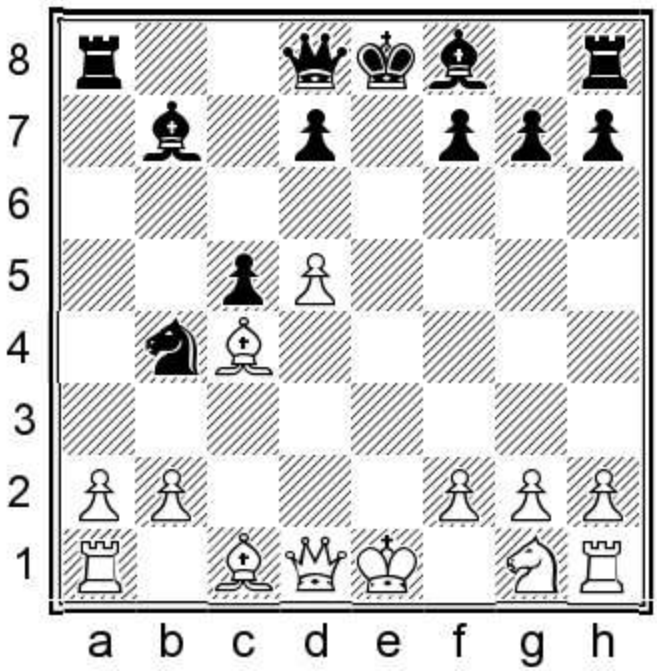
8.bxa6 ♘xa6 9.♗c4 ♘b4

A less accurate move order is:

9...♘xd5 10.exd5 ♘b4

10...♘c7 occurred in Schimpf – Huber, Munich 2017, when 11.♗f4N 11...d6 12.♘e2 ♗e7 13.0-0 0-0 14.a4 would have been clearly better for White.

chesstouring.com



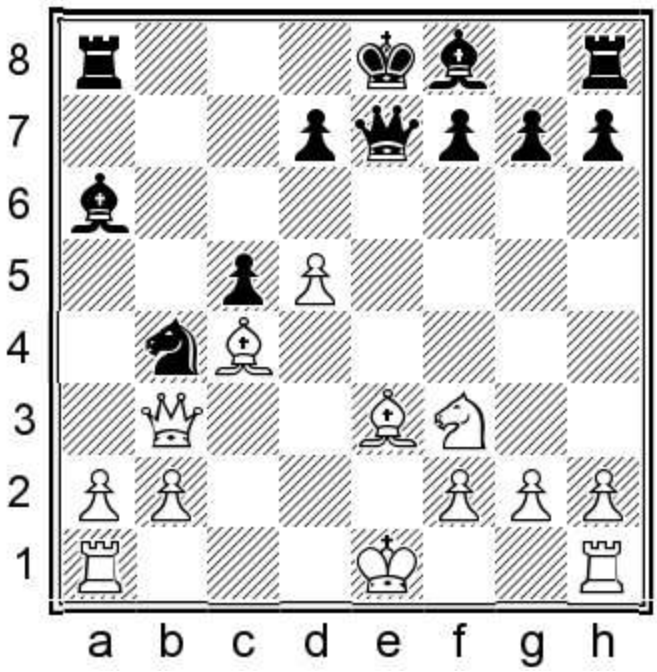
11.♕b3!?N

11.♘f3N is the simplest repertoire choice, transposing to variation A21 below, but the text move is quite a tempting extra option against Black's chosen move order. My analysis continues:

11...♗a6

11...♗d6 12.♘f3 ♕e7† 13.♗e3 ♕e4 14.0-0 0-0 15.♘d2 ♕f5 16.a3 ♘c2 17.♖ac1 ♘xe3 18.fxe3 ♕h5 19.g3± leaves Black without enough for the pawn.

12.♘f3 ♕e7† 13.♗e3



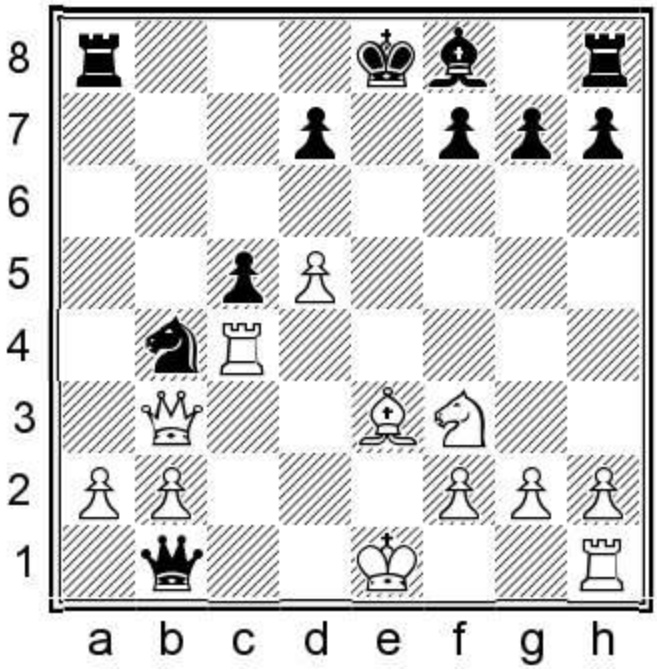
The critical line continues:

13...♕e4 14.♖c1!

With the following key idea.

14...♗xc4 15.♖xc4 ♕b1†

chesstouring.com



16.♔e2! ♕xh1 17.♖e4† ♗e7

17...♔d8 loses to 18.♖xb4! cxb4 19.♗b6† ♔e8 20.♕e3† ♗e7 21.d6 and the attack is too strong.

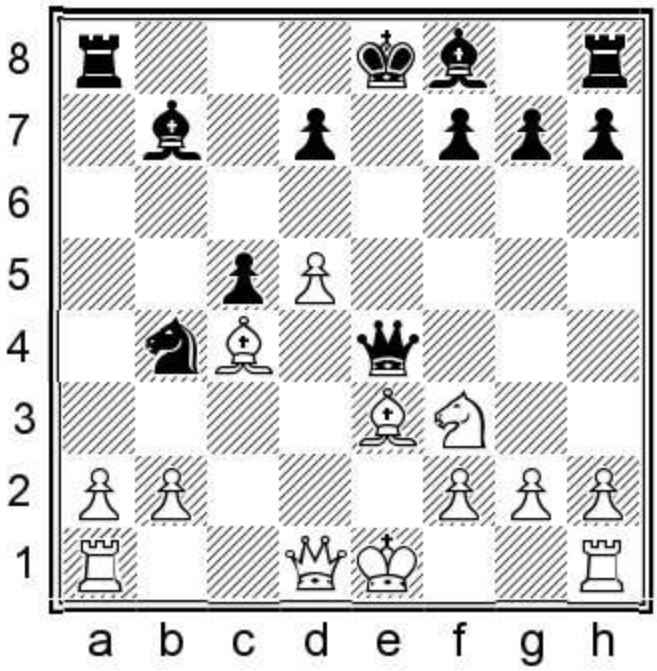
18.d6 0-0 19.dxe7 ♖fe8 20.♗xc5 ♘c6 21.♘g5

Black is under serious pressure.

10.♘f3

We will analyse **A21)** 10...♘fxd5 and **A22)** 10...♘bxd5N.

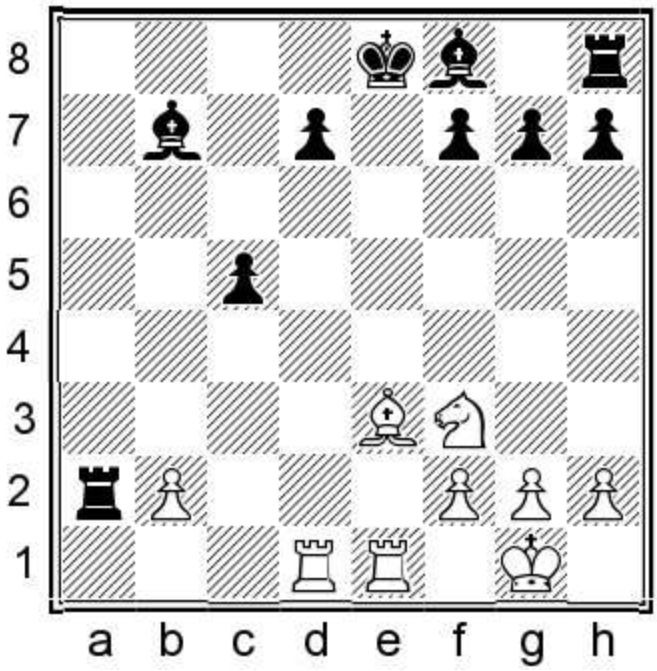
A21) 10...♘fxd5 11.exd5 ♕e7† 12.♗e3 ♕e4



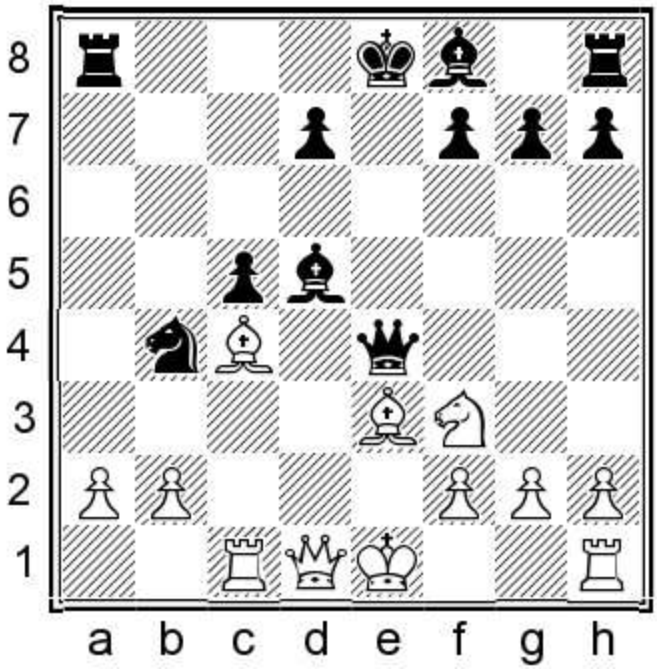
13.♖c1 ♗xd5

chesstouring.com

I also checked 13...♘xa2N 14.♗xa2 ♖xa2 15.0-0 when the threat of ♖e1 prevents Black from completing development. Play may continue: 15...♕xd5 16.♖e1 ♕xd1 17.♖cxd1



Even without queens, White's initiative is serious, for instance: 17...♖a6 18.♗f4† ♖e6 19.♘g5→



14.0-0!

White utilizes a simple tactic to accelerate his development.

14...♗xc4 15.♘d2 ♕d5 16.♖e1!

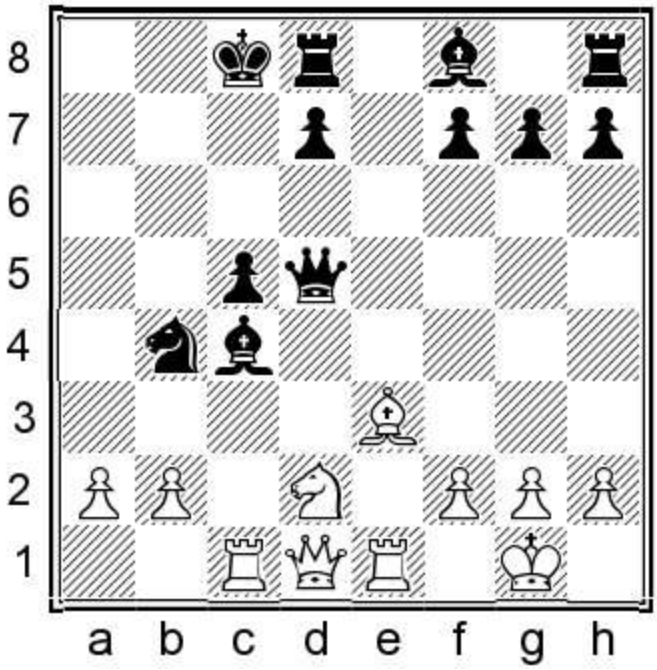
The key move.

Weirdly, the database shows another game from five years later between the same players, where White opted for the weaker 16.♖xc4?!. The reasons why Black repeated this line and White deviated with an inferior move remain a mystery to me.

chesstouring.com

16...0-0-0

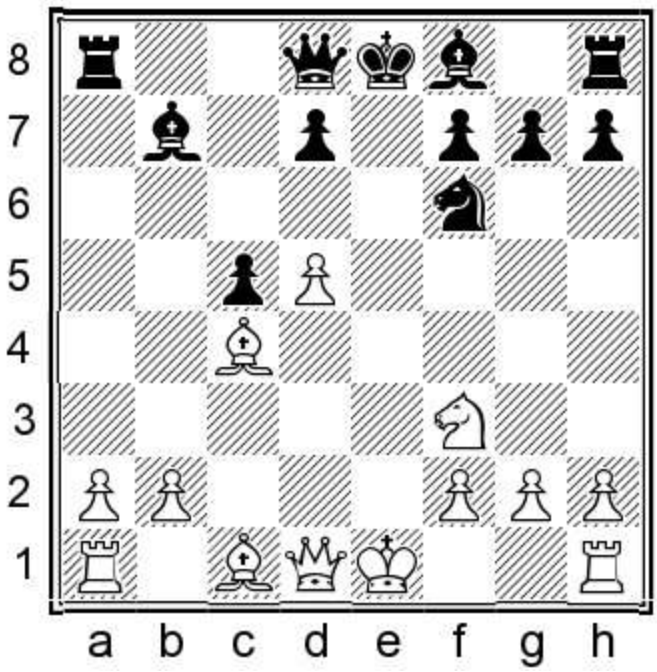
In B. Toth – Capece, Reggio Emilia 1974, White could have decided the game with:



17.♖xc4!N 17...♘d3 18.♖f1 ♘xb2 19.♕b3 ♘xc4 20.♖b1+–

With a devastating attack.

A22) 10...♘bxd5N 11.exd5

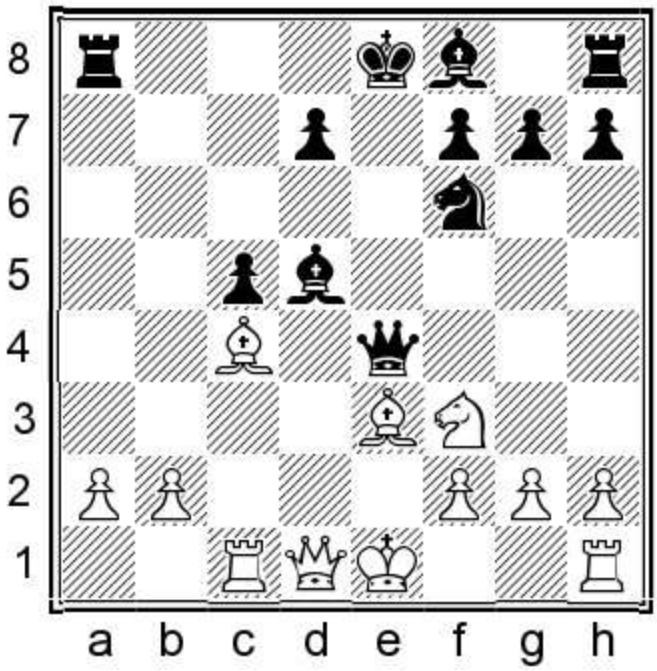


Although Black's last move was a novelty, the resulting position has occurred via transposition, as the knight went via c7 to d5 in one game.

chesstouring.com

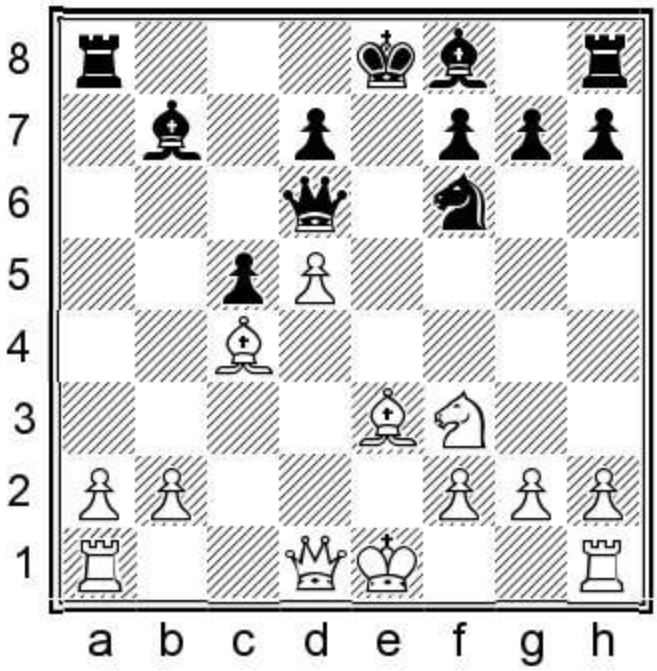
11...♕e7† 12.♗e3 ♕d6

It is also important to consider: 12...♕e4 13.♖c1 ♗xd5 (13...♘xd5?! 14.0-0 is too dangerous for Black with his king stuck in the centre)



14.b3! ♗e7 15.0-0 ♗e6 (15...0-0 16.♖e1 wins material) 16.a4 ♕f5 17.♖e1 0-0 18.♗g5± White is significantly better.

We have been following Donner – Contedini, Lenzerheide 1964. An obvious improvement for White is:



13.0-0N 13...♗xd5

If 13...♗e7 then 14.♘h4! is extremely powerful; for instance, 14...g6 15.♗h6 ♗xd5 16.♖e1 and Black unavoidably loses material.

chesstouring.com

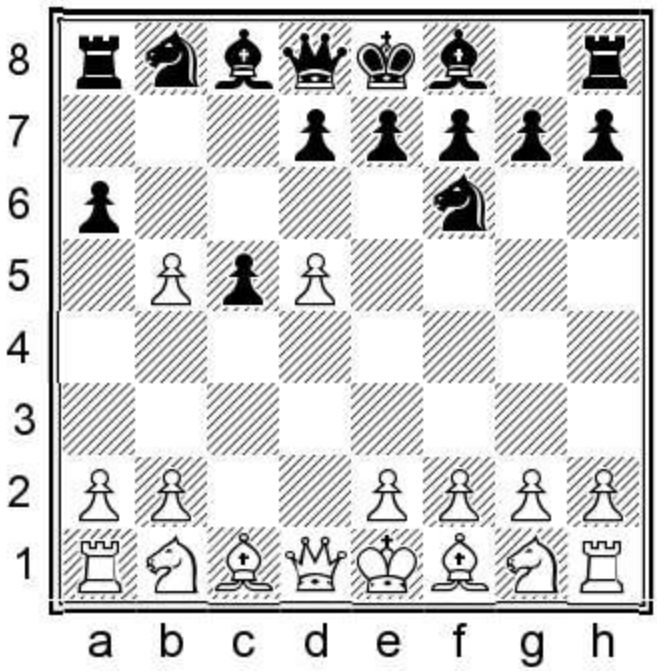
14.♗xd5 ♕xd5

14...♘xd5 15.♖e1 ♗e7 16.♗f4! is nasty for Black.

15.♖e1 ♕xd1 16.♖axd1±

Despite the queen exchange, White's initiative is strong, especially considering that 16...0-0-0 is not really an option due to 17.♘g5.

B) 4...a6



This is overwhelmingly the most popular choice.

5.bxa6

At this point Black's most popular choice has been 5...♗xa6, while 5...g6 is arguably the most theoretically challenging option. These two moves will be examined in Chapters 15 and 16 respectively.

Before then, we will consider a third option:

5...e6

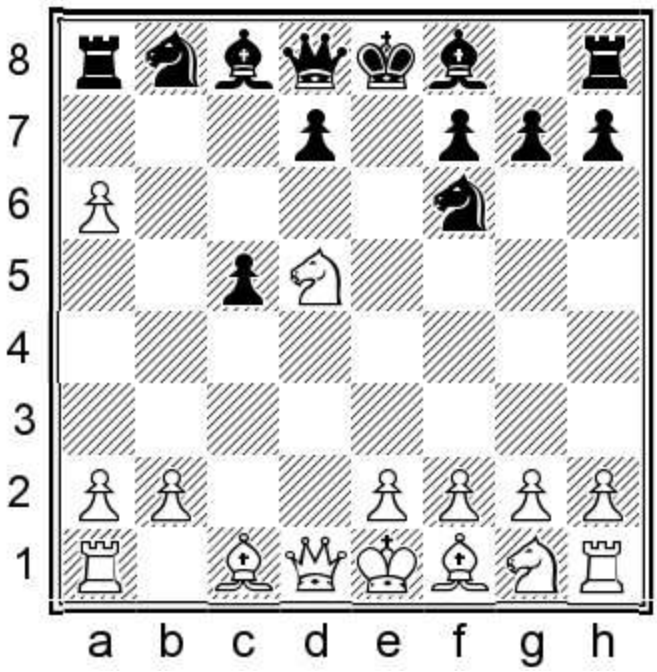
Black aims for central play, in a similar fashion to variation A above, but he hopes that the exchanging of the b5-pawn will increase his active possibilities.

6.♘c3 exd5

6...♘xd5 7.♘xd5 exd5 8.♕xd5 transposes to variation B3 below.

7.♘xd5

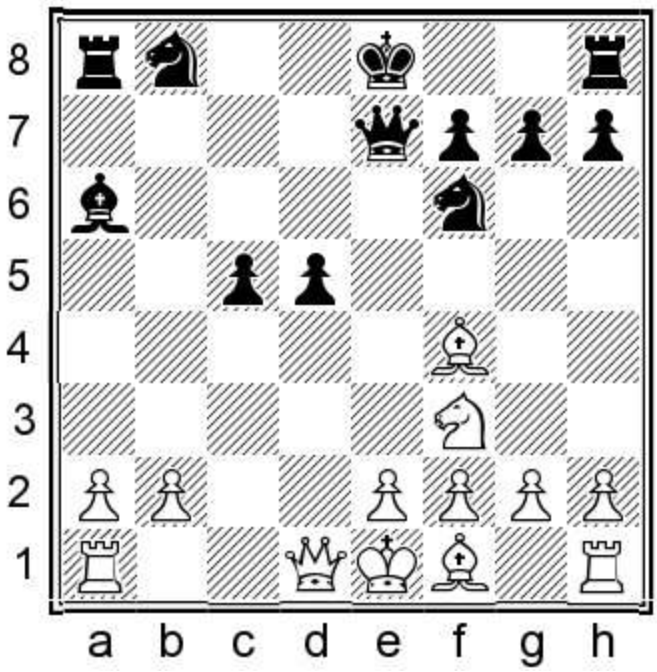
chesstouring.com



At this juncture it is worth considering **B1)** 7...♗xa6, **B2)** 7...♘xa6, **B3)** 7...♘xd5 and **B4)** 7...♗e7!?.

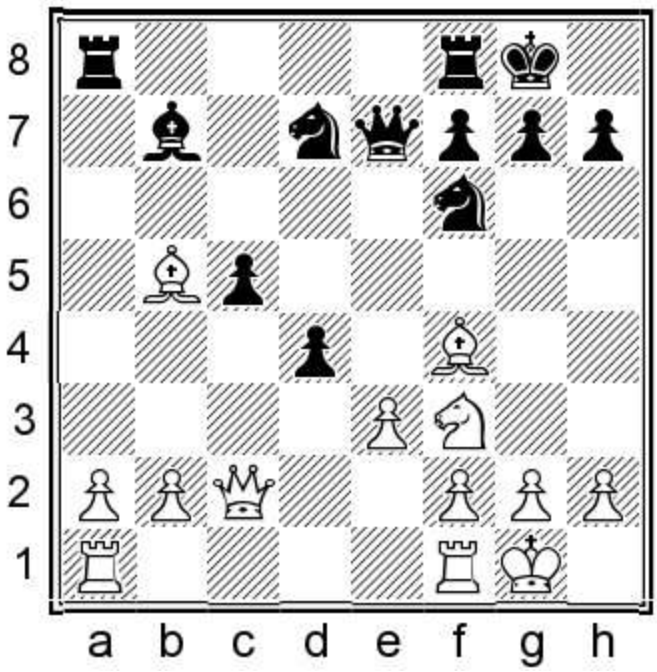
B1) 7...♗xa6 8.♘f3 ♘c6

8...♗e7 is worth checking, but the following line seems quite convincing for White: 9.♘xe7 ♕xe7 10.♗f4 d5

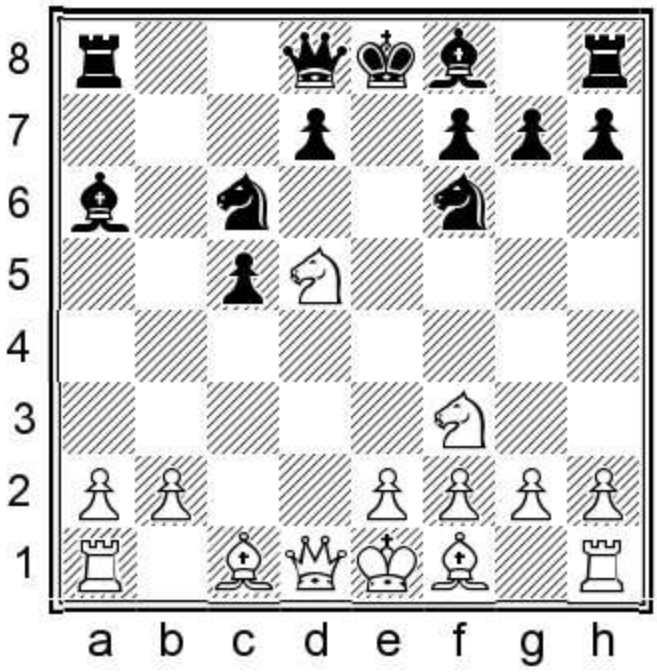


11.♕a4†! ♘bd7 12.e3 ♗b7 13.♕c2 0-0 This was Knol – Sitorus, corr. 2016, and now 14.♗b5N works well for White, mainly due to the fact that 14...d4 15.0-0 is not at all dangerous for him, for instance:

chesstouring.com



15...♗xf3 16.gxf3 ♘e5 17.♕e2 ♘d5 18.♗g3 White is clearly better.



9.e4 ♗xf1 10.♔xf1 ♗e7 11.♘c3!

A simple yet powerful move, which I was able to discover over the board. White retreats the knight from its strong position but secures the e4-pawn and earns important time to consolidate his position.

11...d6

Another good example continued 11...0-0 12.g3 c4 13.♔g2 ♖e8 14.♖e1 ♗b4 15.♗g5± and White's advantage was beyond any doubt in Avalyan – Tomasi, Mamaia 2017.

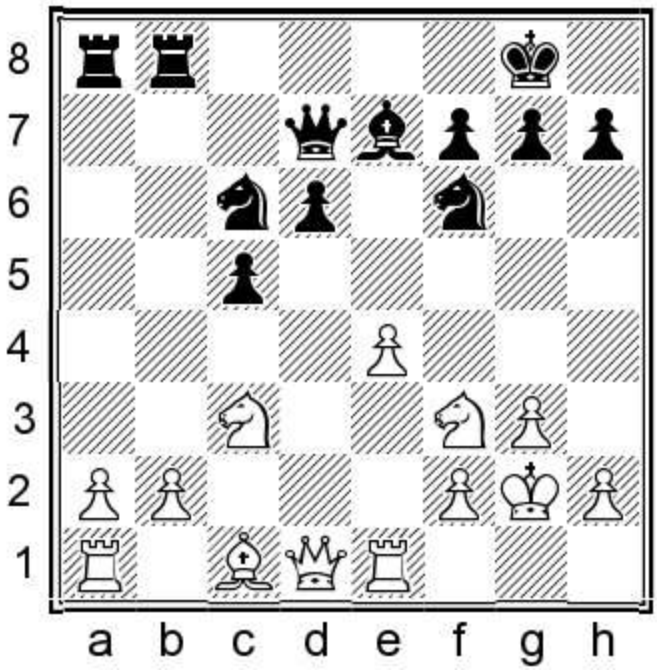
12.g3 0-0 13.♔g2

chesstouring.com

Black is unable to create any serious counterplay, especially with his bishop on e7.

13...♕d7 14.♖e1 ♖fb8

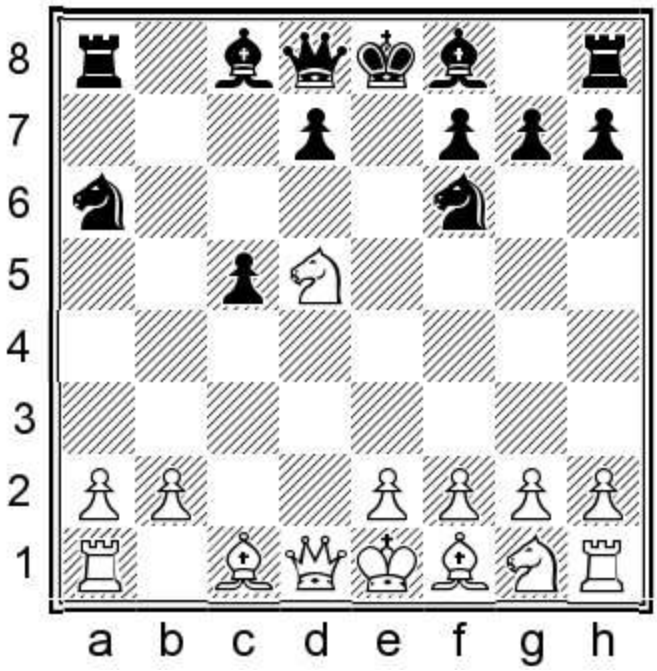
My game continued 14...h6 15.♗f4 ♘h5 16.♗e3 ♘f6 17.♖e2!? ♖fd8 18.♖c1 ♕e6 19.a3 ♖ab8 20.♕a4 and I enjoyed a healthy extra pawn in Avrukh – Terrieux, Sautron 2013.



15.b3 h6 16.♗b2 ♕b7 17.♕e2±

Black had no real compensation for the pawn in Steedman – Aymard, corr. 2015.

B2) 7...♘xa6



This has been a popular choice but it does not work too well for Black.

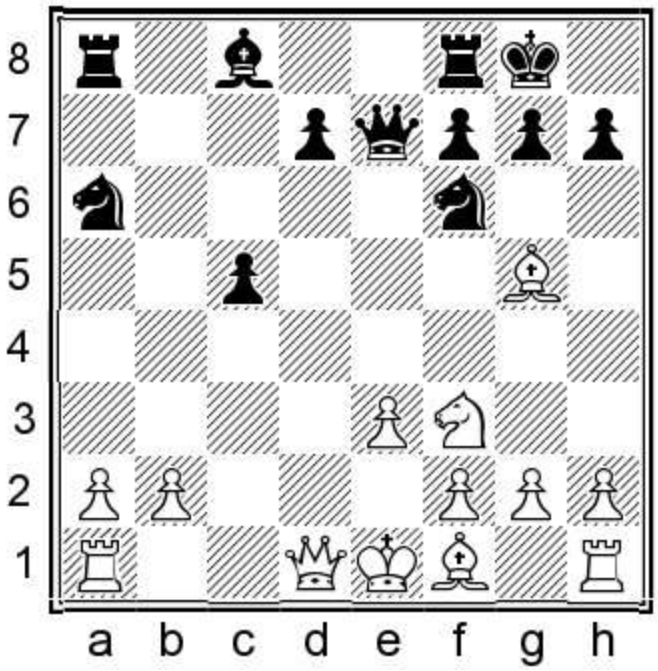
chesstouring.com

8.♗g5 ♗e7 9.♘xe7 ♕xe7 10.♘f3 0-0

10...h6 11.♗h4 does not really change anything; 11...0-0 12.e3 just reaches our main line below. Another game continued 10...♗b7 11.e3 0-0 12.♗e2 d5 13.0-0± and Black had no compensation whatsoever in Kalinowska – Stock, Plzen 2017.

11.e3

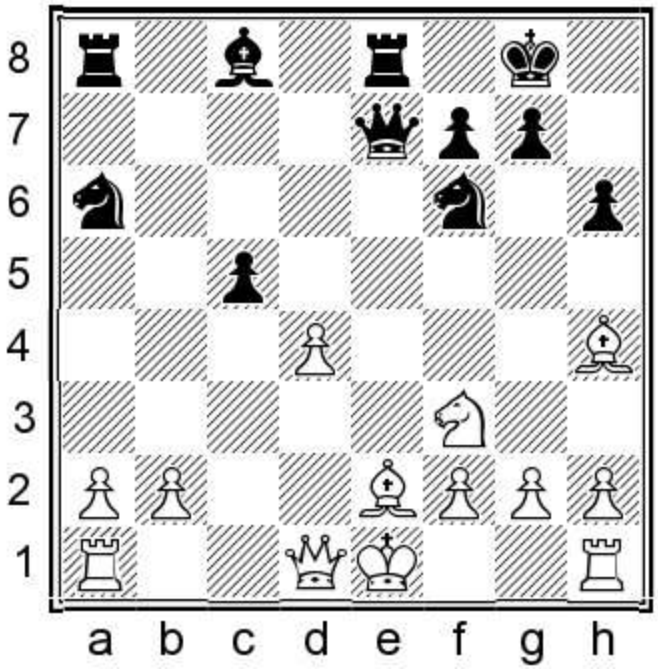
The following sequence looks pretty natural:



11...h6 12.♗h4 d5 13.♗e2 ♖d8

13...d4!? 14.exd4 ♖e8 is an interesting attempt to open things up, but White keeps everything under control as follows:

chesstouring.com

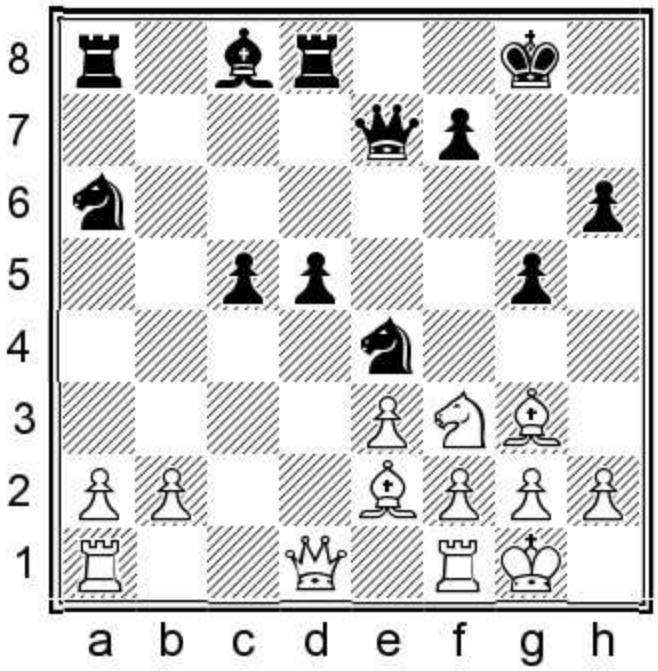


15.♗xf6! ♕xf6 16.0-0 ♖d8 17.a3! cxd4 18.♘e1 ♘c7 19.♘d3 White stabilized the position while keeping his extra pawn in Galje – Dijk, corr. 2016.

14.0-0 g5

Otherwise it is not clear how Black can claim any compensation for the pawn.

15.♗g3 ♘e4



16.♘d2!

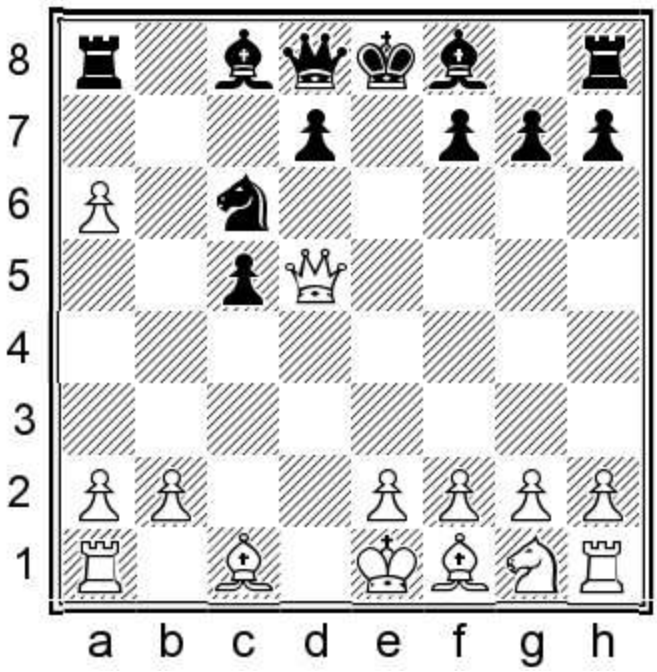
It is essential to get rid of the strong knight.

chesstouring.com

16...♘xg3 17.hxg3 ♗f5 18.a3±

This has occurred in four correspondence games. Even though Black only lost once and drew the other three, I believe White retains a solid advantage. Black does not have full compensation and faces an unpleasant battle for a draw.

B3) 7...♘xd5 8.♕xd5 ♘c6



9.♗d2!

This has been a rare choice so far, but it works perfectly for White.

9...♗xa6

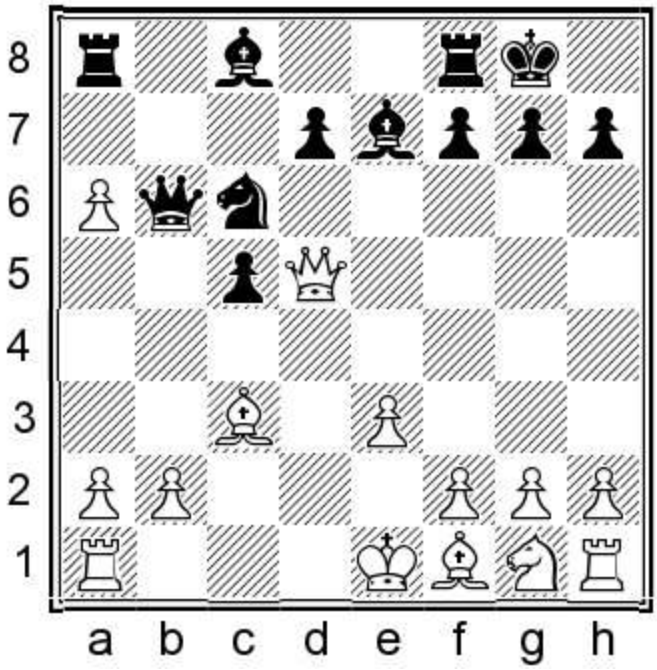
Black has also tried:

9...♗e7 10.e3 0-0

10...♕b6 11.♗c3 0-0 transposes.

11.♗c3 ♕b6

chesstouring.com



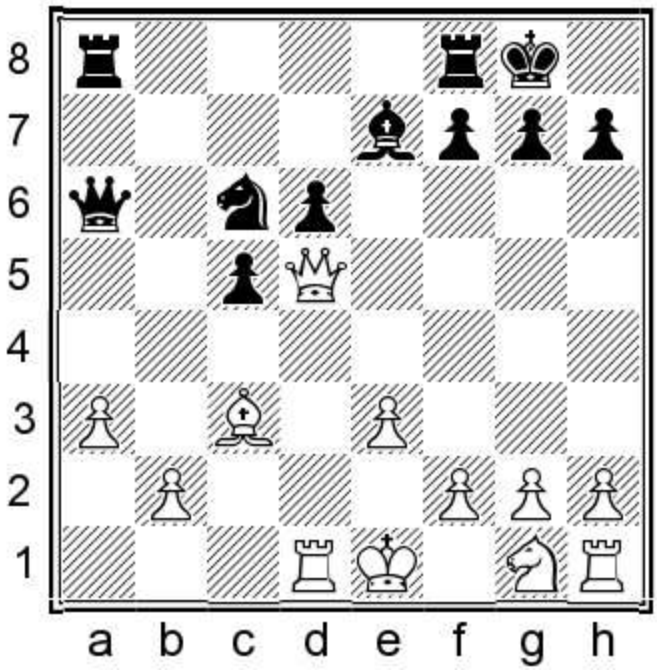
12.a3!

It seems to me that Black is in trouble after this precise move.

12...♗xa6

Another good example continued 12...♗f6 13.♗xf6 gxf6 14.♖b1 ♗xa6 15.♗xa6 ♕a5† 16.♕d2 ♖xa6 17.♘e2± and Black's strategy had obviously failed in Hildebrand – Gierth, email 2012.

13.♗xa6 ♕xa6 14.♖d1 d6



15.♘e2±

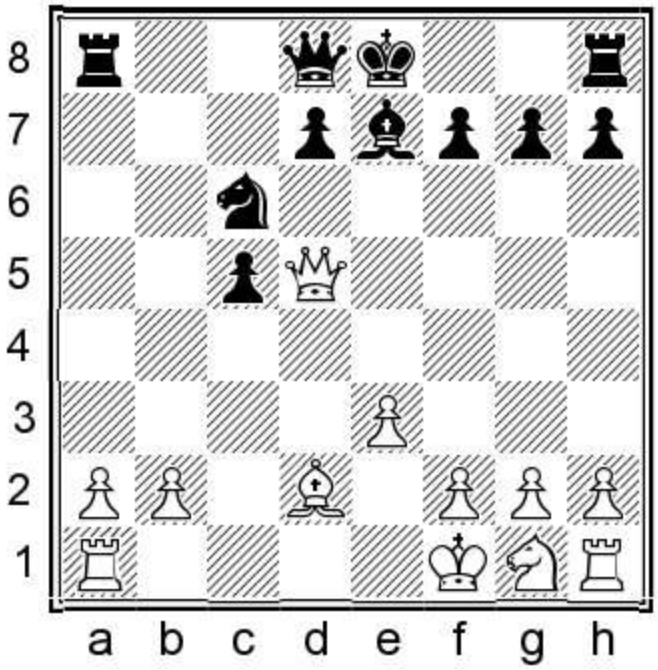
White was a healthy pawn up in Brugger – Lovholt, corr. 2007.

10.e3 ♗xf1 11.♔xf1 ♗e7

I found six correspondence games from this position, all of which ended in draws. Surprisingly, White

chesstouring.com

never opted for the following natural continuation:



12.♗c3N 12...0-0

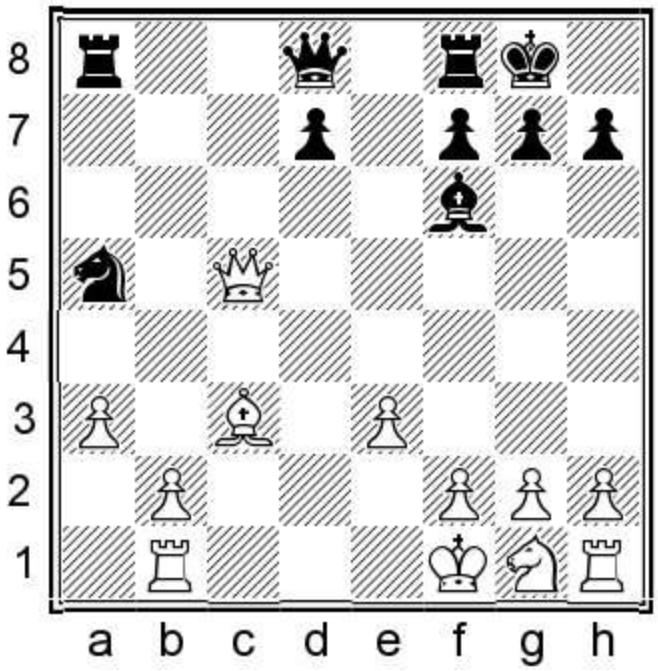
Or 12...♘b4 13.♕f3 0-0 14.a3 d5 15.♖d1 with some advantage for White.

13.a3 ♗f6

13...♘b4 also fails to impress after 14.♕f3 ♕b6 15.♘e2.

14.♕xc5 ♘a5 15.♖b1!

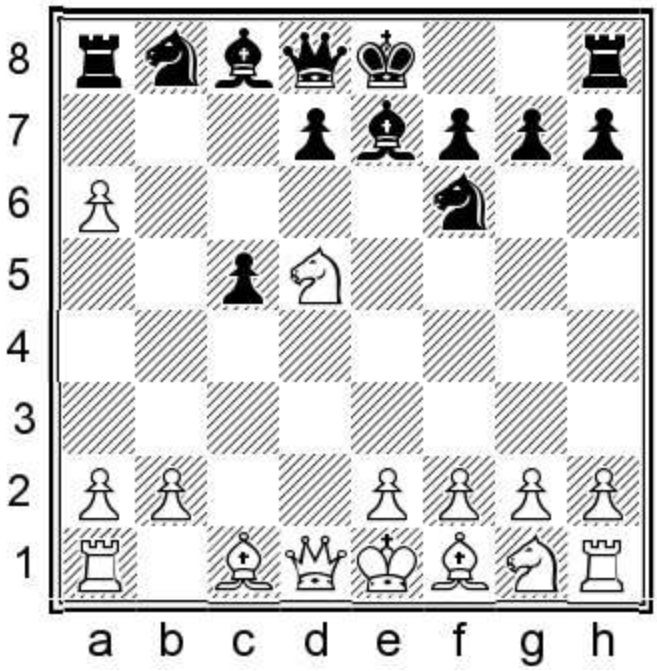
Black does not have enough activity. For instance:



15...♘b3 16.♕d5 ♗xc3 17.♕xb3 ♗f6 18.♕d3 ♕a5 19.♘f3 ♖fb8 20.g3 ♖xb2 21.♖xb2 ♗xb2 22.♕xd7±

White has excellent winning chances.

B4) 7...♗e7!?

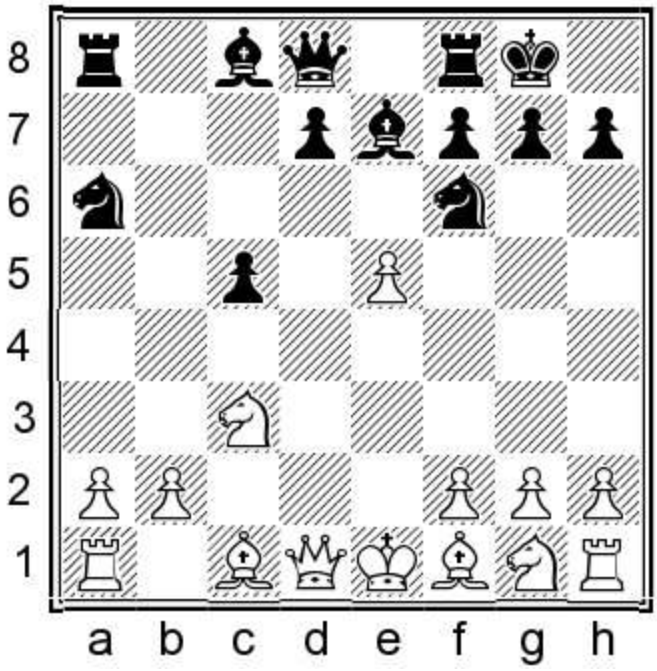


This isn't the most obvious choice but it has been tried in several correspondence games, and has surprisingly achieved a plus score for Black.

8.♘xe7

This simple move is White's best bet.

I have to mention the remarkable line: 8.e4 0-0 9.♘c3 ♘xa6 10.e5



chesstouring.com

10...♗b7!! 11.exf6 ♗xf6 12.♘f3 d5 13.♗e2 ♘b4 14.♘b5 d4 15.♗c4 ♖e8† 16.♔f1 d3 Black has full compensation for the piece, and has achieved a win and a draw from two correspondence games.

8...♕xe7 9.♗f4 d5 10.e3 0-0 11.♘f3 ♖d8

11...♗xa6?! 12.♗xa6 ♖xa6 13.0-0 gives White an extra tempo compared with the main line below.

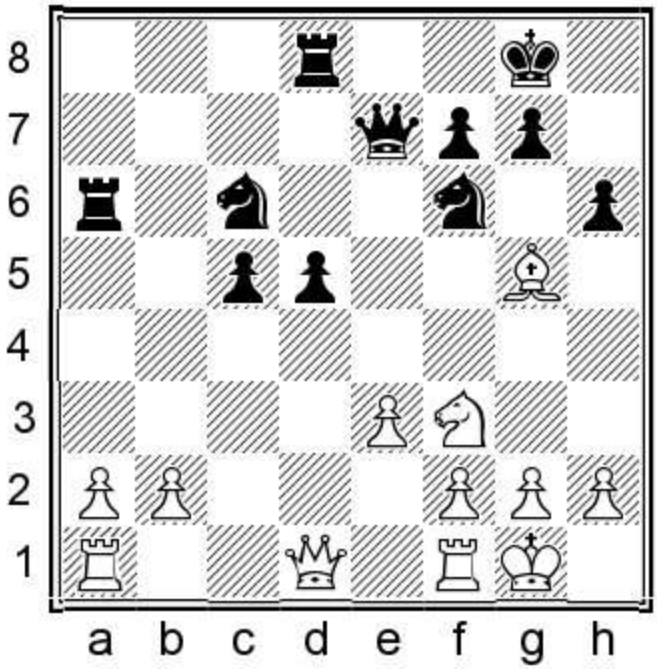
12.♗e2

In most games White has played 12.a3 or some other waiting move, hoping to gain a tempo after ...♗xa6. However, it is risky to leave the king in the centre and Black can play an active move such as ...♘e4 before taking on a6, so I prefer to simply develop and castle.

12...♗xa6

12...d4 13.♕b3 is good for White.

13.♗xa6 ♖xa6 14.0-0 ♘c6 15.♗g5! h6



16.♕e2N

I found a game where White exchanged on f6, but we may as well hit the rook first.

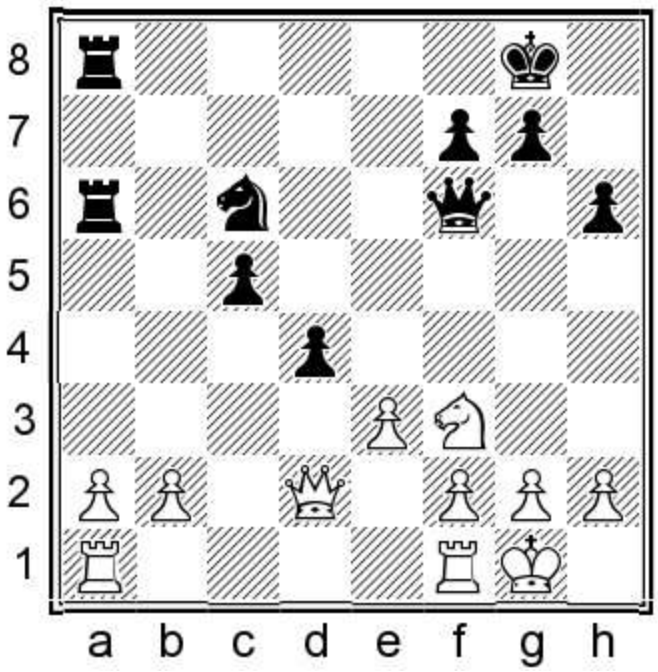
16...♖da8

16...♖a7 17.♗xf6 ♕xf6 18.♖fd1 c4 19.h3± leads to a similar situation.

17.♗xf6 ♕xf6 18.♕d2 d4

In the event of 18...♕e6 19.a3 or 18...♖d8 19.b3, White easily stabilizes his position while retaining his extra pawn.

chesstouring.com



19.exd4

19.b3 dxe3 20.♕xe3 ♘d4 is pretty similar to our main line.

19...♘xd4 20.♘xd4 cxd4 21.a3 d3 22.♖ac1

Black certainly has some compensation but is doomed to a long defence.

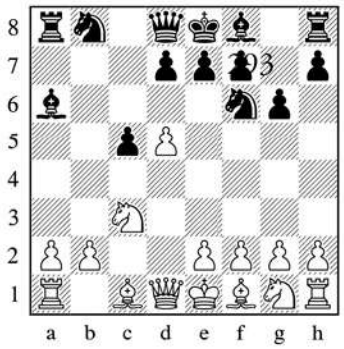
Conclusion

This chapter has focused on two Benko sidelines: 4...e6 and the related idea of 4...a6 5.bxa6 e6. In general, I am not too impressed with Black's attempts to generate counterplay in the centre. A lot of the lines lead to positions where White may face some technical challenges to convert his extra pawn, but he is nonetheless playing for a win with little risk – always a pleasant situation for a practical player.

chesstouring.com



Benko Gambit



5...♗xa6

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5 a6 5.bxa6 ♗xa6 6.♘c3 g6

7.e4

A) 7...d6 8.♗xa6 ♘xa6 9.♘f3 ♗g7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♕e2 294

A1) 11...♕b6 295

A2) 11...♘d7 296

B) 7...♗xf1 8.♔xf1 d6 9.♘f3 ♗g7 10.g3 0-0 11.♔g2 297

B1) 11...♕b6 298

B2) 11...♘a6 299

B3) 11...♘bd7 12.a4! 301

B31) 12...♕a5 302

B32) 12...♕b6 303

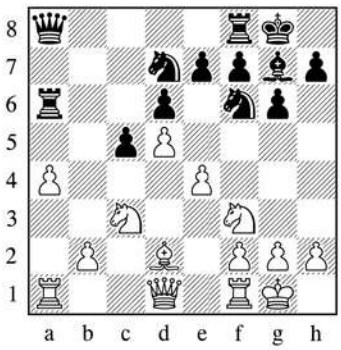
B33) 12...♖a6 13.♕c2 ♕a8 14.♖a3 306

B331) 14...♖c8 306

B332) 14...e6 307

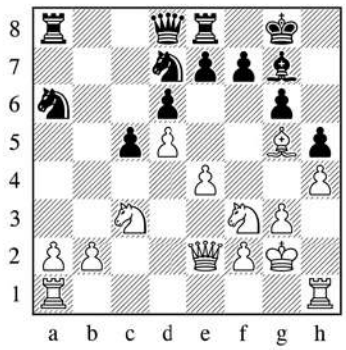
chesstouring.com

A) note to 8...♘xa6



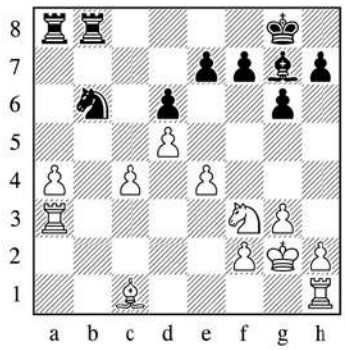
13.♘b5!N

B2) note to 12...♕b6



15.g4!N

B32) after 19...♘b6



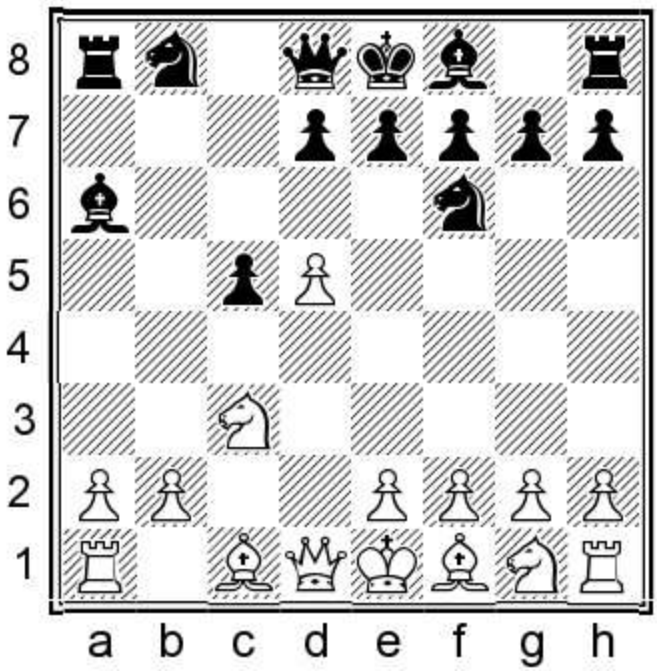
20.c5!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5 a6 5.bxa6 ♗xa6

The next chapter will focus on 5...g6, which is the usual choice among Benko experts these days.

Before then, it is useful to analyse the text move. When you appreciate the power of the thematic plan shown in this chapter, you can better understand why Black prefers to fight against it with 5...g6 and where the differences lie.

6.♘c3



6...g6

Usually 6...d6 7.e4 will just transpose to the main line. For instance, 7...♗xf1 8.♔xf1 ♘bd7 9.♘f3 g6 10.g3 and now Black really has nothing better than 10...♗g7 11.♔g2 0-0, when we reach variation B3.

7.e4

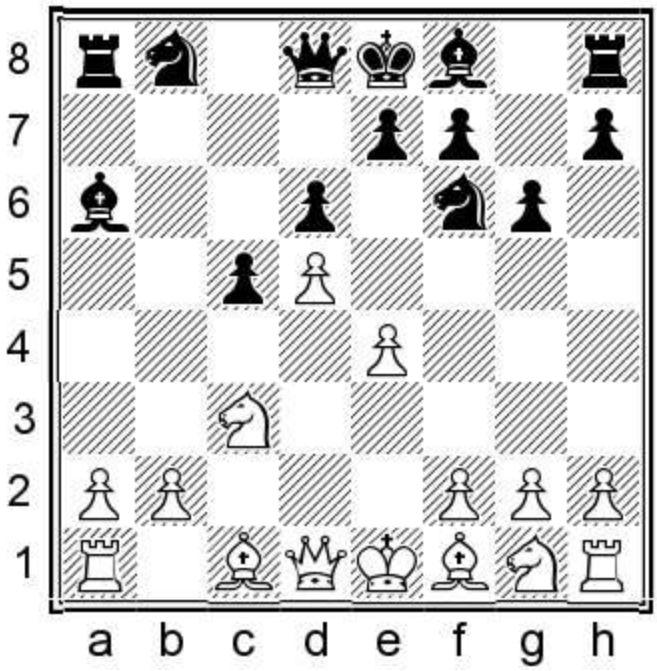
This is a major change from *GM 2*. First I was encouraged by Magnus, while witnessing his model

chesstouring.com

game against Viorel Bologan in Biel 2012. Moreover, later I realized that White's "light-squared strategy" (explained later), something that I was striving for in my previous fianchetto line, can be started immediately!

We will analyse **A)** 7...d6 and **B)** 7...♗xf1.
7...♕a5 has been tried in a few games but after 8.♗d2 it is not clear what the purpose of Black's last move is meant to be.

A) 7...d6

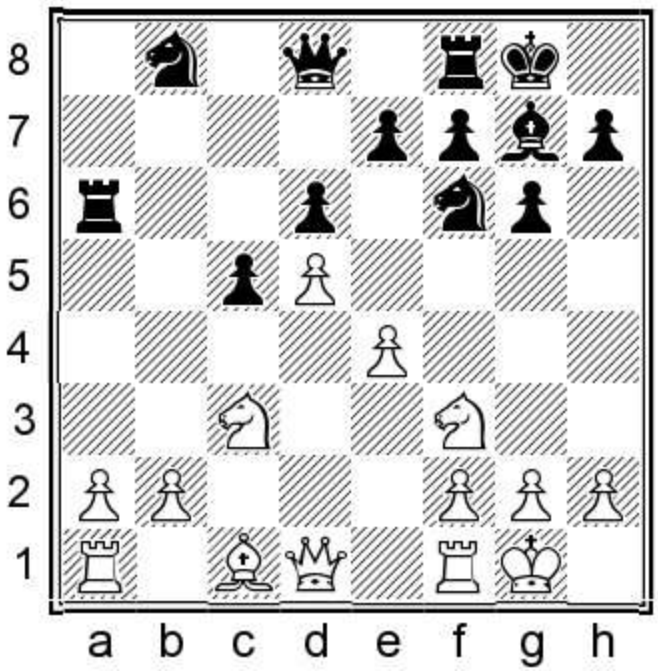


When Black declines to take on f1 it doesn't change White's general plan, but just saves him the mild inconvenience of artificial castling.

8.♗xa6 ♘xa6

The alternative recapture makes White's task easier:
8...♖xa6?! 9.♘f3 ♗g7 10.0-0 0-0

chesstouring.com



11.a4!

I suggest playing this move right away, as it is an important part of White's light-square strategy, so it is best to keep some flexibility with the other pieces.

11...♘bd7 12.♗d2

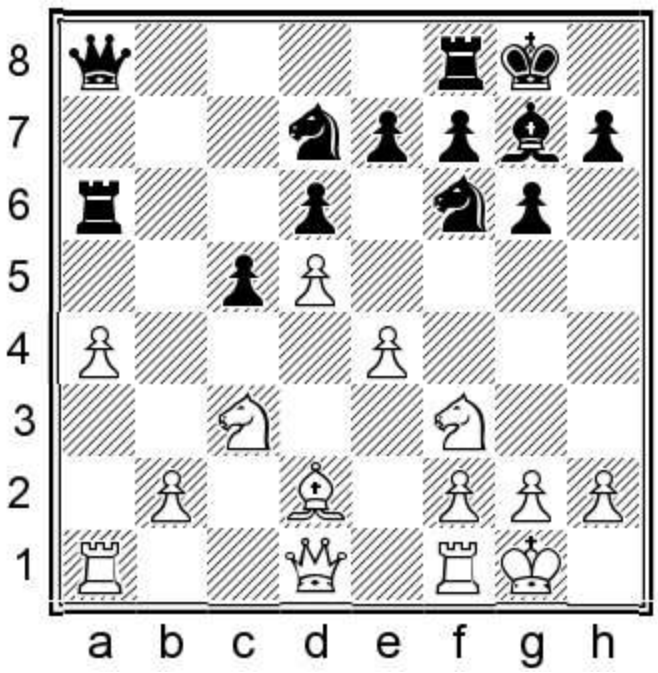
White's play is more or less the same as in our main line.

12...♕a8

12...♕b6 13.♖b1 ♖b8 14.b3± reached White's model set-up in Fahrenholz – Ehret, Germany 1997.

12...♘g4 13.b3 ♕a8 14.♖c1 is also excellent for White, who easily consolidated his queenside after 14...♕b7 15.♘b5 ♘ge5 16.♘xe5 ♗xe5 17.♕e2± in Moiseenko – S. Kasparov, Cappelle-la-Grande 2006.

The text move has been played twice. My improvement is:



chesstouring.com

13.♘b5!N

The knight belongs here anyway, so it is best to play it while threatening a fork.

13...♖c8

13...♘xe4 14.♘c7 ♕a7 15.♘xa6 ♕xa6 16.♖e1! leaves Black with no significant compensation for the exchange.

14.♕c2

White has a harmonious set-up.

14...c4

This is Black's only serious attempt to find counterplay, but it has a clear drawback which can be exploited by means of:

15.♘fd4 ♘c5 16.♘c6 ♗f8 17.♘c3±

White is firmly in control.

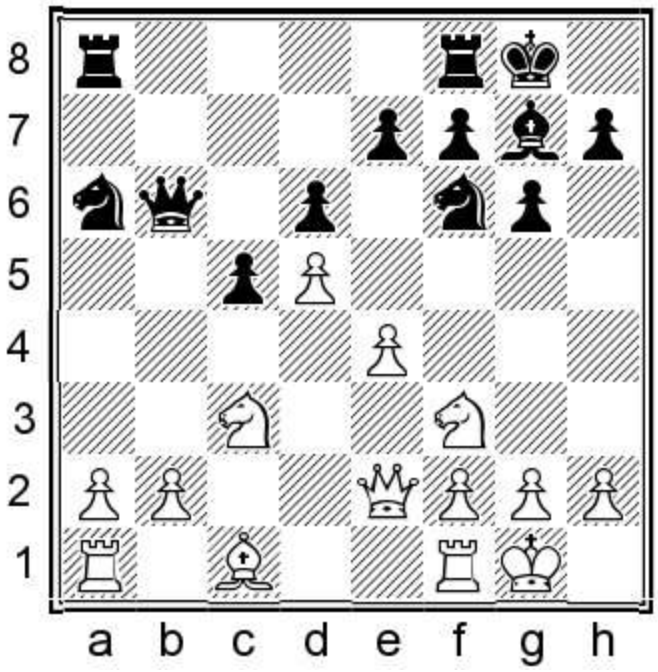
9.♘f3 ♗g7 10.0-0 0-0

This is the first serious crossroads for White, with many reasonable moves. To make life easier, I decided to go with the same move as in the main line.

11.♕e2

I examined two continuations: **A1)** 11...♕b6 and **A2)** 11...♘d7.

A1) 11...♕b6



12.a4

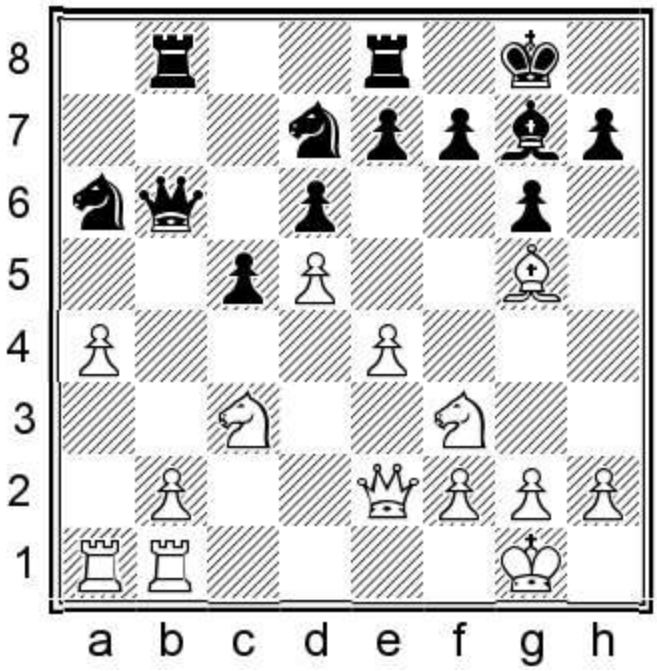
Later in the main line, we will see this move being used to secure the b5-outpost for the knight. Here we will not hurry to put the knight there, as it can easily be exchanged by ...♘c7. Still, it is useful to have the option of a4-a5.

chesstouring.com

12...♘c7

12...♖fb8 occurred in Thorhallsson – Manca, Arnhem 1988, and now the energetic 13.a5!N 13...♕b7 14.♘d2 would have been clearly better for White.

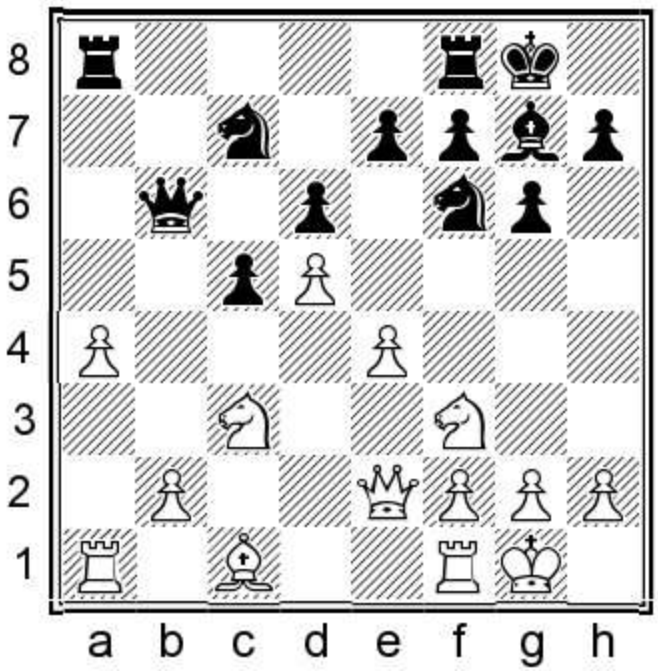
12...♘d7 can be met by: 13.♗g5 ♖fe8 14.♖fb1!? This move is seldom seen in the Benko, but actually why not? One rook supports the advance of the a-pawn, while the other neutralizes Black's pressure along the b-file. 14...♖ab8 Now in Gotel – Toledo, Greenhills 1997, a logical continuation of White's strategy would have been:



15.a5!N 15...♕b7 16.♘d2± With a pleasant advantage.

After the text move I like the following new idea:

chesstouring.com



13.♗g5!?N

Here are a few illustrative lines.

13...♖fb8

13...h6 14.♗d2 is similar and may transpose, as taking the b2-pawn would cost Black his queen.

14.♖fb1 h6 15.♗d2 ♕a6

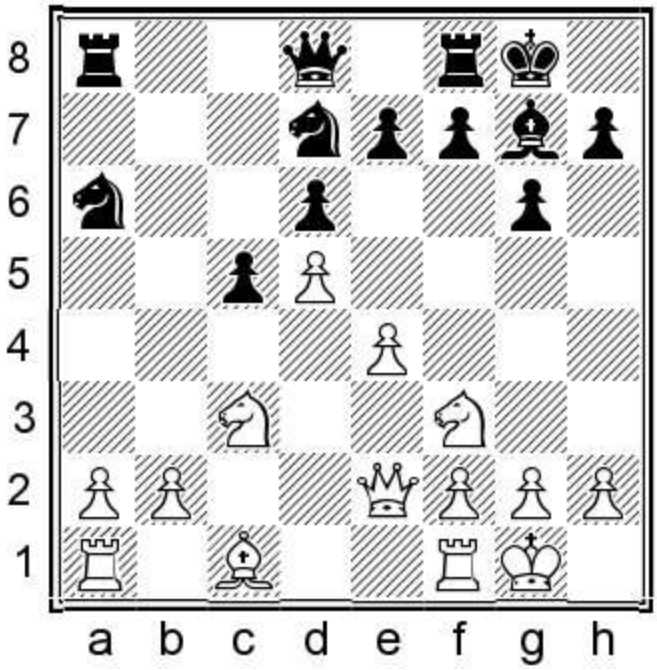
15...e6 16.dxe6 ♘xe6 17.♕c4 also favours White.

16.♕d1 e6 17.dxe6 ♘xe6 18.a5

White maintains the better chances.

A2) 11...♘d7

chesstouring.com



This has been Black's most popular choice.

12.♗f4 ♕b6

Another important line is:

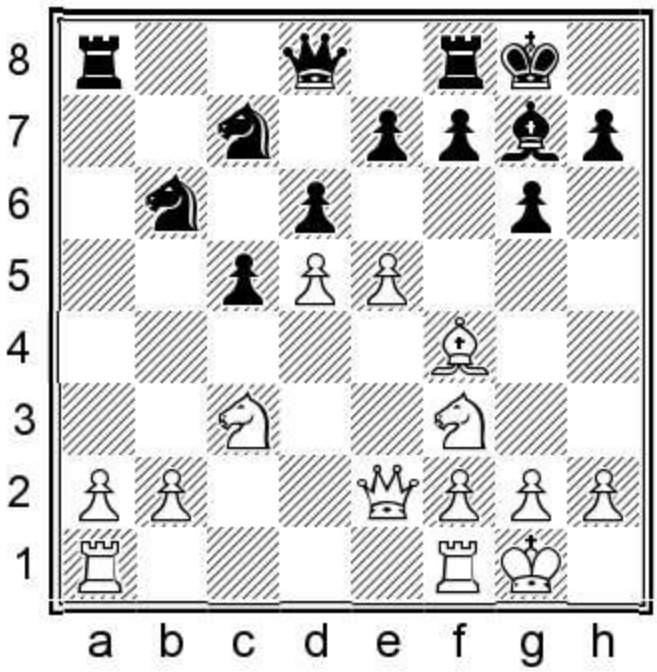
12...♘c7 13.e5!

White is ideally prepared for this break.

13...♘b6

It is also worth checking 13...dxe5 14.♘xe5 ♘xd5 (White maintains a clear plus after 14...♘xe5 15.♗xe5 ♘xd5 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♕e5† ♘f6 18.♕xc5±) 15.♘xd5 ♘xe5 16.♖fd1! e6 17.♗xe5 exd5 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.♕e5† ♕f6 20.♖xd5± and White keeps a healthy extra pawn.

Here I found an important improvement over Jeszenkovics – Demeter, Hungary 1997:



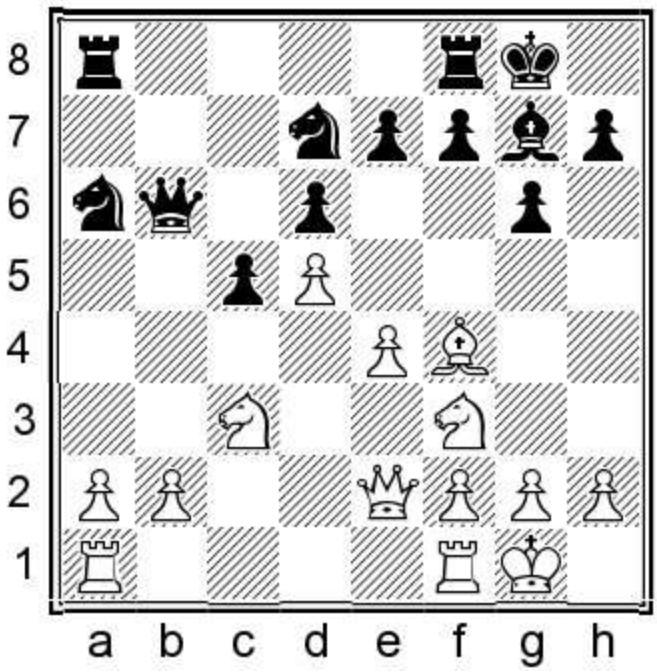
chesstouring.com

14.♖fd1N 14...♕d7 15.a4! ♖fb8

Obviously White is ready for 15...♘xa4 16.♘xa4 ♖xa4 17.♖xa4 ♕xa4 18.exd6± when he regains his extra pawn.

16.g3!

White keeps the advantage.

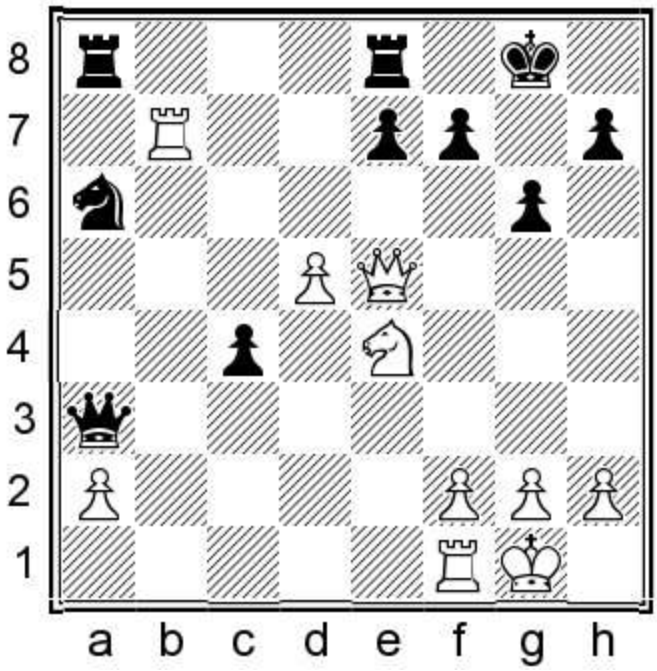


13.e5!

Once again, this thematic pawn break works perfectly.

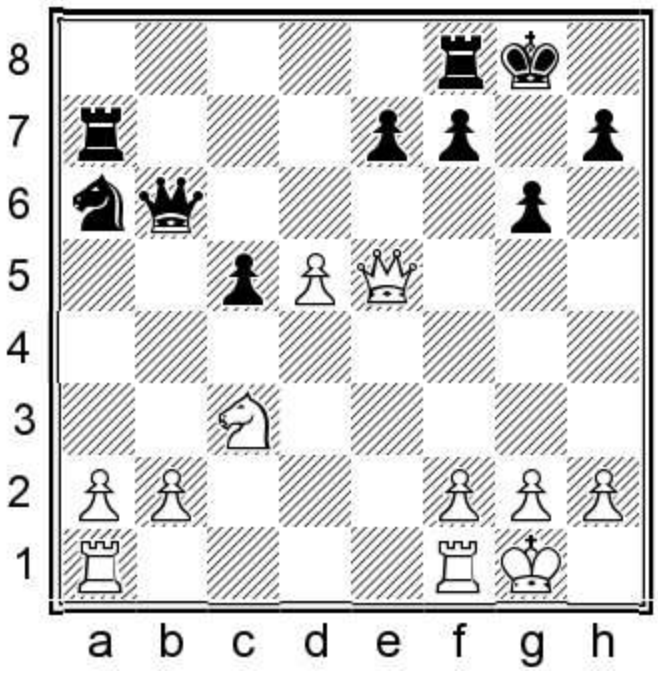
13...dxe5 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.♗xe5 ♗xe5 16.♕xe5 ♖a7

16...♕xb2 does not help Black in view of 17.♖ab1 ♕a3 (17...♕c2 18.♖b7±) 18.♖b7 and White quickly seized a decisive initiative in the following game: 18...♖fe8 19.♘e4 c4



chesstouring.com

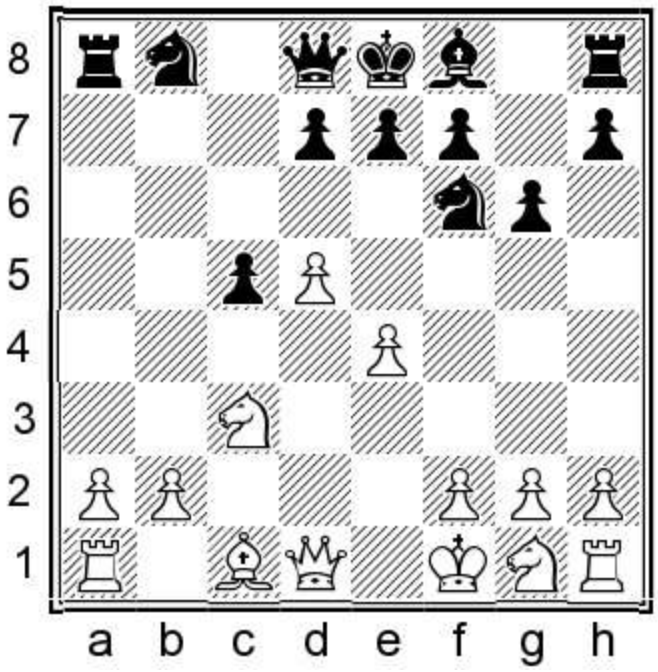
20.d6! exd6 21.♘f6† ♔f8 22.♕g5 ♔g7 23.♘h5† 1–0 Antoshin – Prado, Uppsala 1956.



17.♘e4! f6 18.♕c3 ♖b8 19.b3±

Black had no compensation whatsoever in Turov – Kolasinski, Teplice 2017.

B) 7...♗xf1 8.♔xf1



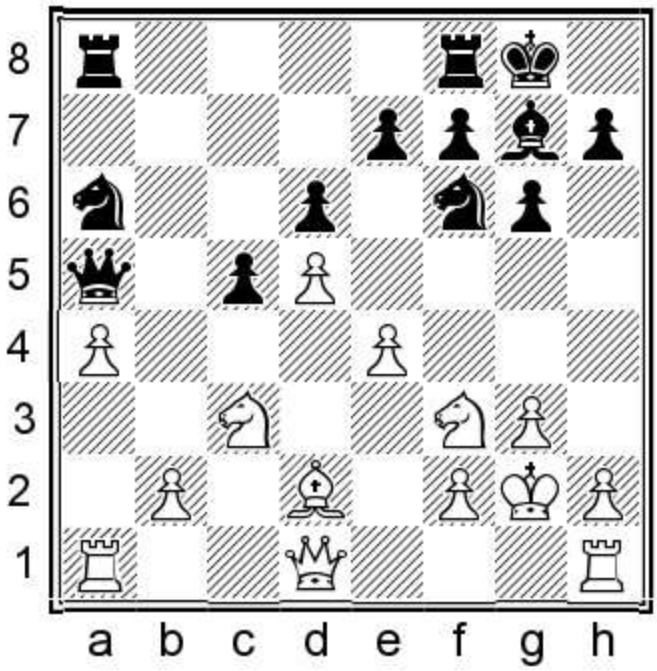
This is the overwhelmingly most popular continuation. The next few moves require no comment, as both sides continue developing in the obvious way.

8...d6 9.♘f3 ♗g7 10.g3 0-0 11.♔g2

Black has tried **B1)** 11...♕b6 and **B2)** 11...♘a6, although **B3)** 11...♘bd7 is definitely the main move.

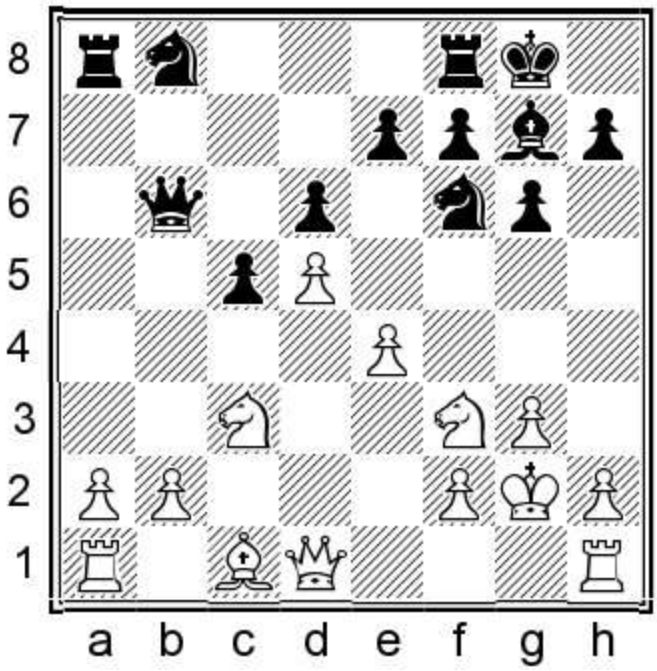
chessstouring.com

A minor alternative is: 11...♕a5 12.a4 ♘a6 (12...♘bd7 transposes to variation B31 on page 302) 13.♗d2 The apparent weakness of the b4-square is hardly important, as the following game demonstrates:



13...♘b4 (13...♕b6N 14.♖b1 ♘b4 15.b3 and 13...♖fb8N 14.♘b5 ♕b6 15.♕c2 also favour White) 14.♕e2 ♖fe8 15.♘b5 White was clearly better in Jianu – Vajda, Medias 2016.

B1) 11...♕b6



I suggest meeting this with our thematic pawn move:

12.a4! ♘a6

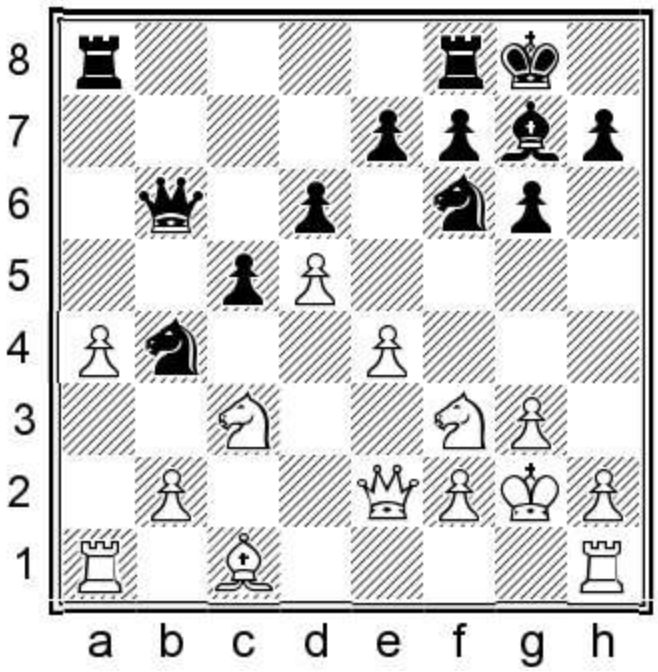
chesstouring.com

This is Black's usual reply.

12...♘bd7N would lead to variation B32 on page 303.

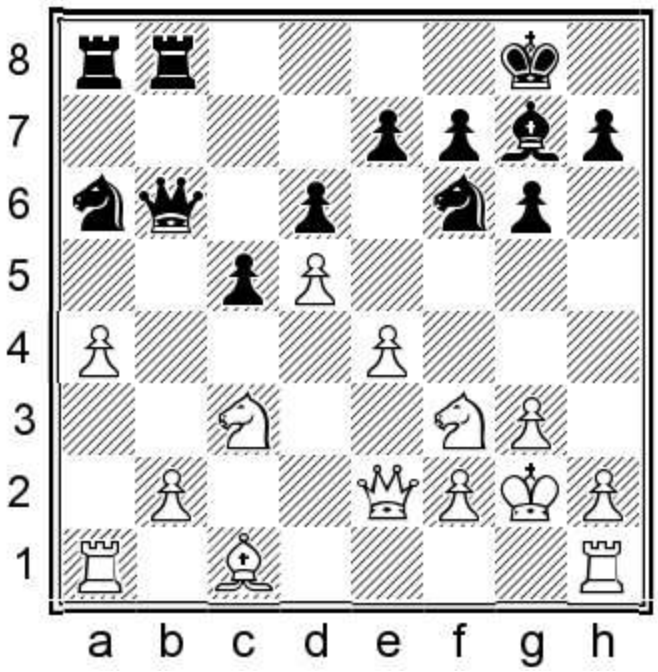
13.♕e2 ♘c7

13...♘b4 may look tempting but we should actually be happy to see this move, as the knight does not threaten anything and it even blocks Black's pressure along the b-file. So far, nobody has chosen the best continuation for White:



14.♘b5N 14...♕b7 (14...♘e8 is well met by 15.h4!; we will see in some of the later lines how effective this can be...) 15.♗g5 h6 16.♗d2± White has a great position.

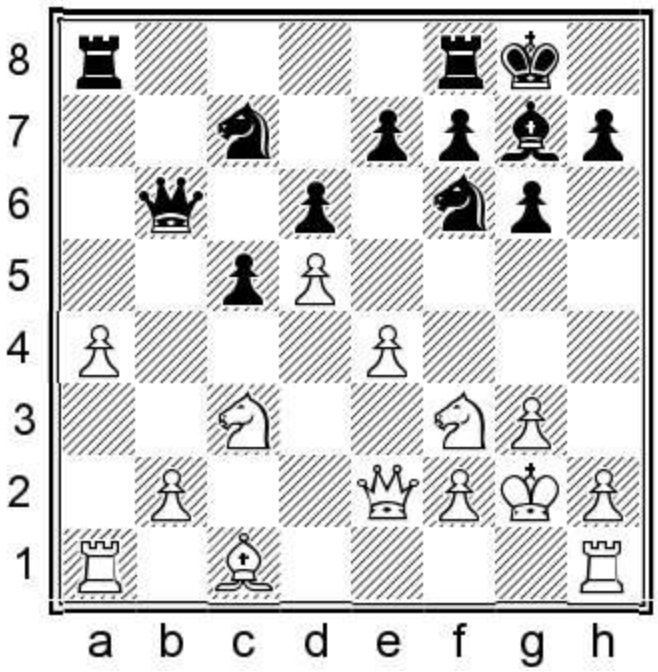
13...♖fb8 has been fairly successful for Black in practice, but nobody has found the strongest reply to it:



chesstouring.com

14.a5!N 14...♕b7 15.♘d2 White easily neutralizes any pressure on the queenside, for instance: 15...♘c7 16.♘c4 ♕a6 17.♖a4!±

The text move occurred in Konstantinov – Milanovic, Novi Sad 2016, and a couple of other games. I propose the following improvement:



14.♗g5!?N 14...h6

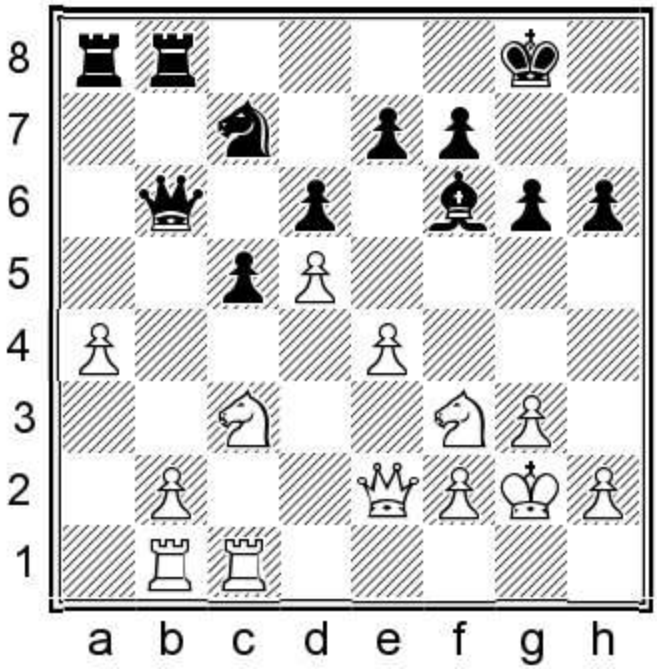
This is the most obvious move to consider.

Another plausible line is: 14...♖fb8 15.♖ab1!? h6 16.♗xf6 ♗xf6 17.♕e3 (or 17.♖hc1, transposing to the main line below) 17...♗g7 18.♘d2 ♕a6 19.♖hc1± Followed by b2-b3 and ♘c4, with full consolidation of the queenside.

15.♗xf6! ♗xf6 16.♖hc1 ♖fb8 17.♖ab1

The main point of White's play can be seen after:

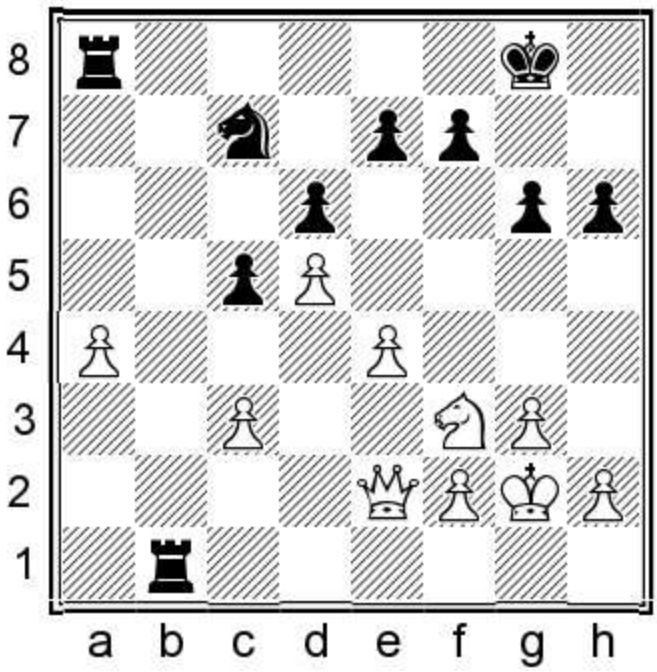
chesstouring.com



17...♗xc3

After 17...♕b4 18.♕e3 ♗g7 19.b3 Black is left with no ideas on the queenside, so the text move is critical.

18.bxc3 ♕xb1 19.♖xb1 ♖xb1

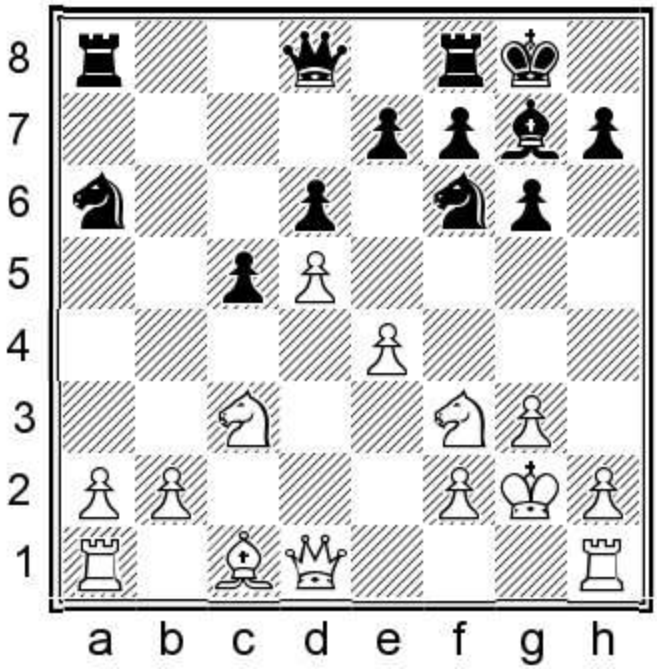


20.e5! ♖xa4 21.h4!

To my great surprise, I could not find a satisfactory defensive idea for Black. White's initiative is decisive.

chesstouring.com

B2) 11...♘a6



This is a pet line of the strong Russian grandmaster Vadim Zvjaginsev.

12.♕e2 ♕b6

Black's second choice has been:

12...♘d7 13.h4!

It turns out that White can profit from the position of his rook on h1.

13...h5

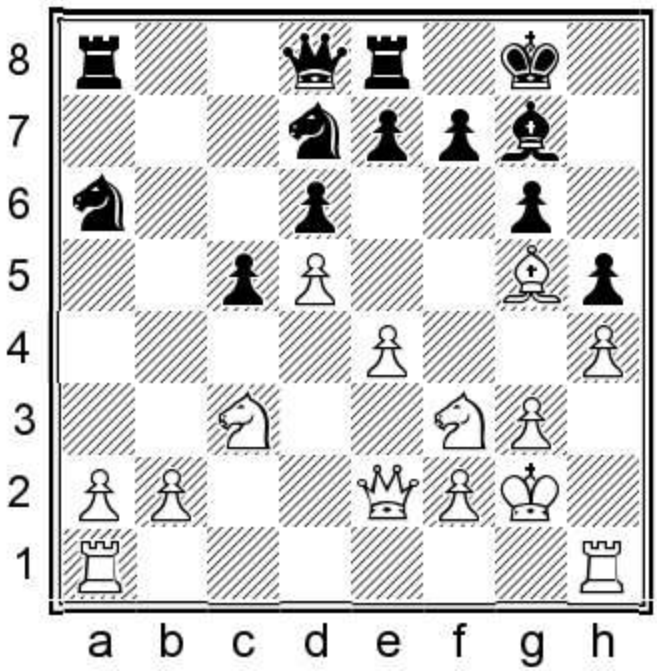
13...h6 14.h5 g5 15.♘h2! ♘b4 16.f4 f6 17.♘g4 gave White a huge advantage in Philips – Cox, email 2012.

I also examined the natural 13...♘f6N and discovered, to my great surprise, that White can play 14.h5! ♘xh5 15.♖xh5! gxh5 16.♗d2 followed by ♖h1 with an extremely powerful attack.

14.♗g5 ♖e8

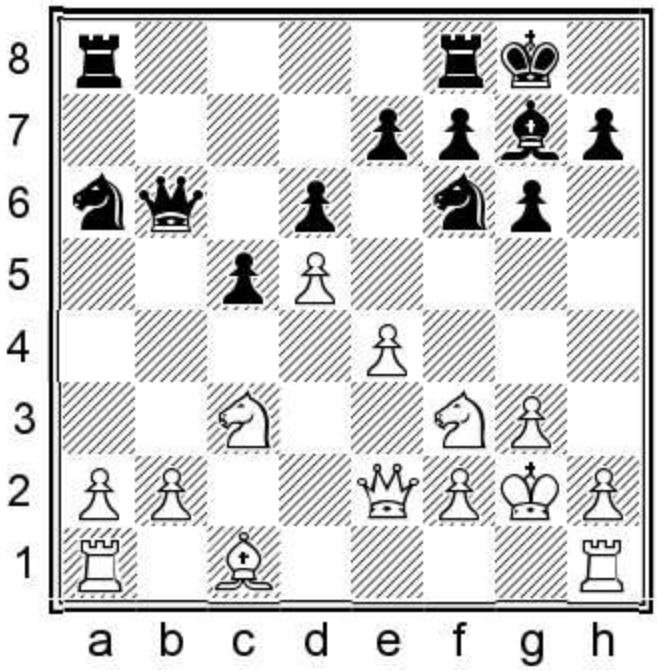
This position has occurred in two games, and both times White went for some kind of consolidating plan on the queenside. I discovered a remarkable attacking idea:

chesstouring.com



15.g4!N 15...hxg4 16.♘h2 ♘f6 17.h5! ♘xh5 18.♘xg4

With a dangerous attack.



13.♖d1!?

This has been played by several GMs and I like White's chances after it.

However, sometime after completing my analysis of this section, I realized that 13.a4 leads straight to variation B1 above, so in some ways that would be a more convenient repertoire choice. But having already done the work on the text move, I will leave it for the readers to decide which path they prefer.

13...♕b7

13...♘d7 is the most logical alternative. It has been played in several games, but White has never opted for 14.♗f4!N, after which 14...♖fb8 15.♖ab1 ♘c7 16.e5 and 14...♘c7 15.e5 ♖fe8 16.a4 both lead to

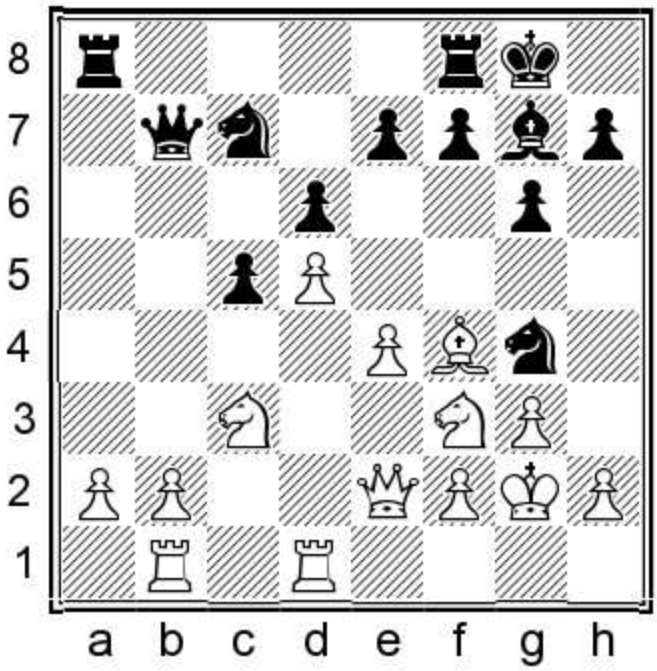
chesstouring.com

promising play for him.

14.♖b1 ♘d7

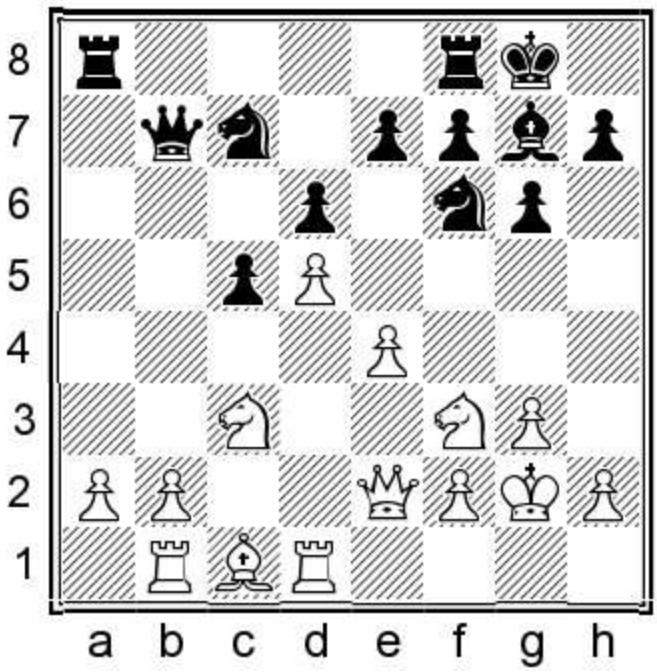
This is Zvjaginsev's latest attempt to rehabilitate this line. Previously he tried two other moves:

14...♘g4 15.♗f4 ♘c7 occurred in Li Shilong – Zvjaginsev, China 2014. White rushed ahead with 16.e5 but I prefer the following thematic plan:



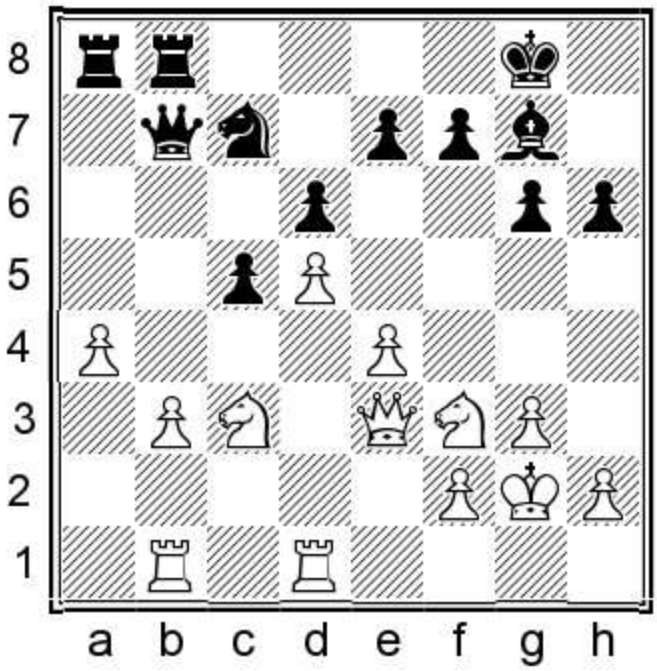
16.a4!N My analysis continues 16...♖fb8 17.♘d2! ♘e5 18.♗xe5 ♗xe5 19.♘c4 ♗d4 20.a5 with the clearly better game for White.

Next he tried 14...♘c7 in Cheparinov – Zvjaginsev, Berlin 2015. I have the following improvement in mind:

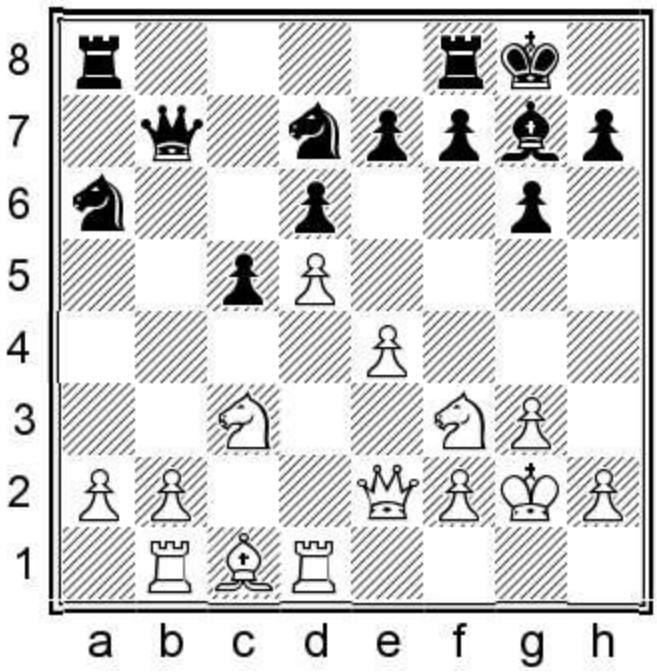


chesstouring.com

15.a4!N 15...♖fb8 16.♗g5 The critical line continues: 16...h6 (16...♕a6 17.♕c2 h6 18.♗d2 is absolutely comfortable for White) 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♕e3! ♗g7 19.b3



White successfully secures his queenside, for example: 19...♖a6 20.♘d2 ♖b6 21.♖dc1±



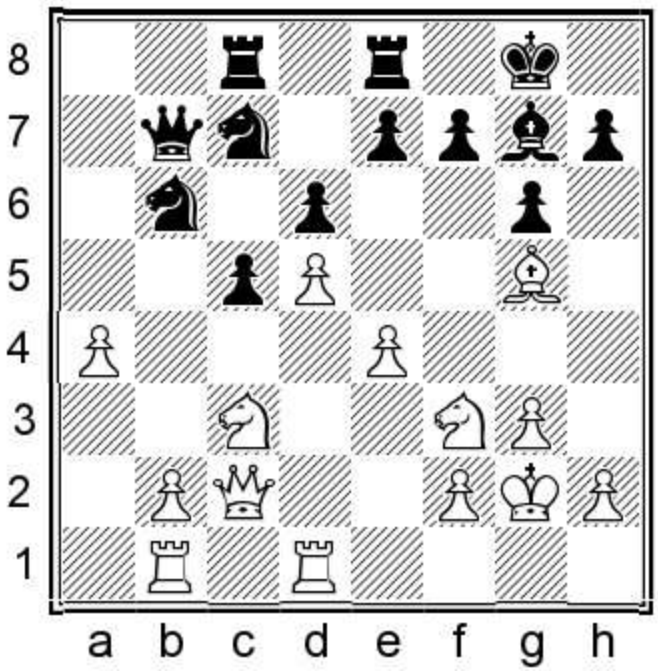
15.♗g5 ♖fe8 16.a3 ♘c7 17.♕c2 ♘b6

White is ready to meet 17...e6 with 18.dxe6! ♘xe6 19.♘d5± when he keeps a significant advantage.

18.a4 ♖ac8

We have been following Jakovenko – Zvjaginsev, Moscow 2016. White is safe enough and has developed all his pieces, so it's a good time to start creating some weaknesses in Black's position.

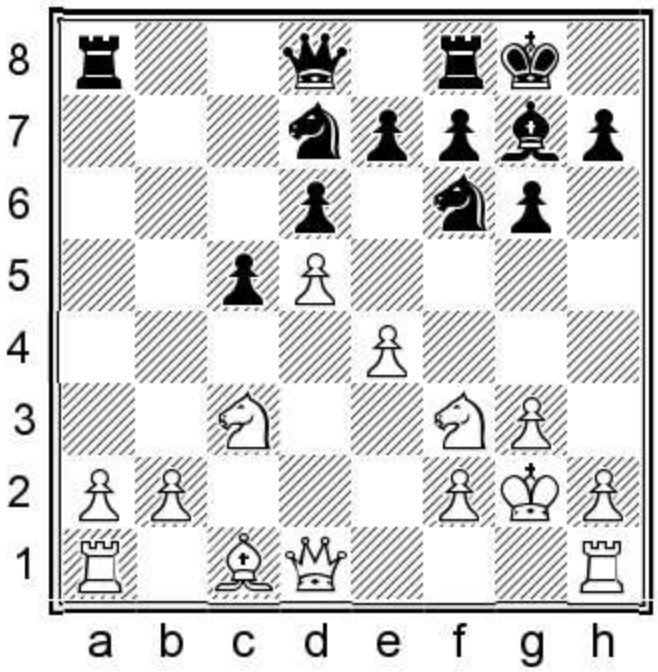
chesstouring.com



19.h4!?N 19...h5 20.b3

White secures the nice outpost on g5 for his bishop, and potentially later his knight.

B3) 11...♘bd7



Definitely the main move, which leads to the initial position of this variation.

12.a4!

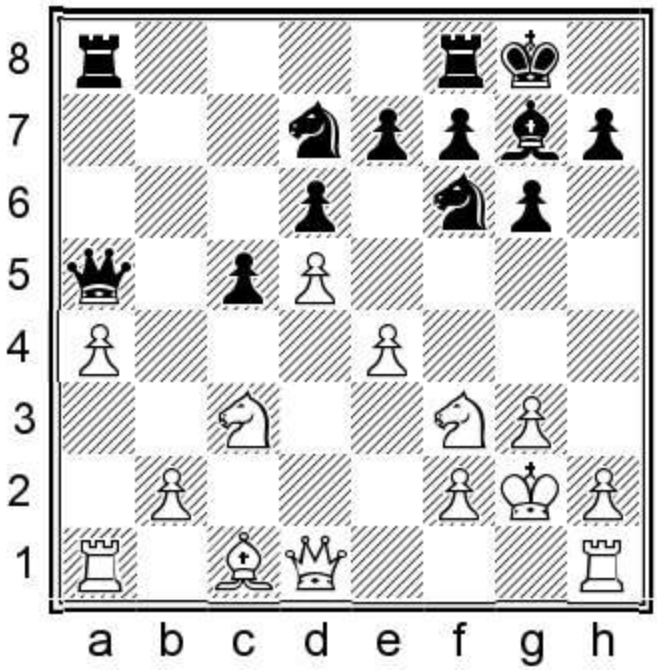
White's scheme connected with this move is so modern that books such as Pinski's *The Benko Gambit* and Alterman's *The Alterman Gambit Guide – Black Gambits 1* (published in 2005 and 2011 respectively) do not consider it at all. As I said earlier, I myself only became aware of it in 2012 when

Magnus played it.

In the beginning I intended to go with Carlsen's 12.♕e2, but later I realized that the text move gives White the most flexibility.

Black has three main tries: **B31)** 12...♕a5, **B32)** 12...♕b6 and **B33)** 12...♖a6.

B31) 12...♕a5

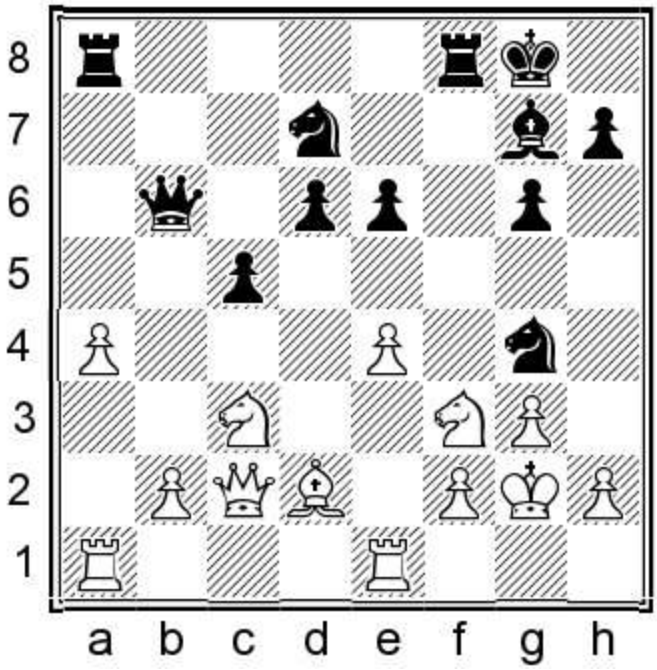


13.♗d2 ♖fb8

This is the most natural move although Black has tried various others. Here are the most important directions:

13...♕b6 14.♕c2 e6 (14...♖fb8 15.♘b5 transposes to our main line below) is an attempt to create counterplay in the centre. Unfortunately for Black, it seldom works well in these positions. 15.dxe6 fxe6 16.♖he1 ♘g4 (16...c4 17.♗e3± is also much better for White) In Lalic – Tate, Cappelle-la-Grande 2013, the simplest path to an advantage would have been:

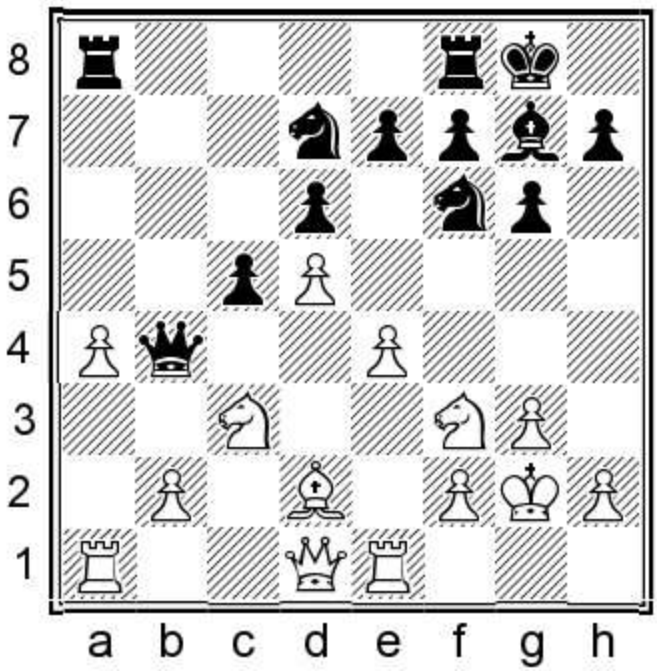
chesstouring.com



17.♗f4!N 17...♘ge5 18.♘xe5 ♗xe5 (or 18...♘xe5 19.♘b5±) 19.♗xe5 ♘xe5 20.f4 ♘c6 21.♘b5± White is clearly better.

13...♕b4 14.♖e1!

White is already threatening ♘b5 to trap the black queen.



14...♕b7

14...♕xb2?? is refuted easily: 15.♖b1 ♕a3 16.♖b3+–

14...♘g4? 15.h3 ♘ge5 was played in F. Fernandez – Contreras, Lima 2013, when 16.♘b5N

16...♕xb2 17.♗c3+– would have caught the queen.

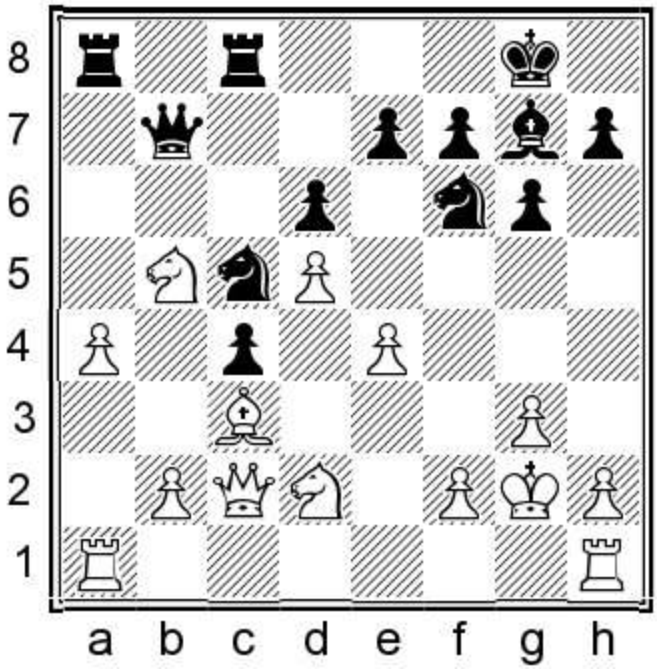
The text move is the best Black can do, but now White can consolidate his queenside with ease.

15.♘b5 ♖fb8 16.♗c3±

chesstouring.com

Harestad – T.K. Larsen, Copenhagen 2012.

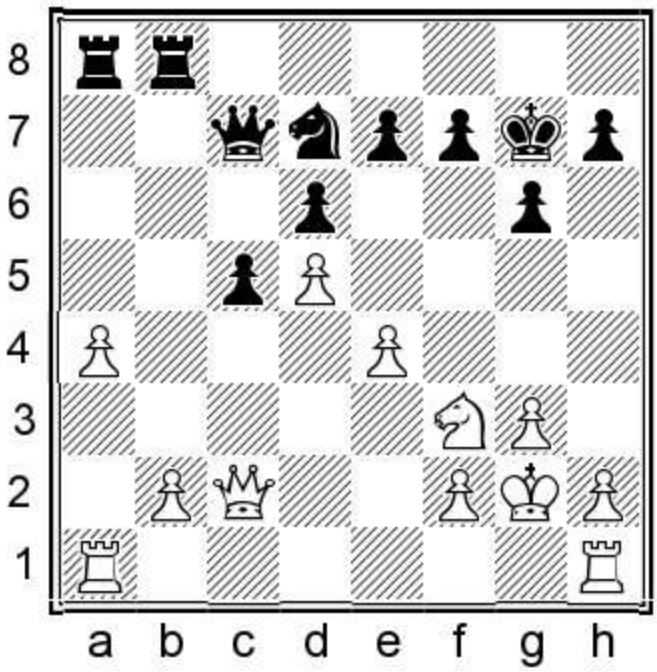
Finally, 13...♕a6 14.♕c2 ♖fc8 15.♘b5 c4 16.♗c3 ♘c5 17.♘d2 ♕b7 has occurred in a couple of games. My improvement is:



18.♖a3!N Natural and strong. The small tactical point is that White need not fear 18...♘xa4 in view of 19.♘xd6! exd6 20.♖xa4 with a large advantage.

14.♘b5 ♕b6

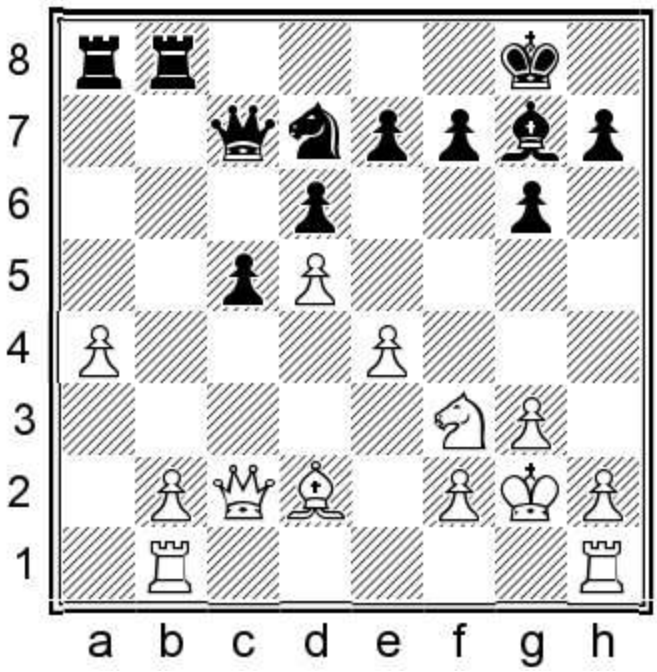
Black has also opted for 14...♕d8 many times, but it doesn't really change the evaluation. A good example continued: 15.♕c2 ♘e8 16.♗c3 (16.♖ab1 is also promising) 16...♘c7 17.♘xc7 ♕xc7 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7



chesstouring.com

19.♘d4! Cementing White's advantage. 19...♖b7 20.♘b5 ♕a5 21.b3± Martinovic – Matko, Zadar 2014.

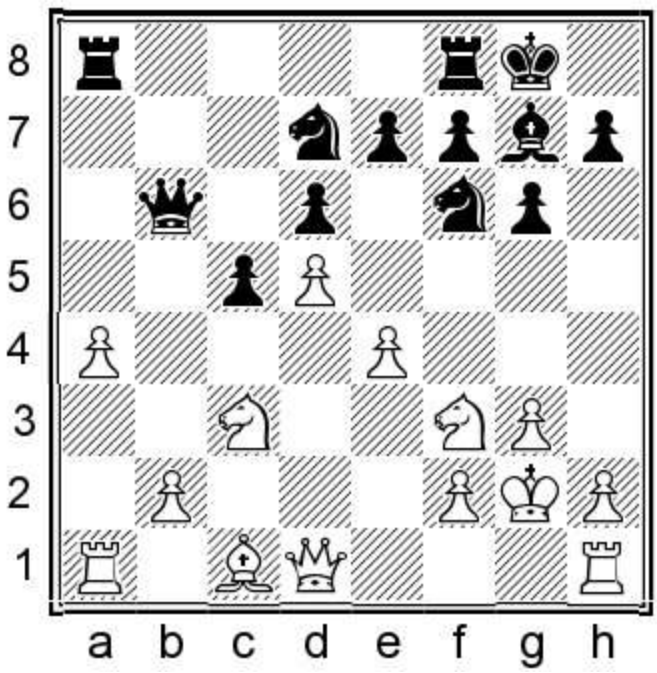
15.♕c2 ♘e8 16.♖ab1 ♘c7 17.♘xc7 ♕xc7



18.b4! ♕a7 19.a5±

Black has no real compensation and has only managed to salvage a single draw in four games from this position.

B32) 12...♕b6



This has been the most popular continuation but White has little trouble proving an advantage against it.

chesstouring.com

13.♕e2

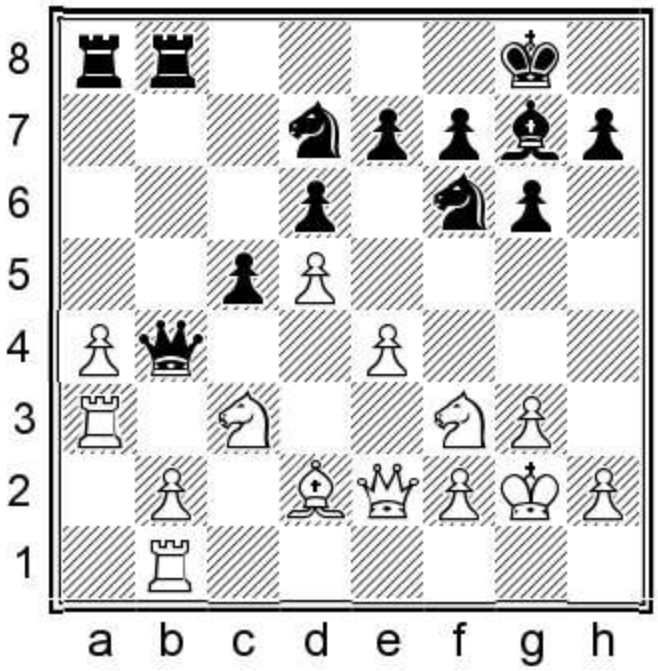
With this, we transpose to the Carlsen – Bologan game referred to earlier.

13...♖fb8

Black hardly has anything better.

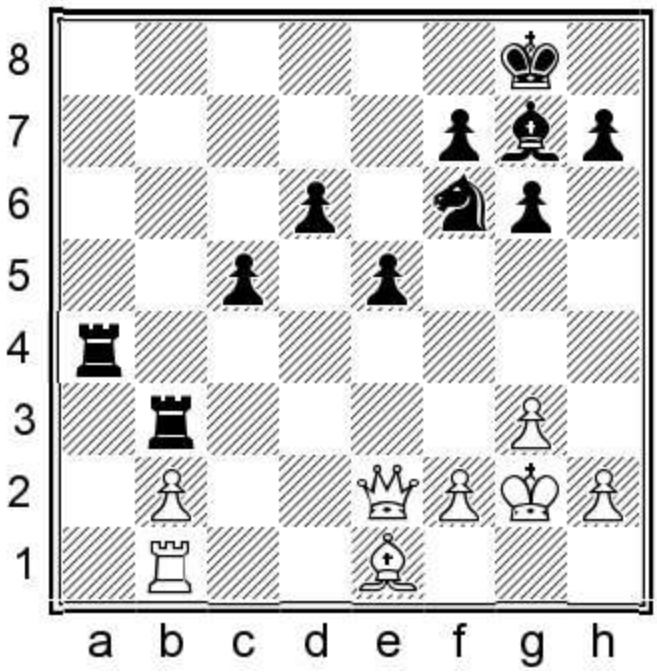
After 13...♕a6 White declines the queen exchange and easily consolidates his queenside: 14.♘b5 ♘b6 15.♖a3 ♘e8 16.♖e1 ♕b7 17.b3± I. Sokolov – Shoker, Dubai 2013.

13...♕b4 can be met by 14.♗d2 when the b2-pawn is untouchable, and after 14...♖fb8 15.♖hb1 White is definitely on the right path. A few games have continued 15...♕b3 16.♖a3 ♕b4 and now a useful improvement is:

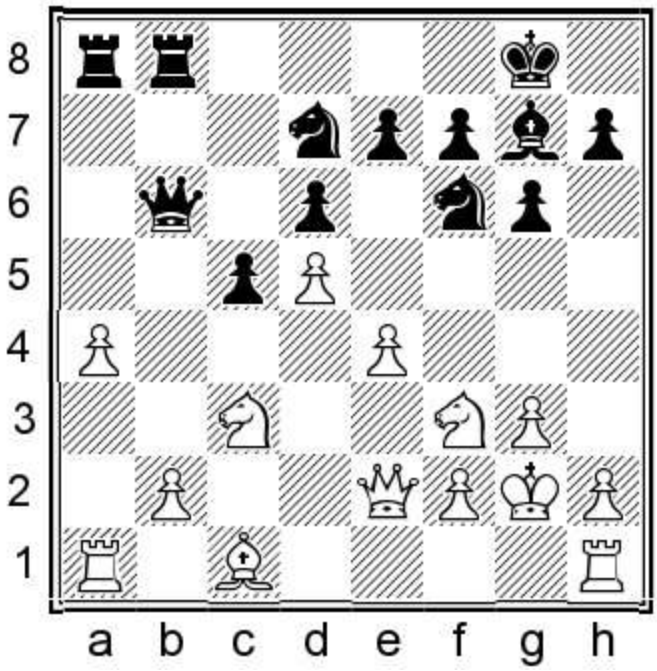


17.♗e1!N 17...♘b6 18.♘d2 White is ready to deal with the capturing of the a-pawn: 18...♘xa4 19.♘xa4 ♖xa4 20.♖b3 ♕xb3 21.♘xb3 ♖xb3 22.e5! dxe5 23.d6! exd6

chesstouring.com



24.♕d1! The point of White tactical operation 24...c4 25.♕xd6 ♖a8 26.♕c7 ♖ab8 27.♖d1 White should be able to convert his material advantage.



14.♘b5 ♘e8

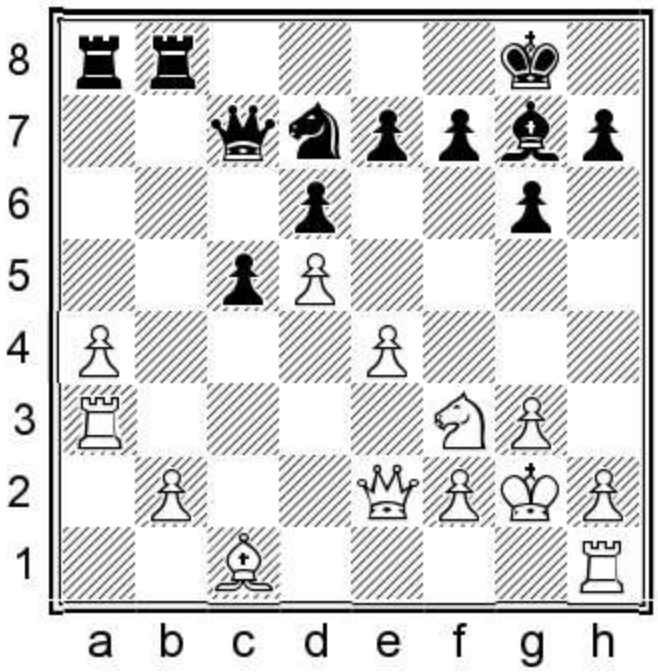
14...♕a6 15.♖a3 ♘e8 16.♖e1 also favours White, as has been demonstrated in several games.

15.♖a3!

15.♗g5 was Carlsen's choice against Bologan but it later became clear that 15...h6! 16.♗xe7 ♖b7 is rather complicated. The text move keeps things simpler.

15...♘c7 16.♘xc7 ♕xc7

chesstouring.com



17.b3

Continuing with the light-squared strategy.

17...c4

This is the critical move to check, but it does not offer Black enough counterplay. Obviously he can try one of the following less aggressive options:

After 17...♕b7 a model game continued: 18.h4!? h5 19.♘d2 ♕a6 20.♘c4 ♘e5 21.♗d2 ♖b7 22.♖e1 ♘xc4 23.bxc4 ♖b2 24.♕d3± Again Black had no compensation for the pawn in Schueppel – Jaumandreu Llopis, corr. 2016.

17...♖b7

White has a few good ways to continue but I like the following idea:

18.♗g5!? ♘e5

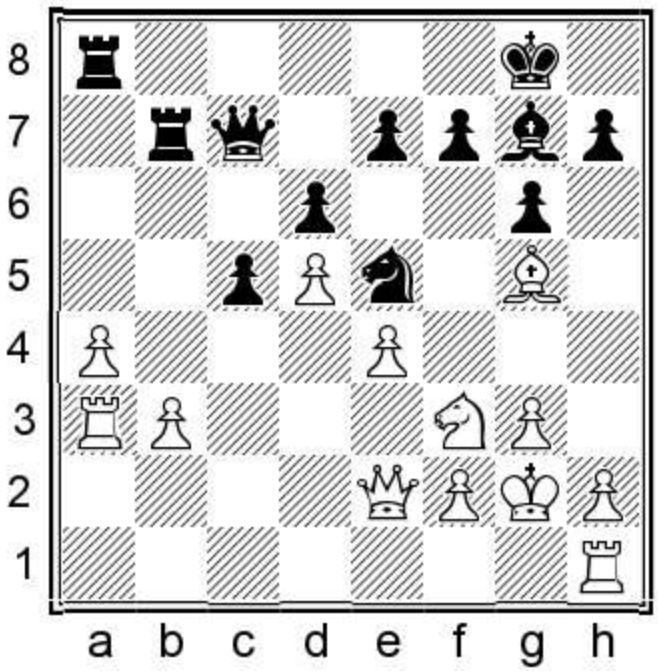
Other options are no better, for instance:

18...♔f8?! 19.♖b1 h6 20.♗e3 gives White an even better version of Ovcharenko – Dautovic below.

18...e6 loosens Black's position: 19.dxe6 fxe6 20.♖d1 ♘e5 21.♘xe5 ♗xe5 22.♕g4±

18...h6 is possible as White is not yet threatening to capture on e7, but 19.♗e3 ♕b6 20.♘d2± was still excellent for him in Ovcharenko – Dautovic, corr. 2017.

chesstouring.com



19.♗d2! ♖ab8 20.♖b1 ♘xf3 21.♕xf3 e6 22.a5

Black failed to show any compensation in Korogodski – Farmer, corr. 2016.

18.♕xc4 ♕xc4 19.bxc4

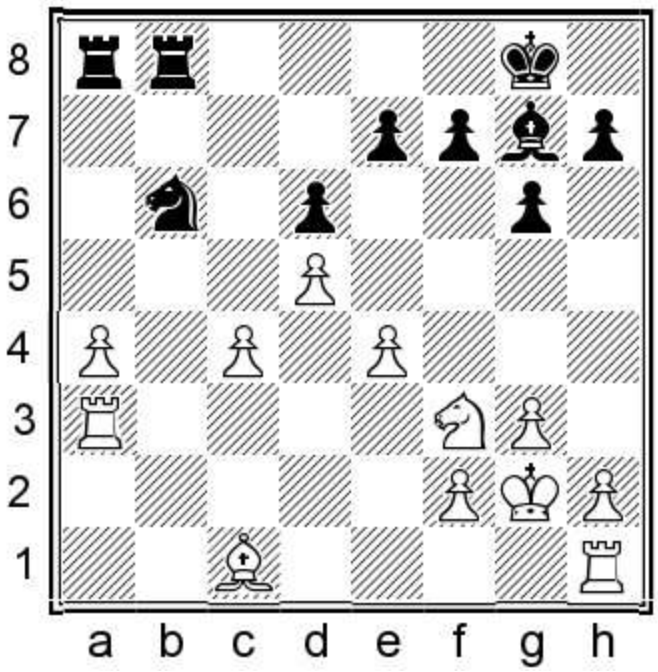
If Black is to equalize, he needs to regain two pawns without seriously compromising his position, which turns out to be an impossible task.

19...♘b6

19...♖b4?! was tried in Debashis – Schippers, Barcelona 2016, and now 20.a5!N 20...♖xc4 21.♗e3 ♖xe4 22.♖b1+– would have made the a-pawn a decisive force.

The text move was played in Hoenick – S. Brunello, Porto Mannu 2014, when White missed a strong idea:

chesstouring.com



20.c5!N 20...dxc5

20...♘c4 21.♖a2 dxc5 22.♗g5! f6 23.♗d2± is also much better for White.

21.♗g5 f6

Or 21...♔f8 22.♖b1± and White keeps an extra pawn.

22.♗f4 ♘c4 23.♗xb8 ♘xa3 24.♗c7 c4

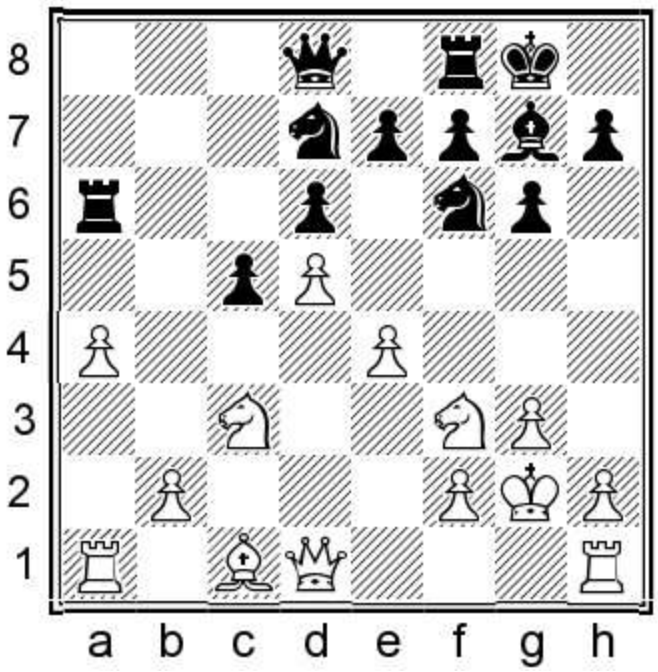
After 24...♖xa4 25.♖a1± Black loses at least the c5-pawn.

25.a5 ♘b5 26.♗b6 c3 27.♘e1 ♘d6 28.♘c2 ♘xe4 29.♖a1±

The mighty a-pawn should eventually decide the outcome.

B33) 12...♖a6

chesstouring.com



Overall this has been less popular than the previous variation, but it has taken over as the main line amongst the strongest players who continue to defend Black's cause.

13.♕c2 ♕a8

This is the logical follow-up and almost universally played. It may look as though Black is piling up on the a-file but his main idea is actually to play ...e6, when he hopes his queen will be influential along the a8-h1 diagonal and the rook will help to guard the d6-pawn and e6-square.

14.♖a3

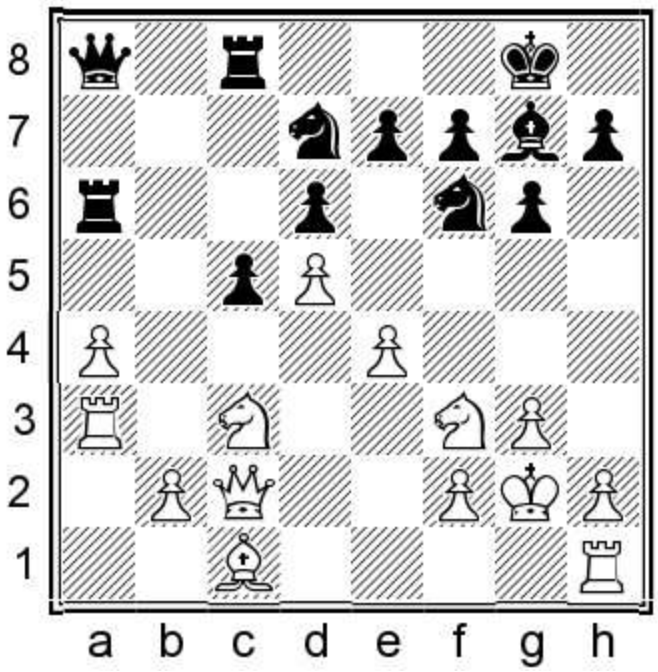
We reach a final crossroads, with **B331)** 14...♖c8 and **B332)** 14...e6 the most important options.

14...♘b6 15.b3 ♘e8 16.♘b5 f5 17.♖d1 fxe4 18.♕xe4± was an unsuccessful experiment by Black in Gajewski – Brustkern, Maastricht 2012.

14...♖b8 is well met by 15.♘b5 ♖b7 (15...♘e8 16.♖e1 ♘b6 17.b3 ♘d7 18.♕e2 ♖a5 19.♕a2± did little to change the evaluation in Plischki – Haba, Plzen 2012) 16.♗g5 ♘b6 17.♖ha1 ♘e8
18.♖1a2 ♕b8 19.b3± and White successfully consolidated his queenside in Perez – Daus, email 2012.

B331) 14...♖c8

chesstouring.com



Black has tried this in about thirty games, presumably hoping to play ...c4 at an opportune moment.

15.♖d1

This seems the most useful way to strengthen White's position.

15...♘g4

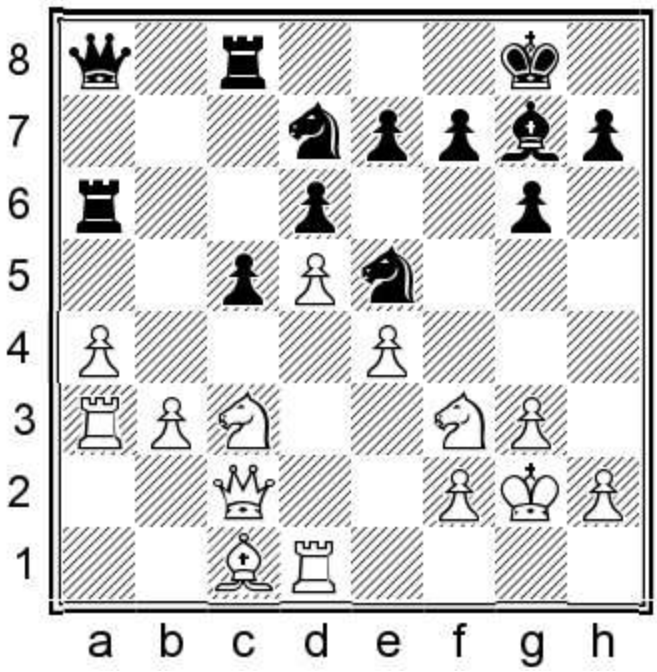
15...e6 16.dxe6 fxe6 transposes to 16...♖c8 in the notes to variation B332 below.

15...c4 is the other natural move to check, but after 16.♗e3 ♕b7 17.♗d4± White's advantage was obvious in Broemme – Yazgeldiev, corr. 2012.

16.b3 ♘ge5

In Lenderman – Belous, Saint Louis 2017, White exchanged on e5 and went on to win. Although there is nothing wrong with that approach, I like the following continuation even more:

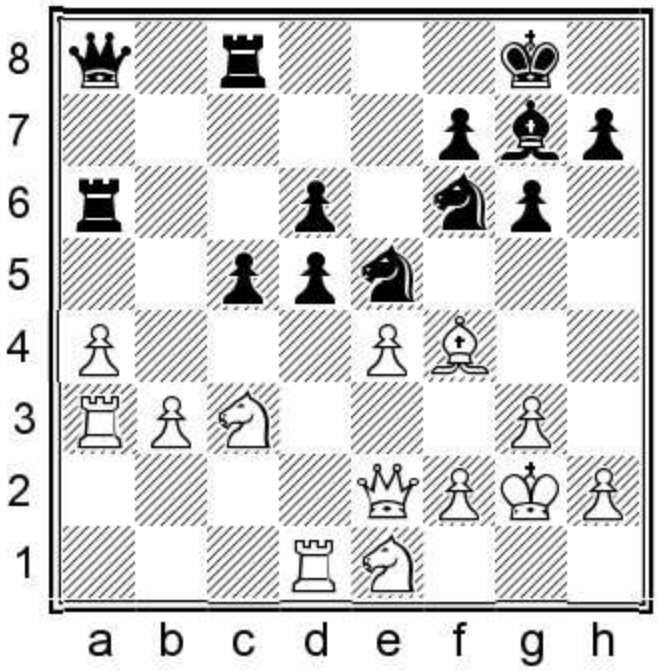
chesstouring.com



17.♘e1!?N 17...e6

17...c4 obviously runs into 18.b4.

18.♕e2! ♘f6 19.♗f4 exd5



20.♗xe5!

The point.

20...dxe5 21.♘xd5±

White keeps a clear advantage.

chesstouring.com

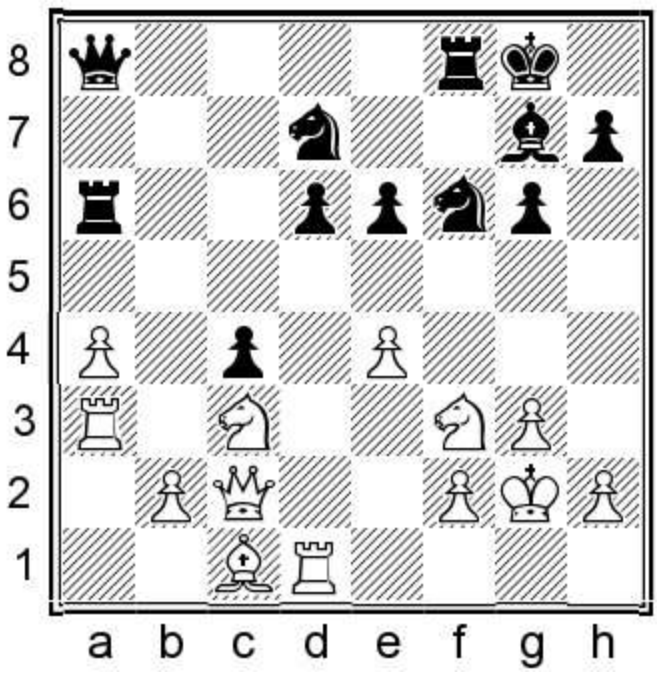
B332) 14...e6

This is the most logical sequel to Black's previous two moves.

15.dxe6 fxe6 16.♖d1 d5

This looks like the critical continuation. I checked two other options:

16...c4 runs into a powerful antidote:



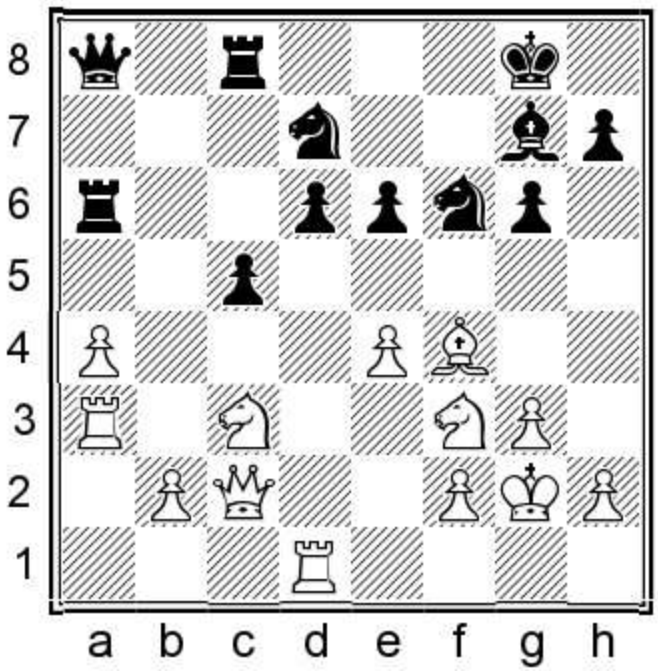
17.♘b5! ♕xe4 18.♕xe4 ♘xe4 19.♘c7 ♖a5 20.♘xe6± Sun – Gouma, corr. 2016.

16...♖c8

This move has been played a bunch of times, and the same position can also arise via the 14...♖c8 move order, as noted earlier.

17.♗f4

chesstouring.com

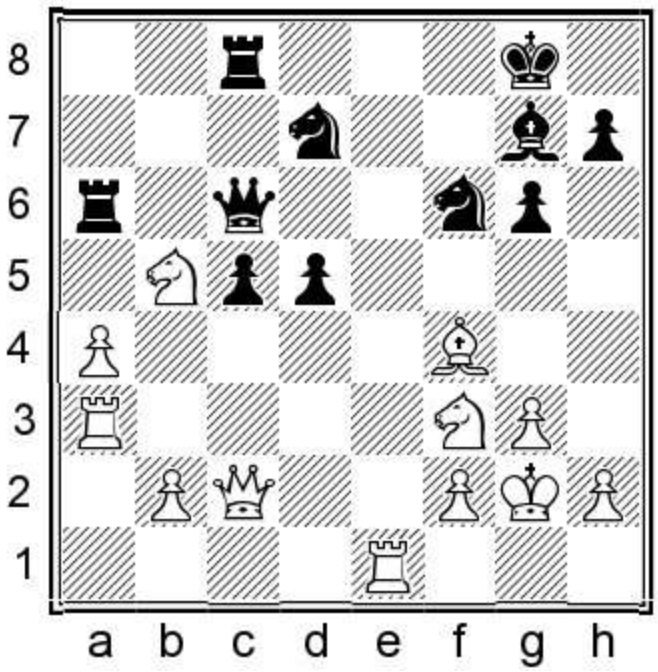


17...d5

17...♗f8 has been played in some correspondence games but it seems too passive. 18.♖aa1 d5 19.exd5 exd5 20.♘b5 ♘h5 This is Black's latest try. (20...♕b7 21.b3 ♘h5 22.♗e5 ♘hf6 23.♖e1± was no fun for Black in Dutra Neto – Rook, email 2010) 21.♗g5 ♘df6 22.b3 ♘e4 23.♖ac1 c4 24.♕e2± Black eventually went down in Garnica – Oliynyk, corr. 2013.

18.exd5 exd5 19.♘b5 ♕c6 20.♖e1

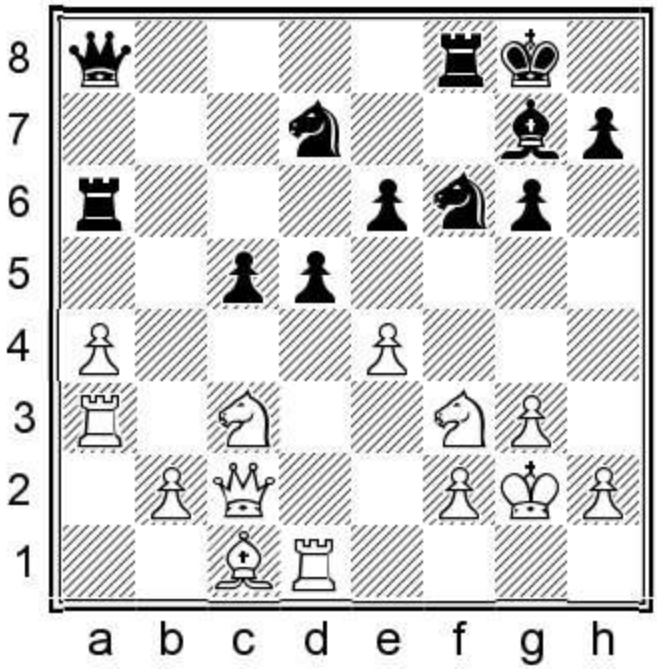
Black's pieces appear quite active but in fact there is no clear counterplay. The model game continued:



20...♗f8 21.♘g5! c4 22.♖e6 ♕b7 23.♖f3→

White was able to build a serious initiative on the kingside in Romm – Arreaga Orozco, corr. 2009.

chesstouring.com



17.exd5 exd5 18.♘b5 ♕c6

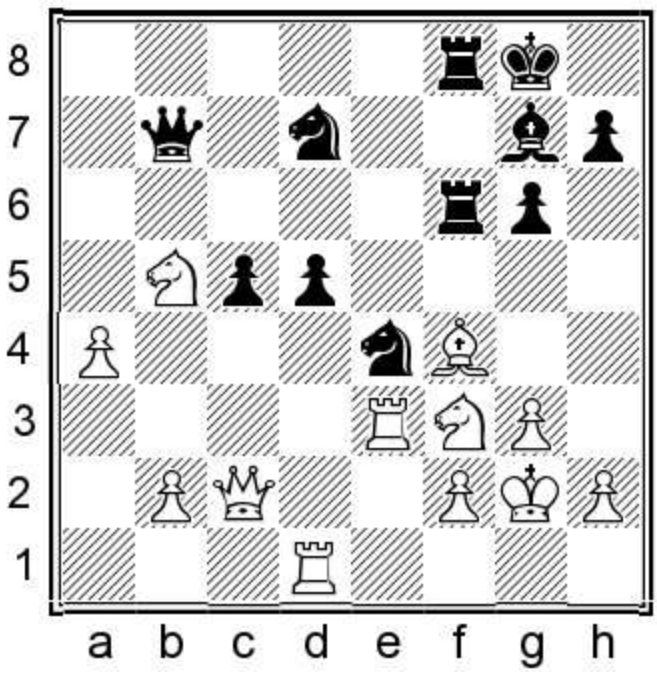
The alternative is:

18...♕b7 19.♗f4 ♘e4

Another important line continues 19...d4 20.♘c7! ♖b6 21.♕c4† ♔h8 22.a5 ♖xb2 23.a6+– and the a-pawn should decide the game.

20.♖e3 ♖af6

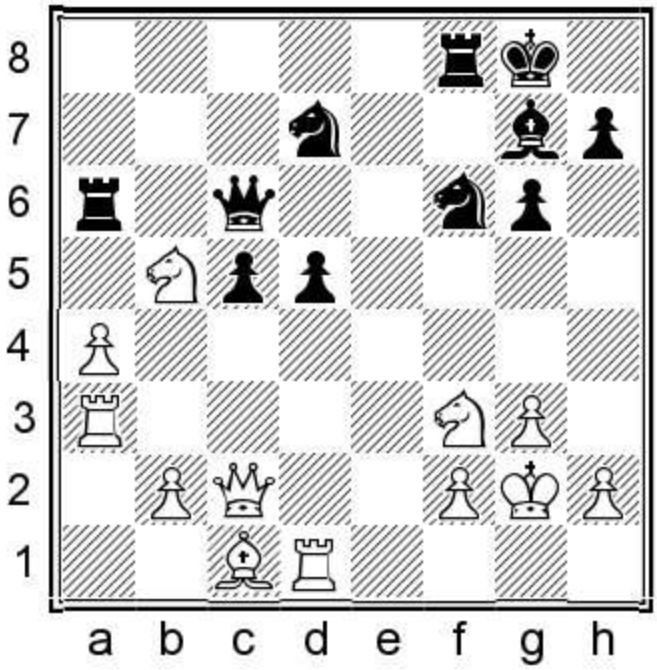
The natural-looking 20...♘df6 allows the tactical solution 21.♘c7 ♖b6 22.♘xd5! when the following sequence is pretty forced: 22...♘xd5 23.♖xe4 ♖xb2 24.♕xc5 ♘xf4† 25.♖xf4 ♖xf4 26.gxf4 White emerges with a decisive advantage.



21.♘c3! ♖xf4 22.gxf4 ♘xc3 23.bxc3 ♘f6 24.♘g5+–

Dorn – B. Rogers, corr. 2013.

chesstouring.com



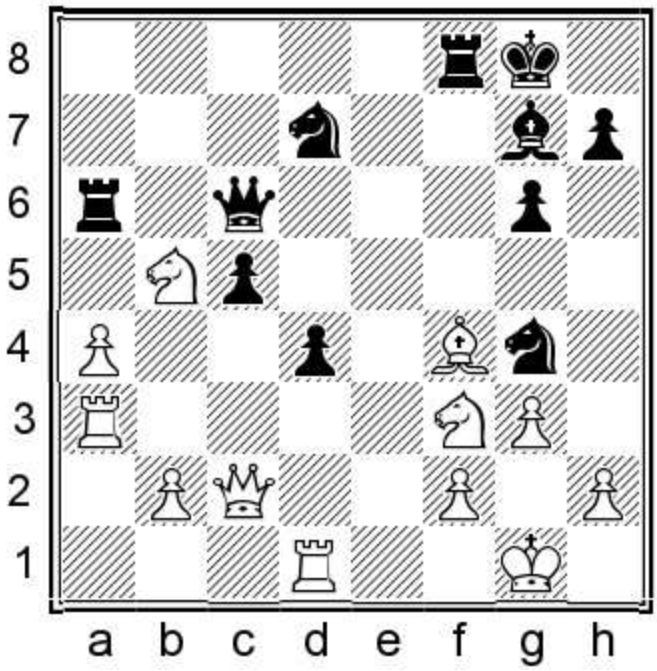
19.♔g1!

I found an interesting novelty in 19.♗f4!?N, when 19...♖c8 would transpose to the 16...♖c8 line analysed above, but Black also has some other options. In general I like White's chances although the position is quite complicated. On balance though, I find the text move more convincing.

19...♘g4

19...♘e4 20.♗f4 looks strong for White as well.

20.♗f4 d4



21.♕c4† ♔h8 22.♖e1

chesstouring.com

White dominated the board by controlling all the important squares in Ditmas – Schwarz, Lueneburg 2016.

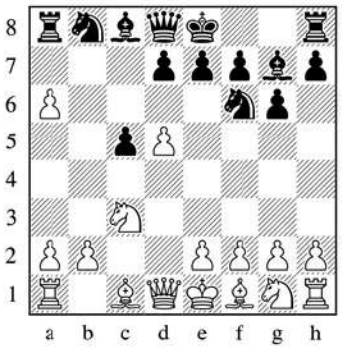
Conclusion

5...♗xa6 6.♘c3 g6 is the traditional way of handling the Benko Gambit, but it has come under pressure in recent years due to the plan involving 7.e4 ♗xf1 (7...d6 8.♗xa6 leads to similar play, except White castles in the normal way rather than artificially) 8.♔xf1 d6 9.♘f3 ♗g7 10.g3 0-0 11.♔g2 followed by the modern concept involving an early a2-a4, setting the framework for a light-squared strategy which may involve a knight on b5, pawn on b3, and the other pieces supporting the blockade in whichever way makes the most sense in the given position. In some lines White may trade his bishop for the knight on f6, leaving Black's bishop firing into thin air. It is also worth remembering that in certain lines where Black reroutes the f6-knight towards the queenside at an early stage, White may switch to attacking mode by ramming his h-pawn up the board, making use of the fact that the rook has yet to move from h1. Obviously Black has some ideas of his own, with variation B33 involving ...♖a6 and ...♕a8 perhaps the best try, but if White plays accurately he has every chance to make his opponent's life difficult.

chesstouring.com



Benko Gambit



5...g6

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5 a6 5.bxa6 g6 6.♘c3 ♗g7

7.e4

A) 7...♕a5 311

B) 7...0-0 8.a7! ♖xa7 9.♘f3 312

B1) 9...♕a5 313

B2) 9...♕b6 314

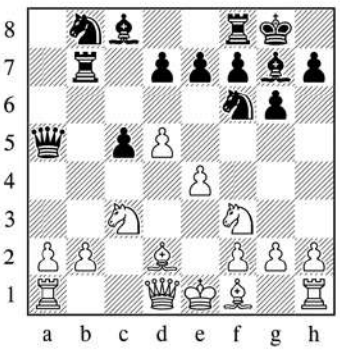
B3) 9...d6 315

B4) 9...e6 10.♗e2 exd5 11.exd5 d6 12.0-0 316

B41) 12...♗a6 317

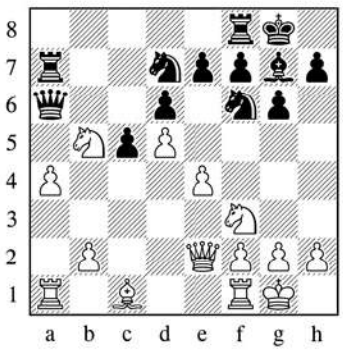
B42) 12...♘a6 318

B1) note to 10...♕b6



11.♘e5!N

B2) note to 12...♘bd7



15.♕c2!N

B3) note to 11...♘bd7



14.a3!N

chesstouring.com

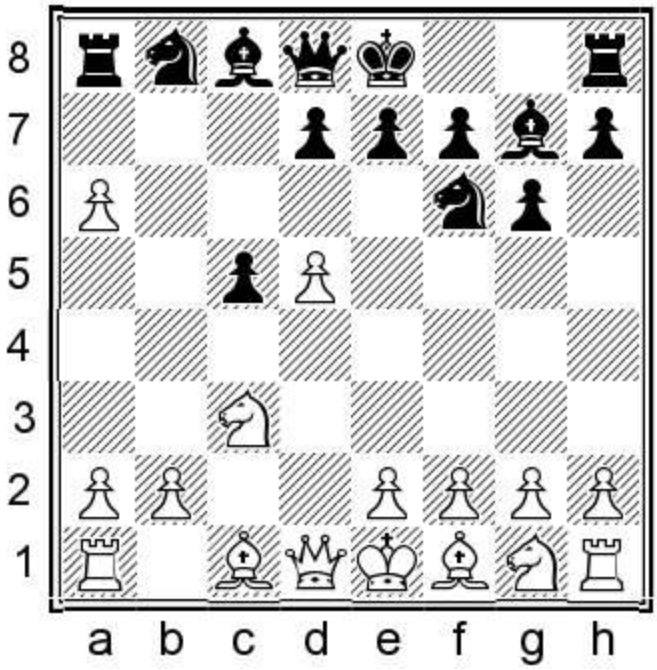
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5 a6 5.bxa6 g6

This is the latest trend in the Benko Gambit and arguably the most playable line for Black. It is also recommended by GM Perunovic in his recent book *The Modernized Benko Gambit*.

6.♘c3 ♗g7

6...♗xa6 transposes to the previous chapter.

For a long time, it was believed that Black should recapture on a6 no later than here, in order to be ready to meet e2-e4 with ...♗xf1, forcing White to castle artificially. However, in more recent years it became clear that he has some additional resources after the text move.



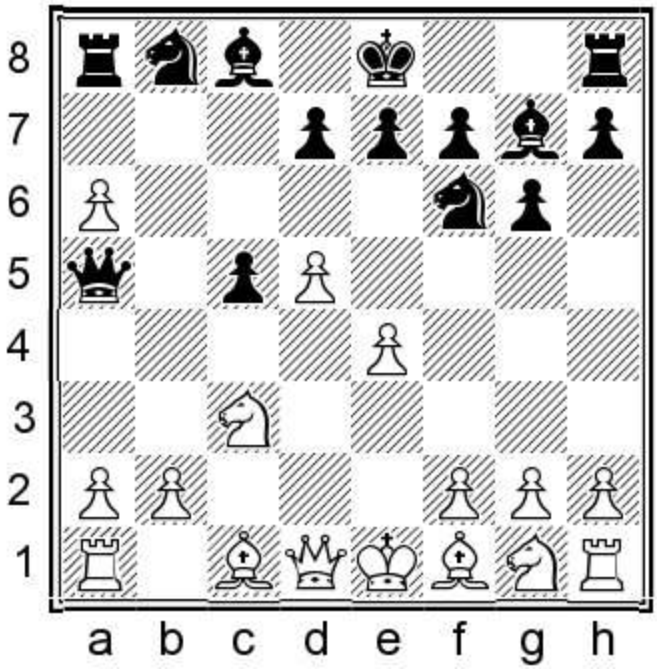
7.e4

I examined **A)** 7...♕a5 as well as **B)** 7...0-0.

7...d6 has been played in lots of games but 8.♘f3 is promising for White, and will probably lead to something resembling the 4...g6 line mentioned early in Chapter 14 on page 282, where White castles conveniently and follows the same consolidating plan as in the previous chapter. Black needs to play more forcefully to make sense of the 5...g6 move order, as shown in the lines below.

A) 7...♕a5

chesstouring.com



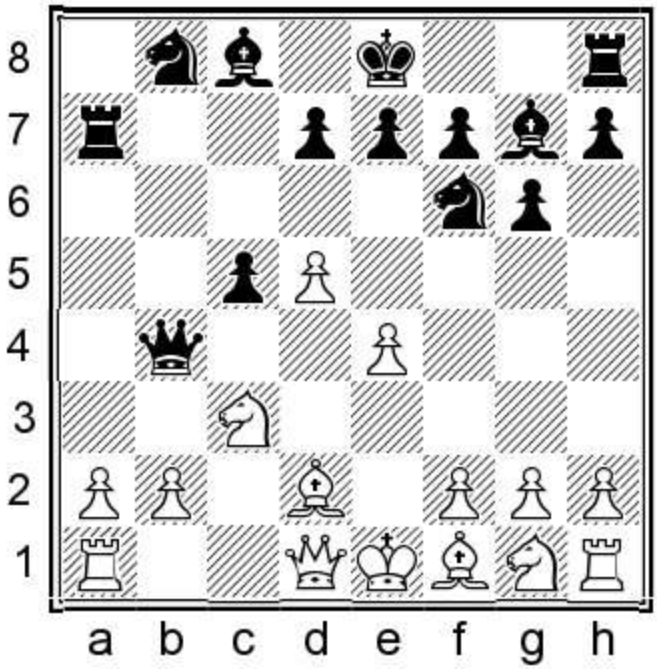
8.a7!

Just as in the more popular variation B below, I consider it beneficial to include this move.

8...♘a6

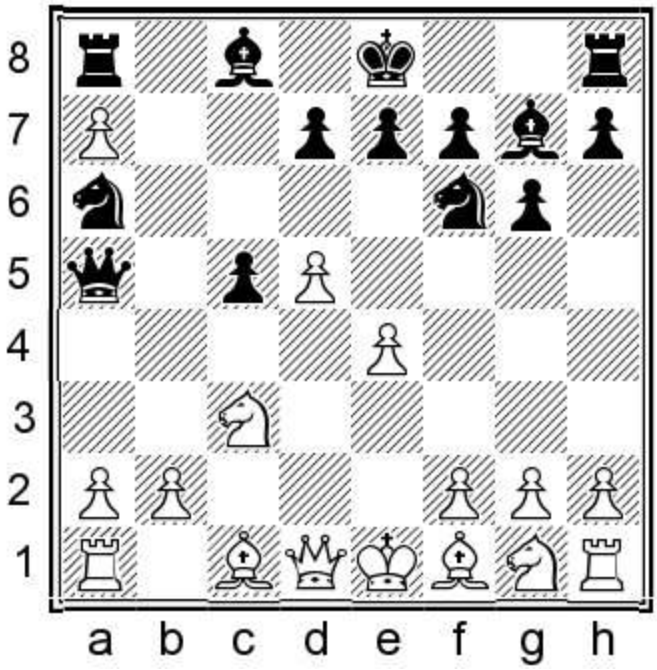
8...♘xe4?? was refuted after 9.axb8=♕ ♖xb8 10.♘ge2 ♘xc3 11.♕d2! when Black found nothing better than resigning in S. Grigorian – K. Berg, Germany 2016.

The point of White's last move is revealed after 8...♖xa7N 9.♗d2! when White gains a tempo thanks to the ♘b5 threat. My analysis continues: 9...♕b4



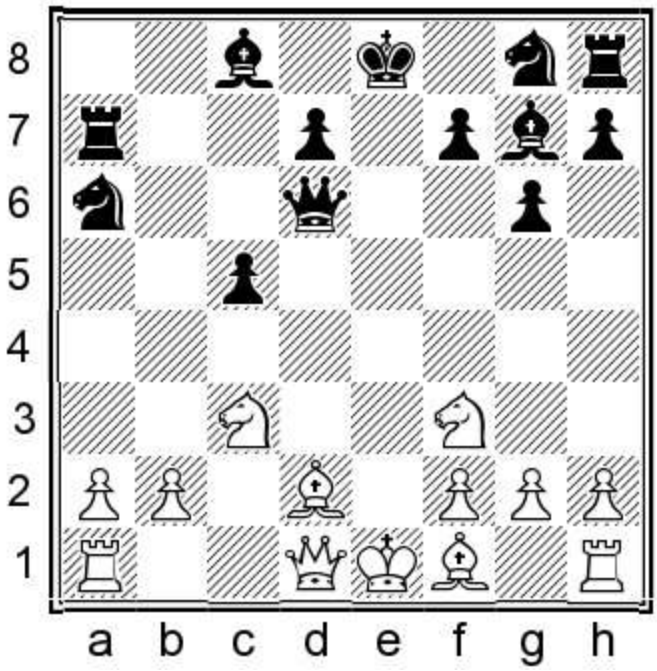
10.♗d3! ♕b7 11.♘f3± White has clearly won the opening battle.

chesstouring.com



9.♗d2 0-0

9...♕b6? allows 10.e5 ♘g8, and it is hardly surprising that Black's play was convincingly refuted in the following game: 11.♘f3 ♖xa7 12.d6! exd6 13.exd6 ♕xd6



14.♘b5 ♕e7† 15.♗e3 ♖a8 16.♘d6† ♔d8 17.♗c4 ♘h6 18.0-0 White had an overwhelming advantage in Elias – MacMillen, corr. 2016.

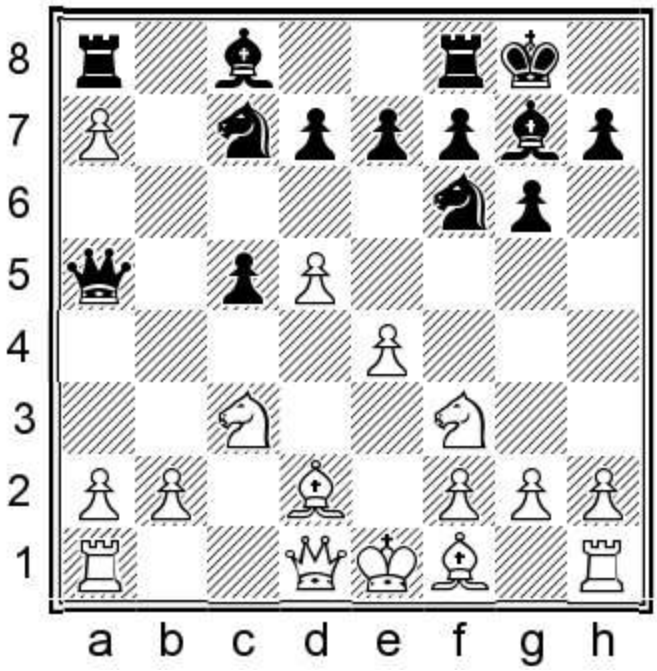
10.♘f3

The aggressive 10.e5!?N 10...♘e8 11.f4 is also worthy of consideration.

10...♘c7

chesstouring.com

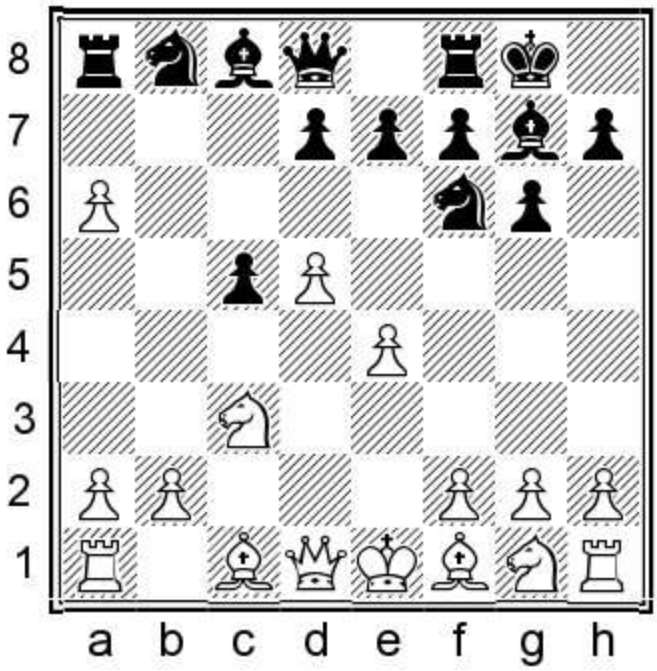
Now in Hoefelsauer – Szotkowski, Olomouc 2017, White should have continued with simple development:



11.♗e2N 11...♕xa7 12.0-0 ♗a6 13.♖e1 d6 14.b3 ♗xe2 15.♖xe2±

With a comfortable position for White.

B) 7...0-0



8.a7!

Having worked extensively on this line, I eventually concluded that the text move is the simplest and most promising direction for White.

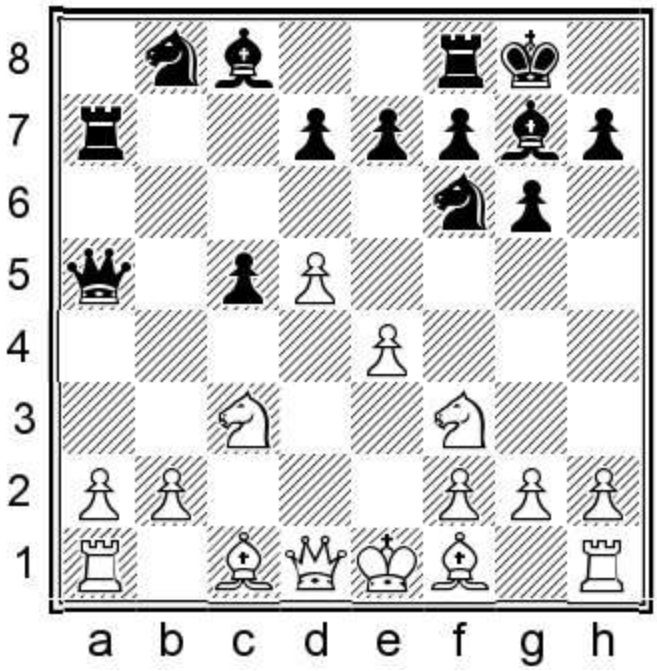
chesstouring.com

Why can't we play 8.♘f3 and treat the position the same as any other sideline where Black delays taking on a6? The reason is 8...♕a5! when the attack on the e4-pawn forces White to choose between 9.♗d2 and 9.♘d2, with complex play in either case. It is worth mentioning a couple of tactical pitfalls: 9.♗d3? allows the elegant 9...♘xd5!; and the attempt to transpose to the analysis below with 9.a7? is refuted by 9...♘xe4! 10.axb8=♕ ♖xb8 when White's position falls apart.

8...♖xa7 9.♘f3

We will examine **B1)** 9...♕a5, **B2)** 9...♕b6, **B3)** 9...d6 and finally the main line of **B4)** 9...e6.

B1) 9...♕a5



This enables White to demonstrate the value of his previous move.

10.♗d2!

The threat of ♘b5 forces Black to waste a tempo.

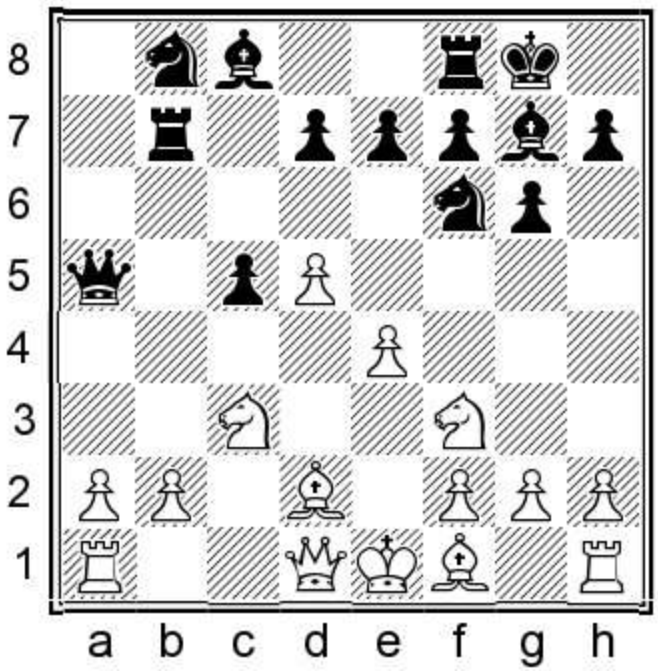
10...♕b6

I checked two other moves:

The slow 10...♖a8?! has been played twice. I suggest 11.♗e2N 11...♗a6 12.0-0 d6 13.a4± and White is clearly better.

10...♖b7 was tried in Bologan – Stocek, Wroclaw (blitz) 2014, and one other game. I found an elegant improvement:

chesstouring.com



11.♘e5!N Heading for the perfect c4-square. The important tactical point is that 11...♖xb2?! 12.♘c4 ♖xd2 13.♘xa5 ♖xd1† 14.♖xd1± leaves Black with insufficient play for the exchange.

11.♗e2 ♗a6

11...d6 12.0-0 ♗a6 simply transposes.

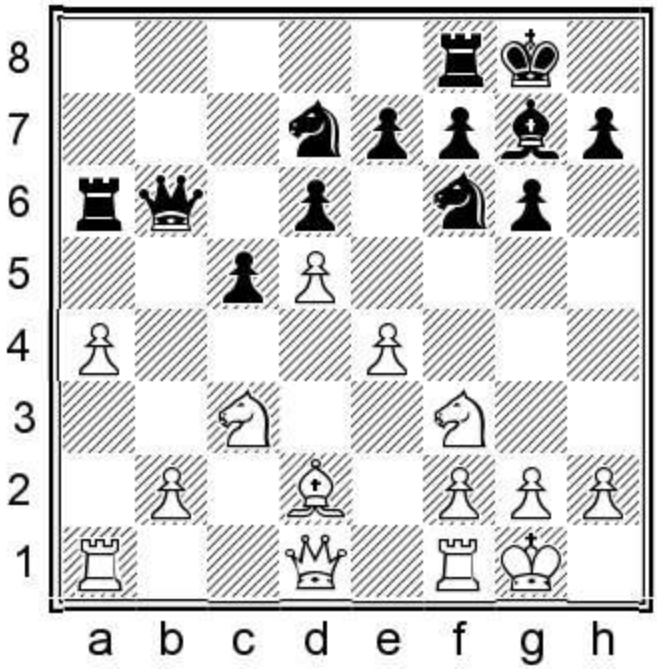
12.0-0 d6

The b2-pawn is untouchable: 12...♕xb2? 13.♖b1 ♕a3 14.♖b3 ♕a5 15.e5 ♘g4 16.♘b5 ♕xa2 17.♖a3+– leads to decisive material gains for White.

13.a4 ♘bd7 14.♗xa6 ♖xa6

White has a few good options but I believe the most accurate is:

chesstouring.com



15.♖b1!

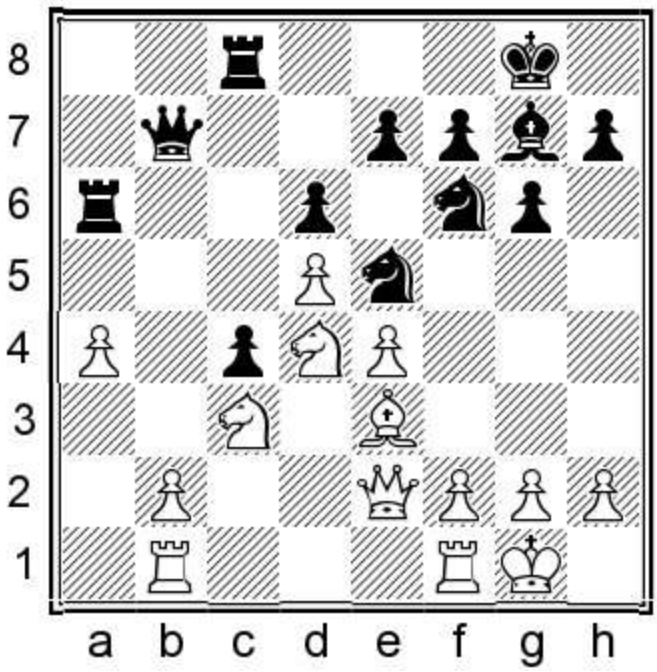
This establishes a clear plus for White, based on the following points.

15...c4N

This seems like the only challenging idea.

15...♖b8 16.b3± left Black with no counterplay in Fahrenholz – Ehret, Germany 1997.

16.♕e2 ♖c8 17.♗e3 ♕b7 18.♘d4 ♘e5

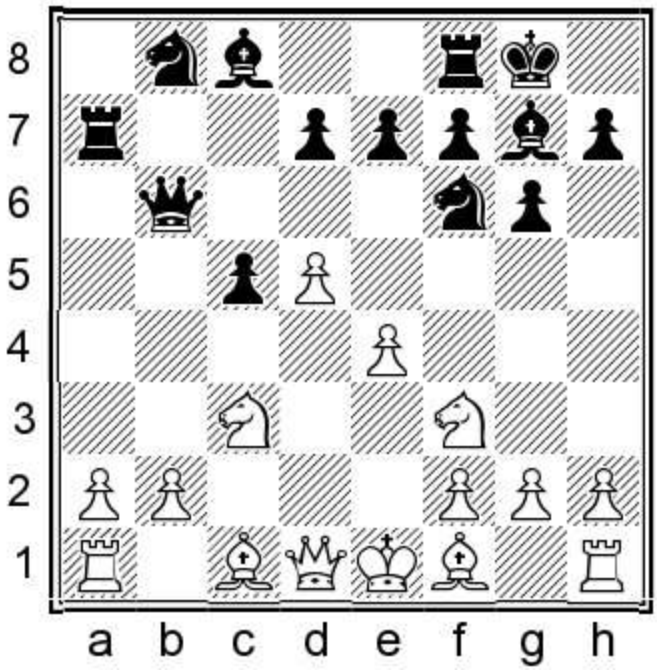


19.b4! cxb3 20.♖xb3±

chesstouring.com

White should convert the extra pawn.

B2) 9...♕b6



This avoids presenting the queen as a target in the way the previous variation did, but Black will still find it hard to generate meaningful counterplay.

10.♗e2 ♗a6 11.0-0 d6

With this move, we suddenly transpose to some additional games.

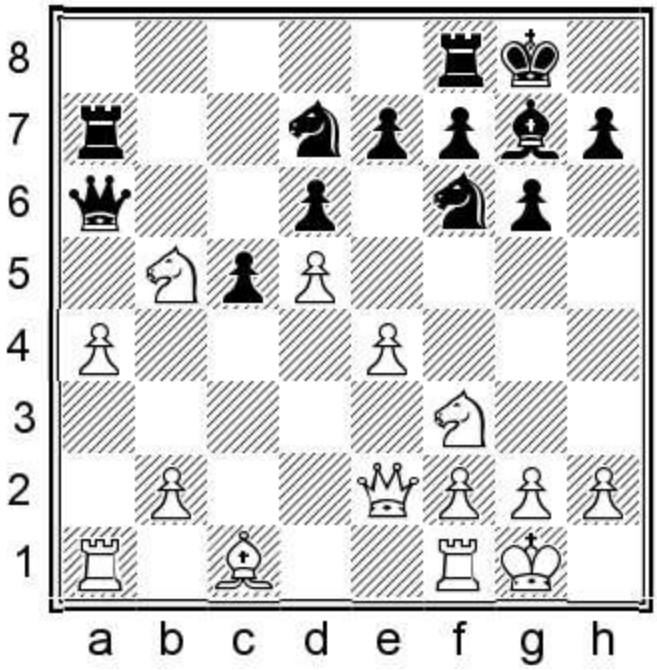
12.a4 ♘bd7

Two other moves have been tried, without improving Black's prospects:

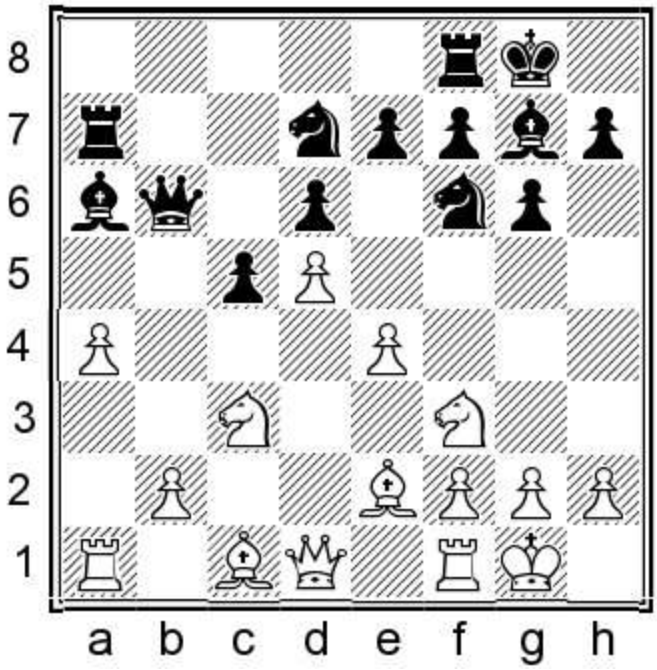
12...♕b4 13.♖e1 ♘bd7 occurred in Antonsen – Skytte, Fredericia 2016. White did pretty well in the game, but 14.♗b5!N would have secured a clear advantage on the spot.

12...♗xe2 13.♕xe2 ♕a6 14.♘b5 ♘bd7 occurred in Rozum – Nechaev, Sochi 2017, and now the most precise would have been:

chesstouring.com



15.♕c2!N 15...♖b7 16.♗d2± White has completely neutralized Black's activity on the queenside.



13.♖a3!

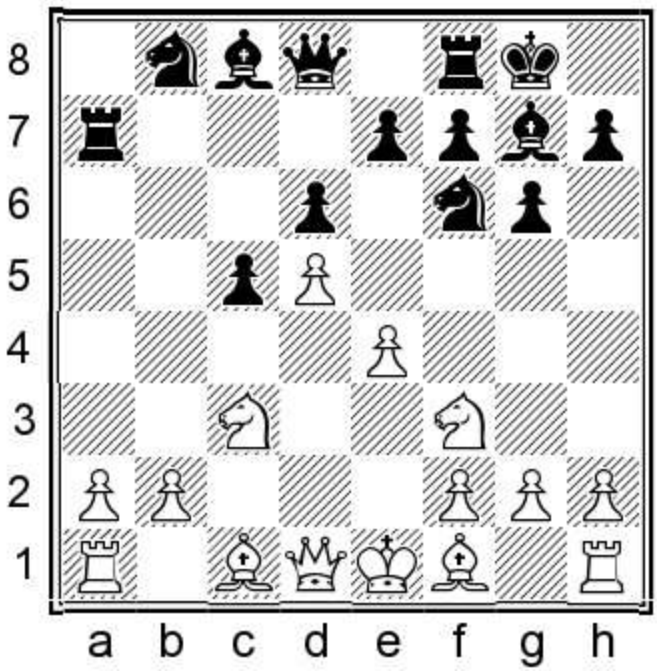
White has excellent prospects. A good example continued:

13...♖b8 14.♘d2 ♕d8 15.♘b5±

Molina Camacho – Ruiz Jarabo Pelayo, corr. 2010.

B3) 9...d6

chesstouring.com

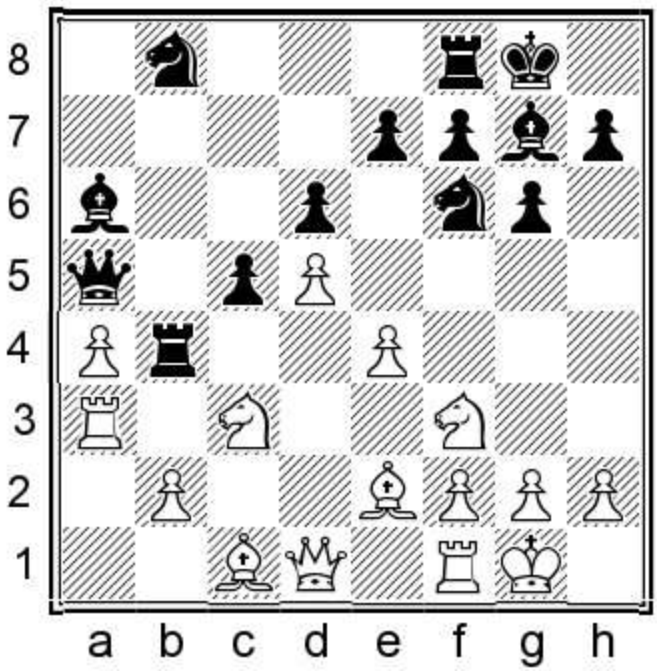


This is more flexible than the previous two moves, but White should still be able to consolidate on the queenside by following our thematic plan.

10.♗e2 ♗a6 11.0-0 ♘bd7

11...♕b6 transposes to variation B2 above.

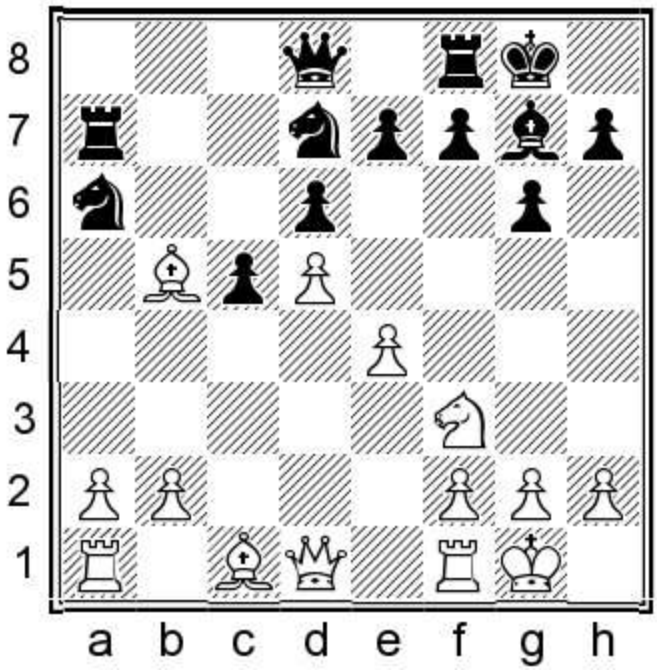
11...♕a5 has been played in two games. I think White should continue with the thematic 12.a4!N, creating an outpost on b5. 12...♖b7 13.♖a3 ♖b4 seems like the only critical try, but a good reply is:



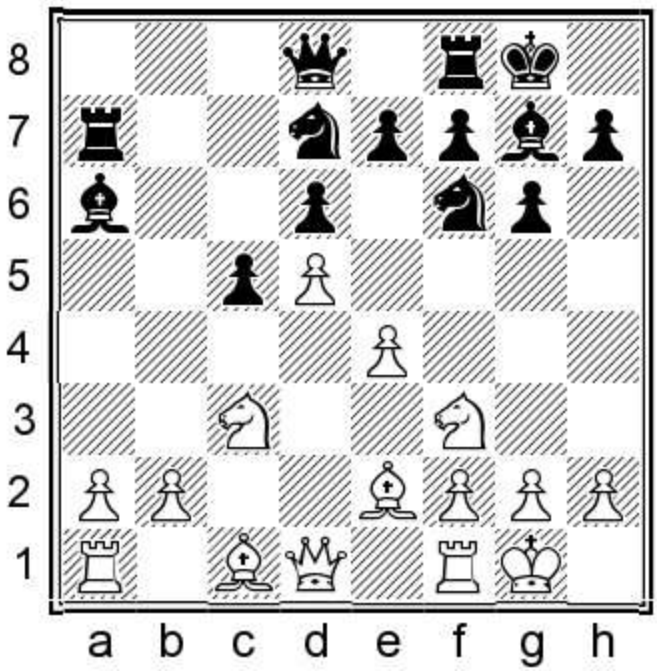
14.♗b5! ♘bd7 (the main point is that after 14...♘xe4 15.♘xe4 ♖xe4 16.♗d2 ♕b6 17.♕c2± the black rook is in trouble) 15.♕c2 ♗xb5 16.axb5 ♕c7 17.♗g5± Black does not have much for the pawn.

chesstouring.com

11...♘fd7 12.♘b5 ♗xb5 (obviously 12...♖b7 should be met by 13.a4) 13.♗xb5 ♘a6 Here I found an improvement over O'Donnell – Whatley, Prague 2016:



14.a3!N 14...♕b6 15.♕e2 ♖b8 16.a4 ♘b4 17.♖b1± White is clearly better.



12.a4

Once again, we carry out our thematic plan.

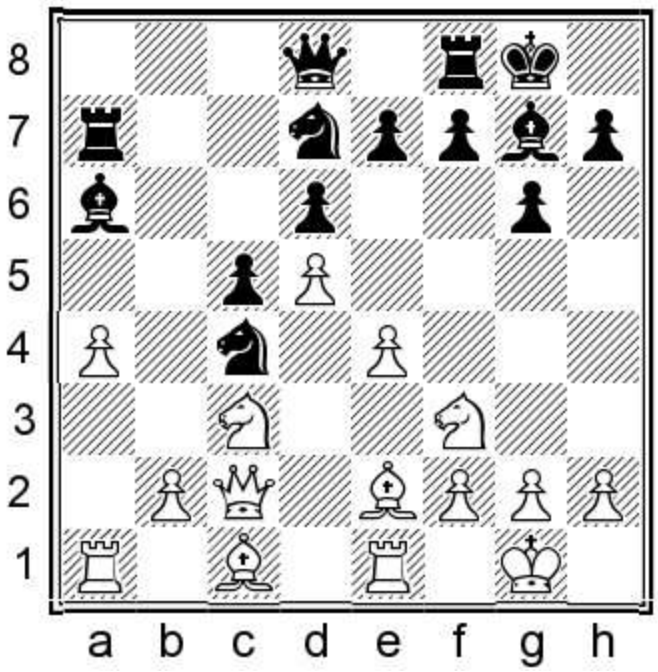
12...♕b6

12...♕a8 13.♖a3 ♖c8 14.b3 ♘b6 15.♖e1 ♘e8 16.♘b5± gave White a typical big advantage in Stefansson – Hauge, Reykjavik 2015.

12...♘b6 13.♖e1 ♘c4 14.♕c2 ♘d7 occurred in Lopez Azambuja – Godoy, Villa Martelli 2017, when

chesstouring.com

White should have continued:



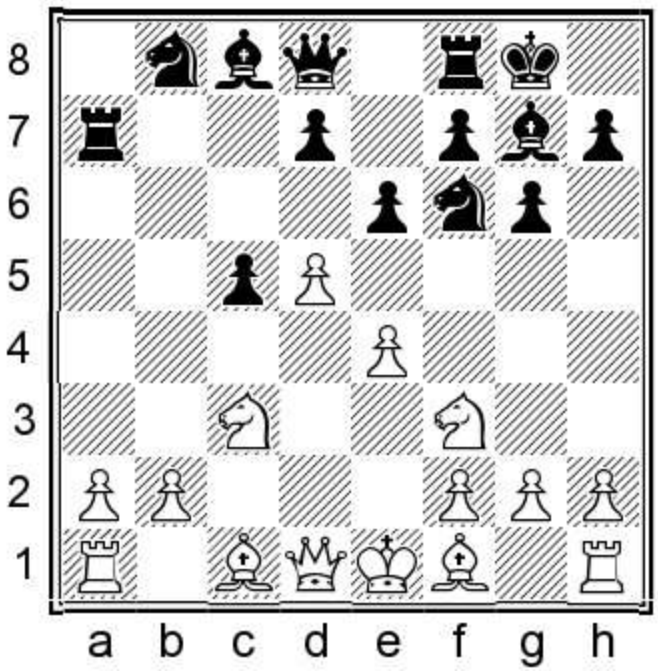
15.♘d2!N 15...♘xd2 16.♗xd2 ♗xe2 17.♖xe2± Black has no compensation for the pawn.

After the text move, we will follow a recent game where White continued strongly.

13.♘d2 ♘e5 14.♘b5! ♗xb5 15.♗xb5±

Black had no compensation in Jarmula – Vaishali, Moscow 2018.

B4) 9...e6



Considering Black's difficulties in obtaining queenside counterplay in the above lines, it is hardly surprising that this move has become his most popular response. Perunovic also recommends it in *The*

chesstouring.com

10.♗e2 exd5

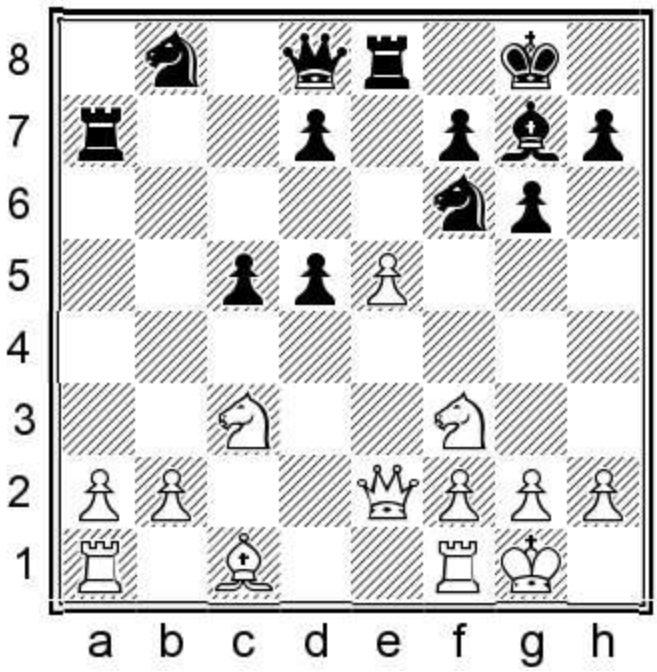
A deservedly rare alternative is:

10...♗a6 11.0-0 exd5

The problem is that White is not obliged to recapture.

12.e5! ♗xe2 13.♕xe2 ♖e8

This happened in Javakhishvili – Tsiganova, Baku (ol) 2016, and now a clear improvement is:



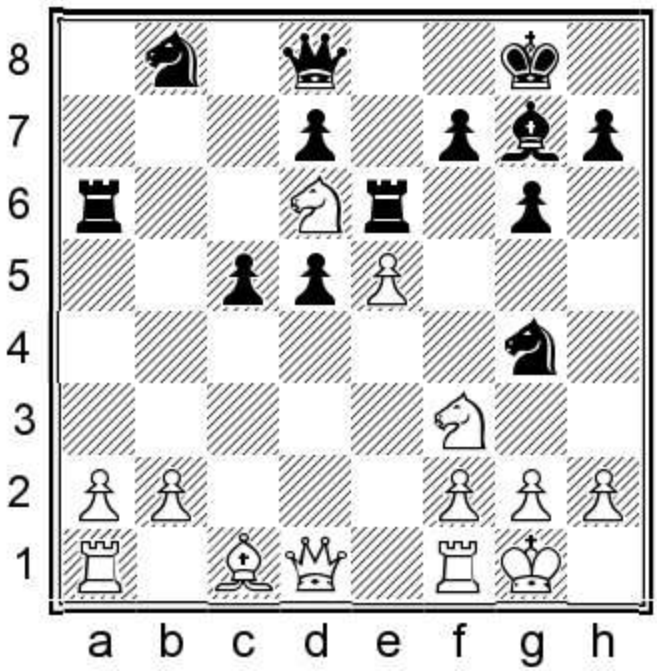
14.♕d1!N 14...♘g4

Or 14...♘e4 15.♘xd5 ♗xe5 16.♘xe5 ♖xe5 17.♗f4 ♖e6 18.f3 ♘d6 19.♗e3± followed by b2-b4 with a considerable advantage.

15.♘b5 ♖a6 16.♘d6 ♖e6

16...♖f8 17.♗g5! is also unpleasant for Black.

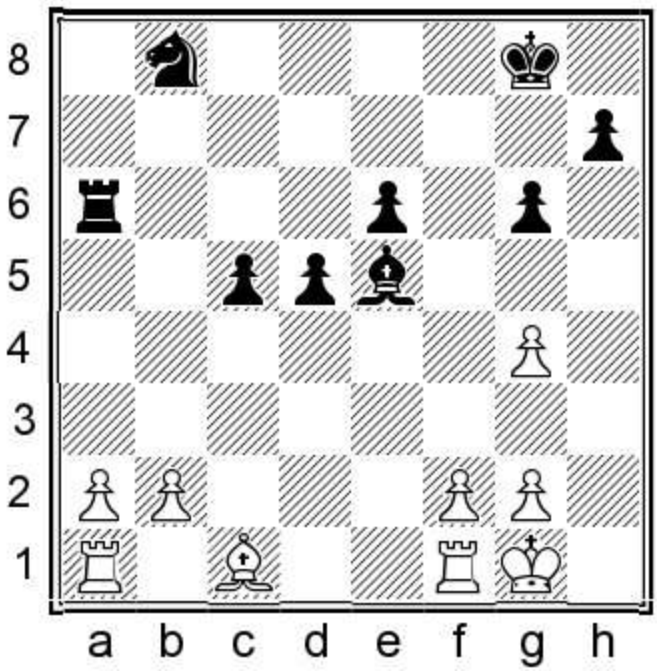
chesstouring.com



17.♘xf7!

The following sequence looks more or less forced.

17...♔xf7 18.♘g5† ♔g8 19.♘xe6 ♕h4 20.h3 dxe6 21.♕xg4 ♕xg4 22.hxg4 ♗xe5



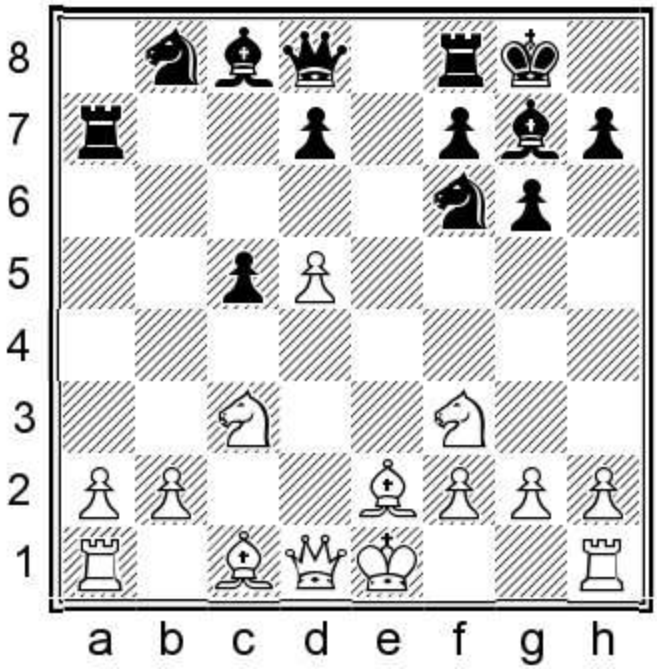
23.♖e1 ♘d7 24.a4±

Black does not have enough for the exchange.

11.exd5

This time 11.e5 is well met by 11...♘e4! 12.♘xd5 ♕a5† with unclear play.

chesstouring.com

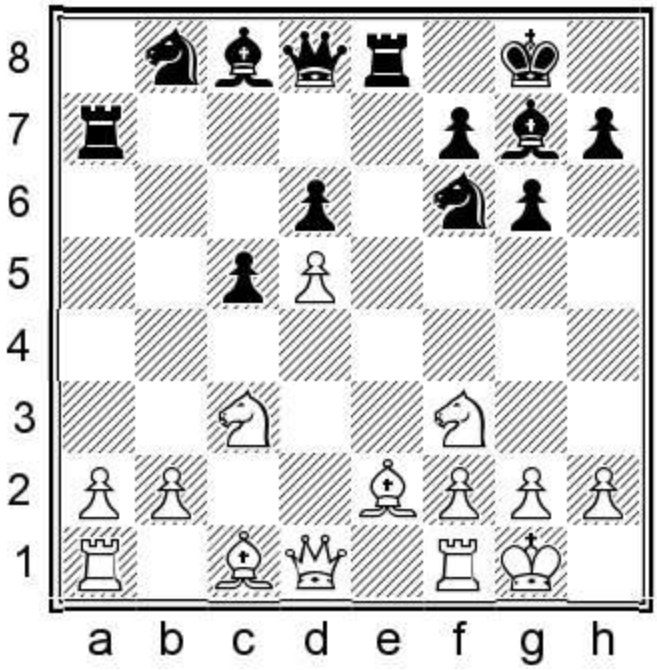


11...d6

11...♖e8 12.0-0 d6 is merely a transposition to the 12...♖e8 line noted below.

12.0-0

Now **B41)** 12...♗a6 deserves considertion, but the main line is **B42)** 12...♘a6.
After 12...♖e8 I like the following new idea, which is similar to our main line:



13.♗g5!?N 13...h6 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 (or 14...♕xf6 15.♘d2±) 15.♗b5 ♘d7 16.a4± White's light-squared strategy offers him the better chances.

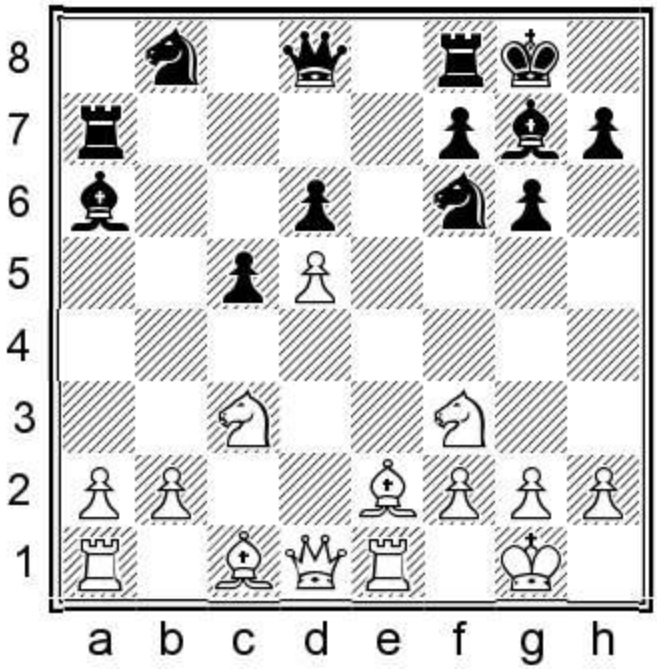
B41) 12...♗a6

chesstouring.com

This has not been played in many games but it requires accurate handling.

13.♖e1

Perunovic analyses 13.♘b5!?N and concludes that White stands better. The Serbian GM may well be right about that, but the lines are quite sharp and forcing. I think the text move is a simpler route to an edge.

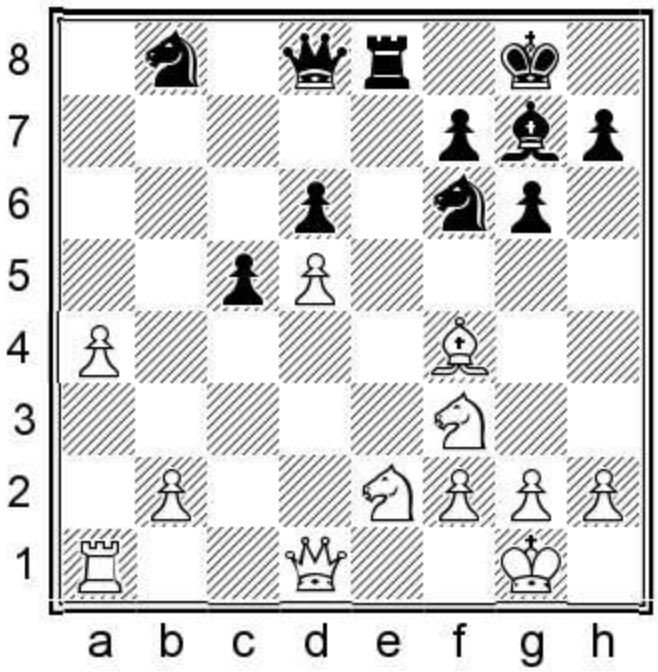


13...♗xe2!?N

Perunovic gives this as an improvement over previous games, but I don't believe it fully solves Black's problems.

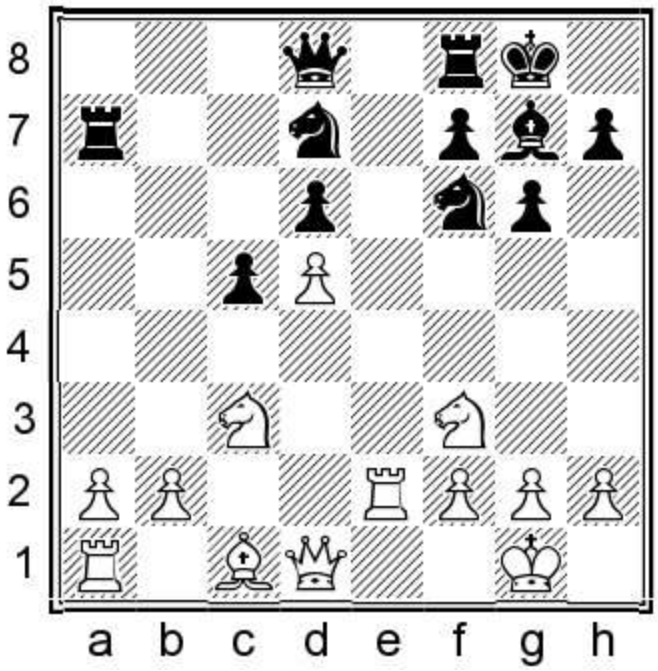
13...♖e8 has been played twice. I like the following new approach for White: 14.♗f4!?N 14...♖ae7 15.a4 ♗xe2 16.♖xe2 ♖xe2 17.♘xe2

chesstouring.com



17...♕b6 (17...♘e4 18.♕b3! is promising for White) 18.♖b1 ♘a6 19.♘c3± Black still has to prove his compensation for the pawn.

14.♖xe2 ♘bd7



15.♗f4!

Perunovic mentions 15.♘b5 ♖a6⩱ as satisfactory for Black; the text move is my improvement.

15...♘b6

15...♕b8 16.♕c2 ♘b6 17.♖d1 also favours White.

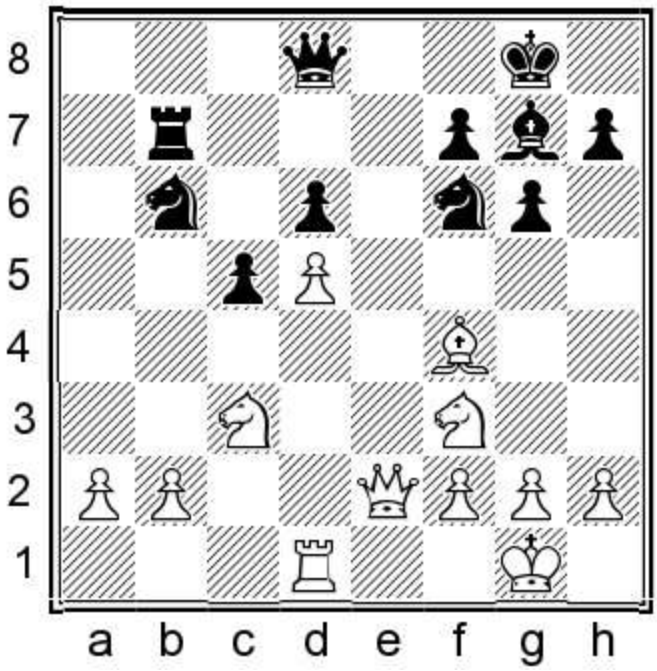
chesstouring.com

16.♕b3 ♖b7 17.♖d1 ♖e8

17...♕b8 18.♕c2±

18.♕c2 ♖xe2 19.♕xe2

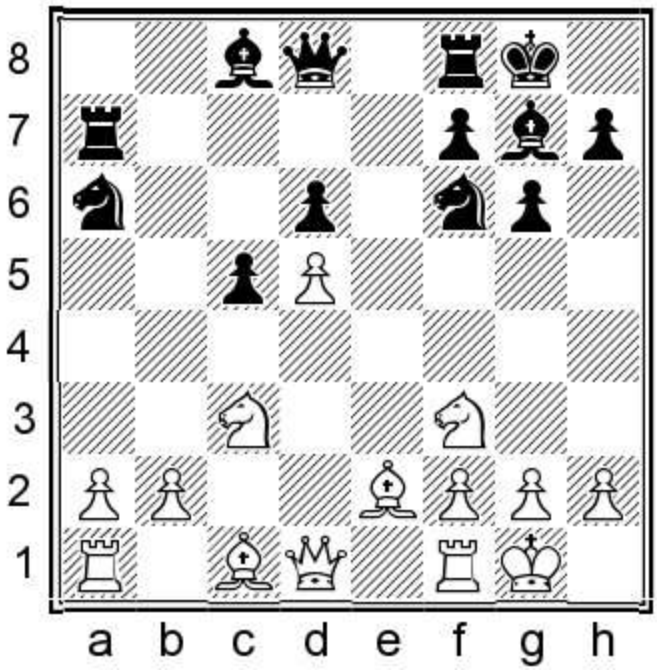
White is doing well, for instance:



19...♘h5 20.♗g5 ♕d7 21.h3±

Black is unable to claim full compensation.

B42) 12...♘a6



As mentioned earlier, this has been Black's clear first choice so far, and is the main recommendation of

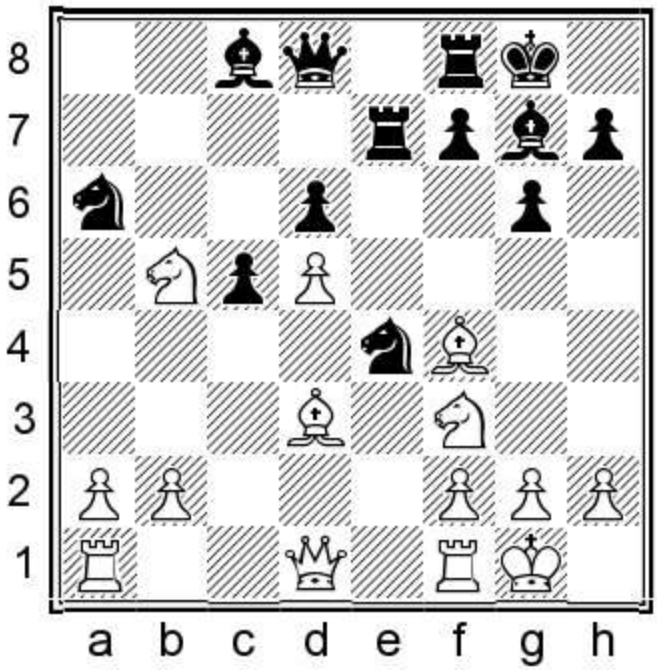
chesstouring.com

Perunovic.

13.♘b5 ♖d7

Black has also tried both of the other logical rook moves:

13...♖e7 14.♗f4 is good for White, for instance: 14...♘e4 15.♗d3

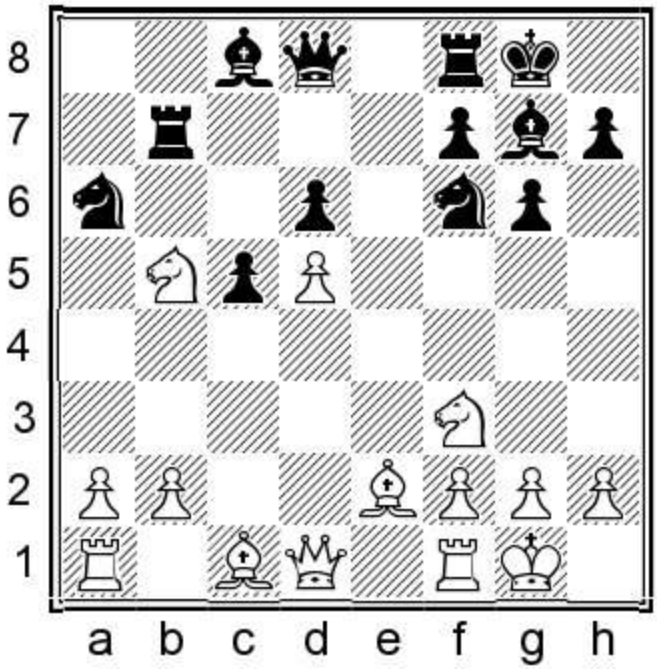


15...♘b4? (15...♘c7N was preferable although 16.♘xc7 ♕xc7 17.♖e1 ♖fe8 18.♕a4 f5 19.♖e2 still clearly favours White) 16.♗xe4 ♖xe4 17.♗xd6 ♖fe8 18.♗xc5+– Black lost too many pawns in Wurtinger – Opitz, email 2012.

13...♖b7!?

Against this move, I had to find another novelty:

chesstouring.com



14.♗c4!N

14.♗f4 ♘e4!?N is a good suggestion from Perunovic, which offers Black enough counterplay. The point of my new idea is to solidify the centre and queenside.

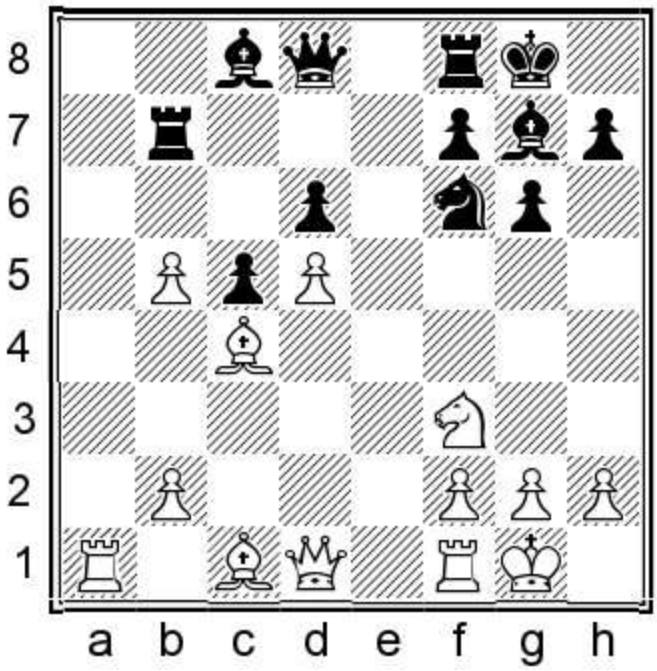
14...♘c7

14...♘b4?! 15.♘c3± leaves Black with no real play for the pawn.

15.a4!

15.♘xc7 ♕xc7 16.a4 ♖a7 is not so clear, as Black will follow up with ...♗a6 to erode the light-square blockade.

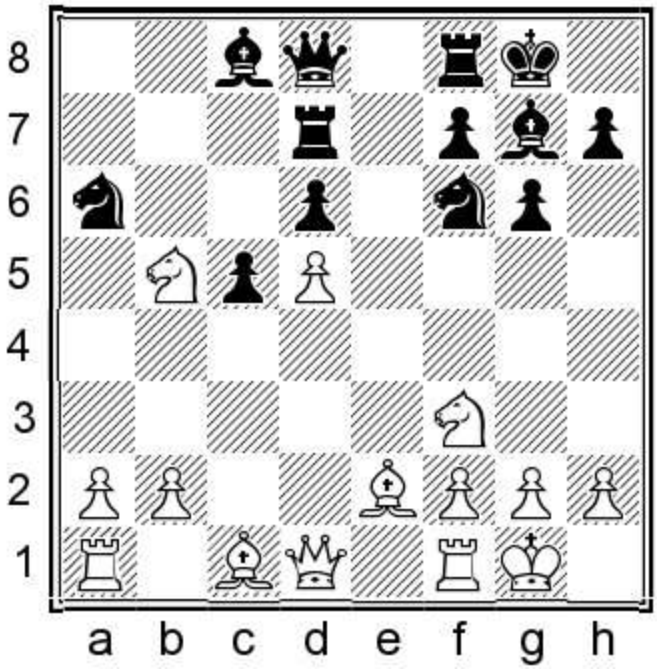
15...♘xb5 16.axb5



16...♗d7 17.♕d3 ♕b8 18.♖a5±

White retains his extra pawn while keeping Black's activity under control.

chesstouring.com



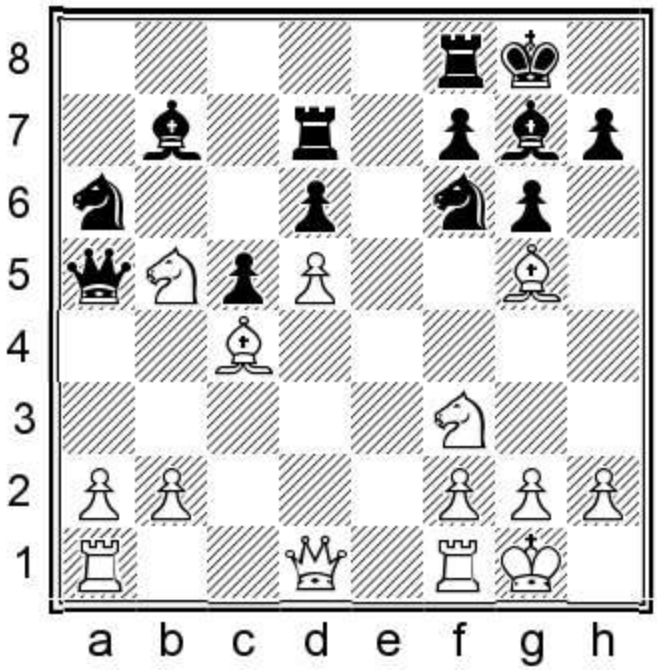
14.♗c4

It is important to overprotect the d5-pawn.

14...♗b7 15.♗g5 h6

Obviously Black has some other options:

15...♕a5 occurred in Dziuba – Jarmula, Lublin 2017, when White hurried to exchange on f6. Instead I recommend the following simple plan:



16.♘c3!N 16...h6 17.♗f4! ♘c7 18.♕d3 ♕a8 19.♖fd1± White has an obvious advantage, since Black failed to create any counterplay.

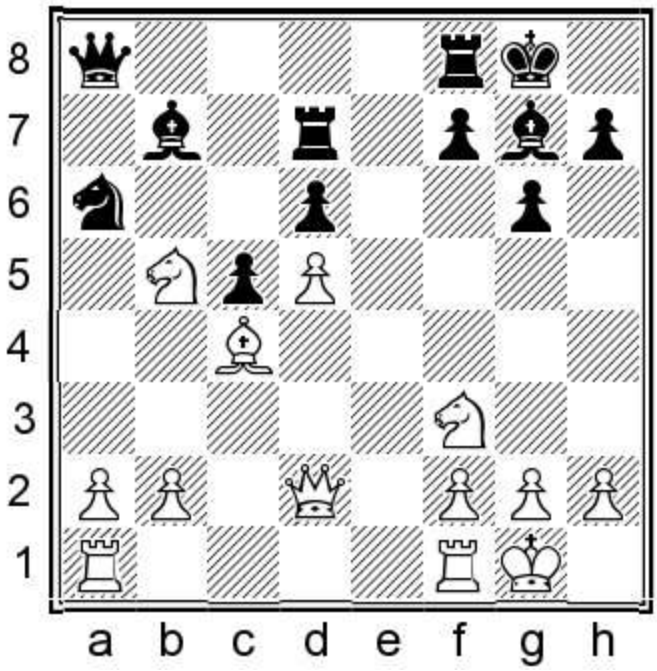
chesstouring.com

15...♕a8 16.♗xf6

This exchange is forced, otherwise White will not be able to defend the d5-pawn.

16...♗xf6 17.♕d2 ♗g7

I shared the following idea with my student Annie Wang, who sensationally took the silver medal in the 2018 US Women's Championship and came very close to winning the event. She had a chance to employ my idea in an IM tournament the previous year, but here she committed a slight inaccuracy.



18.♖fe1!N

18.♖ad1 ♘c7 19.♖fe1 led to an eventual draw in A. Wang – Larson, Saint Louis 2017. At this point, Black could have obtained decent counterplay with 19...♗a6!N.

18...♘b4

If 18...♘c7 19.♘xc7 ♖xc7 20.♖ac1! White consolidates the blockade on the c4-square and keeps the advantage.

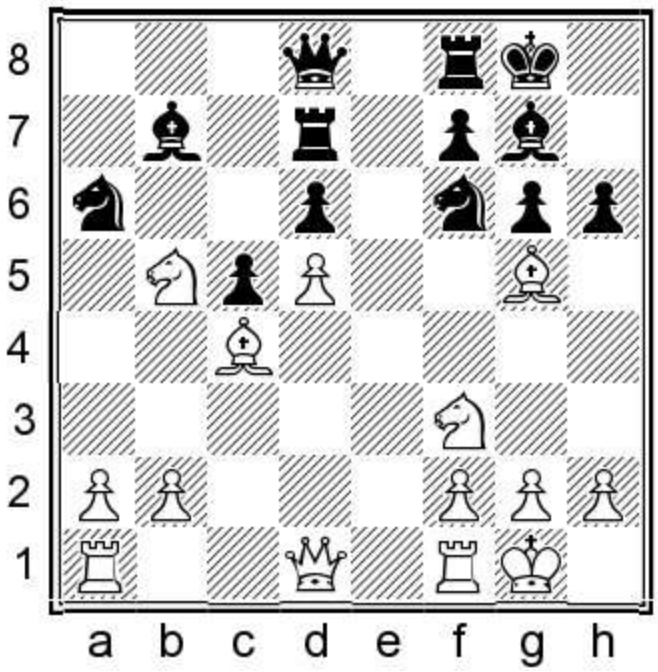
19.♖ed1!

Losing a tempo does not matter here – it is more important to keep the rook on a1 to support the queenside.

19...♖b8 20.a4±

Black does not have much compensation for the missing pawn.

chesstouring.com



16.♗h4!

This seems to be strongest, although I was also tempted by 16.♗xf6 ♕xf6 17.♖b1, when there are two lines worth mentioning:

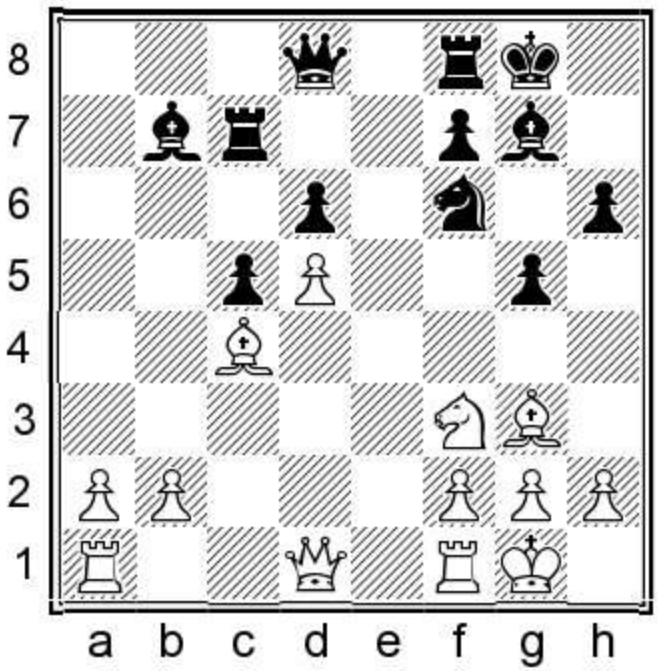
a) Black narrowly held on for a draw after 17...♕f5 in Hassim – Senturk, corr. 2016, but it would be an unpleasant defensive task, especially in an over-the-board game.

b) 17...♘c7!N 18.♘xc7 ♖xc7⩲ is an important improvement mentioned by Perunovic, who points out that Black will either trade his light-squared bishop with ...♖a8 and ...♗a6, or activate it with ...♗c8-f5. White does not have much of an advantage here.

16...♕a8N

The game continuation also favoured White after: 16...g5 17.♗g3 ♘c7 18.♘xc7 ♖xc7

chesstouring.com



19.a4 ♘e4 20.♘d2 ♘xg3 21.hxg3 ♗xb2 22.♖a2 ♗c3 23.a5 Despite regaining the pawn, Black's position remained difficult and he was unable to hold it in Bell – Bus, corr. 2016.

17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♕d2 ♗g7

Perunovic ends his analysis here with a "compensation" symbol, but White maintains better chances after:

19.♖fe1 ♘b4

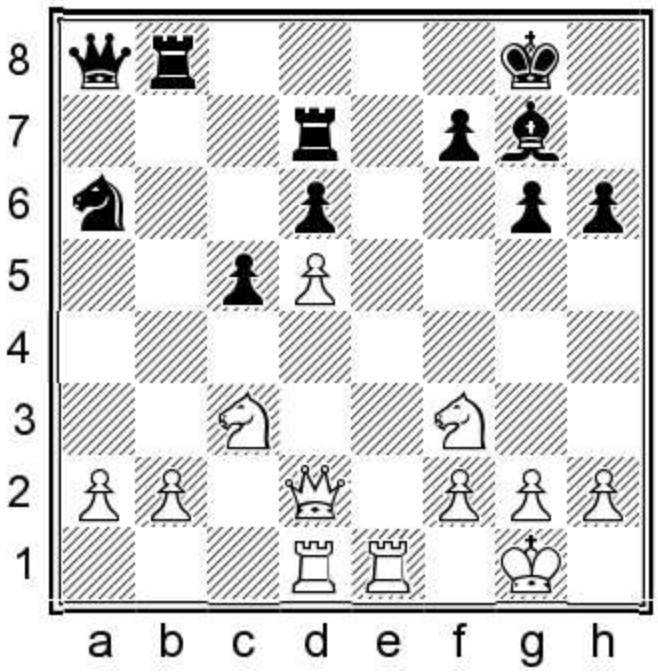
We reached an almost-identical position in the note on 15...♕a8 above, after improving on the Wang – Larson game. The only difference is that here Black's pawn is on h6 instead of h7, which makes a difference in the following illustrative line:

20.♖ad1!?

20.♖ed1 also favours White, just as in the aforementioned line, but the text move is also tempting, for instance:

20...♖b8 21.♘c3 ♗a6 22.♗xa6 ♘xa6

chesstouring.com



23.h4!

Forcing Black to pay attention to the kingside. The game continues but White's chances are clearly higher.

Conclusion

5...g6 is the favourite choice of most Benko aficionados, the point being that after 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.e4 he gets some additional counterattacking possibilities against White's pawn centre, to make up for the fact that White's king has not been forced to go to f1. After both 7...♕a5 and the more challenging 7...0-0, it is important to throw in 8.a7! to lure Black's rook to a more exposed square. After the latter move, play generally continues 8...♖xa7 9.♘f3 when Black has a choice. If he aims for traditional Benko-style compensation along the queenside files, White obtains excellent chances with the standard light-squared strategy. 9...e6 is more challenging though, when 10.♗e2 exd5 11.exd5 d6 12.0-0 is the main line, which is certain to receive much more testing in the years ahead. Black certainly has a degree of counterplay for the sacrificed pawn, but I believe my recommendations and novelties will cause plenty of problems for the defence.

chesstouring.com



Budapest Gambit



Fajarowicz

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6

2.c4

A) 2...e6 3.g3 e5!? 323

B) 2...e5 3.dxe5 ♘e4 4.a3 325

B1) 4...b6 325

B2) 4...d6 326

B3) 4...♘c6 5.♘f3 328

B31) 5...♗c5 328

B32) 5...a5 329

B33) 5...d6 6.♕c2! 331

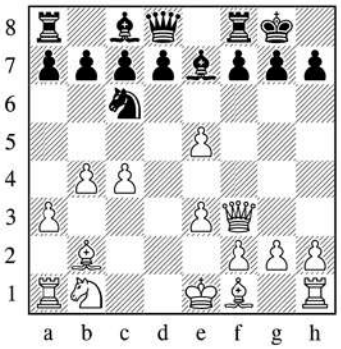
B331) 6...♗f5? 331

B332) 6...d5 333

B333) 6...♘c5 334

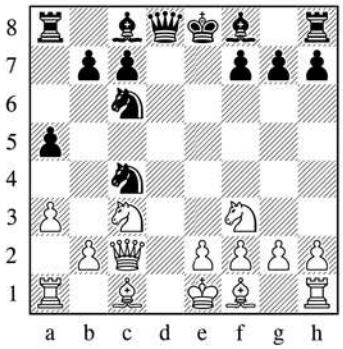
chesstouring.com

B31) after 9...0–0



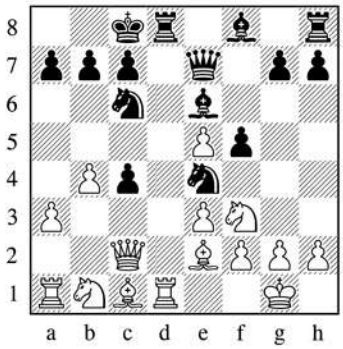
10.b5!N

B32) note to 7...♗f5



9.♗g5!N

B332) note to 7...♗g4



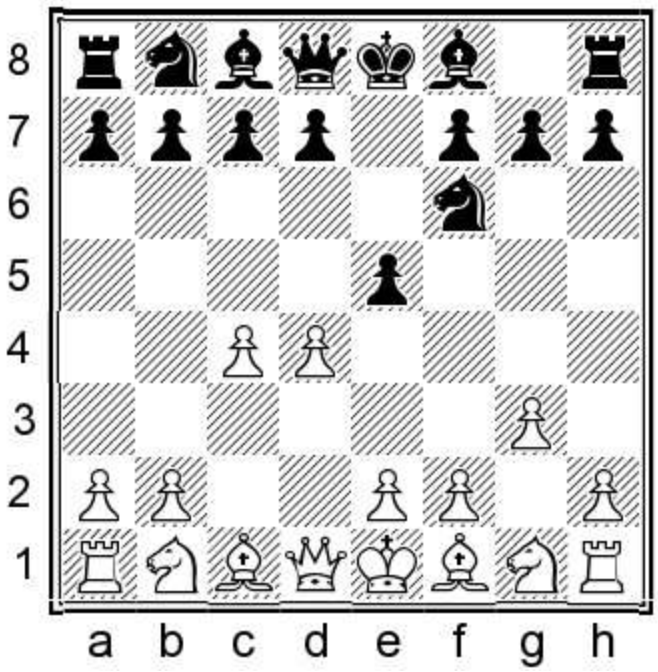
12.♖xd8†!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4

The Budapest is an exciting gambit, although it doesn't have a good reputation at GM level. Still, it can be an effective surprise weapon, especially in rapid or blitz games.

We will start by considering the unusual Budapest-style gambit of **A)** 2...e6 3.g3 e5!?, before concentrating on the Budapest proper with **B)** 2...e5.

A) 2...e6 3.g3 e5!?



I would never have thought to analyse this move, but my publishing house pointed out that it has a right to exist, and has been tried by a few strong players including Jan Timman. It was also advocated by Jeroen Bosch in *Secrets of Opening Surprises* 13. Black's idea is to avoid the Catalan by playing a modified version of the Budapest, and he hopes that the loss of a tempo will be justified by the fact that g2-g3 is not usually a desirable move in the main lines of the Budapest.

chesstouring.com

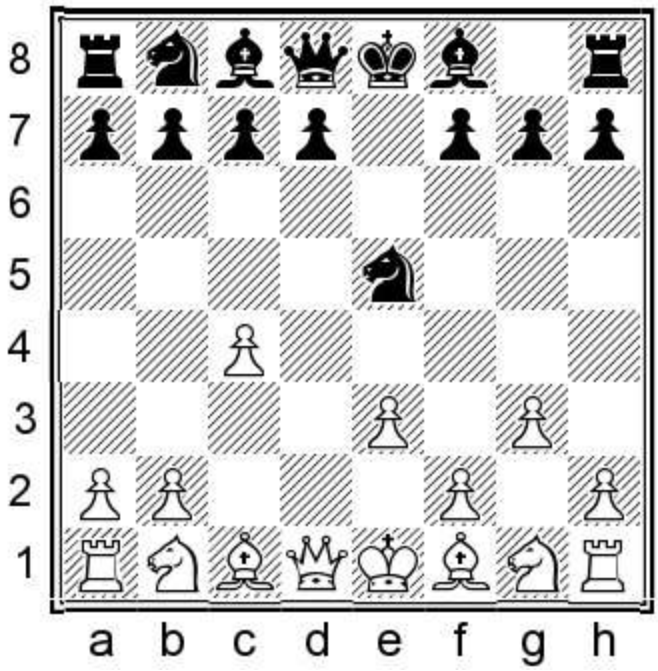
4.dxe5 ♘g4 5.e3!?N

I decided on this simple approach, which is untested and was not considered by Bosch.

5.♗f4!?N is a reasonable move but it invites ...g5 (either immediately or after a check on b4), when White can still fight for an advantage, but Black can at least claim some justification for his play, as the g3-square is not available to White's bishop.

5...♘xe5

Black has no real choice, as 5...d6? 6.exd6 ♗xd6 7.♘c3 (7.♘f3 is also good) 7...0-0 8.h3 ♘e5 9.f4 ♘ed7 10.♗g2 leaves him with no compensation.



6.f4! ♘ec6

I checked two other options:

6...♗b4† 7.♗d2 ♗xd2† 8.♕xd2 ♘ec6 9.♘c3 0-0 10.♗g2 d6 11.♘ge2± and White's space advantage is obvious.

6...♘g6 7.♗g2 ♘c6 8.♘c3 ♗c5 9.♘a4 ♗b4† 10.♗d2 0-0 11.♘e2± Once again, Black has a cramped position with no real counterplay.

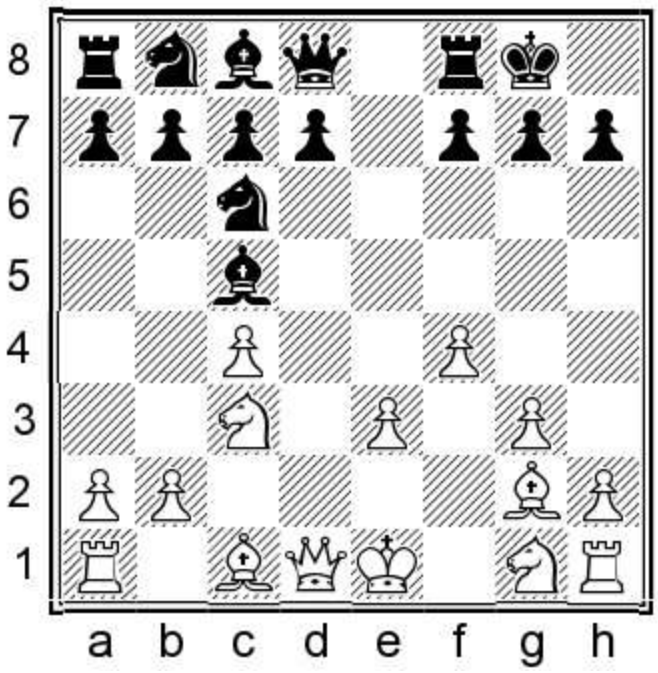
7.♗g2 ♗c5!?

The alternative is 7...♗b4† 8.♗d2 ♗xd2† 9.♕xd2 0-0 10.♘c3 d6 11.♘ge2 and White retains a pleasant edge.

Keeping the dark-squared bishop is a more critical approach, as Black hopes to put pressure on the e3-pawn. However, by refusing to simplify the position he risks ending up with even more of a space problem.

chesstouring.com

8.♘c3 0-0



9.♘f3 d6

9...♖e8? 10.♘g5! gives White vicious threats on the kingside, especially against f7.

10.0-0 ♖e8

A critical position has been reached, where White has two attractive options.

11.♘g5!?

The most aggressive. The other tempting idea is:

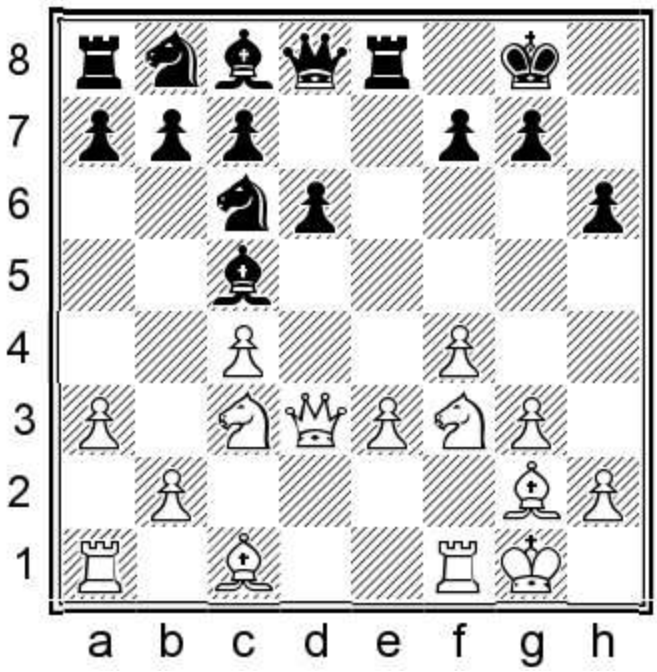
11.♕d3 ♘b4 12.♕b1 h6

Black should not allow the knight to come to g5. For instance, if 12...a5?! then 13.♘g5 g6 14.a3 ♘4c6 15.♗d5 ♗e6 16.♗xe6 fxe6 17.♘ce4 ♘d7 18.b3 gives White a dangerous attack.

12...♗xe3†? is obviously too risky in view of 13.♗xe3 ♖xe3 14.a3 ♘4c6 15.♘g5 g6 16.♗d5 with decisive threats.

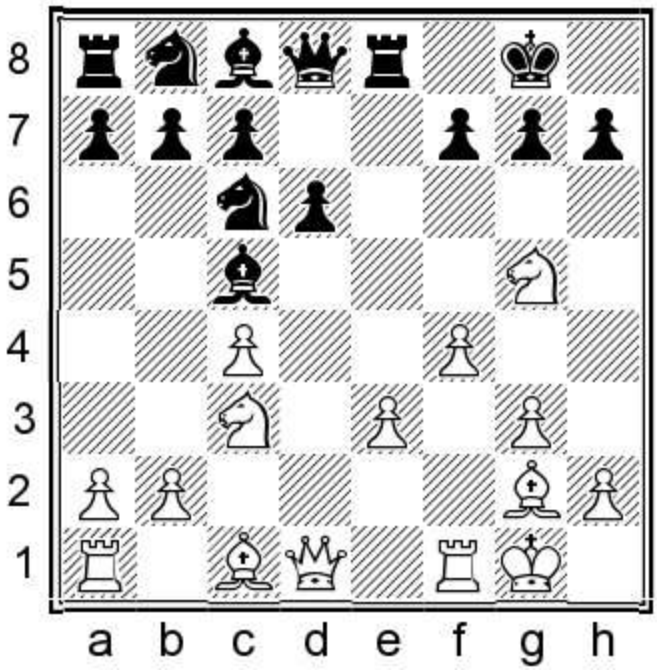
13.a3 ♘4c6 14.♕d3

chesstouring.com



14...a5 15.♗d2 ♘d7 16.♖ae1 ♘f6 17.♔h1

White keeps a pleasant edge thanks to his space advantage in the centre.



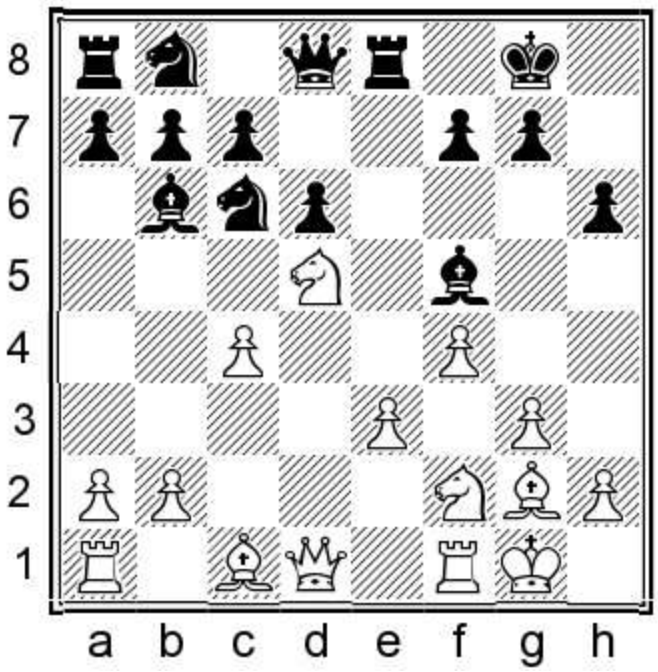
11...h6 12.♘ge4 ♗b6 13.♘d5 ♗f5

Again, White has choice of promising options.

14.♘f2

The alternative is: 14.♘ec3 ♕c8 (14...♘d7 is risky in view of 15.♘xb6 axb6 16.e4 ♗h7 17.b3 ♘c5 18.f5! f6 19.g4 when the kingside attack will be dangerous) 15.♘xb6 axb6 16.♗f3!± Avoiding the exchange of light-squared bishops, and maintaining a pleasant advantage thanks to the bishop pair and extra space.

chesstouring.com



14...♘d7 15.♘xb6 ♘xb6 16.b3±

White should be happy with the outcome of the opening: he has two strong bishops and will easily carry out the e3-e4 advance to increase his space advantage.

B) 2...e5 3.dxe5

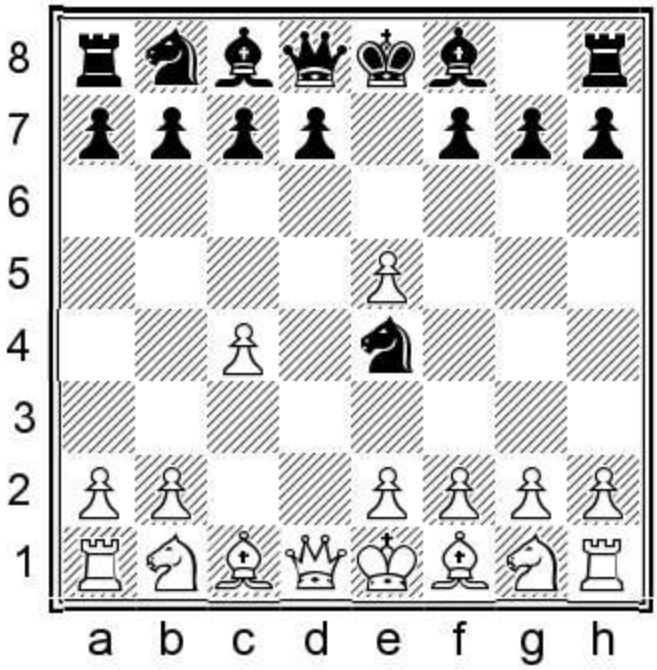
This is the Budapest Gambit proper. For the rest of this chapter, we will cover the dubious branch of it which occurs after:

3...♘e4

This is the Fajarowicz variation of the Budapest. It does not have a good reputation, and deservedly so, although I must admit I have occasionally run into problems when facing it in blitz games.

3...♘g4 is analysed in the next two chapters.

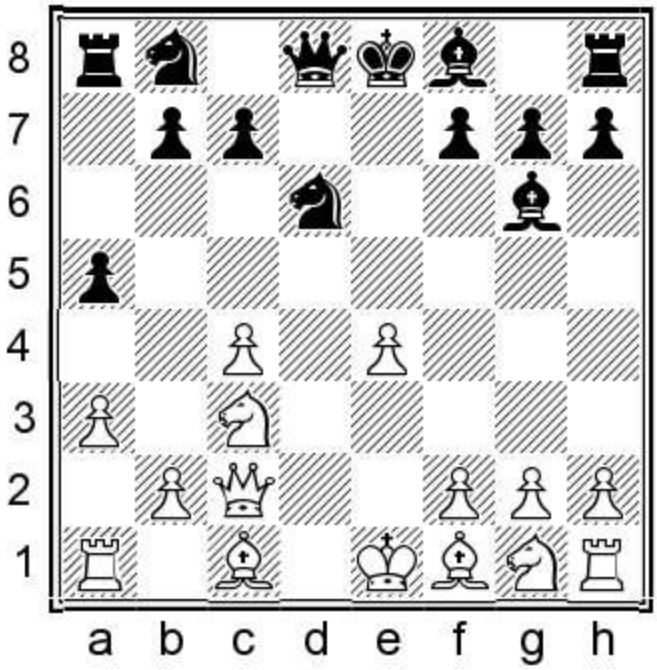
chesstouring.com



4.a3

It is well worth investing a tempo to prevent a check on b4. Black has three main options: **B1)** 4...b6, **B2)** 4...d6 and **B3)** 4...♘c6.

4...a5 has been tried in a number of games, and is worth considering. 5.♕c2 d5 (5...♘c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 is covered on page 329 – see 6...♘c5 in the notes to variation **B32)** 6.exd6 ♗f5 7.♘c3 ♘xd6 8.e4 ♗g6 Stewart – Will, Oban 1995. Now the simplest is:

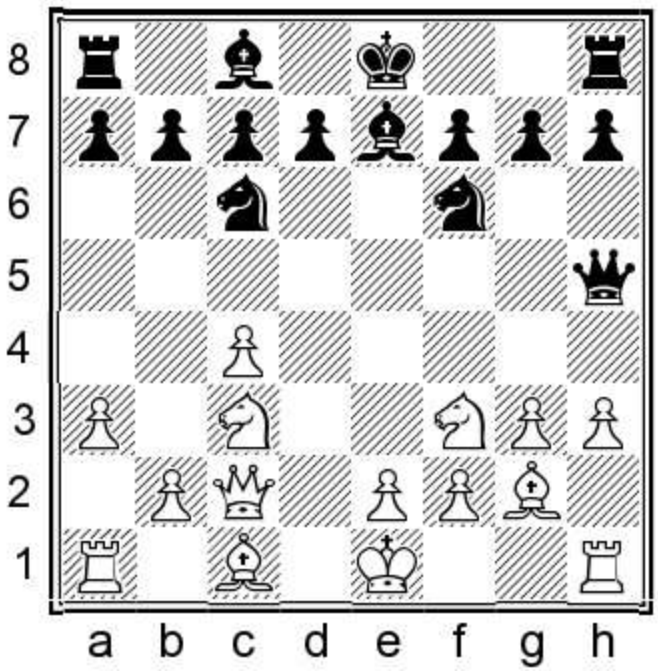


9.♗e3N Black is not even close to having compensation. 9...b6 (9...♕e7 10.♗d3; 9...♘d7 of course runs into 10.c5) 10.♖d1±

4...♕h4 is easily refuted by: 5.g3 ♕h5 (5...♗c5 6.e3 ♕e7 7.f3+–) 6.♗g2 ♕xe5 7.♘f3 ♕h5 8.♕c2 ♘f6

chessbooks.com

9.♘c3 ♗e7 10.h3 ♘c6



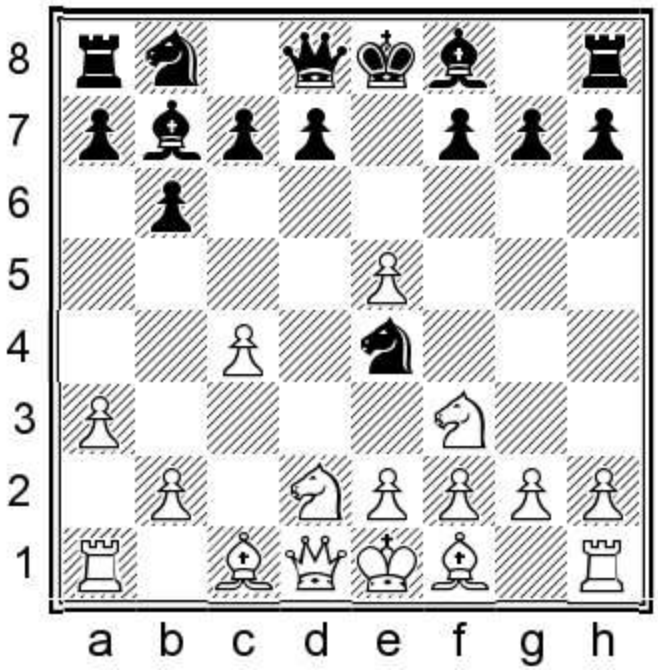
11.g4 ♘xg4 (11...♕g6 12.e4) 12.hxg4 ♕xg4 13.♗f1+– Hillarp Persson – Heinzel, Nuremberg 2006.

B1) 4...b6 5.♘f3

Obviously we must avoid the thematic trick: 5.♕d5?! ♘c5 6.♕xa8? ♗b7 7.♕xa7 ♘c6 and the white queen is trapped.

5...♗b7 6.♘bd2!

Challenging the active knight seems natural.



chesstouring.com

6...♘c5

Black has tried many moves but there is no need to look at all of them; White is a pawn up and should be able to claim a clear advantage with mostly natural moves. The two most common alternatives are:

6...a5 is well met by 7.♘xe4 ♗xe4 8.♕d4! when White takes firm control over the position. 8...♗b7 9.g3 ♘c6 10.♕c3 ♕e7 11.♗h3! White's simple, strong play gave him a clear plus in Panelo Munoz – Herms Agullo, Barcelona 2013.

6...♘xd2 7.♗xd2 ♘c6 8.♗c3 sees the bishop move to a nice square while protecting the extra pawn. After the further 8...♕e7 9.♕c2 0-0-0 10.0-0-0± Black had no compensation in Hillarp Persson – Romero Holmes, Benidorm 2003.

7.b4!

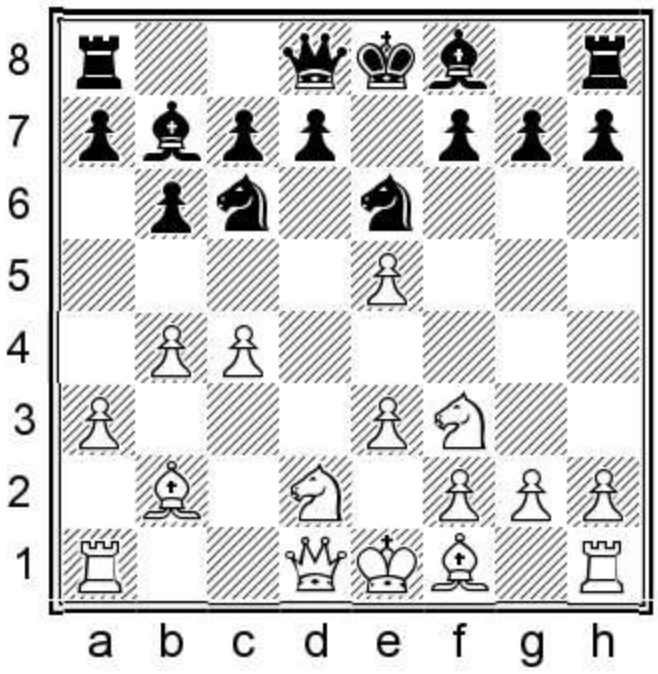
Pushing the knight back, while gaining both a tempo and extra queenside space.

7...♘e6 8.♗b2 ♘c6

8...a5N is awarded an exclam by Moskalenko, who attributes the move (along with a supporting variation) to Stefan Bücker. However, after 9.b5 d6 White can easily improve with 10.exd6! ♗xd6 11.g3± when Black has one good square on c5, which is hardly adequate compensation for a pawn.

9.e3

Black has failed to create any real play for the pawn. One example continued:



9...a5 10.b5 ♘e7 11.♗d3 g5?

Obviously Black should not weaken himself like this; but even after a better move, it is obvious that he has lost the opening battle.

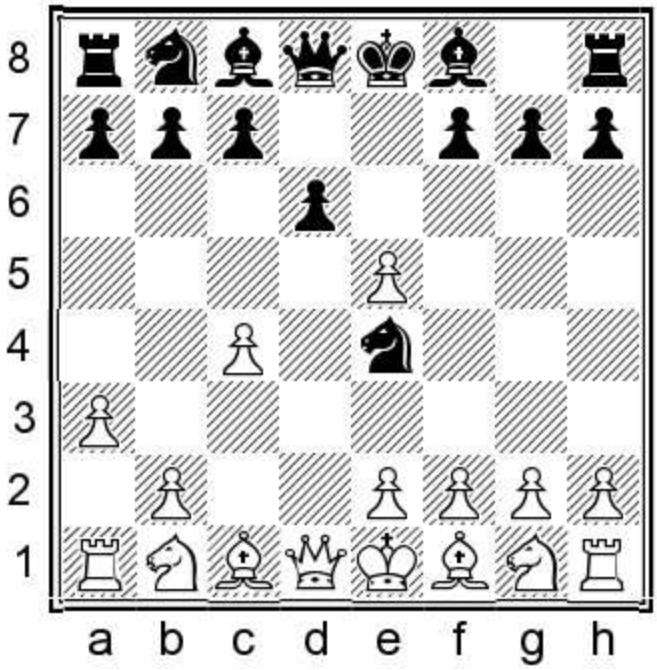
chesstouring.com

12.♘e4+–

Black soon resigned in Postny – Herges, Andorra 2005.

B2) 4...d6

This is quite a popular continuation, aiming for speedy development.



5.♕c2!

In *GM 2* I recommended the more popular 5.♘f3, but now I believe the text move to be more accurate.

5...♘c5

Black also has a hard time after other options:

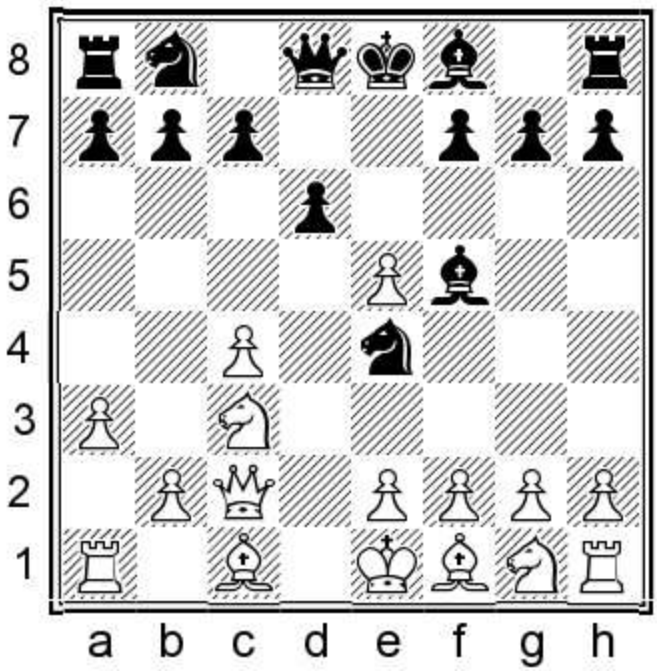
5...♗f5?

In *SOS* 8, GM Kogan remarks that this move "looks very logical", but he overlooked something vital.

6.♘c3!

I consider this an outright refutation of Black's play.

chesstouring.com

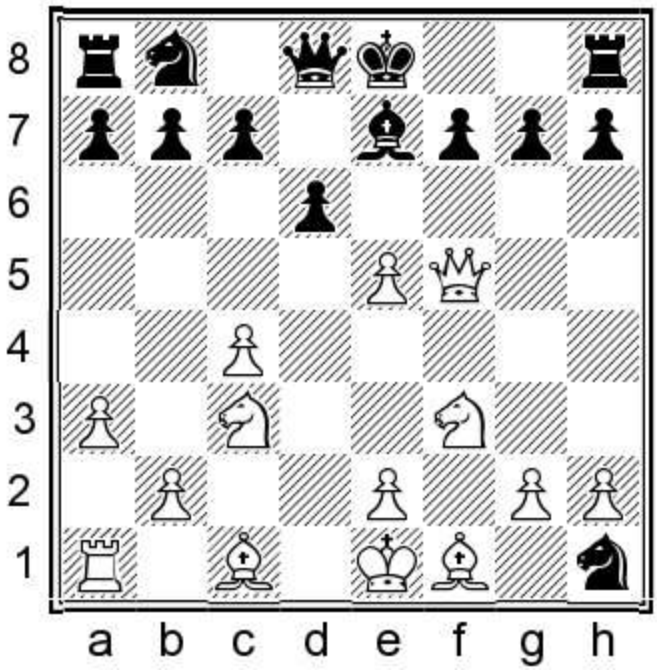


6...♘xf2

6...♘g3 7.e4! ♘xh1 8.exf5+– has occurred several times; the h1-knight is doomed and White is simply winning.

6...d5 7.cxd5 ♘xc3 8.♕xf5 ♘xd5 9.e6 f6 10.e4+– was another opening disaster for Black in Roeder – Stefanova, Groningen 1996.

7.♕xf5 ♘xh1 8.♘f3 ♗e7



In Bluebaum – Lueck, Dortmund 2005, White missed the strongest continuation:

9.♘g5!N 9...♗xg5 10.♗xg5 ♕d7 11.♕xd7† ♘xd7 12.exd6 cxd6 13.g3

Followed by picking up the knight, with a winning position.

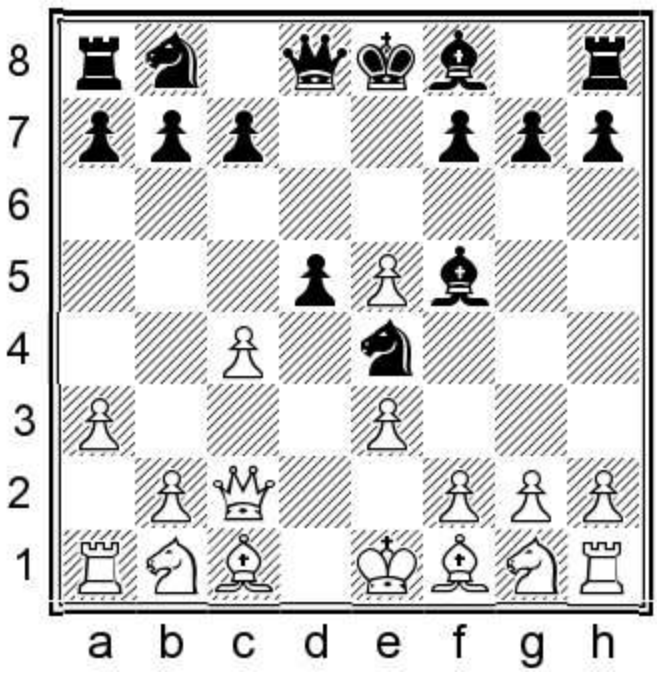
5...d5 6.e3

chesstouring.com

Continuing normal development.

6...♗f5?!

The lesser evil is 6...♘c6, after which 7.♘f3 transposes to variation B332 on page 333.



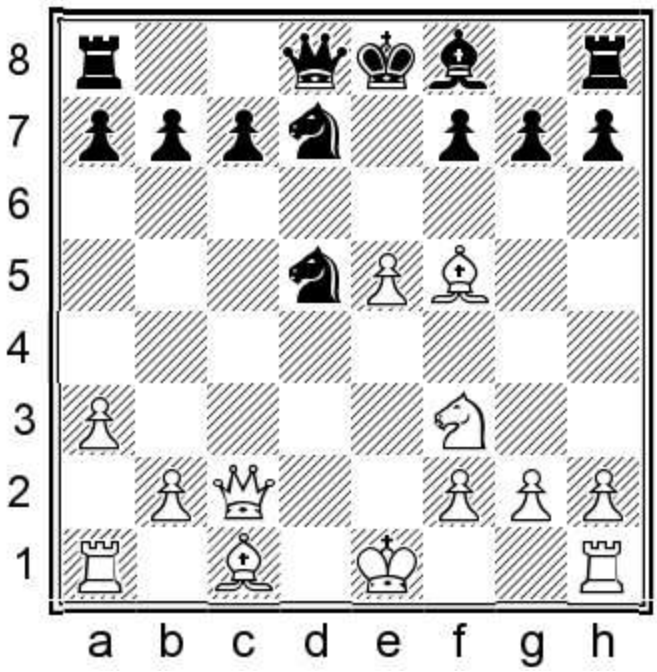
7.♘c3!

7.♗d3 is promising for White but the text move is stronger. Gutman overlooks it in his book.

7...♘g3 8.e4!

This is the main point of White's play.

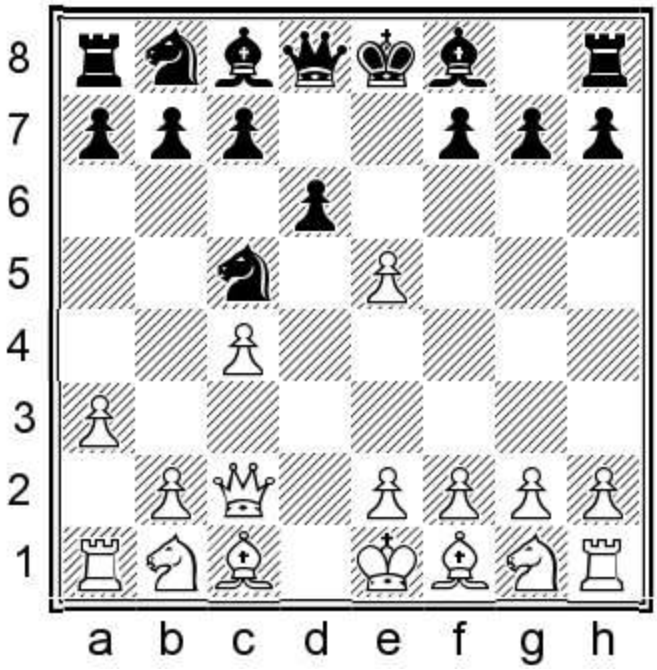
8...♘xe4 9.♗d3 ♘d7 10.cxd5 ♘xc3 11.♗xf5 ♘xd5 12.♘f3



12...g6 13.♗e4 c6 14.0-0 ♗g7 15.♗g5 ♕c8 16.♖ad1±

White's simple yet powerful play netted him a serious advantage in Tsygankov – Kahl, corr. 2014.

chesstouring.com

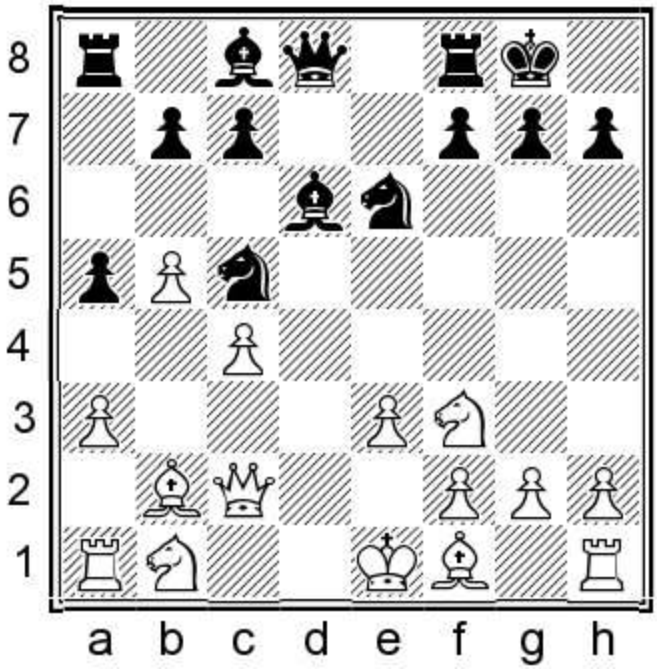


6.b4 ♘e6 7.exd6 ♗xd6 8.♗b2 0-0 9.♘f3

There is nothing special about White's play, but it all ties together well. A good example continued:

9...a5 10.b5 ♘d7 11.e3 ♘dc5

In Holm – Wiander, Vaxjo 2014, White should have continued:

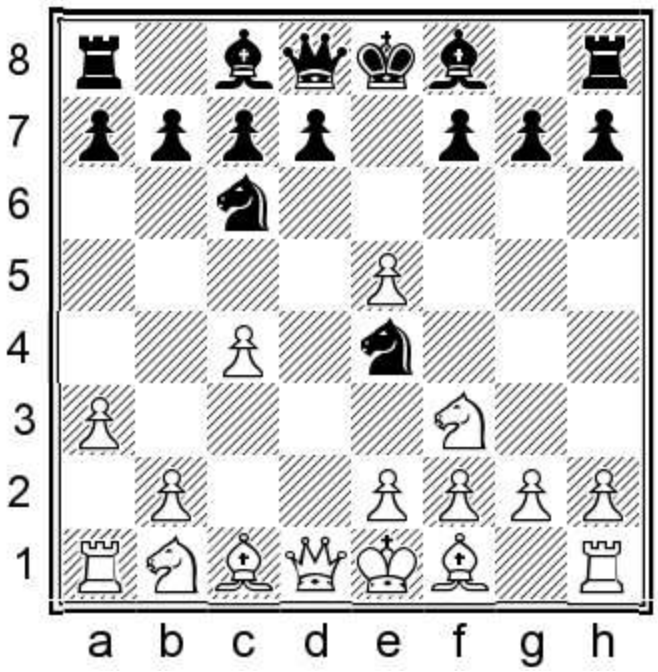


12.♘c3N 12...a4 13.♖d1±

Black has absolutely no compensation for the missing pawn.

B3) 4...♘c6 5.♘f3

chesstouring.com



Protecting the pawn. We have reached another branching point, where Black's most popular options are **B31)** 5...♗c5, **B32)** 5...a5 and **B33)** 5...d6.

B31) 5...♗c5 6.e3

Defending against the threat, while leaving Black's bishop misplaced and in the firing line of the upcoming b2-b4.

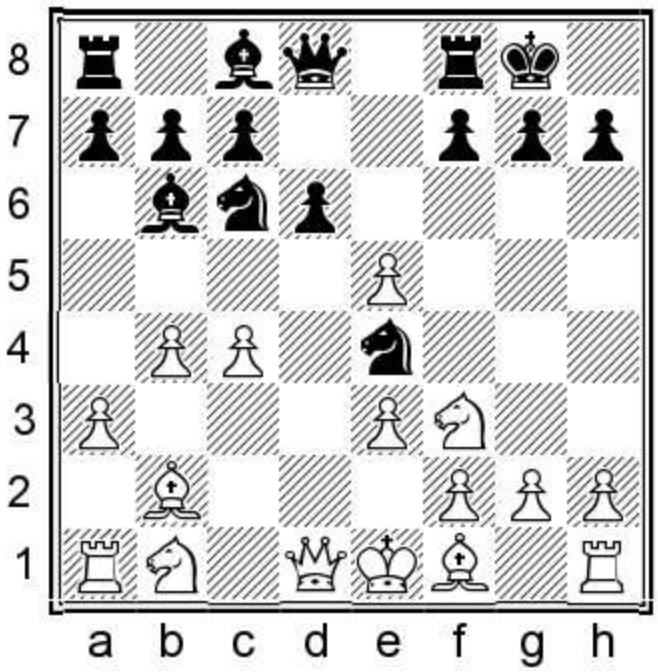
6...♘g5

Other moves are no better, for instance:

6...a5?? loses a piece to 7.♕d5!+–, which has occurred in nine (!) games.

6...d6? gives White several routes to a clear advantage, the most convincing being: 7.b4! ♗b6 8.♗b2 0-0

chesstouring.com



9.♕d5! Attacking the knight with great effect. Black's opening play has effectively been refuted by this stage9...♘g5 10.♘xg5 ♕xg5 11.exd6 ♗xe3 A desperate attempt to change the course of the battle. 12.fxe3 ♕xe3† 13.♗e2 ♗g4 14.♕d2 ♖fe8 15.♘c3+– and Black did not have much for the piece in Surroca Collazo – Lopez Gomez, Cuba 2001.

7.b4 ♘xf3†

Also after 7...♗e7 8.♘xg5 ♗xg5 9.♗b2 0-0 10.♘d2± White was a healthy pawn up in Yarmolyuk – Johansen, corr. 2009.

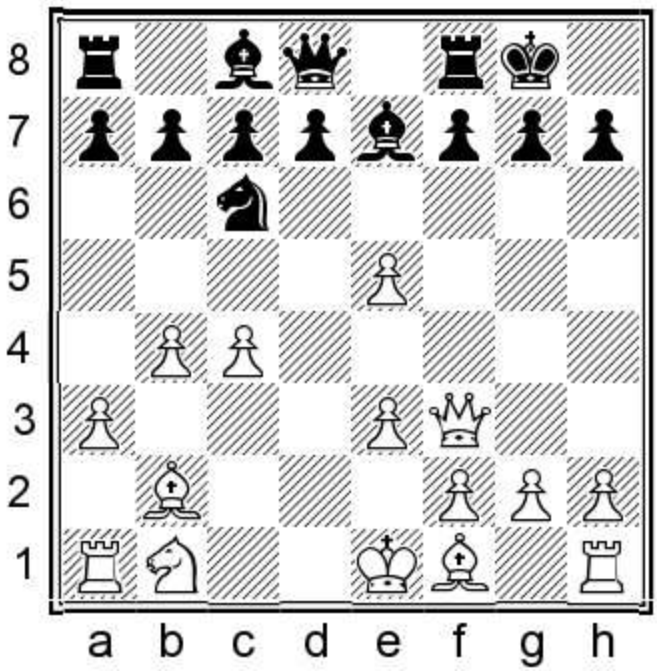
8.♕xf3

8.gxf3!?N 8...♗e7 9.♗b2 is also extremely tempting. For instance, 9...f6 10.f4 fxe5 11.b5! ♘a5 12.♗c3 b6 13.♗g2 with a huge advantage for White.

8...♗e7 9.♗b2 0-0

Here I found an easy improvement over the four existing games:

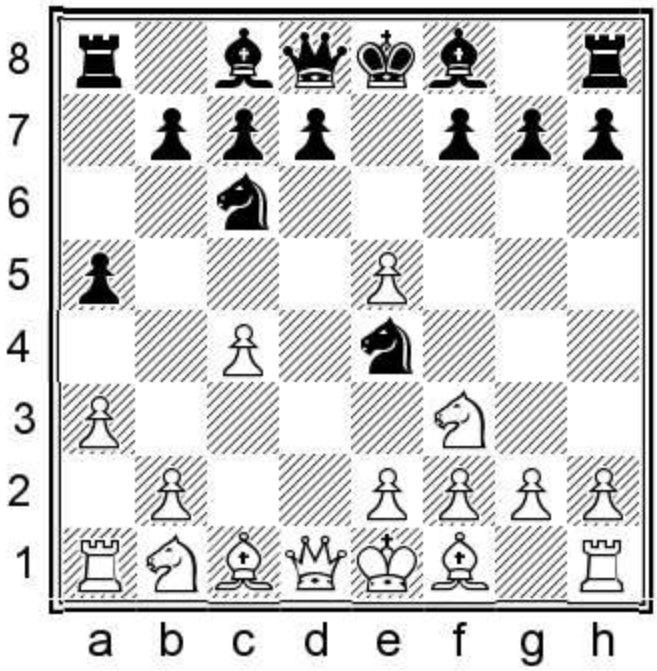
chesstouring.com



10.b5!N 10...♘a5 11.♘d2 d6 12.♖d1±

With a large advantage.

B32) 5...a5



6.♕c2!

White should avoid 6.♕d5? here, as after 6...♘c5!∞ the queen is misplaced and Black's development advantage increases.

The text move is a much better way of attacking the knight, which forces Black to either retreat it or

thesolving.com

commit his pawn to d5.

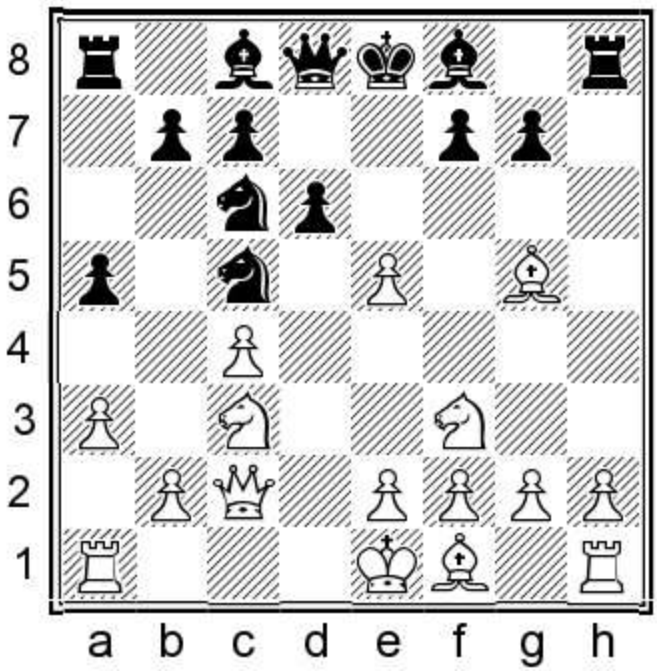
6...d5

Black also struggles after:

6...♘c5 7.♘c3 d6

7...♗e7 8.♗e3 ♘e6 9.♘d5 ♗c5 10.♗xc5 ♘xc5 11.g3 ♘e7 12.♗g2± left Black with no compensation in Harley-Yeo – Mihasi, Rogaska Slatina 2011.

8.♗g5



Developing with tempo, while provoking the following weakening move.

8...f6

8...♗e7 9.♗xe7 ♕xe7 10.♘d5 ♕d8 11.exd6 ♕xd6 12.♖d1 0-0 13.e3± is also no fun for Black.

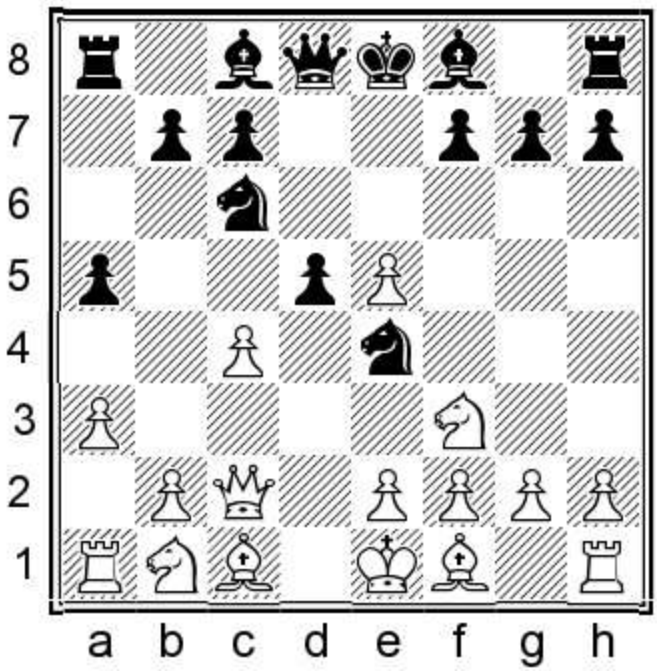
9.exf6 gxf6 10.♗e3!

This move hits the knight and is stronger than retreating to h4.

10...♘d7 11.0-0-0 ♘de5 12.♘d5+–

Straka – Mihasi, Rogaska Slatina 2011.

chesstouring.com



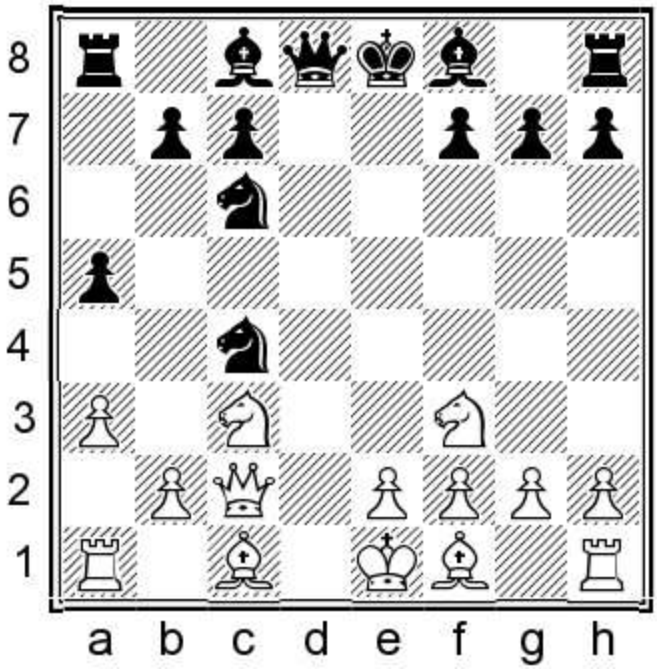
7.exd6 ♗f5

This is Black's most thematic try; now he threatens ...♘g3.

The alternative is:

7...♘xd6 8.♘c3! ♘xc4

Black regained the pawn in Jensen – Augustin, corr. 1988, but his poor coordination could have been punished by means of:



9.♗g5!N 9...f6

9...♗e7 10.♗xe7 ♔xe7 (10...♘xe7 11.♕a4† and 10...♕xe7 11.♘d5 both lose material for Black) 11.e4 ♘b6 12.♖d1 gives White an overwhelming advantage.

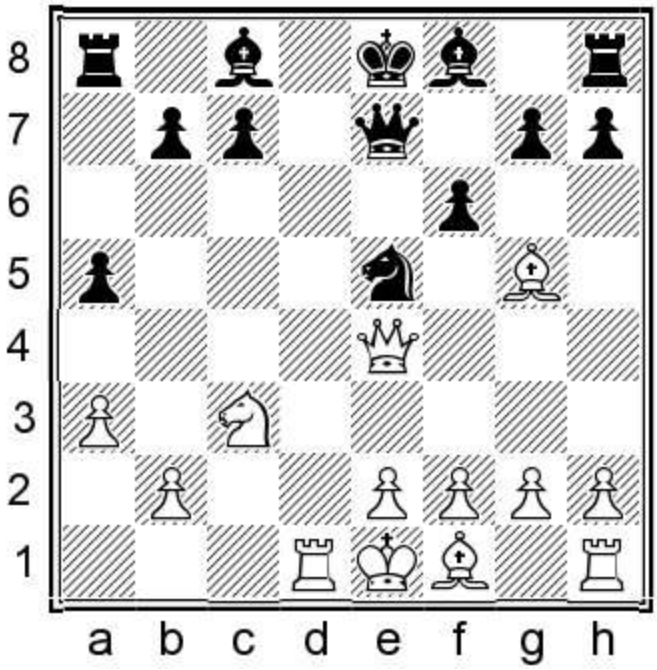
10.♕e4† ♘4e5

chesstouring.com

10...♗e7 11.♗xf6!± wins a pawn.

11.♘xe5 ♘xe5 12.♖d1 ♕e7

12...♗d6 13.f4!+– wins material.

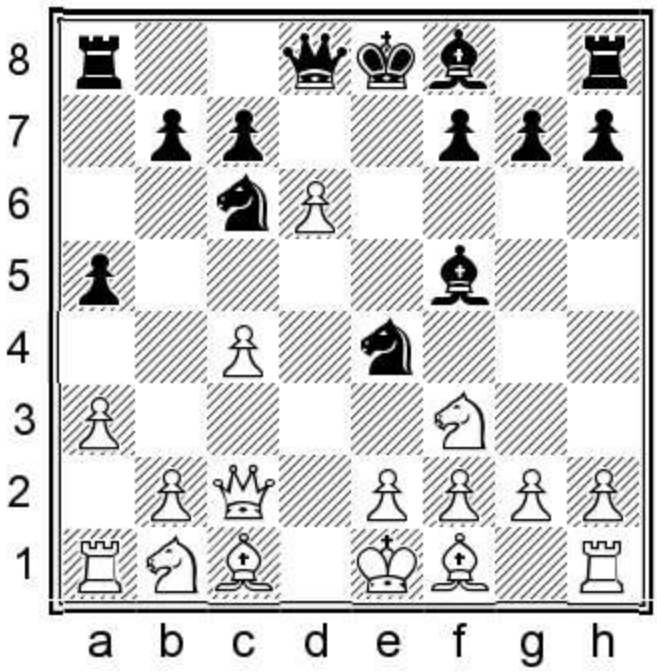


13.♘d5 ♕f7 14.♘xf6†! gxf6 15.♕xe5†!

A nice trick, exploiting the potential mate on d8 to win a pawn.

15...♗e7 16.♕c3±

Returning to our main line, Black is desperately hoping for counterplay, but his opening play can be refuted with a familiar concept.



8.♘c3!

Once again, this is a powerful antidote to the ...♗f5 battery; Black is already in serious trouble.

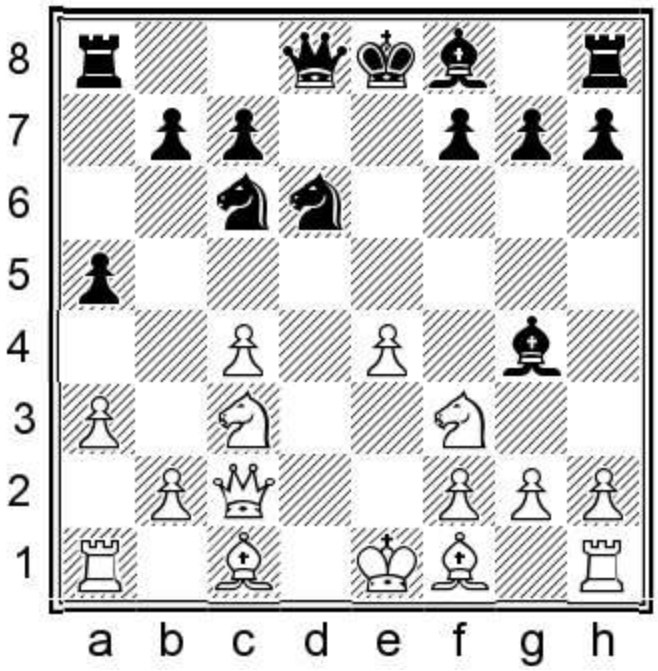
chesstouring.com

8...♘xd6

8...♘g3? 9.e4 ♘xh1 10.dxc7! ♕e7 11.♗e3+– gives White an overwhelming initiative for the sacrificed rook, which is effectively only an exchange, as the h1-knight can soon be captured.

9.e4 ♗g4

After 9...♗g6 10.♗d3 ♗e7 11.c5 ♘c8 12.♘d5+– White was a pawn up with a dominating position in Gebhardt – Rissmann, Schwaebisch Gmuend 1993.



10.c5! ♘c8

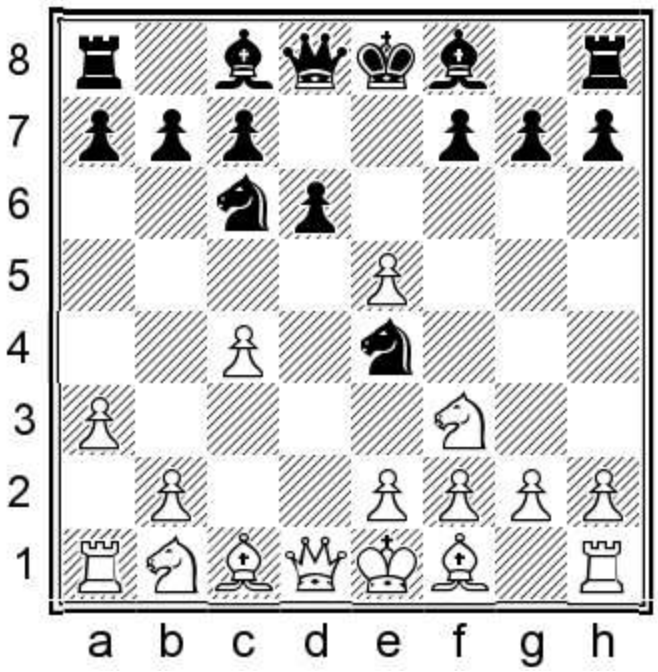
I found two games from this position. A simple improvement is:

11.♗e3N+−

Black's opening has been a total failure.

B33) 5...d6

chesstouring.com



6.♕c2!

Once again, hitting the knight is White's most accurate continuation. Black's three main options are **B331)** 6...♗f5?, **B332)** 6...d5 and **B333)** 6...♘c5.

B331) 6...♗f5?

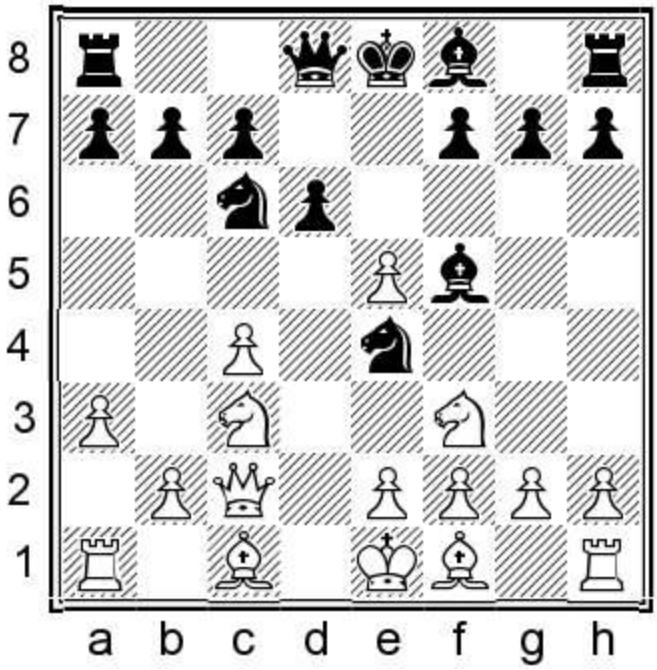
This move runs into the usual refutation.

7.♘c3!

This move should come as no surprise.

Strangely, Kogan overlooks this move in his *SOS* article, only mentioning a game where the inferior 7.♘bd2 was played.

chesstouring.com

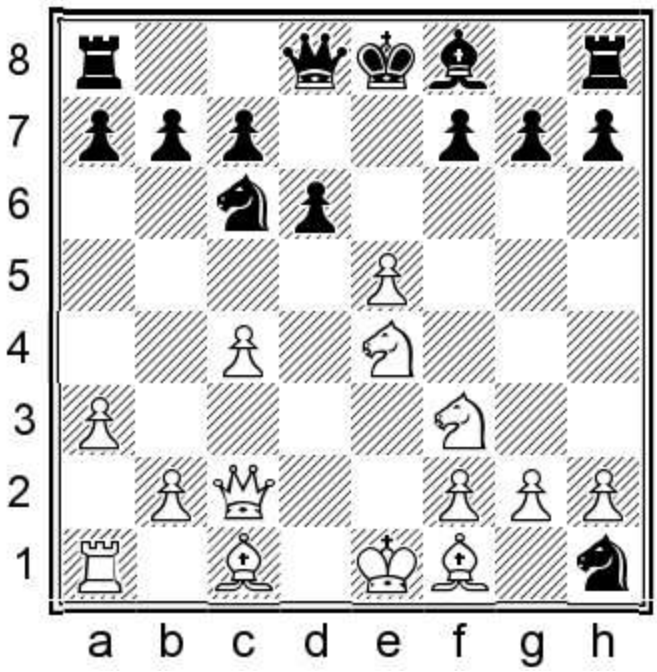


7...♘g3

The alternative is: 7...♘xf2 8.♕xf5 ♘xh1 9.g3! (I recommended 9.e6 in *GM 2*, but I now find the text move even more convincing) 9...♕c8 This was played in the only game, which continued 10.♕xc8† ♖xc8 11.♗h3 ♖d8 12.♘d5 ♗e7 13.e6!? with an overwhelming advantage for White in Marino – Garcia Cortes, corr. 2007.

8.e4 ♘xh1

8...♗xe4 9.♘xe4 ♘xh1 does not help Black after:



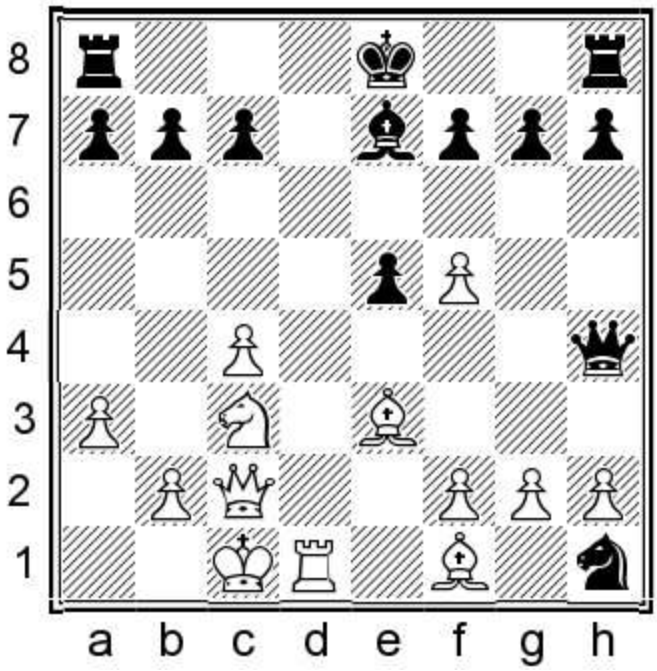
10.♗g5! White is already objectively winning. 10...♗e7 11.♗xe7 ♕xe7 12.exd6 cxd6 13.0-0-0 0-0 14.♗d3 Black's knight is lost and White's material advantage should decide the game, which is what happened in

chesstouring.com

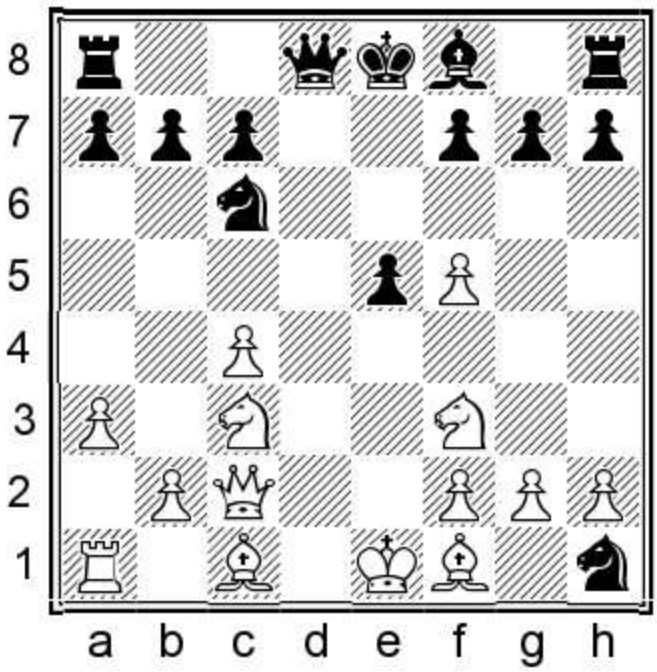
Van Bommel – Boisgard, corr. 2001.

9.exf5 dxe5

9...♘xe5 10.♘xe5 dxe5 does not change much. 11.♗e3 ♕h4 12.0-0-0 ♗e7 occurred in Hamrakulova – Mourut, Oropesa del Mar 2000. White has many possible ways to decide the game, but I like the following tactical solution:



13.♗d3!?N 13...♕xh2 14.♘d5 ♗d8 15.♘xc7†! ♗xc7 16.♕a4† ♔f8 17.♕b4† ♔g8 18.♕xb7 ♖f8 19.♕xc7 With a decisive advantage.



10.♗e3

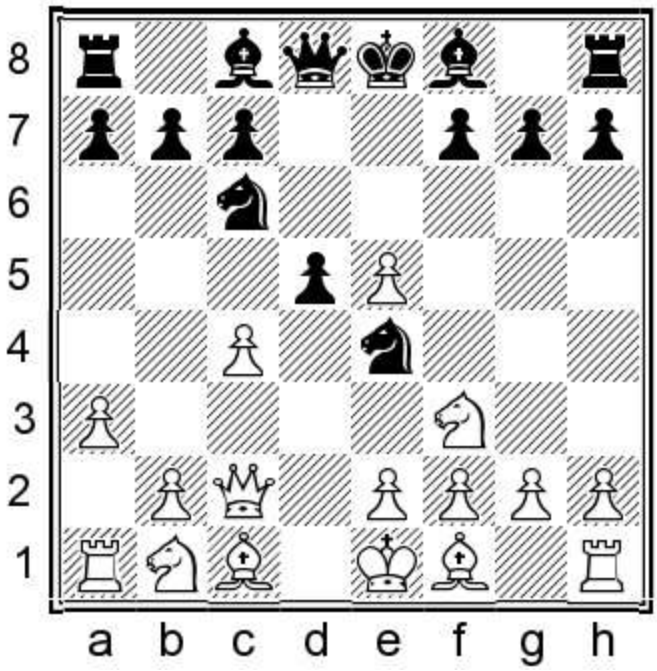
It is clear to me that White's advantage should be enough to decide the game, as the h1-knight is doomed and the two minor pieces should easily outwork a rook in the ensuing middlegame. Here is one

chesstouring.com

illustrative example:

10...♗e7 11.♕e4 0-0 12.♗d3 f6 13.0-0-0 ♘xf2 14.♗xf2+–
White won easily in Montag – Heyer, Germany 1994.

B332) 6...d5



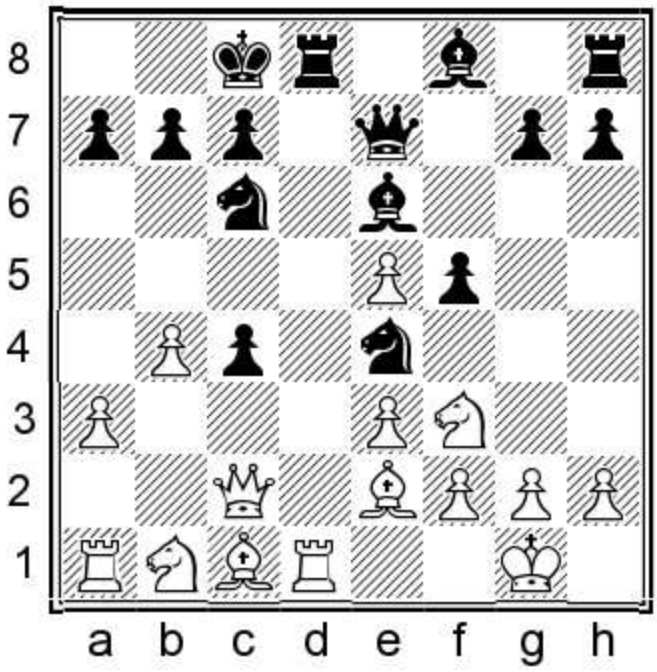
7.e3
White's main goal is to catch up on development and avoid complications.

7...♗g4
7...♗f5 enables White to claim a big advantage with: 8.♗d3 ♗g6 9.♘bd2 The most human approach. 9...♕d7 10.cxd5 ♘xd2 11.♗xd2 ♕xd5 12.e4 ♕c5 13.♗c3 ♗h5 14.b4± White had the more active position as well as an extra pawn in Janosi – Vaassen, corr. 2009.

7...♗e6
This is the most popular alternative; but in thirteen games from this position, Black has yet to avoid defeat!
8.♗e2 ♕e7
8...g5 9.0-0 g4 occurred in Buermann – Enzmann, Germany 2014. After 10.♘d4!N 10...♘xe5 Black regains the pawn but his position is overstretched, and 11.♘d2! ♘xd2 12.♗xd2 leaves him unable to stop White's initiative. For example, 12...dxc4 13.♗c3 ♗d6 14.♘xe6 fxe6 15.♗xe5 ♗xe5 16.♖ad1 ♗d6 17.♕xc4+– and Black's position collapses.
9.0-0 0-0-0 10.♖d1 f5 11.b4!
White easily develops his play on the queenside.
11...dxc4

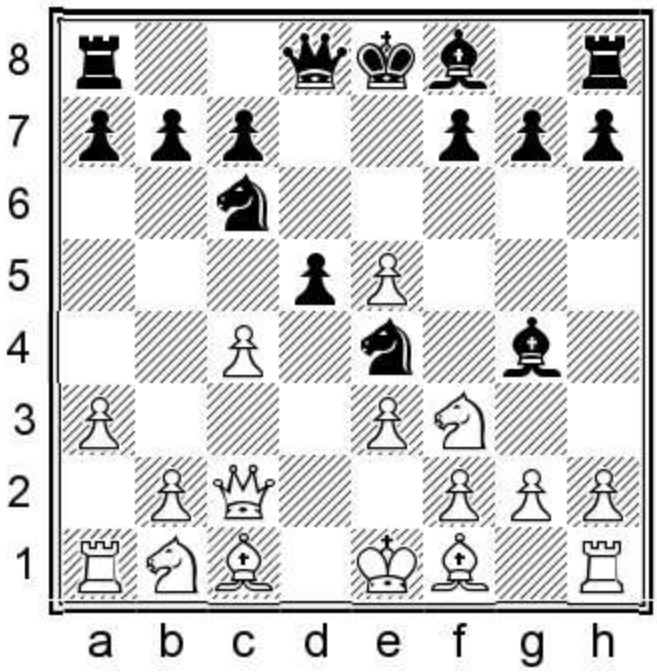
chesstouring.com

This occurred in Yrjola – Hamdouchi, Manila (ol) 1992. White's most accurate continuation would have been:



12.♖xd8†!N 12...♕xd8 13.♗b2 ♗e7 14.♘c3 ♘xc3 15.♗xc3+–

Despite the material balance, Black's position is becoming desperate, since he is unable to prevent b4-b5 with an overwhelming initiative for White.



8.cxd5 ♕xd5 9.♗c4

Developing the bishop with tempo.

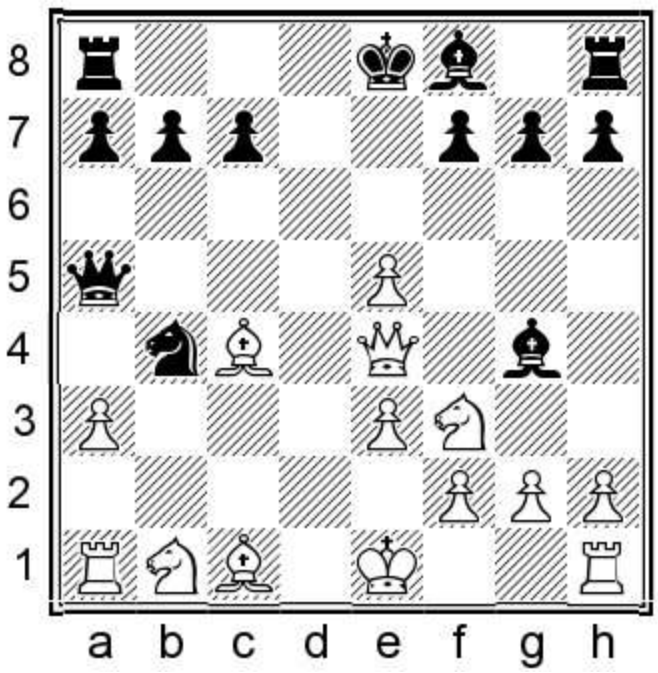
9...♕a5† 10.b4!

A direct refutation of Black's play.

chesstouring.com

10...♗xb4†

Another remarkable line is 10...♘xb4 11.♕xe4! when the prospect of a double check is of no concern to us. For instance:



11...♗xf3 12.gxf3 ♘c2† 13.♔e2 ♘xa1 14.♕xb7 ♖d8 15.♗b5† ♔e7 16.♗d2 ♕b6 17.♗b4† ♔e6 18.♗c4† ♔d7 19.♖d1† Black resigned in Noiroux – Watelet, Charleroi 2011.

11.axb4 ♕xa1 12.♕xe4

Black has tried two moves here, without much success.

12...♗h5

The alternative is 12...♗xf3 13.gxf3 ♕xe5, when 14.b5! ♕xe4 15.fxe4 ♘e5 16.♗e2 0-0-0 17.♖g1 gave White a winning endgame in Ejermo – Russel, corr. 1997.

13.e6!

This should put the result beyond much doubt.

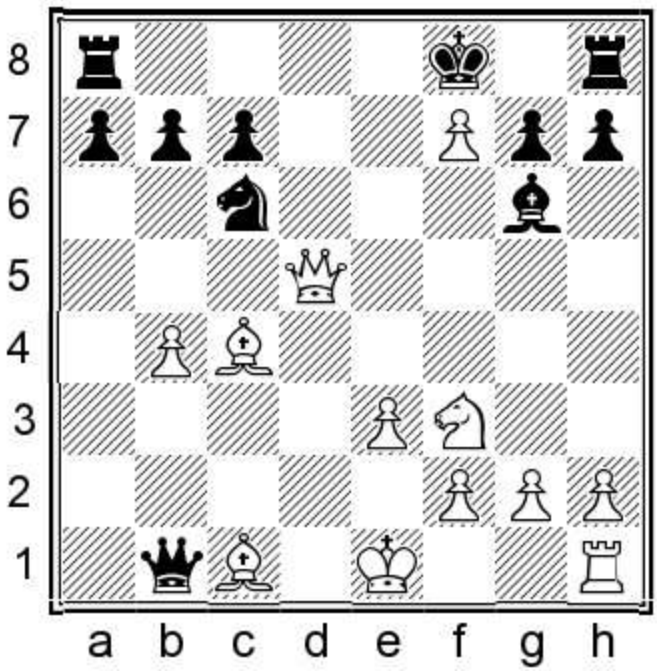
13...♗g6

Black fared no better after 13...0-0-0 14.0-0 ♗g6 15.♕g4 ♕xb1 16.b5 ♗f5 17.♕h4+– in Varonen – Laine, corr. 2010.

14.exf7† ♔f8 15.♕d5! ♕xb1

All this happened in Kristinsson – Meyer, corr. 1988. White's most convincing route to victory is:

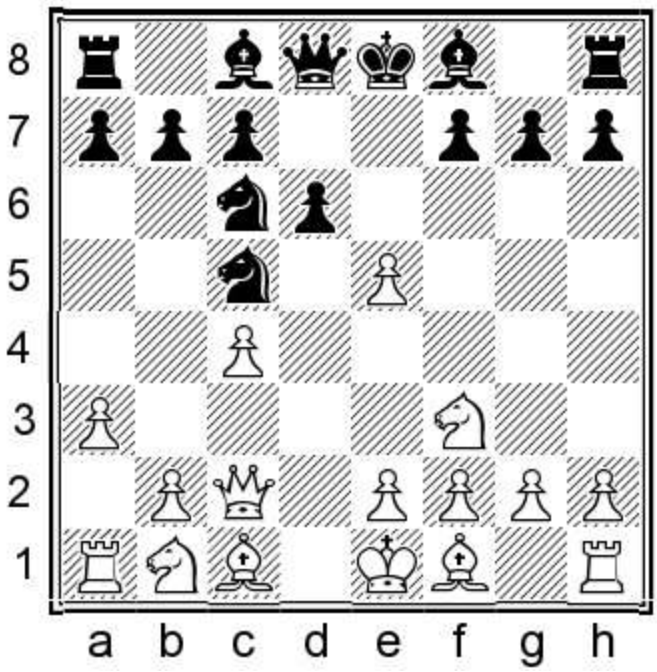
chesstouring.com



16.0-0♘ ♖d8 17.♕c5† ♖d6 18.♗a3 ♕f5 19.♕xf5 ♗xf5 20.b5+–

White wins back the exchange while keeping an overwhelming position.

B333) 6...♘c5



This is Black's best try, although this is mainly because the two previous lines failed for direct tactical reasons, rather than because it's a move he really wants to play. Still, White has to play some good moves to consolidate his extra pawn.

7.b4

Chasing the knight is a good first step.

chesstouring.com

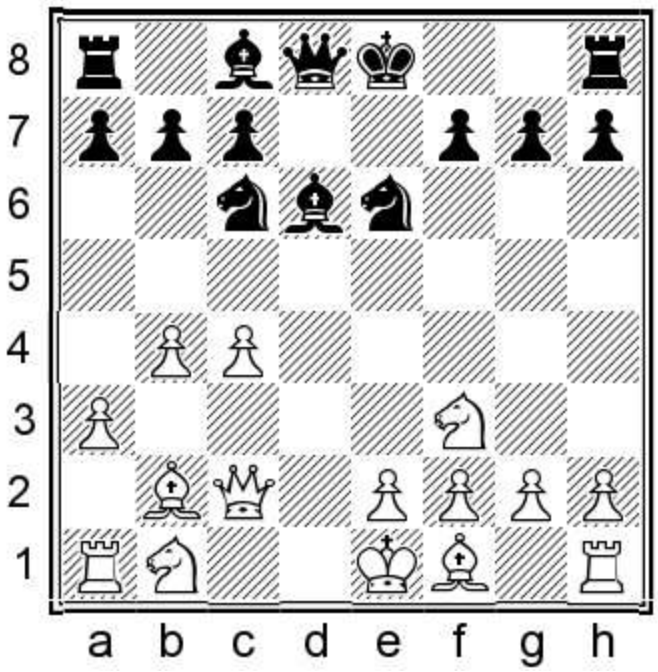
7...♘e6

7...♘d7?! has only been tried once; White easily increased his advantage with 8.exd6 ♗xd6 9.♗b2 0-0 10.e3 f5 11.c5+– in Haik – Choisy, France 2007.

8.exd6!

The most accurate.

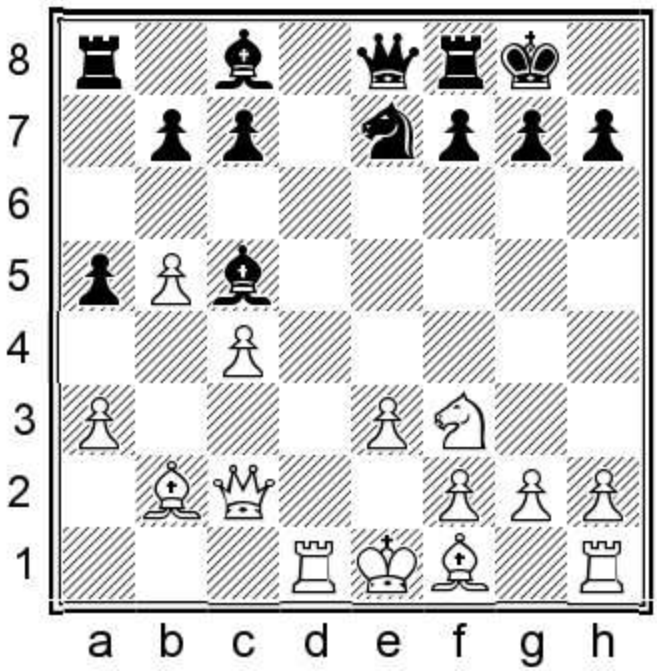
8...♗xd6 9.♗b2



9...0-0

Black has tried 9...a5 10.b5 ♘e7 in a bunch of games, but he failed to achieve any compensation in any of them. The following game looks pretty convincing: 11.♘bd2 0-0 12.♘e4 ♘c5 13.♘xc5 ♗xc5 14.♖d1 ♕e8 15.e3

chesstouring.com



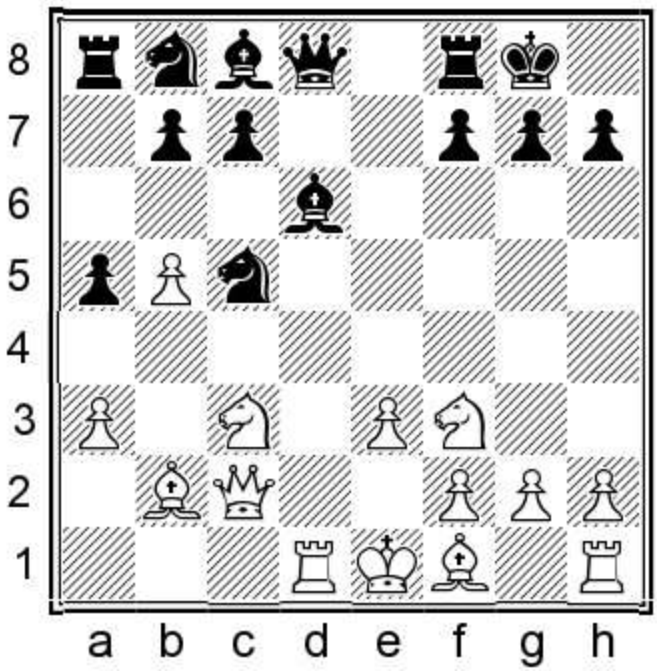
15...f6 16.♗d3 ♕h5 17.♘d4 ♖e8 We have been following Hinterberger – Vestergard, corr. 2005. Here the simple 18.0-0♘+– would have given White a huge advantage.

10.e3 ♖e8

I briefly examined a few other tries:

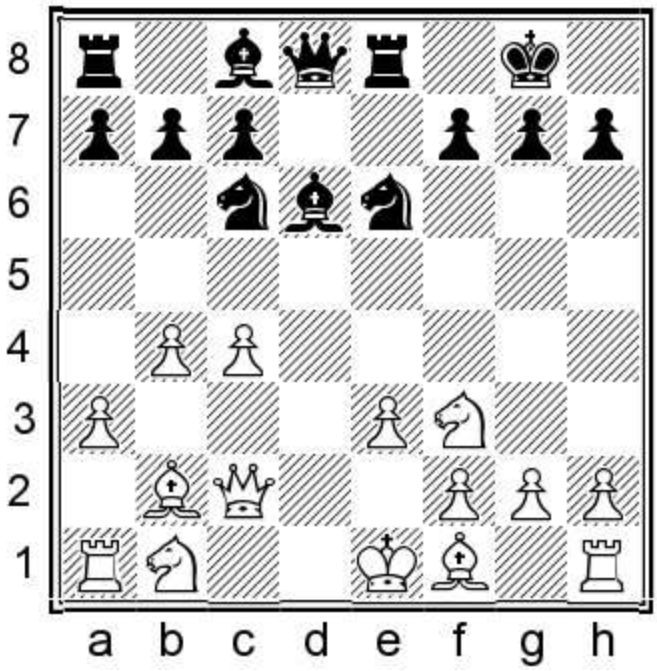
10...b6 11.♗d3 h6 12.0-0 ♗b7 has occurred in three games. The simplest continuation is 13.♗e4!?N when Black has no counterplay for the missing pawn.

In the event of 10...a5 I like the following aggressive approach: 11.c5! ♗e7 12.b5 ♘b8 13.♘c3 ♘xc5 14.♖d1 ♗d6



chesstouring.com

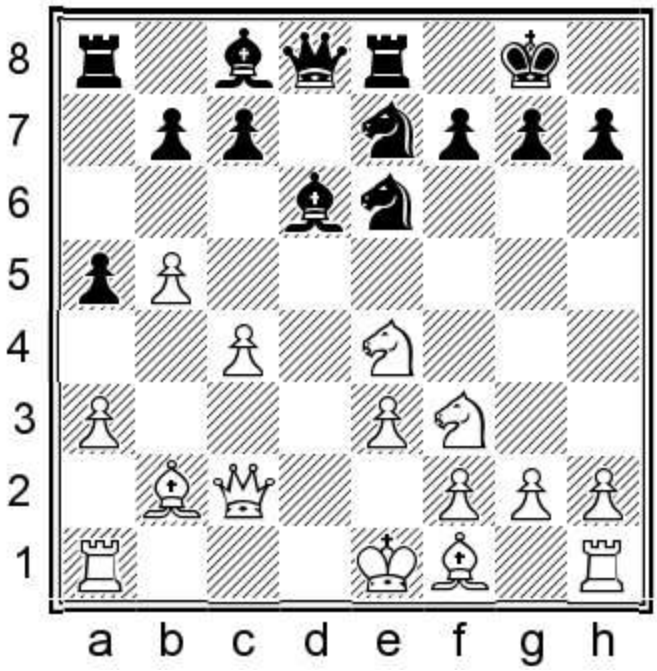
15.h4! White's attack is surprisingly powerful. 15...♕f6 16.♘a4 ♕g6 17.♕xg6 hxg6 18.♘xc5 ♗xc5 19.h5+– Despite the level material and queen exchange, White's initiative was overwhelming in Harikrishna – Ahmedov, Kocaeli 2015.



11.♘bd2

After this natural move, it's obvious that Black has no real compensation for the pawn. One example continued:

11...a5 12.b5 ♘e7 13.♘e4±



White's advantage was already close to decisive in Goebert – Howes, corr. 2004.

chesstouring.com

Conclusion

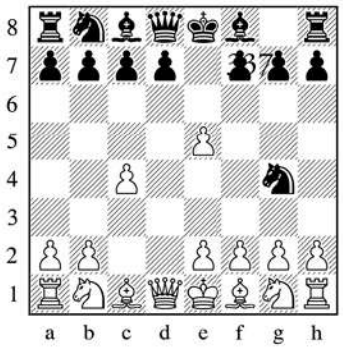
The pseudo-Budapest option of 2...e6 3.g3 e5!? 4.dxe5 ♘g4 is not too bad, but my new idea of 5.e3!?N is an attractive solution which assures White of a good game.

We then looked at the Fajarowicz Variation, 2...e5 3.dxe5 ♘e4, which does not impress me. 4.a3 offers White a clear advantage in all variations, as long as he knows a few key details. Attacking the knight with ♕c2 is a recurring theme; time and time again, we saw that Black's attempts to respond actively with ...♗f5? can be tactically refuted by the powerful reply ♘c3!, leading to a trade of the bishop on f5 for the rook on h1, but with the black knight remaining trapped in the corner.

chesstouring.com



Budapest Gambit



3...♘g4 – Sidelines

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 ♘g4

4.♗f4

A) 4...♗b4† 338

B) 4...g5 5.♗d2! ♘xe5 6.♘f3 339

B1) 6...♗g7 341

B2) 6...♘bc6 342

C) 4...♘c6 5.♘f3 ♗b4† 6.♘bd2 343

C1) 6...f6 344

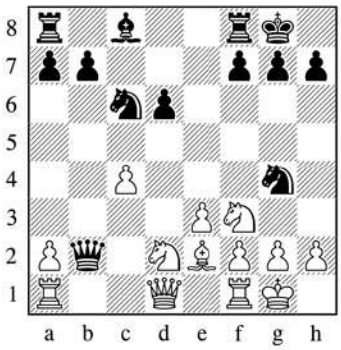
C2) 6...♕e7 7.e3 ♘gxe5 8.♘xe5 ♘xe5 9.♗e2 b6 10.0-0 346

C21) 10...♗xd2 347

C22) 10...♗b7 348

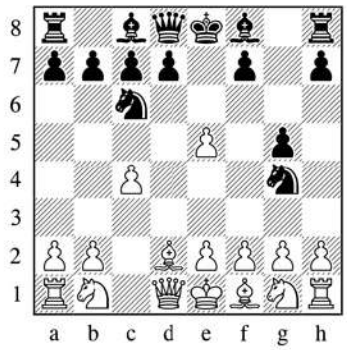
chesstouring.com

A) after 11...♘c6



12.♘e4!N

B) note to 5...♘xe5



6.h4!N

C1) note to 10...0–0



12.♗xe5!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 ♘g4

Compared to the Fajarowicz of the previous chapter, this is the more respectable version of the Budapest, although it has never been especially popular at GM level.

4.♗f4

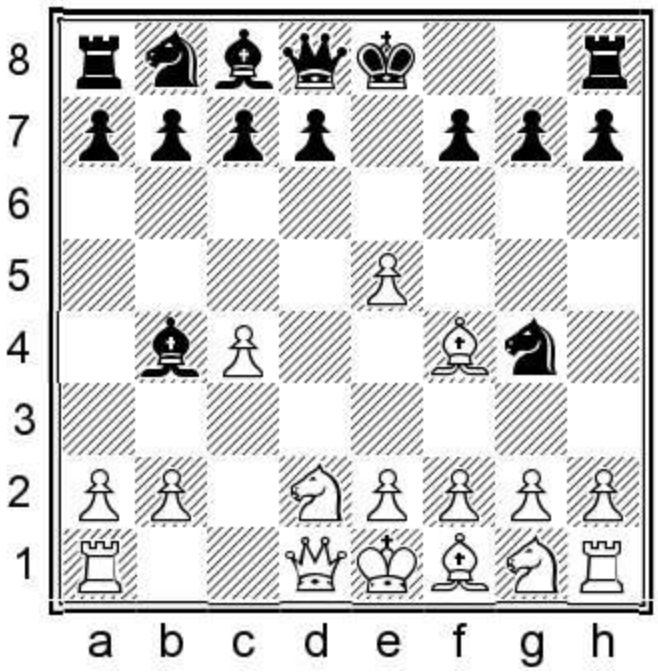
This is a significant change from *GM 2*, where I started with 4.♘f3. The reason is simple: I looked at the 4...g5 line again and discovered a good solution this time!

Black has three options: **A)** 4...♗b4†, **B)** 4...g5 and **C)** 4...♘c6.

A) 4...♗b4† 5.♘d2

This is the natural square for the knight, avoiding any doubling of the queenside pawns. Now 5...♘c6 or 5...♕e7 would quickly transpose to the normal 4...♘c6 lines, so here we will quickly deal with any independent ideas.

chesstouring.com



5...d6

5...f6 was seen in Saborido Carre – W. Heidenfeld, Torremolinos 1961, and several other games. White's simplest response is 6.exf6!N 6...♕xf6 7.e3 ♕xb2 8.♘gf3, when Black has nothing better than 8...♘c6, which transposes to variation C1 on page 344.

6.exd6 ♕f6

This is Black's only challenging idea, attacking both the bishop and the b2-pawn. The best reply is:

7.e3!

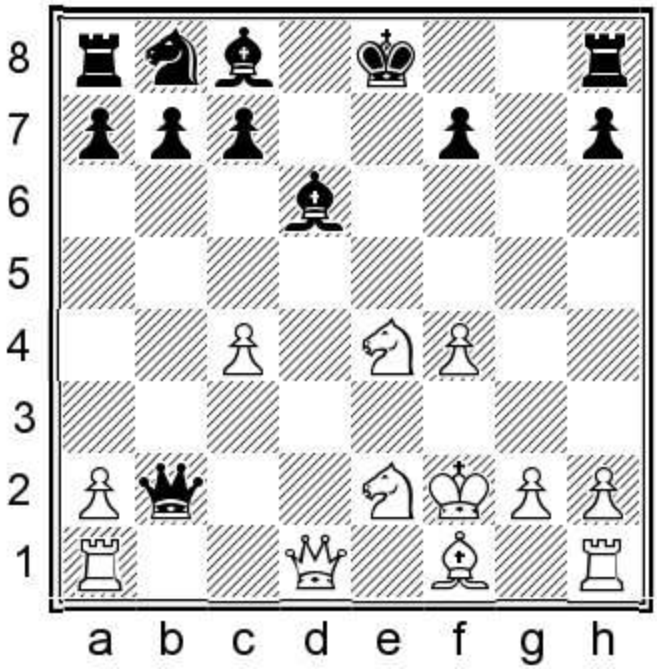
At first I thought 7.♘h3 ♘xf2! 8.♔xf2 ♗xh3 9.g3 might refute Black's play, but things are not so clear after 9...♗f5! (an important resource, which is overlooked by Taylor in his book; Moskalenko finds it in his second edition) intending 10.dxc7 ♘c6⩱ when Black is very much in the game.

7...♕xb2

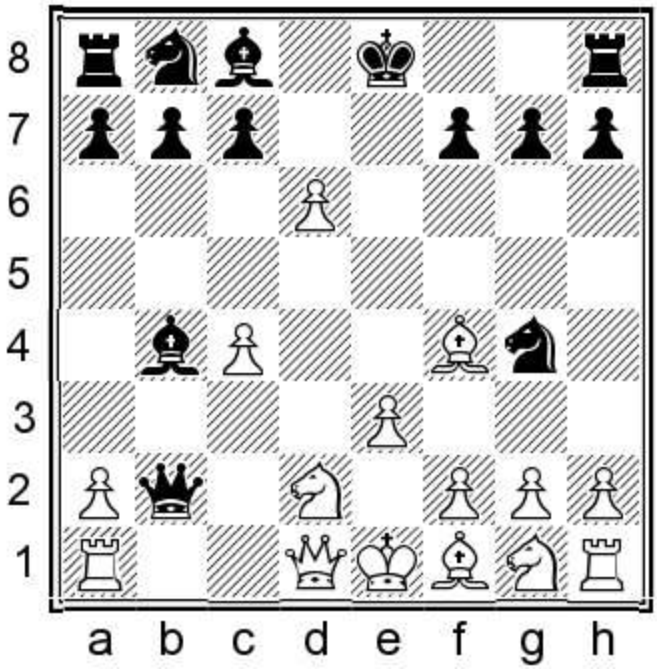
7...g5? 8.♗g3 h5 has been played in a surprising number of games, but the simple 9.dxc7 ♘c6 10.h4+– leaves Black with no compensation for his missing pawns and glaring weaknesses.

7...♘xf2 8.♔xf2 g5 is slightly more interesting, but after 9.♘e4! ♕xb2† 10.♘e2 gxf4 11.exf4 ♗xd6 White has the luxury of choosing between two excellent continuations:

chesstouring.com



12.♘xd6† (White can also go on the attack with 12.♖b1N 12...♕xa2 13.♕d4 ♖g8 14.♖a1 ♕b3 15.♘2c3 ♘c6 16.♕e3 ♔f8 17.♗e2, with a serious initiative) 12...cxd6 13.♕d4± The forced queen exchange gave White a clearly better endgame in Makarov – Twardowski, Koszalin 1998.



8.♘gf3 ♗xd6

I checked two other moves:

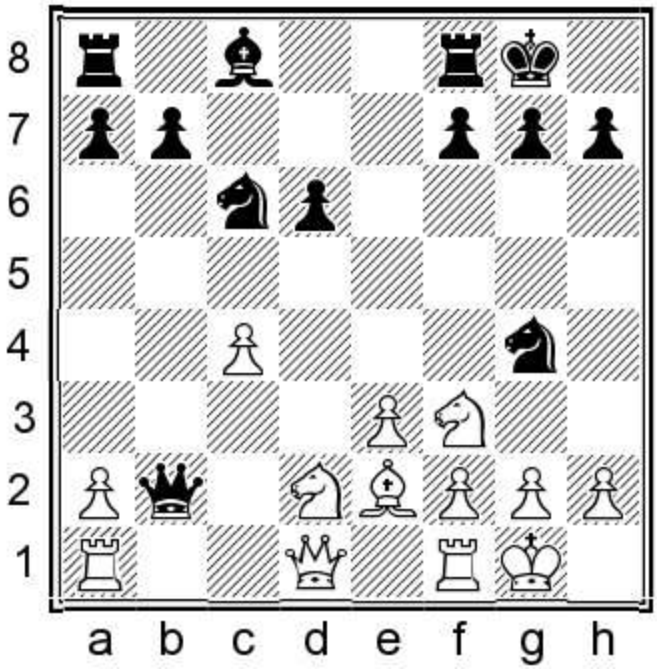
8...♗f5?! invites 9.dxc7! ♘c6 10.♗e2 ♗c2 11.♕c1 ♗a3 12.0-0 ♕xc1 13.♖axc1 ♗xc1 14.♖xc1 ♗f5 15.c5+– when White had an overwhelming advantage in Schulte – Vollmer, Stuttgart 2003.

8...cxd6 9.♖b1 ♕a3 10.♗e2 ♘c6 11.0-0 0-0 12.♘d4± and once again Black had lost the opening battle in Cmilyte – Kudzma, Vilnius 2009.

chesstouring.com

9.♗xd6 cxd6 10.♗e2 0-0 11.0-0 ♘c6

In Balazs – Fodor, Paks 2008, White could have obtained a clear advantage with:

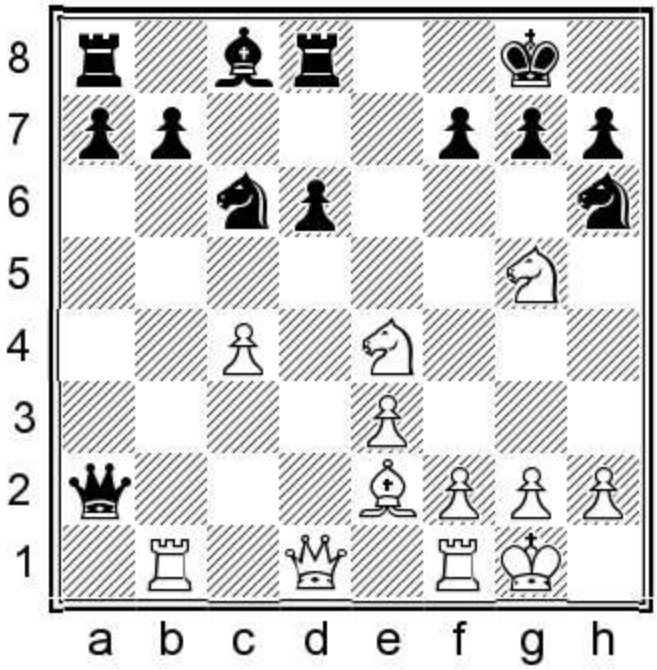


12.♘e4!N

A nice illustrative line is:

12...♖d8 13.♖b1 ♕xa2 14.♘fg5! ♘h6

14...♘ge5 runs into 15.f4! ♘g6 16.♘xf7 with a decisive attack.

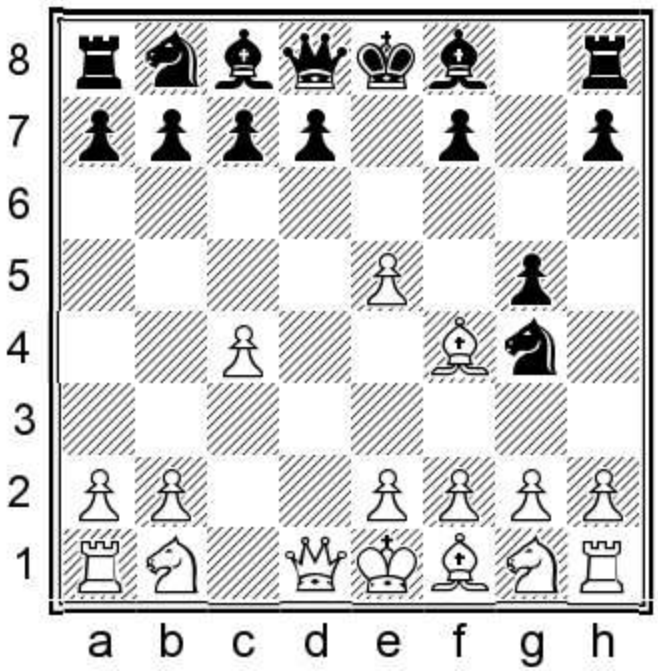


15.♘c3 ♕a5 16.♘d5±

With a powerful initiative for White.

chesstouring.com

B) 4...g5



In *GM 2*, I mentioned this move as a reason to avoid 4.♗f4 in favour of 4.♘f3. However, I am now ready with a powerful antidote.

5.♗d2!

5.♗g3 is much more popular. White can try for an advantage with that move as well, but matters may become quite complicated. The text move is both easier to learn and objectively stronger, in my opinion. Taylor remarks that Black equalizes with ease and has chances for an advantage against this move, but he seriously overestimates Black's chances.

5...♘xe5

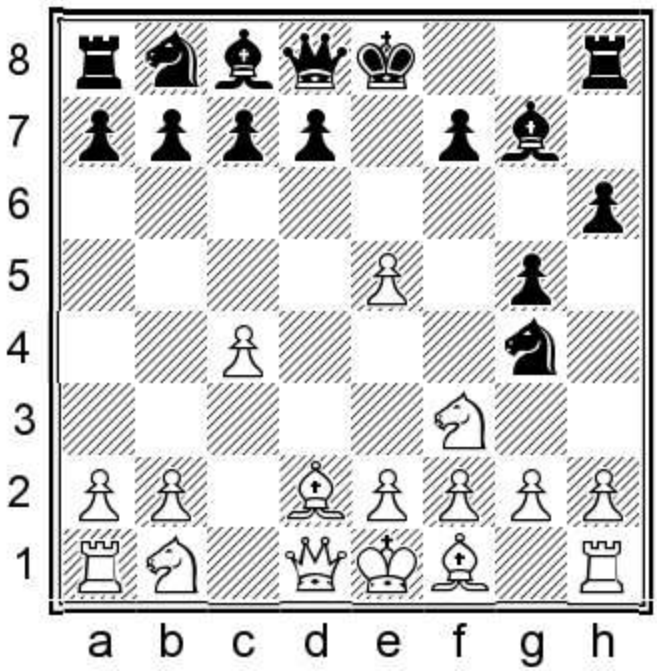
Recapturing the pawn is the obvious choice. Occasionally Black tries one of the following alternatives:

5...♗g7 6.♘f3 h6

6...♘xe5 transposes to variation B1 below.

This position has been played ten times in practice. Strangely enough, no one has tried the following natural move:

chesstouring.com

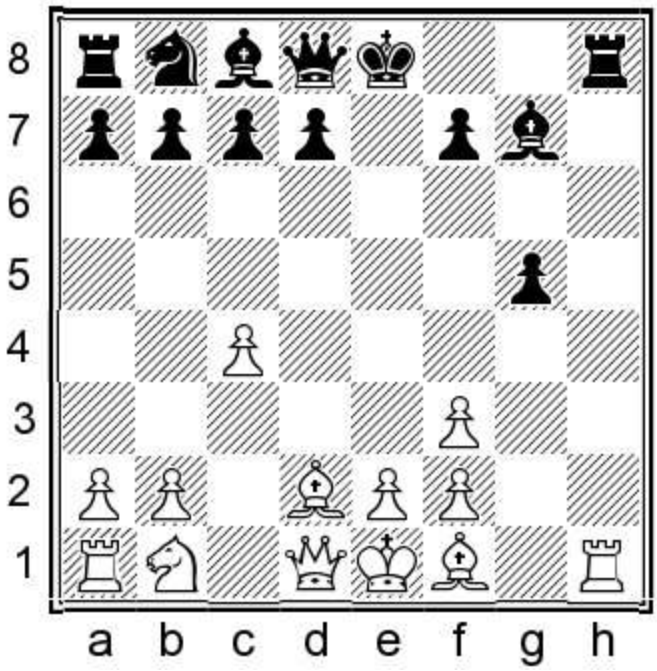


7.h4N!

White should always be on the lookout for this move against the ...g5 set-up, especially when the knight is still on g4, preventing Black from keeping the kingside closed with ...g4.

7...♘xe5 8.hxg5 ♘xf3† 9.gxf3 hxg5

9...♗xb2? is not possible in view of 10.♘c3 ♗xa1 11.♕xa1 when Black's position is a total disaster.

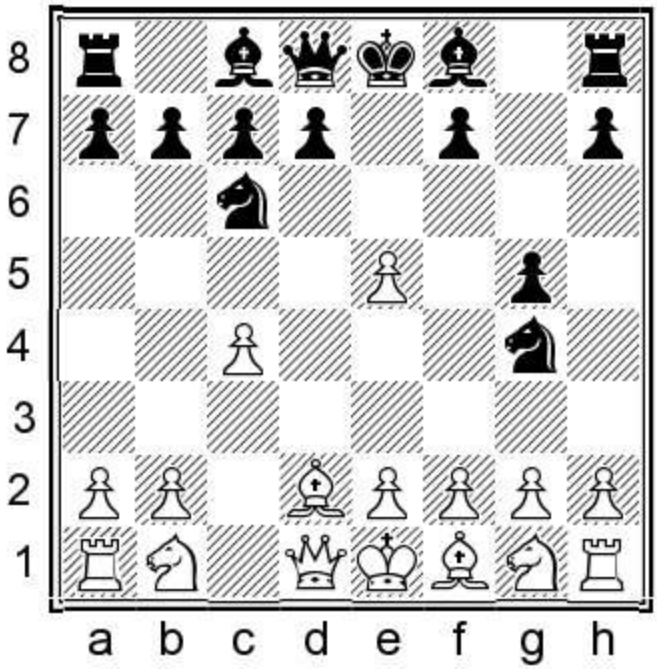


10.♖xh8† ♗xh8 11.♘c3 d6 12.♕c2 ♗e6 13.♘e4±

White's advantage is quite obvious.

5...♘c6

chesstouring.com



6.h4!N

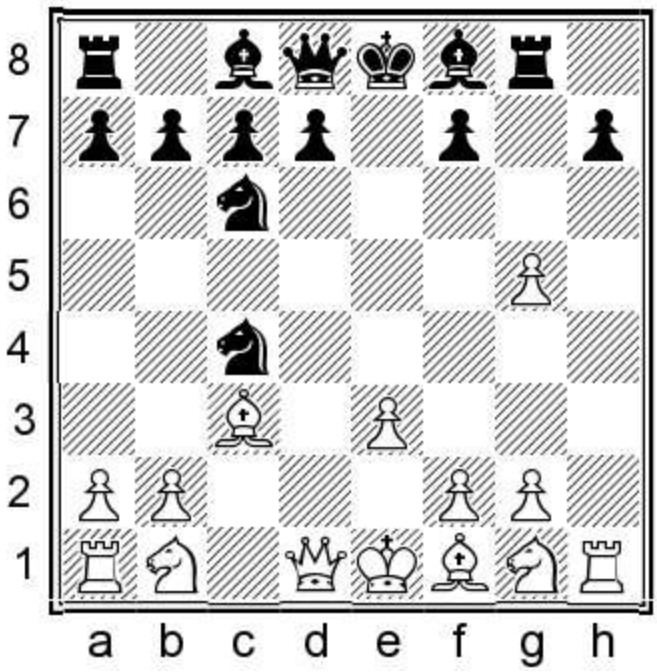
Striking at the weakened kingside is natural, so it is strange that no one has played this move.

6...♘gxe5

White also gets a great game after 6...gxh4 7.♘f3 ♘gxe5 (7...♗g7?! 8.♗g5! f6 9.exf6 ♗xf6 10.♗xh4± with a healthy extra pawn) 8.♘xe5 ♘xe5 9.♗c3 ♕f6 (9...♗g7? is not possible in view of 10.f4, winning a piece) 10.e3 with a clear advantage, as it's not clear how Black is going to deal with the threat of f2-f4.

7.hxg5 ♘xc4 8.♗c3 ♖g8 9.e3

Black's kingside weaknesses spell trouble, for instance:

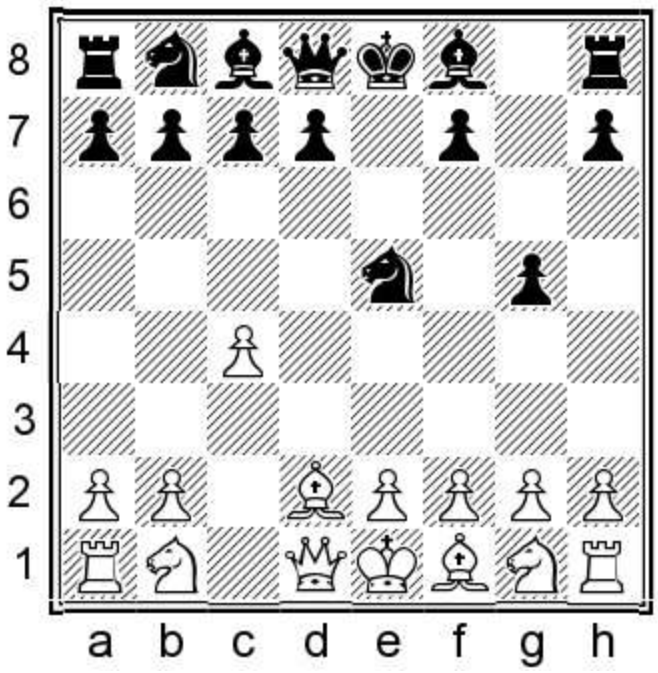


9...d5

9...♘b6 10.♘f3 d5 11.♘bd2 ♗f5 12.♗b5 also offers White a comfortable advantage.

touring.com

10.♗xc4 dxc4 11.♕xd8† ♘xd8 12.♘d2±



6.♘f3

Black has two main options: **B1)** 6...♗g7 and **B2)** 6...♘bc6.

It is too risky for Black to play:

6...♘xf3† 7.gxf3!?

White is spoiled for choice, as 7.exf3 also yields a clear advantage, but opening the g-file is too tempting.

7...♗g7

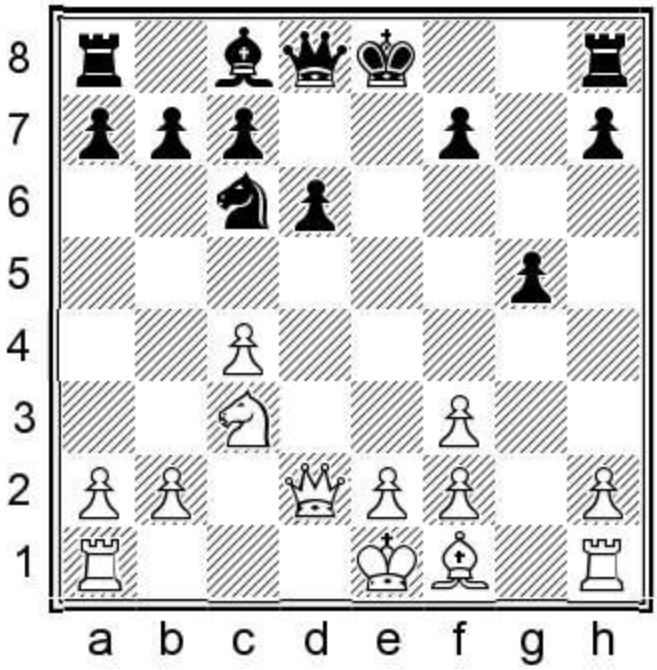
7...♘c6 occurred in Janosi – Sabjan, corr. 1980, when the simple 8.♘c3N 8...d6 9.♘d5 ♗g7 10.♕c1 h6 11.h4± would have been excellent for White.

8.♗c3

White has a few attractive options but I find the text move the most convincing of them.

8...♗xc3† 9.♘xc3 ♘c6 10.♕d2 d6

chesstouring.com



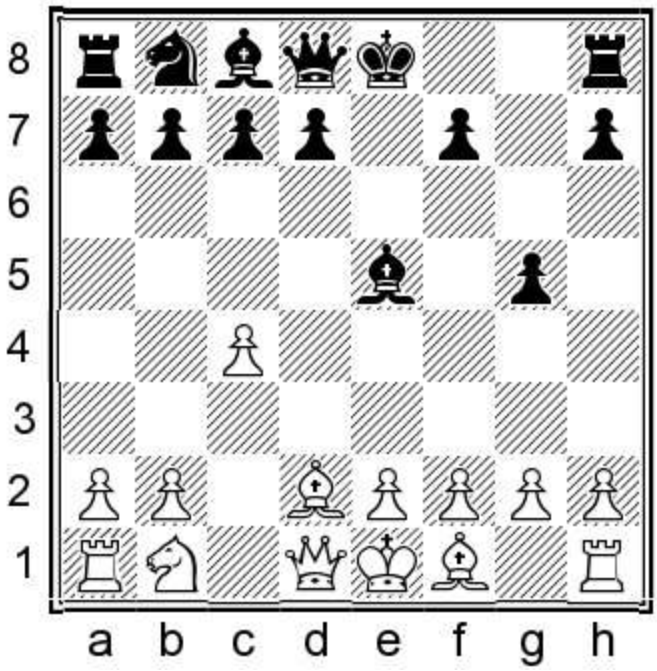
11.h4!?N

11.f4 f6?! 12.♘d5 ♗e6 13.0-0-0 gave White a large advantage in Prusikin – Eichner, Dortmund 1997, but Black's 11th move was rather cooperative. The text move looks even stronger for White.

11...gxh4 12.♕h6±

Followed by ♖xh4, with an obvious advantage.

B1) 6...♗g7 7.♘xe5 ♗xe5



8.♘c3!

Taylor only considers the more popular 8.♗c3, when 8...♘c6 is not too bad for Black. The text move is simpler and more powerful though. Now we can start to see the advantage of retreating the bishop to d2

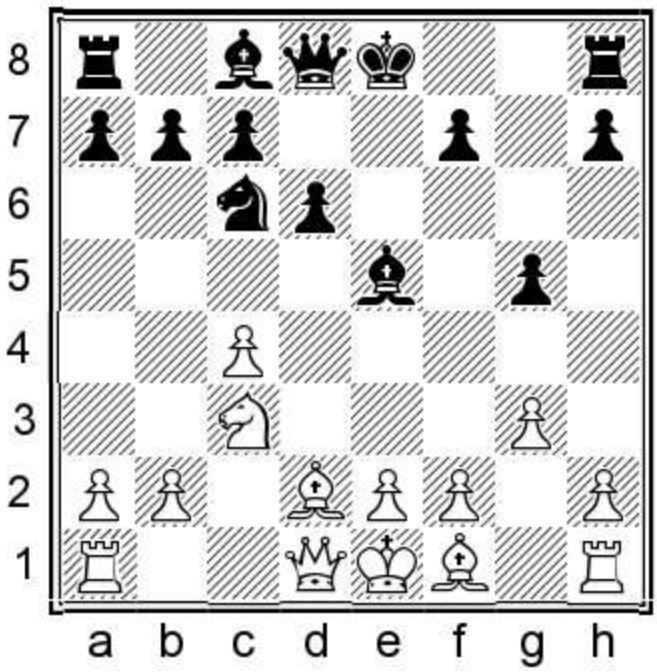
instead of g3 on move 5: instead of finding itself blocked by an enemy pawn on d6 or piece on e5, it eyes the loose g5-pawn and adds force to White's attacking ideas.

8...d6

8...♘c6 can be met by the natural 9.g3N when 9...d6 transposes to the main line.

9.g3 ♘c6

9...♗e6 10.♗g2 ♘d7?! (10...♘c6 transposes to the main line below) is mentioned by Moskalenko as "interesting" but 11.♕c1! leaves Black unable to defend the two loose pawns on b7 and g5 simultaneously.



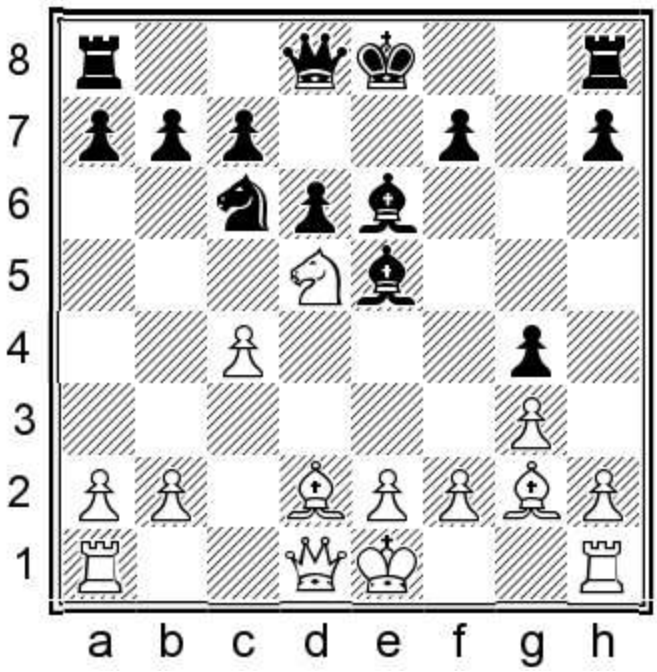
10.♗g2 ♗e6

Another game continued 10...0-0 11.♕c1 g4 12.h3 gxh3 13.♗xh3 ♗xh3 14.♖xh3 ♕d7 15.♖h5 ♖ae8 16.♕c2 f5 17.0-0-0 when White had excellent attacking prospects along the open h-file in Biel – Vasquez Nigro, corr. 2011.

11.♘d5 g4

In Dreev – Zwardon, Warsaw (rapid) 2013, White should have continued:

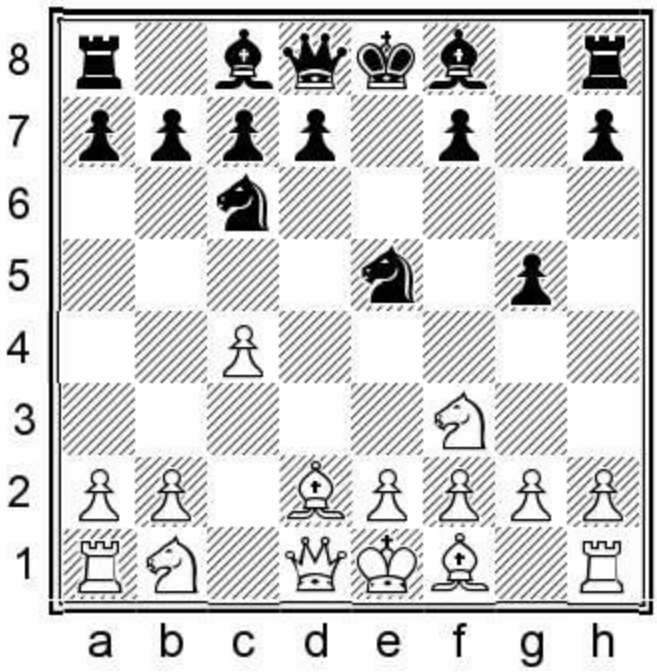
chesstouring.com



12.♗f4N 12...h5 13.♕d2

With a clear positional advantage.

B2) 6...♘bc6



With this move Black avoids having his bishop lured to an exposed central square, but his positional weaknesses remain.

7.♘c3 d6 8.♕c2

With the simple plan of long castling. Black, on the other hand, will find it much harder to find a safe spot for his king.

chesstouring.com

8...♗g7

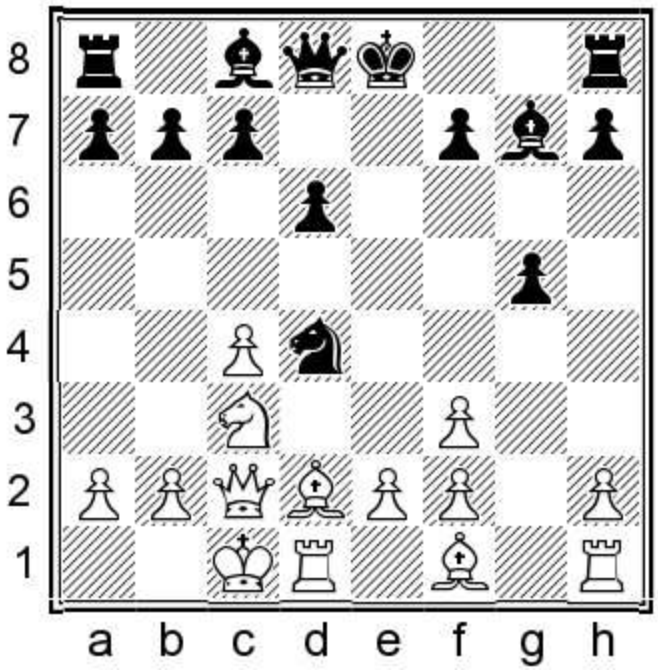
8...♗e6 occurred in Sage – Fister, corr. 2010, when 9.0-0-0!N would have been strong. For instance, 9...g4 10.♘xe5 ♘xe5 11.e3 ♗g7 12.♘d5± and Black is clearly under pressure.

9.0-0-0 h6

Black has tried two other moves:

9...g4 10.♘xe5 ♗xe5 11.h3! gxh3 12.f4± and White obtained a serious initiative in Damnjanovic – Szenczy, corr. 2008.

9...♘xf3 10.gxf3 ♘d4 occurred in Wharam – Fels, corr. 2007. White checked on e4 and eventually won, but I prefer:

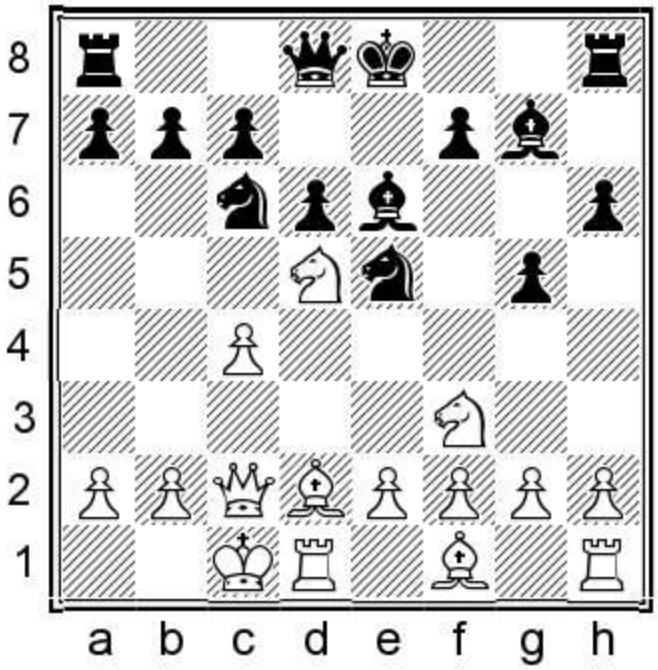


11.♕d3!N Play may continue 11...♗f5 12.e4 ♗g6 13.♖g1 h6 14.h4± and Black has obvious problems on the kingside.

10.♘d5 ♗e6

We have been following Kulczycki – Fels, corr. 2008. Moskalenko quotes the game continuation and calls it unclear, but White can improve by striking on the kingside with:

chesstouring.com



11.h4!N 11...g4

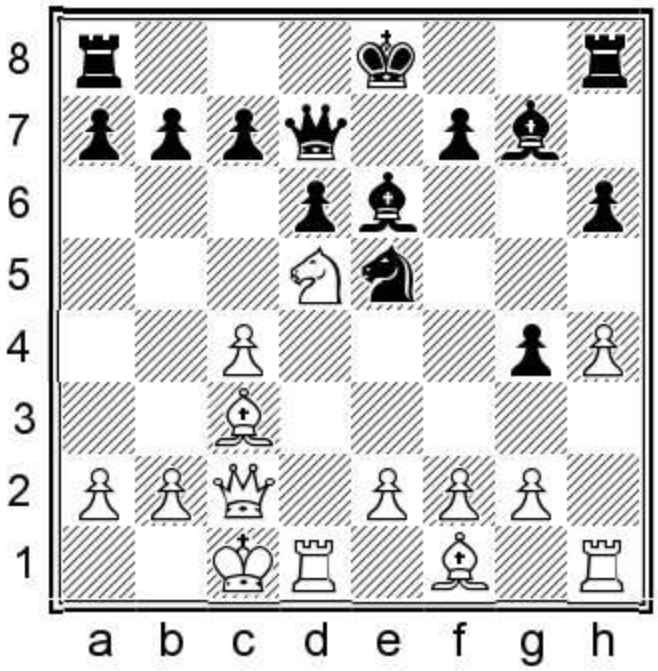
An important line is 11...♘g4 12.hxg5! ♘xf2 13.gxh6 ♗f6 14.♖h5 ♘xd1 15.♕xd1 and White has more than enough compensation for the exchange.

12.♘xe5 ♘xe5

Also after 12...♗xe5 13.♗c3 0-0 14.e4± White's advantage is obvious.

13.♗c3 ♕d7

If 13...0-0 14.e4± White is significantly better.

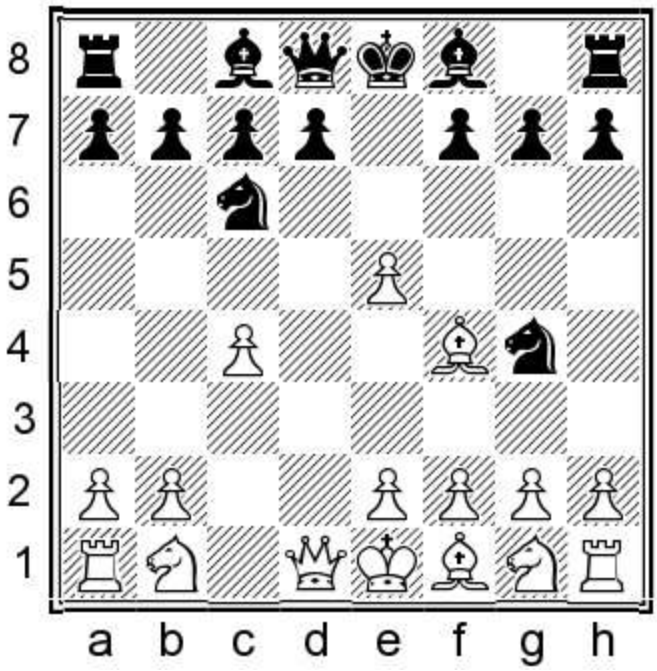


14.f4! gxf3 15.gxf3 ♖g8 16.c5±

chesstouring.com

White is dominating.

C) 4...♘c6

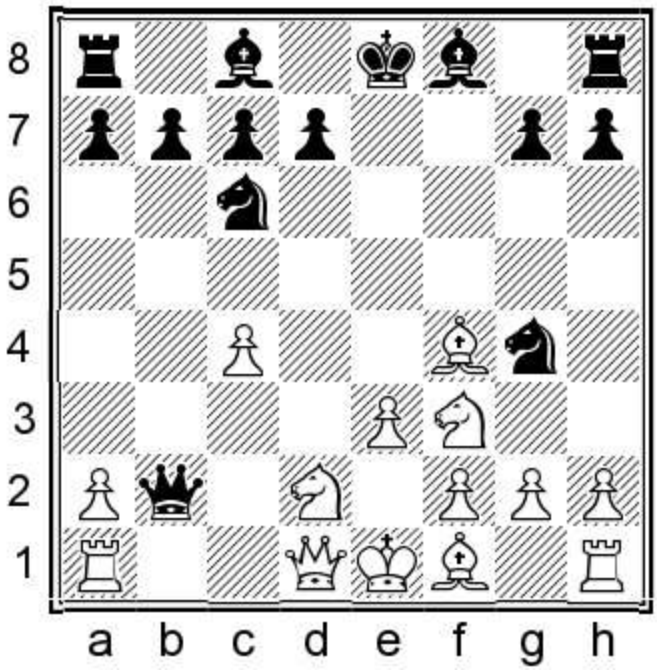


This is Black's most popular and reliable choice.

5.♘f3 ♗b4†

Black does not really have any serious alternatives. Here are a couple of minor options:

5...f6 6.exf6 ♕xf6 7.e3 (this is the simplest move for our purposes, although 7.♕d2 is also good for White) 7...♕xb2 8.♘bd2

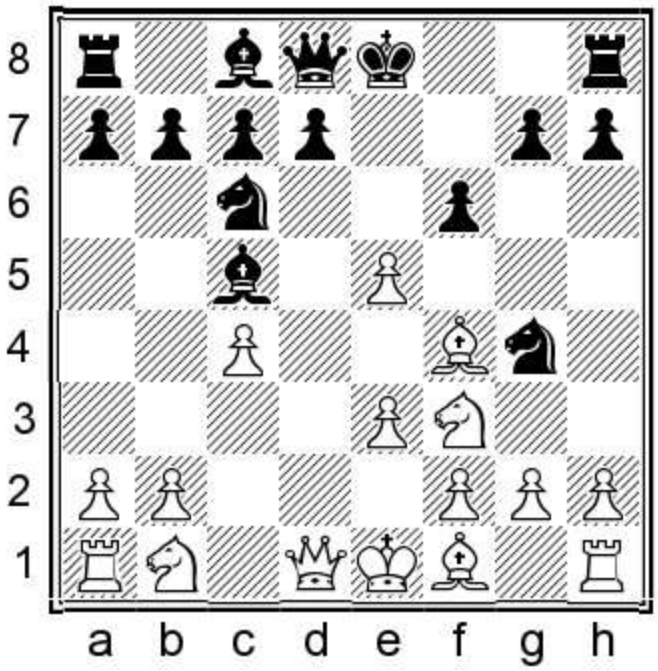


chesstouring.com

The only game from here continued 8...♗b4, which transposes to variation C1 below. Other moves are possible but White is clearly better regardless, so no further analysis is needed.

5...♗c5 6.e3 f6

6...♕e7 7.♘c3 ♘gxe5 8.♘xe5 ♘xe5 9.♘d5 ♗b4† allows an easy refutation: 10.♔e2! ♕d6 11.♘xb4+– Wimmer – Bau, corr. 2010.



7.♘c3!

7.exf6 ♕xf6 8.♕d2 should also yield a clear advantage but the text move is even more convincing.

7...♗b4

The tactical point of White's last move was revealed after 7...♘gxe5 8.♘xe5 fxe5 9.♗xe5! in Ortega Ruiz – Dougan Maho, Madrid 2014, with the bishop indirectly defended by the check on h5.

8.exf6 ♕xf6 9.♖c1

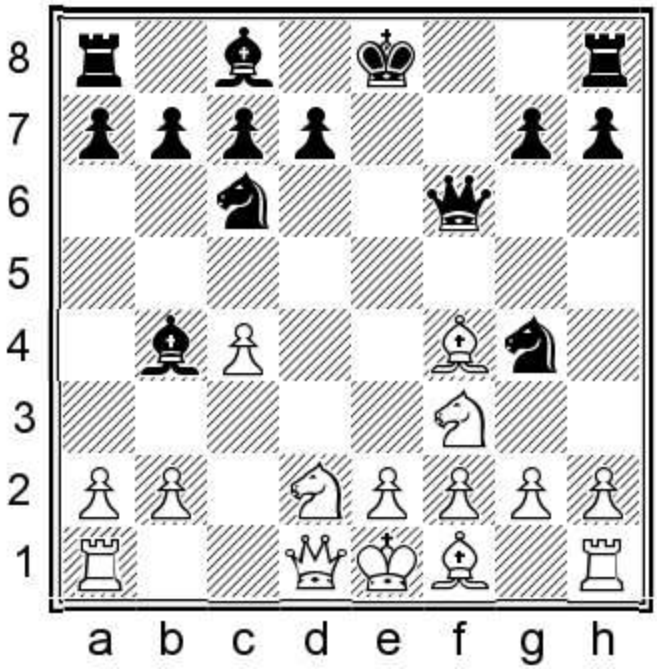
Black had no compensation whatsoever in Krueger – Franck, Germany 1995.

6.♘bd2

Now **C1)** 6...f6 is the only alternative which deserves to be mentioned, before we come to the main line of **C2)** 6...♕e7.

C1) 6...f6 7.exf6 ♕xf6

chesstouring.com



8.e3!

8.g3 is also promising but the text move is best.

8...♕xb2 9.♗e2

White will easily mobilize his forces, whereas Black's development is problematic and his queen is obviously misplaced.

9...d6

After 9...0-0 10.0-0 Black has nothing better than transposing to the main line with 10...d6.

10.0-0 0-0

Occasionally Black has tried:

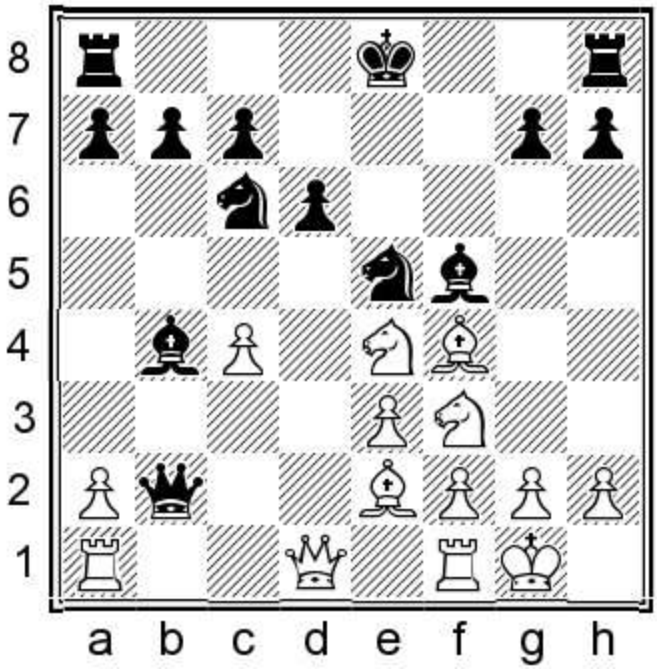
10...♘ge5 11.♘e4

In *GM 2* I recommended 11.c5!?N but later realized that the text move is even more convincing when followed up correctly.

11...♗f5

Jenkinson – Dickl, corr. 2000. A nice improvement is:

chesstouring.com

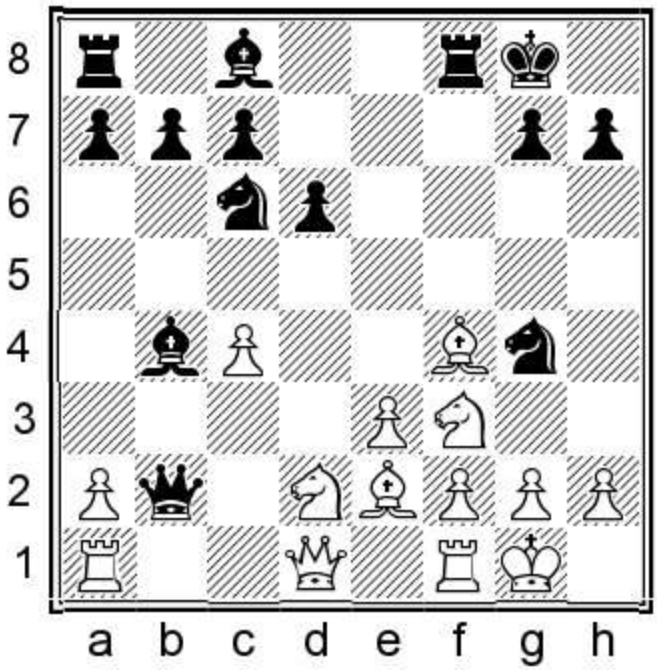


12.♗xe5!N 12...dxe5

12...♘xe5 runs into 13.♖b1 ♕a3 14.♖b3 ♕a5 15.♘g3 ♗g6 16.♘xe5 dxe5 17.♗h5 with a winning position for White.

13.♖b1 ♕a3 14.♘fg5! 0-0 15.c5 ♔h8 16.♗c4 ♘a5 17.♗e6±

White's advantage is close to being decisive.



11.c5!

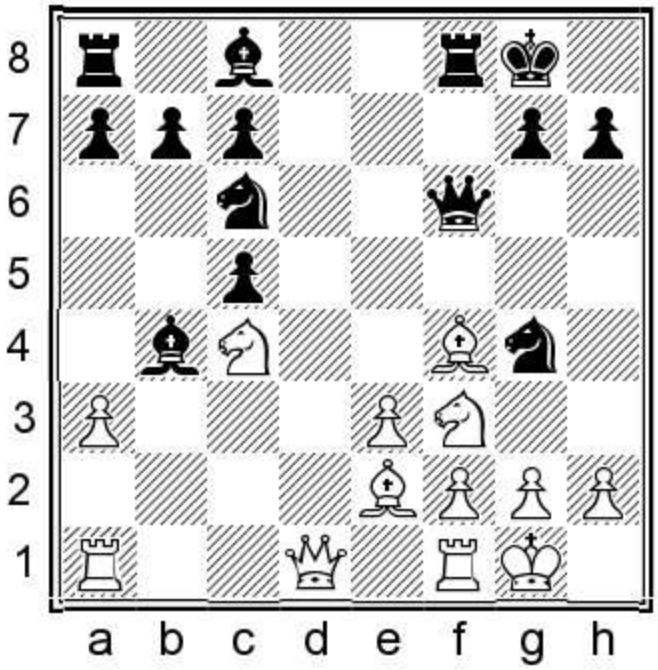
Moskalenko underestimated this positional sacrifice, awarding it a mere "!?" in his first Budapest book, although in the updated edition he admits that it "poses some questions" for Black. The main point is to vacate the c4-square for either the knight or the bishop.

chesstouring.com

11...♗xc5

Rejecting the pawn with 11...d5 led to a miserable position for Black after 12.♗xc7 ♘f6 13.♗d6 ♖e8 14.♗d3+– in Sarak – Gronemann, email 2008.

11...dxc5 12.♘c4 ♕f6 13.a3 is also great for White, for instance:



13...♗a5N (13...♗c3 14.♖c1 was close to winning for White in Hagglund – Danzanvilliers, email 2005) 14.♕b3! (In *GM 2* I suggested 14.♘xa5 ♘xa5 15.♘g5 but the text move is more accurate) 14...♔h8 15.h3 ♘h6 16.♘fe5 White has a huge initiative.

12.h3!

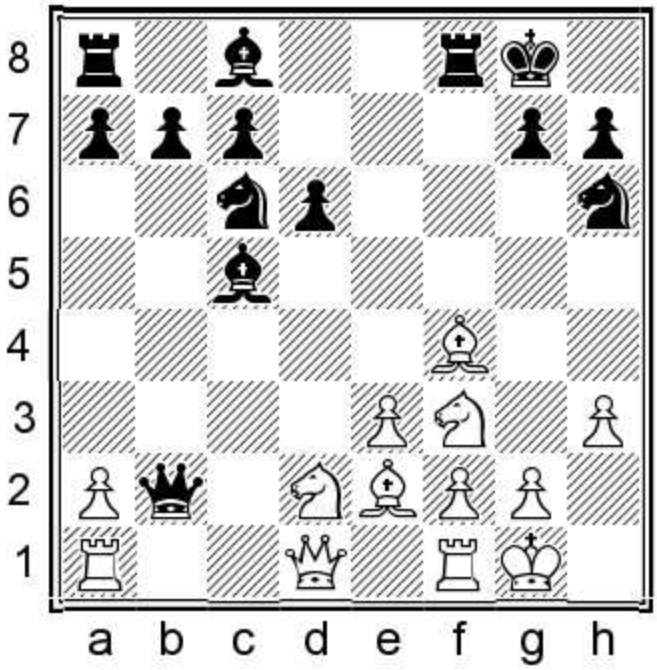
It is useful to kick the knight away before going on the offensive.

In *GM 2* I recommended 12.♘g5 as a novelty but then text move is even stronger. Moskalenko does not consider it.

12...♘h6

It is understandable that Black avoided 12...♘f6, since after 13.♘c4 ♕b5 14.a4 ♕b4 15.♖b1 ♕c3 16.♖b3+– his queen is trapped.

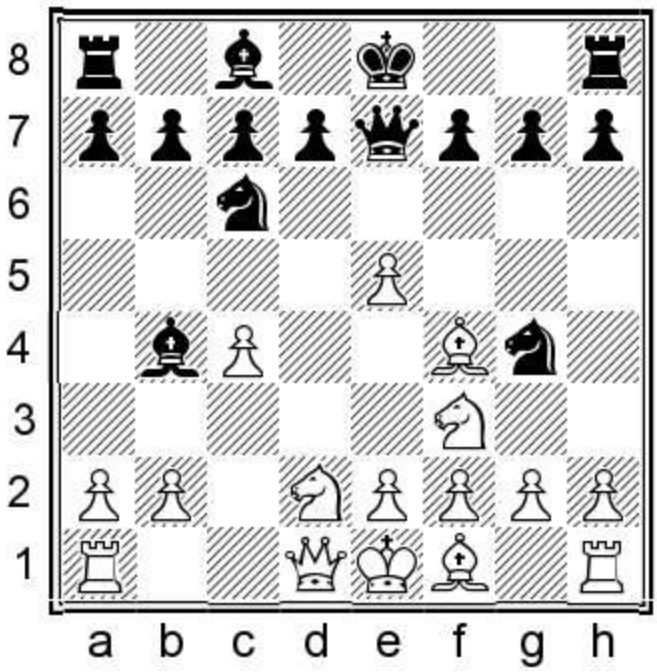
chesstouring.com



13.♗c4† ♔h8 14.♘e4 ♗f5 15.♖b1 ♕a3 16.♗d5±

White had a serious advantage in Gonzalez Barcina – Duran Vallverdu, corr. 2012.

C2) 6...♕e7



7.e3

Both here and on the next few moves, I recommend refraining from hunting the bishop with a2-a3. In quite a lot of games, Black has exchanged on d2 voluntarily after White has castled, potentially saving us a tempo. If Black avoids making the exchange, we will be able to find another role for the d2-knight.

7...♘gxe5

chesstouring.com

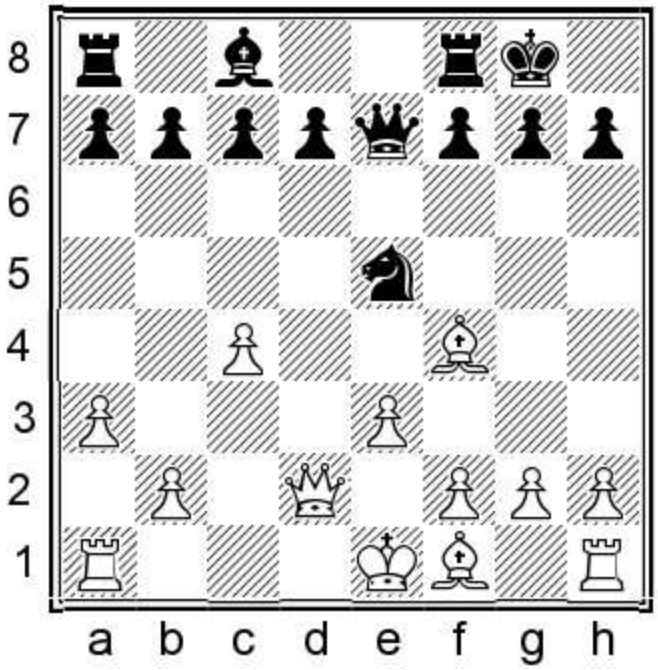
7...♘cxe5 8.♘xe5 ♘xe5 is a simple transposition.

An inaccurate move order is:

7...0-0?!

This move offers no real upside for Black, as the simple 8.♗e2 would transpose to variation B of the next chapter after Black takes on e5. However, we can also aim to punish Black's sloppy move order with:

8.a3! ♗xd2† 9.♕xd2 ♘gxe5 10.♘xe5 ♘xe5



11.c5!

Exploiting the fact that Black has not yet played ...b6 or ...d6.

11...♖d8

11...♖e8 12.♖c1± offers Black no relief.

After 11...♕xc5 12.♖c1 ♕d6 13.♕xd6 cxd6 14.♖d1 ♖e8 15.♖xd6 White regains the pawn with an obvious positional advantage, thanks to his better pawn structure and bishop pair. For instance, 15...♘g6 16.♗g3 ♖e6 17.♗c4± and White went on to convert his advantage in Herzog – Pons, corr. 2010.

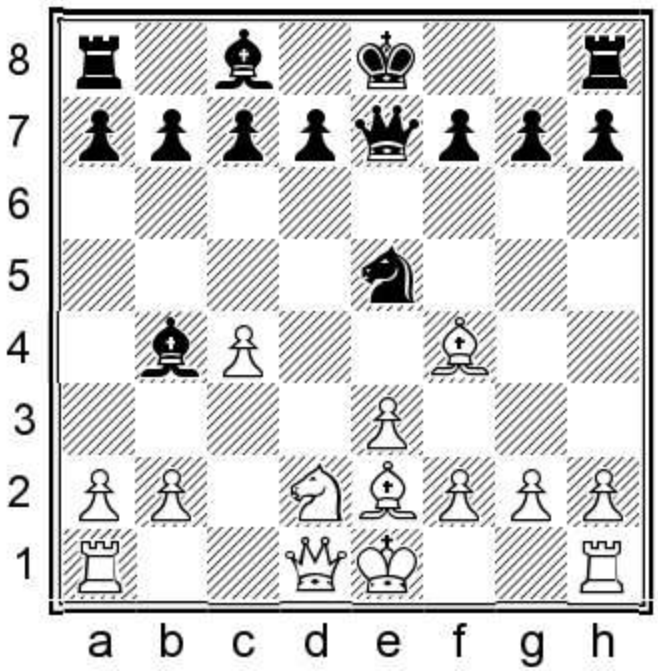
12.♗e2 d5 13.cxd6 ♖xd6 14.♕c3 f6 15.0-0 c6 16.♖fd1 ♖xd1† 17.♖xd1±/±

Black avoided any pawn weaknesses, but remained under significant pressure due to White's bishop pair in Koutsin – Detko, Prievidza 1998.

8.♘xe5 ♘xe5 9.♗e2

Black's most popular moves are 9...d6 and 9...0-0, and we will analyse them in the next chapter. Before then, we will consider some minor options.

chesstouring.com



9...b6

In *GM 2* I awarded 9...a5 an exclam and presented it as my main line, but it remains pretty rare and there is no special benefit connected with playing this move so soon. In any case, after 10.0-0 Black will almost certainly continue with one of 10...d6 or 10...0-0, transposing to either variation A2 or B1 of the next chapter.

Similarly, 9...♗xd2† 10.♕xd2 requires no separate analysis: White will castle next, transposing to one of the lines in either this or the next chapter in which Black exchanges on d2.

10.0-0

Now Black must decide whether to trade off his bishop with **C21)** 10...♗xd2 or preserve it with **C22)** 10...♗b7.

C21) 10...♗xd2 11.♕xd2 ♗b7 12.c5!

This remarkable pawn sacrifice enables White to activate his dark-squared bishop with great effect.

12...bxc5

After 12...0-0 13.♕c3 White's advantage is clear. For instance, 13...♘g6 14.♗xc7 bxc5 15.♗g3 d5 16.♖ac1 ♖ac8 17.♕a3± and White's bishop pair was a great asset in Van Wieringen – Bitmanis, corr. 2012.

13.♕a5!

This is the obvious follow-up to White's previous move.

13...♘g6

chesstouring.com

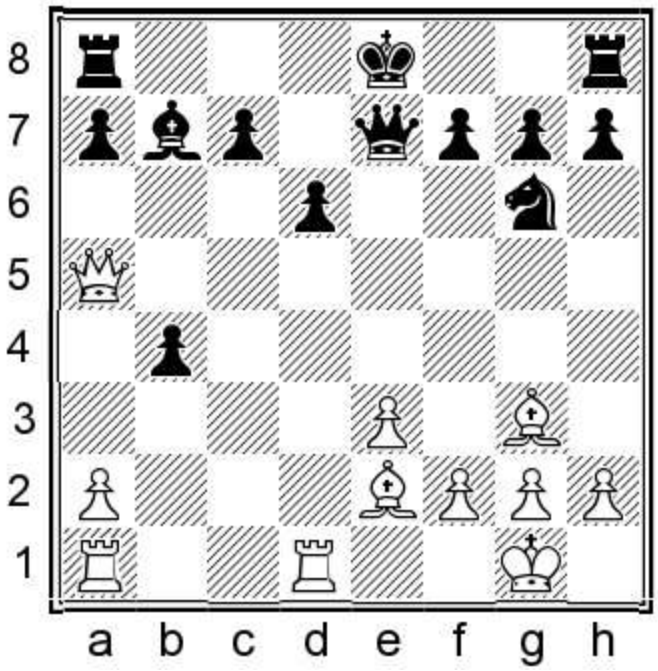
Black has nothing better.

14.♗g3 d6 15.b4!

This second, temporary sacrifice enables White to develop a powerful initiative.

15...cxb4 16.♖fd1!?

A small change from *GM 2*, where 16.♖ac1 was my suggestion. Both options are good for White, but Black's defence seems even more unpleasant when we attack d6 to prevent the c-pawn from moving.



16...0-0 17.♖ac1 ♖fc8

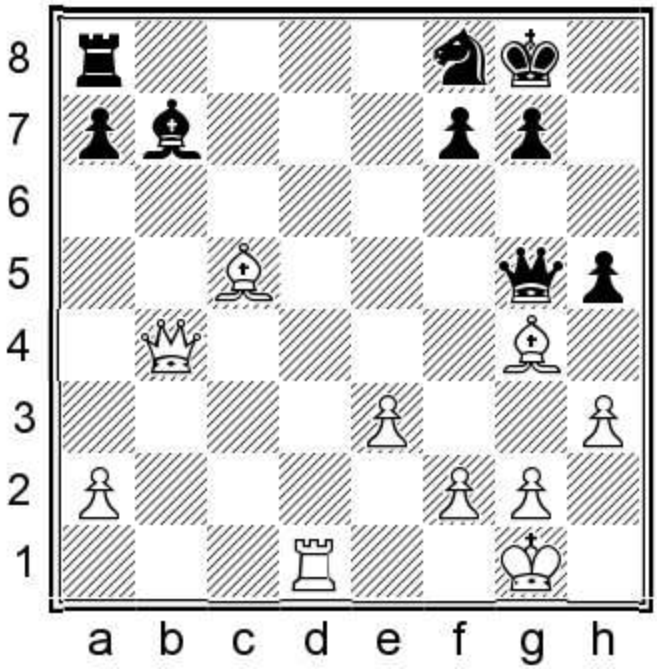
17...♖ac8 18.♗g4± did not help Black in Matin – Ferrer, corr. 2010.

18.♗g4 c5 19.♗xd6 ♕g5 20.h3 ♘f8

20...h5 21.f4± is also excellent for White.

21.♖xc5 ♖xc5 22.♗xc5 h5 23.♕xb4

chesstouring.com



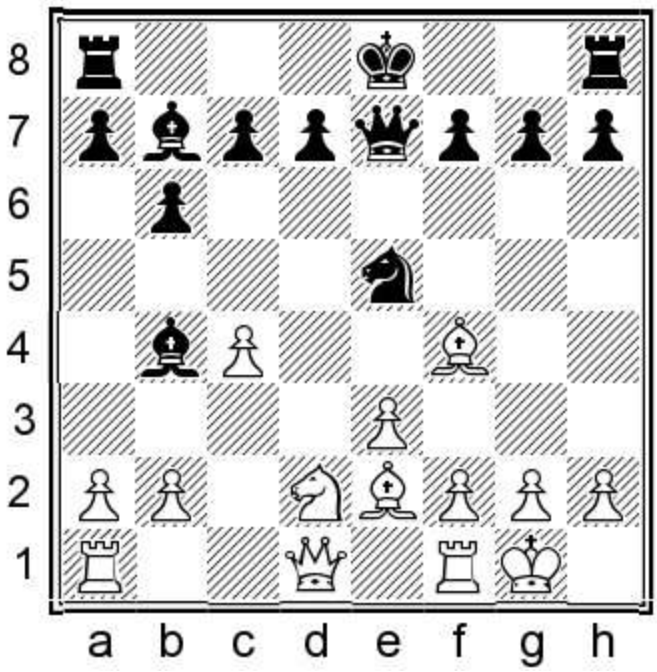
23...♗xg2

Or 23...hxg4 24.♕xb7 ♖e8 25.♖d5 and White should convert his extra material.

24.♔xg2 hxg4 25.hxg4±

White eventually made his extra pawn count in Mostowik – Akrill, corr. 2016.

C22) 10...♗b7



11.♘b3

Now Black's dark-squared bishop is left staring into thin air. He can either allow it to be exchanged on c5 or retreat it to d6.

chesstouring.com

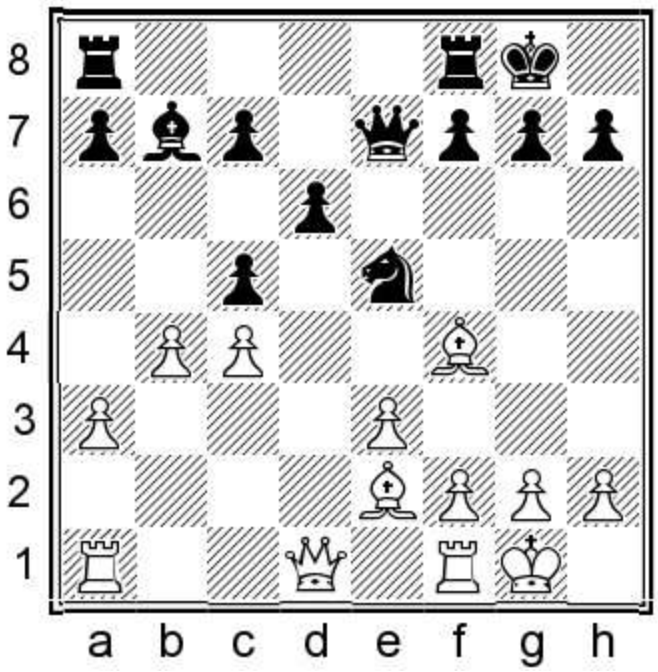
11...0-0 12.a3 ♗d6

The alternative is:

12...♗c5 13.♘xc5 bxc5 14.b4 d6N

After 14...♖ab8?! 15.bxc5 ♕xc5 16.♕d4± White was much better in Delgado – Martinez Spain 1992.

The text move is new, but it immediately transposes to several other games. White's best continuation is:



15.bxc5 dxc5 16.♕d2!

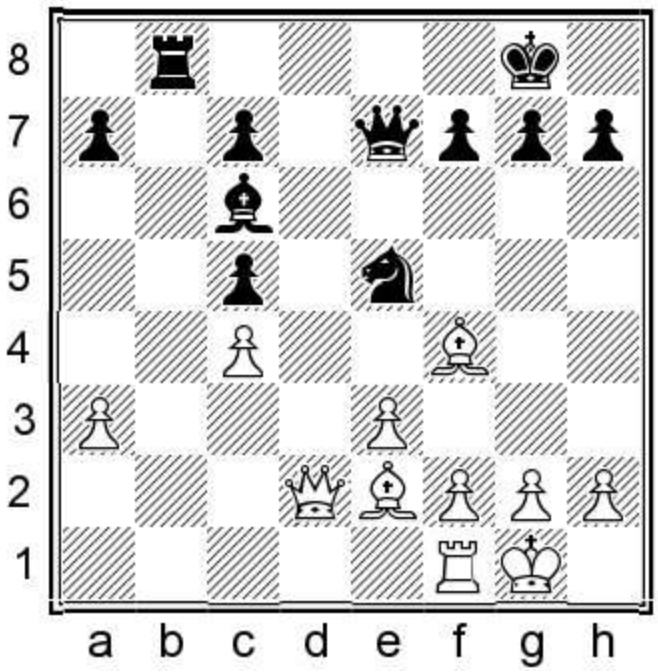
16.♕c2 is more common but the text move is more precise, as the queen should operate on the dark squares.

16...♗c6

Another game continued 16...♘g6 17.♗g3 ♘h4 18.f3 ♘f5 19.♗f2 ♖fe8 20.e4 ♘d4 21.♗xd4 cxd4 22.♕xd4 c5 23.♕c3 and White slowly converted his extra pawn in Susla – Correa de Almeida, corr. 2014.

17.♖ab1 ♖ab8 18.♖xb8 ♖xb8

chesstouring.com

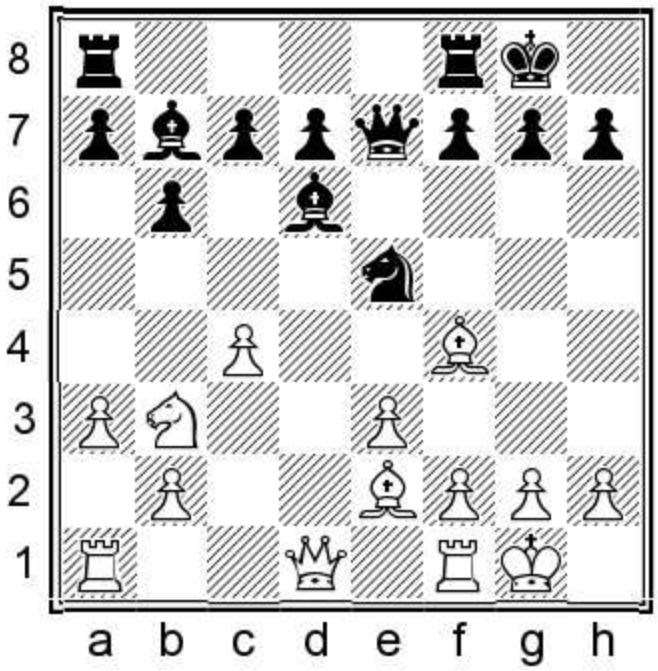


19.♕a5!

The queen is perfectly placed here, and the following invasion of the black rook is of little consequence.

19...♖b2 20.♖e1 f6 21.♗g3±

White went on to score another victory in Marquardt – Langheld, email 2008.



13.♘d4

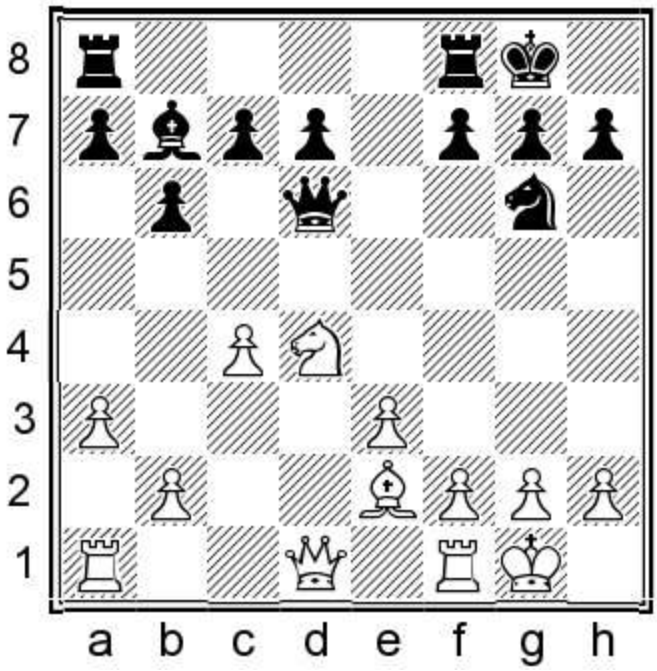
White improves the knight and threatens to land on f5.

13...f5!

This is the most challenging reply, which I overlooked when analysing this line in a note in *GM 2*.

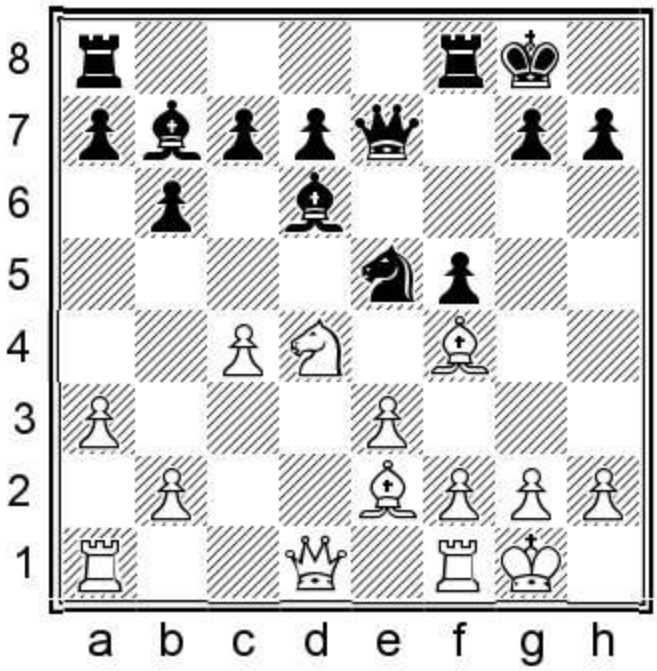
chesstouring.com

13...♘g6 14.♗xd6 ♕xd6 occurred in Denderski – Nurkiewicz, Krakow 2004, when White missed the strongest continuation:



15.♘b5!N 15...♕e5 16.♕xd7 ♕xb2 17.♘d4! An important detail. 17...c5 18.♖fb1 ♕d2 19.♖d1 ♕b2 20.♕b5 ♕xb5 21.♘xb5 The arising endgame is quite unpleasant for Black.

The text move was played in Hampel – Hobusch, Dresden 2004. Surprisingly, White only has one serious way to fight for the advantage:



14.b4!N

With the following point:

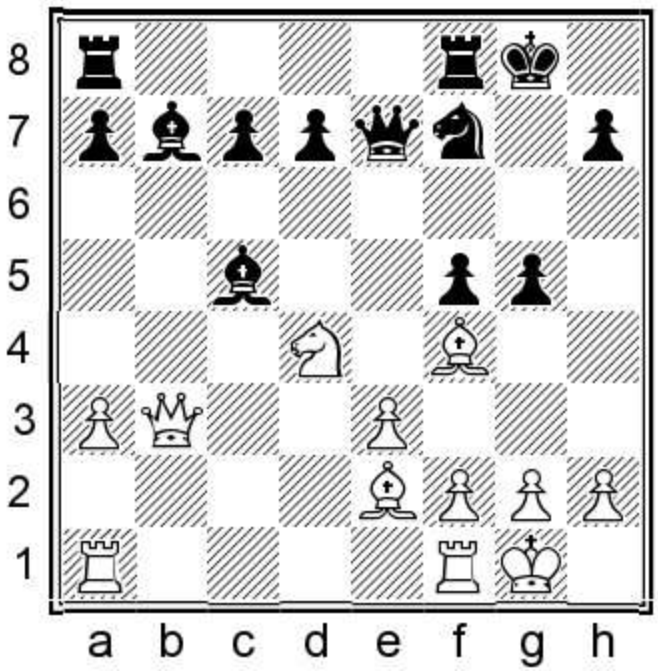
14...g5

chesstouring.com

This is obviously the critical reply.

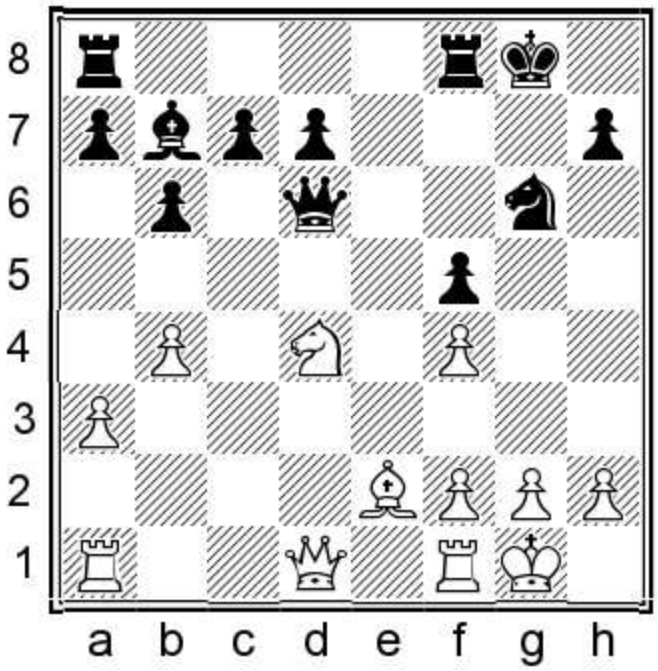
15.c5! gxf4

Another important line is: 15...bxc5 16.bxc5 ♗xc5 17.♕b3† ♘f7



18.♗xg5! ♕xg5 19.♕xb7 f4 20.♕xc7 fxe3 21.f4 ♕d5 22.♘f3 White's chances are higher, due to the vulnerability of the black king.

16.cxd6 ♕xd6 17.exf4 ♘g6



18.♘b5

It would also be worth considering 18.♕b3†!? ♔h8 19.♖ad1 ♘xf4 20.♗f3⩲ with good compensation.

chesstouring.com

18...♕xd1 19.♖fxd1 ♘xf4 20.♗f1

White regains the pawn and keeps some positional pressure.

Conclusion

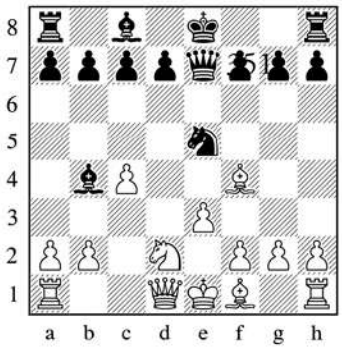
This chapter has introduced the traditional Budapest Gambit with 3.dxe5 ♘g4, after which 4.♗f4 is a change from my previous recommendation. Then 4...♗b4† 5.♘d2 is likely to lead to one of our main lines, unless Black tries one of the gambit continuations of 5...d6 or 5...f6. Neither option should worry us, although both are worth analysing, just to avoid any unpleasant surprises. Then we looked at 4...g5, which can lead to interesting play, but the accurate continuation of 5.♗d2! ♘xe5 6.♘f3 leads to excellent prospects for White. Once again, it is worth familiarizing yourself with the lines that follow, paying particular attention to the correct timing of the h2-h4 move, which is an important resource to weaken Black's kingside.

We then began our coverage of the most popular 4...♘c6, when 5.♘f3 ♗b4† 6.♘bd2 leads to another branching point. 6...f6 7.exf6 ♕xf6 is an active attempt, but 8.e3! is an excellent reply, giving back the b2-pawn in order to seize the initiative, especially with the help of a timely c4-c5. Finally, 6...♕e7 7.e3 ♘gxe5 8.♘xe5 ♘xe5 9.♗e2 reaches the main line of our Budapest coverage. In the remaining part of the chapter we looked at 9...b6, which is quite an interesting sideline, and I advise you to pay close attention to the details of what followed. After the natural 10.0-0 Black has a few ways to handle the position, and White needs to be precise to maximize his chances. As in many Budapest lines, a timely c4-c5 thrust is the key to our success, but it takes a certain amount of theoretical knowledge and calculation at the board to implement the idea correctly. Get it right though, and you can cause your opponent serious problems straight out of the opening.

chesstouring.com



Budapest Gambit



3...♘g4 – Main Lines

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 ♘g4 4.♗f4 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♗b4† 6.♘bd2 ♕e7 7.e3 ♘gxe5 8.♘xe5 ♘xe5 9.♗e2

A) 9...d6 10.0-0 352

A1) 10...♗d7 352

A2) 10...a5 11.a3! 353

A21) 11...♗xd2 354

A22) 11...♗c5 355

B) 9...0-0 10.0-0 356

B1) 10...a5 357

B2) 10...♘g6 358

B3) 10...d6 359

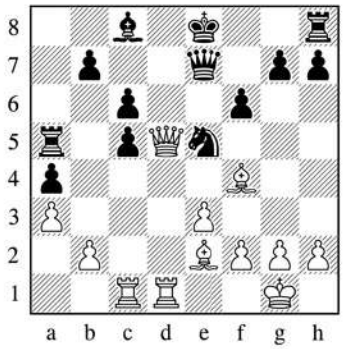
B4) 10...♗xd2 11.♕xd2 d6 12.b4 362

B41) 12...b6 363

B42) 12..a5 363

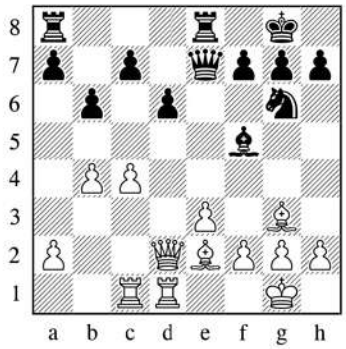
chesstouring.com

A21) note to 14...♘g6



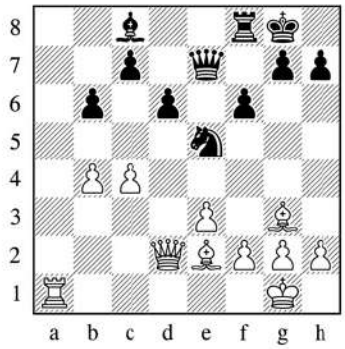
17.♕d2!N

B4) note to move 12



16.c5!N

B42) note to 13...♖d8

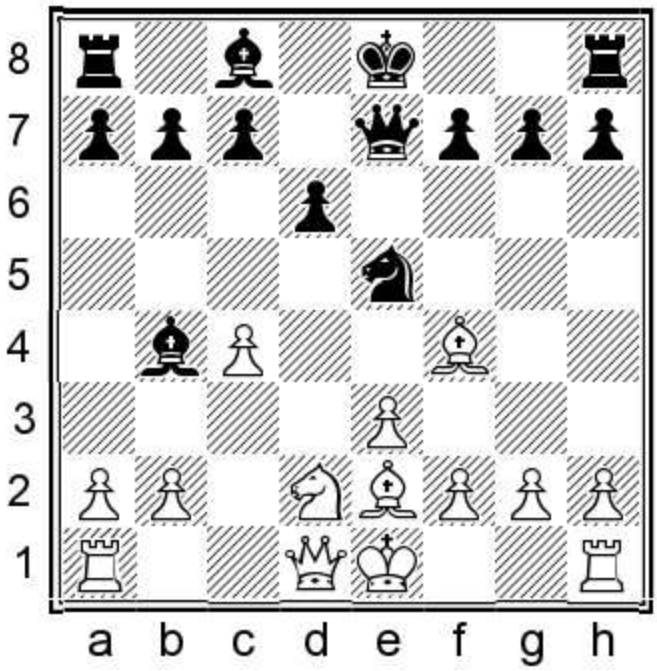


17.f4!?N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 ♘g4 4.♗f4 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♗b4† 6.♘bd2 ♕e7 7.e3 ♘gxe5 8.♘xe5 ♘xe5 9.♗e2

This chapter will deal with Black's two main options of **A)** 9...d6 and **B)** 9...0-0. Obviously the two moves can transpose, but the first section will deal with any lines where Black postpones castling for long enough to lead to some difference in the ensuing play.

A) 9...d6



10.0-0

We will analyse **A1)** 10...♗d7 and **A2)** 10...a5!?.

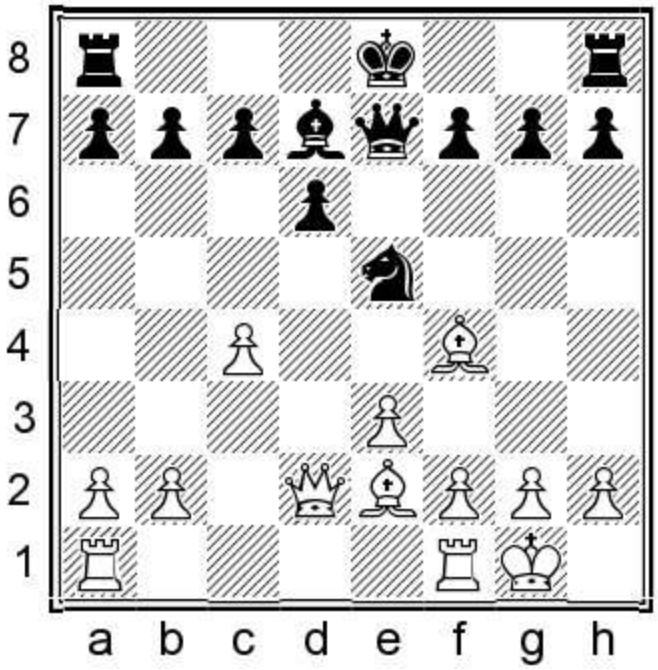
10...0-0 transposes to variation B3 on page 359.

Less challenging is:
10...♗xd2 11.♕xd2 ♗d7

chesstouring.com

11...0-0 transposes to variation B4 on page 362.

11...b6 is strongly met by 12.b4 ♗b7 13.c5! when a model game continued: 13...dxc5 14.bxc5 0-0 15.♕c3 f6 16.♖fc1 ♗d5 17.a4 ♖ab8 18.f3± White was in full control in Lalic – Rosic, Bosnjaci 2009.



12.c5!

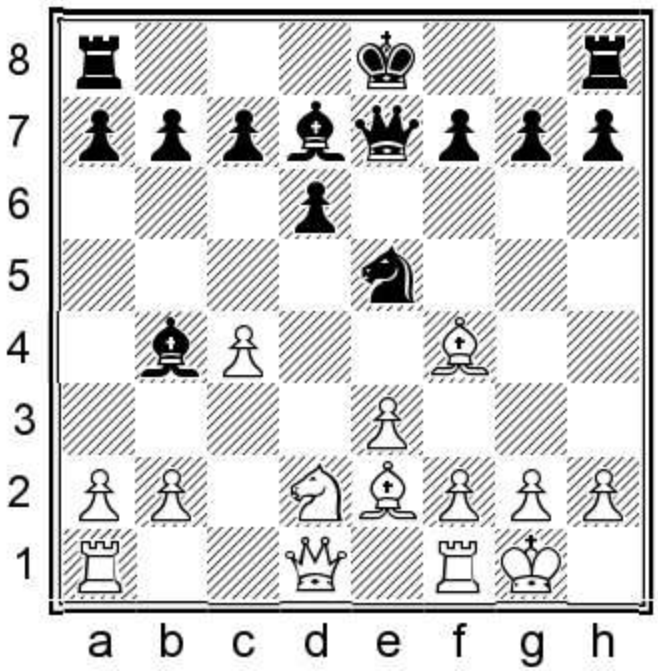
Again this thematic sacrifice works perfectly.

12...dxc5 13.♕d5 ♘c6 14.♖ac1 0-0-0 15.♕xc5 ♕xc5 16.♖xc5±

The bishop pair and pressure along the c-file gave White a serious advantage in Droualliere – Soulas, corr. 2007. Black will have a hard time dealing with the simple plan of doubling rooks and advancing the b-pawn.

A1) 10...♗d7

chesstouring.com



11.♘f3!

This slightly unusual move seems more potent than the routine 11.a3, which I gave in *GM 2*. Black usually responds with:

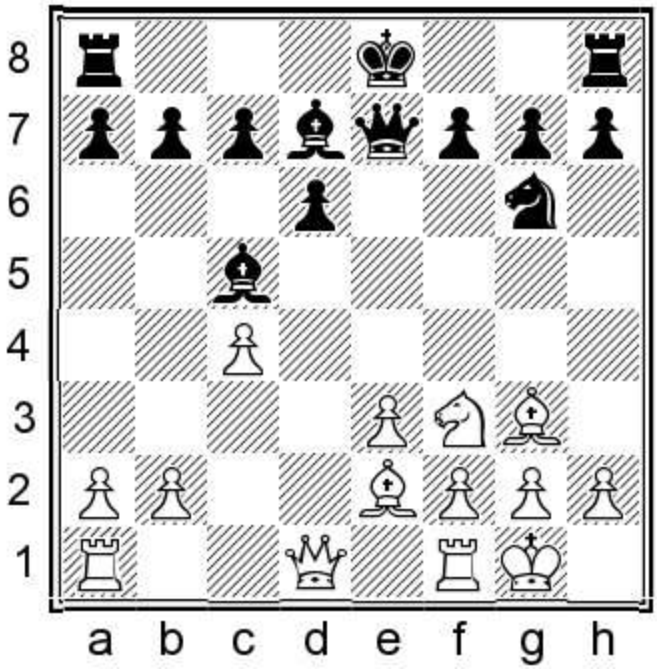
11...♘g6

Instead 11...♗c5 was seen in Karpov – Barlag, Wolfsburg (simul) 2007, when 12.a3N would have been simple and strong, with the same ideas as in the main line below; indeed, after 12...♘g6 13.♗g3 a transposition has occurred. Moskalenko mentions 12...f6 with an 'unclear' symbol, but after something like 13.b4 ♗b6 14.♗g3 White is better as usual.

12.♗g3 ♗c5

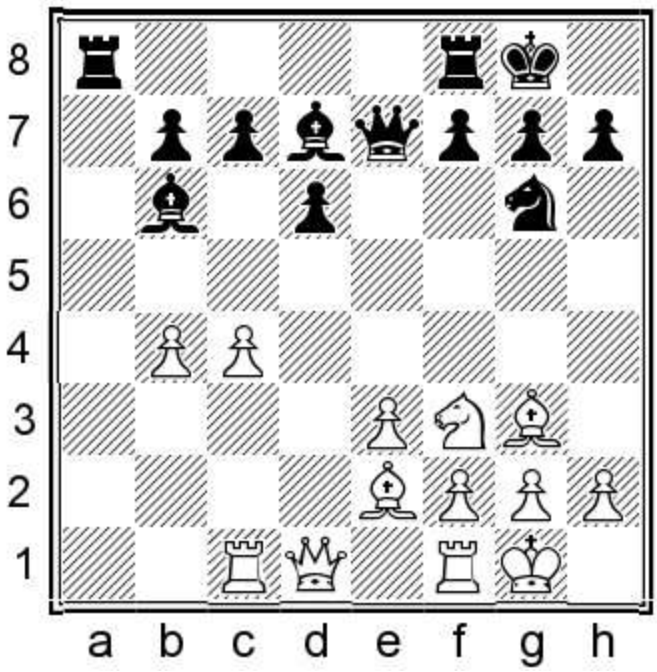
12...0-0 13.a3 ♗c5 is a simple transposition.

chesstouring.com



13.a3 0-0

13...a5?! does not stop White's plan: 14.b4! ♗b6 (14...axb4? 15.axb4 ♖xa1 16.♕xa1 ♗xb4 17.♕xg7! is hardly acceptable for Black15.♖c1 axb4 16.axb4 0-0

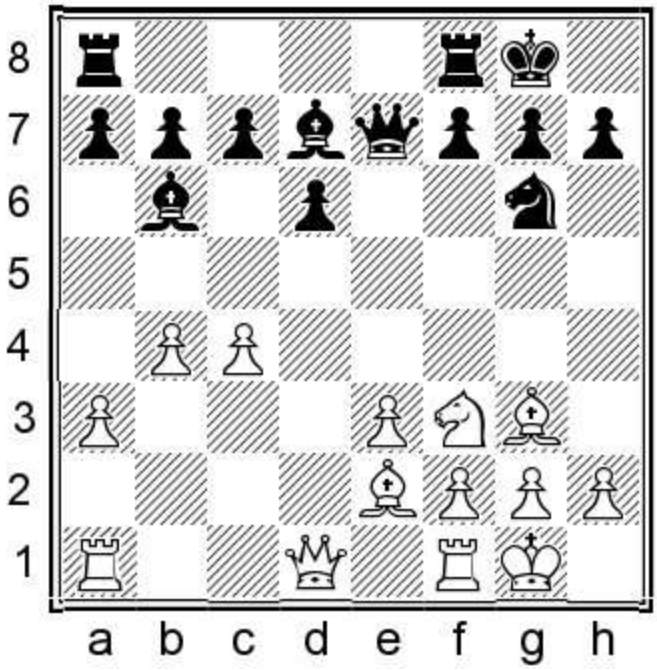


17.c5! dxc5 18.bxc5 ♗a5 (18...♗xc5? runs into 19.♖xc5 ♕xc5 20.♕xd7+–) 19.♕b3± Black was under heavy pressure in Epishin – Bohigas Santasusagna, Badalona 2005.

14.b4 ♗b6

This position has been reached in three correspondence games. My new idea is:

chesstouring.com



15.♕c2N

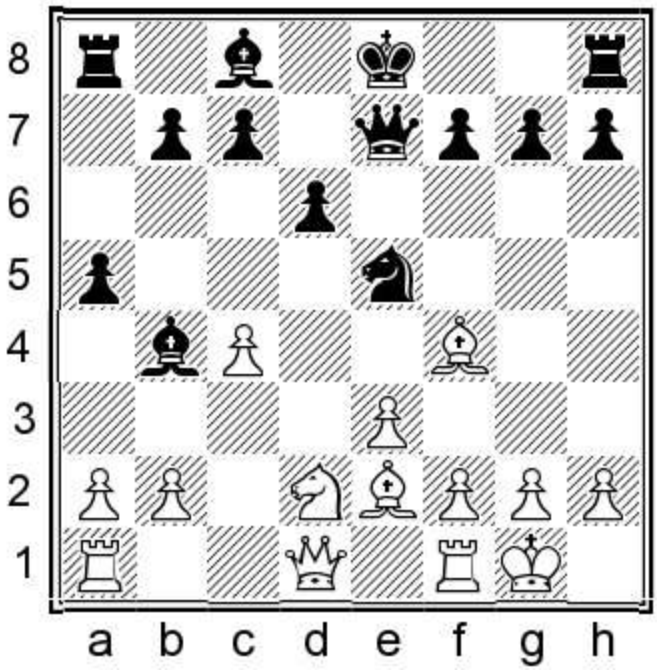
Connecting the rooks and supporting a potential c4-c5 break in the future. A possible continuation is:

15...♗c6 16.♖fc1 ♗e4 17.♕c3 c6 18.♘d2 ♗f5 19.♘b3±

White keeps a pleasant edge.

A2) 10...a5

Moskalenko awards this an exclamation mark.



11.a3!

chesstouring.com

Another change from *GM 2*, where 11.♘b1 was my suggestion. I now consider the text move to be more challenging.

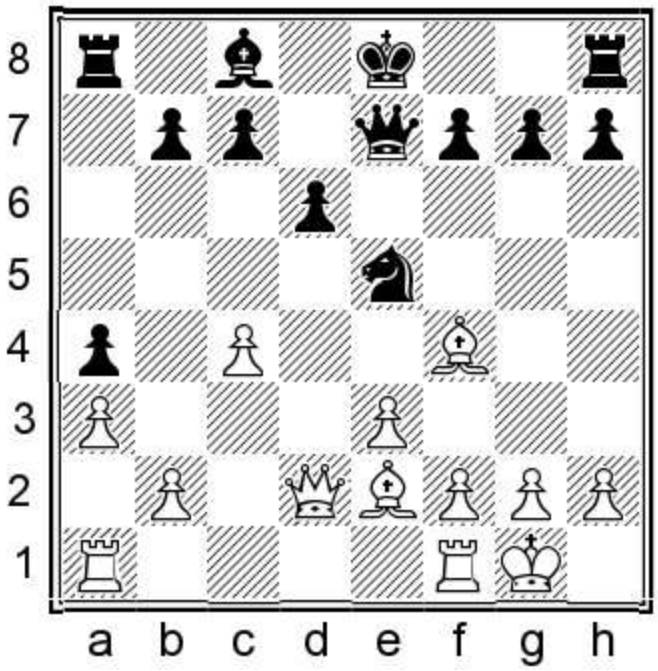
It is also worth mentioning that 11.♘b3 a4 12.a3 ♗c3! is a nice trick, which leads to an acceptable position for Black.

The text move gives Black a choice between **A21)** 11...♗xd2 and **A22)** 11...♗c5.

A21) 11...♗xd2 12.♕xd2 a4

12...0-0 13.b4 transposes to the later variation B42 on page 363.

Moskalenko evaluates this position as acceptable for Black, but it looks like he failed to take into account the following resource.



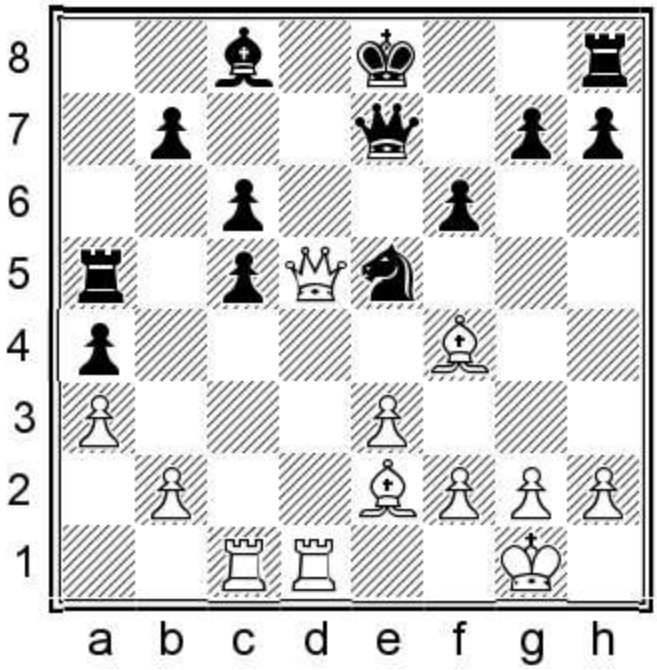
13.c5!

An important detail, without which Black would be in good shape.

13...dxc5 14.♕d5 ♘g6

Black's other try is 14...f6, which has occurred in two games. Both of them continued 15.♖ac1 ♖a5 16.♖fd1 c6 and here White missed the strongest continuation:

chesstouring.com



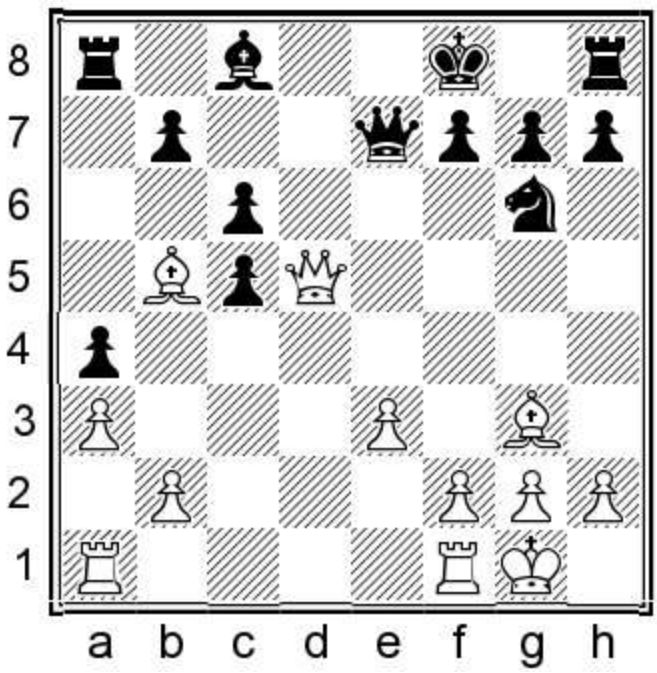
17.♕d2!N 17...b6 18.♗xe5 fxe5 19.♗f3 0-0 20.♗xc6± Despite the level material, White's advantage is obvious.

15.♗b5† ♔f8

In *GM 2* I commented that this position was not dangerous for Black, but I underestimated White's resources.

16.♗g3 c6

This position was reached in Hrubaru – Pavlikov, corr. 2010. Simple and strong would have been:

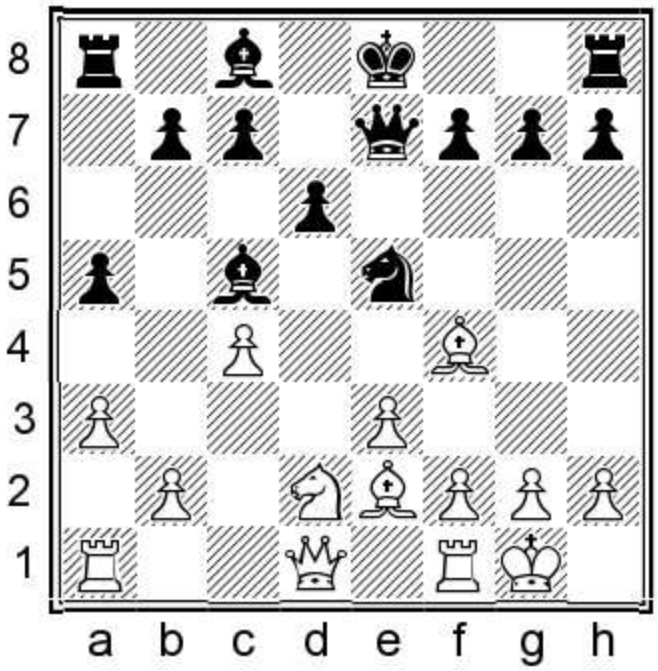


17.♕d1!N 17...♘e5 18.♗xa4

chesstouring.com

White has a pleasant edge, due to his bishop pair and safer king.

A22) 11...♗c5



This has been slightly the more popular of the two options. I found a new idea for White:

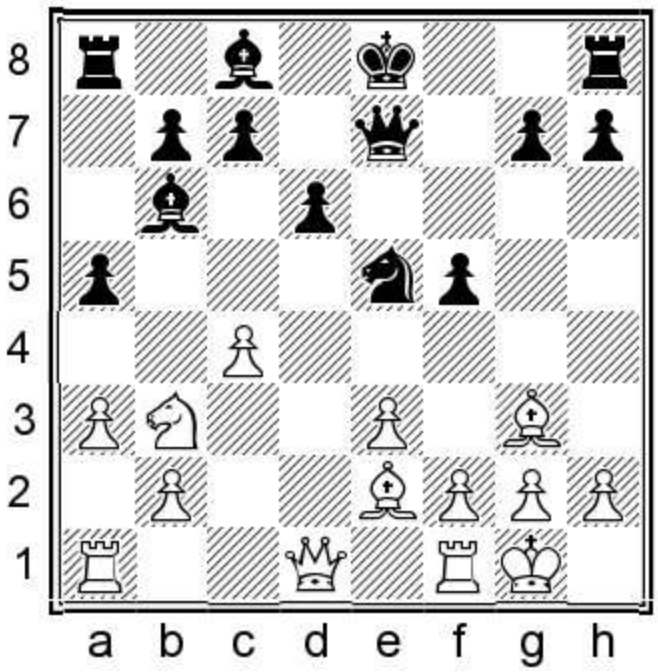
12.♗g3!?N

12.♘e4 was noted as better for White in *GM 2*, but 12...♘g6! 13.♘xc5 ♘xf4 14.exf4 dxc5 gave White no more than a tiny edge in Marquez Abreu – Sanchez Riera, corr. 2011.

12...0-0

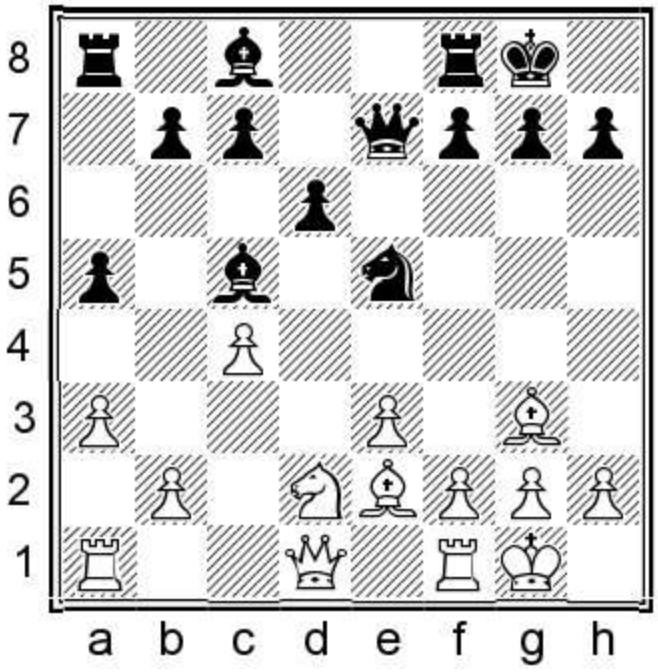
12...f5 prevents the knight from coming to e4, but allows White to seize the initiative with a promising pawn sacrifice: 13.♘b3 ♗b6

chesstouring.com



14.c5! dxc5 (14...♗xc5?! 15.♘xc5 dxc5 16.b4! is even worse for Black) 15.♕c2 a4 16.♘d2 0-0 17.♖ad1 White has great compensation, due to Black's misplaced dark-squared bishop and kingside weaknesses created by the ...f5 move.

The text move briefly transposes to a couple of games. I suggest deviating with:



13.♘e4N

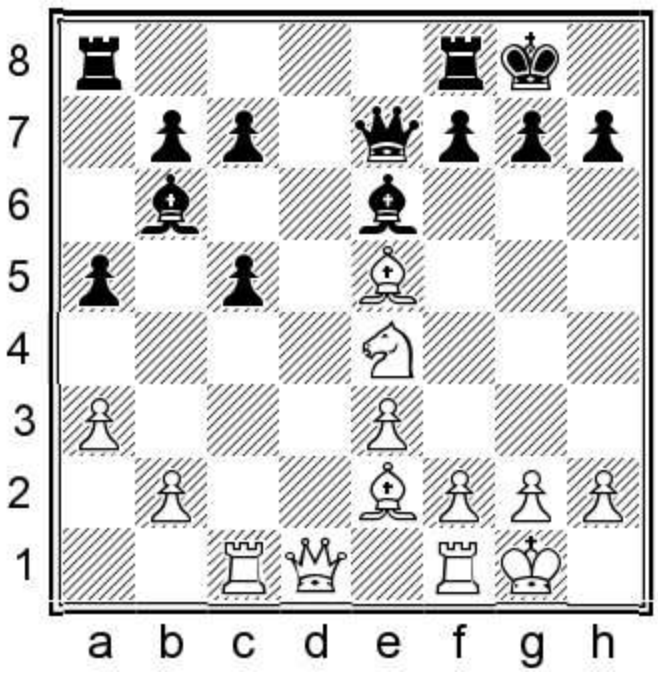
Perfectly logical, since White's previous move was intended to prepare this without allowing ...♘g6 in reply. The text move produces yet another transposition!

13...♗b6 14.♖c1 ♗e6?!

14...♖e8N was preferable although White still enjoys a pleasant edge after 15.♘c3 c6 16.♕b3.

chesstouring.com

15.c5! dxc5 16.♗xe5



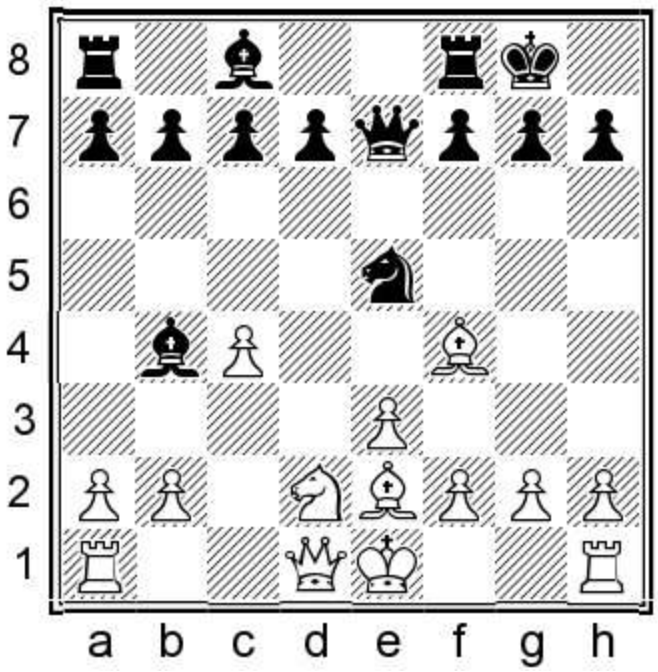
16...♗f5N

After 16...♖fd8? 17.♘d2 Black had no compensation for the piece in B. Kovacevic – B. Markovic, Zagreb 1993. The text move keeps Black in the game, but he can hardly be happy after:

17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.♘g3

White enjoys an obvious advantage due to Black's weakened kingside.

B) 9...0-0



chesstouring.com

This is Black's most popular choice, as you would expect.

10.0-0

Black's four main options are **B1)** 10...a5, **B2)** 10...♘g6, **B3)** 10...d6 and **B4)** 10...♗xd2. I have arranged them in ascending order of popularity, although this does not necessarily correspond to their objective strength.

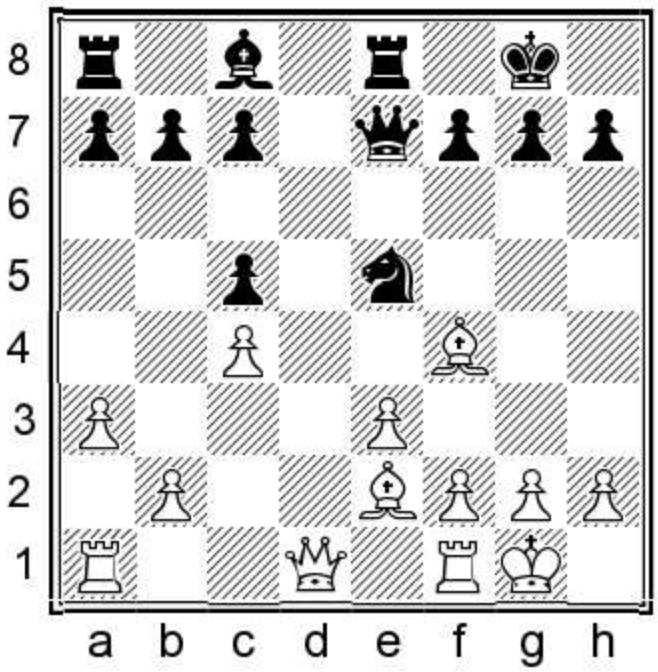
10...♖e8

This has been played from time to time, but it's hard to believe that developing the rook should be Black's top priority. A good reply is:

11.♘b3

Targeting the bishop. The main line continues:

11...d6 12.a3 ♗c5 13.♘xc5 dxc5



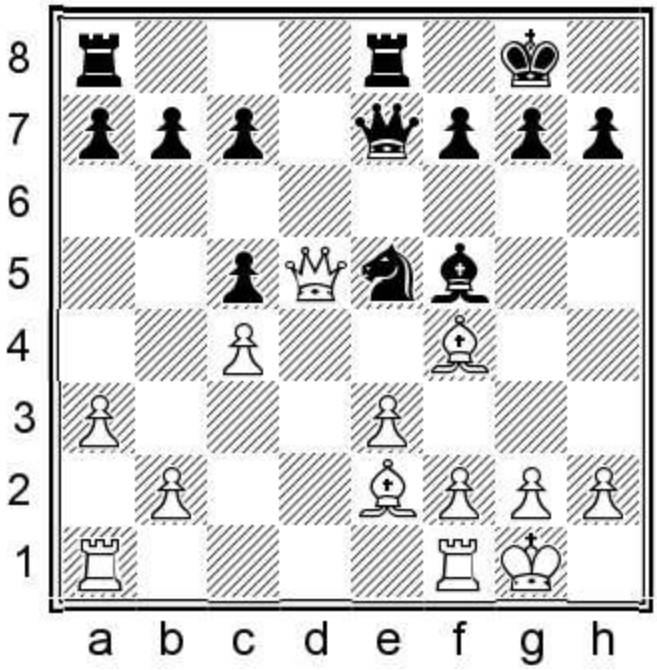
White has a lasting advantage thanks to his better pawn structure and of course the bishop pair. The most accurate continuation is:

14.♕d5! ♗f5!?

After 14...c6 White has exchanged on e5 in a couple of games but I would prefer 15.♕e4N± to keep the dark-squared bishop in the game, when White keeps a nice edge.

14...♘g6 15.♗g3 ♖d8 occurred in Verdesca – Cimmino, Italy 1991, when 16.♕h5N 16...♖d2 17.b4! would have been excellent for White.

chesstouring.com



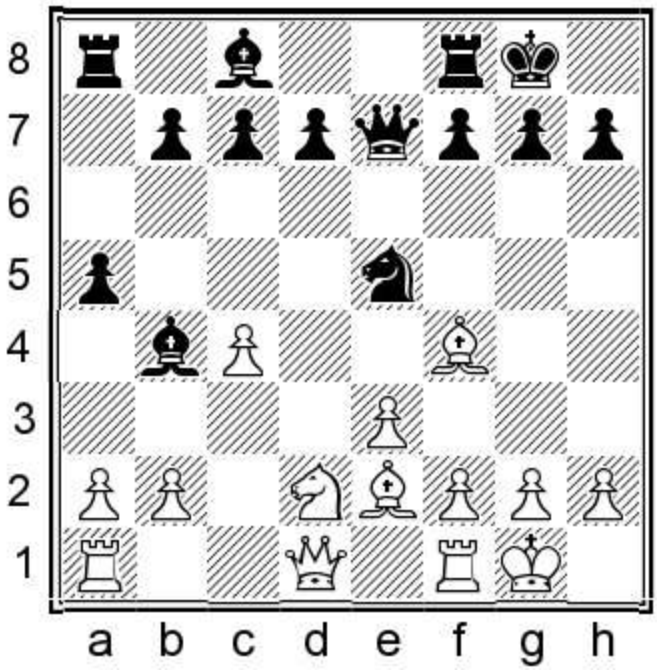
15.♕xb7!?N

White has a pleasant choice between this pawn grab and the safer 15.b4 cxb4 16.axb4 c6 17.♕d4 f6 18.♕c3± with an obvious positional edge, as has been played in a couple of correspondence games.

15...♖ab8 16.♕xa7 ♖xb2 17.♖fe1

Black's piece activity does not fully compensate for the missing pawn.

B1) 10...a5

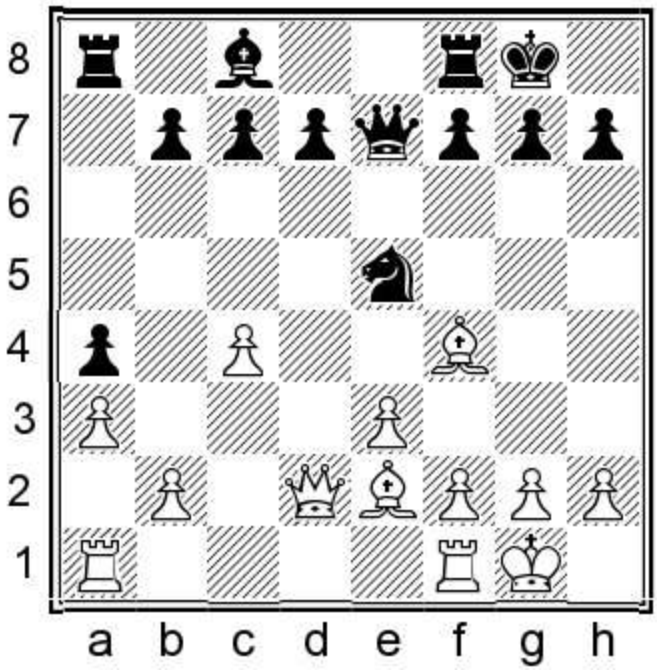


11.a3 ♗c5?!

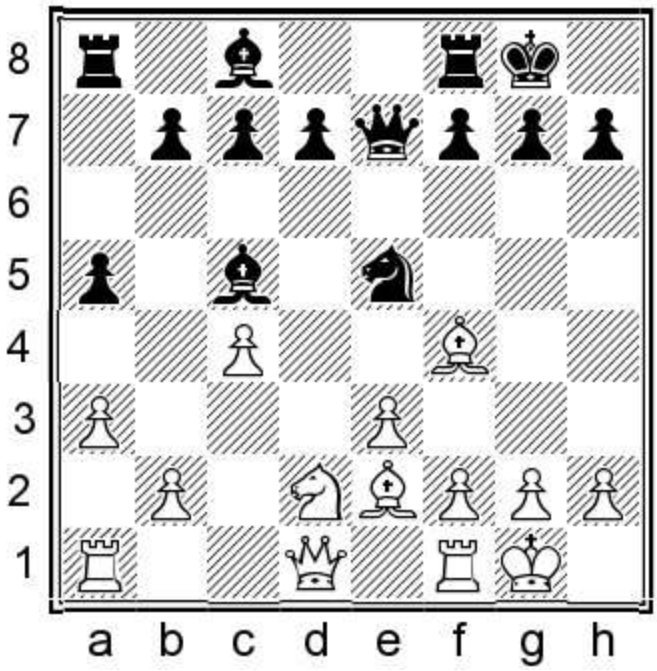
This is the only option which gives this move order an independent character. White should be happy to see it though, and Black should really avoid it in favour of the transposition pointed out below.

chessbooming.com

After 11...♗xd2 12.♕xd2 there is a positional trap which Black must avoid: 12...a4? (he should prefer 12...d6, when 13.b4 reaches variation B42 on page 363)



13.c5! We have already encountered this thematic idea on page 346, and this is an even better version for White. For instance, 13...f6 14.♖ac1 d6 15.cxd6 cxd6 16.♖fd1 ♖d8 17.♕b4+– with an overwhelming positional advantage for White, Rout – Farrell, Canberra 2002.



12.b4!

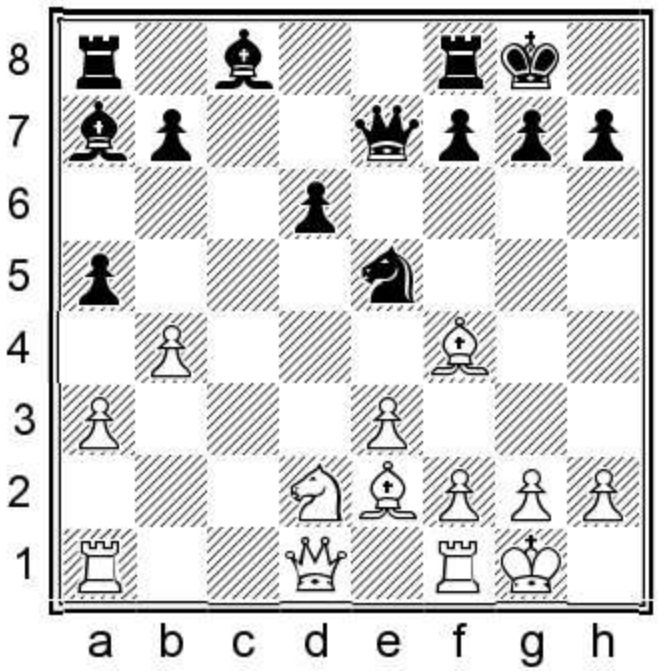
When this tactical shot works, it is bad news for Black!

12...axb4

Black has also tried: 12...♗a7 13.c5! d6 14.cxd6 cxd6 (after 14...♕xd6 15.bxa5 I don't see how Black

chesstouring.com

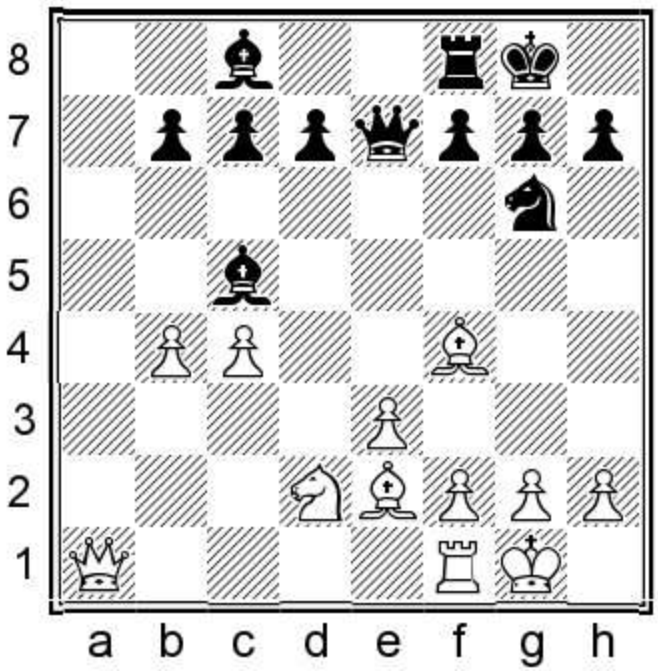
will get the pawn back)



15.♘c4 ♘xc4 16.♗xc4 ♖d8 17.♕f3 ♗e6 18.♗d5± Black suffered from a worse pawn structure and misplaced dark-squared bishop in Aczel – Golubov, Budapest 2017.

13.axb4 ♖xa1 14.♕xa1 ♘g6

Even worse is 14...♗xb4? 15.♗xe5 ♗xd2 16.♗xg7 ♖e8 17.♗f6 ♕c5 18.♖d1+– and the rook transfer to kingside soon proved decisive in Gutov – Belmeskin, Tomsk 2008.



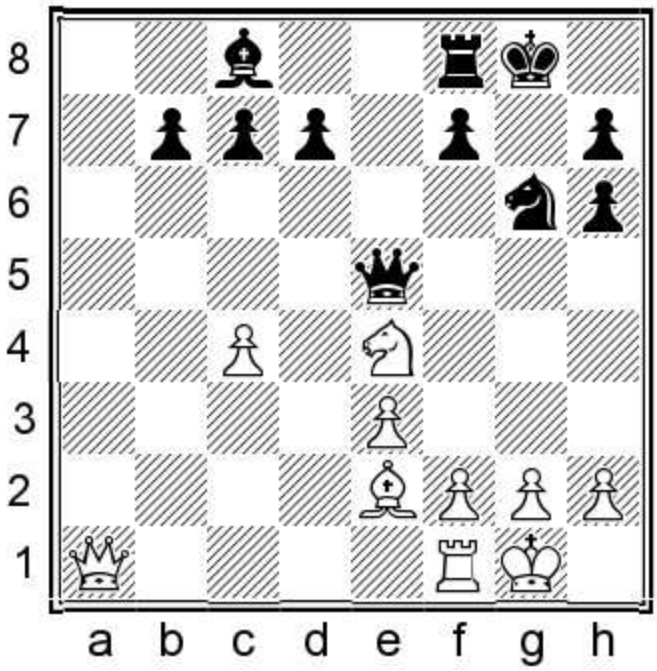
15.♗h6!

An attractive and important finesse.

chesstouring.com

15...gxh6 16.bxc5 ♕xc5 17.♘e4 ♕e5

Black's moves are all more or less forced.



18.♕xe5 ♘xe5 19.f4

The endgame proves surprisingly unpleasant for Black, despite his extra pawn.

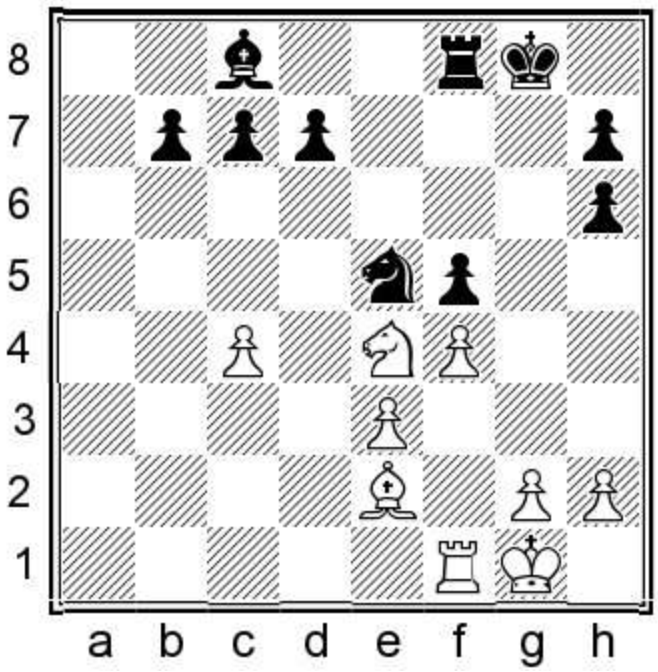
19...f5

Other moves also bring no relief to Black. For instance:

19...♘c6 20.♘f6† ♔g7 21.♘d5 is much better for White.

19...♘g6 20.♘f6† ♔g7 21.♘d5 c6 22.♘b6 d6 23.♖d1 regains the pawn while keeping White's positional pluses.

chesstouring.com



20.♘c3 ♘g6 21.♘b5±

White regained the material while keeping a big advantage in Saule – Hamilton, corr. 2007.

B2) 10...♘g6 11.♗g3 ♗d6

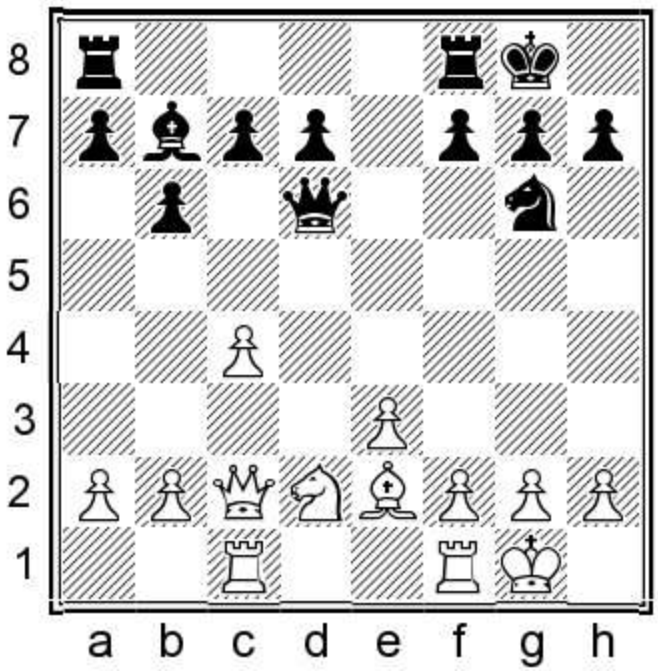
This is the main idea behind Black's previous move, and is recommended by Taylor. Black refuses to give White the advantage of the bishop pair, instead trading bishop for bishop in the hope of equalizing. I believe White can still obtain a pleasant pull though.

11...d6 can be met by 12.a3 (or 12.♘b3!?), when White gets a favourable version of a main line, as the knight has retreated to g6 prematurely.

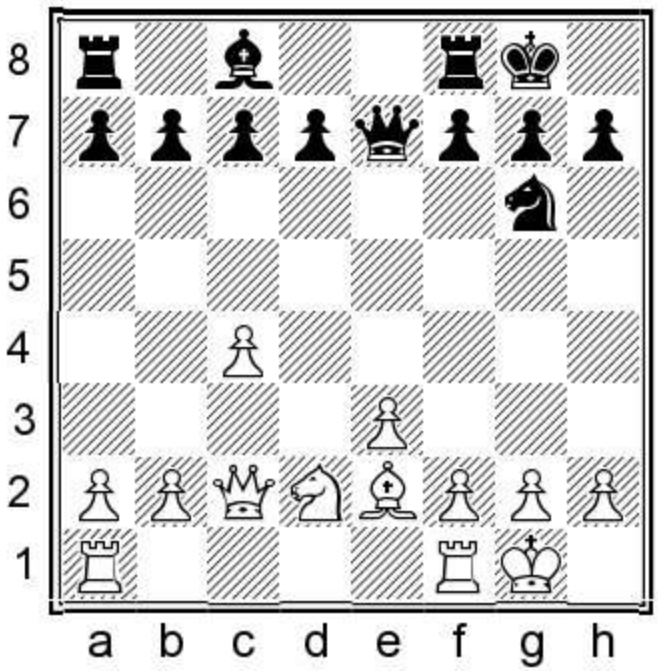
12.♗xd6 ♕xd6 13.♕c2 ♕e7

13...b6 has been the most popular alternative. I suggest 14.♖ac1! (rather than the much more popular 14.♗f3) 14...♗b7 as played in Savin – Trefilov, corr. 2002, when White missed a strong idea:

chesstouring.com



15.c5!N 15...bxc5 (15...♕e7 16.cxb6 cxb6 17.♘f3± gives White a clear positional plus) 16.♖fd1 ♕c6 17.♗f3 (17.♘f3!? d6 18.b4 is also strong) 17...♕a6 18.♗xb7 ♕xb7 19.♕xc5 ♕xb2 20.♖c2 White will regain the pawn while keeping a positional advantage.



14.♘e4

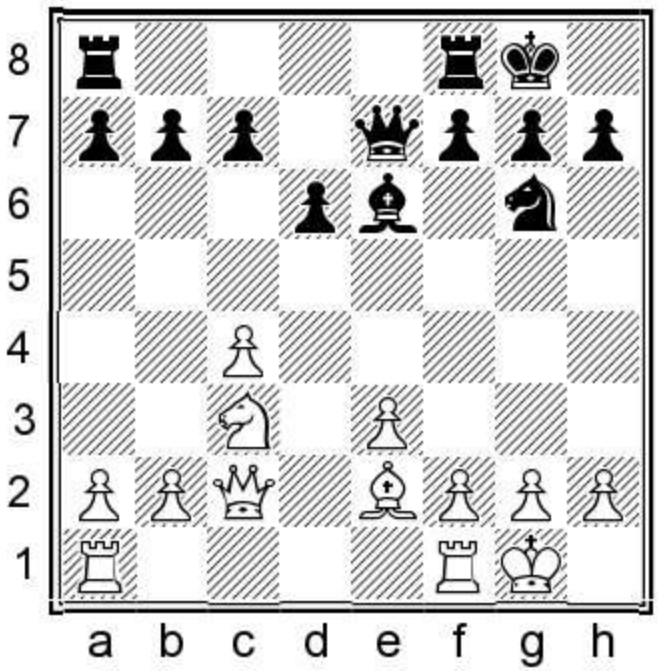
The knight is heading for c3. I like this move a bit more than 14.c5 d6 15.cxd6 ♕xd6 16.♖fd1 ♕e7 17.♘b3 when White maintains an edge, though Black's position is pretty solid. The text move is not mentioned by either Taylor or Moskalenko.

14...d6 15.♘c3 ♗e6

15...c6?! weakens the d-pawn, and 16.♖ad1 ♗e6 17.♖d4 ♘e5 18.♖fd1 ♖fd8 19.♕d2± left Black under

chesstouring.com

serious positional pressure in Khenkin – Plesec, Geneva 1994.



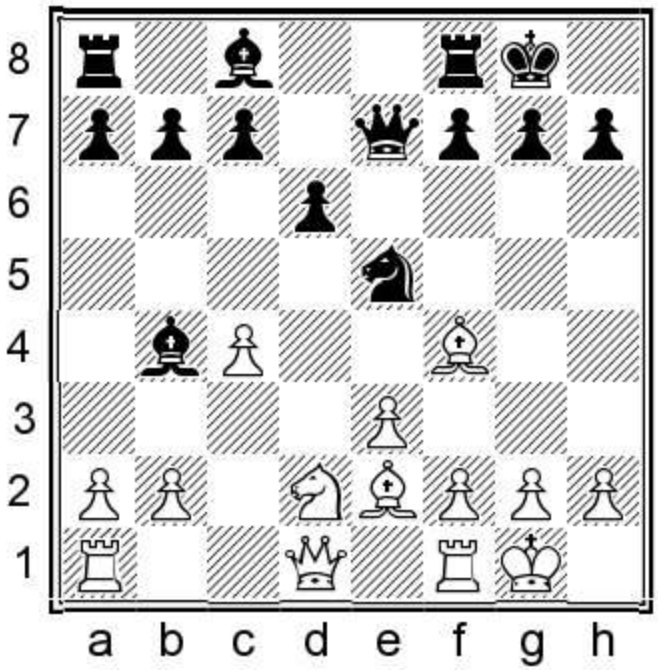
16.f4!

Depriving Black's knight of the e5-square while threatening f4-f5.

16...f5 17.♖fe1 c6 18.g3 ♖ad8 19.♖ad1±

White enjoyed an obvious positional edge in Marek – Saviano, corr. 2012.

B3) 10...d6



11.a3!?

Now I believe this is stronger than 11.♘b3 b6 12.a3 ♗c5 13.♘xc5 (13.♘c1 a5 14.♘a2 a4 15.♘c3 ♕e8

chesstouring.com

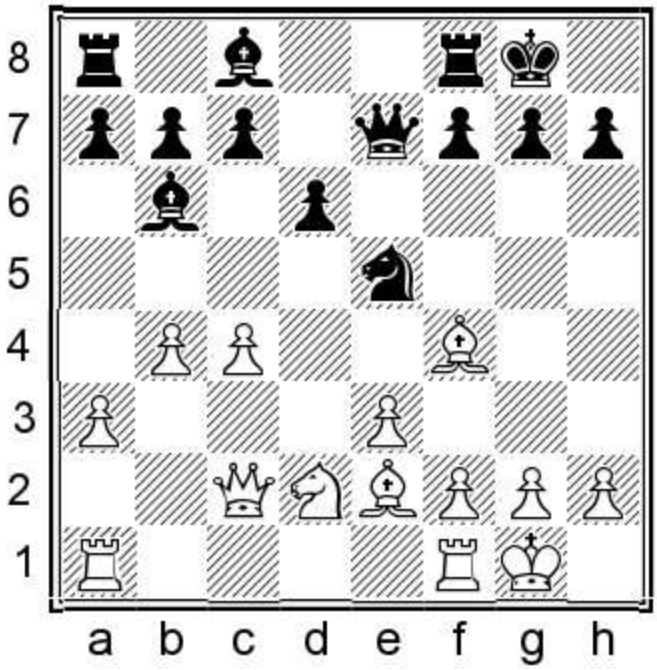
is hardly an improvement) 13...bxc5 14.b4 ♘d7 15.♗g4 when White certainly has the easier game and has achieved a healthy score, but I am not convinced that his advantage is all that significant after 15...♖e8.

11...♗xd2

Black may also preserve his bishop with:

11...♗a5 12.b4 ♗b6 13.♕c2

Taylor reaches this position via a different move order in his book, and claims equality on the basis that Black has not had to give up the bishop pair. In reality though, White's position is much easier to play: his queenside pawns have been mobilized and Black's dark-squared bishop is not well placed, being a constant target for c4-c5 ideas. Here is a model game:



13...♗d7 14.♖fd1

14.♖ac1N is also worth considering.

14...♖fe8

14...♖ae8 occurred in Buys – De Groot, Netherlands 1987, when 15.♘f3!N would have been similar to the game below. Here Black has a rook on f8 instead of a8, which means White has to be slightly more vigilant about a kingside attack with ...g5 and ...f5, but White would have to do something seriously wrong for this plan to ever become effective. And on the flip side, the absence of a black rook on a8 makes his queenside pawns more vulnerable, so White is undoubtedly better here too.

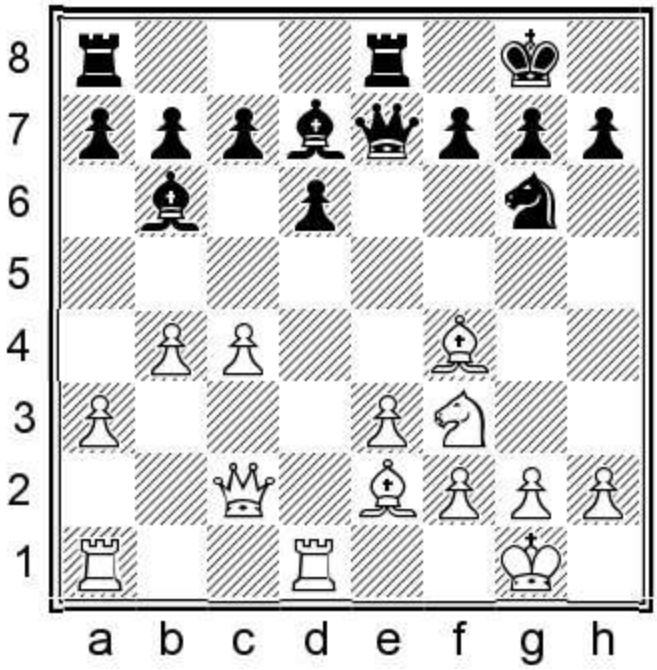
15.♘f3!

We saw this idea in variation A1 and it works well here too.

15...♘g6

The main point of White's last move can be seen in the following variation: 15...♘xf3†N 16.♗xf3 ♗c6 17.♖ac1! ♗xf3 18.gxf3 ♖ad8 19.a4 c6 20.a5 ♗c7 21.♗g3± With nice pressure for White.

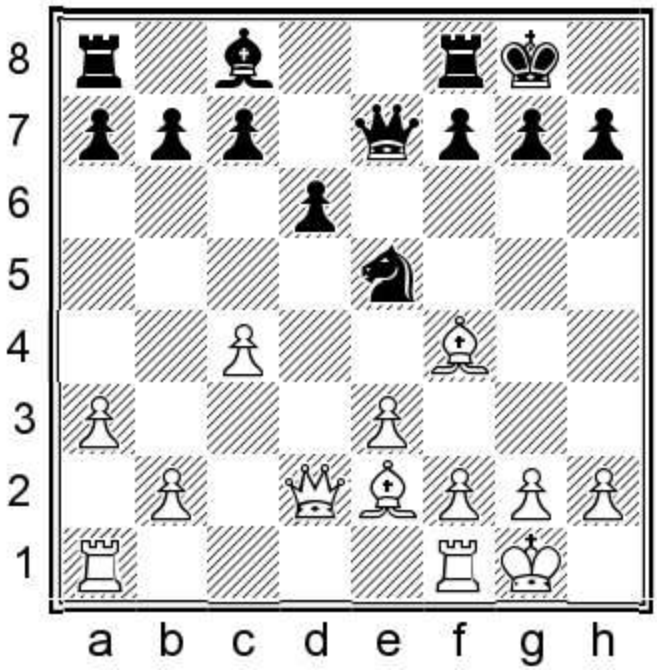
chesstouring.com



16.♗g3 h5?! 17.c5! dxc5 18.bxc5 ♗a5 19.h4 c6 20.♘g5

White was close to winning in Halliwell – Harding, corr. 2011.

12.♕xd2



12...b6

This is Black's best and most popular continuation. Many other moves have been tried but there is no need for heavy details, as White's play is simple: he enjoys the bishop-pair advantage and an obvious plan of advancing the queenside pawns to open lines and create weaknesses.

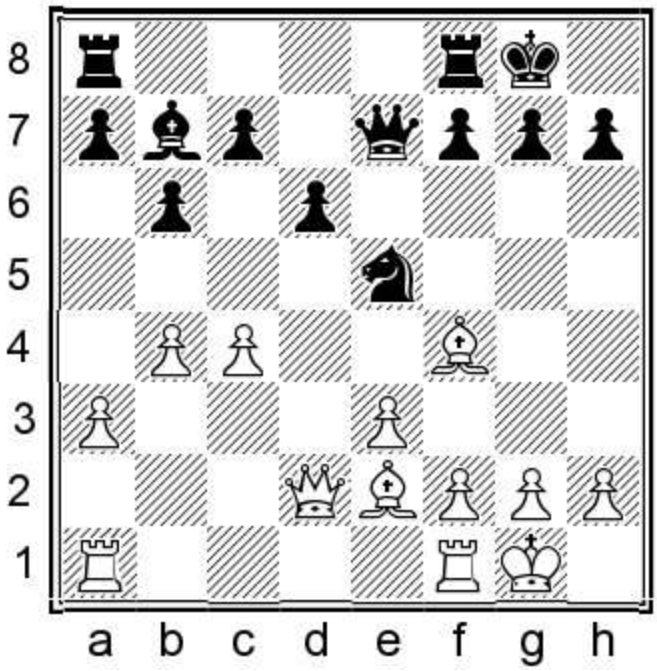
Black's second-most-popular continuation has been 12...♗e6 but White gets a most enjoyable position after: 13.c5! ♖fd8 14.cxd6 cxd6 (14...♖xd6?! 15.♕c3 wins a pawn) 15.♖ac1± With the bishop pair and an

chesstouring.com

isolated d-pawn as a target, White should be happy.

13.b4 ♗b7

This position has been reached in a few hundred games, and White has tried many moves with generally good results. However, my favourite idea is an unusual one which puts Black under immediate pressure:



14.a4!

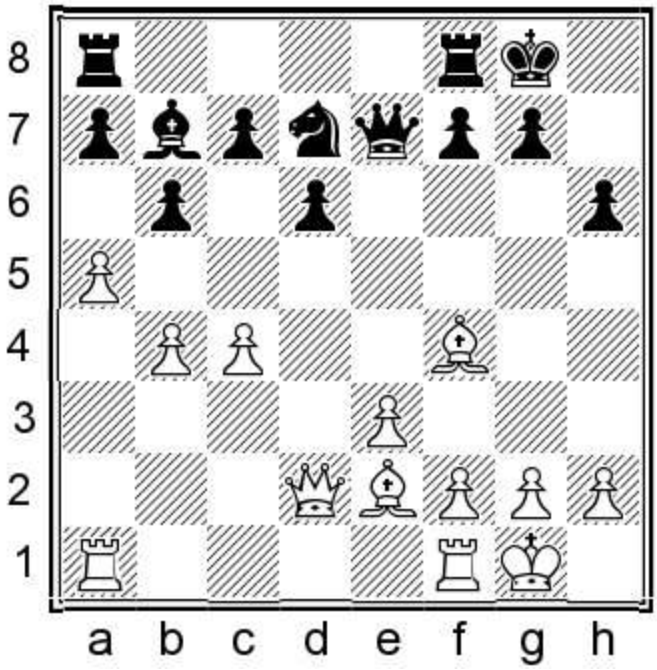
This has only ever been tried in two correspondence games.

14...a5

This is obviously the critical reply.

In the first game Black played 14...♘d7, allowing White to press ahead on the queenside. 15.a5 h6 This was Wilterdink – Abels, Netherlands 1988. White is clearly better after any sensible move but my favourite idea is:

chesstouring.com



16.f3!?N 16...♖fe8 17.e4± Gaining additional space and stabilizing White's advantage.

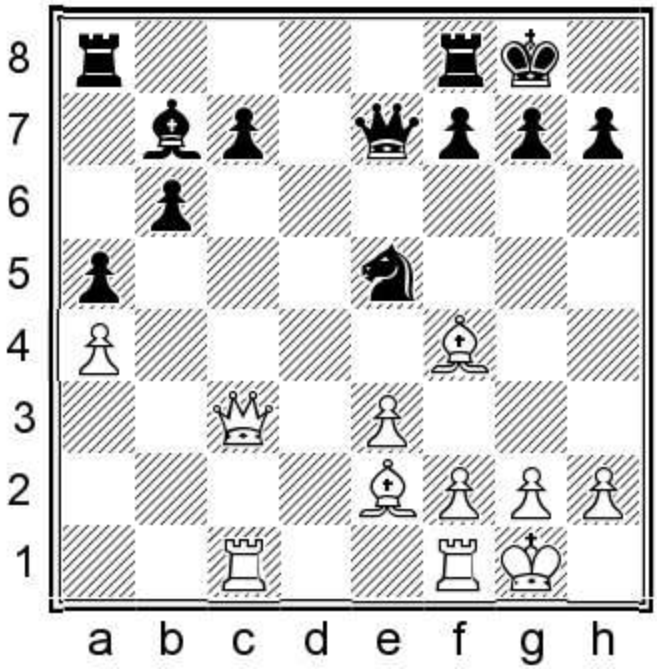
15.c5!

White seizes the opportunity to smash open the queenside. If it were not for this resource, his previous move would have been a mistake.

15...dxc5 16.bxc5 bxc5N

This seems slightly more resilient than the game continuation, although Black is still in trouble.

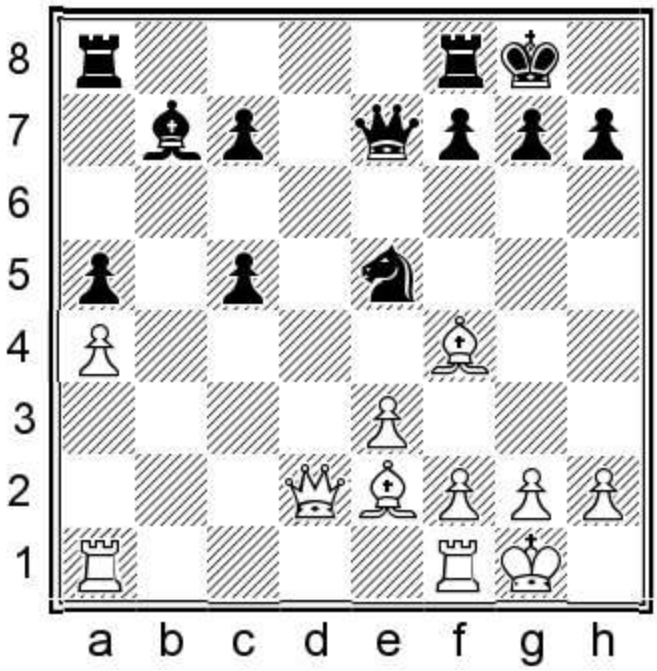
16...♕xc5 17.♖ac1 ♕e7 18.♕c3 makes things easier for White. The game continued:



18...f6 (18...♘g6 19.♕xc7 ♖fc8 20.♕xe7 ♘xe7 21.♗c7! ♘d5 22.♗e5± leads to an unpleasant endgame

chesstouring.com

for Black, as White is likely to win the b6-pawn soon) 19.♕xc7 ♕xc7 20.♖xc7 ♗d5 21.♖fc1 ♖ad8 22.f3 White was much better in Zaas – Shannon, corr. 2016.



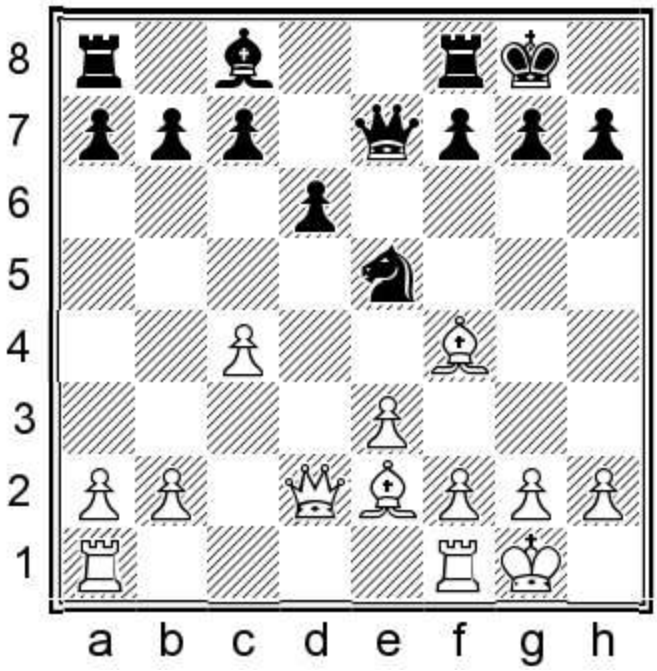
17.♖fc1 ♖fe8 18.♕c3 c4 19.♗xe5!

19.♗xc4 ♘xc4 20.♕xc4± is certainly no fun for Black either, but the text move is even stronger.

19...♕xe5 20.♗xc4±

Black queenside pawn structure is ruined, so White's advantage is obvious.

B4) 10...♗xd2 11.♕xd2 d6



As mentioned earlier, this has been Black's most popular continuation, probably because a lot of

chesstouring.com

players prefer to avoid the plan of ♘b3 and a2-a3, which will lead to a damaging of Black's pawn structure. However, as we saw earlier, I am no longer recommending that plan, so the upshot is that we effectively gain a tempo over variation B3 above, as we have not had to play a2-a3 to provoke the exchange on d2.

12.b4

Preparing for c4-c5. You hardly have to know any more theoretical details, as it's obvious that White has fine prospects for the reason explained above. Still, there have been a lot of games played from here, so I will include some further analysis to show how White can maximize his chances.

B41) 12...b6 and **B42)** 12..a5 are Black's most popular choices.

Another plausible continuation is:

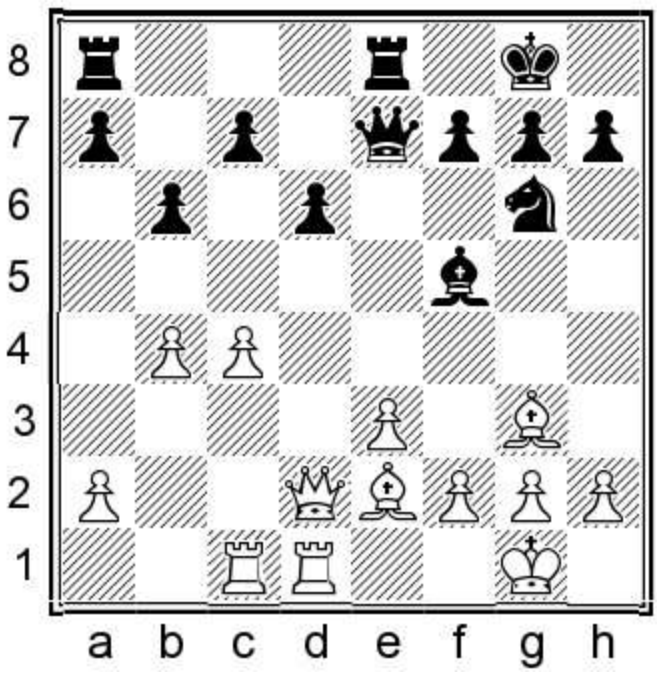
12...♖e8 13.♖fd1 ♘g6

13...b6 runs into our thematic plan: 14.c5! dxc5 15.bxc5 ♗b7 (after 15...♕xc5 16.♖ac1 ♕e7 17.♕c3 Black loses the c7-pawn) 16.♕c3 ♘g6 17.♗g3± White's bishop pair and queenside pressure yielded a clear advantage in M.V. Garcia – Iacobitz, corr. 2007.

14.♗g3 ♗f5 15.♖ac1

Bringing the last piece into play before opening the queenside.

15...b6



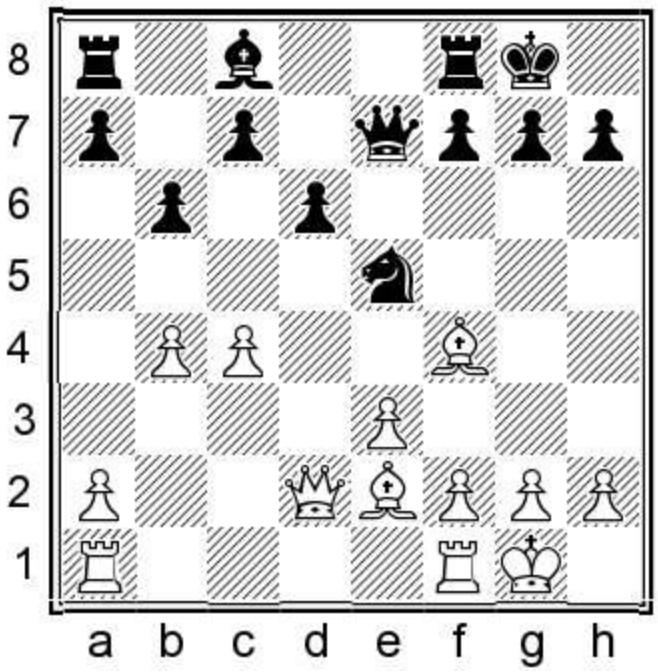
This position has been reached in two games, but for some reason White never followed up with:

16.c5!N 16...dxc5 17.bxc5 ♖ed8 18.♕c3

White accomplishes his main strategic plan and enjoys an obvious advantage.

B41) 12...b6

chesstouring.com



13.c5 ♗b7

Other moves are no better, for instance:

13...dxc5? loses material after 14.♕d5 ♗g4 15.f3, as has occurred in a couple of games.

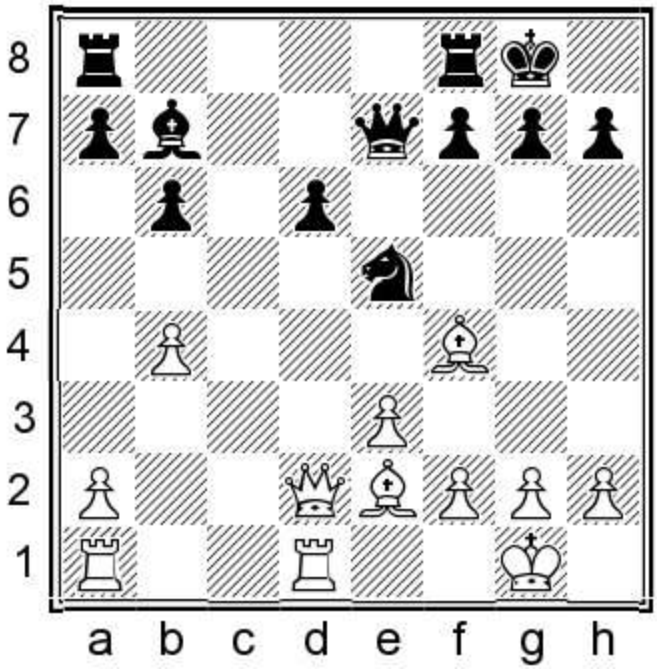
13...bxc5 14.bxc5 ♖d8 15.cxd6 ♖xd6 16.♕a5± led to serious problems for Black in Dominguez – Hartman, Argentina 2001.

13...♖d8 14.cxd6 ♖xd6 (obviously White is positionally much better after 14...cxd6 15.♖ac1 ♗b7 16.♖fd1± which has occurred in several games) 15.♕c3 f6 16.♖ac1 ♖c6 17.♕b2 Black was under serious pressure in Damjanovic – Dinic, Senta 2006.

14.cxd6 cxd6 15.♖fd1

White has an obvious positional plus, with the bishop pair and a better pawn structure. One model game continued:

chesstouring.com



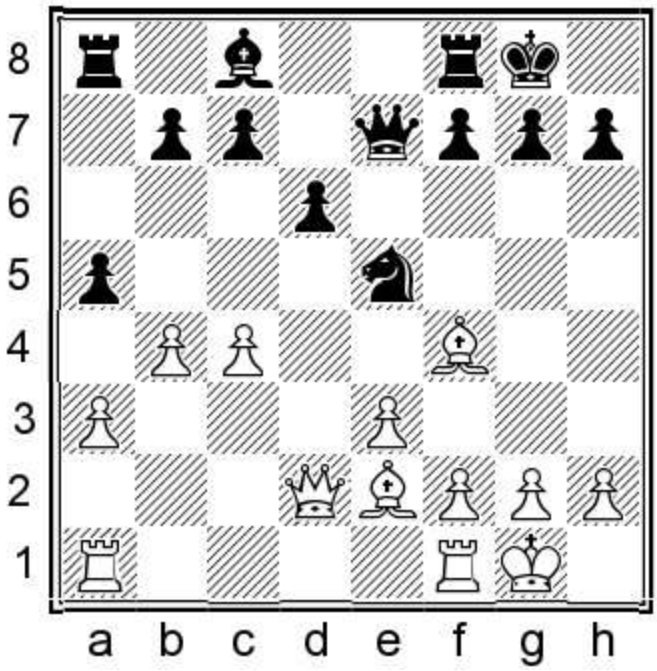
15...♖fd8 16.a4!

White builds on his other advantages and seizes the initiative on the queenside as well.

16...♘g6 17.♗g3 ♘h4 18.a5±

The g2-pawn is untouchable, so White comfortably develops his play; his advantage was clear in Hoegerl – Schoemig, email 2003.

B42) 12...a5 13.a3



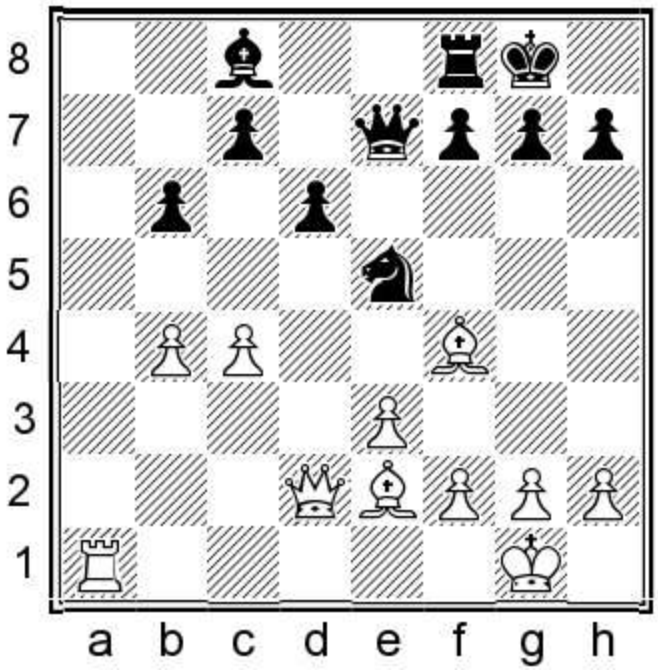
At least this way Black provokes a2-a3, partially making up for the loss of time compared with variation B3. White still has an excellent position though.

chesstouring.com

13...♖d8

The main alternative is:

13...axb4 14.axb4 ♖xa1 15.♖xa1 b6



16.♗g3!

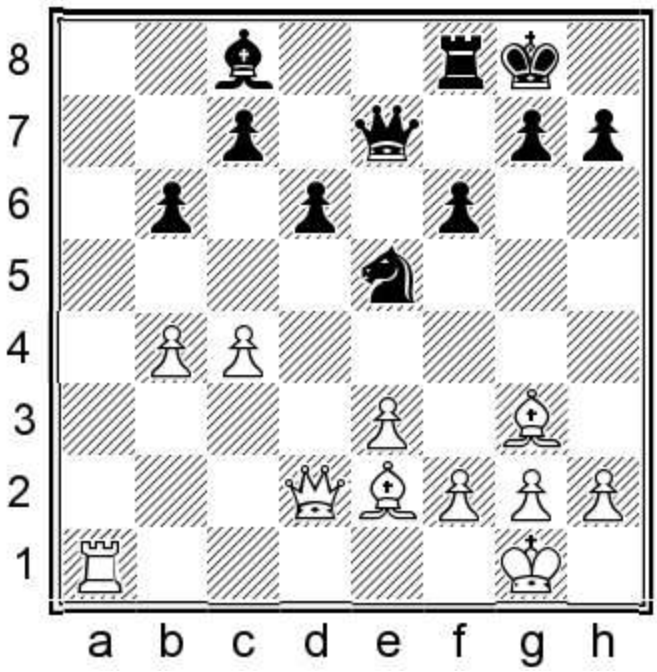
A fine prophylactic move.

At first I thought 16.c5!?N appeared strong, but I realized that after 16...dxc5 17.bxc5 bxc5 (but not 17...♕xc5? 18.♖c1 ♕e7 19.♕c3 f6 20.♕xc7 ♕xc7 21.♖xc7± with a difficult endgame for Black) 18.♖a7 c4 19.♕c3 (or 19.♕d5 ♘d3) 19...♘d3 20.♕xc4 ♘xf4 21.♕xf4 ♕d6! White does not have much advantage and Black should be able to hold.

16...f6

This position was reached in Gyimesi – Nevednichy, Naykanizsa 2003. I like the following aggressive idea:

chesstouring.com

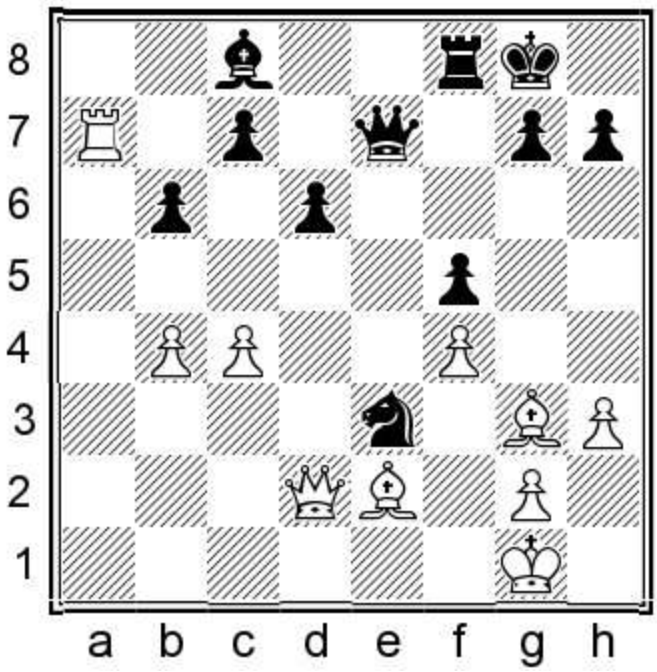


17.f4!?N 17...♘g4

17...♘f7 18.♖a7! looks annoying for Black.

18.♖a7 f5 19.h3! ♘xe3

After 19...♘f6 20.♗h4 White has serious positional pressure.



20.♗f3

Black's knight is in a precarious position, especially taking into account the following line:

20...♘xc4? 21.♗d5† ♗e6 22.♕e2+–

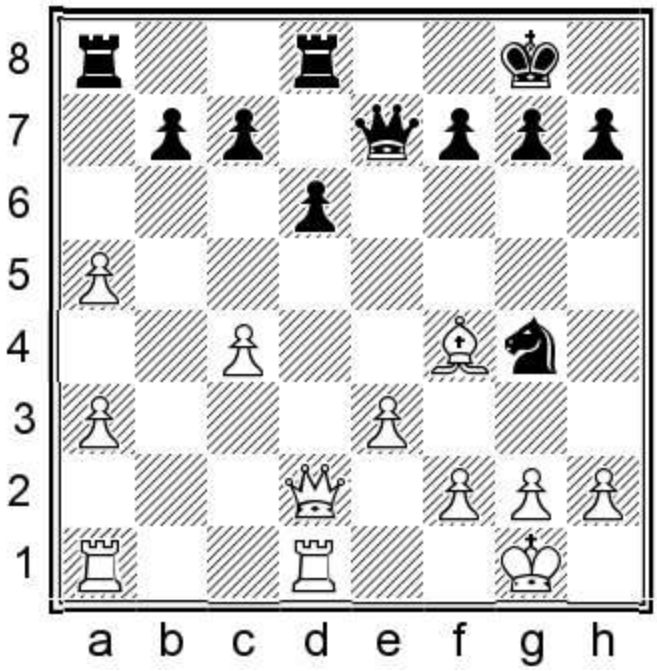
Winning a piece.

14.♖fd1 ♗e6

14...♗g4!? is an attempt to provoke f2-f3, but White has a more challenging answer: 15.♗xg4 ♘xg4

chesstouring.com

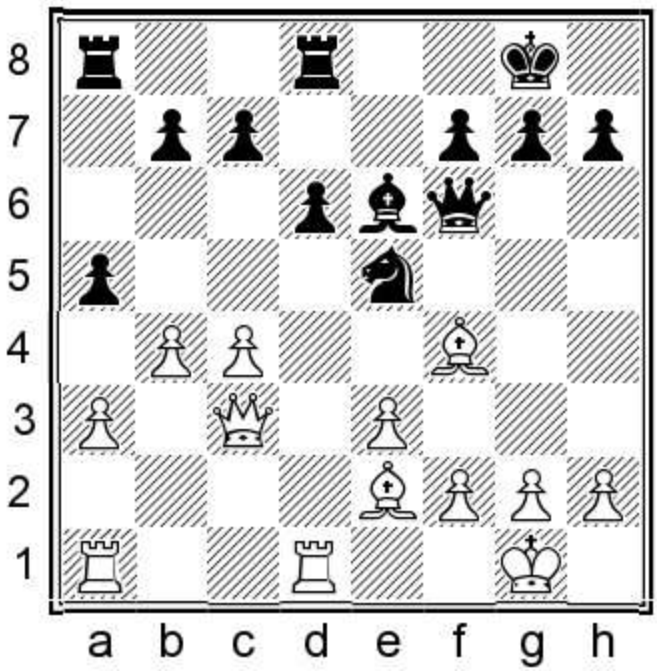
16.bxa5! It will not be easy for Black to regain the pawn. There is only one game from this position, which continued:



16...g5 17.♗g3 h5 18.h3 ♘f6 19.f3 ♘d7 20.♖ab1 ♘c5 21.e4 White was much better in Bonoldi – Mann, email 2001.

15.♕c3 ♕f6

Here I propose a new idea.



16.♖ac1!?N

16.♗xe5 ♕xe5 17.♕xe5 dxe5 18.♖xd8† ♖xd8 19.bxa5 has led to two wins for White, but I believe Black should be able to hold the endgame with accurate defence.

chesstouring.com

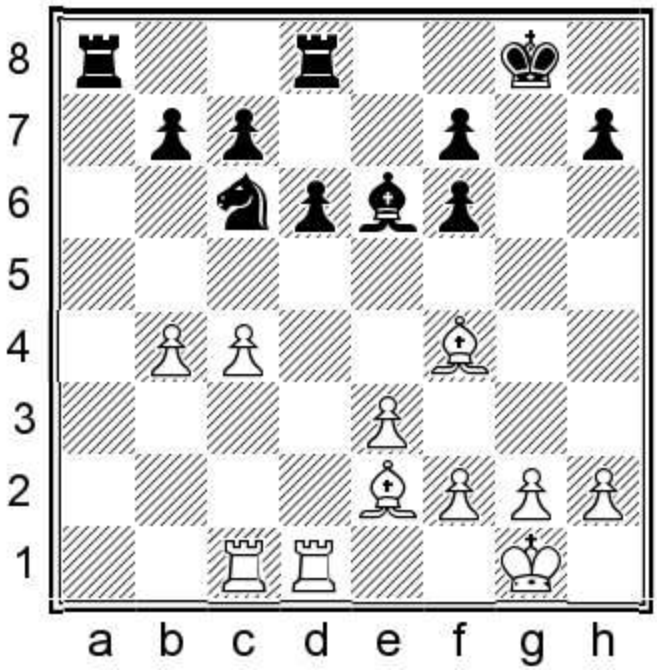
16...axb4 17.axb4 ♘c6

17...♖a2 is well met by 18.♗xe5! dxe5 19.♖xd8† ♕xd8 20.♖d1 ♕e8 21.♗f3 and White wins a pawn.

18.♕xf6

18.♕e1 ♖a4?! gives Black a decent position.

18...gxf6



19.c5 ♘xb4 20.cxd6 cxd6 21.♖xd6±

Despite the simplifications, the arising endgame is unpleasant for Black, due to the vulnerability of his king and his numerous pawn weaknesses, not to mention White's strong pair of bishops.

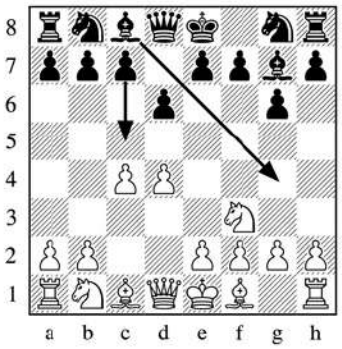
Conclusion

This chapter has concluded our coverage of the Budapest Gambit by examining several set-ups after 9...d6 and 9...0-0. Each move order has its own nuances but in general I would suggest paying close attention to the c4-c5 break, as we saw several lines where it could be played as a powerful (and usually temporary) sacrifice to seize the initiative. There are a few lines, such as 9...0-0 10.0-0 ♘g6, where Black avoids giving us the advantage of the bishop pair, but White keeps some advantage regardless. Still, this may be a better try for him than the most popular lines involving an early ...♗xd2, as White's plan of b2-b4 and c4-c5 may turn the unopposed dark-squared bishop into a powerful weapon.

chesstouring.com



Modern Defence



4...c5 & 4...♗g4

Variation Index

1.d4 g6 2.c4 ♗g7 3.♘f3 d6

4.♘c3

A) 4...c5 5.d5 ♗xc3† 6.bxc3 367

A1) 6...♕a5 367

A2) 6...f5 369

B) 4...♗g4 5.e3 372

B1) 5...♘d7 373

B2) 5...c5 6.♗e2 374

B21) 6...♘c6 375

B22) 6...cxd4 376

B3) 5...♘c6 6.♗e2 380

B31) 6...♘f6 380

B32) 6...e5 381

B4) 5...♘f6 6.h3 383

B41) 6...♗xf3 383

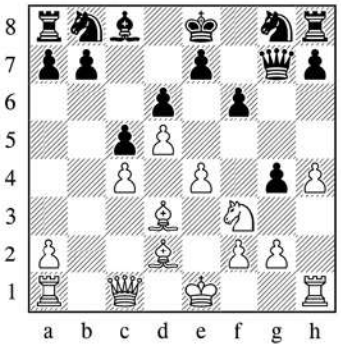
B42) 6...♗f5 7.g4! 385

B421) 7...♗c8 385

B422) 7...♗d7 387

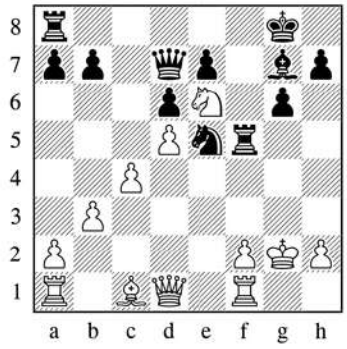
chesstouring.com

A1) note to 7...♘f6



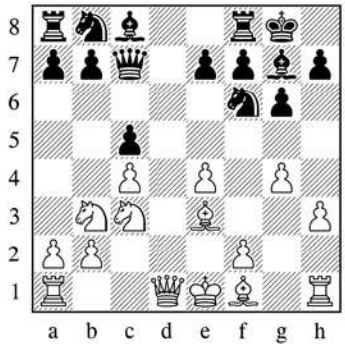
12.♘g5!N

B22) after 18...♖xf5



19.f4!N

B421) after 12...♕c7



13.f4!N

1.d4 g6 2.c4 ♗g7 3.♘f3 d6

We have already started to cover this move order in Chapter 8. In this section we will deal with set-ups more traditionally associated with the Modern Defence, rather than those where Black attempts to transpose to a Leningrad Dutch with ...f5.

4.♘c3

As I mentioned in Chapter 8, I am no longer recommending 4.g3 on account of 4...c5, since 5.d5 b5 leads to a line of the Benko which falls outside of the present repertoire.

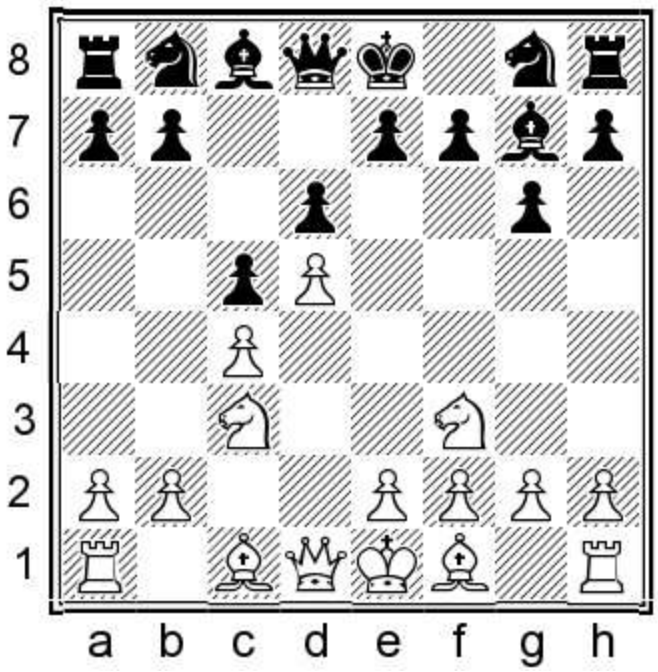
This chapter will deal with the two important options of **A)** 4...c5 and **B)** 4...♗g4.

4...e5 is covered in the next chapter.

4...♘f6 5.g3 will transpose to our King's Indian coverage from *Volume 2A*. Similarly, 4...♘d7 5.g3 will lead soon enough to any of the King's Indian (after 5...♘gf6), the Modern (after 5...e5 followed by ...♘e7), or the Reluctant Benoni (after 5...c5 6.d5).

A) 4...c5 5.d5

chesstouring.com



5...♗xc3†

This is the only serious option which we need to analyse.

5...♘f6 6.g3 is a Benoni and 5...♘d7 6.g3 will inevitably transpose somewhere.

5...f5 6.g3 also has no independent significance: 6...♘f6 7.♗g2 leads back to variation B2 of Chapter 8, while 6...♗xc3† 7.bxc3 transposes to variation A2 below.

6.bxc3

Now **A1)** 6...♕a5 is a slightly dubious alternative to the more popular **A2)** 6...f5.

A1) 6...♕a5

This seems inaccurate, since Black doesn't really want to take on c3; or to put it another way, I would be happy to give up this pawn in order to open the long diagonal for my bishop.

7.e4! ♘f6

As mentioned above, I would welcome the following pawn grab:

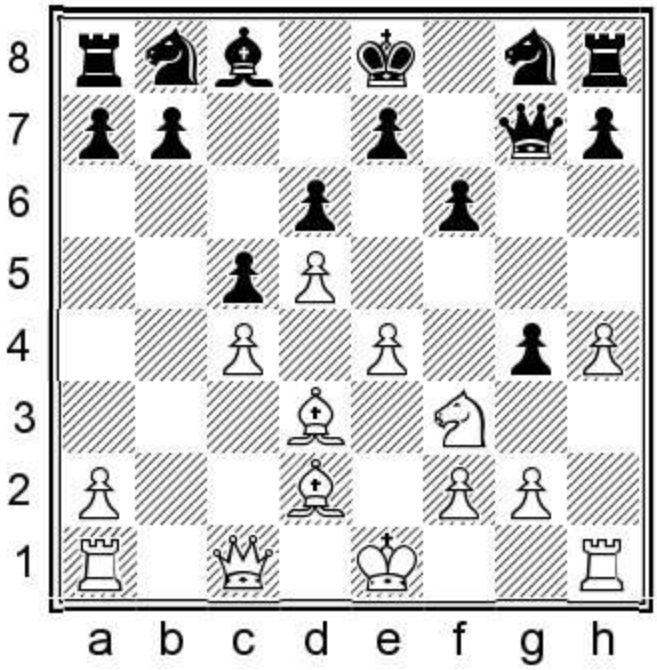
7...♕xc3† 8.♗d2 ♕g7 9.♗d3

I only found one game here, which we will follow for a few more moves.

9...f6 10.♕c1 g5 11.h4 g4

Fontaine – Chatalbashev, Val Thorens 2007. Here I found a remarkable improvement:

chesstouring.com

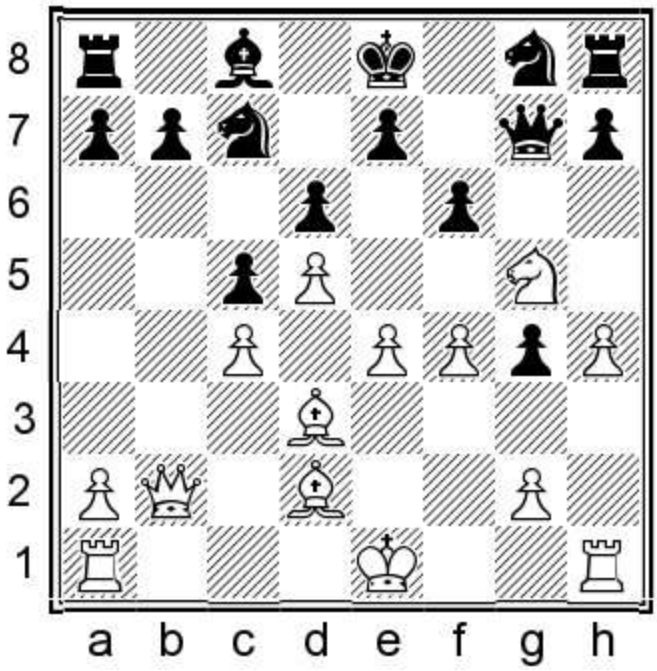


12.♘g5!N 12...♘a6

12...fxg5?! looks too dangerous in view of 13.♗c3 ♘f6 14.hxg5↑ with a powerful initiative for White.

13.♕b2 ♘c7 14.f4!

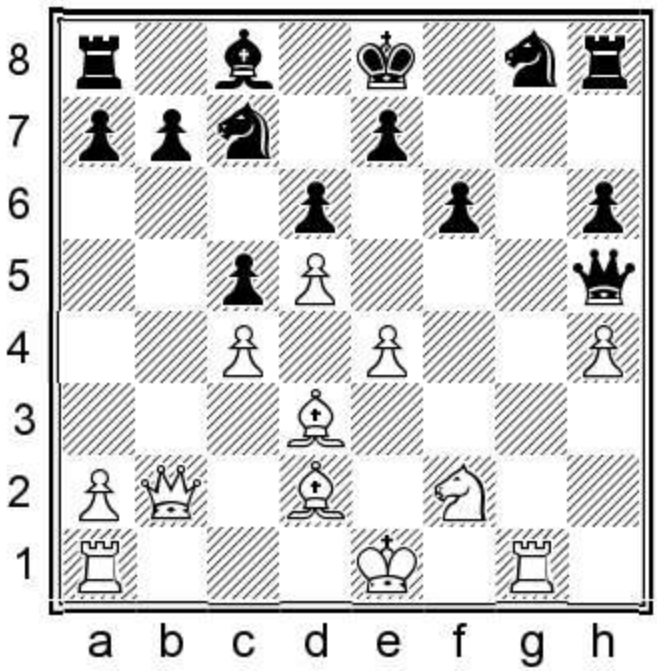
White has excellent prospects, as shown by the following illustrative line.



14...gxf3 15.gxf3 h6 16.♘h3 ♕g3† 17.♘f2 ♕xf3 18.♖g1 ♕h5

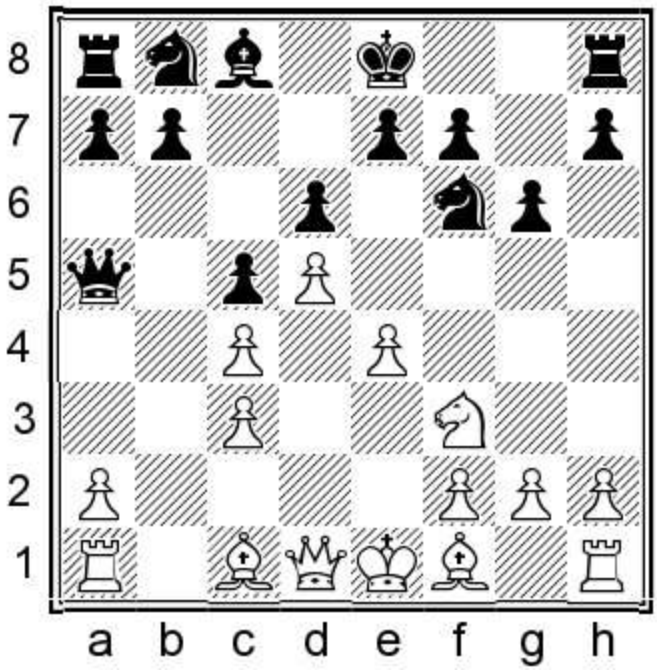
White threatened 19.♗e2, trapping the queen.

chesstouring.com



19.♗e2 ♕f7 20.♘d3!

The knight is heading for f4, with amazing compensation for the two pawns.



8.♕c2 ♘xe4 9.♗d3 ♘f6

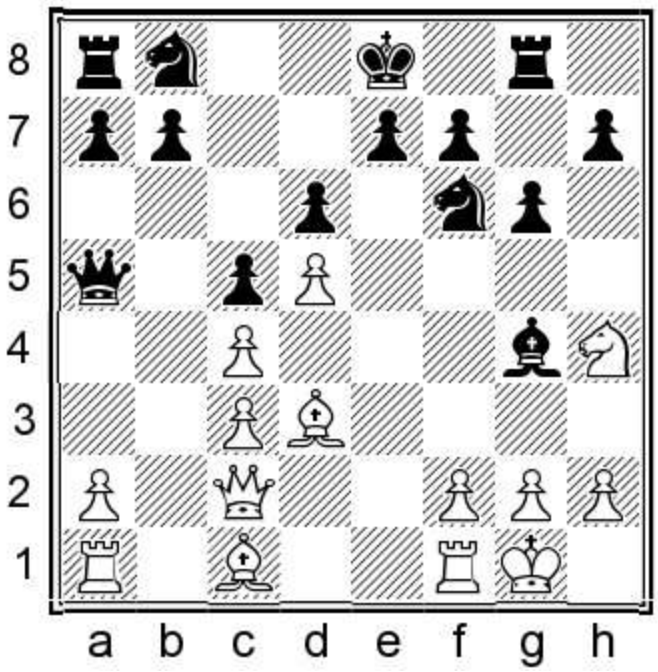
Black has tried 9...f5 a few times but it is positionally risky. 10.0-0 ♘d7 I found two games from here, with Black having a positive score. However, the natural 11.♗h6N 11...♘df6 12.♖ae1 ♗d7 13.♗xe4! enables White to seize the initiative after both 13...♘xe4 14.♘g5 and 13...fxe4 14.♘g5.

10.0-0 0-0

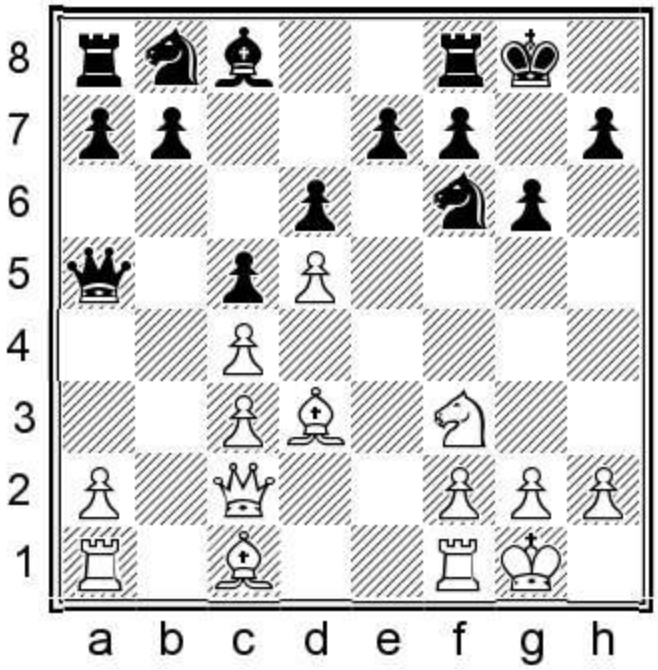
10...♗g4 fails to impress after 11.♘h4! when Black's bishop is misplaced and his position is not easy to handle. For instance: 11...♖g8 (11...0-0 12.♗h6 ♖e8 13.f4 ♔h8 14.f5 gave White a crushing attack in

chesstouring.com

Kengis – Glicenstein, Paris 2004)



12.♗g5 ♘bd7 13.h3 ♗f5 14.♗xf5 gxf5 15.♗xf6 ♘xf6 16.♘xf5 White was close to winning in P.H. Nielsen – Cicak, Sweden 2011.



11.♗h6!N

Surprisingly, nobody has played this natural move in more than twenty games.

11...♖e8 12.h3

White has powerful long-term compensation, so it's no problem to invest a tempo to prevent ...♘g4. The main plan from here will be to double the rooks along the e-file.

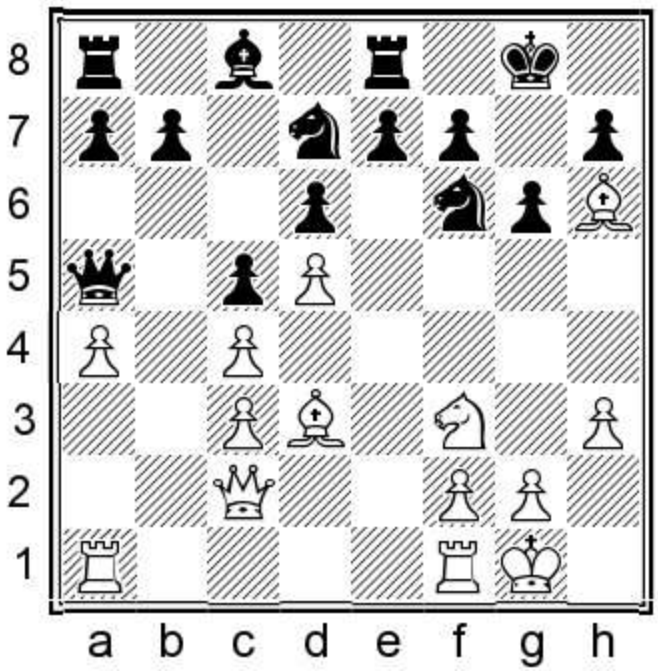
chesstouring.com

12...♘bd7

Black's attempt to get counterplay on the queenside by means of 12...b5!? 13.cxb5 a6 is thwarted by 14.b6! ♕xb6 15.c4 and White is firmly in control.

13.a4!

Preventing any possibility of counterplay with ...b5. White's compensation is overwhelming; Black is cramped and it is hard for him to oppose White's plan of seizing the initiative on the kingside and e-file. A good illustrative line continues:

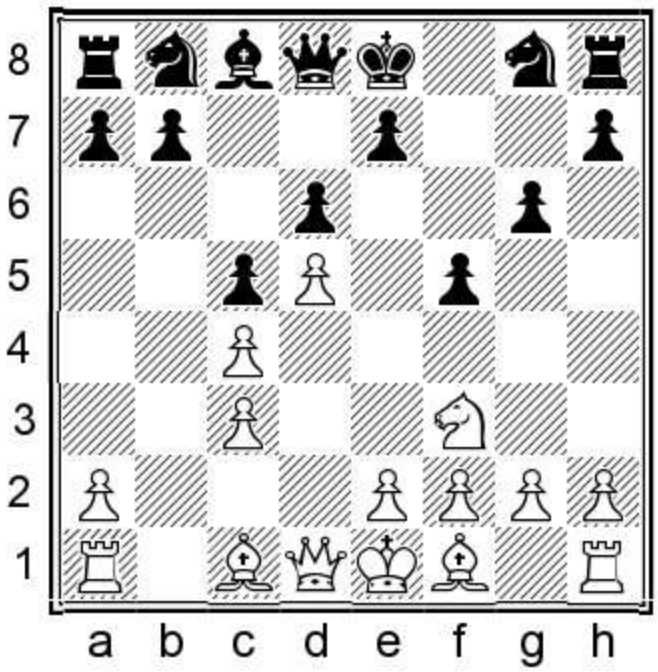


13...♘e5 14.♘xe5 dxe5 15.♖ae1! ♕c7 16.f4 e4 17.♗xe4 ♘xe4 18.♕xe4

Black has a hard time coping with White's initiative.

A2) 6...f5

chesstouring.com



This is more challenging than the previous line, and can be regarded as an improved version for Black of a well-known variation without the ♘f3 and ...d6 moves. Nevertheless, I have always had the impression that Black's scheme is strategically risky and that accurate analysis should reveal White's advantage.

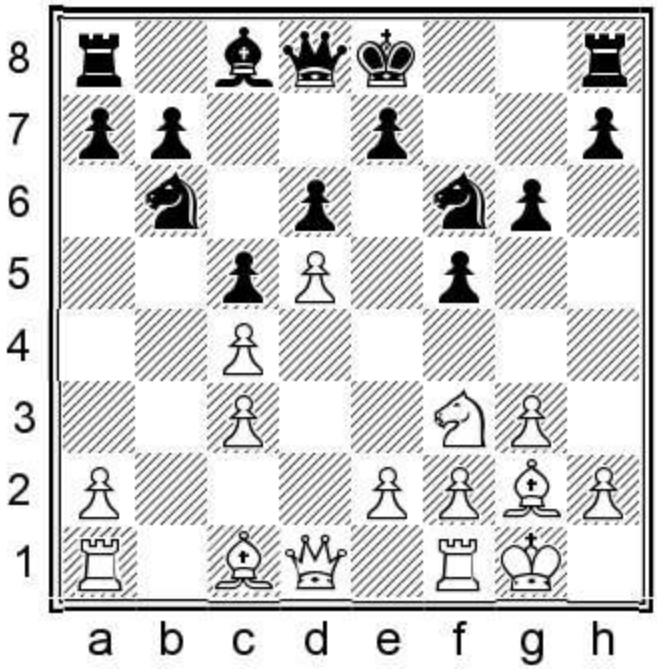
7.g3

Even in this unusual structure, I still favour the fianchetto!

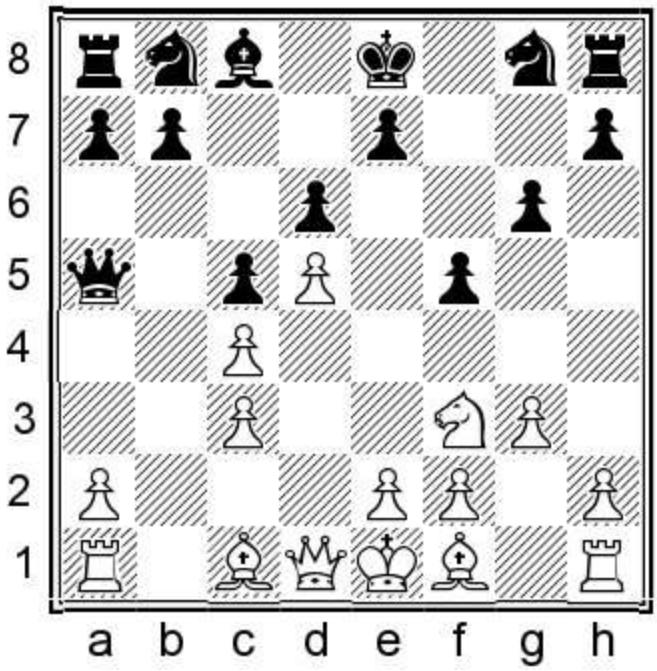
7...♕a5

Another obvious continuation for Black is: 7...♘f6 8.♗g2 ♘bd7 (8...♕a5 9.♘d2 is our main line) 9.0-0 ♘b6 (once again 9...♕a5 10.♘d2 reaches our main line) Now in Temirbayev – Touze, Shenyang 1999, White should have played:

chesstouring.com



10.♗h6N 10...♘g4 11.♗f4 0-0 (other options such as 11...♗d7 12.♕d3 and 11...h6 12.h4 also look promising for White) 12.♕d3 White slowly but surely prepares the advantageous e2-e4 break.



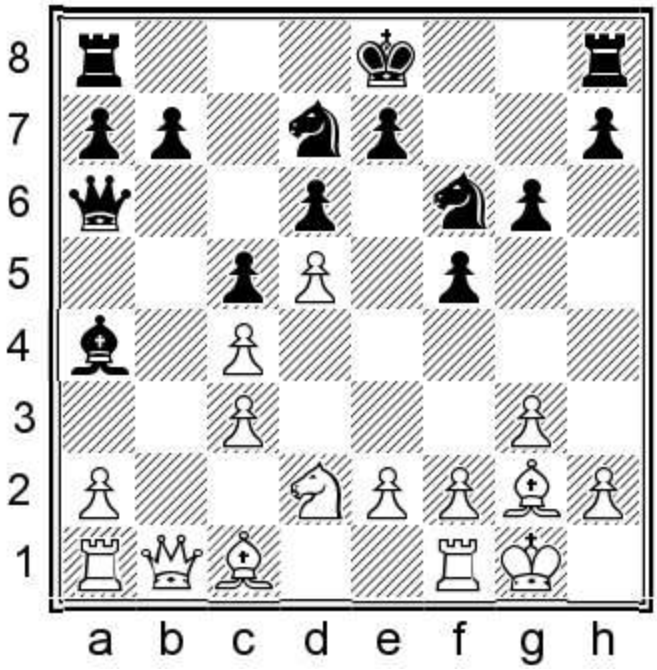
8.♘d2!

Just as in the previous variation, I am not at all worried about losing the c3-pawn, so there is no reason to waste time defending it.

8...♘f6

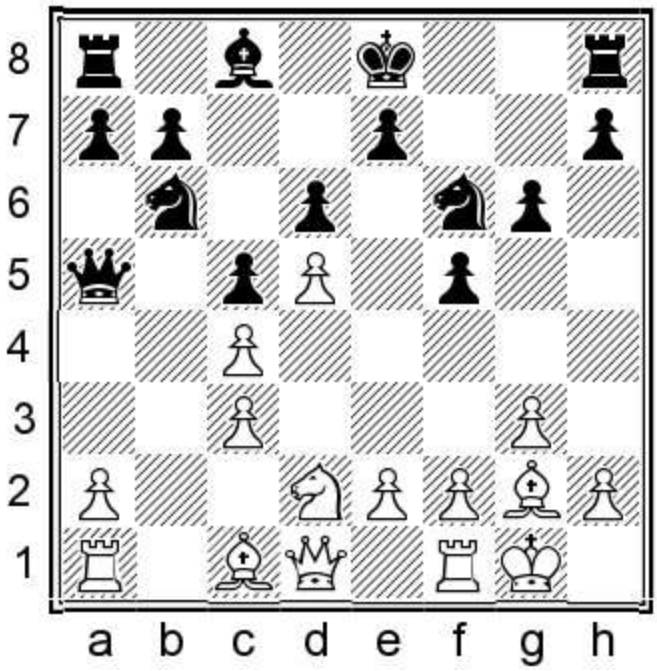
8...♗d7 occurred in Bernasek – Vokac, Czech Republic 2018, and now I like the following idea for White: 9.♕b3!N Attacking the b7-pawn. 9...♕a6 10.♗g2 (10.a4!? also deserves consideration) 10...♗a4 11.♕b1 ♘f6 12.0-0 ♘bd7

chesstouring.com



13.e4 This comes with great effect. 13...fxe4 14.♘xe4 White is better after both 14...0-0-0 15.♖e1 and 14...♕xc4 15.♖e1 0-0 16.♗h6↑.

9.♗g2 ♘bd7 10.0-0 ♘b6



11.♖e1

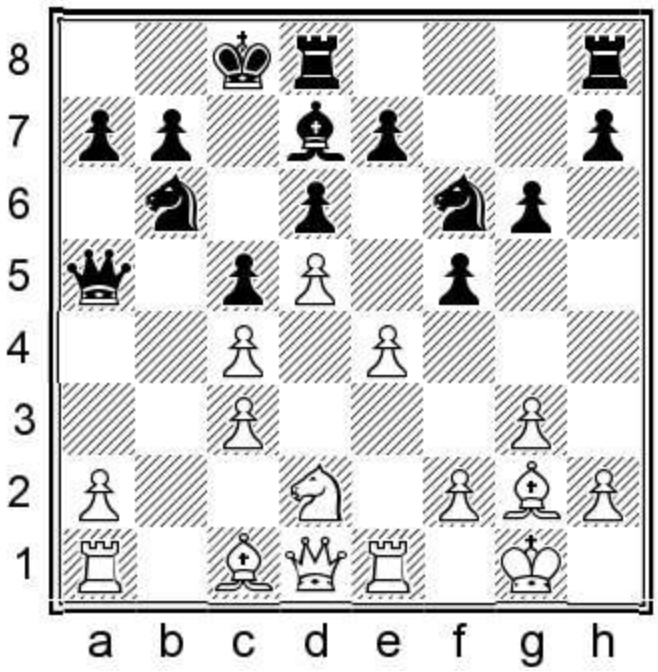
Useful preparation, ensuring that the e2-e4 break will pack more punch.

11...0-0

Black does not fare any better after other moves.

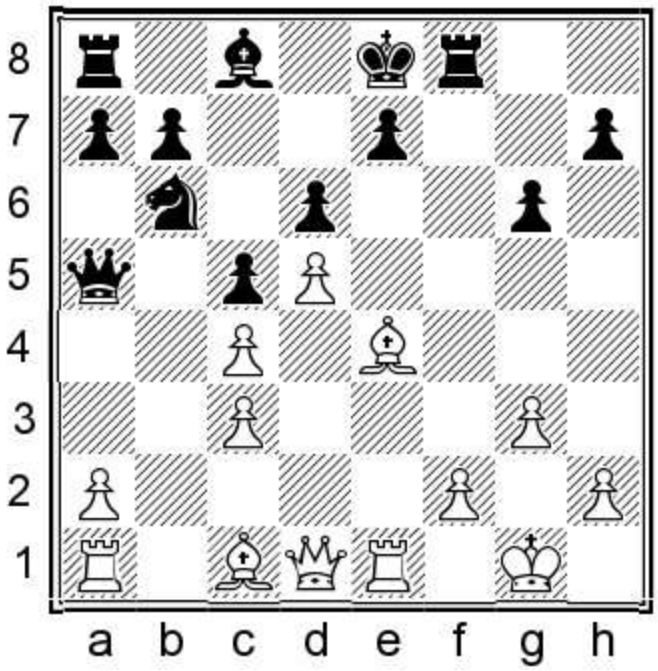
chesstouring.com

11...♗d7 12.e4 0-0-0 runs into:



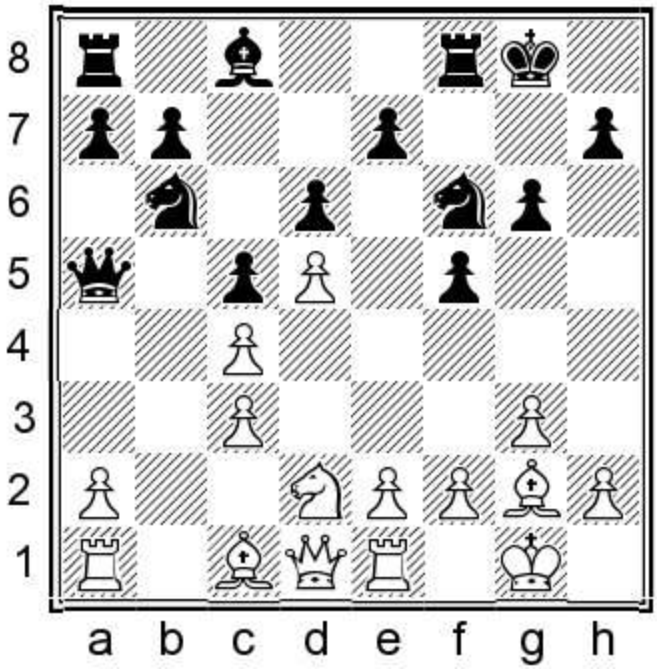
13.e5! dxe5 14.♘b3 ♕a4 (14...♕xc3? 15.♗a3 is even worse for Black) 15.♖xe5 ♘xc4 16.♖xe7± White was much better in Kuzubov – Shtembuliak, Rivne 2016.

11...♖f8!? looks a bit artificial. 12.e4 fxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♗xe4 (there is no reason to allow Black to gain time with 14.♖xe4 ♗f5)



14...♖f7 (as always, 14...♕xc3 promises White rich compensation: 15.♗g5 ♖f7 16.♗d3⩲) 15.♗f4 ♖xf4 A desperate attempt to change the character of the game. 16.gxf4 ♕xc3 Black would have the makings of nice compensation if his king was safe; but as things stand, 17.♕e2 ♕g7 18.a4 a5 19.♖a3 gave White a decisive advantage in Kuzubov – Marcelin, Chartres 2017.

chesstouring.com



12.e4!N

White should take an aggressive approach.

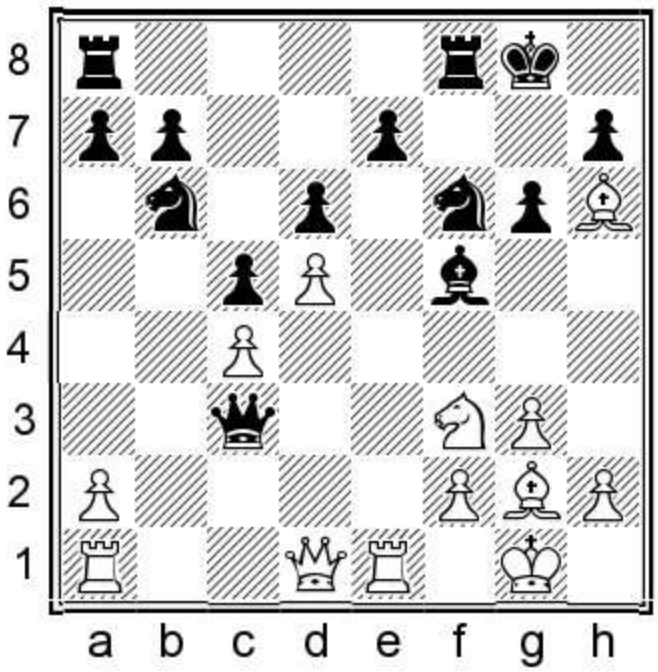
The slower 12.♕c2 ♗d7 13.e4 led to unclear play after 13...fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♘xc4 15.♗h6 ♖fe8 in Beinoras – Luch, Panevezys 2007.

12...fxe4

12...♘xe4 13.♘xe4 fxe4 is well met by: 14.♕b3! ♗f5 15.♗h6 (even better than 15.♗xe4, which transposes to the 13...♗f5 line in the notes to the main line below) 15...♖f7 16.h3± White will follow up with g3-g4, regaining the e4-pawn with a clear advantage.

12...♗d7 is a reasonable move although after 13.exf5 ♗xf5 Black might regret the loss of a tempo with the bishop. My analysis continues: 14.♘f3! ♕xc3 15.♗h6

chesstouring.com

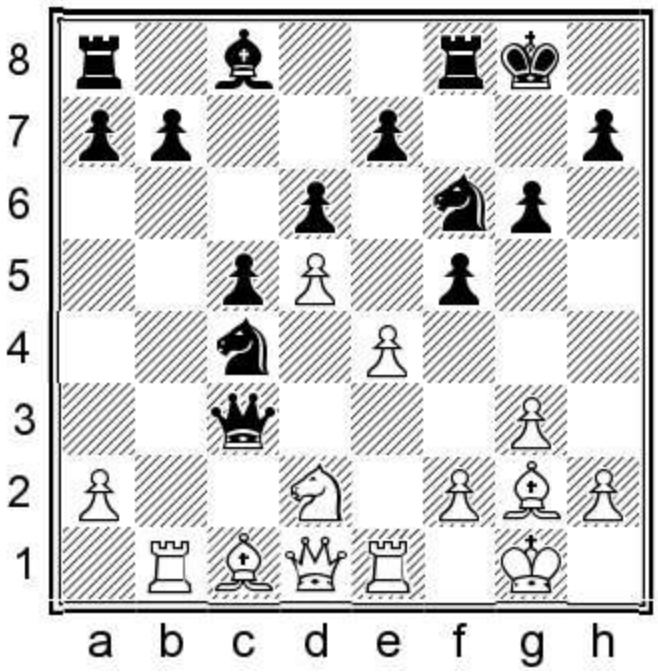


White is better after both 15...♕xc4 16.♗xf8 ♔xf8 17.♕d2! and 15...♖fe8 16.♖c1 ♕d3 17.♗d2!.

Finally, we should check the ever-risky pawn grab:

12...♕xc3 13.♖b1 ♘xc4

After 13...fxe4 14.♗b2 ♕a5 15.♖e3! ♗g4 16.♕c1 Black's position is becoming critical.

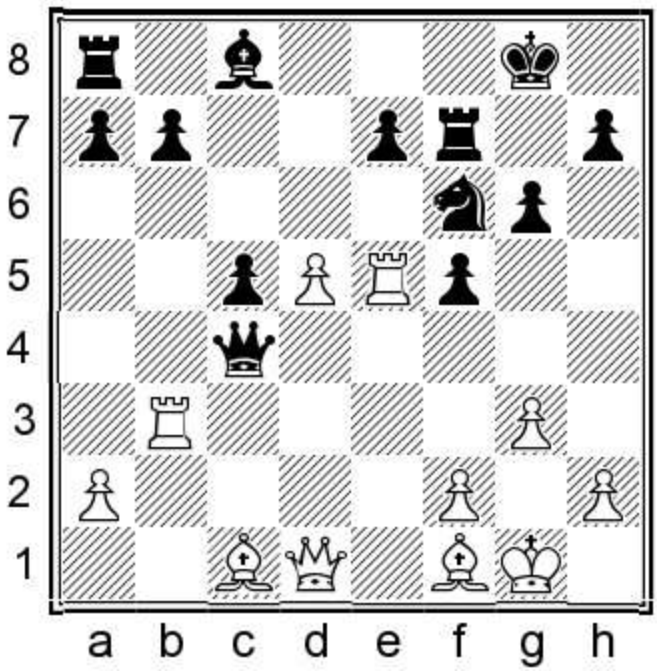


14.♖b3! ♕d4 15.♘xc4 ♕xc4 16.e5 dxe5 17.♖xe5 ♖f7

White has fantastic compensation, although it is worth pointing out the strongest continuation:

18.♗f1!

chesstouring.com

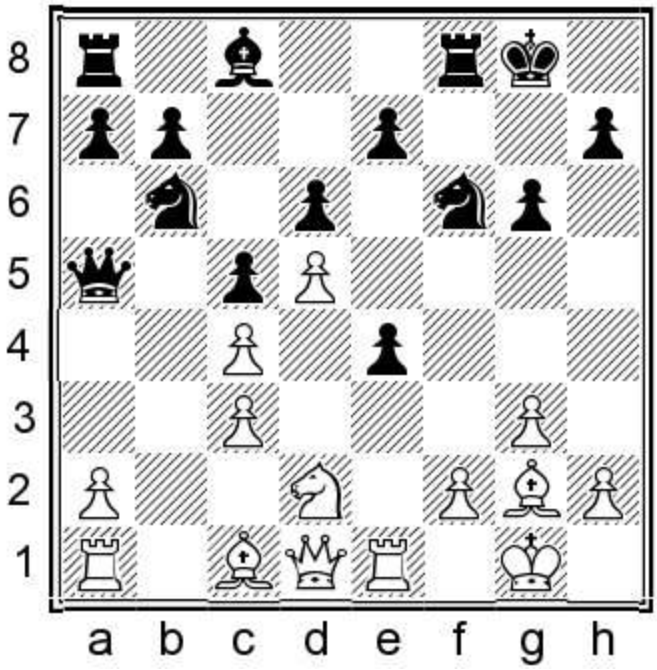


18...♕a4

18...♕d4 19.♕e1 is also unpleasant for Black.

19.d6 exd6 20.♕xd6

White has a powerful initiative.



13.♕b3!

Matters are not so clear after 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♖xe4 ♗f5 15.♖xe7 ♖ae8∓ when Black has interesting compensation.

13...♗d7

chesstouring.com

13...e5 14.dxe6 ♗xe6 15.♘xe4 ♗xc4 16.♕c2 ♘xe4 17.♗xe4 leaves Black vulnerable on the kingside.

13...♗f5 14.♘xe4 ♘xe4 15.♗xe4 ♗xe4 16.♖xe4 ♖f7 17.♗g5 ♖e8 18.♖ae1 is also clearly better for White.

14.a4!

Another important nuance, since 14.♘xe4 ♗a4 15.♕b1 ♘xe4 16.♖xe4 ♕xc3 is not so clear.

14...♖ae8

Grabbing the pawn is rather dangerous: 14...♗xa4 15.♕b2 ♖ae8 16.♗h3! and I don't see how Black is going to survive, due to the pin along the a-file and the difficulties Black faces in untangling his queenside pieces.

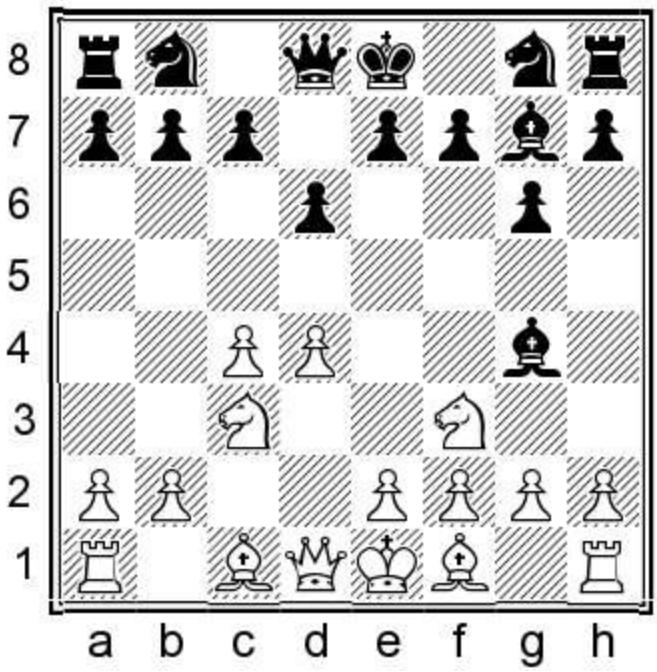
15.♘xe4 ♘xe4 16.♗xe4

White's bishop pair and safer king should tell in the long run. The critical line continues:

16...♕a6 17.♗h6 ♖f6 18.♗d3 ♘xd5 19.♗e4 ♘c7 20.♗xb7

White remains clearly better.

B) 4...♗g4



This is the only major variation in the book where we have to deal with an early ...♗g4. Compared with the 1.d4 d6 2.♘f3 ♗g4 line covered in *GM 2*, Black's options are quite limited here.

5.e3

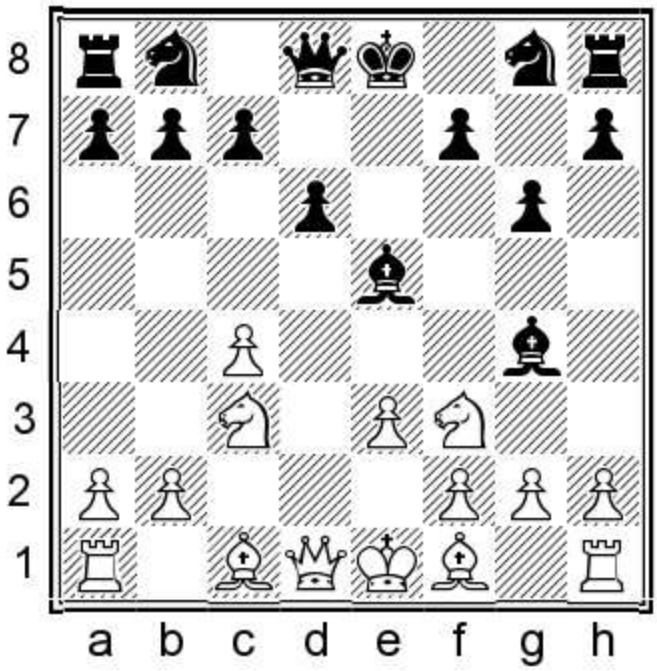
Black has tried many different ideas in this position, but I decided to focus on four main options: **B1)** 5...♘d7, **B2)** 5...c5, **B3)** 5...♘c6 and **B4)** 5...♘f6.

chesstouring.com

An inferior alternative is:

5...e5?! 6.dxe5! ♗xe5

After 6...dxe5 7.♕xd8† ♔xd8 8.♘g5 ♘h6 9.h3 ♗d7 White obviously has a promising position. I prefer the ambitious 10.b4!?N, which is untested but seems logical enough. An illustrative line is 10...f6 11.♘ge4 ♘f7 12.g4! when White is ready to meet 12...f5?! with 13.gxf5 gxf5 14.♘c5 and Black has serious problems.



7.♕b3!

This strong move forces Black to cede the bishop pair.

7...♗xf3 8.gxf3

Black's position is quite problematic, as the following examples demonstrate.

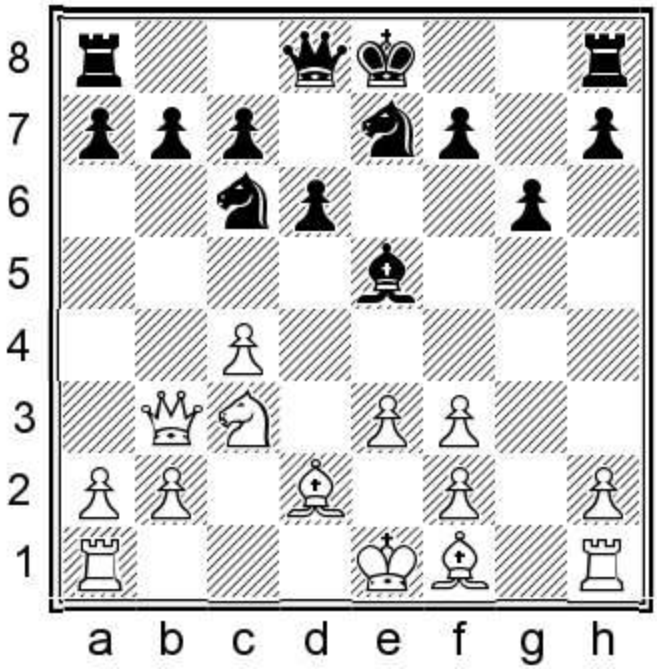
8...♘c6

8...♕c8 occurred in Czimer – Klein, Budapest 2004, when 9.h4!N would have been strong. For instance, 9...♘d7 10.h5 ♘c5 11.♕a3 a5 12.f4 ♗g7 13.e4 ♘e7 14.f3 0-0 15.♗e3 with a clear advantage to White.

9.♗d2 ♘ge7

We have been following Sargissian – V. Georgiev, Batumi (ol) 2018. Once again I suggest:

chesstouring.com



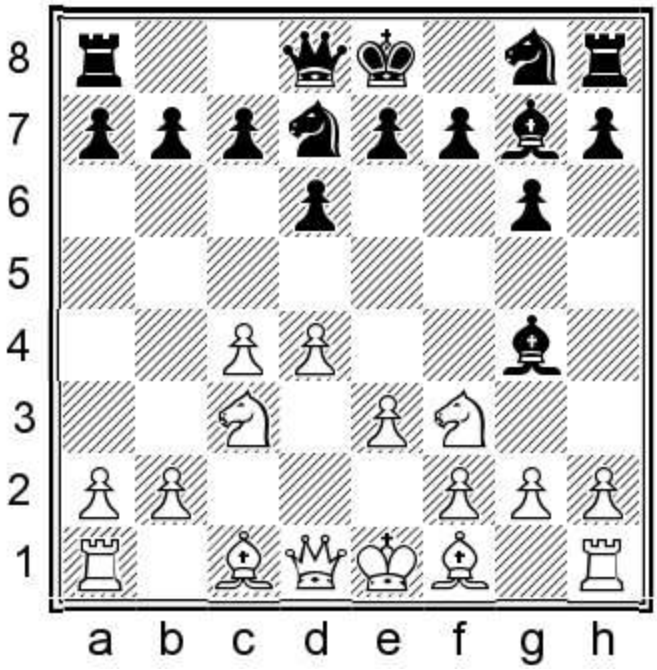
10.h4N

This looks extremely promising, for instance:

10...♕d7 11.f4 ♗g7 12.h5

With a large advantage for White.

B1) 5...♘d7



6.h3!?

6.♗e2 has been much more popular but I prefer the text move, as the queen will be quite well placed on f3.

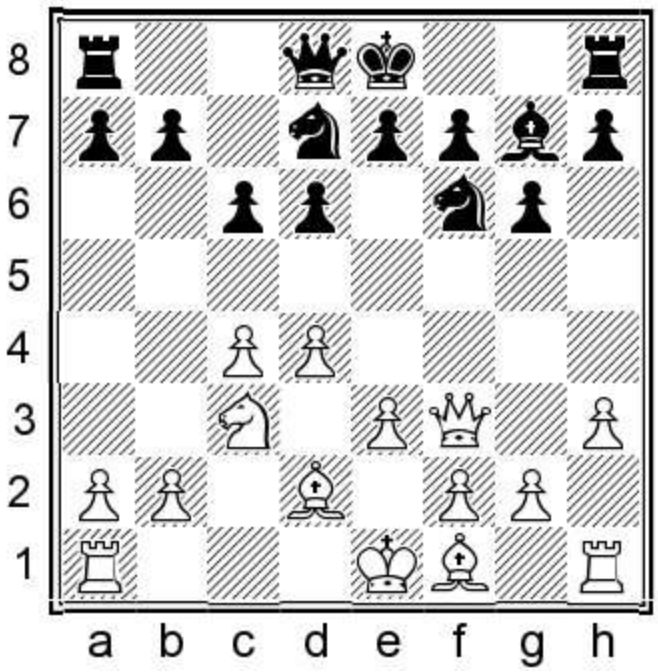
chesstouring.com

6...♗xf3 7.♕xf3 c6 8.♗d2

I like this flexible approach.

8...♘gf6

Black tried 8...e6 in Rohmeiss – Seul, Bad Zwesten 1997. I like the following improvement: 9.g4!?N 9...d5 10.cxd5 exd5 (unfortunately for Black, 10...cxd5? runs into 11.♘b5!) 11.♗d3 ♘gf6 12.0-0-0 ♘b6 13.♔b1 With a promising position for White.



9.g4!

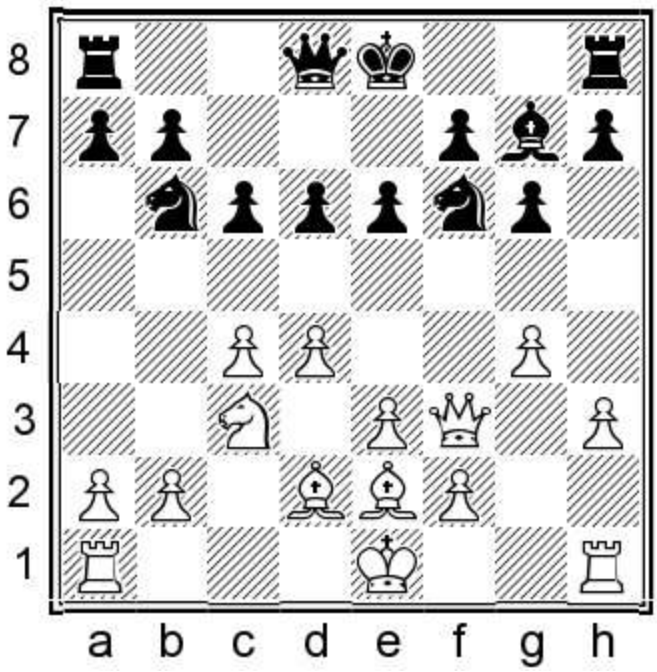
White has an easy plan of advancing the kingside pawns and castling in safety on the other wing.

9...h6

Black tried in 9...e5 in Kozul – Vandenbussche, Tromso (ol) 2014, when the natural 10.0-0-0N 10...♕e7 11.h4 0-0-0 12.♕g2 would have given White a pleasant advantage.

9...♘b6 10.♗e2 e6 was played more recently in Chytilek – Biolek, Czech Republic 2018. I suggest:

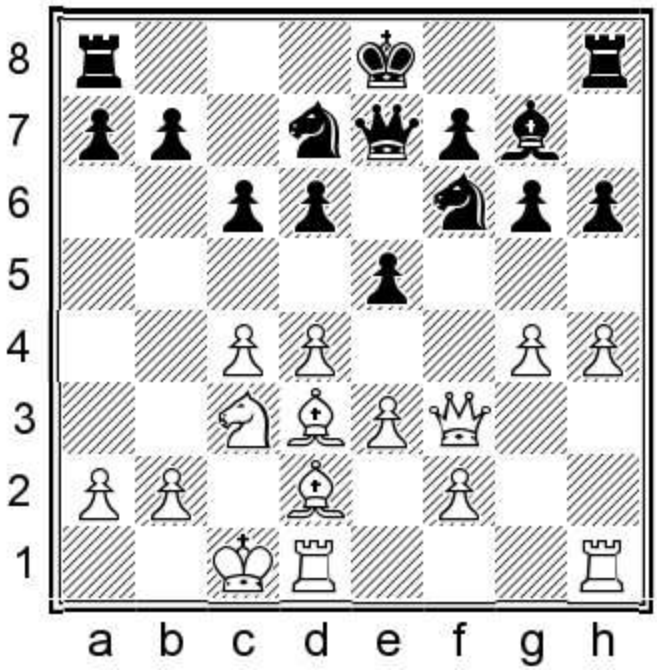
chesstouring.com



11.g5!N 11...♘fd7 (11...♘h5 12.h4 does not change the evaluation) 12.h4 ♕e7 13.0-0-0± White is obviously doing well.

10.h4 e5 11.0-0-0 ♕e7 12.♗d3

This is fine although 12.♕g2!?N is also worthy of consideration.

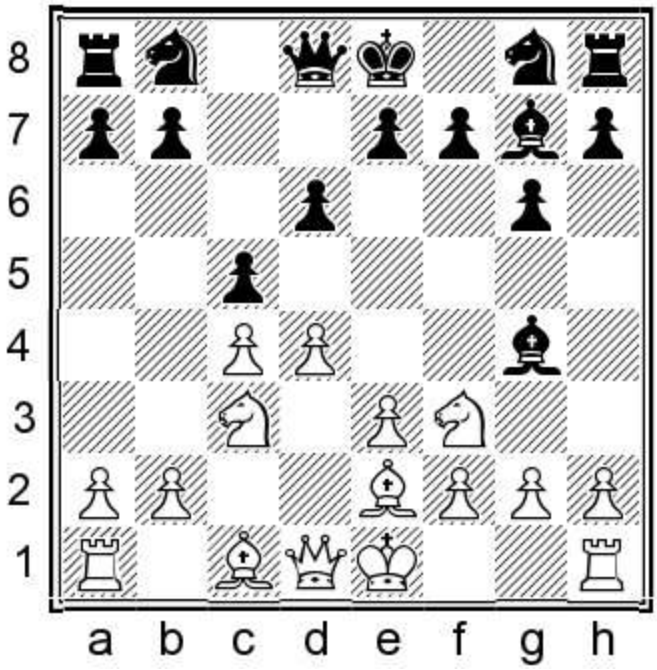


12...0-0-0 13.h5

White was obviously better in Gustafsson – Mamedov, Novi Sad 2009.

B2) 5...c5 6.♗e2

chesstouring.com

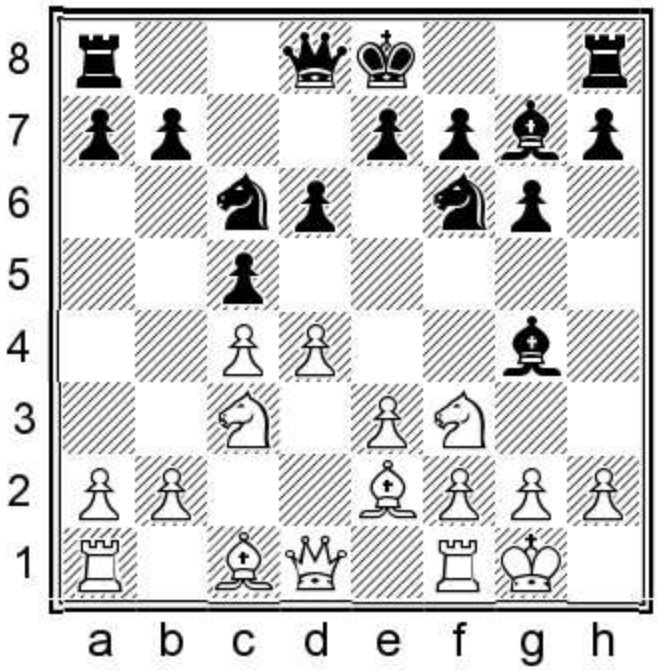


We have another division, where **B21)** 6...♘c6 is the main alternative to **B22)** 6...cxd4.

B21) 6...♘c6 7.0-0 ♘f6

7...cxd4 8.exd4 transposes to variation B22 below.

7...♘h6?! is a bad idea: 8.d5! ♗xf3 9.♗xf3 ♘e5 10.♗e2 f5 11.f4 ♘d7 12.♗d2 0-0 13.♗f3 a6 14.a4 ♖b8 15.h3± Black's missing light-squared bishop left him clearly worse in Gschnitzer – Roos, Freiburg 2016.



8.d5 ♘a5

After 8...♗xf3 9.♗xf3 ♘e5 10.♗e2 Black has little chance of equalizing. For instance, after 10...0-0

chesstouring.com

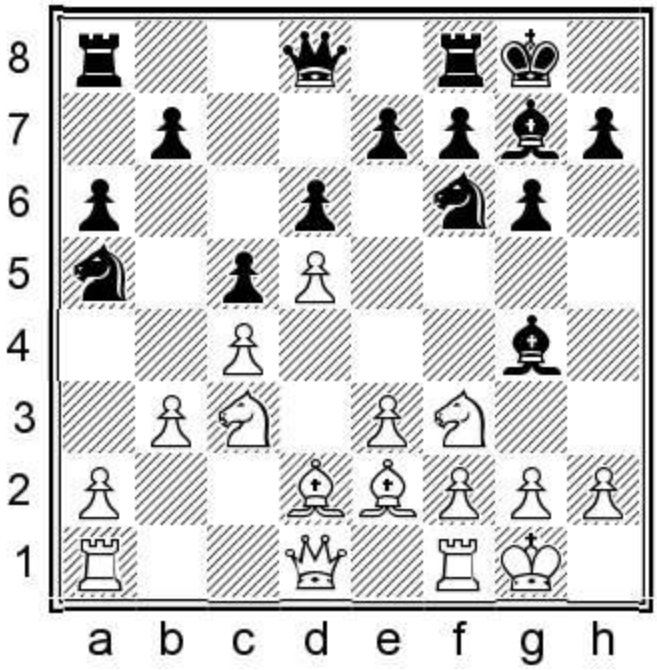
11.e4 a6 12.a4 b6 13.f4 ♘ed7 14.♗e3 White enjoyed a pleasant edge thanks to his space advantage and bishop pair in Urh – Hrescak, Rymanow Zdroj 2017.

9.♗d2! 0-0 10.b3

White stabilizes the queenside, emphasising the fact that the a5-knight is misplaced.

10...a6

Another game continued 10...e5 11.e4 a6 12.♖b1± and White enjoyed a pleasant edge in U. Andersson – Markovic, Belgrade 2000. The pawn structure resembles the Yugoslav Variation of the Fianchetto King's Indian, but Black lacks any dynamic counterplay to make up for the knight on a5.

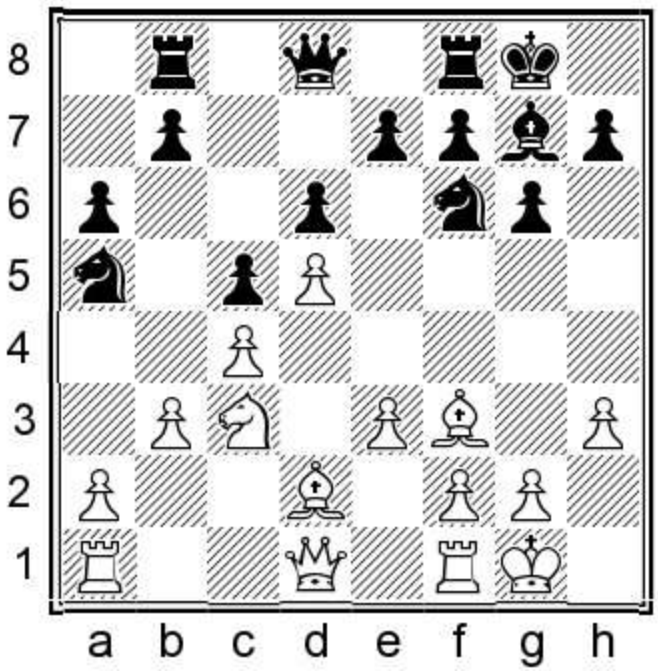


11.h3 ♗d7

I am always suspicious about the idea of giving up the light-squared bishop:
11...♗xf3 12.♗xf3 ♖b8

Four games have arrived at this position. I like the following improvement:

chesstouring.com



13.♘e2!N

White's most popular move choice has been 13.a4 but it doesn't appeal to me, for two reasons: it weakens the b3-pawn, and kills any future plans of queenside play with a2-a3 followed by b3-b4. The text move prepares to transfer the knight to the kingside, while preventing Black from moving his e-pawn.

13...b5

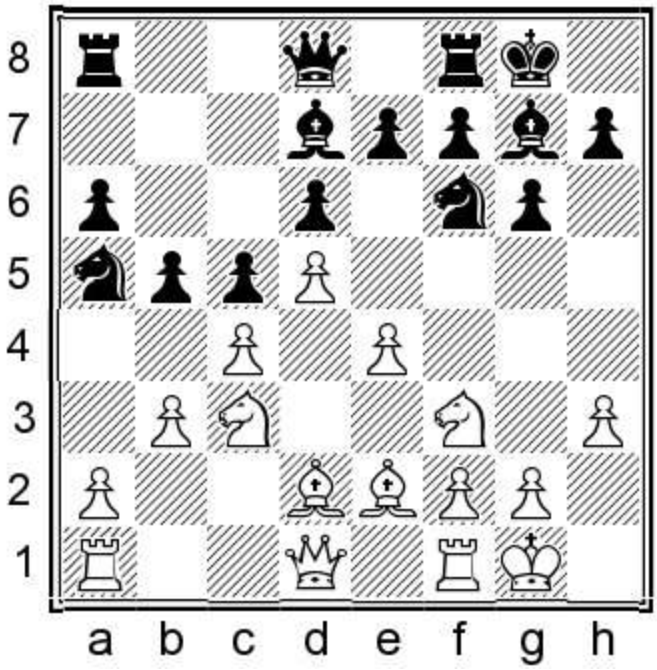
13...e5? (or 13...e6) is refuted by 14.dxe6 fxe6 15.♗xa5 ♕a5 16.♕xd6.

14.♖c1 ♘d7 15.♘f4±

Black has no serious ideas on the queenside, and White will slowly but surely develop his play on the other wing.

12.e4 b5

chesstouring.com



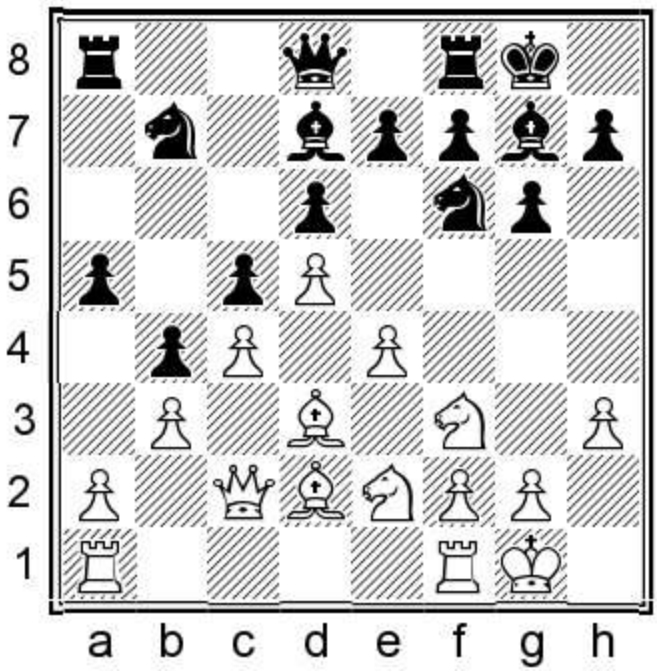
13.♗d3!

White is well prepared to neutralize his opponent's play. Because of the misplaced knight, Black does not have much to offer on the queenside.

13...♘b7

13...bxc4?! is hardly a good idea in view of 14.bxc4 e5 15.♖b1± when the opening of the b-file worked in White's favour in Vazquez Igarza – Oliva Castaneda, Linares 2017.

14.♕c2 b4 15.♘e2 a5



16.a4!

chesstouring.com

Preventing Black's ...a4 plan.

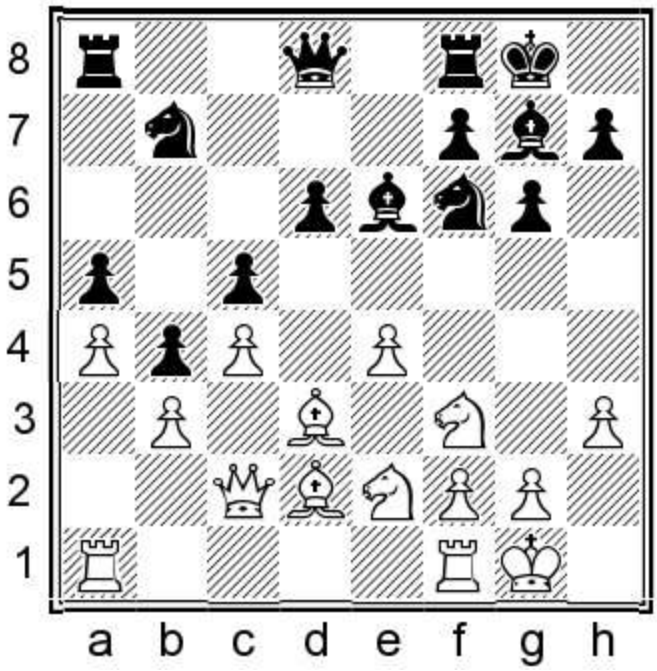
16...e5 17.dxe6!

It would be hard to break down Black's position without opening up the centre.

17...♗xe6

17...fxe6 runs into 18.e5 dxe5 19.♘xe5± when Black will suffer from his extra pawn island.

We have been following Ruck – Shariyazdanov, Neum 2002. Here White should have played:

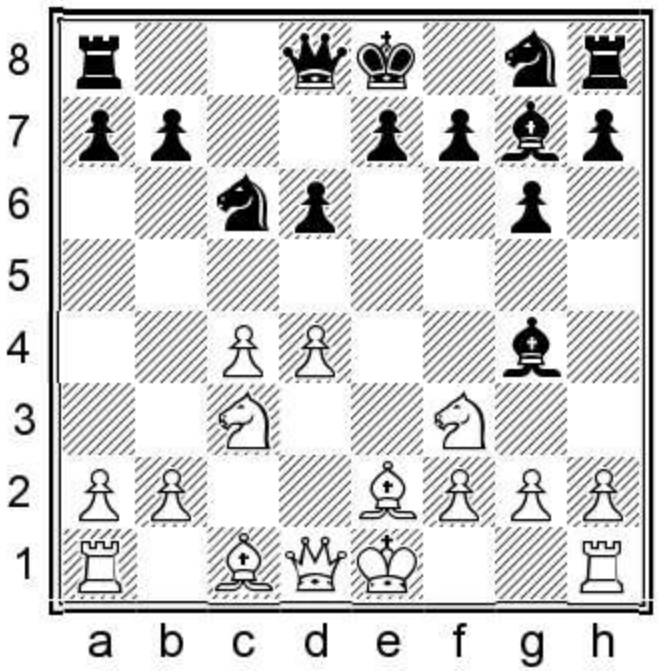


18.♘f4N 18...♖e8 19.♖ae1±

White keeps the better chances, while the black knight is still badly placed on b7.

B22) 6...cxd4 7.exd4 ♘c6

chesstouring.com



8.0-0!

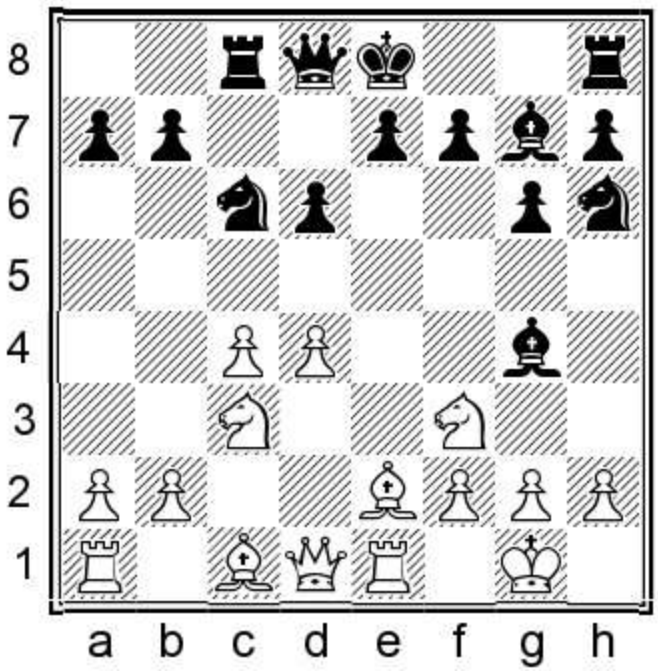
White should not react yet, as capturing the d4-pawn is not a real threat.

8...♘h6

8...♘f6?! is pointless in view of 9.d5 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3 ♘e5 11.♗e2 0-0 12.♗e3. Despite the reasonably high number of games here, there is no need to analyse further, as White enjoys a better version of the main line with a spatial superiority and bishop pair, with no counterplay in sight for Black.

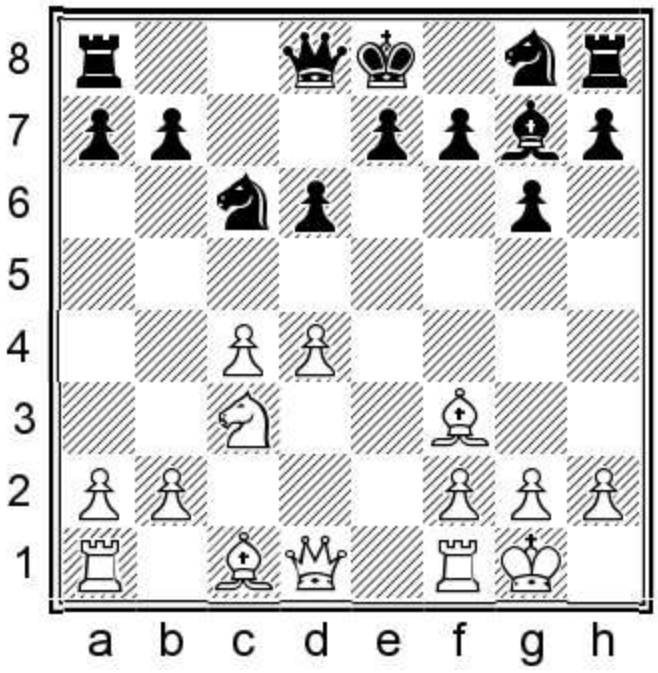
8...♖c8!? is pretty rare but it has been tried by some strong players with solid results for Black; nevertheless, the simple 9.♖e1 looks good to me, as Black is still not threatening to capture on d4. Therefore Black played 9...♘h6 in Stefanova – Dzagnidze, Tehran 2016, when White should have played:

chesstouring.com



10.d5!N 10...♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘e5 12.b3 ♘xf3† The ability to trade on f3 seems like the only advantage to Black's move order, but it does not bring her much relief. (12...0-0 13.♗e2 ♘f5 14.♗d2 e6 15.♖c1 a6 16.♗f1± gives White everything she could wish for) 13.♕xf3 ♘f5 14.♗d2 0-0 15.♕d3 ♕d7 16.♖ac1 White enjoys the favourable pawn structure while Black does not have much counterplay in sight.

Obviously we should also consider:
8...♗xf3 9.♗xf3



9...♘xd4?

This is certainly not a good idea for Black, but it is worth checking how to deal with it.

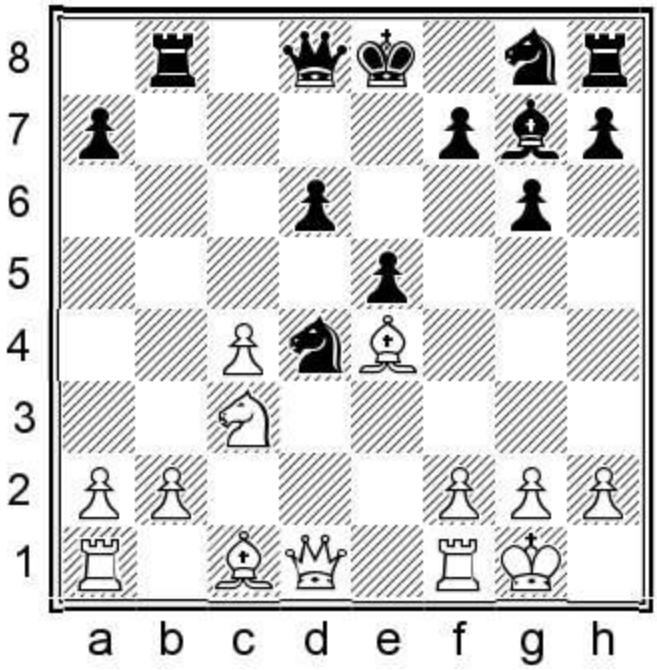
9...♘h6 is better, when 10.♗e4! 0-0 11.d5 ♘e5 12.b3 transposes to our main line.

10.♗xb7 ♖b8 11.♗e4 e5

chesstouring.com

This has been Black's most frequent attempt.

Another game saw 11...♕d7 12.♗e3 ♘e6 and now in Bradford – Hobuss, Winterthur 2007, White should have opted for speed and efficiently with: 13.♕f3!N 13...♘d8 (13...♖c8 14.♘b5! wins material) 14.c5↑ Opening the game in White's favour, due to his strong bishops and Black's king stuck in the centre.



12.♘b5! ♘xb5 13.♗c6†

The point of White's previous move.

13...♔f8 14.cxb5 ♘e7 15.♕a4 d5 16.♕xa7+–

White already enjoyed a decisive advantage in Sorokin – Guerra Bastida, Linares 1999.

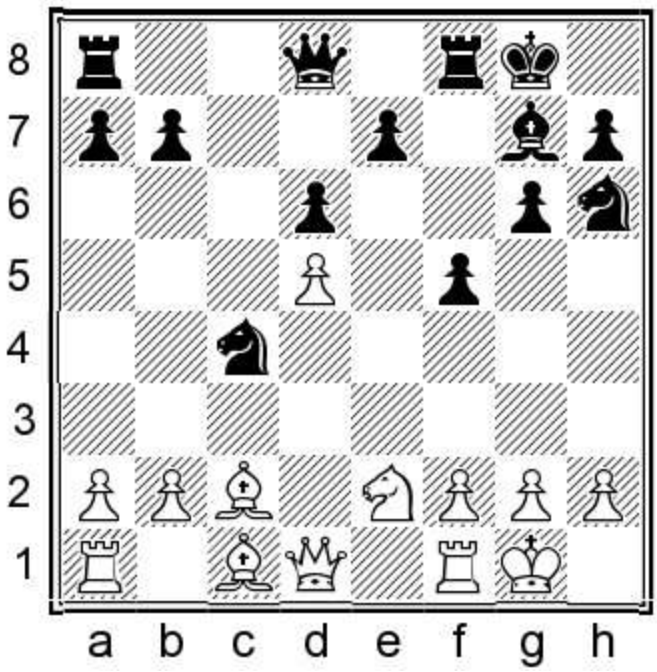
9.d5 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3 ♘e5 11.♗e4!

11.♗e2 is much more common and although White has achieved good results after that move, I believe the text to be more accurate. By covering the f5-square, White makes it harder for the knight on h6 to get into the game.

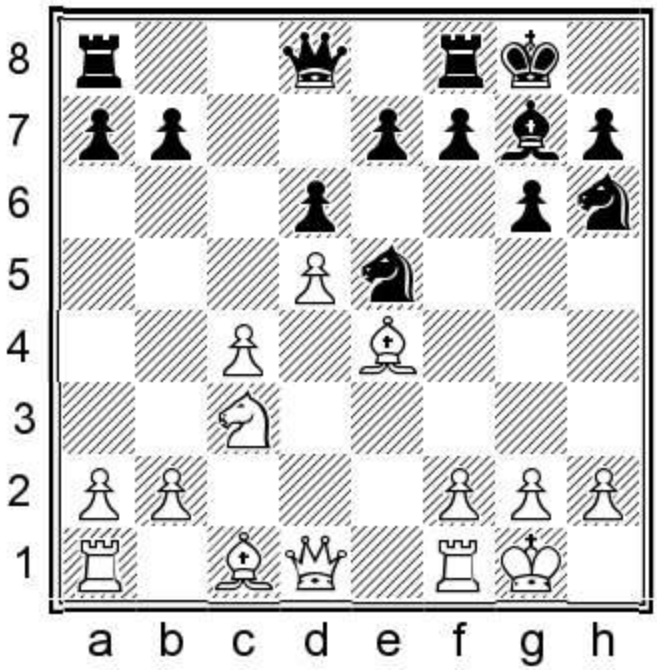
11...0-0

One game saw 11...f5 but it ran into a powerful reply. 12.♗c2 0-0 13.♘e2! ♘xc4 In Speelman – Xu Jun, Lucerne 1989, White brought the knight to d4 and went on to win, but it would have been even more accurate to continue with:

chesstouring.com



14.♗b3!N 14...b5 15.♘f4↑ With the knight coming to e6 in the near future, White has more than enough play for a mere pawn.



12.b3 f5!?

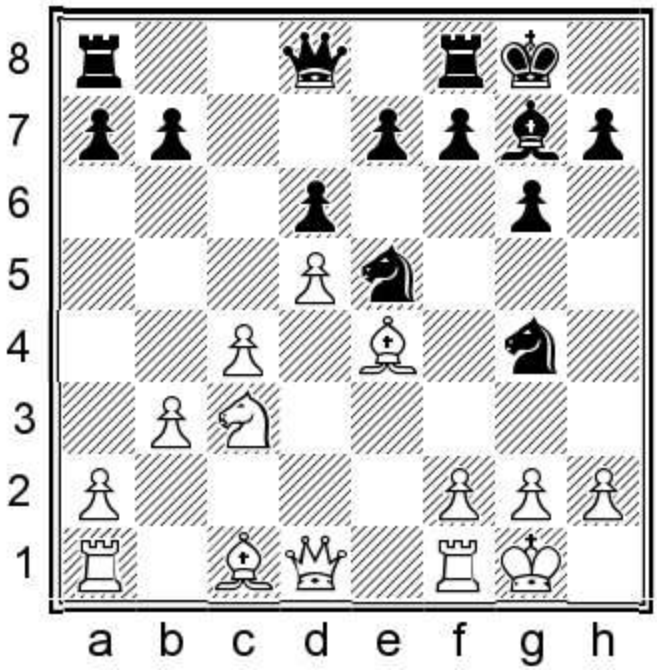
This ambitious move has been Black's usual choice and it has scored well for him, but White's play can be improved. Before seeing the details, I would like to mention a couple of other tries:

12...♕c7?! is hardly a good square for the queen. In Arsovic – Vratonjic, Niksic 1997, White should have played 13.♗d2N 13...a6 14.♖c1± with a clear positional advantage.

Another interesting option is:
12...♘hg4!?

chesstouring.com

By moving the knight away from h6, Black threatens ...♘xc4. There is also a deeper idea connected with this move, which demands that White improves on the existing game in order to prove his advantage.



13.♗d2!N

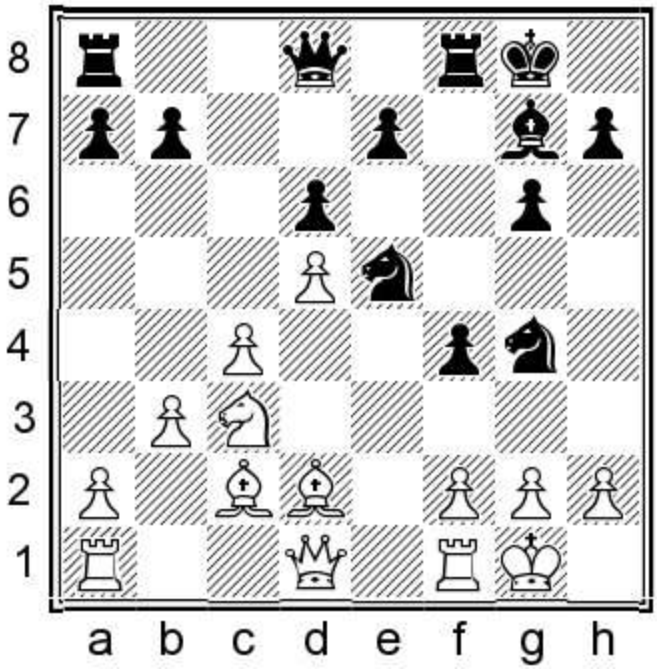
13.♗b2 led to an eventual victory for White in Morovic Fernandez – Xu Jun, Novi Sad (ol) 1990, but it seems both players underestimated 13...f5!N 14.♗c2 f4 when Black has serious attacking chances. Best play seems to be 15.h3 f3! 16.hxg4 e6 17.♘e4 ♕h4 18.♗xe5 ♗xe5 19.♘g3, at which point Black has a couple of ways to force a draw.

After the text move White has an automatic positional advantage due to his space advantage and bishop pair, so the following attempt is critical.

13...f5 14.♗c2 f4

With the bishop on d2, White is better placed to meet this idea.

chesstouring.com

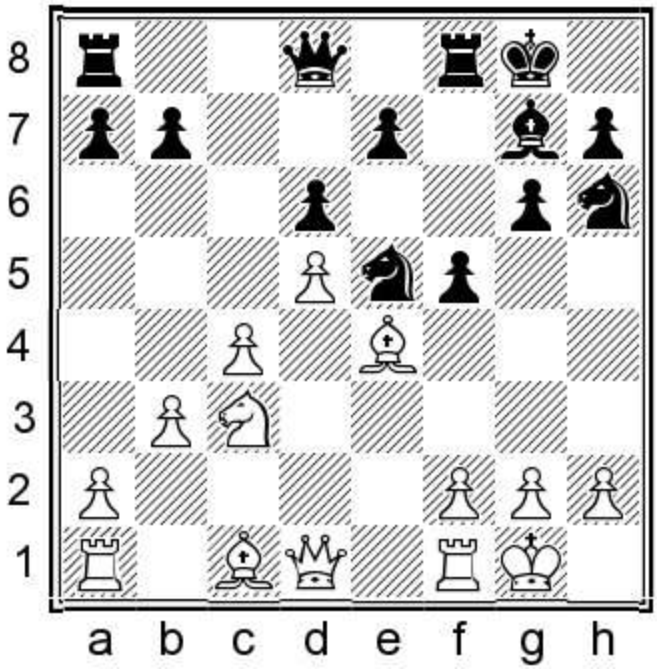


15.h3! f3

Now we must avoid 16.hxg4?? ♕d7! when Black wins, but instead play:

16.♘e4!

Although the position remains tricky, White is clearly better.



13.♗c2 f4

Once again this attacking plan demands an accurate response.

14.♘e2!

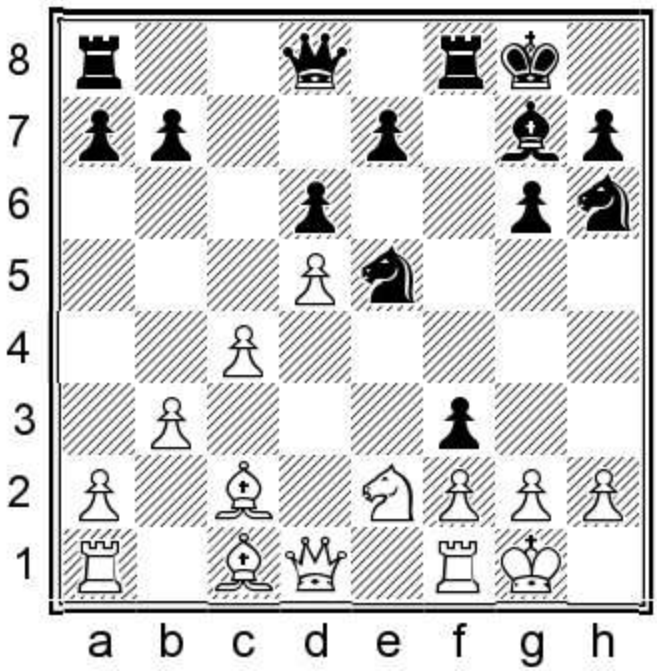
A powerful idea, which I found before it occurred in the latest game from 2018.

chesstouring.com

14...f3

14...♘xc4? is refuted by 15.♘xf4! when Black is busted.

Another important line is 14...♘f3† 15.gxf3 ♗xa1 16.♘xf4 ♘f5 17.♘e6 ♕d7 18.♖e1 when White has more than enough for the exchange, as the powerful knight on e6 can hardly be considered inferior to a rook.



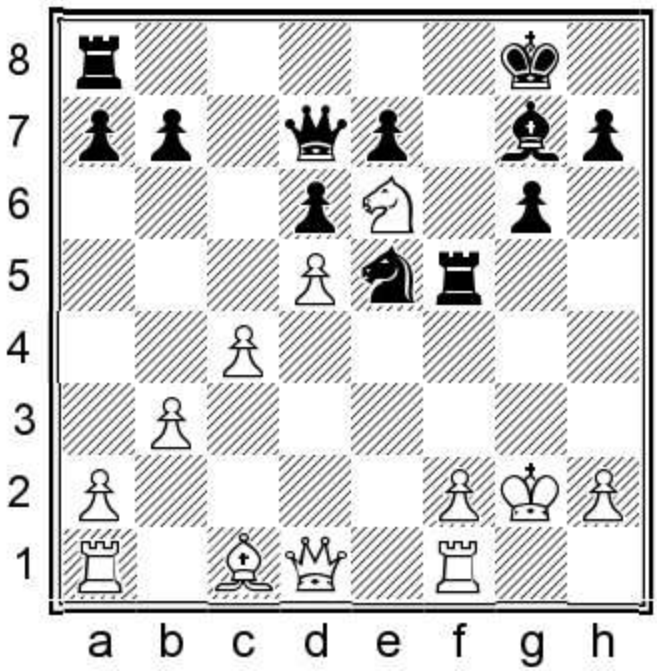
15.♘f4

This was played in the aforementioned game. My original notes ended with 15.♘d4N 15...fxg2 16.♔xg2±, which is essentially the same thing and likely to transpose. White has a significant advantage, as his knight is coming to e6 with great effect.

15...fxg2 16.♔xg2 ♘f5 17.♘e6 ♕d7 18.♗xf5! ♖xf5

So far White had played perfectly in Filip – Ardeleanu, Satu Mare 2018, but unfortunately he failed to make the most of his advantage and agreed a draw a few moves later. A big improvement is:

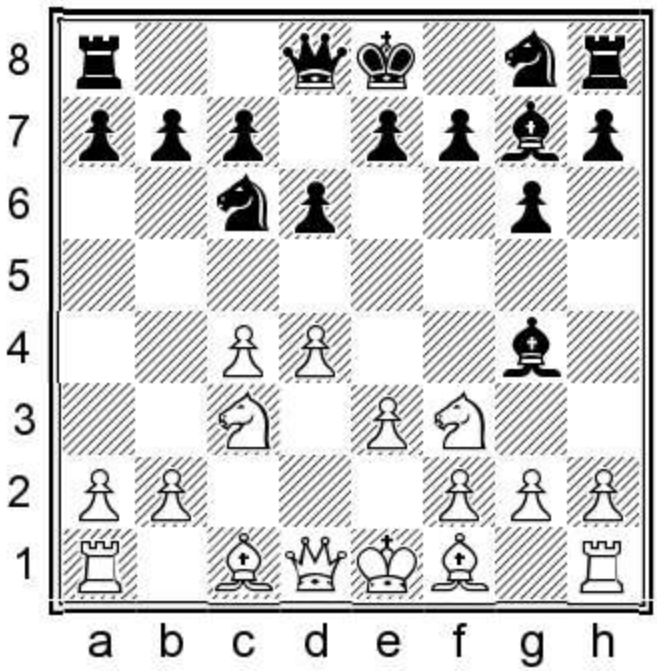
chesstouring.com



19.f4!N 19...♘f7 20.♘xg7 ♔xg7 21.♗b2† ♔g8 22.♕d4 ♖f6 23.♕e3

White's advantage is close to winning.

B3) 5...♘c6



6.♗e2

Black has tried numerous moves but we will focus on the main options of **B31)** 6...♘f6 and **B32)** 6...e5.

B31) 6...♘f6 7.h3 ♗xf3

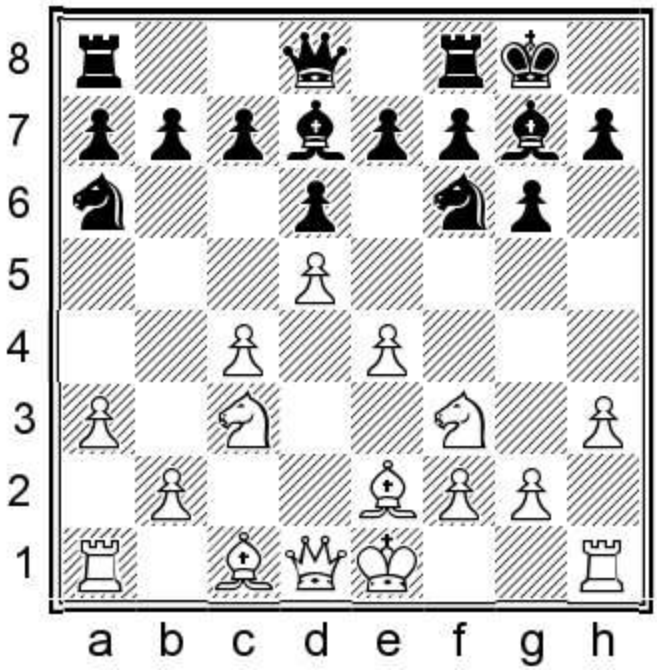
chesstouring.com

Black has also tried to preserve his bishop.

7...♗d7 8.d5! ♘b4

Another game continued 8...♘b8 9.e4 0-0 10.0-0 ♘a6 11.♗e3 ♘c5?! and now in Lin – Khouseinov, Kuala Lumpur 1993, White missed 12.♗xc5!N 12...dxc5 13.e5 ♘e8 14.♕d2± with a big advantage.

9.e4 0-0 10.a3 ♘a6



11.♗e3 c6

11...e5 12.g4! gives White a much improved version of the Makogonov Variation against the King's Indian, with about two extra tempos.

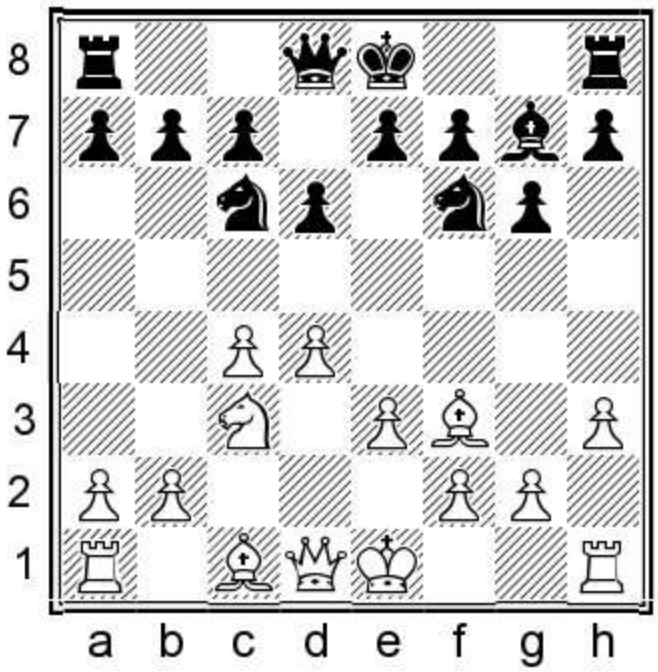
12.0-0 ♕c7 13.♖c1 ♖fc8 14.b4±

In Lechtynsky – Nedela, Czech Republic 2001, White enjoyed a significant space advantage while Black's position remained rather passive.

8.♗xf3

I have been always sceptical about Black's idea of trading off his light-squared bishop for a knight in King's Indian positions, and this is no exception.

chesstouring.com



8...0-0 9.0-0 ♘d7

This is Black's most logical continuation.

9...e5?! only invites us to ruin Black's pawn structure by means of 10.♗xc6! bxc6 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♕a4 ♕e8 13.b3 with a clear positional advantage, as in Nikcevic – Lazic, Obrenovac 2011.

10.♖b1!

Advancing the b-pawn is White's most effective plan.

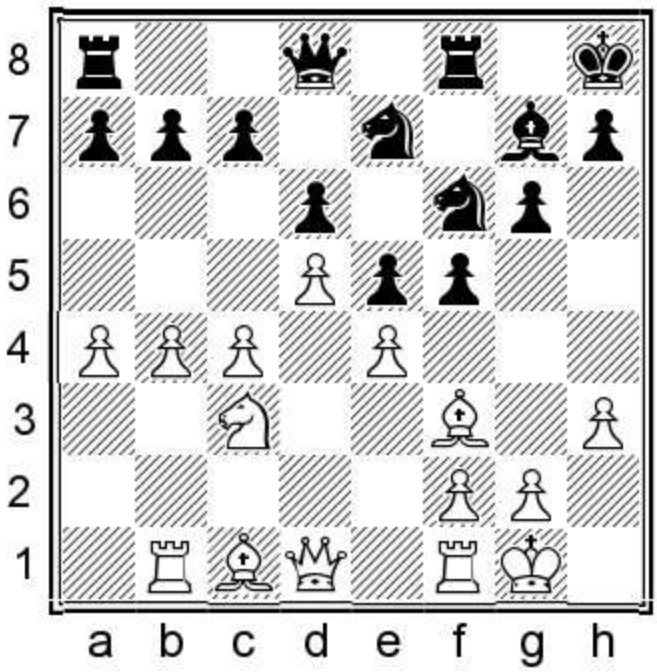
10...e5 11.d5 ♘e7 12.b4 f5 13.e4

One of the main reasons why I am sceptical about Black's idea of giving up the light-squared bishop in the King's Indian is the significant reduction in his ability to attack on the kingside. Meanwhile White's play on the queenside develops fairly naturally. A good model game continued:

13...♘f6 14.a4 ♔h8

14...a5 would be met with 15.bxa5.

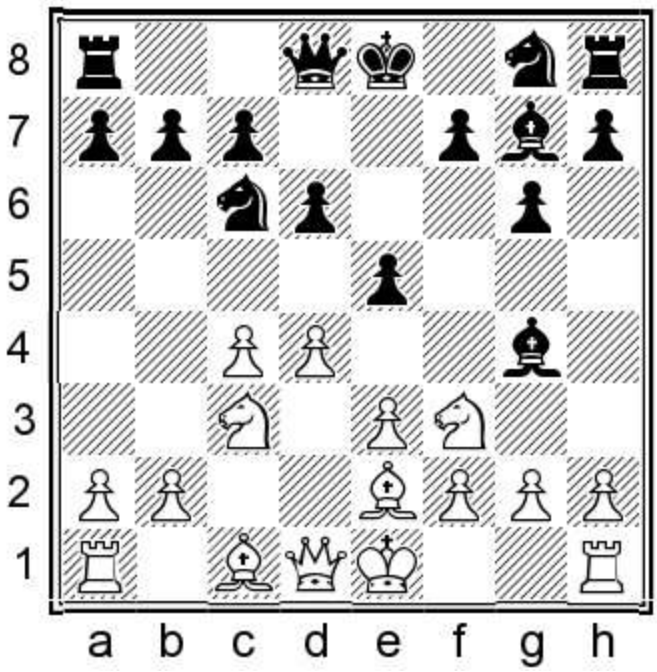
chesstouring.com



15.a5 ♕d7 16.♕d3 ♖f7 17.♗d2 ♘fg8 18.c5

White's chances were clearly preferable in Hesse – Knaak, Erfurt 1973.

B32) 6...e5



This has been a reasonably common position with more than 300 games in the database, but White's next move might come as a shock.

7.♘xe5!?

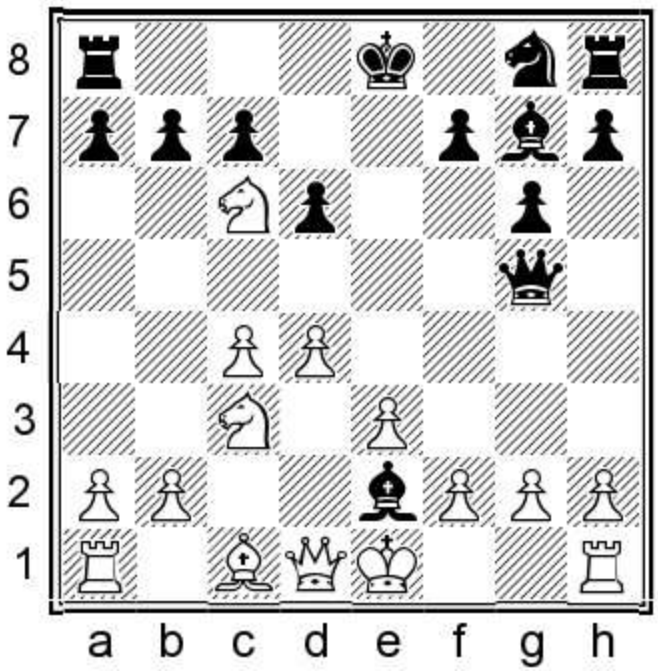
This tactical trick leads to an interesting transformation of the central structure.

chesstouring.com

After 7.d5 ♘ce7 8.e4 ♘f6 White definitely has a good version of the King's Indian, but I decided to examine a different kind of position, which looks quite attractive to me.

7...dxe5

7...♗xe2? is much worse in view of: 8.♘xc6 ♕g5 (after 8...♗xd1 9.♘xd8 ♗g4 10.♘xb7 a5 11.♘b5 ♔d7 12.♗d2+– White's knight escaped, with two extra pawns and a winning position in Farina – Satta, Verona 1997)



9.♔xe2! bxc6 10.♔f1 ♘e7 11.g3 0-0 12.♔g2± Black had no compensation whatsoever in Sanikidze – Mamedov, Gaziantep 2008.

8.♗xg4 exd4 9.exd4

Now Black must make an important decision.

9...♘xd4

9...♕e7†? was pointless after 10.♗e3 in Debnar – Petran, Bratislava 1989; Black does not have time to take on d4 due to the terrible threat of ♘d5.

9...♗xd4? is also poor; after 10.0-0 ♗xc3? 11.bxc3 ♕xd1 12.♖xd1 ♖d8 13.♗g5 White's bishop pair decided the game quickly in Sorhouet – Gregoire, France 1994.

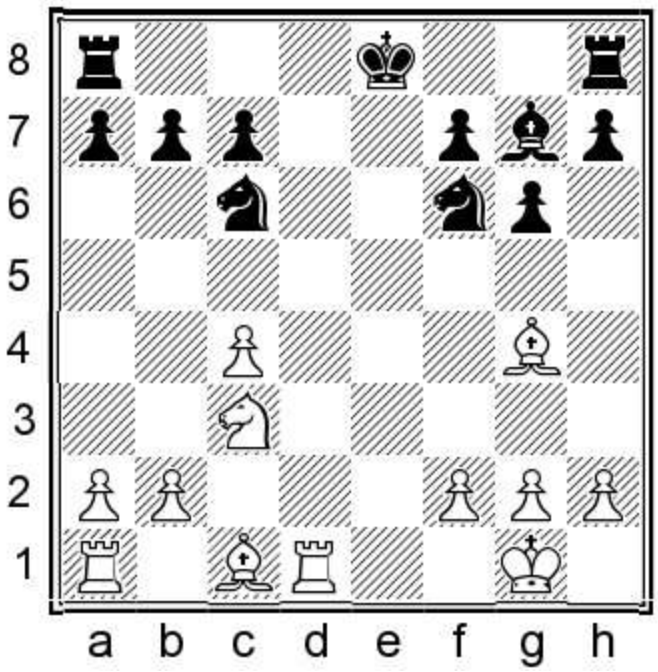
Black's only reasonable alternative to the main line is:

9...♕xd4 10.0-0 ♕xd1

10...♕xc4?! 11.♖e1† ♘ge7 is extremely risky. In Blees – Dedes, Athens 1992, White should have continued 12.♗d7†!N 12...♔f8 13.♕f3± with a tremendous initiative for the pawn.

11.♖xd1 ♘f6

chesstouring.com



12.♖e1†!N

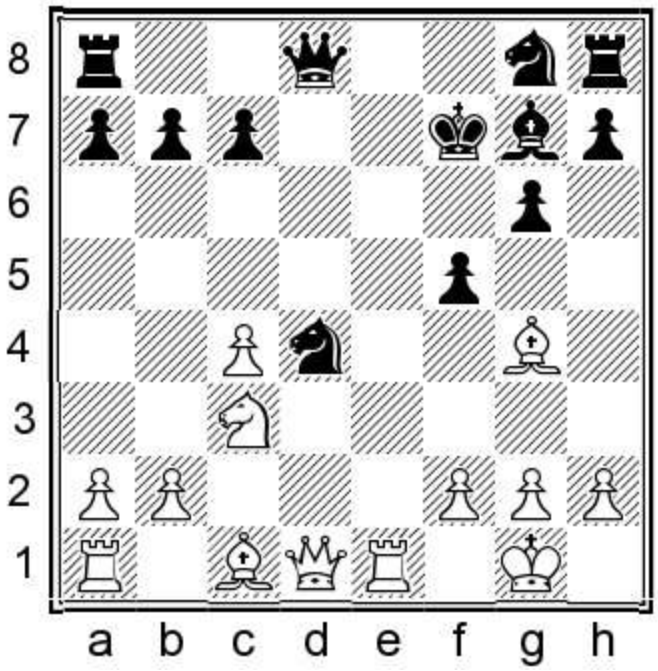
Stronger than 12.♗f3 0-0 13.♗f4, though this also gave White a pleasant edge in Dambacher – Hoeksema, Hilversum 2006.

12...♔f8 13.♗h3 ♘d4 14.♖d1! c5 15.♖b1

White intends to open the position with b2-b4 next; his advantage is obvious.

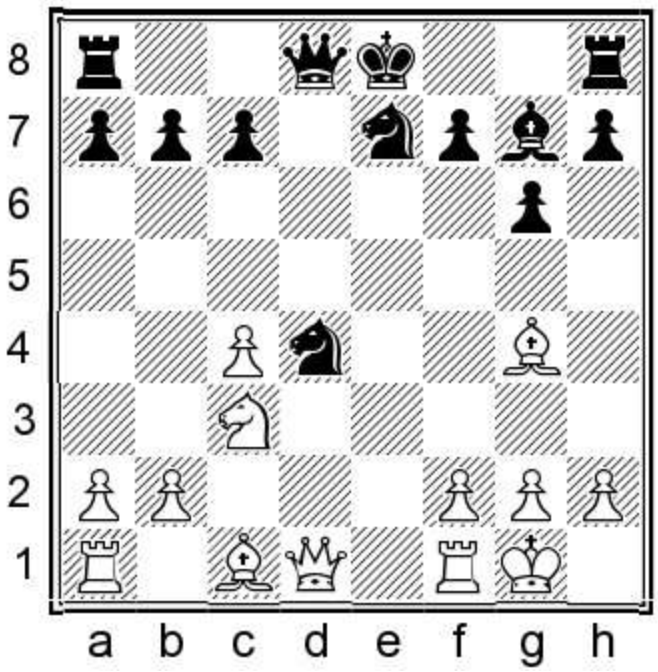
10.0-0 ♘e7

10...f5?! can hardly be a good idea. 11.♖e1† ♔f7 occurred in Bock – Steinhauser, corr. 1990, when White should have opted for:



12.♗h3!N 12...♘f6 13.♗e3 c5 14.g3 Followed by ♗g2 with an obvious advantage.

chesstouring.com



11.♗g5!

I don't think Black's outpost on d4 fully compensates for White's bishop pair.

11...0-0

Black has also tried:

11...h6 12.♕a4†! ♔f8

Black has to play this ugly move, since 12...c6 is losing in view of 13.♗xe7 ♔xe7 14.♕b4†!.

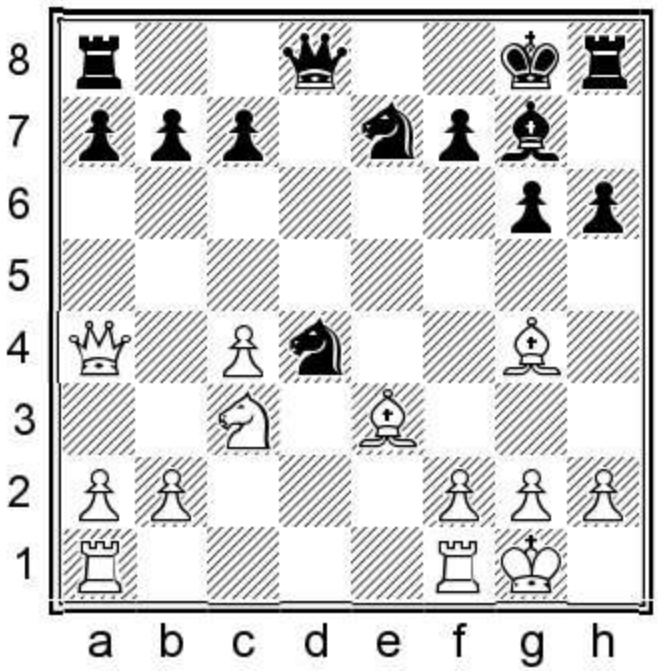
13.♗e3

13.♗f4!?N is also interesting; for instance, 13...h5 14.♗h3 ♘ec6 15.♗e3 a6 16.♕d1! and White maintains the better chances.

13...♔g8

In G. Shahade – A. Ivanov, Chicago 1997, White should have continued:

chesstouring.com



14.♖ad1N 14...c5 15.b4!

With strong play in the centre.

12.♘d5 f6 13.♗e3

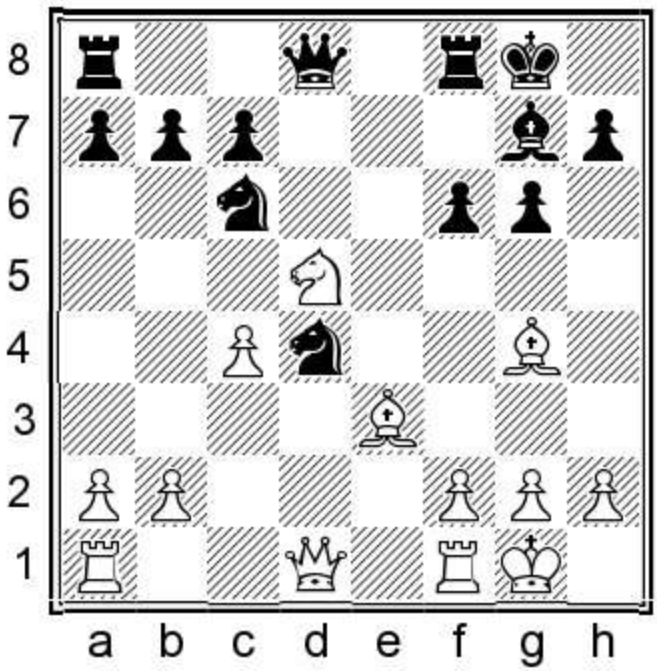
Now Black needs an improvement.

13...♘ec6N

13...♘df5? is simply bad; in Velten – Shoker, Saint-Quentin (blitz) 2015, White could have decided matters on the spot by means of 14.♗c5!N winning material, for instance: 14...♖e8 15.♘xe7† ♘xe7 16.♗d7+–

13...♘ef5N 14.♗xd4 ♘xd4 is the same as the main line.

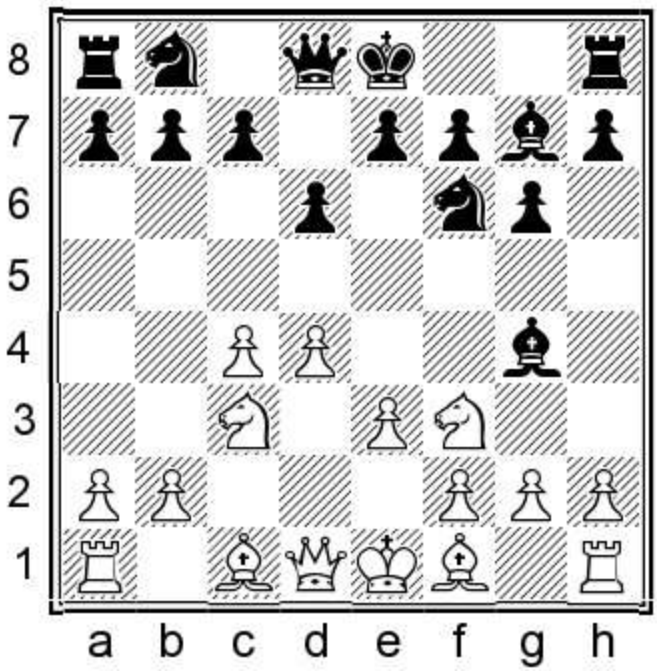
chesstouring.com



14.♗xd4 ♘xd4 15.♕xd4 f5 16.♕e3 fxg4 17.♖ad1

White keeps a pleasant advantage.

B4) 5...♘f6

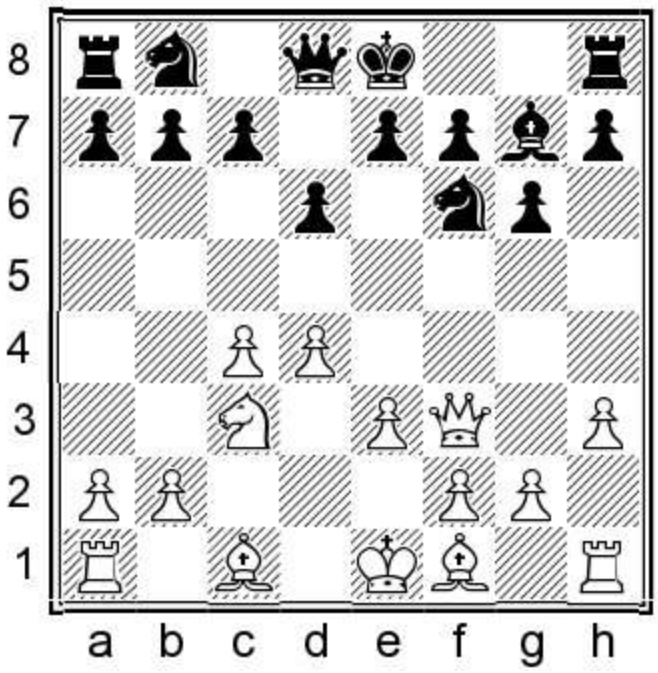


6.h3!?

Unlike the previous variation, I prefer to challenge the bishop immediately here, rather than playing the more popular 6.♗e2.

Black may react with **B41)** 6...♗xf3 or **B42)** 6...♗f5.

chesstouring.com



7...♘c6

The alternative is obviously:

7...c6

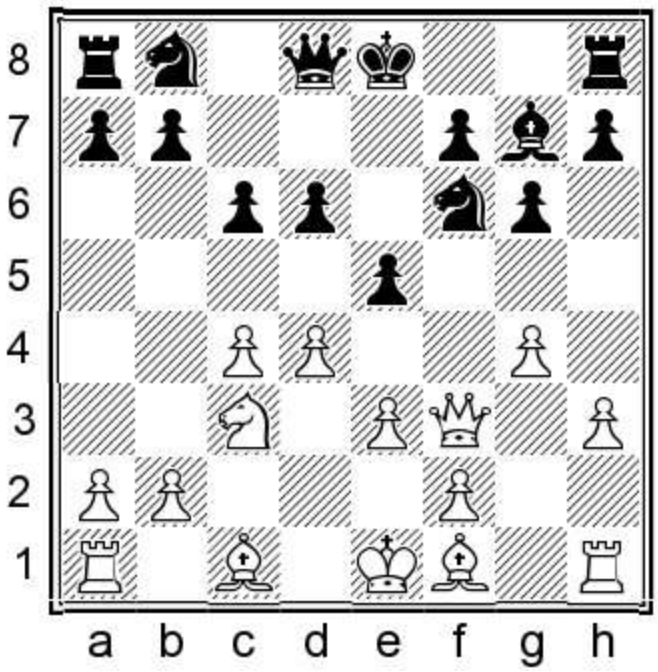
There have been over twenty games in this position and White has tried many different moves. Nevertheless, I really like the approach of my student:

8.g4!?

This not only prevents 8...d5 but also creates some play on the kingside.

8...e5

I also examined 8...♘bd7N 9.h4! e5 10.♗d2 h5 11.g5 ♘g4 12.d5! when White enjoys a pleasant edge.



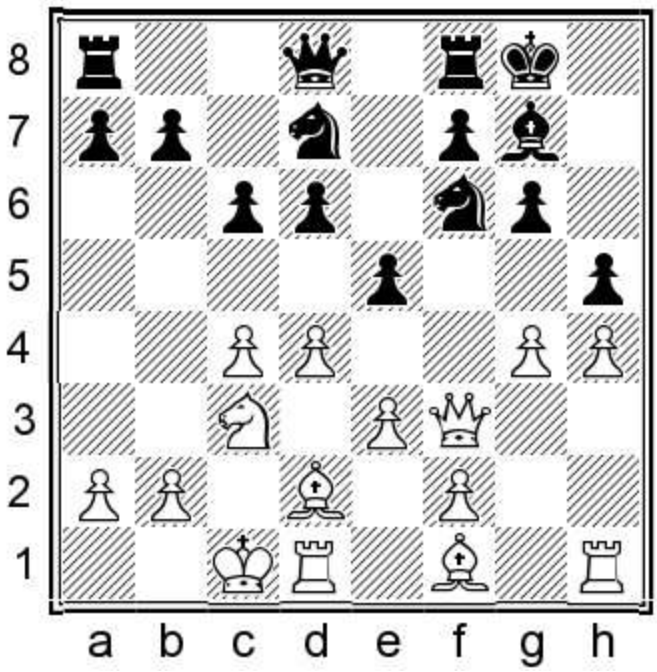
chesstouring.com

9.♗d2!N

I favour this flexible approach.

9.d5 occurred in Kolay – Kretchetov, Las Vegas 2017, when 9...cxd5N 10.cxd5 0-0 would have led to unclear play.

9...0-0 10.0-0-0 ♘bd7 11.h4! h5



12.gxh5 exd4

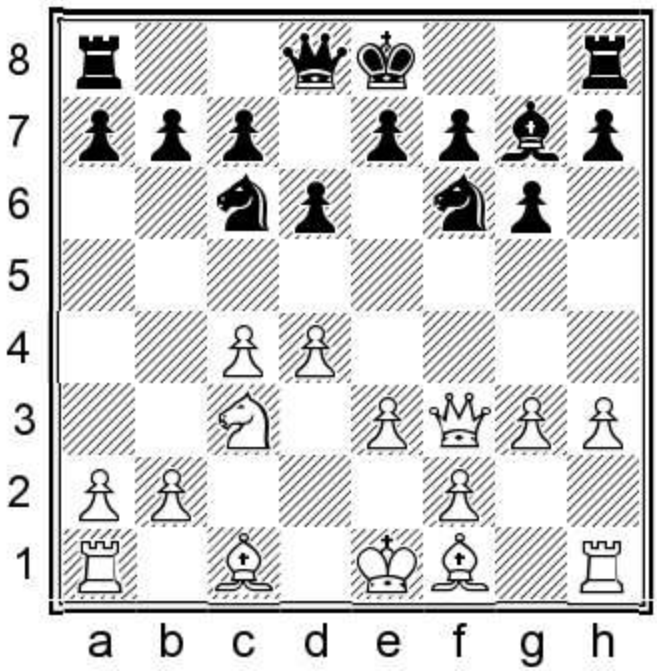
12...♘xh5 13.♗e2↑ is pretty much the same.

13.exd4 ♘xh5 14.♗e2 ♘df6 15.♖hg1

White has good chances on the kingside.

8.g3

This is the right time for the fianchetto!



chesstouring.com

8...0-0

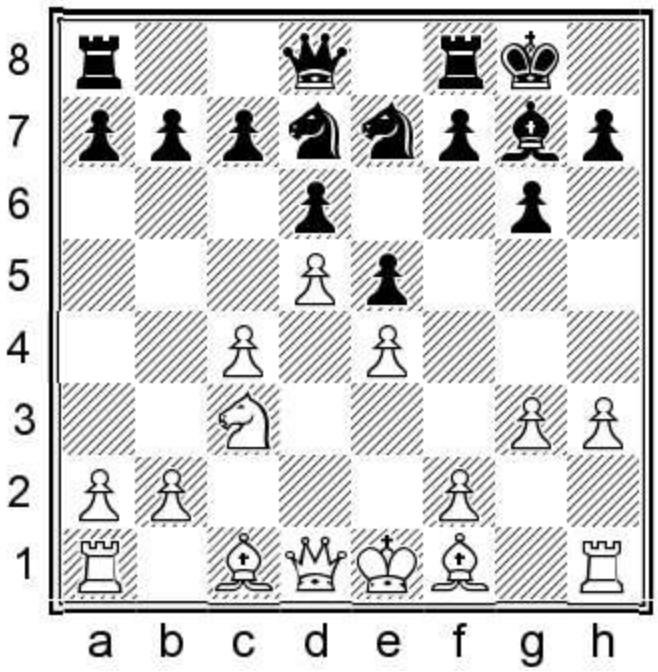
Black opted for 8...e5 in A. Onischuk – Andreikin, Moscow 2015, when 9.d5N would have been correct. Play might continue 9...♘b4 (9...♘e7 is similar to the note to Black's next move in the main line below, and may well transpose) 10.♕d1 a5 11.e4 0-0 12.h4 c6 13.♗e2 with a clear advantage to White, as the light-squared bishop is extremely important.

9.♕d1

I found two games which reached this position via different move orders.

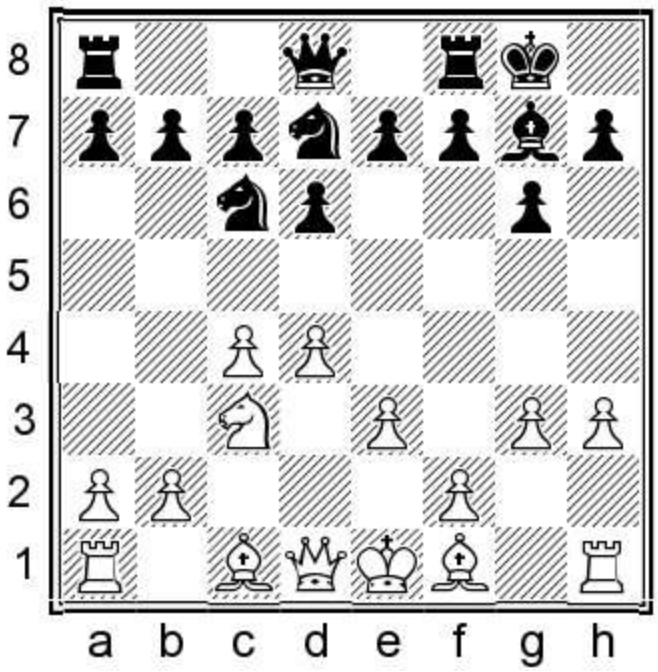
9...♘d7

The later game continued: 9...e5 10.d5 ♘e7 11.e4 ♘d7



12.h4! This is always a thematic idea in positions where Black combines a kingside fianchetto with giving up his light-squared bishop. For instance, see Chapter 5 of *Volume 2A*, where I recommend exactly the same plan against the King's Indian lines where Black makes the same piece trade. 12...h5 13.♗h3 The bishop is perfectly placed here. 13...♘f6 14.♗e3 c6 15.0-0 c5 In Kozul – Arapovic, Sarajevo 2016, this would have been the right time to start playing actively on the queenside. 16.a3!N White has a clear advantage.

chesstouring.com



10.h4! h5

Otherwise the further advance of the h-pawn could prove unpleasant for Black.

11.♗g2 e5 12.d5 ♘e7N

After 12...♘a5?! 13.♕e2 e4 14.♘xe4 ♘e5 15.♖b1! c6 16.b3± White was not only much better positionally but also a healthy pawn up in Peralta – Romanishin, Sitges 2015.

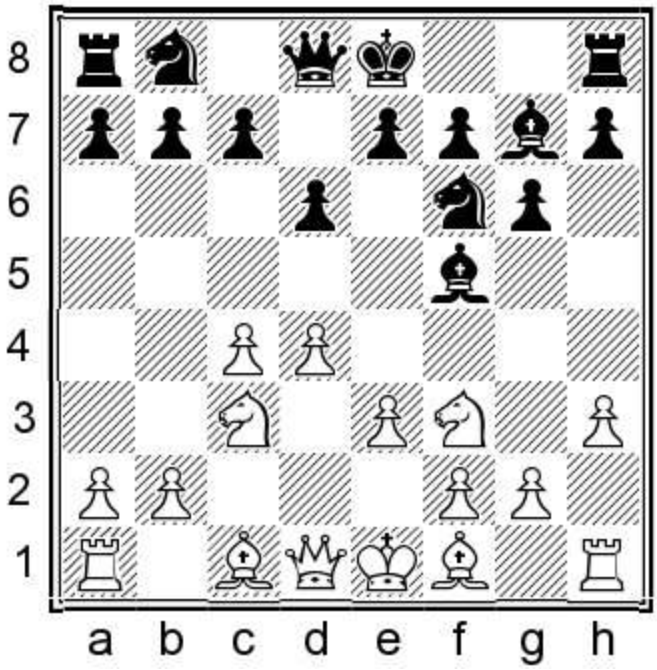
The text move would have been better although Black is still a long way from equalizing. The continuation might be:

13.e4 f5 14.♗g5 ♗f6 15.♗d2!

White keeps a pleasant advantage.

B42) 6...♗f5

chesstouring.com

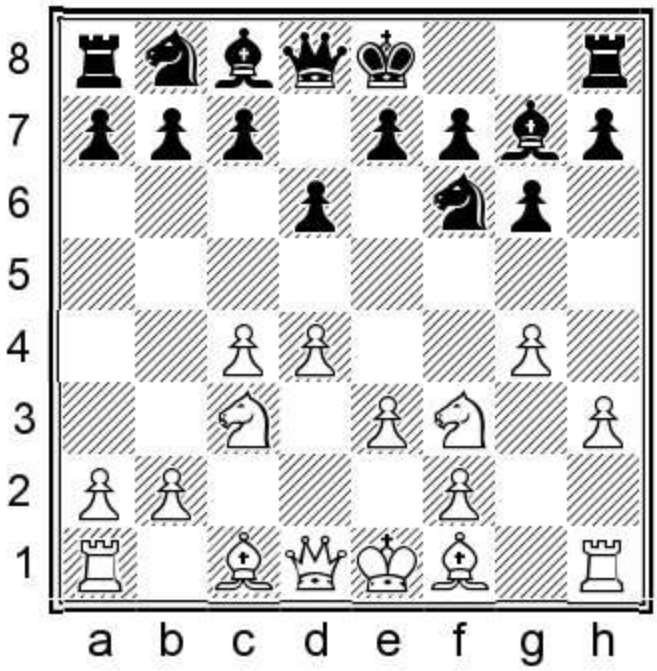


7.g4!

I have no problem playing this move, since later on I can fianchetto the light-squared bishop, or utilize the g4-pawn to inhibit the ...f5 break in a King's Indian structure.

B421) 7...♗c8 and **B422)** 7...♗d7 have both been used by strong players.

B421) 7...♗c8



8.e4

We can afford a loss of time with this pawn, considering that Black has spent three tempos moving his light-squared bishop. The upshot is that we have a King's Indian position where White has been given the moves h2-h3 and g2-g4 for free. They may not be the optimal way of spending two free tempos, but they

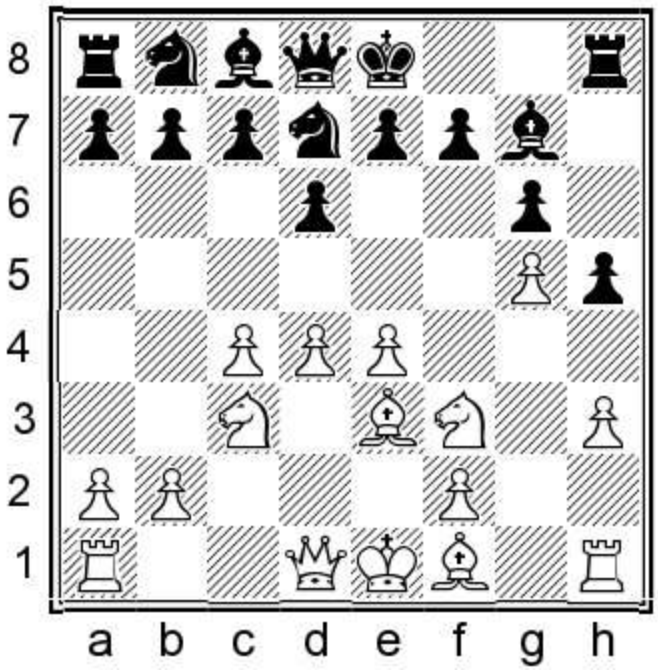
chesstouring.com

still improve his chances.

8...0-0

Quite often Black has tried:

8...h5 9.g5 ♘fd7 10.♗e3



10...c5

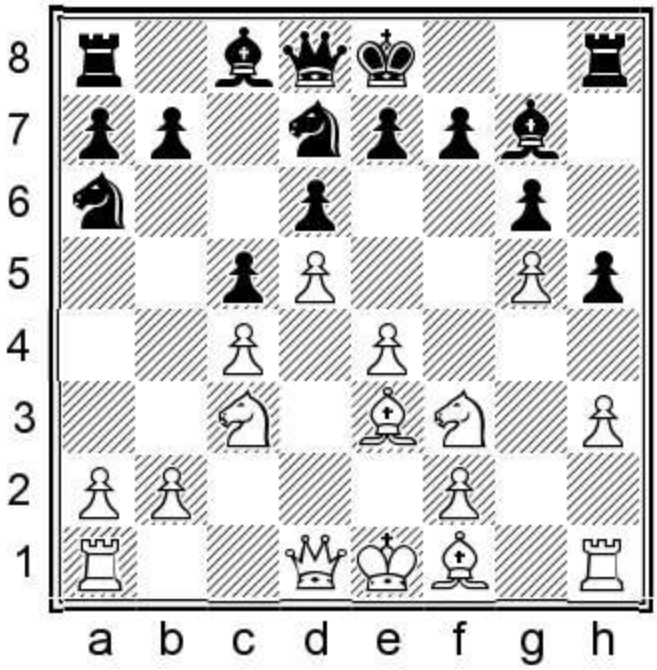
The most popular.

10...0-0 is well met by 11.♘h4! with ideas of preparing f4-f5 in the future, or even a ♘f5 sacrifice. 11...e5 12.d5 a5 happened in Savina – Grigorian, Sochi 2017, and now White could have struck with 13.♘f5!N 13...♗h8 (13...gxf5 14.exf5, looks extremely dangerous for Black) 14.♘h6† ♔h7 15.♗e2→ when Black cannot stop ♗xh5.

11.d5 ♘a6

Even though White has won all three games from this position, I would like to suggest an improvement:

chesstouring.com



12.♘h4!N

Once again thinking about f4-f5 in the future.

12...♘c7

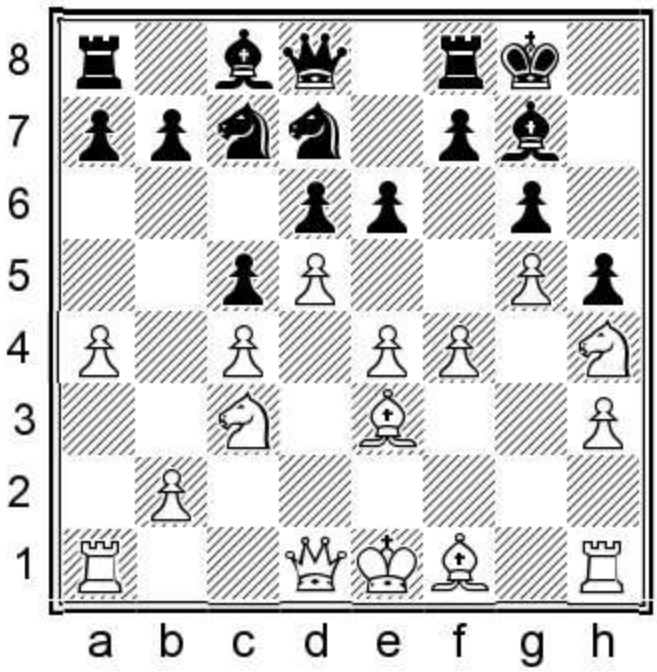
After 12...0-0?! 13.f4 ♘c7 White has 14.e5! dxe5 15.f5→ with a decisive attack.

13.a4!

Having expanded so much on the kingside, I don't want to allow any Benko-style ideas which might force us to switch our attention to the queenside.

13...0-0 14.f4 e6

Otherwise White will break through with the familiar idea of e4-e5, meeting ...dxe5 with f4-f5.



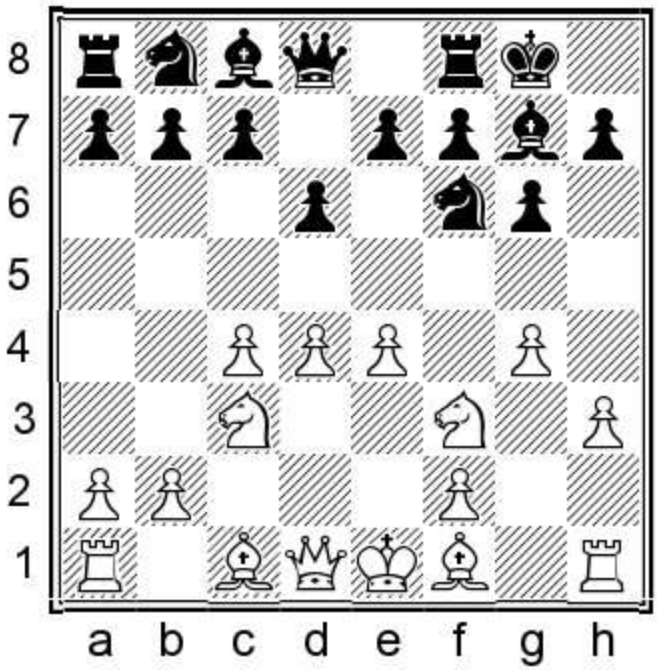
15.♗g2

15.♗d3 deserves attention as well.

chesstouring.com

15...♘b6 16.♕d3 ♘a6 17.0-0 ♘b4 18.♕e2

White keeps everything under control, while enjoying a considerable space advantage.



9.♗e3 c5

Black tries to reach a Benoni structure where the h3/g4 moves are not so useful.

Obviously we also need to consider:

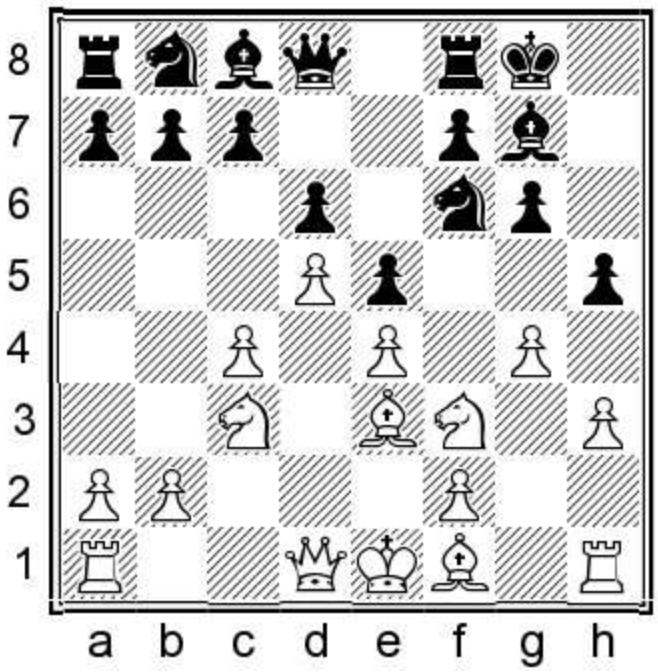
9...e5 10.d5

This reaches a Makogonov King's Indian with two extra tempos for White.

10...h5

I also examined 10...♘a6 when an excellent example continued: 11.♘d2 ♘e8 12.♗d3 ♘c5 13.♗c2 a5 14.a3 ♗d7 15.b4 axb4 16.axb4 ♖xa1 17.♕xa1 ♘a6 18.♕a3 f5 19.exf5 gxf5 20.♗xf5 ♗xf5 21.gxf5 ♖xf5 22.♘ce4± White was clearly in control in Converset – Nevols, corr. 2003.

chesstouring.com



11.g5 ♘h7 12.♖g1 f5

In the event of 12...a5 13.♘h4 ♘a6 14.♗e2! Black cannot stop the following bishop sac: 14...♗xh3 15.♗xh5! ♗d7 (15...gxh5 16.♕xh5 leads to a crushing attack for White) 16.♗g4 White dominates all over the board.

13.exf5 gxf5 14.♘h4!

The position may appear messy at first glance, but in fact White is almost winning.

14...♕e8 15.♗e2 f4 16.♗d2 ♕d7 17.♗d3!

Black's position soon collapsed in Babula – Adamek, Czech Republic 2017.

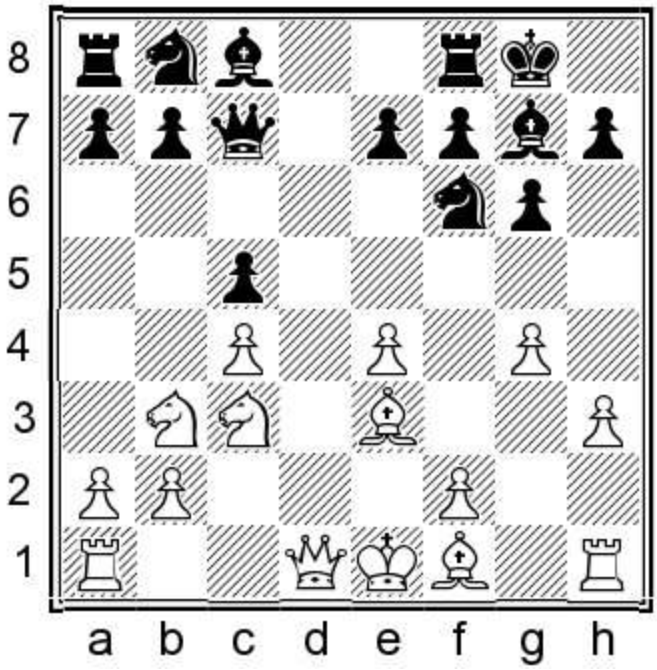
10.dxc5

I prefer this forcing continuation, although 10.♕d2 looks like a promising alternative.

10...♕a5 11.♘d2! dxc5 12.♘b3 ♕c7

Two games arrived at this position. I strongly recommend the following improvement:

chesstouring.com



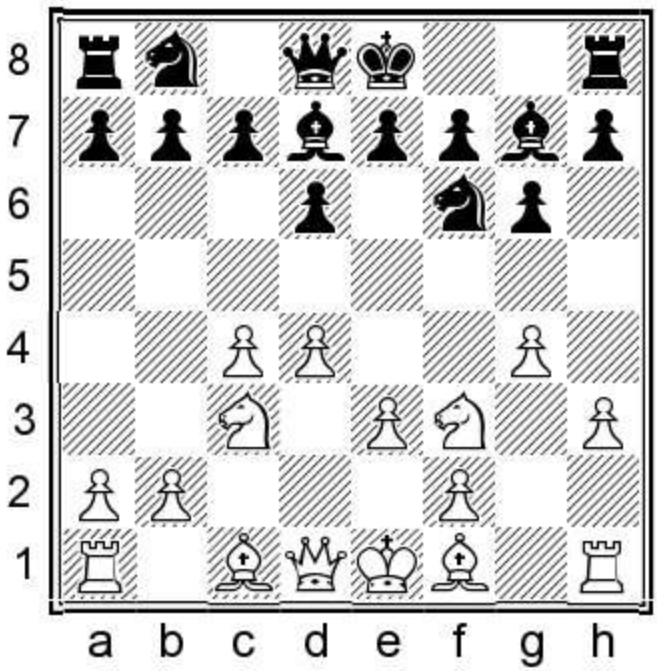
13.f4!N

There is no reason not to gain more space in the centre. An illustrative line is:

13...♖d8 14.♕e2 e5 15.f5 ♘c6 16.♕f2 ♘d4 17.♗g2↑

White has great prospects.

B422) 7...♗d7

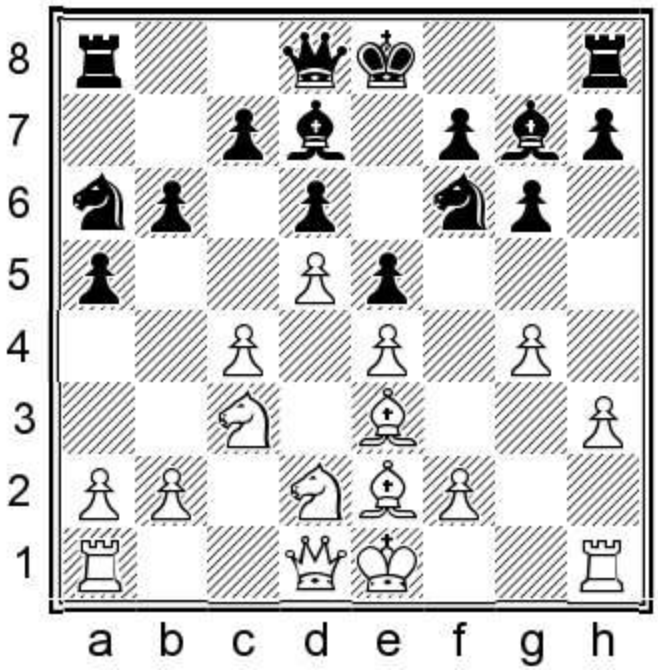


This way Black avoids retreating the bishop all the way to its original square, but he remains a tempo down on a normal King's Indian and he would not normally move the bishop to d7 so early in that opening.

chesstouring.com

8.e4 0-0

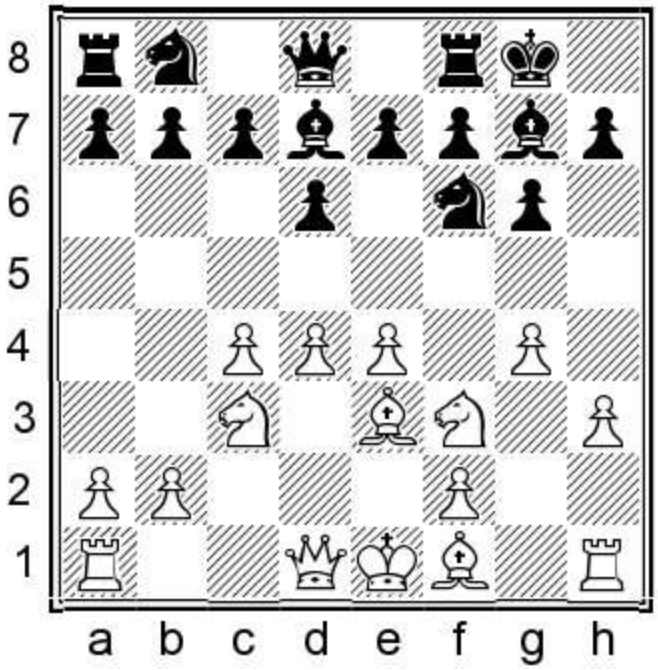
Black can also delay castling, as in the following recent example: 8...e5 9.d5 a5 10.♗e3 ♘a6 11.♗e2 b6 12.♘d2 This is the optimal arrangement of White's minor pieces.



12...h5 13.g5 ♘h7 14.♘f3! Anticipating the following pawn break. 14...f6 15.gxf6 ♕xf6 16.♕d2 ♘c5 17.0-0-0 White had a highly promising position in Jojua – Petriashvili, Tbilisi 2018.

9.♗e3

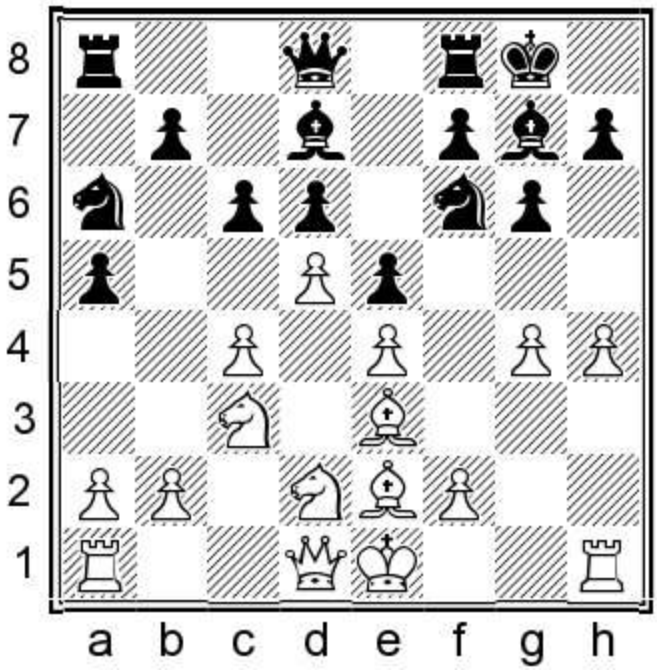
After this natural developing move, Black has tried a few different plans.



9...♘a6

chesstouring.com

9...e5 10.d5 gives White a typically favourable version of the King's Indian. After 10...c6 11.♗e2 a5 12.♘d2 ♘a6 13.h4! White has scored 4/4, and I will present a few more moves from a high-level game:



13...cxd5 14.cxd5 ♕b8 15.g5 ♘e8 16.♘c4± White was much better in Wang Hao – Bacrot, Beijing 2014.

9...c5

This move has occurred in five games but it runs into a powerful reply:

10.e5! ♘e8

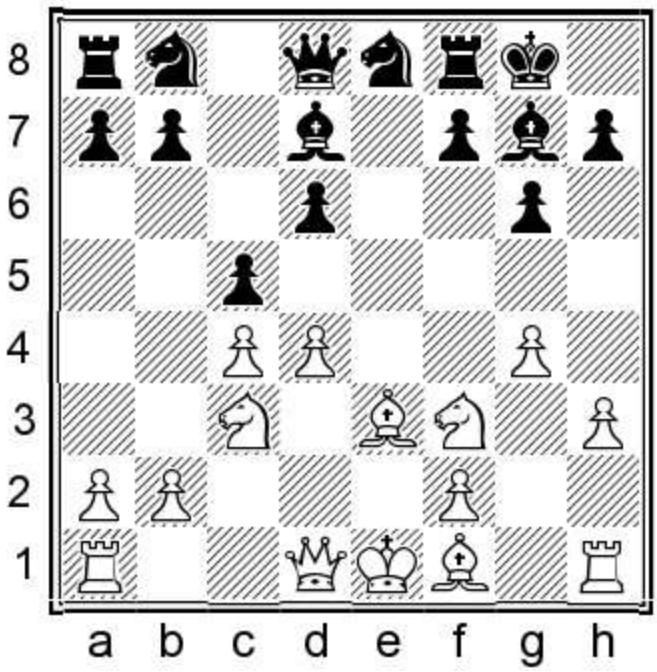
This is Black's best bet.

Much worse is 10...dxe5? 11.dxe5 ♘e8 12.♕d2 ♘c7 13.0-0-0 ♘e6 14.♗g2 ♕a5 15.♔b1! ♖d8 16.♘d5 ♕xd2 17.♘xd2 ♘c6 18.f4± and White was fully in control in Miroshnichenko – Gelashvili, Leros 2009.

11.exd6 exd6

In Karpenko – Tanis, corr. 2017, White should have continued:

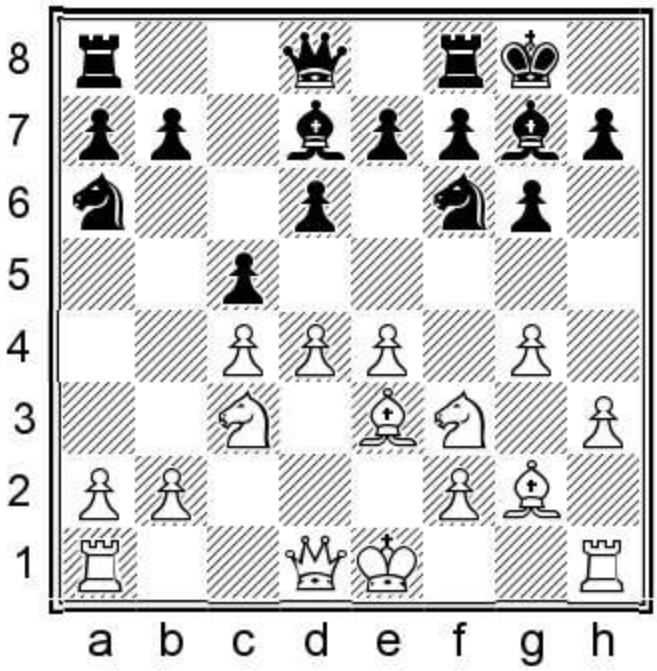
chesstouring.com



12.♗g2N 12...cxd4 13.♘xd4 ♘c6 14.♕d2±

White has a pleasant position, with a space advantage and better pawn structure.

10.♗g2 c5



11.0-0

White's set-up is flexible enough to allow him to convert to a Maroczy structure. We will follow a useful illustrative example for a few more moves.

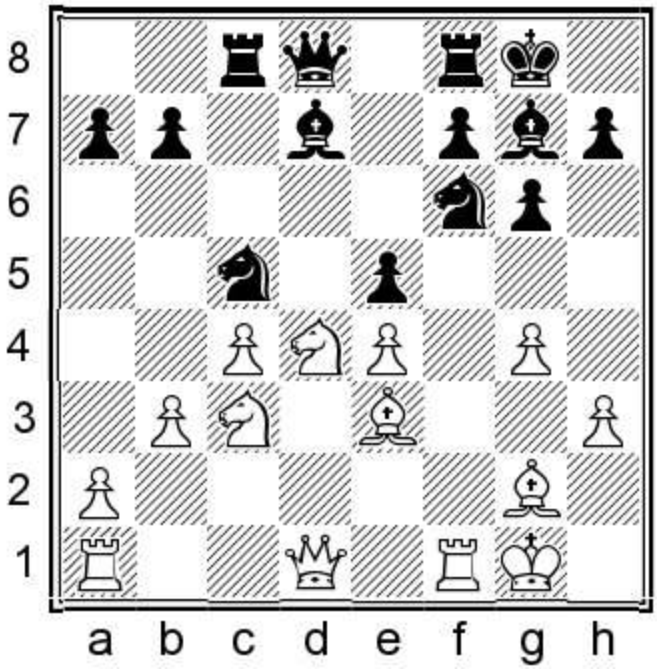
11...cxd4 12.♘xd4 ♖c8 13.b3 ♘c5 14.f4

The quiet 14.♕d2N was also good.

chesstouring.com

14...e5 15.fxe5 dxe5

This position occurred in Sargissian – Petenyi, Legnica 2013. White should have played:



16.♘de2N 16...b6 17.♕e1 ♗c6 18.♖d1 ♕e8 19.♘g3

White keeps the better chances.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with a variety of plans after 1.d4 g6 2.c4 ♗g7 3.♘f3 d6, when we play 4.♘c3 to avoid being tricked into an unfavourable Benko variant. Black may still opt for 4...c5, after which 5.d5 ♗xc3† 6.bxc3 f5 leads to interesting play: White has the better chances but he needs to play energetically, by preparing e2-e4 as quickly as possible and not hesitating to sacrifice the c3-pawn.

4...♗g4 is another thematic Modern move, when 5.e3 is our choice. Then 5...c5 is a reasonable attempt to strike at the centre but 6.♗e2 keeps control, although it is worth checking some of the nuances of variation B22, especially the correct way to deal with the attacking plan of ...f5-f4-f3.

The remainder of the chapter saw a mixture of lines where Black develops his knights in one way or another, after which White usually hits the bishop with h2-h3. If Black exchanges on f3, the bishop pair should offer White good chances, and it is worth noting the well-timed g2-g4 advance as a useful option. Black has also tried various ideas involving retreating the bishop to f5, d7 or c8, but this should offer White a favourable version of a King's Indian, even if he has to lose a bit of time playing e3-e4.

chesstouring.com



Modern Defence



Main Line

Variation Index

1.d4 g6 2.c4 ♗g7 3.♘f3 d6 4.♘c3 e5

5.g3

A) 5...♗g4?! 392

B) 5...♘c6 6.dxe5! 393

B1) 6...dxe5? 394

B2) 6...♘xe5 395

C) 5...exd4 6.♘xd4 396

C1) 6...♘e7 396

C2) 6...♘c6 7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.♗g2 ♘e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♗g5 397

C21) 10...f6 398

C22) 10...♖b8 400

D) 5...♘d7 6.♗g2 ♘e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.e4 401

D1) 8...h6 402

D2) 8...♘c6 404

D3) 8...exd4 9.♘xd4 ♘c6 10.♘de2 406

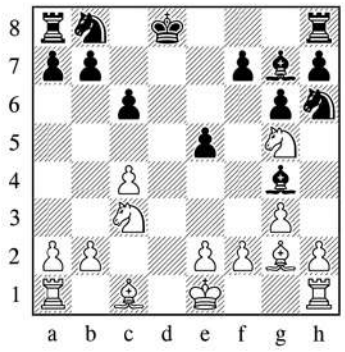
D31) 10...♘de5 408

D32) 10...♘c5 411

D33) 10...a5 412

chesstouring.com

A) note to 6...♗xf3



10.b4!N

D2) after 15...♘e5



16.exf5!N

D33) after 15...♖e8



16.♖b2!N

1.d4 g6 2.c4 ♗g7 3.♘f3 d6 4.♘c3 e5

I will take this as our tabiya for the chapter. It is worth mentioning that 4...♘d7 followed by ...e5 is a more popular route to the main line (see variation D below), but I have chosen to concentrate on the text move in order to consider some sidelines where Black avoids placing the knight on d7.

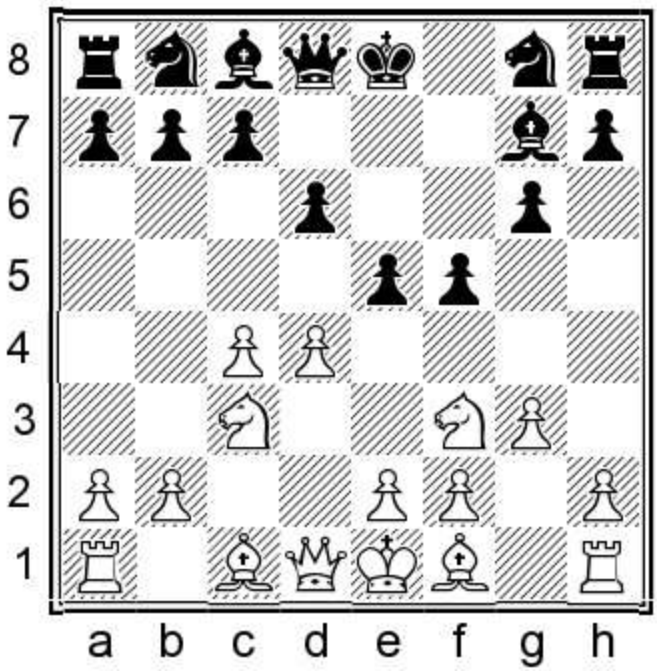
5.g3

5.dxe5 dxe5 6.♕xd8† ♔xd8 has also been tested in hundreds of games but I prefer to head for the main lines while keeping the dxe5 option in reserve, in case Black allows it under more favourable conditions.

Black's four most popular choices have been **A)** 5...♗g4?!, **B)** 5...♘c6, **C)** 5...exd4 and **D)** 5...♘d7, and we will analyse them after first checking a few inferior options.

5...f5?!

This looks pretty dubious due to the following straightforward response:



6.dxe5! dxe5 7.♕xd8† ♔xd8 8.♗g5†

chesstouring.com

White gains a lot of time for his development.

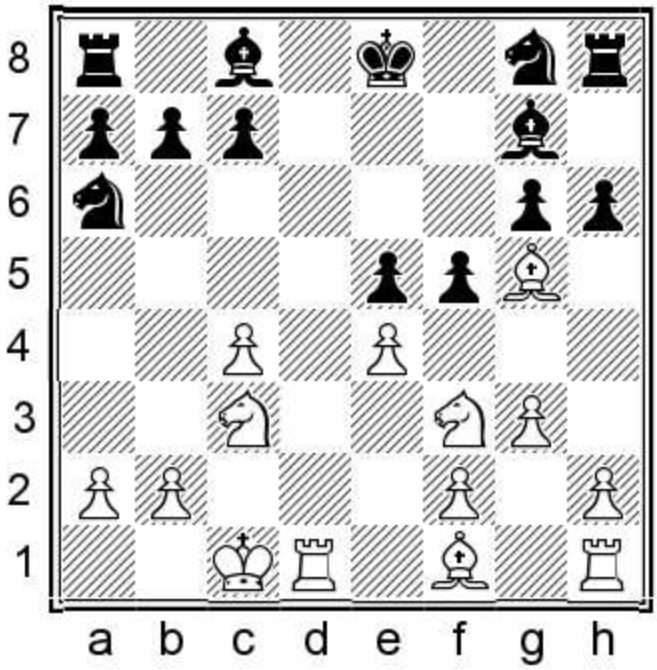
8...♔e8 9.0-0-0 ♘a6

9...♘e7? is simply a blunder, allowing 10.♗xe7! ♔xe7 11.♘d5† ♔d6 12.♘b6†+− as in Tadic – Borsos, Senta 2002.

The text move occurred in the recent game Raja – D. Fernandez, Paracin 2018. I still like my recommendation from *GM 2*:

10.e4N 10...h6

But here I found a slight improvement:



11.♗d2!

Previously I gave 11.♗e3, but it is useful to have the option to press against the e5-pawn.

11...♘e7

Or 11...fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♗g4 13.♗g2 ♘e7 14.h3 ♗e6 15.b3 with a nice positional edge for White.

12.♖e1! fxe4 13.♖xe4 ♗f5 14.♖e3

White is clearly better.

5...♘e7?!

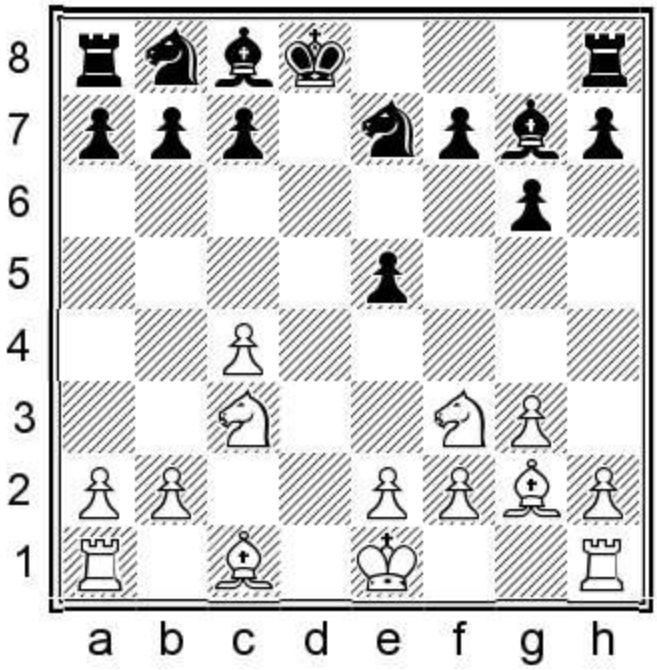
This move order seems senseless to me. I do not see how Black can hope to profit from postponing ...♘d7, but he does allow White an extra option:

6.dxe5!?

6.♗g2 is fine, as Black hardly has anything better than transposing to our main line.

6...dxe5 7.♕xd8† ♔xd8 8.♗g2

chesstouring.com



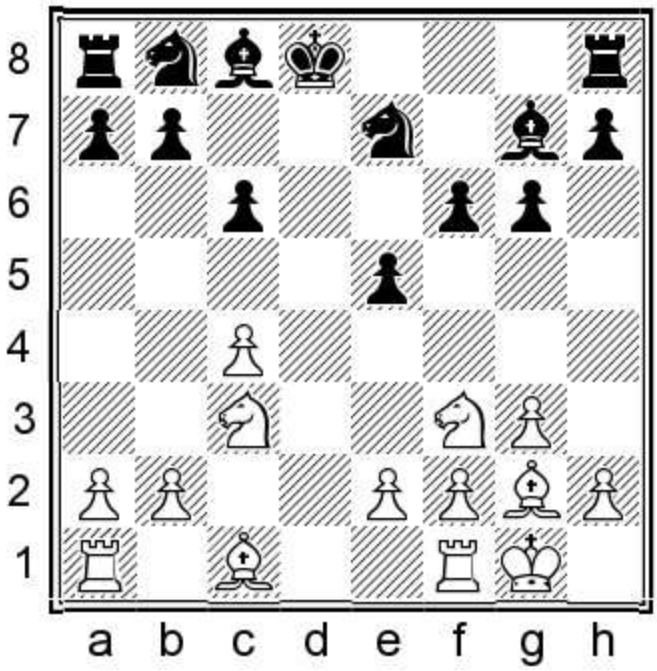
Usually these kinds of endgames are fairly defendable for Black, but there is one concrete detail which makes his life tougher here. Black would normally develop his kingside knight via h6 to f7, where it covers the sensitive d6-square. Here the knight is obviously misplaced on e7, so it is much harder for him to neutralize White's pressure.

8...f6

Black cannot really get by without this move. For instance, 8...c6 9.0-0 ♗e6 was played in Mentink – Selig, Radebeul 2016, when 10.♘g5!N 10...♗xc4 11.b3 ♗e6 12.♘xe6† fxe6 13.♘e4+– would have given White a positionally won game.

9.0-0 c6

Here I found an improvement over Rinder – Weise, Solingen 1964.

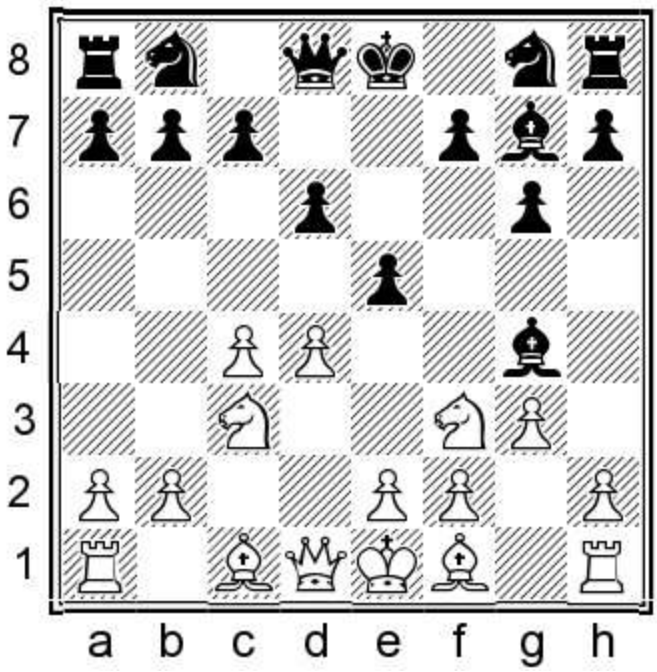


10.♖d1†N 10...♔c7 11.b4!

chesstouring.com

Seizing the initiative. The continuation might be:
11...a6 12.a4 ♗e6 13.♗a3↑
White has a lot of play on the queenside.

A) 5...♗g4?!

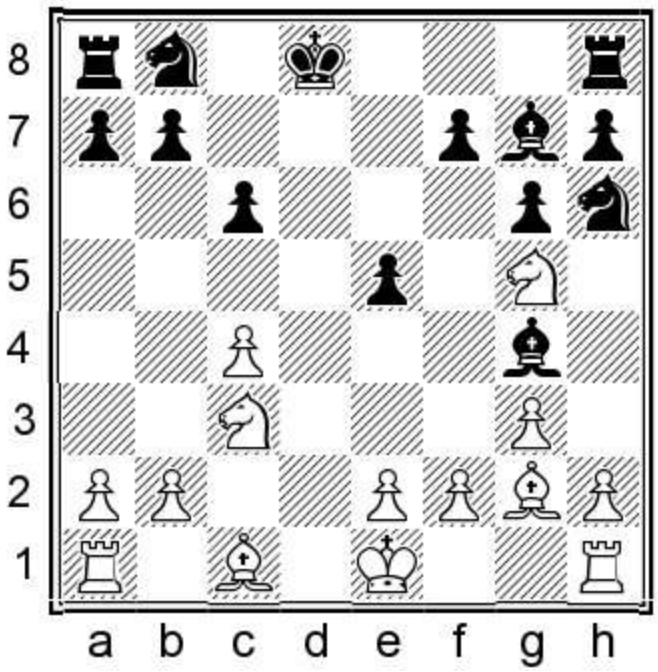


The moves ...e5 and ...♗g4 are individually quite sensible in the Modern Defence, but combining them at such an early stage does not work well for Black.

6.dxe5! ♗xf3

6...dxe5 7.♕xd8† ♔xd8 is met by the unpleasant continuation: 8.♘g5! ♘h6 9.♗g2 c6 (another game continued 9...♔c8 10.0-0 ♘c6 11.h3 ♗d7 12.♘ge4 f5 13.♘c5 e4 14.♖d1 ♘e5 15.♗f4 ♘hf7 16.♘d5 and White seized a decisive initiative in Adorjan – Kupreichik, Jyvaskyla 1991) This position was reached in Dzindzichashvili – Gurgenidze, Gori 1968, and several other games. My new idea is:

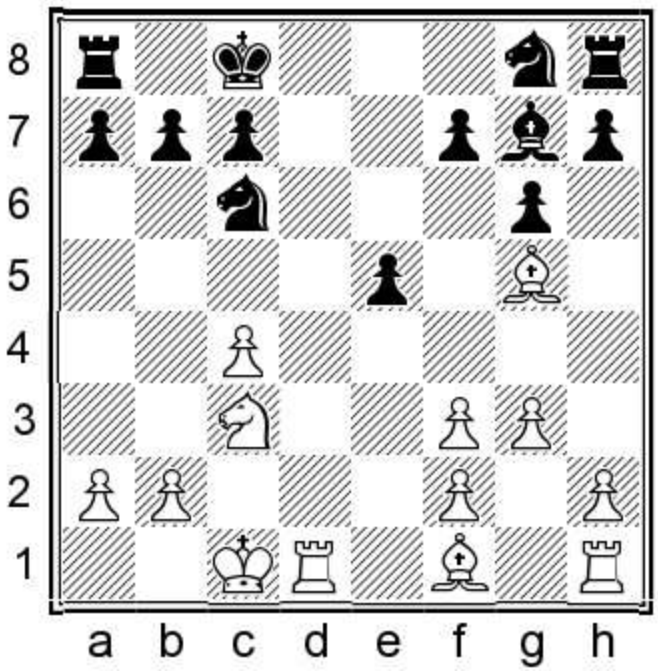
chesstouring.com



10.b4!N This looks extremely attractive; for instance, 10...f6 11.♘ge4 ♘f7 12.b5 with a serious initiative on the queenside.

7.exf3 ♗xe5

7...dxe5 8.♕xd8† ♔xd8 9.♗g5†! is also excellent for White. A nice model game continued: 9...♔c8 10.0-0-0 ♘c6



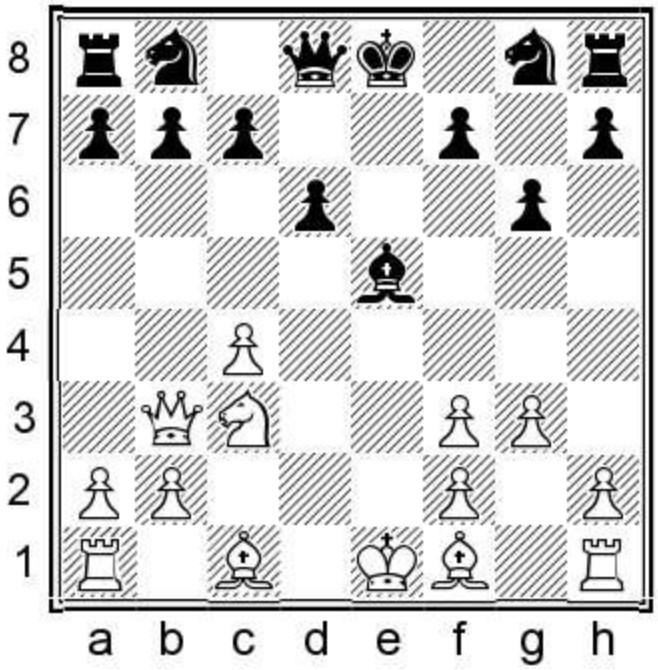
11.h4! h6 12.♗e3 ♘ge7 13.♗h3† f5 14.f4 a5 15.g4!?→ White had other good options, but in any case the practical problems were too much for Black to handle in Grover – Lalith, Kolkata 2012.

8.♕b3

chesstouring.com

A natural move, but not the only tempting continuation.

8.♗h3!?N is also worth considering. My illustrative line continues: 8...♗g7 (if Black tries 8...♘e7 then 9.♗h6 will be annoying for him) 9.0-0 ♘e7 10.♗g5 0-0 11.♖e1 ♘bc6 12.♘d5 White's initiative plays itself. 12...f6 13.♗d2± Black's position looks suspicious, to say the least.

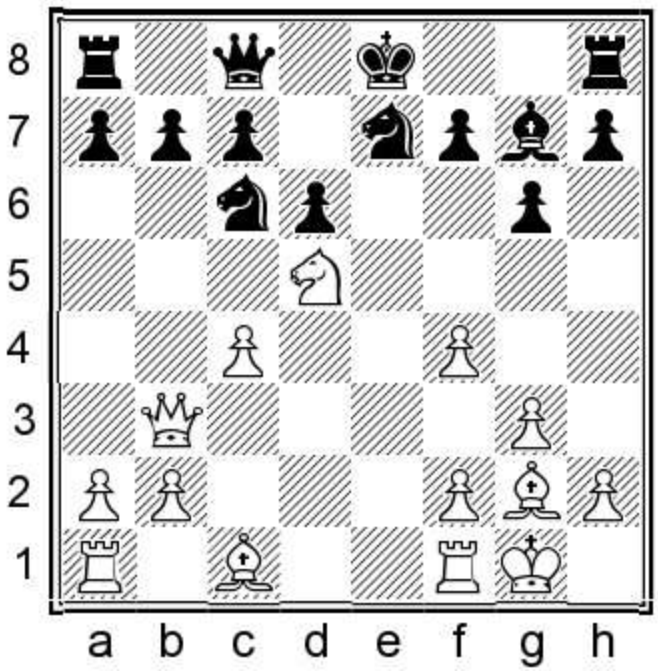


8...♕c8 9.f4 ♗g7 10.♗g2

The text move is good enough, but I also found a promising alternative: 10.♗h3!?N 10...♕xh3 11.♕xb7 ♗xc3† 12.bxc3 ♘f6 13.♕xa8 0-0 14.♗e3± Black does not have much compensation for the lost material.

10...♘c6 11.0-0 ♘ge7 12.♘d5!

Preventing Black from completing development in a natural way.

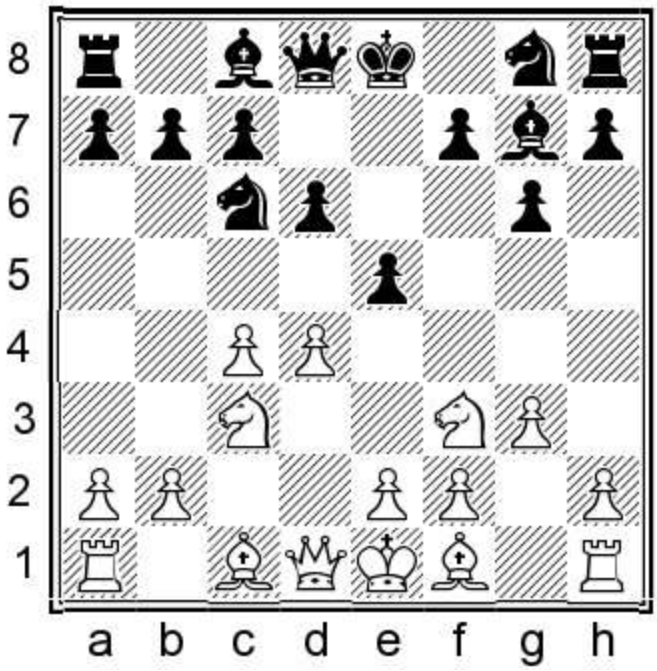


12...♘xd5 13.cxd5 ♘b8 14.♖e1† ♔f8 15.♗h3±

chesstouring.com

Black was in serious trouble in Van Wely – Hommeles, Netherlands 1997.

B) 5...♘c6



6.dxe5!

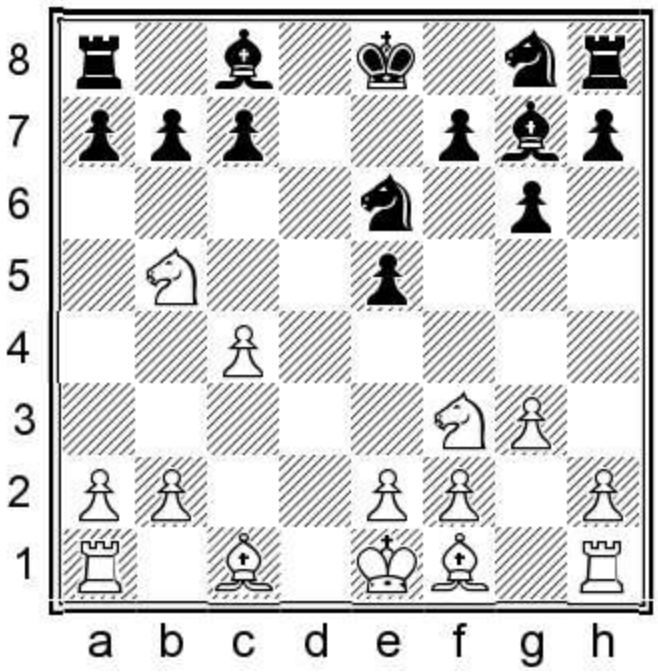
Again this is the natural reply, and I find it much more convincing than 6.d5 ♘ce7.

We will analyse the inferior **B1)** 6...dxe5? followed by the more resilient **B2)** 6...♘xe5.

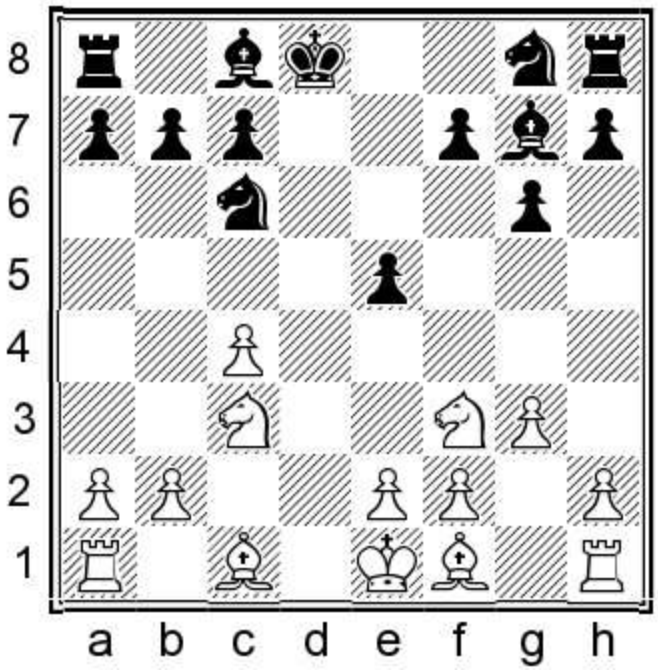
B1) 6...dxe5? 7.♕xd8† ♔xd8

7...♘xd8 soon loses material after: 8.♘b5 ♘e6 (or 8...♔d7 9.♗g5! f6 10.0-0-0† ♔e7 11.♘xc7 fxg5 12.♘xa8 and White was winning in Drozdovskij – Zajarnyi, Odessa 2006)

chesstouring.com



9.♘g5! Black is unable to defend the c7-pawn. 9...♔e7 10.♘xe6 ♗xe6 11.♘xc7 ♖c8 12.♘xe6 ♔xe6 13.e4± Black had no compensation in T. Hansen – Flaata, Norway 2000.



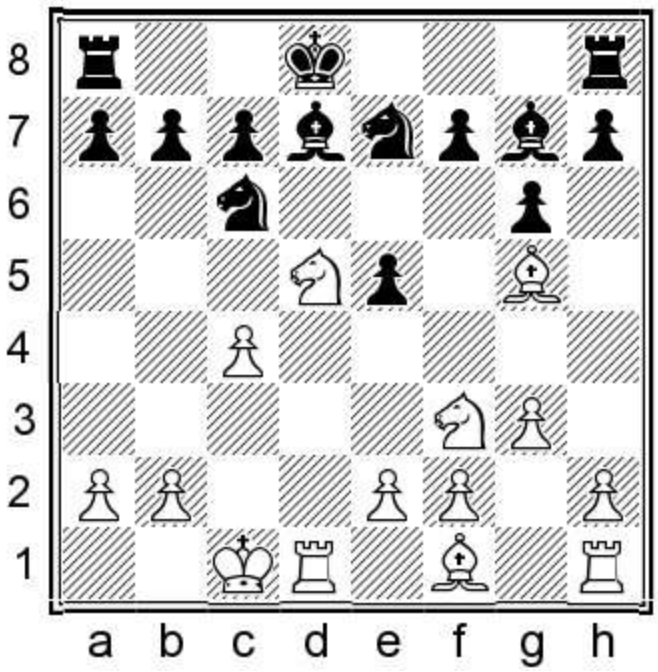
8.♗g5†! ♘ce7

This leaves Black in serious trouble but other moves don't really help him. For instance:

8...f6 9.0-0-0† ♔e8 (9...♗d7? 10.♗h3! ♘b8 has occurred in a couple of games, when 11.♖xd7†!N 11...♘xd7 12.♖d1+– would have been the simplest route to victory) 10.♘d5 The c7-pawn is undefendable. 10...♔f7 11.♘xc7 ♖b8 12.♗d2 ♘ge7 13.♗c3 e4 14.♘d4 White was a healthy pawn up in Comas Fabrego – Sanpera Bonet, Castellar 2004.

8...♘ge7 9.0-0-0† ♗d7 10.♘d5 is also depressing for Black, for instance:

chesstouring.com



10...f5 (10...e4 11.♗f6! is a killer, and after 11...exf3 12.♗xg7 ♖g8 13.♗f6 White had a decisive advantage in Costa – Rego, Rio de Janeiro 2011) 11.♘f6 ♗xf6 12.♗xf6 ♖f8 13.♗xe5 White was simply winning in Huch – Zenker, Bavaria 2014.

9.0-0-0† ♗d7 10.♗h3 f5

This is the best Black can do in this dubious line, but his position still collapses fairly quickly after:

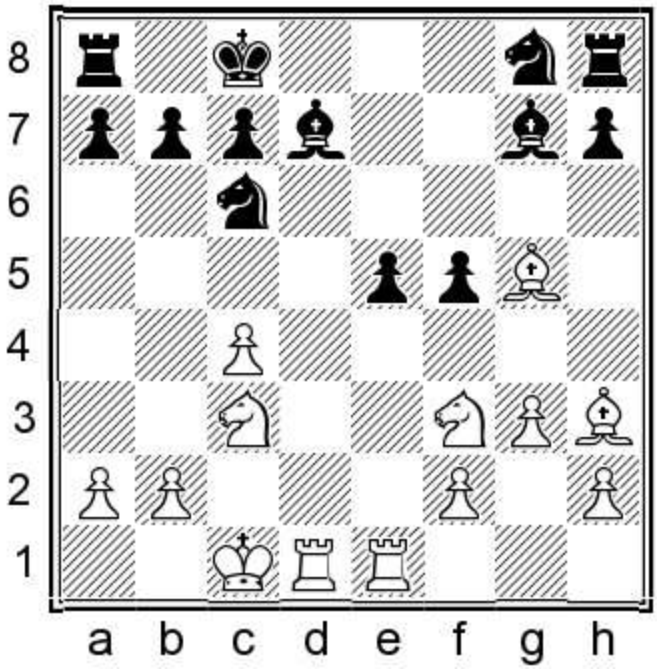
11.e4! ♔c8

11...♔e8 12.♖he1 ♗c6 13.♘d5! ♗xd5 14.cxd5 ♖d8 15.exf5 gxf5 16.♘xe5+– also gave White a winning advantage in Cooksey – Swanson, England 2012.

12.♖he1 ♘c6 13.exf5 gxf5

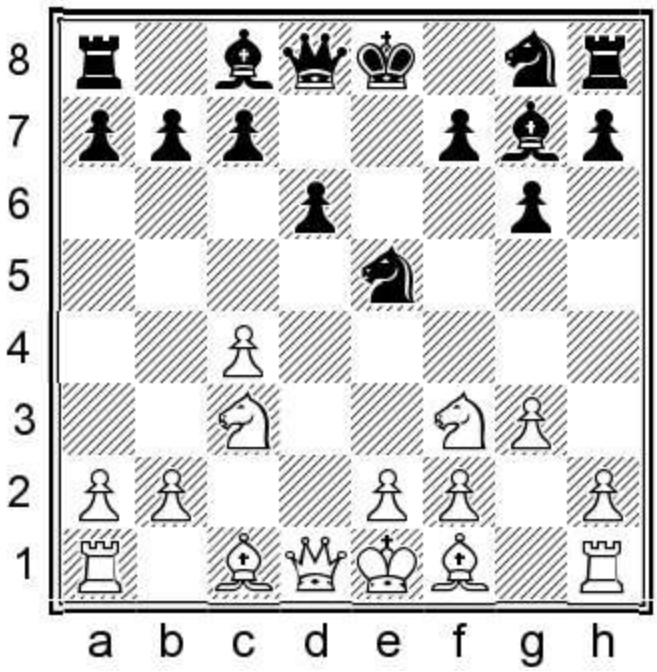
We have been following L. Santos – Santamaria Mas, Thessaloniki (ol) 1988, and one other game. White could have broken through in brutal fashion with:

chesstouring.com



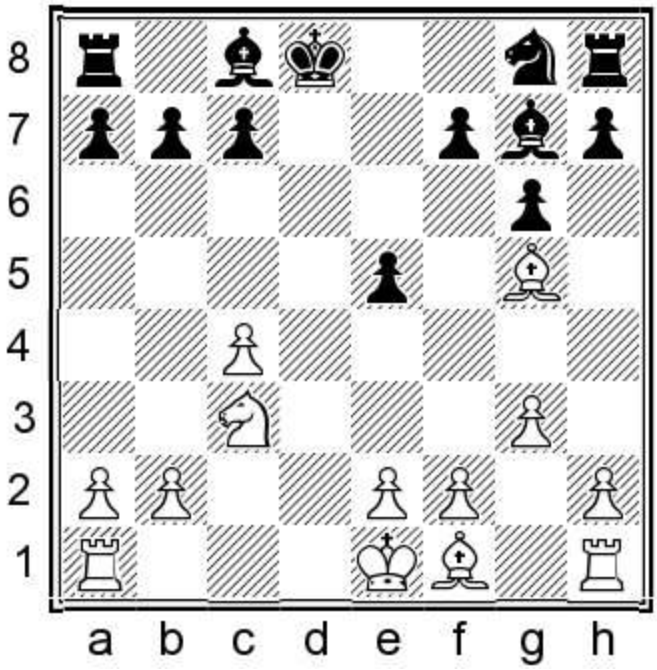
14.♖xd7!N 14...♔xd7 15.♗xf5† ♔e8 16.♘d5 ♔f7 17.♘xc7 ♖b8 18.♗e6† ♔f8 19.♖d1+–
With an overwhelming advantage.

B2) 6...♘xe5



7.♘xe5 ♗xe5
Once again, Black should stay away from the queenless middlegame: 7...dxe5? 8.♕xd8† ♔xd8 9.♗g5†

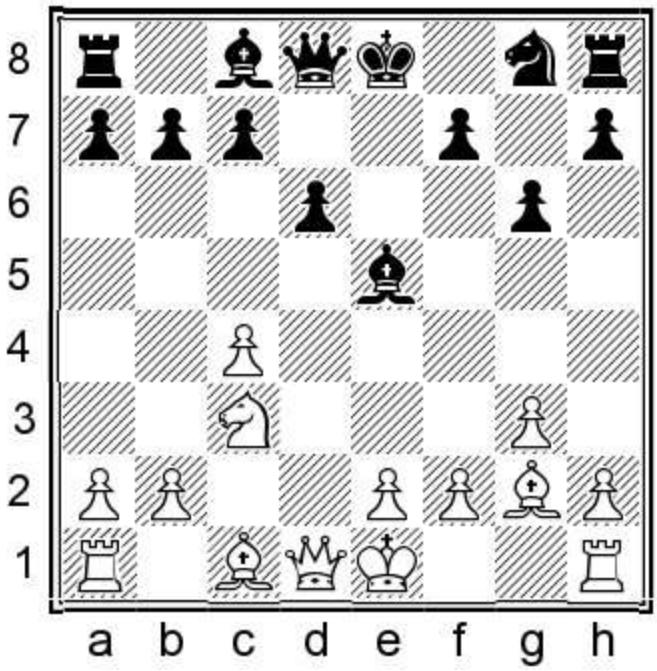
chesstouring.com



9...f6 (9...♗f6? proved even worse after: 10.♖d1†! White avoids placing his king on c1, for a reason which will soon become obvious. 10...♗d7 11.♗h3! ♗xg5 12.♖xd7† ♔e8 13.♖xc7+– Zifroni – Karttunen, Panormo 2001) 10.♖d1† ♔e8 11.♘b5! Black was losing at least a pawn in Vaulin – Belotserkovsky, Krasnodar 1997.

8.♗g2

White enjoys the characteristically favourable pawn structure; moreover, Black faces some additional challenges, as we will see.



8...♘e7

Another game continued 8...♗g7 9.c5! ♘f6 10.cxd6 ♕xd6 (also after 10...cxd6 11.0-0 0-0 12.♗e3±

chesstouring.com

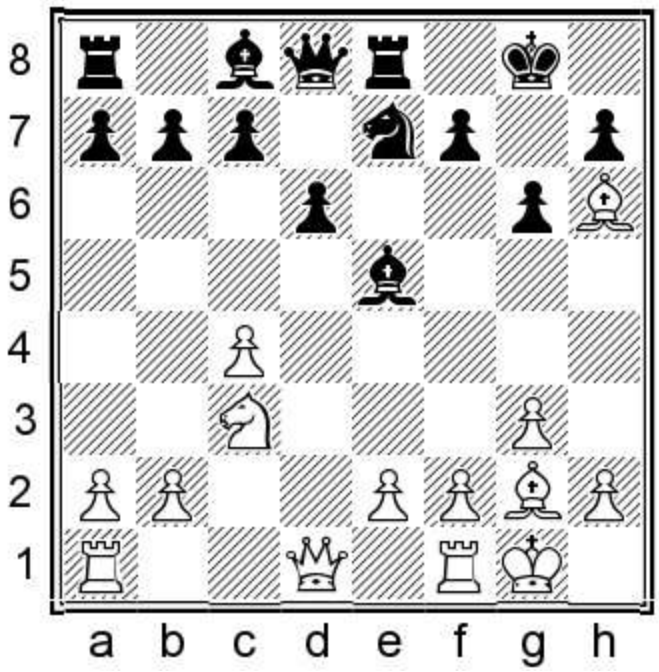
Black is much worse) 11.♕xd6 cxd6 12.0-0 ♔e7 13.♖d1 ♖d8 14.b3± with a difficult endgame for Black, V. Popov – Pushkarev, Ulan Ude 2009.

9.0-0 0-0 10.♗h6

I find this the most appealing option, although 10.♗g5 is also strong and has yielded excellent results for White.

10...♖e8

10...♗g7 11.♗xg7 ♔xg7 12.♕d4† f6 13.♖ad1 ♘c6 14.♕d2 ♗e6 15.♘d5± gave White an unquestionable positional advantage in Rakhmanov – Sachdev, Dubai 2017.



11.♕d2 ♘f5 12.♗f4 c6

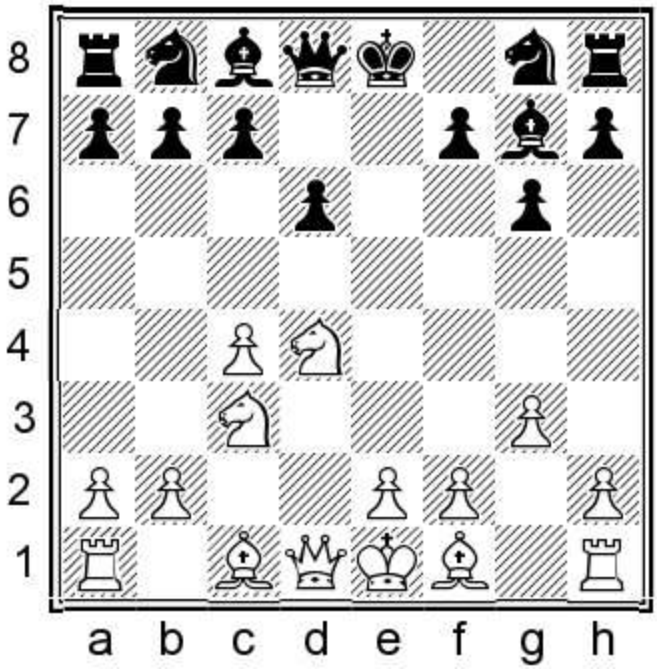
12...♗xc3 13.♕xc3 ♖xe2 14.♖ae1↑ looks too dangerous for Black.

13.♖ad1 ♕e7 14.e4 ♘d4 15.♗e3±

White's advantage was obvious in Johannessen – Gronn, Bergen 2009.

C) 5...exd4 6.♘xd4

chesstouring.com

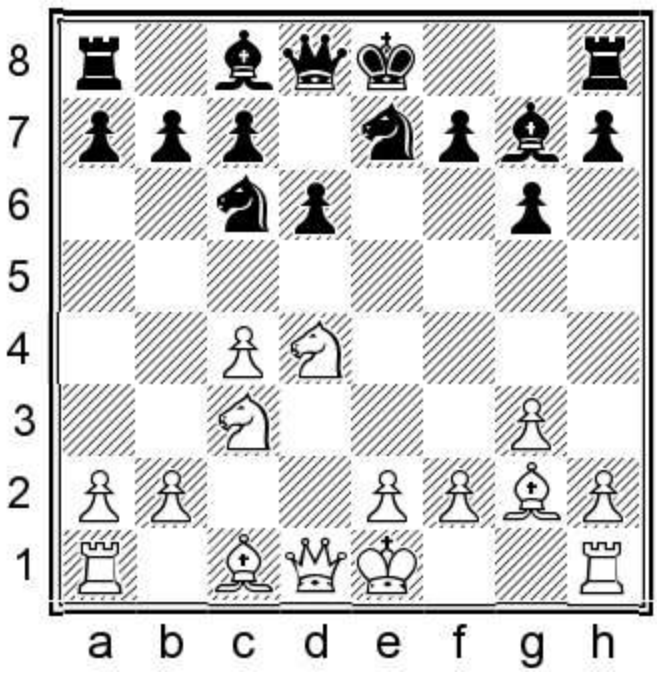


Now **C1)** 6...♘e7 and **C2)** 6...♘c6 are both quite popular.

6...♘f6 is likely to transpose to a normal King's Indian, for instance: 7.♗g2 0-0 8.0-0 ♖e8 (8...♘bd7 9.e4 leads straight to the repertoire from *Grandmaster Repertoire 2A*) 9.h3! It is hard to imagine that Black has anything cleverer than 9...♘bd7, after which 10.e4 leads to Chapter 12 of *GM 2A*.

C1) 6...♘e7 7.♗g2 ♘bc6

7...0-0 8.0-0 ♘bc6 leads to more or less the same situation after 9.♘xc6.



8.♘xc6 ♘xc6

chesstouring.com

8...bxc6 will be covered under variation C2 below.

9.♗f4!?

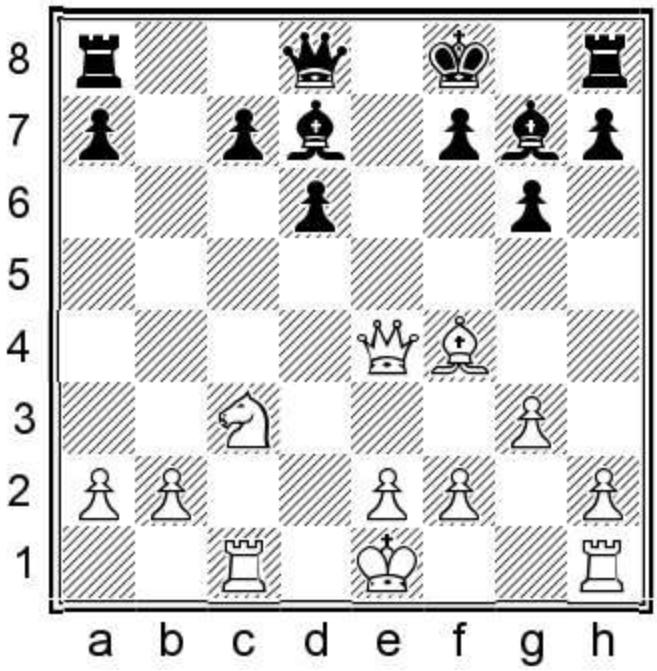
9.0-0 0-0 10.♗d2 was my previous choice.

This time, I have gone for a slightly different set-up, having been impressed by David Navara's win over Piorun in 2016.

9...♗e6 10.♖c1! 0-0

This is definitely Black's best bet.

The aforementioned game continued 10...♗xc4? 11.♕a4! ♗e6 12.♗xc6† bxc6 13.♕xc6† ♗d7 14.♕e4† ♔f8 (14...♗e6 also brings Black no relief after 15.♘b5!) and now in Navara – Piorun, Germany 2016, White's most accurate choice would have been:

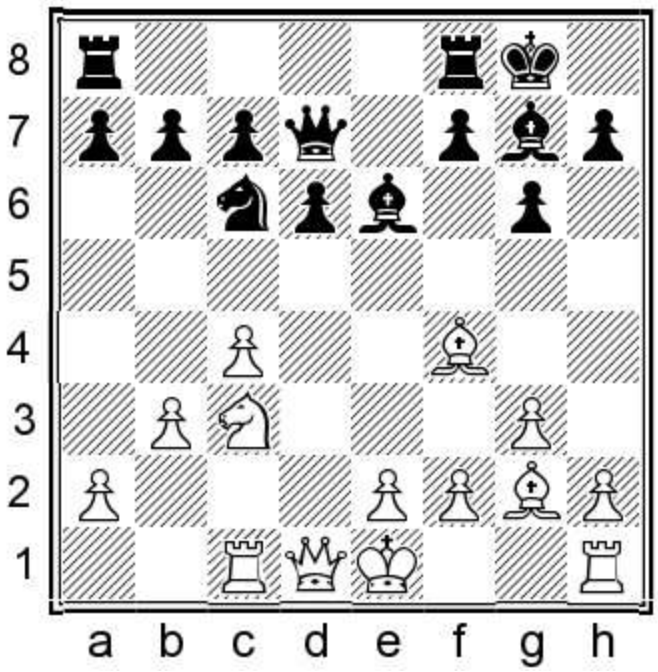


15.♘d5!N 15...♗f5 16.♕e3 ♖c8 17.♗h6± With a serious advantage.

11.b3 ♕d7

White can even consider playing aggressively with:

chesstouring.com



12.h4!?N

The more modest 12.0-0 ♗h3 13.♘d5 ♗xg2 14.♔xg2± was also perfectly pleasant for White in Uhlmann – Schoeneberg, Goerlitz 1972.

12.h3N 12...♖ae8 13.♕d2± is another valid approach.

12...♖ae8

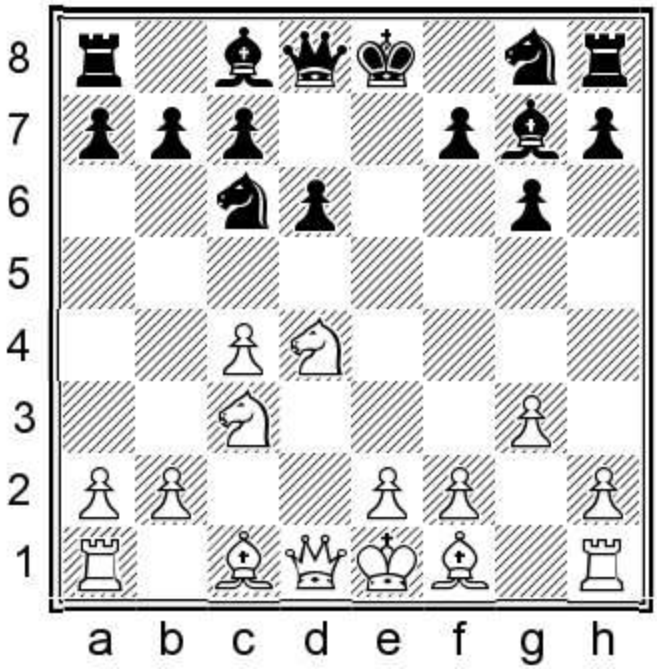
12...h5 13.♘d5± is similar.

13.♕d2 h5 14.♗h6±

White enjoys a pleasant advantage in all these lines.

C2) 6...♘c6

chesstouring.com

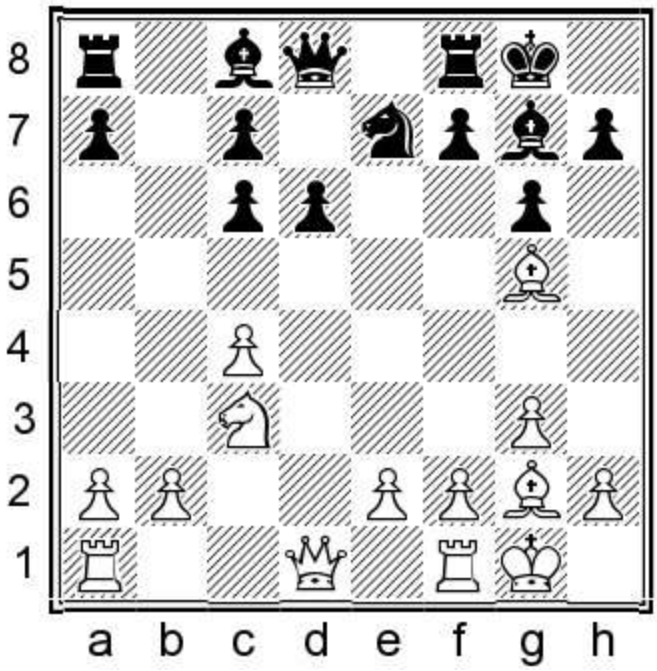


The ensuing position with doubled c-pawns offers Black more chances for counterplay than the previous line, as the b-file is opened and White cannot simply plonk a knight on d5 whenever he feels like it. On the other hand, Black's structure is weakened and White still has plenty of attractive ideas.

7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.♗g2 ♘e7 9.0-0 0-0

I also examined 9...♗e6 10.♕d3 ♕d7 (10...0-0 11.♗g5 is covered under the 10...♗e6 line in the notes to the main line below) which has occurred twice in practice. 11.♗g5!?N is my suggested improvement, an approximate line being 11...♖b8 12.b3 h6 13.♗d2 ♗h3 14.♖ae1 ♗xg2 15.♔xg2 0-0 16.e4± when White keeps a pleasant position.

10.♗g5

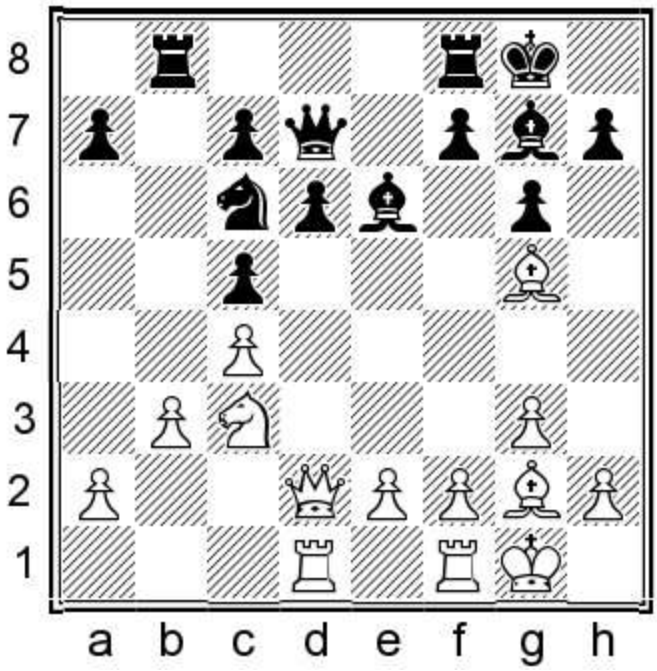


chesstouring.com

We will analyse **C21)** 10...f6 and **C22)** 10...♖b8.

10...h6? is optimistic to say the least, and after 11.♗xe7 ♕xe7 12.♗xc6 ♖b8 13.♕c2 ♕e5 14.♖ac1± Black failed to prove any compensation in Chernin – Berndt, Austria 2000.

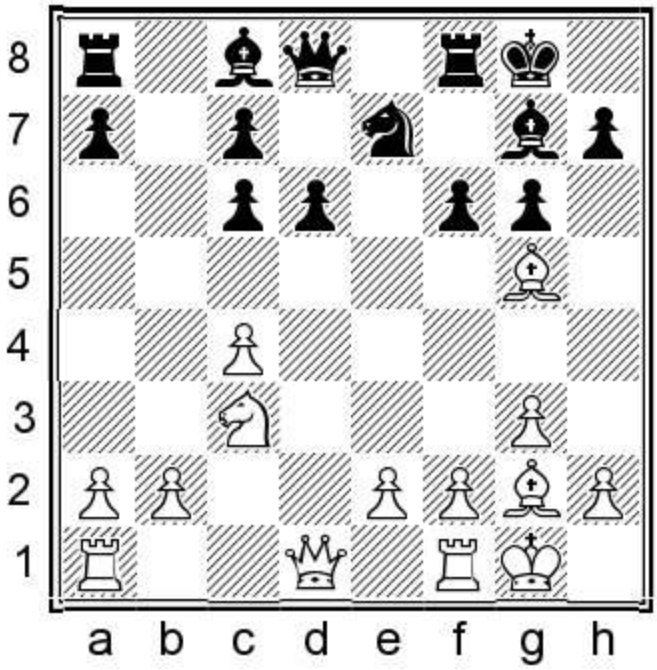
10...♗e6 should be met by 11.♕d3 when the following sequence looks pretty natural: 11...♖b8 12.b3 c5 13.♕d2 ♕d7 14.♖ad1 ♘c6 Here I would stick to the positional continuation:



15.♗h6N (In the game White went for an unusual exchange sacrifice with 15.♘e4 f6 16.♘xc5!? dxc5 17.♕xd7 ♗xd7 18.♖xd7 ♘e5 19.♖xg7† ♔xg7 20.♗e3 ♘d7 21.♖d1 ♖fd8 22.♖d5 and obtained interesting compensation in Giri – Dzagnidze, Tbilisi 2017) 15...f6 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♗xc6!? ♕xc6 18.e4 White has a pleasant position, as the scope of Black's remaining bishop is quite limited.

C21) 10...f6

chesstouring.com

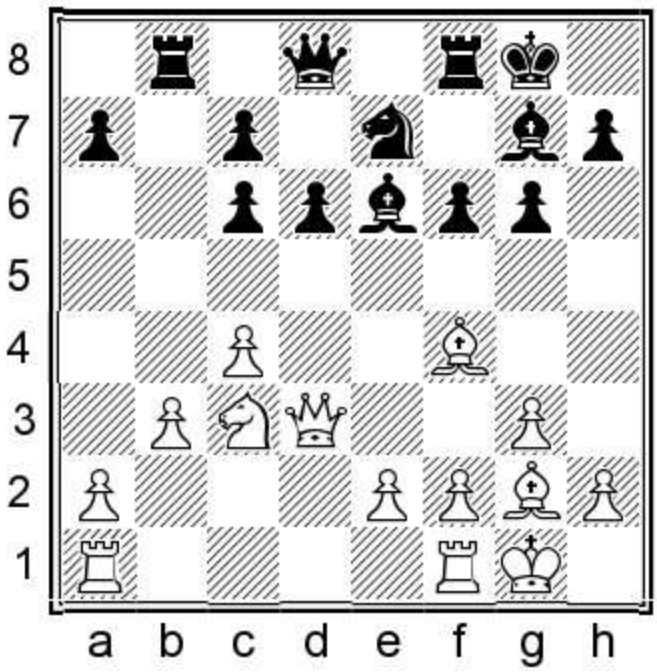


11.♗f4 ♗e6

I checked a few other ideas:

11...g5 happened in Brumen – Medvegy, Austria 2011, when 12.♗d2!N would have been the best retreat. My illustrative line continues 12...♖b8 13.b3 f5 14.e3 ♗d7 15.♖c1 c5 16.f4! g4 17.♘d5 and White is pleasantly better.

11...♖b8 12.b3 ♗e6 13.♕d3! sees the queen settle on a good square. Here are a couple of examples:



13...c5 (13...♕c8 14.♖ad1 ♖d8 happened in G. Shahade – Milman, New York 2002, when 15.c5!N 15...d5 16.e4± would have opened the game in White's favour) 14.♖ad1 ♕d7 Now in Storck – Voss, Germany 2010, a simple and efficient continuation would have been 15.♖fe1N 15...♘c6 16.♘d5± with a

thesaturing.com

pleasant edge for White.

12.♕a4!

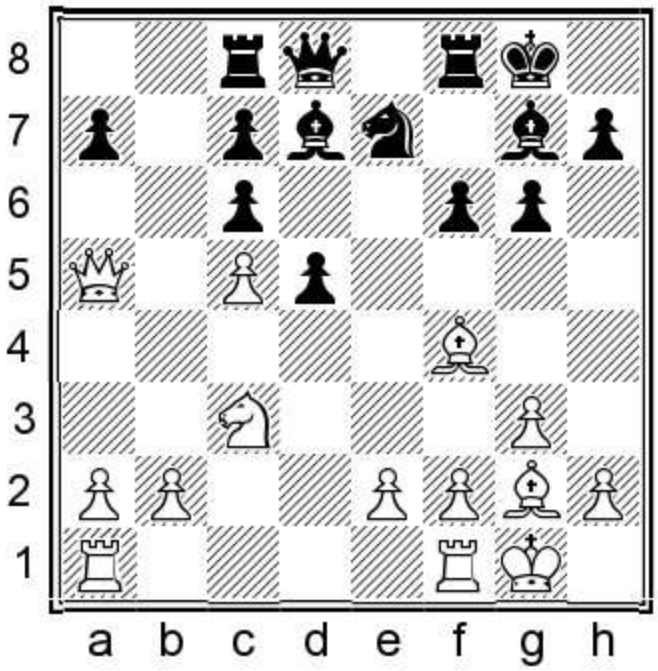
In the line above, I commented that the queen was well placed on d3 in these positions, but she can annoy Black even more on the queenside, taking advantage of the fact that b2-b3 has not yet been played.

12...♖b8

I checked two other examples:

12...♕b8 13.b3 ♗d7 14.c5! g5 15.♗d2± was excellent for White in Issing – Hank, Bad Zwischenahn 2002.

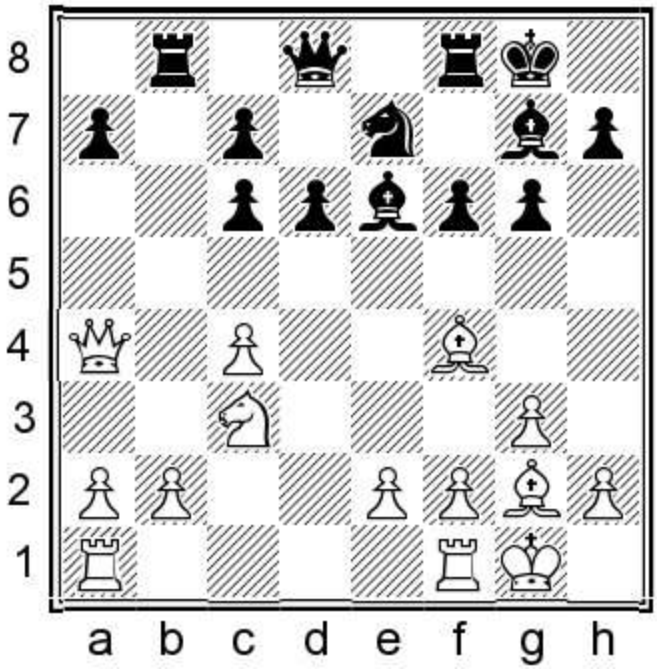
12...♗d7 13.c5! d5 14.♕a5 ♖c8 occurred in Przewoznik – Jaworski, Bielsko Biala 1990, when a simple and strong continuation would have been:



15.♖ad1N 15...g5 16.♗c1 ♕e8 17.e4± Sealing White's advantage.

We have been following Esposito – Reinhardt, Buenos Aires 1963. Here I realized that White does not have to safeguard the b-pawn and can instead play:

chesstouring.com

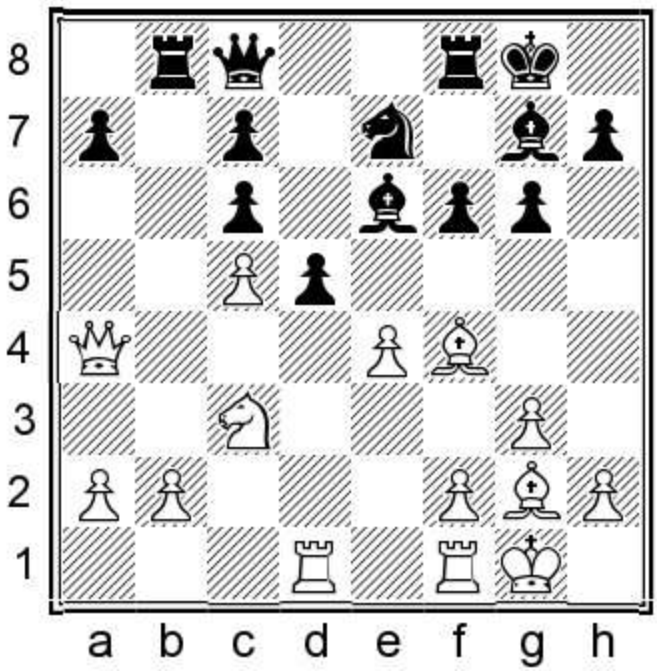


13.♖ad1!N 13...♕c8

Black can grab the pawn with 13...♖xb2 but after 14.c5! d5 15.e4 ♕c8 16.♖fe1 it is hard for him to withstand White's pressure in the centre.

14.c5! d5 15.e4

White is ideally prepared for central activity. A good illustrative line is:

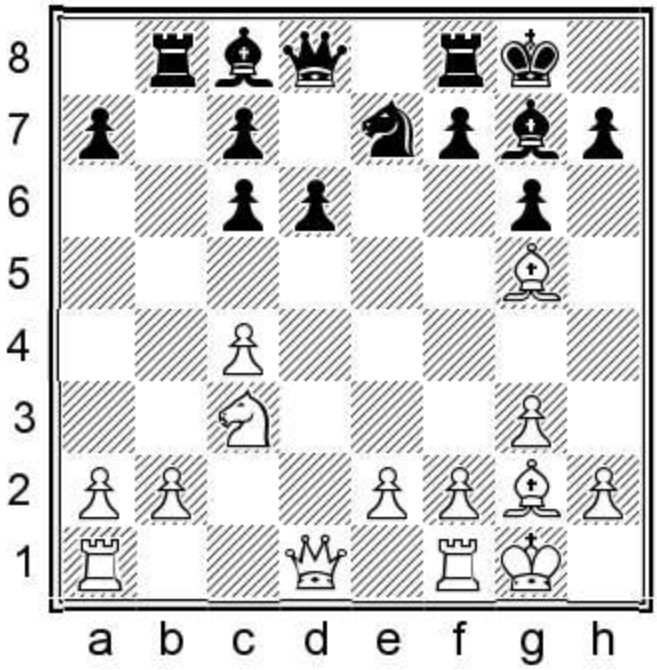


15...dxe4 16.♕xe4 ♘d5 17.♖fe1 ♗f7 18.♘xd5 cxd5 19.♕d3±

White is clearly better.

chesstouring.com

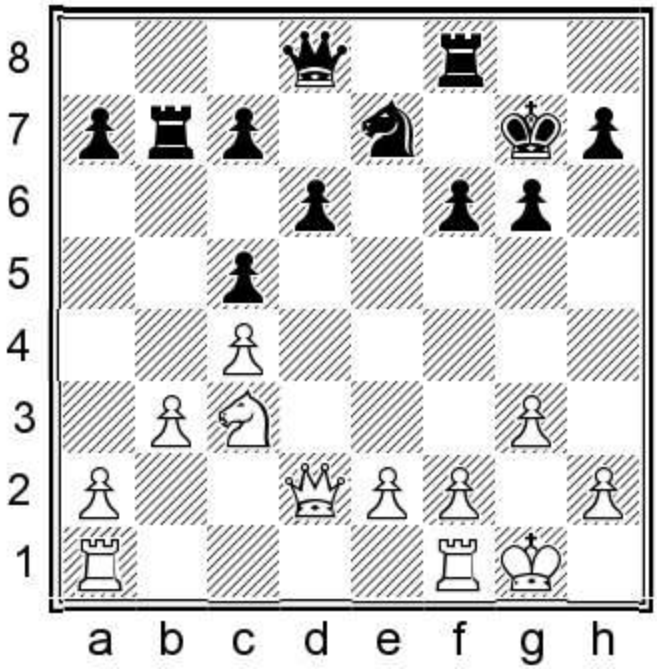
C22) 10...♖b8



This has been Black's most popular choice, and it has the advantage of ruling out the ♕a4 plan, which proved to be rather effective in the previous line.

11.♕d2 c5 12.b3 ♗e6

The main alternative is 12...f6 and in this case I like 13.♗h6 (as I found 13.♗f4 g5! 14.♗e3 ♘f5 not very clear) 13...♗b7 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.♗xb7 ♖xb7 Roiz – M. Brown, Concord 2014. White should have played:



16.h4N 16...h5 17.e4 with a promising game.

13.♖ad1 f6 14.♗f4!

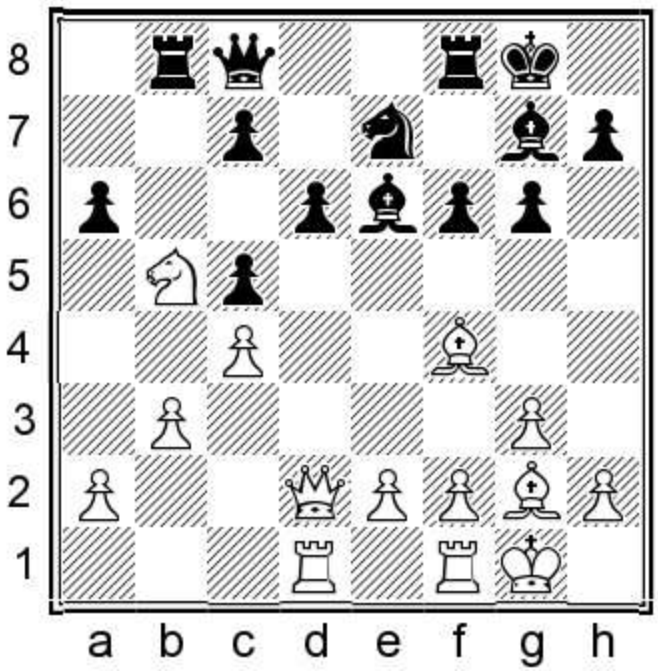
chesstouring.com

It is best to avoid 14.♗h6, after which 14...♗xh6 15.♕xh6 ♕d7 significantly eased Black's defensive

task in Hulak – Schneider, Neu Isenburg 1992.

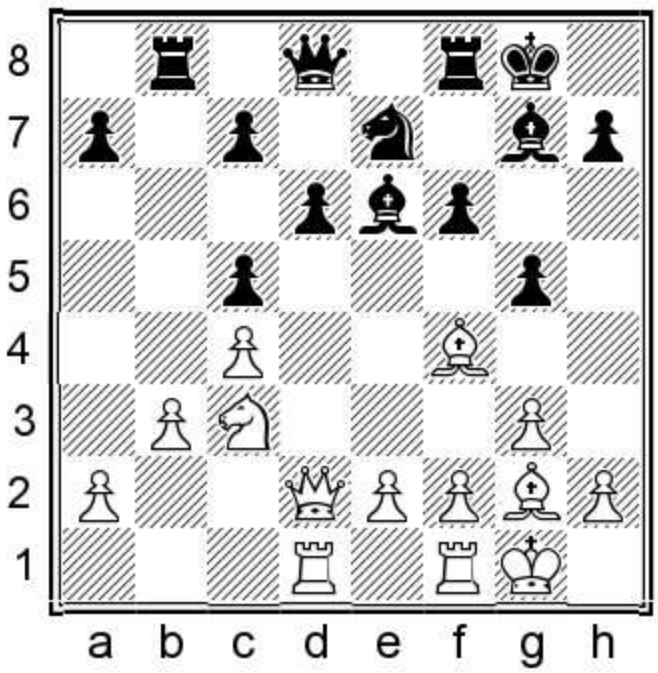
14...g5

14...♔h8? runs into a surprising tactical idea. 15.♘b5! attacks the a7-pawn, and after 15...a6 White has:



16.♘xc7! ♕xc7 17.♗xd6 ♕d7 18.♗xb8 ♕xd2 19.♖xd2 ♖xb8 20.♖d6 White quickly obtained a decisive advantage in Magerramov – Kantsler, Podolsk 1989.

14...♕c8 occurred in Gavrikov – Sutter, Zurich 1992, when White missed a chance to go for the same tactical idea: 15.♘b5!N 15...a6 16.♘xc7 ♕xc7 17.♗xd6 ♕d7 18.♗xb8 ♕xd2 19.♖xd2 ♖xb8 20.♖fd1 White is clearly better and will soon go after the a6-pawn.

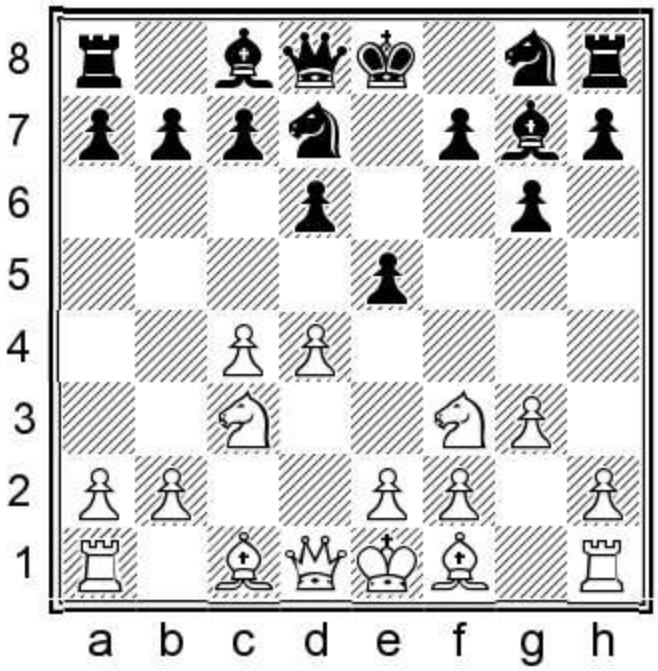


15.♗e3 h6 16.f4!↑

chesstouring.com

White was clearly better in Beckmann – Schebler, Germany 1991.

D) 5...♘d7



This is the big main line which, as I mentioned earlier, often arises after the move order of 4...♘d7 followed by 5...e5.

6.♗g2 ♘e7

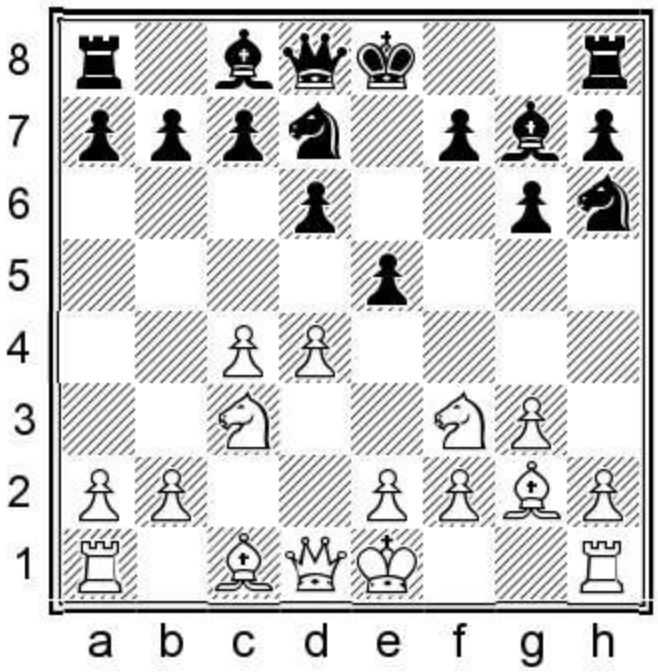
6...♘gf6 simply transposes to a King's Indian of course.

The other noteworthy option is:

6...♘h6?!

I find this move an odd choice, but was surprised to see that it has been played more than 150 games. I suggest meeting it with:

chesstouring.com

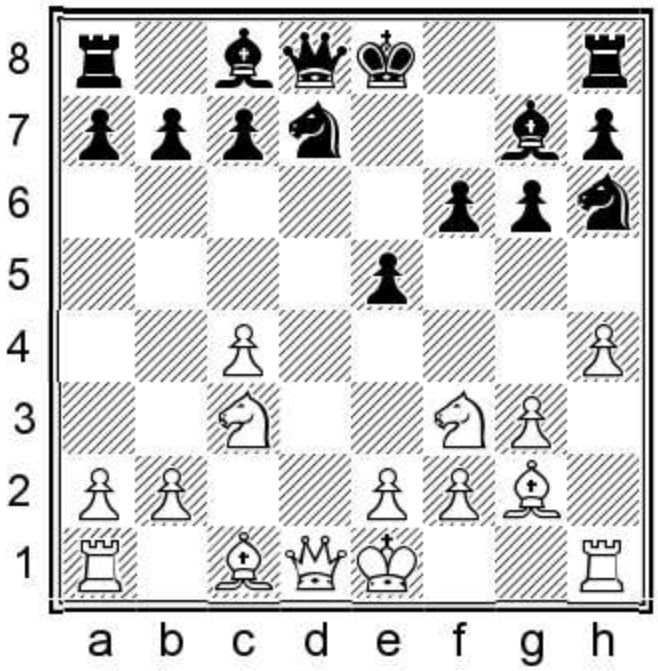


7.dxe5!

After analysing the position in depth, I now find the text move much more convincing than my previous recommendation of 7.c5.

7...dxe5 8.h4! f6

After 8...♘g4 9.h5 White's initiative plays itself, for instance: 9...♕e7 10.♘d5 ♕c5 11.0-0 ♕d6 12.♘g5 ♘b6 13.♘e4 ♕c6 14.♗g5+– Vecek – Nackas, corr. 2016.



9.♘g5!

A remarkable tactical idea.

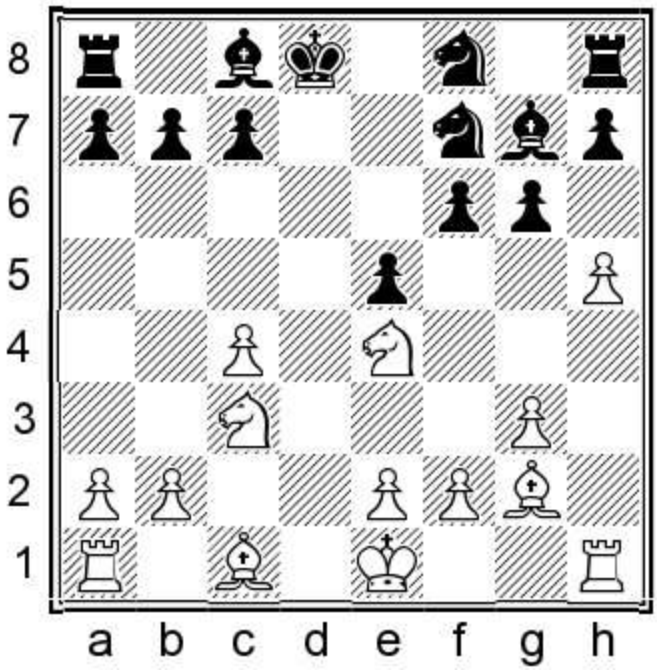
9...♘f8

9...fxg5? is obviously bad after 10.♗xg5 ♘f6 11.♕xd8† ♔xd8 12.♘d5 ♖f8 13.0-0-0+– when White regains the material with dividends.

chesstouring.com

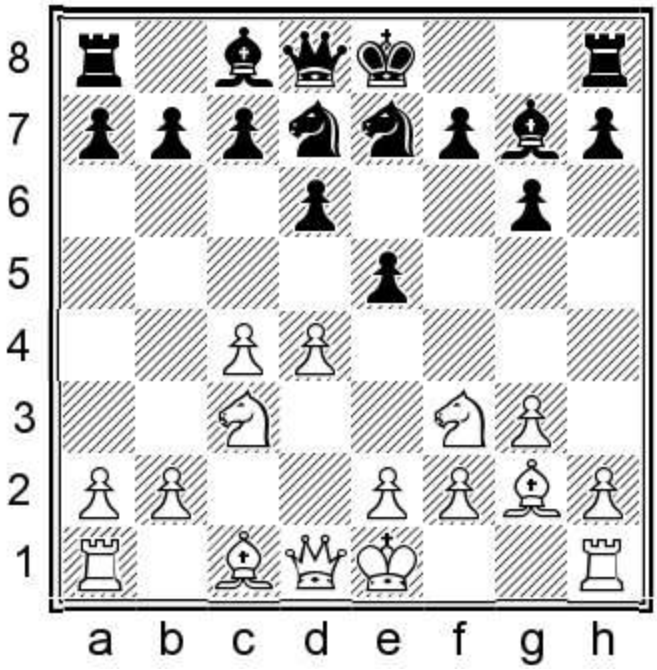
10.♕xd8† ♔xd8 11.♘ge4 ♘f7 12.h5

Black is under unpleasant pressure, for instance:



12...gxh5 13.♘d5 ♘d7 14.♗d2 c6 15.♘e3 a5 16.♖xh5±

White's positional advantage was obvious in Vakhidov – Vinoth Kumar, New Delhi 2012.

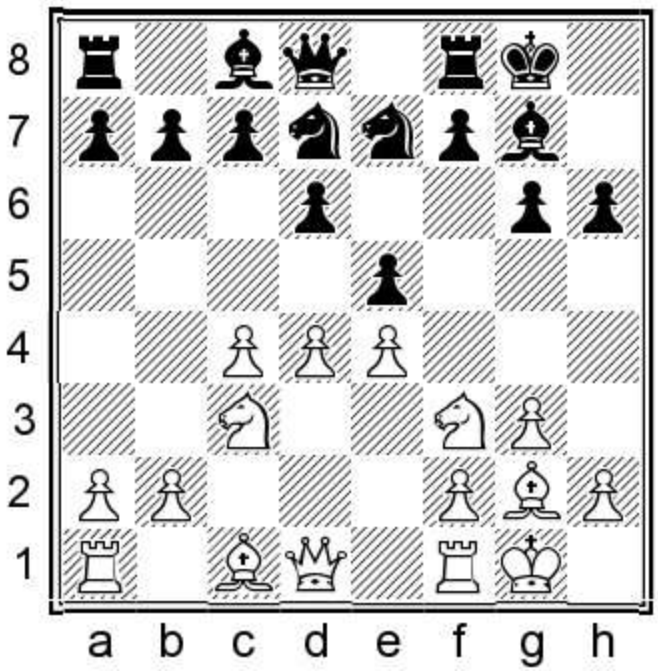


7.0-0 0-0 8.e4

Finally we have reached a position which strongly resembles the main lines of the Fianchetto King's Indian, the only difference being that Black's knight is placed on e7 instead of the normal f6-square.

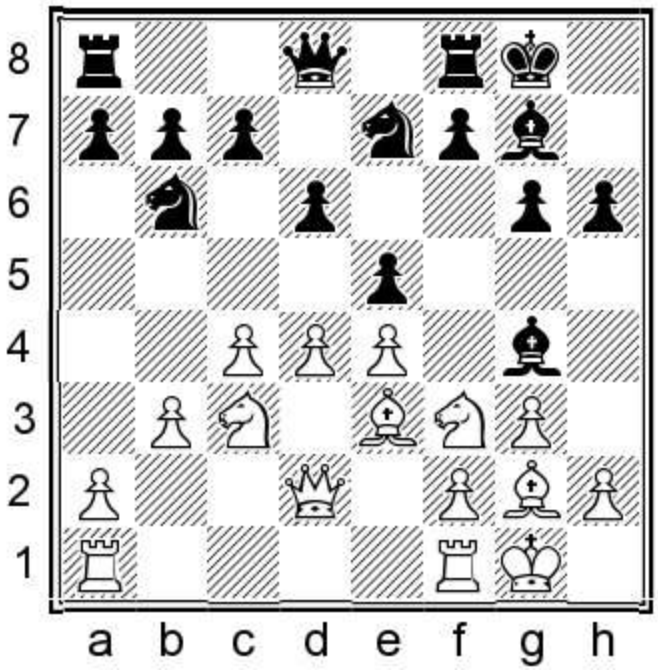
We will examine **D1)** 8...h6 and **D2)** 8...♘c6, although **D3)** 8...exd4 is absolutely Black's first choice.

chesstouring.com



9.♗e3 f5

This appears to be the logical follow-up to Black's last move, but the entire plan is rather questionable. 9...♘b6 10.b3 ♗g4 occurred in Iskandarov – Guseinov, Baku 2016, when 11.♕d2N looks like an easy improvement, for instance:

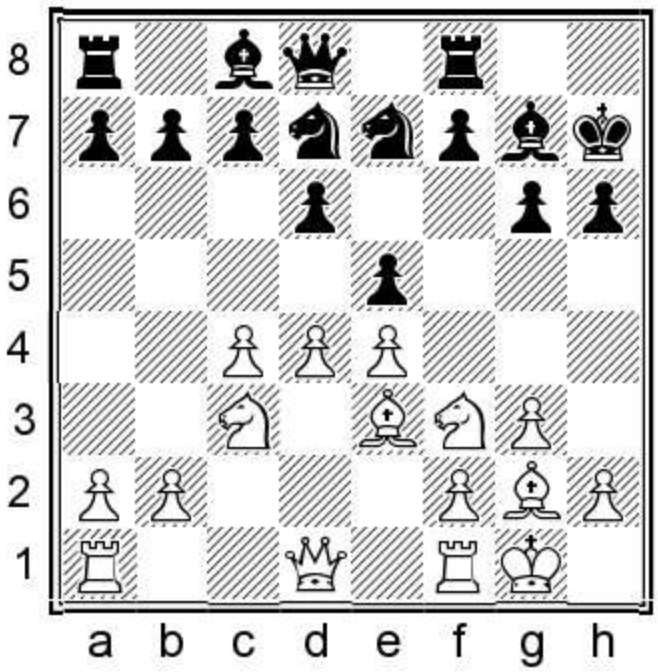


11...♔h7 (after 11...♗xf3 12.♗xf3 ♔h7 13.♗g2 ♘c6 14.d5 ♘d4 15.♘b5! ♘xb5 16.cxb5± the c7-pawn is a clear target and White's positional advantage is beyond any doubt) 12.♘e1! ♕c8 13.f3 ♗h3 14.♖d1 ♗xg2 15.♘xg2 White enjoys a pleasant edge.

9...♔h7

This move also does not promise Black an easy life after:

chesstouring.com



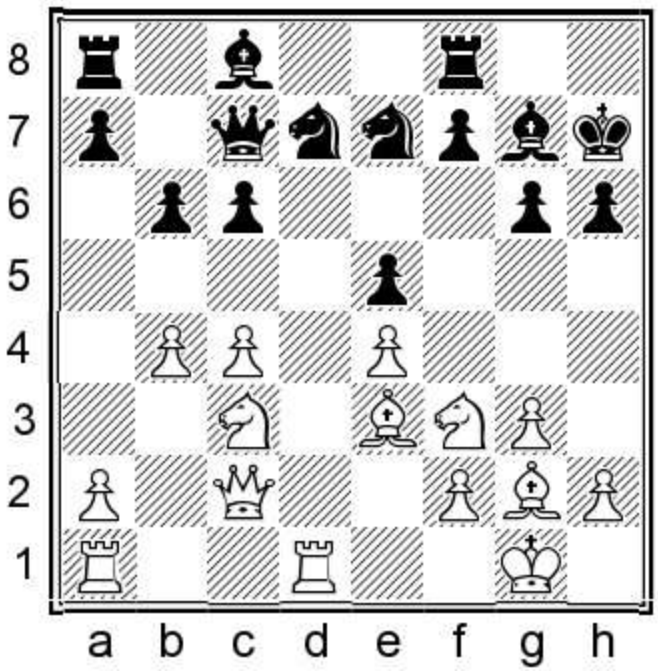
10.dxe5! dxe5

Another game continued 10...♘xe5 11.♘xe5 ♗xe5 (or 11...dxe5 12.♕xd8 ♖xd8 13.♘b5! and Black loses material) 12.♕d2 ♗g7 13.♗d4 ♗e6 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.♖ad1 f6 16.b3± and White was clearly better in Lakic – Cabrilo, Bor 1976.

11.♕c2 c6 12.♖fd1 ♕c7 13.b4 b6

13...f5 runs into 14.exf5 gxf5 (14...♘xf5 15.♘e4 is also no fun for Black) 15.♘h4↑ and Black is vulnerable on the kingside.

We have been following Grobbel – Schnitker, Germany 1993. Here I suggest:



14.a4!N 14...f5

14...a5 15.b5 ♘c5 16.♕b2± is also excellent for White.

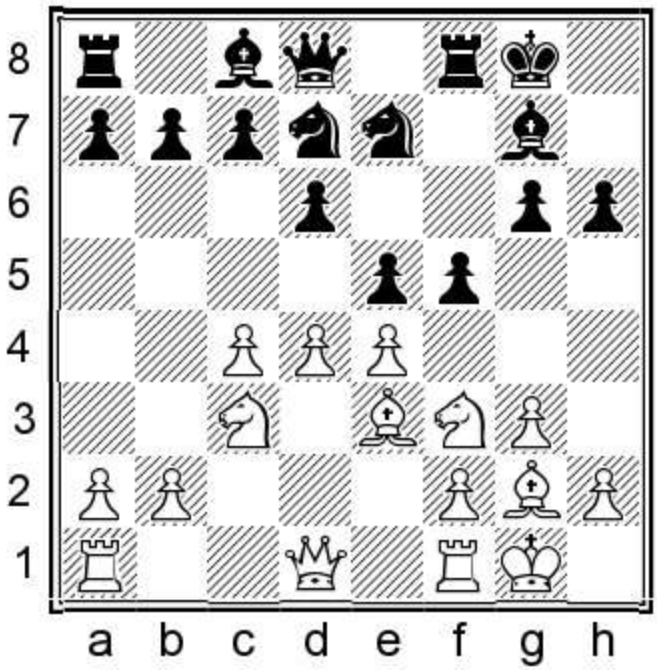
15.a5 ♖b8 16.axb6 axb6 17.exf5 ♘xf5

chesstouring.com

17...gxf5? runs into 18.♘h4! when Black's position soon collapses.

18.♖e1!

White has a clear positional advantage.

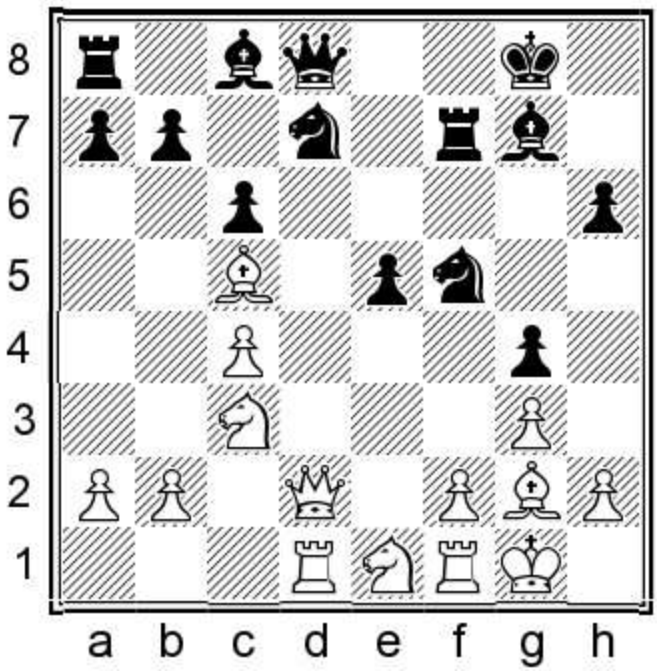


10.dxe5 dxe5 11.♕d2

Black's position is too vulnerable and his queenside is undeveloped.

11...♔h7

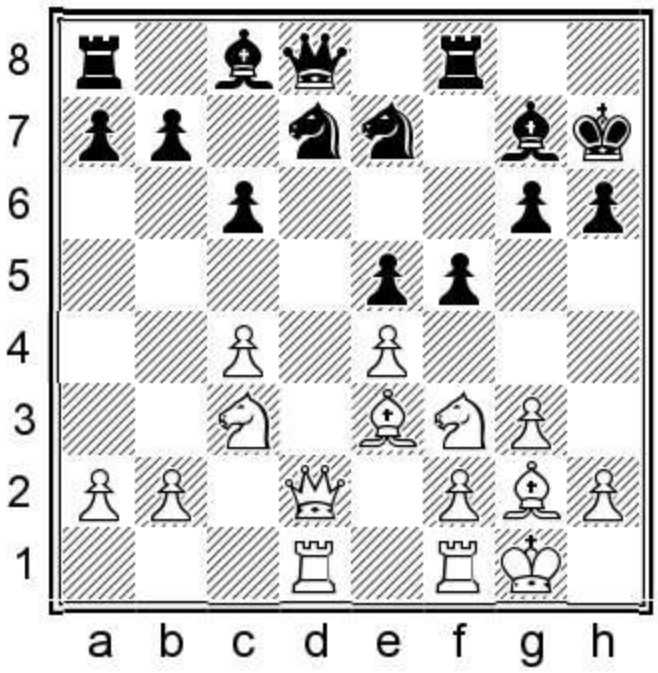
11...g5 is easily handled by means of 12.exf5 ♘xf5 13.♖ad1 g4 14.♘e1 c6 15.♗c5 ♖f7 as in Stupak – Rasulov, Tashkent 2017, at which point White should have played:



16.♘c2N 16...♕c7 17.♗a3± With a clear positional superiority.

chesstouring.com

12.♖ad1 c6



13.♗c5!

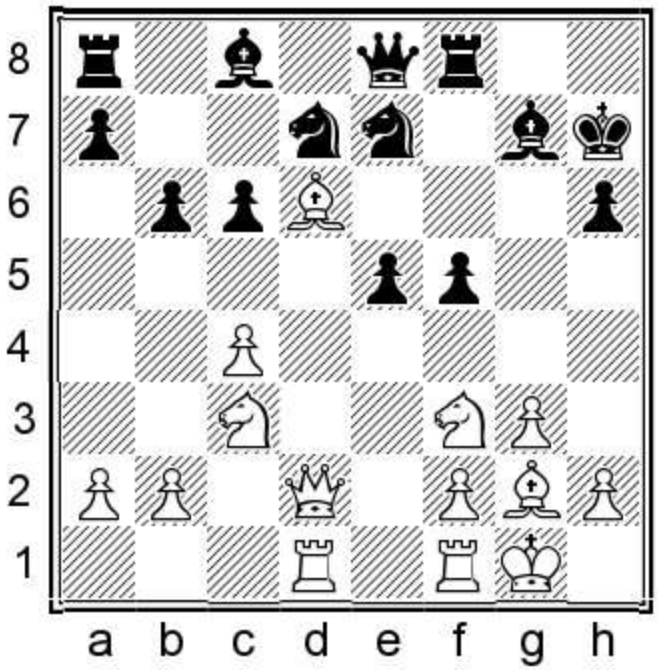
A powerful move, enabling White to seize the initiative.

13...♕e8 14.♗d6 b6

Another example continued 14...♖f7 15.♖fe1 g5 16.♗xe7 ♖xe7 17.exf5 ♘f6 18.♕c2± and White was much better in Anwesh – Koshy, Visakhapatnam 2011.

15.exf5 gxf5

Now in R. Miles – G. Morris, Ogmore-by-Sea 1992, White overlooked the strongest continuation:

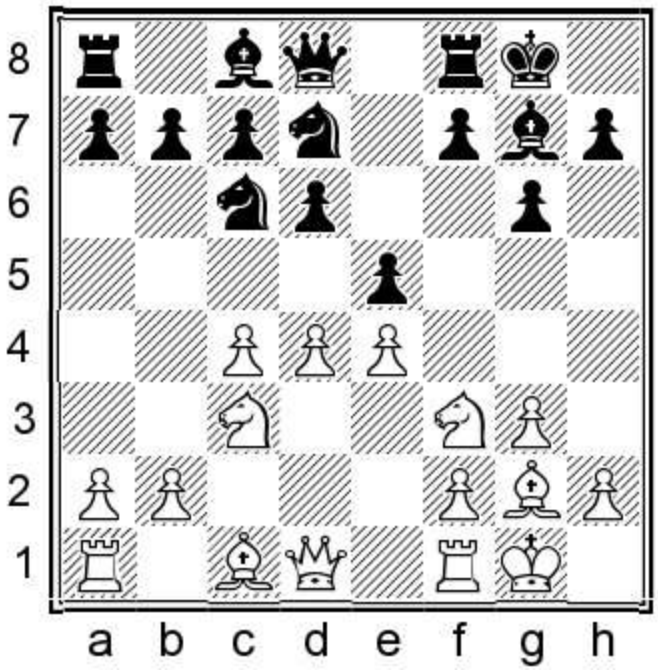


chesstouring.com

16.♘h4!N 16...♘c5 17.♖fe1±

Black can hardly avoid material losses.

D2) 8...♘c6



Here I recommend provoking a concession from Black on the kingside by means of:

9.♗g5 f6

The alternative is:

9...♗f6

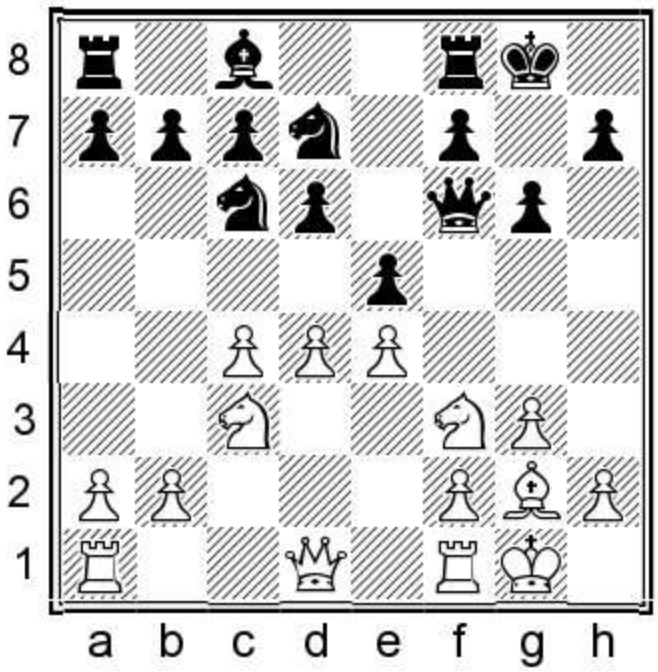
And here I found an interesting idea.

10.♗xf6 ♕xf6

10...♘xf6 11.h3± gave White a pleasant game in Kotov – Lein, Leningrad 1962; Black cannot hope for equality without his dark-squared bishop.

Here I found an improvement over the three existing games.

chesstouring.com



11.♕d2!N

With this small trick, White continues his normal development.

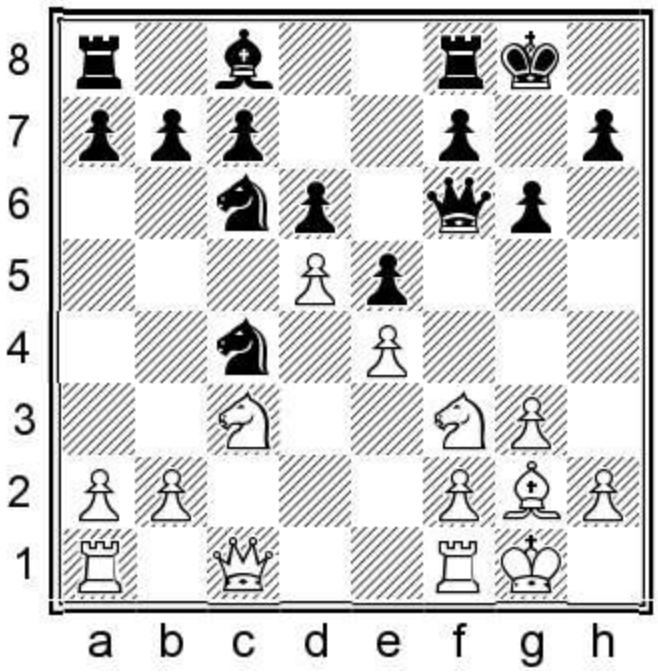
11...♘b6

Not much changes after 11...♕d8 12.♖ad1± or 11...exd4 12.♘d5 ♕d8 13.♘xd4, with a comfortable edge for White in both cases.

12.d5 ♘xc4

12...♘e7 13.b3± leaves both of the black knights poorly placed.

13.♕c1



13...♘d8

13...♘b4 14.♘b5 ♘b6 15.♕xc7± does not really help Black.

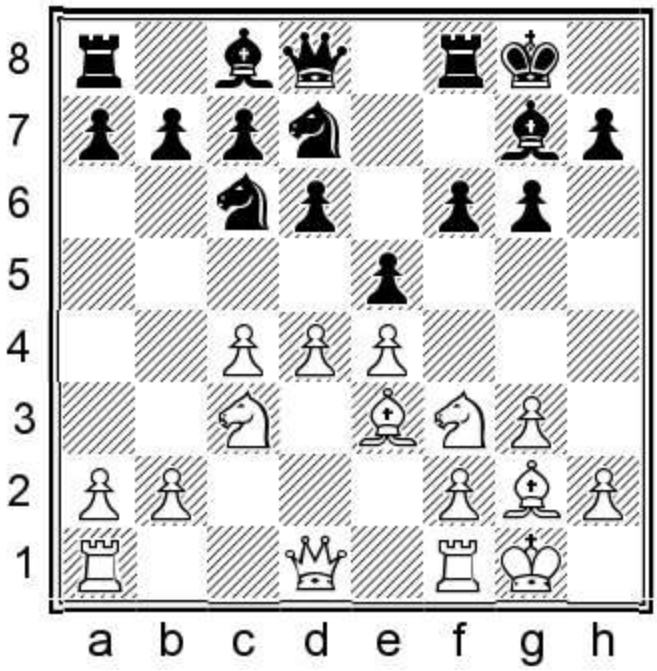
14.♘b5 c6 15.dxc6 bxc6 16.♘c7 ♖b8 17.♕xc4 a5 18.♕c3±

chesstouring.com

Black can restore material equality by going after the trapped knight on c7, but White will pick up the a5-pawn and exert strong positional pressure.

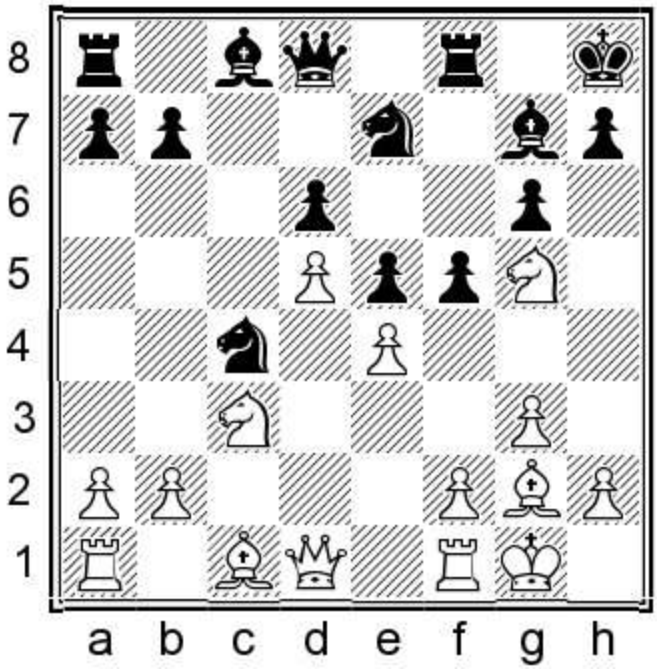
10.♗e3

It is clear to me that White has a favourable version of a King's Indian. Black has tried several moves but I don't see any need to analyse too deeply, so I will present a few lines which I consider instructive.



10...exd4

10...♘b6 11.d5 ♘e7 12.c5 ♘c4 13.cxd6 cxd6 (13...♘xd6 14.♕b3± is also pleasant for White) 14.♗c1 f5 15.♘g5! ♔h8 occurred in Levin – Lazarev, Ukraine 1963, when White should have continued:



16.b3N 16...♘b6 (or 16...♕a5 17.♕d3 ♘b6 18.♗d2±) 17.a4± With an obvious advantage.

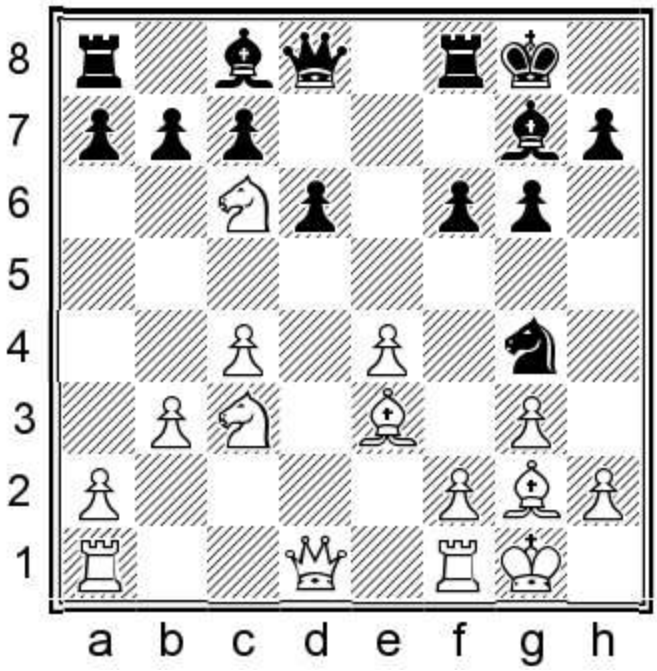
chesstouring.com

11.♘xd4 ♘de5

11...♘xd4 12.♗xd4 ♘e5 13.b3 transposes to our main line.

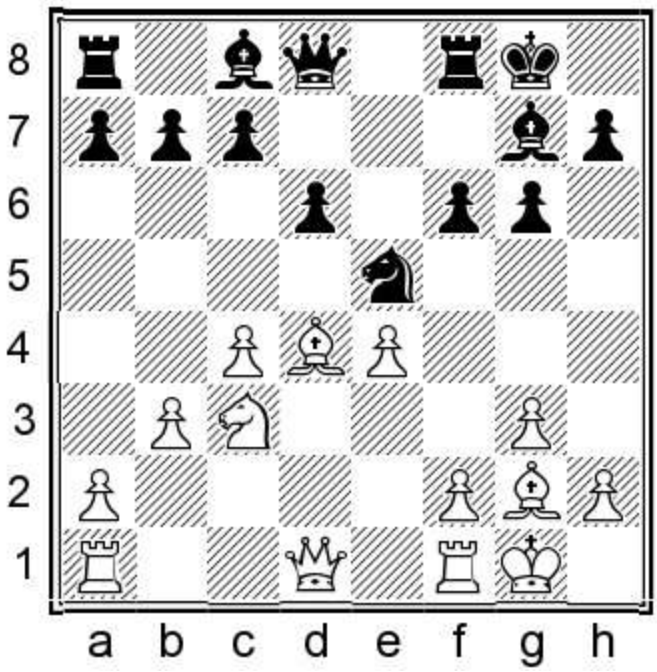
12.b3 ♘xd4

It is important to mention that 12...♘g4 can be met by 13.♘xc6! with the following point:



13...♘xe3?! (the lesser evil is 13...bxc6N 14.♗d2 and White is better) 14.♘xd8 ♘xd1 Now in Maki – Westerinen, Finland 2009, White missed the strong 15.♘d5!N which wins material.

13.♗xd4



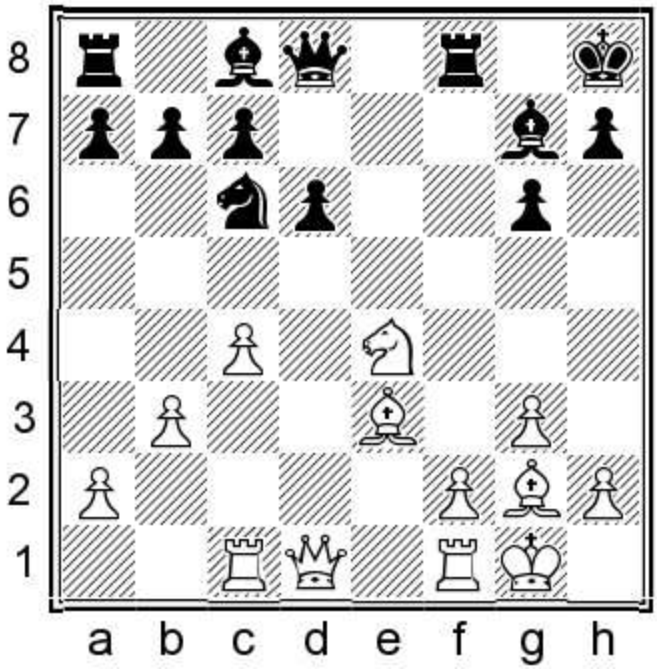
13...♘c6

chesstouring.com

Black tried 13...♗g4 14.f3 ♗e6 in Lalic – Soos, Bad Mergentheim 1988, when the most convincing continuation looks to be 15.♕d2N 15...c5 16.♗e3 f5 17.exf5 ♗xf5 18.♖ad1± with a solid plus.

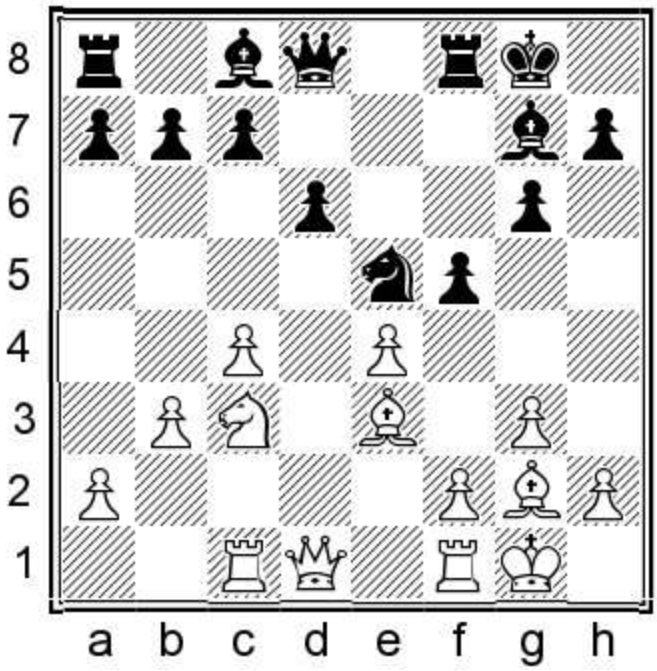
14.♗e3 f5 15.♖c1 ♘e5

Black tried 15...fxe4 16.♘xe4 ♔h8 in Deforel – Rinaldi, corr. 2006, when White should have continued:



17.♕d2!N 17...♗f5 18.b4!± With much better chances.

Here I found an improvement over Burger – Thesing, Berlin 2015.



16.exf5!N 16...gxf5

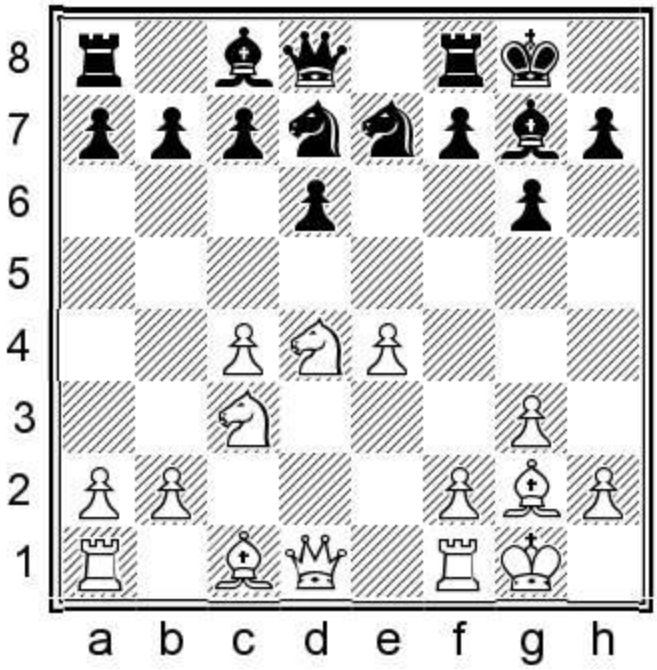
Or 16...♗xf5 17.♕d5† ♔h8 18.♕xb7± and White picks up a pawn.

chesstouring.com

17.♘e2!±

With a clear positional advantage.

D3) 8...exd4 9.♘xd4



Exchanging on d4 has been by far the most common choice. Let me remind you again that we have in front of us a Fianchetto King's Indian structure, except for the 'Modern twist' of the black knight being on e7 rather than f6. This piece generally moves to c6, either immediately or in the near future, while the other knight may go to c5 or e5.

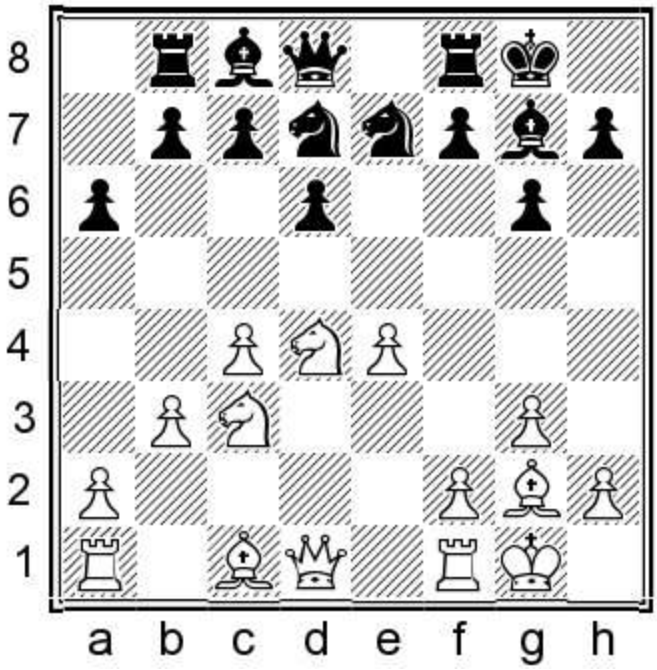
9...♘c6

The knight was rather passive on e7 so it makes sense for Black to improve it immediately. I considered two other tries:

9...a6 10.b3 ♖b8

10...♘e5 has yielded Black decent results but White should be much better with precise play. A good model game continued: 11.♗b2 c5 12.♘de2 b5 13.f4! ♘g4 14.♕d2 ♖b8 15.h3 ♘f6 16.♖ad1 bxc4 17.e5! An important resource. 17...♘d7 18.exd6 ♘f5 19.g4 ♘h4 Now in Roubalik – Kislinsky, Stare Mesto 2014, 20.♗c6!N 20...cxb3 21.♘d5+– would have been decisive.

chesstouring.com



11.♗e3

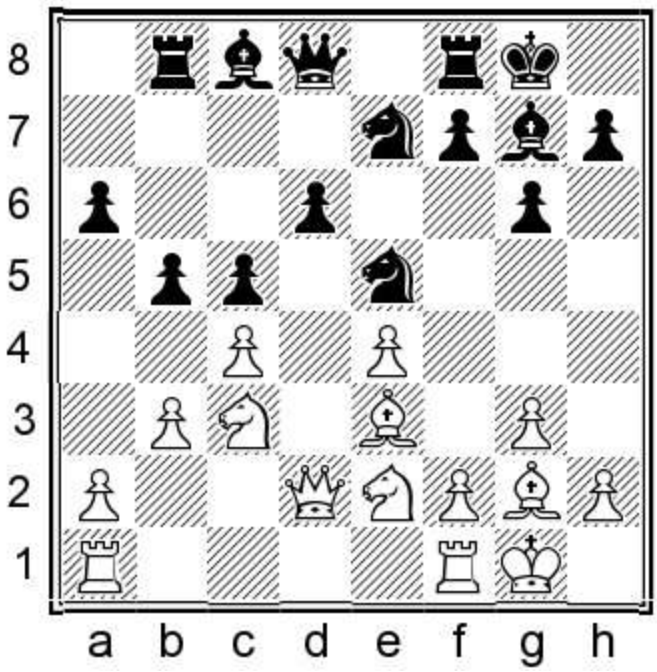
I believe this is the best way for White to fight for the advantage.

11...♘e5 12.♕d2 c5

I also checked 12...b5N 13.cxb5 axb5 when 14.♗g5! is an important move, and after 14...f6 15.♗f4 b4 16.♘d5± White is positionally better.

13.♘de2 b5

We have been following Sterpu – S. Foisor, Predeal 2006. Black has carried out her main plan, but White is extremely well mobilized and she could have exploited this by means of:



14.♖ad1!N

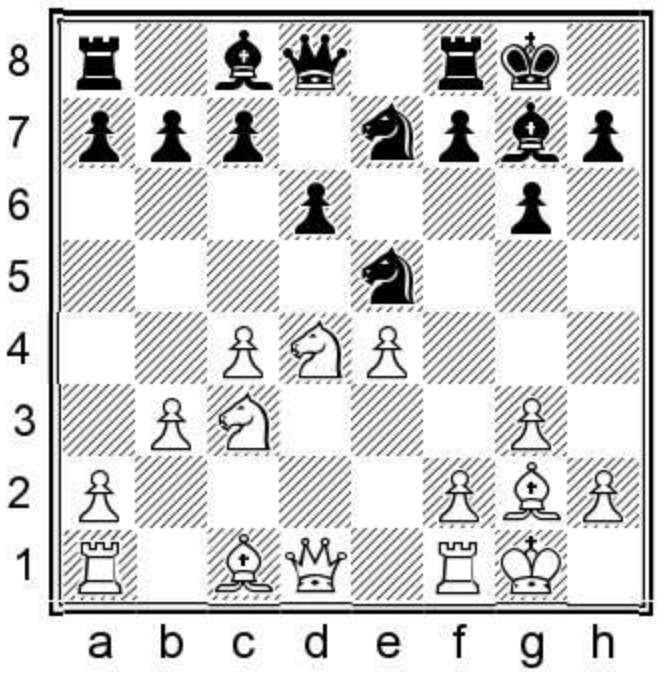
The following line looks pretty forced.

14...bxc4 15.♗xc5 ♘d3 16.♗a7! ♖b7 17.♗d4 ♗xd4 18.♘xd4±

chesstouring.com

After an eventual exchange on b3, White will have a stable advantage due to the weakness of the d6-pawn.

9...♘e5 10.b3



10...♘5c6

10...a6 has been covered under the 9...a6 10.b3 ♘e5 move order above; and 10...♘7c6 11.♘de2 transposes to variation D31x below.

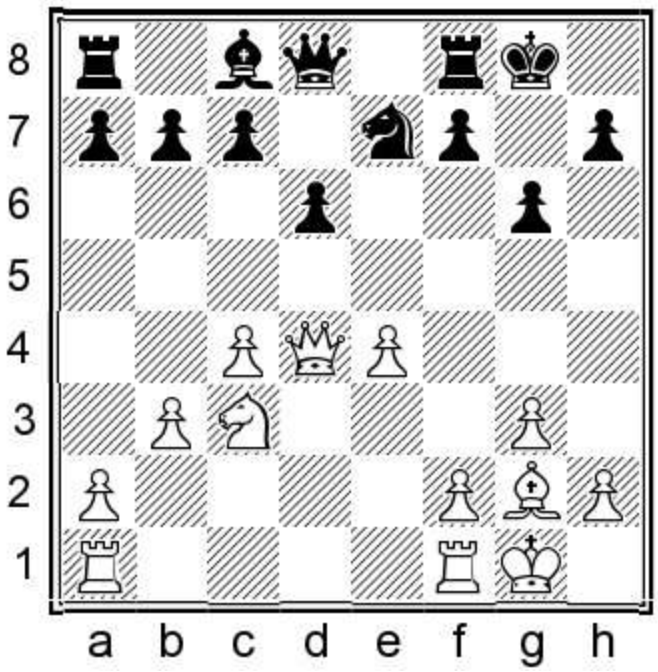
10...c6 has been played in ten games. I have no idea why nobody ever responded with 11.♗b2N, which seems natural and strong, for instance: 11...f5 12.f4! ♘f7 (12...♘g4 13.♕d2 is also clearly better for White) 13.♕d2 fxe4 14.♘xe4 d5 15.cxd5 ♘xd5 16.♖ae1± White's pieces are much better mobilized and coordinated.

11.♗e3 ♘xd4

11...♗d7 12.♖c1 a6 13.♕d2 ♖b8 14.h3± gave White a clear positional plus in Meyner – Schaffer, Germany 2015.

12.♗xd4 ♗xd4 13.♕xd4

chesstouring.com



13...♗e6

13...♘c6 14.♕d2 f5 15.exf5 ♗xf5 was seen in a later game, Rodgaard – Simonsen, Klaksvik 2007, when the simple 16.♘d5!N would have sealed White's advantage.

14.f4 f6 15.♖ad1

White maintained the more pleasant game in Kharitonov – Azmaiparashvili, Jurmala 1983.

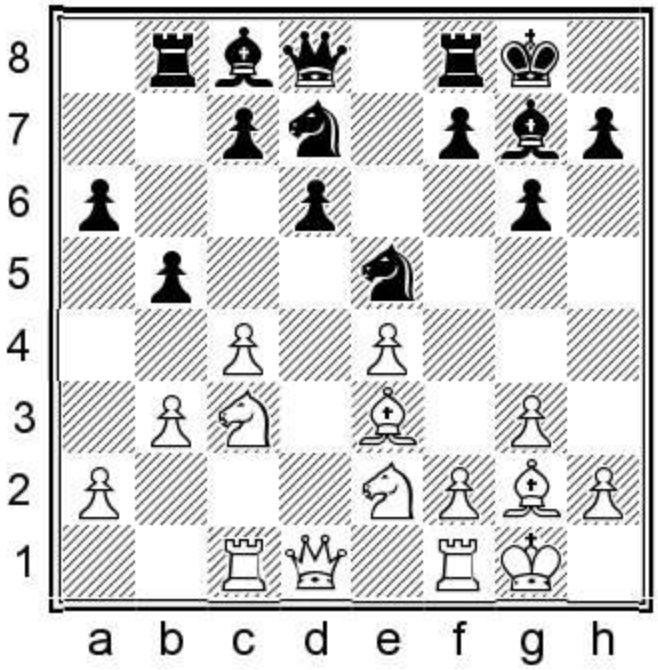
10.♘de2

This is White's most popular continuation, for good reason I think.

It is worth analysing **D31)** 10...♘de5 and **D32)** 10...♘c5 as significant alternatives, but **D33)** 10...a5 remains the clear main line.

10...a6 11.♗e3 is my recommendation from *GM 2*, which is not new anymore. 11...♖b8 12.♖c1 ♘ce5 (White is ready to meet 12...b5 with 13.cxb5 axb5 14.♘d5 ♗b7 15.b3±) 13.b3 b5 This occurred in A. Ledger – McNab, England 2011, and now White should have played:

chesstouring.com



14.f4!N The critical line continues 14...♘g4 15.♗a7! ♖a8 16.♗d4 ♗xd4† 17.♕xd4 ♗b7 18.h3 ♘gf6 19.e5! with a nice advantage for White.

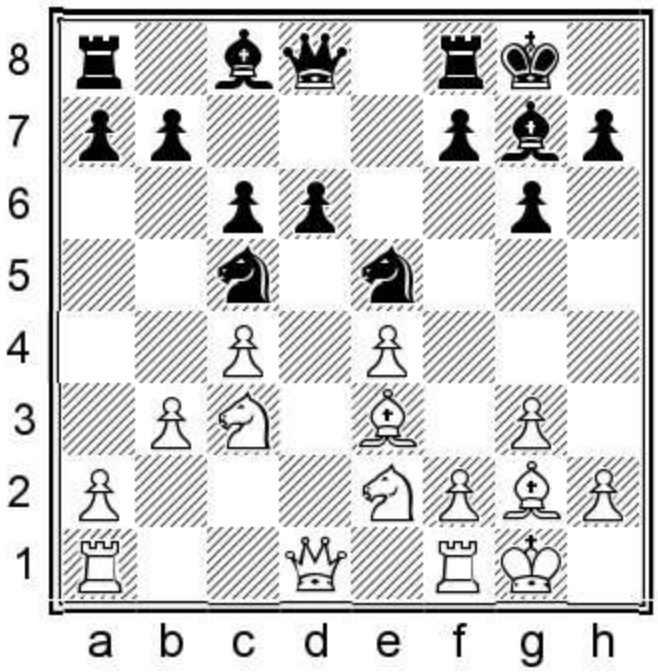
Another sideline is:

10...♘ce5 11.b3 ♘c5

Black's knights look active, but in fact White controls all the important squares.

12.♗e3 c6

12...b6 13.f4 ♘g4 14.♗d4 ♗b7 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.b4 ♘d7 17.h3± was clearly better for White in Sundararajan – Mamedjarova, Dubai 2015.



13.h3!N

This calm move is more accurate than 13.♕d2, after which 13...f5 14.exf5 ♗xf5 15.♖ad1 ♕a5! gave

chessbooking.com

Black good counterplay in Seirawan – Welin, Reykjavik 1986. After the text move, White is better prepared to deal with the pawn break.

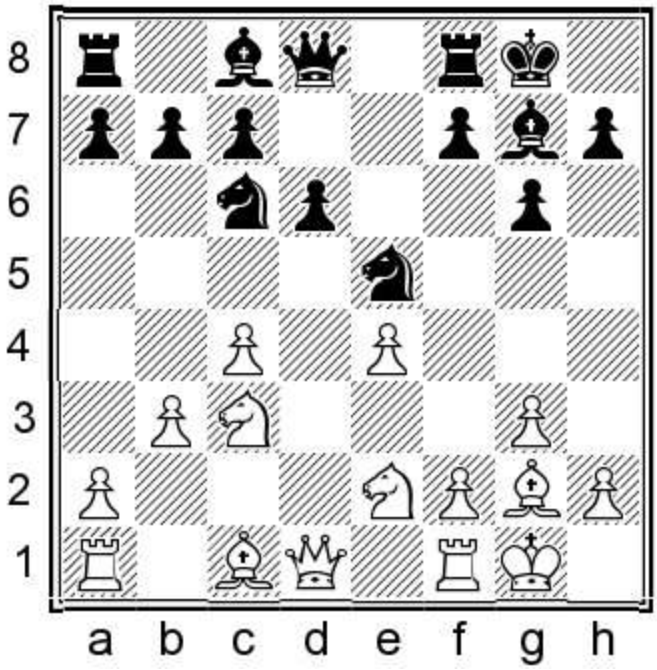
13...f5 14.f4

Another approach is 14.♗xc5 dxc5 15.f4 ♘f7 16.e5± when White practically has an extra pawn in the centre, although Black has a solid position and some long-term potential with the two bishops.

14...♘f7 15.exf5 ♗xf5 16.♗d4±

With positional pressure.

D31) 10...♘de5 11.b3



11...f5

The logical follow-up to Black's last move, and it has been tested many times in practice.

12.f4 ♘g4

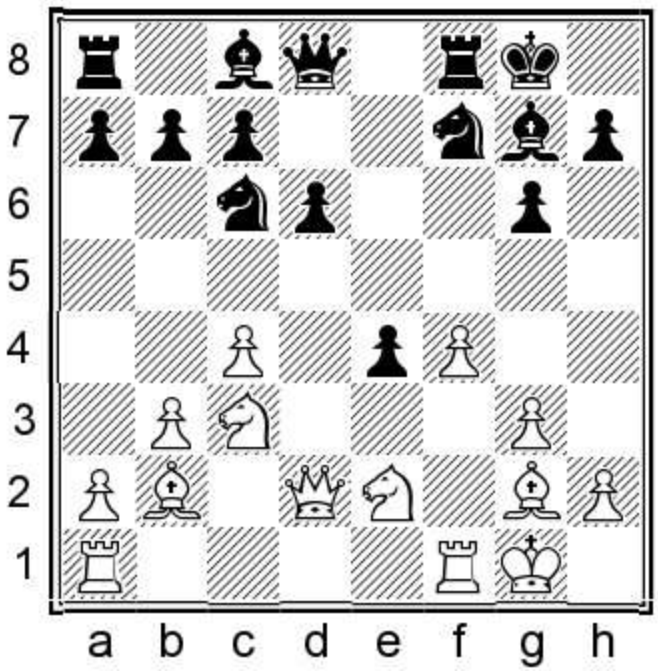
I also checked:

12...♘f7

This is less popular and deservedly so, as it places the knight on a passive square.

13.♗b2 fxe4 14.♕d2!

chesstouring.com

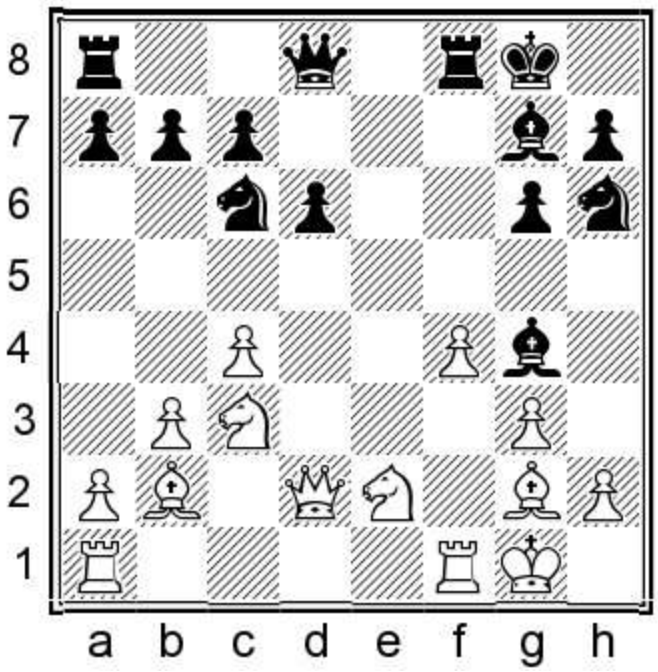


An important move in White's strategy. He intends to recapture the e4-pawn with the knight, followed by exchanging the dark-squared bishops, which is why Black has always lured the white queen with the following move:

14...e3 15.♕xe3 ♘h6

Black has also tried: 15...♗f5 16.♕d2 ♘h6 17.h3 ♗d7 18.g4! Having prevented the activization of Black's knight via f5, White enjoyed a clear positional advantage in Farago – Resika, Budapest 2000.

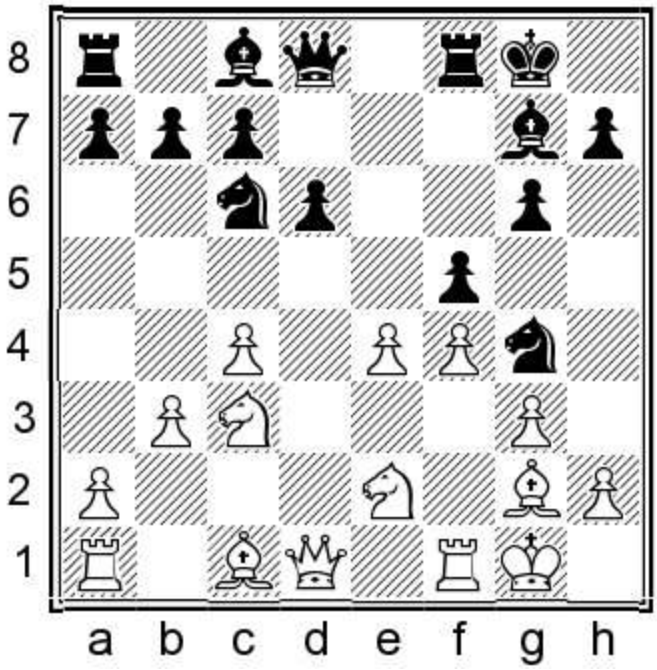
16.♕d2 ♗g4



17.♗d5†! ♔h8 18.♘e4 ♕d7 19.♖ae1 ♖ae8 20.♘g5±

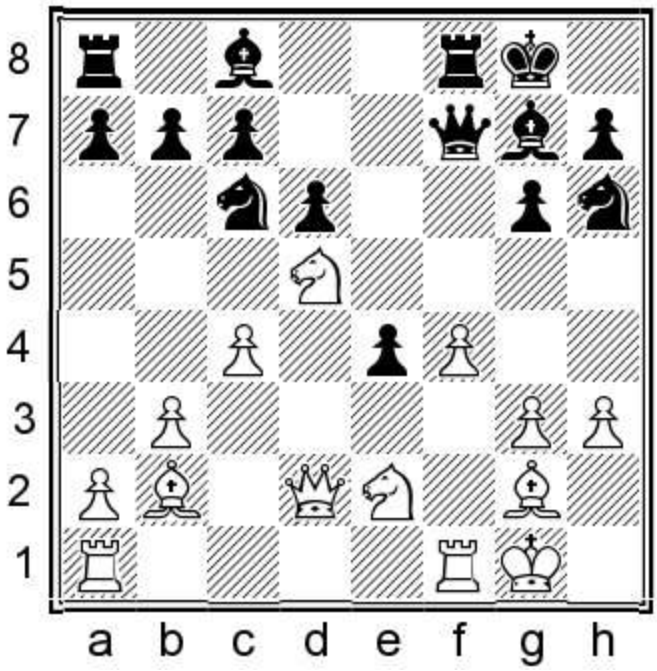
White was much better in Martinovic – Kazhgaleyev, Rijeka 2009.

chesstouring.com



13.h3 ♘f6

A less challenging alternative is: 13...♘h6 14.♗b2 fxe4 15.♕d2! Again we see this thematic idea. 15...♕e7 16.♘d5 ♕f7

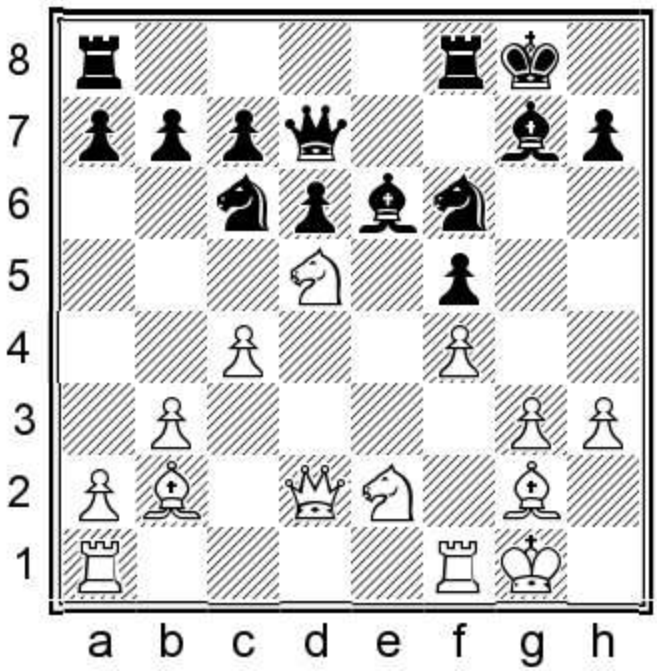


17.g4! ♗e6 18.♗xe4± With the h6-knight firmly locked out of play, White was clearly better in Iskusnyh – Mamedov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

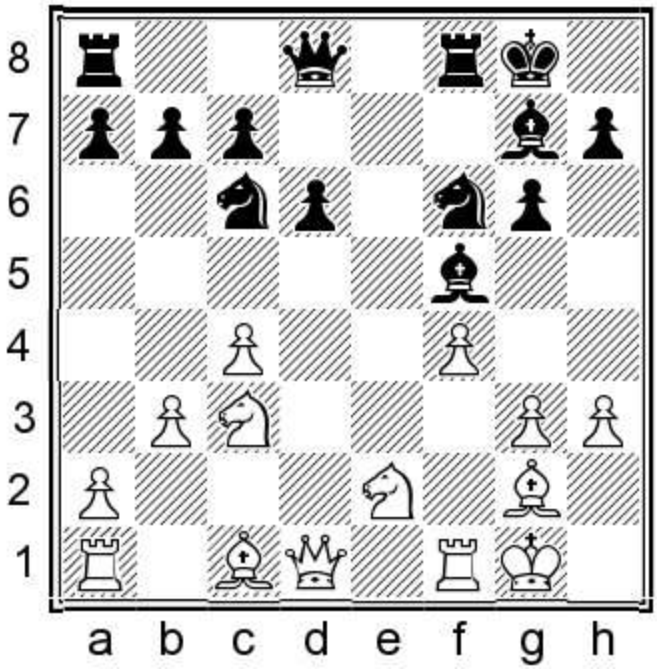
14.exf5 ♗xf5

14...gxf5 has only been tried once. Play continues: 15.♗b2 ♗e6 16.♕d2 ♕d7 17.♘d5 A thematic jump.

chesstouring.com



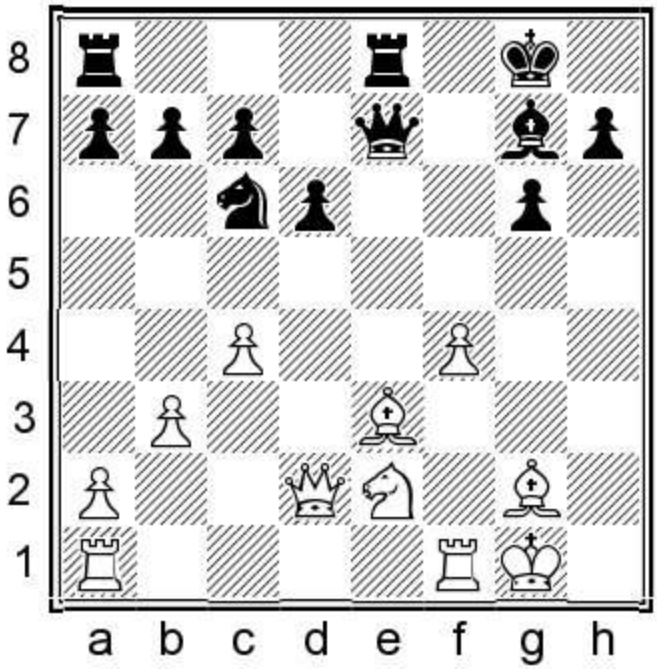
17...♖ae8 This natural move turns out to be an inaccuracy. (Black should have preferred 17...♘e4N although even then after 18.♗xe4 fxe4 19.♗xg7 ♕xg7 20.♔h2 ♖ae8 21.♘e3 White is clearly better) 18.♘xf6†! ♗xf6 19.♗xf6 ♖xf6 20.♖ae1± In Eingorn – Jakobsen, Hamburg 1999, it transpired that Black's kingside was seriously weakened following the disappearance of the dark-squared bishop.



15.g4 ♗d7

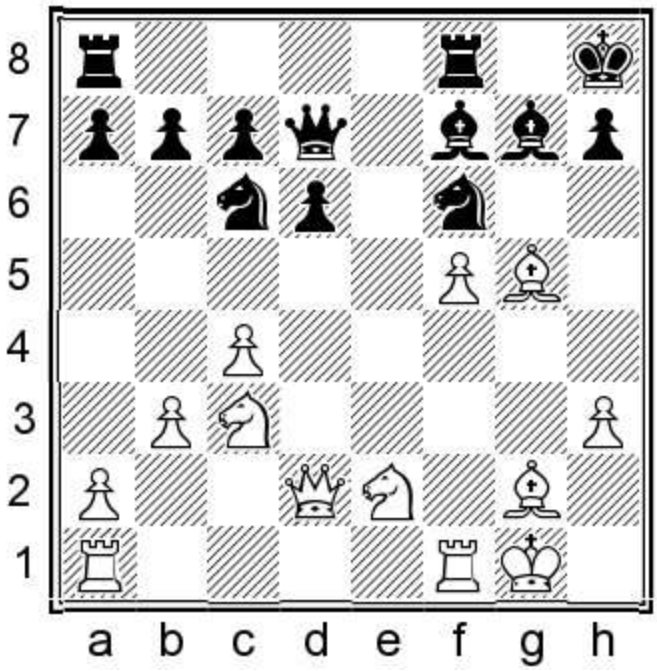
15...♘xg4?! 16.hxg4 ♗xg4 is not really a serious option, provided White responds with some good defensive moves: 17.♗e3 ♖e8 (17...♗xe2 18.♘xe2 ♕e7 19.♖f3 ♗xa1 20.♕xa1± also doesn't work for Black) 18.♕d2 ♗xe2 19.♘xe2 ♕e7 This occurred in De Fotis – Miller, Chicago 1986, and one other game. White's most convincing continuation is:

chesstouring.com



20.♗d5†!N 20...♔h8 21.♔f2 ♗xa1 22.♖xa1 ♕h4† 23.♔g2 ♕e7 24.♔f3+– White's two bishops easily outclass Black's spare rook.

15...♗e6 is well met by 16.f5!? (16.♗b2 was my recommendation in *GM 2* but I now find the text move more straightforward) 16...gxf5 17.gxf5 ♗f7 18.♗g5 ♕d7 19.♕d2 ♔h8 as in Skoberne – Beletic, Nova Gorica 2018, and now White should have played:



20.♘g3N 20...♖ae8 21.♕f4 With a near-decisive advantage.

The text move was not analysed in *GM 2*. Black places the bishop on a less exposed square than e6, and has achieved decent results from here in practice. Nevertheless, White is still clearly better.

chesstouring.com

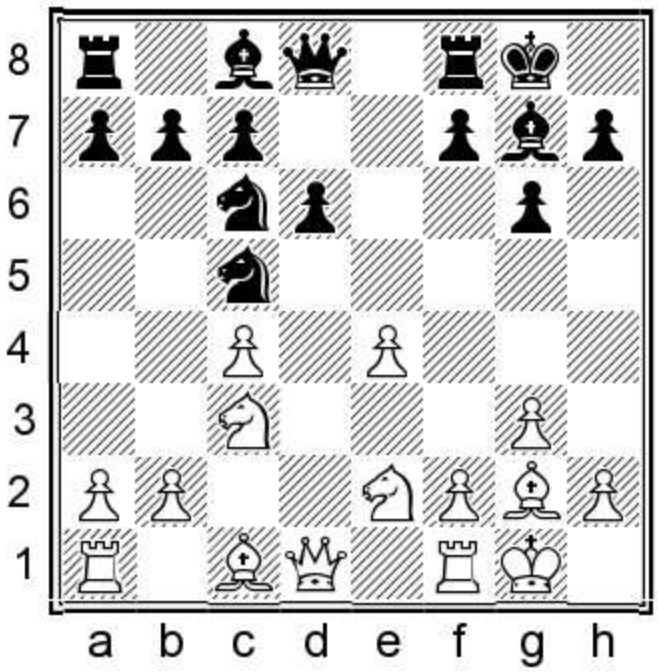
16.♗b2 ♖b8

Not much is changed after 16...♕e7 17.g5 ♘e8 as occurred in Moehring – Nezhmetdinov, Varna 1967. After the simple 18.♕d2N followed by ♖ae1 White's positional advantage is huge.

17.♕d2 ♘e7 18.♖ae1±

White had a great position in Nestorovic – Nikolic, Belgrade 1991.

D32) 10...♘c5



11.♗e3

There is no point in preparing b2-b4 with 11.♖b1, because 11...f5 12.b4 ♘xe4 13.♘xe4 fxe4 14.♗xe4 ♗f5 offers Black comfortable play.

11...a5

11...♘e5 12.b3 has been covered on page 408 – see the note on 10...♘ce5 11.b3 ♘c5 12.♗e3.

The main alternative is:

11...f5 12.exf5 ♗xf5 13.♕d2

13.♘d4!? also looks promising.

13...a5

It is also important to mention 13...♘e5 when, in Tadic – Sredojevic, Kragujevac 2015, White should have reacted in the following way: 14.f4N 14...♘ed3 15.♘d4! c6 16.♖ab1 a5 17.♘xf5 gxf5 18.♖f3 Followed by ♗f1, with some advantage.

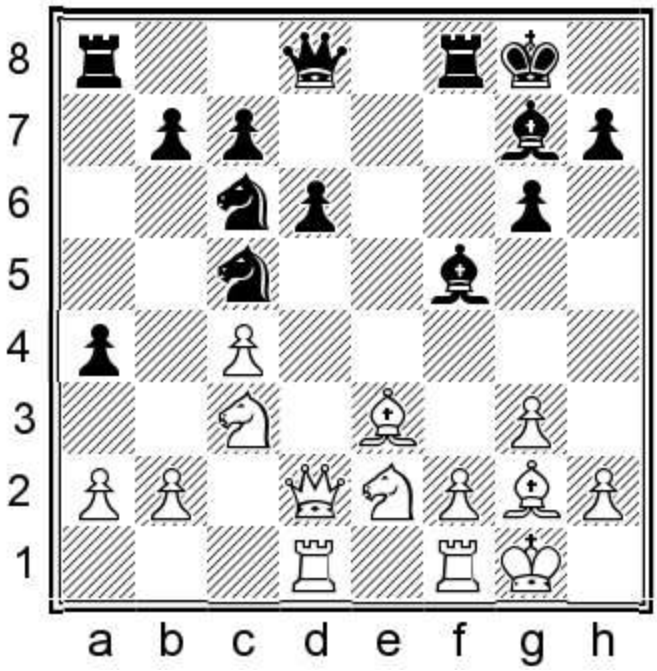
14.♖ad1

Having achieved the ideal configuration of his pieces, White is ready to combine play in the centre and on the kingside.

chesstouring.com

14...a4

In Nikolic – Damljanovic, Manila 1990, White opted for 15.♘d4, which eased Black's task after heavy exchanges on the d4-square, which is why I developed another idea.



15.♘f4!?N 15...♔h8 16.h3±

White does not need to rush, although in some lines he can consider g3-g4 to push away the bishop. White's chances are clearly preferable.

12.♕c2!

12.♕d2?! is actually a serious inaccuracy which allowed Black to create counterplay by means of 12...♗e6! 13.b3 (or 13.♘d5 ♘e5 14.b3 a4⇄) 13...a4 14.♖ab1 axb3 15.axb3 ♖a3 in Bentzen – Mortensen, Denmark 2002.

12.♖b1 was my suggestion in *GM 2*, but it transposes to a position from the 10...a5 line (as featured in variation D33 below), which I am no longer recommending.

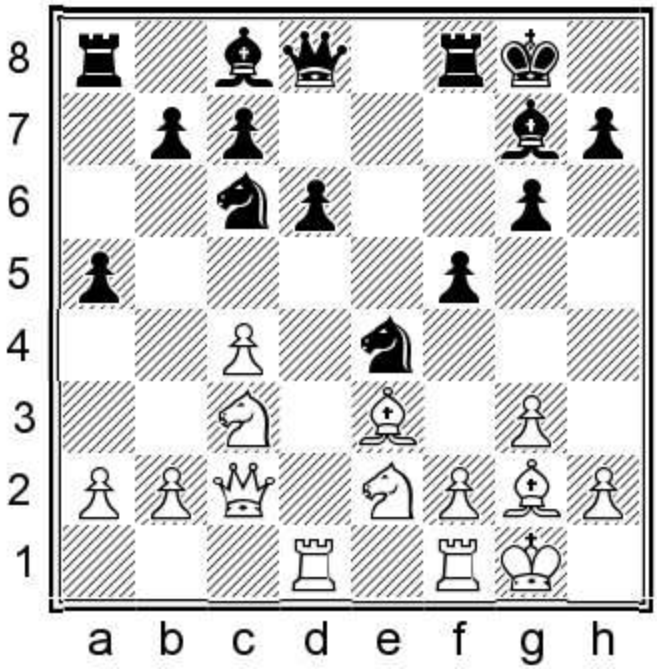
12...♘b4

Here are a few other relevant practical examples:

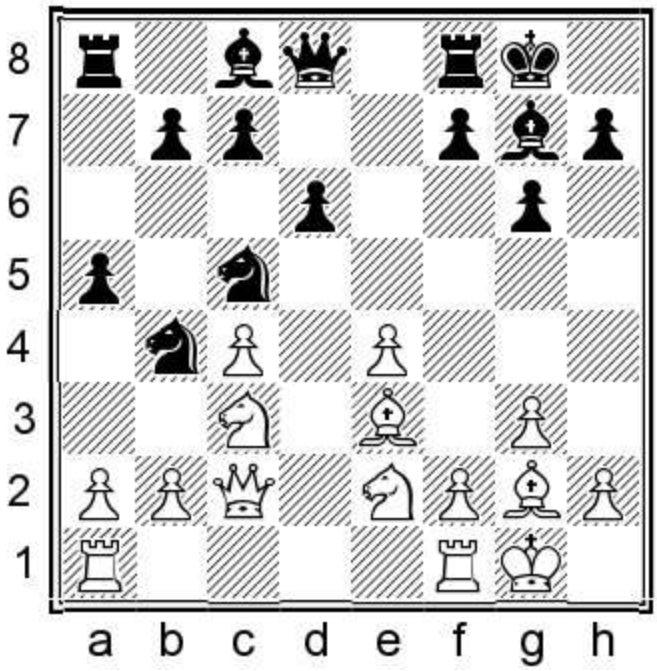
12...♗e6 13.♖ad1 ♕c8 14.♘d5± left White in full control in Ponfilenok – Bocharov, Kazan 2008.

12...f5 13.♖ad1 ♘xe4 was seen in Sasikiran – Guseinov, Dubai 2011, and here I discovered a surprising resource:

chesstouring.com



14.c5!N The opening of central lines creates serious problems for Black. For instance, 14...♕e7 15.♘f4 ♘xc3 16.cxd6! cxd6 17.bxc3 and White has an overwhelming initiative for the pawn.



13.♕d2 ♗e6

13...♘bd3 fails to impress. 14.♖ad1 ♗e6 15.b3 a4 occurred in Ollivier – S. Fernandez, corr. 2002, when the simple 16.♗d4N± would have sealed White's advantage.

I also examined 13...f5N 14.♖ad1 ♘xe4 15.♘xe4 fxe4 16.a3 ♘c6 17.♗xe4 with a pleasant game for White.

14.b3 f5

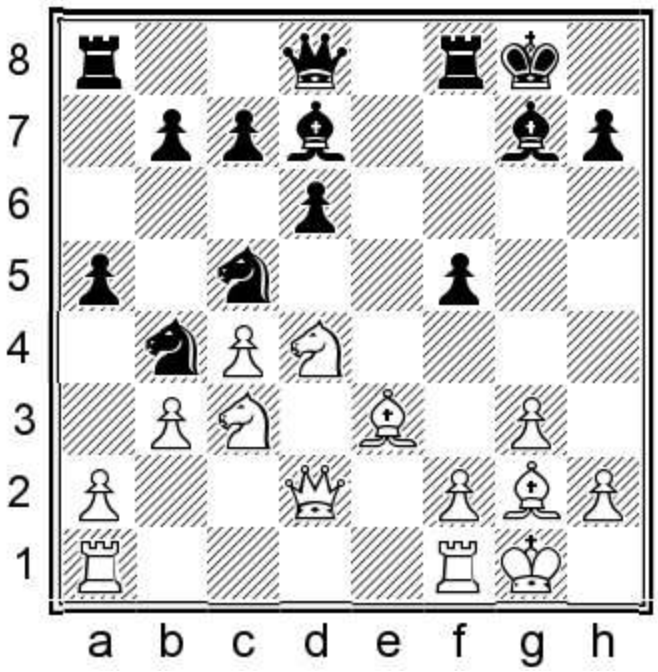
14...a4 runs into 15.♘xa4! ♘xa4 16.♕xb4 ♗xa1 17.♖xa1 ♘c5 18.♗d4 with fantastic compensation for

chesstouring.com

the small material sacrifice.

15.♘d4 ♗d7 16.exf5 gxf5

In Blagojevic – Shanava, Konya 2016, White should have continued:

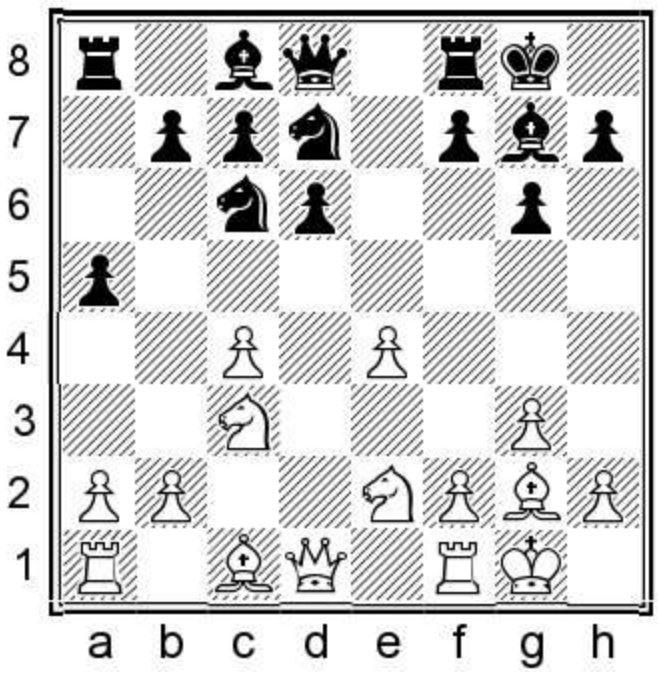


17.♖ad1N

White is clearly better.

D33) 10...a5

Against this I have a new recommendation.



chesstouring.com

11.♗e3!

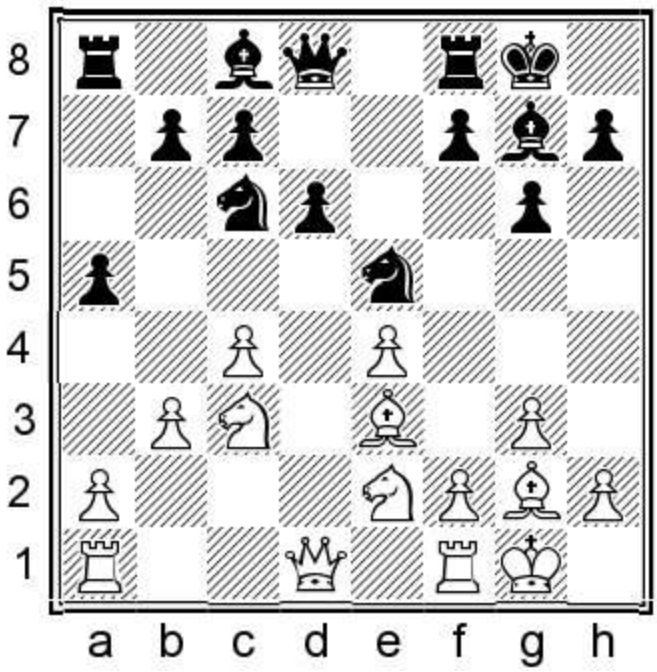
11.b3 is premature on account of 11...a4 12.♖b1 axb3 13.axb3 when the open a-file clearly helps Black.

Previously I suggested 11.♖b1 to keep the a-file closed, but now I don't think it's so clear after: 11...♘c5 12.♗e3 (Black is doing fine after 12.b3 f5) 12...f5 13.♘f4!? This was my original idea, which has been tested in three games. 13...♘xe4 (13...♔h8 has been tested twice and is also worth considering) 14.♘xe4 fxe4 15.♗xe4 So far, the game Wiechert – Goldenberg, Strasbourg 2017, was following my analysis from *GM 2*. However, when I reanalysed this line I realized that the prophylactic 15...♔h8!N would have led to a pretty decent position for Black.

11...♘de5

11...♘c5 takes us back to variation D32 above.

12.b3



12...a4

Black has tried 12...f5 13.exf5 ♗xf5 in a few games, but 14.h3! ♘b4 15.♘d4 ♗d7 16.a3 ♘a6 17.♖a2± proved to be an effective answer in Fominyh – Gelman, Moscow 1999.

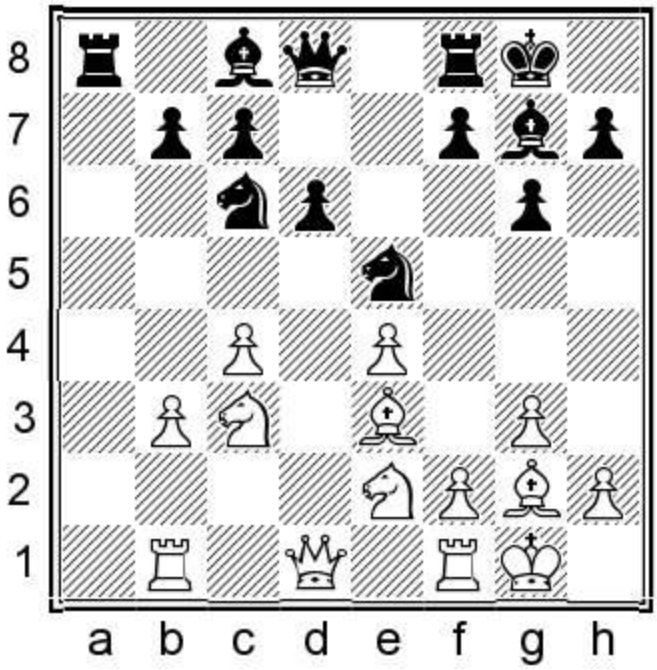
13.♖b1

13.♘xa4?! runs into 13...♘xc4.

13...axb3 14.axb3

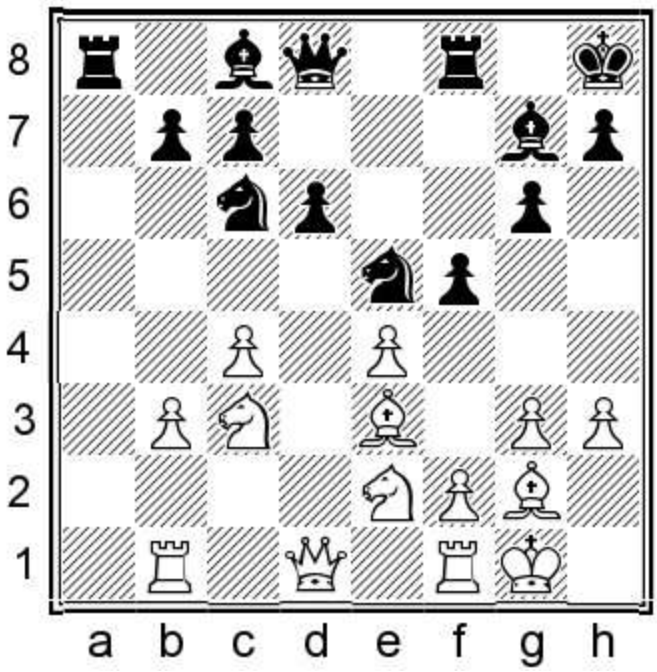
I find this position quite appealing for White, irrespective of Black's positive score in the games in which it has been reached.

chesstouring.com



14...♘b4

14...f5 15.h3 ♔h8 led to an eventual defeat for White in Khotenashvili – Wang Jue, Batumi (blitz) 2012, but she missed a great opportunity:



16.f4!N 16...♘f7 17.♘d5! fxe4 18.♘ec3± With a serious advantage.

15.h3

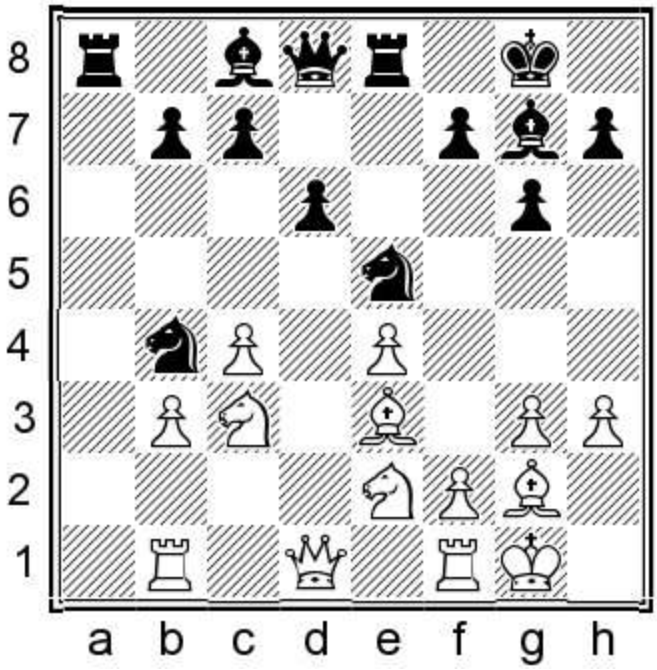
15.f4!?N 15...♘ed3 16.♕d2 also looks interesting.

15...♖e8

This position was reached in Heemskerk – Nisipeanu, Rogaska Slatina 2011, and one other game. I

chessbooking.com

found a strong idea:



16.♖b2!N 16...♘ec6

Also after 16...f5 17.♖d2 fxe4 18.♘xe4 ♗f5 19.♘2c3 White is better.

17.♖d2 ♗e6 18.♘d4

White keeps everything under control.

Conclusion

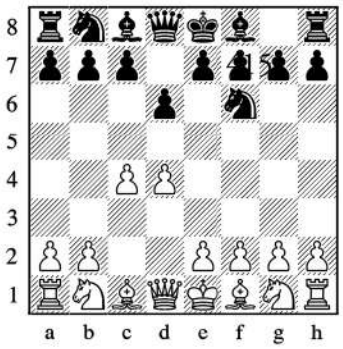
4...e5 (or 4...♘d7 followed by ...e5) is a typical move for the Modern Defence, leading to a King's Indian structure where Black hopes to benefit from not having developed the g8-knight to f6. We respond with 5.g3, when Black has tried several moves. Against 5...♗g4?!, 5...♘c6 and most other irregular moves, White obtains a clear advantage by exchanging on e5. Things are a bit more complex after 5...exd4 6.♘xd4, but after the normal sequence of 6...♘c6 7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.♗g2 ♘e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♗g5 I like White's chances.

The big main line occurs after 5...♘d7 6.♗g2 ♘e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.e4, when we reach a modified version of the King's Indian main line where Black's knight has been shifted from f6 to e7. Usually he tries to activate this piece with 8...exd4 9.♘xd4 ♘c6, when 10.♘de2 should be preferred. Just as in the King's Indian, Black will try as hard as possible to find dynamic counterplay, usually with some combination of knight jumps in conjunction with the pawn levers ...a4 and/or ...f5. However, my analysis has shown that with precise play, White should be able to consolidate and exert positional pressure in the middlegame.

chesstouring.com



1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4



Old Indian

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 d6

3.♘c3

A) 3...♗f5 416

B) 3...e5 4.♘f3 419

B1) 4...e4 5.♘d2! 419

B11) 5...♕e7 420

B12) 5...♗f5 422

B2) 4...♘bd7 5.g3 ♗e7 6.♗g2 0-0 7.0-0 423

B21) 7...♖e8 424

B22) 7...exd4 427

B23) 7...c6 8.e4 430

B231) 8...♖e8 431

B232) 8...a6 9.a4 a5 10.h3 ♖e8 11.♗e3 433

B2321) 11...♗f8 434

B2322) 11...exd4 12.♘xd4 ♘c5 13.♕c2 ♗f8 14.♖ad1 436

B23221) 14...♕b6 437

B23222) 14...♕c7 437

chesstouring.com

A) note to 12...♗h3



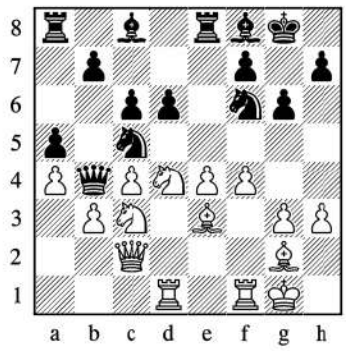
14.♕d3!N

B11) note to 10...d5



13.♘h4!N

B23221) after 16...g6



17.g4!N

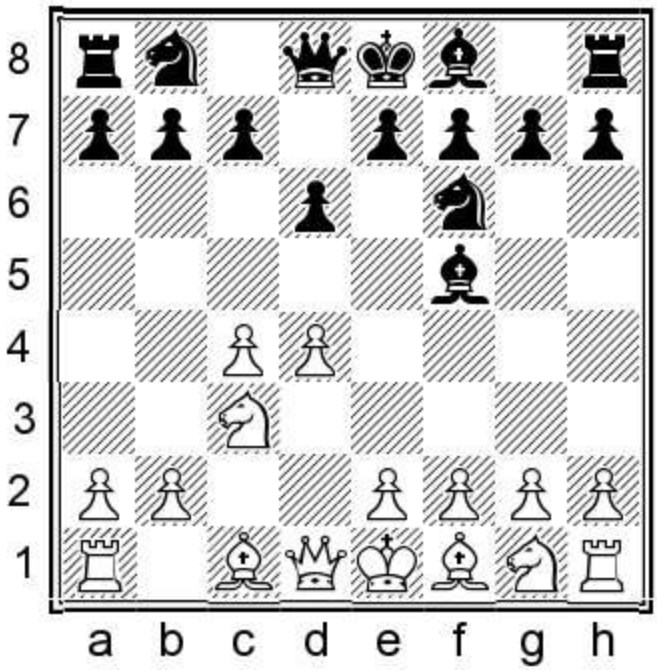
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 d6 3.♘c3

This time I decided to make a change from my previous recommendation of 3.♘f3, after which there are some ...♗f5/...♗g4 lines which would have to be considered. There are no concrete problems for White in these lines, but I am keen to evolve the repertoire and study new variations and types of positions. Finally, this change against the Old Indian move order goes hand in hand with the change in Chapter 25, where we meet 1.d4 d6 with 2.c4 followed by ♘c3, rather than 2.♘f3 which I recommended in *GM 2*.

It is worth considering the sideline of **A)** 3...♗f5 before concentrating on the Old Indian with **B)** 3...e5.

3...g6 leads to the King's Indian and 4...♘bd7 is just another route to the Old Indian if Black follows up with ...e5 and ...♗e7, or to a King's Indian if he opts for a fianchetto.

A) 3...♗f5



chesstouring.com

This move looks strange but it has been played numerous times by serious grandmasters.

4.f3

This seems to me like the most challenging response.

4...e5

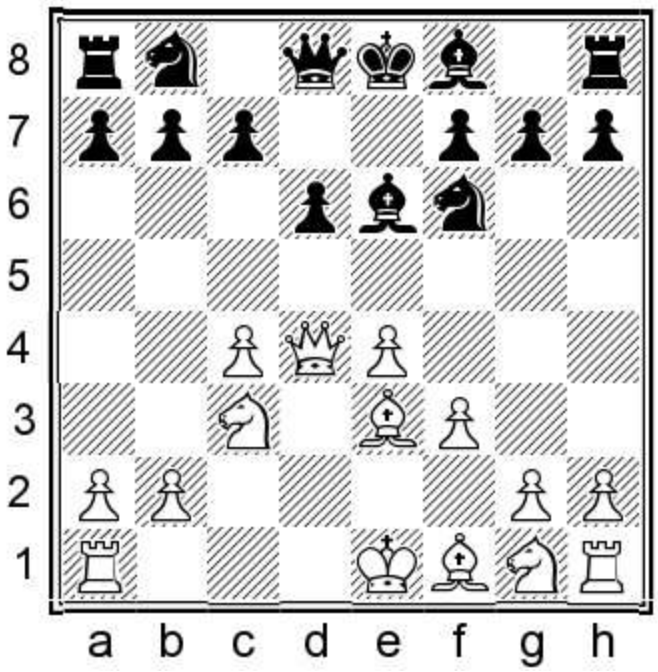
This is the only move that makes sense as an attempt to justify Black's set-up; otherwise e2-e4 will make the bishop look silly.

5.e4 exd4 6.♕xd4

This appeals to me more than 6.♘b5 ♗g6 7.♘xd4 c6, when Black has good chances to carry out the ...d5 break.

6...♘c6

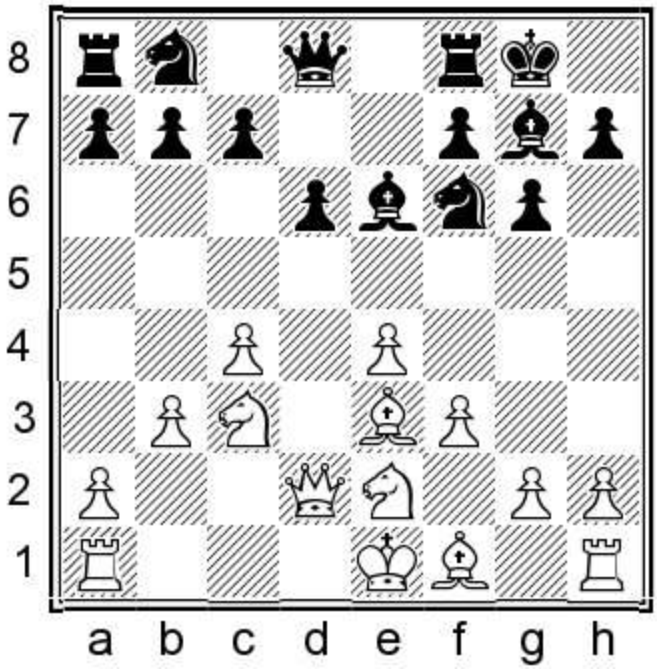
Black can also delay or omit this move:
6...♗e6 7.♗e3



7...g6

7...♗e7 seems less challenging. 8.♕d2 0-0 (8...♘bd7 occurred in Duer – Roth, Austria 1993, when the natural 9.b3N 9...0-0 10.♘ge2 c6 11.♘f4 ♘e5 12.♗e2± would have offered White a pleasant pull thanks to his space advantage) 9.♗d3 ♘bd7 10.♘ge2 ♘e5 11.b3 ♘xd3† 12.♕xd3 It's a pretty common idea to give up the light-squared bishop in this type of Sämisch structure. 12...♘d7 13.0-0 ♗f6 14.♘d4 ♘e5 15.♕c2 White had a pleasant advantage in Damljanovic – Matovic, Cacak 2014. This move has scored superbly for Black, and it was recommended by Cherniaev & Prokuronov in *The New Old Indian*. I suggest the following set-up for White:
8.b3 ♗g7 9.♘ge2 0-0 10.♕d2

chesstouring.com



10...♘c6

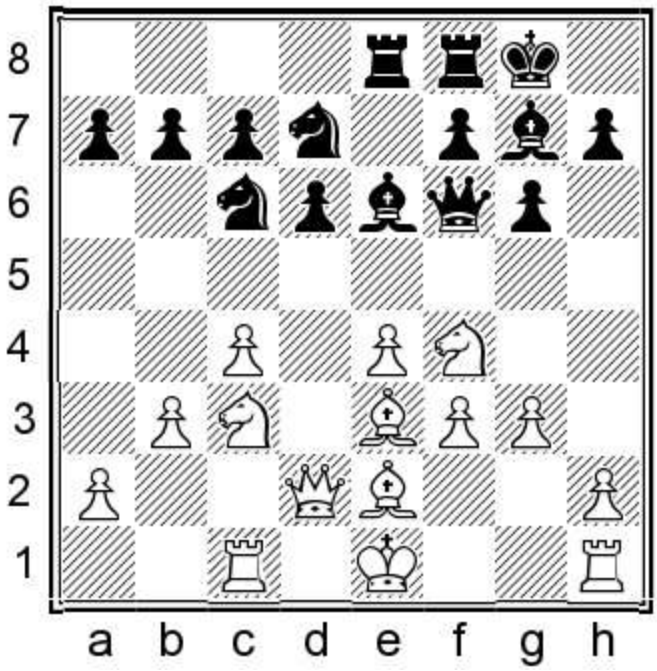
10...a5 11.♘d4 ♘c6 12.♗e2 ♖e8 occurred in Paunovic – Martinovic, Belgrade 2004. Cherniaev & Prokuronov evaluate this line as fine for Black, but the improvement 13.♘db5!N 13...a4 14.0-0 offers White a solid positional advantage.

11.♘f4 ♘d7

Black preferred 11...a5 12.♖d1 ♘d7 in Navrotescu – Shirazi, France 2006. Cherniaev & Prokuronov quote the game up to move 20, by which point Black stood better, but they fail to mention that 13.♘b5!N± would have secured White's opening advantage.

12.♗e2 ♕h4† 13.g3 ♕f6 14.♖c1 ♖ae8

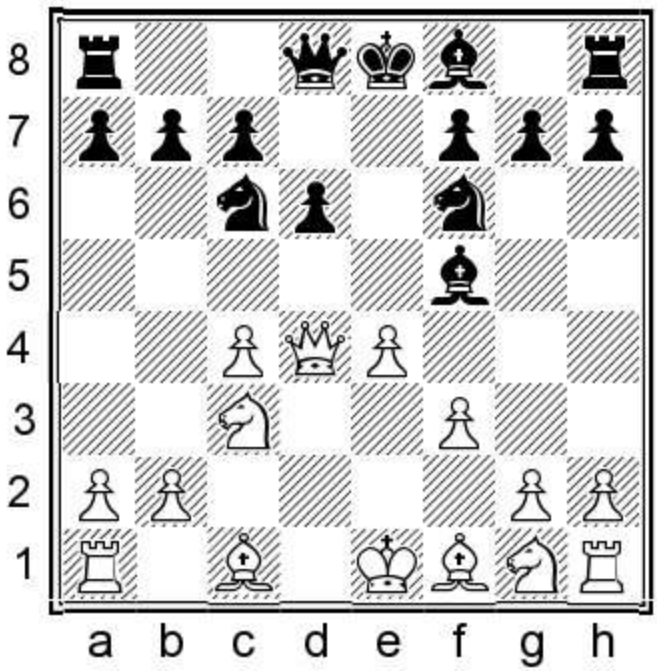
This position was reached in Czerwonski – M. Socko, Karvina 1994. My improvement is:



15.♘cd5N 15...♕d8 16.h4 h5 17.b4!

chesstouring.com

White's advantage is obvious.

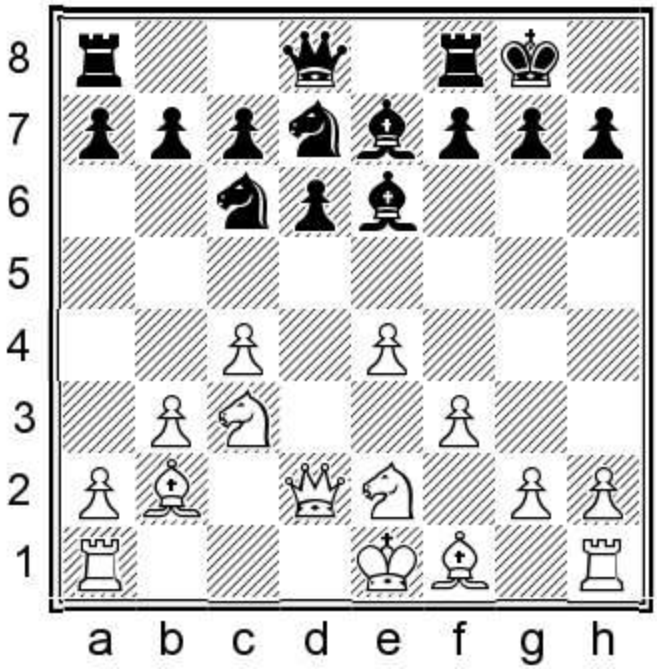


7.♕d2 ♗e6 8.b3 g6

Another possible bishop development is:

8...♗e7 9.♗b2 0-0 10.♘ge2 ♘d7

Black has also tried 10...♘h5 11.g3 f5 but White easily got a big advantage after 12.exf5 ♘e5 13.♗g2 ♗xf5 14.0-0± in Stanec – Stuhlik, Graz 2001.



11.♘d5! ♗g5

11...♗xd5 12.cxd5 ♘ce5 13.♘d4 obviously favours White, for instance: 13...♘c5 14.♗e2 ♗g5 15.♕c2± Schwing – Adler, Germany 2014.

12.f4 ♗h6 13.g3 f5 14.exf5 ♗xf5 15.♗g2 ♘c5 16.0-0±

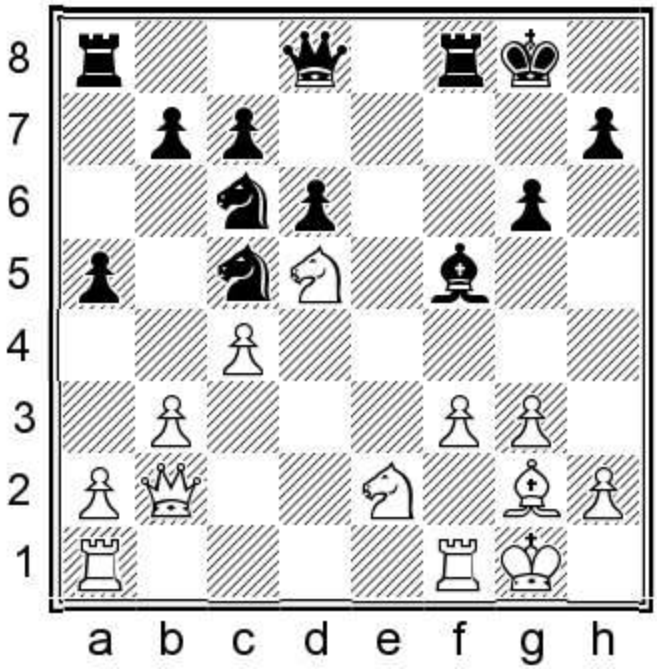
White was much better due to the serious misplacement of Black's dark-squared bishop in Flores Rios

chesstouring.com

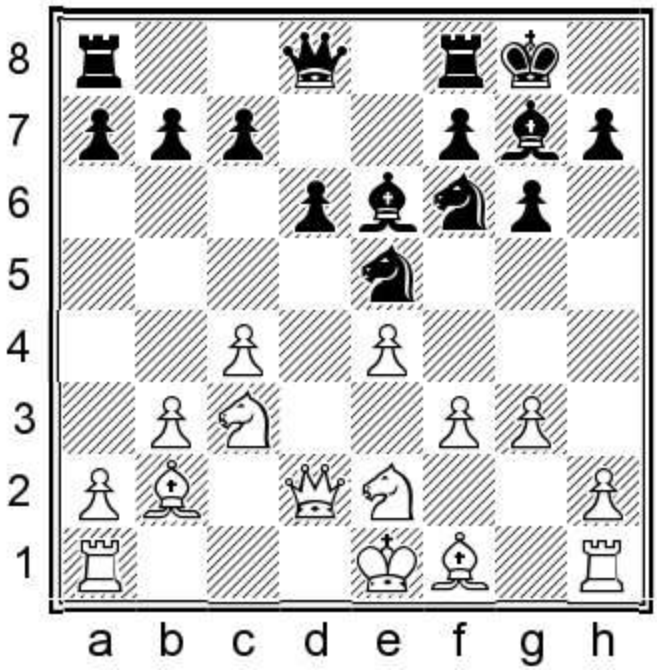
– Zherebukh, Internet 2018.

9.♗b2 ♗g7 10.♘ge2 0-0 11.g3 ♘e5

11...♘d7 12.♗g2 ♘c5 is a thematic manoeuvre but a good answer is: 13.0-0 a5 14.♘d5! The knight takes up a great square while the trade of dark-squared bishops will weaken the black king. 14...♗xb2 15.♕xb2 f5 16.exf5 ♗xf5 In Blackstock – MacDonald-Ross, Brighton 1979, an obvious and strong continuation would have been:



17.f4!N 17...♗e4 18.♗xe4 ♘xe4 19.♘d4± White is much better.

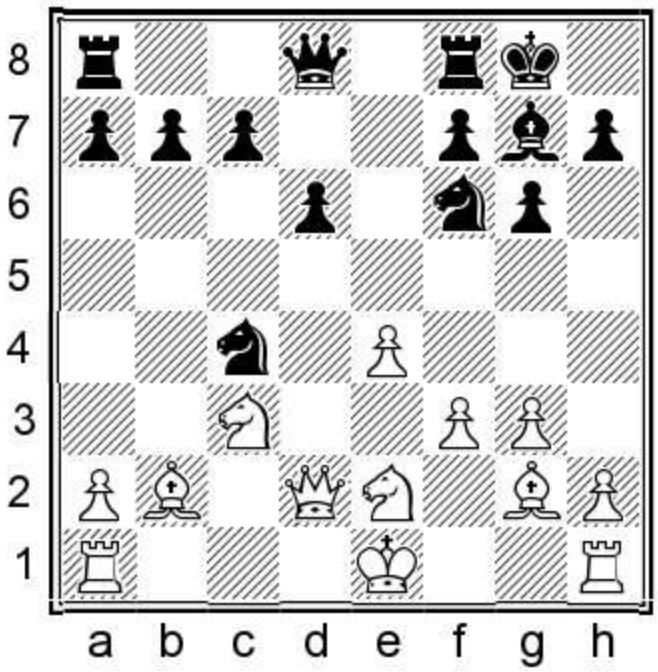


12.♗g2 ♗h3

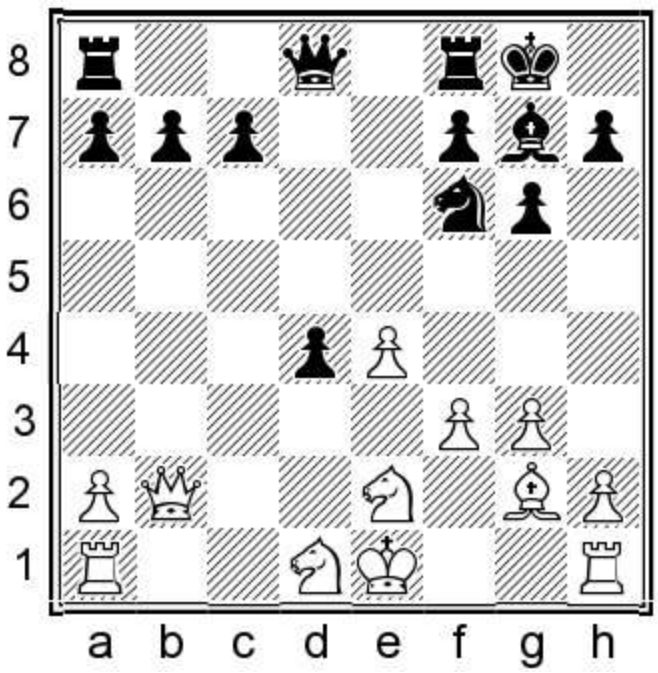
12...♗xc4!? 13.bxc4 ♘xc4 is a remarkable piece sacrifice which led to an eventual success for Black in

chesstouring.com

Ivkov – V. Sokolov, Kraljevo 1967. Nevertheless, White has a surprising but effective way to counter it:



14.♕d3!N 14...♘xb2 15.♕b5 d5 16.♕xb2 d4 17.♘d1 Black does not have enough compensation, for instance:

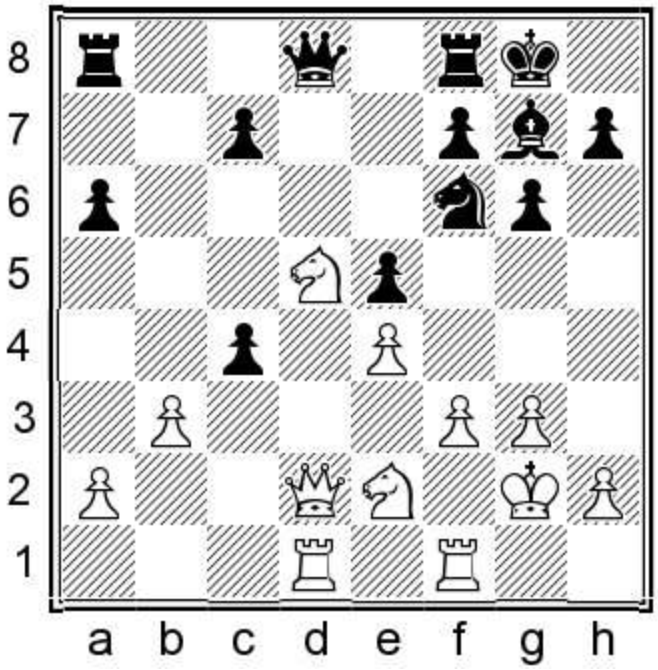


17...d3 (or 17...c5 18.0-0±) 18.♘ec3 ♘d7 19.f4± With an obvious advantage.

13.0-0 ♗xg2 14.♔xg2 ♖e8

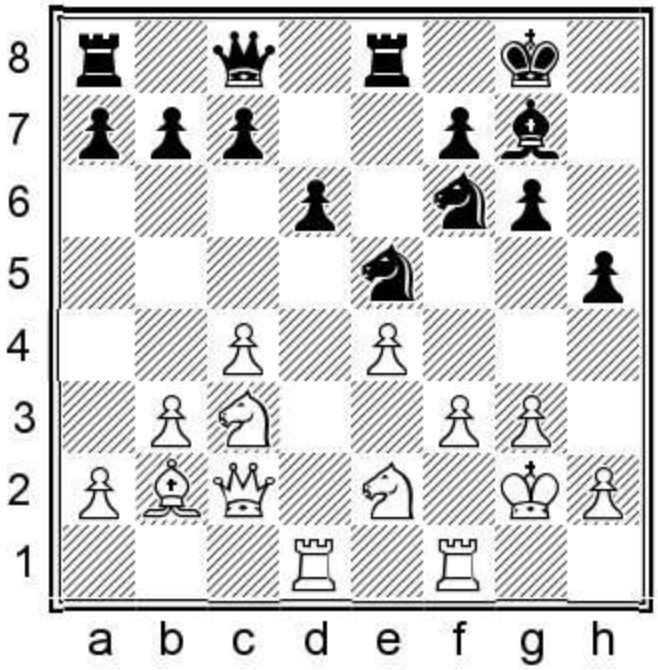
Another example continued: 14...a6 15.♖ad1 b5 16.♘d5! bxc4 17.♗xe5 dxe5 and now in Chabanon – J. Ivanov, Escaldes 1999, White should have played:

chesstouring.com



18.♕b4N 18...♘xd5 19.♖xd5 ♕f6 20.♕xc4± With a pleasant positional edge.

15.♖ad1 h5 16.♕c2 ♕c8

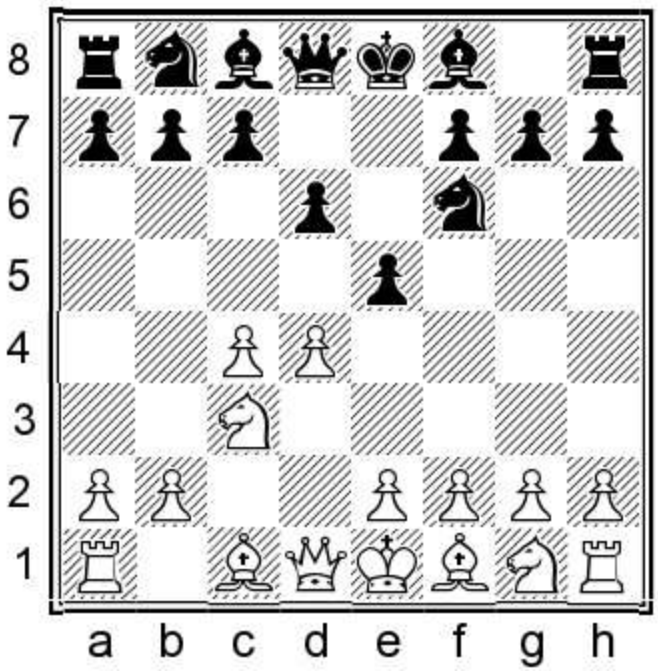


17.h3!? h4 18.g4 ♘h7 19.♘d5±

White was clearly better in Sorin – Scarella, Villa Martelli 2017.

B) 3...e5

chesstouring.com



Even though 3...♘bd7 is more popular, I will take this as the main line in order to consider some independent options where Black delays the knight move.

4.♘f3

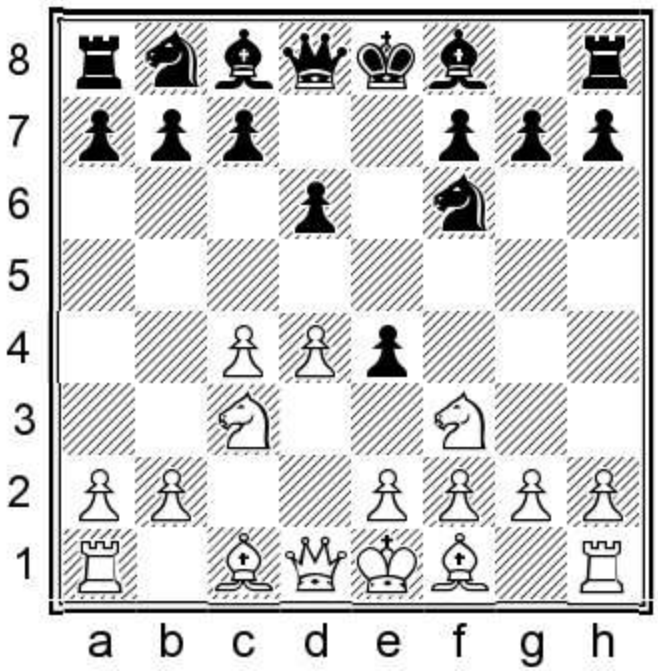
We will analyse **B1)** 4...e4 before moving on to the main line of **B2)** 4...♘bd7.

4...♘c6 transposes to a line of the Black Knights' Tango: see variation B2 of Chapter 24 on page 455.

4...exd4 5.♘xd4 is likely to transpose to one of the main lines, or to a King's Indian if Black follows up with ...g6.

B1) 4...e4

chesstouring.com



In *GM 2* I recommended avoiding this position, on the basis that 5.♘g5 ♕e7 had been yielding good results for Black. Indeed, that particular variation still looks quite healthy for Black according to current theory, but I have come to realize that White obtains an excellent position after a different knight move:

5.♘d2!

Now **B11)** 5...♕e7 is the main alternative to **B12)** 5...♗f5.

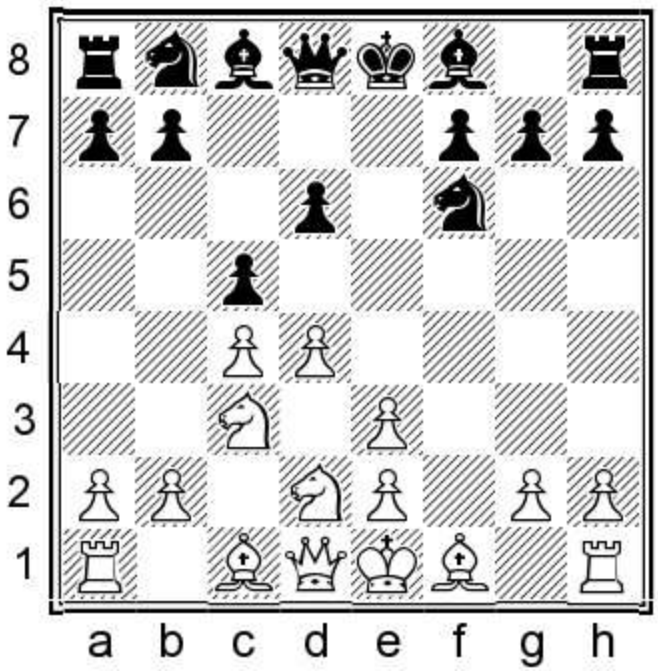
5...e3?!

GM Glek has tried this positional sacrifice twice, but with no success.

6.fxe3 c5

Glek's first attempt was 6...g6 7.g3 ♗g7 8.♗g2 0-0 9.0-0 ♖e8 and now in Graf – Glek, Dresden 2006, 10.e4N would have been simplest. 10...♘c6 11.e3 leaves Black without much compensation, and 10...c5 11.e5!? dxe5 12.d5± sees White returning the extra pawn to claim a positional advantage.

chesstouring.com



7.g3 h5 8.♘f3 h4 9.gxh4!

This seems easier than 9.♘xh4 ♖xh4 10.gxh4 ♘g4 when Black obtained some counterplay in Konovalov – Glek, Moscow 2006, although White was still objectively better.

9...b6

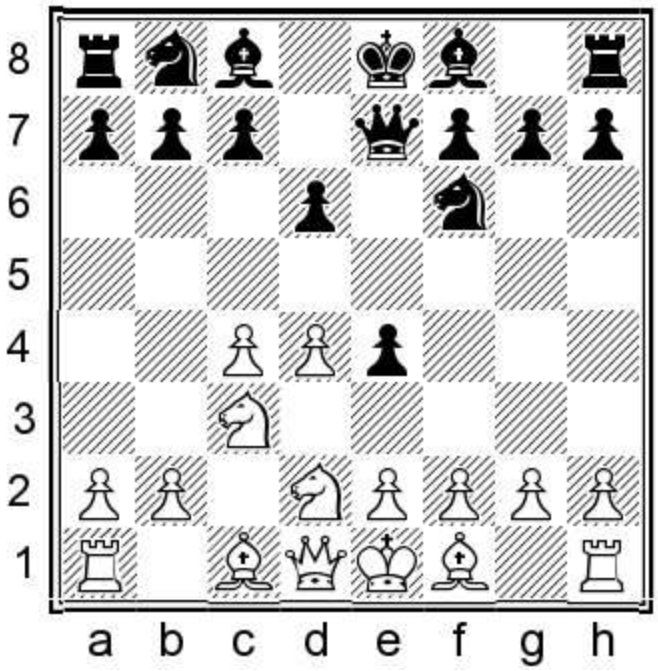
This move is unconvincing but Black would have struggled to find compensation after other moves as well.

Now in Mihailovs – Ibarra Jerez, Pamplona 2009, the easiest option would have been:

10.♗g2N±

Followed by 0-0, when Black has nowhere near enough play for two pawns.

B11) 5...♕e7



chesstouring.com

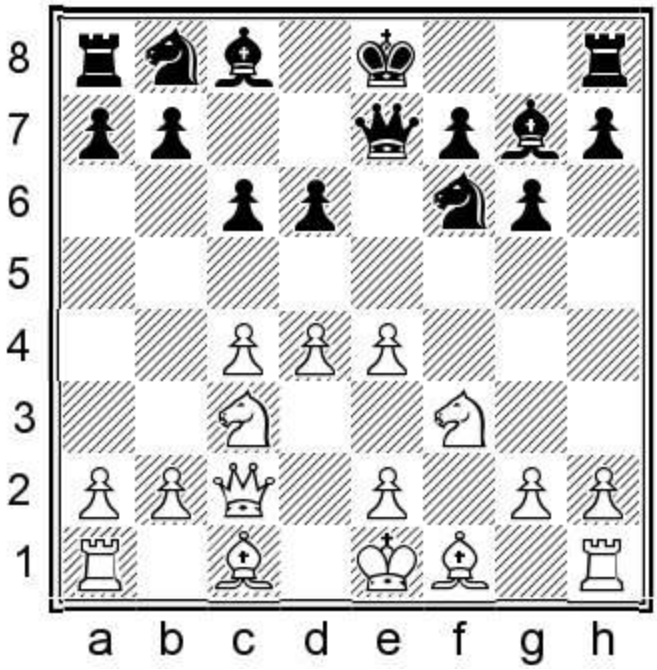
6.♕c2!

For some reason this move has only been played in a small minority of games, but it offers White an advantage in all variations.

6...♗f5

6...♘c6 7.e3 ♗f5 is more or less refuted by 8.♘d5!. For example, 8...♘xd5 9.cxd5 ♘b8 10.♗b5† ♔d8 11.0-0± and White's advantage was beyond any doubt in Al Saffar – Murshed, Guangzhou 2010.

6...e3 fails to achieve its goal: 7.fxe3 g6 (7...♕xe3?! allowed White easy play after 8.♘f3 ♕e7 9.♗g5 c6 10.e4 ♘bd7 11.♗d3± in Martz – Parham, Chicago 1973) 8.e4 ♗g7 9.♘f3 c6 In Homa – McShane, Arlington 2015. White should have continued with:



10.♗g5!N The pin is annoying for Black. He can break it with 10...h6 11.♗h4 g5, but after 12.♗f2 0-0 13.e3 ♘bd7 14.♗d3± I don't see any compensation for the pawn.

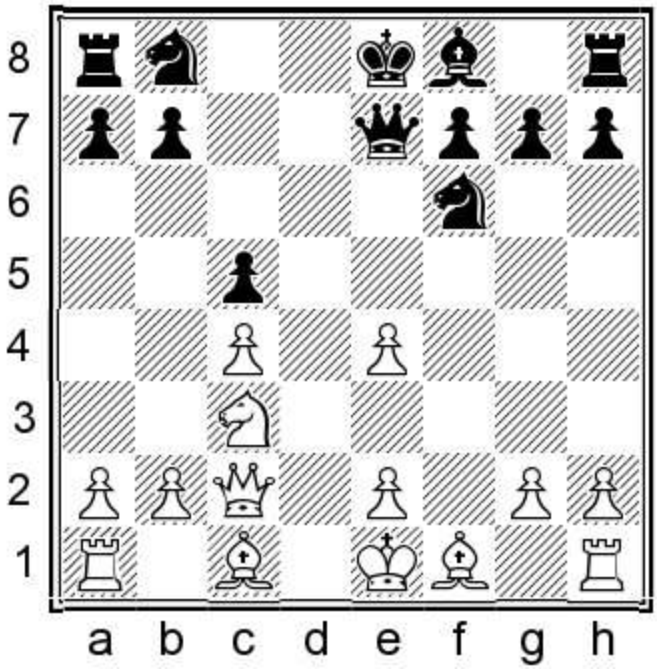
7.f3

Hunting down the e4-pawn is the logical continuation of White's strategy.

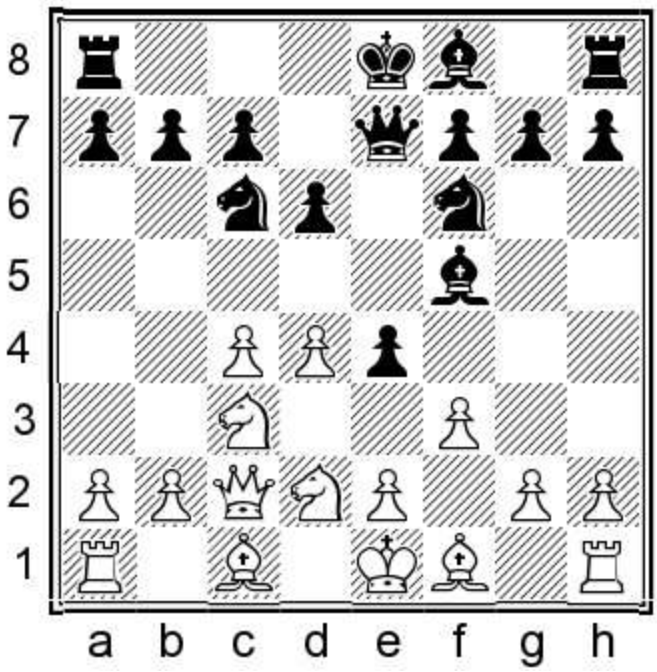
7...♘c6

Black tried 7...c5 in Swapnil – Lalith, Moscow 2017. I recommend the following improvement: 8.dxc5!?N 8...dxc5 9.♘dxe4 ♗xe4 10.fxe4 Despite White's ugly pawn structure and Black's control over the e5-square, he cannot claim full compensation. For instance:

chesstouring.com



10...♕e6 (10...♘c6 is worse after 11.♘d5 ♕d7 12.g3 ♗d6 13.♗g2±) 11.g3 ♗d6 (11...♕xc4? 12.e5 is terrible for Black) 12.♗g2 ♘c6 13.♘d5 0-0 14.0-0 ♘g4 15.♗f4 ♘ge5 16.e3! White is better as he controls a lot of important squares in the centre, while retaining an extra pawn.



8.fxe4 ♗g6

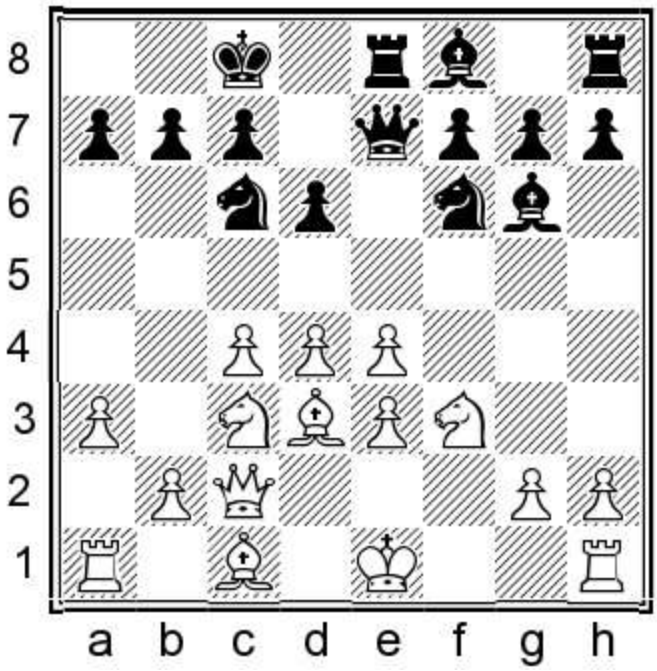
If White opted for 5.♘g5 then this sequence of moves would have offered Black satisfactory compensation for the pawn. The present version is favourable for White, as the knight offers the e4-pawn much more solid support from d2 than g5, making it easier for him to consolidate.

9.e3 0-0-0 10.a3 d5

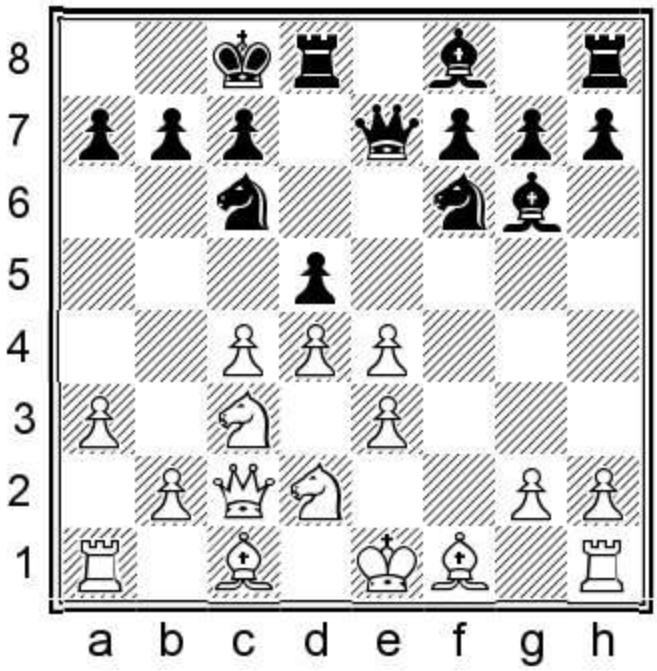
Black does not have much else to offer. For instance, a few games have continued: 10...♖e8 11.♗d3 ♘g4 12.♘f3 ♘f6 (or 12...h5 13.0-0 h4 14.♘d5 ♕d8 15.♘f4 ♗h7, Donner – Vasiukov, Wijk aan Zee

chesstouring.com

1973, and now 16.b4N+− would have been more than good enough) Now in Issabayev – Salinnikov, Tomsk 2007, White should have continued:



13.♘h4!N White intends to relieve the pressure on the e4-pawn by exchanging on g6, and 13...♗xe4? is not an acceptable solution in view of 14.♘xe4 ♘xe4 15.♘f5 ♕e6 16.0-0+– when White wins material due to the d4-d5 threat.

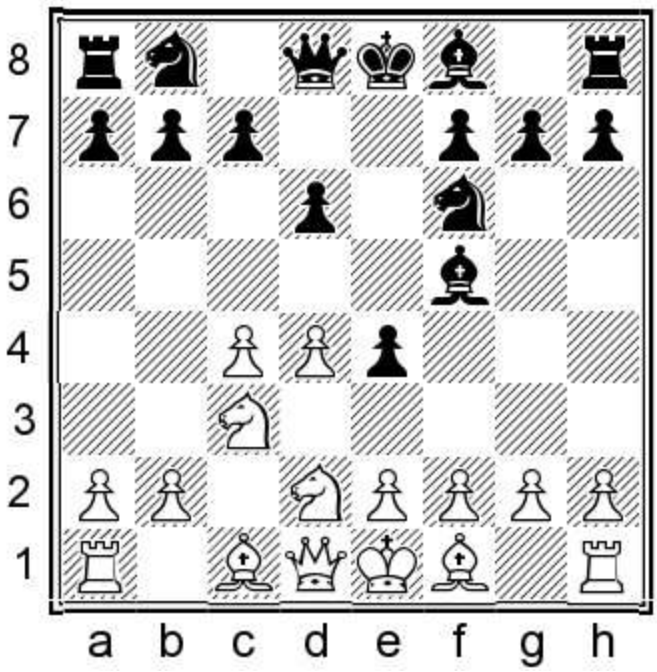


11.cxd5 ♘xd5 12.♘xd5 ♖xd5 13.♗d3 ♖h5 14.♘f3±

White's advantage was obvious in Kashdan – Chajes, Chicago 1926.

B12) 5...♗f5

chesstouring.com



6.♕b3!

By hitting the b7-pawn, White makes it harder for Black to build his desired pawn chain with ...c6 and ...d5.

6...♕c8

Other moves are no better, for instance:

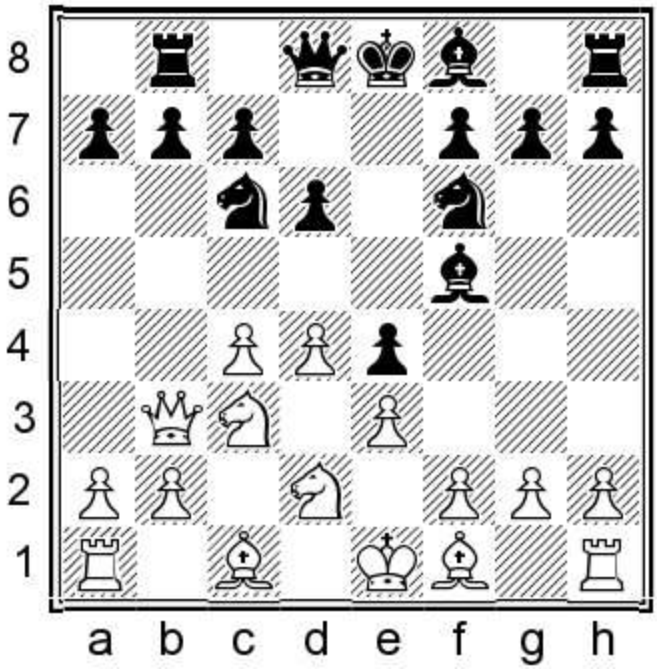
6...b6 occurred in Will – Carmo, corr. 2013. White should have simply played 7.g3!N 7...♘c6 8.e3 followed by ♗g2, when I don't see any way for Black to hold on to the e4-pawn.

6...♘c6 7.e3 ♖b8

7...a5 8.a3 looks like a favourable inclusion for White.

Here I found a promising idea which has not featured in any of the ten games from this position:

chesstouring.com



8.♕c2!N

Cherniaev & Prokuronov give 8.g3 as good for White, and indeed he may also be better after that move, but I like the text even more, as Black does not seem to be able to hang on to the e4-pawn.

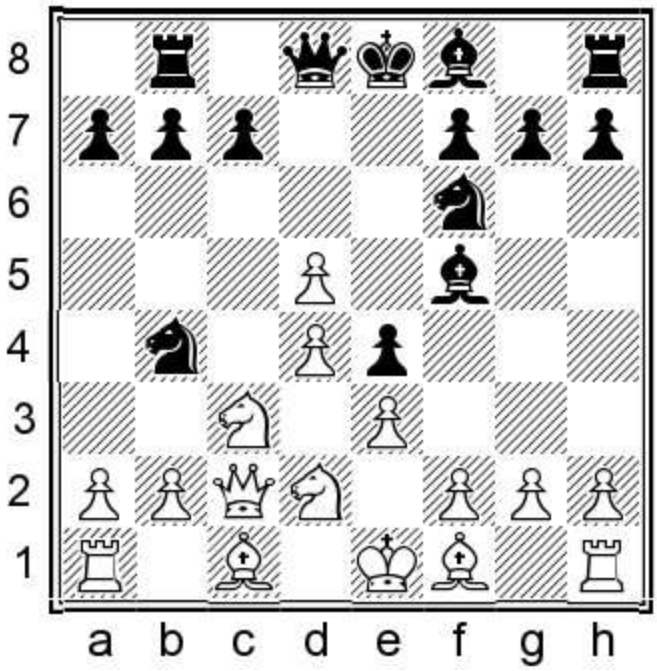
8...d5

I also checked 8...♗e7 9.a3! (this is easier than 9.♘cxe4 ♘xe4 10.♘xe4, when 10...d5! offers Black some counterplay) 9...0-0 10.♘dxe4 ♘xe4 11.♘xe4 ♗g6 12.♗d3± and White enjoys a healthy extra pawn.

9.cxd5

9.a3!? is also pretty good.

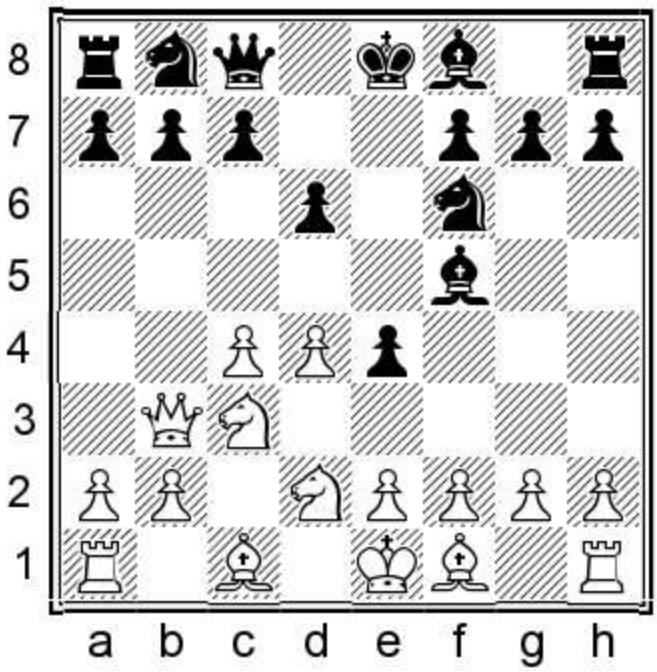
9...♘b4



10.♕a4† ♗d7 11.♕b3 ♗f5 12.♗c4±

chesstouring.com

Once again, White is a pawn up for little or no compensation.



7.g3 c5

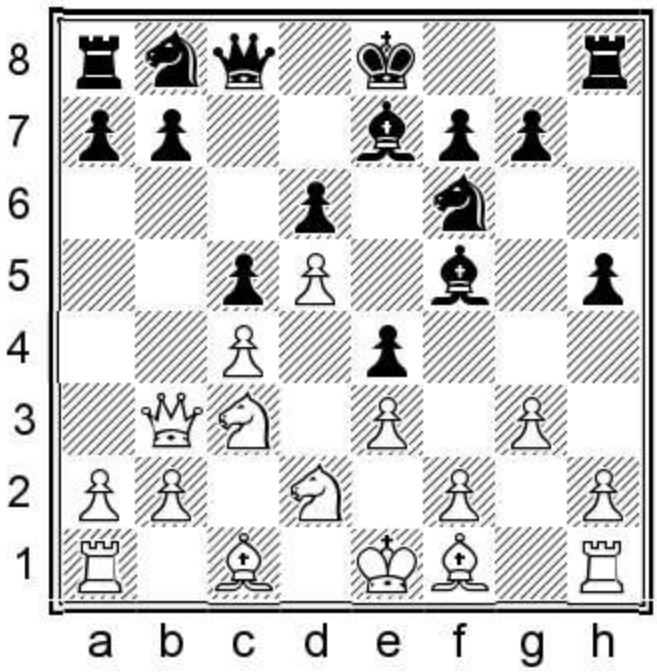
7...♘bd7 8.♗g2 c5 happened in Wong Tsui Hern – Koh, Bandar Seri Begawan 2003, when 9.♘dxe4N 9...♘xe4 10.♘xe4 cxd4 11.♕d3!± would have worked out in White's favour.

8.d5 e3

This thematic pawn sacrifice seems like Black's best try, as he will get some positional compensation thanks to the outpost on e5.

8...♗e7 occurred in Burnet – J.L. Williams, corr. 2013, when 9.e3!N would have been strong; I don't see a good way for Black to deal with the mounting pressure on the e4-pawn. For instance: 9...h5 (or 9...♘bd7 10.♗g2 and the pawn drops)

chesstouring.com

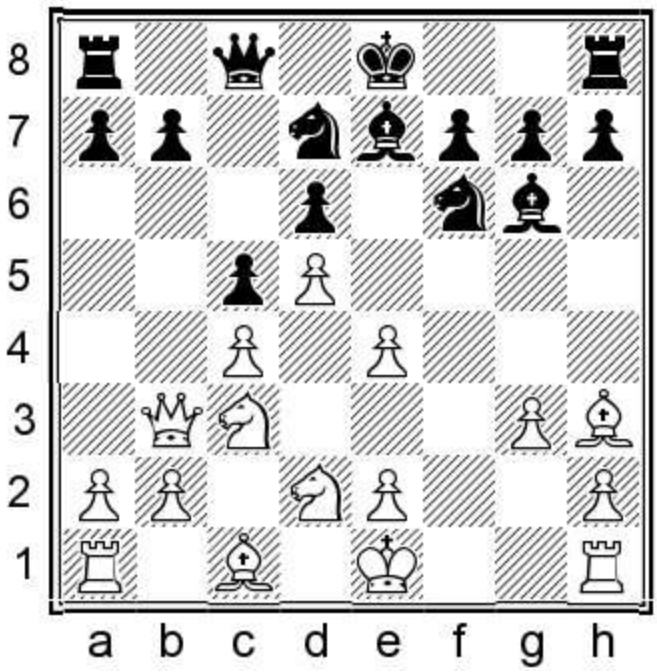


10.h3! Why allow Black to obtain the slightest counterplay by advancing the h-pawn any further? (Cherniaev & Prokuronov offer a rather unconvincing line continuing 10.♗g2 h4 and resulting in an 'unclear' symbol after some more moves. I don't really believe in Black's compensation after 11.♘dxe4, but the text move is even more convincing.) 10...0-0 (10...♘bd7 11.♗g2 changes nothing) 11.♗g2± Black loses the e4-pawn for no compensation whatsoever.

9.fxe3 ♘bd7 10.e4 ♗g6 11.♗h3 ♗e7

11...♕b8N is a logical alternative, but after 12.♘f3 ♗e7 13.♗g5 Black will have a hard time completing development.

White had clearly won the opening battle and went on to win in Parligras – Jankovic, Hungary 2018. However, at this point I especially like the following idea:

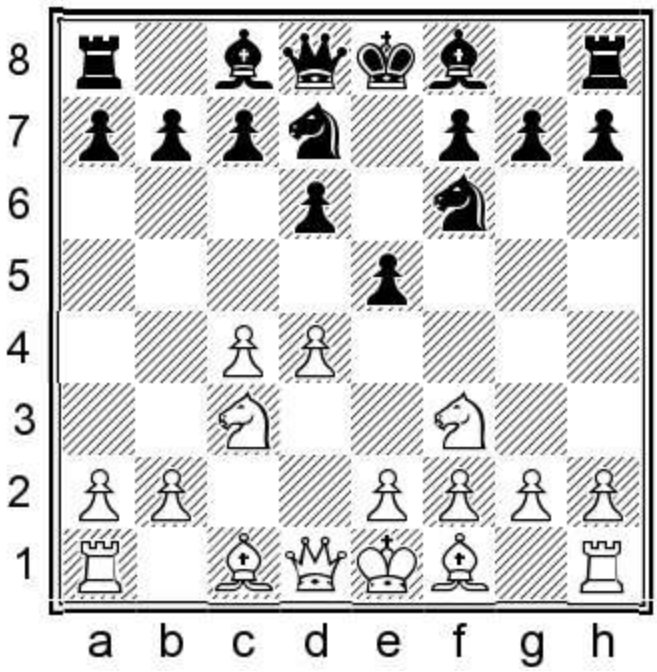


chesstouring.com

12.e5!?N 12...dxe5 13.0-0 0-0 14.e4±

White has returned his extra pawn to obtain an obvious positional advantage, thanks to his strong protected passed pawn as well as Black's misplaced light-squared bishop.

B2) 4...♘bd7



This position is the gateway to the main lines of the Old Indian.

5.g3 ♗e7

5...g6 would once again lead to the King's Indian, which was covered in *GM 2A*.

5...c6 should be met by 6.e4 when Black has nothing better than transposing to either the King's Indian or the Old Indian. (Instead 6.♗g2 would needlessly allow Black the extra option of 6...e4 followed by ...d5.)

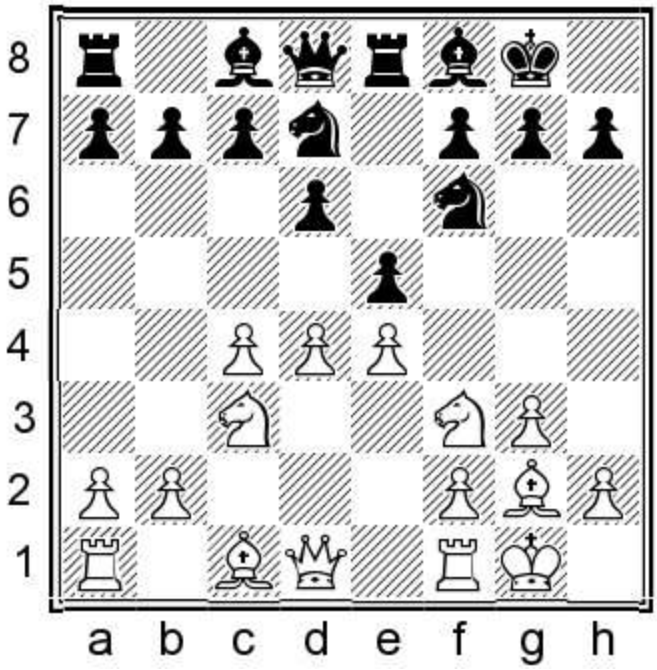
6.♗g2 0-0 7.0-0

There are all kinds of move orders and potential transpositions here, but I decided to focus on three main pathways. We will start by looking at some independent possibilities after **B21)** 7...♖e8 and **B22)** 7...exd4, before moving on to the main line of **B23)** 7...c6.

B21) 7...♖e8 8.e4 ♗f8

8...c6 transposes to variation B231, and 8...exd4 9.♘xd4 will also soon transpose to one of the main lines below.

chesstouring.com

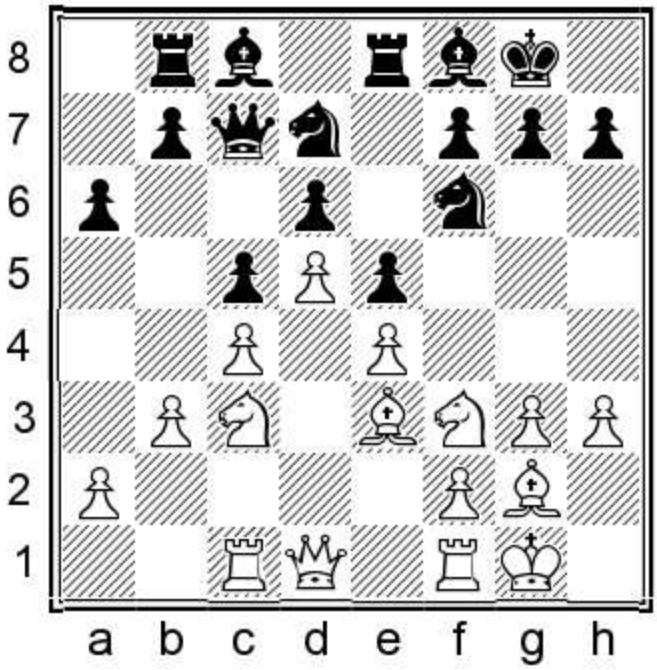


9.h3 c6 10.♗e3 a6

In most games, Black has opted for this thematic plan.

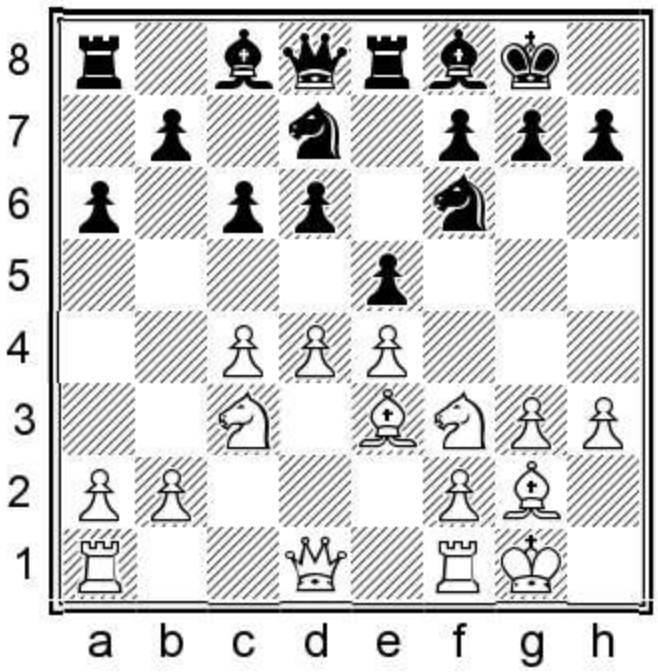
Releasing the central tension usually only clarifies White's plans: 10...exd4 11.♘xd4 ♘c5 12.♕c2 a5 We have transposed to variation B22 below.

10...♕c7 gives White the freedom to choose between several promising continuations; I like 11.♖c1 a6 12.d5 in order to question the placement of Black's queen. A good example continued: 12...c5 13.b3 ♖b8



14.a4! ♘h5 15.♘e1 g6 16.♘d3 ♗g7 17.♖c2!? ♘f8 18.g4 ♘f6 19.b4 White was clearly better in Korchnoi – Shashin, Yerevan 1965.

chesstouring.com



11.d5!?

There is nothing wrong with the thematic 11.a4, as Black has nothing better than transposing to one of our main lines. For instance, 11...exd4 (or 11...a5, which leads straight to variation **B2321)** 12.♘xd4 ♘c5 13.♕c2 a5 is variation B2322; see the top of page 437 for the continuation beginning 14.♖ad1.

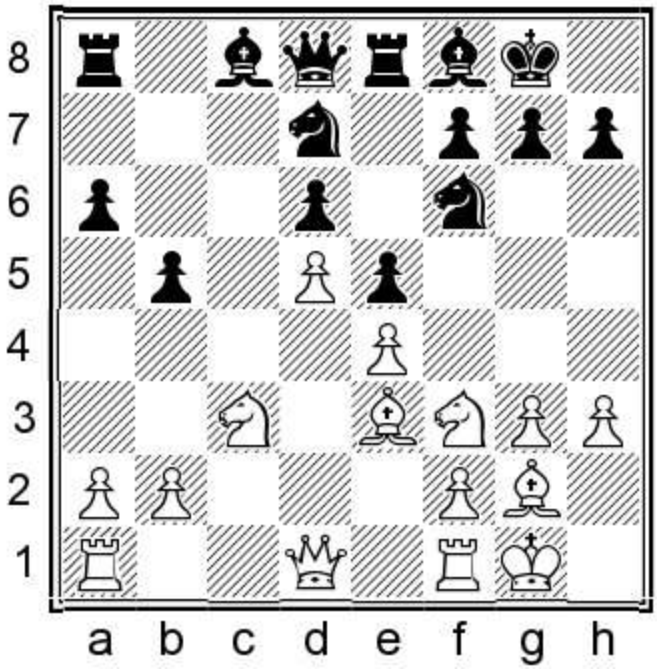
Nevertheless, I want to show another tempting continuation, gaining space in the centre, in a way exploiting the fact that Black was slow to develop his queenside counterplay (compare the note to White's 10th move in variation B231 on page 432, where the d4-d5 plan is not so attractive for White).

11...cxd5

11...♘c5? is simply a blunder in view of 12.dxc6 bxc6 13.♗xc5 dxc5 14.♕xd8 ♖xd8 15.♘xe5 and White wins a pawn.

12.cxd5 b5

chesstouring.com



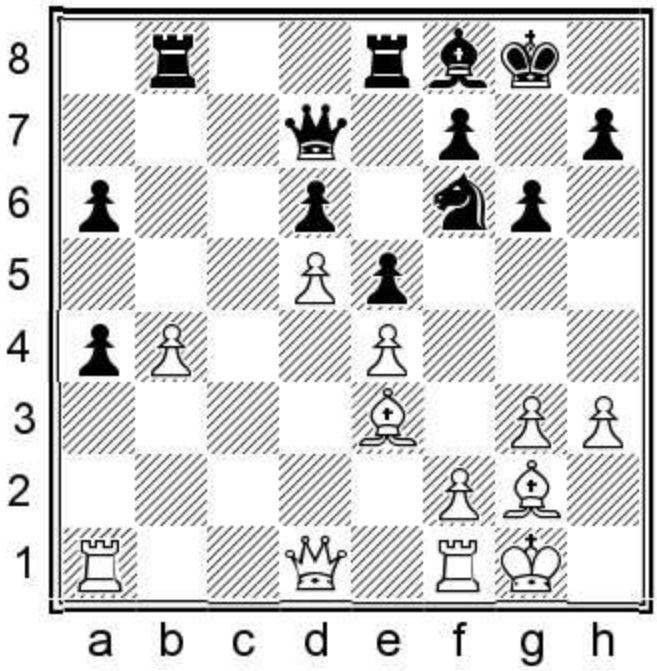
13.♘d2

White has achieved the optimal arrangement of his minor pieces for this pawn structure. He enjoys a serious space advantage thanks to his d5-pawn, and his play on the queenside flows quite easily. Overall his position is clearly preferable, as the following lines demonstrate.

13...♘b6

This has been the usual choice. Other options are no better, for instance:

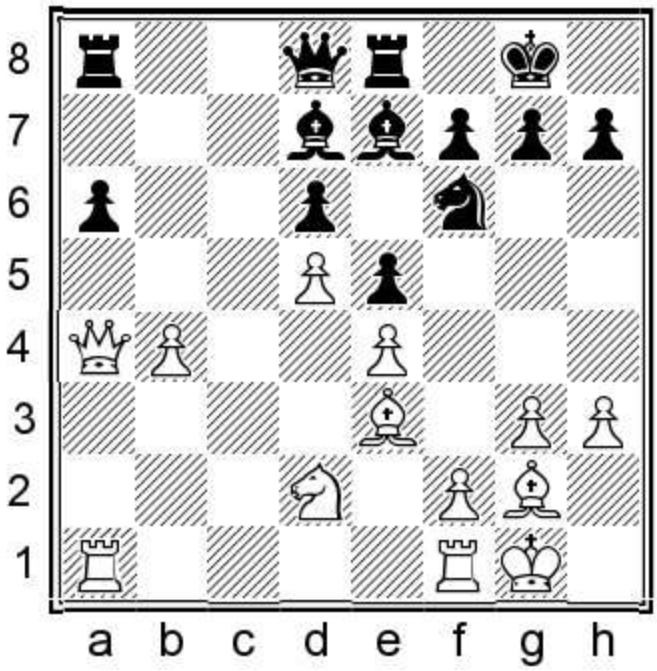
13...g6 14.b4! fixes the queenside in preparation for a2-a4. 14...♘b6 15.a4 ♘xa4 16.♘xa4 bxa4 17.♘c4! ♗d7 18.♘b6 ♖b8 19.♘xd7 ♕xd7 was seen in Ftacnik – Hausner, Marianske Lazne 1978, and now White should have opted for:



chesstouring.com

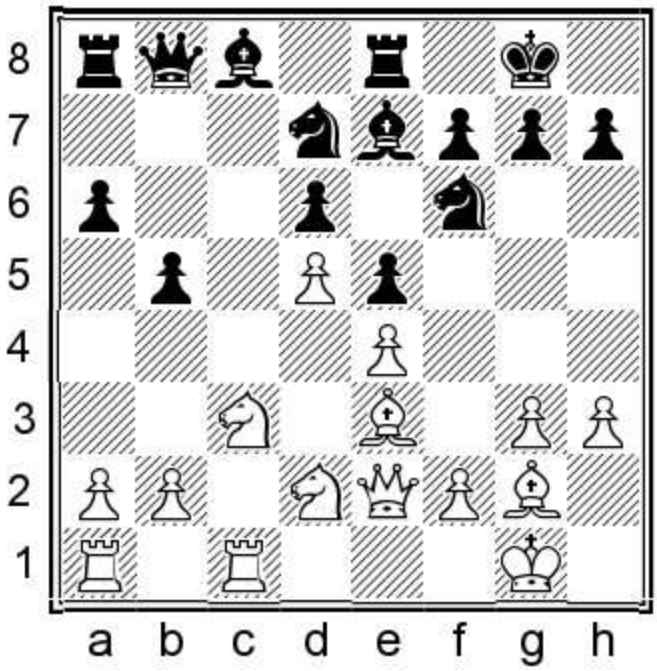
20.♕xa4N 20...♕xa4 21.♖xa4 ♖ec8 22.♖c1 ♖xc1† 23.♗xc1 White has a serious endgame advantage, for instance: 23...♘e8 24.♗d2 ♘c7 25.♗f1 ♖a8 26.♗d3± Black faces a difficult task to hold this endgame.

13...♗e7 has the idea to transfer the bishop to the d8-a5 diagonal, which is certainly in the spirit of the Old Indian, but Black has wasted several tempos and White is quick to cause trouble on the queenside. 14.b4 ♘b6 15.a4 The same thematic plan that we have seen before. 15...bxa4 16.♘xa4 ♘xa4 17.♕xa4 ♗d7 This occurred in A. Petrosian – Gulko, Kiev 1984, and here I suggest improving White's play with:



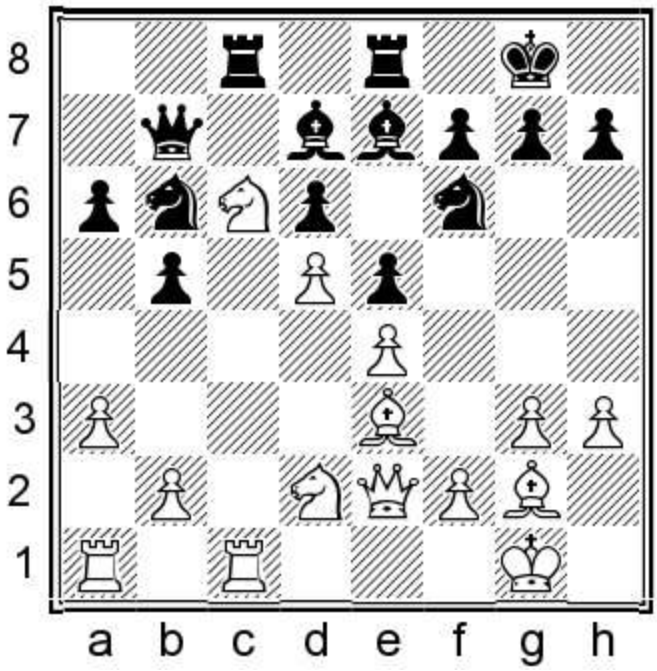
18.♕b3N 18...♗b5 19.♖fc1 ♖c8 20.♗f1! With a difficult position for Black.

13...♕c7 14.♕e2 ♗e7 15.♖fc1 ♕b8 occurred in Vukic – Zapata, Zenica 1986, when White continued with the thematic plan of b2-b4 followed by a2-a4. I like another idea even more:

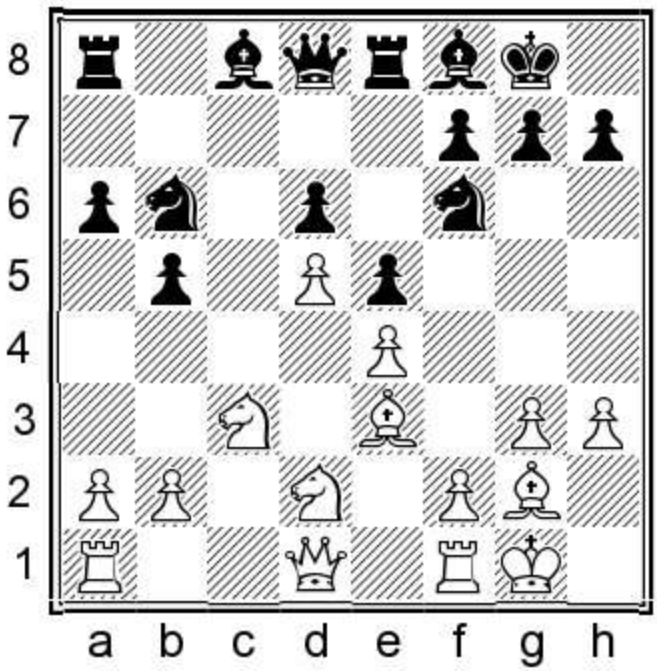


chesstouring.com

16.a3N 16...♘b6 17.♘a2! White's knight is heading for c6. An illustrative line is: 17...♗d7 18.♘b4 ♕b7 19.♘c6 ♖ac8



20.♘xe7†! ♖xe7 21.♗g5+– Switching the attack towards the kingside will be devastating for Black.



14.a4!

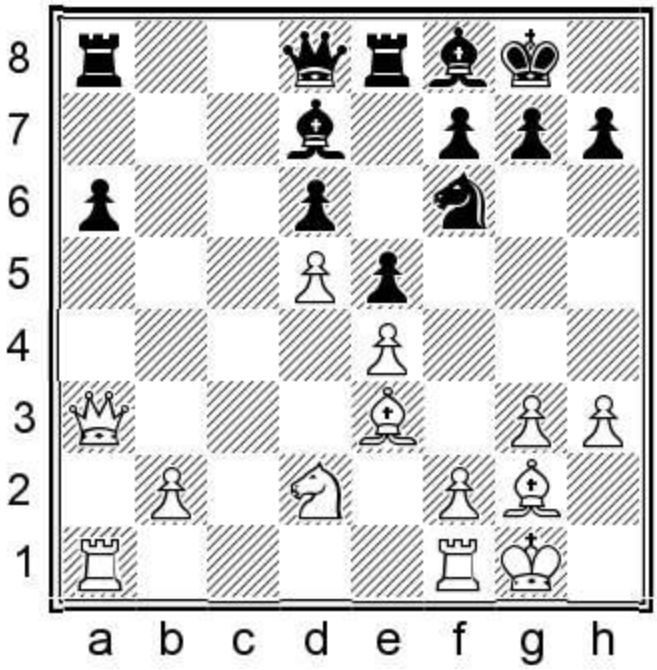
With the knight already on b6, White can confidently play this move without the preliminary b2-b4.

14...bxa4

The main point is that 14...b4 is met strongly by 15.a5! ♘bd7 16.♘a4 when White is much better.

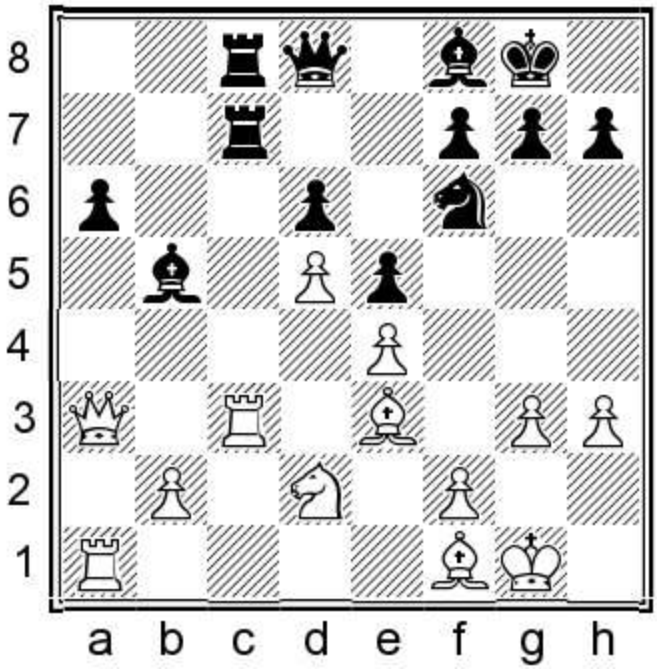
15.♘xa4 ♘xa4 16.♕xa4 ♗d7 17.♕a3

chesstouring.com



17...♕b8

Practice has also seen 17...♗b5 18.♖fc1 ♖c8, when 19.♖c3! is a strong positional idea. White exerts pressure along the c-file, exploiting the fact that any exchange on c3 will be met by bxc3 followed by c3-c4, when Black's a-pawn will perish. 19...♖e7 20.♗f1 ♖ec7 In Schroll – Appel, Germany 1998, White's best way forward would have been:

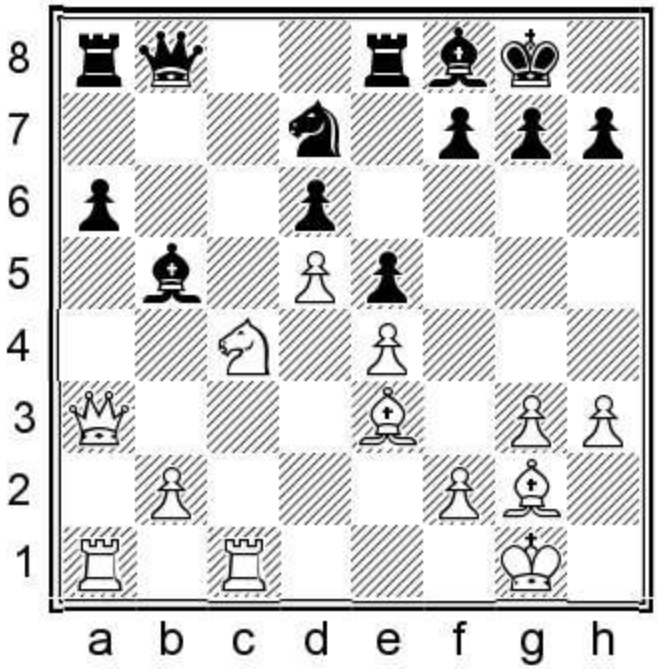


21.♕a5N 21...♕d7 22.♗xb5! axb5 23.♖xc7 ♖xc7 24.♔g2 Intending ♕b4, ♖a5 and ♘b1-c3, when the pressure against the b5-pawn will be hard for Black to tolerate.

18.♖fc1 ♗b5 19.♘c4 ♘d7

This occurred in the relatively recent game Blagojevic – Kostanjsek, Durres 2014. A natural improvement is:

chesstouring.com



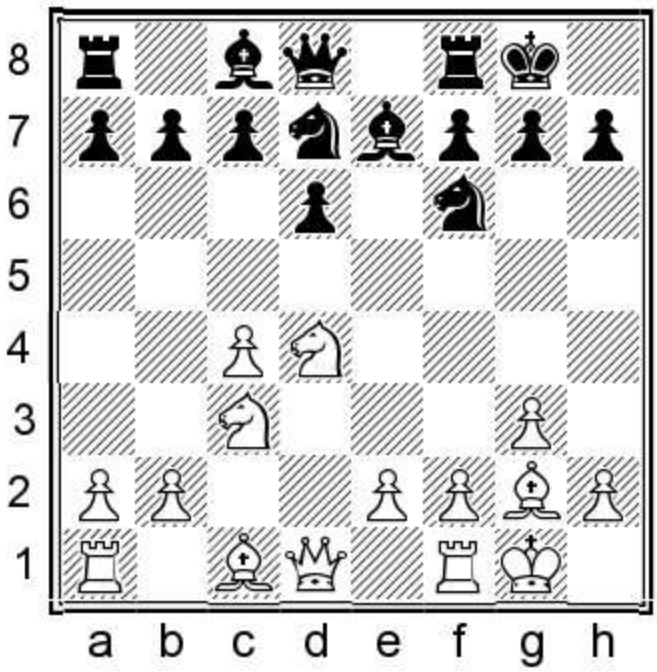
20.♘a5N 20...♖c8 21.♘c6 ♕b7 22.♕c3 ♔h8

The immediate 22...♘b8? would lose to 23.♘e7†, so Black hides his king.

23.♗f1!

By removing the b5-bishop, White secures the outpost on c6, and with it a clear advantage.

B22) 7...exd4 8.♘xd4



It seems to me that releasing the central tension is a concession which significantly eases White's task. Nevertheless, there are still some lines which we need to check.

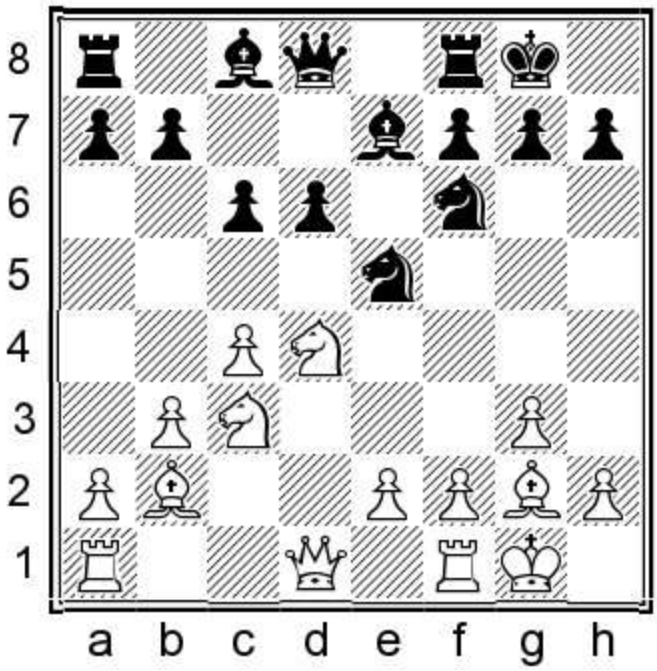
chesstouring.com

8...♖e8

8...c6 9.e4 transposes to the note on ...exd4 in variation B23 below.

I also examined a couple of knight moves:

8...♘e5 9.b3 has occurred in lots of games (including transpositions), but White simply continues his normal development while Black struggles to find any counterplay. For instance: 9...c6 10.♗b2



10...♖e8 (another relatively recent example continued 10...♕c7 11.♕c2 a6 12.♖ad1 ♗d7 13.♘f5± and White had a great position in Delchev – Velickovski Nejkovic, Skopje [rapid] 2015) 11.e4 ♗f8 12.h3 a6 13.f4 ♘g6 14.♔h2± White's advantage was obvious in D. Hossain – E. Hossain, Dhaka 2017.

8...♘b6

This forces White to make a slightly trickier choice although he still enjoys excellent chances after:

9.♕d3!

9.♕b3 was my previous recommendation but 9...♘fd7! is slightly annoying.

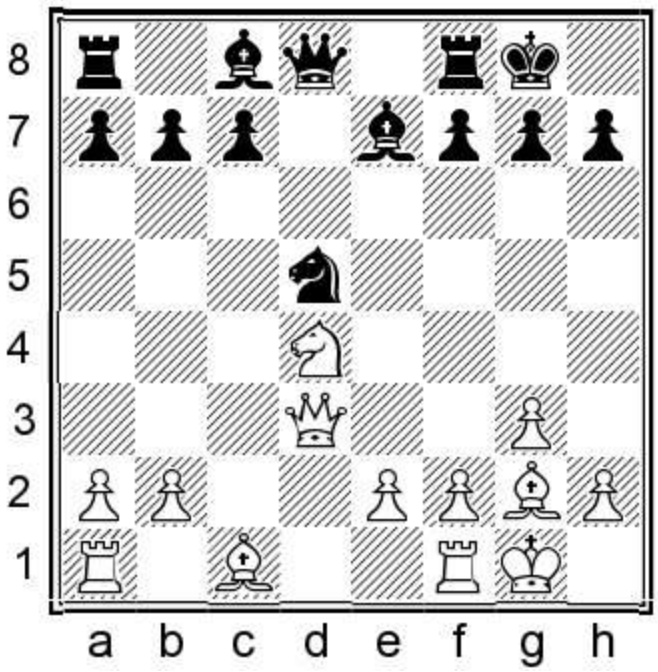
9...d5

Black has also tried 9...♘fd7 but, unlike in the note above, White can play 10.b3 and develop his pieces comfortably, while Black is too slow to create any counterplay. 10...♖e8 11.♗b2 ♘c5 12.♕c2 ♗f6 13.♖ad1 ♕e7 was the continuation of Kolk – Veiper, Estonia 2003, when White should have played 14.b4!N 14...♘a6 15.a3± with an obvious advantage, since the c4-pawn is untouchable due to ♘d5.

10.cxd5 ♘bxd5 11.♘xd5 ♘xd5

This occurred in Raupp – Dietrich, Germany 1986, and one other game. White's strongest continuation is:

chesstouring.com



12.♖d1!N 12...c6

12...♗f6 13.♕c2! causes problems due to the X-ray along the d-file. Play may continue 13...♘b4 14.♕c4 ♕e7 15.♗f4± and Black is under pressure.

13.e4 ♘f6 14.♗e3

14.♕e2 is also worth considering. Either way, White enjoys a pleasant space advantage.

9.♕c2

There is nothing wrong with 9.e4; White is likely to want to play both moves in the near future, but it feels more natural to move the queen first and avoid blocking the long diagonal for one more move.

9...♗f8

9...♘e5 10.b3 does not bring Black any dividends.

10.e4 c6 11.h3

This is an essential move to prepare ♗e3. White's set-up is the same as in the main King's Indian lines from *GM 2A*, but Black's prospects for counterplay are clearly diminished with his bishop on f8 instead of g7.

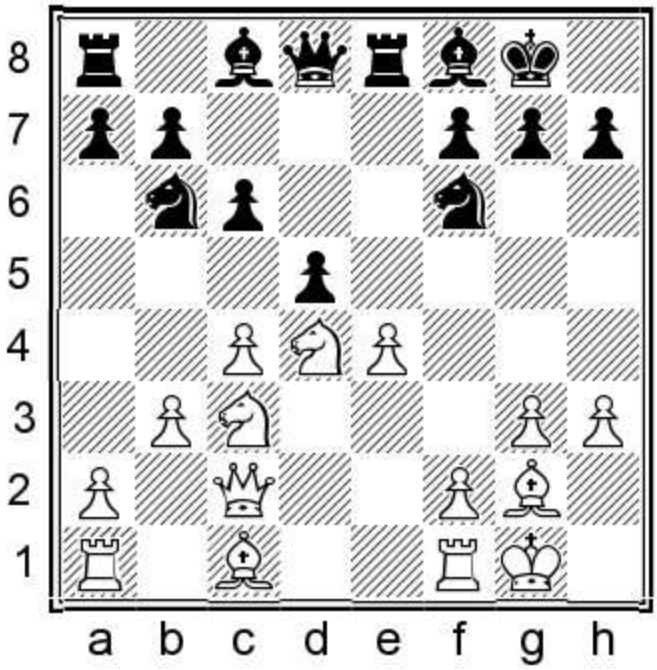
11...a5

The following attempt to liquidate the centre falls short:

11...♘b6 12.b3 d5

This position was reached in Bannik – Pogrebissky, Kiev 1959, as well as a more recent game where White could have used my improvement from *GM 2*:

chesstouring.com



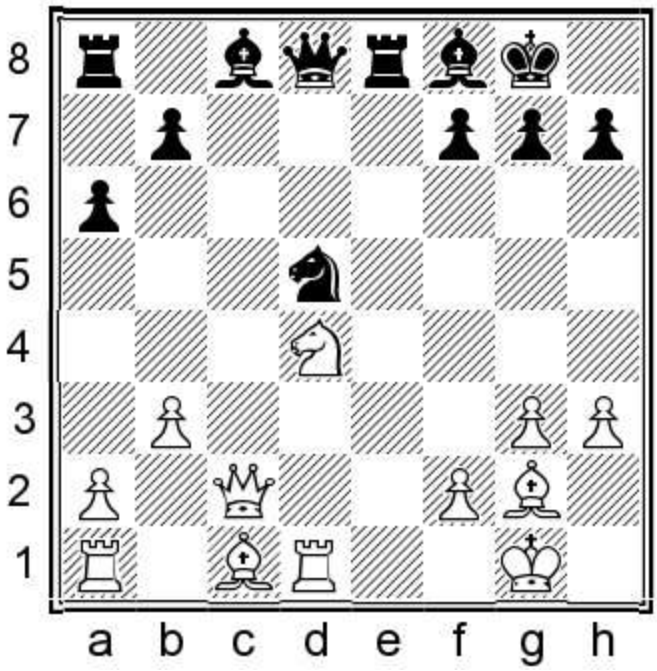
13.exd5!N 13...cxd5 14.♖d1!

Producing a nasty X-ray along the d-file.

14...a6

Black cannot play 14...dxc4? in view of 15.♘c6! when the queen will be caught.

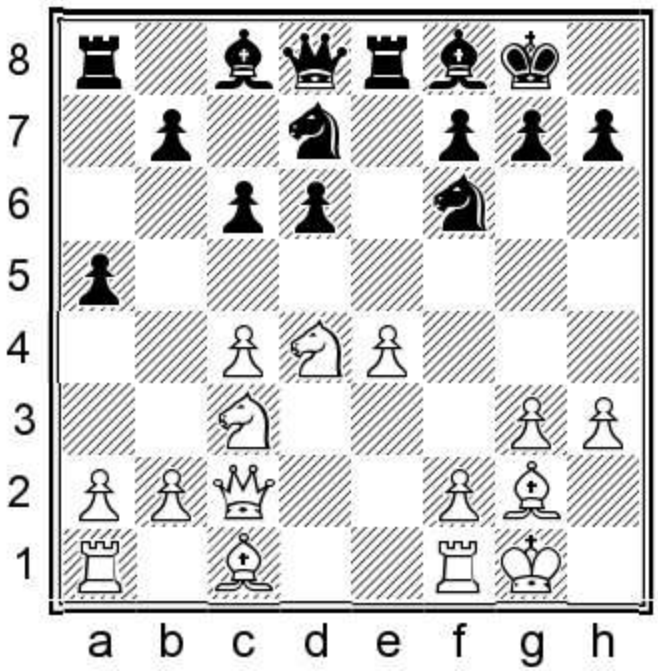
15.♘xd5 ♘bxd5 16.cxd5 ♘xd5



17.♗b2±

White's bishops dominate the board.

chesstouring.com



12.♗e3 ♘c5

If you skip ahead to variation B2322 on page 436 (the position after 13...♗f8), you will see that Black's pieces are identically placed, but White's pawn is on a2 here instead of a4. It is clearly in Black's interests to provoke the weakening a2-a4 move, so we may regard the present variation as an inferior version for him.

13.♖ad1

White threatens a small combination involving 14.♘xc6 followed by 15.♗xc5, so Black should move his queen.

13...♕b6

In the event of 13...♕c7 14.b3! White enjoys a pleasant space advantage while Black has absolutely no counterplay on the queenside. There is no need to analyse any further, and White's practical score of 5/5 from this position speaks for itself.

14.b3

I like this positional approach more than 14.♘b3 ♘fd7.

14...a4

This is one way for Black to make use of the fact that a2-a4 has not been played, but it does not yield much play for him.

15.♖b1!

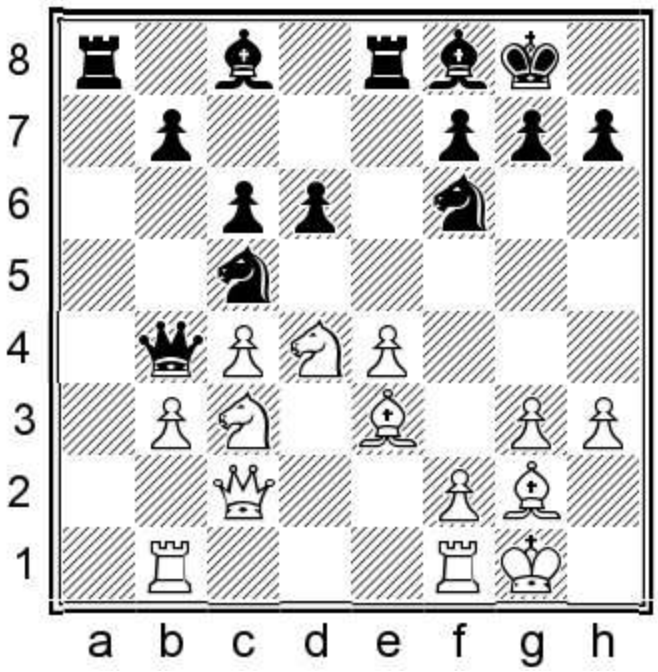
A well-timed switch to the queenside.

chesstouring.com

15...axb3 16.axb3 ♕b4?!

Black should settle for the passive 16...♕c7 although 17.b4 ♘e6 18.♘b3 leaves White in control.

The text move appears tempting but is inaccurate. In Jobava – Galego, Warsaw 2005, White missed a nice trick, which was also pointed out by Bruzon in *Chess Informant* 94.



17.♕d2!N

With the nasty threat of 18.♘c2 followed by b3-b4.

17...♕b6

Black has nothing better than retreating the queen, as 17...♘a6 18.♖a1! brings him no relief.

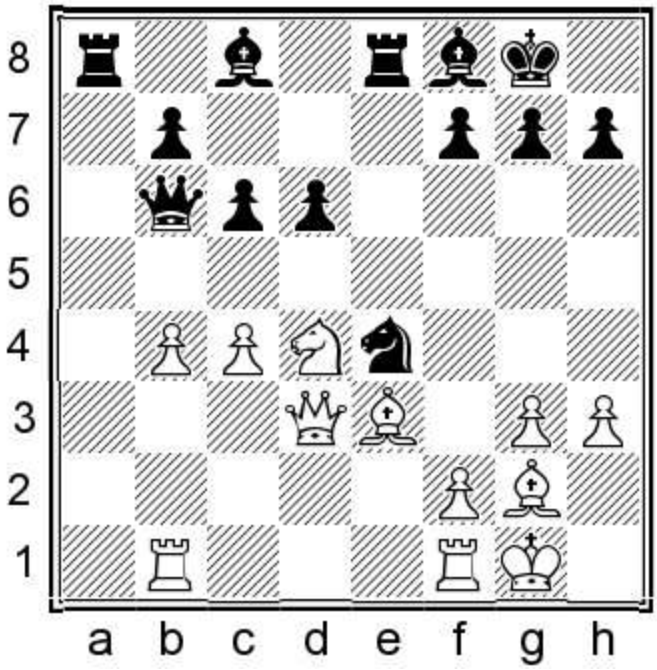
18.b4!

A strong pseudo-sacrifice.

18...♘cxe4 19.♘xe4 ♘xe4 20.♕d3!

Black cannot avoid losing material, for instance:

chesstouring.com



20...c5

20...♘f6 21.♘e6! does not help Black.

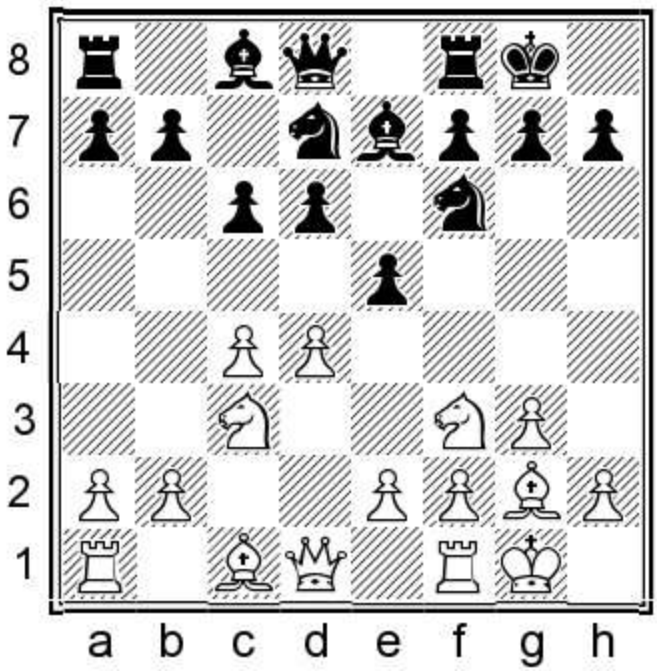
21.♗xe4 ♖xe4

Or 21...cxd4 22.♗xd4 ♕c7 23.♗xh7† with a clear extra pawn.

22.♕xe4 cxd4 23.♗xd4

Black has no compensation for the exchange.

B23) 7...c6



chesstouring.com

This has been by far Black's most popular move order.

8.e4

There are two main options: **B231)** 8...♖e8 and **B232)** 8...a6.

I also considered:

8...exd4 9.♘xd4

This is similar to variation B22 above and could easily transpose if Black follows up with ...♖e8. Here are a few examples in which he delayed that move for long enough to avoid transposing:

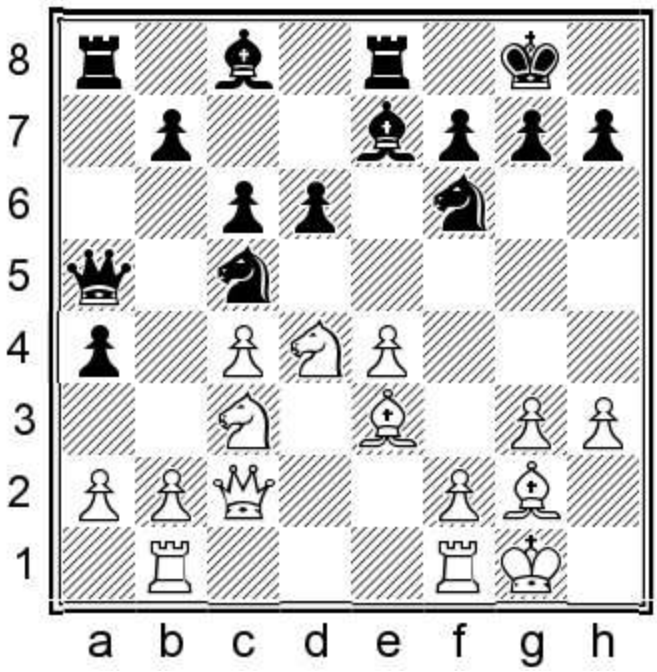
9...♘c5

9...♘e5 10.b3 ♖e8 11.h3 ♗f8 12.♗g5!? (12.♗e3N is totally fine) 12...h6 13.♗e3 a6 was played in Sapis – Erenska Barlo, Polanica Zdroj 1995. I don't see any reason to refrain from 14.f4!N, when White is clearly better after both 14...c5 15.♘de2 ♘c6 16.g4± and 14...♘ed7 15.♕c2±.

10.h3

White follows the familiar plan of development. A good model game continued:

10...a5 11.♗e3 a4 12.♕c2 ♕a5 13.♖ab1 ♖e8



14.b4!

Black is not the only one who can play on the queenside.

14...axb3 15.axb3 ♕c7 16.b4 ♘e6 17.♘f5±

White was much better in M. Gurevich – Erturan, Izmir 2002.

8...♕c7

Against this move, we should follow the same recipe as in the main line.

9.h3 a6

9...♖e8 is covered under 9...♕c7 in the notes to variation B231 below.

10.a4!

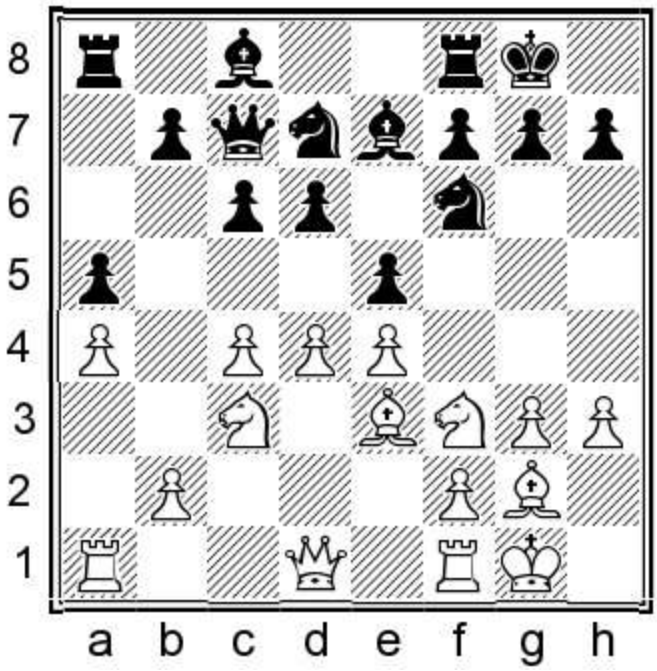
Just as in variation B232 below, it is best to prevent ...b5, as the weakening of White's queenside is

chesstouring.com

of little consequence.

10...a5 11.♗e3

This is likely to transpose to a later variation, for instance:



11...♖e8

11...exd4 12.♘xd4 ♖e8 13.♕c2 is the same thing.

12.♕c2 exd4

12...♗f8 reaches variation B2321 on page 434.

13.♘xd4 ♘c5

After 13...♗f8 14.♖ad1 Black hardly has anything better than 14...♘c5, transposing to variation B23222 below.

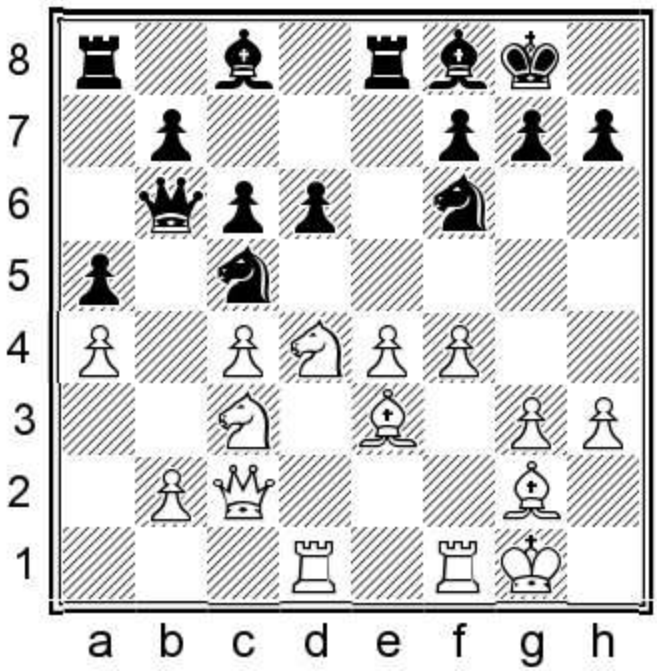
14.♖ad1 ♕b6?!

14...♗f8 again transposes to variation B23222. The text move is hardly an improvement, as Black loses a full tempo compared to a later line where the queen goes to b6 in one move.

15.f4 ♗f8

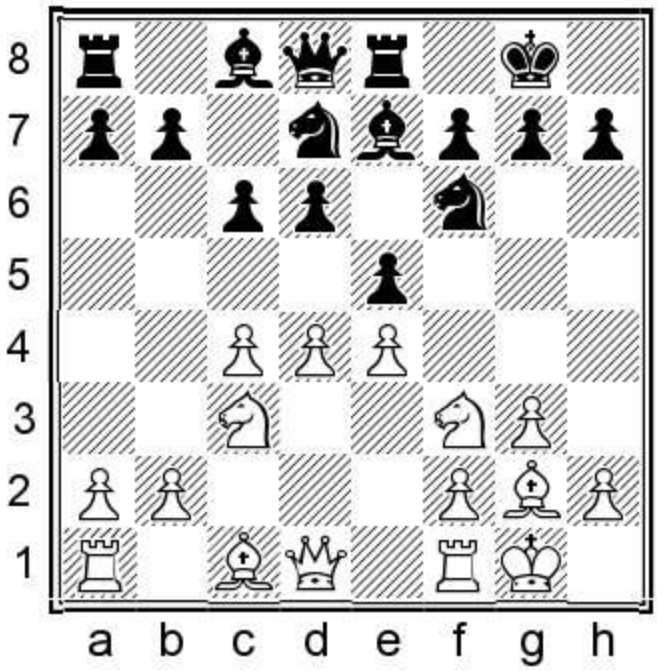
This occurred in Lorenz – Seidel, Bad Wiessee 2013. The position is the same as the later variation B23221, but here it's White to move instead of Black. With all of White's pieces already on good squares, there is no reason to hold back on the kingside.

chesstouring.com



16.g4!N 16...g6 17.f5 ♘fd7 18.♕f2 ♘e5 19.b3±
White has excellent attacking prospects.

B231) 8...♖e8



9.h3
Once again we prepare to develop with ♗e3.

9...a6
I will take this as our main line.

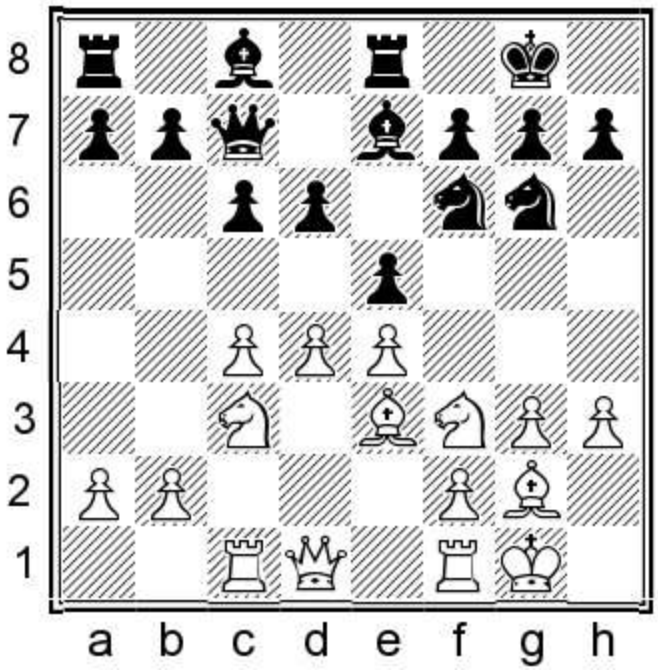
chesstouring.com

9...♗f8 has been the most popular choice but we have already covered this position under variation B21.

The only other noteworthy plan is to transfer the d7-knight to the kingside with:
9...♕c7 10.♗e3 ♘f8

10...♗f8 has been covered on page 424 – see 10...♕c7 in the notes to variation B21.

11.♖c1 ♘g6



White has a wide choice but I like the following approach:

12.♘e1!? exd4

After 12...♗d7 White can seriously consider 13.d5.

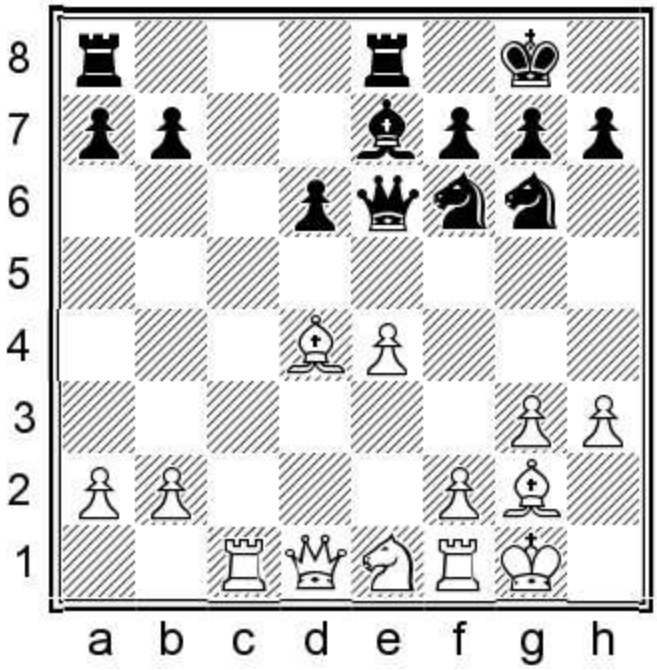
13.♗xd4 ♗e6 14.♘d5!

Obviously this is a thematic tactical idea which can arise from many openings.

14...cxd5 15.cxd5 ♕d7 16.dxe6 ♕xe6

We have been following Alatortsev – Rudakovsky, Moscow 1945. Here I would recommend:

chesstouring.com

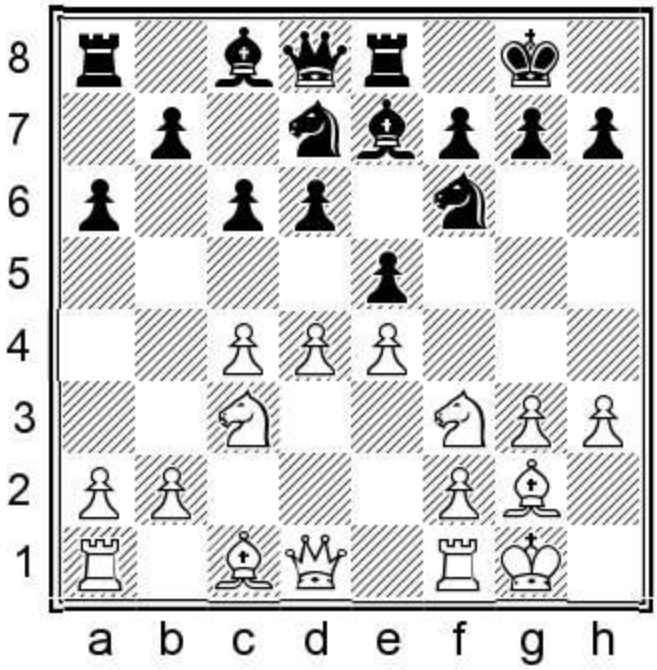


17.♘c2!N 17...♕xa2

17...♖ac8 18.a3 leaves White in full control.

18.♘e3±

White's positional superiority is worth much more than the sacrificed pawn.



10.a4!

This is our usual response to the ...c6/...a6 set-up, which we will see again in variation B232 below. For a better understanding of the nuances of these positions, I will briefly show why I wasn't satisfied with White's other options:

Unlike in variation B21, blocking the centre with 10.d5 cxd5 11.cxd5 b5 leaves White with insufficient time to reach his optimal set-up with ♗e3 and ♘d2, as Black is already threatening to win the e4-pawn

chesstuning.com

with ...b4.

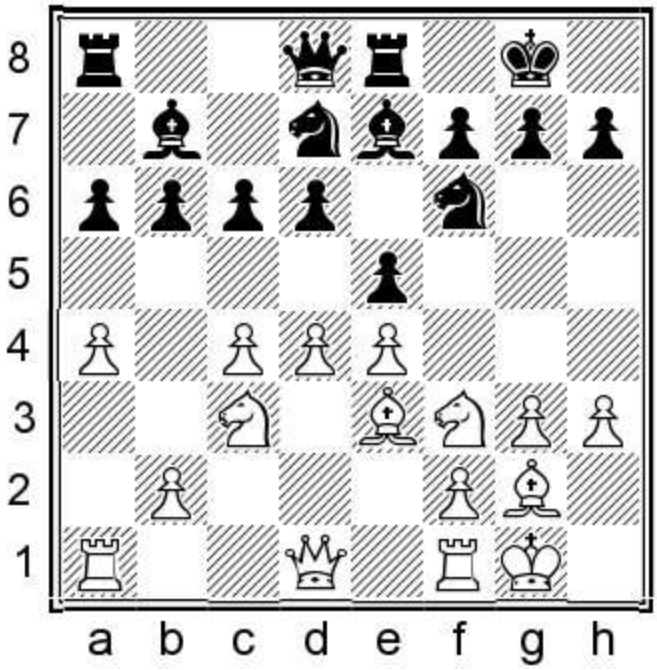
10.♗e3 b5 11.c5 is another thematic try, but 11...♗b7 leads to complex and unclear play.

10...b6

10...a5 is the most natural and popular reaction, and it will be covered via transposition under variation B232 below. The text move is an independent try, which is not too difficult to meet.

11.♗e3 ♗b7

I found a useful improvement:



12.d5!N

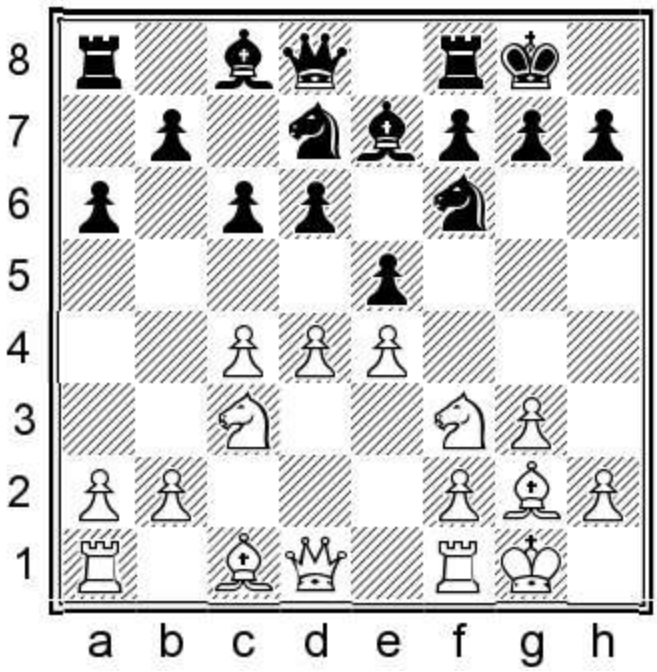
White preferred 12.♕c2 in all three of the existing games, but 12...b5!N would have offered Black reasonable counterplay.

12...♘c5 13.♕b1 a5 14.♖d1 ♕c8 15.b3±

White's positional advantage is beyond any doubt, as he enjoys a solid space advantage while the b7-bishop is blocked in.

B232) 8...a6

chesstouring.com



9.a4

Once again, I consider it best to prevent ...b5 by radical means.

9.h3 b5 10.c5 ♗b7! reaches a position where Black's set-up resembles something out of the Meran variation of the Semi-Slav. The position is complicated and I was unable to find any advantage for White.

9...a5

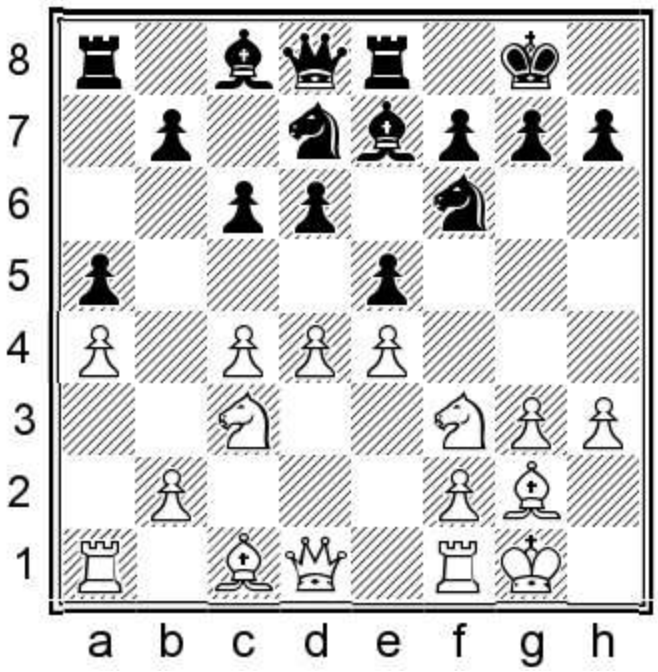
Black gets some positional trumps by establishing control over the c5- and b4-squares, but White's space advantage and kingside prospects remain the most significant factors in the evaluation of the position.

10.h3 ♖e8

10...♕c7 reaches a position covered in the 8...♕c7 line in notes to variation B23, on pages 430-431.

10...exd4 11.♘xd4 ♘c5 12.♗e3 has no real independent significance: 12...♖e8 transposes to variation B2322, while 12...♕b6 13.♕c2 ♖e8 14.♖ad1 ♗f8 transposes to variation B23221.

chesstouring.com



11.♗e3

Black has two main options: he can maintain the tension with **B2321)** 11...♗f8 or clarify the situation in the centre with **B2322)** 11...exd4.

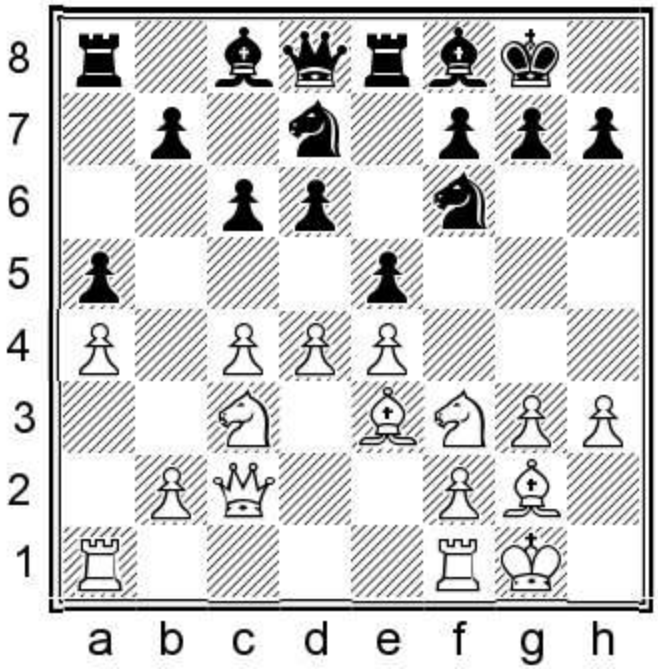
11...♕c7 transposes to the aforementioned note on 8...♕c7 on page 430-431.

B2321) 11...♗f8 12.♕c2

White continues with normal development.

There is no point in changing the character of the position with 12.d5, as 12...♕c7 offers Black a reasonable game.

chesstouring.com



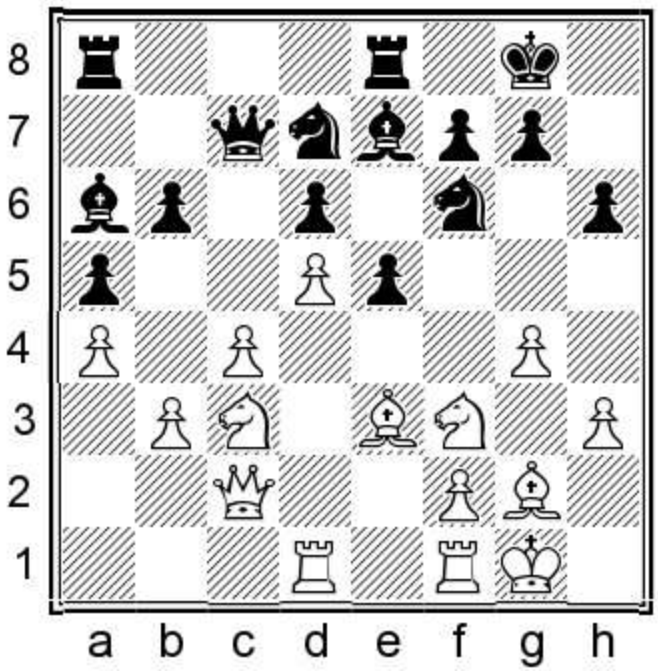
12...♕c7

12...exd4 13.♘xd4 ♘c5 transposes to variation B2322 below.

13.♖ad1 g6

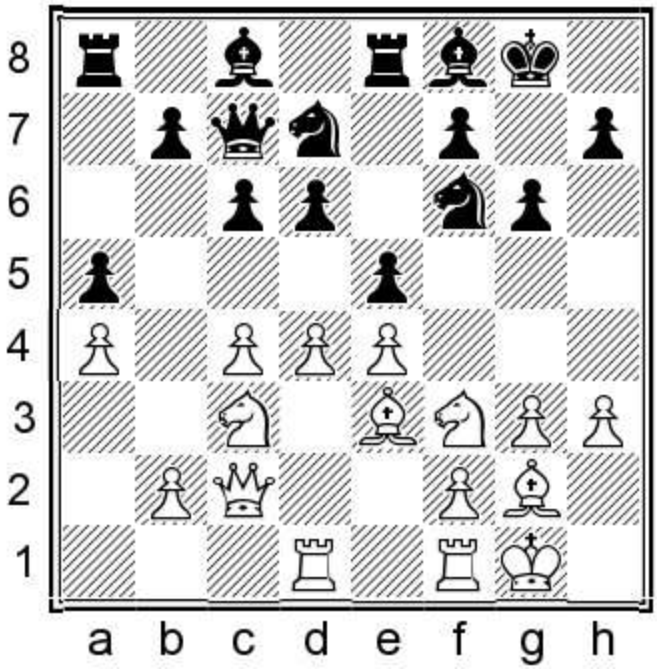
Once again 13...exd4 14.♘xd4 ♘c5 converts to a later line, this time variation B23222 on page 437.

13...b6 is a rather passive set-up, which offers White an easy life. A good example continued 14.b3 ♗a6 15.g4!? h6 16.d5 cxd5 17.exd5 ♗e7 and now in Ardiansyah – Zapata, Thessaloniki (ol) 1988, White should have developed his play on the kingside with:



18.g5!N 18...hxg5 19.♘xg5 ♘f8 20.f4 ♘h5 21.f5 ♗xg5 22.♗xg5 ♘h7 23.♗e3± White is much better.

chesstouring.com



14.♖fe1

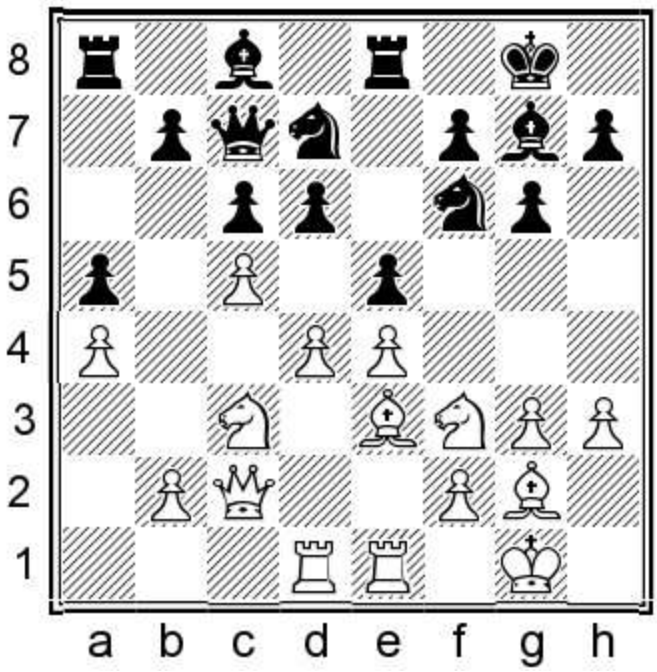
14.c5 is not yet dangerous in view of 14...dxc5 15.dxe5 ♘xe5 16.♘xe5 ♕xe5 and the problem is that White cannot play 17.f4? in view of 17...♕h5!.

14...exd4

I think Black should make this exchange now, as there are some specific problems with his other options which maintain the tension. This is well illustrated in the following lines:

14...♗g7 15.c5!

White's pieces are ideally placed to support this strike.



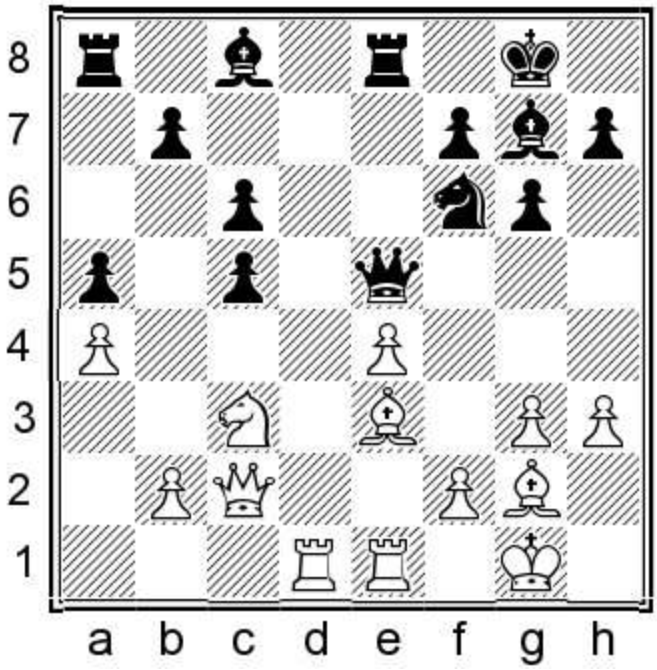
15...dxc5

chesstouring.com

15...exd4 16.cxd6 ♕xd6 17.♗xd4± followed by e4-e5 is unpleasant for Black.

15...d5 enabled Black to escape with an eventual draw in Jirka – Longson, Bruges 1999, but White has several strong options here, with 16.exd5N 16...♘xd5 17.♘xd5 cxd5 18.♗f4!± being one good example.

16.dxe5 ♘xe5 17.♘xe5 ♕xe5



18.f4 ♕e7

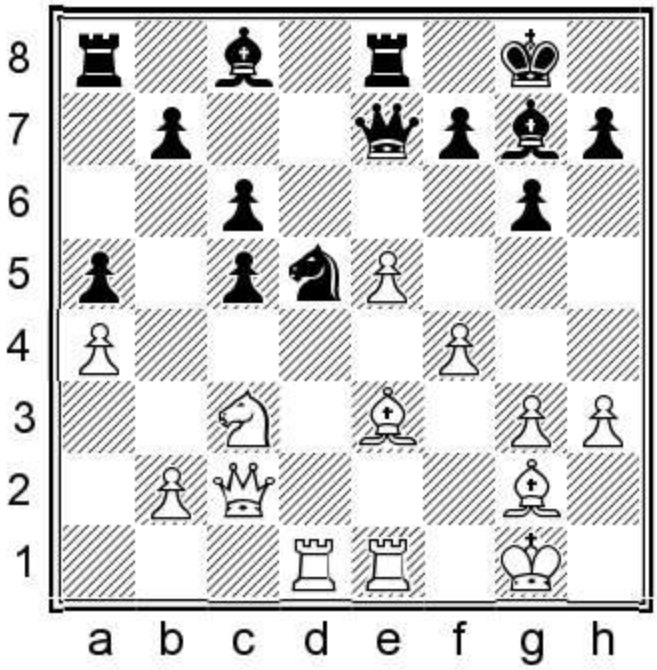
18...♕h5 is strongly met by 19.e5 ♘d7 20.g4 ♕h4 21.♘e4 with an obvious advantage for White.

18...♕c7 allows White to regain the pawn with 19.♗xc5, and after 19...♗e6 20.e5 ♘d5 21.♘e4 ♖ed8 22.♕f2± he was dominating in Leontiev – Aleksikov, Moscow 1996.

19.e5 ♘d5

This position was reached in Grachev – Pasiev, Khanty-Mansiysk 2013. White has more than one way to keep a big advantage but the most convincing is:

chesstouring.com



20.♗xd5!N 20...cxd5 21.♘xd5 ♕e6 22.g4!+–

Leading to a decisive gain of material.

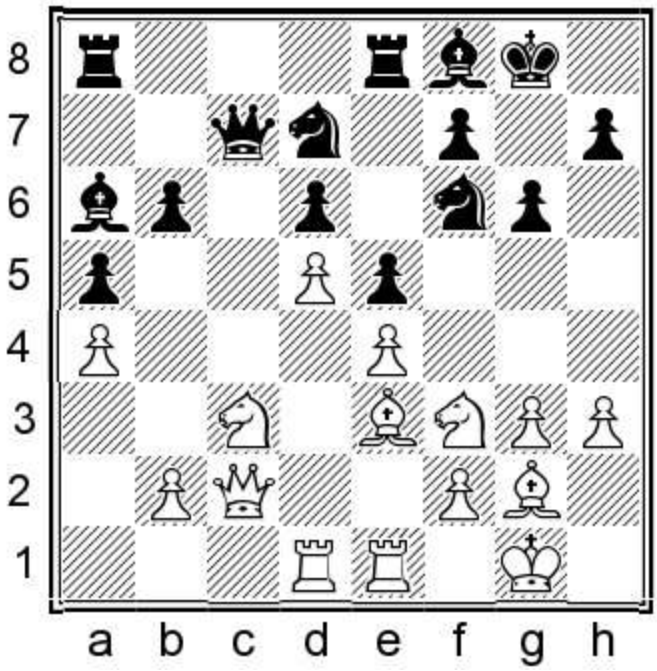
14...b6 15.d5!

This advance becomes much stronger after Black has moved his b-pawn, due to the weakening of his light squares.

15...cxd5

I also examined 15...♗b7N 16.dxc6 ♗xc6 17.♘d2 ♘c5 18.♘db1! when White's knight is heading for b5 via a3, and his positional advantage is beyond any doubts.

16.cxd5 ♗a6



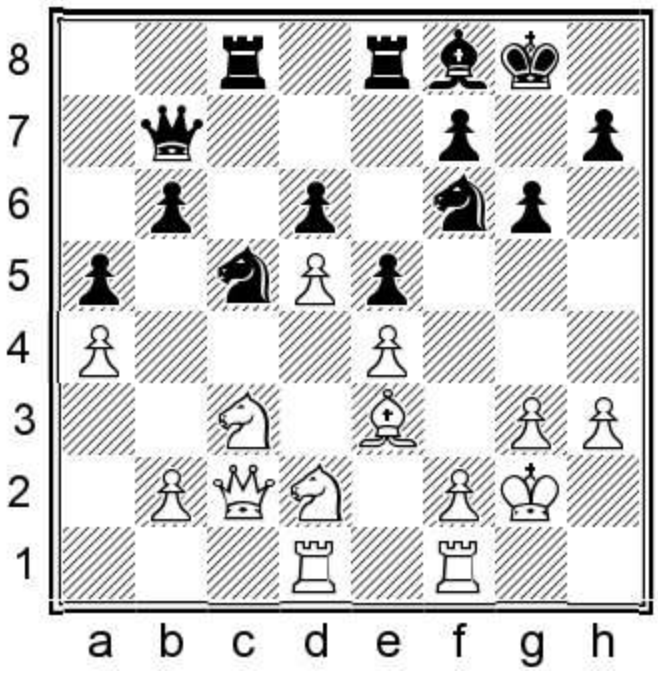
17.♗f1!

chesstouring.com

Trading the light-squared bishops will help White to exploit the weak light squares in Black's position.

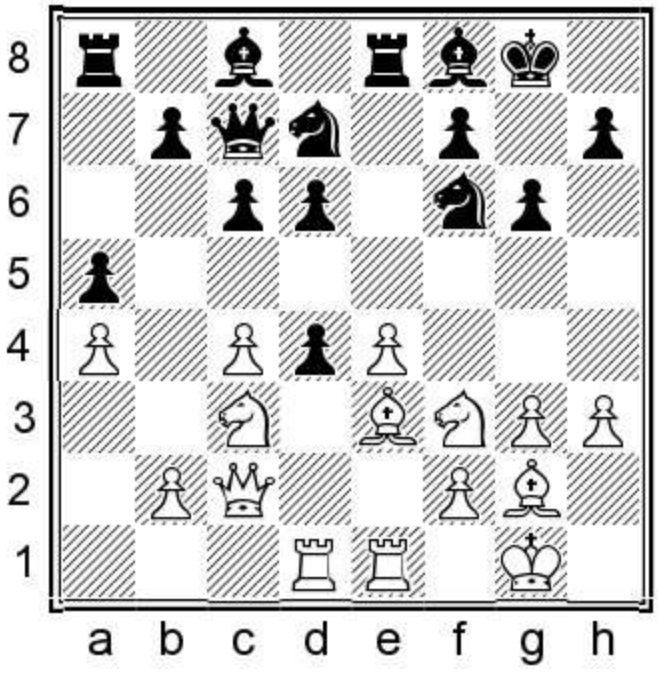
17...♗xf1 18.♖xf1 ♖ac8 19.♘d2 ♘c5 20.♔g2 ♕b7

In Iagar – Thakur, Barbera del Valles 2012, White should have continued:



21.♘c4!N 21...♕a6 22.♘a3±

With a clear positional advantage, since 22...♘cxe4? 23.♘xe4 ♖xc2 24.♘xf6†+− gives White too much material for the queen.



15.♗xd4!?

I find this somewhat unconventional recapture to be the most promising option here.

Obviously 15.♘xd4 is playable, but 15...♘c5 gives Black a slightly improved version of variation

chesstouring.com

B23222 below.

15...♗g7

Black has also tried 15...b6 when I like the idea of 16.♘h2!?N to prepare the f2-f4 advance. (After 16.♗e3 ♗a6 17.b3 b5 18.axb5 cxb5 19.cxb5 ♗xb5 20.♘d4 ♗a6 21.♕d2 White gained the upper hand in Matamoros Franco – Hickl, Sevilla 2006. However, Black's play can be improved, especially on move 16.) Play might continue: 16...♗b7 17.f4 ♗g7 18.g4! White's kingside initiative practically plays itself.

After the text move I would like to suggest a solid prophylactic move to improve over the three existing games.

16.b3N

Safeguarding the c4-pawn. A logical continuation is:

16...b6 17.♗e3!

We should not forget about the weakness of the d6-pawn.

17...♗b7 18.♕d2 ♗f8

This is never a nice move to make, but 18...♘c5?! invites 19.♗xc5! dxc5 20.e5± when the transformation clearly favours White.

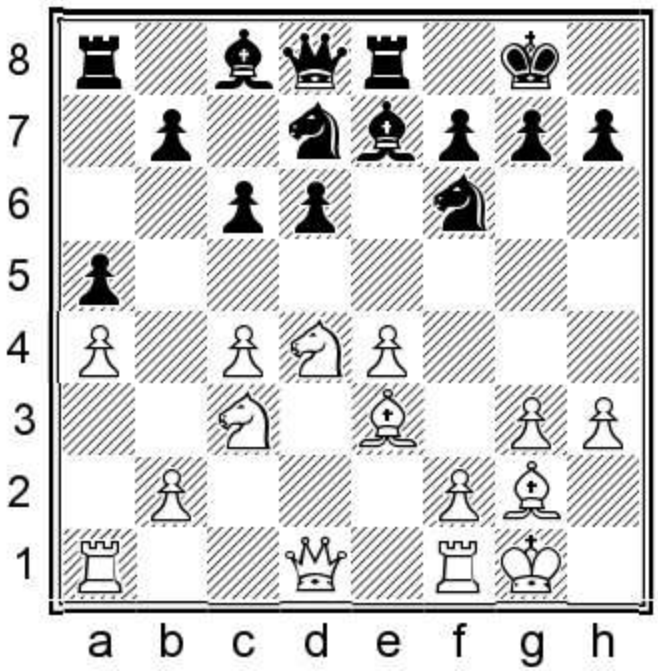
19.♗g5±

Black is under serious pressure, while lacking counterplay.

B2322) 11...exd4 12.♘xd4

In this particular situation I prefer to take back with knight, although 12.♗xd4!? is a serious alternative.

chesstouring.com



12...♘c5

12...♗f8 13.♕c2 ♘c5 is just another move order.

13.♕c2 ♗f8

13...♕b6 and 13...♕c7 should both be met by 14.♖ad1, when Black has nothing better than 14...♗f8, transposing to one of the two main lines below.

14.♖ad1

The threat of ♘xc6 means that Black almost always continues with either **B23221)** 14...♕b6 or **B23222)** 14...♕c7.

B23221) 14...♕b6

This move is natural enough, but it is hard for Black to achieve anything special on the queenside.

15.f4 ♕b4

The alternatives are even less appealing.

15...♗d7 16.g4! leaves the f6-knight short of squares. Therefore Black opted for the miserable-looking 16...♔h8 17.g5 ♘g8, and after 18.♗f2 White's advantage was obvious in Harika – Bezgodova, Batumi 2012.

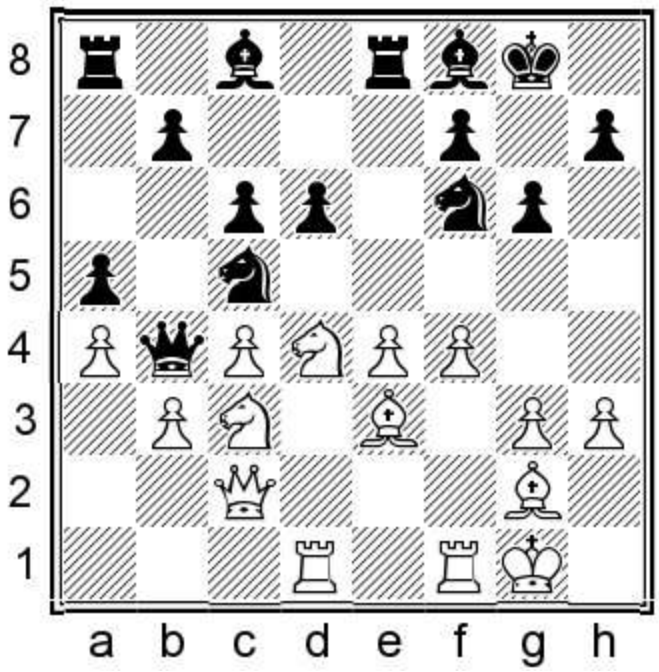
In their book *Play 1...d6 Against Everything*, Zude and Hickl reach this position (via a slightly different move order) and offer 15...♘fd7N followed by some speculative variations, but it seems to me that 16.g4± leads to the same kind of play as the other variations mentioned below.

chesstouring.com

15...h5!? is not as bad a move as it may first appear. The point is to stop White's offensive on the kingside with g3-g4, but there are clear consequences of Black's last move, namely the weakening of the kingside and especially the g5-square. After 16.♖fe1 ♗d7 17.♗f2 White enjoyed a pleasant advantage in Chatterjee – Hossain, Dhaka 2013, and subsequently broke through with g3-g4 followed by an attack along the h-file.

16.b3 g6

We have been following Grachev – Kurochkin, Moscow 2005. There is no reason to delay:



17.g4!N

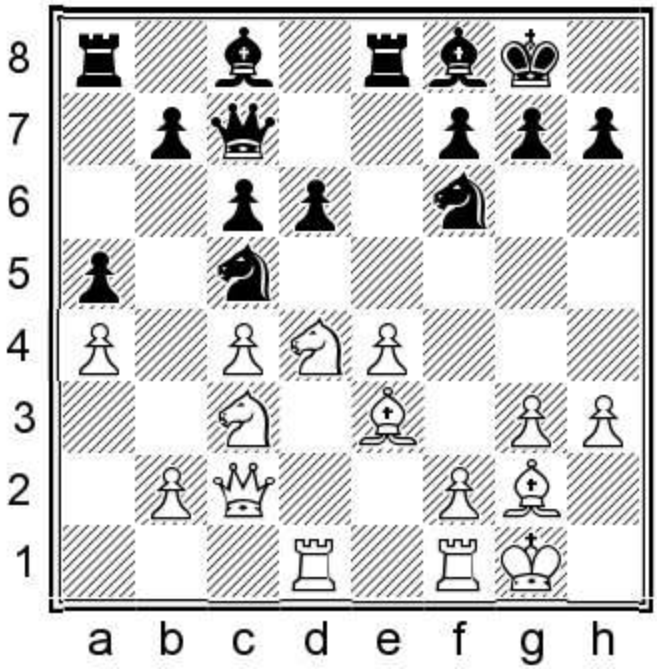
White's position is extremely promising, for example:

17...♗g7 18.f5!? ♘fd7 19.♘ce2 ♘e5 20.♘f4

With a dangerous kingside initiative.

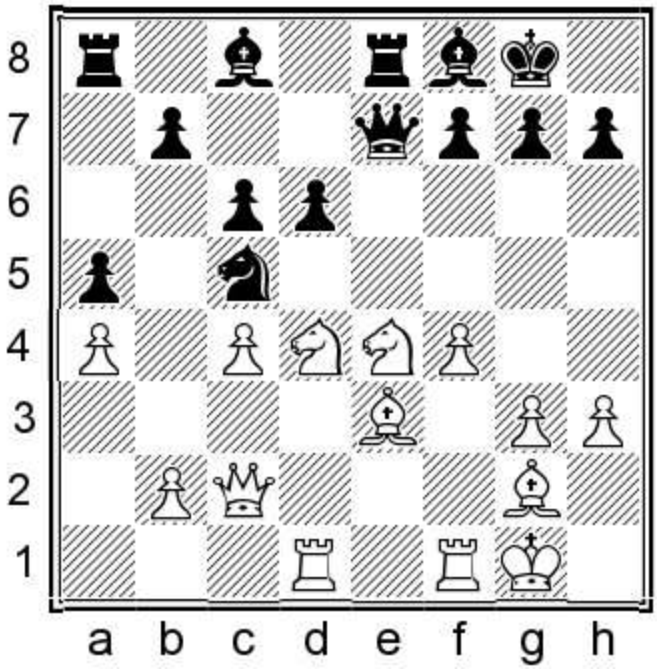
B23222) 14...♕c7

chesstouring.com



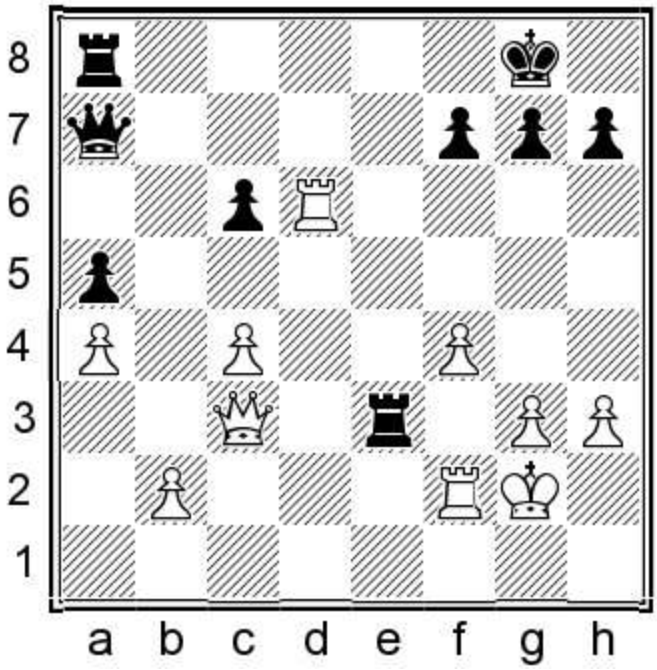
15.g4!?

This is a significant change from *GM 2*, when 15.f4 was my suggested novelty. To my great surprise, I discovered a remarkable idea for Black: 15...♘fxe4!N (At least in one game White benefited from my idea: 15...♘fd7 16.g4 ♘a6 17.♕f2!? ♘dc5 18.g5 ♘b4 19.♕g3 ♗d7 20.f5± and White went on to win convincingly in Sethuraman – Abhilash, Kolkata 2012) 16.♘xe4 ♕e7 The pin along the e-file is obviously Black's point. Best play continues:



17.♘xc6! bxc6 18.♗xc5 ♗f5! 19.♗xd6 ♗xe4 20.♕c3 ♕a7† 21.♖f2 ♗xd6 22.♖xd6 ♗xg2 23.♔xg2 ♖e3

chesstouring.com

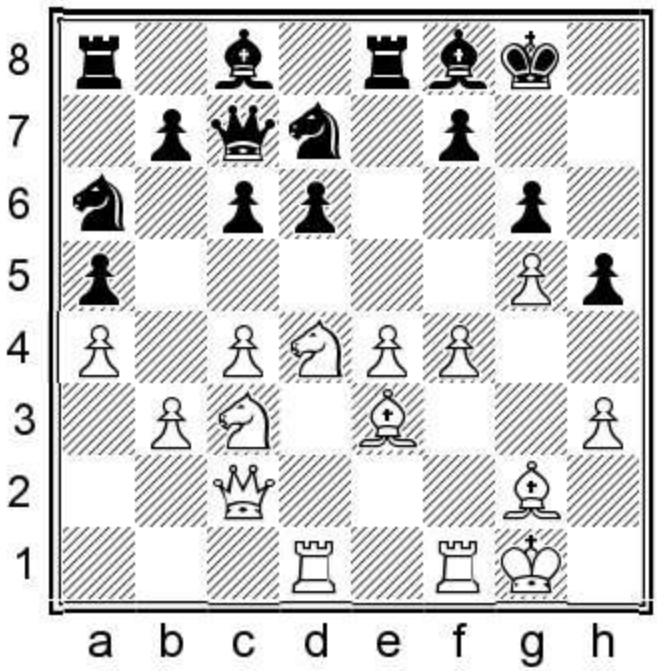


Despite being a pawn down, Black has reasonable chances to hold the position. White is still playing for two results so it's hardly a disastrous outcome from the opening, but I believe we can strive for a larger advantage than this.

15...g6N

This seems like Black's best bet.

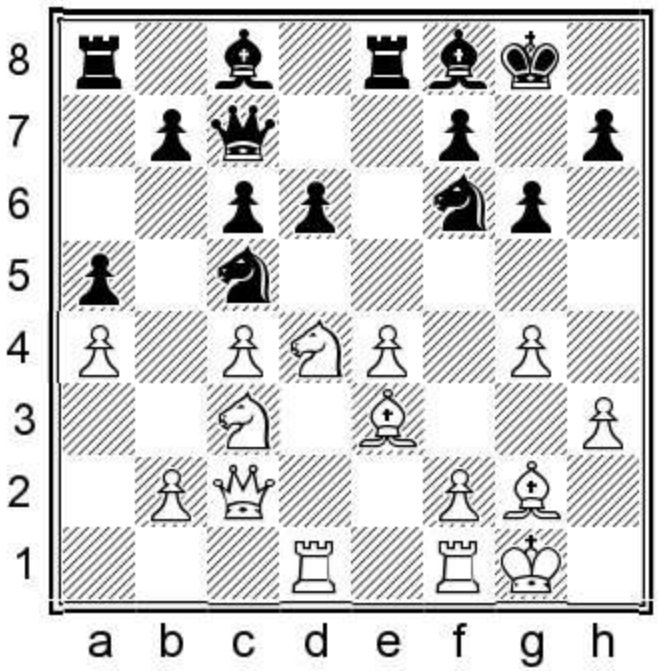
He certainly needs to improve upon 15...h5?! 16.g5 ♘fd7 17.b3 g6 18.f4 ♘a6 as played in Cernousek – Sergeev, Olomouc 2015, when White should have continued:



19.♕f2!N Followed by f4-f5, when White's initiative looks super-powerful.

I also considered 15...♘fd7 16.f4 ♘a6 17.g5 ♘dc5 18.♕f2 ♘b4 19.♕g3± when White is clearly doing

well.



16.♘de2!

A good consolidating move, avoiding f2-f4 while the ...♘xe4 trick is still ‘on’.

16...♗g7

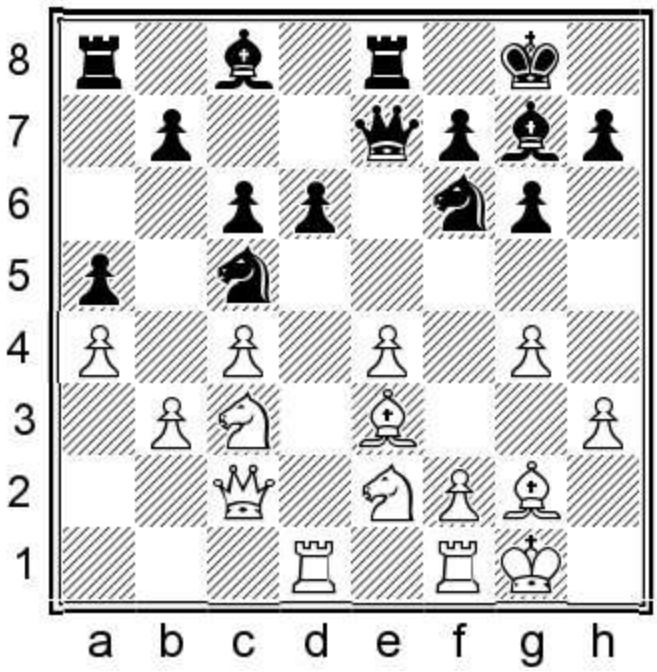
In the event o16...♕b6 17.♘c1! ♗e6 18.b3 ♖ad8 19.♘3e2 ♘fd7 20.♘d4 White keeps the more pleasant game.

17.b3 ♕e7

17...♘fd7 18.f4± is excellent for White.

The text move seems a better try but it enables White to carry out a favourable transformation.

chesstouring.com



18.♗xc5! dxc5 19.f4

White keeps the better game.

Conclusion

After 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 d6, I have modified my approach and offered a new recommendation of 3.♘c3, leaving the other knight on g1 for the moment. Early in the chapter we saw one of the benefits of this scheme, as 3...♗f5 was met by 4.f3! followed by e2-e4, with a pleasant game for White.

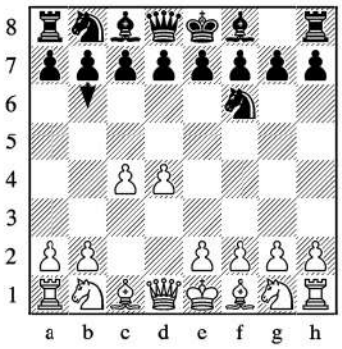
3...e5 is the traditional Old Indian approach, when 4.♘f3 leads to a further split. 4...e4 is an active move which has plenty of supporters, but 5.♘d2! is a strong reply, when 5...♕e7 6.♕c2! and 5...♗f5 6.♕b3! both make it hard for Black to keep his pawn centre intact, which means he usually has to resort to a pawn sacrifice for insufficient compensation.

In view of the problems with the above approach, the more cautious 4...♘bd7 can still be considered the main line. Then 5.g3 ♗e7 6.♗g2 0-0 7.0-0 resembles the main lines of our repertoire against the King's Indian, but the position of Black's bishop on e7 instead of g7 offers him far less potential for active counterplay. The main positional concept to keep in mind is that after 7...c6 8.e4 a6 (or some similar sequence involving these pawn moves), White should react with a2-a4, not fearing the weakening of his queenside dark squares after ...a5. Black gets a nice outpost for his knight on c5 but there is not much he can do with it, whereas White has a straightforward plan of mobilizing his pieces and advancing his kingside pawns, with excellent attacking chances.

chesstouring.com



1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4



Pseudo Queen's Indians

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6

2.c4

A) 2...b6 3.f3! 441

A1) 3...e6 441

A2) 3...♘c6 443

B) 2...e6 3.g3 b6 4.♗g2 444

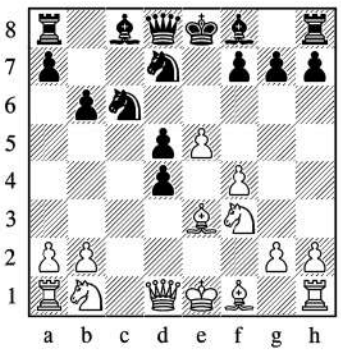
B1) 4...c6 444

B2) 4...d5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♘c3 ♗b7 7.♘f3 ♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♗f4 445

B21) 9...♘bd7 447

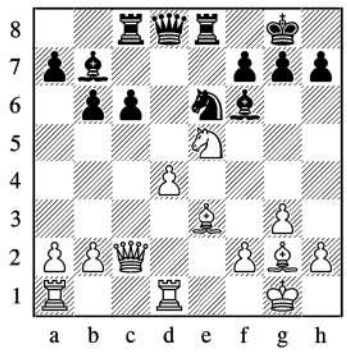
B22) 9...♘a6 449

A1) after 9...cxd4



10.♗b5!N

B21) after 16...♗xf6



17.♕a4!N

B22) note to 10...c5



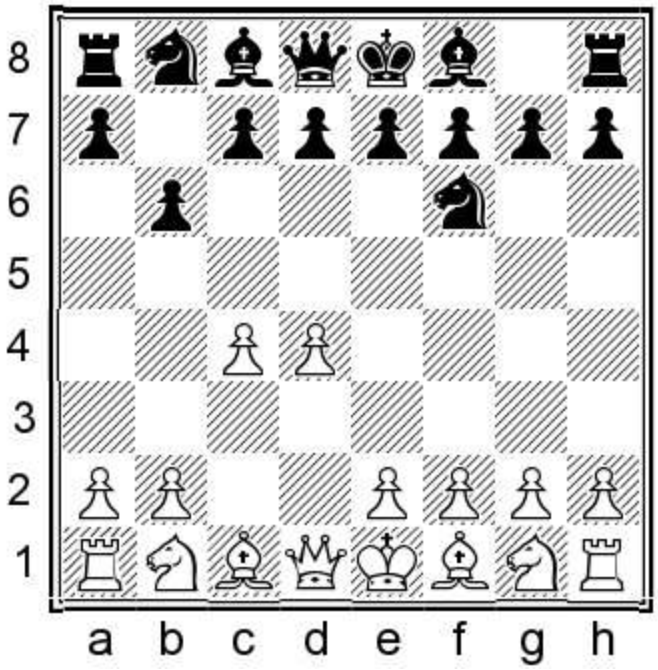
17.♕d1!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4

chesstouring.com

In this chapter we will consider two queenside fianchetto ideas: **A)** 2...b6 and **B)** 2...e6 3.g3 b6. In both cases, Black's set-up resembles a Queen's Indian but the fact that White has not yet developed his knight to f3 improves White's chances.

A) 2...b6



I have never really thought of this as a serious opening, but one cannot ignore the fact that it has been played by many strong Grandmasters, albeit mostly at faster time controls.

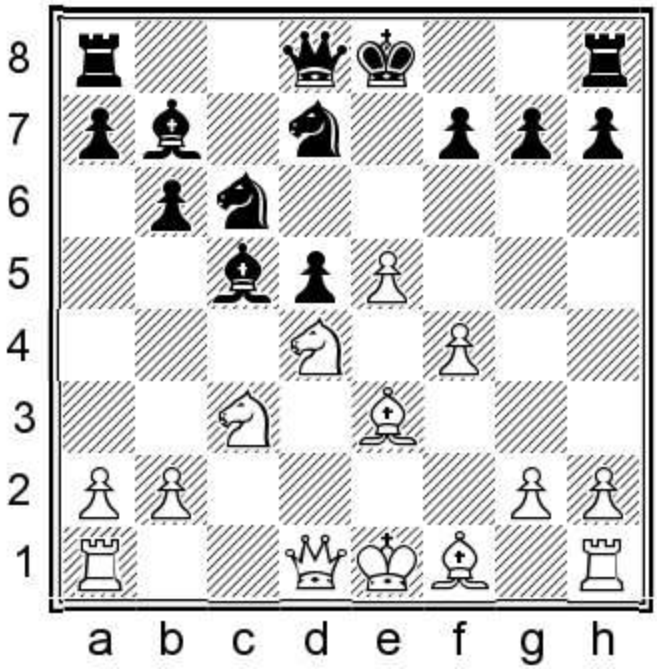
3.f3!

I believe this is the most challenging response. We will examine **A1)** 3...e6 and **A2)** 3...♘c6.

3...d6 4.e4 e5 5.d5 a5 is too passive. 6.♘c3 ♘a6 7.♗e3 ♗e7 8.♘ge2 0-0 occurred in Nakamura – Vachier-Lagrave, Internet (blitz) 2018, and now the natural 9.♕d2N 9...♘c5 10.0-0-0 looks like an excellent version of a Sämisch set-up for White, as it is hard to see Black obtaining much counterplay on the queenside after committing to the ...b6 move.

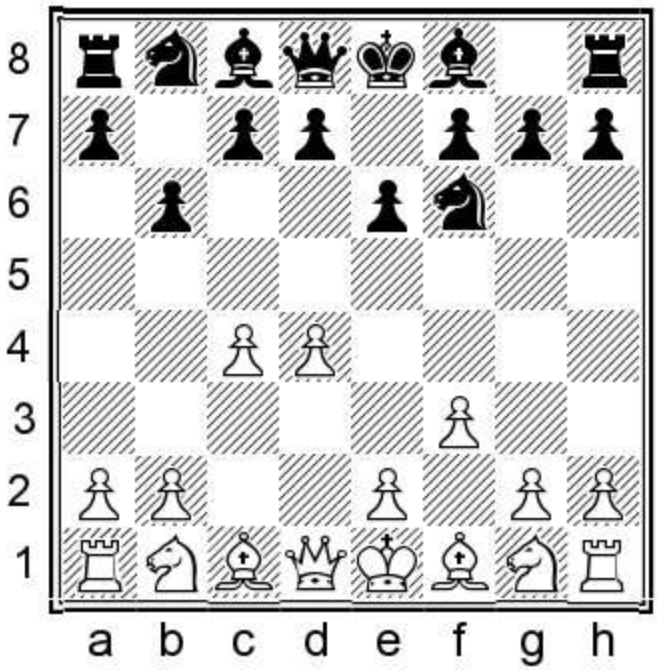
After 3...♗b7 4.e4 e6 I like the following example: 5.♘c3 d5 6.cxd5 exd5 7.e5 ♘fd7 8.f4 c5 9.♘f3 ♘c6 10.♗e3 cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♗c5

chesstouring.com



12.♗b5 ♘xd4 13.♗xd4 0-0 14.0-0 ♖c8 15.♕d2 a6 16.♗e2± White's logical play yielded a solid positional advantage in Matlakov – Mamedyarov, St Petersburg 2018.

A1) 3...e6



4.e4 d5

4...♗b7 has been covered above under the 3...♗b7 move order.

The main alternative is:

4...♗b4† 5.♗d2

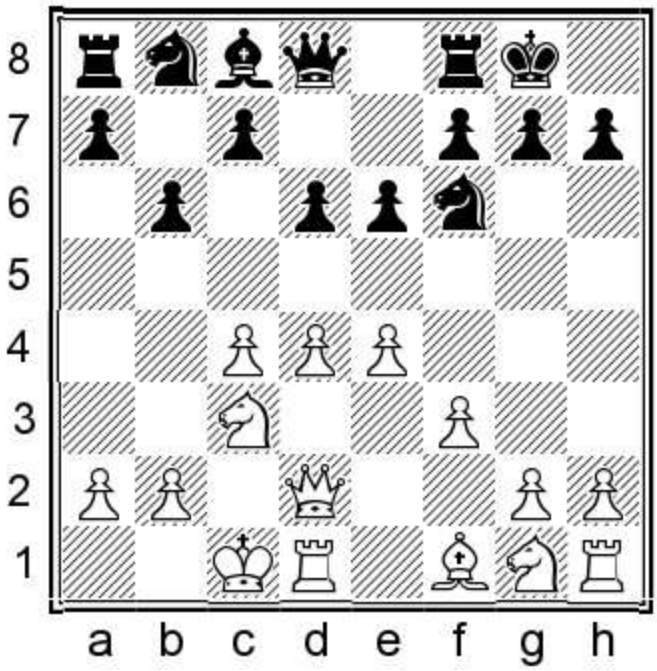
5.♘c3!? is a good alternative, transposing to a favourable version of the 4.f3 Nimzo-Indian, where

chesstouring.com

the early ...b6 is not one of Black's better options.

5...♗xd2† 6.♕xd2 0-0 7.♘c3 d6 8.0-0-0

White space advantage should ensure a nice edge, for instance:



8...♕e7

Another game continued 8...♗b7 9.g4! a6 10.g5 ♘fd7 11.h4, with excellent chances on the kingside, Alber – Gazic, Moerlenbach 2004.

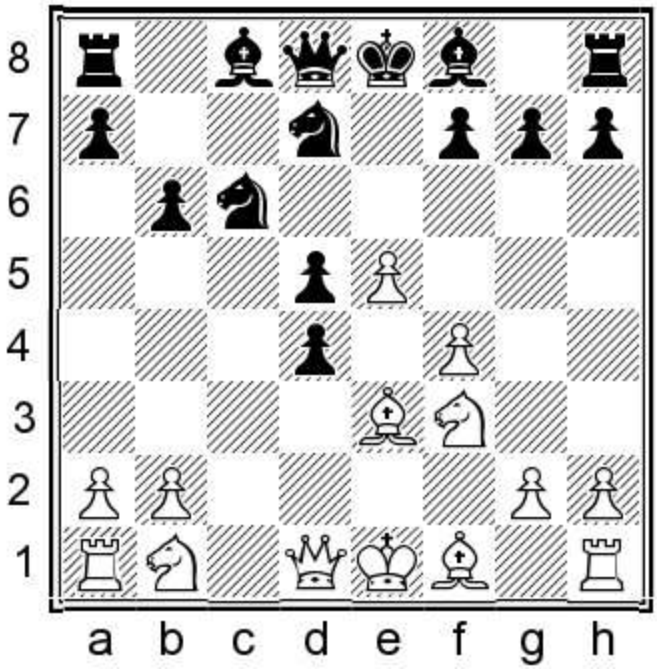
9.g4 c5 10.d5 e5 11.♘ge2 ♘e8 12.h4±

White was much better in Kruppa – Simonian, Kiev 2008.

5.cxd5 exd5 6.e5 ♘fd7 7.f4 c5 8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.♗e3 cxd4

We have been following Rambaldi – Hamitevici, Chartres 2017. Here I discovered a surprising new idea:

chesstouring.com

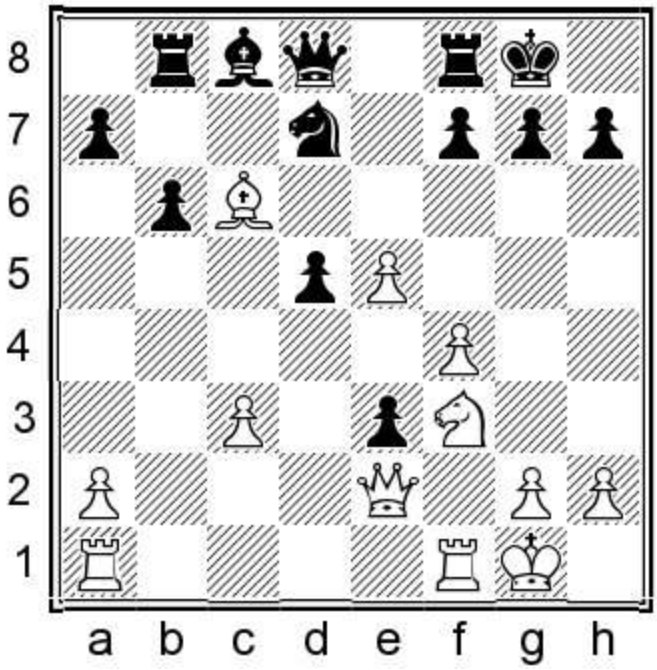


10.♗b5!N 10...dxe3

10...♗b7 11.♗xc6! ♗xc6 12.♘xd4 ♗b7 13.0-0 is clearly better for White.

11.♗xc6 ♗b4† 12.♘c3 ♖b8 13.0-0 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 0-0 15.♕e2

After a virtually forced sequence of moves, White has achieved a comfortable edge and Black must make a difficult choice.

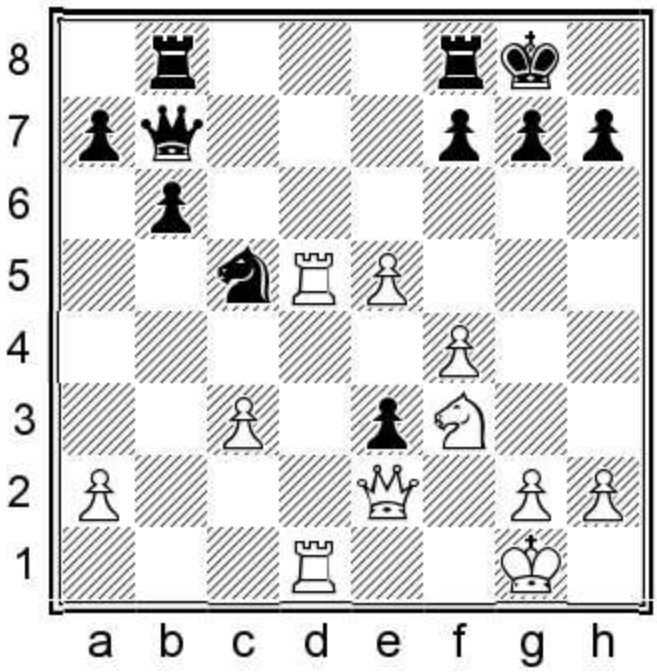


15...♘c5

15...♗b7 16.♗xd7 ♕xd7 17.♘d4± is strategically unpleasant for Black.

16.♖fd1 ♗b7 17.♖xd5 ♕c7 18.♗xb7 ♕xb7 19.♖ad1

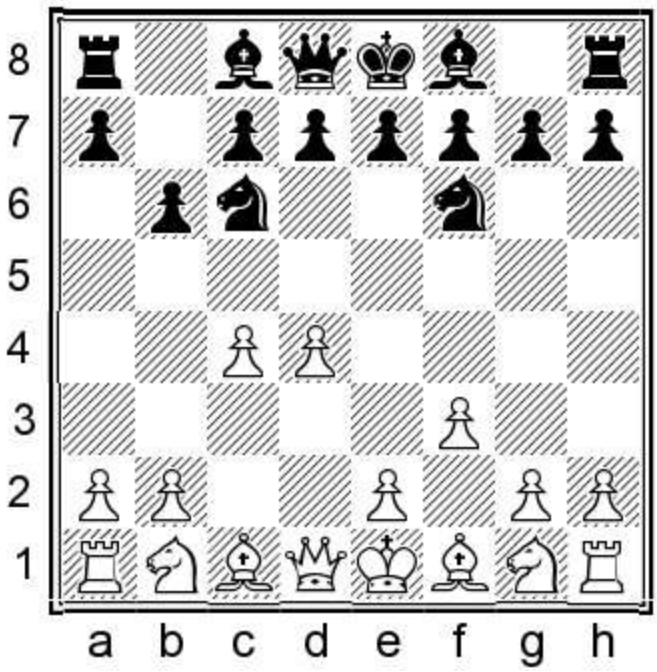
chesstouring.com



19...♕a6 20.♕xe3 ♕xa2 21.f5,

White controls the open file and has excellent attacking prospects.

A2) 3...♘c6

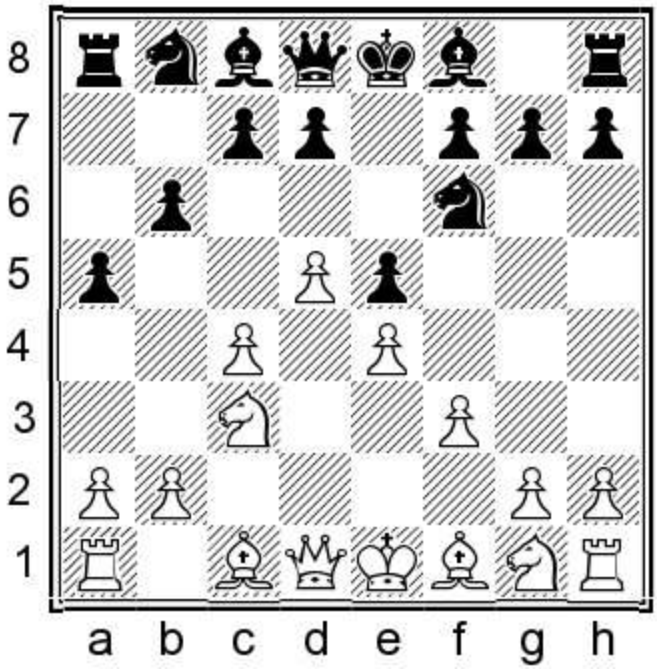


This move has achieved excellent results for Black, but with accurate play White should be doing well.

4.♘c3 e5 5.d5 ♘e7

It's hard to see the point behind 5...♘b8 6.e4 a5, as occurred in Khokhlova – Diakonova, Loo 2018. My suggestion would be:

chesstouring.com

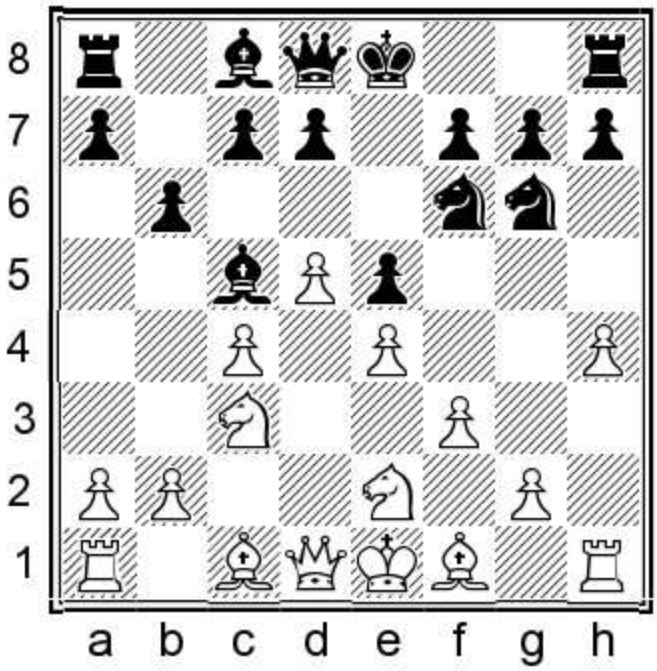


7.♗d3N 7...♘a6 8.♘ge2 ♗c5 9.a3 0-0 10.g4!? White has a highly promising game.

6.e4 ♘g6 7.♘ge2 ♗c5

7...♘h5 8.g3 ♗c5 achieved nothing for Black after 9.a3 a5 10.♘a4! ♗e7 11.♗e3 0-0 12.♕d2 ♗a6 13.♘ec3± and White was dominating the board in Oliva Castaneda – Dragicevic, Havana 2018. After the text move, I really like the following aggressive approach:

8.h4!?



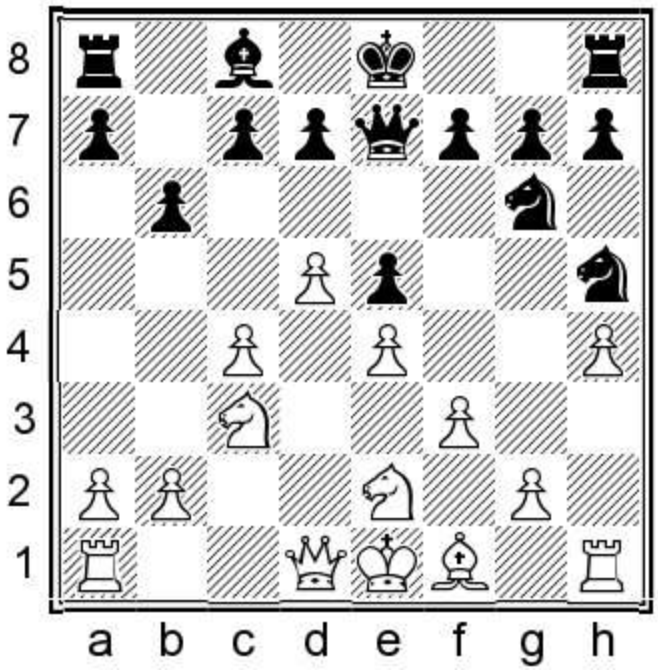
8...♘h5N

This seems like the critical reply.

chesstouring.com

The less challenging 8...h6 9.h5 ♘f8 was seen in Druska – Jurcik, Slovakia 2014, at which point 10.♘g3N 10...d6 11.♖b1± would have given White a substantial advantage.

9.♗g5 ♗e7 10.♗xe7 ♕xe7



11.d6!

This remarkable idea causes trouble for Black no matter which way he captures the pawn.

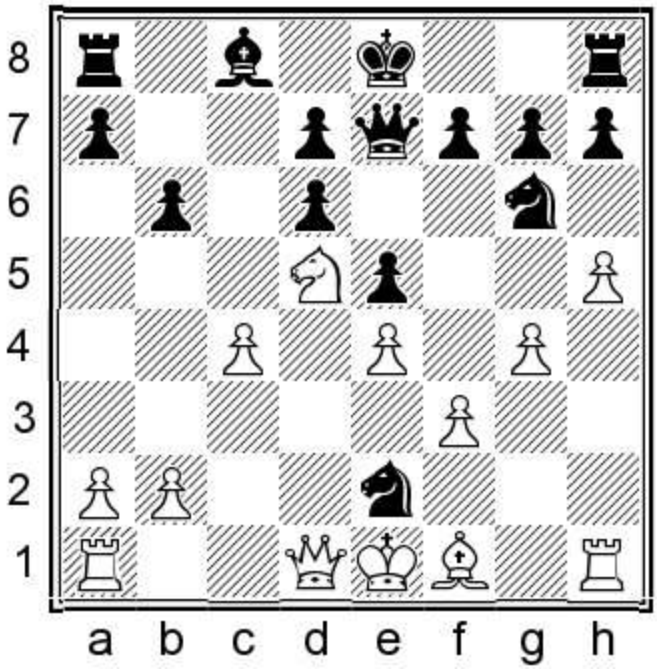
11...cxd6

After 11...♕xd6 12.♕xd6 cxd6 13.♘b5 ♔e7 14.♖d1 ♘gf4 15.♘xd6 g6 16.♔f2± White's positional advantage is beyond any doubts.

12.g4 ♘hf4 13.h5 ♘xe2 14.♘d5!

This zwischenzug is obvious, but still a nice move to play.

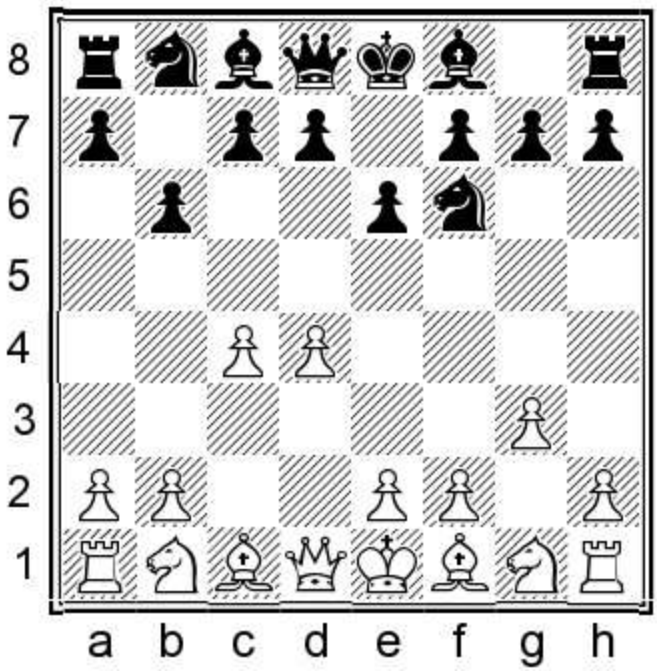
chesstouring.com



14...♕d8 15.♗xe2 ♘f8 16.♘e3 ♘e6 17.♘f5

White regains the pawn while keeping a clear positional advantage.

B) 2...e6 3.g3 b6



The attempt to play a Queen's Indian does not really work for Black.

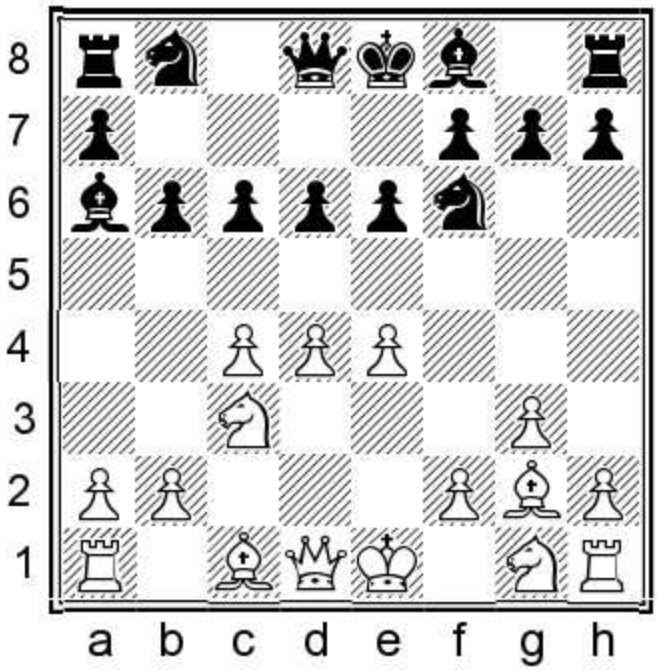
4.♗g2

We will consider **B1)** 4...c6 and **B2)** 4...d5.

B1) 4...c6 5.e4 d5

chesstouring.com

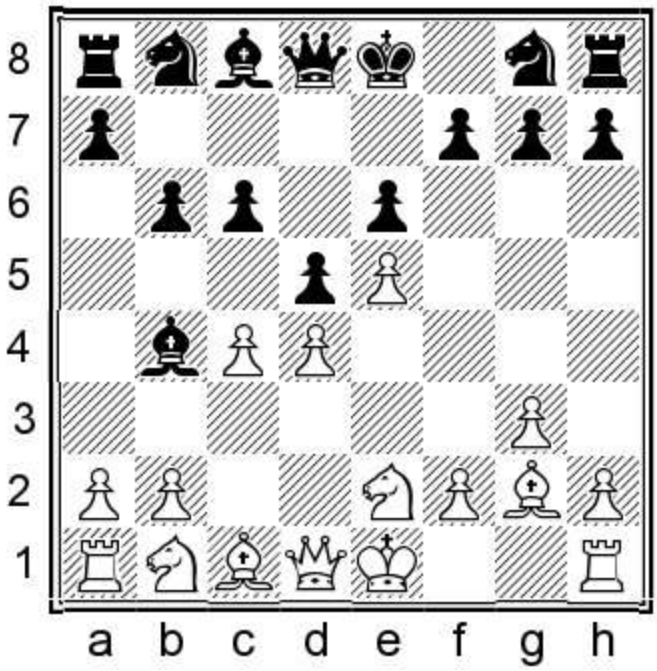
5...d6 looks too passive. 6.♘c3 ♗a6 was seen in Aronov – Lapeginas, corr. 2008, and here I found a nice idea for White:



7.b3N 7...d5 8.e5 ♘fd7 9.♘ge2! Offering a pawn. Play may continue 9...dxc4 10.0-0 ♗e7 11.♖e1 0-0 12.♘f4 cxb3 13.axb3 when White has attacking chances and generally amazing compensation.

6.e5 ♘fd7

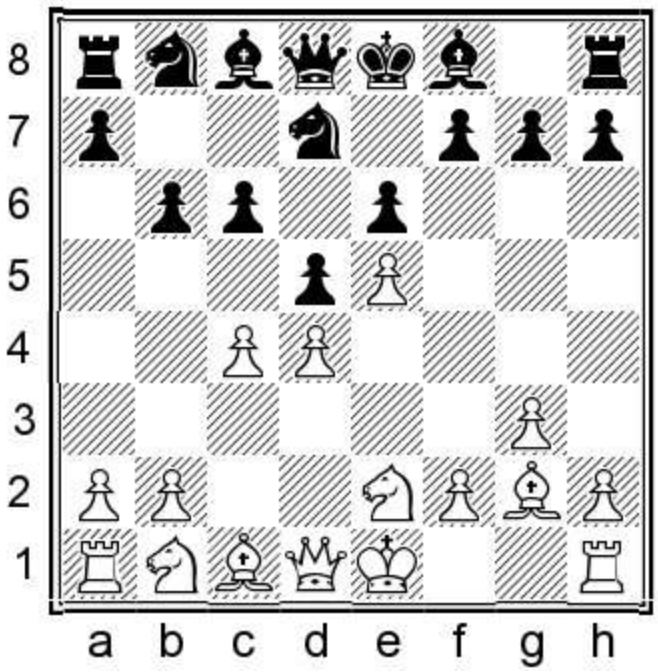
6...♘g8 7.♘e2 ♗b4† occurred in T.B.T. Nguyen – Ton, Ho Chi Minh City 2015. I suggest the following improvement:



8.♗d2N 8...♗xd2† 9.♘xd2 ♘e7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♖c1 ♗b7 12.♘f4 ♘d7 13.♖e1 White is better, thanks to his significant space advantage.

chesstouring.com

7.♘e2!



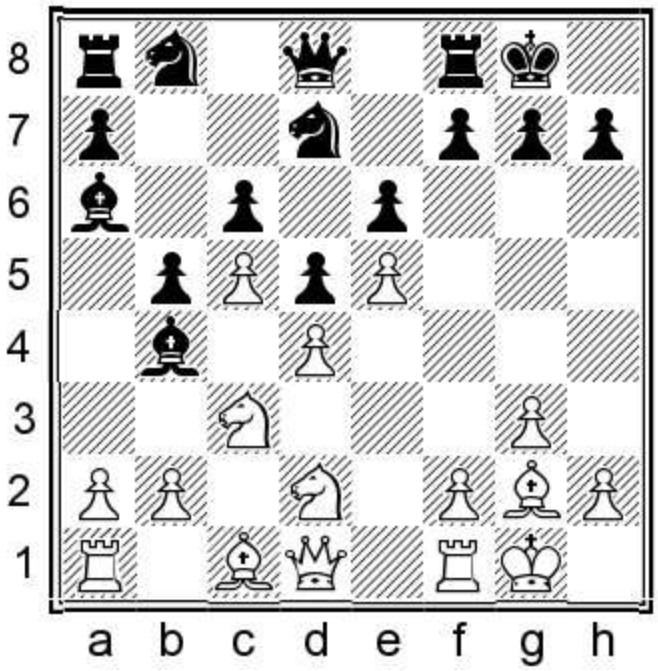
7...♗a6

7...dxc4 can be met by either 8.0-0, with great compensation, or 8.♘d2, when 8...♗b4 is similar to the note below and may transpose.

8.♘d2 ♗b4 9.♘c3 0-0

I also examined 9...dxc4N 10.0-0 0-0 11.♖e1 ♗e7 12.a4 and White is much better.

10.0-0 b5 11.c5!



11...♗xc3

chesstouring.com

11...f6 12.f4 keeps control for White.

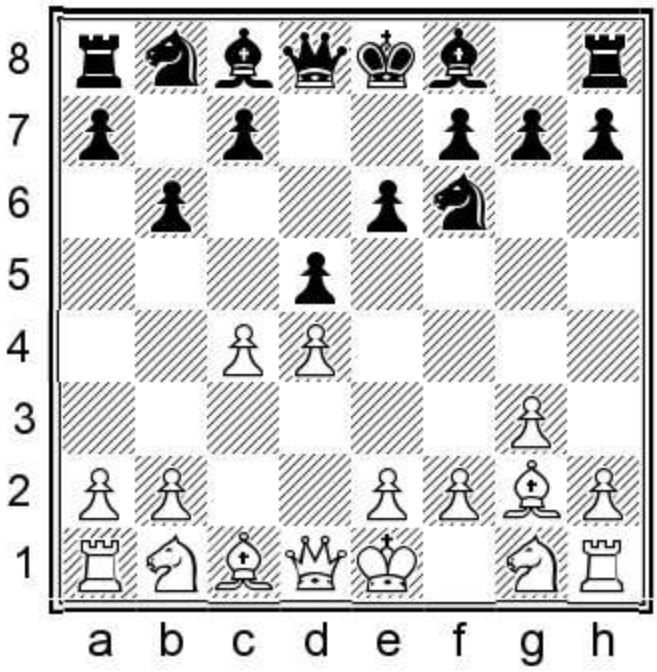
12.bxc3 b4 13.♖e1

13.cxb4!?N 13...♗xf1 14.♗xf1 is a tempting exchange sacrifice which is also better for White.

13...bxc3 14.♘b3 ♗c4 15.♕c2 ♘a6 16.♕xc3±

White was clearly better in Tran – Shoboev, St Petersburg 2018.

B2) 4...d5

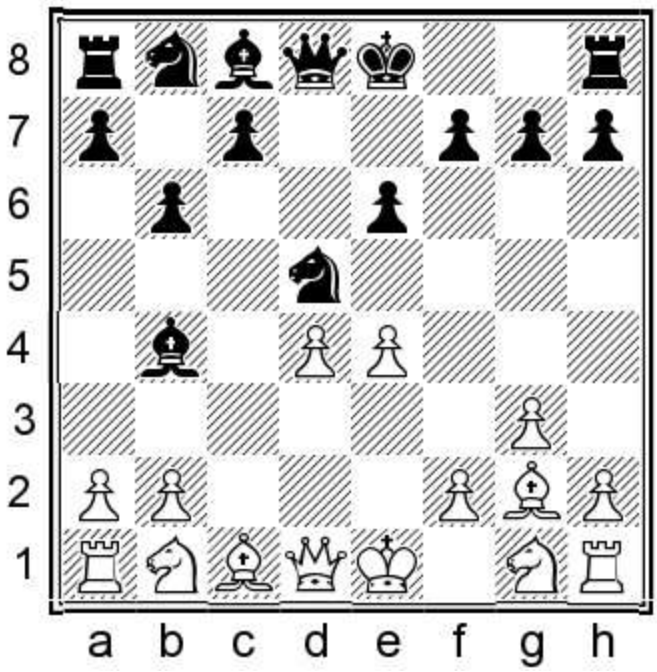


This is more solid than the previous line but it generally leads to positions which are well known to be somewhat better for White.

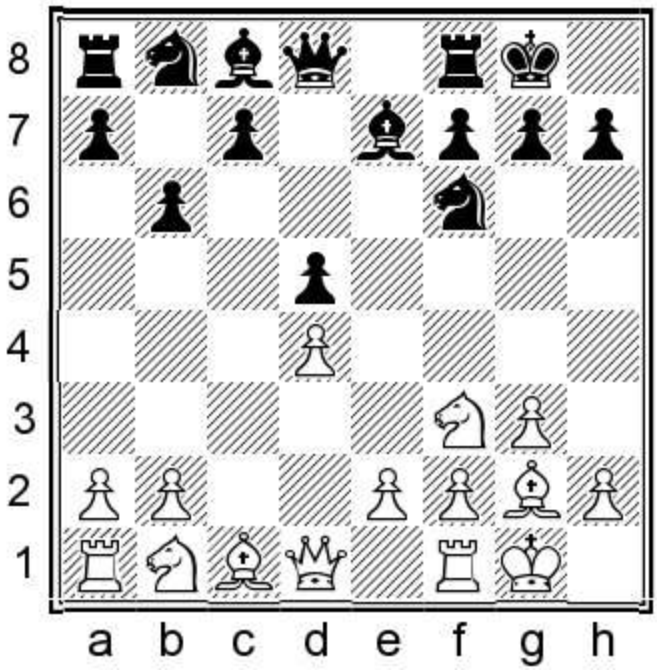
5.cxd5 exd5

I also checked 5...♘xd5 6.e4 ♗b4† (6...♘f6 7.♘c3 ♗b7 8.♘ge2 gives White an easy game) as played in Goltsov – Aleshin, Tula 2003, when my improvement from *GM 2* still looks valid:

chesstouring.com



7.♗d2N 7...♗xd2† 8.♕xd2 ♘e7 9.♘c3 ♗b7 10.♘f3 0-0 11.0-0 ♘d7 12.♖ac1 ♘f6 13.♕e3±

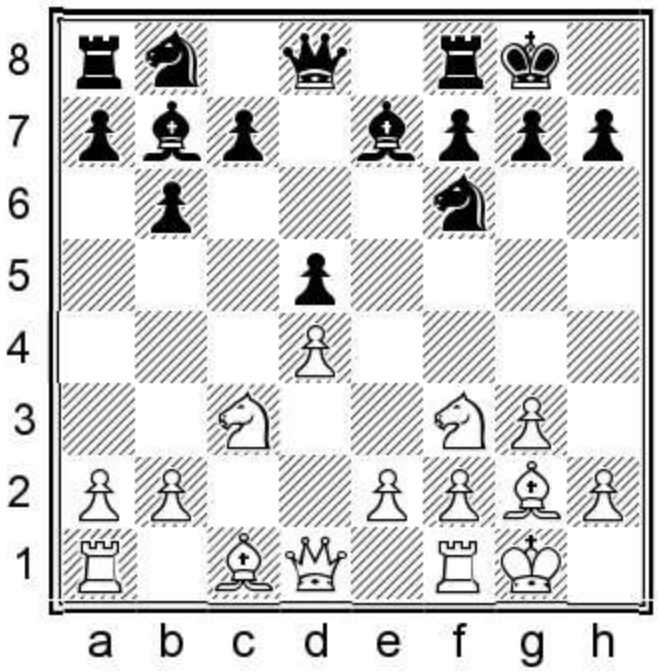


6.♘c3 ♗b7 7.♘f3 ♗e7 8.0-0

This time I decided to go for a conventional approach, rather than 8.♕a4†!? which I recommended in *GM 2*. As with many other lines in the book, the change was not due to any concrete problems but rather a desire to explore a different pathway.

8...0-0

chesstouring.com



This is a thematic, classical set-up which can be reached through different move orders. Crucially though, in both the Queen's Indian and 1.♘f3/2.c4 move orders through which Black's set-up usually arises, White usually has to spend a tempo on ♖e1 to threaten e2-e4, which Black then prevents with ...d5. In our version, White benefits from not having to waste time moving the rook to e1.

9.♗f4

The position after this bishop move might also be reached via a Catalan or Bogo-Indian move order where Black gives an early check on b4, then answers ♗d2 with ...♗e7 before heading for the same pawn structure.

Black's best and most popular tries are **B21)** 9...♘bd7 and B22 9...♘a6.

9...c6 10.♕c2 gives Black nothing better than 10...♘bd7, which transposes to variation B21 below.

9...c5?!

This premature advance only weakens Black's pawns.

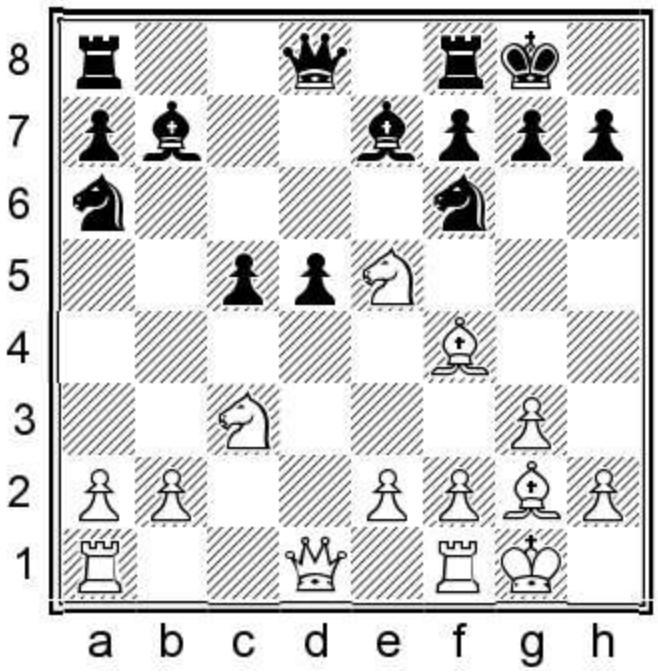
10.dxc5 bxc5

10...♗xc5 11.♘d4 gave White a favourable position playing against the IQP in Cvek – Vyskocil, Pardubice 2014.

11.♘e5 ♘a6

Black has no other decent way to develop the knight.

chesstouring.com



12.♘c4!

This is a thematic motif in the hanging-pawns structure when the b7-bishop is undefended.

12...♕d7

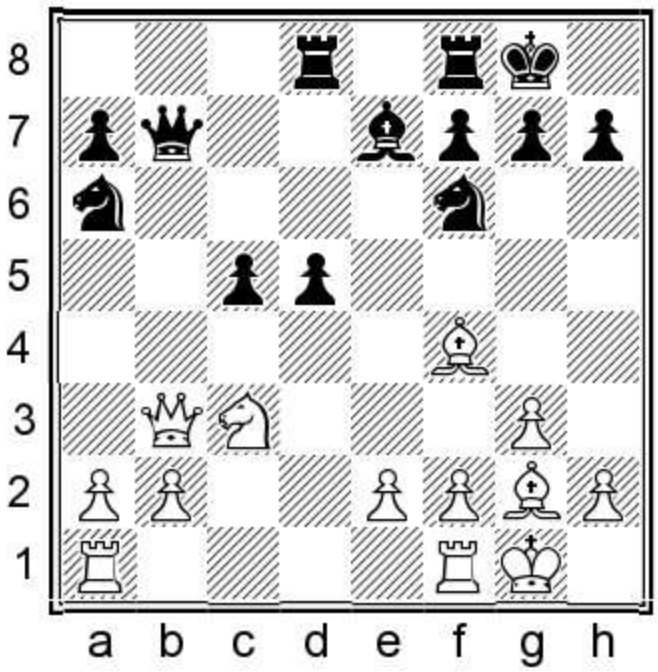
12...♗c6 runs into 13.♗g5! and Black will have a hard time defending the d5-pawn.

13.♘a5

This shows another of the ideas behind White's previous move.

13...♖ad8 14.♘xb7 ♕xb7 15.♕b3

White's superiority has been demonstrated in several games from this position.



15...♕c6 16.♖fd1 c4 17.♕b5

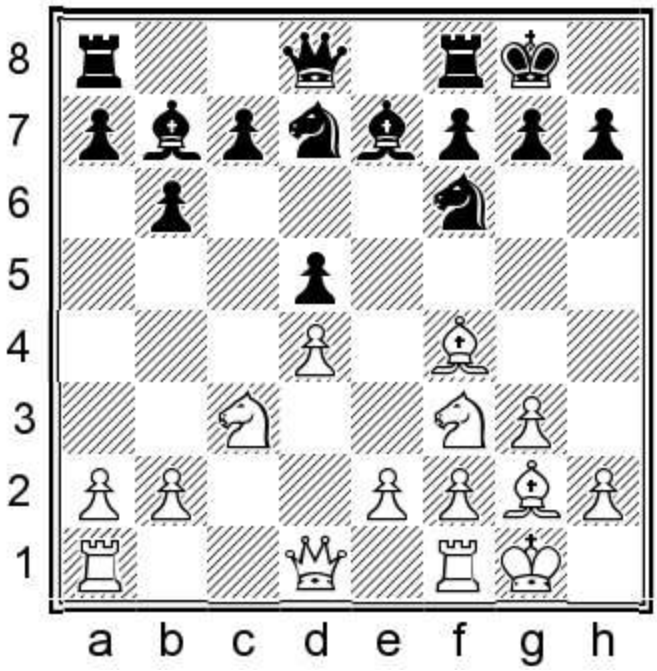
17.♕a4!? is also advantageous for White.

17...♕xb5 18.♘xb5 ♖d7 19.b3!±

chesstouring.com

White went on to win in Gheorghiu – Nun, Timisoara 1987, as well as the more recent game Lenderman – Morrison, Washington DC 2018.

B21) 9...♘bd7



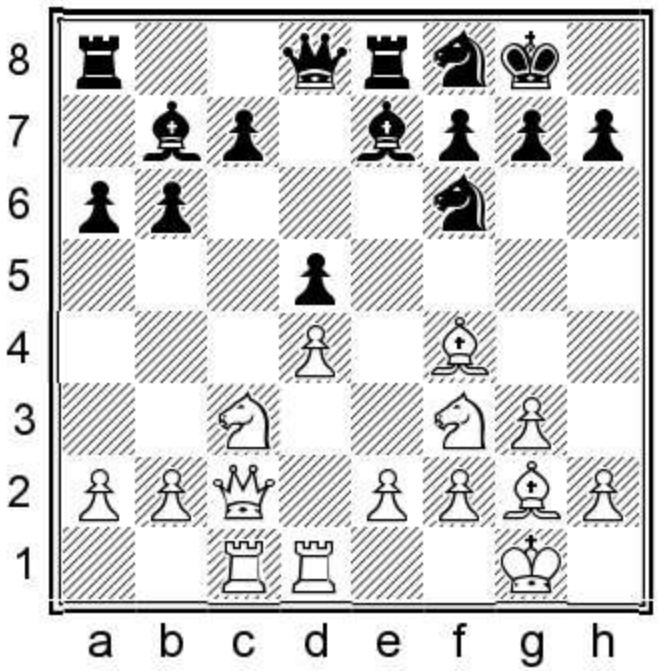
10.♕c2!?

10.♖c1 is the most popular choice and the two moves may easily transpose, but I slightly prefer the idea of placing the other rook on d1 as quickly as possible.

10...c6

10...a6 is another option, although White maintains a pleasant game here too. Here is one good example: 11.♖fd1 ♖e8 12.♖ac1 ♘f8

chesstouring.com



13.♘a4! c6 14.♘e5 b5 15.♘c5 ♗xc5 16.♕xc5 ♘e6 17.♕c2 ♘xf4 18.gxf4± White's positional advantage was obvious in Mikhalevski – Roeder, Aix-les-Bains 2011.

10...c5 is actually Black's most popular continuation and you can find it analysed on page 234 of *GM 1A*, where the same position occurs via a rare move order of the Closed Catalan.

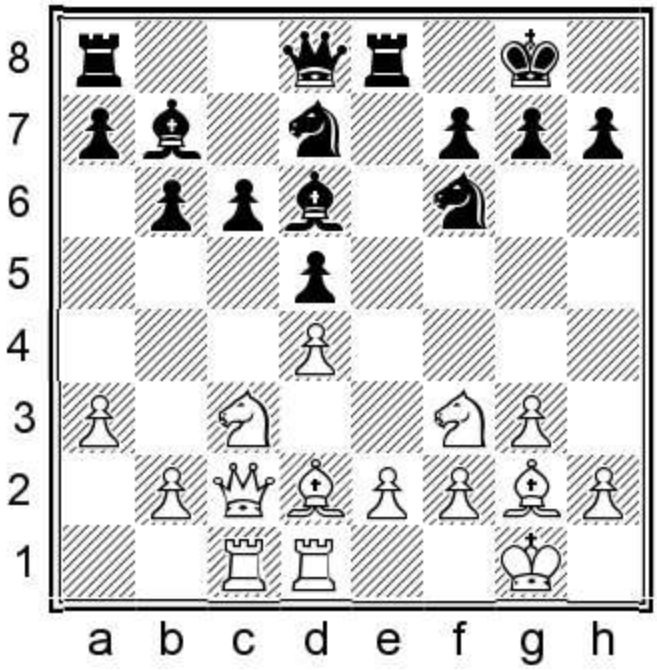
11.♖fd1

I also covered this position briefly in *GM 1A* (see the note to Black's 10th move on page 234 of that volume) but I decided to provide slightly more analysis of it here.

11...♖e8

11...♘h5 12.♗d2 ♘hf6 is a thematic idea, driving the bishop away and challenging White to find something better than repeating moves. A good example continued: 13.♖ac1 ♖e8 14.a3 ♗d6

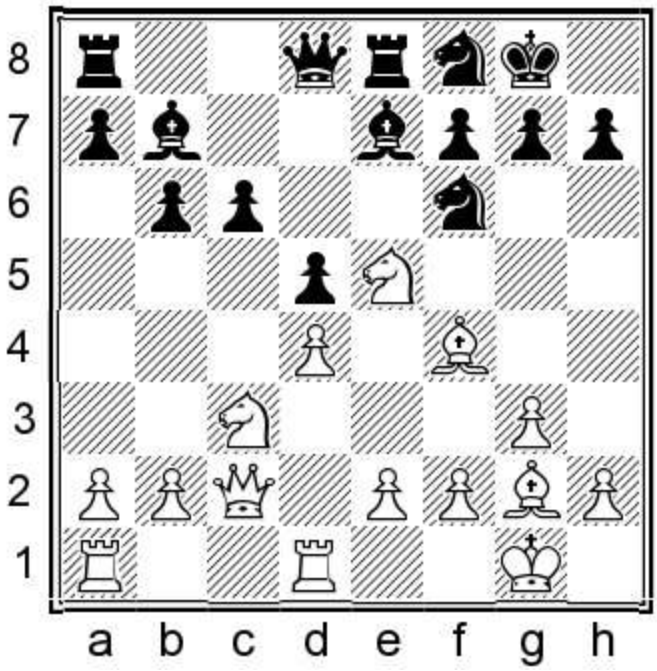
chesstouring.com



15.♗f4! ♕e7 (15...♗xf4 16.gxf4 is also promising for White) 16.e3 White enjoyed a nice edge in Sundararajan – Natarajan, Chennai 2011.

12.♘e5 ♘f8

12...♘xe5?! proves risky after: 13.dxe5 ♘h5 (13...♘d7? makes life easy after 14.e4! dxe4 15.♗xe4 and White was already winning in Harutyunyan – Tuleubayev, Kemer 2009) 14.♗e3 g6 15.f4 f6 16.♕b3! ♕d7 All this occurred in Magerramov – Azmaiparashvili, Riga 1980, and now 17.♗d4!N would secure White a clear edge.



13.e4 ♘e6 14.♗e3

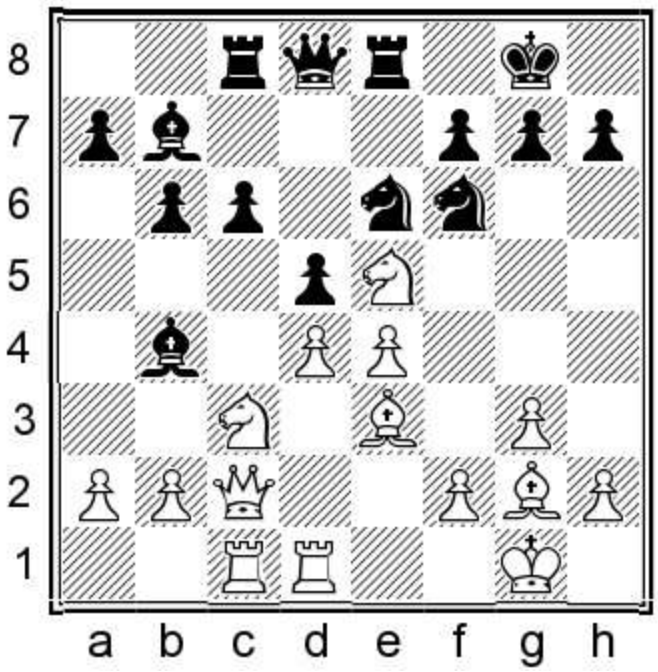
In *GM 1A* I covered 10...c6 in a brief note and stopped here, evaluating the position in White's favour. Although this is essentially correct, the position is still quite complex so I decided to extend the analysis a

chesstouring.com

little for this volume.

14...dxe4

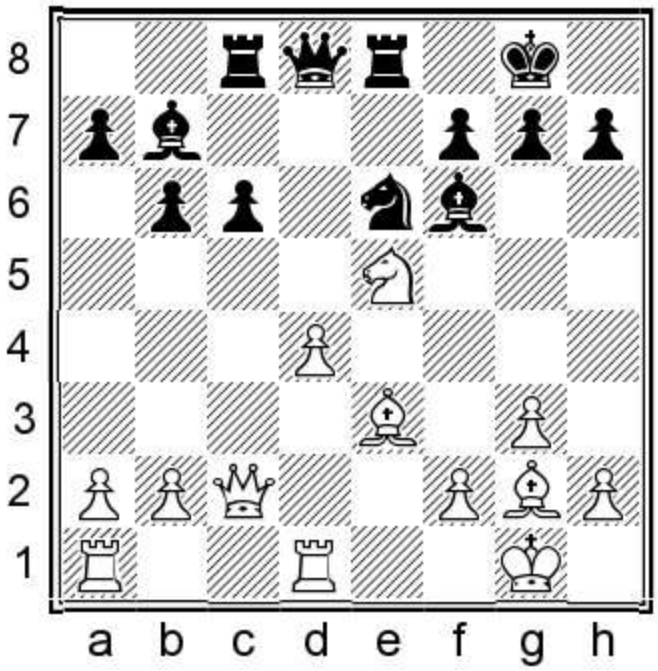
Another important game continued: 14...♖c8 15.♖ac1 ♗b4



16.exd5 cxd5 (16...♘xd5?! is worse in view of 17.♘xd5 cxd5 18.♕a4! and White wins material) 17.♕a4 ♗xc3 18.bxc3 a6 Now in Romanov – Yatzenko, Internet (rapid) 2017, the accurate 19.♕b3!N would have sealed White's advantage.

15.♘xe4 ♖c8 16.♘xf6† ♗xf6

We have been following Oparin – Rakesh, Gibraltar 2017. White has more than one decent continuation but the strongest is:

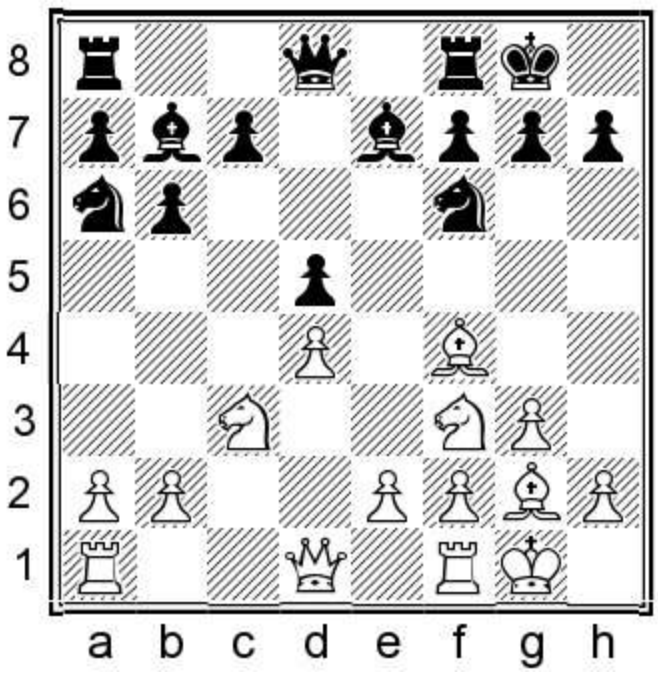


chesstouring.com

17.♕a4!N 17...♕c7 18.♘g4 ♗e7 19.♖ac1

With a clear positional advantage.

B22) 9...♘a6

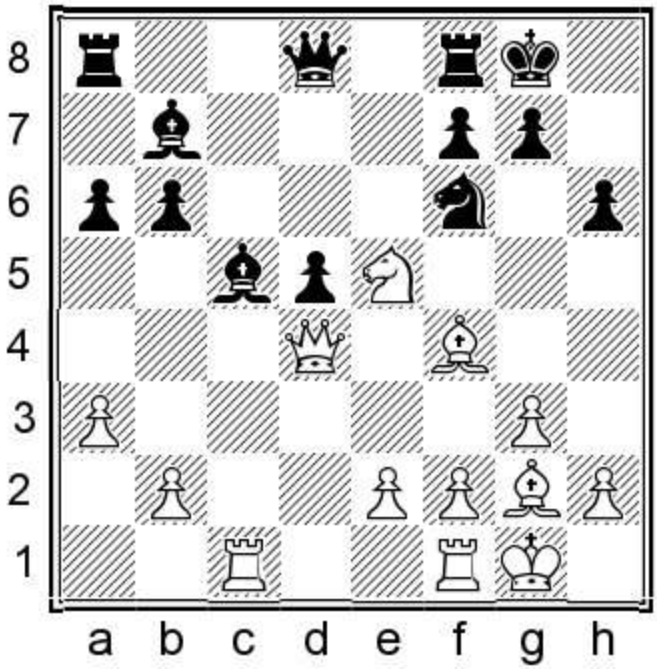


By developing the knight here rather than to d7, Black avoids blocking his queen and prepares to move his knight towards the e6-square, either via c7 or after ...c5 and ...♘xc5.

10.♖c1 c5

I also examined: 10...h6 11.♘e5 c5 12.dxc5 ♘xc5 (12...bxc5 runs into the thematic 13.♘c4! with a clear advantage for White) 13.♘b5 ♘e6 14.a3 a6 15.♘d4 ♘xd4 16.♕xd4 ♗c5 This occurred in Grandelius – Botta, Chotowa 2010, and now the best option for the queen would be:

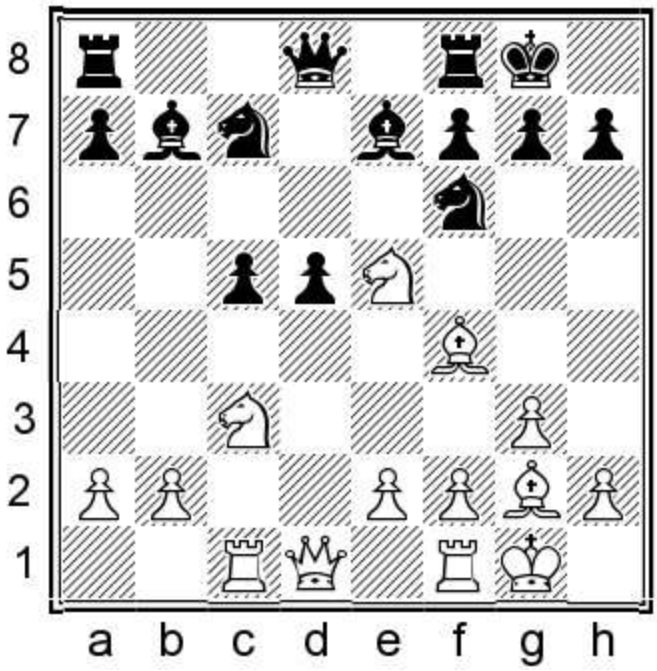
chesstouring.com



17.♕d1!N 17...♖e8 18.♘d3 With a pleasant edge for White.

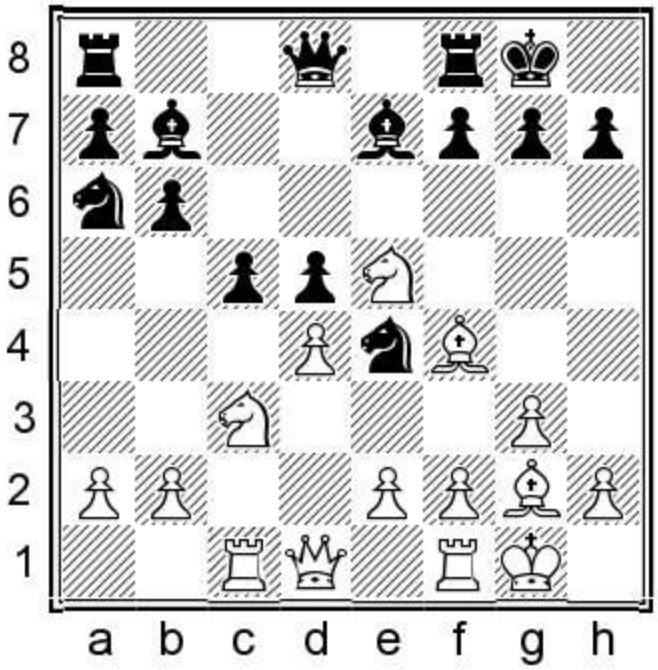
11.♘e5 ♘e4

11...♘c7 is well met by 12.dxc5 bxc5 and now White can quickly organize pressure against the hanging pawns:



13.♕a4! ♘e6 14.♖fd1 ♘xf4 15.gxf4± Black is under serious pressure and has achieved terrible results from here.

chesstouring.com



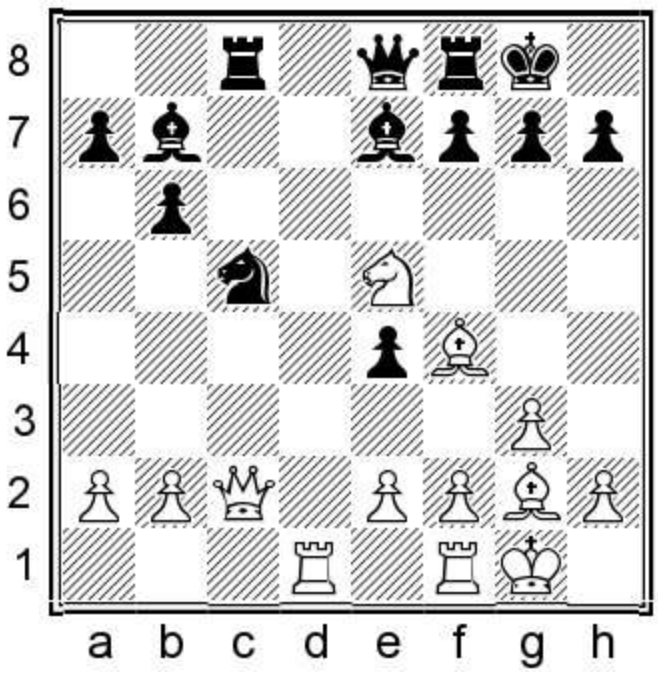
12.♘xe4 dxe4 13.dxc5 ♘xc5

13...♗xc5 is strongly met by 14.♘d7! ♖e8 as in P. Hansen – Syvertsen, Fagernes 2011, and now 15.♕a4!N followed by ♖fd1 would have given White an obvious advantage.

14.♕c2 ♖c8

Black cannot afford to spend a tempo on 14...a5?! due to 15.♖fd1 ♕e8 16.♘c4! ♕c6 17.♗d6± when the b6-pawn soon fell in Levin – Naumkin, Amantea 2009.

15.♖cd1 ♕e8

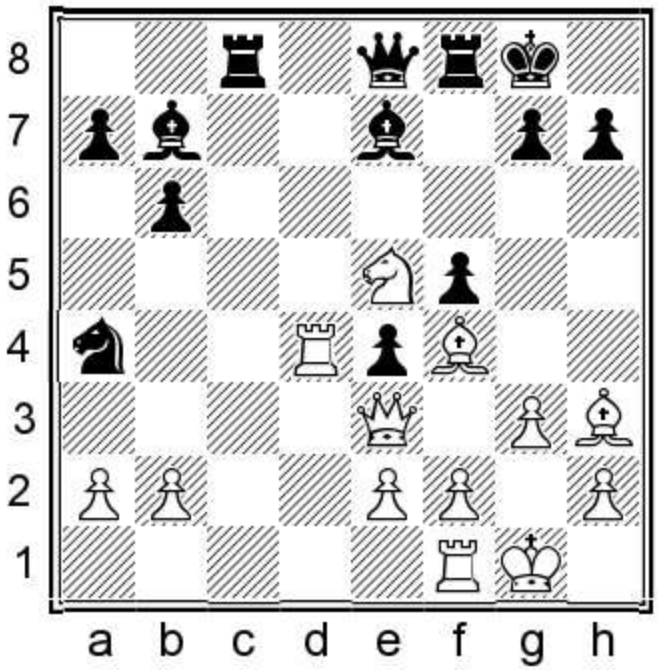


16.♗h3! ♘e6

chesstouring.com

16...♖d8 brings Black no relief after 17.♖xd8 ♗xd8 18.b4 ♘e6 19.♖d1 when he remained under significant pressure in Kallai – Wielsch, Germany 1995.

17.♕b3 ♘c5 18.♕a3 ♘a4 19.♕e3 f5 20.♖d4



20...♔h8

I also considered 20...♘c5N 21.b4! when the following sequence is more or less forced: 21...♗f6 22.bxc5 ♗xe5 23.♗xe5 ♕xe5 24.cxb6 axb6 25.♕b3† ♔h8 26.♖fd1 Black will lose the b6-pawn.

21.♘d7 ♖f7 22.♖xa4 ♕xd7 23.♖xa7±

White was simply a pawn up in Cheparinov – Tiviakov, Antofagasta 2016.

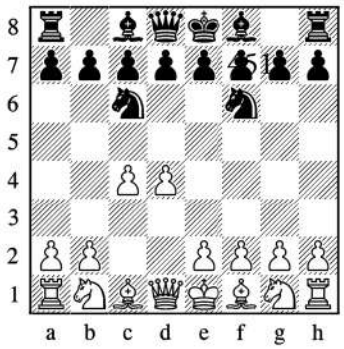
Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with two unusual ...b6 set-ups after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4. First we looked at the immediate 2...b6, when 3.f3! is our choice. Then 3...e6 4.e4 gives White easy play with the big centre, while 3...♘c6 is slightly trickier, but I still really like White's chances after 4.♘c3 e5 5.d5 followed by e2-e4, especially when followed by a timely h2-h4 after the black knight goes to g6, as in our main line. Next we looked at 2...e6 3.g3 b6, which is a rather clumsy attempt to play for a Queen's Indian. 4.♗g2 forces Black to choose between 4...c6, when 5.e4 gives White a powerful pawn centre, and 4...d5, when 5.cxd5 exd5 reaches a thematic structure, but where White can develop his pieces to optimal squares, giving him an improved version of some other popular openings where he usually has to waste time on ♖e1 to provoke the ...d5 structure.

chesstouring.com



1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4



Black Knights' Tango

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 ♘c6

3.♘f3

A) 3...d5?! 452

B) 3...d6 4.♘c3 453

B1) 4...♗g4 453

B2) 4...e5 455

C) 3...e6 4.g3 458

C1) 4...d5 458

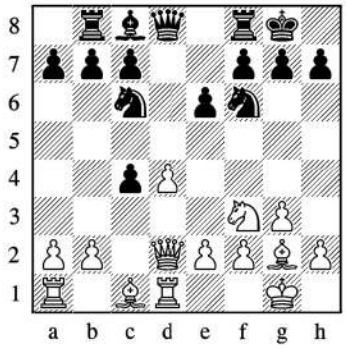
C2) 4...♗b4† 460

A) note to 5...♘b6



9.♕b3!N

C1) after 9...♖b8



10.b3!N

C2) note to 10...a5



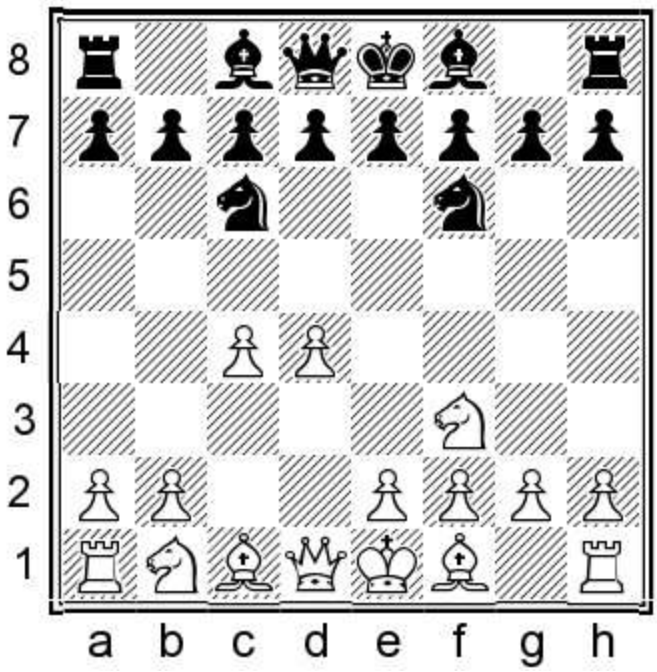
15.♖ae1!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 ♘c6

The Black Knights' Tango is an offbeat defence which now and again finds its way into the repertoires

of top players.

3.♘f3



This move is the best fit with our repertoire. We will consider Black's three main options: **A)** 3...d5?!, **B)** 3...d6 and **C)** 3...e6.

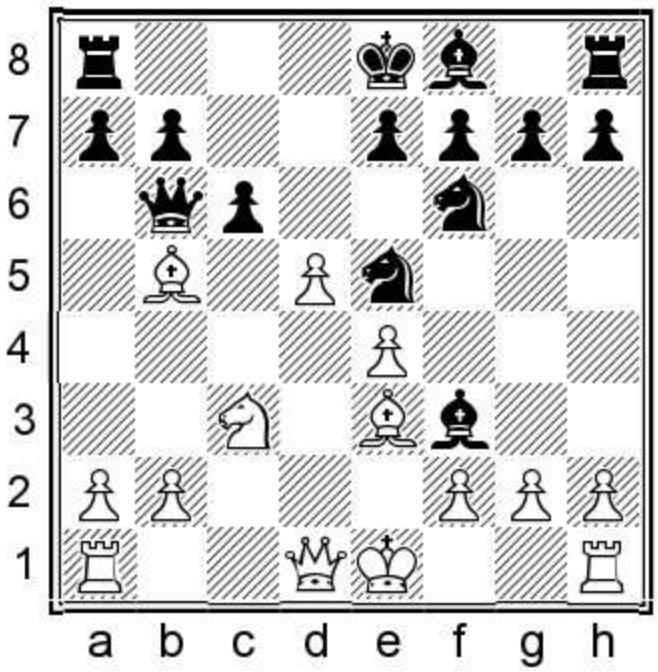
A) 3...d5?!

This transposes to a dubious version of a Chigorin.

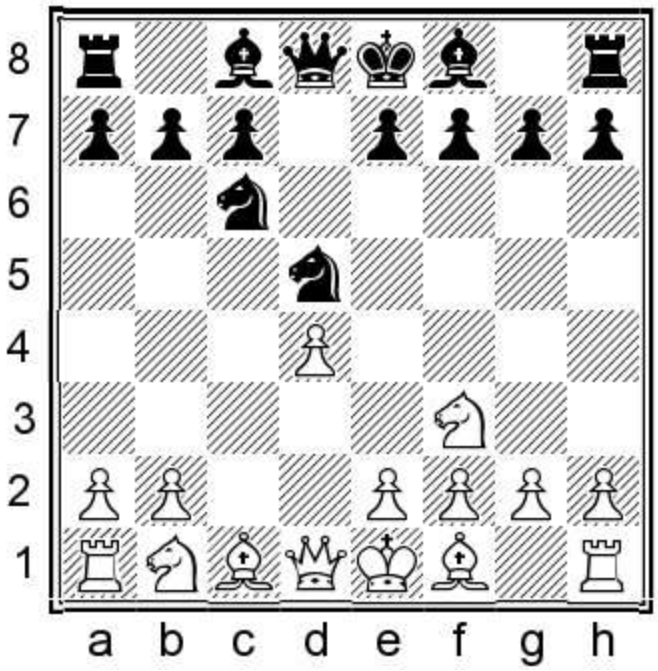
4.cxd5! ♘xd5

4...♕xd5?! is even worse in view of 5.♘c3 ♕a5 6.♗d2 when Black has wasted too much time. A nice example continued: 6...♗g4 7.e4 ♕b6 8.d5 ♘e5 9.♗b5† c6 10.♗e3 ♗xf3

chesstouring.com



11.♕a4! ♕c7 12.gxf3 ♘xf3† 13.♔e2 ♘e5 14.dxc6 bxc6 15.♗d4 cxb5 16.♘xb5 ♕c4† 17.♕xc4 ♘xc4 18.♘c7† ♔d7 19.♘xa8 ♘xe4 20.♖ac1+– Rutten – Perez Pato, corr. 2013.



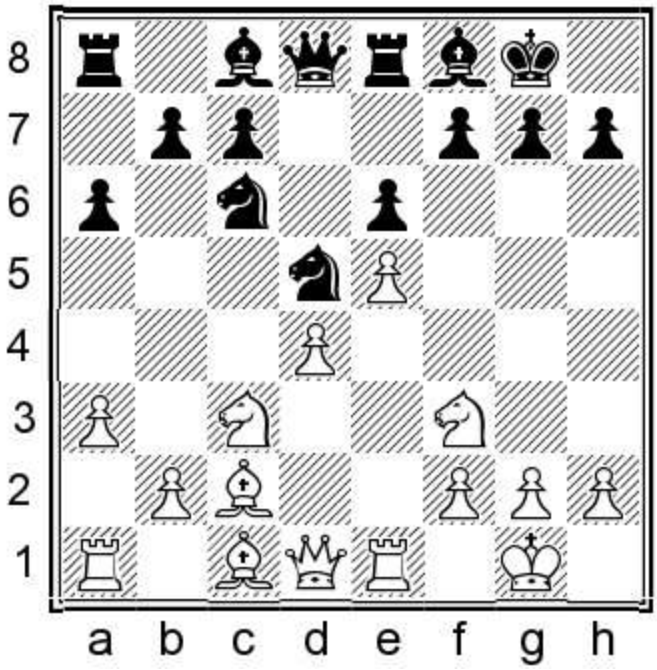
5.e4 ♘b6

I also checked the other knight retreat:

5...♘f6 6.♘c3 ♗g4?!

6...e6 should be preferred, although 7.♗d3 ♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.e5 ♘d5 10.♖e1 gives White an easy advantage. Here is a nice practical example: 10...♖e8 11.a3 a6 12.♗c2 ♗f8?

chesstouring.com



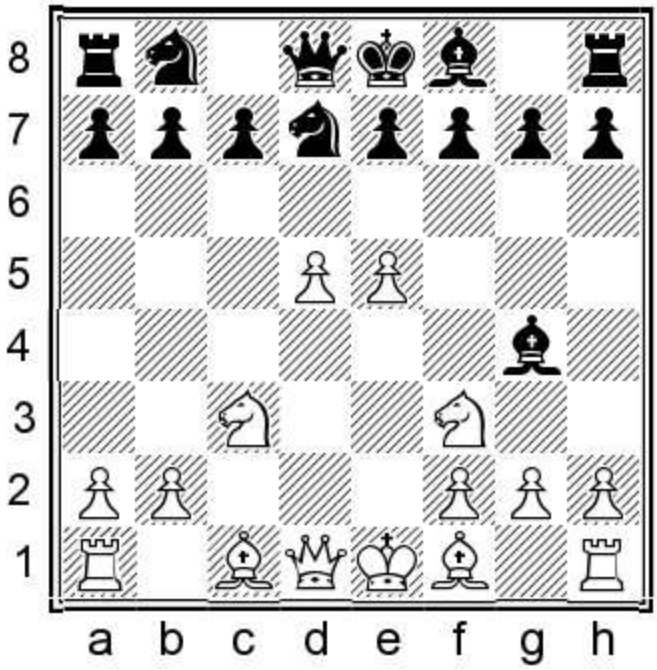
13.♗xh7†! ♔xh7 14.♘g5† ♔g6 15.♕d3† f5 16.exf6† ♔xf6 17.♕f3† ♔e7 18.♕f7† ♔d6 19.♘ce4# Potkin – Suslin, Moscow 2012.

7.d5! ♘b8

7...♘e5?? loses on the spot to the thematic 8.♘xe5! ♗xd1 9.♗b5† c6 10.dxc6+– and White will win back the queen with dividends.

8.e5 ♘fd7

I found six games in the database, all of them won by White after 9.♗f4, but the following novelty looks even more convincing:



9.♕b3!N

White has a crushing initiative, for instance:

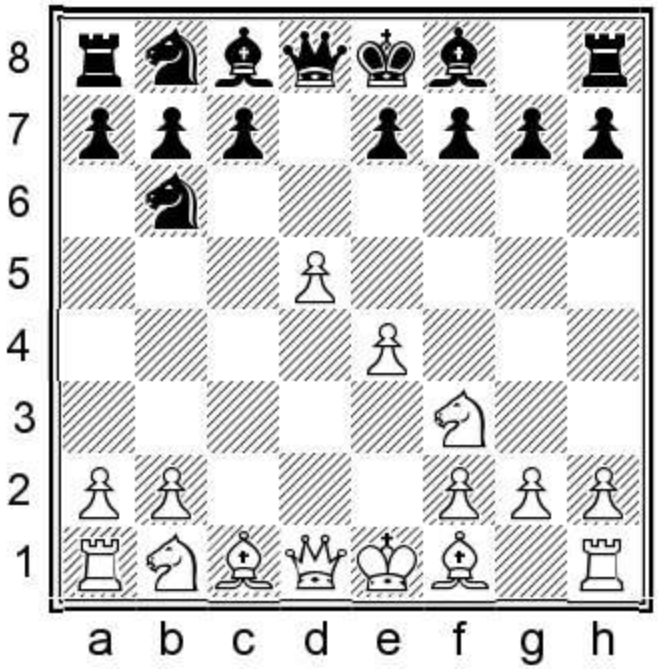
9...♘b6 10.e6! fxe6 11.♘e5 ♗f5 12.♗b5†+–

chesstouring.com

6.d5

6.♘c3 e6 7.♗d3 is also advantageous for White, but it is hard to resist driving the knight back.

6...♘b8



7.a4!

I like this aggressive approach.

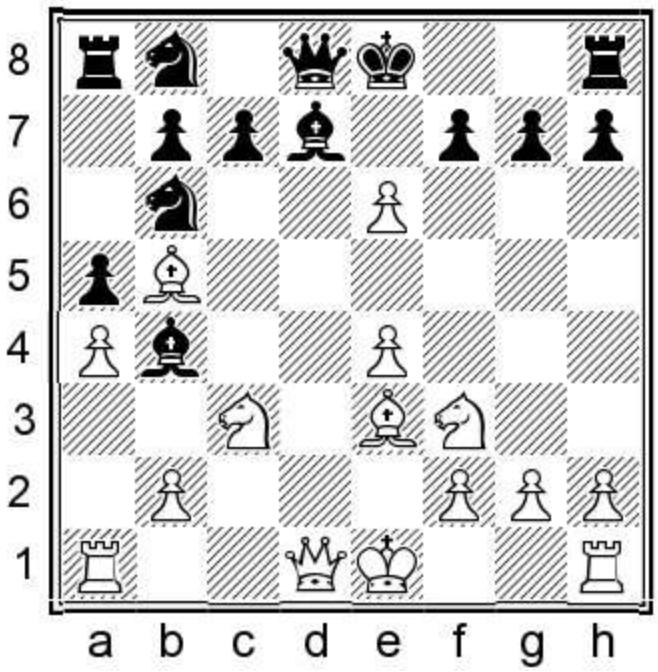
7...a5

After 7...♗g4 8.a5 ♘6d7 9.♗g5! f6 10.♗e3 e5 11.♗e2 White was clearly better in Zhuravlev – Varvarov, corr. 2015.

The text move looks obvious but it renders the b6-knight a bit unstable. In the following game, White quickly obtained a decisive initiative.

8.♘c3 e6 9.♗e3 ♗b4 10.♗b5†! ♗d7 11.dxe6

chesstouring.com



11...♗xb5?

11...fxe6 was the only chance, but after 12.♘e5 ♕f6 13.♘xd7 ♘6xd7 14.0-0 White has a serious advantage.

12.exf7† ♔xf7 13.♘e5† ♔e6 14.♕g4†!+−

Black succumbed to a mating attack in Loncar – Jus, Nerezine 2005.

B) 3...d6

This move resembles the Old Indian; see for instance page 419, where I pointed out a transposition from that opening to this section.

4.♘c3

We will analyse **B1)** 4...♗g4 and **B2)** 4...e5.

4...g6

This move does not warrant any special attention, as White can steer the game towards our King's Indian coverage with 5.g3 if he so wishes. It is also worth mentioning the following more ambitious way of playing:

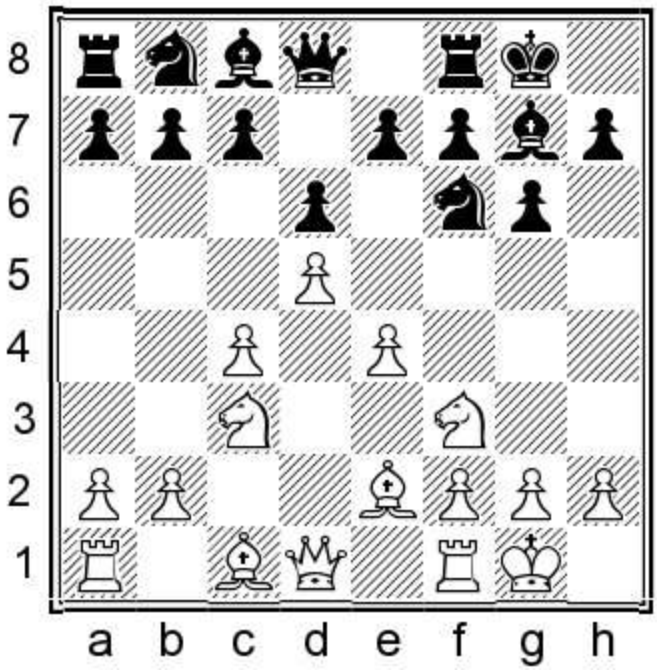
5.d5 ♘b8

5...♘e5 6.♘xe5 dxe5 results in a pawn structure which I have never believed in from Black's perspective, as his dark-squared bishop will be blocked by the e5-pawn. A model example continued 7.e4 ♗g7 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 e6 10.♗g5 h6 11.♗e3 ♕e7 12.♕d2 ♔h7 13.f3 ♘e8 14.c5 exd5 15.exd5 ♗f5 16.♖fd1 ♖d8 17.♖ac1± with great prospects for White, Stohl – Movsziszian, Hamburg 1993.

chesstouring.com

6.e4 ♗g7 7.♗e2 0-0 8.0-0

A lot of games have been played from this position, but I will just mention one illustrative example.



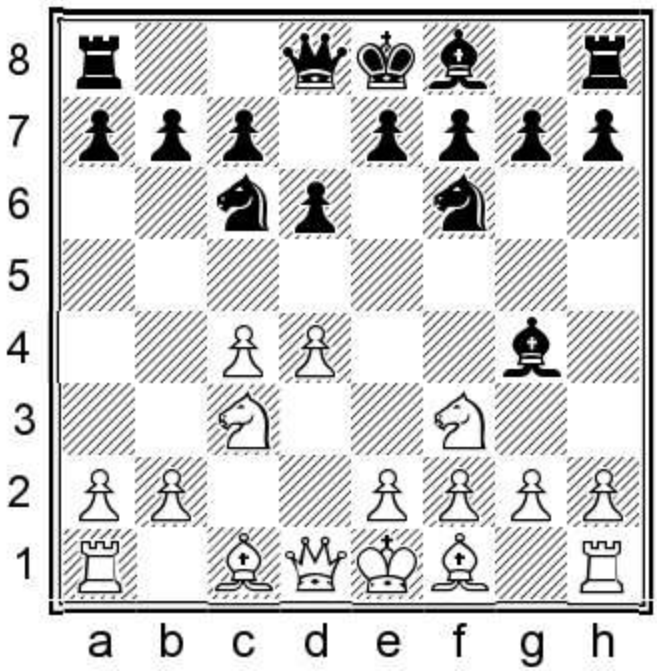
8...♗g4 9.♗e3 ♘bd7 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 c6 12.♖c1 ♕a5 13.a3 c5

13...♖ac8N would have been more consistent with Black's earlier play although 14.♗e2 maintains a nice edge for White.

14.♗e2±

White's bishop pair gave him a favourable version of a closed Benoni structure in Rodrigues – Sanner, corr. 2012.

B1) 4...♗g4



chesstouring.com

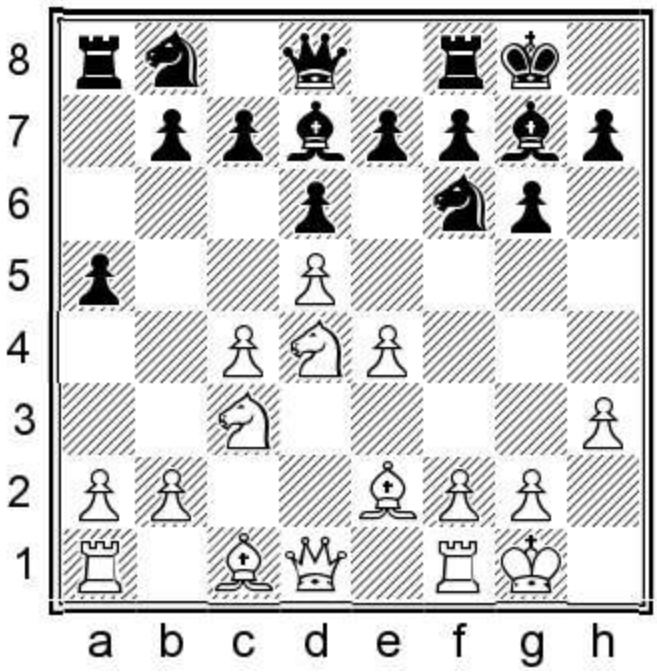
5.d5!

Like in many other openings, playing d4-d5 to attack a knight on c6 is extremely effective as soon as the black bishop arrives on g4.

5...♘e5

Other moves are also unsatisfactory for Black, for instance:

5...♘b8 6.♘d4 g6 7.h3 ♗d7 8.e4 ♗g7 9.♗e2 0-0 10.0-0 a5



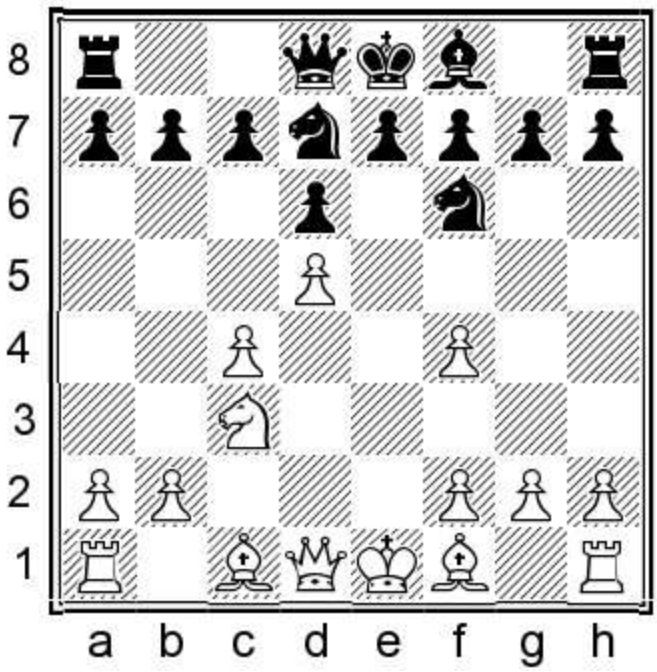
11.f4 ♘e8 12.♗e3 ♘a6 13.♕d2± Black's opening strategy had failed miserably in Ikonnikov – Kaulfuss, Eschborn 2012.

5...♗xf3 6.exf3 ♘e5

6...♘b8 7.♕b3! ♕c8 8.♗e3 ♘bd7 occurred in Koh – Teo, Singapore 2001. White is better after any sensible move, but I especially like 9.g4!N 9...e5 10.dxe6 fxe6 11.g5 ♘h5 12.♗h3 with a terrific position for White.

7.f4 ♘ed7

chesstouring.com

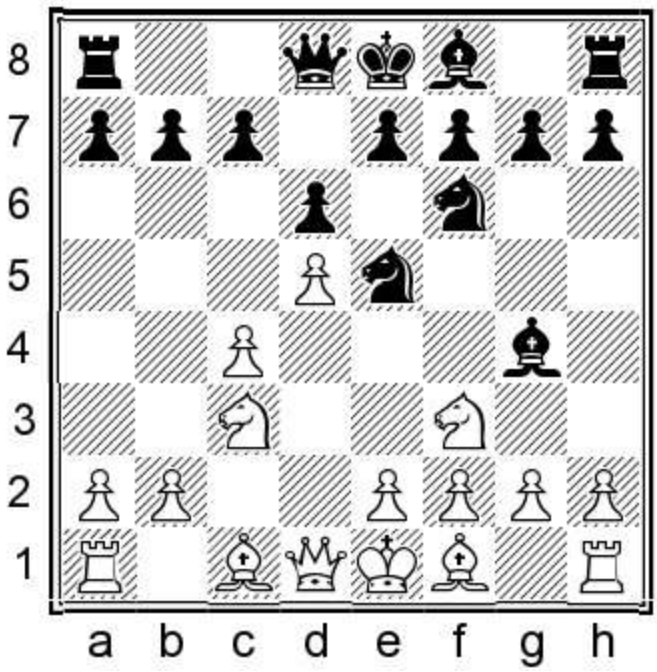


8.g4!

Again this is not the only good option, but I find it the most attractive one.

8...g6 9.h4 ♗g7 10.h5 0-0 11.hxg6 fxg6 12.♗h3 ♘c5 13.♗e3

It is not difficult to see that White's kingside attack should decide the outcome, Grishchenko – Kondenko, Sochi 2014.



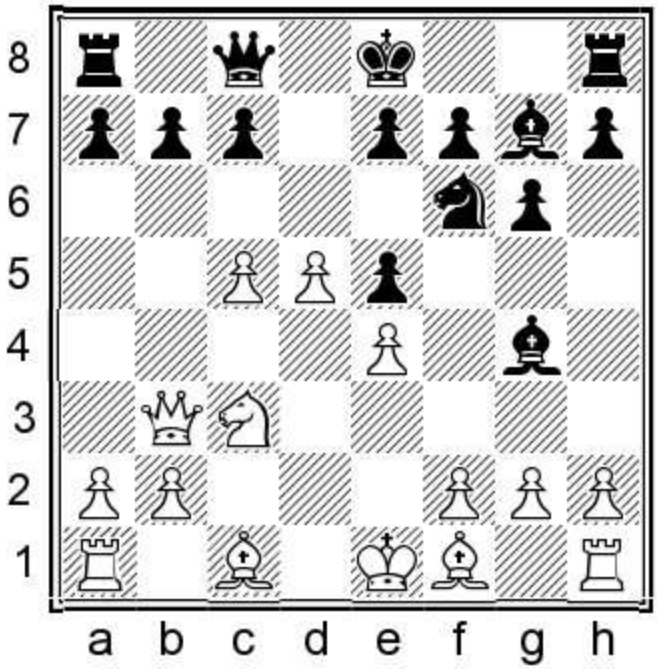
6.♘xe5 dxe5 7.♕b3 ♕c8

I also checked 7...b6 as played in Lange – Brunkow, email 2010, when 8.♗g5N 8...g6 9.e4 ♗g7 10.f3 ♗d7 11.0-0-0 0-0 12.g4 would have given White a promising position.

8.e4 g6 9.c5 ♗g7

chesstouring.com

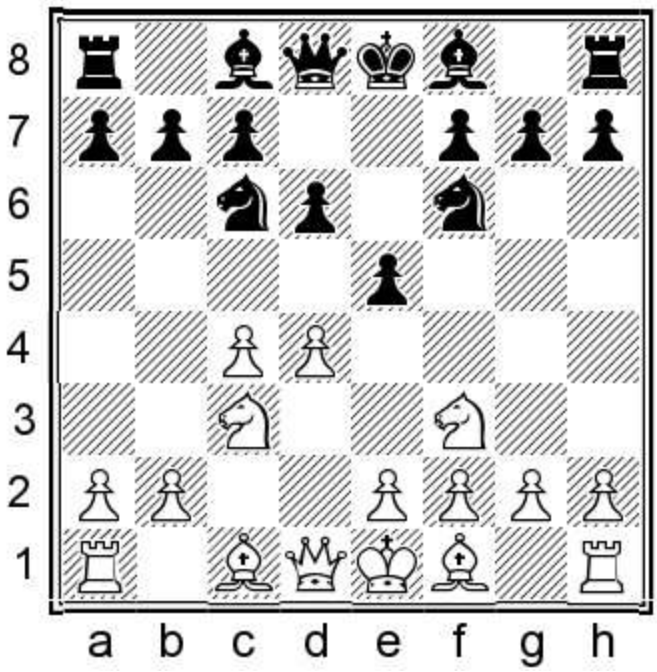
This position has been reached in a couple of games. The following improvement looks natural to me:



10.♗e3N 10...0-0 11.♗c4 ♗d7 12.f3±

White's positional advantage is obvious.

B2) 4...e5



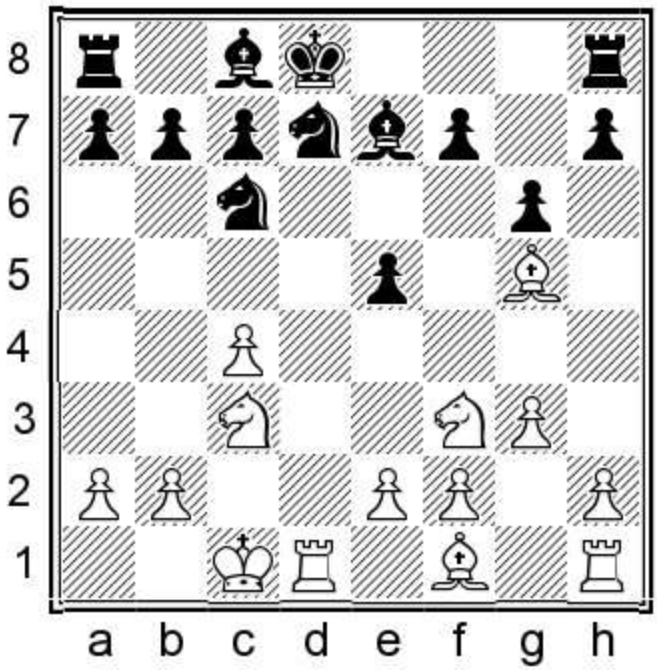
I was surprised to see that this position has occurred almost 700 times! I don't believe the queenless position offers anything special for White, so I am happy to proceed with our standard fianchetto set-up.

5.g3 ♗g4

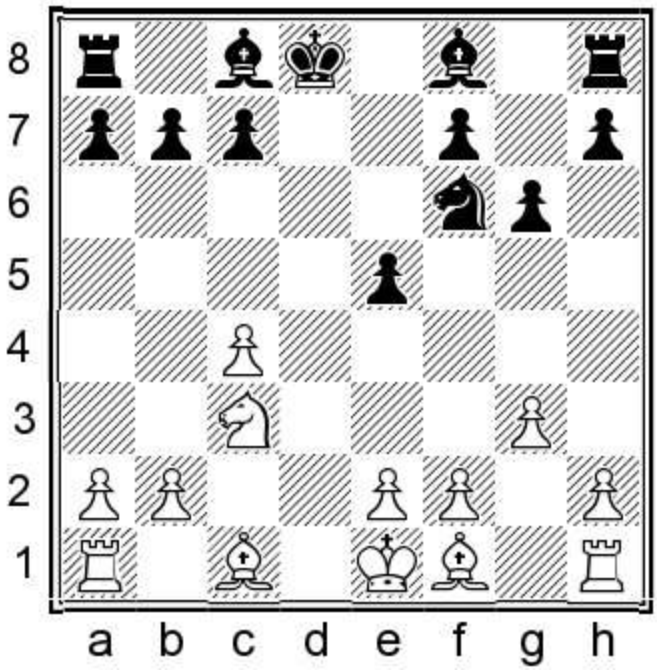
This is Black's main continuation but of course there are several alternatives.

chesstouring.com

5...g6?! angles for a transposition to a King's Indian but the inclusion of g2-g3 and ...g6 enables White to exert meaningful pressure in a simplified position with: 6.dxe5 ♘xe5 (6...dxe5? proves to be much worse after: 7.♕xd8† ♔xd8 8.♗g5 ♗e7 9.0-0-0† ♘d7



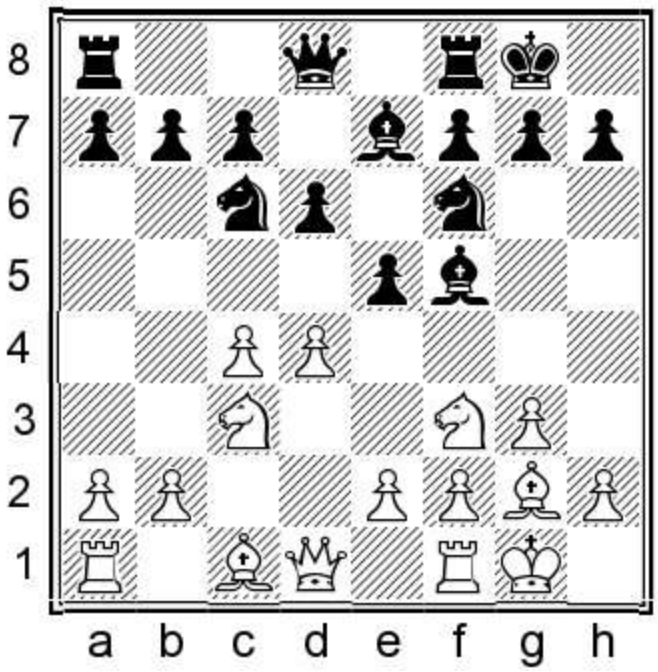
And now 10.♘d5!N+− would have been crushing, although even the inaccurate 10.♗xe7† ♔xe7 11.♘d5† still left Black in trouble in Hangweyrer – Horvath, Vienna 2002.) 7.♘xe5 dxe5 8.♕xd8† ♔xd8



9.♗g5 ♗e7 10.0-0-0† ♘d7 White has won all the games from here, but Black's position is far from hopeless. My suggestion would be 11.h4!?N 11...f6 12.♗e3 c6 13.f4 ♔c7 14.h5 with a nice initiative for White.

5...♗e7 6.♗g2 0-0 7.0-0 ♗f5 (I would also like to mention 7...♗g4 8.d5 ♘b8 when 9.♘e1! seems logical; a model game continued 9...♕c8 10.♘d3 ♗h3 11.e4 ♗xg2 12.♔xg2 with a clear positional plus for White,

Damljanovic – Bukvic, Niksic 2016)

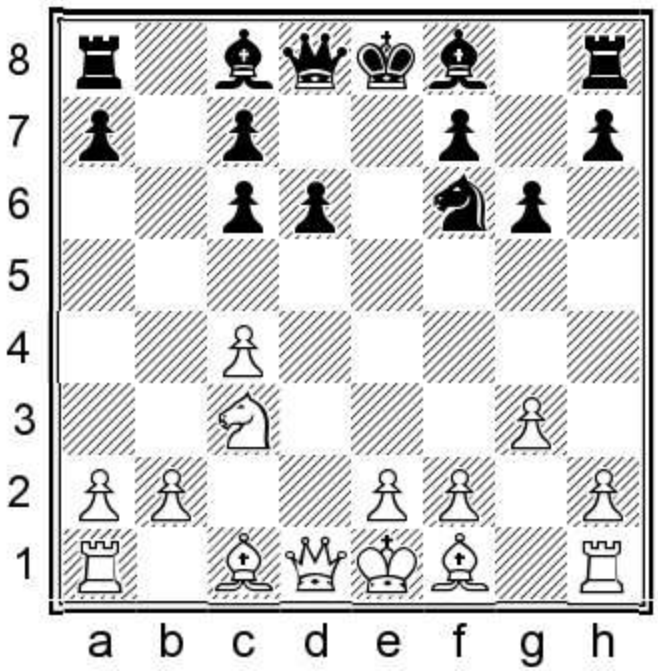


8.d5 ♘b8 (8...♘b4 9.a3 ♘a6 10.♘h4 ♗g4 11.b4± was also great for White in Vehlow – Grimm, email 2013) 9.♘h4 ♗d7 10.e4 a5 This occurred in Laqua – Celmer, Germany 2012, and now the natural 11.♘f5N would have secured a clear advantage for White.

5...exd4 6.♘xd4 g6

This resembles variation C2 of Chapter 21 (see page 397) but here Black's knight is on f6 instead of e7. White's prospects are at least as good here as in the Modern line.

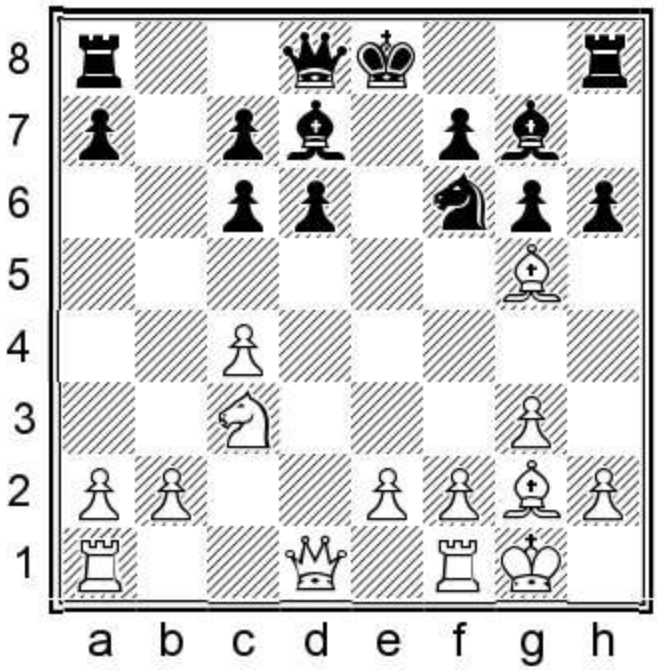
7.♘xc6 bxc6



8.♗g2 ♗d7 9.♗g5 ♗g7 10.0-0 h6

10...0-0 is met by 11.♕d2 when Black cannot play ...h6 anymore, and White enjoyed a pleasant

edge after 11...♖e8 12.♖ad1 ♕c8 13.♖fe1± in Haslinger – Ankerst, Dos Hermanas 2004.
When analysing this position I realized that White has a surprising resource.



11.♗xf6!?N 11...♗xf6

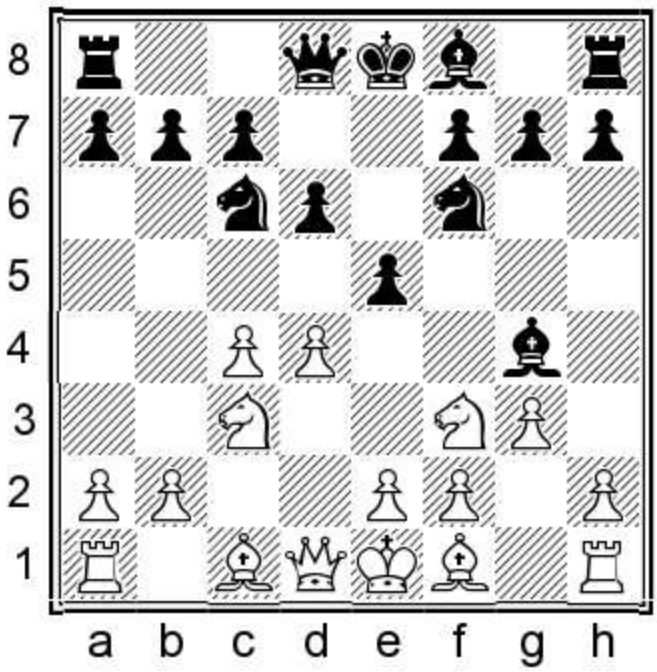
11...♕xf6 runs into the unpleasant 12.♕a4.

12.c5!

This is obviously the point behind giving up the bishop.

12...d5 13.e4 d4 14.♘a4 0-0 15.f4

White has a clear positional edge.



6.♗g2!

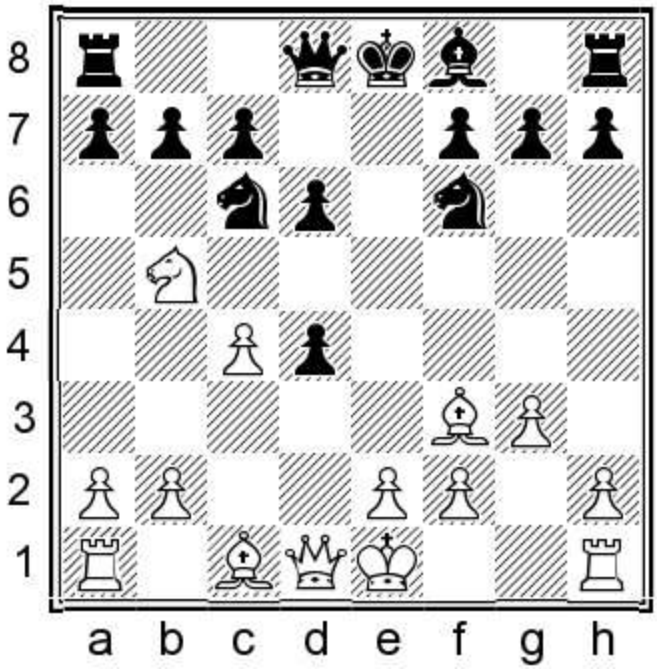
6.d5 has also scored well but I prefer the more flexible text move, which exploits the fact that Black is not really threatening to win the d4-pawn.

chesstouring.com

6...♕c8

I checked two other options:

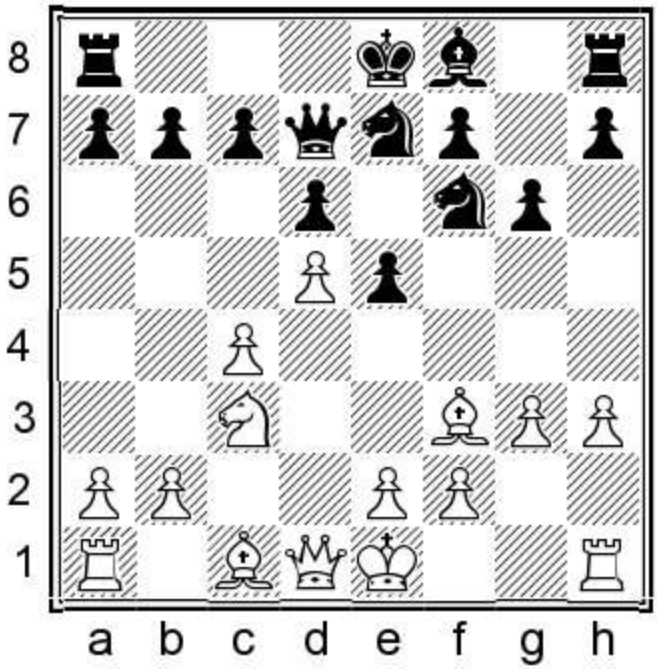
Obviously 6...♗xf3 must be considered, but after 7.♗xf3 White is in good shape, for instance: 7...exd4 (7...♘xd4?! 8.♗xb7 ♖b8 9.♗g2 leaves Black substantially worse) 8.♘b5 White regains the pawn with an excellent game, for instance:



8...♗e7 9.♘xd4 ♘xd4 10.♕xd4 c6 11.0-0 0-0 This was Kirchner – Hohlbein, Germany 1995, and now the natural 12.♖d1N would have offered White a lasting advantage.

6...♕d7 7.d5 ♘e7 8.h3 ♗xf3 9.♗xf3 g6 happened in Koykka – Sarwer, Helsinki 2016, and now I like the following improvement:

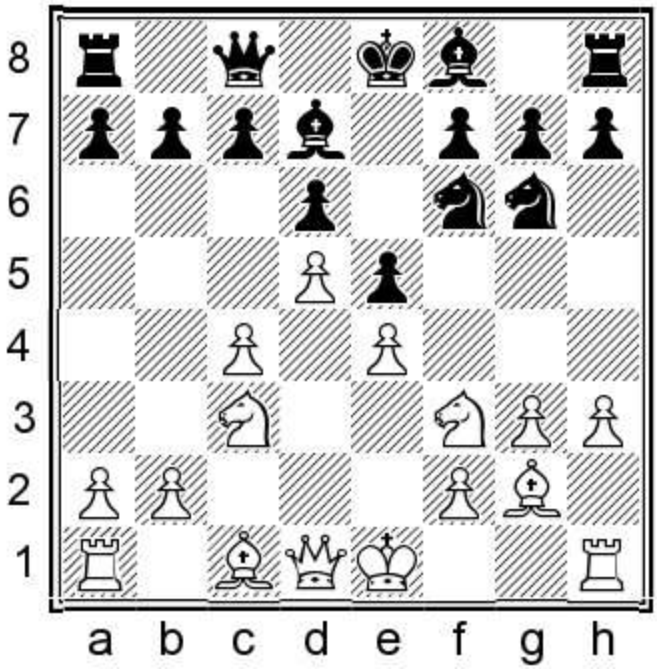
chesstouring.com



10.e4N 10...♗g7 11.h4! The same concept has featured heavily in other parts of the repertoire where Black swaps his bishop for a knight on f3. 11...h5 12.♗g2 0-0 13.♗h3 ♕d8 14.0-0± White has much better chances.

7.d5 ♘e7 8.h3 ♗d7 9.e4 ♘g6

I found three games which reached this position, but somehow White's play was not particularly impressive in any of them. Therefore I suggest the following new plan:



10.h4!?N 10...h6

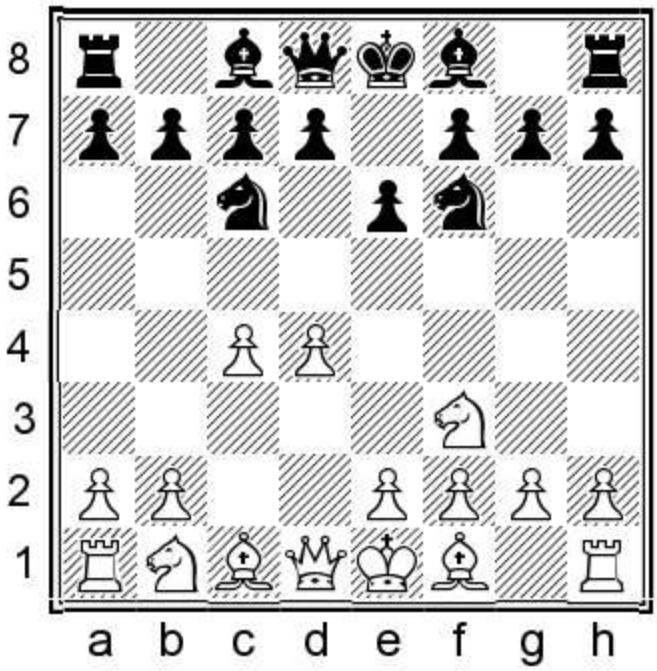
10...♗g4 is well met by 11.♕d3 ♗e7 12.♘d2 c6 13.♘f1! followed by ♘e3.

chesstouring.com

11.♘h2! ♗e7 12.♘f1

White's knight is heading for e3 and he is firmly in control.

C) 3...e6



This is the most natural and popular continuation.

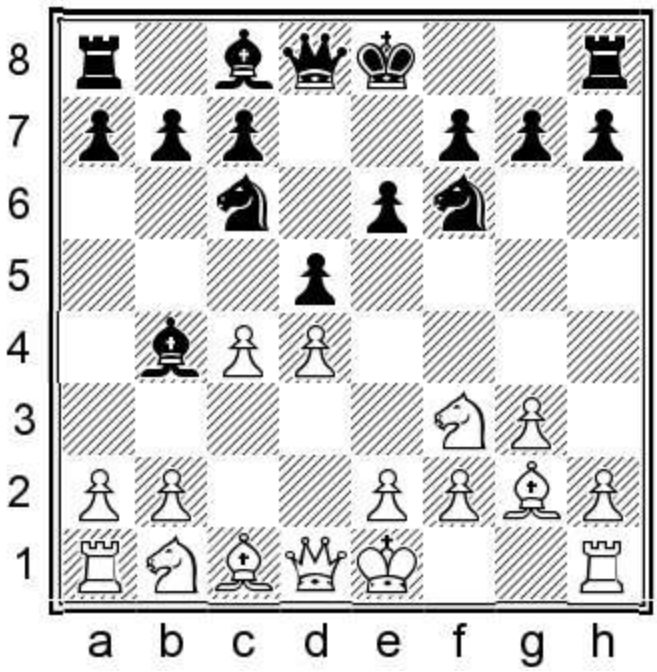
4.g3

We will analyse **C1)** 4...d5 and **C2)** 4...♗b4†.

C1) 4...d5 5.♗g2 ♗b4†

5...dxc4 is by far the most popular continuation, but it leads straight to the Catalan. See Chapter 11 of *GM 1A*, where 6.♕a4 is my choice for White.

chesstouring.com



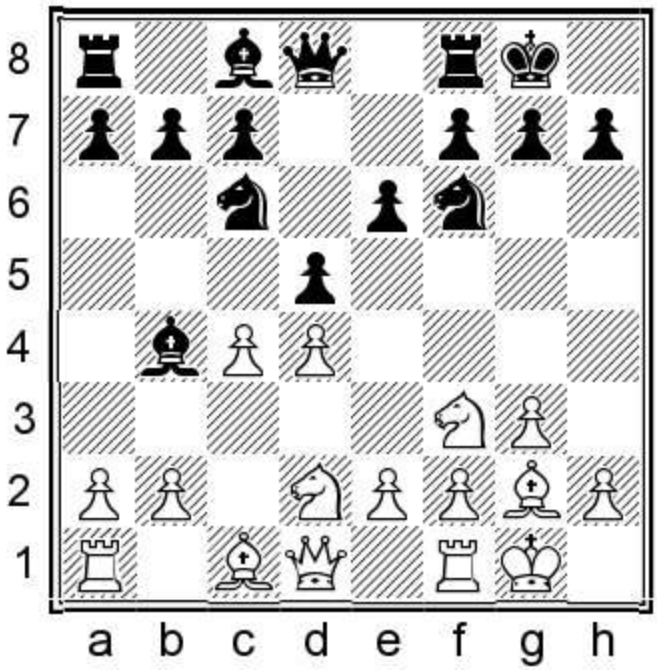
6.♘bd2!?

Obviously 6.♗d2 is fine and is likely to transpose to one of our Catalan or Bogo-Indian lines from *GM 1A*. However, I think this is an advantageous moment to block with the knight.

6...dxc4

Another line is:

6...0-0 7.0-0



7...♖e8

I also checked: 7...♕e7 8.a3 ♗xd2 9.♗xd2 ♖d8 (after 9...dxc4 10.♖c1 White will regain the pawn with an obvious edge) 10.♕c2 dxc4 11.♕xc4 e5 12.dxe5 ♘xe5 In Zhao – Lan, Shenzhen 2017, 13.♗b4!N± would have secured White's clear positional advantage.

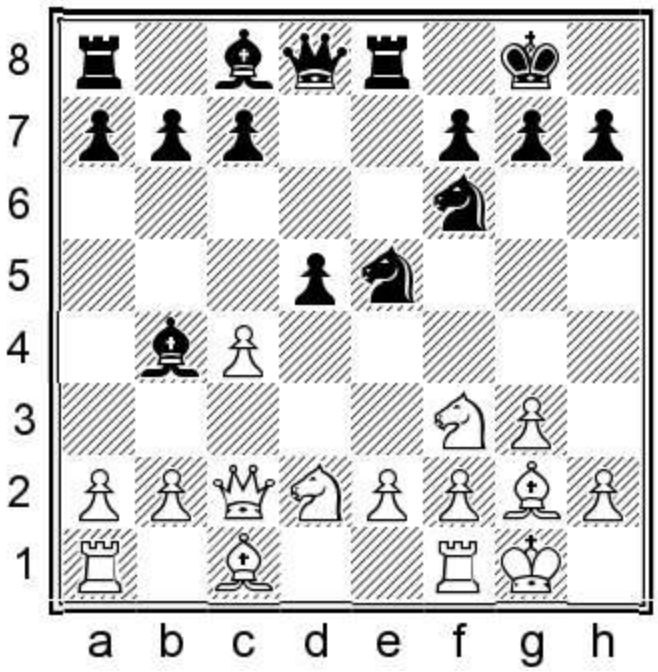
chesstouring.com

8.♕c2 e5

If Black does not play this, I cannot understand the point of his set-up.

9.dxe5 ♘xe5

This occurred in Krebs – Schieder, Graz 1993. A natural improvement is:

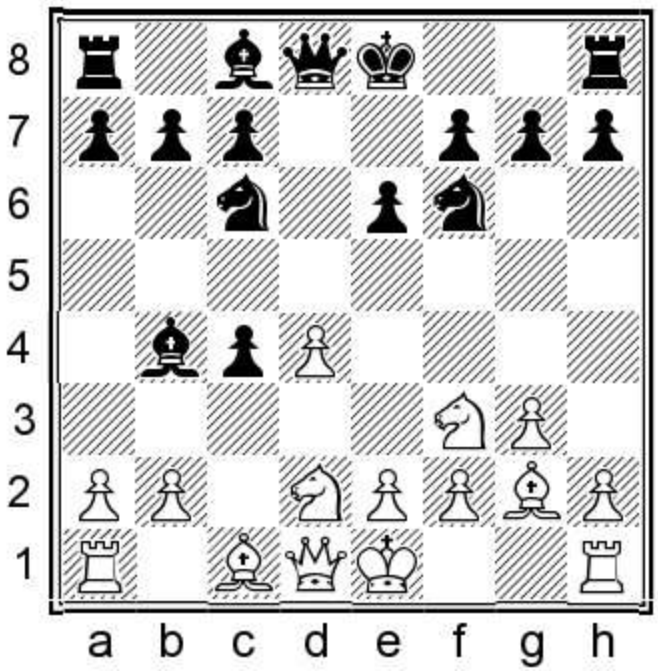


10.♘xe5N 10...♖xe5 11.♘f3 ♖e8 12.cxd5 ♕xd5

After 12...♘xd5? 13.♖d1 the pin will cost Black some material.

13.♕xc7

White wins a pawn for no real compensation, since 13...♖xe2? runs into 14.♘g5.



7.0-0 ♗xd2

The alternative is:

7...c3 8.♘b3 0-0 9.♕c2 cxb2 10.♗xb2

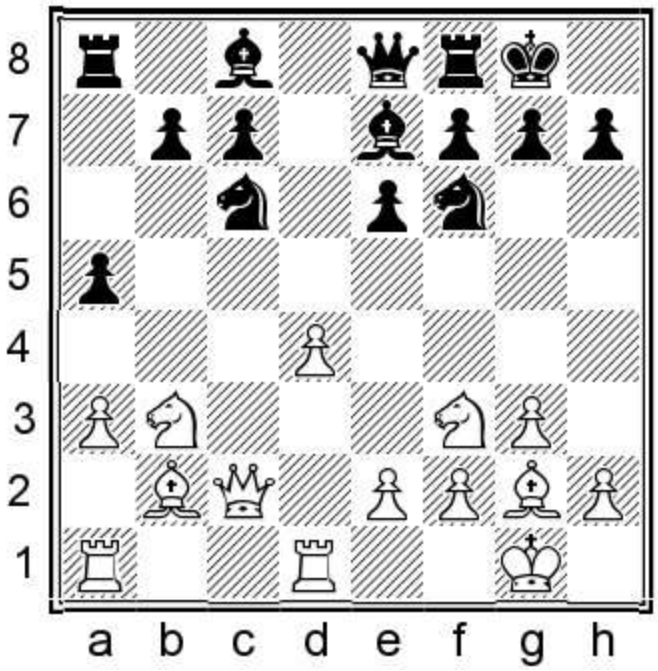
chesstouring.com

White has excellent compensation; I will just mention a few illustrative examples.

10...a5 11.a3 ♗e7 12.♖fd1 ♕e8

12...♘d7 13.♖ac1 ♕e8 14.e4 gave White terrific play for the pawn in A. Mikhalevski – Haimovich, Tel Aviv 2001.

The text move was played in Karason – Gupta, Reykjavik 2011, when White should have continued:



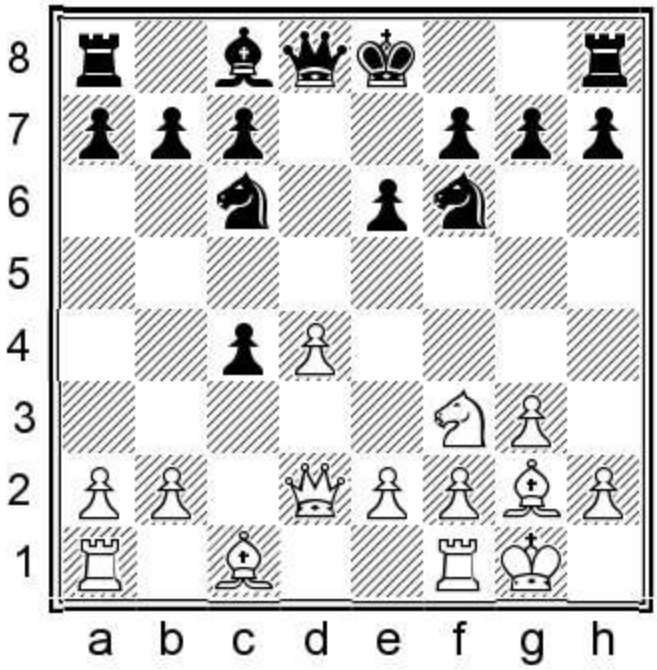
13.♘c5N 13...♘d7 14.♘d3!

With a fine initiative for the pawn.

8.♕xd2

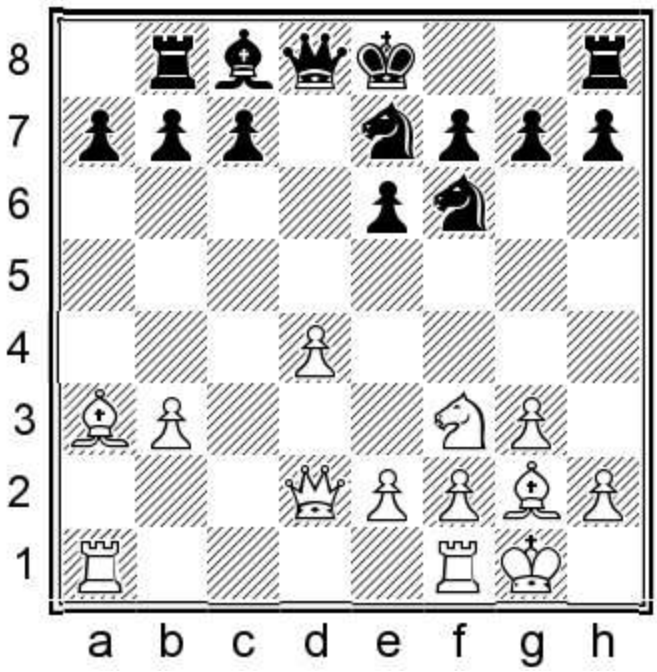
8.♗xd2!? has yielded excellent results for White but I don't see any special reason to give up the d-pawn; besides, we will see that the bishop does not have bad prospects from c1.

chesstouring.com



8...0-0

Black has also tried 8...♖b8, when I really like the idea of 9.b3! cxb3 10.♗a3 ♘e7 11.axb3 with tremendous compensation, mainly due to the powerful dark-squared bishop. A model game continued:

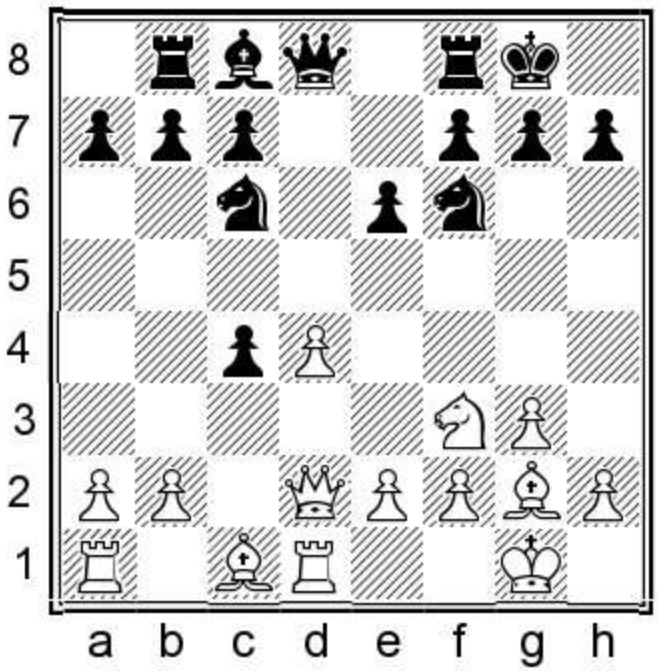


11...a6 12.♖ac1 0-0 13.♕c2 c6 14.e4± White had a great game in Haba – Hellmayr, Austria 2001.

9.♖d1 ♖b8

This position was reached in Kopylov – Fries Nielsen, Hamburg 2009. Once again, I like the following method of opening up the queenside:

chesstouring.com



10.b3!N 10...cxb3

10...b5?! can hardly be recommended for Black in view of 11.bxc4 bxc4 12.♗a3 ♖e8 13.♕c1± and White is clearly better.

11.axb3 a6

11...♗d7 12.♘e5 is also pretty strong for White.

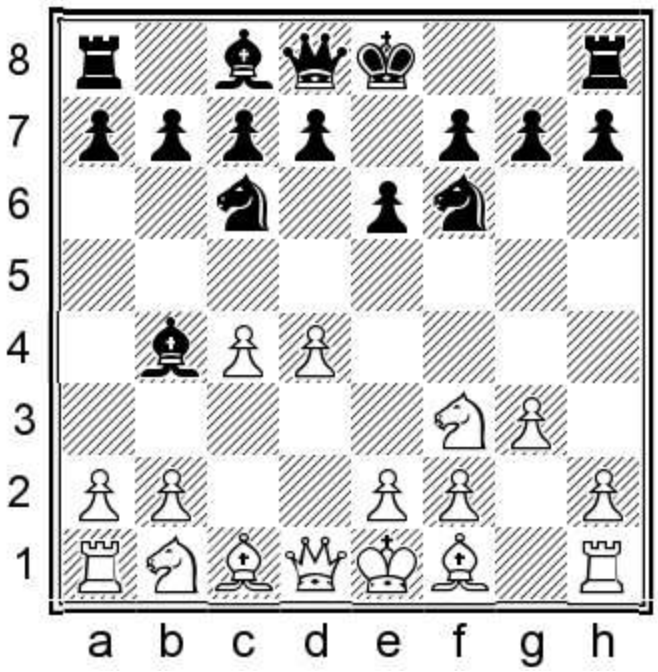
After the text move White has several promising options but my preference is:

12.♗a3 ♖e8 13.♕c2

With wonderful compensation for the pawn.

C2) 4...♗b4†

chesstouring.com



5.♘bd2!?

Again I like this concept even more than 5.♗d2, which would most likely transpose to one of the lines from *GM 1A*.

5...0-0

5...d5 6.♗g2 leads back to variation C1 above.

6.♗g2 d6 7.0-0 ♗xd2

This has been Black's most popular choice, swapping off the bishop before it gets into trouble.

I also considered:

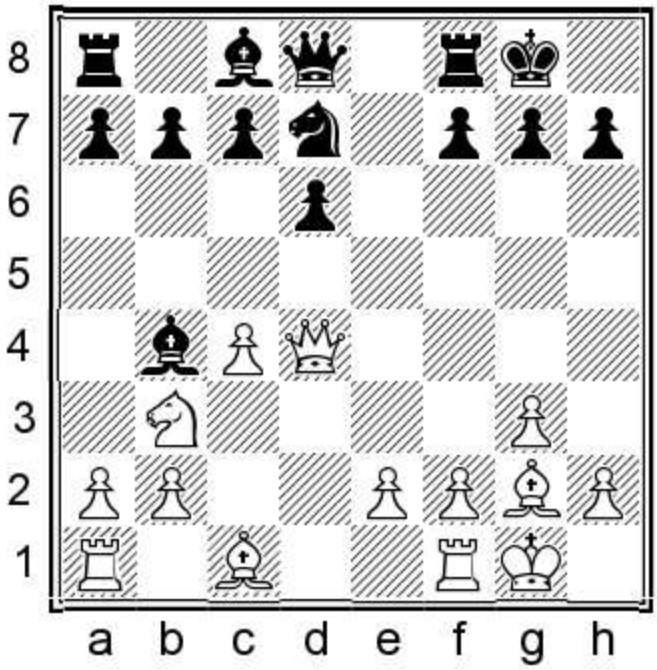
7...e5 8.♘b3!?

It is also worth considering 8.d5 ♗xd2 (otherwise ♘b3 might be awkward for Black) 9.♘xd2 ♘b8, and here I suggest 10.e4N 10...a5 followed by the elegant regrouping: 11.♘b1! ♘a6 12.♘c3± with a pleasant advantage.

8...exd4 9.♘fxd4 ♘xd4 10.♕xd4 ♘d7

The only move, otherwise Black will have serious issues with his dark-squared bishop.

chesstouring.com

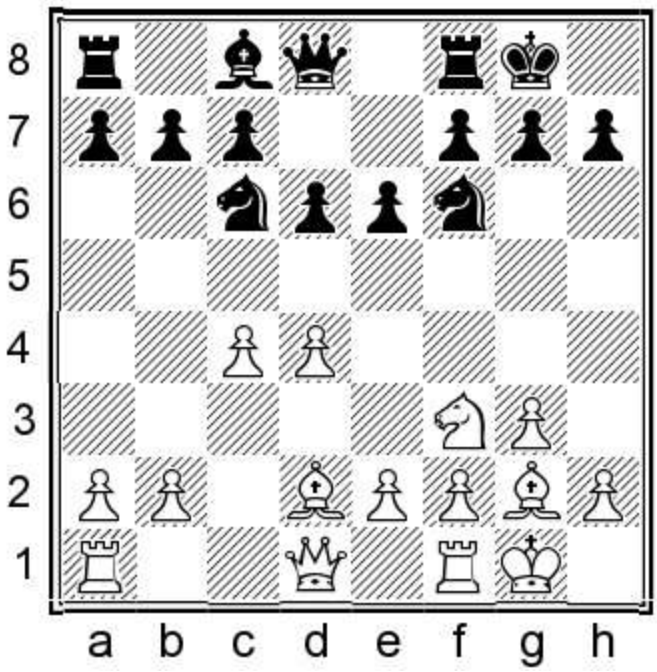


11.a3 ♘c5 12.♘xc5 ♗xc5 13.♕c3 a5 14.b3 ♕e7 15.♗b2 f6 16.e3

Despite some simplifications, White maintains significant pressure in a favourable pawn structure. 16...c6 17.b4 ♗b6 18.b5±

Black had a difficult defensive task in Bai – Chernov, Neustadt an der Weinstrasse 2018.

8.♗xd2



8...e5

Black has tried a few other moves but the text is the only one which warrants any serious analysis. I suggest meeting it with:

chesstouring.com

9.d5 ♘e7 10.♘e1!

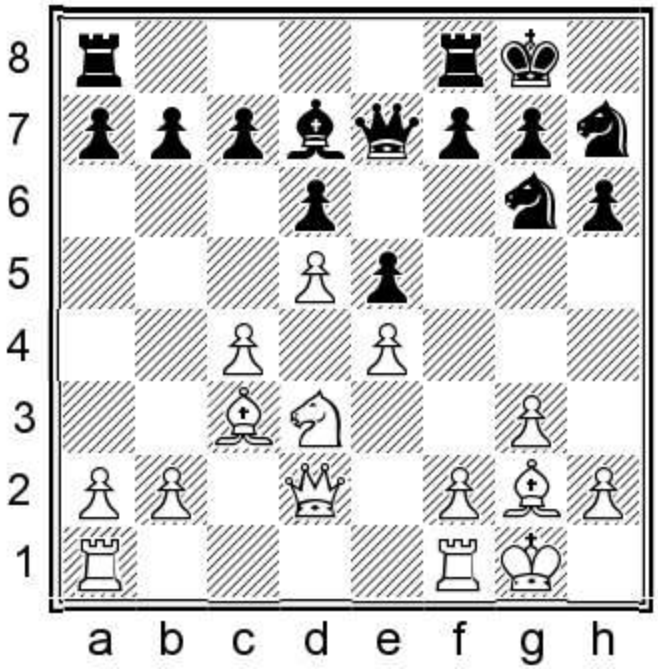
A thematic regrouping for such positions.

10...a5

Here are some other examples:

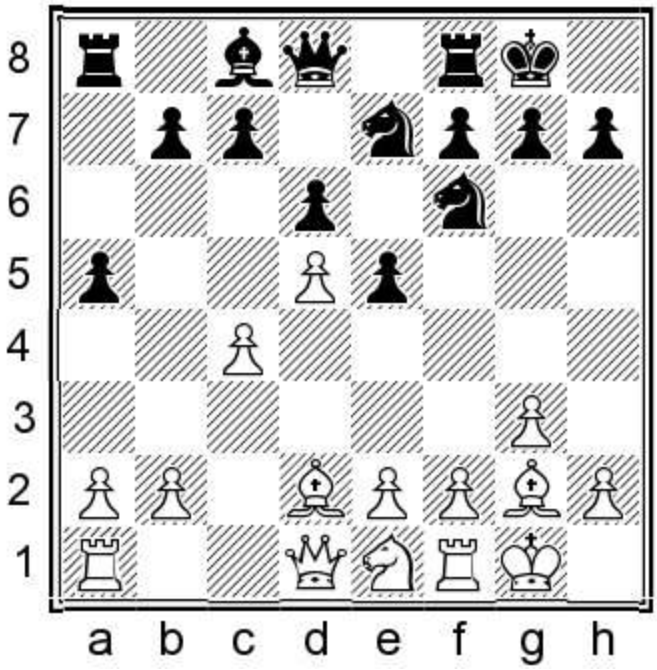
10...h6 occurred in Rodshtein – Stojcevski, Katowice 2017. I believe White's best plan is 11.♗c3!N 11...c6 (or 11...♘h7 12.e3 f5 13.f4 e4 14.♘c2 with a thematic advantage) 12.dxc6 bxc6 13.♕d2 with the better chances.

10...♘g6 11.♗c3 h6 12.♘d3 ♘h7 13.♕d2 ♕e7 14.e4 ♗d7 happened in A. Saric – Jaracz, Nova Gorica 2005. Here I would continue:



15.♖ae1!N Followed by f2-f4, with obvious domination.

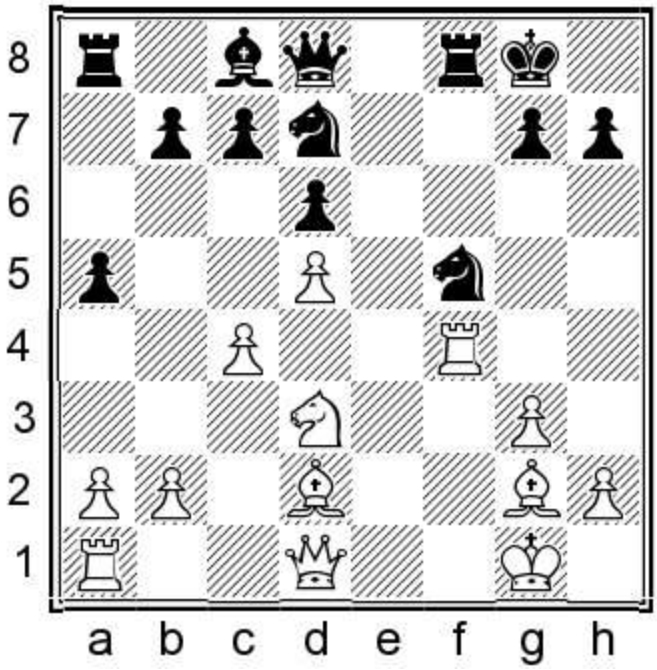
chesstouring.com



11.e4 ♘d7 12.♘d3 f5?!

Black tries to find counterplay, but he should have accepted that he was worse and tried to play more solidly.

13.exf5 ♘xf5 14.f4 exf4 15.♖xf4±



The opening of the position clearly favoured White in Protopopova – Osmak, Moscow 2017.

Conclusion

Black's double knight development is a bit unusual but not so bad, especially if Black takes the

chessbooking.com

opportunity to transpose to other openings when the time is right. 3.♘f3 d5?! is an example of how he should not handle the opening, as White gets a clearly advantageous version of a Chigorin.

We then looked at a couple of somewhat more reliable options. 3...d6 4.♘c3 leads to something resembling the Old Indian. 4...♗g4 is not the best way for Black to handle the opening, since 5.d5! gives White an easy advantage. 4...e5 is more respectable but our typical fianchetto offers fine prospects.

Finally we looked at 3...e6, which we answer with 4.g3. Black has two important options in 4...d5 and 4...♗b4†. The former could easily lead to one of the Catalan lines covered in *GM 1A*, and this seems to be Black's best course of action. An important point is that an early bishop check on b4 should be met by ♘bd2! rather than the more common bishop block, as the placement of Black's knight on c6 is not so well suited to the ensuing positions. White offers a pawn sacrifice when playing in this way, but it is well worth it for the initiative he gains in return.

chesstouring.com

Chapter 25

Minor Lines



1...d6

Variation Index

1.d4 d6 2.c4 e5

3.♘c3

A) 3...♘c6 464

B) 3...exd4 4.♕xd4 468

B1) 4...♘f6 468

B2) 4...♘c6 5.♕d2 470

B21) 5...♘f6 470

B22) 5...g6 473

B23) 5...♗e6 6.b3 ♘f6 7.e4 476

B231) 7...a5 478

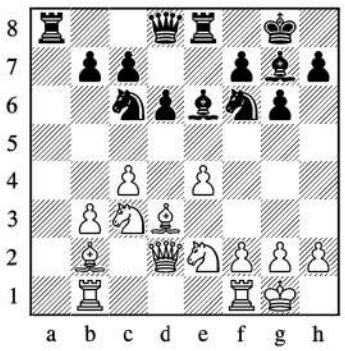
B232) 7...g6 480

A) note to 5...g6



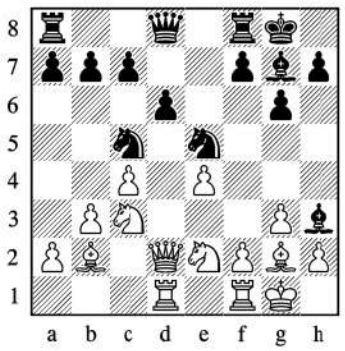
9.h6!?N

B231) after 13...♖e8



14.♘d1!N

B232) after 13...♗h3



14.♗a3!N

chesstouring.com

1.d4 d6 2.c4

This time I decided to avoid 2.♘f3, after which 2...♘f6 3.c4 reaches a position which I am no longer covering against the Old Indian, while 2...♗g4 is another serious option. Once again, my main motivation was the desire to explore new variations, rather than any specific problems with my previous recommendations.

2...e5

Other moves do not require serious discussion. For instance, 2...♘f6 takes us back to Chapter 22, while 2...g6 will invariably lead to either the Modern or the King's Indian. Finally, 2...♘d7 3.♘c3 is almost certain to transpose to one of the major systems analysed elsewhere in the repertoire.

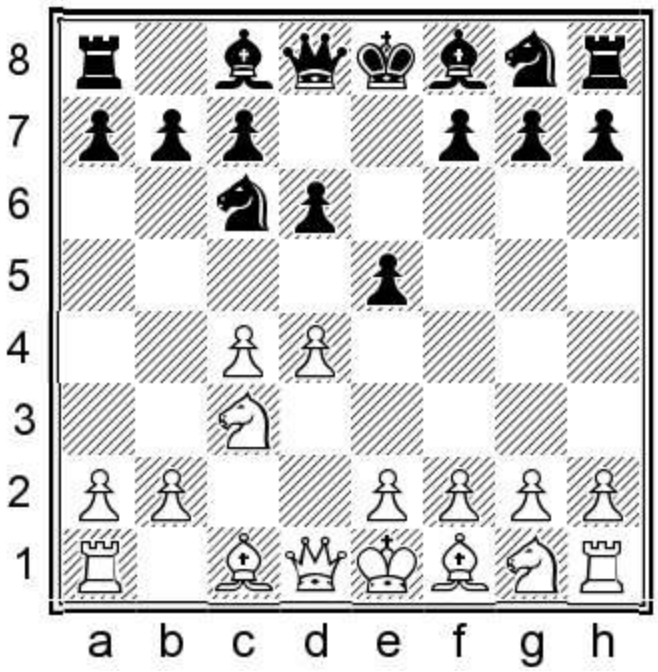
3.♘c3

I believe this is White's most promising option. We will start by analysing **A)** 3...♘c6 before tackling the main line of **B)** 3...exd4.

3...♘f6 leads to the Old Indian: see variation B of Chapter 22 on page 419.

3...♘d7 has been played in lots of games but it has little independent significance: after 4.♘f3 the play will almost always transpose to one of the King's Indian, Modern or Old Indian Defences.

A) 3...♘c6



This move has been played quite a lot, but it looks pretty dubious to me.

4.d5 ♘ce7

Other retreats are worse, for instance:

chesstouring.com

4...♘b8?! 5.e4

Compared to the well-known theoretical line of 1.d4 d6 2.c4 e5 3.d5 (rather than 3.♘c3, as I recommend in this chapter), White enjoys the considerable advantage of two extra tempos. Play might continue as follows.

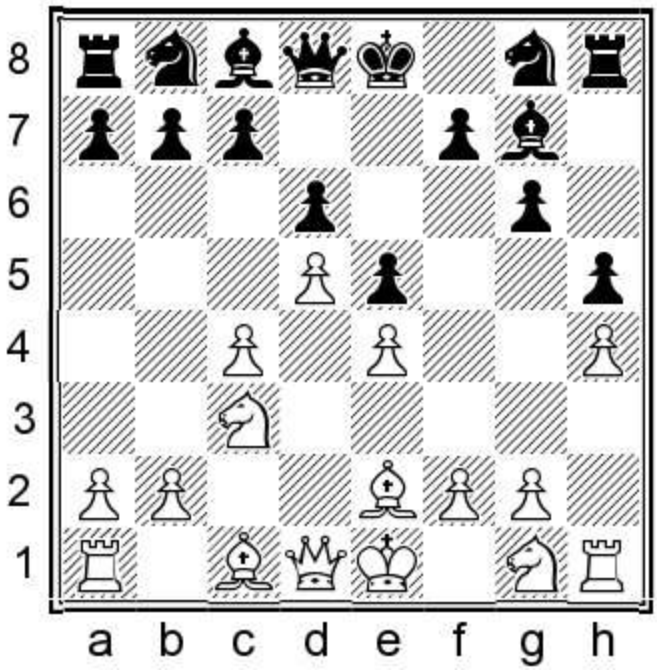
5...g6 6.♗e2 ♗g7 7.h4!

I am always a big fan of this idea in such positions.

7...h5

7...h6?! 8.h5 g5 occurred in Poddubnyi – Chunihin, Krasnodar 2003, and now I would prefer 9.g4!N± to seal up the kingside and the f5-outpost, leaving White with a clear strategic advantage, as he has a free hand to develop his queenside play.

The text move was played in Hadraba – Prokop, Klatovy 1997. My improvement is:



8.♘f3N 8...♘f6 9.♘g5 0-0 10.f3

With an excellent position for White.

5.e4 g6

Other moves are less challenging, for instance:

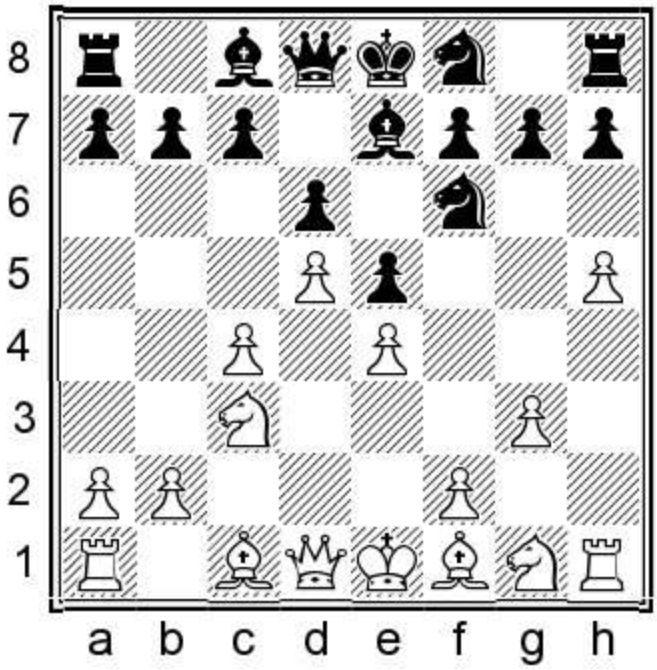
5...♘g6 6.g3!

This thematic reaction highlights the inferior placement of the enemy knight.

6...♗e7 7.h4 ♘f6 8.h5 ♘f8

This position has been reached in two games. I think a logical follow-up would be:

chesstouring.com



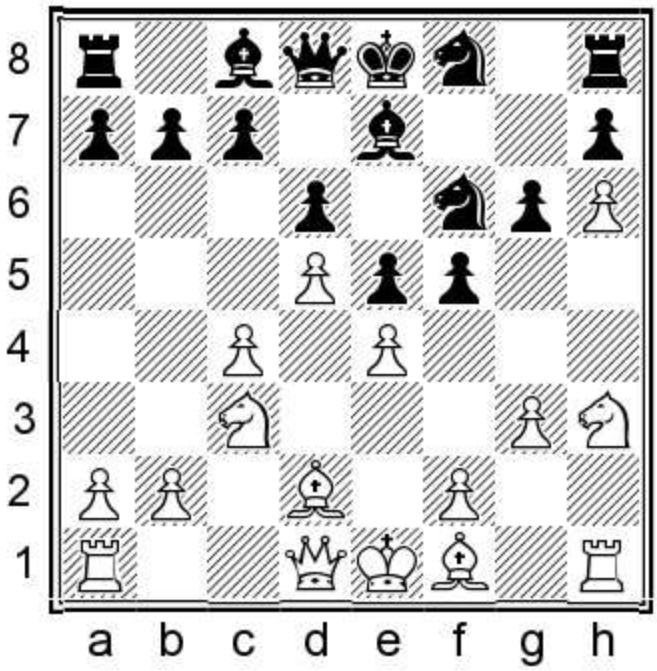
9.h6!?N 9...g6 10.♗e3

White obviously has the better chances. I checked a couple of illustrative lines:

10...♘g4

Or 10...♘8d7 11.g4! ♘c5 12.f3 a5 13.♕d2 c6 14.♘h3 with excellent play for White.

11.♗d2 f5 12.♘h3 ♘f6



13.exf5! gxf5

13...♗xf5 14.f3± is hardly an improvement for Black.

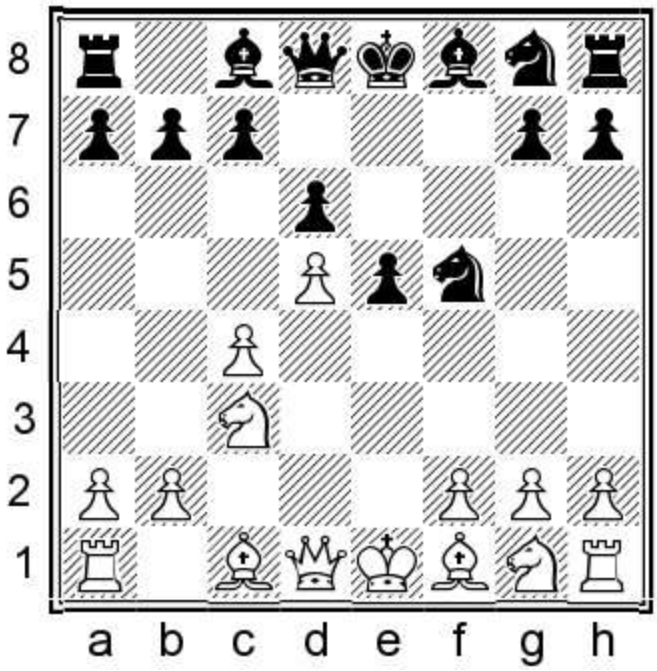
14.♕c2 ♘g6 15.0-0-0 0-0 16.f3

White is clearly better.

5...f5 6.exf5 ♘xf5

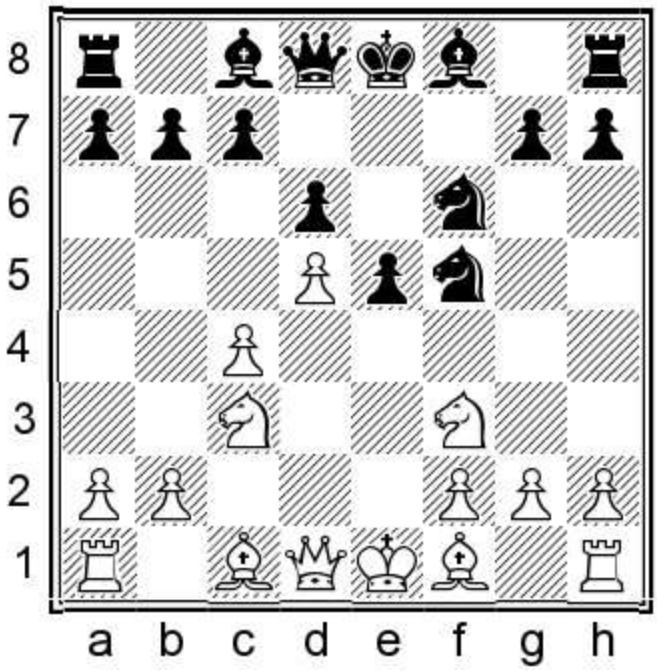
chesstouring.com

6...♗xf5 has been played three times; I suggest 7.♘ge2!N, heading for g3 with gain of tempo, while establishing full control over the key e4-square. After 7...♘f6 8.♗g5 ♕d7 9.♘g3 ♗g6 10.♗d3± White is much better.



7.♘f3 ♘f6

7...♗e7 8.♗d3 ♘f6 9.0-0 0-0 has occurred in two games. I suggest the simple 10.h3N, not only taking control over the g4-square, but also preparing aggressive action with g2-g4 should the position warrant it. Play may continue 10...♘d7 11.♗c2 g6 12.♘e4 with the better game for White. 7...g6 8.♗d3 ♗h6 can be met by the simple 9.♗xh6 ♘gxh6 10.♕d2 ♘f7 11.0-0-0 (11.h4!?N might also be worth considering) and White obtained a promising position in Stojnic – Soln, Bled 1996.



8.h3!N

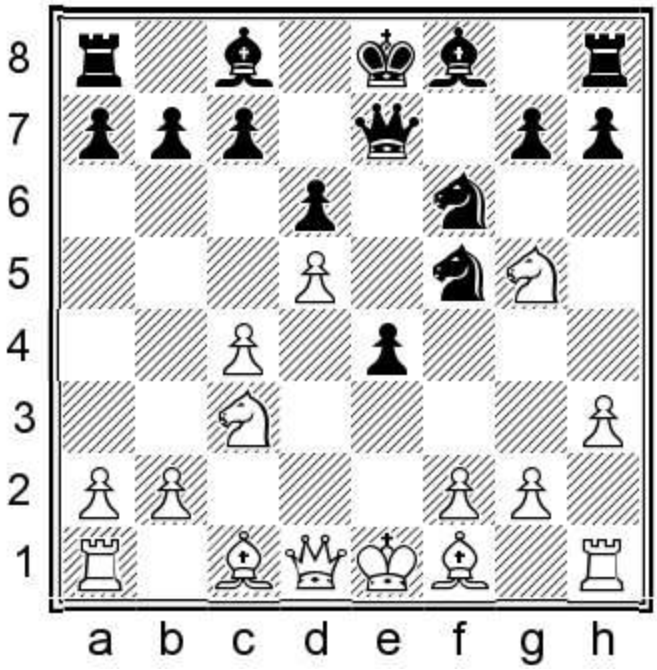
All games have continued with the natural 8.♗d3, which also seems favourable for White, but the

text move seems even better. White's idea is to prepare g2-g4.

8...e4

This seems like Black's best try, as 8...g6 9.g4 ♘e7 10.♗e3 ♗g7 11.♕d2± and 8...c5 9.dxc6 bxc6 10.g4 ♘e7 11.♗d3± both leave him clearly worse.

9.♘g5 ♕e7



10.♗e2! g6

Obviously 10...h6? would be met by a nasty check on h5.

11.g4 ♘h4 12.♕a4† ♗d7 13.♘b5±

White's advantage is obvious.

Finally, it is worth mentioning:

5...♘f6

This should not be a good version of the King's Indian for Black, but in order to maximize his chances White has to be aggressive.

6.h4! g6

6...♘g6 was played in Bareev – Riff, Ajaccio (blitz) 2007, and after 7.g3 the position was similar to the 5...♘g6 line analysed above. Although White has good chances there, the immediate 7.h5!N would have been even more accurate, since 7...♘f4? runs into 8.g3! ♘4xh5 9.♖xh5 ♗g4 10.♗e2 and White wins material.

7.♗e2 h5

7...♗g7 has been played in a few games, but for some reason White always refrained from the natural 8.h5N. A possible continuation is 8...♘xh5 9.♗xh5 gxh5 10.♕xh5 ♘g6 11.♘ge2 when White's advantage is obvious.

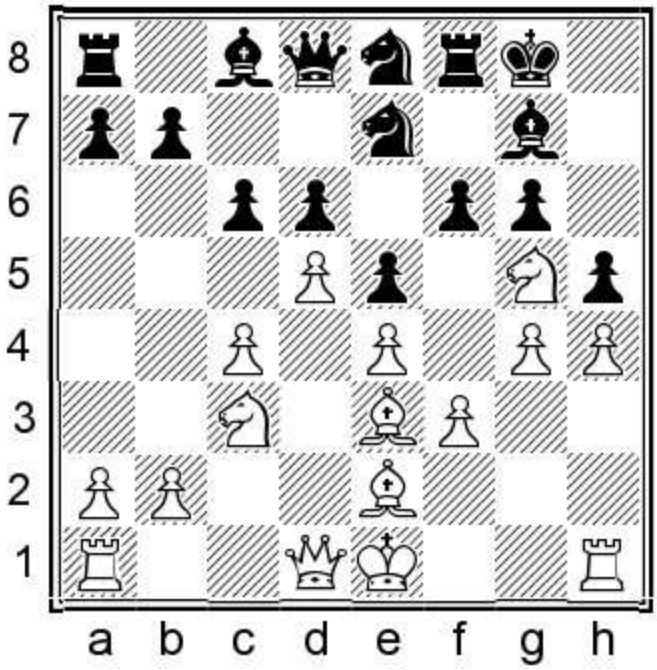
8.♘f3 ♗g7 9.♘g5 0-0 10.f3 c6 11.♗e3

White is obviously better, since Black is unable to create his usual counterplay on the kingside.

11...♘e8 12.g4 f6

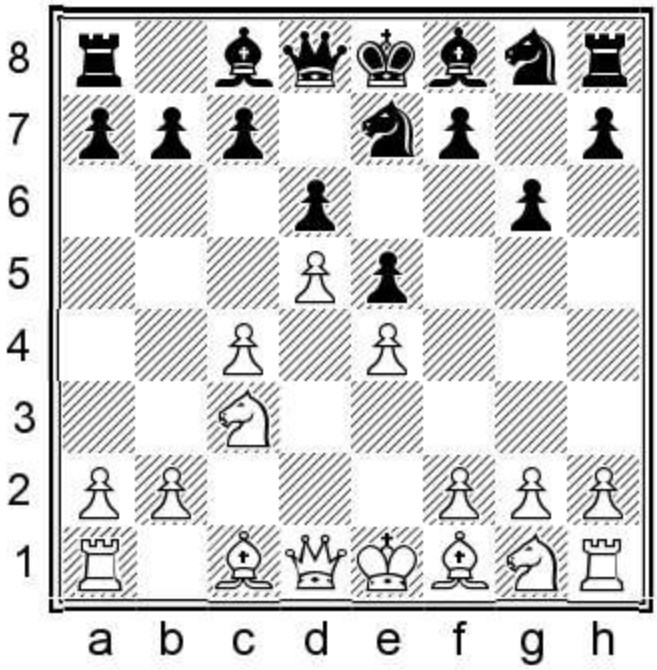
chesstouring.com

In Ortega – Ftacnik, Cienfuegos 1980, White should have played:



13.♘e6! ♗xe6 14.dxe6

White's kingside attacking chances, which have been improved by the elimination of Black's light-squared bishop, are much more significant than the vulnerability of the e6-pawn.



6.f4!?

I find this move rather attractive. The main justification for it is the misplaced knight on e7, which hampers Black's efforts to establish control over the e5-square.

6...♗g7

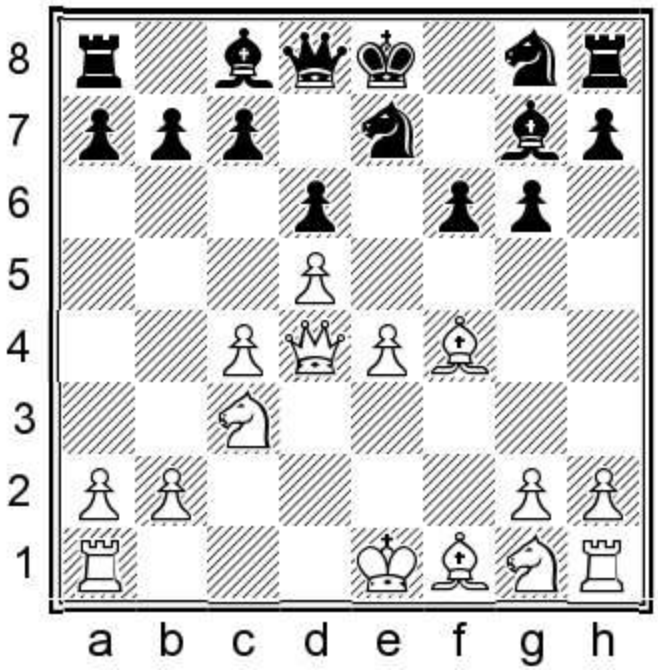
The alternative runs into a powerful response:

6...exf4 7.♕d4! f6 8.♗xf4 ♗g7N

This untested move seems to me to be the most natural and critical continuation.

chesstouring.com

8...h6?! 9.♗e2 ♗g7 was played in Jimenez Martinez – Lara Lopez, Cullera 2005, when 10.c5!N would have been great for White.



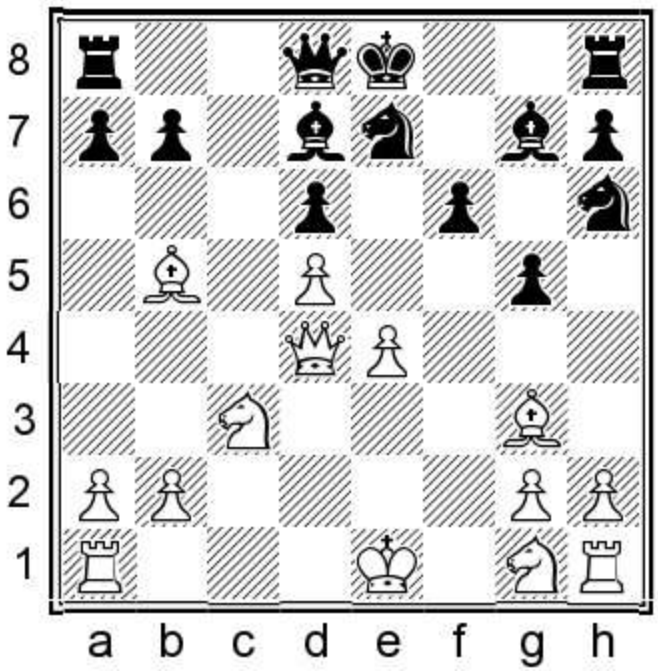
9.c5!

This poses serious problems to Black, as the following lines illustrate.

9...g5 10.♗g3 ♘h6

Black has no time for 10...a6 in view of 11.♘f3 ♘h6 12.cxd6 cxd6 13.♕b4 ♘f7 14.♘d4 0-0 15.♘e6 ♗xe6 16.dxe6 ♘e5 17.0-0-0 with a huge advantage for White.

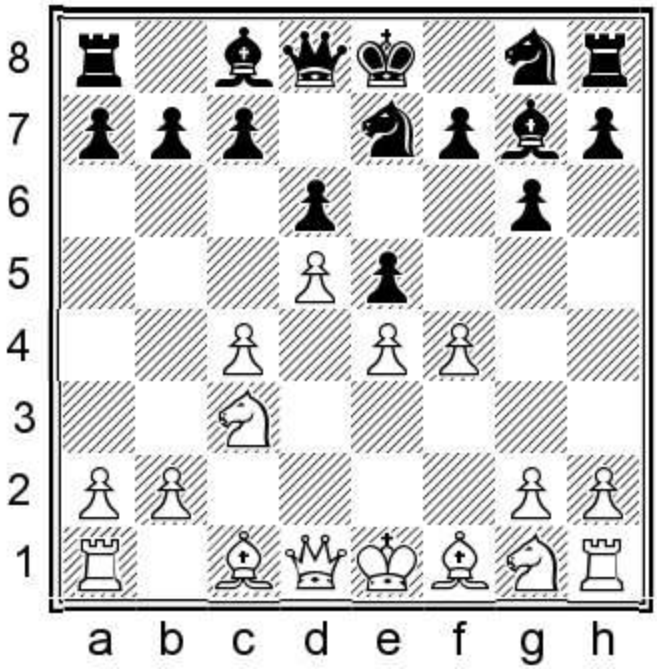
11.♗b5† ♗d7 12.cxd6 cxd6



13.♗xd6 ♗xb5 14.♘xb5 0-0 15.♕b4 ♖e8 16.♘e2±

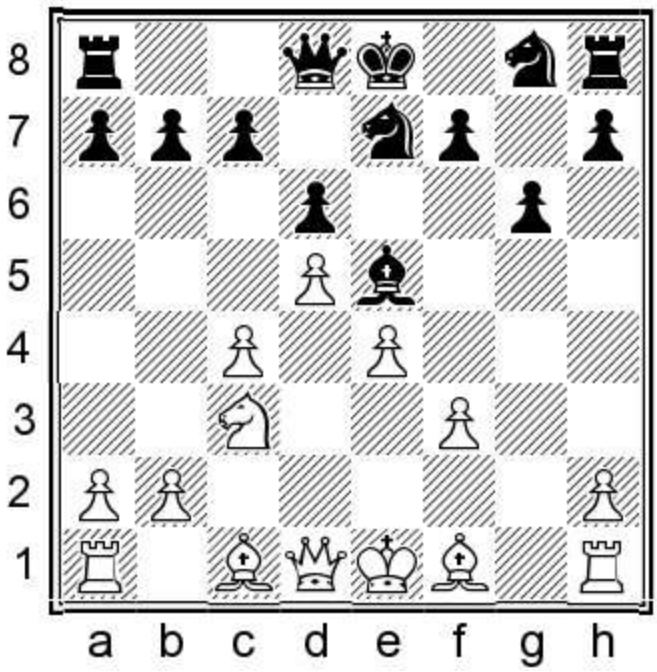
Black has no compensation for the pawn.

chesstouring.com



7.♘f3 exf4

In the event of 7...♗g4 8.fxe5 ♗xf3 I like 9.gxf3!? ♗xe5, when White utilized his central pawn mass and bishop pair extremely convincingly in the following game:



10.f4 ♗g7 11.♕e2 c6 12.♗g2 ♕c7 13.0-0 ♘h6 14.e5± Barlov – Perez Aleman, Mesa 1992.

8.♗xf4 ♘f6

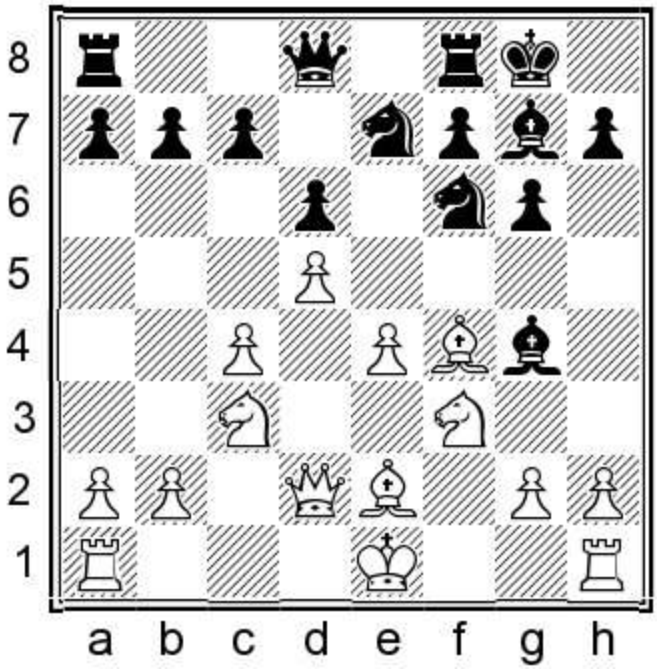
8...♗g4 should be met with 9.♕d2N with a likely transposition to the main line below.

9.♕d2 0-0 10.♗e2 ♗g4

We have been following Mellado Trivino – Johansson, Barbera del Valles 1996. White should

chessloving.com

definitely have continued with:



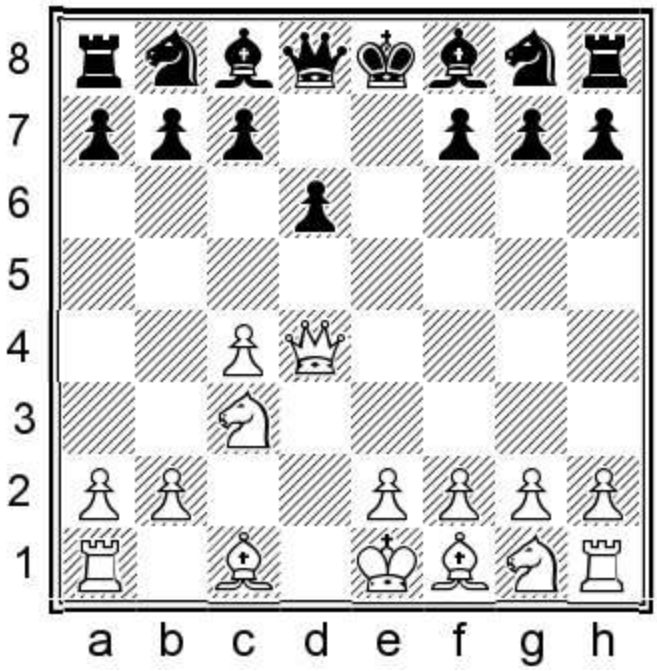
11.0-0-0!N

The position is complicated but White enjoys clearly better chances. One illustrative line is:

11...♘d7 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.gxf3 f5 14.h4! ♘f6 15.♗g5

With promising play for White.

B) 3...exd4 4.♕xd4



Black has two main options. **B1)** 4...♘f6 is a reasonable move, but usually Black cannot resist the temptation to gain a tempo against the queen with **B2)** 4...♘c6.

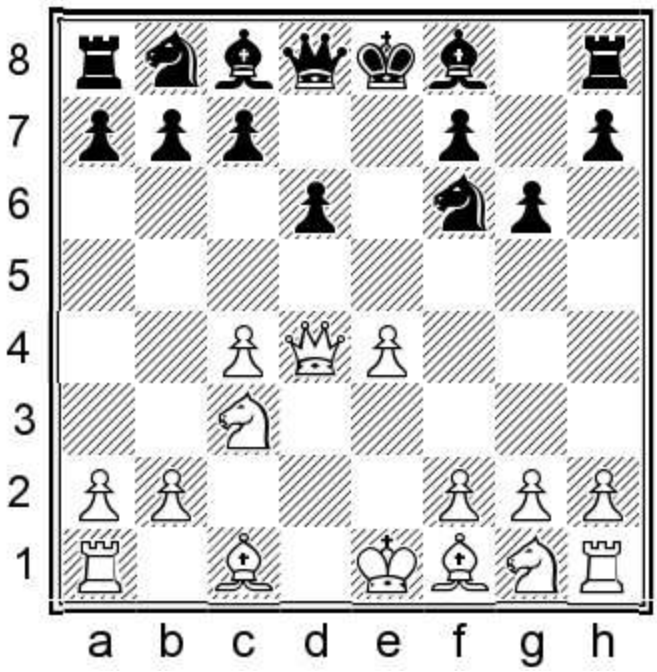
chesstouring.com

B1) 4...♘f6 5.e4

This is only White's fifth choice in terms of popularity, but it scores better than the other moves and I like the positions to which it leads.

5...g6

In most games Black has preferred 5...♘c6, when 6.♕d2 transposes to the later variation B21. The text move is an independent option but it does not impress me.



6.♗g5!

Usually the earlier ...♘c6 would force the queen back to d2, where it would block this method of developing, but here we can exploit the delayed development of the b8-knight to post our bishop on an active square.

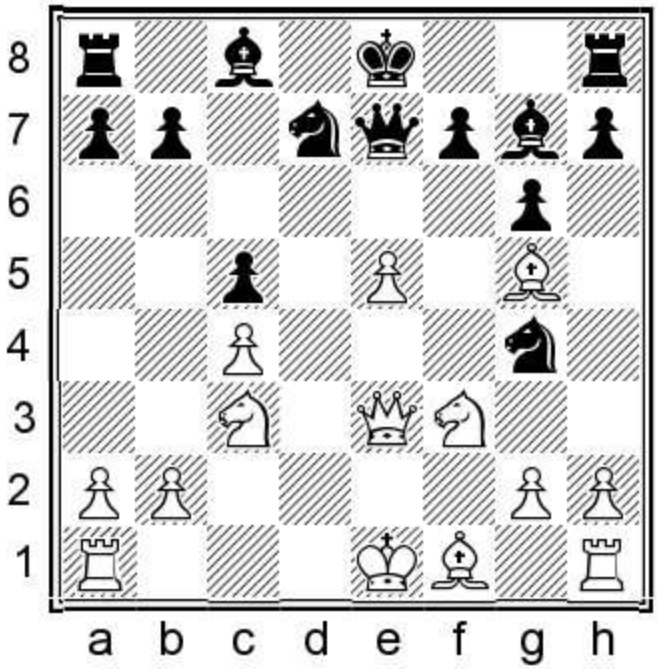
6...♘bd7

Black's problem is that 6...♗g7? runs into: 7.e5! ♕e7 (7...dxe5 8.♕xd8† ♔xd8 9.♘d5 ♘bd7 10.0-0-0 was winning for White in Gouliev – Filip, Hollabrunn 1998) 8.♘d5 dxe5 9.♕h4 ♘xd5 10.♗xe7 ♘xe7 Black clearly does not have enough compensation for the queen, even though he managed to salvage a draw in Stefansson – Cu. Hansen, Moscow 1989.

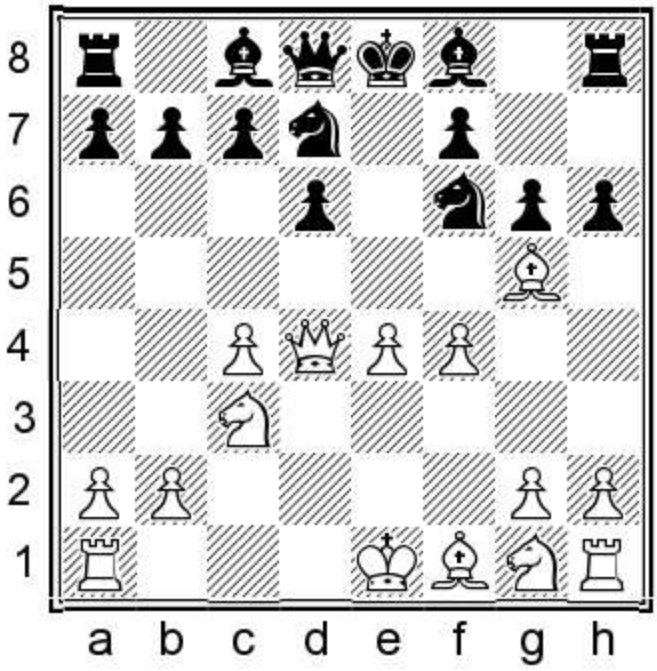
7.f4 h6

7...♗g7 enables White to seize the initiative with: 8.e5! dxe5 9.fxe5 ♕e7 10.♘f3!? (10.♘d5 ♘xd5 11.♗xe7 ♘xe7 12.♘f3 ♘c6 13.♕h4 leaves Black without enough compensation for his material disadvantage, but I like the text move even more) 10...c5 11.♕e3 ♘g4 In Tran – Tu, Can Tho 2012, White should have played:

chesstouring.com



12.♕d2!N 12...♕e6 13.♘d5 ♕c6 14.0-0-0 With an overwhelming advantage.

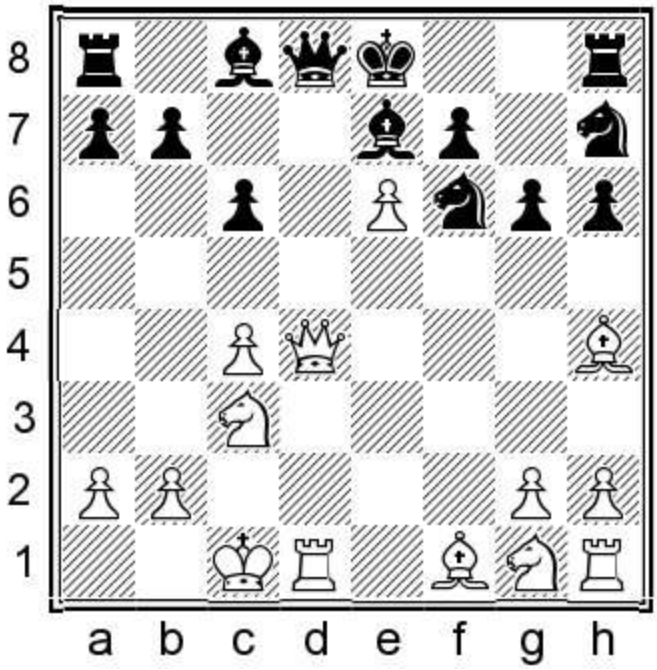


8.♗h4 c5

8...♗g7 was played in Sher – Azmaiparashvili, Volgodonsk 1983, when 9.♘f3N 9...0-0 10.0-0-0 ♕e8 11.♖e1 would have maintained White's advantage.

8...c6 9.0-0-0 ♗e7 has also been tried, but once again 10.e5! is extremely strong. 10...dxe5 11.fxe5 ♘h7 12.e6 ♘df6 was seen in Alburt – D. Gurevich, Newark 1995, when the most convincing continuation would have been:

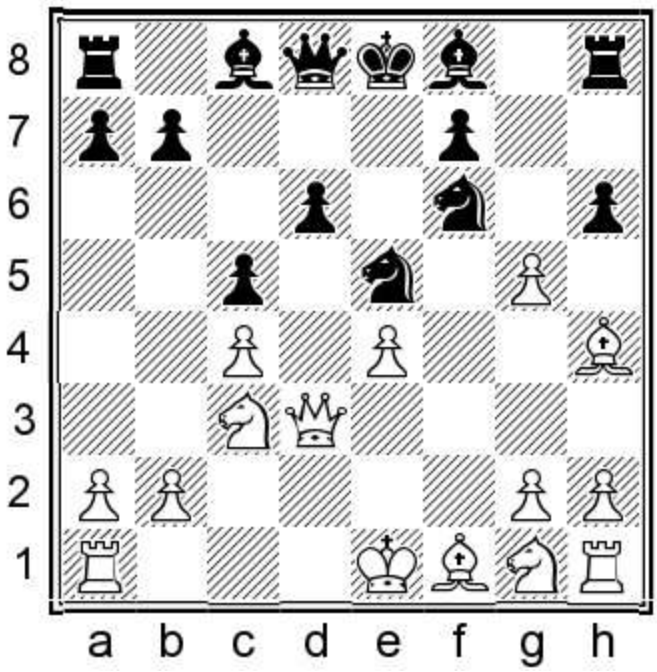
chesstouring.com



13.♕e5!N 13...♕b6 14.♗d3 ♗xe6 15.♗xg6 With a large advantage.

9.♕d3 g5 10.fxg5 ♘e5

10...♘g4 11.♘f3 ♘de5 12.♕d2 ♗e7 was seen in Hort – Hickl, Bad Neuenahr 1991, when, among other promising ideas, 13.♗g3N 13...hxg5 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.0-0-0± would have led to a position where Black's light-square weaknesses should tell.



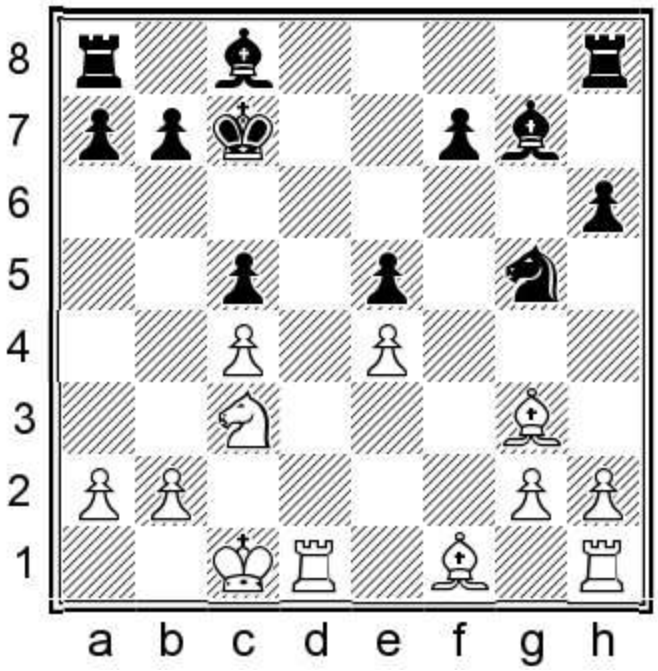
11.♕d2 ♘h7 12.♘f3 ♘xg5

Black has regained the pawn but he suffers from positional weaknesses.

13.♘xe5 dxe5 14.♕xd8† ♔xd8 15.0-0-0† ♔c7 16.♗g3 ♗g7

chesstouring.com

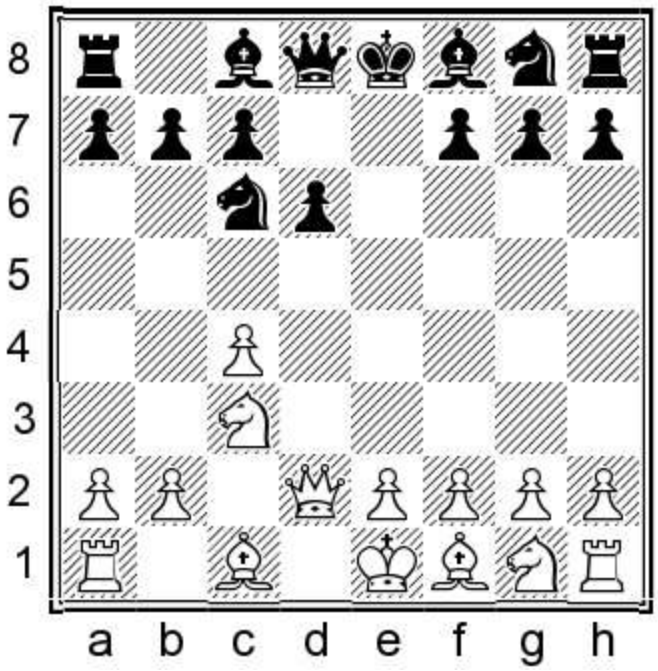
We have been following Bente – Sulskis, Warsaw 2005. A natural and strong continuation would have been:



17.♗e2N

Followed by ♖hf1, with a clear positional advantage for White.

B2) 4...♘c6 5.♕d2



This is the most important part of the chapter, and I became attracted to it after examining the game L'Ami – Mamedyarov (see page 476). White's play really impressed me and this was an important factor in deciding to play 2.c4 instead of 2.♘f3.

There are three important options to consider: **B21)** 5...♘f6, **B22)** 5...g6 and **B23)** 5...♗e6.

chesstouring.com

B21) 5...♘f6

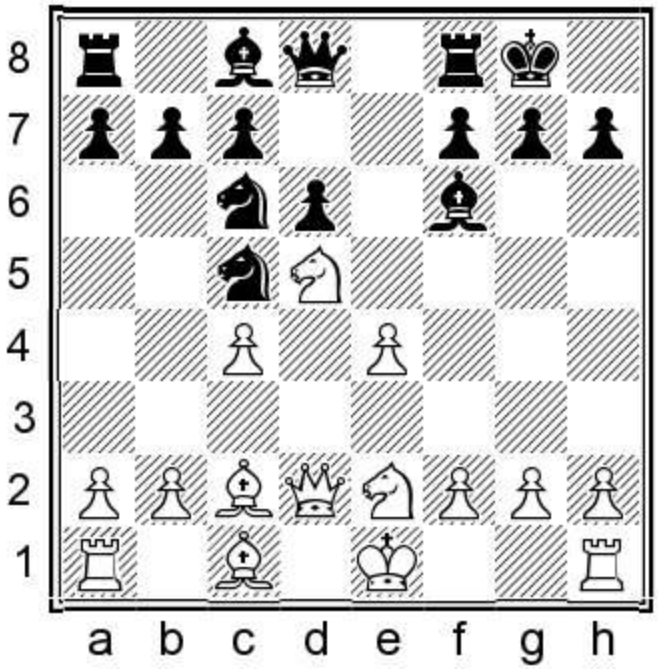
This has been Black's most popular move by a wide margin, but I believe I found a convincing line against it.

6.e4!

6.b3 has been much more popular but 6...a5! is a good answer, for instance: 7.♗b2 a4 8.♖d1 (8.♘xa4? d5! gives Black a vicious initiative) 8...axb3 9.axb3 g6 Black will follow up with ...♗g7, ...0-0 and ...♘d7-c5, with a satisfactory position.

6...g6

I also checked 6...♗e7 7.♗d3 0-0 8.♘ge2 ♘d7 9.♘d5!? (9.0-0N 9...♘c5 10.b3 ♗f6 11.♗a3!± is perhaps a simpler way to maintain a pleasant edge) 9...♘c5 10.♗c2 ♗f6 as played in Rawlings – Leupold, corr. 2014. White should have continued:



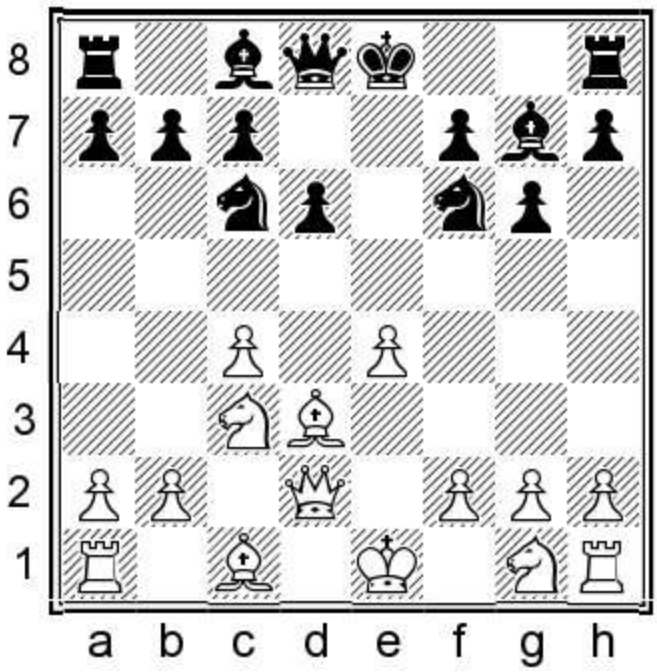
11.0-0N 11...a5 12.♘xf6† ♕xf6 13.♘c3 White should be better; for instance, 13...♗e6 14.b3 a4 15.♗b2 and Black does not have much to offer against White's bishop pair.

7.♗d3

Once again, most games have continued 7.b3, but I see no reason to postpone the development of the kingside pieces. I guess most players have avoided the text move because of the possibility of ...♘e5, but this should not worry us at all. One of the recurring themes of this chapter is that White does not mind allowing his light-squared bishop to be traded on d3 for an enemy knight in this structure.

7...♗g7

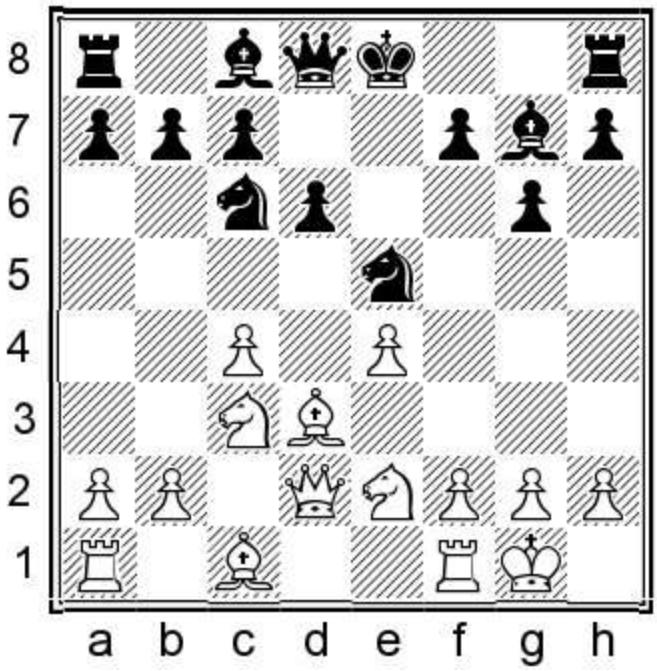
chesstouring.com



8.♘ge2 0-0

I checked two other possibilities:

8...♘g4 9.0-0 ♘ge5 was played in Topel – Lubbe, Tromso (ol) 2014. Black's knight manoeuvre looks natural but is actually not so impressive, and White should have continued:

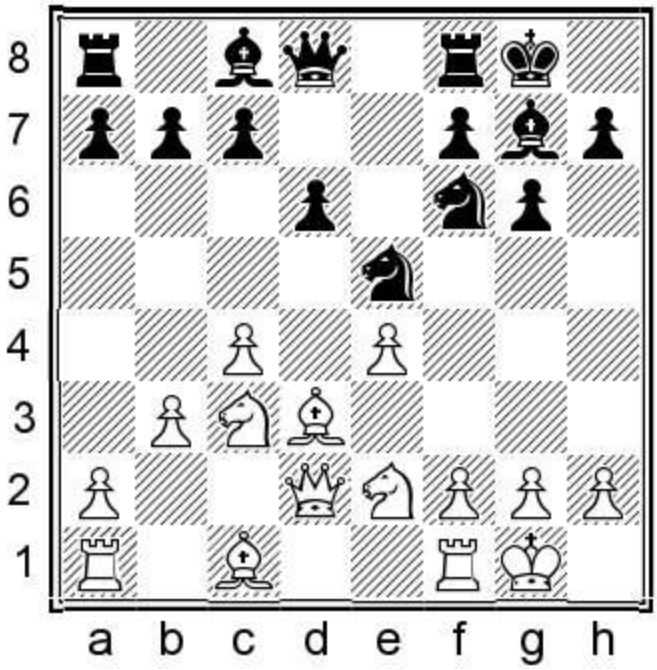


10.b3N 10...0-0 11.♗b2 White has a pleasant position and the potential loss of the bishop pair is of little consequence. For instance: 11...f5 12.exf5 ♘xd3 13.♕xd3 ♗xf5 14.♕d2±

8...♘e5 9.0-0 0-0 10.b3

Here too, White is happy to allow an exchange on d3.

chesstouring.com



10...♘xd3

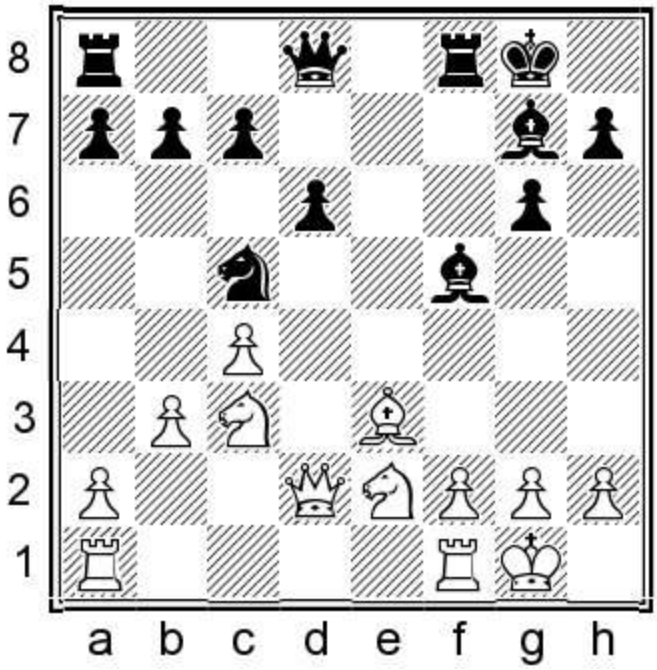
If Black delays with 10...♖e8, White may avoid the exchange with 11.♗c2, leaving the e5-knight with an uncertain future. 11...b6 was seen in Bouaziz – Aung, Istanbul (ol) 2000, and now the simple 12.♗b2N 12...♗b7 13.f3± would have maintained a pleasant edge for White.

11.♕xd3 ♘d7

11...♖e8 12.f3 ♘d7 13.♗e3 ♘e5 14.♕d2 a6 15.♖ac1± was good for White in Makoveev – Semenov, Gelendzhik 2015.

12.♗e3 ♘c5 13.♕d2 f5 14.exf5 ♗xf5

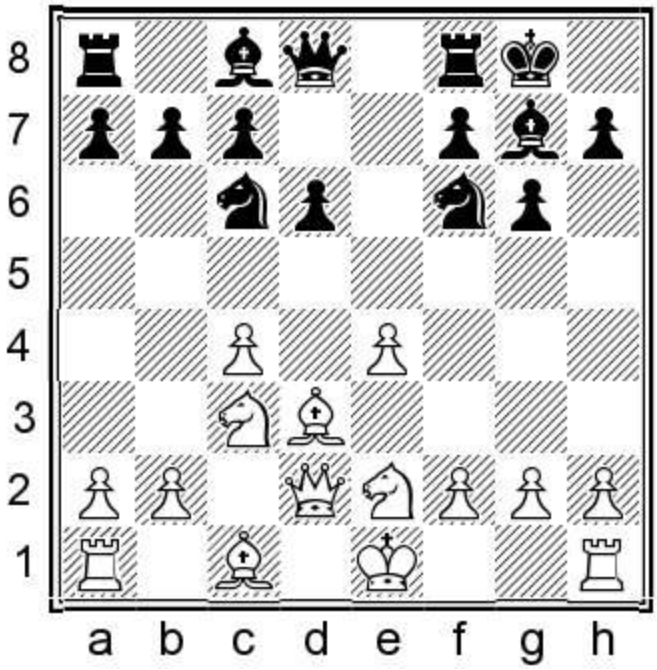
We have been following Wiedenkeller – R. Jones, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010. Here I suggest:



15.♘g3!N 15...♕d7 16.♖ad1±

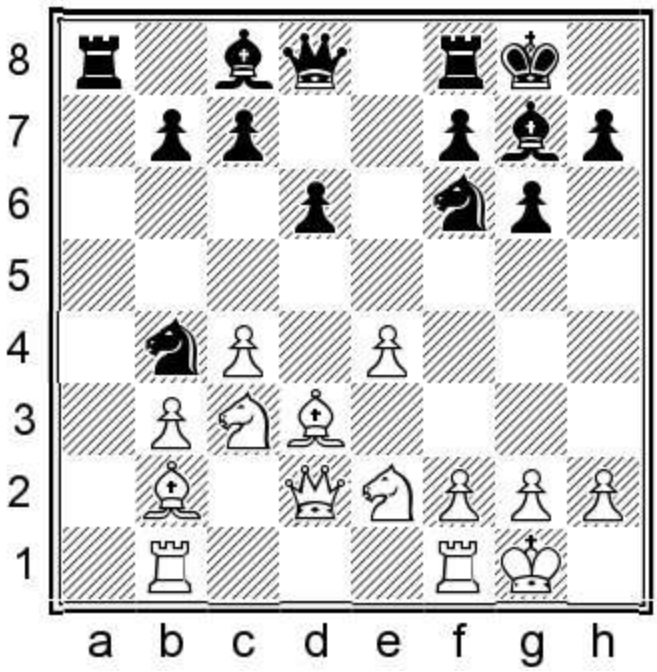
White enjoys a pleasant pull.

chesstouring.com



9.0-0 ♘d7

I also considered: 9...a5 10.b3 a4!?N (10...♗d7 occurred in Zilberstein – Franett, Reno 2004, when the natural 11.♗b2N 11...♘e5 12.♗c2 a4 13.♖ad1± would have been strong for White) The text move looks more challenging than the game continuation, but White is still doing fine after: 11.♖b1 axb3 12.axb3 ♘b4 13.♗b2



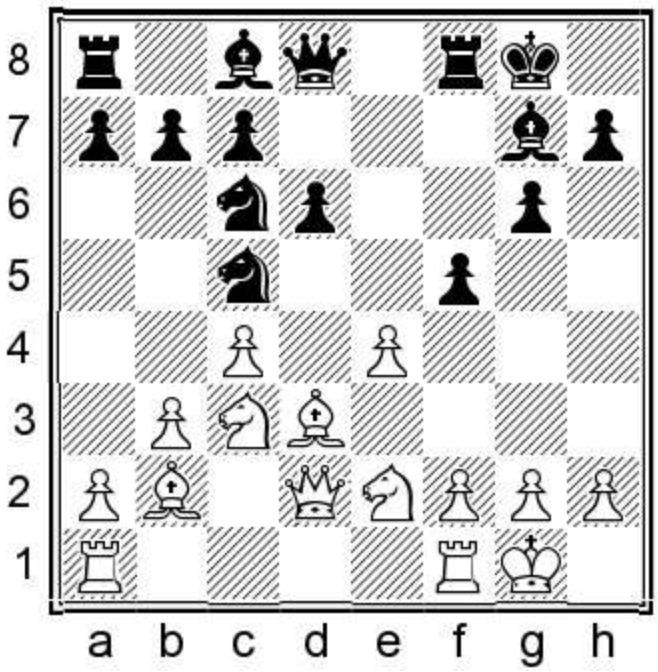
13...c6 14.♖bd1 ♘xd3 Otherwise ♗b1 could have been played next. 15.♕xd3 ♖e8 16.♕c2± White has the more pleasant game, with the d6-pawn acting as a long-term target.

10.b3 ♘c5 11.♗b2 f5

This is a logical continuation of Black's strategy. In Harikrishna – Akobian, Wijk aan Zee 2010, White

chesstouring.com

should have reacted as follows:



12.exf5!N 12...♘b4

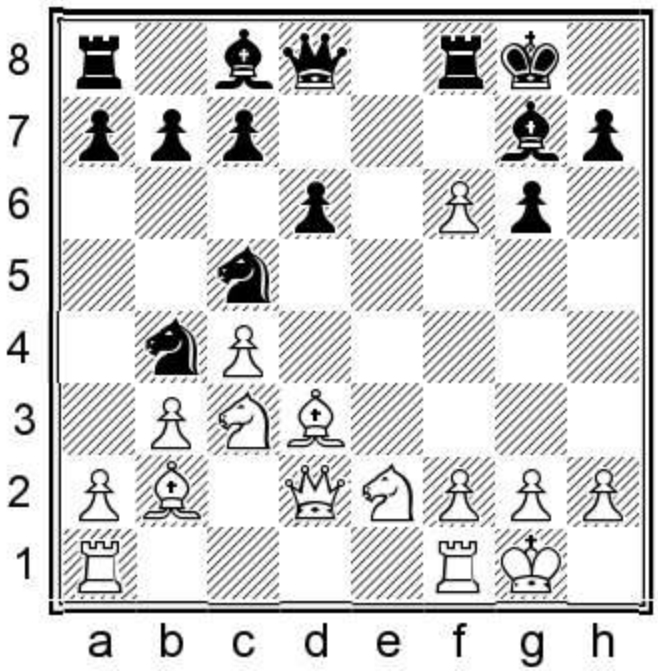
White also maintains the better chances against other options:

12...♘xd3 13.♕xd3 has already been covered in an earlier note on 8...♘g4, with 13...♗xf5 14.♕d2± being the end of my line.

12...♗xf5 13.♗xf5 ♖xf5 14.♘d5± is also pleasant for White.

13.f6!

13.♗b1 ♗xf5 14.♗xf5 ♖xf5 15.♘g3 ♖f7 is less convincing.



chesstouring.com

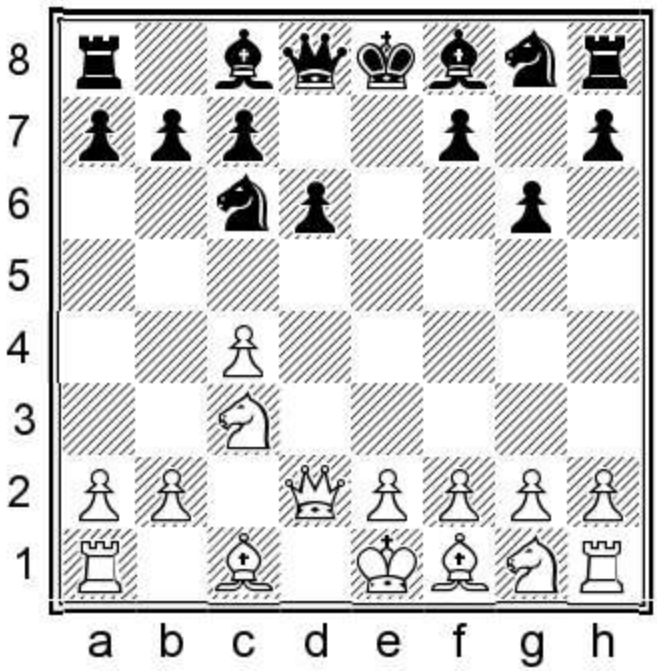
13...♗xf6

13...♕xf6 14.♘a4 ♕e7 15.♗xg7 ♕xg7 16.♘xc5 dxc5 17.♖ad1± also favours White, due to his better pawn structure.

14.♗e4 ♘xe4 15.♘xe4 ♗xb2 16.♕xb2 ♗f5 17.♘4g3±

White enjoys a positional pull due to his favourable pawn structure and safer king.

B22) 5...g6



6.b3

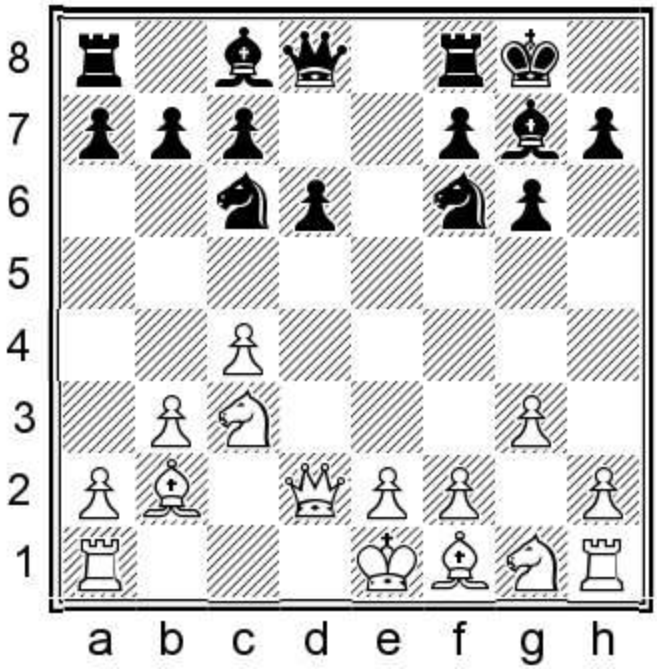
Unlike the previous variation, Black is missing certain tactical resources involving a quick ...d5 here, so there is no need to hurry with e2-e4.

6...♗g7 7.♗b2 ♘f6

7...♘ge7 8.g3 0-0 9.♗g2 looks more passive for Black. A good example continued 9...♗e6 10.♖d1 ♘f5 11.♘f3 ♘fd4 12.♘xd4 ♘xd4 13.♗xb7 ♖b8 14.♗g2± and White was a healthy pawn up in Klekowski – Bartel, Katowice 2017.

8.g3 0-0

chesstouring.com



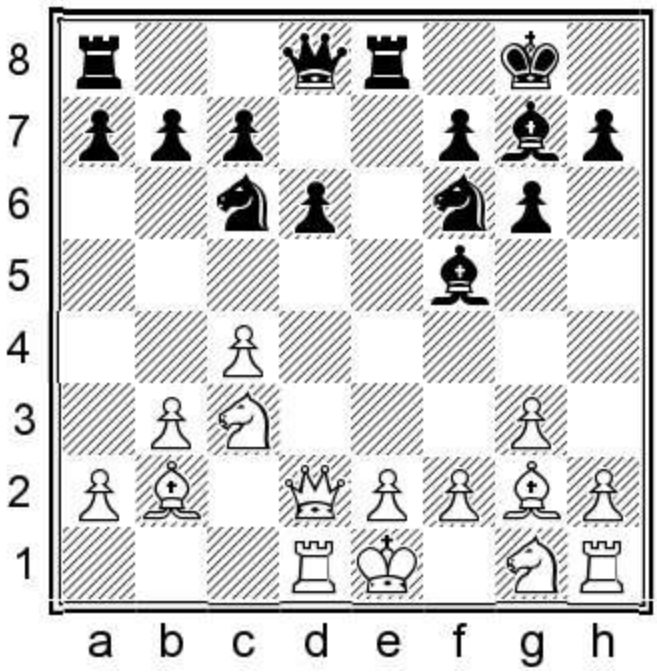
9.♗g2 ♖e8

This has been the most popular continuation. Black has tried all kinds of moves but I will just mention the two main alternatives:

9...♗f5 10.♖d1!

I decided on this rare move after discovering that the more common 10.♘h3 allows Black to initiative complications with 10...d5!?. The critical line seems to be 11.cxd5 ♘xd5 12.♘xd5 ♗xh3 13.♗xh3 ♗xb2 14.♕xb2 ♕xd5 15.0-0 ♖ad8 and although White went on to win in Zaskalski – Sapeta, Wysowa 2005, I don't think he has anything special at this stage.

10...♖e8



11.♘h3!N

chesstouring.com

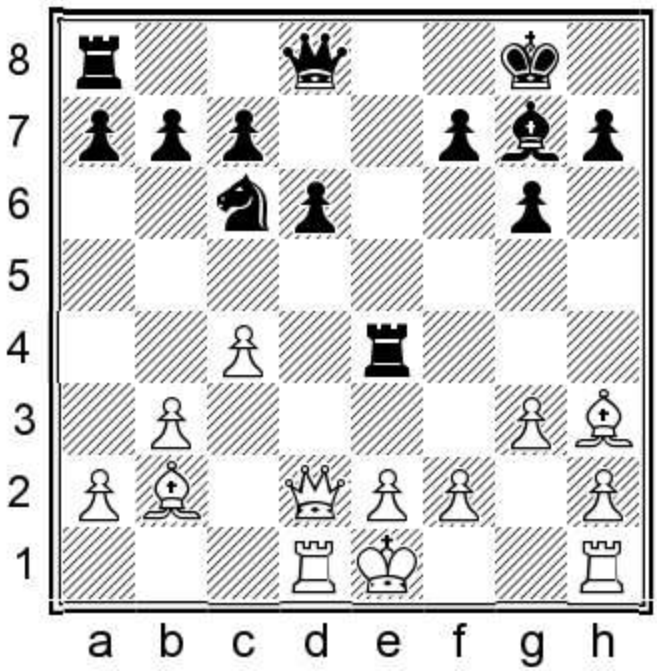
A natural improvement, preparing to castle.

All three of the games from this position have continued with 11.f3, which is too slow, and after 11...a6! 12.e4 b5 13.♘ge2 ♗e6 Black had decent counterplay in Garcia Gonzales – Swanson, Malta (ol) 1980.

11...♘e4

If Black does not do something quickly, White will simply complete development and build upon his positional advantages.

12.♘xe4 ♗xh3 13.♗xh3 ♖xe4



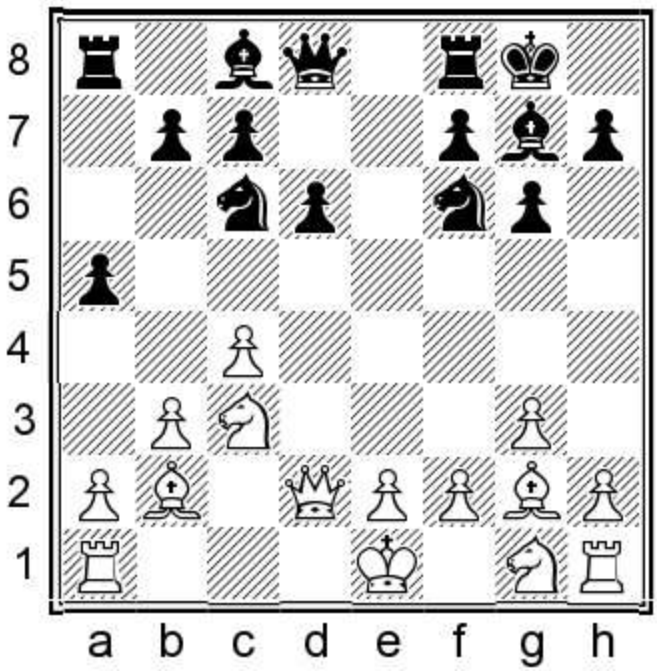
14.♗g2 ♖e8 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.0-0±

White maintains a pleasant edge thanks to his strong light-squared bishop.

9...a5!?

This forces us to make an important decision.

chesstouring.com



10.♘f3!

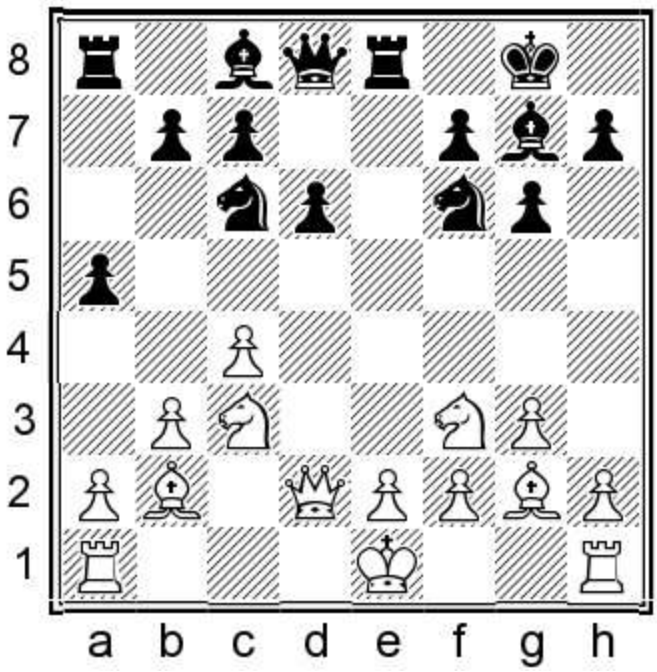
This time I choose a different way of developing the knight, since 10.♘h3 ♘e5 11.0-0 a4 leads to counterplay and great practical results for Black.

10...♖e8

Black has tried two other moves:

10...♗e6 11.♘g5! ♗f5 12.0-0 ♖e8 occurred in Lafuente – Filgueira, Buenos Aires 2005, when the simple 13.♖ad1N 13...h6 14.♘h3 would have maintained an obvious positional pull.

10...♗f5 11.♘h4! is an important move, directed against ...♘e4. 11...♗e6 12.♖c1! Preventing ...a4. 12...♘d7 13.0-0 ♘c5 14.♘d5 ♗xd5 (Black should have settled for 14...♗xb2 15.♕xb2 ♘e5 but after 16.♕d4 White keeps a pleasant advantage) 15.cxd5 ♘e5 16.♗c3 White was clearly better in Nguyen – Senthil, Abu Dhabi 2018.



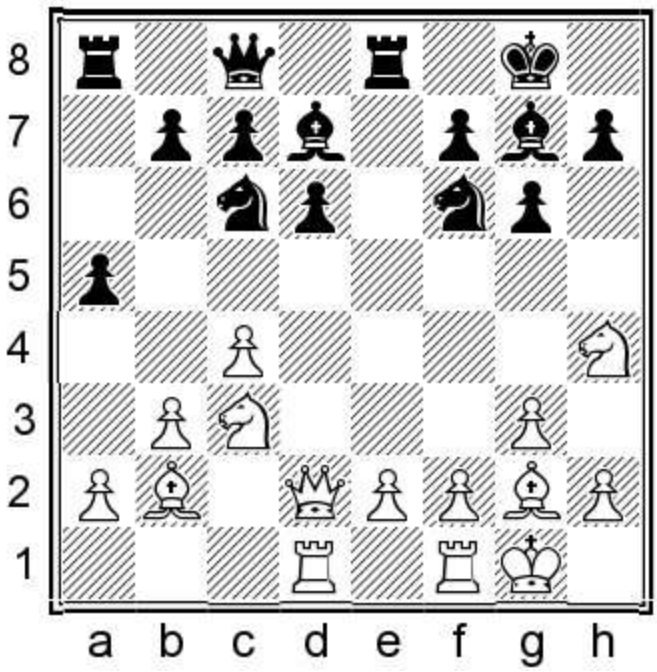
chesstouring.com

11.0-0 ♗f5 12.♘h4! ♗d7

12...♗e6 transposes to the position after 11...♗e6 12.0-0 a5 in the note to Black's 11th move in the main line below.

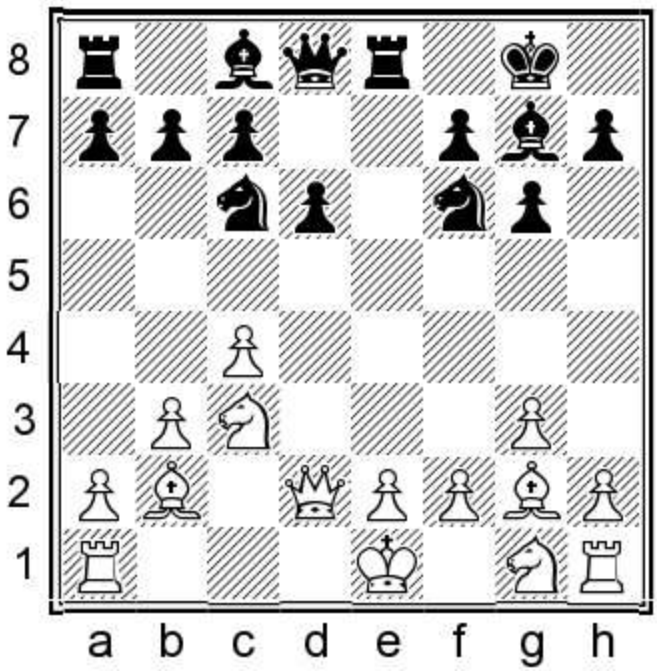
13.♖ad1 ♕c8

In Dreev – Aronian, Dubai (blitz) 2014, this would have been a great moment for:



14.♘d5!N 14...♘xd5 15.cxd5 ♘e5 16.f4 ♘g4 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.e4±

White's advantage is unquestionable.



10.♘f3!

Only this move will do.

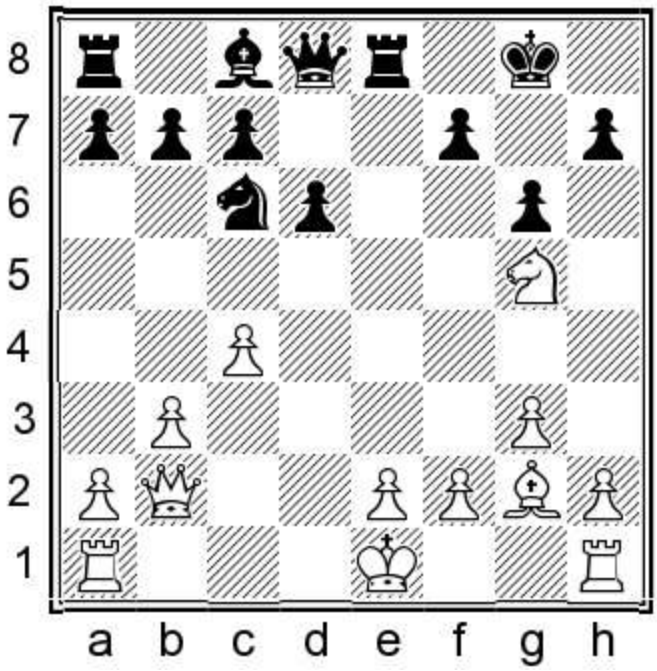
10.♘h3 allows 10...♗xh3! 11.♗xh3 d5 when Black equalizes.

chesstouring.com

10...♗f5

This is Black's first choice by far.

10...♘e4? is never played, but it's important to see why it's a mistake: 11.♘xe4 ♗xb2 12.♕xb2 ♖xe4 13.♘g5 ♖e8



14.♘e4! ♘e5 15.0-0 White is clearly better.

11.♘h4!

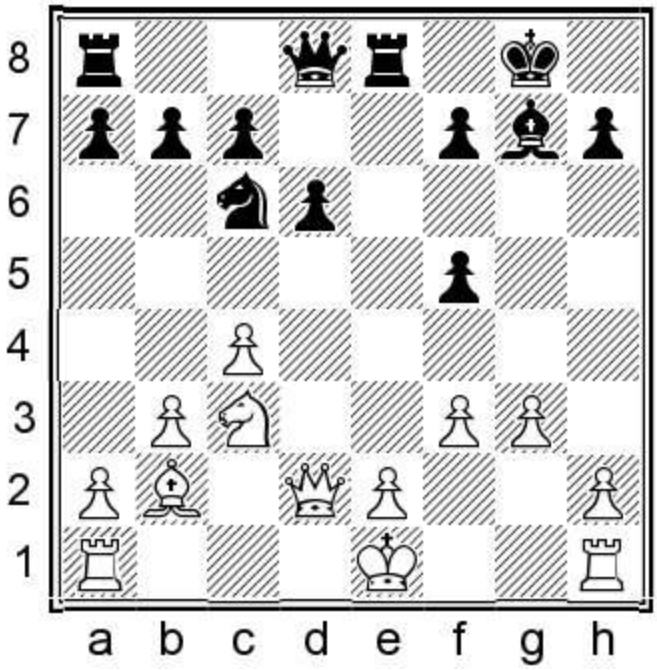
We have already seen this motif in the 9...a5!? line in the notes above. The key point is to prevent ...♘e4.

11.0-0 allows 11...♘e4! 12.♘xe4 ♗xb2 13.♕xb2 ♗xe4 when White has little, if any, advantage.

11...♗d7

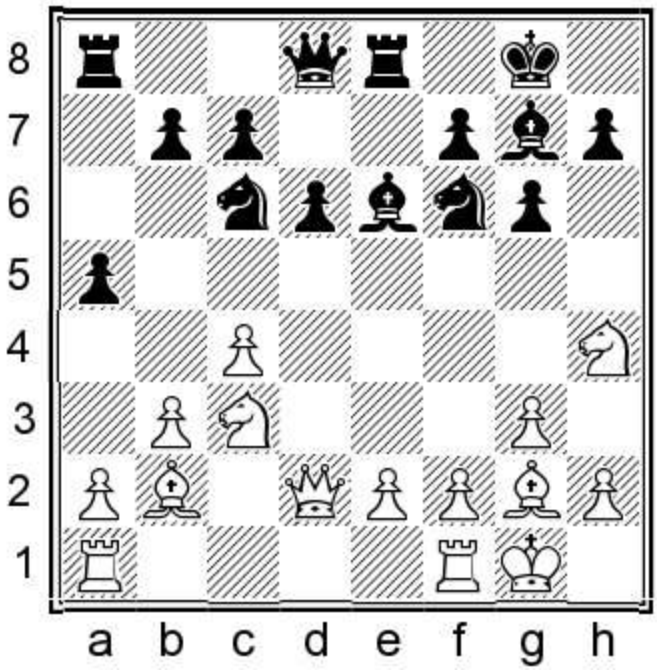
11...♘e4?! runs into 12.♗xe4! ♗xe4 13.f3 ♗f5 14.♘xf5 gxf5 as played in Kunin – Haubro, Helsingor 2013. The most convincing way to exploit the weakening of Black's pawn structure would have been:

chesstouring.com



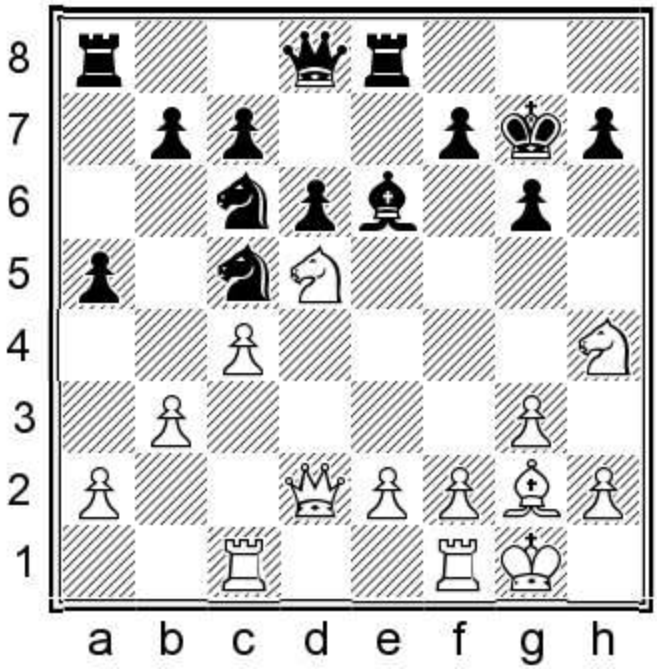
15.0-0-0!?N 15...♕f6 16.♖hg1!± Followed by g3-g4 with an attack.

Black’s main alternative is: 11...♗e6 12.0-0 a5

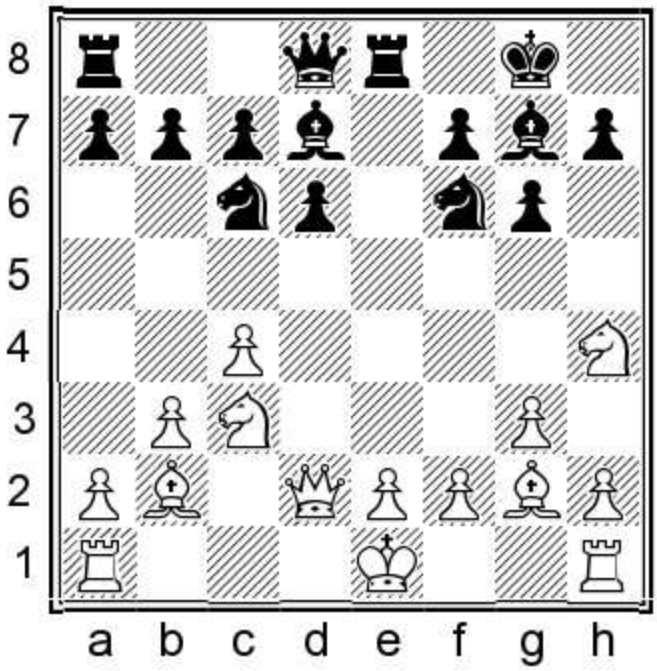


13.♖ac1! We have already encountered this method of preventing the further advance of Black’s a-pawn. 13...♘d7 14.♘d5 ♘c5 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7

chesstouring.com



16.♕b2† (16.e4!?N is another valid idea) 16...f6 17.♖fd1± White had a pleasant positional edge in Kuzubov – V. Onischuk, Voronezh 2013.



12.0-0 ♕c8

I also examined 12...♖b8 which has occurred twice in practice. White seems to maintain a pleasant pull after any normal continuation, but my suggestion would be 13.♖fe1N 13...a6 14.♖ac1, in order to be ready to meet 14...b5?! with 15.♘d5!±.

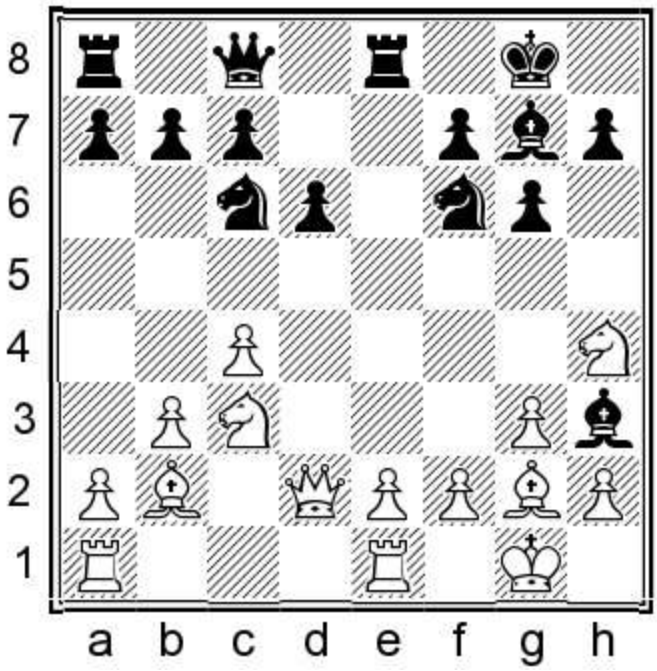
13.♖fe1!?

There is also nothing wrong with the immediate 13.♘d5N.

chesstouring.com

13...♗h3

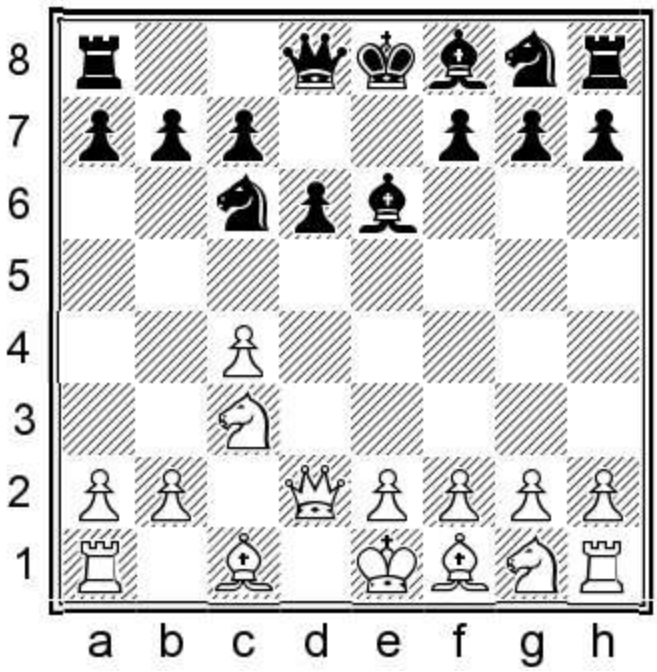
Even though White went on to win an excellent game in L'Ami – Mamedyarov, Reykjavik 2015, I believe that the objectively strongest continuation would have been:



14.♘d5!N 14...♘xd5 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.cxd5 ♗xg2 17.♔xg2

White is clearly better, as the black pawn structure provides easy targets for the white pieces – especially the c7-pawn.

B23) 5...♗e6



When Black places his bishop here at such an early stage, it generally means he is looking for an opportunity to break open the centre with ...d5, or perhaps undermine White's queenside with a quick

chesstouring.com

...a5-a4.

6.b3 ♘f6

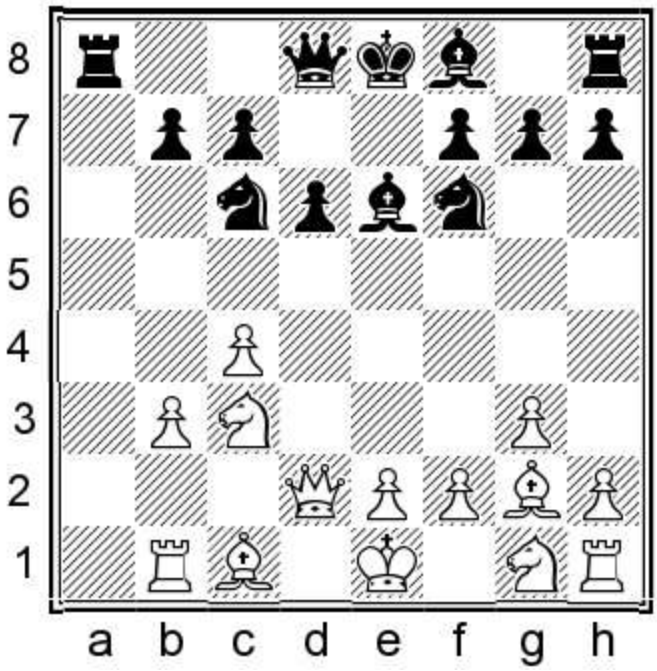
Already threatening ...d5.

The other logical continuation is:

6...a5 7.g3 a4 8.♖b1

Of course not 8.♘xa4? d5! when Black seizes the initiative.

8...axb3 9.axb3 ♘f6 10.♗g2



10...g6

10...♗e7 should be met by 11.♘h3!, keeping the long diagonal open while planning ♘f4, thus establishing full control over the crucial d5-square. 11...0-0 12.0-0 h6 13.♗b2 ♘b4 14.♘f4± White's advantage was obvious in Petursson – Okhotnik, Belgrade 1988.

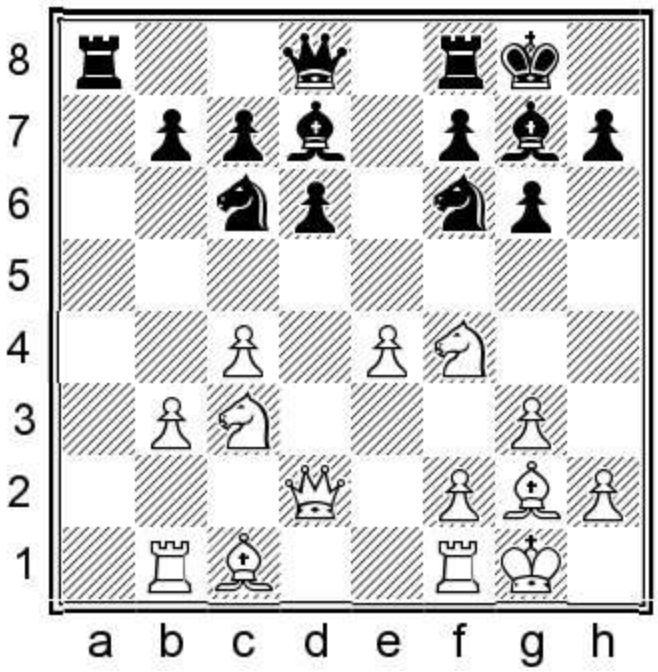
11.♘h3!

Again this is the most attractive path for the knight.

11...♗g7 12.♘f4 ♗f5 13.e4 ♗d7 14.0-0 0-0

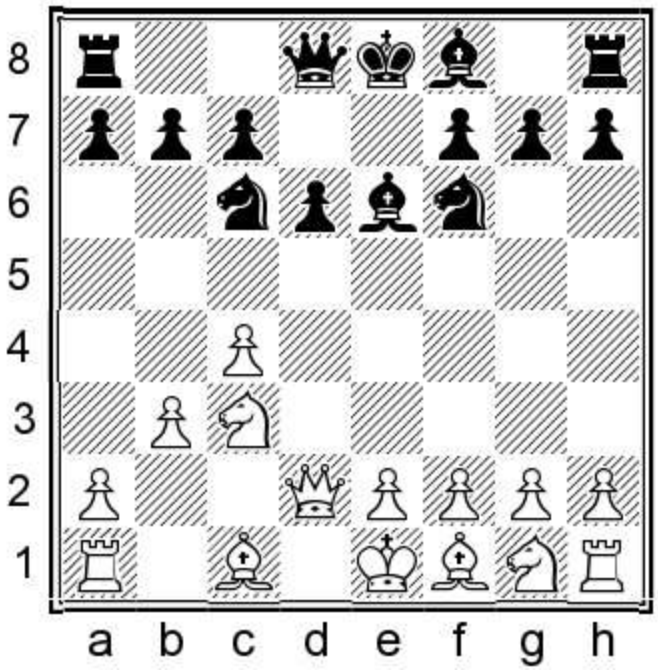
We have been following Rajkovic – Vojinovic, Herceg Novi 2001. My improvement is:

chesstouring.com



15.♖d1N 15...♘e5 16.f3±

With a pleasant edge for White, thanks to his spatial superiority.

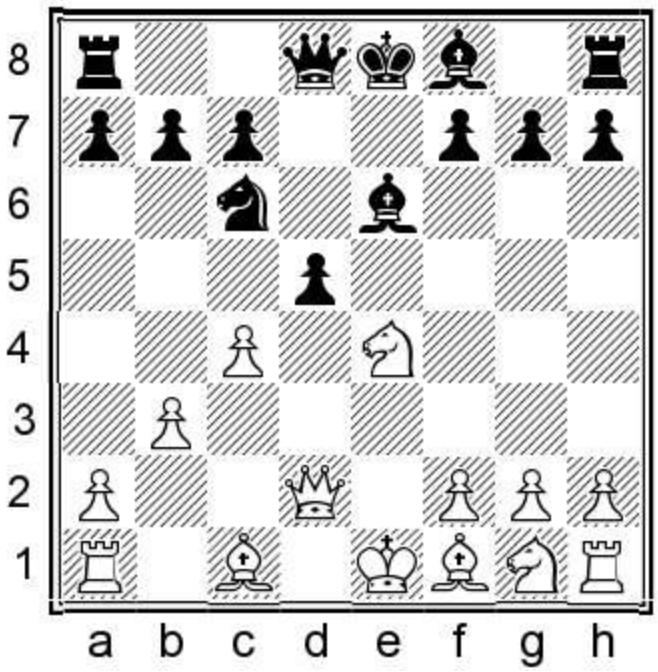


7.e4

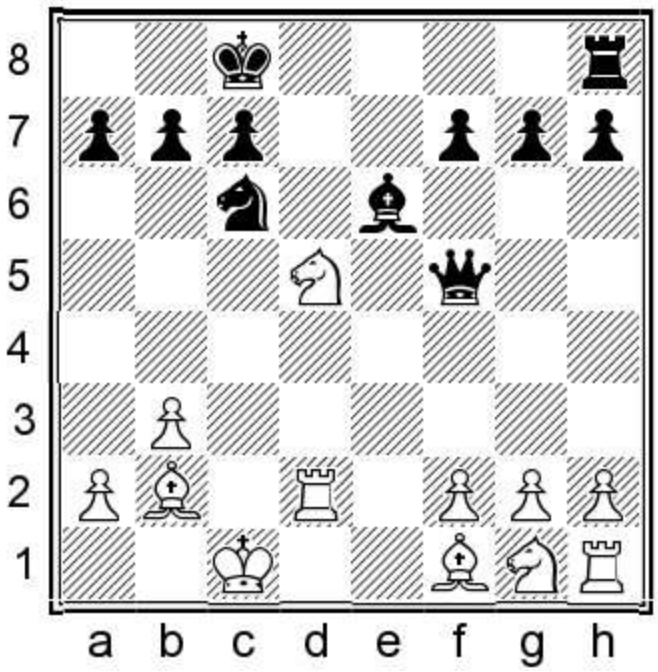
After this virtually forced move, which prevents the ...d5 break, Black's main options are **B231)** 7...a5 and **B232)** 7...g6.

Among Black's other possibilities, the first thing to mention is that 7...♘xe4? 8.♘xe4 d5 does not work, although White has to react with precision:

chesstouring.com



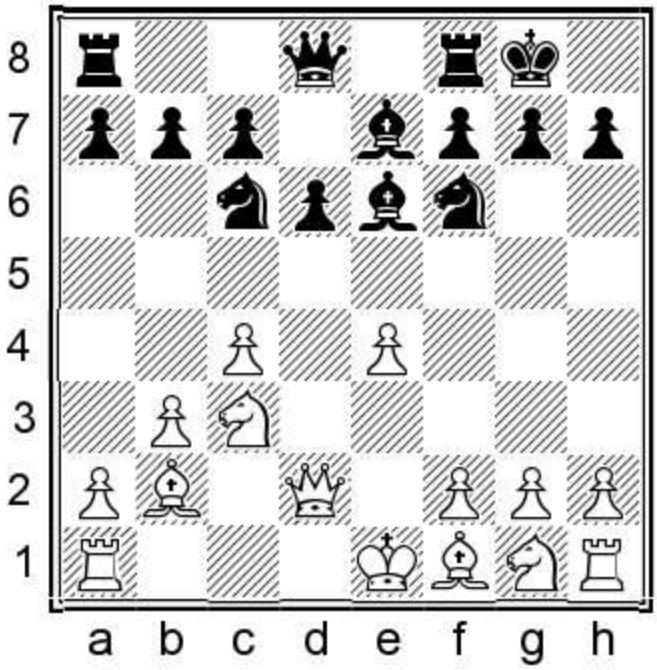
9.cxd5 ♗b4 10.♘c3 ♕f6 11.♗b2 0-0-0 12.0-0-0! ♖xd5 (12...♗xd5 13.♕e3! was winning for White in Yasser – Zakaria, Cairo 2016) 13.♘xd5 ♗xd2† 14.♖xd2 ♕f5 White has a rook and two pieces for the queen, and it's just a matter of completing development. He was successful in the following game:



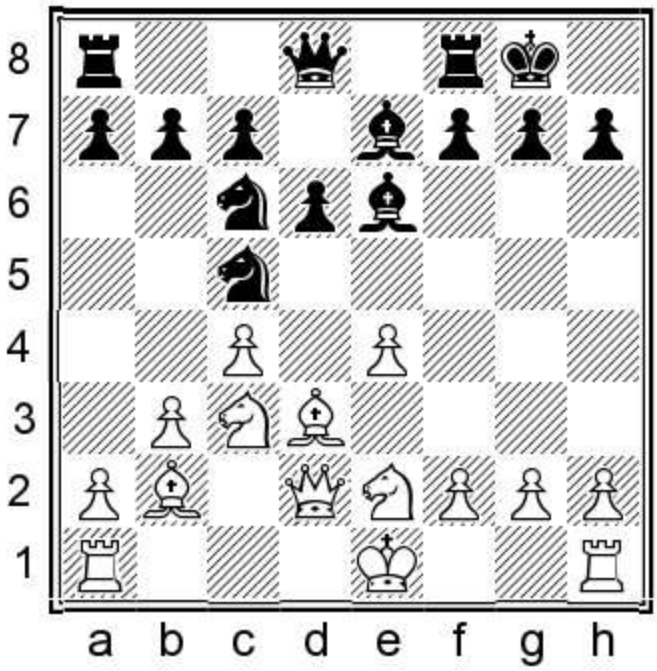
15.♘e3 ♕a5 16.♘f3 ♖d8 17.♖xd8† ♔xd8 18.♔b1 ♘b4 19.a3 ♘d5 20.♘c4 ♕a6 21.♘d4+– Wang Yue – Likavsky, Turin (ol) 2006.

7...♗e7 8.♗b2 0-0 has been played a few times; I like the following set-up:

chesstouring.com



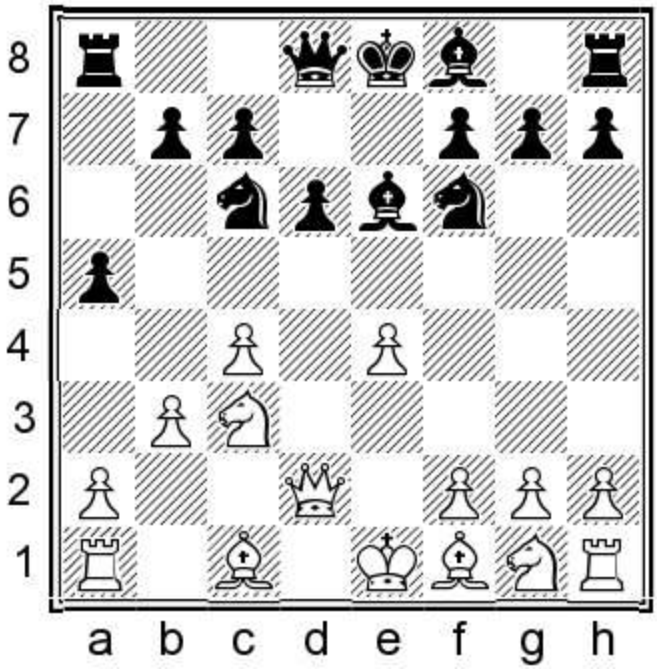
9.♗d3N This move has yet to be played, but it is likely to transpose to some existing games. For instance, 9...♘d7 10.♘ge2 ♘c5 and now I like:



11.0-0N (it is also worth mentioning that 11.♘d5 f5, as played in Maksimovic – Delemarre, Dresden 1996, should also be better for White after 12.exf5!N 12...♘xd3† 13.♕xd3 ♗xf5 14.♕d2 ♕d7 15.0-0±) 11...♗f6 12.♖ad1± With a typical edge for White.

B231) 7...a5

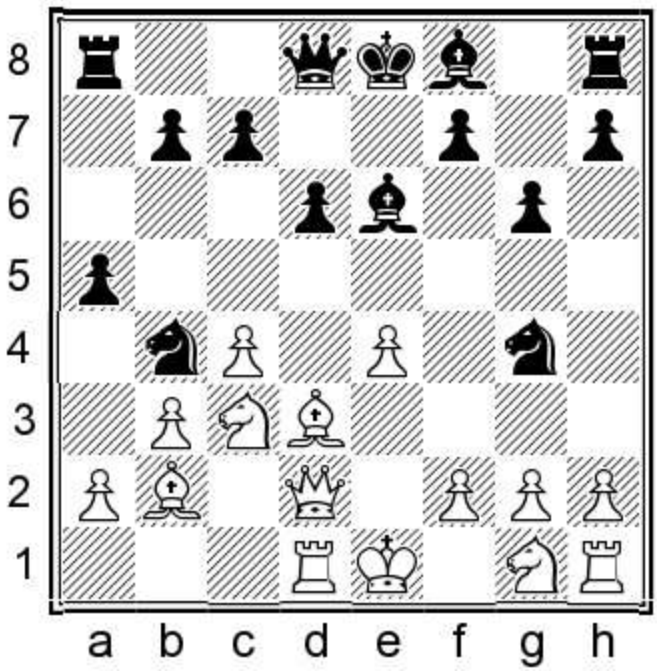
chesstouring.com



8.♗d3 a4

This seems most consistent. Here are a couple of other tries:

8...♘b4 is not an efficient use of time, as White has no problem allowing his light-squared bishop to be traded for a knight. 9.♗b2 g6 10.♖d1 should be pleasant for White after a trade on d3, but 10...♘g4?! was a step too far. In Dreev – Gareev, Las Vegas 2015, White could have refuted Black's opening strategy with:

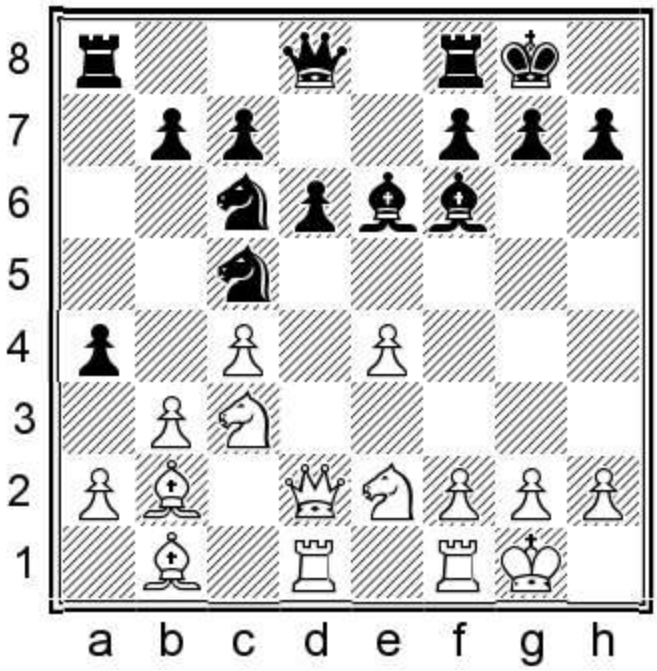


11.♗b1!N 11...♗g7 12.h3 ♘e5 13.♘ge2 0-0 14.0-0± Followed by f2-f4. Black's knight manoeuvres have achieved nothing and he now finds himself under serious positional pressure.

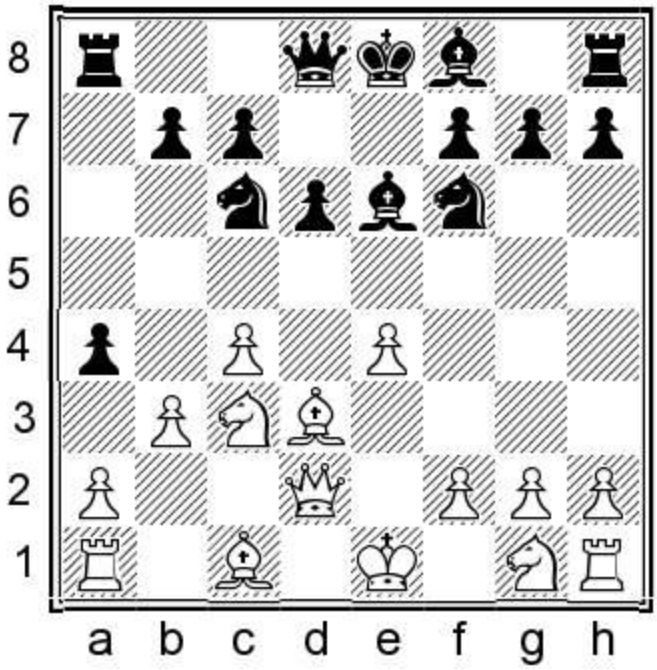
8...♘d7 9.♘ge2 ♘c5 10.0-0 ♗e7 11.♗b2 ♗f6 12.♖ad1 0-0 Once again, White would have been happy to

chesstouring.com

allow the bishop to be exchanged on d3; but now that he has moved his rook to a better square than a1, he should tuck the bishop away. So 13.♗b1 a4 occurred in Milanovic – Damljanovic, Belgrade 2016, and now White was ready for another thematic move:



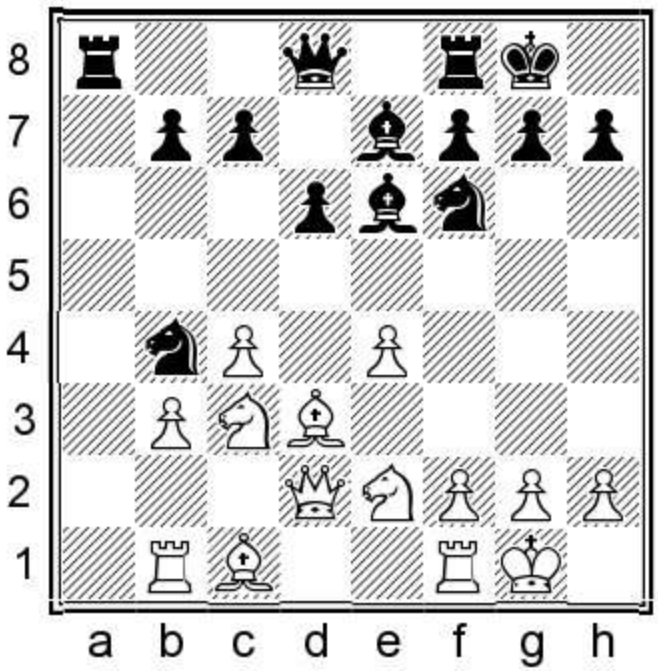
14.♘d5!N 14...♗xb2 15.♕xb2 axb3 16.axb3 With a clear positional advantage.



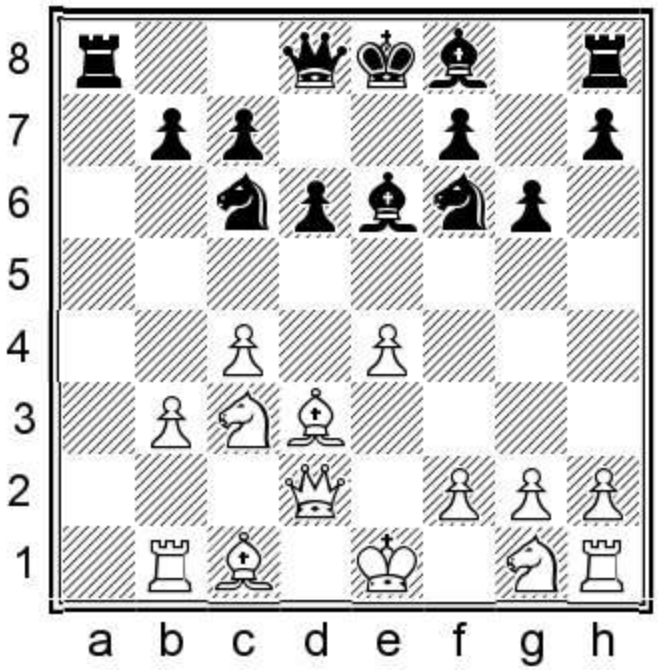
9.♖b1 axb3 10.axb3 g6

Black can develop his dark-squared bishop differently: 10...♗e7 11.♘ge2 0-0 12.0-0 ♘b4 This was Hochstrasser – Vogt, Switzerland 2008. We have seen that White has no qualms about trading off his light-squared bishop, and a good continuation would have been:

chesstouring.com



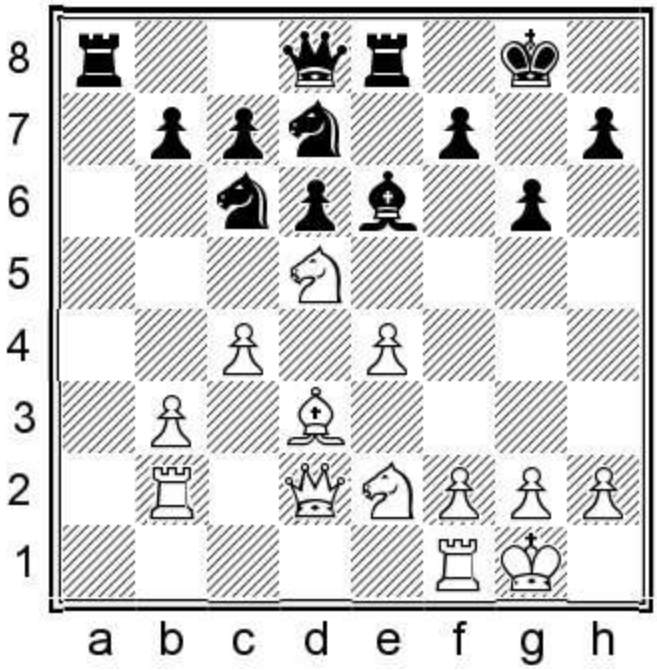
13.♘d4N 13...♘xd3 (after 13...♘d7 we can consider 14.♗e2) 14.♕xd3± White keeps a pleasant advantage.



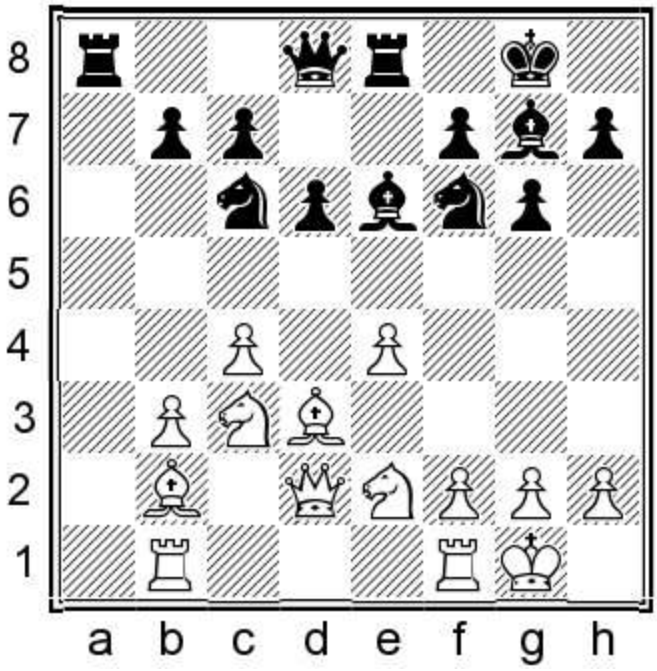
11.♘ge2 ♗g7 12.0-0 0-0 13.♗b2 ♖e8

Another possible direction is 13...♘d7 14.♘d5 ♗xb2 (another game saw 14...♘ce5 15.♗c2 c6 16.♘e3 ♘c5 17.f4 ♘g4 18.♗xg7 ♘xe3 19.♕xe3 ♔xg7 20.f5→ and White seized a decisive initiative in Maly – Kernazhitsky, Kiev 2002) 15.♖xb2 ♖e8 as played in Dizdar – Ruck, Pula 1997. I think White should have continued with:

chesstouring.com



16.♘e3!N 16...♘ce5 17.♗b1± White retains a pleasant space advantage and is ready to play f2-f4 next.



14.♘d1!N

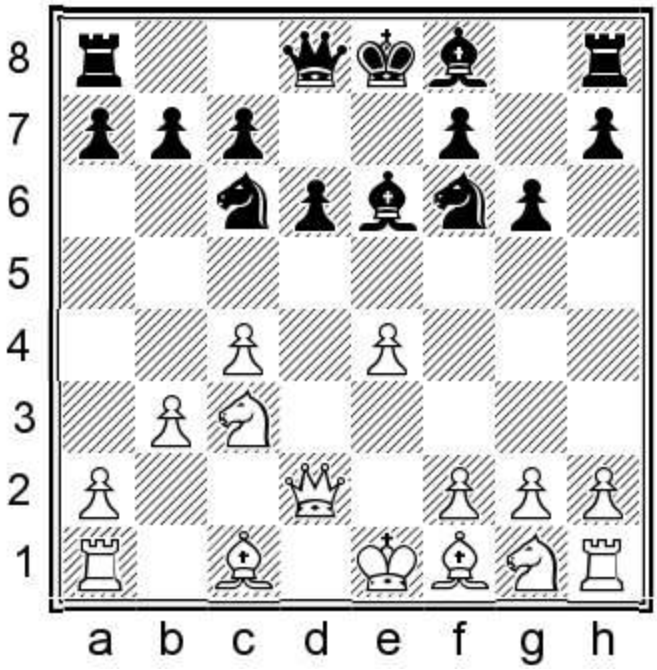
14.♘d5 was not so clear after 14...♗xd5 15.cxd5 ♘e5 16.♗c2 c6∞ in Polugaevsky – Tseshkovsky, Leningrad 1974. Therefore I decided on a slower method of improving White's position, by transferring the knight to a better square.

14...♕b8 15.♘e3 ♘e5 16.f3±

Black's counterplay has been contained, and White maintains a pleasant positional edge.

B232) 7...g6

chesstouring.com



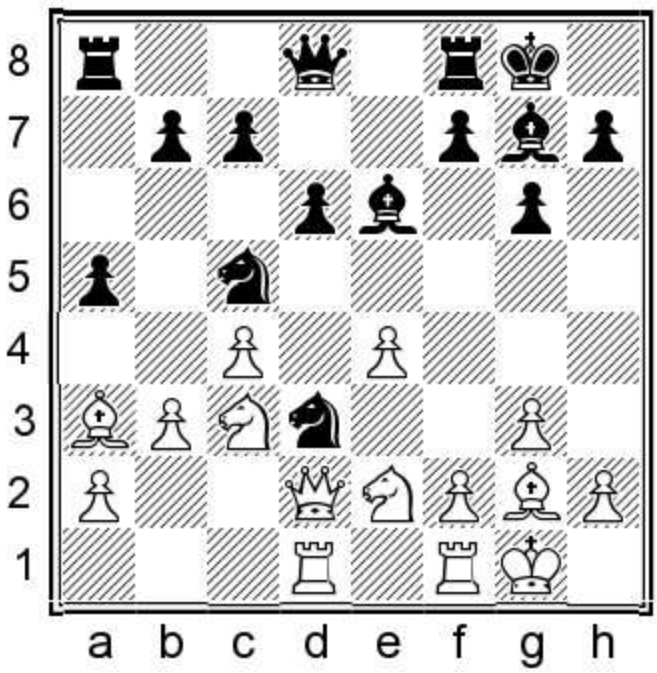
8.♗b2 ♗g7 9.g3

This time I favour the fianchetto set-up.

9...0-0

I checked two other ideas:

9...♘d7 10.♗g2 ♘c5 11.♘ge2 ♘e5 sees Black take aim at the d3-square, but it doesn't achieve anything special. 12.0-0 ♘ed3 13.♗a3 a5 14.♖ad1 0-0 was seen in Stepak – Gofshtein, Ramat Hasharon 1990, and now it was finally time to challenge the enemy knight:



15.♘c1!N 15...♘b4 16.♗b2 f5 17.exf5 ♗xf5 18.♘b5± With the better game for White.

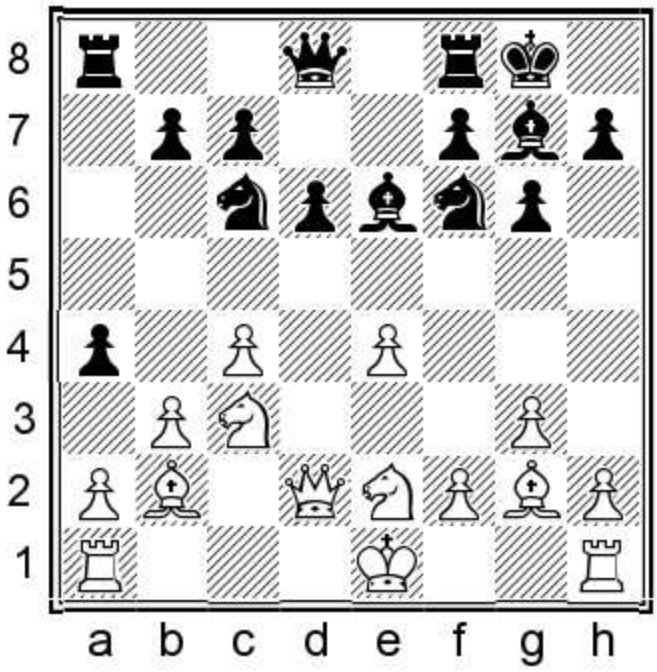
chesstouring.com

9...a5 10.♗g2 a4

10...0-0 11.♘ge2 a4 is the same thing.

11.♘ge2 0-0

The continuation 11...axb3 12.axb3 ♖xa1† 13.♗xa1 ♘d7 14.0-0 0-0 15.♘d5! also gave White the upper hand in Ordaz Valdes – Pina Vega, Holguin 2010.



12.0-0 a3

12...♘d7 13.♘d5± looks like a pleasant edge for White.

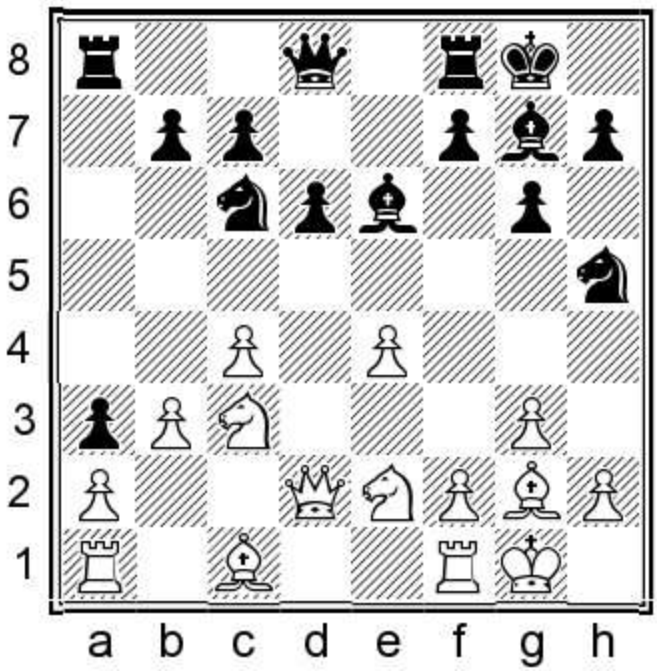
13.♗c1

Black cannot do much to exploit White's temporary lack of coordination.

13...♘h5

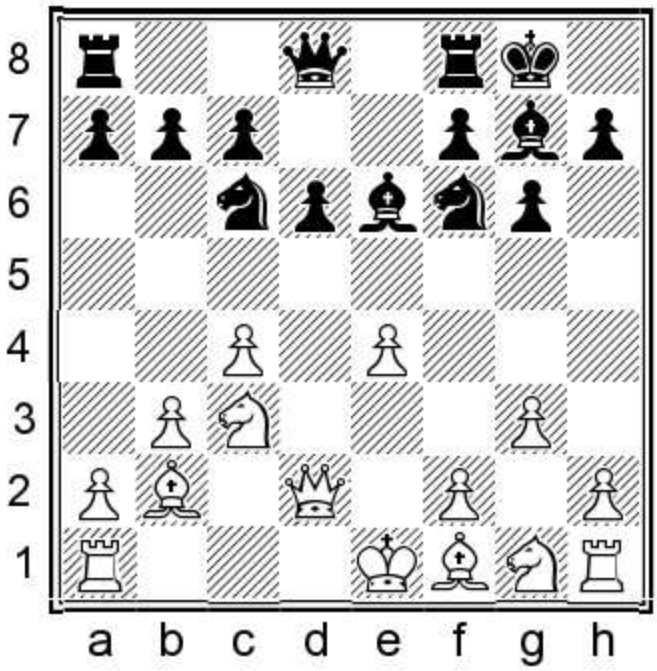
I also examined the natural-looking 13...♘d7N and found the following nice idea for White: 14.♕d1! f5 15.♗e3 fxe4 16.♘xe4 ♗xa1 17.♕xa1↑ With a dangerous initiative for the exchange. Now in Melkumyan – Sanal, Gjakova 2016, White missed the strongest continuation:

chesstouring.com



14.h3!N 14...f5 15.exf5 gxf5 16.♕d3 ♘e5 17.♕d1±

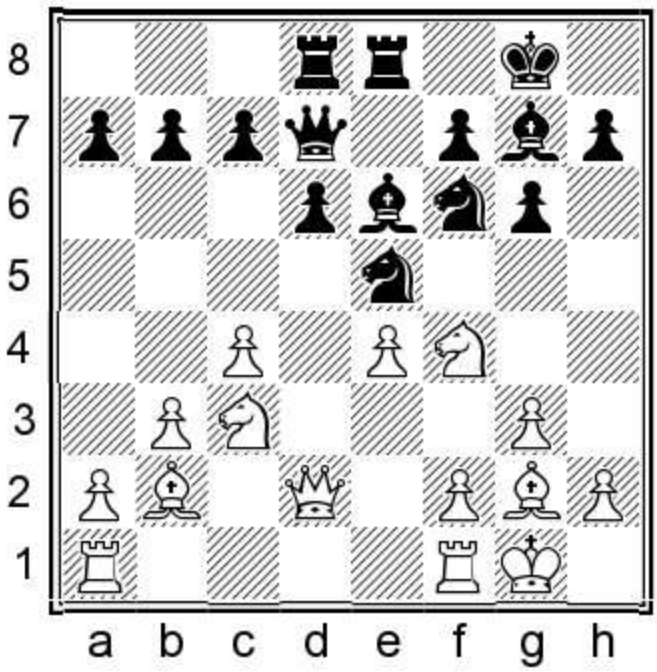
With a serious advantage, due to the numerous weaknesses in Black's camp.



10.♗g2 ♘d7

10...♖e8 11.♘ge2 ♕d7 failed to impress after 12.♘f4 ♖ad8 13.0-0 ♘e5 in Cossin – Bortot, Rosny sous Bois 2002, when White should have continued:

chesstouring.com

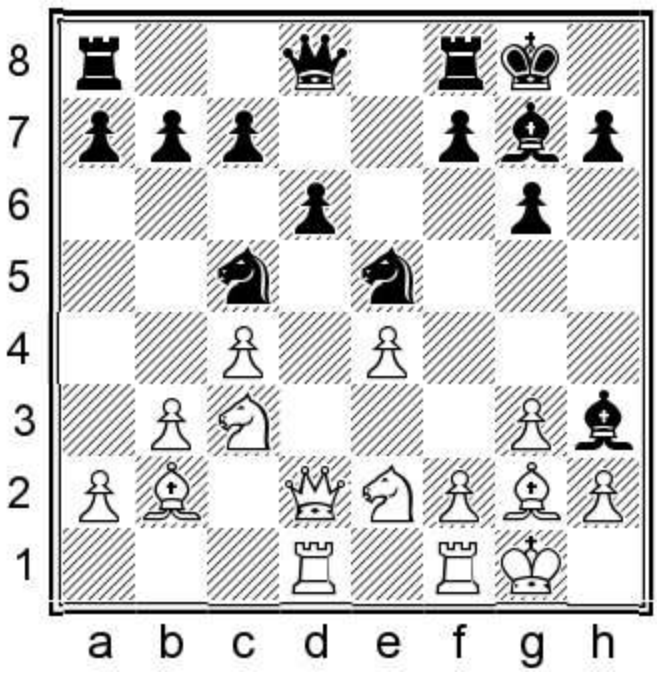


14.♘xe6N 14...fxe6 15.f4 ♘c6 16.♗h3± With an obvious advantage.

11.♘ge2 ♘c5 12.0-0 ♘e5 13.♖ad1 ♗h3

13...♘ed3 is easily met by 14.♗a1.

Now in Gregor – Priehoda, Prague 2011, White should have continued:



14.♗a3!N ♗xg2 15.♔xg2 ♘ed7 16.f4

With the more pleasant game.

Conclusion

chesstouring.com

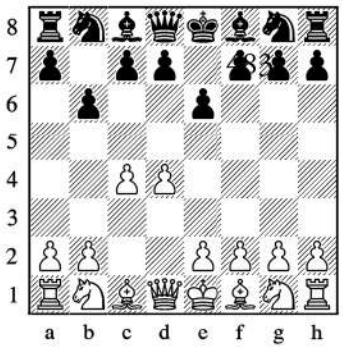
1.d4 d6 2.c4 e5 3.♘c3 has made for an interesting change from my previous work. Certainly after 3...♘c6 4.d5 ♘ce7 5.e4, White enjoys a pleasant version of a King's Indian structure, with 5...g6 6.f4!? leading to attractive play.

Our main topic of investigation was 3...exd4 4.♕xd4 ♘c6 5.♕d2, when White has good chances to obtain a positional advantage, but he should be precise in the next few moves, taking care to tailor his set-up according to Black's choices. So against 5...♘f6 we play 6.e4! to prevent a quick ...d5, while 5...g6 should be met by 6.b3 followed by a double fianchetto. Keep in mind that the knight may go to h3 or f3 according to circumstances; and in the latter case, ♘h4 is an important motif against ...♗f5, before Black lands a knight on e4. Finally, 5...♗e6 6.b3 may lead to various tricks involving ...a5-a4 and/or ...d5, so White should be on guard. After 6...♘f6 7.e4 we follow up with either ♗d3 or g2-g3/♗g2. With accurate play, White should be able to complete development and exert positional pressure in the middlegame.

chesstouring.com



Minor Lines



English Defence

Variation Index

1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6

3.e4

A) 3...♗b4† 484

B) 3...♗b7 4.♗d3 487

B1) 4...♘f6 487

B2) 4...♗b4† 5.♗d2 491

B21) 5...♘c6 491

B22) 5...♕e7 492

B23) 5...♗xd2† 493

B3) 4...f5 5.exf5 496

B31) 5...♗xg2? 496

B32) 5...♗b4† 500

B4) 4...♘c6 5.♘e2 504

B41) 5...g6 504

B42) 5...♘b4 6.♘bc3 ♘xd3† 7.♕xd3 506

B421) 7...♗b4 506

B422) 7...g6 508

B423) 7...d6 510

chesstouring.com

B424) 7...♘e7 8.0-0 511

B4241) 8...g6 512

B4242) 8...d6 513

1.d4 e6 2.c4

2.e4 would be an excellent move if we knew for sure that Black was going to play 2...b6 (see Owen's Defence in Chapter 28 for more about this), but 2...d5 would obviously take us out of our repertoire.

2...b6

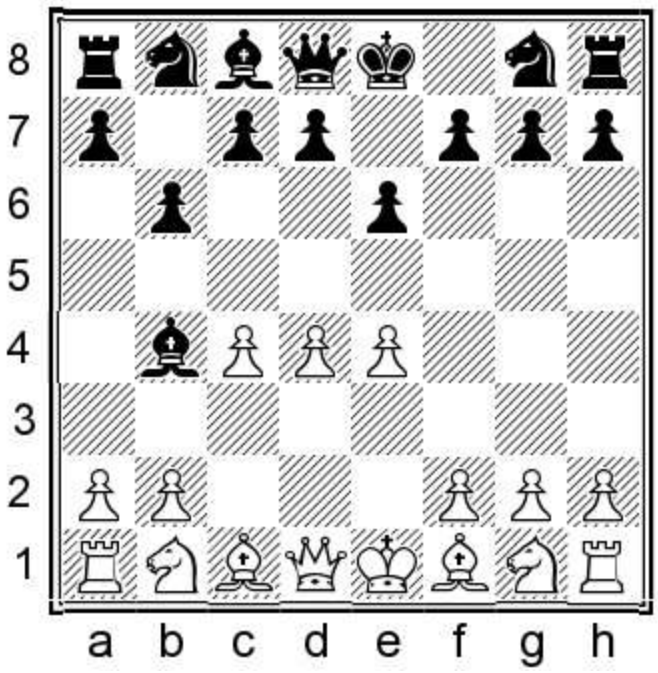
The English Defence is among the most respectable of Black's unusual options, and it is regularly employed by strong GMs.

3.e4

Taking over the centre is self-evidently White's most ambitious approach. Often White prefers not to enter a theoretical debate and settles for simple development with 3.♘c3 or 3.♘f3, which might transpose to the Queen's Indian Defence. Another quite challenging option is 3.a3, which I have played a number of times myself.

We will analyse **A)** 3...♗b4† followed by the main line of **B)** 3...♗b7.

A) 3...♗b4†



I did not consider this move in *GM 2* but it has since become quite fashionable, and has been played by many young GMs.

4.♗d2 ♗xd2†

chesstouring.com

4...♕e7 5.♗d3 ♗b7 transposes to variation B22 below.

5.♕xd2!

I also considered 5.♘xd2 but 5...d5! is a good reply, after which I failed to find anything interesting for White.

5...d5

This the trendy reply, and the move which has achieved the most solid results for Black.

Much less challenging is:

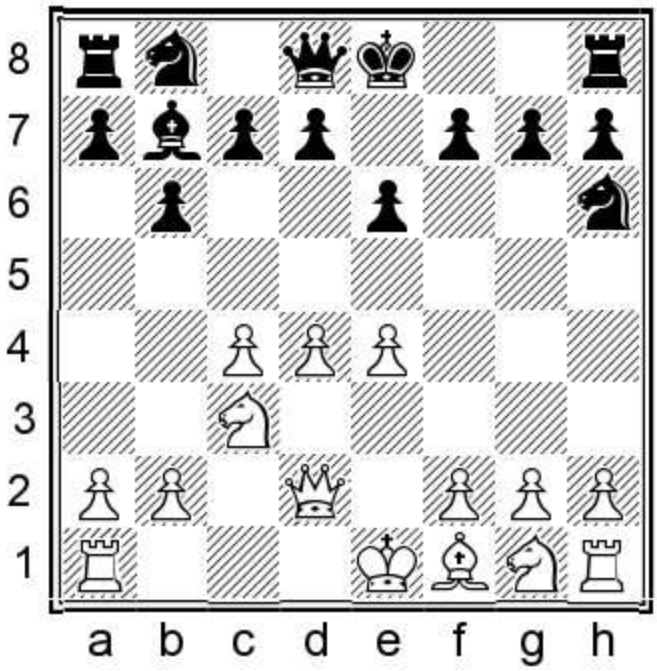
5...♗b7 6.♘c3

White has exactly the kind of position he wants, with a clear space advantage and no real counterplay in sight.

6...♘h6

This is a thematic way of developing the knight, and Black hardly has anything better.

Another good example continued 6...♘f6 7.f3 0-0 8.0-0-0 d6 9.g4! and White seized a dangerous initiative on the kingside in Rowson – Sowray, London 2016.



7.f4!

Gaining even more space. Tony Miles reached this position twice with Black but with no success:

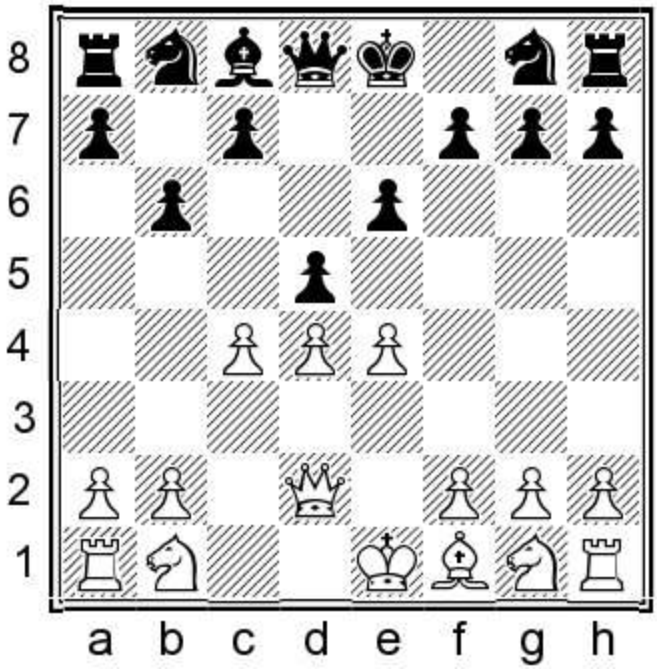
7...d6

Previously he tried 7...f5 but after 8.e5 ♘f7 9.0-0-0 g5 10.♘f3 ♖g8 11.♗e2 ♘a6 12.h3 gxf4 13.♕xf4 ♕e7 14.g4 fxg4 15.hxg4 White was clearly better in Karpov – Miles, Biel 1992.

8.♘f3 ♘d7 9.0-0-0 f6 10.g4 ♘f7 11.h4

White's overwhelming space advantage eventually decided the game in Van Wely – Miles, Matanzas 1994.

chesstouring.com



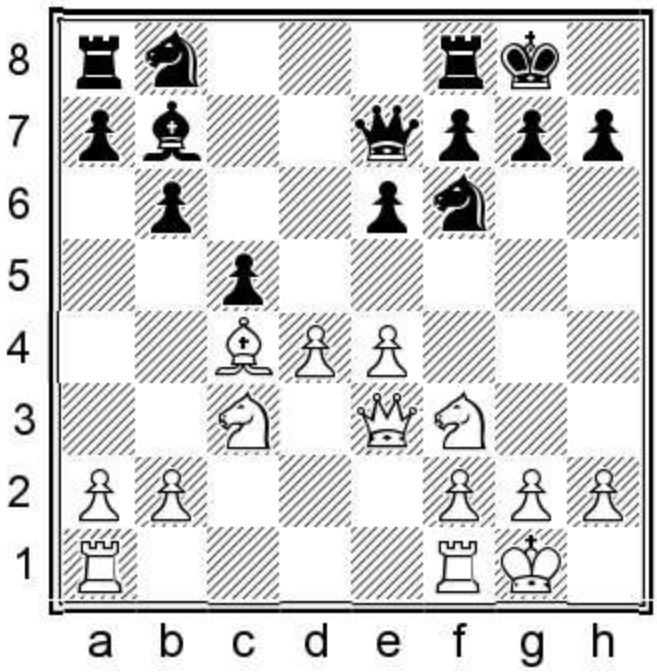
6.♗d3

This is the best way to develop while maintaining the tension.

6...♘c6

I will take this as the main line although two other moves have been tried by strong players:

6...dxc4 7.♗xc4 ♗b7 8.♘c3 ♘f6 9.♕e3 gives White a pleasant game with excellent central control. 9...0-0 10.♘f3 (10.♘ge2!?N is definitely worth considering) 10...♕e7 11.0-0 c5 Now in Ringoir – D. Berczes, Cleveland 2015, White definitely should have played:



12.dxc5!N 12...♕xc5 (12...bxc5 13.♘e5± also offers White long-term pressure, due to Black's weakened pawn structure) 13.♕xc5 bxc5 14.♘d2 ♘c6 15.f3± It will not be much fun to defend this endgame for

chesstouring.com

Black.

6...♗a6

This is a fresh idea, with all three of the games on the database coming from 2018.

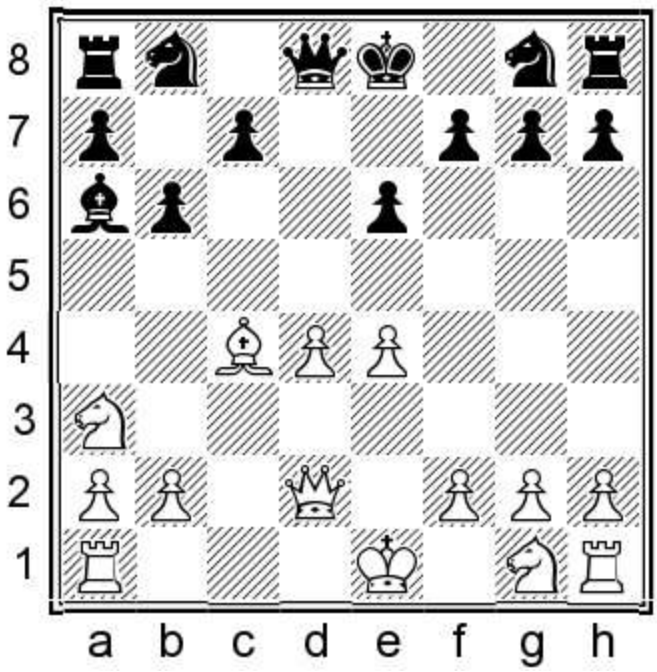
7.♘a3!?

The first two games continued 7.cxd5 ♗xd3 8.♕xd3 exd5 when White has nothing special. I analysed the text move as a novelty for this book, but it was played in a game later in the year, which will be mentioned below.

7...dxc4

7...♘f6N 8.e5 looks promising for White, for instance: 8...dxc4 (8...♘e4?! 9.♗xe4 dxe4 10.♘e2±) 9.♘xc4 ♘d5 10.♘f3 0-0 11.♖c1±

8.♗xc4



8...♘f6N

This was my main line when I analysed this line before, and I will keep it that way.

The game continuation of 8...♗xc4 9.♘xc4 ♘f6 was similar. 10.f3 0-0 11.♘e2 ♕e7 occurred in Costachi – Balla, Tasnad 2018, when 12.♖c1N± would have given White a nice edge, just as in the main line below.

I also considered 8...♗b7N 9.f3 ♘e7 10.♘e2 0-0 11.0-0-0± with a pleasant game for White, as Black has a hard time undermining White's centre.

9.f3

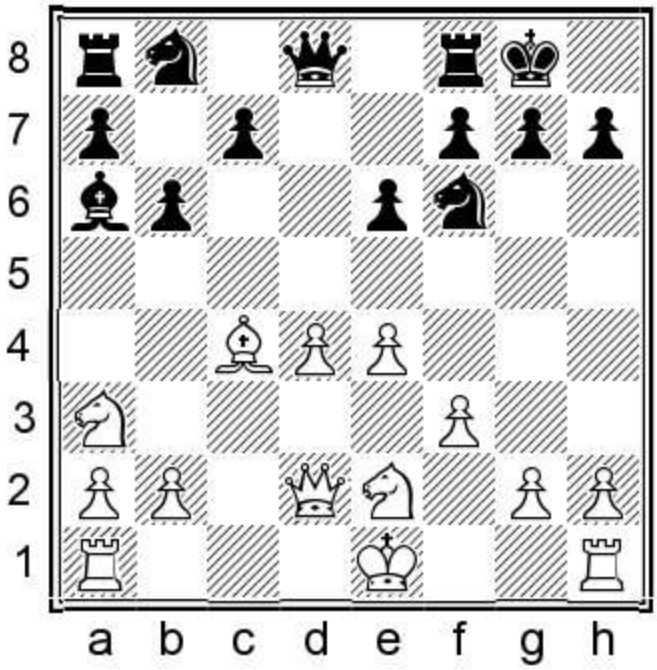
I like this move, which strengthens the e4-pawn and restricts Black's knight.

9.♗xa6 ♘xa6 10.♘f3 is a sensible alternative. For instance, 10...0-0 11.0-0 c5 12.♕e2 ♘b4 13.e5 ♘fd5 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.♘c4± and White also retains a slight pull.

9...0-0 10.♘e2

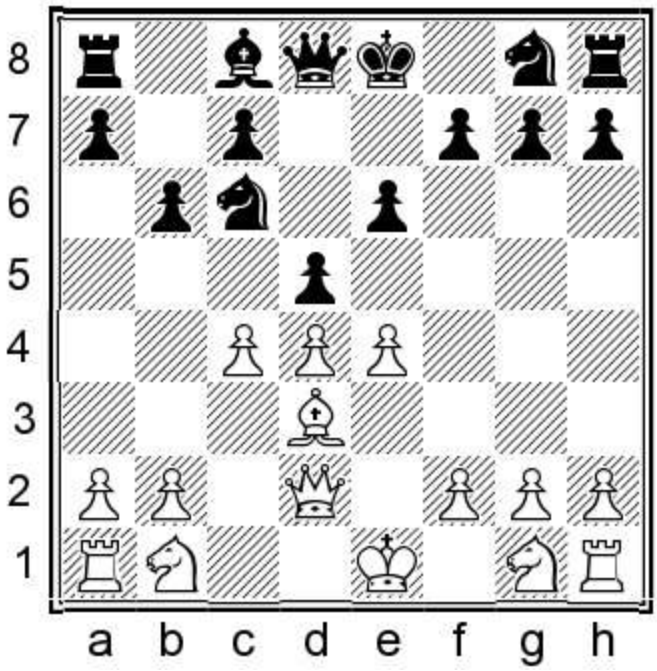
White's pawn structure looks favourable to me, for example:

chesstouring.com



10...♕e7 11.♖c1 ♖d8 12.♕e3

White enjoys a pleasant game with a strong centre.



7.cxd5!?N

7.♘e2 is the only move to have been tested so far, but after 7...dxe4 8.♗xe4 ♗b7 White failed to impress in Gelfand – Rapport, Palma de Mallorca 2017.

7...exd5

7...♘xd4? 8.♕c3!± is a bad idea for Black.

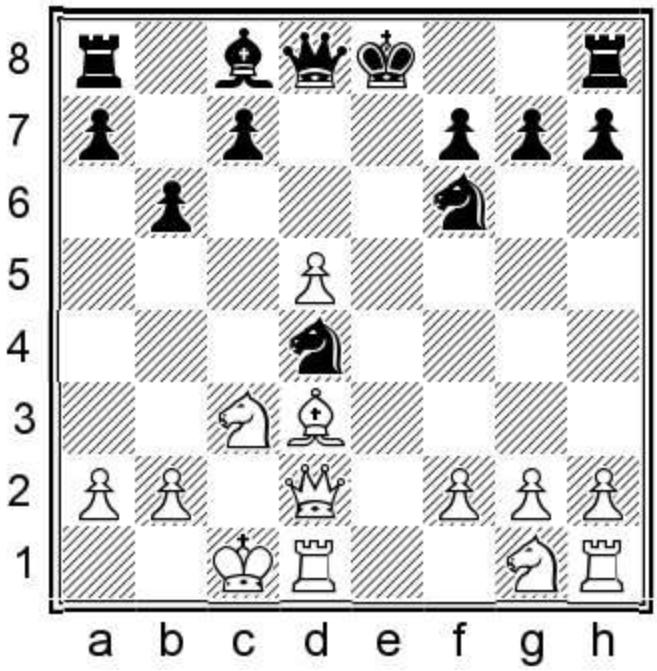
8.exd5!

chesstouring.com

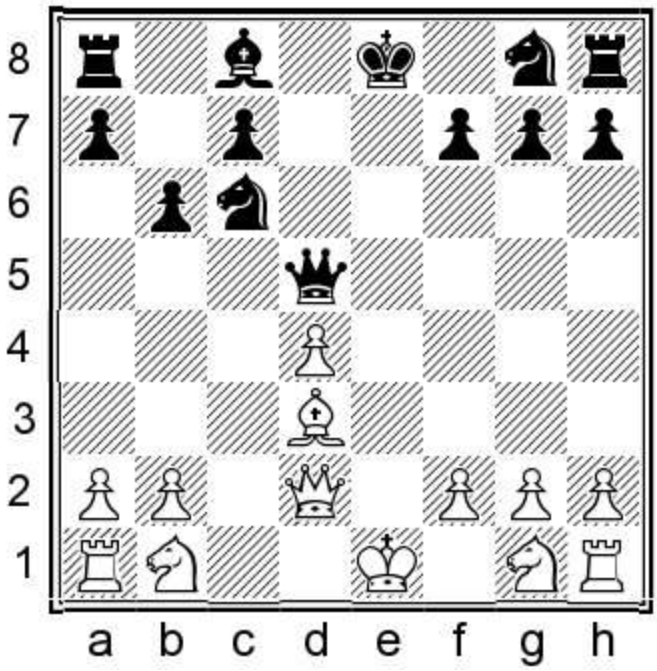
White's idea is to lure either the queen or knight into the centre in order to gain time.

8...♕xd5

8...♘xd4 9.♘c3 ♘f6 10.0-0-0 looks promising for White, for instance:



10...♘f5 11.♗xf5 ♗xf5 12.♖e1† ♔f8 13.♖e5! White is definitely better, due to Black's problematic king.



9.♘c3 ♕d8

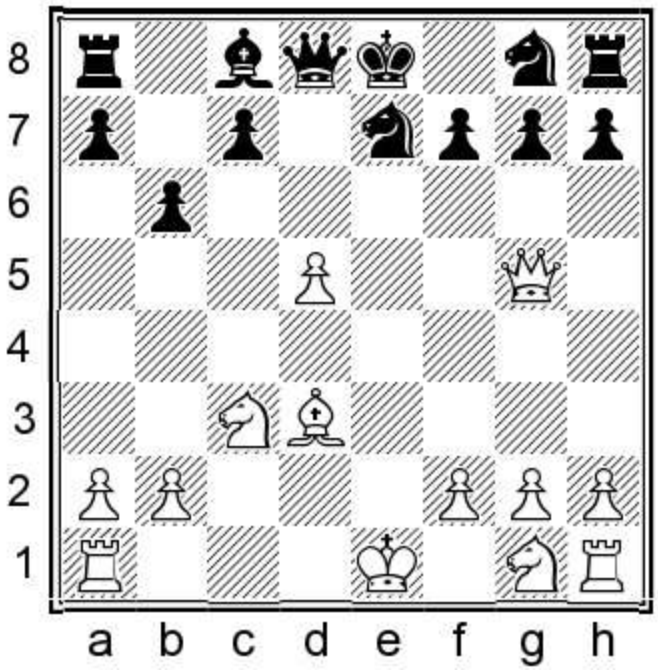
Accepting the pawn sacrifice is extremely dangerous: 9...♕xd4 10.♘b5 ♕d7 (10...♕e5† 11.♔f1! only makes things worse due to the ♖e1 threat) 11.♕f4→ With a venomous initiative.

10.d5 ♘ce7

chesstouring.com

10...♘e5?! is risky in view of 11.♗b5† ♗d7 12.♕e2 ♕e7 13.0-0-0↑ and once again Black is under pressure.

11.♕g5



11...♔f8

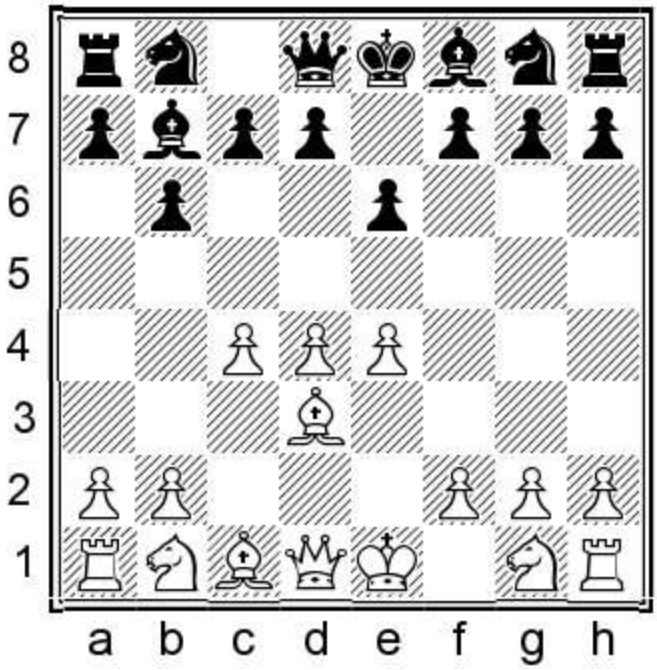
The endgame after 11...♘g6 12.♕xd8† ♔xd8 13.♘f3 ♘f6 14.0-0± is quite unpleasant for Black, since his king is misplaced in the centre, despite the absence of queens.

12.♘f3 ♗b7 13.♗c4±

White has a pleasant game, with a space advantage secured by the d5-pawn.

B) 3...♗b7 4.♗d3

chesstouring.com



This is a major crossroads, with four main options for Black: **B1)** 4...♘f6, **B2)** 4...♗b4†, **B3)** 4...f5 and **B4)** 4...♘c6.

B1) 4...♘f6

This is a distant fourth choice in terms of popularity, but it is important to know how to react to it.

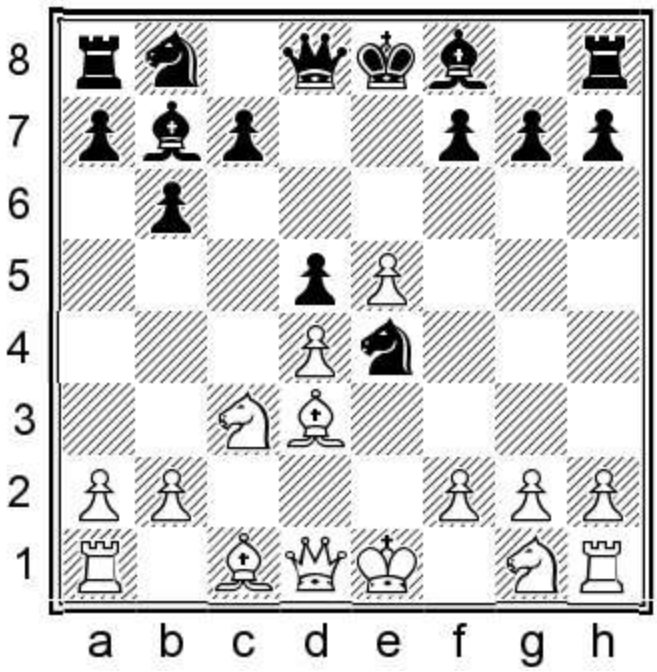
5.♘c3!

A change of direction from my previous work, where 5.f3 was my choice. Since then there have been many developments and Black has been doing pretty well.

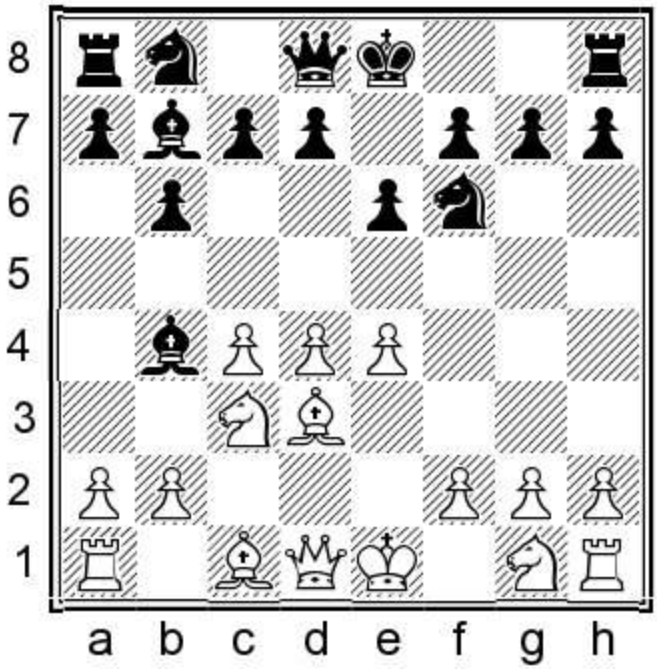
5...♗b4

The other method of challenging for the centre is much worse: 5...d5?! 6.cxd5 exd5 7.e5 ♘e4 (After 7...♘fd7 8.♕g4 Black's position is already critical. 8...g6 was played in Candela Perez – Sanchez Garcia, Collado Villalba 2008, and here the simplest way would have been 9.♘f3N 9...♗g7 10.♗g5 f6 11.♗h4 0-0 12.0-0 with a clear advantage.)

chesstouring.com



Black's play does not make a good impression and it is no surprise that he has scored poorly from here. Here is a fairly recent example, which nicely illustrates White's attacking potential: 8.♘ge2 ♗e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♕c2 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 h6 12.f4! c5 13.f5 f6 14.♘f4 Black did not last much longer in Granda Zuniga – H. Nielsen, Kollafjord 2017.

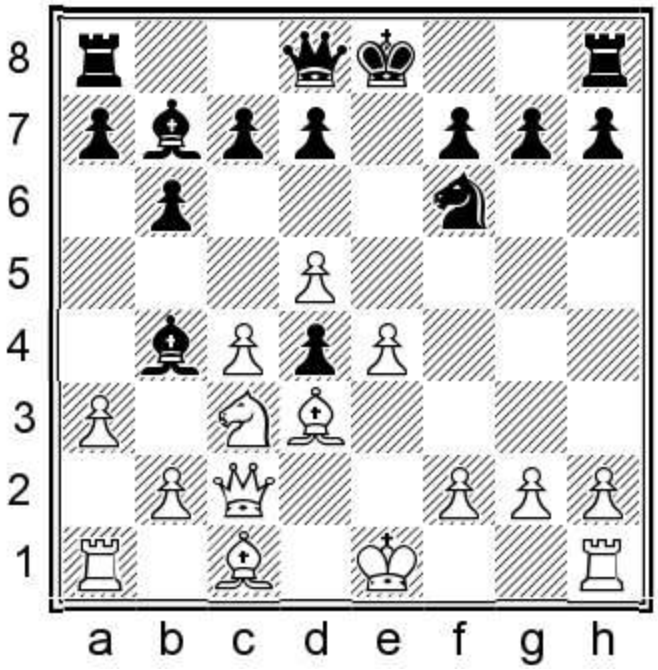


6.♕c2 c5

Black has tried a whole host of alternatives but the only moves requiring serious attention are those which involve challenging our strong pawn centre or weakening our position in some other way. I checked two such options:

6...♘c6?! 7.♘ge2 looks shaky for Black. Here is one model game: 7...e5 8.d5 ♘d4 9.♘xd4 exd4 10.a3

chesstouring.com



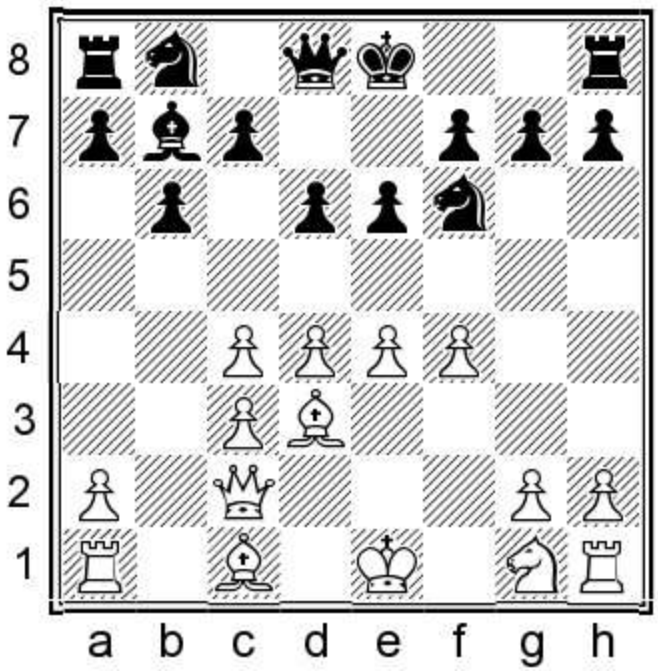
10...♗xc3† 11.bxc3 dxc3 12.0-0 d6 13.♕xc3 ♕e7 14.♗b2 0-0-0 15.♖ae1 ♘g4 16.f4+– White obtained an overwhelming positional advantage in Rionda Medio – Korneev, Las Palmas 2017.

6...♗xc3† 7.bxc3 d6

This time Black aims for a Nimzo-Indian-style set-up, where he hopes the doubled c-pawns will prove weak. However, this is not enough to compensate for White's bishop pair and mobile pawn centre.

8.f4

White has excellent prospects, for instance:



8...e5

Another good example continued 8...c5 9.♘f3 ♘c6 10.0-0 ♕c7 11.d5 exd5 12.cxd5 ♘e7 13.c4± and

chesstouring.com

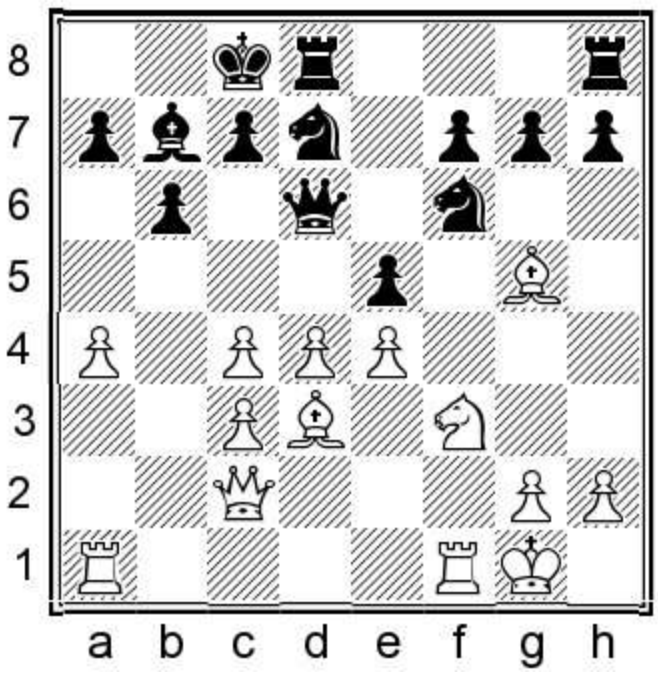
White was much better in Brodsky – Zakarian, Sochi 2014.

9.♘f3 ♘bd7 10.0-0 ♕e7

10...0-0 11.fxe5 dxe5 12.♗g5 ♖e8 13.♖ae1 ♖e6 14.♘h4 ♕f8 15.♘f5, gave White a strong initiative in De Boer – Heidenfeld, Groningen 1989.

The text move has been Black's most popular choice but White reacted perfectly in the following game:

11.fxe5 dxe5 12.♗g5 0-0-0 13.a4! ♕d6



White was dominating in Erdos – Nguyen, Budapest 2003, although he subsequently misplayed his position and the game ended in a draw. At this stage White has several strong continuations but the simplest is:

14.♗xf6N 14...gxf6 15.♘h4±

With a serious positional advantage.

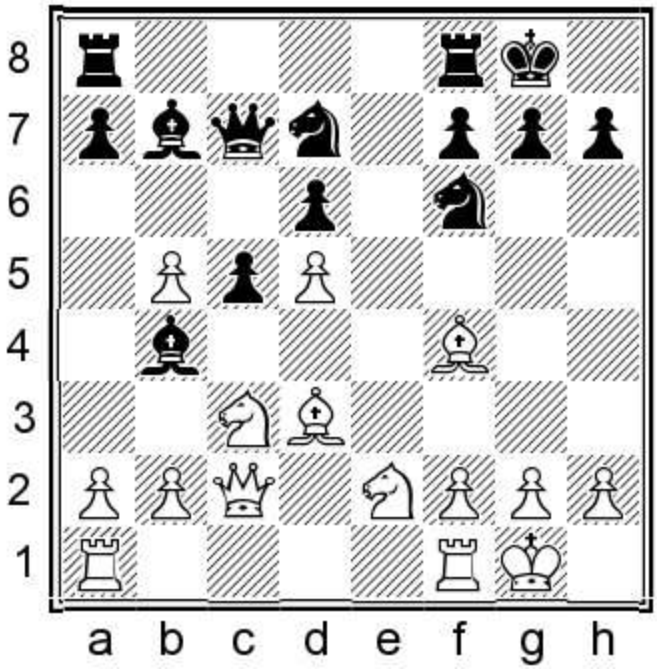
7.d5 b5

Once again, Black has to fight back in the centre somehow, otherwise he will simply be left in a cramped position with a passive bishop on b7.

7...d6 8.♘ge2 ♘bd7 is too slow, and after 9.a3 ♗xc3† 10.♘xc3 ♘e5 11.♗e2 ♘g6 12.f4 0-0 13.h4 ♖e8 14.h5 ♘f8 15.h6 g6 16.0-0± White's advantage was obvious in I. Sokolov – Slobodjan, Germany 2003.

7...exd5 8.exd5 is similar to the main line and may transpose. 8...0-0 9.♘ge2 b5 Black should try to create some counterplay. 10.cxb5! d6 (10...♗xd5 transposes to the 10...0-0 line in the notes to the main line below) 11.0-0 ♘bd7 12.♗f4 ♕c7

chesstouring.com



13.♘e4! ♘xe4 14.♗xe4 ♘f6 15.♘g3 ♖fe8 16.♖fd1± Black had no compensation for the missing pawn in V. Szabo – Danzanvilliers, email 2012.

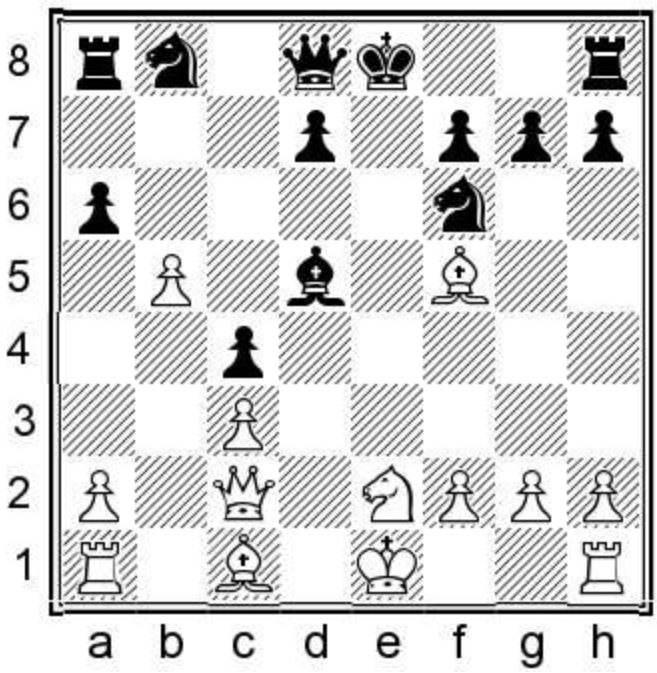
8.cxb5 exd5 9.exd5 ♗xd5

9...0-0 leads back to the 7...exd5 line noted above.

9...♘xd5?! 10.♘f3 ♘e7 seems too slow, and after 11.a3 ♗a5 12.♗e3 d6 13.0-0-0± White's advantage was already close to decisive in Tinjaca Ramirez – Naumovic, corr. 1998.

Life is also no fun for Black after:

9...♗xc3† 10.bxc3 ♗xd5 11.♘e2 c4 12.♗f5 a6



13.0-0

chesstouring.com

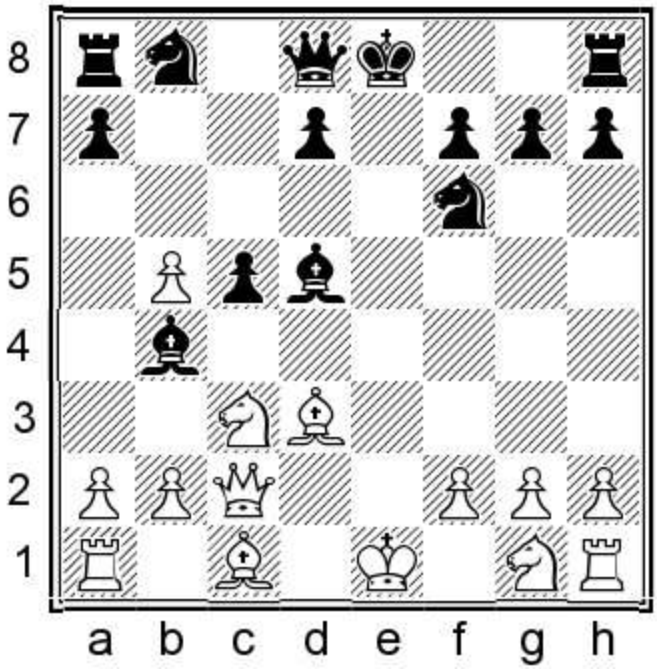
After 13.♘d4 0-0 Black soon managed to neutralize White's slight initiative in Verleur – Boonet, corr. 2004.

13...axb5 14.♖d1 ♗e6

I also considered 14...♗b7N 15.a4! 0-0 (15...bxa4? would be a terrible idea in view of 16.♗a3!+–) 16.♗g5 h6 17.♗xf6 ♕xf6 18.axb5± and White is positionally much better.

15.♘d4 ♗xf5 16.♕xf5 0-0 17.♗g5±

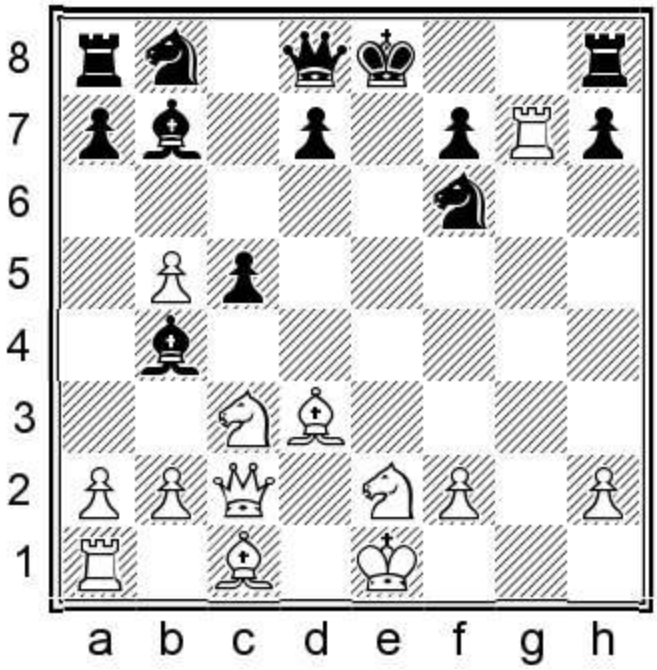
Black faced a miserable defensive task in Davidavicius – Kurylo, corr. 2016.



10.♘ge2 ♗e6!?N

I decided to take this as my main line, as it seems like Black's best chance.

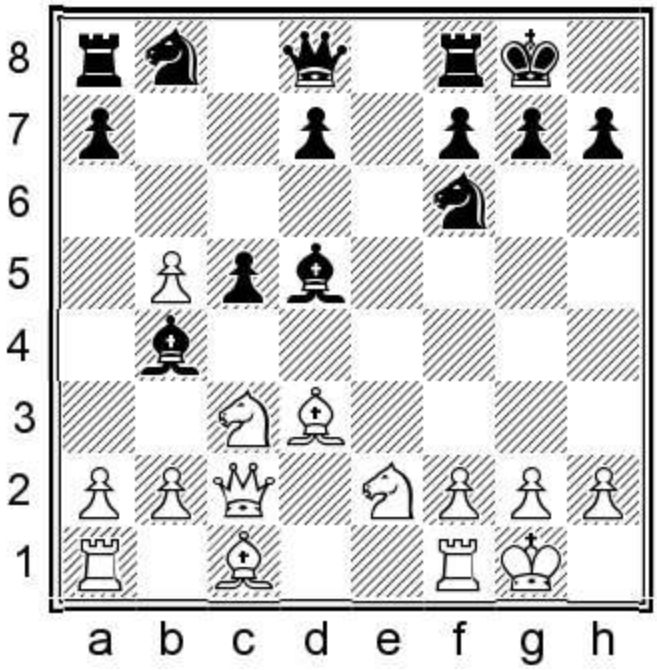
10...♗xg2? is hardly a serious option, in view of 11.♖g1 ♗b7 12.♖xg7.



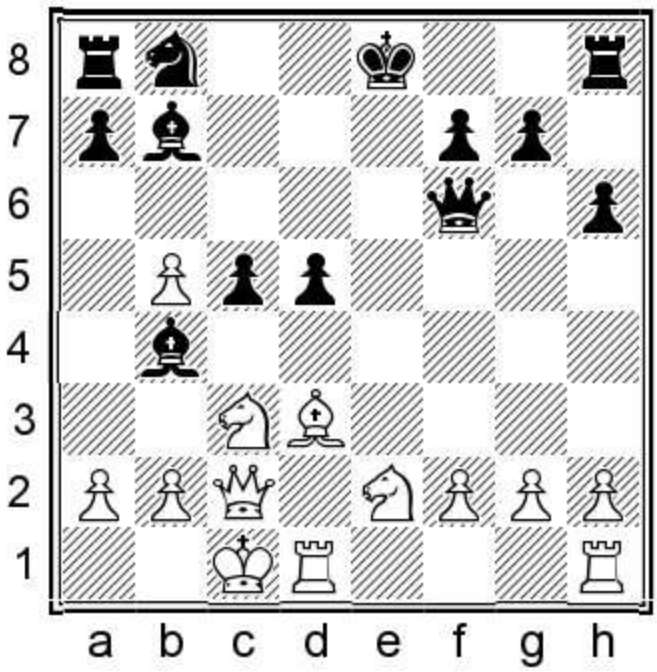
chesstouring.com

White's initiative is too strong, for instance: 12...d5 13.♗g5 ♘bd7 14.0-0-0+–

10...0-0? transposes to a couple of games which arrived here via the 7...exd5 move order noted earlier. After 11.0-0 Black is in big trouble, for instance:



11...♗b7 (or 11...♗e6N 12.♗g5 and Black has no time to defend the h7-pawn, since 12...h6 13.♗xf6 ♕xf6 14.♗e4+– leads to big material gains for White) 12.♗g5 d5 13.♗xh7† ♔h8 14.♗f5+– White enjoyed an extra pawn as well as a big initiative in Gelfand – Djuric, Novi Sad 2016.
Finally, a model example from correspondence praxis continued: 10...♗b7 11.♗g5 h6 12.♗xf6 ♕xf6 13.0-0-0 d5



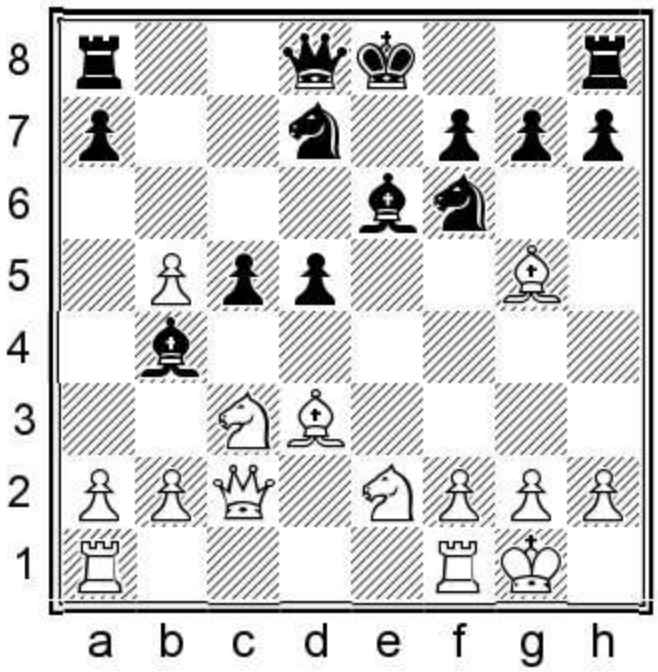
14.♗h7!! Sacrificing the bishop in order to arrange a central breakthrough and stop Black from castling. 14...g6 15.♘xd5 ♗xd5 16.♖xd5 ♖xh7 17.♖hd1 ♔f8 18.♖d8† ♔g7 19.♕e4+– Murillo Subia – Balladho,

corr. 2016.

11.0-0 d5

10...0-0? transposes to the Gelfand – Djuric game noted above.

12.♗g5 ♘bd7



13.♘f4!

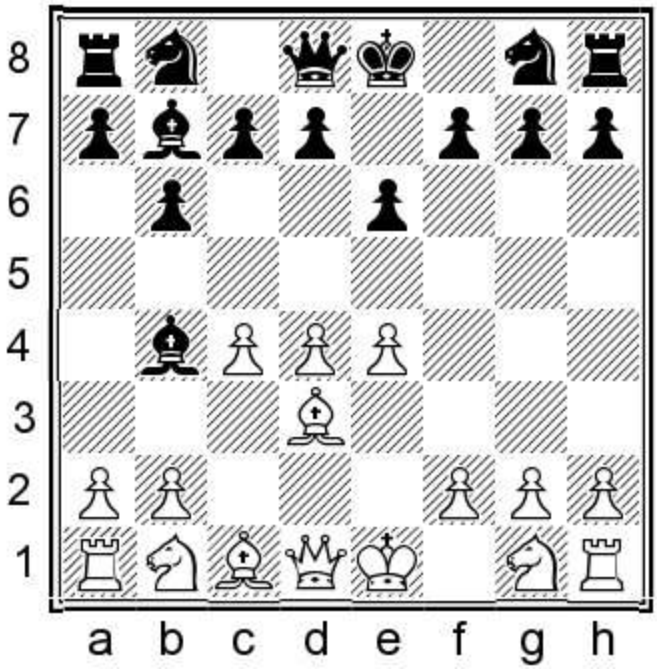
An important resource to increase the pressure on Black's position.

13...♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♕b6 15.♖fe1 0-0 16.c4 dxc4 17.♗f1!±

White will follow up with ♘xe6 and ♗xc4, with a clear positional advantage consisting of the bishop pair plus the better pawn structure.

B2) 4...♗b4†

chesstouring.com

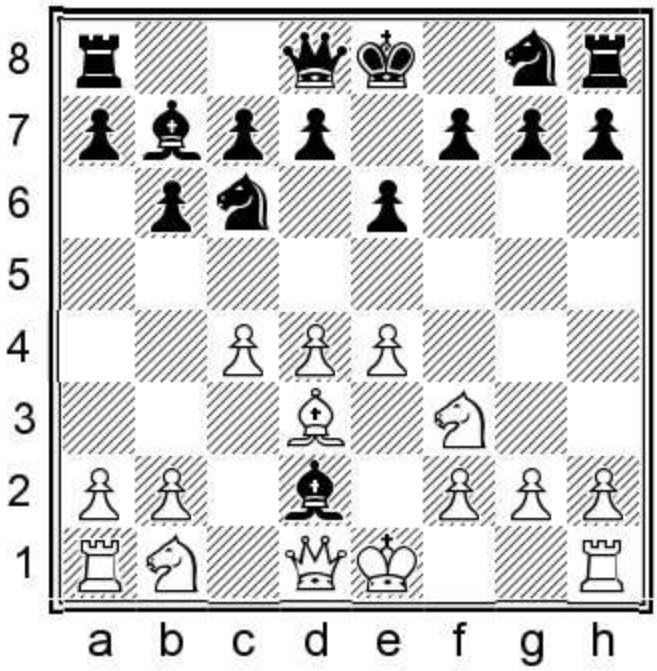


5.♗d2

This brings us to a further split. **B21)** 5...♘c6 and **B22)** 5...♕e7 are significant options, but **B23)** 5...♗xd2† is the main line by far.

B21) 5...♘c6 6.♘f3 ♗xd2†

6...♕f6 should be met by 7.d5! (this is much stronger than 7.e5, when 7...♗xd2† 8.♕xd2 ♕h6 led to double-edged play in H. Olafsson – Speelman, Internet [blitz] 2000) 7...♗xd2† 8.♕xd2 with a transposition to our main line below.



7.♕xd2!

chesstouring.com

White intends to drive away Black's knight with d4-d5, and it is not so easy to deal with this idea.

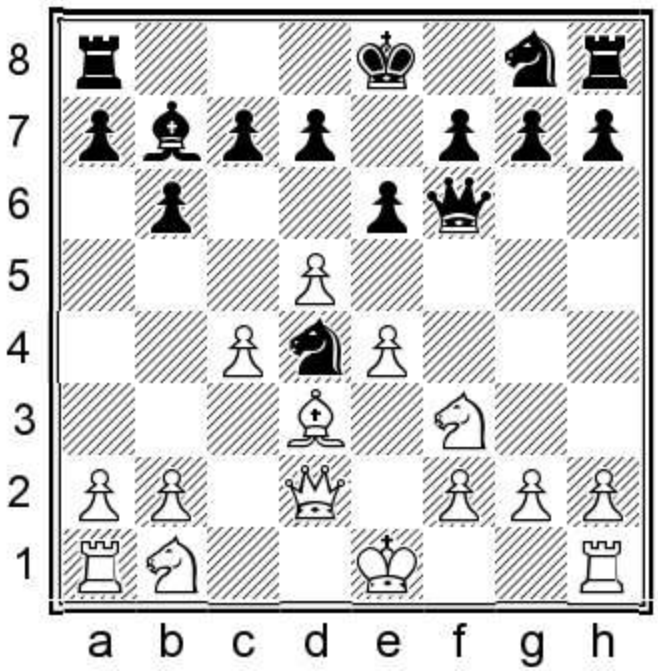
7...♕f6

Black gets ready to exchange off the problem knight, rather than allowing 7...♘ge7?! 8.d5 ♘b8 9.♘c3± when his opening strategy had clearly failed in Yeremenko – Poliakov, Kharkov 2004.

8.d5 ♘d4

8...♘e5?! has not been played; after 9.♘xe5 ♕xe5 10.♘c3 White is much better, as he is threatening the unpleasant f2-f4.

8...♘ce7 can hardly be a good idea. 9.♘c3 a6 A sad necessity, as ♘b5 was an unpleasant threat. 10.0-0 Black's opening experiment had clearly fallen short in Dautov – Speelman, Lippstadt 2000.



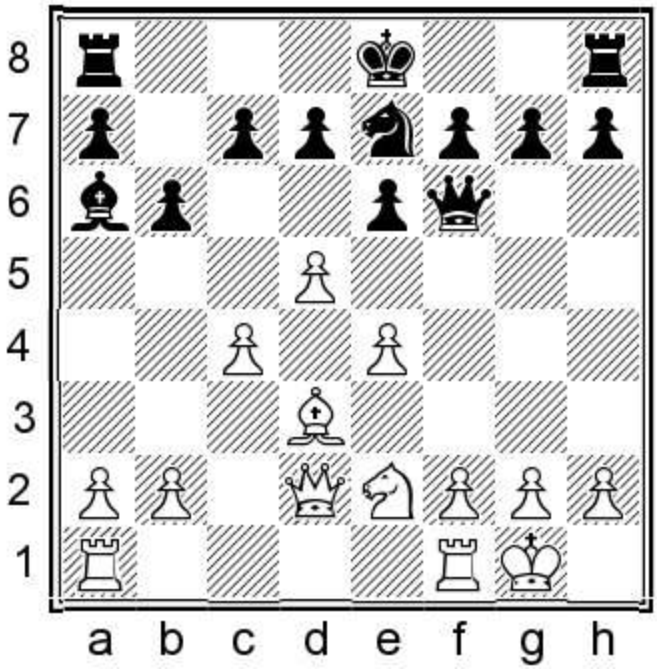
9.♘xd4 ♕xd4 10.♘c3

In *GM 2* I reached this position in a note and evaluated the position as better for White, with ♘b5 being an immediate threat. A few years later, the line received a practical test.

10...♗a6 11.♘e2 ♕f6 12.0-0 ♘e7

This occurred in Kappeler – Summermatter, Switzerland 2014. White stands better after any sensible continuation but my favourite way of strengthening the position is:

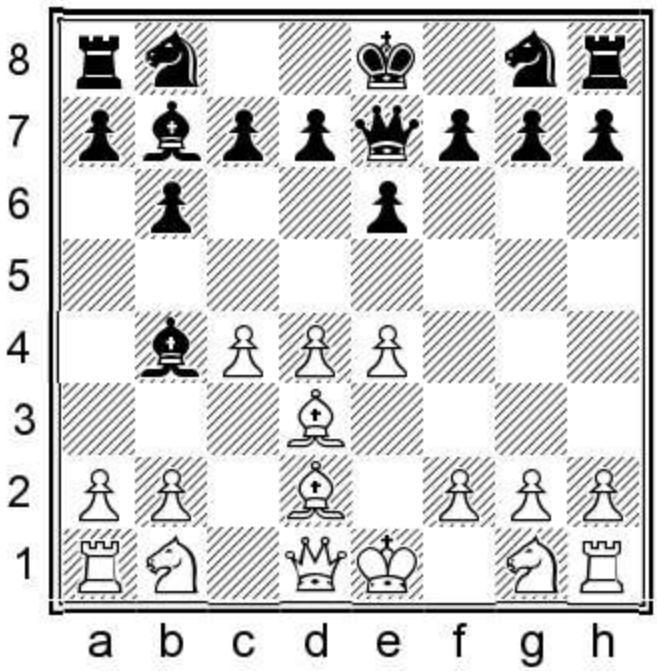
chesstouring.com



13.b3N 13...0-0 14.f4±

With a commanding space advantage.

B22) 5...♕e7



6.♘e2

I still favour this flexible move, having used it successfully in my own praxis.

6...♗xd2†

Of course we should also check:

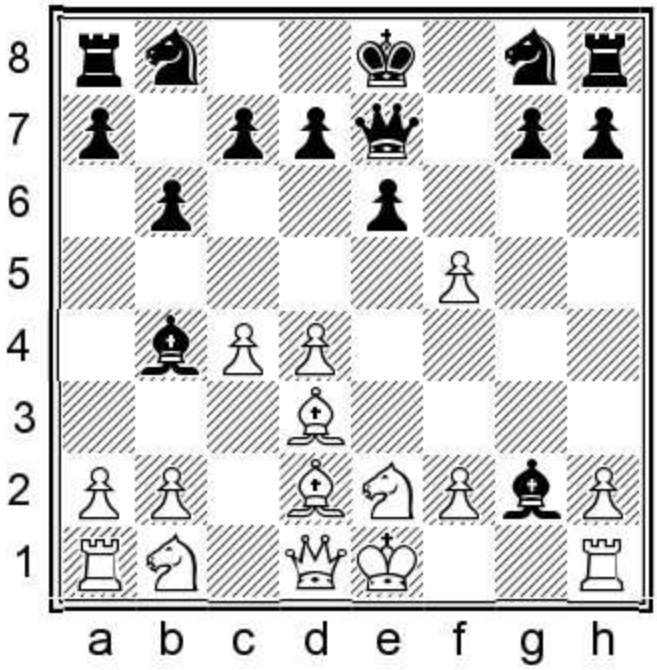
6...f5?!

chesstouring.com

This has scored surprisingly decently for Black, but White is excellently placed to meet it.

7.exf5 ♗xg2

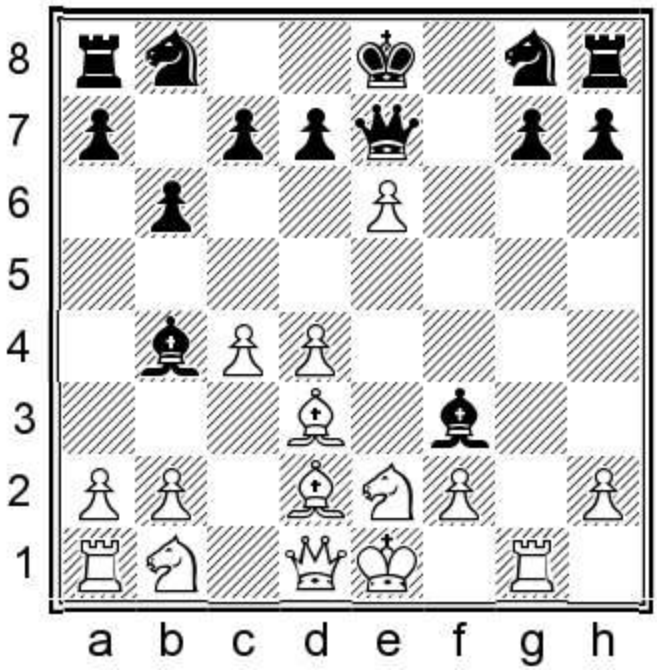
7...exf5 8.0-0 ♗xd2 9.♕xd2 ♘h6 10.♘bc3 0-0 11.♘f4± gave White a large positional advantage in Ranaldi – L. Nielsen, Ballerup 2015.



8.♖g1 ♗f3

After 8...♗b7, which occurred in Vasiliev – Lempert, Moscow 1990, White can play the simple: 9.fxe6!N 9...♗xd2† (9...dxe6? can be refuted by 10.♕a4† ♘c6 11.♗e4 ♗xd2† 12.♘xd2 ♕d7 13.♖xg7!+–) 10.♘xd2 dxe6 11.♘f4 ♘f6 12.♕e2 With an unquestionable advantage.

9.fxe6



9...♗d6!?N

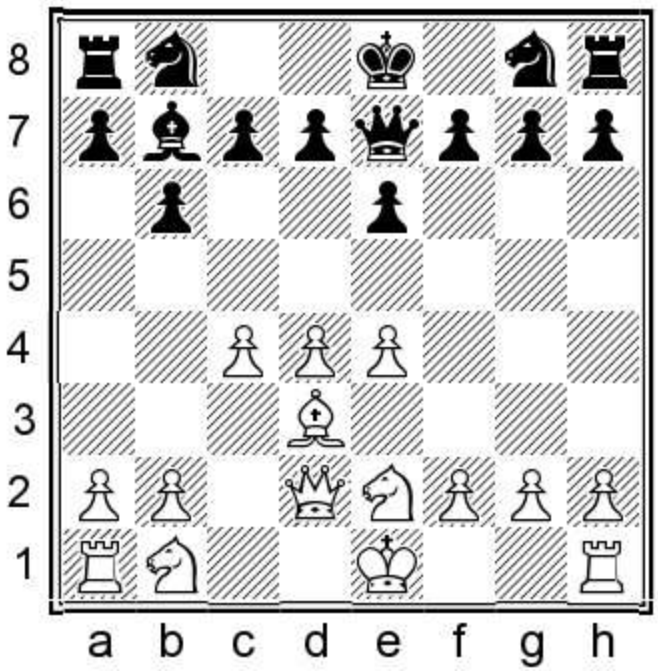
Black needs to come up with something better than 9...♘f6 10.♖g3 ♗h5 11.exd7† ♔f7 12.♕b3

♗xd2† 13.♘xd2+– when his position was a total wreck in Cvitkovic – Kalajzic, Hum na Sutli 2015. The text move is a better chance to make the game interesting, but White maintains much better chances after:

10.♗e3 ♗xh2 11.♖g5 ♘f6 12.♘d2 ♗g4 13.♕c2±

Followed by 0-0-0.

7.♕xd2



7...♘h6

7...d6 is Black's most recent try, but after 8.♘bc3 a6 9.0-0 ♘d7 10.f4 c5 11.♗c2± White was much better in Brunello – Bonafede, Rome 2016.

8.♘bc3 0-0 9.0-0 d6

This leads to a passive position for Black.

9...f5 was a more ambitious choice in Balazs – Bokros, Balatonlelle 2009, although 10.d5!N still gives White the better chances. For instance, 10...♘a6 11.exf5 ♘xf5 12.♖ae1↑ and White's pieces are much better coordinated.

10.f4 ♘d7

Now it's too late for 10...f5?!, as after 11.exf5 ♘xf5 12.d5!± Black faces serious difficulties.

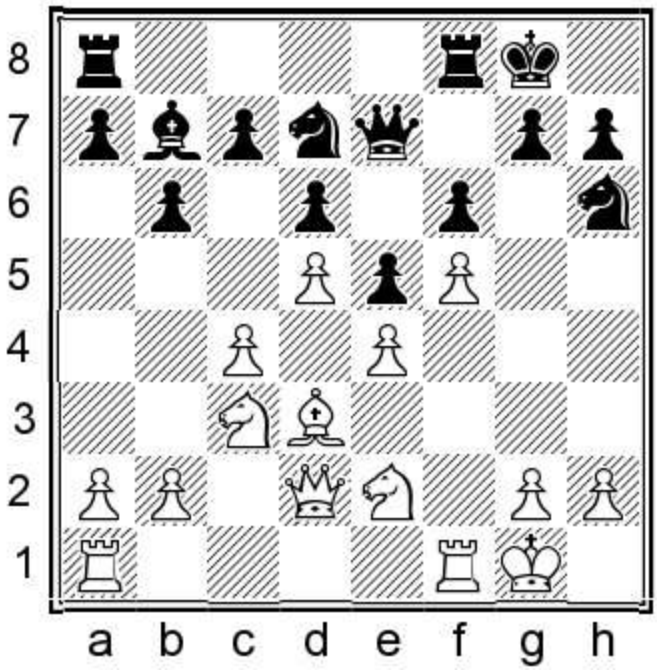
11.d5

There is also nothing wrong with 11.♖ae1!?N 11...e5 12.♗c2 maintaining all the pluses of White's position.

chesstouring.com

11...e5 12.f5 f6

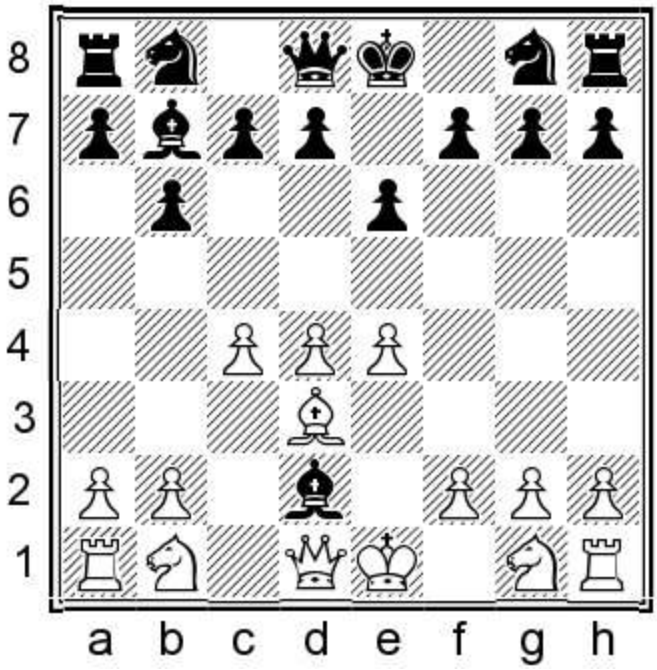
It's important that Black has no time for 12...♘c5?? since 13.f6! is lethal.



13.b4 ♘f7 14.♗c2!±

Intending to activate the bishop via the a4-square. White enjoyed a stable advantage thanks to his obvious spatial superiority in Avrukh – Speelman, Elista (ol) 1998. Eventually I won a nice positional game, which helped Israel to achieve victory in our match against England.

B23) 5...♗xd2†



6.♕xd2!

This is an important change from my previous work, which was influenced by my personal experience

chesstouring.com

after: 6.♘xd2 ♕f6! Black's latest trend, which had yet to be tested when *GM 2* was published. 7.♘e2 (7.♘f3 has also been tried, but Black has been doing pretty well here too) 7...♘c6 8.♘f3 g5 9.d5 ♘e5 10.♘xe5 ♕xe5 11.♕d2 ♘e7 12.0-0-0 0-0-0 Black was in decent shape in Avrukh – Greenfeld, Beer Sheva 2013.

6...f5

I don't take any other moves seriously, as White will simply maintain a clear space advantage in a similar manner as in the lines covered above.

7.♘c3 ♘f6

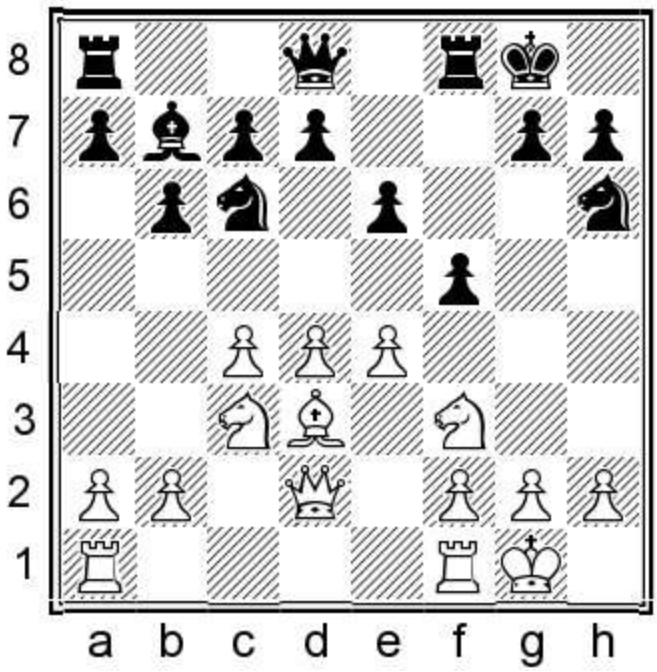
I checked two other options:

7...♘h6

This move has hardly ever been played in this exact position, but it immediately transposes to a few other games.

8.♘f3 0-0 9.0-0 ♘c6

After 9...fxe4 10.♗xe4 ♗xe4 11.♘xe4 ♖xf3 12.gxf3 ♘c6 13.d5 ♘e5 Black's exchange sacrifice yielded an eventual draw in Detter – Fahrner, Austria 1997, but the accurate 14.♕c3!N 14...♘g6 15.dxe6 dxe6 16.c5± would have left Black with no compensation.



10.♖ad1 ♕f6

10...♘e7?! was met by powerful play by White in the following game: 11.d5 ♔h8 12.dxe6 dxe6 13.♘g5 ♕c8 14.exf5 exf5 15.♖fe1+– Metge – Miles, Auckland 1992.

11.e5 ♕g6 12.d5 ♘e7 13.♗e2±

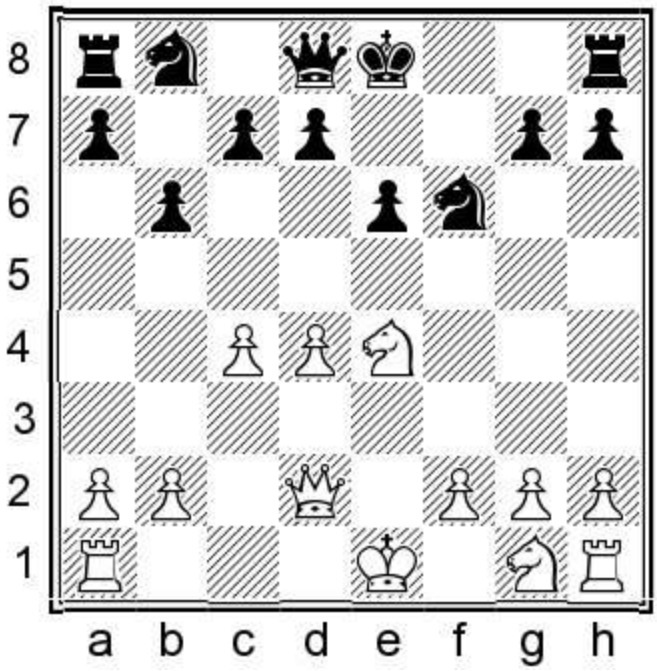
White's advantage is obvious Jelen – Praznik, Ljubljana 1998.

A more significant alternative is:

chesstouring.com

7...fxe4 8.♗xe4 ♗xe4 9.♘xe4 ♘f6

In *GM 2*, I reached this position in a line which was intended to illustrate why I was avoiding 6.♕xd2. However, a closer inspection revealed that White has good prospects after:

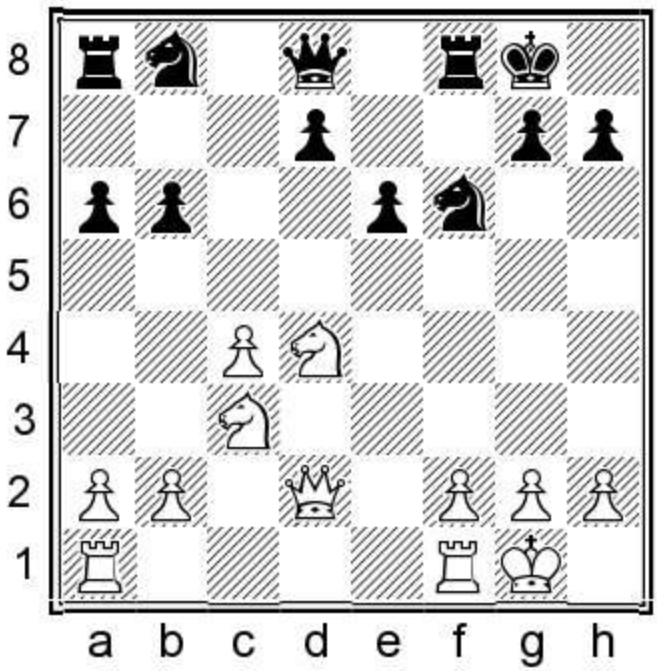


10.♘c3!

An important detail. Without this move, White has no real hope for an advantage.

10...0-0 11.♘f3 ♘c6

Black has also tried 11...c5, when 12.0-0 cxd4 13.♘xd4 a6 was seen in Postny – Hamitevici, Skopje 2015.



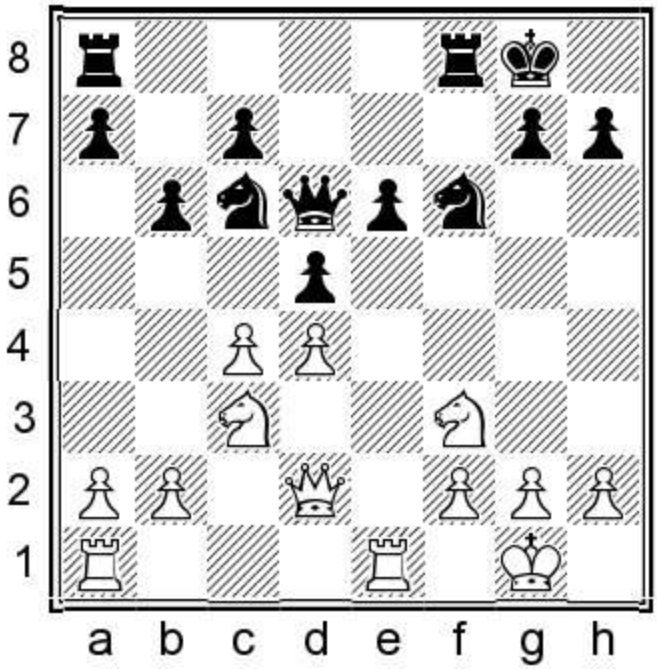
Here I suggest 14.♕e2N 14...♕c7 15.♖fd1 ♘c6 16.♘xc6 ♕xc6 17.♖d4± when Black's pawn structure is rather vulnerable.

12.0-0 d5

chesstouring.com

White dealt with 12...♘e7 efficiently in the following game: 13.♖fe1 c6 14.♖ac1 ♕e8 15.♘e5 ♕h5 16.h3± Malaniuk – Zebracki, Polanica Zdroj 2016.

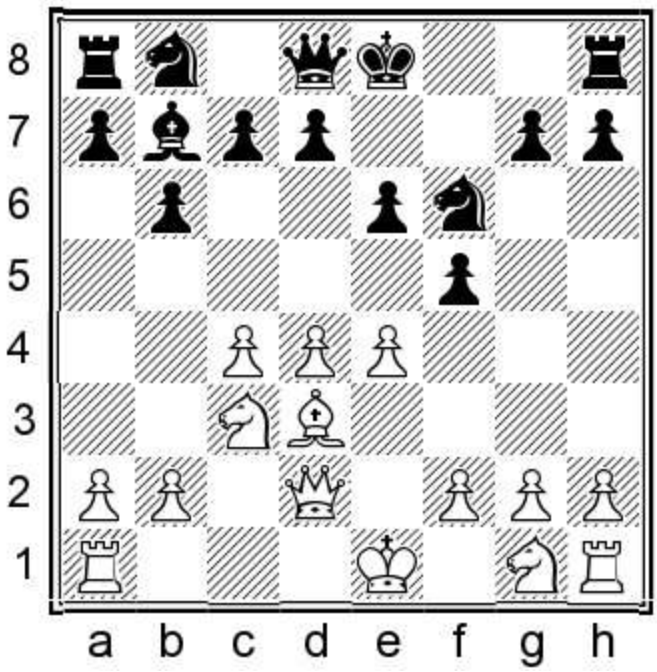
13.♖fe1 ♕d6



This position has been reached twice with Black by B. Cheng, without any success. Nevertheless I would like to suggest an improvement for White:

14.♕e2N 14...♖fe8 15.♖ad1±

With a clear positional plus.



8.f3 ♘c6

The alternative is:

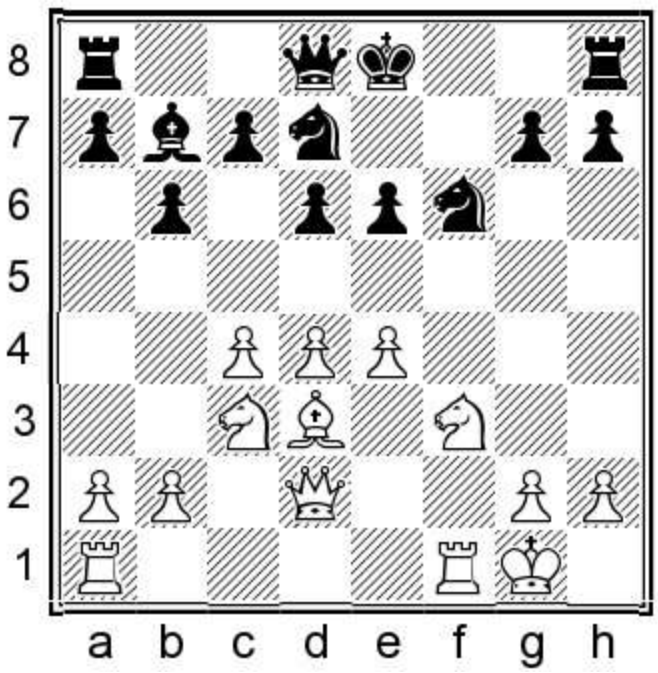
8...fxe4 9.fxe4 d6

9...♘c6?! is worse in view of 10.e5! ♘h5 11.♘f3 0-0 12.0-0 ♘b4 13.♗e4 ♗xe4 14.♘xe4 ♕e7

chesstouring.com

15.g3± and Black could not have been happy about the placement of his knight in Kashlinskaya – Semcesen, Olomouc 2009.

10.♘f3 ♘bd7 11.0-0



11...0-0

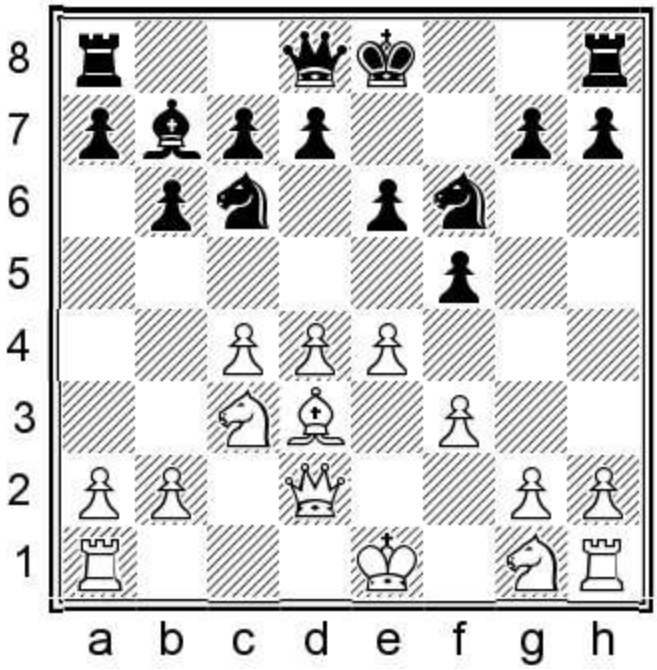
The unfortunate 11...♕e7?! was played in Kaufman – Mouzon, Washington DC 1997, when 12.♘b5!N would have been strong. Black has nothing better than 12...0-0 (12...♕d8? loses to 13.♘g5!+–) 13.♘xc7 ♖ac8 14.♘b5 ♘xe4 15.♕e3± when a7 is about to drop and Black has several other weak pawns.

The text move was played in Debarshi – Degraeve, Barcelona 2017, when White rushed ahead with 12.d5. Instead I suggest:

12.♗c2N

White enjoys a pleasant pull.

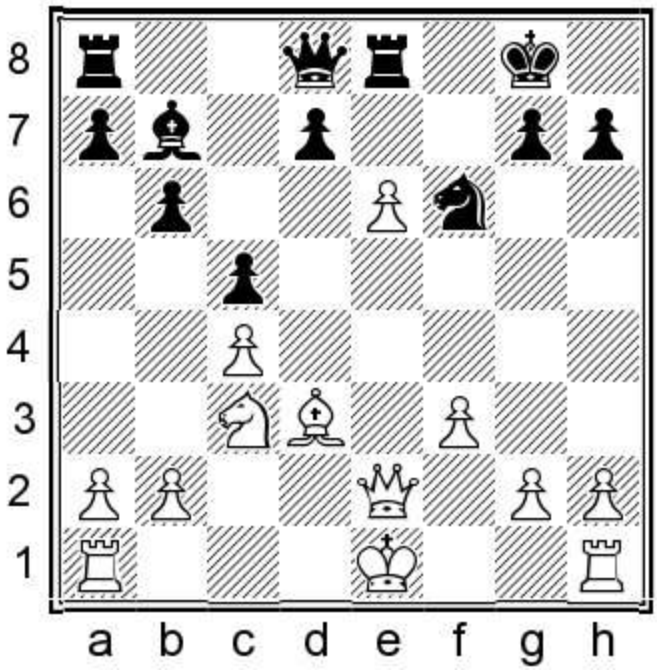
chesstouring.com



9.exf5!

This leads to a pretty forced sequence which ends up in White's favour.

9...♘xd4 10.♕e3 c5 11.♘ge2 ♘xe2 12.♕xe2 0-0 13.fxe6 ♖e8



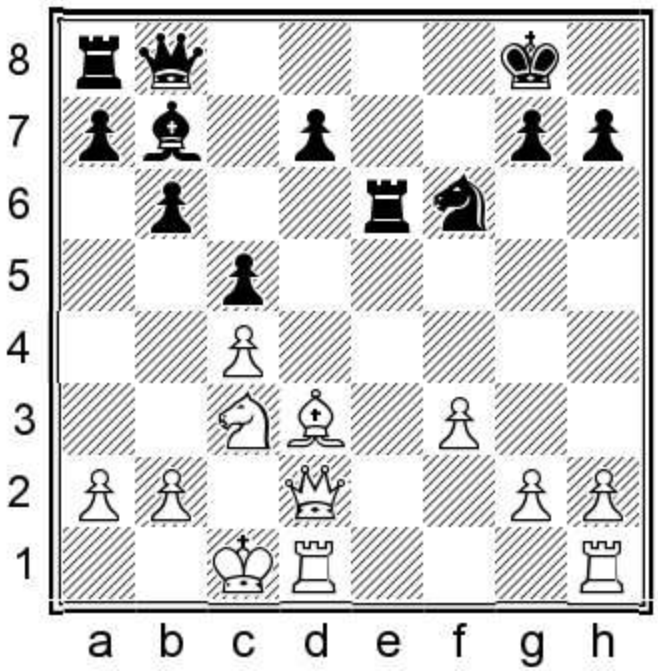
14.0-0-0 ♖xe6 15.♕d2 ♕b8

15...♗c6 is well met by 16.♖hf1! in order to prepare g2-g4. A well-played game continued 16...♘e8 17.♗e4 ♘d6 18.♗d5 ♗xd5 19.♕xd5 ♕f8 20.f4 ♘f5 21.♖fe1± and White was firmly in control in Dosi – Girard, corr. 2010.

So far the play has been quite logical, but now in Standaert – Girard, corr. 2011, I believe White could

chesstouring.com

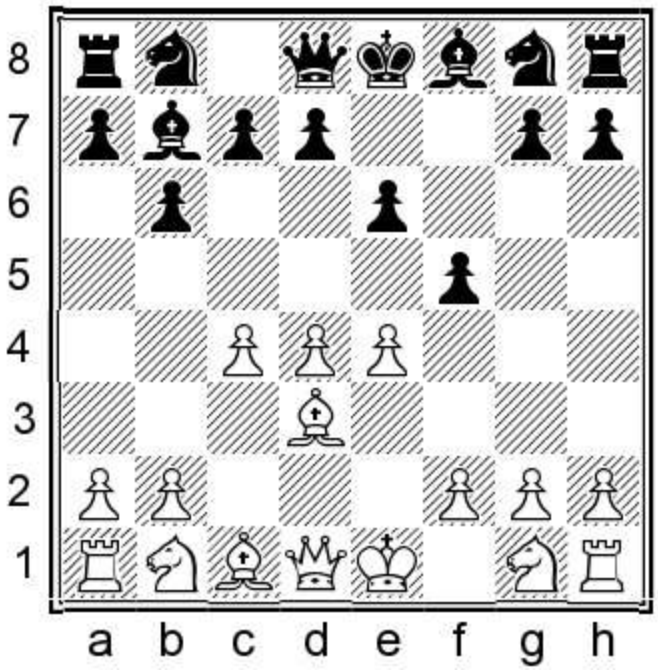
have played more strongly with:



16.h4!N 16...♗c6 17.h5↑

With good attacking prospects.

B3) 4...f5



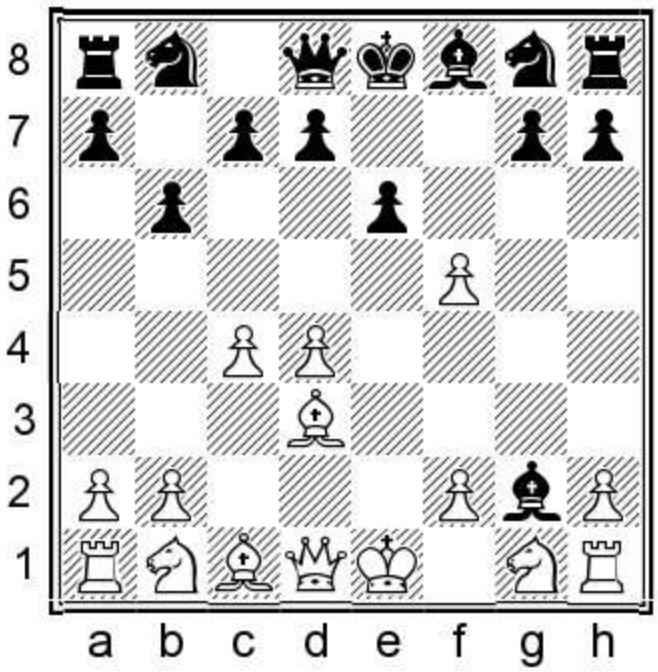
The fear of this move is undoubtedly the reason why some players avoid 3.e4 in favour of a less ambitious move. However, if White knows some theory on this line, it is Black who should be afraid.

5.exf5

We will consider the dubious **B31)** 5...♗xg2? followed by the main line of **B32)** 5...♗b4†.

chessbouring.com

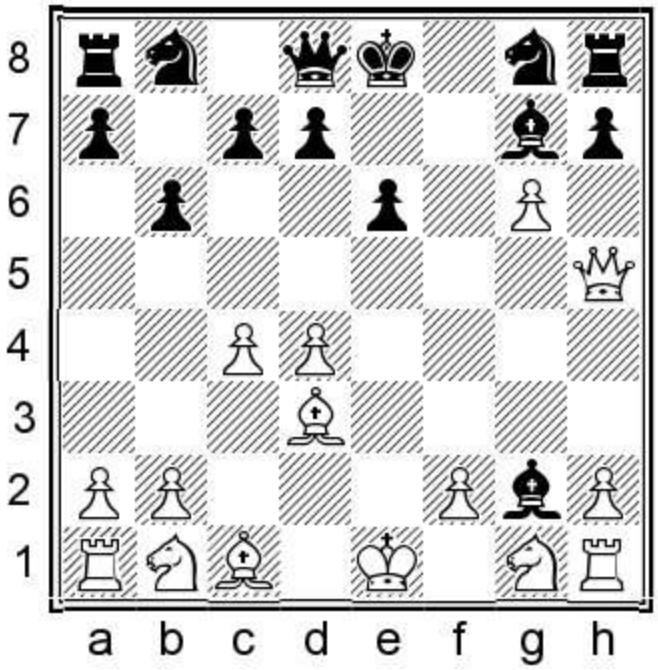
B31) 5...♗xg2?



This move is known to be bad, and it may even be losing outright. You don't have to memorize every detail of what follows, but it is essential to know a few forced lines and recurring motifs which will enable White to break through.

6.♕h5† g6 7.fxg6 ♗g7

7...♘f6? is obviously not playable due to 8.g7† ♘xh5 9.gxh8=♕.



8.gxh7† ♔f8 9.♗g5

9.♘e2 is another possible move order, when 9...♘f6 (or 9...♗xh1 10.♗g5 ♘f6 11.♕h4) 10.♕h4 ♗xh1

11.♗g5 transposes to our main line. This could be one way to simplify your preparation by avoiding the 10...♘c6 line in the notes below, although it's not a particularly good option for Black, so I will leave it for the reader to decide which move order to go for.

9...♘f6

This is forced, since 9...♘e7? loses to 10.♘f3! ♗xh1 11.♘e5 ♕e8 12.♘g6† ♘xg6 13.♗xg6 ♕c8 14.♕h4 and Black is helpless against the mating threats.

10.♕h4 ♗xh1

A rare alternative is:

10...♘c6

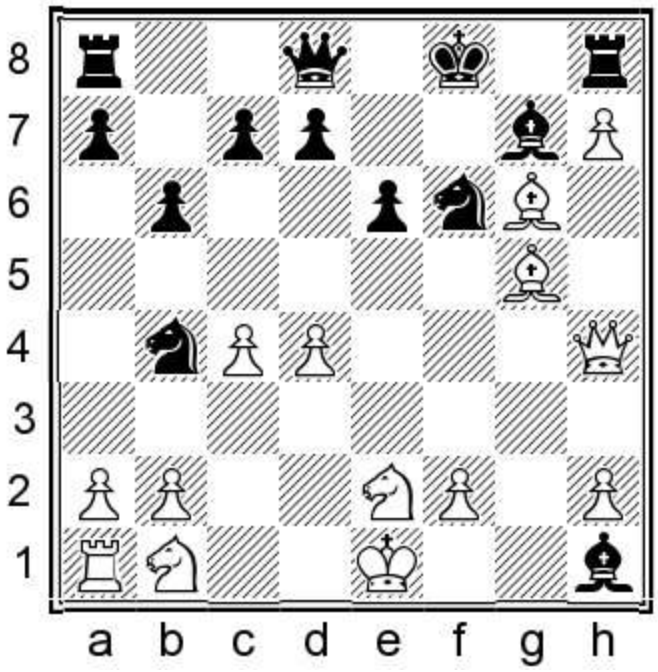
This has scored surprisingly well for Black, but White has a great position after:

11.♘e2 ♘b4

11...♗xh1 has actually been the usual choice, but it leads straight to our main line below.

12.♗g6 ♗xh1

This has occurred in one game, where White missed the strongest continuation:



13.♘d2!N

13.♘bc3 was still highly favourable for White in Shumiakina – Matveeva, Kstovo 1998, but the text move is a more convincing winner. The idea is to transfer the e2-knight to h5, so the other knight is optimally placed on d2 where it prevents Black's bishop from going to f3.

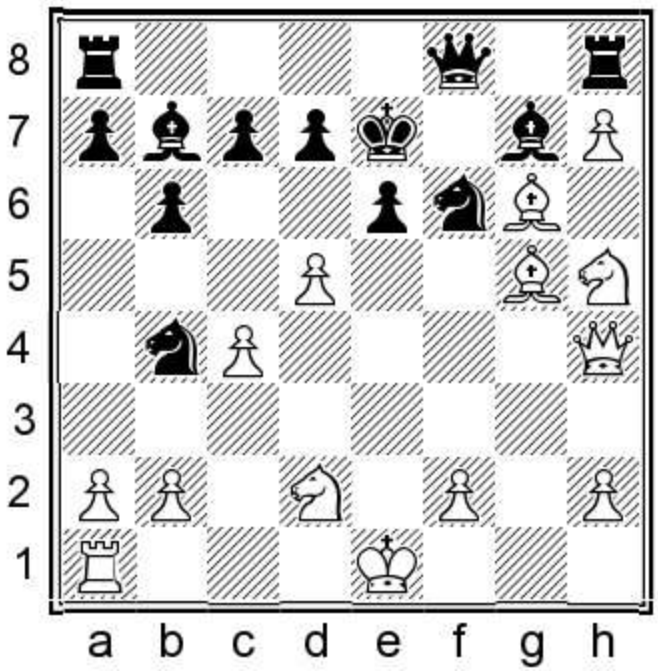
13...♗b7

13...♘c6 gives White a few ways to win: 14.f3!? ♘e7 15.♘f4 ♘xg6 16.♘xg6† ♔f7 17.♘e5† ♔f8 18.♘e4 ♖xh7 19.♕f4+– is one example.

14.♘f4 ♔e7 15.♘h5 ♕f8 16.d5!

Threatening ♘e4.

chesstouring.com

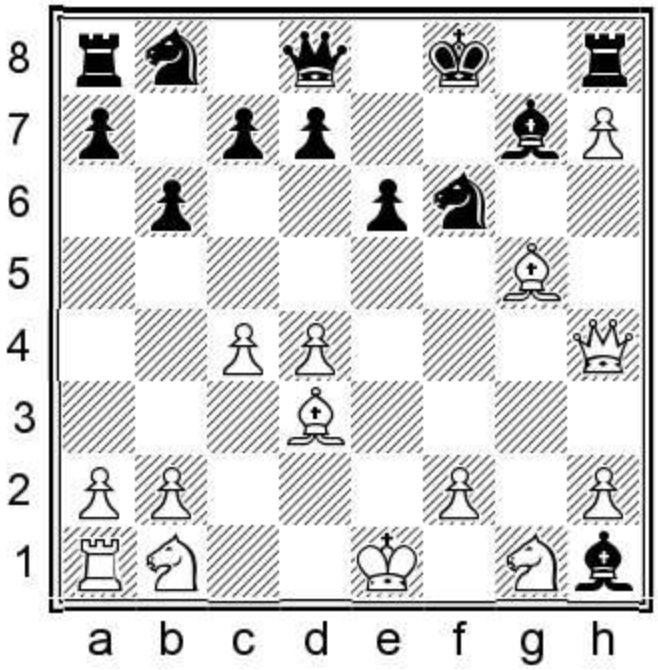


16...exd5

16...♘bxd5 17.♘e4 is crushing.

17.0-0-0

Black has no chance of surviving the attack.



11.♘e2 ♘c6

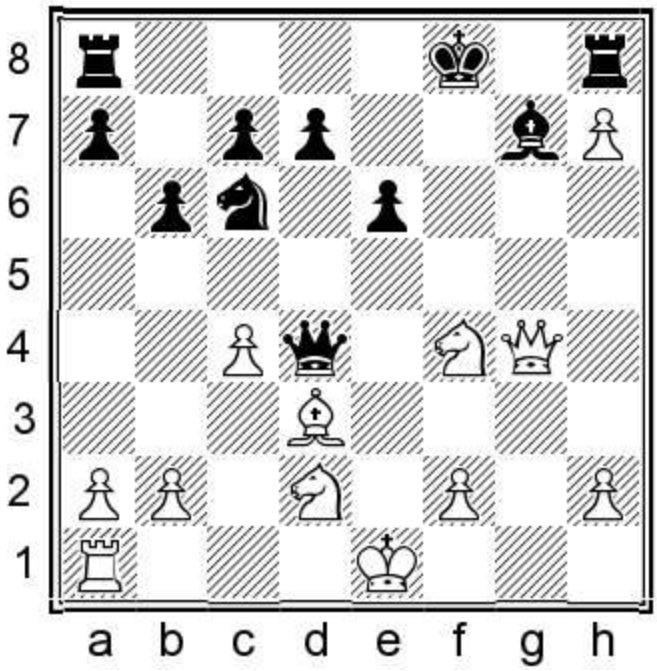
Black does not fare any better after other moves, for instance:

After 11...c5 12.♘d2 White's initiative practically plays itself: 12...♘c6 13.0-0-0 ♘b4 14.♗g6 ♗b7 15.♘f4 ♔e7 16.♘h5 ♕f8 17.d5 Black's position was hopeless in Van Gysel – Moreira, email 2011.

11...♗f3 12.♘f4 ♘c6 13.♘d2 ♗g4 gives White a couple of good options; the best in my view is: 14.♗xf6

chesstouring.com

♕xf6 15.♕xg4 ♕xd4 (15...♘xd4N 16.♔f1! is also winning for White) Now in Lower – Marshall, email 1999, White should have continued:



16.♖d1!N (this is much stronger than the game continuation of 16.♘f3, although even that is still winning) 16...♗f6 17.♔f1 ♘e7 18.♘f3 ♕c5 19.♘h5 ♗xb2 20.♘g5 With a crushing attack.

Finally, Bauer claimed that the following move enables Black to hold, but I disagree...

11...♕e7 12.♘f4 ♕f7

12...♔e8? was played in Elsness – Antoniou, Istanbul (ol) 2000, when 13.♘h5N would have won immediately.

The text move avoids an immediate calamity but the queen manoeuvre is too slow, and White develops a lethal initiative after:

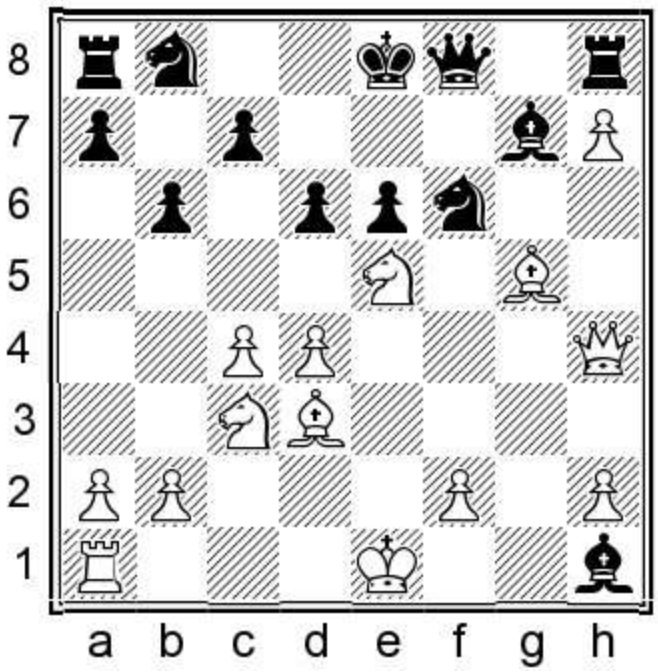
13.♘g6† ♔e8 14.♘e5 ♕f8

14...♕e7 15.♘g4 was winning for White in Percze – G. Evans, corr. 2001.

15.♘c3 d6

Bauer gets this far and analyses 16.♗g6†, but White has something stronger.

chesstouring.com



16.0-0-0! dxe5

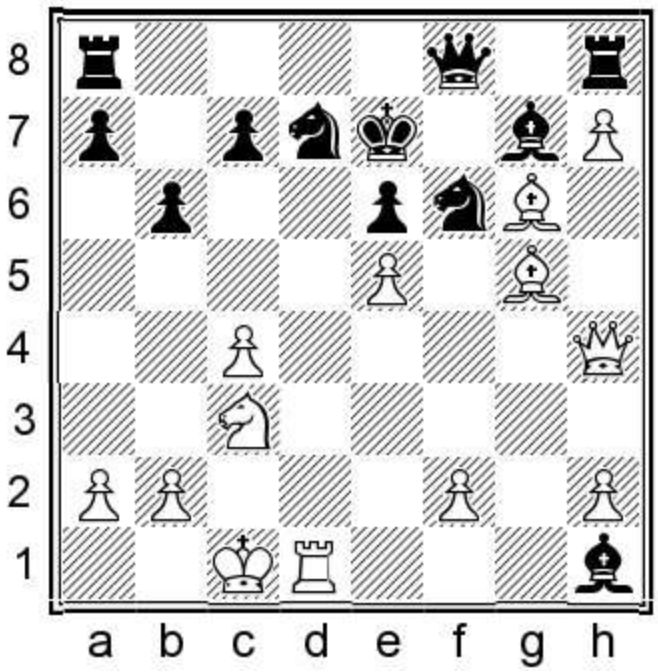
I also analysed 16...♗b7N 17.♗g6† ♔e7 when White has many ways to win, but I decided to leave my fancy solution from *GM 2*: 18.♘d5†!! ♗xd5 (or 18...exd5 19.♖e1 ♔d8 20.♘f7† ♔c8 21.♗xf6+–) 19.cxd5 dxe5 (19...exd5 20.♖e1 wins as well) 20.dxe5 ♘bd7 21.♕c4!+– With a crushing attack.

17.dxe5 ♘bd7

After 17...♔e7 18.♖xh1 ♘bd7 19.♖e1 ♘xe5 20.♖xe5 ♔d7 Black somehow escaped with a draw in Browne – Miles, Reno 1999. White has several winning considerations, the simplest being 21.♖e3N intending ♖f3.

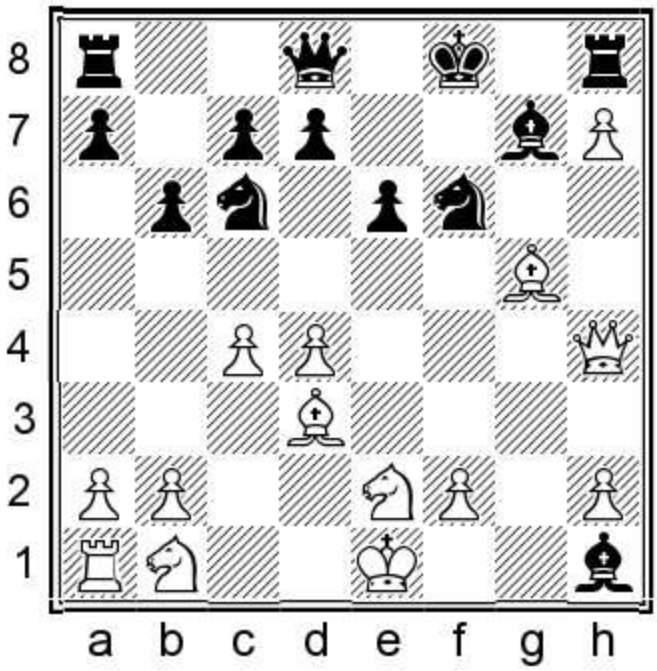
The text move is a more recent try, but White easily cracked the defence in the following game:

18.♗g6† ♔e7



chesstouring.com

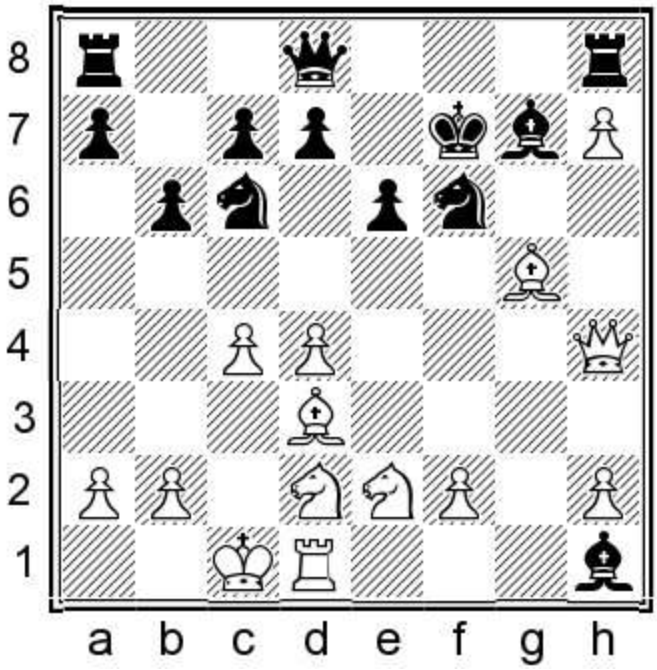
19.♕f4!? ♗c6 20.♘e4 ♗xe4 21.exf6† ♗xf6 22.♗xf6† ♕xf6 23.♖xd7† ♔xd7 24.♕xf6 ♗xg6 25.♕xg6
White had an easily winning endgame in Gerbich – Kazantsev, corr. 2009.



12.♘d2 b5

Once again, Black has a depressing choice:

12...♘b4 13.♗g6 ♗b7 14.♘f4 ♘c6 15.0-0-0 ♘xd4 occurred in Popovics – Babuiian, Chalkidiki 2003, when 16.♘h5N+− would have decided matters on the spot.
12...♔f7 gives White a pleasant choice. In *GM 2* I gave 13.f3 intending to trap the bishop, and although this move is certainly good enough to win with best play, I later realized that 13.0-0-0! is even more convincing. A good example continued:

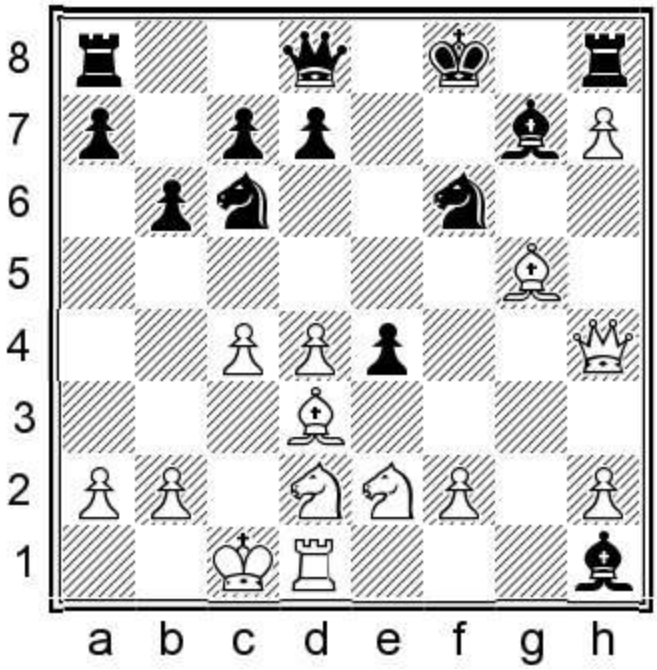


13...♘b4 14.♗b1 ♗b7 15.♖g1 ♕f8 16.♘f4 Black resigned in Mirkowski – Avchinikov, corr. 2014.

chesstouring.com

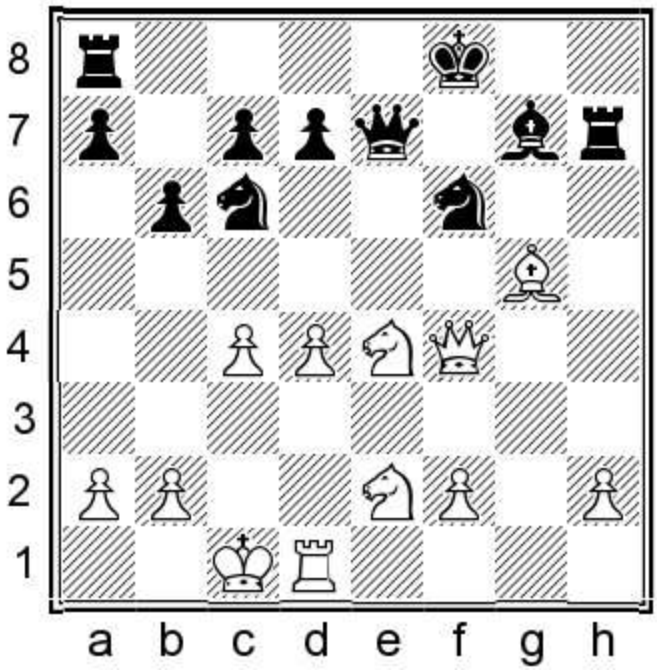
12...e5 13.0-0-0 e4

This enables Black to trade off the h1-bishop and eliminate the h7-pawn, but it still doesn't come close to solving his problems.



14.♗xe4 ♗xe4 15.♘xe4 ♖xh7 16.♕f4 ♕e7

16...♔f7 has been played in three games, and although White won them all, 17.♖d3!N is an improvement. The main threat is ♖f3, and if 17...♕e7 18.♖e3+– White is winning.



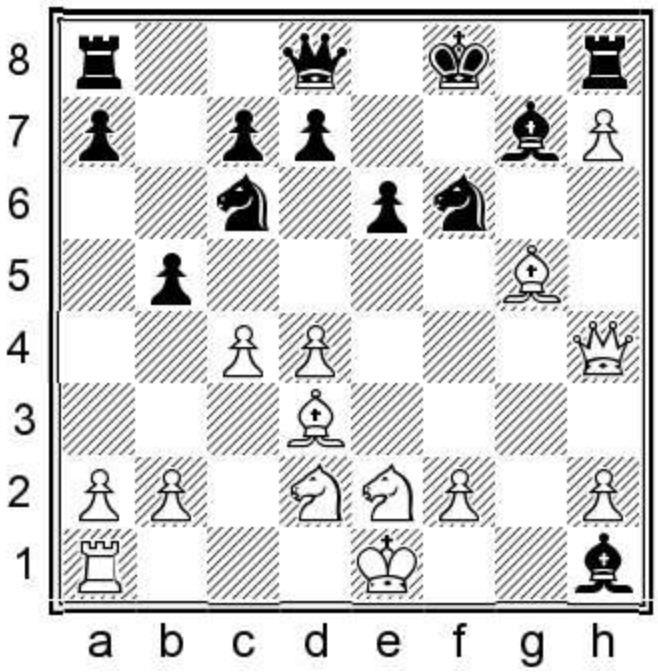
17.♗xf6 ♕f7

After 17...♗xf6 18.♘xf6 ♖f7 19.♕h6† ♖g7 20.♖g1 Black can resign.

18.♘g5 ♕xc4† 19.♘c3 ♖h6 20.♗xg7† ♔xg7 21.♕g4

Black was unable to resist for much longer in Van Seben – Heesen, corr. 2009.

chesstouring.com

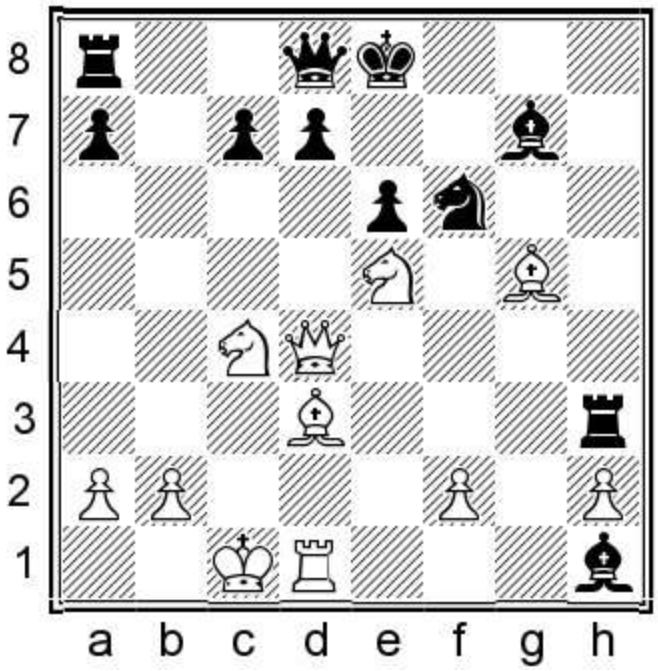


13.♘f4 bxc4

13...♘xd4? significantly eases White's task: after 14.♘g6† ♔f7 15.♘e5† ♔e8 16.♕xd4 he was winning in Boor – Kraai, Lindsborg 2004.

14.♘xc4 ♘b4

My line from *GM 2* continued: 14...♘xd4 15.♘g6† ♔e8 16.♕xd4 ♖xh7 17.♘ge5 ♖h3 18.0-0-0



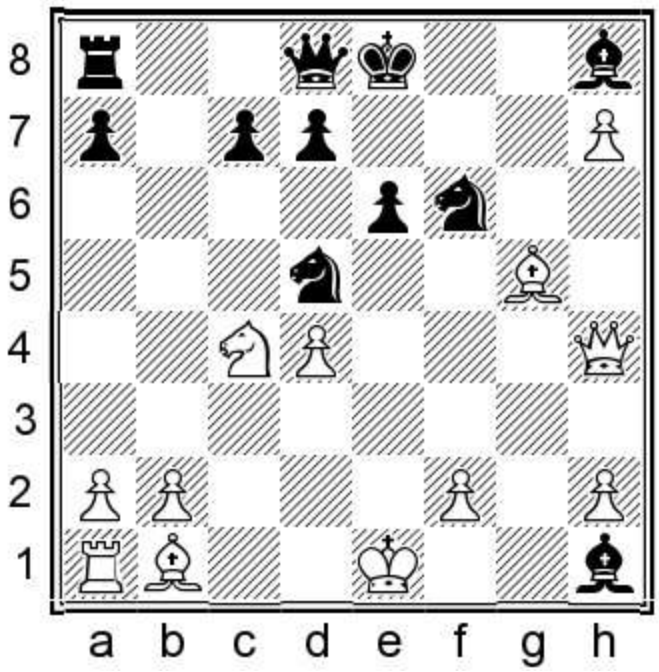
18...♗d5 19.♗g6† ♔f8 20.♕f4!+– White has a decisive attack.

15.♗b1 ♘bd5 16.♘g6† ♔e8 17.♘xh8 ♗xh8

We have been following A. Schneider – Utasi, Budapest 1984. Here White missed a relatively easy

chessbump.com

win:



18.♗g6†N 18...♔f8 19.♔e2 ♗g2 20.♖g1+–

Trapping the bishop, while keeping an overwhelming attack.

B32) 5...♗b4† 6.♔f1

Defending the g2-pawn.

6...♘f6

6...♕h4? 7.♘f3 ♕h5 was the strange continuation of Estremera Panos – Rausis, Seville 2003, when 8.fxe6N+– would have left Black with no compensation whatsoever.

6...exf5?!

This has been tried by a few strong players but it is not really a viable option.

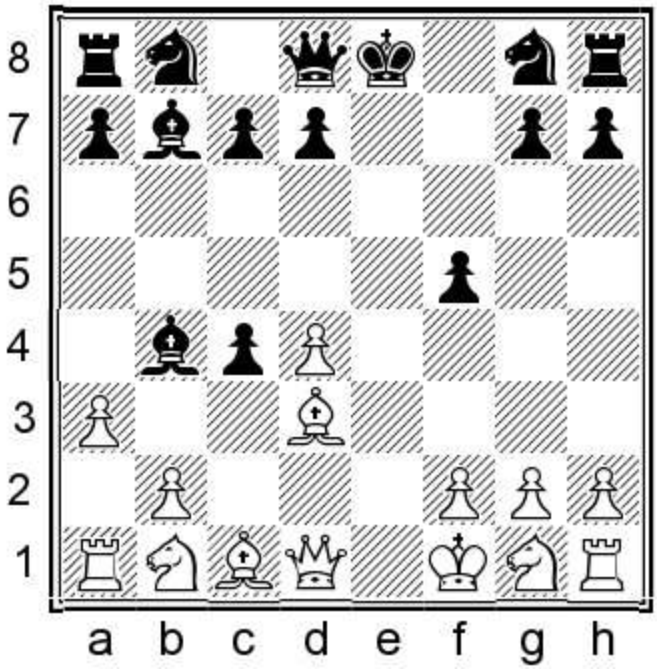
7.c5! bxc5

Black has no choice, as 7...♕f6? loses to 8.a3 ♗a5 9.b4 ♕xd4 10.♕e2† ♘e7 11.♗b2+– when his bishop will perish.

8.a3 c4

8...♗a5?! is even worse. Play continues 9.dxc5 ♕f6 and now I really like the following elegant idea: 10.♖a2! ♗d5 (10...c6N brings Black no relief after 11.b4 ♗d8 12.♖e2† ♘e7 13.♗b2 ♕f7 14.♘f3 with a strong initiative) In Mielke – Heusslein, Germany 1986, White should have continued: 11.b3!N 11...♘e7 12.♖e2 c6 13.♘f3 Threatening ♗g5. 13...h6 (13...♗xf3 14.gxf3 0-0 loses quickly: 15.♗b2 ♕f7 16.♖g1+–) 14.♗b2 ♕f7 15.♘bd2 0-0 16.♘c4 ♗c7 17.h4!+– Black is positionally destroyed, even though we have equal material.

chesstouring.com



9.♗xc4 ♗d6

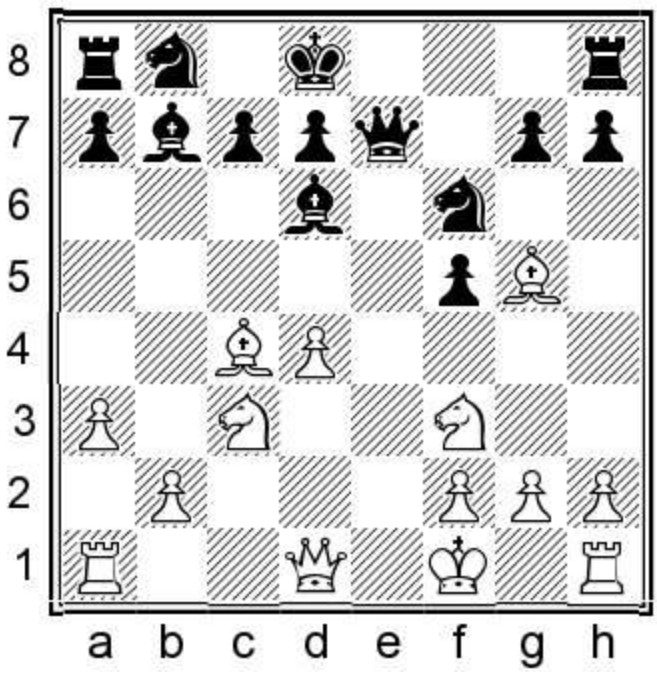
9...♗a5? 10.♕b3! forks the b7-bishop and g8-knight. 10...♕e7 (10...♗a6? 11.♗xa6 ♘xa6 12.♕b5 is a simpler win) Now the most convincing continuation is: 11.♘d2!N (in the game Black got some counterplay after 11.♘e2 ♕e4! 12.f3 ♕c6 13.♗xg8 d5 in Krueger – Galicki, Hattingen 2005, although White is still much better) 11...♗b6 12.♗xg8 ♘c6 13.♘gf3 0-0-0 14.♗d5 ♖he8 15.g3+– Black has no real play for the piece.

10.♘c3!

This is even more convincing than 10.♕b3 ♗a6, as analysed in *GM 2*.

10...♘f6 11.♘f3 ♕e7 12.♗g5 ♔d8

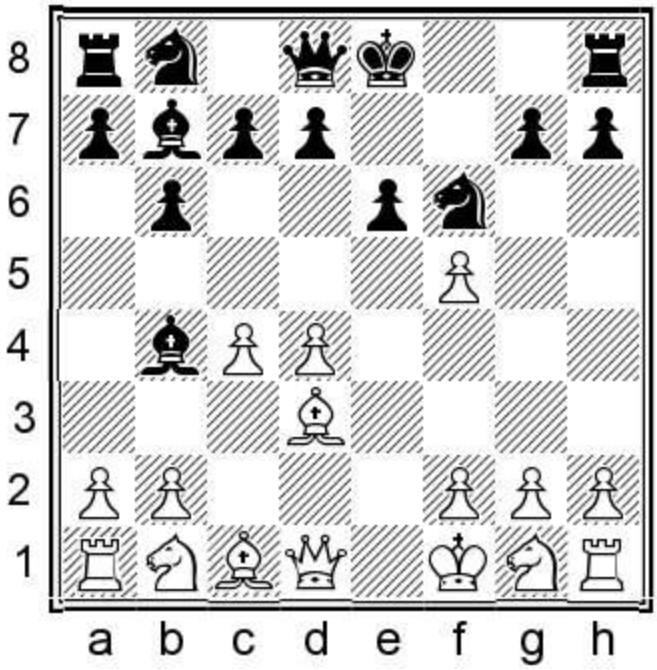
In Seirawan – Schussler, Malmo 1979, White should have continued:



13.♘d5N 13...♗xd5 14.♗xd5 c6 15.♕b3!+–

chesstouring.com

With devastating threats.

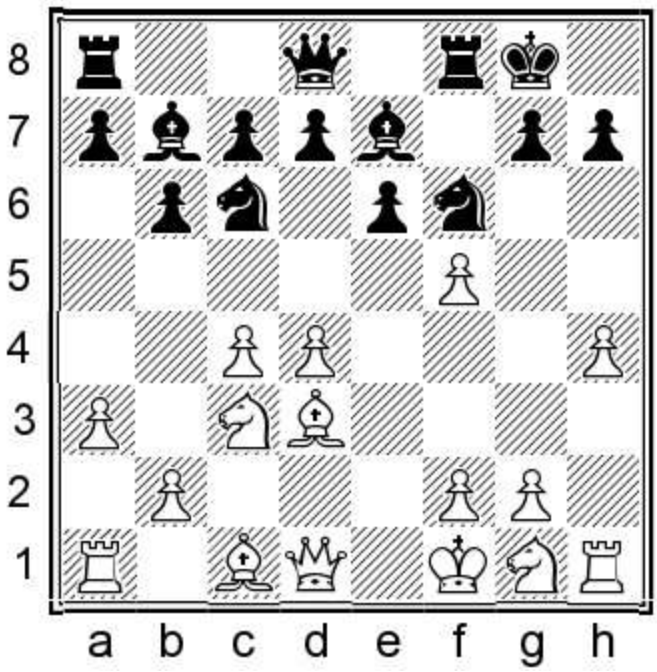


7.a3!?

This move is somewhat unusual and Bauer does not consider it in *Play 1...b6*, but I believe it to be the most promising option.

7...♗d6

Black can hardly hope for adequate compensation after the more passive retreat: 7...♗e7 8.♘c3 0-0 9.h4! As we will see in several of the lines below, this move often turns out to be the most efficient way for White to get organized on the kingside. 9...♘c6 (9...exf5 10.♗xf5 g6 11.♗g4 ♘xg4 12.♕xg4 ♕e8 13.d5 is also clearly better for White) In Dale – Kerr, Melbourne 2013, White should have played:

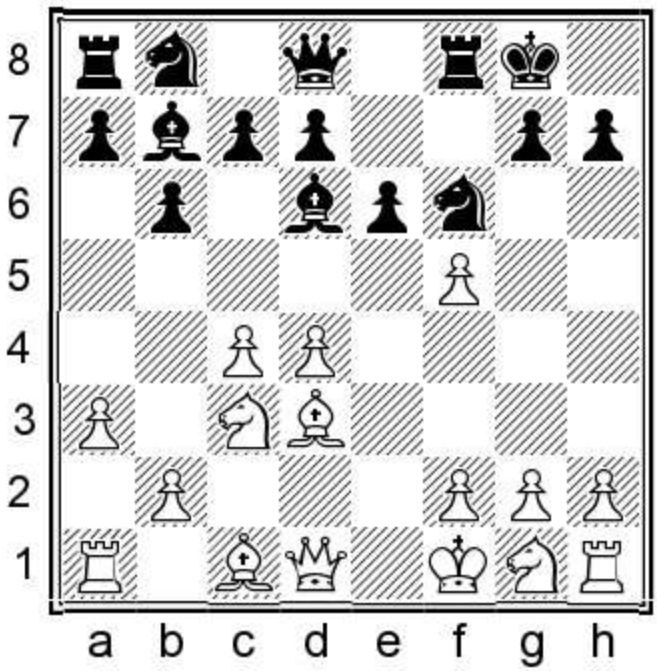


10.♘f3N 10...♕e8 11.♖h3 ♕h5 12.♗g5 With a serious advantage.

chesstouring.com

8.♘c3 0-0

8...♘c6 9.♘f3 0-0 transposes to the note on 9...♘c6 below.



9.♘f3

Suddenly we transpose to several more games, due to the different possible timings of the a2-a3 move.

9...♕e8

This is the Black's usual choice, but of course I checked a couple of alternatives:

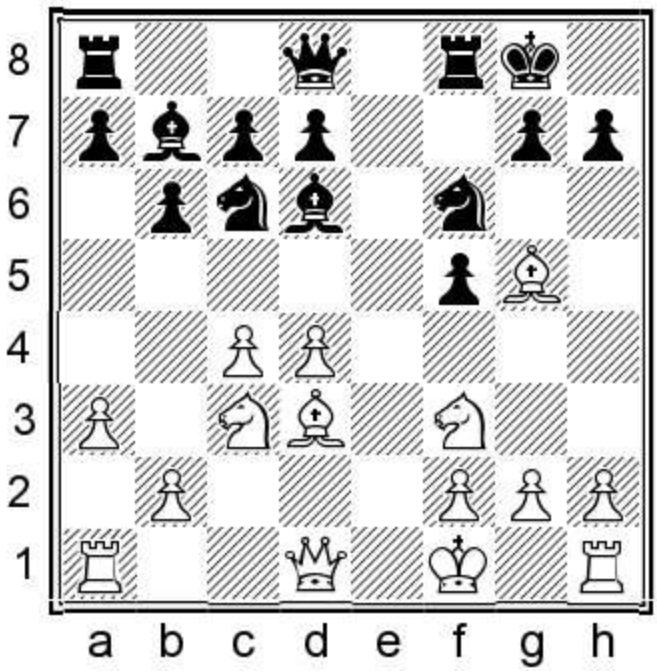
9...♘c6 10.♗g5 exf5

10...♘e7 11.fxe6 dxe6 12.♕e2 ♕d7 13.♖e1 is clearly better for White, and after 13...h6 14.♗xf6 ♖xf6 15.♘e4 ♖f4 16.c5!+– the outcome was soon decided in Goldin – Gofshtein, Rishon LeZion 1998.

10...♕e8 allows White to carry out favourable simplifications: 11.fxe6 dxe6 12.♗xf6! ♖xf6 13.♗e4 ♖d8 14.♕a4!± Dautov – Filipovic, Switzerland 2004.

This position was reached in Khademalsharieh – Tregubov, Doha 2015, and one other game. A natural improvement is:

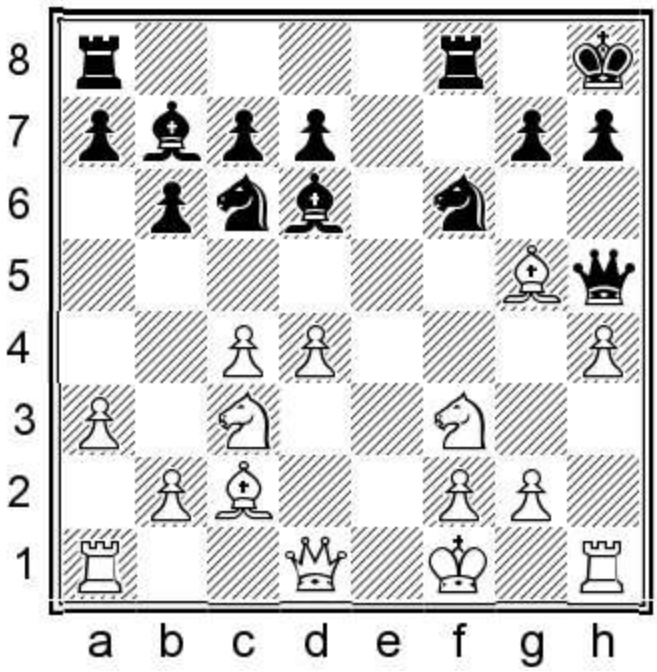
chesstouring.com



11.h4!N 11...♔h8

After 11...h6 White is not obliged to retreat his bishop and can instead play 12.c5! ♗e7 13.♗xf5, with a great position.

12.♗xf5 ♕e8 13.♗c2 ♕h5



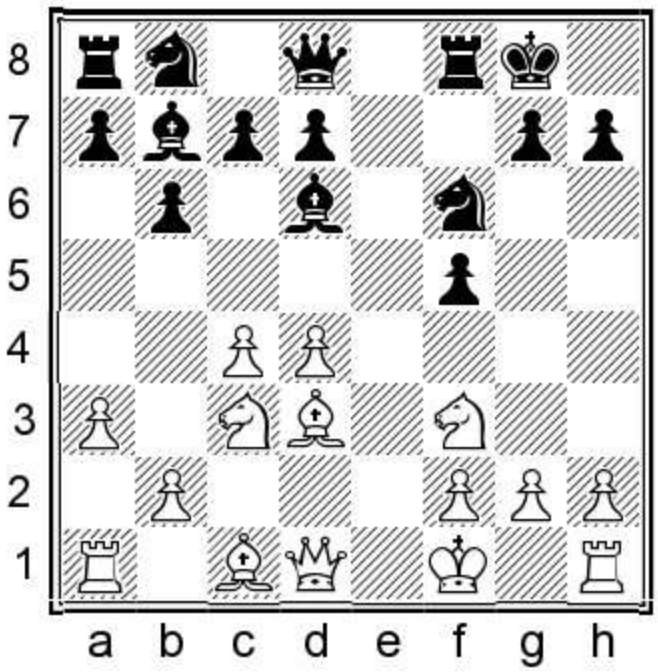
14.♗xf6! ♖xf6 15.♘g5 ♕xd1† 16.♖xd1

Black is in trouble: the h7-pawn is hanging, and 16...h6 runs into 17.♘ge4.

9...exf5

I decided on a new approach against this move.

chesstouring.com



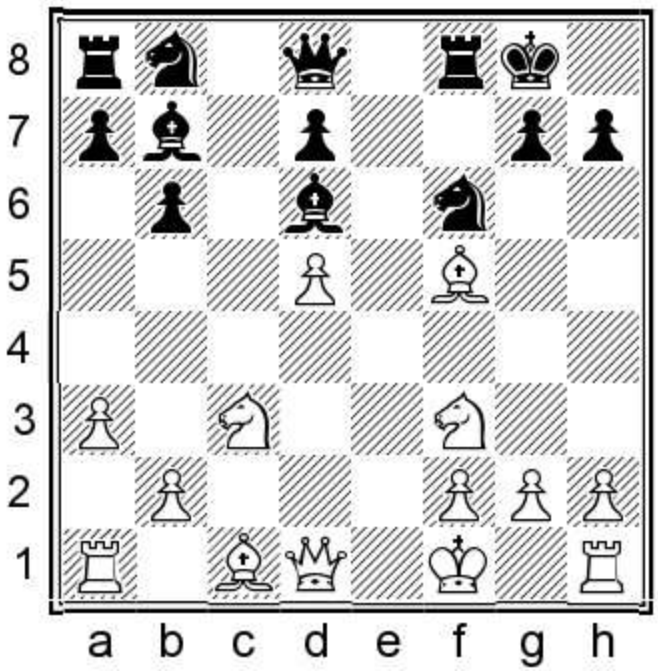
10.d5!?N

10.♗xf5 was analysed in *GM 2* and although White should be better there too, the text move has the advantage of being positionally strong while avoiding complications. White does not need to worry about his king on f1, as his rook can be developed along the third rank after the thematic h2-h4.

10...c6

10...♘g4 11.♗g5 ♕e8 12.♕c2 ♕g6 13.♖e1 ♘a6 14.h3 ♘e5 15.♘xe5 ♗xe5 16.♖xe5 ♕xg5 17.h4 ♕h6 18.♗xf5± leaves Black with zero compensation for the pawn.

11.♗xf5 cxd5 12.cxd5



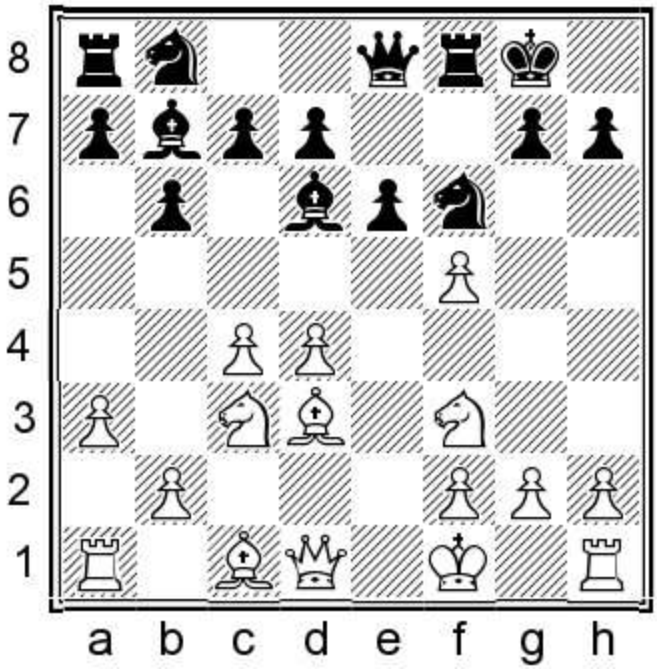
12...♕e8

12...♘xd5? is refuted by: 13.♗e4! ♘xc3 14.♕b3†+−

13.♕c2 ♘a6 14.♗g5±

chesstouring.com

White is much better.

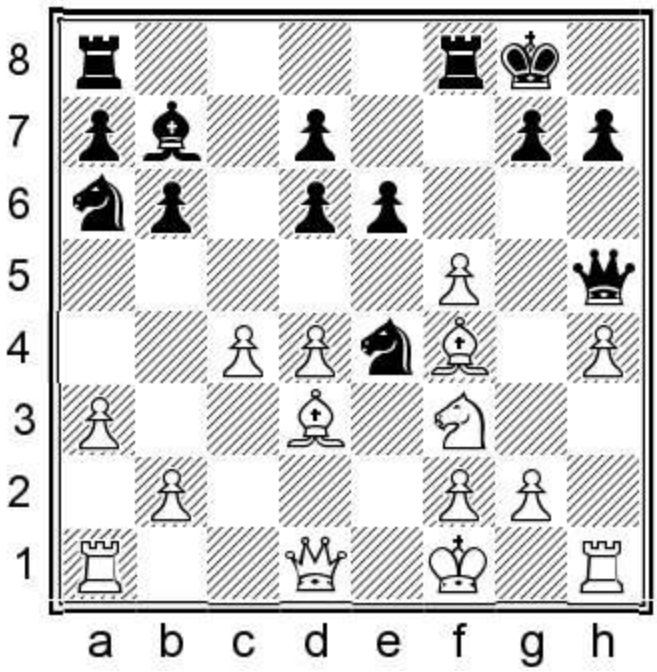


10.h4!

I believe that this idea from Boris Gelfand makes things much easier for White compared to my previous recommendation of 10.♗g5.

10...♘c6

I also considered 10...♕h5N, after which 11.♘b5! is a strong move, intending to eliminate Black's dark-squared bishop while damaging his pawn structure. 11...♘a6 (11...♗xf3 12.♕xf3 ♕xf3 13.gxf3 ♘c6 14.♗e3 also gives White a significant advantage) 12.♘xd6 cxd6 13.♗f4 ♘e4

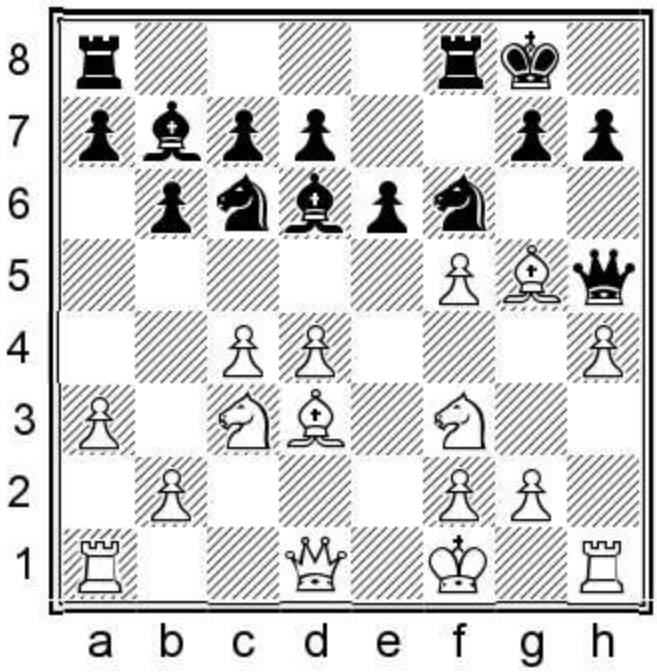


14.♘g5! Forcing favourable simplifications. 14...♕xd1† 15.♖xd1 exf5 16.f3 ♘xg5 17.hxg5 The arising endgame is virtually hopeless for Black.

chesstouring.com

11.♗g5 ♕h5

Now in Gelfand – Grischuk, Berlin (blitz) 2015, White should have played:



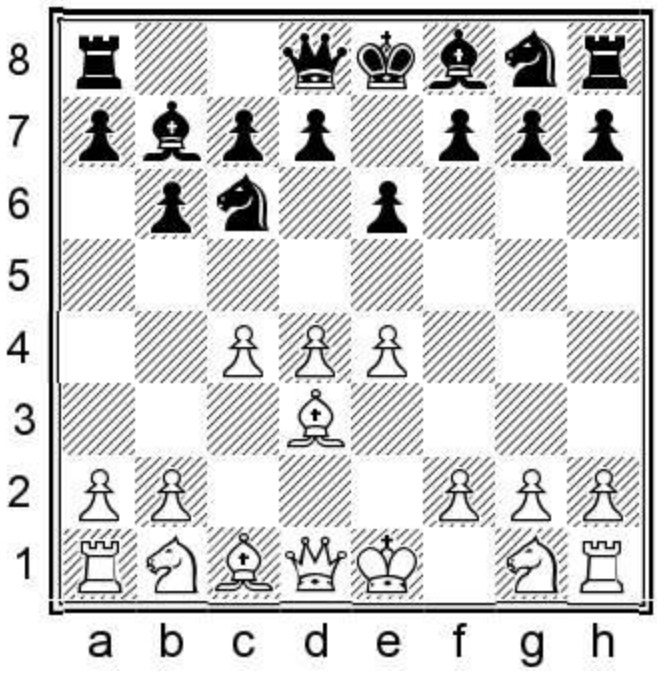
12.♗xf6!N 12...♖xf6

12...gxf6 13.fxe6 dxe6 14.b4 ♔h8 15.c5± is also excellent for White.

13.fxe6 dxe6 14.♗e4 ♖af8 15.♖h3±

Black has no compensation for the missing pawn.

B4) 4...♘c6



chesstouring.com

This move is usually connected with the idea of hunting the d3-bishop. Here Black generally aims to keep his position more solid than in the previous variation, hoping to finish development and gradually activate his bishop pair.

5.♘e2

We will analyse **B41)** 5...g6 followed by the main line of **B42)** 5...♘b4.

B41) 5...g6

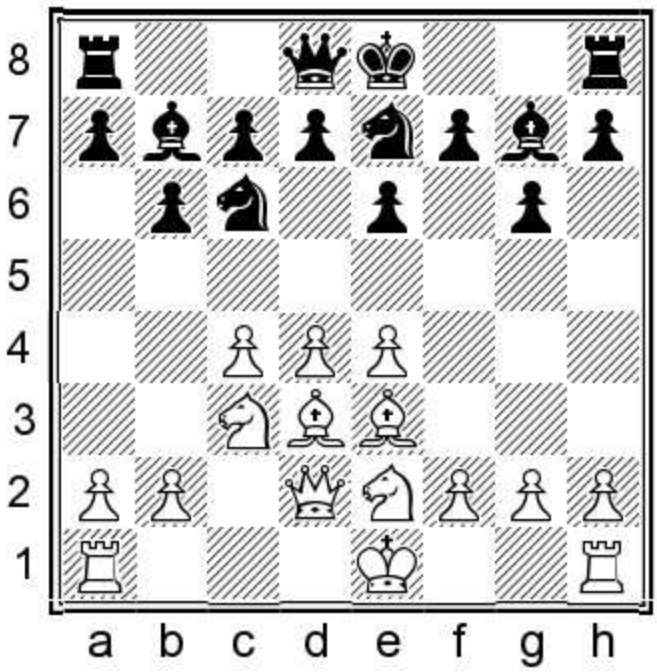
This may appear inconsistent but it has been employed by quite a lot of strong players.

6.♘bc3 ♗g7 7.♗e3 ♘ge7

Having played a couple of obvious developing moves, White must make an important decision.

8.♕d2!?

8.0-0 has been played more frequently but I think it is useful to preserve the option of long castling.



8...d5

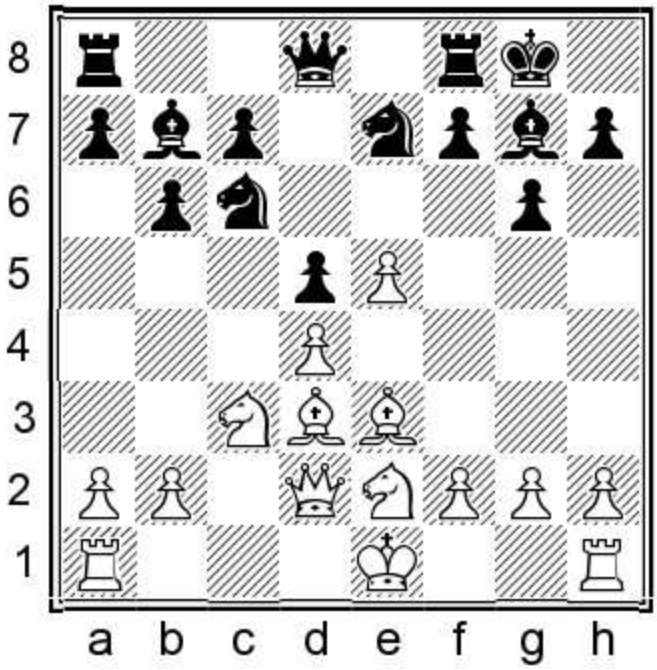
8...0-0?! invites 9.h4! h5 10.0-0-0↑ with good attacking prospects for White.

9.cxd5 exd5 10.e5 f6

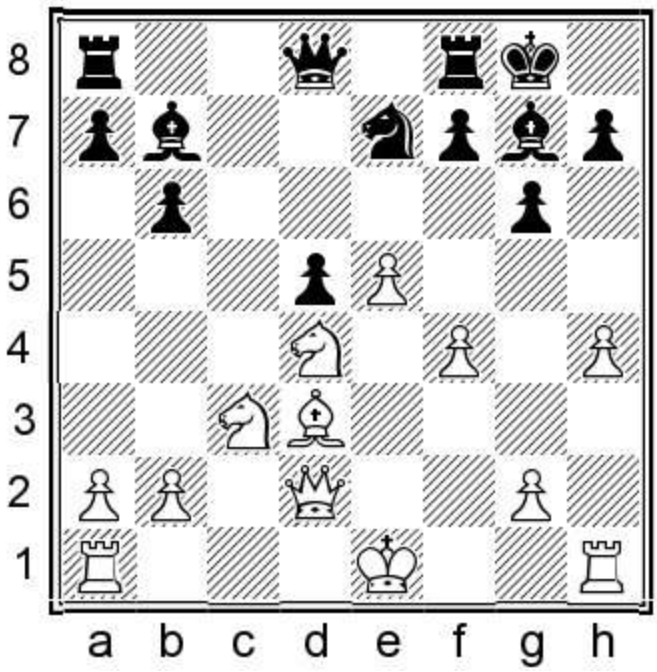
Black has tried two other moves.

10...0-0 occurred in Bareev – Bauer, Ajaccio (blitz) 2007. In the game White opted for short castling and was successful, but I would find it hard to refrain from a more aggressive approach:

chesstouring.com



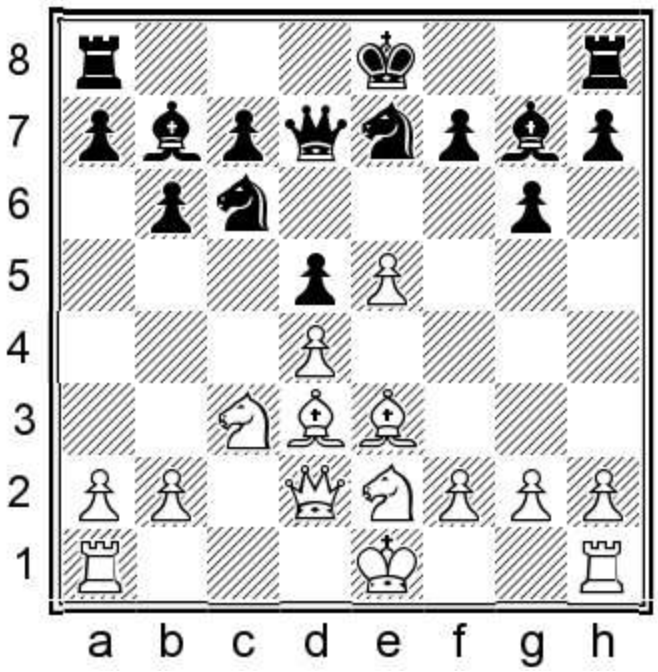
11.h4!N 11...♘xd4!? My guess is that this is what White feared. (Other moves look extremely dangerous for Black; for instance, 11...h5 12.♗g5± or 11...♘b4 12.♗b1 c5 13.h5→) 12.♗xd4 c5 13.f4! cxd4 14.♘xd4 White's positional advantages more than make up for the loss of the bishop pair. A possible continuation is:



14...♘c6 15.♘xc6 ♗xc6 16.h5↑ With a dangerous initiative.

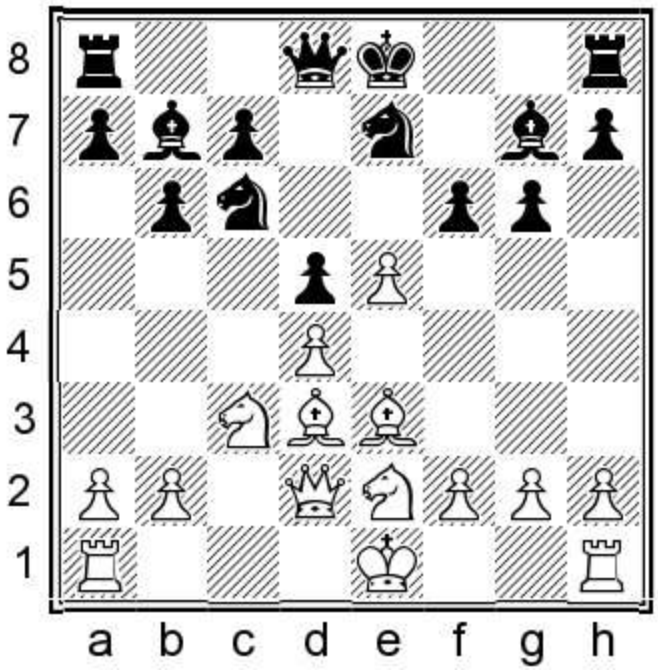
10...♕d7 occurred in Plischki – Gonda, Pardubice 2012, plus a more recent game. Once again I have a new idea:

chesstouring.com



11.♗g5!?N 11...h6 (I also considered 11...0-0-0 12.0-0 ♔b8 13.♗b5 h6 14.♗xe7 ♕xe7 15.♗xc6! ♗xc6 16.a4 with a promising position for White) 12.♗h4 0-0-0 13.0-0 White keeps the better chances, for instance: 13...g5 (or 13...♔b8 14.f4±) 14.♗g3 ♘f5 15.♗xf5 ♕xf5 16.f4± Here too, White has more than enough trumps to make up for Black's bishop pair.

The text move is Black latest try, which featured in N. Anand – Beerdsen, Dieren 2018. Here too, I came up with an idea to improve White's play:



11.♘f4!?N 11...♕d7 12.e6 ♕d6 13.0-0 0-0

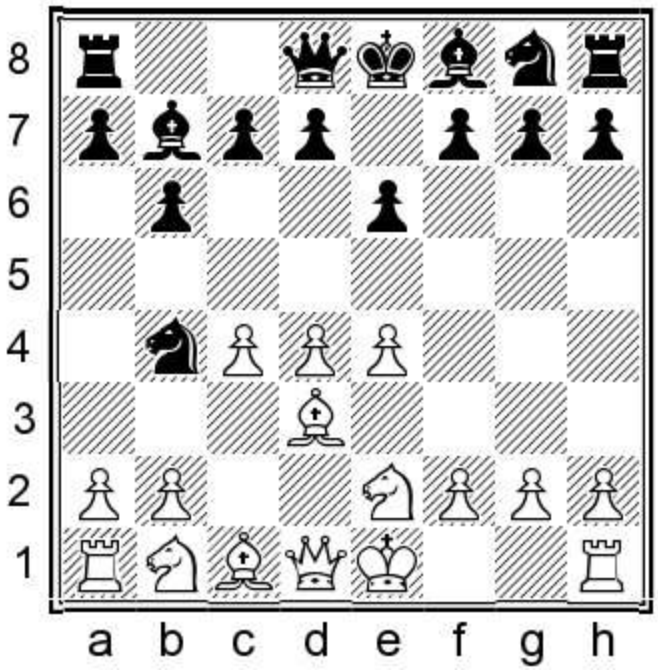
The position is rather double-edged, but overall I prefer White's chances. Hopefully practical tests will confirm this evaluation, but for now I offer a short line:

chesstouring.com

14.♖fe1 ♖ae8 15.♖ad1 a6 16.♕e2!

The position remains extremely complex but I prefer White's chances.

B42) 5...♘b4



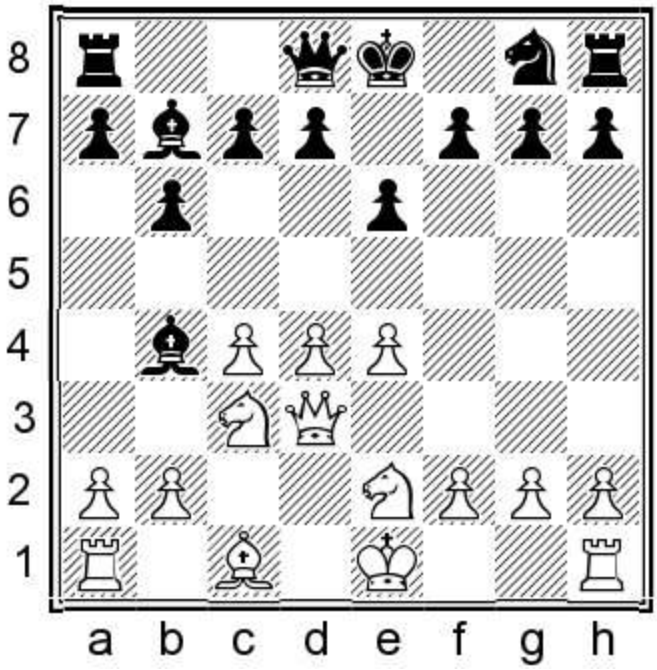
Black prepares to trade his knight for a valuable bishop, but it is worth paying this price in order to seize so much space in the centre.

6.♘bc3 ♘xd3† 7.♕xd3

Black has four main options: **B421)** 7...♗b4, **B422)** 7...g6, **B423)** 7...d6 and **B424)** 7...♘e7.

B421) 7...♗b4

chesstouring.com



8.0-0 ♘e7

The alternative is:

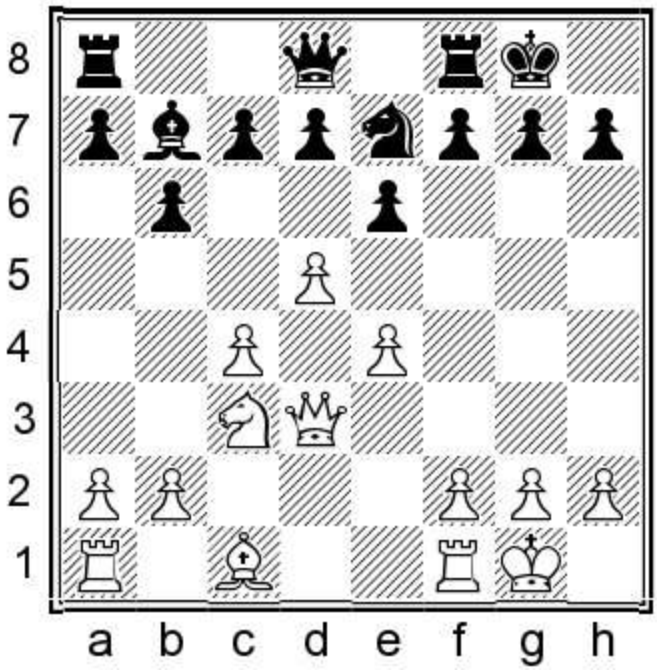
8...♗xc3 9.♘xc3 ♘e7 10.d5!

I like this advance as it restricts both of Black's minor pieces.

10...0-0

10...d6 seems too slow. 11.f4 ♕d7 12.f5! exf5 13.exf5 0-0-0 occurred in Gual Pascual – Teran Alvarez, Cala Galdana 1999, and now 14.a4!N 14...a5 15.♘b5! followed by b2-b4 would have given White a powerful attack.

The text move has been Black's usual choice. I found a new idea for White:



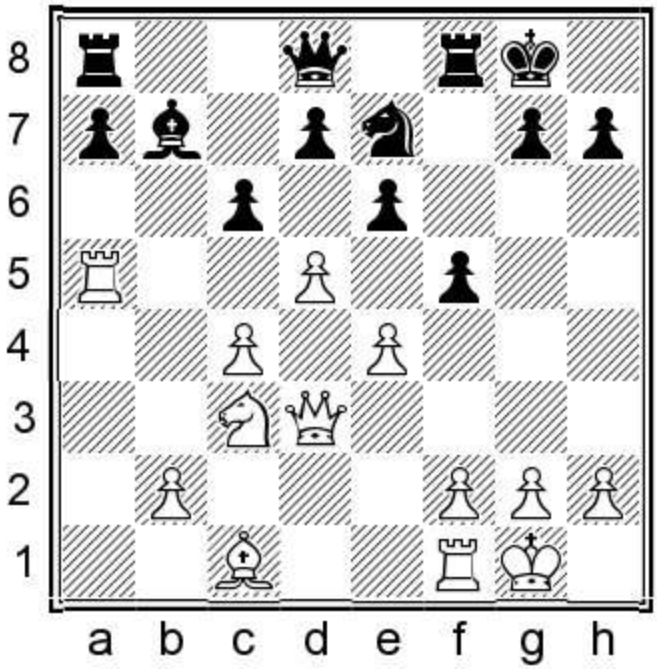
11.a4!?N

Challenging the enemy pawn structure on the queenside.

chesstouring.com

11...a5

11...f5 is a logical alternative but 12.a5 gives White excellent chances, for instance: 12...bxa5 (12...♖b8 is well met by 13.a6! ♗a8 14.dxe6 dxe6 15.♕xd8 ♖bxd8 16.♗g5 ♖d7 17.♖fd1 ♖xd1† 18.♖xd1 and Black is in trouble) 13.♖xa5 c6



14.d6! A nice trick. 14...♘d5 (the white rook is untouchable: 14...♕xa5 15.dxe7 ♖fe8 16.♕xd7 ♕b4 17.♕xe6† ♔h8 18.♗g5+– and the e7-pawn should be the deciding factor) 15.♖c5 ♘xc3 16.♕xc3 fxe4 17.♗e3± The difference in quality between the opposite-coloured bishops is far more important than any drawish tendencies associated with them.

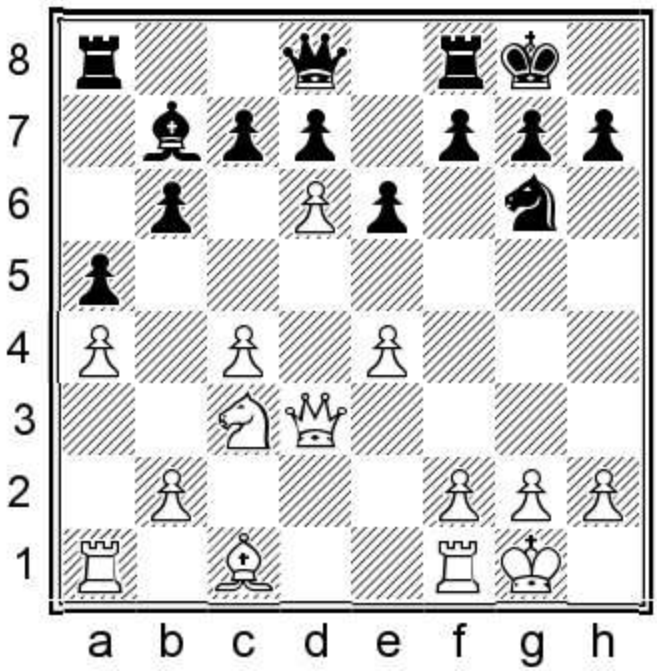
12.d6!

This is one of the key points behind White's previous move.

12...♘g6

12...cxd6 13.♕xd6 ♗c6 14.b3 f5 15.♗g5 ♖f7 16.f3± is also excellent for White.

chesstouring.com

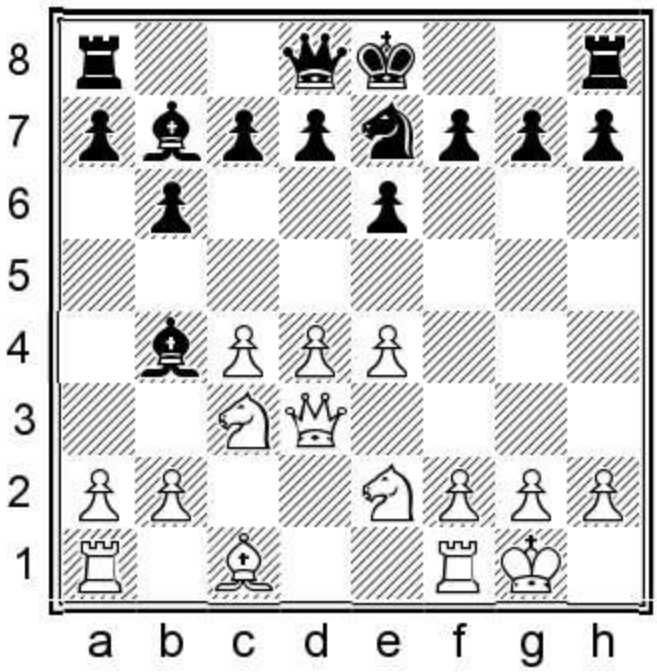


13.dxc7 ♕xc7 14.♘b5 ♕e5 15.♘d6 ♗c6

15...♗d5 is well met by 16.♕g3±.

16.f4 ♕h5 17.b3

White's powerful knight gives him a solid advantage.



9.♘d1!

A remarkable move. White is not only threatening to trap Black's dark-squared bishop, but also preparing to transfer his knight to e3, where it will significantly help his future play on the kingside.

9...♘g6

I don't see much point for Black in 9...f5 10.f3.

chesstouring.com

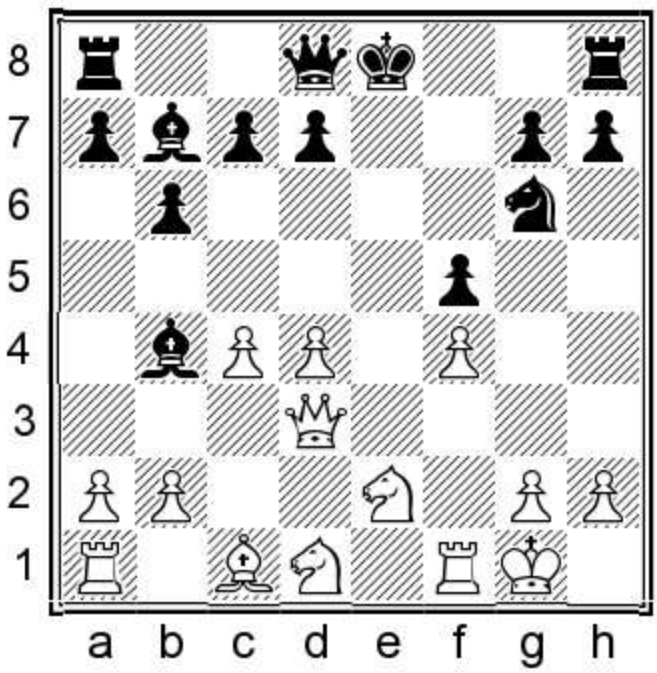
10.f4

Now White intends to follow up with 11.f5.

10...f5

Black cannot play 10...0-0 which is just bad in view of 11.f5 exf5 12.exf5 ♘h4 13.g3 and Black loses his knight.

11.exf5 exf5



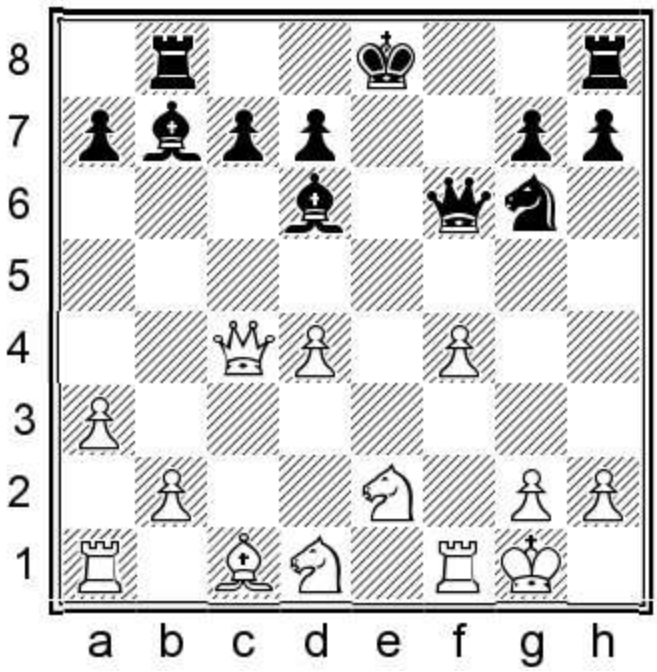
12.c5!

And now I realized that this is stronger than my previous recommendation of 12.♘g3, as was played in Ehlvest – Kraai, Philadelphia 2003.

12...bxc5 13.a3 c4 14.♕xf5 ♗d6 15.♕b5 ♖b8 16.♕xc4 ♕f6

We have been following Muzyka – Gaujens, corr. 2008. Here the most accurate continuation would have been:

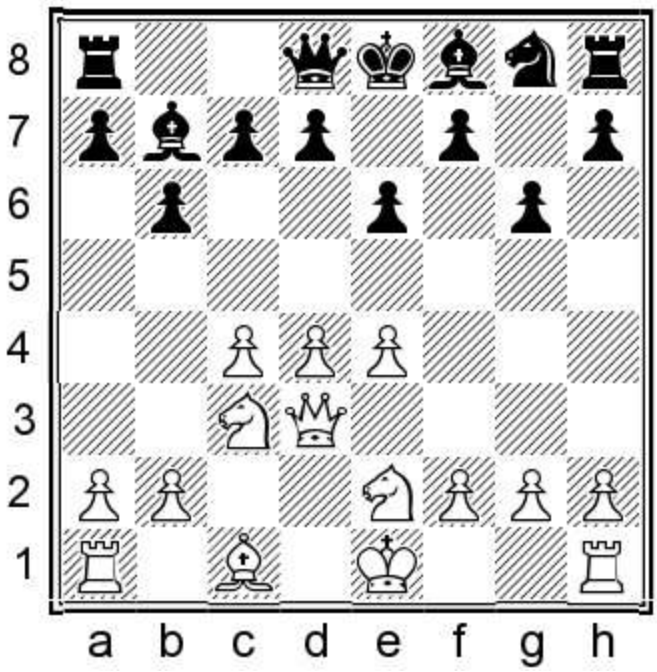
chesstouring.com



17.♘ec3!N 17...♘e7 18.♘e3

Black does not have any significant compensation for being a pawn down.

B422) 7...g6



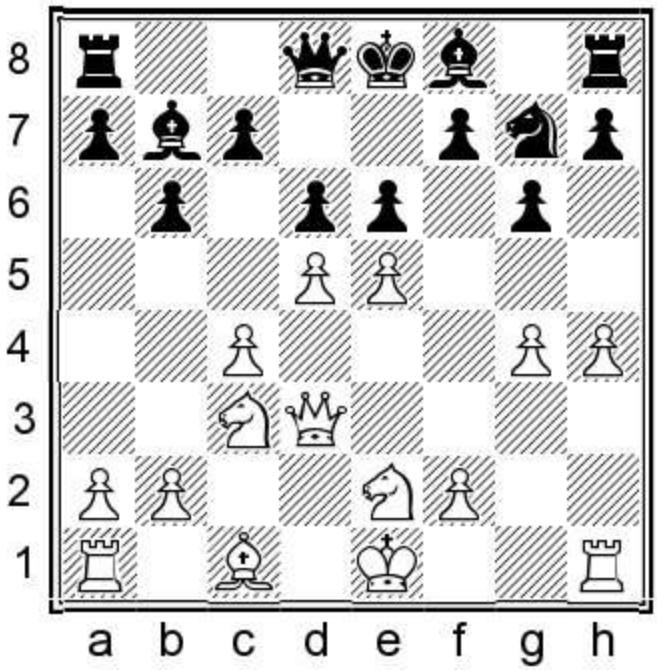
I suggest meeting this move aggressively.

8.h4! h6

Black's other replies also have their drawbacks:

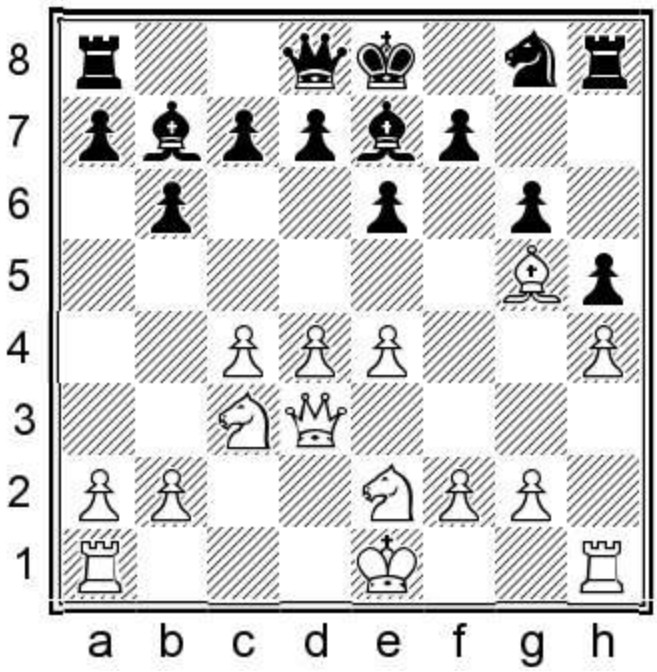
8...♘f6?! 9.e5 ♘h5 is well met by 10.d5!, my novelty from *GM 2* which has since been tested twice. Both

games continued 10...d6 11.g4 ♘g7 when, despite two GMs having played this with Black, with a positive score between them, I find it hard to believe in his position, especially after the following continuation:



12.exd6!N This improves on both games, as well as my analysis from *GM 2*. 12...♗xd6 (Black is also in trouble after the other recaptures: 12...cxd6 13.♗g5! f6 14.♗h6 ♕d7 15.f3±; or 12...♕xd6 13.♘e4 ♕b4† 14.♗d2 ♕xb2 15.♖b1 ♕a3 16.♖b3 ♕xa2 17.♘f6† with a decisive attack) 13.♗h6 0-0 14.0-0-0± White's advantage is obvious.

8...h5 prevents the further advance of the h-pawn but weakens Black's dark squares. 9.♗g5 ♗e7

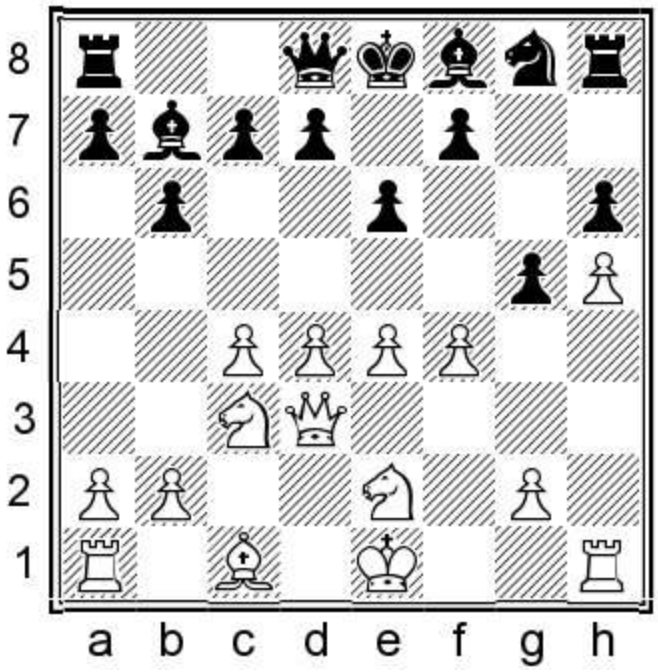


10.♕g3! (10.♕e3 was my recommendation in *GM 2* and although it still looks promising, I now prefer the text) 10...d6 11.0-0-0 ♘f6 12.f3 We have been following Van Wely – Garcia Palermo, Rabat (blitz)

2014. White's position looks extremely promising, as Black has nothing to compensate for his lack of space and kingside weaknesses.

9.h5 g5 10.f4!

All of White's moves are consistent with his aggressive approach.



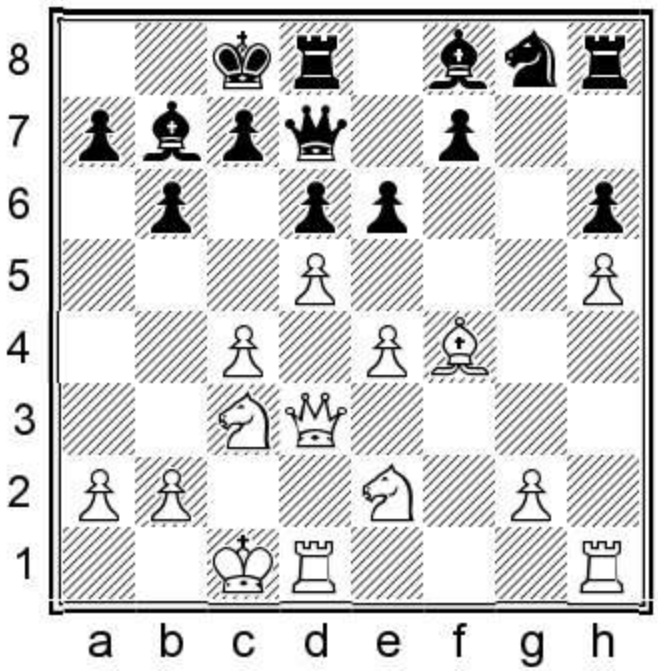
10...gxf4

10...♗g7? hardly helps. 11.♕g3 f6 occurred in Predojevic – Popchev, Zupanja 2009, and now 12.d5!N would have left Black in a terrible position.

11.♗xf4 d6 12.0-0-0 ♕d7 13.d5 0-0-0

Here I found a new idea:

chesstouring.com

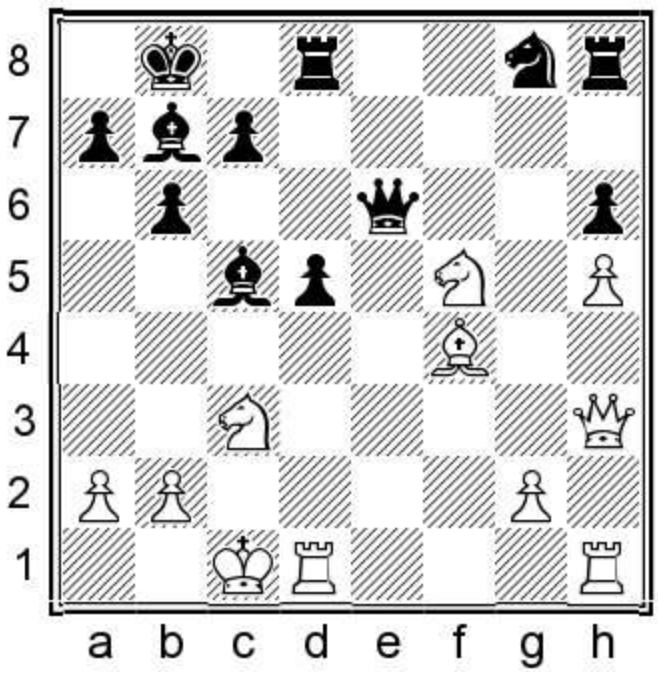


14.dxe6!?N

14.♖hf1 was my novelty from *GM 2*, which is certainly a sensible move and helped White towards an eventual victory in Debashis – Asik, Internet (rapid) 2017. However, I now favour a more concrete approach.

14...♕xe6

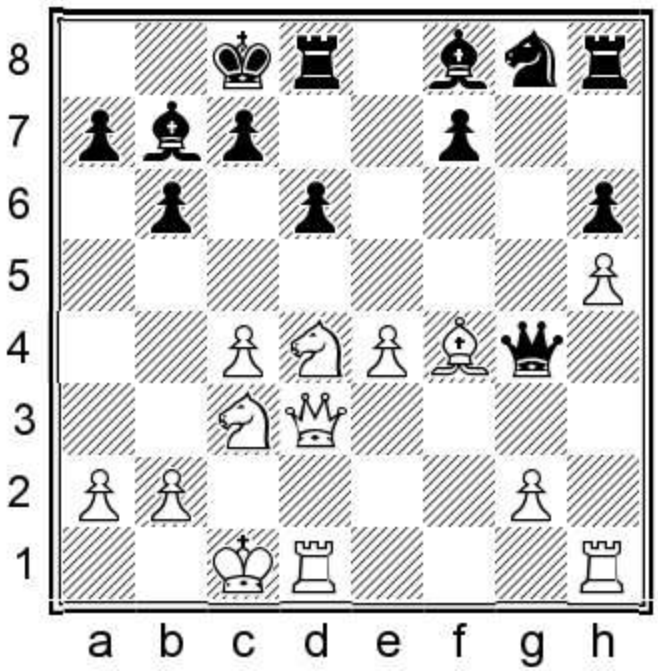
Another important line is 14...fxe6 15.e5! d5 16.♕h3!, the last move being a key detail, with the following point: 16...♗c5 17.cxd5 exd5 18.e6 ♕e7 19.♘g3 ♔b8 20.♘f5 ♕xe6



21.♗xc7†! ♔xc7 22.♘b5† ♔c8 23.♘fd6† ♔d7 24.♕xe6† ♔xe6 25.♖he1† ♔d7 26.♘xb7 ♖c8 27.♘xa7+– White will emerge from the tactical exchanges with at least two extra pawns.

chesstouring.com

15.♘d4 ♕g4



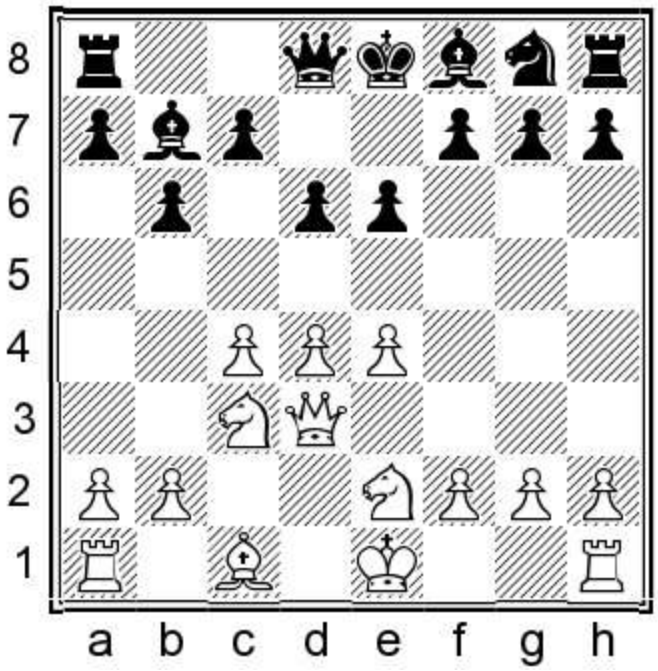
16.g3 ♘f6 17.♘d5 ♘xh5

17...♘xd5 18.cxd5± is obviously bad for Black, due to White's play along the c-file.

18.♘b5→

White has a dangerous attack, with the queen heading for a3 in the near future.

B423) 7...d6



8.0-0 ♘f6

8...♘e7 transposes to variation B4242 below.

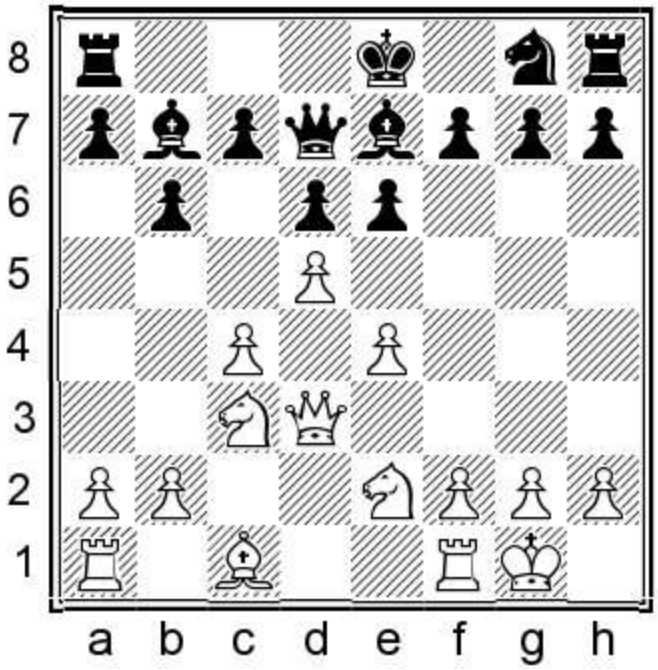
chesstouring.com

I would like to mention another set-up which has been employed by some strong players:

8...♕d7 9.d5 ♗e7

9...♘f6 has also been tried. I suggest 10.b3N 10...♗e7 11.♕g3 0-0 12.♘d4 as a promising piece arrangement. A possible line is 12...c5 13.dxc6 ♗xc6 14.♗h6 ♘e8 15.♖fd1 when we reach a version of a Maroczy Bind structure, which I regard as quite favourable for White.

GMs Short and Meier have both played this position with Black, but it seems quite dubious to me, due to the following strong idea:



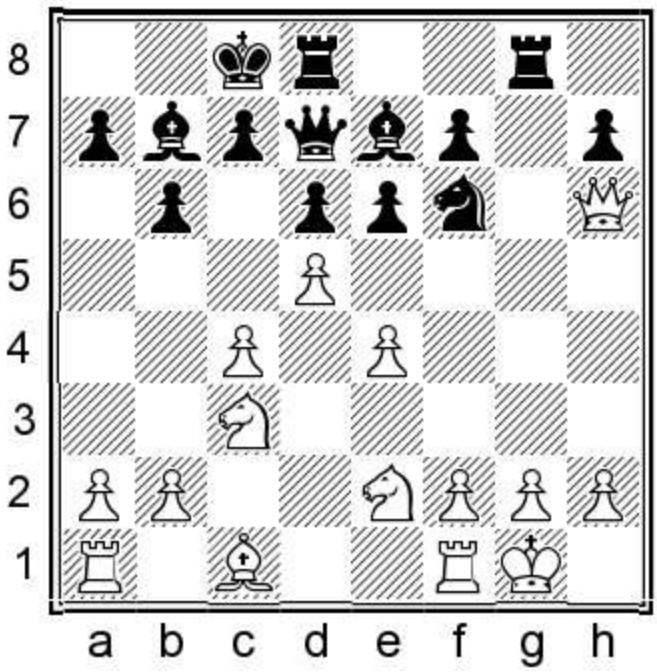
10.♕g3!N 10...♘f6

10...g6 11.♗g5 ♘f6 12.♕h4 gives White an obvious edge after trading the dark-squared bishops, so I assume the text move was Black's idea.

11.♕xg7 ♖g8 12.♕h6 0-0-0

The idea of sacrificing a pawn for the initiative may appear interesting for Black, but I don't believe in his scheme.

chesstouring.com

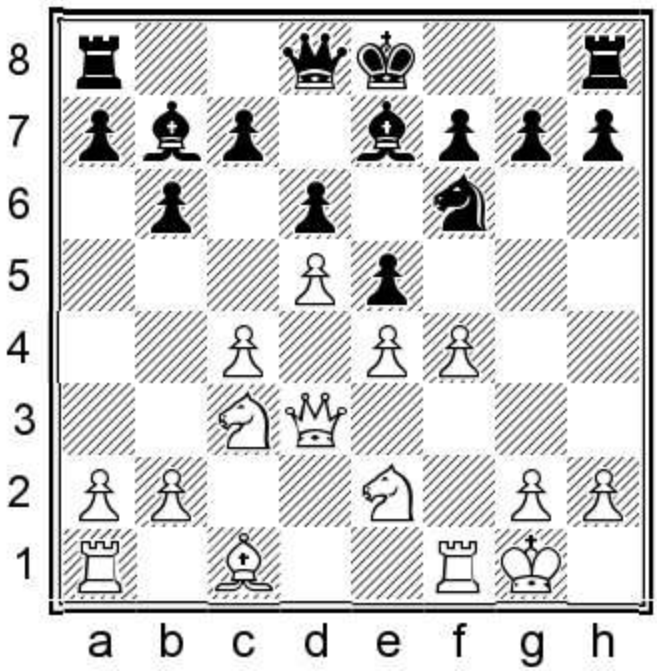


13.f3 ♖g6 14.♕h3 ♖dg8 15.♘f4 ♖6g7 16.♖f2±

I don't see any real compensation for the pawn.

9.d5 ♗e7

It is hardly a good idea for Black to go for 9...e5 10.f4 ♗e7 (10...♘d7 11.♕g3 g6 occurred in Wei Yi – Liu Guanchu, Zhongshan 2014, when the natural 12.f5N would have given White an obvious advantage) when, in Gual Pascual – Gonzalez Velez, Montcada 1997, White should have continued with:



11.♘g3N 11...♗c8 12.f5± White dominates the board.

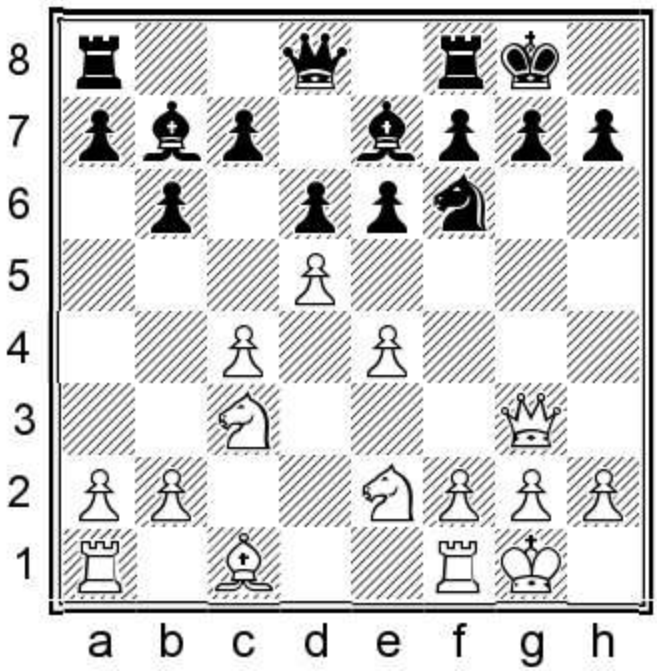
10.♕g3!?

Most games have continued 10.♘d4 ♕d7 but I have a different idea in mind.

chesstouring.com

10...0-0

Obviously Black cannot play 10...♘h5? in view of 11.♕h3 and White wins a pawn.



11.♗h6N

We are following my analysis from *GM 2*, which improves over the harmless 11.f3?!, as played in Kaczmarczyk – Meier, Zurich 2014.

11...♘e8 12.♗e3

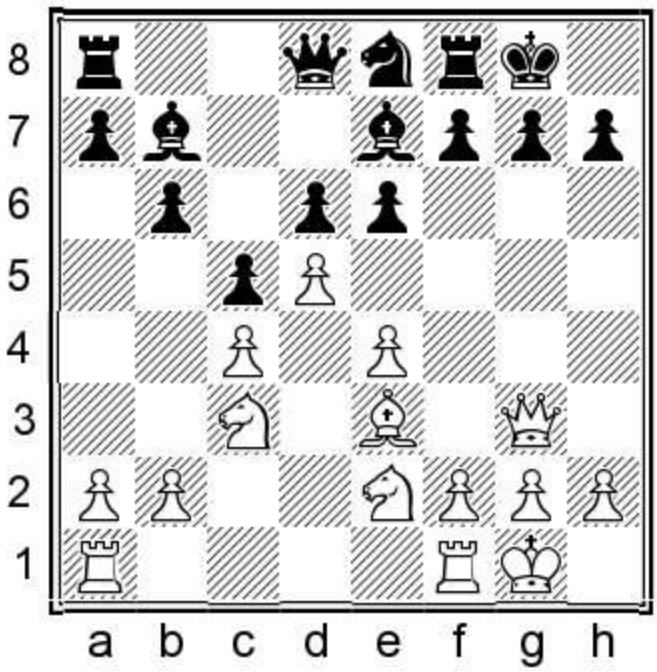
White has an easy game with good attacking prospects. Black's position remains sound, but it is rather passive.

12...c5

This move came to my attention when reanalysing this variation.

My line from *GM 2* continued 12...e5 13.f4 exf4 14.♗xf4 ♗f6 15.♖ad1 followed by ♘d4, with better chances for White.

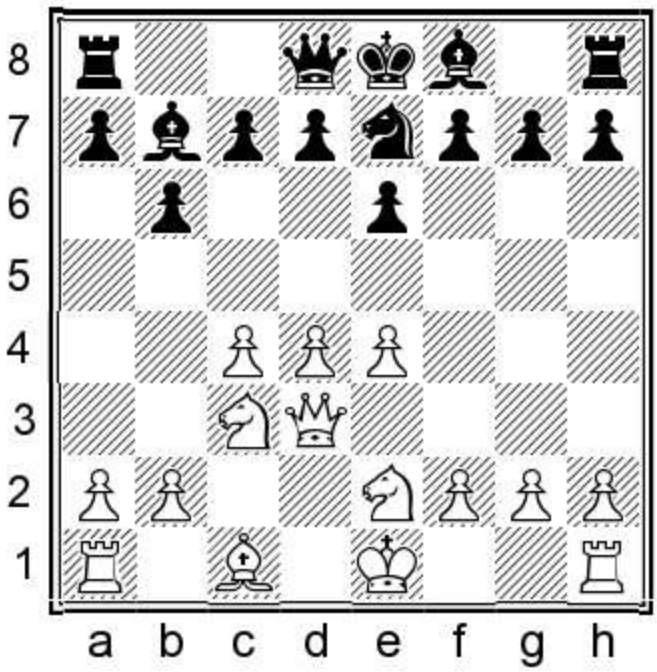
chesstouring.com



13.dxc6 ♗xc6 14.♖fd1±

14.a4!? is also reasonable. Either way, White has a favourable version of a Maroczy Bind structure.

B424) 7...♘e7



8.0-0

Now we have a final split: **B4241)** 8...g6 has been tried by several strong players but **B4242)** 8...d6 is the clear main line.

8...♘c6?! is clearly worse: 9.♕g3! d6 10.♗g5 sees White develop with tempo, and after 10...f6?! 11.♗e3 ♕d7 12.d5 Black was already positionally busted in Fremmegaard – Stevens, corr. 2016.

chesstouring.com

8...d5

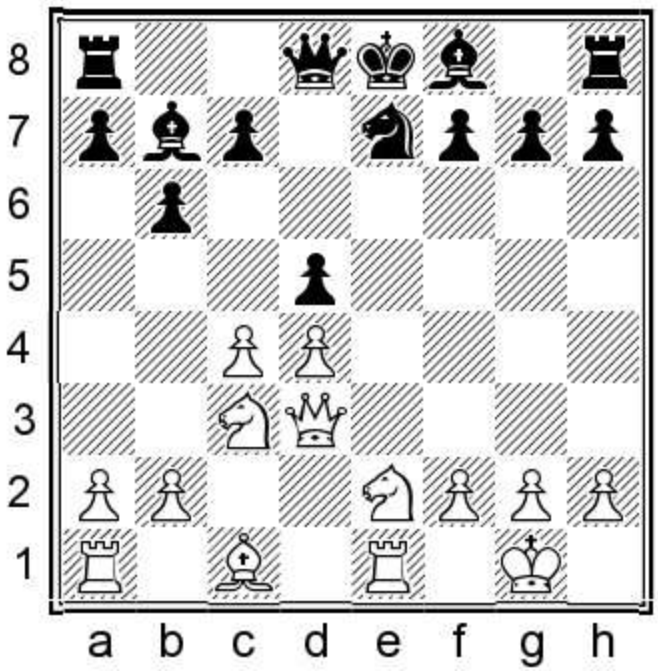
This has been tried by a few GMs but it seems too risky for Black to open the centre while he is so far behind in development.

9.exd5!

I recommended this as a novelty in *GM 2*, but I missed that it had already been played in a correspondence game. We will use it as a model example, as White's play was perfect.

9...exd5 10.♖e1!

This significantly complicates Black's task of arranging short castling, while going the other way enables White to develop a dangerous offensive on the queenside.



10...dxc4

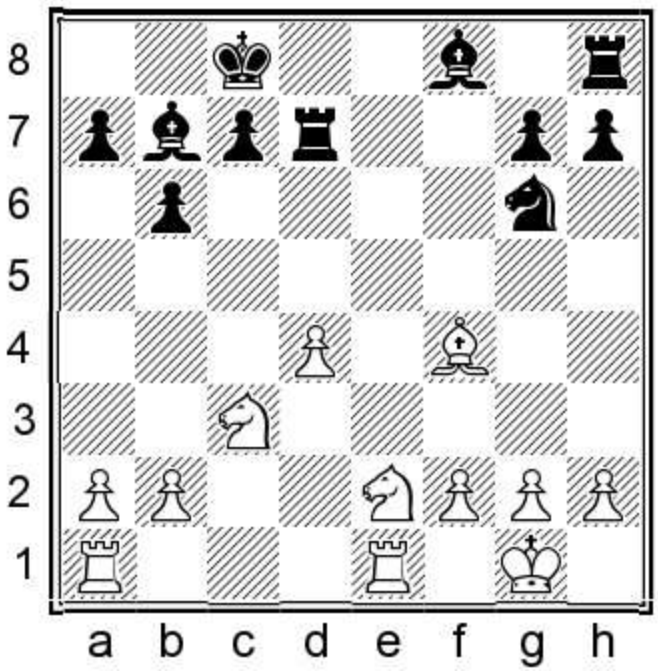
I also analysed 10...♕d7 11.c5! ♘g6 (or 11...0-0-0 12.b4!, and Black's king is anything but safe on the queenside) and now White can win a pawn by force: 12.♘f4† ♗e7 13.♘xg6 hxg6 14.cxb6! axb6 15.♗g5 f6 16.♕xg6†±

11.♕xc4 ♕d7 12.♗f4 0-0-0

12...♕c6 13.♕xc6† ♘xc6 14.♗xc7± is a free pawn.

13.♕xf7 ♘g6 14.♕xd7† ♖xd7

chesstouring.com



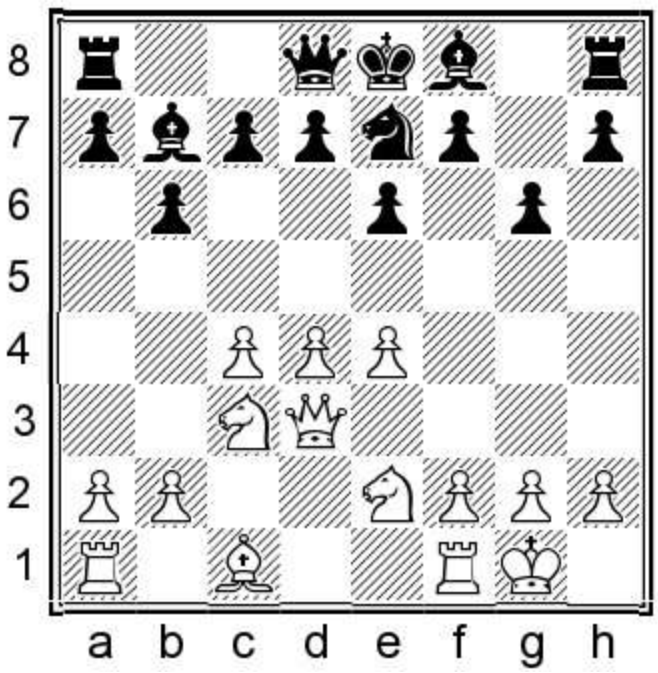
15.♗g3!

In *GM 2* I arrived at this position and recommended 15.♗e3, but there is no reason to allow 15...♘h4 and so the game continuation is stronger.

15...♗d6 16.♖ac1±

Black's compensation was insufficient and White successfully converted his advantage in Ludgate – Gonzalez Freixas, corr. 2007.

B4241) 8...g6



9.♕h3!

It is essential for White to exchange Black's dark-squared bishop. Nevertheless, this move has been

chessbomb.com

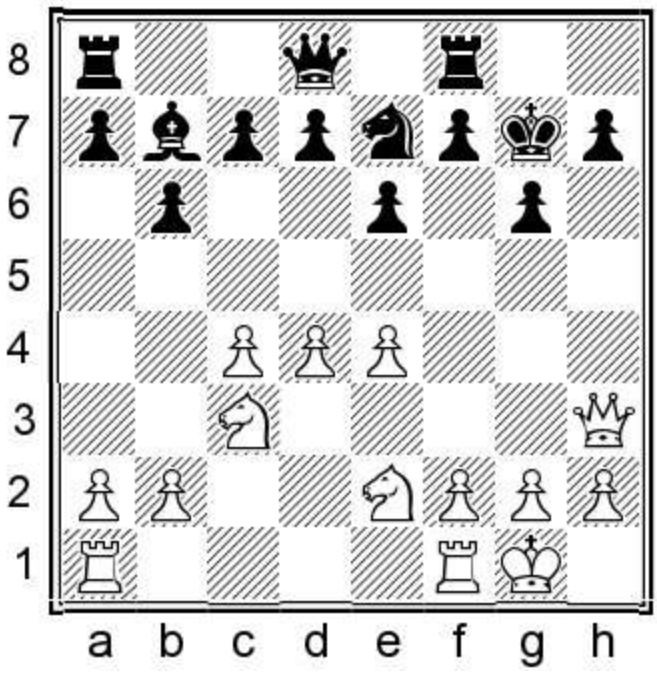
played only once in practice.

9...♗g7

9...h6N is an obvious alternative but 10.d5 ♗g7 11.a4!± looks excellent for White.

10.♗h6 0-0 11.♗xg7 ♔xg7

Now in Kohlweyer – Gulko, Geneva 1997, White should have played:



12.d5!N

I really like advancing the d-pawn in these positions, as it restricts both of Black's minor pieces. White's chances are clearly preferable, for instance:

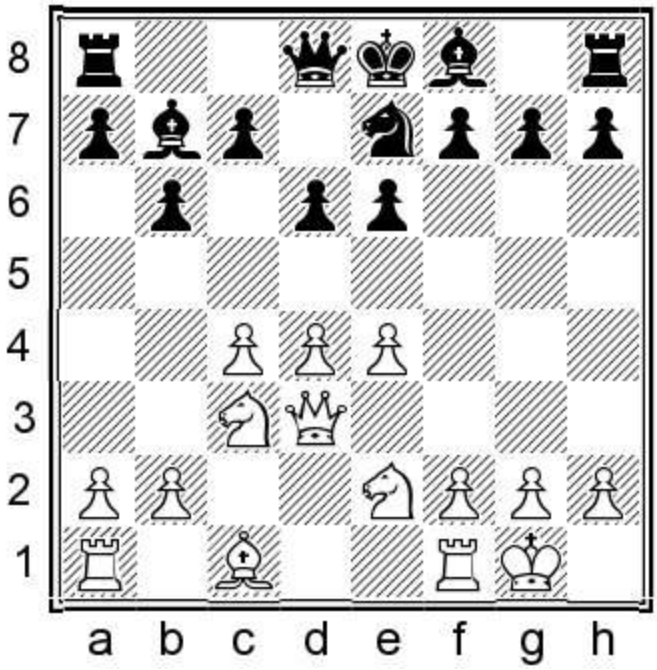
12...exd5 13.cxd5 f5 14.f3 ♗a6 15.♖ad1

With a positional edge.

B4242) 8...d6

Since this loosens the e6-pawn and the d4-d5 advance is part of our plans anyway, White's next move suggests itself.

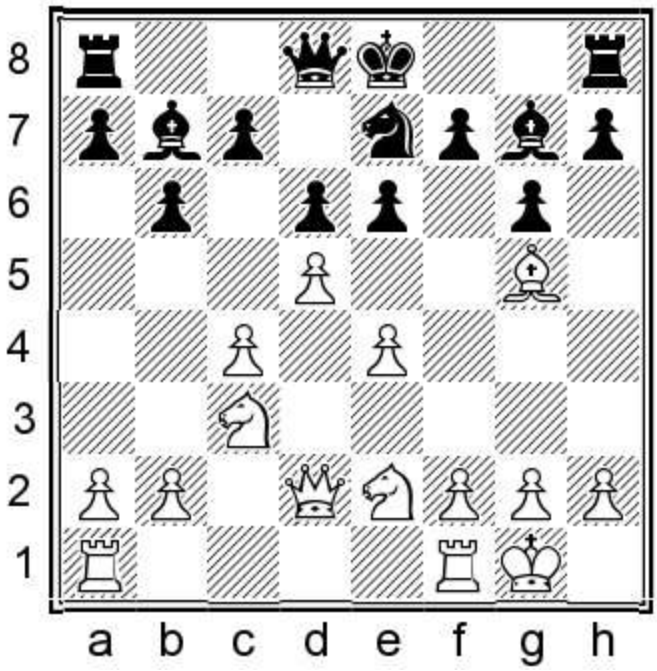
chesstouring.com



9.d5 ♕d7

9...e5?! invites White to start an attack: 10.f4 exf4 11.♘xf4 ♕d7 12.♗e3 0-0-0?! Definitely a strategic error, although Black was clearly worse anyway. 13.b4 (13.a4N was also strong) 13...c5 14.bxc5 dxc5 15.a4 ♔b8 16.a5+– White developed a decisive attack in Dub – Jamrich, Budapest 2000.

9...g6 is a more recent try. I suggest improving on White's play from Charochkina – A. Grigoryan, Yerevan 2014, with: 10.♗g5N 10...♗g7 11.♕d2 As always, it's a good idea to trade dark-squared bishops. Play might continue:



11...e5 (11...h6 12.♗e3 g5 13.f4↑ is also no fun for Black) 12.♗h6 0-0 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.f4± White has every chance of developing a strong initiative on the kingside.

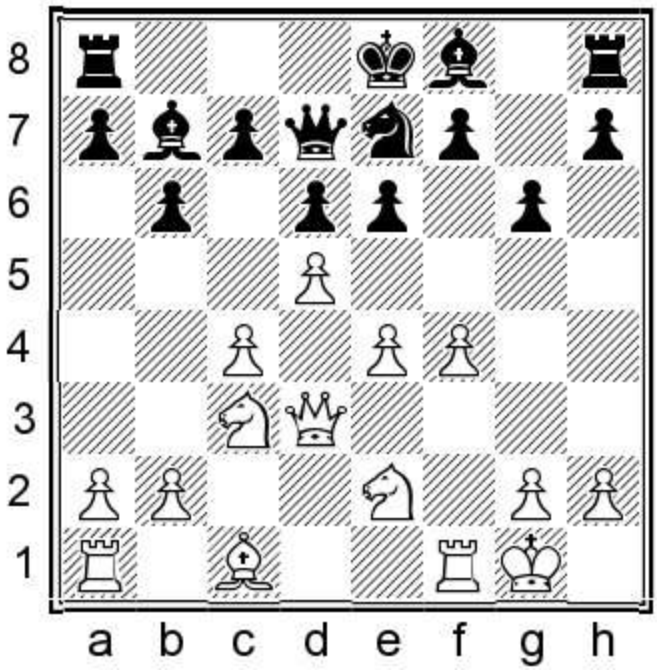
chesstouring.com

10.f4

10.a4!? is also worth considering but I will stick with my previous recommendation.

10...g6

10...♘g6 is the other option, when 11.b3 ♗e7 12.♗b2 ♗f6 13.♘g3 e5 14.♘ce2!± was clearly better for White in Claridge – Bendig, email 2008.



11.♘d4 ♗g7

11...0-0-0

Nigel Short once tried this move, successfully, against Gelfand. However, Black's last move is rather risky and White can pose serious problems with:

12.a4!

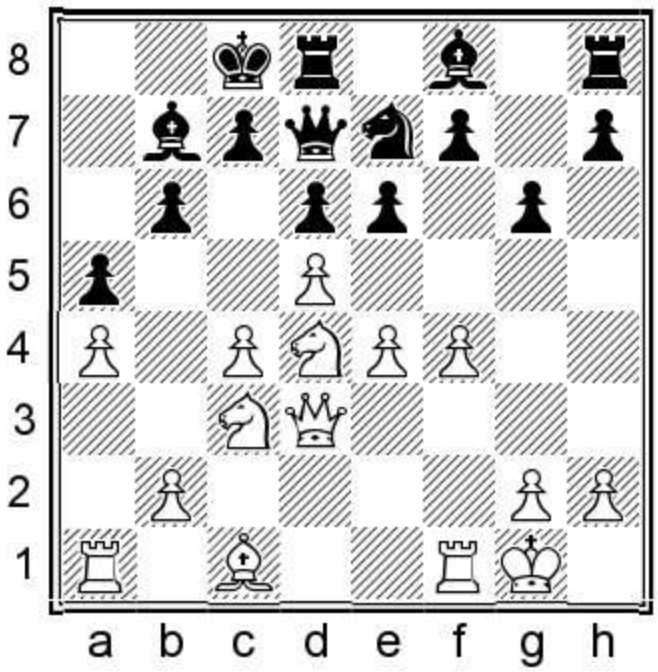
The slower 12.b4 ♗g7 led to a double-edged position in Gelfand – Short, Novgorod 1997.

I also considered 12.dxe6N 12...fxe6 13.♕h3 but after 13...♗g7! 14.♘xe6 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 ♖de8© Black obtains fantastic compensation for the pawn.

12...a5

Otherwise it's hard to imagine how Black can defend his king after the advance of the a-pawn. Black tried 12...c5 in one game, but after 13.dxc6 ♘xc6 14.♗e3 f5 15.a5 fxe4 16.♕e2!, White's queenside initiative was too powerful in Osbahr – Benedetto, corr. 2003.

chesstouring.com



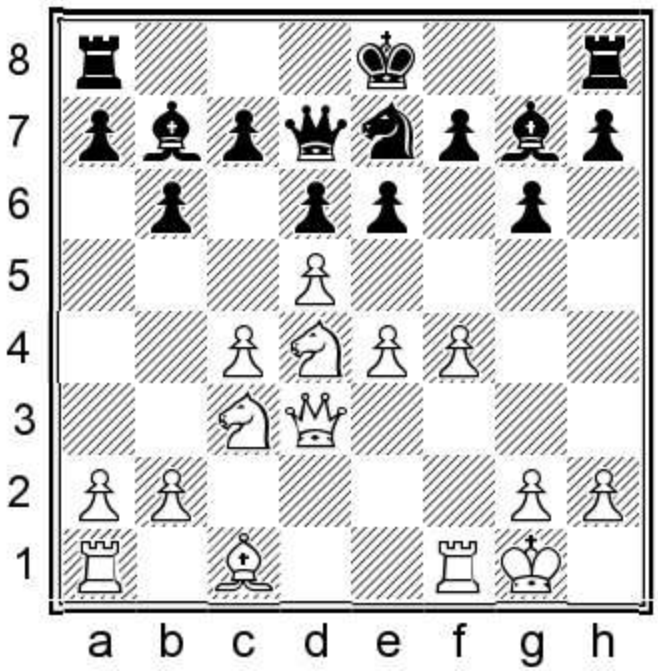
13.♗e3!

My line from *GM 2* continued 13.♘cb5 ♗g7 14.b4! exd5 15.exd5 c5 16.dxc6 ♘xc6 17.♘xc6 ♗xc6 18.♖a2 axb4 19.♗e3 ♔b7 20.a5 bxa5 21.♖xa5 ♖a8 22.♘a7!, when Black has nothing to oppose the ♖b1-b4 manoeuvre.

Although my previous recommendation still looks promising, I noticed a correspondence game where White opted for the text move, and I slightly prefer it. The game continued:

13...♗g7 14.b4 axb4 15.♘cb5 exd5 16.cxd5 f5 17.♖fc1 fxe4 18.♕d2+–

White won easily in Sabel – Fabig, email 2013.



12.f5!

12.♗e3 has scored incredibly well for White but I believe the text move to be objectively stronger.

chesstouring.com

12...gxf5

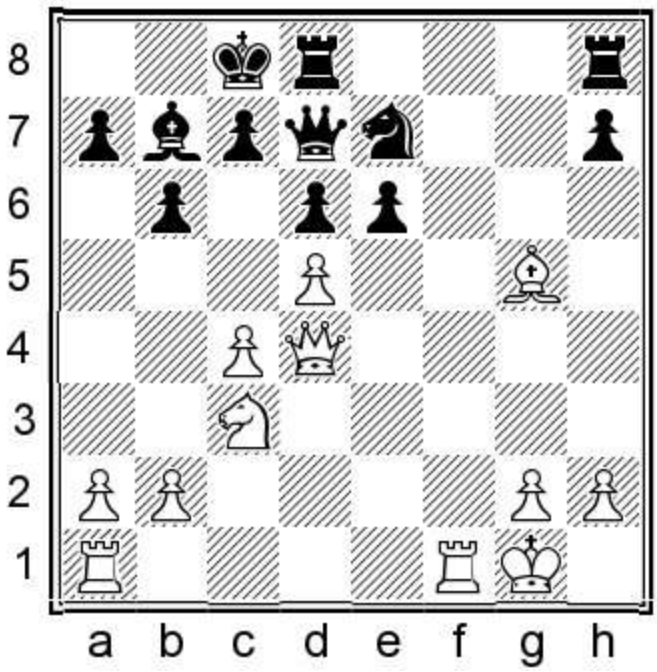
12...♗xd4†N 13.♕xd4 e5 does not solve Black's problems. For instance, 14.♕f2 gxf5 15.exf5 c6 16.f6 ♘g6 17.♗h6 and White is clearly better, as the black king will not find safety anywhere on the board.

13.exf5 ♗xd4†

13...♘xf5 is not a serious option, as 14.♘xf5 exf5 15.♗g5 0-0 16.♖xf5 f6 17.♗e3 ♖ae8 18.♗d4± leads to an obvious positional advantage for White.

14.♕xd4 0-0-0 15.fxe6 fxe6 16.♗g5!

White develops the bishop actively and sets up an unpleasant pin.



16...♖hg8

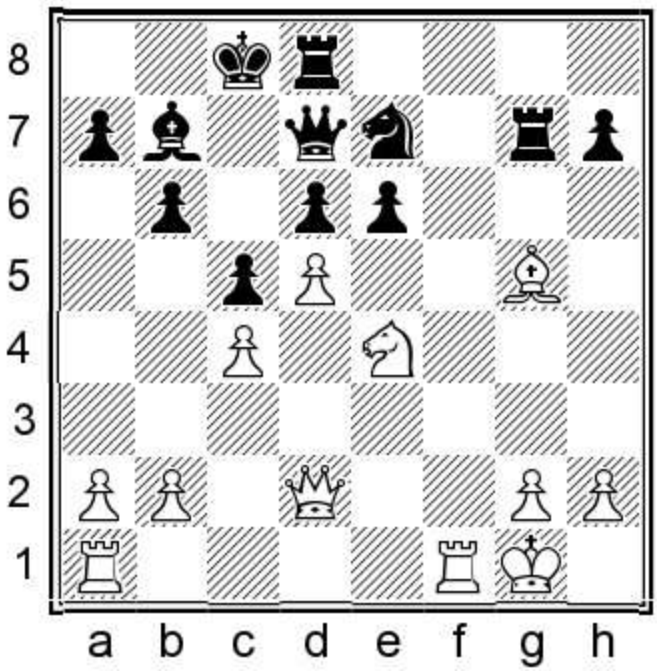
I also examined 16...e5 17.♕f2 h6 18.♗h4± when White remains clearly better.

16...♖hf8? transposes to Debashis – Salgado Lopez, Gibraltar 2015, which was eventually won by Black. However, the opposite result would have occurred if White had found the relatively simple solution: 17.♕g7!N 17...♘g6 (17...♖xf1† 18.♖xf1 ♖e8 19.♖f7+– simply wins the knight) 18.♕xd7† ♖xd7 19.dxe6 ♖xf1† 20.♖xf1 ♖g7 21.♘d5+–

17.♘e4 ♘f5N

Black needs to improve upon 17...c5? 18.♕d2 ♖g7 when, in Miniboeck – Schroll, Austria 2004, White missed an easy win:

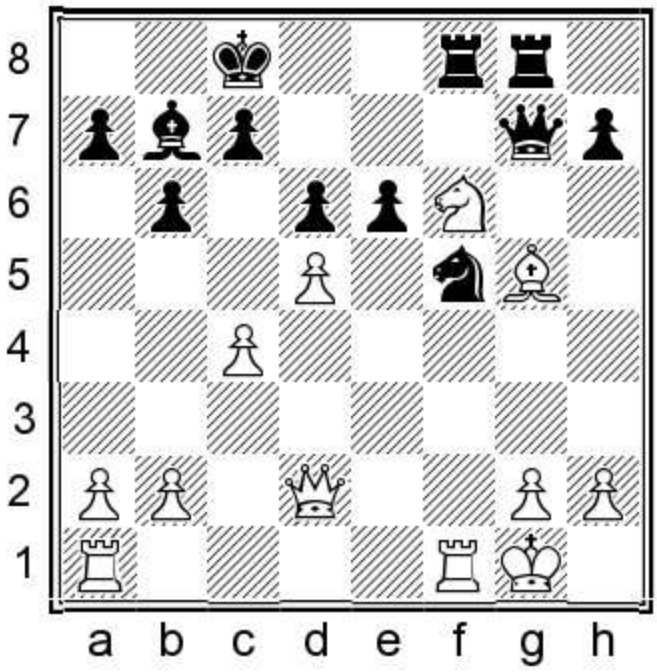
chesstouring.com



19.♘f6N 19...♕c7 20.♘h5! ♖g6 21.♖f7 ♖e8 22.♘g7+–

The text move is obviously critical, but my analysis from *GM 2* still looks perfectly valid:

18.♕d2 ♖df8 19.♘f6 ♕g7

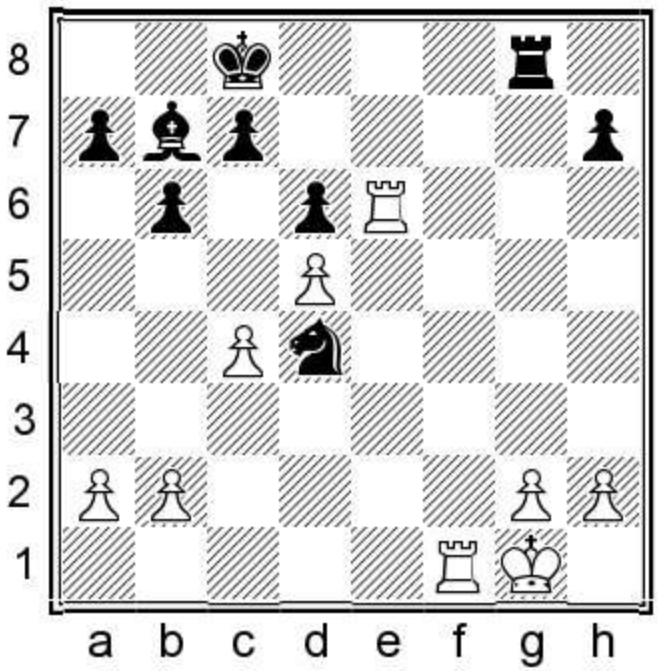


20.♖ae1! ♖xf6 21.♗xf6 ♕xf6 22.♖xe6 ♕d4†

22...♕f7 23.♕c2 ♖g5 24.h3!+– leaves Black defenceless against the threat of g2-g4.

23.♕xd4 ♘xd4

chesstouring.com



24.♖e7 ♔b8 25.♖ff7±

White has every chance of converting his advantage in the endgame.

Conclusion

The English Defence is among the most challenging of the various sidelines we are dealing with in this section. After 1.d4 e6 (rather than 1...b6, which should be met by 2.e4) 2.c4 b6, we should occupy the centre with 3.e4. Then 3...♗b4† is a recently trendy line which is reasonably solid for Black, although White should keep an edge with sensible play. 3...♗b7 is more common, when 4.♗d3 leads to a major branching point.

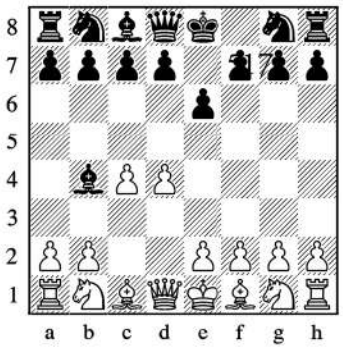
4...♘f6 is an interesting move which forced me to improve on my previous analysis and recommend 5.♘c3!, not fearing the 5...♗b4 pin, when 6.♕c2 gives White an improved version of a Nimzo-Indian. We then looked at 4...♗b4† 5.♗d2, when several moves are playable but White's space advantage always counts for something.

We finished with the two most popular moves. 4...f5 is a principled try but 5.exf5 is a good response. Then 5...♗xg2? is most probably a losing move, as long as White knows a bit of theory and remains alert to the attacking opportunities. 5...♗b4† is therefore essential, but White obtains an excellent game after 6.♔f1, with the plan of h2-h4 and ♖h3 a recurring motif. Lastly we considered the more solid 4...♘c6 5.♘e2, when most games continue 5...♘b4 6.♘bc3 ♘xd3† 7.♕xd3. There are a number of possible directions from here, but White's space advantage and superior development generally count for more than Black's bishop pair, especially if White keeps in mind the golden rules of exchanging the dark-squared bishops when possible, and advancing with d4-d5 when the time is right.

chesstouring.com

Chapter 27

Minor Lines



1...e6 2.c4 ♗b4†

Variation Index

1.d4 e6 2.c4 ♗b4†

3.♗d2

A) 3...♕e7 4.g3 f5 5.♗g2 ♘f6 6.♘f3 0-0 7.0-0 ♗xd2 8.♕xd2 518

A1) 8...d6 519

A2) 8...♘e4 521

B) 3...a5 4.g3 523

B1) 4...d6 523

B2) 4...d5 5.♘f3 dxc4 6.♗g2 ♘c6 7.e3 525

B21) 7...♘ge7 526

B22) 7...♘f6 527

C) 3...♗xd2† 4.♕xd2 530

C1) 4...♘f6 5.♘c3 530

C11) 5...0-0 530

C12) 5...d5 532

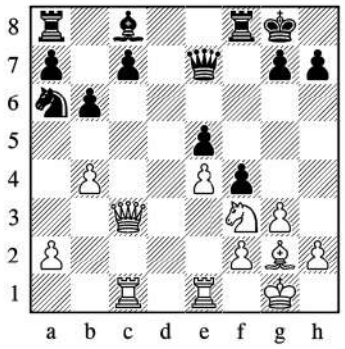
C2) 4...f5 5.g3 ♘f6 6.♗g2 0-0 7.♘c3 d6 8.♘f3 534

C21) 8...♕e8 534

C22) 8...♘c6 535

chesstouring.com

A2) after 17...♘a6



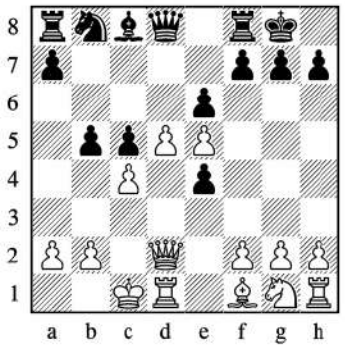
18.a3!N

B21) after 10...♗a6



11.♘e5!N

C11) note to 9...b5!?



11.f3!N

1.d4 e6 2.c4 ♗b4†

This move is not particularly popular at GM level, but White still has to be ready for it. Black's scheme resembles the Bogo-Indian and it could transpose, but there are plenty of independent possibilities.

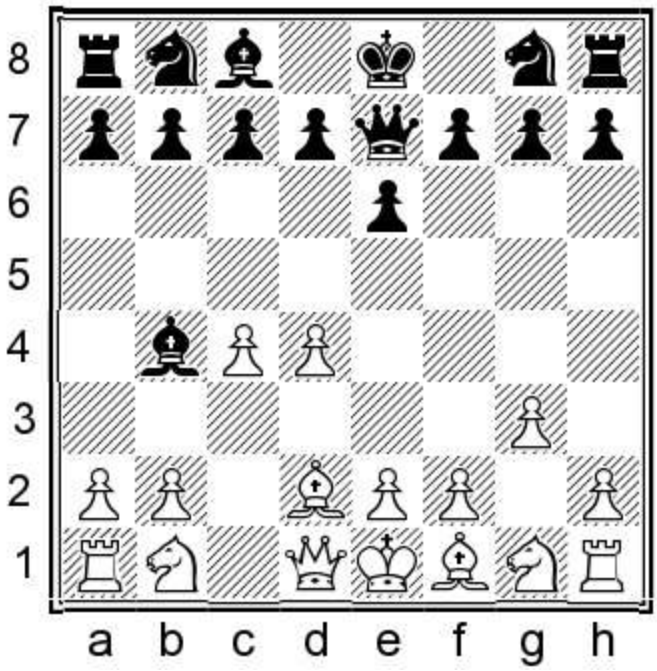
3.♗d2

We will analyse **A)** 3...♕e7, **B)** 3...a5 and **C)** 3...♗xd2†.

3...c5 has no real independent value, since after 4.♗xb4 cxb4 5.g3 Black has nothing better than 5...♘f6, transposing to a Bogo-Indian line which was covered in Chapter 17 of *GM 1A – The Catalan*.

A) 3...♕e7 4.g3

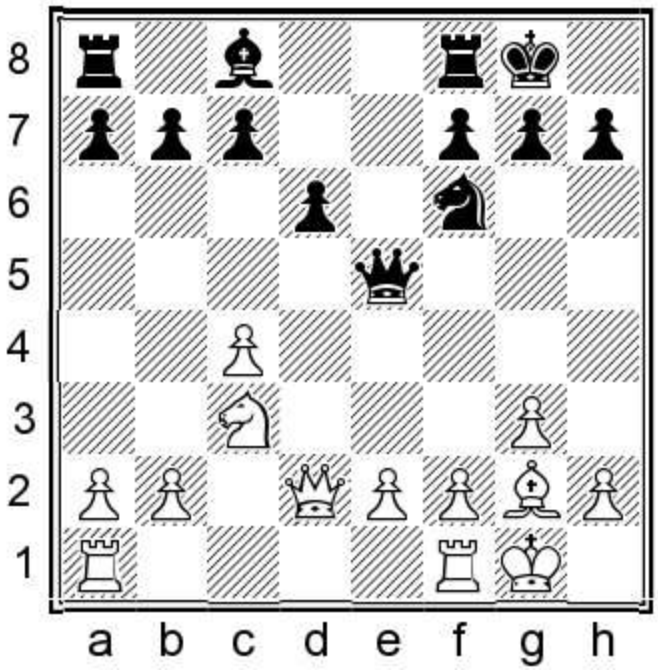
Black's most popular continuation has been 4...♘f6, which again takes us back to the Bogo-Indian from *GM 1A*. Obviously we will focus on Black's other options.



chesstouring.com

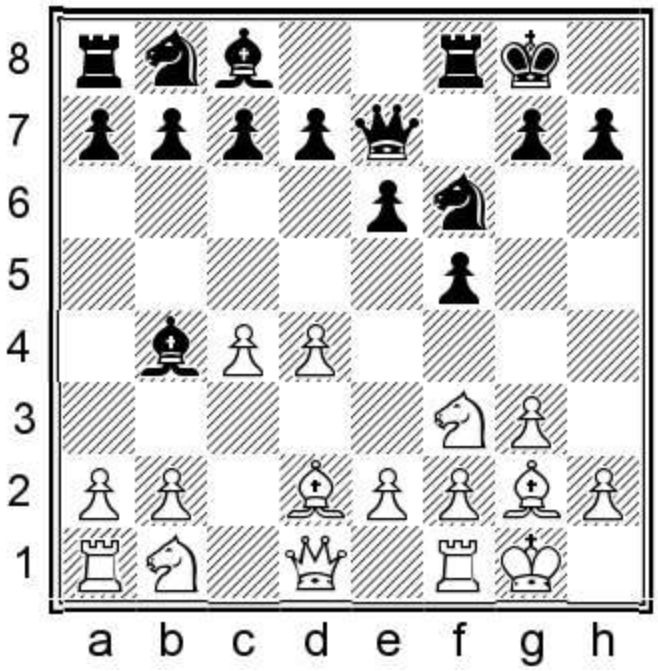
4...f5

The only other noteworthy option is: 4...♘c6 5.♘f3 e5 (once again, 5...♘f6 converts to the Bogo-Indian; see Chapter 21 of *GM 1*A) 6.dxe5 ♘xe5 7.♘xe5 ♗xd2† 8.♕xd2 ♕xe5 9.♗g2 ♘f6 10.♘c3 0-0 11.0-0 d6 White has reached a favourable situation, where he can exert positional pressure without having to worry about enemy counterplay. In most games White has proceeded to develop one of his rooks on the next move, but a stronger option is:



12.♘d5!N 12...♘xd5 13.cxd5± White's positional advantage is obvious.

5.♗g2 ♘f6 6.♘f3 0-0 7.0-0



7...♗xd2

Black cannot wait with this exchange.

chesstouring.com

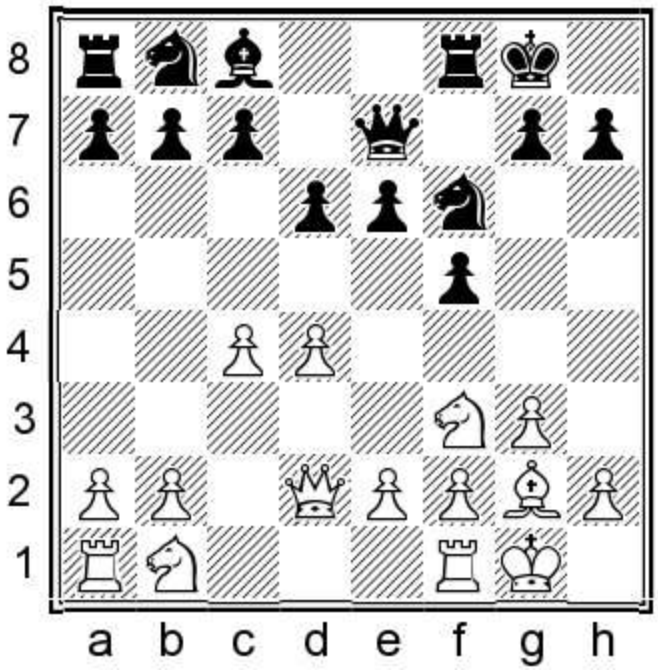
The careless 7...♘e4? is answered by 8.♗e3! when suddenly Black's bishop in trouble. A good example continued 8...c6 9.c5! ♗a5 10.♘bd2 ♘xd2 11.♘xd2 ♗c7 12.♘c4± and White enjoyed a solid positional advantage in Basin – Linn, Lansing 1993.

8.♕xd2

In most of the lines in this chapter, we will recapture with the queen in order to develop the knight to the superior c3-square.

Black may proceed with **A1)** 8...d6 or **A2)** 8...♘e4.

A1) 8...d6



9.♘c3 c6

Black cannot play 9...e5? right away in view of 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.♘d5! and White wins material.

The main alternative is:

9...♘c6 10.d5

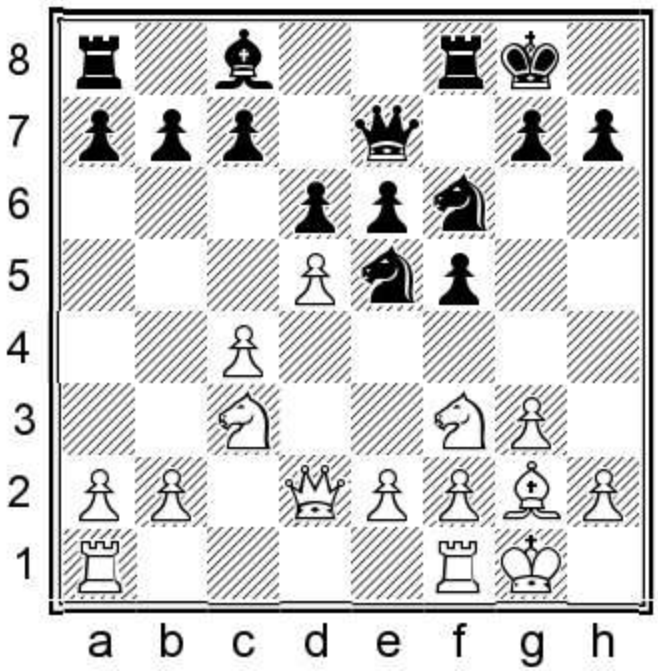
10.♖ad1 is playable, and actually transposes to a position on page 536 in the later variation C22. However, when the present move order arises, it seems appropriate to carry out the central pawn break when the opportunity is presented.

10...♘e5

10...♘d8 11.dxe6! ♘xe6 reaches a typically favourable pawn structure for White. 12.♕c2 (12.♘d4 looks pretty good as well) 12...g6 In Sachdev – Lacasta Palacio, Barbera del Valles 2013, White should have continued 13.♘d5N 13...♕g7 14.e3 with a pleasant positional advantage.

Here I discovered an new interesting idea:

chesstouring.com



11.b3!N

11.dxe6?! ♘xc4 gives White nothing, so most games have continued 11.♘xe5 dxe5, when White does not have much of an advantage.

The text move is more challenging. Given the chance, White will take on e6 to reach the ever-favourable pawn structure, so the only challenging reply is:

11...♘xf3† 12.exf3!

This is the main point of my idea, avoiding 12.♗xf3 e5 when Black is perfectly fine.

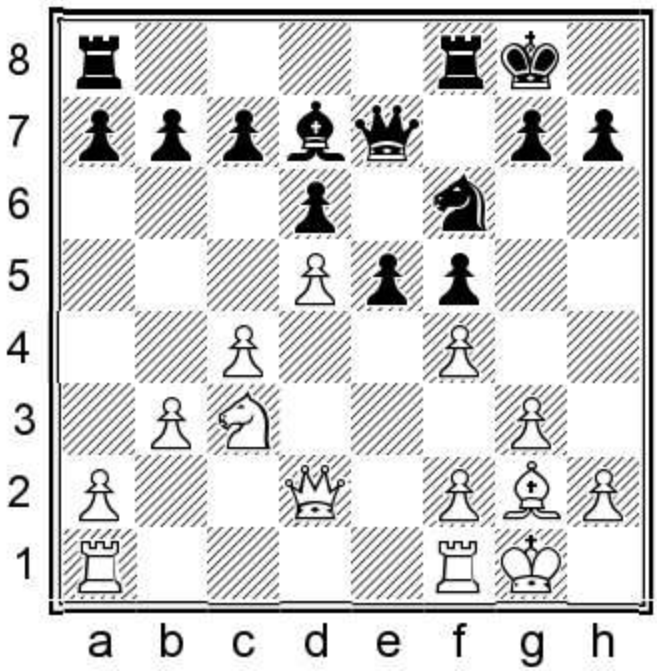
12...e5 13.f4

White utilizes the spare f-pawn to undermine Black's central structure.

13...♗d7

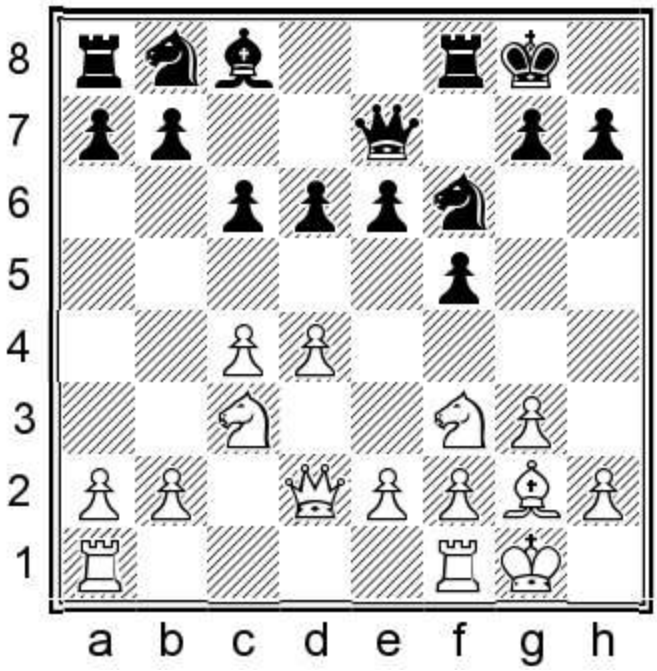
13...exf4 14.♖fe1 ♕f7 15.♕xf4 leaves Black a long way from equality; if 15...♗d7 then 16.c5! gives White a strong initiative.

chesstouring.com



14.♖fe1 ♖ae8 15.♖ad1 ♕f7 16.c5!

Black is clearly under pressure.



10.♖fe1 d5

Black should take action before e2-e4 comes.

10...♘e4 is another idea, but 11.♘xe4! fxe4 12.♘g5 d5 13.f3 is a strong and thematic response, after which 13...h6 14.♘h3 dxc4 15.f4!± gave White a serious advantage in Behrendorf – Rennert, email 2005.

11.♕c2

We have reached a Stonewall structure where Black has a typically solid position, but I don't see any reason why White shouldn't enjoy a pleasant pull, especially since the dark-squared bishops have been

chesstouring.com

traded.

11...♘bd7

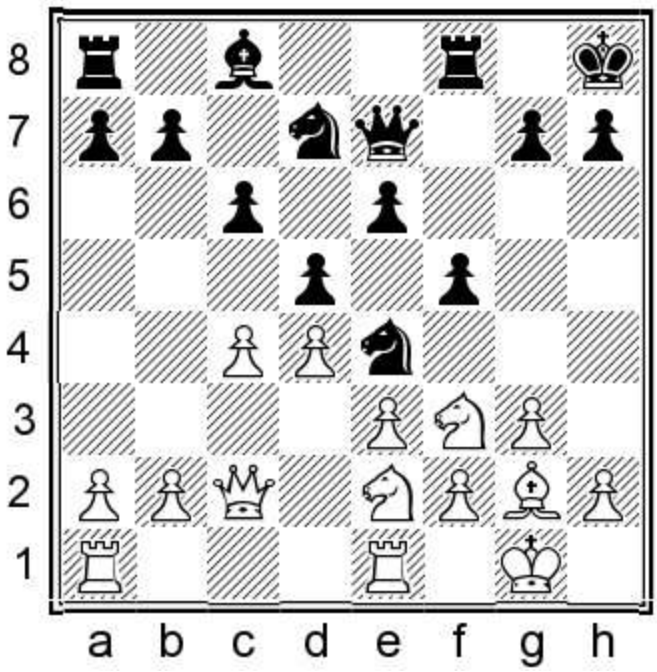
Black has also tried:

11...♘e4 12.e3 ♘d7

Another good example continued: 12...♗d7 13.♘e2 White carries out the thematic manoeuvre of the knight towards the optimal d3-square. 13...♗e8 14.♘f4 ♘d7 15.♘d3 ♘df6 16.♘fe5 ♖c8 17.b4± White achieved everything he could have wished for against the Stonewall structure in Kharitonov – Ovetchkin, Moscow 1998.

13.♘e2 ♔h8

In Anelli – Giardelli, Buenos Aires 1978, White should have continued with:



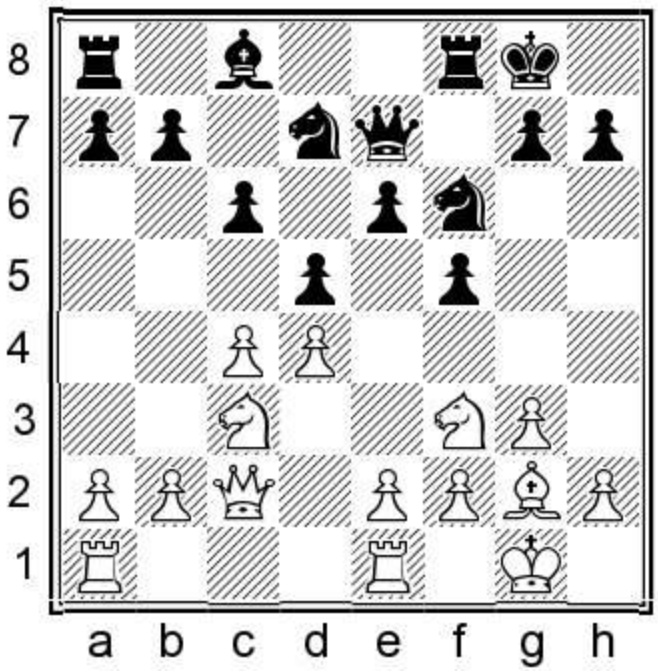
14.♘f4N

The usual thematic manoeuvre. Play might continue:

14...g5 15.♘d3 g4 16.♘fe5

With a typical advantage for White.

chesstouring.com



12.e3!N

A new move, although it immediately transposes to a couple of games.

12.cxd5 appears tempting but, somewhat surprisingly, Black can play 12...exd5! when 13.♕xf5 ♘e4 14.♕h5 ♘df6 15.♕h4 ♕b4! offers him interesting compensation.

12...b6

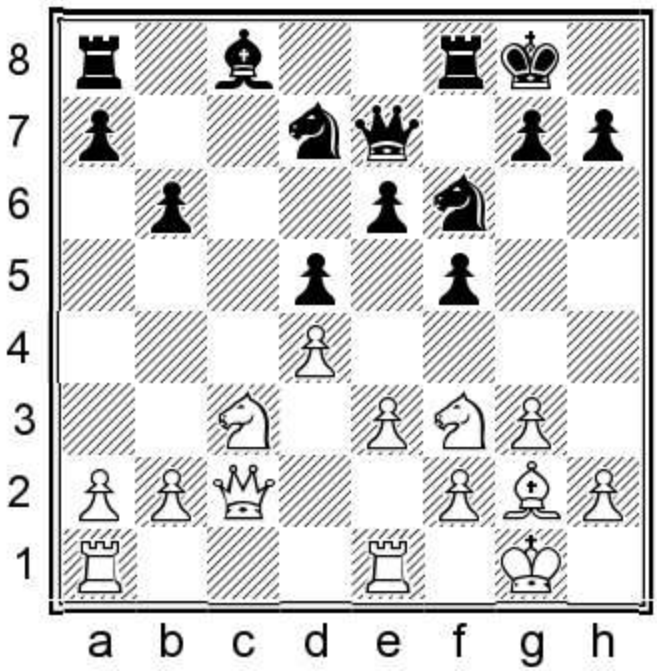
White is well prepared for 12...dxc4 13.a4 a5 14.e4 when he enjoys a powerful initiative for the pawn.

The text move is more logical, but it offers White a more favourable moment to open the c-file.

13.cxd5! cxd5

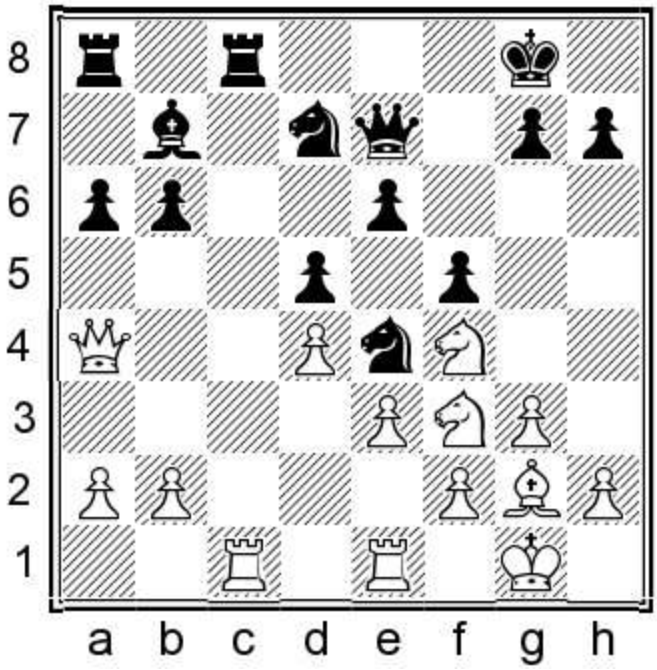
The sacrificial attempt 13...exd5? 14.♕xf5 is a non-starter for Black here, since 14...♘e4? 15.♘xd5! destroys his position.

chesstouring.com



14.♖ac1 ♗b7 15.♕a4! a6 16.♘e2 ♖fc8 17.♘f4 ♘e4

We have been following Krizsany – Hardicsay, Hungary 1996. Here I suggest:

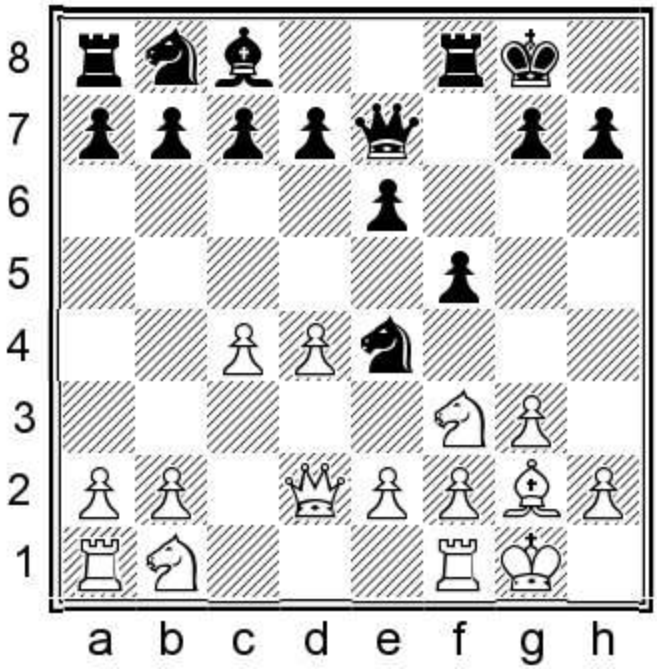


18.h4!N

Stabilizing the kingside, with a clear positional advantage for White.

A2) 8...♘e4

chesstouring.com



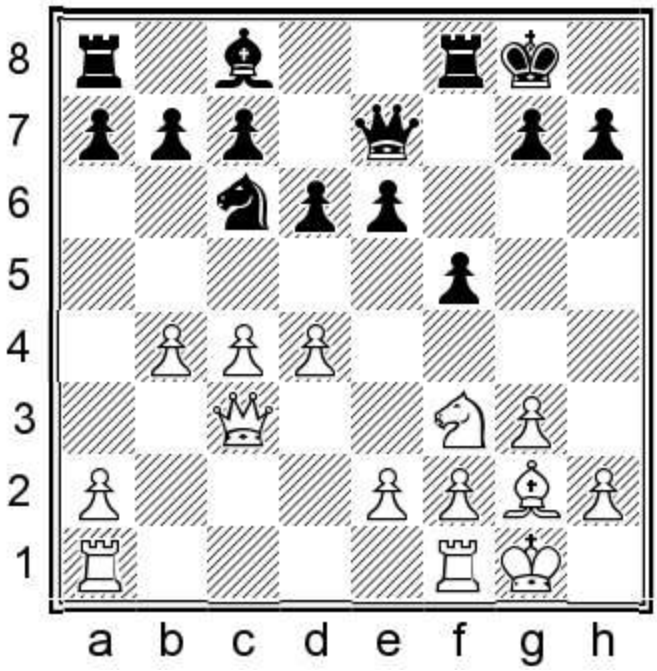
The point of this move is not merely to attack the queen, but rather to be ready to trade off a pair of knights in the hope of reaching a satisfactory game with ...d6 and ...e5.

9.♕c2 d6 10.♘c3 ♘xc3 11.♕xc3 ♘d7

The main alternative is:

11...♘c6 12.b4!

This is more efficient than 12.d5 ♘d8 13.dxe6 ♘xe6, although White is certainly a bit better here too.



12...♗d7

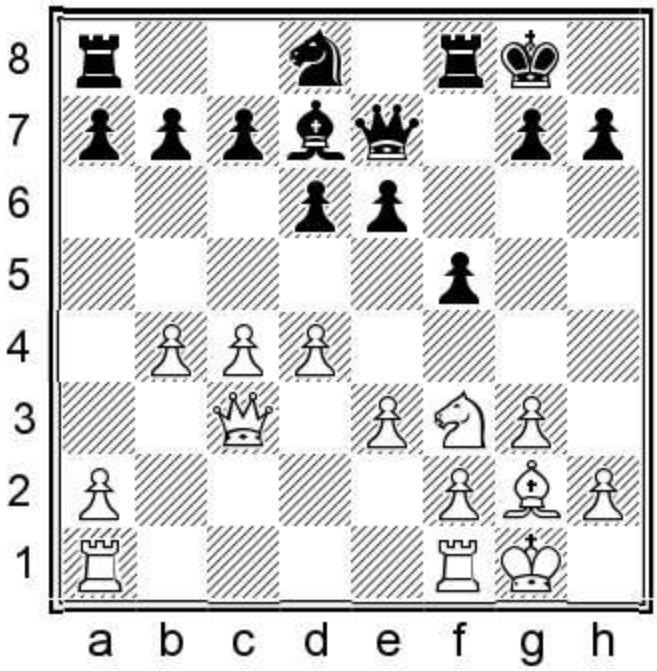
After 12...e5?! 13.b5 ♘xd4 14.♘xd4 exd4 15.♕xd4± White's positional advantage is obvious, Kopylov – Berelowitsch, Internet 2005.

chesstouring.com

13.e3 ♘d8

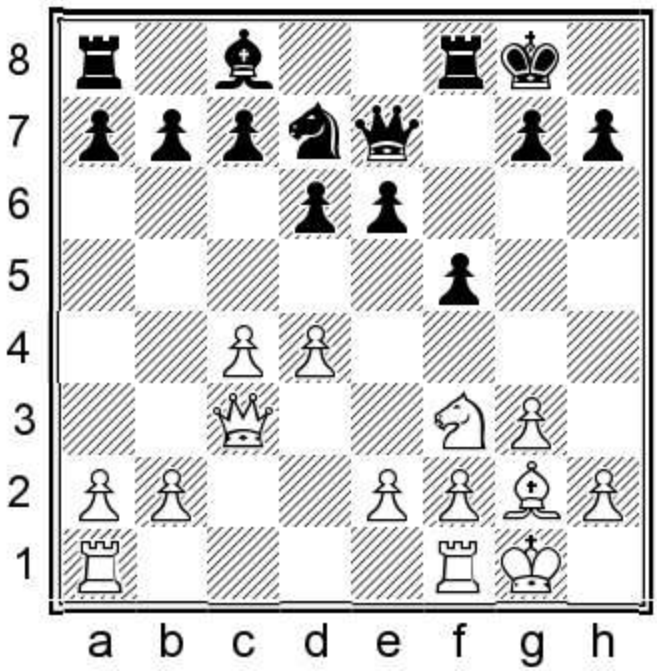
13...♖ae8 may appear more desirable but it runs into concrete problems: 14.b5 ♘b8 (14...♘d8? runs into 15.♕a5! and White wins a pawn) In Bolbochan – Grau, Buenos Aires 1936, White should have continued 15.♖fc1!N 15...a6 16.♘e1 with a serious edge.

The text move was played in another old game, Pirc – Rabinovich, Moscow 1935. White should have continued:



14.a4N 14...♘f7 15.♘d2 ♖ab8 16.b5

White has easy play on the queenside, and Black must already do something about the threat of ♕a5.



12.♖fe1 e5

I doubt that Black has anything better than this thematic move.

He has also tried:

chesstouring.com

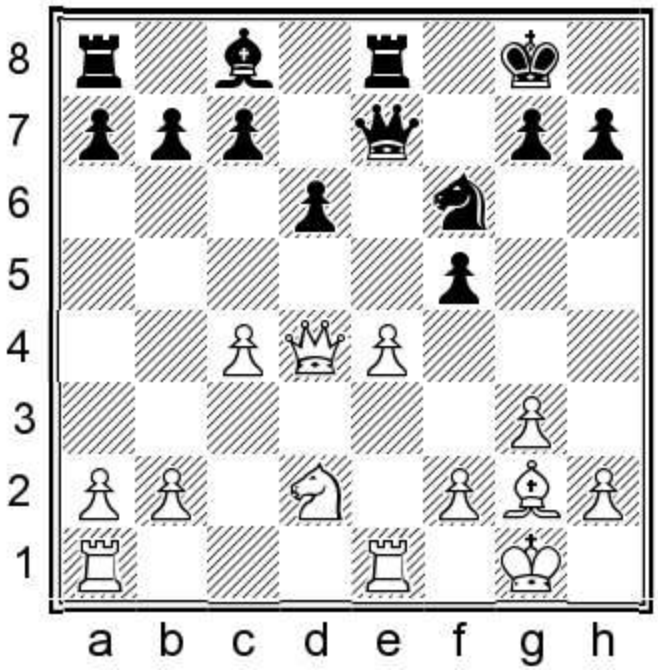
12...♘f6 13.♘d2! e5

13...d5 gives White a typically favourable game against the Stonewall, and he can even opt for direct action with 14.f3!? c6 15.e4 as in Botvinnik – Nenarokov, Odessa 1929.

14.e4 exd4

Unfortunately for Black, the thematic idea of 14...f4 15.gxf4 ♘h5 runs into 16.f5! when his compensation is hardly sufficient.

15.♕xd4 ♖e8



16.c5! dxc5 17.♕c3

White's idea is surprisingly powerful, and Black is already in serious trouble.

17...♕f7 18.exf5 ♗xf5 19.♗xb7 ♖ab8 20.♖xe8† ♕xe8 21.♗g2±

White converted his positional advantage in Mirkowski – Rodriguez Perez, corr. 2014.

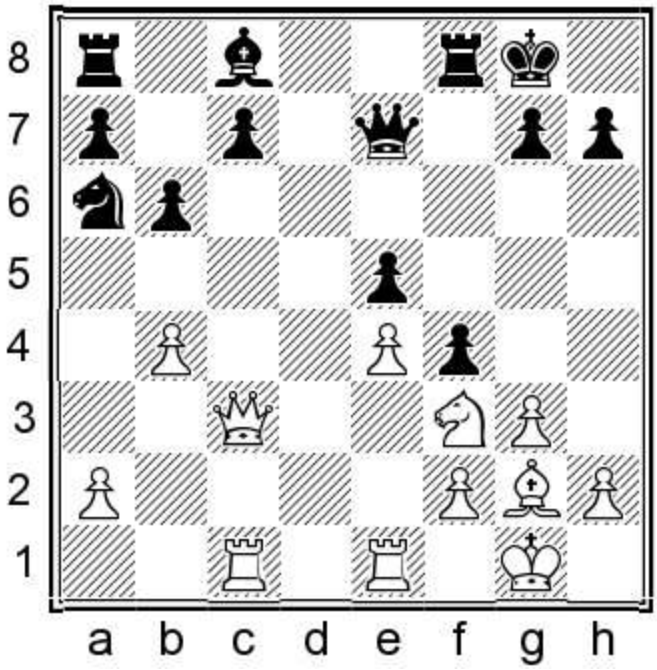
13.dxe5 dxe5

13...♘xe5 allows the powerful 14.c5! ♘f7 (14...♘xf3† runs into 15.exf3! attacking the queen) 15.b4 dxc5 16.bxc5± and White was much better in Johannessen – David, Norway 2016.

14.e4 f4 15.c5! ♘xc5 16.♖ac1 b6 17.b4 ♘a6

We have been following Wang Yue – Agdestein, Amsterdam 2008. White could have clarified his advantage with:

chesstouring.com

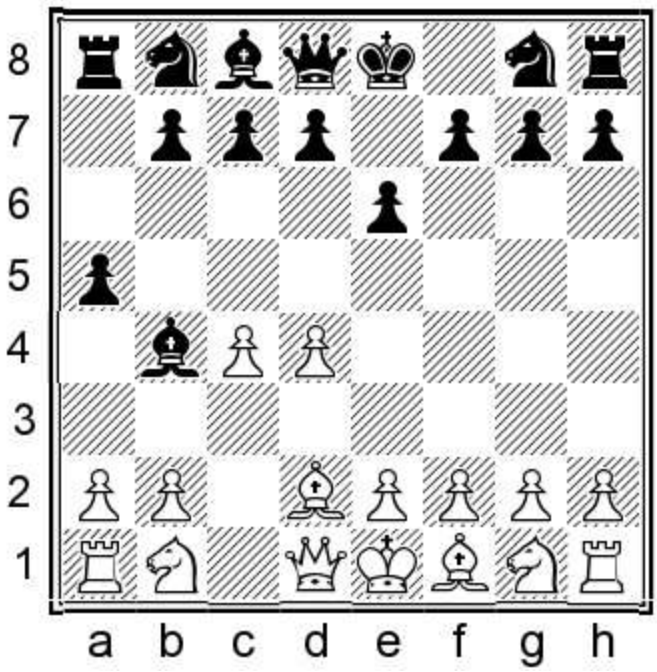


18.a3!N 18...c5

18...♖e8 is well met by 19.♗f1! threatening ♗b5. White is positionally dominating and will soon regain the sacrificed pawn.

19.♘xe5 cxb4 20.♕c4† ♔h8 21.♘c6±

B) 3...a5



4.g3

Once again we proceed in parallel with our Bogo-Indian coverage, so 4...♘f6 would lead straight to Chapter 19 of *GM 1A*.

chesstouring.com

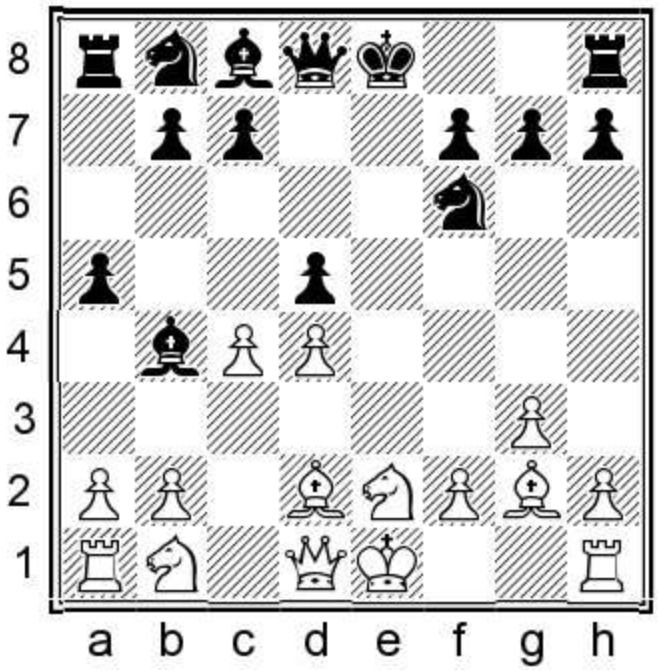
We will analyse **B1)** 4...d6 and **B2)** 4...d5.

4...♘c6 does not really threaten the d4-pawn, so 5.♗g2 is White's simplest response. In all four of the games on my database, Black continued 5...d6, transposing to variation B1 below.

Alternatively, 5.♘f3 is obviously playable as well, and after 5...d6 6.♗g2 we reach the 6.♘f3 line given in the notes to variation B1, which also seems quite promising for White.

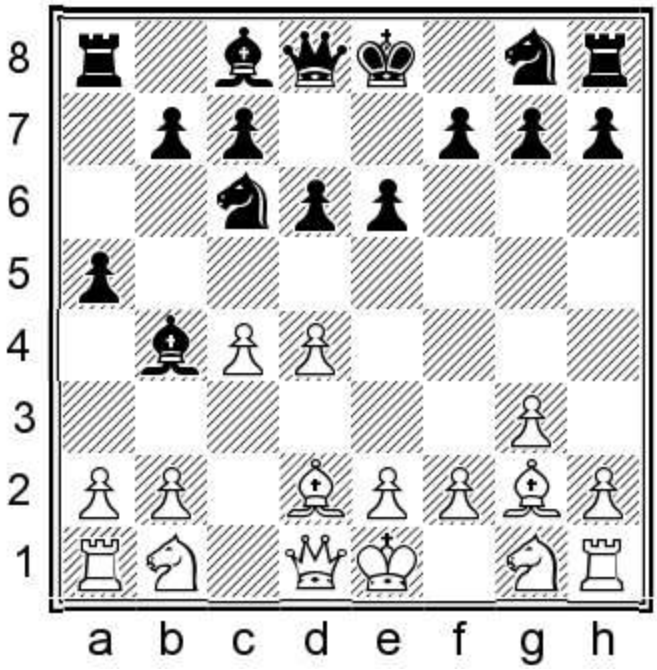
B1) 4...d6 5.♗g2 ♘c6

5...e5 6.e3 is likely to transpose after a subsequent ...♘c6, but I would like to examine a possible deviation. 6...exd4 7.exd4 ♘f6 8.♘e2 d5!? occurred in P.H. Nielsen – Ivanchuk, Beijing (rapid) 2011, when White should have played:



9.cxd5N 9...♘xd5 10.♘bc3 ♘b6 11.0-0 0-0 12.a3 ♗e7 13.♕c2 White is better, as he has excellent central control while the IQP is not really weak.

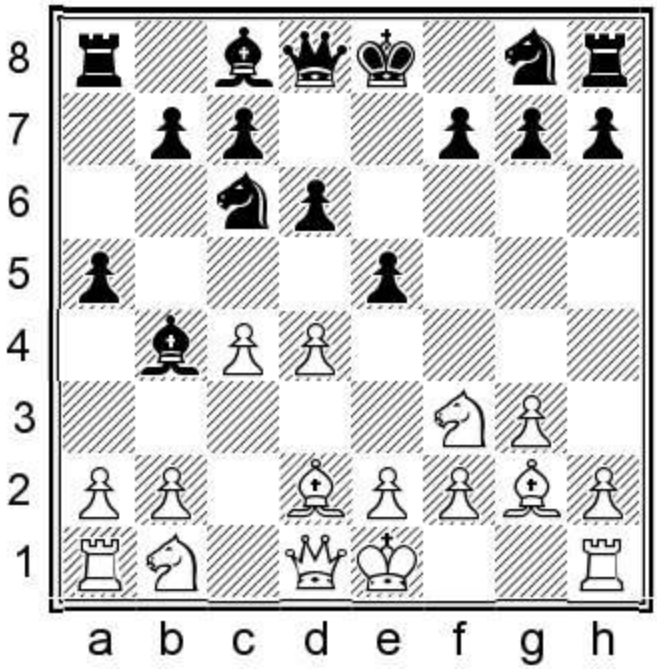
chesstouring.com



6.e3!?

Eventually I opted for this slightly unusual move.

I also spent some time looking at 6.♘f3 e5 and found an interesting new idea, which has not yet been tested in 250 games from this position:



7.♗c3!?N An illustrative line is 7...♘f6 8.0-0 0-0 9.dxe5 ♗xc3 10.♘xc3 dxe5 11.♕xd8! ♖xd8 12.♖fd1 and the arising endgame is not so easy for Black, for instance: 12...♗g4 (or 12...♗f5 13.♘e1±) 13.b3 ♔f8 14.♔f1 h6 15.♘e1±

6...e5

6...♘f6 does not really change anything after 7.♘e2 0-0 8.0-0 ♗xd2 (or 8...e5 immediately) 9.♕xd2 e5

chesstouring.com

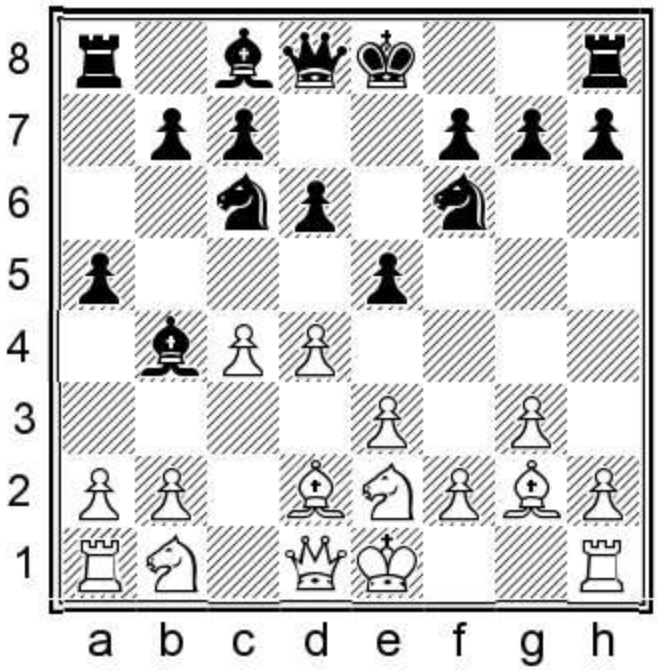
when we transpose to lines given below.

7.♘e2 ♘f6

This seems natural, although there is not much established theory. I checked two other options:

7...♘ge7 8.0-0 ♗xd2 9.♕xd2 0-0 10.♘bc3⩲/⩱ gave White an easy advantage in Vaisser – Sharif, Aubervilliers 1994.

7...♗g4!? occurred in Ju Wenjun – E. Paehtz, Beijing (rapid) 2014, when White should have reacted with 8.f3N 8...♗d7 9.0-0. A logical continuation is 9...♘f6 10.♘bc3 0-0 11.a3 ♗xc3 12.♗xc3 a4 13.♕d3 when White keeps a pleasant advantage.

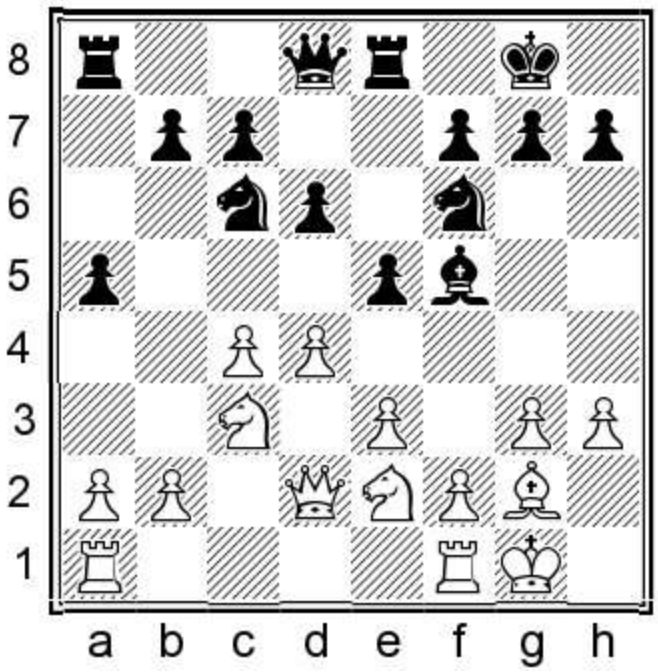


8.0-0 0-0?!

Objectively this seems a dubious choice, but the resulting position has occurred several times and it is worth analysing how to punish Black's inaccurate play.

8...♗xd2 9.♕xd2 0-0 is safer although White enjoys a pleasant game after: 10.♘bc3 ♗f5 (10...exd4 11.exd4 ♘e7 12.♘f4 c6 occurred in Tihonov – Borsuk, Alushta 2010, when 13.d5!N would have yielded a clear space advantage) 11.h3 ♖e8 This position was reached in Hagen – Bromann, Denmark 2015, and here I suggest:

chesstouring.com



12.g4!N 12...♗g6 13.♘g3± Gaining more space and securing a pleasant edge.

9.♗c1!

This is a thematic resource in positions where Black 'forgets' to exchange on d2. Now his dark-squared bishop is in some trouble on b4.

9...exd4

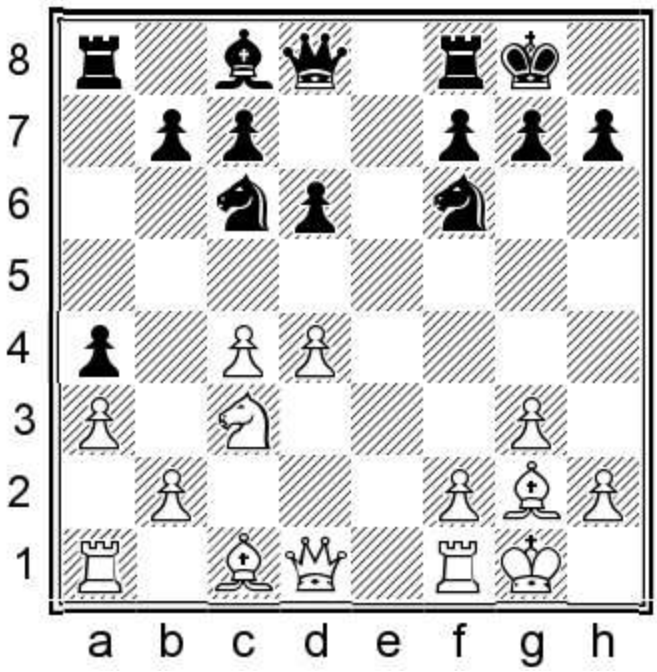
After 9...a4 10.a3 ♗a5 11.d5 ♘e7 12.♕xa4 ♗g4 13.♕c2 White was simply a pawn up in Aloma Vidal – Aranaz Murillo, Barcelona 2015.

10.exd4 a4

10...d5 11.c5 a4 12.a3 ♗a5 occurred in Dorfman – Lysyj, Internet 2006, and now the obvious 13.♘bc3N 13...♗xc3 14.♘xc3± would have won a pawn.

11.a3 ♗a5 12.♘bc3 ♗xc3 13.♘xc3

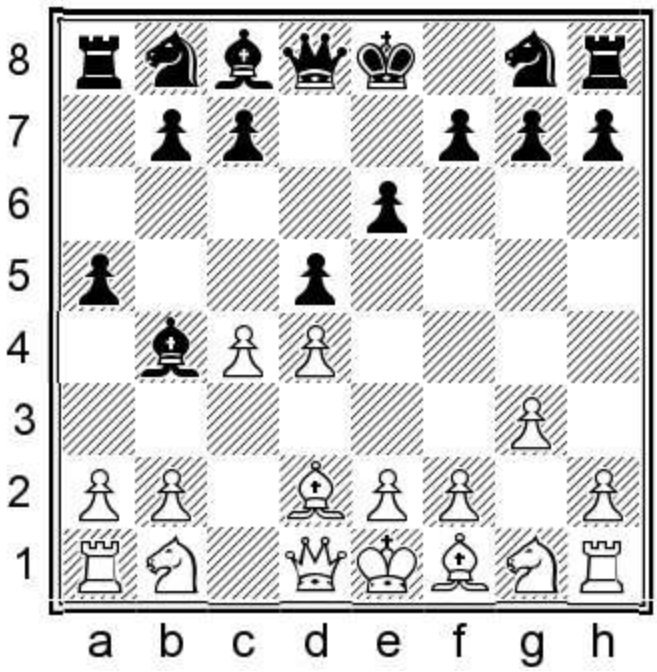
chesstouring.com



13...♘a5 14.♕xa4 ♗e6 15.d5 ♗f5 16.♖e1 ♕d7 17.♕b4±

Black did not have much compensation for the pawn in Matlakov – Kulaots, Tallinn 2016.

B2) 4...d5



This closely resembles the Catalan, but there are some independent lines where Black avoids or postpones ...♘f6.

5.♘f3 dxc4

5...♘f6 is covered in *GM 1A* of course; see variation C of Chapter 19 on page 307 of that volume.

chesstouring.com

6.♗g2 ♘c6

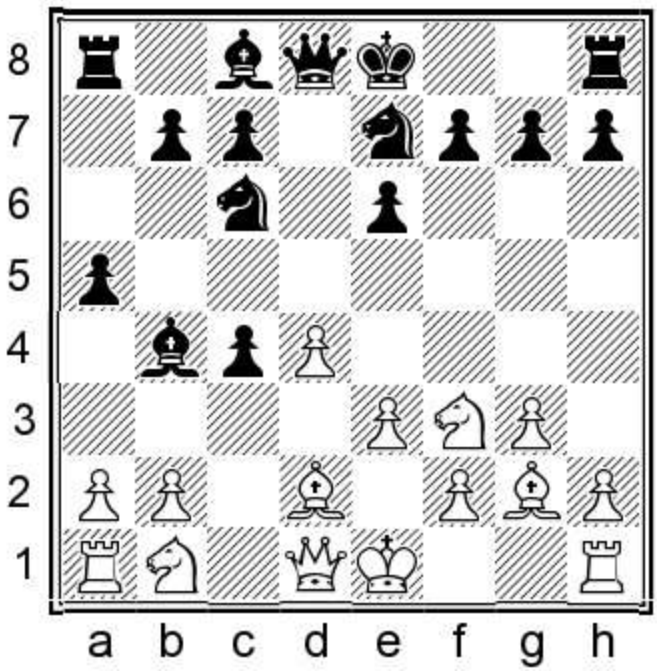
This is the most important independent option, whereas 6...♘f6 leads to a major Catalan line – see variation D of Chapter 4 in *GM 1A*, where 7.♕c2 is my recommendation.

7.e3

By postponing ...♘f6, Black forced us to spend a tempo defending the d4-pawn, thus steering us away from the repertoire of *GM 1A*. Fortunately e2-e3 is quite a useful move anyway, and Black has lost some options by developing his knight to c6, so we still have decent chances to fight for the advantage.

We will analyse **B21)** 7...♘ge7 and **B22)** 7...♘f6.

B21) 7...♘ge7



This has been the most common choice via the present move order; Black supports the c6-knight and avoids transposing to any normal Catalan lines.

8.0-0 0-0

Black has also tried:

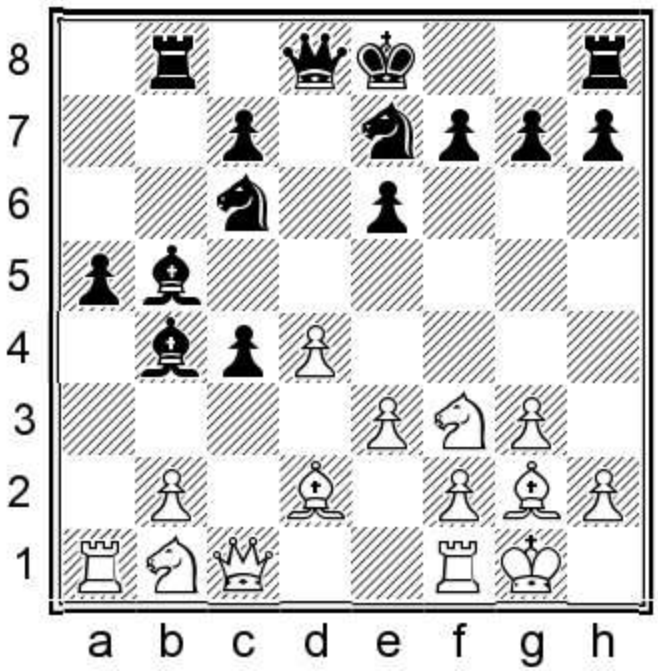
8...♖b8 9.♕c1!

An important nuance: White chooses a slightly unusual square for his queen in order to avoid being hit by ...♘b4 with tempo.

9...b5 10.a4 ♗a6 11.axb5 ♗xb5

In Pataki – J. Horvath Hungary 2010, White missed a great opportunity:

chesstouring.com



12.♗xb4!N 12...axb4

12...♘xb4 is well met by 13.♘a3 ♘d3 14.♕d2 when White quickly restores material equality while keeping his typical pressure on the queenside.

13.♖d1

Safeguarding the rook while preparing ♘bd2, after which White will regain the c4-pawn with the clearly better game.

9.♕c2 b5

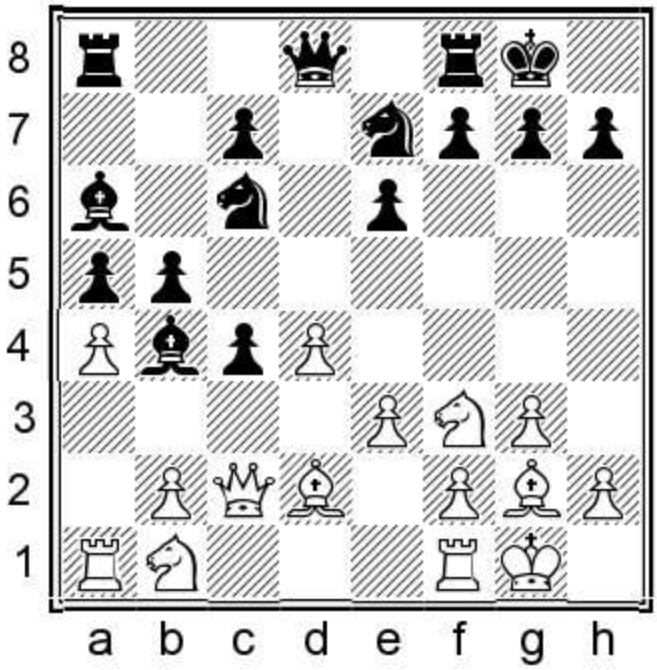
I checked 9...♗d6N 10.♕xc4 e5 but it does not combine well with the ...a5 move, and after 11.♘c3 exd4 12.exd4± White's chances are clearly better.

10.a4 ♗a6

10...♗xd2 was played in Ippolito – Moradiabadi, Las Vegas 2018, when 11.♘fxd2!N± would have enabled White to regain the pawn while keeping a clear positional plus.

Now in Postny – Istratescu, Bastia 2013, White missed a powerful idea:

chesstouring.com



11.♘e5!N

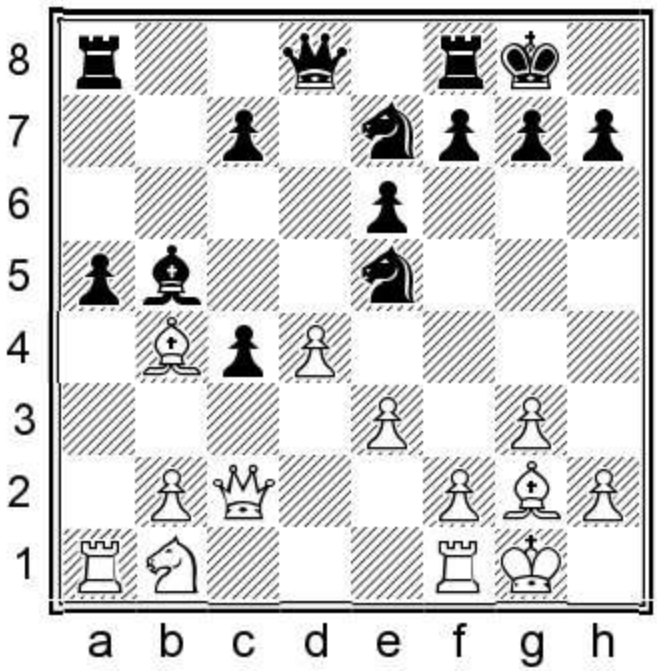
With the following tactical point:

11...♘xe5 12.axb5!

But not 12.♗xa8 ♕xa8♖ when Black has ample compensation for the exchange.

12...♗xb5 13.♗xb4

The pin along the a-file means that Black has nothing better than:



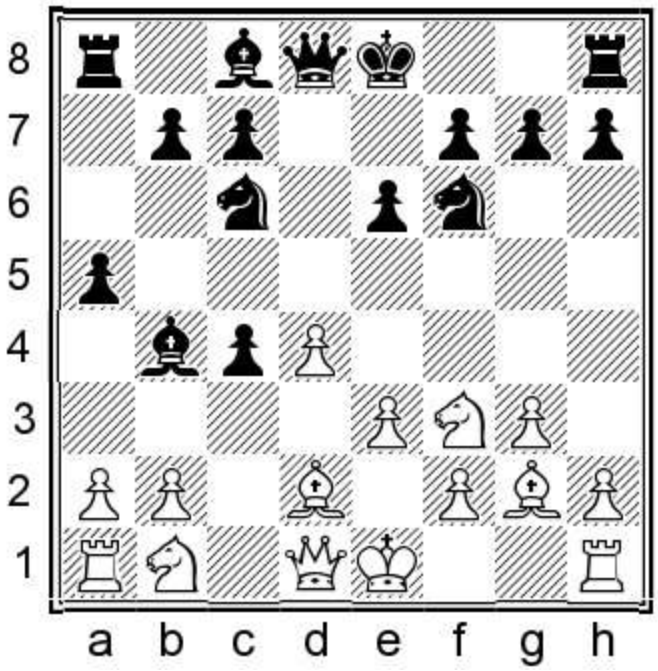
13...♘5c6 14.♗c5±

It will not take long to win back a pawn on the queenside, which will result in material equality and

chessgames.com

strong pressure for White.

B22) 7...♘f6



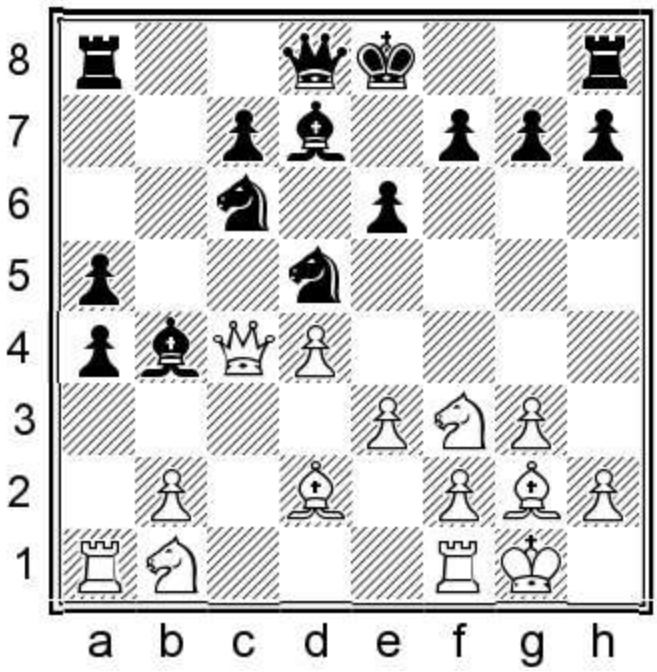
8.0-0

Even though Black's last move has been a pretty rare choice via this move order, White's natural reply transposes to a pretty popular Catalan line, so the game count jumps from just three to nearly a hundred. I won't analyse it exhaustively as it's such a rare occurrence via our move order, but will still show some good ideas against Black's main options.

8...0-0

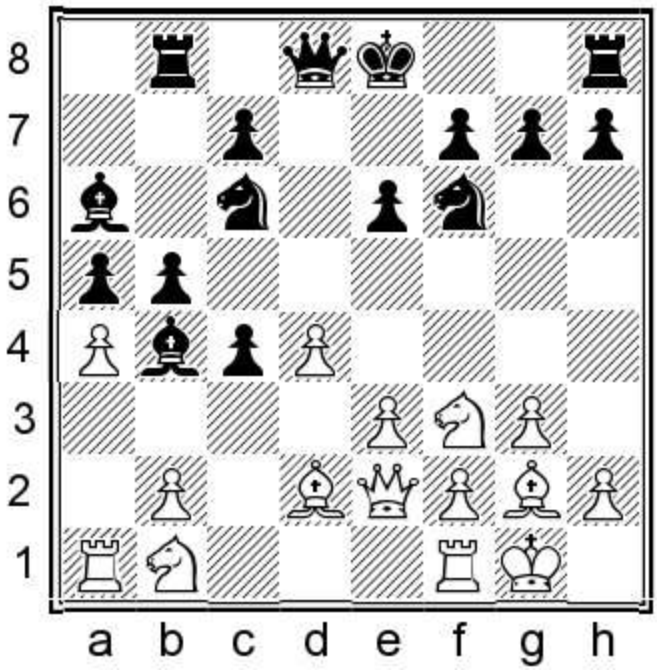
8...♗d7 9.♕e2 b5 allows 10.a4!, destroying Black's pawn structure on the queenside. 10...bxa4 11.♕xc4 ♘d5 (11...♖b8 12.♘c3 ♗xc3 13.♕xc3 ♘d5 14.♕c1 was also clearly better for White in Isik – Cakiroglu, Antalya 2017) This position occurred in Ghaem Maghami – Short, Jakarta 2013, and now an easy improvement is:

chesstouring.com



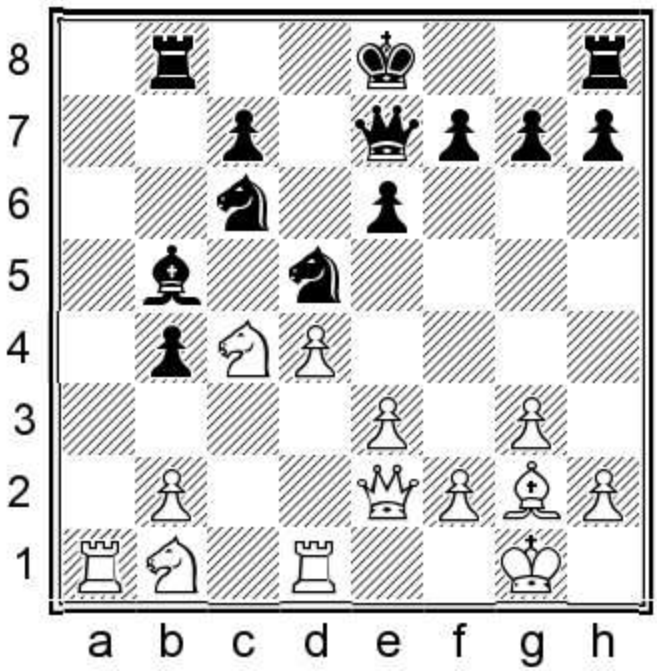
12.♖c1N 12...0-0 13.♘c3 ♘b6 14.♕e2 ♖b8 15.♘e4± With an obvious advantage for White.

8...♖b8 9.♕e2 b5 10.a4 ♗a6 should be met by:

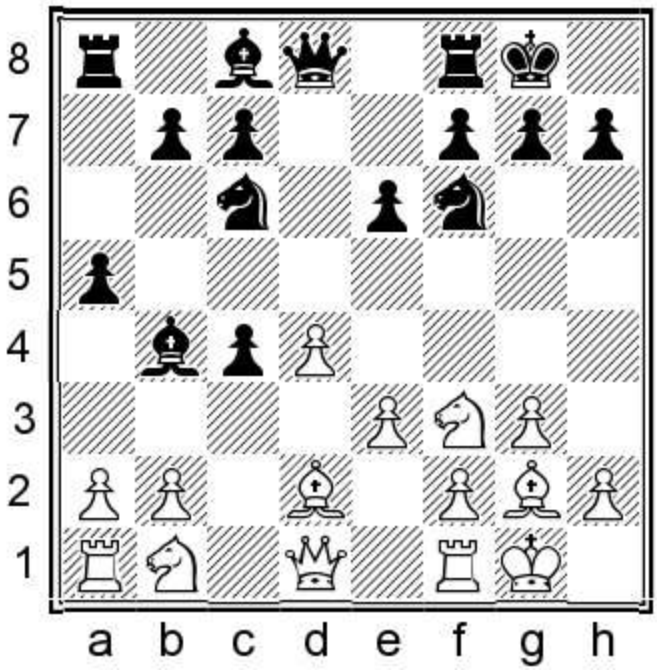


11.♖d1! This important prophylactic move has occurred in only one model game, which is worth quoting: 11...♕e7 (I assume White was intending to meet 11...0-0N with 12.♘e5 ♘e7 13.axb5 ♗xb5 and now 14.♘c3 ♗xc3 15.♗xc3 a4 16.e4 provides excellent compensation for the pawn) 12.♗xb4 axb4 13.♘fd2 ♘d5 14.axb5 ♗xb5 15.♘xc4

chesstouring.com



15...0-0 16.♕c2 ♖a8 17.♘bd2 ♖fd8 18.♘b3 White secured a solid positional advantage in Shadrin – Plyusnin, corr. 2013.



9.♕e2 ♗d6

I checked two alternatives:

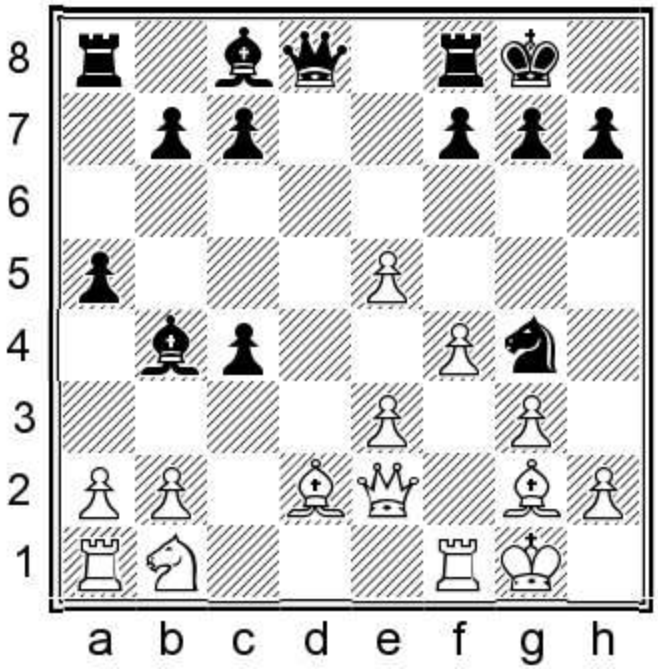
9...♕e7 10.♕xc4 e5 looks reasonably sensible; I suggest 11.d5 ♘b8 as played in Schild – Nemchenko, email 2010, followed by 12.e4N 12...c6 13.♘c3± when White enjoys a slight pull.

9...e5 10.♘xe5

This begins a relatively forcing sequence of moves.

10...♘xe5 11.dxe5 ♘g4 12.f4

chesstouring.com

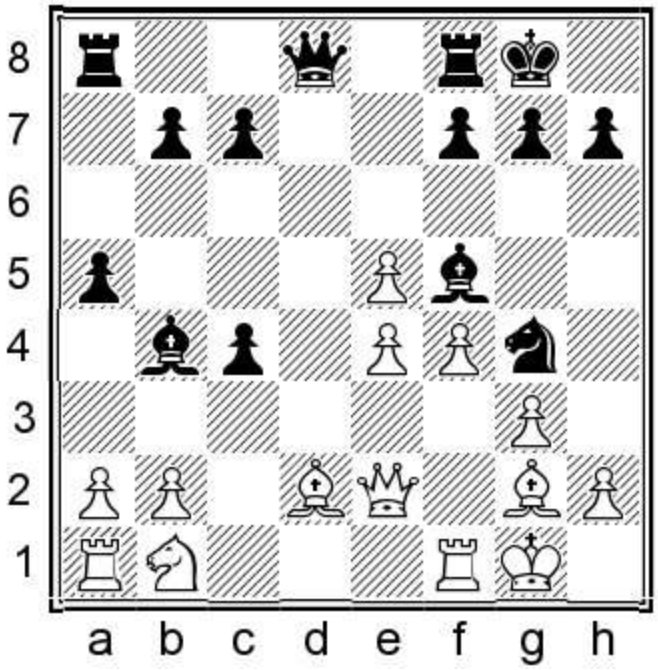


12...♗f5

Black has also tried: 12...♕d3 13.♕xd3 cxd3 14.♘c3 f6 (an earlier game continued 14...♗c5 15.♖ae1 c6 16.h3 ♘h6 17.g4 ♖d8 18.♖c1± and White was much better in Godat – Siger, corr. 2009) 15.h3 ♗xc3 16.bxc3 ♘h6 17.exf6 gxf6 18.c4 c6 19.e4 ♘f7 20.c5!± White obtained a strategically winning position in Chiesa – Justesen, corr. 2011.

13.e4

13.♗xb7 also proved a good choice after 13...♖b8 14.♗xb4 axb4 15.♗g2 h5 16.♖c1 and White was better in Jepson – S. Colin, corr. 2009.



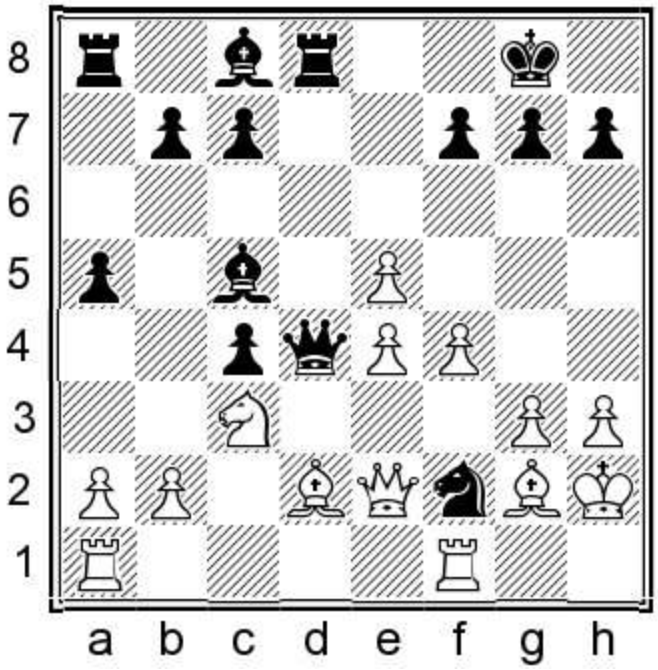
13...♕d4† 14.♔h1 ♗c8 15.♘c3 ♗c5

15...♖d8 proved to be worse after 16.♖ad1 ♗xc3 17.bxc3 ♕d3 18.♗f3 ♕xe2 19.♗xe2 b5 20.♔g2± when White's natural and efficient play yielded a clear advantage in Shirov – Korchnoi, Karlovy

Vary 2007.

16.h3 ♘f2† 17.♔h2 ♖d8

White continued with 18.♘d5 in two correspondence games, but was unable to make much headway. Instead I recommend:



18.♗e1N 18...♘d3 19.♖d1

With promising play for White, as his mobile kingside majority looks more threatening than Black's queenside pawns.

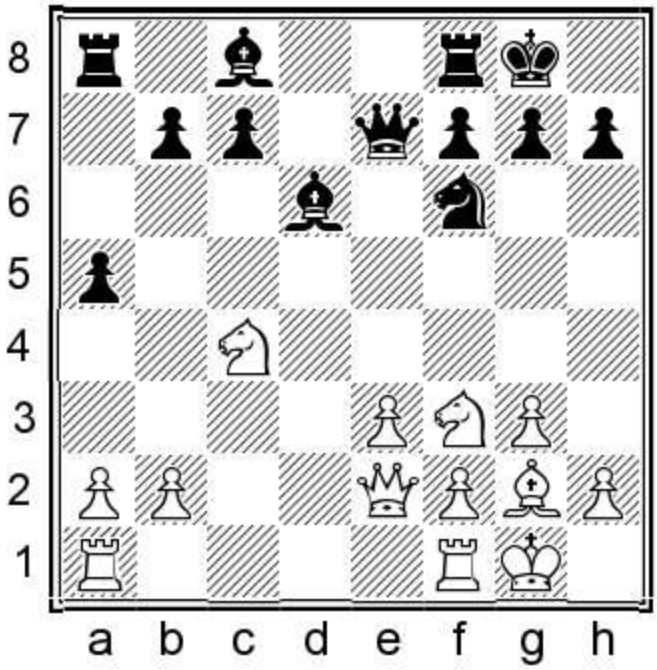
10.♗c3!?

This is more ambitious than 10.♕xc4, which allows 10...e5.

10...♕e8

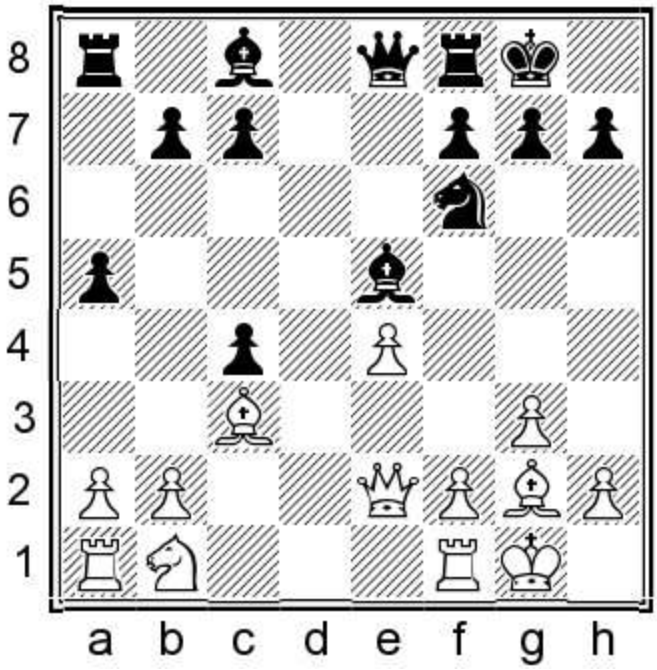
Another game continued 10...♕e7 11.♘bd2 e5 12.dxe5 ♘xe5 13.♗xe5 ♗xe5 14.♘xc4 ♗d6 and now in Shankland – D. Zilberstein, Berkeley 2011, White should have continued:

chesstouring.com



15.♘xd6N 15...♕xd6 16.♕c2 With a pleasant game for White.

11.e4! e5 12.dxe5 ♘xe5 13.♘xe5 ♗xe5



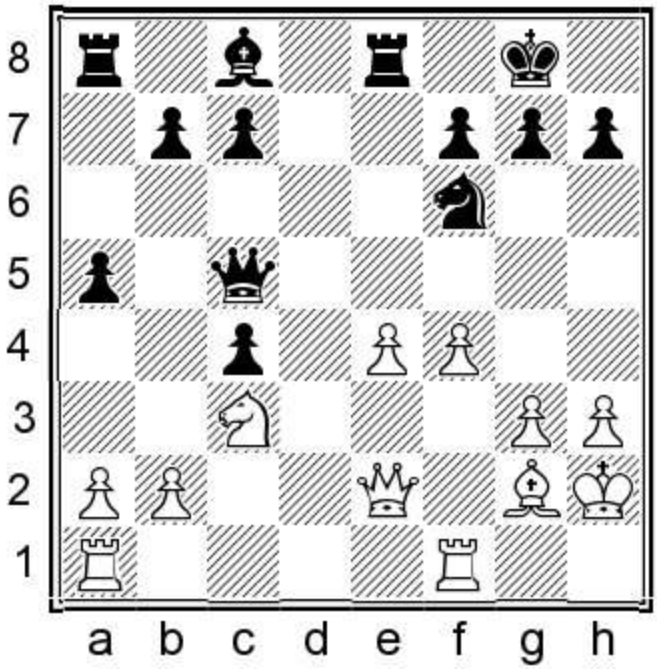
14.f4! ♗xc3 15.♘xc3 ♕c6 16.h3!?

I also considered 16.e5, but after 16...♕c5† 17.♔h1 ♘g4 18.♘e4 ♕e3 19.♕xc4 ♕b6! the position is pretty unclear.

16...♕c5† 17.♔h2 ♖e8

In Vidit – Lafuente, Mumbai 2010, White rushed ahead with 18.e5. It would have been better to mobilize his pieces with:

chesstouring.com



18.♖ad1!N

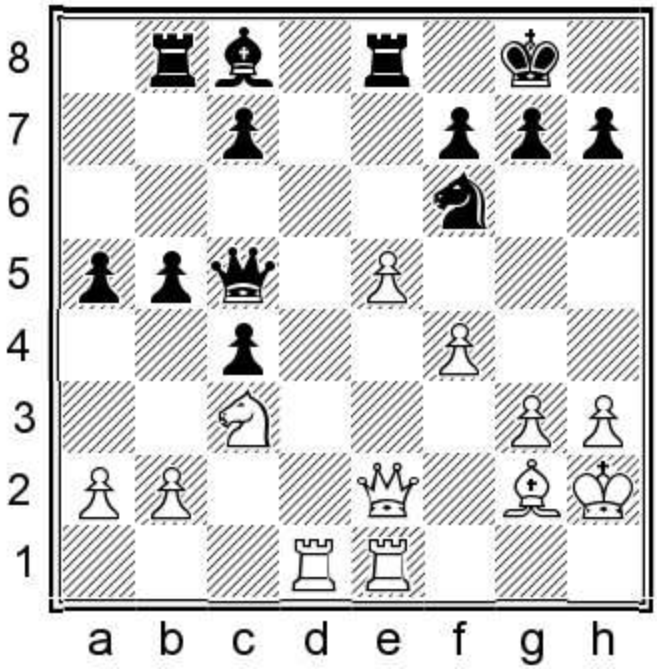
It is not so easy for Black to complete development.

18...♖b8 19.♖fe1 b5

This looks like the most natural response, but now White is fully prepared to advance in the centre.

20.e5

A logical continuation might be:



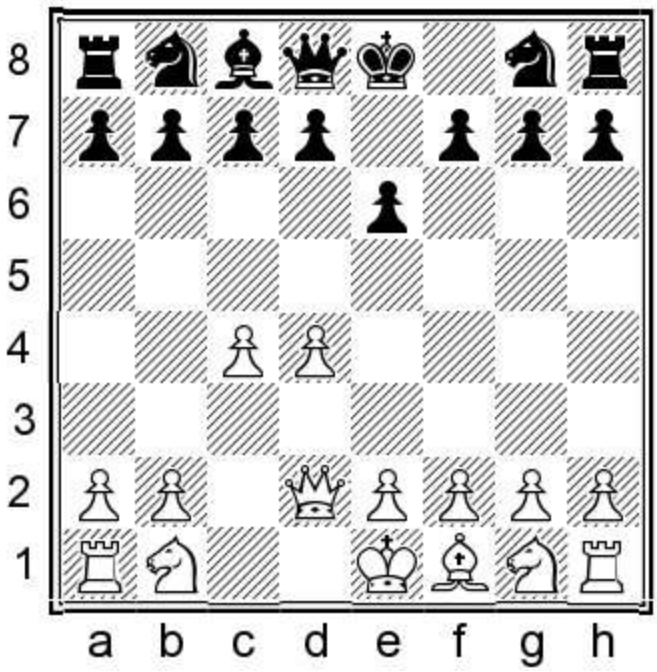
20...♗f5 21.♕d2 b4 22.exf6 bxc3 23.♖xe8† ♖xe8 24.♕xc3

White keeps some advantage due to his safer king.

chesstouring.com

C) 3...♗xd2† 4.♕xd2

I considered 4.♘xd2 d6 5.g3 but after 5...e5 (rather than 5...♘f6 which transposes to a line covered in Chapter 18 of *GM 1*A) 6.♘gf3 ♕e7 it seems to me that Black has a pretty good version of a Bogo-style position.



Black has two main possibilities: **C1)** 4...♘f6 and **C2)** 4...f5.

C1) 4...♘f6 5.♘c3

5.g3 would transpose to a line I rejected in *GM 1A*, so I suggest doing without the fianchetto for a change.

Black has two main ideas: **C11)** 5...0-0 and **C12)** 5...d5.

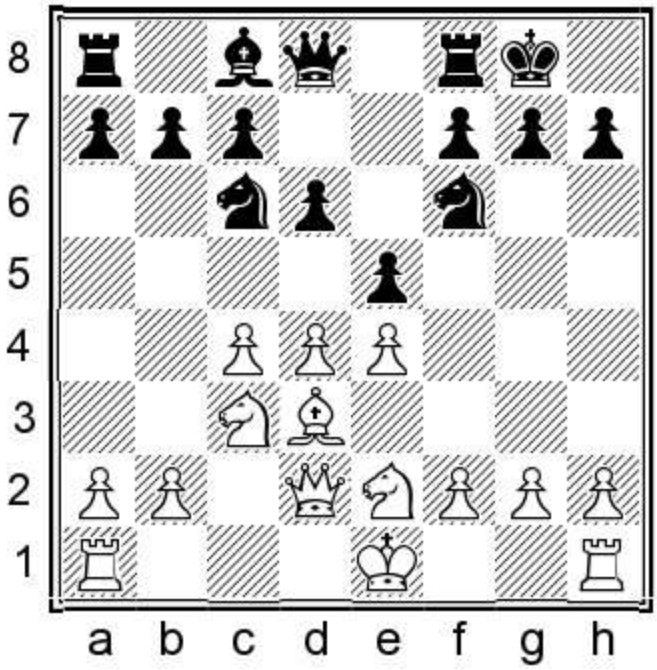
C11) 5...0-0 6.e4

Naturally we will seize the centre if given the opportunity.

6...d5

6...d6 has been played numerous times, but surprisingly nobody opted for the natural 7.♗d3N. A logical continuation is: 7...e5 (but not 7...c5?! 8.dxc5! dxc5 9.e5 ♘fd7 10.f4 when White enjoys a significant space advantage and an easy initiative) 8.♘ge2 ♘c6

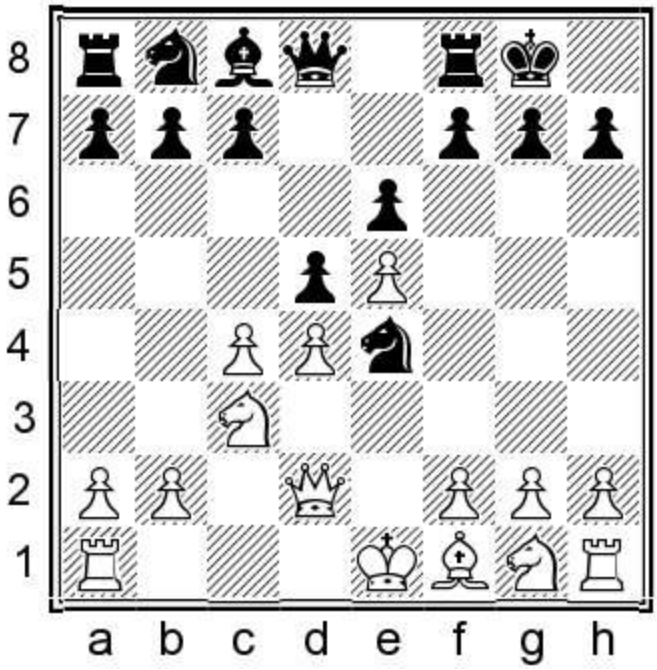
chesstouring.com



9.♗c2! I suggest avoiding d4-d5, for a while at least. Meanwhile the structure after 9...exd4 10.♘xd4 should always be slightly favourable for White.

7.e5 ♘e4

7...♘fd7 8.♘f3 has been played in one game but I consider it too passive for Black, so we will focus on the more challenging text move.



8.♘xe4 dxe4

In his book *A Rock-Solid Chess Opening Repertoire for Black*, GM Eingorn mentioned this line in a note, cutting off the analysis here without any assessment other than a general comment about "double-edged play". This is far from a rock-solid position for either player, but I believe White has the better chances – especially if his opponent is not familiar with any of the moves that follow.

chesstouring.com

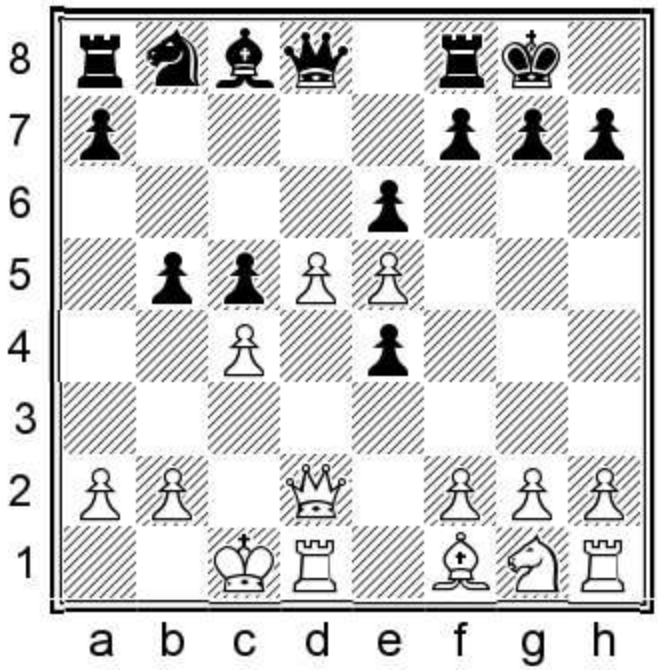
9.0-0-0!

White needs to be well prepared for Black's counterplay in the centre, so this aggressive approach is called for.

9...b5!?

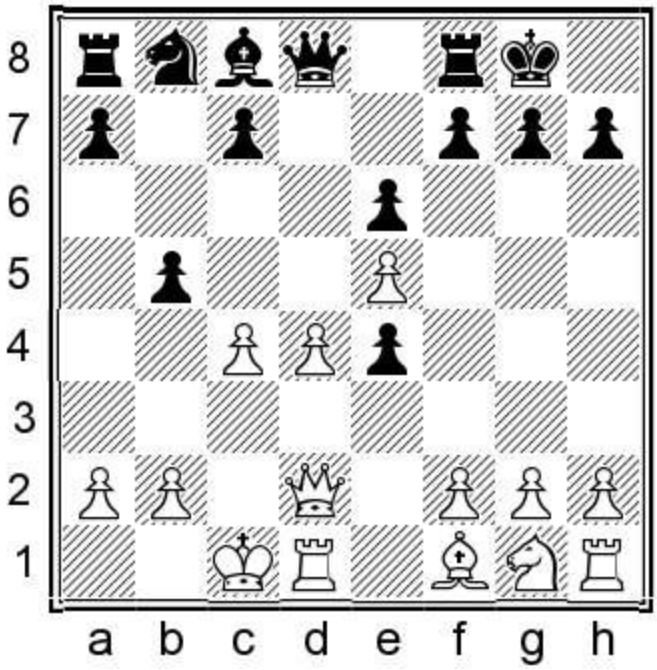
This seems critical.

I also analysed 9...c5 10.d5 b5 and found the following improvement over Sadorra – Matamoros Franco, Las Vegas 2014:



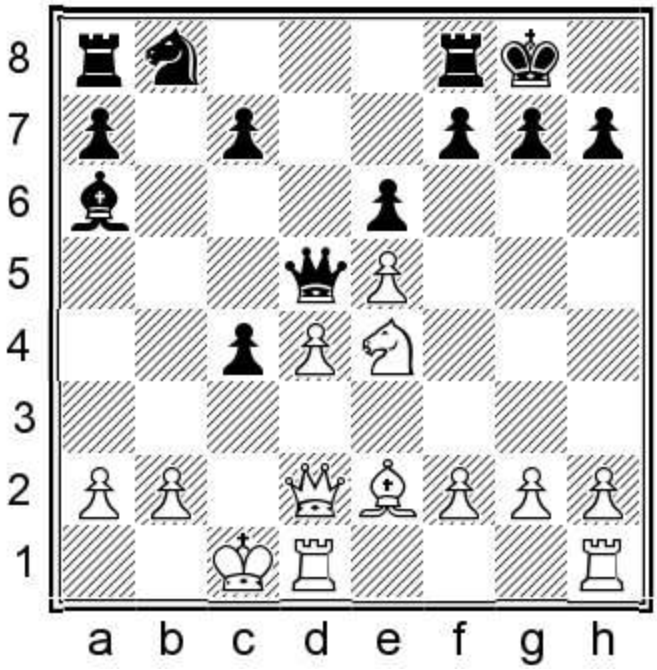
11.f3!N 11...exd5 (11...♘d7 12.dxe6 fxe6 13.fxe4 b4 14.♘f3± also gives White a considerable advantage) 12.♕xd5 ♕xd5 13.cxd5 c4 14.f4! ♘a6 15.♘e2 ♘c5 16.♘d4 The arising endgame is clearly better for White.

chesstouring.com



10.♘e2! bxc4 11.♘c3 ♗a6 12.♘xe4 ♕d5 13.♗e2!

There is no need to move the knight away.



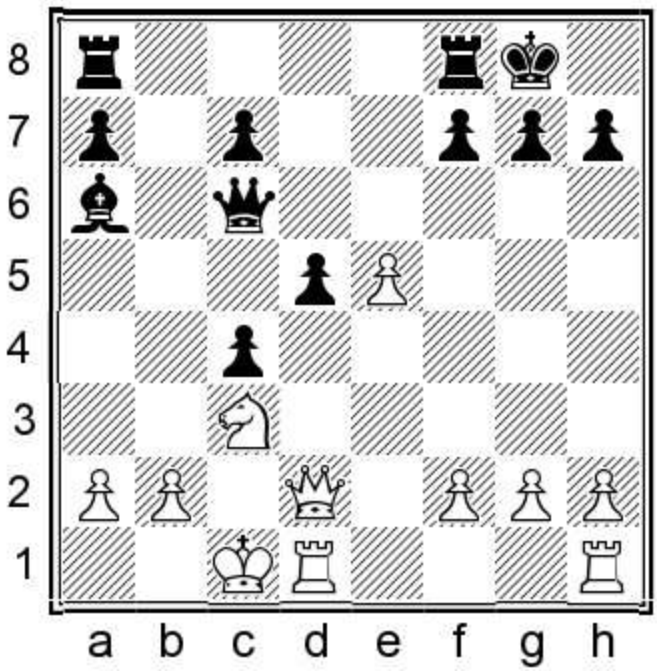
13...♘c6 14.♗f3 ♕b5 15.♘c3 ♕b6 16.♗xc6!

Black's counterplay on the queenside had the potential to become quite serious, so White should transform the position before it gets to that stage.

16...♕xc6 17.d5 exd5

We have been following Andersson – Laine, corr. 2014. Here my personal preference would be:

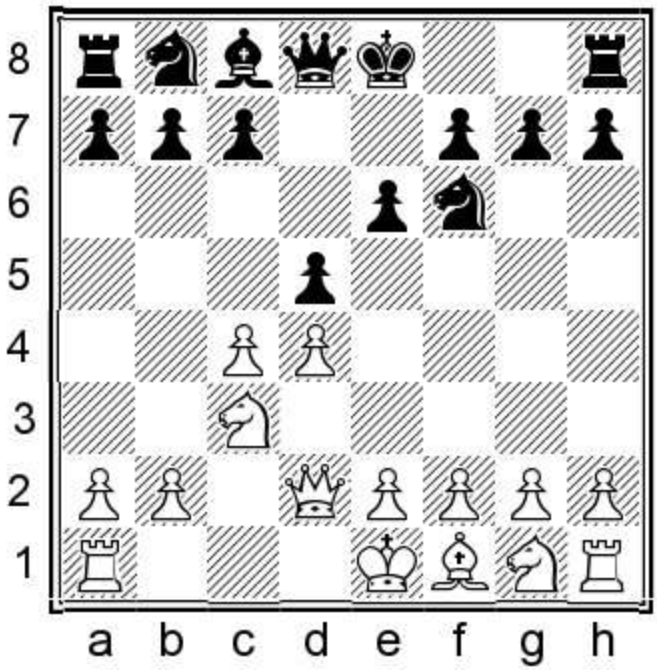
chesstouring.com



18.♕xd5N 18...♕b6 19.f4 ♖ab8 20.♖d2

White has a solid positional advantage, and Black's queenside play is less scary without the help of a knight.

C12) 5...d5



6.e3 0-0

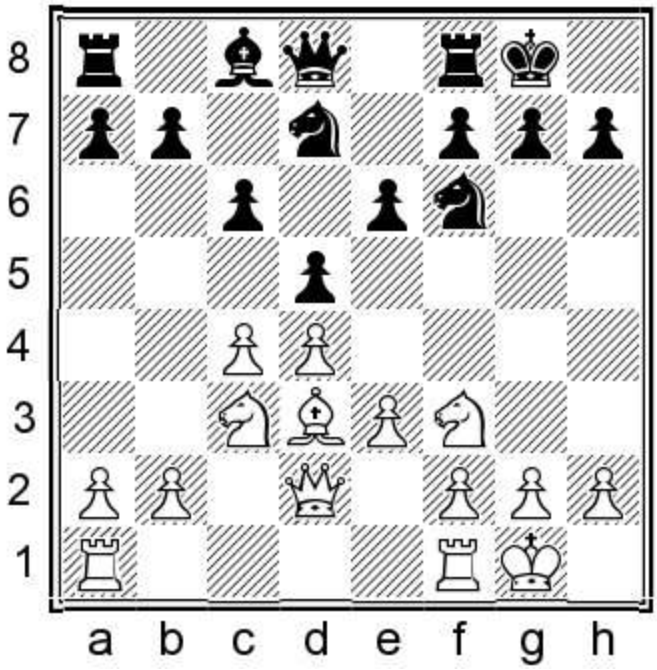
Black's other main option is:

6...c6 7.♘f3 0-0

This looks solid but perhaps a bit too passive.

8.♗d3 ♘bd7 9.0-0

chesstouring.com

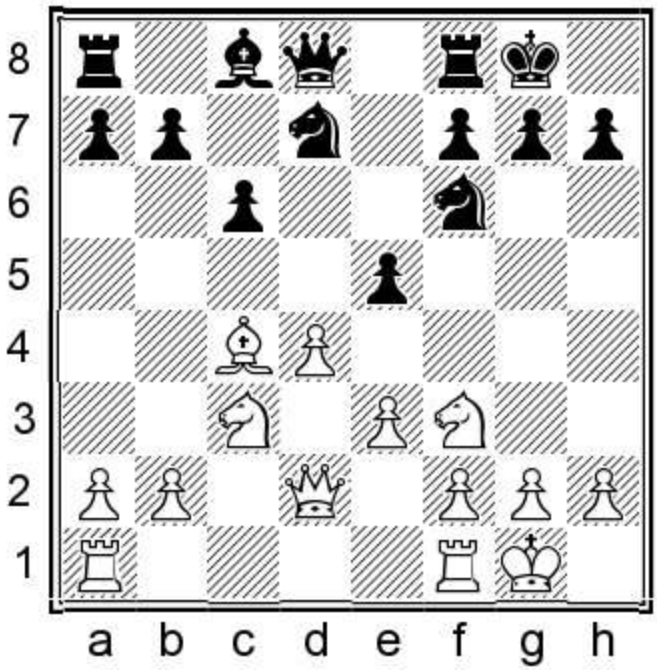


9...dxc4

The most likely alternative is 9...b6, when 10.cxd5! is a well-timed decision. 10...exd5 (10...cxd5N enables White to seize the initiative on the queenside: 11.♖fc1 a6 [or 11...♗b7 12.♘b5 ♘e8 13.♕b4] 12.♘a4 ♗b7 13.♕b4 and White is better) This occurred in Wiman – Ongut, Budapest 2014. It would be an absolutely harmless position for Black if his pawn was on b7 instead of b6, but here the vulnerability of his queenside structure invites: 11.♕c2!N 11...♗b7 (11...♖e8 runs into 12.e4!) 12.♘e5 Followed by f2-f4 with a useful initiative for White.

10.♗xc4 e5

This is the logical follow-up to Black's previous move.



11.♗b3

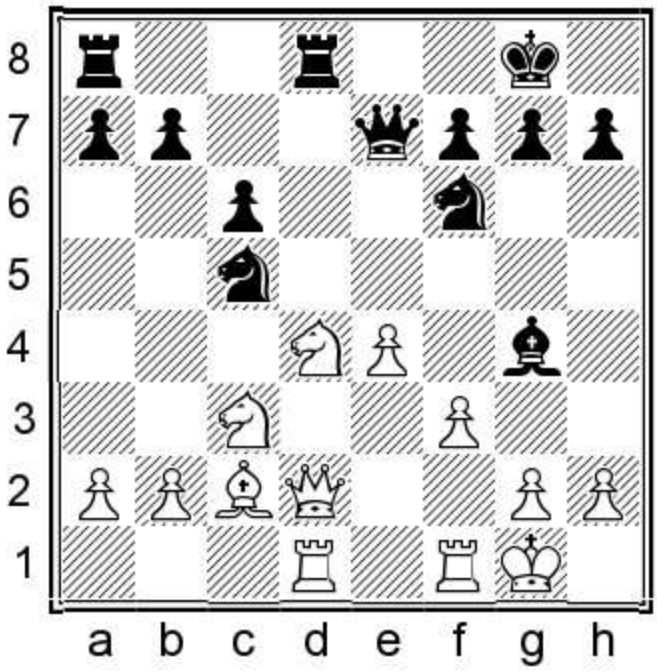
A typical prophylactic move in this kind of structure.

chesstouring.com

11...♕e7

11...exd4 12.exd4 ♘b6 13.♖fe1 is a promising IQP position for White. 13...♗g4 14.♘e5 ♗h5 occurred in Jocas – Vitols, Russia 1998, and now I believe White should have played 15.h3N 15...♘fd5 16.♖ac1 with an active game.

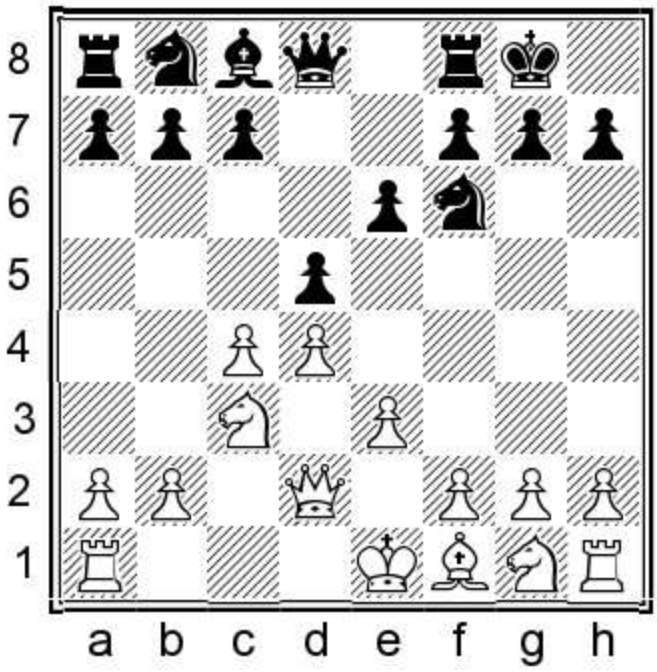
12.e4 exd4 13.♘xd4 ♘c5 14.♗c2 ♖d8 15.♖ad1 ♗g4 16.f3



16...♘e6 17.♕f2 ♘xd4 18.♖xd4 ♗e6 19.♖fd1±

White had a small but lasting advantage in Alekhine – Bogoljubow, Budapest 1921.

After the text move I recommend converting to a Carlsbad structure, in order to develop the bishop without losing a tempo after ...dxc4.



7.cxd5 exd5 8.♗d3

chesstouring.com

Black has many possible options and move orders, but I will just focus on what I regard as the few most important options.

8...♘c6

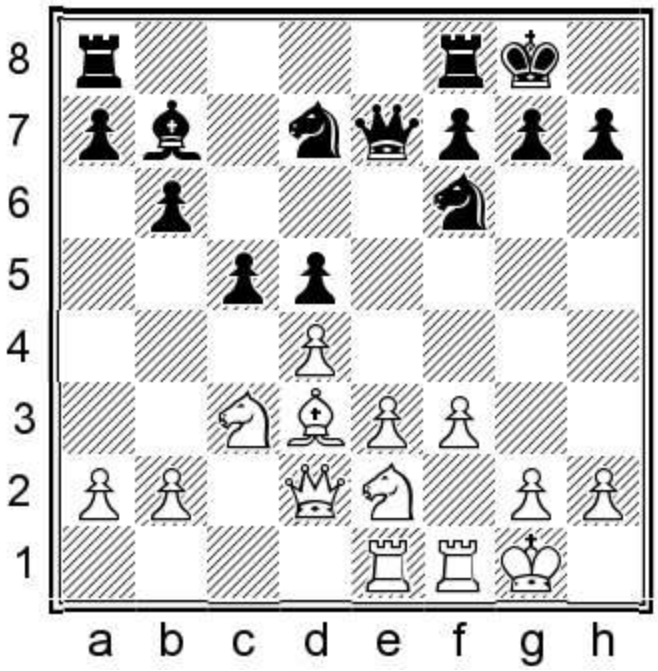
I also considered:

8...♕e7 9.♘ge2

Just as in the Queen's Gambit Declined, this is more challenging than the ♘f3 set-up.

9...♘bd7 10.0-0 b6 11.♖ae1 ♗b7 12.f3 c5

So far, both sides have played quite naturally. Here it is useful for White to know about the following aggressive plan:



13.g4! ♖fd8

Now White has a pleasant choice.

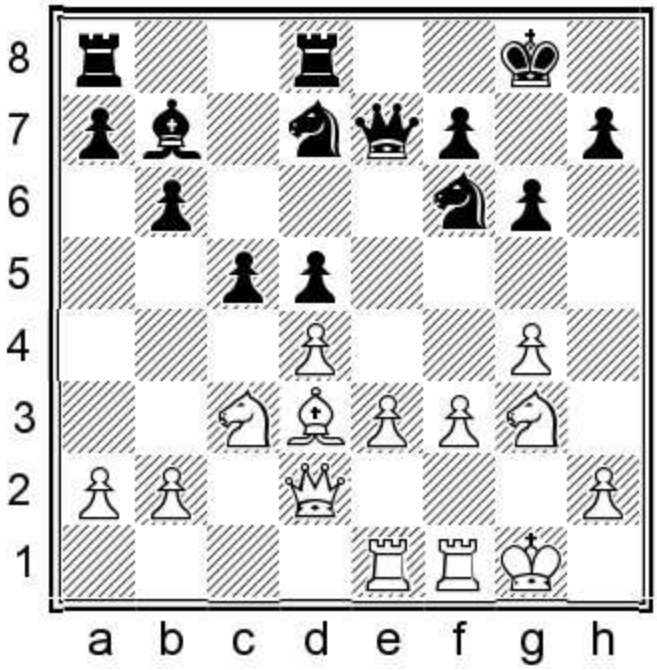
14.♘g3

14.♘f4 ♘f8 15.g5 ♘e8 16.h4 ♘c7 17.♕f2 was also promising for White in Fressinet – Bischoff, Germany 2012.

14...g6

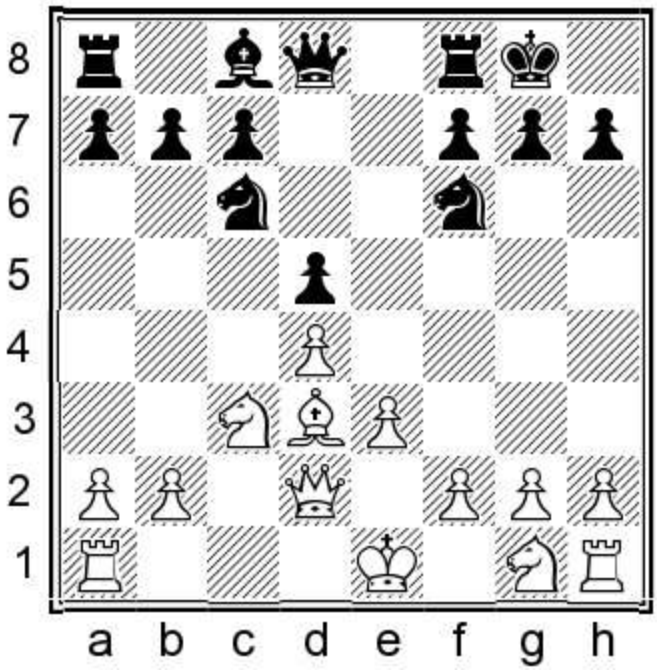
Now in Bogner – Bischoff, Germany 2012, White should have played energetically with:

chesstouring.com



15.g5!N 15...♘e8 16.f4↑

With good chances on the kingside.



9.♘ge2 ♘e7 10.♕c2!

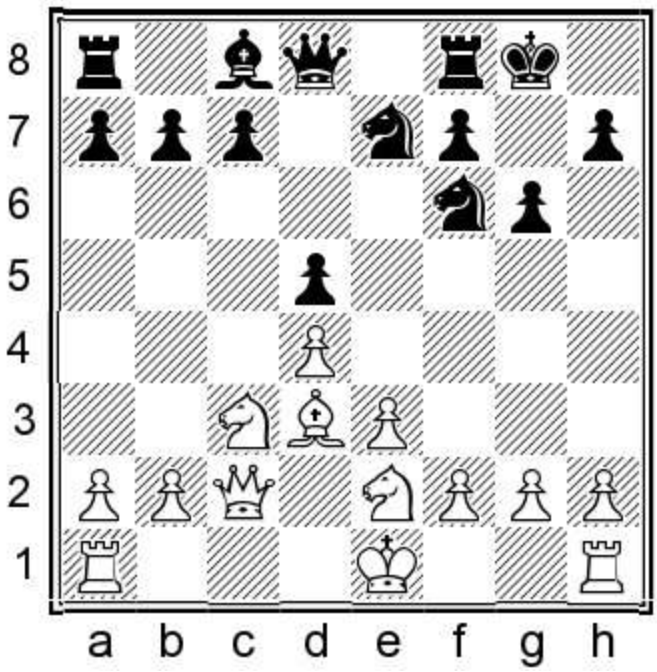
There is no reason to allow ...♗f5.

10...g6

Black opted for 10...b6 11.b4 c6 in an earlier game, Vaisser – Bricard, France 1993. White should have continued 12.0-0N 12...♗b7 13.♖ab1 with a pleasant edge.

This position reached in Wojtaszek – Vocaturo, Doha 2015. I suggest:

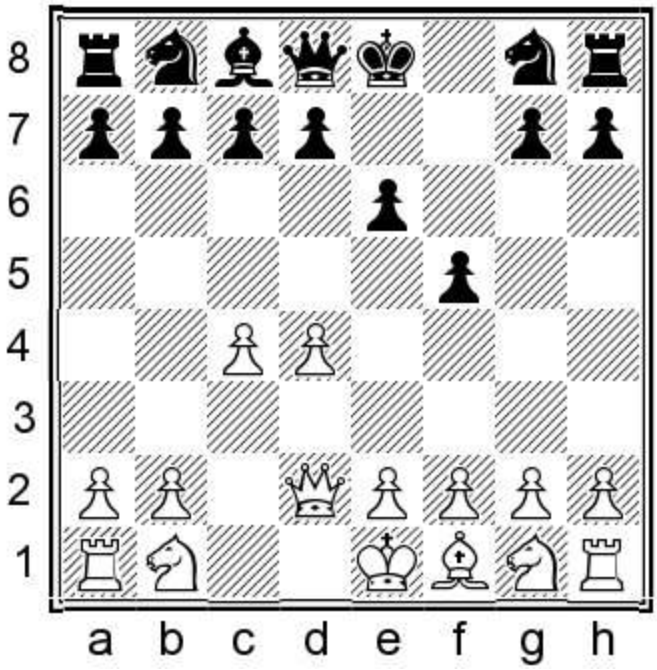
chesstouring.com



11.b4N 11...c6 12.0-0 ♗f5 13.f3±

Despite the simplifications, White has a promising version of the Carlsbad pawn structure.

C2) 4...f5



This time Black converts to a Dutch which resembles variation A of Chapter 3, except that we have traded bishops on d2 rather than meeting ...♗b4† with ♘d2, as I recommended there. Does that mean we have fallen victim to a move-order trick? Thankfully no. As I explained on page 60, the main drawback of 5.♗d2 in that line is the number of options it offers Black. Here he has already committed to the exchange on d2, making White's plan of development much simpler.

5.g3 ♘f6 6.♗g2 0-0 7.♘c3 d6 8.♘f3

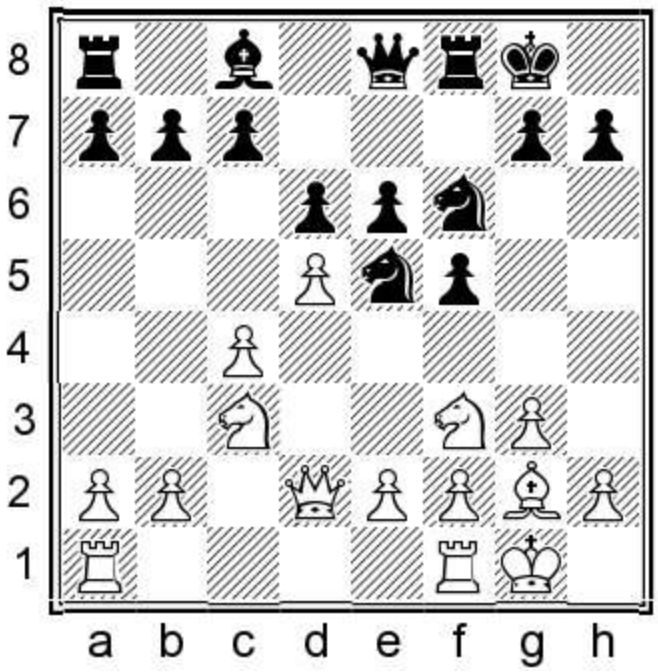
chesstouring.com

Black has tried numerous moves here but it seems to me that **C21)** 8...♕e8 is the most challenging of the rare options, while **C22)** 8...♘c6 is by far the most popular move.

Black's second choice in the database has been 8...♕e7, but after 9.0-0 we have transposed to variation A1 at the start of the chapter.

C21) 8...♕e8 9.0-0 e5

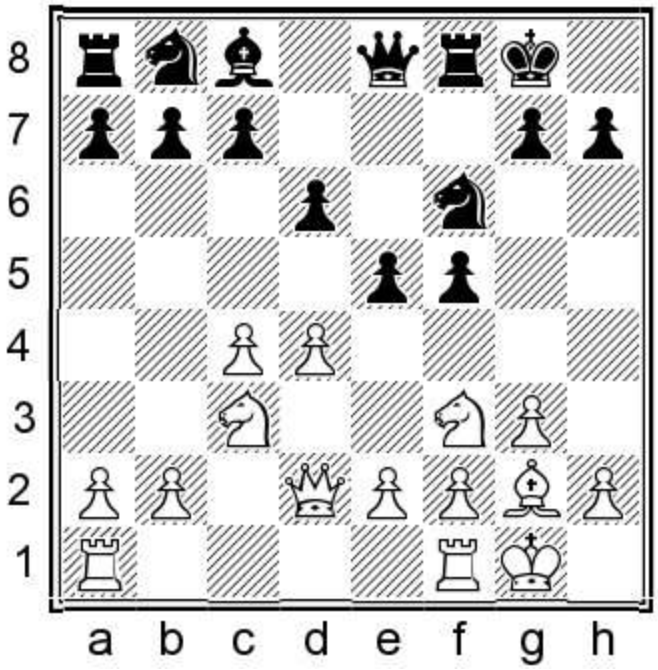
9...♘c6 has occurred in three games, including a couple of transpositions. For some reason White has never opted for the natural continuation: 10.d5!N 10...♘e5 (10...♘d8 11.dxe6 ♘xe6 12.♘d4± offers White a typical edge due to his favourable pawn structure) Now a strong idea is:



11.♘xe5 dxe5 12.♘b5! Intending d5-d6 with a clear advantage.

This position has been reached in a few games, including the GM encounter Peralta – Alonso Rosell, Barcelona 2017. I like the following idea for White:

chesstouring.com



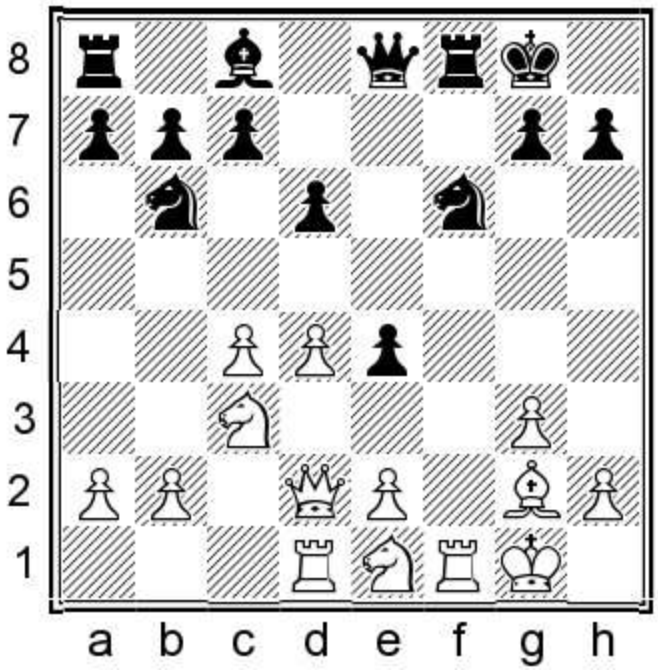
10.♖ad1!N 10...e4

Another important line is 10...c6 11.e4! fxe4 (11...♘xe4 12.♘xe4 fxe4 13.♘g5± does not change the evaluation) 12.♘g5 ♗f5 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.♘gxe4 and White is clearly better.

11.♘e1 ♘bd7

11...c6 prepares to strengthen Black's centre, but 12.d5! c5 13.f3 prevents his plan and once again gives White the advantage.

12.f3! ♘b6 13.fxe4 fxe4



14.c5!

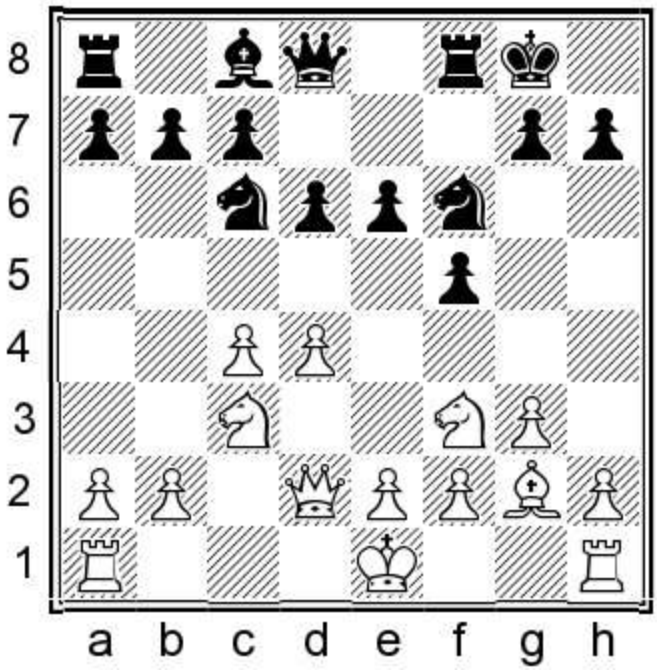
chesstouring.com

White should continue to play energetically.

14...♘bd5 15.♘xd5 ♘xd5 16.♖xf8† ♔xf8 17.♕a5↑

With a useful initiative.

C22) 8...♘c6



9.♖d1!

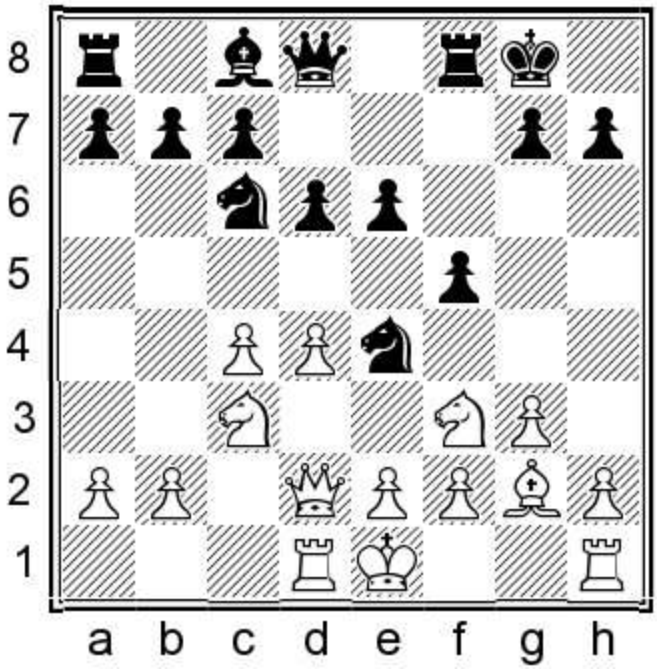
The thematic 9.d5 runs into 9...♘e5 with unclear play, while 9.0-0 e5 also offers Black decent prospects.

9...♕e7

I checked two other options:

9...♘e4 occurred in Wharam – Pavlov, corr. 2011.

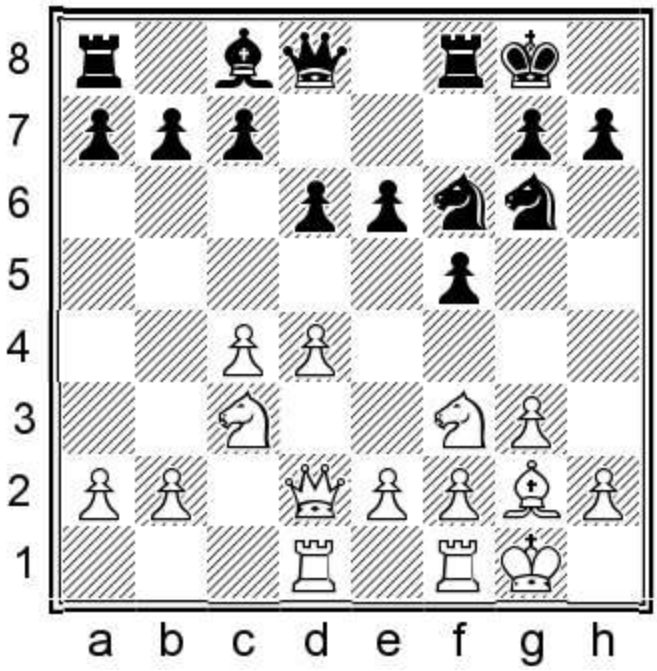
chesstouring.com



I believe White should react with 10.♘xe4N 10...fxe4 11.♘g5 d5 12.0-0 followed by f2-f3, when his lead in development means he is well placed for the subsequent opening of the position.

9...♘e7 10.0-0 ♘g6

I was surprised to see that this knight manoeuvre has been quite popular. Of course White is better after:

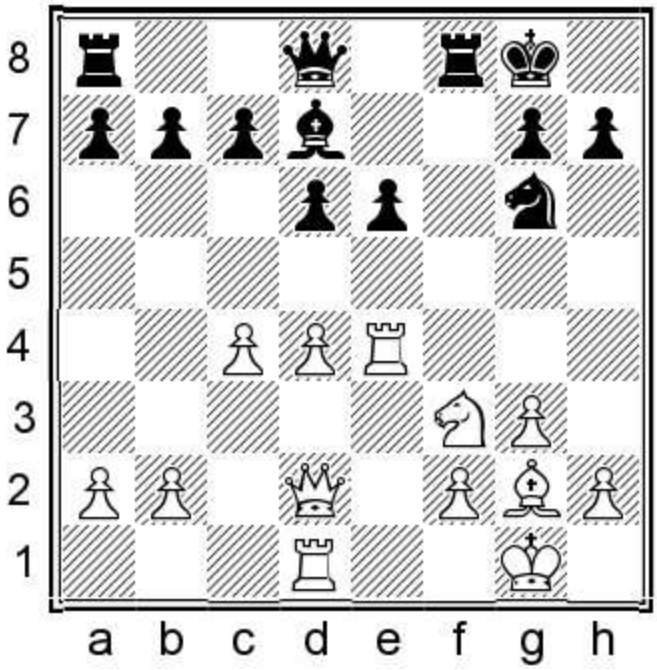


11.♖fe1 ♗d7

11...♕e7 was Black's latest attempt in this line, but it failed miserably after 12.e4 f4 13.e5! dxe5 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.dxe5 ♘g4 16.♖e4 and White obtained a winning position in Barp – Naumkin, Forni di Sopra 2017.

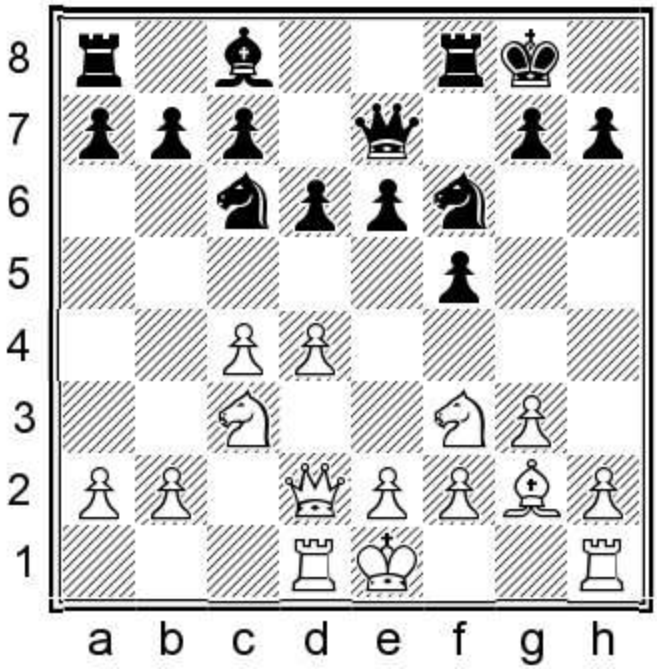
12.e4 fxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♖xe4

chesstouring.com



White has an obvious advantage and Black went down rather quickly in the following model game: 14...♕f6 15.♖de1 ♖ae8 16.♘g5! e5 17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.f4 ♘f7? 19.♖xe8 ♗xe8 20.♘e6+–

Pelletier – Gerber, Switzerland 1997.



10.0-0!?

This seems more promising than 10.d5, when 10...♘e5 (or even 10...♘d8 11.dxe6 ♘xe6) is not so bad for Black.

10...e5 11.♘d5!

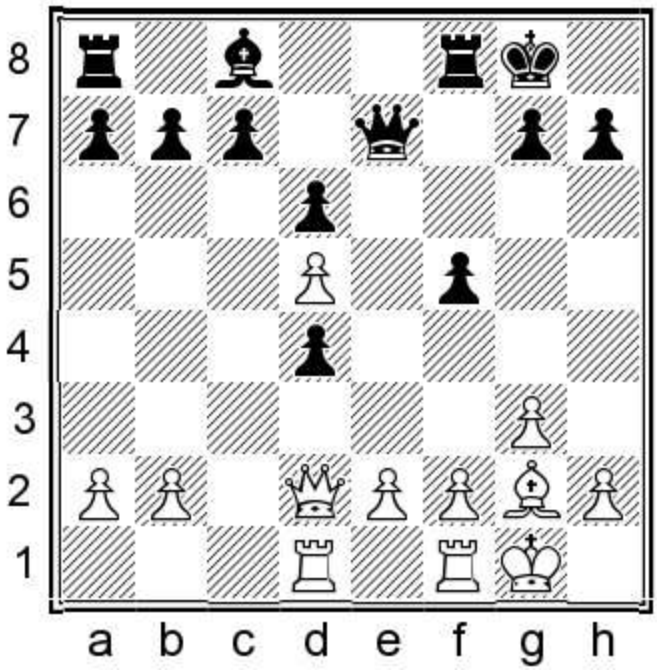
This temporary pawn sacrifice forces Black to accept an inferior pawn structure.

chesstouring.com

11...♘xd5

Unfortunately for Black, the attempt to avoid changing the structure with 11...♕d8 runs into 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♘h4! with a strong initiative for White.

12.cxd5 ♘xd4 13.♘xd4 exd4



14.♖fe1 f4 15.♕xd4 ♗g4 16.♖c1

With the backward c-pawn as a long-term target, White was clearly better in Collett – Svenn, Sweden 1996.

Conclusion

1.d4 e6 2.c4 ♗b4† is a flexible system, and after 3.♗d2 we must be ready for all sorts. First we considered 3...♕e7 4.g3, when Black can either transpose to a Bogo-Indian or deviate with a move like 4...f5, after which we can look forward to a pleasant version of a Classical or Stonewall Dutch.

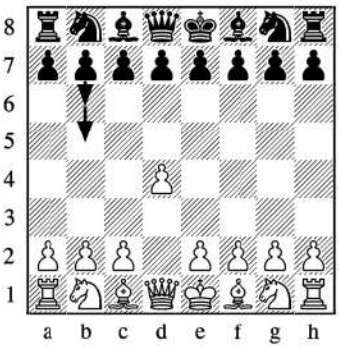
Next we considered 3...a5 4.g3, when there are two branches. 4...d6 is playable but the simple plan of 5.♗g2 followed by e2-e3 and ♘e2 offers White at least a slight advantage, and possibly more if Black 'forgets' to swap bishops on d2. We then looked at the more challenging 4...d5 5.♘f3 dxc4, which leads to a Catalan-style struggle where White has good prospects, although the positions present challenges to both players.

Finally we checked a number of lines after 3...♗xd2† 4.♕xd2. If 4...♘f6 5.♘c3 White intends e2-e4, unless Black plays 5...d5 when we get a pleasant version of a QGD. Finally, 4...f5 is another route to a Dutch without the dark-squared bishops, but the usual plan of 5.g3 works well, especially when White follows up with a timely ♖d1, which was a key move in different scenarios in variations C21 and C22.

chessfouring.com



Minor Lines



b-Pawn Systems

Variation Index

1.d4

A) 1...c6 2.c4 b5 539

B) 1...b5 2.e4 541

B1) 2...a6 3.♘f3 ♗b7 4.♗d3 e6 5.0-0 541

B11) 5...♘f6 543

B12) 5...c5 544

B2) 2...♗b7 3.♗d3 ♘f6 4.♘d2 547

B21) 4...c5 547

B22) 4...e6 550

C) 1...b6 2.e4 ♗b7 3.♗d3 553

C1) 3...g6 555

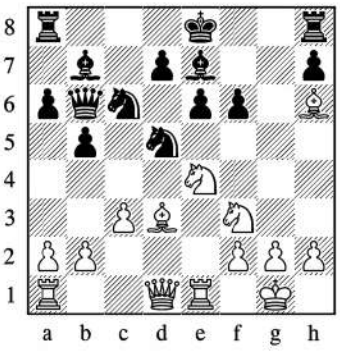
C2) 3...♘f6 4.♘d2 e6 5.♘e2!? 557

C21) 5...d5 558

C22) 5...c5 559

chesstouring.com

B12) note to 10...f5



15.c4!N

C21) note to 10...cxd4



12.♕d2!N

C22) note to 7...♗e7



12.d5!N

1.d4

In this chapter we will deal with an assortment of lines involving the early mobilization of Black's b-pawn, usually followed by ...♗b7. The three main options are **A)** 1...c6, **B)** 1...b5 and **C)** 1...b6.

1...a6 2.e4 b5 will be analysed under variation B1.

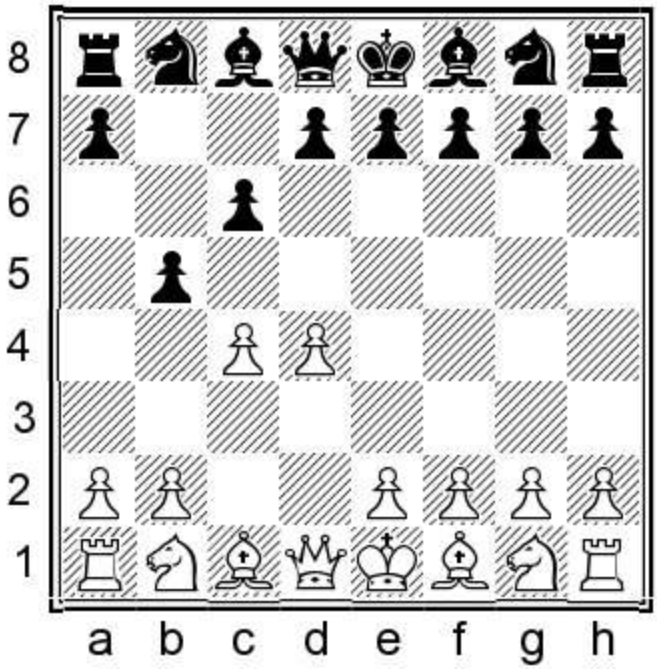
A) 1...c6

This may look like an invitation into a Caro-Kann after 2.e4 or a Slav after 2.c4 d5, but Black can also try:

2.c4 b5

Australian Grandmaster Ian Rogers wrote an article about this rare move in *SOS* 5. He calls it the Malinoise Defence, named after the city of Malines in Belgium where the opening was first played by its inventor, Belgian IM Michel Jadoul. I do not rate Black's concept particularly highly, but it is worth knowing a few details of how to meet it.

chesstouring.com

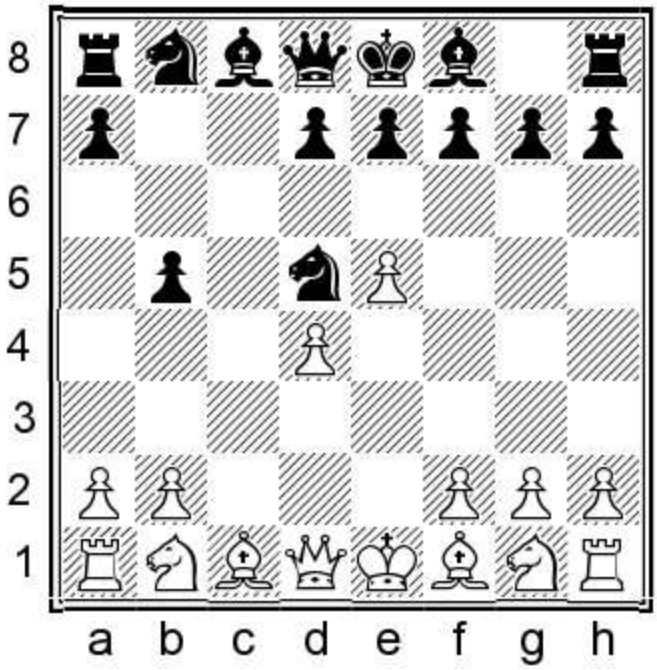


3.cxb5

3.c5 is the other challenging reply but I am happy to stick with my recommendation from *GM 2*.

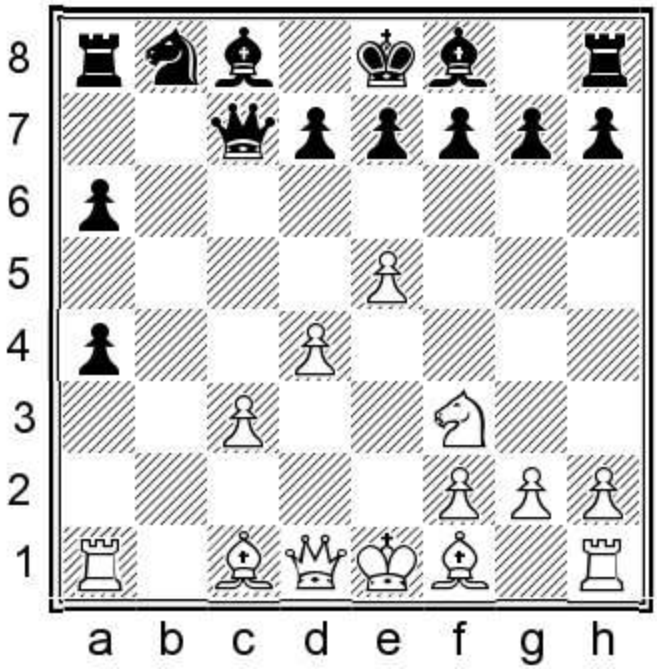
3...cxb5 4.e4 ♗b7

4...♘f6 is well met by: 5.e5 (5.♗d3 is also fine of course) 5...♘d5



6.♘c3! ♘xc3 7.bxc3 ♕c7 8.♘f3 a6 (8...♕xc3†? looks too dangerous in view of 9.♗d2 ♕c6 10.♖c1 ♕e4† 11.♗e3 when Black's lack of development should be the deciding factor) 9.a4! bxa4 Now in Teboul – Simmelink, Internet 2005, a simple and strong continuation would have been:

chesstouring.com

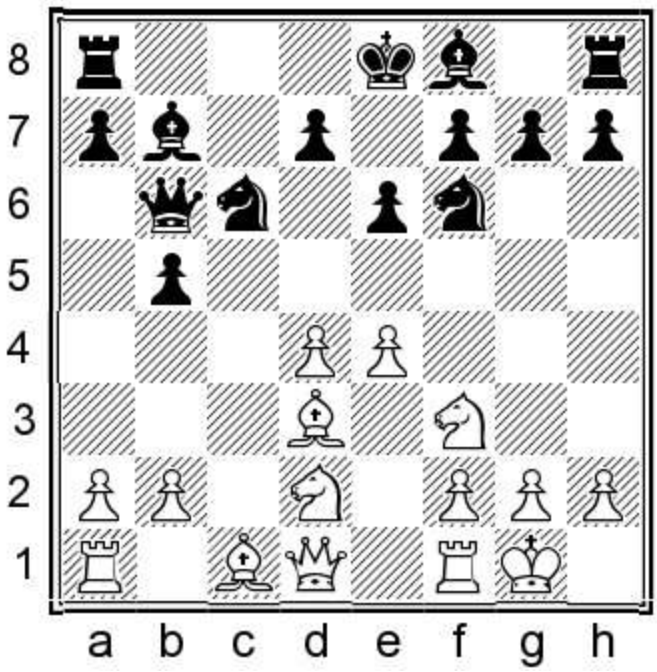


10.♖xa4N 10...e6 (once again 10...♕xc3†? is too dangerous due to 11.♗d2 ♕c7 12.♖c4 ♕d8 13.e6! dxe6 14.♘e5 with a crushing initiative) 11.♖c4! ♘c6 12.♘g5 White has a dangerous initiative.

5.♘d2 a6

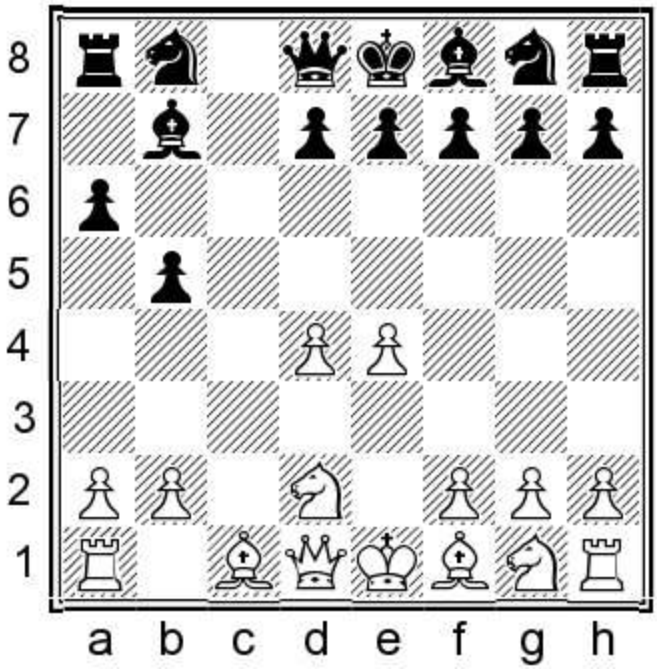
5...♘f6 6.♗d3 is covered on page 547 – see 5...cxd4 6.cxd4 in the notes to variation B21.

5...♕b6?! is inaccurate; it may look as though Black is defending the b-pawn while making a useful developing move, but he would be better off leaving his queen at home. 6.♘gf3 e6 7.♗d3 ♘f6 (7...♘c6 was played in Molzahn – Schwab, St Veit 2002, when 8.d5!N 8...♘b4 9.♗b1 would have been strong; for instance, 9...exd5 10.0-0 ♗e7 11.a3 ♘a6 12.e5 ♘c5 13.♘d4 with powerful compensation for the pawn) 8.0-0 ♘c6



chesstouring.com

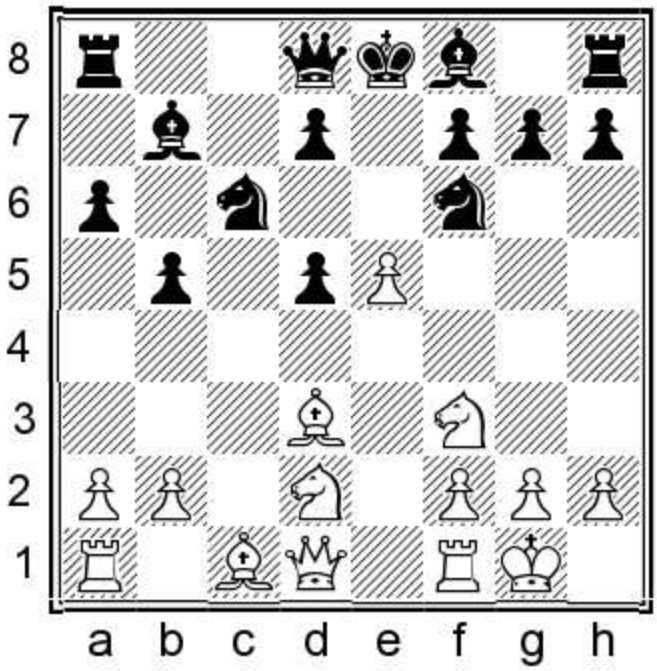
9.d5! ♘b4 10.♗b1 exd5 11.e5 ♘e4 White has many possibilities to develop his initiative, but the game continuation looks convincing enough: 12.♘b3 a5 13.♗e3 ♕c7 14.a3 ♘a6 15.♗d3 ♗c6 16.♖c1 a4 17.♘bd4 ♕b7 18.e6! White seized a decisive initiative in Van der Sterren – Rogers, Wijk aan Zee 1989.



6.♘gf3 ♘f6 7.♗d3 e6 8.0-0 ♘c6

8...♗e7 is another transposition: see the note to Black's 5th move in variation B21.

9.d5! exd5 10.e5



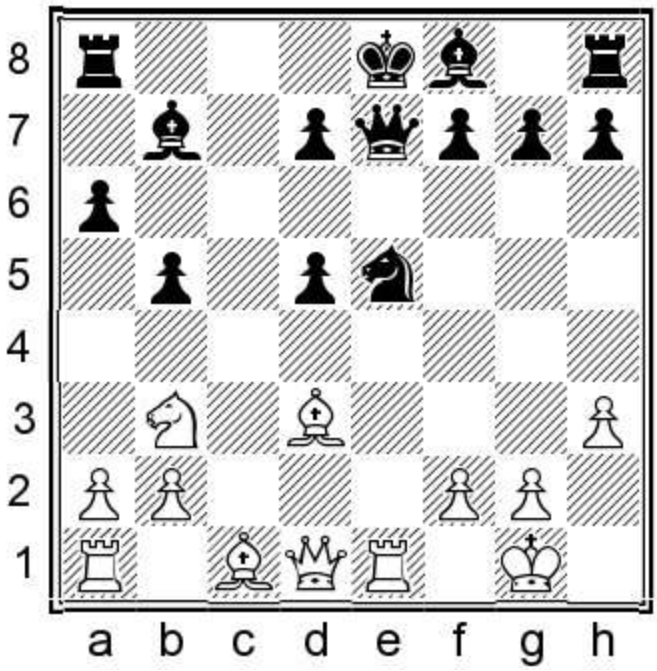
10...♘g4

After 10...♘h5 11.♘b3 the position of Black's knight is problematic.

chesstouring.com

11.h3 ♘gxe5 12.♘xe5 ♘xe5 13.♖e1 ♕e7 14.♘b3!

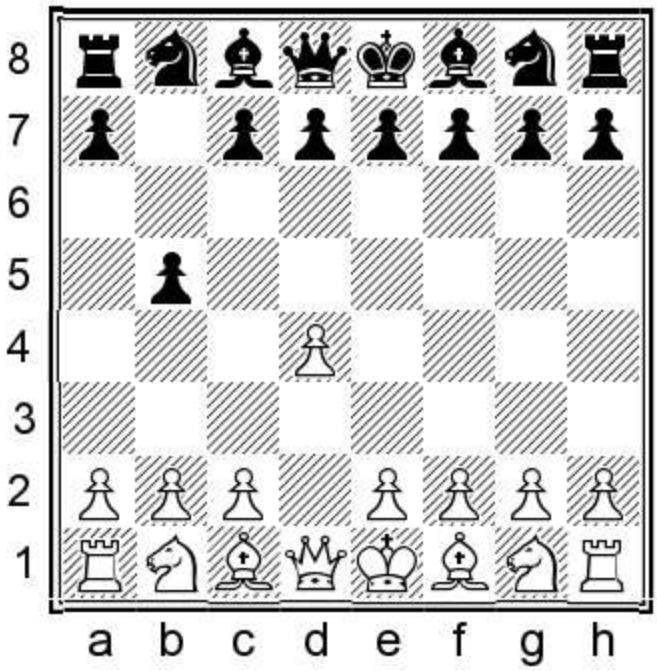
14.f4? would let Black off the hook after 14...♘xd3 15.♖xe7† ♗xe7 with unclear play.



14...g5 15.♘a5 ♗c8 16.f4 gxf4 17.♗xf4+–

Black soon resigned in Vrabec – Bristol, corr. 2005.

B) 1...b5



2.e4

We will analyse **B1)** 2...a6 and **B2)** 2...♗b7.

chesstouring.com

B1) 2...a6

This is the St. George Defence, a somewhat dubious opening which became famous after Tony Miles sensationally used it to defeat Anatoly Karpov in 1980 (the actual move order of that game was 1.e4 a6 2.d4 b5).

3.♘f3 ♗b7 4.♗d3

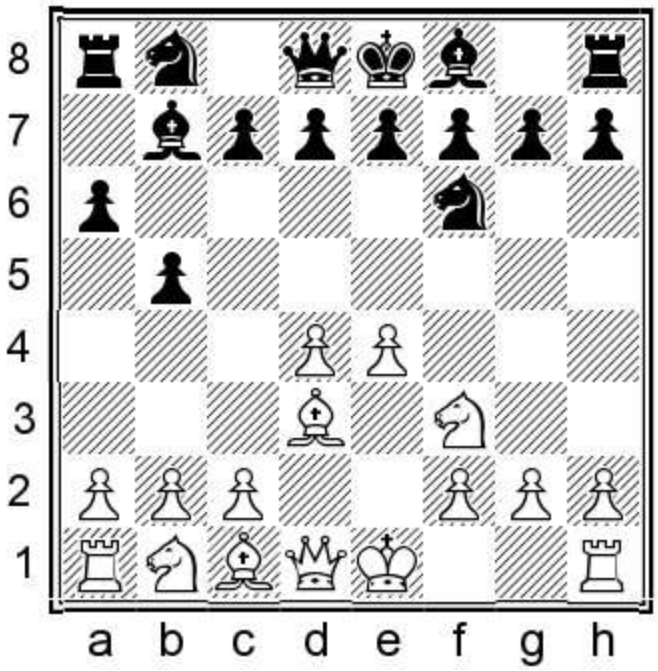
This is the most natural set-up for White.

4...e6

Black should play this move before developing any other pieces.

4...♘f6

I have known since my childhood that this move was riskier due to:



5.e5 ♘d5 6.♘g5!

Black already has to be careful.

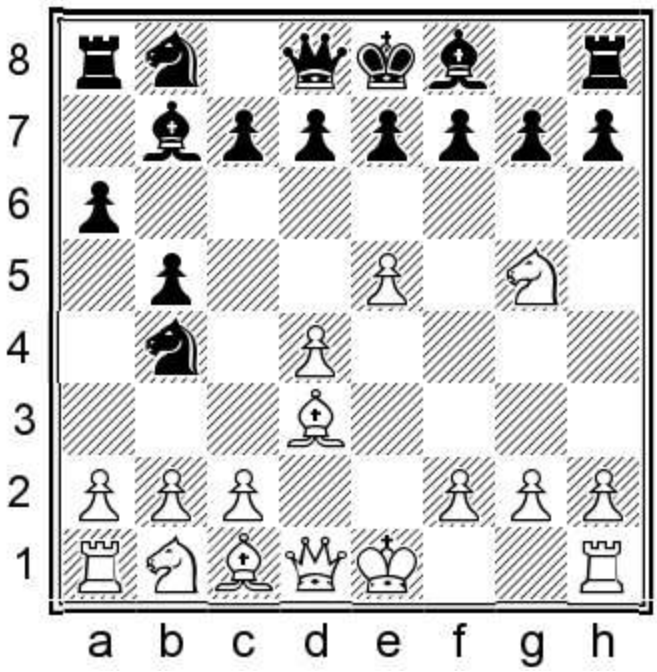
6...♘b4?

I used to think this was an interesting option for Black, but it can actually be refuted.

6...h6? loses to either 7.♕h5 or the flashier 7.♘xf7!?.

6...e6 is Black's best option, when 7.0-0 transposes to variation B11 below. (I recommended 7.♕f3!? in *GM 2* but now I find it less clear-cut.)

chesstouring.com



7.♗xh7!

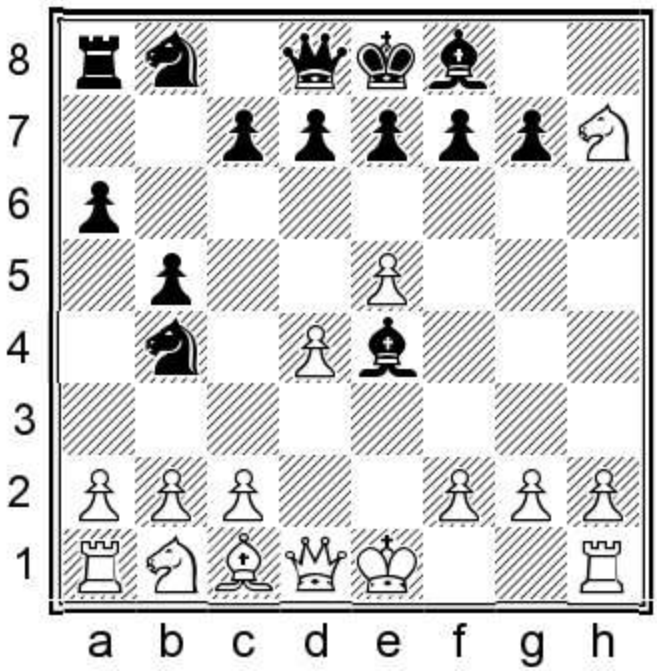
This works out perfectly, as long as White follows it up correctly.

7.♗e4 was my recommendation from *GM 2*, which 'only' leads to a pleasant positional advantage.

7...♖xh7 8.♘xh7 ♗e4N

This is obviously the critical line.

8...♗xg2? occurred in Schulz – Schmitt, Baden 1997, when 9.♖g1N would have been winning for White.



9.♘g5!

The key move, sacrificing the rook on a1 to get a winning attack.

Previously I only considered 9.♘xf8?, when 9...♘xc2† 10.♔f1 ♔xf8 leads to a messy position, as mentioned in *GM 2*.

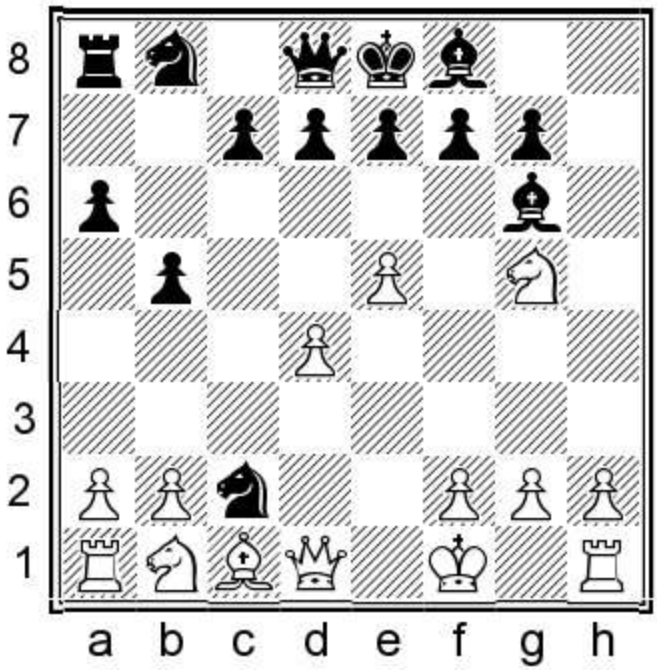
chesstouring.com

9...♘xc2†

9...♗xc2 leads to a lost position for Black after: 10.♕f3 ♗g6 11.♕xa8 (11.0-0+– is also good enough) 11...♘c2† 12.♔d1 ♘xa1 13.♘c3+–

10.♔f1 ♗g6

10...♗f5 loses even more quickly to 11.g4 ♗g6 12.f4+– when Black cannot stop f4-f5.

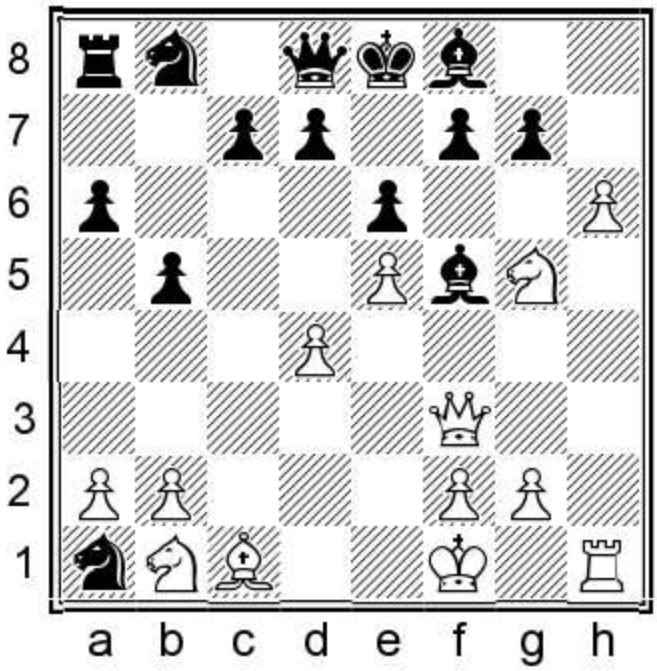


11.h4! ♘xa1 12.h5 ♗f5

12...♗xb1 13.♕f3 ♗xa2 14.d5 f6 15.♕f5 also wins for White.

13.♕f3 e6 14.h6!

This important tactical resource should seal White's victory.



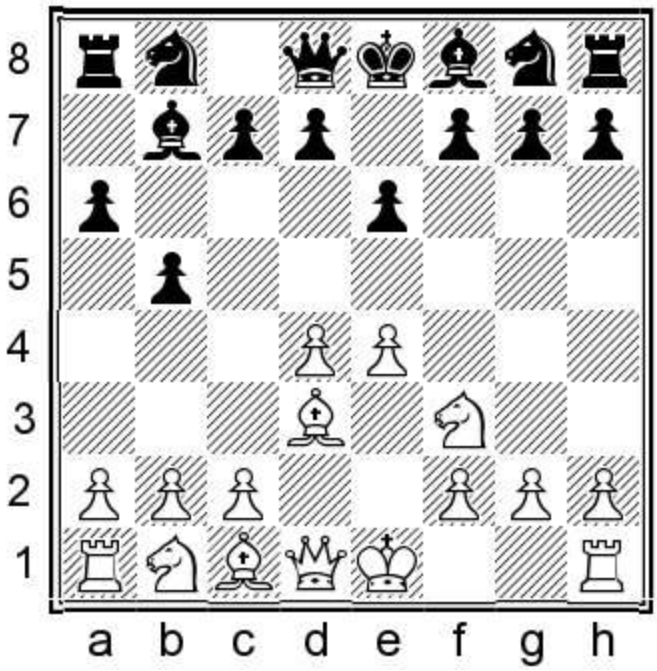
14...gxh6 15.♘xf7 ♔xf7

15...♕e7 16.♘xh6 also wins.

chesstouring.com

16.g4+–

White smashes through on the kingside.



5.0-0

Black has two main options: **B11)** 5...♘f6 and **B12)** 5...c5.

5...d6 6.♕e2 ♘d7

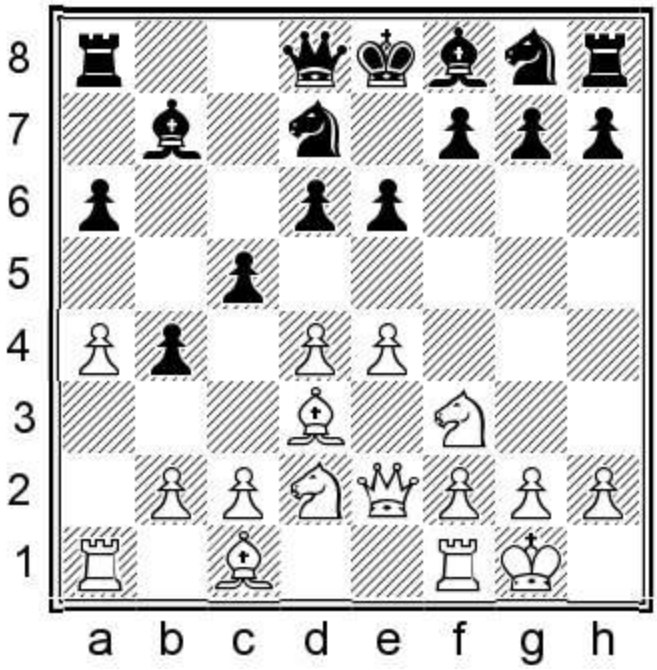
This passive set-up offers White comfortable play. I like the following plan:

7.a4 b4 8.♘bd2 c5

8...g6 was seen in Girvalakis – Ignatiadis, Heraklio 2009. I suggest: 9.♘c4N 9...a5 Otherwise the further knight jump to a5 would be unpleasant. 10.c3 bxc3 11.bxc3 ♘gf6 12.♖b1 With a solid advantage.

This position occurred in Carstensen – Zapolskis, Frydek Mistek 2006. The following continuation looks natural and strong:

chesstouring.com



9.d5!N 9...exd5

9...e5 looks safer but after 10.a5 ♗e7 11.♘c4 ♘gf6 12.c3 bxc3 13.bxc3 0-0 14.♗d2 White enjoys a pleasant edge, with easy play on the queenside.

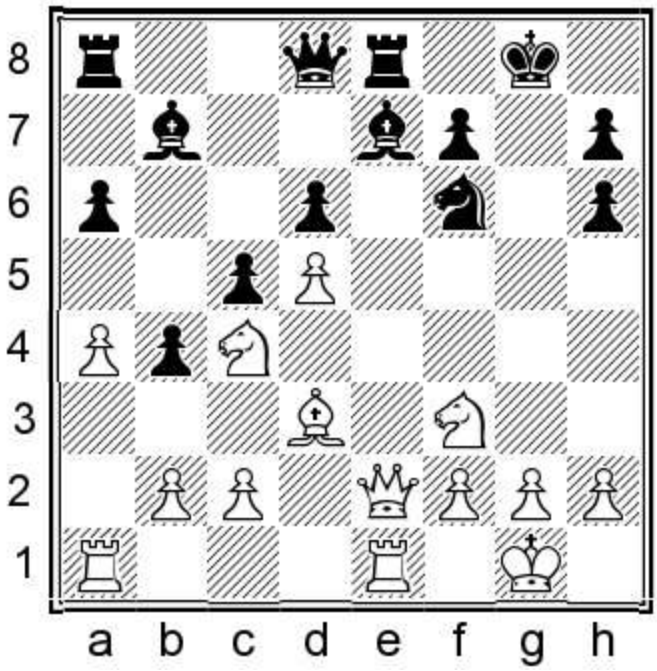
10.exd5† ♗e7 11.♘c4 ♘df6

Black had to do something about the threat of ♘xd6†.

12.♘e3 ♘h6

Another possible line is 12...♘xd5 13.♘xd5 ♗xd5 14.♗xa6 ♘f6 15.♗b5† ♘d7 16.♖d1 ♗xf3 17.♕xf3 0-0 18.♗f4 ♘f6 19.♗c4± and White enjoys an obvious positional edge.

13.♖e1 0-0 14.♘c4 ♖e8 15.♗xh6 gxh6

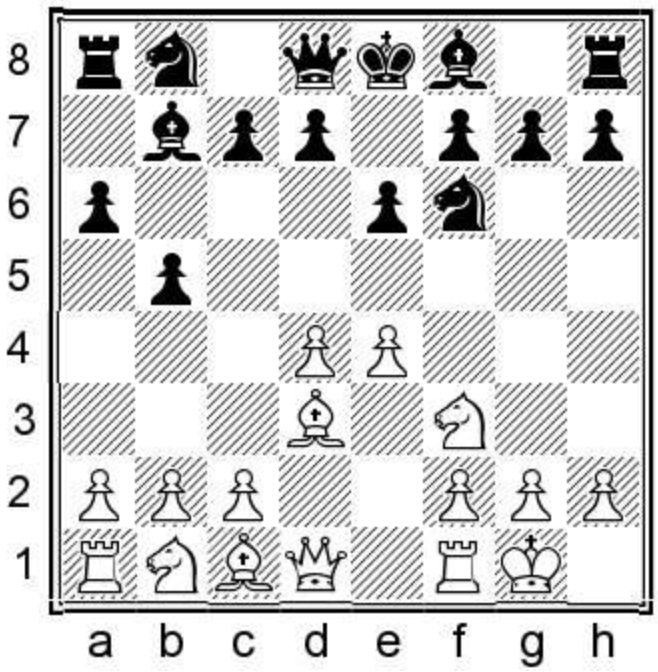


16.♕d2! ♗f8 17.♖xe8 ♘xe8 18.♖e1

White's advantage is obvious.

chesstouring.com

B11) 5...♘f6



6.e5!?

6.♖e1 was my previous recommendation and it is certainly favourable for White as well, but the text move puts Black under more immediate pressure. The resulting position can also arise via the 4...♘f6 move order examined earlier, so we would have had to study it anyway.

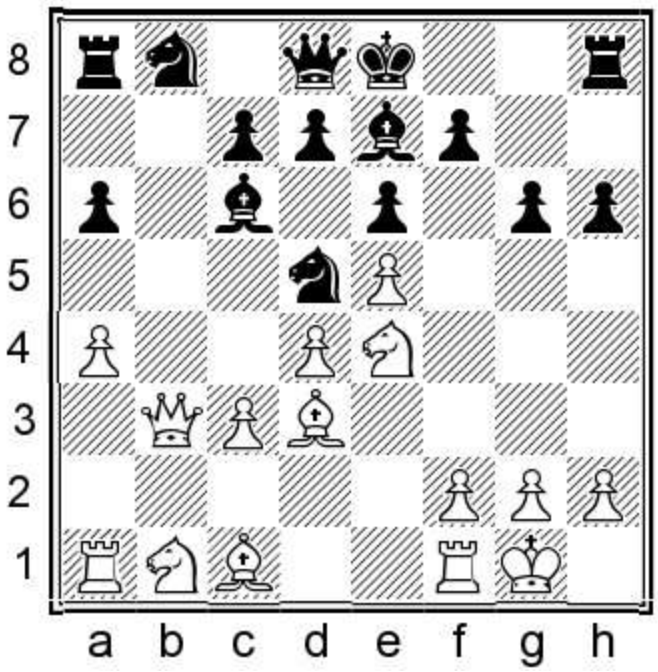
6...♘d5 7.♘g5!?

7.a4 b4 8.♘bd2 also looks attractive, but we will stick with the same plan that we saw against the 4...♘f6 sideline.

7...♗e7

In the event of 7...g6 I suggest 8.a4! b4 9.c4 bxc3 10.bxc3 h6 11.♘e4 ♗e7 12.♕b3 ♗c6 as occurred in Nabelek – Pilch, Kouty nad Desnou 2012. Here I like the following improvement:

chesstouring.com



13.♘a3!N 13...a5 Black has to develop the b8-knight somehow. 14.♘b5 White maintains a clear advantage.

8.♕h5 g6

Black's moves are all pretty much forced.

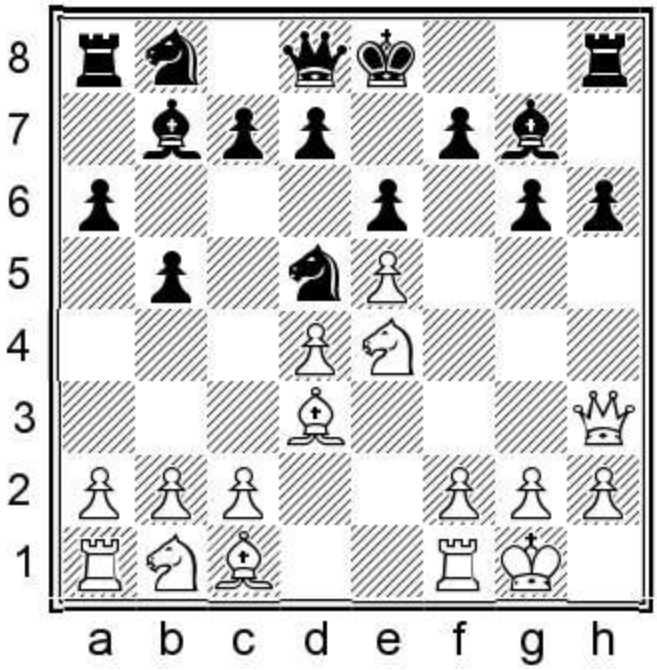
9.♕h6 ♗f8 10.♕h3 h6

Another game continued 10...♗e7 11.♘e4 ♘c6 12.c3 d6 13.f4 and White was obviously better in Cohen – Bristol, corr. 2006, since Black's king lacks a safe haven.
10...♘c6 should be met by 11.c3.

11.♘e4 ♗g7

This position was reached in Sustek – Joba, Liptovsky Mikulas 2018. Here I would suggest:

chesstouring.com



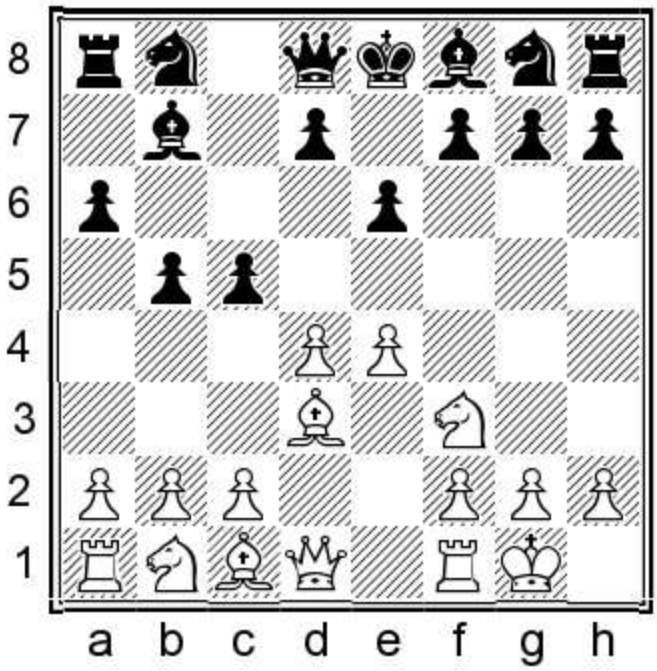
12.♘bc3!N

White continues developing and has nothing to fear from the loss of the bishop pair, which could occur after:

12...♘b4 13.♘c5 ♗c6 14.♗d2 ♘xd3 15.♘xd3

Black's position is cramped and it will be hard for him to find a safe spot for his king.

B12) 5...c5



This is Black's most popular continuation.

chesstouring.com

6.c3 ♘f6

Black has tried all kinds of moves, but White generally gets an excellent game with common-sense development.

I will just mention one clearly inferior alternative:

6...♘c6? 7.d5! ♘a5 8.♖e1

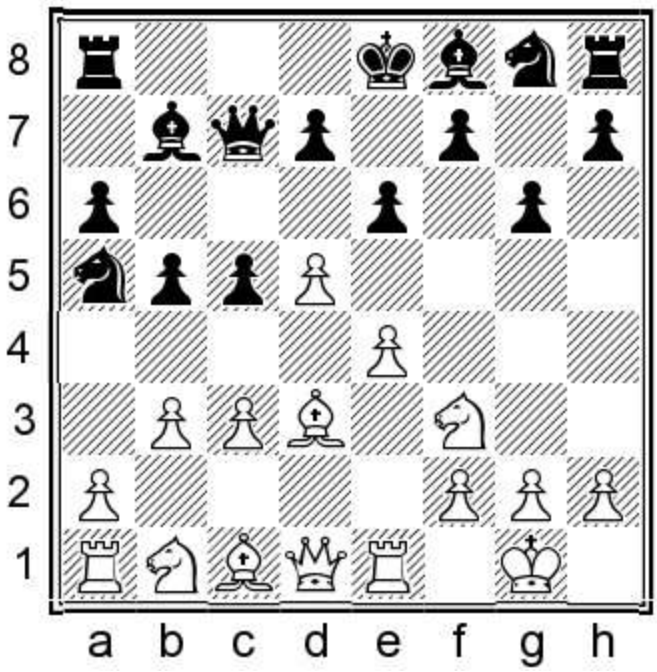
Black's knight is clearly misplaced on the rim.

8...♕c7

Another example continued 8...♘e7 9.b4! cxb4 10.cxb4 ♘c4 11.♗xc4 bxc4 12.♕d4 ♖c8 13.♘a3± and Black's opening experiment proved a total disaster in Hoffmann – Lopatina, Bad Wiessee 2008.

9.b3 g6

This position has been reached in two games but for some reason White rejected the following continuation:



10.c4!N 10...♗g7 11.e5

With a large advantage, thanks to the following point.

11...exd5 12.cxd5 ♗xd5 13.♗xg6

White is close to winning.

7.♖e1

7.e5 ♘d5 is playable too, but the aggressive ♘g5 plan would be less effective now that ...c5 and c2-c3 have been played. Therefore I prefer to defend the e4-pawn in a more flexible way.

7...♗e7

This has been by far the most common choice.

Once again a lot of moves have been tried, but I will just mention one option which significantly changes

chessbooking.com

the character of the position:

7...d5 8.e5

Reaching a pawn structure which is characteristic of the French Defence, but in a favourable situation for White.

8...♘fd7

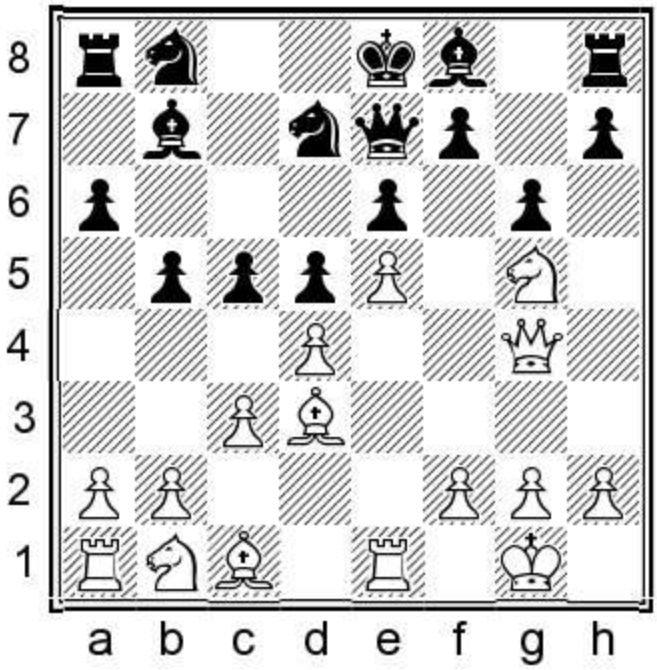
8...♘e4 9.♘bd2 ♘xd2 10.♗xd2 is also pleasant for White. A good example continued: 10...♘c6 11.dxc5! ♗xc5 12.♘g5! We have already seen a couple of examples of this thematic knight jump, and it works well here too. 12...♕c7 13.♕h5 g6 14.♕h3 0-0-0 Unfortunately for Black, long castling does not promise safety to his king. 15.b4 ♗b6 16.♘f3 d4 This occurred in Delchev – Chetverik, Cannes 2005, and now 17.c4!N 17...bxc4 18.♗xc4± would have left Black's king in serious danger.

9.♘g5! g6

9...cxd4?? loses at once to 10.♘xe6!, as seen in a few games.

10.♕g4 ♕e7

White would be positionally better after any normal move, but he can increase his advantage by tactical means.



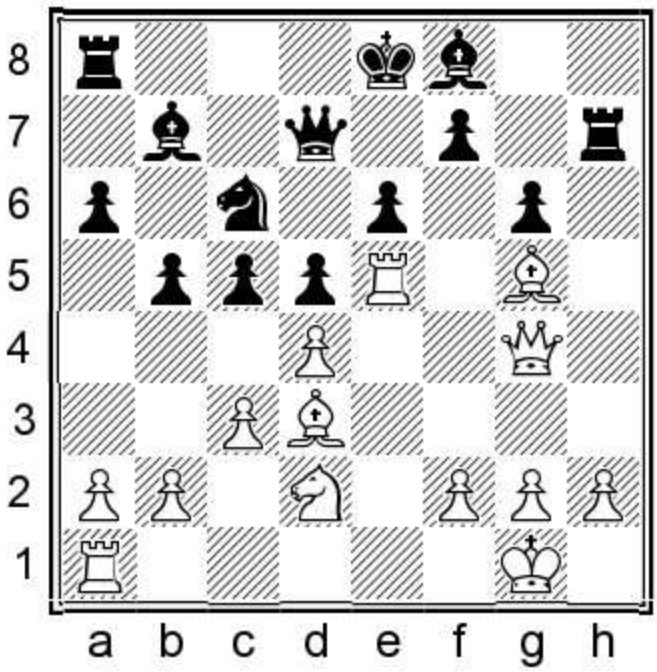
11.♘xh7! ♖xh7

11...cxd4? loses by force: 12.♗g5 ♕c5 occurred in Niebergall – Jovanovic, Munich 2006, and now 13.♕xe6†!N 13...♗e7 14.♗xg6!+– would have decided the game.

12.♗g5 ♘xe5 13.♖xe5 ♕d7 14.♘d2 ♘c6

All this happened in Iskusnyh – Khismatullin, Khanty-Mansiysk 2015. Here White should have chosen:

chesstouring.com

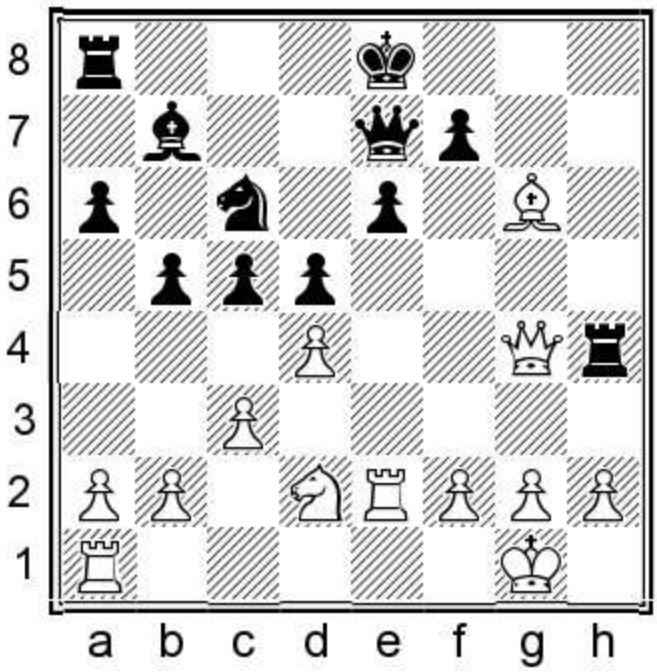


15.♖e2N 15...♗e7 16.♗xe7 ♕xe7

After 16...♘xe7 17.dxc5 White enjoys an extra pawn and a large advantage.

17.♗xg6! ♖h4

This is Black's only way to stay in the game.



18.♕xe6!

18.♕g3 also favours White but the text move is more forcing.

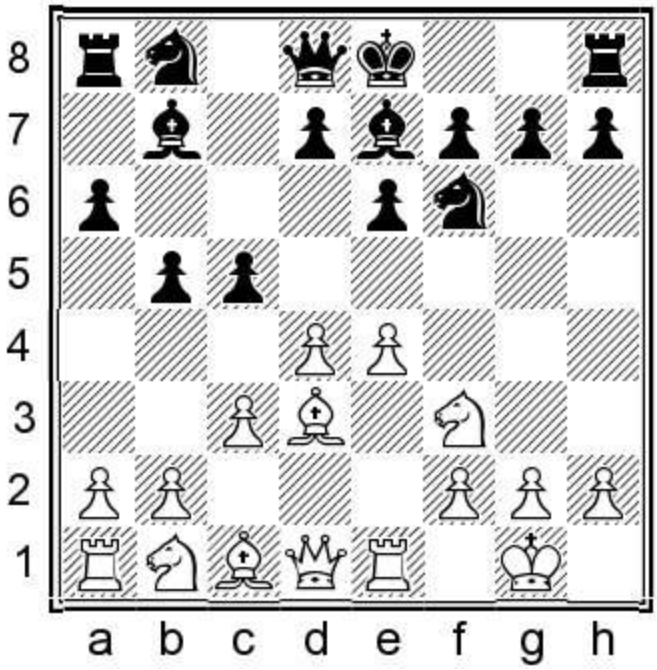
18...♕xe6 19.♖xe6† ♔d7

19...♘e7? 20.♖ae1+– and 19...♔f8? 20.♖f6+– are both hopeless for Black.

20.♗xf7 ♖f4 21.♘b3! ♖xf7 22.♘xc5† ♔c7 23.♖ae1±

With four pawns for a piece, plus active pieces and three connected passed pawns, White has excellent winning chances.

chesstouring.com



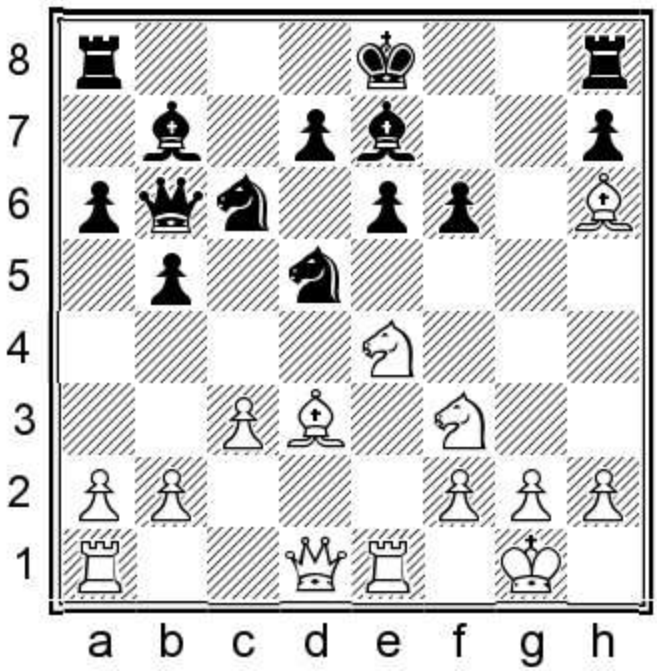
8.e5 ♘d5 9.dxc5!

Forcing Black to lose a tempo by moving his bishop for a second time.

9...♗xc5 10.♘bd2 f5

This seems like the best defensive try.

10...♘c6 11.♘e4 ♗e7 12.♗g5 leads to bigger problems for Black after: 12...f6 (12...0-0 13.♗xe7 ♘cxe7 14.♘d6+– occurred in two games, with White poised for a winning Greek gift on h7 after Black defends the b7-bishop) 13.exf6 gxf6 14.♗h6 ♕b6 Now in Resika – Galaras, Aghios Kirykos 2001, White kept a big advantage after 15.a4, but he missed something even stronger:

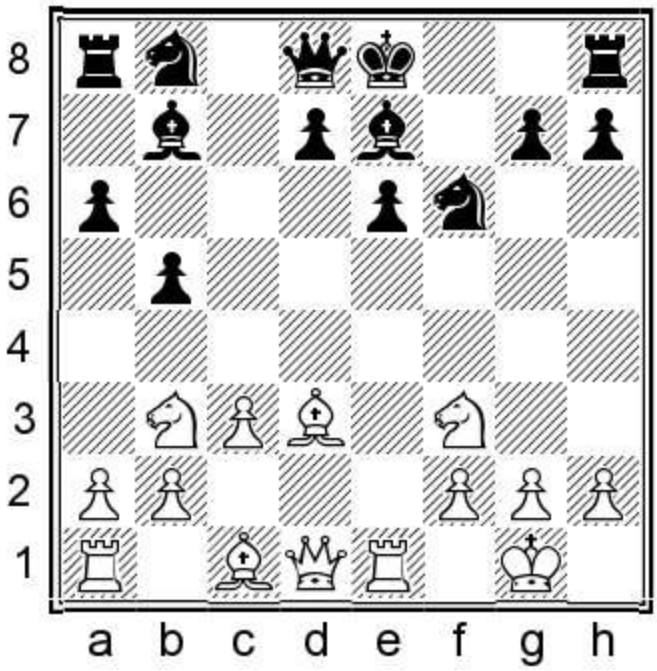


15.c4!N With a crushing initiative, for instance: 15...♘db4 16.♗f1 bxc4 17.♗g7 ♖g8 18.♗xf6+–

chesstouring.com

11.exf6 ♘xf6 12.♘b3 ♗e7

This position was reached in Sadvakasov – Tatai, Saint Vincent 1999. I found a useful improvement:



13.♗g5!N 13...0-0

13...♘c6 14.♕c2! leads to serious problems for Black.

14.♘e5 ♕c7

One of the main points of my idea is that Black cannot play 14...♘c6? in view of 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 16.♘xd7!+– and the knight is untouchable.

15.♕c2

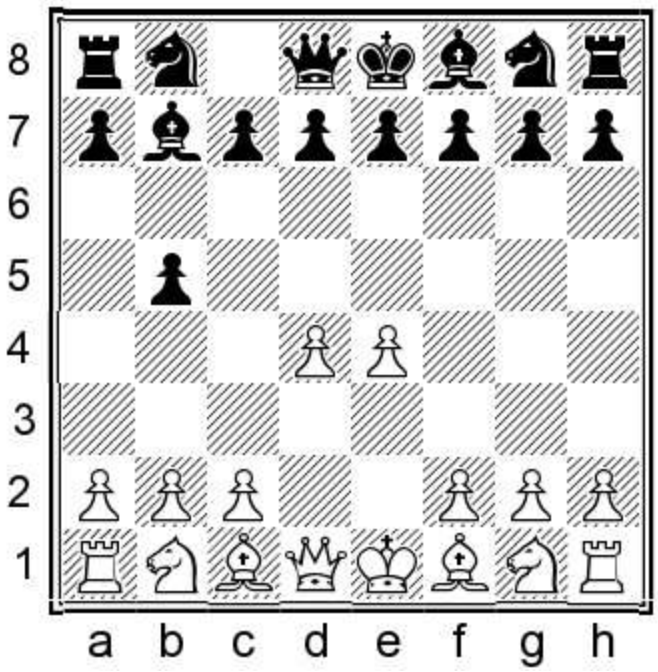
Black faces serious problems, as there is no comfortable way to defend the h7-pawn. His best continuation seems to be:

15...h6 16.♘g6 ♖e8 17.♘xe7† ♖xe7 18.♗h4±

White has a substantial advantage due to his bishop pair and more active pieces.

B2) 2...♗b7

chesstouring.com



This is known as the Polish Defence. It leads to similar positions as the St. George, but Black is slightly helped by the fact that he does not have to play ...a6 so soon. This saving of a tempo means that White's e4-pawn will be attacked more quickly, which means that White will not have time to defend it with 0-0 and ♖e1, which worked well in variation B12 above. On the other hand, White has the option of changing the structure by trading the b5- and e4-pawns, but I decided against doing so.

3.♗d3

3.♗xb5 ♗xe4 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.0-0 e6 6.c4 ♗e7 7.♘c3 ♗b7 is perfectly playable for Black.

3...♘f6

3...a6 4.♘f3 leads back to variation B1 above.

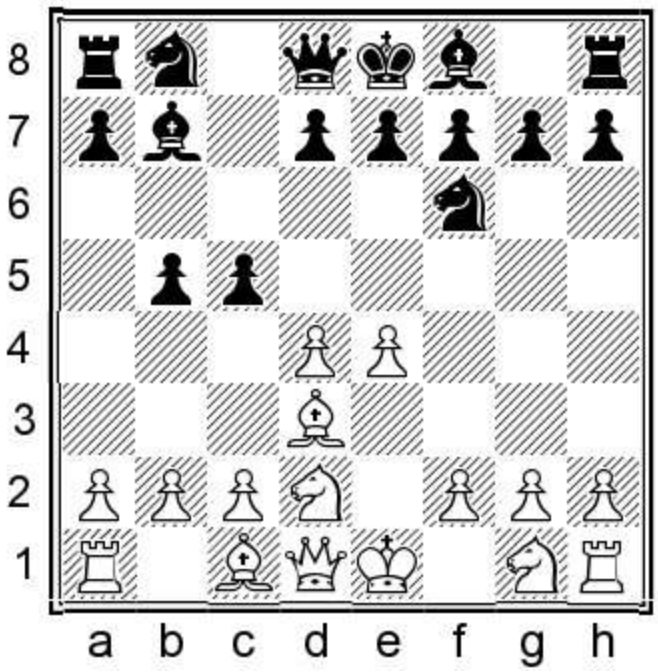
3...e6 4.♘f3 c5 (4...a6 is variation **B1)** 5.c3 a6 6.0-0 transposes to variation B12.

4.♘d2

We will analyse **B21)** 4...c5 followed by the more popular **B22)** 4...e6.

B21) 4...c5

chesstouring.com



This move order is not so common but it seems to me that it is the best moment for Black to play ...c5. The point is that in many variations White can respond with dxc5 with good effect, but in this particular position it does not work so well.

5.c3

5.dxc5 has scored well for White but I think this is mainly because several players failed to play the accurate 5...♘a6!, when Black regains the pawn in the best possible way.

5...e6

I also examined:

5...cxd4 6.cxd4

This position can also be reached via the Malinoise Defence, as noted on page 539.

6...e6 7.♘gf3 a6 8.0-0 ♗e7

White has many attractive options here, but I decided to stick with:

9.♕e2

Rogers reaches this position in his coverage of the Malinoise Defence, and admits that Black is struggling.

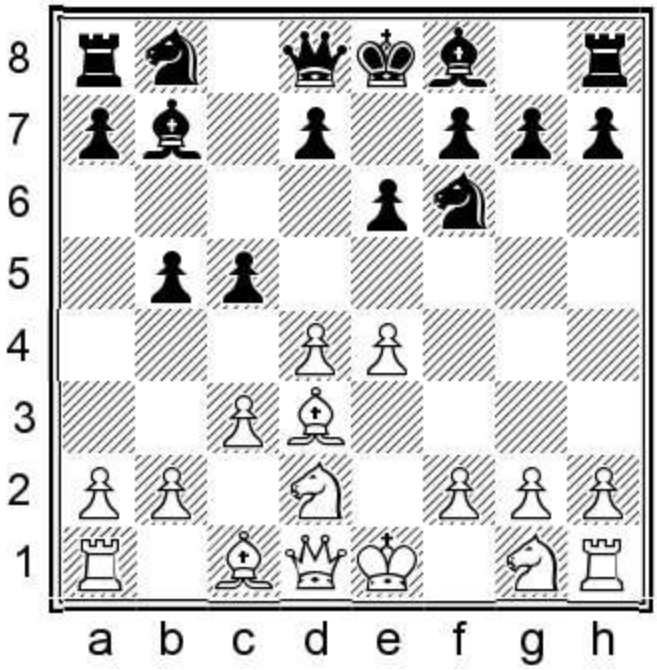
9...0-0

Rogers mentions 9...d5 10.e5 ♘fd7 as played in Lissang – Chetverik, Pardubice 2009, when White remains better after 11.b3N, as the Australian GM points out.

10.♖d1 d6 11.♘f1 ♘bd7 12.♘g3

In Meulner – Sindermann, Forchheim 2016, White had a pleasant space advantage, while Black had to worry about the possibility of e4-e5 at any moment.

chesstouring.com

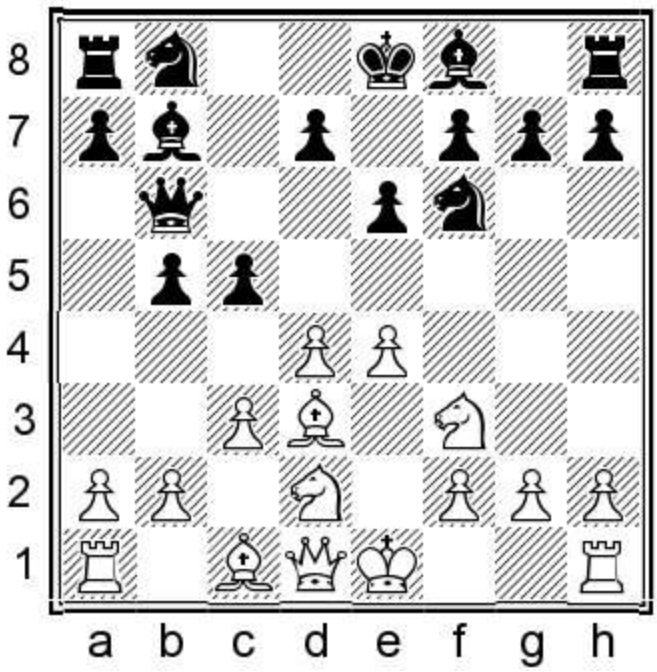


6.♘gf3 a6N

Despite being a novelty, I consider this the most natural move and it immediately transposes to quite a lot of games. Naturally I checked a few other options:

6...cxd4 7.cxd4 transposes to the note to Black's 5th move above.

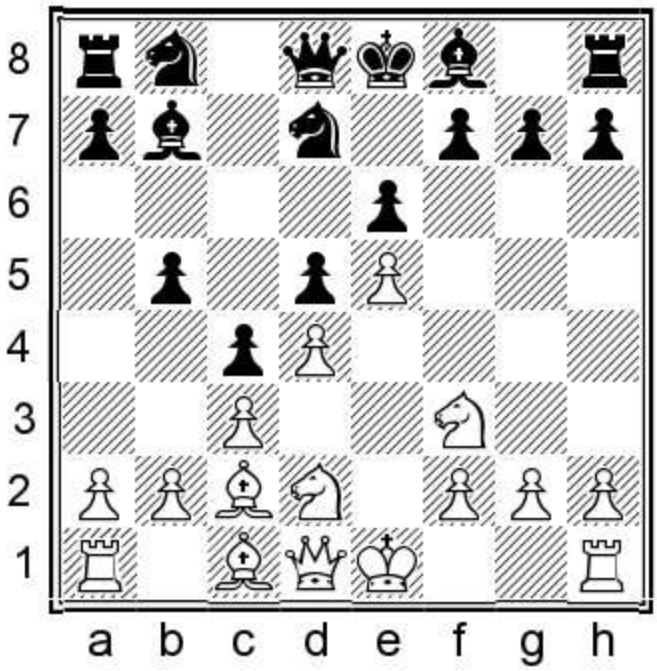
6...♕b6 appears active but the queen is actually not so well placed here, as she might be attacked by the white pieces and she is also a long way from defending the kingside. I found a strong new idea:



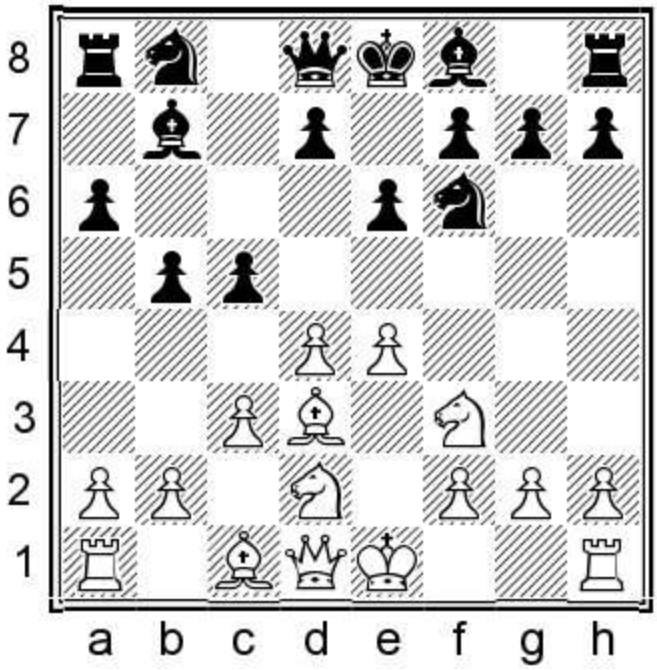
7.e5!N 7...♘d5 8.dxc5 ♗xc5 9.♘e4 ♗e7 10.0-0 ♘c6 11.♖e1 0-0 12.a4 a6 13.♗c2 White has great attacking prospects.

chesstouring.com

6...c4 7.♗c2 d5 8.e5 ♘fd7 leads to a typical favourable French structure for White. A good example continued:



9.♘f1! ♗e7 10.h4 f6? 11.exf6 ♗xf6 12.♘g5↑ White was much better in Paschall – Knox, Hastings 1995.



7.0-0

7.dxc5 ♗xc5 8.e5 ♘d5 9.♘e4 ♗e7 10.0-0 is another fairly logical approach, although it's not as powerful here as it was in the earlier note on 6...♕b6.

After the text move the position is almost the same as variation B12, but here White has played ♘bd2 instead of ♖e1. This version is not quite as favourable, but his chances are still undoubtedly superior.

chesstouring.com

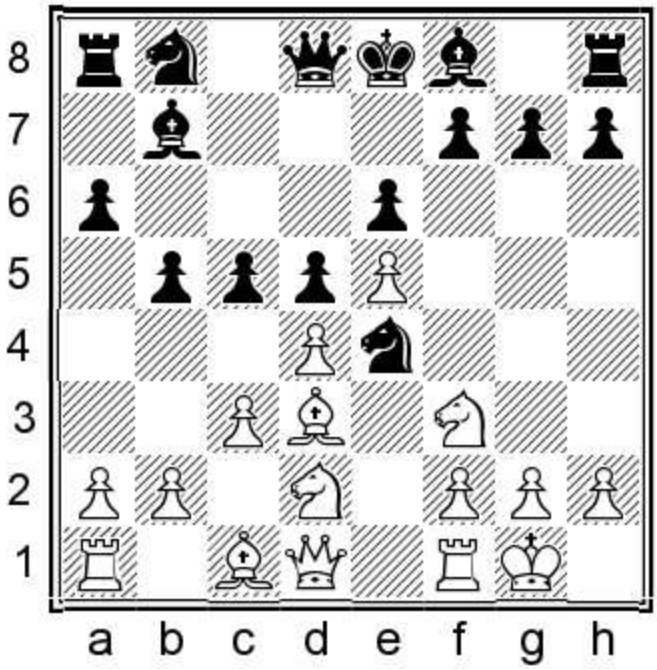
7...♘c6

This is Black's usual choice. It certainly seems better than the second-most-popular 7...♗e7?!, when 8.dxc5 forces Black to lose a tempo.

A different conceptual approach is:

7...d5 8.e5 ♘e4

After 8...♘fd7 I like the idea of opening the centre with the following new idea: 9.dxc5!?N (9.♖e1 is the usual move, leading to a thematic French structure which also favours White) 9...♘xc5 10.♗c2 ♘c6 11.♘b3 ♕c7 12.♖e1 ♘xb3 13.axb3 White has good chances to build an attack behind the e5-pawn.



9.♕e2 ♘xd2 10.♗xd2

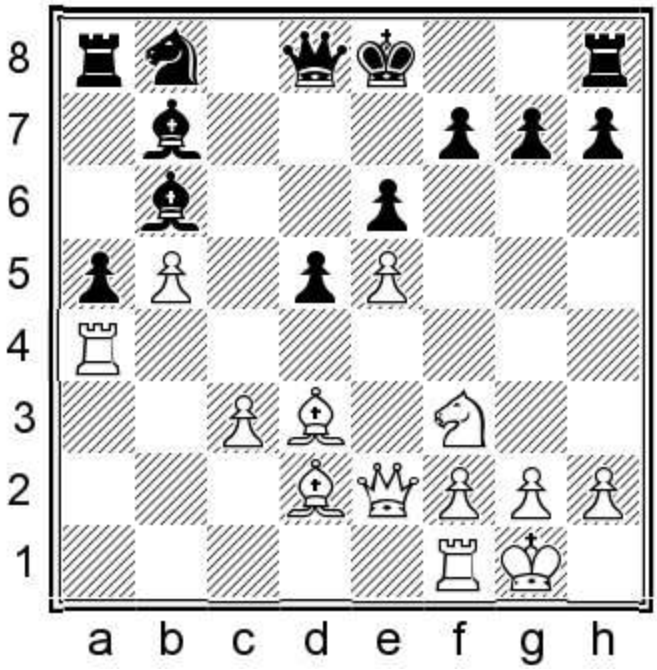
White has much better chances, as shown by the following examples.

10...♘c6

10...♗e7 11.dxc5! ♗xc5 happened in Rojas Barrero – Culma, Ibague 2013, when White overlooked the strongest continuation: 12.a4!N 12...bxa4 13.♖xa4↑ The rook will swing to the kingside, leading to a powerful initiative.

11.dxc5 ♗xc5 12.b4 ♗b6 13.a4 bxa4 14.♖xa4 a5 15.b5 ♘b8

chesstouring.com



16.♖g4!

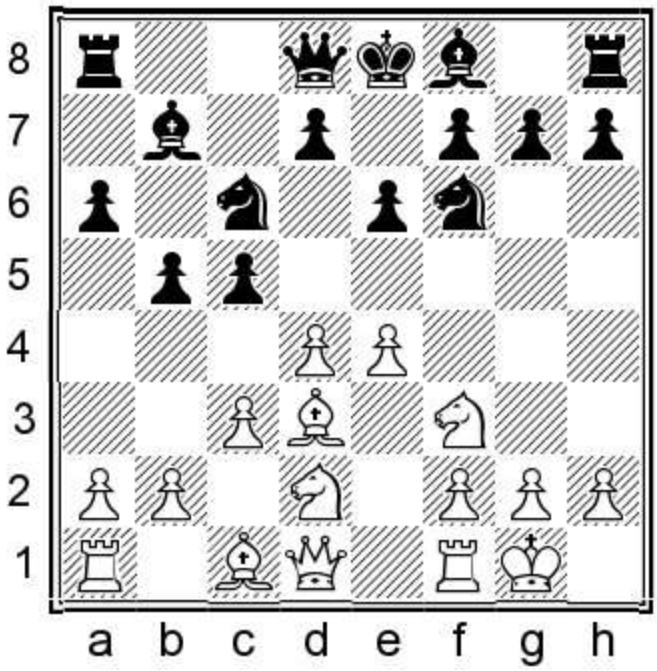
Here too, swinging the rook along the fourth rank clearly enhances White's attacking prospects.

16...g6

We have been following Herold – J. Martin, France 1990. Here I would suggest:

17.♗h6! ♘d7 18.♘g5

Black's position is under enormous pressure.



8.dxc5

This seems like the ideal time to open the position.

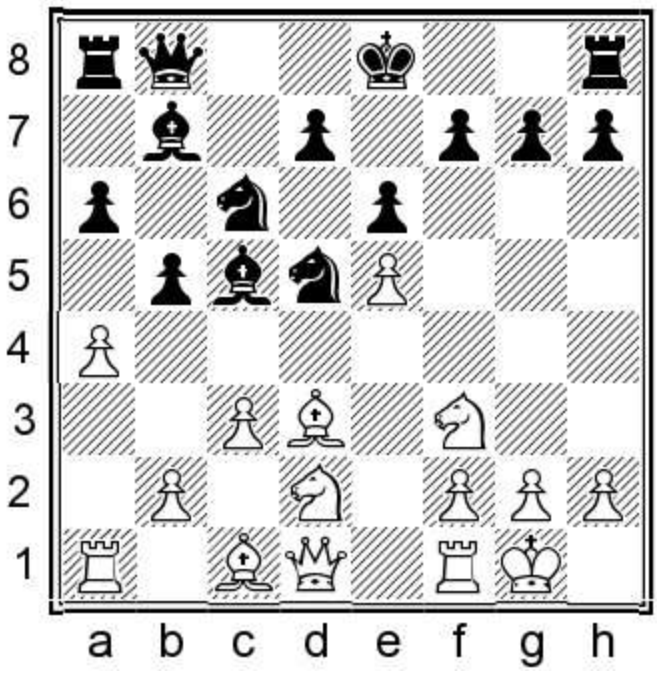
8...♗xc5 9.e5 ♘d5 10.a4! ♕b8

10...bxa4 allows 11.♕xa4 ♗e7 12.♕g4, showing that the rook is not the only piece that can utilize the

chesstouring.com

fourth rank. White had a promising initiative in Sukhov – Cummings, email 2002.
10...♘f4 11.♗c2 g5? is much too aggressive, and after 12.♘e4 ♗e7 13.♘fxg5! Black was already losing in Martinez Rubio – Campos Calvo Sotelo, Madrid 2017.

We have been following Hoe – Domingo, email 2010. In the game White sent his knight via b3, but it would have been better to centralize it with:



11.♘e4N 11...♗e7
With this, we transpose to a couple of other games.

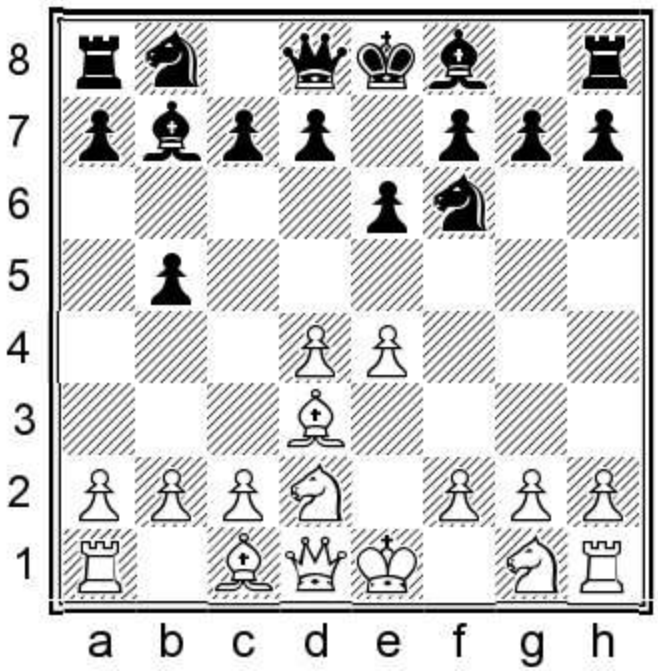
12.♖e1 ♘xe5
This is the critical move for us to consider, but it's not a great idea for Black.
12...h6 was played in the later game Marcos Herrero – Campos Calvo Sotelo, Madrid 2017, and here I would suggest 13.♘g3!N with a fantastic position for White.

13.♘xe5 ♕xe5 14.♘c5 ♕c7N
The queen sac is inadequate: 14...♕xe1†? 15.♕xe1 ♗xc5 16.axb5 axb5 17.♖xa8† ♗xa8 18.♗xb5 and White was winning in Osman – De Jong, Leuven 1994.

15.♘xb7 ♕xb7 16.♗e4
Black's extra pawn is useless and he is under serious pressure.

B22) 4...e6

chesstouring.com



Even though this is Black's most popular continuation, I consider it slightly worse than variation B21 above. The point is that in the aforementioned line, the timing of 4...c5 meant that I found no better way to meet it than with 5.c3. In the present variation, on the other hand, we can save time by going for the active dxc5 plan.

5.♘gf3 a6

This converts to a St. George where White has played ♘bd2 instead of my preferred 0-0 and ♖e1. Despite being a slightly suboptimal version of variation B12, the change in the position does not harm our prospects all that much, and we still have every chance to obtain a comfortable advantage.

The main alternative is:

5...c5 6.dxc5! ♗xc5

Unlike the analogous position from variation B21, 6...♘a6?! is not a serious option due to 7.e5 (this is the difference: with the knight already on f3, White can play this move without allowing the bishop to take on g2) 7...♘d5 8.♗xb5 ♘xc5 9.0-0 followed by ♘b3, when Black has no real compensation for the lost pawn.

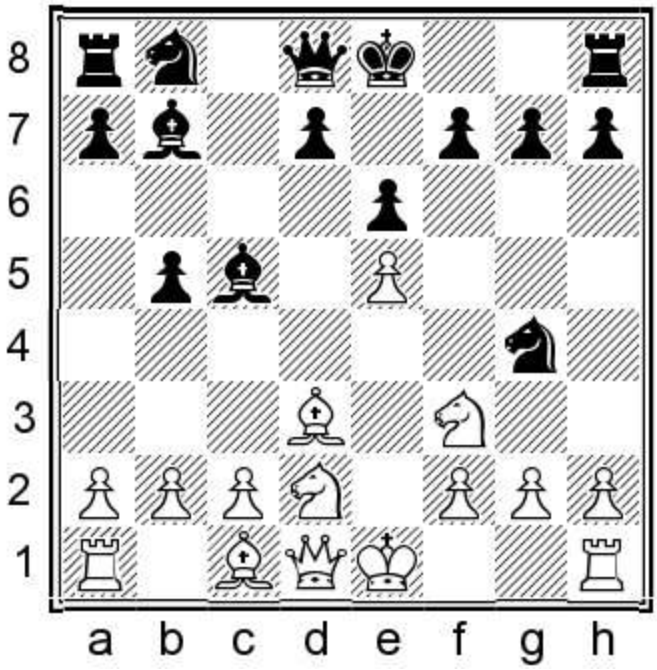
7.e5!?

7.0-0 a6 would transpose to our main line, but White can switch the move order in an attempt to goad Black into playing the following risky line:

7...♘g4?!

7...♘d5 8.0-0 a6 would transpose to our main line below.

chesstouring.com



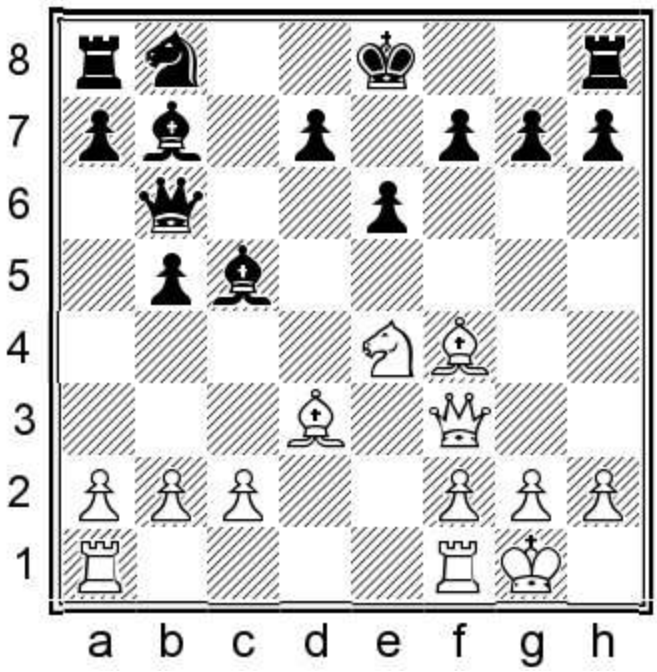
8.0-0 ♕c7

8...♕b6 was seen in Marcos Herrero – Sebastian Enesco, Tres Cantos 2011, when 9.♕e2N would have been natural and strong. For instance: 9...♘c6 10.h3 h5 (10...♘xf2 11.♖xf2 ♘b4 12.♘e4 is much better for White) 11.♘b3 and Black's strategy fails.

9.♘e4 ♘xe5

Also after 9...0-0 10.♗f4 f6 11.♘xc5 ♕xc5 12.exf6 ♖xf6 13.♗d6! ♕b6 14.♗g3! White has a clear advantage.

10.♗f4 ♘xf3† 11.♕xf3 ♕b6



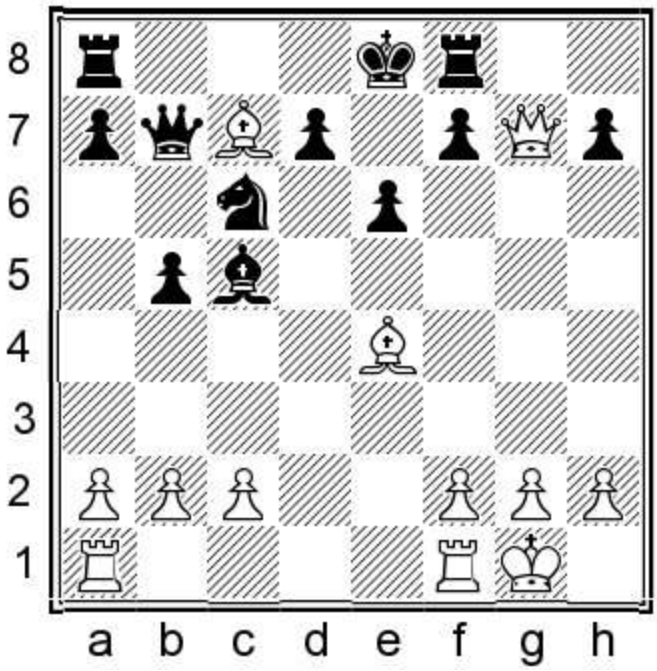
12.♕g3!

In *GM 2* I reached this position in a note and concluded that White has a strong attack. This has since been demonstrated in practice.

chesstouring.com

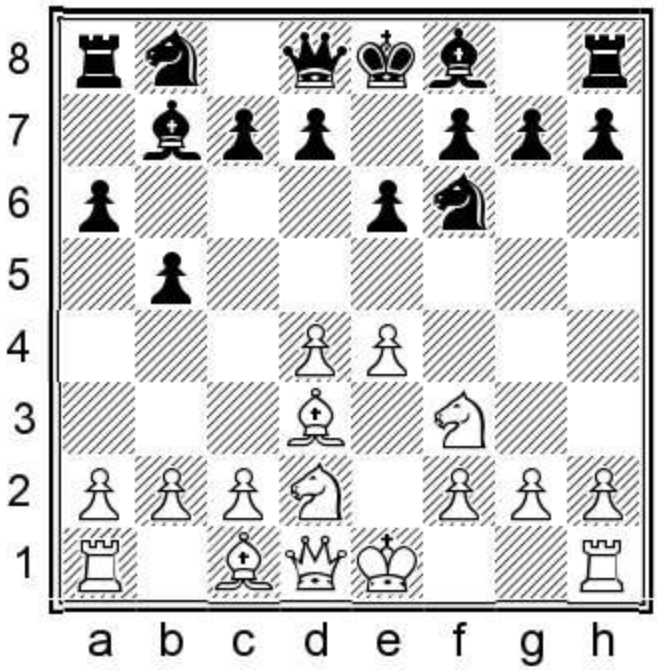
12...♗xe4 13.♗xe4 ♘c6 14.♗c7! ♕b7 15.♕xg7 ♖f8

In H.M.H. Nguyen – Villamayor, Pattaya 2018, White committed some inaccuracies and Black was eventually able to escape with a draw. The following simple continuation would have been best:



16.♗g3!N 16...0-0-0 17.a4 b4 18.c3

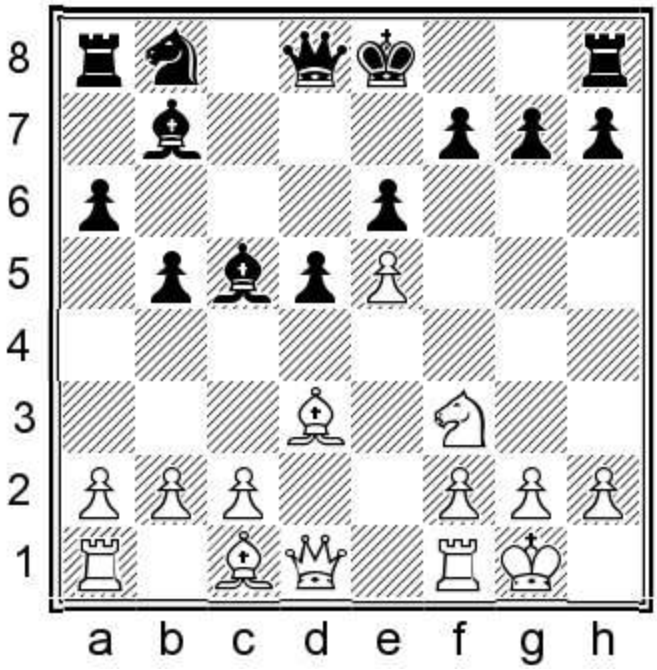
White is much better due to Black's unsafe king.



6.0-0 c5

Another option I would like to mention is: 6...d5 7.e5 ♘fd7 8.♘b3! An important move to clear space for White's pieces. 8...c5 9.dxc5 ♘xc5 10.♘xc5 ♗xc5 This position was reached in Flear – Rossi, Asti 1997, and now I like the following idea for White:

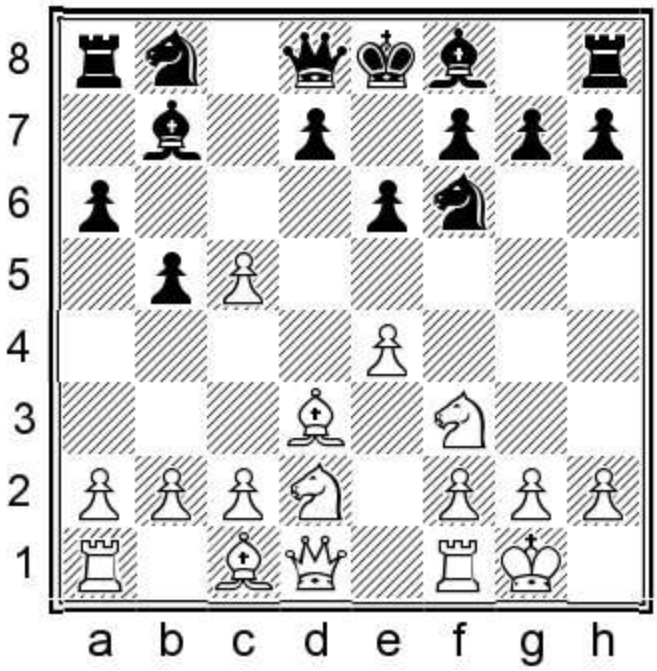
chesstouring.com



11.♕d2!?N 11...♘c6 12.♕f4 By transferring the queen to g4 or g3, White seizes the initiative on the kingside and poses Black a tricky question as to how he intends to defend the g-pawn.

7.dxc5

Again we go for this active plan, leading to a pretty forced sequence.



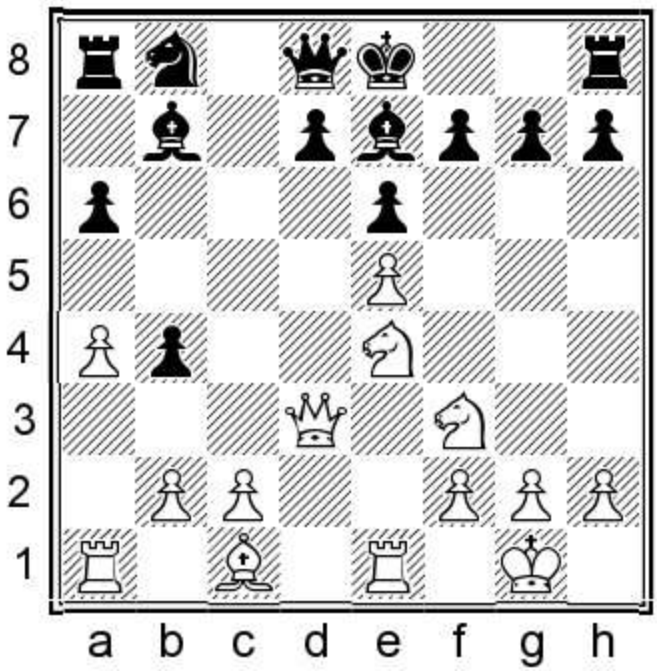
7...♗xc5 8.e5 ♘d5 9.♘e4 ♗e7

After 9...♕c7 White should simply ignore the bishop with 10.♘fg5!, after which 10...♗e7 11.♕f3 0-0 12.♘xh7 led to a crushing attack in Afromeev – Novikov, Tula 2007.

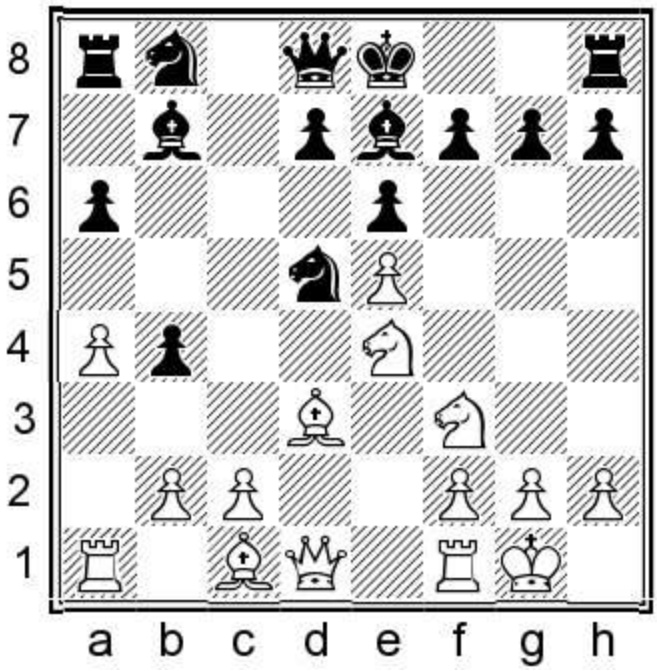
10.a4 b4

chesstouring.com

10...♘b4!? was a reasonable attempt to change the flow of the game in Swinkels – Serdijn, Vlissingen 2006. White has a few interesting options but I prefer the simple 11.♖e1N, when the disappearance of the light-squared bishop does not harm White's prospects too much: 11...♘xd3 Otherwise White could simply play ♗f1, leaving the knight misplaced on b4. 12.♕xd3 b4



13.♘fd2 (13.♗g5!? ♗xe4 14.♕xe4 ♘c6 15.♗xe7 ♕xe7 16.♖ad1 0-0 17.♖d6 also favours White) 13...0-0 14.♘c4 White is definitely in control.



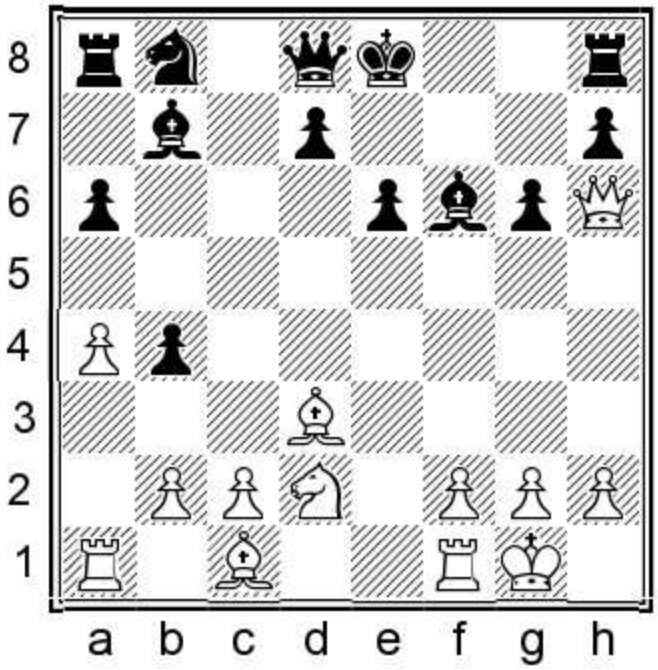
11.♘fd2!

I like this motif: the knight is heading for c4, while at the same time opening a path for the queen to go to the kingside.

chesstouring.com

11...0-0

Black has also tried the immediate 11...f5 but it's quite dangerous with his king still in the centre. 12.exf6 ♘xf6 13.♘xf6† ♗xf6 14.♕h5† g6 15.♕h6 White's last move was my recommended improvement from *GM 2*, which was used successfully in the following game:

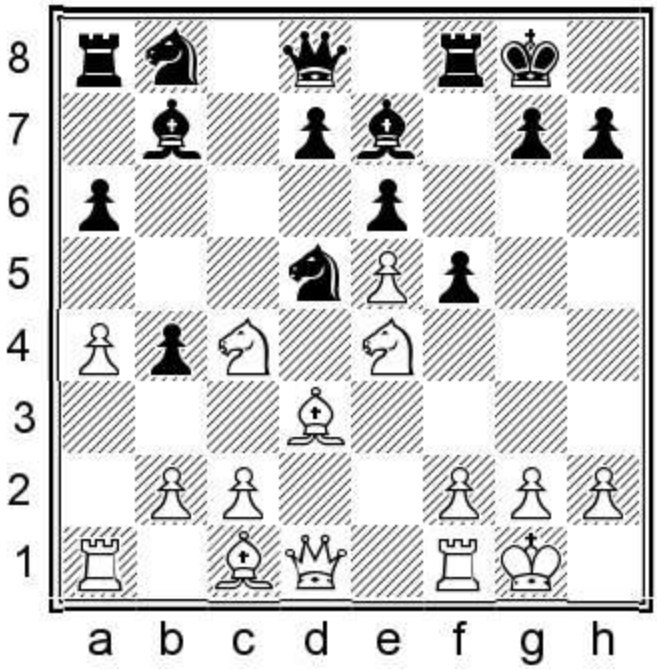


15...♗d5 (15...♕e7 16.♘c4 d5 17.♘b6 ♖a7 18.♖e1 e5 19.♗f4 was my illustrative line from *GM 2*, which looks horrible for Black) 16.♗e4 ♗c6 17.♗xc6 ♘xc6 18.♘e4 d5 19.♖d1± Wegelin – Mangold, email 2012.

12.♘c4 f5

12...♘c6 leads to big problems for Black after: 13.♕h5! (13.♕g4 is a good move which would probably transpose to our main line, but the text move is even stronger) 13...g6 14.♕h6! f5 15.exf6 ♗xf6 16.♘xf6† ♕xf6 17.♗g5 ♕g7 18.a5± Mosrati – Michas, corr. 2016.

chesstouring.com

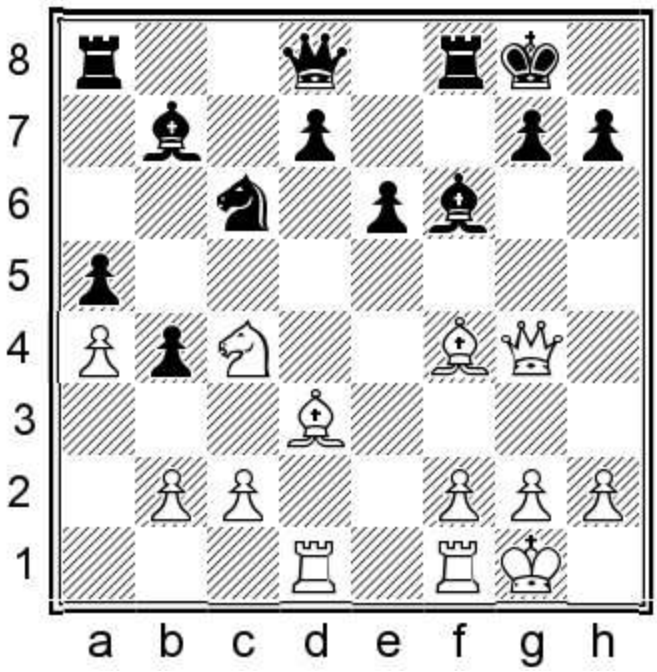


13.exf6 ♘xf6 14.♘xf6† ♗xf6 15.♕g4

White's last move is my recommendation from *GM 2*, which has since yielded White two convincing victories.

15...♘c6 16.♗f4 a5 17.♖ad1

White is obviously better. I like the following example:

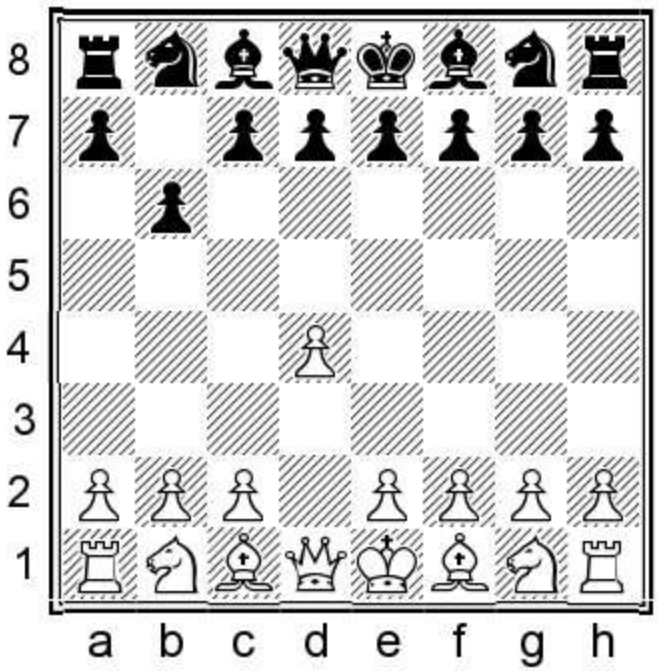


17...♘e7 18.♗d6 ♖f7 19.♖fe1 ♗d5 20.♘e5 ♗xe5 21.♖xe5

White had a solid advantage in Andraschko – Wagner, email 2010.

C) 1...b6

chesstouring.com



Owen's Defence is not as bad as it looks, and the fact that the strong French GM Christian Bauer has authored a book on it lends it some respectability.

2.e4

Obviously White should not miss the opportunity to build a strong centre.

2...♗b7 3.♗d3

Now it is worth considering **C1)** 3...g6 and **C2)** 3...♘f6 in detail, after first checking a couple of Black's other options.

3...e6 is a popular move but it does not have much independent significance after 4.♘e2, for instance: 4...c5 (or 4...♘f6 5.♘d2 c5 6.c3) 5.c3 ♘f6 6.♘d2 and we have transposed to variation C22 on page 559.

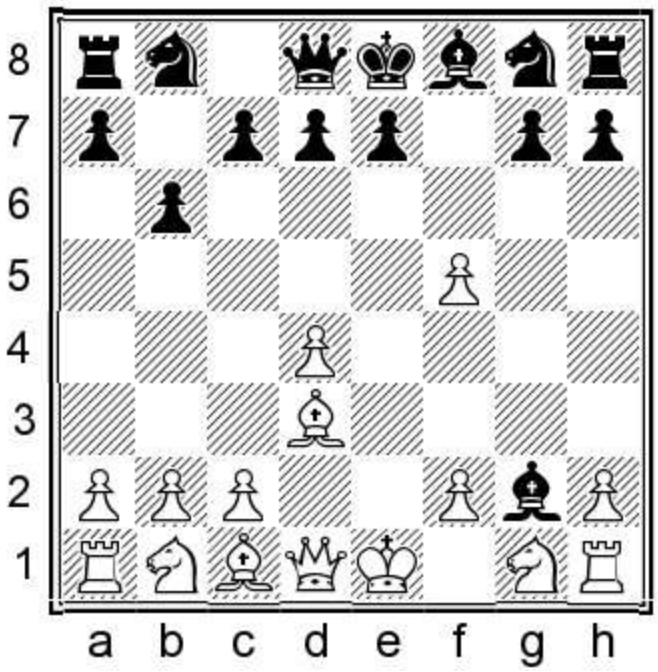
3...f5?

This move is unsound, and probably losing outright in absolute terms.

4.exf5 ♗xg2

We have already seen something similar to this in an unsound line of the English Defence (see variation B31 of Chapter 26 on page 496). Here the moves c2-c4 and ...e6 have not been played, but the general evaluation is about the same.

chesstouring.com

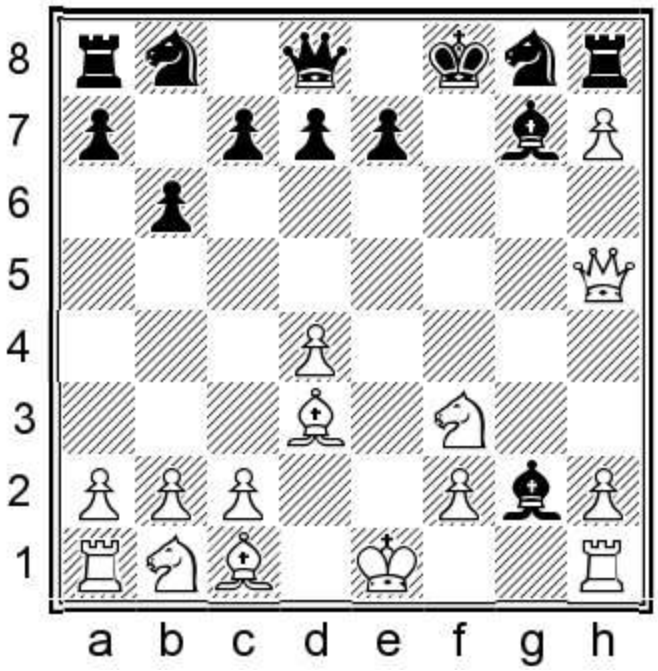


5.♕h5† g6 6.fxg6 ♗g7

Black has no choice, since 6...♘f6?? leads to a nice mate: 7.gxh7† ♘xh5 8.♗g6#

7.gxh7† ♔f8 8.♘f3!

This is the moment where we stop playing in parallel with the English Defence line. The reason why the text move is the better choice here will be explained shortly.



8...♘f6

Again the only move, since 8...♗xh1? 9.♘e5! ♗xe5 10.dxe5 is hopeless for Black.

9.♕g6 ♗xf3

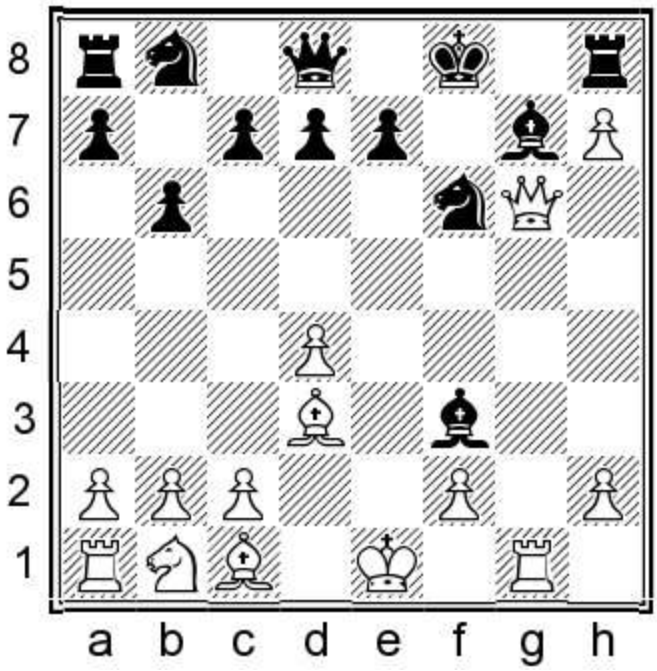
9...♗xh1? loses to 10.♗h6 ♖xh7 11.♘g5 and Black will be mated quickly.

10.♖g1

If White played this way in the English Defence variant (i.e. with the moves c2-c4 and ...e6 having

chessdiagram.com

been played), his scheme would come unstuck after ...♕e7. As things stand, Black has to defend in g7 in a much less desirable way.



10...♖xh7 11.♕g3!

With this, the key move in this line, White regains the piece while keeping both an extra pawn and a positional advantage due to his safer king.

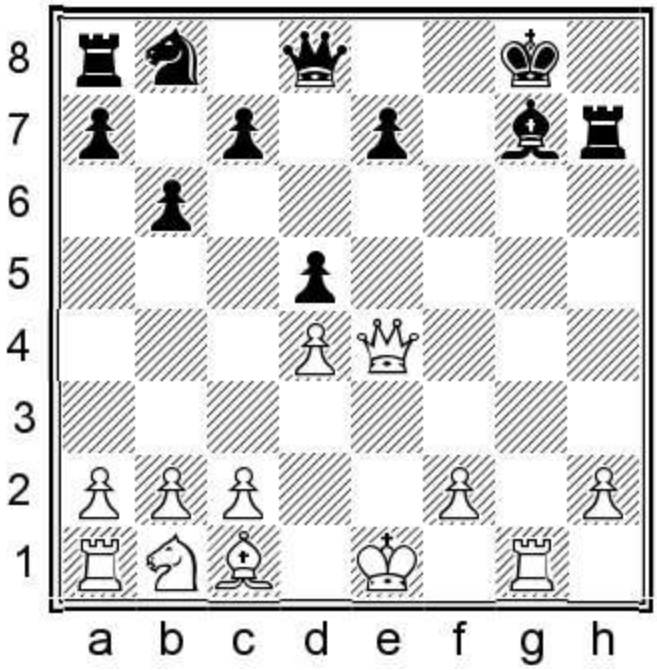
11...♗e4 12.♗xe4 ♘xe4 13.♕f3† ♔g8

Another game continued 13...♘f6 14.♕xa8 ♖xh2 15.♗f4 ♖h4 16.♕g2 ♖g4 and now in Dallmann – Ewald, Leipzig 1996, the simple 17.♕h2N+− would have left White an exchange up for no compensation.

14.♕xe4 d5

14...c6 15.♗f4 ♕f8 16.♗e5 d5 occurred in Jensen – Thestrup, Helsingor 2008, when 17.♕e3N 17...♕f5 18.♘d2+– would have been easily winning for White.

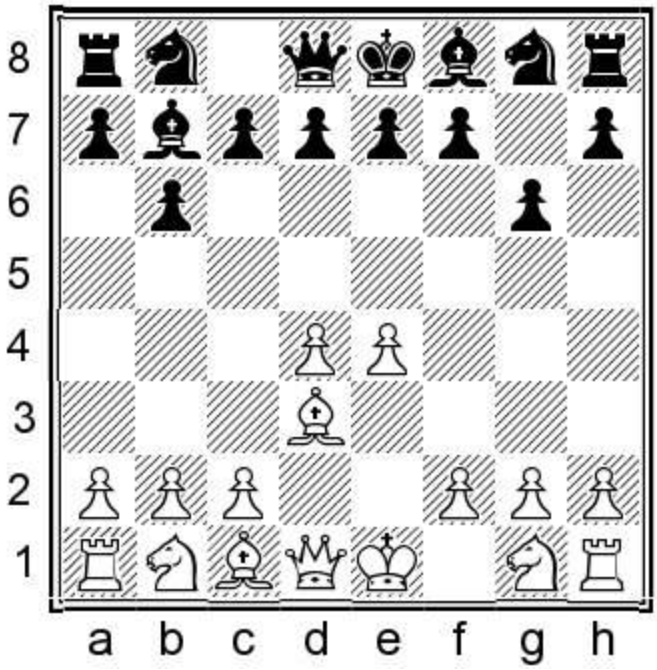
chesstouring.com



15.♕e6† ♔h8 16.♘c3 ♕d7 17.♕xd5

All this occurred in Schabata – Michas, corr. 2007, and a couple of subsequent games. White has two extra pawns and excellent winning chances.

C1) 3...g6



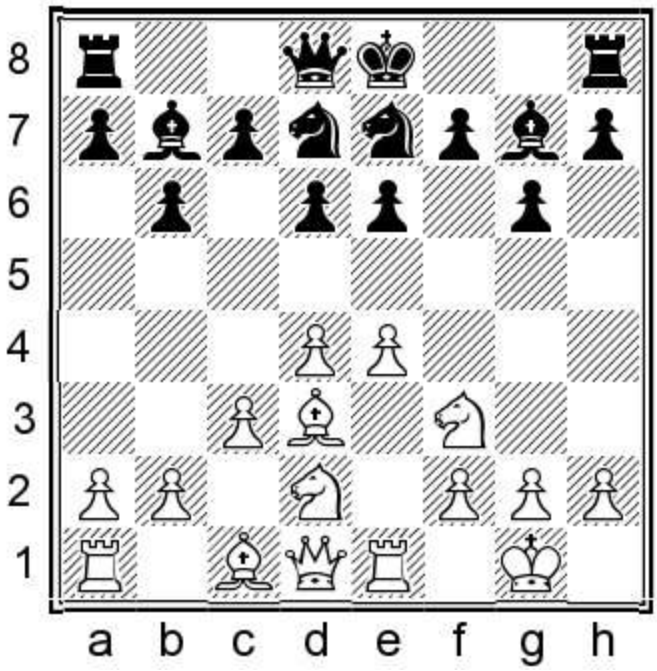
The double fianchetto is a reasonable choice, although White now has the freedom to choose between a few promising set-ups.

4.c4

I decided to focus on this space-gaining approach.

chesstouring.com

However, I would also like to mention another attractive way for White to handle the position: 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.0-0 d6 6.♖e1 e6 7.♘bd2 ♘d7 8.c3 ♘e7



9.a4!? a6 10.♘f1 0-0 11.♘g3 The position looks quite favourable for White. For instance, in one recent game Black opted for 11...e5 and after 12.h4! faced serious difficulties in Nihal – Adly, St Petersburg 2018.

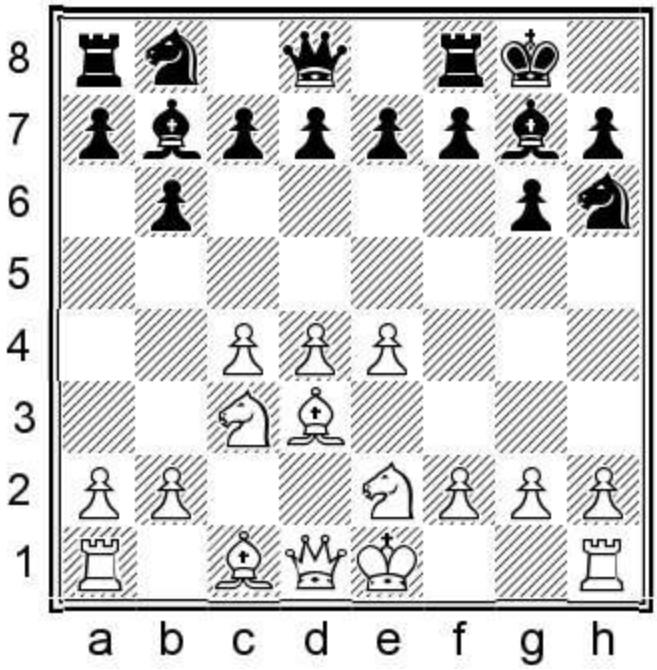
4...♗g7 5.♘e2

5.♘f3 is an equally valid continuation but I like the added flexibility of the text move. The position is quite similar to our repertoire against the English Defence, and transpositions to Chapter 26 are possible.

5...♘c6

5...♘h6?! has been played, presumably with the idea of supporting the ...f5 break, but the knight is awkwardly placed. 6.♘bc3 0-0 occurred in Illescas Cordoba – Anton Guijarro, Linares 2013, and now I strongly recommend:

chesstouring.com



7.h4!N This simple attacking plan makes things quite unpleasant for Black. 7...e6 8.f3 f5 looks like the best defensive try, but 9.♗g5 ♕e8 10.h5 still offers White a nice initiative.

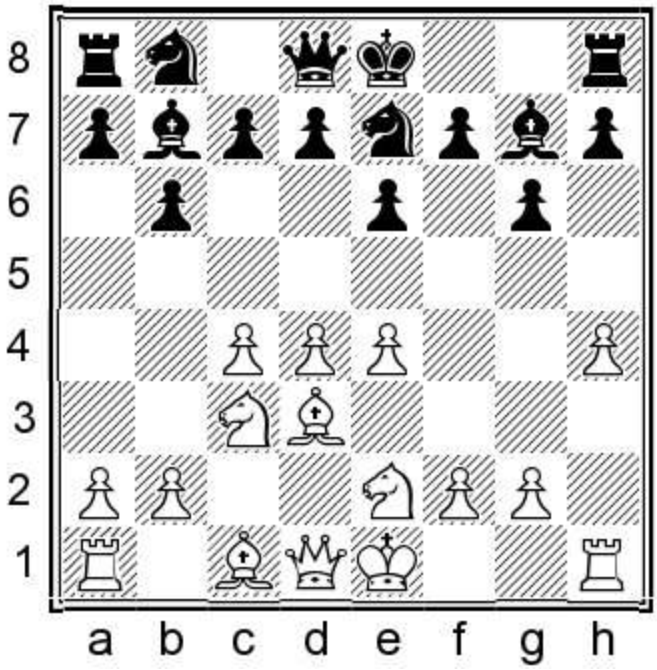
I also considered:

5...e6 6.♘bc3 ♘e7

6...♘c6 transposes to variation B41 of Chapter 26 on page 504.

7.h4!

I am always tempted to carry out this idea when Black opts for a kingside fianchetto without his knight on f6.



7...d6

7...h5 was tried in J. Horvath – Friedrich, Sibenik 2011. Black's last move halted the h4-pawn but

chesstourney.com

weakened Black's dark squares, and 8.♗g5N 8...0-0 9.0-0 would have given White the more pleasant game.

8.h5 ♘d7

This position was reached in Zuferi – Scherer, Saarbruecken 2015. Here I like the following prophylactic idea:

9.♗c2!N

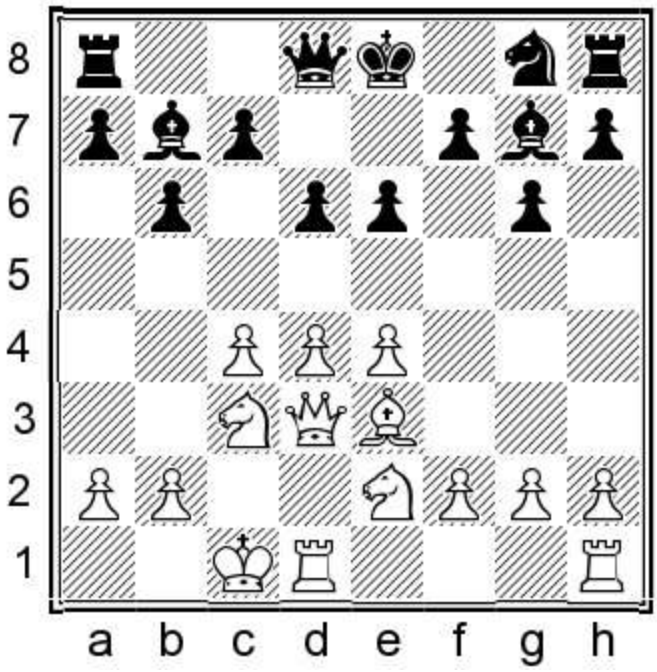
White keeps the upper hand thanks to his space advantage and favourable tension on the kingside. The point of the last move was to prepare to meet ...c5 with d4-d5, while taking the sting out of ...♘e5.

6.♗e3 ♘b4

Black exchanges his knight for White's light-squared bishop, rather like in variation B42 of Chapter 26.

7.♘bc3 ♘xd3† 8.♕xd3 e6 9.0-0-0 d6

White's space advantage is obvious, but Black has a pretty sound position. I suggest the following improvement:



10.h4!N

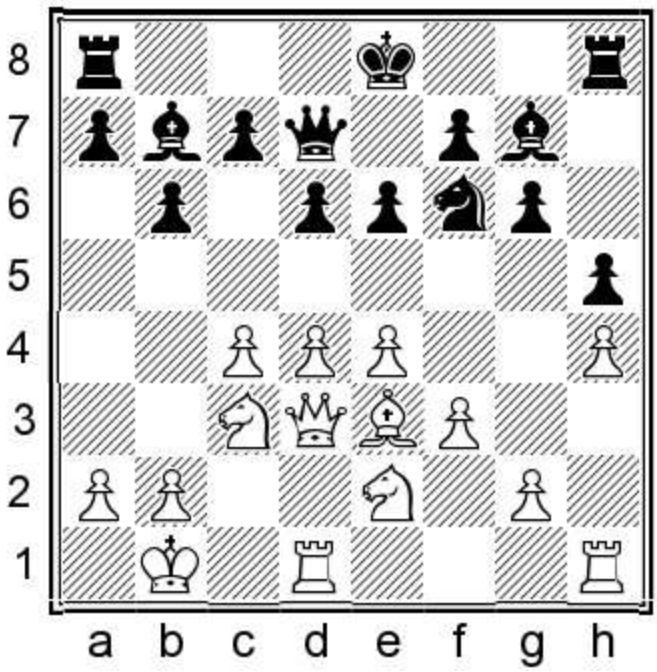
10.f4 ♘e7 11.g4 h5 12.g5 occurred in Najer – Blatny, Pardubice 2007, when the well-timed 12...d5!N would have won control over some important central squares, with promising play for Black.

10...♘f6 11.f3 h5

Otherwise White will grab more space with g2-g4.

12.♔b1 ♕d7

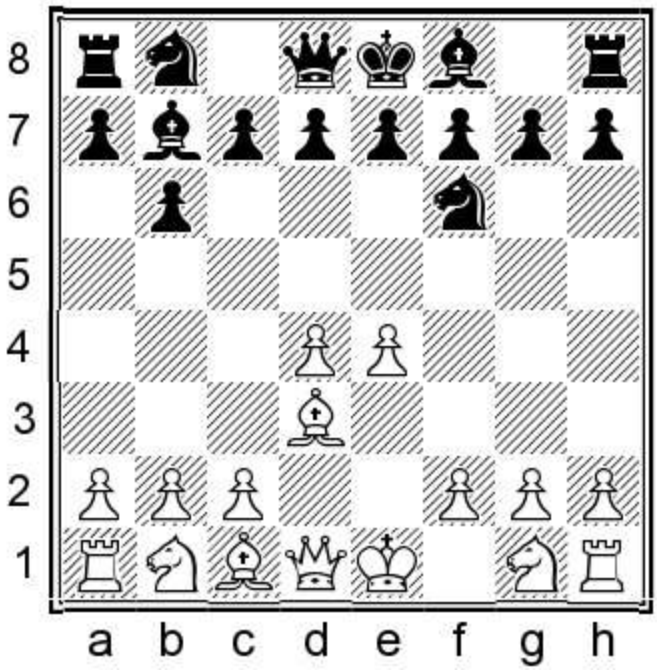
chesstouring.com



13.♕c2!?

I prefer White's chances, as Black must solve an unpleasant dilemma with his king. If he castles short then he will obviously be attacked in Sämisch style, while 13...0-0-0 runs into the unpleasant 14.e5.

C2) 3...♘f6



4.♘d2

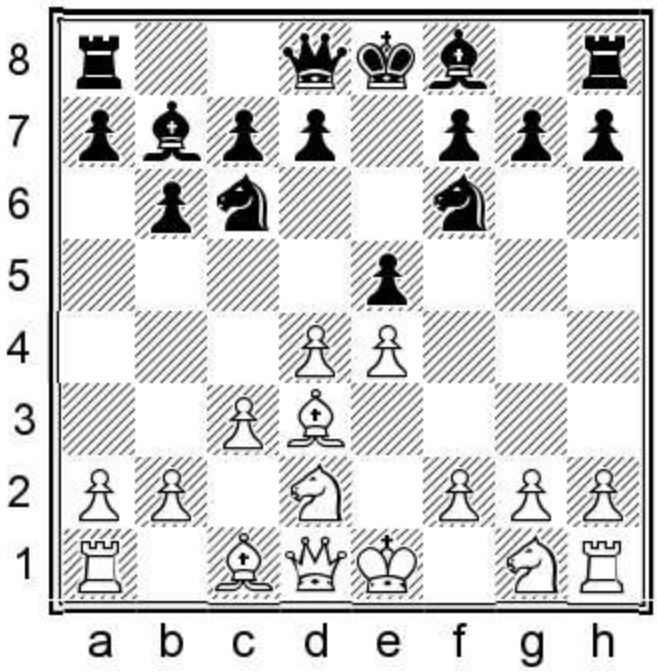
4.♕e2 and 4.♘c3 are decent alternatives but I decided to stick with my previous recommendation.

4...e6

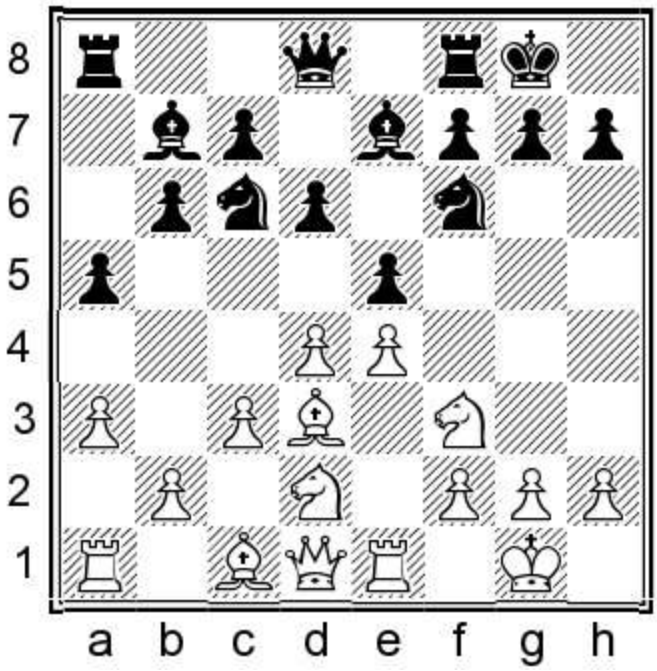
Sometimes Black goes for a different central structure with 4...♘c6 5.c3 e5, when I suggest the

chesstouring.com

following plan of development for White.



6.♘gf3 d6 (6...exd4?! 7.cxd4 ♘b4 8.♗b1 ♗a6 does not work here. 9.♕b3! c5 10.a3 ♘c6 occurred in Bruzon Batista – Munoz Pantoja, Catalonia 2012, and now the most convincing way forward would have been 11.e5!N 11...♘a5 12.♕d1 ♘h5 13.♘e4 with a large advantage.) 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.♖e1 0-0 9.a3 a5 This position was reached in Baus – Trumm, Heusweiler 2007. I think the natural continuation would be:



10.♘f1N 10...a4 11.♘g3 White maintains a pleasant edge.

5.♘e2!?

Bauer does not consider this set-up but I consider it more flexible than the usual 5.♘gf3.

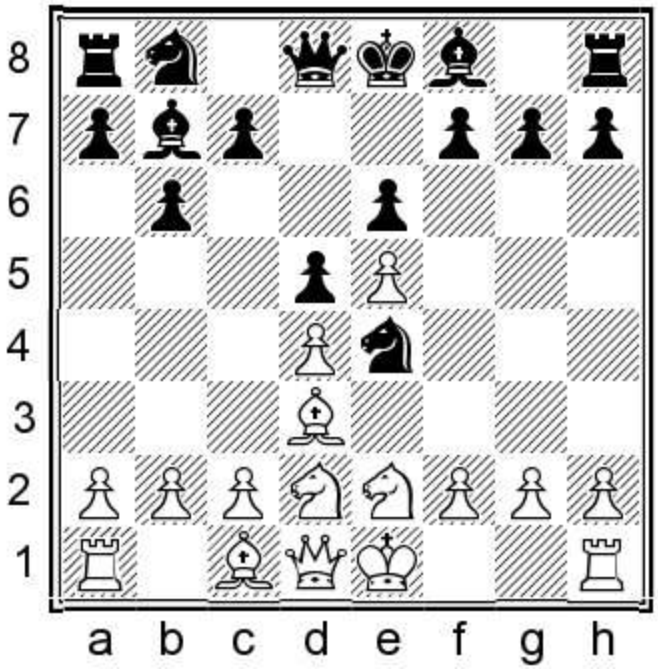
Black's two main options are **C21)** 5...d5 and **C22)** 5...c5.

chesstouring.com

C21) 5...d5 6.e5 ♘fd7

6...♘e4

In the event of this knight jump, I suggest:



7.c3 ♘d7

7...♘xd2 8.♗xd2 might transpose to one of the lines below.

7...c5?! would be a mistake due to 8.♘xe4!N 8...dxe4 9.♗c2 when the e4-pawn is extremely vulnerable.

8.♘g3

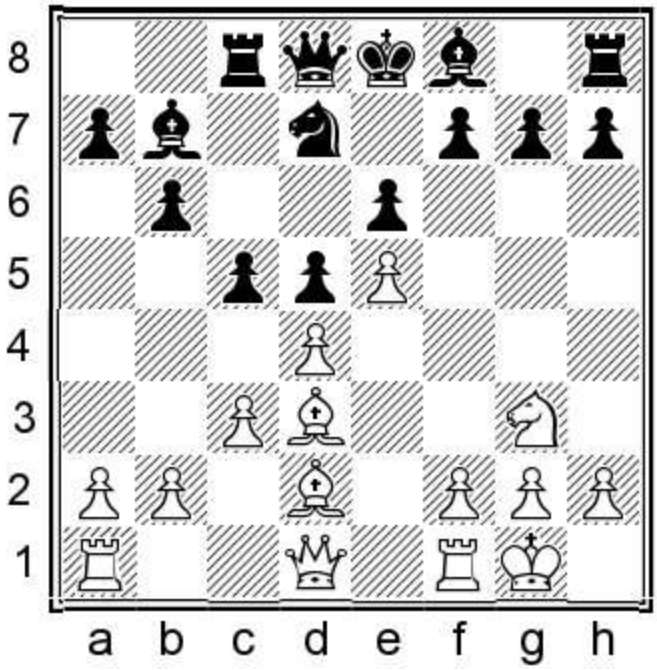
8.0-0N 8...♘xd2 9.♗xd2 c5 10.♘f4 g6 11.♕g4± is a good alternative.

White could also have tried 8.♘xe4!?N 8...dxe4 9.♗c2, although this option would not have existed if Black had exchanged on d2 on the previous turn.

8...♘xd2 9.♗xd2 c5 10.0-0 ♖c8

This position was reached in Lelumees – Siempos, Patras 1999. The following continuation looks natural to me.

chesstouring.com

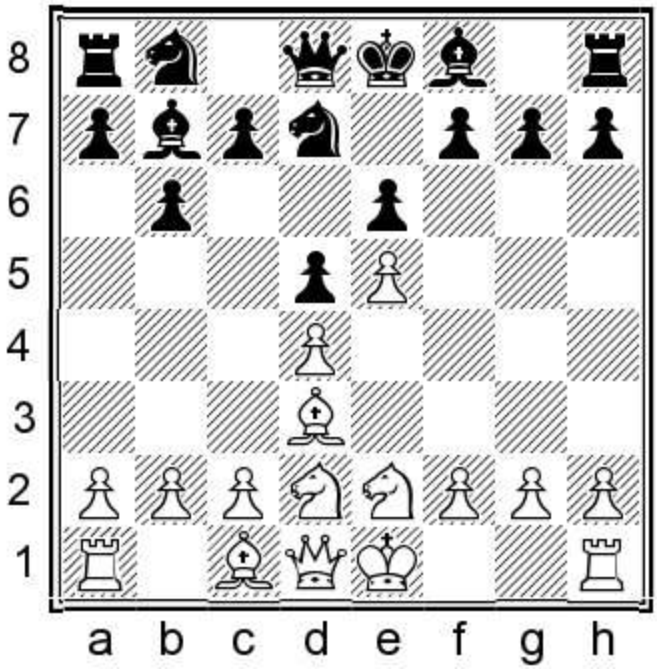


11.♕g4N 11...g6 12.♗g5 ♕c7

12...♗e7 13.♗h6! keeps up the pressure.

13.h4

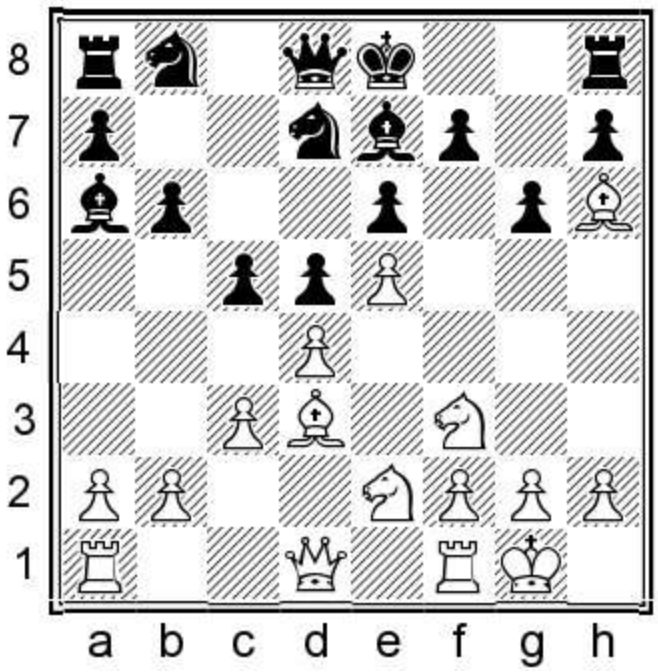
White's chances are obviously favourable.



7.0-0 c5 8.c3 ♘c6

8...g6?! weakens the dark squares, which White exploited nicely in the following encounter: 9.♘f3 ♗e7 10.♗h6! ♗a6

chesstouring.com



11.c4! With Black's king unable to castle, it is the perfect time to open the centre. 11...♗xc4 12.♗xc4 dxc4 13.d5 White was clearly better in Poluljahov – Shevchenko, Polanica Zdroj 1999.

9.♘f3

9.f4 has also scored well for White but I prefer to aim for active piece play on the kingside.

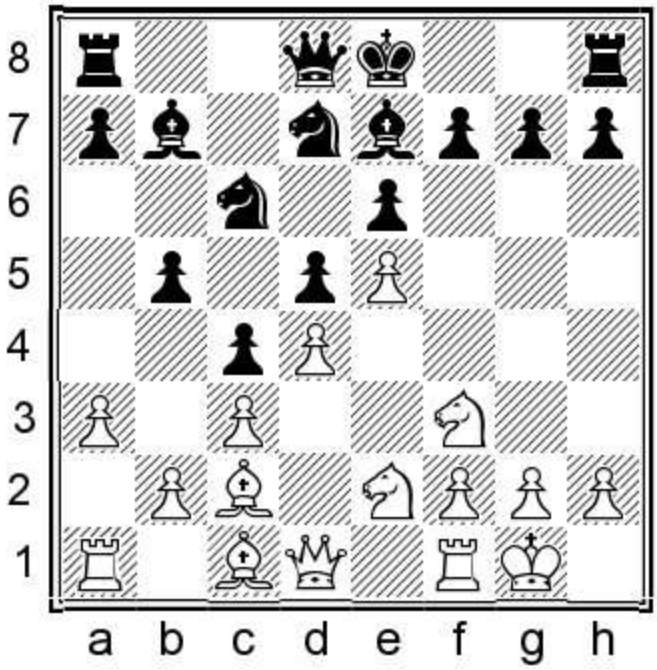
9...♗e7 10.a3

A useful prophylactic move to prevent a possible ...♘b4 jump after an exchange on d4.

10...cxd4

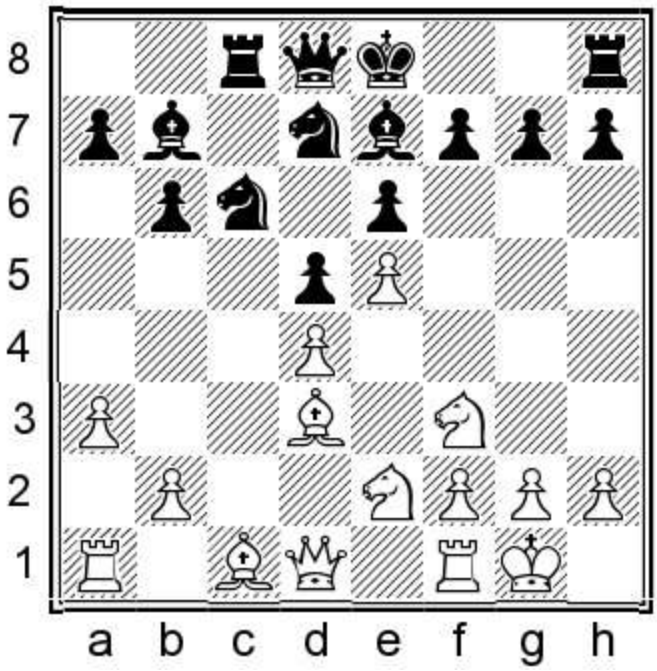
Another possible plan for Black is 10...c4 11.♗c2 b5, closing the queenside in preparation for long castling, as played in Burgerhoff – Rikumahu, Vlissingen 1999. My suggested improvement is:

chesstouring.com



12.♕d2!N Heading for an active post on the kingside. 12...a5 13.♕f4 b4 14.♕g3 g6 15.♗a4 With the better game for White.

11.cxd4 ♖c8



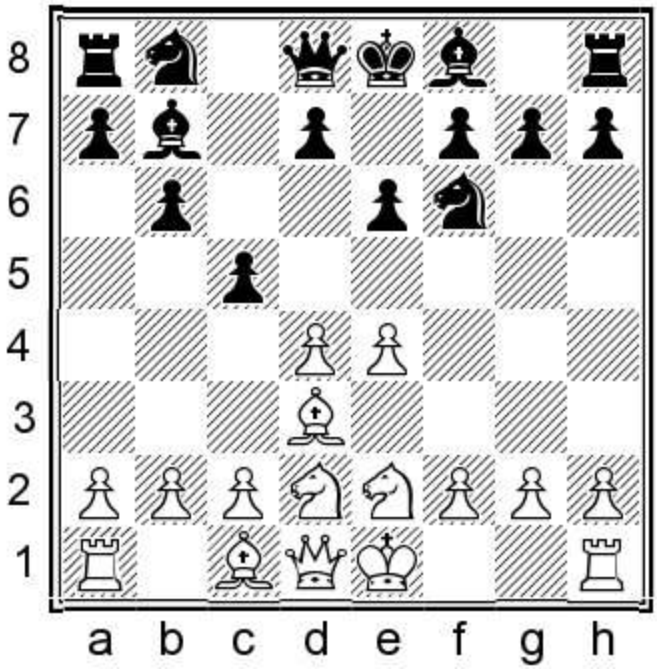
12.b4 0-0 13.♘f4 ♖e8 14.g3

White has a significant space advantage and can easily seize the initiative on the kingside.

14...g6 15.h4 ♗f8 16.h5 ♗g7 17.♖e1

White had much the better prospects in Korneev – Triquell, Badalona 1994.

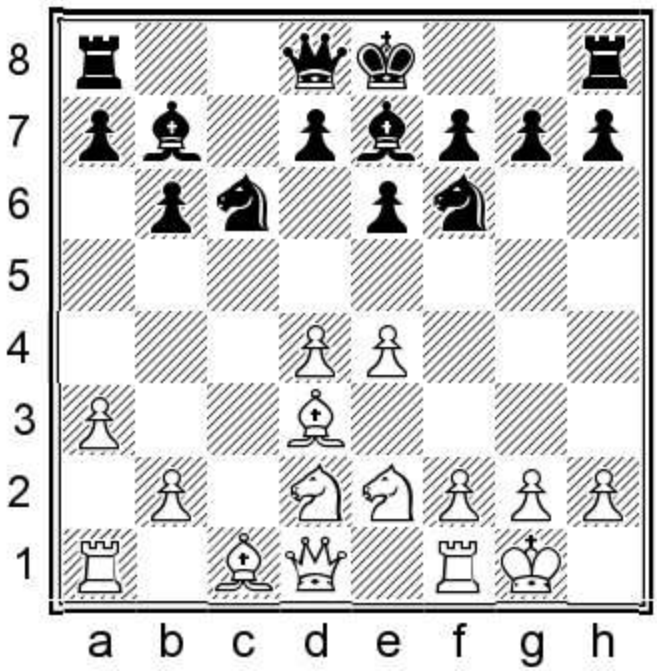
chesstouring.com



6.c3 ♘c6

This is Black's most natural continuation although many other moves have been tried. Here are a few examples:

6...cxd4 7.cxd4 ♘c6 8.a3 ♗e7 9.0-0 0-0

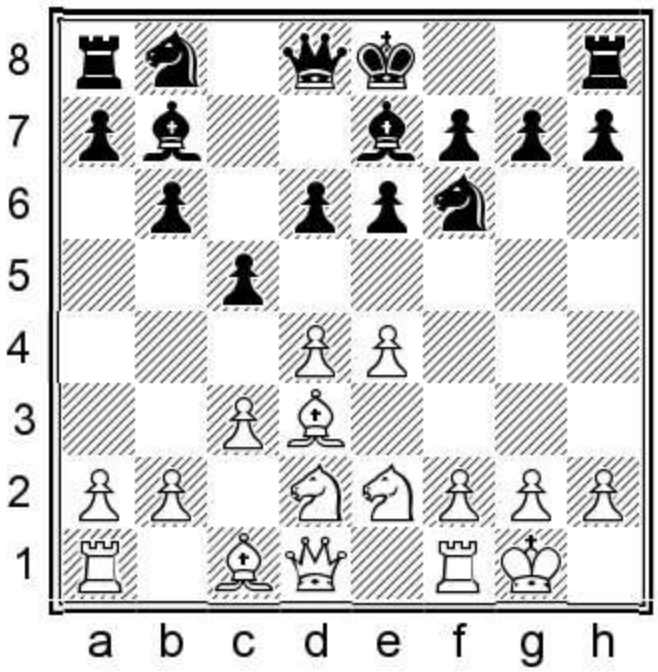


10.b4! d6 11.♗b2 This is the ideal way to develop in such a position. 11...♖c8 12.♘g3 White prepares to advance the f-pawn, which should give him serious attacking chances. 12...♘d7 13.f4 g6 14.♕g4 ♘f6 15.♕h3 White enjoyed the better prospects in Ermenkov – Sahovic, Jurmala 1978.

6...d6 7.0-0 ♗e7

White has two equally strong options, with the choice coming down to personal taste.

chesstouring.com



8.f4!?

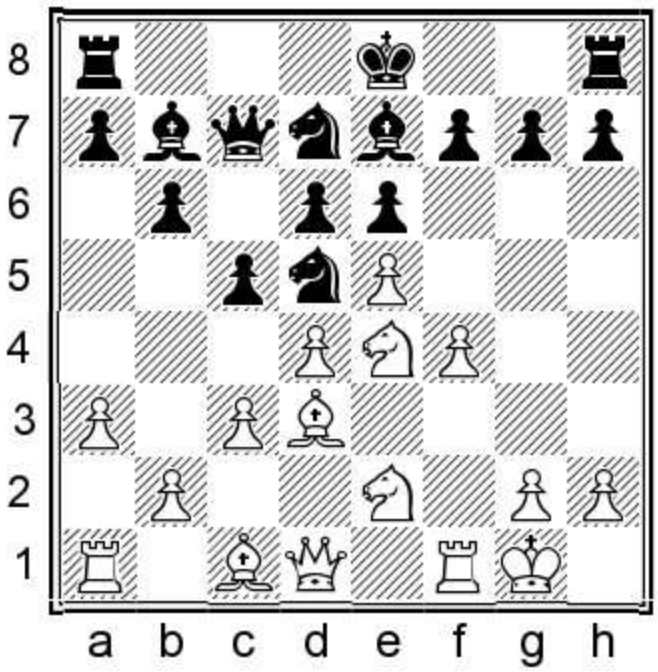
Ambitious and aggressive.

The more positional continuation is 8.♘g3 ♘c6 9.♘f3 cxd4 10.cxd4 0-0 as in Beshukov – Turikov, St Petersburg 2001, and now the simple 11.♗d2N 11...♖c8 12.♕e2± would have given White the better chances thanks to his space advantage.

8...♘bd7 9.e5

I also checked 9.f5N but found it less clear after: 9...exf5 10.♖xf5 0-0 11.♘g3 ♖e8∞

9...♘d5 10.♘e4 ♕c7 11.a3



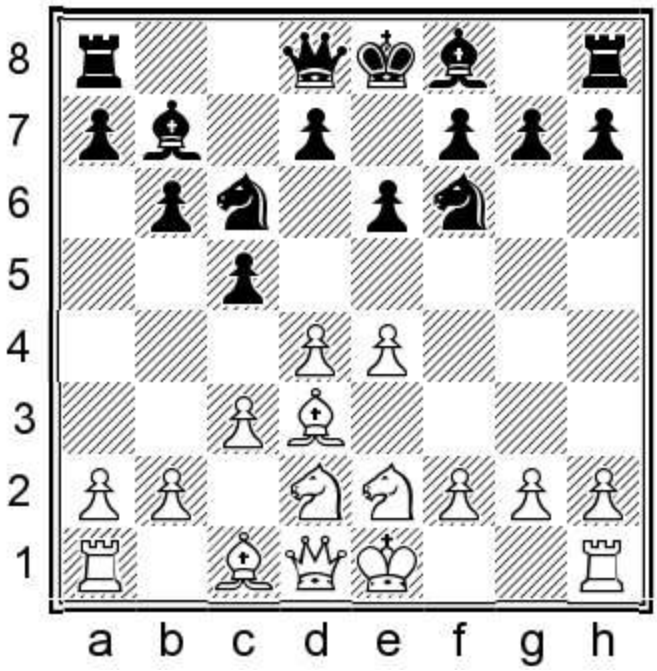
11...♕c6?

An obvious mistake. Black should have preferred 11...cxd4N 12.cxd4 0-0, although 13.♗d2 leaves White with the more promising position.

chesstouring.com

12.c4 ♘c7 13.b4!±

Black faced serious problems due to the misplaced position of his queen in Krug – Lang, Bavaria 2001.

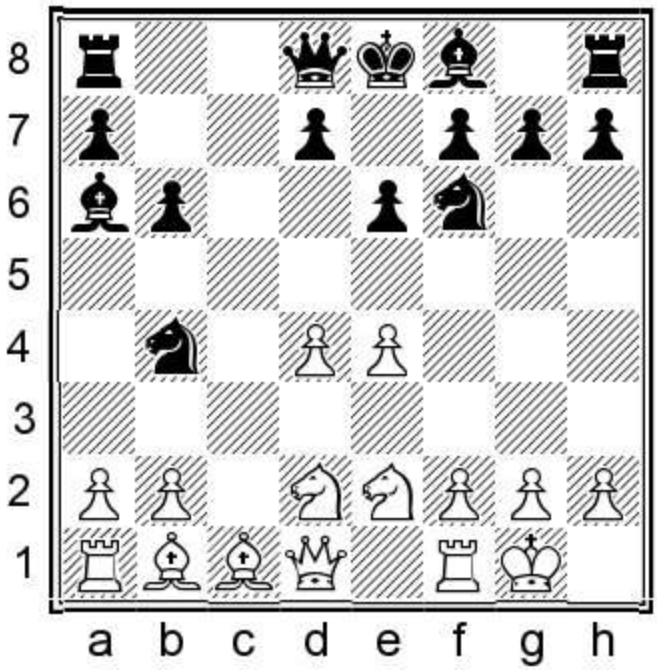


7.0-0 ♗e7

Once again Black has some other possibilities, but in most cases White gets a good game with common-sense play.

7...cxd4 8.cxd4 ♘b4 9.♗b1 ♗a6

If 9...♗e7 White can, at the very least, play 10.a3 ♘c6 11.♗d3, transposing to the 6...cxd4 line in the note to Black's 6th move.



10.♘f3 ♗e7

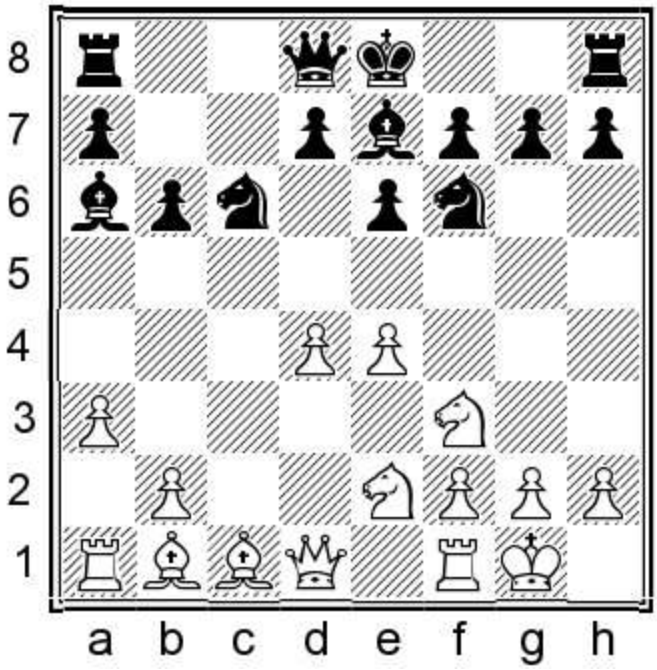
10...d5 occurred in Schneider – Karlsson, Stockholm 1978. I don't know why White refrained from

chesstouring.com

the natural 11.e5N, when 11...♘d7 (or 11...♘e4 12.♗e3 followed by ♘e1 when Black's knight is short of squares) 12.♖e1 ♗e7 13.♘f4 ♘c6 14.h4 would have led to promising play for White.

11.a3 ♘c6

This occurred in Ali Marandi – Genov, Ankara 2010, and one other game. White has a wide choice of promising ideas but I find the following continuation especially appealing:



12.d5!N

The following sequence looks pretty forcing.

12...exd5 13.exd5 ♗xe2

Or 13...♘xd5 14.♕xd5 ♗xe2 15.♘g5! and White seizes a strong initiative.

14.♕xe2 ♘xd5 15.♖d1 ♘f6 16.b4 0-0 17.♗b2

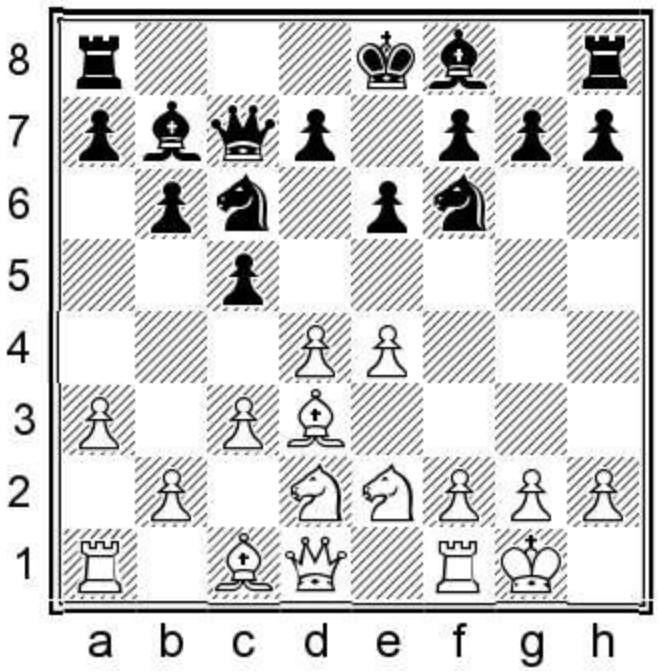
With powerful compensation.

I also considered:

7...♕c7 8.a3

It is essential to the cover the b4-square, as after 8.♘f3?! cxd4 9.cxd4 ♘b4 10.♗f4 ♕d8 White has to give up his light-squared bishop.

chesstouring.com



8...d5

This looks like one of the more reasonable options available to Black.

8...♗e7? is an unfortunate choice. In Genzling – Scherer, France 2007, both players overlooked the idea of 9.e5!N when Black's knight has to retreat to its home square, since 9...♘d5? 10.c4 would leave it trapped in the centre.

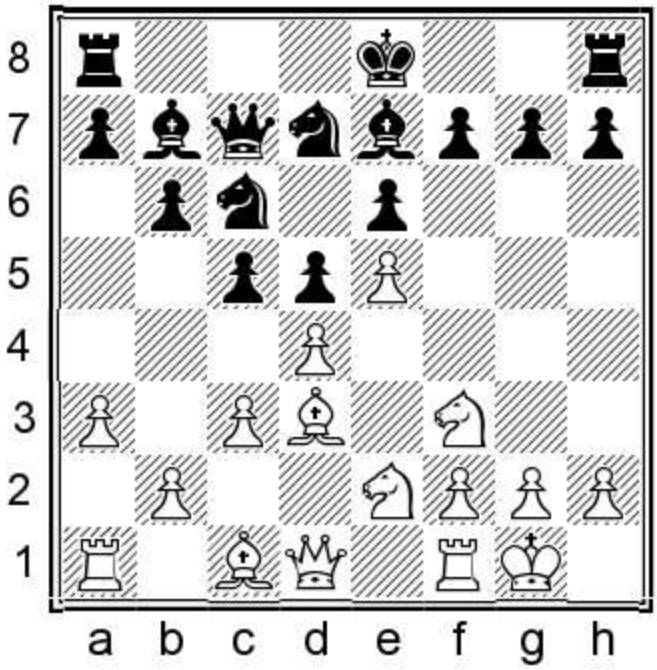
8...h5?! Just weakens the g5-square, while Black fails to get any activity on the kingside. 9.♘f3 d6 10.♗g5 ♗e7 This happened in Luther – Scherer, Altenkirchen 2005, and now 11.♘f4!N would have secured White's advantage and proved the failure of Black's set-up.

Another dubious continuation is 8...g6?! 9.e5! ♘h5 10.♘e4 ♗e7 as in Beliavsky – Basman, Hastings 1974, when the straightforward 11.g4! ♘g7 12.♗h6 would have left Black in a terrible position.

8...d6N has never been played but is sounder than the three moves mentioned above. Still, after 9.♘f3 ♗e7 10.♘g3 0-0 11.♖e1 White enjoys a promising position.

9.e5 ♘d7 10.♘f3 ♗e7

chesstouring.com



11.b4! a5 12.b5 ♘a7 13.a4 c4 14.♗c2 0-0-0 15.♘g5

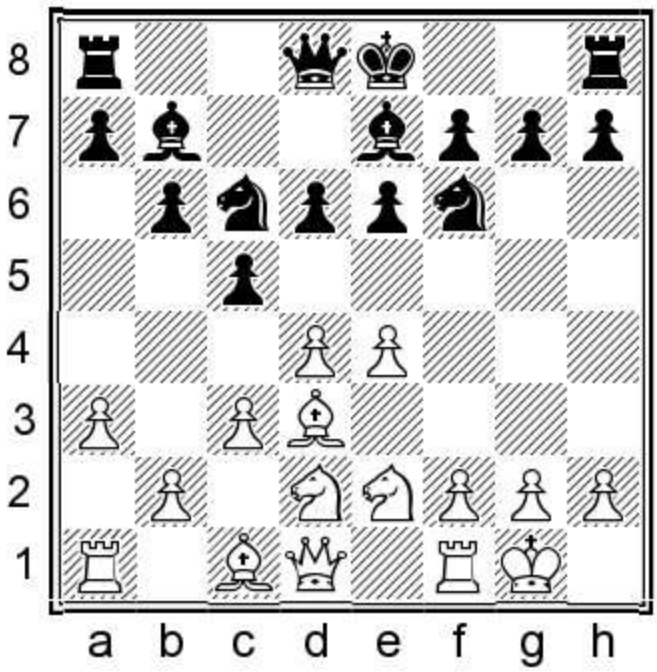
White was clearly better in Kostic – Goric, Banja Junakovic/Vukovar 2010.

8.a3

White should take control over the b4-square, as 8.♘f3?! would allow the typical 8...cxd4 9.cxd4 ♘b4! and White has to give up his light-squared bishop.

8...d6

8...cxd4N has not been played here, but it is worth mentioning that 9.cxd4 leads back to the 6...cxd4 line in the note to Black's 6th move on page 559.



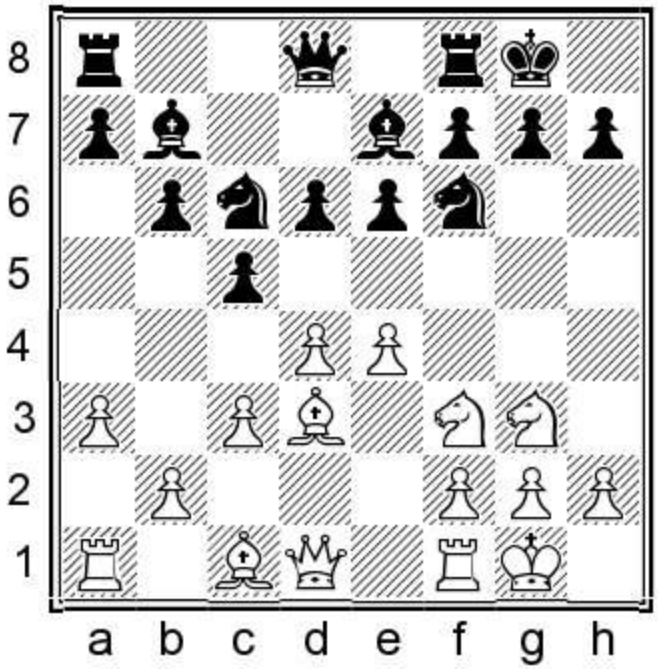
chesstouring.com

9.♘f3!N

I prefer this to 9.f4, since the position after 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 0-0 looks pretty double-edged. For instance, 11.♘f3 (11.b3N 11...b5! 12.♗b2 ♕b6 also gives Black a decent game) 11...d5 12.e5 ♘e4 13.♘g3 ♘a5! and Black obtained good play in Fink-Nunn – Dragasevic, Dortmund 1988. The main point is that after 14.♖e1N Black can leave her knight with 14...♖c8!, sacrificing a pawn in return for plenty of activity on the queenside.

9...0-0 10.♘g3

In my opinion this kind of position is always favourable for White, due to his space advantage. White's last move transposes to a game, which continued logically for the next few moves.



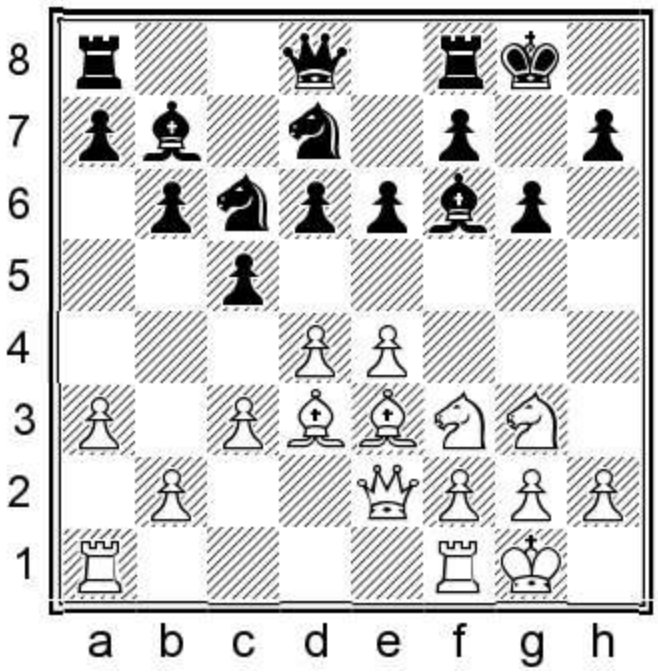
10...♘d7

My line from *GM 2* continued 10...♖c8 11.♕e2 (11.b4 ♕c7 12.♕e2!? also deserves consideration) 11...♘a5 12.♗f4 ♘b3 13.♖ad1± with the better prospects for White.

11.♕e2 ♗f6 12.♗e3 g6

We have been following Lim – Satyapragyan, Chennai 2010. Here my suggestion would be:

chesstouring.com



13.♖fd1!?N 13...♗g7 14.b4

With a pleasant positional edge for White.

Conclusion

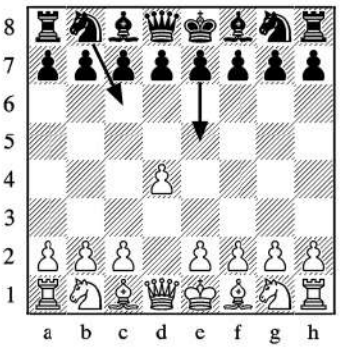
This chapter dealt with a variety of 'b-pawn systems' which Black may try after 1.d4. The first three of them (1...c6 2.c4 b5, 1...b5 2.e4 a6 and 1...b5 2.e4 ♗b7) all have some common characteristics, as Black's set-up almost always involves pawns on a6 and b5 and a bishop on b7. White has excellent chances for an advantage here, due to his central control and chances to seize the initiative, especially by answering the ...c5 break with the thematic response of dxc5 followed by e4-e5 and a knight jump to e4. We also saw several lines where the b5-pawn acted as a target for a timely a2-a4, or occasionally c2-c4.

1...b6 is a bit more respectable than the various ...b5 systems, as Black not only saves time (due to not having to play ...a6) but also because it deprives White of the option of a quick a2-a4 to create outposts for his pieces. After 2.e4 ♗b7 3.♗d3 we checked a few continuations. 3...f5? can be considered refuted, but the others are more solid. 3...g6 is a decent option, after which 4.c4 leads to similar positions as Chapter 26 on the English Defence. Finally, 3...♘f6 4.♘d2 e6 is the most thematic follow-up to Black's first move, after which 5.♘e2!? makes a lot of sense to me. As long as White remembers the importance of a timely a2-a3, he should be able to prevent all his opponent's attempts to create fast counterplay, and will have every chance of developing a middlegame initiative with the help of his strong pawn centre.

chesstouring.com



Minor Lines



Odd Ideas

Variation Index

1.d4

A) 1...e5? 2.dxe5 ♘c6 3.♘f3 565

A1) 3...f6 565

A2) 3...♕e7 4.♗f4 ♕b4† 5.♗d2 ♕xb2 6.♘c3 ♗b4 7.♖b1 ♕a3 8.♘d5! 567

A21) 8...♗xd2† 569

A22) 8...♗a5 570

B) 1...♘c6 2.d5 ♘e5 3.f4! ♘g6 4.e4 e6 5.dxe6 571

B1) 5...dxe6 571

B2) 5...fxe6 6.♘f3 574

B21) 6...d5!? 575

B22) 6...d6 575

B23) 6...♗c5 7.♘c3 576

B231) 7...♘h6 577

B232) 7...♘f6 578

chesstouring.com

B1) note to 9...♘f6



11.e5!N

B22) after 10...♘c6



11.♘g5!N

B231) after 10...♘g6

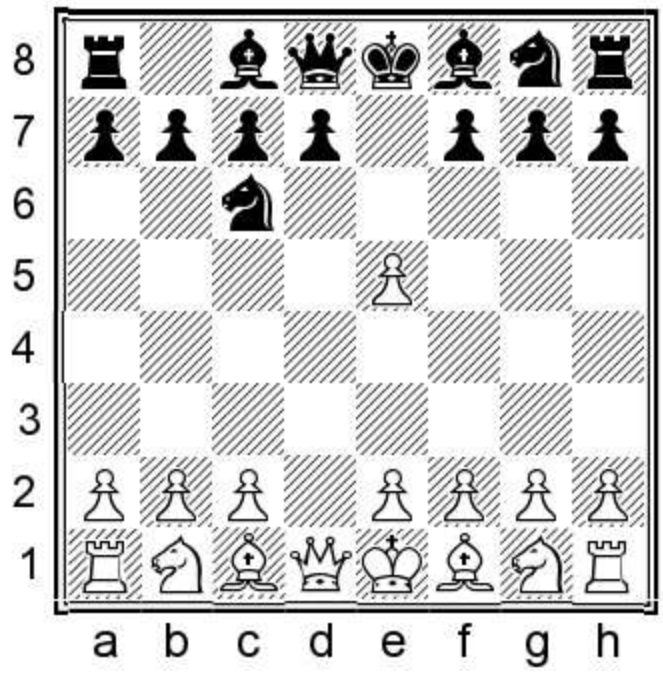


11.exf5!N

1.d4

In this chapter we will deal with two final rare lines: the unsound gambit **A)** 1...e5? and the somewhat more reasonable **B)** 1...♘c6.

A) 1...e5? 2.dxe5 ♘c6

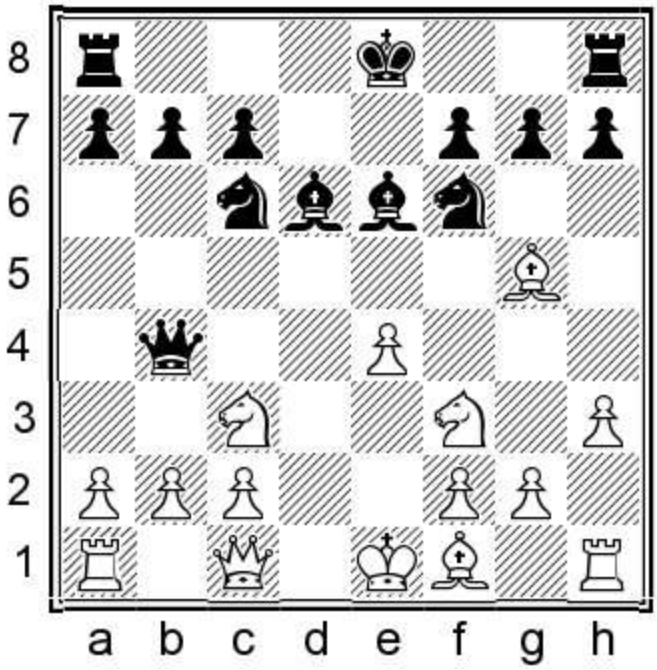


3.♘f3

We will consider **A1)** 3...f6 followed by the more common **A2)** 3...♕e7.

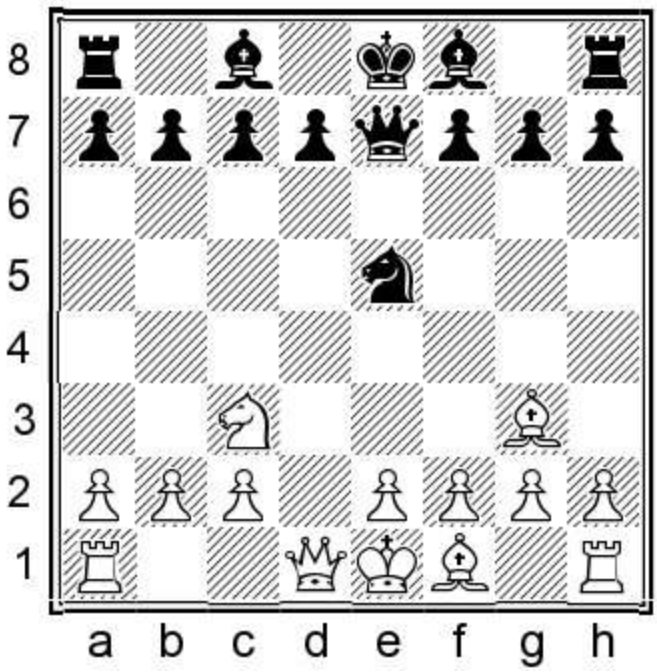
After 3...d6 I suggest 4.♗g5 with the following possible line: 4...♕d7 5.exd6 ♗xd6 6.♘c3 ♕g4 7.h3 ♕b4 8.♕c1 ♗e6 9.e4 ♘f6 This occurred in Maduekwe – Brousek, email 2006, when the natural continuation would have been:

chesstouring.com



10.♗d3N 10...0-0-0 11.0-0± White is a healthy pawn up.

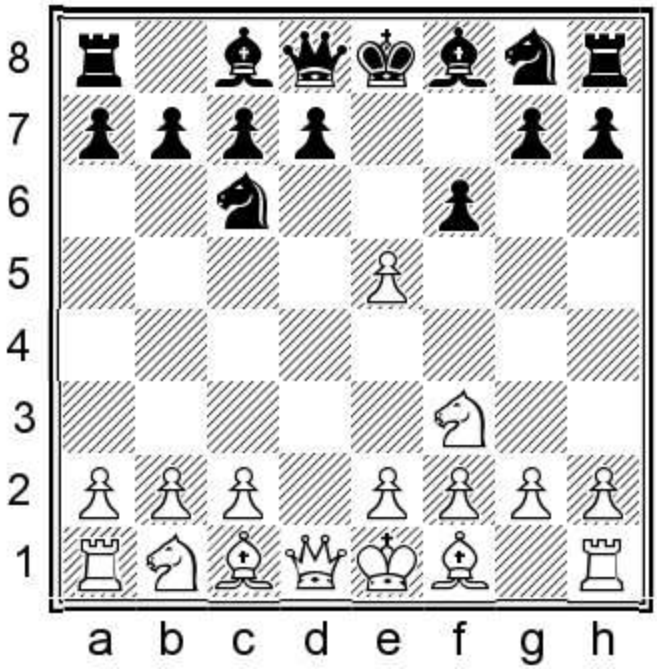
3...♘ge7 has achieved a surprisingly respectable score but White obtains a big advantage with natural moves. 4.♗f4 ♘g6 5.♗g3 ♕e7 6.♘c3 ♘cxe5 (6...♘gxe5? is even worse due to 7.♘d5!+–) 7.♘xe5 ♘xe5 Now the most precise is:



8.♕d4!N (the simple 8.e4± also gave White a great game in Lenz – Schoenbuchner, corr. 2013) 8...♘c6 9.♕d2 Followed by ♘d5 with an overwhelming position.

A1) 3...f6

chesstouring.com



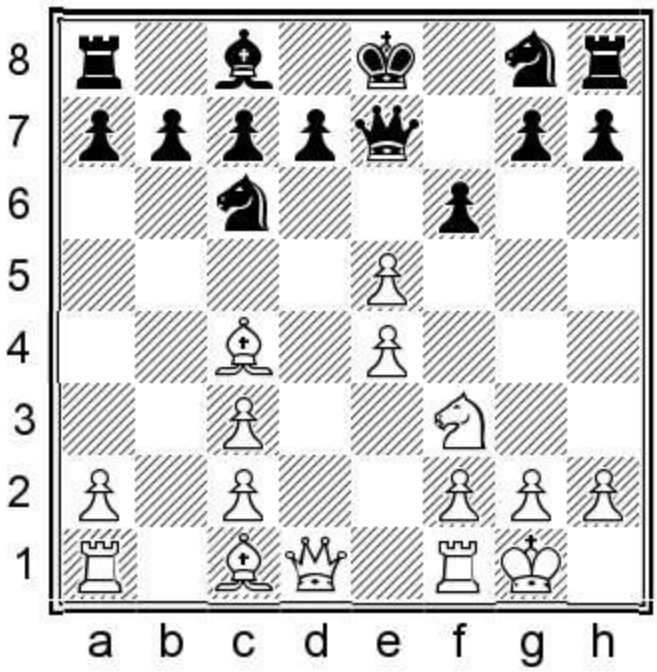
4.e4!

4.exf6 ♘xf6 5.g3 certainly leaves Black with insufficient compensation, but I like the idea of returning the extra pawn and fighting for the initiative even more.

4...fxe5

4...♘xe5? obviously loses to 5.♘xe5 fxe5 6.♕h5†.

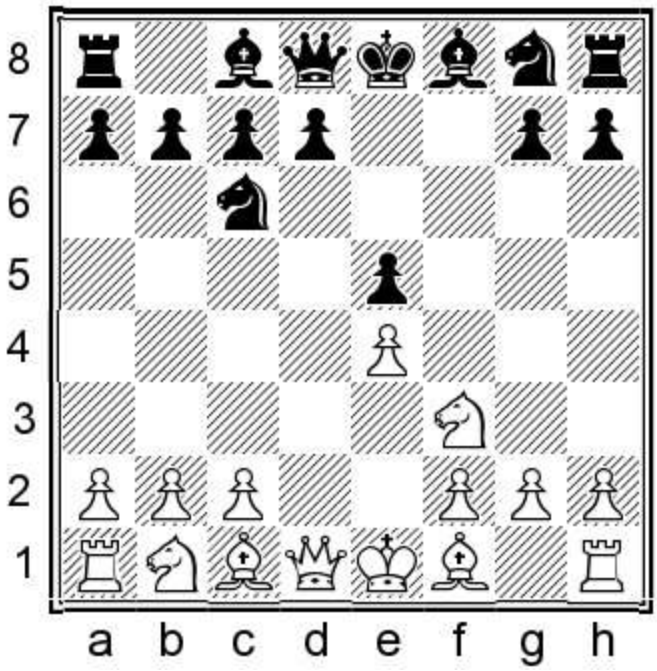
Another line is: 4...♗c5 5.♗c4 ♕e7 (5...fxe5 loses on the spot to 6.♗xg8 ♖xg8 7.♕d5+–) 6.♘c3 ♗b4 (6...♘xe5? 7.♘d5 is hopeless for Black) 7.0-0 (7.♗d2 should also offer a serious advantage) 7...♗xc3 8.bxc3



We have been following Pertuz – Pacheco Quintero, Ocana 2016. Black blundered in the game, but

chesstouring.com

even the more sensible 8...fxe5N runs into 9.♘g5! ♘d8 10.♕e2 d6 11.f4 when White's initiative should be decisive.



5.♗c4 ♘f6

I also checked 5...♕f6 6.0-0 ♗c5 7.♘c3 ♘d4 (7...♘ge7 runs into the unpleasant 8.♘b5 ♗b6 9.♗e3 when Black's position collapses) 8.♘xd4 exd4 9.♘d5 ♕e5 10.♗f4 and it was all over in Garnica – Benabdallah, email 2011.

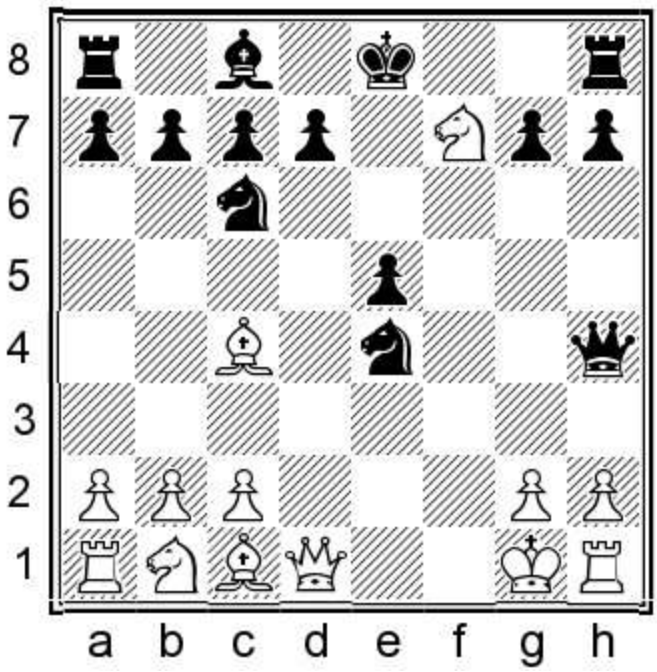
6.♘g5 d5

This is Black's only real chance.

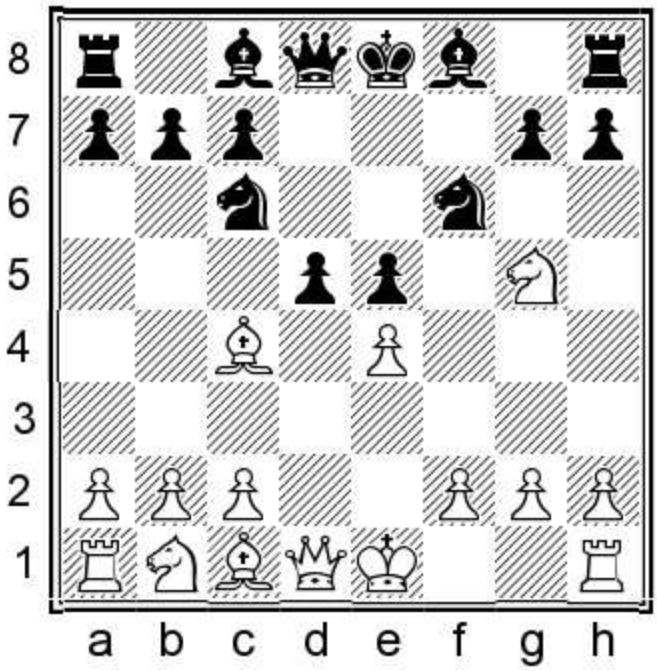
6...♕e7?? loses the queen: 7.♗f7† ♔d8 8.♘e6†+−

6...♗c5 7.♘f7 ♗xf2† 8.♔xf2 ♘xe4† 9.♔g1 ♕h4 sees White's king come under fire, but with precise play White is firmly in control:

chesstouring.com



10.g3 ♘xg3 (10...♕f6 11.♕e2 is virtually hopeless for Black) 11.♘xh8 ♘xh1 12.♕d5! White was winning in Marino – Garibaldi, 2003.



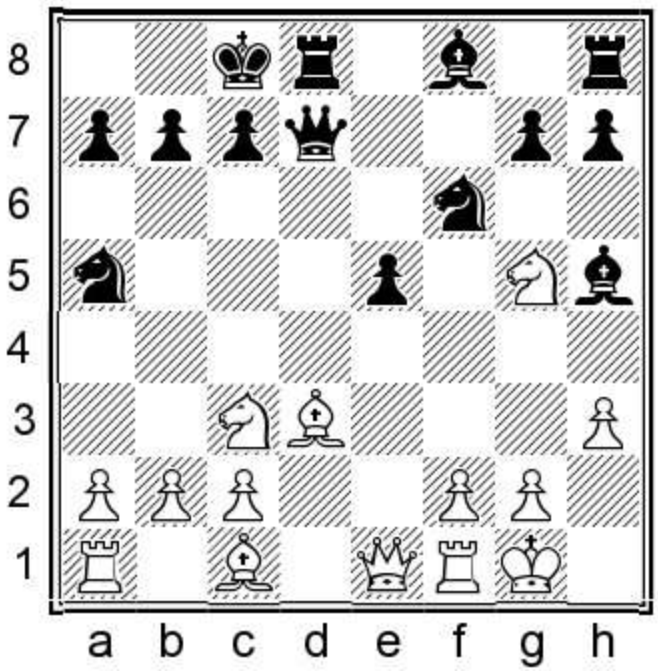
7.exd5 ♘a5 8.♗d3!

Other moves are playable but this seems most convincing to me.

8...♕xd5 9.0-0 ♗e7

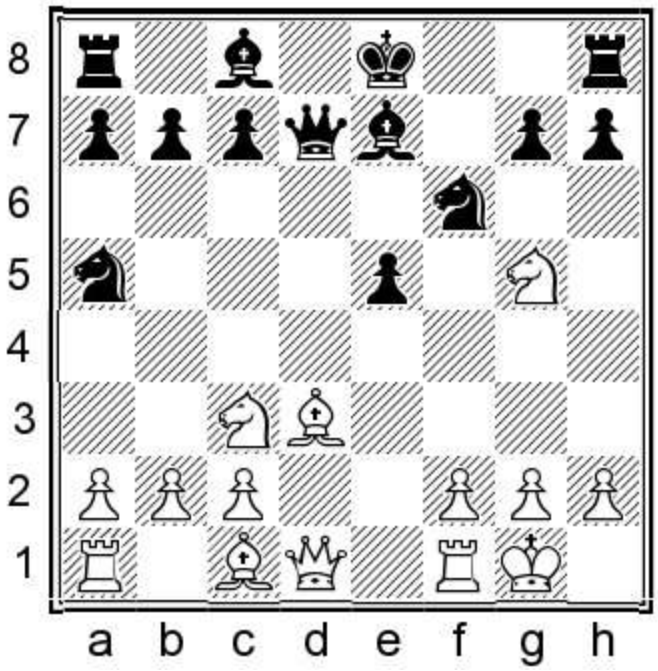
Another game continued: 9...♗g4 10.♕e1 0-0-0 11.♘c3 ♕d7 12.h3 ♗h5

chesstouring.com



13.♕xe5 ♘c6 14.♕e6 ♘d4 15.♕xd7† ♖xd7 16.♗e3+– White was a healthy pawn up in Glembek – Barbalic, corr. 2009.

10.♘c3 ♕d7



11.♗xh7!

This elegant tactical blow decides the game quickly.

11...♘xh7

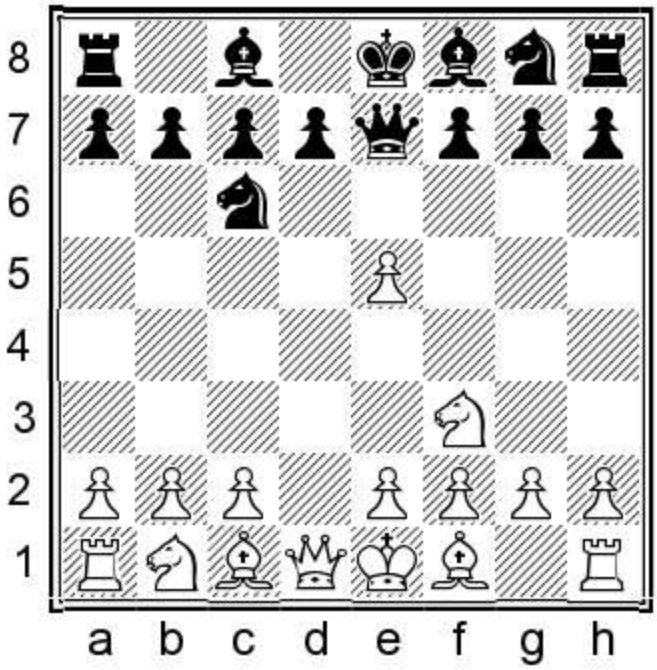
Black should have preferred 11...♕xd1 although the position after 12.♗g6† is also pretty hopeless for him.

chesstouring.com

12.♕h5† ♔d8 13.♘f7† ♔e8 14.♘xh8†+−

Black suffered a disaster in Moman – Ranganathan, corr. 2009.

A2) 3...♕e7



This is Black's main idea, hoping to either regain the pawn or jump with his queen to b4 under certain circumstances.

4.♗f4

This is the most ambitious continuation. White can also return the extra pawn with something like 4.♘c3 ♘xe5 5.e4 when he clearly has the easier game, but I feel obliged to refute Black's dubious opening outright.

4...♕b4†

This is the point behind Black's previous move.

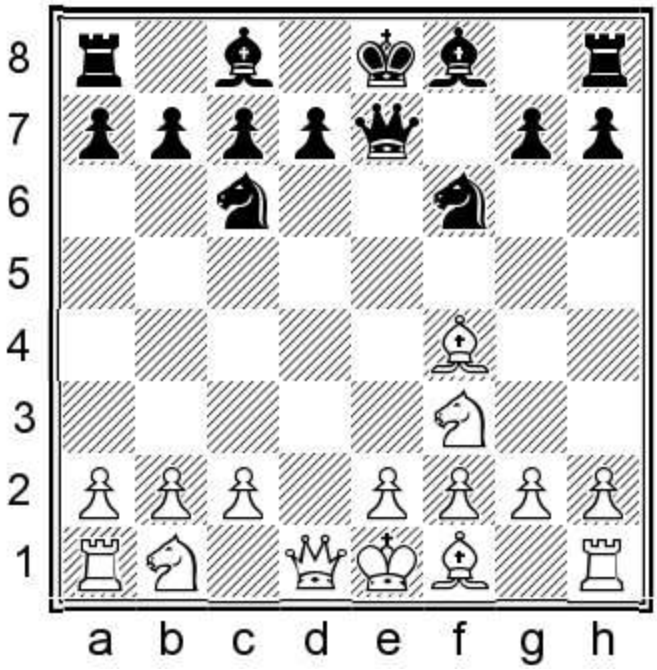
Black has absolutely no compensation after:

4...f6 5.exf6 ♘xf6

5...♕xf6 6.♕c1 d5 occurred in Solozhenkin – Bocchicchio, Montecatini Terme 1999, when White could have easily grabbed the second pawn with 7.♗xc7N 7...♗f5 8.c3, with a large advantage.

I found three games from this position, but White never played the following natural move:

chesstouring.com



6.♘c3N 6...d6 7.e4 ♘xe4

7...♗d7 is met by 8.♗d3 0-0-0 9.♕d2± followed by 0-0-0 with a healthy extra pawn.

This is the critical move for us to consider, but the pawn turns out to be poisoned:

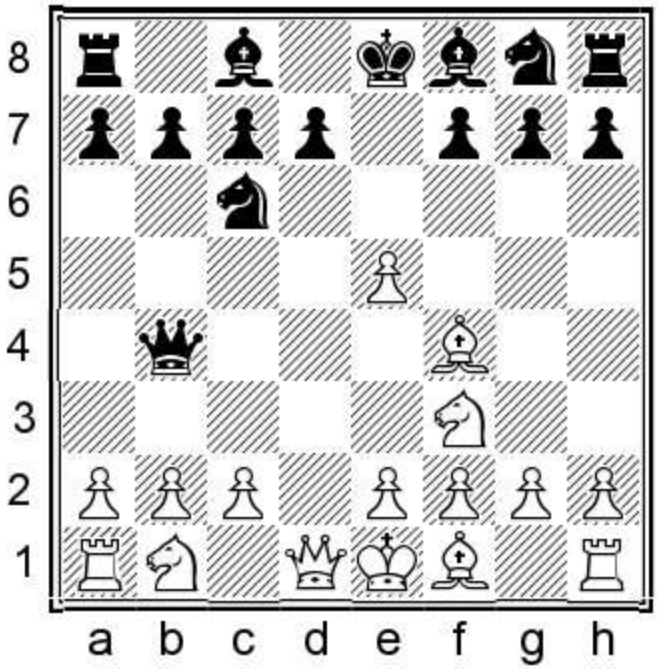
8.♘d5 ♕f7

Another instructive line is 8...♕d8 9.♗c4 ♗f5 10.♘d4 ♘xd4 11.♕xd4 c6 12.0-0-0! with a crushing initiative.

9.♗c4 ♗e6 10.0-0 0-0-0 11.♖e1

Black cannot avoid material losses, for example:

11...♘e7 12.♗g5! ♗xd5 13.♗xd5 ♕xd5 14.♕xd5 ♘xd5 15.♗xd8+–



5.♗d2 ♕xb2 6.♘c3

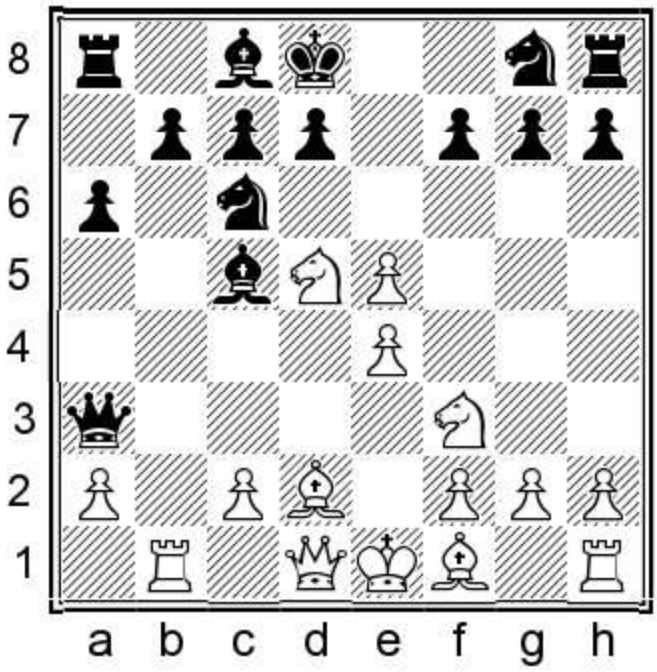
There is a famous childish trap: 6.♗c3? ♗b4 7.♕d2?? ♗xc3 8.♕xc3 ♕c1#

chesstouring.com

6...♗b4

This is the only remotely playable move. Others are plain bad:

6...a6 7.♖b1 ♕a3 8.♘d5 ♔d8 9.e4 gives White a huge advantage, for instance: 9...♗c5

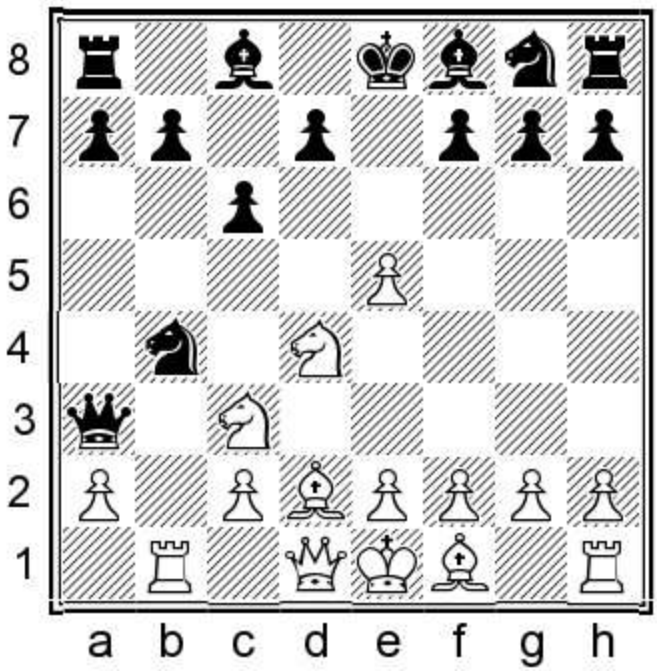


10.♗c4 b5 11.♗b3+– Kolanek – Martin, corr. 2011.

6...♘b4 7.♘d4 c6

7...c5 8.♖b1 ♕a3 9.♘db5 is already hopeless for Black. For instance, 9...♕a5 10.a3 ♘a6 11.♘e4+– followed by a check on d6.

8.♖b1 ♕a3



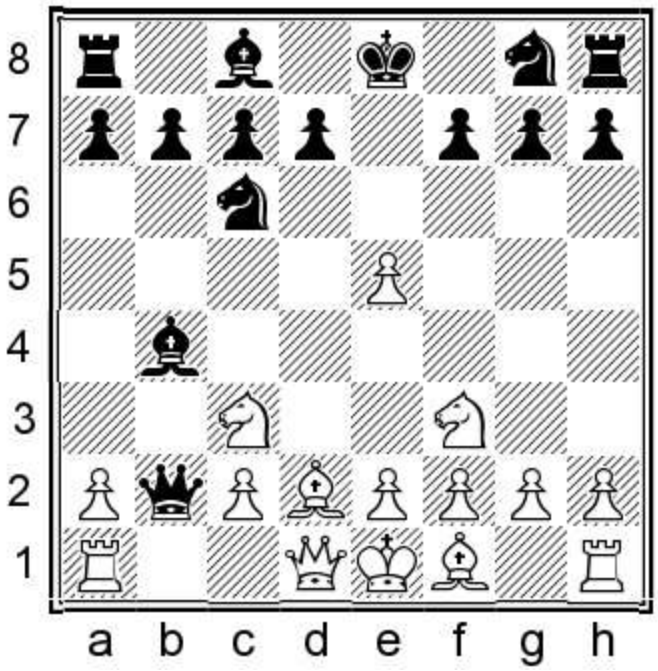
chesstouring.com

9.e3N

This is my favourite idea, although the game continuation is also excellent: 9.♖b3 ♕a5 10.a3 ♘d5 11.♘cb5! ♕d8 12.e4 ♘b6 13.♘d6† ♗xd6 14.exd6 White had an overwhelming advantage in Cordes – Nilsson, corr. 2014.

9...♘h6 10.♘e4 ♕a4 11.g4+–

White enjoys total domination, while the material is equal.



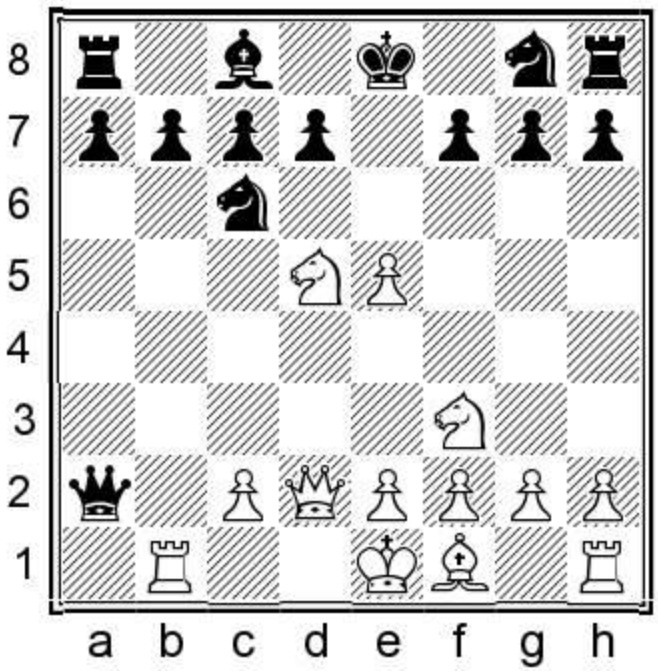
7.♖b1 ♕a3 8.♘d5!

Out of a few promising continuations, the text move seems to me to be the most accurate. We will consider **A21)** 8...♗xd2† and **A22)** 8...♗a5.

A21) 8...♗xd2† 9.♕xd2 ♕xa2

9...♔d8 has been played a few times but is hardly an improvement. 10.e4 is simplest, with a huge advantage for White.

chesstouring.com



10.♖d1 ♔d8

After 10...♔f8 11.♘xc7 ♖b8 12.♘b5+– Black is going to suffer with equal material.

11.♘g5!?

The simple 11.e4 offers White an overwhelming position. The choice is a matter of taste, but I decided to focus on a fancier, tactical solution.

11...♘h6 12.e6!

A nice trick, although even after the modest 12.f4!? White's compensation for the pawn should be more than sufficient.

12...d6

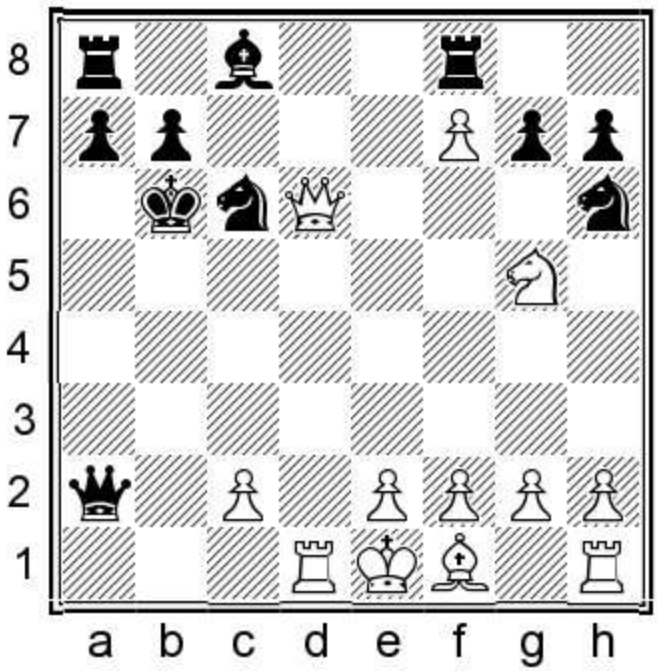
Obviously the only move.

12...♕a5? led to Black's downfall after 13.e7†! ♔e8 14.♕xa5 ♘xa5 15.♘xc7† ♔xe7 16.♘xa8+– in Brain – Demjen, Aggtelek 2000.

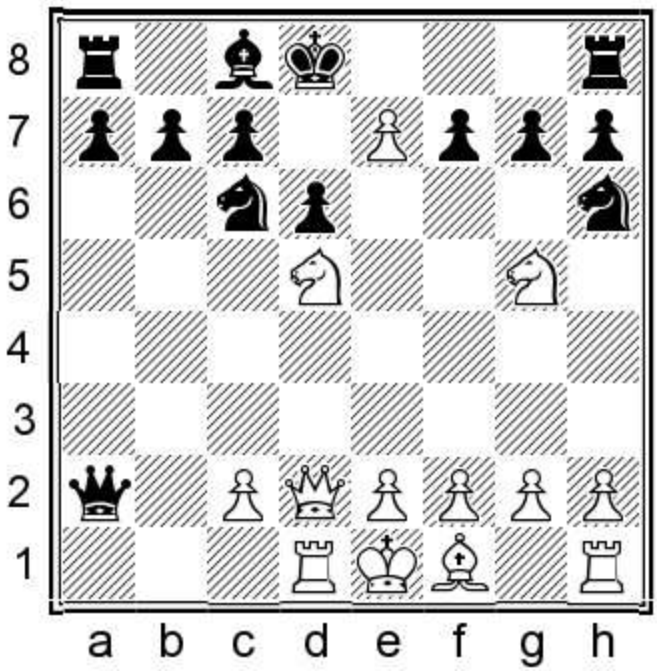
13.e7†

My line from *GM 2* is also good enough: 13.exf7 ♖f8 (13...♕a5 14.c3 ♗d7 would offer more resistance) 14.♘xc7! The decisive blow. 14...♔xc7 15.♕xd6† ♔b6

chesstouring.com



16.♘e4! The point. (16.♕xf8? only leads to a perpetual after 16...♕a5† 17.♖d2 ♕a1†=) 16...♕xc2 (16...♗f5 loses on the spot to 17.♘c3 ♕xc2 18.♘d5†) 17.♘d2 ♖xf7 18.♖b1† ♕xb1† 19.♘xb1 White is winning.



13...♔d7N

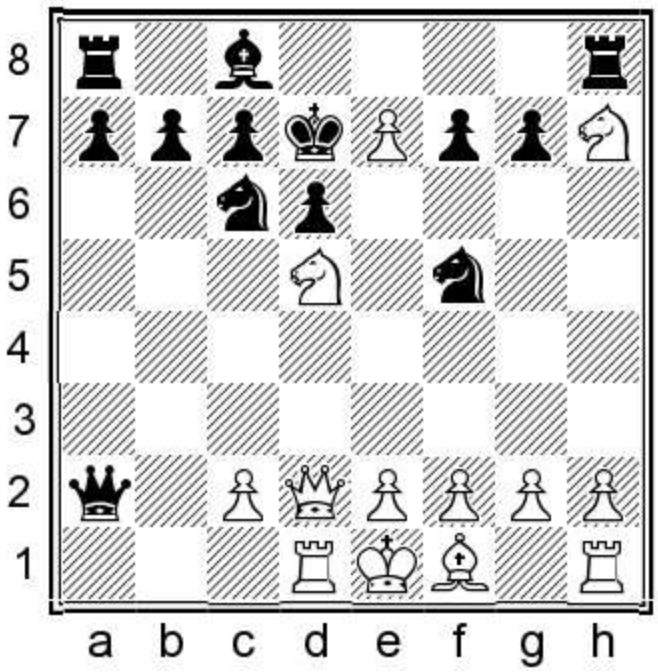
13...♘xe7? 14.♘xc7! d5 15.♘xa8 was winning for White in Hosdurga – Greatorex, Llandudno 2017.

The text move is the only way for Black to stay in the game. In my previous work I rejected this line in favour of the alternative mentioned at move 13 above, but later I realized that White is winning after:

14.♘xh7! ♘f5

14...♖xh7 15.e8=♕†! is a nice detail, with mate in a maximum of four more moves.

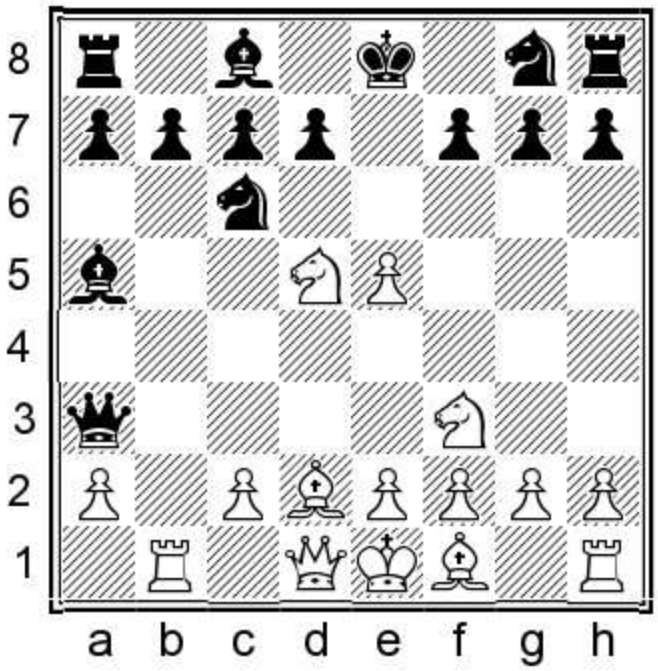
chesstouring.com



15.♘f8† ♔e8 16.♘xc7† ♔xe7 17.♘xa8 ♔xf8 18.e3+–

White's material advantage should decide.

A22) 8...♗a5



9.♖b5 ♗xd2†

9...a6? is a blunder. In Koenig – Neumann, Heroldsbach 1997, White could have decided the game immediately with: 10.♖xa5! ♘xa5 11.♘xc7†+–

9...♗b6 allows a similar motif with 10.♖xb6! axb6 11.♘xc7† ♔d8 12.♘xa8 ♕xa8 13.♕b1+– as seen in Zordick – Crnilovic, corr. 2016.

chesstouring.com

10.♕xd2 ♔d8 11.♘g5!

11.e4 is excellent for White but I find the text move even more tempting.

11...♘h6

11...♘xe5 occurred in Gauthier – Morin, Montreal 2011, when 12.♘xc7!N 12...♔xc7 13.♖xe5 would have given White an overwhelming advantage.

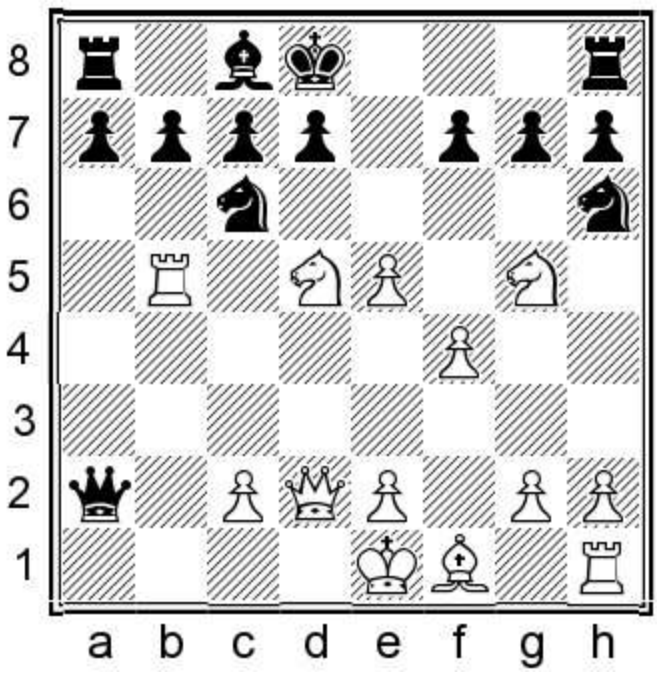
12.f4

This is my recommendation from *GM 2*, which is no longer a novelty.

12...♕xa2

12...a6 13.♖b3 ♕xa2 14.♔f2+– is similar to our main line.

12...♖e8 13.e3 ♕xa2 14.♗e2 also looks pretty hopeless for Black.



13.e3 ♕a1† 14.♔f2 f6

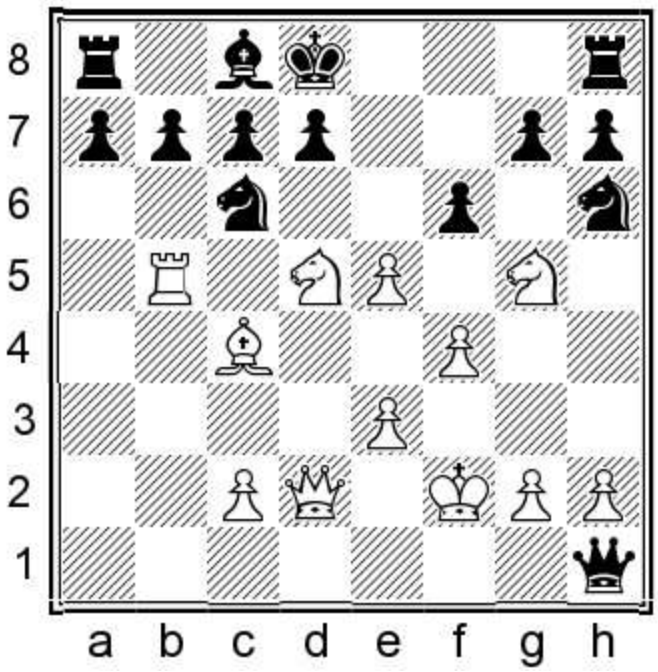
Another game continued 14...♘g4† 15.♔g1 ♘h6 16.h3 a6 17.♖c5 ♕a3 18.♖c3 ♕a5 19.♔h2 with a decisive advantage for White due to Black's poor king and undeveloped queenside, Pototschnig – Nicholls, corr. 2011.

15.♗c4!

A brilliant combinative solution.

15...♕xh1

chesstouring.com



16.♘e6†! dxe6 17.♘xc7†! ♔e7 18.♕d6† ♔f7 19.♗xe6† ♗xe6 20.♕xe6† ♔f8 21.exf6+–
White had a crushing attack in Pilarska – Nicholls, corr. 2010.

B) 1...♘c6

"This move is very seldom seen at GM level" is a quote from *GM 2* referring to this move. I found this quite funny when I read it back while researching the present volume, since the database shows that Carlsen, Caruana, Mamedyarov and many other strong Grandmasters have tried it in recent years – often in rapid or blitz games, but still...

2.d5
Without a doubt the most principled continuation.

2...♘e5 3.f4!
This is the right move order. I realized that after 3.e4 e6 4.f4, as I recommended in *GM 2*, Black has 4...exd5! with the idea 5.fxe5 ♕h4†! and Black has a draw.

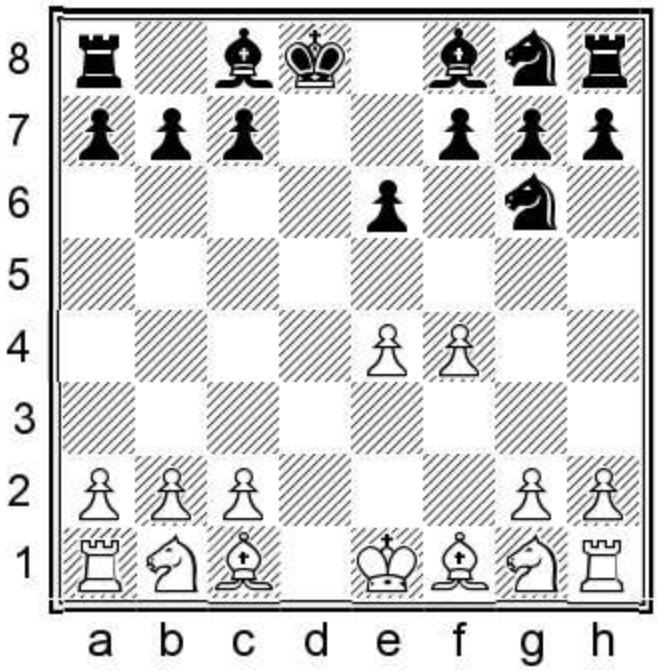
3...♘g6 4.e4 e6
4...e5 5.dxe6 is the same thing.

5.dxe6
Obviously Black has two options: **B1)** 5...dxe6 and **B2)** 5...fxe6.

B1) 5...dxe6 6.♕xd8† ♔xd8

chesstouring.com

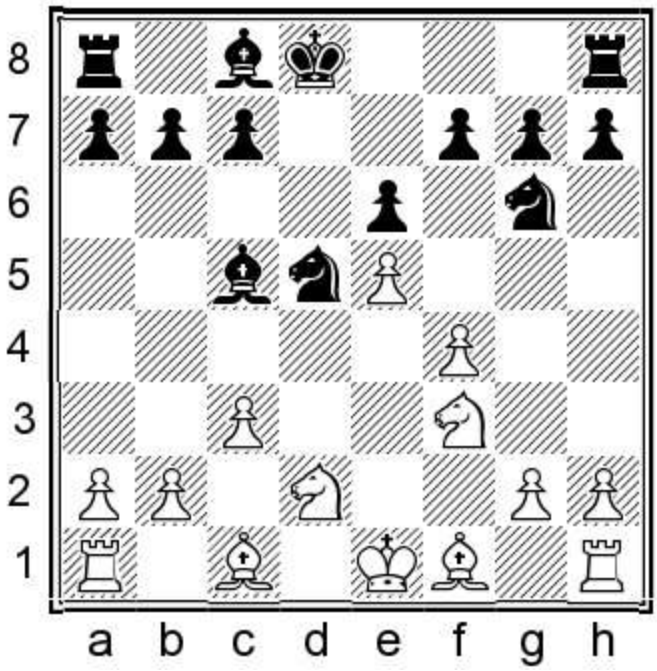
The resulting queenless middlegame offers White a pleasant advantage. Black's main problem is his misplaced knight on g6.



7.♘f3 ♗c5

This is Black's most popular choice. Here are a few other options:

7...♗b4† 8.c3 ♗c5 changes the position slightly, but the general evaluation remains about the same. 9.♘bd2 ♘f6 (obviously Black cannot play 9...♘xf4? due to 10.♘b3 ♗d6 11.e5+– winning a piece) 10.e5 ♘d5 This occurred in Majuwana Kankanamge – Latypov, corr. 2015, and here I offer a choice of improvements:

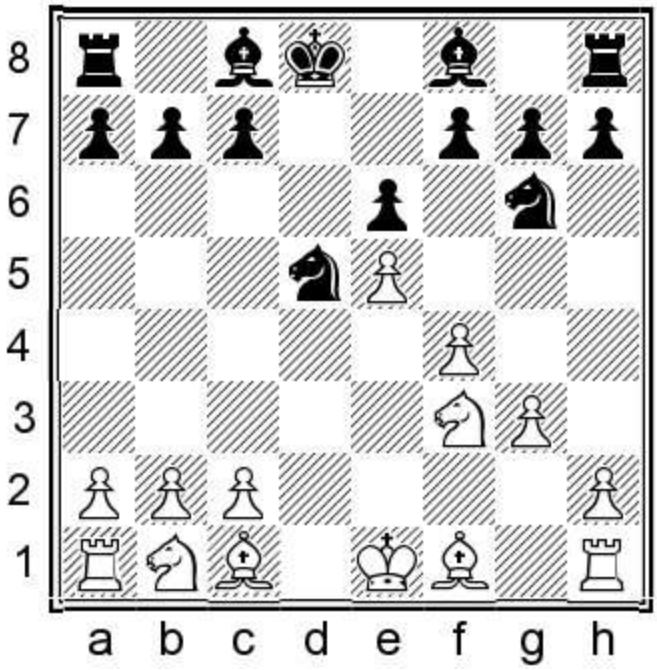


11.♘b3N (the alternative is 11.g3N 11...♗d7 12.♗d3 ♗c6 13.♗e4) 11...♗b6 12.g3 ♗d7 13.♗d2 With a

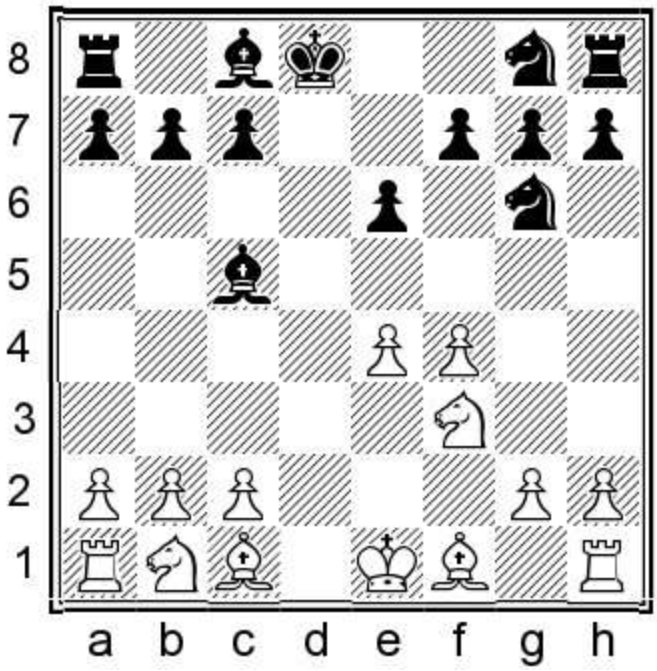
chessbuilder.com

pleasant advantage for White in both cases.

In the event of 7...♘f6 I still like my novelty from *GM 2*: 8.e5!?N 8...♘d5 9.g3 White's main plan is to slowly prepare c2-c4, driving Black's knight from the centre. Here are a few illustrative lines:



9...♗c5 10.a3 ♗d7 11.♗d3 ♗c6 (or 11...a5 12.♘bd2 ♗c6 13.♘e4 ♗b6 14.♔e2± followed by c2-c4) 12.b4 ♗b6 13.♔e2 White is clearly better thanks to his huge space advantage; Black's minor pieces hardly have any good squares.



8.♘c3 ♗d7

This has taken over as Black's main line in recent years. GM Stevic and especially IM Vlasenko have both achieved superb results with it.

chesstouring.com

8...♘h6 occurred in Altini – Bove, Spilimbergo 2018, when 9.g3N 9...♗d7 10.♗h3 would have kept control for White.

I also checked:
8...♘f6 9.e5 ♘g4

9...♘d5 10.♘e4 ♗b6 11.g3 ♗d7 12.♗d2 ♘e3 13.♗d3 ♗c6 14.♔e2 ♘f5 occurred in Baumegger – Feistenauer, Austria 1997, and now White should have played 15.b4!N 15...a6 16.a4, seizing the initiative on the queenside.

10.♘e4 ♗e3

10...♗b6 11.c4 ♗d7 12.b4 allows White to seize even more space.

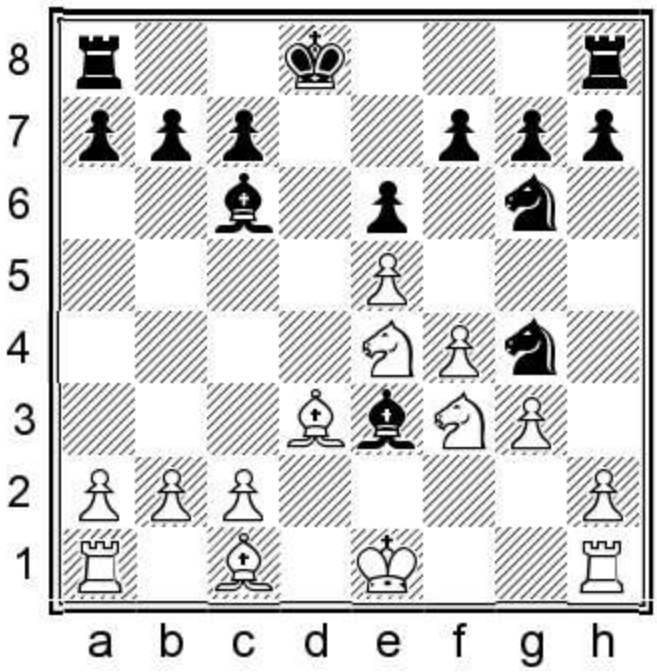
11.g3

White has no problem neutralizing Black's activity.

11...♗d7 12.♗d3 ♗c6

12...♔e7 13.h3! ♗xc1 14.hxg4 ♗e3 15.♔e2 ♗b6 16.♖h5 was clearly better for White in Khenkin – Mate Adan, Don Benito 2012.

We have been following one of the more recent games in this variation, Arizmendi Martinez – Carretero Ortiz, Linares 2018. White's strongest continuation would have been:



13.h3!N 13...♗xc1 14.♖xc1 ♘e3 15.♘d4!

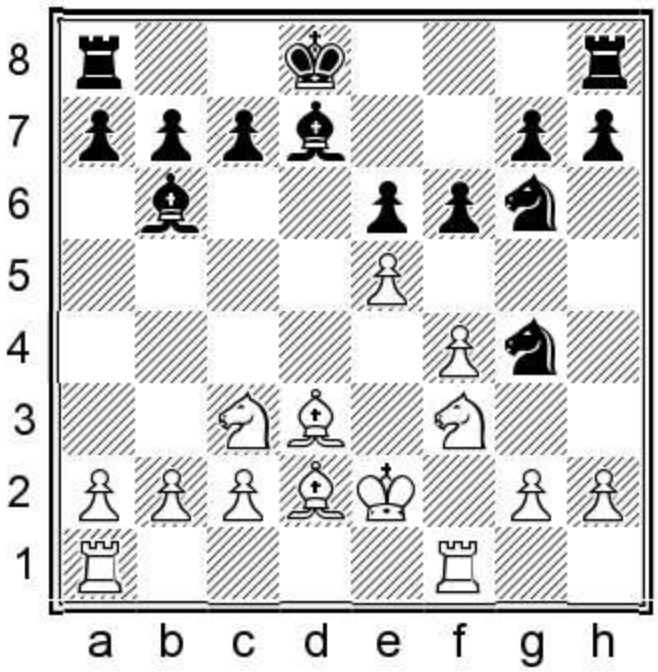
With clearly better chances for White.

9.♗d3 ♘f6

I checked two other moves:

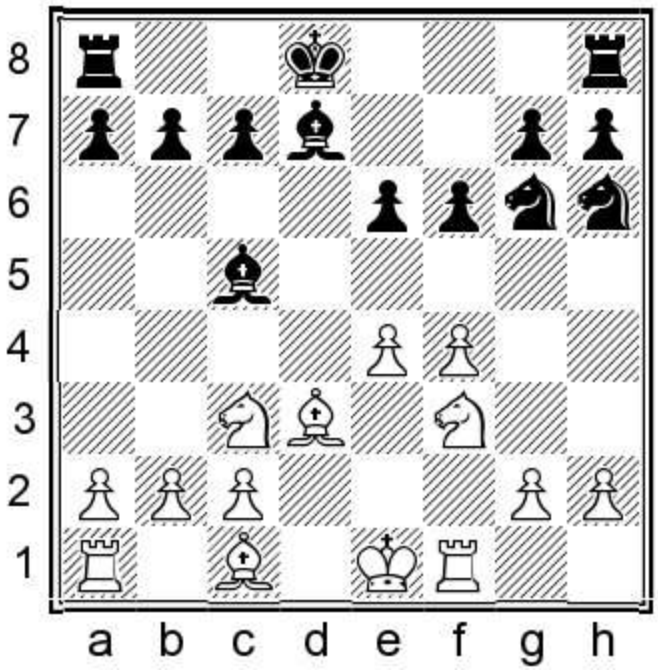
9...f6 10.e5 ♗b6 occurred in Kuljasevic – Stevic, Austria 2014. I believe the natural 11.♗d2N would have offered White good prospects, for instance: 11...♘h6 12.♖f1 ♘g4 13.♔e2

chesstouring.com



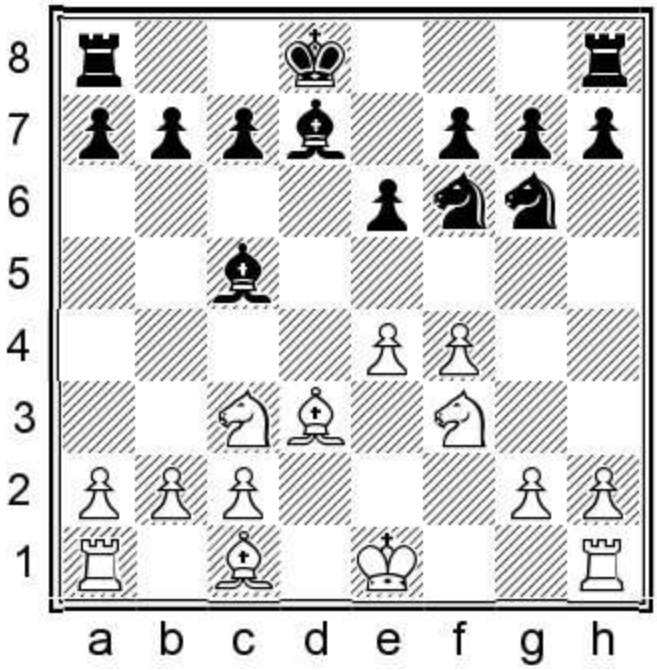
White retains a pleasant advantage, especially taking into account that 13...fxe5?! 14.h3 ♘f6 15.♗xg6! hxg6 16.♘xe5 turns out badly for Black.

9...♘h6 has been played by Vlasenko with a lot of success, but this does not change the objective evaluation of the position. 10.♖f1 f6 occurred in Timerkhanov – Vlasenko, Kirov 2013, and here I again suggest:



11.e5!N This thematic move works well; for instance, 11...♘g4 12.♔e2 and White maintains an obvious advantage.

chesstouring.com

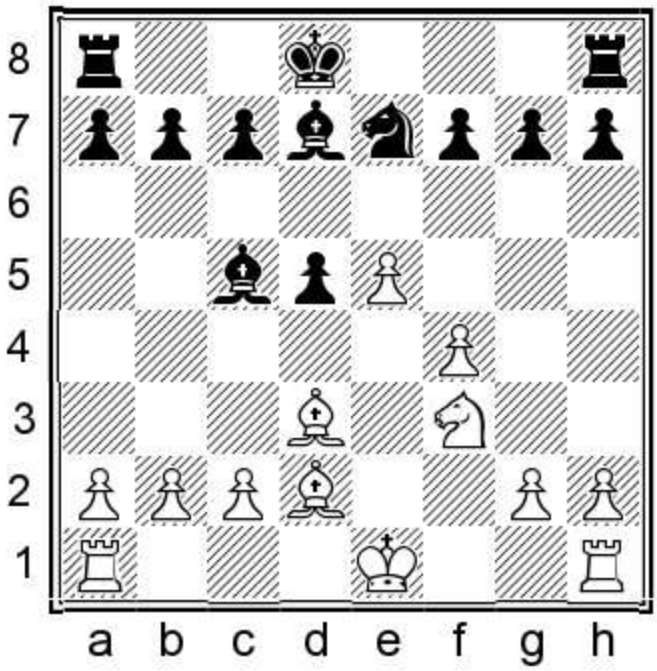


10.e5

10.♖f1!? also deserves attention, and it certainly worked well in the following game: 10...♔e7? 11.f5! ♘f8 12.♗f4 ♘e8 13.0-0-0 f6 14.e5!+– White already had a decisive attack in Zakhartsov – V. Ivanov, Kazan 2013.

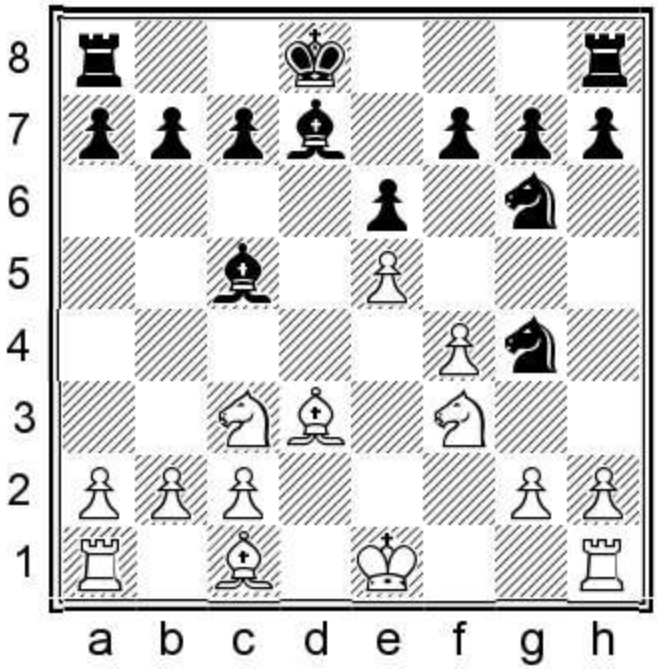
10...♘g4

10...♘d5 is an obvious alternative, when an instructive game continued: 11.♘xd5 exd5 12.♗d2 ♘e7



13.c4! dxc4 14.♗xc4 ♗e6 15.♖c1 ♗b6 16.♔e2 ♗xc4† 17.♖xc4 ♘d5 18.♖d1 ♔e7 19.f5↑ Despite the simplifications, White maintained a significant initiative in J. Andersen – Bender, email 2012.

chesstouring.com



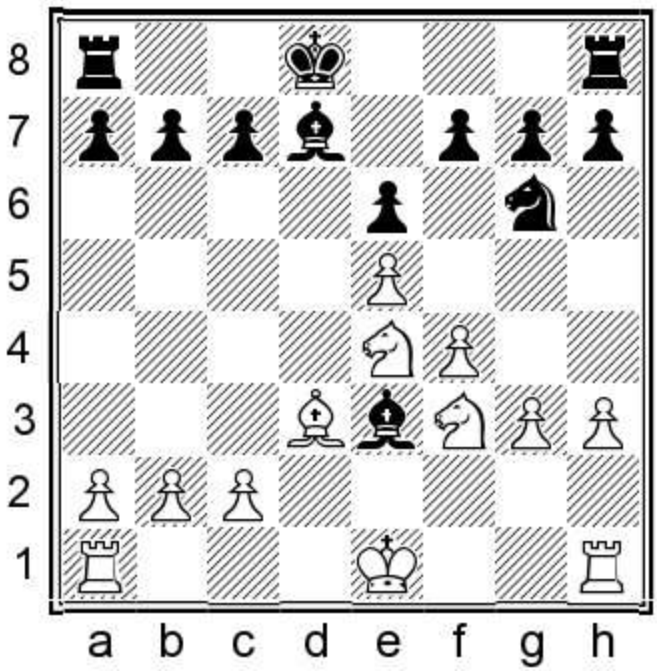
11.♘e4 ♗b6N

11...♗e3 is well met by 12.h3!N (even stronger than 12.g3, which transposes to the 8...♘f6 line analysed on pages 572-573; this was the actual move order of the Khenkin – Mate Adan game referenced there) 12...♗xc1 13.♖xc1 ♘e3 14.♔f2 ♘d5 15.g3± when the trade of dark-squared bishops doesn't really help Black, and White is clearly better.

The text move has not been played but it looks natural enough. I see no problem with my line from *GM 2*:

12.h3 ♘e3 13.♗xe3 ♗xe3 14.g3

Black's knight is clearly misplaced and his bishop pair is of limited value.



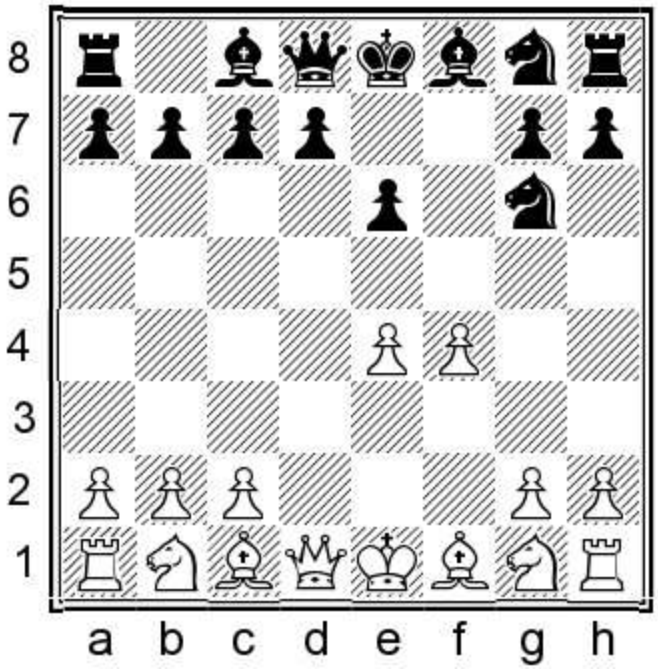
chesstouring.com

14...♗c6 15.♔e2 ♗b6 16.c4 ♗xe4 17.♗xe4 c6 18.b4

White has a dominant position and is ready to develop his play on the queenside.

B2) 5...fxe6

This leads to a more complex game than the previous option.



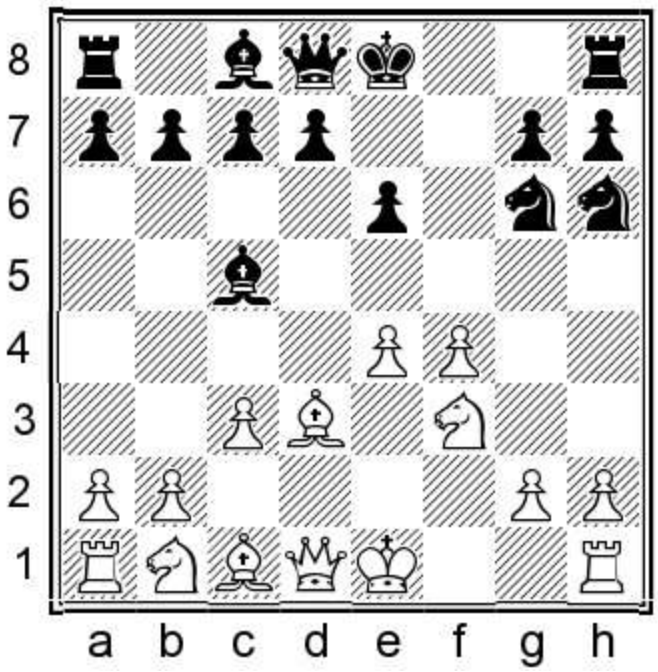
6.♘f3

This move is obvious enough, but now Black has a wide choice. I decided to focus on **B21)** 6...d5!?, **B22)** 6...d6 and **B23)** 6...♗c5.

6...b6?! is unimpressive: 7.♗d3 ♗b7 8.♕e2 ♕f6 9.g3 0-0-0 10.h4 (10.♘c3N is also good) 10...♘h6 11.♘c3± Black's pieces were miserably placed on the queenside in Istratescu – Petenyi, Legnica 2013.

6...♗b4† 7.c3 ♗c5 is a fairly common theme, with the idea of preventing our knight from developing to c3, but it does not solve Black's opening problems. 8.♗d3 ♘h6 (I also checked 8...d6 9.♕e2 ♗d7 as played in Blocher – Lenninger, Liechtenstein 1995, when 10.g3N 10...♘f6 11.e5 ♘g4 12.♖f1± would have been great for White) Now in Rush – Lam, Llandudno 2017, White should have played:

chesstouring.com



9.♕e2N 9...0-0 10.g3 d5 11.e5 ♘f5 12.♘bd2 ♗b6 13.♘b3 With the better game for White.

B21) 6...d5!?

This move was recommended by Schuyler in *The Dark Knight System*, a repertoire book which advocates 1...♘c6. Interestingly, the move was still a novelty when the book was published in 2013, and it has only been tested in a single game since then. Conveniently for us, it was a correspondence game featuring model play by White.

7.h4!

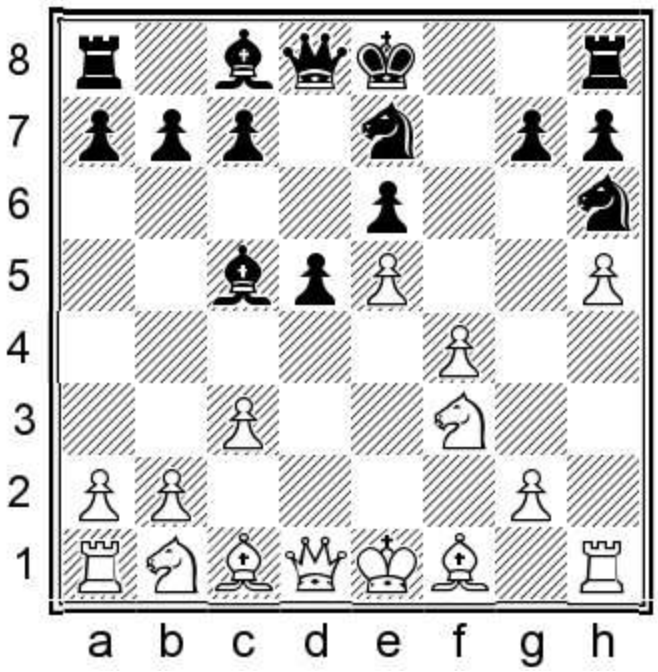
A powerful move, immediately seizing the initiative on the kingside.

7...♗b4† 8.c3 ♗c5 9.e5!

Schuyler offers an illustrative line beginning with 9.h5 ♘6e7 10.b4, but the text move improves for White.

9...♘h6 10.h5 ♘e7

chesstouring.com



11.♘g5 0-0 12.♗d3 ♘ef5 13.♖h3 ♘f7 14.♘xf7 ♖xf7 15.♕e2±

White's pressure along the b1-h7 diagonal eventually led to decisive gains in Barkov – Belanoff, corr. 2015.

B22) 6...d6

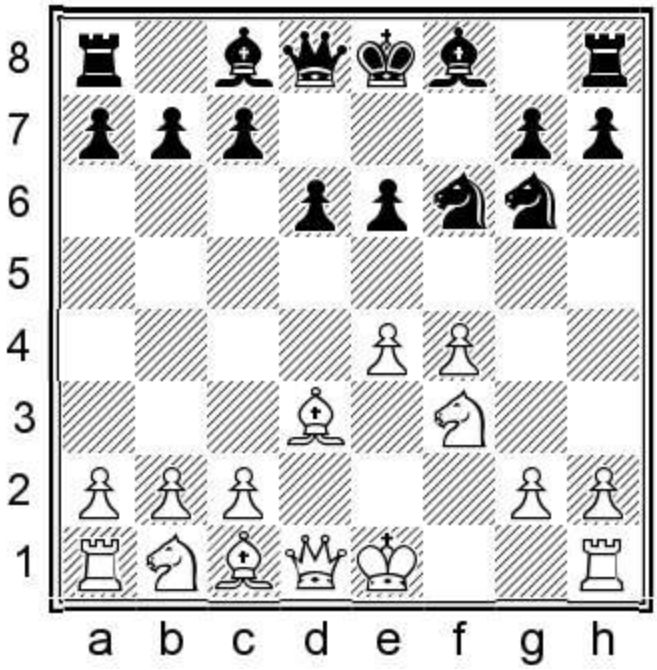
This looks too passive but the resulting position has arisen in quite a few games (mostly via transposition), so it is worth taking a quick look at it.

7.♗d3 e5?!

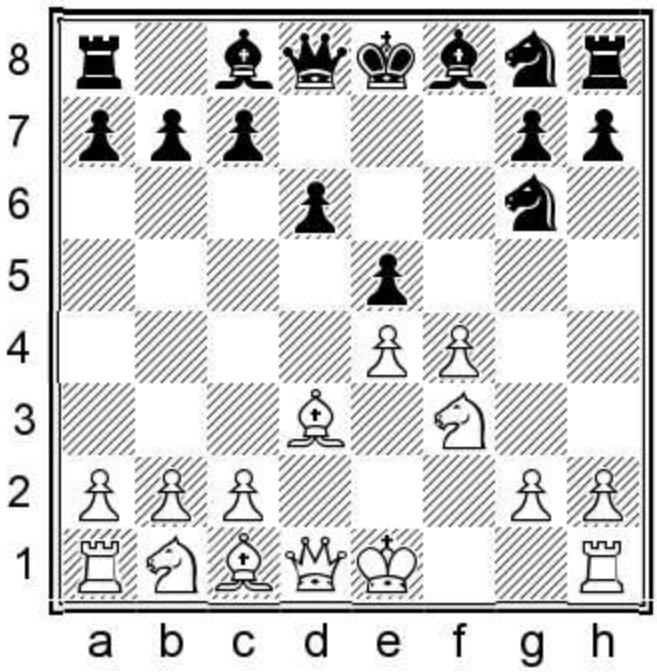
This move seems consistent but it leads to a difficult position for Black.

7...♘h4 turned out badly after 8.0-0 ♘xf3† 9.♕xf3 g6? 10.f5, and White developed a crushing attack in Kalinic – Popov, Croatia 2015.
7...♘f6 has been played in a couple of games.

chesstouring.com



Both times White missed the opportunity for 8.e5!N (I find this more natural and convincing than 8.0-0, which was played in both games) 8...♘d5 (8...dxe5? only makes matters worse after 9.♘xe5!) 9.♗xg6† hxg6 10.♕d3± with obvious problems for Black.



8.f5! ♘6e7

8...♘h4 provides little relief after 9.g3 ♘xf3† 10.♕xf3 c6 11.c4 h5 12.♘c3 and White was clearly better in Schmidt – Kokholm, Ballerup 2010.

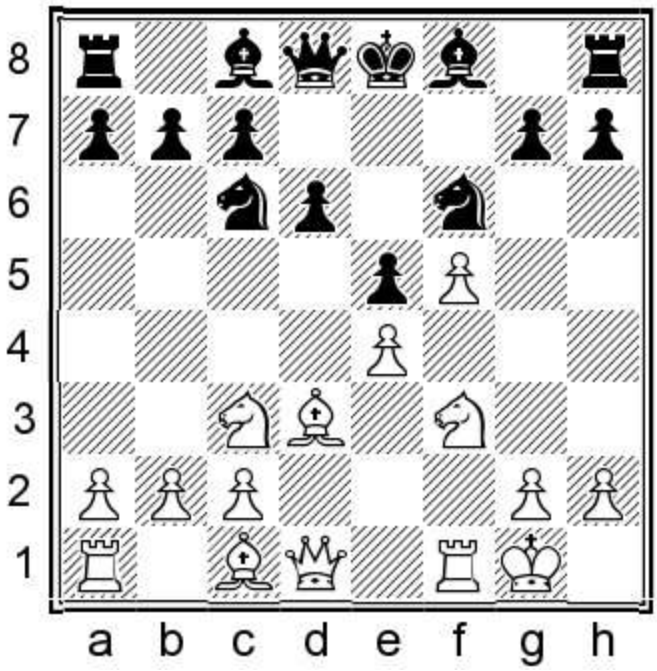
9.0-0 ♘f6

This transposes to a game from 2015, which we will briefly follow.

chesstouring.com

10.♘c3 ♘c6

This position occurred in Latzke – Cofman, Ditzingen 2015. I still like my recommendation from *GM 2*:



11.♘g5!N

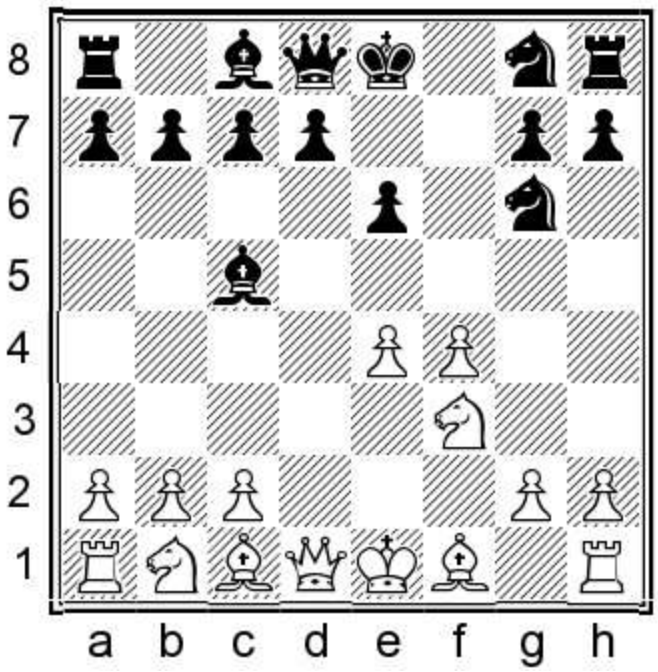
With the following idea:

11...h6?! 12.♘e6 ♗xe6 13.fxe6

White's advantage is close to decisive, as ♘d5 will come with devastating effect, while 13...♗e7? loses immediately to 14.♖xf6 followed by ♕h5†.

B23) 6...♗c5

chesstouring.com



Schuyler criticizes this move and he may be right, but it remains Black's most popular choice by a wide margin.

7.♘c3

Note the optimal timing of this move, when ...♗b4 would involve a loss of tempo.

Black usually proceeds with either **B231)** 7...♘h6 or **B232)** 7...♘f6.

The only other noteworthy line is:

7...d6 8.♘a4!

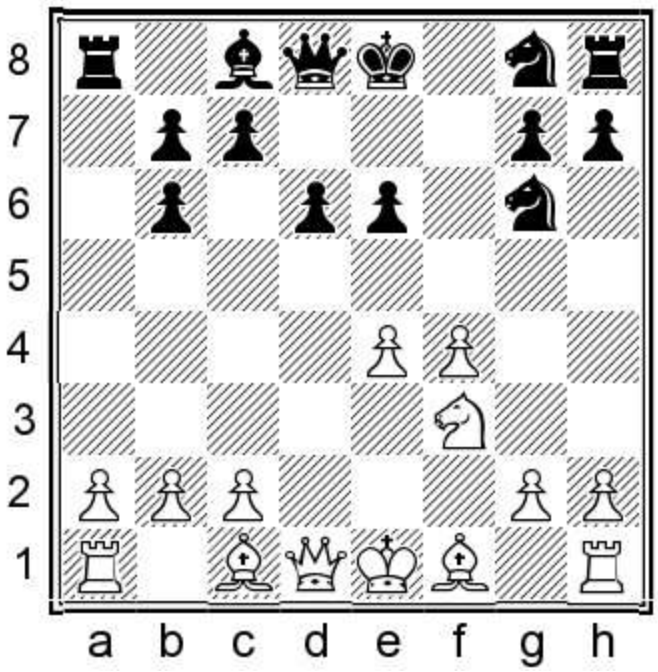
White should take the opportunity to eliminate Black's dark-squared bishop.

8...♗b6

8...♗b4† should obviously be met by: 9.c3 (rather than the strange 9.♗d2, which occurred in a couple of previous games) 9...♗a5 10.b4 ♗b6 11.♗d3 ♘f6 (or 11...♘8e7 12.♘xb6 axb6 13.0-0 and White enjoys a pleasant edge) 12.♘xb6 axb6 13.e5 ♘d5 14.♗xg6† hxg6 15.0-0 Both sides have some weaknesses in their positions but Black's are more serious, and White eventually prevailed in Rudykh – Dreisch, corr. 2017.

9.♘xb6 axb6

chesstouring.com



10.♗d3N

This is an obvious improvement over 10.e5 ♘8e7, which led to a double-edged game in Ruban – Ermenkov, Miskolc 1990.

10...♘8e7

10...♘f6?! runs into the unpleasant 11.e5.

11.0-0 0-0 12.g3±

White is better due to his bishop pair and space advantage, not forgetting the misplaced knight on g6.

B231) 7...♘h6

This is a thematic way to develop the knight in these positions, but here it proves dubious after White's powerful reply.

8.f5! ♘h4

Other moves also don't help, for instance:

8...♘g4?! is bad in view of 9.fxg6 ♘f2 10.♕e2 ♘xh1 11.♗g5 ♗e7 12.♗xe7 ♕xe7 13.0-0-0± and Black's knight is trapped in the corner, Vantika – Kotepalli, Chennai 2016.

The only other option is:

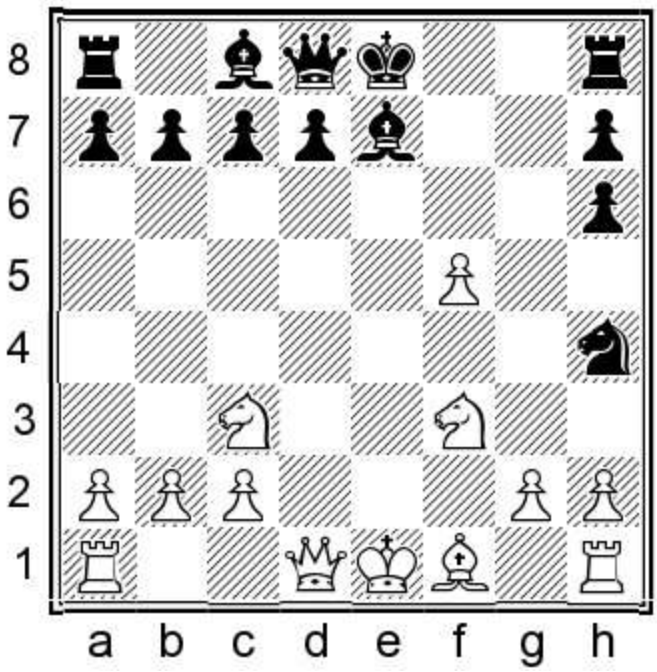
8...exf5 9.♗g5! ♗e7

After 9...♘e7 10.♗xh6 gxh6 11.♕d2 ♗b4 12.♕d4 Black soon collapsed in Grammatica – Kokorin, corr. 2011.

10.♗xh6 gxh6 11.exf5 ♘h4

This position has been reached in two games, but in both of them White failed to find the best continuation, which I also overlooked in *GM 2*:

chesstouring.com



12.♗c4!N

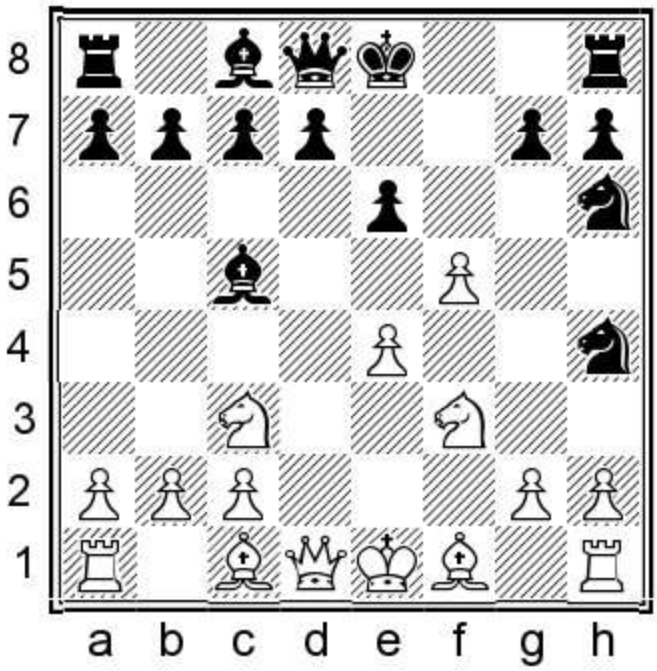
Black's situation looks pretty bleak, for example:

12...c6

12...♘xg2† 13.♔f2 ♘h4 14.♖e1+– is hopeless for Black.

13.♕e2 ♘xf3† 14.♕xf3 d5 15.0-0-0+–

A subsequent sacrifice on d5 should easily decide the game.



9.♘g5!

My novelty from *GM 2* has brought White three victories!

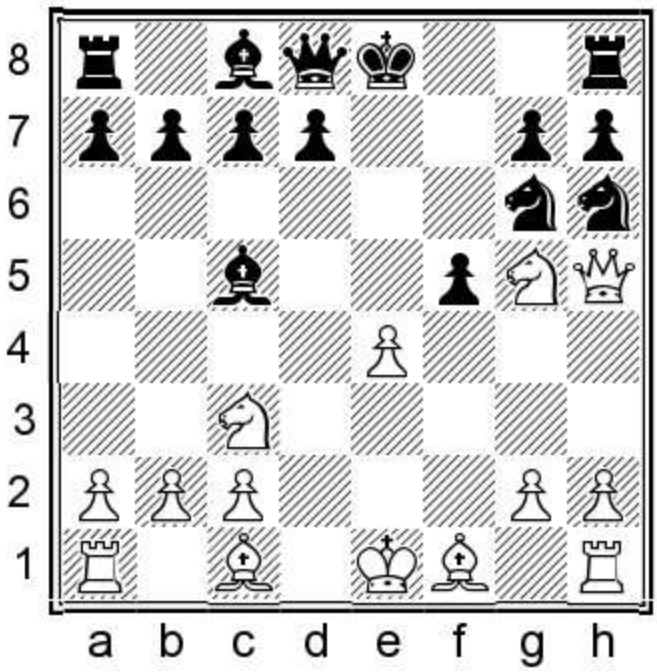
9...exf5

After 9...0-0 10.♕h5 Black had to give up his knight for scant compensation in Lagashin – Pakhomov,

chesstouring.com

St Petersburg 2013.

10.♕h5† ♘g6



11.exf5!N

11.♗c4 has yielded two victories for White but the text move looks much more convincing. We will follow my analysis from *GM 2*.

11...♘xf5

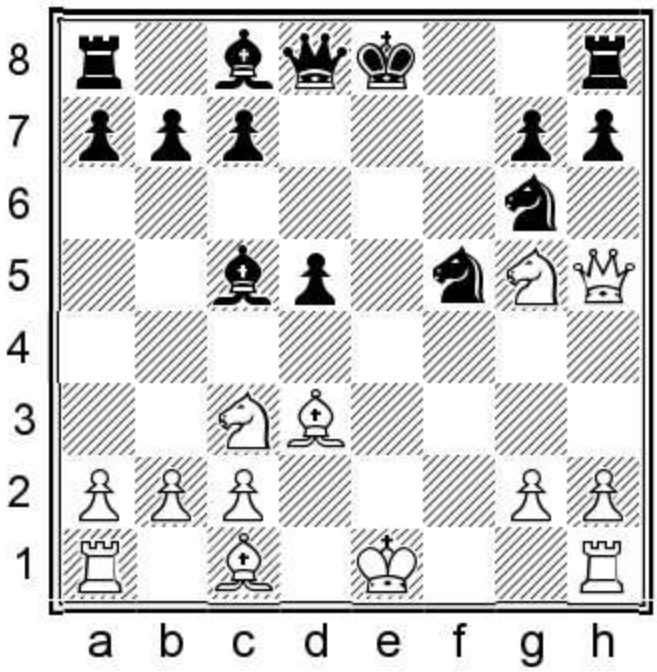
Black loses by force after 11...♕e7† 12.♔d1 ♘xf5 13.♗d3 when there are too many threats.

12.♗d3 d5

Black is unable to cope with the direct threats.

12...♕f6 also comes unstuck after 13.♖f1 d6 14.♕e2†+− when the f5-knight will be lost.

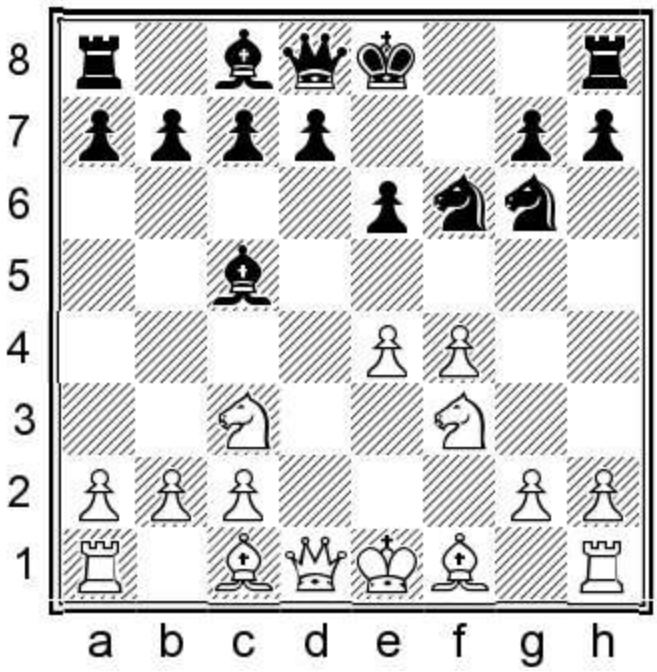
chesstouring.com



13.♖f1 ♕e7† 14.♔d1 ♘h6 15.h3!

Black cannot avoid material losses.

B232) 7...♘f6

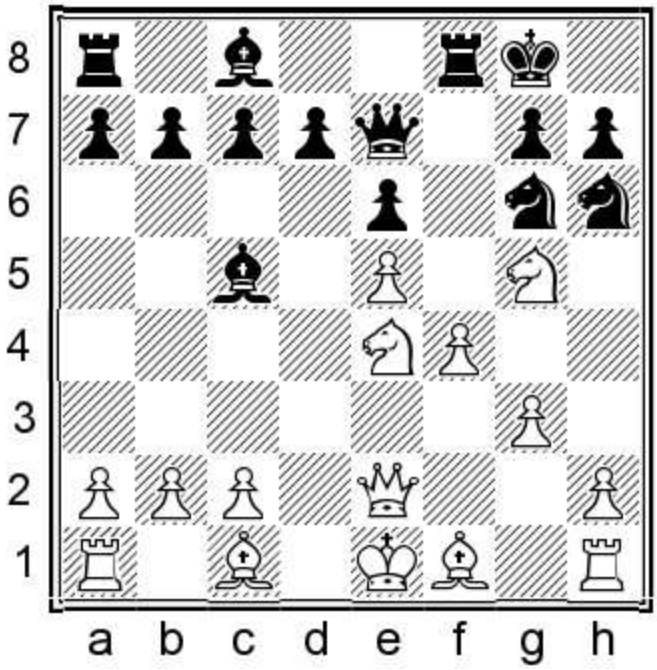


This is Black's most popular continuation although he scores pretty dismally with it.

8.e5 ♘g4 9.♘e4 ♗b6

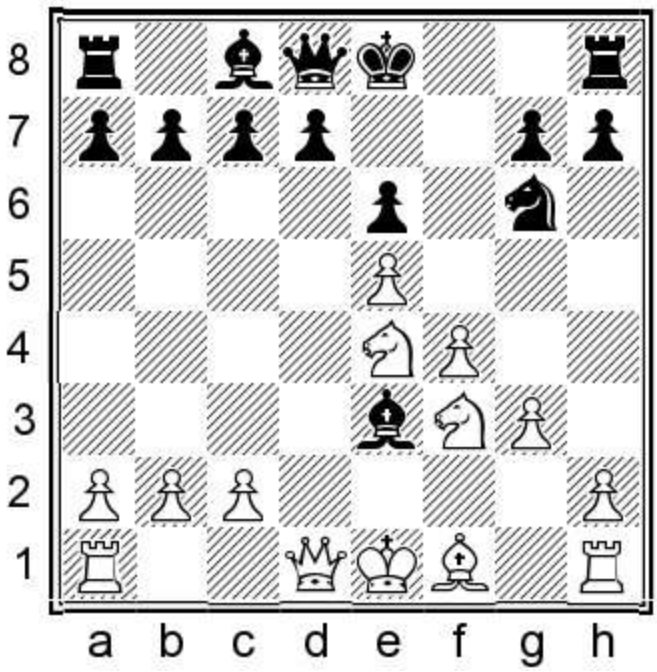
In the event of 9...♕e7 I still like my novelty from *GM 2*: 10.♕e2!?N (10.c3 and 10.g3 have been played but they both seem a little slow) 10...0-0 11.♘fg5 ♘h6 12.g3

chesstouring.com



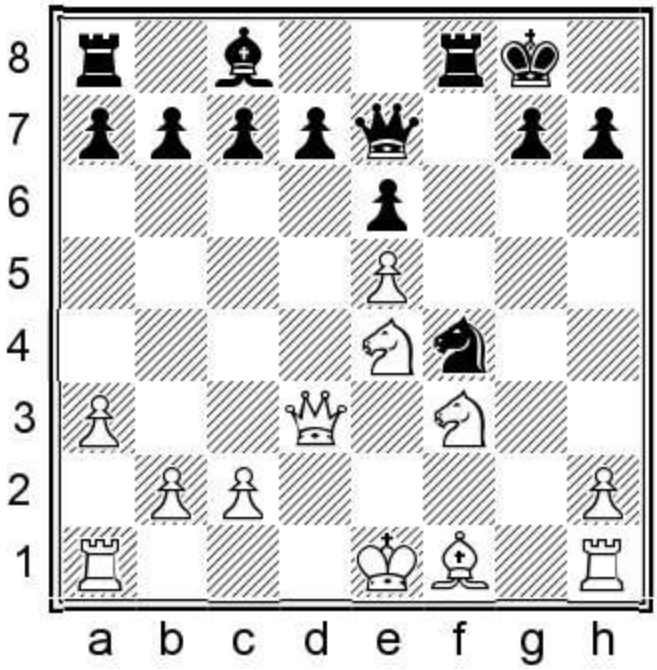
12...d5 This seems like Black's only decent try to create some activity. 13.♘xc5 ♕xc5 14.c3± White is clearly better.

9...♘e3 is an obvious try but after 10.♗xe3 ♗xe3 11.g3 the two bishops are not so important. White's advantage is obvious, for example:

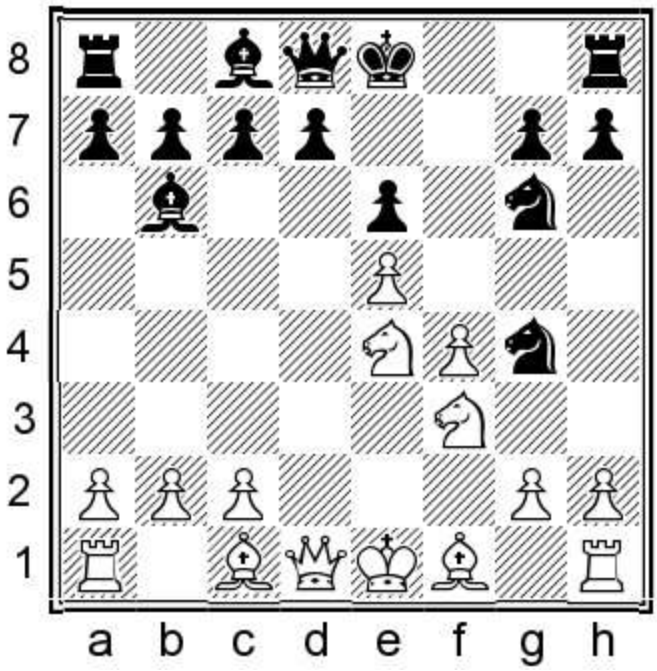


11...♕e7 12.a3! Preventing the check on b4. 12...0-0 13.♕d3 ♗xf4 (Black tries to complicate matters, as after 13...♗b6 14.0-0-0± it is hard to see how he will develop his queenside) 14.gxf4 ♘xf4 Now in Sutkovic – Kalajzic, Omis 2006, the most accurate continuation would have been:

chesstouring.com



15.♕d2!N 15...♘g6 (15...b6 runs into 16.♘f6†! ♖xf6 17.exf6 ♕xf6 18.♕d4 with a decisive advantage) 16.♕e3! Black remains with no compensation.



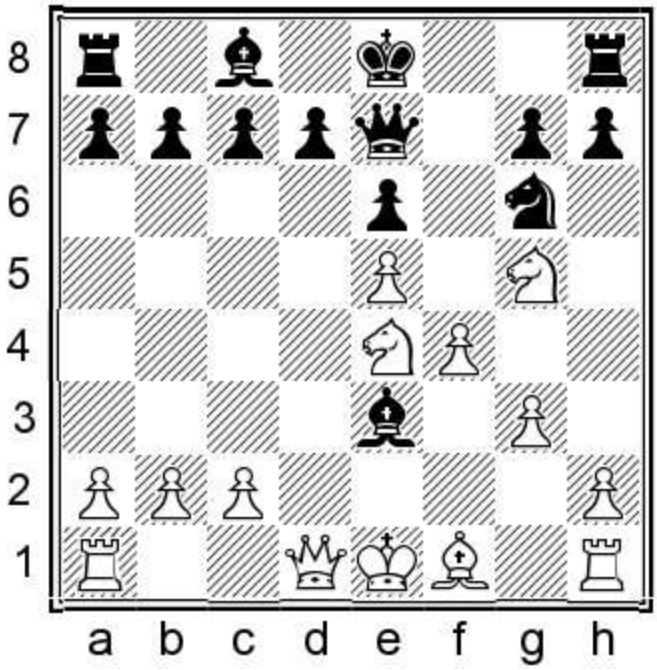
10.♘fg5!

10.c4 led to success for White in Aronian – Caruana, Internet (blitz) 2018, but the text move is stronger.

10...♘h6

10...♘e3 11.♗xe3 ♗xe3 12.g3 ♕e7 occurred in two games, when White should have played:

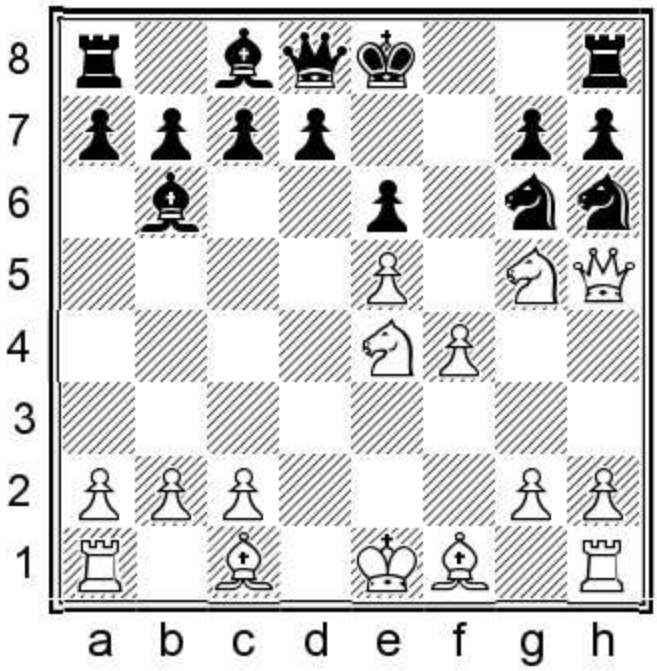
chesstouring.com



13.♕h5!N 13...♔d8 14.♖d1+– With an overwhelming position.

11.♕h5

Black's position is already on the verge of collapse, as the following game demonstrates:



11...0-0 12.♘xh7! ♘xf4 13.♘hf6† ♖xf6 14.♘xf6† ♕xf6 15.♕e8† ♕f8 16.♕xf8† ♔xf8 17.♗xf4+–

Loew – Rebhan, Schney 2016.

Conclusion

This brings us to the end of the book. 1...e5? is clearly not a sound gambit, and after 2.dxe5 ♘c6 3.♘f3

Black will either remain a pawn down or run into serious positional difficulties in the line where his queen delivers a check on b4 and captures on b2. Variations A21 and A22 both contained some forcing tactical lines. I included them because they are objectively convincing (not to mention providing some entertaining chess for us to enjoy), but they are by no means the only solution: in both of the main lines, I have noted that instead of initiating tactical complications with ♘g5, White can play in simpler style with e2-e4, so you can always fall back on this option if you forget the other line, or if you just want to simplify your preparation against this rare line.

1...♘c6 is a more respectable move, and after 2.d5 ♘e5 it is important to avoid 3.e4 in favour of the more precise 3.f4! ♘g6 4.e4, after which 4...e6 (or 4...e5) 5.dxe6 presents Black with a dilemma. 5...dxe6 gives White a pleasant advantage in the queenless middlegame, although it is useful to be familiar with some of the nuances that can occur. Finally we looked at 5...fxe6 when Black seems to be aiming for a double-edged middlegame, but after 6.♘f3 White has good chances to develop an initiative on the kingside, especially if he uses the g6-knight as a target for a well-timed pawn advance.

chesstouring.com

Variation Index

Chapter 1

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♘f3 d5 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.c4 0-0 7.♘bd2

A) 7...♘e4 9

B) 7...♘c6 8.b3 11

B1) 8...♘e4 12

B2) 8...a5 9.a3 ♗d7 10.♗b2 13

B21) 10...♗e8 13

B22) 10...♘e4 15

C) 7...c6 8.♘e5 16

C1) 8...b6 16

C2) 8...♗d7 17

C3) 8...♘bd7 9.♘d3 ♘e4 10.♕c2 18

C31) 10...♕e8 20

C32) 10...♗f6 21

C33) 10...♘xd2 23

Chapter 2

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♘f3 d5 5.0-0 ♗d6 6.c4 c6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.♕c2

A) 8...dxc4 27

B) 8...♗d7 28

C) 8...♘bd7 29

D) 8...♕e8 32

E) 8...♕e7 35

F) 8...♘e4 9.♖b1 39

F1) 9...♗d7 40

chesstouring.com

F2) 9...a5 42

F3) 9...♘d7 10.b4 45

F31) 10...♘df6 46

F32) 10...b6!? 48

F33) 10...b5!? 50

F4) 9...♕e7 10.b4 51

F41) 10...♗xb4 52

F42) 10...♘d7 53

F43) 10...♗d7 55

F44) 10...b5 57

Chapter 3

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.c4

A) 4...♗b4† 60

B) 4...♗e7 5.♘f3 0-0 6.0-0 63

B1) 6...b6 64

B2) 6...♘e4 65

B3) 6...d6 7.♘c3 66

B31) 7...♘c6?! 66

B32) 7...a5 8.b3 68

B321) 8...♘a6 69

B322) 8...♘e4 9.♗b2 70

B3221) 9...♗f6 70

B3222) 9...♘xc3 10.♗xc3 71

B32221) 10...♘d7 71

B32222) 10...♕e8 72

Chapter 4

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.c4 ♗e7 5.♘f3 0-0 6.0-0 d6 7.♘c3

chesstouring.com

A) 7...♘e4 8.♘xe4 fxe4 9.♘d2 d5 10.f3 75

A1) 10...exf3 76

A2) 10...♘c6 11.e3! exf3 12.♘xf3 78

A21) 12...♗f6 78

A22) 12...b6 80

B) 7...♕e8 8.b3 81

B1) 8...♘c6 81

B2) 8...♘bd7 82

B3) 8...♕h5 84

B4) 8...a5 9.♗b2 86

B41) 9...♕h5 87

B42) 9...c6 88

B43) 9...♘a6 10.♖e1 89

B431) 10...c6 90

B432) 10...♕h5 90

B433) 10...♕g6 91

Chapter 5

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

A) 6...♘e4 97

B) 6...c5 98

C) 6...d6 7.♗b2 100

C1) 7...♘c6 101

C2) 7...a5 8.c4 103

C21) 8...♘a6 103

C22) 8...c6 105

C3) 7...e5?! 8.dxe5 107

C31) 8...♘fd7 107

C32) 8...♘g4 9.♘a3 109

chesstouring.com

C321) 9...♘xe5 109

C322) 9...♘c6 111

C4) 7...e6 8.c4 ♕e7 9.♘c3 111

C41) 9...♘c6 112

C42) 9...c6 113

C5) 7...h6 8.c4 ♕e8 9.♘bd2 g5 10.e3!? 114

C51) 10...e5 117

C52) 10...♘a6 118

Chapter 6

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3 d6 7.♗b2

A) 7...c6 8.♘bd2 120

A1) 8...a5 120

A2) 8...♕c7 122

A3) 8...♕e8 124

A4) 8...♘a6 9.c4 126

A41) 9...♖b8 126

A42) 9...e5 127

B) 7...♘e4 8.♘bd2 129

B1) 8...c5 129

B2) 8...♘xd2 9.♕xd2 131

B21) 9...♘d7 131

B22) 9...♘c6 133

B3) 8...♘c6 9.♘e1 135

B31) 9...d5 136

B32) 9...♘g5 137

Chapter 7

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3 d6 7.♗b2 ♕e8 8.c4

chesstouring.com

A) 8...e5 9.dxe5 ♘g4 10.♘c3 142

A1) 10...dxe5 143

A2) 10...♘xe5 145

B) 8...♘c6 146

C) 8...♘e4 9.♘bd2 148

C1) 9...♘xd2 148

C2) 9...c6 150

D) 8...♘a6 9.♕c2! 151

D1) 9...h6 153

D2) 9...c6 10.♘bd2 155

D21) 10...♗d7 156

D22) 10...h6 157

D3) 9...♖b8 10.♘bd2 159

D31) 10...c5!? 159

D32) 10...b5 160

Chapter 8

1.d4 g6 2.c4

A) 2...f5?! 3.h4! 166

A1) 3...♗g7 4.h5 166

A11) 4...d6 166

A12) 4...c5 168

A2) 3...♘f6 4.h5 170

A21) 4...♗g7 171

A22) 4...♘xh5 172

B) 2...♗g7 3.♘f3 174

B1) 3...d6 174

B2) 3...c5 176

B3) 3...f5 4.g3 ♘f6 5.b3! 181

chesstouring.com

B31) 5...c5 181

B32) 5...d6 6.♗b2 0-0 7.♗g2 183

B321) 7...e5 184

B322) 7...♘e4 186

B323) 7...c6 8.0-0 187

B3231) 8...e5 188

B3232) 8...♕c7 189

Chapter 9

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5 (3...a6) 4.♘c3 d6 5.e4

A) 5...g6 6.♗e2 193

A1) 6...h5 193

A2) 6...♘bd7 194

A3) 6...a6 7.♗g5 195

A31) 7...♗g7 196

A32) 7...h6 197

A4) 6...♗g7 199

B) 5...♘bd7 6.♗d3 201

B1) 6...g6 202

B2) 6...♗e7 7.♘ge2 203

B21) 7...g6 204

B22) 7...h5 205

B23) 7...♘f8 8.♘g3! 207

B231) 8...♘g6 208

B232) 8...g6 209

B24) 7...0-0 210

Chapter 10

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5 4.♘c3 d6 5.e4 ♗e7 6.g3

chesstouring.com

A) 6...h5 214

B) 6...♘a6 215

C) 6...0-0 7.♗g2 217

C1) 7...♘a6 8.♘ge2 ♘c7 9.0-0 217

C11) 9...a6 218

C12) 9...♖b8 219

C2) 7...♘e8 220

C3) 7...♘bd7 8.♘ge2 222

C31) 8...♘e8 223

C32) 8...a6 9.a4 226

C321) 9...♘e8 226

C322) 9...b6 228

Chapter 11

1.d4 c5 2.d5 e5 3.e4 d6 4.♗b5†!?

A) 4...♗d7 5.a4! 233

A1) 5...a6 234

A2) 5...g6 235

A3) 5...♗e7 236

B) 4...♘d7 5.a4 238

B1) 5...♗e7 6.♘f3 ♘gf6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.0-0 239

B11) 8...a6 239

B12) 8...♘e8 241

B2) 5...g6 6.♘c3 242

B21) 6...♗h6 242

B22) 6...♗g7 7.♘f3 244

B221) 7...♘e7 244

B222) 7...♘gf6 246

B2221) 8.0-0 246

chesstouring.com

B2222) 8.♘d2!?N 247

Chapter 12

1.d4 c5 2.d5 e6 3.♘c3

A) 3...♘f6 4.e4 d6 5.♗b5†!? 250

A1) 5...♘bd7 251

A2) 5...♗d7 253

B) 3...exd5 4.♘xd5 255

B1) 4...♘f6 255

B2) 4...♘e7 256

B3) 4...d6 258

C) 3...d6 4.e4 258

C1) 4...exd5 258

C2) 4...a6 5.a4 260

C21) 5...g6 260

C22) 5...exd5 261

C23) 5...♘f6 262

Chapter 13

1.d4

A) 1...c5 2.d5 266

A1) 2...b5 3.e4 266

A11) 3...♕b6 266

A12) 3...a6 267

A2) 2...f5 3.e4! fxe4 4.♘c3 ♘f6 5.g4! h6 6.♗g2 270

A21) 6...e6 271

A22) 6...e5 272

A23) 6...d6 273

B) 1...e6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 exd5 4.cxd5 d6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♘f3 274

B1) 6...♗g7 275

chesstouring.com

B2) 6...a6 7.a4 ♗g7 8.g3 277

B21) 8...♘h6 277

B22) 8...♘e7 278

Chapter 14

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5

A) 4...e6 5.♘c3 exd5 6.♘xd5 ♗b7 7.e4! 282

A1) 7...♘xd5 283

A2) 7...a6 8.bxa6 ♘xa6 9.♗c4 ♘b4 10.♘f3 284

A21) 10...♘fxd5 285

A22) 10...♘bxd5N 286

B) 4...a6 5.bxa6 e6 6.♘c3 exd5 7.♘xd5 287

B1) 7...♗xa6 288

B2) 7...♘xa6 289

B3) 7...♘xd5 290

B4) 7...♗e7!? 291

Chapter 15

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5 a6 5.bxa6 ♗xa6 6.♘c3 g6 7.e4

A) 7...d6 8.♗xa6 ♘xa6 9.♘f3 ♗g7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♕e2 294

A1) 11...♕b6 295

A2) 11...♘d7 296

B) 7...♗xf1 8.♔xf1 d6 9.♘f3 ♗g7 10.g3 0-0 11.♔g2 297

B1) 11...♕b6 298

B2) 11...♘a6 299

B3) 11...♘bd7 12.a4! 301

B31) 12...♕a5 302

B32) 12...♕b6 303

B33) 12...♖a6 13.♕c2 ♕a8 14.♖a3 306

chesstouring.com

B331) 14...♖c8 306

B332) 14...e6 307

Chapter 16

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5 a6 5.bxa6 g6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.e4

A) 7...♕a5 311

B) 7...0-0 8.a7! ♖xa7 9.♘f3 312

B1) 9...♕a5 313

B2) 9...♕b6 314

B3) 9...d6 315

B4) 9...e6 10.♗e2 exd5 11.exd5 d6 12.0-0 316

B41) 12...♗a6 317

B42) 12...♘a6 318

Chapter 17

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4

A) 2...e6 3.g3 e5!? 323

B) 2...e5 3.dxe5 ♘e4 4.a3 325

B1) 4...b6 325

B2) 4...d6 326

B3) 4...♘c6 5.♘f3 328

B31) 5...♗c5 328

B32) 5...a5 329

B33) 5...d6 6.♕c2! 331

B331) 6...♗f5? 331

B332) 6...d5 333

B333) 6...♘c5 334

Chapter 18

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 ♘g4 4.♗f4

chesstouring.com

A) 4...♗b4† 338

B) 4...g5 5.♗d2! ♘xe5 6.♘f3 339

B1) 6...♗g7 341

B2) 6...♘bc6 342

C) 4...♘c6 5.♘f3 ♗b4† 6.♘bd2 343

C1) 6...f6 344

C2) 6...♕e7 7.e3 ♘gxe5 8.♘xe5 ♘xe5 9.♗e2 b6 10.0-0 346

C21) 10...♗xd2 347

C22) 10...♗b7 348

Chapter 19

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 ♘g4 4.♗f4 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♗b4† 6.♘bd2 ♕e7 7.e3 ♘gxe5 8.♘xe5 ♘xe5 9.♗e2

A) 9...d6 10.0-0 352

A1) 10...♗d7 352

A2) 10...a5 11.a3! 353

A21) 11...♗xd2 354

A22) 11...♗c5 355

B) 9...0-0 10.0-0 356

B1) 10...a5 357

B2) 10...♘g6 358

B3) 10...d6 359

B4) 10...♗xd2 11.♕xd2 d6 12.b4 362

B41) 12...b6 363

B42) 12..a5 363

Chapter 20

1.d4 g6 2.c4 ♗g7 3.♘f3 d6 4.♘c3

A) 4...c5 5.d5 ♗xc3† 6.bxc3 367

A1) 6...♕a5 367

chesstouring.com

A2) 6...f5 369

B) 4...♗g4 5.e3 372

B1) 5...♘d7 373

B2) 5...c5 6.♗e2 374

B21) 6...♘c6 375

B22) 6...cxd4 376

B3) 5...♘c6 6.♗e2 380

B31) 6...♘f6 380

B32) 6...e5 381

B4) 5...♘f6 6.h3 383

B41) 6...♗xf3 383

B42) 6...♗f5 7.g4! 385

B421) 7...♗c8 385

B422) 7...♗d7 387

Chapter 21

1.d4 g6 2.c4 ♗g7 3.♘f3 d6 4.♘c3 e5 5.g3

A) 5...♗g4?! 392

B) 5...♘c6 6.dxe5! 393

B1) 6...dxe5? 394

B2) 6...♘xe5 395

C) 5...exd4 6.♘xd4 396

C1) 6...♘e7 396

C2) 6...♘c6 7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.♗g2 ♘e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♗g5 397

C21) 10...f6 398

C22) 10...♖b8 400

D) 5...♘d7 6.♗g2 ♘e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.e4 401

D1) 8...h6 402

D2) 8...♘c6 404

chesstouring.com

D3) 8...exd4 9.♘xd4 ♘c6 10.♘de2 406

D31) 10...♘de5 408

D32) 10...♘c5 411

D33) 10...a5 412

Chapter 22

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 d6 3.♘c3

A) 3...♗f5 416

B) 3...e5 4.♘f3 419

B1) 4...e4 5.♘d2! 419

B11) 5...♕e7 420

B12) 5...♗f5 422

B2) 4...♘bd7 5.g3 ♗e7 6.♗g2 0-0 7.0-0 423

B21) 7...♖e8 424

B22) 7...exd4 427

B23) 7...c6 8.e4 430

B231) 8...♖e8 431

B232) 8...a6 9.a4 a5 10.h3 ♖e8 11.♗e3 433

B2321) 11...♗f8 434

B2322) 11...exd4 12.♘xd4 ♘c5 13.♕c2 ♗f8 14.♖ad1 436

B23221) 14...♕b6 437

B23222) 14...♕c7 437

Chapter 23

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4

A) 2...b6 3.f3! 441

A1) 3...e6 441

A2) 3...♘c6 443

B) 2...e6 3.g3 b6 4.♗g2 444

chesstouring.com

B1) 4...c6 444

B2) 4...d5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♘c3 ♗b7 7.♘f3 ♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♗f4 445

B21) 9...♘bd7 447

B22) 9...♘a6 449

Chapter 24

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 ♘c6 3.♘f3

A) 3...d5?! 452

B) 3...d6 4.♘c3 453

B1) 4...♗g4 453

B2) 4...e5 455

C) 3...e6 4.g3 458

C1) 4...d5 458

C2) 4...♗b4† 460

Chapter 25

1.d4 d6 2.c4 e5 3.♘c3

A) 3...♘c6 464

B) 3...exd4 4.♕xd4 468

B1) 4...♘f6 468

B2) 4...♘c6 5.♕d2 470

B21) 5...♘f6 470

B22) 5...g6 473

B23) 5...♗e6 6.b3 ♘f6 7.e4 476

B231) 7...a5 478

B232) 7...g6 480

Chapter 26

1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6 3.e4

A) 3...♗b4† 484

chesstouring.com

B) 3...♗b7 4.♗d3 487

B1) 4...♘f6 487

B2) 4...♗b4† 5.♗d2 491

B21) 5...♘c6 491

B22) 5...♕e7 492

B23) 5...♗xd2† 493

B3) 4...f5 5.exf5 496

B31) 5...♗xg2? 496

B32) 5...♗b4† 500

B4) 4...♘c6 5.♘e2 504

B41) 5...g6 504

B42) 5...♘b4 6.♘bc3 ♘xd3† 7.♕xd3 506

B421) 7...♗b4 506

B422) 7...g6 508

B423) 7...d6 510

B424) 7...♘e7 8.0-0 511

B4241) 8...g6 512

B4242) 8...d6 513

Chapter 27

1.d4 e6 2.c4 ♗b4† 3.♗d2

A) 3...♕e7 4.g3 f5 5.♗g2 ♘f6 6.♘f3 0-0 7.0-0 ♗xd2 8.♕xd2 518

A1) 8...d6 519

A2) 8...♘e4 521

B) 3...a5 4.g3 523

B1) 4...d6 523

B2) 4...d5 5.♘f3 dxc4 6.♗g2 ♘c6 7.e3 525

B21) 7...♘ge7 526

B22) 7...♘f6 527

chesstouring.com

C) 3...♗xd2† 4.♕xd2 530

C1) 4...♘f6 5.♘c3 530

C11) 5...0-0 530

C12) 5...d5 532

C2) 4...f5 5.g3 ♘f6 6.♗g2 0-0 7.♘c3 d6 8.♘f3 534

C21) 8...♕e8 534

C22) 8...♘c6 535

Chapter 28

1.d4

A) 1...c6 2.c4 b5 539

B) 1...b5 2.e4 541

B1) 2...a6 3.♘f3 ♗b7 4.♗d3 e6 5.0-0 541

B11) 5...♘f6 543

B12) 5...c5 544

B2) 2...♗b7 3.♗d3 ♘f6 4.♘d2 547

B21) 4...c5 547

B22) 4...e6 550

C) 1...b6 2.e4 ♗b7 3.♗d3 553

C1) 3...g6 555

C2) 3...♘f6 4.♘d2 e6 5.♘e2!? 557

C21) 5...d5 558

C22) 5...c5 559

Chapter 29

1.d4

A) 1...e5? 2.dxe5 ♘c6 3.♘f3 565

A1) 3...f6 565

A2) 3...♕e7 4.♗f4 ♕b4† 5.♗d2 ♕xb2 6.♘c3 ♗b4 7.♖b1 ♕a3 8.♘d5! 567

A21) 8...♗xd2† 569

chesstouring.com

A22) 8...♗a5 570

B) 1...♘c6 2.d5 ♘e5 3.f4! ♘g6 4.e4 e6 5.dxe6 571

B1) 5...dxe6 571

B2) 5...fxe6 6.♘f3 574

B21) 6...d5!? 575

B22) 6...d6 575

B23) 6...♗c5 7.♘c3 576

B231) 7...♘h6 577

B232) 7...♘f6 578

chesstouring.com

Table of Contents

Title page 4
Preface 6
Key To Symbols and Bibliography 8
Chapter 1 - Stonewall 5...Be7 10
Chapter 2 - Stonewall 5...Bd6 49
Chapter 3 - Classical Introduction 123
Chapter 4 - Classical 7...Ne4 & 7...Qe8 155
Chapter 5 - Leningrad Introduction 198
Chapter 6 - Leningrad 7...c6 & 7...Ne4 250
Chapter 7 - Leningrad 7...Qe8 295
Chapter 8 - St Petersburg 345
Chapter 9 - Czech Benoni Sidelines 404
Chapter 10 - Czech Benoni Mainlines 448
Chapter 11 - Closed Benoni 488
Chapter 12 - 1.d4 c5 2.d5 e6 523
Chapter 13 - Miscellaneous Lines 557
Chapter 14 - Sidelines 591
Chapter 15 - 5...Bxa6 616
Chapter 16 - 5...g6 652
Chapter 17 - Fajarowicz 678
Chapter 18 - 3...Ng4 Sidelines 709
Chapter 19 - 3...Ng4 Mainlines 738
Chapter 20 - 4...c5 & 4...Bg4 769
Chapter 21 - Main Line 823
Chapter 22 - Old Indian 875
Chapter 23 - Pseudo Queens Indians 927
Chapter 24 - Black Knights Tango 950
Chapter 25 - 1...d6 976
Chapter 26 - English Defence 1017
Chapter 27 - 1...e6 2.c4 Bb4 1087
Chapter 28 - b-Pawn Systems 1131
Chapter 29 - Odd Ideas 1185

chesstouring.com