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My First Chess Opening Repertoire for Black



A Ready-to-go Package
for Ambitious Beginners

VINCENT MORET

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Vincent Moret

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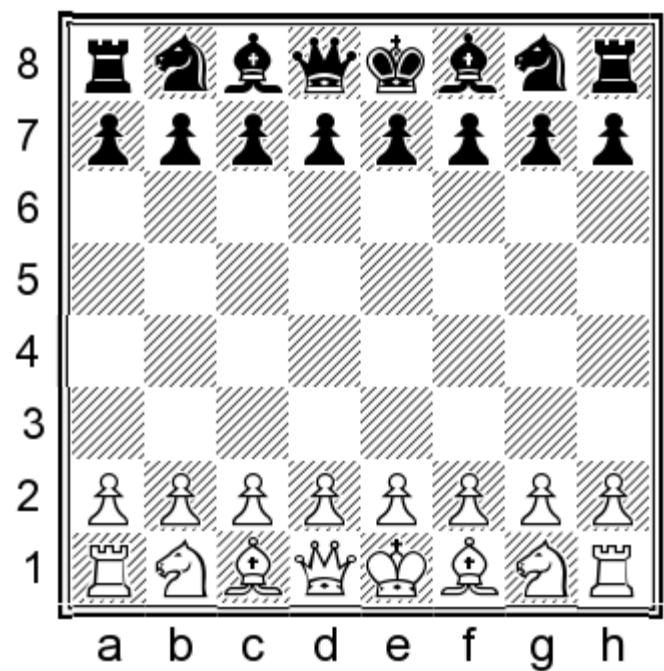
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Explanation of Symbols

The chess board with its coordinates:



- ♔ King
- ♚ Queen
- ♖ Rook
- ♗ Bishop
- ♘ Knight

- ! good move
- !! excellent move
- ? bad move
- ?? blunder
- !?! interesting move
- ?! dubious move
- ± White stands slightly better
- ∓ Black stands slightly better
- ± White stands better
- ∓ Black stands better
- + - White has a decisive advantage
- + Black has a decisive advantage

= balanced position

∞ unclear

↔ counterplay

≡ compensation

mate

corr. correspondence

jr junior

sr senior

Introduction

A few months have passed since the first volume of this diptych was written and published. Hocine and Nicolas, the two young children who were starting chess and whom we met in the introduction, have begun to study the openings in a systematic and intelligent way – in other words, without learning the first ten moves of a variation by heart. Both have also competed in numerous tournaments to put their new theoretical knowledge into practice, and the results were not long in coming. Nicolas, in particular, has surged more than 500 points in Elo rating, and we will see him at work later in these pages for his first game against a grandmaster with an Elo over 2600. The ten-year-old boy won the opening battle, but nevertheless failed to make use of a good advantage and finally lost after a tactical blunder, proving that the opening is important (I would not say otherwise while writing a book on the subject), but that it is not everything. We will have the opportunity to discuss this again.

I hope that those readers of the first volume that I have the pleasure to find here for the rest of our study have experienced the same progression as Nicolas and Hocine. I asked myself whether I should write a new introduction for this second volume. I know from experience that this is not the part of a book that chess players are generally the most fond of, and that it is often skipped by readers in order to plunge as quickly as possible into the heart of the matter. Furthermore, I do not really have any new elements to add to the first volume. I will therefore simply summarize a few of the main points.

Like its predecessor, this book is conceived in the form of a repertoire. It offers Black targeted systems against White's main moves, and is not an encyclopaedic survey of all openings. Naturally, a large part will be devoted to 1.e4, which is by far the most popular opening for amateurs and club players.

The choice of openings (for the black side!) is undoubtedly debatable. I have deliberately avoided the major theoretical variations of the Sicilian Defence (against 1.e4) or the King's Indian Defence (against 1.d4), which would have no place in a work mainly intended for amateurs or young children just starting out. And I have deliberately chosen aggressive variations. Playing aggressive openings allows the development of one's tactical vision in open positions, which can only benefit progression.

Do not be afraid, or reluctant, to play some of the gambits in this repertoire, even though they may have a dubious reputation according to omniscient opening theory. I have bet on pragmatism and efficiency. And this approach has been confirmed by the results of my students who have tested – and adopted! – this repertoire against opponents of their own level. There will always be time, later, to come to the main opening variations recommended by theory, which will inevitably require much more effort. Initially the goal must be to forge a digestible repertoire without expending too much energy on it, and above all by emphasizing understanding rather than memorization. This is undoubtedly the aim of this book, which is not intended to prepare masters, or even candidates to become masters (at least not right away!), but rather to offer ideas and points of reference to players – young and less young alike! – who engage in competitions and are not sure where to start studying openings. This book will also be useful for organizers and trainers of clubs who sometimes feel a little lacking when they have to teach openings to their students.

I have kept the same framework, involving a collection of complete games, rather than the presentation of long theoretical lines which could prove indigestible for an amateur. Rather than being able to recite the first ten moves of an opening by heart, it is far more important to know the typical middlegame plans that result from an opening, and above all the most common combinations and tactical themes. And it is only by studying complete games that you can discover these.

Moreover, whenever possible, I have again mainly chosen to select young players' games rather than games from grandmasters. There are at least two reasons:

1. I would not have much to add to grandmasters' games, which have already been analyzed by illustrious authors and which can be found in many other publications.
2. It seems profitable, at least at first, to study games by children and amateurs, with their characteristic faults, rather than those of grandmasters. The latter are often free from major mistakes, but are sometimes a little difficult to grasp for the layman. Obviously, as it is impossible to study an opening without drawing on the experience of the best players, some games from great champions are included in this collection.

At the end of each chapter a series of exercises will test that the concepts discussed have been assimilated. An experienced player can try to solve the positions before reading the chapter. Solving these exercises will therefore also be a good way to work at tactics and the calculation of variations. Work that must necessarily go hand in hand with the study of openings. With greater tactical skill it is possible that Nicolas could have capitalized on the advantage he acquired in the opening against the grandmaster.

Now I wish you a safe and rewarding journey of initiation into the fabulous world of the openings. If, in addition to acquiring new knowledge, you have fun, then this modest book will have achieved its goal.

Vincent Moret

Nancy, June 2017

Chapter 1

The Scandinavian: introduction and general ideas

A player who is looking to build an opening repertoire with black must naturally first ask himself the question of what to play against 1.e4. The advance of the king's pawn at the beginning of a game is statistically the most played move at all levels. Out of the approximately 8.1 million games contained in Mega Database 2017, more than half start with 1.e4. Moreover, this ratio increases considerably for amateur players, and even more so for beginners.

We can therefore measure the importance of being well armed against 1.e4. However, the choice is not simple. Finding an opening that offers Black good chances and that would be easy to learn by amateurs, who do not have hours and hours to devote to it, sounds almost utopian.

And yet... if this opening exists, it could well be the Scandinavian (1.e4 d5!), and so this is the opening I will recommend in this work. Obviously, I can justify this choice and explain the reasons for it.

It is first of all a process of elimination that leads us to the Scandinavian. Let's look at the other possible openings for an amateur deciding to build his or her first opening repertoire. Take for example the four most popular – according to statistics provided by Mega Database – which alone account for more than 85% of the openings played against 1.e4.

1...e5 ? (this question mark indicates a question, and not the chess symbol indicating a poor move). This first move is an essential stage on the road for all beginners. It is what I recommend to my students when they begin playing, but I soon invite them to move on to something else, and return to 1...e5 later. Playing 1...e5 means having a defence against the Spanish, the Italian, the Scotch, the Three or Four Knights Opening, and even the Vienna, the King's Gambit, the Centre Game and all the other gambits (Danish, Göring etc.). There is plenty to be discouraged about before you even get started.

The Sicilian Defence (1...c5)? The most played opening at the top level, and probably the best. Complete books exist on certain variations – the Dragon or the Najdorf, to name but two – which are analyzed well beyond the 20th move. But how could an amateur – and even more so, a beginner – swallow so much theory? When we start studying chess we must focus our effort on the most important areas of the game, and primarily on tactics!

The French Defence (1...e6)? A very strategic opening. Probably too much so for beginners, who will struggle to play when confined to three ranks and with a bishop on c8 that cannot be developed much of the time.

The Caro-Kann Defence (1...c6)? A very solid opening, in which the theory is certainly not as dense as in the above three openings. But it has a reputation for being a bit passive. It is ideal for a grandmaster, who would be quite satisfied to draw with black after having defended accurately for 40 moves, but not necessarily for young players making their first steps in competition.

I'm obviously not saying that all these openings are inferior to the Scandinavian Defence – just that they are perhaps not the most appropriate for a player who has just embarked on opening study. There will always be time to go there later. But the Scandinavian is not just a choice by default. Far from it. This opening, and especially the Portuguese Variation that I propose, has many advantages.

This Scandinavian system is easy to learn. There are no major theoretical lines that need to be swallowed whole (there aren't any, anyway), as in some variations of the Sicilian for example. It is enough to know the general ideas, to know where to develop your pieces, to understand some move order subtleties, and above all to remember the tactical themes and classical combinations, some of which will recur quite frequently.

The Portuguese Scandinavian is very tricky for White. An unprepared opponent runs all the risks (or has every chance,

depending on which side you are on) of falling into a multitude of tactical traps. We will see, for example, that one of the fathers of the Portuguese Variation, IM Rui Damaso, has mated a grandmaster with an Elo of over 2500 in just 13 moves! Few openings offer this possibility with black.

Young players often arrive at the chessboard armed to the teeth with hyper-aggressive variations against the Sicilian or 1...e5, but are often much less well prepared when faced with so-called secondary openings, such as the Scandinavian. Unless you play against an IM or GM there is likely to be a real surprise effect.

With the Scandinavian we are sure to play our opening, and this right from the very first move. This is not the case with other openings. I know young players who are very proud to know long variations of the Dragon, learned until the 20th move with black, and who dream of getting to play them over the chessboard in competition. Alas, too often the opponent plays 2.c3 or one of the many other anti-Sicilians against them. And what about 1...e5, where we can – and should! – expect a good half dozen possible openings. Moreover, the 1...e5 opening does not even have a name. None of this is the case with the Scandinavian. After 1.e4 d5 it will be seen that the conductor of the white pieces cannot escape our opening and that none of the second move deviations is satisfactory for him.

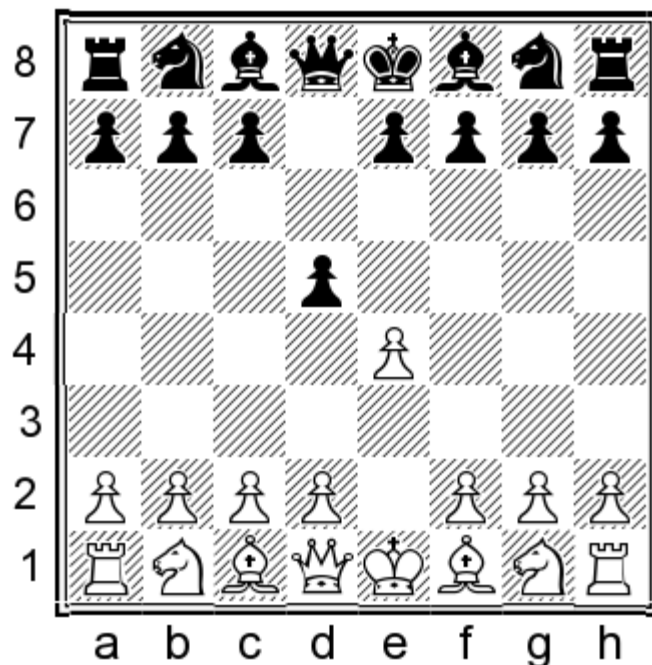
The Scandinavian is a healthy opening. In other words, it is not a dubious gambit against which there is a simple refutation. Bent Larsen, who was one of the world's best players in the 1980s, played the Classical Variation (with 2...♞xd5) for a long time at the highest level and even beat Karpov with it. This Classical Variation obtained its letters of nobility with Vishy Anand, who used it against Kasparov in the final of the World Championship. As for the Portuguese Variation, which we are going to study, the Australian GM David Smerdon wrote a monumental work of 500 pages on this in 2015. It's called *Smerdon's Scandinavian* and it was published by Everyman Chess. A grandmaster would certainly not write such a book on a refuted opening.

The theory on the Portuguese Variation is still completely open. Before Smerdon's book, only a short work by an American master, Selby Anderson, had been written on the subject twenty years ago. Several of the games we will study followed recommendations of Smerdon that have never yet been tested in practice. The way is thus open to all sorts of investigation for those who feel creative.

Last but not least, the proposed variation is a pleasant opening that promises beautiful attacking games, as will be seen throughout our study.

This has to be worth a try, surely?

If the answer is yes (which I do not doubt), let us begin as we should by looking at the major ideas of the Scandinavian after 1.e4 d5.



After the move 1...d5 Black decides to go to battle immediately by opening the centre, in contrast to the French (1...e6) or the Caro-Kann (1...c6), where this central ...d7-d5 thrust is prepared by a pawn move.

Black's #1 objective in the Scandinavian will be the ultra-fast development of the pieces, especially on the queenside (which is normal, since Black has specifically advanced the queen's pawn first). No time will be wasted on unnecessary pawn moves. For example, in Chapter 4 we will see one of the main variations of the Portuguese Scandinavian where Black generally only plays one pawn move (...d7-d5!) during the first seven moves, all the other moves being devoted to developing a new piece.

After White takes on d5 (there is no satisfactory alternative), and an eventual recapture by the queen (the set-up we will advocate in our repertoire), here is the plan of development to which Black must aspire.

The queen, which took the pawn on d5 (not necessarily on the second move, as we will see), will inevitably be forced to leave its central position after being attacked by the c3-knight. This is the main objection that can be made against the Scandinavian. All beginners are taught that the queen should not be developed too soon because of the risk of losing time through being attacked. This is true, but we will have to live with it, and above all make this drawback an advantage. In the Classical Scandinavian, the black queen often takes refuge on a5. In our Portuguese Variation we shall see that it can find a much more active (and less exposed!) square on the kingside, on h5 or even f5.

The knights will be – as far as possible – developed on their natural squares on f6 and c6.

The c8-bishop has the c8-h3 diagonal, which has been opened by the ...d7-d5 move, at its disposal. It will often be very well placed on f5 or on g4 (the key square for the bishop in the Portuguese!).

As the queenside has been mobilized first the king will often castle queenside, allowing the a8-rook to be developed to the d-file, opposite the white queen. Black's queenside castling is certainly a very common theme in the Scandinavian, simply because it is quicker than castling kingside. If the white king castles kingside, the subsequent opposite-side castling positions promise beautiful attacking games that will keep aggressive players happy.

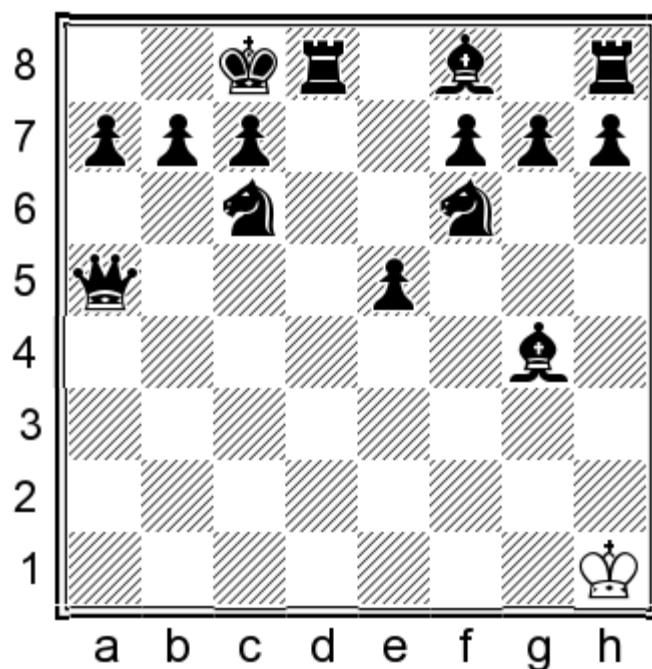
The f8-bishop may go to e7, d6, c5 or b4 (spoiled for choice!), as soon as the e7-pawn has moved to either e6, or even better to e5.

Finally, the h8-rook will naturally be the last black piece to come into play. It can often take up a position on the e-file when ...e7-e5 has been played, sometimes even before the white king has had time to be evacuated to safety by castling. In addition to a rook/queen face-off on the d-file, it is possible to have a second rook/king one on the e-file. The

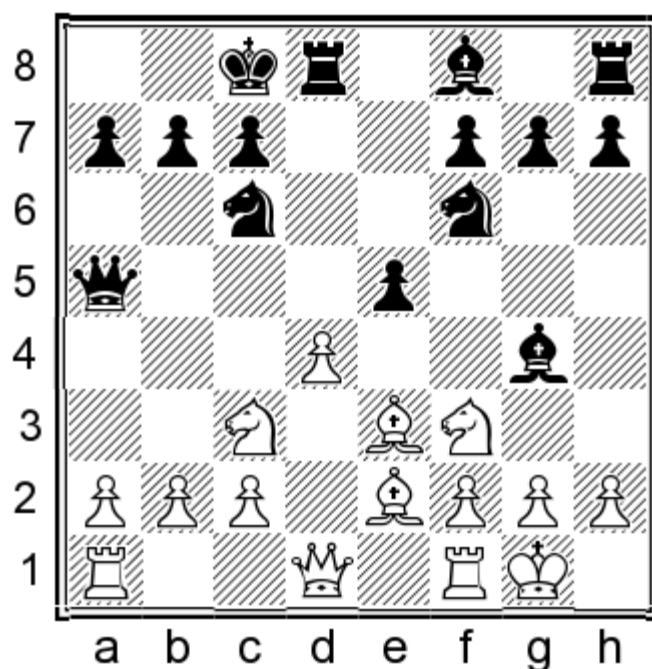
situation is potentially explosive.

Of course, all this remains purely theoretical, and it is by no means certain that it will always be feasible. But at least it's a plan, and we know that in chess it is always essential to have one, especially in the opening.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a diagram should equally be worth much more than a long variation. Let us then take a look at the usual (ideal!) development pattern for Black in the Classical Scandinavian (where the queen has recaptured on d5 on the second move):



And here's what this set-up could give if White plays logical and natural developing moves (but not necessarily the best ones):



This is actually Black's ideal development set-up – which we can describe as his 'dream' position – in the Scandinavian, if White allows him the opportunity.

After the move ...e7-e5 Black's pressure on the d-file has become unbearable due to the pin on the d4-pawn, and the situation can very quickly turn disastrous for White.

Let us look at two example games, both played by the multiple French Girls Champion Mathilde Congiu against strong opponents.

Game 1

Paul Saint Amand 2131

Mathilde Congiu 2149

Cannes 2010

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♙xd5 3.d4

It is more natural to gain time against the queen straight away by 3.♘c3.

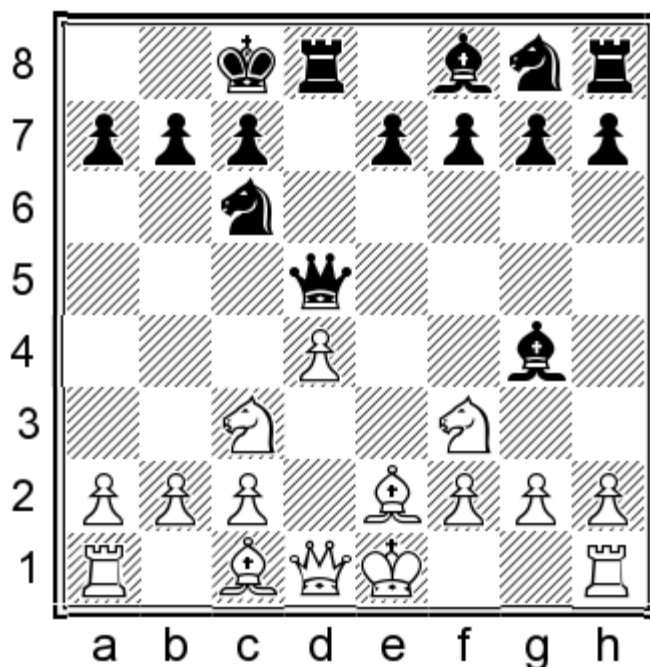
3...♘c6

Black can take advantage of White's inaccuracy by immediately playing the equalizing move 3...e5!?.

4.♘f3 ♘g4 5.♙e2

Here again it was better to chase the queen from her central position immediately by playing the natural 5.♘c3.

5...0-0 6.♘c3



6...♙a5

Black could take advantage of this move order, which is somewhat unusual for White, to reposition her queen on f5, or even better h5: two squares that are more active than the classical a5, as we will see in Chapters 3 and 4. But Mathilde prefers to remain faithful to the traditional Scandinavian lines (1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♙xd5 3.♘c3 ♙a5) that she normally

plays.

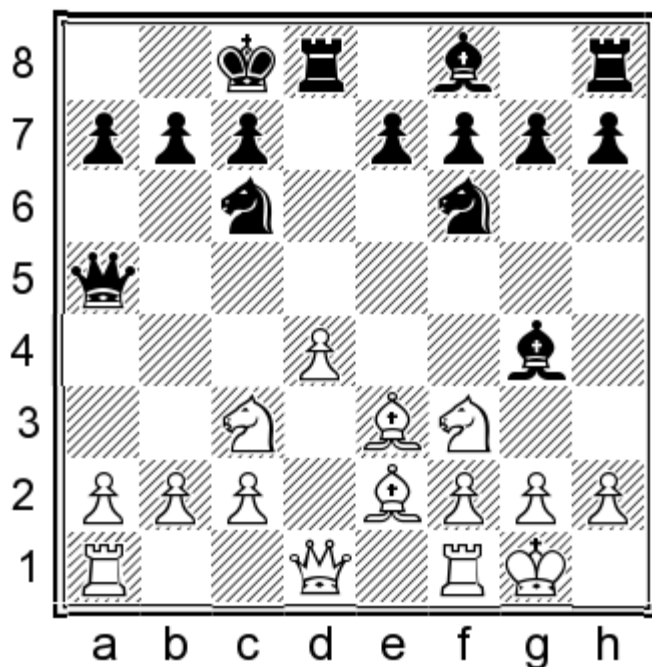
7.♙e3 ♜f6

This line had already occurred in 1869, between two of the best players of the time, Johannes Zukertort and Louis Paulsen. But Black had played the modest 7...e6 here, thus depriving himself of the strong possibility in the game.

8.0-0?

This natural move already leads to an almost losing position for White.

It was absolutely necessary to play 8.a3, as in the game Malakhov-Fressinet, Tromsø 2013, to threaten b2-b4 and prevent the next move. After 8.a3 the French grandmaster evacuated his queen to f5: the proof – if needed – that in this game it would have been better to immediately bring the queen to the kingside rather than to a5 at move 6.



8...e5!

The liberating move, which will occupy an essential place in Chapters 3 and 4 (so you might as well remember it now!), and which here brings what can be described as Black's 'dream' position in the Scandinavian. White already has great difficulties because of the pressure on the d4-pawn. Unsurprisingly, out of 269 games recorded with this position in the 2017 Mega Database, the score is emphatically close to 80% in Black's favour!

9.d5

This loses a pawn, but what else? Black threatens to exchange on f3 and then to capture on d4, winning a piece. A year after this game, during the French Rapid Championships, Mathilde had exactly the same position against Claire Boursier. White tried to unpin the d-pawn by playing 9.♙e1? and immediately lost the piece after 9...exd4 10.♜xd4 ♜xd4 11.♙xg4+ ♜xg4 12.♙xd4 ♜xd4, and 0–1 several moves later. We will see this tactical theme (exchange on f3 and then capture on d4) again in the next game.

9...♜xd5 10.♜xd5 ♜xd5

Black has a good extra pawn and a better position.

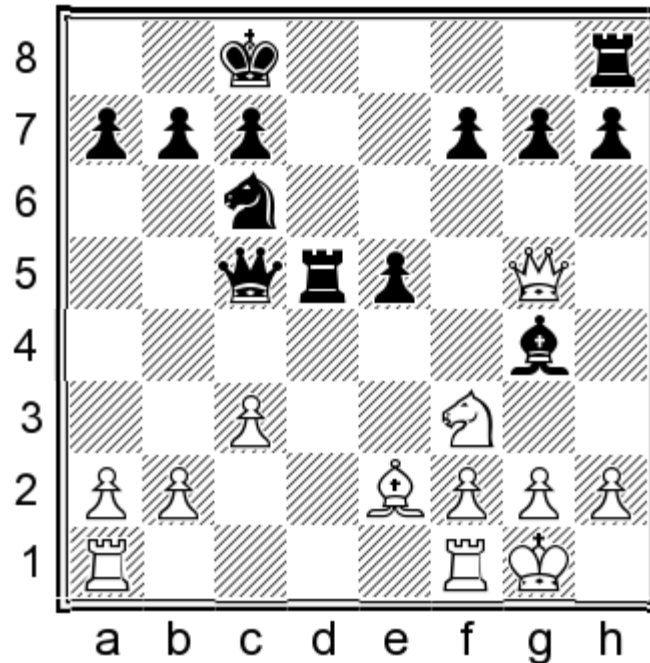
11. ♖c1 ♙c5

11...e4! 12. ♘d4 ♙xe2 13. ♘xe2 f5 was a simpler way to keep a big advantage.

12.c3 ♜b6?!

12...♙xe3! 13. ♜xe3 f5+.

13. ♙xc5 ♜xc5 14. ♜g5



White has finally managed to get some compensation.

14...♙e6

14...h5! 15. ♜xg7 ♜dd8! and Black keeps good prospects on the kingside, notably thanks to the g-file.

15. ♜xg7 ♜hd8

15...♜dd8!, in order to play on the g-file, was stronger.

16. ♜ad1?

After 16. ♜xh7 the position is not that clear.

16...e4 17. ♘g5??

A rather surprising blunder from a player with an Elo of over 2100. After 17. ♜xd5 ♜xd5 18. ♘h4 ♜d2 Black is still better, but nothing has been decided yet.

17...♜xg5 18. ♜xd8+ ♘xd8 0-1

Game 2

Sophie Milliet 2391

Mathilde Congiu 2175

France tt 2010

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3 ♜a5 4.♘f3 ♘c6

The move order has been slightly modified to conform to the Scandinavian. The game actually started 1...♘c6 2.♘f3 d5 3.exd5 ♖xd5 4.♘c3 ♜a5.

5.d4 ♙g4 6.♙e2?!

This overly passive move allows Black to reach the 'ideal' Scandinavian position.

It was necessary to play 6.♙b5 0-0-0 7.♙xc6 bxc6 8.♜d3 to unpin the f3-knight and thus prevent ...e7-e5. 8...c5 gives nothing: 9.d5 e6 10.0-0 exd5? 11.♘e5+—, with an attack on the g4-bishop, but also two fork threats on f7 and c6.

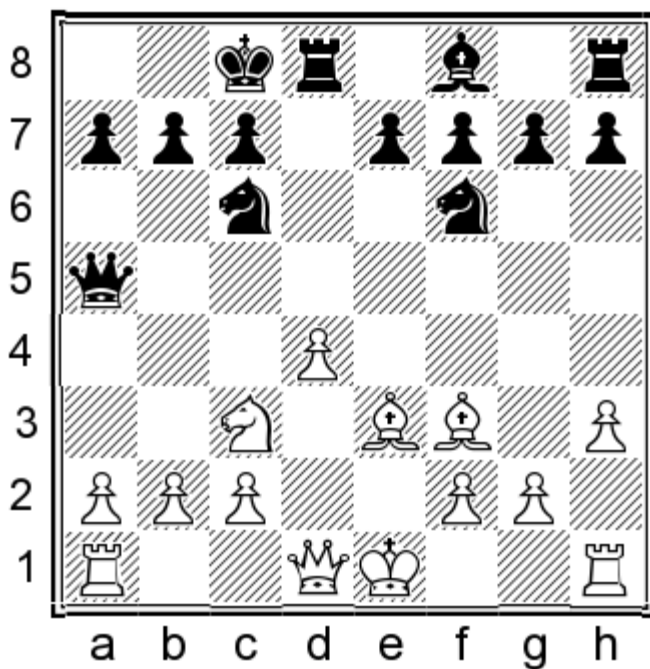
6...0-0-0 7.♙e3 ♘f6 8.h3?

This is no better than 8.0-0, which we saw in the previous game.

8...♙xf3

8...e5! was already possible.

9.♙xf3



9...e5

The natural move in this position, but this time there was a much stronger option: 9...♘xd4! 10.♙xd4 ♜b4!, and Black regains the piece with a pawn extra.

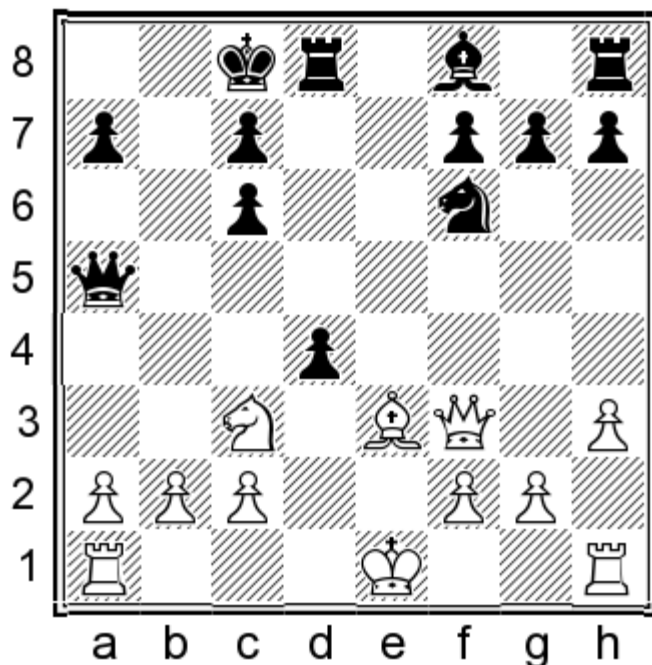
10.♙xc6

There was no other option to reduce the pressure on d4.

10...bxc6 11.♚f3??

11.♚d3! was the only move for White. After 11...exd4 12.♙xd4 Black cannot take advantage of the pin. The attempt to do so by 12...c5? is not possible because of 13.♚f5+, and 12...♖e8+ 13.♙e3 ♙c5 14.0-0-0 ♙xe3+ 15.fxe3 ♖e6 gives an almost equal position. The pawn weaknesses on both sides cancel each other out.

11...exd4



Black wins a piece. It is rare to see the five-time French Women's Champion find herself in such a position after only 11 moves.

12.0-0-0 dxc3 13.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 14.♚xc6

It is now clear that White does not have anything like sufficient compensation for the piece.

14...♚xa2 15.♖d1+ ♙d6 16.bxc3 ♚a3+ 17.♔d2 ♖e8 18.♖b1 ♔e7 19.♖b7 ♖d8 20.♙d4 ♚a5 21.♖b5 ♚a2 22.c4 ♙f4+ 23.♔d3 ♚a3+ 24.c3 ♚a2 25.♚c5+ ♔e8 26.♚c6+ ♔f8 0-1

The black king will now escape the checks by finally taking refuge on the kingside. White, on the other hand, can no longer parry the decisive check on d2.

Black won these games with impressive ease, one might say. Unfortunately, if White is not as cooperative as here, Black will rarely get to this dream position through the usual Classical Variation.

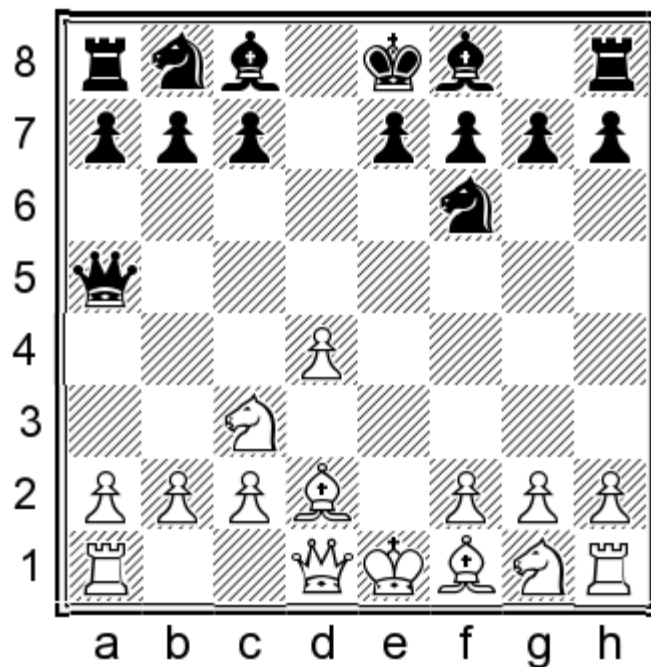
Indeed, White can (and should!) very quickly attack and even harass the black queen. Let us not lose sight of the fact that the early development of the queen is the major disadvantage of the classical Scandinavian with 2...♚xd5.

We should not get carried away by these two exciting games by Mathilde Congiu. Let us now see how things can

sometimes turn out very badly for Black.

We will start by showing you a classic trap that has already claimed many victims:

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3! ♚a5 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♙d2



An important move in the Scandinavian when the queen is on a5, and one that can occur straight away or after 5.♘f3: the c3-knight is unpinned and Black will have to watch out for a possible discovered attack.

5...♘c6?

Unfortunately this natural developing move is not possible with this move order.

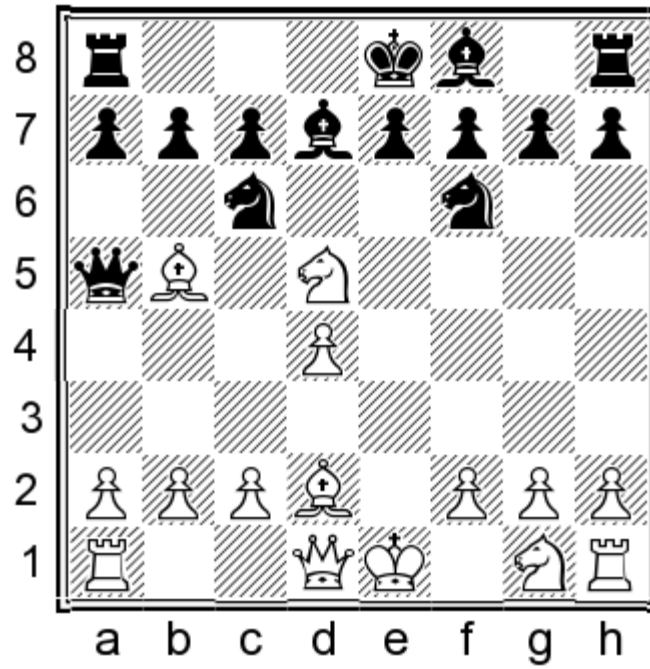
6.♙b5!

Threatening d4-d5, which wins a piece!

6...♙d7

6...a6 would meet the same reply.

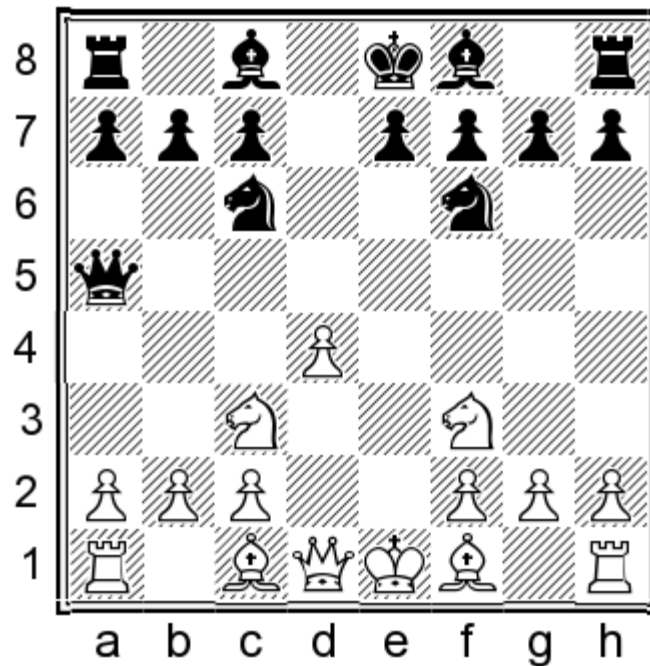
7.♘d5!



And the black queen is lost (if 7...♖xb5 8.♘xc7+)! A classic trap in the ...♗a5 Scandinavian if Black is not vigilant.

Here is a second example, which illustrates, besides the dangers that the black queen can face on a5, the problem that faces the b8-knight when it is developed (too) quickly to its natural square on c6.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3 ♗a5 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 ♘c6



6.d5!?

Chasing the knight! If the c8-bishop had been developed Black could have replied with ...0-0-0, pinning the d-pawn. Besides 6.d5, 6.♗d2 was of course again possible. After 6...♗g4 a long, almost forced sequence follows: 7.♘b5 ♗b6

8.c4 (threatening 9.c5!) 8...♙xf3 9.♚xf3 ♘xd4 10.♘xd4 ♚xd4 11.♚xb7 ♚e4+ 12.♚xe4 ♘xe4 13.♙e3, and it is obvious that White is much better thanks to his bishop pair and better pawn structure.

6...♘b4 7.♙d2!

Again this move, causing serious discomfort to the queen on a5.

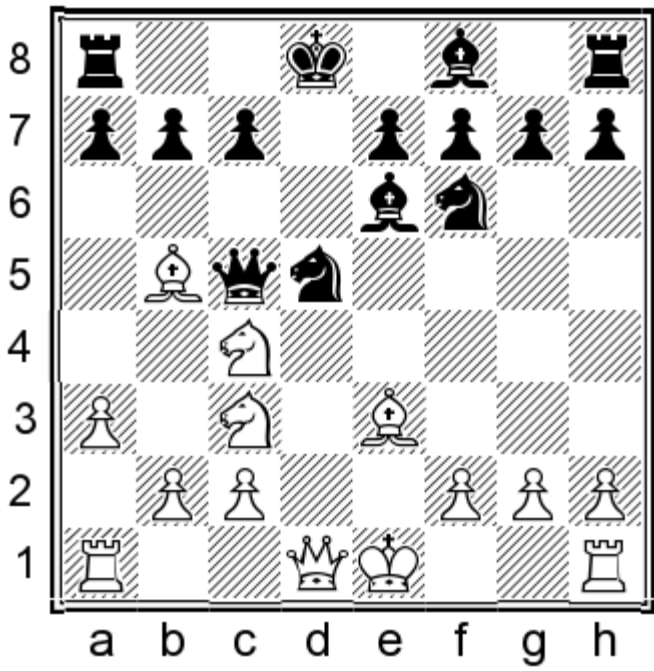
7...♘bd5?

Black had to play 7...♙d7, even though after 8.♘e5! ♘bxd5 9.♙c4! White has a very strong initiative, with serious threats hanging over the black queen.

8.♙b5+ ♔d8

8...c6? 9.♘xd5! ♚xb5 10.♘c7+ wins for White.

9.♘e5! ♙e6 10.♘c4 ♚b4 11.a3 ♚c5 12.♙e3



The black queen, utterly harassed by the four white pieces, has no more squares.

Because of all this, in the Classical Variation Black is strongly advised to provide a retreat for the queen on a5 by playing ...c7-c6 in order to allow her to return, if necessary, to c7 or even to d8. As a result, Black will no longer be able to obtain the ‘dream’ position (with the knight on c6), and must be happy to develop the knight on d7, with less pressure on the d-file after castling queenside.

But all is not lost. We can indeed attempt to have this ‘dream’ position (with a better position for the black queen than on a5!) by being tricky with the move order... through the ‘Portuguese’ Variation!

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6

Black defers (momentarily?) the recapture of the d5-pawn to speed up his development. Obviously, this allows the first player to cling on to the pawn by c2-c4. But this option is not really recommended for White, and we will of course see

why.

The idea of 2...♘f6 is paradoxically not to recapture with the knight, although this is possible. After the move c2-c4, which will gain a tempo on the black knight, White could easily develop behind his strong pawn centre and would remain with a superior position.

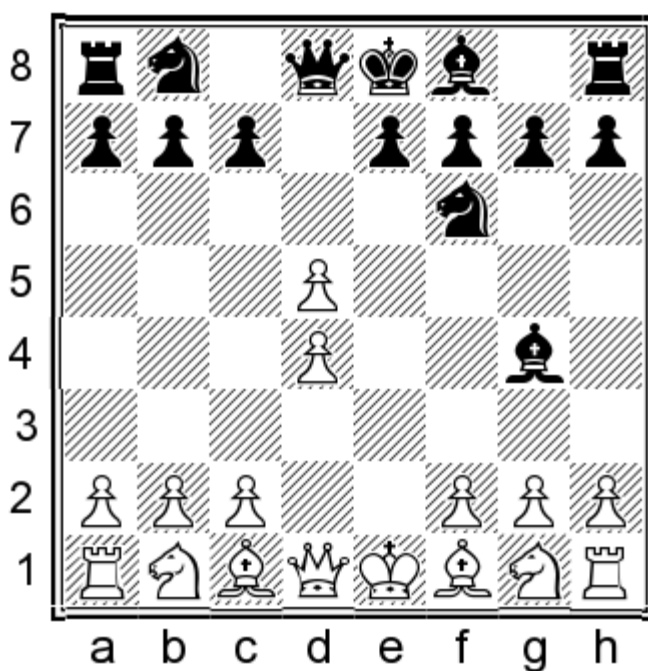
We therefore stay with the idea of taking on d5 with the queen.

3.d4

The most logical and the most natural move.

Once again, 3.c4?! would give Black too much play. This is the first variation we will study in **Chapter 2**. For now you can take me at my word: if White plays 3.c4 Black will have every reason to be satisfied.

3...♝g4!?



The ‘Portuguese’ Variation! Although it began to be played in the 1980s by two Belgian masters, Michel Jadoul and Pascal Vandervoort, it owes its name to a group of Lusitanian players – including Rey Pereira, Luis Galego and above all Rui Damaso, who we will find prominently in this book – who developed it in the early 1990s and enjoyed some spectacular success with it.

Anyway, whether Belgian or Portuguese Variation, it might well one day be renamed the Australian Variation, after the enormous contribution made by David Smerdon in his book published in 2015, especially since his compatriot, GM Ian Rogers, has also long been an avid fan of the Scandinavian.

Let us return to purely chess-related considerations.

The idea of the move 3...♝g4 is to get the bishop out with gain of time by attacking the white queen. The idea is to accelerate the development of the queenside and thus castle queenside.

Depending on White’s reply we will next try to recapture the d5-pawn with the queen and then we will only be two moves away from castling queenside and our ideal development position. If White attacks the black queen with ♘c3, then, as the ♝c8 is already out, the queen can choose a more active square than a5, namely f5 or better still h5.

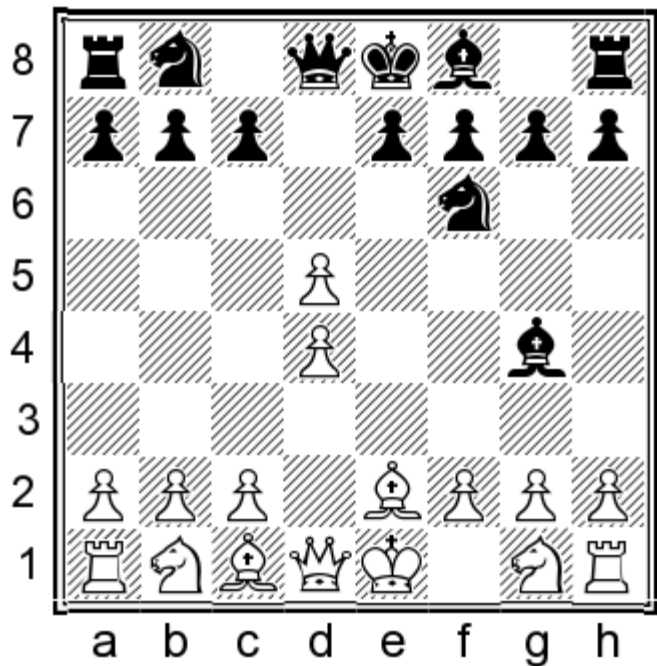
After ...♘c6 the d4-d5 advance will no longer be possible for White – as opposed to the game we saw above – because

Black will be able to answer with ...0-0-0 (the advantage of having already developed the bishop and queen!) and the d5-pawn will be pinned.

Black will then get his ideal position. He will be ready to play ...e7-e5, with strong pressure on the d-file and the d4-pawn, if the white queen is still on d1.

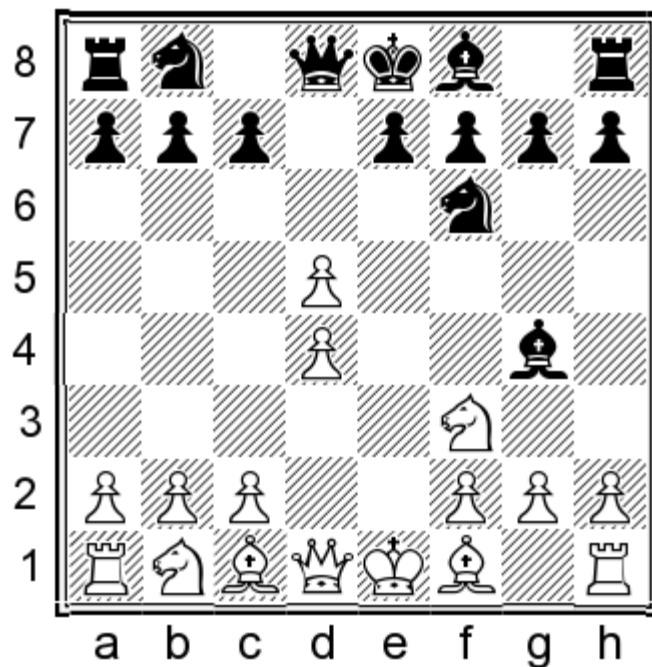
White has three ways to meet 3...♗g4.

1) He can interpose the bishop on e2 (4.♗e2):



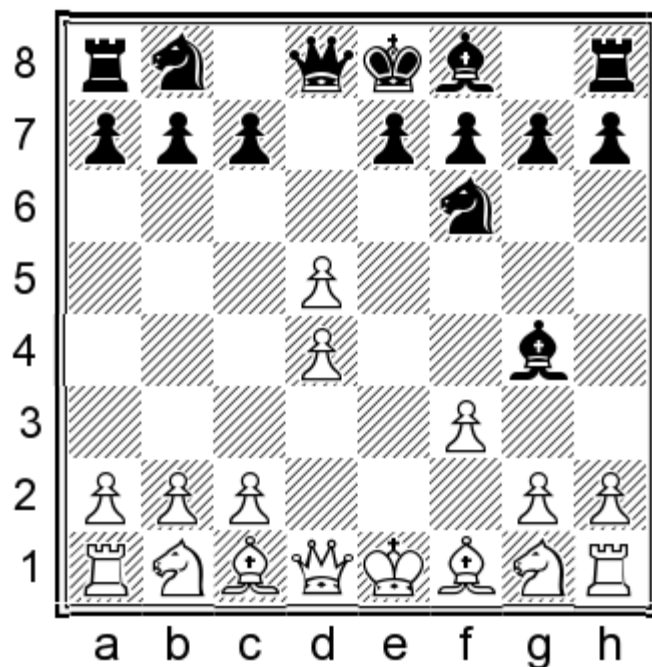
Smerdon describes this move as ‘wimpish’, as it is so harmless. In this variation Black is indeed likely to have a very easy game after the exchange of bishops and the recapture on d5 by the queen. We will look at this in **Chapter 3**.

2) He can develop the knight on f3 (4.♘f3):



The move Nf3 is often the first choice of players who are surprised by the move $\dots \text{Bg4}$ and who don't know the theory of the Portuguese. After all, what could be more natural than developing a piece? But this variation often allows Black to achieve his dream position. After recapturing on d5 the black queen can head for h5 or f5. There will follow $\dots \text{Nc6}$ and $\dots 0-0-0$, when everything will be ready for the $\dots \text{e7-e5}$ breakthrough. We will see many examples of this liberating and often devastating (to White!) move in **Chapter 4**.

3) He can attack the g4-bishop – and thus gain time – by playing f2-f3. (4.f3):



This is the critical move, and certainly the only one that can pose a threat to the Portuguese Variation. After the move 4.f3 White will be able to cling to the pawn, either immediately by 5.c4, or by interjecting a bishop check on b5 (incidentally, White can also play 4.Bb5+, before f2-f3, and most of the time this represents a simple inversion of moves). But all this is not without drawbacks for White, as the f2-f3 move causes a weakening of the e3-square and

also of the a7-g1 diagonal, and is also a hindrance to his development by occupying the g1-knight's natural square.

We will see the two options 5.c4 and 5.♟b5+ (after 4.f3) in **Chapter 5**, as well as the move 5.g4!?, which is still little analyzed by theory, but which Smerdon sees as the most dangerous threat to the Portuguese.

In **Chapter 6** we will discover a subtle move order in which White defers the move d2-d4 in favour of a rapid development of the kingside (♞f3, ♟e2 and 0-0). Against this so-called 'modern' variation, Black will have to be very vigilant to not fall into inferior variations of the Portuguese. Fortunately (for Black!), antidotes exist.

Finally, in **Chapter 7** we will review all the White alternatives on the 2nd and 3rd moves. Good news: not one is in any way dangerous for Black.

As promised, we will start with the variation where White clings on to the pawn on the 3rd move by c2-c4. Before discovering the Portuguese Scandinavian it is important to see that this variation is definitely not dangerous for Black, and that, on the contrary, it will offer him tremendous attacking possibilities.

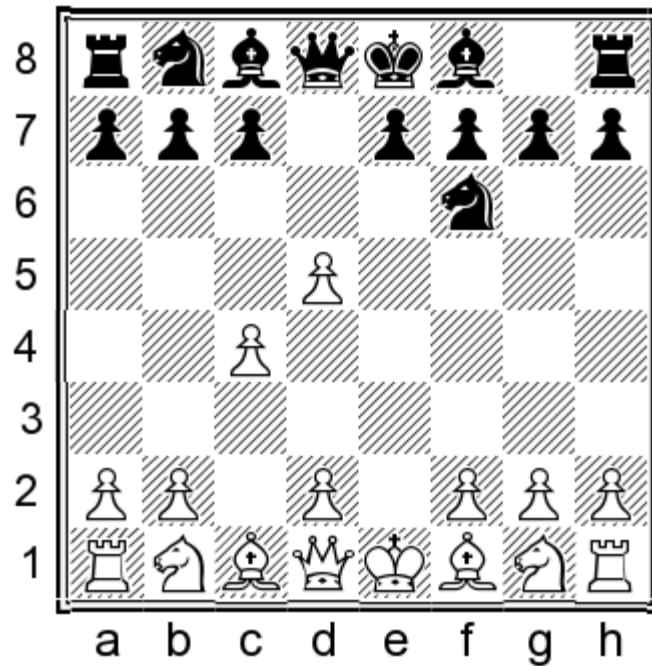
So here we go on an exciting discovery of the Portuguese Scandinavian, and one which will account for the bulk of this book.

Hang on, because it's going to get hairy!

Chapter 2

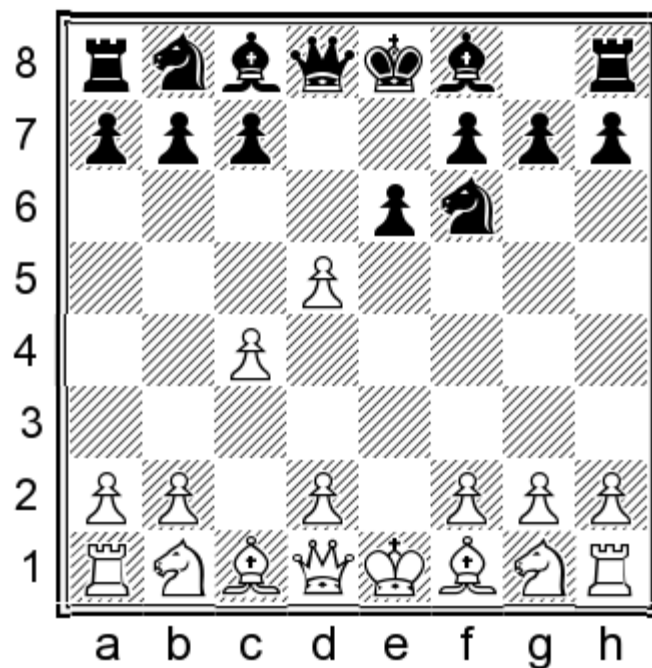
The Icelandic Gambit

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.c4



White hangs on to the pawn – a risky decision, especially if he persists in the intention to keep it.

3...e6!



The Icelandic Gambit, in reference to the Grandmasters Hannes Stefánsson and Throstur Thórhallsson, who used it with

some success in the late 1980s.

In the same spirit as the text move, 3...c6 is also possible, and this leads to the Scandinavian Gambit. Both moves (3...e6 and 3...c6) have a good reputation and it is difficult to say for sure which is better. In their monographs on the Portuguese Scandinavian, Anderson and Smerdon analyze the two variations without giving an opinion, and let readers make their own choice. Here, within the limited framework of our repertoire work, I will only propose the Icelandic Gambit, and this for three reasons.

First of all, it leads to very tactical positions with many traps in which an amateur player playing White will struggle to come out alive against a well-prepared opponent.

Second, we will find the ...e7-e6 move in many variations of the Portuguese. So there will be unity in the repertoire.

The third reason is probably the most important. After 3...c6 White is not forced to take on c6 and can play 4.d4, which leads to the dangerous and complicated Panov Variation of the Caro-Kann. There is no need to burden our repertoire with an additional opening.

Game 3

Slobodan Mitrović 1915

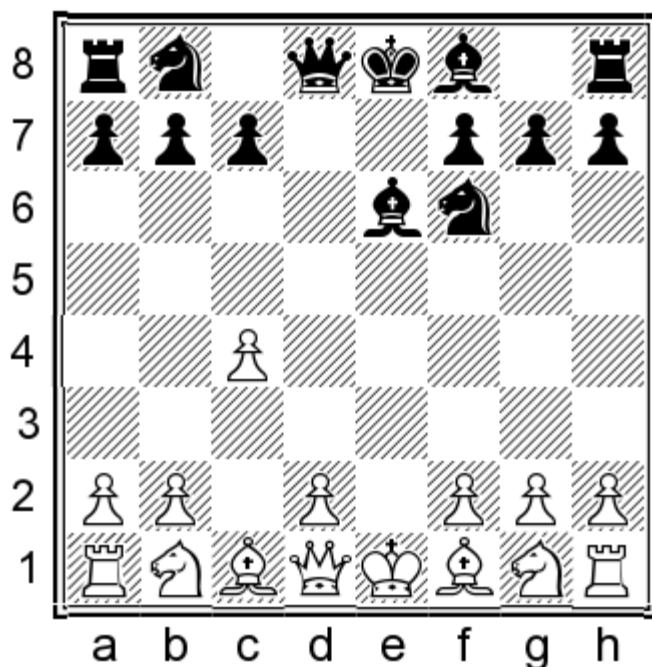
Quentin Daños 1435

Metz 2014

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.dxe6?!

The acceptance of the gambit is much too risky. It is much wiser for White to return the pawn by 4.d4, thus transposing into a variation of the Exchange French after 4...exd5. Unlike the Panov Variation of the Caro-Kann (which could occur after 3...c6), this variation of the Exchange French poses no real problems to Black and certainly does not require a lot of learning. We will see an example at the end of the chapter (a game by Magnus Carlsen when he was twelve years old).

4...♙xe6



In compensation for the sacrificed pawn Black already has a lead in development, with two pieces out against zero for

White. In most variations Black will castle queenside (in the spirit of the Scandinavian) and place the rooks on the two central files in an attempt to create threats to the white king before White has time to consolidate the position.

5.d4

A logical but dubious move. Later we shall see the other option, 5.♘f3, which is preferable.

5...♙b4+ 6.♙d2

6.♘c3 is not better, as we will see in Game 5.

6...♙xd2+

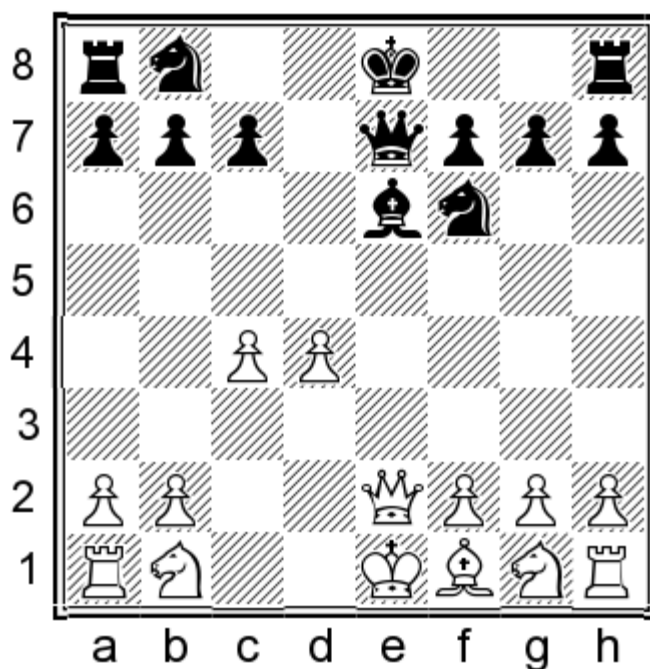
6...♞e7! is just as strong as the text move.

7.♞xd2 ♞e7!

The threat of a discovered check on the e-file is very unpleasant.

8.♞e2?

It was absolutely essential to play 8.♞e3, which we will analyze in the next game, even if White's problems are far from being solved.



8...♙c6!

Be careful not to stray. 8...♙xc4?? is not possible: 9.♞xe7+ ♙xe7 10.♙xc4+–.

There are 49 games listed in the 2017 Mega Database after the move 8...♙c6. From these 62 games, White has scored a very poor 19%. In other words, White is already lost.

9.♘f3

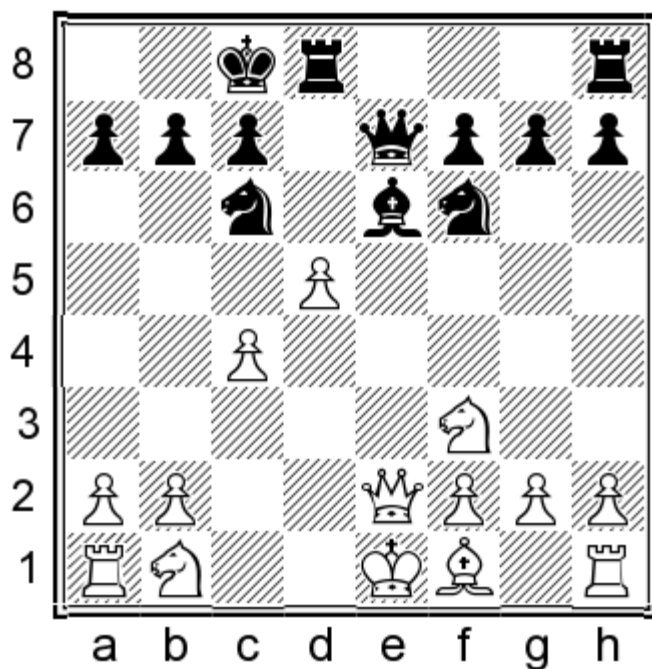
The fork is not possible: 9.d5? ♘d4, and the white queen cannot both defend the c2-square and prevent the discovered check on the e-file.

9...0-0!

Renewing the attack on d4.

10.d5

The only way to defend the d4-pawn this time. If 10.♘c3 ♖xd4! 11.♘xd4 ♘xd4–+.

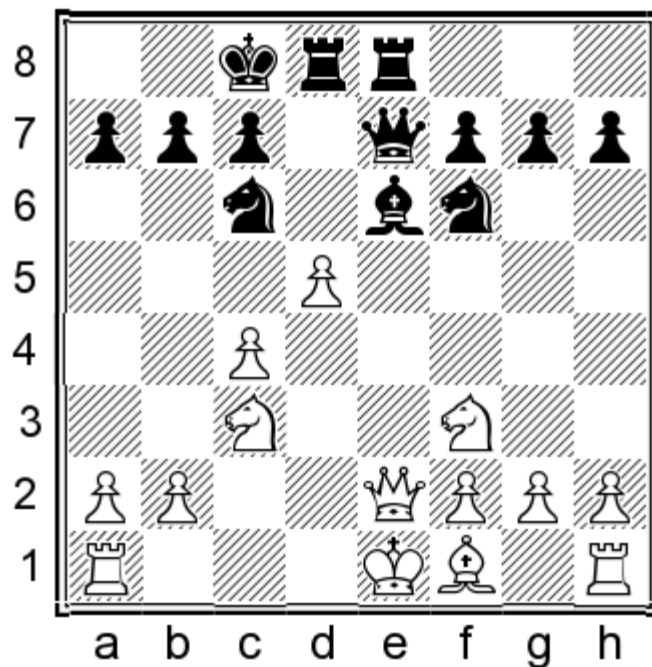


10...♖he8!!

Without worrying about the fork Black centralizes his rook and so brings the last undeveloped piece into play. The whole black army will be able to participate in the final assault on the white king.

11.♘c3

Neither capture was possible: 11.dxe6? ♔b4+ 12.♘c3 ♖xe6–+, or 11.dxc6? ♔b4+ 12.♘c3 ♙xc4–+.



11...Qxd5!

Opening lines!

12. Nxd5

A) 12. Qxe7? Rxe7+ 13. Qe2 Qxc4+-. White cannot castle without losing a piece;

B) 12. cxd5? Bb4 13. dxc6 Bxb2!-+;

C) It was doubtless better for White to evacuate his king immediately by 12. 0-0-0, even if after 12... Qc5 13. Qd3 Qxf3 14. Qxf3 Rxd1+ 15. Qxd1 (15. Nxd1 Re1-+) 15... Bb6! his position remains very uncomfortable. One example: 16. b3 Qd4+ 17. Qc2 Nb4+ 18. Qb2 Qd2+ 19. Qa3 Nc2+ 20. Qa4 (20. Qb2 Ne1+) 20... Re6 and the white king will be mated.

12...Nxd5

12... Qc5! was even stronger.

13. Qxe7 Rxe7+ 14. Qd1?

A) 14. Qe2 Nf4-+;

B) 14. Qd2 Ne3+ 15. Qc3 Nd1+ 16. Qc2 Nxf2-+.

14...Ne3+ 0-1

White loses a rook or is mated.

White was an experienced adult rated around 2000 Elo. Black was a 15-year-old rated 1435 (!), but who knew his stuff well. Without taking anything from his performance, he was simply repeating analysis that he already knew, which just goes to show that, even for a player with a 500 Elo point advantage, the Icelandic Gambit is not a bed of roses for White.

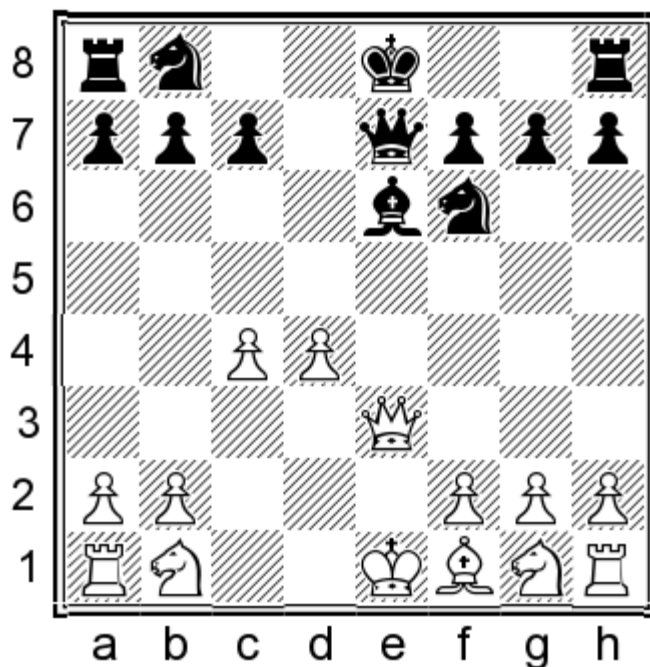
Game 4

Paul Smadja 1605

Marwan Brion 1542

Montbéliard ch-FRA jr 2012

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.dxe6 ♙xe6 5.d4 ♙b4+ 6.♙d2 ♙xd2+ 7.♚xd2 ♚e7 8.♚e3



On e3 the white queen does not block the bishop and provides additional protection to the d4-pawn.

8...♘c6!

As in the previous game!

9.♘f3

And, also as in the previous game, the fork does not work: 9.d5? ♘g4 10.♚e2 (10.♚e4 ♚f6 – with a double attack on f2 and b2 – 11.♚e2 ♘d4–+) 10...♘d4 (the white queen is harassed) 11.♚e4 ♚b4+ 12.♘d2 (12.♘c3 ♚xb2–+) 12...♚b6! (stronger than 12...♚xb2 13.♚b1 ♘c2+ 14.♙e2 ♘d4+∞) 13.♘h3 (13.dxe6 f5! 14.♚b1 ♘c2+! 15.♚xc2 ♚xf2+ 16.♙d1 ♘e3+ 17.♙c1 ♚e1+ and it's mate!) 13...0-0-0 14.dxe6 (14.♙e2 ♘f6 15.♚d3 ♙f5–+) 14...♘f6–+.

9...0-0-0 10.♙e2

The position of the queen on e3 makes it possible to try to close the e-file.

Once again, the fork does not work: 10.d5? ♘g4 11.♚e2 ♚he8!, and again we find the themes of the previous game: 12.♘c3 ♙xd5!–+.

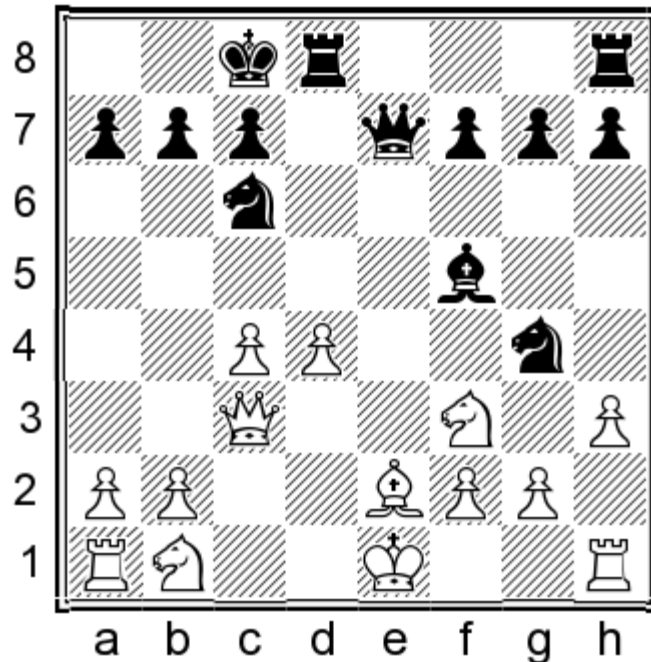
10...♘g4

10...♚he8 was also possible. Black obviously has very good compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

11.♚c3 ♙f5

To open the e-file and prepare ...♖he8.

12.h3



12...♖he8?!

The highly original move 12...♗h2!!, preventing kingside castling, leads to a brilliant conclusion: 13.♖xh2 (13.♗xh2 ♗xd4+) 13...♖he8 14.♕d2 (14.♗g1 ♗xd4+; 14.♕e3 ♕f6 15.♕d2 ♗xd4+) 14...♗xd4 15.♗xd4 ♖xd4!-+.

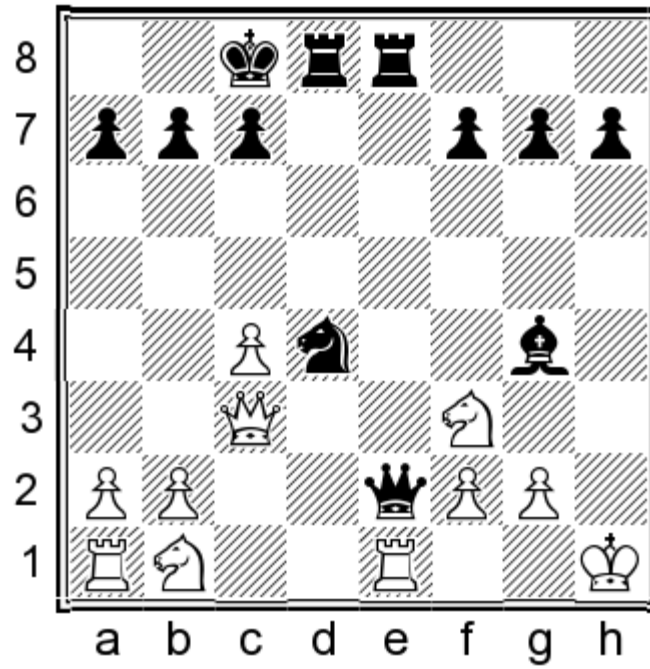
13.0-0 ♕xe2 14.hxg4 ♗xg4 15.♖e1?

15.♗bd2, threatening to trap the queen by 16.♖ae1, would have allowed White to hold the balance.

15...♗xd4! 16.♔h1?

A) 16.♖xe2? ♗xe2+ 17.♔f1 ♗xc3-+;

B) 16.♗bd2 ♗xf3 17.♗xf3 ♗xf3+ 18.gxf3 ♕d3 19.♖xe8 ♕g6+.



16... Nxf3! 17. Bxe2 Bb1+ 0-1

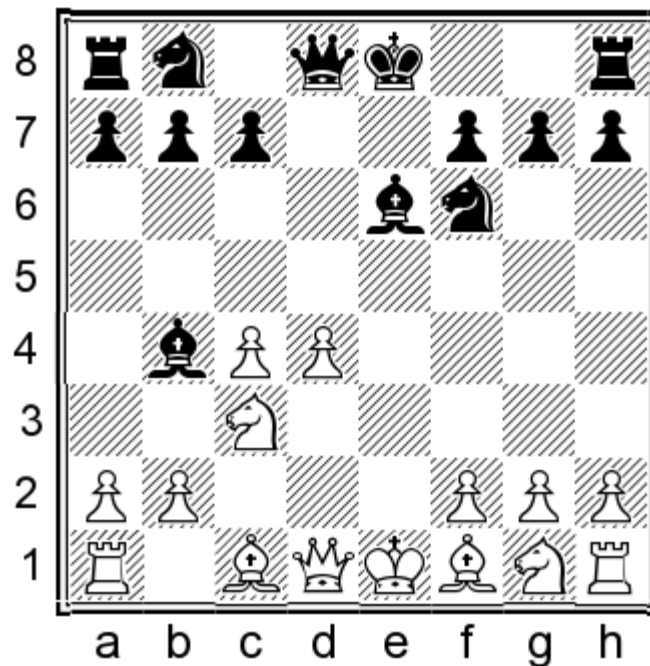
Game 5

Keith Ruxton 2325

Li Yang Hsu 2315

Tunja Wch jr 1989

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.c4 e6 4.dxe6 Bxe6 5.d4 Bb4+ 6.Nc3



6... Bb4! 7. Nc3

A) 7.d5? ♖f6! – attacking c3 and f2! – 8.♖f3 (8.dxe6?? ♖xf2#) 8...♗xc3 9.♖xf6 ♗xd5+ 10.♖c3 ♗xc3 11.♙d2 ♗xa2+. The black knight has made three consecutive captures in the last three moves;

B) 7.♖c2 was played in a game between Anne Haast and Mariya Muzychuk at the World Under 12 Championship in 2004. Black, who became Women's World (adult!) Champion 11 years later, could have gained the advantage by playing: 7...♗xc3 8.bxc3 ♖xd4!+.

7...♙f5 8.♖f3

A) 8.♙d2? 0-0! 9.♗ge2 (9.♗xe4 ♙xe4 10.♖xe4? ♖e8–+) 9...♖e8 10.♗xe4 ♙xe4 11.♖g3 ♙xd2+ 12.♗xd2 ♗c6 13.♗c3? ♗xd4!! 14.♗xd4 c5 15.♗c2 ♖f6+ 16.♗b3 ♖e6 and the threats to the white king were too strong in the game Yasin-Koc, Turkey tt 2008;

B) 8.a3 was no better, as demonstrated by the game Dicu-Florescu, played in the Romanian Team Championships in 2011: 8...♙xc3+ 9.bxc3 0-0 10.♖f3 ♖e8, and as often in the Icelandic Gambit, Black has a big lead in development in exchange for the sacrificed pawn – the entire white king's wing is still in its paddock.

8...♖xd4 9.♗ge2

9.♖xf5? was not possible. After 9...♙xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♖xc3+ 11.♗e2 0-0! 12.♖xe4 ♗c6, as is also typical of the Icelandic Gambit, the white king will not survive the arrival of two black rooks on the central files. Again, the entire white kingside is still on its starting blocks.

9...♖d7 10.a3?

The decisive mistake. It would have been better to try to develop the kingside by 10.g4 ♙g6 11.♙g2 in order to castle, even though Black, who has restored material equality, retains the better position.

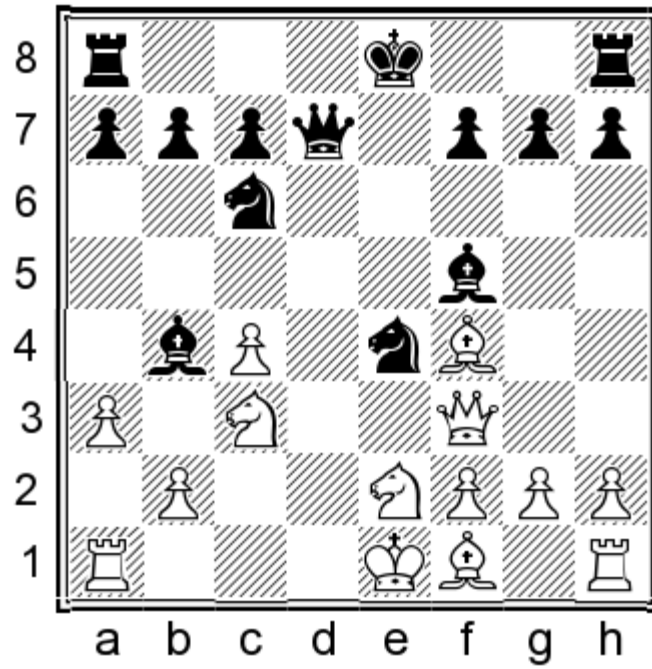
10...♗c6!

Developing a new piece and threatening 11...♗e5.

11.♙f4

To prevent ...♗c6-e5.

11.axb4 ♗xb4 (threatening mate on c2!) 12.♗d5 ♗c2+ 13.♗d1 ♗xa1–+.



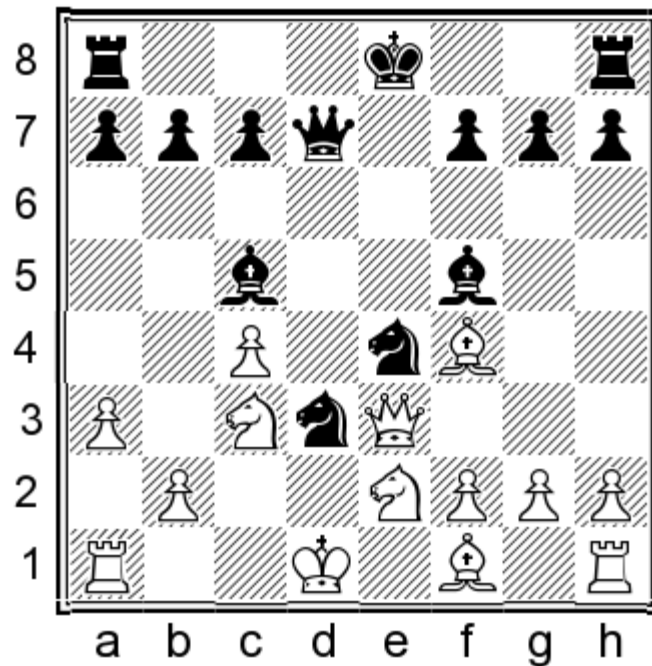
11...♞e5!

Anyway!

12.♞e3

12.♙xe5? ♞d2#.

12...♞d3+ 13.♚d1 ♙c5 0-1



The white queen is lost. In all the variations and notes we examined in this game, neither the f1-bishop nor the h1-rook moved.

Game 6

Sophie Aflalo 1953

Salomé Neuhauser 1798

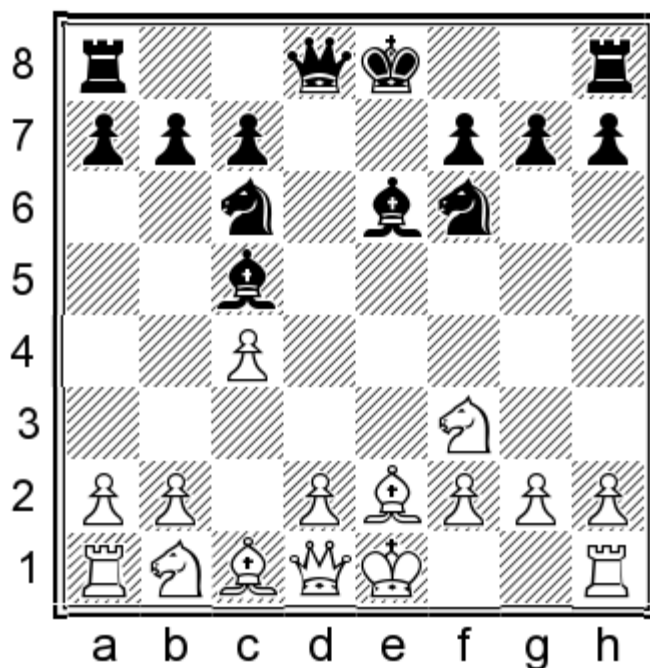
Aix-les-Bains ch-FRA jr 2006

This game was played in the last round of the French Championship between the two big favourites for the Under 12 category, who were then in the lead. The winner was assured of the title. Salomé, who usually plays the Sicilian Dragon, decided to avoid her opponent's preparation and bet on the surprise effect of playing the Scandinavian for the first time – a choice that paid off, as we shall see.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.dxe6 ♕xe6 5.♗e2

A move order intended to avoid the variation of the following game (5.♘f3 ♔e7!), but which allows Black to develop very easily and thus obtain good compensation for the pawn.

5...♘c6 6.♘f3 ♗c5

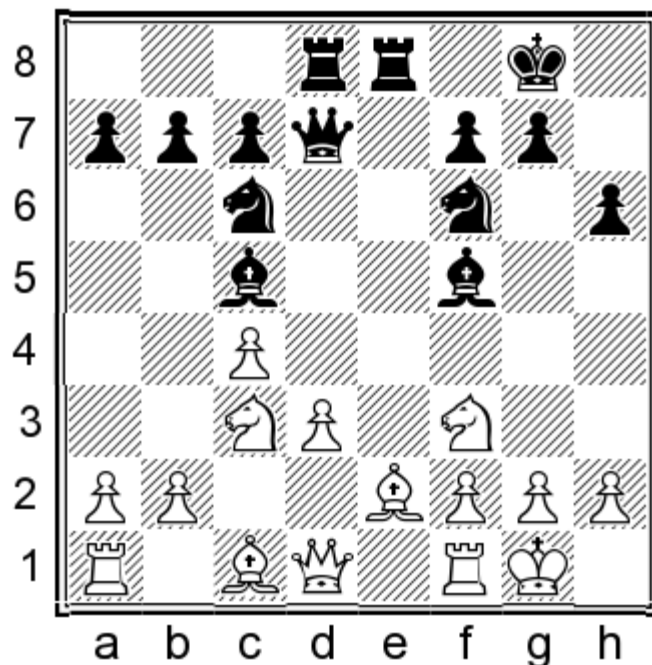


For the sacrificed pawn Black has obtained a development advantage and positional compensation thanks to her control of the d4-square and the weakness of the white d-pawn, which is backward on a semi-open file. This is a direct consequence of not having played d2-d4.

7.0-0 ♔d7

Black plans to castle queenside to strengthen the pressure on the d-file and the backward white pawn. In his book, however, Smerdon considers that this plan is perhaps too ambitious. According to him, Black's compensation being essentially positional in this position (pressure on the backward d-pawn), there is no reason to take risks by unbalancing the position with opposite-side castling, where positional considerations weigh less. That is why 7...0-0! is preferable in this position, followed by ...♔d7, ...♖ad8, ...♗fe8 and ...♗f5, when Black will press on the d3-pawn, while of course maintaining absolute control of the d4-square.

Let's see, with a diagram, the position that Black must try to get with her pieces:



Of course, White is missing some moves, but this diagram is just intended to show on which squares Black should try to place her pieces (note that ...h7-h6 has been played to prevent ♔g5). Black firmly controls the d4-square to prevent the d3-pawn from advancing, and this is attacked three times: by the black queen, bishop and rook. White is struggling to protect the pawn. If she is forced to play ♖e1, Black can then play ...♘d4 to try to exchange the e2-bishop and thus eliminate one of the defenders of the d3-pawn.

An example of this strategy (with Black castling kingside!) was adopted in a game from the 1987 European Under-16 Championship, between the future super-grandmaster Michael Adams and Hannes Stefánsson, one of the 'fathers' of the Icelandic Gambit. In this game Black recovered the d-pawn at move 20, and went on to win 30 moves later. One might think that with the capture of the d3-pawn Black merely restores material equality. But very often, in this type of position, the gain of the white d-pawn is accompanied by a mass exchange of pieces on d3, and Black remains better in the endgame that follows because his pieces are more active.

8.♘c3

8.d3, with the idea ♗bd2 and ♗b3 to challenge the d4-square, was preferable.

8...0-0!? 9.a3 ♜he8 10.b4

With opposite-side castling the game becomes more tactical. White is the first to launch a pawn storm on the opposing king, but Black has centralized her pieces and they occupy active squares.

10...♙d4 11.♙b2 ♘e5 12.c5?

White continues her advance on the queenside, but it was absolutely necessary to exchange the strong bishop on d4: 12.♘xd4 ♜xd4 13.♗a4 ♜f4. Black retains compensation for the pawn less, but chances are equal.

12...♗xf3+ 13.♙xf3 ♙c4

One of the consequences of not having played the d-pawn to d3.

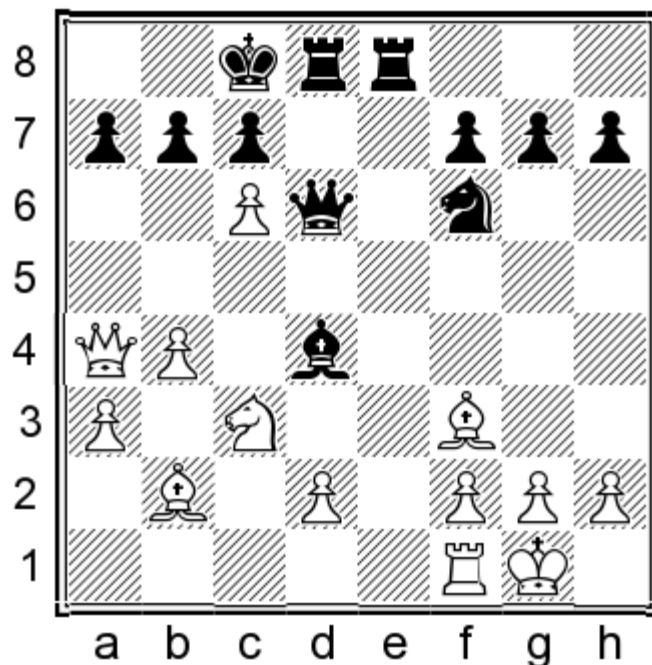
14.c6 ♜d6 15.♜a4?

This allows a nice combination, but the white position was already difficult.

15.♖e1 allows 15...♙xf2+! as in the game.

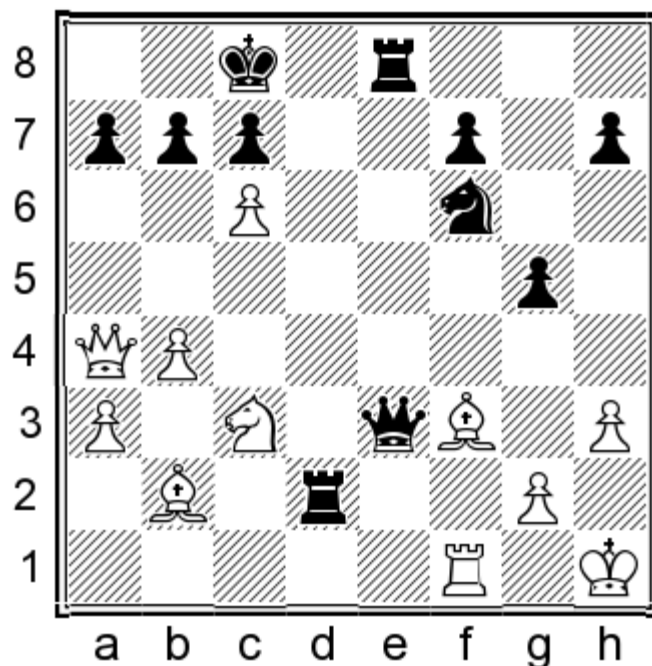
And after 15.cxb7+ ♔b8 16.d3 ♙xd3! the d-pawn falls, as 17.♖xd3 is not possible because of 17...♙xf2+.

15...♙xf1 16.♖xf1



16...♙xf2+!! 17.♔h1?

It was necessary to at least take the bishop. But not with the rook, certainly, because it's mate after: 17.♖xf2?? ♖e1+ 18.♖f1 ♜d4+. The king had to capture: 17.♔xf2, even though Black now gets a very strong attack: 17...♜d4+ 18.♔g3 g5! (threatening mate on h4) 19.h3 ♜f4+ 20.♔f2 ♖xd2+ 21.♔g1 ♜e3+ 22.♔h1



analysis diagram

22...g4!! 23.♘d5 (the only move) 23...♘xd5 24.♙xg4+ ♔b8 25.♚b5 ♚b6 26.♚xb6 axb6.

17...♚d3 18.cxb7+ ♔b8 19.♞c1?

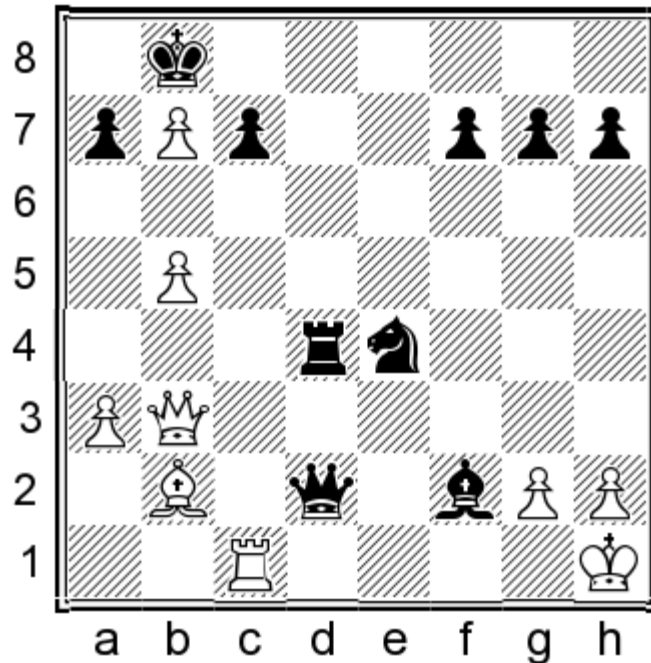
White blunders in a difficult position.

19...♚xd2

In this game one can see the strength of the black rooks centralized on the d- and e-files – a recurring theme in the Icelandic Gambit.

20.♘e4 ♞xe4 21.♙xe4 ♘xe4 22.b5 ♞d4! 23.♚b3

23.♙xd4? ♚xc1+.



23...♘g3+! 24.♚xg3

24.hxg3 ♚h6#.

24...♚d1+! 25.♞xd1 ♞xd1#

A powerful game from the French Under 12 champion, which qualified her for the European and World Championships. We will find her again at this event a little later in this book. Salomé had adopted the Scandinavian, and, of course, the Portuguese Variation.

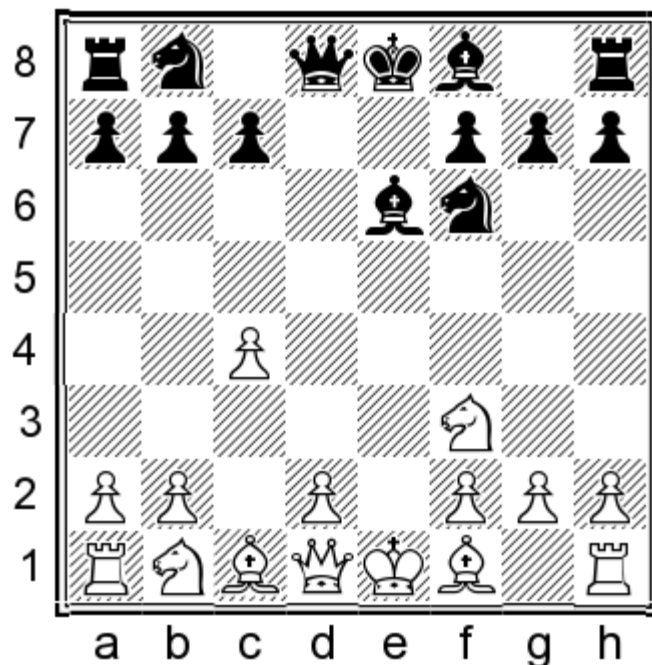
Game 7

Romain Di Costanzo

Ernesto Dillenschneider

Sarrebourg 2015

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♞f6 3.c4 e6 4.dxe6 ♟xe6 5.♞f3!



The move recommended by theory, and the only one, in any case, that can cause Black problems in the Icelandic Gambit. Rather than playing d2-d4, White gets a piece out and hurries to develop his king's wing to be able to castle quickly.

5...♞e7!

Also the best move, still according to theory. It may seem odd to block the f8-bishop, but Black threatens a discovered check on the e-file that will force White to adopt the same position with his queen.

The natural move 5...♞c6 is not entirely satisfactory. With the two knights out the move 6.d4! becomes very strong. Let's try to understand why by following the same course as that of Game 5: 6...♟b4+ 7.♞c3! ♞e4 8.♟d2!. In the aforementioned game this move was not playable because of ...♞xd4, but it is possible here because the f3-knight defends the d4-pawn. So, after 8...♞xd2 9.♞xd2 White will be able to castle while keeping the extra pawn.

6.♞e2

White has no choice and must follow Black if he does not want to immediately lose his extra pawn.

After 6.♟e2?! ♟xc4 7.d3 ♟d5 8.0-0 ♞c6 9.♞e1 Black can evacuate his king from the e-file just in time by castling queenside: 9...0-0-0, and 10.♞c3 isn't possible because of 10...♟xf3 11.♟xf3 ♞xd3!

6...♞c6 7.d4 ♟f5!

A rarely played move. There are only 14 games in the 2017 Mega Database against 74 for 7...♟g4 and 69 for 7...0-0-0, but according to Smerdon this is the one that offers Black the best chances.

8.♞xe7+

8.♟e3?, which was possible on 7...♟g4, isn't here because of 8...♞b4, when the threat of 9...♞c2+ is very unpleasant.

8...♟xe7

Despite the exchange of queens Black retains good compensation. He still has a big lead in development, with four developed pieces against a single one for White, and above all the first player must reckon with the threat of 9...♖b4.

9.a3 ♖a5

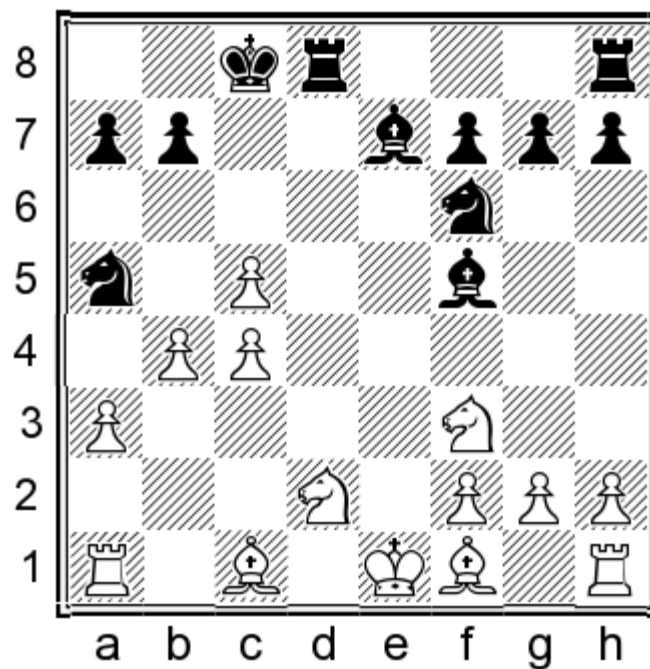
Threatening to win a piece by infiltrating the hole on b3.

10.♗bd2 c5 11.dxc5

11.d5 0-0 12.♕e2 b5! offers enough counterplay to Black.

11...0-0-0 12.b4?!

White had to think about the development of his king's wing.



12...♖he8!

A tactical theme already encountered several times in this chapter. Once again, the centralization of the black rooks on the two files in front of the white king is more important than the material. Although this position has only been played once, in an email game, it was extensively analyzed in 2008 by the FM Michiel Wind in the German magazine *Kaissiber*. Ernesto knew this analysis.

13.bxa5?

It was absolutely necessary to close the e-file by 13.♕e2, even if Black retains a dangerous initiative: 13...♗h5! (threatening 14...♗f4) 14.g3 (14.0-0 is no good because of 14...♗f6) 14...♗f6 15.♖a2 ♕d3 16.♗g1 ♗c6. Despite his two extra pawns, White will have great difficulty completing his development. 17.♗f1, for example, was not possible because of 17...♖xe2 18.♗xe2 ♗d4.

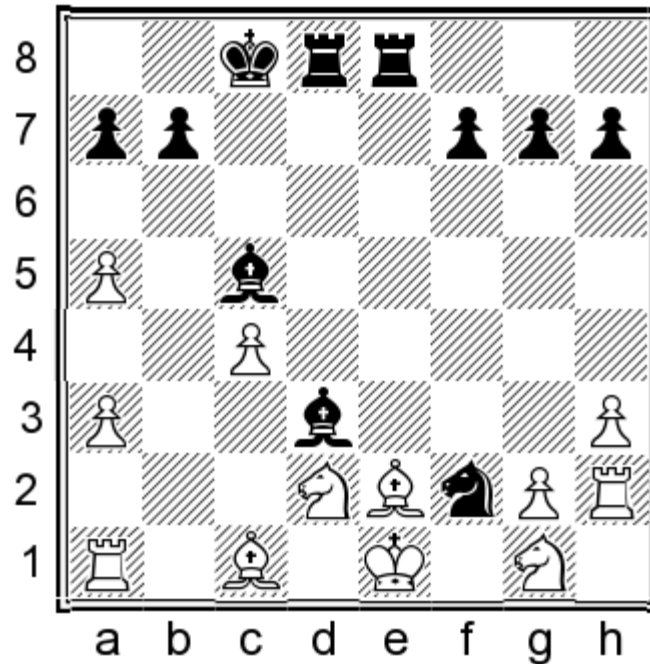
13...♗xc5+

The first move ‘out of theory’ for Ernesto, but the position is not very difficult to play. With all his very active pieces facing an uncastled king, Black has excellent compensation for the sacrificed piece.

14.♙e2

14.♚d1, falling into another pin on the d-file, is no better: 14...♘e4 and White can no longer defend f2.

14...♙d3 15.♘g1 ♘g4 16.h3 ♘xf2 17.♖h2



The white position is tragicomic.

17...♙d4

Black misses an elegant conclusion:

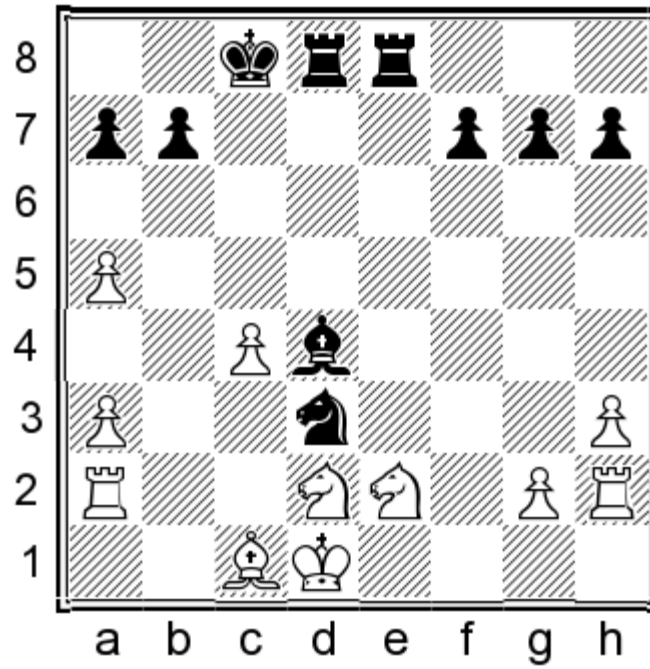
17...♘g4!! 18.hxg4 ♙xg1 19.♖h1 ♙d4 20.♖a2 ♙xe2—+.

18.♖a2

18.♘b3 offered more resistance, but would not save the game: 18...♙xe2 19.♘xd4 ♘d3+ 20.♙d2 ♘xc1 21.♙xc1 ♖xd4. Black captures the c4-pawn and, of course, has a winning ending.

18...♙xe2 19.♘xe2 ♘d3+ 20.♙d1

20.♙f1 would have met the same reply.



20...♖xe2!

The winning liquidation.

21.♔xe2 ♜xc1+ 22.♔d1 ♜xa2

White resigned.

Game 8

Rolf Sander 2061

Magnus Carlsen 2214

Bergen 2002

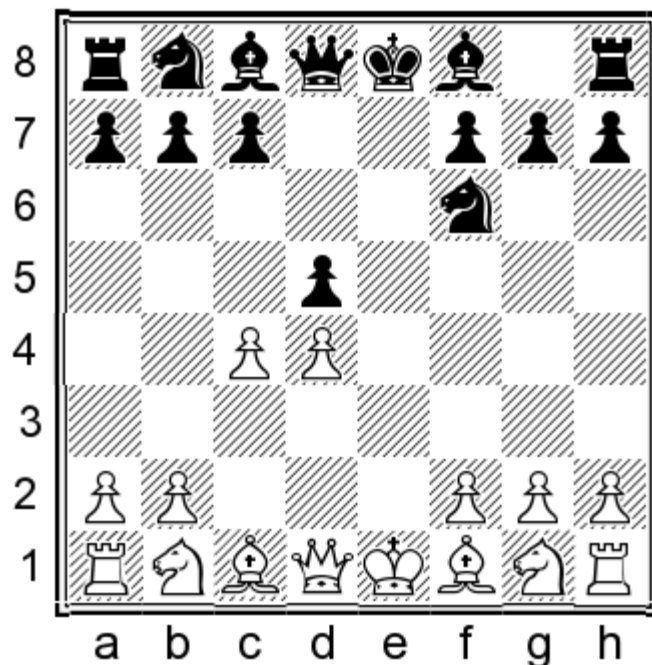
1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♞f6 3.c4 e6

The move order has been modified to stick to our repertoire. Black actually played ...e7-e6 on the first move.

4.d4

A wise refusal of the gambit.

4...exd5



The game has now transposed into an Exchange French (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.c4 ♘f6). This variation does not pose major problems to the second player, even if he is not usually a French player.

5.♘f3 ♗b4+ 6.♗c3

6.♗d2 would be good for Black. After the capture on c4, which will inevitably occur, we will be in the presence of a position with an isolated pawn on d4. The exchange of bishops therefore favours Black and weakens White's potential to attack: 6...♗xd2+ 7.♖xd2 0-0 8.♗c3 ♗e8+ 9.♗e2 dxc4.

6...0-0 7.♗e3

7.c5?!, to try to avoid the isolated pawn, would hinder development: 7...♗e8+ 8.♗e2 ♖e7 (White is already under pressure and cannot castle) 9.0-0? ♗xc3 10.♗d3 (the only way to avoid losing a piece) 10...♗a5 11.♖a4 b6 12.b4 ♗d7 13.♖a3 ♗xb4 14.♖xb4 ♗c6.

The game Feller-Bauer, played at the 2008 French Championships in Pau, continued with 7.♗e2 dxc4 (of course, Black waited for the f1-bishop to develop before taking on c4 with gain of tempo). After 8.0-0 (8.♗xc4=) 8...♗xc3 9.bxc3 ♗e6, followed by ...b7-b5, Black succeeded in keeping his extra pawn.

7...♗c6 8.♗d3

White still cannot afford to play c4-c5: 8.c5?! ♗e4 and Black grabs the initiative. White still needs two more moves to castle.

8...dxc4

As in the game Feller-Bauer cited above, Black was waiting until the f1-bishop was developed to take on c4.

9.♗xc4 ♗g4 10.0-0 ♖d6

There are a dozen possible moves for Black in this position, all of which are playable.

10...♖b8 is the one proposed by John Watson, in the 4th edition of the French players' bible (*Play the French*). The idea

of ...♖a8-b8 is simply to protect the b7-pawn and thus threaten to capture on f3 and then win the d4-pawn, without White being able to take back on b7 in exchange.

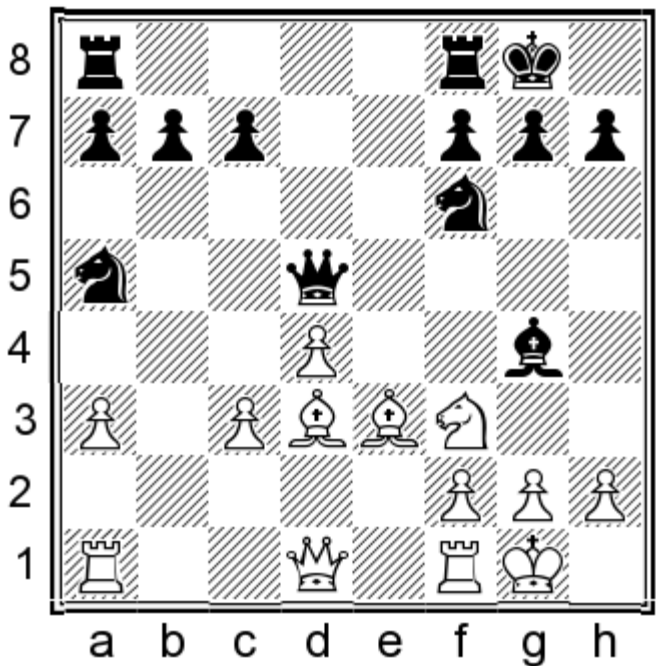
After 11.♙e2 ♜e8 Black will have a very satisfactory middlegame due to the isolated pawn on d4 and above all the strong square on d5.

11.a3 ♟xc3 12.bxc3

The exchange on c3 has certainly strengthened the isolated pawn on d4, but with three islands the white pawn structure remains weaker than Black's.

12...♞a5 13.♙d3 ♞d5

Black wants to prevent White from advancing his c-pawn to c4 and will attempt a blockade of the c4- and d5-squares.



14.♞b1 a6 15.h3 ♟h5

After 15...♟xf3 16.♞xf3 ♞xf3 17.gxf3 his pawn structure is in ruins, but White retains some chances due to the bishop pair.

16.g4 ♟g6 17.♞e5 ♟xd3 18.♞xd3 b5

Strengthening control of the c4-square.

19.♞fe1 ♞c4

A bit rushed. It was better to exchange the defender of the c4-square first: 19...♞d7! 20.♞xd7 ♞xd7. The black knight will come to c4 and will be stronger than the white bishop, which is bad because it is hampered by its own pawns.

20.♟g5 ♞d7 21.♞xc4 bxc4 22.♞e3 ♞b6 23.♟f4 ♞d7 24.♞g3 ♞d5

Black has maintained a slight advantage thanks to the strong knight on d5.

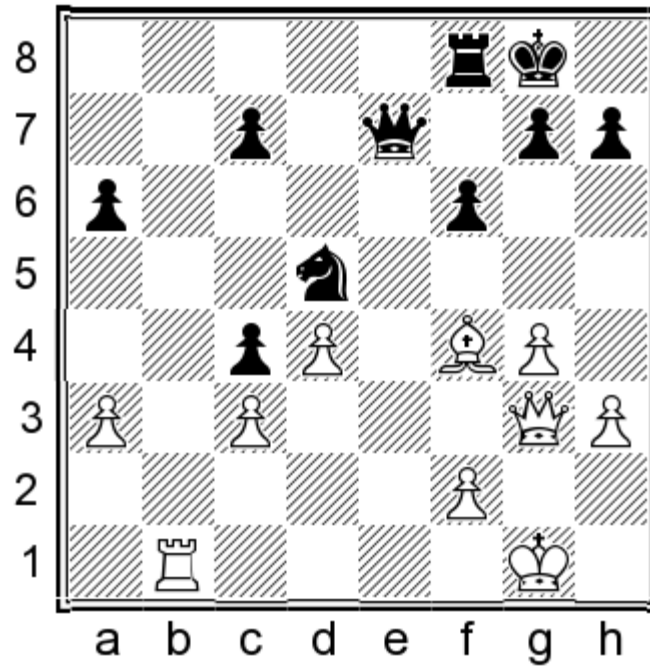
25.♖e5 f6 26.♗e2 ♖ab8 27.♗eb2 ♗xb2 28.♗xb2 ♔e7 29.♗b1??

A blunder in a position that was beginning to become difficult.

29.♗b7? wasn't possible either: 29...♔e4 30.♕xc7 ♜f4, with an attack on the b7-rook and the threat of a fork on e2.

And 29.a4 is countered by 29...♔a3.

White had to play 29.♗f3, even though Black retains a superior position.



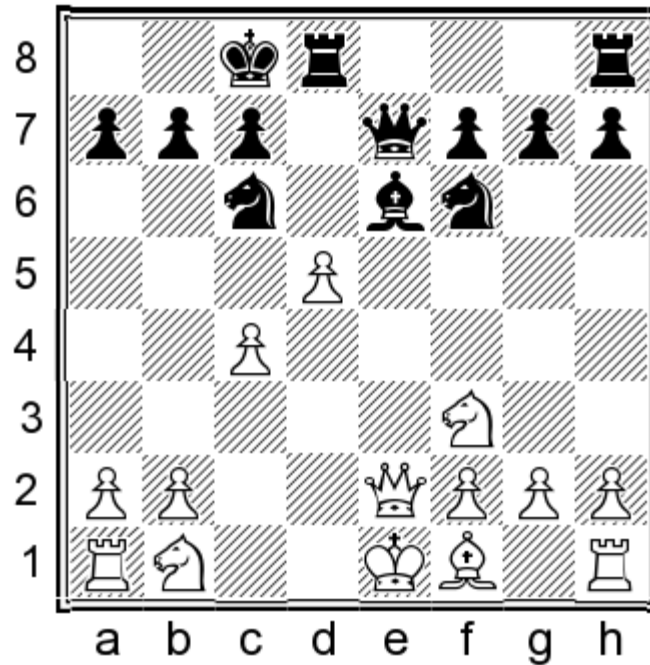
29...♔e4 0–1

A double attack on the f4-bishop and b1-rook. White loses a piece, and so he resigned.

Show in Quiz Mode

Your move!

1



White has just played 8.d5, forking two pieces. How should Black react?

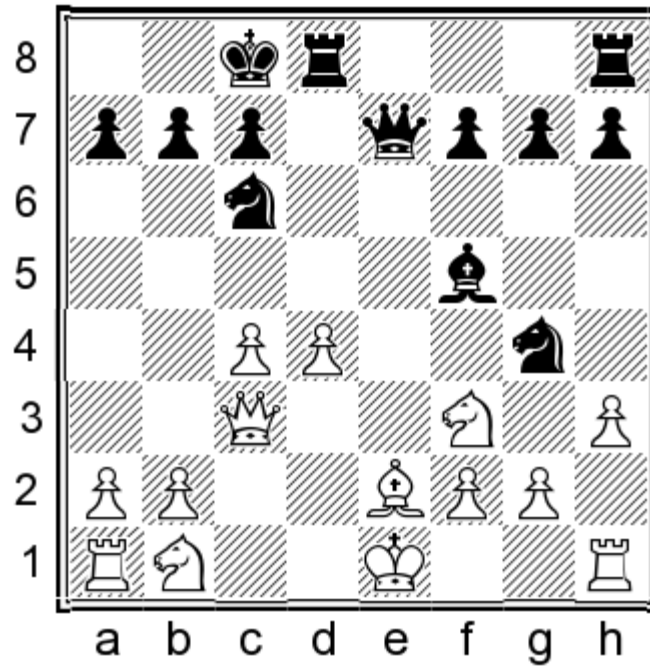
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10...♖e8!!

when the future of the white king in the centre is bleak.

(See Game 3, **Mitrović-Daños**)

2



White has just played 12.h3 to attack the knight. How does Black take advantage of the exposed situation of the white king in the centre?

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12...♞h2!! 13.♞xh2

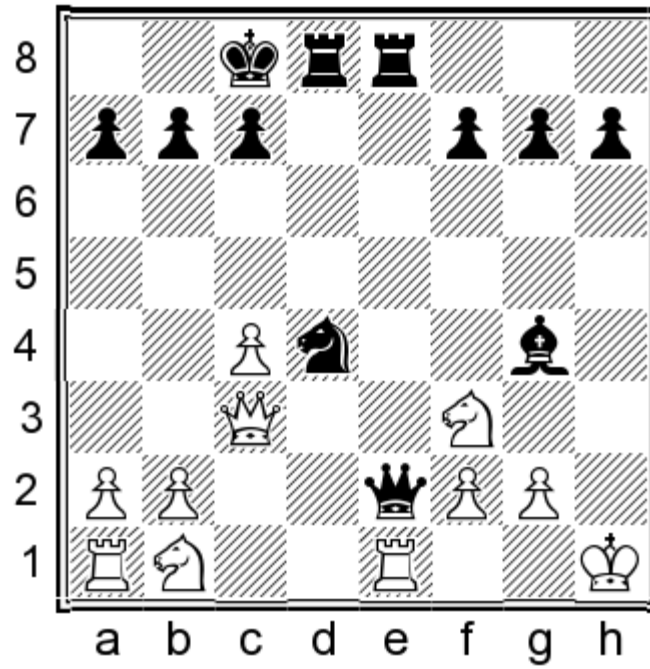
13.♞xh2 ♞xd4–+.

13...♞he8 14.♞d2

14.♞g1 ♞xd4–+; 14.♞e3 ♞f6 15.♞d2 ♞xd4–+.

14...♞xd4 15.♞xd4 ♞xd4!–+

(See Game 4, **Smadja-Brion**)



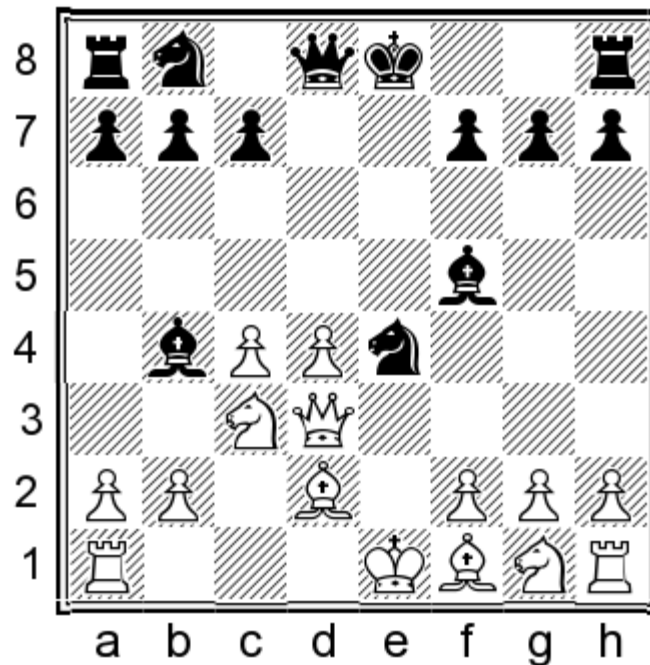
White has just played 15.♖e1 to attack the black queen, which does not appear to have a retreat square. What to do?

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16...♘xf3! 17.♗xe2 ♚d1+

(See Game 4, **Smadja-Brion**)

4



How should Black (best!) react to the attack on the c3-knight?

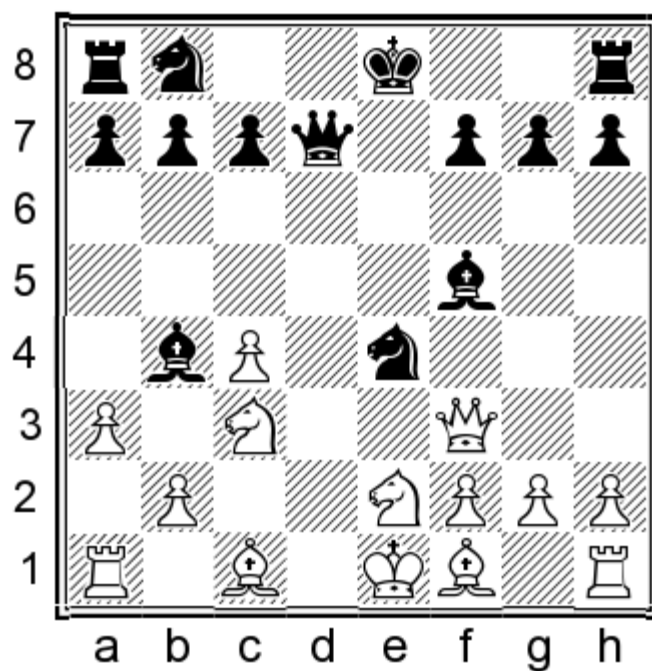
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8...0-0!

and White cannot take the knight because of the pin threat on the e-file.

(See Game 5, **Ruxton-Li Yang Hsu**)

5



White has just played 10.a3 to attack the b4-bishop. What is Black's best reply?

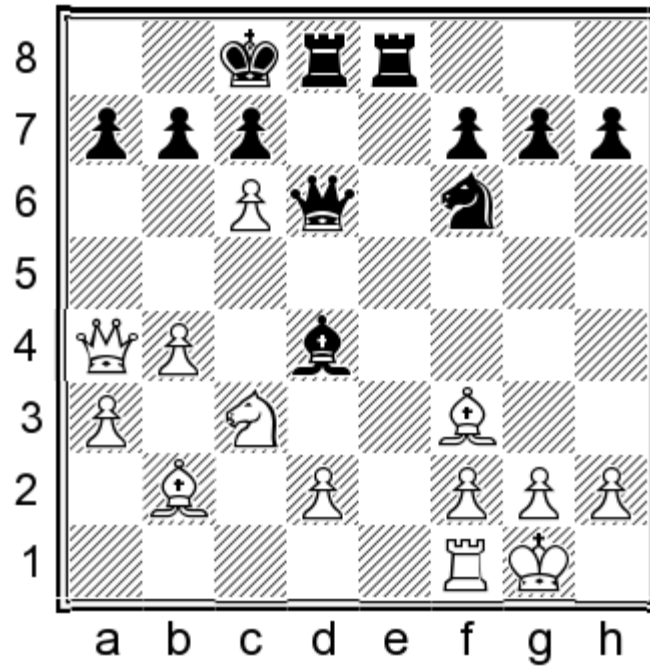
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10...♘c6!

and Black gains a very big lead in development.

(See Game 5, **Ruxton-Li Yang Hsu**)

6



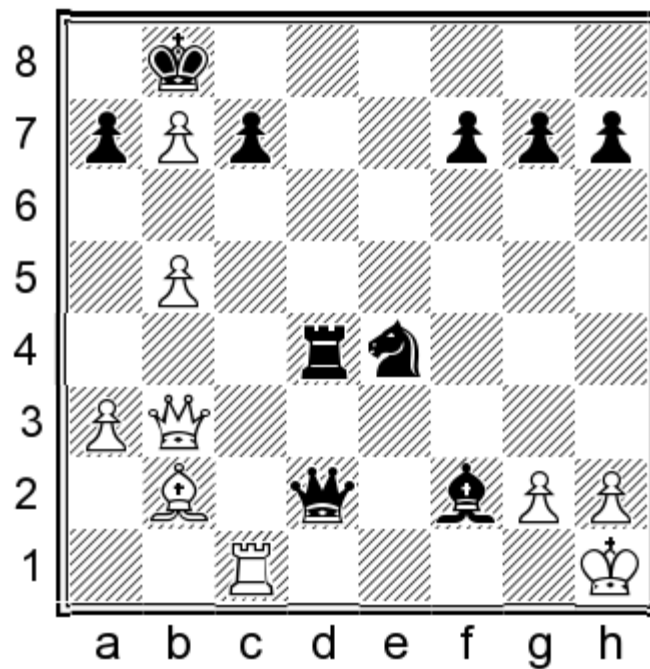
The attack is raging on both wings, but it's Black's move and he is the first to strike.

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16...♙xf2+!!

with a decisive attack.

(See Game 6, **Aflalo-Neuhauser**)



Black to play and mate in three moves.

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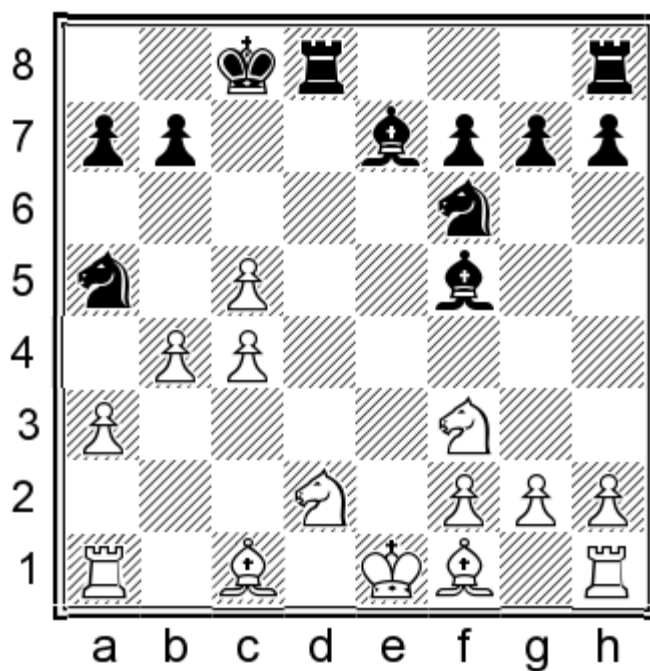
23...♘g3+! 24.♚xg3

24.hxg3 ♚h6#.

24...♚d1+! 25.♖xd1 ♖xd1#

(See Game 6, **Aflalo-Neuhauser**)

8



White has just played 12.b4 to attack the black knight. What is the best reply?

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12...♖he8!

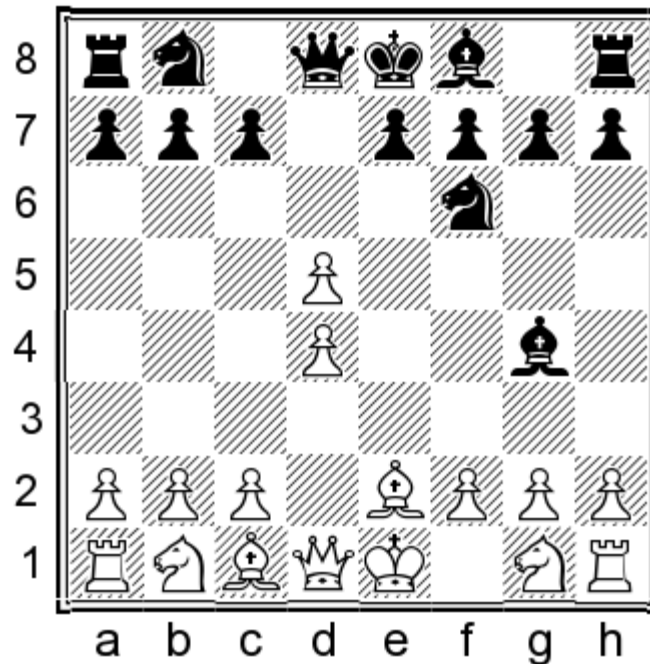
and the white king is in great danger on the e-file.

(See Game 7, **Di Costanzo-Dillenschneider**)

Chapter 3

The Scandinavian Defence, Portuguese Variation: the quiet line with 4.♞e2

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♞g4 4.♞e2



The variation described as ‘wimpish’ (sic!) by Smerdon. That says it all. Anderson was more moderate, baptising it ‘quiet’.

The move 4.♞e2, often played by players unaware of the theory, is indeed not the most ambitious. After the exchange of bishops White has two options to recapture on e2:

- 1) With the knight. The most frequently chosen option – because it develops a piece and prepares to castle – is, however, clearly inferior. Black will recapture with the queen on d5 while attacking the g2-pawn, and will then play ...♘c6 and evacuate the queen to h5 when it is attacked by the c3-knight. Black will then be ready to castle queenside and obtain the dream position with ...e7-e5.
- 2) With the queen, the best option. The g1-knight keeps its natural square on f3, and more importantly the white queen escapes the dangerous d-file while placing itself opposite the black king, thus decreasing the force of the move ...e7-e5. On 5.♞xe2 Black will recapture with the queen on d5 (which he will do whenever he can) while gaining a tempo due to the attack on d4, then send it to h5 when attacked, preferring the move ...e7-e6 to ...e7-e5 (the white queen is on e2!), and then again play ...♘c6 and ...0-0-0. There will ensue a position with opposite castling in which Black will place the dark-squared bishop on d6 and then, in collaboration with the queen on h5, will advance the g-pawn (...g7-g5-g4, possibly preceded by ...♖g8) to chase the f3-knight and organize an attack on h2.

In both variations (5.♘xe2 and 5.♞xe2) Black will get good chances.

Let’s start with three rather extraordinary games from the French Girls Under 10 Championships – extraordinary not so much for their chess quality, but for at least three reasons:

- 1) The three games were played at the same World Junior Championship.

2) In all three games White chose to play 4.♔e2 against the Portuguese Variation and, after the exchange of bishops, recaptured with the knight each time.

3) In all three games the young Bérénice was able to play the liberating ...e7-e5 move, which on each occasion led to the win of White's d-pawn.

Game 9

Adrijana Djermanovic

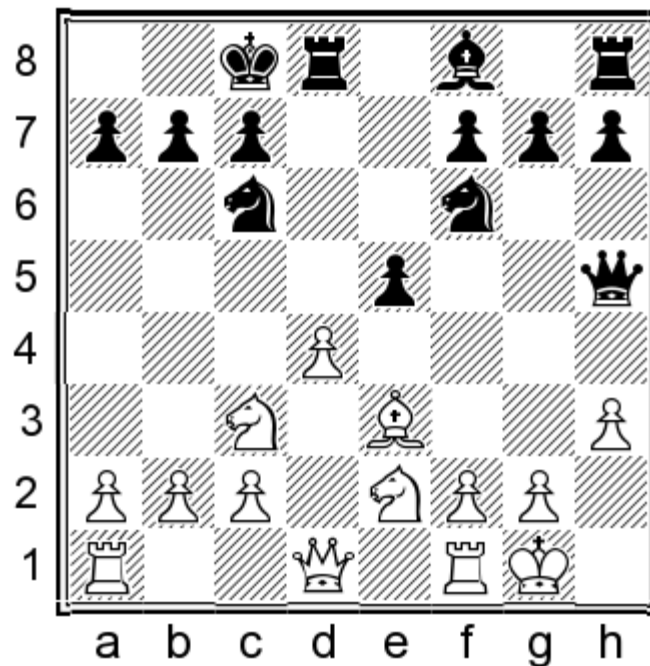
Bérénice De Talancé 1501

Maribor Wch jr 2012

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♔g4 4.♔e2 ♔xe2 5.♞xe2 ♚xd5 6.0-0 ♞c6 7.♞bc3 ♚h5 8.h3 0-0-0

The threat of 9...e5 is already very difficult to counter.

9.♔e3 e5!



Our dream position!

10.d5?

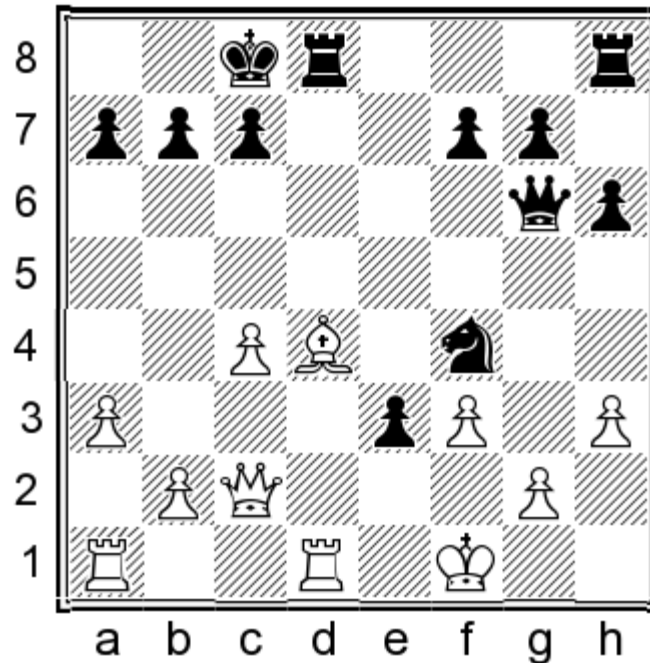
10.a3 was the only move to avoid disaster: 10...exd4 11.♞xd4 ♚g6 (the pin on the d-file is very unpleasant) 12.b4 (there is no other way to prevent the move ...c7-c5, which would follow the exchange on d4, and which would win a piece) 12...♞xd4 13.♔xd4 c5 (anyway!) 14.bxc5 ♔xc5 15.♞e2 ♞e4 and Black has the initiative. 16.c3, for example, is not possible because of 16...♞xc3!.

10...♞b4 11.a3 ♞bxd5

There you go... Black has won the d-pawn.

12.♚c1 ♔d6 13.♚d1 e4 14.♔f1 h6 15.♔d4 ♚f5 16.♞xd5 ♞xd5 17.c4 ♔f4 18.♞xf4 ♞xf4 19.♚c2 ♚g6 20.f3 ♞d3?!

20...e3! (attacking the white queen and threatening 21...e2+) would have immediately finished the game, also saving Black the work involved in 40 additional moves:



analysis diagram

21. ♖xg6 e2+ 22. ♕f2 exd1=♘+! (intermediate check!) 23. ♖xd1 fxg6–+.

21. ♔c3 ♜he8 22. a4 e3 23. ♞db1 e2+ 24. ♕g1 ♞g3 25. ♔e1 ♜xe1 26. ♞xe1 ♞e5 27. ♞ac1 ♞e3+ 28. ♕h1 ♞d2 29. ♞b1 ♞f2 30. b3 b6 31. ♞a1 ♕b7 32. ♞b1 a6 33. ♞a1 c6

A series of four strange moves. Black obviously does not know how to proceed.

33... ♞e6!, with the idea of coming to g6, was the right plan: 34. ♞b1 ♞g6 35. ♞g1 ♞xg2! 36. ♞xg2 ♞xg2+!! 37. ♕xg2 e1=♞#.

34. ♞xg7 ♞e7 35. ♞a1 ♞e3 36. ♞b1 ♞e6

Bérénice finally finds the plan ... ♞e6–g6, but without the queen on f2 attacking g2 it is obviously not nearly as strong.

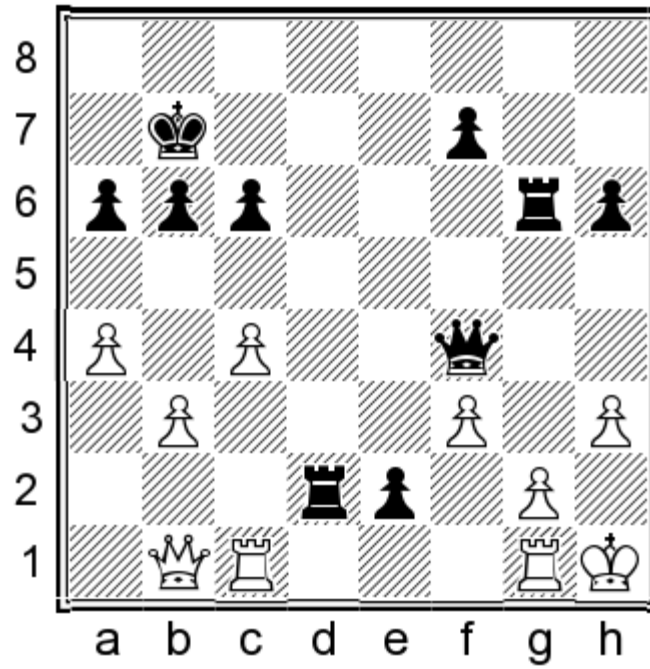
36... ♞ed7! followed by 37... ♞d3 and 38... ♞d1 was the simplest.

37. ♕h2 ♞g6 38. ♞g1?

White had 38. ♞f5!, and things are not so clear.

38... ♞f2?!

38... ♞f4+ 39. ♕h1



analysis diagram

39...Rc1!! 40.Rxg2 Qxf3 41.Re1 Rd1-+.

39.Rc1

Unfortunately, with a rook on e1 the combination at move 33 no longer works.

39...Rf6 40.Qh1 Rfd6 41.Qc1 b5?!

Black fails to find the right way, loses patience and weakens herself unnecessarily.

42.Qb1

But White proves unable to take advantage.

42.axb5! axb5 43.cxb5 cxb5 44.Qa1, with the idea of coming to a5. Due to the unprotected situation of her king, it is no longer so easy for Black to make progress.

42...Qe3 43.axb5 axb5 44.cxb5 cxb5 45.Qh2 Qd3 46.Qxd3 R6xd3 47.b4 Rb3 48.Qg3 Rxb4 49.Qf2 Rbb2 50.g3?

50.g4!, to set the kingside majority in motion, offered more hope of counterplay.

50...b4 51.Qe3 b3

Now it's over.

52.Rb1 Qa6 53.Ra1+ Ra2 54.Rxa2+ Ra2 55.Rb1 Qa5 56.g4 Qa4 57.f4 Qa3 58.g5 hxg5 59.fxg5 b2

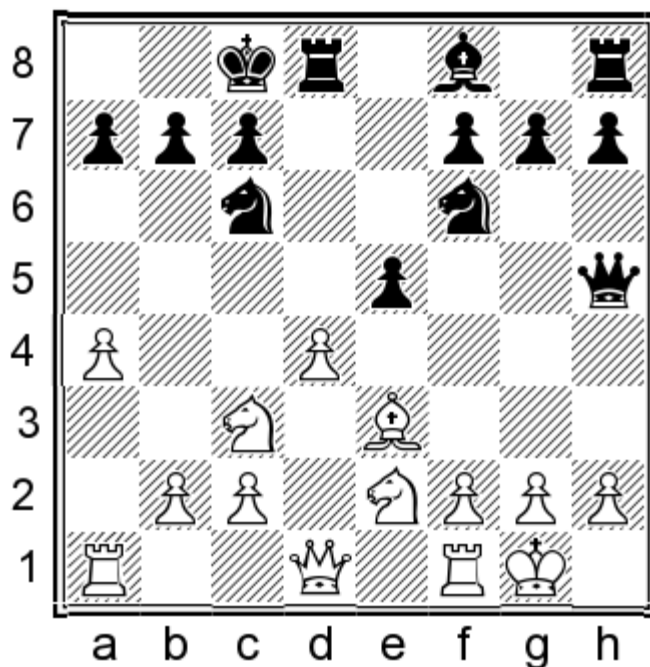
White resigned.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♙g4 4.♙e2 ♙xe2 5.♗xe2 ♚xd5 6.0-0 ♘c6 7.♗bc3 ♚h5 8.♙e3 0-0-0 9.a4?

A move that leads nowhere. White should have sought to exchange the queens by 9.♗f4 to try to obtain an equal position. But this is not very ambitious on the 9th move when we have White.

If we are going to advance the a-pawn, it would have been better to move it just one square to control b4 and avoid the unpleasantness of the game.

9...e5!



The identical music and lyrics to the previous game.

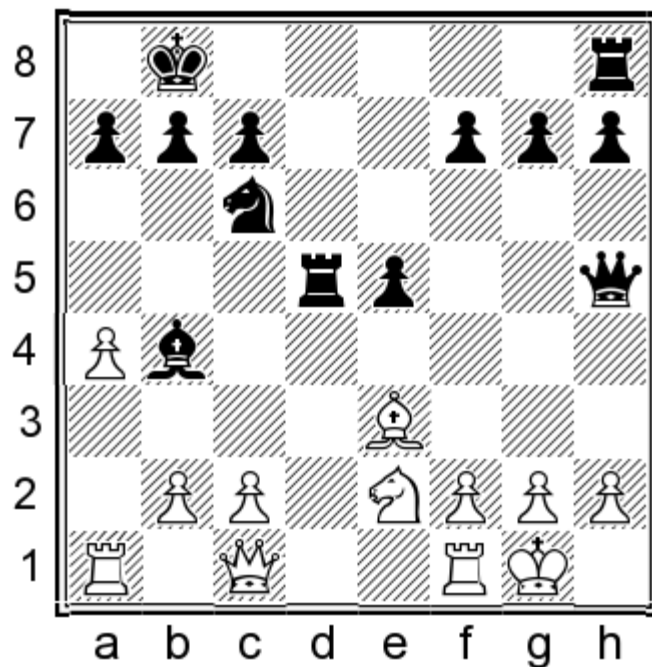
10.d5 ♙b8

Black does not want to lose the a7-pawn by playing ...♗b4 as in the previous game, but she could allow this: 10...♗b4! 11.♙xa7 ♗fxd5 and the white position is very unstable. She must reckon with the discovery on the d-file, and cannot play 12.♗xd5? because of 12...♙xd5 when White is forced to abandon either the c2-pawn or the e2-knight.

11.♙d2 ♙b4

Even stronger than putting the knight on this square.

12.♙c1 ♗xd5 13.♗xd5 ♙xd5



There we go. Just as in the previous game, Black has won the d-pawn and retains the better position. The game is now entering a new phase: the realization of the advantage – not so easy for a 10-year-old.

14.♖g3 ♜g4 15.c3 ♙d6 16.b4 f5 17.c4 ♜d3 18.c5 ♙e7 19.b5 ♖d4 20.h3 ♜g6 21.b6 ♖b3 22.bxa7+?

Capturing the c7-pawn offered White more chances to fish in troubled waters: 22.bxc7+! ♔xc7 23.♞b2 ♖xa1 24.♞xe5+ ♔d7 (24...♔c8?? 25.♙f4+–) 25.♞xa1∞.

22...♔a8 23.♞c4 f4

Protecting the d3-rook while forking two pieces!

24.♞ab1 fxe3 25.♖e4 exf2+ 26.♖xf2 ♖d2

26...♙xc5! 27.♞xb3 ♞xb3 28.♞xb3 ♞f8–+. White will not be able to get rid of the pin.

27.♞xd3 ♖xb1 28.♞xb1 ♙xc5 29.♞xg6 hxg6 30.♞c1 ♙b6 31.♔f1 ♞f8 32.♞c2 ♔xa7 33.♔e1 ♙xf2+

The simplest.

34.♞xf2 ♞xf2 35.♔xf2 ♔a6 36.♔e3 ♔a5 37.♔e4 ♔xa4 38.♔xe5 b5 39.g4 b4 40.g5 b3 41.h4 b2 42.h5 b1=♞ 43.hxg6 ♞f1 0–1

Game 11

Aryna Kuzich

Bérénice De Talancé 1501

Maribor Wch jr 2012

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖f6 3.d4 ♙g4 4.♙e2 ♙xe2 5.♖xe2 ♞xd5 6.0-0 ♖c6 7.♖bc3 ♞h5 8.♙f4

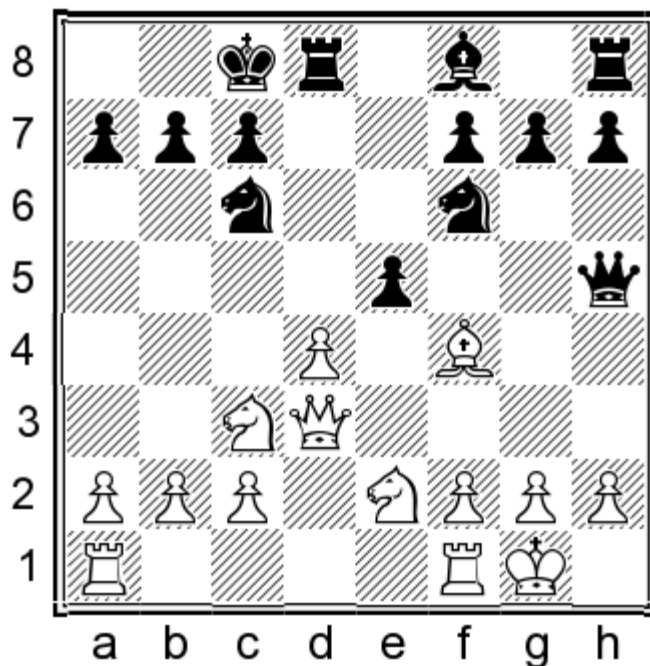
After 8.h3 and 8.♙e3 in the two previous games, we now have a bishop on f4 that seems well placed to prevent the

move ...e7-e5.

8...0-0 9.♔d3?

It was necessary to remove the queen from the d-file to mitigate the consequences of the ...e7-e5 move by playing 9.♔c1 or 9.♔e1.

9...e5!



‘*Bis repetita placent!*’, as the Latin says (take advantage of the good things ... and do not hesitate to use them again).

10.♘g3

10.♘g3 a6! and the pressure on d4 is too strong (10...exd4?! 11.♘b5∞).

10...♔g4 11.♙c1 exd4

This is the third d-pawn Bérénice has won in three games with this variation, and all in the same World Championship. This is proof that this variation of the Scandinavian can be devastating for juniors (and even for the less young).

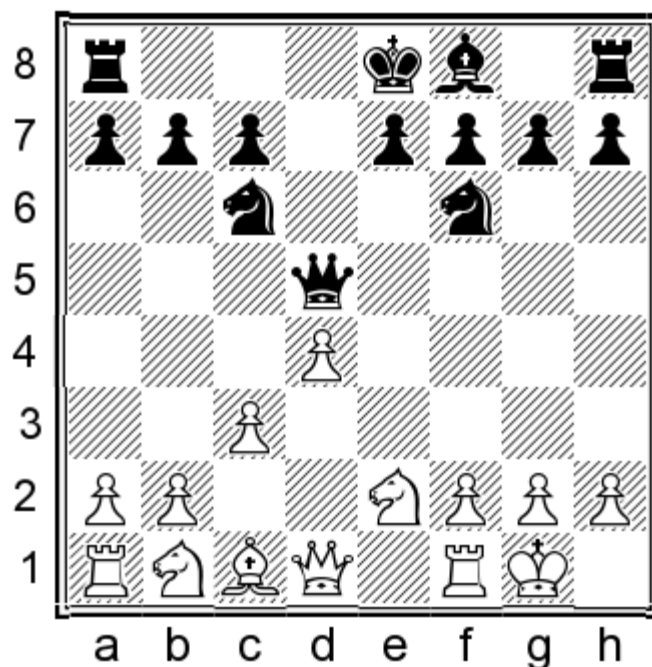
12.♘b5 ♙c5 13.♘xd4??

The question of how to take advantage of the extra pawn will not arise now.

13...♙xd4 14.♔f5+ ♔b8 15.♔xg4 ♘xg4 16.♘e4 f5 17.h3 ♘f6 18.♘g5 ♖he8 19.c3 ♙b6 0-1

White prefers to stop here. Even without the extra piece Black would still be better. Note the centralized position of the two black rooks, common in many variations of the Portuguese Scandinavian.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♙g4 4.♙e2 ♙xe2 5.♘xe2 ♚xd5 6.0-0 ♘c6 7.c3



This move overprotects the sensitive point on d4, certainly, but it also occupies the b1-knight's natural square on c3.

7...0-0 8.b3?!

To be able to play c3-c4 and chase the queen from its central position. But this move is, of course, a waste of time.

It would have been better to develop with 8.♘d2. Black would then have continued by 8...e6 (8...e5?! 9.c4 with d4-d5 to follow) and moves like ...♙d6 and ...♚h5, with an attack on the kingside that is certainly faster than White's on the other wing.

8...♚h5

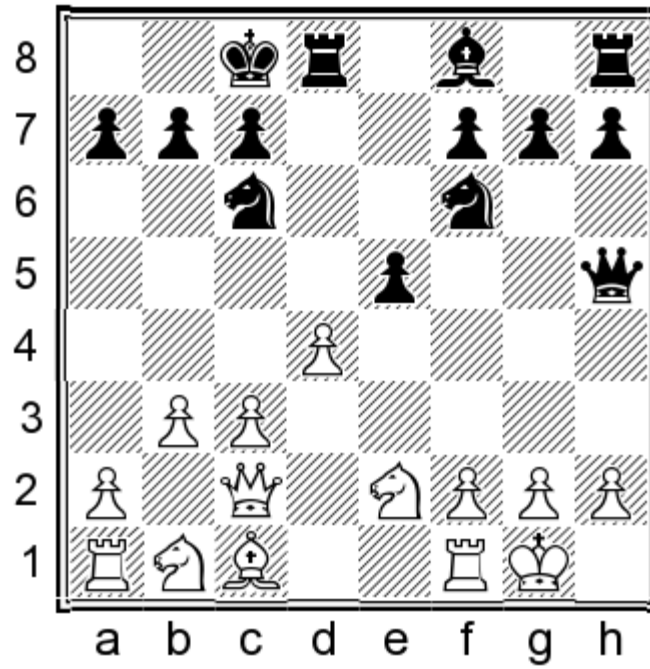
8...e5?! was no longer good due to 9.c4 followed by d4-d5.

9.♚c2

White sees ...e7-e5 looming on the horizon and pre-emptively removes her queen from the d-file. But she neglects her development even further.

9...e5!

Anyway!



10.dxe5 ♞xe5

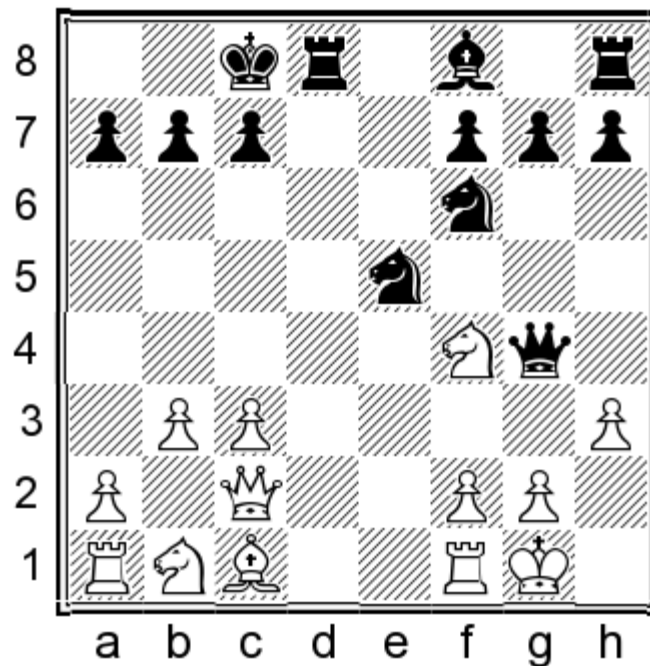
Black's position is already superior. Her pieces are better developed and threats are beginning to emerge against the white kingside, especially after the coming move ...♞d6.

11.♞f4

11.♞f4 to try to protect the kingside was preferable.

11...♚g4 12.h3

To drive the queen away from her threatening position White is already obliged to weaken her kingside.



12...♔d7

12...♘f3+! 13.♖h1 ♔d7 14.gxf3 g5 and Black regains the piece with a very strong attack, as the knight cannot retreat:
15.♘e2 (15.♘g2 ♔xh3+ 16.♖g1 ♕d6–+) 15...♔xh3+ 16.♖g1 ♘h5! (to prevent ♘g3 and to play ...♘f4, which will lead to a decisive opening of the g-file after the exchange on f4) 17.♕e3 (17.♘g3 ♘xg3 18.fxg3 ♕c5+–+) 17...♘f4–+.

13.♕e3 g5

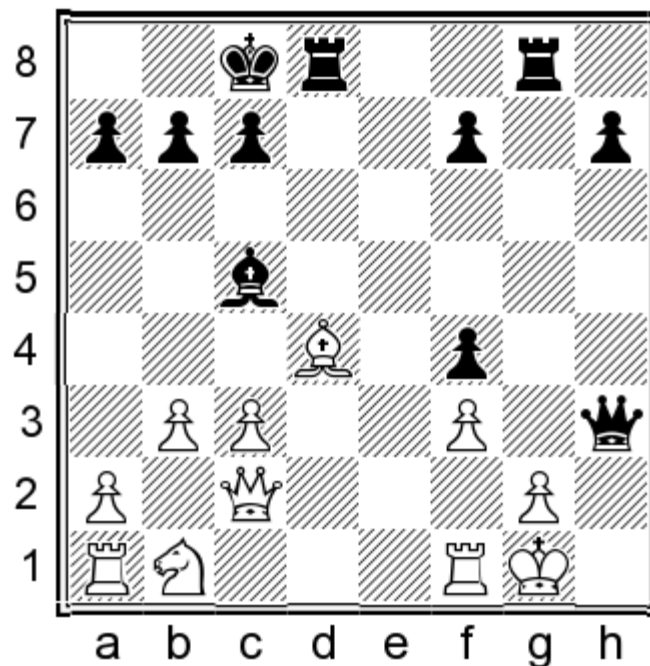
We can now assess the weakening caused by the move h2-h3: Black will be able to play ...g5-g4 with great force.

14.♕d4??

14.♘e2 was mandatory, even if after 14...g4 and the opening of the g-file Black has a very dangerous attack that is, above all, a lot faster than White's, which has not yet started.

14...♘f3+?!

14...gxf4! wins more quickly: 15.♕xe5 ♖g8! 16.♕xf6 (16.♖h2 ♔d5 – with a double attack on g2 and the e5-bishop – 17.♔f5+ ♘d7!–+: the double threat is still there) 16...♔xh3 17.f3 ♕c5+ 18.♕d4



analysis diagram

18...♖xd4!–+.

15.gxf3 gxf4 16.♖h2 ♕e7 17.♘a3

The b1-knight finally gets out on the 17th move.

17...♖hg8 18.♘c4 ♖g5!

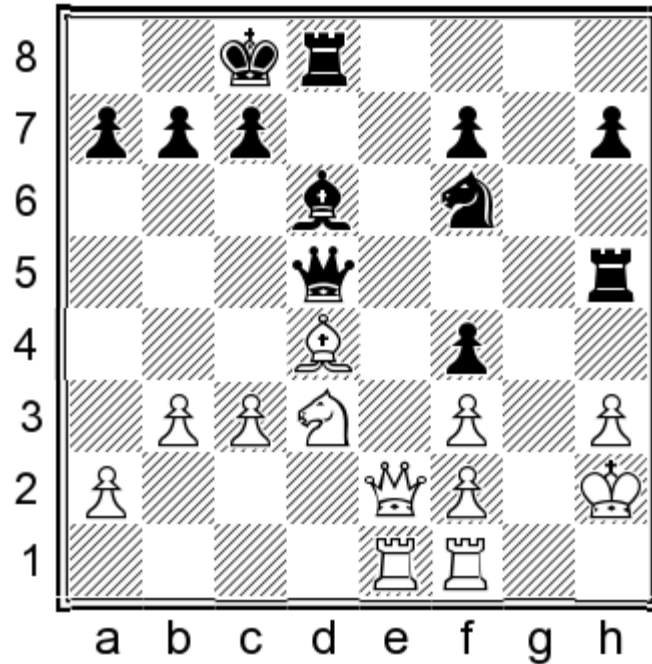
With the simple idea ...♖h5.

19.♘e5

The only move.

19...♚d5 20.♖ae1 ♜h5 21.♙e2 ♙d6 22.♘g4

Black threatened 22...♚e6 or 22...♖e8. There was no longer any defence, for example: 22.♘d3



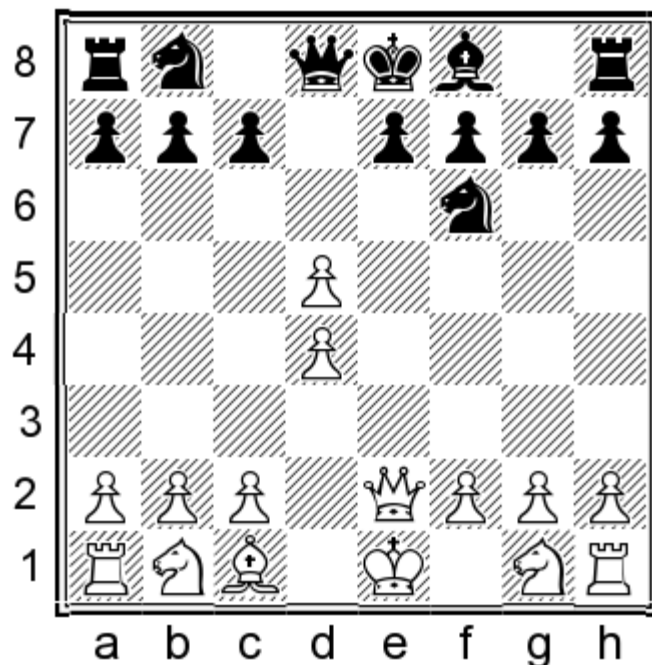
analysis diagram

22...♖xh3+!! 23.♔xh3 ♚h5+ 24.♔g2 ♖g8#.

22...♘xg4+ 23.fxg4 f3+ 0-1

Game 13
Rémy Feller
Alexis Cahen
Metz 2014

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♙g4 4.♙e2 ♙xe2 5.♚xe2



The best recapture. While preventively leaving the d-file (we have seen all the problems that could arise, especially after the move ...e7-e5), the white queen takes up position on the e-file. As a result, the ‘liberating’ move ...e7-e5 will be more difficult to play, and in many variations White may threaten c2-c4, followed by d4-d5. In addition, the g1-knight will be able to develop to its natural square and participate in the fight for e5 (which it did not do on e2). Despite all this, Black has no real problems in this variation.

5...Qxd5 6.Nf3 e6

Better than the natural move 6...Nc6, which would expose Black to a rapid c2-c4, followed by d4-d5. After ...e7-e6 Black will probably abandon the usual plan of playing ...e7-e5, which would be less effective here anyway, because the white queen is no longer on the d-file. Instead he plans to play ...Qd6, ...Nc6 and ...0-0-0, followed eventually by ...Wh5 and ...g7-g5, with an easy-to-play attack against h2 in the – probable – case where White castles kingside. At the level of the pawn structure the position looks like a French Defence where Black has traded on e4 (...d5xe4), but with the huge difference that he has managed to exchange his c8-bishop (which is often bad in the French) for the strong white bishop.

7.0-0

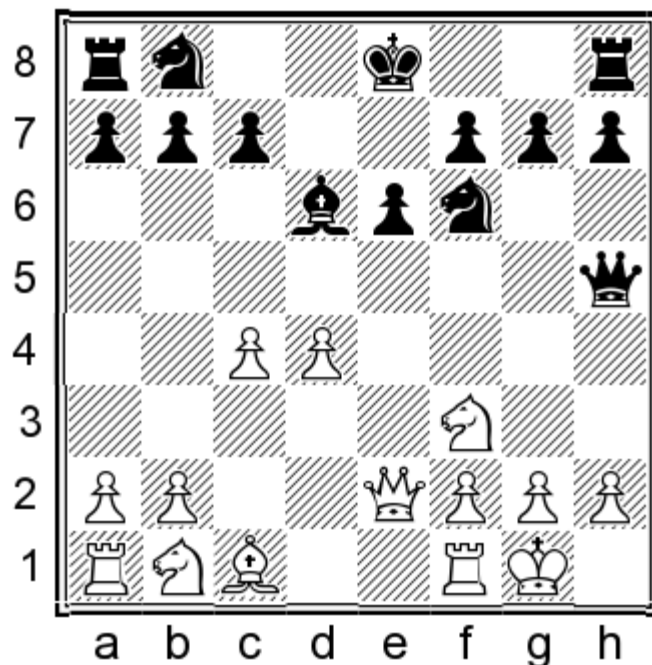
In Game 15 we will see the move 7.c4!, which is more energetic. After 7.Nc3 Wh5 8.Qb5+ (8.0-0 Qd6 and Black’s plan is substantially the same as in the game, namely, ...Nc6, ...0-0-0 and ...g7-g5. If 9.Nb5? Qxh2+!) 8...Qxb5 9.Nxb5 Qd6 10.Nxd6+ cxd6 the black position is slightly superior, due in particular to the semi-open c-file, which may prove more useful than the e-file for White. In the game Schäfer-Blum (France National 1 Junior 1999), Black eventually prevailed on move 52.

7...Qd6

7...Nc6! might be a better order of moves, preventing 8.c4? in particular because of 8...Nxd4!, which wins a pawn. In Mega Database 2017 no fewer than 22 players fell into this trap, including four (!) opponents of GM Krivoshey.

On the other hand, be warned – after 8.Nc3, 8...Nxd4? doesn’t work: 9.Nxd4 Qxd4 10.Qb5+ (with the pawn on c4 this check is impossible). Black must therefore play 8...Wh5, with the usual plan of ...Qd6 followed by ...0-0-0, ...Bg8 and ...g5-g4.

8.c4 ♔h5!



Threatening 9...♙xh2+!

9.♘c3 ♘c6!

This time threatening 10...♘xd4!.

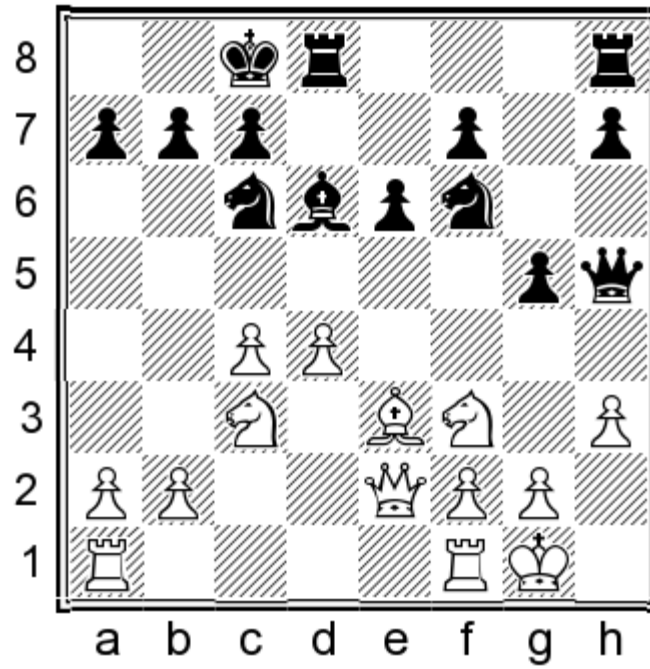
10.h3

Black has managed to provoke a weakening of the kingside that could well give much more force to the pawn attack by ...g7-g5-g4.

A) 10.c5?? ♘xd4! abruptly ended the game Myers-Duxbury, Brisbane 2005;

B) 10.♙e3 g5! 11.h3 (11.♘xg5?? ♔xh2#; 11.♙xg5? ♘xd4!-+; 11.g3 g4 12.♘h4 0-0-0 and Black will try to dislodge the blocking knight on h4 by ...♙e7) 11...g4 with an attack.

10...0-0-0 11.♙e3 g5!?



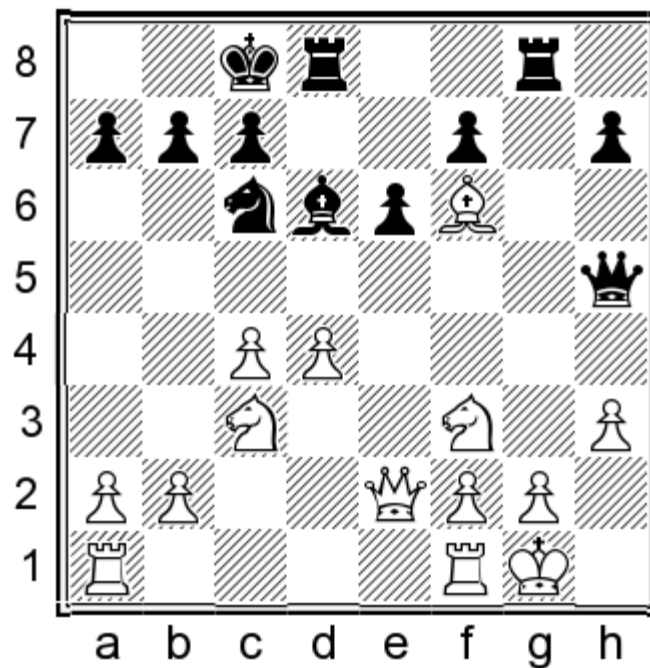
A thematic pawn sacrifice in this type of position with opposite-sides castling. If White captures, he opens the g-file, and if he does not, Black will open it anyway after ...g5-g4.

However, it was possible (and even stronger) to prepare this advance by 11...♖hg8!. But playing 11...g5, Alexis was inspired – and rightly so – by the next game, which he knew.

12. ♕xg5?

As we shall see in the next game (in homage to one of the fathers of the Portuguese Scandinavian), he had to take with the knight.

12...♖hg8! 13. ♕xf6

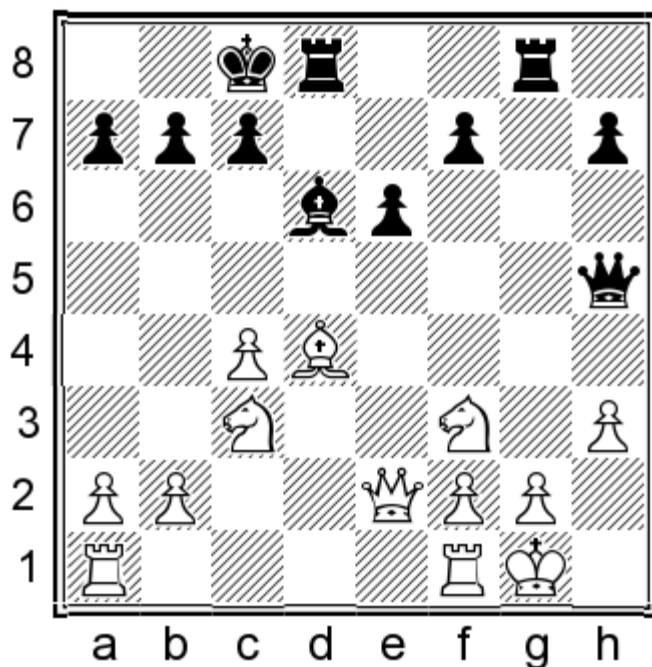


13...♖xd4!!

13...♖xh3 was much less clear after 14.g3 ♗xg3 15.fxg3 ♖xg3+ 16.♕f2 ♖g2+ 17.♕e1 ♖xe2+ 18.♕xe2, when, with queen and two pawns against rook and two minor pieces, the position remains very complicated.

14.♗xd4

14.♖xd4 leads to the same abrupt conclusion.



14...♖xg2+! 15.♕xg2 ♖g8+ 0–1

Now we understand the idea of the sacrifice on d4. It was necessary to divert a piece from control of g5. It is now mate after White has exhausted all the defenders that he can interpose on the g-file: 16.♗g7 ♖xg7+ 17.♖g5 ♖xg5+ 18.♖g4 ♖xg4+ 19.hxg4 ♖xg4+ 20.♕h1 ♖h3+ 21.♕g1 ♖h2#.

We will now see Rui Damaso, the Portuguese master who greatly contributed to the development of the eponymous variation in the 1990s, in action.

This game was played in the third round of a China-Portugal match in Macau 1996, and it caused a sensation at the time. These were the first explosions of the Portuguese Variation at a very high level.

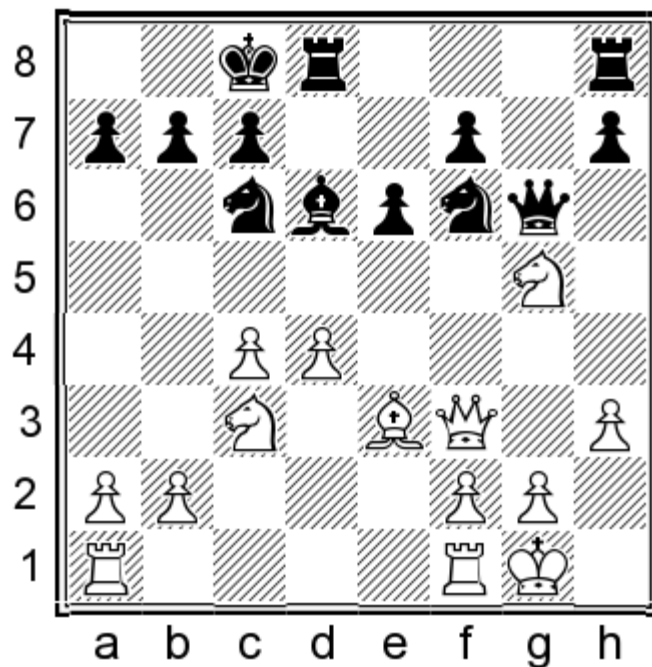
Game 14

Ye Jiangchuan 2560

Rui Damaso 2415

Macau tt 1996

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖f6 3.d4 ♗g4 4.♗e2 ♗xe2 5.♖xe2 ♖xd5 6.♖f3 e6 7.0-0 ♗d6 8.c4 ♖h5 9.♖c3 ♖c6 10.h3 0-0-0 11.♗e3 g5!? 12.♖xg5 ♖g6 13.♖f3?!



Occupying the knight's retreat square. This will have unfortunate consequences, as we shall see.

13. ♖f3, followed by 14. ♖h4, offered White better chances to defend, even if after 13... ♜hg8 Black retains good compensation for the sacrificed pawn thanks to his possibilities of attack on the g-file.

13... ♙b4!

Attacking the d4-pawn and setting a small trap.

14. ♜fd1?

A few years earlier, in this same position and against the same Damaso during the Oviedo tournament in 1992, the English super-grandmaster John Nunn placed the other rook on d1, but with the same consequences as in this game. After 14. ♜ad1? ♙xc3 15. bxc3 h6 – the knight has no square! – 16. h4 hxg5 17. ♙xg5 ♘e4 18. ♙xd8 ♘xd8 19. ♚h3 f5 20. ♜fe1 ♘g5 the Portuguese player obtained a winning position, which, however, he did not manage to convert (drawn in 34 moves). That said, making a point and a half with black in this variation against grandmasters over 150 Elo points stronger is not such a bad result.

It was necessary here to repatriate the knight with 14. ♘ge4, even if after 14... ♘xe4 15. ♘xe4 ♘xd4 Black has regained his pawn and has a good position.

14... ♙xc3 15. bxc3 h6

There we go – just as in the game Nunn-Damaso the g5-knight finds itself with no square.

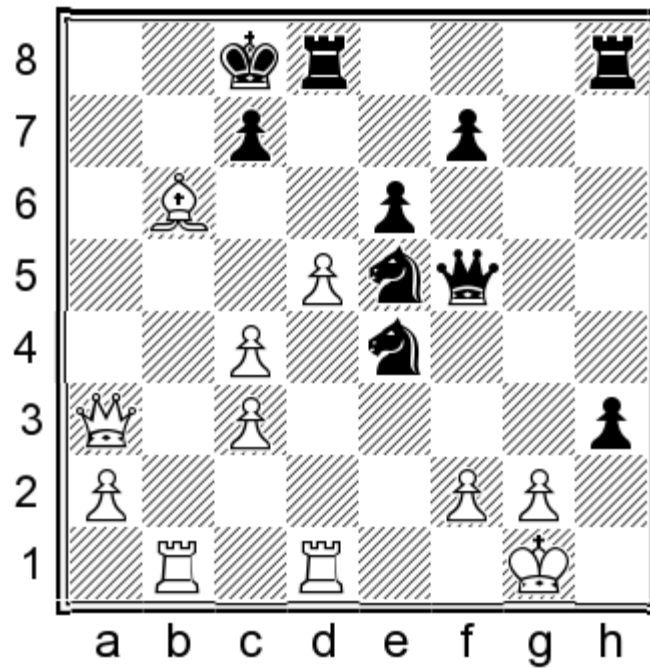
16. d5 ♘e5 17. ♚e2 hxg5 18. ♙xa7 ♚f5 19. ♜ab1 ♘e4

More incisive was 19... ♜xh3!! 20. gxh3 ♜h8 with a decisive attack.

20. ♙d4 g4! 21. ♚b2

21. ♙xe5 ♚xe5 22. ♚xg4 ♘xc3–+.

21... b6 22. ♚a3 gxh3 23. ♙xb6



23...♘f3+! 24.♔f1

24.gxf3 h2+ 25.♔g2 ♕h3+ 26.♔h1 ♕xf3#.

24...hxg2+ 25.♔e2

25.♔xg2 ♕h3#.

25...♘g3+! 26.fxg3 ♕e4+ 27.♙e3 g1=♘+! 28.♔f1

28.♖xg1 ♖h2+ 29.♔f1 ♕xc4#.

28...♕xc4+ 29.♔g2 ♖h2#

We will meet Rui Damaso again in the following chapter, facing, in the same match, the grandmaster Wang Zili. This second GM will be mated in fewer than half the moves of his team-mate Ye Jiangchuan.

Game 15

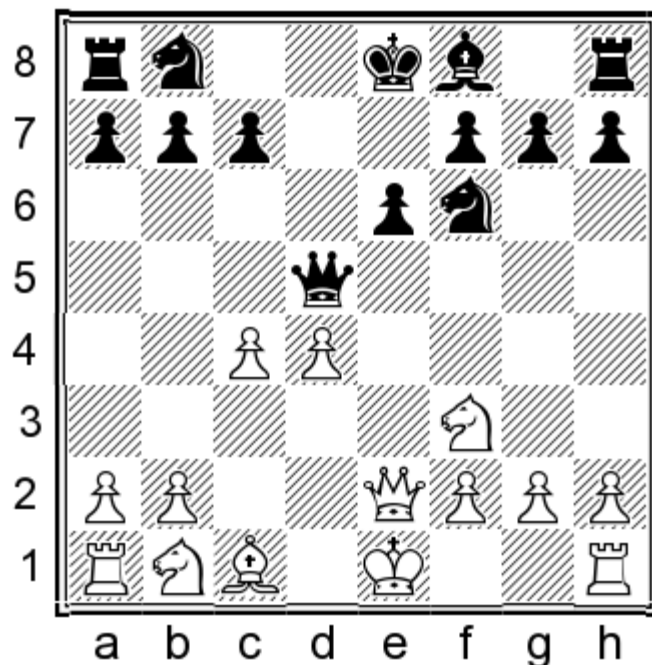
Nathanaël Frédéric

Clément Kuhn

Metz 2016

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♙g4 4.♙e2 ♙xe2 5.♕xe2 ♕xd5 6.♘f3 e6 7.c4

Playing this move right away is better than the 7.♘c3 and 7.0-0 we have seen in previous games because it prevents ...♕h5.



7...♖f5!

7...♖h5 would obviously be the natural move, with the idea, in particular, to return to the game Ye Jianchuan-Damaso. Unfortunately (for Black), it is not so simple after 8.♘c3! (8.0-0 effectively transposes into the aforementioned game) 8...♙d6 (8...♘c6? is strongly countered by 9.d5! – one of the points [for White!] of having the queen on e2, opposite the black king) 9.c5 ♙e7 10.♗b5+±, Sonter-Blazkova, Olomouc 2009.

Fortunately (for Black!), in the Portuguese Scandinavian the black queen quite often has the f5-square at its disposal as well. We will find this theme again in the next chapter.

8.0-0

8.d5? would not lead to anything, because here this move does not attack the ♘c6: 8...♙c5 9.dxe6 0-0! 10.exf7+ ♖xf7 11.0-0 ♘c6, and as so often in the Portuguese, Black has a big lead development in exchange for the sacrificed pawn.

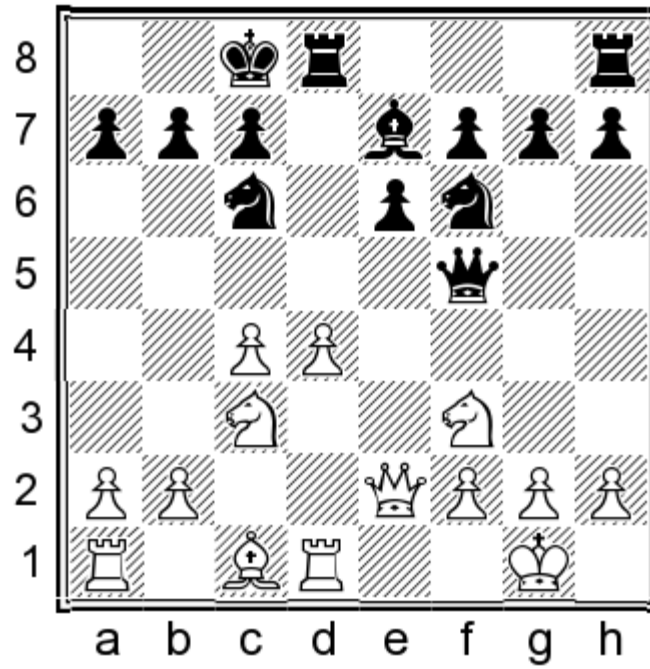
8...♙e7

8...♘c6 9.d5! and 8...♙d6 9.c5! not being possible, Black must develop more modestly than in the usual scheme.

9.♘c3 ♘c6

Now that the e6-pawn is no longer pinned, this developing move becomes possible again.

10.♞d1 0-0-0



Black has finally managed to castle queenside, but with the bishop on e7, which is certainly less actively placed than on d6. The opposite-side castling clearly indicates the strategy to be adopted. White will try to play b4-b5, and Black, for his part, ...g5-g4. Black's chances are certainly not inferior.

11. ♖e3 ♜hg8 12. a3 g5 13. b4 ♘e4!

Stronger than 13...g4 immediately, because after 14. ♗h4 the black attack would be slowed.

14. ♘xe4 ♕xe4

The ...g5-g4 threat is clear now.

15. ♜d3

To be able to withdraw the f3-knight to d2 without losing the d4-pawn.

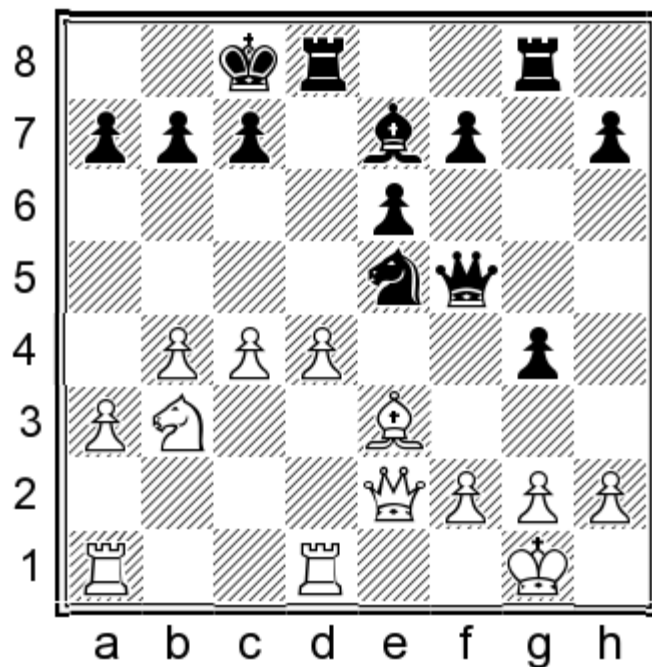
A) 15. b5? g4! 16. ♗e1 ♘xd4+;

B) 15. ♕d3 ♕xd3 16. ♜xd3 g4 17. ♗e1 ♕f6 18. ♜ad1 ♜d7 leaves Black with a small advantage because of the pressure on d4. After b4-b5, the c6-knight can be reactivated on f5, via e7.

15...g4 16. ♗d2 ♕f5 17. ♗b3

17. b5? ♗e5! with the same continuation as in the game.

17...♗e5 18. ♜dd1



18...Nf3+!

The black attack breaks through first.

19.Ke1

19.gxf3?? gxf3+ obviously loses the queen.

19...Qh5 20.h3

20.gxf3 is still not possible: 20...gxf3 21.Qf1 Qd6 (the black bishop returns to its natural square with force) 22.h3 (there is no other way to defend the h2-pawn) 22...Bg4 and 23...Rh4 is decisive.

20...gxh3 21.gxf3?

Shortening the game.

21.g3 offered more resistance, but even so Black keeps a very strong attack (and also an extra pawn) after 21...Qg4 followed by ...h5-h4.

21...h2! 22.Qf4

To try to close the g-file.

22.Nd2? Bg1+! 23.Bxg1 hxg1=Q+ 24.Qxg1 Bg8+ 25.Qf1 Qh1#.

22...Qd6 23.Qg3

23.Qxd6 cxd6 and the threat is 24...Bg1+ (or even 24...Qh3), as in the previous note.

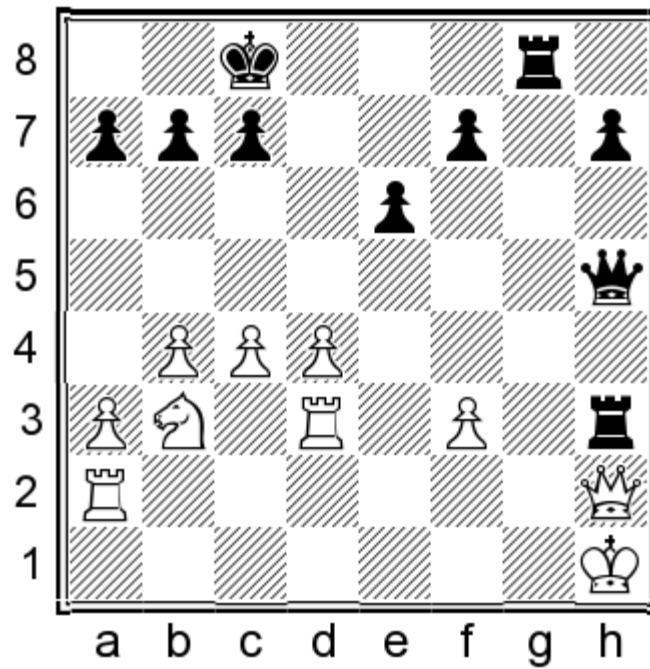
23...Qxg3 24.fxg3 Bxg3 25.Bd3 Bdg8

White is defenceless.

26. ♖xh2

26. ♖dd1 ♜g1+ 27. ♜xg1 hxg1=♚#.

26... ♜h3 27. ♜a2



27... ♚g6!

Threatening mate on g1.

28. ♜d1 ♚g3 29. ♜f1 ♜g6 30. ♜af2 ♜gh6!

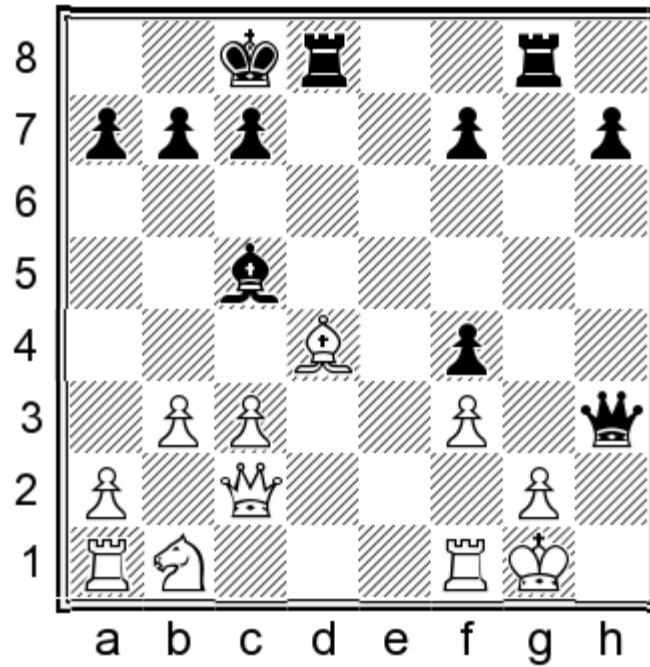
White resigned.

A nice attacking game from the French Under 8 champion.

Show in Quiz Mode

Your move!

9



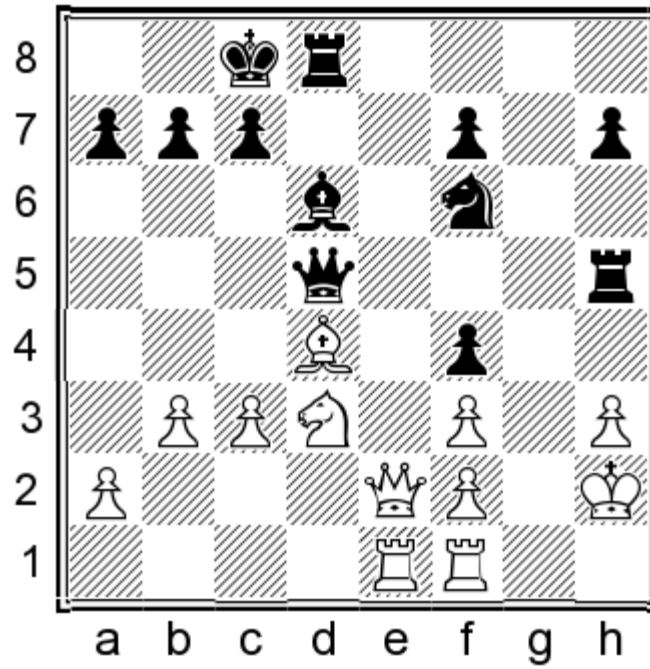
Black to play and mate in three moves.

Show/Hide the Solution

18...♖xd4!

(See Game 12, Djermanovic-De Talancé)

10

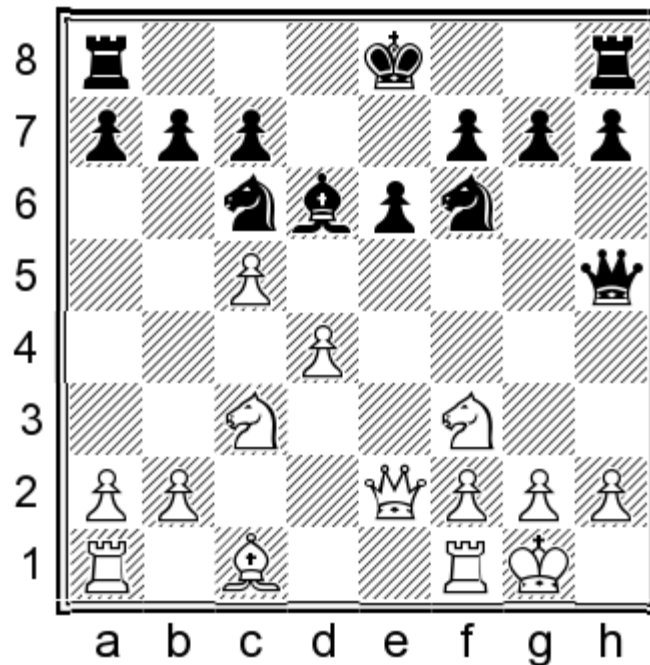


Black to play and mate in three moves.

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22... ♖xh3+!! 23. ♕xh3 ♜h5+ 24. ♕g2 ♜g8#

(See Game 12, Sriskantharajah-Nolot)



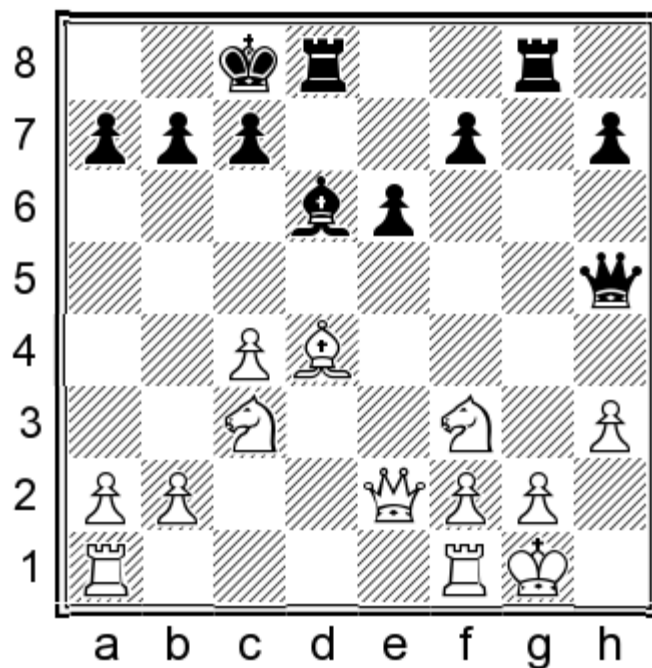
White has just played 10.c5?? to attack the d6-bishop. What brutal response from Black ends the game? chesstouring.com

Show/Hide the Solution

10...♘d4!

(See Game 13, **Feller-Cahen**)

12



How does Black best exploit the g-file?

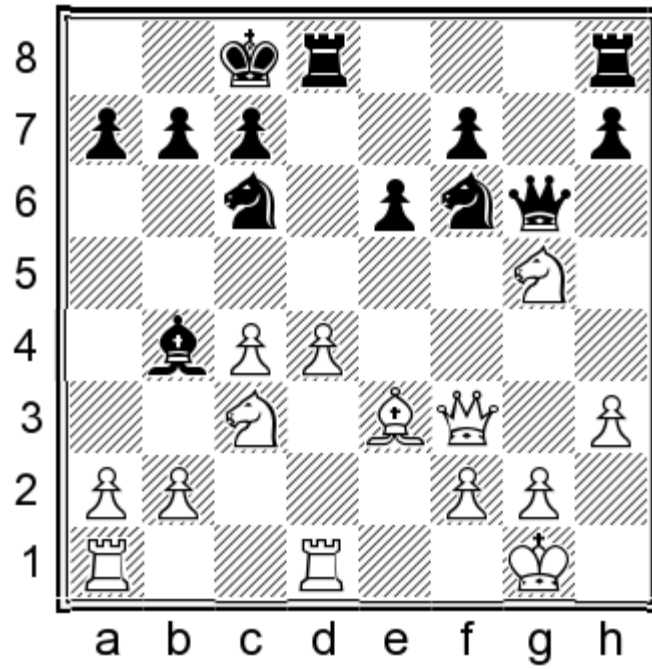
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14...♖xg2+! 15.♔xg2 ♖g8+

with a quick mate.

(See Game 13, **Feller-Cahen**)

13



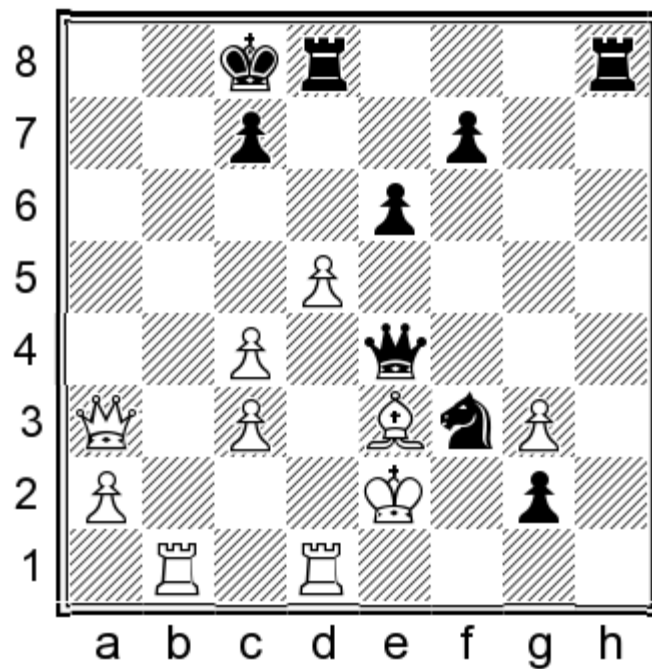
Black to play and win a piece.

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14...Qxc3 15.bxc3 h6

and the knight has no squares.

(See Game 14, **Ye Jiangchuan-Damaso**)



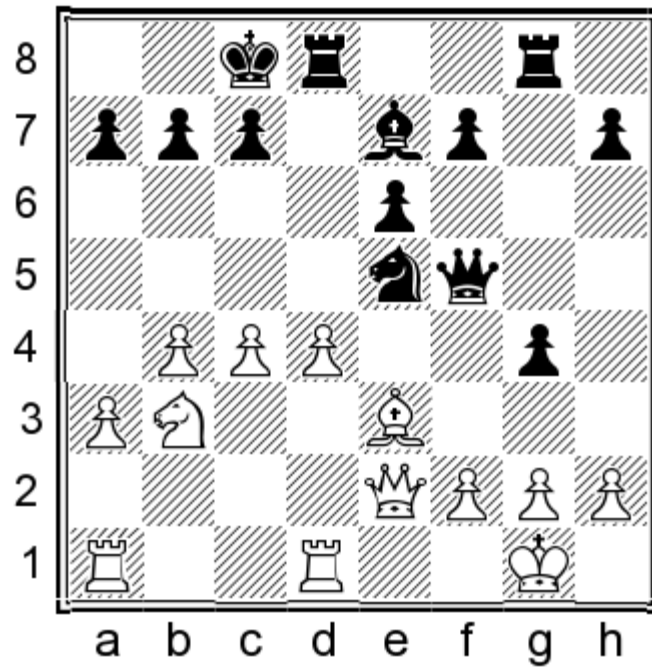
White has threats, but Black plays and mates first.

Show/Hide the Solution

27...g1=♔+!

(See Game 14, **Ye Jiangchuan-Damaso**)

15



Both attacks are launched on opposite wings, but Black breaks through first.

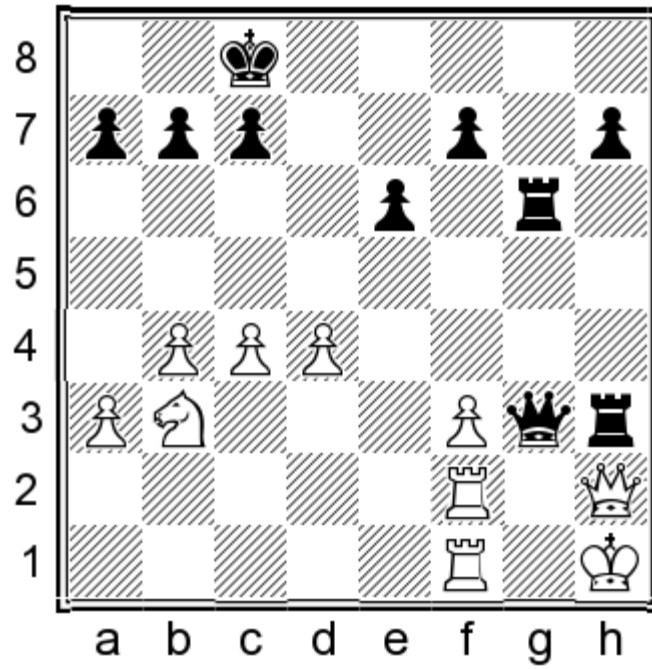
Show/Hide the Solution

18...♔f3+!

with a very strong attack.

(See Game 15, **Frédéric-Kuhn**)

16



Black to play and mate in three moves.

Show/Hide the Solution

30...♖gh6!

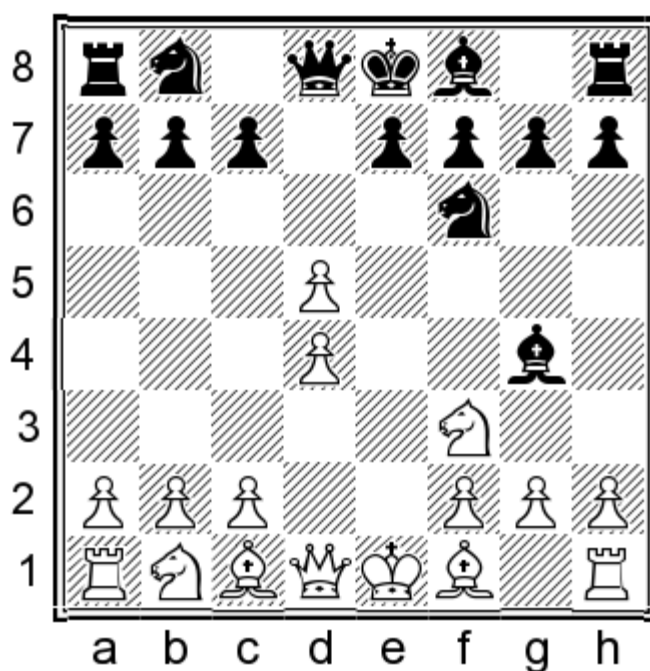
and mate is unstoppable.

(See Game 15, **Frédéric-Kuhn**)

Chapter 4

The Scandinavian Defence, Portuguese Variation: the classical system with 4.♘f3

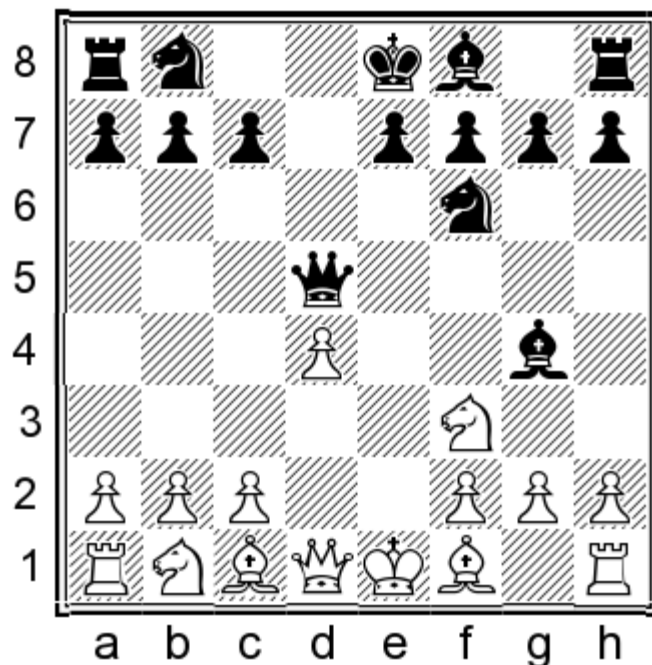
1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♕g4 4.♘f3



This is the so-called ‘Classical’ Variation, although it was called ‘positional’ by Anderson. But positional does not necessarily mean that it will all be smooth sailing for White, as we shall see.

The move 4.♘f3 is undoubtedly the most popular option among club players who are surprised by the move 3...♕g4, and who don’t know the theory of the Portuguese Scandinavian. Bringing the knight out to f3 is indeed the most natural of White’s possibilities on the 4th move: we avoid exchanging pieces by ♕f1-e2 and weakening the pawn structure by playing the move f2-f3.

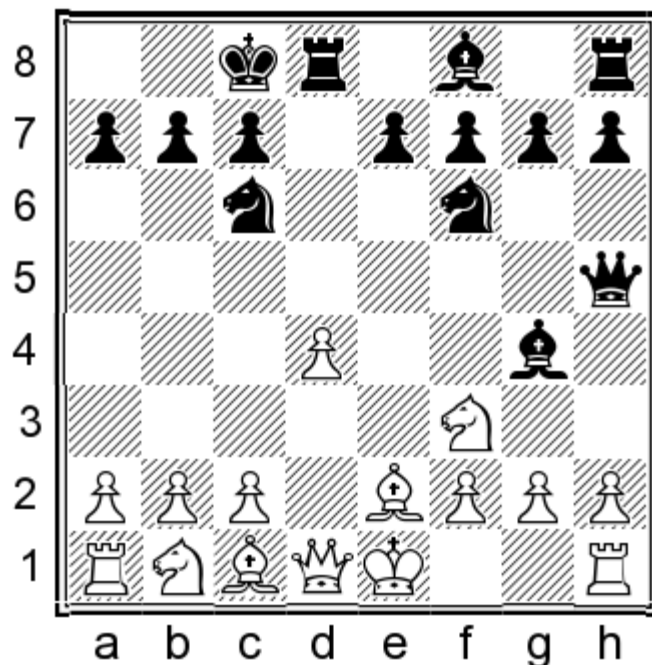
After 4.♘f3 Black will invariably recapture the pawn on d5 (4...♙xd5) with the queen. We then obtain the following position:



This position is of great practical importance: not only because, as stated above, the move ♖g1-f3 is often employed by amateur players when facing the Portuguese Scandinavian, but also because this position can come from the Classical Scandinavian via the move order 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♙xd5 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.d4 ♙g4.

For at least the first of these reasons, an important chapter deserves to be devoted to this variation. We shall see numerous examples where Black easily reaches the so-called dream position of the Scandinavian. After the recapture on d5 Black will indeed be able to play ...♘b8-c6 and ...0-0-0 quickly, and will then be ready for ...e7-e5 after having, most of the time, evacuated the queen to the kingside. This piece has in fact a wide choice at its disposal: the h5-square will offer many tactical possibilities (notably because of the attack on h2 when the white king has castled kingside), but f5 can represent an excellent alternative, and in some cases even d7 will be possible (if the queen cannot go to either h5 or f5).

This Classical Variation is really easy to play for Black, once he knows the usual patterns. In the vast majority of games in this chapter Black will be able to play exactly the same first seven moves (1...d5, 2...♘f6, 3...♙g4, 4...♙xd5, 5...♙h5, 6...♘c6, 7...0-0-0) almost mechanically against most white moves to reach the following position:



Of course, White is deliberately missing three moves in this position. These could well be chosen from a list of five natural moves (c2-c4, ♖c3, ♕e3, h2-h3 and 0-0) that can be played in almost any order. The move h2-h3, to attack the g4-bishop, has a special significance. Played before castling it will bring nothing with a black queen on h5, since the h-pawn is pinned. After castling it will in many cases allow a sacrifice of the g4-bishop to gain a very strong attack against the king (either by taking on h3 with the bishop or more often by leaving it *en prise* on g4 and playing ...e7-e5 anyway). We already see the advantage of having the queen on h5, although – once again – the f5-square will not be devoid of interest (by targeting the c2-square, for example, or avoiding having the queen attacked in the case of an exchange by ...♗g4xf3 and a recapture by the white bishop on f3).

If White is careless in this choice – and especially the order – of the three moves missing from the last diagram, Black will be able to play ...e7-e5 on the eighth move with devastating effect. And one thing is for sure: among amateur players this happens very often. The following games will prove this.

Game 16

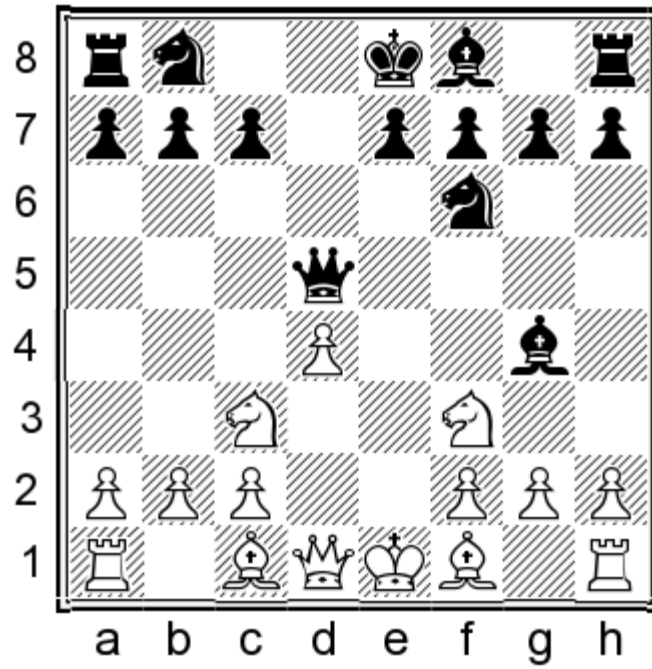
Tom Maietti 1537

Alexis Cahen 1633

Nancy ch-FRA 2013

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♗g4 4.♘f3 ♙xd5 5.♘c3

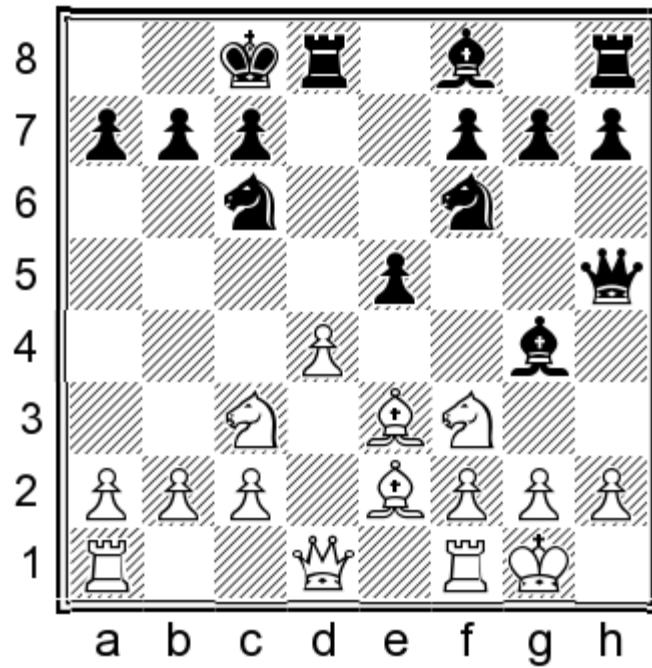
We'll see the c2-c4 move later, before the knight comes out.



5...♔h5!

The correct square for the queen whenever possible.

6.♙e2 ♞c6 7.0-0 0-0-0 8.♙e3 e5!



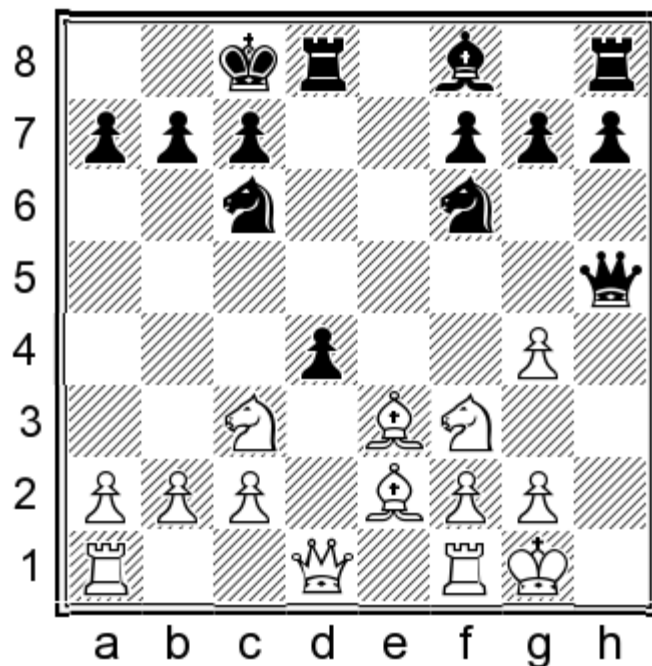
Naturally!

9.h3

In the same position, a few months earlier, an opponent played the move 9.d5? against Alexis. But after 9...e4! (9...♞b4?! 10.h3∞) 10.♞d4 (10.♞g5? ♜xd5! 11.♞xd5 ♙xe2 12.♔d2 ♙xf1 13.♞xf1±: Black has an extra pawn)

10...♞xd4 11.♙xd4 ♘xe2 12.♚xe2 ♜xe2 13.♞xe2 ♞xd5 Black has simply won a pawn (Humbert-Cahen, Montpellier 2013). Again this d-pawn!

9...exd4! 10.hxg4?



A common mistake (13 games in Mega Database 2017, including 11 won by Black).

A) It was necessary to play 10.♞xd4 ♘xe2 11.♞cxe2 ♘c5 12.c3 ♜he8 and Black is only slightly better;

B) 10.♙xd4?!, on the other hand, loses material: 10...♞xd4 11.♞xd4 ♘xe2 12.♞cxe2 c5–+.

10...♞xg4

Black will regain the piece due to the threat on h2.

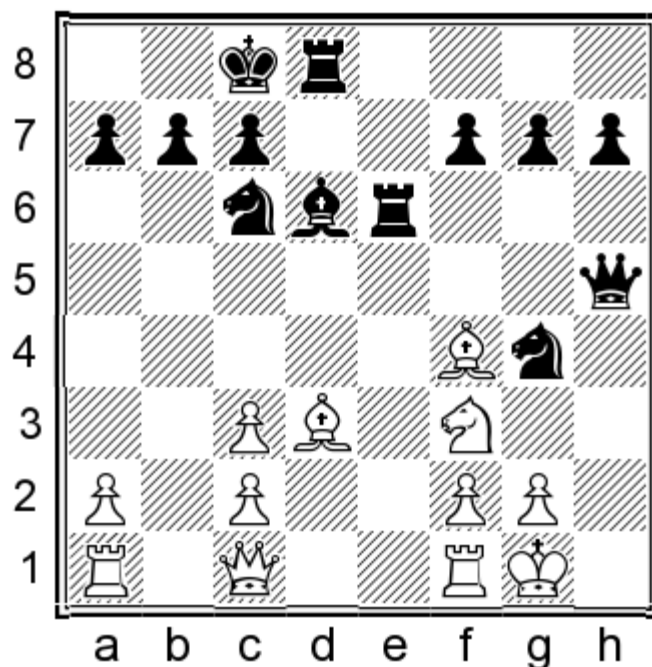
11.♙f4

11.♞h4 f5!–+.

11...dxc3 12.♚c1 ♘d6 13.bxc3 ♜he8

Black has an attack on the king, the better placed pieces, a better pawn structure, and above all an extra pawn.

14.♙d3 ♜e6!



A common rook move in this type of position. Black wants to swing the rook to the h-file.

15. ♖b1 ♜h6!?

Cute, but 15...♙xf4 16. ♖xf4 ♜xd3! (to prevent the check and the exchange of queens on f5) 17. cxd3 ♜h6—+ was even stronger.

16. ♙xh6 ♙h2+ 17. ♖h1 ♙f4+ 18. ♖g1 ♙xc1 19. ♙xc1 ♜ce5 20. ♙f4 ♜xf3+ 21. gxf3 ♜e5 22. ♙xe5 ♖xe5 23. ♜fd1 ♜d6

The second rook will also come to h6.

24. ♖f1 ♜h6 25. ♙e4

Black threatened 25...♜h1+ 26. ♖g2 ♖h2#.

25...c6 0–1

White does not see how to counter the threat of ...f7-f5 and gives up.

However, 26. ♖b4 could set a clever last trap, although it would not save the game: 26...f5 27. f4!? ♖e6—+ (27...♖xf4?? 28. ♙xc6∞).

Game 17

Gildas Cras 1521

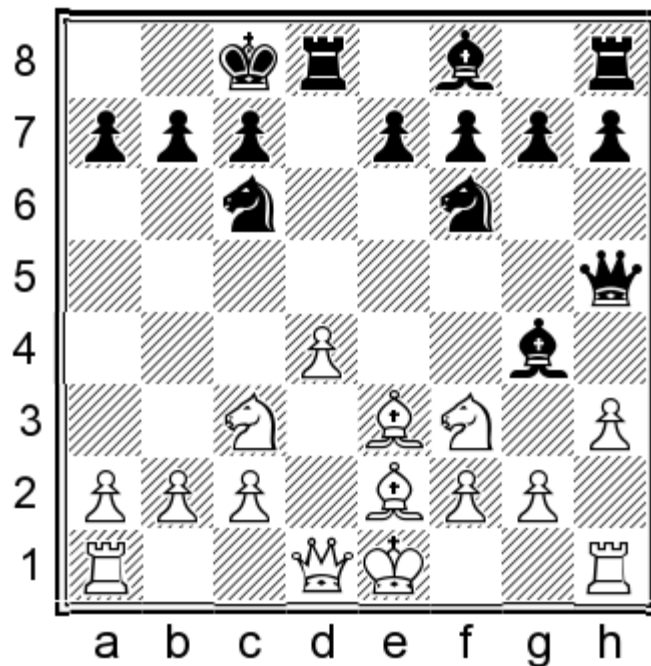
Alexis Cahen 1618

Metz tt jr 2014

Alexis is still bossing the black side.

1. e4 d5 2. exd5 ♜f6 3. d4 ♙g4 4. ♜f3 ♖xd5 5. ♜c3 ♖h5 6. ♙e2 ♜c6 7. ♙e3 0-0-0 8. h3

Here we find almost the same position as in the previous game, with the only difference, for White, being that the move h2-h3 has been played instead of kingside castling.



8...e5!

Of course! The recipe remains the same – even more so since the g4-bishop is not really attacked, as the h-pawn is pinned for the moment.

9.d5

9.0-0 exd4! transposes to the previous game, and 9.♖d2? is not good because of 9...exd4 10.♘xd4 ♘xd4 11.♙xd4 (11.♙xg4+ ♘xg4 12.♙xd4 ♙c5 13.0-0-0 ♖xd4 14.hxg4 ♖xg4–+) 11...♙xe2 12.♘xe2 ♙c5 (12...c5 is weaker because of 13.♖c3) 13.c3 ♖he8, and White, who can no longer castle, is in a catastrophic situation.

9...♘e7

9...♙xf3!?, the move proposed by Smerdon in this position, is probably stronger. But when this game was played, Alexis had not yet read his book (simply because it hadn't been published). Here is the continuation given by the Australian grandmaster: 10.♙xf3 ♖g6 11.0-0 e4 12.♘xe4 ♘xd5 13.♖e2 ♖e8 14.♘d6+! (the only move to maintain equality; 14.♘c3? ♘d4=) 14...♖xd6 15.♖fd1 ♖e5 16.c4 ♘xe3! 17.♖xd6 ♘f5 18.♖d8+! ♘xd8 19.♖d3+ ♘c8 20.♙xc6 bxc6 21.f4 ♖a5 and according to him the position is equal, although in practice a lot of things can still happen with such unbalanced material (queen against rook, bishop and knight).

10.♘g5?

Better was 10.0-0, attacking the g4-bishop (as the sacrifice gives nothing, Black has to exchange on f3): 10...♙xf3 11.♙xf3 ♖g6 with equal chances. If White takes the a7-pawn, the position becomes very complicated: 12.♙xa7 e4! (Black cannot trap the bishop immediately: 12...b6? 13.♖e2! ♘b7 14.d6+ ♘xa7 15.♘b5+ ♘b8 16.dxc7++–) 13.♙g4+ ♘xg4 14.hxg4 h5! and Black's attack seems more dangerous than White's.

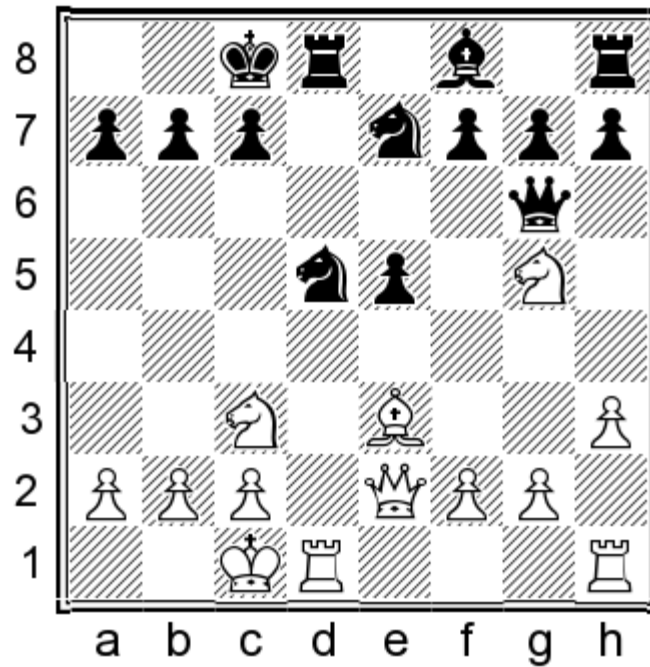
10...♙xe2 11.♖xe2 ♖g6

The d5-pawn is attacked three times and is defended only once. White cannot protect it twice more in only one move.

12.0-0-0?

12. ♖d3 was the only move not to lose a pawn thanks to the counterattack on f7 after the exchange of queens.

12... ♜fxd5



There we go. Always the same story: another d-pawn won for Black.

13. ♜xd5 ♜xd5 14.g3?

White was obviously afraid of losing the g2-pawn after a knight retreat.

14... ♙e7 15. ♜f3 e4 16. ♜d4 ♜xe3 17.fxe3

17. ♖xe3?? ♙g5—+.

17... ♖xg3

And finally he loses it anyway...

18. ♖dg1

18. ♜f5 ♖e5 19. ♜xe7+ ♖xe7 20. ♖g4+ ♖e6 and 21. ♖xg7 is not possible, because the a2-pawn is hanging.

18... ♖e5 19. ♖g4+ ♜b8 20. ♖xg7 ♙f6 21. ♖xf7? c5 22. ♖f1 ♖hf8 0–1

Game 18

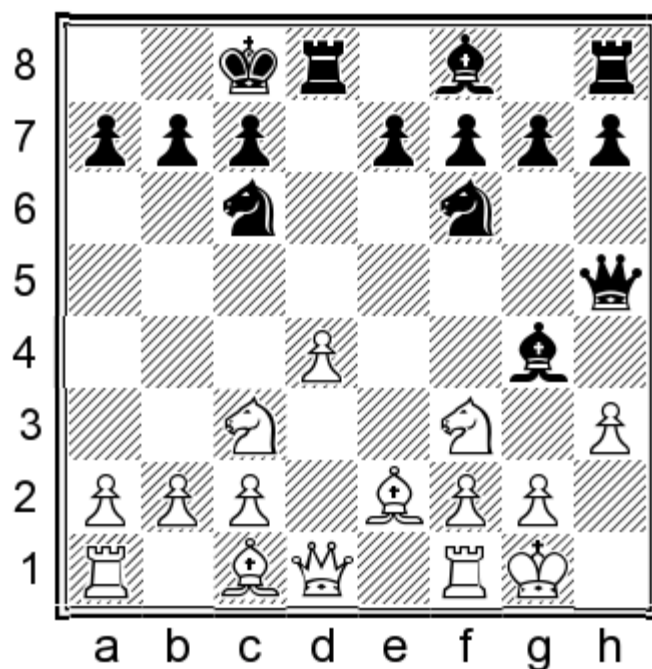
Cyrielle Monpeurt 2033

Helene Ruhlmann 1794

Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux ch-FRA jr 2013

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♜f6 3.d4 ♙g4 4.♜f3 ♖xd5 5.♙e2 ♜c6 6.♜c3 ♖h5 7.0-0 0-0-0 8.h3

chesstouring.com



A very important position, which is often met in practice because White's moves, even if they are not the best, are natural and can be played mechanically by someone who does not know the theory. After h2-h3 the g4-bishop is attacked. It goes without saying that if Black exchanges on f3 then White will have won the opening battle.

8...Nxd4!

8...Qxf3? 9.Qxf3 Rg6 (or 9...Rf5) 10.Qxc6 bxc6 11.Qe2 (removes the queen from the d-file, controls e5 and threatens Qa6+) 11...Kb7 12.Qe3± V.Moiseenko-E.Ivanov, Russian Junior Championship 2002. 1–0 in 25 moves.

The text move is recommended by Smerdon. We will see a very interesting alternative in the following game that is more ambitious, but also more risky.

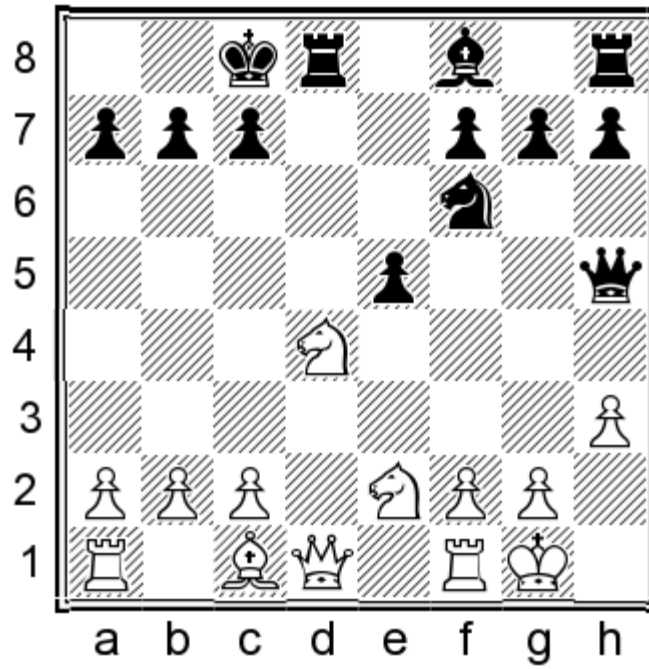
9.Nxd4

9.hxg4? loses immediately: 9...Nxc3 and White obviously cannot take the d4-knight because of the threat of mate.

9...Qxe2 10.Nxe2

10.Qxe2 Rxd4 11.Qxh5 Nxh5 leaves Black with an extra pawn.

10...e5



The famous ‘liberating’ move that allows Black to recover the piece and ensures at least equality.

11.c3 exd4 12.cxd4

12.♘xd4??, to avoid the isolated pawn, wasn’t possible: 12...♙xd1 13.♖xd1 c5, and Black wins a piece.

12...♙c5 13.♙f4 ♜he8

As so often in this variation, the ...e7-e5 move (whether it happens traditionally on the eighth move, or a little later, as here) leads to a more favourable position for Black: more active pieces, centralized rooks on the d- and e-files, and attacking prospects against the castled king. In addition, here White has an isolated and weak d4-pawn.

14.♞c1 ♙b6 15.♞e1 ♘d5 16.♙g3?

The bishop had to go back to d2, even if the white position does not leave a very good impression.

16...♞e7

16...♙a5! would have won material.

17.♘c3 ♙xd1 18.♞cx d1 ♞ed7

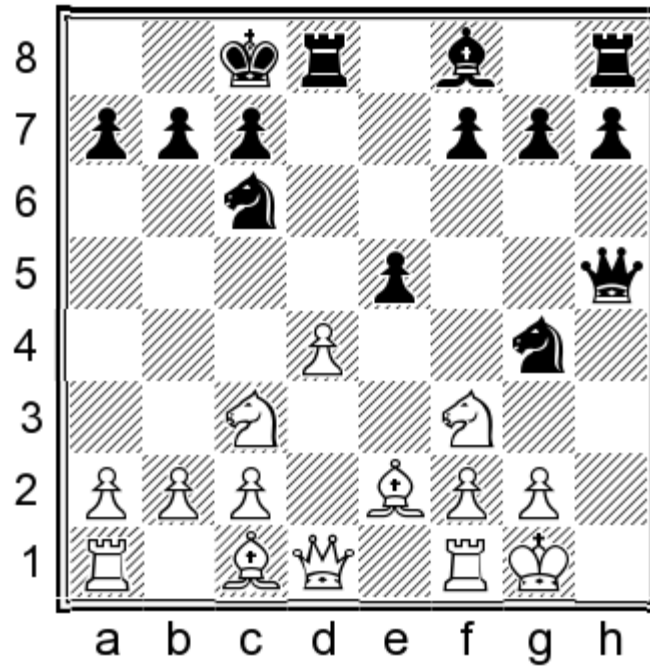
18...♙xd4!.. The d-pawn (which was originally the c-pawn here) falls again.

19.f3 c6 20.♙f2 ♘c7 21.♞e4 ♘e6 22.♘e2

White is forced on the defensive and has no counterplay.

22...h6 23.b4 ♘c7 24.a4 a6 25.♘c3 ♘d5 26.♘xd5 ♞xd5 27.♙f1 a5

27...f5! 28.♞e7 (28.♞f4?? g5–+) 28...♙xd4 29.♙xd4 ♞xd4 30.♞xd4 ♞xd4 31.♞xg7 ♞xb4 offered Black good winning chances.



White's position is very uncomfortable, despite the extra piece, mainly due to the immediate threat of 10...♘xd4, which would deflect the knight away from its defence of h2.

10.d5

10.♘h4 ♜xd4! 11.♙xg4+ ♜xg4 12.♘f3 (12.g3?? ♚xh4—+) 12...♚h3 13.♘e1 (13.g3 ♙c5! pinning the f2-pawn: the threat of taking on g3 is decisive) 13...♘d4 14.♙e3 ♜xg2+! 15.♘xg2 ♘f3+—+.

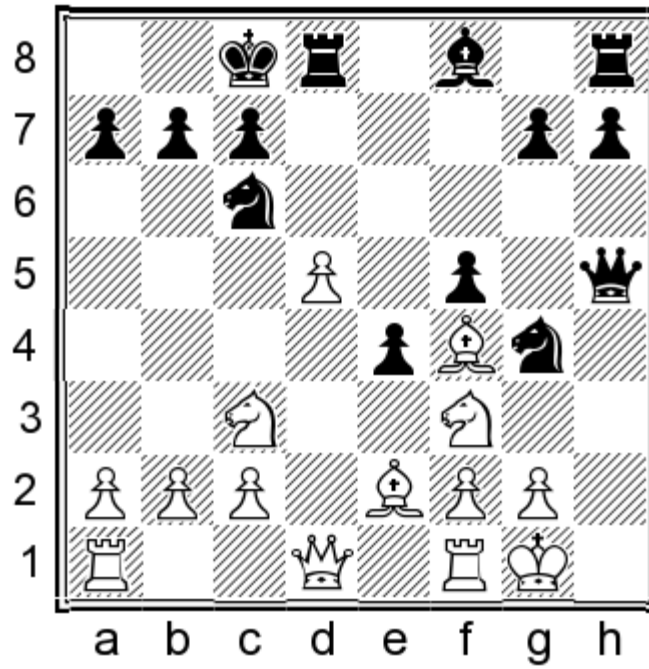
10...f5!

To attack the f3-knight, defending h2, by ...e5-e4.

11.♙g5

White scarcely has any satisfactory alternative: 11.♚d2? ♘d4! (11...e4? 12.♚g5+—) 12.♞e1 (12.♚g5?? ♘xf3+ 13.♙xf3 ♚h2#) 12...♙c5 13.♘d1 ♜xd5—+.

11...e4 12.♙f4



12...♙d6!

Stronger than immediately regaining the piece: 12...exf3?! 13.♙xf3 ♙d6 14.♙xg4 fxg4 15.♘e2!, when the position is still complicated.

13.♘h2?

Wanting to take advantage of the pin on the ♘g4 to eliminate it.

A) 13.♙xd6? allows the rook to intervene on the sixth rank: 13...♖xd6 14.♘h4 ♗xh4 15.♙xg4 fxg4—+;

B) 13.♗d2 was the only move according to Wahls, and also Fritz, Rybka and Houdini: 13...exf3 14.♙xf3 (again the only move; 14.gxf3? ♘h2!) 14...♘ce5 15.♙xg4 (15.♘b5? ♘xf3+ 16.gxf3 ♘e5—+) 15...♗xg4 16.♙xe5 ♙xe5 17.♖fe1 ♖he8. Black has a superior position. He has the advantage of the better minor piece, and attacking prospects against the d5-pawn and the weakened kingside.

13...♙xf4 14.♘xg4 ♘e5!

Still with the same idea of diverting the white knight in order to mate on h2.

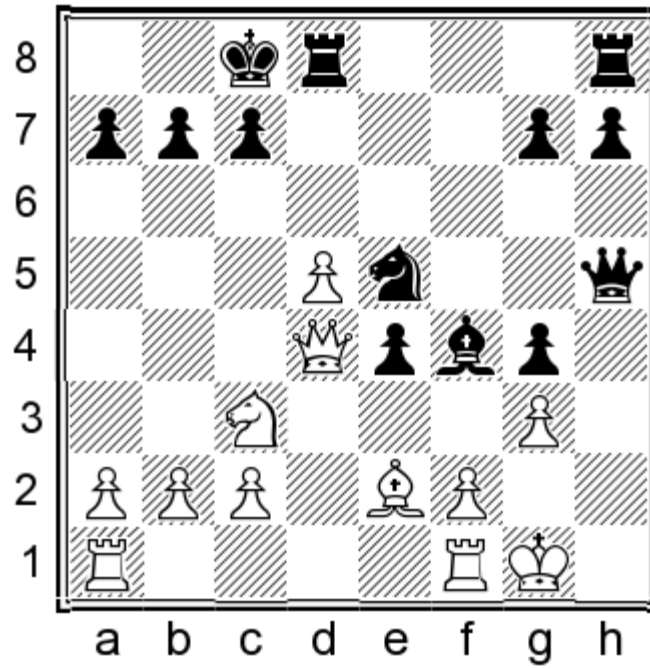
14...fxg4?? 15.♙xg4+.

15.g3 fxg4 16.♗d4?

This loses, but nothing could save White.

A) 16.gxf4 ♘f3+ 17.♙xf3 exf3 and it is mate on g2 in a few moves.

B) 16.♘xe4 ♘f3+ 17.♙xf3 gxf3 18.c4 (18.gxf4 ♗h3—+; 18.♗d3 ♖xd5!—+) 18...♖he8 19.♖e1 ♖e6! and the arrival of the rook on h6 is decisive.



16...♖d6!

The lateral rook manoeuvre that we have already met several times in this type of position. Wahls stops here and concludes that Black has a decisive attack. Marwan knew this analysis and so only now began to play by himself, but the following moves are not very hard to find.

17.♙xe4

17.gxf4 ♖h6--.

17...♖h6 18.♙g2

18.♖fd1 ♜f3+ 19.♙xf3 gxf3--.

18...♜f3+ 19.♙xf3 gxf3 0-1

The white queen is trapped in an original way.

Game 20

Claire-D De Vreese 1727

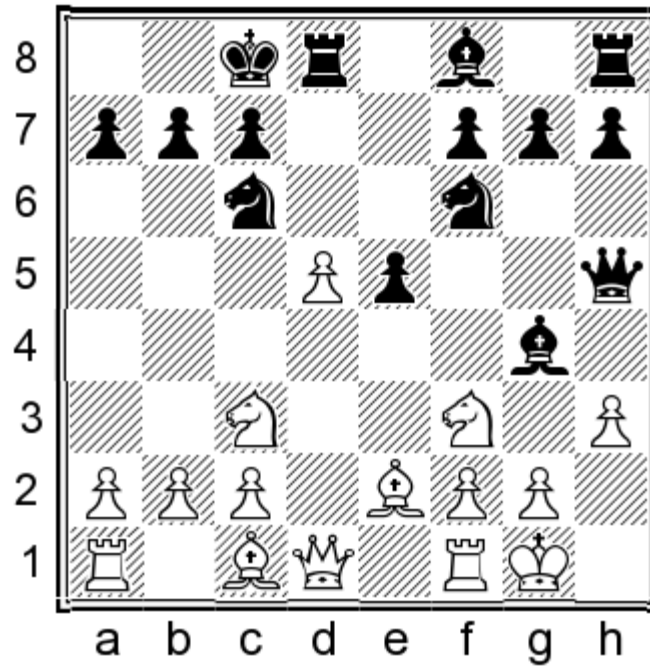
Sébastien Georget 1665

France tt 2016

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♜f6 3.♜f3 ♙xd5 4.♜c3 ♙h5 5.d4 ♙g4 6.♙e2 ♜c6 7.0-0 0-0-0 8.h3 e5!?

Sébastien and I had analyzed the previous game by Marwan. He could therefore test these analyses in practice.

9.d5



White tries to keep the e-file closed and is now threatening to take the g4-bishop.

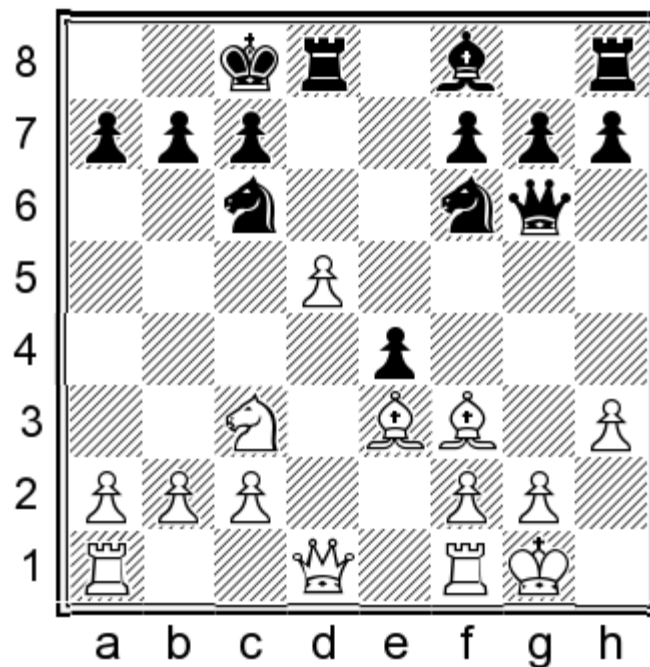
9...♙xf3

Black has no choice. 9...♘d4?? would obviously lose a piece: 10.♘xd4 ♙xe2 11.♘dx2+–, while the sacrifice 9...♙xh3 gives nothing: 10.gxh3 ♜xh3 11.♘g5+–.

10.♙xf3 ♜g6 11.♙e3 ♘b4?

The knight was not obliged to leave.

11...e4! was much stronger:



analysis diagram

12.♔g4+ (12.dxc6 does not offer enough compensation for the queen: 12...♖xd1 13.cxb7+ ♕xb7 14.♔xd1 ♕d6+, and 12.♜xe4 ♜xd5 gives Black a nice game; White will not be able to keep her pair of bishops) 12...♕b8 13.a3 (13.♞e2 ♜e5+) 13...b6! and after ♜e7 Black will be better due to the weakness of the d5-pawn.

12.♜b5?

12.♞c1, wisely protecting the c2-pawn, was preferable: 12...e4 13.♜xe4 ♜bxd5 and the position is equal.

12...a6 13.♜a7+?

The knight ventures into the lion's den in order to avoid losing the c2-pawn, or the d5-pawn in case of retreat.

13...♕b8 14.c3

14.c4 ♜c2 15.♞c1 ♜xe3 loses the a7-knight.

14...♜c2 15.♞e2 ♜xe3 16.♞xe3 ♜xd5

Another d-pawn in Black's wallet.

17.♞xe5 ♕d6! 18.♞e2

Of course the d5-knight was not *en prise*: 18.♞xd5?? ♕h2+–+.

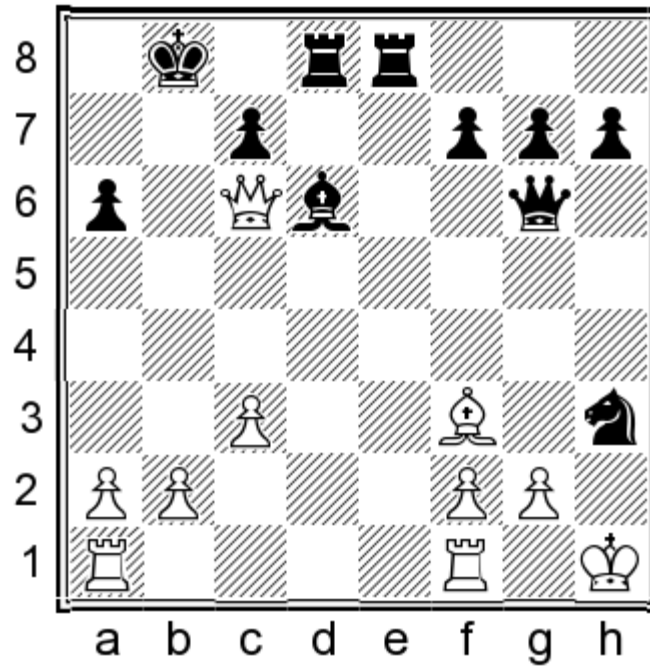
18...♞he8

As so very often in this variation, we find the black rooks centralized on the d- and e-files.

19.♞c4 ♜f4 20.♜c6+ bxc6 21.♞xc6

White threatens mate, but Black shoots first.

21...♜xh3+ 22.♕h1



22...♖xf2+! 23.♔g1

23.♖xf2? leads to mate: 23...♕h6+ 24.♔g1 ♕h2+ 25.♔f1 ♕h1#.

23...♗e4 24.♙xe4 ♖xe4 0–1

Black has an extra piece and still has the attack. The immediate threat is ...♗h2+, which wins the queen. This latter has no square to counter the threat anyway.

Now let's see what happens when White plays c2-c4 to attack the queen before developing the knight to c3.

Game 21

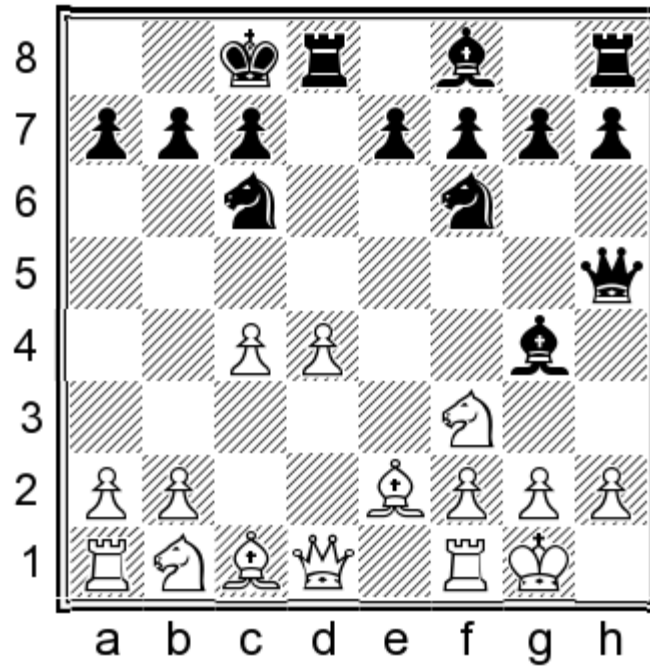
Gabriel Beaskoa Estany 1893

Hélène Ruhlmann 1867

Barcelona 2014

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♗f6 3.d4 ♙g4 4.♗f3 ♕xd5 5.♙e2 ♗c6 6.0-0 0-0-0 7.c4 ♕h5

The white position is already very difficult. The pitfalls are indeed numerous – for White!

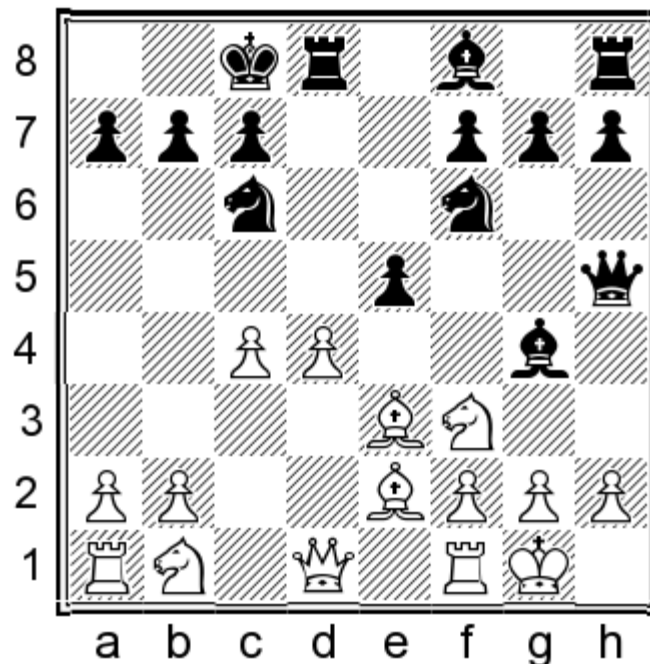


8.♙e3?

Here is the first, but this is not the only one.

- A) 8.h3? ♖xd4! 9.♗xd4 ♙xe2 10.♚xe2 ♜xd4, with a sound extra pawn;
- B) 8.♗c3? ♖xd4! 9.♗xd4 ♙xe2 10.♗cxe2 e5 11.♙e3 c5! Here too, Black has carried out his usual larceny: the d-pawn.
- C) 8.d5 is perhaps still the best (the least worst?!) if White wants to get equality: 8...e6 9.h3 ♙xf3 10.♙xf3 ♚h4 11.♙e3 ♗e5 and Black is only slightly better (note that 11...♚xc4?? is not possible because of 12.♗d2! which attacks the queen while unpinning the d-pawn).

8...e5!



Another very frequent position for Black in the Portuguese Scandinavian (worth knowing, then!), especially against opponents who do not master the theory and who play mechanical and natural moves. There are 63 games in the 2017 Mega Database, with a disastrous score for White: barely 25%. We should not be surprised.

9.d5?

9.h3 was the only move to avoid an immediate rout: 9...exd4! 10.hxg4 ♖xg4 11.♙g5 (11.♙f4? d3! 12.♙xd3 ♙d6 – a known theme to eliminate a defender of h2 and possibly swing the rook along the sixth rank after the exchange – 13.♚d2 ♙xf4 14.♚xf4 ♜xd3+ 11...f6 12.♙h4 (12.♜h4? ♜ce5!–+, Bjelajac-Šahović, Novi Sad 1978) 12...d3! 13.♙xd3 ♜b4 14.♜h2 ♜xd3! 15.♚xg4+ ♚xg4 16.♜xg4 ♜c2. Black will have the superior ending.

9...e4!

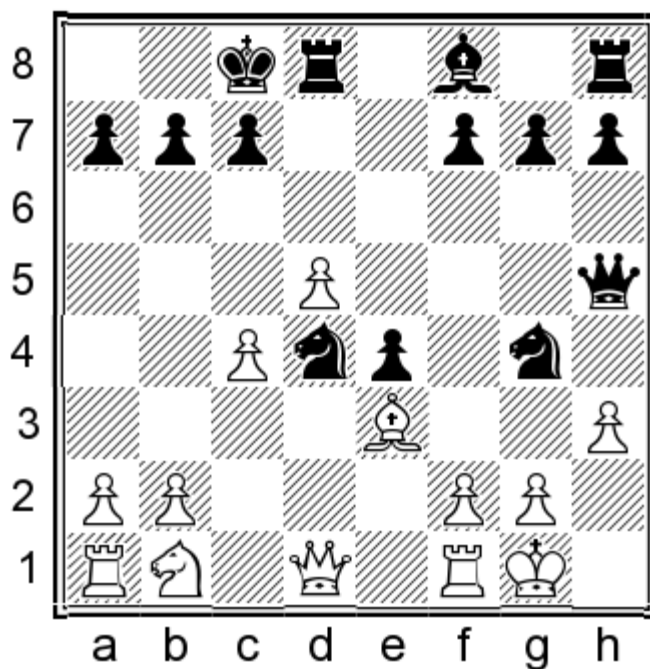
White loses a piece. Hou Yifan, while Women's World Champion, fell into the same trap when facing Anna Muzychuk.

10.♜d4 ♜xd4 11.♙xg4+ ♜xg4

White cannot recapture on d4 because of the threat of mate on h2!

12.h3

The two black knights are attacked, but that is not enough.



12...♜f3+! 13.gxf3 ♜e5 14.fxe4 ♚xh3 15.f3 ♜d6

The passage of the rook at a right angle to the sixth rank – an old acquaintance.

16.♙f2 ♜f6 17.♜d2 ♚h2+ 0–1

After 18.♙e1 it's mate by 18...♜d3#.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♙g4 4.♘f3 ♚xd5 5.♙e2 ♘c6 6.♙e3 0-0-0 7.c4

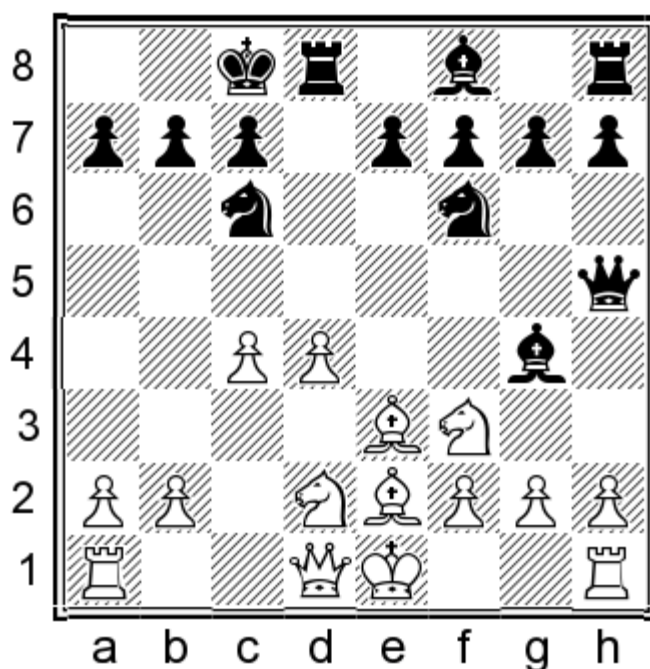
This order of moves, with the bishop on e3, is better for White than in the previous game.

7...♚h5

Even if this is playable, 7...♚f5 is more accurate in this move order.

8.♘c3?!

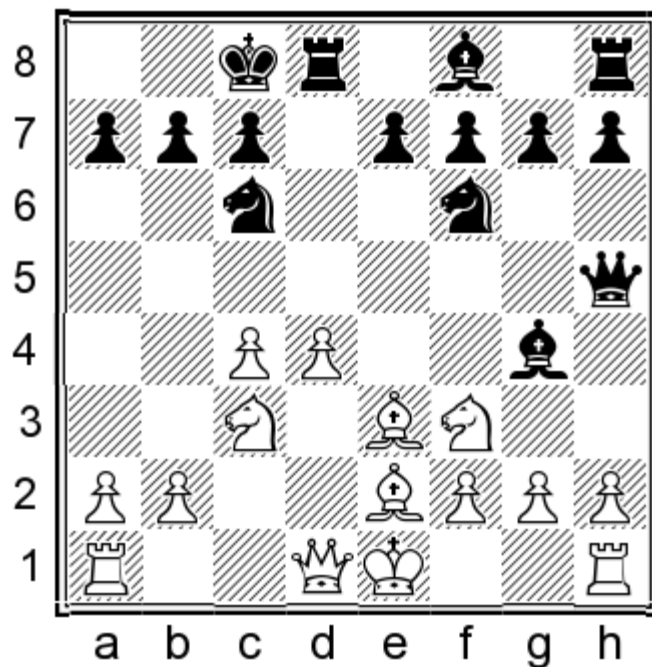
8.♘bd2!.



analysis diagram

The right way to develop and the reason why the queen is not best placed on h5. The d-file is closed, the d4-pawn is protected (mostly due to the e3-bishop), and White will be able to play 0-0 and h2-h3 if Black does not play actively right away: 8...e5 9.d5 ♘d4 10.♘xd4 exd4 11.♙xg4+ (11.♙xd4 ♙xe2 12.♚xe2 ♜e8 13.♙e3 ♚g6 14.0-0 ♘g4 gives Black good compensation) 11...♘xg4 12.♙xd4 ♜e8+ 13.♙f1 ♘xh2+ 14.♙g1 ♚xd1+ 15.♜xd1 ♘g4 16.f3 ♘e5 17.♜e1 and White had a slightly superior ending in the game Rogers-Smerdon, Canberra 2005, although Black still managed to draw. It is amusing to note that the Australian GM Rogers had played the same variation with black a few years earlier against Morozovich (but he had played 12...♙b4?! instead of 12...♜e8+), and had lost. Ian Rogers is also a big fan of the Scandinavian. Perhaps in a few years, thanks to him and his fellow countryman Smerdon, the Portuguese Variation will be renamed the Australian Variation.

After the text move we have almost the same position as in the previous game, except that ♘c3 has been played instead of 0-0.



8...e5!

As always (when the white queen and the black rook are facing each other on the d-file).

9.d5

There was no other option. The pressure on d4 is too strong.

9.0-0? exd4 10.♘xd4 ♘xd4 11.♙xd4 (11.♙xg4+ ♚xg4! and Black wins a piece) 11...♙xe2 12.♘xe2 c5 with, again, the gain of a piece.

9...e4 10.♘g5 ♘e5!

A few weeks earlier Enrique had played 10...♙xe2, and after 11.♚xe2 ♚xe2+ 12.♘xe2?! (12.♙xe2!±) 12...♘e5 13.b3? (13.♙d4!=) 13...h6 Black was better (Konya-Espinosa, Festival of Meurthe-et-Moselle 2016). But we had analyzed this game and concluded that the text move was much stronger. The e5-knight presses on the c4-pawn and the d3-square.

11.♙xg4+

After 11.h3 ♙xe2 12.♚xe2 h6 13.♚xh5 (13.♘gxe4 ♚xe2+ 14.♙xe2 ♘xe4 15.♘xe4 ♘xc4 and Black is better, as the d5-pawn is weak) 13...♘h5 14.♘gxe4 ♘xc4 the weakness of the d5-pawn also gives Black a slightly superior game here.

11.♚a4?, to counterattack a7, is downright bad: 11...♙xe2 12.♘xe2 ♙b4+! 13.♙f1 (13.♚xb4?? ♘d3+) 13...♘xc4! 14.♚xb4 (14.♚xa7 ♘xe3+ 15.fxe3 ♘xd5-+) 14...♘xe3+ 15.fxe3 ♘xd5-+. The white queen, g5-knight and e3-pawn are all attacked.

11...♘exg4 12.h3

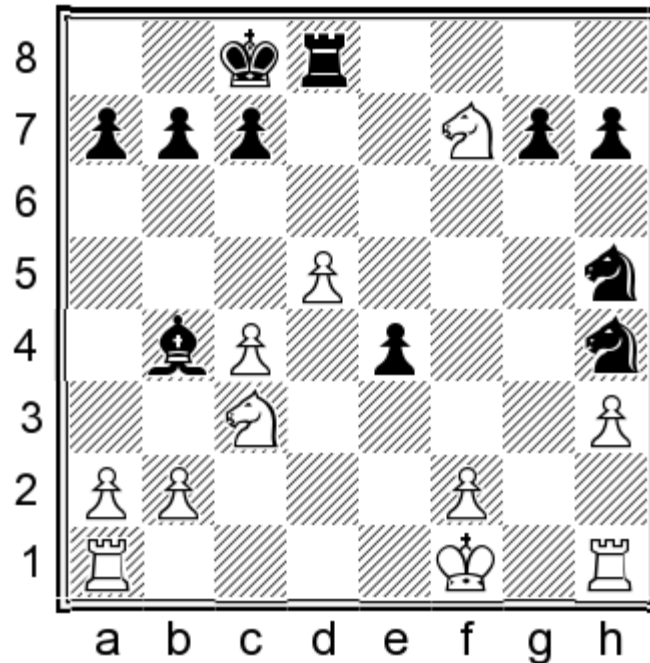
After 12.♘gxe4 ♘xe4 13.♘xe4 ♚e8 14.♘g3 ♚g5 Black has a very strong initiative. 15.0-0? is not possible because of 15...♚h4! 16.h3 ♘xe3 17.fxe3 ♚xg3-+.

12...♘xe3 13.♚xh5 ♘xg2+ 14.♙f1 ♘xh5 15.♘xf7?

White is too greedy. He had to play 15.♔xg2 and be satisfied with only a slightly inferior position after 15...♞d7 16.♜gxe4.

15...♜h4 16.♜xh8 ♞b4 17.♜f7

White has an exchange more, but he will not be able to keep it.



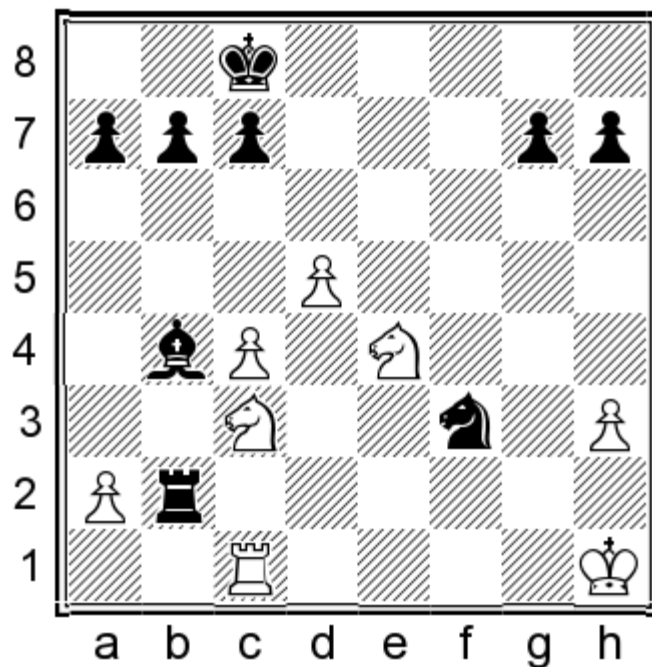
17...♞f8 18.♜g5 ♜g3+ 19.♔g1 ♜xh1 20.♔xh1 ♞xf2 21.♜gxe4

21.♜cxe4 ♞xb2 22.a3 was more resilient, avoiding the abrupt end to the game, but it probably would not have changed the result.

21...♞xb2 22.♞c1??

White obviously did not want to play 22.a3 ♞xc3 23.♜xc3 ♞c2+, but in not doing so he shortens his suffering.

22...♜f3 0-1



Oops! The Arabian mate on h2 is unstoppable.

Game 23

Robert Schoumert

Marwan Brion

Metz 2013

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♙g4 4.♘f3 ♚xd5 5.♙e2 ♘c6 6.♙e3 0-0-0 7.c4 ♔h5

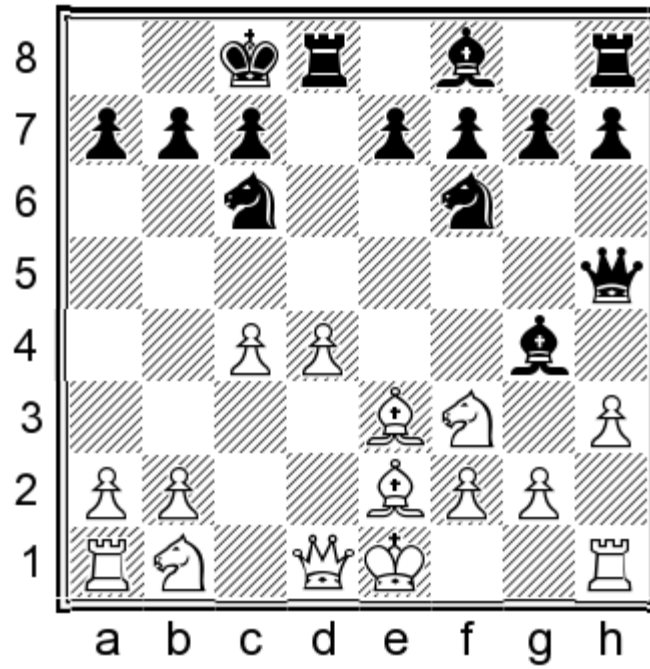
We have seen in the notes to the previous game that with this move order the best square for the queen is probably f5, even though h5 is playable and may remain the first choice for players who prefer to follow familiar patterns.

8.h3?!

This move will only really threaten the bishop when White has castled.

By playing 8.♘bd2! White could obtain the favourable position referred to in the note to White's eighth move in the previous game.

After the text move we again have the same position as in the two previous games, with the difference that this time the move h2-h3 has been played instead of ♘c3 or 0-0. Not surprisingly, the treatment is the same.



8...e5!

The usual recipe.

9.d5

This time 9.0-0 drops us into the note to White's ninth move in Game 21. As can be seen, there are many possible transpositions.

9...e4 10.♖d4 ♘e5

10...♙xe2! was probably stronger. After 11.♚xe2 ♘e5 the d3-square is in the sights of the e5-knight.

11.f3?

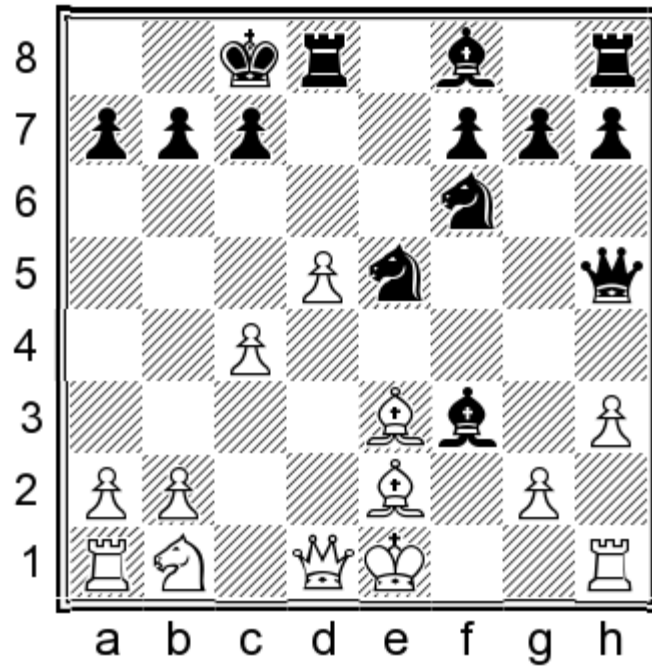
An unnecessary weakening with serious consequences.

11.0-0? loses a pawn after 11...♙xe2 12.♚xe2 ♚xe2 13.♘xe2 ♘xc4+.

He had to play 11.♙xg4+ ♘exg4 12.0-0 ♙d6 and Black is only slightly better.

11...exf3 12.♘xf3 ♘xf3+?!

12...♙xf3! wins immediately:



analysis diagram

13.gxf3 (13.♙xf3 ♖h4+ 14.♙f2 ♖xc4–+) 13...♘xc4! 14.♙xc4 ♖h4+ 15.♔d2 ♘xd5–+. The threats are too numerous.

13.gxf3 ♙d7 14.♘c3 ♝e8 15.♞d3

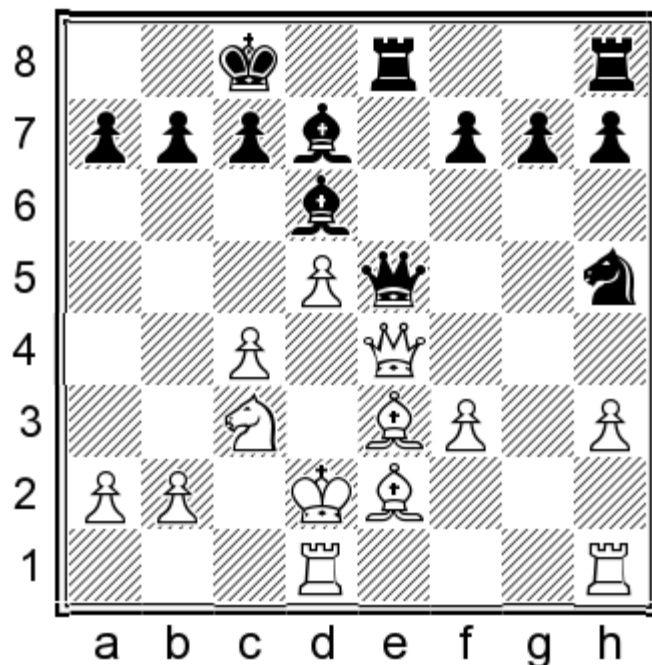
The bishop cannot retreat: 15.♙f2? ♖xf3–+.

15...♙d6 16.0-0 ♖e5 17.♔d2

17.♙d4 ♖g5+ with ...♙f5 to follow.

17.♙d2 ♙f5±.

17...♘h5 18.♞e4?? ½–½



White offered a draw while playing this losing move, which Black accepted (probably because of the 150 Elo points difference).

It was necessary for White to play 18.♔d4 ♕xd4+ 19.♙xd4 ♙f4+ 20.♖c2 ♜g3 21.♞he1 ♞f5+. Black certainly has the better pawn structure and more active pieces, but the path to victory is still long.

After the text move the game could have finished in a few moves in Black's favour: 18...♕f6 19.♕c2 (19.♕d4 ♙f4!—+: the e3-bishop cannot be defended, and it cannot take the f4-bishop, of course, because it must protect the queen) 19...♞xe3! 20.♙xe3 ♕g5+ 21.♙f2 ♕h4+ 22.♙e3 ♙f4+ 23.♙d3 ♙f5+.

Game 24

Manuel Bueno Abalo 2175

Antoaneta Stefanova 2444

Aceimar 1999

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♞f6

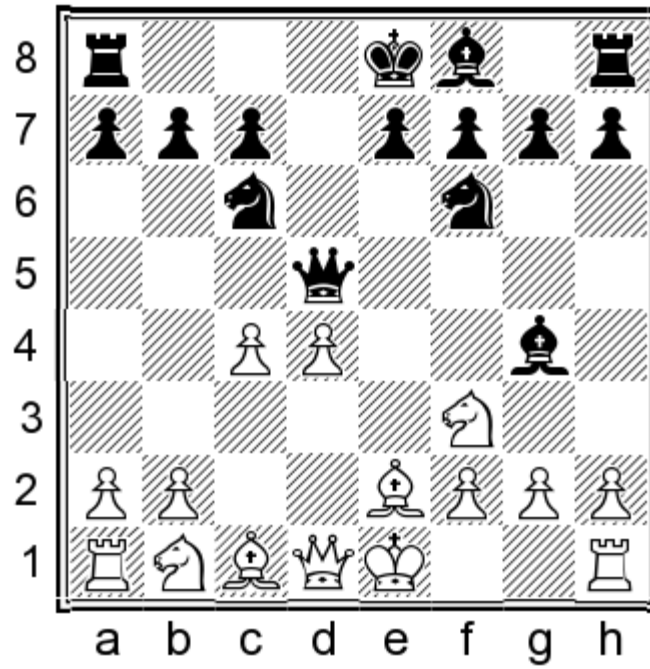
Once again the exact move order has been modified to stick to our 'Portuguese' repertoire. In the game Black actually captured on d5 with her queen on the second move.

3.d4 ♙g4 4.♞f3 ♕xd5 5.♙e2

If White plays 5.c4 immediately it allows 5...♙xf3 6.gxf3 (6.cxd5 ♙xd1 7.♙xd1 ♞xd5+), when the black queen can choose to go to h5, d7, f5 or to a5. In any event, White has worsened his pawn structure and it is not certain that the pair of bishops is sufficient compensation.

5...♞c6 6.c4

This is the right move at the right time according to theory and according to David Smerdon, who also points out that it is the choice made by most grandmasters.

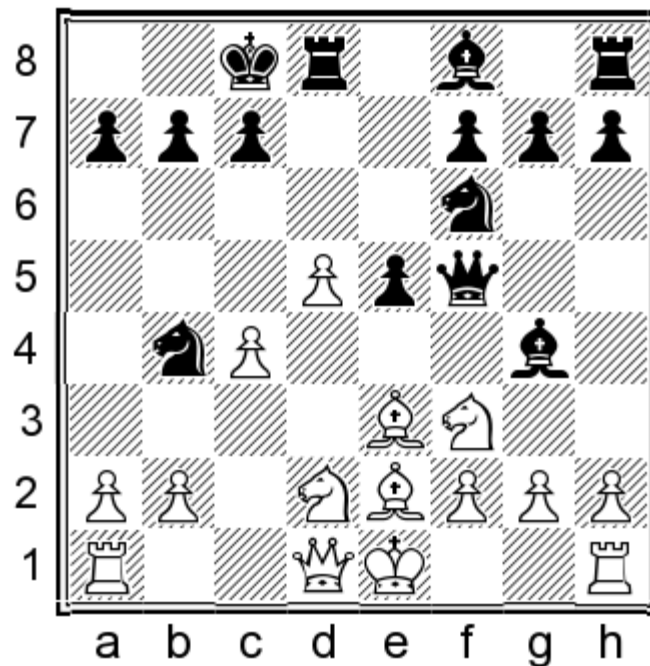


6...Qf5!

6...Qh5 is playable – especially for those who prefer to follow familiar patterns – but it would allow the strong set-up with 7.Qe3! 0-0-0 8.Bbd2!

7.Qe3 0-0-0 8.0-0

8.Bbd2, which was strong with the queen on h5, is much less so here: 8...e5! (again and again!) 9.d5 (9.dxe5 Qxf3 10.Qxf3 Bxe5 11.0-0 Qb4: Black has the initiative because of the threats on the d-file and on the kingside) 9...Bb4!.



Certainly the black queen might seem less active on f5 than on h5, particularly since it does not attack h2, but on f5 it can have other advantages: notably it aims at c2 and d3! 10.0-0 ♖c2 11.♖c1 ♗xe3 12.fxe3 ♕c5, and Black is better.

8...e5 9.d5 e4

9...♗b4? is much less powerful than in the previous note, as the d3-square is protected: 10.a3! ♗c2? 11.♕d3±.

10.♗d4

The retreat 10.♗fd2 is also possible: 10...♗e5 11.♗c3 ♕xe2 12.♖xe2 ♕d6. Black has dangerous threats on the kingside, and 13.♕xa7?, for example, isn't possible because of 13...♗f3+! 14.♗xf3 (14.gxf3?? leads to mate after 14...♖f4!) 14...exf3 15.♖xf3 ♖xf3 16.gxf3 b6 and the bishop is trapped.

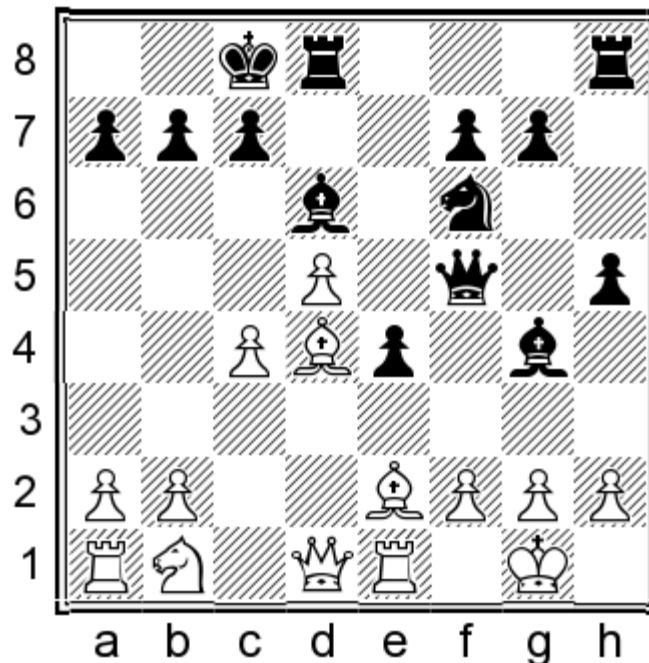
10...♗xd4 11.♕xd4 ♕d6

With the d6-bishop trained on h2 Black immediately has numerous tactical possibilities on the white kingside. We saw one in the previous note, and we'll see another in the game.

12.♗c3

12.♕xg4? gives Black a strong attack after 12...♗xg4 13.g3 (13.h3? ♗h2! 14.♖e1 ♗f3+! 15.gxf3 ♖xh3 16.♗c3? ♕h2+ 17.♗h1 ♕f4+ 18.♖g1 ♖d6–+: the rook on the sixth rank, an old friend!) 13...♖h5 14.h4 g5.

In his book David Smerdon analyzes the position after 11...♕d6 in detail. He considers it very important, for it is the principal variation played by many grandmasters. He concentrates on the move 12.♖e1, which according to him is the main line. The Australian GM then proposes a strong novelty from one of his compatriots, IM Guy West: 12...h5!.



analysis diagram

A move that has never been played in practice and which gives Black very good chances, including ideas based on ...♕xe2 and ...♗g4, or even ...♕xh2+ followed by ...♖xf2. White can play neither 13.h3? because of 13...♕xh3!, nor of course 13.♕xg4?, which would decisively open the h-file after 13...hxg4. Obviously, in the necessarily limited context of our presentation, which is not aimed at grandmasters, it is neither possible nor desirable to go too far into the subject.

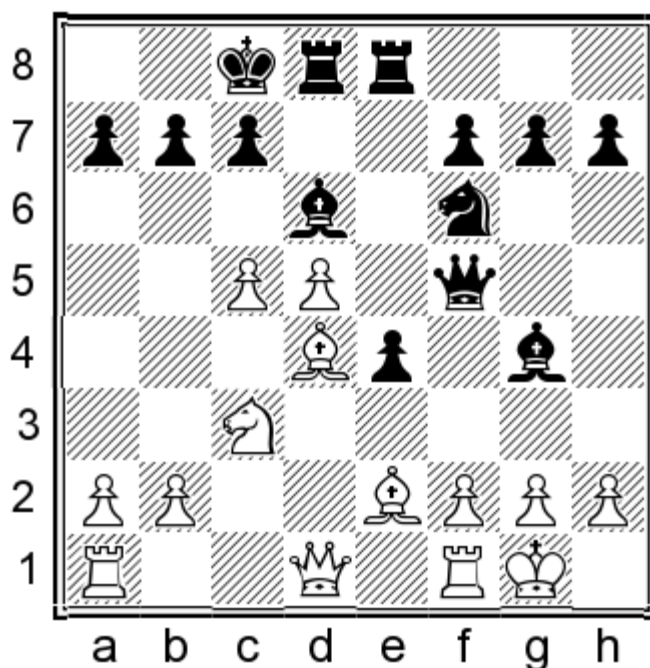
We have included this variation only to demonstrate some of Black's possibilities with the queen on f5, and I can only refer readers wishing to delve deeper into the question to Smerdon's book, which devotes a very important chapter (more than 50 pages) to the ♖f3 variation of the Portuguese Scandinavian.

12...♖he8

12...♙xe2 13.♚xe2 ♘g4 14.h3 ♘h2 15.♗fd1 ♘f3+! gave Black a strong attack, which he went on to convert in the game Lazić-Šulava, Saint-Affrique 2002, even though against the best defence he would have had nothing better than a draw.

13.c5??

13.♗e1 was played in the game Kerbrat-Krivoshey, French Team Championship 2005. After 13...♙e5 14.♙xe5 ♙xe2 15.♚xe2 ♚xe5 the position was approximately equal, but the rating difference allowed Black to grind out a win after 69 moves. Grandmaster Krivoshey is one of the strongest players in the world (with Smerdon, needless to say) to regularly play the Portuguese Variation.



13...♙xh2+!

The combination was not long in coming.

14.♙xh2 ♚h5+ 15.♙g1 ♙xe2 16.♘xe2

16.♚xe2? ♘g4 and White must give up his queen to parry the mate.

16...♘g4 17.♗e1 ♚h2+ 18.♙f1 ♚h1+ 19.♘g1 ♘h2+ 20.♙e2 ♚xg2?!

20...♗xd5! would have won cleanly, avoiding the resource that White could have used in the game.

21.♚b3?

21.d6! complicates things a little by closing the d-file.

21...e3!

We note again, as is very often the case in the Portuguese, the force of the two centralized black rooks on the d- and e-files.

22.♙xe3 ♜g4 23.c6

23.♙d1 ♞xd5+ 24.♙c1 ♞xe3! 25.fxe3 ♞d2+–+.

23...♞xe3+ 0–1

Game 25
David Cohen
Enrique Espinosa
Seichamps 2015

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♜f6 3.d4 ♙g4 4.♜f3 ♞xd5 5.♙e2 ♜c6 6.0-0 0-0-0 7.♙e3

An interesting move order. White has not yet attacked the queen by c2-c4 or ♜c3. Black must therefore take the initiative and relocate it himself to prepare the rook–queen opposition and give the ‘liberating’ ...e7-e5 move its full force. But where to put the queen?

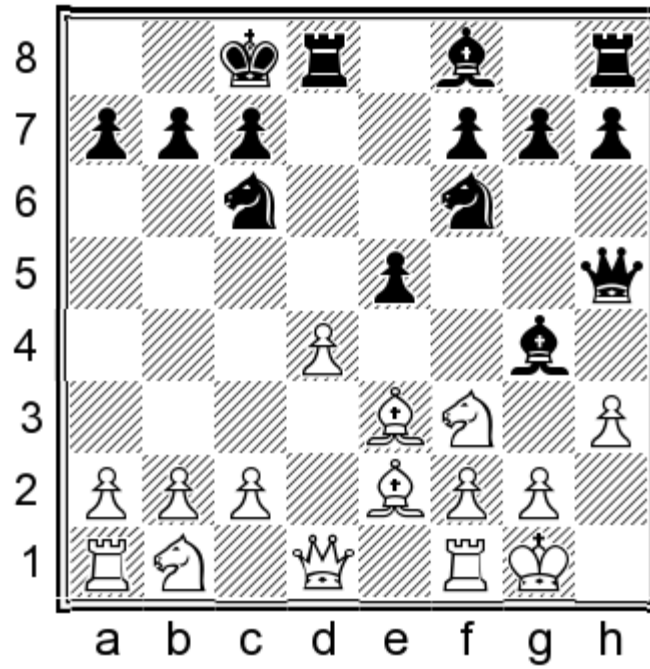
7...♞h5!?

Smerdon again advises 7...♞f5! since the knight is still on b1 (it can therefore develop to d2 to close the d-file). But aficionados (or ardent supporters) of the h5-square can choose their usual spot. Against a player who does not master the opening subtleties h5 will conceal many more tactical possibilities for Black.

8.h3

As we already know, the antidote (for White!) consists of 8.♜bd2! followed by h2-h3.

8...e5!?



We have already seen this idea in Game 19. The position here is very similar, except that White has played ♕e3 instead of ♖c3. However, this has some significance.

9.hxg4?

9.♖bd2! – this is the difference from Game 19! With the knight already on c3 this defensive move would not have been possible. 9...♕xf3 (just like 9...♕d6? 10.hxg4 ♖xg4 11.♗e4, when the attack will be repelled, 9...e4? gives nothing: 10.hxg4 ♖xg4 11.♗xe4+–) 10.♕xf3 ♔g6 11.♕xc6 exd4 12.♕xb7+ ♔xb7 13.♗b3 and White has the better position.

9...♖xg4 10.♗h4?

White had based all his hopes on this defensive move, which we have already seen in the notes to the Descilleuls-Brion game.

10.♗bd2! once again offers the best chance to defend, even though Black retains a strong attack, and therefore sufficient compensation for the sacrificed piece, after 10...f5!, threatening 11...e4.

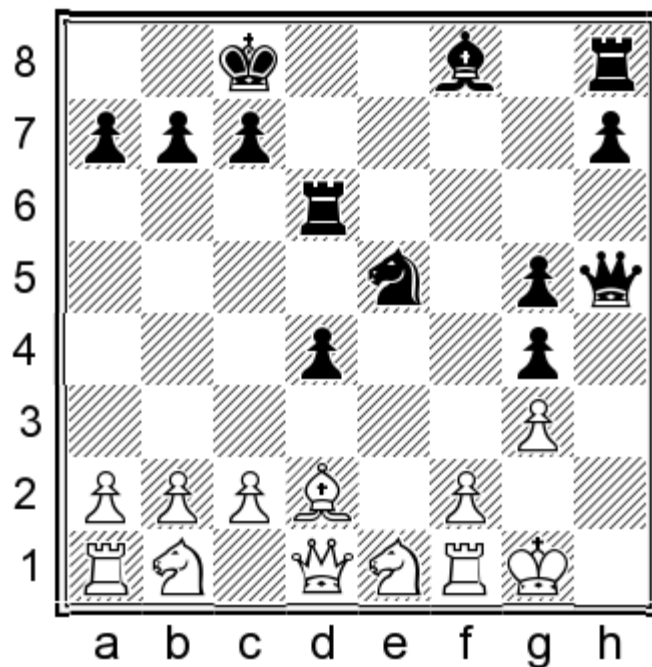
10...f5! 11.♕xg4 fxg4 12.g3 exd4 13.♕d2

13.♕f4? was obviously not possible because of 13...g5–+.

13...g5 14.♗g2 ♗e5

The f3-square!

15.♗e1 ♗d6!



16.f4

White tries to give his king some air.

16...♖h6 17.♘g2 ♜h2+ 18.♔f2 ♝h3 19.fxe5 ♜xg3+ 20.♔g1 ♚c5 21.b4 ♚b6

21...d3+! mated more quickly: 22.bxc5 ♜h2+ 23.♔f2 ♝f8+.

22.♝f6 d3+ 23.♞xb6 axb6 24.♚xg5

Desperately trying to close the f-file before the h8-rook arrives there.

24.cxd3 ♜h2+ 25.♔f1 ♝f8+ with a quick mate.

24...dxc2 25.♞xc2 ♜h2+ 26.♔f2 ♝f8+ 27.♚f6 ♜xe5 28.♞e2 ♝xf6+

The plug on the f-file did not last long.

29.♔e1 ♝h1+ 30.♔d2 ♜b2+ 31.♔d3 ♝d6+ 0-1

31...♞xa1?? was the only joke to avoid: 32.♞e8#.

After 31...♝d6+ it's mate following 32.♔c4 ♝d4+ 33.♔b5 ♝xb4#.

After having seen many examples of the black queen's sidestep to h5 or f5 when it has to vacate its central situation on d5, let us finally look at a third possibility: the retreat to d7.

Game 26

Tamir Nabaty 2493

Boris Chatalbashev 2593

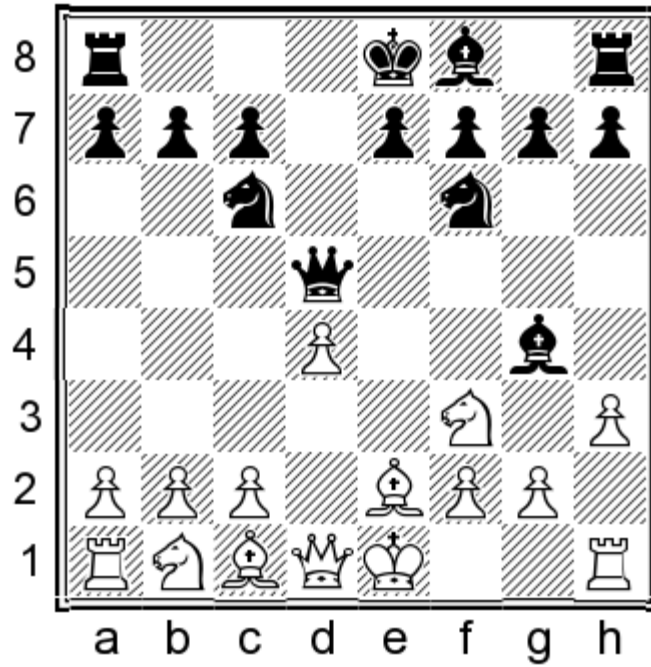
Eforie Nord 2010

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6

Once again the move order has been adapted to stick to our Portuguese Variation. The order in the game was in fact:
 2... ♖xd5 3. ♘f3 ♜f6 4.d4 ♙g4.

3.d4 ♖g4 4.♘f3 ♔xd5 5.♙e2 ♞c6 6.h3

Immediately posing a question to the bishop.



6...♗xf3

Black does not have much choice and can hardly avoid the exchange.

A) 6...♘h5? is downright bad because of 7.0-0! which attacks the bishop! White has played neither c2-c4 nor ♘c3, so he is a tempo ahead of all the games we've seen in this chapter. Black has not yet castled queenside, so is not ready for ...e7-e5. 7...0-0-0? 8.hxg4 ♘xg4 and 9.♙f4! put an end to Black's hopes in the game Rouzes-Ruhlmann, French Junior Championship 2015.

The two retreats are also unsatisfactory:

B) 6...♔f5?! 7.♘c3 ♚d7 8.0-0 0-0-0 9.♙b5. Black cannot play ...e7-e5 and has a very cramped game;

C) 6...♔h5?! 7.c4 ♕d7 8.g4 ♖g6 9.d5, and with ♘e5 coming Black is already in a difficult position.

7. xf3 d7

Finally, the queen almost returns home.

7...♔f5 was possible, but after 8.0-0 0-0-0 9.♙xc6 bxc6 10.c3 e5 11.♕a4 the black king position is too weak.

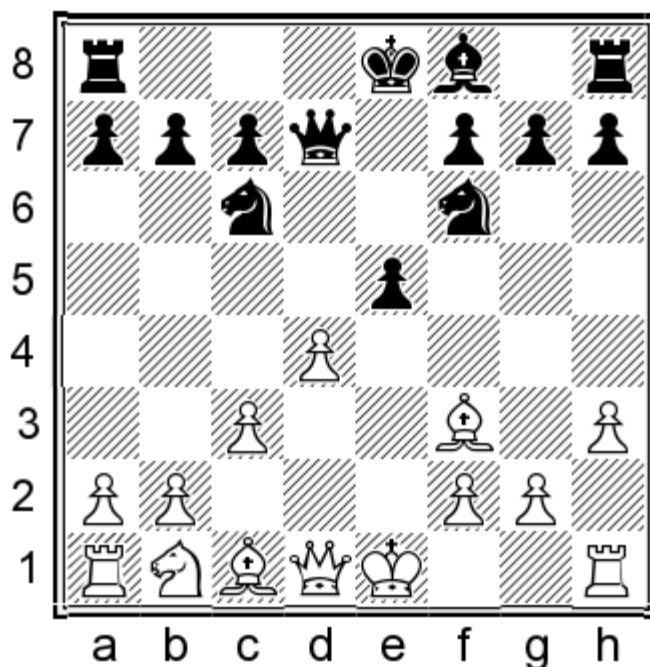
7...♔d4?? was not possible: 8.♙xc6+ and the black queen is lost! A classic trap in the Scandinavian that can be found in many situations, and which has already claimed numerous young victims.

8.c3

After 8.♔e3 0-0-0 White would have to play 9.c3 to protect the d4-pawn anyway.

And 8.d5 would weaken the pawn too much after 8...♘e5 9.♘c3 0-0-0.

8...e5!



The usual recipe works here too. The text move, recommended by Smerdon, is much stronger than 8...0-0-0, which was proposed (with an exclamation mark) by Anderson some fifteen years earlier. 9.♘b3! would then, in fact, prevent Black from playing his ‘liberating’ move. 9...e5? 10.dxe5 ♕xd1+ 10.♔xd1 (10.♔xd1 ♘xe5 is equal) 10...0-0-0+ (to protect b7 before recapturing the pawn) 11.♔c2 ♘xe5 12.♔e2 ♔c5. The position seems even, but Black is slightly better, despite the white bishop pair, due to his lead in development and more active pieces (Gorin-Krivoshey, Koszalin 1998, 0–1 in 69 moves).

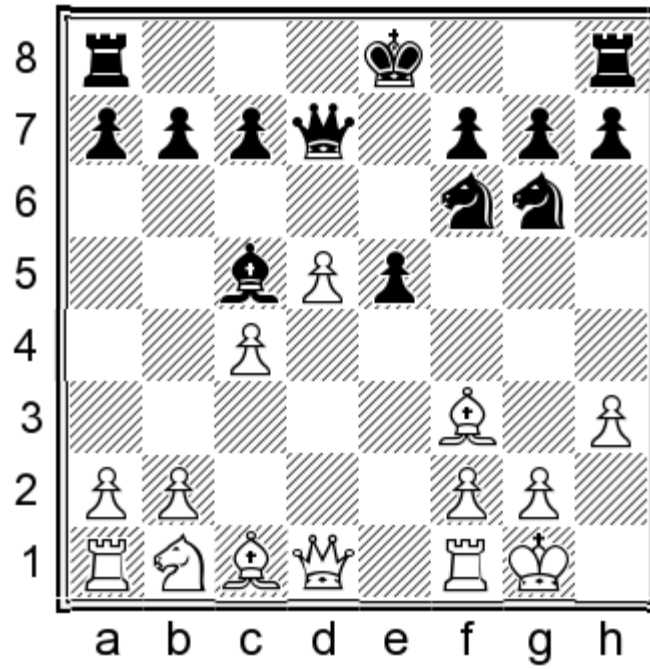
9.d5

The exchange of queens poses Black no problems: 9.dxe5 ♕xd1+ 10.♔xd1 (10.♔xd1 ♘xe5 is equal) 10...0-0-0+ (to protect b7 before recapturing the pawn) 11.♔c2 ♘xe5 12.♔e2 ♔c5. The position seems even, but Black is slightly better, despite the white bishop pair, due to his lead in development and more active pieces (Gorin-Krivoshey, Koszalin 1998, 0–1 in 69 moves).

9...♘e7 10.c4 ♘g6

Smerdon considers the move 10...♘f5! to be stronger than the text move because the knight targets the d4-square. He himself played 10...e4!? against the English master Roberson (British League 2014) and triumphed.

11.0-0 ♔c5



White has the bishop pair, but in exchange Black has active pieces and attacking possibilities against the white king position. The position is currently balanced.

12. ♖b3?!

The start of a dubious plan. 12. ♘c3 was more natural.

12...0-0 13. ♚xb7?

Far too risky. White ventures to capture a pawn with his queen, although he has not yet developed his queenside.

13...e4 14. ♙e2 ♜ab8 15. ♚c6

15. ♚a6 would amount to the same.

15...♚e7 16. ♘c3 e3! 17. fxe3 ♙xe3+ 18. ♙xe3 ♚xe3+ 19. ♔h1

19. ♖f2 ♘f4 gives Black too strong an attack: 20. ♙f1 ♜xb2 21. ♘d1 ♚d4 22. ♘xb2 ♘e4+.

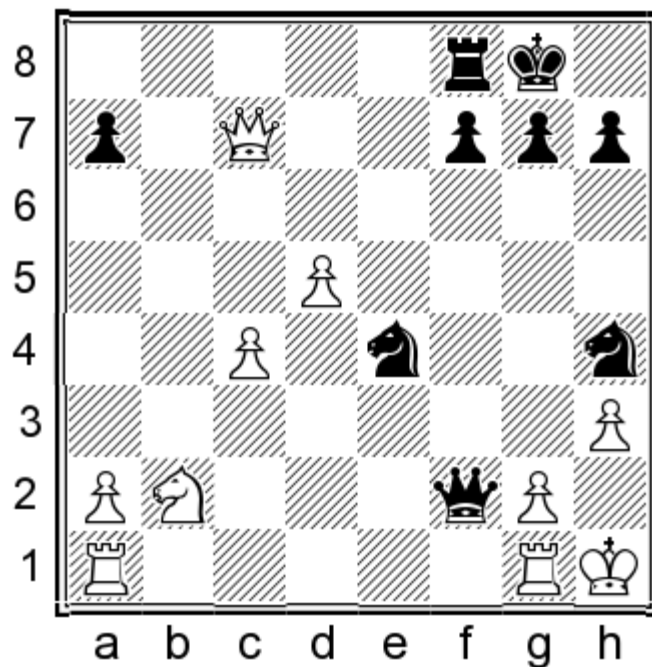
19...♜xb2

The white queen is offside and cannot get back to defend.

20. ♘d1

20. ♜ac1 ♘f4 21. ♙f3 ♘d3 22. ♜b1 ♘f2+ 23. ♔h2 ♚e5+–+.

20...♚xe2 21. ♘xb2 ♘h4 22. ♜g1 ♘e4 23. ♚xc7 ♚f2 0–1



After 24.♔d3, or any other move, White must give up his queen to avoid the mate that would occur after 24...♘g3+ 25.♕h2 ♘f3#.

With this game we finish our study of the Classical Variation. This chapter is quite dense, but if I chose to show numerous examples it is to illustrate the frequency of these type of positions in games involving amateur and junior players.

There are two points that are essential to learn. Let us try to draw some conclusions.

The best square for the black queen (when attacked by ♘c3 or c2-c4): f5 or h5?

It is difficult to offer general rules about this.

It is clear that h5 will be the most aggressive square and will usually be preferred by attacking players. From there it will be able to pin the h3-pawn when the white rook is still on h1, and sacrifices involving the g4-bishop may occur (always after h2-h3) if White has castled kingside. Furthermore, if White does not play h2-h3 Black will often be able to play the typical...e7-e5 without opposition.

The f5-square may represent a default solution when h5 is not the best. With the queen on f5 Black can answer the h2-h3 move by the exchange on f3, it not being attacked when the white bishop recaptures, and then continue with ...e7-e5 without losing time. Another advantage of having the queen on f5: it can threaten the c2-square, in concert with a knight on b4.

Here is a rule of thumb that will be valid in most cases: when the queen is attacked by the c3-knight the h5-square is generally good. When attacked by c2-c4 it is often necessary to prefer f5 if White has already developed his bishop to e3, for with the queen on h5 White could advantageously develop the b1-knight to d2, preventively closing the d-file, and then play h2-h3 followed by castling kingside.

The ...e7-e5 move at move 8

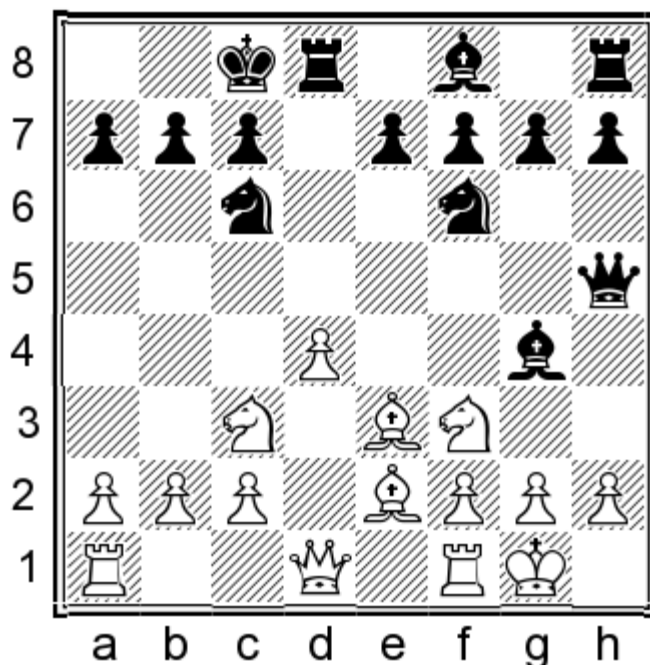
We saw that this was very often feasible – especially with the queen on h5 – if White plays the first eight moves in a casual manner.

To facilitate understanding (and memorization), let us give a summary of the principal positions where this 8...e5 move will be playable and strong.

In each of these positions White will have played the five inevitable moves (no matter in which order) e2-e4, e4xd5, d2-d4, ♖f3 and ♙e2.

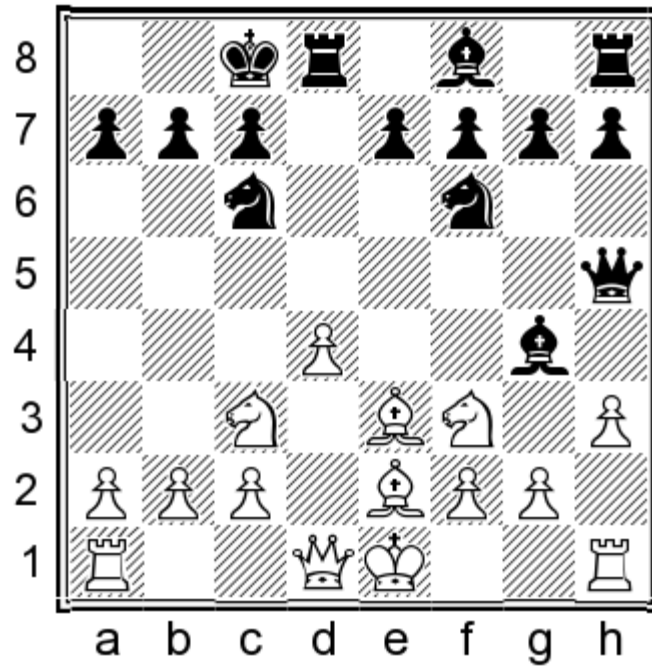
Let us add a combination of three natural moves (chosen from ♘c3, c2-c4, ♙e3, 0-0, h2-h3 or even ♔d2 – but in this case after ♙e3) and let's see what that gives:

♘c3 + ♙e3 + 0-0



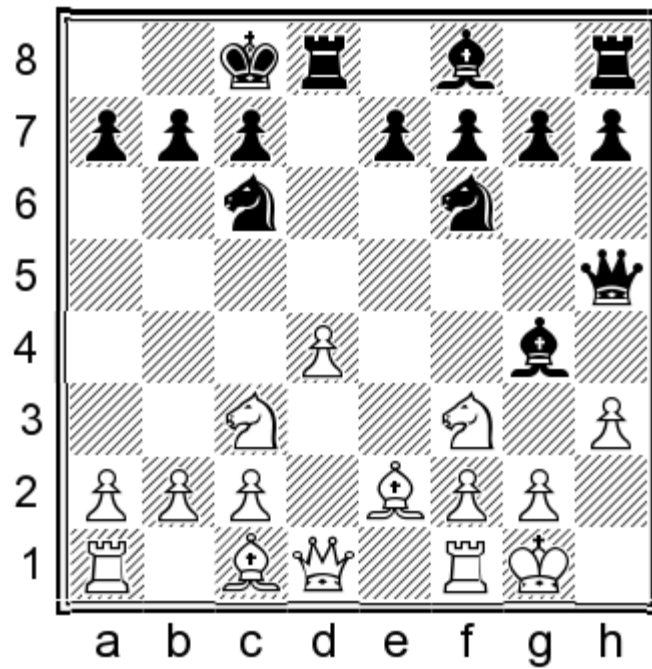
8...e5! 9.h3 (9.d5? e4 10.♘d4 ♘xd4 11.♙xd4 ♙xe2 12.♔xe2 ♔xe2 13.♘xe2 ♘xd5+) **9...exd4 10.♘xd4** (10.hxg4? ♘xg4+) **10...♙xe2 11.♘cxe2 ♙c5** (see Game 16).

♘c3 + ♙e3 + h3



8...e5! 9.d5 Qxf3 10.Qxf3 Kg6 (see Game 17).

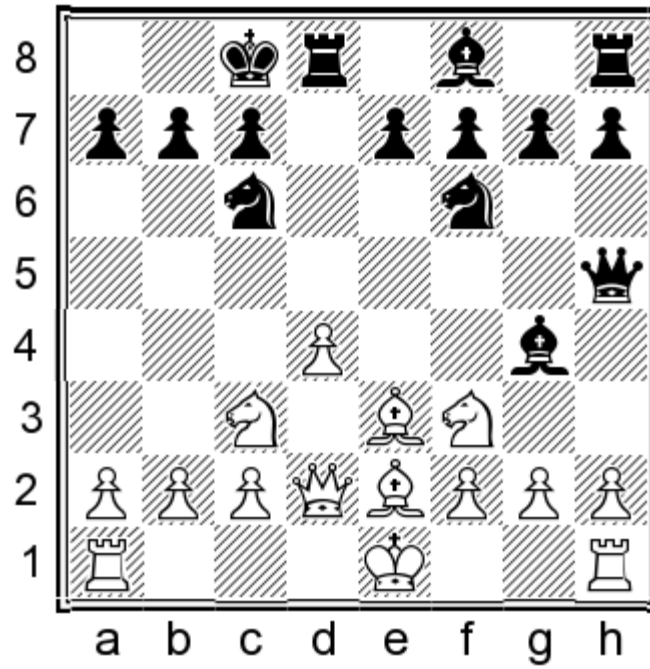
Qc3 + 0-0 + h3



8...e5!? is possible,

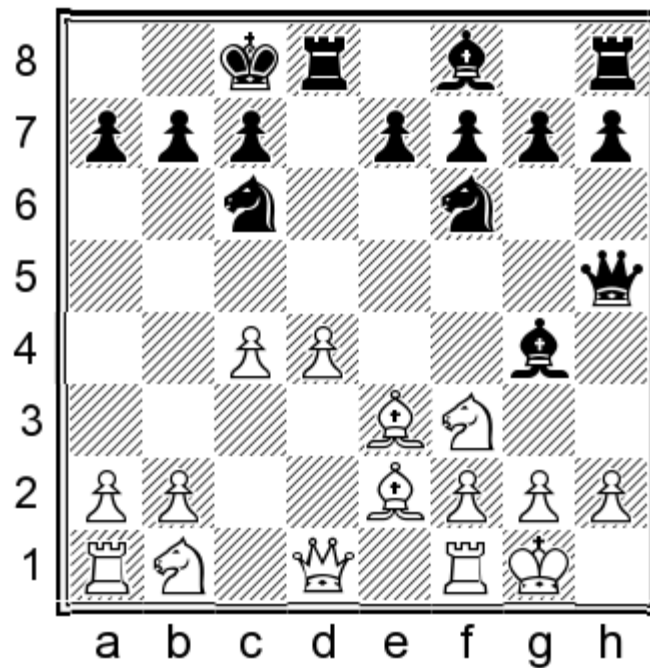
but 8...Qxd4! is less risky and probably stronger (see Games 18, 19 and 20).

Qc3 + Qe3 + Qd2



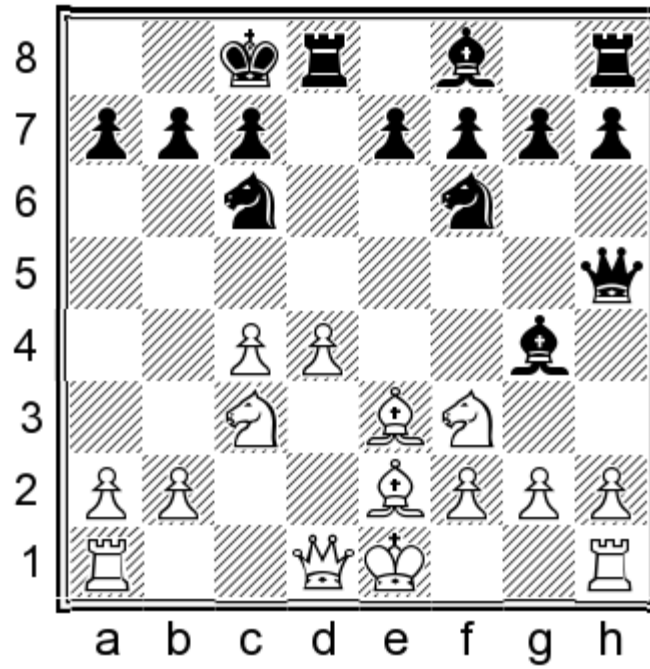
8...e5! 9.h3 (9.d5 ♖b4! 10.a3 ♜xd5–+; 9.0-0 exd4 10.♗xd4 ♗xd4 11.♙xd4 ♙c5 12.♙xg4+ ♜xg4–+) **9...exd4 10.♗xd4 ♗xd4 11.♙xd4** (11.♙xg4+ ♗xg4 12.♙xd4 ♙c5 13.♗e2 ♙xd4 14.♗xd4 ♜e5+) **11...♙xe2 12.♗xe2 ♙c5 13.c3 ♜he8–+** (see the notes to Game 16).

c4 + ♙e3 + 0-0



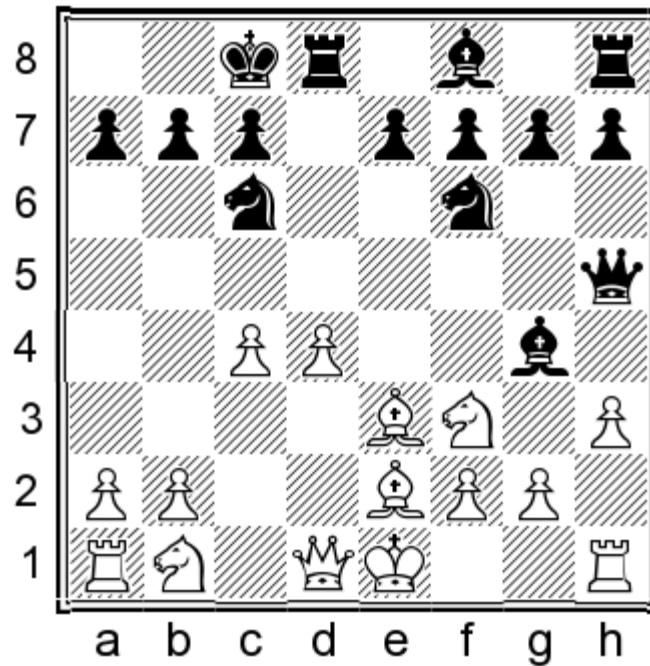
8...e5! 9.h3 (9.d5? e4 10.♗d4 ♗xd4 11.♙xg4+ ♗xg4 12.h3 ♗f3+–+) **9...exd4! 10.hxg4 ♗xg4** (see Game 21).

c4 + ♗c3 + ♙e3



8...e5! 9.d5 (9.0-0 exd4 10.♘xd4 ♘xd4 11.♙xg4+ (11.♙xd4 ♙xe2 12.♘xe2 c5) 11...♚xg4+) **9...e4 10.♘g5 ♘e5** (see Game 22).

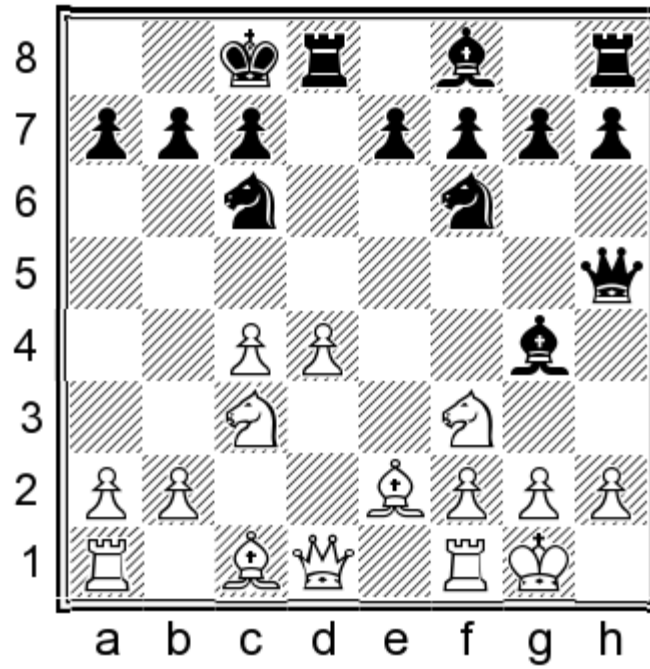
c4 + ♙e3 + h3



8...e5! 9.d5 (9.0-0 exd4 10.hxg4 ♘xg4) **9...e4 10.♘d4 ♙xe2 11.♚xe2 ♘e5** (see Game 23).

Two examples where the move 8...e5 is not the strongest:

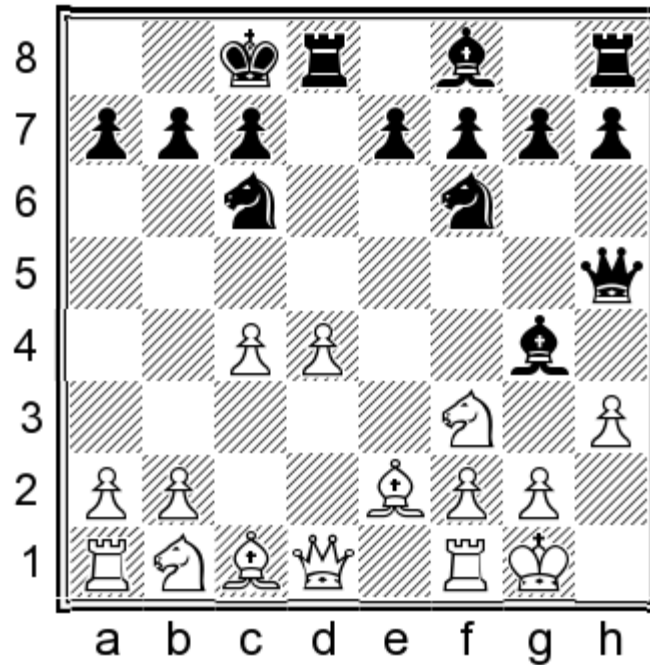
c4 + ♘c3 + 0-0



8...dxd4! (8...e5 9.d5=)

8...dxd4! 9.dxd4 ♕xe2 10.♖xe2 ♜xd4 (10.♜xe2 ♝xd4) 10...e5 11.♙e3 c5! (see the notes to Game 21).

c4 + 0-0 + h3

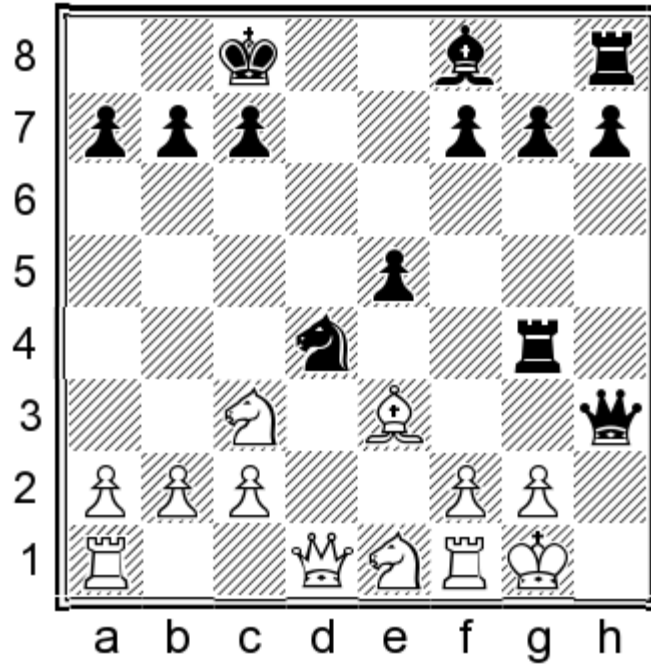


8...dxd4! (8...e5? 9.♖bd2±)

8...dxd4! 9.dxd4 ♕xe2 10.♜xe2 ♝xd4 (see the notes to Game 21).

Your move!

17



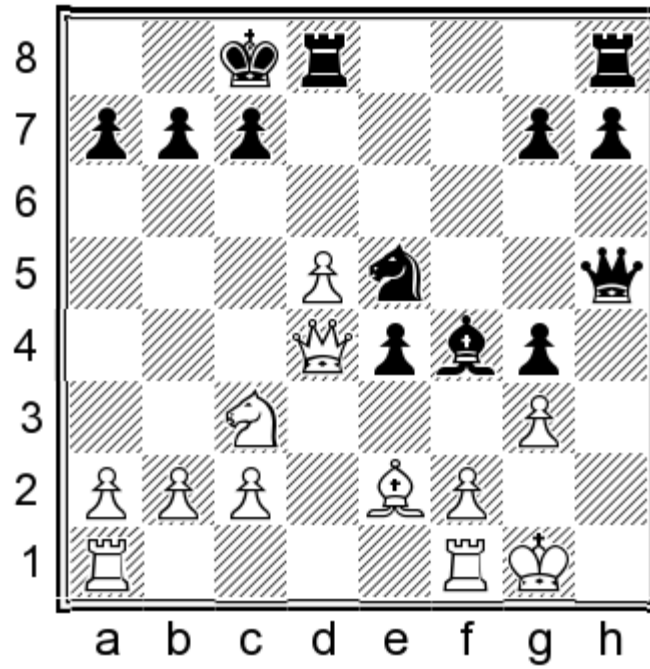
The g2-pawn is defended. How does Black get through anyway?

Show/Hide the Solution

14... ♖xg2+! 15. ♘xg2 ♜f3+-+

(See Game 19, Descilleuls-Brion)

18



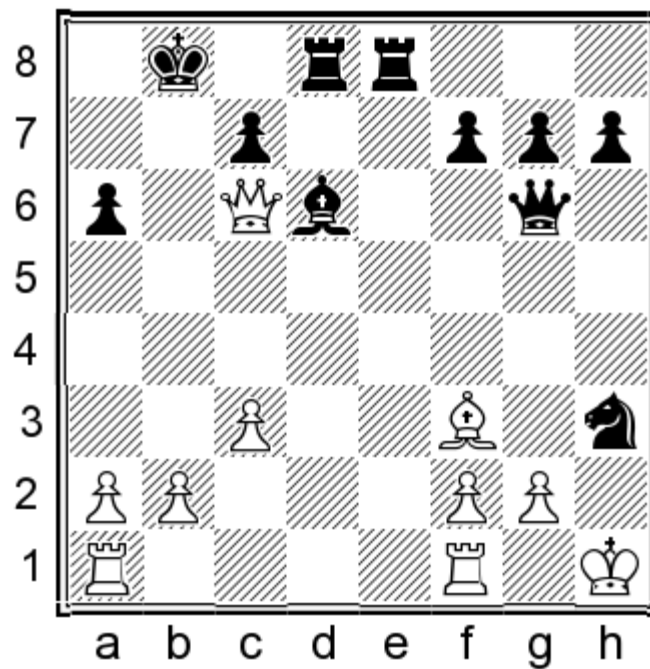
By what thematic manoeuvre does Black decisively reinforce the attack?

Show/Hide the Solution

16...♖d6!

A very common right-angled rook move in this type of position.

(See Game 19, **Descilleuls-Brion**)



Black is threatened with mate, and yet still wins.

Show/Hide the Solution

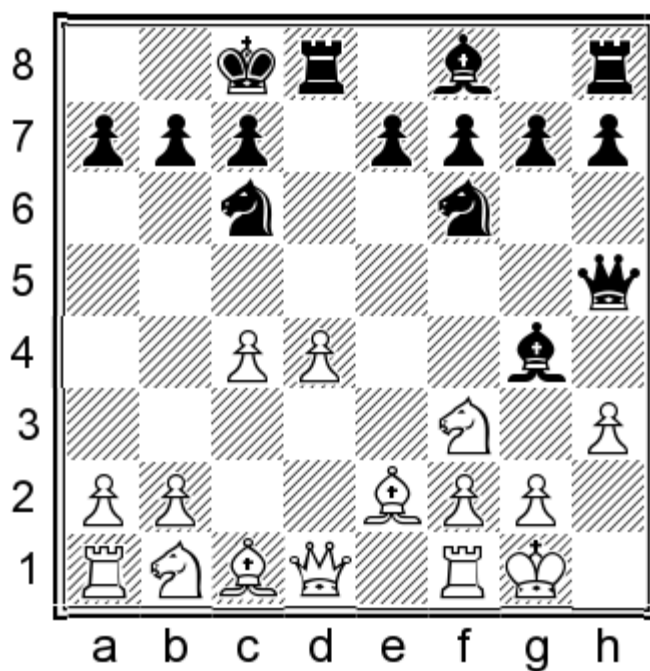
22...♘xf2+! 23.♔g1

23.♞xf2? ♚h6+ 24.♔g1 ♚h2+ 25.♔f1 ♚h1#.

23...♘e4

(See Game 20, **De Vreese-Georget**)

20



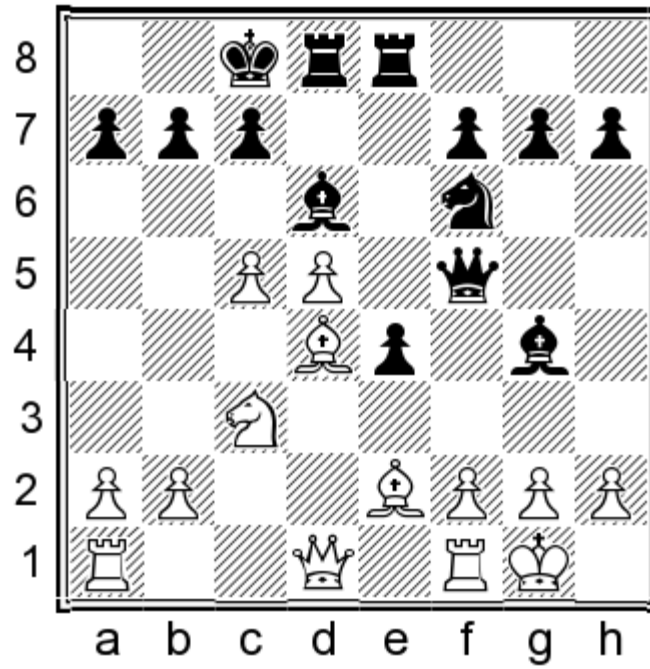
White has just played 8.h3?, Black wins a pawn.

Show/Hide the Solution

8...♘xd4! 9.♘xd4 ♙xe2 10.♚xe2 ♞xd4

(See Game 21, **Beaskoa Estany-Ruhlmann**)

21



White, who has just played 13.c5?? to attack the d6-bishop, did not see Black's threat. What was it?

Show/Hide the Solution

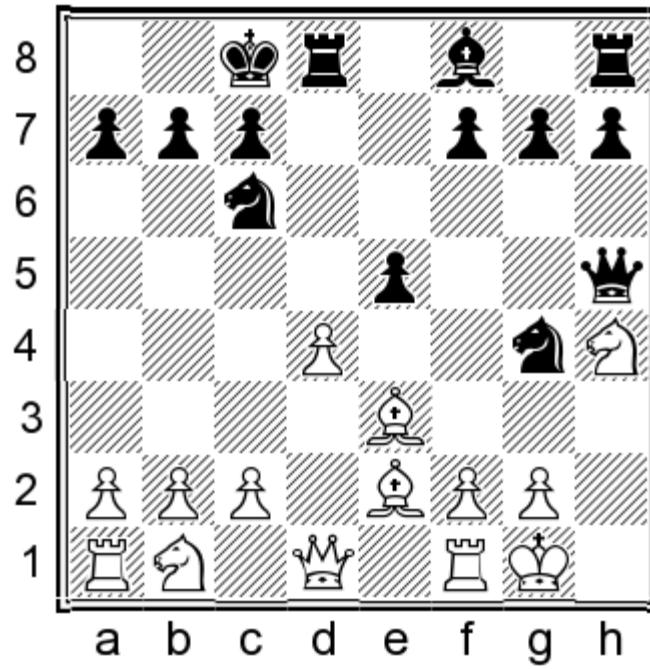
13...♙xh2+! 14.♖xh2 ♚h5+ 15.♖g1 ♙xe2 16.♘xe2

16.♚xe2? ♘g4-+.

16...♘g4

with a strong attack.

(See Game 24, **Bueno Abalo-Stefanova**)

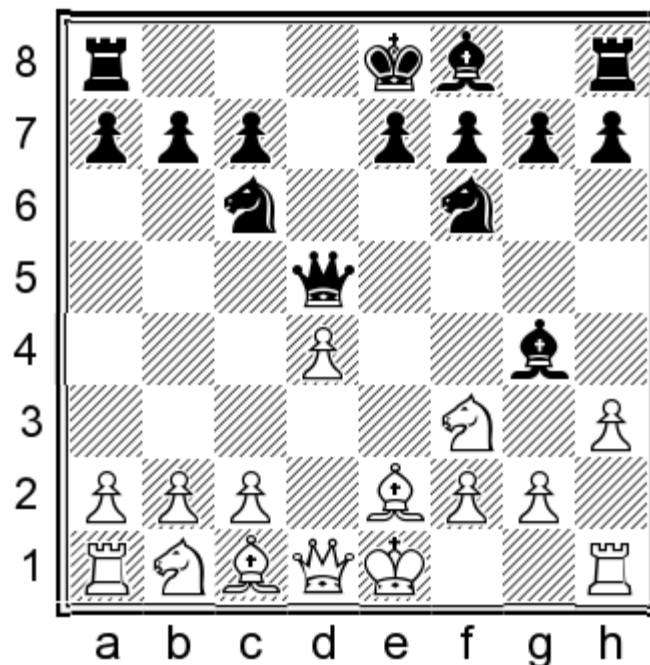


White has just played 10. h4. How does Black continue the attack?

Show/Hide the Solution

10...f5!

(See Game 25, Cohen-Espinosa)



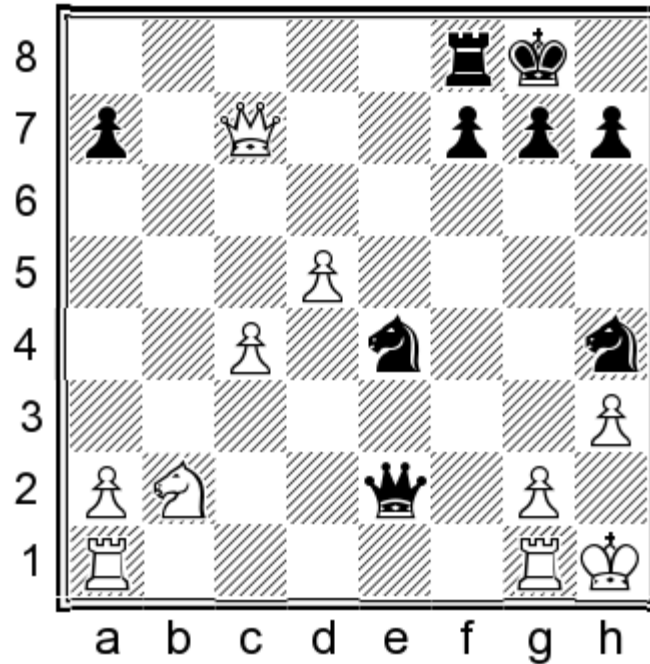
The g4-bishop is attacked. What is Black's best reaction in this position? 6...h5; 6...f5; 6...x3 or 6...h5 ?

Show/Hide the Solution

6...♙xf3

(See Game 26, Nabaty-Chatalbashev)

24



The charge of the cavalry. How does Black conclude the attack?

Show/Hide the Solution

23...♔f2

when White will have to give up the queen to avoid the mate after

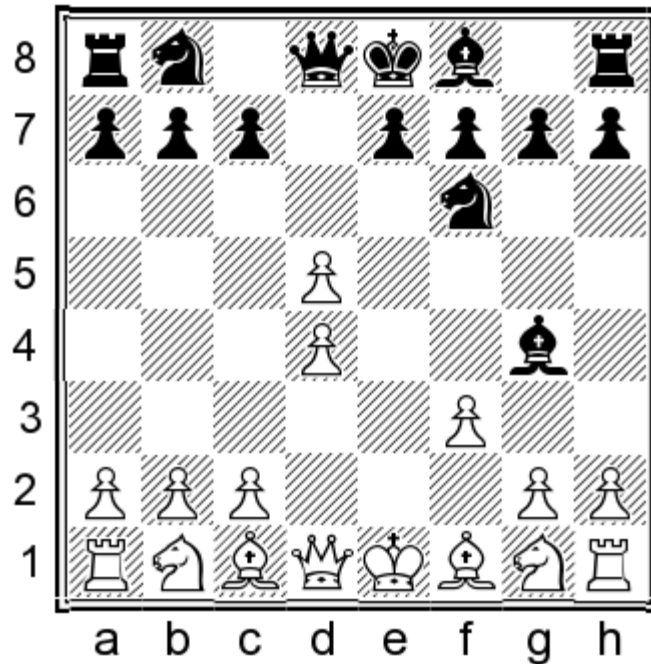
24...♘g3+ 25.♙h2 ♘f3#

(See Game 26, Nabaty-Chatalbashev)

Chapter 5

The Scandinavian Defence, Portuguese Variation – the critical line with 4.f3

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♙g4 4.f3



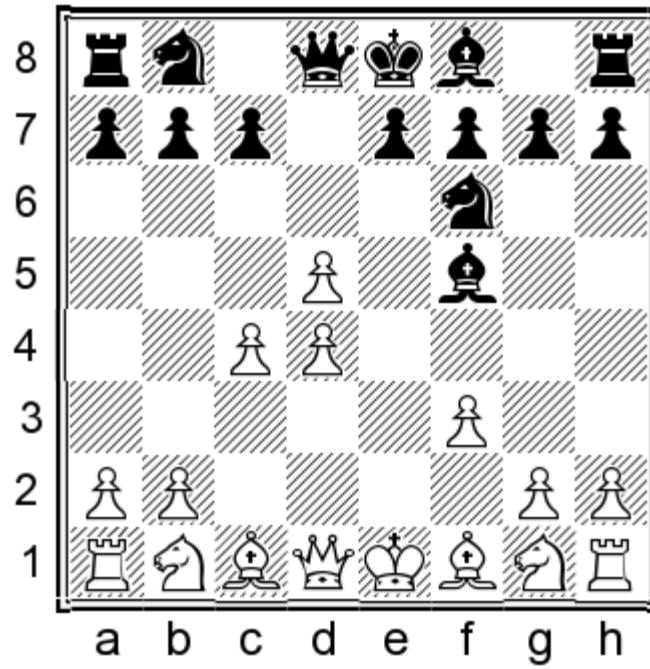
The critical move, and the only one that can, according to theory, pose Black problems. With 4.f3 – gaining time on the g4-bishop – White announces his intention to hold on to the d5-pawn by playing c2-c4.

Black must therefore play a gambit, in the same vein as that seen in Chapter 2 – with the difference that White has already played d2-d4 and that Black has lost at least one tempo with the bishop (by playing ...♗c8-g4-f5), whereas in the Icelandic Gambit it recaptures on e6 in one move directly from c8.

In compensation (fortunately for Black, there is some), the f2-f3 move comes at a price: the g1-knight loses its natural square and the weakening of the e3-square and the g1-a7 diagonal will not be without consequences, as will be seen in several games.

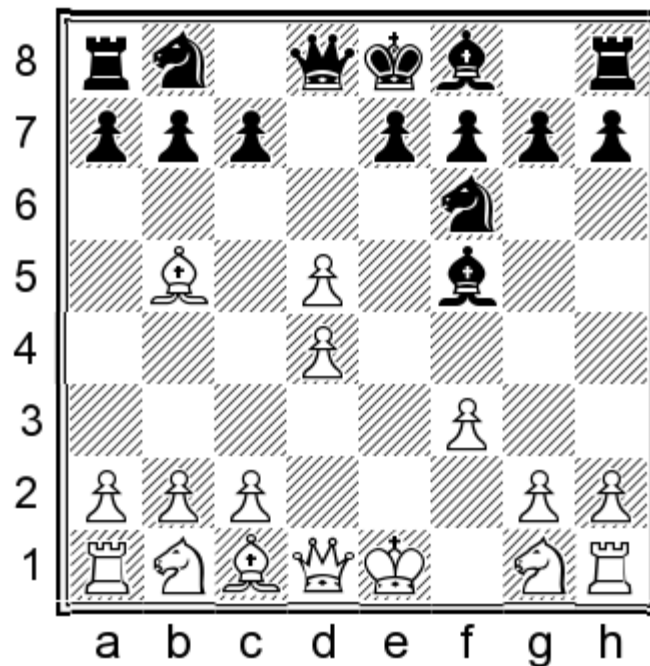
After 4.f3 Black has no choice and must retreat the bishop to f5. White then has three options to cling to the d5-pawn by c2-c4 (if he doesn't, then the f2-f3 move would not have made much sense).

1) The direct approach by immediately playing 5.c4 (Games 27–31)



Just as in the Icelandic Gambit, Black gets good chances with the usual move 5...e6. White's extra tempo, compared with the Icelandic Gambit, will be compensated for by the weakening caused by the f2-f3 move (in the Icelandic Gambit the g1-knight had its natural square on f3).

2) Interposing 5.♖b5+ before hanging on to the pawn with c2-c4 (*Games 32 to 34*)



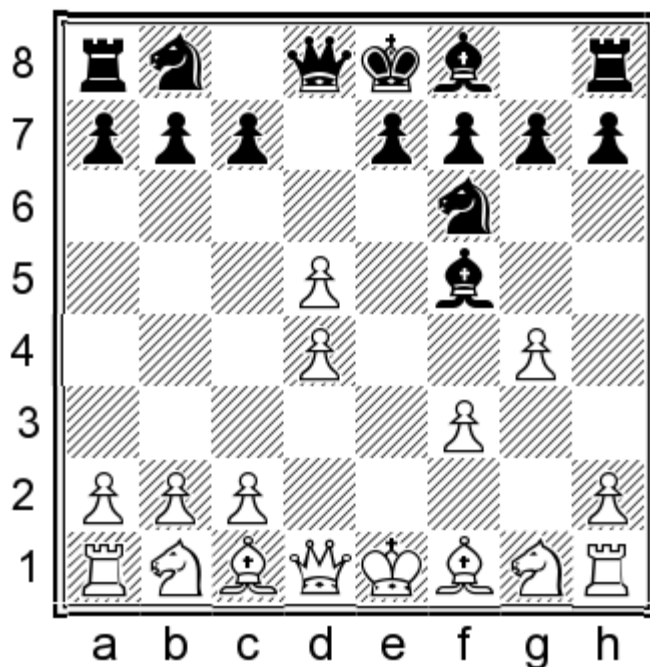
The idea behind this check is to get the f1-bishop outside the pawn chain before playing c2-c4, and equally to obstruct the d-file, since Black will have to parry the check by playing ...♗bd7.

The bishop check on b5 also accelerates White's preparation for kingside castling, and he will thus be able to remove his king more quickly from the dangerous e-file, which will inevitably open when Black plays ...e7-e6.

On the other hand, the b5-bishop will soon have to answer to the move ...a7-a6. White will then have to choose either to

exchange it, yielding the bishop pair to Black, or to waste a tempo by retreating it.

3) Interposing 5.g4 before hanging on to the pawn with c2-c4 (Games 35–36)



‘If there is a refutation of the Portuguese Variation, it must be this move’ (David Smerdon). Even though the 5.g4 move is still relatively rare it represents the most serious threat to the Portuguese Scandinavian, according to the Australian GM.

White wants to chase the black bishop off the important h3-c8 diagonal by forcing it to retreat to g6, and also keep the possibility of harassing the f6-knight by playing g4-g5.

The downside is that White will have played six consecutive pawn moves after 6.c4 and his kingside will be weakened by the moves f2-f3 and g2-g4. Black must try to take advantage of the situation.

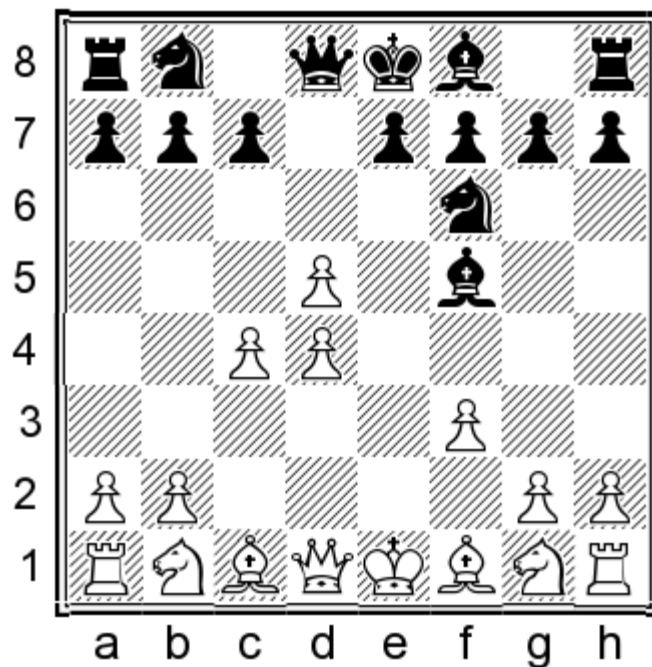
Game 27

Nigar Novruzova

Salomé Neuhauser 1827

Herceg Novi Ech jr 2006

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♙g4 4.f3 ♙f5 5.c4



5...e6!

The same recipe as for the Icelandic Gambit works here too.

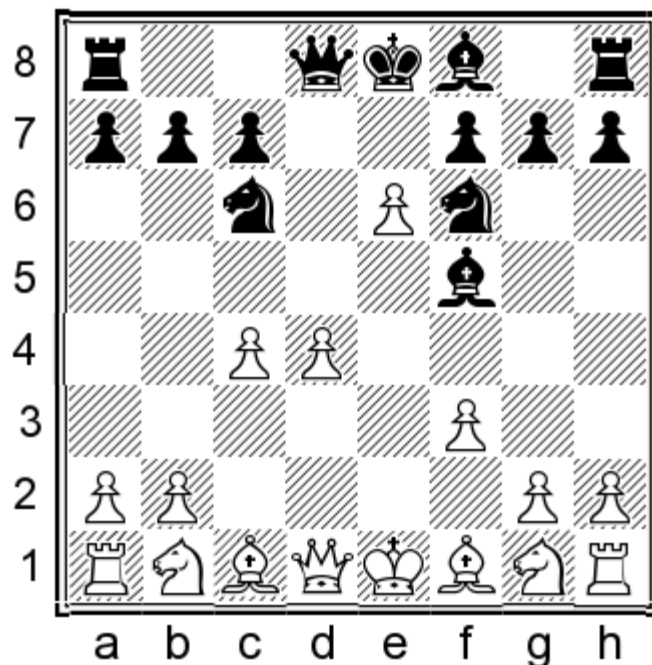
6.dxe6

6.g4? is an important move that we will consider later in this chapter, but here it does not work at all: 6...♘xg4!! 7.fxg4 ♕h4+ 8.♔d2 (after 8.♔e2?? ♕xg4+ 9.♘f3 ♕xf3+! 10.♔xf3 ♕h5+ Black wins the queen nicely) 8...♕e4 9.♘f3 ♖f2+ 10.♖e2 ♖xf3. Black has recovered the material investment and retains the better position.

6...♘c6!

Black doesn't waste time recapturing the e6-pawn, but continues to develop as quickly as possible.

In fact, 6...♕xe6 would give a kind of Icelandic Gambit where Black would have played ...♕c8-g4-f5-e6, while the recapture is usually made in just one move. Compared to variations in the Icelandic Gambit, White would already have played d2-d4 and would still be to move, which makes two extra tempi (not counting the move f2-f3 which, frankly, is not useful anyway).



The text move seems very reckless, however, since Black allows another pawn to be captured, moreover with check, so that Black will no longer be able to castle.

7.exf7+?

Too greedy. After this move, White is almost lost! His lack of development is too much. The fact that he is uncastled is absolutely no problem for Black.

7.d5?! is another natural move that is also bad: 7...♘b4 8.♙a3 (8.♙a4+ loses immediately: 8...b5! 9.♙xb5+ c6! 10.♙b7 fxe6! – he had to take care of the mate on f7! – 11.♙a3 ♖b8 12.♙xa7 ♖a8 13.♙b7 ♙c5! – Black obviously does not take the repetition of moves – 14.♙xg7 – the white queen strolls around the enemy camp all alone while the rest of her army is still on the starting line – 14...♖g8 15.♙h6 ♖xa3!+–) 8...♙c5 9.♙d2 (9.g4? suffers the same treatment as in the note to White's sixth move: 9...♙xg4! 10.fxg4 ♙h4+–+) 9...0-0. Black has a huge development advantage, while White will have a hard time mobilizing his kingside and bringing his king to safety.

7.♙e3 was the only move. We will see this in Games 30 and 31.

7...♙xf7

Black has three pieces developed against none for White (all his pieces are still on their original squares). He is already threatening a check on b4, followed by the centralization of the h8-rook on e8. The temporary situation of the king on f7 is absolutely inconsequential for the time being. It will be able to return to g8 if need be once the h8-rook has moved. On top of this, it should not be forgotten that the d4-pawn is currently attacked.

8.♙e3?

A natural developing move to defend d4 and close the e-file, but it loses!

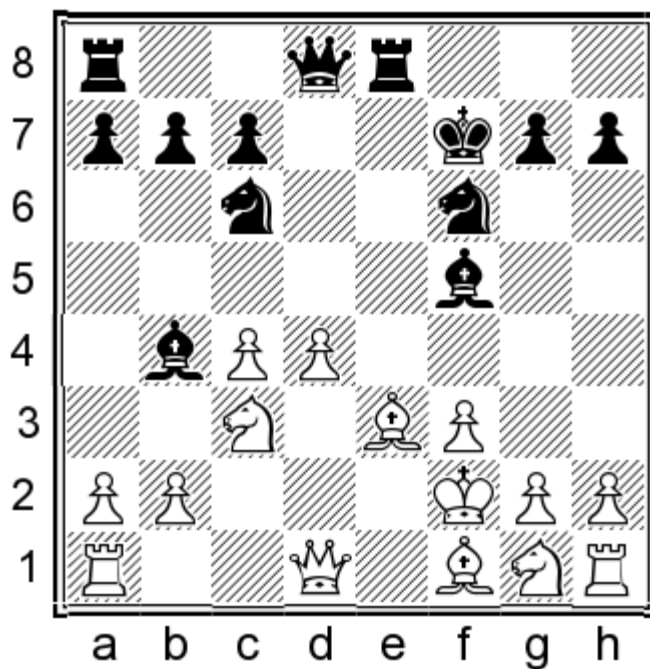
The only way for White to retain some chances was with 8.♙e2, which we shall see in Game 29.

8...♙b4+ 9.♙c3

9.♙f2 was no better. We will have an overview of it in the next game.

9...♖e8 10.♔f2

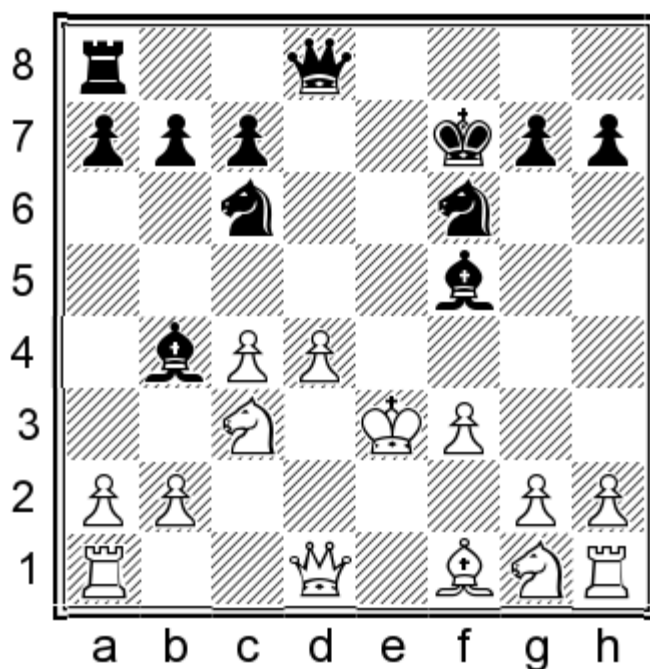
10.♕d2 ♕xd4 (taking advantage of the pin on the e-file!) 11.♕xd4 ♖xd4 12.0-0-0 ♗xe3 13.♗xd4 ♙xc3 14.bxc3 ♗ae8!
Black has an overwhelming position. The white kingside is still in the garage.



10...♗xe3!

A major theme in this variation – and one of the consequences of weakening the e3-square! – which will be found in the following game, in particular. The white king is sucked into the open air.

11.♔xe3

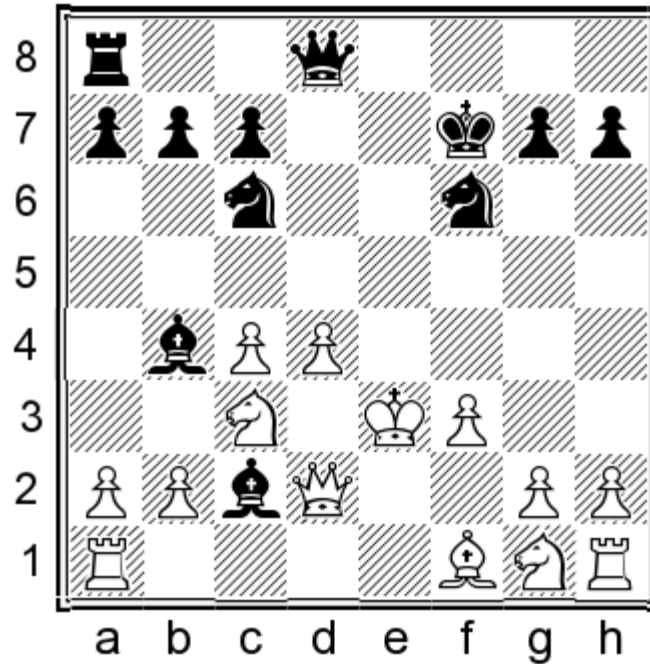


11...♔c2!!

A very nice deflection idea.

12.♕d2

12.♕xc2 ♖xd4+ 13.♙e2 ♜e8++-.



12...♘g4+!!

The fireworks continue. All this had, in fact, already been played a year earlier in a game Sergeev-Saulin, Tula 2005. However, Salomé did not know this game!

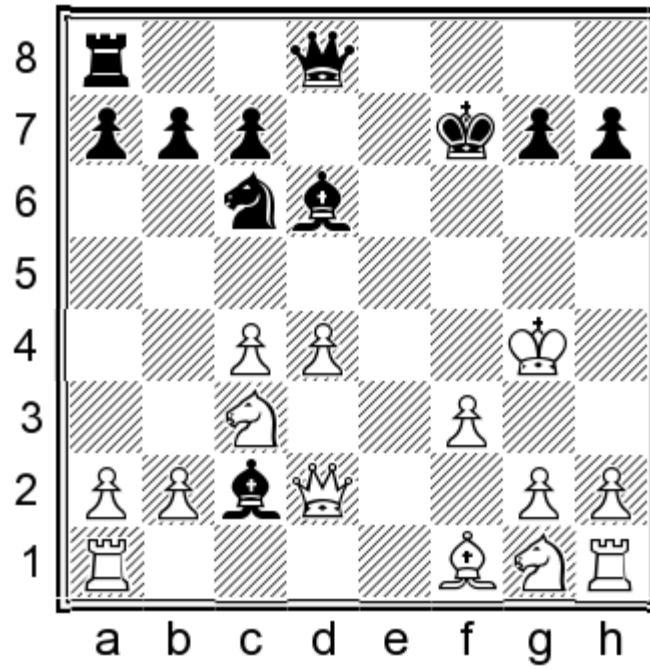
13.♙f4

The aforementioned game had continued 13.fxg4 ♕g5+ 14.♙e2 ♜e8+ and the white queen is lost.

13...♔d6+!

The suction continues.

14.♙xg4



14...♔d7+?!

Too bad. Black misses a superb conclusion that would have conferred an exceptional quality to the game, from beginning to end: 14...♕f5+!! (a new attraction sacrifice!) 15.♖xf5 ♔h4! (cutting off the white king's retreat; it can no longer escape the mating net) 16.g4 ♖e8! and mate by 17...g6 is forced.

15.♖h4 g5+ 16.♖h5??

After 16.♖xg5 ♕e7 Black wins the queen, but the game could go on for a while.

16...♕g6+ 17.♖xg5 ♖f5+ 18.♖h4 ♖h5#

An extraordinary game, played by an 11-year-old girl at a European Championship, which perfectly reflects the extent of Black's tactical possibilities in this variation.

Game 28

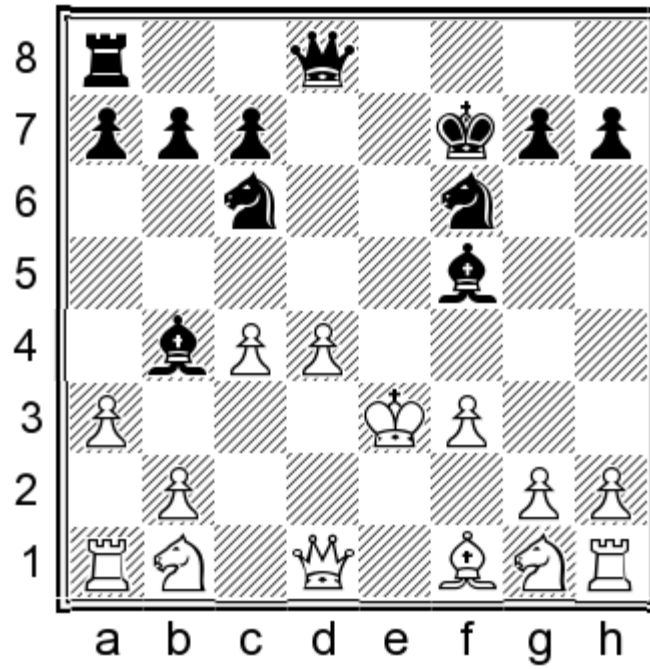
Simon Gehin

Sébastien Georget

France tt 2014

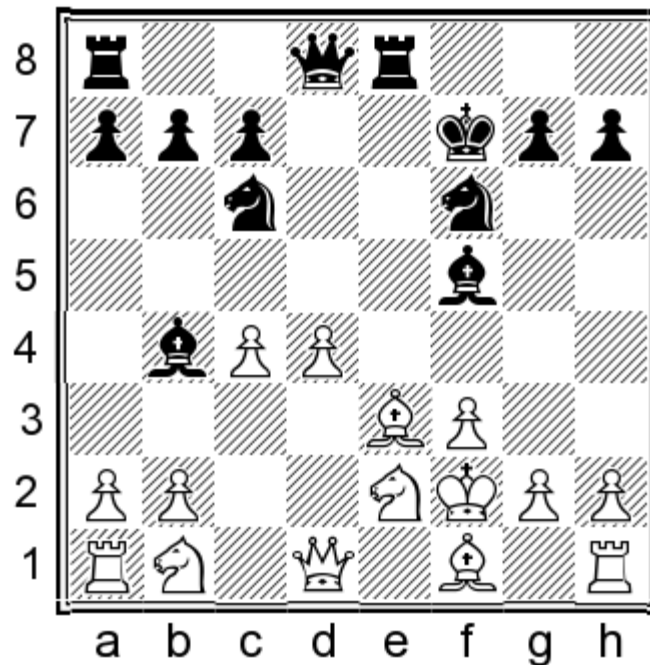
1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♕g4 4.f3 ♕f5 5.c4 e6! 6.dxe6 ♘c6 7.exf7+? ♖xf7 8.♕e3 ♕b4+ 9.♖f2 ♖e8 10.♘e2

10.a3 would have been met by the same reply as the move in the game: 10...♖xe3! (again this thematic exchange sacrifice in this variation, intending to draw the white king into the open) 11.♖xe3 (11.axb4 ♖d3!! 12.♕xd3 ♖xd4+ 13.♖f1 ♕xd3+ 14.♘e2 ♖e8 15.♘bc3 ♘xb4 and Black has too much compensation for the exchange)



analysis diagram

11...♔e1!! (a brilliant way to cut off the king's retreat and deflect the queen from the defence of d4) 12.♘c3 (12.♙xe1 ♜xd4+ 13.♕e2 ♞e8#) 12...♘xd4! 13.♙xd4 ♜xd4+ 14.♕xd4 ♔f2+ 15.♕e5 ♔e3!! (the same theme as at move 11, but two ranks higher) 16.♕xf5 g6+ 17.♕e5 ♞e8#.

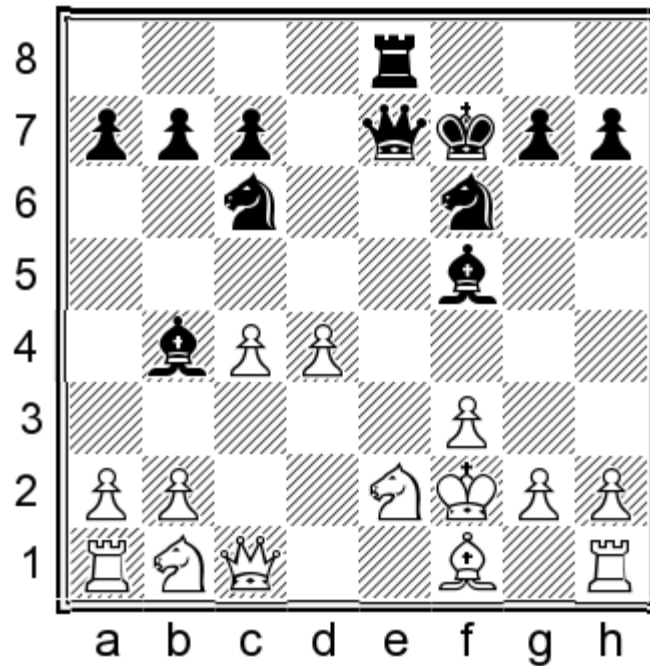


10...♞xe3!

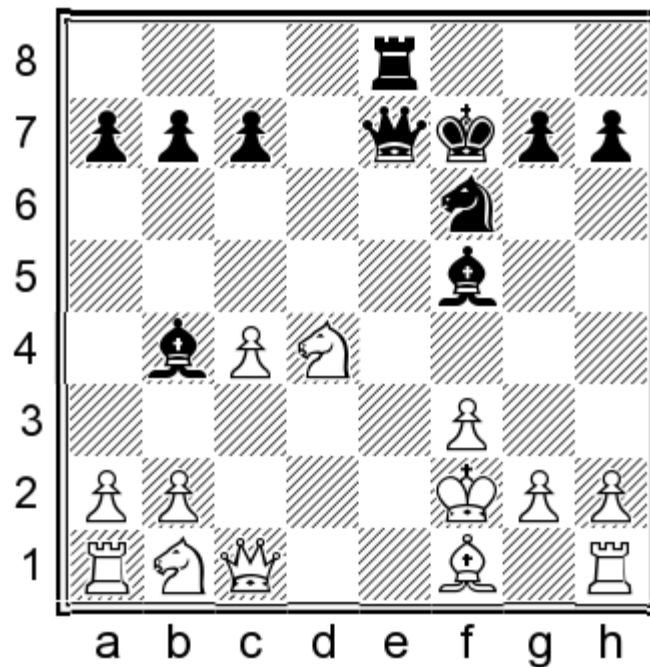
As expected!

11.♕xe3 ♜e7+ 12.♕f2 ♞e8 13.♙c1

To control the e3-square, which was in Black's sights.



13...Bxd4!! 14.Bxd4



14...Qe5!!

A fantastic quiet move – which was not found at the chessboard (I hope Sébastien will not mind me revealing this).

In the game Dimitrov-Rivera Kuzawka, Lalin 1994, Black continued with 14...Qe1+ and won quickly after 15.Kg1 Qc5 16.Qd1 Qc2+. But the text move, which we had analyzed during a training session, is much stronger. With the help of Fritz and Houdini we concluded that every white move leads to mate here. So far Sébastien has learned the lesson well, but he has to find the last few moves by himself. Without taking anything away from his performance, these moves

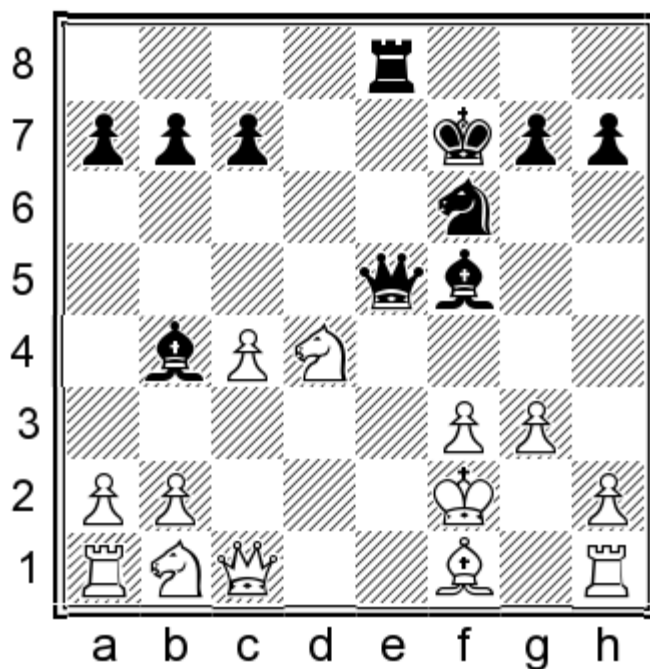
were not very difficult, as they are all checks.

15. ♖e2

As stated in the previous note, nothing can stop the mate. Some examples:

A) 15. ♖xf5 ♕c5+;

B) 15. g3 (to try to give the king refuge on g2)



analysis diagram

15... ♕h3!! (a spectacular sacrifice, both of obstruction, to prevent the white king from escaping via h3, but also of deviation for the defender of the e2-square) 16. ♕xh3 ♖xd4+ 17. ♖f1 ♖d3+ 18. ♖g1 ♕c5+ 19. ♖g2 ♖e2#;

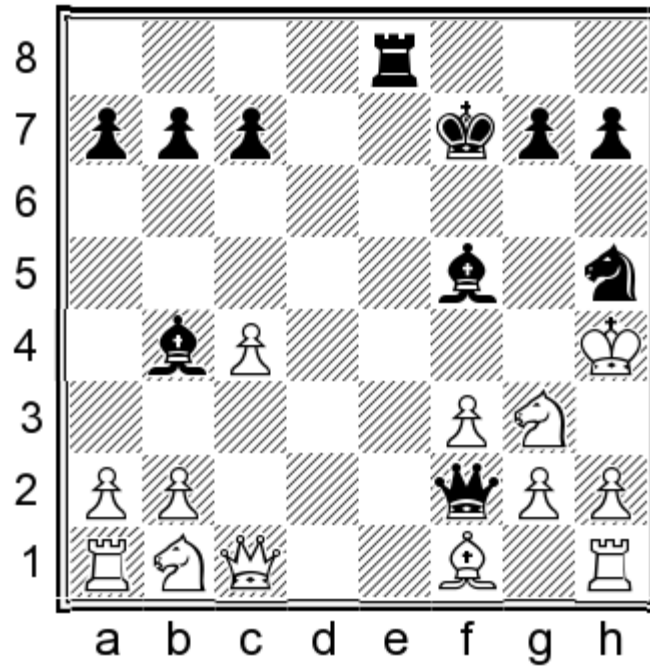
C) 15. g4 (to take refuge on g2, but without allowing the move ... ♕h3 this time) 15... ♖xg4+! 16. fxg4 ♖xd4+ 17. ♖g2 ♖xg4+ 18. ♖f2 ♕c5+.

15... ♖c5+ 16. ♖g3 ♖h5+

This mates, but more aesthetic (and faster by one move) was 16... ♕e1+!! 17. ♖xe1 ♖e4+! 18. fxg4 ♖e3+ 19. ♖h4 ♖xe4+ 20. g4 ♖xg4+ 21. ♖h5 ♖g5#.

17. ♖h4 ♖f2+ 18. ♖g3

18. g3 ♕e7+ 19. ♖xh5 ♖xf3+



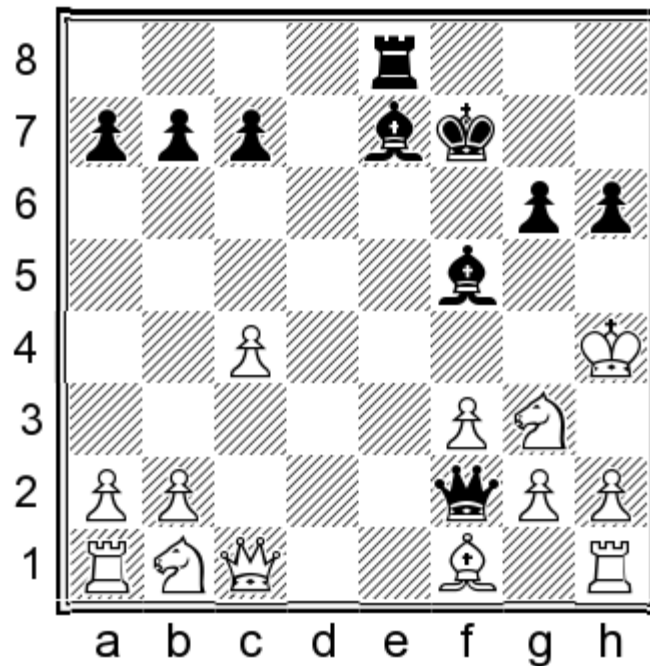
18...♕e7+! 19.♔xh5 g6+

There were other faster mates, but it does not matter of course.

20.♔h6 ♕f8+ 21.♔g5

21.♔xh7 ♕g7! and it's mate by ...♖h8.

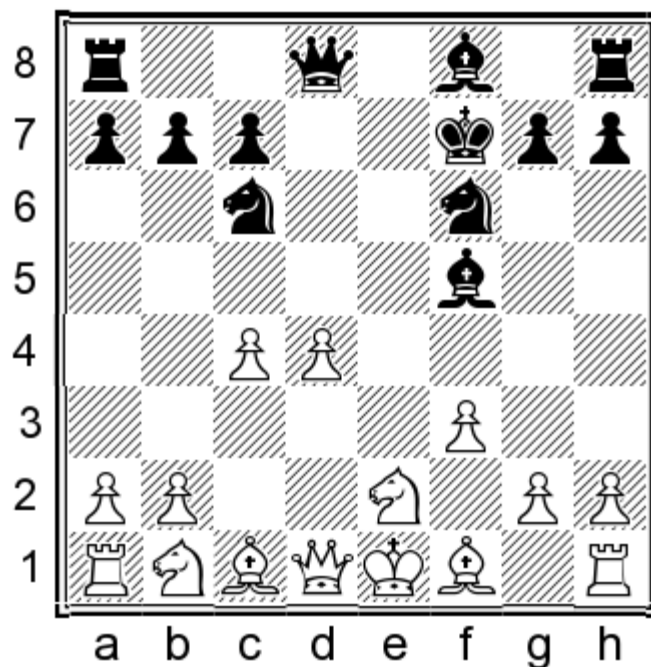
21...h6+ 22.♔h4 ♕e7+ 0-1



Amusing. As in the previous game the king hunt ends on the h4-square.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖f6 3.d4 ♙g4 4.f3 ♙f5 5.c4 e6 6.dxe6 ♜c6 7.exf7+? ♜xf7 8.♞e2

The only move, according to Smerdon, ‘to prolong the game’ (sic!).



8...♞b4! 9.♞a3?

White logically wants to defend the c2-square, but this move leads to disaster.

The only move was 9.♞g3 ♜c2+ 10.♜f2 ♞xd4! 11.c5! (again the only move! 11.♞xf5? ♞xf5 12.♞xd8 ♙c5+! – an important intermediate check – 13.♜e1 ♞axd8 and Black has an overwhelming position) 11...♙xc5 12.♙e3 (12.♙c4+? ♙e6 13.♙xe6+ ♞xe6+ – check! – 14.♙e3 ♙xe3+ 15.♜xe3 ♞e7! and again the white king is very badly placed) 12...♞d6 13.♙c4+ ♙e6 14.♙xe6+ ♞xe6 15.♞xd6 ♙xd6 and Black is ‘only’ slightly better.

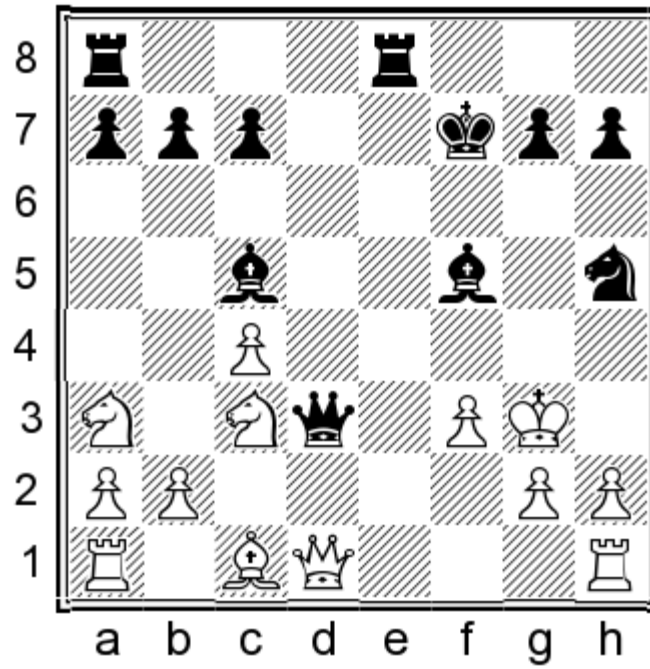
9...♞d3+ 10.♜d2 ♙b4+ 11.♞c3 ♞xd4

11...♞f2–+ was simpler, of course.

12.♙xd3

12.♞c2 ♞f2+ 13.♞e2 ♞ad8–+.

12...♞xd3+ 13.♜e1 ♞he8+ 14.♜f2 ♙c5+ 15.♜g3 ♞h5+

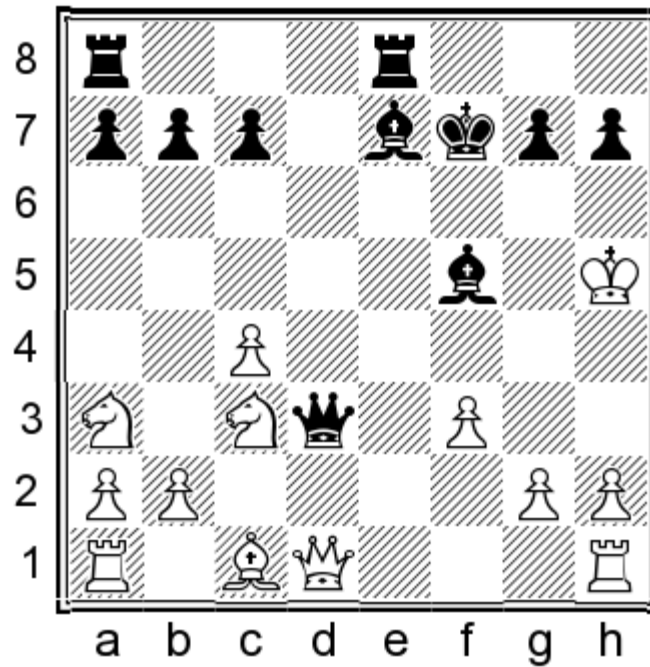


16. ♖h4 ♗e7+

The same theme as in the previous two games.

17. ♖xh5

17. ♗g5 ♗xg5+ 18. ♖xg5 ♖e3+ 19. ♖h4 ♖e7+ 20. ♖xh5 g6+ 21. ♖h6 ♖h4#.



17...g6+?

It is never easy to conclude winning positions. This natural move, which gives a check, could well have let the win slip.

It was necessary to insert 17...h6!!, which does not check, to force mate. White is helpless against the threat of 18...g6+ 19.♔xh6 ♖h8#.

18.♔h6

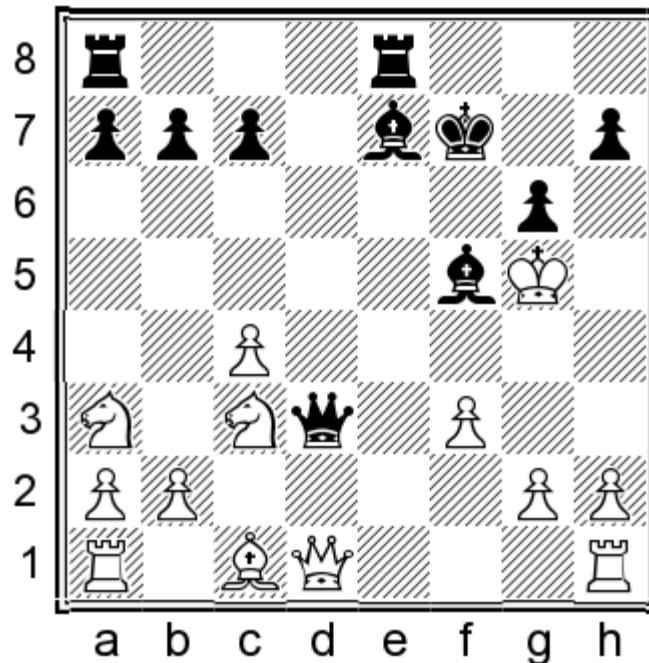
As incredible as it may seem with the white king on h6, there is no longer a forced mate! This is partly due to the fact that the black queen has no square to check from and that it cannot avoid being exchanged.

18...♕f8+ 19.♔g5

19.♔xh7?? ♕g7 and 20...♖h8 mate! A theme that we met in the previous game.

19...♕e7+

19...h6+ leads nowhere. 20.♔h4 ♕e7+ 21.♔g3 ♕d6+ 22.♔f2 ♕c5+ 23.♔g3 and Black has nothing better than a repetition of moves.



20.♔f4??

White did not see the danger and thought that this move also led to a perpetual check, but this is not the case.

He had to return to h6. After 20.♔h6 ♕xa3! (the only winning try) 21.♖xd3 ♕f8+ 22.♔g5 ♕xd3 Black retains very good compensation for the pawn (which he will undoubtedly recover, as the c4-pawn is attacked) thanks to the bishop pair, the centralized rooks and above all the very uncomfortable position of the white king on g5.

20...♕d6+ 21.♔g5 h6+!

With the bishop on d6 the situation is now completely different.

22.♔h4

22.♔xh6 ♖h8+ 23.♔g5 ♖h5#.

22...g5+

Here is the difference: the white king cannot come back to g3.

23.♙h5 ♜g6+ 24.♙xh6

24.♙g4 ♜f5#.

24...♜h8+ 25.♙xg5 ♜f5# 0–1

Game 30

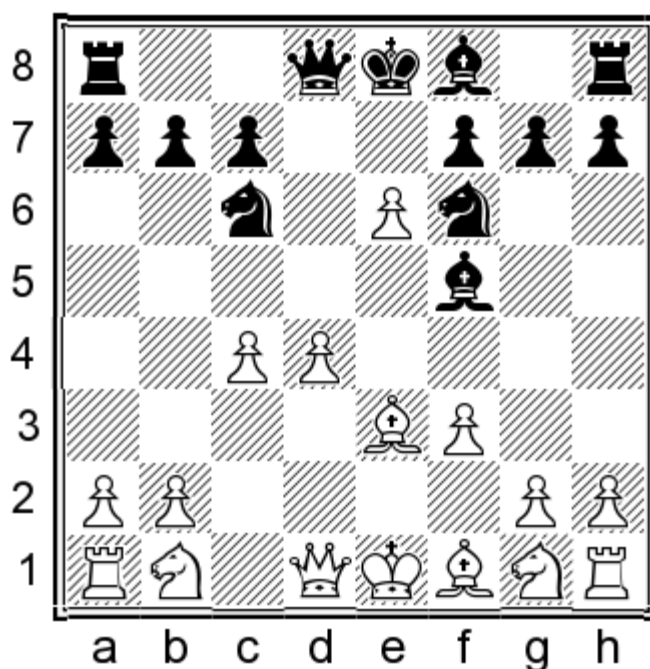
Wang Zili 2540

Rui Damaso 2415

Macau 1996

We meet our Portuguese hero from Game 14 once again.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♜g4 4.f3 ♜f5 5.c4 e6 6.dxe6 ♘c6 7.♙e3!



Much wiser than taking on f7. White protects the d-pawn and preventively closes the e-file, which is so dangerous when opened, as we saw in previous games.

7...♙b4+

We will see in the next game that 7...♙e7! is much stronger, so why have I kept this game? Firstly, because it is short and entertaining. It is always rare to see a grandmaster with an Elo over 2500 get mated in 13 moves. But mainly because this game – which caused a sensation at the time – is a kind of homage to one of the ‘fathers’ of the Portuguese Scandinavian.

8.♘c3?!

8.♙f2?! fxe6 9.g4?? led to another miniature from Damaso, played five years after this game, facing another

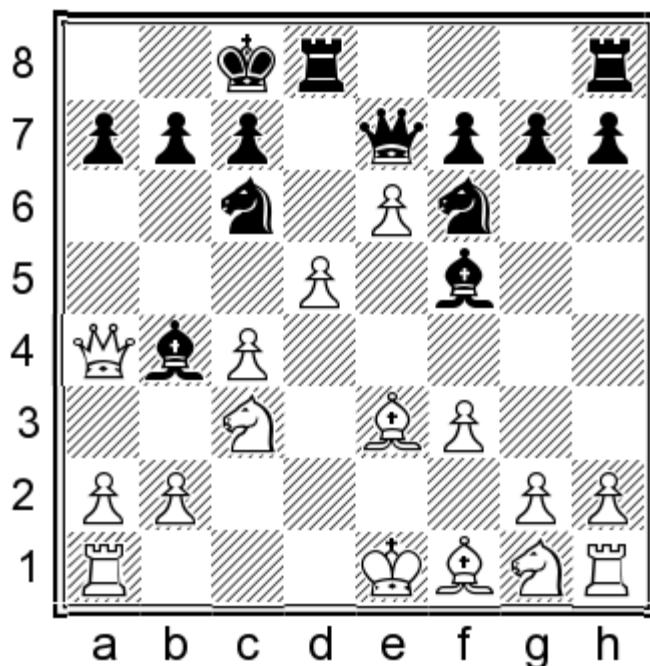
grandmaster rated above 2500 Elo: 9...♖xg4+! 10.♔e2 (10.fxg4 ♜h4+ 11.♔g2 ♚e4+ 12.♖f3 0-0-+) 10...♖xe3 11.♔xe3 e5! and 0-1 several moves later. Timoshenko-Damaso, European Club Cup, Panormo 2001. White had to play 8.♖d2! (the right move, and the reason we should prefer 7...♜e7) 8...fxe6 9.a3 ♚e7 10.♖e2 and Black has just enough compensation for his pawn less.

8...♜e7 9.d5

9.exf7+ ♔xf7 10.♜d2 ♜he8 11.♔f2 ♜ad8 gives Black too much play.

9...0-0 10.♜a4?

10.♜c1, unpinning the d5-pawn and therefore attacking the c6-knight, was preferable, even though Black retains a very strong initiative due to his lead in development.



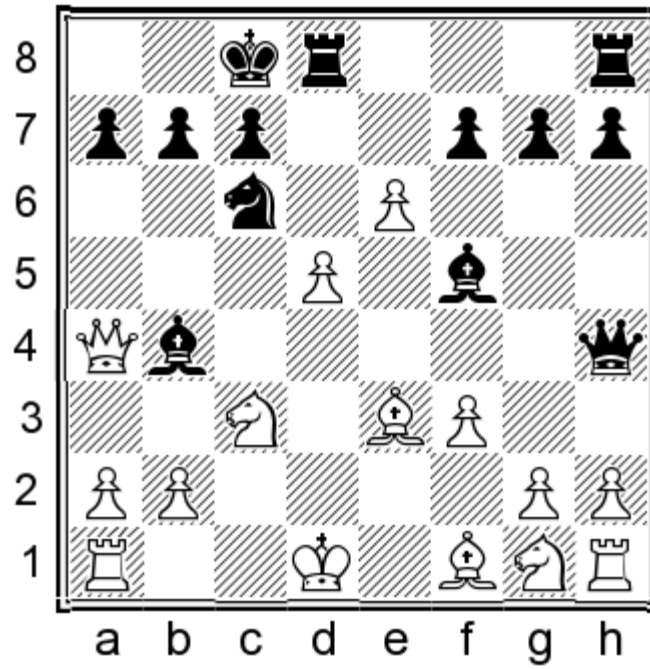
10...♖xd5! 11.cxd5 ♜h4+

A further consequence of the move f2-f3: the e1-h4 diagonal is weakened!

12.♔d1?

It is suicidal to go to the d-file where the black rook is already placed.

12.g3? was not possible because of 12...♚xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♜xa4. He had to play 12.♔e2, even if after 12...♖d4+ 13.♚xd4 ♜xd4 Black keeps a very strong attack. Once again we can see that the whole white kingside is still undeveloped and is not about to get out.



12...♖xd5+! 13.♘xd5

White shortens his suffering, but he was lost anyway: 13.♔e2 ♘d4+ 14.♙xd4 ♜xd4 15.♞d1 ♞e5+ 16.♘e4 ♞xe4+! 17.fxe4 ♜xe4+ 18.♔f2 ♙c5+--.

13...♜e1#

Game 31

Giorgi Sulashvili 2173

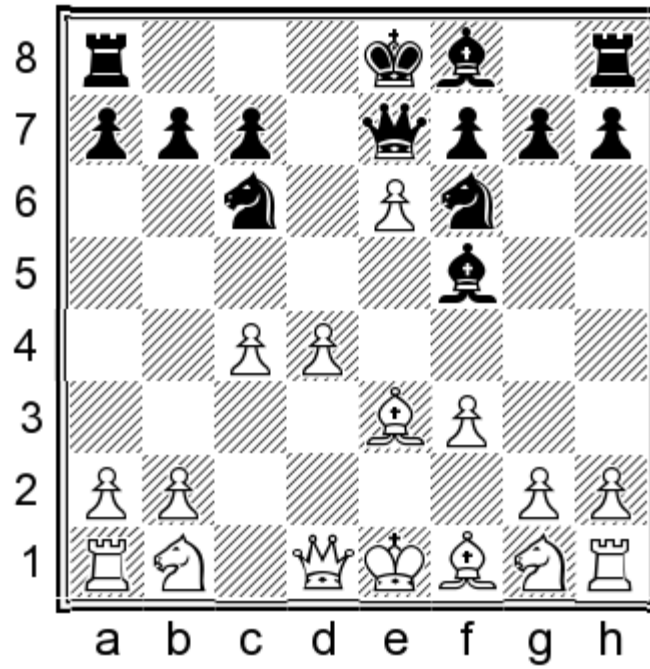
Matthieu Cornette 2144

Artek ol jr 2000

1.e4 d5

The 2016 French Champion frequently played the Scandinavian, and even sometimes the Portuguese Variation, in his youth. He was perhaps influenced by Grandmaster Éric Prié, one of France's leading Scandinavian Opening specialists, with whom he worked in the French team during the World Junior Championships in the early 2000s.

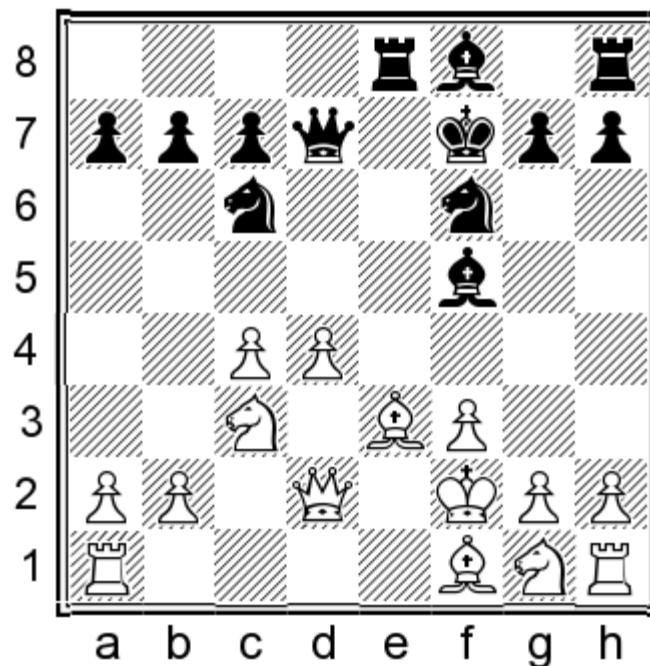
2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♙g4 4.f3 ♙f5 5.c4 e6 6.dxe6 ♘c6 7.♙e3 ♜e7!



A strange-looking move at first sight. The queen blocks the f8-bishop, but it immediately takes up position on the dangerous file. Even though this move has been played less than the alternative ...♙b4+, seen in the previous game, it is much better according to Smerdon. Thanks to the Australian grandmaster the trend should soon be reversed.

8.♘c3

8.exf7+ would fit into Black's plan and justify the move 7...♖e7. As always this capture gives Black a very strong initiative on the e-file: 8...♙xf7 9.♙f2 ♖e8 10.♖d2 ♖d7!. The queen leaves the field open to the rook, and the threat of ...♖xe3 is then on the agenda. Here is an example from the game Dworakowski-Moll, Groningen 1997: 11.♘c3



analysis diagram

11...♖xe3! (classic) 12.♔xe3 and now the move 12...g6 would have left White defenceless against the bishop check on h6 followed by the mobilization of the rook to e8. If 13.♕f2 then 13...♘xd4 followed by ...♙c5 leaves Black a very strong attack. As so often, the white kingside has not yet taken off.

8...0-0 9.♖d2

White decides to evacuate his king to the queenside. With the kingside completely congested due to the move f2-f3 it is difficult to envisage kingside castling in the near future.

After 9.♕f2 fxe6 10.♘ge2 ♘b4 11.♖d2 e5! White will have big problems completing his development.

Otherwise, 9.♘ge2? again gives Black a very strong initiative after 9...♘b4, due to the threat of the knight invading on c2 or d3.

9...♘b4 10.0-0

The white king has arrived at its destination, but the f5-bishop, piercing the queenside king position, is very threatening.

10...♖xe6 11.g4

11.a3? ♘c2 12.♙g5 ♘a1! is an amusing variation that perfectly illustrates the dangers on the b1-h7 diagonal. The threat of ...♘b3+ is unstoppable.

11...♙g6 12.g5?

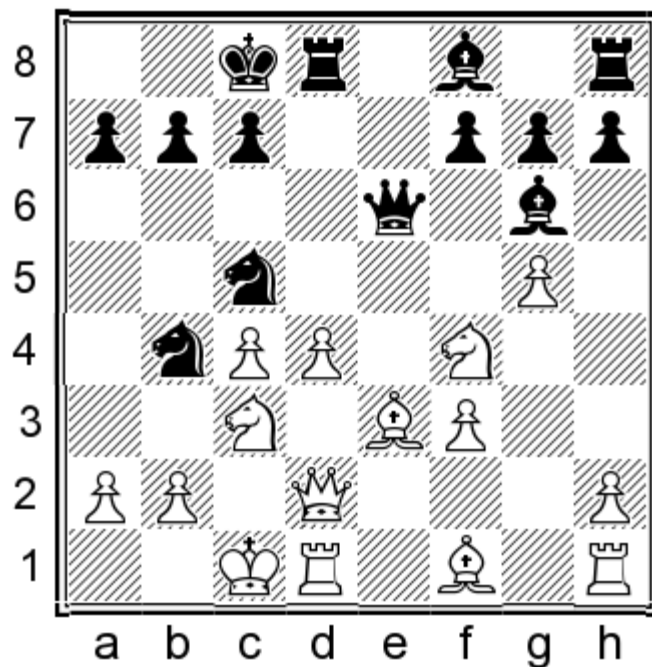
White completely neglects the development of his king's wing.

12...♘d7 13.♘h3?

The first kingside piece to appear, but it's too late! 13.♖f2 parries Black's immediate threat, but even so does not solve White's problems: 13...♘xa2+!! 14.♘xa2 ♖a6 15.♘c3 ♖a1+ 16.♔d2 ♖xb2+ 17.♔e1 ♖xc3+. The last straw. The white king has eventually returned to e1, and on this occasion he will not find any more shelter.

13...♘c5! 14.dxc5

White prefers to give his queen rather than be mated after 14.♘f4



analysis diagram

14...♖xa2+! 15.♗xa2 ♜b3#.

14...♖xd2 15.♗xd2?

15.♗xd2 only allows White to prolong the struggle a bit.

15...♜xa2+!

The theme of the game!

16.♗xa2 ♜f5

White resigned. Mate is unstoppable on c2 or b1.

Game 32

Camilla Kohi 1875

Salomé Neuhauser 1866

Le Grand Bornand ch-FRA jr 2007

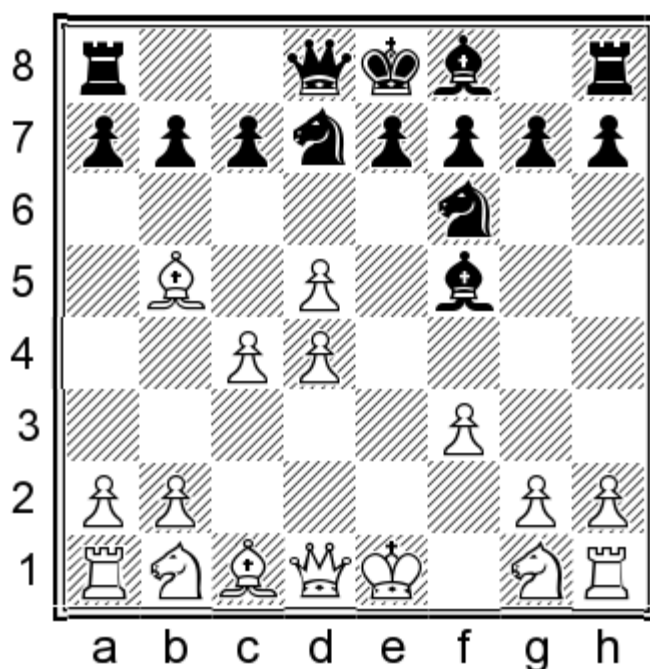
A few words to set the scene. We again find the Under 11 French Girls Champion one year after her game against Sophie Aflalo (Game 6), which we studied in the chapter on the Icelandic Gambit. Here Salomé once more bet on the Scandinavian for a decisive game in the last round against a direct rival. And once again she profited from the surprise effect, since the game against Sophie Aflalo had not been recorded in the databases.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♜f6 3.d4 ♗g4 4.♗b5+

A simple reversal of moves compared to the usual 4.f3 ♗f5 5.♗b5+.

4...♜bd7 5.f3 ♗f5 6.c4

The right way to cling on to the pawn. The light-squared bishop does not remain locked in on f1 and castling is easier.



6...a6!?

An important crossroads. Black has two alternatives, each as interesting as the other: 6...a6 and 6...e6. It is difficult to say with certainty which of these two moves is the best at the moment. Both are comparable in popularity: 414 games for 6...a6 in Mega Database 2017 and 475 for 6...e6 (against only one each for 6...c6? and 6...xb1?).

A very short head start for the move that we will study, then, but the tendency could soon be reversed thanks to Smerdon's book. Even though he has studied both variations thoroughly, the Australian grandmaster prefers the move 6...e6, which is, according to him, the choice of most strong players in the Portuguese. But even so he does not condemn the move 6...a6, which he considers a good surprise weapon.

I have personally selected 6...a6 as the main line in our repertoire for a very pragmatic reason: the theory is much less developed here than in the 6...e6 variation (Smerdon dedicates about 40 pages to this in his work), and there will consequently be far fewer main lines to be remembered. Another advantage in favour of the move 6...a6 is that it is more restrictive for White. By immediately posing a question to the b5-bishop Black obliges his opponent to make a decision straight away: either to exchange on d7 or to retreat to a4. Those who, for one reason or another, are not completely satisfied with the move 6...a6 can always turn to Smerdon's book.

7.♙xd7+

We will see the retreat 7.♙a4 in Game 34.

7...♖xd7 8.♘e2

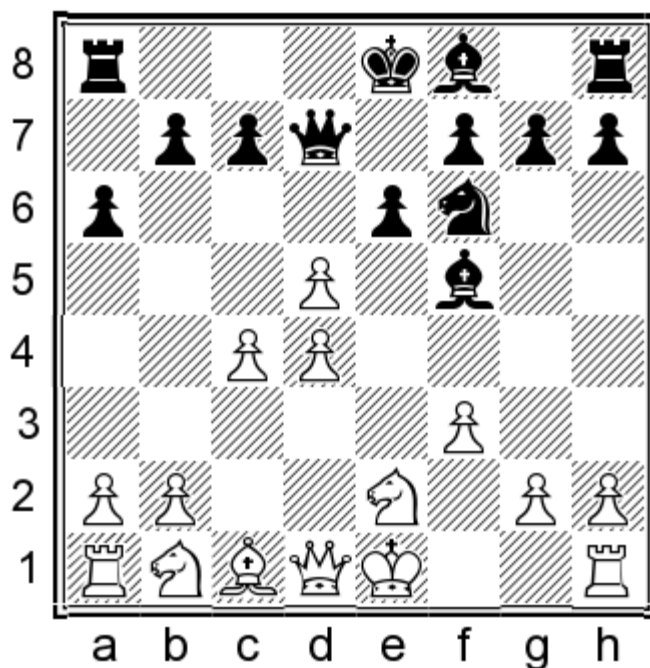
White must develop her kingside rapidly so that she can castle as soon as possible.

8.♘c3?! e6! (the standard reaction when White hangs on to the d5-pawn by c2-c4) 9.dxe6 ♖xe6+ 10.♖e2 0-0-0 11.♖xe6+ ♙xe6 12.d5 (the only move to protect the pawns on c4 and d4) 12...♙f5.

Black has the usual compensation: a lead in development, the insecurity of the white king on the open e-file, and the more active pieces. The f8-bishop will find a nice diagonal on c5 and the h8-rook will of course rush to the e-file. In the game Agrest-Mnatsakanyan, World Junior Championship 2008, White played the natural move 13.♙e3. After 13...♙d3

14.b3 Black could have obtained a very strong initiative by playing 14...b5! 15.cxb5 ♖b4 16.♗d2 ♜he8+ 17.♔f2 axb5. Black will restore the material balance by regaining the d5-pawn and will retain a big advantage, with all his pieces much better placed than their white counterparts.

8...e6!



We again find this move, which is by now quite customary, intending to open the centre as soon as possible in order to benefit from the development advantage.

9.dxe6 ♜xe6

In contrast to the variations that we examined at the beginning of this chapter, we are obviously obliged to recapture here, as the queen is attacked. The recapture by the bishop would be a further waste of time, since it would have moved successively to g4, f5 and then e6.

10.d5?!

This move seriously weakens the a7-g1 diagonal, as we shall see.

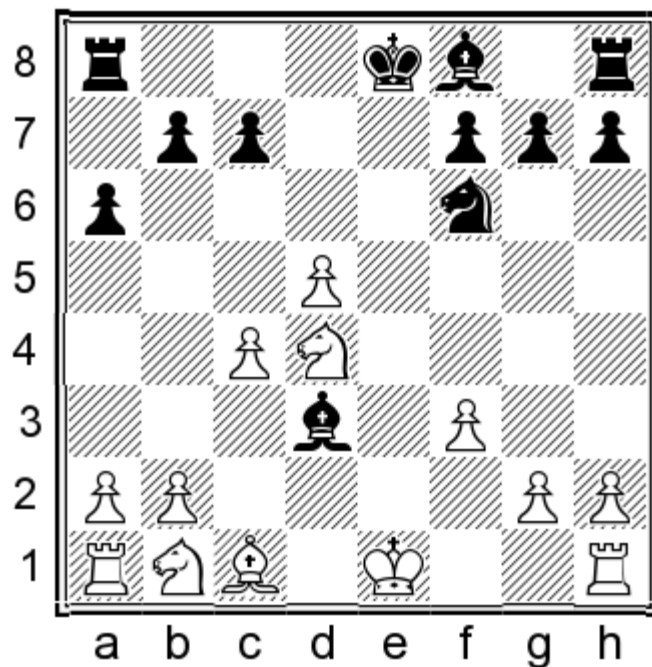
White can also protect the c4-pawn by playing 10.b3. This very natural and obvious move will be examined in the next game.

10...♜b6! 11.♜d4

White naturally offers the exchange of queens to weaken the pressure on the a7-g1 diagonal.

After 11.♞bc3 0-0-0 Black would have a dangerous initiative with moves like ...♗c5 (or ...♗b4) and ...♜he8. Once again the white king will struggle to find a safe haven.

11...♜xd4 12.♞xd4 ♗d3



Even without queens Black retains the initiative.

13.b3 ♖c5 14.♗b2?

14.♗e3 was preferable, so as not to leave the famous a7-g1 diagonal in Black's hands. After 14...c6 15.♘c3 (15.dxc6? 0-0-0! 16.cxb7+ ♜xb7 17.♙f5 ♗b4+ 18.♙f2 ♗xf5-+) 15...cxd5 16.cxd5 ♗g6 17.0-0 ♖d8 Black regains her pawn and is slightly better thanks to the bishop pair.

14...0-0-0 15.♙d2

15.♙a3 ♘xd5! 16.cxd5 ♖xd5 17.0-0-0 ♗xd4 18.♗xd4 ♖xd4. Even if White manages to exchange the rooks, the bishop will be superior to the knight in this position.

15...♗g6

15...♗xb1! gains the advantage. 16.♖axb1 ♘xd5! 17.cxd5 ♖xd5 18.♙d3 ♗xd4 19.♗xd4 ♖hd8. Black recovers the piece and stays a pawn up.

16.♘e2 ♖he8

How often in our Scandinavian does Black have his centralized rooks and active minor pieces, while White has a king in danger and his pieces still undeveloped? The pawn loss is more than compensated for.

17.♗xf6 gxf6 18.♘bc3 ♖e7

18...♗e3+! would have prevented White from connecting her rooks.

19.♖ae1 ♗f2 20.♖ef1 ♗e3+ 21.♙d1 ♖de8 22.♖e1 ♗f2 23.♖ef1 ♗c5 24.♘g3 ♖e3 25.♘ce4 ♗b4 26.♙f2 f5

26...♗b1! wins the queenside pawns. All the white pieces are tangled up on the other side.

27.f4 h5

White is completely tied up. She cannot oppose rooks on the e-file and her knights are dominated.

28.♔c2

28.♖hg1 h4 29.♘gh1 ♖e2 would have led to a disastrous tragicomic position for White.

28...h4

The g3-knight has no squares.

29.♘d3 ♙f8 30.♘e5 hxg3 31.♔d2 ♖e4 32.hxg3 ♙g7 33.♘xg6 fxg6 34.♖h7 ♖e2+ 35.♔d1 ♖xa2 36.♖f3 ♙d4 37.♖h6 ♙f2

White resigned.

He is obliged to give up another exchange to parry the mate, and therefore remains a rook down.

Game 33

Thi Hai Huyen Nguyen

Vincent Moret

Ho Chi Minh City 2015

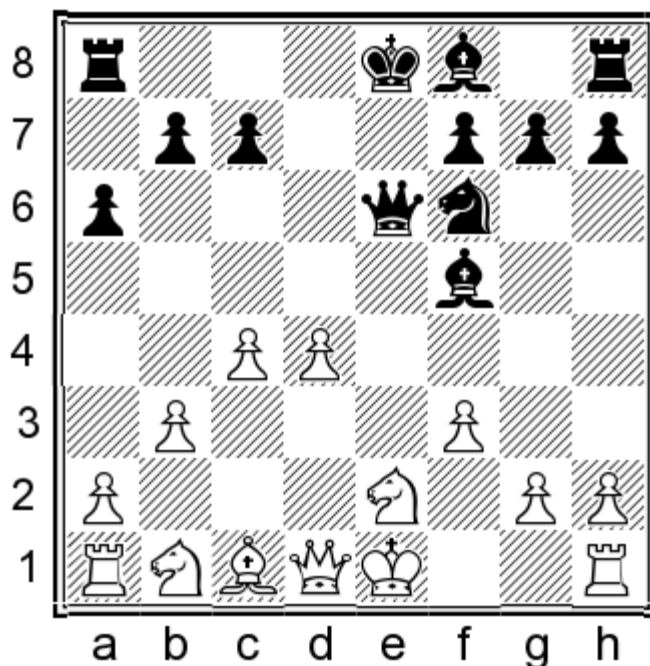
1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♙g4 4.♙b5+ ♘bd7 5.f3 ♙f5 6.c4 a6

When I began editing this book I had the opportunity to test one of the main variations, and at the same time some of Smerdon's recommendations, at the chessboard.

7.♙xd7+

Retreating the bishop to a4 is also possible. We will look at this in the next game.

7...♖xd7 8.♘e2 e6! 9.dxe6 ♖xe6 10.b3!



This move is considered by theory to be the main line.

10...0-0-0

As so often in the Scandinavian. The pressure on the d-file and the d4-pawn is already real.

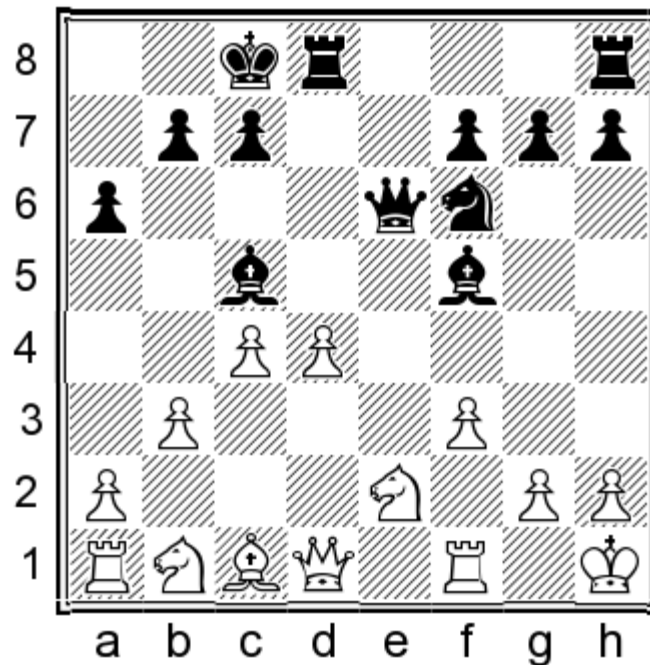
11.0-0 ♖c5!

Increasing the pressure on the d-pawn, which is doubly pinned: by the rook on the d-file and by the bishop on the a7-g1 diagonal.

12.♗h1

To remove the king from the a7-g1 diagonal, and eliminate at least one of the two pins.

12.♘bc3 allowed 12...♔e5!. An original position, with two black pieces that have voluntarily put themselves *en prise* to the d4-pawn in order to capture it.



12...♜he8!

12...♙xd4?! has long been the main move, but today it has completely fallen out of favour. Black certainly recovers his pawn thanks to a small combination – 13.♘xd4 ♔d7 14.♙b2 c5 – but after 15.♘a3! cxd4 16.c5! followed by the arrival of the knight on c4, Black is much worse.

13.♘bc3 h6!

The move recommended by Smerdon, which is intended to hinder the development of the c1-bishop. Opposite-side castling and his more active pieces ensure Black adequate compensation for his pawn deficit.

14.♘f4

In the game Mallahi-Laylo, Manila 2008, White tried to fianchetto his bishop: 14.♙b2?!, but this move abandons control of the e3-square, already weakened by the f2-f3 move. After 14...♔e3 15.♔c1 ♙b4 16.♔xe3 ♜xe3 Black has good

compensation thanks to his bishop pair and control of the e-file. He won at move 41. Darwin Laylo is a young Filipino grandmaster. Along with the Russian grandmaster Sergei Krivoshey and of course David Smerdon, he is one of the three grandmasters to regularly play the Portuguese Scandinavian at the highest level. A name to remember, certainly, for all lovers of this variation.

14.d5 would certainly solve the problem of the d4-pawn, but would, in exchange, dangerously – and above all unnecessarily – lengthen the diagonal of the c5-bishop. After 14...♞e7 Black would have good attacking prospects by advancing his g- and h-pawns towards the white king.

14...♞c6 15.d5?!

A natural move, but one which has the same disadvantage as in the previous note.

15.♘fd5 was played in the game Puljek Salai-Stadler, Croatia tt 1998, and should be considered better than the text move. However, after 15...♘xd5 16.♘xd5 (16.cxd5 ♞f6!?) 16...♙d6 Black keeps adequate compensation according to Smerdon.

15...♞d6 16.♘d3 ♙d4 17.♙b2?

This weakens the e3-square just as in the Mallahi-Laylo game.

17.♙f4 was preferable, even if after 17...♞d7 18.♞c1 ♘h5 Black already has the better prospects.

17...♞e3

Black suddenly has a very menacing position. The bishop pair, in particular, is very strong.

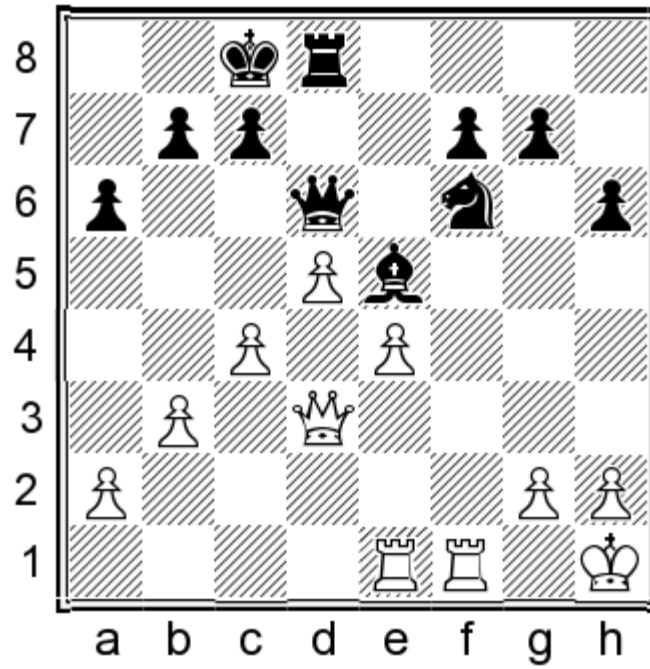
18.♘e4

White returns his extra pawn to eliminate the pair of black bishops and relieve the pressure.

18...♙xe4 19.fxe4 ♞xd3!

This small combination, which wins two pieces for a rook, is better than simply regaining the e4-pawn.

20.♞xd3 ♙xb2 21.♞ae1 ♙e5



Thanks to the e5-square the two black minor pieces are much stronger than the white rook and pawn.

22.g3 h5 23.♞c1

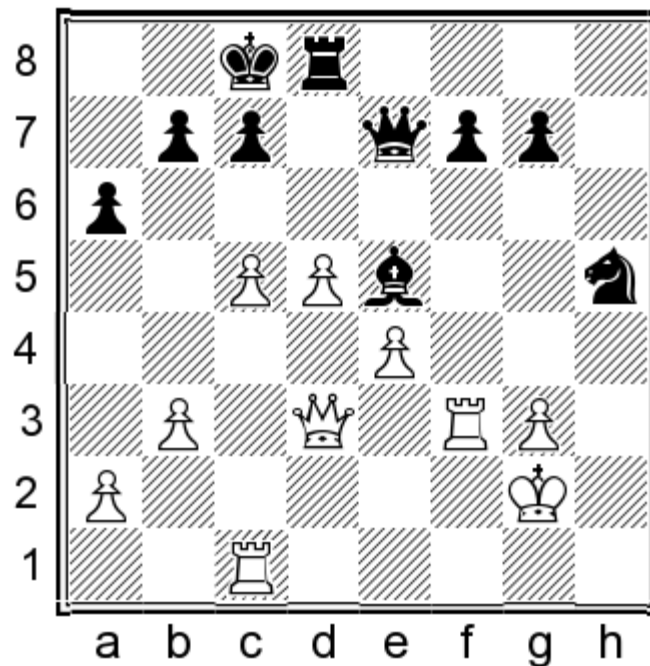
The white counter-attack is too slow compared with the black attack on the king's wing.

23...h4 24.c5 ♞e7 25.♔g2 hxg3 26.hxg3 ♘h5

Pressing against the weakness on g3.

27.♞f3

27.g4?? ♘f4+--.



27...♙xg3!

A new combination that wins the game.

28.d6

A) 28.♞xg3? ♜f4+–+;

B) 28.♞cf1 perhaps allows a little more resistance, but does not save White.

28...♞g5 29.♞cf1

As the rook was attacked the white king could not escape the discovered check.

29...♙xd6+ 30.♚h1 ♙xc5

The dark-squared bishop has returned to the tremendous a7-g1 diagonal after having captured a bishop and three pawns. It is difficult to ask for more.

31.♞c3 ♞h4+

31...♜f4! mates more quickly.

32.♞h3 ♞xe4+ 33.♞f3 ♜g3+!

To allow the d8-rook to participate in the party on the h-file.

34.♞xg3

34.♜g2 ♞d2+ 35.♜xg3 ♙d6+ and mate follows.

34...♞h8+ 35.♜g2 ♞c2+ 36.♞f2 ♙xf2

The devastating bishop concludes the game by eating another rook.

37.♞xf2 ♞h2+! 0–1

After the game I analyzed with my friendly opponent, and in particular I explained to him that the retreat of the bishop to a4 on the seventh move has a better reputation than the exchange on d7. By a funny coincidence I faced him again a week later in a rapid game.

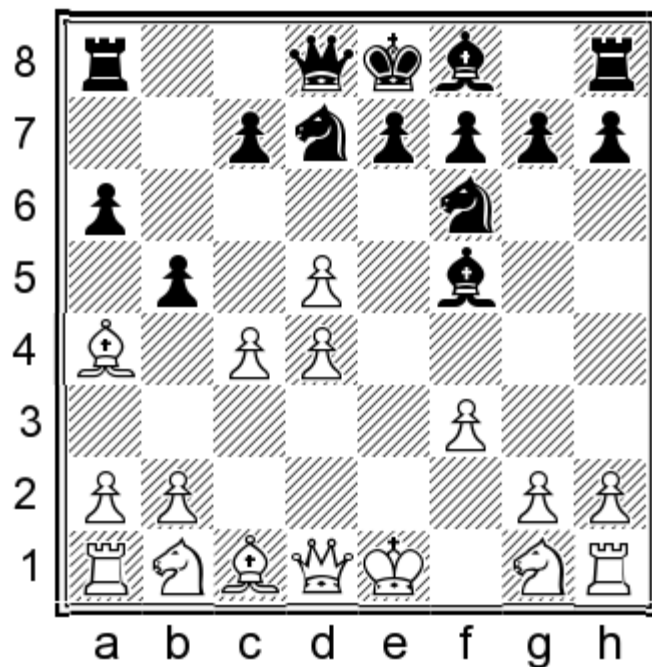
Game 34

Thi Hai Huyen Nguyen

Vincent Moret

Ho Chi Minh City 2015

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♜f6 3.d4 ♙g4 4.♙b5+ ♜bd7 5.f3 ♙f5 6.c4 a6 7.♙a4 b5!



A move in the spirit of the Benko Gambit (1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5!). Black gets rid of his queenside pawns to open the a- and b-files. On top of that, he undermines the support of the d5-pawn, which he will then be able to recover.

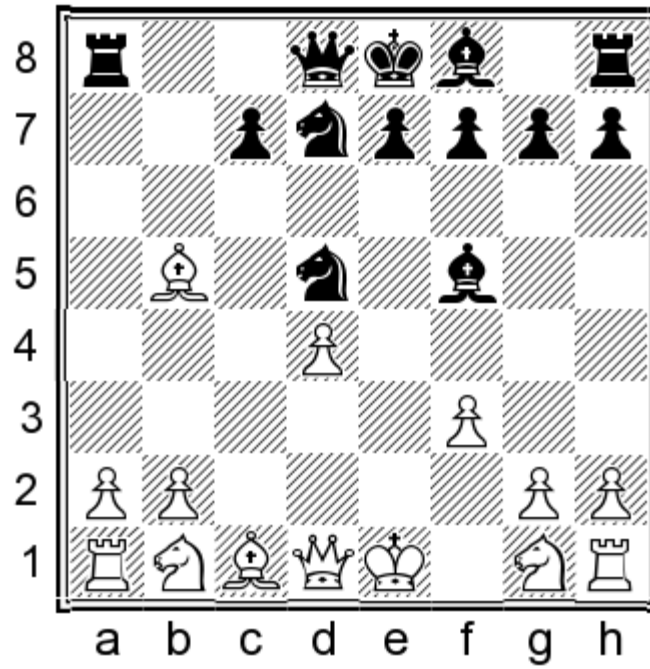
8.cxb5 axb5!?

Another recommendation from Smerdon that I had discovered shortly before this game.

More popular, but not necessarily better, is 8...♗xd5 9.bxa6 ♖xa6 and Black has good compensation thanks to his lead in development, pressure on the queenside, and the strong square on d5 for his knight.

9.♙xb5 ♘xd5

Smerdon stops his analysis here by qualifying the position as complicated with chances for both sides. Black undoubtedly has compensation, thanks to the a- and b- files and the lead in development.



10. ♖e2

10. ♕c6? was not possible because of 10... ♖b4 11. ♕xa8 ♘c2+ 12. ♖f2 ♙xa8 and Black will have a big advantage after taking the ♖a1.

10... ♖b4 11. 0-0

11. ♕a4? ♙xa4! 12. ♙xa4 ♘c2+ gives Black a clear advantage.

11... e6

Black should not rush to play the obvious fork on c2: 11... ♘c2? 12. ♖g3 ♕g6 13. f4 and the threat of f4-f5 is very unpleasant.

12. ♖bc3 c6 13. ♕c4 ♕c2 14. ♙e1

In view of what follows the d2-square was probably better for the queen, although it does not seem appealing. On e1 there will be threats of a knight fork on c2.

14... ♖b6 15. b3

The bishop has no retreat squares. The b3-square was not possible, of course, because of the unprotected position of the a1-rook.

15... ♖xc4 16. bxc4 ♕d3

Owing to the threat of ... ♘c2 Black recovers his pawn and keeps the more active pieces.

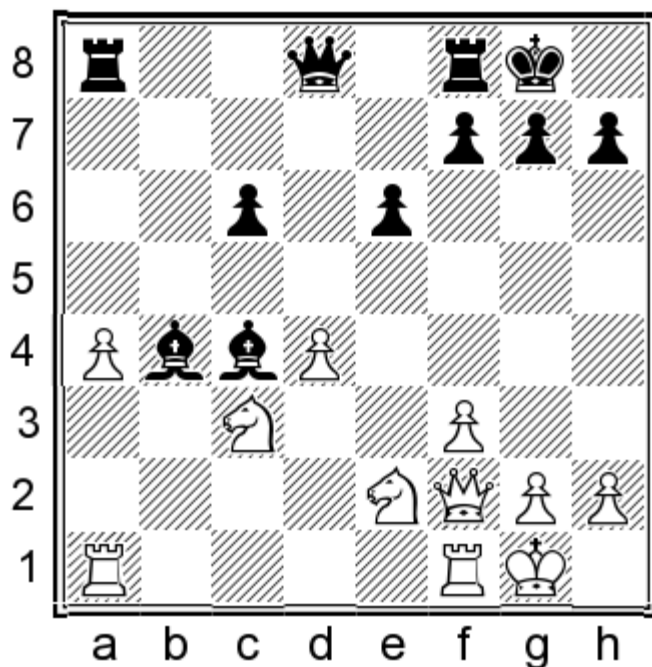
17. ♙f2 ♕xc4 18. a4 ♕d6 19. ♕a3

The c1-bishop does not have that many other possibilities to develop: 19. ♕f4?? ♘d3+.

19...0-0 20.♙xb4

A more or less forced exchange. Otherwise, the knight will threaten to invade the white camp on c2 or d3.

20...♙xb4



Black now has a good advantage thanks to his pair of bishops, which totally dominate the knights. In addition to this the a4- and d4-pawns represent two serious weaknesses.

21.♖fd1 ♗a5 22.♜e3 ♖fd8 23.♝ac1 c5!

To open the a7-g1 diagonal. We saw in the previous game the weakness of this diagonal caused by the move f2-f3, especially when the black bishop is still there and its white counterpart has been exchanged.

24.♘e4 ♙xe2 25.♜xe2 cxd4 26.♝a1 ♝ac8 27.♜b5

White seeks salvation in a possible exchange of queens, but it is not enough.

27...♜xb5 28.axb5

The b5-pawn will fall and the ensuing endgame will, of course, be winning for Black.

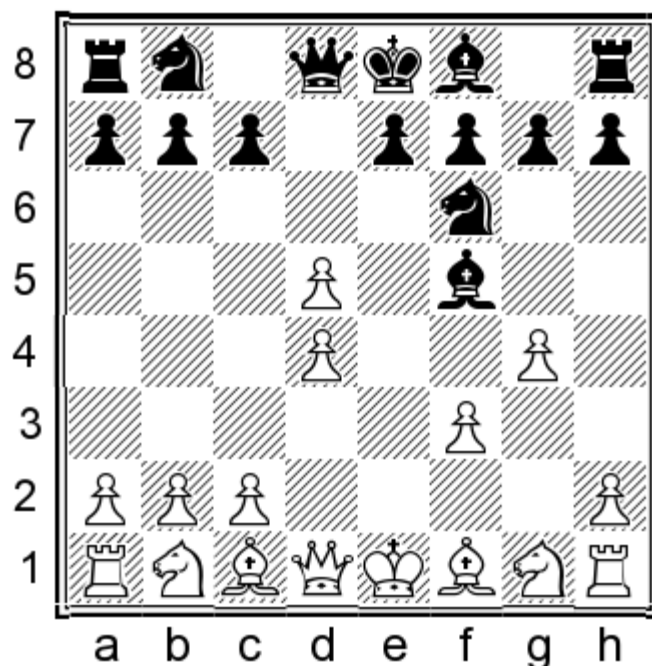
28...♝b8 29.♘f2 ♝xb5 30.♘d3 ♙c3 31.♝a7 ♝db8 32.f4 h6 33.g3 ♝b1 34.♝xb1 ♝xb1+ 35.♔f2 ♝d1 36.♘e5 d3 37.♘xf7??

A blunder in a losing position.

37.♝d7 would not change the result: 37...d2 38.♘f3 ♝h1 39.♘xd2 ♝xh2+–+.

37...♙d4+ 0–1

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♙g4 4.f3 ♙f5 5.g4!?



A system that is still relatively rare (only 49 games in Mega Database 2016, against 279 for 5.c4 and 546 for 4.♙b5+), but it is the most dangerous against the Portuguese Scandinavian according to Smerdon.

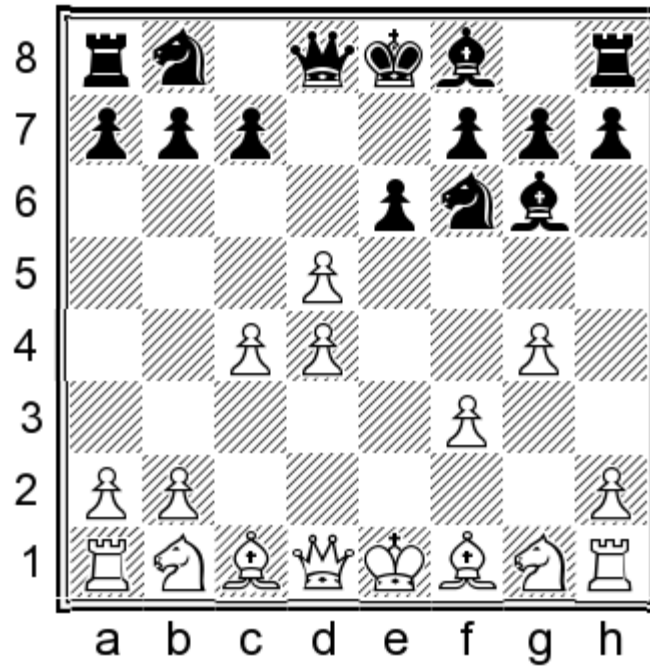
5...♙g6

Since the move ...e7-e6 has not yet been played and the d8-h4 diagonal is not open (see the note to the sixth move in Game 27), 5...♘xg4? would give nothing at all.

6.c4!

The forced complement to g2-g4. White holds on to the pawn after deflecting the black bishop from the c8-h3 diagonal. After 6.♙b5+ Black can play 6...♘bd7 and get a position similar to those of the previous three games, with the addition of the move g2-g4 (it is far from clear that this is a useful move for White), or try his luck with the interesting gambit 6...c6!?, which Smerdon tested in blitz against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. The French No. 1 eventually prevailed after having a lost position.

6...e6!



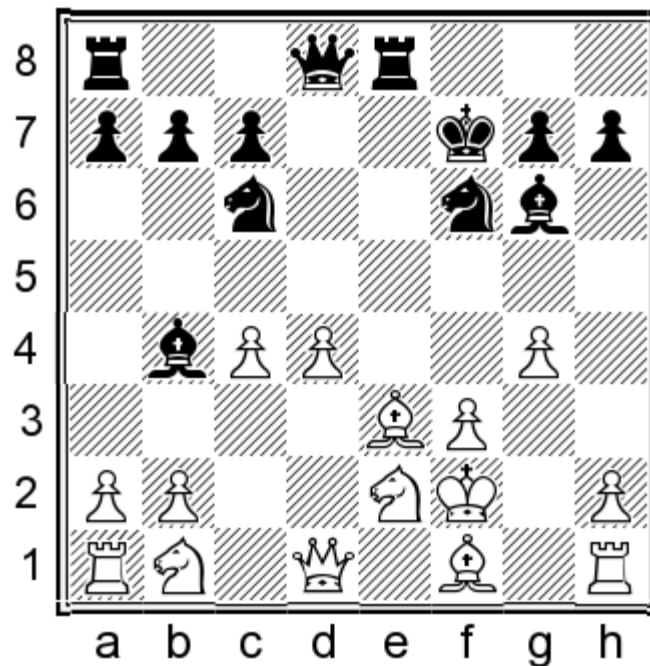
Anyway! The usual recipe works here as well.

7.dxe6?

If there is a refutation of the Portuguese Variation it may involve the 5.g4 move, but certainly not with this follow-up. White has made seven consecutive pawn moves. This is far too many.

He had to play 7.♘c3, as we will see in the next game.

7...♘c6! 8.exf7+? ♔xf7 9.♙e3 ♙b4+ 10.♔f2 ♖e8 11.♘e2



11...♖xe3!

We again see the themes from Game 28. The extra g2-g4 move only causes further weakness.

12.♔xe3 ♖xg4+! 13.fxg4 ♜f6!

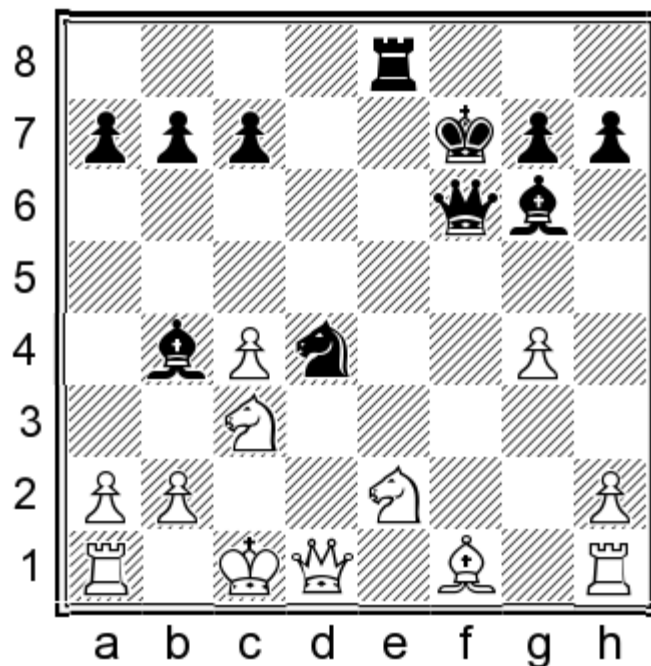
To let the black rook go to e8.

14.♖bc3

14.♖f4 ♜e8+ 15.♔f3 ♖xd4+ 16.♔g3 ♜e3+ 17.♔g2 ♜e4+ with a quick mate. Absolutely all the black pieces participate in the attack, while, during this time, five of the six white pieces are still on their starting squares.

14...♜e8+ 15.♔d2 ♖xd4 16.♔c1

16.♖xd4?? ♜f4 mate!



16...♜xe2!

The young French Under-10 champion concludes cleanly.

17.♜xe2

17.♖xe2 ♜g5+ and mate to follow.

17...♜f4+ 18.♜d2 ♖xe2+ 19.♔d1 ♖xc3+ 20.bxc3 ♜f3+ 21.♜e2 ♜xh1+ 22.♔d2 ♜xa1

White resigned.

Black has picked up the two white rooks which, as so often in the games we have seen so far, have not even moved.

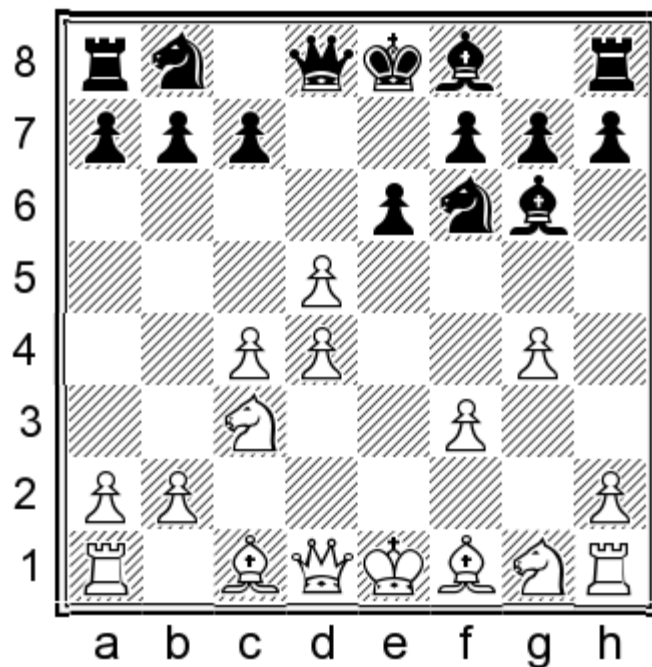
Game 36

Thi Hai Huyen Nguyen

Vincent Moret

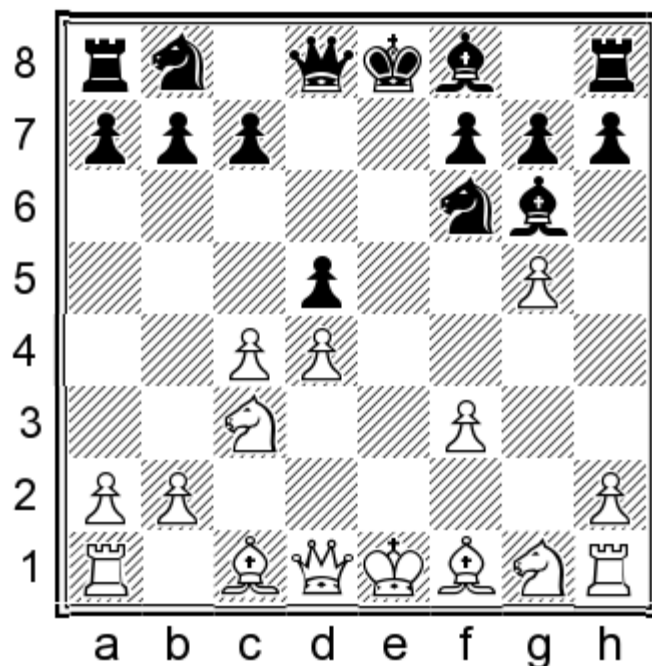
A few days after Game 34 I again met my Vietnamese opponent for some friendly practice games with the Scandinavian.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♞f6 3.d4 ♟g4 4.f3 ♟f5 5.g4 ♟g6 6.c4 e6 7.♞c3!



It is this critical position (for this variation) in particular that I had suggested playing with my opponent.

7...exd5 8.g5



The whole idea of the moves g2-g4 and ♞c3. With this sequence of moves White will be able to capture the d5-pawn with his knight.

8...♖g8!?

So far the very meagre theory on this variation (Anderson devotes only a very small paragraph to the 5.g4 move) had only considered the moves 8...♖fd7 and 8...♖h5. The text move is a recommendation from Smerdon that had never yet been tested (at least there are no games in the databases). The idea of 8...♖g8 is to come back out immediately on e7.

9.♗xd5 ♘e7 10.♗xe7

After 10.♔e2 c6 11.♗xe7 ♘xe7 the white queen is misplaced on e2, especially after Black castles kingside next move.

10...♘xe7 11.h4 ♗c6 12.♘e3

After having played eight pawn moves since the beginning of the game, White finally brings out a piece.

12.d5 (a ninth pawn move!) is weak: 12...♖b4 and the threat of checking on c2 is very unpleasant.

12...0-0

Black has good compensation for the pawn less. White is way behind in development and his king will struggle to find a safe place to hide.

13.a3

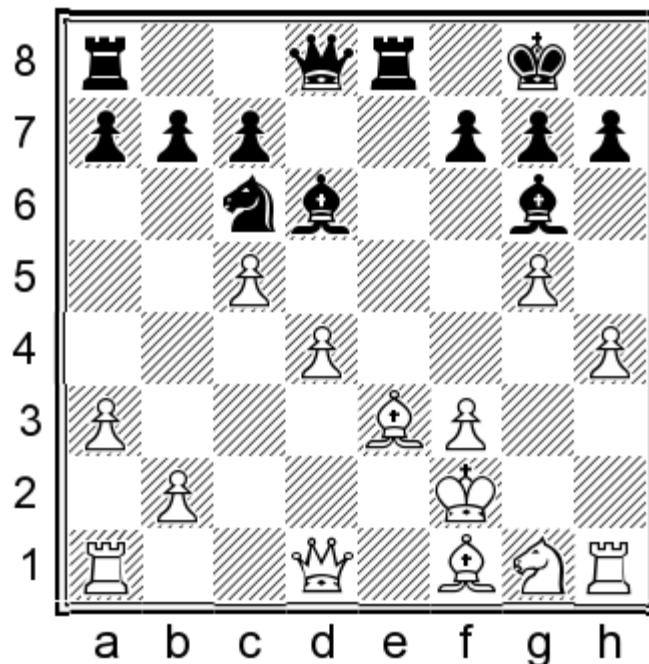
To prevent 13...♖b4, but this further accentuates the lack of development.

13...♞e8 14.♕f2 ♘d6

Creating a small tactical threat...

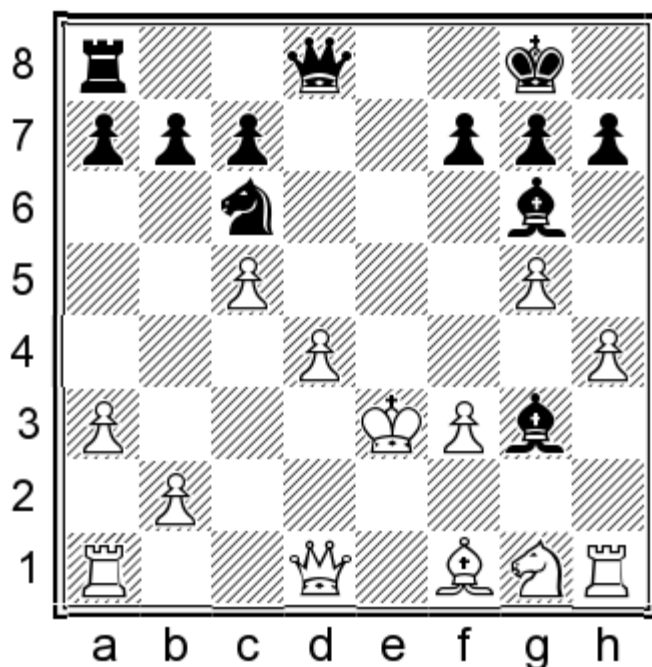
15.c5?

... that White does not see. He had to play 15.♗e2 ♔e7 16.♘d2 ♞ad8, even if Black retains a dangerous initiative which easily compensates for the pawn deficit.



15...♙g3+?!

I played the little combination that I had in mind, but the thematic 15...♖xe3! was much stronger – a move that will not surprise anyone who has studied the previous game (or numerous others in this book): 16.♔xe3 (16.cxd6 does not lose by force, but leaves White with a pathetic position after 16...♖e6 17.dxc7 ♜xc7) 16...♙g3!!.



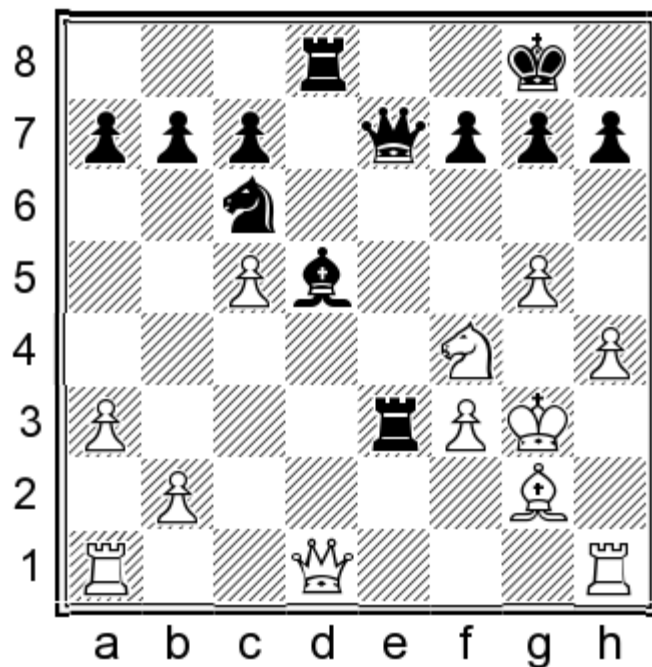
analysis diagram

A powerful move that I had not seen at all when I considered 15...♖xe3. This is why I rejected the exchange sacrifice. White is defenceless against the threat of 17...♜e7+. An example: 17.♘e2 ♜e7+ 18.♔d2 ♜d8 19.♔c1 ♜xd4! with mate after 20.♘xd4 ♙f4+ 21.♞d2 ♜e1#.

16.♔xg3 ♖xe3 17.♘e2 ♜e7 18.♘f4 ♜d8 19.d5

White had no other option to defend the d-pawn: 19.♘e2 ♘xd4! 20.♘xd4 ♜e5+--.

19...♙e4 20.♙g2 ♙xd5



Black has recovered his pawn and still has a very strong initiative. The white king is not safe.

21. ♖a4?

21. ♖e1 allows more resistance, but Black keeps an attack after 21... ♘d4!.

21... ♙b3

21... ♙xf3! 22. ♙xf3 ♖d4 23. ♗b5 ♖xf3+ led to mate: 24. ♙xf3 ♗e4+ 25. ♙g3 ♗xf4+ 26. ♙h3 ♗f3+ 27. ♙h2 ♖d2+.

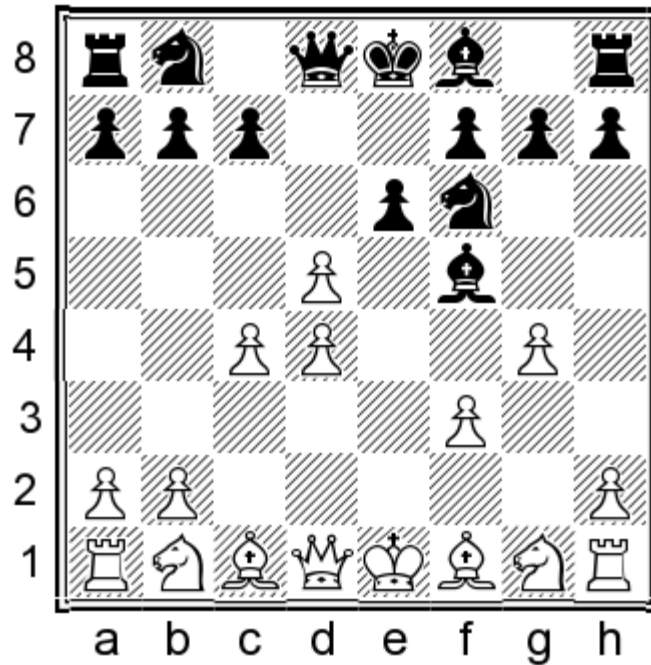
22. ♗b5 ♗e5 23. ♗xb7 ♖d4 24. ♗a8+ ♘d8 0-1

We will conclude our study of the Portuguese with this game. In the last two chapters we shall go through the white alternatives that try to avoid the main lines of the Scandinavian. Within the limited scope of this book we cannot afford to go further.

Those who would like to explore the subject even more can, of course, refer to Smerdon's book. This book dedicates almost 250 pages just to the Portuguese, of which more than half concern the variation with 4.f3. There are numerous new ideas that have never been played before and are just waiting to be tested in practice.

Your move!

25



White has just played 6.g4?. How does Black immediately refute this weakening move?

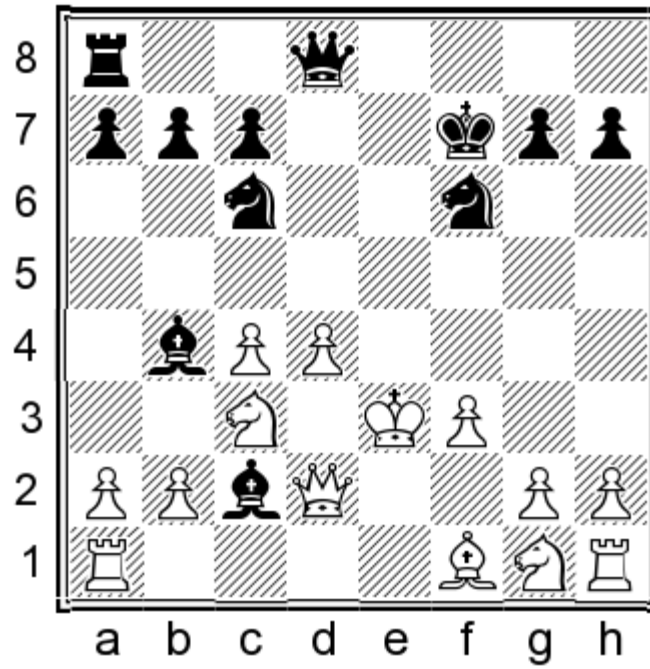
Show/Hide the Solution

6... ♖xg4!! 7.fxg4 ♔h4+

and Black has some very strong threats that will allow him to recover the material.

(See Game 27, **Novruzova-Neuhauser**)

26



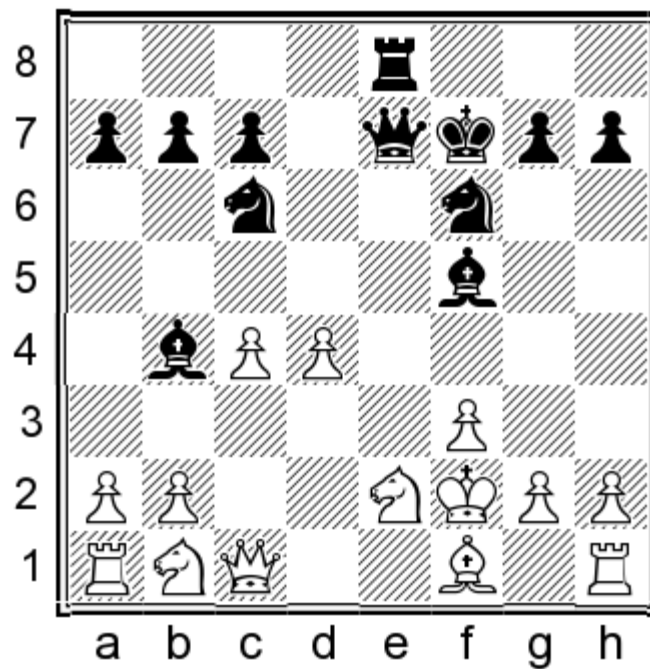
The white king is in the forefront. How does Black attract him into a mating net?

Show/Hide the Solution

12... ♖g4+!! 13. ♕f4 ♜d6+! 14. ♕xg4 ♜f5+!!

and the white king will be mated.

(See Game 27, Novruzova-Neuhauser)



Black has already sacrificed an exchange to uncastle the white king. How does he give his attack a second wind?

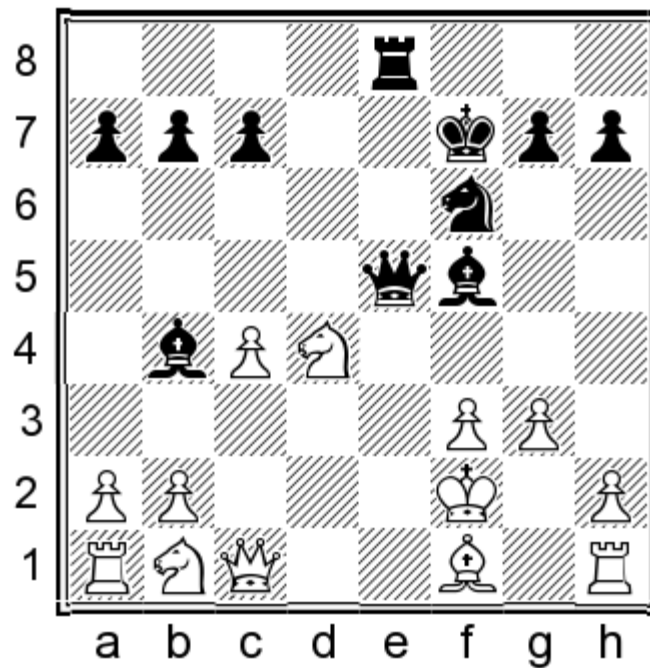
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13...♘xd4!! 14.♗xd4 ♔e5!!

when Black gets a very strong attack.

(See Game 28, **Gehin-Georget**)

28



Black to move. What is the most accurate move to conclude the attack?

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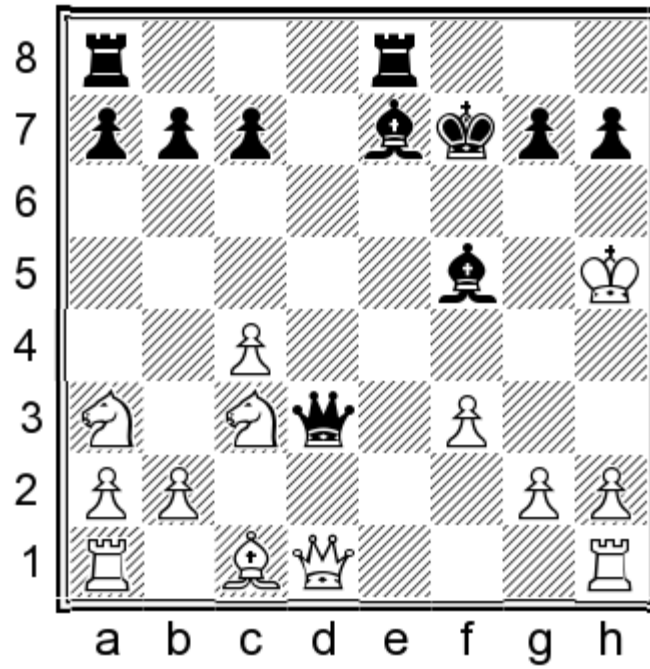
15...♕h3!!

and the white king will be mated after

16.♕xh3 ♖xd4+

(See Game 28, **Gehin-Georget**)

29



Black to play and mate. With a white king on h5 it's hardly a surprise.

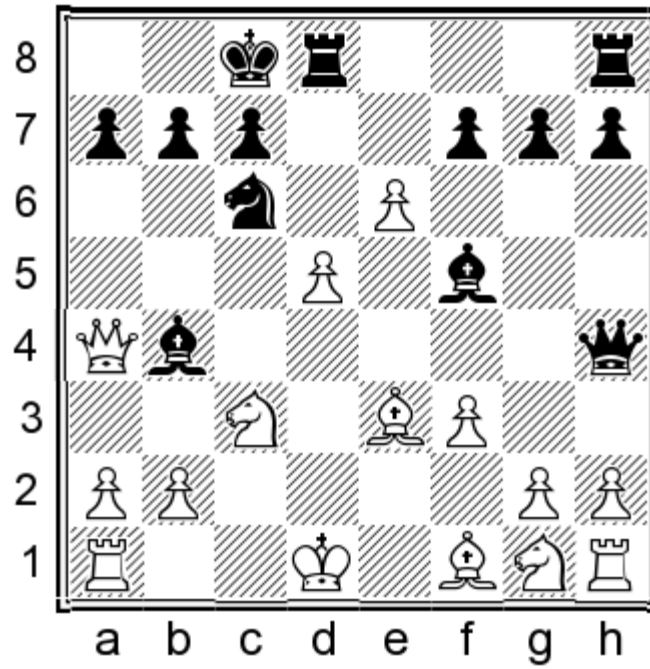
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17...h6!!

and White can no longer counter the threat of

18...g6+ 19.♔xh6 ♚h8#

(See Game 29, **Ribeiro-Ciccoli**)

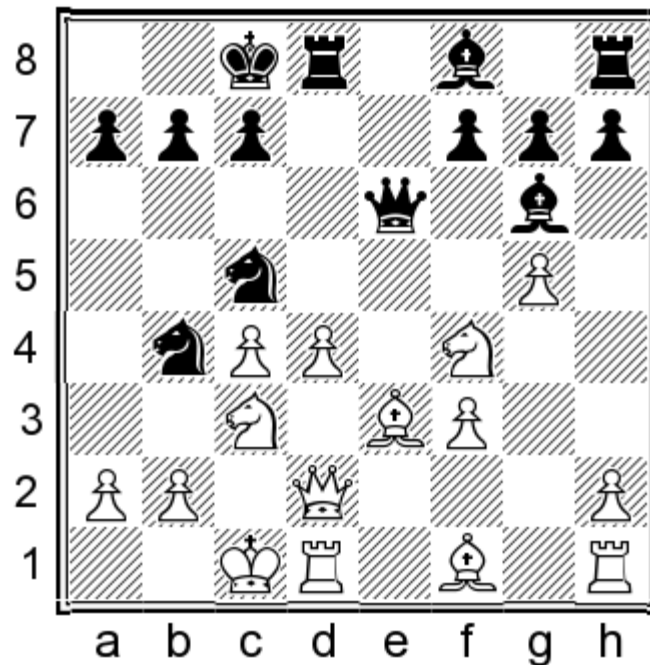


How does Black take advantage of the king-rook opposition on the d-file?

Show/Hide the Solution

12...♖xd5+!

(See Game 30, Wang Zili-Damaso)



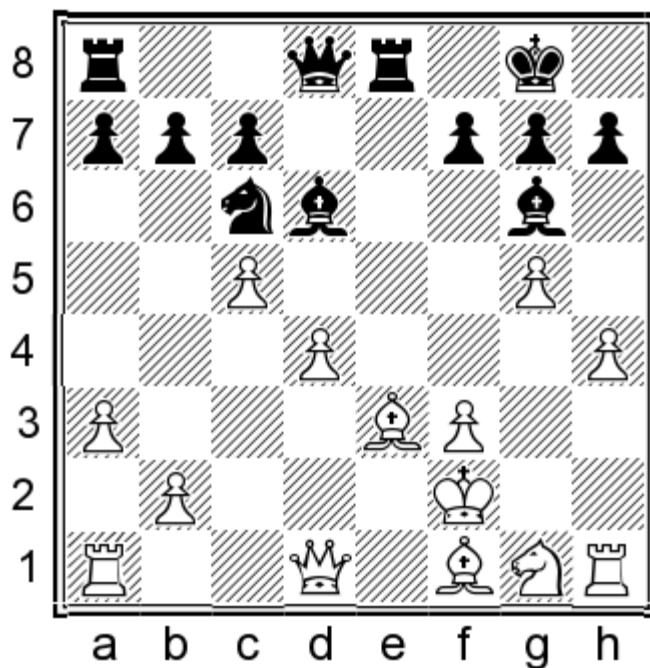
Black to move. Mate in two moves.

Show/Hide the Solution

14...♖xa2+! 15.♗xa2 ♕b3#

(See Game 31, **Sulashvili-Cornette**)

32



White has just played 15.c5 to attack the d6-bishop. What is the most energetic black reaction?

Show/Hide the Solution

15...♖xe3!

Stronger than 15...♗g3+.

15...♖xe3! 16.♔xe3 ♗g3!!

(See Game 36, **Nguyen-Moret**)

Chapter 6

The Modern Variation

Game 37

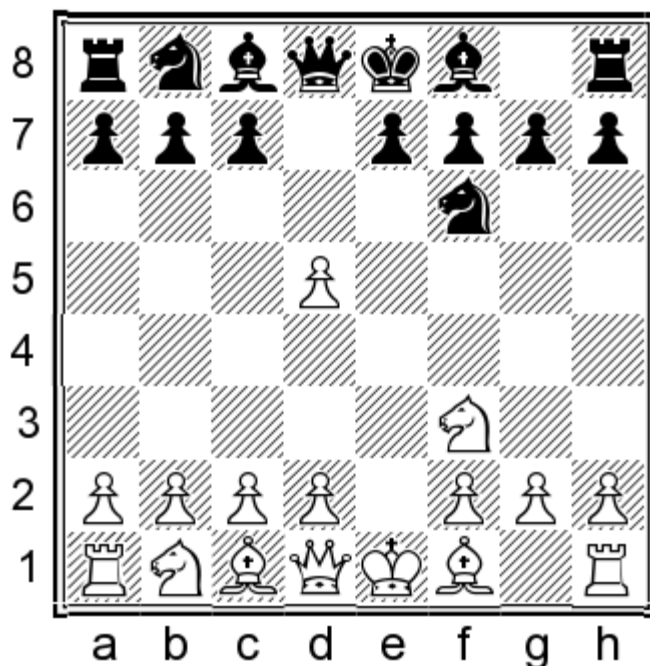
Alexandr Fier 2620

Nicolas Hornet

Nancy 2016

We again find Nicolas, the young boy of about ten years old, who we met in the introduction to the first volume of this book. At the time that he first began to play chess he learned the names of all the openings and their first moves, which he had picked up here and there without really understanding them. A year later he had developed a real repertoire that he studied in a methodical way, focusing on understanding rather than learning by heart, and he obviously made a lot of progress. Here he is facing his first grandmaster in a simultaneous display.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.♘f3



The Scandinavian variation known as ‘modern’. This move order, where White defers playing d2-d4, poses big problems to Portuguese fans.

3...♙g4

Black stays in the spirit of the Portuguese Variation. However, he could deviate by playing 3...♙xd5 and transpose, after 4.♘c3 ♙a5, into Scandinavian main lines that we will not cover here.

4.♙e2 ♙xd5 5.0-0 ♘c6 6.d4

Oddly enough, the grandmaster does not take advantage of this move order, which he could do by deferring the central thrust and immediately attacking the black queen by 6.♘c3. We will see the benefit of this move order in the next game. After the text move we transpose back into the Classical Variation, which we analyzed in some detail in Chapter 4. Obviously this game could have been put there, but I preferred to place it here, mainly because of its move order, but

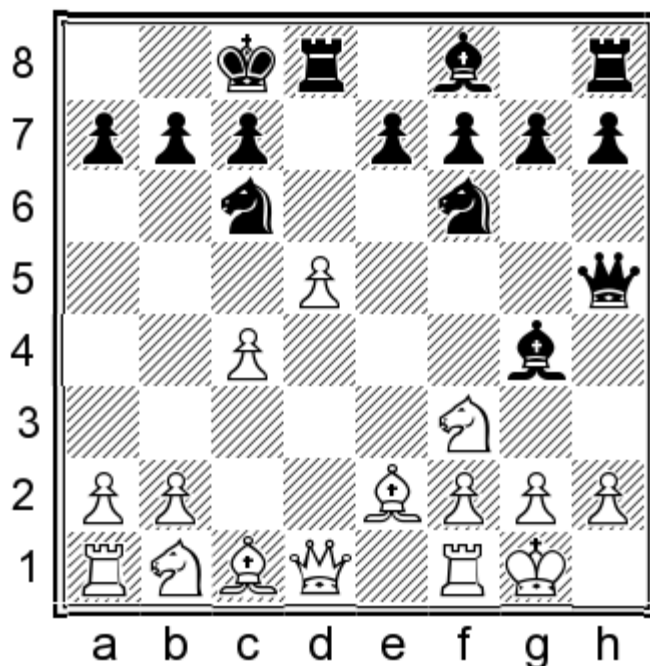
also because it is related to the two games that will follow.

6...0-0 7.c4 ♖h5

As we saw in Chapter 4, the f5-square is also possible for the queen, especially when the b1-knight can go to d2, but here 7...♖h5 fits perfectly because ♕e3 has not yet been played, and as a result the d4-pawn is insufficiently protected to permit 8.♘d2.

8.d5

8.♕e3?! (too late!) 8...e5! would return to Game 21.



8...e5?

Nicolas knew that Black could almost always play ...e7-e5 systematically on the eighth move in this variation of the Portuguese Scandinavian, but with a white pawn on d4 and not on d5!

Here, as we saw in the notes to Game 21, it was obviously necessary to play 8...e6!, which immediately attacks the d-pawn and gives Black a very easy game: 9.h3 ♕xf3 10.♕xf3 ♖h4 (attacks c4) 11.♕e3 ♘e5 and the capture on a7 is impossible: 12.♕xa7? b6 13.a4 ♖f4! (13...♙b7? 14.a5!) 14.a5 ♕d6. The black attack is the most dangerous. 15.axb6?? obviously leads to mate after 15...♘xf3+.

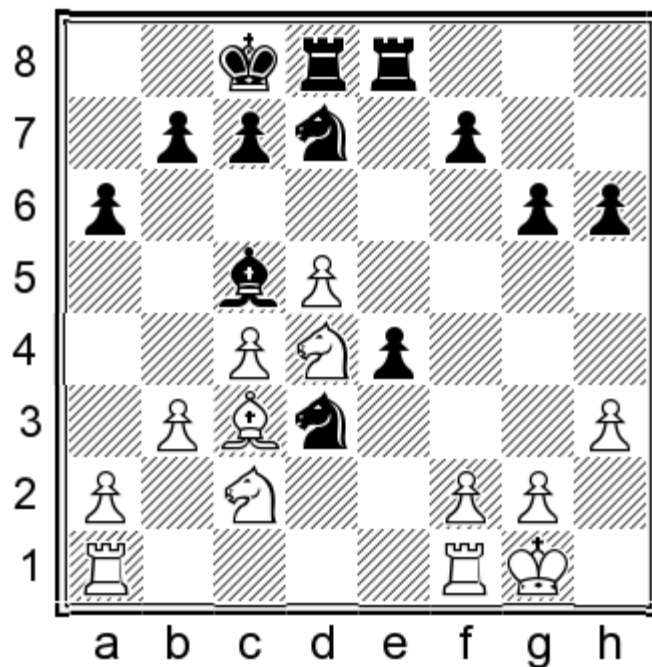
9.♘c3?!

9.♘bd2!, closing the d-file, and thus unpinning the d5-pawn and attacking the c6-knight, while threatening h2-h3, brings about a position that is much better for White.

9...e4 10.♘e1 ♕xe2 11.♖xe2 ♖xe2 12.♘xe2 ♘e5 13.b3 ♕d6

Black has finally obtained a very satisfactory position.

14.h3 h6 15.♘d4 g6 16.♕b2 ♘fd7 17.♘b5 ♕c5 18.♘c2 a6 19.♘bd4 ♘d3 20.♕c3 ♖he8



Black is now better. All his pieces are active, and the d3-knight is particularly strong.

21.b4 ♖d6

21...♙xd4! gives Black a big advantage. 22.♙xd4 (22.♘xd4 ♜b6–+) 22...♜7e5 23.♙xe5 (else how does White defend the pawns on b4 and c4?) 23...♜xe5 24.♜e3 f5±.

22.♜e3?

A sacrifice of the b4-pawn to open the b-file, or a simple blunder? Whatever the case, White will not have sufficient compensation.

22...♙xb4 23.♙xb4 ♜xb4 24.♝ab1 ♜d3 25.g4 ♜f4 26.♞h2 ♜e5

Black has an extra pawn and a better position.

27.♞g3 ♜fd3 28.♝b3 b6?!

28...c5! 29.♜e2 (the en passant capture was obviously not possible because of the unprotected situation of the d4-knight) 29...f5 30.gxf5 gxf5 31.♜xf5 ♜xc4–+.

Besides the extra pawn Black has many threats, starting with the fork on d2, which is not easy to parry.

29.♝c3 ♞b7 30.♝b1 ♝d6 31.c5 ♝f6 32.d6

White has managed to find some counterplay.

32...♝xf2?

He had to play 32...♜xc5! 33.♝xc5 ♝xd6 and the position remains very complicated. Black has three pawns for the piece.

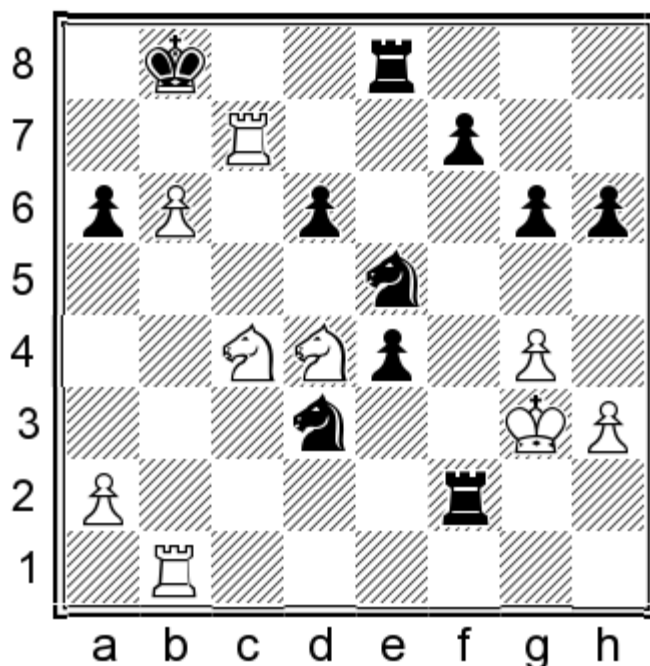
33.cxb6?

33.c6+! completely reverses the situation: 33...♔a7 34.♘d5! (34.d7? ♖h8∞) 34...cxd6 35.♖xb6+–.

33...cxd6?

33...c5! (a difficult-to-find move; the black pawn does not capture either of the two white pawns) 34.♖xc5 (34.♘e2 ♖f3+–) 34...♘xc5 35.♔xf2 ♖d8 and Black is clearly better.

34.♖c7+ ♔b8 35.♘c4



35...♖c8??

Under time pressure (the game was played in a simultaneous display, and it was one of the last still in progress) Black cracks.

After 35...♖xa2! 36.♘xd6 ♖d8 37.♖b7+ ♔a8 38.♖a7+ ♔b8 White had nothing better than a perpetual check, for the final winning attempt 39.♘xf7?? does not work because of 39...♖xd4!–+ (but not the blunder 39...♘xf7?? 40.♘c6+ ♔c8 41.♖c7#).

36.♖xc8+ ♔xc8 37.b7+ ♔b8 38.♘xe5

Black resigned.

If 38...dxe5 (38...♘xe5 39.♔xf2+–) 39.♘c6+.

Two weeks after his game against Grandmaster Fier, Nicolas had the opportunity to play another simultaneous game, this time against the Armenian master Andriasian.

Game 38

Siranush Andriasian 2247

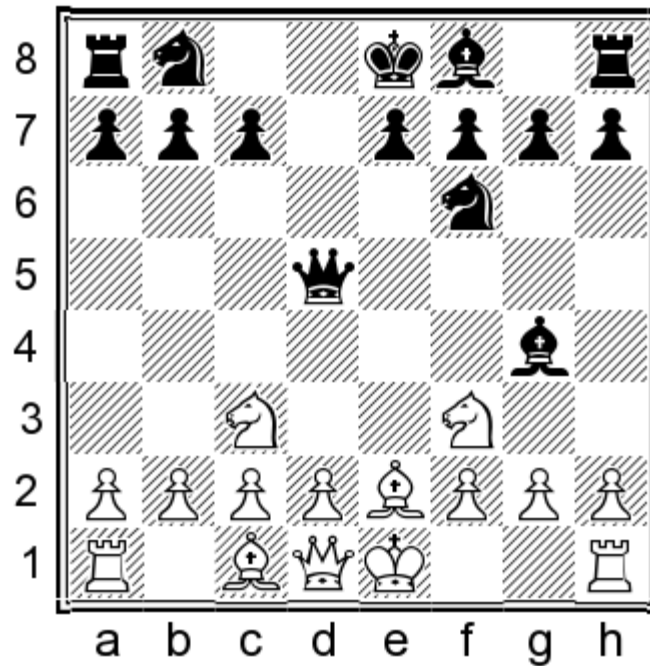
Nicolas Hornet

Nancy 2016

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.♘f3

Again the so-called Modern Variation of the Scandinavian.

3...♗g4 4.♗e2 ♚xd5 5.♘c3!



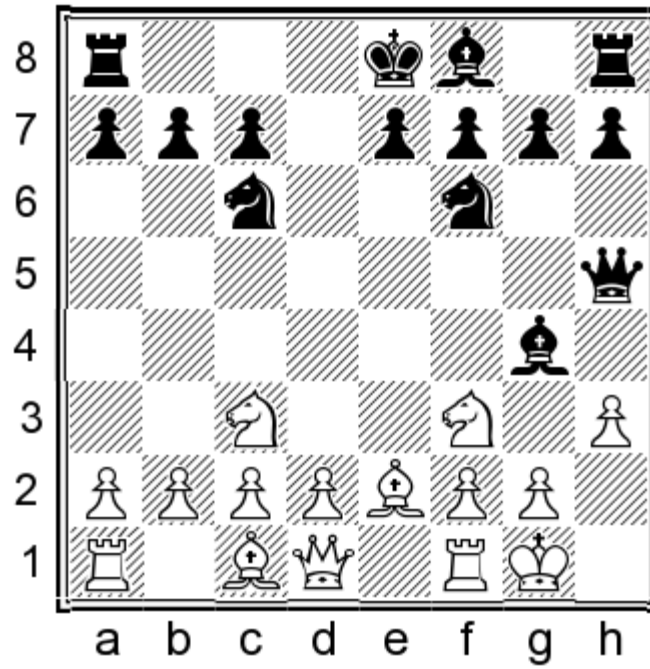
5...♚h5?!

Definitely not the right square for the queen in this variation when White has not yet played d2-d4. We will see in the following game the (good) alternative 5...♗f5!.

6.0-0

6.d4 would, of course, transpose back into our usual variations where the black queen is this time very well placed on h5.

6...♘c6 7.h3!



Here's the problem: White has saved the d2-d4 move and Black has not yet had time to play ...0-0-0 and obtain the usual counterplay on the d-file.

7...♖xf3

Black has no choice.

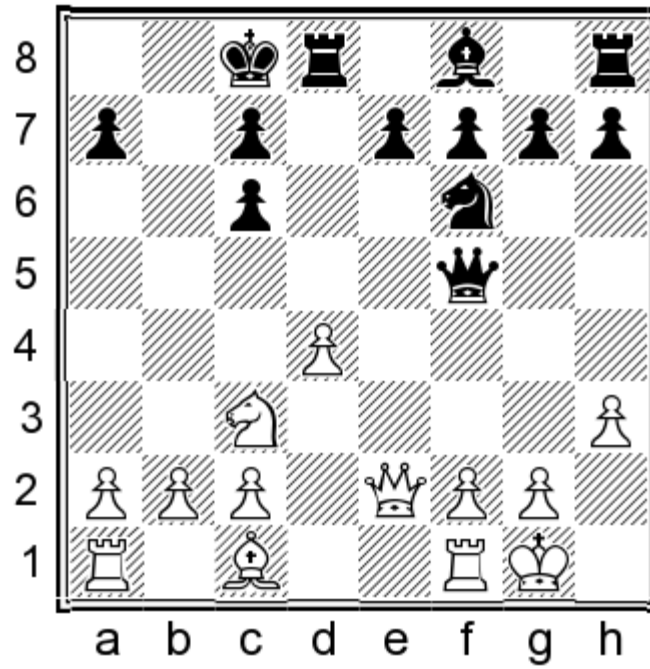
A) The sacrifice of the bishop is unsatisfactory: 7...♖xh3 8.gxh3 ♜xh3 9.♘g5!±;

B) 7...0-0-0 8.hxg4 ♞xg4 9.d3 ♞ce5 10.♖f4+–.

8.♖xf3 ♜f5

Now we understand why it would have been better to go to f5 immediately.

9.d4 0-0-0 10.♖xc6 bxc6 11.♜e2



The black queenside is very weak and the queen threatens to infiltrate on a6.

11...♔b7

11...♖xd4? was not possible because of 12.♔a6+ ♔b8 13.♕e3.

12.♘a4?

He had to play 12.♖d1 to protect the d4-pawn.

12...♖xd4

Now it can be taken!

13.b3 ♖b5?

After 13...e6 14.♕e3 ♖e5 it was not so simple for White to justify his pawn deficit.

14.c4 ♖a5

Black loses too much time with his queen.

15.♕e3 ♖e4 16.♖d3 e6 17.a3 ♕e7 18.♖c2 ♖f5

Black has unnecessarily wasted two moves with his queen, finally returning to the famous f5-square.

19.b4 ♖e5 20.♖b3 ♖d8?

20...♔a8, to play ...♖b8, was more resilient.

21.♘c5+ ♕xc5 22.bxc5+

The opening of the b-file is, of course, decisive.

22...♖c8 23.♜ab1 ♕d7 24.♜fd1+ ♖e7 25.♜xd8 ♕xd8 26.♜b8+ ♕d7 27.♜d1+ 1-0

It's mate after 27...♖e7 28.♜d8#

After his two defeats in this modern variation Nicolas set out to find a viable system for Black. Quite naturally we turned to an improvement proposed by Smerdon, and it was not long before Nicolas reaped the benefits. Barely a month after his game against Siranush Andriasian, he is again confronted with this variation, but this time facing an opponent far more within his reach.

Game 39

Rémi Balland

Nicolas Hornet

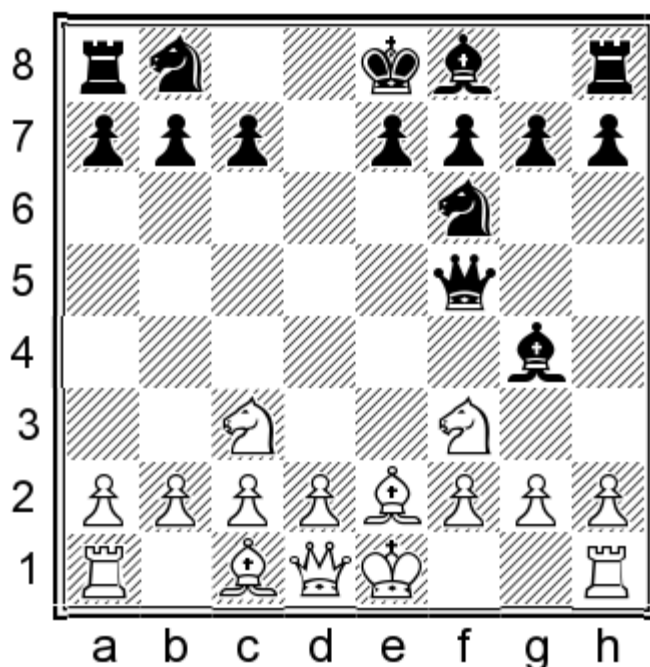
Nancy 2016

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♙g4 4.♙e2

We will see in the next two games that White can also play 4.c4 and 4.♙b5+.

4...♜xd5 5.♘c3 ♜f5!

Here is the move proposed by Smerdon, and it will not surprise us since we already know that the f5-square is often a good square for the black queen. Yet this move is still relatively rare. With only 14 games in Mega Database 2017 out of 198 games, it is only shared fourth out of the six possible queen retreats (far behind a5, h5 and even d8).



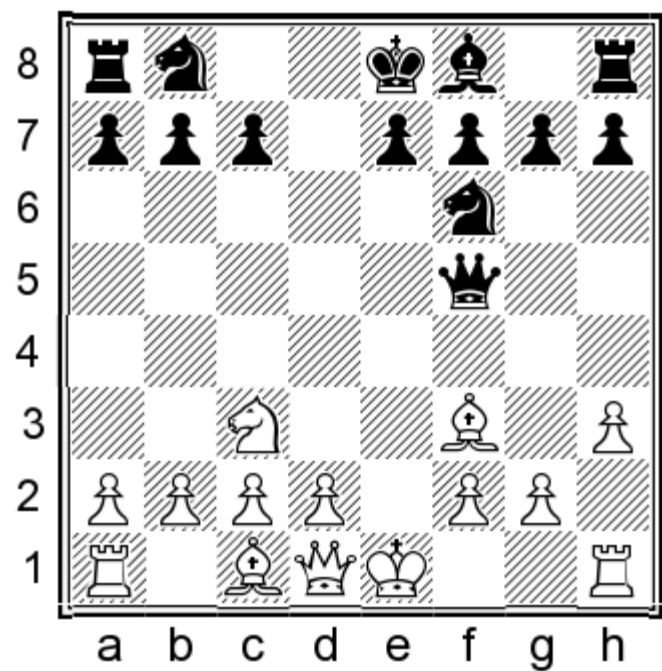
6.h3

The most logical, White immediately seizes the bishop pair.

6.d4 would allow Black to begin the usual pressure on d4 and the d-file after the natural moves ...♘c6 and ...0-0-0.

6...♙xf3 7.♙xf3

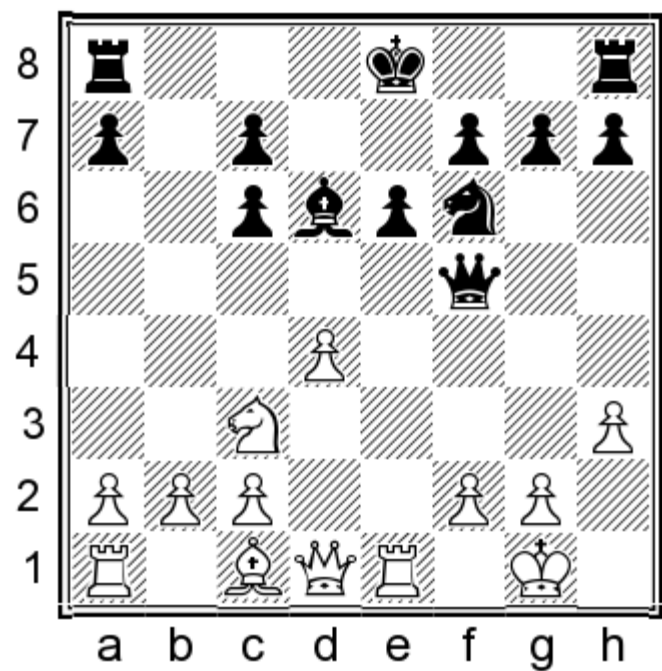
We can see that on f5 the black queen is not attacked by the bishop. Black therefore has one more tempo compared to the previous game.



7...♞c6!

This highly provocative move is Smerdon’s actual new idea. Up until now Black had mainly played 7...c6, but then had to settle for the modest development of the knight to d7 and thus had quite a passive position facing the white bishop pair.

8.♞xc6+ bxc6 9.0-0 e6 10.d4 ♞d6 11.♞e1



11...g5!

More ambitious than 11...0-0, which would only give an equal position (the b-file compensates for the doubled black pawns). The white pawn on h3 offers Black the chance to open the g-file after ...g5-g4, and the black king can find a quite secure spot on d7.

12.♖e2 h5 13.♘a6 ♔d7 14.♞e2 g4 15.h4

To try to keep the kingside closed.

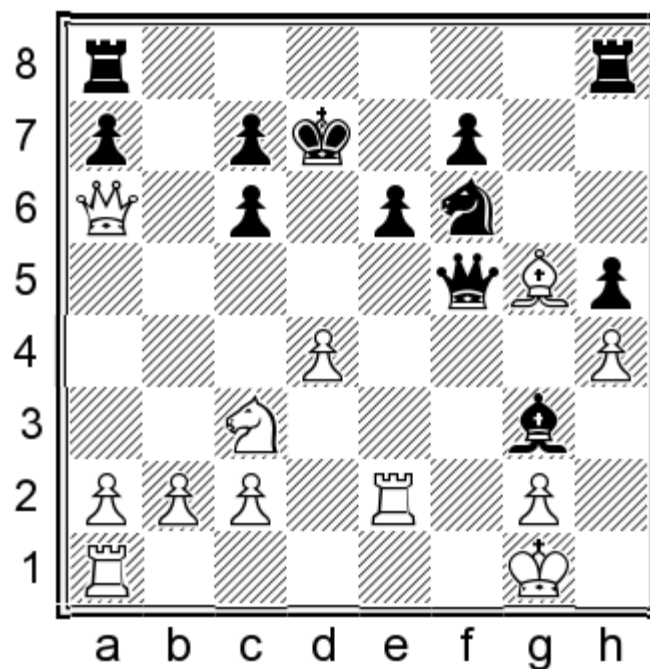
15...g3

Otherwise White would play g2-g3 himself.

16.fxg3

To play 16.f3, and leave the black pawn on g3, would be too dangerous.

16...♙xg3 17.♙g5



17...♞ag8!

Black abandons his queenside and bets everything on his attack against the king.

18.♘xa7 ♞xg5! 19.hxg5 ♘xg5 20.♔e4??

He had to play 20.d5! to bring the queen back to defend, even though, after 20...cxd5 21.♘d4 ♔g4!, Black keeps a dangerous attack. 22.♘h8??. for example, was not possible because of 22...♗h4 and White is mated.

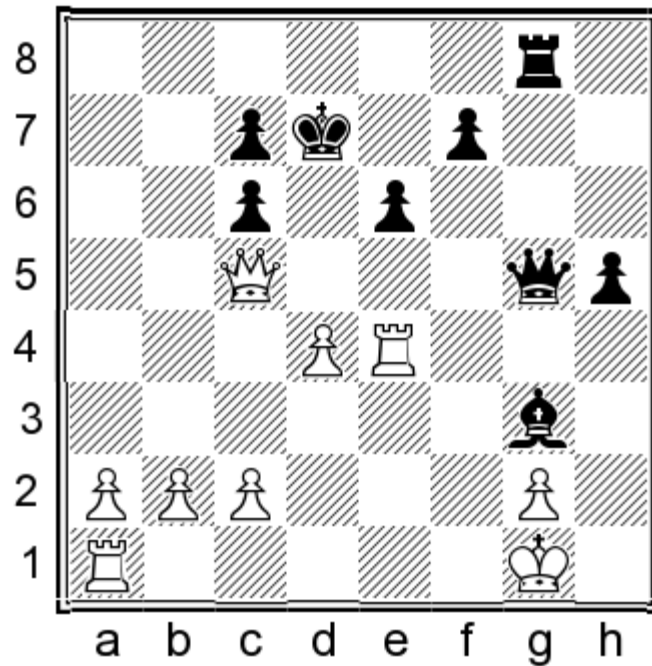
20...♔xe4 21.♞xe4 ♞g8

With a nice threat...

22. ♖c5

... that White does not see.

22. ♖e2 was the only move, but even so it does not save the game after 22... ♗g4 23. ♖a6 ♗h4 and Black will win the rook on a1 at least.



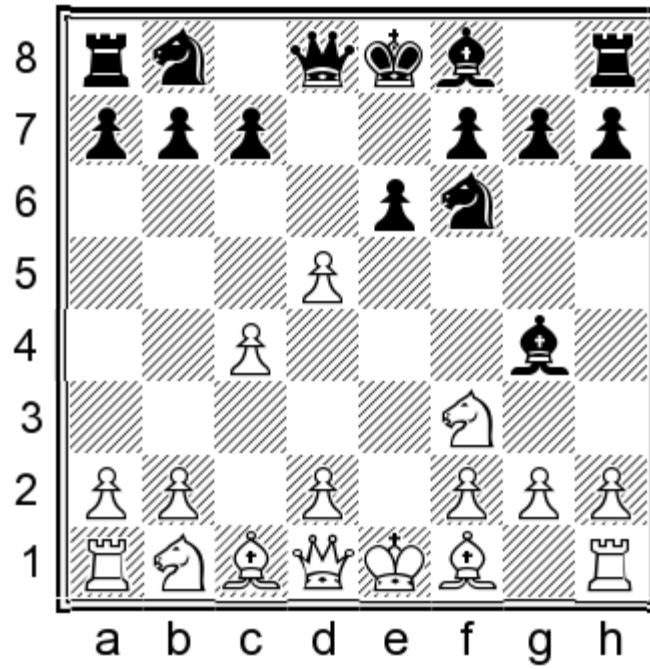
22... ♗h2+! 23. ♖f1

23. ♖xh2 ♗xg2#.

23... ♗xg2+ 24. ♖e1 ♗xe4+ 25. ♖d2 ♗g2+ 0-1

Game 40
Matthis Libaud
Théo Ciccoli
Metz 2016

1. e4 d5 2. exd5 ♘f6 3. ♘f3 ♗g4 4. c4 e6!



The usual recipe, which is good most of the time when White clings on to the pawn.

5.dxe6 ♟xf3!

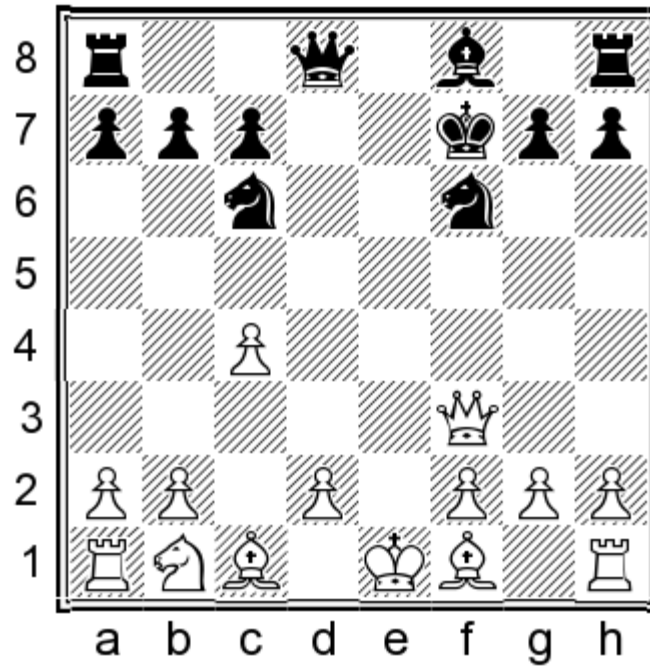
A) Much stronger than 5...fxe6, which had been played in the game Marcelin-Adrian, Besançon 1999. The text move is yet another Smerdon recommendation. The Australian grandmaster has literally revolutionized the entire theory of the Portuguese Scandinavian, which was relatively blank up to his book;

B) 5...♟xe6? would transpose back into Game 6 with a tempo less for Black (the move ♞f3 has already been played), since he would have played ...♟c8-g4xe6.

6.exf7+

6.♞xf3 ♞c6 7.exf7+ is simply a reversal of moves.

6...♟xf7 7.♞xf3 ♞c6

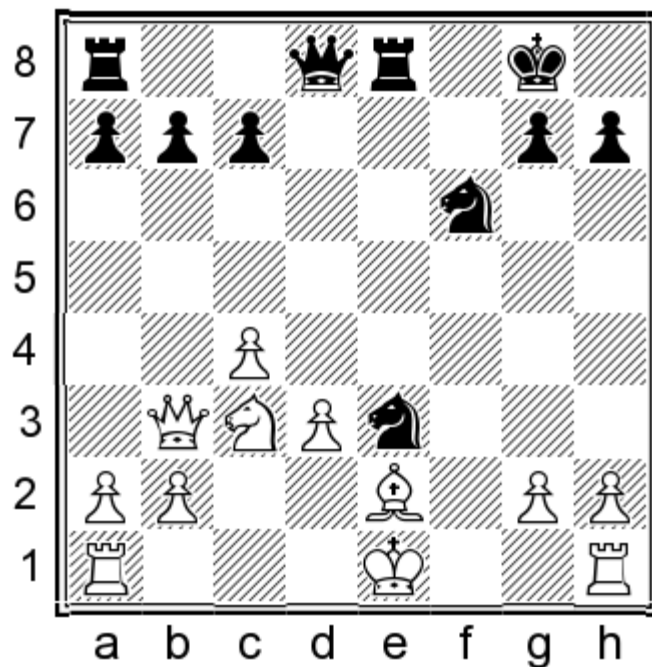


This position will inevitably remind us of Game 29, where the young Théo was already bossing the black side. Suffice to say that he knows the tactical themes. Black is two pawns down, certainly, but, as always in these variations his pieces can develop very rapidly, the d4-square is an invitation to the c6-knight and the open e-file is a real danger for the white king.

8. ♖c3?!

A mistake, according to Smerdon. According to his analysis the only move was to return a pawn by 8.c5 in order to allow the f1-bishop to develop with gain of time by checking on c4. But it must be acknowledged that this is not an obvious move to find over the chessboard. After 8.c5, Smerdon gives a variation: 8... ♕e7+ 9. ♖e3 ♖xc5 10. ♖b3+ ♔e7 and concludes by saying that Black has sufficient compensation for the pawn less. The c1-bishop is attacked, the moves ... ♘d4 and ... ♖e8 will follow, and the black king on e7 is paradoxically in less danger than its counterpart on e1. After the text move (8. ♖c3?!), Black's next three moves (8... ♗c5, 9... ♖e8+, 10... ♘d4) can flow easily and will lead to a very difficult position for White.

8... ♗c5 9.d3 ♖e8+ 10. ♗e3 ♘d4 11. ♖d1 ♘f5 12. ♗e2 ♗xe3 13.fxe3 ♘xe3 14. ♖b3 ♔g8



If necessary the black king will be completely safe on h8.

15.♔d2 ♚d7 16.♖ae1

16.c5+ ♔h8–+.

16...♚c5 17.♗b5 ♖g5 18.h4?

This loses quickly, but there was no way to escape the discovered check anyway: 18.♔c1 ♚xg2+ 19.♔b1 ♚xe1 20.♖xe1 a6 21.♗a5 b6 22.♗a3 ♚xd3. Black has an exchange and a pawn more, and still has an attack.

18...♚f1+

Double check!

19.♔c2 ♖d2+ 20.♔b1 ♖xe1+ 21.♙d1 ♚d2+ 22.♔a1 ♖xh1 0–1

Game 41
Hugo Tajan
Théo Ciccoli
 Metz 2016

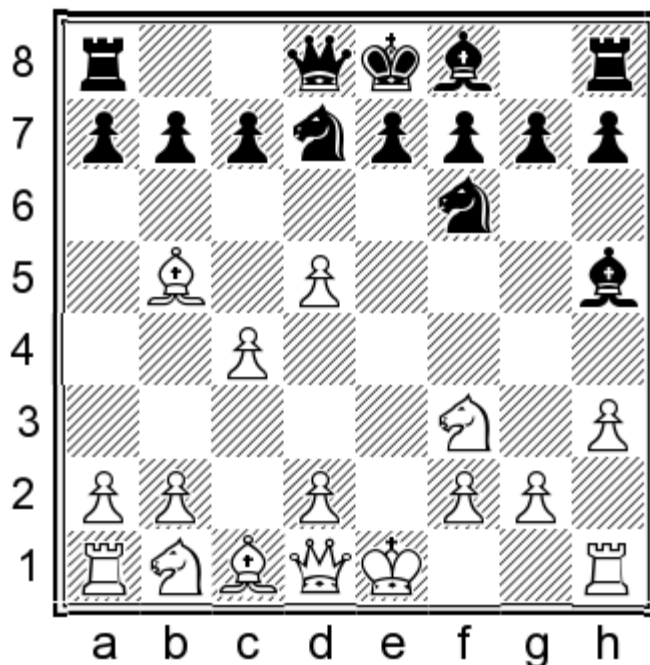
1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♚f6 3.♚f3 ♙g4 4.♙b5+ ♚bd7 5.h3

5.c4 would meet the usual response: 5...e6! 6.dxe6 ♙xe6 (Black threatens 7...c6 followed by taking the c4-pawn) 7.d3 c6 8.♙a4 ♙d6 and, according to David Smerdon, Black has good compensation. He will be able to put pressure on the backward d-pawn in particular.

5...♙h5 6.c4?!

This is too ambitious, and above all too risky.

6.♘c3 was safer, even though after 6...a6 7.♙a4 b5 8.♙b3 ♘c5 Black will exchange the b3-bishop and recover the d5-pawn with a perfectly acceptable position.



6...e6!

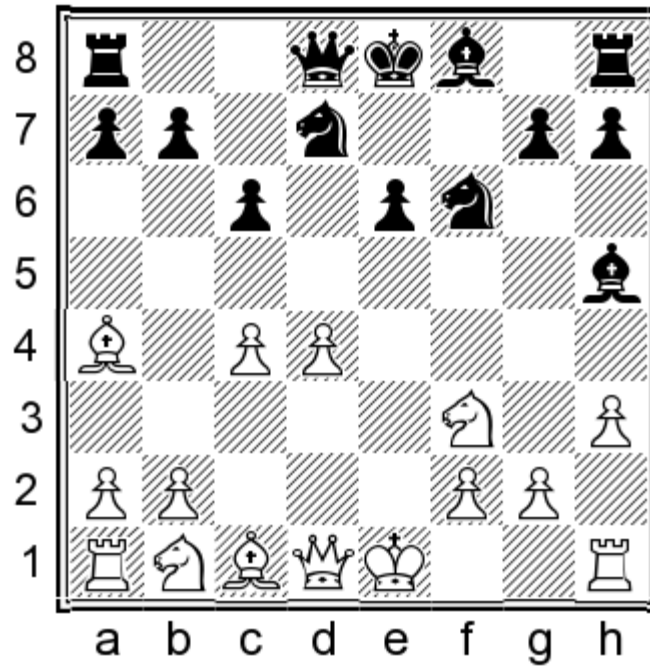
Of course!

7.dxe6 fxe6 8.d4

Otherwise Black would play 8...c6 and 9...♘e5.

On 8.♙xd7+ ♔xd7 9.0-0 0-0-0 Black will be able to exert strong pressure on the d-file.

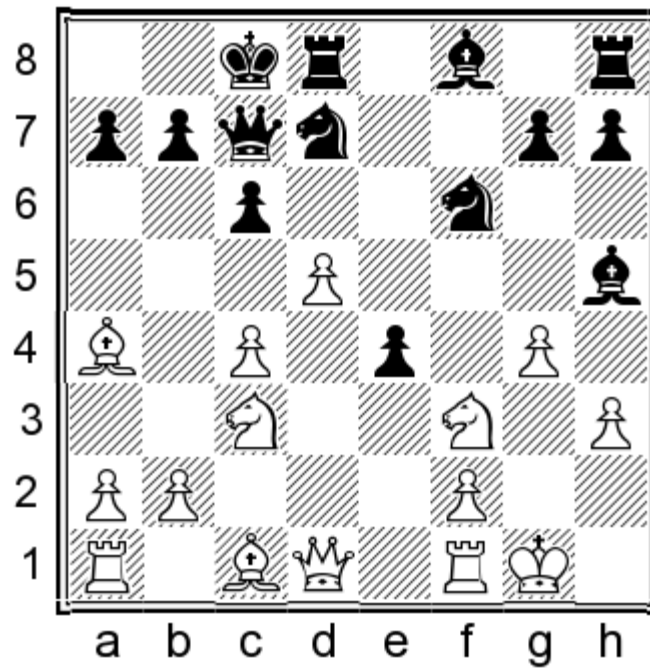
8...c6 9.♙a4



9...♔c7!

9...♘b6?! had been played in a game Emms-Smerdon, British 4NCL 2013. The text move is an improvement proposed by the Australian grandmaster that had never been tested in practice. Théo and I had looked at his analysis. The young French champion has had the opportunity to test several of his novelties in the course of numerous training games.

10.0-0 0-0-0 11.♘c3 e5 12.d5 e4 13.g4



13...♘xg4!?

In his analysis Smerdon only considers 13...exf3 14.gxh5 ♖e5! and concludes that Black has a dangerous attack against

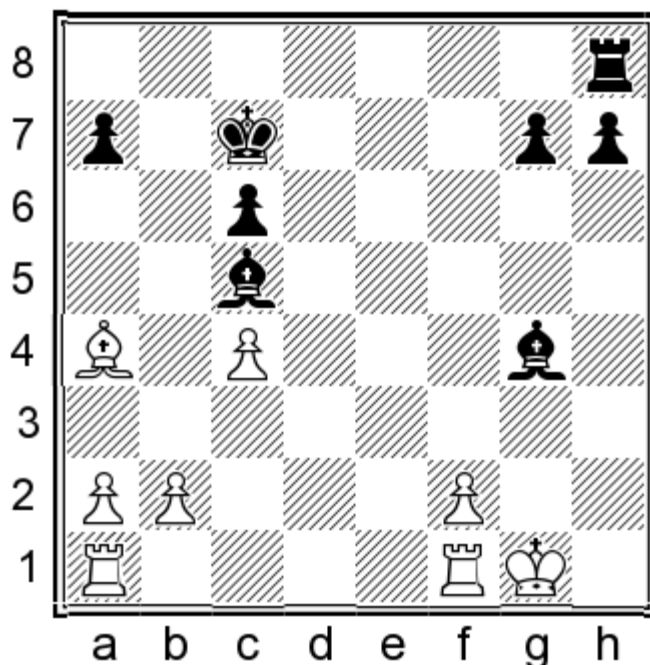
the white king, but Théo's knowledge did not go that far. The text move is also very interesting, however. This proves – if need be – that Black has several good possibilities.

14.hxg4 ♘xg4 15.♖xe4 ♖e5 16.♙f4

The only move.

16.♖ed2? lost immediately: 16...♙c5! 17.♖h1 – Black threatened to take on f3 followed by the queen check on g3 (the f2-pawn is pinned!) – 17...♞hf8–+.

16...♖xf3+ 17.♞xf3 ♙xf3 18.♙xc7 ♖xc7 19.♖g5 ♙g4 20.♖f7 ♙c5 21.♖xh8 ♞xh8 22.dxc6 bxc6



It is time to take stock after this almost forced series of captures and exchanges. Black has an exchange less, but his bishop pair is very strong. The white king is not completely safe, moreover, even in the absence of queens. We can therefore conclude that the position is unclear, but that it is probably easier to play – at the moment – for Black, who has the initiative.

23.♙d1 ♙h3 24.♞e1 ♞f8 25.♞e2 ♞f5! 26.♙c2 ♞g5+ 27.♖h2 ♙g4 28.♞d2 ♙d6+ 29.♞xd6

White is obliged to return the exchange.

29.♖g2?? loses: 29...♙e2+! 30.♖h3 ♞h5+ 31.♖g2 ♞h2+ 32.♖g1 ♙f3 and the mate is unstoppable! We did say that the white king was not completely safe.

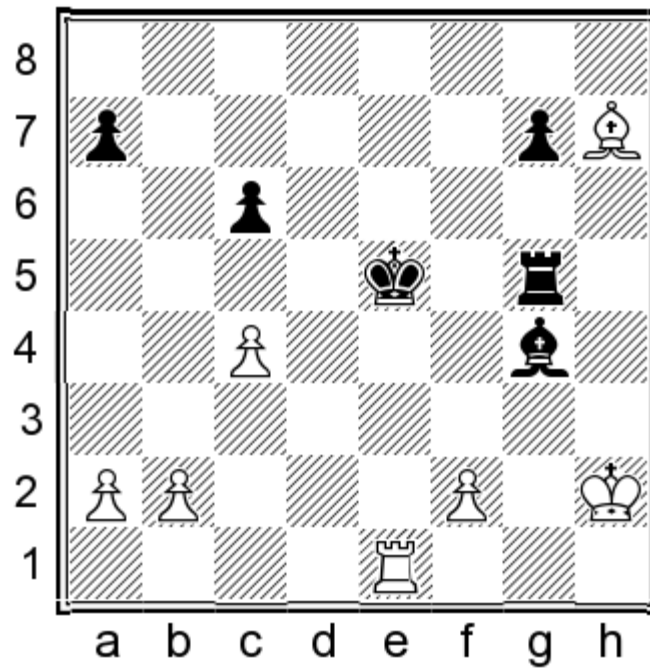
29...♖xd6 30.♙xh7?!

Too greedy. White had to be satisfied with an approximate equality after 30.f4 ♞h5+ 31.♖g3 ♙e6.

30...♖e5

The position remains delicate for White, despite the extra pawn, because the black pieces – including the king! – are very active.

31.♞e1+??



White finally mobilizes his rook – and what’s more with check – but it’s the losing move. He had to repatriate the bishop to c2.

31...♔f4

The threat is ...♖h5+, which would win the h7-bishop.

32.♙c2

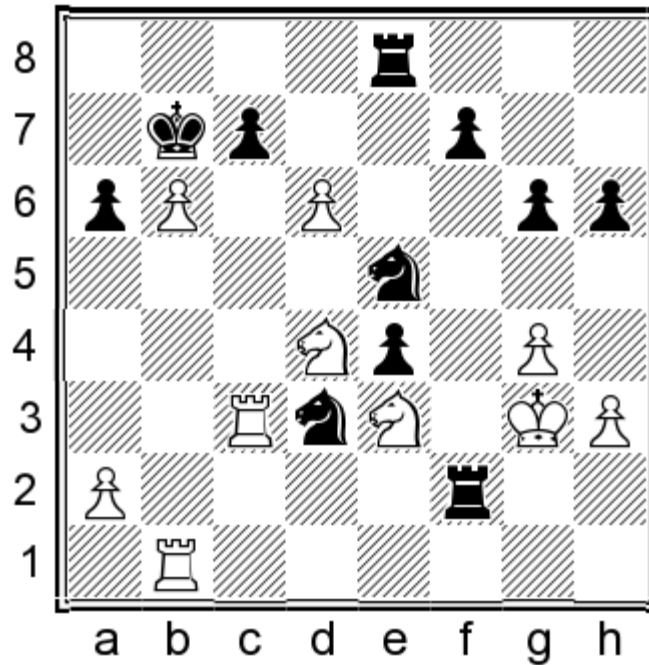
White withdraws the threatened bishop, but...

32...♙f3 0–1

... his king is in a mating net (33...♖h5+ followed by 34...♖h1 mate).

Your move!

33



Both sides are attacking and the position is very complicated. How does Black, to move, parry the white threats?

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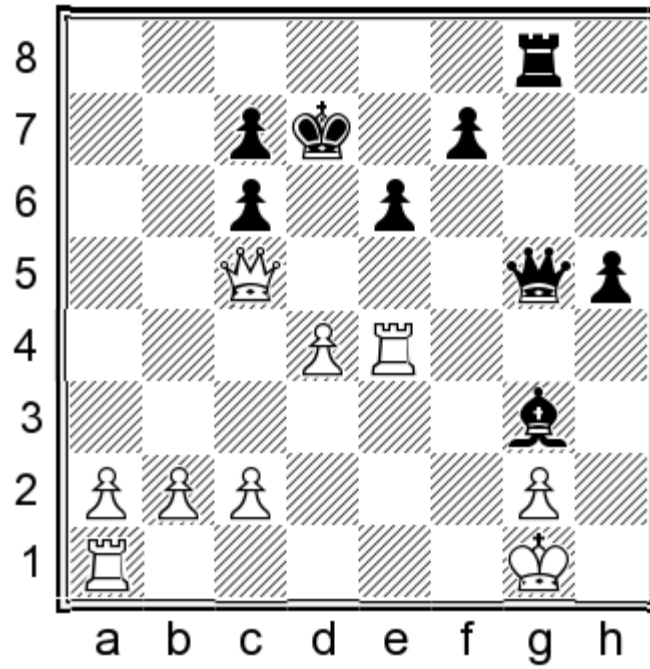
33...c5! 34.♖xc5

34.♘e2 ♜f3+-+.

34...♘xc5 35.♙xf2 ♜d8+

(See Game 37, **Fier-Hornet**)

34



How does Black exploit the g-file?

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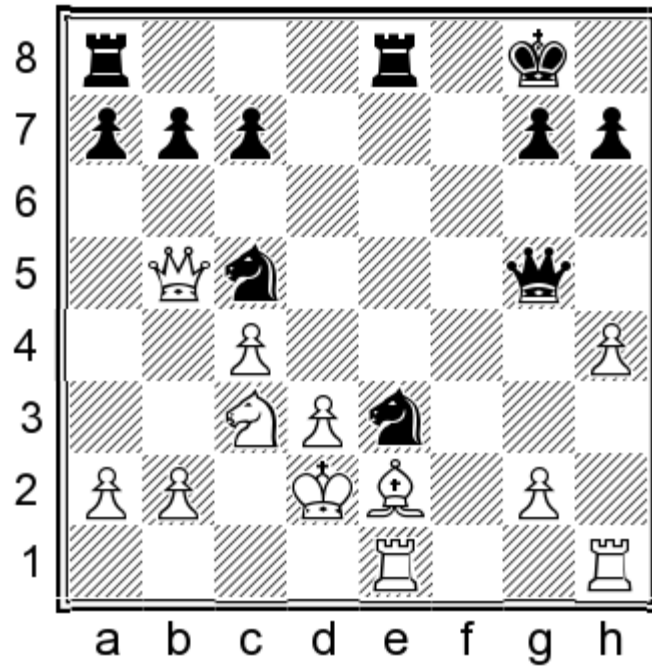
22...♙h2+! 23.♔f1

23.♔xh2 ♚xg2#.

23...♚xg2+

with a decisive attack.

(See Game 39, **Balland-Hornet**)



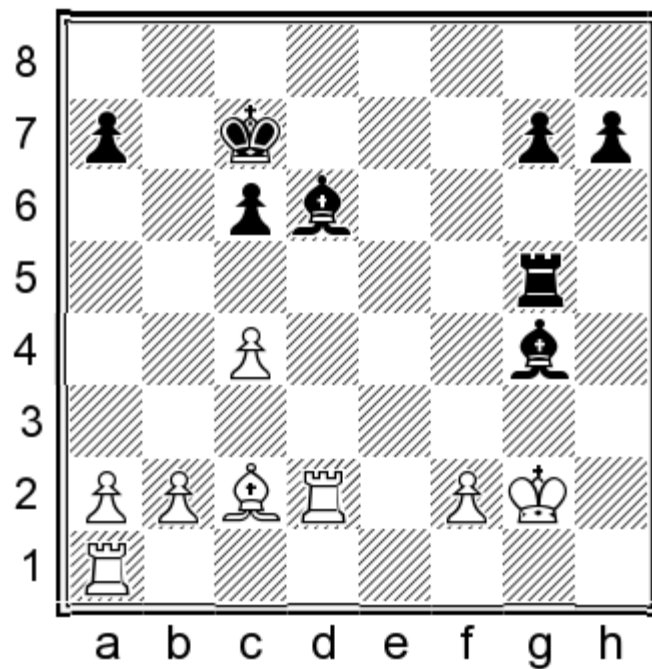
White has just played 18.h4? to attack the black queen. How can Black take advantage of the discovered check?

Show/Hide the Solution

18...♞f1+

Double check!

(See Game 40, **Libaud-Ciccoli**)



Black to play and mate. You have to find the right discovered check.

Show/Hide the Solution

29...♙e2+! 30.♔h3 ♚h5+ 31.♔g2 ♚h2+ 32.♔g1 ♙f3

and there is no defence against mate.

(See Game 41, **Tajan-Ciccoli**)

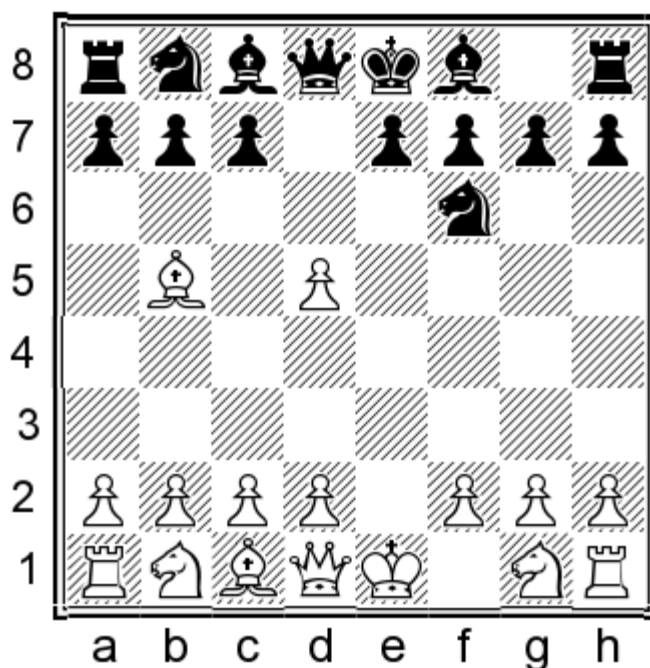
Chapter 7

Odds and ends

In this chapter we will examine all the white alternatives on the second and third moves. The good news, as already stated in the introduction, is that none of these variations is actually dangerous for Black. But as some can be frequently used by amateur players (mostly through simple ignorance of the theory), it is advisable to be a little prepared for them.

Game 42
Frédéric Raulin
Alain Baris
Seichamps 2013

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.♗b5+



A check, quite often played after 2...♘f6, which tries to disrupt Black's development and above all hinder the recovery of the d5-pawn.

3...♗d7

The most popular way to counter the check, but two other moves are possible: 3...♗bd7, recommended by Smerdon, and even the gambit 3...c6!?. Within the limited framework of this book we will confine ourselves to the most popular move, one that has proved its worth.

4.♗c4

This retreat is also the most popular move.

A) 4.♗xd7+ does not give White anything: 4...♙xd7 5.c4 c6! – as often in this type of position, where White has clung on to the pawn by c2-c4, 5...e6 is equally possible, but here 5...c6 is certainly stronger – 6.dxc6 ♗xc6 7.♗f3 e5 and

Black has the usual compensation for the pawn: a lead in development, control of the d4-square and pressure on the d-file, in particular on the backward pawn;

B) However, 4.♙e2!? would be best according to Smerdon. This is even the move that deterred him from playing 3...♜d7 in favour of 3...♞d7. After 4.♙e2 play can continue as follows: 4...♞xd5 5.d4 ♙f5 6.♞f3 e6 7.0-0 ♙e7 8.a3 (8.c4 immediately would allow 8...♞b4) 8...0-0 9.c4 ♞b6. Anderson considers this position to be completely equal, while Smerdon finds it solid but fairly passive for Black. That is why the Australian GM proposes to infuse a little life into the position by playing the sharp 4...c6!? instead of the automatic recapture on d5. This pawn sacrifice may not be to everyone's taste (White has not weakened himself with the move c2-c4), but the adventurous will be able to refer to Smerdon's analysis (rich, but rather complex, it must be said).

4...♙g4

Remaining true to the spirit of the Portuguese.

5.f3

On any other move Black would recover the d5-pawn with no problems.

5...♙c8!?

To keep attacking the d5-pawn with the queen and the knight. Anderson considers this retreat to c8 interesting, and Smerdon describes it as 'not bad at all' (*sic*). 5...♙f5 is the most natural retreat, of course, but it invites White to play g2-g4, and gives rise to quite complex variations.

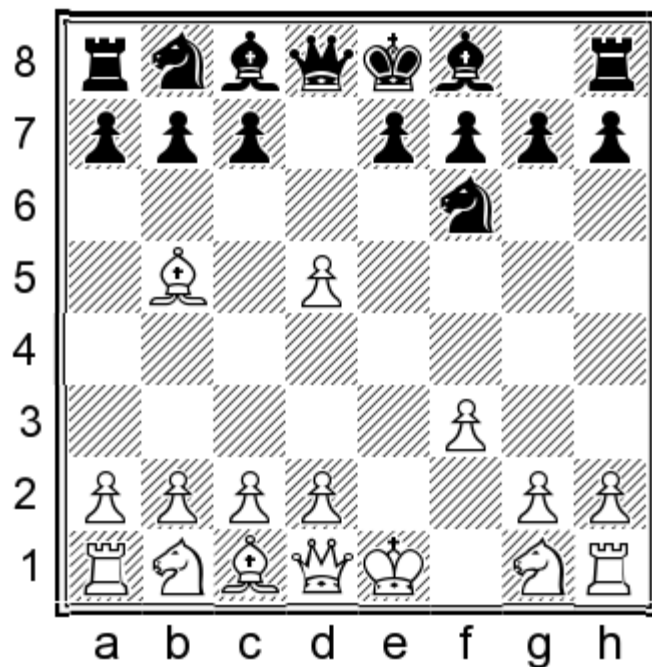
Certainly, after 5...♙f5 6.g4! the bishop could also retreat to c8, but the question – which has no clear answer – is whether the move g2-g4 represents an advantage or, on the contrary, a weakness for White.

6.♙b5+

White may seek to hang on to the d5-pawn at all costs, but this will be at the expense of development: 6.♞c3 ♞bd7 7.♙e2 ♞b6 8.♙d3 g6 and he is heavily congested. Black will play ...♙f5 and the dark-squared bishop will find a nice diagonal on g7.

6...♙d7 7.♙c4 ♙c8 8.♙b5+

Draw?!



8...Nbd7!?

Black is not satisfied with a repetition of moves and transposes into positions of the same type as those that would occur after 3...Nbd7, with the difference that he has provoked the move f2-f3, which is of no use to White.

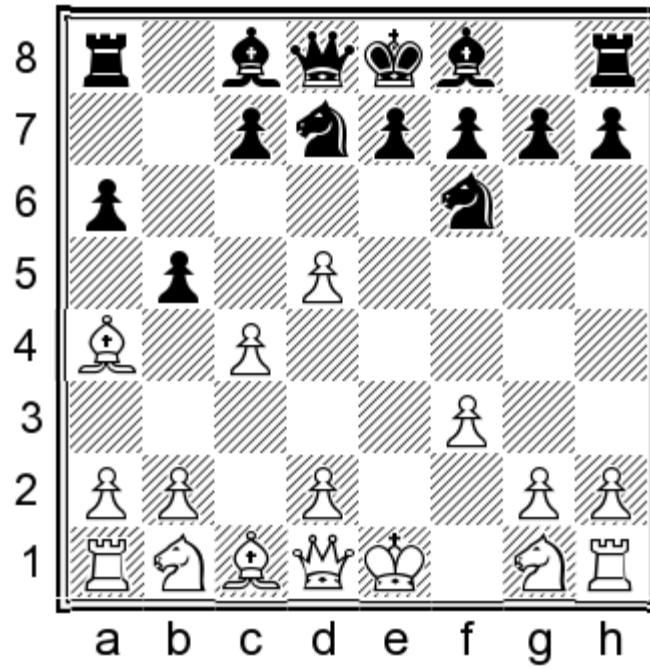
9.c4

After 9.Nc3 a6 10.Ba4 (10.Bxd7+ Kxd7!) 10...b5 11.Bb3 Nb6 Black recovers the d5-pawn with a good position.

9...a6 10.Ba4

10.Bxd7+ Bxd7 11.d4 e6! (the usual antidote when White hangs on to the pawn by c2-c4) 12.dxe6 Bxe6 13.b3 (13.d5 Bf5 14.Ne2 Bc5 and Black has the usual compensation: a big lead in development, the bishop pair and pressure on the g1-a7 diagonal; the moves ...0-0 and ...Re8 will quickly follow) 13...Bb4+ 14.Kf2 (otherwise the d4-pawn would fall; the only white piece that is not on the first rank is... the king!) 14...0-0 15.Ne2 Ng4+! 16.fxg4? Bxg4 and Black has some very strong threats, starting with the check on f6, followed by the capture on e2 and then on d4.

10...b5!



We have already met this idea in Game 34.

11.cxb5 ♖xd5 12.bxa6?

Far too risky. White absolutely must take care of his development by playing 12.d4 or 12.♘e2.

12...♙xa6

Black has very good compensation for the pawn. The white position is already very difficult.

13.d3

13.♘e2 was not better: 13...♘b4 14.0-0 ♙xe2 (discovering an attack on the a4-bishop!) 15.♙xd7+ ♚xd7 16.♚xe2 ♚d4+. Check! We see the consequences of having provoked the f2-f3 move (16...♘c2 fails immediately to 17.♚e4). 17.♙h1 ♘c2+.

13...♘b4 14.♙c2 ♘c5

Two more attacks – in one move! – on the weakness on d3!

15.♘e2

15.d4? leads to disaster: 15...♘cd3+ 16.♙xd3 ♘xd3+ 17.♙d2 ♚xd4+.

15...♘bxd3+ 16.♙xd3 ♘xd3+ 17.♙f1 e5

17...♘xb2! was equally possible: 18.♚xd8+ ♚xd8 and White cannot take the knight because of the check on e1.

18.♘bc3 ♙c5

Black has regained his pawn and, of course, has a far superior position. The bishop pair, in particular, is very strong.

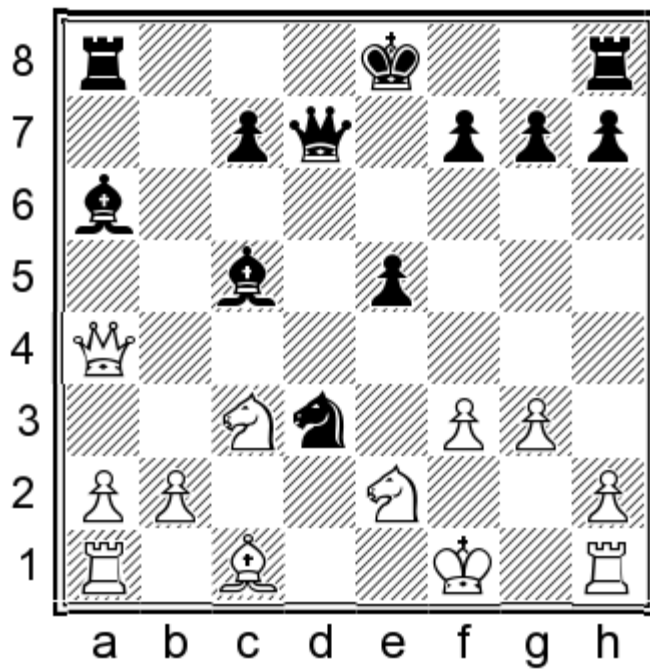
19.g3 ♚d7

Threatening mate on h3!

20. ♖a4?

A blunder that allows a nice tactical conclusion.

20. ♔g2 was forced, but Black keeps an overwhelming position after the simple 20...0-0.



20... ♖b5!!

A lovely decoy sacrifice.

20...c6 allows White to resist a little more after 21. ♖g4.

21. ♖xa8+

21. ♖xb5 c6 and White has to give up his queen to avoid getting mated on h3.

21... ♔e7 0-1

Here too White loses the queen or gets mated.

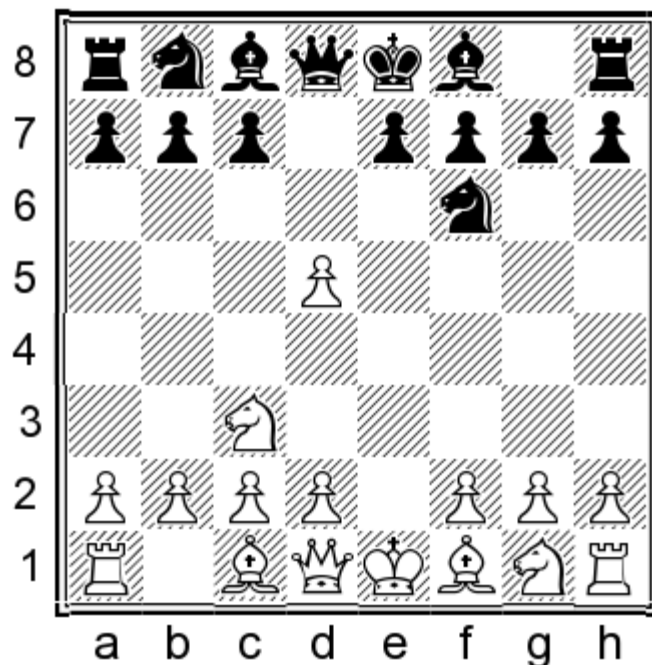
Game 43

Roger Turboust 1890

Pauline Crabie 1470

Tressange 1998

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.♘c3



An unambitious variation, but which is encountered fairly frequently among amateur players.

3...♞xd5

Obviously we must take the pawn. The black knight is no longer at risk of being attacked by the white c-pawn.

4.♞xd5?!

A totally harmless exchange that only centralizes the black queen.

4.♙c4 is playable: 4...♞b6 5.♙b3 ♞c6 6.♞f3 ♙f5 (but not 6...♙g4?? because of 7.♙xf7+! ♜xf7 8.♞g5+-) 7.d4 e6 8.0-0 ♙e7 and Black has a very reasonable position. He will castle kingside, then play ...♙f6 and ...♞a5 to get the bishop pair.

4...♞xd5

Black now has a very good Scandinavian. White no longer has ♞c3 to gain a tempo on the queen.

5.♞f3

5.c4, to attack the queen, is also a move that is met quite often with amateurs and juniors. But it is not good: 5...♞e4+ 6.♞e2 ♞xe2+ 7.♙xe2 ♞c6 8.♞f3 e5 and we have a structure similar to the one we have already seen in the chapter on the Icelandic Gambit, and which we know is favourable to Black because of the weakness of the d-pawn on the semi-open file. However, the difference here is that Black has not even had to sacrifice a pawn to obtain it.

5...♞c6 6.♙e2

Very passive. 6.d4 led to a similar position to those studied in Chapter 4, except for one detail that does not fundamentally change the assessment of the position, that is, the absence of the knights on b1 and f6. After 6...♙g4 White has two options.

A) 7.c4 ♞f5! (better, here, than 7...♞h5, for after 8.♙e2 0-0-0 9.h3 e5 10.0-0 the absence of the f6-knight is felt when attacking the king position – see for example the difference with Game 19) 8.♙e2 0-0-0 and Black has a more pleasant position because of the usual pressure on the d4-pawn;

B) 7.♔e2 0-0-0 (certainly not 7...♙xf3 8.♙xf3 ♚xd4?? 9.♙xc6+ and the black queen is lost; a tactical trap which has already claimed many junior victims in the Scandinavian, unfortunately) 8.0-0 and in the game Dupont-Hornet, Junior Club Championship, France 2016, Black won the pawn: 8...♙xf3 9.♙xf3 ♚xd4, even if after 10.♚e2 he had to remain vigilant. 10...♘e5 must be played here to prevent both the exchange on c6 and also ♖d1 (because of the capture on f3). Black then has good chances to make his extra pawn count.

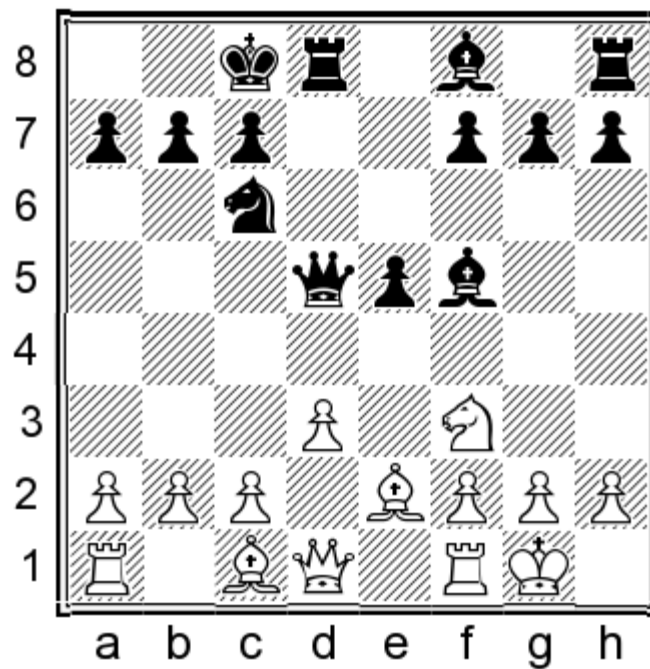
6...e5 7.d3

Black has the advantage in the centre.

7...♙f5

7...♙g4, to remain in the spirit of the Portuguese, does not bring much after 8.h3, when the bishop is obliged to retreat to f5 if it does not want to be exchanged.

8.0-0 0-0-0



Black is already slightly better.

9.♘h4 ♙g6 10.♙f3 ♚d6 11.♙e3 ♘b8 12.g3 f6 13.♘xg6?!

Too dangerous. This move opens the h-file for Black free of charge, but he was doing well anyway.

13...hxg6 14.♚e2 ♙e7 15.♖fd1 ♖h7

Black has a very simple plan: attack on the h-file! Faced with a former French veteran champion, and despite the 400 points difference, the young girl will be equal to the task.

16.♙g2 g5 17.c3 ♚e6 18.b4 ♖dh8

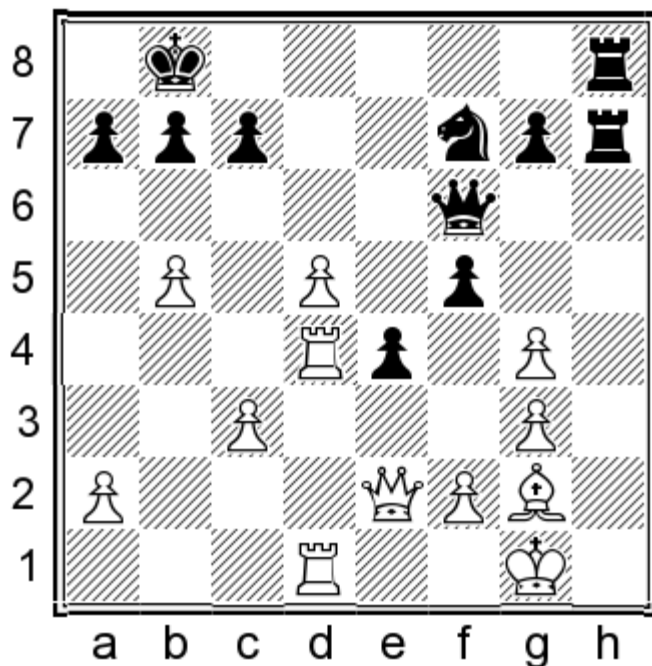
The black attack is already far more advanced than that of White on the queenside.

19.h3 f5

19...♖xh3! was very strong: 20.♙xh3 ♜xh3 21.♚f3 f5 with very good compensation for the exchange.

20.b5 ♜d8 21.d4 e4 22.d5 ♜g6 23.♙d4 ♙f6 24.♙xf6 ♜xf6 25.♞d4 ♜f7 26.♞ad1 g4! 27.hxg4

27.h4 g5 28.hxg5 ♜xg5 29.♞a4 ♜h6—+. The threat of 30...♚h1 is decisive!



27...♜h6!

Threatening the aesthetic 28...♚h1+!! followed by mate.

28.f3 e3

Renewing the threat, but 28...♚h2+ was much stronger: 29.♙f2 ♞h3—+.

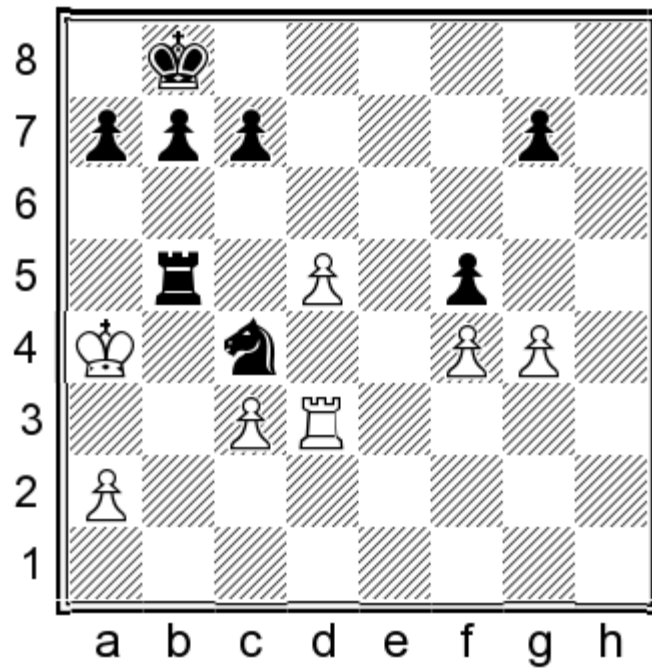
29.f4 ♜h2+ 30.♙f1 ♜xg3

Threatening 31...♞h1+!! this time.

31.♚f3 ♜xf3+ 32.♙xf3 ♞h2 33.♙g2?

He had to play 33.♙g1, even if after 33...♞f2 34.♞f1 (34.♙g2 ♞h4!—+) 34...♞hh2 Black is still winning.

33...e2+! 34.♙xe2 ♞xg2+ 35.♙d3 ♞h3+ 36.♙c4 ♜d6+ 37.♙b4 ♞b2+ 38.♙a3 ♞xb5 39.♞1d3 ♞xd3 40.♞xd3 ♜c4+ 41.♙a4



41...♖b2+?!

It was mate after 41...♖b2! followed by 42...b7-b5.

42.♙xb5 ♜xd3 43.gxf5 ♜xf4 44.♚c5 ♚c8 45.d6 cxd6+ 46.♚xd6 ♚d8 47.c4 ♜d3 48.♚e6 ♚e8 0-1

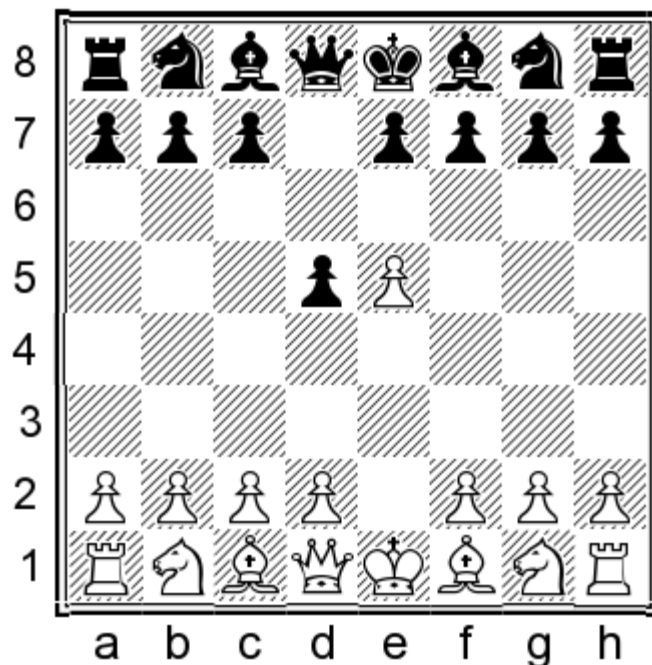
Game 44

Lionel Dubourg 1610

Franz Grothe 1639

Nancy 2015

1.e4 d5 2.e5?!

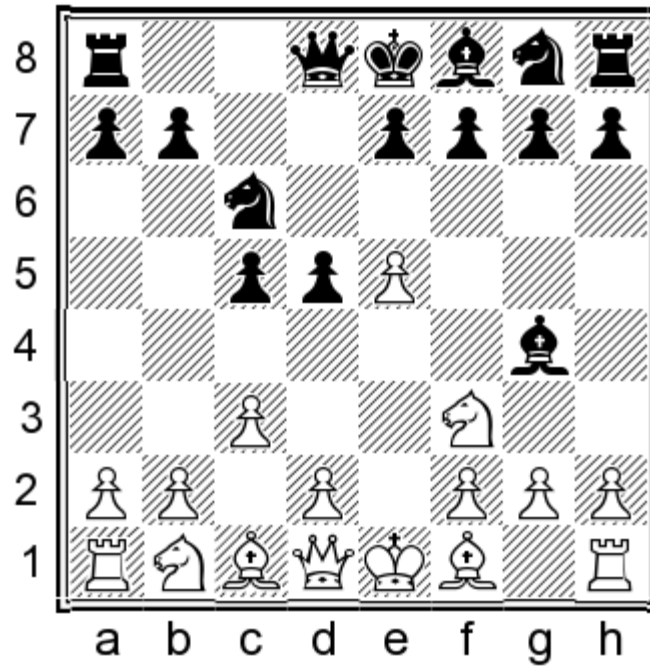


Another move that is frequently played by amateurs, but which is, frankly, no good. Let's see why. After the text move Black can choose to transpose into a French Defence (with 2...e6) or into a Caro-Kann Defence (after 2...c6), but there is much better, by playing an improved version of both these two openings (which are already in themselves very respectable). In the French the c8-bishop remains locked in its camp (because of the move ...e7-e6) and it rarely has an active role to play, whereas here it can be very advantageously developed to f5 or g4. Compared to the Caro-Kann, now Black has saved the ...c7-c6 move. This means that he will be able to push ...c7-c5 – a fundamental move in this type of structure where White has advanced his pawn to e4 – in one move (not bothering with ...c7-c6!). To have all the advantages of the French and the Caro-Kann, without the inconveniences – Black can't complain!

2...c5

2...♗f5 is also very good. Black will transpose into a Caro-Kann Defence in which he has the opportunity to play ...c7-c5 in one go.

3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.c3 ♗g4!



Of course!

A) 4...e6 5.d4 would give an 'ordinary' French;

B) 4...Bf5 was also quite possible, but on g4 the bishop participates in the fight for d4.

5.d4 e6

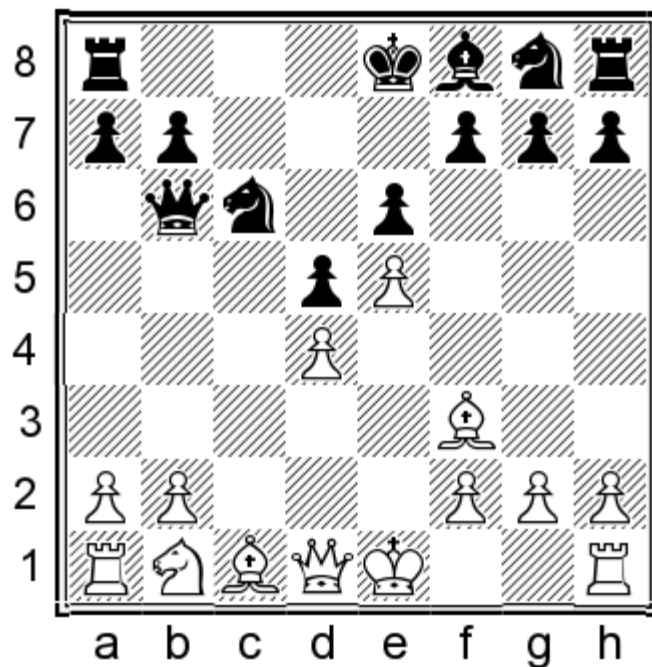
There we are. Here we have the same position as in a French Advance, with the – enormous – difference that the black light-squared bishop is actively developed on g4 instead of being enclosed on c8.

6.Be2?!

White already has a very uncomfortable position.

It was necessary to play 6.Bb5 so as to alleviate the pressure on d4, but it is heartbreaking for White, in this type of position, to have to exchange his good bishop, which would happen after 6...Qb6 7.Bxc6+ bxc6.

6...Bxf3 7.Bxf3 cxd4 8.cxd4 Qb6!



A typical move in the French Defence. The queen is very well placed on b6. From there it attacks the d4-pawn and puts pressure on b2, thus hindering the development of the c1-bishop. In fact, Black has a very favourable French Advance type of position, without the bad bishop on c8.

9.0-0?

White accepts the loss of a pawn without fighting. He had to at least try 9.♘e3, even if after 9...♙xb2 10.♘d2 ♘xd4 11.0-0 ♘xf3+ 12.♘xf3 it will be hard to find compensation for the two pawns deficit.

9...♙xd4 10.♙xd4 ♘xd4 11.♘d1 ♘c6

Black has a good extra pawn.

12.♘a4 ♘c5 13.♘g5 ♘d4

Winning a second pawn and the game.

14.♘c3 ♘xe5 15.♙fe1 f6 16.♘h4 ♘ge7

And 0–1 at move 33. Exploiting Black's material advantage poses no problems at all.

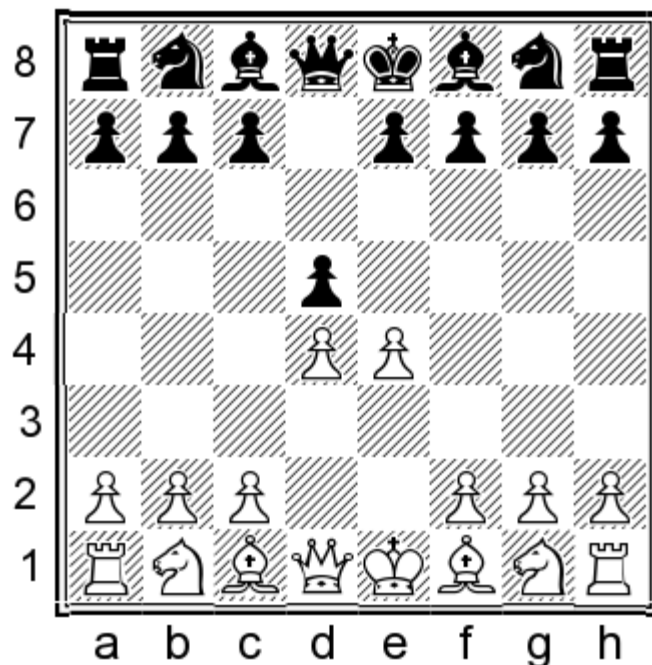
Game 45

Pierre Théon 2230

Éric Prié 2441

Val-d'Isère ch-FRA 2004

1.e4 d5 2.d4?!



The Blackmar-Diemer Gambit, more commonly known by its diminutive BDG (especially when writing!). This gambit is a rare bird among amateurs (and also for grandmasters, who consider it – quite rightly – to be dubious). It will be even more so against the Scandinavian, since BDG followers are mostly 1.d4 players (the normal move order is 1.d4 d5 2.e4), and they have no reason to begin with the king pawn. That said, the BDG remains a very dangerous weapon in the hands of a well-prepared player, and even more so against an opponent who is not. This is why, without going into great theoretical study (complete books deal with the BDG), a Scandinavian player must have an easy-to-learn system to counter this gambit.

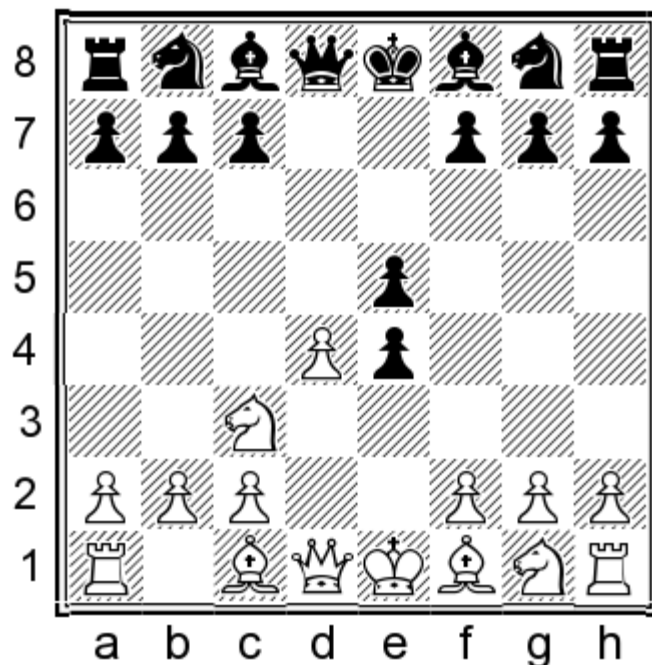
2...dxe4!

Anyone who has no knowledge of the BDG, and no desire to immerse themselves in its study, may very well decide to transpose into the French or Caro-Kann by playing 1...e6 or 1...c6, if one of these two openings is also part of his repertoire. But since the opponent offers a central pawn (for free!), why not accept it?

3.f3

3.f3?! would not be correct immediately because of the strong 3...e5! and White obviously cannot take on e4 because of the check on h4.

3...e5!?



There are many good systems against the BDG.

The text move is advocated by the two grandmasters Éric Prié and Christian Bauer, who are certainly the two leading Scandinavian Defence specialists in France (and also among the world's best). Éric has played it for a very long time at a very high level while contributing to its theoretical development, most notably on the site Chesspublishing.com, and the 2015 French champion Bauer recently devoted a book of more than 300 pages to it. This book, however, mainly focuses on the Classical Variation (2...♞xd5) and doesn't cover the Portuguese Variation.

The classical continuation is 3...♘f6, to which White invariably responds 4.f3, the essential BDG move, which gives rise to wild complications which we do not want to concern ourselves with here.

4.dxe5?!

After this move Black will be able to equalize or be better very easily.

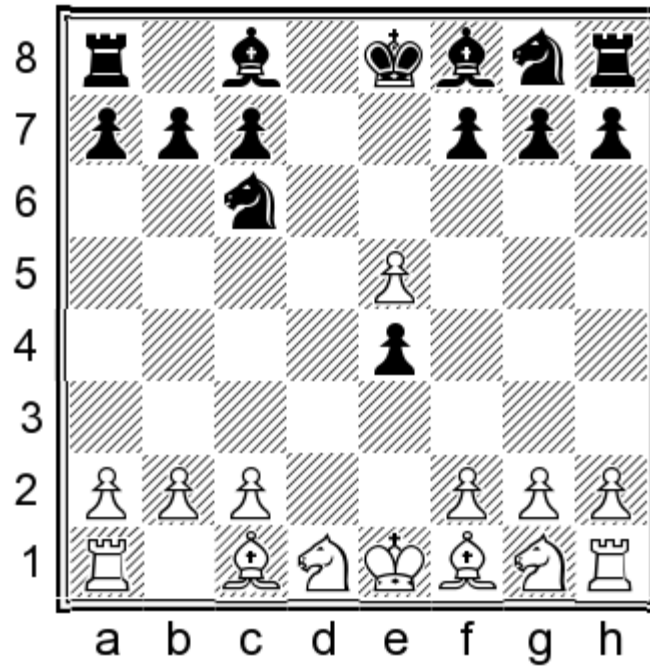
A) 4.♞h5 ♘f6!? 5.♞xe5+ ♘e7 6.♘xe4? (6.♙f4 c6=) 6...0-0. It is now Black who has a pawn less, but he has excellent compensation. White is way behind in development, his queen is exposed and the move ...♞e8 will be very unpleasant. 7.♙g5?, for example, would lose a piece after 7...♞e8 8.0-0-0 ♘xe4 9.♙xe7 ♞xe7+;

B) 4.♘xe4 is the main move after 3...e5!?. After 4...exd4 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.♙c4 ♙f5 7.0-0 ♙xe4 8.♞e1 ♙e7 9.♞xe4 ♘f6 10.♞e2 0-0 White has some compensation for the pawn with his pair of bishops, but Black has a very solid position.

4...♞xd1+ 5.♘xd1

The loss of castling rights would, of course, be a big concession on White's part.

5...♘c6



6. ♕f4?!

Christian Bauer considers 6. ♖c3 to be the only one that allows White to maintain equality. However, Black has every reason to be satisfied with the opening: the position is completely symmetrical after six moves and he has gained the advantage of being first to move!

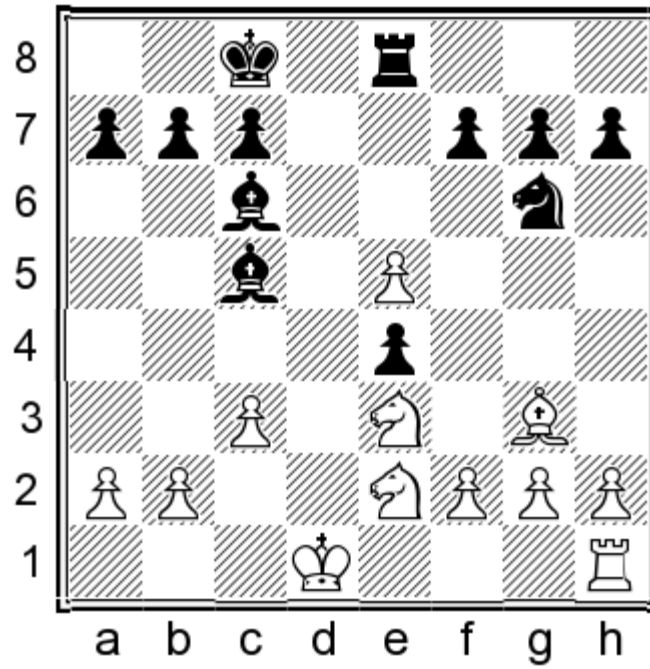
6... ♖ge7

White is already facing the threat of 7... ♖g6, which would win the e5-pawn. It is clear that White's e-pawn is much weaker than Black's.

7. ♕b5

7. ♖c3 ♖g6 8. ♕g3 ♕b4+.

7... ♕d7 8. ♖e3 0-0-0 9. ♕xc6 ♕xc6 10. ♖e2 ♖g6 11. ♖d1 ♕b4+ 12. c3 ♖xd1+ 13. ♖xd1 ♕c5 14. ♕g3 ♖e8



Black has a much superior position due to the bishop pair and the weakness of the e5-pawn.

15. ♖f5 ♜xe5 16. ♜xg7 ♞d8+ 17. ♔c2 e3! 18. ♙xe5

18. fxe3 ♙xg2 19. ♞d1 (19. ♞g1 ♙e4+ 20. ♔b3 ♜f3—+) 19... ♙e4+—+.

18... ♞d2+ 19. ♔b3 ♙xg2 20. ♞a1 ♞xe2 21. fxe3 ♞xe3 22. ♙g3 ♙d5+ 23. ♔a4

23. ♔c2 ♙f8 24. ♜h5 ♞e2+ 25. ♔d1 ♙f3—+.

23... ♙f8 24. ♜h5 ♞e6 0–1

The threat of 25... ♞a6, followed by 26...c6 mate, is decisive.

Let's finish our study of the Scandinavian with Rui Damaso, one of the fathers of the Portuguese Variation. That's the least we can do to honour him.

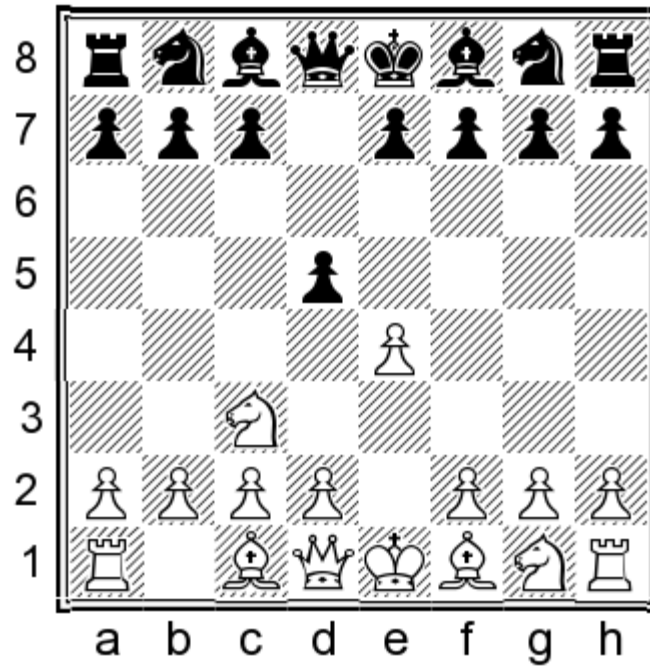
Game 46

Jose Alves Santos 2215

Rui Damaso 2465

Portugal 1997

1. e4 d5 2. ♜c3



2...d4

Here again the transpositional possibilities for Black are numerous: 2...e6 would give a French Defence, 2...c6 a Caro-Kann Defence and 2...f6 an Alekhine Defence. It is also possible to transpose into an improved version of the Caro-Kann, where Black hasn't wasted a tempo on playing the move 1...c6, after 2...dxe4 3. dxe4 f5 4. g3 g6.

But, here again, rather than just opting for a simple transposition why not choose an even stronger alternative just like in the two previous games? With 2. d3 White invites Black to gain some ground in the centre. There is no reason not to take advantage!

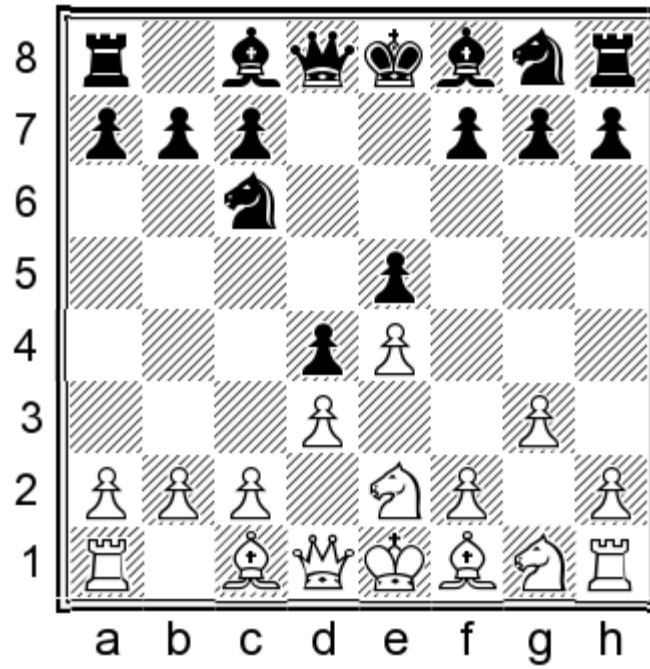
3. dce2 e5 4. d3

4. g3, so as to avoid enclosing the light-squared bishop and attempting to develop it on the f1-a6 diagonal, would be countered by the simple 4...f6! when the f1-bishop will have no good square on that diagonal (other than the rather passive e2).

4...d6

Black has gained the advantage in the centre and can develop without any problem.

5. g3



5...h5!?

A very aggressive move, very much in the style of the Portuguese IM.

6.f4?

Too weakening (particularly for the e3-square, as will be seen in a few moves).

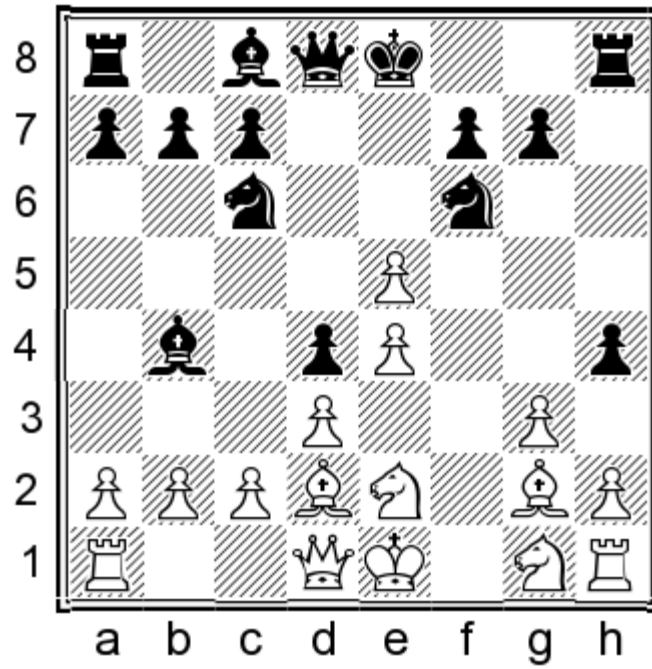
6.♘f3 was better, even if after 6...♙g4 7.♙g2 ♔f6 8.♙g5 ♔g6 9.h4 ♙e7 10.♙xe7 ♘gxe7 Black has a much easier to play position than White.

6...h4

Black already has a strong initiative.

7.♙g2 ♙b4+ 8.♙d2 ♘f6 9.fxe5?

He should not have let a black knight get to g4, but it's clear that 9.h3 hxg3 was not very appealing to White.



9...Ng4! 10.c3

Forced, otherwise the black knight lands decisively on e3.

10...cxe5! 11.f4

11.cxb4 Nxd3+ 12.f1 df2 13.Wa4+ Qd7-+.

11...Qc5 12.Wa4+

White no longer has any good moves.

12.c4 g5 and if the knight goes away Black takes on d3.

12.f3 h3! 13.fxh3 Nxd3+ 14.f2 Nxb2-+.

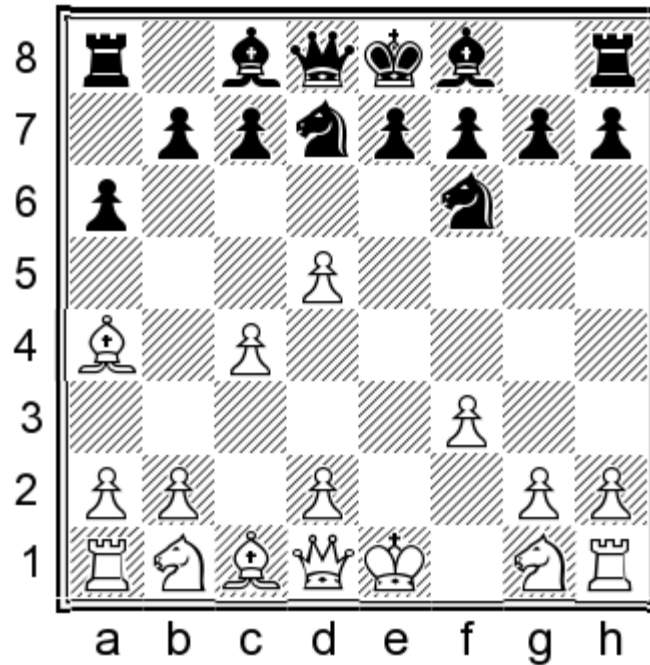
12...Qd7 13.Wc2 hxg3 14.hxg3 Rxb1 15.Qxb1 dxc3

Black wins a piece.

16.Wxc3 Qxg1 17.d4 Qf2+ 0-1

Your move!

37



White has clung on to the c4-pawn and retreated his bishop to a4. What is Black's best strategy in this situation?

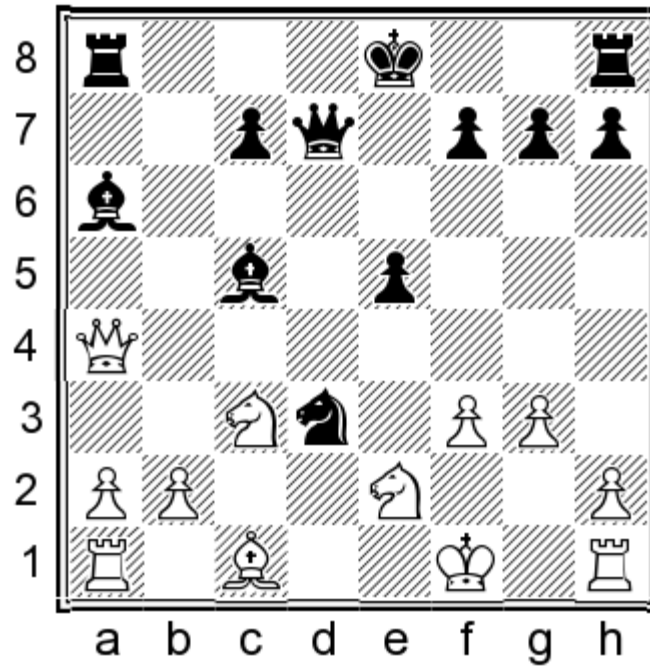
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10...b5!

A classic theme in this type of position, which will allow Black to regain the d5-pawn.

(See Game 42, **Raulin-Baris**)

38



Black would like to mate on h3, but for now his queen is pinned. How to remedy this problem?

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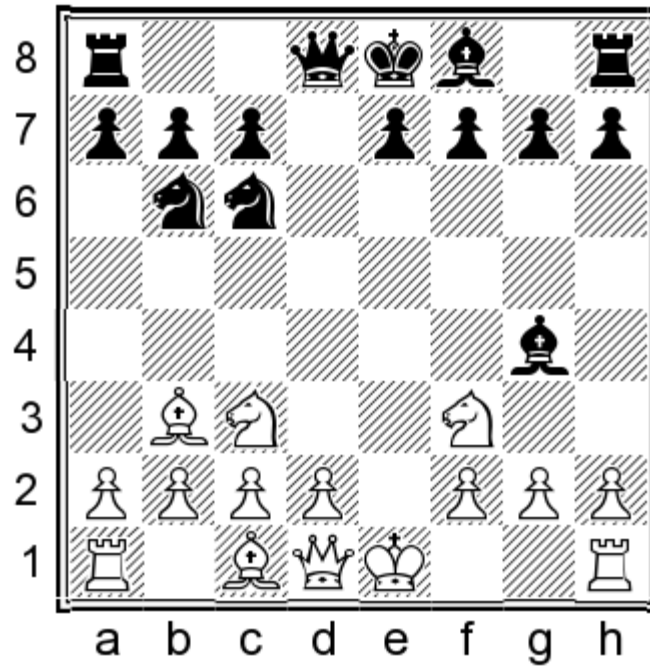
20...♙b5!! 21.♚xa8+

21.♚xb5 c6.

21...♔e7

and White loses her queen if she does not want to be mated.

(See Game 42, **Raulin-Baris**)

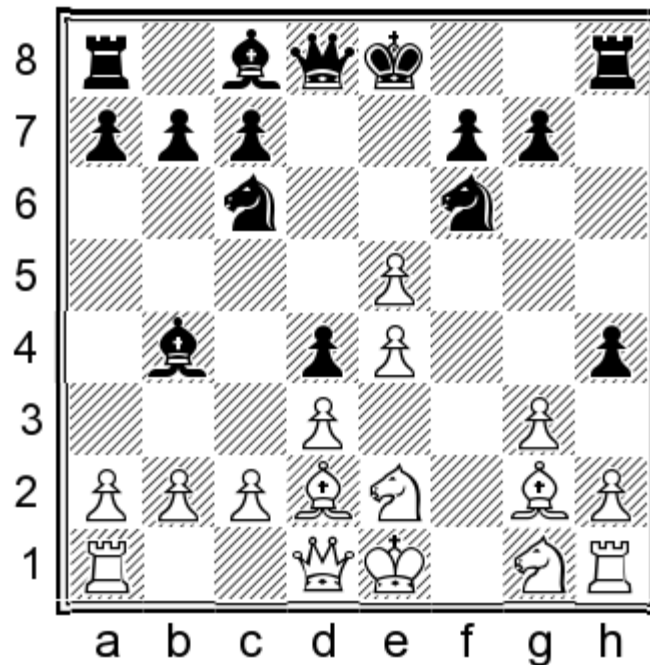


Why should Black certainly not develop his bishop to g4 in this position?

Show/Hide the Solution

7. ♖xf7+! ♜xf7 8. ♘g5+-

(See Game 43, **Turboust-Crabie**)



White has just captured on e5. How does Black seize the initiative?

Show/Hide the Solution

9... g4!

and the knight goes to e3, which will give Black a very strong initiative.

(See Game 46, **Alves Santos-Damaso**)

Chapter 8

The Albin Countergambit

After having found an opening against 1.e4 the player who is seeking to build an opening repertoire with black will inevitably – and very quickly – have to consider 1.d4.

Admittedly, the move 1.e4 is predominant in junior and amateur games (rather more than one game in two), but this is no reason to overlook the queen's pawn.

As against 1.e4, the choice is vast, especially with the large Indian family, whether Queen's, King's or Nimzo, not to mention the Slavs and the many variations of the Queen's Gambit. These openings are all very respectable, but they risk disorientating – or even discouraging – the amateur with the large mass of theory they contain.

Our slogan will therefore be the same as the one that led us to choose the Scandinavian against 1.e4: to find an opening without major theoretical lines, that's easy to learn, which allows us to play beautiful attacking games and which offers real practical chances that outweigh the theoretical value.

So, naturally there is the idea of playing a gambit, one of those openings where a player seeks to rapidly gain the initiative, even at the cost of a pawn.

Together with the Benko Gambit and the Budapest Gambit, the Albin Countergambit is one of the three most played gambits after 1.d4. It is this latter that I will propose studying in this chapter.

The Albin Countergambit has all the ingredients for the attacking player. First, there is a well-known trap into which many amateurs fall (on White's side!). Just by itself this trap almost justifies playing the Albin Countergambit against amateur players, but, of course, the Albin Countergambit is not just limited to this trap. Even if White avoids it (which will happen anyway – it must be admitted – most of the time), Black will then most likely play a game with opposite-side castling where his chances will be far from worse, especially against unprepared players, as will often be the case. Many young 1.d4 players arrive at the chessboard armed with hyper-aggressive variations against the King's Indian or the Queen's Gambit, but very few are prepared against the Albin Countergambit. Unless you play against an IM or a GM the surprise effect is likely to be real.

As in our Scandinavian the theory of the Albin Countergambit is not very well developed (in any case much less than openings such as the King's Indian or the Slav Defence), even if the strong Belgian player Luc Henris devoted a book of over 500 pages to it.

The Albin Countergambit takes its name from the Romanian player Adolf Albin, who used it for the first time in New York in 1893 against Emmanuel Lasker, the future World Champion. Although he was victorious, Lasker was seduced by the opening – so much so that he quickly adopted it with black. He was followed in this by Alekhine, who did not hesitate to play the Albin Countergambit (against Lasker himself, no less) during the legendary St Petersburg tournament in 1914. During the interwar period Tartakower was the most fervent adept of the Albin Countergambit, which then experienced a long period of scarcity at the highest level, until supergrandmaster Alexander Morozevich took it out of the closet in the early 2000s with some new ideas that enabled him to win resounding victories against the best in the world. FIDE World Champion Rustam Kasimdzhanov followed suit and also achieved very good results against the elite. Boris Gelfand, former World Championship finalist and renowned for his theoretical preparation with white, was a notable victim of the Albin Countergambit on two occasions, specifically when facing Morozevich and Kasimdzhanov. The latter has recently made a DVD on the Albin Countergambit, which is, according to him, one of the most active Black openings against 1.d4. No reason, therefore, not to try it. And what's more, to adopt it!

Here are the fundamental opening moves of the Albin Countergambit:

1.d4 d5

The most natural answer to 1.d4 (just as 1...e5 is against 1.e4), and the most commonly played move among amateurs.

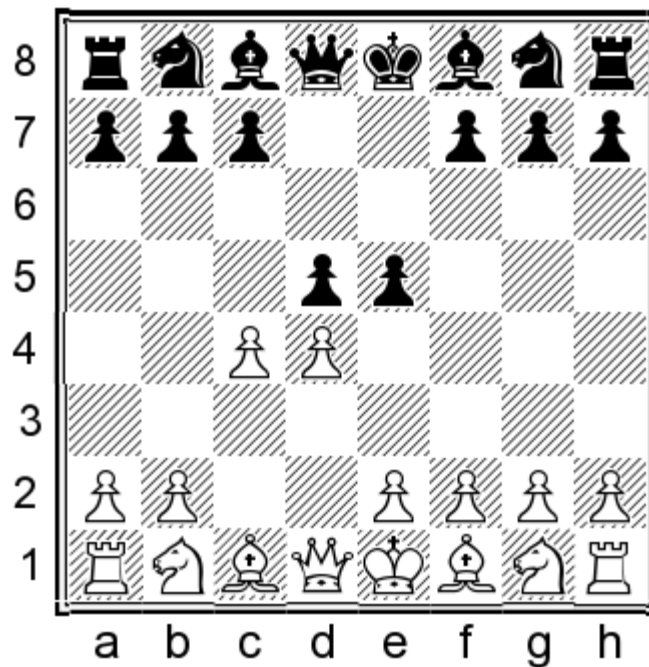
2.c4

Here too, the most popular move for White, who offers the classic Queen's Gambit. After the move 2.c4 Black has three main options that are favoured by theory:

- 1) Take the c-pawn and accept the gambit. Which, besides, is a false gambit, since White could, if he wanted, recover the pawn immediately by playing ♔a4+.
- 2) Protect the d5-pawn by playing 2...e6 in order to keep a presence in the centre.
- 3) Protect the d5-pawn by 2...c6, the Slav Defence.

But there is also a fourth possibility...

2...e5!?



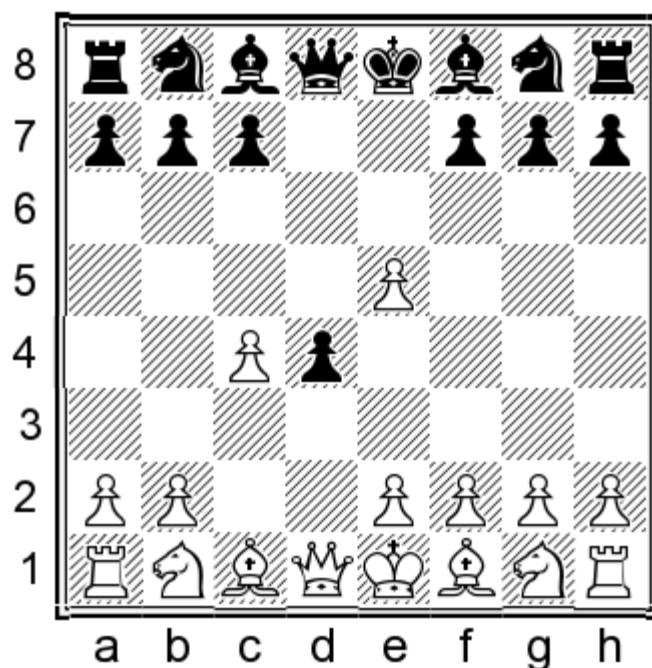
The Albin Countergambit! Rather than modestly moving his e-pawn one square, which would enclose his light-squared bishop and lead to the classic Queen's Gambit main lines, Black decides to advance it two squares. Of course, in so doing, he sacrifices it.

Pay attention to a very important point that must be made clear right now: Black can only play the Albin Countergambit against the Queen's Gambit (2.c4), although this remains the main choice after 1.d4 d5. On any other second move by White you will need an alternative opening in your arsenal. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

3.dxe5

White has little choice and must accept the challenge. At the end of the chapter we will see all the ways to refuse the gambit, moves that are frequently played by amateurs who do not know the theory of the Albin Countergambit and who are surprised by 2...e5. Good news (for Black!): none of these refusals of the gambit pose any problem.

3...d4



The basic position of the Albin Countergambit. How strange this opening must seem at first sight. One can reasonably wonder what Black could have been thinking when he played 2...e5. He is now a pawn down without the slightest lead in development. In addition, the white king does not seem to be in any danger. And yet Black does have some compensation for his small investment.

First of all, his development will be easier thanks to the two open diagonals for his two bishops. In particular, the c8-bishop is not closed in as in classic Queen's Gambit Declined positions with ...e7-e6. It can be developed, as desired, on e6, f5 or g4. Just like its light-squared team-mate, the f8-bishop has a nice diagonal and will be able to choose between the squares e7, c5 and, above all, b4. The third option will often wreak havoc, as we will see in the first two games. This is the reason, moreover, why Black rarely plays ...c7-c5 in the Albin Countergambit, so as to avoid obstructing the bishop's diagonal. The b8-knight will develop to its natural square on c6 and the g8 one can come to g6 via e7. The two knights will thus put pressure on the e5-pawn. The black queen, for its part, will either be positioned on d7, or on e7 in order to reinforce the attack on the e5-pawn. In many cases Black will be able to easily recover the e5-pawn and thus restore material equality, with, most of the time, a freer game.

Finally, the black king will very often find refuge on the queenside, and there will follow opposite-side castling attacks in which Black will often be the first to fire.

As can be seen, Black's possibilities are numerous. Besides, he can also play ...f7-f6 at one time or another, with the intention this time of proposing a true gambit rather than trying to recover the e5-pawn. This option is very interesting, but in the necessarily limited scope of this book we will not expand on it. We will see just two examples, in Games 49 and 50, where White clings on to his e5-pawn with f2-f4 (Black no longer had any choice and could not try to retrieve the e5-pawn the natural way).

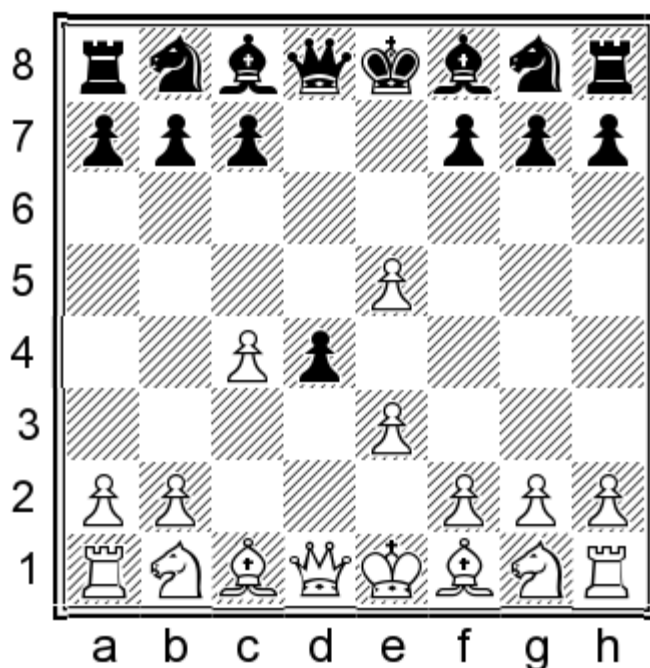
All this already represents good compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but that's not all. White is himself greatly hampered by the strong d4-pawn and will experience some difficulties developing his pieces. The b1-knight, for example, does not have its natural square on c3, and we will see in the first game that White cannot play e2-e3 to release the f1-bishop. This is indeed the great Albin Countergambit trap announced in the introduction, and with which we will naturally begin. To illustrate this I have chosen one of my own games, because it was as amusing as it was extraordinary, but I could have chosen many others. In my personal practice alone four of my opponents have fallen into this trap out of a dozen Albin Countergambits that I have played with black in official games, and there are dozens

of other examples in Mega Database. I can only hope that you manage to play it yourself one day. It is the dream of every Albin Countergambit player.

Game 47
Philippe Stanczyk
Vincent Moret
Jarny 1995

My opponent was a very promising young twelve-year-old boy who was regional champion in his category. He had been playing the Queen's Gambit for a while, but was completely unaware of the Albin Countergambit.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.e3?

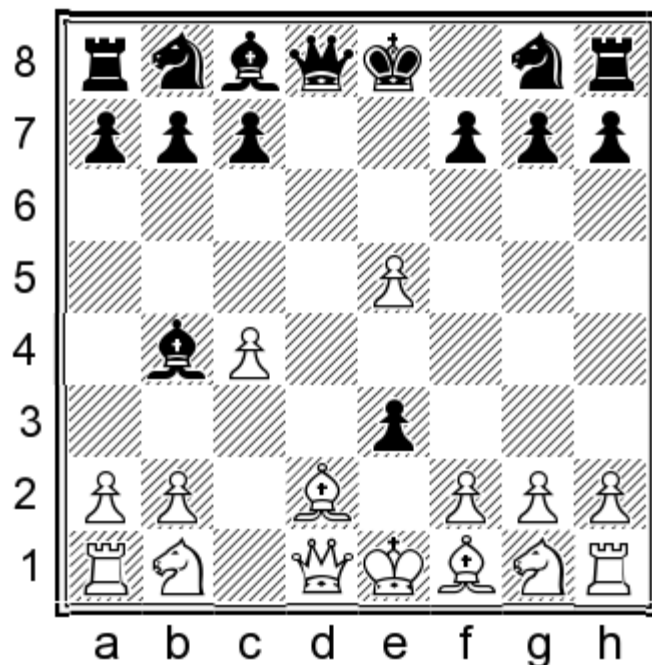


The reply that all Albin Countergambit players hope for. It's a natural move, to get rid of the advanced pawn, but it's bad. White is now on the edge of the abyss.

4...♙b4+ 5.♙d2

5.♘d2 will hardly occur to a player who does not suspect what is hanging over his head. And he who does suspect it will obviously never play 4.e3. After 5...dxe3 6.fxe3 ♖h4+ 7.g3 ♗e4 8.♘gf3 ♘c6 Black has the same type of advantage as will be dealt with in the following game: namely a better pawn structure because of the two isolated and weak white e-pawns.

5...dxe3!



The opening trap, played countless times in amateur games. As mentioned above, this alone would almost justify playing the Albin Counter gambit.

6. ♖xb4??

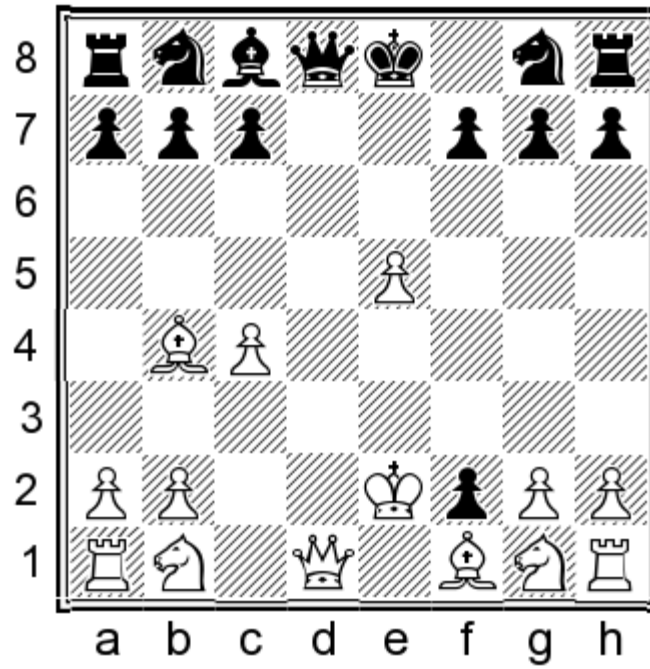
White falls into the trap. We can count 59 victims in Mega Database 2017, including two players with a rating of over 2200 Elo. Out of these 59 games Black has a 94% score, which is still below what it should be.

Contrary to what some commentators thought last century, the move 6. ♖a4+ does not save White: 6... ♟c6! 7. ♙xb4 (7. fxe3 ♖h4+ 8. g3 ♖e4—+) 7... exf2+ (7... ♖h4, as Lasker played against Blumenfeld in Moscow in 1899, is also strong: 8. g3 exf2+ 9. ♙xf2 ♖d4+ 7) 8. ♙xf2 ♖h4+ (more precise than the immediate check on d4; the idea is to provoke the move g2-g3) 9. g3 (I will let you check that all the king moves are immediately losing) 9... ♖d4+ 10. ♙g2 (10. ♙e1 ♖e4+ 11. ♙f2 ♖xh1 12. ♟f3 ♟h6 and the menace of ... ♟g4 will allow the black queen to come out) 10... ♖xb2+ 11. ♙e2 ♖xa1 (amusing: in the previous note the black queen captured the h1-rook) 12. ♟f3 ♖b2 and the queen comes out again.

White has to resign himself to accepting a slightly worse position after 6. fxe3 ♖h4+ 7. g3 ♖e4 8. ♖f3 (8. ♟f3? ♖xe3+) 8... ♙xd2+ 9. ♟xd2 ♖xe5 and Black, who has recovered his pawn, is now significantly better thanks to his superior pawn structure.

6...exf2+ 7. ♙e2

The king can obviously not take the pawn, because it has to protect the queen.



7...fxg1=♖+!

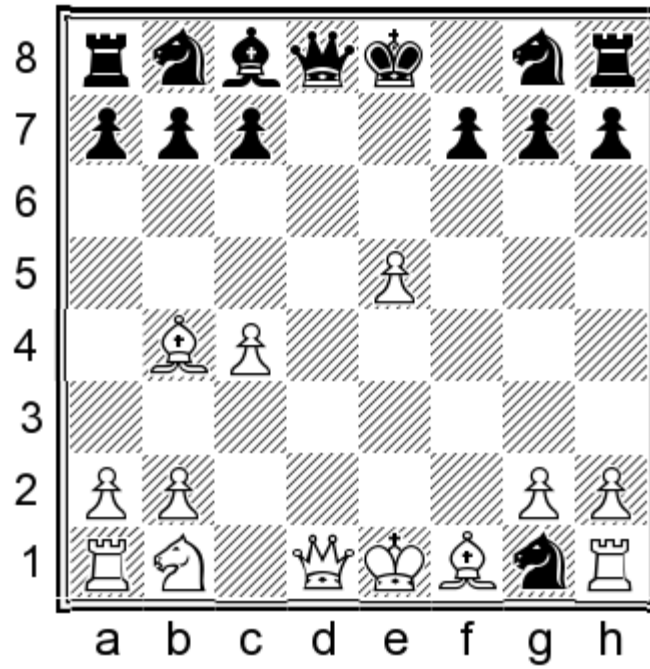
The pretty point of the variation that all Albin Counter gambit players dream of playing one day. It is important to promote with check.

Certainly not 7...fxg1=♚? because of 8.♚xd8+ – intermediate check! – 8...♔xd8 9.♖xg1 and everything is in order for White. After the game my young opponent confessed that he had only counted on this continuation when he captured the b4-bishop on the sixth move.

7...♗g4+ gives nothing, obviously, because the knight interposes.

8.♔e1

8.♖xg1? ♗g4+ was the end of the game Forlani-Roesch, National 1 Junior 1999 (Under 10 category) and 24 others in the 2017 Mega Database.



After the text move we are in the presence of a very original position. Four knights are on the initial squares reserved for knights, but the one on g1 is black! Black therefore has one extra piece at the moment. But the question is to know whether the g1-knight will be able to get out.

8...♖h4+ 9.♔d2

9.g3 ♖e4+-+.

9...♖f2+

Unable to actually release the knight for the moment, Black protects it.

9...♘c6 is also possible, and strong.

10.♔c1

On 10.♙e2 the g1-knight would obviously be very happy to escape by being exchanged.

10...♙g4! 11.♖xg4

Threatening mate on c8!

If 11.♖e1 ♘e2+ 12.♙xe2 ♖xe2 Black has an extra piece.

11...♖xf1+ 12.♔c2

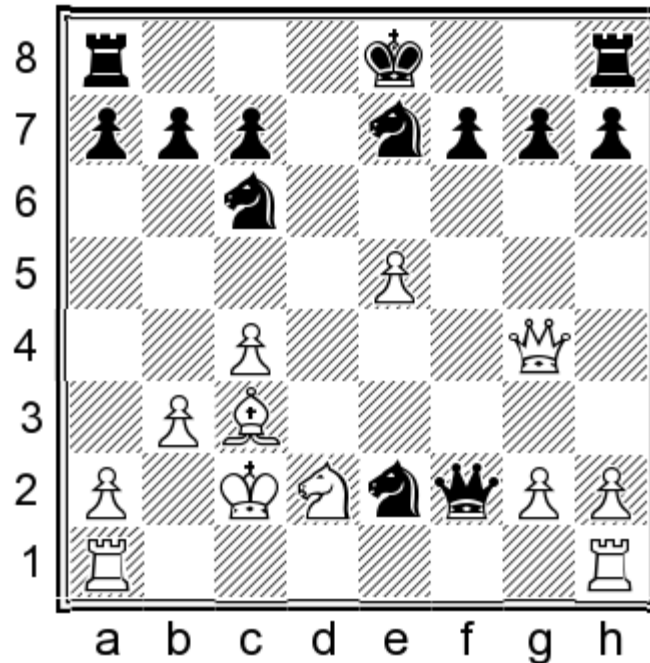
If 12.♖d1 ♘e2+ 13.♔d2 ♖xd1+ 14.♙xd1 ♘f4, just as in the game, Black will play with his three knights.

12...♘c6 13.♙c3 ♘ge7 14.b3

To protect the a1-rook and to try to get the b1-knight out.

14...♖f2+ 15.♔d2 ♘e2

The knight finally comes out. Black now has a piece more and will play with three knights. Of course, White could have stopped here.



16.♖hf1 ♜e3 17.♙b2 0-0

17...♞d8 wins right away, because White cannot defend both the d2-knight and the d3-square.

18.a3 ♞g6 19.♞ad1 ♞gf4 20.♙b1 ♞cd4

We know the strength of the queen + knight duo. But what about the queen + three knights quartet, then!?

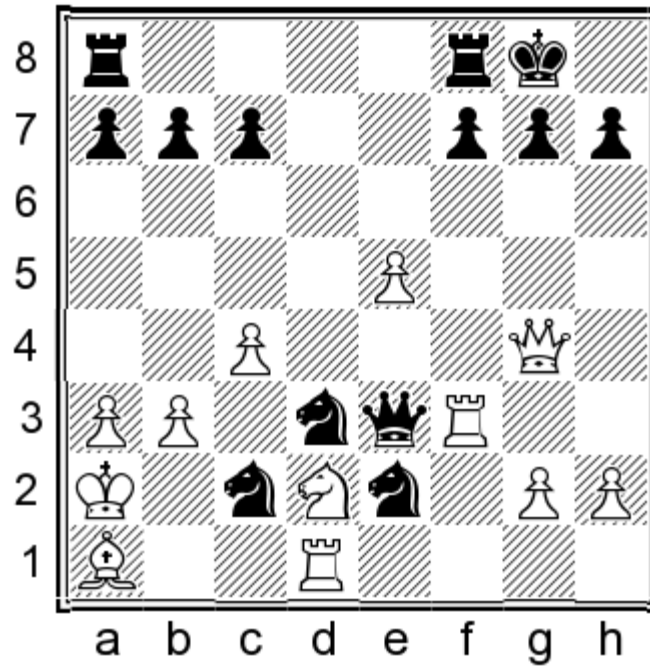
21.♙a2

White wants to maintain his b2-bishop at all costs. Visibly, he still placed some hope on the e5-e6 move, and an eventual attack on g7. Evidently White has to try to diminish Black's firepower by exchanging at least one of the knights. Even if, after 21.♙xd4 ♜d3+ 22.♙a2 ♜c2+ 23.♙b2 ♞d3 24.♞b1 ♞c3+, the die is also cast.

21...♞d3 22.♙a1 ♞c2

The cavalry charge!

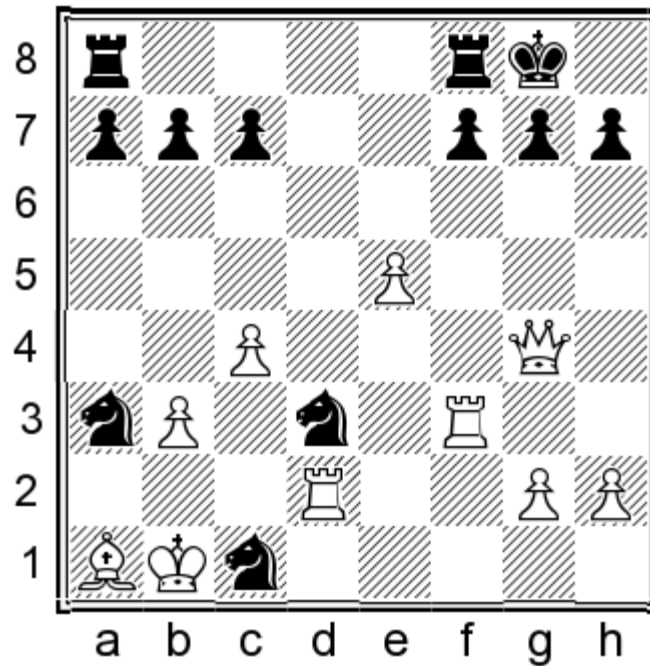
23.♞f3



23...Qxd2! 24.Rxd2

My opponent was sufficiently accommodating not to give up too soon, and thus allow a nice finish.

24...Nec1+ 25.Kb1 Nxa3#



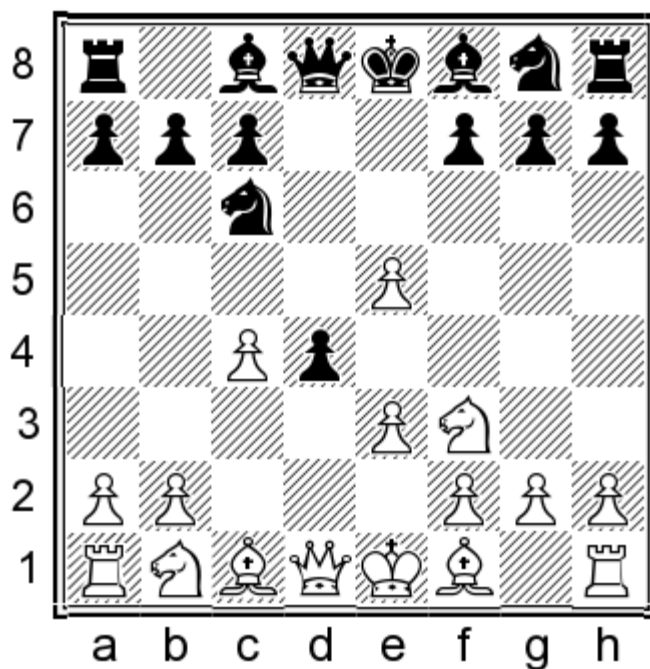
An original mate with three knights, which does not happen every day. Shortly after this game I started working with the following youngster, and the first thing we learned was the Albin Countergambit. From the black side, obviously.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.♘f3

A good move, since 4.e3 is not possible.

4...♘c6 5.e3?

Even if it does not lead to the rout of the previous game, this natural move is once again not correct.



5...♙b4+ 6.♙d2

Not surprisingly, 6.♘bd2 is unsatisfactory. After 6...dxe3 7.fxe3 ♙g4 8.♙e2 ♙xf3 9.♙xf3 ♙h4+ 10.g3 ♙xc4 Black has restored material equality and has a much better pawn structure. Again we see the doubled e-pawns that we met in the notes to the previous game, and which will be the theme of this game.

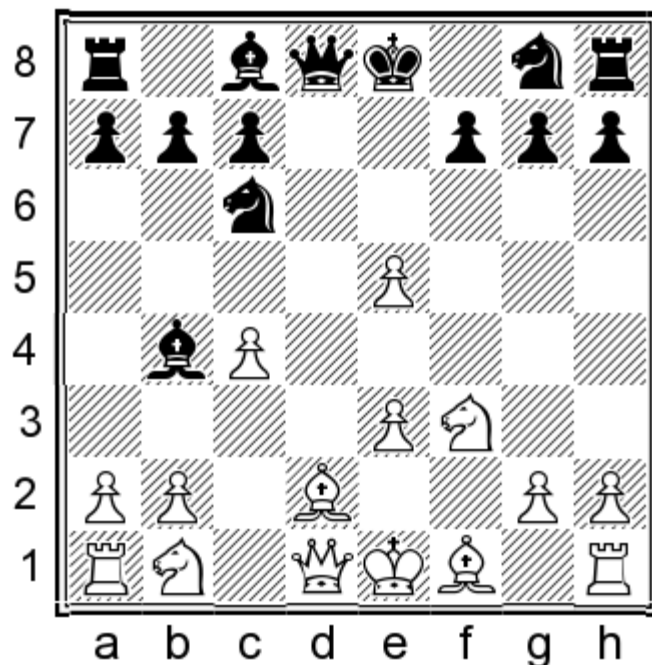
6...dxe3

As in the previous game! With the difference, however, that there is no longer a knight on g1 to capture at the end of the variation. On the other hand, the b4-bishop is no longer hanging, as it is protected by the c6-knight.

7.fxe3

7.♙xb4 exf2+ 8.♙e2 ♙xd1+ 9.♙xd1 ♘xb4.

After the recapture on e3 we have a structure with two doubled and isolated white central pawns on the semi-open e-file.



Certainly, this structure does not lead to an automatic win for Black, but it is very favourable for him. He will play ...♗ge7-g6, possibly followed by ...♖e7 – and if that is not enough, ...♜fe8 after kingside castling – to attack the e5-pawn, which should fall very quickly. Then Black will direct his efforts to the e3-pawn, which risks suffering the same fate. In very many games with this structure Black wins the two white pawns pretty easily. Of course, it will then remain to exploit the advantage of the extra pawn, but that is another problem.

7...♗g4

One notices the easy development of the black pieces. For his part, White has big problems defending the e5-pawn.

8.♗e2

Many moves have been tried in this position, but none is really satisfactory (for White!).

A) 8.♖a4 is strongly answered by 8...♗xf3 9.gxf3 ♗xd2+ 10.♗xd2 ♖h4+ 11.♗e2 ♗h6 and 12.f4 is not possible because of 12...♗g4 13.♗e4 0-0-0 with a big advantage for Black, because the position of the white king is hardly enviable;

B) 8.a3 ♗xd2+ 9.♗bxd2 ♗xe5+. White must also monitor the d3-square.

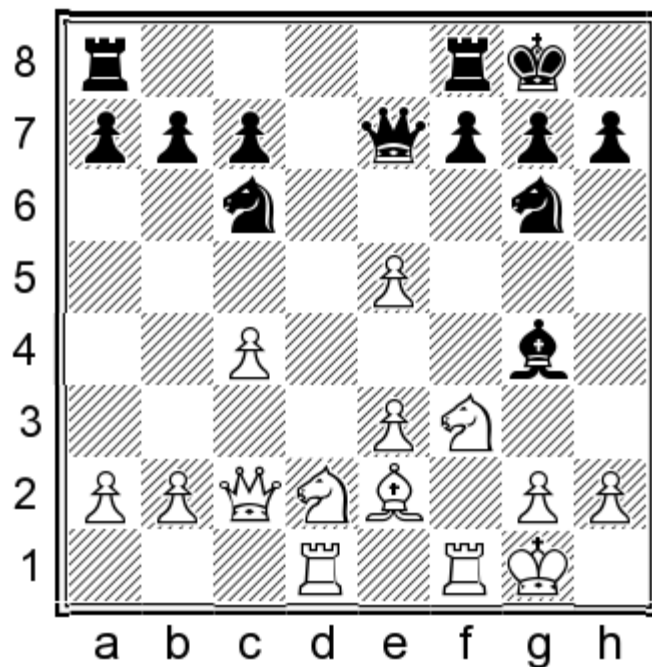
C) 8.♗xb4 ♖xd1+ 9.♗xd1 ♗xb4 10.♗a3 was played in the game Draillard-Chrétien, France Top Junior 2001. After 10...0-0-0+ 11.♗e1 ♗e7 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.gxf3 ♗f5 14.e4 ♗d4 15.♗f2 ♜he8 16.♗g1 g6 17.f4 Black had a big positional advantage that he could have increased by playing 17...f6! 18.exf6 ♞xe4+;

D) 8.♗c3 is still the best – the only move, without doubt, that stops White from falling into a disadvantageous position: 8...♗h6! 9.a3 ♗e7 10.♗e2 0-0 11.0-0 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 ♗xe5 13.♗xb7 ♞b8 and Black will recover c4 or b2, and have at least equality.

8...♗ge7

8...♗xf3 9.♗xf3 ♖h4+ 10.g3 ♖xc4 was also possible and was perhaps even stronger.

9.0-0 ♗xd2 10.♗bxd2 0-0 11.♖c2 ♗g6 12.♞ad1 ♖e7



This is the right piece set-up for Black with this pawn structure. The two knights and the queen on e7 put pressure on the e5-pawn, which cannot be defended, and the two rooks will develop on the central files, to e8 and d8. Black has a good positional advantage.

13.h3

In the game Djian-De Talancé, France Top Junior 2013, White played 13.♖e4, but blundered immediately afterwards: 13...♟gxe5 14.♞xe5? ♙xe2–+.

13...♙xf3

13...♞cxe5! 14.hxg4 ♞xg4 and the threats to the e3-pawn more than compensate for the sacrificed piece.

14.♞xf3 ♟gxe5 15.♞xe5 ♞xe5

Black has recovered the e5-pawn and will now go after the one on e3.

16.b3 ♖ad8 17.♞d4 ♖fe8 18.♖fd1? ♞c6 19.♖xd8

19.♞4d3 was obviously not possible because of 19...♞b4–+.

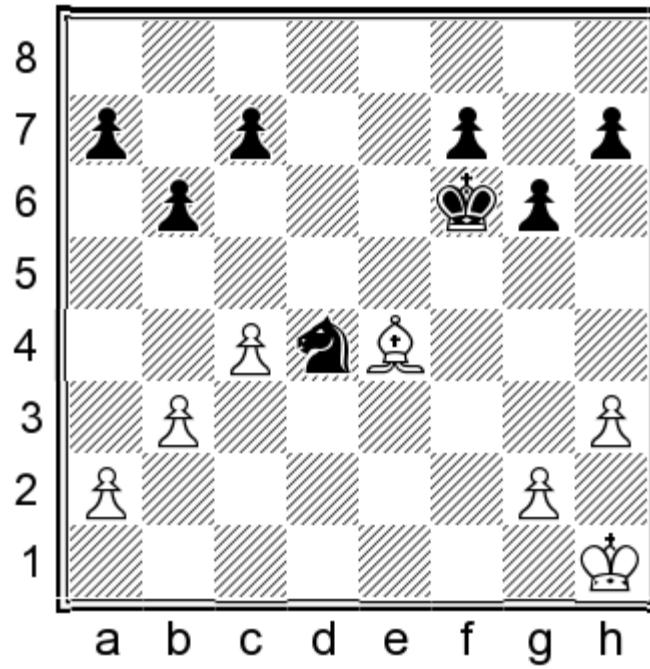
19...♖xe3+

Intermediate check!

20.♔h1 ♖xd8 21.♖xd8+ ♞xd8

There we go: Black has finally won the two white e-pawns. Now we enter the phase of converting the material advantage. Which is perhaps not so simple – it must be admitted – for players who do not have a grandmaster's technique.

22.♖d1 ♞e6 23.♙f3 b6 24.♖d7 g6 25.♖c8+ ♔g7 26.♖b7 ♞d4 27.♖e4 ♖xe4 28.♙xe4 ♔f6



With an extra pawn, a more active king and a strong knight, the game is won for Black. No need of grandmasterly technique now.

29.♔g1 ♚e2+ 30.♕f2 ♚c3

Winning a second pawn.

31.♙f3 ♚xa2 32.♕e3 ♕e5 33.♙d5 f5 34.♙g8 h6 35.♙f7 g5 36.♙d5 ♚c3 37.♙f3 ♚e4 38.♙e2 f4+ 39.♕d3 ♚c5+ 40.♕c3 ♚e4+ 41.♕d3 ♚f2+ 42.♕d2 ♕d4 43.♙f3 ♚e4+ 44.♕e1 ♕e3 45.b4 a5 46.bxa5 bxa5 47.♙d1 ♚c3 48.♙c2 a4 0–1

You are now convinced (I hope!) that White cannot play e2-e3 on the fourth move, nor even on the fifth after having interposed ♙f3 and ...♚c6 – both attempts lead to disaster.

Let us now see if White cannot advance his e-pawn two squares, instead.

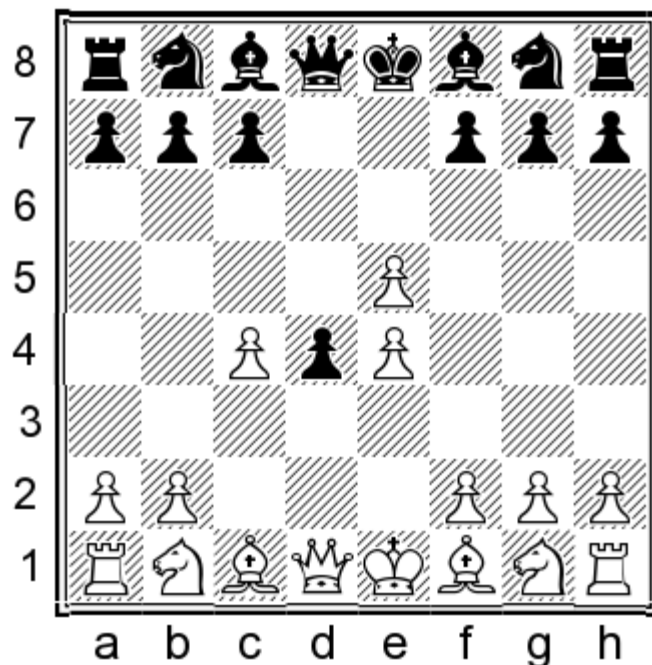
Game 49

Marie Bazzara

Romarc Mathieu 2030

La Bresse 1998

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.e4



A move that was played several times by Boris Spassky, so much so that the name of the former World Champion was given to this variation with 4.e4. Capturing *en passant* would obviously give nothing, because White would exchange the queens with check before recapturing on e3.

On the other hand, after White plays 4.e4 the black d4-pawn becomes even stronger (White will no longer have the opportunity to try to exchange it in the middlegame by playing e2-e3), and in the case of a very hypothetical endgame it will already be passed and may even, if necessary, be supported by the c5-pawn.

4...♖c6

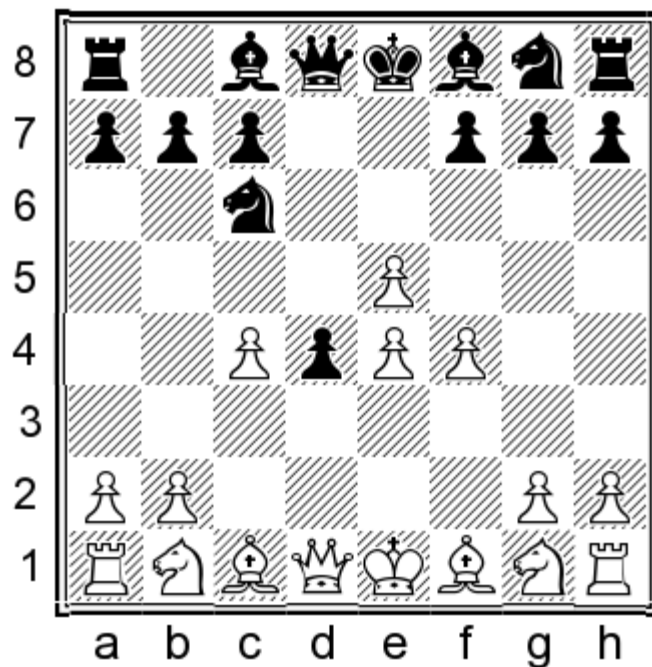
Boris Spassky mischievously remarked that, after 4...♖b4+ 5.♙d2, Black can no longer take *en passant* to try to transpose back into the trap of Game 47.

5.f4

The only way to justify the move 4.e4. White hangs on to the e5-pawn.

A) 5.♘f3 ♗ge7 gives Black a good advantage. The e5-pawn will fall rapidly after ...♗g6 and Black will keep his very strong pawn on d4;

B) 5.♙f4 is no better: 5...♗ge7 (the right way to respond to the set-up with ♙f4; the move ...♗g6 will be even more unpleasant, since it will also attack the f4-bishop) 6.♙g3 h5 7.h3 (7.h4 ♗g6 followed by 8...♙e7 and it's finally the h4-pawn that has to worry) 7...g5 – with the idea ...♗g6 – gave Black the advantage in the game Janowski-Maróczy, Munich 1900.



5...f6!

This is the refutation of the system according to GM Olivier Renet, one of France's Albin Countergambit specialists. Since Black will not be able to recover the e5-pawn, he opts for a real gambit.

6.exf6

White can decline the sacrifice but this would obviously pose no problem for Black, who would easily recapture the e5-pawn.

For example, 6.♘f3 fxe5 7.fxe5 ♗g4, followed by the usual knight manoeuvre ...♘ge7–g6, leaves Black with a very nice position.

6...♗xf6

For the sacrificed pawn Black already has his two knights developed (against none for White), and the d4-pawn, which prevents ♗c3, is still just as strong.

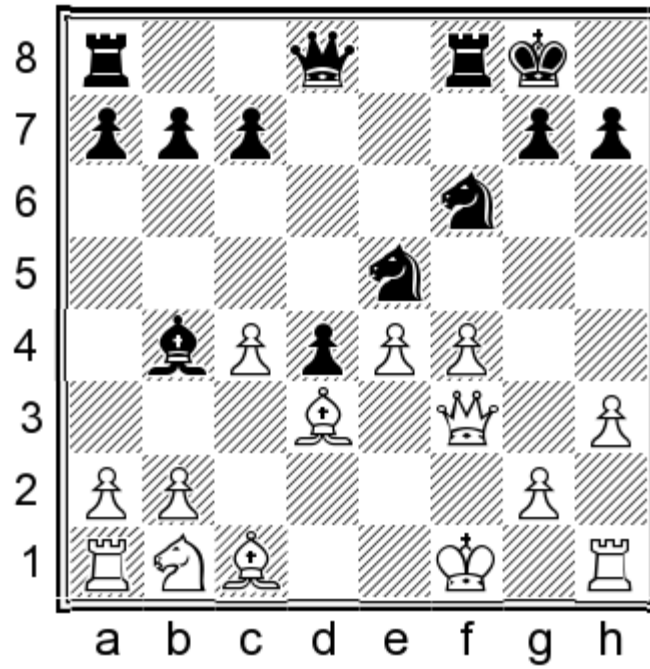
7.♙d3 ♙b4+

Again this check!

8.♙d2

A) After 8.♙d2 0-0 9.♘gf3 ♗g4, just as in this game, the e3-square is very weak;

B) 8.♙f1 to avoid ...♗g4 and the invasion of the e3-square, led to a rapid disaster in the game Bouton-Raetsky, Cappelle-la-Grande 1995: 8...0-0 9.♘f3 ♗g4 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♙xf3 ♗e5!



analysis diagram

(Black takes advantage of the bad situation of the white king on f1) 12. ♔d1 ♖h5 13. ♕g1 ♗xf4 14. ♗xf4 ♖xf4 15. a3 ♔h4 16. ♗e2 ♗e1 17. ♗d2 ♗f2+ 18. ♕f1 ♗e3+ 19. ♗f3 ♔f2#.

8... ♗g4 9. ♗f3 ♗e3 10. ♔e2 ♗g4 11. ♕f2?

Nothing was good anyway, e.g.: 11. ♗xb4 ♗xb4+-. The two black knights are much too strong. The one on e3 is a monster.

11... 0-0 12. ♗xe3

12.g3 would have allowed the same strong reply 12... ♗e5!-+.

12... dxe3+ 13. ♔xe3

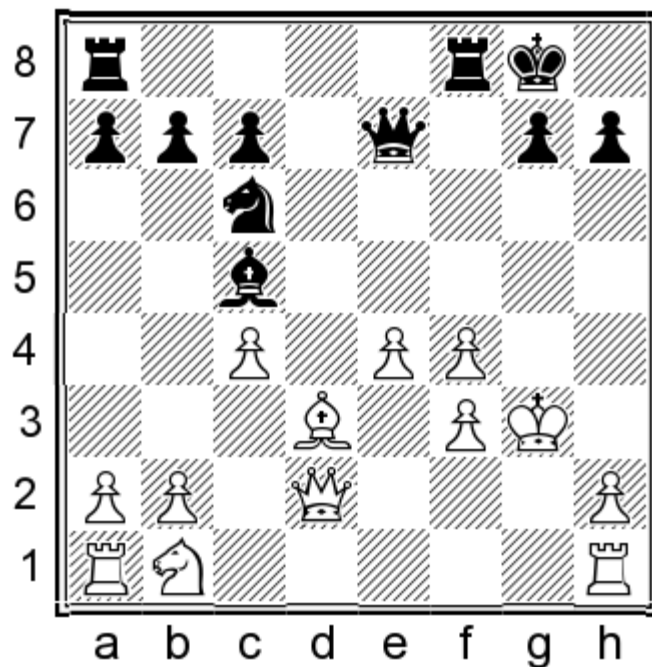
White has managed to get rid of the e3-knight, and even to win another pawn, but the g1-a7 diagonal, with the alignment of the white queen and king in particular, is very weak.

13... ♔e7

Threatening 14... ♗c5.

14. ♕g3 ♗c5 15. ♔d2 ♗xf3 16. gxf3

16. ♕xf3 ♗e5+, followed by 17... ♖ad8, was no better.



16...Rxf4!

Here too the f4-pawn drops, just like in the above game, even though it is protected twice.

17.h4

17. ♖xf4 ♕d6–+.

Alternatively, 17. ♔xf4 ♚h4+ 18. ♔f5 ♖e8! (threatening 19...♖e5 mate!) 19.f4 ♚h5#.

17...Raf8 18.♗e2 ♘d4 0–1

Black delivers mate after 19. ♖f1 ♚xh4+ 20. ♔g2 ♚g5+ 21. ♔f2 ♘c2+ 22. ♖e3 ♗xe3#.

We have seen in this game that the attempt to cling on to the pawn by f2-f4 (after the move 4.e4) could quickly turn into a fiasco for White. Let's now look at an extra very short example where f2-f4 is played even earlier (without the move 4.e4).

Game 50

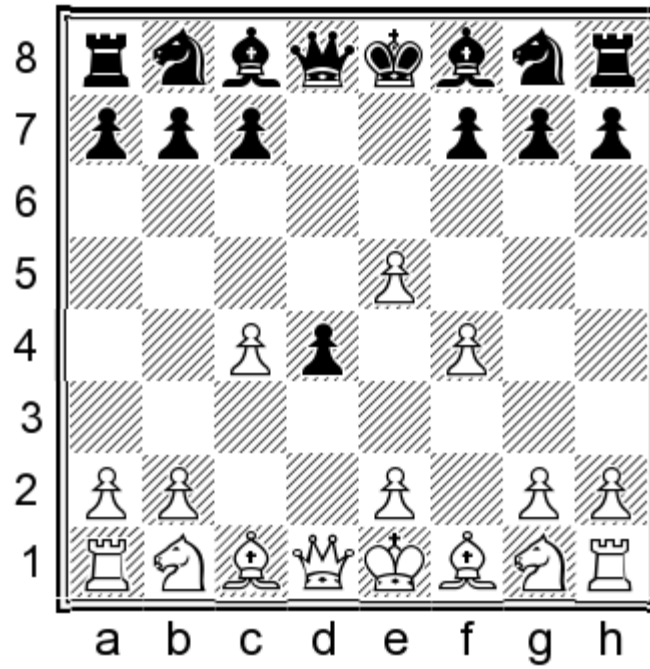
András Forgács 1709

Tamás Török 2128

Budapest 2015

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.f4?

This is downright bad and certainly even more so than in the previous game.



4...f6!

The correct way to proceed when Black can no longer hope to regain the e5-pawn.

5.exf6

5.♘f3 ♘c6 would probably have just resulted in a transposition of moves.

5...♗xf6 6.♗f3 ♘c6

White's situation is worse than in the previous game, because the e3-square – on a semi-open file – is even weaker.

7.g3

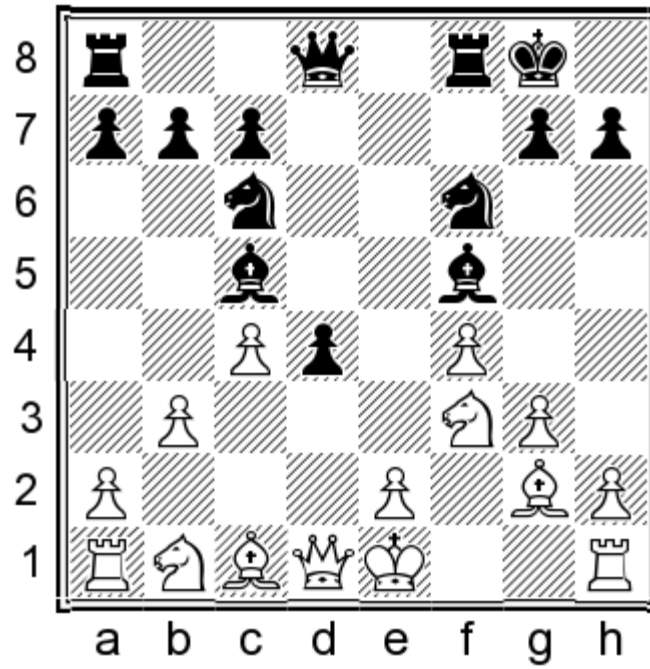
To try to develop the bishop with a fianchetto.

7.e3? would have seen the usual punishment inflicted after 7...♗b4+ 8.♗d2 dxe3+.

7...♗c5 8.♗g2 0-0 9.b3?

Far too slow. It was necessary to evacuate the king by castling kingside, as the discovered check was not to be feared.

9...♗f5



The four black minor pieces are all very active, whereas White's are anything but – the queenside is completely undeveloped. Even the c5-bishop exerts strong pressure on the g1-a7 diagonal, and notably on the e3-square.

10. ♖a3 ♜b4 11. ♖xb4 ♖xb4+

Here is the check on b4 again!

12. ♜bd2 ♜g4

And now the invasion of the e3-square by the knight.

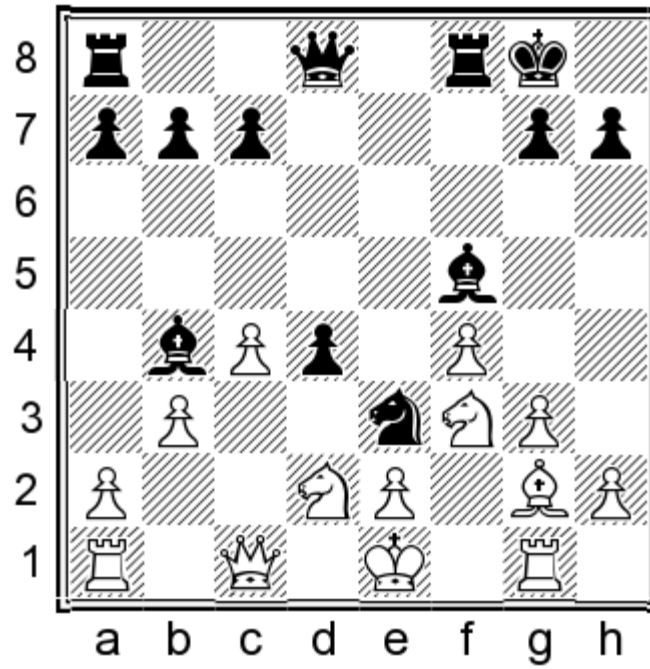
13. ♖g1?

Here again it was necessary to evacuate the king, even if after 13.0-0 ♜e3 White has to resign himself to the loss of an exchange.

13... ♜e3

Once again this knight is a monster driven into the enemy lines.

14. ♚c1



14...♙a3! 15.♙xa3

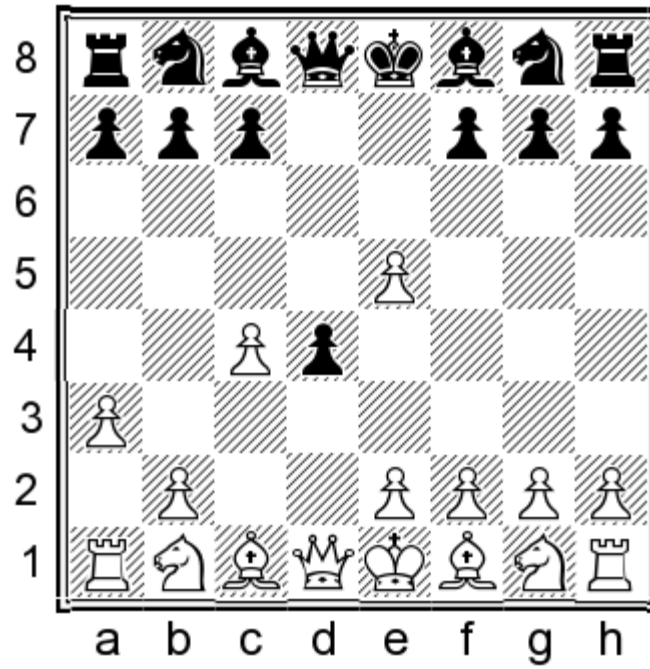
The white queen has no other squares.

15...♘c2+ 0-1

Since it seems crystal clear that White cannot cling on to the e5-pawn with f2-f4, let's see, through two short games, whether he can with a move like ♙f4. We had already mentioned this possibility in the note to the fifth move in Game 49.

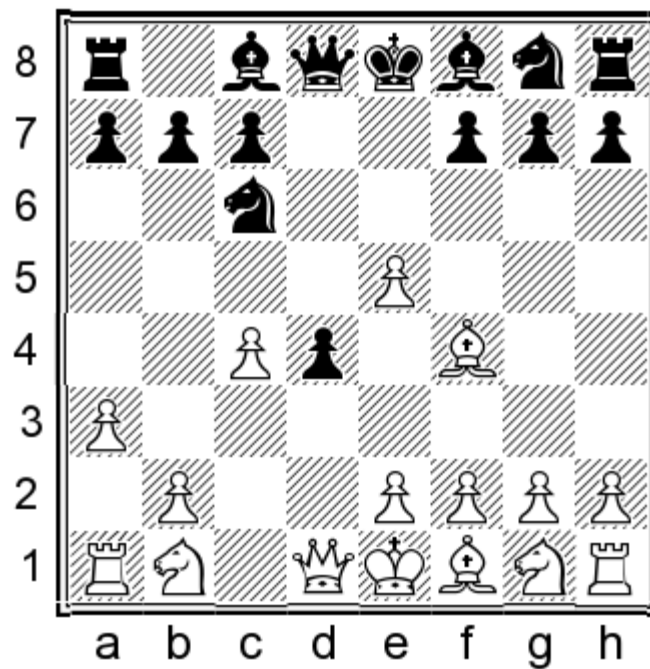
Game 51
Wilhelm Kluxen
Emanuel Lasker
 Hamburg 1904

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.a3



A logical move, designed to avoid the inconvenience of the check on b4 –which is not absolutely guaranteed, as we will see in this game. We will discuss this important move in more detail in Game 53.

4...♖c6 5.♙f4



5...♖ge7!

The right method when facing a development of the bishop to f4. The threat of 6...♖g6, which would attack the f4-bishop and the e5-pawn, is very unpleasant.

6.♙g3 ♖f5

6...♖g6 7.♘f3 ♘g4 was doubtless possible, but the text move is stronger. Black plans to exchange the g3-bishop and thus eliminate a defender of the e5-pawn.

7.♙d3

7.♘f3 g5! – with ideas such as ...g5-g4, ...♘g7 and equally ...h7-h5 – 8.h3 g4 9.hxg4 ♖xg3 10.fxg3 and the white pawn structure is painful to see.

7...♙g5

Attacking the e5-pawn a second time (after an exchange on g3) and threatening a check on c1!

8.f4?

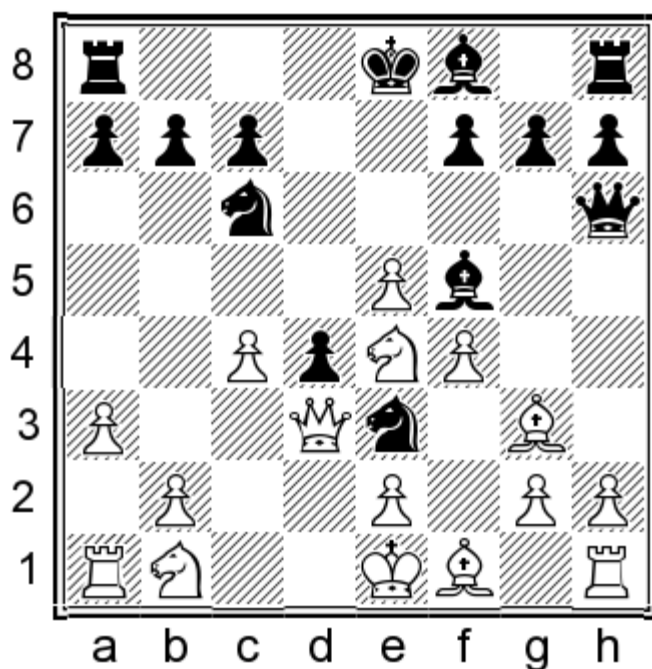
Once again mortally weakening the e3-square.

8.♘d2 would have been preferable, even if after 8...♙h5 (to pin the h2-pawn) 9.♘gf3 ♖xg3 10.fxg3 ♘f5 Black remains significantly better.

8...♙h6 9.♘h3 ♘e3

And here is the monster on e3 again!

10.♘f2 ♘f5 11.♘e4



11...♘b4+!

Black gives the check anyway, and despite the pawn on a3 this once again decides.

12.♘bd2

12.axb4 ♖xb4 13.♙b3 ♖bc2+ 14.♔f2 ♘xe4+.

12...♙xd2+ 13.♖xd2 ♔g6

The e4-knight can no longer be protected.

14.♚b3 ♙xe4 15.♙f2 ♜a5

White resigned.

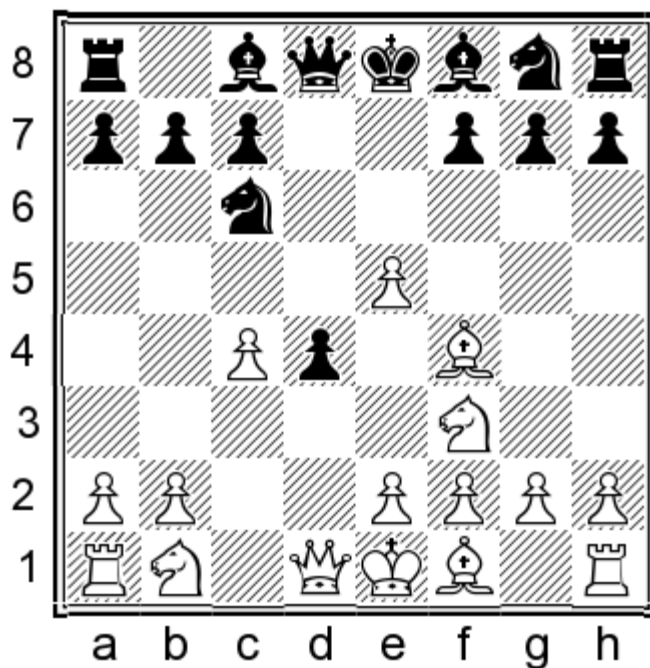
Game 52

Daniel Weiss

Jaroslav Gelfenboim

Germany-ch jr 1997

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.♞f3 ♞c6 5.♙f4



5...♞ge7 6.e3

6.♙g3 ♞f5 7.♞bd2 g5! again with ideas based on ...g5-g4, ...h7-h5 and ...♙g7.

6...♞g6 7.♙g5

7.♙g3 ♙b4+ (again) 8.♞bd2 dxe3 9.fxe3 ♙g4. Black has all the usual advantages of this type of position.

7...f6!

7...♙e7 would obviously allow 8.♙xe7 ♔xe7 9.♞xd4.

8.exf6 gxf6 9.♙h4 ♙b4+

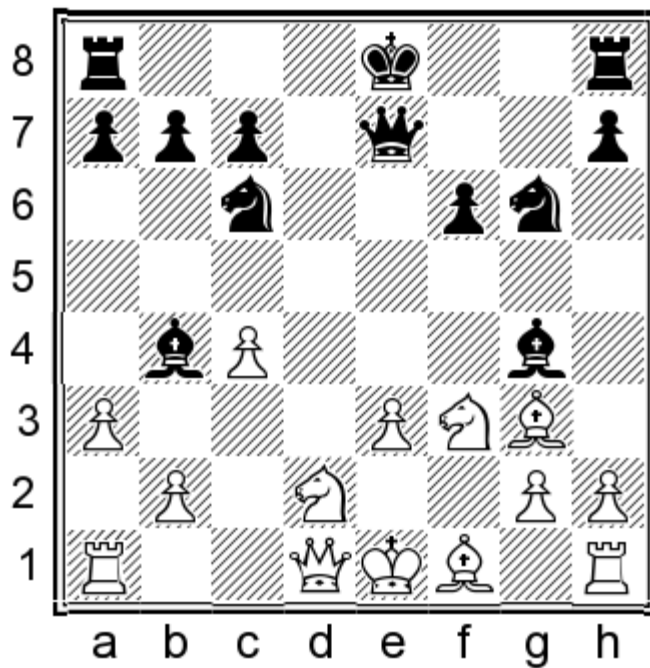
Again and again ...

10. ♖bd2 ♗g4

Threatening the h4-bishop.

11. ♗g3 dxe3 12. fxe3 ♕e7 13. a3??

Losing immediately, but 13. ♕e2 0-0-0 followed by ... ♖he8 was hardly exciting.



13... ♕xe3+?

13... ♗xf3 was more precise: 14. ♕xf3 ♖d4 15. ♕d1 ♕xe3+ 16. ♗e2 ♖xe2 17. ♕xe2 ♗xd2+—+.

14. ♕e2??

14. ♗e2✗.

14... ♗xd2+ 0–1

The bishop cannot be recaptured. The white queen and king are both pinned.

We have seen repeatedly that the check on b4 can be very unpleasant for White. It is therefore natural for him to try to protect himself by playing a2-a3. This move is important, both to prevent the check on b4 and also to initiate an expansion on the queenside by b2-b4. If the move b2-b4 is actually played Black will have to beware of b4-b5, which would attack the c6-knight and which would pose a threat to the d4-pawn.

Game 53

Thomas Constant

Sébastien Roesch

Rocheft ch-FRA jr 1998

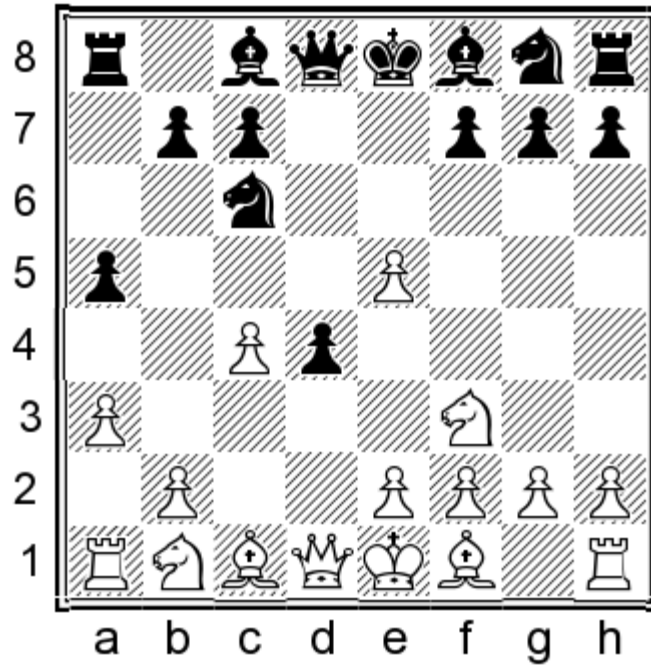
1. d4 d5 2. c4 e5 3. dxe5 d4 4. a3

This move can be played immediately or on the next move after ♖f3.

4...♘c6 5.♘f3

The e5-pawn was threatened. 5.♔f4 would bring us back to Game 51, and 5.f4 could again be countered by 5...f6.

5...a5!?



5...♔g4 is considered to be the main line according to theory. This move was notably played in the famous game Lasker-Albin, which continued 6.h3 ♕xf3 7.gxf3 ♞xe5 8.f4, and the future World Champion eventually prevailed – certainly not thanks to the opening, since Black has equalized, but simply because he was the best player in the world at the time.

5...♘g7 is a more recent continuation popularized by Morozevich, who introduced many new ideas in the Albin Countergambit. With 5...♘g7, which he plays against both 5.a3 and 5.g3, the Russian Grandmaster succeeded in beating both Topalov and Gelfand. I will not, however, deal with the move 5...♘g7, as it leads to wild complications after b2-b4 in which the amateur player could very well go astray. We can't all play like Morozevich.

The text move (5...a5) is an interesting third way which has the merit of preventing the move b2-b4. However, there is a flip side which we must be aware of. With the black pawn on a5 it will be more difficult to envisage playing those variations involving castling queenside that we will see in the following games.

6.e3

Now that the check on b4 is no longer to be feared White naturally tries to eliminate the annoying pawn on d4.

6.g3 is the other option available to White. Once again, with the ...a7-a5 move played it would probably be too optimistic for Black to adopt the plan with queenside castling. But, on the other hand, as the move b2-b4 is no longer threatened, he can develop more calmly by ...♘g7-g6 in order to try to recover the e5-pawn. However, care must be taken to preventively protect the d4-pawn beforehand (by ...♙c5 for example), since it would be out of the question to trade the e5-pawn against the d4-pawn.

6...♘c5

One of the advantages of the ...a7-a5 move. The bishop can develop to this square without fearing b2-b4.

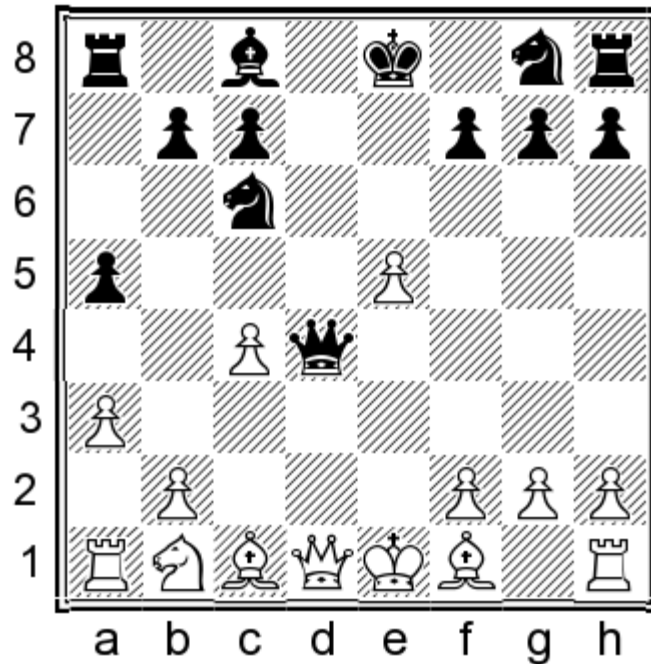
7.exd4 ♖xd4!

The right recapture. 7...♗xd4?! would allow 8.♕e3 as was the case in the game Feller-Chadaev, France-Russia Match, Moscow 2008 (1-0, 25 moves). After the text move Black threatens 8...♕xf2+.

8.♗xd4?!

Better was 8.♕e2. After 8...♗ge7 9.0-0 0-0 Black will regain the e5-pawn and the position will be roughly equal.

8...♔xd4



9.♔xd4?

An exchange of queens which seems natural (White still has a pawn more), but which will quickly lead to disaster.

9.♕e2 was played in the games Jogi-Keres, Tartu 1935, and Bareev-Morozevich, Elista 1997. In both cases Black quickly recovered the e5-pawn and had a totally satisfactory position.

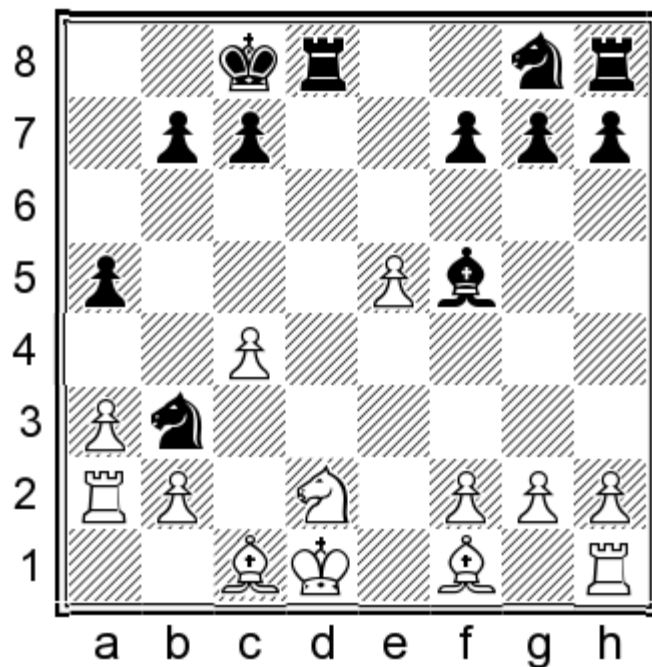
9...♗xd4 10.♖d1 ♗b3

The a2-a3 move has also weakened the b3-square.

11.♖a2 ♕f5 12.♗d2

12.♗c3 would have been even worse after 12...0-0-0+.

12...0-0-0



Threatening 13...♙b1, which wins the rook! White's position is tragicomic.

13.a4 ♘e7 14.♞a3 ♘c5 15.♙e2 ♘c6 16.f4 ♘b4 17.g4

White has no moves and is almost in zugzwang.

17...♙c2+ 18.♙e1 ♘bd3+ 19.♙xd3 ♘xd3+ 20.♙e2 ♘xf4+

Black has recovered his pawn and still has a very strong initiative.

21.♙f3 ♘d3 22.♞c3

The threat was 22...♘xc1, followed by capturing the d2-knight.

22...♙xa4 23.♙e2 ♘xe5

Black has two extra pawns. The game is finished.

24.h3 ♞he8 25.♞e3 ♙c6 26.♞f1 f6 27.b3 a4 28.bxa4 ♙xa4 29.♙b2?

The c1-bishop had to wait 29 moves to get out, and its first move is a losing one.

29...♞xd2+ 0-1

30.♙xd2 ♘xc4+.

In view of the games that we have studied so far, it is clear that White cannot play e2-e3 at an early stage of the game. As we saw in Game 49, e2-e4 has little to recommend it as well. As a result, since the white e-pawn can hardly advance at the moment, the best option for White is to fianchetto his king's bishop with g3. This is the system that is recommended by theory and that we will study in the following games. After g2-g3, which usually occurs on the fifth move, we will stick to the classic plan as it is clear and easy enough for amateurs to play: ...♙e6 (or ♙g4), ...♞d7 and ...0-0-0, followed by ...♙h3 to exchange the fianchettoed bishop, then ...h7-h5-h4 to open the h-file and attack the

castled king. In fact, Black will carry out a sort of Yugoslav Attack, which we discovered with white against the Pirc in Chapter 7 of Volume I. I had indeed said at the time that the Yugoslav Attack could be used against many openings that involved a kingside fianchetto.

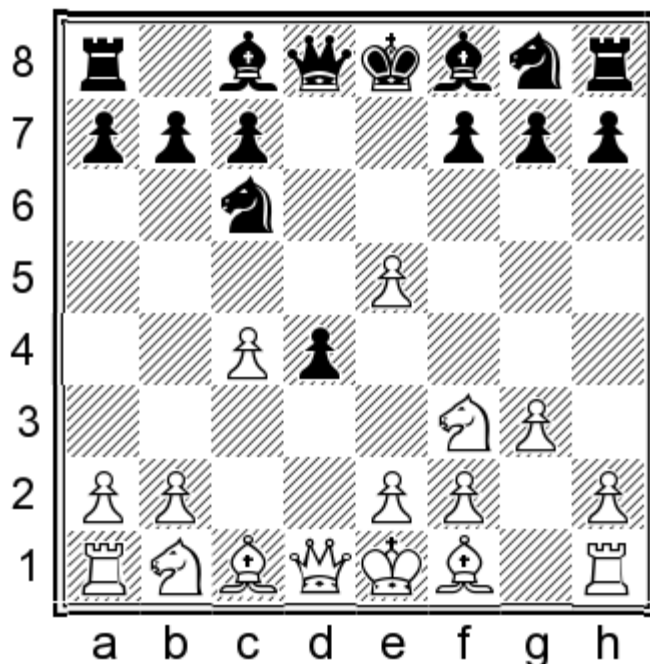
Game 54

Andreea Navrotescu 1670

Aur lie Massard 1520

Mulhouse jr 2007

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4. f3  c6 5.g3



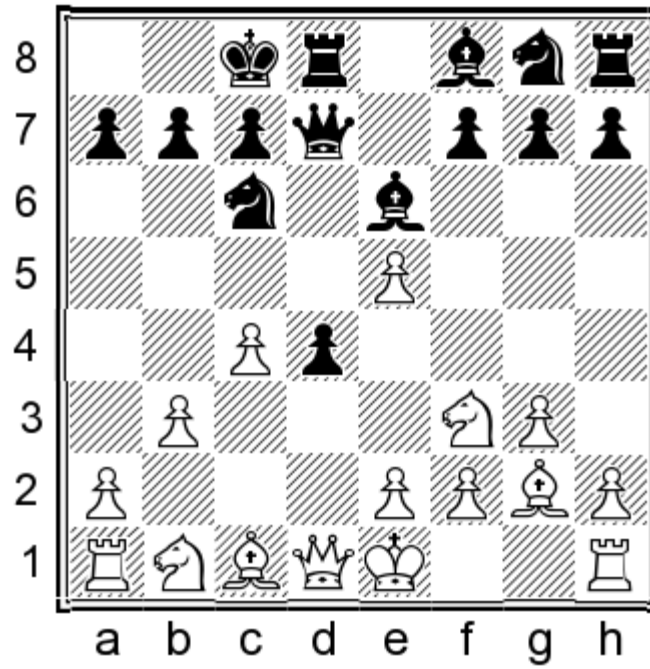
5... e6

The bishop can also be developed on g4 (or even on f5). Theory has never really ruled on the best of these squares, but it doesn't matter, in fact, since the bishop normally only passes through and should quickly reach the h3-square. The three squares (e6, f5 and g4) each have their specific advantages without presenting any real disadvantages. On g4 the bishop may threaten ... xf3 followed by ... xe5 in some cases, on f5 it can combine an attack on c2 with the move ... b4, and on e6 it has the merit of directly attacking the c4-pawn. It is this last option that I propose, since an amateur will naturally be tempted to defend it. And there are ways to go wrong.

6.b3?!

Logical and natural, but too slow. With Black preparing to castle queenside White will have to attack on the queenside. Notably with a2-a3 and b2-b4, when the move b2-b3 will then be a waste of time. In addition, it blocks the white queen's access to the a4-square. For these reasons it was preferable to protect the c4-pawn by 6. bd2, or even to simply not protect it and continue developing with 6. g2.

6... d7 7. g2 0-0-0

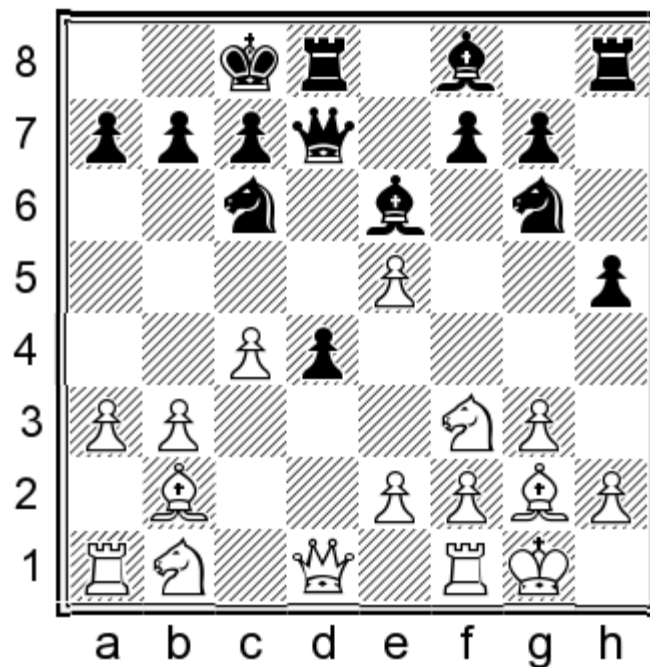


By castling queenside Black clearly sets the tone. Once again his plan is crystal clear: ...♗h3, ...h7-h5-h4-hxg3, sac, sac, mate, to use the famous expression of Bobby Fischer when he played the Yugoslav Attack against the Sicilian Dragon.

8.0-0 ♖ge7 9.♗b2 ♜g6

The black position is now very easy to play. For the record, out of nine games that reached this position in the 2017 Mega Database, Black scored 7½ points.

10.a3 h5

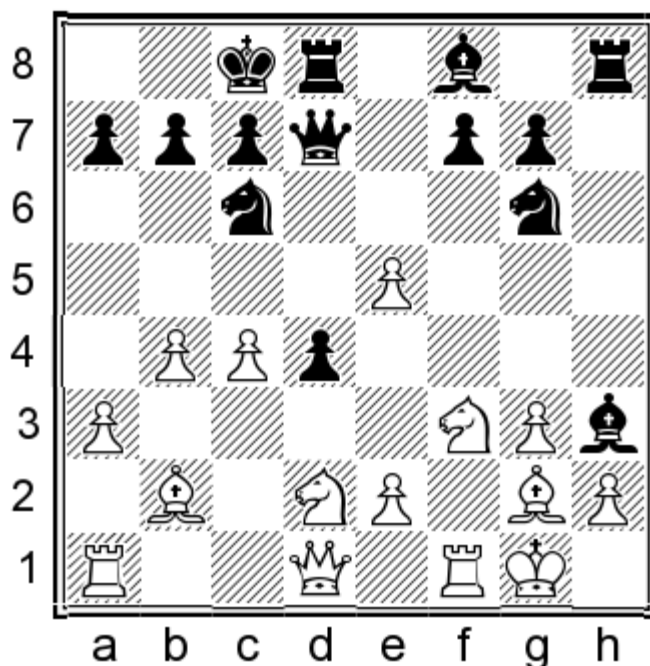


The black attack almost plays itself. And it is, above all, faster than White's.

11.♜bd2

As we saw in the chapter on the Yugoslav Attack in the first volume, the defender may decide to stop the advance of the h-pawn by advancing his own two squares. Concretely, White could therefore consider the move 11.h4 here, but it must be realized that such a move, even if it does actually slow the attack, may also create a further weakness. We will see in Games 56, 57 and 58 that the move h2-h4, in this type of position, does not provide a universal antidote against the black attack.

11...h4 12.b4 hxg3 13.fxg3 ♖h3



The black plan runs like clockwork at the moment.

14.b5 ♖cxe5

If we can recover the e5-pawn along the way we will not say no.

15.♖b3

15.♖f2 – to try to defend h2 – loses at least one exchange after 15...♗g4.

And 15.♗xd4? is even worse: 15...♗xg2 16.♗xg2 ♖h3+ 17.♗f2 ♖xd4! 18.♗xd4 ♖xh2+ 19.♗e3 ♖xg3+ 20.♗4f3 (20.♗2f3 ♗xc4+ 21.♗d3 ♗b2+–+) 20...♖f4+ 21.♗f2 ♖h2+ 22.♗e1 ♖g3+ and it's mate.

15...♗xg2 16.♗xg2 ♖h3+ 17.♗f2

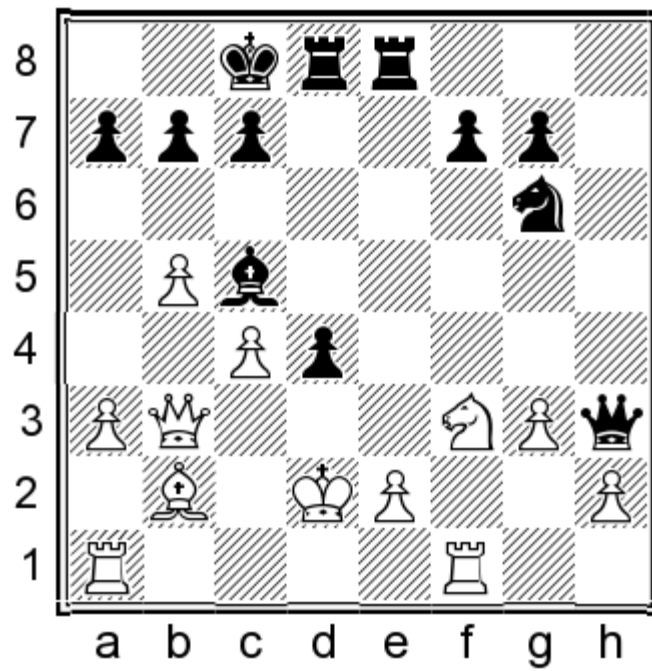
17.♗g1 ♗c5!–+.

17...♗c5 18.♗e1 ♗xf3+ 19.♗xf3 ♖he8

With the threat 20...d3, but 19...d3! immediately, without any preparation, was even stronger.

20.♗d2

20.♖d1 ♗e5 21.♗xe5 ♖xe5 leaves Black with an overwhelming advantage. He does not even have a pawn less for such an attacking position.



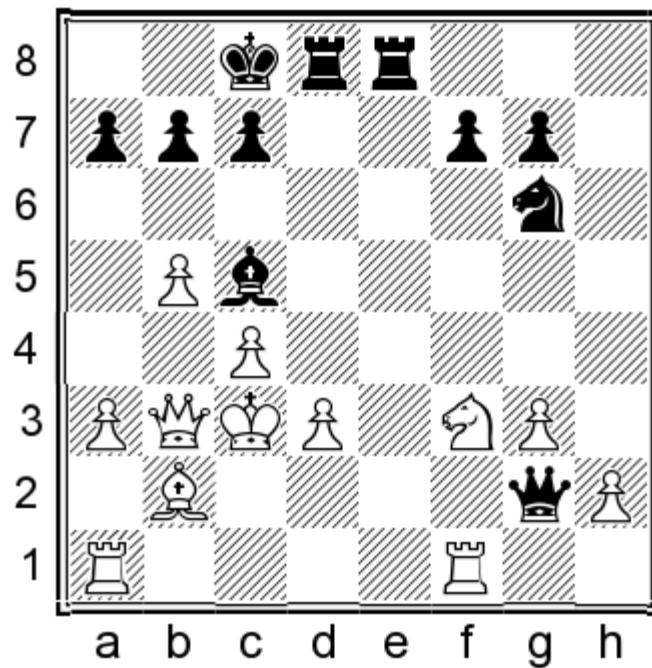
20...d3!

Opening lines against the king!

21.exd3?

Suicidal, but the game was lost anyway.

21...♙g2+ 22.♔c3



22...♟xd3+!

Simple, but nevertheless pretty.

23.♖xd3 ♜e2+

Of course, 23...♞e3 mates one move earlier.

24.♖c3 ♞e3#

The conductor of the black pieces was an 11-year-old girl; White was a future six-time French junior champion.

If the black attack with opposite-side castling is often played almost in auto-pilot mode, be careful not to get carried away. Black must be particularly vigilant when playing ...♞h3, as he risks being hit by a powerful counter-blow that has already claimed many victims. Here is an example to serve as a warning. The lesson is given by Boris Spassky, who was to become World Champion a few years later.

Game 55
Boris Spassky
Győző Forintos
Sochi 1964

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.♘f3

In this game Spassky does not use the variation that bears his name (4.e4).

4...♗c6 5.g3 ♕g4

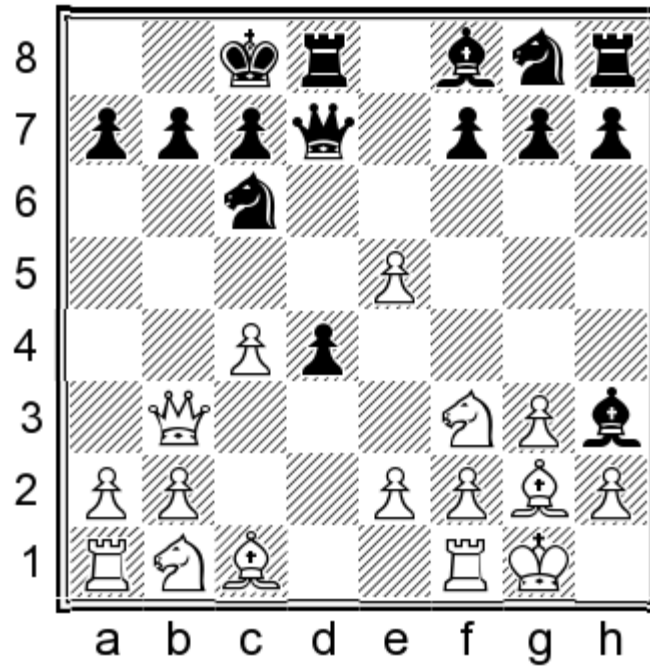
5...♞e6 is about the same if Black decides on the classic plan of attack with opposite-side castling.

6.♞g2 ♜d7 7.0-0 0-0-0 8.♞b3

At first sight a strange move since White voluntarily blocks his b-pawn, but it does not lack venom. From b3 the queen targets the b7-pawn and threatens a subtle combination.

8...♞h3?

Black does not sense the danger. He had to play 8...♗ge7, or even 8...♞c5, to take advantage of the fact that the queen is on b3 and so the bishop is unlikely to be harassed by the b-pawn in the near future. 8...♞f5 was also possible, before playing ...♞h3, to avoid the combination that follows.



9.e6!

A recurring tactical theme, especially with the queen on b3 and the fianchettoed bishop on g2.

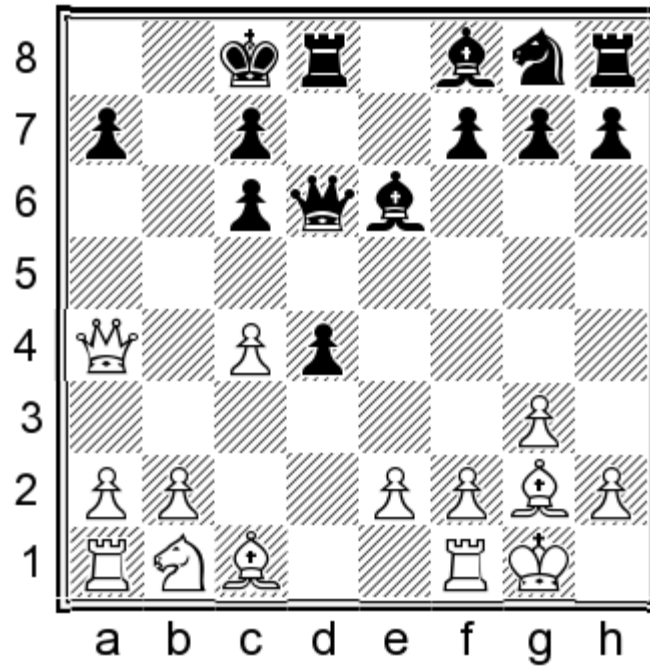
9...♙xe6

Of course, taking on e6 was impossible with either the pawn or the queen: 9...fxe6 10.♙xh3+- and 9...♙xe6 10.♘g5+-.

10.♘e5

Forcibly opening the diagonal for the g2-bishop. The white knight cannot be captured because of the instant mate on b7.

10...♙d6 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♙a4



The black queenside is in tatters. White has a big advantage, and in the hands of Spassky this is necessarily decisive.

12...♖c5 13.♘a3 ♜b6 14.♙xc6 ♙xa3 15.bxa3 ♘e7 16.♙b5 c6 17.♙a6+ ♔d7 18.♙f4 ♜c5 19.♞ab1 ♙h3 20.♞b7+ ♔e6
20...♔e8 21.♙c7 ♞c8 22.♞fb1+.

21.♞d1 g5 22.♙d2 ♜e5 23.c5!

To bring the a6-bishop back into play via c4.

23...♔f6 24.♞b3 ♔g7

The black king has taken refuge on the other wing, but it is no safer there.

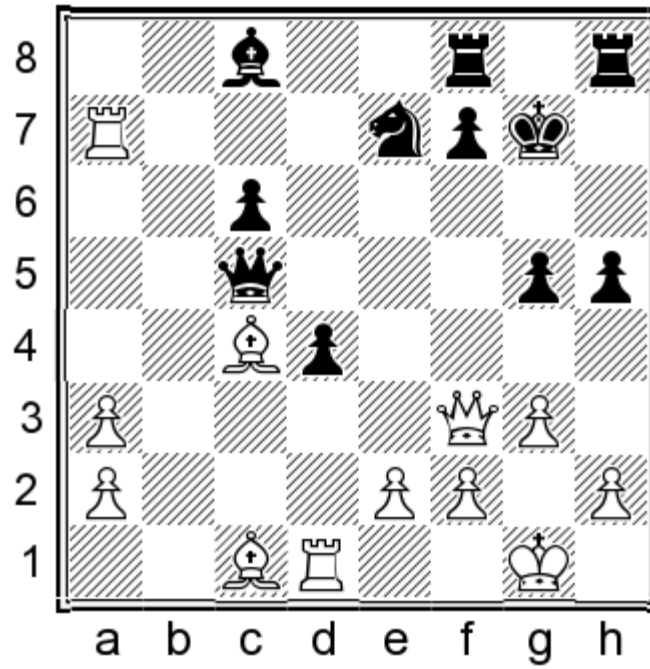
25.♞f3

Threatening g3-g4, which would trap the h3-bishop.

25...h5 26.♙c4 ♞df8 27.♙c1 ♙c8

After making two incursions to the h3-square the bishop finally returns to its departure square.

28.♞xa7 ♜xc5



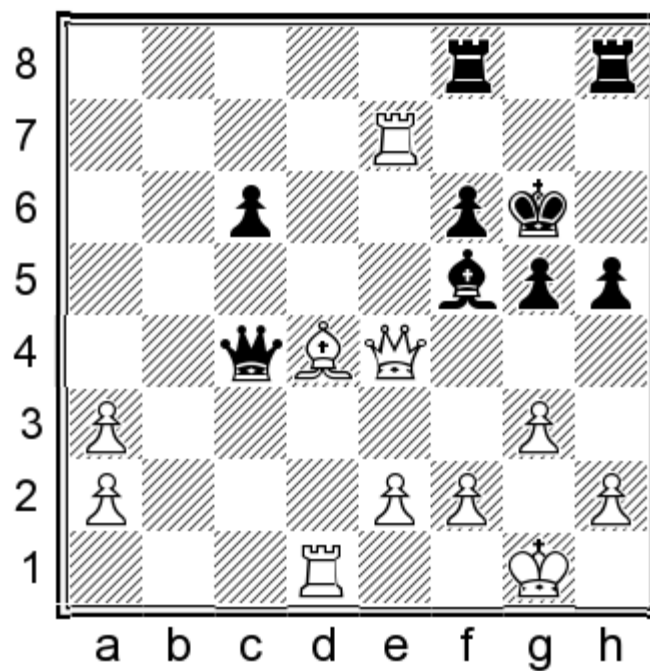
29. ♖b2! f6

Neither of the two white pieces could be taken: 29... ♗xc4? 30. ♕xd4+ f6 31. ♖xe7+-; 29... ♗xa7? 30. ♕xd4+-.

30. ♕xd4 ♗xc4 31. ♖xe7+ ♔g6

31... ♔h6 32. ♕xf6 ♖hg8 33. ♕g7+! ♖xg7 34. ♖d6+ ♔h7 35. ♗xh5+ ♔g8 36. ♖xg7+ and the black king is going to be mated.

32. ♗e4+ ♕f5



33.♖g7+! ♕h6

33...♕xg7 loses the queen after 34.♙xf6+.

34.♖xf5 ♕xg7 35.♖xg5+ ♕f7

35...♕h7 36.♙xf6 ♖xf6 37.♖xf6., and the appearance of the rook on d7 is decisive. After seeing the position with queenside castling on the seventh move, who would have thought that the black king could be mated on h7?

36.♖xf6+ ♕e8 37.♖g6+ ♕e7 38.♙xh8 1-0

We close the majestic parenthesis of Boris Spassky and return to games by girls who did not, of course, have the mastery of the former World Champion. Again, this opening repertoire is not meant to prepare you against grandmasters, but amateur-level players, with their characteristic faults.

After seeing two of the best French Under 11s of their time at work in Game 54, let's now rise a little in the world hierarchy in this category and look at two of the favourites (both rated above 2000 Elo) at the World Junior Championships in 1998. The player who had Black was the defending Girls Under 12 European champion and her opponent had won the World Under 10 Championship two years before.

Game 56

Maria Kursova 2070

Tatiana Kosintseva 2120

Oropesa del Mar Wch jr W 1998

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.g3 ♙e6 6.b3?!

The same inaccuracy as in the game Navrotescu-Massard. At an amateur level this alone could be enough to justify developing the bishop to e6 rather than g4.

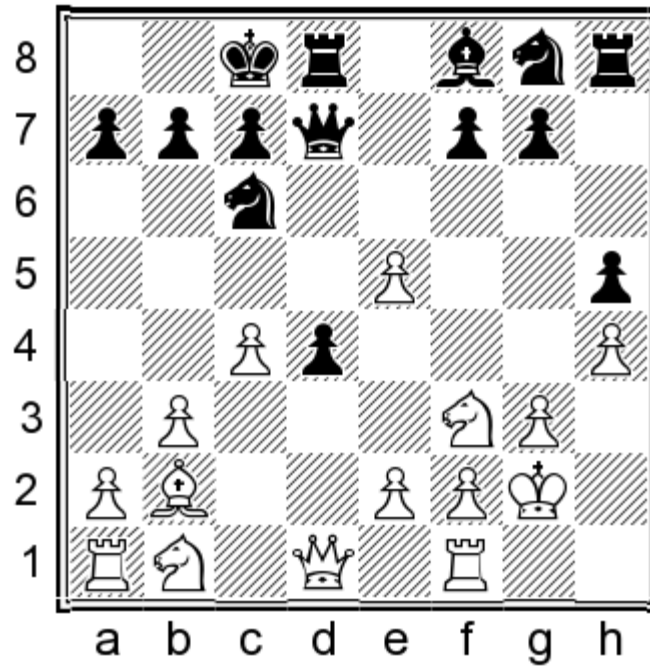
6...♖d7 7.♙g2 ♙h3

This time everything's OK: e5-e6 is not to be feared! We must constantly be wary of this tactical resource, even when the white queen is not on b3.

8.0-0

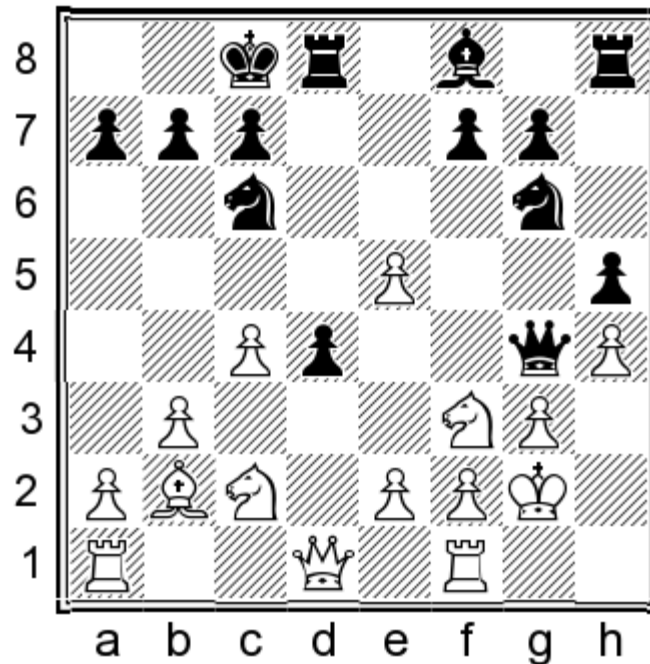
8.e6 ♙xe6 and White has given her extra pawn back for nothing. The two tempi gained (...♙h3-e6) do not give her any advantage in the opposite-side castling attack.

8...♙xg2 9.♕xg2 0-0-0 10.♙b2 h5 11.h4



This is the move that we mentioned in the game Navrotescu-Massard. White chooses radical means to prevent the advance of the black pawn. This is always a double-edged option: certainly the black attack is slowed down, but the white king position is dangerously weakened.

11...♖ge7 12.♘a3 ♘g6 13.♘c2 ♔g4



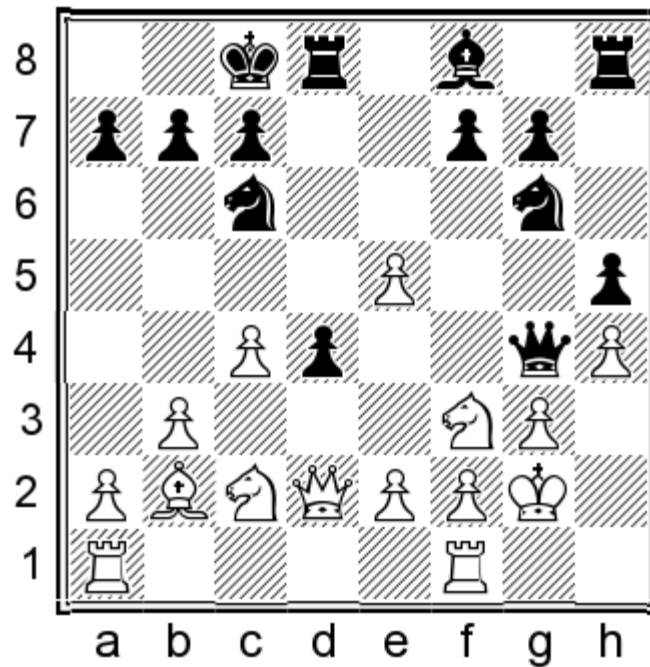
This is the right square for the black queen to occupy whenever White has played h2-h4, especially when there is a black knight sitting menacingly on g6. The threats of a check on f4 or taking on h4 are real.

14.♔d2?

When one does not have the strength or accuracy of a grandmaster this type of complicated position is always difficult to defend for an amateur player. The tactical possibilities for Black are indeed numerous, and White is unlikely to see

all of them. With the text move White was planning to play 15.♔g5 to either exchange or repel the black queen, but the move loses for tactical reasons.

She had to play 14.♕c1 – with the same idea as 14.♕d2 – even if after 14...f6! 15.exf6 gxf6 the black attack is still very dangerous.



14...d3!

The strong black d-pawn plunges into the enemy lines.

15.♖cd4

15.exd3 ♖xd3! and the rook cannot be taken because of the knight fork on f4.

15.♖e3 ♖f4+ 16.♗g1 ♖xe2+ 17.♗g2 ♖f4+ 18.♗g1 ♕xf3–+.

15...dxe2 16.♗fc1

16.♕xe2 is not possible, again because of the fork on f4.

16...♖xd4 0–1

White loses material: 17.♖xd4 (17.♗xd4 ♗c5–+) 17...♖xh4+ 18.♗h2 ♖xd4! and the threat of a fork on f3 ends the game.

Let's look at another very instructive example of an attack with castling on opposite sides. Apart from the fact that it perfectly illustrates the potential of the black attack in the Albin Countergambit main line, this game presents a second very interesting aspect: it pits an experienced grandmaster with white against an amateur player rated around 2000 Elo with black. Despite the almost 500 points difference, the player who will win in less than 20 moves is not the one that we would have bet on at the start.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.g3 ♕f5

Again, since Black is planning to play a quick ...♕h3 it makes no difference whether it stops on e6, f5 or g4. That said, as we have seen in Games 54 and 56, 5...♕e6 has the merit of attacking the c4-pawn.

6.♕g2 ♔d7 7.0-0 ♕h3

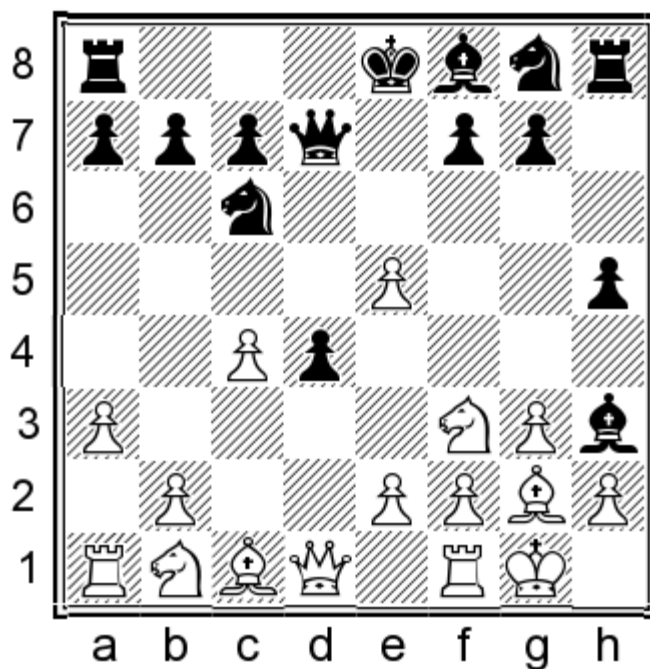
When e5-e6 is not dangerous we can go here without fear.

8.a3

As the black rook is not yet on d8 (Black has not yet castled queenside) Black had to consider 8.♕xh3 ♔xh3 9.♘xd4 before playing 7...♕h3. But after 9...0-0-0, and with ...♘e5-g4 or ...♘h6-g4 to come, White had reason to be worried.

8.♕xh3 ♔xh3 9.♘g5 was also conceivable, with the idea – after 9...♔f5 – of keeping the pawn by 10.f4. After 10...♕e7 11.♘f3 0-0-0 Black nonetheless keeps excellent attacking possibilities for the sacrificed pawn. In particular he will be able to play ...♔h3 followed by ...h7-h5-h4.

8...h5



The presence of the bishop on h3 has the merit of preventing the move h2-h4 in answer to ...h7-h5 since the h-pawn is immobilized.

9.b4

Compared to Games 54 and 56 White has not wasted any time with b2-b3 and can therefore launch his b-pawn into the attack immediately.

9...♕xg2 10.♕xg2 0-0-0

Black has to be wary of b4-b5, which would have chased away a defender of the d4-pawn by attacking the c6-knight. After castling queenside the d8-rook protects the pawn.

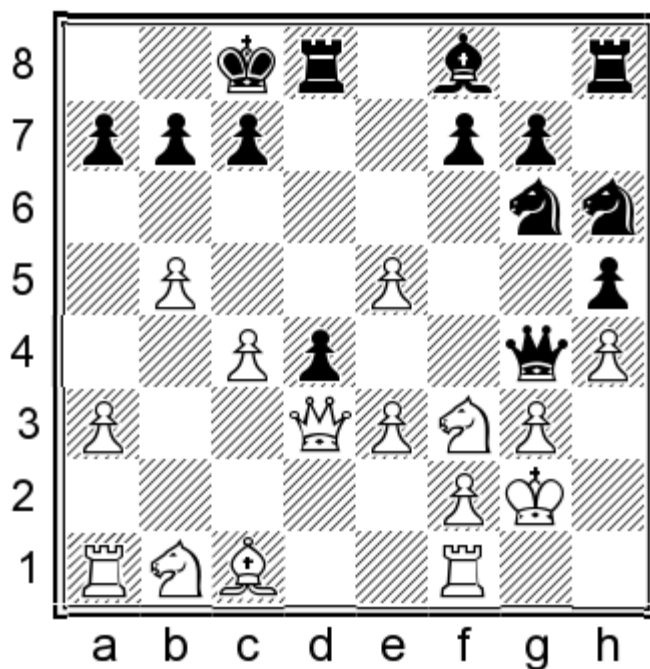
11.b5 ♞ce7 12.h4

White decides on a relative blockade of the kingside, but as we already know, this option, besides losing time, weakens the kingside. Here, 12.♚a4! was preferable, and the race is in full swing.

12...♞g6 13.♚d3 ♞h6

The black knights are ready to leap into the heat of battle.

14.e3?! ♜g4



As we saw in the previous game, g4 is often the correct square for the black queen when White has played h2-h4. Especially in conjunction with a knight on g6.

15.exd4?

It was better to try to keep the d-file closed with 15.e4.

15...♞f5

White has not even started developing his queenside, and yet Black already has serious threats against his king.

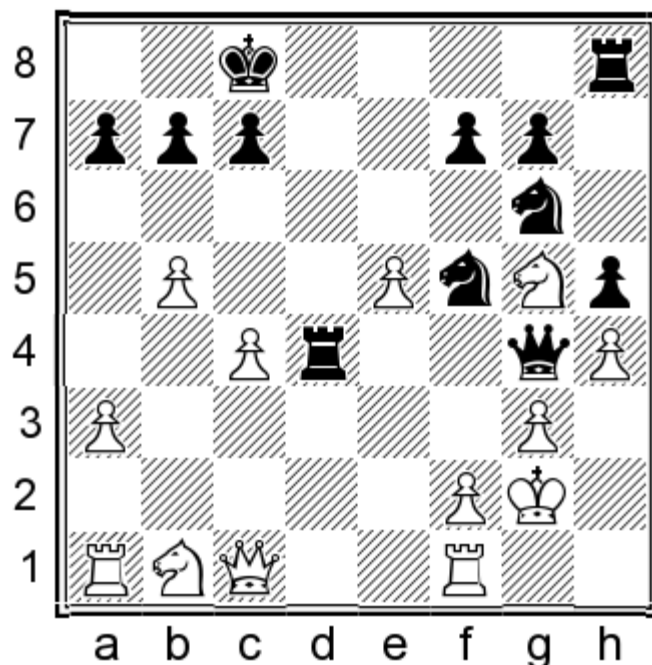
16.♙g5 ♙e7! 17.♚d2

17.♙xe7?? ♞f4+.

17...♙xg5 18.♞xg5

18.♚xg5? ♞fxh4+ and the white queen is lost.

18...♖xd4 19.♔c1



19...♗gxh4+

White's castle collapses like a house of cards, starting with the h4-pawn that was intended precisely to constitute a bulwark against the black attack. Very symbolic.

20.♕h1

20.♕h2 ♖f3+ 21.♗xf3 h4! finally leads to the opening of the h-file, and to mate in a few moves.

20...♖f3 0-1 21.♗xf3 ♔xf3+ 22.♕g1 ♗h4! 23.gxh4 ♖g4+.

It is difficult to imagine studying the Albin Countergambit without looking at a game from Alexander Morozevich, who is the strongest player, together with the former FIDE World Champion Kasimdzhanov, to regularly practice this opening at the highest level.

Let us therefore look at a game played blindfold in the Melody Amber Tournament, Monaco, against a supergrandmaster. 'A very classic game', according to Kasimdzhanov who analyzed it on his DVD. 'It perfectly illustrates the dangers that White may face in this attack with opposite-side castling.' and, visibly, even supergrandmasters are not spared.

For this game I will borrow some analysis and comments from Kasimdzhanov, to which I will not have much to add, of course.

We are off. Moro on the pitch, and Kasim at the microphone, it should be good.

Game 58

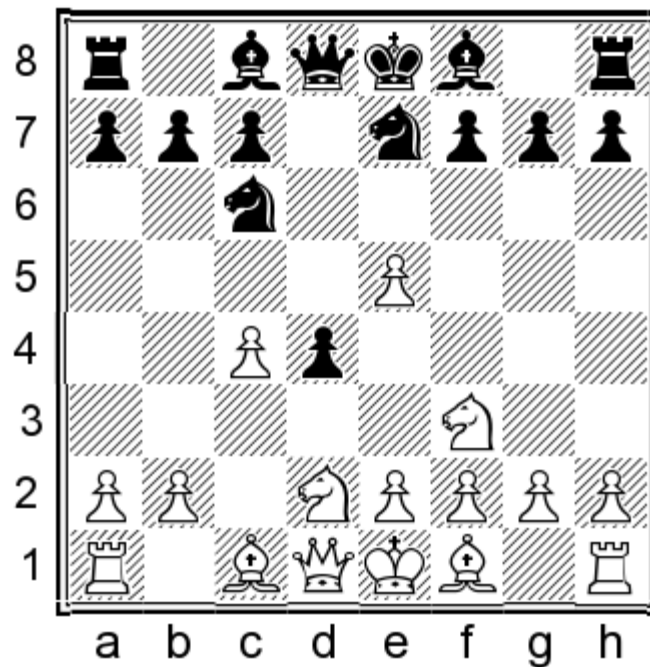
Loek van Wely 2681

Alexander Morozevich 2765

Monaco blindfold 2008

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.♗bd2 ♗ge7

The move order generally used by Morozevich in the Albin Countergambit, whether against 5.♗bd2, 5.a3 or 5.g3.



6.a3

With this move order, possible was 6.♗b3 ♗f5. The four knights and the two queens attack and defend the d4-pawn.

6...♗e6

Black does not play 6...a5 in order to keep the possibility of castling queenside.

7.g3

White could also play 7.b4.

7...♔d7

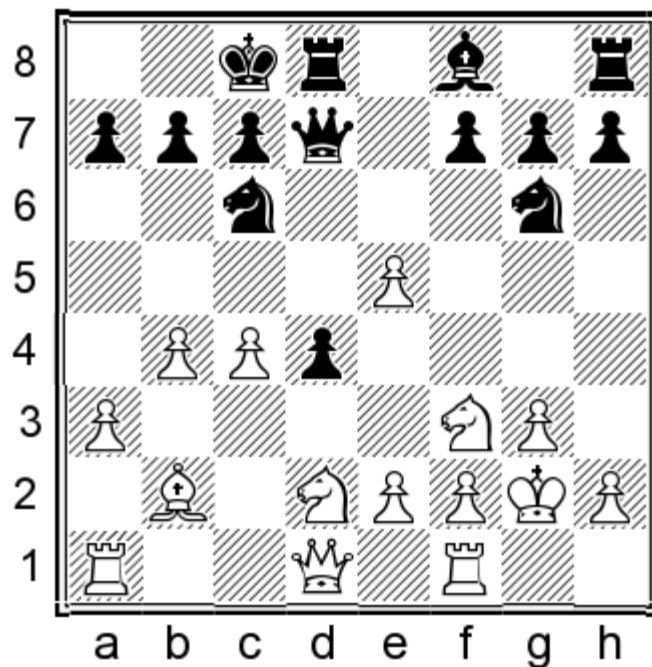
Finally we go into a classical pattern of opposite-side castling with a white kingside fianchetto. The move order is of little importance.

8.♗g2 ♗h3 9.0-0 ♗xg2 10.♔xg2 0-0-0 11.b4 ♗g6

White threatened 12.b5.

12.♗b2

12.b5 ♗cxe5=.



12...h5

Black does not hang about on the way.

12...♖cxe5 is not good because of 13.♙xd4±, and 12...♜gxe5? loses a piece after 13.b5. After the text move Black's plan is very simple: ...h5-h4, taking on g3, ...♞h3+ and a mating attack.

13.b5

After 13.♞a4 play could become very sharp: 13...h4 14.b5 hxg3 15.fxg3 (15.bxc6?? ♞h3+ 16.♔g1 ♜f4 17.cxb7+ ♔b8 and White gets mated) 15...♞h3+ 16.♔g1 ♜cxe5 17.♞xa7 ♜g4 18.♞a8+ ♔d7 19.♞xb7 ♜xh2 and, according to Kasimdzhanov, both sides must be satisfied with the perpetual check: 20.♞c6+ ♔c8 21.♞a8+ ♔d7 22.♞c6+ ♔c8.

13...♜cxe5 14.♙xd4

It is too late for 14.♞a4, as after 14...♜xf3 15.♜xf3, 15...♙c5 defends a7.

14...♜xf3 15.♜xf3 h4 16.♙xa7?

Too optimistic. White had to think about defence. He had to play 16.e3! hxg3 17.fxg3 ♞h3+ 18.♔g1 in order to organize a defence of the second rank with ♞a2 (Kasimdzhanov).

16...♞g4

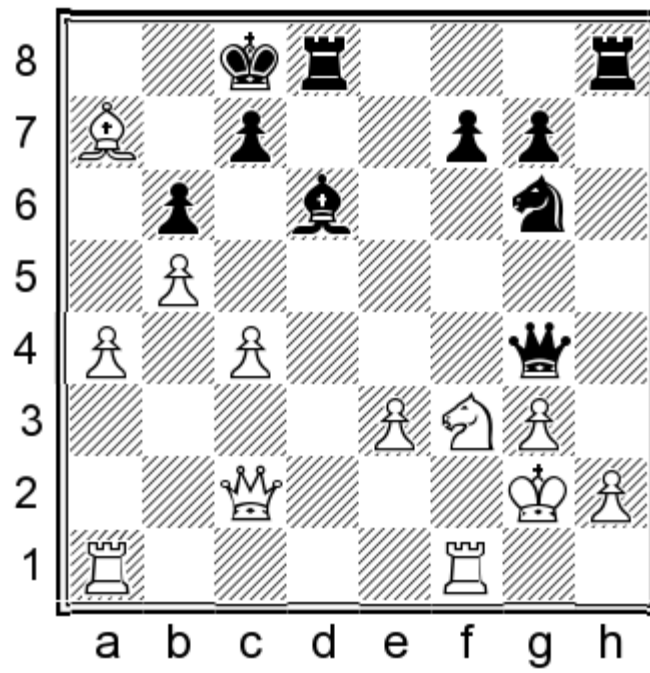
Discovering an attack on the white queen!

16...♜f4+! was also strong: 17.♔h1 (17.gxf4 ♞g4+ 18.♔h1 ♞xd1→) 17...♞h3 and White must give up his queen.

17.♞c2 hxg3 18.fxg3 b6

To enclose the bishop, which is trapped.

19.a4 ♙d6 20.e3

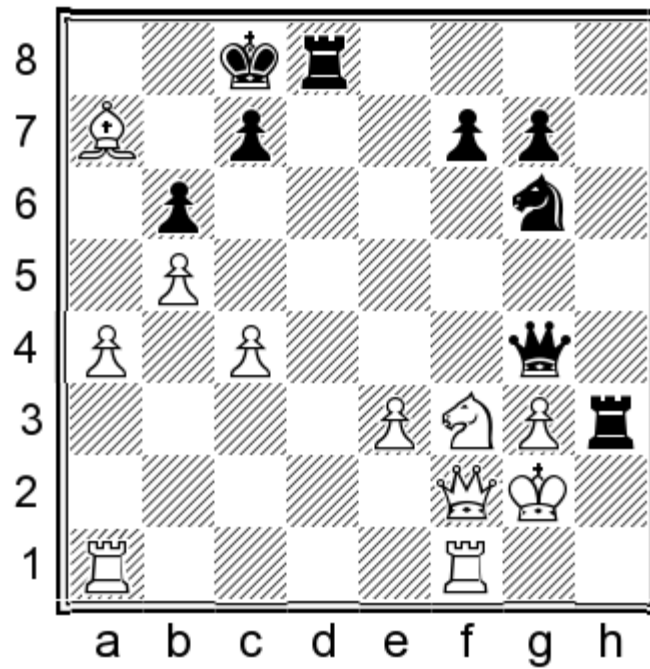


20...♖h3!

The threats of a sacrifice on g3 are decisive.

21.♔h1

21.♜f2 ♕xg3! 22.hxg3



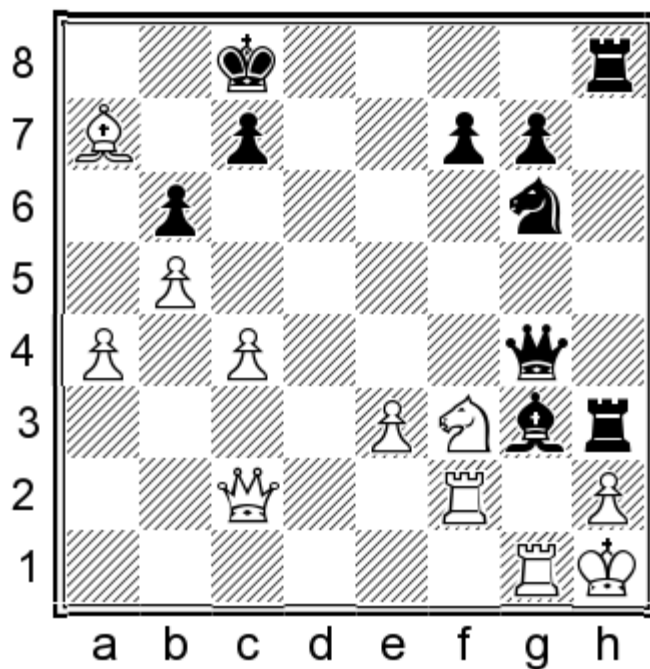
analysis diagram

22...♜d2!! (a pretty deflection) 23.♘xd2 ♖h4+ 24.♔g1 ♜xg3+.

21...♖dh8

21...♕xg3!-+.

22.♟f2 ♕xg3 23.♟g1



23...♜xf3+! 24.♟xf3 ♜xh2+ 0-1

‘A very easy win against an experienced Grandmaster’ (Kasimdzhanov).

Before closing this chapter on the Albin Countergambit let us consider the various ways to decline the gambit, as promised. As announced in the introduction to this chapter, none of these poses any real problem to Black.

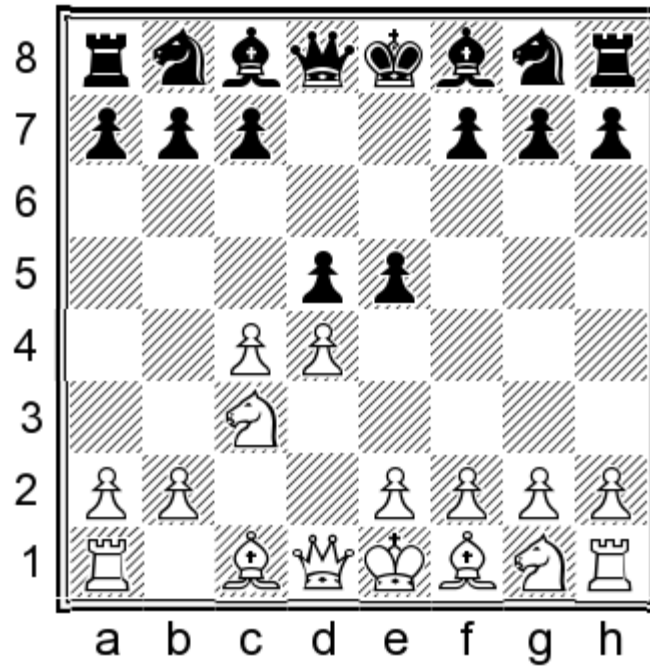
Game 59

Daniel Weill

Abdourahmane Kasse

Nancy 1994

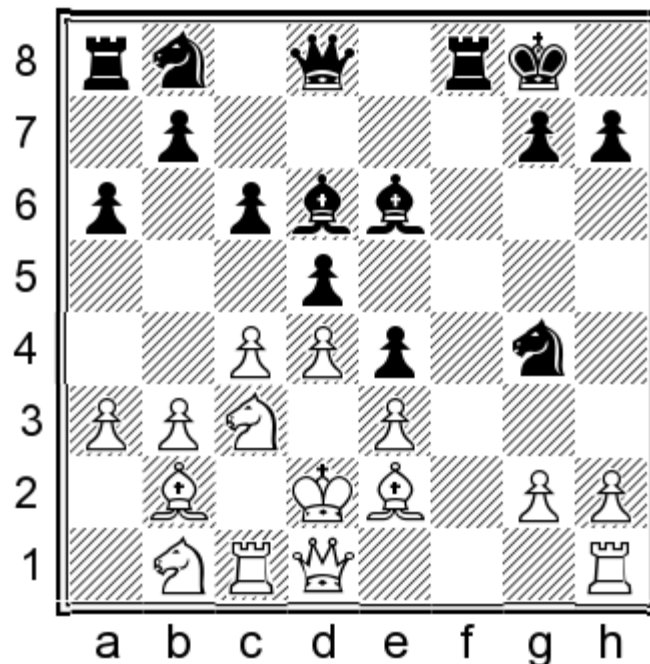
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.♘c3



White has three other (sensible) possibilities to refuse the gambit.

A) 3.e3 is very passive: 3...exd4 4.cxd5? (4.exd4 leads to the Exchange Variation of the French that we discussed in Chapter 2, devoted to the Scandinavian; ah yes, we start with an Albin Countergambit and eventually transpose into a French which could itself result from a Scandinavian – transpositions are numerous in the opening) 4...Qb4+ – an old acquaintance – 5.Qd2 dxe3 (as in Game 47, except that here the d-file is closed; the black queen does not therefore threaten its white counterpart) 6.Qxb4 (6.fxe3 Qh4+ 7.g3 Qe4 8.Qf3 Qe7) 6...fxe2+ 7.Qxf2 Qh4+. The d-file was closed, but not the fourth rank. Black regains the piece with an extra pawn.

B) 3.Nf3?! allows Black to gain space in the centre. The game Shoker-Maatoug (French Junior Championship 1998) quickly turned into a rout for White: 3...e4 4.Nfd2 c6 5.e3 f5 6.Nc3 Nf6 7.b3 a6 8.Qb2 Qd6 (Black has a space advantage that allows him to develop more easily) 9.Qc1 0-0 10.a3 f4 11.Qe2 Qe6 (11...fxe3 12.fxe3 Ng4 13.Qxg4 Qh4+ 14.g3 Qxg3+ wins immediately) 12.Ndb1 fxe3 13.fxe3 Ng4! 14.Qd2 (14.Qxg4 Qh4+ 15.g3 Qxg3+-) 15.Qxg4

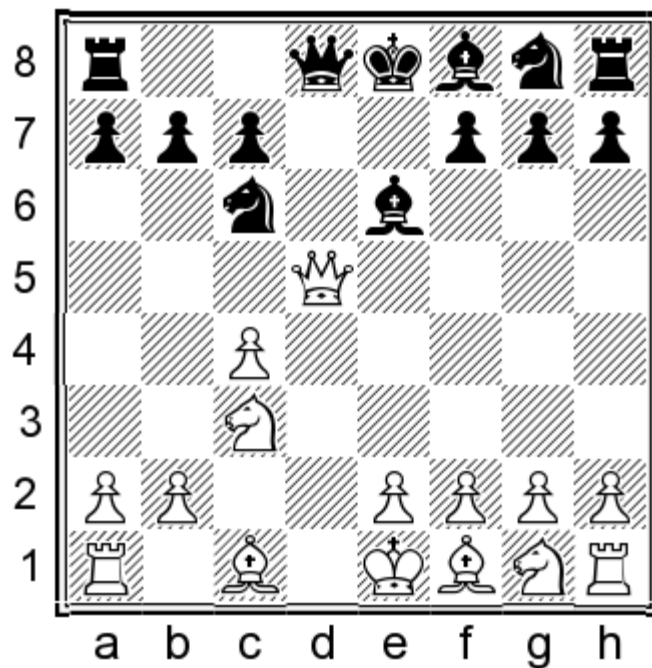


analysis diagram

14...♘xe3! and 15.♙xe3 is not possible because of 15...♔g5#;

C) 3.cxd5, which we shall see in the next game.

3...exd4 4.♖xd4 ♘c6! 5.♔xd5 ♙e6

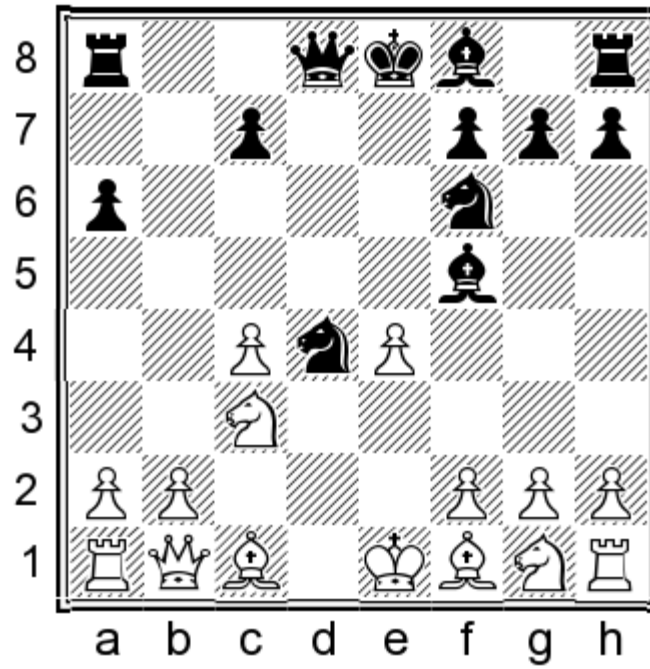


6.♔xd8+

This exchange of queens gives Black too strong an initiative because of the threat of ...♘b4(d4)-c2+.

White had to play 6.♖b5, even if after 6...a6! he must be very vigilant.

A) 7.♖xb7 is much too dangerous, for example: 7...♘d4 8.♖e4 ♘f6 9.♖b1 (9.♖d3 ♙xc4! 10.♖xc4?? ♘c2#) 9...♙f5 10.e4



analysis diagram

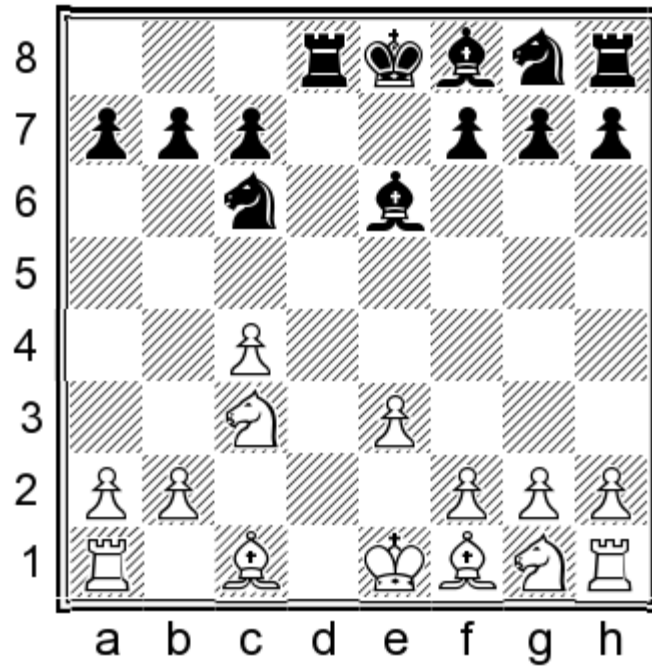
10...Nxe4! 11.Nxe4 Bb4+ 12.Qd2 Qxd2+ 13.Kxd2 Nb3+. Even if material remains approximately equal, the white king will be in great danger after Black castles kingside;

B) 7.Qa4 is better and was played in the game Karu-Keres, Estonia 1931: 7...Bb4 8.Qd2?! (8.e3 gave a balanced position with compensation for Black because of his lead in development) 8...Qxc4. Black has regained his pawn and, better developed, has the superior chances (0–1, 25 moves).

6...Rxd8 7.e3??

A) 7.b3? loses in the same way as in the game after 7...Nb4;

B) The only move was 7.Qf4. After 7...Qxc4 8.Qxc7 Rxd7 9.Qf4 Nb4 10.Rc1 Nxa2 11.Nxa2 Qxa2 12.Rc8+ Rxd8 13.Rxd8+ Qxd8 the position remains almost equal, although this queenless middlegame will probably be easier to play for Black because of his queenside pawn majority.



7...♞b4

The threat of a knight fork on c2 wins material.

8.♞b1 ♞c2+ 9.♞e2 ♜xc4+ 10.♞f3 ♜xf1

White resigned.

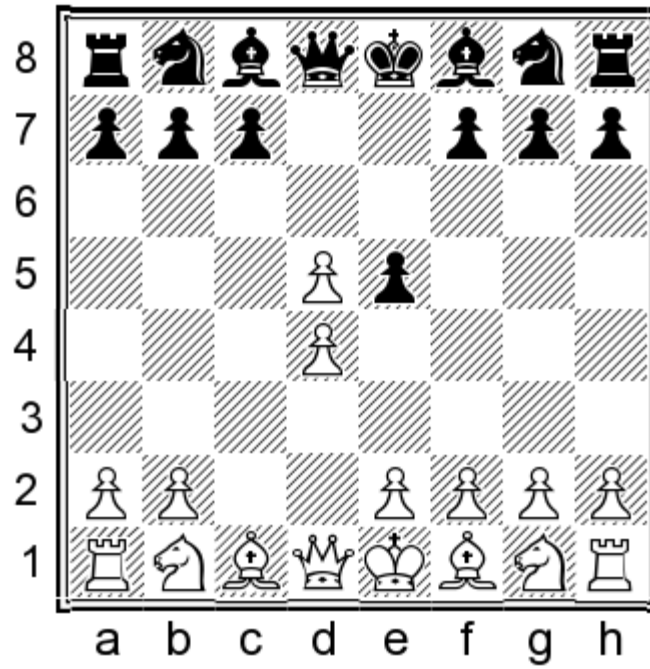
Game 60

Li Zunian 2378

Wang Hao 2605

Suzhou 2006

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.cxd5

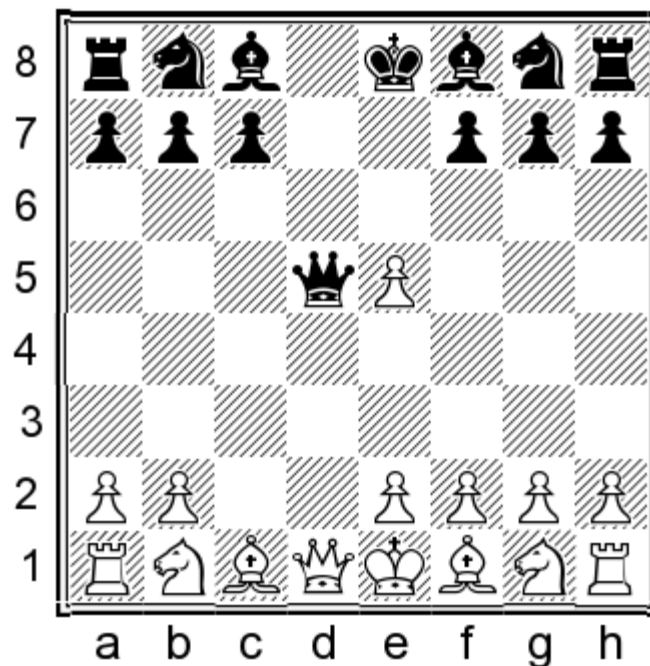


3...Qxd5 4.dxe5

A) 4. Nf3 e4 5. Nc3 Bb4 and White is forced to play 6. Ng1 if he does not want to lose the d4-pawn.

B) 4. Nc3 does not give White anything: 4... Qxd4 5. Qxd4 exd4 6. Nb5 Bb4+ 7. Qd2 Qxd2+ 8. Qxd2 Na6 9. Nxd4 c5 10. Nb5 Qe6.

C) 4. e3 exd4 5. Nf3 Nc6 6. exd4 Qg4 oddly transposes into a variation of the Göring Gambit (1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 exd4 4. c3 d5 5. exd5 Qxd5 6. cxd4 Qg4) which is absolutely not dangerous, even without knowing the theory. In any case, if the player of the white pieces started the game with 1. d4 there is little risk that he himself is a great connoisseur of the Göring Gambit.



4...♔xd1+!

Stronger than 4...♕xe5, which gives White a tempo for development: 5.♘f3.

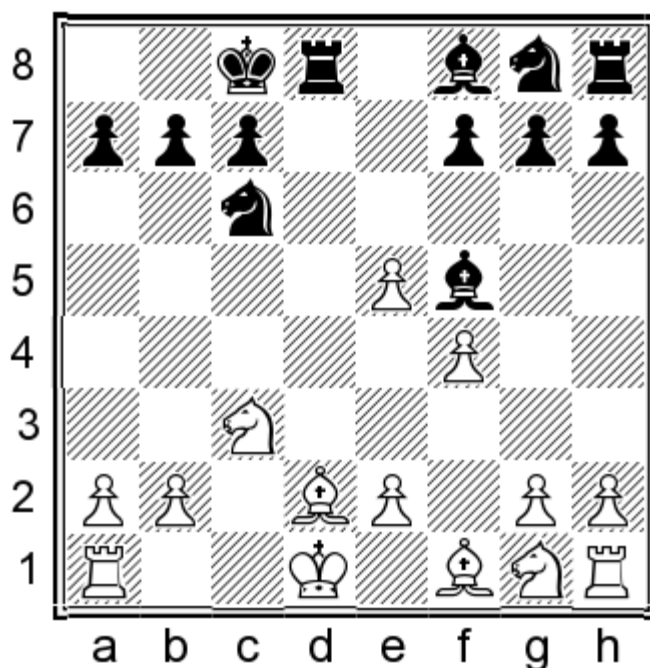
5.♔xd1

The white king is uncomfortably placed on d1, especially since Black will soon castle queenside.

5...♘c6 6.f4?!

Too ambitious. White had to be satisfied with 6.♘f3, even if after 6...♗g4 7.♗f4 ♘ge7 8.♘bd2 ♘g6 9.♗g3 0-0-0 Black will quickly recover the e5-pawn with a better position.

6...♗f5 7.♘c3 0-0-0+ 8.♗d2



8...f6!

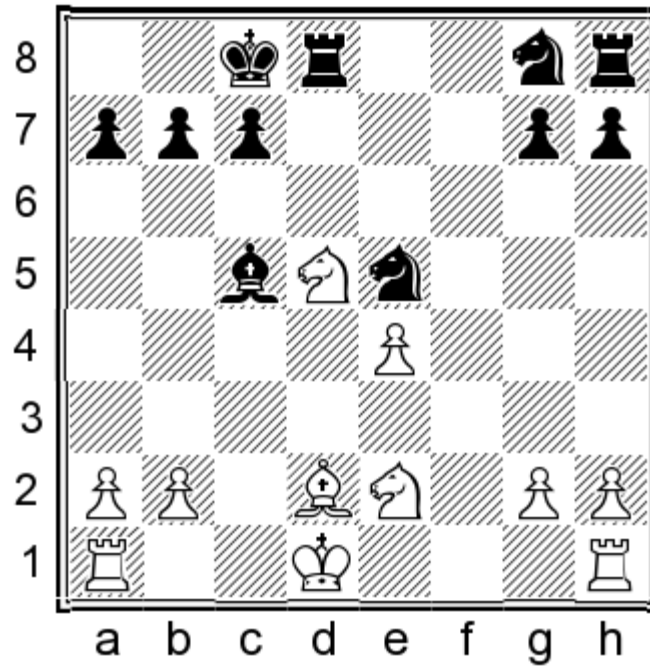
Often the correct method in the Albin Countergambit when White clings on to the e5-pawn by f2-f4. Black can no longer hope to recover the pawn and must therefore play a true gambit.

9.e4

White finally decides to give the pawn back right away.

9.exf6 ♘xf6 10.♘f3 ♗c5 would indeed have left Black too much initiative.

9...♗g4+ 10.♗e2 ♗xe2+ 11.♘gxe2 fxe5 12.fxe5 ♗c5 13.♘d5 ♘xe5



Black has recovered his pawn. He is now better because his pieces are more active and the white king remains very badly placed in the centre.

14.♖c1?

He had to play 14.♔c2 to remove the king from the d-file and allow the a1-rook to get out.

14...♞d3 15.♞c2 ♞f2+ 16.♔e1 ♞xe4

16...♞xh1 17.♞xc5 was less clear, since the knight is not certain of getting back out.

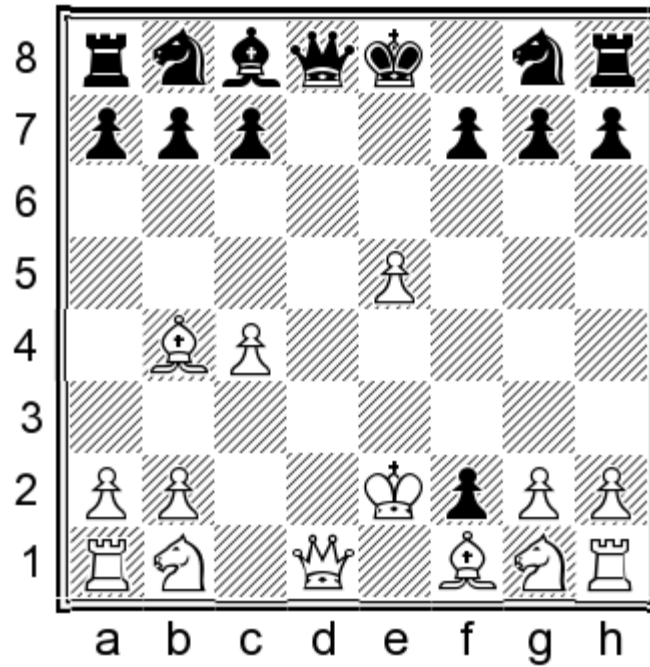
17.♞df4 ♞gf6 18.a3 ♞f2+ 19.♔f1 ♞g4 0-1

The (difficult to counter) threat is 20...♞e3+ 21.♞xe3 ♞d1#.

Show in Quiz Mode

Your move!

41



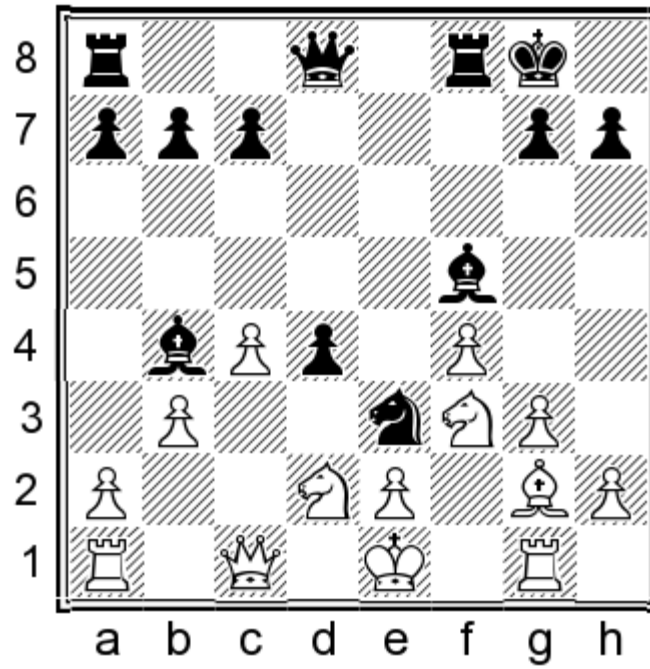
The Albin Countergambit combination. Black to move.

Show/Hide the Solution

7...fxg1=♘+!

(See Game 47, Stanczyk-Moret)

42



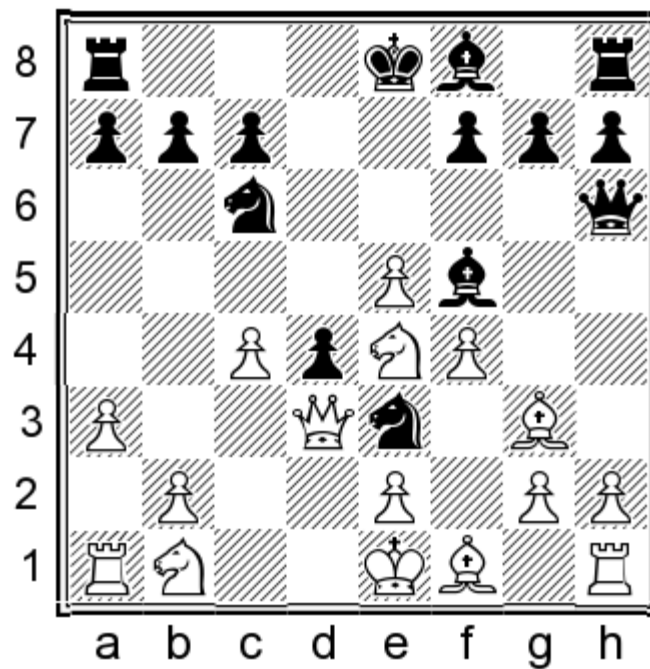
How does Black exploit the strong e3-knight and the bad position of the white pieces?

Show/Hide the Solution

14...♔a3!

and the white queen has no square because of the threat of a fork on c2.

(See Game 50, **Forgács-Török**)



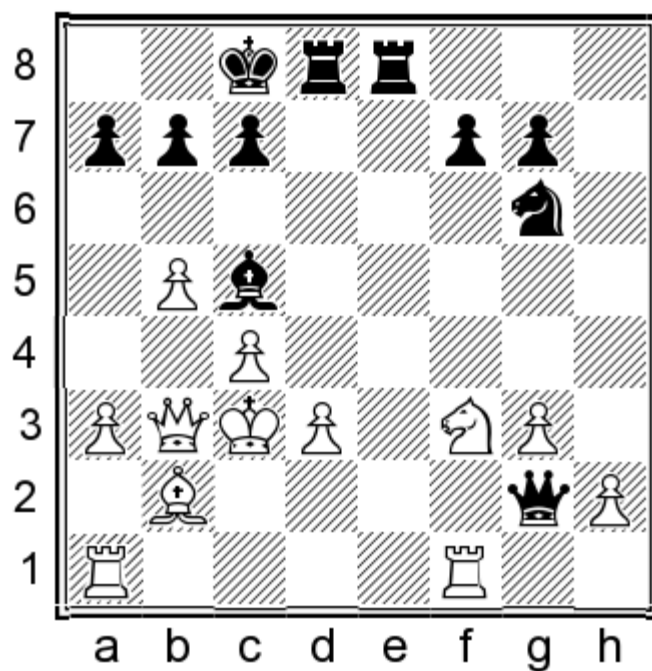
Exactly the same question as in the previous diagram, but not necessarily the same answer.

Show/Hide the Solution

11...♙b4+! 12.axb4 ♘xb4 13.♚b3 ♘bc2+ 14.♔f2 ♙xe4+

(See Game 51, **Kluxen-Lasker**)

44



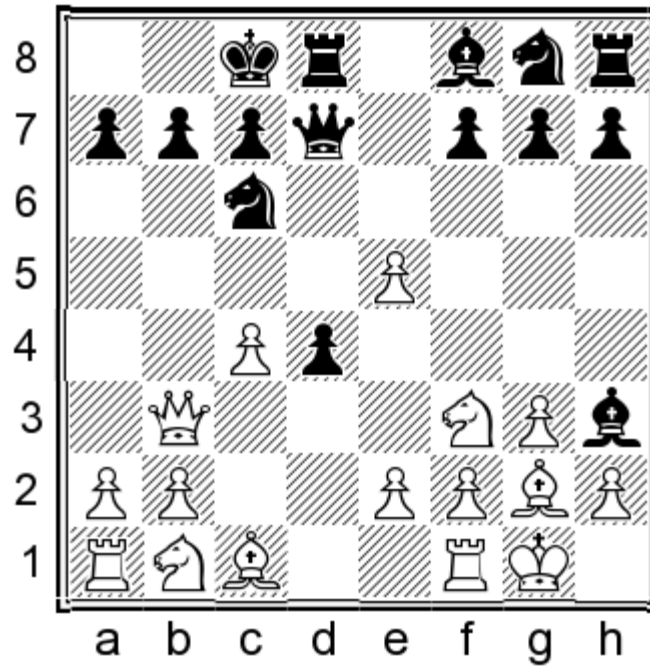
Black to play and mate in two moves.

Show/Hide the Solution

22...♙xd3+! 23.♔xd3 ♙e3#

(See Game 54, **Navrotescu-Massard**)

45



White to move. The tactical theme which Black must be very careful to avoid in the Albin Counter gambit.

Show/Hide the Solution

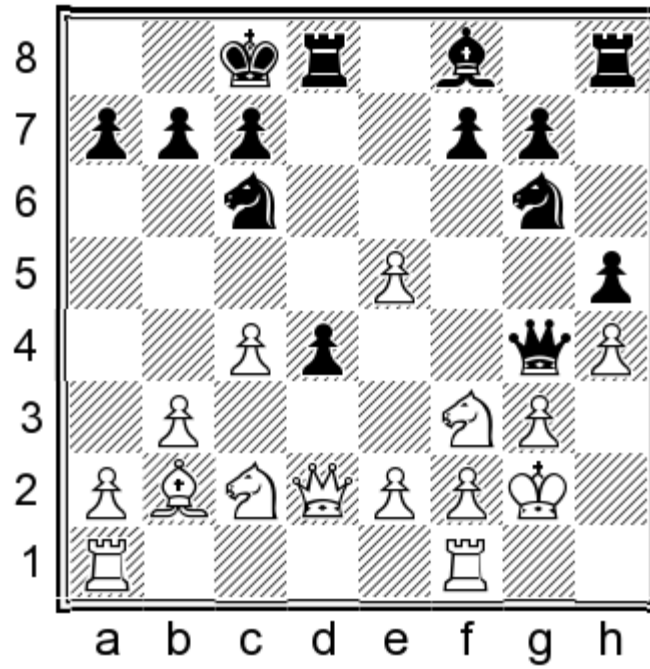
9.e6! ♖xe6

9...fxe6 10.♗xh3+–; 9...♕xe6 10.♘g5+–.

10.♘e5

and White has a strong attack.

(See Game 55, **Spassky-Forintos**)



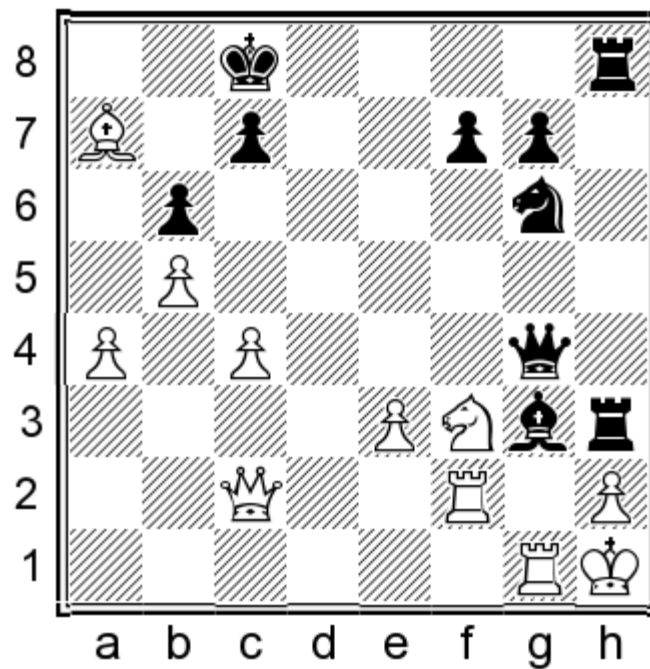
Black to play and win.

Show/Hide the Solution

14...d3!

with decisive threats.

(See Game 56, **Kursova-Kosintseva**)



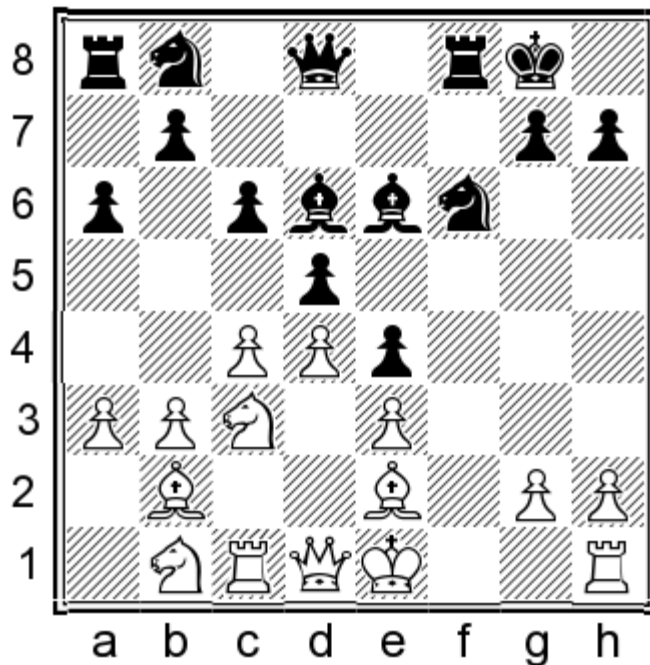
It's not that common to see a grandmaster with an Elo of nearly 2700 get mated in less than 25 moves with white. Yet this is what happened in this position to Van Wely.

Show/Hide the Solution

23...♔xf3+! 24.♖xf3 ♖xh2+

(See Game 58, **Van Wely-Morozevich**)

48



How does Black take advantage of his lead in development, and more especially the insecurity of the white king, still stuck in the centre?

Show/Hide the Solution

13...♖g4!

with a very strong initiative, as 14.♖xg4 is not possible because of 14...♔h4+ 15.g3 ♖xg3+-+.

(See Game 59, **Weill-Kasse**)

Chapter 9

The Stonewall: an unbreachable fortress

As we saw in the previous chapter (and once more I have to insist on this important point!), the Albin Countergambit can only be played against the Queen's Gambit.

It is therefore absolutely necessary to add another opening to it when White starts with 1.d4, but does not continue with 2.c4 after 1...d5.

Even though the move 2.c4 is by far the most popular, there are many alternatives. The three most natural moves, and the most frequently played (besides 2.c4), are 2.e3, 2.g4 and especially 2.f3 (Diagram 1), and all three radically prevent the Albin Countergambit.

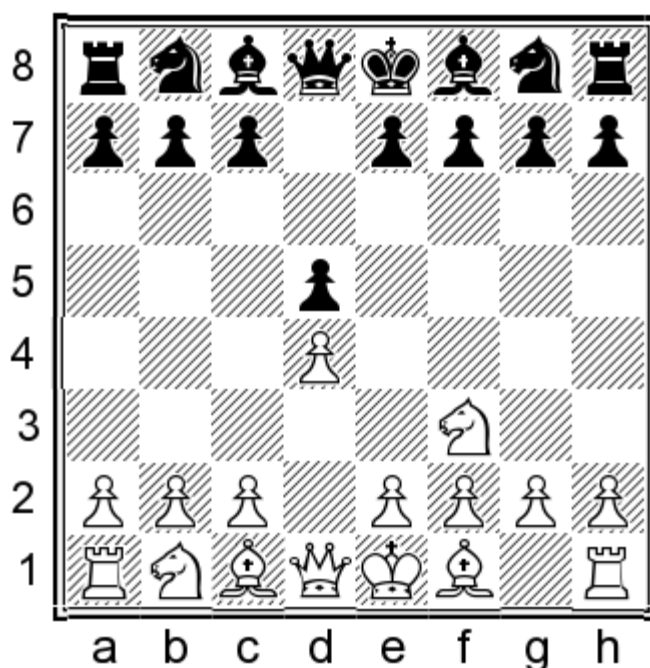


Diagram 1

The move 2.f3 will pose specific problems that we will approach at the end of this chapter in a small aside concerning move orders and possible transpositions.

Against all these so-called Queen's Pawn Openings (1.d4 d5 without c2-c4 on the second move), I propose that you adopt the Stonewall Opening. It is sometimes found under the name Stonewall Defence, but we will see that it would be more appropriate to speak of attack, as its offensive potential is so important. For my part, throughout this chapter I will prefer the more neutral name Stonewall.

After the Portuguese Variation of the Scandinavian and the Albin Countergambit that we studied in the first two parts of this book, we have here an opening that does not take its name from either a country or a player, but from a pawn structure.

The Stonewall (wall of stones!) is part of the large Dutch Defence family (1.d4 f5), even though former World Champion Euwe instead chose to classify it among the sub-variations of the Queen's Gambit. The Stonewall, in fact, is characterized by four pawn moves (...f7-f5, ...d7-d5, ...e7-e6, ...c7-c6) which, as we shall see, can be played in any order, even if, to stick to our repertoire, we will obviously have to play ...d7-d5 first. It can also be played against the Queen's Gambit, but I will not advise it for at least two reasons:

1) Against the Queen's Gambit we already have the Albin Countergambit, which represents an important part of our repertoire.

2) Playing the Stonewall against the Queen's Gambit move order (1.d4 and 2.c4) would require the study of additional variations which we will mention at the end of the chapter, but which we cannot afford to tackle within the limited scope of this book.

That said, readers who, for one reason or another, are not entirely satisfied with the Albin Countergambit will still be able to turn to the Stonewall, even against the Queen's Gambit. Much of the work will already be done.

It is difficult to precisely identify the precursor of the Stonewall, which is a very old opening. It was successfully used in 1843 by the Frenchman Pierre de Saint-Amant in his match against Howard Staunton, who was the first unofficial World Champion. Subsequently, it has been adopted by many World Champions, such as Alexander Alekhine, Mikhail Botvinnik, Vasily Smyslov, Mikhail Tal and Boris Spassky. More recently very strong grandmasters such as Nigel Short, Artur Jussupow and the Frenchman Joël Lautier have played it regularly, as did Vladimir Kramnik during his youth. Surely a guarantee of quality.

As with the Scandinavian and the Albin Countergambit, we will not be able to venture deeply into the examination of the most recent theory within the limited framework of this work. We will therefore be satisfied (and this is already not so bad) with examining the main ideas, the plans, the classical combinations and also the most frequent errors that regularly come up in games involving amateur players. In any case, this is the right way to start when you begin studying an opening. I will refer readers who want to explore more deeply to the theoretical works listed in the bibliography, especially that of Sverre Johnsen (*Win with the Stonewall*), which is the most recent and which has an enticing title.

Here is a picture of the characteristic structure of the Stonewall after the first four pawn moves, facing 1.d4 and 2.♘f3 (of course, it lacks two white moves which can be chosen from a wide selection):

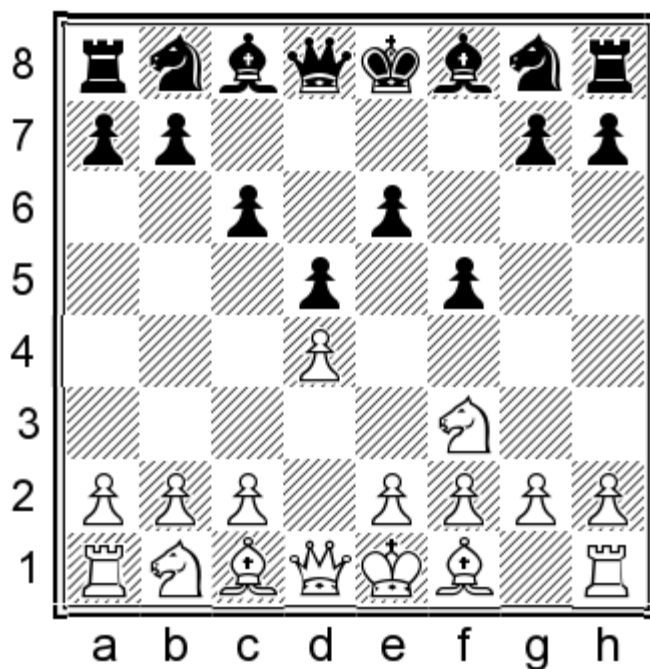


Diagram 2

This central pawn structure is well named (wall of stone!) and is renowned for its robustness. The d5-pawn is solidly supported by its two acolytes on e6 and c6, and the e4-square is kept firmly under control by the d5- and f5-pawns.

Most of the black pieces will eventually be able to find good squares in this wall of stone, starting with the dark-squared bishop, one of the pieces that will play a leading role in the Stonewall. Whenever it can it will sit on d6, from where it will aim at the white kingside. We shall see that the sacrifice of the bishop on h2 will be a major tactical theme when White has not fianchettoed on the kingside (and has castled kingside, needless to say).

The two knights, meanwhile, will be very naturally developed on f6 and on d7, and the king will systematically castle kingside, because the f8-rook has an important role to play in the attack on the kingside thanks to the pawn on f5.

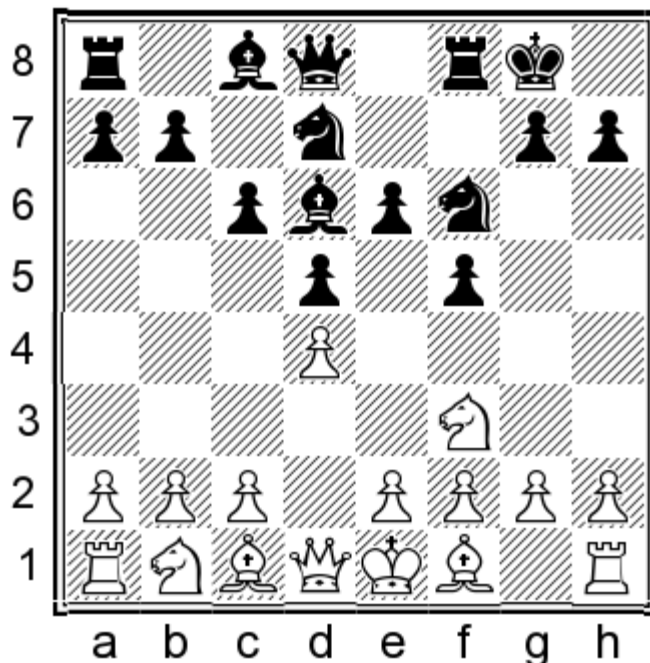


Diagram 3

Of course, the Stonewall is not without its drawbacks (if it was the perfect opening this would be common knowledge, and the other openings would no longer have a reason to exist). The main weaknesses of this construction are two in number.

1) The c8-bishop, foremost. The ultimate bad bishop of the Stonewall. The four black pawns (c6, d5, e6 and f5) are positioned on light squares, and so considerably restrict the possibilities of the bishop, which moves on squares of the same colour. Its field of action is therefore inevitably limited. Black will have two ways to try to remedy this.

The most ambitious (but also the most arrogant) is to think that we will not need this bishop and that we will be able to mate the white king without it.

If this first point is not achieved (it will happen, unfortunately), try to get it out into the open air via d7-e8 and h5. We will see several examples of this zigzag manoeuvre. When the c8-bishop reaches h5 it can in some cases become very active or can simply be exchanged against the f3-knight. The problem of the bad bishop is then solved.

2) The e5-square is the other significant weakness of the Stonewall set-up. The two black d5- and f5-pawns have abandoned control of this square, which will provide a magnificent outpost for a white knight. Black will try to fight for the control of the e5-square with the d6-bishop, the knight on d7, and also very often with the queen on f6, as we will see in many examples. But sometimes this will not be enough. The nightmare scenario for Black in the Stonewall (to try to avoid as much as possible, needless to say) is an endgame with a white knight on e5 against the bad c8-bishop.

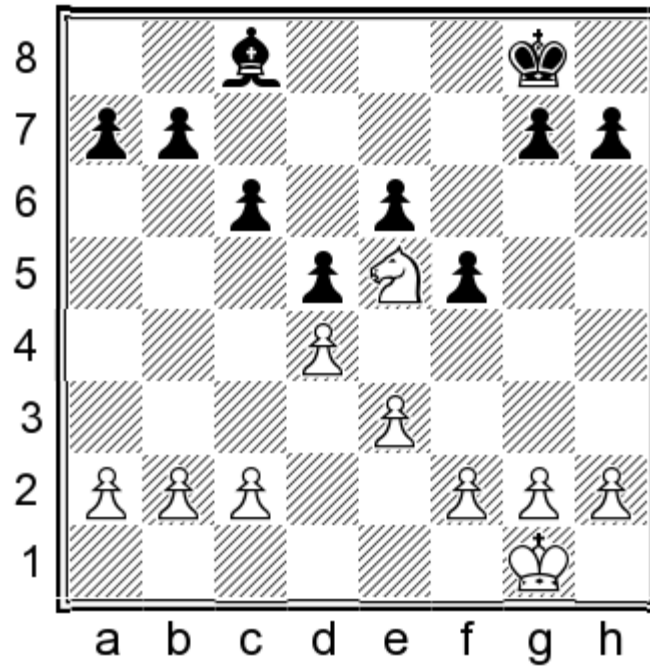


Diagram 4

However, before considering worst-case scenarios, let us return to the black strategy in diagram 3.

The f6-knight will quickly jump to the outpost on e4. It will be difficult to chase it away, as White will mostly have a knight on f3 that will block the f2-pawn. And an exchange on e4 would open the f-file very dangerously after the recapture ...fxe4 – hence the importance of having castled kingside and having a rook on f8. We will see many examples of tactical possibilities after the opening of the f-file that occurs after an exchange on e4, which is frequently played by amateurs.

If we admit that the c8-bishop, and by consequence the a8-rook, are not going to be developed in the immediate future, let us evoke the case of the black queen. Its ideal objective would be the h4-square on the kingside, after having chased away the f3-knight, which defends this square, and provided of course that White has not fianchettoed on the kingside (with a pawn on g3). When White has fianchettoed his bishop and a white pawn on g3 prevents the queen from intervening on h4, it will take a slightly roundabout route via e8 to finally reach h5 (one of the benefits of having the pawn on f5: the h5-e8 diagonal is open!).

Very often the black queen will have to make a short stop on f6 before reaching its final destination on h4, in order to control the e5-square one more time and thus prevent a white knight from settling there.

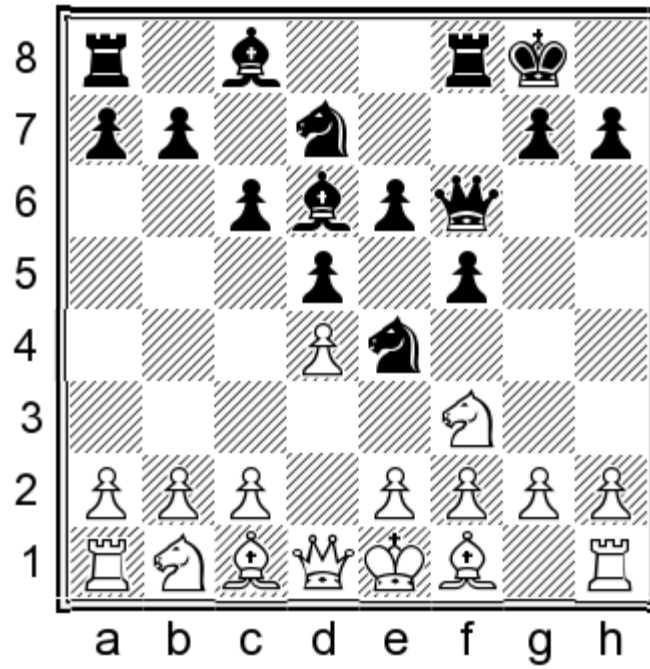


Diagram 5

We will see that the f6-square has a special importance in the Stonewall. In addition to the queen, the black rook will very frequently pass through this square at one time or another to get to the kingside (mostly to h6). This is the well-known right-angled rook manoeuvre which is one of the major attacking themes of the Stonewall and which will be honoured throughout this chapter.

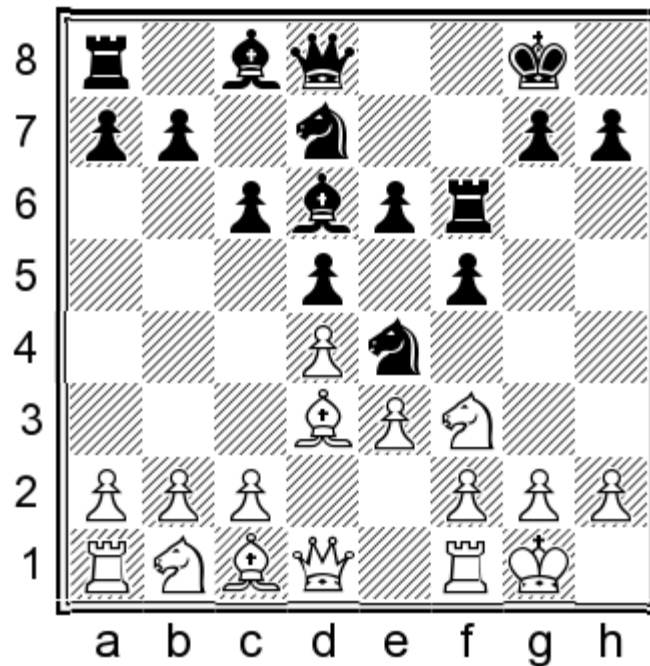


Diagram 6

The black queen will obviously also be able to perform this right-angled manoeuvre (f6-h6), but it is often preferable to favour the h4-square (or h5) and leave h6 to the rook, which will thus reinforce the action of its queen on the h-file.

Let us return to diagram 5 (with the black queen on f6) and continue the development of the black attack in its most classic form. It remains to be seen how to expel the f3-knight, which is the important defender of the white kingside. If White has the unfortunate idea of exchanging the e4-knight, the recapture with the f5-pawn will automatically chase the f3-knight away – one of the reasons why exchanging on e4 is rarely advisable for White. If he has not been sufficiently compliant to expel the f3-knight himself, it is the black g-pawn that will take care of this and which will launch the signal to attack. The advance of the g-pawn to g4 is indeed a central theme of the Stonewall. Amateur players are often reluctant (and rightly so!) to move the pawns in front of their king, but in the Stonewall they can do it without (too much) fear. White will have absolutely no means of profiting from the weakening of the black kingside, and the solidity of the centre (the wall of stone!) will prevent any counter-attack in this sector.

Here is the ideal arrangement of the black pieces in the Stonewall, which I shall describe as ‘classical’ (when White has castled kingside without the fianchetto).

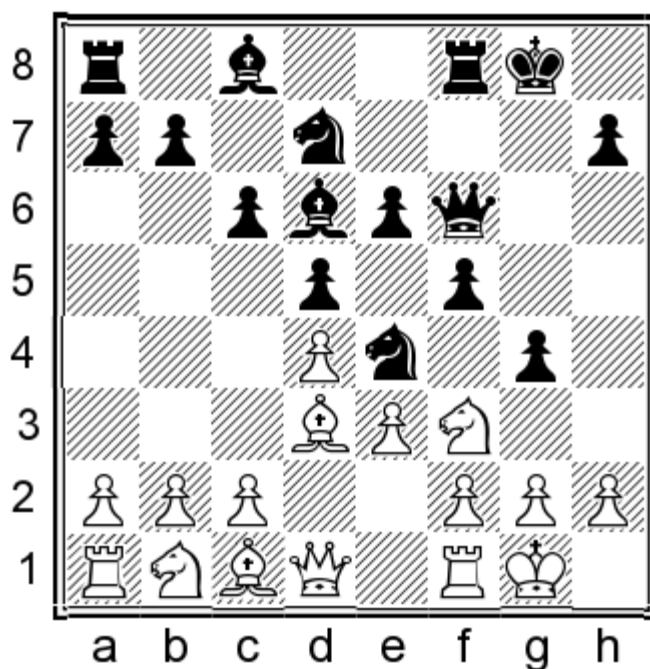


Diagram 7

Of course, White is missing some moves in the diagram position, but what is initially important is to clearly understand where Black must place his pieces. We will see the exact positions (with the same number of white and black moves!) in the games we are going to study.

We will start with a classic combination – the Stonewall combination, which has been reproduced in many amateur games. Grandmasters will obviously not let this happen, although we will see in Game 64 that there are some exceptions.

I. The bishop sacrifice on h2

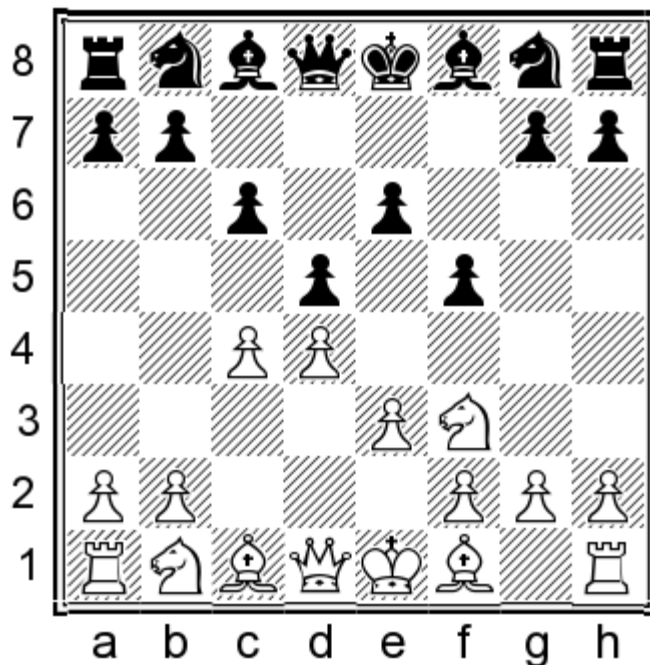
Game 61

Mathieu Boban 1720

Anthony Wirig 2145

Metz 1998

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 c6 4.e3 f5



The basic position of the Stonewall. The four black pawn moves can be interchanged and played in any order, but in order to stick to our repertoire, it is advisable to follow that of this game.

5.♘c3 ♘f6 6.♙e2

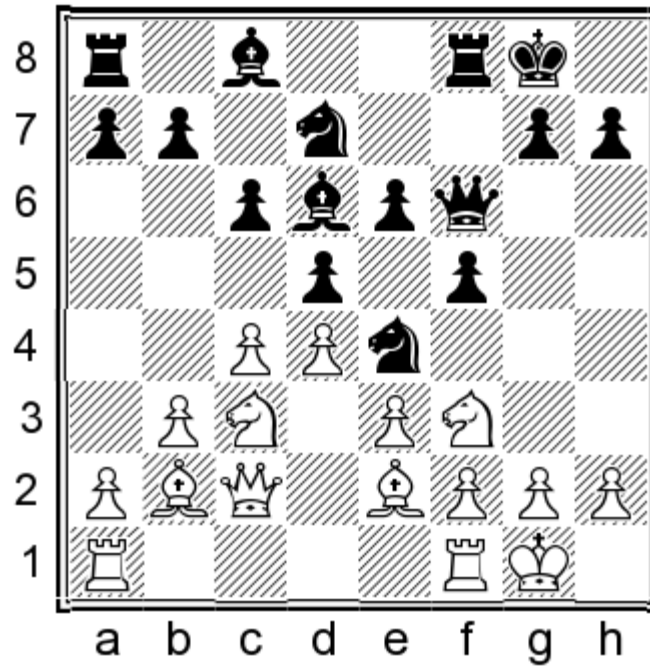
It seems more natural to develop the bishop to d3, but it is not necessarily better. On d3 the bishop seems more active, but when the black knight appears on e4 (and it will get there), White will no longer be able to play ♘xe4, as this would lose a piece to a fork after Black recaptures with a pawn.

6...♙d6 7.0-0 0-0 8.♙c2 ♘e4

The knight takes up its position on its natural outpost. Black has an ideal Stonewall.

9.b3 ♘d7 10.♙b2 ♙f6!

A good square for the queen (we shall see later that it can also be just as good for the rook) and the right way to proceed.



10...g5 would be premature, since White could respond 11.♘xe4 fxe4 12.♘e5. With the move 10...♕f6, which reinforces control of the e5-square, this manoeuvre becomes impossible.

The black queen is only passing through f6. Of course, it is heading towards the kingside.

11.c5

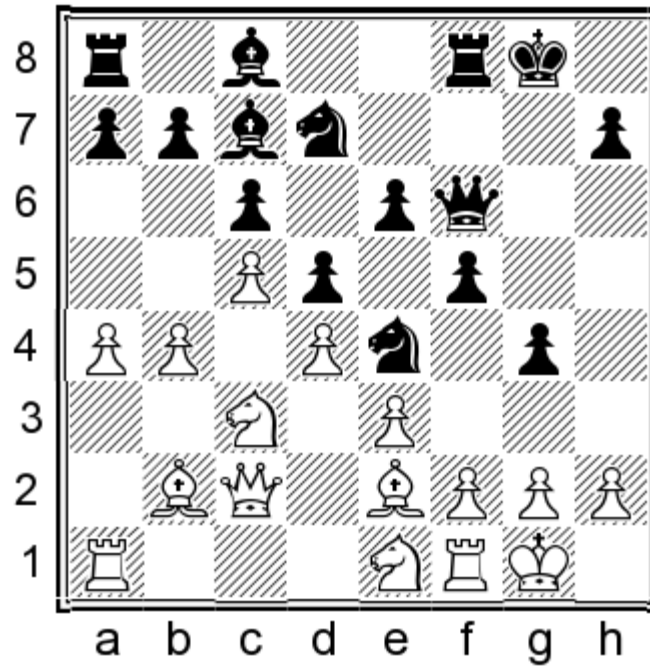
A move that is frequently played in junior and amateur games, but is often dubious. The white attack on the queenside is going to be much too slow. The white position, although apparently solid, is very difficult to defend for an amateur player.

11...♙c7 12.b4 g5!

This is the classic Stonewall attack.

13.a4 g4 14.♘e1

We will return to this position later and see what would have happened if White had retreated his knight to d2.

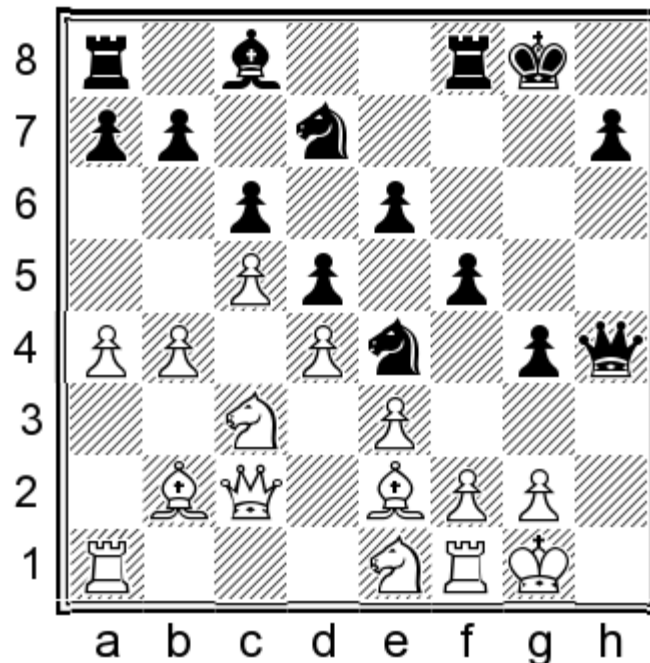


14...♗xh2+!!

The sacrifice of the bishop on h2 is a recurring tactical theme in the classical Stonewall (when White has not fianchettoed on the kingside).

The more prosaic 14...♕h6! also gives Black a strong attack without sacrificing anything, but it is difficult to resist the sacrifice when one knows that it works and also knows the follow-up. Be careful, however, not to get carried away. We will see later that it is not always easy to accurately assess whether this sacrifice is correct or not.

15.♖xh2 ♕h4+ 16.♖g1



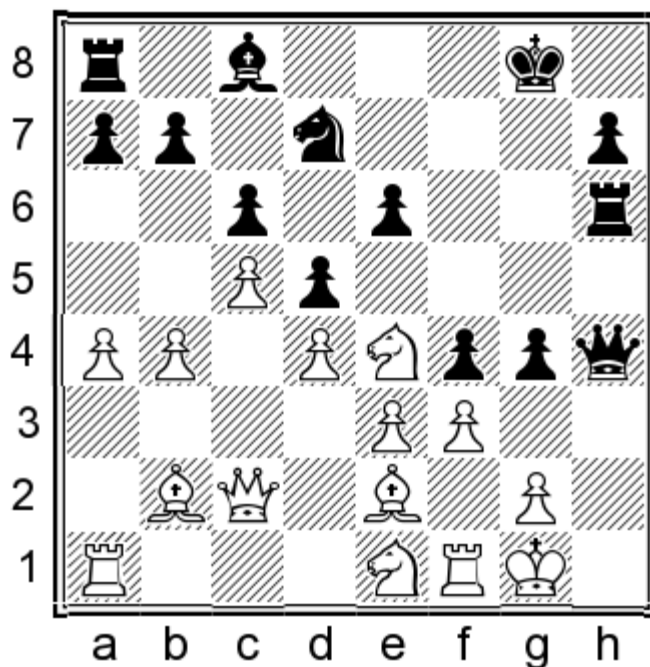
16...♖f6!

The famous right-angled rook move, which is very common in the Stonewall attack. The rook prepares to board and will support its queen on the h-file to force mate.

17.g3

17.♘xe4 is an important defence, which we shall see again, but it does not work here. It is important to know why:

A) 17...♖h6! (17...fxe4 18.♙xg4 ♜xg4 19.f3 gives White chances to defend) 18.f3 (18.f4 dxe4 and the threat of 18...g3 followed by mate is decisive) 18...f4!!



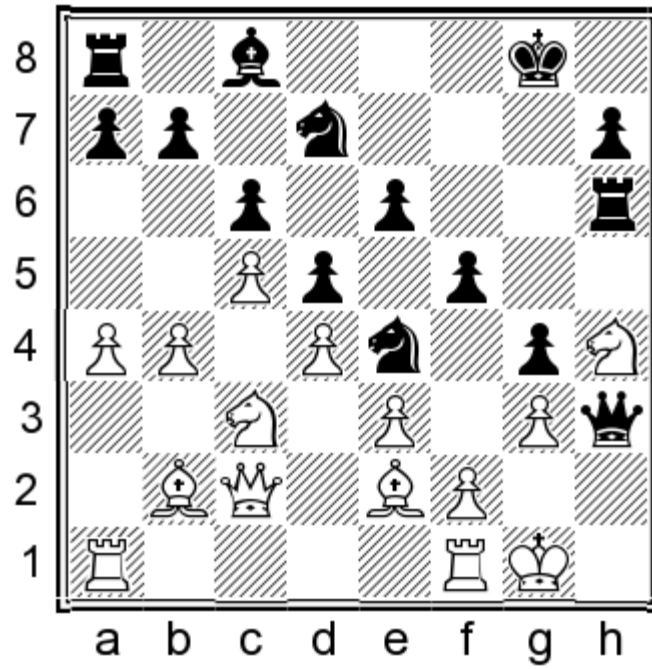
This move is the only one that leads to victory (18...fxe4 19.fxg4 ♜h2+ 20.♔f2 ♜h4+ 21.♔g1 and Black has nothing better than the perpetual; 18...dxe4 19.fxg4 fxg4 20.♖f4 and the attack will be repelled; 18...g3 19.♘xg3! ♜xg3 20.♙d3+—). 19.exf4 (if 19.fxg4 fxe3 mates) 19...dxe4 20.fxg4 (20.fxe4 g3—+) 20...e3! and White is mated;

B) 17.♙xg4 is not enough either: 17...fxg4 18.♘xe4 ♖h6 19.f3 dxe4 20.♜xe4 ♘f6! 21.♜f4 (if not, then 21...g3 followed by mate) 21...e5! 22.dxe5 ♘d5 23.♜d4 ♘xe3!! (to deflect the queen from the fourth rank and thereby unpin the g4-pawn; if it advances to g3 the white king will be in great danger) 24.e6 ♜h1+ 25.♔f2 ♜xf1+ 26.♔xe3 ♜g1+ 27.♔d2 ♜xd4+ 28.♔xd4 ♙xe6 and Black has an extra exchange.

17...♜h3 18.♘g2

The knight rushes to close the h-file.

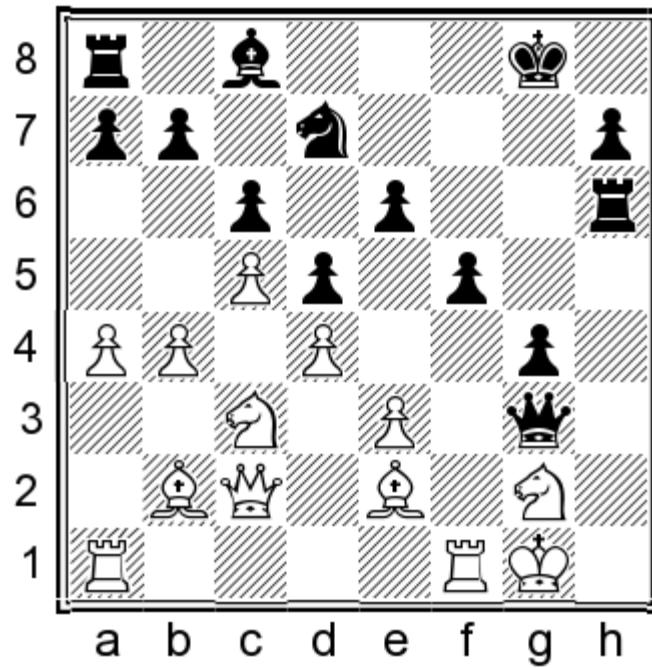
18...♖h6 19.♘h4



19...♘g3!

19...♘g5, with the idea 20...♙xh4 21.gxh4 ♘f3+, was also very strong.

20.fxg3 ♚xg3+ 21.♘g2



21...♙h1+!!

The fireworks continue.

22.♔xh1 ♚h3+ 23.♔g1 g3 0-1

Mate is unstoppable.

The future GM already had a sharp tactical sense at the age of 15. In his youth, while he was a great prospect, Anthony played – with white! – the Colle Opening and the Stonewall a lot, and this brought him some dazzling successes.

We had studied the following game together, and this had obviously inspired him.

Game 62
Al Horowitz
Amateur
New York 1950

1.d4 d5 2.e3 ♘f6 3.♙d3 e6 4.♘d2 c5 5.c3 ♘c6 6.f4 ♙e7 7.♘gf3 0-0 8.♘e5 ♔c7 9.0-0 b6 10.g4

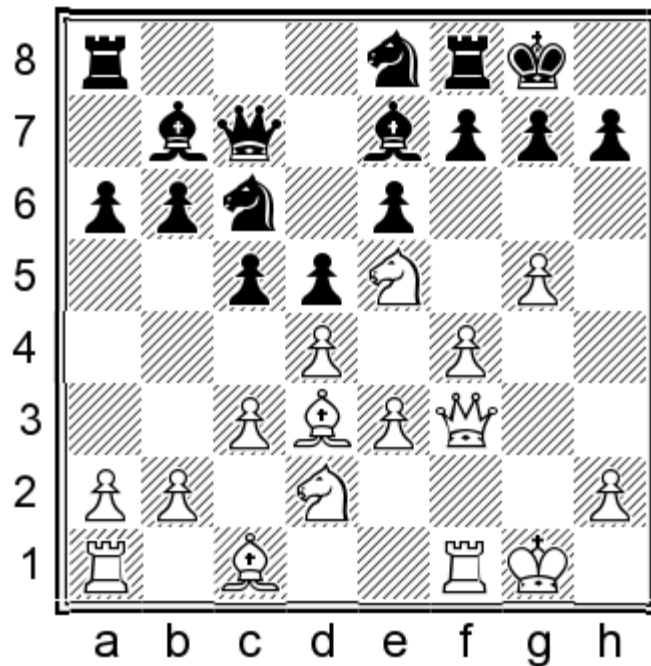
The Stonewall with white. This game follows exactly the same course as the previous one, but with reversed colours.

10...♙b7 11.♔f3!

The equivalent to the move ...♔f6 that we saw in the note to White's tenth move in the previous game.

11.g5?! would have been too hasty: 11...♘xe5 12.fxe5 (12.gxf6? ♘xd3 13.fxe7 ♔xe7–+) 12...♘e4♞.

11...a6 12.g5 ♘e8



13.♙xh7+!

Here we go! The music and lyrics are almost identical to Anthony's previous game.

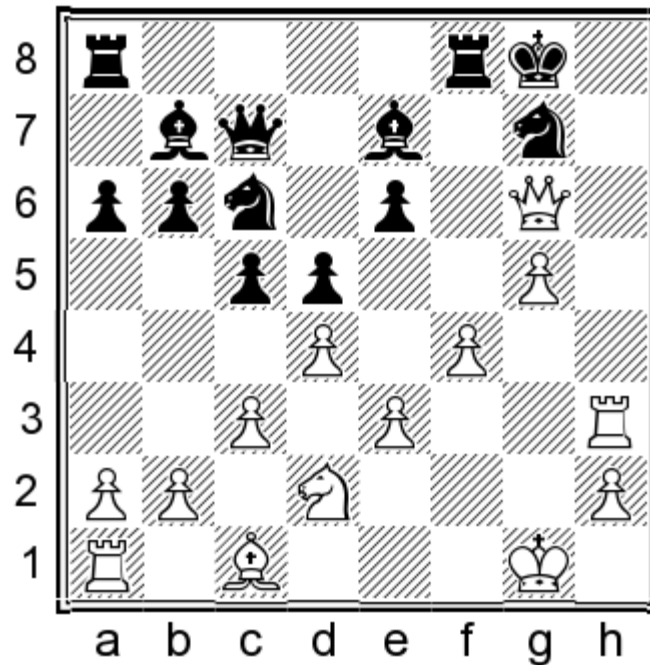
13...♙xh7 14.♔h5+ ♙g8 15.♔f3 g6

A) 15...f6?? 16.g6!–+;

B) 15...♖xe5? also loses: 16.♗h3 f6 17.f5!!+-. Just as in Anthony's game (but with reversed colours).

C) After 15...♙xg5 16.fxg5 ♜xe5 17.♗h3 f6 18.dxe5 ♜xe5 19.♞f3 ♜f5 20.e4 dxe4 the position remains very complicated. Unlike Anthony's game (with reversed colours!), White cannot play 21.♞d4 here, as the black pawn is still on c5 (Black hasn't played ...c5-c4 – equivalent to the move c4-c5, with reversed colours, in Anthony's game).

16.♜h6 ♞g7 17.♗h3 ♞h5 18.♞xg6 fxg6 19.♜xg6+ ♞g7

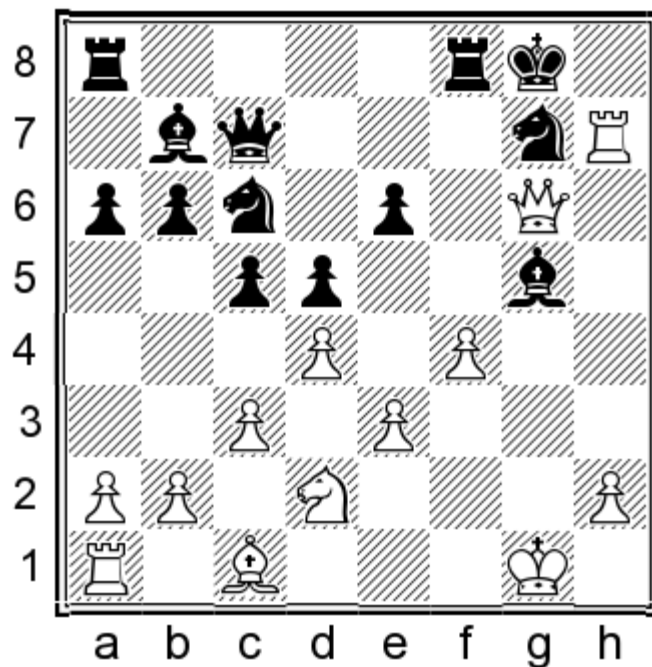


20.♗h7??

In his book *The Stonewall Attack*, Grandmaster Andrew Soltis surprisingly asserts that the text move wins, while recognizing that the final combination of the previous game was stronger. But he is mistaken, as we shall see. As we already know, it was necessary to conclude by playing 20.♗h8+ ♜xh8 21.♜h6+ ♜g8 22.g6+-.

20...♙d6

This move, indeed, gives White a strong attack. Soltis states that 20...♗f7?? lost immediately because of 21.♜h6+- . But he omits the fantastic resource 20...♙xg5!!, which completely reverses the situation.



analysis diagram

21.fxg5 (21.♞xg5 ♔xh7–+) 21...♞f7 and 22.♞h6 is not possible, because Black mates first! 22...♞f2+ 23.♔h1 ♞e1+ 24.♔g2 ♞f2+ 25.♔h3 ♞xe3+ 26.♔h4 ♞f4#.

21.♞h6 ♕xf4?

After 21...♘f5! the position becomes very complicated, and equally unclear. It should not be forgotten that, if his attack does not succeed, the ‘driver’ of the Stonewall will find himself stuck with a bad bishop (the one on c1, here) and an undeveloped queenside.

22.exf4 ♞xf4 23.g6

23.♘e4!! ♞xe4 24.♞h8+ ♔f7 25.♞f6#.

23...♞g4+ 24.♔h1 ♞xg6 25.♞xg6 ♞f8 26.♘f3 ♞xf3?

26...♞f7□ 27.♞xf7+ ♞xf7 28.♞h3±.

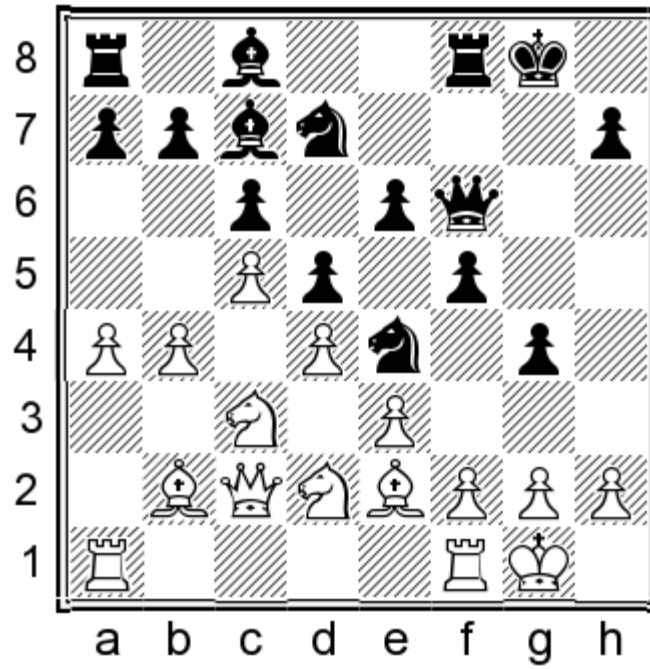
27.♕h6 ♞f7 28.♞g1 1–0

Going back to the game of Anthony Wirig, let us dwell on the bishop sacrifice for a moment. This combination is so classic in the Stonewall that it is important to understand its intricacies before getting started.

In Anthony’s game we had a white bishop on e2 and a knight on e1.

Let us find out whether the sacrifice would be correct with a slight modification of the position of these two pieces. Let’s consider several possibilities.

Analysis position No. 1: bishop e2 + knight d2



14...♙xh2+ 15.♗xh2 ♖h4+ 16.♗g1 ♜f6?

A) It was necessary to interpose 16...♘xc3 to prevent the white resource on the next move. 17.♙xc3 ♜f6 18.g3 ♗h3 19.♘f3! (the only move) 19...♜h6 20.♘h4 ♜xh4 21.gxh4 g3 22.fxg3 ♗xg3+ and Black has nothing more than a perpetual check;

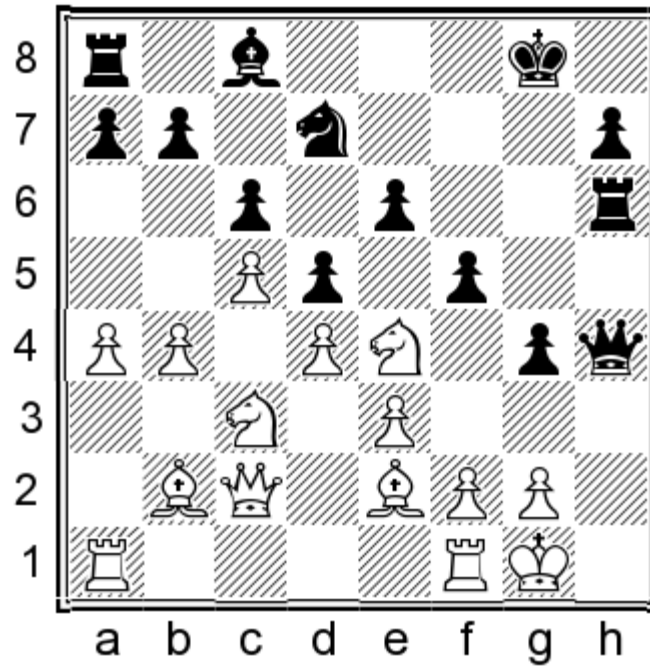
B) Perhaps 16...♘xd2!? gave Black more chances: 17.♗xd2 ♜f6 18.g3 ♗h3 19.♙d3 (the only move) 19...♜h6 20.f3 gxf3 21.♗f2 (21.♜xf3?? ♗h1+ 22.♗f2 ♜h2#) 21...e5! and the position remains very complicated.

17.♘dx4!

Of course, this resource was not possible with the knight on e1. Taking with the other knight on e4 is exactly the same. The important thing is that the two knights control the e4-square.

17...♜h6

17...fxe4 18.♘xe4! dxe4 (18...♜h6 19.f3!±) 19.g3 ♗h3 20.♗xe4 and the white queen can return to g2 to defend the king.



18.f3 f4

As in the game?

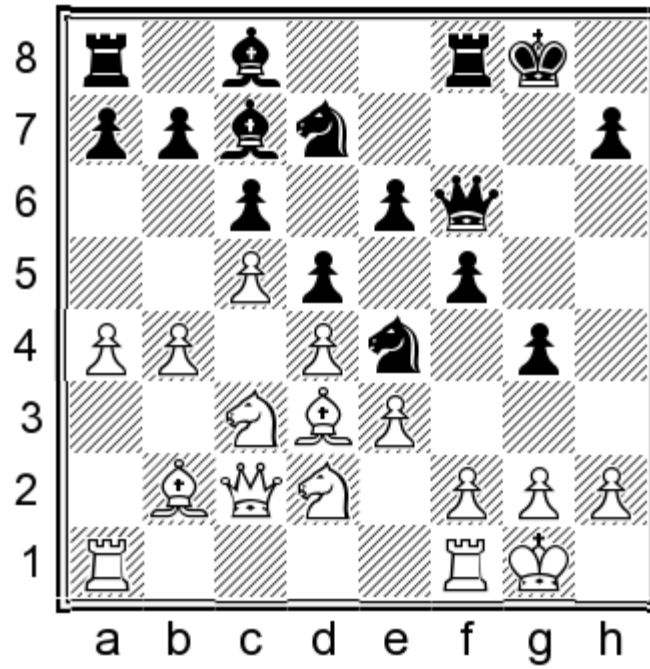
18...g3? 19.♘xg3+-.

19.exf4 dxe4 20.♘xe4+-

No, not as in the game! Here is the difference: the two knights (c3 and d2) controlled the e4-square. The attack is repelled.

Now let's put the bishop on d3 and leave the knight on d2.

Analysis position No. 2: bishop d3 + knight d2



14...♙xh2+ 15.♔xh2 ♚h4+ 16.♔g1 ♜f6 17.♟cxe4

A) 17.g3? ♟xg3 18.fxg3 ♚xg3+ 19.♔h1 (there is no knight on e1 that can interpose on g2) 19...♜h6#;

B) 17.♙xe4? ♜h6 18.f4 g3 and there's no defence against mate.

17...♜h6 18.f3 dxe4

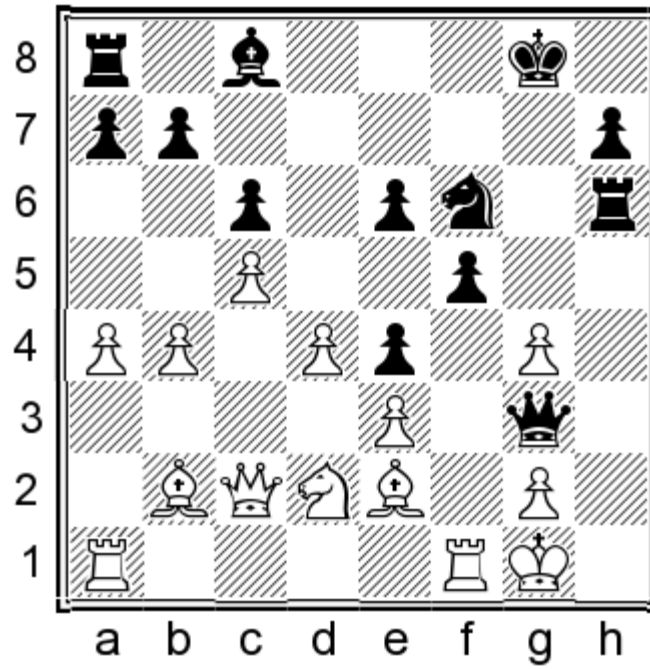
A) As we saw in the previous analysis, 18...f4 does not work when the two knights control the e4-square: 19.exf4 dxe4 20.♟xe4. In the game, with the e1-knight, this resource did not exist;

B) 18...g3? 19.♟xg3!+-.

19.fxg4 ♟f6

Taking advantage of the fact that the d3-bishop does not control g4.

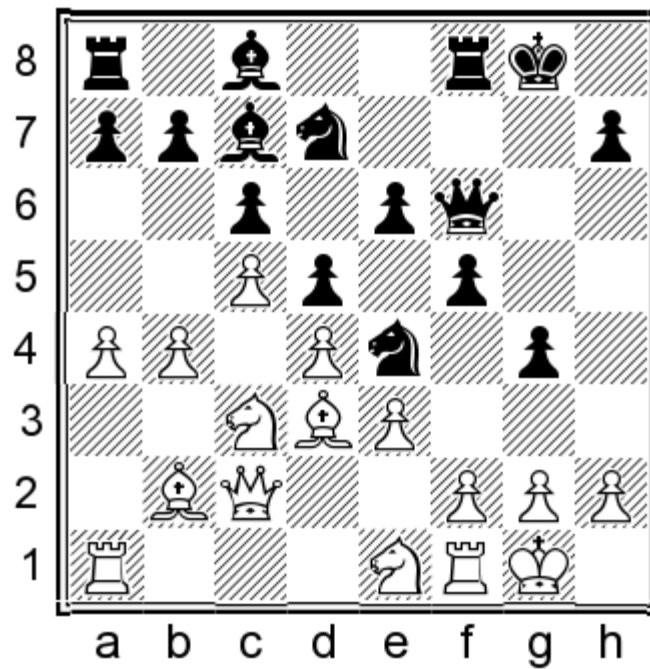
20.♙e2 ♚g3!+-



The threat of 21...Rf2, followed by 22...Qh4 combined with the attack on the e3-pawn, is decisive.

Let us now try with the bishop on d3 and the knight on e1.

Analysis position No. 3: bishop d3 + knight e1



14...Qxh2+ 15.Qxh2 Qh4+ 16.Qg1 Rf6 17.g3!

17.Qxe4? was wrong: 17...Rf6 18.f3 fxe4 19.fxg4 Qf6 20.Qe2 Qh2+ 21.Qf2 e5! and the entrance of the c8-bishop, followed by the a8-rook, gives Black a decisive attack.

17...♖h3

17...♘g3, which we saw in the previous analysis, does not work with the knight on e1 and the queen on c2: 18.fxg3 ♖xg3+ 19.♗g2+–.

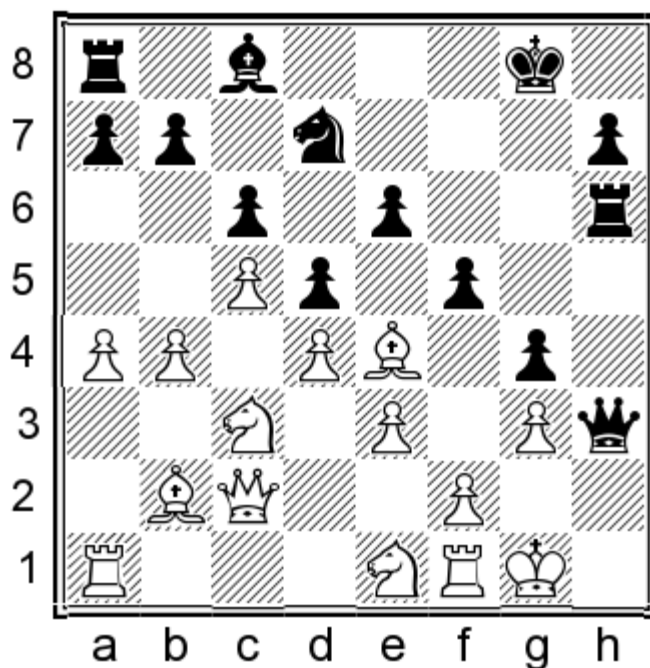
18.♙xe4!

Having the bishop on d3 allows this defence.

18.♘g2? ♖h6 19.♘h4 ♘g5! (the only winning move in this position; 19...♘xg3? 20.fxg3 ♖xg3+ 21.♘g2 ♖h1+?? 22.♕xh1 ♗h3+ 23.♕g1 g3 24.♘f4+–: the white queen defends the second rank, as the bishop is on d3 and not on e2!) and there is no longer any way to parry 20...♖xh4! followed by 21...♘f3#.

18...♖h6

18...fxe4 19.♘g2 (now this is possible) 19...♖h6 20.♘h4 and without the e4-knight the attack is at a dead end: there is no way to break through the blockade on h4. Black does not have time to play 20...♘f8 because of 21.♘e2! ♘g6 22.♘f4+–.



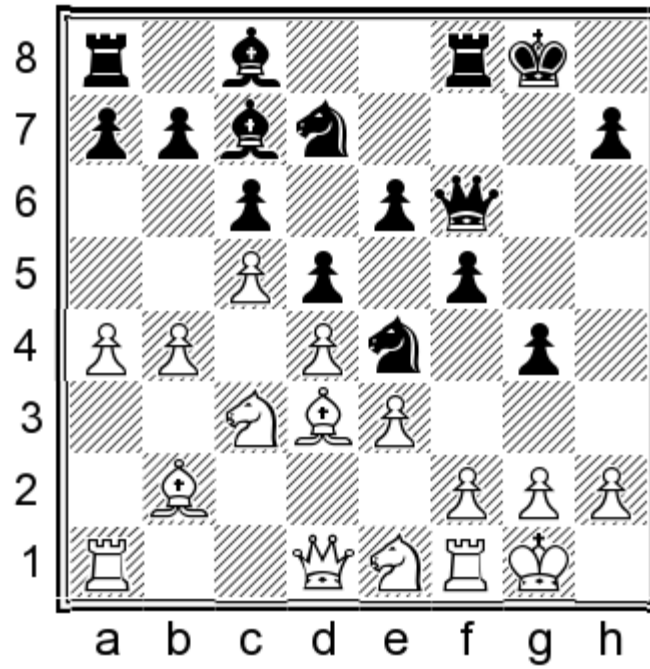
19.f4!

The only defence. The white queen defends the second rank. The critical squares h1 and h2 are controlled. Everything is in order for White.

19...♖xg3+ 20.♙g2+–

Let us now consider an additional case where the white queen does not control the second rank.

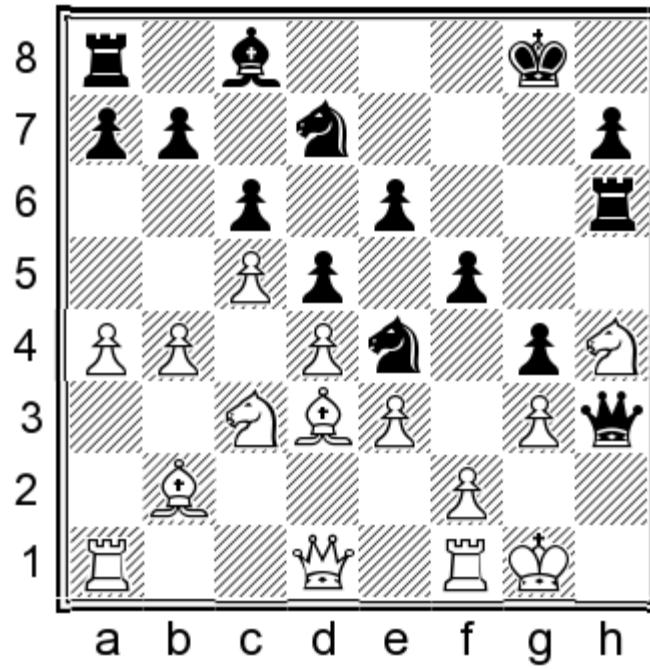
Analysis position No. 4: queen on d1



14...♙xh2+ 15.♔xh2 ♚h4+ 16.♔g1 ♜f6 17.g3

17.♘xe4 offers more resistance, but it is also insufficient: 17...♜h6 18.f3 dxe4 19.fxg4 ♘f6! – pointing out one of the major disadvantages of having the bishop on d3: it does not defend the g4-square – 20.♙e2 fxg4 21.♜f4 ♚h2+ 22.♔f1 ♚g3 23.♜xg4+ ♘xg4 24.♙xg4 ♙d7. The arrival of the rook on the f-file is decisive.

17...♚h3 18.♘g2 ♜h6 19.♘h4



19...♘g5!

The combination from the game, 19...♘xg3?, does not work with a bishop on d3, even when the white queen is not on

the second rank: 20.fxg3 ♖xg3+?? (20...♖xh4 allows a perpetual: 21.gxh4 ♖g3+) 21.♟g2 ♖h1+ 22.♕xh1 ♖h3+ 23.♕g1 g3 24.♖f3! as the white king will now be able to escape via e2. With the white bishop on e2 this idea works.

20.♖e2 ♖xh4 21.gxh4 ♟f3+--+

The examination of these possibilities is very instructive. It makes it possible to become familiar with the numerous white defensive resources that will obviously have to be considered in a game before sacrificing the bishop on h2.

Let us now look at some additional practical examples of this sacrifice.

Game 63
Theotime Massard
Aur lie Massard
 Nancy 2007

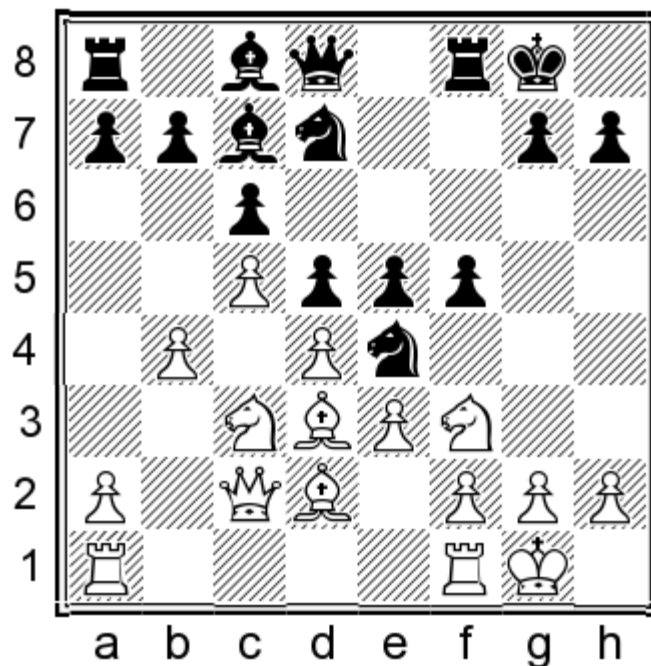
We once again find Aur lie from Game 54, this time in a fratricidal struggle during the Nancy Open.

1.d4 d5 2.♟f3 e6

Aur lie would obviously have played the Albin Countergambit against 2.c4. Which is exactly what her big brother is trying to avoid.

3.c4 c6 4.e3 f5 5.♟c3 ♟f6 6.♖d3 ♖d6 7.0-0 0-0 8.♖d2 ♟bd7 9.c5?! ♖c7 10.b4 ♟e4 11.♖c2 g5

Because of the move 9.c5 Black also had the very strong possibility of 11...e5!.



It is time to head off on a digression for a while, and understand why the move c4-c5, though so frequently played by amateurs, is so often dubious. Let's look at this diagram representing the Stonewall pawn structure (with pieces for both sides, of course, in addition to the c8-bishop):

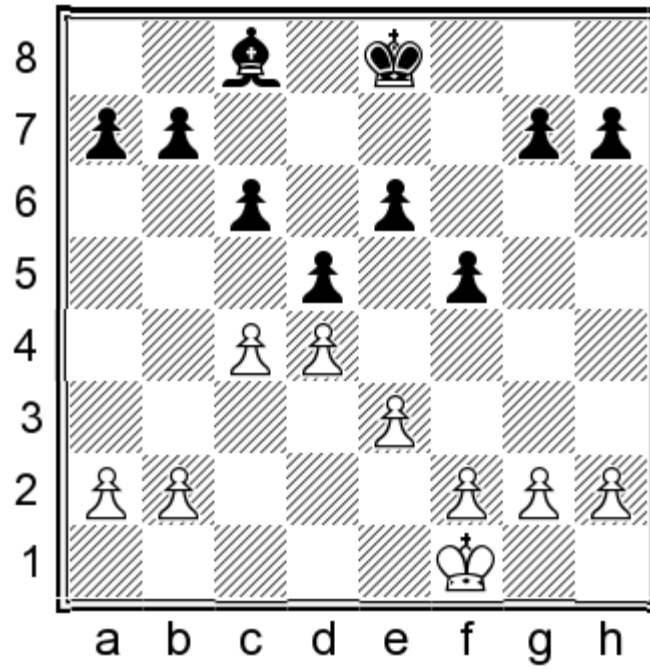


Diagram 8

As we know, with such a pawn structure the c8-bishop is enclosed in its own camp and currently has little future. Black would like to be able to play the ...e6-e5 move to try to release it, but this is hardly possible so long as the white c4-pawn puts pressure on the black d5-pawn. After 1...e5 2.dxe5, recapturing on e5 with a piece (probably the d7-knight), 3.cxd5 cxd5 we get this new pawn structure:

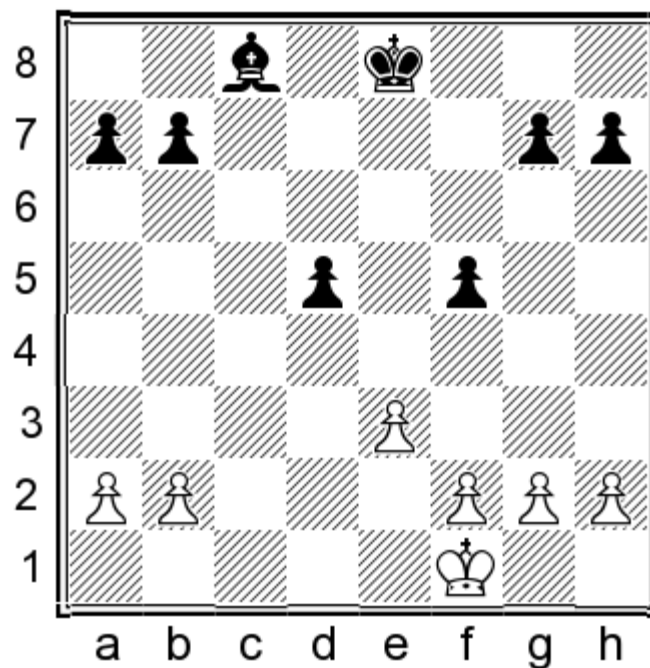


Diagram 9

This is very unfavourable for Black, of course, because of the weak isolated pawn on d5 and the strong square on d4 for

White.

Now look at the difference when White has played c4-c5:

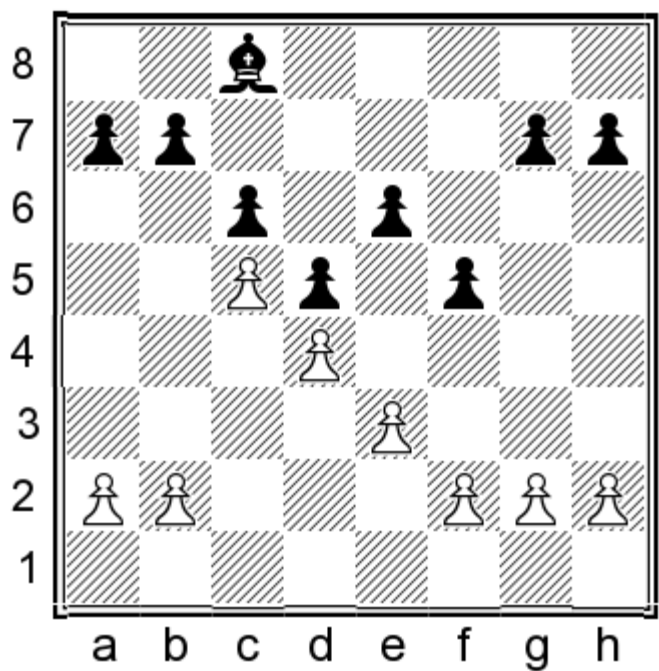


Diagram 10

The move ...e6-e5 (prepared by pieces, obviously) now becomes very strong:

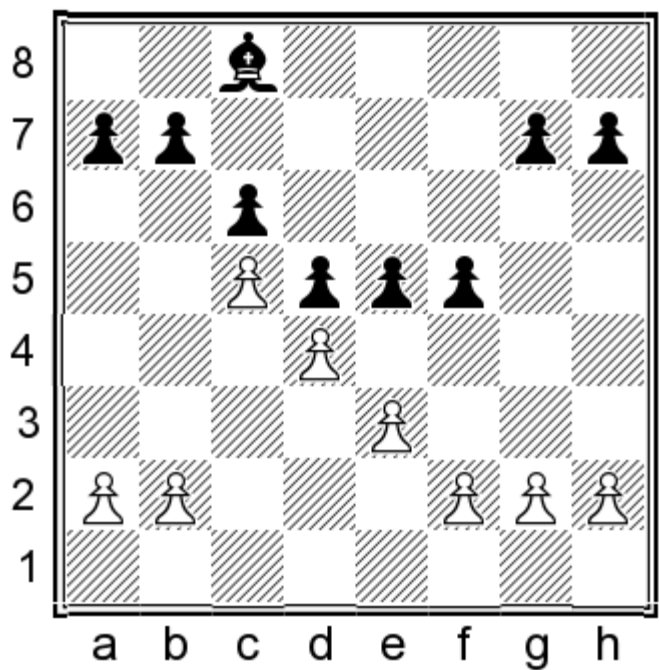


Diagram 11

In this situation Black threatens to play ...e5-e4, which would chase the knight away from f3, and then continue by pushing the f-pawn with ...f5-f4, which would completely release the c8-bishop and would give excellent prospects on the f-file and the kingside. White cannot tolerate this and must therefore exchange on e5. We then obtain this structure:

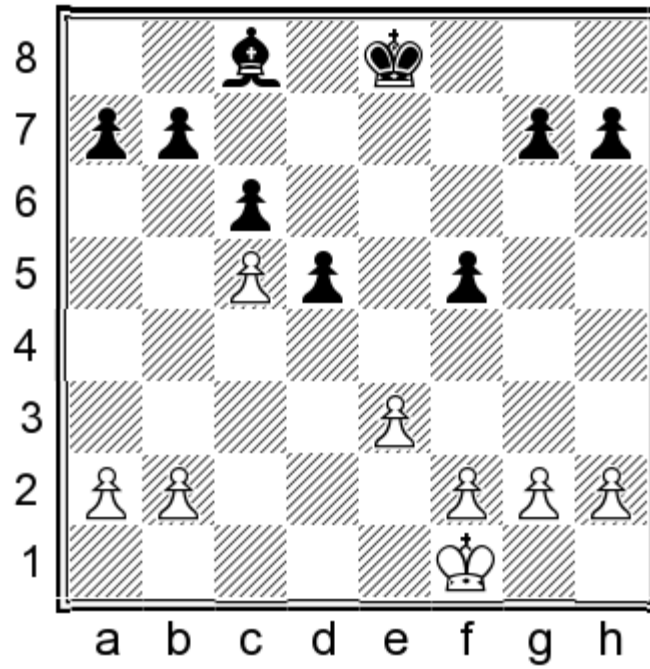


Diagram 12

In contrast to the situation of Diagram 9 this structure is very favourable to Black. The d5-pawn remains solidly protected by its sidekick on c6, and here too the advance ...f5-f4 will be very strong: it will completely open the c8-bishop's diagonal, pointing towards White's king position, as well as the f-file, and in case of White capturing with e3xf4 the d5-pawn will become a protected passed pawn.

It should be noted, however, that on some occasions the move c4-c5 may be perfectly playable, especially if White is able to quickly continue with b2-b4, a2-a4, b4-b5, a4-a5 and a5-a6 to obtain the pawn structure shown in Diagram 13:

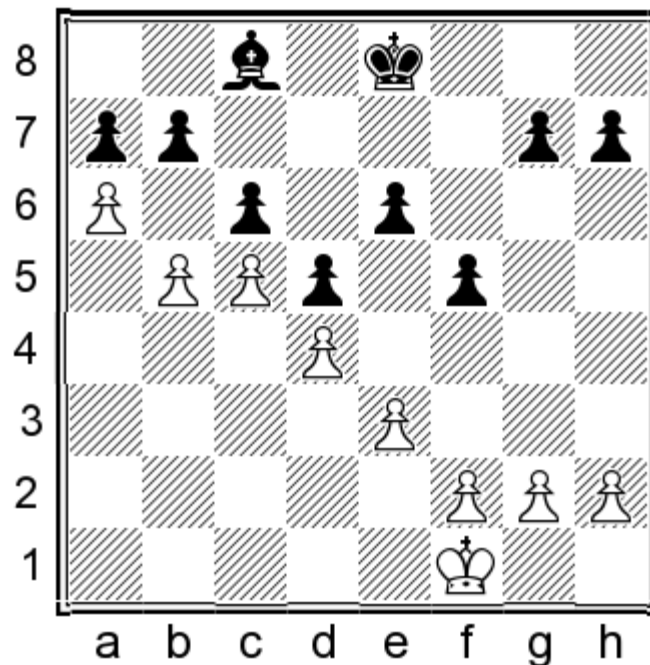


Diagram 13

The white strategy would then be a triumph and the black queenside would disintegrate. But this plan is usually far too slow, and, providing he does not sit idly by waiting for the demolition of his queenside, Black normally has plenty of time either to achieve the central ...e6-e5 breakthrough under good conditions or to mount his traditional kingside attack.

After seeing the negative aspects of the c4-c5 move, let's also try to understand why the c4xd5 exchange is just as rarely favourable to White after the recapture ...e6xd5:

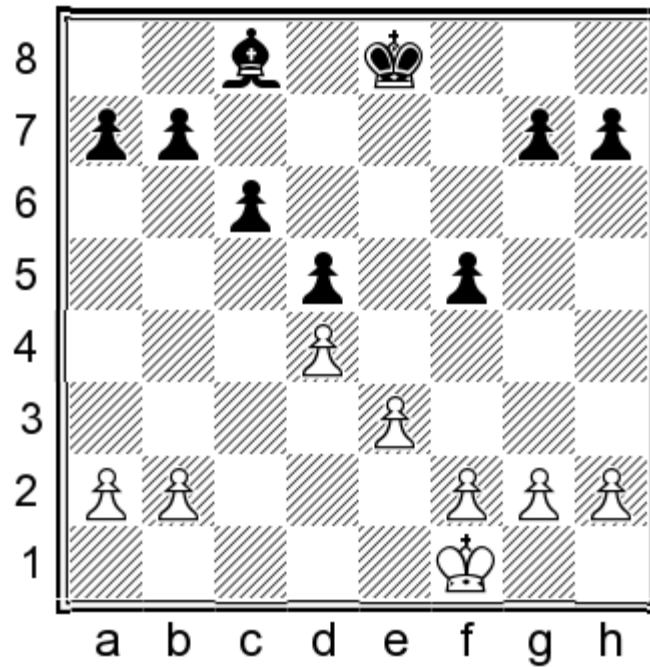
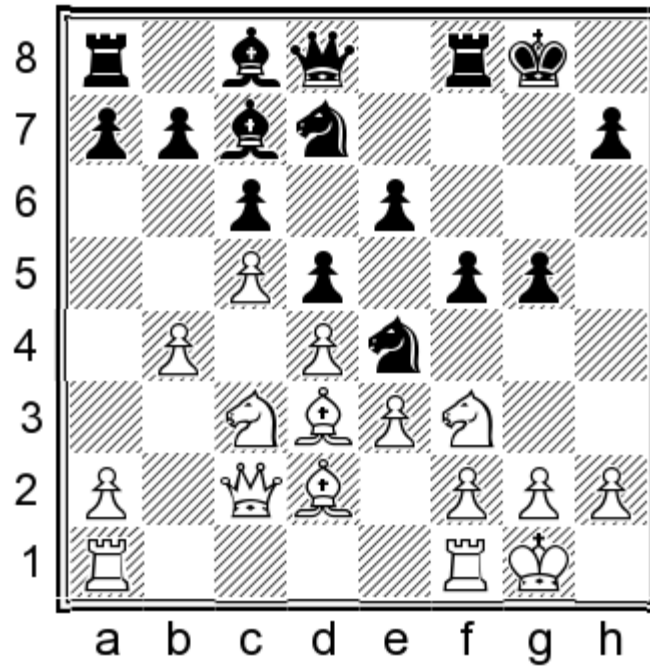


Diagram 14

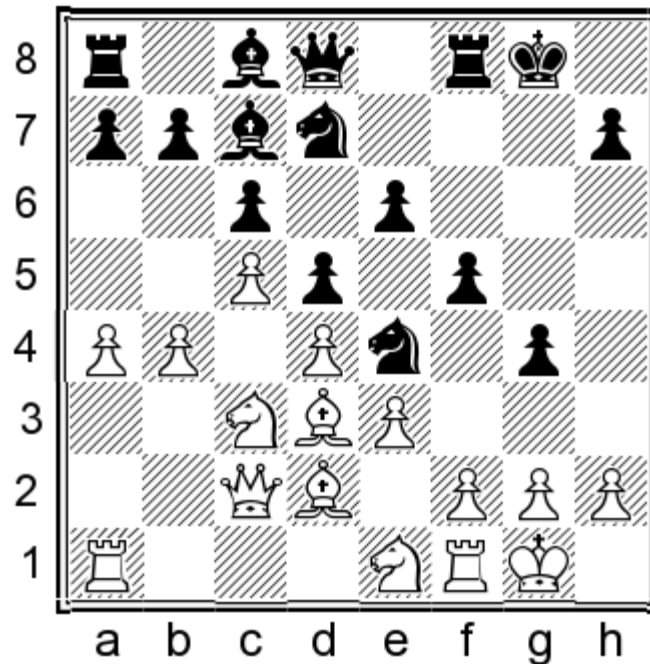
The exchange does not bring White much on the c-file. He will have to prepare its opening by b4-b5 and this will take time. Black, on the other hand, is again ready to play ...f5-f4 to open the diagonal for the c8-bishop and put pressure on the f-file.

After this lengthy digression, let us return to the game after 11...g5:



Aurélie does not take advantage of the strong positional possibility ...e6-e5 and instead sticks to the traditional Stonewall plan by attacking with ...g7-g5. Here there was no need to play 11...♖f6 beforehand, because White is not able to occupy the e5-square with his knight (as there is no white bishop on b2).

12.a4 g4 13.♘e1

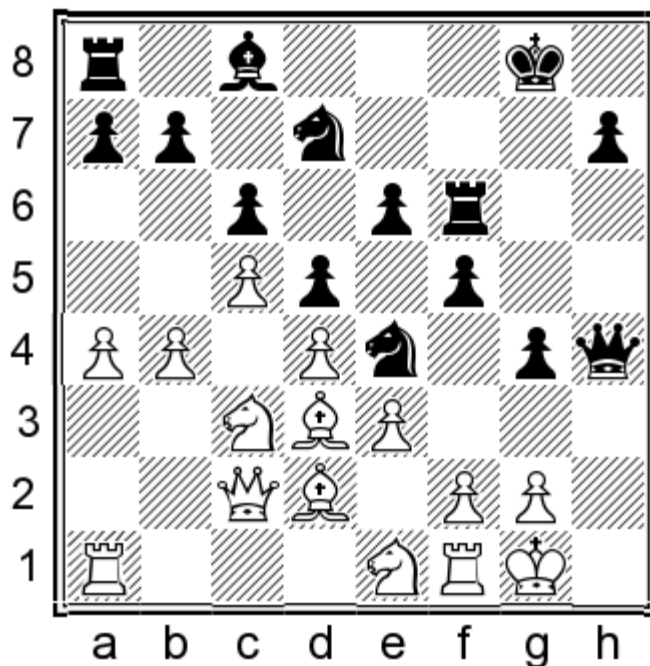


Let us make an inventory before the sacrifice: we have the bishop on d3 and the knight on e1. In other words, the situation is as in analysis position No. 3. If we follow the conclusions of this analysis, the sacrifice should not be correct. However, in the precise circumstances the presence of the bishop on d2, which blocks the second rank for the queen, is an important element in certain variations which leads us to modify the evaluation of the sacrifice.

13...♙xh2+

An intuitive sacrifice. Aurélie certainly knew this theme, but after the game she acknowledged that she had not considered all of White's defensive resources.

14. ♖xh2 ♜h4+ 15. ♔g1 ♞f6

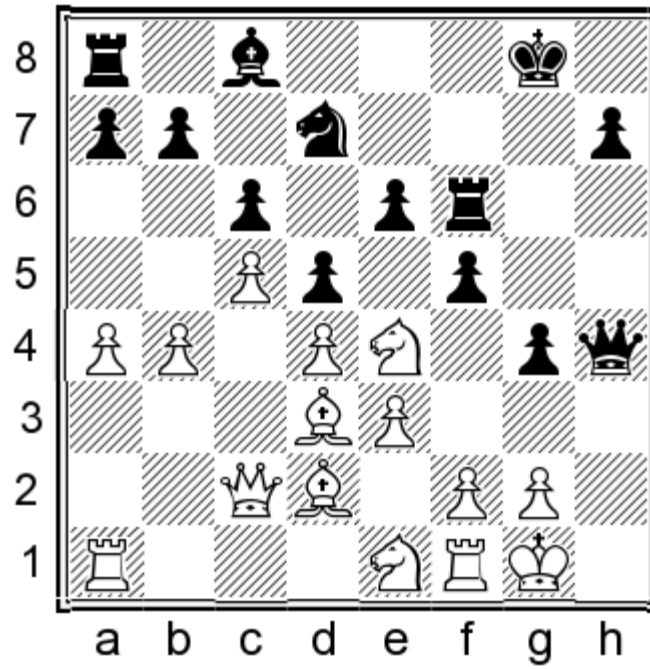


16.f3??

As is often the case in junior and amateur games the defending player quickly collapses. Again, you will not often be facing a grandmaster and this will surely happen to more than one of your opponents in this type of position, which is very difficult to defend over the board with limited time.

A) 16.g3? doesn't work either. In analysis position No. 3 this move saved White and refuted the sacrifice on h2.
16... ♜h3 17. ♙xe4 ♜h6. This is the difference from analysis position No. 3: the d2-bishop prevents the saving move f2-f4;

B) A more resilient approach, then, was 16. ♘xe4:



analysis diagram

Black now has two possibilities.

B1) 16...fxe4 17.g3 ♖h3 18.♘g2 ♜h6 19.♗h4 exd3! Black has re-established material equality and retains a strong attack. The d7-knight will come to e4 via f6;

B2) 16...♜h6! 17.f3 fxe4 18.fxg4 ♘f6! – a continuation of the attack that we have already seen several times with the bishop on d3; the threat of 19...♗xg4 is very unpleasant: 19.♙e2 (19.♝xf6 ♖h2+ 20.♔f2 ♝xf6+ 21.♙e2 e5!–+) 19...♖h2+ 20.♔f2 e5! – exactly as in the note to White's 17th move in analysis position No. 3; the presence of the bishop on d2 changes nothing.

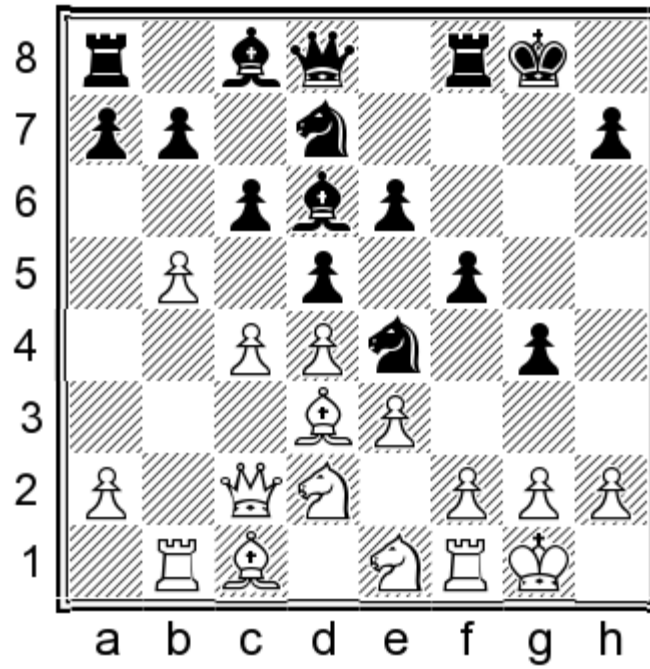
16...g3

White resigned.

Let us now see a grandmaster confronted with the sacrifice.

Game 64
Ahmed Adly 2507
GB Joshi 2252
 New Delhi 2007

1.d4 d5 2.♗f3 c6 3.e3 e6 4.♗bd2 f5 5.c4 ♗f6 6.♙d3 ♙d6 7.♖c2 ♗e4 8.0-0 ♗d7 9.♝b1 g5 10.b4 0-0 11.b5 g4 12.♗e1



Here we have the white bishop on d3 and the knight on e1, but also a knight on d2, which will play an important role.

12...♙xh2+!? 13.♙xh2 ♖h4+ 14.♙g1 ♜f6 15.g3

15.♘xe4?! ♜h6 16.f3 fxe4 17.fxg4 exd3 18.♘xd3 ♘f6 left Black, who has recovered his material, with good attacking prospects.

15...♜h3 16.♘g2

With the d2-knight cluttering the second rank (rather like the d2-bishop in the previous game), the defensive move 16.♙xe4? does not work: 16...♜h6+, and 17.f4 is no longer any good, as the white queen does not defend the h2-square.

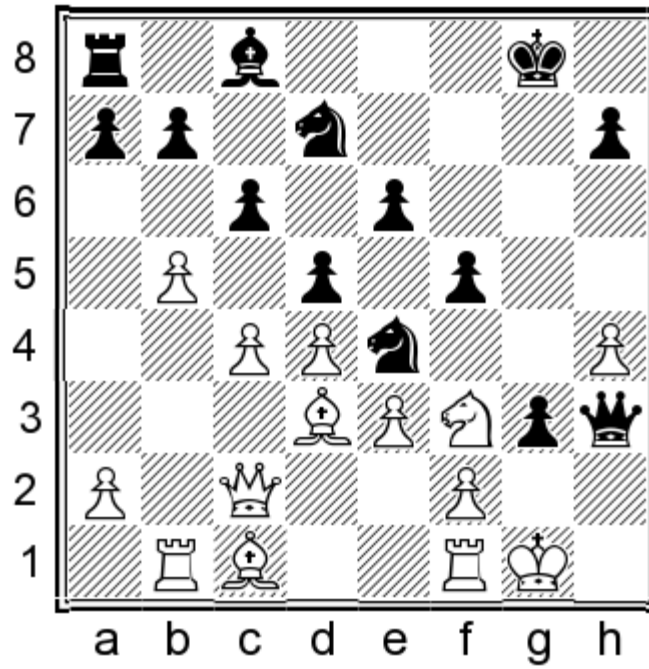
16...♜h6 17.♘h4 ♜xh4

The presence of the (b1) knight on d2 reinforces the defence of the f3-square, easing White's task.

A) 17...♘g5 18.♙e2! ♜xh4 19.gxh4 g3 20.fxg3 ♜xg3+ only gives Black a perpetual;

B) Another way to force perpetual check is 17...♘g3 18.fxg3 ♜xh4 (18...♜xg3+? 19.♘g2 ♜h1+ 20.♙xh1 ♜h3+ 21.♙g1 g3 22.♘f3+-) 19.gxh4 ♜g3+.

18.gxh4 g3 19.♘f3



The knight has come back to defend. The position is unclear.

19...g2 20.♘h2! 20...♘df6

Taking immediately on f1 amounts to much the same.

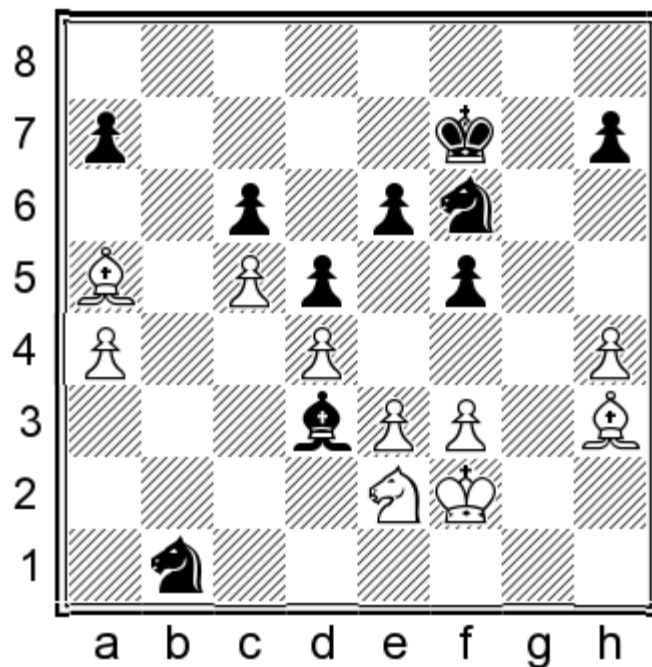
21.f3 gxf1=♚+ 22.♙xf1 ♚g3+ 23.♚g2 ♚xg2+ 24.♙xg2 ♘d6

The storm has passed. Material equality is re-established and the position is roughly equal, but the player of the white pieces is a grandmaster and has 250 Elo points more than his opponent.

25.bxc6 bxc6 26.c5 ♘c4 27.♙f2 ♙a6 28.a4 ♙f7 29.♙h3 ♚e8 30.♘f1 ♚e7 31.♙d2 ♚b7 32.♚xb7+ ♙xb7 33.♙c3 ♙a6 34.♘g3 ♘a3

Play is still equal. In this closed position the white bishop pair does not confer any advantage.

35.♘e2 ♙d3 36.♙a5 ♘b1?



The knight is going to stuff itself into the wolf's mouth.

37. ♖b4!

The jaws close.

37... ♗c2 38. a5 ♜d7 39. ♕f1 ♗d3 40. ♜f4 ♗c4 41. ♗d3 ♗xd3 42. ♜xd3 ♗g6 43. ♜f4+ ♗f6 44. ♗e1 ♜b8 45. ♗d1 ♜a6 46. ♜d3! ♗g6

46... ♜xb4 would allow the b1-knight to escape, but would lose the c6-pawn.

47. ♗c1 ♜xb4 48. ♜xb4 ♜a3 49. ♜xc6 ♜b5 50. ♗d2 ♗h5 51. ♗e1

51. ♜d8! was stronger: 51... ♜c7 52. c6 ♗xh4 53. e4 fxe4 54. fxe4 dxe4? (54... ♗g4 55. ♜xe6 ♜xe6 56. exd5+—) 55. ♜xe6! ♜xe6 56. d5 and the two white passed pawns win against the knight.

51... ♗xh4 52. ♗f2 ♗g5 53. ♗g3

He had to play 53. f4+! to prevent Black from playing this move himself.

53... f4+ 54. exf4+ ♗f5

The position has become much more difficult for White to win.

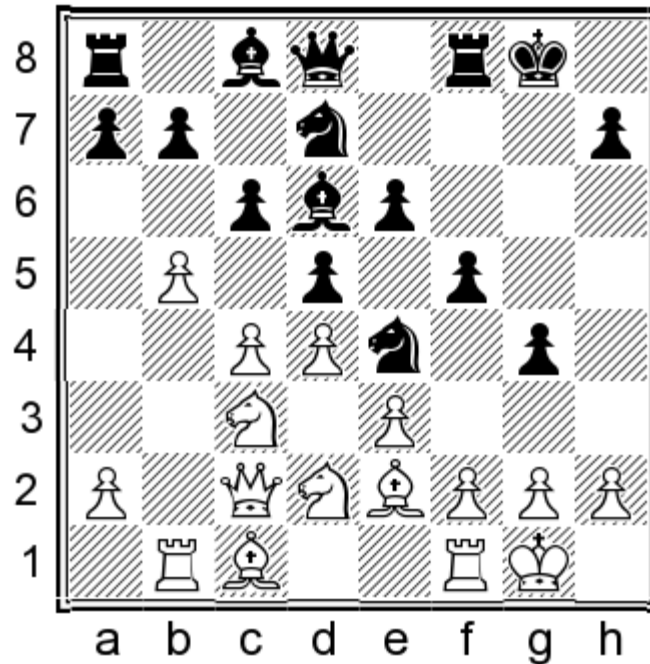
55. a6 h6 56. ♜e7+ ♗f6 57. ♜c8 ♜c7 58. ♜xa7 ♜xa6 59. ♗g4 h5+ 60. ♗xh5 ♗f5 61. ♜b5 ♗xf4?

61... ♜b8 62. ♜a7 ♜a6 greatly complicates White's task.

62. c6 e5 63. dxe5 ♗xe5 64. ♗g4 d4 65. c7 ♜xc7 66. ♜xc7 d3 67. ♜b5 d2 68. ♜c3 1-0

The player who had White was 10 years old at the time of the game. Today he is a grandmaster with an Elo of nearly 2600.

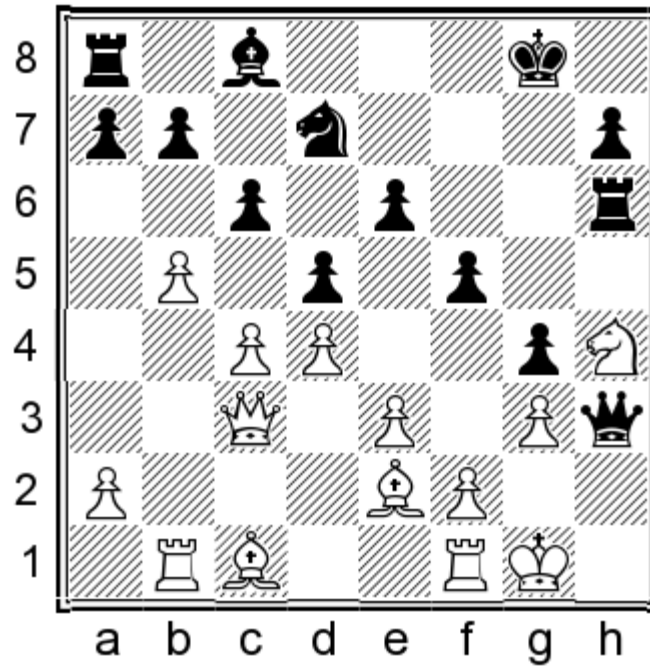
1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 c6 3.c4 e6 4.♘c3 f5 5.e3 ♘f6 6.♙e2 ♙d6 7.0-0 ♘bd7 8.♚b1 0-0 9.b4 ♘e4 10.♙c2 g5 11.b5 g4 12.♘d2



Bishop on e2 + knight on d2: as in analysis position No. 1?

12...♙xh2+ 13.♙xh2 ♙h4+ 14.♙g1 ♚f6?

In the light of analysis position No. 1 one would think that 14...♘xc3 15.♙xc3 ♚f6 would just have led to a perpetual after 16.g3 ♙h3 17.♘f3 ♚h6 18.♘h4. But this is not the case, as the unprotected situation of the white queen on c3 (there is no bishop on b2!) allows a neat tactical point:

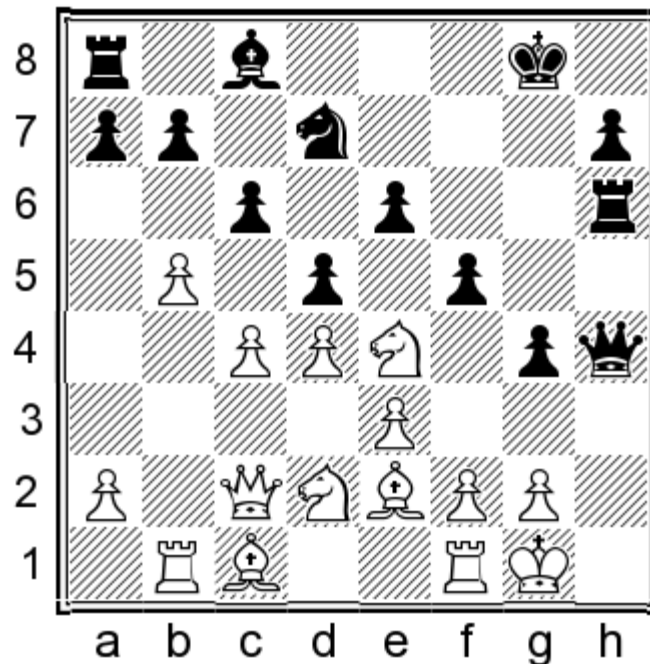


analysis diagram

18...f4!! when 19.exf4 is not possible because of 19...♖xh4+. This shows that a very minor detail (here the queen being on c3 and the bishop on c1) can totally modify the evaluation of the sacrifice.

15. ♖cxe4 ♜h6?

We know from analysis position No. 1 that Black does not (normally) get anything after this move. It was necessary to play 15...fxe4, with a position that remains very complicated for both sides.



16.f4?

16.f3! fxe4 17.fxg4 repels the attack.

16...fxe4

16...dxe4!, which provides additional protection for the g4-pawn, was even stronger.

17.♙xg4 ♜xg4 18.bxc6 bxc6?!

18...♜f6! 19.cxb7 ♙xb7 20.♖xb7 ♜h4, with 21...♜g4 to follow, gives Black a strong attack.

19.cxd5?

19.♜a4 gives counterplay against the c6-pawn.

19...exd5

Because of the exchange on d5 the c6-pawn is now defended by the h6-rook.

With ...♜f6 coming, the black attack will quickly become decisive.

20.♜d1 ♜g3 21.♜e1 ♜h2+ 22.♔f2 ♜f6

There we are. With the reinforcement of the knight the game is over.

23.♖g1 ♙a6

Cutting off the white king's flight through e2.

24.♜d1 ♜h4+ 25.g3 ♜g4+ 26.♔e1 ♜h2 27.♜f1 ♜f2#

Further proof that the defence is very difficult for White.

Game 66

Hermann Welk

Rainer Witkowski

Neubrandenburg 1998

1.d4 e6 2.c4 f5 3.♜f3 ♜f6 4.♜c3 d5 5.e3 c6 6.♙e2 ♙d6 7.0-0 0-0 8.c5 ♙c7 9.b4 ♜bd7 10.♙b2 ♜e8?!

This is possible, but frankly it is not the best way for the queen to reach the kingside. More natural is obviously 10...♜e4. I have only kept this game for the combination that will follow, and which would even have worked with a black queen on d8.

11.♙d3?

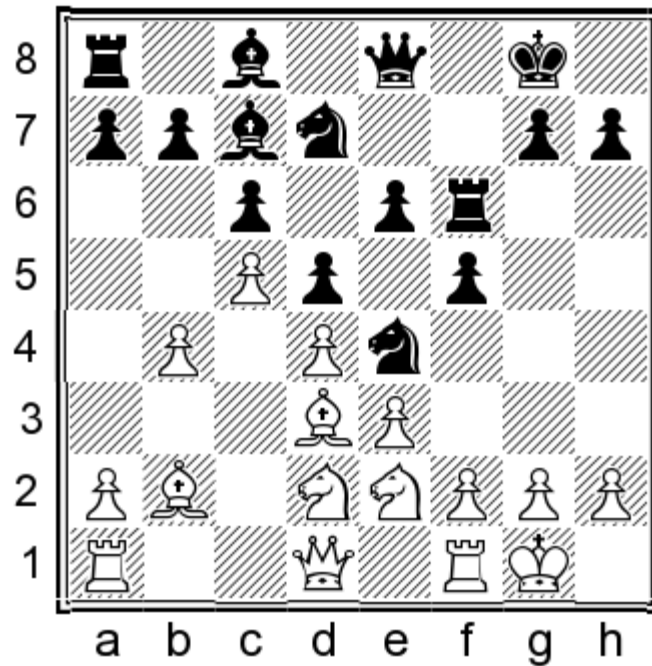
White loses too much time.

11...♜e4 12.♜e2 ♖f6

The right-angled rook manoeuvre, which is possible at almost any time in this type of position.

13.♜d2??

Abandoning the defence of h2 is suicidal.



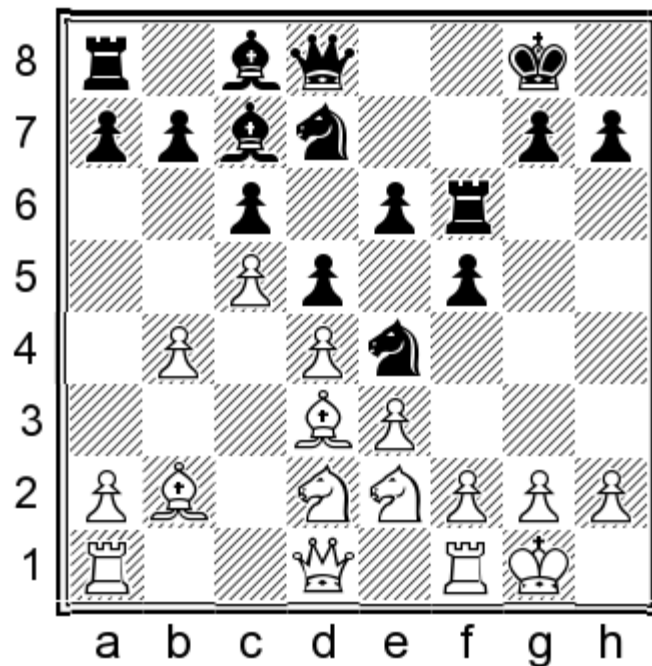
13... ♖xh2+!

A different form of the sacrifice.

14. ♔xh2 ♚h5+ 15. ♔g1 ♜h6 0-1

The mate on h1 (or h2) is unstoppable.

Let us put the black queen back on d8, and note that the combination works identically (even with a tempo less for Black):



13...♙xh2+! 14.♔xh2 ♜h6+ 15.♔g1 ♚h4—+

A tactical theme to remember.

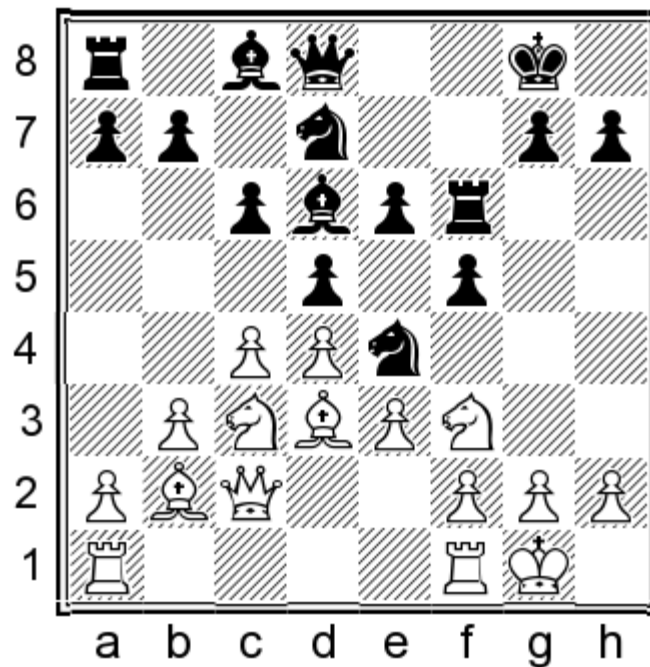
Game 67

Justin Burel 1490

Romaric Mathieu 2084

Nancy 2000

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 e6 3.e3 ♙d6 4.♙d3 f5 5.0-0 ♘f6 6.c4 c6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.b3 ♘e4 9.♚c2 ♘d7 10.♙b2 ♜f6

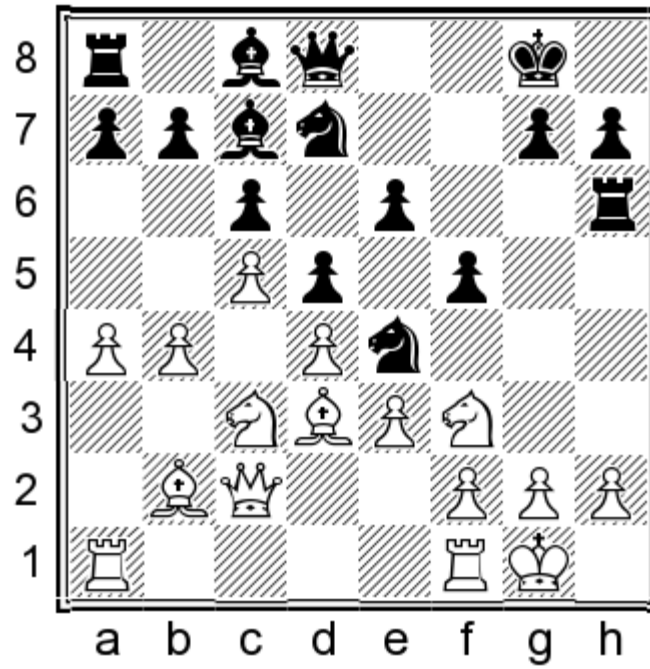


Watch out, the rook is coming! We will see this right-angled manoeuvre again in Game 69.

The text move is a very interesting alternative to 10...♚f6.

11.c5?! ♙c7 12.b4 ♜h6 13.a4

As always, the white attack on the queenside is much too slow.

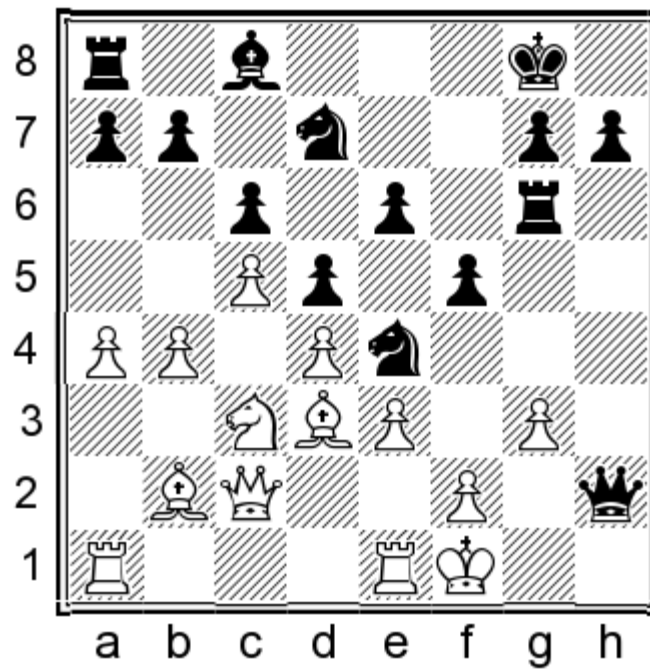


13...Qxh2+!

This sacrifice works despite the knight on f3!

14. Nxb2 Qh4 15. Bfe1 Qxh2+ 16. Kh1 Bg6 17. g3

17.f3 Nxc3 18. Qxc3 Qh1+ 19. Ke2 Bxg2+-.



17...Bxg3!

Black now has two extra pawns and the attack, which is more than enough for an easy win.

18.♔xe4

18.fxg3 ♖xg3#.

18...fxe4 19.b5

There was no defence anyway.

19...e5

To let the c8-bishop join the party.

20.bxc6 ♜xc5! 21.dxc5 ♔g4! 0–1

Even stronger than 21...♔h3+.

After 22.fxg3 it's mate by 22...♜f8+.

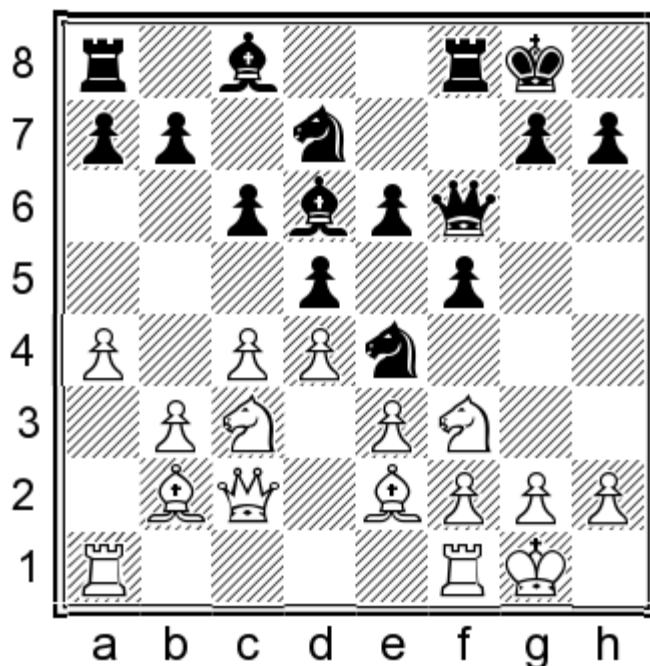
Game 68

David Chinchilla

Anthony Wirig 1900

Thionville 1997

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 c6 4.e3 f5 5.♘c3 ♘f6 6.♔e2 ♔d6 7.0-0 0-0 8.b3 ♘bd7 9.♔b2 ♘e4 10.♚c2 ♚f6! 11.a4



11...♜f7!

White was threatening 12.♔a3, which would have forced the exchange of the dark-squared bishops, resulting in greatly reducing Black's potential to attack.

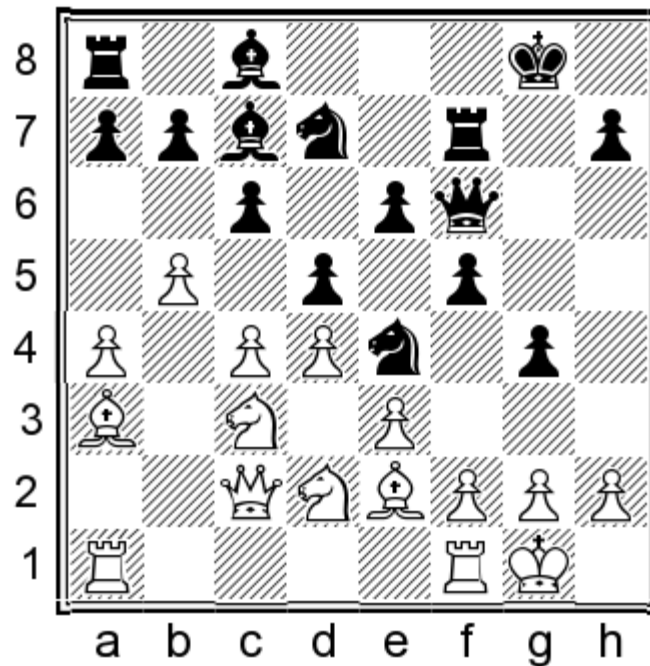
12.♔a3 ♔c7

As the rook is no longer on f8, the bishop can now slip away and evade the exchange.

13.b4

If White were to play 13.♘d2, to try to close the c7-bishop's diagonal, it would have allowed the black queen to make her way to h4 too easily: 13...♙h4 14.f4 ♘df6. This threatens 15...♗g4, and now 15.h3? is not possible because Black has 15...g5! 16.fxg5 ♘xg5, resulting in the reopening of the diagonal of the c7-bishop. Black has a very strong attack.

13...g5 14.b5 g4 15.♘d2



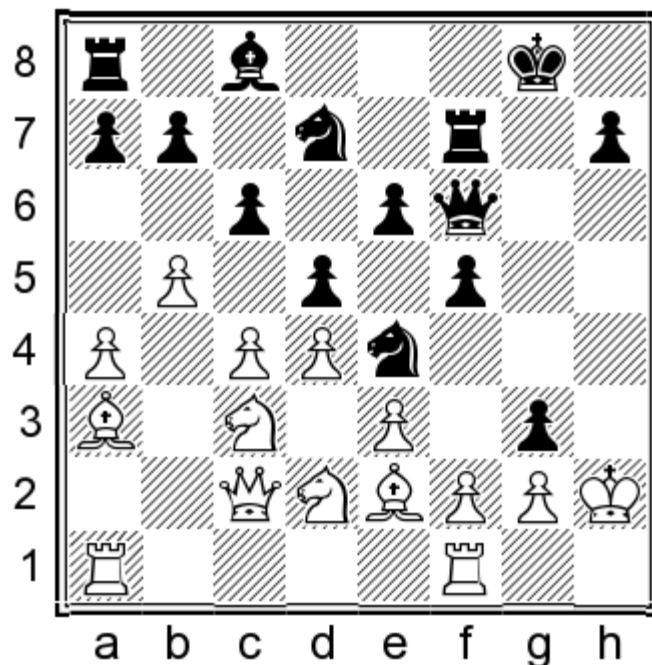
15...♙xh2+!?

Thematic, but probably unnecessary.

The simple 15...♙h4! gives Black good chances: 16.g3 ♘xg3! 17.fxg3 ♙xg3!.

And 15...♗xf2! was undoubtedly even better: 16.♖xf2 ♙xh2+ 17.♔f1 (17.♔xh2 ♙h4+ 18.♔g1 g3) 17...♙h6 and Black will play ...♙g3 with a strong attack.

16.♔xh2 g3+



An unusual form of the sacrifice.

We saw in analysis position No. 1 that with the bishop on e2, a knight on d2 and the queen on the second rank, the sacrifice in its traditional form does not work: 16...♖h4+ 17.♔g1 ♜f6? 18.♘cxe4! and White will be able to repel the attack: 18...fxe4 19.♗xe4! dxe4 (19...♞h6 20.f3 g3 21.♗xg3!±) 20.g3 ♜h3 21.♞xe4+–.

17.fxg3?

After 17.♔g1 the situation was far from being clear: 17...♞h6 18.♗f3 ♘df6 19.♗d1!. Black has a strong attack which compensates for the sacrificed piece, but White can still defend.

17...♞h6+ 18.♔g1?

18.♗h5 offered better chances to defend: 18...♞xh5+ 19.♔g1 and the black queen no longer takes the e3-pawn with check.

18...♞xe3+ 19.♔h2 ♜f6 0–1

The lateral move decides the game. Note the small steps of the rook: ...♞f8-f7-f6.

White gives up without even trying his last chance: 20.♗g4 ♘xd2 21.♗h3 ♘xf1+ 22.♞xf1, which left little hope in any case.

II. The sacrifice of the rook(!) on h2

Game 69

Geza Maróczy

Savielly Tartakower

Teplitz-Schönau 1922

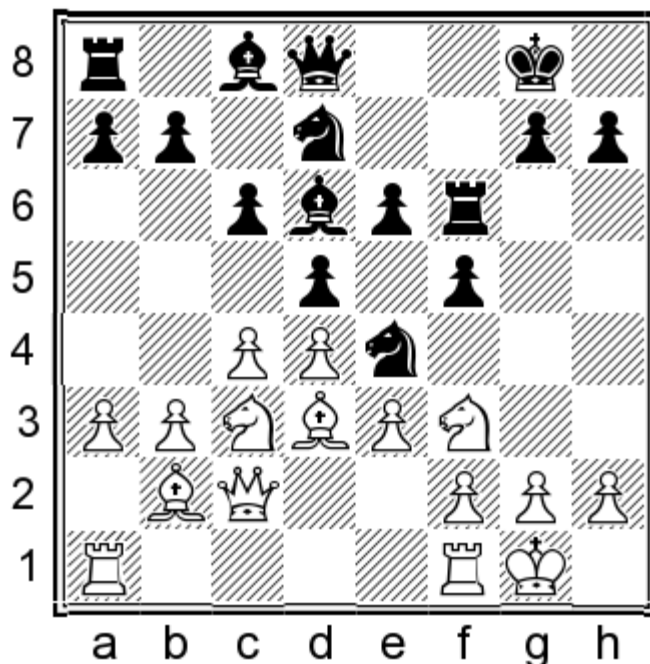
1.d4 e6 2.c4 f5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.a3 ♗e7 5.e3 0-0 6.♗d3 d5 7.♗f3 c6

After a somewhat unusual move order we transpose back into our Stonewall, but with the bishop placed on e7 instead of d6 – a detail that will quickly be corrected. Remember that the four pawn moves that make up the Stonewall can be played in any order, but to be consistent with our repertoire let us not forget that we must play ...d7-d5 on the very first move.

8.0-0 ♘e4 9.♚c2 ♙d6

Here the ‘detail’ is corrected, and the bishop takes its place on the most natural diagonal. The tempo lost is not of great importance in a closed position, and the a2-a3 move gained by White is not really that useful.

10.b3 ♘d7 11.♙b2 ♜f6!?



It was this game that first popularized the right-angled rook manoeuvre in the Stonewall.

Of course, our usual plan based on 11...♚f6 and ...g7-g5-g4 was also entirely possible in this position, but the text move is a very interesting alternative. It is always a good thing to have a varied arsenal of plans available in the same opening.

12.♜f6 ♜h6

Black already threatens 13...♙xh2+ followed by 14...♚h4, a combination that we had already encountered in Game 67.

13.g3

A necessary weakening.

13.b4? ♙xh2+! 14.♘xh2 ♚h4+.

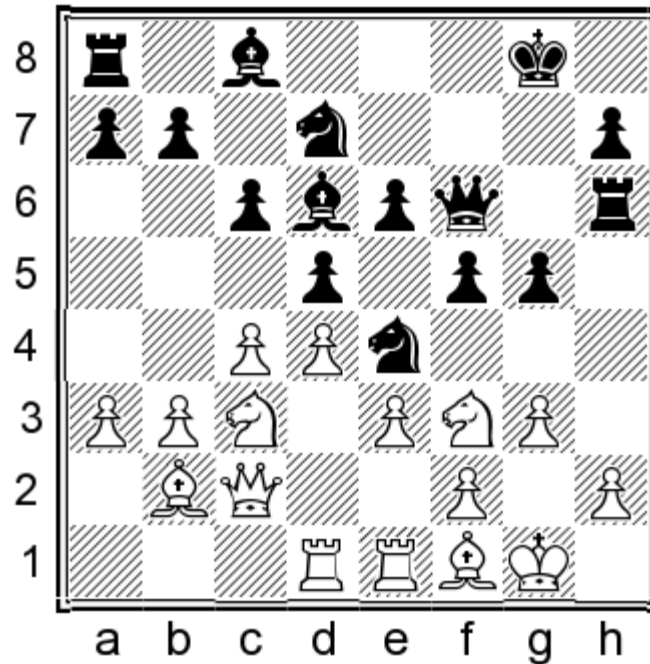
13...♚f6 14.♙f1

The mistake 14.♘d2? allows another destructive sacrifice: 14...♘xf2! 15.♙xf2 ♜xh2+ 16.♙g1 (16.♙f3 ♚g6 and mate on g4 or on g3 is unstoppable) 16...♙xg3 and the arrival of the queen on h4 is decisive.

14...g5

The usual plan in the Stonewall, aiming to chase the knight away from f3 and the defence of h2.

15.♖ad1

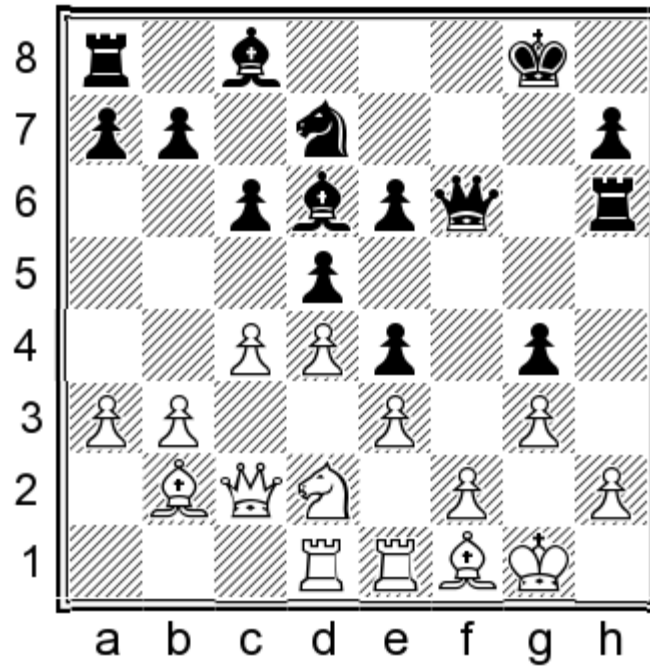


It is difficult at first sight to imagine that the white position will crumble in a few moves. All the white pieces are developed, while the black queenside is still in its starting blocks.

15...g4 16.♘xe4

16.♘d2? is again punished by 16...♘xf2! 17.♔xf2 ♖xh2+ 18.♔g1 (18.♙g2 ♙xg3+!! 19.♔xg3 ♚h4+ 20.♔f4 g3+ 21.♔f3 ♚g4#) 18...♙xg3 and Black has three pawns for the piece plus a very strong attack.

16...fxe4 17.♘d2



17...♖xh2!!

‘An unprecedented combination in chess literature’ exclaimed Réti in 1933. Tartakower shows remarkable intuition by sacrificing an entire rook with no forced follow-up.

18.♔xh2 ♕xf2+ 19.♔h1!

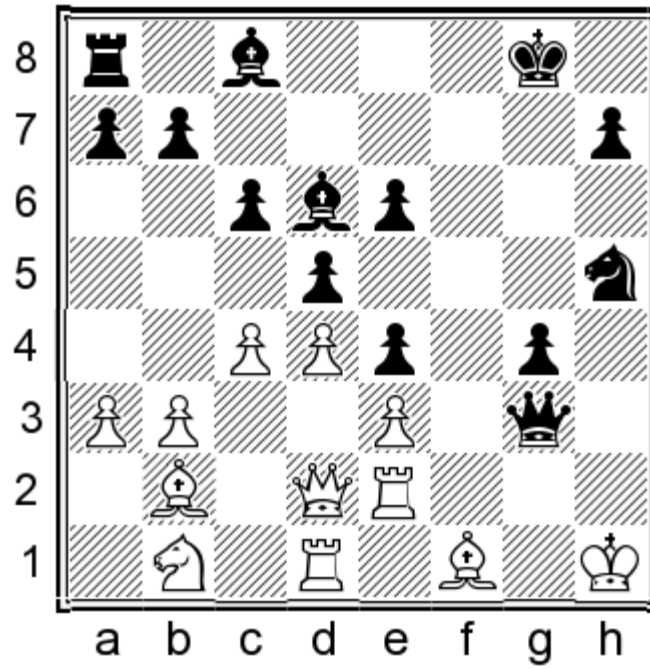
The best defence.

After 19.♔g2 Tartakover explained in his comments that he planned to play 19...♘f6! 20.♕c3 ♕xg3+ 21.♔g1 ♕h2+ 22.♔f1 ♘h5, when 23...♔d7 followed by 24...♖f8 would be decisive.

19...♘f6!

19...♕xg3? allows the white queen to come and defend the kingside after 20.♘b1.

20.♖e2 ♕xg3 21.♘b1 ♘h5 22.♕d2



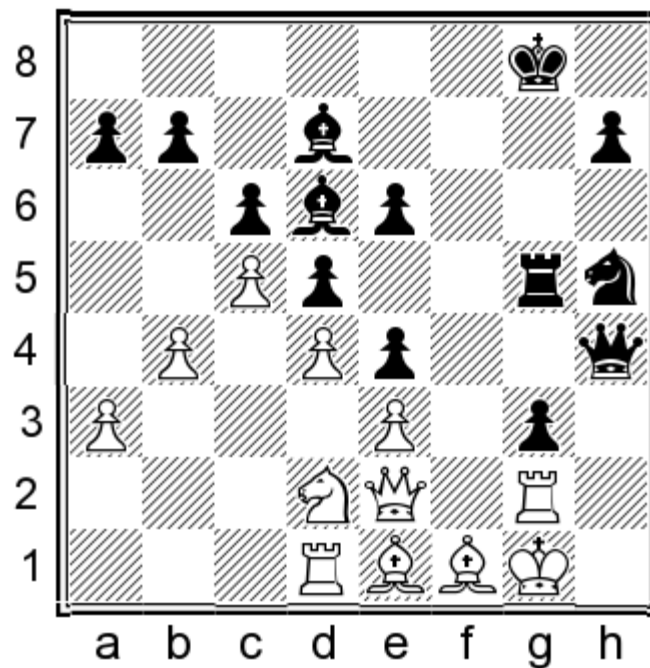
22...♕d7!

Black is a whole rook down and yet he now finds time to simply finish his development.

23.♖f2 ♜h4+ 24.♔g1 ♜g3 25.♙c3

White is obliged to return some material.

After 25.♖g2 ♜f8 26.♜e2 ♜f3 27.♙c3 ♙d6 28.♙e1 g3 29.♘d2 ♜f5 30.b4 ♜g5 31.c5 Black has a wonderful conclusion:



analysis diagram

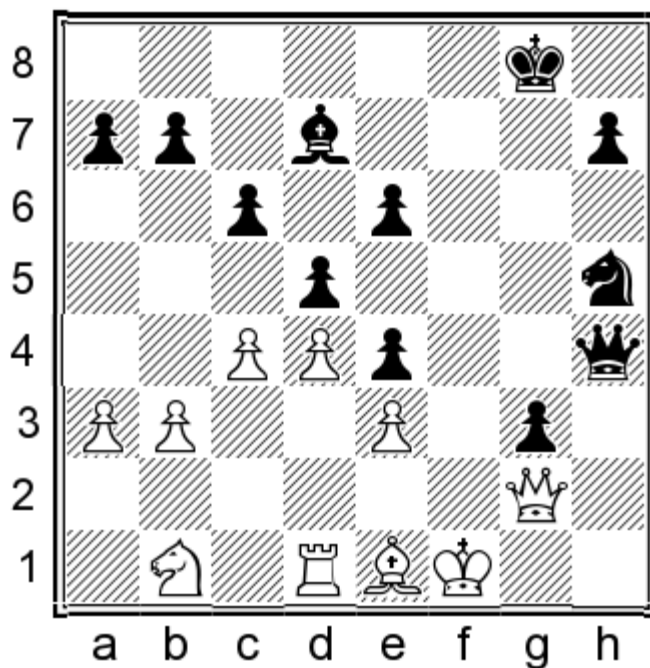
31...♜h2+!! 32.♜xh2 g3 33.♔h1 ♜g1#.

25...♙xf2+ 26.♚xf2 ♖g3 27.♚g2 ♜f8

The second rook joins the game.

28.♙e1 ♜xf1+! 29.♙xf1

29.♚xf1?? ♜h2#.



29...e5!

With the threat of 30...♙h3.

30.♙g1 ♙g4 31.♙xg3

31.♜d2 ♙f3—+.

31...♙xg3 32.♜e1 ♙f5 33.♚f2 ♜g5 34.dxe5

White cracks in a position that was losing anyway.

34...♙f3+ 35.♙f1 ♙g3+ 0–1

After 36.♙g1 ♙h1+ White loses his queen and will be mated a few moves later.

This is surely one of the prettiest attacking games in the long history of chess.

III. White develops his dark-squared bishop before playing e2-e3

So far we have only seen examples where White enclosed his c1-bishop by playing e2-e3 before developing it. Let us now see what happens when White brings his bishop out to g5 or f4.

Game 70

Florence Wolfangel

Sandy Hinzelin

Rochefort ch-FRA jr 1998

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c6 4.♘f3 ♙d6 5.♚c2 f5

The Stonewall structure is reached. Once again, the four black pawn moves could have been played in almost any order.

6.♙g5

White logically brings her bishop out before playing e2-e3.

6...♘f6 7.e3 ♘bd7?!

An inaccuracy which could have allowed a strong white reply.

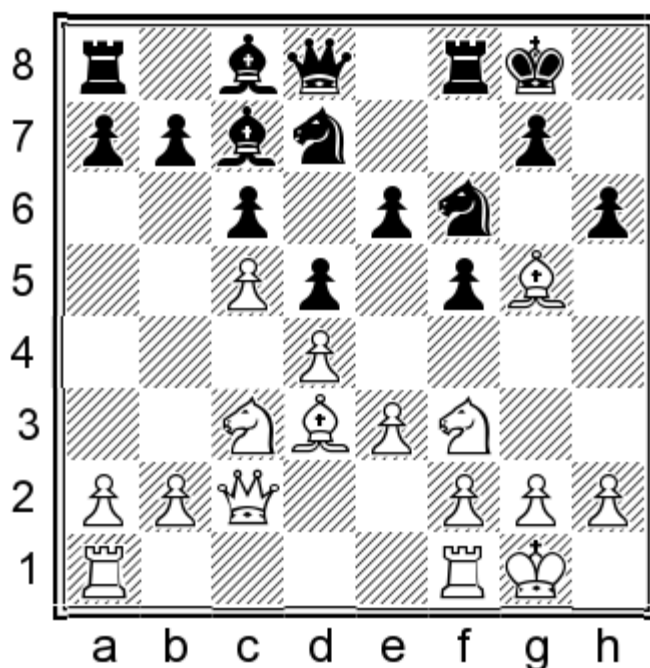
Better was 7...0-0 followed by development based on ...♚e8, ...♘e4 and only now ...♘bd7, as we will see in the next game.

8.c5?!

Again this move that is so frequently played by juniors and amateurs, who think they are gaining a tempo by attacking the bishop.

8.cxd5! would have taken advantage of Black's imprecision on the previous move: 8...cxd5 9.♘b5 ♙b8 10.♚c1, and White has strong pressure on the c-file.

8...♙c7 9.♙d3 0-0 10.0-0 h6?!



Again an instructive inaccuracy. Black logically seeks to unpin herself, but she deprives herself of the h6-square for her rook in the middlegame, and we have seen that this square was very useful. It was better to unpin by playing 10...♚e8.

11.♙xf6 ♜xf6 12.b4 ♞e4!

The black knight has reached its central outpost. Even if it's not the g8-knight ...

13.a4 g5!

So, here we go with the classic attack, except here the h6-square is sorely lacking.

14.♞d2 g4 15.♞dx4?!

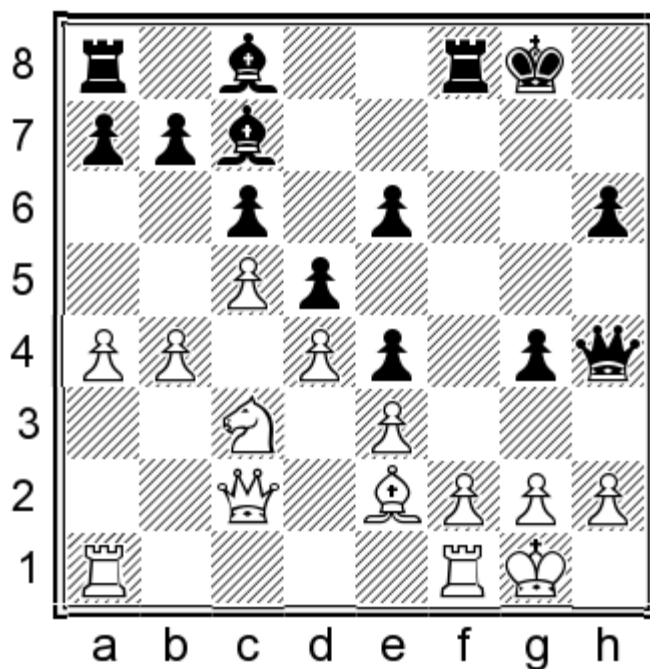
A pointless exchange that dangerously opens the f-file for Black.

White could continue her queenside attack, in so far as the sacrifice on h2 is not threatened (put the h6-pawn back on h7 and that will not be the case!): 15.b5 and if 15...♞h4 then 16.f4 closes the diagonal. Black will never be able to make the right-angled rook manoeuvre because of the pawn on h6.

15...fxe4 16.♙e2 ♞h4

Black now has excellent attacking prospects on the kingside. Thanks to the semi-open f-file she will again be able to make the right-angled rook manoeuvre, but now via f5!

16...♙xh2+?! was in the air, but it still does not work: 17.♙xh2 ♞h4+ 18.♙g1 ♞f5 19.♞xe4! (a now familiar refrain – see for example analysis position No. 1 earlier in this chapter) 19...dxe4 20.g3! ♞h3 21.♞xe4!+–. A defence that we have already met several times.



17.g3 ♞g5

17...♞h3!, with the idea ...♞f8-f5-h5, was stronger.

18.b5 h5

Black wants to open the h-file, but this plan is too slow.

19.a5 ♖d8?

It's a shame to move the bishop from its beautiful diagonal while White has not yet played b5-b6 to attack it.

20.bxc6?!

20.a6! demolishes the black queenside and gives White a big advantage.

20...bxc6 21.♟a4 ♖d7 22.♞ab1 ♖f6 23.♞bd1?

A strange move, to say the least, as the rook was active on the open file. Obviously, White did not know what to do on the queenside.

23...♞f7

A 'small' right angle to come to h7 and support the advance of the h-pawn.

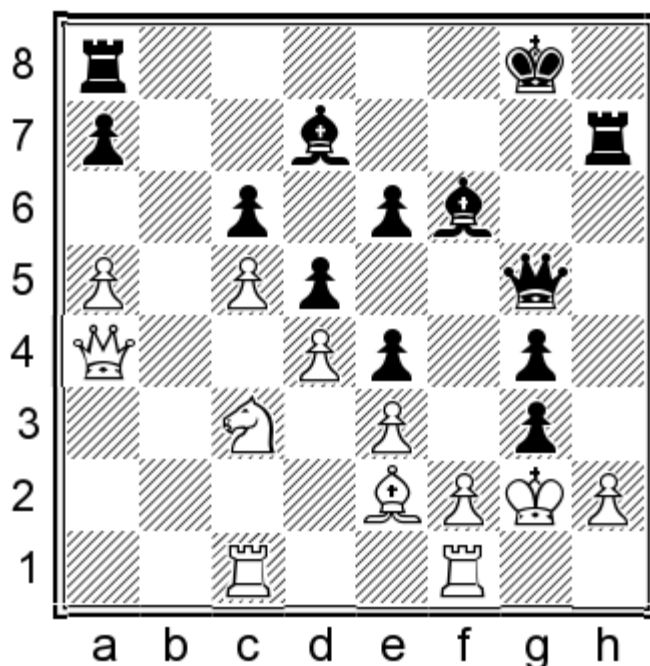
24.♞b1

White has no doubt realized the strangeness of her previous move.

24...♞h7 25.♔g2 h4

White has wasted too much time on the queenside, and now the black attack is the more dangerous.

26.♞bc1 hxg3?



Again an instructive error: Black opens the file too soon, so White will be able to oppose and exchange the rooks.

Stronger was 26...♟h5 27.♞h1 h3+ 28.♔f1 and the h1-rook is not about to come back into play.

27.hxg3 ♔g7 28.♞h1 ♞ah8 29.♞xh7+ ♞xh7 30.♞h1 ♞xh1 31.♔xh1 ♟h5+

Without rooks Black's firepower is greatly diminished.

32.♔g1 e5?

The correct strategic move in this type of pawn structure, but here it can be tactically refuted.

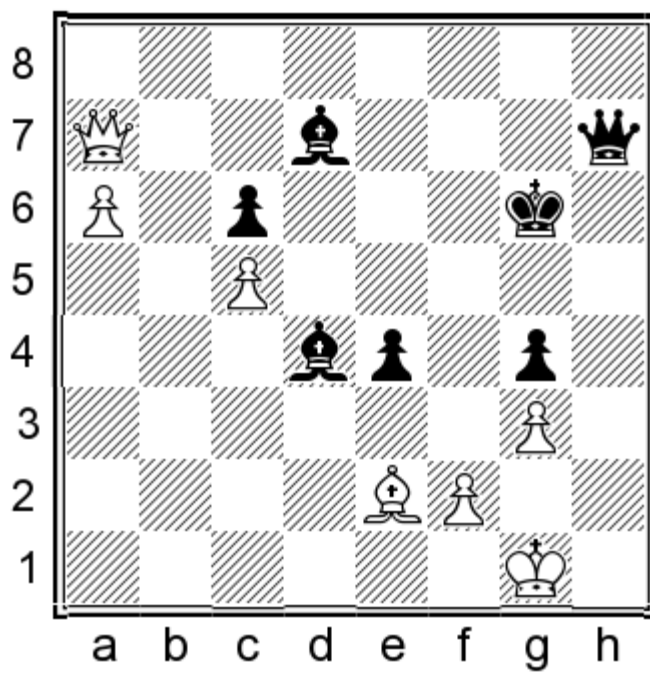
33.♚b4?

33.♘xd5!.

33...exd4 34.exd4 ♔g6 35.♚b7 ♚h7 36.♚xa7 ♘xd4 37.♘xe4??

37.♘d1! defends f2, when the a5-pawn will become very dangerous.

37...dxe4 38.a6



38...♚h3??

38...♚f7! mates by force.

39.♚xd7??

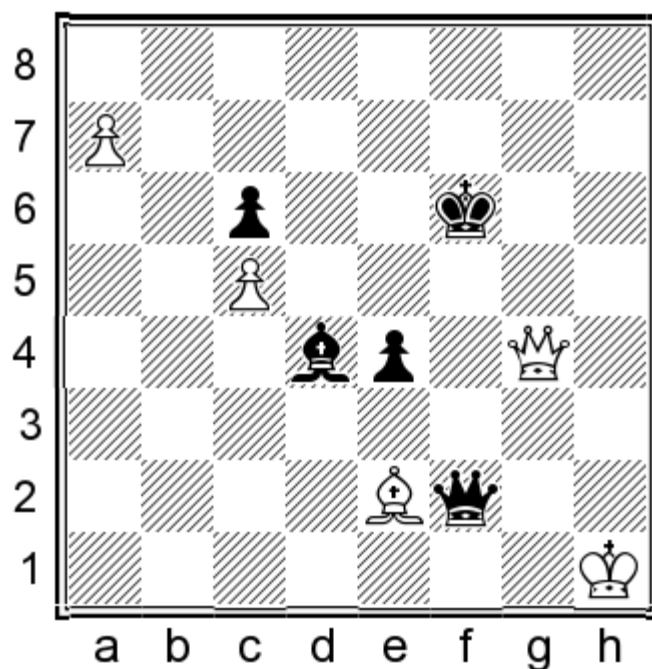
39.♚b8! defends the g3-pawn. After 39...♘xf2+ 40.♔xf2 ♚h2+ 41.♔e1 ♚g1+ 42.♔d2 ♚d4+ there was nothing better than a perpetual check for both sides.

39...♚xg3+ 40.♔h1 ♚xf2??

40...♚h4+! mates: 41.♔g1 ♚xf2+ 42.♔h1 ♚g1#.

Many missed opportunities at the end of this game between these two young girls who were among the best French players in their Under 14 category. This game was played in the last round of the French Championship and the winner was certain of getting onto the podium.

41.♚xg4+ ♔f6 42.a7



42... ♖e1+??

42... ♔e5! saves the game: 43. ♗h3 ♕xe2 44. a8=♖ ♕e1+ 45. ♔g2 ♕e2+ and Black still has a perpetual.

43. ♔h2 ♕a5 44. ♗f4+ ♔g7 45. ♗g5+ ♔f7 46. ♔c4+ ♔f8 47. a8=♖+ ♕xa8 48. ♗g8+ 1-0

Game 71

Robert Druesne

Vincent Moret

France tt 1994

1. d4 d5 2. ♘f3 e6 3. c4 c6 4. ♘c3 f5 5. a3

Apparently to prevent 5... ♔b4.

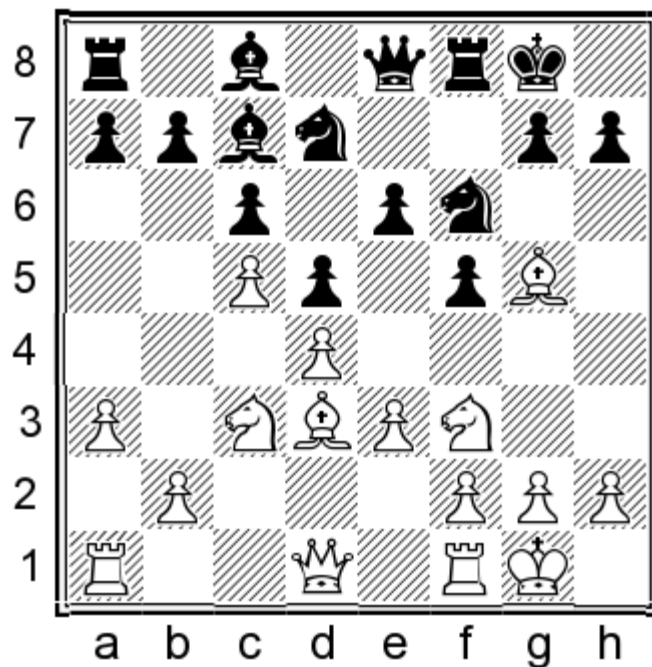
5. ♔g5 ♘f6 6. e3 ♔d6 was more natural, with White economizing the move a2-a3.

5... ♘f6 6. ♔g5 ♔d6 7. e3 0-0 8. c5?!

Again and again this move, so frequently played by amateurs simply because it attacks the d6-bishop.

Stronger is 8. ♔d3. White keeps the possibility of exchanging on d5 or simply keeping the tension in the centre. After 8... ♕e8 Black will unpin and then be able to play ... ♘e4 (Black must be vigilant: he cannot immediately play 8... ♘bd7 because of 9. cxd5 and the natural recapture 9... exd5 is not possible because the f5-pawn is hanging).

8... ♔c7 9. ♔d3 ♘bd7 10. 0-0 ♕e8



The right way to unpin when the white bishop is on g5. Black avoids the move ...h7-h6 and thus keeps the possibility of using this square in the middlegame.

11.b4

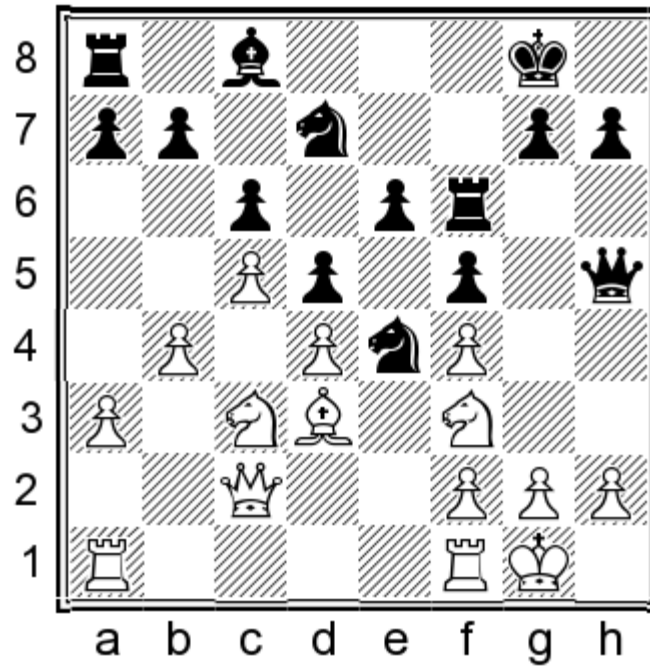
Of course, an exchange on f6 would accelerate the right-angled rook manoeuvre.

11...♘e4 12.♙c2 ♚h5

The bishop is now in an unstable situation on g5.

But 12...e5!, which takes advantage of the white c4-c5 move, is a more incisive way to gain the advantage. After 13.dxe5 (otherwise Black exchanges on c3 and plays ...e5-e4, winning a piece) 13...♘xe5 Black is much better.

13.♙f4 ♙xf4 14.exf4 ♜f6



Attack!

15.b5 Bg6

Stronger, this time, than 15...Bh6.

16.dxe5?

A natural move, but losing. He had to play 16.Ke2, even if after 16...Bg4 17.g3 Bxf4 Black has won a pawn.

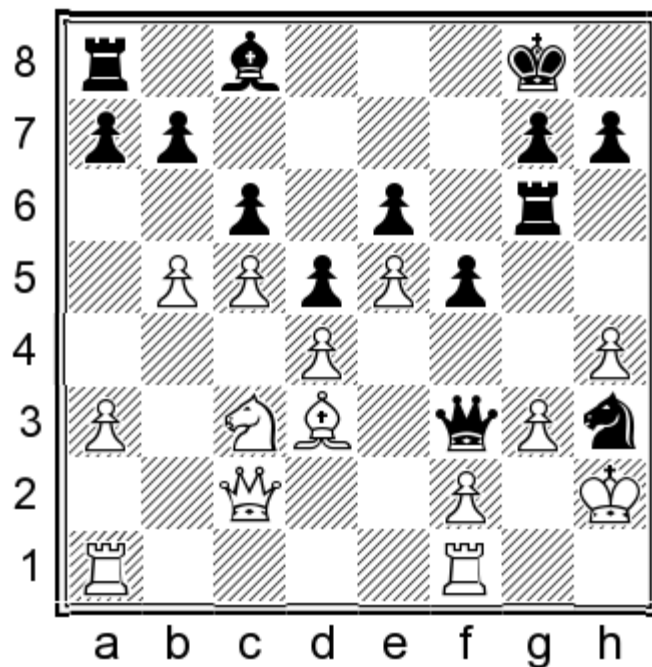
16...dxe5 17.fxe5?

17.dxe5 offered more resistance: 17...Bf3 18.g3 Bxf4.

17...Bf3

The move that White had obviously overlooked.

18.g3 d5 19.h4 d3+ 20.Kh2



20...♞f4! 0–1

The knight is invulnerable, of course, because of the mate on g2. White loses the d3-bishop at least.

Game 72

Nicolas Forestier 1680

Vincent Houzelle 2040

Flavigny 1996

1.d4 d5 2.♞f3 e6 3.♟f4

The London System. A queen's pawn opening (1.d4) in which White develops his bishop to f4 and does not necessarily play c2-c4, often preferring the solid c2-c3.

3...f5 4.e3 ♞f6 5.c4

White eventually transposes back into the main lines with c2-c4.

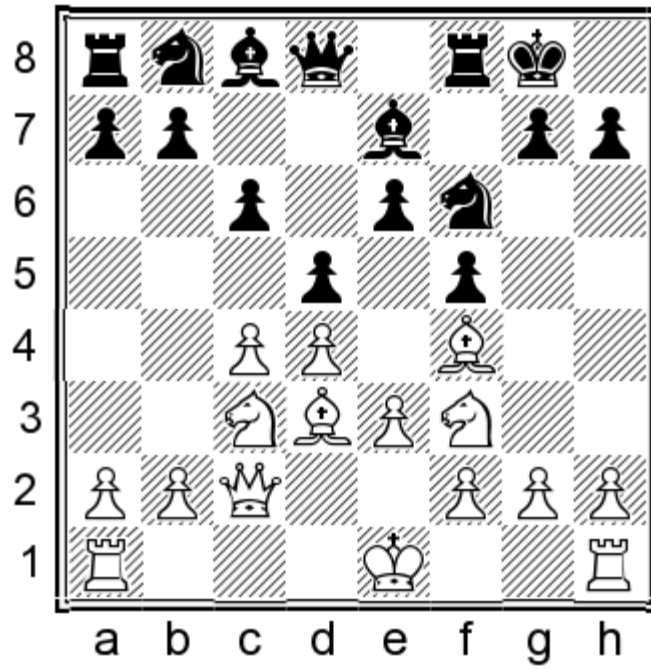
5...c6 6.♞c3 ♟e7

6...♟d6?! would be a bad positional mistake that would allow White to advantageously exchange the dark-squared bishops and greatly reduce Black's offensive potential.

7.♟d3 0-0 8.0-0

Logical, natural and good.

But 8.♞c2 is certainly even stronger.



analysis diagram

This move (8.Qc2) is the introduction to a variation that is arguably one of the most serious threats to the viability of the Stonewall. White's idea is to castle queenside and then play g2-g4 to open the g-file.

A) After 8.Qc2 Black should certainly not play 8...Nbd7? because of 9.cxd5!, and neither of the two pawn recaptures is satisfactory. Recapturing by ...e6xd5 would lose the f5-pawn, and 9...cxd5 is no better, because of 10.Nb5, when the penetration to c7 is very unpleasant for Black;

B) After 8.Qc2 Black must therefore play 8...Ne4, but after 9.g4! the position becomes very sharp. The best plan for Black is undoubtedly 9...Qa5, with the idea of ...Qb4 to counter-attack against White's c3-knight. Play can then continue as follows: 10.gxf5 exf5 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.Qe2 (the best square for the king in order to unpin the c3-knight; 12.0-0-0 would be too risky, in particular because of the open c-file). And here Black can choose 12...b6!?, to play ...Qa6 and set a subtle trap: 13.Nxd5 Qxd5 14.Qc4?? pin ... 14...Qa6+ and counter-pin!

8...Ne4!

Here too 8...Nbd7 allowed 9.cxd5.

9.Qc1 g5 10.Qe5

10.Qg3 is not possible because of 10...f4, and exchanging on b8 against a knight that has not yet moved would certainly be a little frustrating.

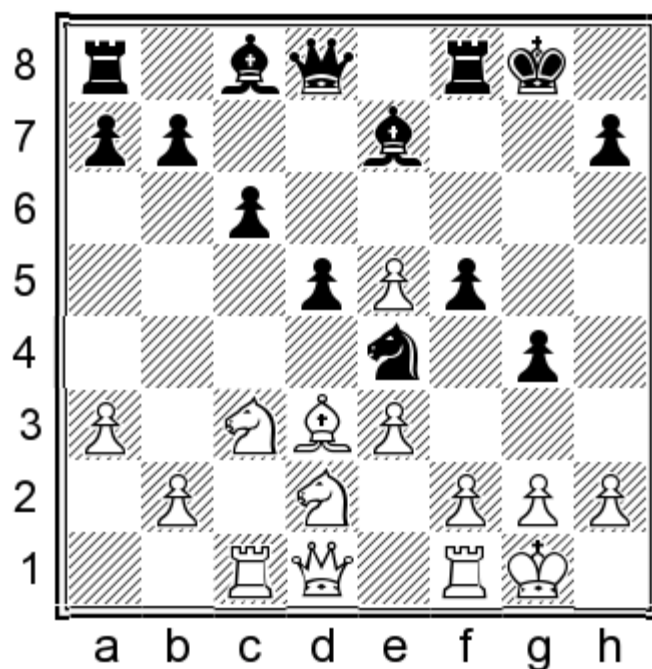
10...Nd7

Finally, the bishop will nevertheless be exchanged.

11.cxd5 exd5 12.a3

12.Qg3 would of course be countered by 12...f4.

12...g4 13.Nd2 Nxe5 14.dxe5

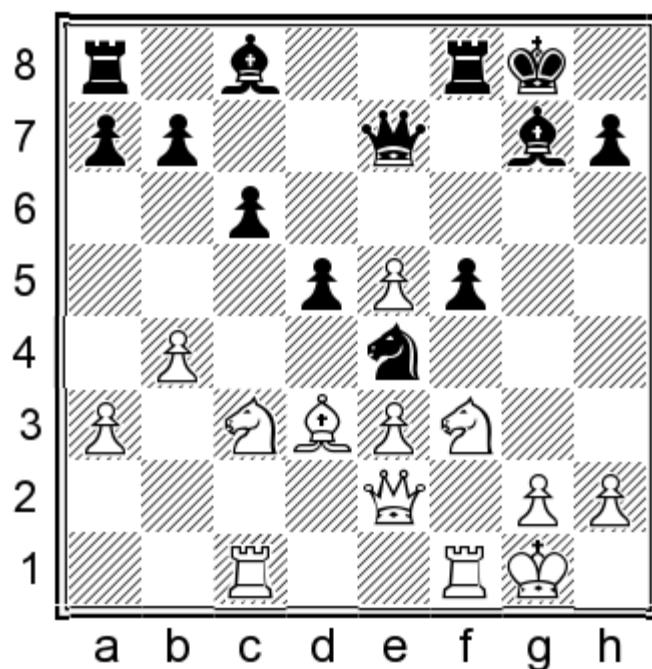


If the e5-pawn could be supported by f2-f4 everything would be fine for White, who would have a strong protected passed pawn, but this is not possible, and the e5-pawn will therefore become weak.

14...♗g5 15.♔e2 ♔e7 16.f4 gxf3 17.♘xf3

Recapturing with the pawn is not playable: 17.gxf3? ♘xc3 18.♖xc3 f4!± (18...♔xe5?? 19.f4+–).

17...♗h6 18.b4 ♗g7



The bishop has come a long way to end up being fianchettoed (...♗f8-d6-f4-h6-g7). It is very well placed on g7, from where it attacks the e5-pawn while protecting the king.

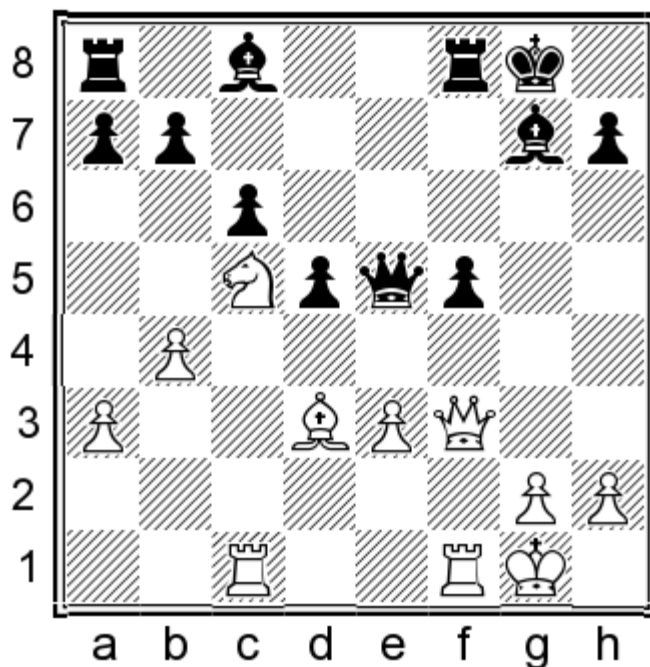
19.♘a4

White can no longer defend the e5-pawn.

19...♘g5!

Much stronger than the immediate recapture on e5, which would unnecessarily exchange the strong g7-bishop.

20.♘c5 ♘xf3+ 21.♙xf3 ♙xe5



With an extra pawn, the bishop pair and a better position (the e3-pawn is weak), Black is winning.

22.♘b3 ♗h6 23.♞ce1 ♙c3 24.♙g3+ ♖h8 25.♘c1 ♙xa3 26.b5 ♗d7 27.bxc6 bxc6 28.♙e5+ ♗g7 29.♙f4 ♞ae8 30.♞f3 a5 31.♞ef1 ♙b4 32.♙c7 ♞e7 33.♘e2 a4 34.♘d4 a3 35.♘xc6? ♙c5 0-1

After 36.♙a5 ♙xa5 37.♘xa5 a2 38.♘b3 ♞b8 39.♘a1 the white position is hopeless.

IV. Using the f-file after the exchange on e4

Game 73

Florian Simon

Nicolas Hornet

Sarrebourg tt jr 2016

1.d4 d5 2.♗f4 f5 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 e6 5.♘e5 ♗d6 6.♗d3 0-0

Here we only have three pawn moves from our usual Stonewall (...d7-d5, ...e7-e6 and ...f7-f5). Black can sometimes make do without the ...c7-c6 move if two conditions are met: White has not played c2-c4, and the knight is not on c3 and does not threaten to harass the d6-bishop by ♘b5.

7.0-0 ♘bd7 8.♘d2

More natural – and above all stronger – would be 8.c4 followed by the development of the b1-knight to c3.

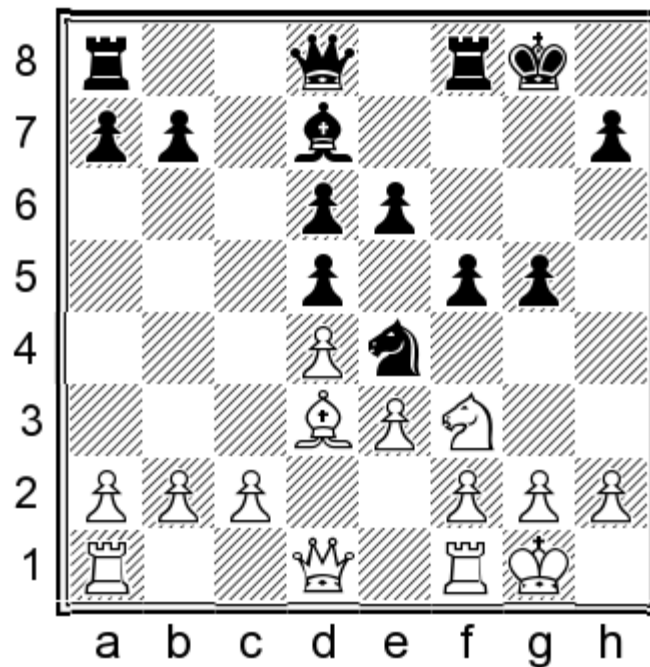
8...♘e4 9.♘df3 g5!

The f4-bishop is immediately assaulted.

10.♘xd7

10.♙g3 ♘xg3 11.hxg3 g4 and Black will have attacking prospects on the h-file. He may, in particular, consider ...♚e8–h5 followed by ...♖f6–h6.

10...♙xd7 11.♙xd6 cxd6

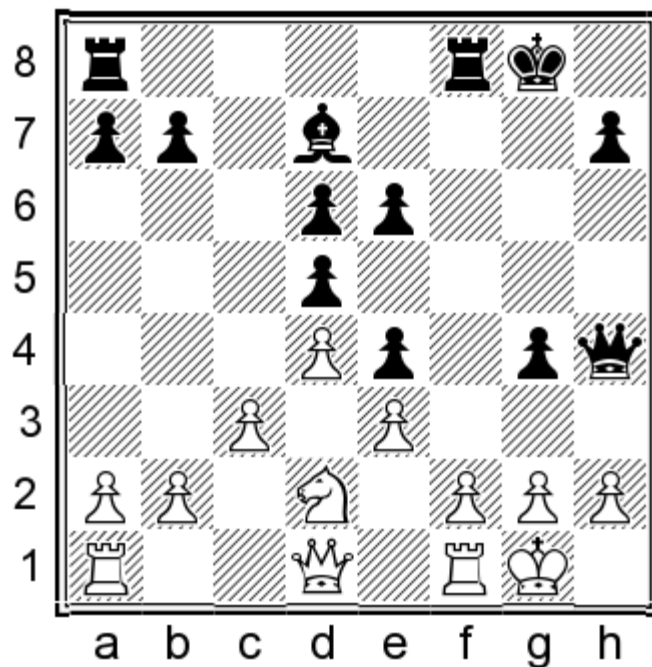


We see the whole point of not having played ...c7-c6. The recapture on d6 with the pawn, made possible because Black was not forced to play ...c7-c6, is very advantageous for him. The d6-pawn, although doubled, controls the important e5-square and prevents the white knight from jumping there. In addition to this the central ...e6-e5 thrust can be facilitated if need be.

12.c3 g4 13.♘d2

Obviously the knight would have preferred to come to e5 if possible.

13...♚h4 14.♙xe4? fx4



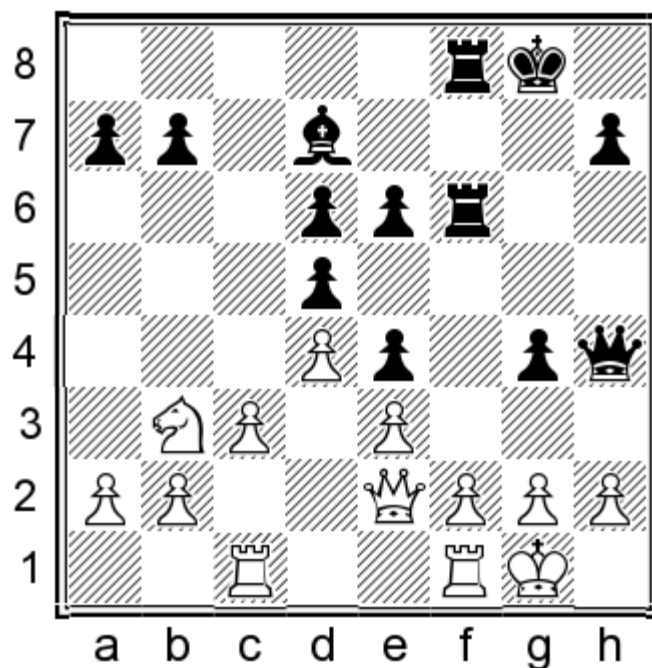
As we have already noted in Game 70 (and as we will see in the next two games), the exchange on e4 often gives Black a lot of play on the f-file. White is advised to do this only when it is absolutely necessary. That certainly was not the case here.

15. ♖e2 ♜f6 16. ♘b3?

The knight should not have given up control of the f3-square. In the game Black played 16... ♜h6 and after 17. h3 gxh3 18. g3 White could still resist a while (0–1, 33 moves).

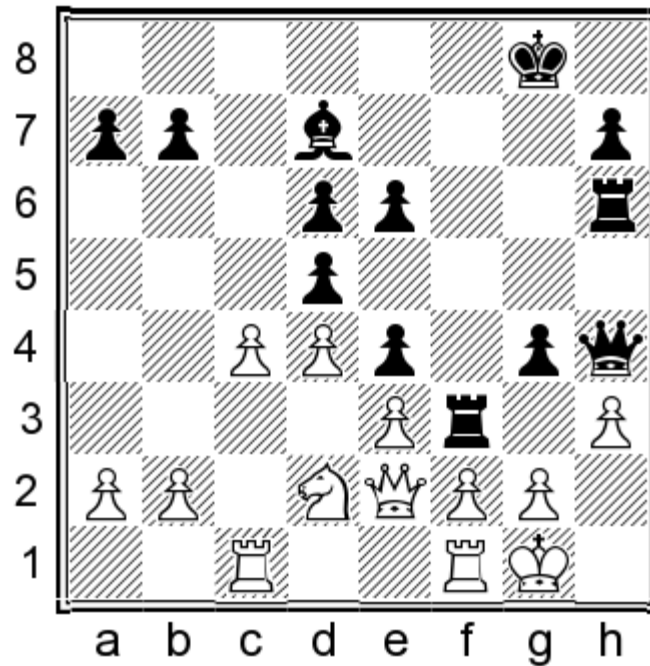
But let's look at how Black could have benefited from the f-file, instead of playing the natural 16... ♜h6.

16... ♜af8! 17. ♜ac1. Whatever White tries to undertake, the continuation will be the same. He is defenceless.



analysis diagram

17...♖f3!! (a very strong move that completely ties up White on the kingside) 18.♘d2 (18.gxf3 gxf3 and the queen is lost because of the mate threat) 18...♞8f6! – it is the second rook that comes to play the right-angled manoeuvre – 19.c4 (19.h3 ♞h6!) 19...♞h6 20.h3



analysis diagram

20...♞xh3!! – another right-angled rook move! – 21.gxh3 ♞xh3 and mate can no longer be parried: 22.f4 gxf3 23.♘xf3 exf3 24.♞xf3 ♞g6+ 25.♔f2 ♞h4+ 26.♔f1 ♞h1+ 27.♔f2 ♞g2#.

We do not hold it against the young Nicolas not to have found the ...♖f3 manoeuvre in the game. 16...♖f3 immediately (before 16...♖af8!) was weaker: 17.♔h1 and White is now threatening to take the rook, as he has ♖g1+ at his disposal to protect g2.

Game 74
Carine Metzger
Antoine Quenette
Nancy tt jr 1994

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 e6 3.e3 f5 4.♙e2 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙d6 6.♘bd2 0-0 7.c4 c6 8.♞c2 ♘e4 9.c5 ♙c7 10.b4 ♘d7 11.♙b2 ♞f6

The correct move, as we already know, when White is able to play ...♘e5 after an exchange on e4.

12.♞fe1

Doubtless to try to consolidate the kingside with ♘f1, but this move dangerously weakens the f2-square.

12...g5 13.g3

To prevent a sacrifice on h2 and equally to stop the black queen from coming to h4.

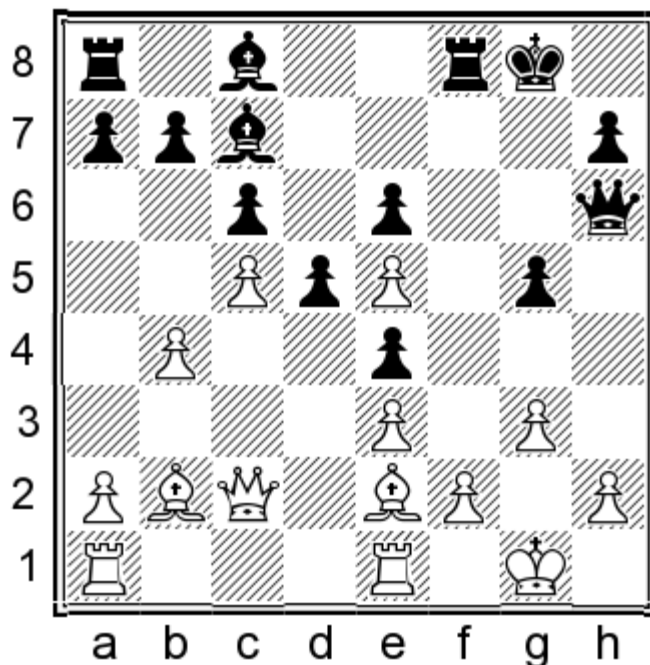
13...♖h6 14.♘xe4?

An unnecessary exchange, and above all much too risky. It is very dangerous to open the f-file, which has already been weakened by the moves 12.♞fe1 and 13.g3, like this. Even more serious, after this exchange on e4 the recapture by a black pawn will attack the f3-knight, which is an important defender of the kingside.

14...fxe4 15.♘e5

15.♘d2 would not have avoided the game's combination.

15...♘xe5 16.dxe5



16...♞xf2!

A direct consequence of the 12.♞e1 move and of the opening of the f-file.

17.♔xf2?

White shortens his suffering and does not find the only defence, 17.h4, which was not very promising in any case.

17...♞xh2+ 18.♔f1 ♚d7 0-1

The a8-rook comes to the f-file with decisive material gain.

Game 75

Noé Jeunecourt

Théo Ciccoli 1965

Metz 2015

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 c6

If Black is already thinking of playing a Stonewall then 2...e6 is surely more accurate. As we saw in the previous game, if White does not play c2-c4 Black can sometimes avoid ...c7-c6.

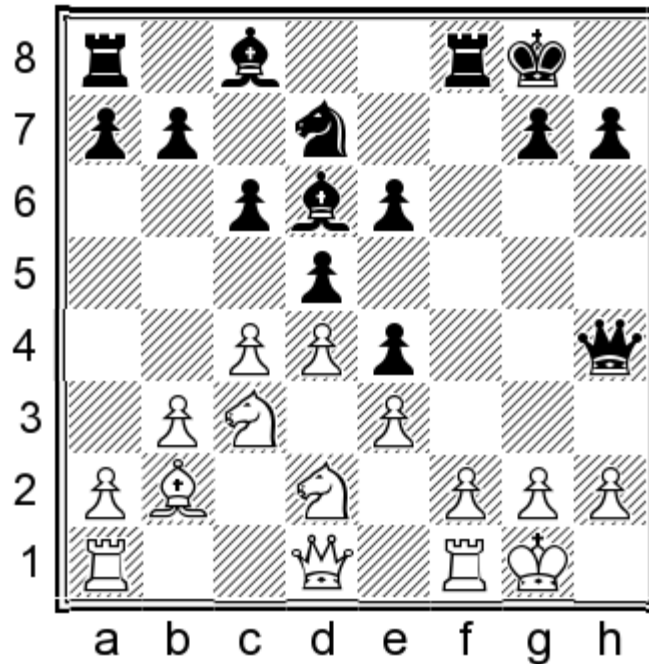
3.c4 e6 4.e3 f5 5.♘c3 ♘f6 6.♙d3 ♙d6 7.0-0 0-0

We are back in the classical Stonewall set-up.

8.b3 ♘bd7 9.♙b2 ♘e4 10.♙xe4?

An unnecessary exchange, just like those of Games 70, 73 and 74, which offers Black too much play on the f-file.

10...fxe4 11.♘d2 ♚h4



Following the exchange the e4-pawn has chased the knight from its defence of the kingside. Black did not even need to play ...g5-g4, and the queen was able to get to h4 in one move, without making its usual stop on f6.

12.h3?!

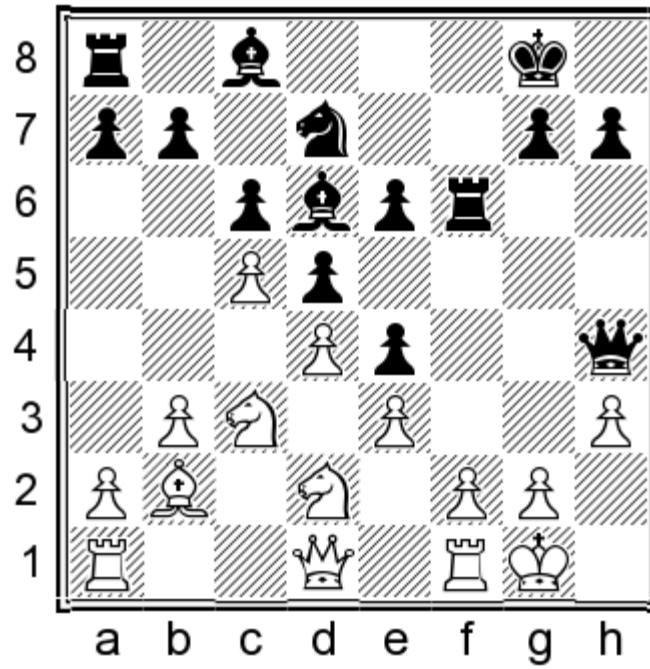
A weakening move, but the white position is already difficult.

A) 12.g3 also creates holes in the kingside. After 12...♚h3, followed by ...♘f6-g4 and the right-angled rook manoeuvre, Black has excellent prospects;

B) The attempt to close the dangerous b8-h2 diagonal by 12.f4 was unsatisfactory. After 12...exf3 13.♘xf3 ♙xf3! 14.♙xf3 ♚xh2+ 15.♔f2 ♚h4+ 16.♔g1 ♘f6 Black has a pawn for the exchange and good attacking possibilities.

12...♙f6 13.c5

The exchange 13.cxd5 would now be catastrophic: 13...exd5 and the c8-bishop's diagonal is opened. As in the game, sacrifices on h3 will soon be the order of the day.



13...Rg6! 14.Ke1

The bishop was immune from capture: 14.cxd6?? Bxh3 15.g3 Rh6 and it's mate.

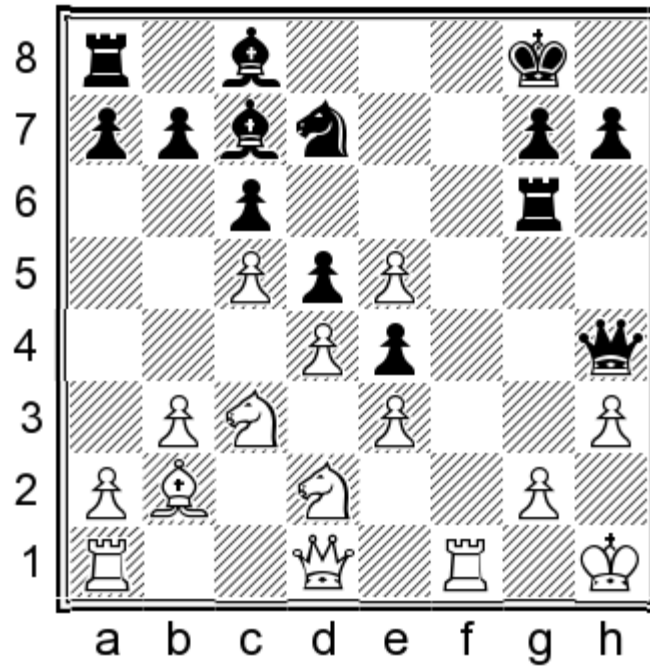
14...Bc7 15.f4

15.b4 e5! – the usual central reaction when White has played c4-c5 and no longer puts pressure on d5. The ...e6-e5 thrust has even more force when there is no longer a pawn on f5 (in other words, when there has been an exchange on e4), because the c8-bishop's diagonal opens completely. 16.dxe5 Nxe5. Apart from the a8-rook, all the black pieces participate in the kingside attack. One example: 17.b5 Rxc2! 18.Ke2 Bxh3+ 19.Ke1 Nf3+ 20.Nxf3 exf3+.

15...e5!

Anyway!

16.fxe5



16...♖xe5! 17.♗f4

17.dxe5 ♕xh3!-+.

17...♖g4 18.♗f1 ♖f2+ 19.♗xf2 ♕xh3! 20.gxh3 ♗xh3+ 0-1

A pretty fireworks display to finish!

V. The white kingside fianchetto

In all the games we have seen so far we can easily understand why the fianchetto of the white king's bishop is, at a high level, the most popular system against the Dutch in general, and against the Stonewall in particular. With his move ...f7-f5 Black clearly announces that he will attack on the kingside in the middlegame. Therefore, White anticipates this and reinforces the security of his king position with the bishop on g2. In addition, the g3-pawn closes the dangerous h2-b8 diagonal and prevents the black queen from coming to h4. Regarding this last point, it really doesn't matter that much, as it will find another route, as we will see in this game.

Game 76

Alexander Kotov

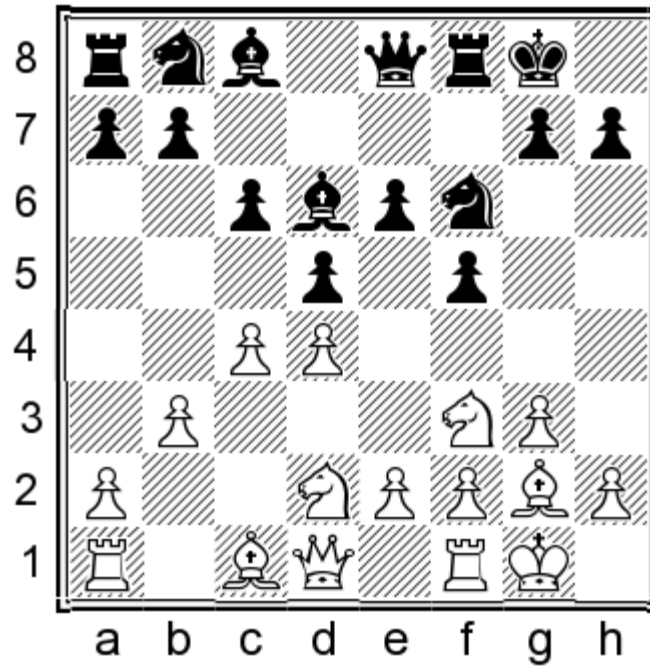
Igor Bondarevsky

Leningrad 1936

1.d4 e6 2.♖f3 f5 3.g3 ♖f6 4.♗g2 d5

Transposing into the Stonewall.

5.0-0 ♗d6 6.c4 c6 7.♖bd2 0-0 8.b3 ♗e8



And here is that other route to the kingside for the black queen. Since it can no longer go to h4, it goes to h5 via e8.

9.♘e1 ♜bd7 10.♘d3 ♜e4 11.♘f3

An original yet classic knight manoeuvre in this variation that enhances control of the e5-square, Black's weak point in the Stonewall.

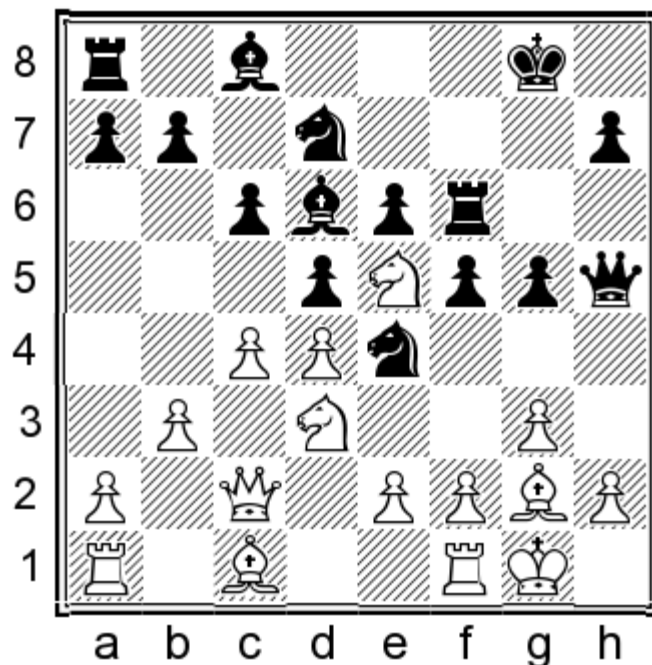
11...♙h5 12.♘f4 ♙f7

The queen is temporarily forced to retreat, but it will come back. Similarly, if White had placed his bishop on f4, rather than the knight, Black would have retreated to e7 before hitting the bishop with ...g7-g5.

13.♙c2 g5 14.♘d3 ♙h5

It's done!

15.♘fe5 ♜f6!



Again this right-angled rook manoeuvre, which really is one of the major themes of the Stonewall, whether White has fianchettoed on the kingside or not.

16.f3

The rook on f6 has occupied the only retreat square for the ♖e4.

16...♗h6! 17.h4?!

White is banking on the pinned g5-pawn, but this move is too weakening.

That said, after 17.fxe4 ♗xh2+ 18.♔f2 ♜f6 Black also has a very strong attack that compensates for the sacrificed piece. For example: 19.♖g1 (19.exf5? ♜e4+ 20.♔e1 ♗xg2—+) 19...fxe4 20.♜c5? ♙xe5 21.dxe5 e3+! 22.♙xe3 (22.♔f1 ♗xg3 and the mate is unstoppable) 22...♜g4+ 23.♔f3 ♜xe5+ 24.♔f2 ♜g4+ 25.♔f3 ♖f6+ 26.♔xg4 e5+ and the white king is getting mated.

17...♜xg3 18.hxg5?

It is suicidal to open a file towards the king like this.

It was necessary to play 18.♙xg5 ♜xf1 19.♔xf1 when the position was far from being clear.

18...♗h2+ 19.♔f2 ♖h4 20.♖g1 ♖xd4

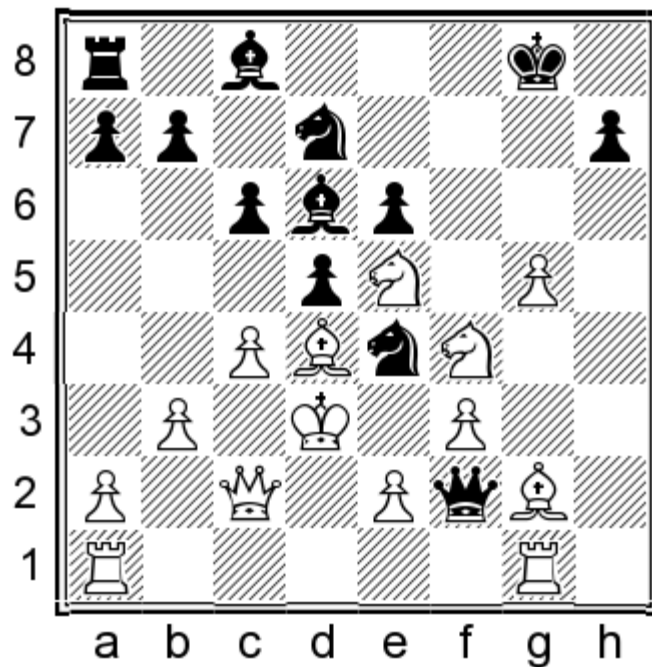
The black rook will have moved via f6-h6-h4 to finally arrive on d4. That is, a double right-angled manoeuvre. An original route, to say the least, and what is more, in a position where there is no fully open file.

21.♙b2 ♗h4! 22.♙xd4 ♜e4+ 23.♔e3?

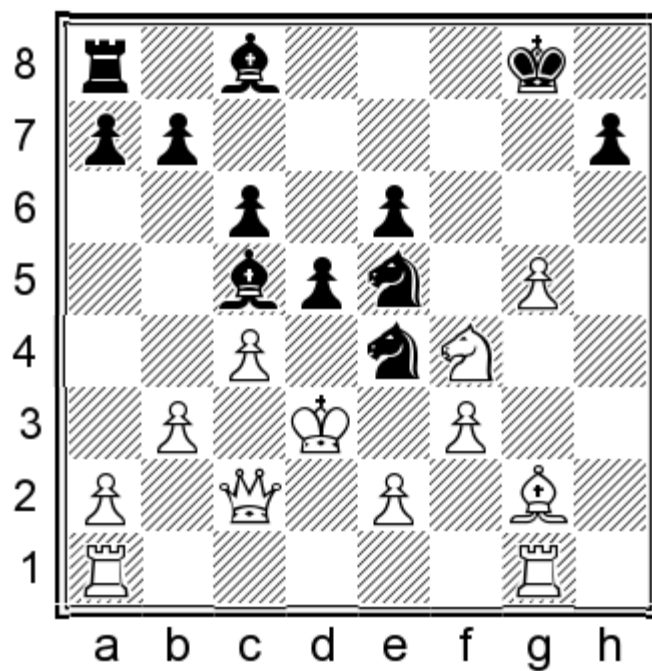
Jumping feet first into a magnificent mating net.

After 23.♔f1 ♜g3+ 24.♔f2 ♗xd4+ 25.e3 ♗h4 Black keeps a strong initiative in return for the exchange, but there was nothing decisive.

23...f4+! 24.♞xf4 ♔f2+ 25.♞d3



25...♞xd4+!! 26.♞xd4 ♔c5+ 27.♞d3 ♞xe5# 0-1



An extraordinary final position!

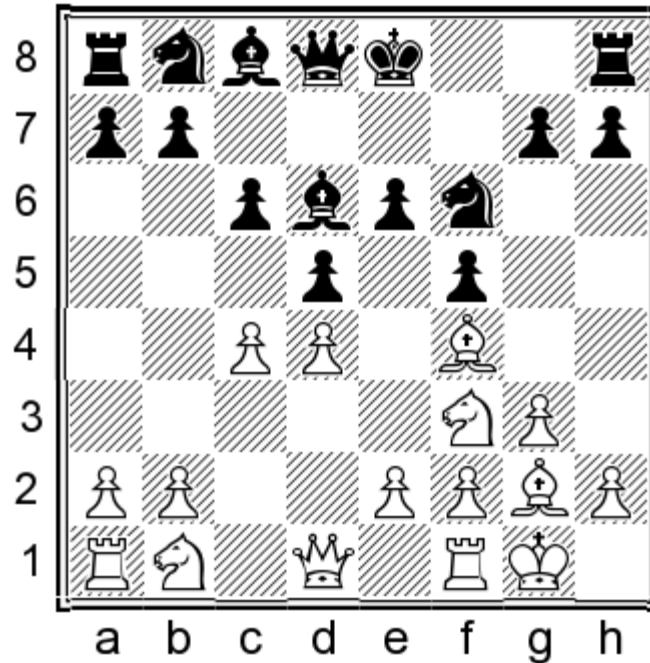
Game 77

Adrian Mikhalchishin 2500

Alexei Dreev 2475

Pavlodar ch-URS 1987

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 c6 4.♘g2 f5 5.♗f3 ♗f6 6.0-0 ♘d6 7.♘f4!

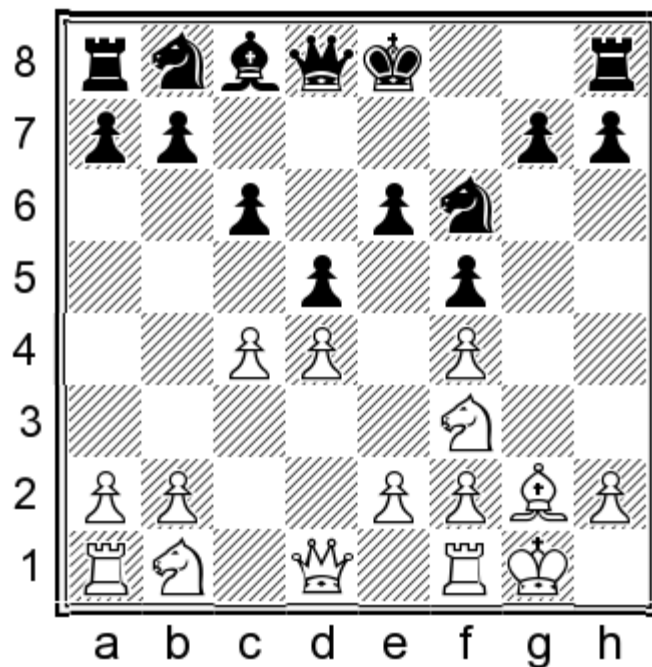


A strong move recommended by theory. White offers to exchange the dark-squared bishops. Let us not forget that this is Black's good bishop, and in the event of an exchange he would still have his bad one on c8.

Another way for White to try to trade the bishops would be by 7.b3, with the idea of ♗a3. It is then advisable for Black to oppose this plan by playing 7...♞e7.

7...♘xf4 8.gxf4

White has voluntarily damaged his kingside, but the pawn structure that results from this exchange offers him a big advantage: he has strengthened his control of the e5-square, and Black can no longer – in principle – advance his e6-pawn. The latter will have to try to find some kingside play by opening the g-file with ...g7-g5 (prepared by ...♕h8 and ...♞g8). As for the c8-bishop, it will try to get out in the open via e8 and h5.



This variation with 7.♔f4 is one of the most important lines, from a theoretical point of view, in the Stonewall.

According to none other than Vladimir Kramnik, the former World Champion, who often played the Stonewall in his younger days, Black's chances will not be worse if he is able to transfer his light-squared bishop to h5 and open the g-file.

8...0-0 9.♘e5 ♘bd7 10.e3 ♘e4 11.♘d2

The four knights have good chances of being exchanged. This is certainly White's goal, in any case, to remain with his good bishop against Black's bad one.

White can certainly force the e4-knight back by 11.f3, but in doing so he would severely limit the activity of his own bishop.

11...♘xe5 12.dxe5

If 12.fxe5 Black can play 12...♘xd2 13.♙xd2 f4! 14.exf4 ♙h4. He will recover the f4-pawn and exert pressure on the f-file.

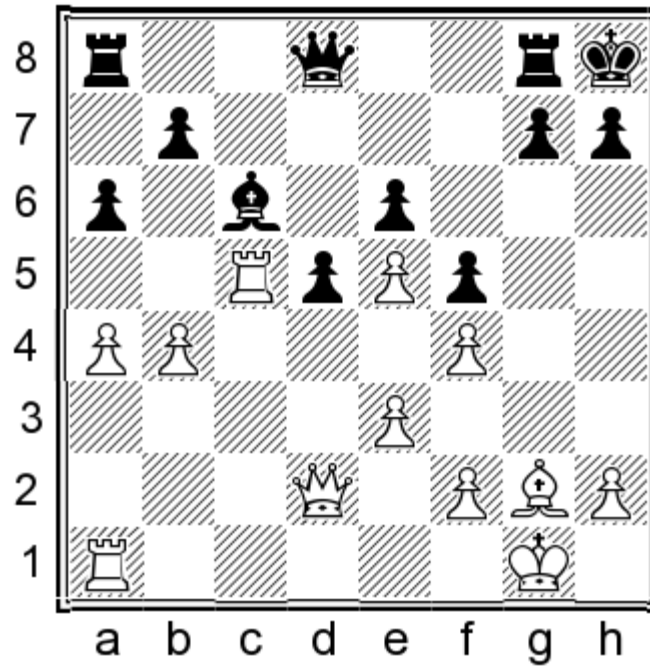
12...♙d7 13.♙e2 ♘xd2 14.♙xd2 ♙e8 15.cxd5 cxd5

The recapture with the c-pawn has the disadvantage of opening the c-file, which benefits White. However, recapturing with the e-pawn would have conceded a protected passed e5-pawn to White.

16.♞fc1 ♙c6!

Finally the bishop interrupts its redeployment to h5 and retraces its steps in order to close the c-file. From c6 it could become very strong if the g-file and the long diagonal were to open.

17.♞c5 ♘h8 18.b4 a6 19.a4 ♞g8



White's play on the queenside is rather slow. As a result, Black has plenty of time to open the g-file.

20. ♖h1

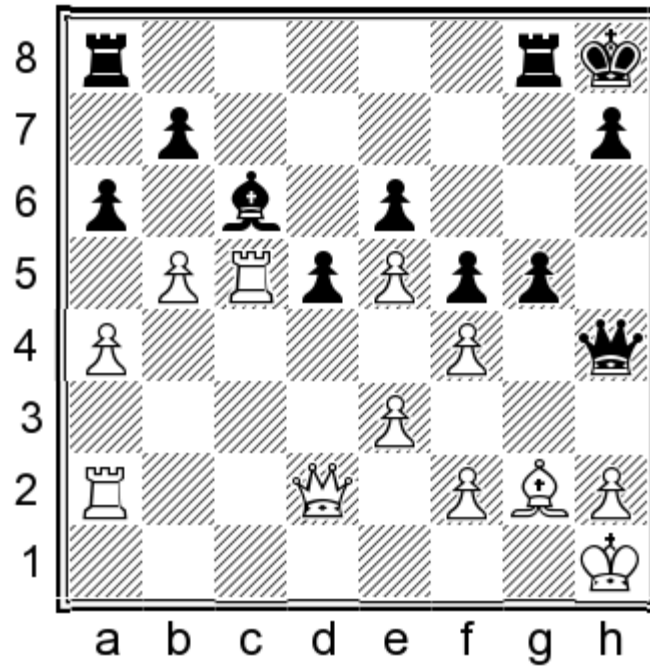
The white king preventively leaves the g-file before it opens, but there are other dangers awaiting it on the long diagonal.

20... ♜h4 21. ♖a2

21.b5? axb5 was obviously not possible because of the unprotected situation of the a1-rook.

21...g5 22.fxg5

22.b5? was not possible:



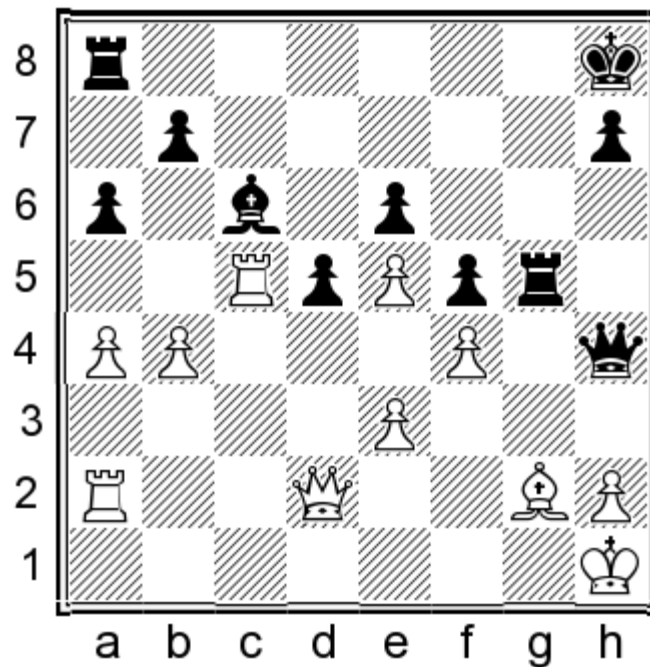
analysis diagram

22...gxf4!! 23.bxc6 ♖xg2 24.♔xg2 f3+ 25.♔h1 ♜g4 and the mate on g2 is unstoppable.

22...♞xg5 23.f4

There was no better defence.

23.b5 was still not possible because of 23...♞ag8–+, and White is mated after 23.♙f3 ♜h3 24.♜e2 ♞ag8 25.♞a1 ♞g2!.



23...♞xg2! 24.♜xg2

After 24.♔xg2 ♞g8+ 25.♔f1 ♜h3+ White loses the queen or gets mated.

24...♖e1+ 25.♔g1 ♜xb4 0–1

White resigned a little prematurely, perhaps, but after 26.♞xc6 (forced, otherwise the opening of the long diagonal is decisive) 26...bxc6 he has a pawn less and a hopeless position.

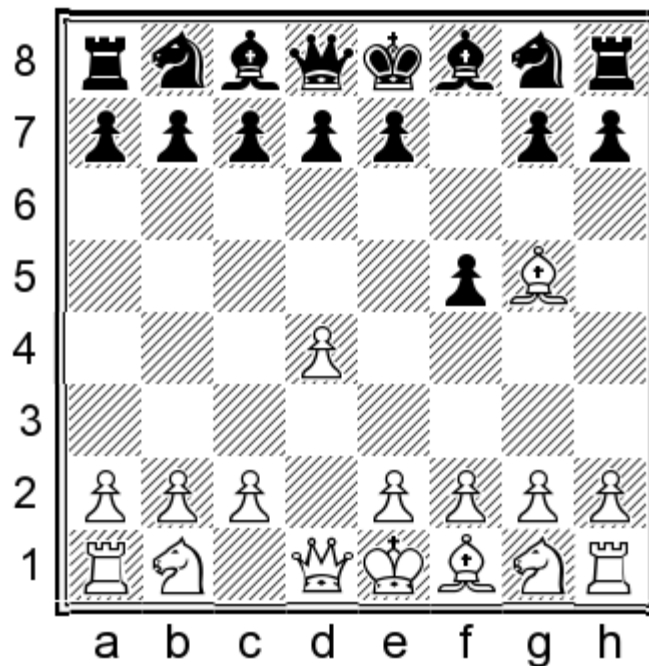
VI. Thoughts on the move order

To conclude this chapter, let us take stock of various move orders and their possible consequences. As we know, the Stonewall can be reached via several different routes, but we must be careful not to get drawn into variations with which we are not familiar.

1.d4 d5

I have repeatedly written that the four pawn moves that make up the Stonewall can, theoretically, be played in any order. The most precise, to keep to our repertoire, is to nevertheless play 1...d5.

1...f5 is the ‘normal’ move in the Dutch Defence, but then we must reckon with many ‘anti-Dutch’ variations, starting with 2.e4 (the Staunton Gambit), or 2.♗g5, a rather sharp variation with lots of traps.



analysis diagram

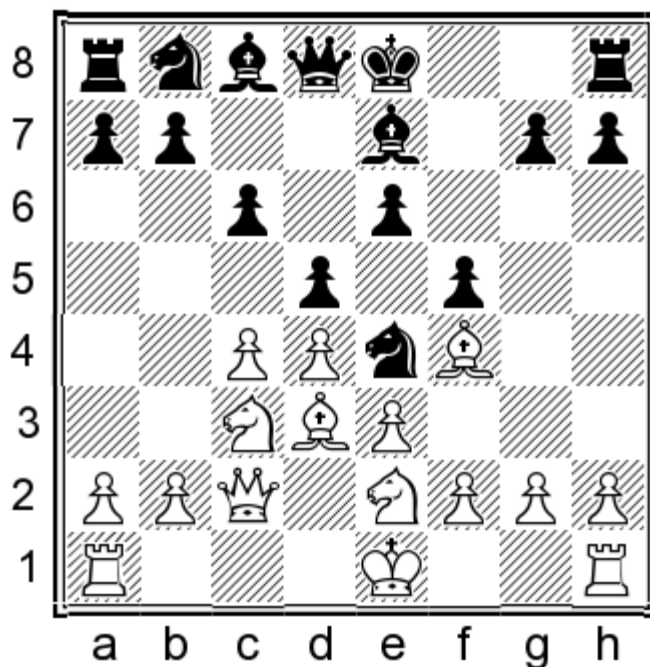
It is not possible, for example, to trap the bishop with 2...h6 3.♗h4 g5 4.♗g3 f4 because of 5.e3! and the threat of mate on h5 allows the bishop to get out of its cage. 5...e5? is bad because of 6.♔h5+ ♖e7 7.exf4 exf4 8.♗xf4! gxf4 9.♔e5++–.

1...e6 and 1...c6 could respectively lead to a French Defence or a Caro-Kann Defence after 2.e4, two openings that, as we have previously discussed, are not part of our Scandinavian-based repertoire.

2.♘f3

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, it is of course also possible to play the Stonewall against the Queen's

Gambit, but then it is necessary to reckon on studying numerous additional variations, some of which may prove quite difficult for Black. To take one example: 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 f5 (3...c6 would allow White to play 4.e4, which radically prevents the Stonewall) 4.♙f4 c6 5.e3 ♘f6 6.♙d3 ♙e7 7.♚c2 (as we discussed in Game 72, the presence of the queen on c2 and the bishop on d3 threatens the exchange on d5 due to the pressure on the f5-pawn after the e6-pawn recaptures) 7...♘e4 8.♘ge2!.



analysis diagram

Here White takes advantage of the fact that the g1-knight has not yet been developed, and will now be able to play f2-f3, driving away Black's knight with an even better position than that mentioned in the note to White's eighth move in Game 72.

2.e4 would transpose into a Blackmar-Diemer Gambit, which we have dealt with in Game 45 of Chapter 7 devoted to the Scandinavian.

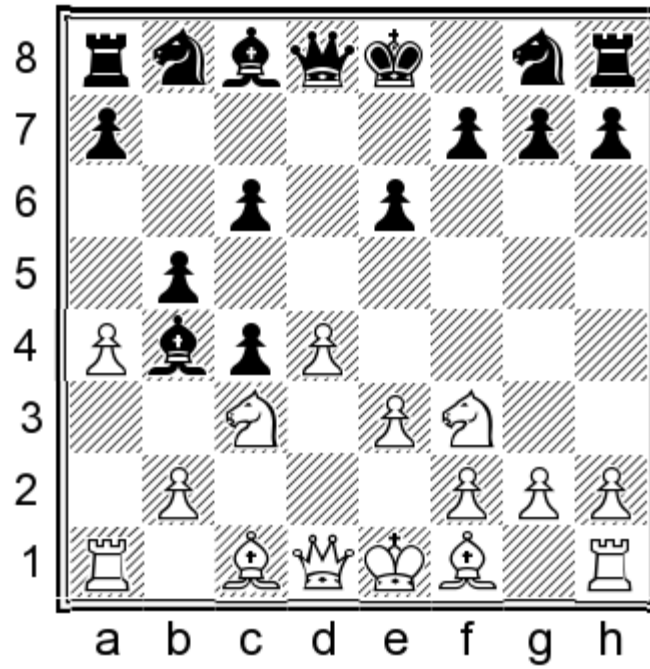
2...e6 3.c4 c6

3...f5 is possible and would represent a simple inversion of moves, but this idea of playing 3...c6 is of interest. It may, for example, encourage White to play e2-e3 for fear of the capture on c4, and thus to return to a variation that is absolutely not dangerous, as we have seen throughout this chapter.

Once the ...c7-c6 move has actually been played, Black may then consider taking the pawn on c4 and trying to hold on to it by ...b7-b5. Of course, this is not really our intention, but White doesn't know this!

4.e3

4.♘c3 could lead to the very sharp Noteboom Variation after 4...dxc4 5.a4 ♙b4 6.e3 b5.



analysis diagram

White often prefers to avoid this very complicated variation by playing 4.e3.

Equally, after 4.♘f4 White must seriously reckon with 4...dxc4 5.a4 b5.

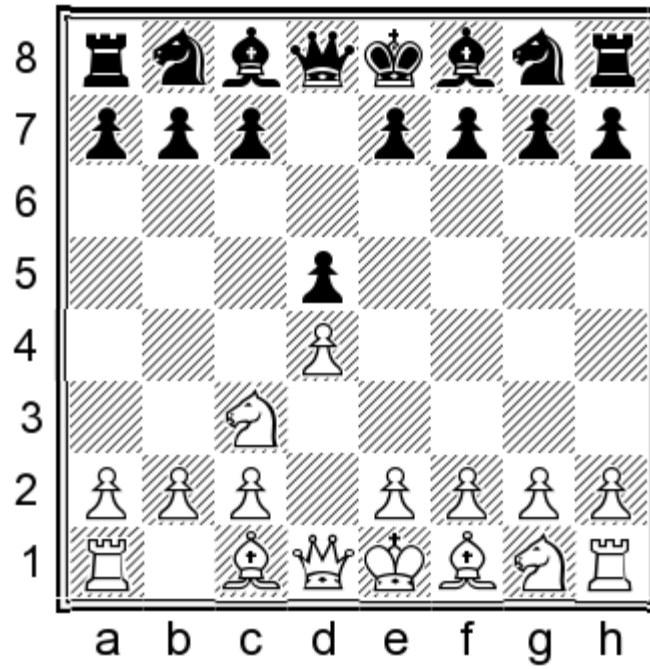
Once again, it is not our intention to go into these very complex variations by taking on c4, but – once more – our opponent is not to know this when playing his fourth move.

4...f5

And we have arrived at our classical Stonewall.

Let's now look at the move 2.♘c3, which poses some specific problems in order to reach our usual Stonewall.

1.d4 d5 2.♘c3



By blocking his c-pawn White loses the ability to attack the black centre by c2-c4, but we must be wary of this move order, which can hinder us from reaching our usual Stonewall.

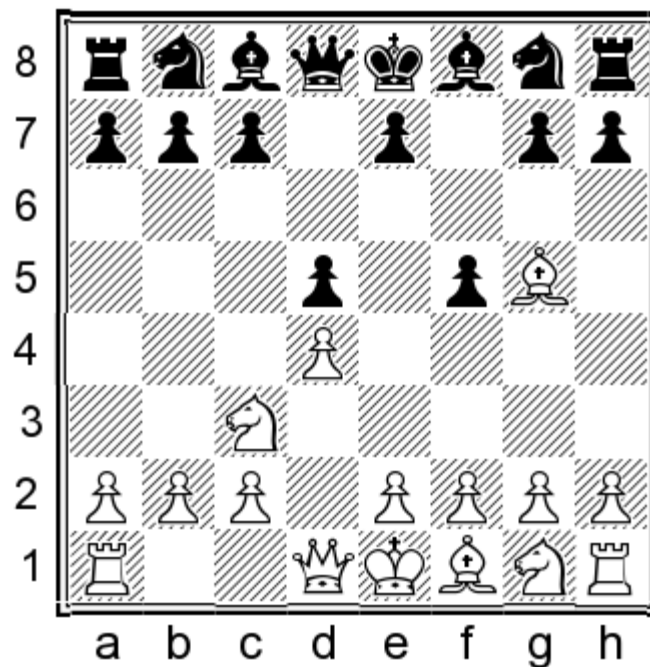
2...f5

The most accurate move if we want to play the Stonewall.

2...e6 and 2...c6 could again respectively transpose into a French or into a Caro-Kann after 3.e4.

3.♙g5

This is a rather irritating move for Stonewall players because it prevents the natural move ...e7-e6 (the pawn is pinned!) and bets on the fact that the ...h7-h6 move would ultimately represent a disadvantage for Black.



3.e4 is also possible, but after 3...dxe4! (3...fxe4? 4.♖h5+ g6 5.♖xd5±) 4.♙f4 (4.f3 e5!) 4...♘f6 5.f3 exf3 6.♗xf3 e6 it is not sure that White has enough compensation for the lost pawn.

After 3.♙f4 the correct move order is 3...c6! to prevent ♗b5.

3...c6

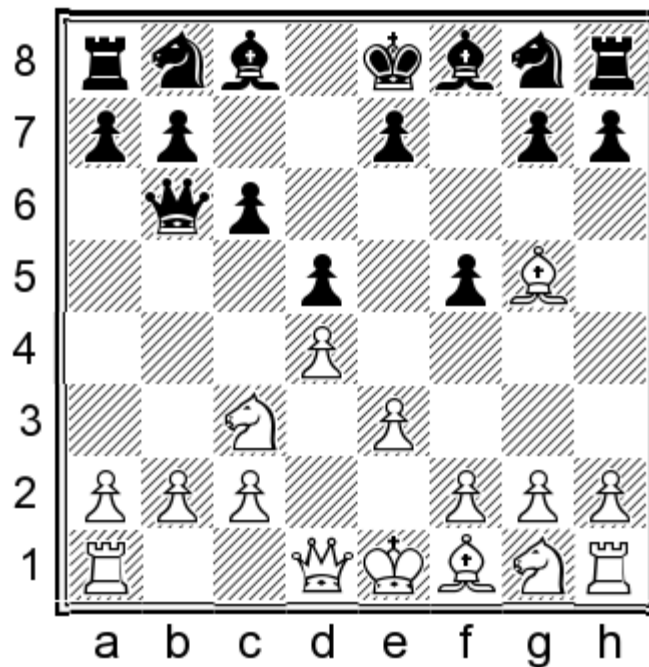
A) 3...♗f6 is quite possible, with the idea of transposing into a normal variation of the Stonewall after ...e7-e6, but we have to reckon with 4.♙xf6 exf6 5.e3 and the Stonewall structure has lost its flexibility because of the doubled pawns;

B) 3...h6 is also conceivable. However, after 4.♙f4 ♗f6, as we saw in Game 70, the ...h7-h6 move is frankly not very useful for Black in these types of positions, and can even be an inconvenience, especially since the g6-square and the h5-e8 diagonal are weakened.

4.e3 ♖b6!?

Ostensibly to attack b2, but also, and above all, to unpin the e7-pawn.

4...♗d7 is also possible: 5.♙d3 (if not 5...♗gf6) 5...♗df6 6.♗f3 e6 7.0-0 ♙d6. Certainly, the two black knights are stepping on each others' toes a bit, and the one on g8 will have to be satisfied with the e7-square, which is less favourable than d7. On the other hand, the c3-knight is also not well placed, as it blocks the c-pawn.



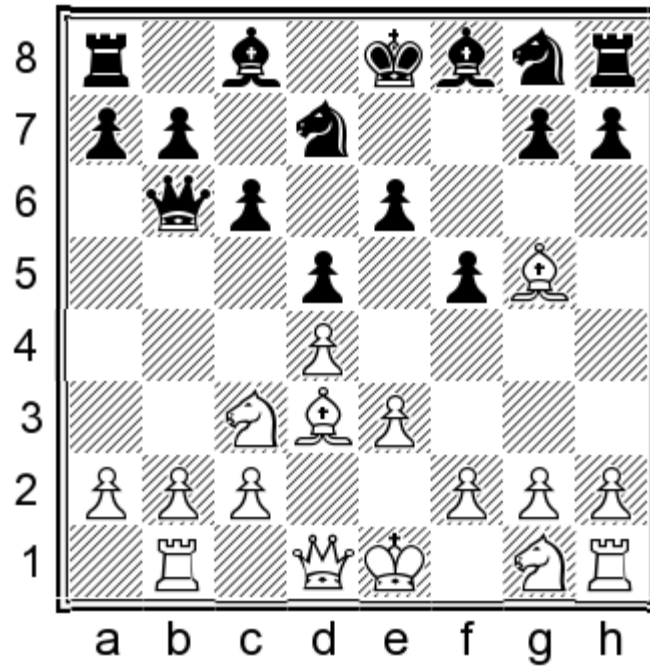
5.♖b1

After 5.a3 Black must on no account take the b2-pawn: 5...♖xb2?? 6.♗a4 and the black queen is lost. We have to make do with continuing development by 5...e6 or 5...♗d7.

5...♗d7

5...e6 comes to the same.

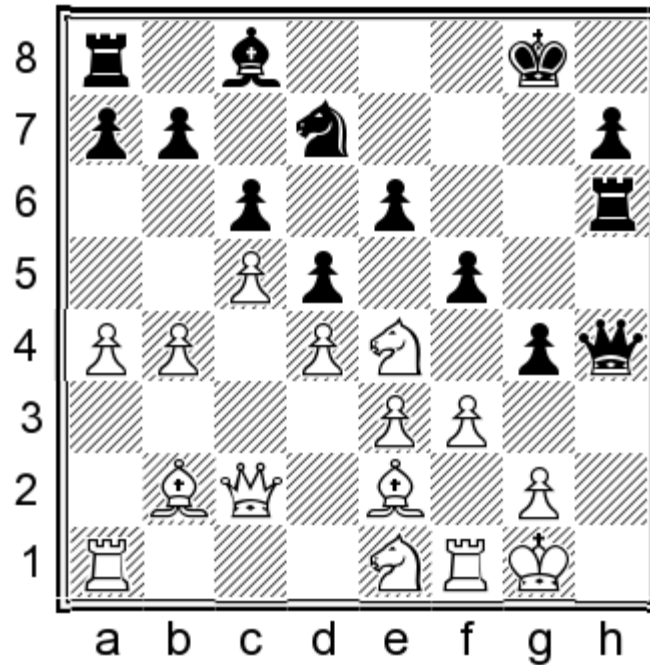
6.♙d3 e6



And after ...Ngf6 Black will have achieved a traditional Stonewall structure. Certainly, the black queen is not in its usual place and will probably have to come back to d8 to get to the kingside, but the c3-knight, which blocks the c-pawn, is not ideally placed either. The disadvantages are therefore balanced for each side, and the chances too.

Your move!

49



The check on h2 or h1 gives nothing for now; how does Black decisively reinforce the attack?

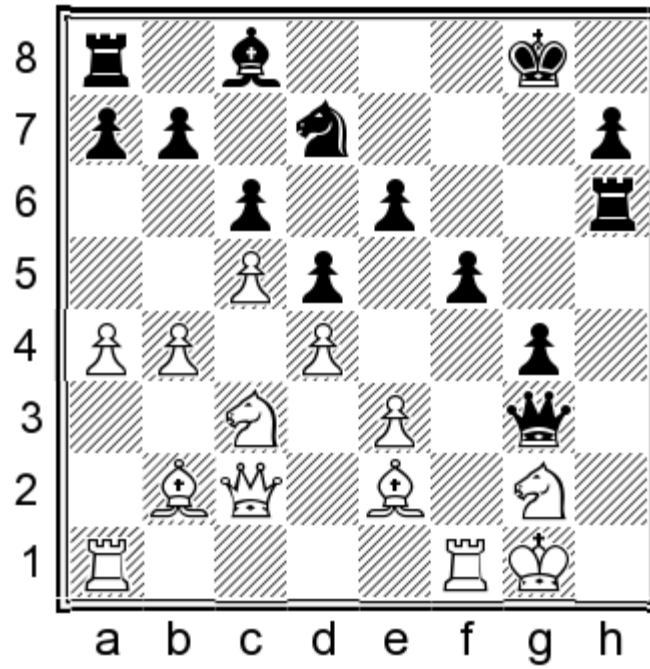
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18...f4!!

The only move that leads to victory.

(See Game 61, **Boban-Wirig**)

50



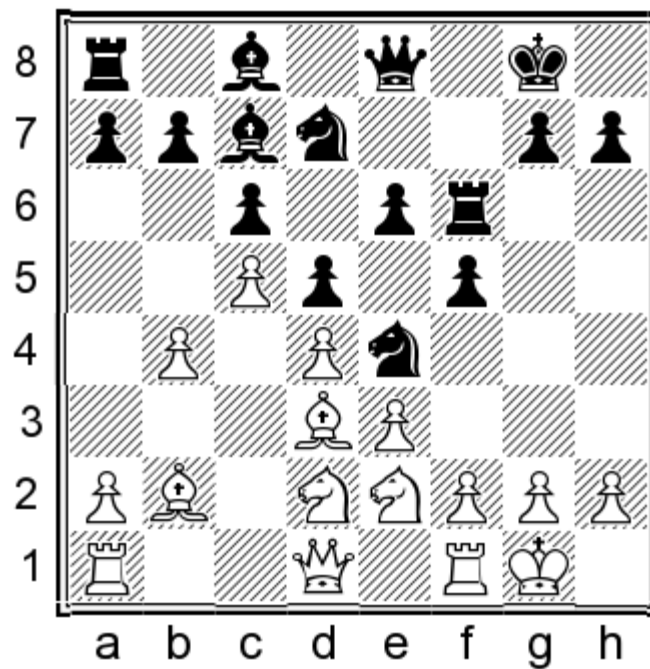
Black to play and mate.

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21... ♖h1+!! 22. ♕xh1 ♚h3+ 23. ♕g1 g3

and mate is unstoppable.

(See Game 61, **Boban-Wirig**)



Black to move. A classic.

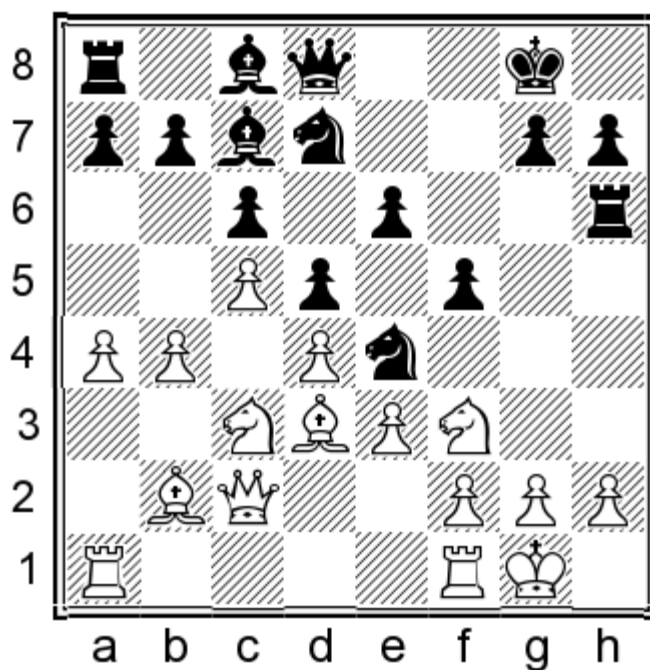
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13...♙xh2+! 14.♔xh2 ♚h5+ 15.♔g1 ♜h6

and mate is forced.

(See Game 66, **Welk-Witkowski**)

52



Compared to the previous position the white knight is on f3 and therefore defends h2. Does this change anything?

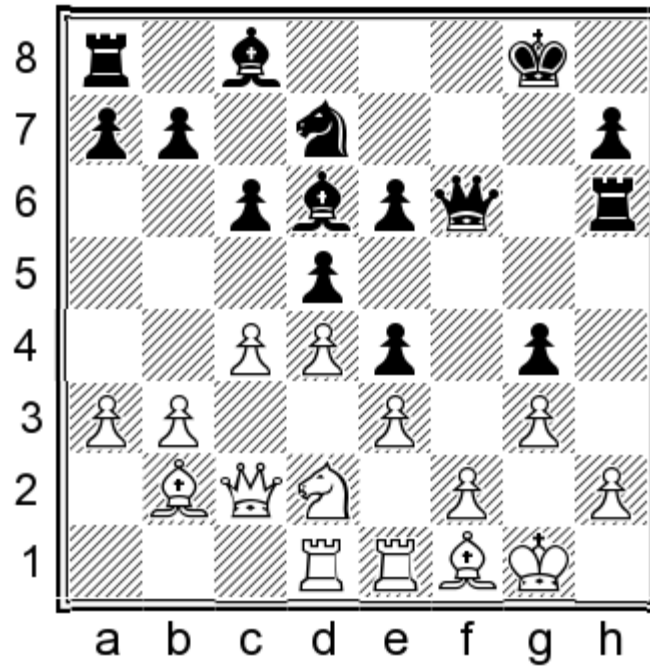
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13...♙xh2+! 14.♘xh2 ♚h4

Black recovers the piece and keeps a very strong attack.

(See Game 67, **Burel-Mathieu**)

53

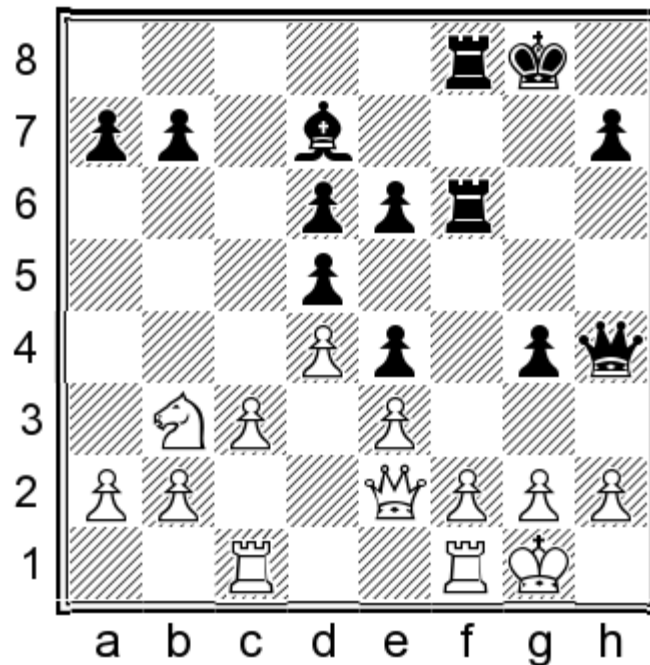


Tartakower's move, which gives Black a very strong attack.

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17...♖xh2!!

(See Game 69, Maróczy-Tartakower)



How does Black exploit the f-file?

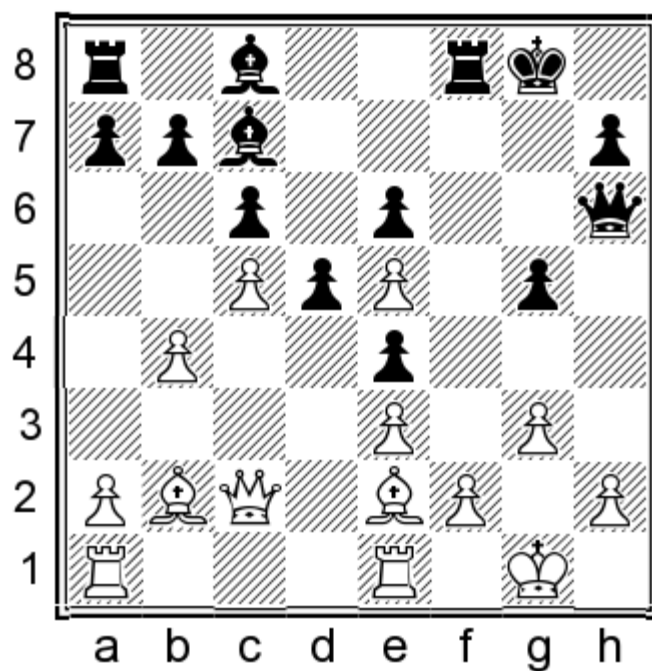
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17...♖f3!!

when White is defenceless against the manoeuvre 18...♖f6-h6 as the f3-rook cannot be captured.

(See Game 73, **Simon-Hornet**)

55



The same question as in the previous position, but not necessarily the same answer.

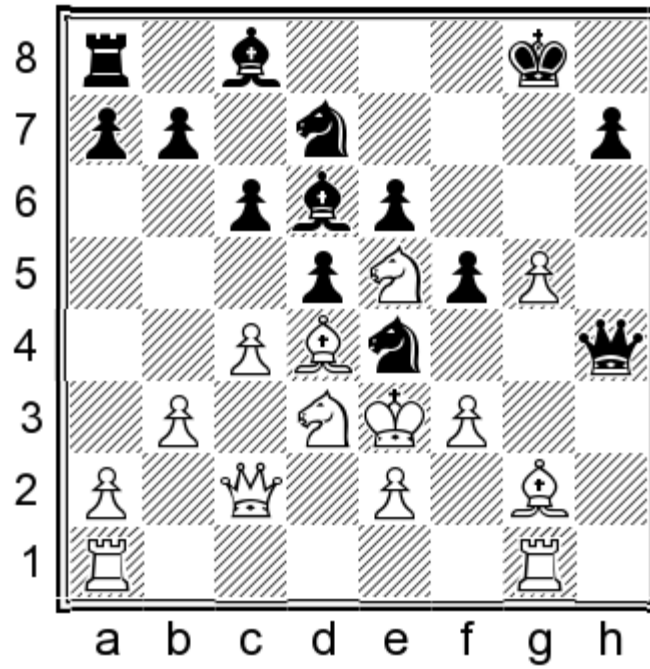
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16...♖xf2!

and 17.♔xf2? loses after 17...♔xh2+ 18.♔f1 ♕d7.

(See Game 74, **Metzger-Quenette**)

56



Black to move. Mate in five moves.

Show/Hide the Solution

23...f4+! 24.♘xf4 ♔f2+ 25.♕d3 ♔xd4+!! 26.♕xd4 ♔c5+ 27.♕d3 ♘xe5#

(See Game 76, **Kotov-Bondarevsky**)

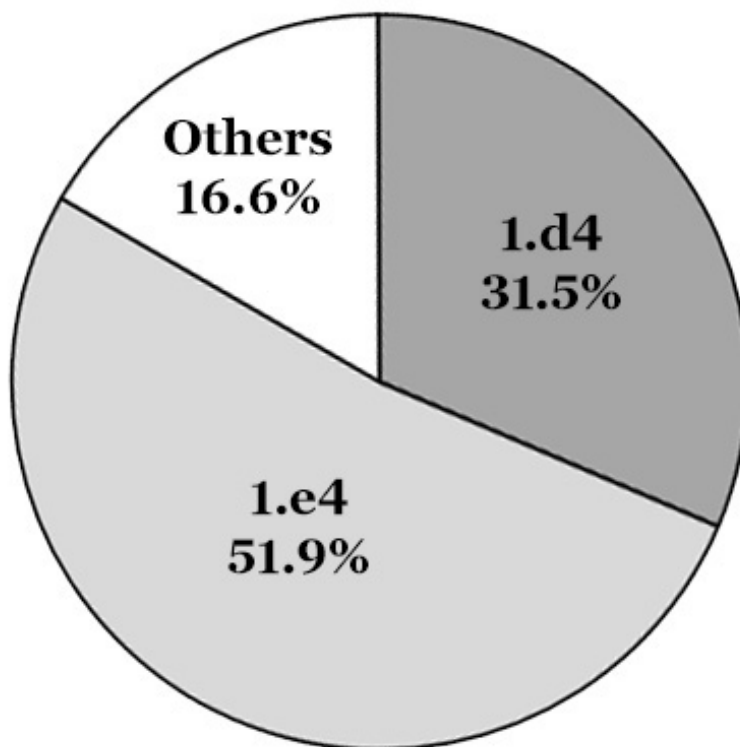
Chapter 10

The English and the Réti

Let us put the chess analysis aside for a moment to open a short digression and look at some quantitative analysis.

Of the 8,133,447 games in Mega Database 2017, 4,217,379 start with 1.e4 and 2,563,836 with 1.d4. If you do a quick subtraction, you will get 1,352,232 games remaining for the other openings.

Since statistics involving seven-digit numbers may be difficult to grasp, let's look at what that gives as a percentage and in a pie chart. This will certainly be more meaningful.



We notice that the share devoted to the so-called Flank Openings (the expression used when White does not open with a central pawn) is relatively small. This is probably even more so for young beginners and amateurs, since the king's pawn openings occupy such a predominant part.

It is therefore normal, when one begins to study openings and tries to create a repertoire with black, to dedicate the main part of our effort to the king's pawn and queen's pawn openings, and this is the guideline of this book. Nevertheless, this is not a reason to completely neglect the other possible white openings.

Let us continue our statistical analysis by examining this 11% of 'other' openings, which are the subject of the last part of this book. Of these 1,352,232 games, 1,125,776 – that is 83%! – start with 1.c4 (the English) or 1.♘f3 (let us call this the Réti Opening, even if this classification will later be refined). It is therefore essential to have a minimum knowledge of these two openings – all the more so because they are both difficult to grasp, as they are both so flexible. The transpositions are countless, in particular after the move 1.♘f3, where almost anything can happen, depending on the black response.

It is undoubtedly for this reason that many club players feel a certain apprehension when facing these two Flank Openings, the English and the Réti. It is so difficult to sink your teeth into them.

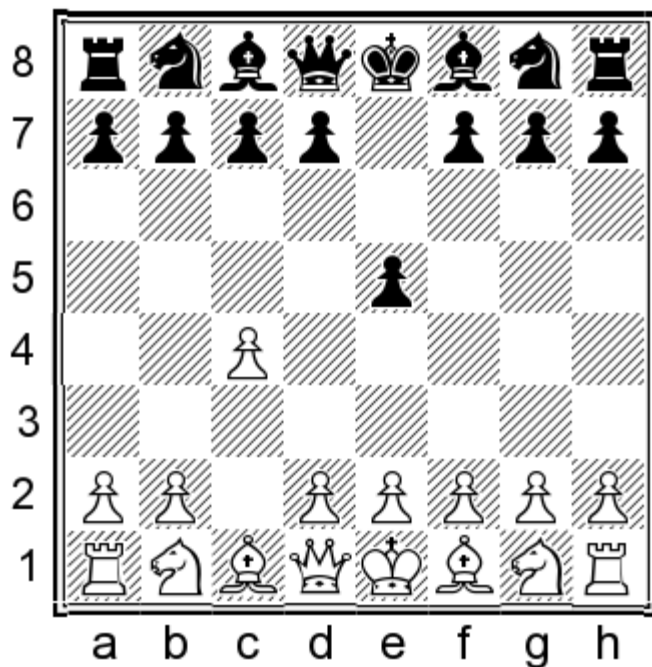
This is good news, nevertheless, for those readers who adopt the repertoire recommended in this book. For the sake of economy (of effort!), we will be demonstrating our own flexibility by choosing a system that we have already worked

on to deal with both these openings. Which means: (almost) no extra work!

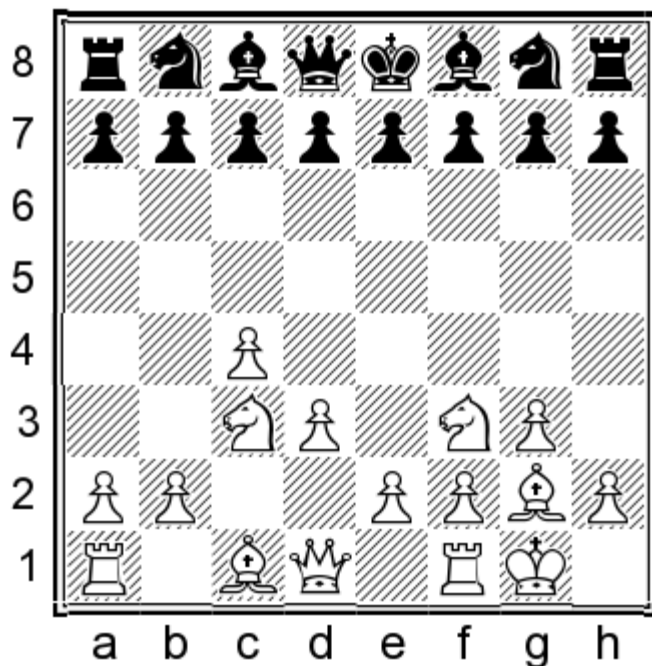
Against the English, I will suggest you play the Grand Prix Attack, which we saw in Volume I with White against the Sicilian.

The majority of amateurs who play the English with white are most often guided by two main motivations:

1) They are themselves Sicilian players with black (1.e4 c5), and they just want to use their favourite opening with reversed colours while enjoying an extra tempo (1.c4 e5). What is good with black cannot be bad with white.



2) In order not to lose too much time studying the opening, they aim to automatically trot out the first seven characteristic moves of the English, which can be played against almost all of Black's replies (1.c4, 2.♘c3, 3.g3, 4.♗g2, 5.d3, 6.♞f3 and 7.0-0) to achieve this set-up with white:

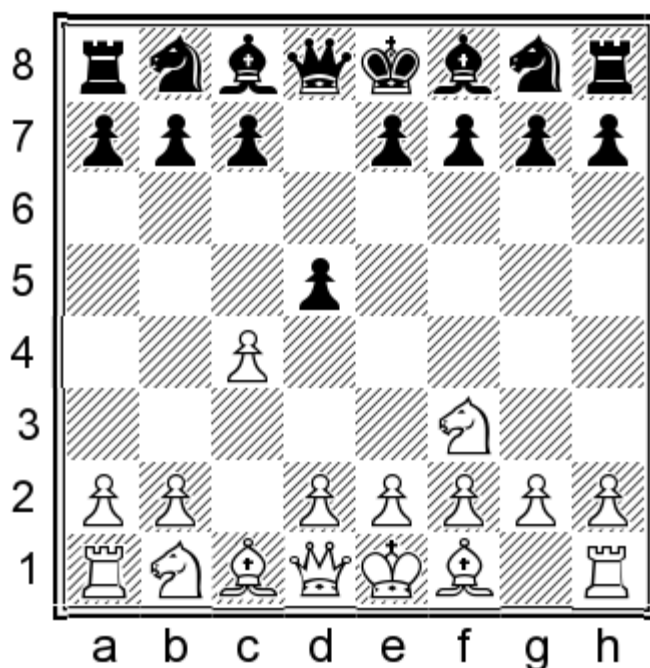


In both cases the Grand Prix Attack with black will be particularly appropriate and effective. Black's tempo less

We cannot review all the Grand Prix Attack themes in detail here, which we have already studied in depth with white. I will therefore refer you to the corresponding chapter of Volume I (no, it is not a pretext to get you to buy it if you have not already done so ☺). It will then suffice to reverse the colours ...

The move 1.♘f3 does not by itself constitute the Réti. Numerous transpositions can occur, depending on the black and white responses. For example, 1...c5 2.e4 will give a Sicilian; 1...♘f6 2.c4 an English, or even possibly any Queen's Pawn Opening after 2.d4; 1...d5 2.d4 may transpose into a Queen's Gambit. And this is far from being exhaustive.

The ‘pure’ Réti actually occurs after the moves 1.♘f3 d5 (the most natural central reaction, which will be recommended in our repertoire) 2.c4, as long as White does not play d2-d4 at an early stage of the game, thus transposing the game back into Queen’s Gambit positions.



Against the Réti Opening – just as against the English Opening – we will adopt (and also adapt!) a system that is already familiar to us. And this time we don't even need to dive back into the previous volume and reverse the colours, as it will suffice to flip back a few pages and return to the previous chapter. Yes indeed, we can use the Stonewall. Our usual 'wall of stone' will just require moving a small brick, since normally in the Réti White will not have played the move d2-d4. And if by chance White plays this move at some point during the opening, the transposition to the Stonewall would be complete.

For now, we will start by looking at the English Opening, and thus with the Grand Prix Attack (but this time with black!). For the record, the Grand Prix Attack was developed in the 1980s by several young English masters to fight against the Sicilian Defence with the white pieces. I wonder if they had any idea back then that this attack, which is nowadays very popular, could also be used against their ‘own’ opening (the English!)?

We are heading for some beautiful attacking games, just like those we saw in Volume I. *Let's go and have fun!*

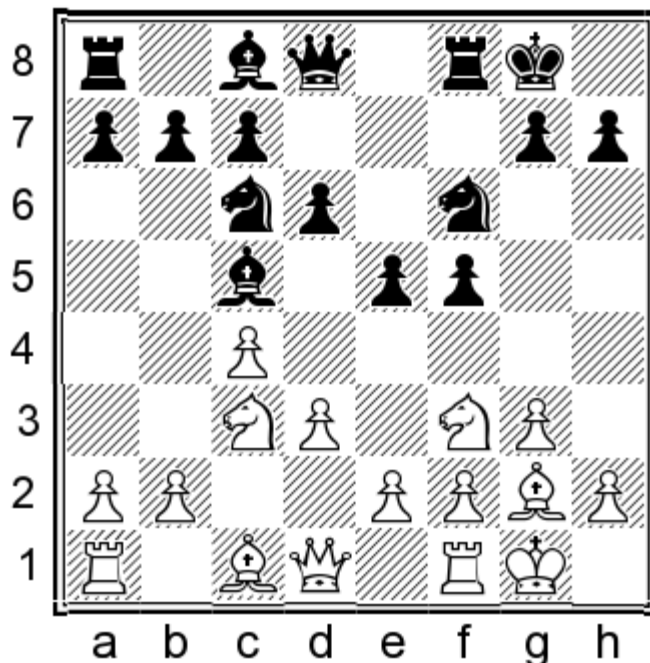
Game 78

Viktor Lehoczki 2090

Attila Piróth 2245

Hungary tt 1996

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♗g2 f5 4.d3 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♗c5 6.♙f3 0-0 7.0-0 d6



White has rolled out the characteristic first seven moves evoked in the introduction. And we get exactly the same position that we studied in Game 24 of the first volume, but with reversed colours. White's extra tempo is not of great importance – we are not in the presence of an opposite-side castling attack where every tempo counts.

8.♗b1 f4!

A thematic move in the Grand Prix Attack, to open both the diagonal for the ♗c8 and the f-file.

8...♖e8 immediately, to involve the queen on h5, was also possible.

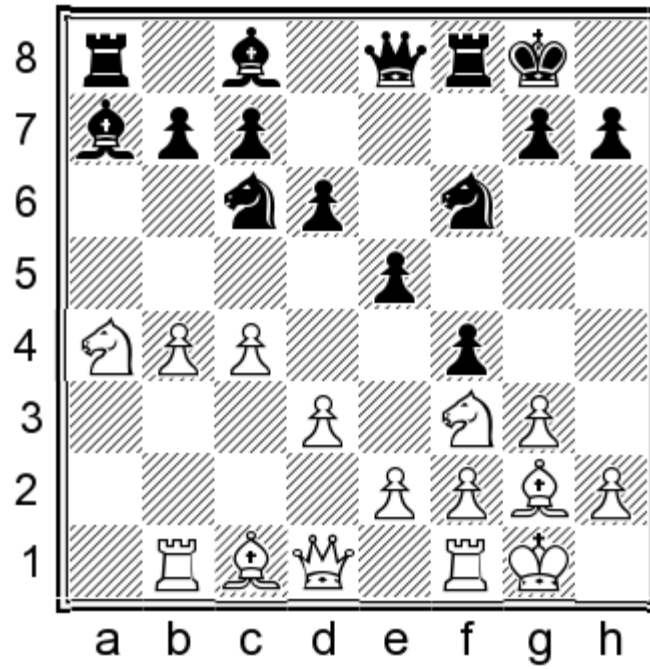
9.a3

9.gxf4?! was too weakening for the kingside: 9...♖e8! (we do not take back on f4 as we must always have a pawn on e5) 10.fxe5 dxe5, and after ...♖h5, ...♗h3 and ...♘g4, with the threat of the traditional exchange sacrifice on f3, Black will have a strong attack and most certainly good compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

9...a5

Black could no doubt dispense with this move and start his attack immediately by 9...♖e8.

10.♘a4 ♗a7 11.b4 axb4 12.axb4 ♖e8



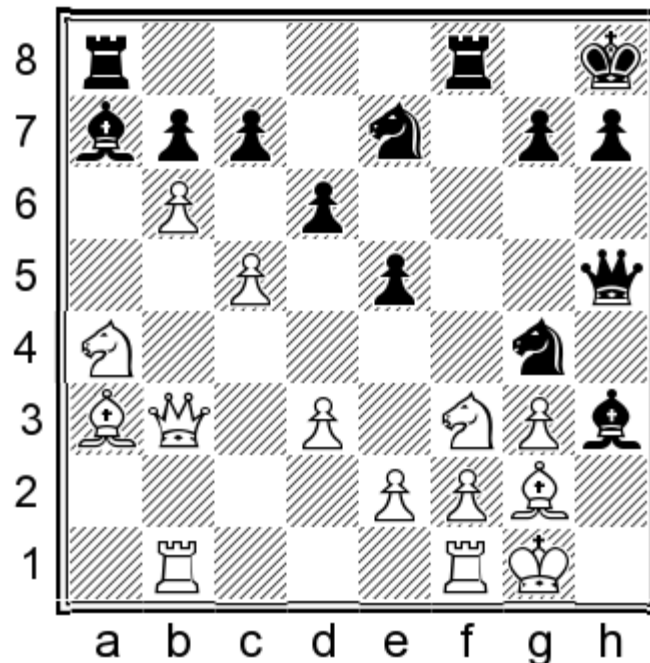
The black queen heads towards the theatre of operations: the kingside.

13.b5 ♖e7 14.♗b3

White is obliged to find quick counterplay on the queenside immediately and, above all, to close the diagonal for the ♗a7, which is much too strong.

A) 14.b6 immediately allows 14...♕d7, which attacks the a4-knight;

B) 14.♕a3? is much too slow: 14...♗h5 15.♗b3 fxg3 16.hxg3 (White cannot recapture with the f-pawn because of the a7-bishop) 16...♕h3! (the classic twist in the Grand Prix Attack) 17.c5+ ♖h8 18.b6 ♗g4!!.



The Grand Prix Attack in all its splendour! We studied many examples in the chapter devoted to the Sicilian in the first volume. Of course the colours are reversed here, but the tactical themes stay the same. After the text move White is defenceless against the exchange sacrifice on f3 which will eliminate the protector of his kingside, and, more precisely, of the h2-square. A possible conclusion: 19.bxa7 (there is nothing to do anyway) 19...♙xg2 20.♙xg2 ♖xf3! 21.♙xf3 ♜f8+ 22.♙e4 ♜f5#.

14...fxg3 15.hxg3 ♜h5 16.b6

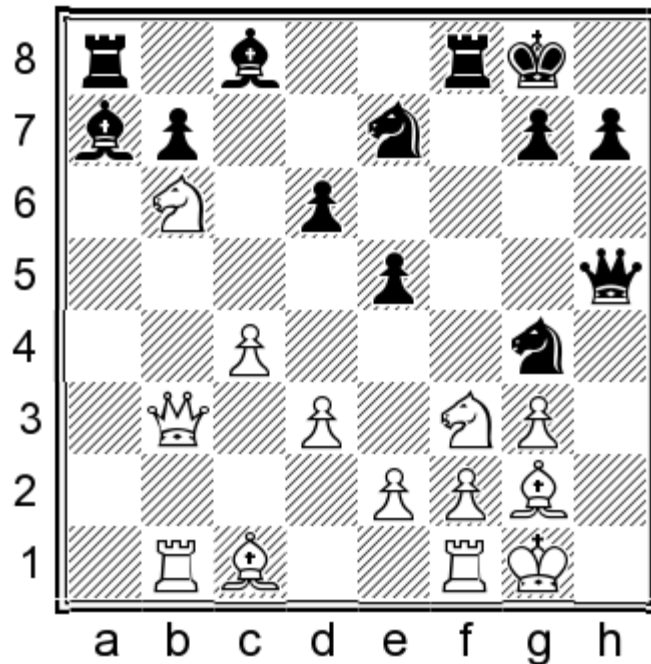
This diagonal must be closed at all costs.

16.c5+ ♙h8 17.b6 ♘g4! 18.♞e1 (18.bxa7? ♞xf3! and White gets mated) 18...cxb6 19.cxb6 ♙b8 and Black keeps excellent attacking possibilities against the white king without having had to sacrifice anything at all.

16...cxb6 17.♘xb6

17.c5+ ♙h8 18.cxb6 ♘g4! 19.bxa7? ♞xf3! and White will be mated.

17...♘g4!



With once again the classic threat of 18...♞xf3!.

18.♞d1

To give the white king an escape square on f1.

18.♘xa8?? ♞xf3!-+.

18...♘f5! 19.♞c2?

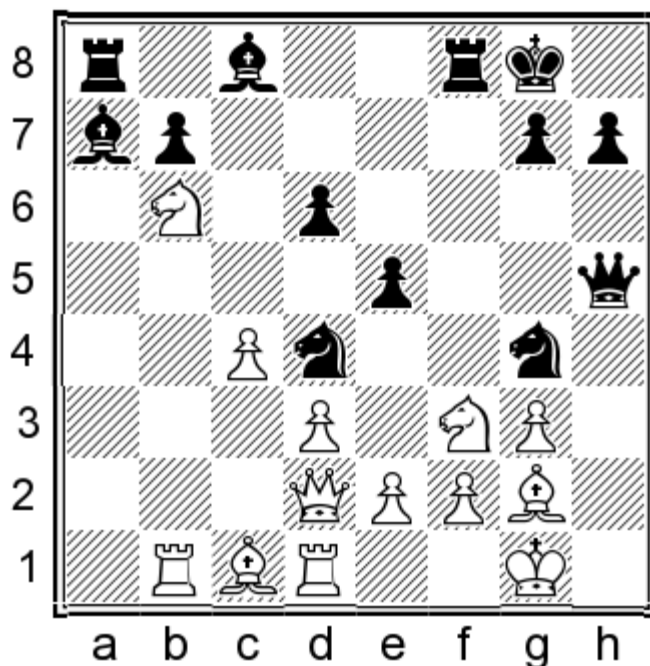
A) The rook was still safe: 19.♘xa8?? ♙xf2+ 20.♙f1 ♘xg3#;

B) 19.♙b2 was also unsatisfactory: 19...♙e6!, to prevent the discovered check which would close the important a7-bishop's diagonal. White is defenceless against the capture on g3. An example: 20.♞a1 (what else? Black's answer would be the same for most white moves anyway) 20...♘xg3! 21.fxg3 ♞xf3! 22.exf3 ♜h2+ 23.♙f1 ♜f8! 24.♞d2 ♘e3+

25.♔e1 ♖g1+ 26.♔e2 ♜xg2+ 27.♔xe3 ♜xf3#.

19.c5+ was the only move that offered White some chances to defend, even though Black still has a very strong attack after 19...♗h8 as 20.♘xa8 is not possible: 20...♞d4 21.♞a2 (21.♞xd4 ♜h2+ 22.♔f1 ♝xf2+-) 21...♙xc5!.

19...♞d4 20.♞d2



20...♝xf3!

Classic, although the conclusion is going to be somewhat different from the usual patterns seen in our study of the Grand Prix Attack against the Sicilian.

21.exf3 ♞h2!

21...♞h2+? 22.♔f1 brought nothing decisive.

22.♞e3 ♞dxf3+ 23.♙xf3 ♞xf3+ 24.♔f1 ♞d4

Threatening mate on h1.

25.♔g2

25.♔e1 ♞c2+-+.

25...♙h3+

White resigned.

It's mate after 26.♔g1 (26.♔h1 ♞f3! comes to the same thing) 26...♞f3+ 27.♔h1 ♙f1#.

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.g3 f5 4.d3 ♘f6 5.♙g2 ♙c5 6.♘f3 d6 7.0-0 0-0

The same position as in the previous game.

8.♙d2 ♔e8!

The signal to attack! The queen heads towards h5.

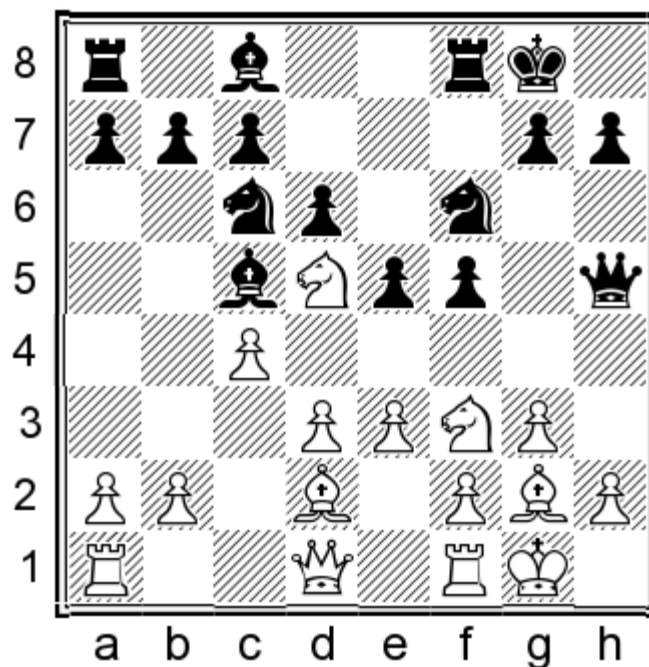
8...f4!? was possible immediately.

9.e3

Quite logically, White tries to close the c5-bishop's dangerous diagonal. We saw in the previous game the dangers that could arise when this diagonal is open and the c5-bishop can participate in the attack.

9...♔h5 10.♘d5

Defend the c7-pawn or not? This is an important issue in the Grand Prix Attack, and one that is often asked of White in the Sicilian when it is he who plays the attack (defend the c2-pawn, or not, when Black plays ...♘d4 – see the Games 24, 26 and 27 from the first volume on this subject).



10...f4!?

As we have already mentioned in the previous game, the move ...f5-f4 (the equivalent of f4-f5 when it is White who plays the Grand Prix Attack) is a thematic move in this attacking scheme, often at the price of the f-pawn itself, but also sometimes the c7-pawn, and even the a8-rook.

If Black wants to play more cautiously he can defend the c7-pawn by retreating his bishop to b6 or even exchanging on d5.

11.d4

Taking on c7 was obviously the critical move, but it was not without danger: 11.♘xc7 fxg3! (Black can afford to leave the rook hanging, but he can also play the more careful 11...♖b8 as in Game 27 from Volume I) and now:

A) 12.♘xa8 gxf2+ 13.♖xf2 ♘g4 14.♖f1 ♕xe3+ 15.♕xe3 (15.♖h1?? ♖xf3–+) 15...♘xe3 16.♗e2 ♘xg2! 17.♗xg2 ♕h3 18.♗g5 ♗xg5+ 19.♘g5 ♕xf1 20.♖xf1 ♖xa8 and finally Black has an extra pawn;

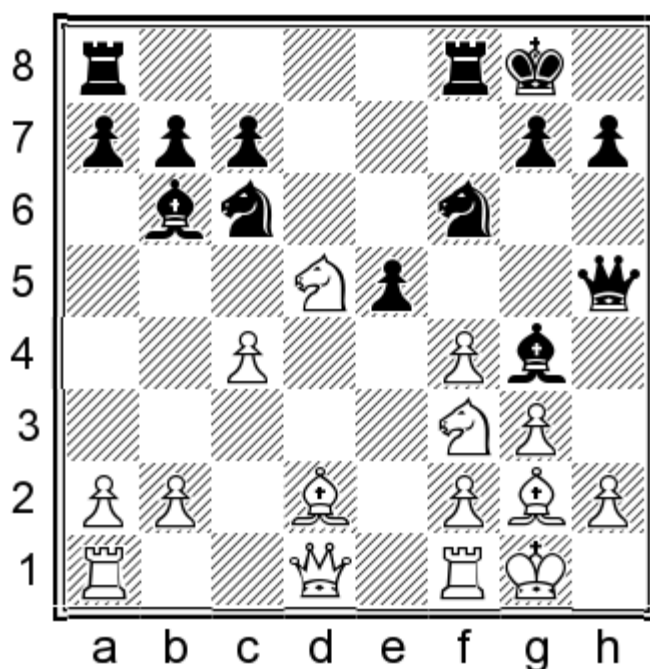
B) 12.hxg3? – it is too risky to open the h-file when this is not forced (in other words, when the f2-pawn is not pinned). 12...♕g4! – an unusual twist, but relatively common in the Grand Prix Attack that we had studied in Volume I: Black profits from the pin of the ♘f3. 13.♘xa8? e4! (a clearance sacrifice!) 14.dxe4 ♘e5 and Black is winning;

C) 12.fxg3 ♖b8 (more reasonable than leaving the a8-rook *en prise*). After 12...♖b8 Black has good compensation for the sacrificed pawn, with ideas such as ...♕h3 and then ...♘g4, or ...♕g4 followed by ...e5-e4 and ...♘e5.

11...♕b6?!

11...exd4 12.♘xf4 ♗f5 13.exd4 ♘xd4 14.♘xd4 ♕xd4 gives an approximately equal position.

12.dxe5 dxe5 13.exf4 ♕g4

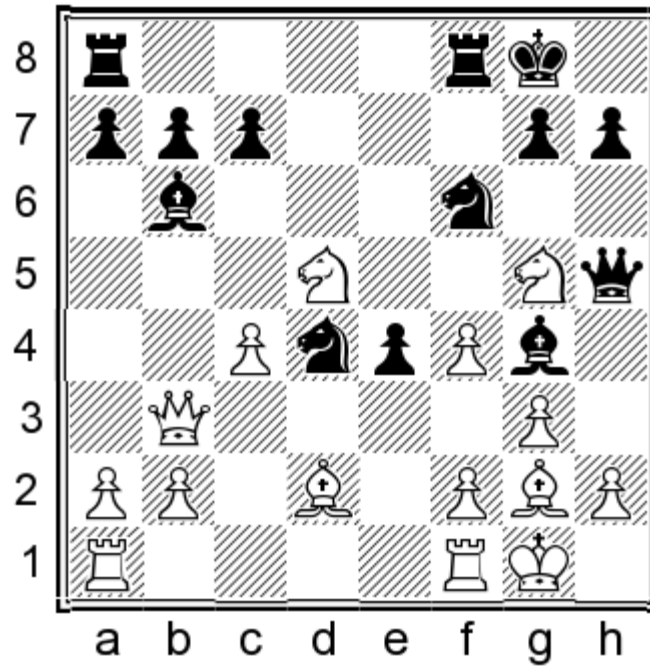


14.♗b3?

White panics when faced with the threat of 14...♘d4, and logically seeks to unpin the f3-knight.

He had to play 14.h3!. This cold-blooded move would have refuted Black's overenthusiastic attack. But it must be admitted that it was not an easy move to play (and above all to find) at the board. 14...♕xh3 15.♘xe5 ♗xd1 16.♖axd1 ♕xg2 17.♖xg2 ♘xd5 18.cxd5 ♘d4. The attack has disappeared, and Black no longer has any compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

14...e4 15.♘g5 ♘d4



Now Black has some dangerous threats; in particular the f3-square is in his sights.

16. ♖a4 ♗f3

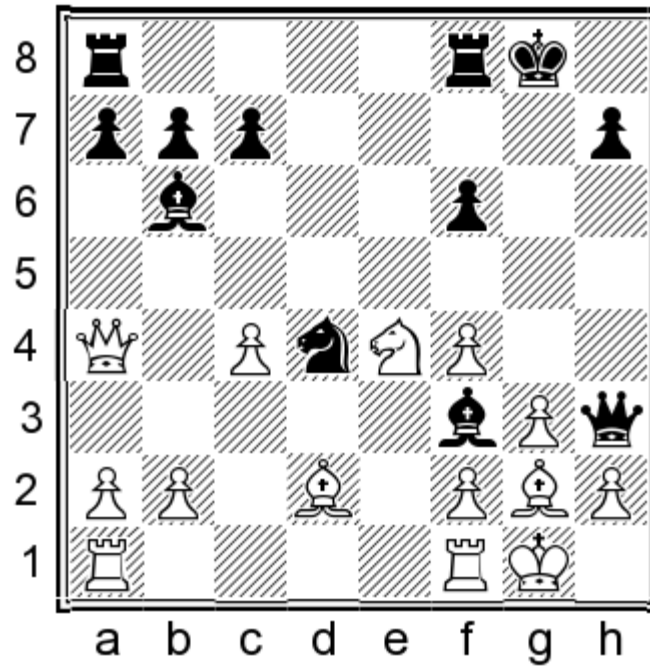
16... ♗xd5! was even stronger: 17. cxd5 h6 18. ♗e6 ♗f3+ 19. ♗xf3 ♗xf3 20. h4 ♖g4 21. ♗h2 ♖f5! with the powerful threat of 22... ♖h5 and 23... ♖xh4! Black has a decisive attack.

17. ♗xf6+ gxf6 18. ♗xe4??

18. ♗xf3 exf3 19. c5 ♗e2+ (19... ♗xc5? 20. ♖c4+ ♗h8 21. ♖xc5±) 20. ♗h1 left White some small chances to survive.

18... ♗xg2

18... ♖h3!! was a more aesthetic conclusion:



analysis diagram

19. ♕xh3 ♖e2#.

19. ♖xg2 ♜f3+

White resigned.

After 20. ♖g1 it's mate by 20... ♖e2#, and if 20. ♖h3 ♜xe4 Black has an extra piece plus an attack.

Game 80

Daniel Rittie 1960

Valentin Battistella 1509

Nancy 2011

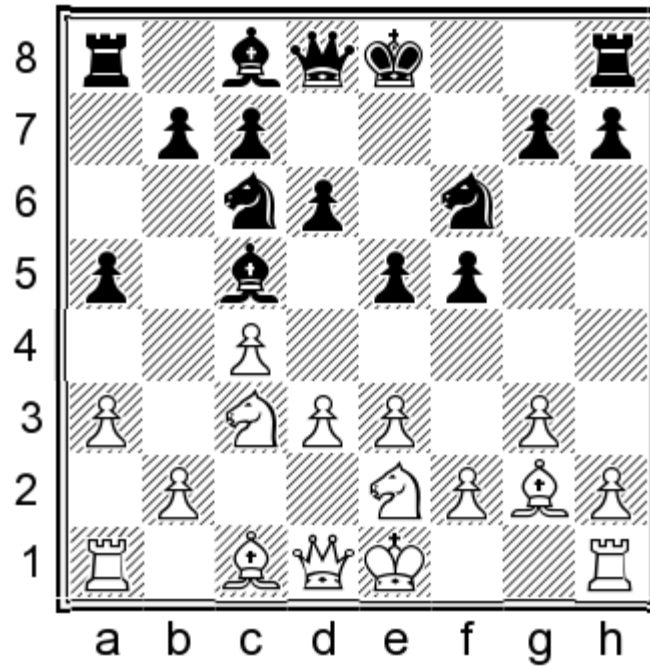
1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♖c6 3. ♕g2 ♗c5 4. ♖c3 f5 5.d3 d6 6.e3 ♖f6 7.a3 a5

A logical and natural move, since it prevents b2-b4, but very often Black can do without it.

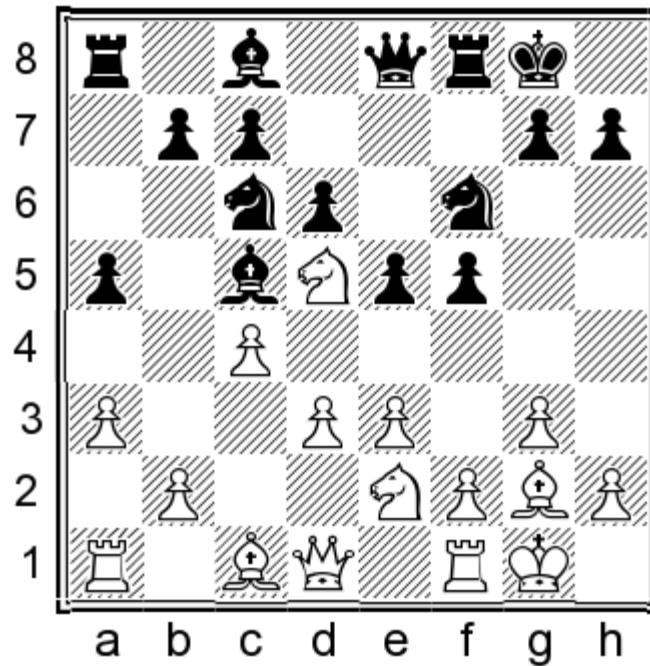
7...0-0 was therefore possible.

8. ♖ge2

We saw in Volume I (with reversed colours) that this set-up with e2-e3 and the knight on e2 to counter the Grand Prix Attack was more solid than that with the knight on f3.



8...0-0 9.0-0 ♔e8 10.♘d5



Again, the issue of the protection of the c7-pawn arises. If Black had not played 7...a5 he could have retreated the bishop to b6 to protect it, but with the black pawn on a5 the withdrawal of the bishop to b6 would no longer be very suitable. After an exchange on b6 Black would then be forced to take back with the c-pawn, and his pawn structure would be damaged.

10...♗h5!?

Black finally decides to sacrifice the c7-pawn...

11.♘xc7 f4?!

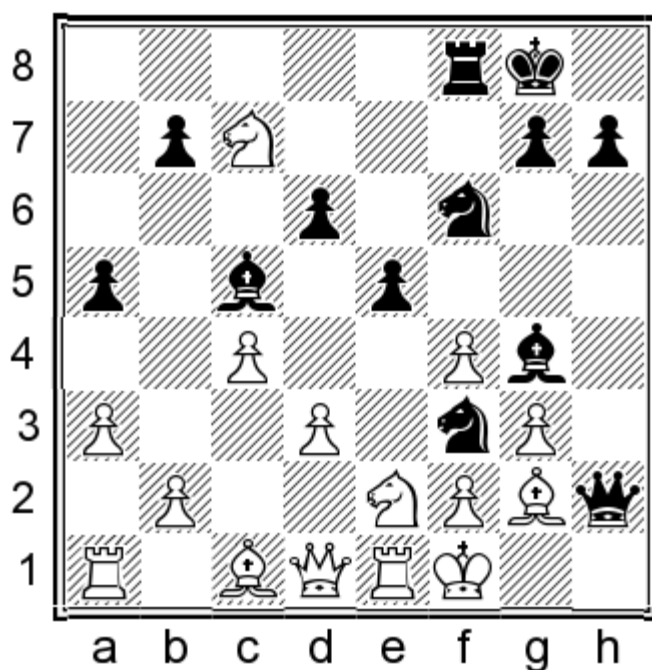
...and the a8-rook. A rather bold decision, and too ambitious in this position. Here it was wiser to play the cautious 11...♖b8.

12.exf4?

Despite his higher rating, White is not sure of himself. He could 'cash in': 12.♘xa8! f3 (12...fxg3 gives nothing because of 13.♘xg3; the same for 12...♗h3 this time because of 13.♘xf4!) 13.♙xf3 ♔xf3 14.♘c3 ♔xd1 15.♖xd1 ♗g4 16.♘c7 ♗xd1 17.♘xd1+-. White has two extra pawns and he should have no trouble realizing his advantage.

12...♗h3?!

12...♗g4! would have crowned Black's fearlessness. The pin of the e2-knight is a recurring theme in the Grand Prix Attack (I again refer readers to the chapter devoted to it in Volume I): 13.♖e1 ♘d4 14.♕f1 ♔xh2 (White is helpless) 15.♘xa8 ♘f3! with a pretty threat against which there is no defence: 16.♘c7



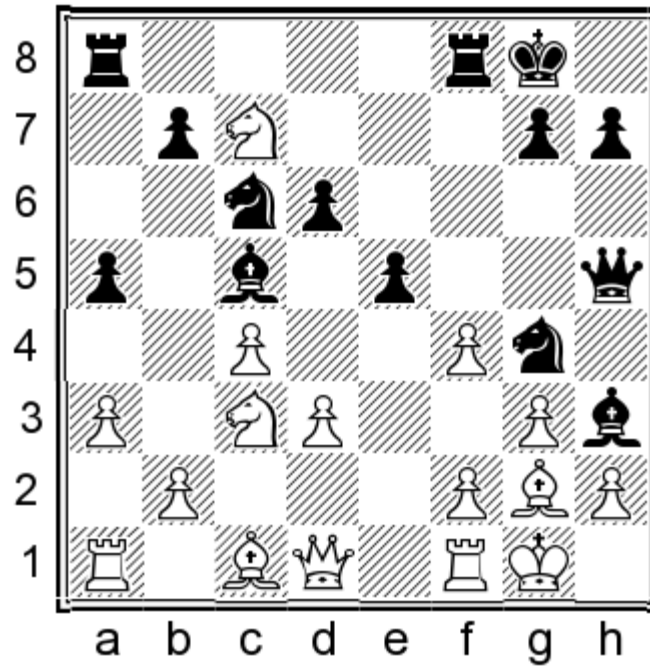
analysis diagram

16...♔g1+!! 17.♘xg1 ♘h2#.

13.♘c3

13.♘xa8? was too dangerous this time because of 13...♗g4! 14.♖e1 ♘d4 with a very strong initiative.

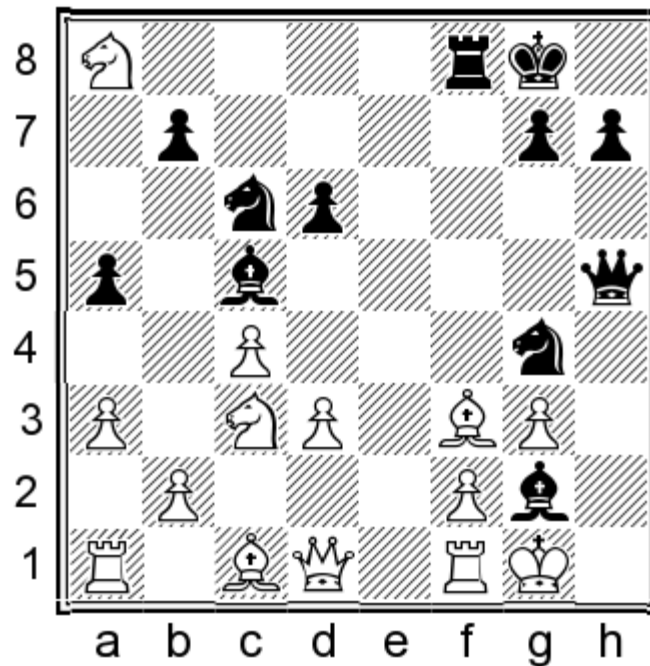
13...♗g4!



The classic layout of the pieces in the Grand Prix Attack, which we have already seen in Game 78. Not surprisingly, Black has a winning attack. He simply threatens the exchange on g2, followed by the capture on h2.

14. ♖f3

Even though it put up more resistance, the move 14. ♕f3 was not sufficient because of 14... exf4 15. ♘xa8 (15. ♕xf4 g5 16. ♕d2 ♘ce5 17. ♕d5+ ♔h8 and White will not be able to ward off all the threats) 15... fxg3 16. hxg3 ♕g2!-+.



analysis diagram

A very typical conclusion for the Grand Prix Attack, and which was the theme of Game 23 in Volume 1 (with colours reversed).

14.♔d5+ ♕h8 15.♖xa8 ♙xf1 16.♕xf1 ♙xf2 also gives Black a decisive attack after the opening of the f-file and the capture of the h2-pawn.

14...♖d4 15.♚d5+ ♕h8?

15...♖f7! was winning: 16.♙xh3 (16.♖xa8?? ♙xg2 17.♚xg2 ♖f3+!! 18.♕h1 ♖gxh2--+) 16...♚xh3 17.♚g2 ♚xg2+ 18.♕xg2 ♖xc7--+. That caps it all: Black eventually captures the white knight, which never had the time to consume the a8-rook.

16.♙xh3 ♚xh3 17.♚g2

We notice the difference with the variation in the note to Black's 15th move: after the exchange of queens the c7-knight is not *en prise* to the black rook.

17...♖f3+

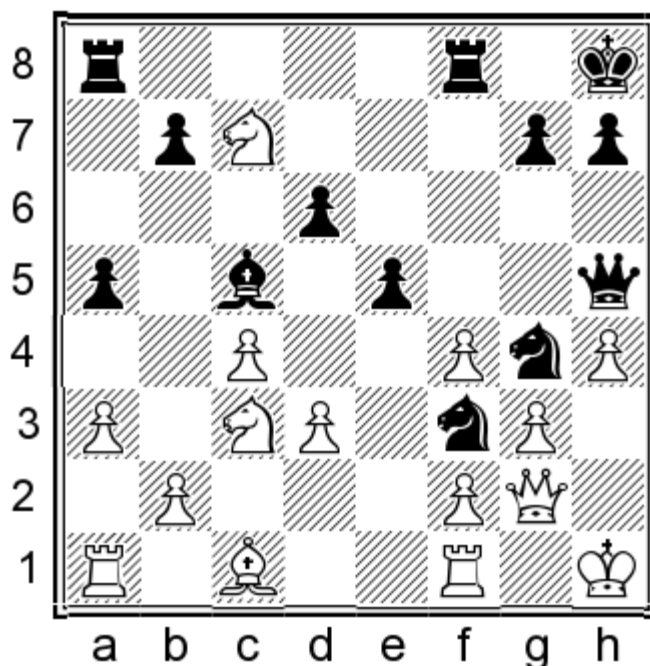
After 17...♚xg2+ 18.♕xg2 ♖ac8 19.♖7d5 White has two extra pawns (the c7-pawn and the f-pawn!), and Black has no compensation.

18.♕h1 ♚h5

Black retains a strong initiative and the white position is not easy to defend, even for a player who has 450 Elo points more than his opponent.

19.h4?

He had to play 19.h3. After 19...♖e1 20.♖xe1 ♖xf2+ 21.♕h2 (21.♕g1? exf4 22.♙xf4 ♖xh3+ 23.♕h1 ♖xf4+--+) 21...♖g4+ 22.♕h1 ♖f2+ the game would have ended in a perpetual check.



19...♖xh4?

Black cracks. Too bad (for him and for the Grand Prix Attack) because 19...exf4! would once again have given him a

decisive attack: 20.♙xf4 (20.♖xf3 fxg3 21.♖xg3 ♖f3!! 22.♖xf3 ♖xh4+ 23.♔g2 ♖h2#; 20.♜xa8 ♜xf2+ 21.♖xf2 fxg3 22.♖xg3 ♙xf2 23.♖xf2 ♖g4!-+) 20...♖xf4!! 21.♜xa8 (21.gxf4 ♖xh4+--+) 21...♜xh4! 22.♖h3 ♖f5. Black has too many threats. The capture on h4, for example, is neither possible with the pawn nor with the queen, because of 23...♜xf2+.

Admittedly, all these tactical variations are certainly not easy to find at the board, but they clearly show the enormous tactical potential of the Grand Prix Attack. Furthermore, it must be said that these defensive moves will undoubtedly be even harder for the first player to find.

20.♖h3!

The move that saves White. The h4-knight is pinned and can thus be captured. Not forgetting the a8-rook, which has been hanging since move 11.

20...♖f5 21.♖xh4 ♖f6 22.♔g2 ♖h6 23.♖g5 ♖h2+ 24.♔g1

Black resigned.

If he does not want to lose the a8-rook, which will ultimately have remained *en prise* for 12 moves(!), Black must exchange queens. He does not then have enough compensation for the piece.

Game 81

Vincent Moret

Krzysztof Pytel 2400

Reims 2004

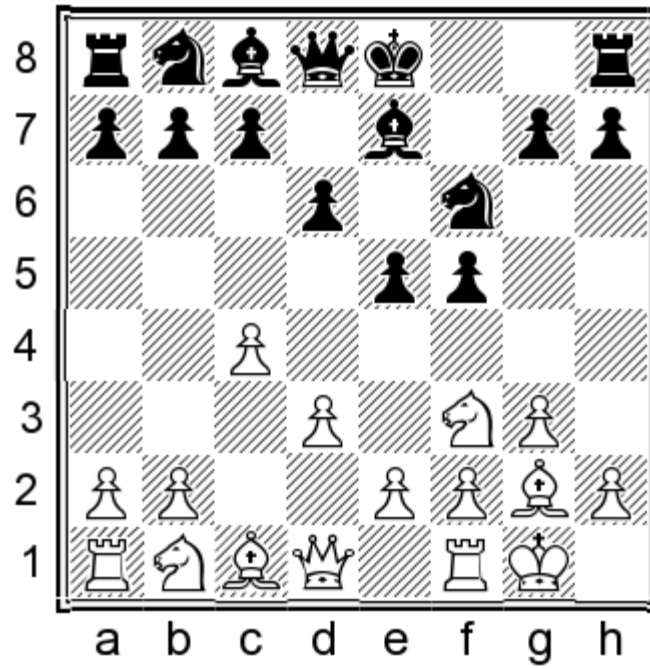
1.♜f3 d6

To be consistent with our repertoire I advise playing the move 1...d7-d5 here, with an eventual transposition into the Stonewall. We will see this in the next game, but for now we will continue with the theme of the Grand Prix Attack. I have included this game because, in my opinion, it perfectly illustrates the fluency of the Grand Prix Attack against the automatic first seven moves of the English Opening, even without the bishop on c5.

2.g3

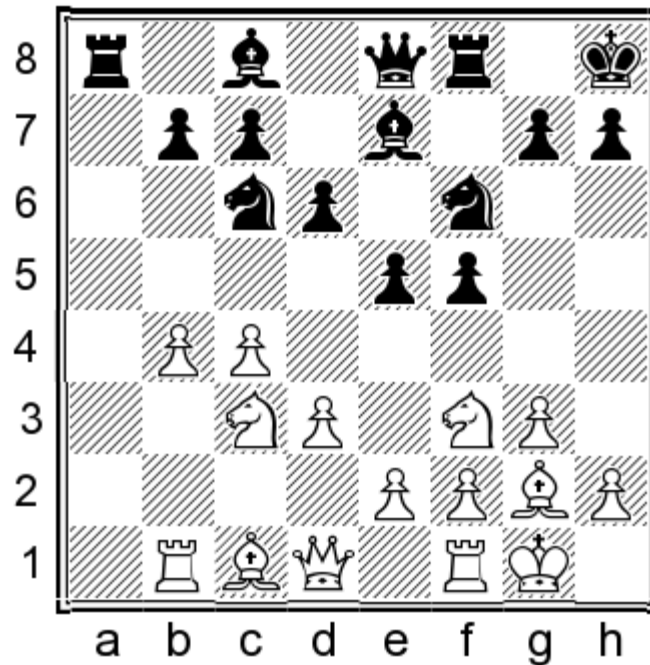
2.d4 would have prevented the next black move and would have transposed into a totally different opening that we could not even name just yet (a King's Indian, a Leningrad Dutch or even an Old Indian are all still possible).

2...e5 3.d3 f5 4.♙g2 ♜f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.c4



There we go – after a rather peculiar move order the game has transposed back into an English. Black will therefore be able to adopt the Grand Prix Attack, even with the bishop enclosed on e7. We have seen in Volume I that this bishop is not indispensable for the attack. I particularly refer you to Game 23 of Volume I, which was an excellent example of a Grand Prix Attack with a white bishop on e2 (the equivalent of the bishop on e7 when colours are reversed) that played no part in the entire game.

6...♘c6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.♙b1 a5 9.a3 ♕h8 10.b4 axb4 11.axb4 ♖e8!



The usual ritual: the black queen is heading towards the scene of the Grand Prix Attack.

12.b5 ♖b8

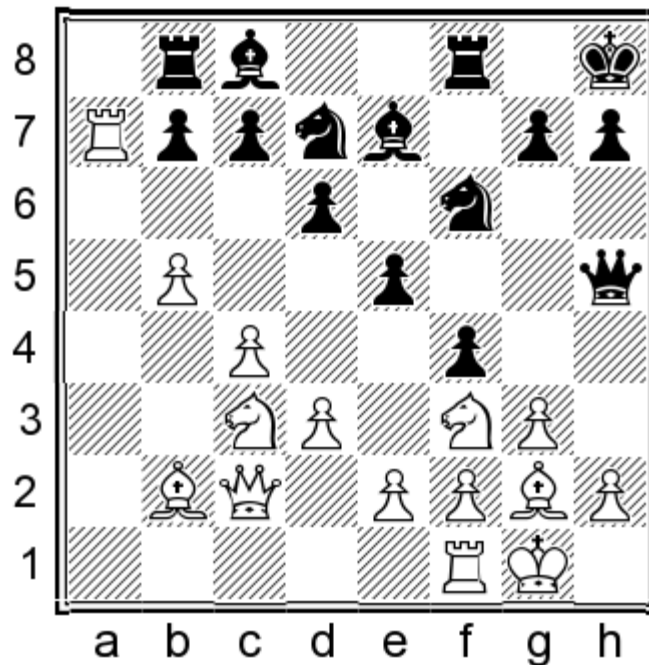
A rather surprising return home, but one which shows that the tempi lost in the Grand Prix Attack (by the attacker!) are

not so important. In this game, for example, Black has *de facto* one tempo fewer (because he has black!), he loses two more of them in the opening by playing ...♖c6-b8, and he locks in his bishop on e7. On top of that, his opponent (yours truly!) was a player of over 2200 Elo, who was not unaware of the Grand Prix Attack, and who was even very well placed to know its dangers. Despite all this, Black will easily get a very strong attack, and yet without White committing any bad blunders (at least I did not get the impression that I made any).

13.♙b2 ♜bd7 14.♚c2 ♜h5 15.♞a1 ♞b8

Black voluntarily abandons the file to his opponent, but this way he continues to defend the important a8-square. To penetrate White will now have to double his rooks.

16.♞a7 f4



Here we go with the Grand Prix Attack! Nevertheless, White is not without resources and is counter-attacking on the queenside.

17.♞fa1 ♜b6

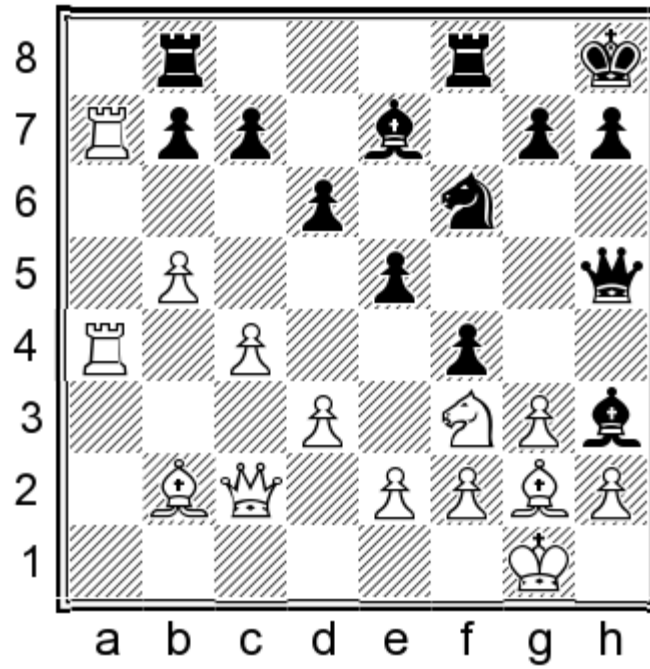
To open the c8-bishop's diagonal and (for the moment) prevent an invasion on a8.

18.♜a4 ♜xa4 19.♞1xa4?

A mistake, but in my defence it was very difficult to foresee – at this moment in time – what exactly would happen. It was the other rook that had to recapture, as it should not stay on the dangerous a7-g1 diagonal.

After 19.♞7xa4! the game remains complicated, with chances for both sides. In any case, the black combination that occurs at move 25 would not then have been decisive.

19...♙h3!



With the classic threat of 20...♘g4 followed by the capture on g3 and a possible exchange sacrifice on f3.

20.♙xh3

I had in mind at this point a defence that will not prove satisfactory.

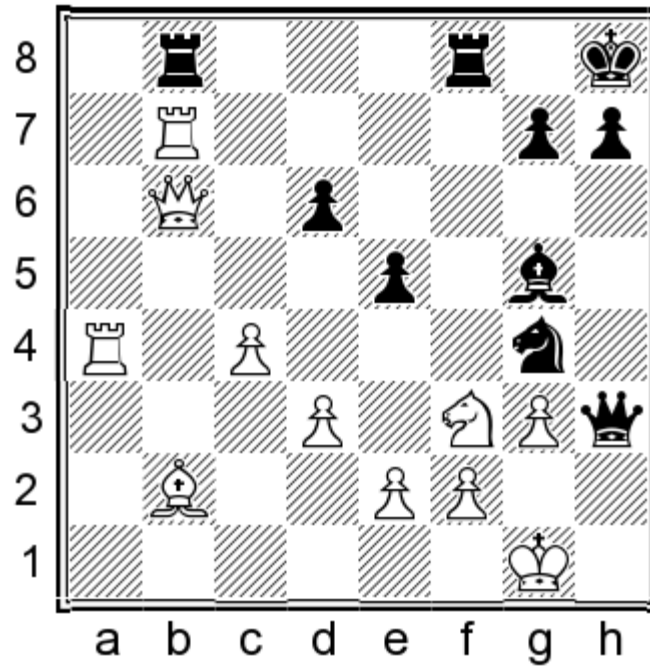
20.♚d1, with the same defensive idea, would bring exactly the same position as that of the game after 20...fxg3 21.hxg3 ♘g4 22.♚f1 ♙xg2 23.♚xg2, but with a tempo less for both sides.

20...♚xh3 21.♚d1

Nothing else works for White:

21.c5? fxg3 22.hxg3 ♘g4 23.♚c4? (23.c6? ♘xf2! 24.♙xf2 ♖xf3+!! 25.♙xf3 [25.exf3 ♚h2+ wins the white queen which is unprotected on c2] 25...♖f8+ 26.♙e4 ♚g2+ 27.♙e3 ♙g5+ and the white king will be mated) 23...h5 (23...♖xf3? 24.♚xg4∞) 24.cxd6 ♖xf3!-+.

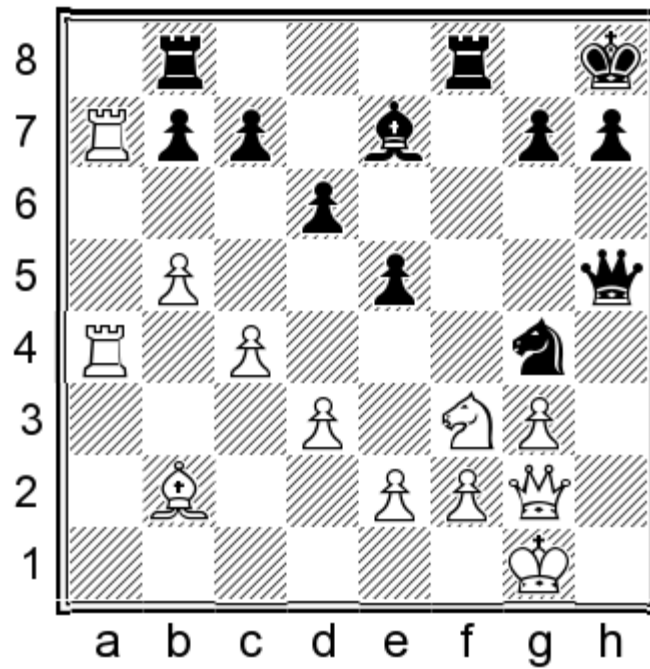
21.b6? fxg3 22.hxg3 cxb6 23.♚b3 ♘g4 24.♚xb6 ♙g5!! 25.♖xb7



analysis diagram

25...♙e3!! The dark-squared bishop gets to the important a7-g1 diagonal with decisive effect. 26.fxe3 ♜xg3+ 27.♔h1 ♞f2#.

21...fxg3 22.hxg3 ♞g4 23.♞f1 ♞h5 24.♞g2



White had placed all his hopes on this defensive structure. The queen replaces the fianchettoed bishop, but the f2-pawn is weak...

24...d5!

The (hammer!) blow that I had not foreseen on the 19th move when I recaptured on a4. The e7-bishop pops out of its box.

25.cxd5

25.e3 e4!–+.

25...♗c5

The dark-squared bishop finally returns to the usual diagonal, and the double attack on the a7-rook and the f2-pawn is decisive.

26.♖xg4 ♜xg4 27.♖a2 e4 28.dxe4 ♜xe4

Black has an extra exchange for just one pawn, and still has the initiative. He is winning, of course. I continued a bit from inertia as it was a team match.

29.♜f1 ♜xd5 30.♜a1 ♞f7 31.♞a4 ♞e8 32.♞g4 ♕f8

The cold-blooded move 32...♕g8! would have avoided the game's problems: 33.♕xg7 (33.♞xg7+ ♞xg7 34.♕xg7 ♞xe2–+) 33...♜d7!–+ with a double attack on the g4-rook and the g7-bishop.

33.♘g5

White has managed to create some threats, but they do not compensate for the exchange deficit. Nevertheless, Black must remain vigilant.

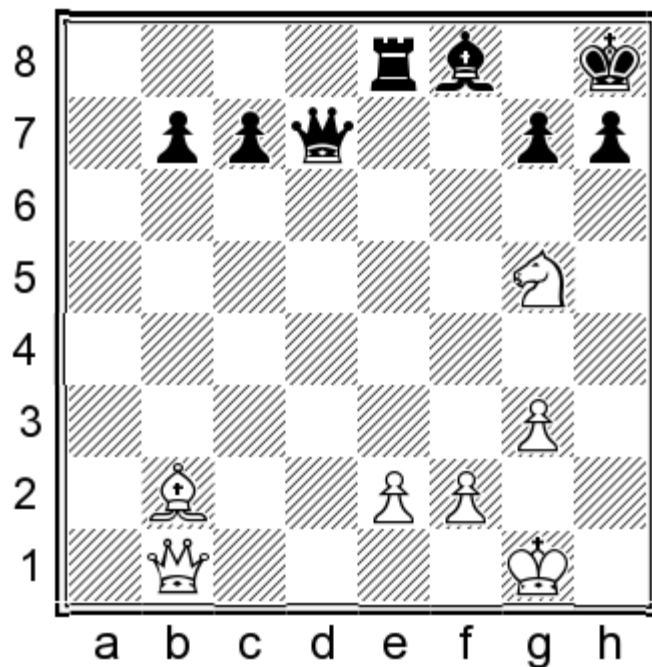
33...♞d7?

33...♞xf2! 34.♕xf2 ♜f5+ 35.♞f4 ♜xg5–+.

34.♞d4 ♜xb5 35.♞xd7 ♜xd7??

Sensing the victory slip out of his grasp, Black cracks completely. He had to play 35...♜xg5 36.♞xc7 when the position is completely equal.

36.♜b1 1–0



Black realizes that he cannot play 36...g6 because the g-pawn is pinned. Mate is unstoppable. A fine example of the queen's (very) long-distance power.

Let us now move on to the Réti Opening, and meet our Stonewall set-up again.

Game 82

Raphaël Thiriet 1640

Romarc Mathieu 2030

Nancy 1998

1. Nf3

A flexible move that can transpose into very many openings depending on the black reply.

1...d5

The most natural central reaction, which in any case is consistent with our repertoire (play 1...d5 against most white moves!).

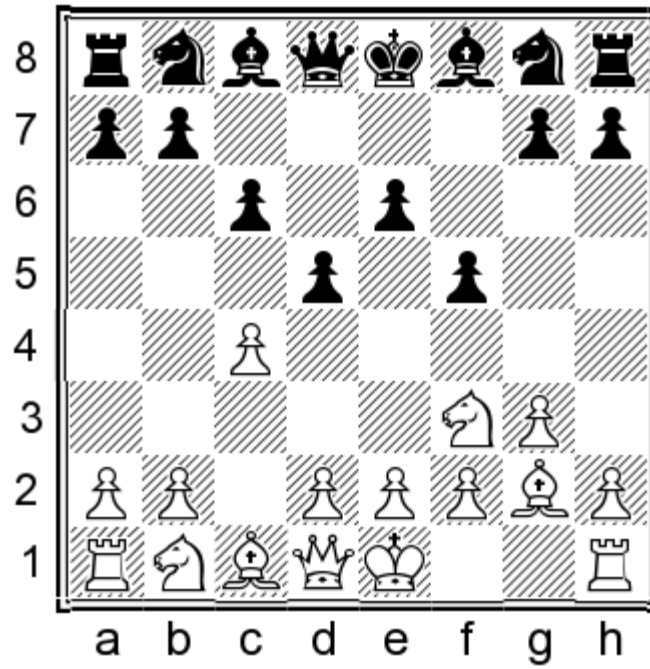
2. c4 e6 3. g3

The game starts as a Réti Opening, against which Black can adopt a Stonewall setup.

3...c6

From this point on White has to reckon with the capture on c4 at any moment, but just as in the previous chapter devoted to the Stonewall, this will not be our intention.

4. Bg2 f5

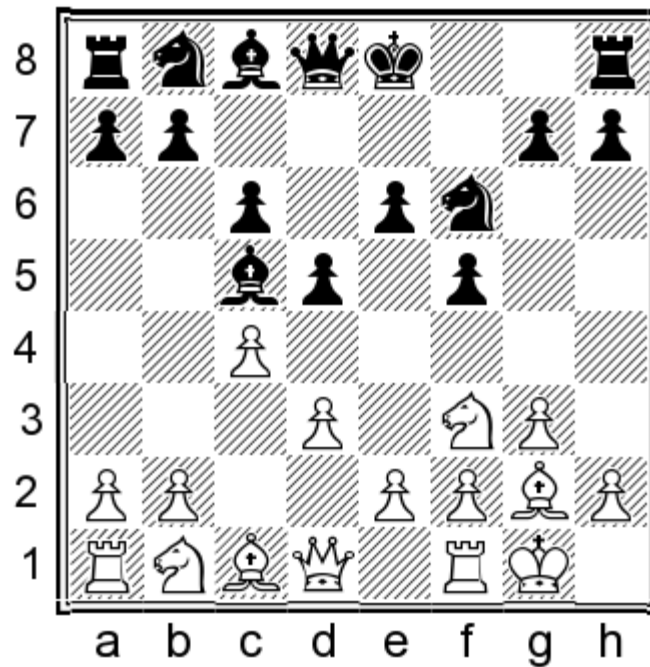


There we are! The wall of stones has been constructed. If White plays d2-d4 at any point the game will transpose into a pure Stonewall.

5.0-0 6.d3

The white pawn structure is similar to that of an English Opening.

6...♗c5!?



Black takes advantage of the fact that White has played d2-d3, rather than d2-d4, to develop his bishop onto a beautiful diagonal.

A) 6...♗e7 is considered the main move by theory, but the text move is an interesting and fairly rare alternative;

B) 6...♗d6 would be less precise in this variation as with the pawn on d3 White will be able to play a quick e2-e4, and the threat of e4-e5, forking the d6-bishop and the f6-knight, will then be very unpleasant.

7.♘bd2

In the event of 7.d4 (which can be played at any time), the bishop will retreat to d6 and we will have transposed into a normal Stonewall with an extra move for both sides (d3-d4 for White, and ...♗c5-d6 for Black).

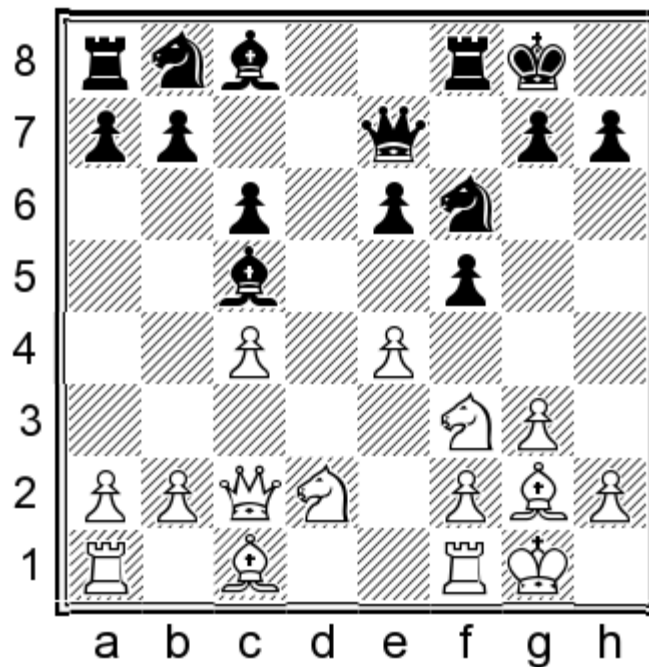
7...0-0 8.♙c2 ♙e7

An essential move as soon as the white queen goes to c2, to protect the c5-bishop against the opening of the c-file.

9.e4

If White takes too long to play this move Black could advantageously play ...e6-e5 and thus take the centre.

9...dxe4 10.dxe4



10...e5!

10...f4 was the move that Black would obviously have liked to play, but it would be countered by 11.e5!, when the d2-knight would obtain the very strong e4-square.

11.exf5 ♘g4 12.♘e4

A) 12.h3? was no good: 12...♗xf5! 13.♙d1 ♘xf2 14.♖xf2 ♗xf2+ 15.♔xf2 e4 and the f3-knight cannot move because of the discovered check;

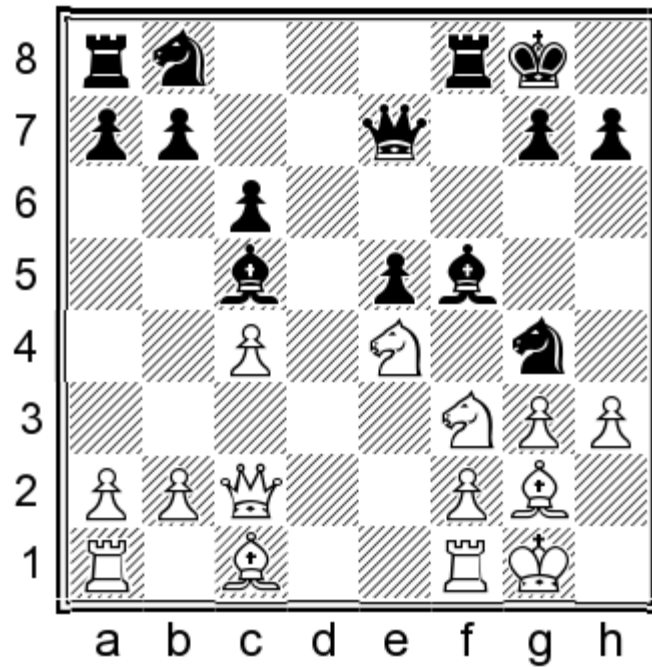
B) On the other hand, 12.♘h4 was playable: 12...♗xf2+ 13.♖xf2 ♘xf2 14.♔xf2 g5 15.♘hf3 (capturing *en passant* was not possible) 15...♗xf5. The material is about equal (rook + pawn against two minor pieces), and so is the position. White must nevertheless pay close attention to the threats on the f-file.

In all these variations we see the importance of the c5-bishop, which exerts strong pressure on the f2-pawn.

12...♙xf5 13.h3?

White does not see the danger.

It was necessary to play 13.♘h4 ♙xe4 14.♙xe4 g6, with a complicated position and chances for both sides.



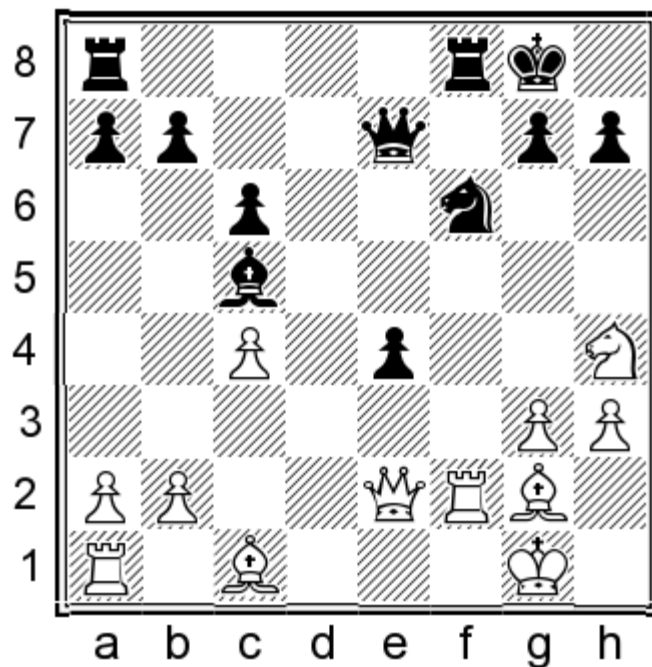
13...♘xf2! 14.♙xf2 ♘d7

Stronger than taking the pinned f2-rook immediately. Black continues his development and threatens 15...♘f6.

15.♙e2

To unpin the e4-knight.

15...♙xe4 16.♙xe4 ♘f6 17.♙e2 e4 18.♘h4?



The decisive error. The f-file will prove fatal to White.

He had to return the piece, even if, after 18.♙e3 exf3 19.♙xc5 ♜xc5 20.♙xf3 ♜ae8, Black is still much better.

18...♘d5! 19.cxd5 ♜xf2 20.♜xf2 ♙xf2+

The black bishop has played a major role throughout the game. It can now bow out by exchanging itself for the white queen.

21.♙xf2 ♜f8+ 22.♙g1 cxd5

The three uncoordinated white pieces cannot compete against the black queen and two mobile central pawns.

23.♙h1

23.♙f1 ♜c5+-+.

23...♜c5+ 24.♙h2 ♜f2+

24...♜f1! was even stronger.

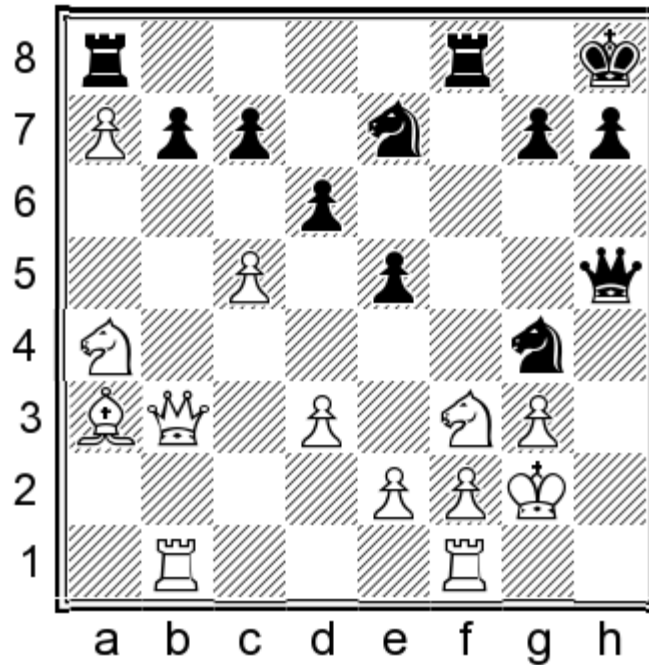
25.♘g2 e3 26.♙g1 e2 27.♙e3 ♜xg2+!

White resigned.

After 28.♙xg2 ♜xe3+ 29.♙h2 d4 he can do absolutely nothing against the advance of the central pawns.

Your move!

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Black to move. The classic Grand Prix Attack combination.

Show/Hide the Solution

20...Rxf3! 21.♔xf3

21.exf3 ♕h2#.

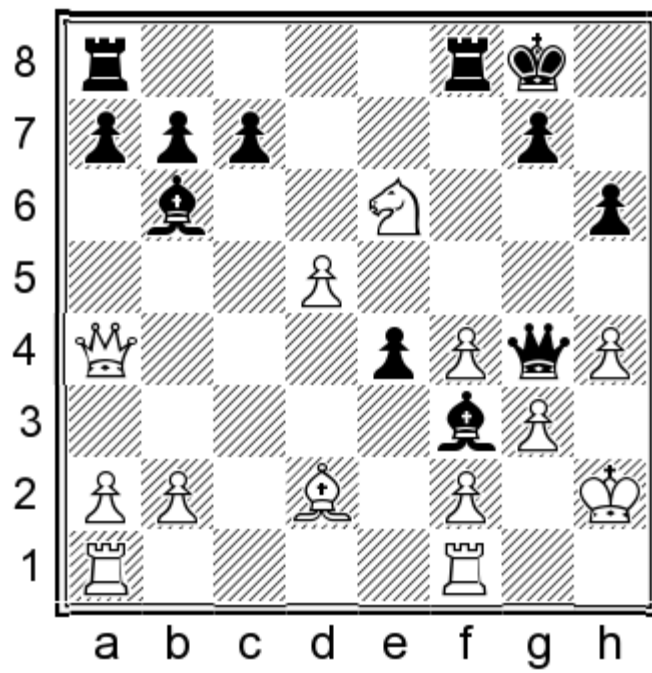
21...Rf8+ 22.♔e4

22.♔g2 ♕h2#.

22...♕f5#.

(See Game 78, **Lehoczki-Piróth**)

58



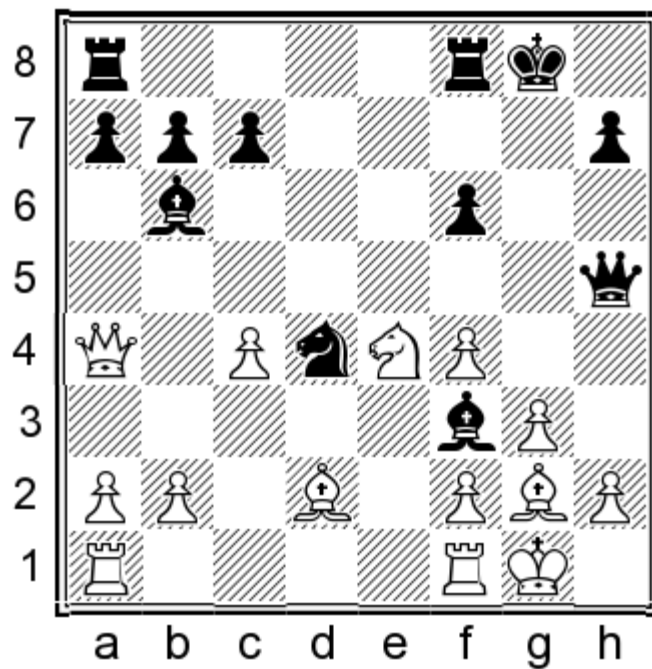
What is the very strong manoeuvre that gives Black a decisive attack?

Show/Hide the Solution

21...♖f5!

The strong threat of 22...♖h5 and 22...♖xh4! gives Black a decisive attack.

(See Game 79, **Stretch-Starr**)



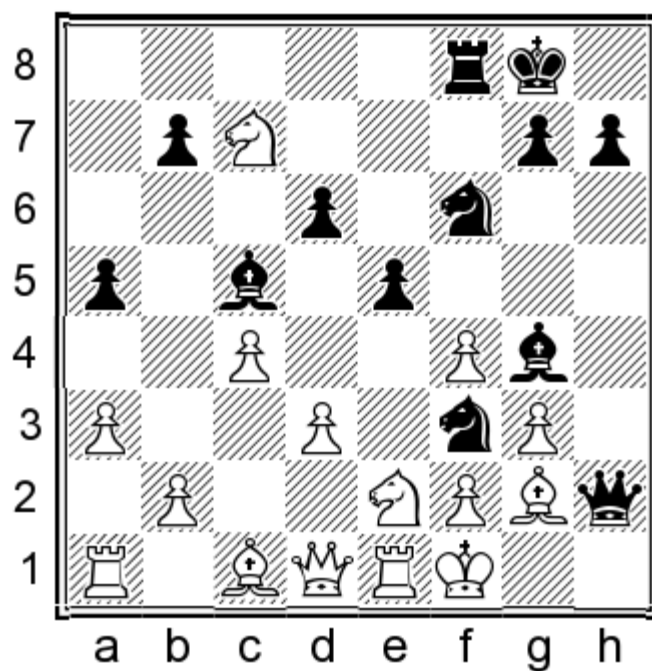
What pretty hammer blow allows Black to checkmate?

Show/Hide the Solution

18... ♖h3!! 19. ♕xh3 ♜e2#

(See Game 79, **Stretch-Starr**)

60



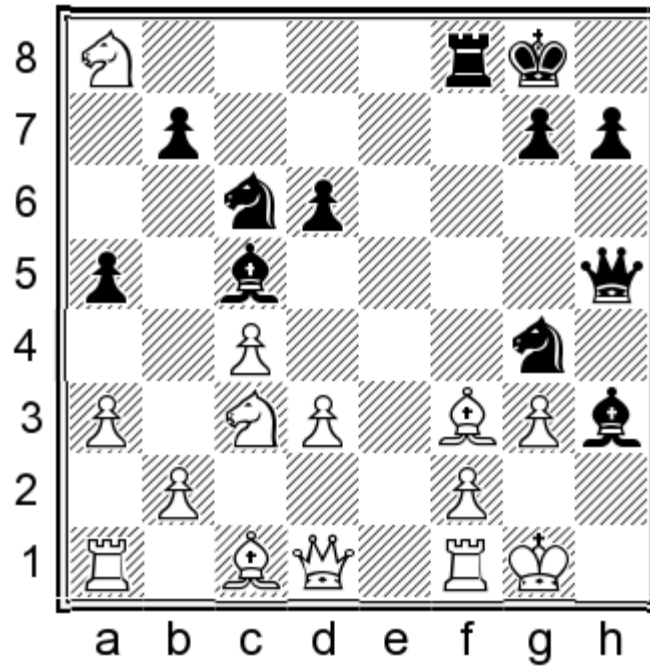
Black to move. Mate in two moves.

Show/Hide the Solution

16... ♖g1+!! 17. ♜xg1 ♜h2#

(See Game 80, **Rittie-Battistella**)

61

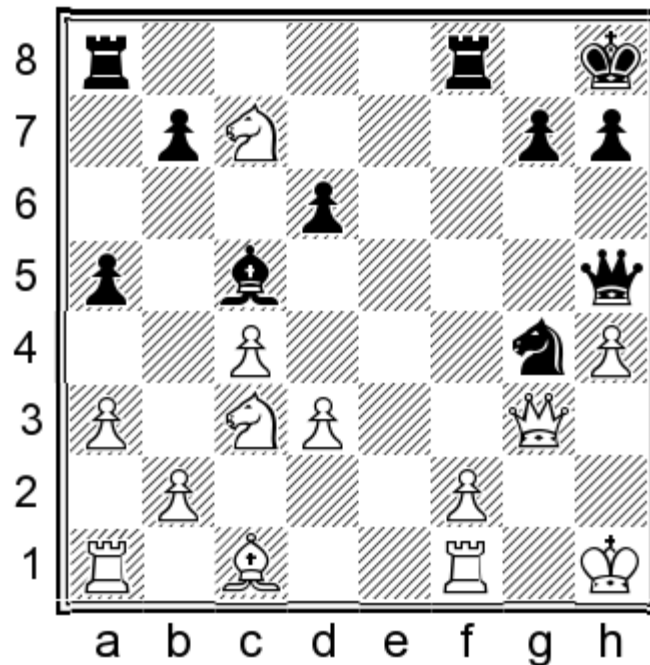


Black to move. A classic conclusion to the Grand Prix Attack that must be known.

Show/Hide the Solution

16...♙g2!-+

(See Game 80, **Rittie-Battistella**)



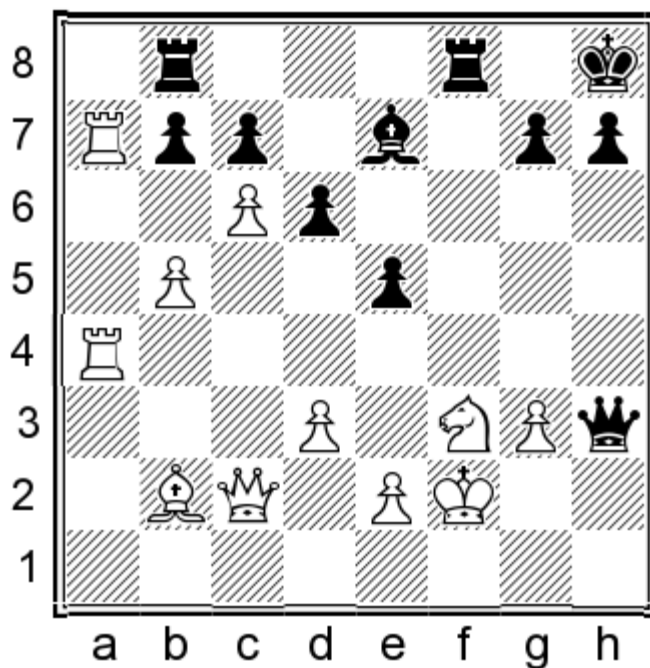
Black to play and win.

Show/Hide the Solution

21...♖f3!! 22.♔xf3 ♜xh4+ 23.♕g2 ♜h2#

(See Game 80, **Rittie-Battistella**)

63



The first move seems obvious for a Grand Prix Attack, but be careful to calculate all the variations right until the end.

Show/Hide the Solution

24...♖f3+!! 25.♔xf3

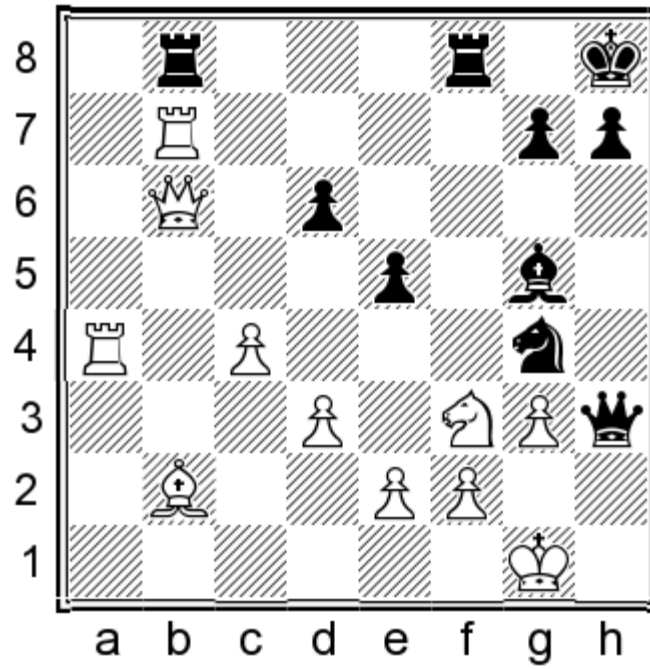
25.exf3 ♜h2+--.

25...♖f8+ 26.♕e4 ♜g2+ 27.♕e3 ♜g5+

and the white king will be mated.

(See Game 81, **Moret-Pytel**)

64



How does Black short-circuit White's final defensive tries?

Show/Hide the Solution

25...♙e3!! 26.fxe3

26.♖xb8 ♜xg3+ 27.♔h1 ♞xf2#.

26...♜xg3+ 27.♔h1 ♞f2#

(See Game 81, **Moret-Pytel**)

Chapter 11

The irregular openings

We will finish our study with some openings that are relatively rare (which is why I will describe them as irregular openings, in the sense that they do not respect the norms).

As you probably know, White has 20 different ways to start a game. In the introduction to the previous chapter we have seen that the four most popular – and best! – moves (1.e4; 1.d4; 1.c4 and 1.♘f3) share 7,906,991 of the 8,133,447 games in Mega Database 2017.

This means that the remaining 16 moves are divided among just 226,456 games, that is, less than 3% of the total in Mega Database.

In this chapter we will study four of them. Although they are (very) rare birds among grandmasters, they nevertheless do have their adepts at club player level. And as this book is specifically aimed at club players, it is useful to dwell on them a moment. Of course, it is not a question of spending hours on learning an opening that you would have the opportunity to meet – according to statistics – about once in every 50 games. It is just necessary to have some ideas if you are faced with them, so as not to be caught completely unprepared and fall victim to the element of surprise.

At the end of the chapter, and in conclusion to this book, we will add a small postscript on how to proceed when we find ourselves facing a first move that is not listed in this chapter, or in the previous ones. In theory, there remain 12 possibilities.

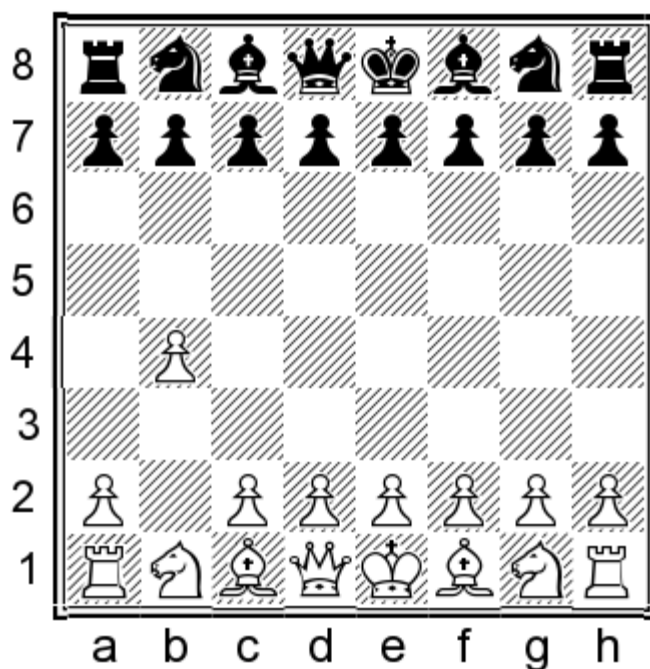
Game 83

Jean Vigneron 1890

Vincent Moret

Nancy 1988

1.b4



The Sokolsky Opening, also known as the Orang-Utan. It is said that Tartakower baptised it like this after a visit to the Vienna Zoo just before his victory against Réti in 1919, in which he had used this exact opening. It was later developed in the 1930s by the Russian Master Alexei Sokolsky. Consequently, it is undoubtedly more legitimate to name the opening after him, rather than an ape.

With the move 1.b4 White prepares to fianchetto his bishop and expand on the queenside, but in so doing he lets Black occupy the centre, and the defence of his b-pawn may cause him some problems.

1...e5

The most natural move, since it blocks the long diagonal and immediately attacks the b4-pawn, but there are many (good) alternatives for Black. We will see some of them after this game.

2.♟b2

Obviously White will not mind exchanging his b4-pawn for the black centre pawn.

After 2.a3 d5 3.♟b2 ♟d6 Black already has the advantage in the centre and the assurance of having easy development.

2...♟xb4

Black takes up the challenge by accepting the swap – *a priori* unfavourable for him – of a central pawn for a wing pawn.

However, he relies on his lead in development (he will be the first to castle) and also on some tactical threats provided by the semi-open e-file.

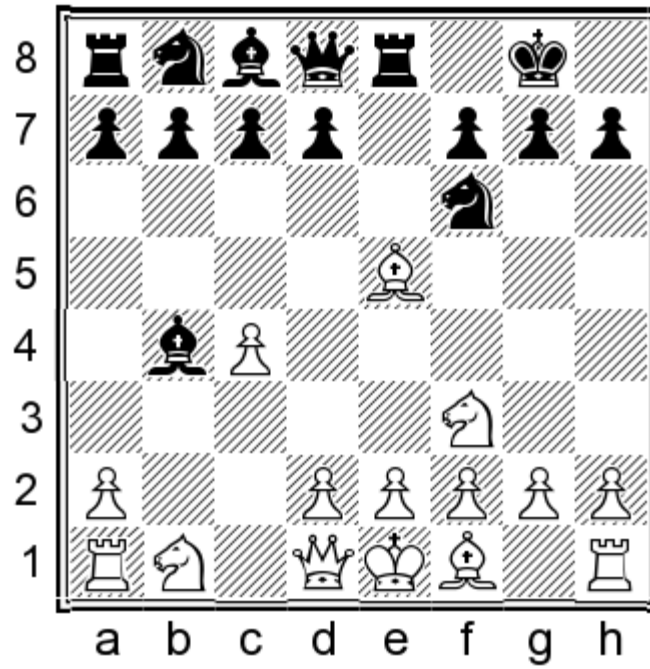
3.♟xe5 ♞f6 4.c4

An important move for White in order to control the centre. It could also be delayed by one or two moves.

4...0-0

Black has already castled, while White has not yet started developing his kingside.

5.♞f3 ♜e8

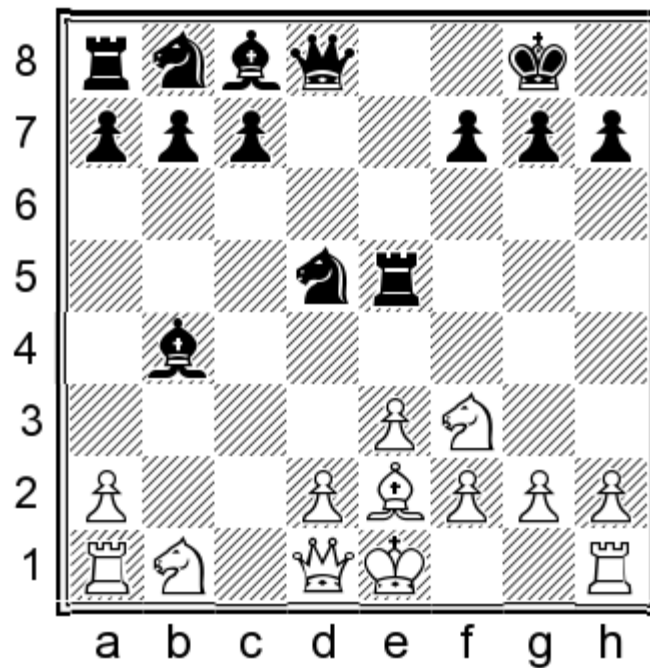


Quite naturally, the black rook occupies the semi-open file facing the white king.

6.e3 d5 7.cxd5 ♞xd5 8.♞b2

White must lose a tempo retreating the bishop.

8.♞e2? would allow the strong 8...♞xe5!



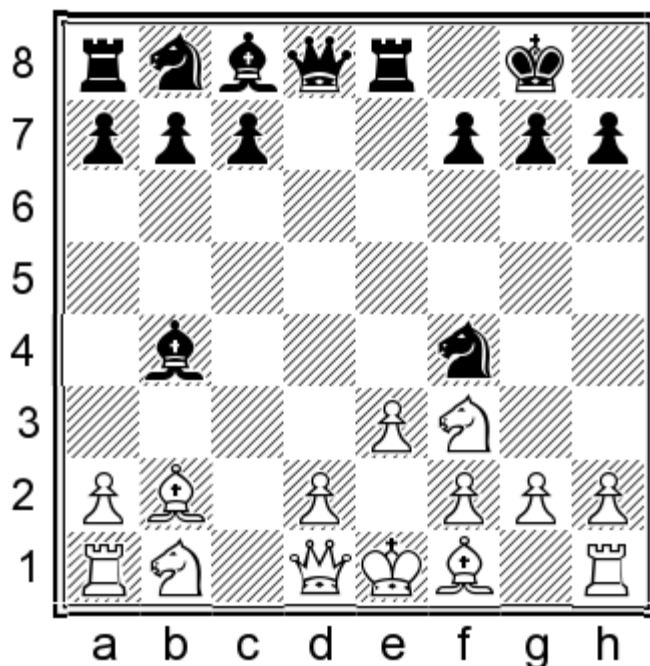
analysis diagram

9.♞xe5 ♞f6 10.f4 (the white knight is pinned! We see one of the consequences of the move b2-b4, which has caused a weakening of the a1-h8 diagonal) 10...♞xe3 and the white position collapses: 11.♞a4 (11.♞b3 ♞xg2+ 12.♞d1 ♞xf4+; Black has three pawns for the exchange and a strong initiative) 11...♞c6 12.♞f2 ♞g4+! 13.♞xg4 ♞xf4+ 14.♞f3 ♞c5+

and the white queen is lost.

8...♘c6

According to the IM Richard Palliser (*Beating Unusual Chess Openings*) 8...♘f4! would be as strong as the text move, and probably less risky (for Black!).



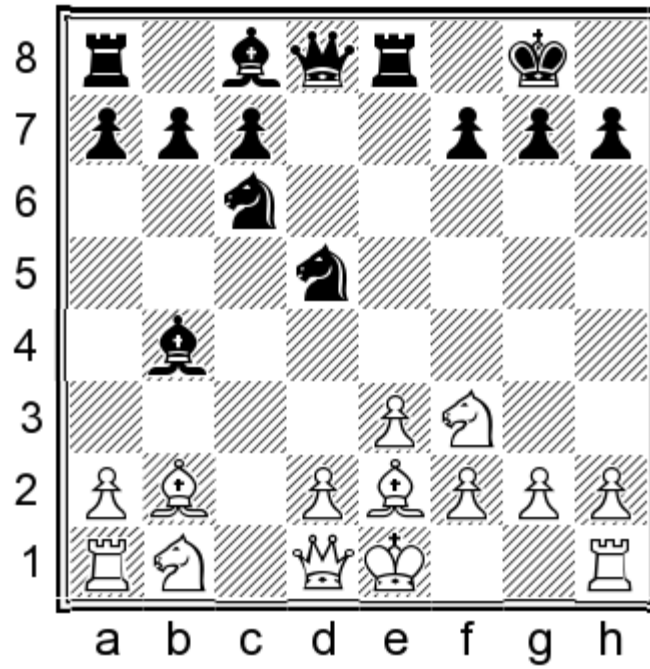
analysis diagram

After 9.♘e5 (to protect the d3-square) 9...♙g5! the white position is very difficult:

A) 10.g3? ♖xe5! 11.gxf4 (11.♙xe5 ♙xe5 12.♘c3 ♘d5–+) 11...♖xe3+! 12.fxe3 (12.♙e2 ♙g2 13.♖f1 ♖e4–+) 12...♙h4+ 13.♙e2 ♙g4+–+;

B) 10.exf4 ♙xf4 11.♙e2 (11.♙e2?! ♘c6 12.g3 ♙f5 13.f4 f6+–) 11...♖xe5 12.♙xe5 ♙xe5 13.♘c3 ♙xc3 14.dxc3 ♙xc3+ 15.♙f1 was played in the correspondence game Billing-Bogert, 1993. Black has two pawns for the exchange and the h1-rook is out of play (0–1, 33 moves).

9.♙e2

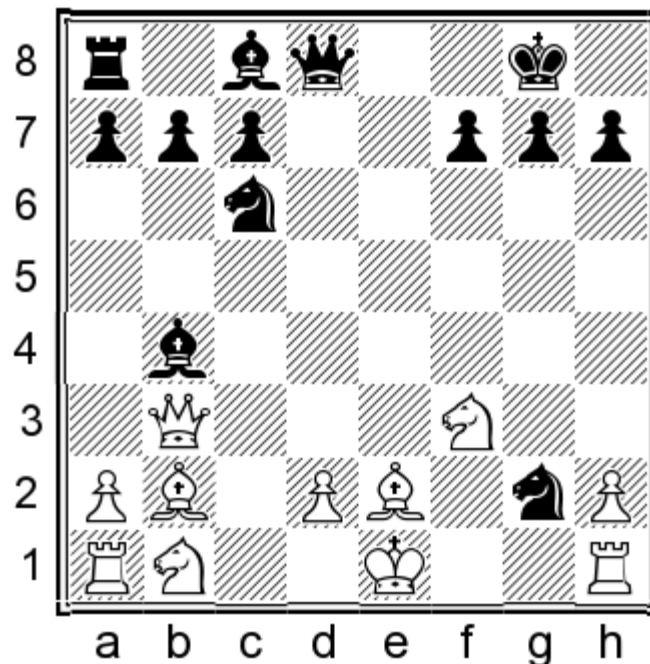


It seems at this instant that White has a very solid position and that he can, after castling kingside, contemplate the middlegame with a certain optimism thanks to his central majority and the two semi-open b- and c-files. However, this is not the case.

9...♖xe3!!?

A very spectacular and quite amazing move. It is rare to find such a sacrifice of an entire rook before the tenth move. Obviously this was prepared beforehand. I knew before the game that my opponent was a devoted fan of the Sokolsky Opening, but at the time I had no computer, no database and no analysis engine. I was therefore inspired by a correspondence game analyzed in detail in a small magazine, the *Courier des Échecs*.

10.fxe3 ♜xe3 11.♚b3 ♜xg2+



12.♔f2?

It was very difficult for my opponent, who did not know the reference game, to find the correct defensive moves at the chessboard.

He had to play 12.♔d1!, a move that was not considered in the analysis from the *Courrier des Échecs*, so I would have had to manage by myself. After 12...♙e6 13.♖d3 ♜xd3 14.♙xd3 ♙g4 15.♙e2 ♜f4 Black has only three pawns for the sacrificed rook, but he maintains good compensation. His four minor pieces are very active, White is still behind in development and his king may find itself in danger in the centre. The position is very complex for both sides, but it is reasonable to think that it will be easier for Black to play because he is attacking. Good defensive moves are usually harder to find, and bad moves occur more easily when you are under pressure and do not have a grandmaster's defensive technique.

12...♙h3 13.d4

Black threatened 13...♙c5+.

13.♔g3? was wrong because of 13...♖d6+! 14.♔xh3 ♜f4+ 15.♔g4 ♜xe2 16.♗e3 ♖d7+ 17.♔h4 ♞e8 and White has no defence. If the queen retreats, it's soon mate after 18...♞e4+.

The only chance of survival was 13.♞c1 (to prevent 13...♙c5+). After 13...♗e7 Black retains a strong initiative. For example, White cannot play 14.♔g1? to try to hide the king in the corner, because of 14...♜f4 15.♙f1 ♜e2+ 16.♙xe2 ♗xe2, and Black has a decisive attack.

Instead, 14.d4 ♞e8 was similar to the game continuation.

13...♗e7 14.♜bd2 ♞e8

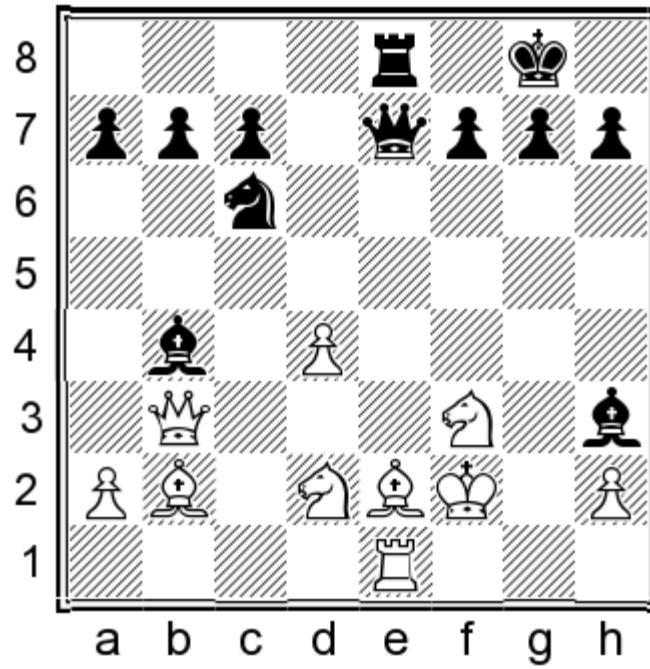
I somewhat blindly followed my preparation, but 14...♙xd2! was much stronger: 15.♜xd2 ♜xd4! 16.♙xd4 ♖h4+ 17.♔f1 ♜f4+ and the white king is in a mating net.

15.♞ae1

White returns some material to try to reduce the black initiative.

15.♙b5 was unsatisfactory: 15...♜a5! 16.♗d3 ♜f4. The white queen is completely dominated, if it retreats to c2 then 17...♗e3+ will be decisive.

15...♜xe1 16.♞xe1

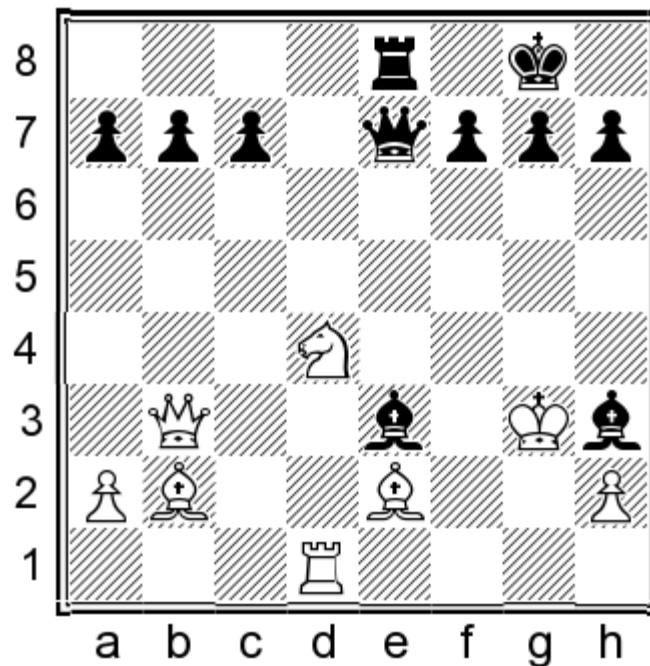


16...♘xd4!!

I was still in my preparation and therefore I cannot claim any great merit for playing this spectacular move.

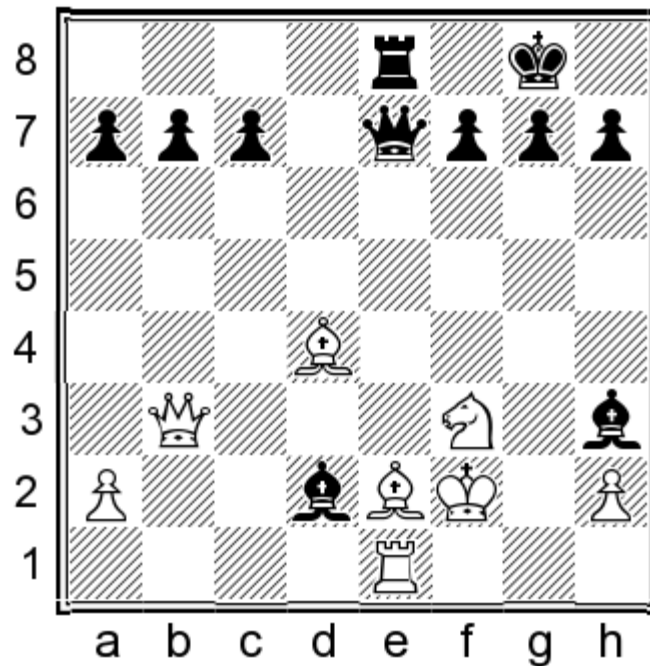
17.♙xd4?

17.♘xd4 was played in the correspondence game Franke-Löffler, 1984, which was the basis of my preparation and which I was therefore able to follow right up till move 16. Here is the end of this very pretty game: 17...♙xd2 18.♖d1? (18.♙xh3 ♙xe1+ 19.♗xe1 c5+) 18...♙e3+ 19.♕g3



19...♖g5+! (the third piece sacrifice of the game!) 20.♔xh3 ♜e4 21.♜f5 ♜xf5+ 22.♔g2 ♜g4+! (another one!) 23.♙xg4 ♜xg4+ 24.♔f1 ♜f3+ 25.♔e1 ♜f2#.

17...♙xd2



18.♖d1

My preparation stopped here, but I did not have to find many moves at the board by myself.

18.♜xd2 loses: 18...♜h4+ 19.♜g3 (19.♔g1 ♜xd4+ 20.♔h1 ♜xd2–+) 19...♜xd4+ 20.♔f3 ♜e3#.

18...♙xe1+ 19.♜xe1 ♜e4 20.♜d2 ♙g4 21.♜e3?

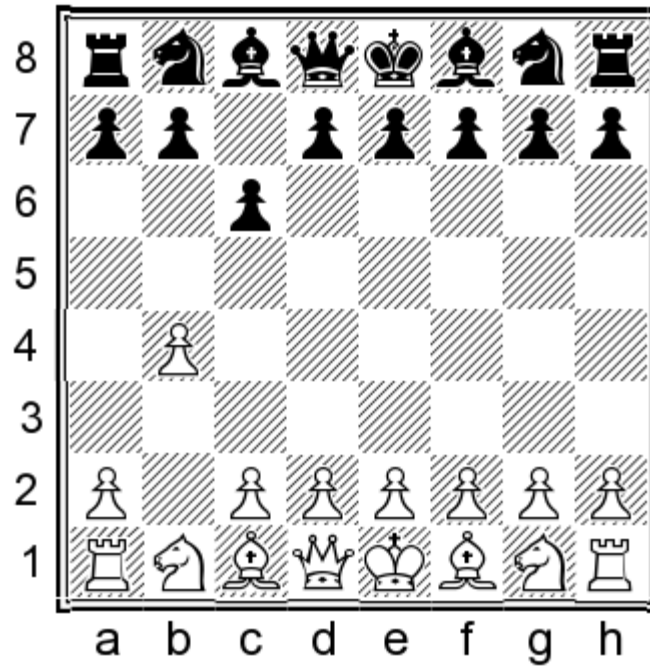
This hastens the end by losing a piece. However, with rook and four pawns against two white minor pieces, the outcome of the game was no longer in doubt.

21...♙xf3 0–1

If 22.♙xf3 White loses the queen after 22...♜c2+.

If, for one reason or another, some readers are not totally satisfied with this variation, which they may find too complicated and too risky for Black, here are two alternative systems against the Sokolsky Opening which require no great theoretical knowledge. In addition, White could easily fall victim to the surprise effect here.

1.b4 c6!?



A dual-purpose move. The first is obvious: to prevent White from gaining more space on the queenside by controlling the b5-square. The second will appear next move.

2. ♖b2 ♜b6

Here's the idea: the attack on the b4-pawn!

3. a3 a5

Renewing the attack on the b4-pawn, which is not so easy to defend. Obviously White cannot take on a5 because of the unprotected b2-bishop.

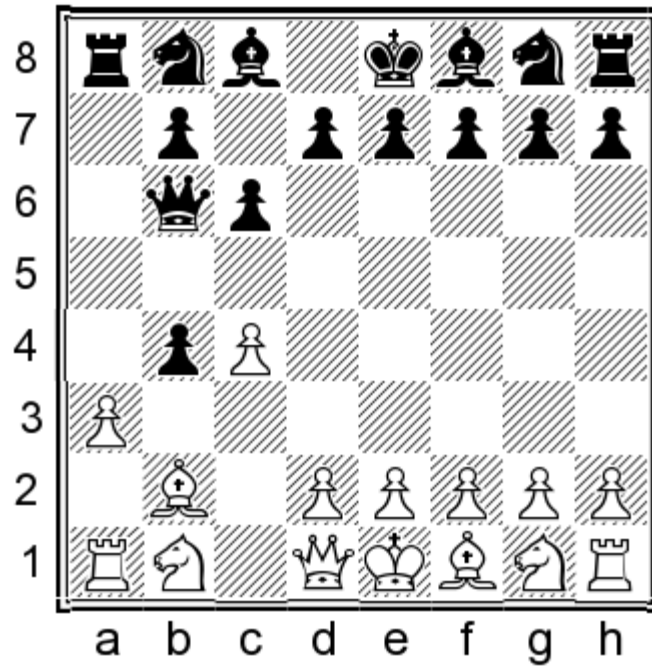
4. c4

White must use tactical means to indirectly defend the b4-pawn.

A) It is clear that if White has to play a move like 4.c3?! the b2-bishop, which is a key white piece in the Sokolsky, would look a sorry sight. After 4...d5 Black would already be clearly better;

B) 4. ♘f3!?, on the other hand, is playable: 4...axb4 5. ♗d4 ♞c7 (5...c5? 6. ♗xc5! ♞xc5 7. axb4+–; a double attack on the queen and the a8-rook!) 6. axb4 ♞xa1 7. ♗xa1 ♜b6! (7...d5?? 8. ♗e5!+–) and the position is equal.

4...axb4



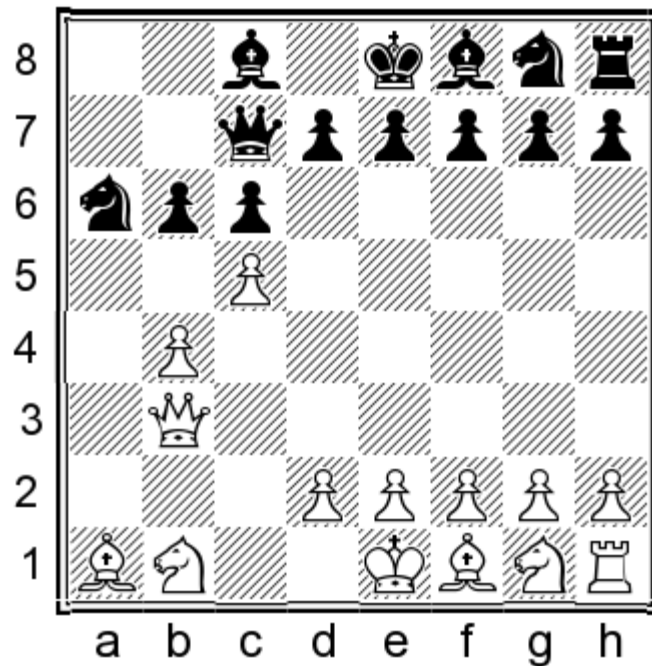
5.c5!

The forced complement to the previous move.

5...♔c7

5...♕xc5?? is not possible: 6.axb4 attacks both the queen and the a8-rook.

6.axb4 ♖xa1 7.♙xa1 ♘a6 8.♕b3 b6



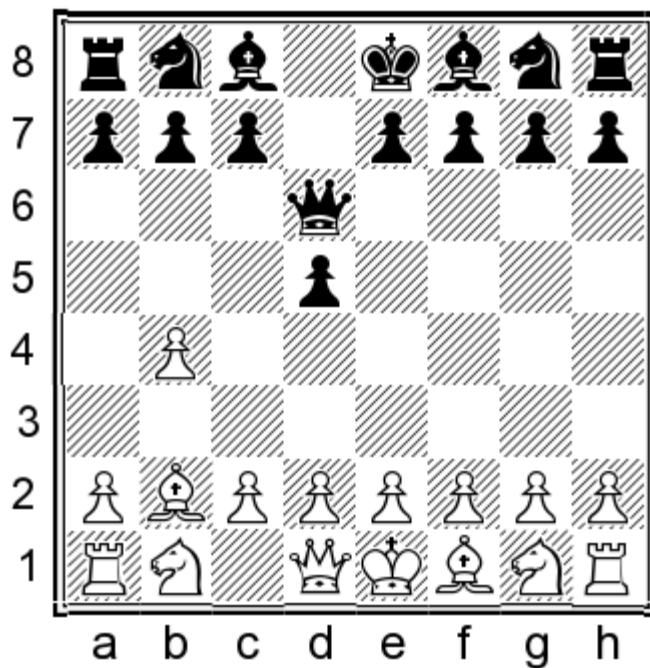
Black has a very satisfactory position.

Here is another interesting system against the Sokolsky Opening which requires no theoretical knowledge.

1.b4 d5

A reply that is just as natural as 1...e5.

2.♙b2 ♚d6!?



An original and unexpected manoeuvre that allows Black to gain a tempo due to the attack on the b4-pawn.

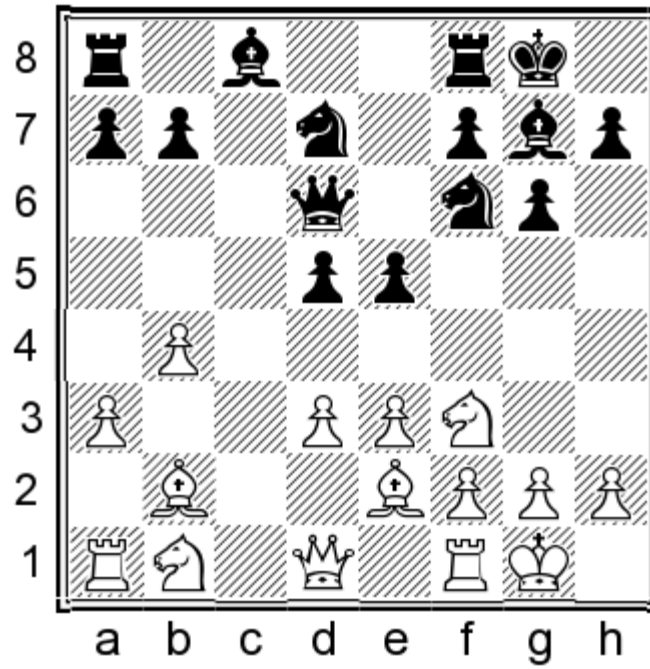
3.a3

3.b5 ♚b4±.

3...e5

As a result Black can grab the centre.

4.e3 ♘f6 5.d3 ♘bd7 6.♘f3 c6 7.♙e2 g6 8.c4 ♙g7 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.0-0 0-0



Thanks to his strong centre Black has a very pleasant position. In the game Lalić-Uhlmann, Sarajevo 1980, he won on the 29th move.

After the advance of the b-pawn for two squares on move one, let us now consider the g-pawn.

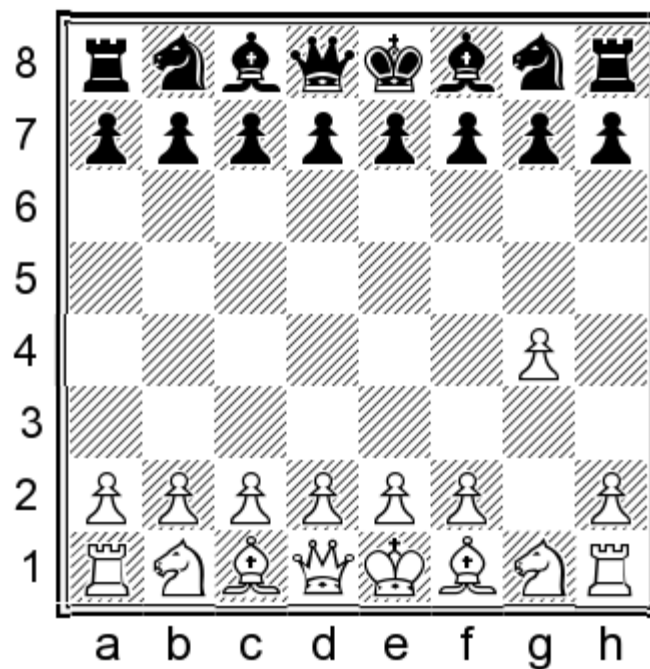
Game 84

Thierry Laurent 2000

Théo Ciccoli 1923

France tt 2014

1.g4



The Grob Opening, in reference to the Swiss player Henri Grob, who used it many times in correspondence games in the middle of the last century. This opening is logically considered doubtful – and certainly more so than the Sokolsky – because advancing the g-pawn two squares greatly weakens the white kingside.

1...d5

Just as against the Sokolsky a central reaction is the most natural. This one has the merit of directly attacking the g4-pawn (just like the move 1...e5 in the Sokolsky).

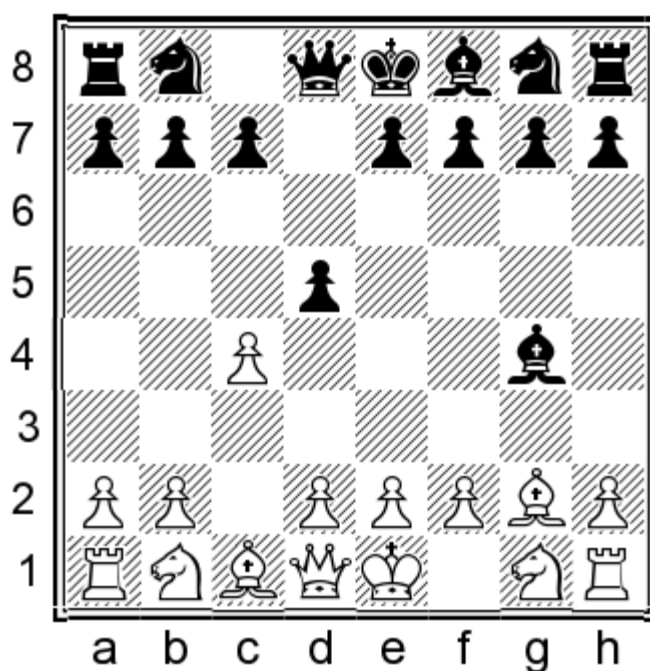
2.♙g2

The English International Master Michael Basman, the great guru of this opening and author of a book entitled *The Killer Grob* (Pergamon 1991), prefers 2.h3. However, after the natural moves 2...e5 3.♙g2 c6 what benefit, quite frankly, can one find to justify playing this opening with white, apart, perhaps, from the surprise effect?

2...♙xg4

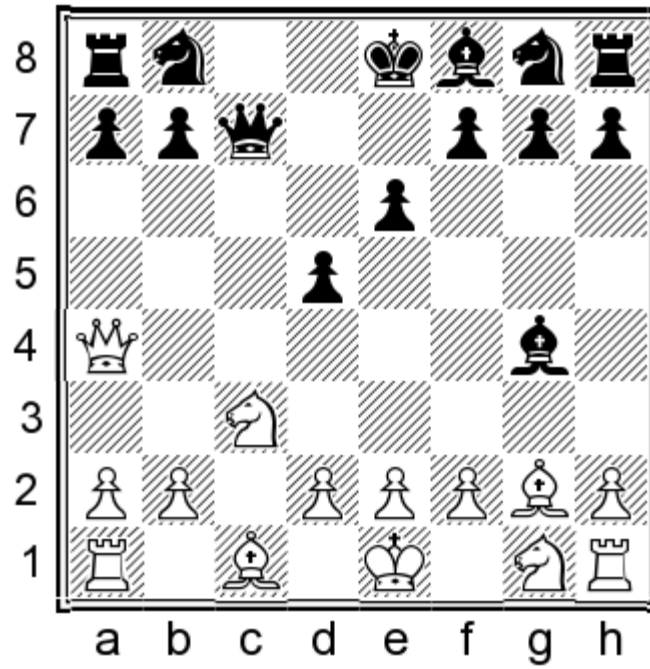
Unlike in Game 83, devoted to the Sokolsky, Black can capture the g4-pawn here without losing his d5-pawn in return, as it is protected by the queen.

3.c4



3...dxc4!?

Many amateurs play the Grob Opening in the hope of setting this little opening trap: 3...c6 4.♞b3 (forking the pawns on b7 and d5) 4...♞c7 5.cxd5 cxd5 (Black counterattacks the c1-bishop) 6.♘c3 e6?? (it was necessary to return the d5-pawn by playing 6...♘c6, when Black has a perfectly satisfactory position) 7.♞a4+, winning the g4-bishop.

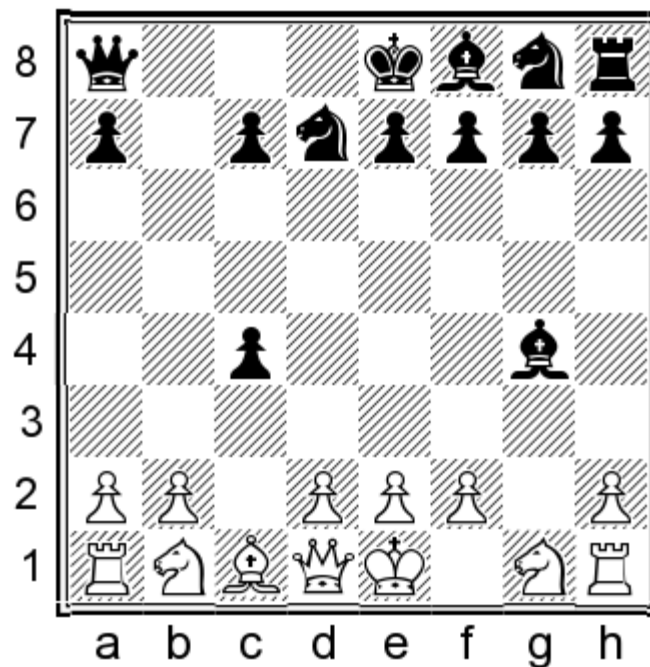


analysis diagram

In Mega Database 2017 there are 17 games in which Black has fallen into this trap!

The text move, which involves an exchange sacrifice, is a very interesting attempt by Black to seize the initiative as early as the fifth move. We had prepared this variation with Theo, who was French Under 10 champion at the time of this game, knowing that his opponent was a devotee of the Grob Opening.

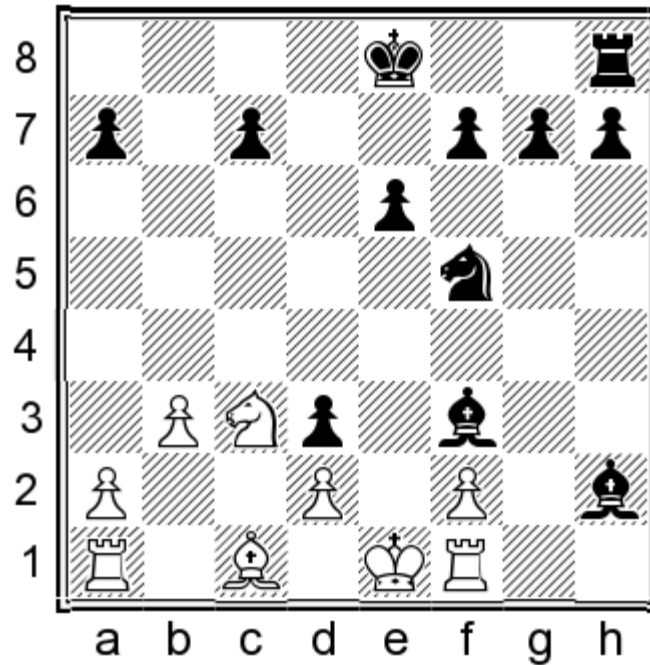
4.Qxb7 ♖d7 5.Qxa8 ♔xa8



For the exchange Black has obtained strong pressure on the long white diagonal, and a pawn!

Not a nice move to have to play, but it's forced.

6.♘f3? doesn't work: 6...♞e5 7.♞a4+ ♕d7 8.♞a3 (8.♞c2 would have met the same reply) 8...♞d3+! 9.exd3 e6! This move, which gains a tempo thanks to the attack on the queen by the f8-bishop, is even stronger than the immediate capture of the f3-knight: 10.♞a5 ♞xf3 11.♞g1 cxd3 (threatening mate on e2!) 12.♞c3 ♕d6 13.♞g5 (an attempt to bring the queen back to defend – White can do nothing else) 13...♞e7 14.♞g2 ♕c6! 15.♞xf3 ♕xf3 (despite having an extra exchange – and even without queens on the board – White is lost) 16.b3 ♕xh2 17.♞f1 ♞f5!–+.



White is helpless against the threat of ...♞f5-h4-g2+.

6...e5 7.♞c2

In the game Landin-Holving, Norrköping 1998, which we had prepared with Theo, White tried 7.♞c3, but after 7...♞e7 8.♞a4 ♕h4+ 9.♞d1 ♕e6 10.b3 ♞e7! Black obtained very good compensation and went on to win after 31 moves.

7...♞gf6 8.♞c3

8.♞xc4!? was undoubtedly the critical move for White, but after 8...♞c5 9.d3 ♕e6 10.♞a4 0-0 White has great difficulty finishing his development. The g1-knight, in particular, poses serious problems. If, for example, White tries 11.h4 to get the knight out to h3 then 11...♞b8! gives Black very good chances due to the threat of 12...♞b4. 12.a3? is not then possible because of 12...♞b3! 13.♞a6 ♕b6, and with ...♞c5 coming the white queen is in big trouble.

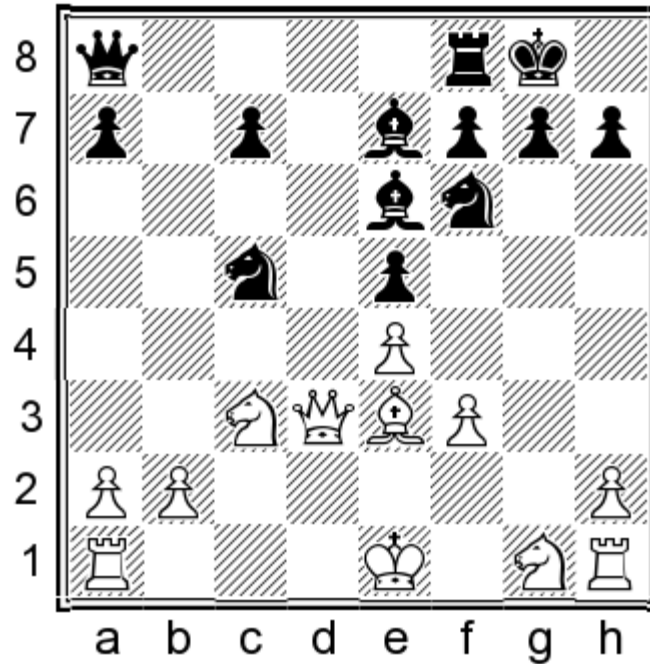
8...♞e7 9.d3

In the game Horváth-Messa, Venice 1981, White played 9.h4?!, with the intention of trying to develop by ♞h3, before realizing after 9...0-0 that he could not play 10.♞h3? after all, because of 10...♞xf3! 11.exf3 ♞xf3 12.♞f2 ♞c5! 13.♞h3 ♞g2 and Black has some very strong threats (14...♞d3+, 14...♞g1+, 14...♞g4...).

9...cxd3 10.♞xd3 0-0 11.e4

White has finally managed to close the long diagonal, but during this time Black has completed his development and castled.

11...♙e6 12.♙e3 ♘c5



Black only has one pawn in return for the exchange, but all his pieces are active and the white king is anything but safe.

13.♙xc5?!

Quite logically White decides to exchange pieces in order to diminish Black's offensive potential, but despite this the dark-squared bishop will become too strong.

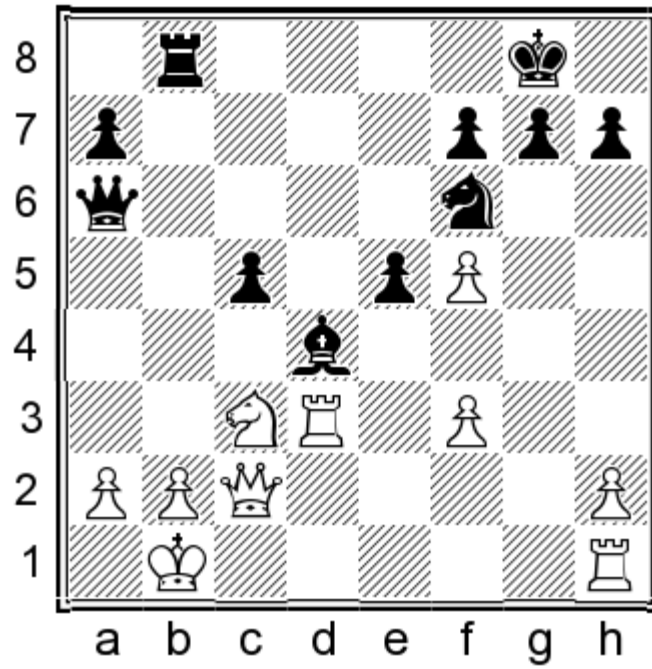
13...♙xc5 14.0-0-0 ♚b7 15.♘ge2 ♜b8 16.♙c2 ♙e3+ 17.♗b1 c5 18.♞d3

White cannot use the g-file to attempt a counterattack on the black king because of the e3-bishop.

18...♙d4 19.♘g3?

White had to exchange the powerful dark-squared bishop, even if Black still keeps a big initiative after 19.♘xd4 cxd4 20.♙e2 ♙d7 followed by 21...♙c5. The d4-pawn, in particular, is very strong in this position.

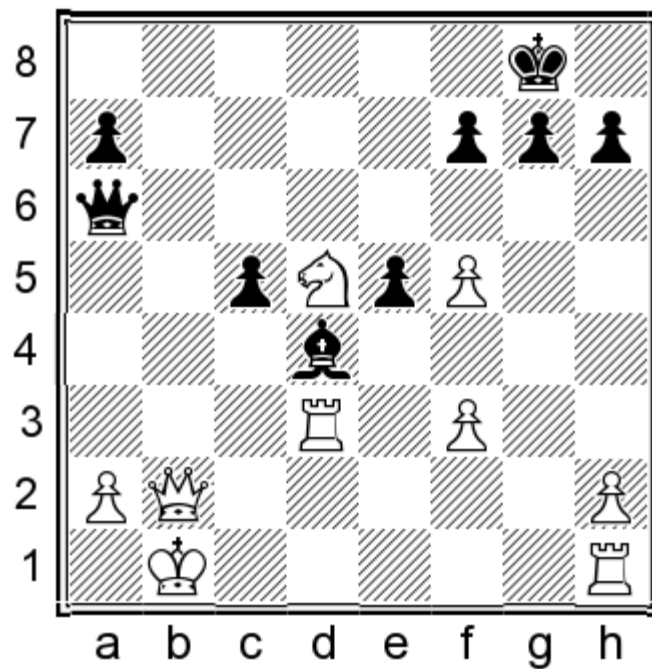
19...♙a6 20.♙f5 ♙xf5 21.exf5



21...d5! 22. dxd5

Faced with the threat of 22...b4 White did not have too much choice.

22...xb2+ 23. cxb2



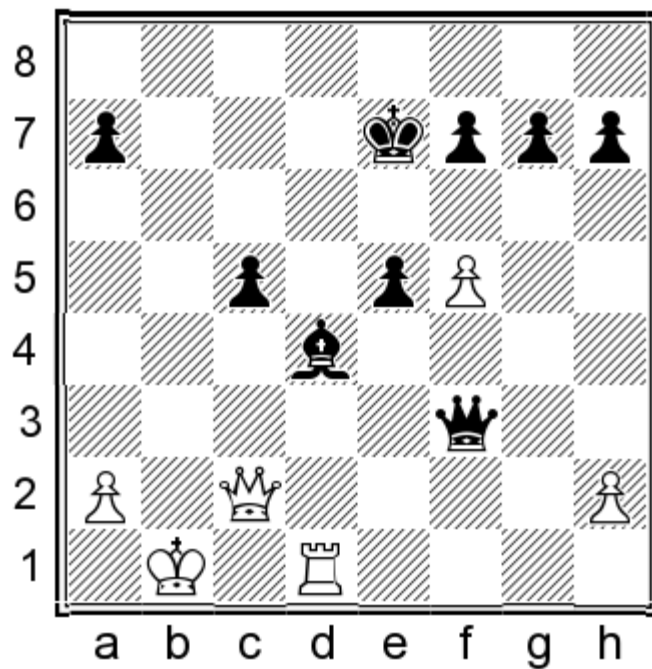
23...xd3+!

White had probably only counted on 23...xb2 24. b3, when the threat of mate on b8 wins the bishop.

24. c2 xf3

Forking the h1-rook and the d5-knight! The black bishop on d4 is a monster.

25.♘e7+ ♔f8 26.♞d1 ♕xe7



Black has three pawns for the exchange and big threats against the white king.

27.f6+ ♕xf6 28.♞xh7? ♕b6+ 29.♔c2 ♕b2+ 30.♔d3 ♕c3+ 31.♔e4 ♕e3+

Of course 31...♕c2+ wins the white queen.

32.♔d5 ♕f3+ 0-1

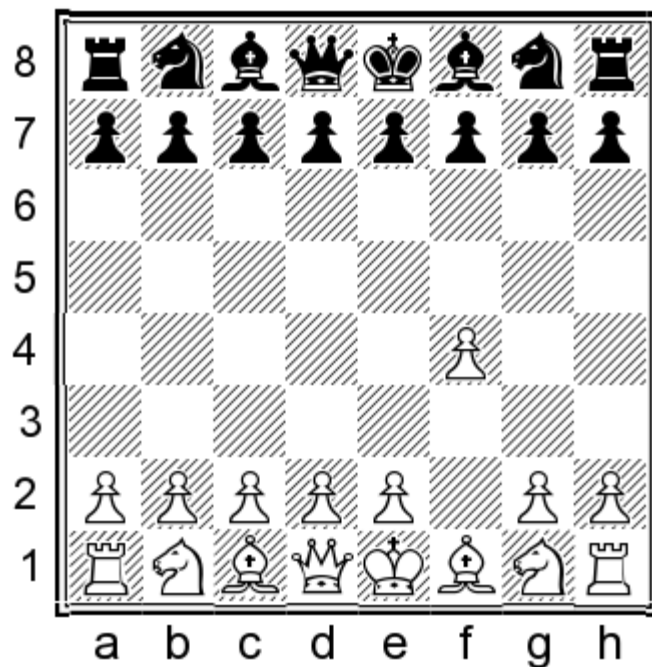
Game 85

Cyprien Fievet 1346

Arnaud Colson 2016

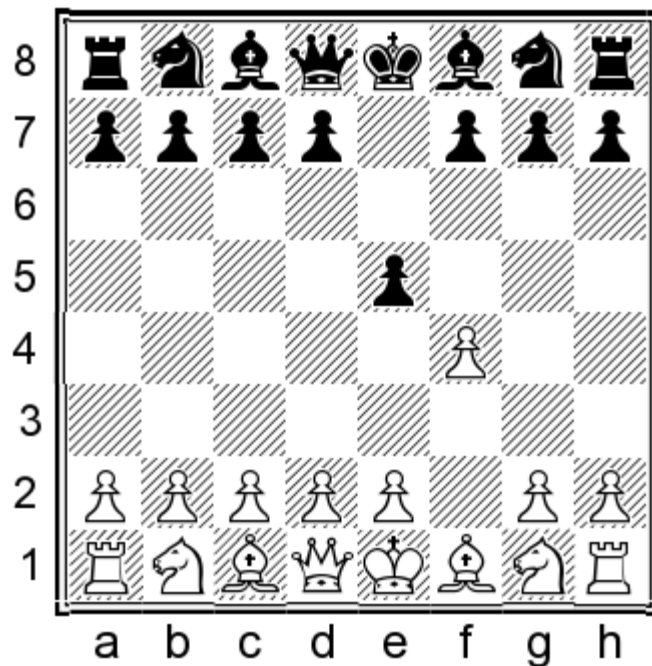
Metz 2015

1.f4



Bird's Opening. White intends to play a reversed Dutch (1.d4 f5) with an extra move.

1...e5!?



The From Gambit, named after the nineteenth century Danish player Severin From, who was also the father of the Danish Gambit (1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3 dxc3 4.♔c4).

1...d5 would be the most natural central reaction, of course, but the resulting variations could disorient those who have adopted the white repertoire proposed in Volume I, and who traditionally play 1.e4. After 1.f4 d5 they would actually find themselves playing 1.d4 with a tempo less (and reversed colours), and what is more facing the Dutch, which is not the simplest of openings.

The text move (1...e5!?) is much more ambitious, and White will have to avoid many pitfalls. At the cost of a pawn Black immediately pinpoints the weak point in the white position: the e1-h4 diagonal, which has been weakened by the

1.f4 move.

2.fxe5

Black also has to be prepared for the King's Gambit (1.e4 e5 2.f4) into which the From Gambit will transpose after 2.e4!?. Nevertheless, in practice this does not happen that often as Bird's Opening enthusiasts are rarely 1.e4 players. However, in order not to find ourselves in totally uncharted territory we will nonetheless study one example in Game 87.

2...d6 3.exd6

3.♖f3 dxe5 4.♗xe5 ♕d6 5.♖f3 gives the same position as in the game, but with a move more for both sides.

3...♕xd6

In exchange for the pawn Black has gained a lead in development (all his pieces can come out easily) and serious threats on the e1-h4 diagonal. The first of these is the immediate 4...♖h4+ 5.g3 ♕xg3+, which virtually forces White's next move.

4.♖f3 ♖f6!

With a two-move threat that is not easy to see. The ultra-aggressive 4...g5!? is also possible to chase the knight from f3 and again threaten ...♖h4+. The text move is much more subtle, however, and consequently more dangerous for white players who are not well prepared for the From Gambit.

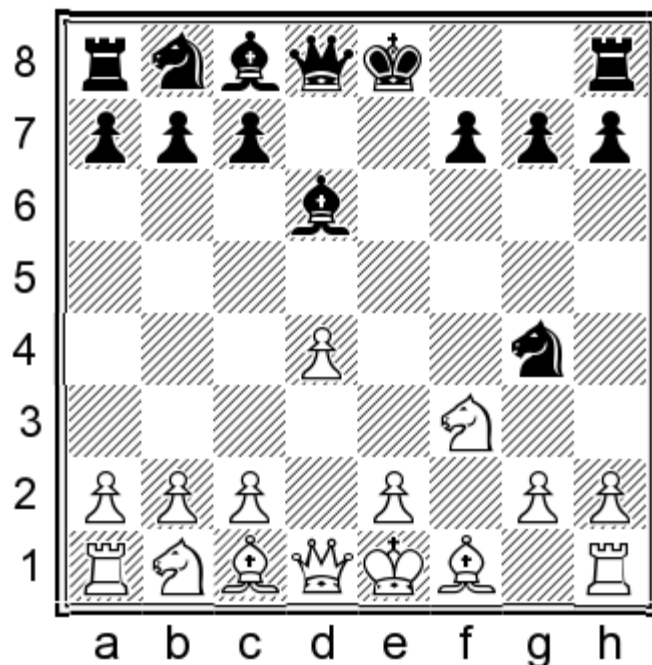
5.d4

5.g3, to close the e1-h4 diagonal, allows the strong response 5...h5! 6.♕g2 h4! and White faces big problems:

A) 7.♖xh4?? ♖xh4! 8.gxh4 ♖e4!! 9.♕xe4 ♖xh4+ 10.♔f1 ♖xe4 11.♖g1 (11.♔g1 ♕h3--+) 11...♕h3+;

B) 7.gxh4 ♖g4 8.d4 ♖xh2! 9.♖xh2 (9.♖xh2 ♕xh2 10.♖xh2 ♖xh4+--+) 9...♖xh4+ 10.♔f1 ♕h3 11.♕xh3 ♖xh3+ 12.♔e1 ♕xh2--+.

5...♖g4



The threat announced on Black's fourth move is actually the capture on h2 (by the bishop or the knight, depending on circumstances), followed by a check on h4 or g3. Apart from the fact that this threat is not obvious to see, it is also not easy to counter. Especially for someone who does not know the variation.

6. ♖c3?!

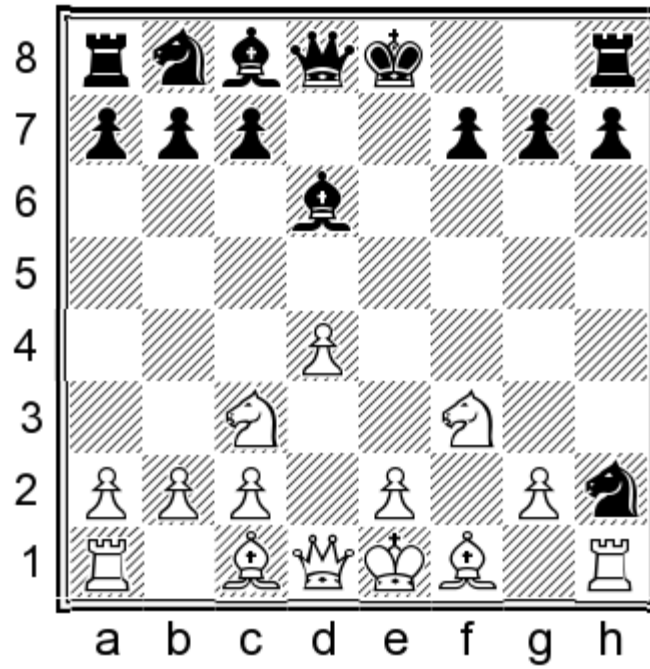
There are numerous traps that White can fall into and the natural moves are far from being the best:

A) 6.e4?! ♙xh2! 7. ♖xh2 ♚h4+ 8. ♔d2 ♖xh2 9. ♙d3 (on 9. ♚e1 Black can play 9... ♖xf1+, but certainly not 9... ♖f3+?? 10.gxf3 ♚xh1 11. ♙b5+ and the queen is lost) 9... ♖c6. The position is balanced, but the very badly placed white king complicates the first player's task;

B) 6.g3?! ♖xh2!? (6...h5!? is also possible: 7. ♙g2?! h4! 8. ♖xh4? ♚xh4 9.gxh4 ♚xh4+ 10. ♔d2 ♖f2+) 7. ♙xh2 (7. ♖xh2?? ♙xg3+ 8. ♔d2 ♚xd4#) 7... ♙xg3+ 8. ♚f2. After taking the exchange material will be approximately equal (rook and pawn against two minor pieces), but the very complicated position will offer Black good practical chances, in particular because he has a simple plan: castle queenside and advance his kingside pawns. In the game Bákó-Gombocz, Debrecen 1994, Black won in 27 moves following precisely this plan;

C) The best move – which prevents the capture on h2 – is actually 6. ♚d3. Not easy to find at the board if you do not know it. We will study this in the following game.

6... ♖xh2!



The theme of the variation!

7. ♖xh2??

7. ♖xh2? was not much better: 7... ♗g3+! 8. ♔d2 ♗xh2 9. ♖xh2 ♕xd4+ 10. ♔e1 ♖h4+ 11. ♔d2 0-0!. Due to the threat of 12... ♗d8+ Black will regain the knight, at the very least, while maintaining a very strong initiative. White had to accept the loss of a pawn by playing 7. ♖e4 ♖xf1 8. ♖xd6+ ♕xd6 9. ♔xf1 and Black only has a slight advantage.

7... ♗g3+

We can now see the consequences of the weakening of the e1-h4 diagonal caused by the move 1.f4.

7... ♖h4+ also mates: 8. ♔d2 ♕xd4+ 9. ♔e1 ♗g3#.

8. ♔d2 ♕xd4#

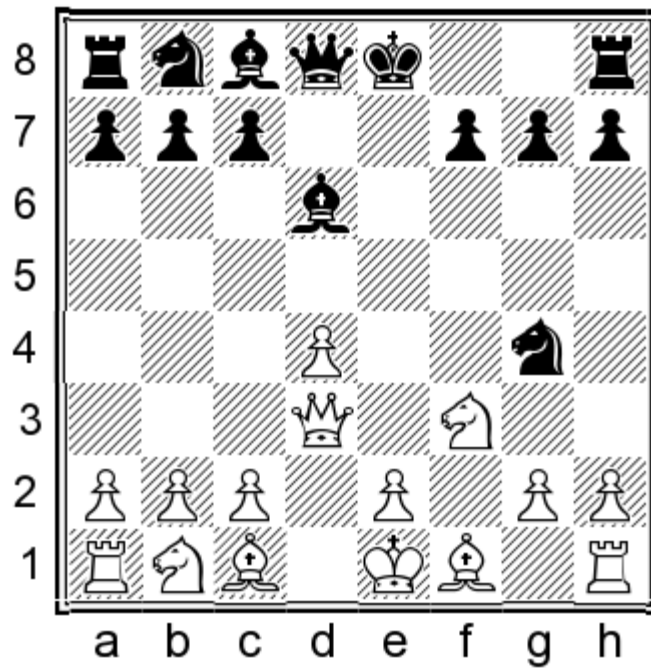
Game 86

Timothy Taylor 2380

Jonathan Mestel 2450

Lone Pine 1978

1.f4 e5 2.fxe5 d6 3.exd6 ♗xd6 4. ♖f3 ♖f6 5.d4 ♖g4 6. ♕d3!



This move prevents the capture on h2 for three reasons:

- 1) The white king has the d1-square.
- 2) White will have an intermediate check on e4, which will allow him to control the h4-square.
- 3) On d3 the white queen protects the g3-square (after the white knight has taken on h2).

6...c5!

The best plan for Black is to react in the centre before White has the time to play e2-e4.

6...♘h2? 7.♙e4+.

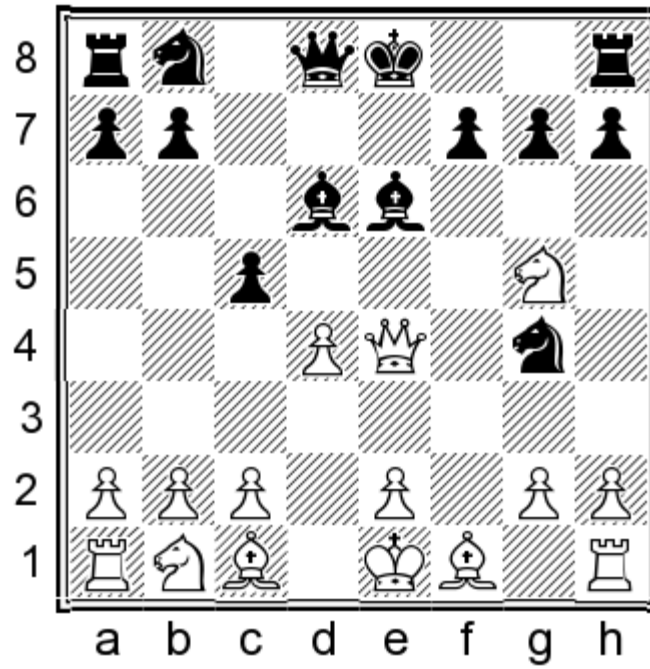
7.♙e4+

Black would not be opposed to an exchange of queens: 7.dxc5 ♙xc5 8.♙xd8+ ♔xd8, and the pressure on f2 is quite unpleasant.

After 7.e4 cxd4 8.♙xd4 0-0 Black has a lead in development and the better pawn structure.

7...♙e6 8.♘g5

8.d5 ♘f6 9.♙a4+ ♙d7 and 8.♙xb7 ♙d5 don't give White anything special. In both variations Black will castle first and have good compensation for the pawn. After the text move the game will take a very wild turn. The following analyses by Timothy Taylor are taken from his book *Bird's Opening* (Everyman 1995). Even though this book offers a repertoire based on Bird's Opening for White, the author does not hesitate to include this spectacular game that he lost.



8...♙xh2!

Due to the threats to e6, to the g4-knight (after the capture on e6) and to b7, Black has no choice but to agree to the complications. ‘All the other moves lose’ (Taylor).

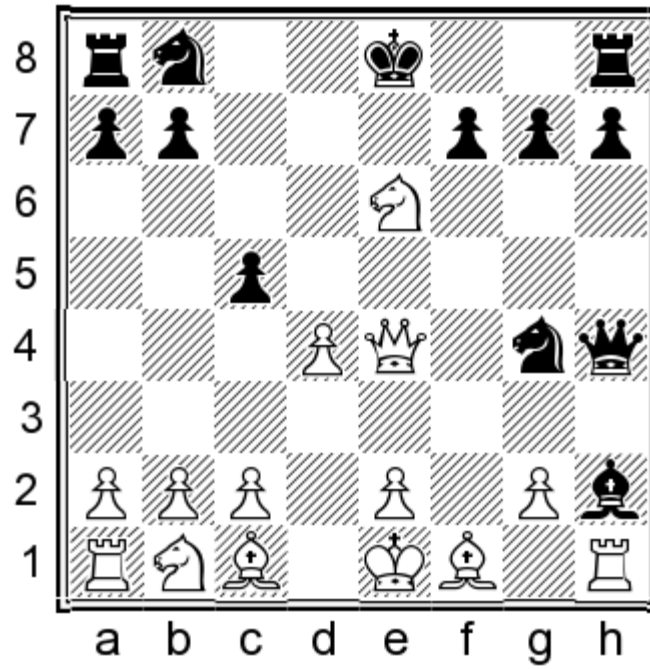
9.♘xe6

9.♙xh2 ♘xh2 10.♘xe6 fxe6 11.♚xe6+ ♚e7 12.♚c8+ ♚d8 13.♚e6+ can lead to a perpetual if both sides agree.

9...♚h4+!

Again the only move. Black would not have had this resource had he taken on h2 with his knight on the previous move.

9...fxe6?? 10.♚xg4+–.



10.♔d2 fxe6 11.♖xh2

11.♜xe6+ ♔d8 12.c3 ♕f4+ 13.♔c2 ♜xh1 14.♕xf4 ♜xf1 15.♜xg4 ♘d7 gives as complicated a position as in the game continuation.

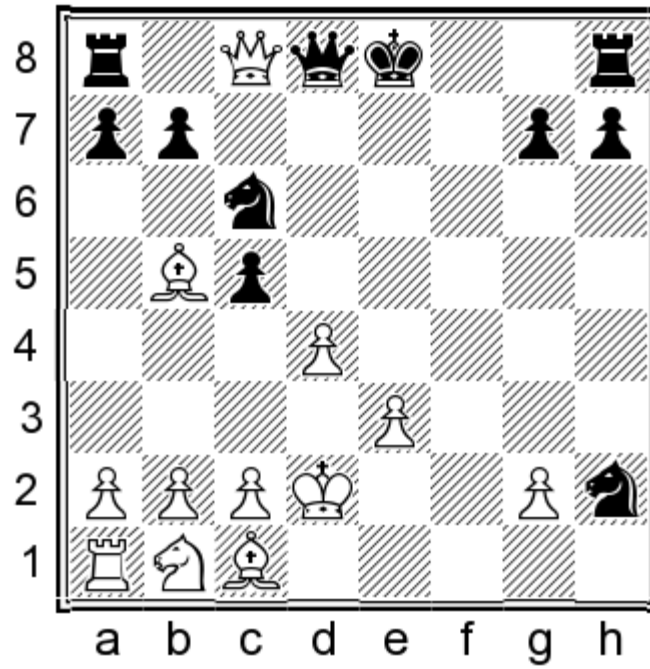
11...♜g5+ 12.e3 ♘xh2 13.♜xe6+ ♜e7

13...♔d8? 14.♜d6+ ♘d7 15.♜xh2+-.

14.♜c8+

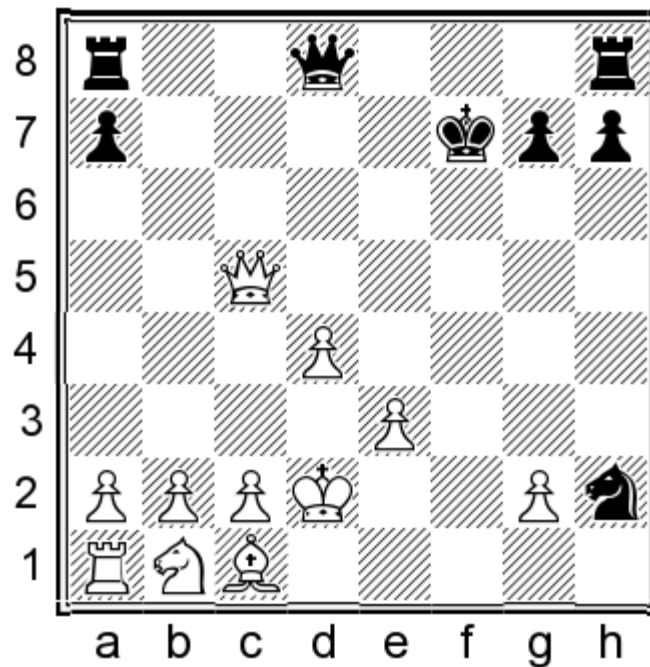
14.♕b5+ ♘c6! 15.♕xc6+ bxc6 16.♜xc6+ ♔f7 may again lead to a repetition of moves... if both sides agree.

14...♜d8 15.♕b5+ ♘c6



16. ♖xb7?!

The critical position, according to Taylor. His impressive analysis demonstrates that it was better for White to play 16. ♕xc6+! bxc6 17. ♖xc6+ ♔f7 18. ♖xc5.



analysis diagram

With three pawns for the exchange the position remains extremely complicated for both sides. White has a smaller material advantage than in the game, but Black has not been able to castle, unlike in the game, making his task much more difficult.

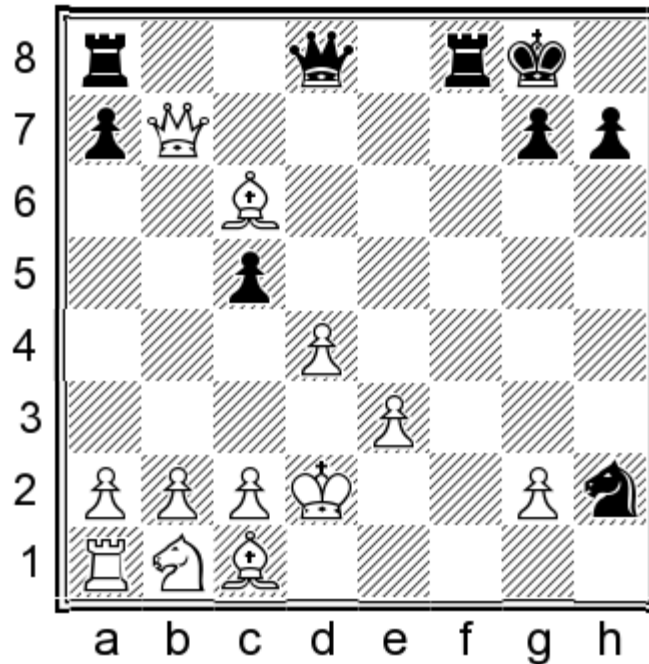
In the game Crick-Taylor, England 1977 (Taylor was on the black side of the From Gambit this time!), Black

nevertheless won on the 41st move after another very wild game.

In very complicated positions it is always easier to find attacking moves (in the From Gambit Black is the attacker!) than defensive moves. And this will be even more true for amateurs, as they do not have a master's defensive technique.

16...0-0 17.♙xc6

Black has given a piece back, but his king is safe, which is not the case for White.



17...♜b8 18.♚d7

White had many other possibilities: 18.♜xa7, 18.♜a6 and 18.♙d5+. There is no question of analyzing them all here, were it possible. In all these variations the evaluation will be the same: the position is very complicated and Black has good compensation for his material deficit due to the insecurity of the white king. Those who really want to know more can refer to Taylor's extensive analysis.

18...♜f6 19.♘c3

White must develop.

19.♜d5+ was too dangerous: 19...♔h8 20.♜xc5 ♜bc8 21.d5 ♜fd8 and the white king is very badly placed on d2 facing the black rook.

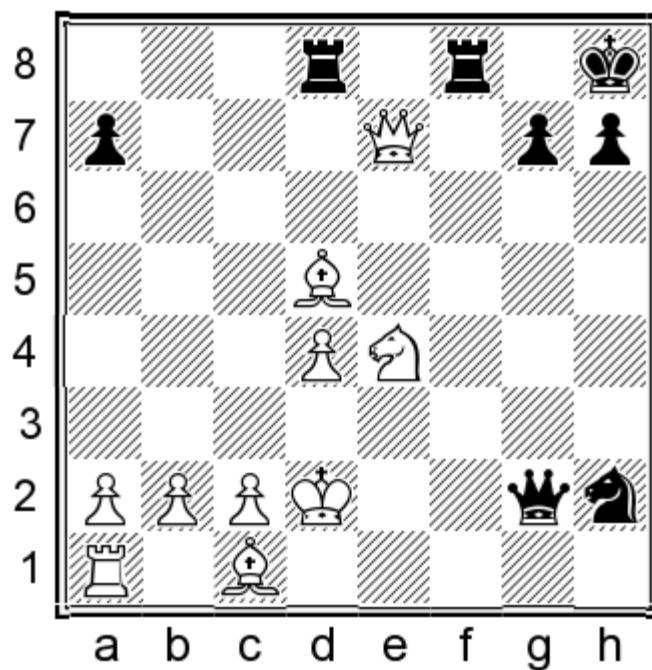
19...cxd4 20.exd4 ♜bd8

Black could put an end to the complications by taking the repetition himself: 20...♜f4+ 21.♔d1 ♜f1+ 22.♔d2 ♜f4+.

21.♘e4 ♜g6 22.♙d5+ ♔h8 23.♜e7?!

23.♜e6 was better: 23...♜xg2+ 24.♔c3 ♜fe8 and, unlike in the game, White has 25.♜f5 here, when the f3-square is protected. 25...♜f8 allows the spectacular resource 26.♘g5!.

23...♔xg2+

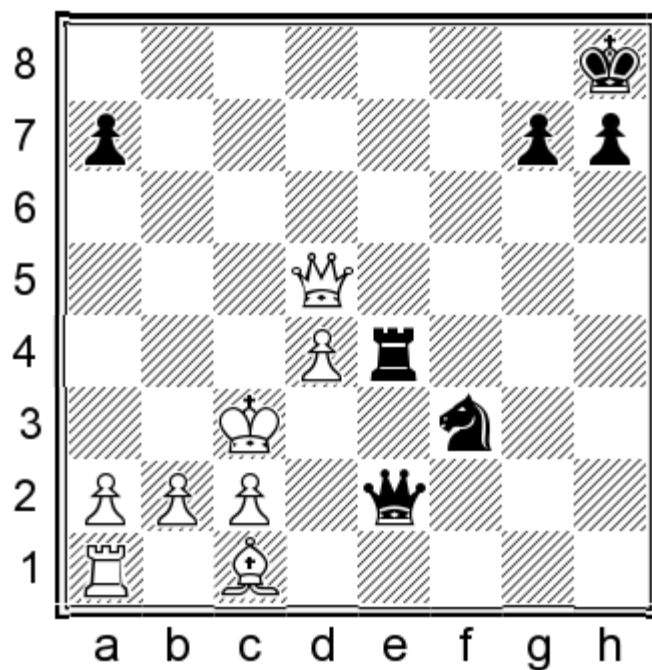


Black has a powerful attack on the white king now.

24.♕c3 ♖fe8 25.♗g5 ♗f3+ 26.♕c4 ♕e2+ 27.♕c3 ♗f3+ 28.♕c4 ♕e2+ 29.♕c3 ♘f3 30.♗f5 ♖xd5

30...♗e1+! won more quickly.

31.♗xd5 ♖xe4



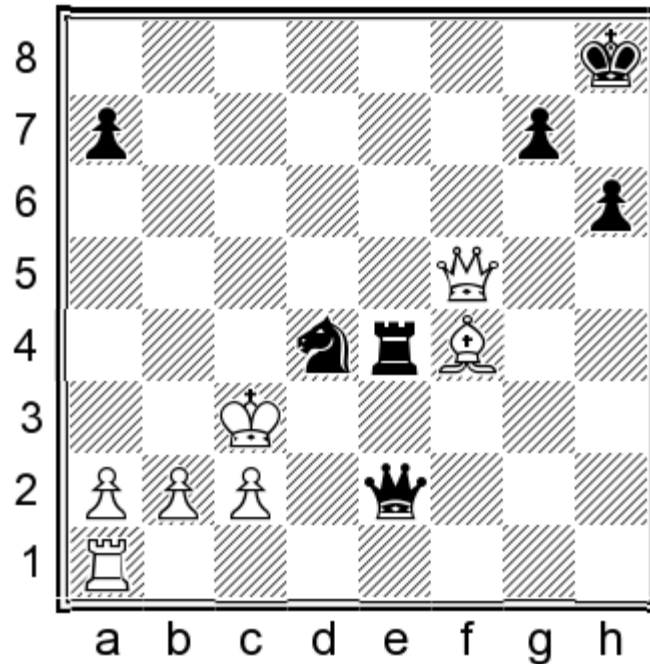
32.♕f4??

It was necessary to play 32.b3 in order to give the king an escape square on b2, although Black still has a very strong attack.

32...h6 33.♖f5

33.b3 was obviously no longer possible, as now that Black has parried the back-rank threat the f4-bishop is hanging.

33...♘xd4



Funnily enough the material balance has returned to equality, but Black is winning because of the insecure white king.

34.♖f8+ ♔h7 35.♖c1 ♘b5+ 36.♔b3 ♚c4# 0-1

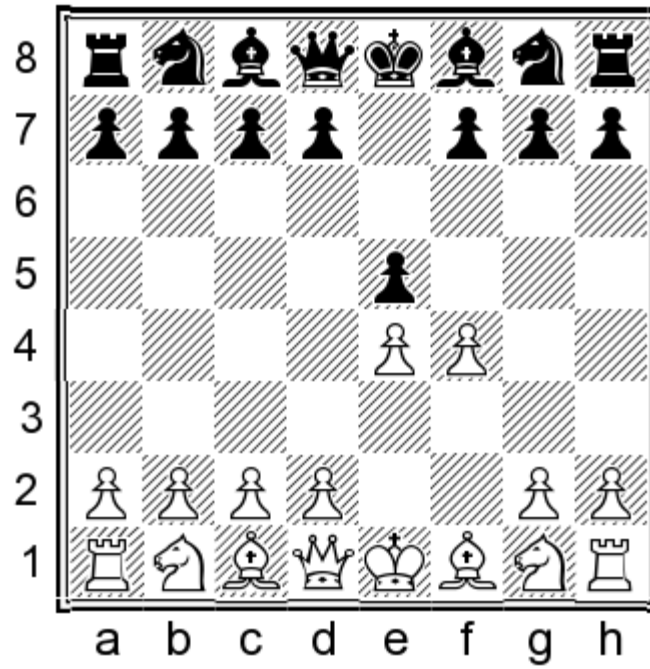
Game 87

Tigran Gharamian

Arnaud Rainfray 2150

Cannes Wch jr 1997

1.e4 e5 2.f4



The King's Gambit. Of course, with our repertoire the order of moves would be 1.f4 e5 2.e4.

It is unthinkable to delve into the very complex and deeply analyzed mainlines of the King's Gambit here. The Scottish grandmaster John Shaw has written a book of nearly 700 pages on the subject! We will therefore just look at a minor system that will allow us to avoid being caught completely off guard in the – rather unlikely – event that our opponent plays 2.e4 against the From Gambit. I say rather unlikely, because a Bird's Opening (1.f4) player who is basically not a 1.e4 player will rarely venture into the ins and outs of the King's Gambit.

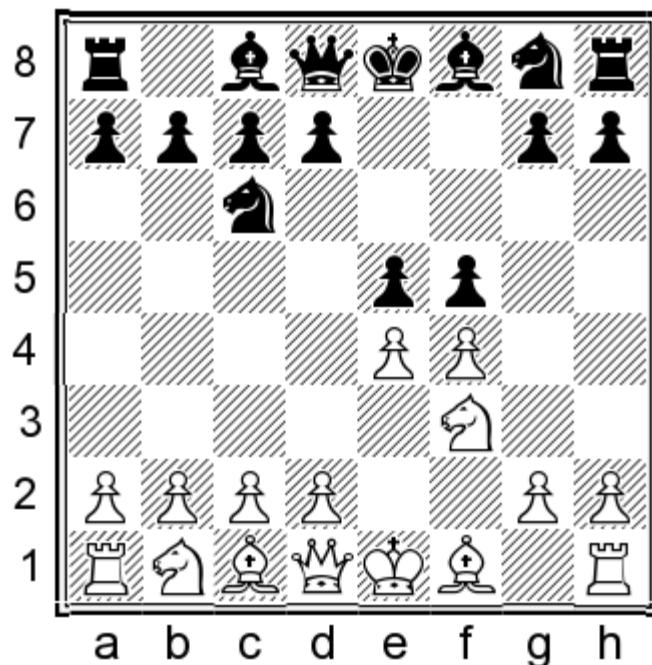
2...♘c6

A declined gambit that is tricky for White!

3.♙f3

3.fxe5?? would lead to a catastrophe: 3...♙h4+ (we again find this diagonal weakened because of the move f2-f4) 4.♔e2 (4.g3 ♜xe4+-+) 4...♜xe4+ 5.♙f2 ♘c5+ 6.♙g3 h5 7.h4 ♜xe5+ 8.♙h3 ♜f5+ 9.♙h2 ♘d6+ 10.g3 ♜f2+ 11.♙g2 ♜xg3#.

3...f5!?



A very interesting and relatively rare continuation. Thus the surprise effect may come into play, especially against an opponent who opens 1.f4 and who is therefore not usually a King's Gambit player.

With the text move Black actually attempts a 'King's counter gambit'! The position of the two knights will favour him in many positions.

4.exf5

The move that is recommended by theory (and in particular by John Shaw). White must be very careful, as it is easy for him to go wrong.

A) 4.♘xe5?? ♞xe5 5.fxe5 ♞h4+ (the e1-h4 diagonal!) 6.♔e2 ♞xe4+ 7.♕f2 ♞c5+ 8.♕g3 f4+ 9.♕h3 d5+ 10.g4 fxg3+ 11.♕xg3 ♞g6+ 12.♕f4 ♞f5+ 13.♕g3 ♞f2# Vieira-Costa, Lisbon 1991;

B) 4.fxe5? fxe4 and the f3-knight turns out to be worse placed than its counterpart on c6;

C) 4.♘c3 fxe4 5.♘xe5 (5.♘xe4 d5=) 5...♞f6 and Black will be able to play ...d7-d5 with a very good position;

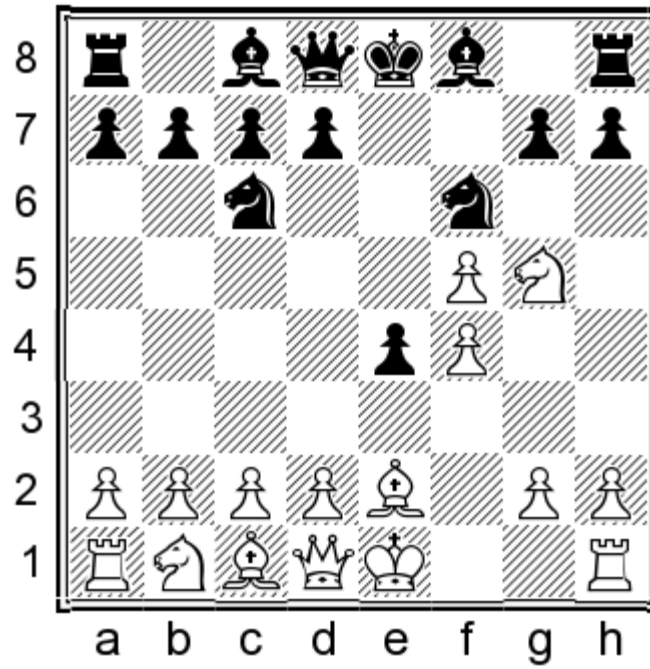
D) 4.d4 fxe4 5.♘xe5 d6! and White cannot play 6.♞h5+? because the black counterattack would prove too dangerous after 6...g6 7.♘xg6 ♞f6 8.♞h4 ♞xd4!. Black threatens a fork on c2, but also 9...♞f5;

E) 4.d3 was the move chosen by Ivanchuk against Nakamura, at Cap d'Agde 2010. It should not pose Black any major problems even though White came out on top in that particular game.

4...e4 5.♘g5

5.♘e5 is the normal move according to theory. After 5...♘xe5! 6.fxe5 Black has the strong move 6...♞e7! (without fear of being uncastled!) 7.♞h5+ ♔d8, because the e5-pawn will fall and Black will then be able to play ...♞f6 with a better position.

5...♞f6 6.♞e2



6...Qc5!

Black – rightly! – ignores the threat of a check on h5.

7.Qh5+ Kf8

Here too Black accepts the loss of castling rights. It will be largely compensated for by the strong centre he will obtain after playing ...d7-d5.

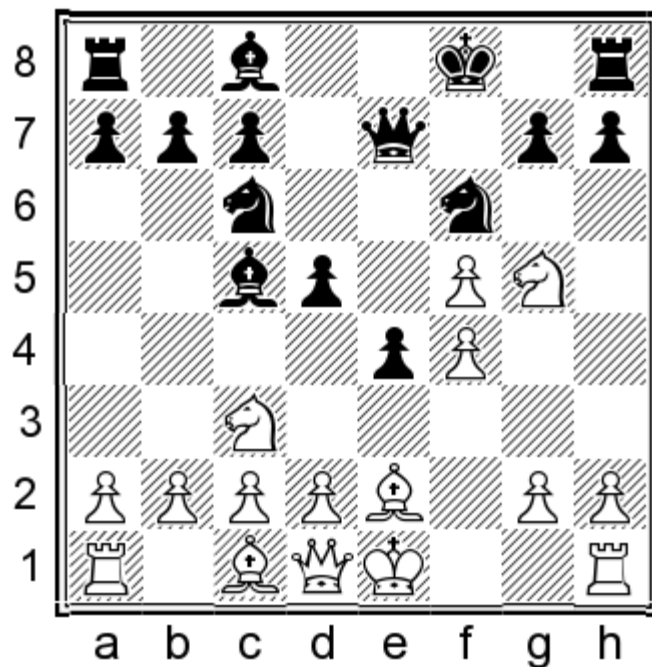
8.Nc3

White may only now have realized that 8.Nf7 was not good because of 8...Qe8!±.

8...Qe7 9.Qe2

White recognizes that the bishop has little reason to be on h5 after all.

9...d5



Black is ready to recover the f5-pawn and he will then have the superior chances thanks to his strong pawn centre.

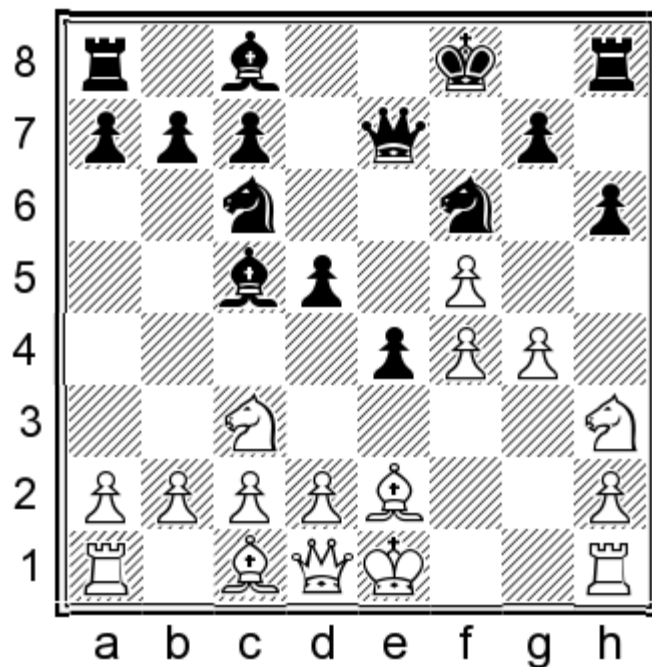
10.g4?

A move that results in too much weakening.

10.♘e6+ was preferable, even if after 10...♙xe6 11.fxe6 ♚xe6 Black stays on top thanks to his very strong centre. The loss of castling rights is not so important. Black can play ...♔f7, followed by ...♖f8 and ...♕g8, or ...h7-h6 with the idea ...♕g8-h7, or even just ...g7-g6 and ...♕g7 to castle 'by hand'.

10...h6 11.♘h3

If 11.♘e6+ ♙xe6 12.fxe6 ♘xg4! and now 13.♙xg4?? is not possible because of 13...♙h4+ and it's mate. Again we see the danger of weakening this diagonal!



11...xf1! 12.gxg4 h4+ 13.f1

In contrast to the note to the previous move, it is not mate here as the knight defends the f2-square.

13...h5 14.a4

The g4-bishop could obviously not retreat: 14.e2?? xh3+ 15.e1 h4+ 16.f1 and this time it is mate on f2!

14...hxg4 15.xc5 xh3+ 16.f2

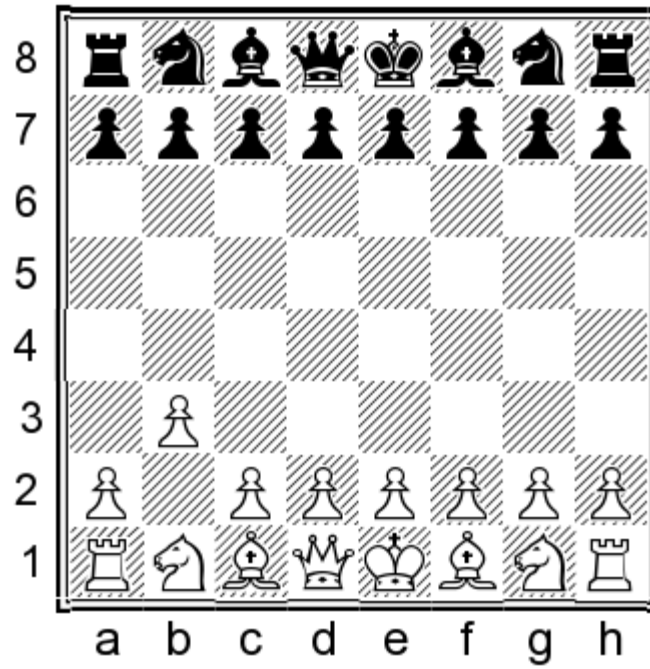
16.e1 was no better: 16...g2 17.f1 xh2--.

16...g3+ 0-1

We will finish our repertoire with a game that has long held a place in the annals of chess and which certainly figures among the most beautiful – and most famous – in history. It was played on the occasion of the so-called Match of the Century between the USSR and the Rest of the World in Belgrade in 1970. This game, on board one, pitted Boris Spassky, the World Champion of the era, against the Dane Bent Larsen, who was thus considered the best Western player. As for the soon-to-be World Champion Bobby Fischer, he was on second board for the Rest of the World team. Just for the record, a few months later the American put some order back into the Western hierarchy by crushing the Dane 6–0 in the semi-finals of the World Championship.

Game 88
Bent Larsen
Boris Spassky
 Belgrade tt 1970

1.b3



Unsurprisingly, Bent Larsen plays the opening which now bears his name and which is perfectly respectable, although relatively little played.

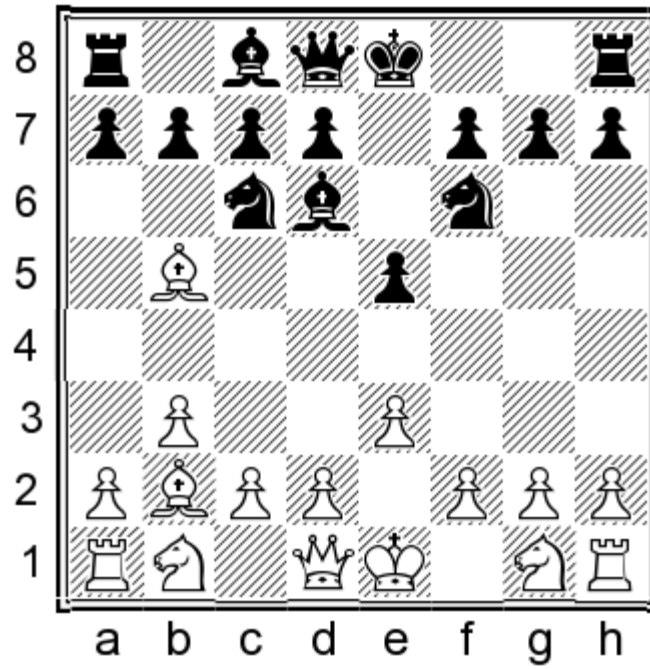
1...e5

The most natural move for those who play 1.e4 with White. The other central reaction (1...d5) could bring Queen's Indian positions with reversed colours with which we are not familiar.

2.♘b2 ♗c6 3.c4

This move leads the game towards English Opening setups (1.c4).

3.e3 is more in the 'spirit' of the Larsen Opening: 3...♘f6 (3...d5 is playable, but it is necessary to take the rather sharp follow-up 4.♘b5 ♘d6 5.f4!? into account) 4.♘b5 (again in the spirit of the opening: putting pressure on the e5-pawn) 4...♘d6!?



analysis diagram

An original defence of the e5-pawn which seems at first sight contrary to all general principles. The bishop is not developed on an active diagonal, and above all it blocks the d7-pawn, which itself prevents the c8-bishop from getting out. However, Black's plan is to play ...Nf7 followed by ...c7-c6, ...Bc7 and ...d7-d5. If he can achieve this then he will have a very good position because of his strong centre. Black does not have to fear the exchange on c6, as after the recapture ...dxc6 the problem of the c8-bishop would be completely resolved.

This move 4...Bd6 was played for the first time by Anderssen in 1859 and has since been taken up by Aronian, Giri, Karjakin, Gelfand, Ponomarev, Morozevich, So, Svidler and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (no less!). A vote of confidence, without a doubt.

3...Nf6 4.Nf3?!

A dubious move, says Kasparov. White allows Black to advance in the centre.

Better is 4.e3, to which Black could reply 4...d5. After 5.cxd5 Nxd5 we are actually in the presence of a Sicilian with reversed colours. If Black does not wish to transpose into an Open Sicilian set-up (with colours reversed), he can also play the more modest 4...Be7, or 4...d6 with the idea of ...g7-g6 and ...Bg7. He will have a solid and equal position in both cases.

4...e4 5.Nd4 Bc5

Black develops with gain of time.

6.Nxc6

e3 does not bring White a good position after 6...Bxd4 7.exd4 d5+.

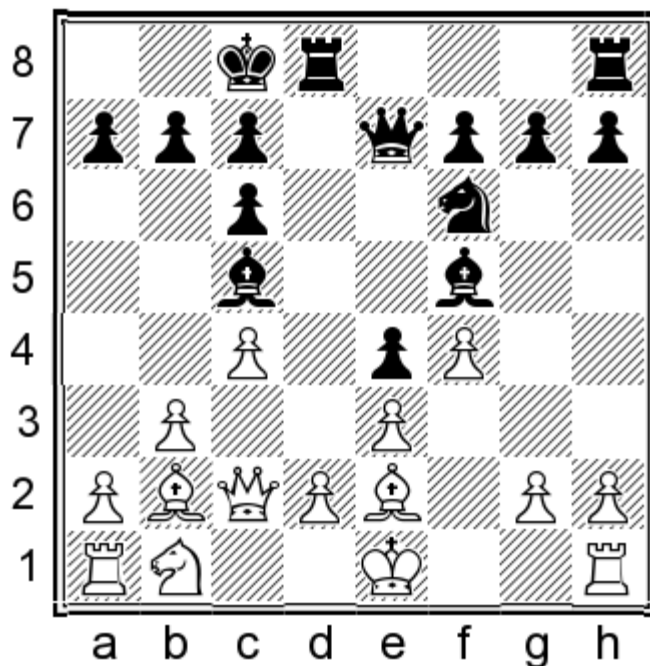
6...dxc6 7.e3

This move creates weaknesses on the semi-open file (the d3-square and the backward d2-pawn). However, 7.d4 leaves Black with a superior position after 7...exd3 8.Qxd3 Qe7!.

7...♙f5 8.♚c2 ♜e7 9.♙e2

9.d4 exd3 10.♙xd3 ♙xd3 11.♚xd3 ♜d8.

9...0-0-0 10.f4?



A serious weakening, especially of the e1-h4 diagonal. In view of the three previous games we know the consequences that this may entail.

10.♘c3 was preferable, even if after 10...♜d7 11.0-0-0 ♜hd8 Black has a good positional advantage because of his pressure on the d-file.

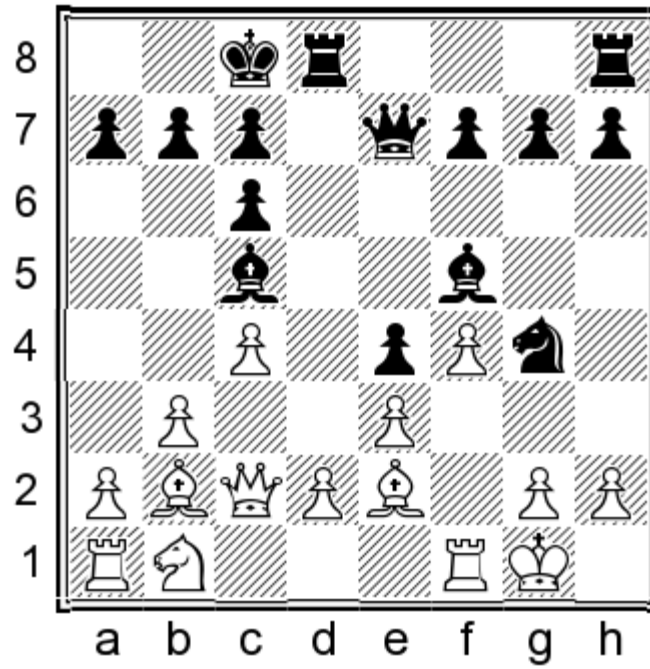
10...♘g4! 11.g3

White was already in a very difficult position:

A) 11.♙xg4? ♜h4+ 12.g3 ♜xg4 13.0-0 h5! and the black attack is decisive;

B) 11.♙xg7? ♜hg8 12.♙b2 ♘xe3 13.dxe3 ♜h4+ 14.g3 ♜xg3 and again White will be mated;

C) 11.0-0?



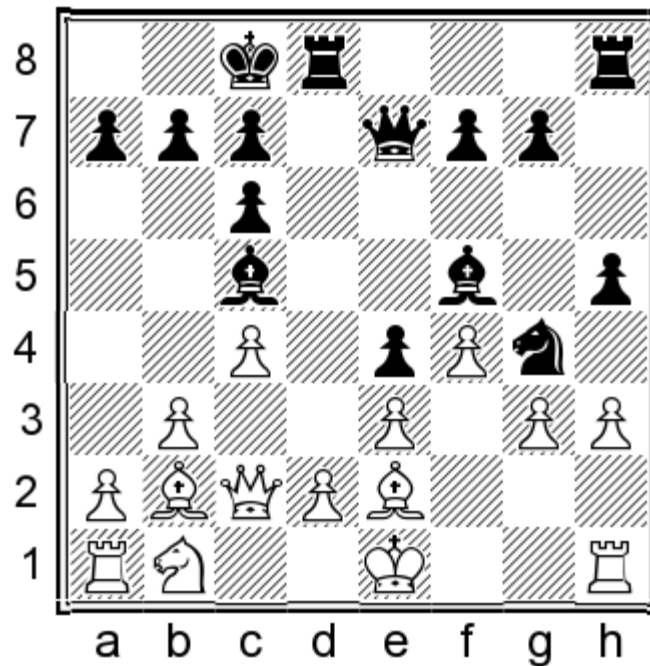
analysis diagram

11...♖xd2! 12.♘xd2 ♘xe3 13.♙c1 ♘xf1+ 14.♔xf1 ♚h4 (threatening mate on f2!) 15.g3 ♚xh2 16.♔e1 e3 and White can no longer escape the mate;

D) 11.♘c3? ♖xd2! 12.♙xd2 ♘xe3 13.♙c2 ♘f2+ 14.♔d2 e3+ and Black wins the queen.

11...h5! 12.h3

12.♘c3 ♖xd2! (as in the previous note).

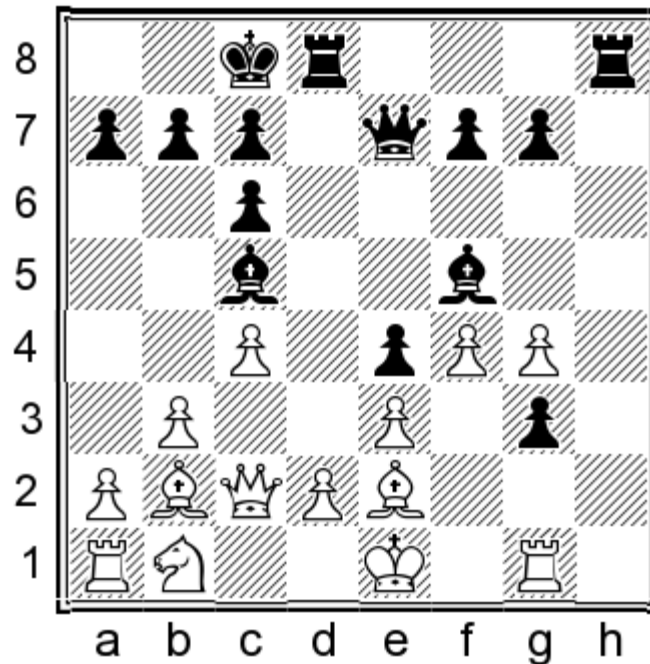


12...h4! 13.hxg4

‘Larsen thought about this move for an hour, but there was already no way to save the game’ (Kasparov).

13.♙xg4 ♜xg4 14.hxg4 hxg3 15.♞g1 ♞h1!! is similar to the game continuation.

13...hxg3 14.♞g1



14...♞h1!!

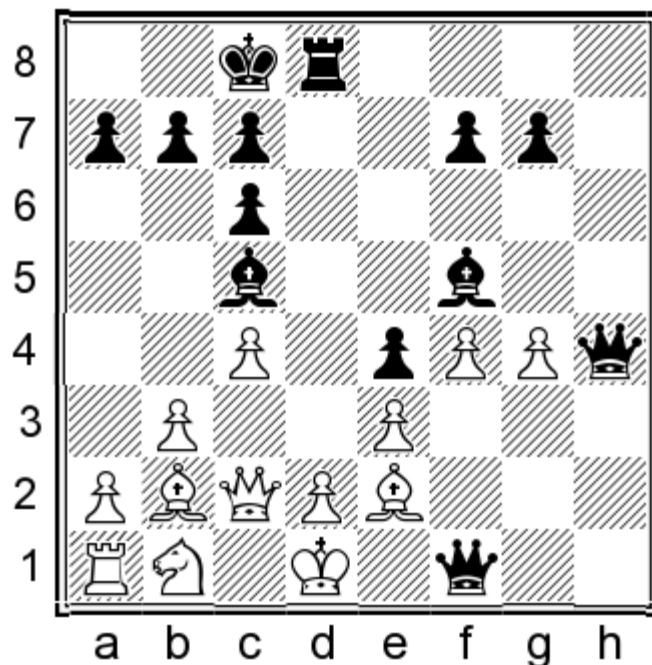
A fantastic move played live in front of 2,000 spectators in the Belgrade auditorium.

15.♞xh1 g2 16.♞f1

16.♞g1 was no better: 16...♞h4+ (we again see the weakening of the e1-h4 diagonal caused by the move f2-f4!) 17.♔d1 ♞h1 18.♞c3 ♞xg1+ 19.♔c2 ♞f2–+. A new black queen will emerge on the chessboard.

16...♞h4+ 17.♔d1 gxf1=♞+ 0–1

It's mate after 18.♙xf1 ♙xg4+ 19.♔c1 ♞e1+ 20.♞d1 ♞xd1#.



In spite of this miniature (mate in 20 moves, which is rather rare at this level), Larsen was not discouraged and managed to beat Spassky with black in the next round of this Match of the Century. One month later he again met the World Champion, at the Leiden tournament, and did not hesitate to play his favourite opening with white once more. This time the game ended with a shared point.

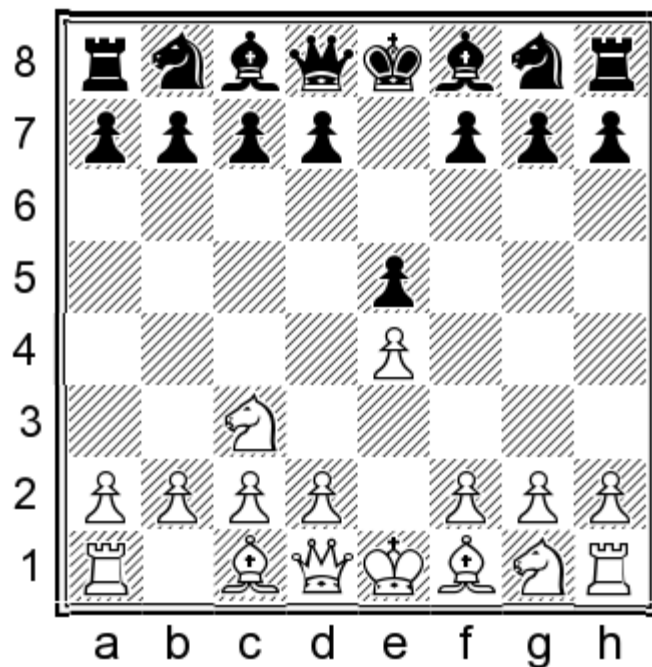
And the others?

So far we have studied eight first white moves (1.e4, 1.d4, 1.c4, 1.♘f3, 1.b4, 1.b3, 1.f4, and 1.g4). This means that there remain – in theory – 12 other possible moves. Of course we will not cover all of them. In any case, five of them (1.a4, 1.f3, 1.h4, 1.♘a3 and 1.♘h3) have absolutely no point and do not even deserve to be treated in a book on the openings. If someone plays such a move against you, just occupy the centre (1...e5 or – and! – 1...d5), develop your pieces and castle. By applying the basic opening principles you will very quickly get a superior position.

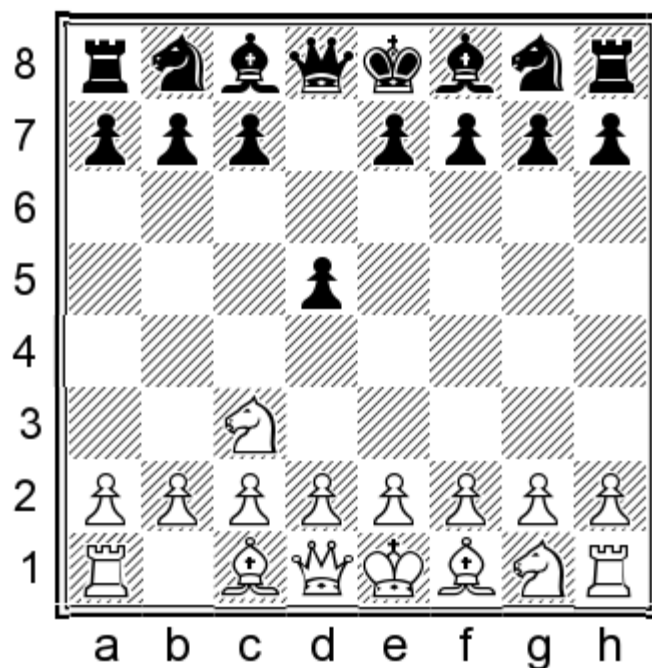
The remaining seven moves (1.a3, 1.h3, 1.c3, 1.d3, 1.e3, 1.g3 and 1.♘c3) can certainly be playable, but they mostly represent a simple transposition to another opening, quite often with reversed colours, and this is especially true for 1.a3 or 1.h3. The conductor of the white pieces who opens in such a way probably wants to simply give you the move. In this case, just take it and you will effectively enjoy the advantage of going first, which is not so negligible.

Just be careful not to let yourself get drawn into an opening that is not in your repertoire.

Take for example the unusual 1.♘c3, which is, after all, quite a respectable move. If Black replies with 1...e5 then the game could transpose into a king's pawn opening after 2.e4 where the move ♘c3 would, of course, be useful (not like a2-a3 or h2-h3).

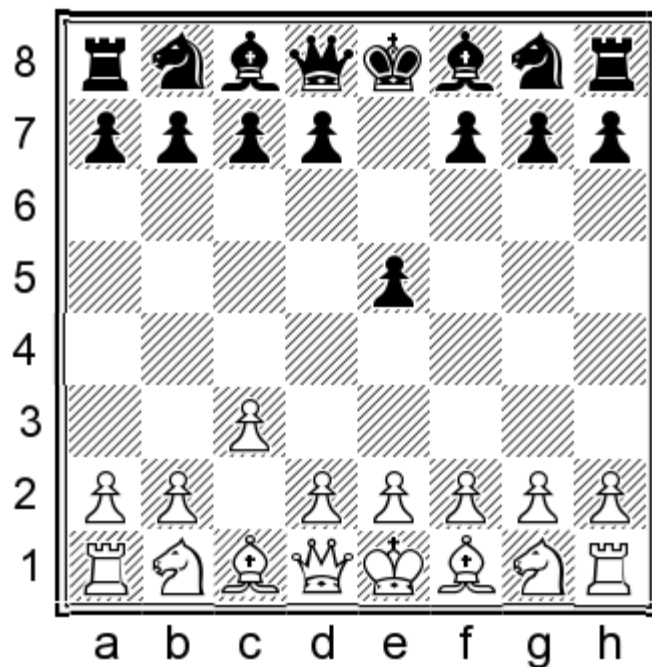


To remain faithful to our repertoire I therefore advise you to play 1...d5 in answer to 1.♘c3.



If White now plays 2.e4, the game has transposed into a variation of the Scandinavian that we saw in Game 46. And if White continues 2.d4 then Black can play his Stonewall, with the rather unusual move order that we discussed at the end of Chapter 9.

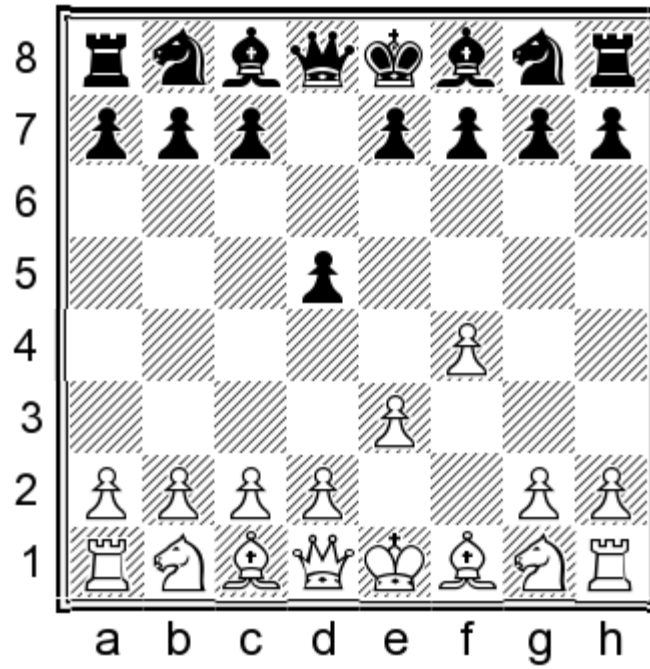
The same reasoning must prevail for the moves 1.c3, 1.d3, 1.e3 and 1.g3. Each time Black may of course reply very naturally with 1...e5. In this case it is very probable that the game will veer towards a King's Pawn Opening (1.e4), but with reversed colours and one extra tempo for White, who in fact becomes Black! This is not clear? Let's take as an example this position in which White has played 1.c3 and Black has replied 1...e5:



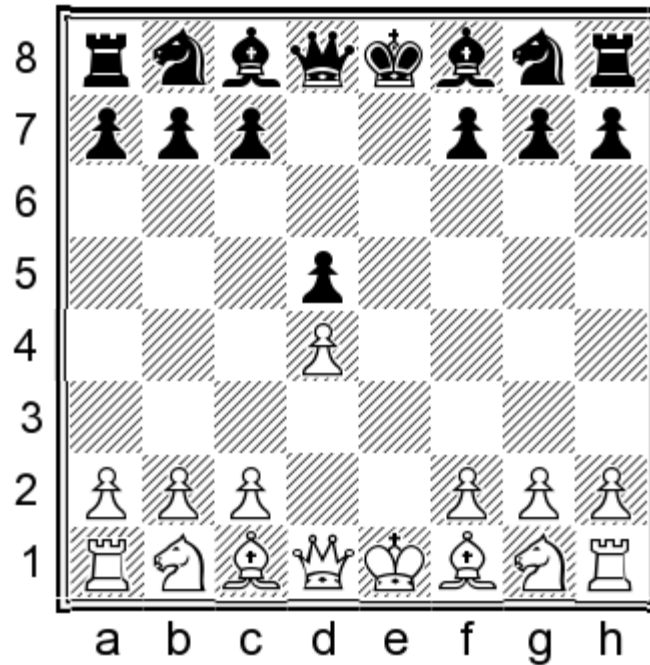
White is in the process of playing a Caro-Kann (1.e4 c6) with reversed colours and a tempo more. Although this is not decisive, it may not, however, be to everyone's taste to play against a Caro-Kann with a tempo less. That is why playing 1...d5 and trying to transpose back into a Stonewall (either the classic one from Chapter 9 or that of the Réti (Chapter 10) where White has not played d2-d4) would be most consistent with our repertoire.

As we have seen throughout this book, the move 1...d5 is in any case the cornerstone of our repertoire. This is the move that will be played against most of White's opening moves (1.e4, 1.d4, 1.♘f3...), but there are exceptions, of course. Notably against 1.c4 (the English Opening) where 1...d5 would not be good because of the exchange on d5 (this is nothing like a Scandinavian, because here White exchanges his c-pawn and keeps his two central pawns). So, as we saw in Chapter 10 against the English, we will accept a transposition into a reversed Sicilian (1.c4 e5) because a tempo more or less is not of fundamental importance in the Grand Prix Attack.

Also pay attention to 1.e3. If you answer automatically with 1...d5 then White could play 2.f4 and the game would transpose into a Bird's Opening where you can no longer play this book's recommendation, the From Gambit.



In order to stick close to our repertoire when facing 1.e3 the most relevant reply would therefore be 1...e5. If White continues with 2.d4 (the most logical), Black exchanges on d4 followed by ...d7-d5, and the game has transposed into an Exchange French, which we saw an example of in Game 9.



Certainly, this position is considered – with good reason – to be completely equal, but that did not stop Magnus Carlsen from winning that game with black. With black you will often have to be satisfied with simple equality, which is not so bad.

Obviously it would be extravagant of me to pretend that the openings recommended throughout this book assure a forced advantage and will guarantee you victory in less than 20 moves against all of White's opening moves. If such miracle cures existed, they would be widely known. On the other hand, this book should allow you to build an opening repertoire with minimum work. You can then devote more time to other sectors, in particular to tactics, which are

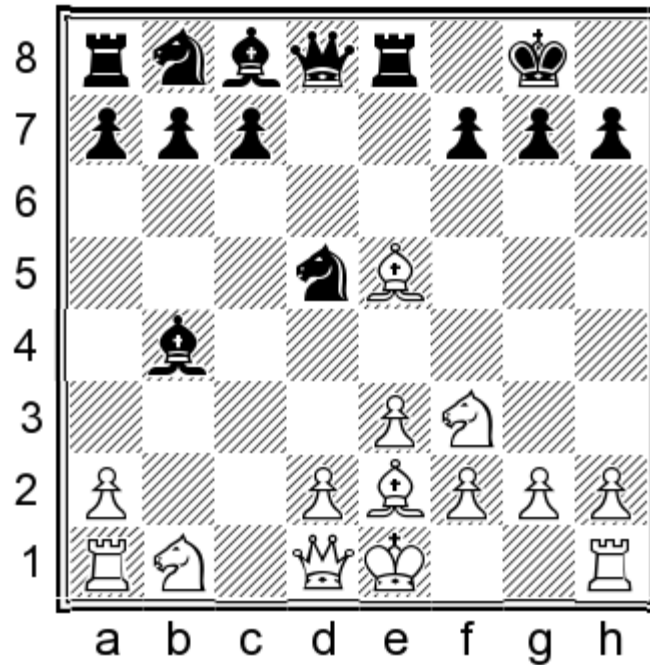
fundamental. I particularly stress this point: the opening is an important area, but tactics and the calculation of variations are undoubtedly even more important, especially for amateurs or juniors who are embarking on competitive chess. What is the point of knowing the first 15 moves of an opening by heart if you then put a piece *en prise* on the 16th move as soon as you have left your theoretical knowledge?

I would therefore like to give you one last piece of advice before we part: work on your tactics, play chess (a lot), do not hesitate to join your local club if you have not already done so, and above all enjoy the game. Working on chess should not be a burden.

Good luck, and don't forget: have fun!

Your move!

65



White has not yet castled. How does Black seize the initiative?

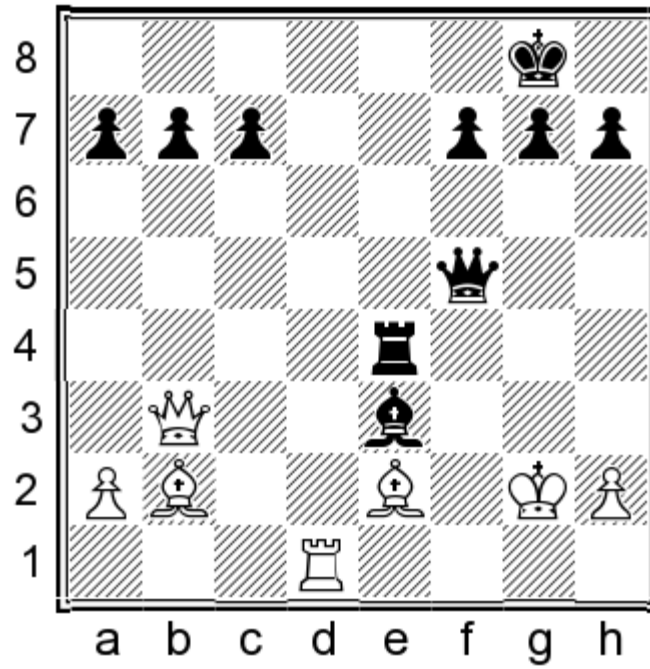
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8... ♖xe5! 9. ♘xe5 ♙f6 10. f4 ♘xe3

and Black has a very strong initiative.

(See Game 83, **Vigneron-Moret**)

66



Black to move. How do you wrap up the mating attack?

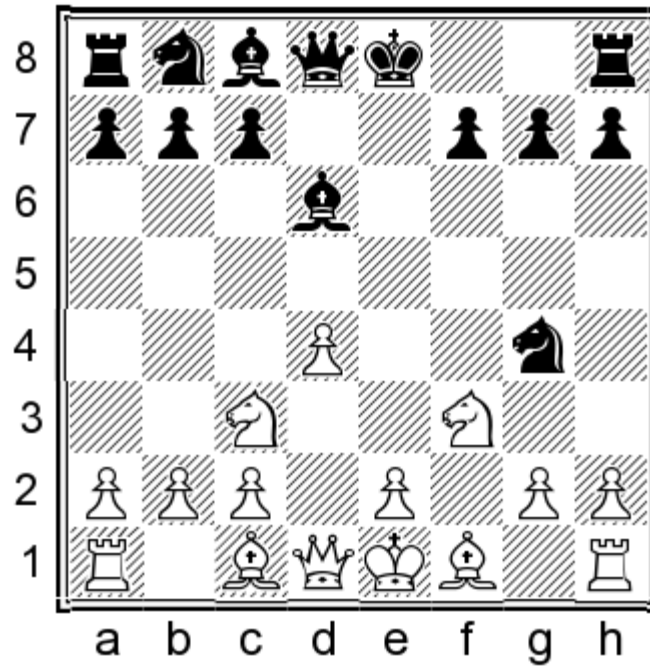
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22... ♖g4+! 23. ♙xg4 ♜xg4+ 24. ♔f1

24. ♔h1 ♜f3#.

24... ♜f3+ 25. ♔e1 ♜f2#

(See Game 83, **Vigneron-Moret**)

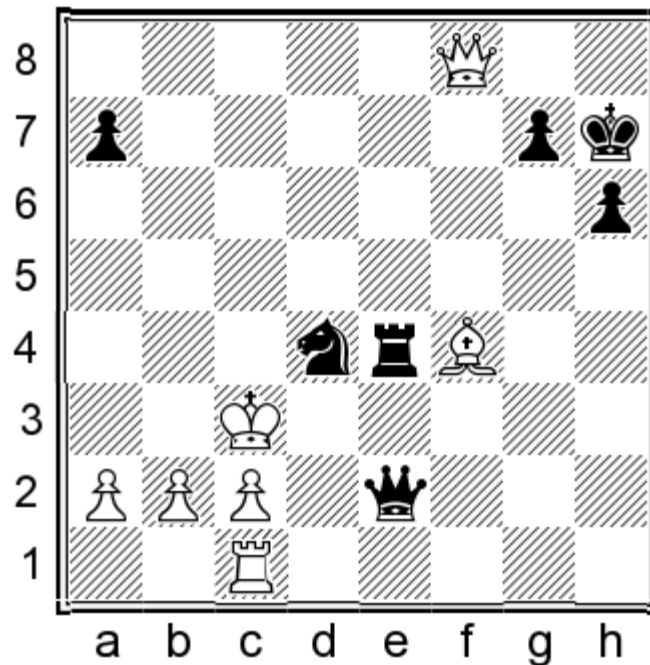


The e1-h4 diagonal is weakened by the absence of the f2-pawn. How does Black take advantage of this?

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6...♘h2!

(See Game 85, Fievet-Colson)



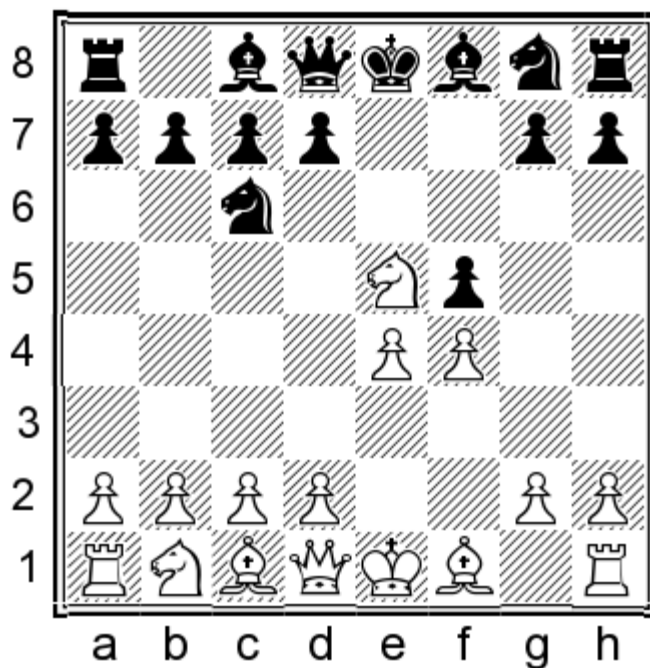
With such an exposed white king it is no surprise that there is mate in two moves.

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35...♖b5+ 36.♗b3 ♜c4#

(See Game 86, **Taylor-Mestel**)

69



White has just played 4. ♖xe5??. How does Black refute this move?

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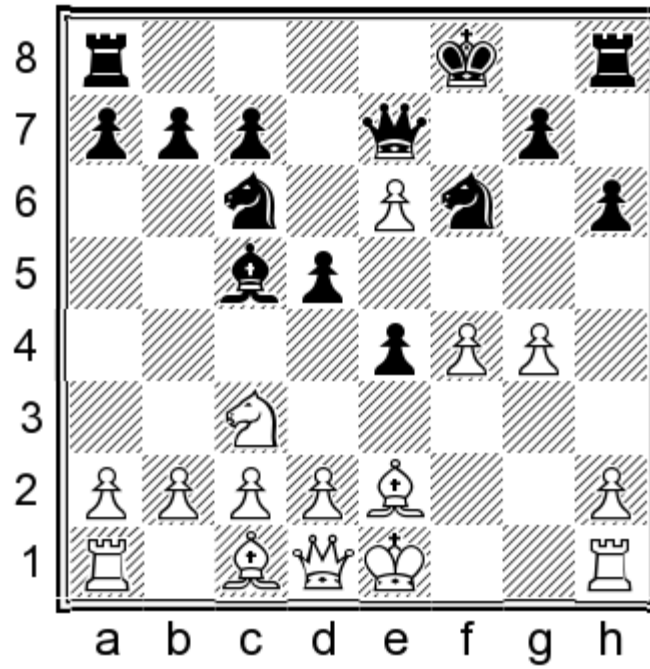
4...♖xe5 5.fxe5 ♜h4+ 6.♗e2

6.g3 ♜xe4+.

6...♜xe4+ 7.♗f2 ♙c5+

(See Game 87, **Gharamian-Rainfray**)

70



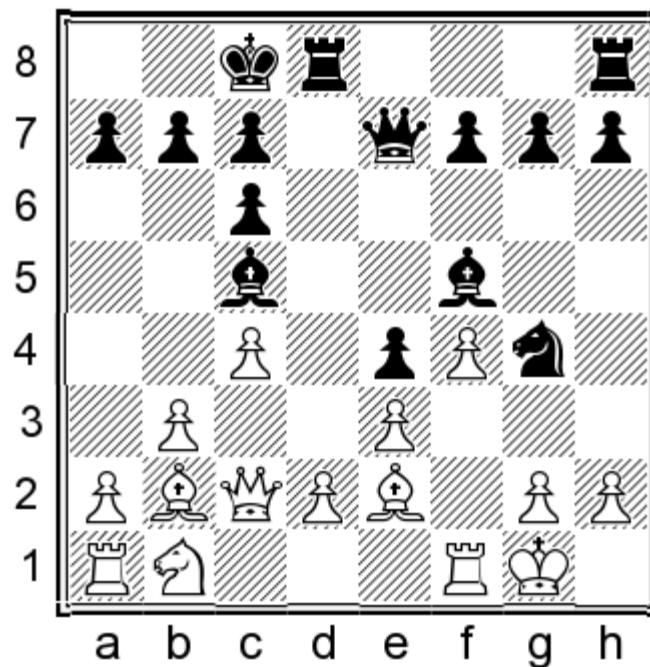
Black to move. Once again, how can you take advantage of the weakness of the e1-h4 diagonal?

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12... ♖xg4!

and 13. ♕xg4?? is not possible because of 13... ♔h4+ with mate to follow.

(See Game 87, **Gharamian-Rainfray**)



Black to play and win.

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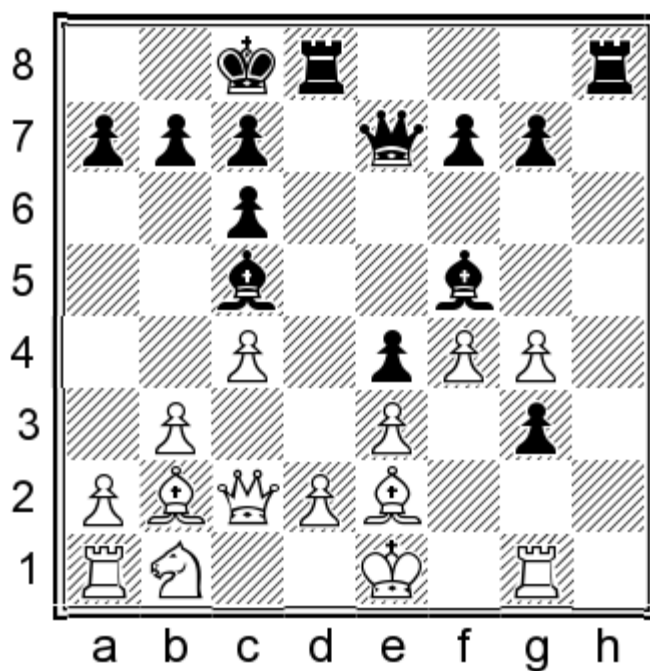
11...♖xd2! 12.♘xd2

12.♙xd2?? ♕xe3+.

12...♘xe3

(See Game 88, Larsen-Spassky)

72



Black to move. Spassky's beautiful move, which must have left Larsen dumbstruck.

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14...♖h1!! 15.♖xh1 g2-+

(See Game 88, Larsen-Spassky)

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