opening repertoire

the Iron English

Simon Williams
Richard Palliser



EVERYMAN CHESS

available on
chessable
chesstouring.com

Contents

Title page
About the Authors
Preface
Introduction

1) Key Ideas for White
2) Kickstarter: An Outline of the Iron English Repertoire
3) English Versus King's Indian
4) The Modern: 1.c4 g6 and 1...d6
5) Other Fianchetto Defences
6) The Reversed Sicilian
7) The Symmetrical English
8) The Mikenas Attack
9) Other Lines (1...c6/1...e6)

Index of Variations
Index of Complete Games

chesstouring.com

The Iron English

Simon Williams
Richard Palliser

chessable.com
www.everymanchess.com

First published in 2020 by Gloucester Publishers Limited, London.

Copyright © 2020 Richard Palliser and Simon Williams

The right of Richard Palliser and Simon Williams to be identified as the authors of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

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

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

chesstouring.com

ISBN: 978 1 78194 580 3

Distributed in North America by National Book Network,
15200 NBN Way, Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214. Ph: 717.794.3800.

Distributed in Europe by Central Books Ltd.,
Central Books Ltd, 50 Freshwater Road, Chadwell Heath, London, RM8 1RX.

All other sales enquiries should be directed to Everyman Chess.
email: info@everymanchess.com; website: www.everymanchess.com

Everyman is the registered trade mark of Random House Inc. and is used in this work under licence from Random House Inc.

Everyman Chess Series

Commissioning editor and advisor: Byron Jacobs

Typeset and edited by First Rank Publishing, Brighton.

chesstouring.com

Cover design by Horatio Monteverde.
Printed by TJ International Limited, Padstow, Cornwall.

chesstouring.com

About the Authors

Richard Palliser is an International Master and the editor of *CHESS Magazine*. In 2006 he became Joint British Rapidplay Champion and in 2019 finished third in the British Championship. He has established a reputation as a skilled chess writer and written many works for Everyman, including the bestselling *The Complete Chess Workout*.

Simon Williams is a Grandmaster, a well-known presenter and a widely-followed streamer, as well as a popular writer whose previous books have received great praise. He is much admired for his dynamic and spontaneous attacking style.

chesstouring.com

Preface

This book is the first collaboration between Chessable and Everyman, a collaboration that aims to help the chess lover learn chess in the way they want to. That might be through the revolutionary Chessable MoveTrainer and video tools, or via a more traditional book format. This book is the essence of The Iron English course on Chessable.

Chessable have quickly become the leading online resource for the aspiring player who is keen to improve, as well as master the important chess concepts. Now by teaming up with Everyman Chess, a premier and long-standing publisher, Chessable are helping to spread their love of chess and studying it to a wider audience.

This book, like its sister Chessable course, is the brainchild of not just myself, but renowned openings expert IM Richard Palliser, who I really enjoyed working with. I used the English Opening pretty much exclusively to rise to the level of strong IM, and our aim is to show you how you too can greatly improve your chess with the help of a dynamic but easy-to-play opening.

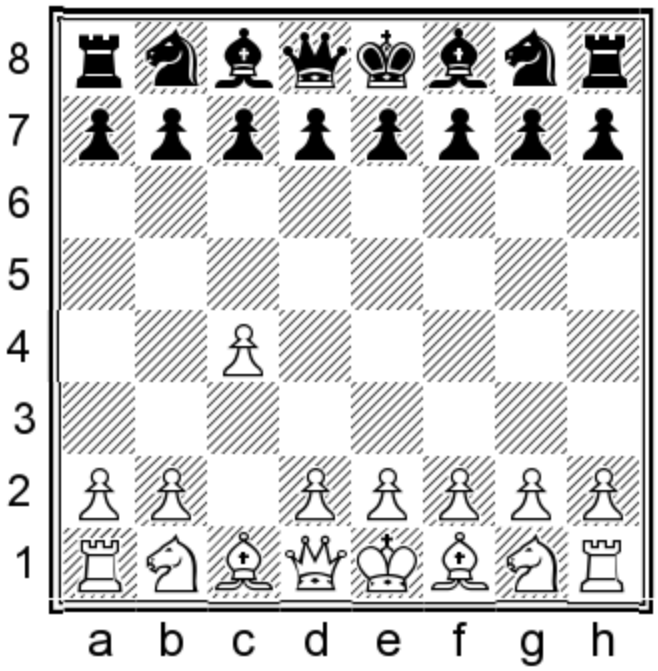
The lines which make up our repertoire are centred around the Botvinnik formation. Unsurprisingly we owe a huge debt of thanks to Mikhail Botvinnik, as well as his fellow seven world champions who have deployed the main lines of our repertoire. It is ideal for the club and tournament player, and very much a serious weapon. Richard has painstakingly gone through not just the key ideas behind it, but also all the latest theory to present a brilliant opening weapon for life.

Simon Williams,
Godalming, October 2020

chesstouring.com

Introduction

1.c4



Welcome to the world of the English Opening! It's an opening which can be traced right back to that great English player of the Victorian era, Howard Staunton. Wherever possible we'll also be looking to put to good use a set-up within the English favoured by the legendary fifth world champion, 'the Patriarch', Mikhail Botvinnik.

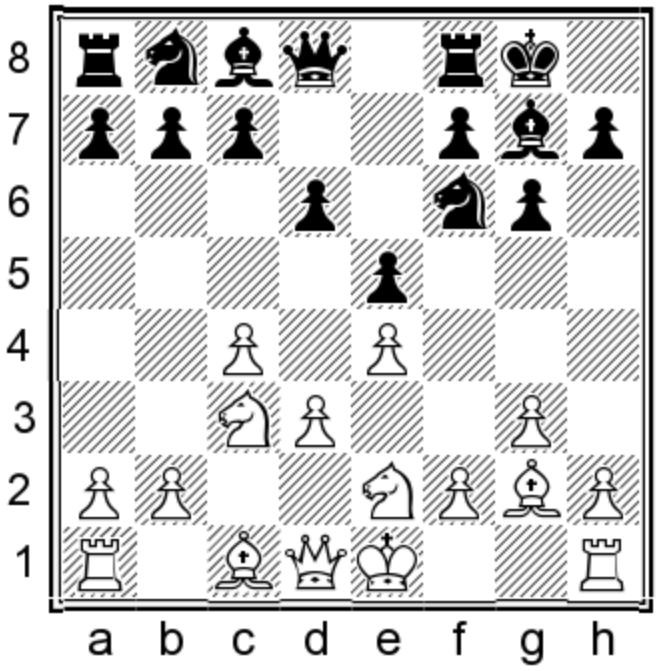
The world hasn't been an amazing place of late, but lockdown allowed time for plenty of filming, streaming...and internet blitz. Simon even did a spot of a chess work for himself, realising that while some of his old favourites were in need of an overhaul, they were very much still as dangerous as back when he first started playing them many years ago.

In recent years Simon has played a lot of 1.d4, but he will most certainly once again be employing his old love, the English, a fair bit more from now on. Let's see why!

chesstouring.com

1...e5

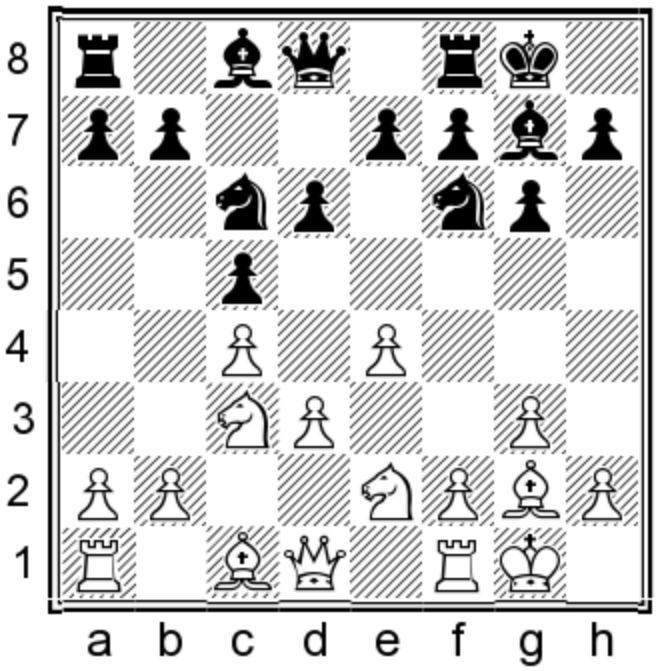
Black's main move. Play transposes after 1...Nf6 2.Nc3 if Black now pushes his e-pawn two squares, but a very popular alternative is 2...g6, going for a King's Indian-style set-up. We too have our own favourite set-up and the Botvinnik is very handy for countering the King's Indian, which remains an extremely popular choice at club level: 3.g3 Bg7 (3...d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 would be Grünfeldy, but 5.Bg2 is quite dangerous; White can even deploy one of our favourite early advances, pushing Harry!) 4.Bg2 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.Nge2 e5 7.d3.



This is the Botvinnik set-up, giving White a firm central grip and control over d5. White will castle next and may then aim to cramp Black with a quick f4-f5.

An important and super-solid alternative for Black is 1...c5, the Symmetrical English. Here too we can aim for our favourite set-up: 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.e4 Nf6 6.Nge2 0-0 7.0-0 d6 8.d3.

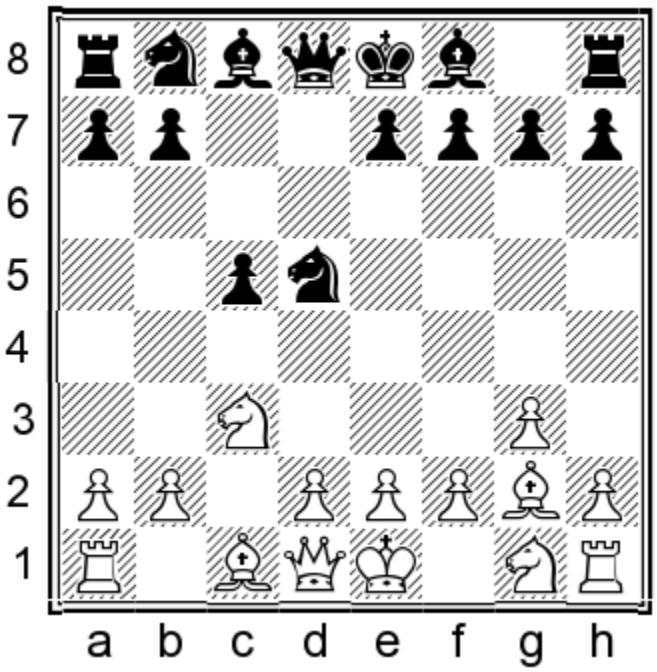
chesstouring.com



This position can come about via a great many move orders, including a King's Indian one, but once again White's central grip is obvious to the eye. Key pawn levers to bear in mind are f4-f5, b4 and d4.

After 1...Nf6 2.Nc3 Black can be a little annoying with 2...c5 (2...e6 is another important line, beloved of Nimzo-Indian players, but we don't have to allow their fun and can go 3.e4, the dangerous Mikenas Attack) 3.g3 d5, which denies us a Botvinnik set-up, but after 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2 it's hard to complain about White's lovely bishop.

chesstouring.com



Just look at that bishop on g2 swooping down the long light-square diagonal!

We'll also look at a few tricky initial moves, including Simon's old favourite, 1...f5, as well as 1...b6, 1...c6 and especially 1...e6, all of which aim to deny us our Botvinnik formation, but do little to prevent a quick e4 from White.

2.Nc3 Nf6

2...Bb4 is a creative line and can lead to some very fun positions after 3.Nd5. It's also possible to go 3.g3 Bxc3 4.bxc3 d6 5.Bg2 when, yes, you guessed it, a Botvinnik formation is on the cards, but our recommendation is actually 3.e4!?, mirroring our main line below.

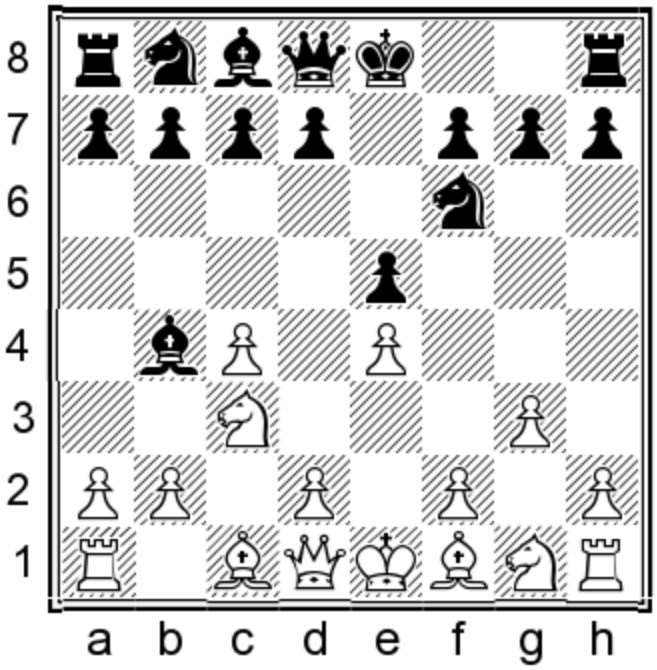
Instead, 2...Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.e4 sees our ideal set-up once again in action. Black doesn't have to go King's Indian style with 5...d6 6.Nge2 Nf6 here, but in any case White has his central grip and may break with f4.

3.g3 Bb4

chesstouring.com

A big alternative is 3...d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2 Nb6 when we're suggesting that White avoids the main lines of the reversed Dragon with 6.e3, again bringing the king's knight to its favourite English square, e2. The resulting positions are relatively unexplored, but certainly dynamic – and fun! Not only may White break with d4, but also f4.

4.e4!?



This idea championed by the champ himself, Magnus Carlsen, is likely to surprise your opponent and is actually a pretty decent choice. Once again, a Botvinnik set-up is White's plan and 4...Bxc3 5.dxc3 Nxe4 doesn't win a pawn due to 6.Qg4, hitting the knight and g7.

Before we get to tackle this line and all Black's possibilities in detail, it's time to learn some of White's key ideas. Read on!

Richard Palliser,
York, October 2020

chesstouring.com

Chapter One
Key Ideas for White

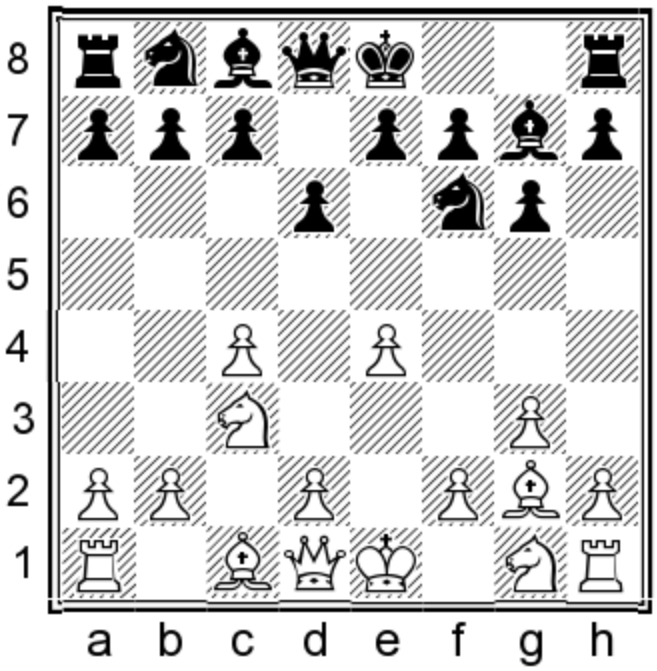
Cramping the King's Indian

Game 1
S.Williams-V.Locatelli
Cappelle-la-Grande 1995

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 d6 3.g3 g6

Black decides to go for a King's Indian set-up after all. Instead, 3...e5 4.Bg2 Nbd7 5.d3 Be7 would resemble the Old Indian. After 6.e4 Black looks a little cramped and our favourite f4 advance might well occur.

4.Bg2 Bg7 5.e4



There are several different ways of handling the English, but naturally we advocate setting up that Botvinnik formation.

chesstouring.com

5...e5 6.Nge2 Nc6 7.0-0 0-0 8.f4!?

8.d3 is our recommended move order, but the young Simon liked the immediate, bold advance of Freddie.

8...Be6

Routine development, just as you might expect at club level. 8...exf4! 9.gxf4 Nh5 is somewhat more challenging. Black prepares to gain space of his own with ...f5 and 10.f5? Qh4 would leave White looking rather overextended.

9.Nd5?!

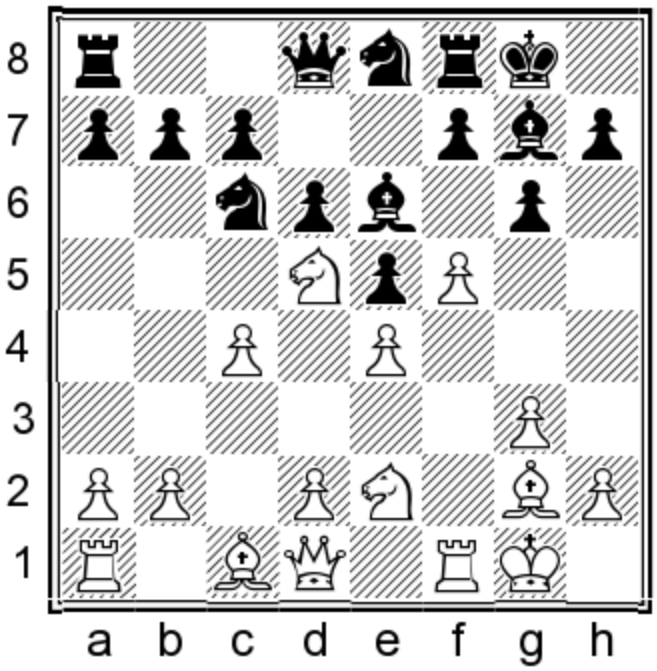
White should still go 9.d3 when Black might well elect to prevent f5 with 9...Qd7. Now 10.Nd5 looks sensible, but we also can't resist pointing out that 10.f5!? gxf5 11.Bg5 is a very interesting pawn sacrifice. If Black takes on e4, White wins material, so 11...Ne8 seems necessary (11...h6? 12.Bxf6 Bxf6 13.exf5 Bxf5 14.g4! wins a piece – a tactical motif worth remembering), when 12.exf5 Bxf5 13.Nd5 leaves White with a certain grip and compensation for the pawn; Qd2 will follow and quite possibly Ne2-c3-e4.

9...Ne8?

Far too meek. King's Indian players always want to free their f-pawn to go ...f5, but Black won't be able to because of our set-up. Much better was 9...Bg4, making good use of Black's grip on the d4-square, which is the one downside to the Botvinnik formation.

10.f5!

chesstouring.com



Put that in your pipe and smoke it!

10...Bd7

10...Bxd5 11.cxd5 is almost never a trade to worry about. After 11...Nd4 (or 11...Ne7 12.d3 when 12...c6 is a break for freedom, but after 13.dxc6 bxc6 14.g4! White is much better; Ng3 follows and Black is in grave danger of being squashed to death on the kingside) 12.Nxd4 exd4 13.d3 White has a pleasant advantage. Black's pawn on d4 is something of a dead point, merely blunting his own bishop, in contrast to which White has control, a space advantage, the two bishops and, yes, g4-g5 may follow.

11.d3

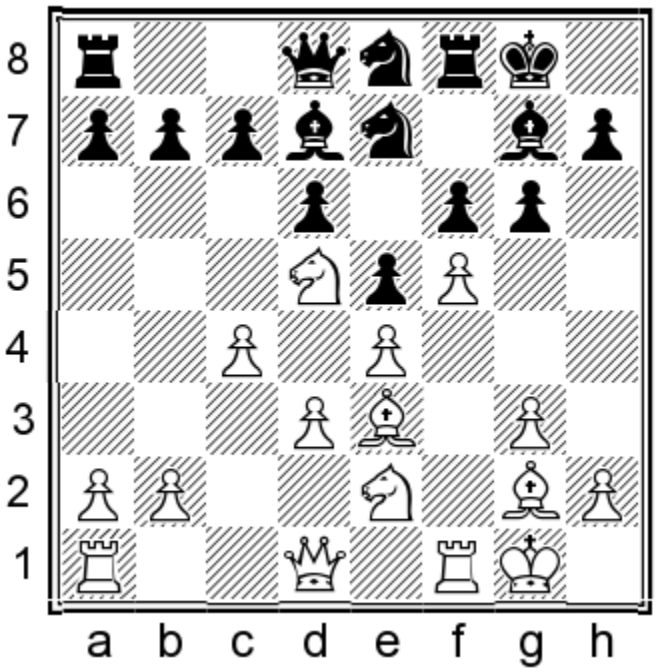
Having made such a gain of space, it's high time to develop the remaining pieces.

11...f6

chesstouring.com

This is ugly, but so is the best the engines can suggest, 11...h6 12.Be3 g5. Just look at that bishop on g7! Indeed, with Black devoid of counterplay and so cramped it might make sense for White to switch operations and expand with 13.b4. Note that while our Botvinnik set-up does leave the f-pawn free to advance, we are by no means committed to kingside play, but can also advance on the queenside and sometimes even in the centre.

12.Be3 Ne7



13.Nxe7+

Simon remembers also being tempted by 13.g4 and 13.d4!? looks very nice too for White with Qb3 next up.

13...Qxe7 14.Qd2 g5?

Black wrongly thinks that Bh6 is a threat. That is often a plan to swap off one of Black's best pieces, but here the entombed bishop on g7 cannot be seen as one.

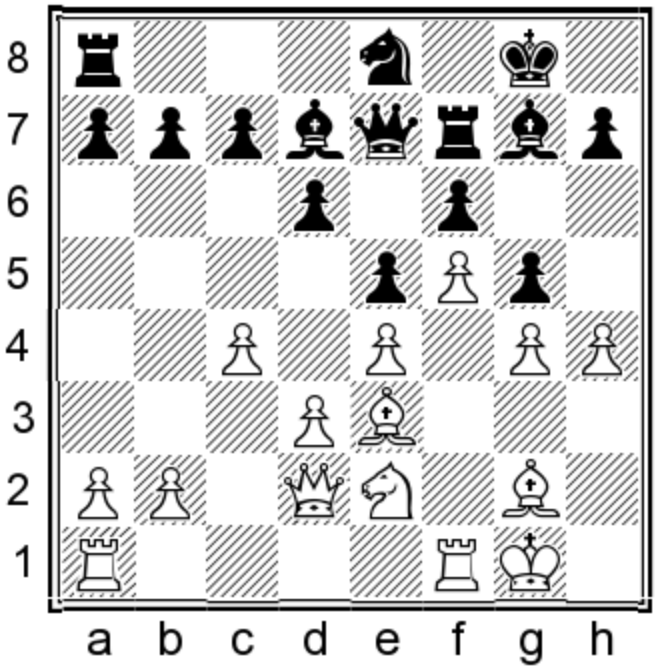
chesstouring.com

14...c6 was a try for some counterplay, but after 15.g4 Nc7 16.Ng3 White retains control and might even ready Harry, while 14...c5 15.g4 (a good case can even be made for 15.b4!?) 15...a6 16.h4! b5 17.Ng3 Rb8 18.g5 is a very instructive line. Naturally Black doesn't want to take on f5 or g5, but he is just in huge trouble in any case, as shown by 18...Nc7 19.Rf2 Rb7 20.Raf1. The pressure grows against f6 and 20...Ne8 21.fxg6! (only now, with all White's pieces perfectly aligned) 21...hxg6 22.h5 decisively rips open lines: for example, 22...fxg5 (or 22...gxh5 23.g6 followed by Nxh5 or even Nf5 and Qe2) 23.Rxf8+ Bxf8 24.hxg6 Qg7 25.Qf2 Be7 26.Nf5 Bxf5 27.Qxf5 and Black collapses on the light squares.

15.g4!

Preventing any notion of ...h5 while freeing g3 for the knight.

15...Rf7 16.h4!



It was again possible to switch focus with 16.b4, but with Black so tied up, Simon couldn't resist involving Harry.

chesstouring.com

16...h6

16...gxh4? 17.Rf3 will regain the pawn with a mighty attack after Rh3.

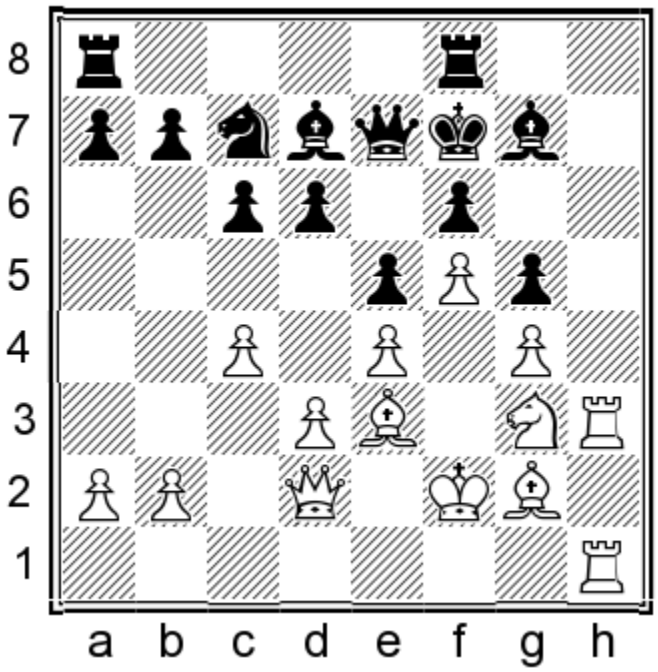
17.hxg5 hxg5

17...fxg5 might have been more obstinate, but still looks great for White after 18.Bf3 Nf6 19.Ng3. Bolder readers will no doubt be looking at ideas of Kg2, Rh1 and a sacrifice on g5 here; calmer ones will notice how tied up Black is, so why not open a second front on the queenside as White?

18.Kf2!

Centralising the king, not for the endgame, but to allow the rooks access to the h-file.

18...c6 19.Rh1 Nc7 20.Rh3 Rff8 21.Rah1 Kf7 22.Ng3



This is a dream Botvinnik position. White has a handy space advantage and just look at Black's lack of coordination and counterplay. Simon recalls he was very happy here, and no wonder.

chesstouring.com

22...Rh8 23.Nh5!

Keeping pieces on and Black bottled up.

23...Bh6 24.d4

Levering open the second front, but we're not sure now how Simon resisted 24.Nxf6!, and if 24...Qxf6 25.Rxh6 Rxh6 26.Bxg5 and it's all over.

24...c5?

Desperation. 24...exd4 25.Bxd4 Ne8 26.Nf4! is one neat way to invade, and 24...Bg7 actually fails to prevent 25.Nxf6! and – boom! After 25...Bxf6 (25...Qxf6 26.Bxg5 traps the black queen) 26.Rh7+ Bg7 27.Bxg5 Qe8 28.f6 White wins material while decisively opening lines.

25.dxc5 dxc5 26.Nxf6!

Simon was never going to miss this for long.

26...Bxf5 27.exf5 Rad8 28.Nd5 e4 29.Nxe7 Rxd2+ 30.Bxd2 1-0

Attacking on the Kingside

Game 2
S.Williams-A.Dyce
European Under-16 Championship, Zagan 1995

1.e4 g6 2.c4 Bg7 3.Nc3 d6 4.g3 Nf6 5.Bg2 0-0 6.Nge2 e5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.f4

Once again we see Simon's old favourite, but you should really prefer 8.d3.

8...Nd4?!

chesstouring.com

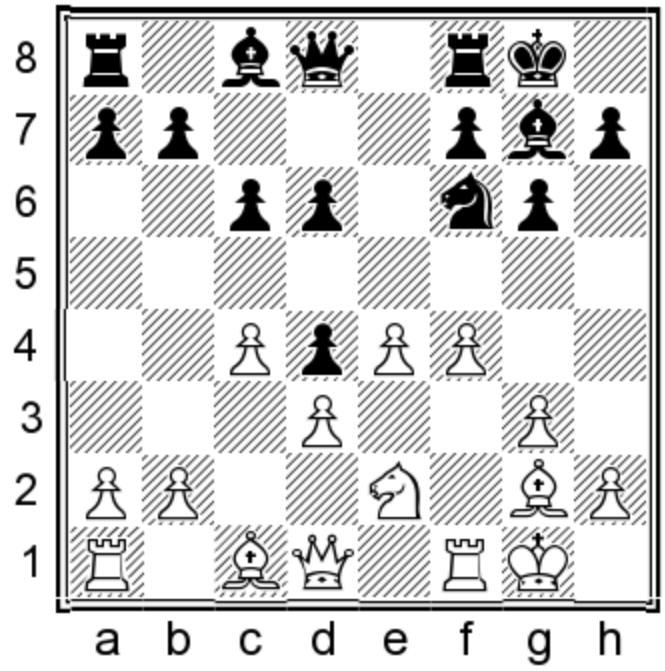
This leap is a fairly common reaction from Black in this structure, but White should rarely mind it as Black will likely be hampered by his resulting dead point on d4.

Once again, Black should prefer 8...exf4!, and if 9.gxf4 Nh5 to free his position.

9.d3 c6 10.Nxd4

Creating the aforementioned dead point. 10.h3 is also reasonable enough, but after 10...Nxe2+ 11.Nxe2 exf4 12.Nxf4 (12.Bxf4 Nh5 is a bit annoying, as is 12.gxf4?! Nh5 followed by ...f5 and/or ...Qh4) 12...Re8 Black may be OK.

10...exd4 11.Ne2



11...Nd7?!

The wrong way. Black needed to exploit the absence of one our favourite moves, h3, with the brave 11...Ng4! and after 12.h3 Ne3 13.Bxe3 dxe3

chesstouring.com

14.d4 (if 14.Qc1 Qb6) 14...c5 matters would have been extremely murky.

12.f5!

Giving up control of e5 should never be done lightly, but here White is well placed to expand on the kingside before Black can organise any real counterplay.

12...g5!?

A bold but by no means bad reaction. Black wants to keep lines closed and be able to exploit his control of e5. The downside is that he's created a hook on g5 for White's attack.

Instead, 12...Ne5 13.h3 looks quite pleasant for White, and it's also possible to be bold and grab: 13.Nxd4!? Qb6 14.Be3 Qxb2 (or 14...Ng4?! 15.Qxg4 Bxd4 16.Bxd4 Qxd4+ 17.Kh1 Qxb2 18.Qh4 when Black's dark squares are creaking quite badly) 15.Rb1 Qxa2 16.f6 Bh8 17.h3 and that's one unhappy bishop on h8.

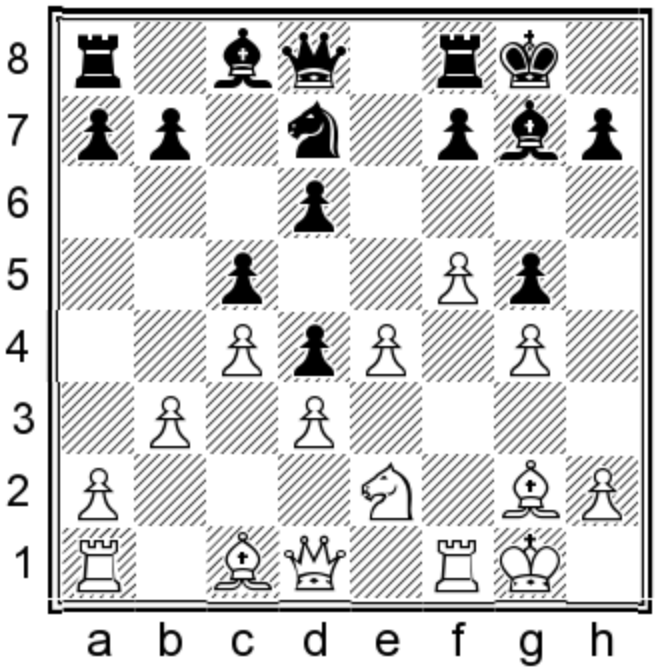
The knight might also come out via 12...Nc5, but then White might simply sound the charge: 13.h4! when 13...a5 (13...d5!? would classically counter the flank attack in the centre; it is an improvement, although White is still slightly for choice after 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.Bg5) 14.Bg5 f6 (14...Bf6 15.Qd2 looks like a nice attacking set-up) 15.Bc1! leaves Black with not just one, but two rather restricted bishops.

13.b3

Simon decides to remind Black that d4 can become weak. 13.Kh1!? is another very interesting idea, preparing to regroup the knight with Ng1-f3.

13...c5 14.g4

chesstouring.com



Here we go...

14...h6 15.Ng3 Rb8

A little slow perhaps. Black should have preferred 15...Be5!? or 15...Ne5, and if 16.h4 b5! 17.cxb5 a6 with Benko Gambit-like counterplay.

16.h4! gxh4?

Far too greedy. 16...b5 was still indicated when we slightly prefer White after 17.hxg5 hxg5 18.cxb5 Rxb5 19.Nh5, but it is, of course, very much a case of game on.

17.Nh5 Nf6?

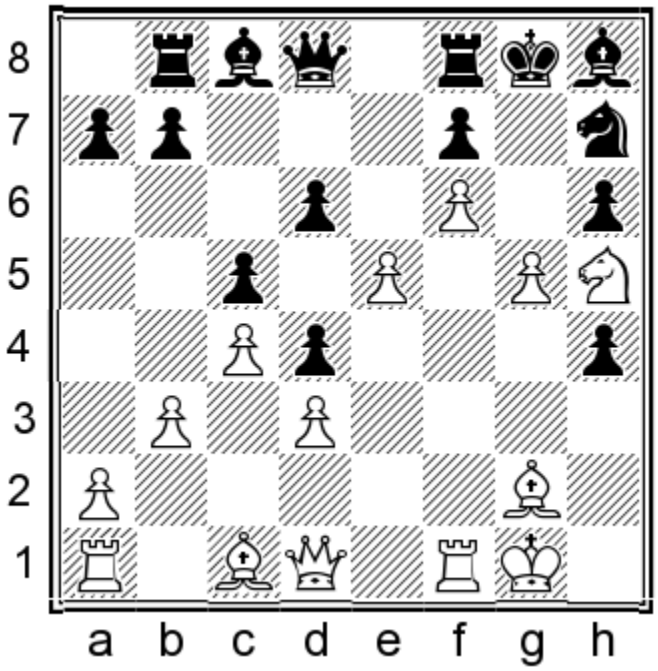
This only encourages White's attack. If 17...Ne5 there's 18.f6!, based on the point 18...Bxg4 19.Qd2! Bxh5? 20.fxg7 Kxg7 21.Qxh6+ and wins, while after 17...b5 Simon was ready with 18.cxb5 Rxb5 19.g5!, crashing through in view of 19...hxg5 20.Nxg7 Kxg7? 21.f6+ Kg6 22.Qg4 with a winning attack.

chesstouring.com

18.g5! Nh7

The best of a bad bunch. 18...hxg5 19.Bxg5 creates a fatal pin and 18...Nxh5 19.Qxh5 hxg5 20.Bxg5 is already all over in view of 20...f6 (or 20...Bf6 21.Bh6) 21.e5! fxg5 22.Bd5+ followed by mate.

19.f6 Bh8 20.e5!



Bringing the Botvinnik bishop on g2 into play, although there was nothing much wrong with the immediate 20.gxh6.

20...hxg5

After 20...dxe5 21.gxh6 White threatens Be4 and there doesn't appear to be any defence, as shown by 21...Nxf6 (or 21...Qd7 22.Kh2! Qg4 23.Qxg4+ Bxg4 24.Bd5! Bxh5 25.Rg1+ Bg7 when the computer's 26.Bg5! is both neat and deadly) 22.Bg5 Bg4 (what else?) 23.Nxf6+ Bxf6 24.h7+ Kh8 25.Bxf6+ Qxf6 26.Rxf6 Bxd1 27.Rxd1 Kxh7 28.Rdf1 Kg7 29.Bd5 with an extra piece and easy win.

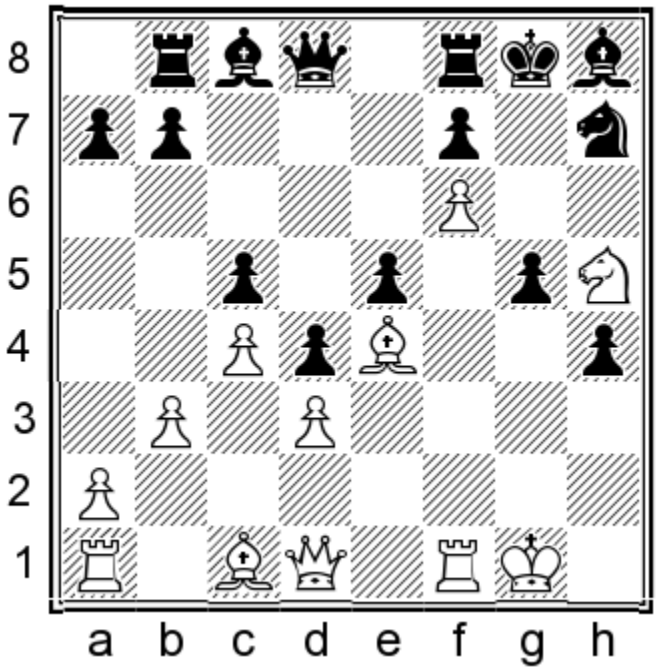
chesstouring.com

21.Be4

The 2020 version of the Ginger GM would surely have spotted 21.Bxg5!, having studied so many games by his favourite player, Mikhail Tal, as well as *The Art of Attack in Chess*. Black is simply getting crushed as after 21...Nxg5 22.Qd2 the attack is overwhelming: 22...Nh7 (22...Ne6 23.Be4 dxe5 24.Qh6 mates and 22...Nh3+ 23.Kh1 will also be followed by Qh6) 23.Be4 Qd7 24.Qh6 Qg4+ 25.Kf2! Ng5 26.Bh7+! (and not 26.Rg1?? Nh3+) 26...Nxh7 27.Rg1 when the attack down the g-file is clearly a decisive one.

21...dxe5?

He would still have been facing a strong attack, but Black needed to take his chances in 21...Re8 22.Nf4! (22.Bxh7+ Kxh7 23.Nf4 g4! keeps lines relatively closed) 22...Nxf6! (22...gxf4 23.Bxh7+ Kxh7 24.Qh5+ Kg8 25.Kf2 is another decisive clearing of the g-file) 23.exf6 gxf4 24.Rxf4.



22.Bxh7+!

chesstouring.com

Unfortunately Simon missed this blow and 22.Qf3? Qd7! began a cruel turning of the tables, with Black winning in 50 moves.

22...Kxh7 23.Ng7! Kg8

23...Bxg7 24.Qh5+! is an important check followed by Bxg5 or 24...Kg8 25.Qxg5 and wins.

24.Qh5 Qd7 25.Nf5

And naturally not 25.Qxg5?? Qg4+.

25...Bxf6 26.Bxg5

The attack is clearly overwhelming and would leave Black with nothing better than resigning or allowing a fairly pretty finish with **26...Bg7 27.Ne7+**.

Light-Square Control

Game 3
R.Palliser-S.Haslinger
British Rapidplay Championship, Leeds 1999

1.c4 e5 2.g3

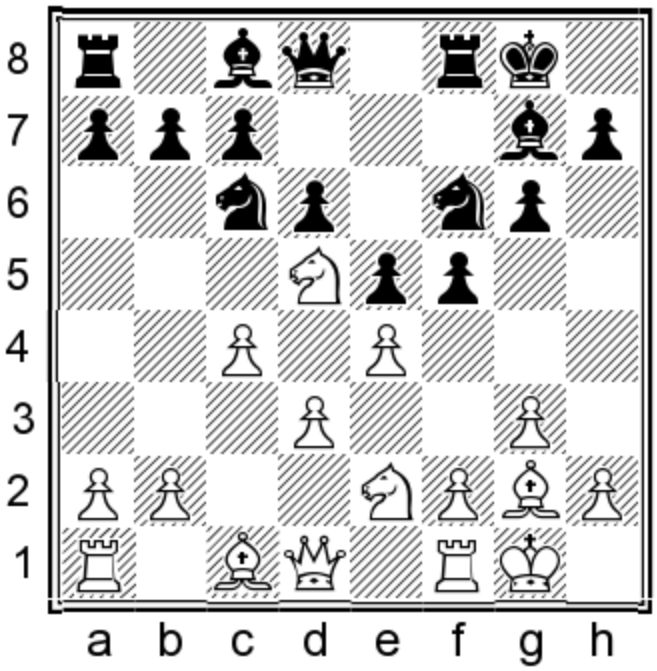
In this game Richard fianchettoed immediately, but we would recommend the move order 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2.

2...Nc6 3.Bg2 g6 4.Nc3 Bg7 5.e4 d6 6.Nge2 f5

Black decides to exploit his move order to break straight away, not transpose into King's Indian lines with 6...Nf6.

7.d3 Nf6 8.0-0 0-0 9.Nd5

chesstouring.com



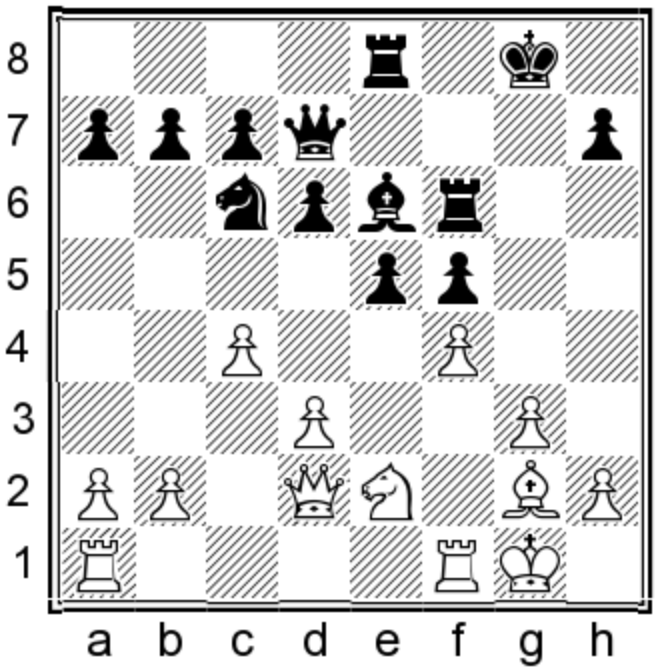
It’s certainly tempting to occupy the hole on d5 and prepare to pin with Bg5, but this is by no means White’s only move, and our repertoire recommendation is actually to exchange on f5 without delay.

9...h6

Ruling out Bg5.

9...Be6 10.Bg5 would reveal White’s main idea. Yes, Black can unpin easily enough, but after 10...Qd7 11.Qd2 White has a fairly harmonious set-up and may play to open up the bishop on g2: for example, 11...Rae8 12.exf5!? gxf5? (12...Bxf5 is necessary when 13.Bxf6 Bxf6 14.Nxf6+ Rxf6 15.d4 Bh3 keeps Black afloat) 13.Bxf6! Bxf6 14.Nxf6+ Rxf6 15.f4!.

chesstouring.com



This is an important advance, stymieing Black's play. Just observe how ...f4 is no longer possible and which bishop is the more powerful? Black might try 15...e4, but after 16.dxe4 (16.Nc3 is also quite tempting) 16...fxe4 17.Rfe1 Bxc4 18.Nc3 White will regain his pawn with a clear advantage, as with 18...Bd3 (18...d5? 19.Nxe4 exploits Black's uncoordinated pieces) 19.Nxe4 Bxe4 20.Bxe4 when White's bishop is clearly superior to the knight. White might follow up with Rac1 and b4 or look to double on the e-file.

Before we return to the main game, do note too that White should rarely worry about an exchange on d5 in such positions. Here 9...Nxd5 10.cxd5 (10.exd5!? is also tempting, and if 10...Ne7 11.f4, that cramping pawn advance once again) 10...Ne7 11.Be3 keeps control and a small edge, while the critical line is 9...Ne7!?, enabling Black to challenge with ...c6.

10.Be3 g5?!

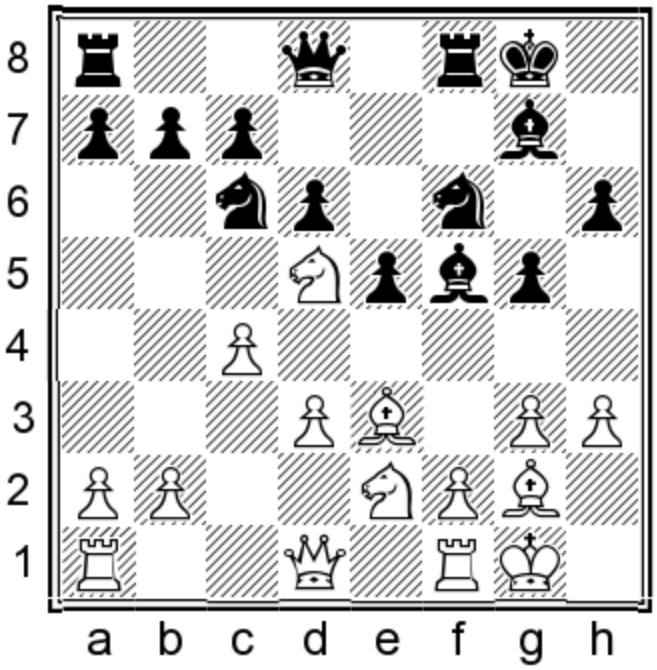
A risky advance because pawns can't, of course, move backwards.

11.exf5

chesstouring.com

Opening up the bishop on g2, but Simon would have preferred 11.Nxf6+!?, hoping for 11...Bxf6?! 12.f4! when the position suddenly opens to White's advantage. You might worry about all the possible pawn exchanges here, but White has e4 and f4 overprotected, and just which king is likely to prove the weaker?

11...Bxf5 12.h3



12...Qd7

12...Nxd5 13.cxd5 Nb4? would echo the game. After 14.g4! Bxd3?! 15.a3 Bxe2 16.Qxe2 Na6 Black is a pawn up, but following 17.Rac1 White has far more than enough compensation. Just look at Black's extremely weak light squares! White may well just double on the c-file, but at some point Be4-b1 followed by Qd3 might also be a plan.

13.Kh2

chesstouring.com

As there was no reason to fear a sacrifice on g4, 13.g4 (13...Nxg4? 14.hxg4 Bxg4 15.f3 Bh3 16.Ng3 keeps control) or just 13.Nxf6+ Bxf6 14.g4! Bg6 15.Ng3 was the way to maintain control. White will play to make good use of the unfurled (or should that be unfurloughed?) bishop on g2, with Rab1 and b4-b5, and that gaping hole on f5 may come back to haunt Black one day.

13...Nxd5 14.cxd5 Nb4?

Falling in with White's plans.

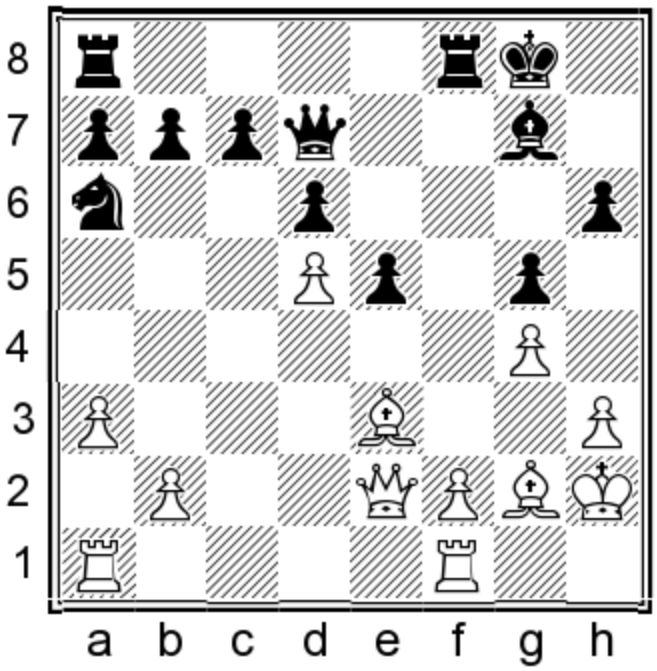
14...Ne7 15.d4 was another idea, looking to leave both black bishops blunted if 15...e4 16.Nc3, but 14...Nd4! 15.g4 Bg6 16.Ng3 c6 would have given Black some counterplay.

15.g4! Bxd3

Black can't resist the free pawn. Snatching it doesn't turn out well for him, but 15...Bg6 16.Be4! would also be pretty unpleasant, with Ng3 on its way.

16.a3 Bxe2 17.Qxe2 Na6

chesstouring.com



18.Be4?!

A little rushed.

18.Qc2! was the way to maintain control, intending Rac1 and b4, or if 18...Nc5 19.b4 Na4 20.Be4 when even Kg2, f3, Rh1 and h4 might be a plan.

18...Nc5 19.Bf5?!

19.Bxc5 dxc5 20.Rac1 would still have supplied decent compensation, as you can quickly see from a comparison of the bishops.

19...Rxf5! 20.gxf5 Qxf5

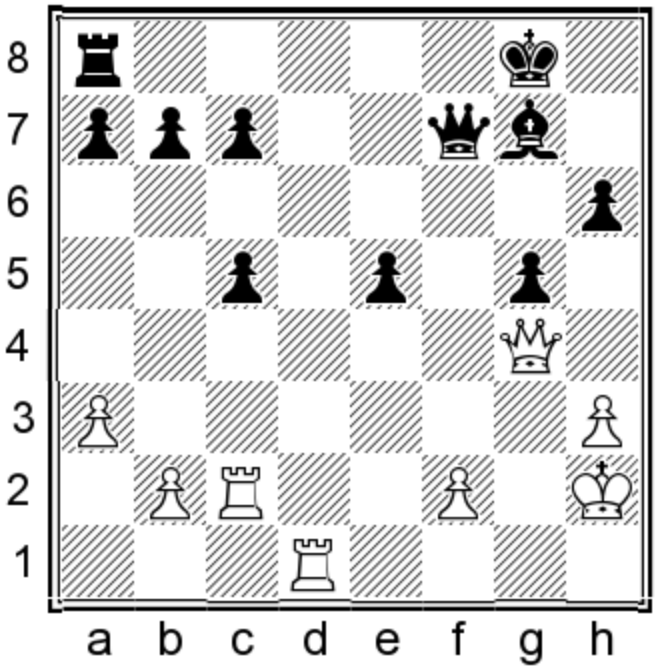
Suddenly Black has freed his position and has two pawns for the exchange.

21.Qg4 Qf7 22.Rac1 Qxd5?!

chesstouring.com

Again Black can't resist a pawn, but he certainly wouldn't have been worse after 22...Nd3!, refusing to open lines for White's rooks.

23.Rfd1 Qf7 24.Bxc5! dxc5 25.Rc2



By this point Black had three pawns for the exchange, but his vulnerable light squares were the key feature of the position. White continued to retain control while bagging a pawn and after **25...Re8 26.Rd7 Re7 27.Rxe7 Qxe7 28.Qc8+ Qf8 29.Qxb7 Qf4+ 30.Kg2 e4 31.Qc8+! Kh7 32.Qg4** Richard was well on his way to victory.

Gradual Expansion

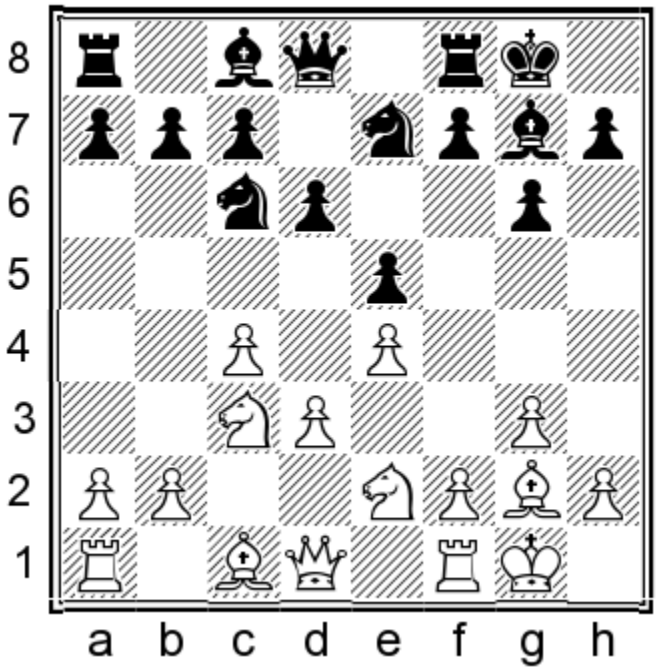
Game 4
S.Williams-G.Bakhtadze
Canary Islands 1995

1.c4 g6 2.Nc3 Bg7 3.g3 d6 4.Bg2 e5 5.e4

chesstouring.com

Our favourite Botvinnik set-up and here we'll see how White might build on some of the ideas we've already seen.

5...Ne7 6.Nge2 0-0 7.0-0 Nbc6 8.d3



8...Bg4

Black has kept his f-pawn free with this set-up, but 8...f5 9.Nd5 is nothing to worry about, and if 9...Be6 10.Be3. Sometimes Black can look to play ...f4 as a sacrifice to open lines, but for it to be effective he normally needs to be able to follow up with one or more of ...Qh4, ...Nh5 and ...Bh3. Here he isn't ready and 10...f4? (even 10...Qd7 11.Qd2 f4? 12.gxf4 Bh3 13.f3 keeps everything secure and White a pawn to the good) 11.gxf4 exf4? 12.Ndxf4 would just be horrendous for Black, and if 12...Bf7 13.d4! Bxc4 14.d5 followed by Ne6.

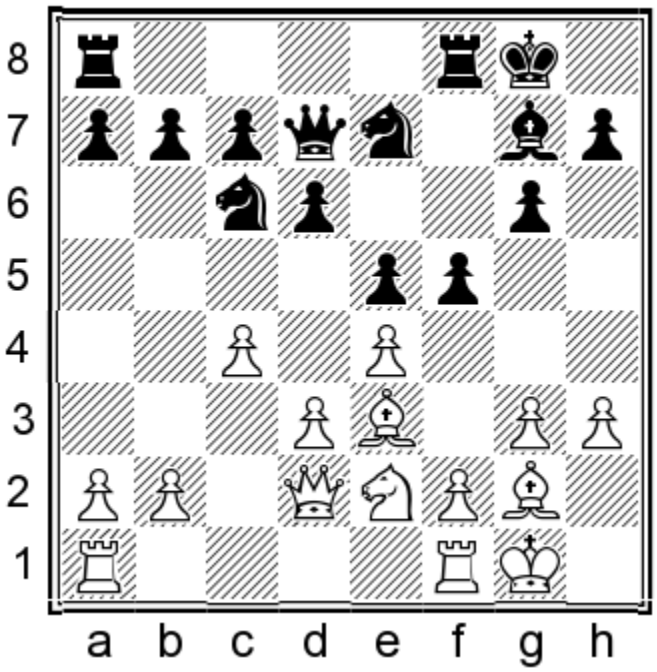
9.h3!?

chesstouring.com

An interesting moment. White often avoids the exchange on e2 with 9.f3, which is far from bad, but does leave him committed to an f4 approach to give the bishop on g2 some action.

9...Be6

9...Bxe2 does increase Black's control over d4, but here White should not be too concerned as he has 10.Nxe2. With Black no longer having a light-squared bishop, there's no real need for White to fear a kingside attack (that fine bishop on g2 will hold everything together), and 10...f5 (10...Nd4?! 11.Nxd4 exd4 leaves White facing a tempting dilemma: to push the f-pawn or first go 12.b4!?; this seizes space while playing around the pawn on d4, and White has by no means renounced the idea of also going f4-f5) 11.Be3 Qd7 12.Qd2 leaves White pleasantly better.



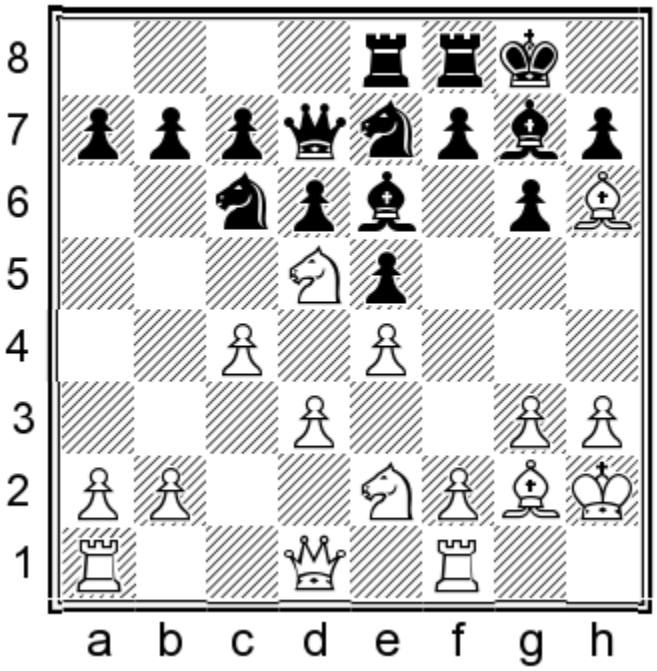
He might expand with Rab1 and b4; another good plan is Rae1 and f4. Just one word of warning: it's usually a good idea to first move the rook from a1 before pushing b4 – 12...Rae8 13.b4? f4! would not be wise, forcing White to jettison the exchange with 14.gxf4 exf4 15.Bxf4 Bxa1 16.Rxa1.

chesstouring.com

10.Nd5 Qd7 11.Kh2

This calm move is a common one in the Botvinnik, keeping everything secure on the kingside.

11...Rae8 12.Bh6!



It's hard to resist this tactical shot, which is also positionally justified, but White would also have quite a pleasant set-up after 12.Bg5 f6 13.Be3 f5 14.Qd2.

12...f5

Naturally Black doesn't fall for 12...Bxh6?? 13.Nf6+ and 14.Nxd7, while White would be slightly for choice after 12...Nxd5 13.Bxg7 Ne3 (or 13...Nc3 14.Qd2 Kxg7 15.Qxc3 followed by f4) 14.fxe3 Kxg7 15.Rc1. Next up will be the d4 break and if 15...f5 16.exf5 Bxf5 (16...gxf5?! 17.d4 leaves Black under pressure) 17.Qd2 Be6 18.b4 when again White's bishop is the more active of the two and he has an edge; b5 then Nc3-d5 or even Nc3-e4 will follow.

chesstouring.com

13.Bxg7 Kxg7 14.f4

Taking the fight to Black and hoping to show that the king on g7 is much less secure than the one on g2, but there was again nothing wrong with 14.Qd2, and if 14...f4? 15.gxf4 Nd4 16.fxe5 dxe5 17.Nxd4 exd4 18.Qg5 with an extra pawn and all the trumps.

14...Nd4 15.Nxd4!

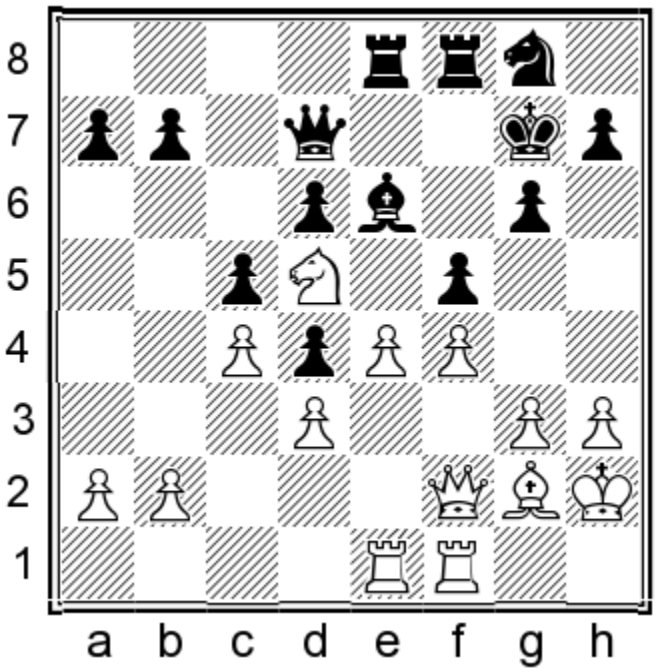
Once again we see White happy to create a dead point on d4.

15...exd4 16.Qd2 Ng8 17.Qf2

Forcing Black to advance his c-pawn two squares, but actually 17.Rfe1 c6? was nothing to worry about. The main point is 18.Qf2! cxd5 (even 18...c5 19.e5 is quite strong) 19.Qxd4+ Kh6 (19...Nf6 20.cxd5 Bg8 21.e5 regains the piece with some advantage in view of 21...dxe5 22.fxe5 Nxd5?? 23.e6+) 20.cxd5 Bf7 21.e5, with a crushing position and far too much play for the piece.

17...c5 18.Rae1

chesstouring.com



Not forgetting to involve all the pieces. Here Black isn't, of course, about to get rolled over by f4-f5, but his position is still the harder to handle. He can't easily break out and free his pieces, and all the while must watch out for White making a timely exf5 exchange.

18...Bxd5

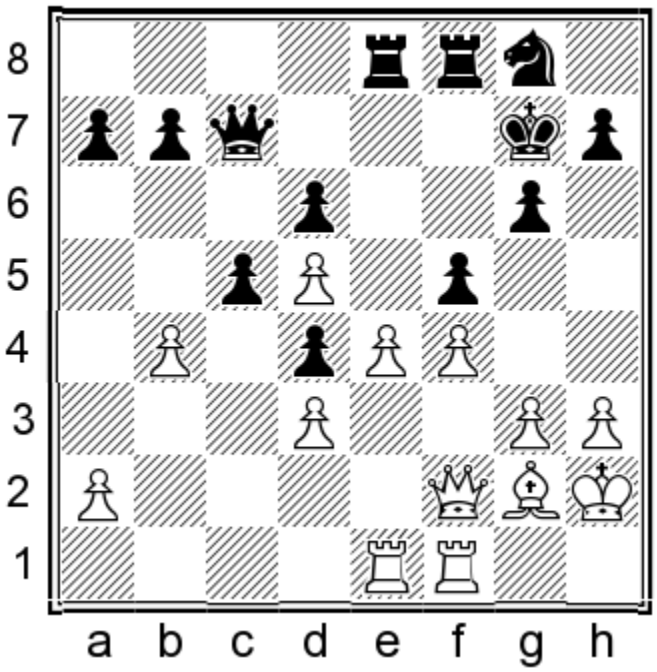
A big decision. You can't blame Black for wanting to avoid 18...Nf6? 19.e5! dxe5 20.Nxf6 Rxf6 21.Rxe5 when White controls the e-file and has much the more active bishop, but a more dynamic response would have been 18...fxe4!? 19.dxe4 b5, leaving the knight on g8 and developing counterplay.

19.cxd5 Qc7?

A strange decision. Black needed to activate his knight with 19...Nf6 when spreading the play with 20.b4!? was Simon's idea, since 20.e5? would now fail to simply 20...dxe5 21.fxe5 Nxd5.

20.b4!

chesstouring.com



You might have wondered about the bishop on g2, but it is actually extremely well placed here and more powerful than Black's knight. Note how the bishop defends e4 and also indirectly d5, thereby supporting White's central play, as well as that White now has the definite positional threat of bxc5 dxc5; e5 when his pawns make for a very strong sight.

20...b6

20...cxb4? 21.Qxd4+ would, of course, not be wise and 20...Nf6? 21.bxc5 dxc5 22.e5 would just allow White his dream scenario.

21.Re2?!

A little routine. 21.exf5! gxf5 22.Re6 would have been much more dynamic and again made good use of the long-range support offered by White's bishop.

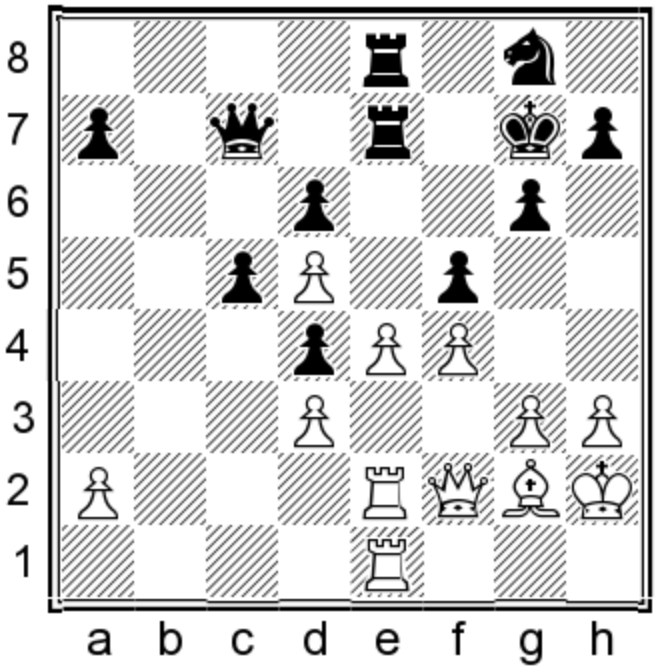
21...Rf7 22.Rfe1 Rfe7?

chesstouring.com

Now it’s Black’s turn to be too routine, but these positions laden with tension are never easy to defend.

22...fxe4! 23.Rxe4! (23.dxe4 Nf6 is just very messy; whose pawns are going to prove the stronger?) 23...Rxe4 (23...Rfe7 24.g4! begins to put White’s kingside majority to good use) 24.dxe4 would have left White slightly for choice (moving the queen in preparation for e5 is the plan), but still with everything to play for.

23.bxc5 bxc5



Now a young Simon couldn’t resist **24.g4!?**, but 24.exf5! was the way to go: 24...Rxe2 (24...gxf5?! 25.Re6! is again a bit awkward for Black, and if 25...Rxe6 26.dxe6 Ne7? 27.g4! when it’s White whose pawns are rolling, dangerously at that, and he most certainly also enjoys the safer king) 25.Rxe2 Rxe2 26.Qxe2 gxf5 27.Qe6 Nh6 (how else to defend f5?) 28.g4! fxg4 29.hxg4. Matters aren’t totally clear, but White’s more mobile pawns and safer king still leave him for choice and he might even meet 29...Qf7 with the calm 30.Kg3.

Squashing Black

chesstouring.com

Game 5

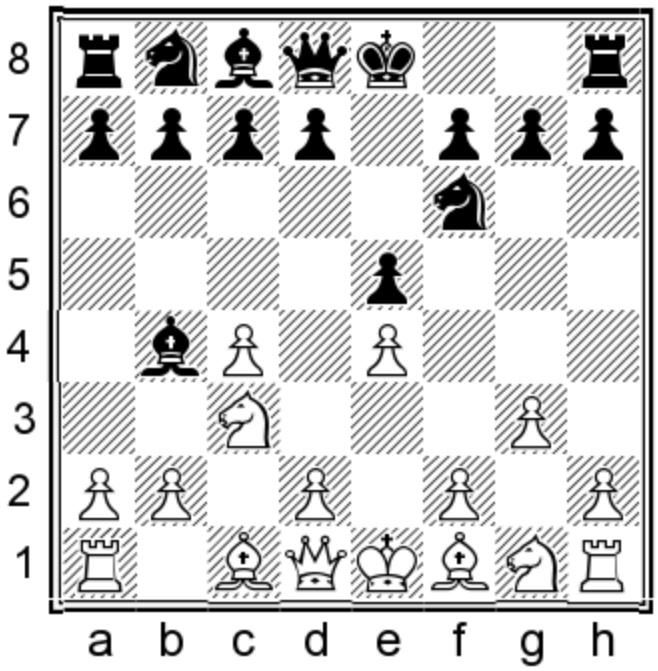
M.Carlsen-L.Aronian

Game 8, Clutch Chess (rapid) 2020

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e5 3.g3 Bb4

A fairly popular choice, as Black heads for a reversed Rossolimo Sicilian.

4.e4!?



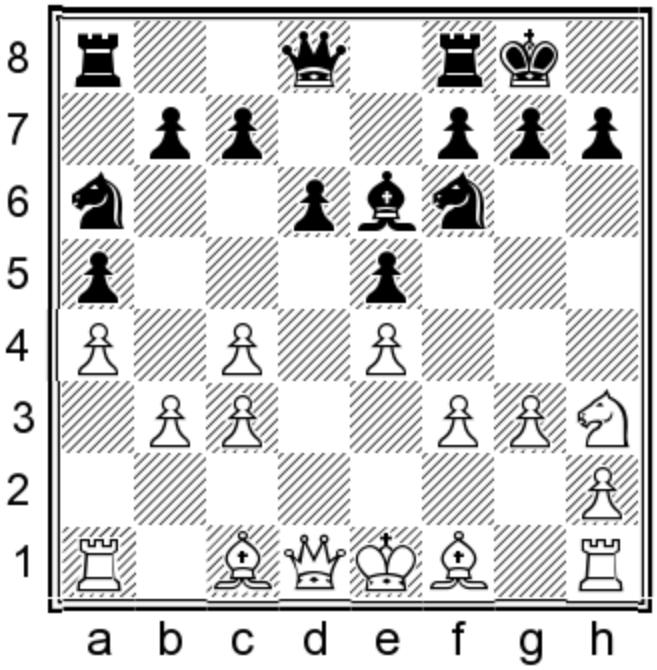
This immediate advance has been a recent favourite of the world champion's.

4...0-0

The previous day of the same match had seen Aronian prefer 4...Bxc3 5.dxc3 (there's also nothing too much wrong with 5.bxc3 d6 6.d3 followed by Bg2 and Nge2) 5...d6 (5...Nxe4 6.Qg4 regains the pawn) 6.f3!? (not our standard development, but after 6.Bg2 0-0 7.Ne2 Be6 8.b3 a5 Black has easy counterplay) 6...Be6 7.Nh3 (very creative play from the world

chesstouring.com

champion; it’s worth noting that White can manoeuvre so because the centre is closed and the structure largely fixed) 7...a5 8.a4 0-0 9.b3 Na6.



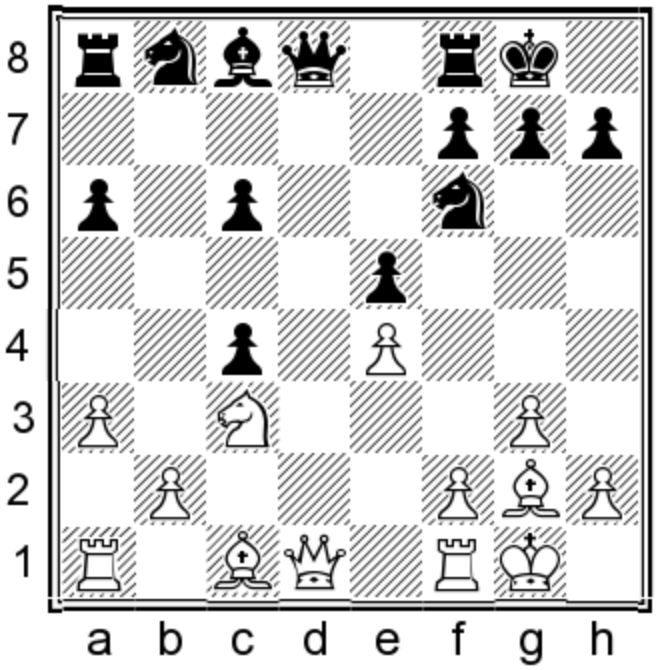
This was Carlsen-Aronian, Game 5, Clutch Chess (rapid) 2020, where Black had a handy lead in development, but was struggling to do much with it due to his current lack of a pawn break. Magnus continued in creative and ambitious fashion: 10.Ng5 (10.Be3 h6 11.Nf2 would be sensible when after 11...Nd7! 12.Bg2 f5 13.exf5 Bxf5 14.0-0 the chances are about level in a very rich and unbalanced position, where White should be looking to break with f4) 10...Bd7 11.Be3 Nc5 12.Ra2!? and now 12...Qc8 13.Rd2 h6 14.h4! would have been extremely unclear. In a fast game it wouldn’t be at all easy to work out how to free Black’s position and, of course, he must avoid 14...hxg5?? 15.hxg5 Nh7 on account of the simple and deadly 16.Rdh2. When did you last see two rooks doubled so quickly on an open h-file?

5.Nge2 d6

Magnus first unveiled 4.e4!? in the first game of his rapid play-off with Fabiano Caruana at the end of their world championship match in London. Fabiano went for immediate counterplay with 5...c6 6.Bg2 a6 7.0-0 b5, but

chesstouring.com

after 8.d4! White's central pressure was the main feature of the position. Now 8...d6 9.a3 Bxc3 10.Nxc3 bxc4?! 11.dxe5 dxe5 did leave Black a pawn ahead, but with a queenside riddled with holes.

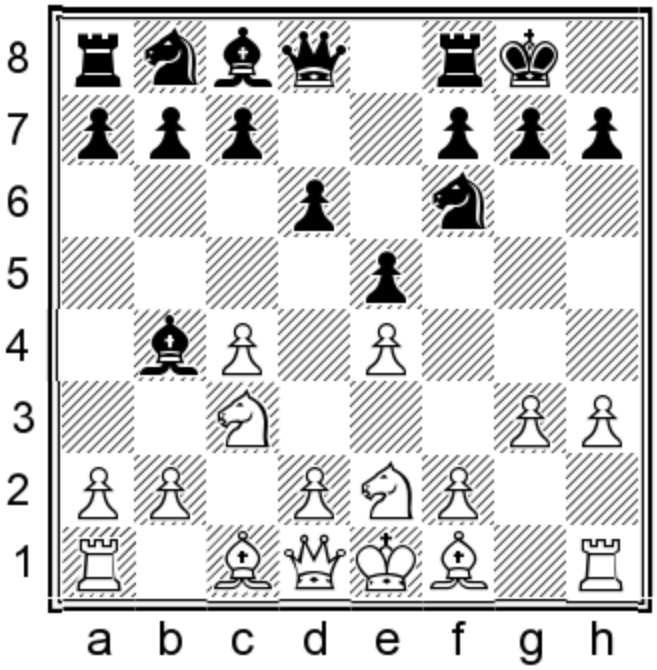


Here one simple route to a very pleasant advantage is 12.Qe2!? (Magnus preferred 12.Na4 Be6 13.Qxd8 Rxd8 14.Be3 Nbd7 15.f3 and went on to secure a very important victory) 12...a5 (12...Qd3 13.Qxd3 cxd3 14.Rd1 Rd8 15.Na4! is quite awkward for Black; just look at those holes and note that 15...Be6 16.Nc5 Bc4? fails to 17.b3 Bb5? 18.a4) 13.Rd1 Qe7 14.Be3 Be6 15.h3 Nbd7 16.f4. Black has managed to cling on to his extra c-pawn, but f5 is a large threat and one not so easy to meet. Indeed, even 16...exf4 (or 16...g6 17.f5!? gxf5 18.exf5 Bxf5 19.Qxc4 when Black has weaknesses right across the board) 17.gxf4 Rfe8 18.Qf2! is quite awkward for him, and if 18...Bf5 19.e5. It's rare that White gets to take over the centre so, but our favourite e4 and f4 Botvinnik pawns really can pack a powerful punch at many times, and here do also enjoy the sight of those two powerful bishops on e3 and g2!

6.h3

chesstouring.com

Prophylaxis against ...Bg4. White simply wants to get his king to safety on the kingside and then expand with the f4 break.



6...Nc6 7.Bg2 a6

One point of White's move order is that he can, of course, recapture after 7...Bxc3 with the knight, but 8.bxc3!? is also quite tempting, especially if it leads to 8...Be6 (8...a6!? is a better try, but White does have 9.a4 followed by d3, 0-0 and f4) 9.d3 Qd7? 10.f4!. Once again we see Black with a lead in development, but also under heavy pressure already, with his bishop proving something of a target on e6. Now 10...Qe7 11.f5 Bd7 12.g4! would just be a dream and free attack for White.

8.0-0 b5 9.d3

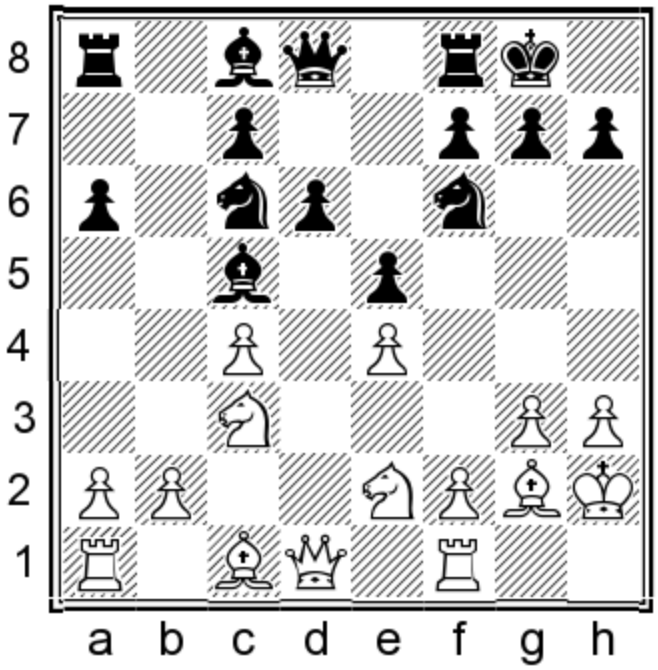
Keeping control rather than allow Black far too much activity for a pawn with 9.cxb5 axb5 10.Nxb5? Ba6 11.Nbc3 Bd3.

9...bxc4 10.dxc4 Bc5!

chesstouring.com

Black reroutes his bishop to a more active diagonal, but he won't be able to tactically prevent f4 for ever.

11.Kh2



Freeing the f-pawn for action, but it's important not to rush with f4 here.

11...Rb8 12.b3!

Magnus wants to retain control of the position, not rush into 12.f4 exf4 13.gxf4, which just feels very unclear. He may also have been concerned about the possibility of 13...Ng4+?, which is a tactical motif we advise you to file away and never allow – in a strong guise! Here White can, though, defend with 14.hxg4 Qh4+ 15.Bh3 Bxg4 16.Qd3! when Black shouldn't have enough for his piece with Qg3 next up.

12...a5 13.Nd5

It's time to apply a spot of pressure and central play is, of course, very justified in response to Black's queenside attack.

chesstouring.com

13.Bb2 Be6 14.Na4!? was also possible, though, and if 14...Ba7 15.f4. This position isn't so easy to assess, but we must admit that we quite like White. After f5 followed by g4 Black may simply find himself in huge danger on the kingside before he's obtained too much on the queenside.

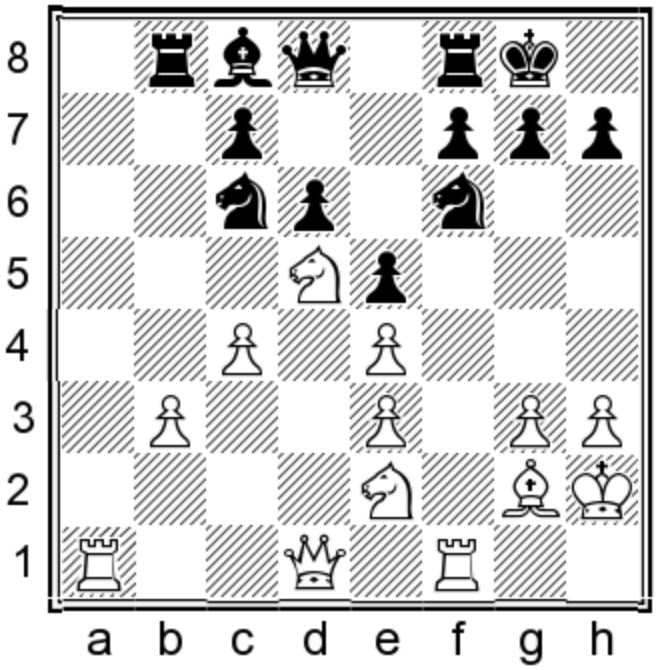
13...a4 14.Be3!?

Naturally Magnus doesn't fall for 14.Bg5?? Ng4+ 15.hxg4 Qxg5 when 16.f3 h5! would be horrific for White, but as well as the creative text, 14.Bb2 was very much an option, getting ready to go f4, which will place e5 and f6 under some pressure.

14...axb3 15.axb3 Bxe3

It was also possible to retain the tension, but Aronian presumably didn't fear any half-open f-file.

16.fxe3!



chesstouring.com

A dynamic and important recapture, in contrast to 16.Nxe3 Nd7 17.f4 Nc5 when Black certainly obtains some counterplay.

16...Nd7

Avoiding any structure-shattering exchange on f6, but 16...Nxd5!? 17.exd5 Ne7 was also possible and would have been pretty unclear. White might now go 18.Qd3, intending Qc3, b4 and c5, aiming to make use of his queenside majority.

17.Nec3

Magnus must have been fairly happy at this point. His clever recapture has bought White control of d4 and while Black may not be worse, his position is the harder to play due to his ongoing slight cramp.

17...Nc5

Even here Black probably should have tried 17...Nb6 18.Nb5 Nxd5 19.exd5 Ne7.

18.Nb5!

Seizing the initiative.

18...Ne6 19.h4

Carlsen's play in this game reminds us of Tigran Petrosian. Not only does White prepare to activate his bishop on h3, but he also gains space, all the while as he continues to restrict Black in true Petrosianic boa constrictor style.

19...Bd7 20.Bh3 Rb7?!

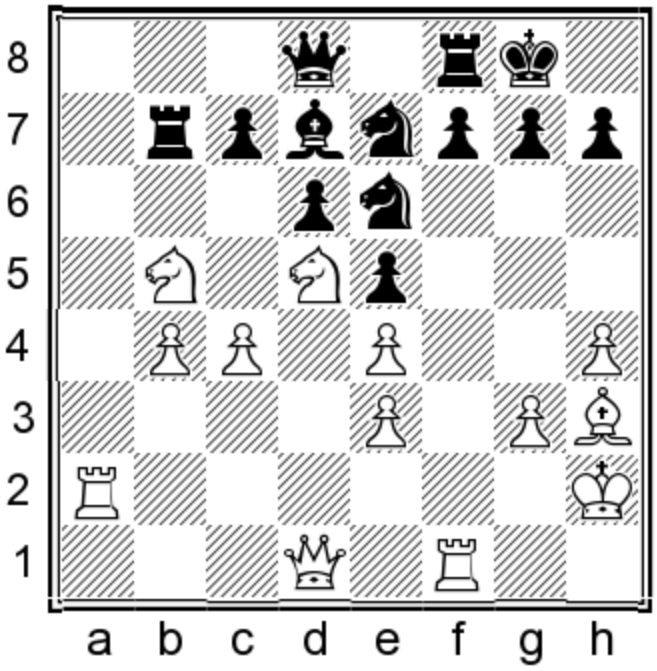
20...Nc5! really needed to be tried, giving up c7, but counterattacking against e4.

chesstouring.com

21.b4!

This would have been strong too on the previous move. Now there is no ...Nc5 and Black is fast becoming very passive.

21...Ne7 22.Ra2



White hints at switching the rook to the kingside and under some pressure, Aronian now cracks.

22...Nc8?

Did you spot why the b-pawn wasn't hanging? 22...Bxb5 23.cxb5 Rxb5 certainly feels rather risky for Black and it actually loses: 24.Bxe6! fxe6 25.Rxf8+ Qxf8 (or 25...Kxf8 26.Qf1+ Kg8 27.Nxe7+ Qxe7 28.Qxb5) 26.Nxe7+ Qxe7 27.Ra8+ Kf7 28.Qh5+ Kf6 29.g4! and White's attack is very much a mating one.

23.Ra8!

chesstouring.com

A powerful pin and one which makes Black even more tied down than he already was.

23...Kh8

As good a try as anything. This time 23...Bxb5? 24.cxb5 Rxb5? would have failed to 25.Bxe6 fxe6 26.Rxf8+ followed by Qf1+ or 26...Qxf8 27.Rxc8! Qxc8 28.Ne7+ and goodnight, Vienna!

24.Qh5

With total control over the position, Magnus goes for the throat.

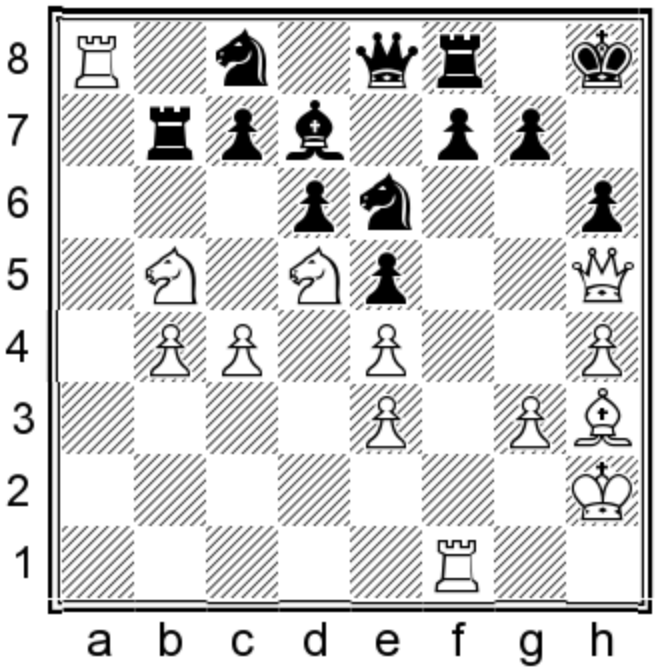
24.Qa1 was also extremely strong, intending to invade with Qa6.

24...Qe8 25.Bf5

Winning, as would have been 25.Nf6! gxf6 26.Bf5. Black can cling on for now with 26...Ng5, but after 27.hxg5 Bxf5 28.exf5 Rg8 29.gxf6 his kingside would not have remained intact for long.

25...h6 26.Bh3!

chesstouring.com



Highly aesthetic play as the bishop returns, thereby clearing the f-file for action.

26...c6

26...Bxb5 27.Rf6! reveals White's deadly threat: 27...Kh7 (if 27...gxf6? 28.Qxh6+ Kg8 29.Nxf6 mate) 28.Rxc8! Qxc8 29.Bf5+ and mate is forced, as if 29...Kg8 30.Ne7+ Kh8 31.Rxh6+ gxh6 32.Qxh6 mate.

Black could have prevented the threat with 26...f6, but after 27.Qxe8 Rxe8 28.Bxe6 Rxe6 29.Nbxc7 his position collapses nonetheless.

27.Nxd6!

Winning the queen, but there was absolutely nothing wrong either with 27.Rf6!.

27...Nxd6 28.Rxe8 Rxe8 29.Nf6!

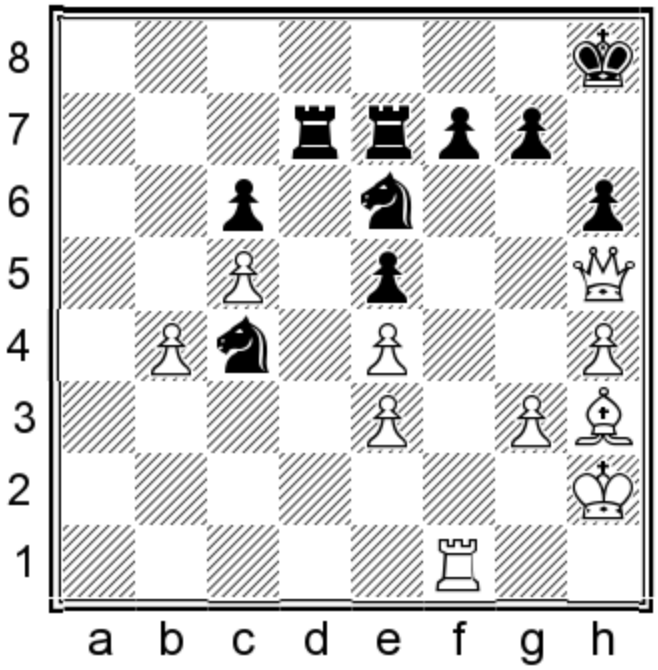
Carlsen is merciless.

chesstouring.com

29...Re7

29...gxf6 30.Rxf6 would be a devastating attack, as we can see from 30...Kg7 31.Rxh6 Rxb4 32.Bxe6 Rxe6 (32...Rb2+ 33.Kg1 Rb1+ 34.Kg2 Rb2+ 35.Kf3 dodges the checks) 33.Qg5+ Rg6 34.Qxe5+! f6 (if 34...Kxh6 35.Qh8 mate) 35.Rxg6+ Kxg6 36.Qxd6 with too much extra material.

30.c5 Nc4 31.Nxd7 Rbxd7



32.Rxf7!

The final blow.

32...Rxf7 33.Bxe6 Rf2+ 34.Kh3 1-0

Black is completely gone on the light squares and losing his knight for starters.

The d4 Break

chesstouring.com

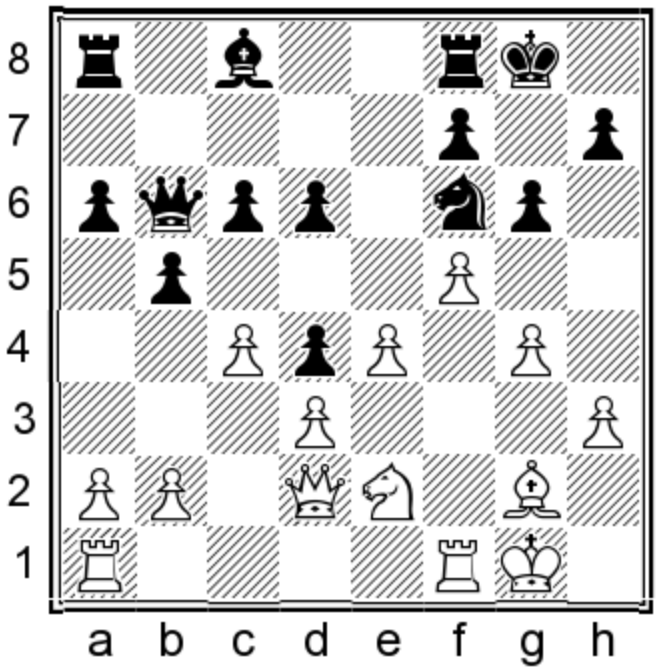
Game 6

M.Botvinnik-L.Szabo

Alekhine Memorial, Moscow 1956

1.c4 g6

It would have been wrong not to feature a game by the man who did so much to put the Botvinnik English on the map, Mikhail Botvinnik. Another game by the fifth world champion saw him attacking in true Botvinnik English fashion: 1...Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.Nge2 e5 7.0-0 Nbd7 8.d3 Nc5 (Black's set-up isn't the best and White can already seize the initiative) 9.f4! c6 10.h3 Ne6 11.f5! Nd4 12.g4 Ne8 13.Be3 (having driven a wedge right into the black kingside, Botvinnik completes his development ahead of pressing ahead against the black king) 13...a6 14.Qd2 b5 15.Bg5!? (15.Ng3 Rb8 16.g5 would also have been strong, and if 16...f6 17.h4!) 15...Bf6? (15...f6 was necessary, if grim for Black after 16.Be3 c5 17.Ng3 when White is in complete control) 16.Bxf6 Nxf6 17.Nxd4! exd4 18.Ne2 Qb6.



chesstouring.com

This defends the dead point on d4, but now Black is simply swept aside on the kingside: 19.cxb5 axb5 20.Qh6! Bd7 21.g5 Nh5 22.Nf4 Ng7 23.f6! 1-0. Rarely did games in the legendary Soviet Championship finish as fast as Botvinnik-V.Shcherbakov, Moscow 1955, where Black gave up in view of 23...Ne8 24.Nxg6! (even the slow-motion 24.h4 is pretty effective) 24...fxg6 (or 24...hxg6 25.Rf4 and Rh4) 25.f7+! Rxf7 26.Rxf7 Kxf7 27.Qxh7+ Ke6 28.Rf1 and the black king clearly isn't long for this world.

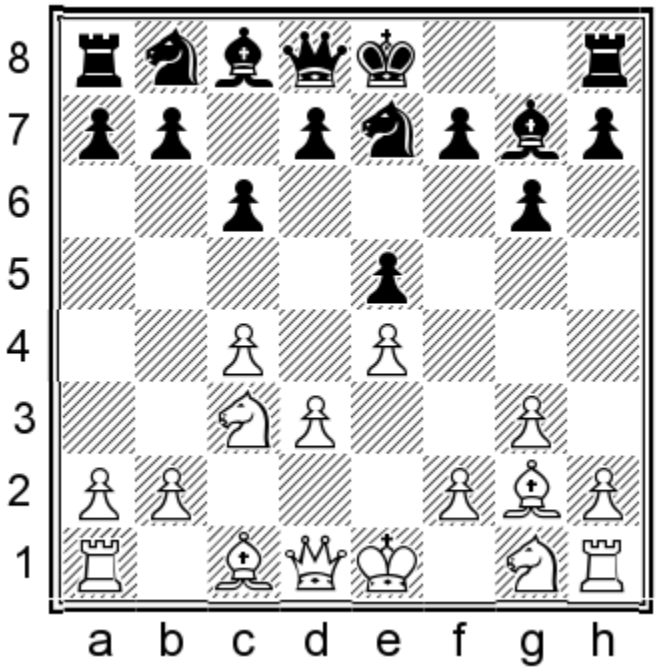
2.g3 Bg7 3.Bg2 e5 4.Nc3

All very normal so far, but now Black springs a small surprise.

4...Ne7!?

Unusual, but not bad. The key as White in such lines, which we'll see more of in Chapter Four, is not to worry and to trust in our Botvinnik set-up.

5.d3 c6 6.e4



chesstouring.com

Here we go...

6...d6

You might wonder about 6...d5?! 7.exd5 cxd5 8.cxd5 0-0, which isn't totally dissimilar to a line of the Panov-Botvinnik (yes, the Patriarch again!) Caro-Kann. Our English bishop does a great job of overprotecting d5 and after 9.Nge2 Nd7 (or 9...Na6 10.0-0 Nc7 11.Qb3) 10.0-0 Nf6 11.Bg5 White is a pawn to the good, and ready to obtain some play of his own after Qb3 and Rac1.

7.Nge2 a6 8.a4

A big decision, ruling out ...b5 once and for all, but weakening White's dark squares on the queenside.

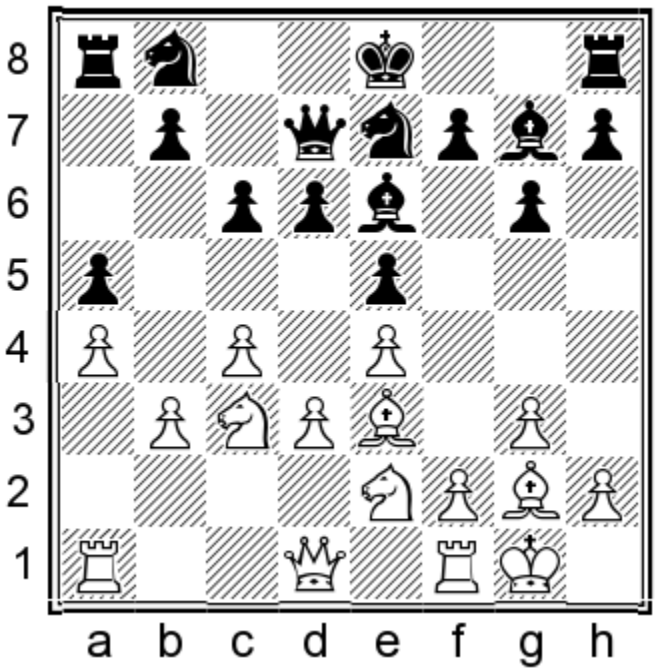
We can't help wondering if Magnus wouldn't have calmly castled here and after 8.0-0!? b5 White might simply retain control with 9.a3, intending Be3 and maybe then Qd2 and f4.

8...a5 9.Be3 Be6 10.0-0 Qd7

10...Na6 might seem more consistent, but does also allow White a fairly pleasant choice between 11.f4 and 11.b3!?, switching to a d4 break. We should also mention 10...d5?, which still loses a pawn, on account of 11.exd5! cxd5 12.Bc5! when Black's position is creaking badly in view of 12...dxc4 13.Bxb7.

11.b3!

chesstouring.com



Botvinnik wants to hit back in the centre with d4.

11...h5!?

Black certainly didn't want to complete development with 11...0-0 12.d4 Na6 in this game. As well as the text, an attacking try is 11...Bh3 12.d4 h5, but here White has at least 13.dxe5 (13.Bxh3 Qxh3 14.f3! is another important method of keeping everything under control at the back and here Black's queen would be trapped after 14...h4 15.g4 and Kh1) 13...dxe5 14.Qxd7+ Bxd7 15.h3, with a pleasant edge and Black set to come under pressure after Rad1 and f4.

12.h4!

A good decision, keeping lines closed.

12...Bh3

12...c5!? would have prevented White's next, but not stopped him from standing well after 13.Nd5!. Then Nec3 and Nb5 might be possible, as

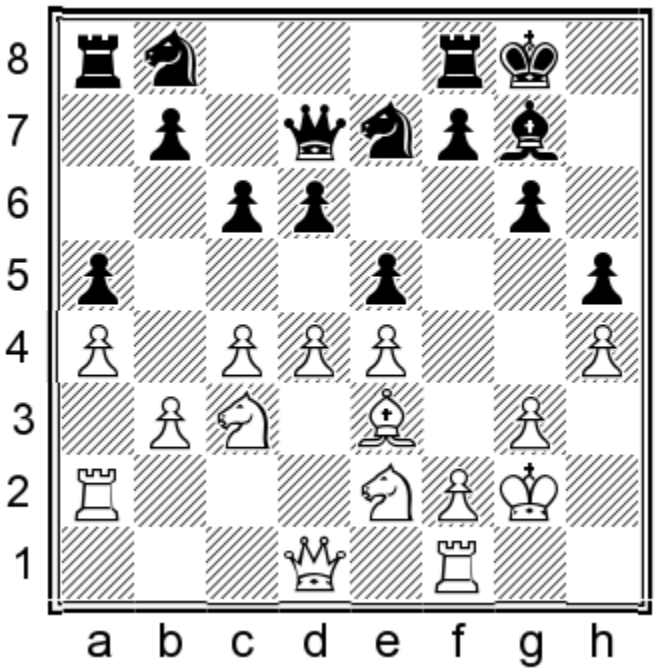
chesstouring.com

could be Bg5 to increase the pressure, and all the while at some point, White will arrange to break with f4.

13.d4 0-0 14.Ra2!

A sophisticated and strong move. The rook will be ideally placed in front of the queen on the d-file as Botvinnik wants more than the edge 14.dxe5 Bxg2 15.Kxg2 dxe5 16.Qxd7 Nxd7 17.Rfd1 would have given him.

14...Bxg2 15.Kxg2



15...d5?

White had ensured that even here this was a premature break.

With 15...Qe6 Black would tempt White to close the centre, but 16.Rd2! remains strong. You might be concerned by 16...f5, but the king on g2 is quite safe so long as White doesn't allow a strong ...f4 breakthrough. Don't forget that White is much the better developed and coordinated, and after the calm 17.dxe5! dxe5 18.exf5 gxf5 (or 18...Nxf5 19.Bc5 Re8 20.Ne4 with

chesstouring.com

complete control and plenty of holes to eye in the black camp) 19.Bg5! Black simply comes under heavy pressure and would get nowhere with 19...f4 20.gxf4 Nf5 (if 20...exf4 21.Nxf4) 21.Re1 – opening lines has only played into the hands of White's much better developed forces.

The other way to release the tension was 15...exd4 16.Bxd4, but this also looks very nice for White with Rd2 and perhaps even f4 on the way.

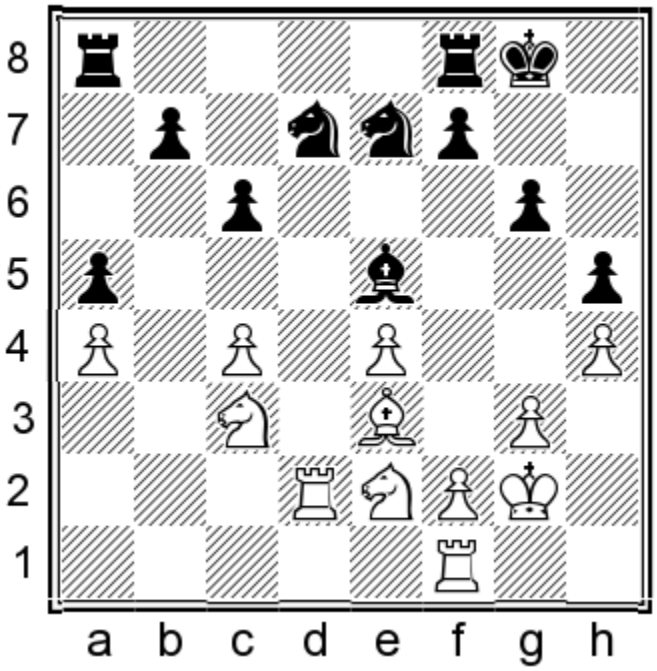
16.dxe5 dxc4

Black also lands up with far too many weak squares after 16...dxe4 17.Nxe4 Bxe5 18.Rd2 Qf5 19.Qb1!.

17.bxc4!

17.Rd2 Qe6 18.f4!? would have tempted both of us, but unsurprisingly Botvinnik wants to maintain control.

17...Bxe5 18.Qxd7 Nxd7 19.Rd2



chesstouring.com

Simple chess has left White clearly for choice. He might have an extra pawn island, but what matters most is the half-open b-file and that weakness on b7.

19...Bxc3

An attempt to distract White rather than just meekly lose a pawn with 19...Nf6 20.Rb1 Rfb8 when 21.Bc5 is likely even stronger than doubling the rooks.

20.Rxd7!

Botvinnik is having nothing to do with the bishop, not wanting to allow Black to dig in for the defence as he would have done with 20.Nxc3 Ne5 21.Bc5 Rfe8.

20...Bb4

The only way to save both pieces, as if 20...Bf6? 21.e5!.

21.c5

Cutting off the black bishop from the game.

21...Rfe8 22.Rfd1!

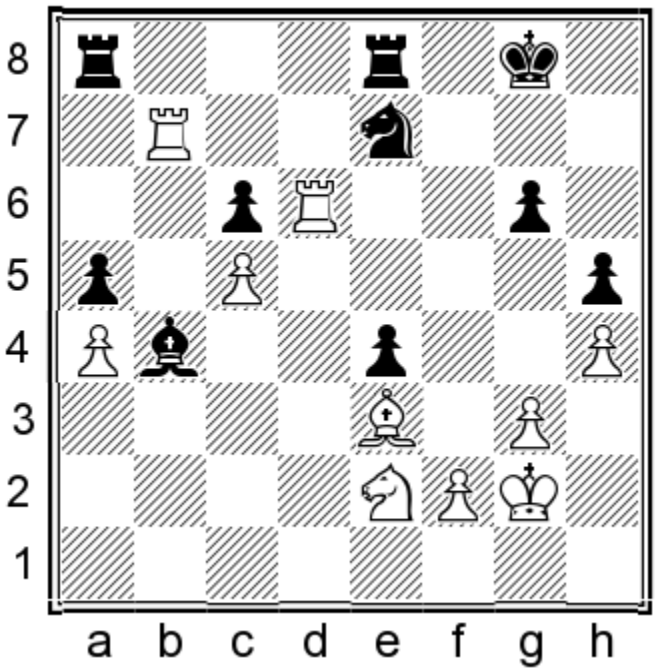
Botvinnik first takes control of the file, thereby not allowing Black even a smidgen of counterplay with 22.Rxb7 Rad8.

22...f5

Desperation, but if 22...Rab8 23.Rc7 when Black can no longer challenge the file and Rdd7 is on its way.

23.Rxb7 fxe4 24.Rd6

chesstouring.com



It’s high time to invade Black’s weakness-laden position.

24...Kf7 25.Nf4 Reb8 26.Rbd7

Keeping full control while renewing the threat of Nxg6.

26...Ke8 27.Ne6 1-0

Black gave up and no wonder in view of his complete lack of freedom and such lines as 27...Nd5 (or 27...Nf5 28.Nc7+ Kf8 29.Rf6+) 28.Nc7+ Nxc7 29.Rxc7 Rc8 30.Rh7 when the computer unsurprisingly announces mate in eight.

Meeting ...e6 with e4

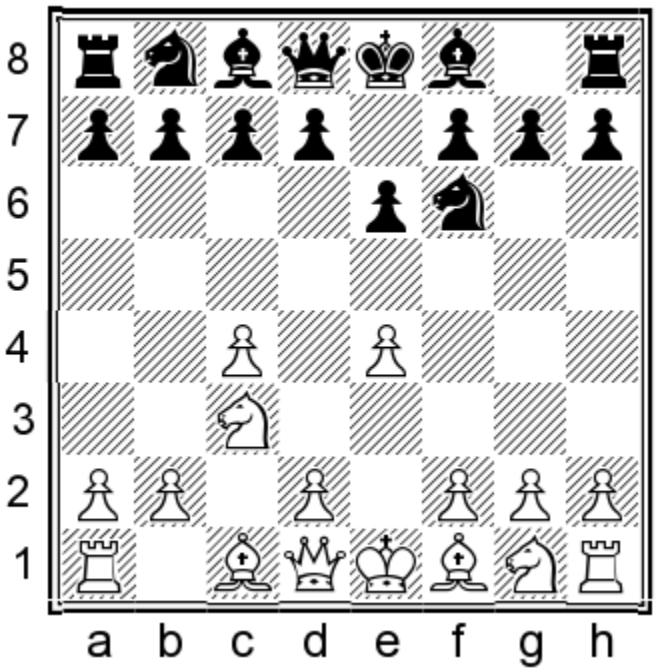
Game 7
S.Williams-J.Howell
British Championship, Swansea 1995

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e6

chesstouring.com

While our focus is very much on the Botvinnik set-up, Black can wrong-foot us with an early ...e6 or ...c6, preparing a quick ...d5 counter. In such cases we advocate White seizes the bull by the horns, grabbing space with e4.

3.e4!



The Mikenas Attack. Note too that 3.g3?! d5 would merely leave our knight on c3 misplaced.

3...d5

As we will see, a very important alternative is 3...c5, but at club level, Black is often caught out by White's boldness. When that happens, 3...d6?! is sometimes seen. This does prevent e5, but allows White a pleasant choice between seizing space with 4.d4 and going for a Botvinnik set-up after all with 4.g3.

4.e5 d4

chesstouring.com

Black decides to grab some space of his own, and exchanges now follow.

5.exf6 dxc3 6.bxc3 Qxf6 7.d4

Taking stock, White should be quite happy. He does have doubled pawns, but also good central control, as well as the easier development, with Black's queen a definite target.

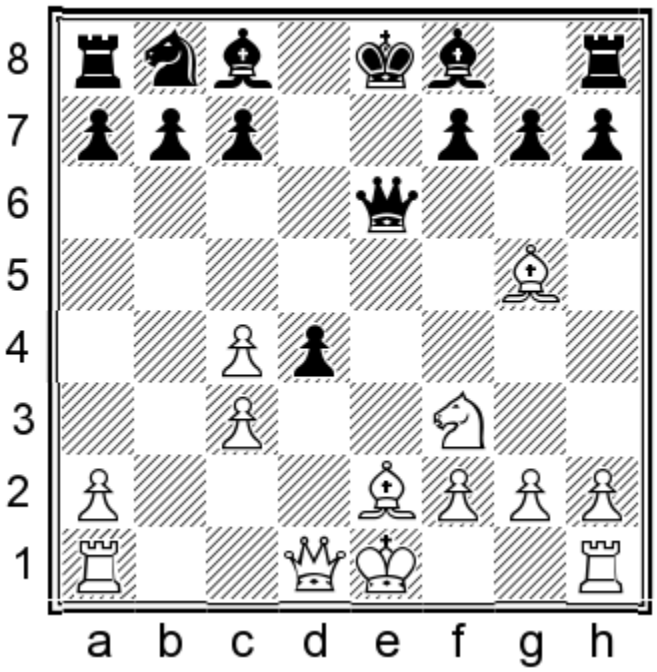
7...e5

Freeing his position, but Black must be careful not to fall too far behind in development.

8.Nf3 exd4 9.Bg5!

Much stronger than allowing Black to speed up his development with 9.cxd4 Bb4+.

9...Qe6+ 10.Be2



chesstouring.com

Already all the minor pieces are developed, in contrast to Black's, and there is a clear tactical reason why Black can't capture on c3.

10...f6?!

A rather greedy and weakening move, if one recommended by old theory.

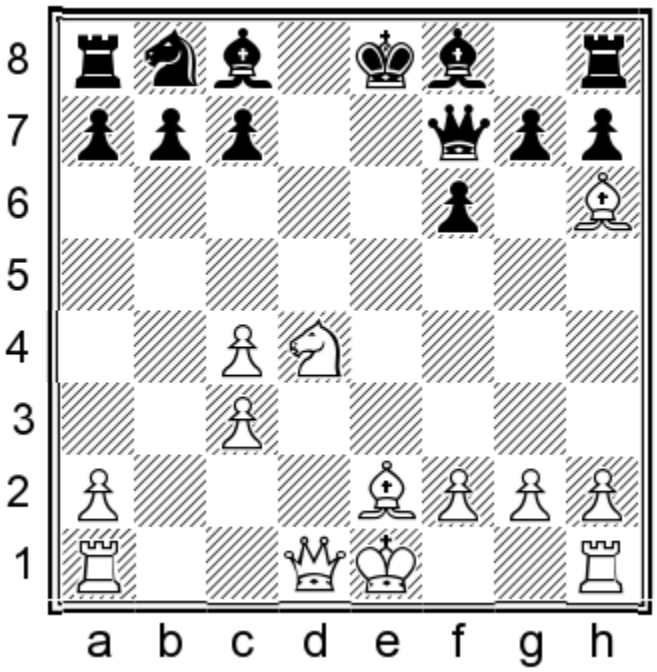
Note that White doesn't have to capture after 10...d3?!, but can go 11.0-0! and after 11...Bc5 (and not 11...dxe2? 12.Qd8 mate or 11...Qxe2? 12.Re1) 12.Bxd3 0-0 13.Re1 Qa6 14.Nd4!, preparing Qh5, English Opening guru Tony Kosten already enjoyed a powerful initiative and some advantage in Kosten-Gregoire, Cap d'Agde 2003.

Instead of weakening, Black might develop with 10...Be7 when 11.Bxe7 d3 (11...Qxe7 12.cxd4 0-0 13.0-0 Bg4 14.Rb1 b6 15.Re1 also gave the teenage Simon a pleasant edge in Williams-Stummer, Budapest 1994) 12.0-0 Qxe7 (12...Qxe2? no longer costs Black his queen, but is well met by 13.Qb1! followed by Re1 or 13...Qxe7 14.Re1 Be6 15.Qxb7, bagging a clear exchange) 13.Bxd3 0-0 14.Re1 Qf6 was the course of Williams-Matthiesen, Aarhus 1998. White's queenside pawns aren't the prettiest, but he has a handy lead in development and 15.Be4! disrupts Black's queenside development, with 15...c6 (15...Qxc3 16.Qb1 h6 17.Bxb7 regains the pawn with advantage) 16.Qd4 a sensible way of putting White's more active pieces to good use.

11.Nxd4 Qf7 12.Bh6!!

A very enjoyable move to play. Simon can still remember the excitement he felt when first shown the idea by his dad, Doug. Even in the pre-engine era it wasn't too hard to appreciate the strength of this blow, which overturned theory's assessment of 'playable for Black'. Amazingly only in 2004 did the idea make it into *Chess Informant*, and in *Informant 91* Shariyazdanov won an award for the novelty...even though it had been first played by Simon some nine years earlier!

chesstouring.com



12...g6

GM James Howell (not to be confused with leading current English GM David Howell) was unlikely to fall for 12...Nd7? 13.Bxg7! Qxg7 (13...Bxg7 14.Bh5 pins and wins) 14.Bh5+ when Black loses his queen to a fork wherever he moves his king. It's by no means impossible, though, that Black would allow such a blow at club level, although there he would surely spot 12...gxh6?? 13.Bh5.

The text move isn't forced, but 12...Be7 13.Bh5 g6 14.Be2 is also unpleasant for Black, who is unable to castle and behind in development.

13.Bxf8

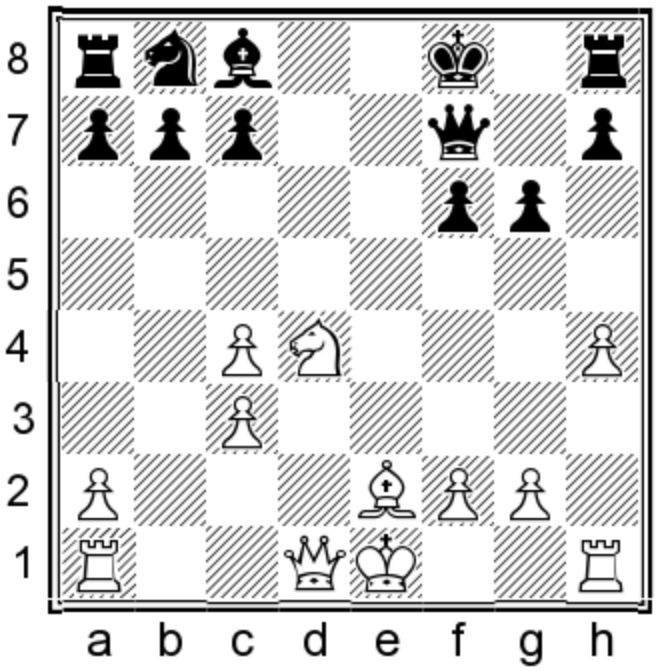
Simple and strong, although to be fair so is Shariyazdanov's 13.Qd2 Bxh6 14.Qxh6 Na6 15.0-0.

13...Kxf8

chesstouring.com

13...Qxf8 would preserve castling rights, but after 14.0-0 Qc5 15.Re1 0-0 16.Bf3!? White has a dream position: holes, especially on e6, to aim at and the possibility of swinging the queen into an attack via d2 and h6, not least in the event of the greedy 16...Qxc4 17.Re7.

14.h4!



Even in 1995 Simon very much understood the importance of Harry.

14...h5

Prudently blocking, albeit at the cost of further weaknesses, rather than fall victim to a deadly attack with 14...Kg7? 15.h5 Re8 16.hxg6 hxg6 17.Qd2.

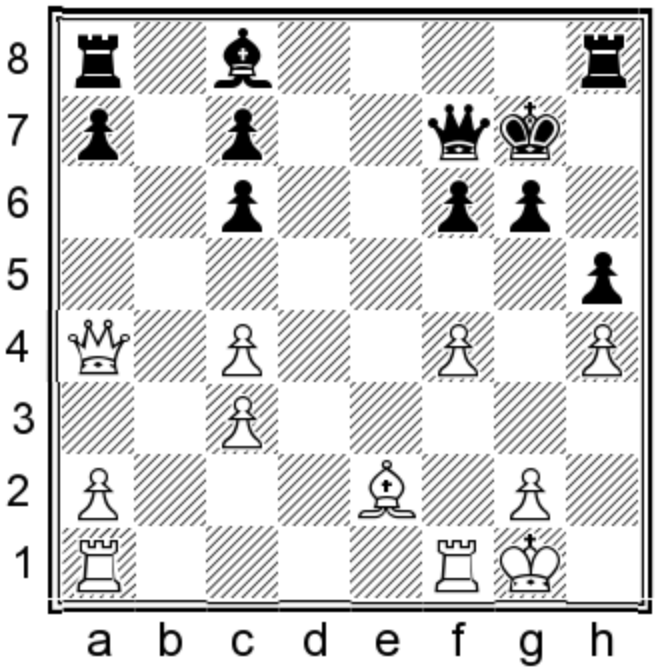
15.0-0 Kg7 16.Bf3!?

Again we see this idea.

Simon actually couldn’t help himself here and 16.f4?! Nc6 (16...c5!? 17.Nb5 Nc6 also restricts White to an edge) 17.Nxc6 bxc6 18.Qa4 was only

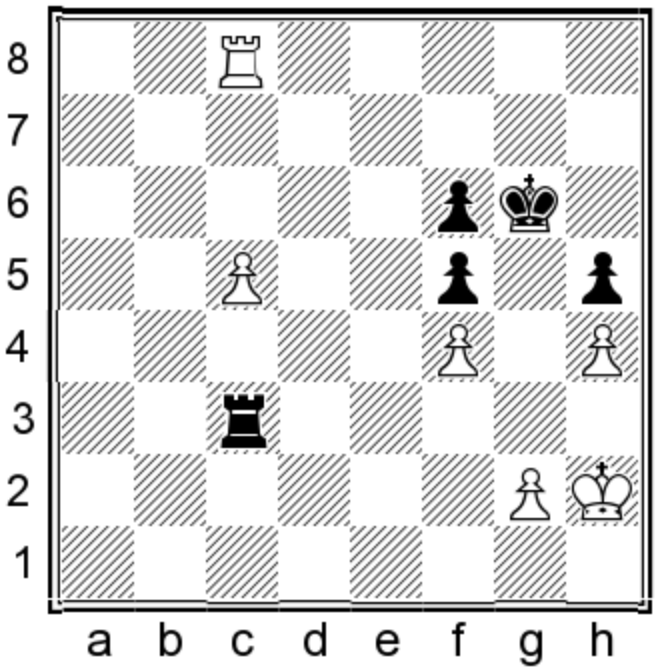
chesstouring.com

a little better for him in the game.



That said, impressively Simon ground out the win, and against the author of the excellent *Essential Chess Endings* no less, to help him obtain his first IM norm: 18...Qe7?! 19.Bf3?! (White can get away with 19.Qxc6!, as if 19...Bd7 20.Qxc7 Rhc8 21.Qb7) 19...Qc5+ 20.Kh1 Rb8 21.Qxc6 Qxc6 22.Bxc6 Rd8 23.Rfe1 Kf8 24.Rab1 Rb6?! 25.Be4! Bf5 26.Bxf5 gxf5 27.Rxb6? (27.Rb5! would have made good use of the doubled pawns to leave White clearly better) 27...cxb6 28.Re6 Kf7 29.Rc6 Rd3 30.Rc7+ Kg6? (allowing his most important piece in the endgame to be cut off; Black had to be prepared to lose his h-pawn with 30...Ke6!) 31.Rxa7 Rxc3 32.Ra4 Rc1+ 33.Kh2 Rc3 34.Rb4 Ra3 35.Rxb6 Ra4 36.Rc6 Rxa2 37.Rc8 Rc2 38.c5 Rc3

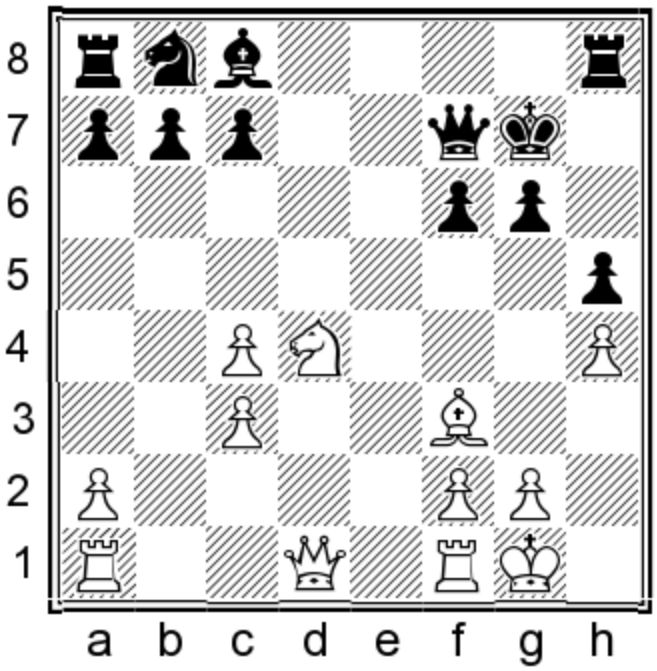
chesstouring.com



39.c6 (39.Rc7! decisively paralyses the black king, after which White will simply walk his king round to help shepherd the c-pawn home) 39...Kg7? (time-trouble; Black had to try 39...Kf7, as the standard trick 40.c7 Ke7 41.Rh8 isn’t winning in this position) 40.c7! Kh7 (now 40...Kf7 41.Rh8 would, of course, be all over) 41.Kg1 Rc2 42.Kf1 Kg7 43.Ke1 (here comes the king; f5 is the target) 43...Rc6 44.Kd2 Rc4 45.Kd3 Rc1 46.Kd4 Rc2 47.Kd5 Rc1 48.Ke6 Re1+ 49.Kxf5 Rc1 50.g4! hxg4 (or 50...Rc5+ 51.Ke6 hxg4 52.Kd6) 51.Kxg4 Rc5 52.h5 Kh7 53.h6 1-0.

Returning to 16.Bf3!?:

chesstouring.com



16...c6

It's not so easy for Black to complete his development, as we can see from 16...Nd7? 17.Bd5 and 16...Qxc4? 17.Re1 when White has far too much for the pawn, as shown by 17...Rf8 (17...Qf7 is a better defence, but still very promising for White after 18.Qd2 followed by simply doubling the rooks or 18...Re8 19.Bd5! Rxe1+ 20.Rxe1 Qxd5 21.Re7+ Kf8 22.Rh7 with a crushing attack) 18.Bxb7! Bxb7 19.Re7+ Rf7 (19...Kg8 20.Qb1 f5 21.Qxb7 is equally hopeless) 20.Ne6+ Kh6 (20...Kg8 21.Qd8+ leads to mate) 21.Qd2+ g5 22.hxg5+ Kg6 23.gxf6 when the huge threat of Qg5+ leaves Black not long for this world.

17.Re1 Na6?

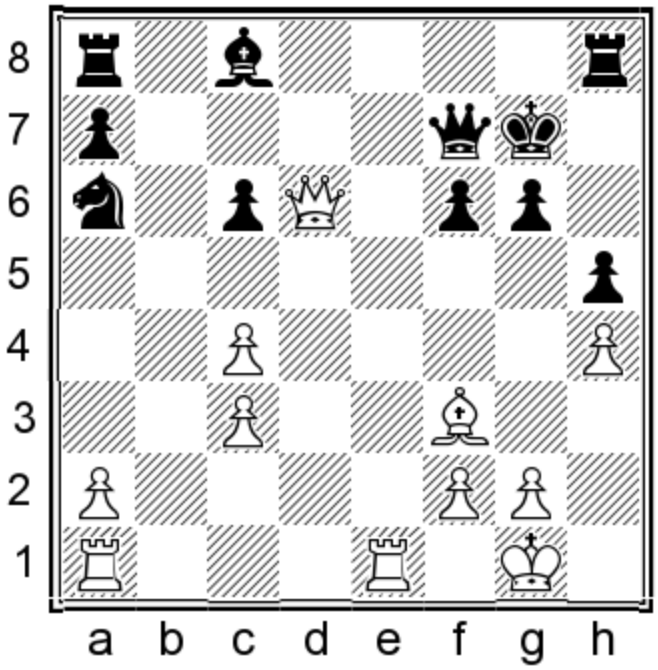
This allows a tactical blow, but finding an improvement is by no means easy for Black.

18.Nxc6! bxc6?

chesstouring.com

Black should probably prefer to suffer a pawn down after 18...Be6 19.Na5 Rad8 20.Qe2.

19.Qd6!



A quiet but deadly follow-up. The threat of **R**e7 is devastating as **19...Re8 20.Rxe8 Qxe8 21.Bxc6** wins material.

Avoiding Early Tactics

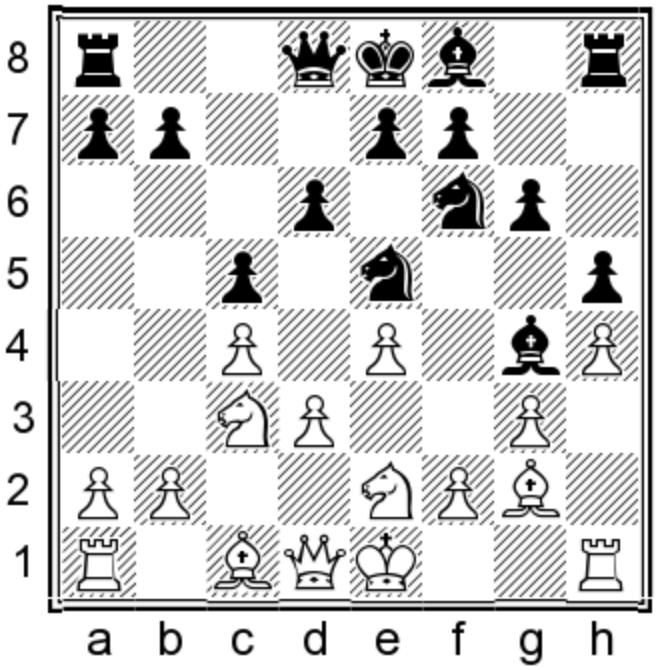
Our Botvinnik set-up is generally a sturdy one, but as we have seen, there are a few common tactical motifs White should be aware of.

1.c4 e5

1...Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 d6 4.Bg2 c5 is a slightly sneaky move order from Black. Often play will just transpose to a main line after 5.e4 Nc6 6.Nge2 Bg7, but here is a good time to remind you that accidents can occur on the light squares – if White is careless.

chesstouring.com

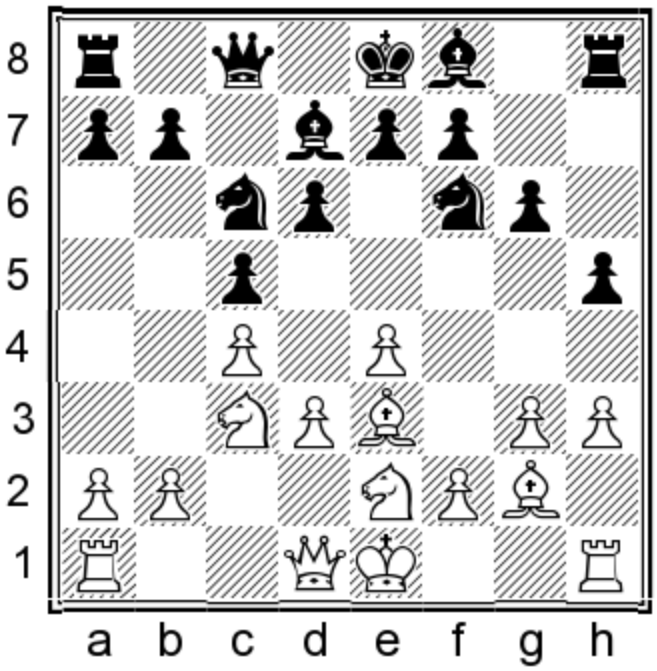
Instead, 6...h5!? is direct and should not be met by 7.h4 (White should prefer 7.h3 – see the next line) 7...Ne5 8.d3?! (White has to try 8.d4 cxd4 9.Nxd4, but this is not very Botvinnik-like) 8...Bg4.



The weakness of the f3-square is a major problem for White and 9.0-0 Nf3+ 10.Kh1 Nd7! leaves Black in control of the position, not to mention looking to attack us.

As such, we recommended meeting 6...h5!? with 7.h3. We will even allow Black to prevent us from castling with 7...Bd7 8.d3!? (8.0-0 Qc8 9.Kh2 is possible, if you prefer, as 9...h4 10.g4 Bxg4!? 11.hxg4 Nxg4+ 12.Kh1 doesn't seem to give Black quite enough for a piece) 8...Qc8, as 9.Be3 should give White an edge.

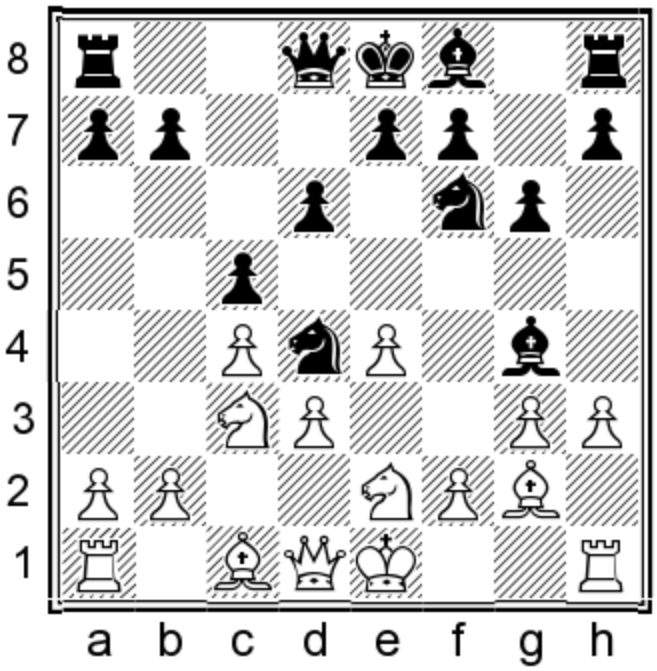
chesstouring.com



For example, 9...Bg7 10.Qd2 0-0 11.f4. White is now ready to sacrifice a pawn to open lines with f4-f5 to attack and may well castle queenside. The position looks like an improved version of a Closed Sicilian (the stability added by having a pawn on c4!), and one where we'd be very happy to try the white position...

Before moving on, we should note that another extremely rare idea is 6...Nd4!?, which also looks to strike on the light squares. Black can do just that after 7.d3 (7.h3 is also fine) 7...Bg4 8.h3!.

chesstouring.com



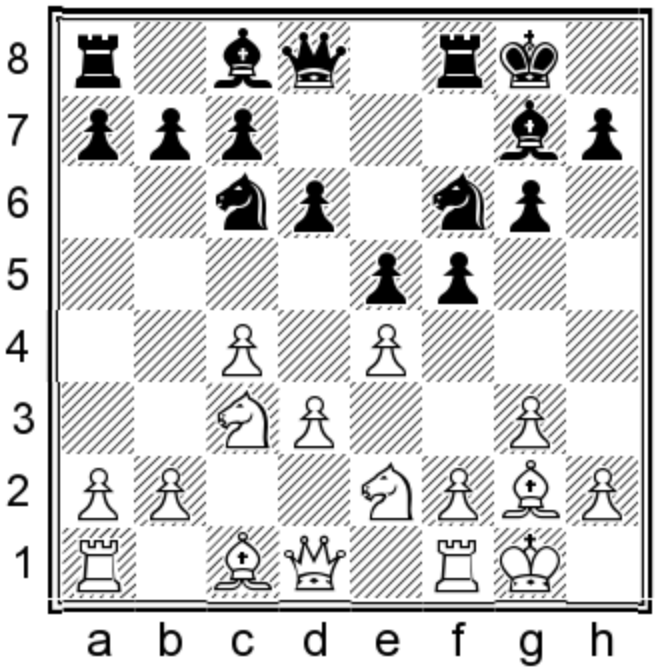
However, 8...Bf3 (8...Nf3+? 9.Kf1 Bh5 10.g4! Nxg4 11.Bxf3 wins a piece) 9.0-0 Bg7 10.Bxf3 Nxf3+ 11.Kg2 Nd4 12.Be3 leaves White slightly for choice; Qd2 will likely follow. We'd again be looking to expand with f4, but in such a structure White can also play for b2-b4. However, while on the subject of what to avoid, do note the line 12...Nd7 13.a3 0-0 14.b4? (14.Rb1!) 14...Nxe2 15.Nxe2 Bxa1 16.Qxa1 when White loses the exchange for insufficient compensation. Always watch out for tactics down the long diagonal – both the h1-a8 one for us and the a1-h8 one for Black.

2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.e4

These moves should all be commonplace by now and soon you'll be used to the following fairly common sequence.

5...d6 6.Nge2 f5 7.d3 Nf6 8.0-0 0-0

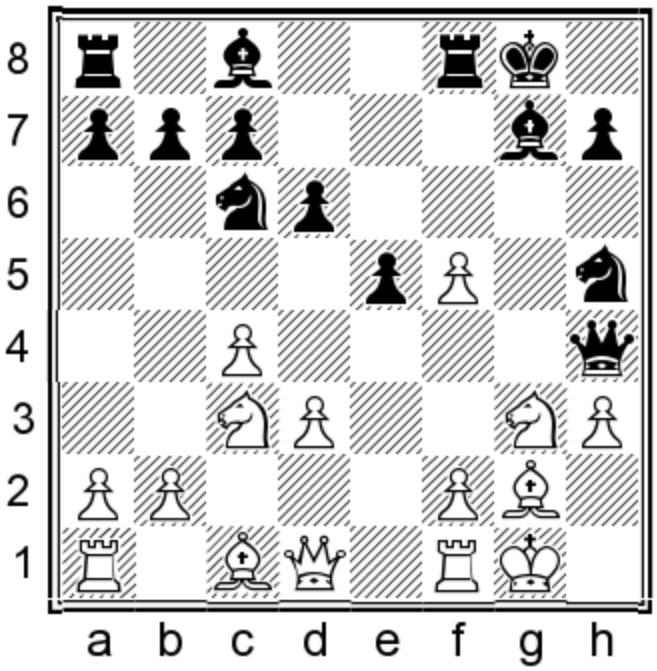
chesstouring.com



Don’t forget about the f4-square in this and all lines where Black has a pawn on f5. Indeed, **9.h3?** (thematic, but there’s good reason why we advocate 9.exf5) **9...f4! 10.gxf4 Nh5** is just quite a strong version of the typical pawn sacrifice for Black, largely due to that slow and weakening h3 move.

Richard was even once able to catch Simon out with this line, although after **11.f5!** (playing to close the position; 11.fxe5? dxe5 12.Nd5 might even be met by 12...Qh4, and if 13.Kh2? Nd4 – and ouch! Black threatens to invade on f3 and 14.Nxd4 exd4 15.f4 fails to simply 15...c6 16.Nb4 Nxf4 with too strong an attack on the dark squares) **11...gxf5** (11...Qh4!? was also very tempting) **12.exf5 Qh4 13.Ng3**...

chesstouring.com



...he failed to find **13...Rxf5!** (13...Nf4? 14.Qg4 Qxg4 15.hxg4 Nxd3 16.Nd5 left the boot very much on the other foot and Black soon gave up in Williams-Palliser, 4NCL 2002) **14.Nxf5 Bxf5 15.Kh2 Nd4** with an extremely strong attack for Black.

The move h3 is often an integral part of White's set-up, usefully taking control of the g4-square and so preventing Be3 being met by ...Ng4, for instance, but do beware playing h3 too early when Black has gone for an early ...f5.

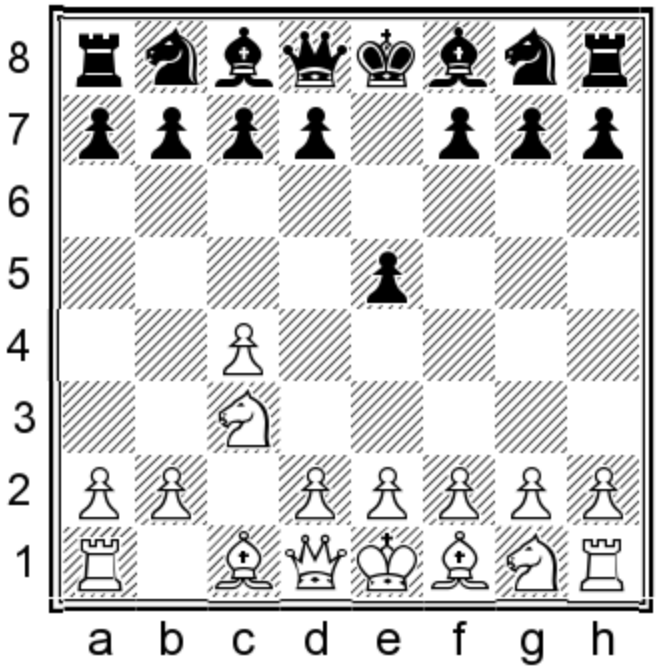
chesstouring.com

Chapter Two
Kickstarter: An Outline of the Iron English Repertoire

1.c4 Nf6

You should expect to see this natural developing move in a great many of your games. Black's major alternatives are:

a) The other popular reply at all levels is 1...e5 when with 2.Nc3 we'll aim for our standard set-up (c4, Nc3, g3, Bg2 and e4).



Now:

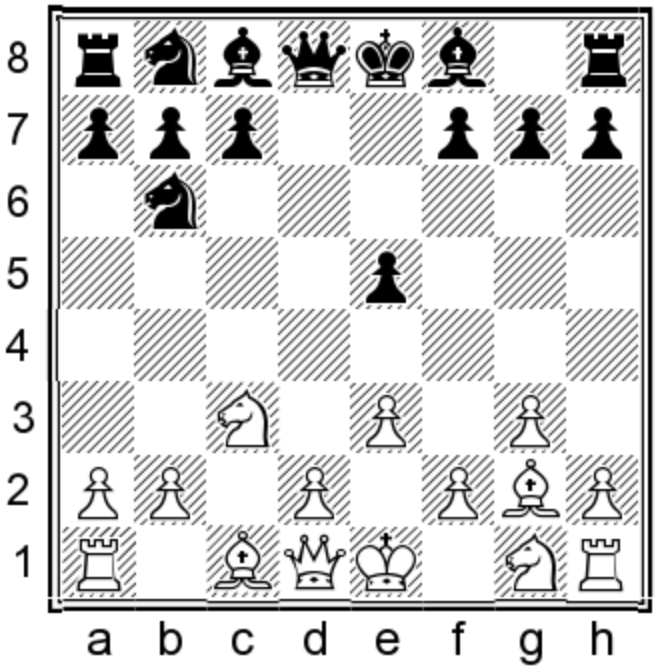
a1) 2...Nf6 3.g3 and here:

a11) 3...Bb4 4.e4!? (Magnus's pet line) 4...Bxc3 (not forced, but 4...0-0 5.Nge2 takes central control, after which 5...d6 6.h3 Nc6 7.Bg2 a6 8.0-0 b5 9.d3 is how Magnus has liked to develop in true Botvinnik fashion, as we saw, above, in the section on Squashing Black) 5.dxc3 d6 (5...Nxe4 6.Qg4

chesstouring.com

favourably regains the pawn) 6.f3!? (this may look unusual, but makes it much harder for Black to obtain counterplay than if the bishop goes to g2) 6...0-0 (6...a5 7.Nh3 reveals one upside of placing the pawn on f3 and 7...a4 8.Nf2 Be6 9.Bd3 Nbd7 10.Qe2 c6?! 11.f4 already left Black getting badly squeezed in our later illustrative game Carlsen-Anand) 7.Nh3 h6 8.Nf2 Nbd7 9.Be3 Qe7 10.g4 is objectively quite unclear, but the central clamp supplied by the Botvinnik formation pawns on c4 and e4 is clearly quite a handy one.

a12) A major alternative is the reversed Dragon, 3...d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2 Nb6, against which we like 6.e3.



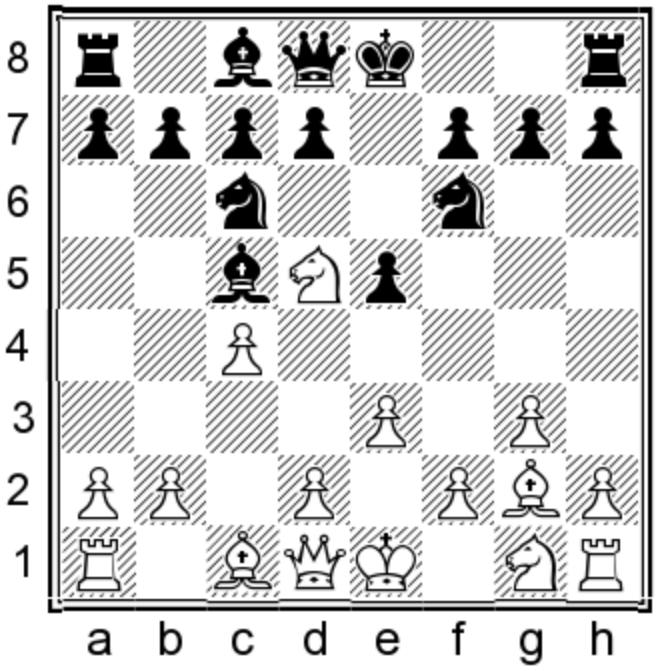
Now 6...Nc6 (alternatively, 6...Be7 7.Nge2 0-0 8.0-0 c6 9.f4! reveals White's key pawn lever and 9...N8d7 10.b3 a5 11.Bb2 leaves him well coordinated and with attacking chances on the kingside, if arguably less than the closely-related 6...c5 7.Nge2 Nc6 8.0-0 Be7 9.f4! exf4 10.Nxf4 0-0 11.b3 Bf5 12.Bb2 supplied in Nakamura-Navara) 7.Nge2 (refusing to blunt the gaze of the bishop on g2, while facilitating f4 and d4) 7...Be7 (7...Bd6 8.0-0 0-0 9.f4 f6 10.f5 once again leads to an attack, as we'll see in Ziese-Lindh) 8.0-0 0-0 9.f4 (yet again we prefer this break to 9.d4) 9...exf4 (9...f6

chesstouring.com

10.f5 again restricts Black and after 10...a5 11.b3 Bd7 12.d4 Qc8 13.g4 the momentum was with White in Jones-Edouard) 10.Nxf4 Ne5 11.d4 seizes space, after which 11...Ng6 12.Nd3! c6 13.b3 keeps pieces on, leaving Black cramped and White with a useful mobile central majority.

a13) 3...c6 is a reversed c3 Sicilian, well enough met by 4.Nf3 e4 5.Nd4, and if 5...Qb6!? 6.Nb3 a5 7.d3!, keeping the knight safe, after which White might battle for the initiative with 7...a4 8.Nd2 exd3 9.Bg2 d5 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.0-0!?.

a2) 2...Nc6 is also very popular and after 3.g3 Nf6 (3...g6 is extremely important too, transposing into Modern or King's Indian waters; indeed, a common transposition is 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.e4 Nf6 6.Nge2 – White completes his Botvinnik set-up – 6...0-0 7.0-0 d6 8.d3 and we're in our main line, below) 4.Bg2 Bb4 (4...Bc5 is the other major development when, fairly unusually, we don't recommend a set-up with Nge2, but 5.Nf3 0-0 6.0-0 d6 7.e3; White shuts down the diagonal of the bishop on c5 and after 7...a6 8.d4 Ba7 9.h3 fights against the other bishop: for example, 9...h6 10.dxe5 Nxe5 11.Nxe5 dxe5 12.Qxd8 Rxd8 13.b3 c6 14.Ba3 with an edge) 5.Nd5! Bc5 6.e3 White can again be happy.

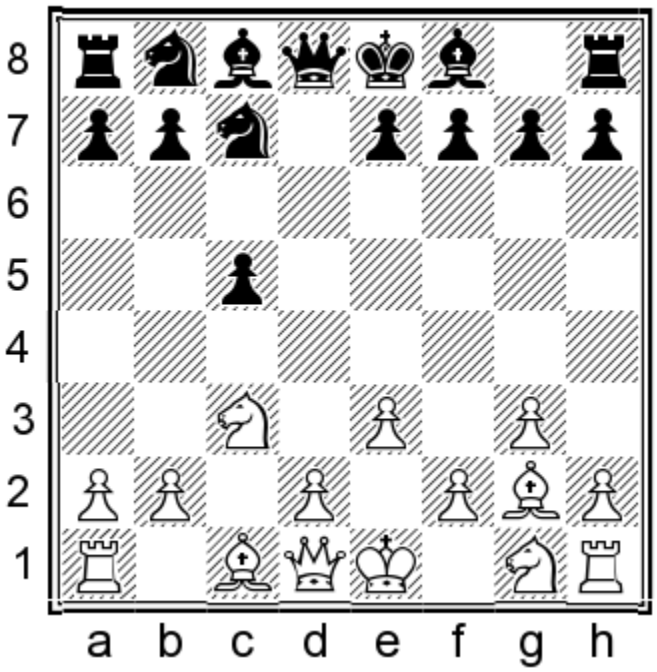


chesstouring.com

Here d4 is one idea, 6...Nxd5 (6...0-0 7.Ne2 d6 8.0-0 Re8 9.d4 reveals plan ‘A’ in action in Timofeev-Andriasian) 7.cxd5 Ne7 8.Ne2 c6 9.Nc3 0-0 10.0-0 another when again White angles to get in d2-d4.

a3) 2...Bb4 3.e4!? is pretty rare, but far from bad and may even just transpose to our 2...Nf6 3.g3 Bb4 coverage after 3...Nf6 4.g3.

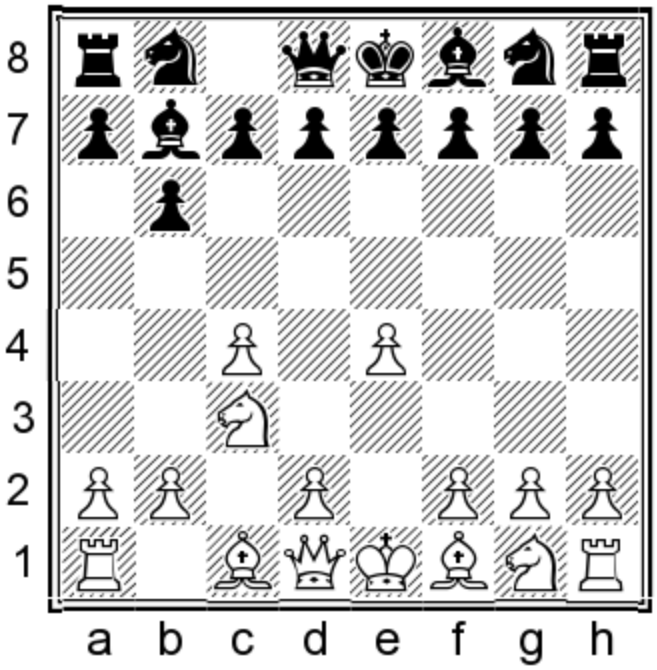
b) 1...c5 is the Symmetrical variation when 2.Nc3 Nf6 (2...Nc6 3.g3 is often followed up by 3...g6 and a transposition to lines we’ll see below after 1...g6; there’s also 3...Nf6 4.Bg2 e6, but here 5.e4!? is very interesting, and if 5...d5 6.exd5 exd5 7.cxd5 Nb4 8.d3! – ruling out an important check – 8...Be7 9.Nge2 0-0 10.0-0 with an unbalanced middlegame ahead, if also one in which the English bishop radiates power from g2) 3.g3 d5 prevents our Botvinnik set-up (Bg2 and e4), but 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2 Nc7 6.e3 resembles our reversed Dragon line.



For example, 6...e5 7.Nge2 Nc6 8.0-0 Be7 9.f4 (here we go again...) 9...exf4 10.Nxf4 0-0 11.b3 Bf6 (11...Bd7 12.Bb2 Rc8 13.Qh5 already menaced serious aggression in Bryzgalin-Wieczorek) 12.Ba3 Na6 13.Rc1 Bd7 14.Ne4 when White’s pieces flow to good, active squares while he seizes the initiative.

chesstouring.com

c) 1...b6 sees the English Opening meet the English Defence. After 2.Nc3 Bb7 3.e4 White is ready to set up a Botvinnik formation and often can:

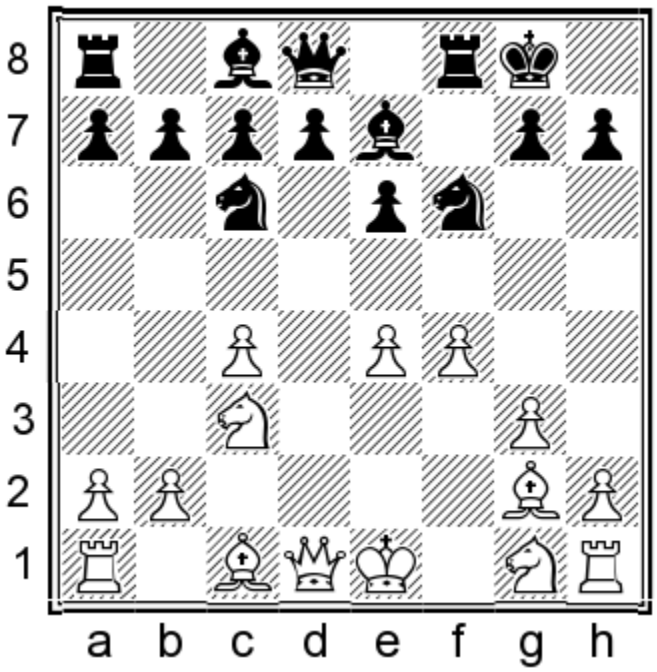


c31) 3...e6 4.Nge2 Nf6 5.d3 (keeping control...) 5...c5 6.g3 (...ahead of going for our favourite set-up) 6...Nc6 7.Bg2 d6 8.0-0 Be7 9.h3 (thematic and ever good preparation for Be3) 9...a6 10.Be3 leaves White comfortably placed, Black a little low on counterplay and either f4-f5 or a3, Rb1 and b4 likely to follow.

c32) 3...Nf6 4.d3 c5 5.g3 Nc6 6.Bg2 d6 7.Nge2 (completing the Botvinnik set-up) 7...g6 8.0-0 Bg7 9.h3 (again, ever important prophylaxis for Be3) 9...0-0 10.Be3 a6 11.Qd2 left White with the b4, d4 and f4 pawn levers in D'Costa-Teske.

d) 1...f5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3 e6 (we also meet the Leningrad branch of the Dutch, 3...g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.d3 0-0, with 6.e4 followed by Nge2 and 0-0) 4.Bg2 Be7 (against the Stonewall, 4...d5, we'll switch focus with 5.cxd5 exd5 6.d3 c6 7.Nf3 and then 7...Be7 8.0-0 0-0 9.Qc2 when White may go for a well-timed e4 break or queenside pressure after Rb1 and b4) 5.d3 0-0 is a Classical Dutch set-up from Black, one best met by a turbo-charged type of Botvinnik set-up, i.e. 6.e4! fxe4 7.dxe4 Nc6 8.f4.

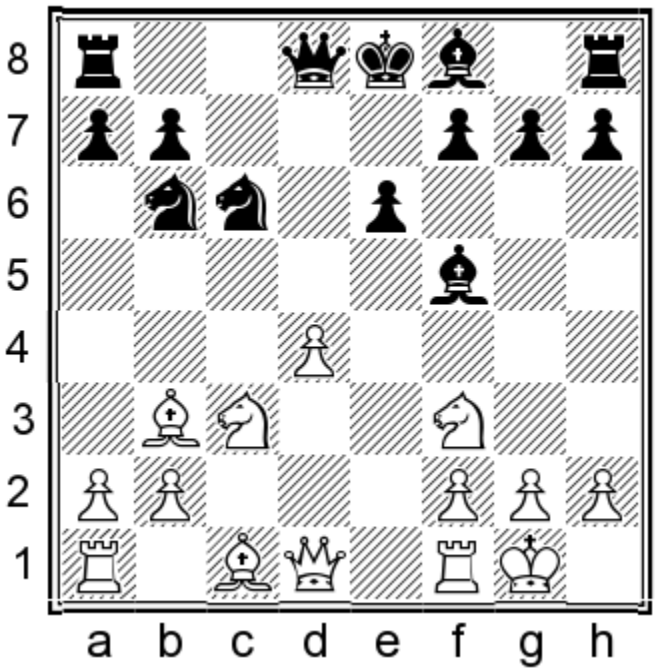
chesstouring.com



White will follow up with e5 or Nf3 and 0-0.

e) 1...c6 angles for a Slav after 2.d4 d5, but not all Slav players also play the Caro-Kann! Yes, here we're going for 2.e4!? and then active piece play with 2...d5 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.exd5 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nxd5 6.Bc4. White develops as quickly as possible, with the critical line running 6...Nb6 7.Bb3 Nc6 8.Nf3 Bf5 9.d4 (making good, active use of the IQP to threaten d5) 9...e6 10.0-0.

chesstouring.com

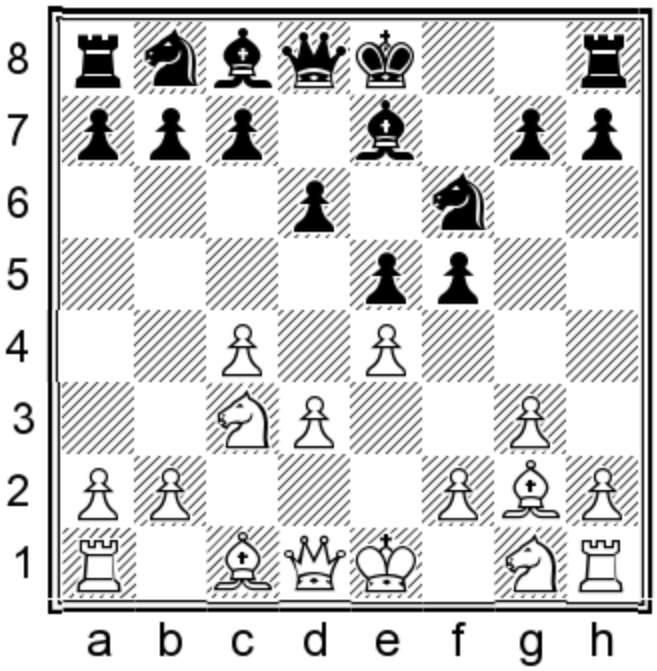


Here White will continue trying to harry Black with the a4-a5 and d5 advances.

f) 1...e6 can be met by 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 if you're happy with the Exchange Queen's Gambit, or by 2.e4!?, again going for active and slightly unexpected play. Here 2...d5 3.cxd5 exd5 4.exd5 Nf6 5.Bb5+ is a speciality of Maxime Vachier-Lagrave's no less. White's priority is active and straightforward development: 5...Nbd7 6.Nc3 Be7 7.d4 0-0 8.Nf3 Nb6 9.h3 (useful prophylaxis against ...Bg4) 9...Bf5 10.0-0 when Black can regain his pawn, but White will invade on e5 and might be able to seize the initiative after Qf3.

g) 1...d6 2.Nc3 e5 3.g3 can easily transpose to King's Indian or Modern (1...g6) lines, but Black can also go for a set-up with 3...f5 4.Bg2 Nf6 5.d3 Be7 6.e4.

chesstouring.com

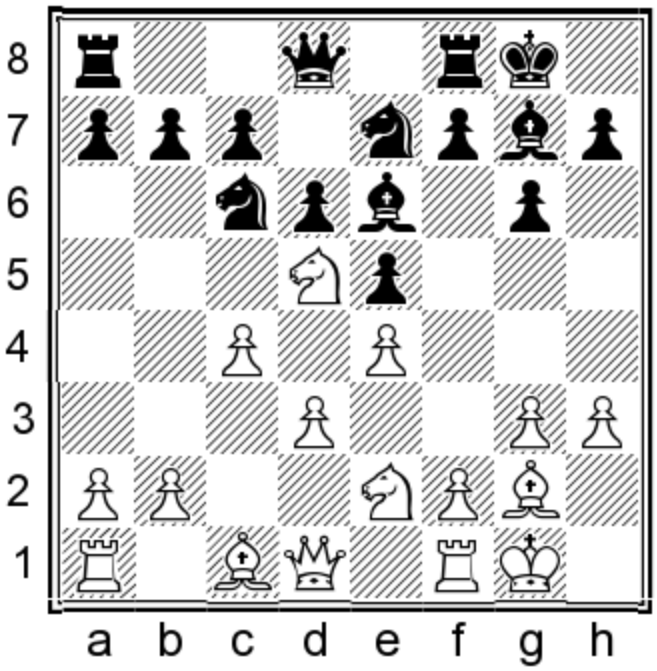


Again, we find White's Botvinnik formation rather a useful one, with 6...c6 7.Nge2 0-0 8.0-0 Qe8 (angling for a classic attack with ...Qh5, ...f4 and ...Bh3; instead, 8...Na6 9.h3 is quite useful, teeing up expansion with 9...Qe8 10.exf5 Bxf5 11.g4, as occurred in Flores-Weis) 9.exf5 (reducing the potency of any attack) 9...Bxf5 10.d4 (the classic central counter to flank play) 10...Nbd7 11.b3 Qh5 12.f3!, keeping Black at bay on the kingside by denying his pieces use of g4, after which White can complete development with Be3 and Qd2 or even Ba3.

h) 1...g6 2.Nc3 Bg7 3.g3 sees White heading for our favourite Botvinnik formation and Black with a choice of set-ups: ...e5 or ...c5. Indeed, that really is the choice, whether immediately or in a couple of moves' time:

h1) 3...d6 4.Bg2 e5 5.e4 Ne7 sees Black avoiding ...Nf6 to keep his f-pawn flexible, but this doesn't worry us: 6.Nge2 0-0 7.0-0 Nbc6 8.d3 is the standard Botvinnik approach, leaving White with the f4, d4 and b4 pawn breaks and a fair amount of control, as with 8...Bg4 9.h3 Be6 10.Nd5!.

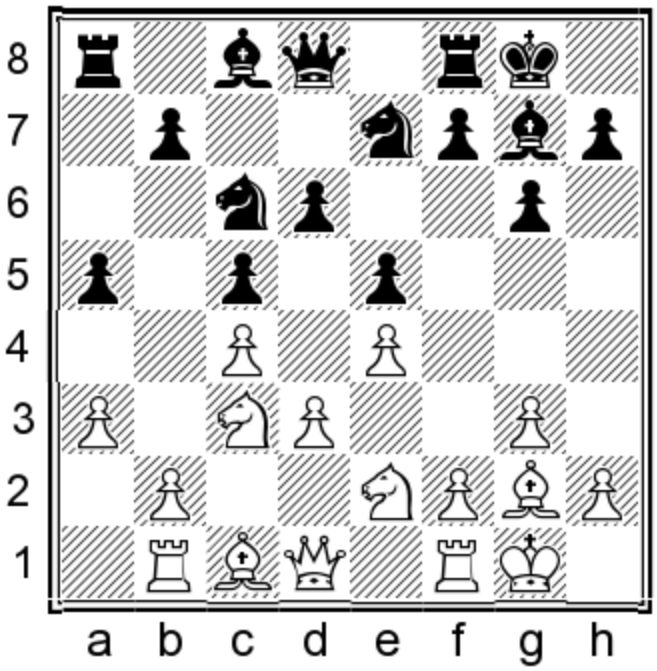
chesstouring.com



Remember this leap which often creates pressure when Black has a knight on c6 and bishop on e6, and no good way of exchanging on d5.

h2) 3...c5 4.Bg2 Nc6 5.e4 e5 (5...e6 6.Nge2 Nge7 is another important set-up, against which we like to complete development then counter on the queenside: 7.0-0 d6 8.d3 0-0 9.Rb1!? b6 10.a3 Bb7 11.b4 sees White beating Black to the punch on the queenside while dissuading the ...d5 break) 6.Nge2 Nge7 (the Botvinnik formation meets the Botvinnik formation!) 7.0-0 0-0 8.d3 d6 (standard development, but now White can hint at queenside expansion and so break the symmetry) 9.a3! a5 10.Rb1.

chesstouring.com



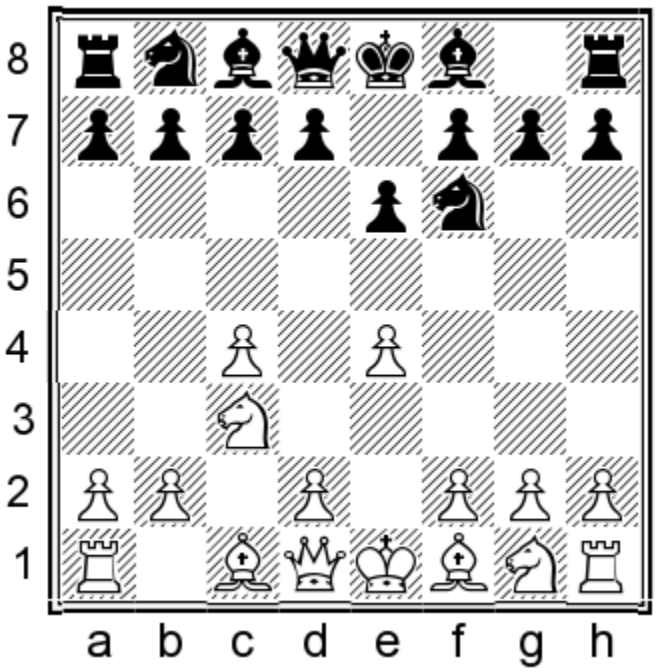
Here 10...Rb8 (yet again, 10...Be6 is well met by 11.Nd5 and after 11...Rb8 12.Nec3 f5 13.Bg5! White's control of d5 was the key feature of the position in Rivas Pastor-Su.Polgar, and 10...Bd7 11.Bd2 h6 12.Nb5 also took control in So-Giri) 11.Nb5 (exploiting the hole we induced Black to create) 11...Be6 12.Nec3 f5 13.Nd5 sees both white knights taking up advanced stations, after which Bg5 and an eventual b4 will turn up the pressure on Black.

Returning to 1...Nf6:

2.Nc3 g6

Going for King's Indian waters. Of course, a Nimzo-Indian or QGD player would never do so, but after 2...e6 we most certainly don't have to go 3.d4 and 3.e4!, the Mikenas Attack, packs a certain punch:

chesstouring.com

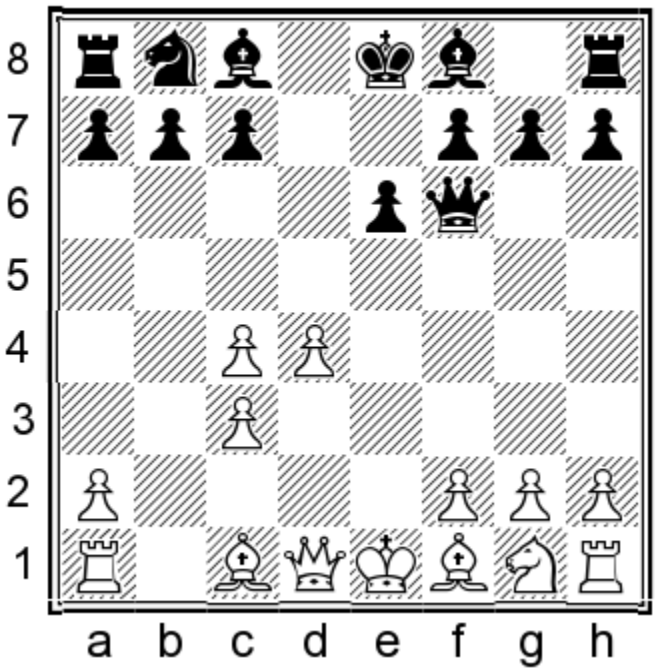


a) There’s certainly no chance of Nimzo-like play in view of 3...Bb4? 4.e5 Ng8 5.Qg4.

b) 3...c5!? 4.e5 Ng8 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.d4! cxd4 7.Nxd4 leads to one of the sharpest lines of the repertoire; yes, White is sacrificing a pawn for dark-square control and a lead in development, i.e. 7...Nxe5 8.Ndb5 a6 9.Nd6+ Bxd6 10.Qxd6. Black doesn’t have to crumble immediately, but even after 10...f6! 11.Be3 Ne7 12.Bb6 (not quite winning the black queen) 12...Nf5 13.Qb4 (to decoy another black knight away from an ideal square) 13...Nc6 14.Qc5 Qe7 15.0-0-0 we quite like White’s lasting compensation, which can easily turn into serious pressure right across the board as Black tries somehow to free his queenside.

c) 3...d5 4.e5 (again, White is happy to seize the space on offer) 4...d4 5.exf6 dxc3 6.bxc3 Qxf6 7.d4.

chesstouring.com

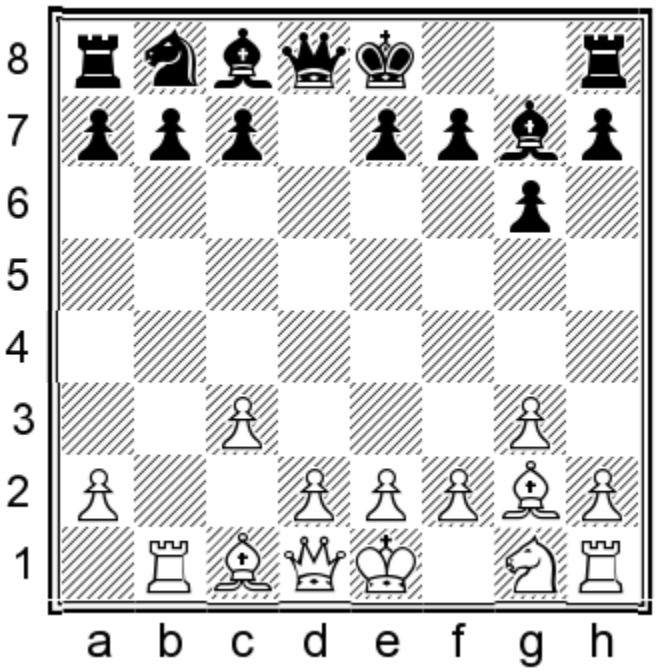


White does have doubled pawns, but also good central control and easy development, which can quickly become a factor, as with 7...e5 (7...c5 8.Nf3 h6 is an important alternative, preventing harassment with Bg5, but 9.Bd3 cxd4 10.cxd4 Bb4+ 11.Bd2 Bxd2+ 12.Qxd2 Nc6 13.Qe3 saw straightforward development maintain White's space advantage in Tomashevsky-Iljin) 8.Nf3 exd4 9.Bg5! Qe6+ 10.Be2 when Black is somewhat behind in development and even 10...Be7 (10...f6 11.Nxd4 Qf7 12.Bh6!! was Simon's incredible creation, neatly exploiting the line-up of Black's royal couple) 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 12.cxd4 0-0 13.0-0 is quite pleasant for White, with Re1 and Rb1 on their way, as well as a timely d5.

3.g3 Bg7

Grünfeld players will prefer 3...d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2, but White should be happy with such a fine bishop on g2. After 5...Nxc3 6.bxc3 Bg7 7.Rb1 the bishop is already making its presence felt and there are definite chances to create some early pressure.

chesstouring.com



For instance, 7...Nd7 8.h4!? (trying to create some kingside pressure – and not 8.Bxb7?? Bxb7 9.Rxb7 Nb6, trapping the errant rook) 8...h6 9.Nf3 0-0 10.0-0 Nb6 11.Qc2 when White was set to expand in the centre and Black was a little low on counterplay in Flores-Barrionuevo.

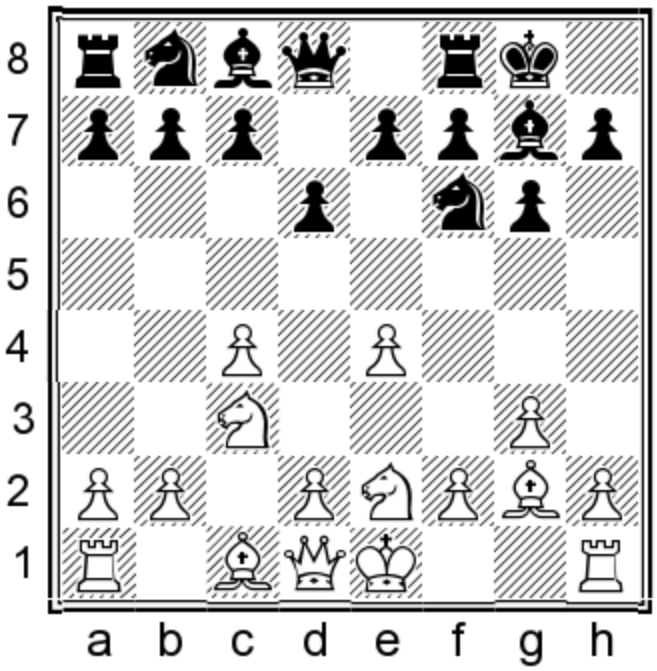
4.Bg2 0-0 5.e4!

Our key advance, seizing space and further increasing White's central control.

5...d6 6.Nge2

And this completes the Botvinnik formation, which is flexible and relatively easy to master.

chesstouring.com

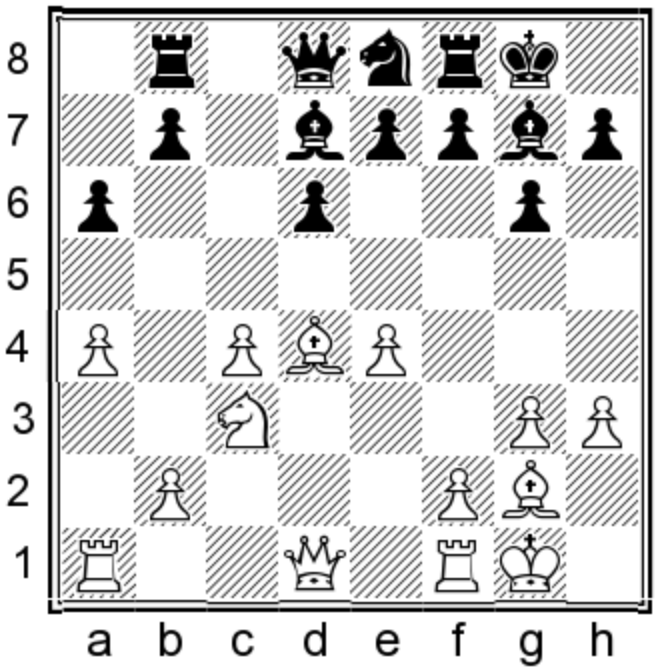


6...e5

The big alternative is a switch to Symmetrical lines with 6...c5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d3 when in the short term White is more likely to play for b4 or d4 rather than f4-f5, as Black's kingside is quite solid with his pawn still on e7: for example, 8...Rb8 9.h3 (ever good prophylaxis) 9...a6 10.a4 (again denying Black easy play) 10...Ne8 (the knight sets off on a quest to help Black achieve a pawn break) 11.Be3 Nc7 12.d4 (but White manages to break first) 12...cxd4 13.Nxd4 Ne6 14.Nde2! with an edge. This retreat keeps pieces on and so continues to leave Black a little low on counterplay, as well as vulnerable to a timely f4-f5.

Alternatively, 8...a6 9.h3 Nd4 10.Rb1! Rb8 11.b4 beat Black to the bounce on the queenside and so left White with the initiative in Kokarev-Popov, 8...Ne8 9.Be3 Nc7 10.d4 cxd4 11.Nxd4 saw White taking control having established the famous Maroczy Bind in Williams-Kahn, and 8...Bd7 9.h3 Rb8 10.Be3 a6 11.a4! (refusing to allow Black easy play with ...b5) 11...Ne8 12.d4 cxd4 13.Nxd4 Nxd4 14.Bxd4 did likewise in Williams-Critelli.

chesstouring.com

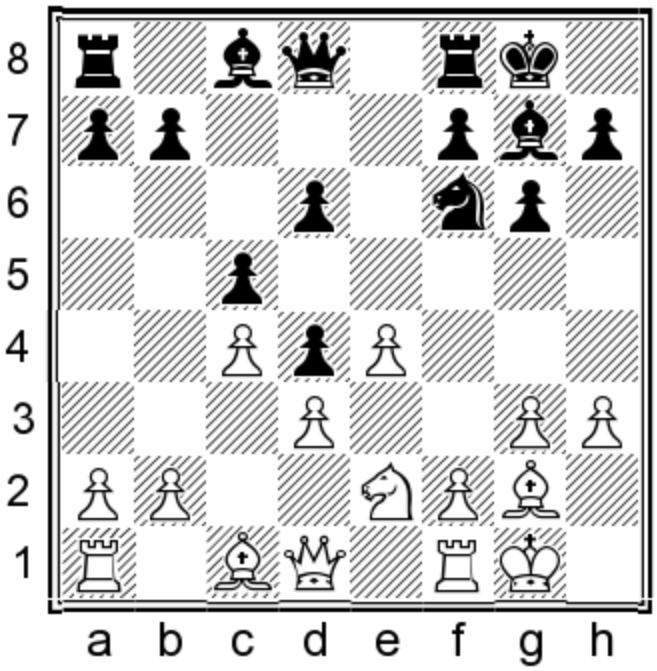


Note Black’s lack of counterplay, in contrast to which White can easily expand, not least with f4-f5.

7.d3 Nc6

Instead, 7...c5 would be a double Botvinnik formation where Black has misplaced his king’s knight and 8.0-0 Nc6 9.h3 Nd4 10.Nxd4 exd4 11.Ne2 was quite pleasant for White in Skembris-Vukic.

chesstouring.com



Note the dead-point on d4, in contrast to which White's pawns are healthy and ready to be deployed with b4 and/or f4.

There's also the attempt at immediate counterplay with 7...c6 8.0-0 Be6, but this is well met by the calm 9.h3 Qd7 10.Kh2 (naturally keeping the kingside secure) 10...d5?! 11.exd5 cxd5 12.d4! when Black comes under early pressure in part due to our mighty bishop on g2.

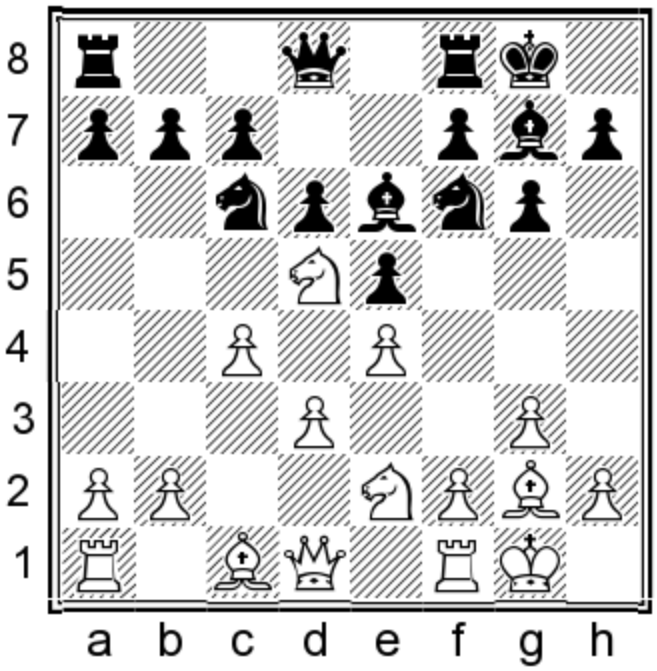
8.0-0 Be6

Simple development. A very important alternative is 8...Nh5, freeing the f7-pawn for duty, although matters aren't so simple for Black: 9.Be3 Nd4 (9...f5 is rather well met by 10.exf5! Bxf5 11.d4, seizing the initiative and leaving White in control after 11...Qd7 12.d5 Ne7 13.f3 in Bachmann-Berg, on account of his grip on e4) 10.Qd2 c6 is probably best, but after 11.Rae1 all White's pieces were well placed and he was ready to expand on the kingside in Kamsky-Khanin.

9.Nd5

Yet again a tempting leap to exploit Black's set-up.

chesstouring.com



9...Qd7

Prudent. 9...Nxd5?? 10.cxd5 would just lose a piece and 9...Bxd5?! 10.cxd5 Ne7 11.f4 is very pleasant for White with the two bishops and definite pressure.

10.Bg5!

Forcing the pace on the kingside.

10...Ne8 11.Qd2

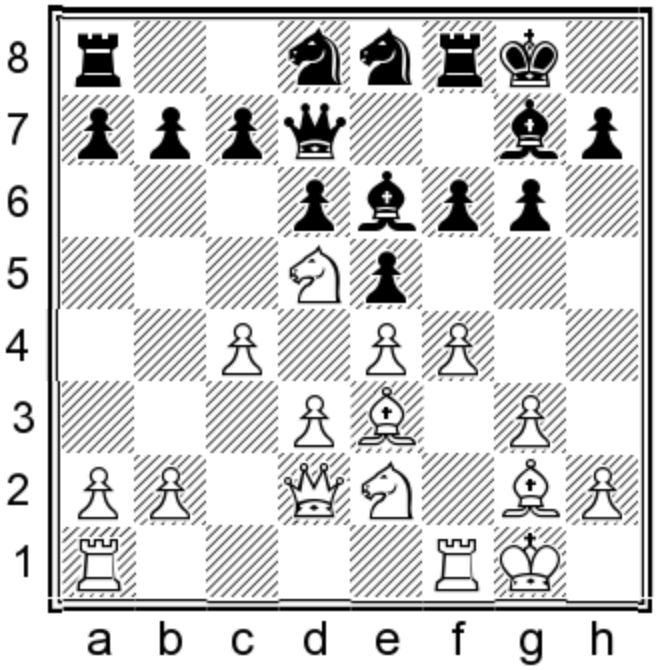
Connecting the rooks and allowing White to consider ideas of Bh6 at the right moment.

11...f6 12.Be3

Dropping back, but the bishop may return should Black go ...f5 at some point.

chesstouring.com

12...Nd8 13.f4



White has an edge and should be happy with the outcome of the opening. Black is able to kick our knight back with ...c6, but has had to become tangled up in the process and may well come under some pressure on the kingside after f5, as we'll now see in the first of our detailed theoretical chapters.

chesstouring.com

Chapter Three
English Versus the King's Indian

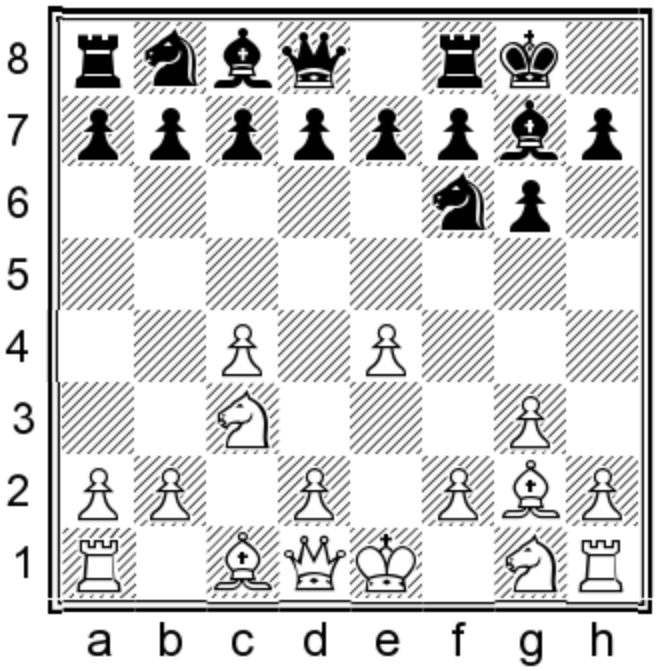
1.c4 Nf6

Play will often transpose after 1...g6 followed by ...Nf6, but we'll take a detailed look at all Black's independent options with a delayed ...Nf6 in Chapter Four.

2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 Bg7

Grünfeld players may try 3...d5, which prevents our Botvinnik set-up, but is again not something to worry about – see Theory 5A.

4.Bg2 0-0 5.e4



It's high time to make our favourite central advance, setting up the Botvinnik formation. These moves should already be almost second nature

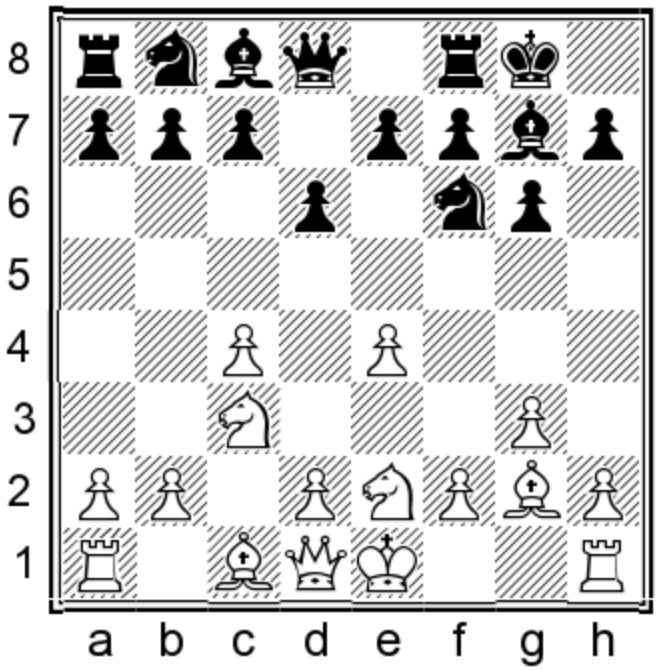
chesstouring.com

for you and you'll likely reach this position a lot, since a King's Indian set-up is such a popular opening at club level. Here, of course, it's not a proper King's Indian as we're not intending to quickly plant our d-pawn on d4, but King's Indian players tend to meet 1.c4 and 1.Nf3 in the same way as 1.d4.

5...d6

Black continues with his standard King's Indian moves. Play will transpose to Line 3A or 3B after 5...e5 6.Nge2 d6 7.0-0, while 5...c5 6.Nge2 d6 7.0-0 would take play into 3C.

6.Nge2



At this point Black has three main ways of playing:

3A) ...e5 with ...Nc6
3B) ...e5 without ...Nc6
3C) ...c5 set-ups

Theory 3A

chesstouring.com

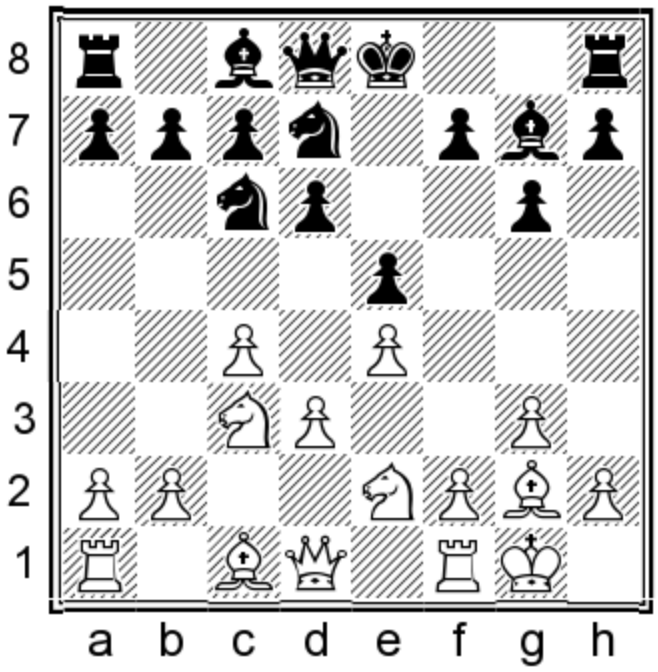
1.c4 Nf6

As we will see, play often transposes after Black's most principled move, 1...e5, to a Botvinnik English. Indeed, 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.e4 Nf6 6.Nge2 0-0 7.d3 d6 8.0-0 is a fairly common transposition into our coverage here.

2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 0-0

After 4...e5 5.e4 Nc6 6.Nge2 Black almost always goes 6...0-0 when play transposes below. We should also, though, quickly consider two independent ideas:

a) 6...d6 7.d3 Nd7!? was once tried by a young Topalov. White should not be distracted, i.e. go 8.0-0.



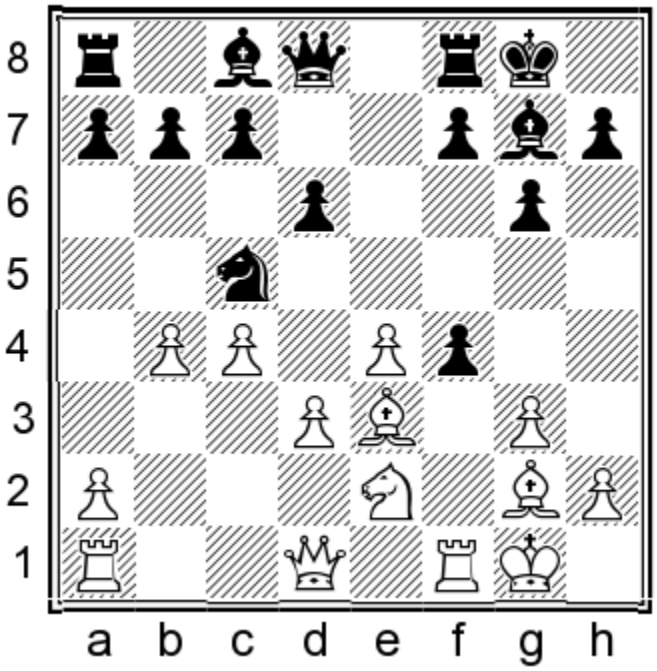
When there are no early tactics, it's usually a good idea to play all the moves you definitely want to play first, then work out where to place the remaining pieces. Here:

a1) 8...Nf8?! goes for a big clamp on d4, but rather ignores development: 9.f4! saw White quickly put his finger on the downside in Avrukh-Bosman,

chesstouring.com

European Club Cup, Ohrid 2009, where after 9...Ne6 10.f5 Ned4 White had a great many tempting moves, with the simplest route to an edge 11.Nxd4 Nxd4 12.Ne2 and 11.Nd5!? Nxe2+ 12.Qxe2 Nd4 13.Qf2 is also quite strong. Black can temporarily grab a pawn with 13...gxf5 14.exf5 Bxf5, but after 15.Be3 Be6 16.Bxd4! exd4 17.Nf4 0-0 18.Bxb7 Rb8 19.Qg2 his structure is shot and White controls the board.

a2) 8...Nc5 9.Be3 0-0 10.f4! (our key break; 10.Qd2 has been more common, but 10...Nd4! is slightly annoying when White cannot, of course, go in for 11.Nxd4?? exd4) 10...Nd4 (critical; 10...f5?! is premature on account of 11.exf5! when Black either finds his pieces badly misplaced after fxe5 or has to go in for 11...Bxf5 12.fxe5 Bxd3 13.Rxf8+ Qxf8 14.Bxc5 Bxe2 15.Qd5+! when White has a strong initiative, while 10...exf4 11.gxf4 f5 12.Qd2 again leaves White much the more comfortably placed, with Rad1 and Ng3 on their way and Black again having to take care, as shown by 12...Be6? 13.d4!, which wins a piece) 11.b4!? (this bold advance has only been played once, but here looks a critical one) 11...Nxe2+ (11...Nce6?! 12.f5 Nxe2+ 13.Nxe2 Nd4 14.Nxd4 exd4 15.Bd2 leaves Black struggling to free his position) 12.Nxe2 exf4.



chesstouring.com

Now in Ahmadzada-Draskovic, European Championship, Batumi 2018, White elected to avoid losing material with 13.Bd4, which was far from bad, but we would like to draw your attention to 13.Nxf4!? Bxa1 14.Qxa1. By walking into a standard tactical ploy (not moving the rook from b1 before playing b4), White has lost the exchange – but done so deliberately.

Just look at all those dark squares being eyed up by the queen on a1! We certainly like the look of White's compensation and after 14...Ne6 (14...Nd7 15.c5! also leaves Black under pressure) 15.Nd5 f5 (how else to cover f6?) 16.exf5 gxf5 17.Bh6 Rf7 18.Bh3 Black's position is creaking. Now a critical and fairly instructive line is 18...c6 19.Bxf5! cxd5 20.Bxe6 Bxe6 21.Rxf7 Kxf7 22.Qg7+ Ke8. Black has fled the mate, but White will regain his rook with a clear advantage after 23.Bg5! (a backwards move, but one you'd hope to consider during a game seeing how it carries a threat) 23...Qd7 (23...Qb6+? loses to 24.c5) 24.Qh8+ Kf7 25.Qxh7+ Ke8 26.Qh8+ Kf7 27.Qxa8.

b) 6...h5!? aims to stir up trouble on the kingside, but after 7.h3 (White's standard reaction, refusing to lose control of the g4-square or castle into it, although 7.0-0!? h4 8.d3 d6 9.Bg5 might also be explored) 7...d6 8.d3 Be6 (8...h4 9.g4 keeps the position closed and will quickly be followed by an f4 break) 9.Be3 (making good use of the insertion of h3 and refusing to castle into it) 9...Qd7 10.Qd2 Ne7 (perhaps not best, but we also like White after 10...0-0 11.f4! followed by castling long when Black's king looks the much more vulnerable of the two) 11.b3!? c5 12.f4 Nc6 13.0-0-0 left White for choice in Wedberg-Je.Hall, Harplinge 1998, and 13.fxe5!? Nxe5 14.d4! cxd4 15.Nxd4 would also have led to a very pleasant advantage.

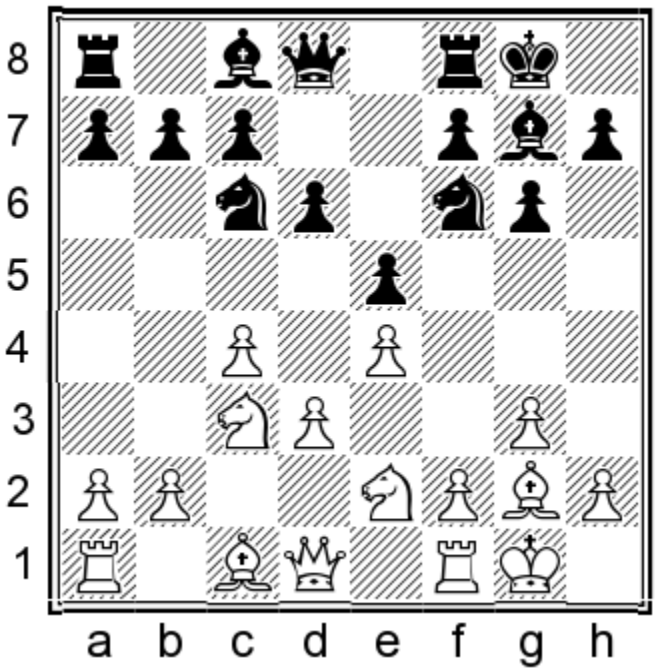
Returning to 4...0-0:

5.e4 d6 6.Nge2 e5 7.0-0

There's also nothing wrong with 7.d3 if you prefer as a move order.

7...Nc6 8.d3

chesstouring.com



We've reached something of a tabiya, but one where you should feel at home (f4 is on its way), and plenty of your opponents may lack experience.

Just a quick reminder that we do, though, advise against Simon's old favourite 8.f4 on account of 8...exf4! 9.gxf4 Nh5 when 10.d4 Qh4 11.Be3 Bh3 leaves White with a big centre, but also looking rather overextended as Black hits back with ...Rae8 and ...f5.

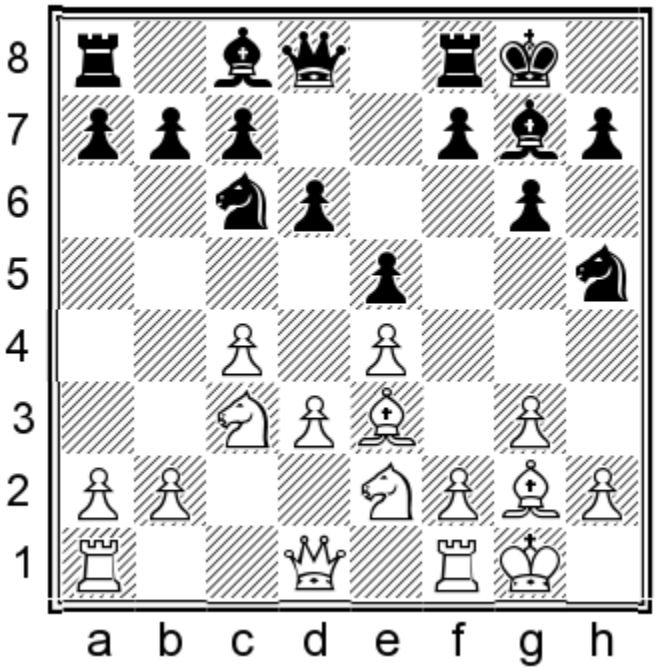
8...Be6

Black's most common move at club level (i.e. below an Elo of 2000), simply continuing to develop. He has though tried a great many moves, including:

a) 8...Nh5 has been Black's most popular move at a high level, immediately freeing the f-pawn for duty and after 9.Be3 (nowadays it's worth keeping an eye on the so-called TCEC, the Top Engines Chess Competition, especially if you like to explore new wrinkles in your favourite lines; here *Lc0*, aka Leela, went for the unexpected 9.b3 in one game with *Komodo*, while with colours reversed, 9.h3!? f5 10.exf5 gxf5

chesstouring.com

11.f4 was the choice of *Komodo* and is a reasonable way to stymie Black's play) he has:



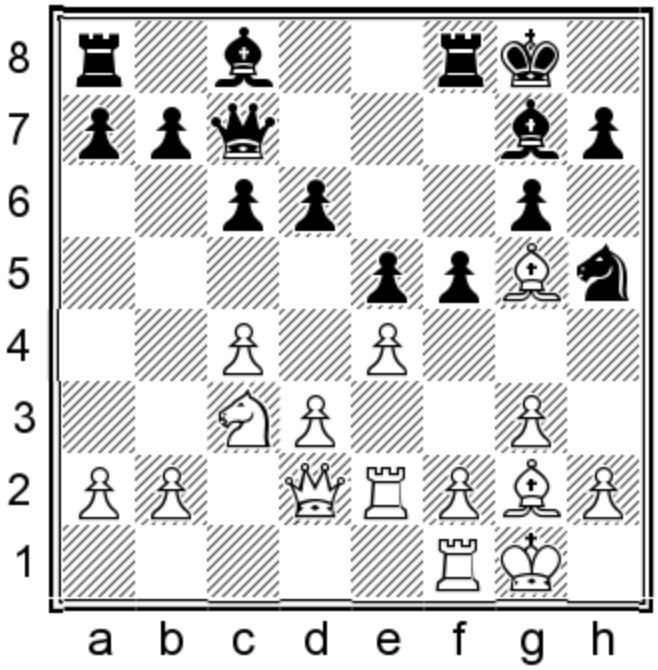
a1) 9...f5 (Black normally breaks so without delay) 10.exf5! (again the right way to deal with ...f5, avoiding ...f4 and also the messy 10.f4 Nd4) 10...Bxf5 11.d4 (and why not react in the centre?) 11...Qd7 12.d5! (you may not be so keen on this further advance, but it's a good one; White is obtaining a very good version of a King's Indian due to his control of e4) 12...Ne7 13.f3! (threatening g4 and so causing Black to swap off our no longer active bishop on g2) 13...Bh3 14.Bxh3 Qxh3 15.Ne4. White's control of e4 gives him a pleasant edge, as we'll see further in Bachmann-Berg, Maastricht 2016.

Here 10...gxf5 11.f4 Nf6 is also sometimes seen when a common regrouping to take the sting out of ...Ng4 is 12.Kh1!? and 12...Ng4 (12...Kh8 13.Qd2 Be6 was more circumspect in Gabuzyan-Naroditsky, Saint Louis 2019, when we agree with David Cummings that 14.b3! prepares d4, leaving White certainly for choice) 13.Bg1 Rf6 (very bold, but just the type of move King's Indian players love) 14.Nd5 Rh6 15.Qd2 exf4? (Black had to maintain the tension, even if his rook does look misplaced

chesstouring.com

after 15...Be6 16.Ne3) 16.Ndxf4 Bd7 17.d4 left Black unable to get his queen to the h-file and White clearly better in Hj.Gretarsson-L.H.Hansen, Reykjavik 2015.

a2) Black might wait with, say, 9...Nd4 10.Qd2 c6 11.Rae1! (bringing the last piece into play; please don't fall for the tactic 11.h3? Bxh3!, exploiting the weakness of the f3-square again, and 11.f4 Bg4 is slightly annoying) 11...f5 (or 11...Be6 12.Bg5!, with the point 12...Qd7 13.Nxd4 exd4 14.Ne2, giving Black a slightly unhappy pawn on d4 ahead of going Bh6 and f4) 12.Bg5! (again we see this idea, and not 12.h3?? f4! 13.gxf4 Bxh3!) 12...Nxe2+ 13.Rxe2 (putting the rook to good use) 13...Qc7.

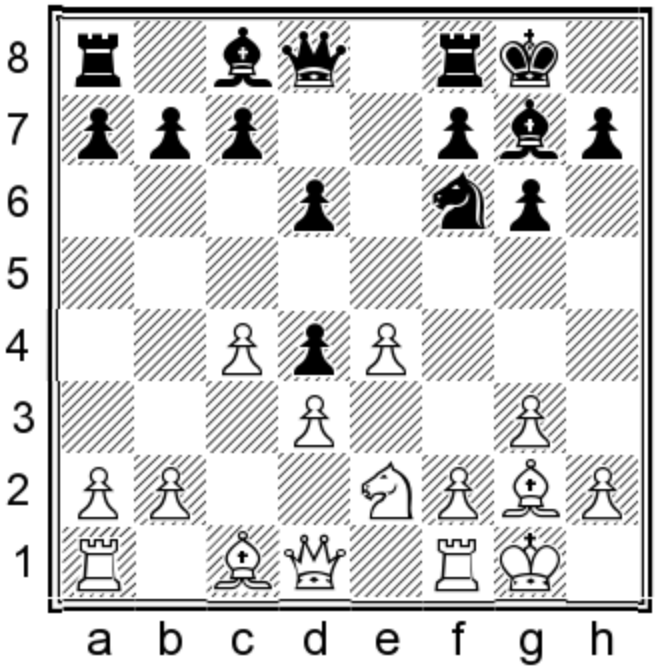


These moves have all been logical enough, but now White very much must respond to the threat of ...f4. His standard method of doing so is 14.exf5!, after which 14...Bxf5 (14...gxf5 is probably a better recapture here, but 15.f4 still looks slightly better for White, and if 15...h6 16.Bh4 Be6? 17.c5!, powerfully opening lines in view of 17...dxc5 18.fxe5 Bxe5 19.Qxh6) 15.h3 (before Black regroups with ...Qd7) 15...Be6 16.b3 (it's rarely a bad idea to overprotect c4 in preparation for the d4 advance)

chesstouring.com

16...Rae8 17.Rfe1 left White with a very pleasant edge in Kamsky-Khanin, Korchnoi Memorial, St. Petersburg 2018, which can be found below.

b) 8...Nd4 exploits the 'hole' on d4, but only for a move as after 9.Nxd4 exd4 10.Ne2 Black now has a dead-point on d4 and White a mobile kingside majority.



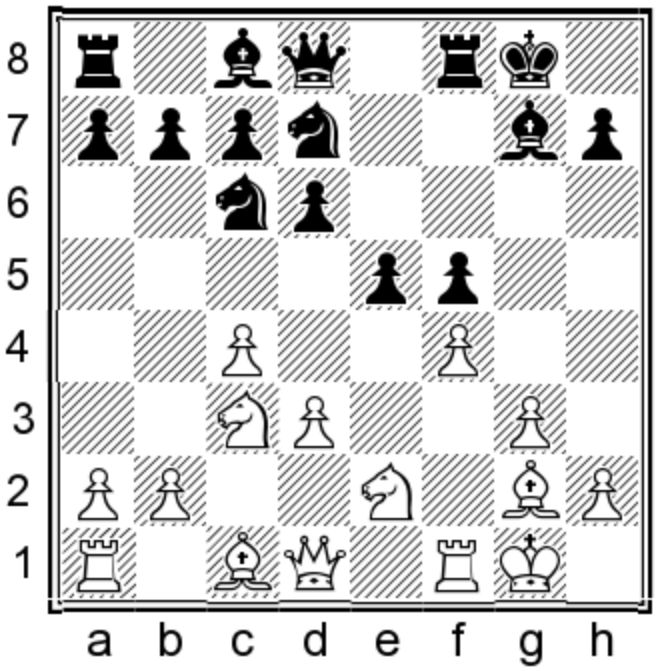
Some fairly strong players have gone this way as Black, but after, for instance, 10...Nd7 (10...c5 11.b4!? is very much an idea, which after 11...Bd7 12.bxc5 dxc5 13.Nf4 Qc7 14.a4 Rac8 15.Bd2 left Black low on counterplay and White with an edge in Medvegy-Petenyi, Budapest 2012, and here 11...cxb4 12.a3! bxa3 13.Rxa3 looks like an excellent version of a Benko Gambit, not least as White will regain his pawn on d4 after Bb2) 11.h3 (11.b4 a5! 12.b5 c5 13.bxc6 bxc6 14.Rb1 Qc7 doesn't seem too bad for Black) 11...a5 12.b3 c5 13.Nf4!? (White continues to manoeuvre and avoid 13.f4 f5, but you may not fear this standard block; a typical type of sequence is 14.exf5 gxf5 15.Kh2 when Ng1-f3 may follow and White will eventually look to break with g4) 13...Nf6 14.g4 Bd7?! (14...h6 was more prudent when we wonder if White would have manoeuvred with 15.Ne2!?, happy to have provoked a small kingside weakness) 15.g5 Ne8 16.Nd5 Be6

chesstouring.com

17.f4! f5 18.h4 White had very much taken over in Fier-Kelires, Chania 2019.

c) 8...Ne7?! is where the knight often goes in the King's Indian, but 9.f4 exf4 10.Bxf4!? c6 11.Qd2 Ne8 12.d4 simply left Black very passively placed in Spraggett-Witt, Toronto 1987.

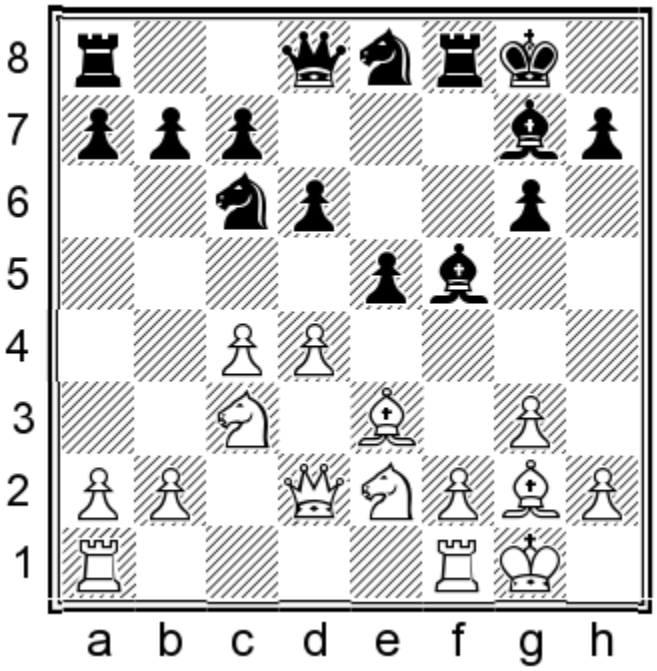
d) 8...Nd7 tries to get in ...f5, but 9.f4! f5 (9...Nc5?! 10.f5 would not be good news for Black, and if 10...Nb4 simply 11.Rf3) 10.exf5 gxf5 feels structurally a little shaky for Black.



After 11.fxe5 (11.Nd5 followed by Be3 would be very sensible too) 11...dxe5 12.Nd5 Nc5?! 13.b4! Ne6 (yes, the rook hasn't moved from a1 yet, but White should be overjoyed to see 13...e4? 14.bxc5 Bxa1 15.d4 when Black's bishop is stuck and his kingside horrendously exposed) 14.b5 Ncd4 15.Nxd4 Nxd4 in Miezis-Naiditsch, European Blitz Championship, Tallinn 2016, simply 16.Bb2 would have left White with a nice edge, and if 16...c5 (16...Be6? 17.Bxd4 exd4 18.Nf4 Bc8 19.Re1 is horrible for Black) 17.bxc6 bxc6 18.Bxd4 exd4 19.Nf4 with strong pressure and much the better structure.

chesstouring.com

e) 8...Ne8 is yet another method of freeing the f-pawn when 9.Be3 (with his bishop on c8 not obstructed, Black is in a better position to answer 9.f4 with 9...f5) 9...f5 (9...h6 10.h3 f5 11.f4!? Be6 12.Qd2 was all very harmonious for Botvinnik English guru Mikhail Gurevich in Gurevich-Aydogdu, Izmir (simul) 2002) 10.Qd2 Be6 (10...f4? 11.gxf4 Nd4 need not be feared here, when the simplest approach might just be 12.f3!?, intending fxe5 dxe5; f4, while bypassing any check on f3) 11.exf5 Bxf5 (11...gxf5 offers White a few options, including the sensible and standard idea 12.f4 Nf6 13.h3) 12.d4! is a thematic break.

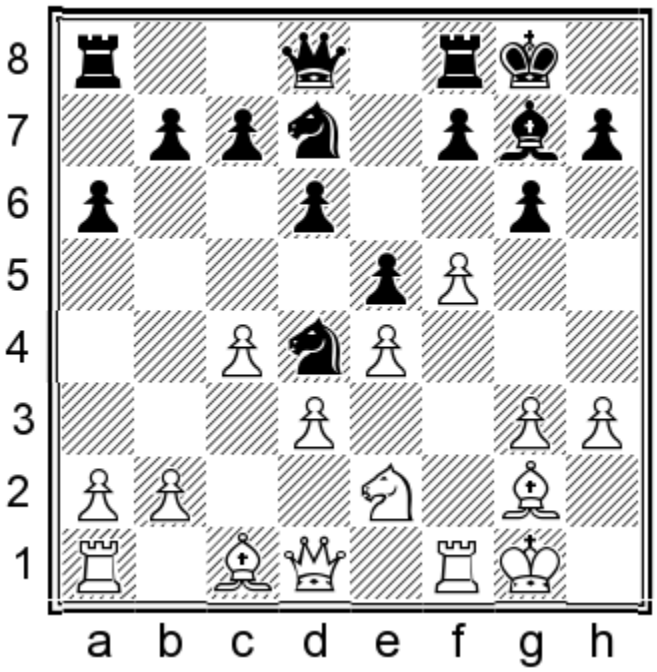


Now 12...exd4 13.Nxd4 Nxd4 14.Bxd4 c6 15.Bxg7 Kxg7 16.Rad1 left White with a pleasant edge in Khismatullin-Shabanov, Serpukhov 2004.

f) 8...a6 9.f4 (Mamedyarov once tried 9.h3 b5!?, which might safely be ignored, but there's also nothing wrong with pushing the f-pawn) 9...Bg4?! (9...Nd4 10.h3 c6 looks less compliant when White would probably go 11.Nxd4 exd4 12.Ne2, while 9...Bd7 10.h3 exf4 11.Nxf4!? Nd4 12.Be3 Ne6 13.Nfe2! – keeping pieces on and Black cramped – 13...b5 14.b3 Rb8 15.Qd2 Re8 16.Rae1 b4 17.Nd1 Nc5 18.Rf2 h6 19.Ref1 g5? 20.Bd4 Re6 21.Ne3 left Black being instructively outplayed and White was already

chesstouring.com

positionally winning in Psakhis-Shabtai, Israeli League 1999) 10.h3 (there's no reason to fear the following exchange) 10...Bxe2 11.Nxe2 Nd7 12.f5! Nd4 gave White an edge in Grigoryan-Terzi, European Rapid Championship, Warsaw 2013.



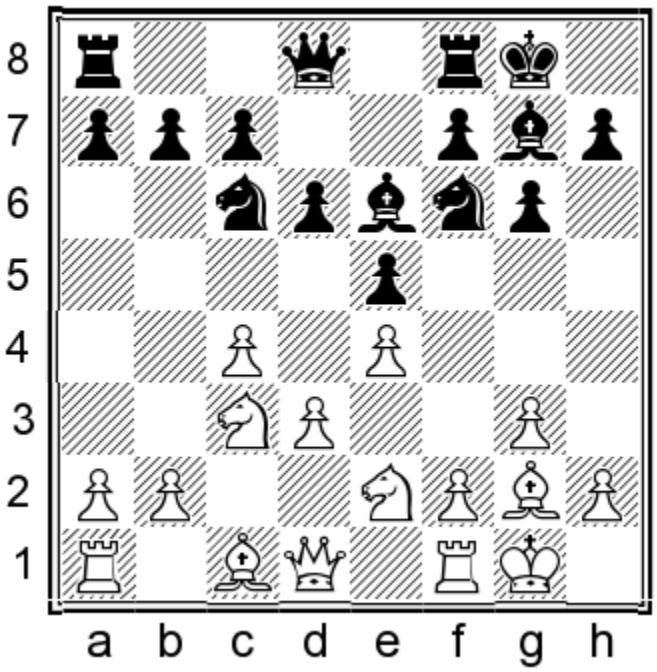
Here 13.Be3 Bf6 14.Qd2 would be sensible followed by advancing on the kingside, before or after 14...Nxe2+ 15.Qxe2 Bg5 16.Bf2!.

g) 8...Bg4?! 9.h3 Bxe2 10.Nxe2 Nd7 11.Be3 Nc5 12.Qd2 a5 13.f4 was likewise promising for White in Eljanov-Al Modiahki, World Blitz Championship, Riyadh 2017.

h) 8...Bd7 is quite a passive development and 9.h3 Nd4 10.Nxd4 exd4 11.Ne2 Ne8 12.f4 left White thematically beginning to expand and Black again low on counterplay in S.B.Hansen-Eng, Pattaya 2011.

Returning to 8...Be6:

chesstouring.com



9.Nd5!?

A change of approach, but a move we like after ...Be6. Now that White no longer needs to worry about ...Nxd5, he decides it's time to put Black under a bit of pressure.

White's most popular move has been 9.h3, which is absolutely fine too unsurprisingly, and, as we saw earlier, 9.f4 Qd7 10.f5!? gxf5 11.Bg5 is a tempting pawn sacrifice which you may wish to explore.

9...Qd7

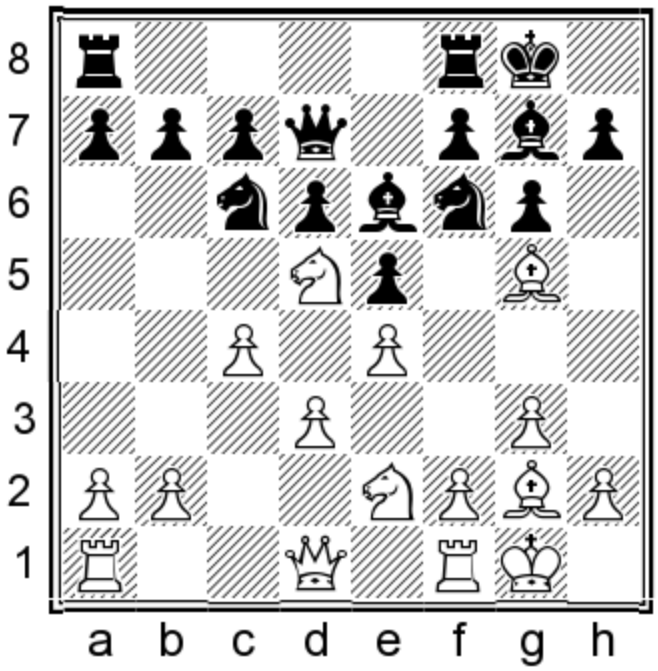
A logical follow-up.

Of course, 9...Nxd5?? 10.cxd5 would win a piece and 9...Bxd5 10.cxd5 Ne7 (or 10...Nd4 11.Nxd4 exd4 12.f4 when White's pawns are again the more mobile and dangerous) 11.f4 is certainly nothing to worry about either. Black can free his position before f5 arrives, but even 11...c6 12.dxc6 Nxc6 13.Kh1!? looks quite nice for White, with the two bishops and a plan of kingside expansion still very much on the table.

chesstouring.com

Instead, 9...Nd7 10.Be3 a5 11.Qd2 Nc5?! (11...Nd4!? improves when 12.f4 c6 13.f5 is fun for White, if objectively just rather unclear) 12.f4 exf4 13.Ndxf4! (ever an appealing recapture when d4 will embarrass Black's pieces) 13...Ne5 was the course of Bruzon Batista-Kempinski, Linares 2001. Here we have to agree with Tony Kosten that 14.b3! would be simple and strong, and if 14...Ng4 15.Bd4 (why not only swap off the bishop for a key defender of the black king?) 15...Bxd4+ 16.Nxd4 c6 17.Nde2!, leaving White in complete control. One plan is, of course, d4; another h3 followed by Nc3 and doubling rooks on the f-file.

10.Bg5



A consistent follow-up to Nd5. White wants to provoke an exchange on d5.

10...Ne8

10...Nh5!? may again be a better square for the knight, as in Talla-Rasik, Ostrava 2005, where 11.Qd2 f5 12.exf5 Bxf5 (12...gxf5?! 13.f4! creates the typical tension – and pressure; Black's knight isn't so happy on f5 here, but

chesstouring.com

13...Nf6?! 14.Nxf6+ Bxf6 15.Bxf6 Rxf6 16.b4! would only speed up the process by which White obtains a strong initiative) 13.Rae1 Rae8 14.b4 (a change of approach, making good use of our English bishop, and because 14.f4? h6 15.Bh4 exf4! is a little awkward, since White is going to have to recapture with the g-pawn) 14...Nd8 15.Be3 (before ...Ne6 attacks the bishop; White can afford the time to manoeuvre since Black isn't threatening too much, and not here 15.Bh6? on account of 15...Bxh6 16.Qxh6 Bxd3) 15...c6 16.Ndc3 a6 17.a4 saw White launching an attack on the queenside, while also enjoying decent central control.

11.Qd2 f6 12.Be3!?

An unexpected choice perhaps, but White wants to keep Black cramped so avoids an exchange with 12.Bh6.

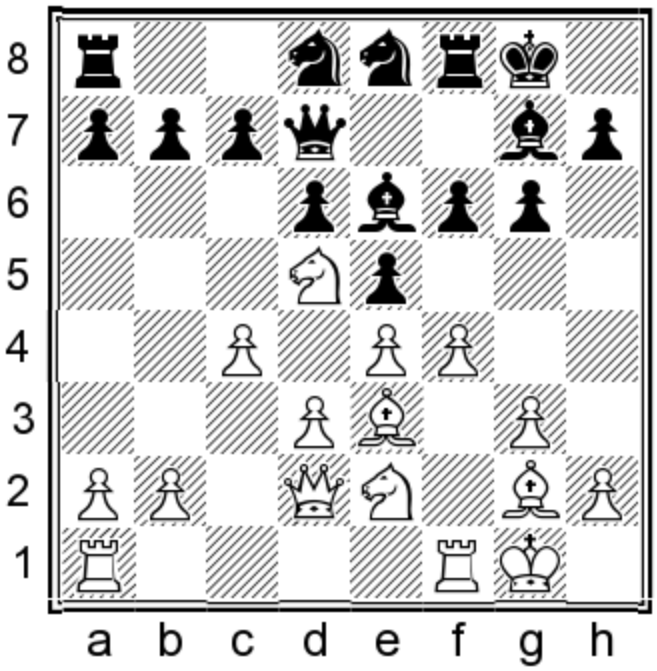
12...Nd8

This is a fairly common regrouping in this structure, but looks a little convoluted here.

12...f5 is more to the point when we can't help but wonder if White's idea was the slightly cheeky 13.Bg5!? (13.f4 Nd4 should be OK for Black, as here 14.Nxd4?! exd4 15.Bf2 c6 doesn't help White's pieces, but 13.exf5! Bxf5 14.Rae1 would be natural, followed by breaking in the centre) 13...Nf6 and only then 14.f4, thematically increasing the tension.

13.f4

chesstouring.com



13...c6?

Black will pay for not reacting in approved fashion to f4 with 13...f5, although here 14.c5!? c6 15.Ndc3 is a very interesting undermining idea, since 15...d5? 16.exd5 cxd5 17.fxe5 Bxe5 18.d4 would leave White in complete control of the position and ready to advance his queenside majority.

14.f5! gxf5

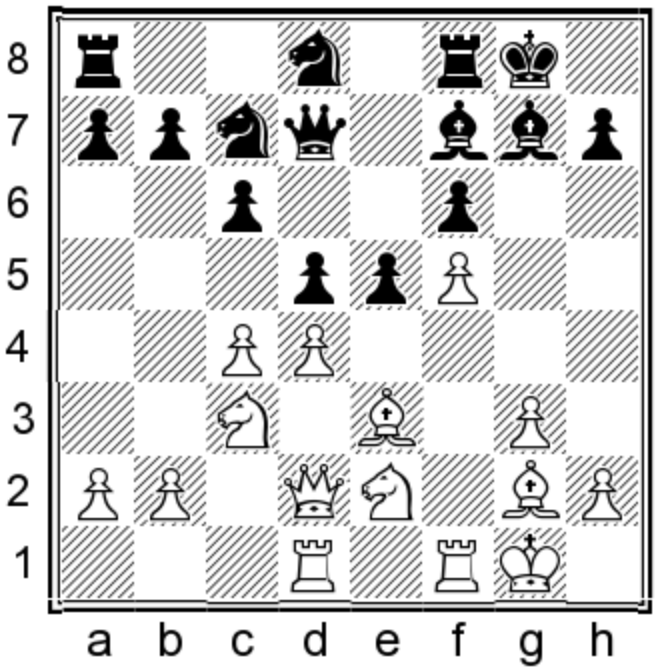
14...cxd5 15.fxe6 Nxe6 16.cxd5 N6c7 17.Rac1 f5 18.Bh3 would also be fairly bad news for Black, who might have got in ...f5, but lacks counterplay. In contrast, White can apply pressure down both open files and enjoys a powerful bishop-pair.

15.exf5 Bf7 16.Ndc3 Nc7

16...d5? 17.cxd5 cxd5 would now even cost Black material after 18.Bc5.

17.Rad1 d5 18.d4!

chesstouring.com



Naturally White ensures it he, not Black, who will play the d4 advance and after **18...e4** (18...dxc4 19.dxe5 Qxd2 20.Rxd2 fxe5 21.g4 would be superb compensation for a pawn, with such a kingside majority and much the more harmoniously placed pieces) **19.g4 dxc4 20.Nxe4 Bd5 21.N2c3** he was in control of the position and enjoyed a large advantage in Gabuzyan-Gaponenko, Abu Dhabi 2015.

Game 8
G.Kamsky-S.Khanin
Korchnoi Memorial, St. Petersburg 2018

1.g3

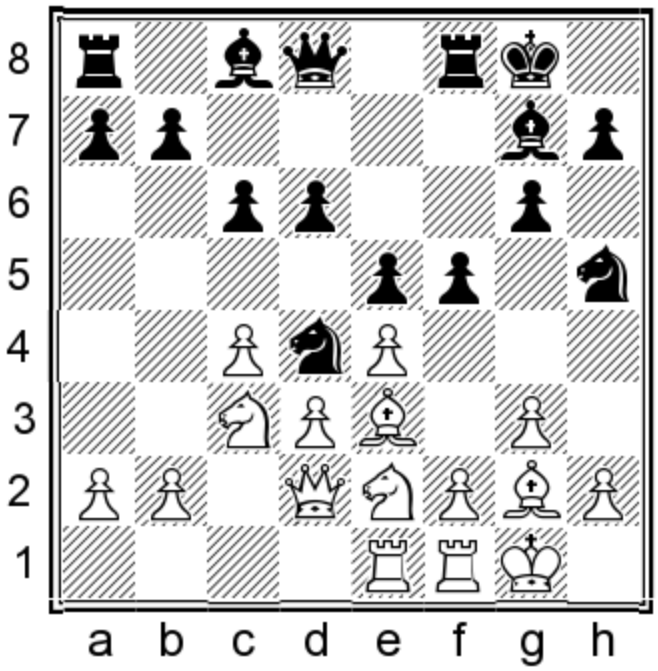
1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 e5 5.e4 0-0 6.Nge2 Nc6 7.0-0 d6 8.d3 would be our move order, but Kamsky's does serve to show that a great many routes can lead into the English.

1.g3 Nf6 2.Bg2 e5 3.d3 g6 4.c4

Only now going for an English set-up.

chesstouring.com

4...Bg7 5.Nc3 0-0 6.e4 Nc6 7.Nge2 d6 8.0-0 Nh5 9.Be3 Nd4 10.Qd2 c6 11.Rae1 f5



12.Bg5

Getting out of the way of Black's f-pawn.

Please don't forget about the significant dangers of 12.h3?? f4! 13.gxf4 Bxh3!, but the other standard idea, 12.exf5 gxf5 13.f4, would be far from terrible were you to forget your theory.

12...Nxe2+ 13.Rxe2 Qc7 14.exf5!

White finally goes in for the thematic exchange, after which much of the play will centre around his key pawn breaks, d4 and f4.

14...Bxf5

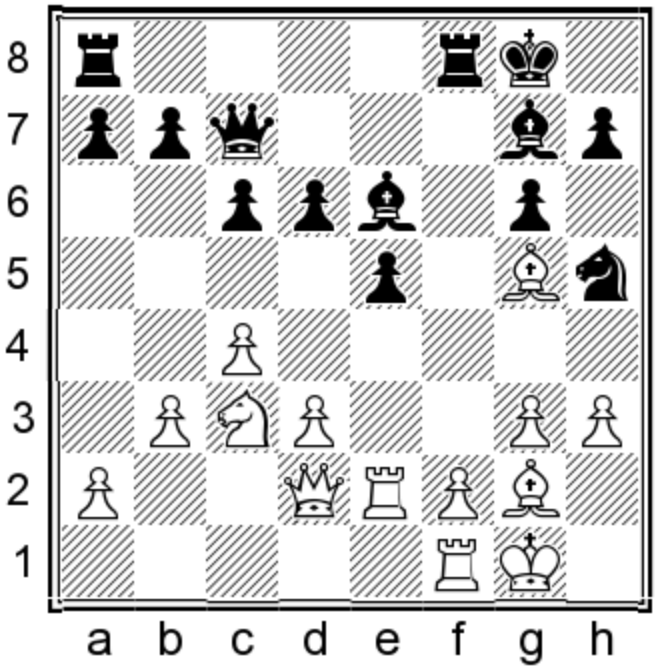
14...gxf5!? may improve, as we saw before, but then White has the thematic 15.f4.

chesstouring.com

15.h3

With a certain threat and rarely an unhelpful move to insert, apart from when it allows ...f4 with force, which isn't, of course, the case here.

15...Be6 16.b3

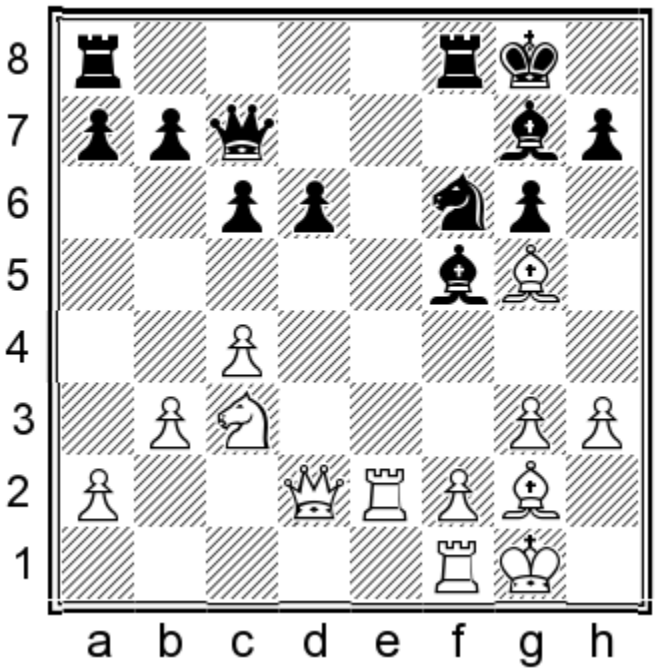


Useful preparation for the eventual d4. Note too Black's lack of counterplay.

16...Rae8

Clearly Black can't bring a rook to the d-file or kick the bishop on g5. He might try to get around those issues with 16...Nf6, but then White can beat him to it and break first: 17.d4! exd4 (17...Rad8 18.Rfe1 merely ramps up the pressure down the e-file) 18.Qxd4 Bf5 (18...Nd5 fails to simply 19.Nxd5, and if 19...Bxd4?? 20.Nxc7) and now 19.Qd2! is a prudent retreat.

chesstouring.com



What's this, isn't White losing time? Yes, you can ask, but it was wise to escape from the gaze of the bishop on g7. This way White also prevents ...h6, all the while maintaining a very pleasant advantage: for example, 19...Rae8 (or 19...Rad8 20.Rfe1 Rf7 21.g4 Bc8 22.Ne4 Nxe4 23.Rxe4 Rdf8 24.Be7 and something is going to give) 20.Rxe8 Rxe8 21.g4 Bc8 22.Rd1 when the weakness of d6 is the main feature of the position and even 22...Qa5 fails to really help Black in view of 23.Bxf6! Bxf6 24.Ne4.

17.Rfe1 Qd7 18.Kh2

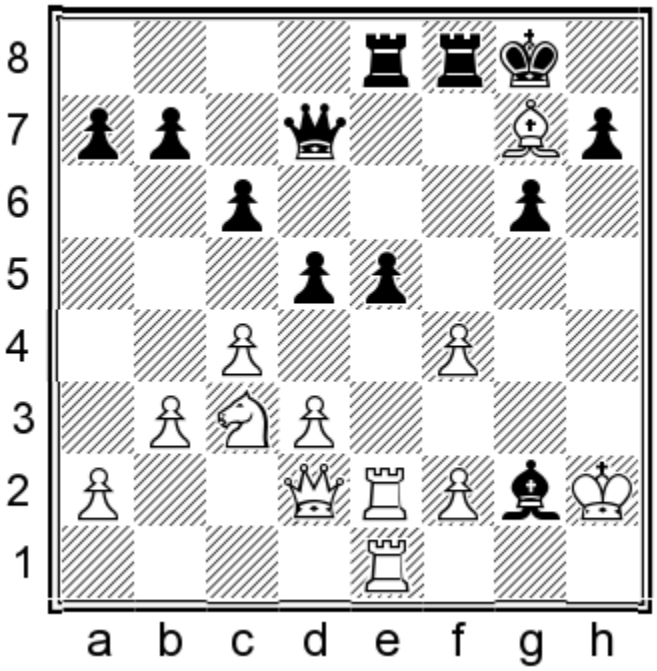
Yet another useful move as Kamsky is content to gradually strength his position.

18...Rf7

The American legend may have been hoping Black would grow impatient and break with 18...d5?! when 19.Bh6! maintains control. Black can try to throw a spanner into the works, but 19...Nf4!? (19...dxc4? 20.dxc4 Qxd2 21.Bxd2 merely leaves White in complete control, while 19...d4 20.Ne4 b6 21.Bxg7 Kxg7 22.Ng5 would begin to probe with menace against e5 and on

chesstouring.com

the light squares) 20.Bxg7 Bxh3 (20...Nxg2 21.Bxf8 Nxe1 22.Qxe1 Rxf8 23.Rxe5 Bxh3 24.Re7 also turns out rather well for White) 21.gxf4! Bxg2 doesn't force perpetual check.



Yes, this line has suddenly become quite sharp, but it's important not to panic in such situations, not least when you're material up in the capturing sequence. Rather than capture on g2 and allow the draw, White can throw his own spanner in the works with 22.f5! and after 22...Rxf5 (22...Qxf5 23.Qh6! is a second very handy resource; it's not only Black who can attack, and after 23...Rf7 24.Rxe5 Rxe5 25.Rxe5 Qxf2 26.Re8+ White wins) 23.Kxg2 Kxg7 24.Rh1 Black shouldn't have enough for his piece.

19.Ne4!

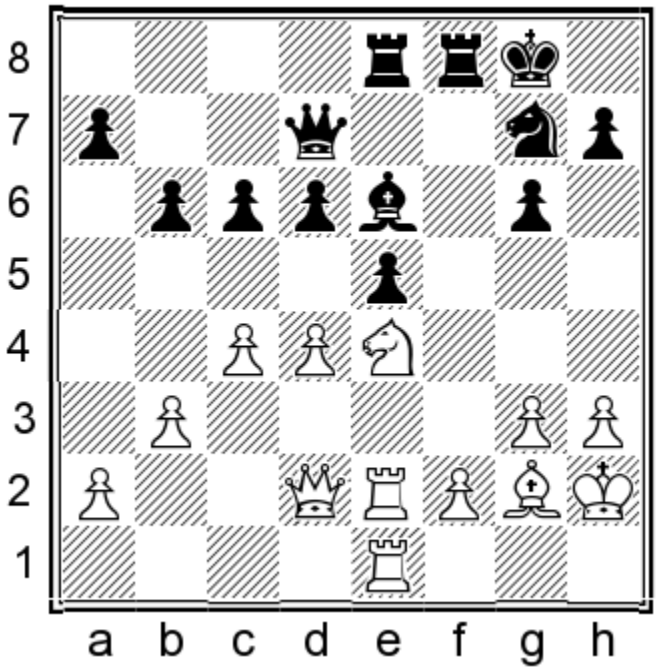
A strong manoeuvre, heading for g5 or even c5 if allowed.

19...b6 20.Bh6 Rff8

Calm defence and it was actually very easy for Black to lose quickly around here, as might well have been the case after 20...d5? 21.Bxg7 Kxg7 22.Ng5 Rfe7 23.Rxe5.

chesstouring.com

21.Bxg7 Nxg7 22.d4!



Essential before ...Nf5 arrived, but by beating Black to the central advance, White has confirmed his clear superiority.

22...d5

22...exd4? 23.Qxd4 Nf5 does defend d6, but also allows 24.Nf6+.

23.cxd5 cxd5 24.Ng5 e4

A fairly forced move, seeing that Black's position would quickly collapse in the centre after 24...exd4 25.Qxd4.

25.f3!

Naturally White must break so, otherwise his bishop on g2 and rooks would but look most misplaced.

25...exf3 26.Nxf3 Qd6 27.Ng5

chesstouring.com

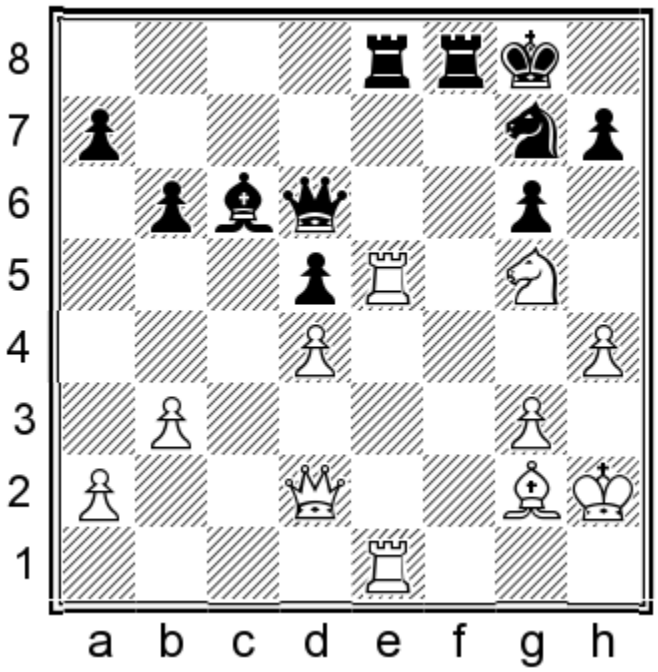
Back again as there's no doubt that White retains complete control.

27...Bd7 28.Re5

The pressure continues to mount.

28...Bc6 29.h4!

It's high time to involve Harry, if more on positional grounds than as part of a direct attack. Kamsky has in mind a further strong knight manoeuvre.



29...h6 30.Nh3! Kh7 31.Nf4 Rf5 32.Rxe8

This can hardly be bad, but White might have overprotected e5 with his queen or even gone 32.h5!?, and if 32...g5 (or 32...Rfxe5 33.hxg6+ Kg8 34.dxe5 Rxe5 35.Rxe5 Qxe5 36.Qc2! Qd6 37.Qd3, retaining complete control ahead of picking off d5) 33.Qc2 gxf4 34.g4, winning the exchange.

32...Bxe8 33.Bh3!?

chesstouring.com

With d5 not yet collapsing, Kamsky finds another role for his bishop.

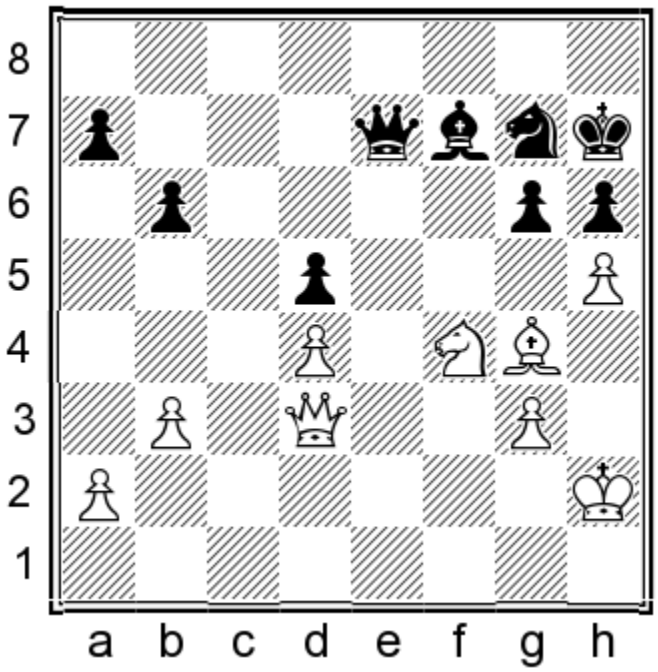
33...Rf6 34.Re5 Bf7 35.Bg4 Qd8 36.Qe3 Rc6

Finally Black has a smidgen of play, but White's central and kingside play is much more important than anything down the c-file.

37.Re7

37.Be2! would have been fairly strong, followed by Bd3 or 37...Rc2 38.Qd3 Rxa2 39.h5 Qf6 40.Kh3!? when Black is completely tied down and Bf3 and Bxd5 will follow.

37...Rc7 38.Rxc7 Qxc7 39.Qd3 Qe7 40.h5



Once again, not failing to make good use of Harry.

40...Qg5 41.Kh3 Nf5

Black finally tires of waiting. After 41...Qf6 White might even seize some further space with 42.b4.

chesstouring.com

42.Bxf5!

Naturally White wants to maintain full control.

42...gxf5

Black has no desire to be forced into extreme passivity after 42...Qxf5+ 43.Qxf5 gxf5 44.g4! (never forget to activate the most important piece in the endgame, the king!) 44...fxg4+ 45.Kxg4 Kg7 46.Kf5.

43.Qe2 Kg8 44.Kg2

It’s not completely clear why Kamsky rejected 44.Qe5!?, seeing that 44...Bxh5 45.Qb8+ Kh7 46.Qxa7+ Kg8 47.Qxb6 Qg4+ 48.Kh2 leaves Black without a good check.

44...Qg4

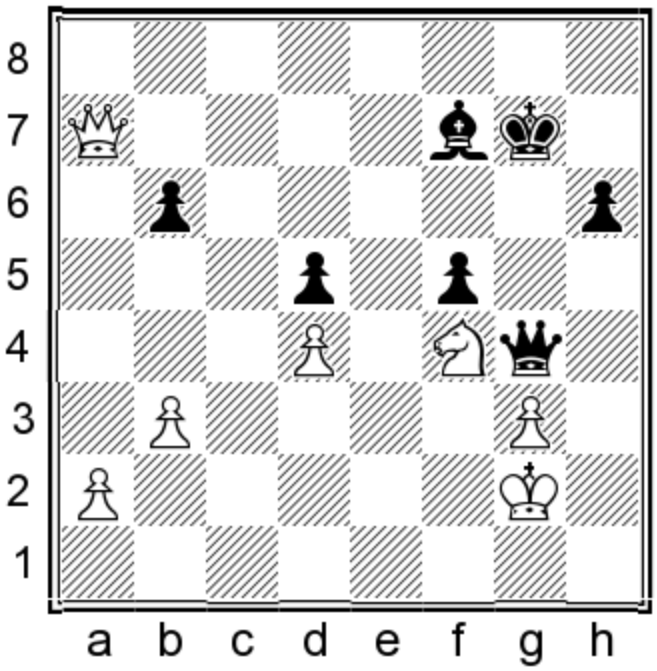
44...Qd8! 45.Qe5 Qc8! would have been a somewhat tougher defence.

45.Qe5

Back on track.

45...Bxh5 46.Qb8+ Kg7 47.Qxa7+ Bf7

chesstouring.com



48.Qe7?

Presumably Kamsky was concerned by 48.Qxb6 Qd1, but here White has at least 49.Qc7!? when it's his attack which will quickly be a decisive one after 49...Qd2+ 50.Kh3 Qxa2? 51.Nh5+, and if 51...Kg6 52.Qe5! Kxh5 53.Qxf5 mate.

48...Kg8 49.Qe5 Qd1!

Now Black has enough counterplay. With the superior minor piece Kamsky naturally still tried to grind away, but the moment had passed and in the end he had to give up half a point:

50.Qe3 Qc2+ 51.Qe2 Qc3 52.Qe5 Qd2+ 53.Kf3 Qxa2 54.Qb8+ Kg7 55.Qe5+ Kg8 56.Qb8+ Kg7 57.Qxb6 Qc2 58.Qb4 Qe4+ 59.Kf2 h5 60.Qd2 Qh1 61.Ng2 Qb1 62.Qe3 Qc2+ 63.Kg1 Qb1+ 64.Kh2 Qb2 65.Kh3 Qb1 66.Qe1 Qxb3 67.Qe5+ Kg8 68.Ne3 Qb1 69.Kh4 Qe4+ 70.Qf4 Kg7 71.Nxf5+ Kf6 72.Ne3+ Qxf4+ 73.gxf4 Kg6 74.Kh3 Kf6 75.Kg3 Be6 76.Kh4 Bf7 77.f5 Be8 78.Nxd5+ Kxf5 ½-½

chesstouring.com

Game 9

A.Bachmann-E.Berg

Limburg Open, Maastricht 2016

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.Nge2

The leading Paraguayan Grandmaster wastes no time going for our favourite set-up.

6...Nc6 7.0-0 e5 8.d3 Nh5

Once again we see a strong black player and noted theoretician, the Swedish GM Emanuel Berg, quickly freeing his f-pawn for duty and the standard King's Indian counterplay.

9.Be3 f5 10.exf5!

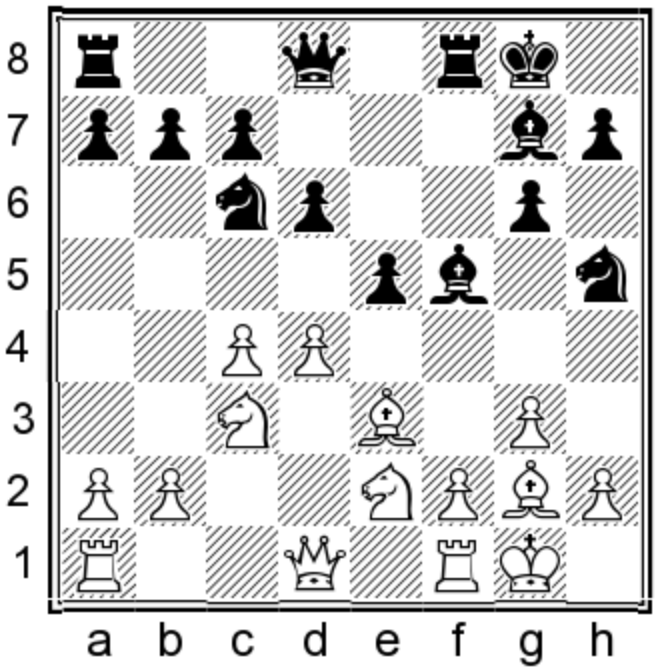
Refusing to allow Black to boss the kingside.

10...Bxf5

By now we very much hope that it's become second nature to meet 10...gxf5 with 11.f4.

11.d4

chesstouring.com



11...Qd7

After 11...exd4 12.Nxd4 the English bishop on g2 really comes into its own and something like 12...Nxd4 13.Bxd4 c6 14.Bxg7 Nxg7 (and not 14...Kxg7? 15.g4!) 15.Qd2 would leave White in control and the weakness of d6 the main feature of the position.

12.d5!

Not closing lines to engage in a typical King's Indian race between queenside and kingside ambitions, but to retain control and a very pleasant edge.

12...Ne7 13.f3

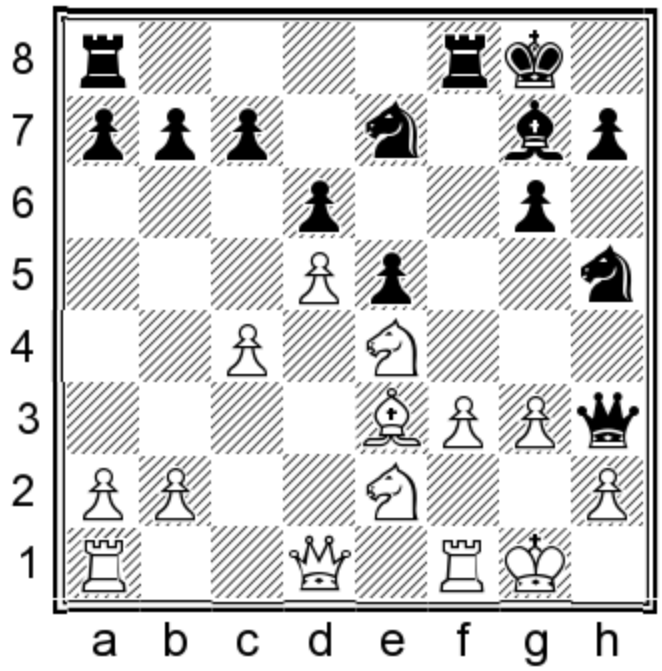
Another useful move. Richard remembers once being surprised to reach this position twice in a simul, but he certainly wasn't going to complain when one of the opponents now failed to clock White's threat: g4.

13...Bh3 14.Bxh3

chesstouring.com

White has no fear of the black queen on h3, and rightly so.

14...Qxh3 15.Ne4!



This move is why White holds a pleasant advantage. Do observe that despite his two pieces on the h-file, Black actually isn't threatening anything and his bishop on g7 is hardly the pride and joy of the King's Indian player.

15...Qd7

A prudent retreat. 15...Nf5? hurls another piece into the fray, but after 16.Bd2 White has g3 securely protected. Not only is g4 a threat, but Nf2, so Black has to go backwards: 16...Ne7 17.g4! Nf4 18.Nxf4 exf4 19.Ng5 Qh6 20.Ne6 with a dream outpost for White.

16.g4!

Again this advance, and again it's a strong one.

16...Nf6 17.N2c3

chesstouring.com

Maintaining control. 17.Ng5? would be premature and after 17...Bh6 (17...b5!? also exploits White's lack of control) 18.Qd2? Nxg4! 19.fxg4 Qxg4+ 20.Kh1 Qxc4 Black would enjoy promising play for the piece.

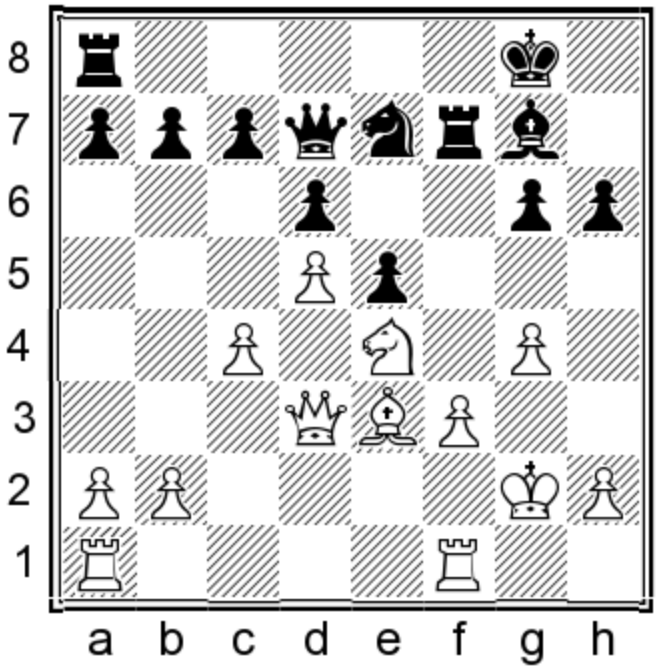
17...Nxe4 18.Nxe4 h6

Black tires of having Ng5 issues hanging over him. He is, though, now even more passive, but 18...c6!? wouldn't really have helped matters, in view of 19.dxc6 Nxc6 20.Qd5+! Kh8 21.Rad1, retaining complete control ahead of picking off d6.

19.Qd3

Not bad, but here and on the next move we quite like 19.h4!?. Only then will White go Kg2, Rf2, Qd3 and Raf1, all the while having prevented ...g5, thereby keeping Black bottled up, and not fearing 19...h5 20.Rc1 hxg4 21.fxg4 Rxf1+ 22.Kxf1 Rf8+ 23.Kg2 when White remains in full control.

19...Rf7 20.Kg2



chesstouring.com

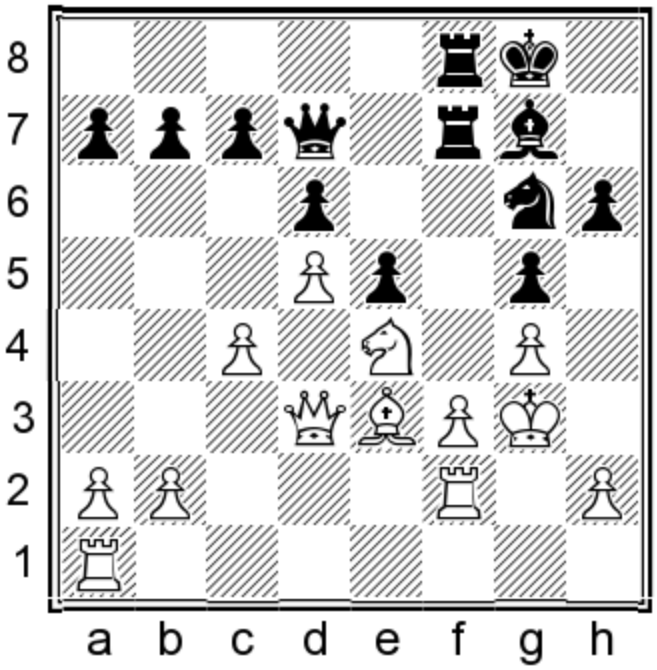
A useful tidying move. Perhaps an engine could hold tight and defend Black's position, but his cause is miserable – and without having made an obvious mistake. Just compare the difference in activity between the two sides' minor pieces!

20...Raf8 21.Rf2 g5 22.Kg3!?

A bold move, but Bachmann is quickly rewarded for his bravery. Instead, 22.Ng3 Rf6 was Black's idea when he has a pawn for the exchange and chances to draw after 23.Qe4 Ng6 24.Nf5 Rxf5! 25.gxf5 Nh4+ 26.Kh1 Nxf5.

22...Ng6?

This needed to be prepared with 22...Qe8! when 23.c5 Ng6 24.Raf1 is only slightly better for White – unless Black rushes with 24...Nf4? 25.Bxf4 exf4+ 26.Kg2. Yes, the bishop on g7 is now playing, but what else is in Black's position? White will double on the e-file and retain control, with queenside pressure and much the safer king.



chesstouring.com

23.Nxg5!

The blow Bachmann’s last move teed up. Berg must have miscalculated something in the upcoming sequence.

23...e4 24.Qxe4 Be5+ 25.f4! hxg5

Possibly Black had missed that he lacks a single decent discovered check after 25...Nxf4? 26.Nxf7.

26.Qxg6+ Rg7 27.Qe6+!

It’s high time to get the queens off.

27...Qxe6 28.dxe6 gxf4+ 29.Bxf4 Re7 30.Bxe5

Simplifying to an easy win.

30...Rxf2 31.Bxd6!? Rxe6 32.Kxf2 Rxd6 33.b3 Rd2+ 34.Kg3 1-0

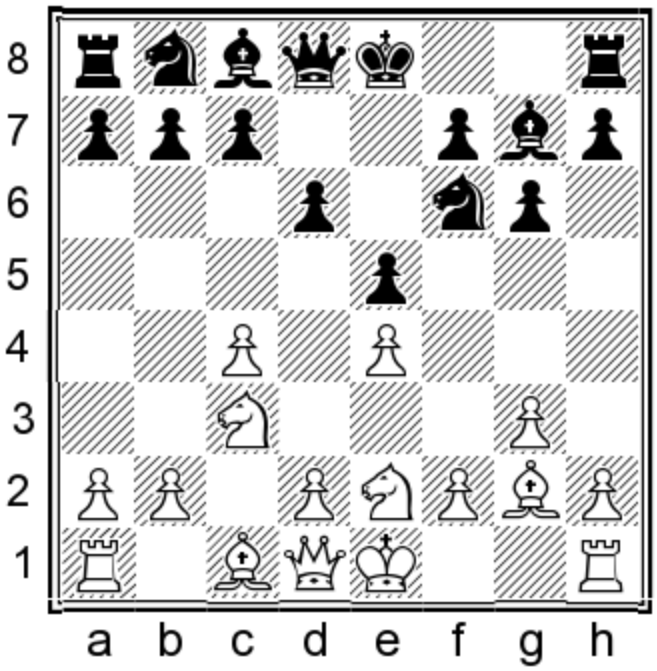
Two extra and connected passed pawns are too much for Black to be able to cope with.

Theory 3B

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 0-0

Once again we should also consider the move order 4...d6 5.e4 e5 6.Nge2.

chesstouring.com

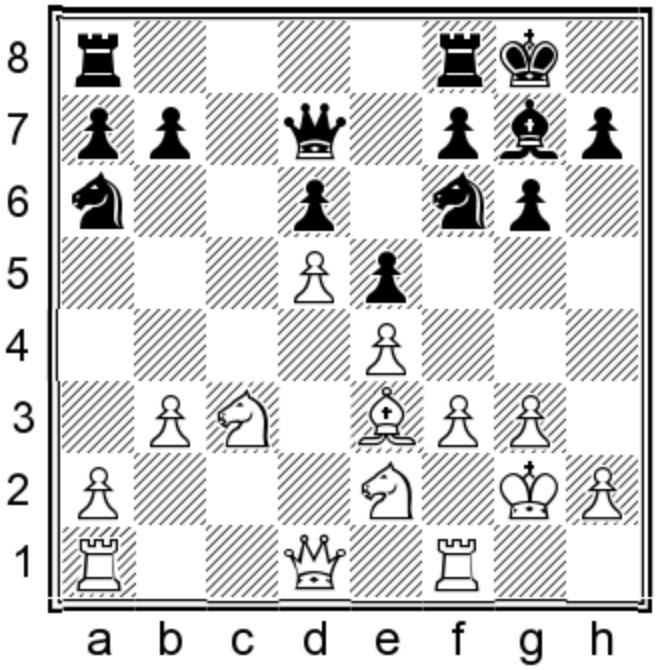


Here Black normally goes 6...0-0, transposing below, or develops his knight to c6. Rare options are:

a) 6...Be6 7.d3 c6 8.0-0 Qd7 (8...d5? is premature, but just the type of bid for freedom which might be seen at club level; unfortunately for Black, 9.exd5 cxd5 10.Qb3 makes full use of our fianchettoed bishop and leaves Black in serious trouble on the long diagonal) 9.b3 (preparation for d4; 9.f4!? is also quite tempting here, and if 9...h5 10.Qd2!?, which is a very sneaky computer idea with the point that 10...h4? 11.f5! gxf5 12.Qg5 wins a piece) 9...h5!? (it still wasn't too late to castle) 10.h4 (sensibly keeping lines closed) 10...Ng4?! (Black needed to prevent White's next with 10...c5, when 11.f3 0-0 12.Be3 Nc6 13.Qd2 is only a touch better for White, who will go Bh6 and then look to break with f4) 11.d4! exd4 12.Nxd4 c5 13.Nde2! (and not 13.Nxe6?? Bxc3; always be careful about the long diagonal once you've moved the b-pawn!) 13...Nc6 14.Bf4 Nge5 (14...Nd4? 15.Nxd4 Bxd4 won't plug the d-file for long, and White might even go 16.Nb5!? Bxa1 17.Nxd6+ Kf8 18.Qxa1 with superb play for the exchange on the dark squares) 15.Qd2 Rd8 16.Rad1 left Black low on counterplay and nursing weaknesses down the d-file in I.Thompson-I.Sokolov, Stockholm 2010.

chesstouring.com

b) 6...c6 7.0-0 (there's nothing wrong with 7.d3, but the text is slightly more flexible; White definitely wants to castle, whereas he may be able to go d4 in one go) 7...Be6 8.b3!? (a different way of handling the position; 8.d3 would take play back into Thompson-Sokolov, above) 8...Qd7 9.d4! 0-0 (one of White's points is 9...Bh3 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.Qxd7+ Bxd7 12.Ba3, keeping the black king in the centre and preparing Bd6 followed by f4, another 9...h5?! 10.f4! h4? 11.f5! gxf5 12.d5, winning a piece) 10.d5!? (10.Ba3 was also quite logical in Hickl-Kock, Liechtenstein 1992) 10...cxd5 11.cxd5 Bh3 12.f3 Bxg2 13.Kxg2 Na6 14.Be3.

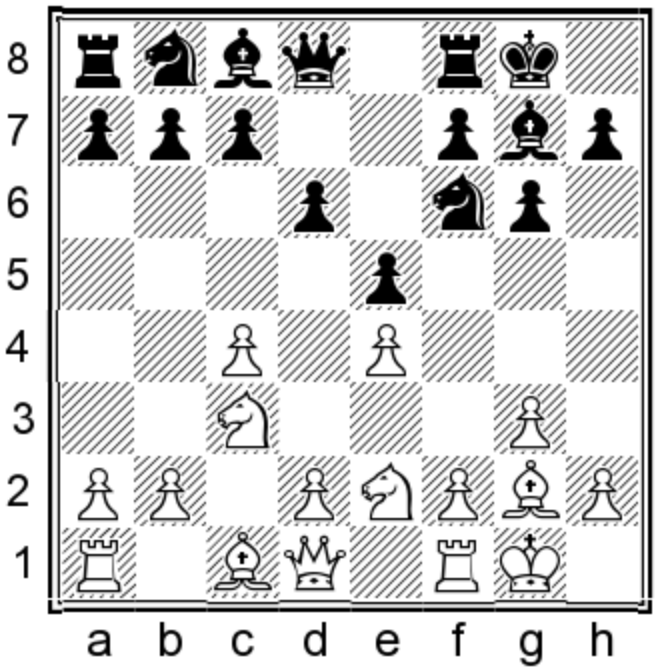


Despite deploying the Botvinnik we have reached a King's Indian structure, but one which is quite pleasant for White. The plan is Qd2 and Rac1, with another important point 14...Ne8 15.g4!. 'Isn't that weakening?' you might ask, but once again the game will revolve around the e4-square after 15...f5 16.exf5 gxf5 17.gxf5 Qxf5 18.Ng3 Qg6 19.Qd2 Nf6 20.Kh1!. White controls e4 and might even be the side who gets to launch an attack down the g-file.

Returning to 4...0-0:

5.e4 d6 6.Nge2 e5 7.0-0

chesstouring.com



7...c6

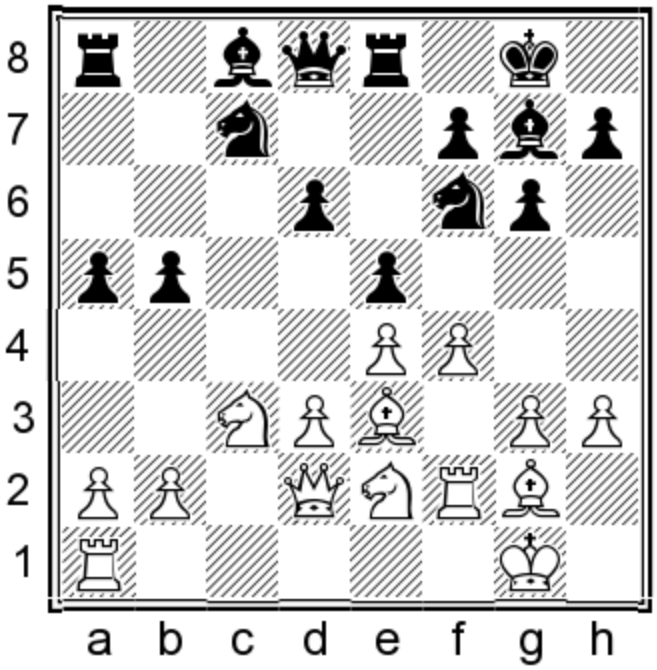
Black's second most popular move after 7...Nc6 – see Line 3A. We should also consider:

a) 7...Nbd7 might seem natural, but can easily become quite slow for Black, with White's pawn not on d4, but back on d3: for example, 8.d3 Nc5 (or 8...a5 9.h3 Nc5 10.Be3 with our ideal set-up and after 10...Nfd7 11.Qd2 Ne6 12.f4! Nd4?! we would both struggle not to push the f-pawn rather than bag a pawn with 13.Bxd4!? exd4 14.Nb5, as White did in Fedorov-Obolentseva, Nezhmetdinov Memorial, Kazan 2016) 9.f4 (or 9.h3 c6 10.f4, transposing) 9...c6 10.h3 Ne6 11.f5! Nd4 12.g4 saw White holding back on Be3 to get in his ideal kingside advance in Botvinnik-V.Shcherbakov, USSR Championship, Moscow 1955. Black is already clearly worse and was quickly crushed in brutal fashion by the Patriarch, as we saw back in Chapter Two ('the d4 break' and the main game Botvinnik-Szabo).

b) 7...a5 8.d3 Na6 is another way of developing the queenside, but still looks a little slow to us: 9.h3 (or just 9.f4!? à la Botvinnik when a model display saw 9...exf4 10.Bxf4 Nc5 11.h3 c6 12.Qd2 Re8 13.Rf2! Ne6 14.Be3

chesstouring.com

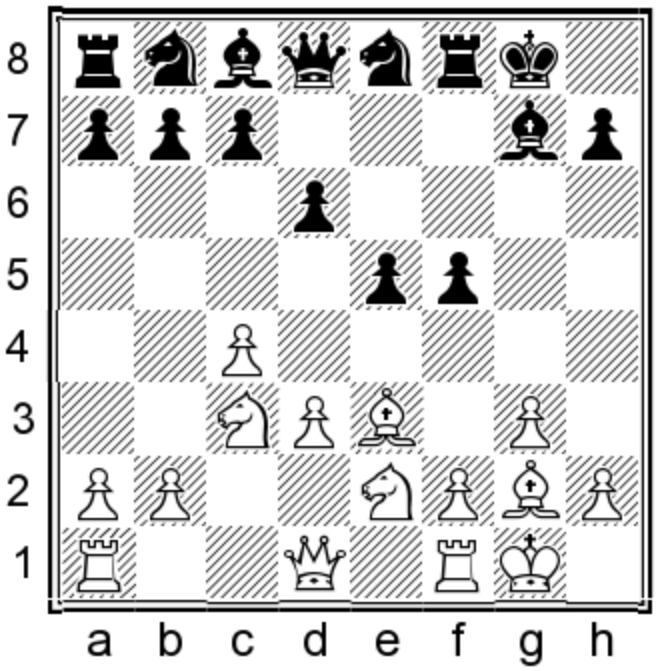
Nd7 15.Raf1 Rf8 16.b3 Rb8 17.d4 and White obtained a huge advantage in Heberla-Carneiro, Torres Vedras 2011; do note Black's complete lack of counterplay) 9...c6!? (9...Nc5 10.Be3 is pleasant for White, as we saw above) 10.Be3 Nc7 11.f4 (11.d4!? also makes good sense with Black's knight back on c7, and if 11...exd4 12.Nxd4 Ne6 13.Nde2!, keeping pieces on and intending Qd2, Rad1 and possibly a kingside pawn advance) 11...Re8 12.Qd2 b5 13.cxb5! (keeping control, not allow Black to mix things up with 13.f5 d5!) 13...cxb5 14.Rf2.



Again we see this simple and effective plan, and 14...Ra6?! (a slightly strange choice with White's knight not yet on a4; clearly 14...d5? 15.fxe5 Rxe5 16.Bd4 Re8 17.Raf1 won't do for Black, but 14...b4 15.Na4 exf4 16.gxf4 Ra6 17.Raf1 is likely only a little better for White who has the black king in his sights) 15.Raf1 b4 16.Nd1 Re7 was very pleasant for White in Doncevic-Lamoureux, Royan 1989, who might now have sounded the charge with 17.g4! (17.f5? is again premature on account of 17...d5, making good use of the knight on c7) 17...exf4 18.Bxf4 Nd7 (or 18...d5 19.e5 Nd7 20.d4 with a very useful space advantage) 19.d4, leaving Black beginning to struggle to breathe.

chesstouring.com

c) While some opponents at club level will want to complete their queenside development, others will want to get in the typical King's Indian ...f5 break as quickly as possible, as with 7...Ne8 8.d3 f5, but after 9.exf5! (our thematic reaction to ...f5) 9...gxf5 10.Be3 White has a pleasant edge.



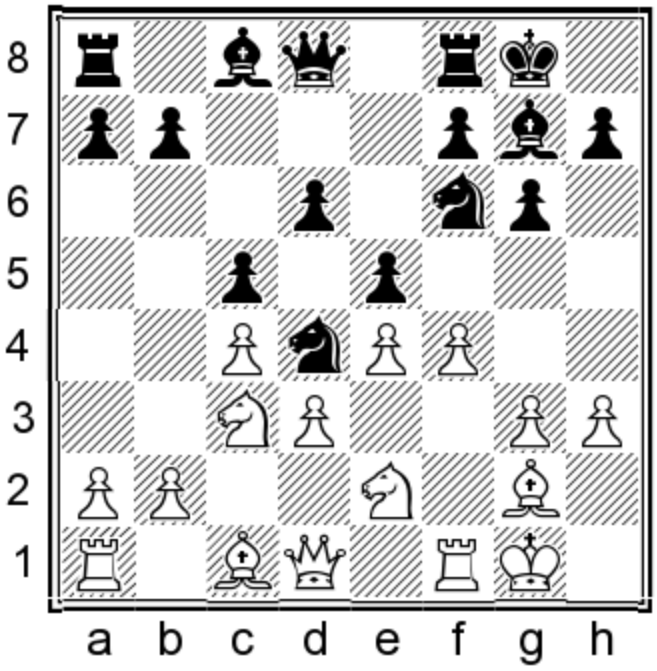
Qd2 and then f4 or d4 will follow, and here 10...f4?! is nothing to worry about, as shown by 11.gxf4 Nc6 12.Qd2 Nd4 (or 12...Nf6 13.fxe5 dxe5 14.f4!, breaking out) 13.Ng3 Bh3 (this tactic again; never forget about the potential weakness of f3 – and conversely f6 in some lines) 14.f3! exf4 15.Bxf4 Qd7 16.Rae1 with a clear extra pawn.

d) 7...Nh5 is a more active way of preparing Black's main pawn lever, but 8.d3 (plenty of strong players have preferred 8.d4, classically reacting in the centre with Black's knight on the rim: for example, 8...c6 9.b3 f5 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.Ba3 Qxd1 12.Rfxd1 Re8 13.Rac1 with slightly the more comfortable position for White, who will look to make a well-timed exchange on f5, Pelletier-Ali, Mallorca Olympiad 2004) 8...Nc6 is then standard, transposing to an important sideline we considered back in Line 3A (note 'a' to Black's 8th move).

chesstouring.com

Here you might also wonder about 8...f5, but again this is well met by 9.exf5! gxf5 (9...Bxf5? 10.Bxb7 Nd7 could give Black some play for the exchange, but White can content himself with a clear extra pawn after 11.Bg2 Nc5 12.Be3, and if 12...Nxd3? 13.g4! Nxb2 14.Qd5+) 10.d4 when the centre opens to White's advantage, not least in the case of 10...e4 (or 10...f4 11.dxe5 when 11...f3? 12.Qd5+ Kh8 13.Bxf3 is an important tactical point) 11.f3! exf3 12.Bxf3 Nf6 13.Bg5 when Nf4 will follow and Black is already under some pressure.

e) With 7...c5!? Black imitates us, but has misplaced the king's knight in the process (it would, like White's, be much happier on e7, as we'll see in the next chapter), and after 8.d3 Nc6 9.h3! (useful prophylaxis; 9.f4 again seems a little premature, in view of 9...exf4 10.gxf4 Nh5 followed by ...Bg4 and/or ...f5) 9...Nd4 (a decent attempt to disrupt rather than allow White to proceed full steam ahead with 9...Be6 10.f4) White might break 10.f4!? (we prefer this to 10.Nxd4, even though 10...exd4 11.Ne2 Ne8 12.b4! led to an instructive win for White, as we'll see in Skembris-Vukic).



10...exf4 (played to avoid being squashed by 10...Nd7? 11.f5 f6 12.h4! a6 13.g4, as in Rakhmanov-Borisenko, World Blitz Championship, St.

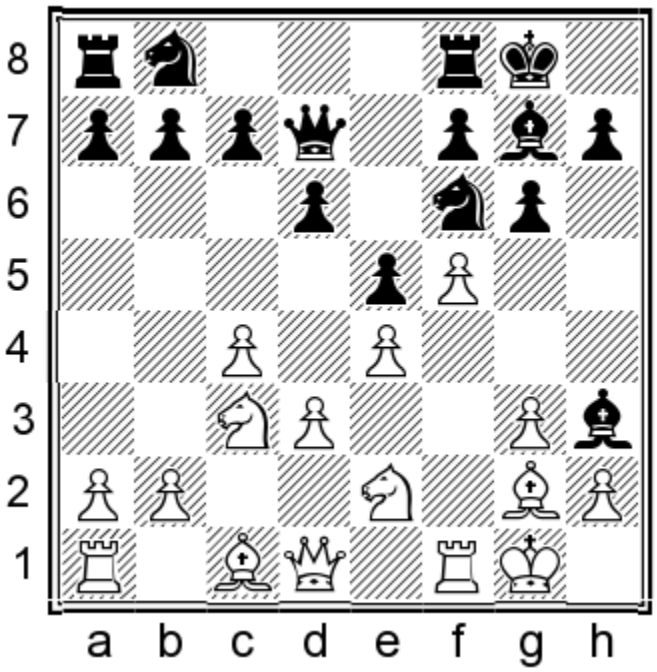
chesstouring.com

Petersburg 2018) 11.Nxf4 (11.gxf4?! Nh5 again looks a bit airy for White) 11...Rb8 12.Be3 a6 sees Black limbering up for ...b5. However, White not only has ideas of Qd2 and Nfd5, before or after g4-g5, but also 13.a4! Bd7 (13...b5? 14.axb5 axb5 15.Bxd4! cxd4 16.Nxb5 bags a pawn) 14.b4!, beating Black to the bounce on the queenside and thereby securing a pull, with Rb1 followed by Qd2 set to leave Black struggling to break out.

Here Black also has 10...Nxe2+ 11.Nxe2 exf4 12.Nxf4 Nd7, which was pretty sensible in Jakubowski-Piotrowski, Katowice 2018. Now White might look towards the b4 break and after 13.Rb1!? a5! 14.b3 Ne5 15.a3 Nc6 16.Be3 the plan could be Qd2 when all of Rf2, Kh2 and even h4 can be useful moves, all the while looking to go Nd5 at the right moment.

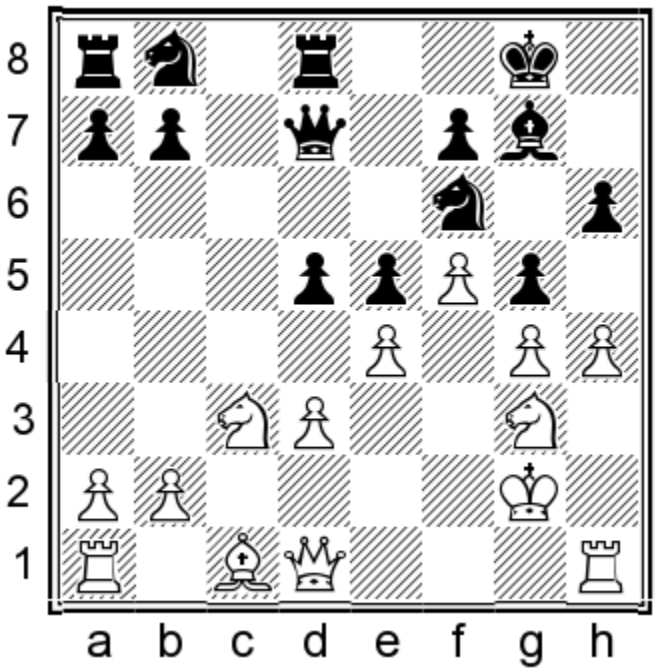
f) 7...Be6 is probably the most important alternative when 8.d3 c6 transposes to our main line after White nudges the h-pawn. Instead, 8...Nc6 would take us back to the main line of 3A, while 8...Qd7 9.f4 (9.b4!? is also possible, if you’re happy to seize space and play on the queenside, as with 9...Bh3 10.Be3 Bxg2 11.Kxg2 Ng4 12.Bd2 f5 13.f3 Nf6 14.b5 when White’s kingside is fairly secure and the a-pawn ready to advance) 9...Bh3? (natural, but not good; 9...Nc6 improves when there’s 10.Nd5 and 10.f5!? gxf5 11.Bg5 is a tempting pawn sacrifice we’ve already considered) runs into 10.f5! of course.

chesstouring.com



Now 10...Bxg2 11.Kxg2 c6 (11...Nc6 12.h3 gxf5 13.Rxf5 Ne7 14.Rf2 Kh8 15.g4 b5 16.Ng3 also left White with a dream grip on the position and serious attacking chances in Motwani-Apicella, French League 2005) 12.h3 (preparing the second key advance) 12...d5 (the point of Black's play, but White can simply ignore the central demonstration) 13.g4! h6 (both 13...d4 14.Nb1 followed by Nd2-f3 and 13...dxc4 14.dxc4 Qxd1 15.Rxd1 scarcely inconvenience White, and if 15...Na6 16.g5 Nh5 17.f6 Bh8 18.Be3 with effectively an extra piece) 14.Ng3 (14.cxd5!? cxd5 15.g5 hxg5 16.Bxg5 Nh7 17.Bh4 would also leave Black in serious trouble due to White's control over d5) 14...Rd8? (14...dxc4 15.h4! is a lovely idea from *Lc0*, and if 15...Qxd3 16.g5 Qxd1 17.Nxd1 hxg5 18.hxg5 Nfd7 19.f6 when Black will again find himself effectively a piece in arrears for the rest of the game) 15.cxd5 g5 (15...cxd5 16.g5 hxg5 17.Bxg5 dxe4 18.Bxf6 Bxf6 19.fxg6 would be a massacre) 16.Rh1! cxd5 17.h4 gave White a huge attack on the kingside in Flores-Martinez de Negri, Mar del Plata 2012.

chesstouring.com

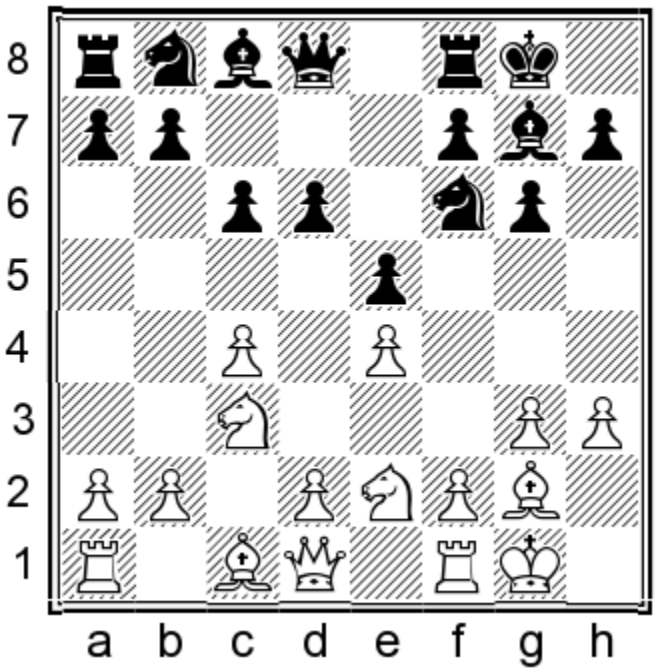


Note that 17...dxe4 18.hxg5 hxg5 19.Bxg5 Qxd3 would fail to 20.Bxf6 Bxf6 21.Ncxe4 when the white knights are just too strong.

Returning to 7...c6:

8.h3!?

chesstouring.com



This move first. Here this move order makes decent sense, as we'll see, but once again we should emphasise that there's nothing at all wrong with 8.d3 when play is likely to transpose, as after 8...Be6 9.h3.

8...Be6

Black tries to get in ...d5.

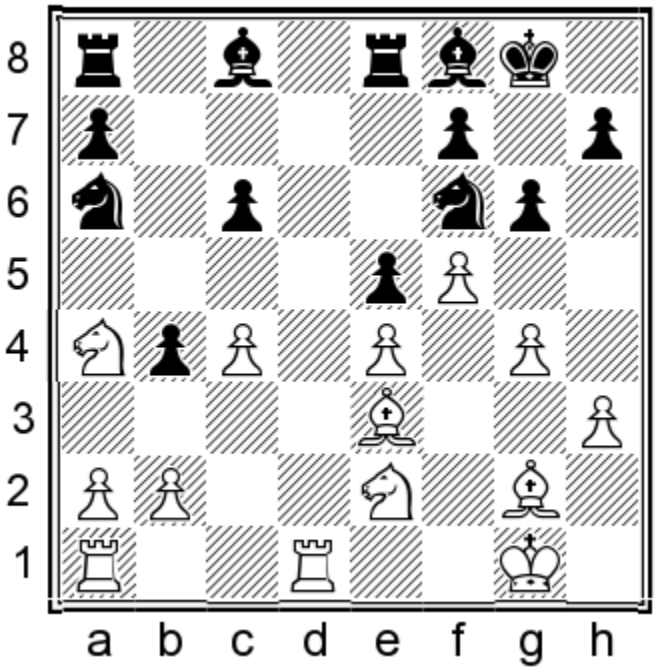
One advantage of White's sneaky choice of eighth move can be seen after 8...Na6 9.f4, and if 9...exf4 10.Nxf4! when d4 will follow in one move.

Likewise, after 8...a6 we wonder about 9.f4!? (there's also nothing wrong with the sensible course of action that is 9.d3 b5 10.a3 Be6 11.b3 Nbd7 12.Be3 and then Qd2 followed by f4), and if 9...exf4 (9...b5 10.d3 Nbd7 11.f5 would sound the charge once again) 10.gxf4 b5 11.d4!? bxc4 12.e5 Nh5 13.Ne4 when White's strong central presence must offer him decent compensation for the pawn; Be3 and Qc2 or even Qe1 may follow.

Instead, 8...Re8 9.d3 Na6 10.f4 b5 saw Black trying to obtain some counterplay on the queenside in McNab-Bates, Hampstead 1998, but now we can't explain why White rejected 11.f5!. Possibly he was concerned by 11...b4 12.Na4 d5, but after 13.g4! White retains control and again the

chesstouring.com

exchange of queens would not fully free Black's position: 13...dxe4 14.dxe4 Qxd1 15.Rxd1 Bf8 16.Be3.



The only way for Black to bring about exchanges appears to be 16...Nd7!, but even so 17.Nc1! Nac5 18.Nxc5 Nxc5 19.Nb3 looks quite pleasant for White, thanks to his extra space and queenside pressure.

9.d3

Going for the standard set-up after all. 9.b3!? with the idea of d4 is a decent alternative, if a little bit too King's Indian-like for our tastes after 9...Nbd7 10.d4 exd4 11.Nxd4 Nc5.

9...Qd7

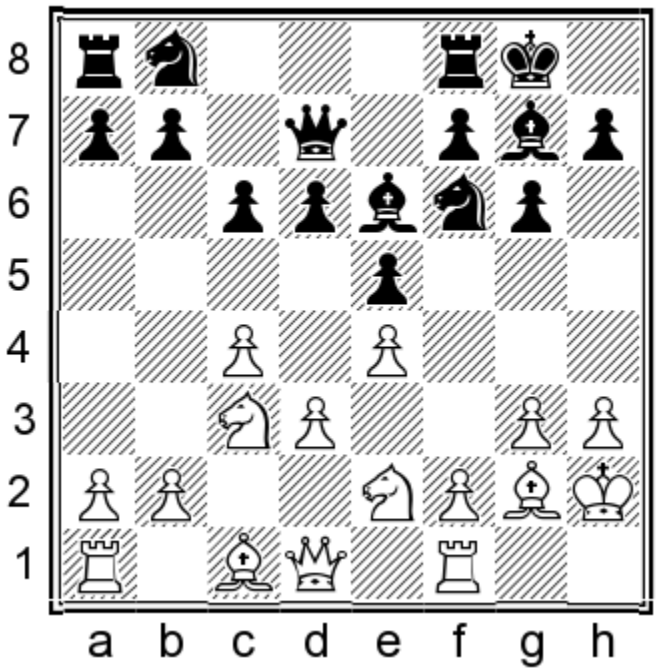
The only move which makes sense of Black's move order, and Yelena Dembo's recommendation in her 2008 work *Fighting the Anti-King's Indians*.

Instead, 9...d5? 10.exd5 cxd5 backfires on Black after 11.d4! (even stronger here than 11.Qb3) 11...e4 12.cxd5 Bxd5 13.Bg5 when his centre is

chesstouring.com

crumbling.

10.Kh2!



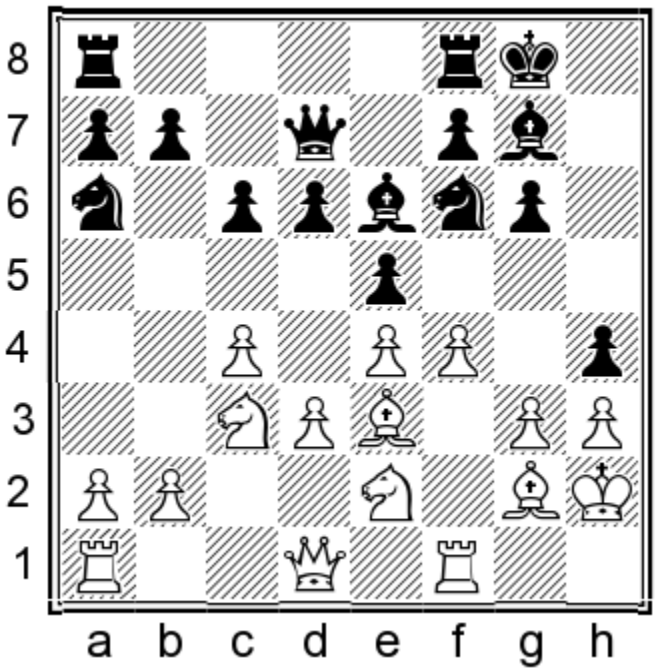
As Dembo shows, Black is well placed to meet 10.g4 with 10...h5!, and if 11.g5 Ne8 12.h4 f6!, breaking out.

10...d5?

Again this is mistaken, if a common mistake even amongst some fairly strong players.

Instead, 10...Na6 was Dembo's recommendation, but after 11.f4 h5!? 12.Be3 (White continues to develop along logical and standard lines) 12...h4, while we have to admire her brave concept, objectively we are not that convinced, so long as White avoids Black's main trap.

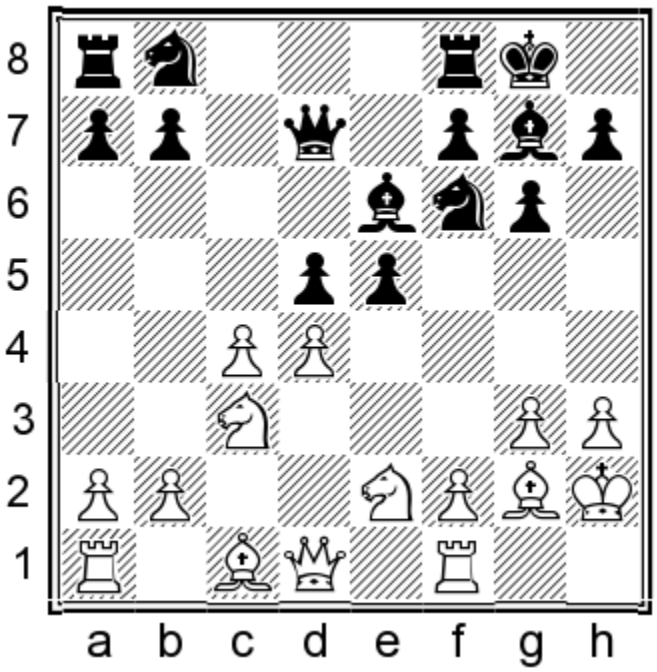
chesstouring.com



Here 13.Qd2 (continuing to develop; Black is hoping for 13.g4? Bxg4!, exploiting the loose bishop on e3 – never forget John Nunn's useful mnemonic LPDO! – but White can also go 13.gxh4!? Nh5 and then 14.f5! gxf5 15.exf5 Bxf5 16.Bf3 with definite attacking chances down the open g-file) 13...hxg3+ (otherwise, White would simply push g4) 14.Nxg3 exf4 15.Bxf4 Rfe8 16.Rae1 left White with control and a very pleasant edge in Markowski-M.Rudolf, Polish League 2010. One plan is Bh6 followed by looking to attack; another simply d4.

11.exd5 cxd5 12.d4!

chesstouring.com



Again, this break and now Black only has a choice of ways to suffer.

12...exd4

The most forcing. Otherwise, 12...dxc4 13.dxe5 Ne8 14.f4 Nc6 15.Be3 left the Polish Botvinnik expert with a very handy space advantage and ideas of Ne4 in Markowski-Khmelniker, San Marino 2006, while 12...e4 13.cxd5 Bxd5 14.Nxd5 Qxd5 15.Nc3 Qf5 was the old game Benko-Panno, Moscow Olympiad 1956, where 16.f3!? exf3 17.Bxf3 Qd7 18.Bf4 would have left White with the bishop-pair and initiative.

13.Nxd4 dxc4

13...Nc6?! 14.Nxe6 fxe6 15.cxd5 exd5 16.Nxd5 Nxd5 17.Qxd5+ Qxd5 18.Bxd5+ was just an extra pawn for White in Donchenko-Nguyen, Stroebeck 2017.

14.Nxe6

chesstouring.com

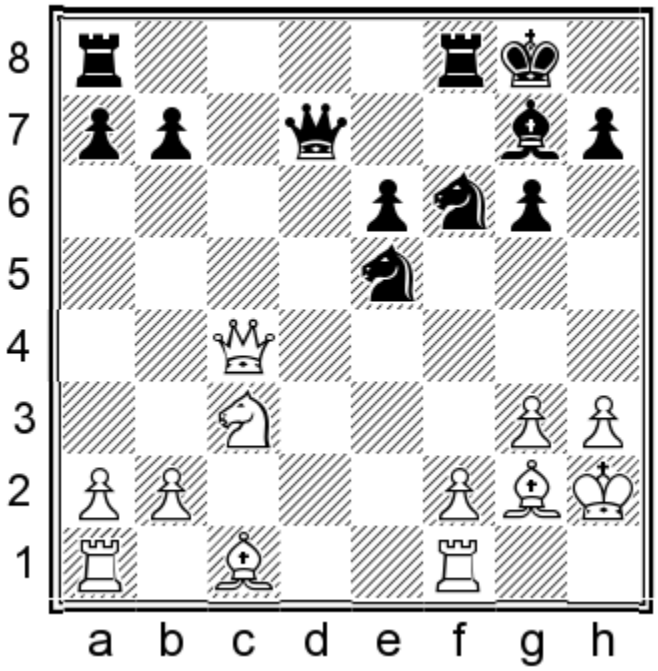
Removing an important bishop and just look at how powerful the English bishop on g2 now is.

14...fxe6 15.Qe2 Nc6

15...Rc8 would be very greedy and after 16.Bg5 Na6 17.Rad1 Qf7 White has at least 18.Nb5 Ne8 19.Nd4 to regain the pawn with interest.

16.Qxc4 Ne5

We've followed a battle between two English Opening experts and Scottish-registered GMs, McNab-Turner, 4NCL 2013. Matthew Turner is normally seen on the white side of the Botvinnik and we have no idea how he stumbled into this position.



Here **17.Qb3!** would just have left White clearly for choice: b7 is obviously vulnerable and White can also quickly complete development with **B**f4 and **R**ad1.

chesstouring.com

Game 10

S.Skembris-M.Vukic

2nd matchgame, Krusevac 1994

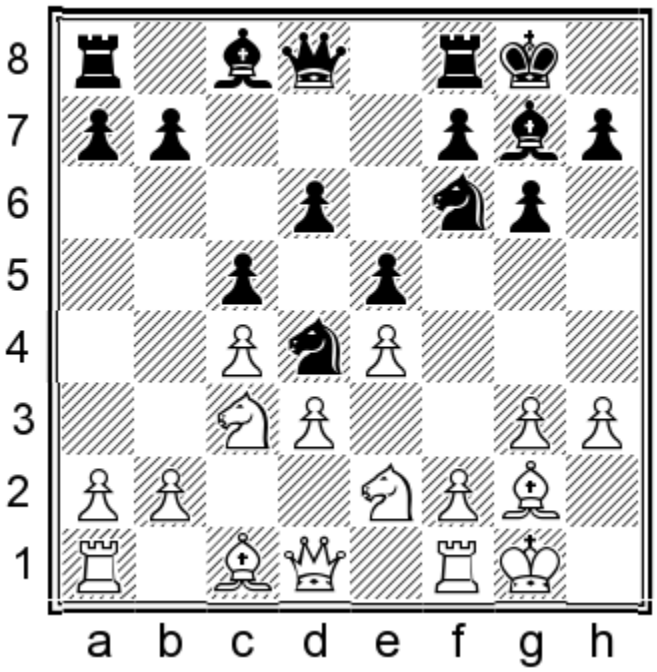
1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.Nge2 e5 7.0-0 c5

Black plays us at our own game.

8.h3

Or just 8.d3 Nc6 9.h3, transposing.

8...Nc6 9.d3 Nd4



10.Nxd4?!

Despite the thematic nature and outcome of this game, we don't recommend this move here. Instead, 10.f4 is our repertoire recommendation, and positional types may also wish to consider 10.Bg5!?, with the idea of 10...h6 11.Bxf6 Bxf6 12.Nxd4 cxd4 13.Nd5 when White

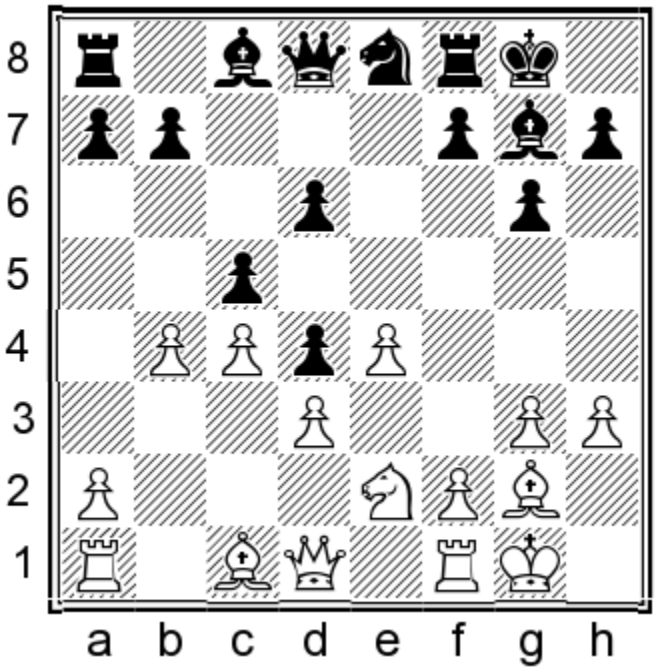
chesstouring.com

has the b4 and f4 advances to play for, and will meet 13...Bg7 14.Qd2 f5?! in trademark fashion with 15.exf5! gxf5 16.f4.

10...exd4?!

Returning the favour. After 10...cxd4! 11.Nd5 (11.Ne2 a5 is also fairly pleasant for Black, and if 12.f4 Nd7 13.f5 Nc5 when he should be safe enough on the kingside in view of possibilities like 14.g4 Bd7 15.g5 f6!; as such, Tony Kosten suggested 11.Na4, but this remains untested in over-the-board practice, likely because 11...Be6 is fine for Black, when White would find himself overextended in the event of 12.f4? exf4! 13.gxf4 Nh5 14.f5 Bd7) 11...Nxd5 12.exd5 Bd7 Black should have sufficient counterplay.

11.Ne2 Ne8 12.b4!



A powerful advance, whereas 12.f4 f5 would rather play into Black's hands and just be quite unclear, partly because the knight isn't so happy on e2 when it can't easily move to f4 or g3.

12...cxb4

chesstouring.com

This must be critical. Instead, 12...b6?! 13.f4!? would see White changing tack, as of course, 13...f5? 14.exf5 is no longer an option for Black, so he must allow f4-f5.

13.a3

A Benko-like, logical and pretty powerful follow-up.

13...bxa3

13...b5!? 14.cxb5 Qb6 attempts to disrupt, but still looks better for White after 15.a4 a6 16.Bg5!, and if 16...f6? 17.Bd2 a5 18.f4 Bb7 19.f5 when Black is in serious danger of being squeezed to death on the kingside, and that's without mentioning the dead-point on d4.

14.Rxa3

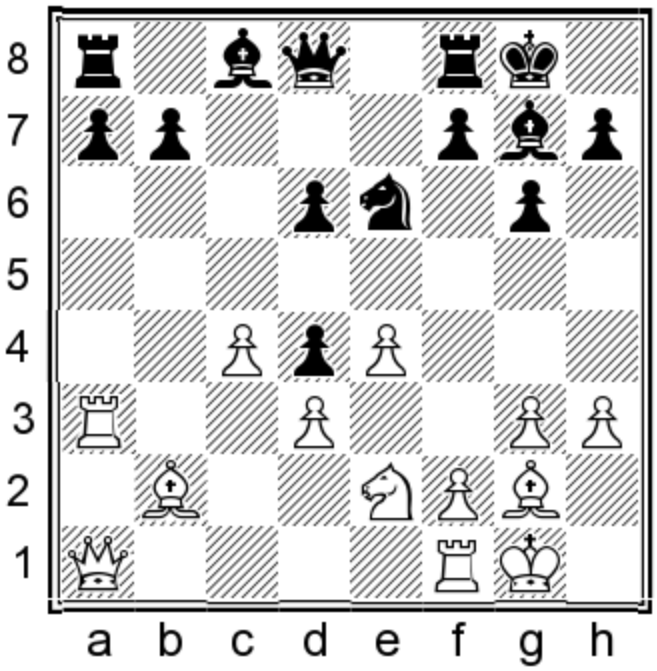
14.Bxa3! was probably even better, and if 14...Nc7 15.Bb2 Ne6 16.f4. White is a pawn down, but clearly d4 is weak and he has a certain initiative, which 16...f5 17.exf5 gxf5 18.Bd5 would but maintain. It's by no means impossible that Qd2, Kh2 and a well-timed g4 could follow, or just Qe1-f2.

14...Nc7?

Meek and rather falling in with White's plans. Black had to seize his chance to set the board on fire with 14...b5! 15.e5 Bd7! when 16.Nxd4 (16.Bxa8? Qxa8 17.Kh2 dxe5 favours Black with the safer king and two pawns for the exchange) 16...b4 17.Ra2 dxe5 18.Nb3 followed by Na5 would have been rather unclear.

15.Bb2 Ne6 16.Qa1

chesstouring.com



Richard Reti's favourite square for the queen and a clear sign here that White is doing pretty well.

16...a6

Skembris criticised this, but even after 16...Qb6 17.f4 Black is clearly worse, followed by f4-f5 or 17...f5 18.exf5 gxf5 19.Bd5 Kh8 20.Bxe6 Bxe6 21.Bxd4 Qc7 22.Rxa7, which wins a pawn for starters.

17.Nxd4 Nc5!?

17...Nxd4 18.Bxd4 Bxd4 19.Qxd4 would just leave White in charge, with the far superior central control and pressure against Black's queenside. As such, Skembris wondered about both 17...Qf6 18.Nxe6 Qxb2 19.Nxg7! (19.Nxf8 Qxa1 20.Raxa1 Bxa1 21.Nxg6 Bf6 isn't so clear, in view of Black's bishops and a-pawn) 19...Qxa1 20.Rfxa1 Kxg7 21.Rb1, when we have to agree that White is clearly for choice, and even 17...Qb6 18.Rb3 Qxd4!? 19.Bxd4 Bxd4 20.Qa3 Bc5, but Black surely doesn't have anything like enough for the queen after 21.Qa5 Nd4 22.Rbb1 followed by Kh2 and f4-f5.

chesstouring.com

18.Ne2 Bxb2 19.Qxb2 f6 20.Nf4

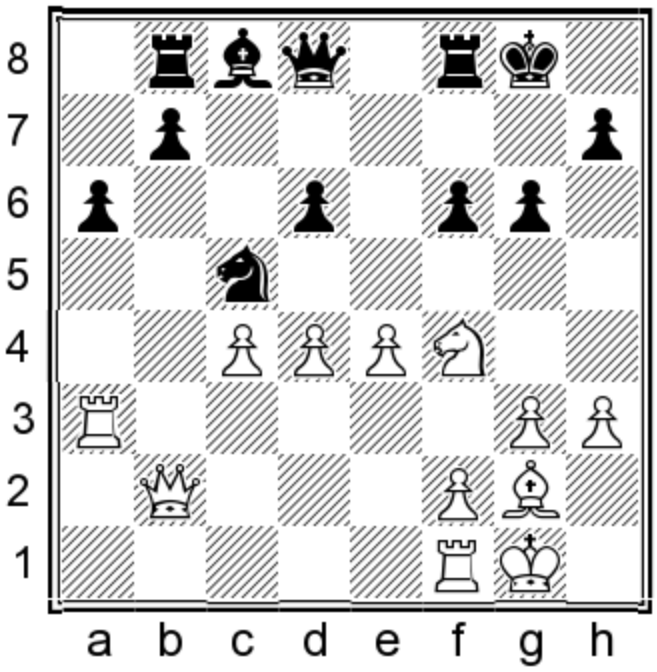
Heading for d5.

20.Rb1 followed by a central advance might have been even stronger.

20...Rb8!

Black's only hope is to break out with ...b5.

21.d4!



White is provoked, and rightly so.

21...Ne6 22.Nxe6?!

Hardly terrible and certainly better than allowing 22.Rxa6? Nxf4 23.gxf4 Bxh3!, but 22.Nd5! would have been stronger, retaining piece to keep Black bottled up. There is 22...b5, but after 23.e5! Black is levered open down the long diagonal as White makes good use of that superb central knight outpost on d5.

chesstouring.com

22...Bxe6 23.d5 Bd7 24.Rc1

It's logical to want to push through c5, after which White might eventually obtain ideal central control with f4 and e5.

24...a5

After 24...Qc7 Skembris even wondered about 25.c5!? dxc5 26.f4 with dangerous compensation for the pawn in the shape of White's powerful centre.

25.Rb3 Qc7?!

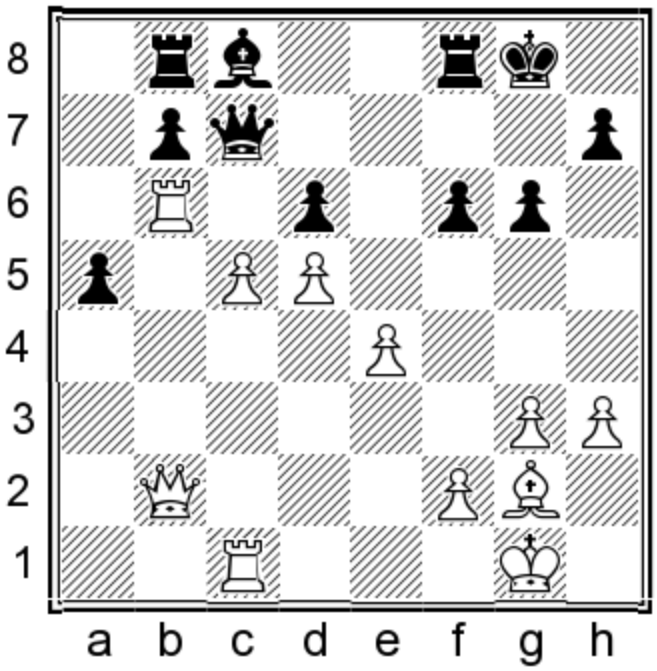
Allowing White to invade. Instead, 25...b6! 26.Rb1 a4 27.Rxb6 (27.Rb4? Qc7 28.Qd4 would retain more tension) 27...Rxb6 28.Qxb6 Qxb6 29.Rxb6 Ra8 30.Rb2 a3 31.Ra2 f5 would have left Black with definite chances to hold, as pointed out by the Greek Grandmaster.

26.Rb6! Bc8?

Now Black is swept aside by a tsunami. He absolutely had to try 26...Qc5 27.Rxb7 Rxb7 28.Qxb7 Rd8 29.Rb1, grim though this would have been.

27.c5!

chesstouring.com



Another powerful pawn break on a dark square.

27...dxc5 28.d6 Qd8 29.Rxc5

Just compare the difference in activity between the two forces! Unsurprisingly Black didn't last much longer.

29...a4 30.Rc7 Be6

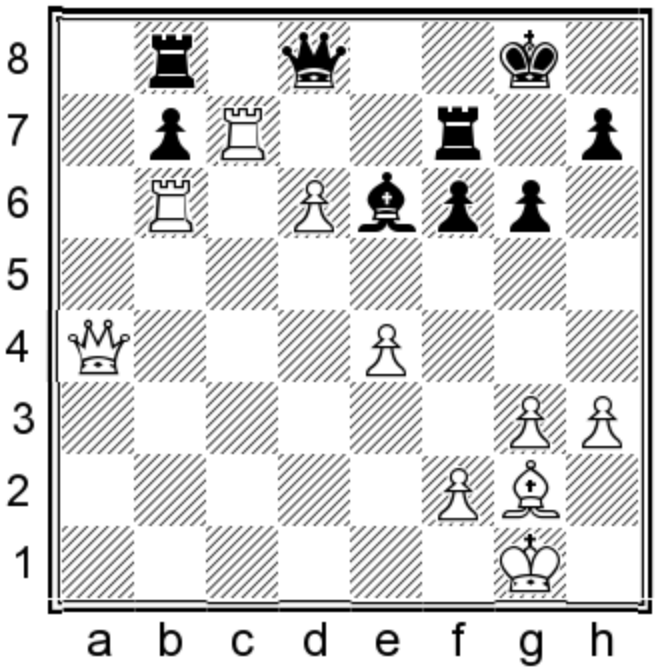
Black's exposed king would prove his undoing after 30...Bd7 31.e5! fxe5 32.Qxe5 and Bd5+.

31.Qb4

Not only attacking the a-pawn, but preparing Bf1-c4.

31...Rf7 32.Qxa4!

chesstouring.com



32...Ra8

The defence is overloaded in the event of 32...Rxc7? 33.dxc7.

33.Qb5 Ra6

White just picks off a second pawn after this. As such, 33...Ra1+ 34.Kh2 Rxc7 35.dxc7 Qd1 was likely the last try, when Skembris was ready with 36.Qe8+ Kg7 37.Qe7+ Kh6 (or 37...Bf7 38.Qxf6+ Kh6 39.g4 Qg1+ 40.Kg3 Ra3+ 41.Kh4! forcing mate) 38.Qf8+ Kh5 39.g4+ Kg5 40.Rxe6 and wins.

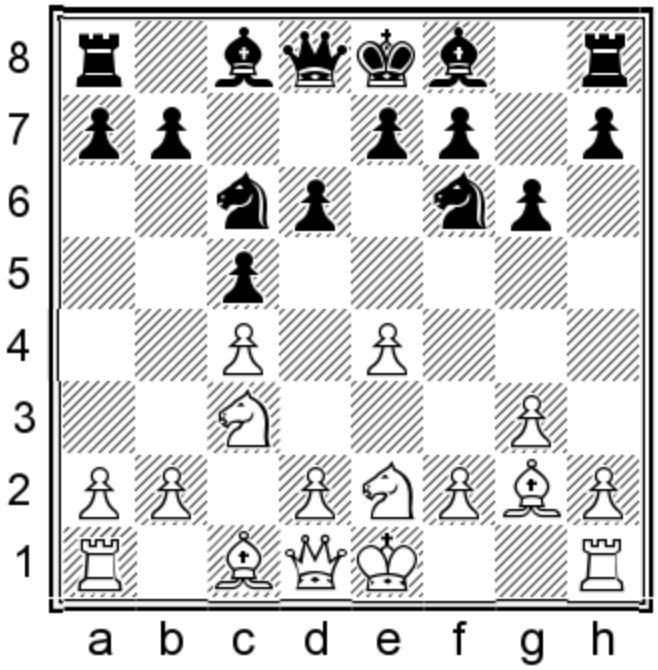
chesstouring.com

34.Rxa6 bxa6 35.Qxa6 1-0

Theory 3C

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 Bg7

Another move order is 3...c5 4.Bg2 Nc6 5.e4 d6 6.Nge2.



Play almost always transposes after 6...Bg7 (back at the end of the Common Ideas for White, we discussed two super-aggressive tries for Black: 6...h5 best met by 7.h3 and 6...Nd4 7.d3 Bg4 by 8.h3!) 7.0-0.

4.Bg2 0-0

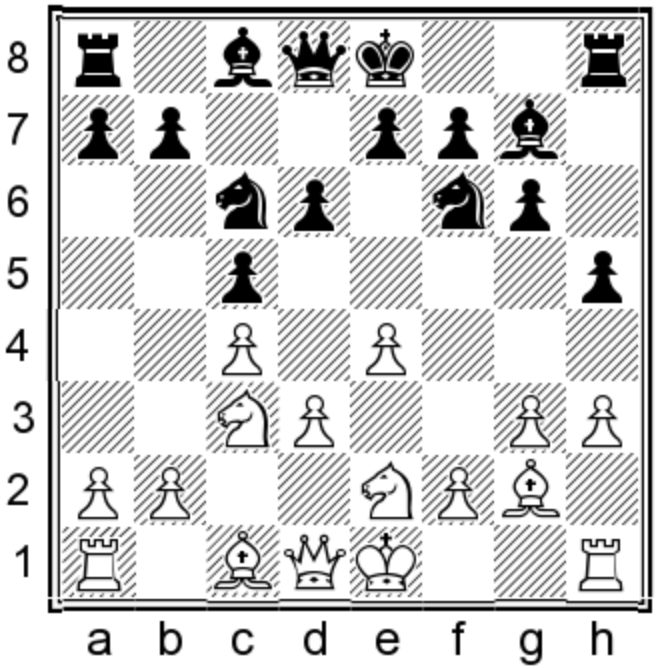
Once again, Black might hold back on this, but after 4...d6 5.e4 c5 6.Nge2 Nc6 7.d3 (development before castling; there's nothing terribly wrong with 7.0-0 when Black usually follows suit and castles, but 7...h5!? is a little tricky and after 8.d4?! h4 9.dxc5 Richard would have been slightly for choice in Brozel-Palliser, British Championship, Llandudno 2017, had he

chesstouring.com

now gone 9...hxg3 10.hxg3 Qa5!) he almost always goes 7...0-0, transposing to our main line after 8.0-0.

Of the alternatives which a creative opponent might try against you, Gawain Jones once went 7...a6 8.0-0 Rb8 9.a4, but with White having thematically prevented ...b5 could now find nothing better than 9...0-0 10.h3 and a transposition to our main line, below. Instead, 7...e5 8.0-0 0-0 9.h3! is quite nice for White as we saw in note ‘e’ to Black’s 7th move in Line 3B.

Once again, Black might try 7...h5, but with his king not in the firing line White can go 8.h3! (there’s nothing wrong with 8.h4, but we quite like to retain control of g4) and now:

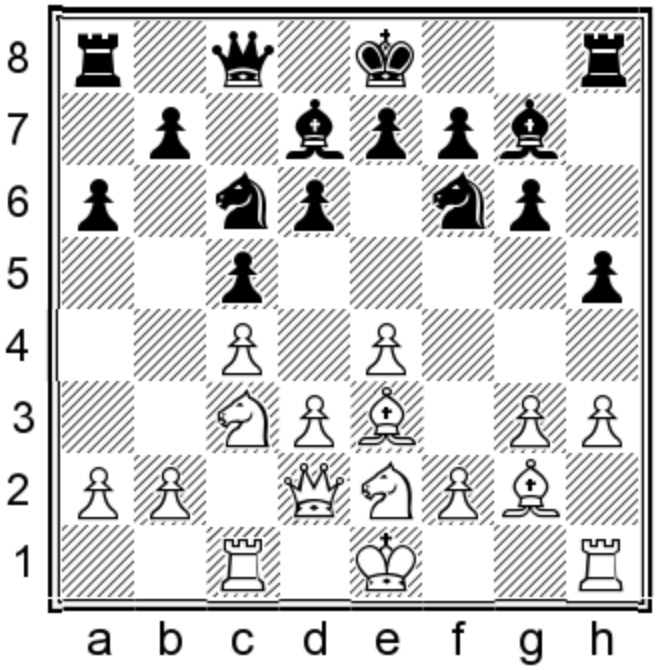


a) 8...h4 9.g4 is nothing to fear when 0-0, Be3 and f4 may well follow.

b) 8...Nh7 9.0-0 0-0 10.f4 f5 was rather ambitious from Black in Maze-Dourerassou, French League 2012, where White obtained a clear advantage in thematic and instructive fashion: 11.Be3 Nd4 12.Rb1! a5 13.a3 e6 14.b4 axb4 15.axb4 Qe7?! 16.bxc5 dxc5 17.e5!. Black’s control over d4 is crumbling and do just compare the difference in activity between the two fianchettoed bishops.

chesstouring.com

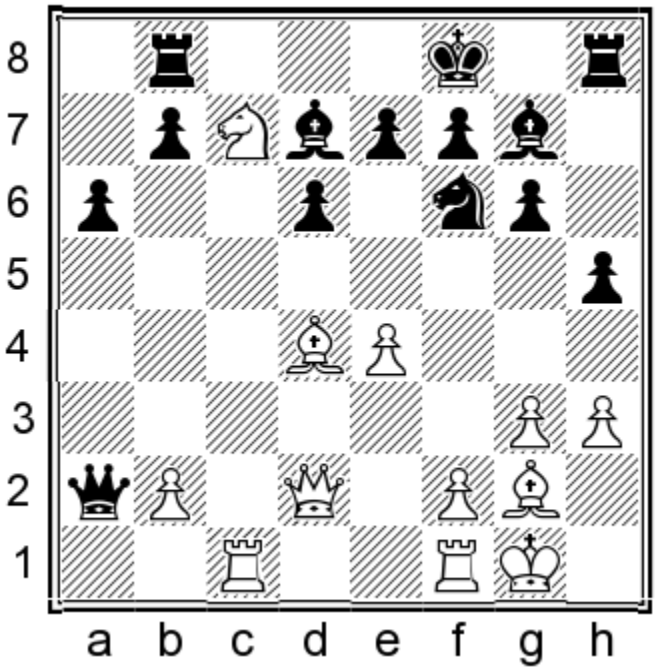
c) 8...Bd7 9.Be3 Qc8 (some players do seem to like 9...Nh7 in this line, but after 10.Qd2 Qa5 11.0-0 g5?! 12.a3 Qd8 White had a few routes to an advantage in Kerr-Glazman, correspondence 2005, including simply 13.f4 gxf4 14.gxf4 Rg8 15.Kh2 when b4 is one plan, f5 and going after h5 another) 10.Qd2 a6 (Black switches flanks; instead, 10...0-0 11.Bh6 a6 might even provoke us into 12.g4!?, and if 12...hxg4? 13.hxg4 with a winning attack down the open h-file), and now 11.Rc1! is an instructive prophylactic move.



What on earth is the rook doing here? Well, White would like to break with d4, after which having the rook on the same file as the black queen might prove very useful: for example, 11...Rb8 (11...b5 12.Nd5! also makes good use of the rook, as does the subsequent 12...Rb8 13.cxb5 axb5 14.d4 c4 15.Nxf6+ Bxf6 16.b3 with pressure down the c-file and also the option to take over in the centre after f4) 12.d4 cxd4 13.Nxd4 Nxd4 (13...0-0 14.Nd5 merely increases the pressure through simple means and may leave Black with nothing better than 14...Qd8 15.0-0, with a typical Maroczy Bind space advantage for White, who may even advance the f-pawn) 14.Bxd4!? (if this is too brave for you, there's nothing at all wrong with the simple 14.Qxd4 0-0 15.Qd3) 14...Qxc4 (14...0-0 15.b3 is again quite

chesstouring.com

pleasant for White, and if 15...b5 16.cxb5 axb5 17.Nd5!? – that rook really has come in handy on c1) 15.Nd5 Qxa2 16.Nc7+ Kf8 17.0-0.



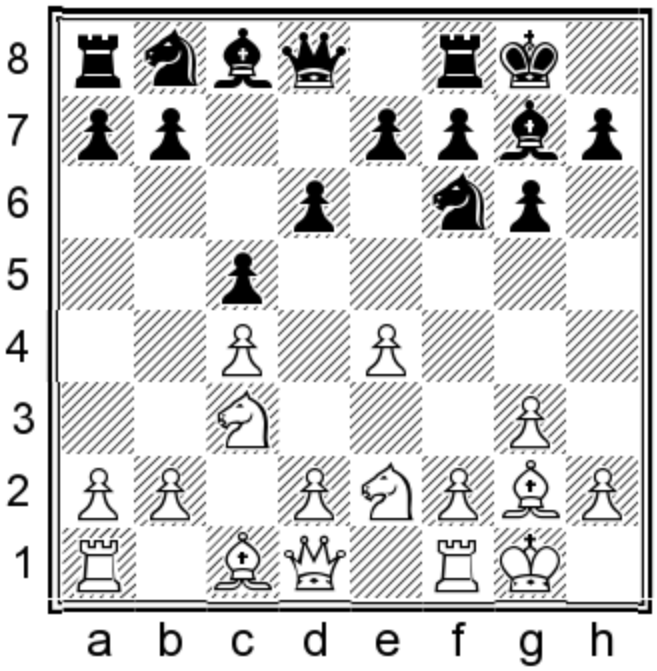
White has sacrificed two pawns, but neither member of Black's royalty is especially happy and we quite like the compensation. White has ideas of Rc3, as well as of f4 and e5, opening lines towards the black king.

Finally here, Black might also try to disrupt with 7...Bd7 8.h3! (8.0-0 h5 again gives Black more play than we need to) 8...Qc8, but again there's no need for White to panic and 9.Be3 0-0 (9...h5 10.Qd2 would transpose to the previous variation) 10.Qd2 a6 11.Bh6 Nd4 12.Bxg7 Kxg7 13.g4 demonstrated that it's not only Black who can hope to attack on the kingside in Nemeth-Pirisi, Hungarian League 1998. White's king will now be safe on g1 and 13...b5 14.f4 Rb8 15.0-0 looks quite pleasant; Ng3, f5 and g5 may follow.

Returning to 4...0-0:

5.e4 d6 6.Nge2 c5 7.0-0

chesstouring.com



With Black's king already on the kingside we can follow suit, although there's nothing wrong with a 7.d3 Nc6 8.0-0 move order should you prefer.

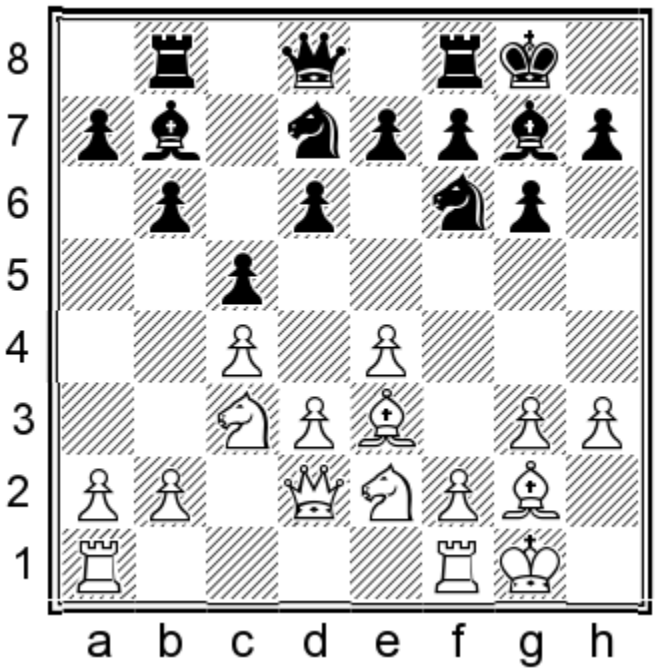
7...Nc6

This natural development is unsurprisingly almost always seen.

7...a6 allows White the option of 8.d4!? (8.d3 Nc6 9.h3 transposes below) 8...cxd4 9.Nxd4, setting up a favourable Maroczy. That's because it's not trivial for Black to complete his queenside development, as shown by 9...Nc6 (9...b5? 10.e5! would be even worse, unfurling an attack on the rook on a8) 10.Nxc6!? bxc6 11.e5!, breaking up Black's structure while making good use of our English bishop. Instead, the copying approach 7...e5 would again take us back into Line 3B after 8.d3 Nc6 9.h3.

Finally, it's by no means impossible that a club player opponent would want to go for a double fianchetto. We can but dream about seeing 7...b6?? 8.e5, which would already be game over, and even 7...Nbd7 8.d3 Rb8 9.h3 b6 10.Be3 Bb7 11.Qd2 is fairly pleasant for White, as in Barbosa-De Paula, Brasilia 2017.

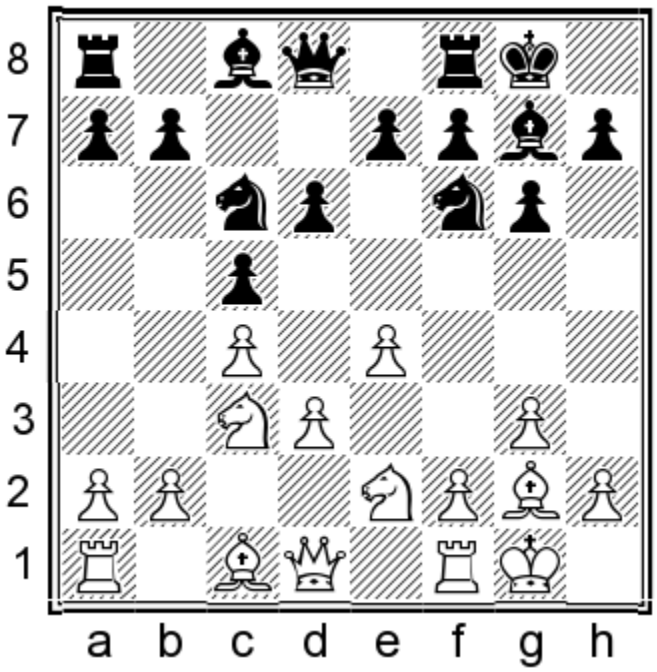
chesstouring.com



White has developed along standard lines and still has all three key pawn advances available: b4, d4 and f4-f5. The last of those might well tempt us, but the game made a good case for 11...Re8 12.Rab1 when after 12...e6 13.Bg5!? (13.Nb5 Qe7 14.Nxa7 was a little materialistic in the game, as now 14...d5 breaks out) 13...a6 14.b4 would have given White a very pleasant edge, and if 14...cxb4 15.Rxb4 Qc7 16.Rfb1 with control over the position. The pressure down the b-file makes it hard for Black to break with ...b5 or ...d5 and White might play in the centre or even switch focus and roll the kingside pawns.

8.d3

chesstouring.com



Our standard development. Even if you are happy with a Maroczy position, please don't fall for 8.d4? cxd4 9.Nxd4 Nxe4! 10.Nxc6 Nxc3 when Black is already somewhat for choice.

8...Rb8

Black decides to prepare ...b5, but this is far from forced:

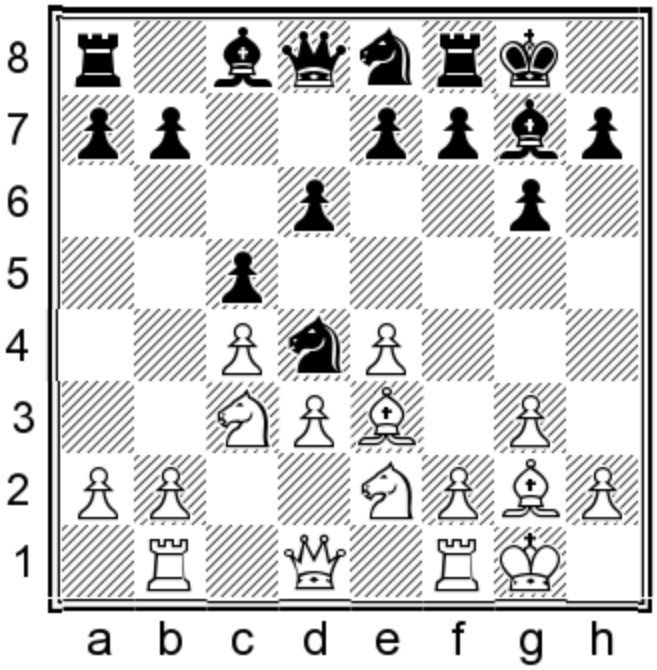
a) Play transposes after another common move order 8...a6 9.h3 Rb8 (not forced, but 9...Nd4 10.Rb1! Rb8 11.b4 beats Black to the punch on the queenside; we'll see how White might exploit his early queenside gain of space in Kokarev-Popov, St. Petersburg 2014) 10.a4.

b) Likewise, after 8...Nd7 9.Be3 Nd4 we like to go 10.Rb1!. Black can prevent b4 with 10...a5, but then any ...b5 break will carry less dynamism (Black can't recapture with a pawn), and 11.Qd2 Nb8!? 12.Bh6 Nbc6 13.Bxg7 Kxg7 14.f4 should be a little better for White thanks to his kingside play.

c) By now you shouldn't be surprised to hear that we advocate meeting 8...Ne8 (a better and much more popular route for the knight; it is heading to c7 to support ...b5 and possibly journey on towards d4 via e6), with

chesstouring.com

9.Be3 (if you're of an attacking bent, you might wish to investigate 9.h3 Nc7 10.g4!? Rb8 11.f4; the position resembles a Closed Sicilian, but with White's c-pawn on c4, which may help to slow down Black's counterplay and certainly 11...b5 12.Rb1 Nd4 13.Be3 Ba6 14.b3 e6 15.f5! Re8 16.Qd2 exf5 17.gxf5 gxf5 18.Ng3 felt rather dangerous for Black in Brooks-Gerhardt, Correspondence Olympiad 2002) 9...Nd4 (otherwise, the other knight can look a little misplaced on e8, as it does after 9...a6 10.d4 cxd4 11.Nxd4 Bd7 12.b3 or 9...e5 10.Qd2 a6 11.f4, and even 9...Nc7 10.d4 cxd4 11.Nxd4, reaching an important Maroczy position we'll explore in some detail in Williams-Kahn, Budapest 1994) 10.Rb1.



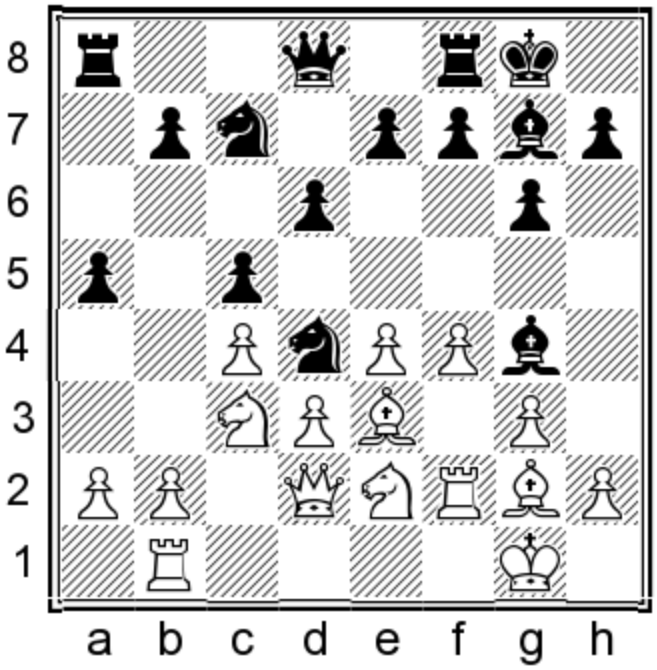
White follows our mantra: when Black prevents d4 with ...Nd4, arrange the b4 advance. In this unforcing position Black has tried quite a few different things:

c1) 10...Bd7 11.b4 b6 12.Qd2 (this flexible move may be best, but 12.a4!? Nc7 13.h3 Nxe2+ 14.Nxe2 a5? 15.b5 Qc8 16.Kh2 Rb8 17.f4 left White with a handy space advantage right across the board in Kosten-Bujisho, Nimes 2009) 12...Nc7 13.Bh6 should give White a small edge. Our aim is to maintain control while gradually building up for an attack on the

chesstouring.com

kingside: for example, 13...a6 14.Bxg7 Kxg7 15.f4 b5 16.bxc5 dxc5 17.Nxd4 cxd4 18.Ne2 when d4 is weak and White's mobile central pawns also a certain asset.

c2) 10...a5 rules out b4, but we don't mind switching our focus to the kingside: 11.Qd2 (11.a3 has been played quite often, but allows Black to clamp down with 11...a4) 11...Nc7 12.f4! (12.Bh6 e5 13.Bxg7 Kxg7 14.f4 f6 was very solid for Black in D'Costa-Mamedov, Benasque 2009) 12...Bg4 (12...e5 13.Rf2! f6 14.Rbf1 Bd7 15.f5 would now leave Black with a rather unhappy bishop on g7, and White ready to mobilise Gary and Harry), and now in Alekseev-Efimenko, Moscow 2004, there was nothing wrong with 13.Rf2!?.



This intends 13...Nxe2+ (or 13...Nce6 14.Nc1!, suddenly threatening to trap the bishop on g4) 14.Nxe2 Bxe2 15.Qxe2 Ne6 16.f5 Nd4 17.Qg4 when Black might have control over d4, but we quite like White's bishops and kingside chances, with an advance of the h-pawn very much a possibility.

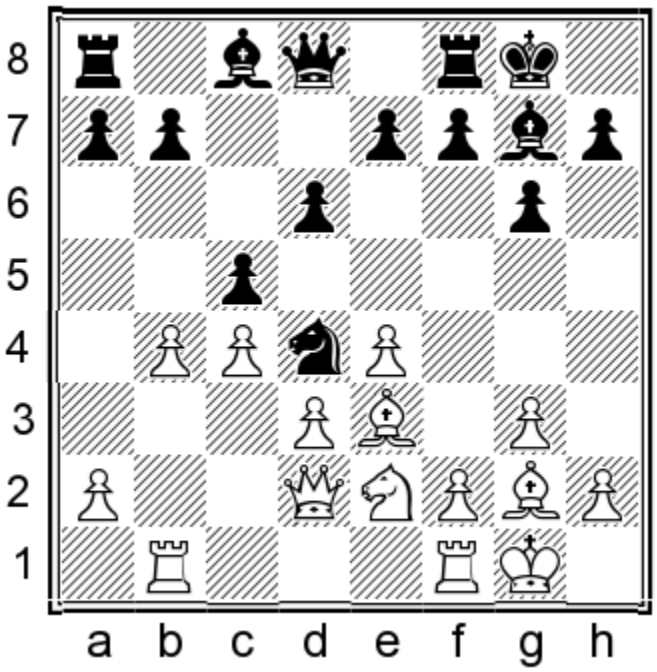
c3) 10...Bg4 has been played by some strong players, but White doesn't mind keeping pieces on and temporarily obstructing the English bishop with 11.f3. After 11...Bd7 12.b4 b6 13.Qd2 Nc7 Black was quite solidly

chesstouring.com

placed in Ponomariov-Vachier-Lagrave, Beijing (rapid) 2011, where White nudged the h-pawn forwards. 14.f4!? feels more like it and 14...Rb8 15.a4!? keeps open White's options on both flanks, while offering a pawn: 15...Nxe2+ 16.Nxe2 Bxa4 17.f5 Bd7 18.g4 a6 19.Bh6 gives White full compensation. Not only is his space advantage quite useful, but there's always the possibility of breaking in the centre with d4, and even Rf3-h3 is a definite possibility.

c4) 10...Nc7 is arguably Black's most logical approach, and then 11.b4 (with Black's knight en route to e6, 11.f4!? is tempting too, and certainly 11...Bg4 12.h3 Bxe2 13.Nxe2 Nxe2+ 14.Qxe2 Ne6 15.Kh1 Nd4 16.Qf2 b5 17.b4! left Black coming under pressure on the queenside and White still with the option of a kingside pawn storm in Piorun-S.Novikov, Pardubice 2016) 11...Nce6 (or 11...b6 12.Qd2 Bb7 13.Bh6 when White's play is again quite thematic, as was 13...e6 14.Nxd4 cxd4 15.Bxg7 Kxg7 16.Ne2 e5 17.f4 f6 18.f5! Qe7 19.g4, which left Black passive and suffering in Nechaev-Gordievsky, Sochi 2018) 12.Qd2 Nxe2+ (with d4 overprotected, Black can now consider 12...cxb4 13.Rxb4, but this should only serve to weaken his central control; White is ready to go f4-f5 and 13...Nc6 14.Rbb1 Ne5 15.Qc2 b6 16.h3 Bb7 would have been excellent for White in J.Grant-McNab, Edinburgh 2001, had he now simply gone 17.f4 Nc6 18.f5 Ned4 19.Qd2 followed by the standard Bh6 and g4 attacking mechanism) 13.Nxe2 Nd4.

chesstouring.com



Having secured a queenside advance, White can now switch flank: 14.f4 Rb8 (this may feel a bit slow, but if 14...f5? 15.bxc5 dxc5 16.e5, powerfully shutting the bishop on g7 out of play, or 14...Bg4 when 15.Nc1!? is quite sneaky, aiming to embarrass the bishop with f5) 15.f5 was all very logical in Ribli-Istratescu, Odorheiu Secuiesc 1993. Black bravely tried 15...gxf5, but after 16.Nxd4 cxd4 17.Bh6 Bxh6 18.Qxh6 fxe4 19.Bxe4 f5 20.Qg5+ Kh8 21.Bxf5 White had regained the pawn with interest, going on to keep up the pressure with 21...e6 22.Qxd8 Rxd8 23.Be4 Kg7 24.Rb2! Bd7 25.Rbf2 Be8 26.Rf4.

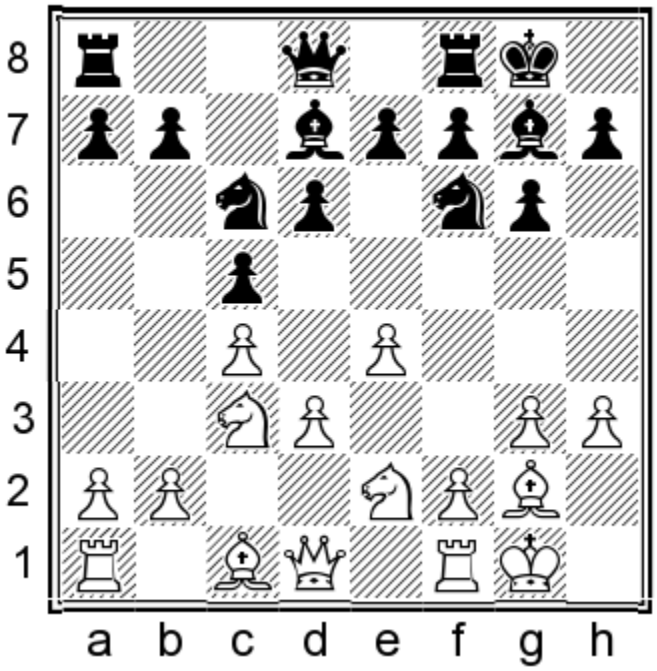
c5) Finally, 10...e5 11.b4 b6 was seen in Williams-Rudd, British Championship, Street 2000, when White's simplest route to an edge was 12.bxc5 dxc5 13.Nd5, and if 13...Nc7 14.Nxd4 cxd4 (or 14...exd4 15.Bf4 Nxd5 16.cxd5) 15.Bd2 Nxd5 16.cxd5, gaining a useful protected passed pawn and, no less importantly, preparing to break with f4 or to invade down the c-file after 16...f5 17.exf5 Bxf5 18.Qb3 Kh8 19.Rbc1.

d) Black can also deploy his light-squared bishop without delay, as with 8...Bg4 9.f3 Bd7 10.Be3 Qc8 11.Qd2 Bh3 12.Rad1 Bxg2 13.Kxg2 e5 14.Bg5!? (or just 14.h3 Nd4 15.f4) 14...Nh5 15.Nd5, which saw White

chesstouring.com

edging forwards in Kosten-Korczak, Paris 2002, and after 15...f5?! 16.exf5 gxf5 he might even have bagged a pawn with 17.Be7! Rf7 18.Bxd6 b6 19.b4.

e) Much more common is 8...Bd7 9.h3 (played to avoid 9.Be3 Ng4).



Once again Black has tried a great many moves here, including:

e1) 9...Ne8 10.Be3 Nd4 11.Rb1 echoes our approach against 8...Ne8. Here 11...a5 was tried against Simon years ago and now 12.Qd2 followed by Bh6 would continue our usual approach, since there's no reason to fear 12...Bxh3? on account of 13.Bxd4! cxd4 (13...Bxg2? 14.Bxg7 Bxf1 15.Bxf8 Bxe2 might catch an opponent out; yes, Black has kept the number of pieces level, but after 16.Qh6! Bg4 17.Nd5 his position collapses on the dark squares) 14.Bxh3 dxc3 15.bxc3! with good central control, as well as the simple and strong plan of doubling on the b-file.

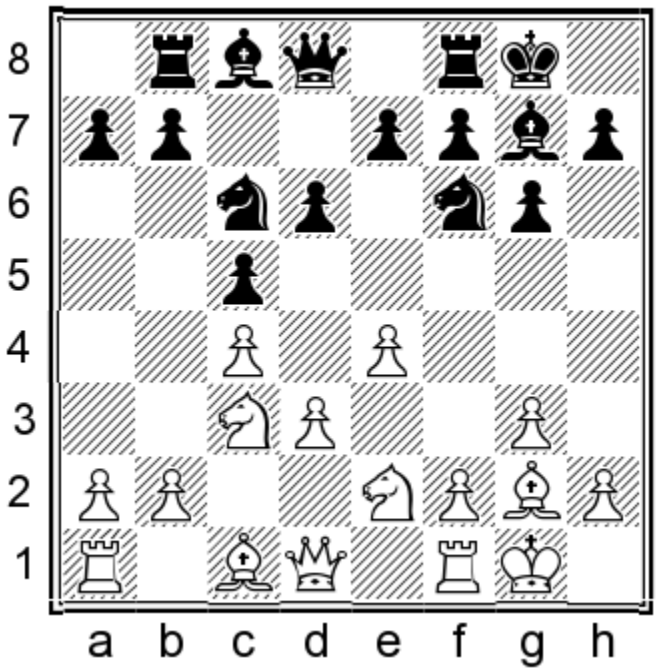
e2) 9...Nd4 feels a little premature and allows White fairly easy play with 10.Nxd4 cxd4 11.Ne2 Ne8 12.f4, whereupon after the 12...b5 13.cxb5 Bxb5 of Cvek-Hummel, Aschach 1999, White might just have rolled forwards with 14.f5 followed by g4 and Ng3.

chesstouring.com

e3) 9...Qc8 10.Kh2 is nothing to fear and just creates a slightly strange impression for Black, who after 10...Ne8 11.Be3 Nc7 12.d4 cxd4 13.Nxd4 Ne6 14.Nde2! (keeping pieces on and Black bottled up) 14...Nc5 15.b3 Kh8 16.f4 b6 17.Qd2 found himself in grave danger of being squashed in B.Lund-Tan, 4NCL 2020.

e4) 9...Rb8 10.Be3 (10.Rb1!? a6 11.a4 is also a possibility, with the idea of 11...Nd4 12.b4) 10...a6 is best met by 11.a4, transposing below (and not 11.d4?! cxd4 12.Nxd4 which walks into the awkward 12...Qc8!, unfurling an attack on h3, as well as indirectly c4).

Finally, we can return to 8...Rb8:



9.h3

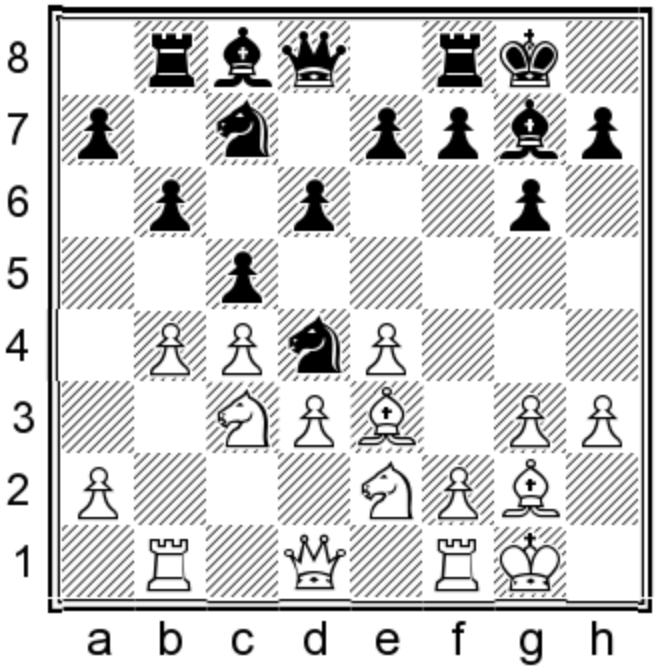
Once again, a useful prophylactic device to side-step 9.Be3 Ng4 or 9...a6 10.a4 Ng4.

9...a6

Black's main move, trying to force through ...b5.

chesstouring.com

It shouldn’t come as a surprise either to discover that 9...Ne8 10.Be3 Nd4 has been tried too, when we hope you know the drill by now: 11.Rb1. Once again, Black has something of a choice here, including 11...Nc7 (11...Bd7 12.b4 b6 13.a4 a5 was preferred in the all-English clash, Short-Jones, Ekurhuleni 2011, when 14.b5 Nc7 15.Kh2!? looks quite nice for White, intending Qd2 and f4, while after 11...a5 12.f4!? is already possible, and if 12...Nc7 13.a4, preventing ...b5 and giving White ideas of Nb5, as well as f5, Qd2 and Bh6) 12.b4 b6.

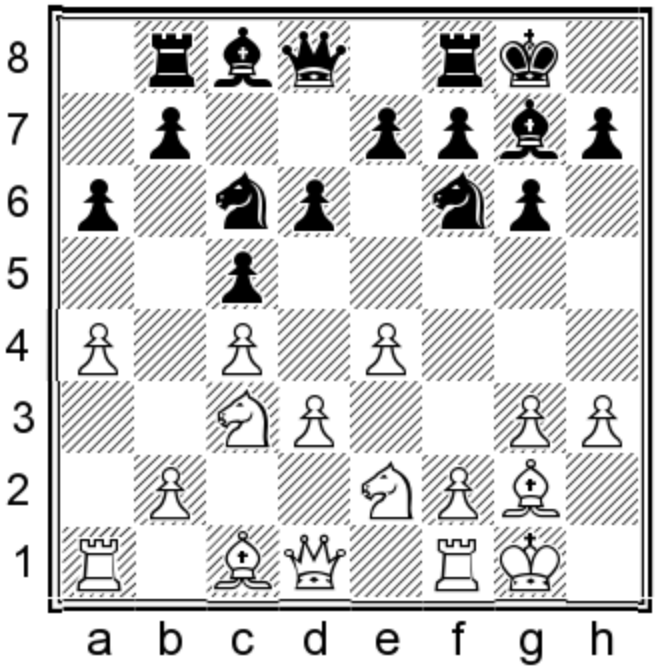


Here Simon placed the queen on a safe square and 13.Qc1 (again, if you prefer, it’s possible to go 13.Qd2!?, falling for 13...Bxh3, as after 14.Nxd4 Bxg2 – or 14...cxd4 15.Bxd4 Bxd4 16.Bxh3 followed by Ne2 and a central advance – 15.Nc6 Qe8 16.Nxe7+! Qxe7 17.Kxg2 White has regained the pawn, and might even be able to get in Rh1 and Bh6) 13...e6 14.Bh6 Nxe2+ 15.Nxe2 Bxh6 16.Qxh6 f5?! (16...cxb4 17.Rxb4 Bb7 is more solid, but White can certainly hope to probe after 18.h4) was Williams-Turner, British Championship, Scarborough 1999, where 17.bxc5 dxc5 18.exf5! exf5 (18...Rxf5 19.Qe3 is also quite pleasant for White, as is 18...gxf5 19.Nf4 Qf6 20.Qxf6 Rxf6 21.Rfe1 followed by doubling on the e-file) 19.Nf4 Bb7 20.Bxb7 Rxb7 21.Rfe1 Qf6 22.h4 would have left White with an edge.

chesstouring.com

Again, the plan is to double rooks, as well as to enjoy the superior-placed knight.

10.a4!



White doesn't want to allow Black easy counterplay, so clamps down on ...b5.

10...Ne8

Black's most common move, again rerouting the knight to c7. Once again, he has also tried a great number of alternatives, so we'll focus on the most important and instructive examples:

a) 10...Bd7 11.Be3 often transposes after 11...Ne8. Black has also tried 11...Qc8 (Richard once tried to improvise with 11...Nb4!?, but after 12.Rc1!? White is ready for d4, and not 12.d4?! cxd4 13.Nxd4 Qc8 with the familiar double-attack on c4 and h3) 12.Kh2 and only then 12...Ne8 when 13.Rc1! prepared d4 in Williams-Lappage, Portsmouth 2004, and gave White an edge with 13...Nd4 14.Nd5 Qd8 15.Nxd4! cxd4 16.Bg5 f6 17.Bd2

chesstouring.com

a5 when 18.c5! would have been very strong, and if 18...dxc5 19.Qb3 Kh8 20.Nb6, regaining the pawn with interest.

b) 10...b6!? 11.Be3 e6 is a bit like a Hedgehog when White can either manoeuvre or seize the bull by the horns with 12.d4 when 12...cxd4 13.Nxd4 Bb7? (13...Na5 improves, but 14.b3 Bb7 15.Rb1 retains control, since Black's main pawn break 15...d5? can be met by the powerful retreat 16.cxd5 exd5 17.Nde2, counterattacking against b6) 14.Nxc6 Bxc6 15.e5! Bxg2 16.exf6 Bxf1 17.fxg7 Kxg7 18.Qxf1 is superb for White, who will be quick to seize a near-deadly initiative after, say, Rd1 and Ne4.

c) 10...Nd7 11.Be3 Nd4 12.Rb1 sees a familiar theme once again and after 12...b6 13.b4 Bb7 in Piorun-Iljiushenok, St. Petersburg 2018, White might have gone 14.Qd2 e6 15.Bh6, intending to exchange bishops ahead of pushing the f-pawn, while not worrying about exchanges with 15...Nxe2+ 16.Nxe2 cxb4 17.Bxg7 Kxg7 18.Rxb4, in view of lines like 18...Bc6 19.Nd4 Qc7 20.h4, maintaining control and beginning to probe on the kingside.

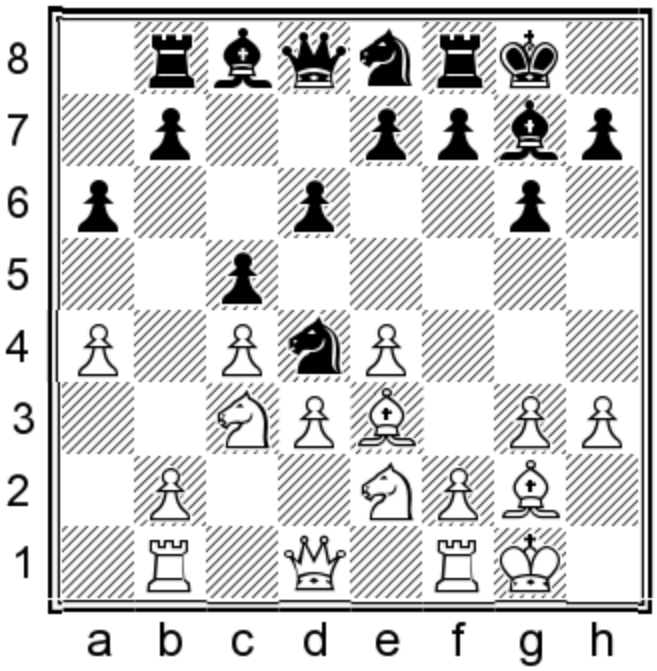
d) 10...Nd4 might also be met by 11.Rb1 followed by our standard b4 advance, although here White can also consider 11.Nxd4 cxd4 12.Nd5!? Nxd5 13.exd5 intending to meet any advance of the e-pawn with an en passant capture, opening up the line of sight of our favourite bishop on g2.

11.Be3 Nc7

Black's main move by some margin, although it may not be best:

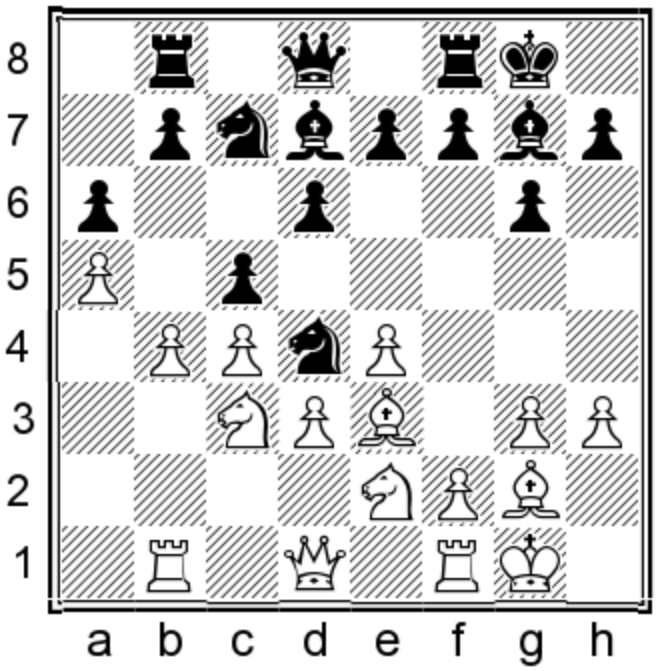
a) 11...Nd4 is the second most common choice, but after 12.Rb1! (yes, you guessed it!), White has good chances of emerging with an edge:

chesstouring.com



a1) 12...Nc7 13.b4 Bd7 (Black can easily lose control of the centre in this line as White's f-pawn advances, as was the case after 13...Nce6 14.bxc5 Nxe2+ 15.Nxe2 dxc5 16.f4 Nd4 17.e5 with a very pleasant edge and long-term advantage for White after 17...f6 18.Nxd4 cxd4 19.exf6! Bxf6 20.Bd2 in Kosten-Bijaoui, Montpellier 2006, or 13...b6 14.bxc5 dxc5 15.f4 Nxe2+ 16.Nxe2 Ne6 17.e5, again with a handy space advantage in Alekseev-Bykov, Yaroslavl 2018, so you might wonder about 13...b5!?, which has been extremely rare, but just about seems to work for Black: 14.axb5 axb5 15.bxc5 dxc5 16.Nxb5 Ncxb5 17.cxb5 Bd7 18.Nc3 Nxb5 19.Na4! when in Romero Holmes-Atakisi, Istanbul 2003, 19...Nd4! 20.Rxb8 Qxb8 21.Nxc5 Bb5 22.Qd2 would have restricted White to just a small advantage) 14.a5! grabs some handy space.

chesstouring.com

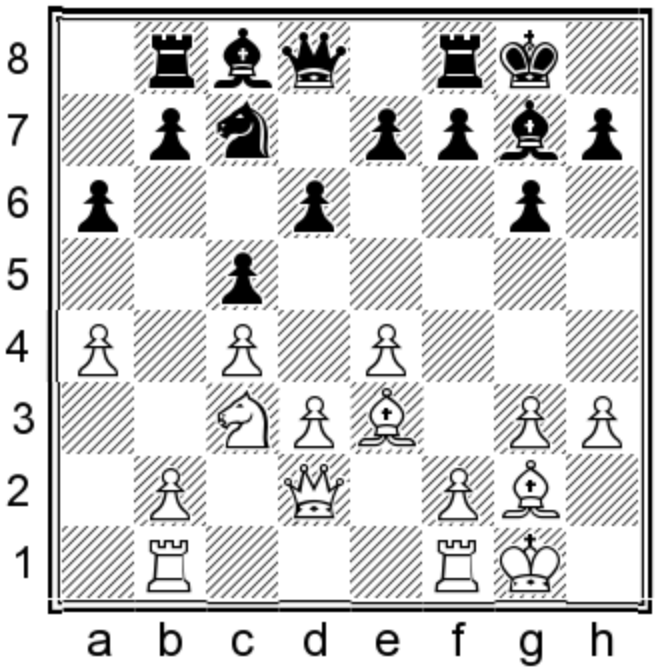


This is based on the point 14...Nce6 15.Nd5 when 15...Nxe2+ 16.Qxe2 Bc6 (16...cxb4? 17.Bb6 Qe8 18.f4 would not be good news for Black's congested pieces) 17.Qa2 (overprotecting the clamping pawn on a5) 17...Nd4 18.bxc5 dxc5 was Navara-Cerveny, Czech League 2008. Here White might have begun to probe with 19.Bf4!? e5 20.Be3, swapping two tempi to force weaknesses. Now any exchange on d5 would leave White with a protected passed pawn and 20...f5 21.exf5! gxf5 22.Qa3 sees him taking control, as shown by 22...Qd6 23.Bxd4 exd4 24.Qb2 when he will look to double on the e-file and expand with f4.

a2) 12...Bd7 13.b4 Nxe2+ 14.Nxe2 cxb4 15.Rxb4 b5!? saw Black trying to break free in Williams-D.Bekker Jensen, Witley 1999, but there's no need to worry: the position isn't about to fizzle out to a draw. White can even retain the tension with 16.Qb3!? Nc7 17.Rb1 when 17...Qc8 18.h4 bxc4 19.dxc4 Rxb4 20.Qxb4 leaves him slightly for choice, being in control of the only open file and with the idea of Nc3(or Nf4)-d5.

a3) 12...Nxe2+ 13.Qxe2! (Black is hoping for 13.Nxe2 b5, although even here he is yet to fully equalise after 14.axb5 axb5 15.cxb5 Rxb5 16.d4) 13...Nc7 14.Qd2 is a notable plan.

chesstouring.com



White has kept the knight on c3 at the expense of losing a tempo with the queen, still has all of the b4, d4 and f4-f5 advances at his disposal and is ready to meet 14...b5?! with 15.b4! bxc4 (15...cxb4 16.Rxb4 Bd7 17.Rfb1 is another important point; yes, Black can break the pin with 17...a5, but after 18.Rxb5! Nxb5 19.axb5 White has superb compensation for the exchange; suddenly Black lacks any play and White can play to win the a-pawn or even to probe on the kingside with h4-h5) 16.bxc5 Rb3?! (even 16...Rxb1 17.Rxb1 dxc5 18.dxc4 looks quite pleasant for White, and if 18...Qxd2 19.Bxd2 Ne6 20.Nd5) 17.Rxb3 cxb3 18.c6 Be6 19.Nd5 Bxd5 20.exd5, which left White with much the more powerful passed pawn in Flores-Escalante Ramirez, Montevideo 2018.

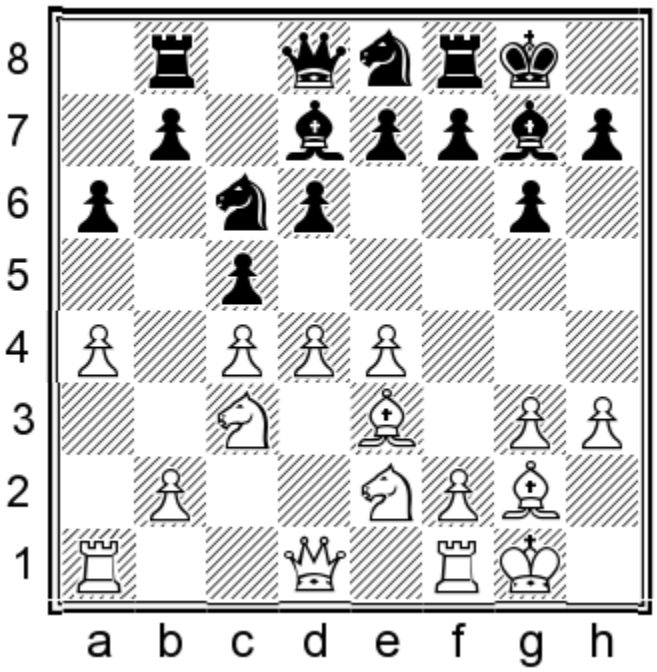
a4) A young Simon faced 12...b6 13.b4 Bd7 on a couple of occasions, eventually concluding that 14.b5! was just a useful gain of space, as occurred in Brooks-Buraschi, Correspondence Olympiad 2002, where 14...Nc7 15.Kh2 a5 16.Qd2 f5 17.Rbe1 (calmly continuing to improve all the pieces) 17...Nb3 18.Qd1 Nd4 19.f4 e6 20.Bf2! (to facilitate Nxd4) 20...Nxe2 21.Nxe2 e5 22.exf5! gxf5 23.Ng1! Qf6 24.Nf3 Rbe8 25.Be3 left Black being outplayed in instructive fashion. After 25...Ne6 26.fxe5 dxe5

chesstouring.com

27.Bc1! Black's hanging pawns on e5 and f5 are definitely much more of a weakness than a strength.

a5) Finally, and much more recently, 12...b5?! 13.cxb5 axb5 14.Bxd4 cxd4 15.Nxb5 Qb6?! 16.b4! Nc7 17.Na3 Na6 18.Nc4 already left Simon well on the way to victory with such trumps on the queenside in Williams-Maroroa, British Championship, Llandudno 2017.

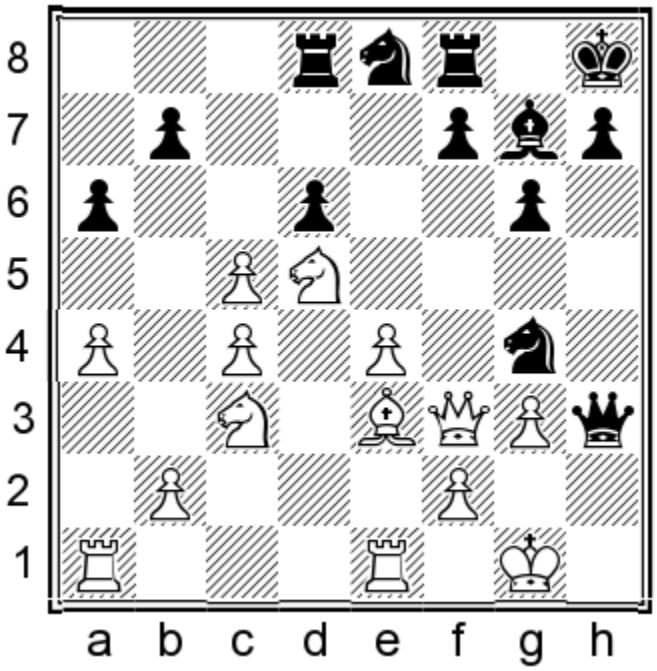
b) It should not come as a surprise to learn that we meet 11...Bd7 with 12.d4!, looking to open the position with Black's knight still on e8.



After 12...cxd4 13.Nxd4 Qc8?! (critical, but very risky; 13...Nxd4 14.Bxd4 is also a very pleasant version of a Maroczy, as we'll see in Williams-Critelli, Internet (blitz) 2003) 14.Nd5! (this powerful leap justifies White's play) 14...Bxd4 (14...Bxh3? 15.Nxc6! would be ruinous for Black) 15.Bxd4 Bxh3 (and not, of course, 15...Nxd4?? 16.Nxe7+) 16.Bc3! (preserving a key bishop – and on what a fine diagonal!) 16...f6 17.f4 Bxg2 18.Kxg2 e6 was Williams-Emms, British Championship, Street 2000. Now 19.Nb6!? Qc7 20.a5 might be best, keeping Black bottled up (he's a very long way from playing ...d5), while preparing to build up with something like Qf3, Rad1, Rh1 and maybe then g4.

chesstouring.com

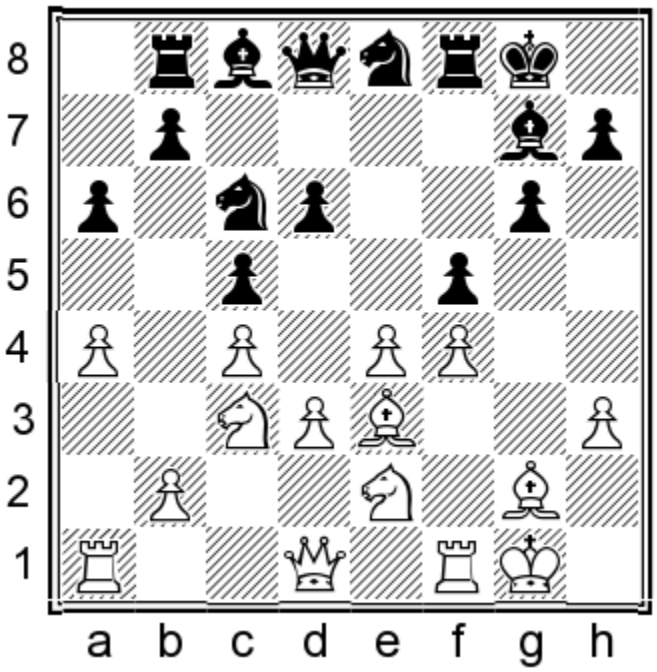
Here the exchange on d4 is far from forced, but 12...b6 13.f4 Nc7 is quite nice for White, who might even seize further space with 14.f5!?. However, 12...Qc8!? isn't totally ridiculous and after 13.dxc5 Bxh3 14.Bxh3 Qxh3 15.Nf4! Qc8 16.Nfd5 Black might try 16...Qh3!? (16...e6 17.Nb6 Qc7 18.cxd6 Nxd6 19.c5 left White obtaining a bind in Bu Xiangzhi-Ye Jiangchuan, Jinan 2005) 17.Re1 (17.Nf4 Qc8 would only repeat moves) 17...Rd8 (and not 17...e6?? 18.Nf4 Qh6 19.Nxe6) 18.Qe2 Ne5 when the position remains quite tense and unclear after 19.Nxe7+ Kh8 20.Ned5 Ng4 21.Qf3.



At least White is never going to get mated and 21...Ne5 22.Qg2 Qxg2+ 23.Kxg2 Nxc4 24.Rad1! even gives him good chances of obtaining a strong initiative, again in large part due to Black still having a knight on e8.

c) 11...e5!? is Mark Hebden's old favourite, best met by 12.f4. Black really has to go 12...exf4 (12...Nc7?! 13.f5 Nd4 14.g4 would just give White everything he could wish for on the kingside) 13.gxf4 f5, holding White up on the kingside.

chesstouring.com



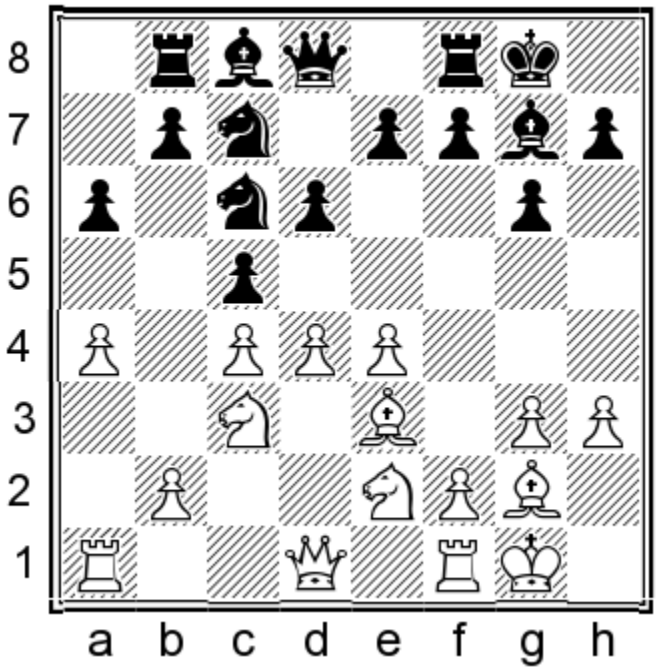
Here 14.Qd2 (14.d4!? cxd4 15.Nxd4 is also possible, but feels a little loose to us; never forget that pawns can't move backwards!) 14...Nd4 15.Rae1 Nc7 16.b4 Nce6?! (16...cxb4? 17.Bxd4 bxc3 18.Bxc3 Bxc3 19.Qxc3 would give White ideal central control and 16...Nxe2+?! 17.Nxe2 cxb4 18.Qxb4 is also quite nice, but 16...b6! improves when 17.Kh2!? Bb7 18.bxc5 bxc5 19.Rb1 is quite unclear, but White does at least have ideas of Ng3 and a well-timed Nd5) 17.bxc5 dxc5 18.e5! opened up the bishop on g7, while closing down the one on g7 to leave White with an edge in Peacock-Hebden, Liverpool 2008.

d) Finally, 11...b5!? might look impossible and has unsurprisingly been pretty rare, but is actually playable: 12.axb5 axb5 13.Nxb5 (13.cxb5!? Nd4 14.Rb1 might also be explored, hoping for 14...Nxb5?! 15.Nxb5 Rxb5 16.d4 with a pull) 13...Nc7 14.Nec3 was even agreed drawn in Alekseev-Demchenko, Fagernes 2019. Black will, of course, regain his pawn, but 14...Nxb5 15.Nxb5 Bxb2 16.Rb1 Bg7 is not the end of the world for White, who might go 17.f4, introducing ideas of e5, as well as of f5, and hoping to keep the knight on b5 for as long as possible to reduce Black's counterplay.

Returning to 11...Nc7:

chesstouring.com

12.d4



And why not?

12...cxd4

Invariably played.

Instead, 12...Na5 13.b3 Ne6 14.Rb1 keeps control and after 14...Bd7 in Taimanov-Suetin, Riga 1954, 15.dxc5!? dxc5 16.Qd2 would have been a risk-free route to a pleasant edge, intending Rfd1 or f4-f5, as well as 16...Bc6 17.Nd5 b5 18.axb5 axb5 19.Qd3, when the knight on a5 continues to make a slightly strange impression.

Needless to say, there's also 12...b6 once again, but White has a few options here, including the direct 13.f4 (13.d5 Ne5 14.b3 b5 15.f4 Nd7 should give Black enough counterplay in a Four Pawns Attack-type position) 13...cxd4 14.Nxd4 Bd7?! (14...Nxd4 15.Bxd4 e5! 16.Be3 exf4 17.gxf4 f5 18.Bd4 is only a touch better for White), when in M.David-Yermolinsky, Las Vegas 1993, 15.f5! would have been strong, and if 15...Nxd4 (15...Ne5 16.Qe2 keeps Black bottled up) 16.Bxd4 b5 17.cxb5

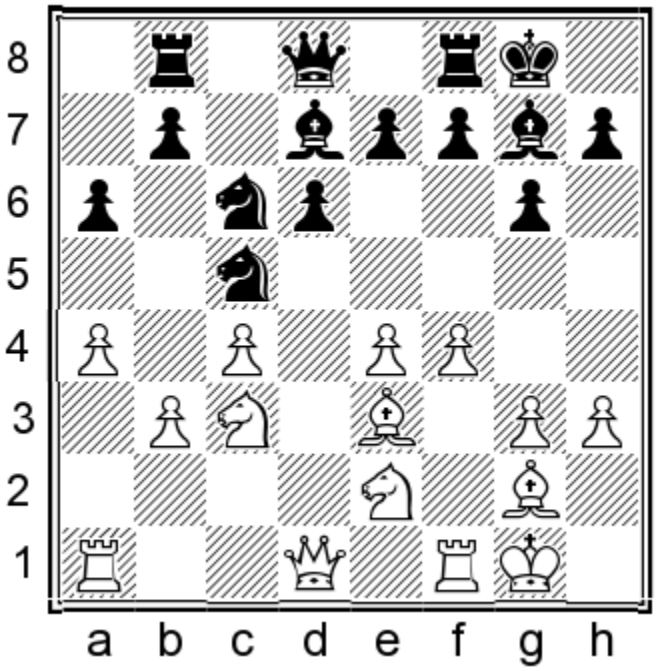
chesstouring.com

axb5 18.a5! b4 19.Bxg7 Kxg7 20.Qd4+ Kg8 21.Nd1 when White is clearly better thanks to his a-pawn, Black's misplaced knight and even the possibility of Ne3-g4.

13.Nxd4 Ne6

Black's main move by some margin, continuing to fight for control of d4.

After 13...Bd7 it shouldn't be a surprise that we quite like 14.f4!?, and if 14...Ne6 15.Nde2 Nc5 16.b3.

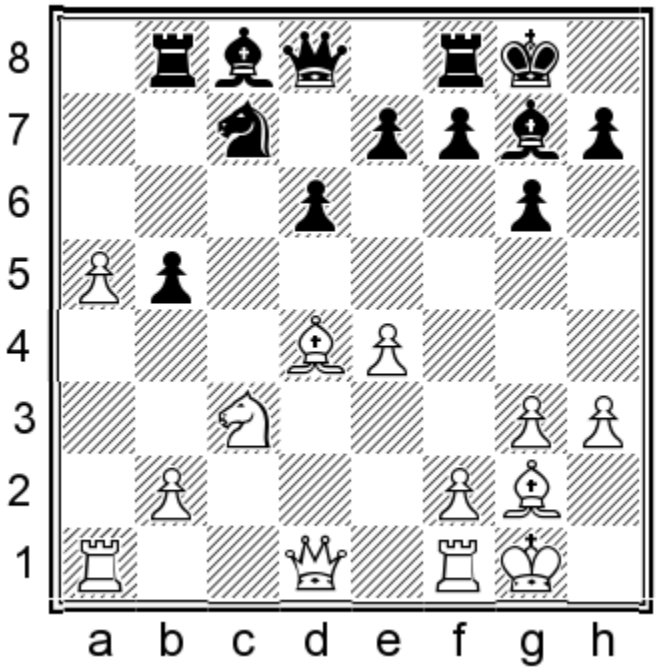


This is a useful prophylactic move, designed so that c4 won't hang after f5 Ne5. Black can try 16...Qa5, but 17.Rc1 Nb4 18.Rb1! stays alert and keeps control. White is finally ready to push the f-pawn, unless Black prefers to allow 18...Ncd3 (18...b5? 19.Bxc5 wins a piece) 19.Nd5 Nxd5 20.exd5 Nb4 21.Qd2 Bf5 22.Rbc1 when not only is g4 coming, but also c5 and Black is just in some trouble.

Having seen how hard it can be for Black to free his position, you might wonder about the direct 13...Nxd4 14.Bxd4 b5?! (or 14...Bxd4 15.Qxd4 b5?! 16.cxb5 axb5 17.a5! b4 18.Nd5 Nxd5 19.exd5 when the a-pawn was a very handy asset and White was set to invade down the c-file, going on to

chesstouring.com

score a small upset in J.Grant-Zueger, Istanbul 2003) 15.cxb5 axb5, but here too 16.a5! is simple and strong.



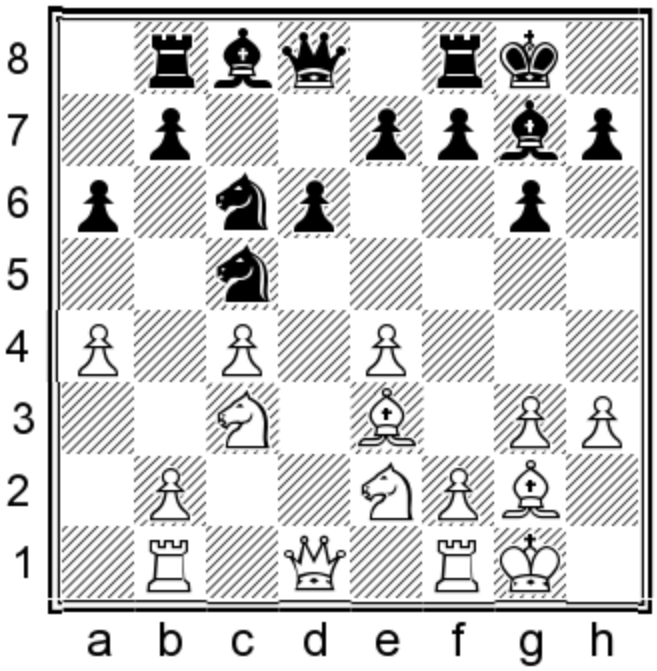
Indeed, after 16...b4 17.Bxg7 Kxg7 18.Nd5 Ba6 19.Re1 Nxd5 20.exd5 Qd7 21.Re4! Rfc8 22.Qe1 Black already gave up in Narciso Dublan-Granero Roca, Cala Galdana 1999. Talk about a graphic illustration of the potential weakness of both e7 and b4 in this Dragon-type structure.

14.Nde2!

Keeping pieces on and so Black a bit cramped.

14...Nc5 15.Rb1!

chesstouring.com



We also like this move, stepping off the long diagonal, menacing b4 and provoking Black's next.

15...Nb4

Otherwise, 15...a5 16.b3 Bd7 17.Qd2 Nb4 18.f4 b6 left Black a little slow on counterplay in Privara-Muneret, World Correspondence Championship 2013, where White might have begun to up the ante with 19.g4!, while 15...b6 16.b3 (ever a useful prophylactic move; now Qd2 can no longer be hit by ...Nb3) 16...a5 17.Qd2 Bd7 18.Bh6 (or even 18.g4!? and then f4) 18...Bxh6 19.Qxh6 f6! 20.Qe3 left Britain's leading correspondence player with a pleasant edge in R.Hall-N.Robson, correspondence 2014. Obviously f4 is one plan; Nb5 and Rbd1 another way to improve White's pieces.

16.b3 Bd7

16...f5?! is just the sort of move a frustrated black player might lash out with. Obviously he wants to exploit the rook's position on b1, but White can maintain control and more with 17.Nd5!, and if 17...Nxd5?! 18.exd5

chesstouring.com

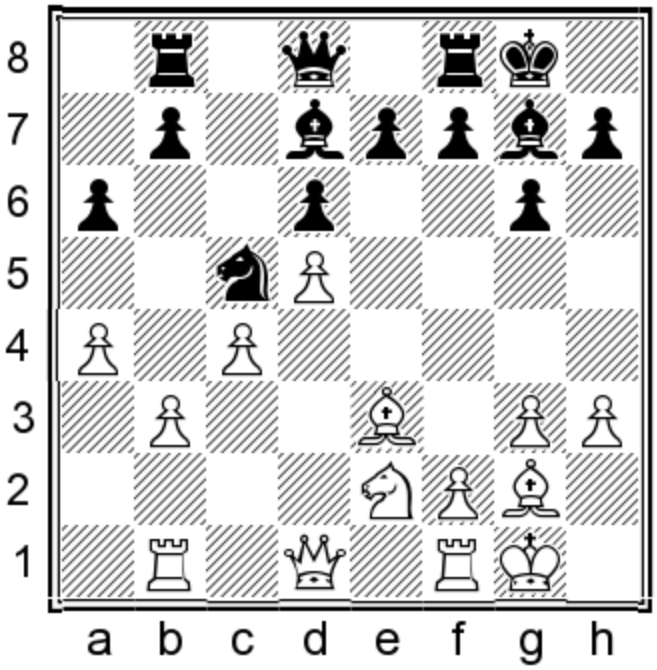
Ne4 19.Rc1 followed by Nd4 with a huge positional advantage thanks to that hole on e6.

17.Nd5!

Favourably transforming the structure.

17.Qd2 b6 18.Bd4 is also a pleasant edge for White should you prefer to angle for an f4 and kingside attack plan.

17...Nxd5 18.exd5



The right way to recapture, and not 18.cxd5? b5 when Black breaks free.

18...Qc8

A *Stockfish* suggestion. The strong Scottish amateur and husband of GM Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant, Jonathan Grant, has twice had the pleasure of reaching this position as White: 18...b5? 19.axb5 axb5 20.b4! Na4 21.c5! already saw him powering through in Grant-F.Zhang, Reykjavik 2014, while 18...Bf5 19.Rc1 Nd3 20.Rc2 Nb4?! 21.Rd2 b5?! 22.axb5 axb5 23.c5!

chesstouring.com

dxc5 24.Bxc5 Na6 25.Be3 Qa5 26.Nd4 was but more of the same and against a teenage grandmaster in Grant-Nyzhnyk, Bad Wiessee 2011.

19.Kh2!?

This entails an exchange sacrifice, but we prefer it to 19.g4 f5 20.f3, as White is going to obtain a fair amount of compensation.

19...Bf5

Seemingly spelling trouble for the white rook...

20.Rc1 Bb2 21.Nd4!

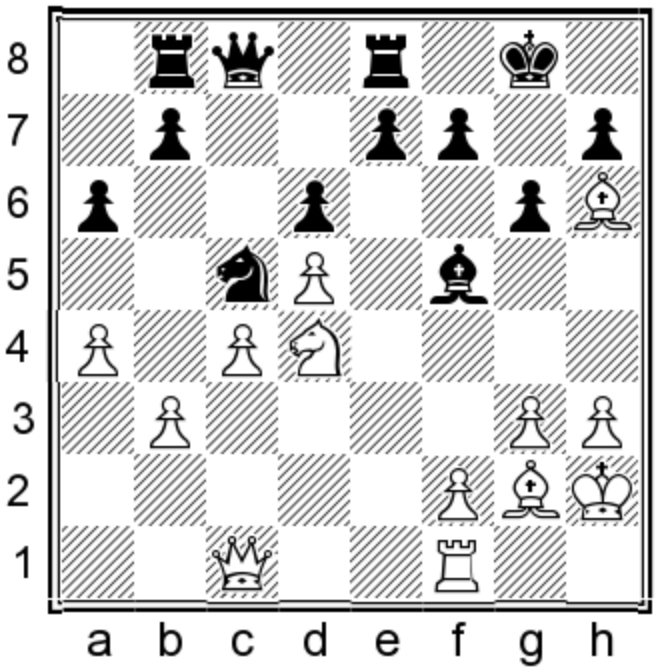
...But allowing White to reveal the point behind his play.

21...Bxc1

21...Be4 22.f3! Bd3 23.Re1 Bxc1 24.Bxc1 also looks like excellent compensation: e7 is attacked, Bb2 will get on to a key diagonal, and Black's bishop is rather floating in mid-air.

22.Qxc1 Re8 23.Bh6

chesstouring.com



White simply intends Qc3 and has excellent play for the exchange, partly because it's far from easy for Black to liberate his position.

23...f6

Settling for a grim defence.

Instead, 23...e6? 24.dxe6 Bxe6 25.Qc3 would just spell huge trouble down the long diagonal, and 23...b5!? 24.axb5 axb5 25.Nxb5 Ra8 26.Qc3 doesn't give Black all that much for the jettisoned pawn.

24.Qe3!?

A brave choice, but if Black does nothing now White will just go g4 followed by f4.

24...e5

Black desperately tries to break out.

25.dxe6 Bxe6

chesstouring.com

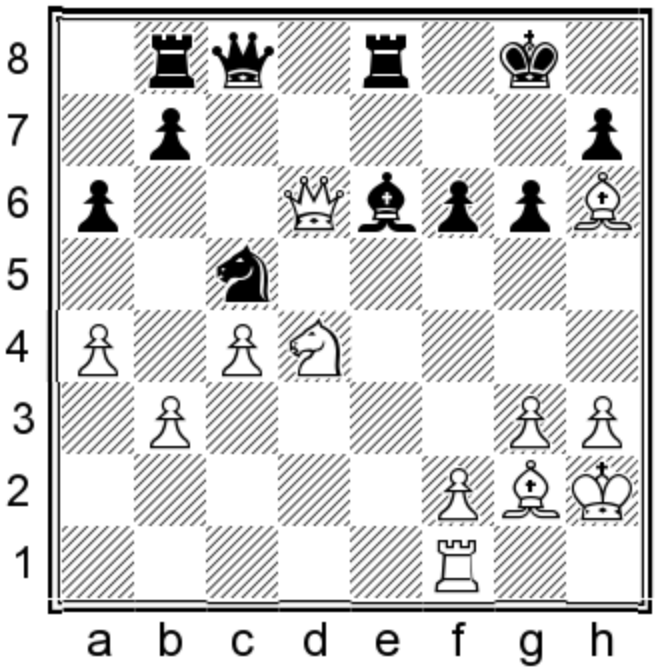
25...Nxe6? 26.Nxf5 gxf5 27.Qd3 would be an extremely disgusting structure for Black and surely lost.

26.Qf3 Bf5

Otherwise, 26...Qd8 27.b4! Nd7 28.Nxe6 Rxe6 29.Qd5 Qe7 30.Re1 Kf7 31.a5! leaves Black badly tied up, and 26...Nd7 27.Nxe6 Rxe6 28.Qd5 Ne5 29.Re1 Kf7 30.Qd2 prepares to wreak havoc with Bd5.

27.Qd5+ Be6 28.Qxd6

White has picked off a pawn, his diagonal-moving creatures still rule the roost and he clearly has too much for the exchange.



Game 11

D.Kokarev-K.Popov

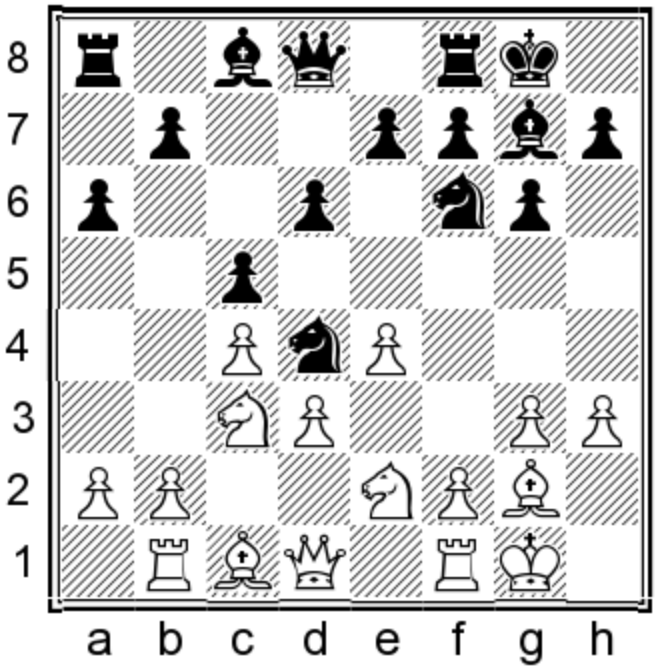
Chigorin Memorial, St. Petersburg 2014

1.g3

chesstouring.com

Our move order would be 1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.Nge2 c5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d3, transposing. Note too that plenty of move orders can transpose to this important variation where the Symmetrical English, 1.c4 1...c5, meets the King's Indian. For instance, 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.e4 d6 6.Nge2 Nf6 7.d3 0-0 8.0-0 and we're again back in our main line.

1.g3 Nf6 2.Bg2 g6 3.c4 Bg7 4.Nc3 d6 5.e4 0-0 6.Nge2 c5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d3 a6 9.h3 Nd4 10.Rb1!



The standard response to an early knight invasion on d4.

10...Rb8 11.b4 Nxe2+

Here 11...b6 isn't so super-solid for Black, as White can go 12.bxc5 dxc5 13.Nxd4 cxd4 (or 13...Qxd4 14.Nd5, threatening to trap the queen with Bb2 and leaving White somewhat for choice after 14...Nxd5 15.exd5 Bf5 16.Rb3 followed by Bb2 or Bf4) 14.Nd5. Black doesn't have to give us a handy protected pawn on d5, but 14...Nd7 15.Bf4 is also quite awkward for him, and if 15...e5 (or 15...Ne5 16.c5 b5 17.Bxe5 Bxe5 18.f4 when the

chesstouring.com

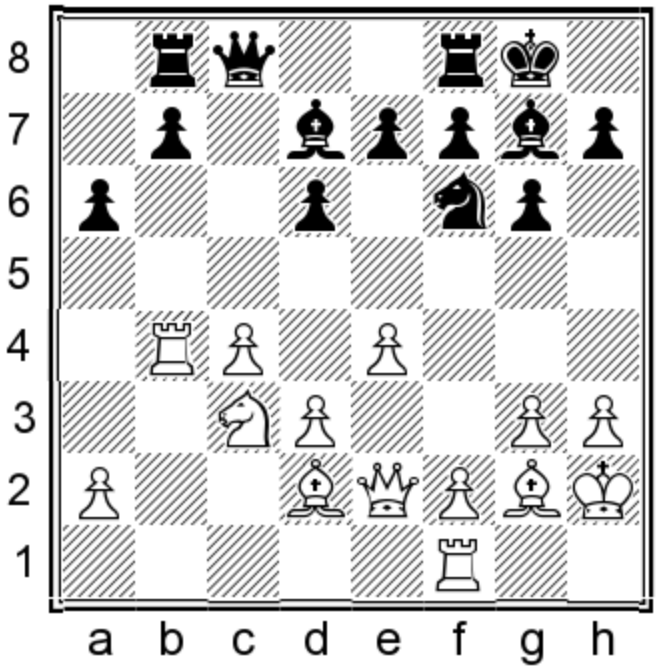
passed c-pawn is quite powerful) 16.Bd2 when White enjoys a fine outpost on d5 and threatens both Bb4 and f4.

12.Qxe2 cxb4?!

This exchange may not look so bad for Black, but rarely works out well for him.

12...Nd7 13.Bd2 b6 (13...b5!? is more ambitious, but White certainly has some pressure on the queenside after 14.cxb5 axb5 15.Rfc1) 14.f4 was a better try, although White must be slightly for choice. His extra space is quite useful and he might bring his knight closer to the kingside by manoeuvring it to e3.

13.Rxb4 Bd7 14.Bd2 Qc8 15.Kh2



The standard way of dealing with the threat against h3. There's no need to advance the g-pawn just yet.

15...Qc5

chesstouring.com

White is also clearly better after 15...b5 16.cxb5 axb5 17.Rc1 Qa6 18.d4. His centre is quite an asset and there's also the simple plan of ganging up on b5, which the a4 break might well help with.

16.Rfb1 b5?

Black had to be brave and undo the damage caused by his last move, returning the queen with 16...Qc7. Even this, though, is quite unpleasant after 17.f4 or even 17.e5! dxe5 18.Rxb7 Rxb7 19.Rxb7, breaking through and leaving Black vulnerable along his second rank and on a6.

17.cxb5

Simple and strong, but here White should have paused and remembered some classic advice. Indeed, there was an even better move: 17.d4!, and if 17...Qxd4 18.cxb5 Qc5 19.b6 with a near-decisive advantage on the queenside.

17...Bxb5 18.Nxb5 Rxb5 19.Rxb5 axb5 20.Be3

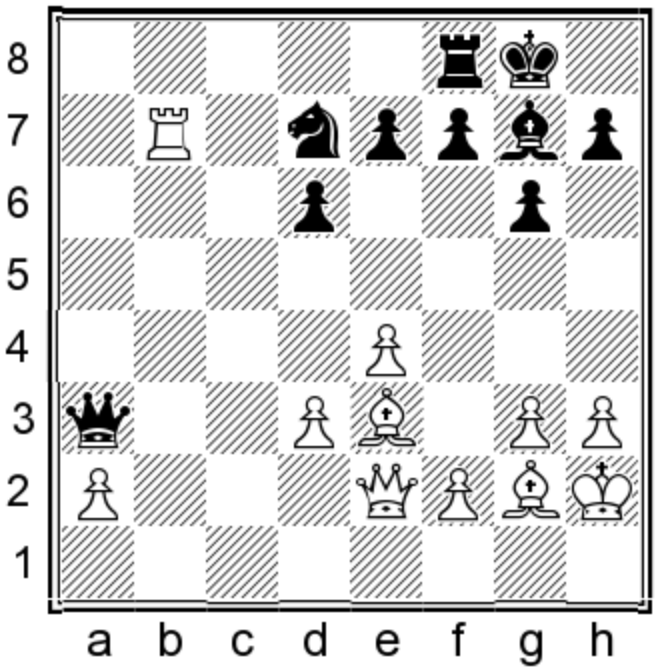
This is still extremely good for White, having the bishop-pair and a clear target on b5.

20...Qa3

There was no good way to hold on to the pawn in view of 20...Qc6? 21.e5! Nd5 22.Rc1 Qb7 23.exd6, and if 23...exd6? 24.Qf3.

21.Rxb5 Nd7 22.Rb7!

chesstouring.com



The Russian Grandmaster has judged that the upcoming exchange will merely increase his advantage.

22...Nc5 23.Rxe7 Nxd3 24.Qd2!

Reminding Black that he now has an isolated pawn on d6, and there's also a certain threat of Ra7.

24...Ra8?

It was better to have to consent to an exchange of queens on c3.

25.e5!

Ever the key advance to look out for when the position opens up and our English bishop can really come into its own.

25...Nxe5 26.Qd5?!

It's not hard to understand why Kokarev wasn't keen on 26.Bxa8 Qxa8, but we're at a loss to explain why he rejected 26.f4, and if 26...Nc4 (or

chesstouring.com

26...Bf8 27.Rc7) 27.Qd5, winning material.

26...Rf8 27.Ra7

The extra pawn has gone, but White should still be winning thanks to his far superior activity and a certain outside passed pawn.

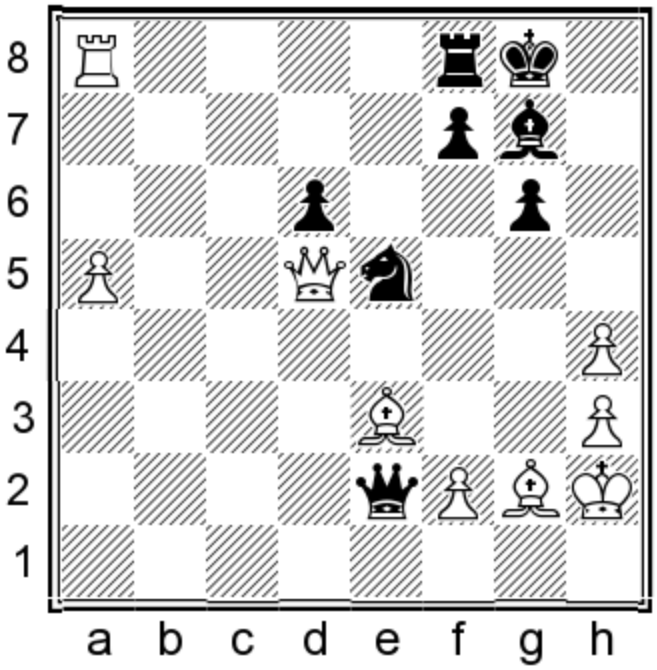
27...Qb2 28.a4

Here we go...

28...h5 29.a5 h4 30.gxh4!?

A very grandmasterly decision, breaking up White's pawns, but most importantly leaving Black without any real play against the white king.

30...Qe2 31.Ra8!



It's time to liquidate ahead of running the a-pawn home.

31...Rxa8 32.Qxa8+ Kh7 33.a6 Nc4

chesstouring.com

The last try, but Kokarev has matters under control.

34.Qf3! Be5+

There’s simply no stopping the pawn after 34...Qxf3 35.Bxf3.

35.Kg1 Qe1+ 36.Bf1 Nxe3 37.fxe3

Opposite-coloured bishops do favour the attacker, but here that’s only going to be White.

37...Qa1

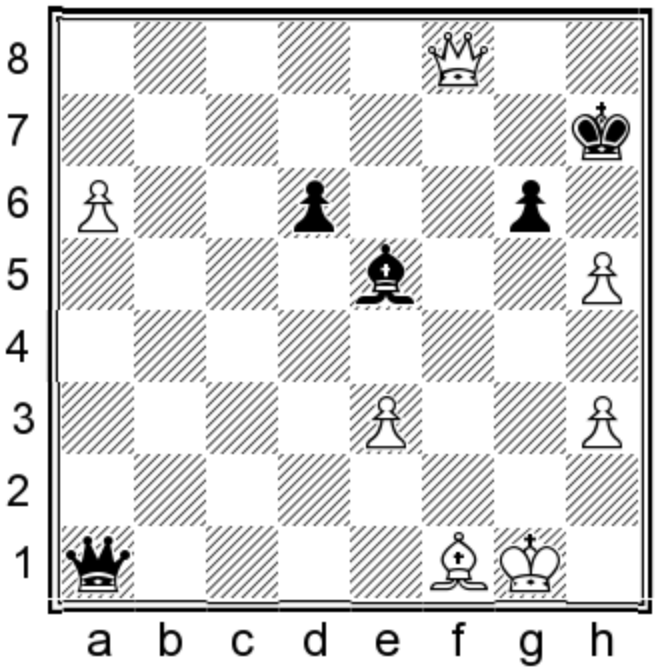
Black is also toast after 37...Qd2 38.Qxf7+ (and not 38.a7?? Qh2 mate) 38...Kh6 39.Qf8+ Kh7 40.Qf2 Qd5 41.a7.

38.Qxf7+ Kh6 39.Qf8+ Kh7

39...Bg7 40.Qf4+ Kh7 41.Qf7 should also be fairly straightforward: for example, 41...Qa3 42.a7! Qxe3+ 43.Kh1 Qe4+ 44.Bg2 Qe1+ 45.Qf1 and the pawn will queen.

40.h5! 1-0

chesstouring.com



Black had seen enough, but might have allowed the pretty finish 40...gxh5 41.a7! Qxa7 42.Bd3 mate.

Game 12
S.Williams-E.Kahn
Budapest 1994

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.Nge2 c5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d3 Ne8 9.Be3

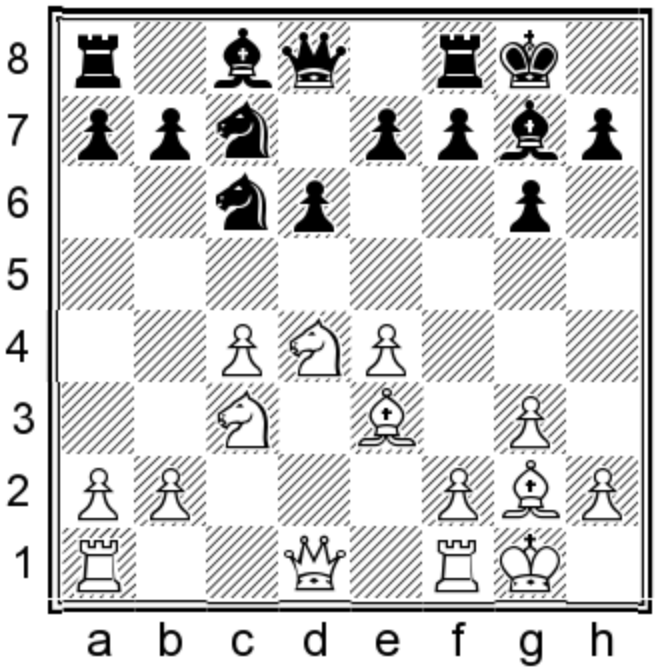
A quick reminder that with the knight no longer on f6, there's no need for 9.h3.

9...Nc7 10.d4

Just in time before the black knight reaches e6.

10...cxd4 11.Nxd4

chesstouring.com

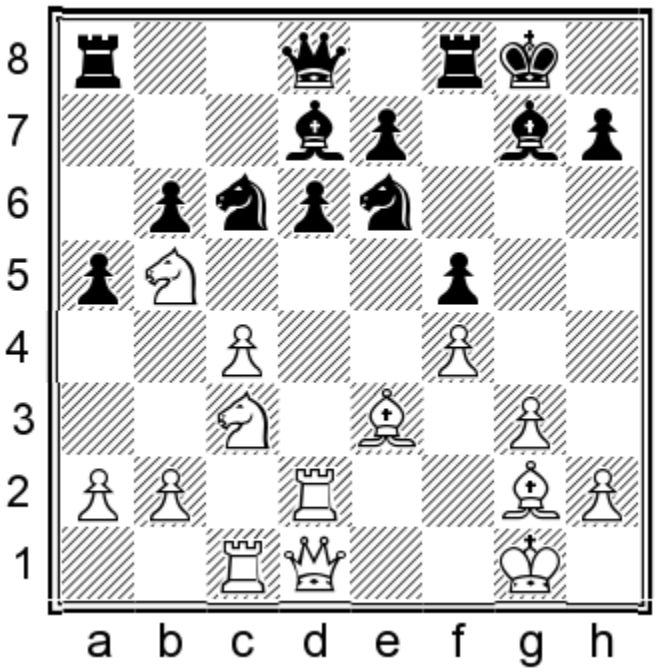


11...Ne6

Challenging for control of d4. Black has also tried:

a) 11...Bd7 12.f4!? is ambitious, but also justified with Black low on counterplay. He tried to fight back with 12...a5 (or 12...Nxd4 13.Bxd4 e5!? 14.Be3 exf4 15.gxf4 when d6 is weak and White also has ideas of f5) 13.Ndb5! (by no means the only good move, but often a strong possibility when Black has gone ...a5) 13...Ne6 (Black's problem is that 13...Nxb5? 14.cxb5 Na7 15.a4 leaves him rather cramped, while White has ideas of both e5 and the standard f5 device, likely followed by Nd5 and Bd4) 14.Rc1 f5 in Piorun-Kanarek, Polish Championship, Poznan 2016, but 15.exf5 gxf5 16.Rf2!? b6 17.Rd2 saw White maintain control.

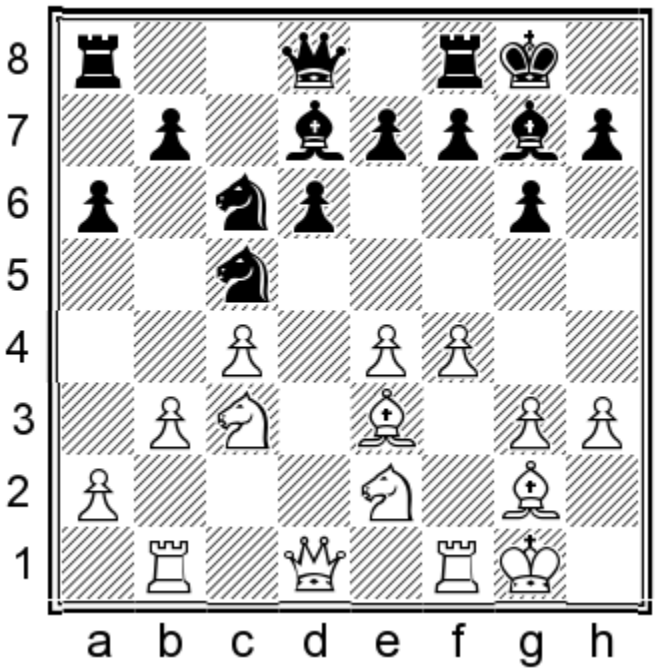
chesstouring.com



Just compare the difference in activity between the two sides here. White might simply increase the pressure with Qe2 and Re1, and the game showed another strong idea: 17...Rb8 18.Nxd6! exd6 19.Rxd6 Ncd4 20.Bxd4 Nxd4 21.Rxd4 Bxd4+ 22.Qxd4 Be6 23.Nd5. Yes, White has lost the exchange, but we really do have to say sacrificed! He has two good pawns for it, a mighty outpost in the centre of the board and much the safer king. Piorun was quick to exploit those assets with 23...h6 24.Re1 Bxd5 25.Bxd5+ Kh7 26.Re6 Re8 27.Rd6! when 27...Re1+ 28.Kg2 Qxd6 29.Bg8+ Rxg8 30.Qxd6 simplified to a winning endgame.

b) Somewhat more active is 11...Ne5 12.b3 Ng4, harrying our pieces. However, it's important to realise that Black is only being mildly annoying in the very short term – he is still rather low on counterplay. Simon calmly regrouped with 13.Bc1 Ne6 14.Nde2! (keeping pieces on, and Black cramped) 14...Nc5 15.h3 Ne5 16.Be3 (back again and we can still ask: where is Black's counterplay?) 16...Bd7 17.Rb1 (getting off the long diagonal to avoid any accidents) 17...a6 18.f4 (yes, once again a certain tactic was lurking: 18.Qd2? Bxh3!) 18...Nc6.

chesstouring.com



Now in Williams-Dovzaltz, Internet (blitz) 2004, 19.b4!? Ne6 20.Nd5 would have left Black getting horribly squashed, with White set to invade on b6, as well as go f5.

Returning to the game's 11...Ne6:

12.Nxe6

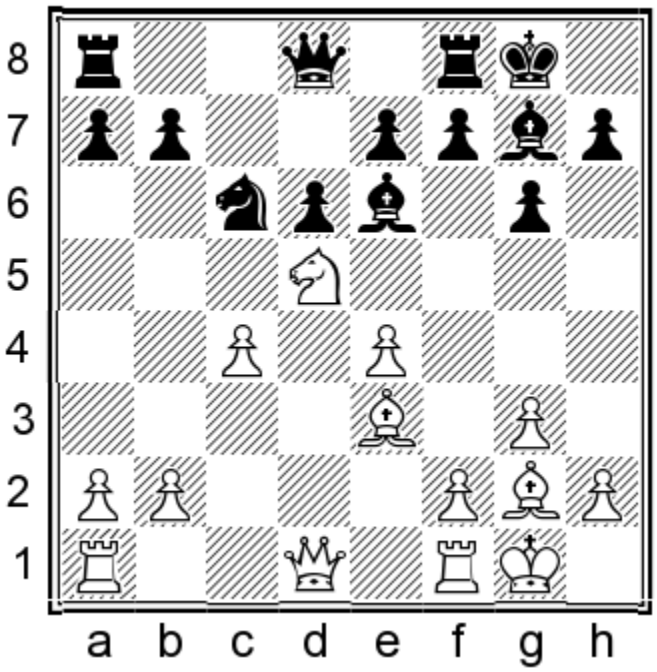
A simple choice, but Simon would later prefer 12.Nde2!, keeping pieces on: for example, 12...Nc5 13.h3 Be6 14.b3 a5 was Nisipeanu-Maze, European Championship, Aix les Bains 2011, when 15.Rb1 would have been sensible, stepping off the long diagonal ahead of pushing f4 and preparing to meet 15...a4 with 16.b4.

12...Bxe6

12...fxe6!? wasn't ridiculous, but after 13.Rc1 (13.h4!? is also very tempting, preparing to soften up Black's kingside with h5) 13...e5 14.f4 White's extra space should give him a small edge.

13.Nd5!?

chesstouring.com



13...Qd7?!

Slow. Now Simon takes control in instructive fashion. Black should have preferred 13...Bxb2 14.Rb1 Bg7 15.Rxb7 Na5! 16.Rb4 (clearly the e-pawn is taboo) 16...Bd7 followed by ...e6, with sufficient counterplay.

14.Qd2 Bh3

Black wants to remove our English bishop, but it isn't all that active here, so White shouldn't mind the exchange.

14...f5!? is another common idea in such positions, but after 15.exf5 Bxf5 16.Rad1 White has control. He needs to be a little careful about his light squares, but can always go f3 or f4 (to prevent ...Ne5), and might play for central pressure with c5: for example, 16...Ne5 17.Qe2 Rf7 (17...Bg4 18.f3 also keeps everything covered) 18.Bd4 Raf8 19.f3! (Black must not be allowed to invade on f3) 19...Bh3?! 20.Bxh3 Qxh3 21.Bxe5! Bxe5?! 22.f4, which keeps Black out on the queenside while making full use of that mighty knight on d5.

chesstouring.com

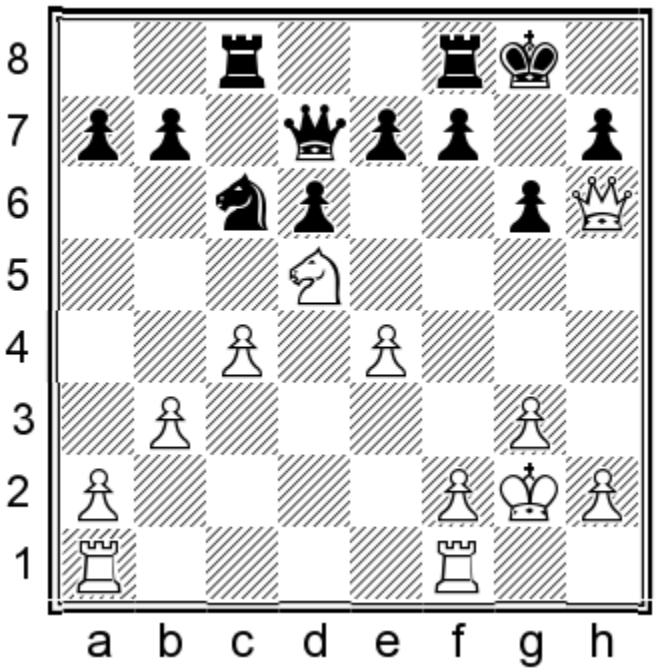
15.Bh6!

White is more than happy to copy Black, the g7-bishop enjoying such an open diagonal.

15...Bxg2 16.Kxg2 Bxh6

Once again, 16...f5!? was likely a better try, leaving Black only a touch worse after 17.Bxg7 Kxg7 18.Rae1.

17.Qxh6 Rac8 18.b3



Rarely a bad prophylactic idea as Simon is happy to maintain control.

18...Qe6

The start of a slightly cumbersome manoeuvre, but it wasn't easy for Black to create any play on the queenside in view of 18...a6? 19.Nb6, and he would like to do something before f4-f5 squashes him.

19.Rae1 Qe5 20.f4!

chesstouring.com

White is beginning to take over.

20...Qg7 21.Qh4

21.Qxg7+ Kxg7 22.g4 would retain an edge, but naturally Simon is after more.

21...f6

A little ugly, but at least it avoids 21...Rfe8 22.e5!, and if 22...dxe5 23.fxe5 Nxe5! 24.Nxe7+.

22.Qg4 Rfd8 23.h4!

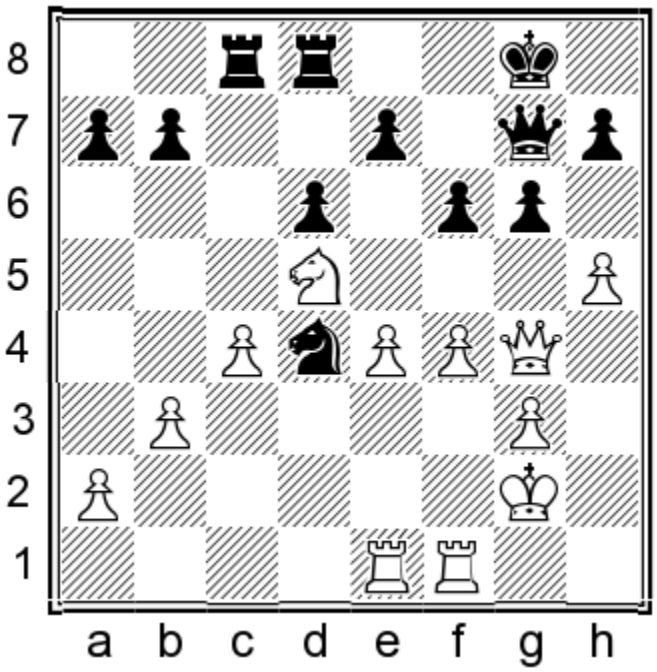
Even as a teenager, Simon knew the power of involving Harry in the attack.

23...Nd4

23...Re8 24.h5 e6 was the alternative, but Black remains under pressure after 25.Ne3 f5 26.Qg5!?, and if 26...fxe4 27.Ng4 when he might well come unstuck on the dark squares.

24.h5

chesstouring.com



The consistent follow-up. There was also 24.e5!? dxe5 25.fxe5 fxe5 26.h5, again leaving Black under some pressure.

24...e6 25.Ne3

Simon would later regret not going 25.h6!, attempting to swap h6 for f6. After 25...Qf7 26.Nc3 White will simply go Rd1 next and return with his knight to d5 after any weakening ...e5.

25...f5

Kahn seizes his only real chance.

26.exf5 Nxf5?!

26...gxf5 was a better try, leaving White only slightly better in the endgame after 27.Qxg7+ Kxg7 28.Rd1 Nc6 29.Rd2.

27.hxg6 hxg6 28.Nxf5?!

chesstouring.com

A little rushed, but a time scramble was brewing. 28.Re2! followed by doubling on the e-file would have left Black suffering.

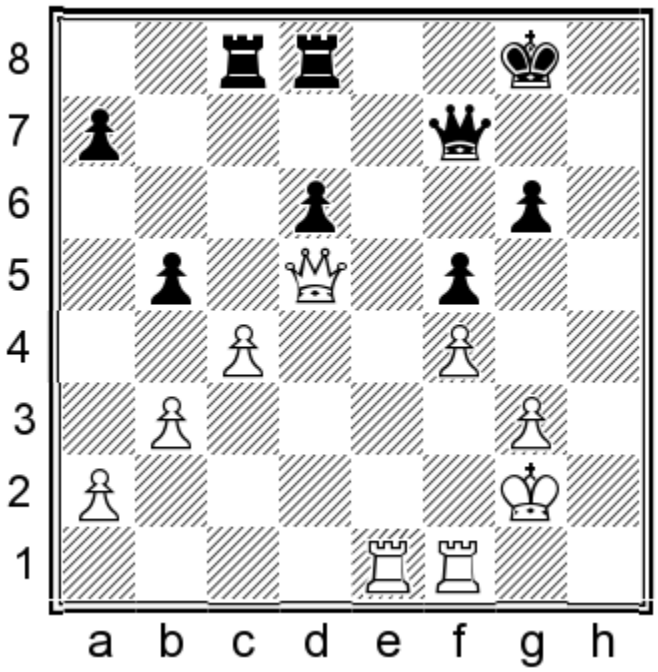
28...exf5 29.Qd1

Threatening to invade with Re6 and forcing Black to find a precise defence.

29...b5?

Kahn fails to find it. 29...d5! would have equalised, since Black regains the pawn after 30.cxd5 Rc5 31.Re5 (or 31.d6 Qd7) 31...Qd7.

30.Qd5+ Qf7



31.Re6!?

Playing for the attack, but there was nothing wrong with 31.Qxf7+ Kxf7 32.cxb5 Rc2+ 33.Rf2, with an extra pawn in the rook endgame.

chesstouring.com

31...bxc4?

Black fails to appreciate how dangerous an attacker Simon is. He simply had to go 31...Rc5! 32.Rxg6+ Kf8.

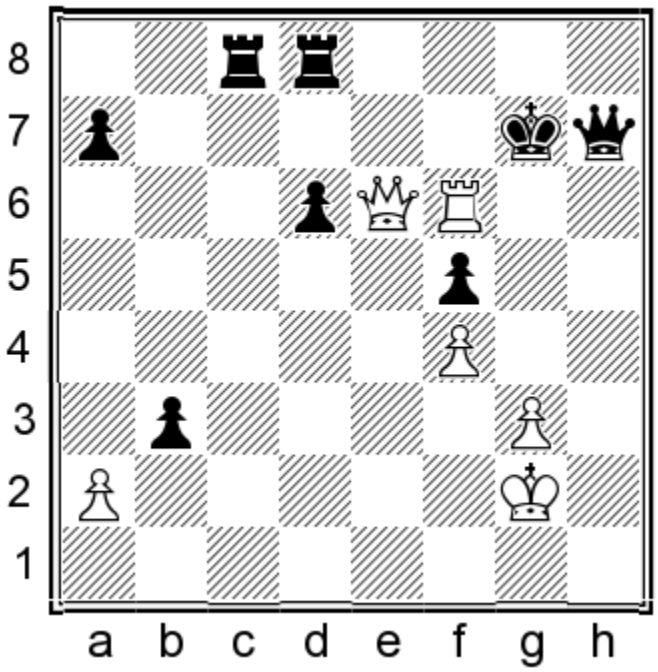
32.Rh1!

Much stronger than 32.Rxg6+? Kf8 when White lacks a single good follow-up.

32...cxb3 33.Rxg6+ Kf8 34.Rh8+ Ke7 35.Rh7?

Complicating the win. A simple path was 35.Qb7+ Rd7 36.Qxc8 Qxg6 37.Qf8+ Ke6 38.Rh6, and the neat 35.Re6+ would actually have led to mate after 35...Qxe6 36.Rh7+.

35...Qxh7 36.Qe6+ Kf8 37.Rf6+ Kg7



Black is going to hide in the corner, but White is still be winning as he can, of course, pick up the queen.

chesstouring.com

38.Rf7+ Kh8 39.Rxh7+ Kxh7 40.Qf7+?

The wrong check. Correct was 40.Qxf5+ Kh8 41.axb3 when White should be winning as he can gradually advance his king and connected kingside passed pawns, all the while keeping the queen as active as possible.

40...Kh8 ½-½

This was a last-round game and here Simon gave up, agreeing a draw having reached the time control. Of course, White can continue to press after 41.axb3 Rf8! 42.Qxa7 Kg8, but Black would have good chances to hold, having retained his f-pawn, which makes it harder for White to create anything on the kingside and also hide from checks in some lines.

Game 13
S.Williams-J.Critelli
Dos Hermanas, Internet (blitz) 2003

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 c5

Black begins with the Symmetrical variation. The King's Indian route into the game would, of course, be 2...g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.Nge2 c5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d3.

3.e4!?

Simon is happy to seize space straight away. We'll return to this line in Chapter Seven, where we also cover 3.g3.

3...d6 4.g3

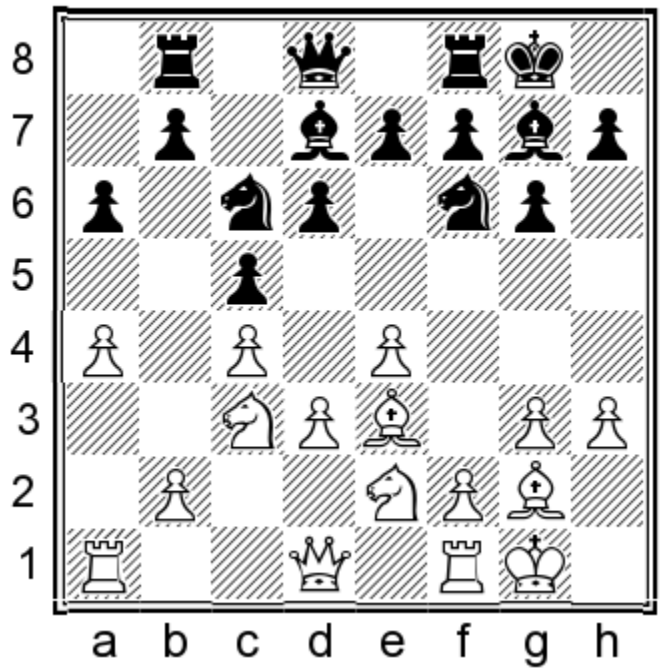
It's high time to fianchetto and head for a Botvinnik formation.

4...g6 5.Bg2 Bg7 6.Nge2 Nc6 7.d3 0-0 8.0-0 Bd7 9.h3

chesstouring.com

The standard preparation for Be3.

9...Rb8 10.Be3 a6 11.a4



White's moves should be almost second nature by now and naturally we don't want to allow Black easy counterplay with ...b5.

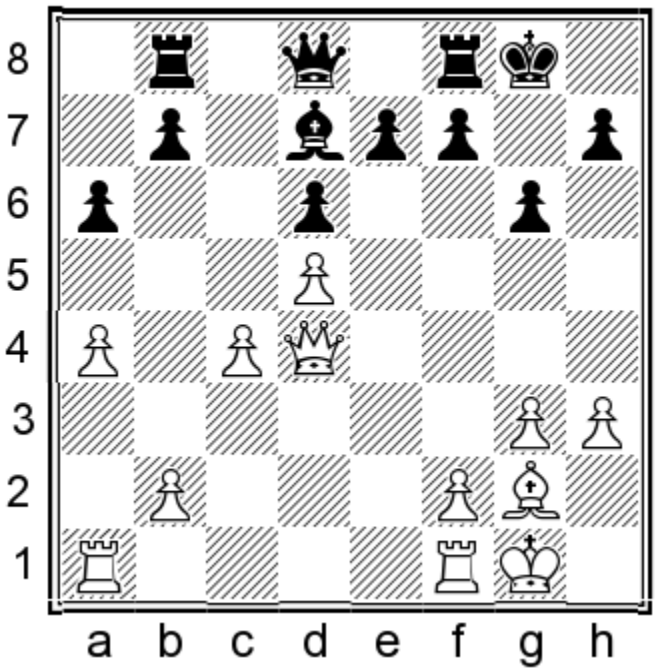
11...Ne8 12.d4

The key break in such positions, setting up the famous Maroczy Bind.

12...cxd4 13.Nxd4 Nxd4 14.Bxd4 Nc7

Another instructive encounter saw 14...Bxd4 15.Qxd4 Nc7 16.Nd5?! (16.Rad1 Rc8 17.b3 Ne6 18.Qe3 would maintain a very pleasant edge; White has ideas of e5, as well as f4-f5) 16...Nxd5? (missing his chance to break out with 16...e5!, and if 17.Qd2 Nxd5 18.Qxd5 Be6 19.Qd3 b5) 17.exd5.

chesstouring.com



This structure has been known since the days of Botvinnik to be generally rather unpleasant for Black. White can pressurise e7 and also has both the c5 break and a kingside attack to play for. Leito-Pitkanen, Helsinki 1996, continued 17...Qa5 (naturally 17...b5? is rather well met by 18.cxb5 axb5 19.a5 and 17...Re8 18.h4!? Qc7 19.h5 would be a standard way to trouble the black king; White might place a fish bone on h6 right in the black king's throat or even open the h-file, then go Bf3, Kg2 and Rh1) 18.Rfe1 Rfe8 19.Re3! Qc5 (19...e5! was still a better try, while 19...b5 would have been met by 20.cxb5 axb5 21.b4 Qd8 22.a5) 20.Qxc5 dxc5 21.a5, which left Black suffering right across the board, with the pressure continuing in the event of 21...b5?! 22.axb6 Rxb6 23.Ra5.

15.f4 Ne6

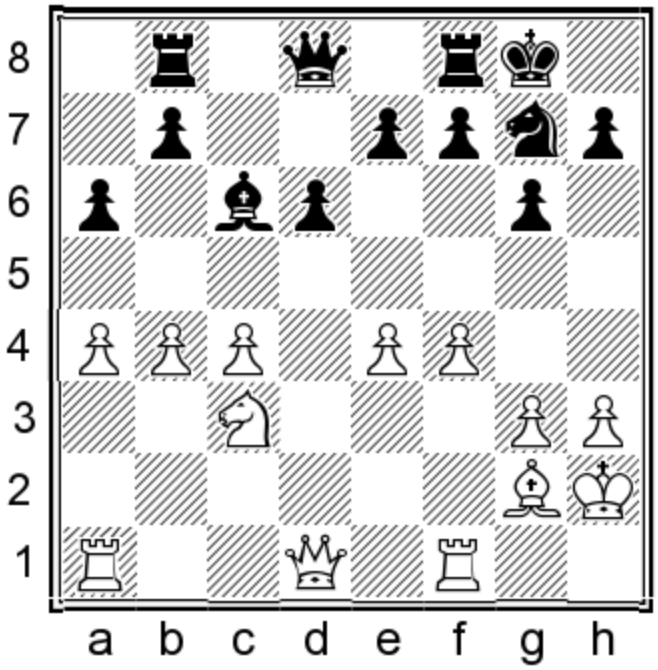
Black's knight simply isn't on a great circuit in these Maroczy positions and he was also squashed after 15...Bxd4+ 16.Qxd4 Ne6 17.Qe3 b5?! 18.cxb5 axb5 19.a5 b4 20.Nd5 in Asendorf-Berberich, Kleve 1999.

16.Bxg7 Nxg7 17.Kh2

chesstouring.com

Tucking the king away out of any danger on the g1-a7 diagonal. 17.Qd4!? Ne6 18.Qe3 Qa5 19.Nd5 would also have been pretty strong.

17...Bc6 18.b4!?



Simon is happy to seize space right across the board.

18...b5?

A common reaction in such positions, but rarely a good one.

Black needed to dig in with 18...b6 when 19.Rc1 a5 20.b5 Bb7 21.Qd2 favours White, despite the fixed pawns on the queenside. That's because f5 is coming or 21...Rc8 22.Nd5 Bxd5 23.cxd5 Rc5 24.Rxc5 dxc5 25.Rd1 with a fairly powerful centre.

19.cxb5 axb5 20.a5!

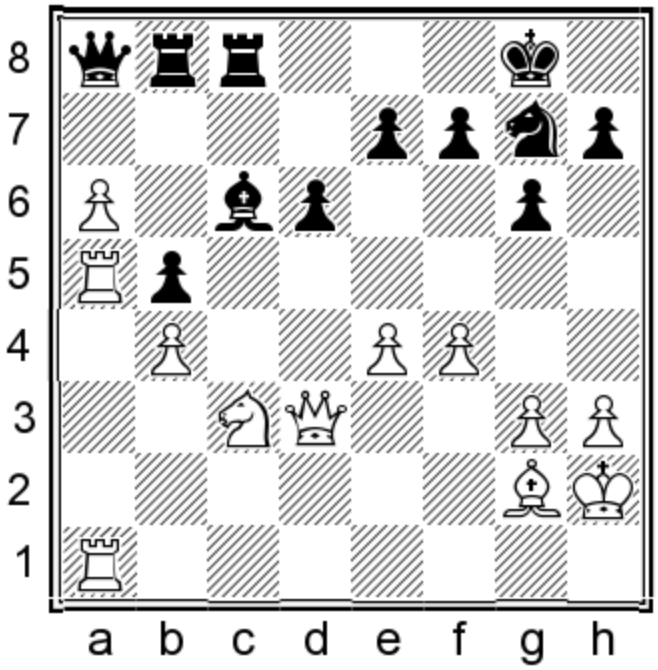
Creating a strong passed pawn. Black is already positionally in serious trouble.

chesstouring.com

20...Qc8 21.Qd3 Qb7 22.a6

22.g4!? was also tempting. Black can try to avoid being squeezed to death with 22...f5, but after 23.a6 Qa7 24.exf5 Bxg2 25.Kxg2 gxf5 26.Ra5 the b5-pawn will fall and likely the game with it.

22...Qa8 23.Ra5 Rfc8 24.Rfa1



That passed a-pawn is a rather useful asset.

24...f5?

As so often, the defender cannot resist a last-ditch bid for freedom. 24...Ne8 25.Nxb5 Bxb5 26.Rxb5 would but have been a slower death.

25.a7! Rb7 26.Nd5

Maintaining full control. We dare not wonder how the queen on a8 was feeling at this stage.

26...fxe4 27.Bxe4 Kf8

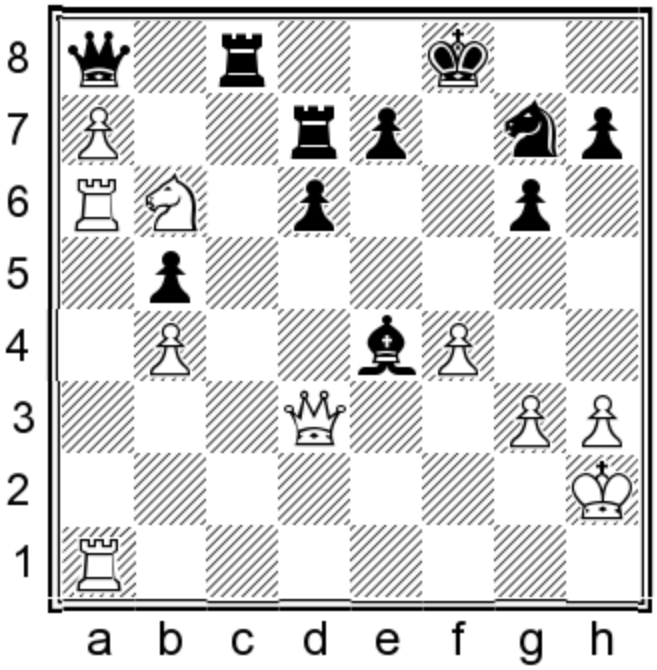
chesstouring.com

27...Ne6 28.Ra6 also leads to a decisive breakthrough on b6.

28.Ra6 Rd7 29.Nb6

Simple and strong, although Simon isn't sure how he rejected 29.Rxc6!, and if 29...Rxc6 30.Nb6 or 29...Qxc6 30.Nxe7.

29...Bxe4



30.Nxa8??

But this might have ruined things. 30.Nxd7+ Kf7 31.Qb3+ Bd5 32.Qb2 was the way to go, and only then a deadly, second Nb6.

30...Bxd3 31.Nb6 Rc2+ 32.Kg1 Rxa7! 33.Rxa7

Suddenly White is only the exchange ahead and with his own king rather exposed. Such sudden turnarounds are, of course, not unknown at blitz...

33...Nf5 34.Re1 Nd4 35.Re3! Be4?

chesstouring.com

Black spots a tactic, but it's a flawed one. Instead, there would have been all to play for after 35...Bf5 36.g4 Be6 or 35...Ne2+ when the game might well end in perpetual check, as with 36.Kf2 Nc3+ 37.Kf3 Be2+ 38.Kg2 Bd3+.

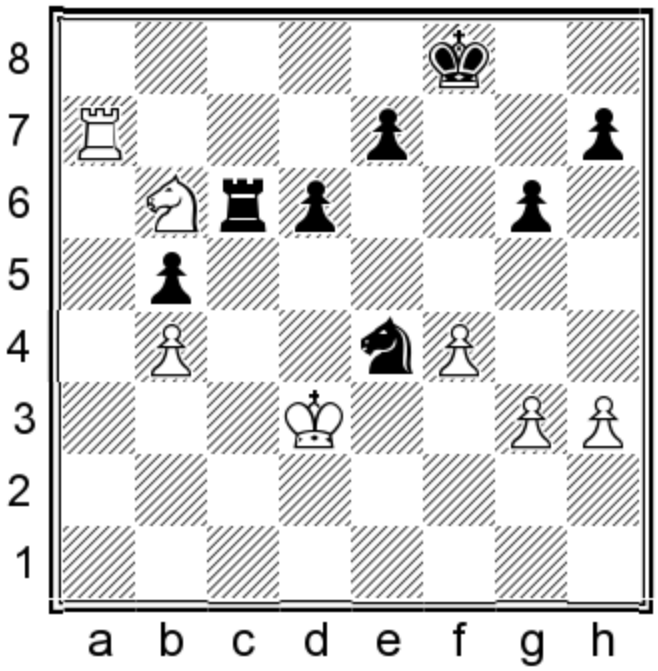
36.Rxe4 Nf3+ 37.Kf1 Nd2+

The point of Black's play, but...

38.Ke2 Nxe4+ 39.Kd3

...is a decisive fork.

39...Rc6



40.Nd7+

This only winning move feels a little harsh on Critelli.

40...Ke8 41.Kxe4 Kd8? 42.Kd5!

chesstouring.com

Granted a reprieve, Simon doesn’t fail to involve the most important piece in the endgame, the king.

42...Rc3 43.Nf8 Ke8 44.Ne6 Rxg3?

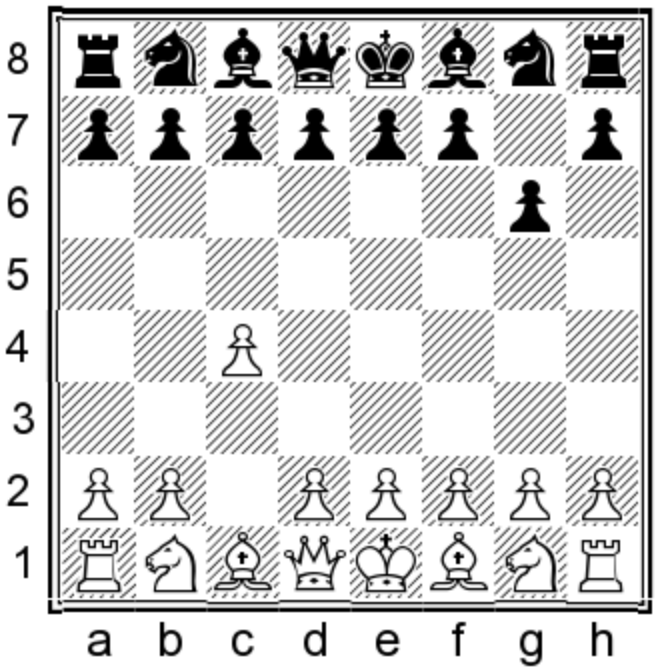
44...Rc8 45.Nc7+ Kd8 46.Nxb5 would also have been completely all over, but now there’s a neat little mate.

45.Ra8+ Kf7 46.Rf8 mate 1-0

chesstouring.com

Chapter Four
The Modern: 1.c4 g6 and 1...d6

1.c4 g6



Play can easily transpose after 1...d6, but we'll examine some independent options for Black in **Line 4C**.

2.Nc3 Bg7 3.g3 e5

Black goes for a King's Indian-type approach, albeit while remaining flexible with his king's knight.

Another very important type of set-up occurs with 3...c5, taking play officially into Symmetrical English lines. After 4.Bg2 Nc6 5.e4 play transposes back into Line 3C after 5...Nf6, just as it does after 5...d6 6.Nge2 Nf6, but Black has some important alternatives. We'll explore the independent options after 5...d6 6.Nge2 and Black's attempt to mimic us

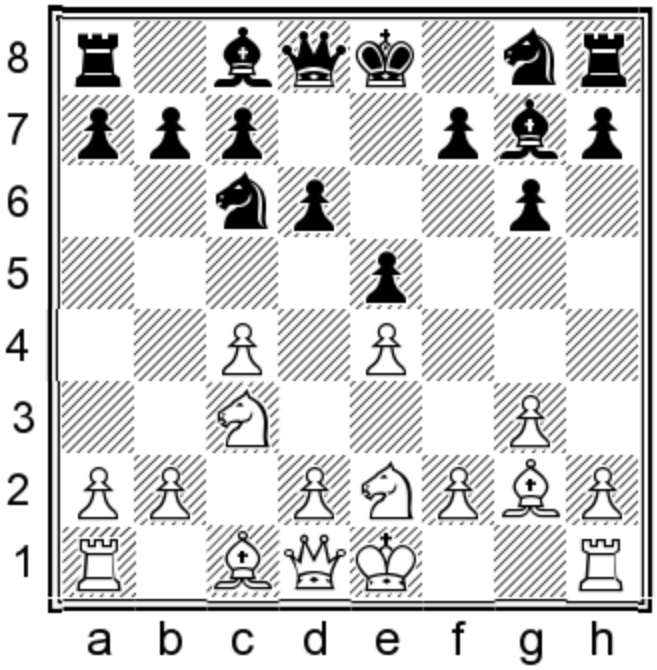
chesstouring.com

with 5...e5 6.Nge2 in **Line 4D**, before turning our attention to the fairly popular set-up denoted by 5...e6 6.Nge2 Nge7 7.0-0 d6 8.d3 in **Line 4E**.

4.Bg2 d6 5.e4 Nc6

Black's most popular choice by some margin at this point.

6.Nge2



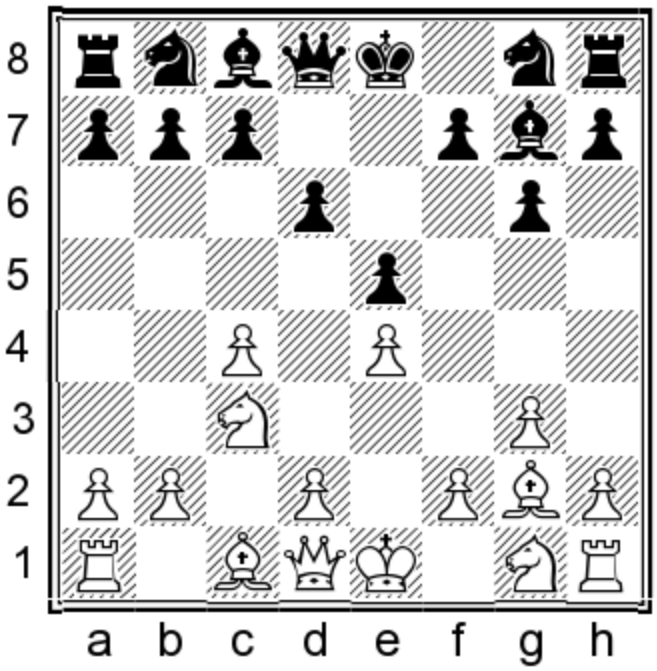
The good news for White is that we just continue with our normal moves. Now 6...Nf6 would again take us back into the last chapter and Line 3A. However, Black doesn't have to obstruct his f-pawn and has some fairly popular alternatives.

We'll look at 6...Nge7 and other piece developments in **Line 4A**, before moving on in **Line 4B** to ways in which Black can try to gain immediate counterplay with his pawns, not least through 6...f5.

Theory 4A

1.c4 g6 2.Nc3 Bg7 3.g3 d6 4.Bg2 e5 5.e4

chesstouring.com



Thus far White has played all our favourite moves, but now Black faces a choice, not least over where to place his knights.

5...Nc6

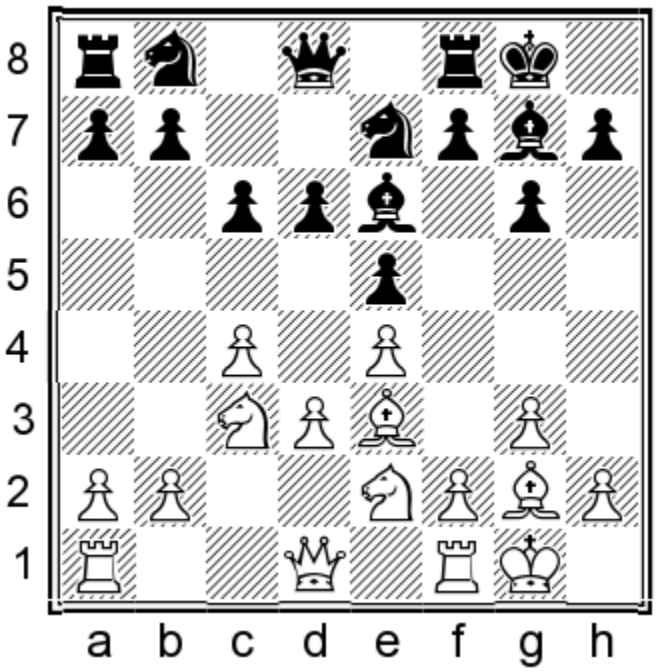
This is popular and logical, aiming at the one square White weakens with the Botvinnik set-up, d4.

Play will transpose after 5...Ne7 6.Nge2 0-0 7.0-0 Nbc6, but on occasion Black prefers something independent:

a) 7...c5 8.d3 Nbc6 reaches the double Botvinnik set-up after all, as we'll consider in Line 4D.

b) 7...c6 provokes 8.d4, which is certainly quite tempting since the knight on e7 is a little misplaced in such a King's Indian-like scenario. White can also, of course, continue along the Botvinnik path with 8.d3 Be6 9.Be3.

chesstouring.com

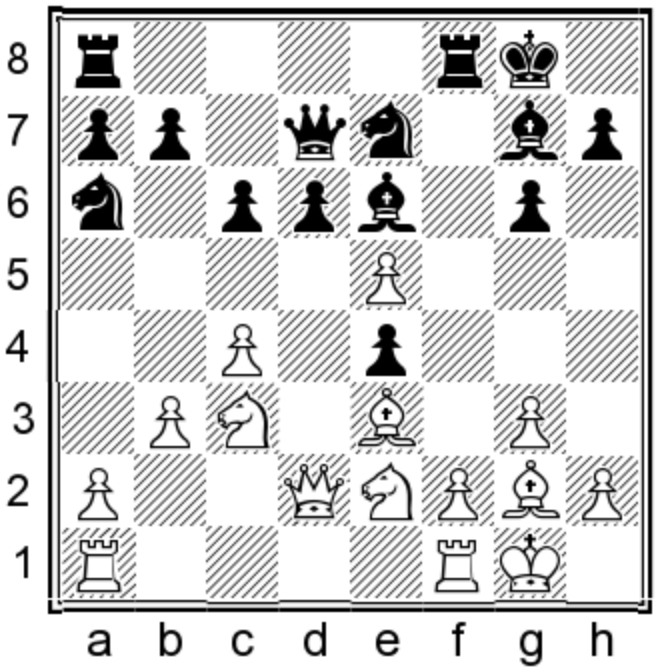


This gives him sufficient control over the position and the option of expanding on the queenside with b4, as well as the more standard f4 break:

b1) Note that 9...d5?! isn't a break to worry about, since 10.exd5 cxd5 opens up the bishop on g2 and now both 11.d4 and 11.Bc5! are quite awkward for Black, and if 11...dxc4 when we don't have to grab the exchange, but can calmly go 12.dxc4!? Nbc6 13.Qb3, with pressure against b7 and a knight invasion of d5 also high on the agenda.

b2) 9...f5 (Black's main break) 10.Qd2 Na6 (10...f4? 11.gxf4 exf4 12.Nxf4 is most certainly nothing to fear) 11.b3!? (a crafty advance; White wants to react in the centre) 11...Qd7 12.d4! fxe4 (12...Nc7? 13.Rad1 merely ratchets up the pressure) 13.dxe5 sees some early central action.

chesstouring.com



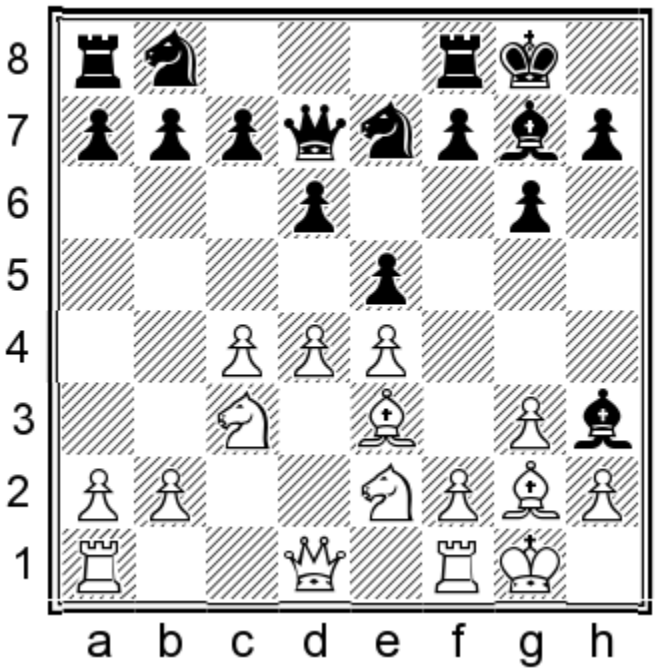
Now 13...d5 (13...dxe5 14.Qxd7 Bxd7 15.Nxe4 Nf5 16.Bg5 h6 17.Rad1! Be6 18.Bc1 is a pleasant edge for White thanks to his control over e4; you might be concerned about the hole on d4, but 18...Nd4 19.Nxd4! exd4 20.Ba3 Rfd8 21.Nd6 leaves White in control, the d-pawn going nowhere, and c5 as well as Rfe1 may follow) 14.Rad1! (this pinning move improves over 14.cxd5 Nxd5 15.Nxe4 Nxe3 16.Qxe3 Bxe5, which saw Black equalise in Lie-Djurhuus, Asker 2003) 14...Rad8 (supporting the queen; 14...Bxe5 15.Bxe4 only leaves d5 weak) 15.cxd5 cxd5 (15...Nxd5? 16.Bxe4 Nxe3 17.Qxe3 now comes with tempo, so if 17...Qc7 18.f4) 16.Bxa7 (the simplest way of handling the position) 16...Bxe5 17.f3 (as is this) 17...exf3 18.Rxf3 Rxf3 19.Bxf3 leaves White with a pleasant edge. Black's isolated queen's pawn is the main feature of the position and isn't easily going to advance to d4, while White might be a little annoying with Bb6, and Nf4 and Re1 could also cause trouble for Black, who is a little tied down.

c) 7...f5 8.d3 might well transpose to our previous note or into the main line of this section after 8...Nbc6 9.Nd5.

d) Finally, 7...Be6 8.d3 Qd7 9.Be3 Bh3 is nothing to fear. Yes, Black is swapping off our favourite bishop, but at some cost in terms of time,

chesstouring.com

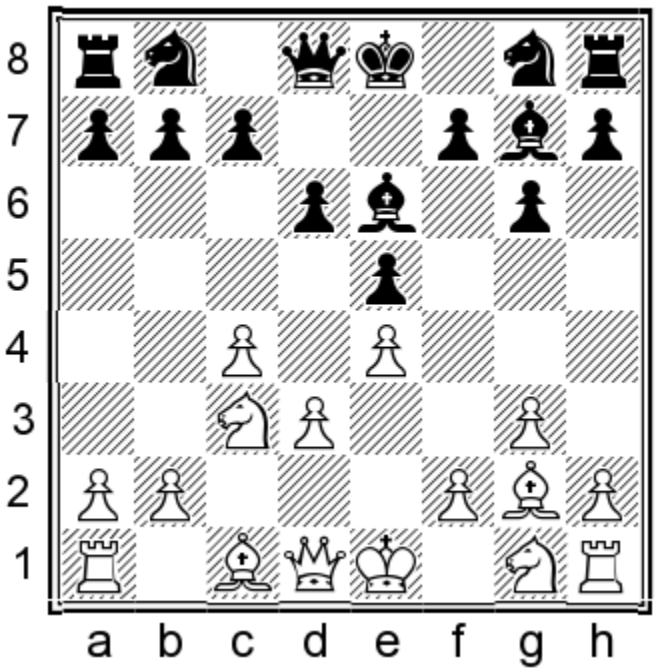
something we can exploit with 10.d4!?, immediately reacting in the centre.



After 10...Bxg2 11.Kxg2 exd4 12.Bxd4 Bxd4 13.Qxd4 the players shook hands in Shoker-Ezat, Egyptian Championship, Cairo 2013, but this should be quite a pleasant edge for White with his Maroczy Bind, as shown by 13...Nbc6 14.Qf6!? Qe6 15.Qxe6 fxe6 16.f4. White's extra space is quite useful, and Rad1 and Ng1 may follow. The knight is bound for f3, supporting any future e4-e5 advance and hoping to hop into g5, which might prove strong in conjunction with an advance of Harry.

Before we return to 5...Nc6, there's also 5...Be6 6.d3 (6.Nge2!? is possible too and only then d3, since 6...Bxc4 7.Qa4+ b5 8.Nxb5 Bxb5 9.Qxb5+ regains the pawn while bagging the bishop-pair).

chesstouring.com



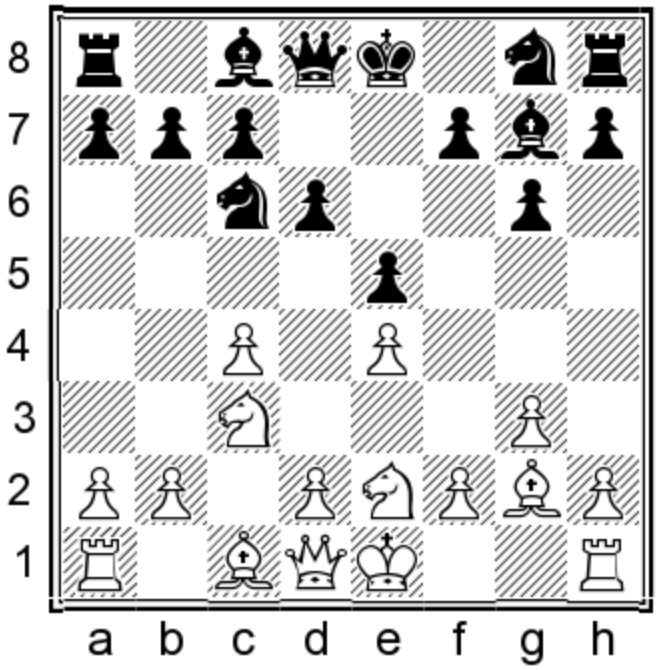
Now 6...Nc6 is another transposition to a fairly important line we'll see below. Here too Black might try something independent, but we shouldn't worry and can calmly continue along standard Botvinnik lines as White: for example, 6...Qd7 7.Nge2 is another transposition if Black develops his queen's knight to c6. We should also consider 7...Bh3 when there's no need for White to castle into an attack: 8.Bxh3 Qxh3 9.Qb3 either forces Black's queen back, when we can castle and break with f4, or 9...b6 when White has at least 10.Nd5 Qd7 11.0-0 c6 12.Ne3 followed by f4 with a small edge, in part due to the possibility of f4-f5, as 12...Ne7 13.f4 exf4 (13...Na6? 14.f5 Nc5 15.Qd1 leaves Black under pressure) 14.Nxf4 0-0 15.Bd2 when Bc3 will exchange off Black's best minor piece.

Instead, 6...Ne7 7.Nge2 is likely to be another transposition, although we should mention that here White can also consider 7.f4!? followed by Nf3, 0-0 and Qe2, a speciality of Simon's in his youth, and 6...c6 7.Nge2 is also likely to transpose elsewhere, such as back into the realm of Line 3B after 7...Nf6. Here 7...f5 8.0-0 Nf6 would be pretty ambitious and after 9.exf5! gxf5 10.b3! Qd7 11.d4 0-0 12.Ba3 Rd8 13.Qd2 Na6 14.Rad1 White enjoyed very pleasant pressure in Movsziszian-Planells Roig, Ibiza 2006, being able to target Black's centre, all the while hoping to provoke 14...e4

chesstouring.com

15.Nf4 followed by f3, which would leave Black looking rather overextended.

6.Nge2

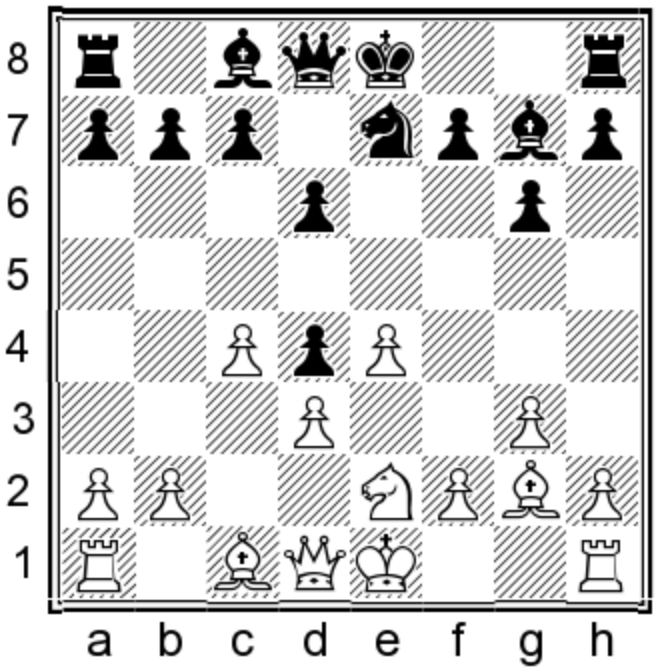


6...Nge7

Black mimics our development of the king's knight. In our next section (Line 4B) we'll see what happens if he prefers to push a pawn at this point. Other piece deployments are:

a) 6...Nd4 has been played by some fairly strong players, but White should not mind seeing a black pawn appear on the former hole on d4: 7.Nxd4 exd4 8.Ne2 Ne7 (invariably played; note that once again 8...h5!? is fairly well met by 9.h3, as there's no need to fear 9...h4 10.g4, keeping lines closed and leaving only Black with serious weaknesses in the event of 10...Ne7 11.d3 f5? 12.exf5 gxf5 13.Nf4 when Nh5 is very much an idea) 9.d3.

chesstouring.com



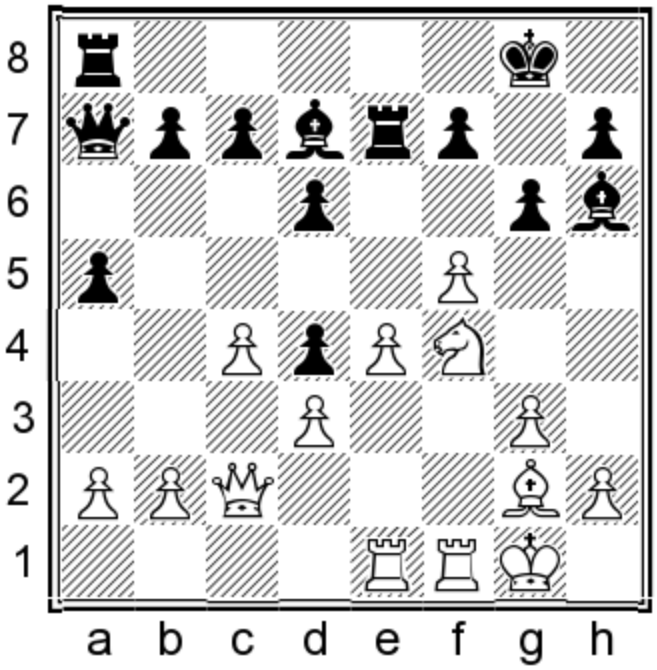
Now:

a1) Sometimes Black waits with 9...h6, but that does nothing to deter White from his two main pawn advances, f4 and b4, as we can see from 10.0-0 c6 (as played in Bischoff-I.Sokolov, Dortmund 1989; 10...g5? 11.f4! Ng6 asked too much of Black's pieces in Peacock-Jaunooby, Leyland 2013, and now 12.b4!? is tempting, grabbing space while maintaining control after 12...gxf4 13.Nxf4 followed by Nh5 or 13...Nxf4 14.Bxf4) 11.b4!? a5 (or 11...0-0 12.Bd2 Be6 13.Nf4 Bd7 14.a4 when b5 is one plan, aiming to gain control of d5 in the event of ...c5, and another good break is c5, angling to open the b-file) 12.b5 0-0 13.bxc6 bxc6 14.Rb1 with a nice position, since it's not so easy to free Black's position and f4-f5 is very much still an idea.

a2) 9...0-0 is standard and after 10.0-0 a5! (Black plays to slow down b4) 11.Bg5!? (Black is very solid, but this at least gives him something to think about) 11...Re8 (11...h6 12.Bd2 is White's other idea, preparing a slow advance with b3, a3 and b4, while hoping ...h6 might turn out to be a weakness, as it easily could after 12...f5?! 13.Nf4 c6 14.Qe2 Be5 15.exf5 Bxf5 16.Ne6! Bxe6 17.f4 Bf6 18.Qxe6+ Kg7 19.Be4 when Black's

chesstouring.com

kingside is certainly vulnerable with Qh3 very much an idea) 12.Qc2 Bd7 13.Rae1 (White calmly continues to improve his pieces, all the while intending to push the f-pawn at some point soon) 13...Qb8 14.Bxe7!? (giving up a fairly important bishop, but leaving White with easy play) 14...Rxe7 15.f4 Qa7 16.f5 Bh6 17.Nf4.



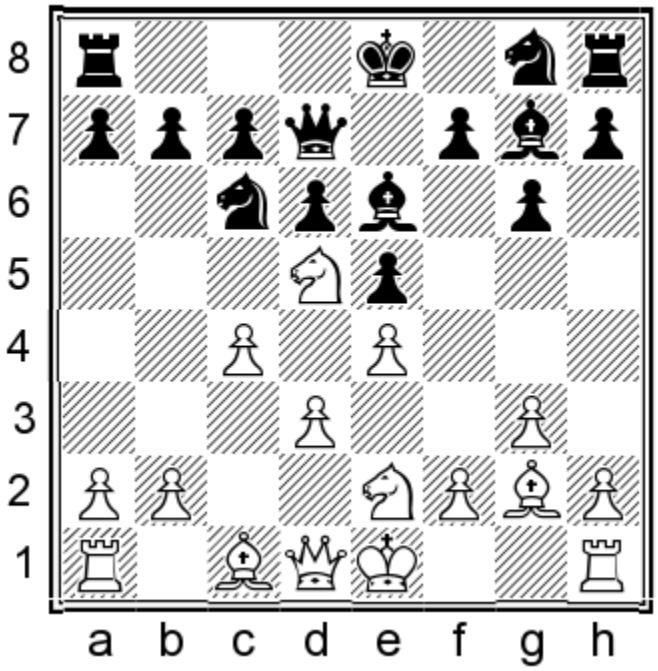
We've followed the high-level correspondence encounter Kerr-Rubinas from 2009, where White was for choice. Black can keep us out of d5 with 17...c6, but after 18.Bh3 followed by Qg2 White retains pressure. The queen might emerge on h3 either after immediate exchanges on g6 and d7, or only after Bg4 and h4 first.

Instead, here 10...f5?! 11.exf5 Nxf5 12.b4 c5?! 13.Ba3 Qc7 14.Nf4 was a dream for the Botvinnik expert in Kosten-Lallemand, French League 2006, and 10...Rb8 11.b4! b5!? 12.cxb5 Rxb5 13.Bd2 Rb8 14.Qc2 c6 15.Rab1 supplied another a pleasant edge in Davies-Murshed, Dhaka 2001, since White can play on the queenside and with f4-f5. Likewise, 10...a6!? 11.b4 b5 also wouldn't have fully freed Black's position in Galyas-McNab, 4NCL 2019, had White now simply gone 12.Qc2!?, and if 12...bxc4 13.Qxc4 Be6 14.Qc2 Rc8 15.Bb2 c5 16.bxc5 Rxc5 17.Qd2, maintaining a structural plus,

chesstouring.com

and, finally, 10...c6 11.b4!? should give White an edge, and if 11...Be6 12.a4 Qd7?! 13.Nf4, robbing Black of an important bishop.

b) Another fairly common approach is 6...Be6 7.d3 Qd7 (Black copies how White often plays in the Closed Sicilian; instead, 7...Nge7 8.0-0 transposes to our main line, while the creative 7...Nh6!? 8.Nd5 f5 can even be met by 9.h4!, with a certain threat of Bg5; Black can keep control of f6 with 9...0-0, but after 10.Bg5 Qd7 11.Qd2 Ng4 12.f3 Nf6 he was fortunate that White accepted a draw in Arun Prasad-Gleizerov, Ortisei 2012, since 13.Bxf6! Bxf6 14.h5 would have been simple and strong, and if 14...Bg7 15.hxg6 hxg6 16.0-0-0 Ne7 17.f4, with strong pressure and where 17...exf4? 18.Nxe7+ Qxe7 19.Nxf4 Qf6 20.e5!, winning material, shows how careful Black has to be) when 8.Nd5! is an important leap.



This often a good move when Black has a bishop on e6, as after ...Nge7 there won't be a threat of ...Nxd5 until one of Black's other minor pieces has moved. Instead, Black is hoping we'll castle and allow an early attack down the h-file. Now:

b1) 8...Nge7?! can even be met by 9.Bh6!?, which might stun your opponent and after 9...0-0 10.Qd2 it's White who might be the side using

chesstouring.com

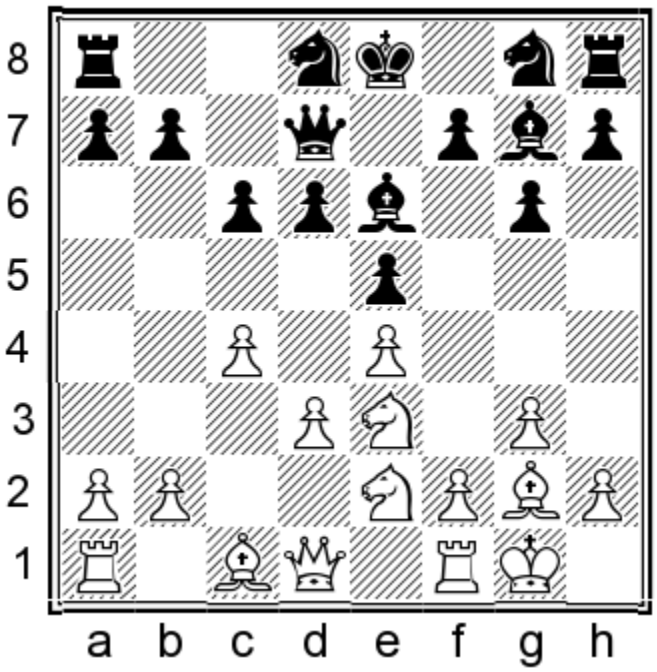
their h-pawn to attack.

b2) 8...Bxd5?! 9.cxd5 Nce7 (or 9...Nd4 10.Nxd4 exd4 11.0-0 Ne7 12.f4 when White is doing pretty well, not least in the event of 12...f5 13.Qb3 0-0 14.e5!) 10.d4!? exd4 11.Nxd4 Nf6 12.0-0 is quite pleasant too for White, with the two bishops and an easy plan of creating some pressure down the c-file.

b3) 8...f5 9.exf5!? (there's nothing wrong with castling, but this exchange is always thematic after such an early ...f5) 9...Bxf5 (9...gxf5 10.Be3 Nge7 11.0-0 followed by f4 should be a little better for White, or if 11...0-0-0 12.f4!?, preventing ...f4 before going Qa4 and b4, possibly without even waiting for Rab1) 10.0-0! (refusing to fear any attack) 10...Nge7 (White isn't going to get mated after 10...Bh3? 11.Bxh3 Qxh3 12.Nxc7+ Kd7 13.Nxa8 Nf6 14.f3 and 10...h5?! 11.Bg5 h4?! 12.Bxh4 Rxh4!? 13.gxh4 0-0-0 14.Ne3 Bh3 15.Ng3 doesn't give Black enough for the exchange; White threatens to exchange queens and can meet 15...Nf6 with 16.Ne4) 11.Bh6! (again we see this tactic) 11...0-0 (and not, of course, 11...Bxh6?? 12.Nf6+) 12.Bxg7 Kxg7 13.d4 is a little better for White. We have the safer king and might seize space with Ne3 and d5 ahead of pushing f4.

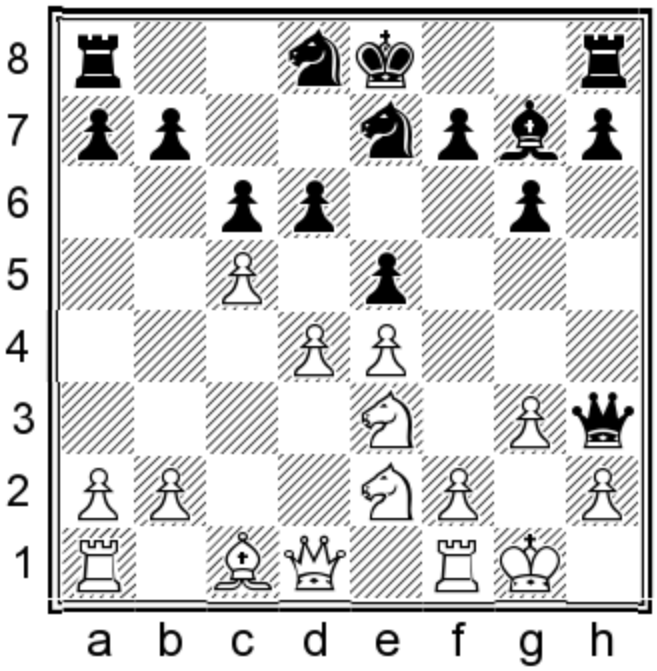
b4) 8...Nd8 may seem mysterious, but is a decent idea, preparing to drive the white knight back with ...c6. However, after 9.0-0 (keeping it simple; decent alternatives are 9.d4 c6 10.Ne3, as played by Alexander Grischuk, and Tony Kosten's old recommendation of 9.f4) 9...c6 10.Ne3 Black's position is a little congested.

chesstouring.com



Moreover, f4 or d4 is on the way: for example, 10...Ne7 (or 10...f5 11.exf5! gxf5 12.f4 when 12...Nf7? 13.d4 already left Black in some trouble in Franco Ocampos-Mantovani, Saint Vincent 2000, and even 10...Bh3 11.f4 Bxg2 12.Kxg2 – Marcelin-Lamoureux, Lausanne 2004 – 12...exf4!? 13.Nxf4 might be ever so slightly better for White, as with 13...Ne7 14.Rb1 Ne6 15.Nxe6 Qxe6 16.Qg4!? Qxg4 17.Nxg4 f5 18.Nf2 when Bg5 and b4-b5 may follow) 11.d4! Bh3 (consistent with Black's set-up and preferable to 11...f5? 12.d5! Bf7, as in Nevednichy-Nikolov, Plovdiv 2011, and then 13.f4 when Black remains rather tangled up after, for instance, 13...exf4 14.Nxf4 fxe4 15.Bxe4) 12.Bxh3! (this move, while critical, is also a little brave, but strong too we believe; in practice thus far White has always exchanged on e5 or advancing the d-pawn) 12...Qxh3 13.c5!.

chesstouring.com



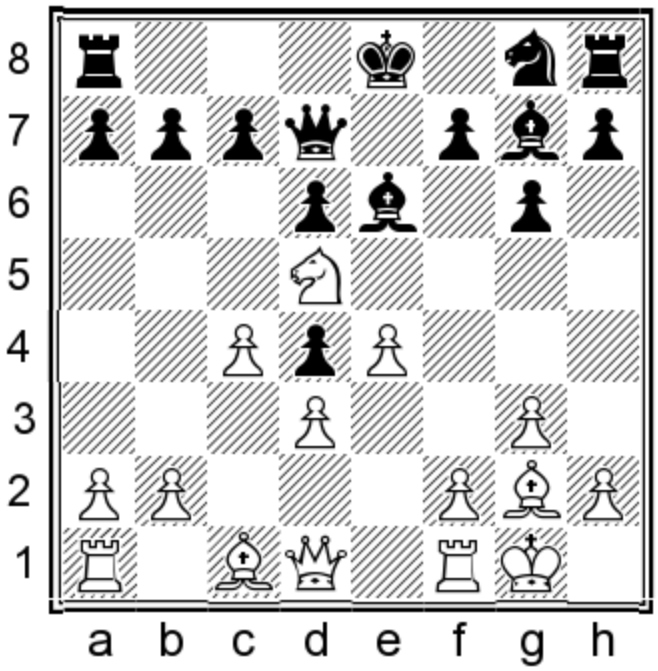
The point of White's play, levering open the centre with Black's pieces not especially well coordinated: 13...dxc5 14.dxe5 Ne6 (at least this helps Black's development unlike 14...Bxe5 15.f4 when even 15...Bc7 16.f5 is pretty grim for him) 15.f4 Rd8 (otherwise White just rolls on with f5) 16.Qb3 h5! (the best try; 16...Nd4 17.Nxd4 cxd4 18.Nc4 0-0 19.Qxb7 gives White an extra pawn and a very imposing centre) 17.Nd1! (this powerful retreat is crucial to White's concept; he is now doing pretty well, not getting mated) 17...Qg4 (otherwise, 17...h4?? 18.Nf2 would but embarrass the black queen and 17...Rxd1!? 18.Rxd1 h4 19.Qf3 hxg3 20.hxg3 Qh2+ 21.Kf1 doesn't give Black very much at all for the exchange, as his minor pieces aren't playing and Be3 is on the way) 18.Re1 (renewing the threat of Nf2) 18...Nd4 (18...c4 19.Qxc4 h4 20.Nf2 Qf3 21.Qc3! keeps control, and if 21...Qh5 22.g4) 19.Nxd4 cxd4 20.Qxb7 (brave, but good; it's high time to harvest) 20...Rd7 (20...h4 21.Nf2 is again a very useful defensive resource, forcing the black queen back in view of 21...Qf3 22.Qb3 d3? 23.Re3 Qh5 24.g4) 21.Qb3 sees White ignoring any checks to renew the threat of Nf2, leaving him in control and with a very useful extra pawn to boot.

That line didn't turn out well for Black, but improvements are not so easy to come by for him: 13...h5? is nothing to fear as 14.cxd6 h4 15.g4! keeps

chesstouring.com

lines closed, 13...exd4 14.cxd6 dxe3? 15.dxe7 is also very pleasant, not least in the event of 15...exf2+? 16.Rxf2 Kxe7 17.Bg5+ with a huge initiative for just a pawn and the ability to meet 17...f6 with 18.Rxf6! Bxf6 19.Bxf6+ Kxf6 20.Qd4+ Ke7 21.Qxh8, and even 13...Nc8 14.cxd6 exd4 is promising for White after 15.Nxd4 Nxd6 16.e5! followed by f4 or the deadly overloading 16...Bxe5? 17.Nf3, and if 17...Qe6 18.Nxe5 Qxe5 19.Ng4.

b5) 8...Nd4?! isn't as good as the knight retreat, partly because 9.Nxd4 exd4 10.0-0 leaves Black with a dead-point on d4 and lacking counterplay.

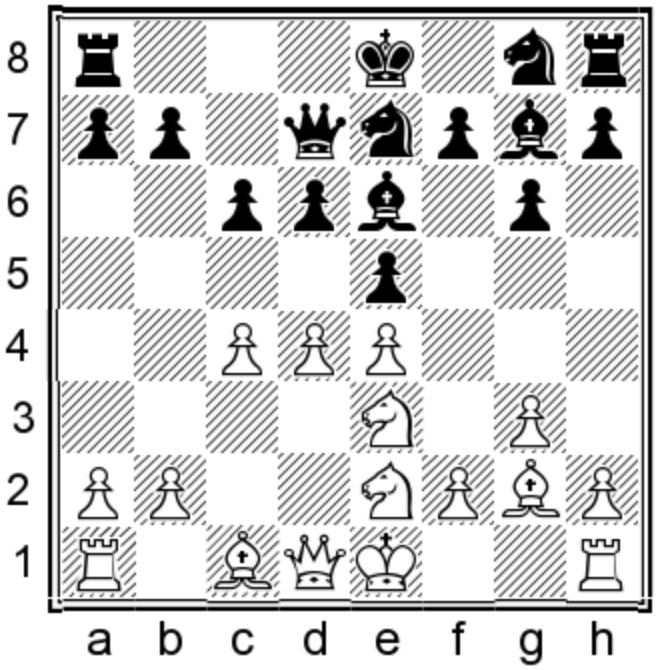


For example, 10...Ne7 (or 10...c6 11.Nf4 Ne7 12.Nxe6 fxe6 13.Bh3 with good pressure on the light squares) 11.Bg5! (here this is even stronger than going to h6) 11...Nxd5 (11...Bxd5 12.cxd5 0-0 13.Rc1 is also quite miserable for Black, with even Bh3 an idea for White) 12.exd5 Bf5 13.Re1+ Kf8 14.Re7 Qc8 15.c5! sees White invading the heart of the black camp while generating a strong initiative.

b6) Along with the retreat to d8, a major option for Black is 8...Nce7 when White should likely react straightaway: 9.d4!? (9.0-0 c6 10.Ne3 is by

chesstouring.com

no means terrible, but after 10...f5 Black's position isn't anything like as congested as in the ...Nd8 lines) 9...c6 10.Ne3!.

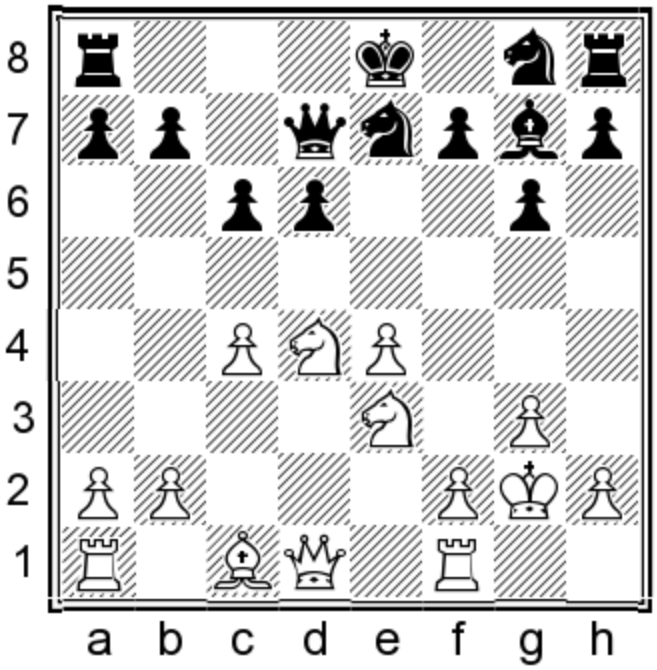


Again our motto is to keep pieces on and Black cramped. Now 10...f5?! 11.d5 cxd5 12.cxd5 Bf7 13.f3 Nf6 14.0-0 is quite a cramped version of a King's Indian for Black, 10...Nf6 11.0-0 Rd8 can either be met by 12.d5 or 12.Qc2 0-0 13.b3, intending Bb2 and Rad1, and 10...exd4 11.Nxd4 Bh3 can even be met by 12.Ndf5!, and if 12...Bxf5 13.exf5 gxf5 14.0-0 Nf6 15.Bd2 Ne4 16.Bb4!? Bxb2 17.Rb1 Be5 18.Qc2 0-0 19.Rfd1 with excellent compensation for two pawns, since Nxf5 is very much an idea, as well as Bh3.

Somewhat more consistent is 10...Bh3 11.0-0 (refusing to be intimidated on the kingside) 11...Bxg2 (11...h5!? 12.Bxh3 Qxh3 13.f3! prepares to keep lines closed and after the 13...f5? of Franco Ocampos-Garcia Brion, Gijon 2018, a thematic break would again have been strong: 14.c5!, and if 14...dxc5 15.dxe5 Bxe5 16.Nc4! h4! 17.Nf4! – White must shore up the defence and not allow 17.Nxe5?? hxg3 – 17...Bxf4 18.Bxf4 g5 when Black is all in and the complications turn out to favour White after 19.Nd6+ Kf8 20.Qb3 Rh7 21.Qxb7 Rd8 22.Qc7! Ra8 23.g4! gxf4 24.Nxf5, which leaves

chesstouring.com

Black a piece up, but his queen is trapped and White's initiative too strong after Rd1 or 24...Rf7 25.Qd6 Rf6 26.Qxf4 Rd8 27.Rad1) 12.Kxg2 exd4 13.Nxd4.

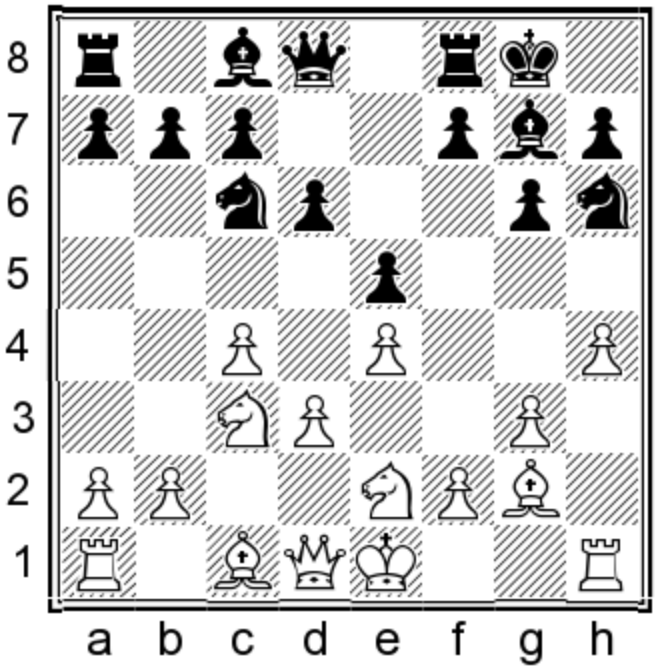


Again after 13...h5!? (criticised by Kasparov, who thought that Black should go 13...Nf6, as in the older game Timman-Bednarski, Dieren 1970, where 14.Qd3!? 0-0 15.Bd2 would have been sensible followed by Bc3 and Rad1, or if 15...d5 16.cxd5 Rfd8 17.Bc3 cxd5 18.e5 Ne4 19.f4 with an edge thanks to the central wedge which rather restricts Black's bishop) 14.h3!? (Kasparov preferred to advance the a-pawn in Kasparov-Short, Linares 1990, but we quite like our usual prophylactic measure) 14...Nf6 (14...h4 15.g4 is, of course, the main point, keeping lines closed) 15.Qd3 0-0 16.Bd2 we see this set-up from White whose position we would be quite happy to take. Bc3 and Rad1 will follow and, if Black does nothing, f4 may well occur, all the while as White wants to meet 16...d5 with 17.cxd5 cxd5 18.e5 Ne4 19.f4, thereby securing a definite, pleasant edge.

c) Finally, we'll consider the old line 6...Nh6 7.d3 f5?! in the notes to Black's 7th move in Line 4B. Here 7...0-0 is a safer choice when there's

chesstouring.com

nothing wrong with castling followed by Nd5 for White, but even here we would find 8.h4!? hard to resist.

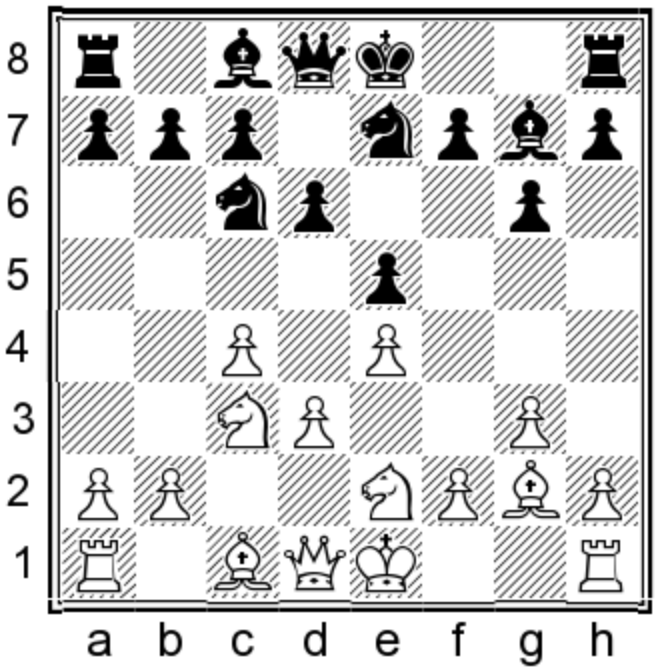


Now 8...Be6 (8...f5?! just creates weaknesses and is very nice for White after 9.Bg5, as we'll see in Line 4B, while 8...Nd4!? will at least see Black's knight getting out on g4 if White goes in for the usual exchange, so 9.f3 is tempting; a precise, if brave response was 9...c6 with the idea of 10.Be3 Qb6 in Ludgate-Kunzelmann, correspondence 2007, so White might try 10.h5 g5 11.g4!? with an unclear position, where at least he'll manage to get in Be3 and Qd2, his king should be safe enough on the kingside, and there will still be queenside prospects after b4) 9.f3!? f5 10.Bg5 Qd7 was Volosin-Wegener, Kecskemet 1992, when 11.Nd5 was one decent move, intending 11...Nf7 12.Bf6! when White's king can go to either side, with 12...Bxd5 13.Bxg7 Kxg7 14.cxd5 Ne7 15.Qd2 c6?! 16.dxc6 Nxc6 17.0-0-0! a good example of going long, and if 17...Rac8 18.Kb1 followed by h5 and f4.

Finally, we can return to 6...Nge7:

7.d3

chesstouring.com



This move is obviously going to be necessary at some stage and makes the most sense here.

There's nothing too much wrong with 7.0-0 should you mix up your move order, but 7...h5!? is slightly annoying in this precise position.

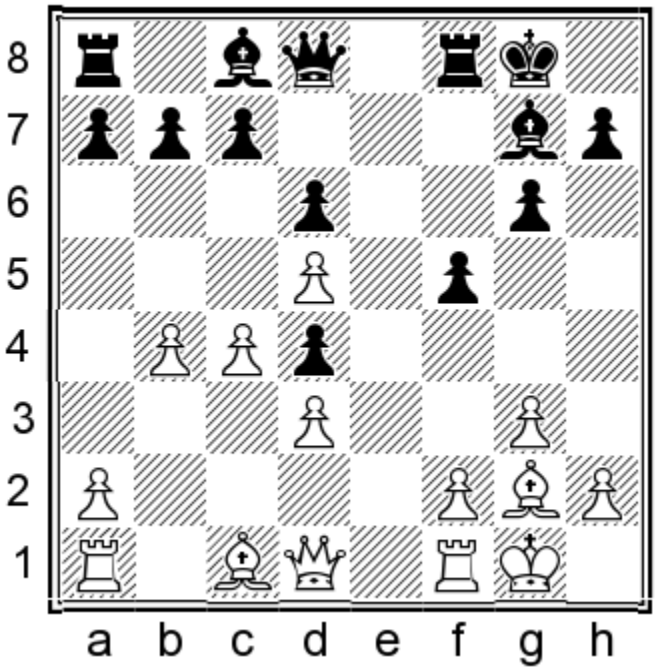
7...Be6

Play transposes to our main line after 7...0-0 8.0-0 Be6 9.Nd5. It also does after 7...0-0 8.0-0 f5 (8...Nd4 9.Nxd4 exd4 10.Ne2 is another transposition and nothing to worry about, while 8...Bd7 is normally met by a knight leap in any case to d5, but there's also 9.f4!?, and if 9...f5 10.Be3 Nd4 11.Qd2 c6 12.Rae1 with a standard set-up for White and Black's knight on e7 getting slightly in the way; exchanging on f5 would help it, so White will likely tee up Nxd4 with Bf2) 9.Nd5 if Black now goes 9...Be6.

He also has 9...Nxd5 when White usually recaptures with the c-pawn, but we quite approve of 10.exd5!?. We rather like this option because our bishop on g2 gains in scope and we retain our c-pawn for a later c5 push, an advance that will often give us good play on the queenside. Moreover, 10...Nd4 (or 10...Ne7 when 11.f4! is a key advance to keep Black slightly

chesstouring.com

bottled up, and if 11...c6 12.Be3 when 12...exf4?! 13.Nxf4 Bxb2 14.Rb1 Bg7 15.Qd2 followed by Rfe1 leaves White with a huge amount of pressure for the pawn) 11.Nxd4 exd4 12.b4 gives White a pleasant edge.



His queenside pawns are the more mobile and there's that long-term hole on e6, as we'll see in Doncea-Touzane, French League 2010.

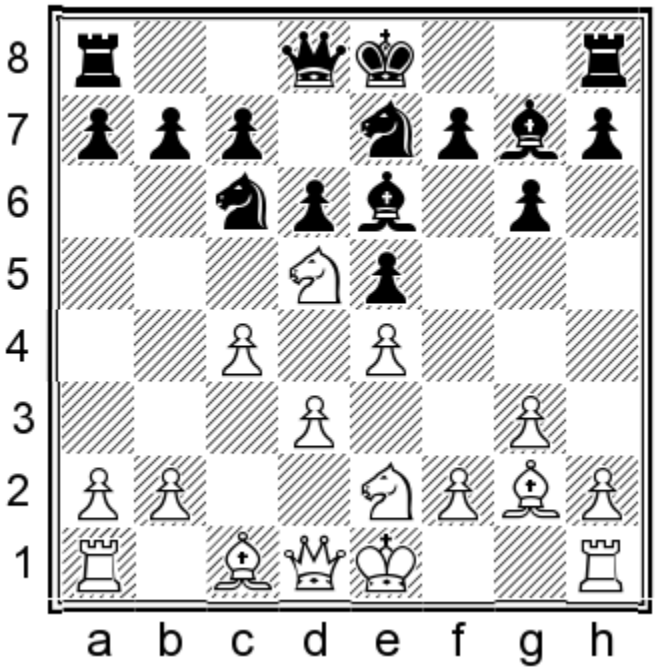
Instead, 9...h6 10.Be3 g5?! was a little too aggressive in Kharlov-Popov, Kazan 2001, as now the thematic 11.f4! opens the position to White's advantage: for example, 11...gxf4 12.gxf4 fxe4 13.dxe4 exf4 14.Ndxf4 Bxb2 15.Rb1 Bg7 16.Ng3 when White has excellent compensation for the pawn, with Ngh5 one idea, Qb3 and c5 another way of increasing the pressure.

Finally, 9...fxe4?! is premature, but just the sort of tension-easing exchange often seen at club level, not that Benko-Evans, New York 1966, could be described as that. There 10.dxe4 Bg4 11.f3! (keeping pieces on and Black out of d4) 11...Be6 12.Be3 Qd7 13.Qd2 was very pleasant for White. One plan is b4-b5 followed by engineering a c5 break, another possibility seizing some useful space on both flanks (after b4), with the a- and h-pawns, all the while as Black's position remains a little congested.

chesstouring.com

Alternatively, 7...Nd4 8.Nxd4 exd4 9.Ne2 gives White definite chances of emerging with an edge, as we saw in note ‘a’ to Black’s 6th move, above, while 7...h6 prevents Bh6 tricks, as well as Bg5, but that’s far from the end of the world for White. Following 8.0-0 Be6 9.Nd5 Qd7 White might just develop his bishop and a good case can be made too for 10.Rb1!?: for example, 10...f5 11.b4 0-0 12.b5 Nd8 13.Be3 c6 14.bxc6 bxc6 15.Nxe7+ Qxe7 was all very thematic in Danielsen-Narayanan, Reykjavik 2008, as now would have been 16.exf5!? Bxf5 (16...gxf5 17.f4 keeps Black a little tied up) 17.Rb3 when White will advance with d4, aiming to leave Black with weaknesses right across the board.

8.Nd5!



We again see White wasting little time on meeting ...Be6 so, leaving Black unable to satisfactorily release the central tension.

8...0-0

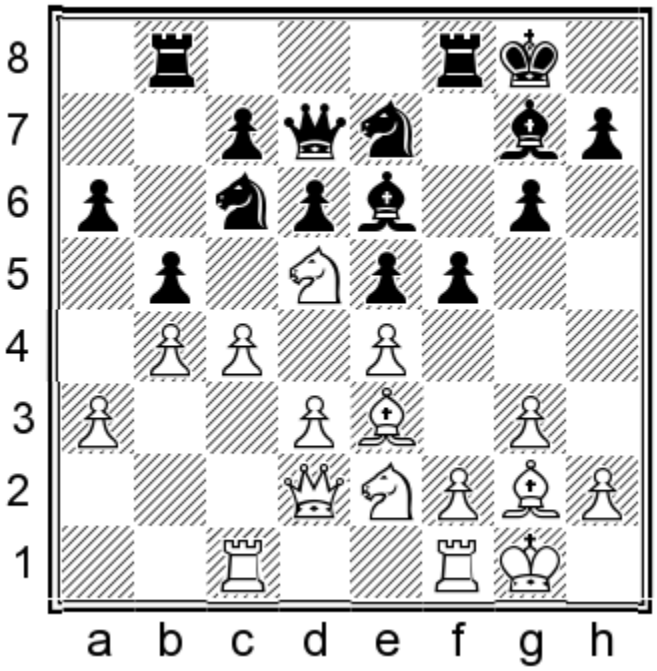
Sensible, unlike 8...Bxd5?! 9.cxd5 Nd4 10.Nxd4 exd4 11.h4!?, which was already pleasant for White with the bishop-pair and potential kingside

chesstouring.com

pressure in Bezold-Jacob, Austrian League 2004.

Likewise, Black is best advised to avoid 8...Nd4?! 9.Nxd4 exd4 10.Bg5 which forced 10...Bxd5, after which 11.cxd5 0-0 12.h4!? h6 13.Bd2 Qe8 (13...f5 14.0-0 is calm, but good, and if 14...fxe4 15.dxe4; again, note how Black's knight isn't exactly amazingly placed on e6) 14.0-0 Qb5 15.Qc2, which left White in control and ready to roll the queenside pawns in Reinderman-Meng, Delft 2010.

Instead, 8...a6 is a little mysterious, but Black hopes to break with ...b5. That does not help to solve all his problems, though, as a Botvinnik authority demonstrated: 9.Be3 0-0 10.0-0 (now that Black has castled it is time for us to do so too, as we do not need to fear any aggressive ...h5-h4 plans) 10...f5 11.Qd2 Rb8 12.Rac1 (stepping off the long diagonal ahead of advancing the b-pawn) 12...Qd7 13.b4 b5 14.a3 left White in control in Kosten-He.Gretarsson, German League 2000.



Tony Kosten then transformed the structure to be left with lasting pressure after 14...Kh8 15.exf5!? (clarifying the position a bit and a typical idea of course; White would have also been better after a slow build-up, such as 15.Rc2 intending 16.Rfc1) 15...Bxf5 (15...Nxf5 16.Nxc7! is a handy tactical

chesstouring.com

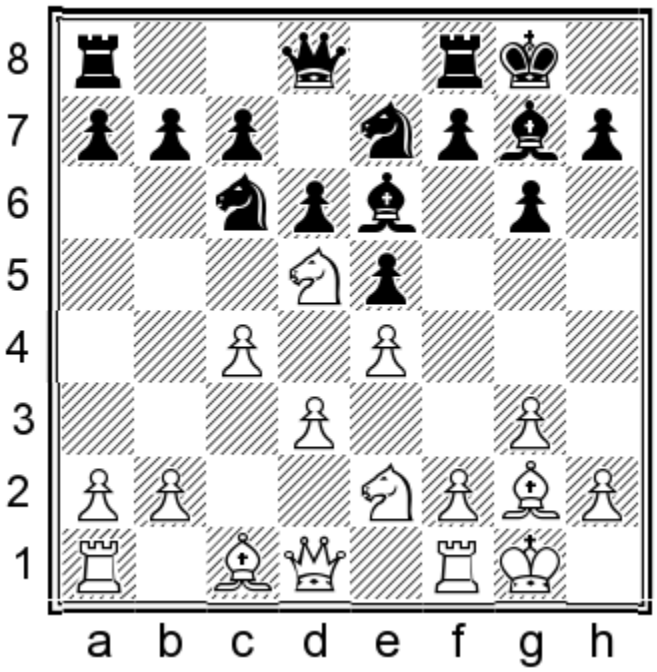
device, and if 16...Qxc7 17.cxb5 axb5 18.Rxc6) 16.d4 (another standard plan and follow-up to exf5) 16...bxc4 17.Nxe7 (again, simplifying, which is the correct approach, as why complicate when there is a simple solution?) 17...Nxe7 when 18.dxe5!? Bd3 19.exd6 cxd6 20.Rfe1 followed by Nf4 would have left Black's position rather loose.

Here too 8...h6 is occasionally seen, but does nothing to inconvenience White, who after 9.Be3 Nd4 10.Nxd4! (still a useful exchange, even at the cost of a tempo) 10...exd4 11.Bd2 c6 12.Nf4 Bd7 13.0-0 0-0 14.b4! Kh7 15.a4 (White's plan is simple: to seize space; in contrast, it's not so easy for Black to obtain counterplay) 15...a6 (15...f5?! 16.c5! dxc5 17.bxc5 fxe4 18.dxe4 only creates weaknesses in the black camp which Qb3 will target) 16.c5! Nc8 17.Qb3 Qe7 18.Rac1 Rb8 19.Rfe1 had put in a model display to maintain the pressure and full control in Grischuk-Andriasian, Dubai (blitz) 2014. There are tactical ideas associated with cxd6, b5 and Bb4, with Ne2 followed by f4 also in the pipeline.

Finally, 8...Qd7 is perhaps more natural, but after 9.0-0 play normally transposes to our main line following 9...0-0 10.Be3.

9.0-0

chesstouring.com



9...f5

Natural. So is 9...Qd7 when we transpose after 10.Be3 (10.Bh6 is tempting, but Black is OK after 10...Nxd5 11.Bxg7 Nc3) 10...f5. Otherwise, Adorjan's 10...Kh8 can be met by 11.Qd2, and if 11...Ng8 12.d4!? when 12...f5 13.exf5 Bxf5 14.Rac1 leaves White with a stable edge and ideas of exchanging on e5 at some point soon to obtain some squares, while 10...Nd4?! slightly walks into 11.Nxd4 exd4 12.Bh6!, which left White with a pleasant edge in Botvinnik-Geller, Moscow 1966, which we'll analyse below.

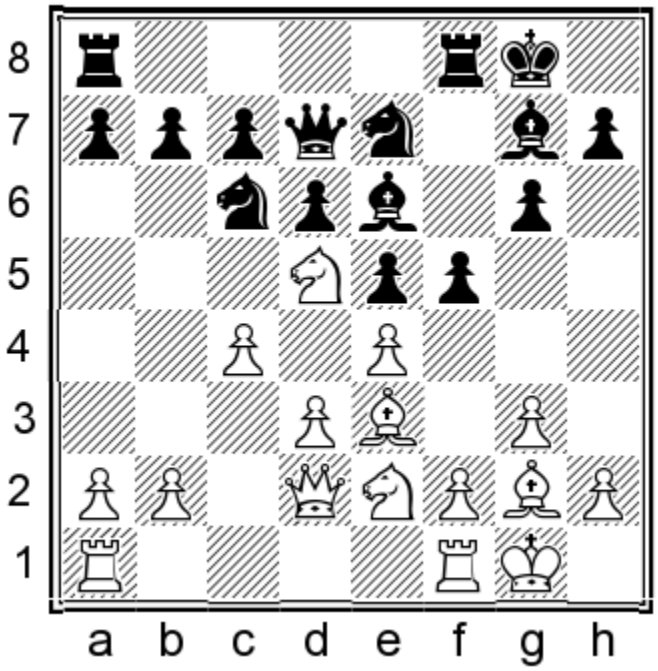
Instead, 9...a5 10.Be3 Bg4 was the TCEC encounter *Stoofvlees-Arasan*, Internet 2020, where 11.f3 would have been a human response, and if 11...Be6 White might skip 12.Qd2 to go 12.f4!?, as 12...exf4 13.Ndxf4 Bxb2 14.Rb1 will regain the pawn on b7 with advantage.

10.Be3 Qd7

We saw that 10...f4? 11.gxf4 is nothing to worry about back in the 'Gradual Expansion' part of Chapter One.

chesstouring.com

11.Qd2

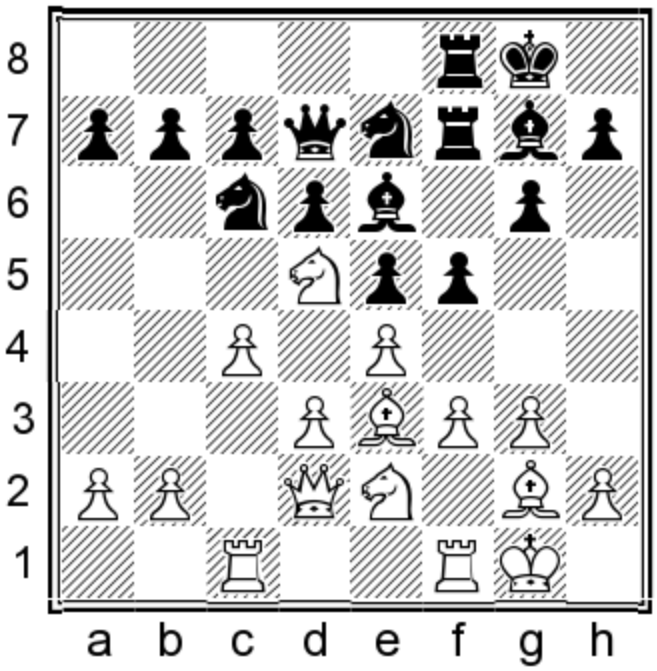


Calm and correct. White completes his development and remains flexible, all the while as he aims to deny Black much play of his own.

11...Rae8

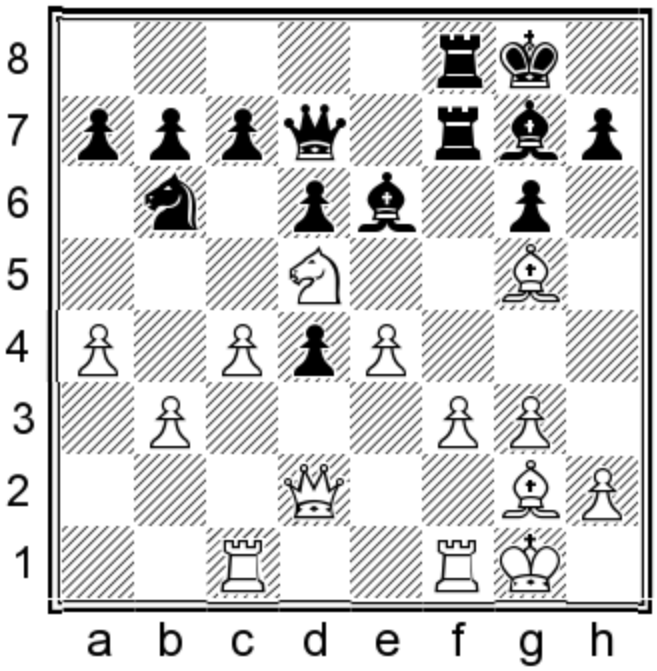
Again, 11...f4?! 12.gxf4 is nothing to fear, and if 12...Bh3 13.f3! with pretty much just an extra pawn. That may help to explain why Botvinnik himself once tried 11...Rf7 against Benko. Here 12.Rac1 is our preferred square for the rook, hoping Black may exchange on d5 or that we'll go c5 one day. It's also useful to keep c4 overprotected, with another useful little move 12...Raf8 13.f3!, taking the sting out of ...f4, unlike 13.b4 when 13...f4 is pretty messy.

chesstouring.com



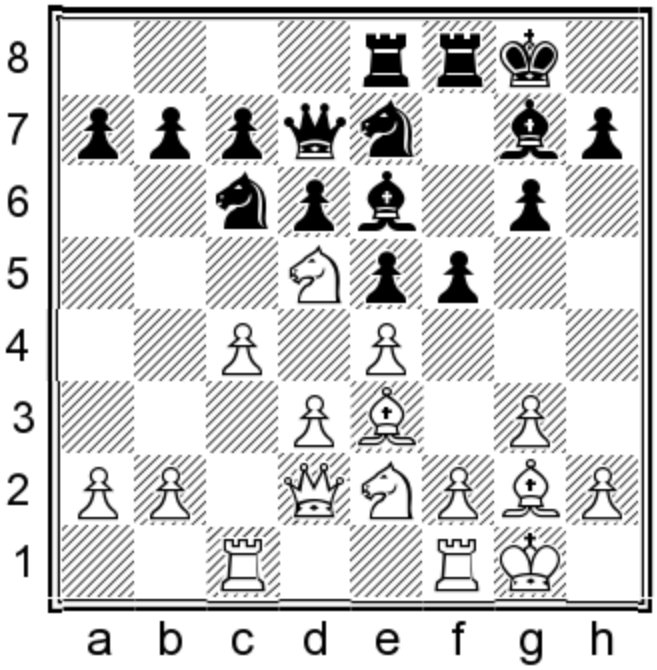
White has control of the position and has scored quite well here with, for example, 13...Nc8 (the engines argue that after 13...f4!? 14.gxf4 Nd4 15.fxe5 Nxe2+ 16.Qxe2 dxe5 17.Nxe7+ Qxe7 18.Qf2 Black has sufficient positional compensation; mankind has never been so convinced, though, and we would certainly be happy enough as White with the extra pawn, just as we are after 13...Kh8 14.b4 whereupon 14...Ng8 15.exf5! Bxf5 16.d4 was a thematic and timely opening of the centre in Miezis-Roemer, Seefeld 2000, before the long-time English advocate and Latvian GM increased his advantage with 16...Bh3 17.b5! exd4 18.Nxd4 Ne5 19.Bxh3! Qxh3 20.Nf4 Qd7 21.Nde6) 14.b3 (further useful prophylaxis; exf5 and d4 may now follow) 14...Nb6 (Black hopes that his pressure against the knight on d5 will dissuade White from exf5, but, of course, there's no need to fear any exchange on d5) 15.a4 Nd4 16.Nxd4 exd4 17.Bg5 fxe4 was Ribli-Pribyl, German Bundesliga 1990, where Black had untangled to an extent, but 18.dxe4! would have retained an edge.

chesstouring.com



The d4-pawn isn't going anywhere and Black will probably have to weaken with ...c5 at some point soon, while in the short term White has ideas of Nf4 and in the long term of advancing his kingside majority.

12.Rac1



chesstouring.com

Just as after 11...Rf7, White faced the classic dilemma of: where to place the rooks? In both cases, the choice is really between c1 and e1 (the king's rook is quite happy being ready to support a timely advance of the f2-pawn), and we prefer the former, planning to play on the queenside.

12...Kh8

12...Rf7?! feels a little strange at this point, but Black often suffers from an inability to find a good plan in this line. Whatever the reason for the move, it allowed a strong Hungarian GM and English expert to give another model display for White: 13.b4 Nc8 14.b5 Nd8 and now in Ribli-Mokry, Moscow Olympiad 1994, White exchanged on f5 in thematic fashion. Possibly even stronger, though, would have been 15.a4!?, and if 15...c6 16.Ndc3 followed by f4 or 16...f4 17.gxf4 Bh3 18.f3!, again keeping Black at bay on the kingside.

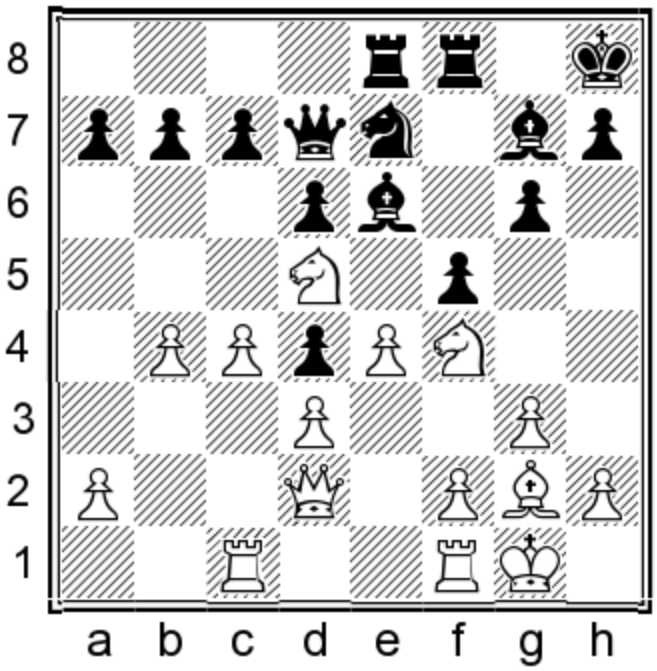
13.b4

Consistent with our previous move and already b5 is a threat when White may even be able to follow up with Qa5.

13...Nc8

Alternatively, 13...Ng8 14.b5 Nce7 (or 14...Nd4 15.Bxd4 exd4 16.Ndf4 threatening, amongst others, exf5 and Bxb7) 15.Qa5!? would illustrate that previous comment perfectly, and after 15...c5 16.bxc6! (and not 16.Qxa7?? Ra8 17.Qb6 Bxd5 followed by the queen-trapping ...Nc8) 16...Nxc6 17.Qc7 White's hold on d5 and queenside pressure leaves him with an edge, as does 13...Nd4 14.Bxd4!? exd4 15.Nef4.

chesstouring.com



True, this gives up an important bishop, but White is more than compensated by his light-square pressure, not least down the long diagonal: for example, 15...Bg8 16.Nxe7 Rxe7 17.exf5 Qxf5 when taking on b7 would allow ...Bh6, which is a little annoying, but 18.Nd5! Ref7 19.Qe2 retains control and a very pleasant edge. Just look at White's control of the light squares and how 19...Qd7 20.Rce1! c6 21.Ne7 Bf6 22.Nxg8 Kxg8 23.a4 only leaves one bishop pulling its weight.

14.exf5

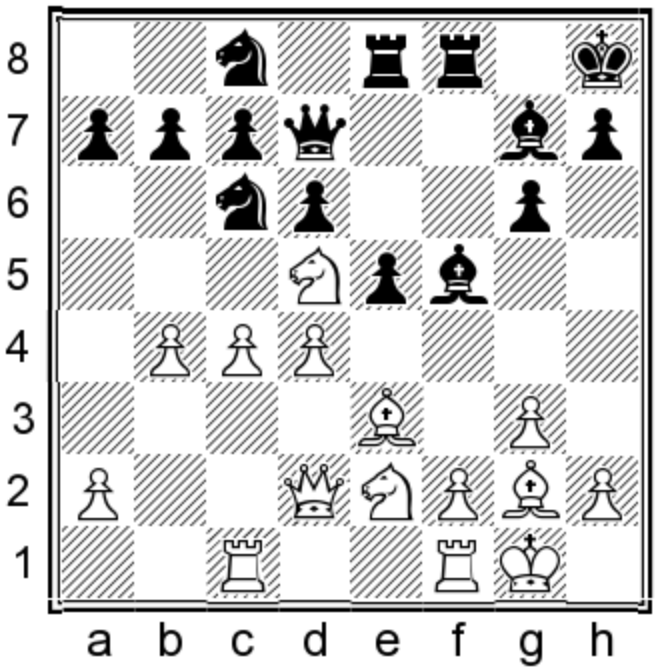
Thematic and, again, so too would have been a further queenside advance.

14...Bxf5

After 14...gxf5 15.b5 N6e7 Black is finally ready to exchange knights on d5, so White should just go 16.Nxe7! Nxe7 17.f4, retaining both control and the usual pleasant queenside pressure.

15.d4!?

chesstouring.com



White's most ambitious course, if also one which might well cause Black to quickly err.

15...exd4?!

White takes over after this. Instead, 15...Nd8! would have freed Black's c-pawn for duties and only left him slightly worse after 16.dxe5 dxe5 17.Rfd1 c6 18.Ndc3 Qf7 19.Ne4.

16.Nxd4 Bh3?

Black goes all-in. 16...Be4 was likely better, if quite miserable for the defender after 17.f3 Bxd5 18.cxd5 Nxd4 19.Bxd4 on account of White's pressure down the c-file and the hole on e6.

17.Bxh3!

Cold-blooded play. White refuses to be bluffed.

17...Qxh3 18.Nxc7 Re4

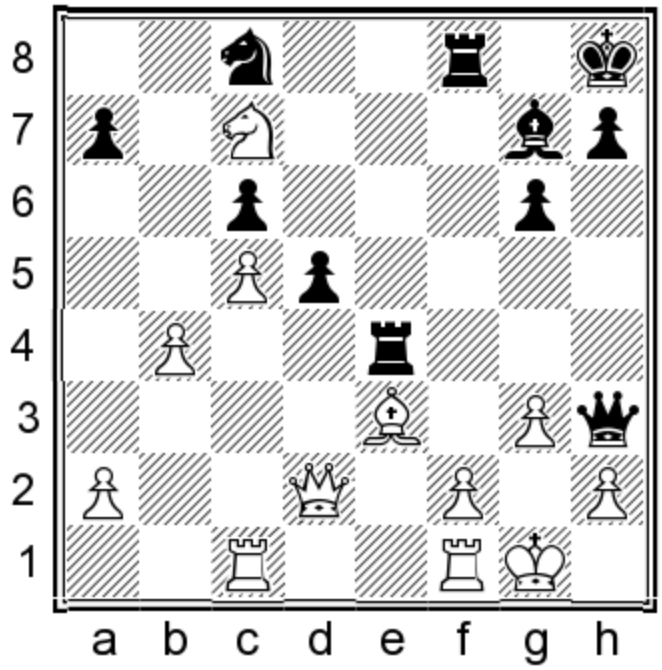
chesstouring.com

The point of Black's play: d4 is attacked and there are ideas of ...Rh4, as well as of ...Ne5, but never forget that White can usually defend along the second rank in such positions. It's easy to panic, but actually the king is quite safe on g1, in part because there actually aren't that many pieces in the attack.

19.Nxc6!

Exchanging off a potential attacker before it could go to e5.

19...bxc6 20.c5! d5



Instead, 20...Rh4? would hope for a draw by perpetual check if the rook is taken, but is powerfully rebuffed by 21.f4.

We've followed the game Baghdasaryan-Maiorov, Kazan 2016, and now the simplest approach would have been **21.f3 Re7 22.Na6** followed by a4 and b5, retaining control and a huge advantage.

chesstouring.com

Game 14
V.Doncea-O.Touzane
French League 2010

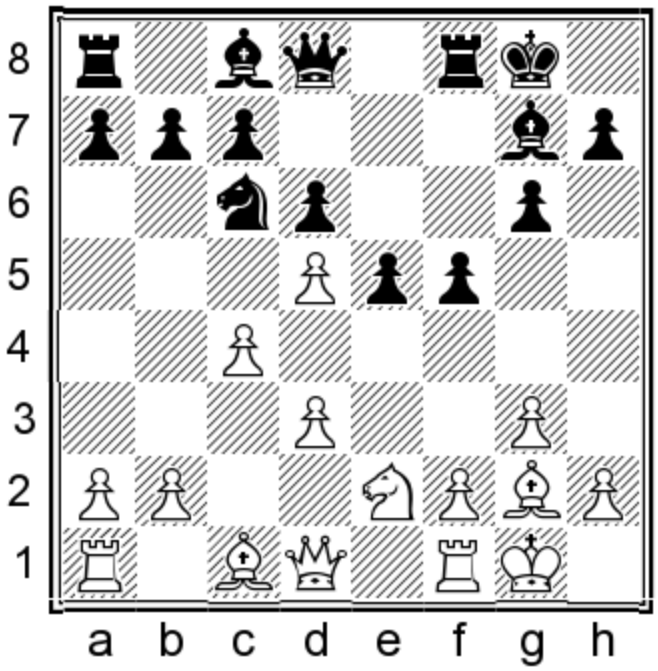
1.c4 g6 2.g3

There's absolutely nothing wrong with this, but 2.Nc3 Bg7 3.g3 d6 4.Bg2 would be our usual move order.

2...Bg7 3.Bg2 d6 4.Nc3 e5 5.e4 Nc6 6.Nge2 f5

We'll come on to this line in our next section (4B). As we've already seen, 6...Nge7 7.d3 0-0 8.0-0 f5 is another important line whereupon 9.Nd5 Nxd5 10.exd5!? transposes to our main game here.

7.d3 Nf6 8.0-0 0-0 9.Nd5 Nxd5 10.exd5!?



This recapture and one which certainly increases the gaze of the bishop on g2.

chesstouring.com

10...Nd4 11.Nxd4 exd4 12.b4!?

A novelty, if also a logical move, seizing space on the queenside.

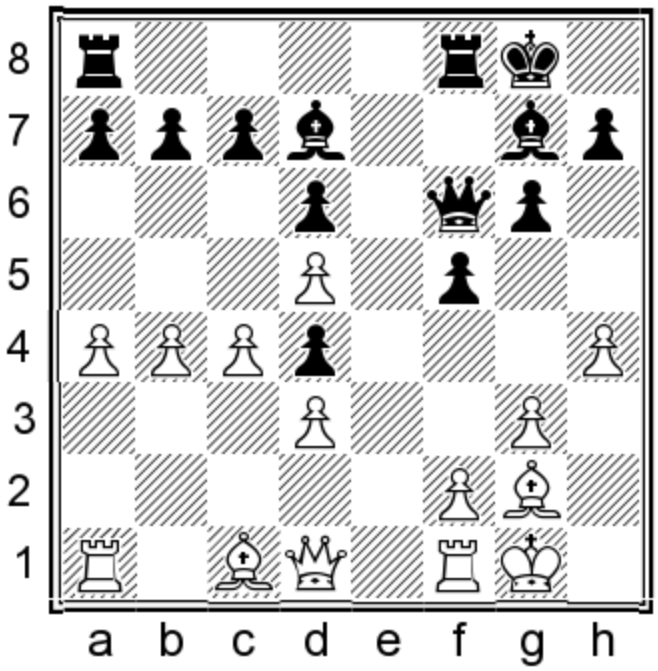
12...Bd7

Some players would have been unable to resist 12...a5!? here as White clearly cannot go a3 in response. However, 13.bxa5! Rxa5 14.a4 b6 15.Bd2 Ra8 16.Re1 maintains control and an edge, since Black remains slightly vulnerable down the e-file and a5 will swap off the isolani.

13.a4 Qf6

13...a5 14.bxa5 would have been more of the same, and if 14...Rxa5 15.Bd2 Ra8 16.a5, clamping down on the black queenside and intending to pressure b7.

14.h4!



A big move, but also a good one. White wants to prevent any advance on the kingside whilst gradually edging forwards on the queenside.

chesstouring.com

14...h6 15.a5 a6

Holding White up for now.

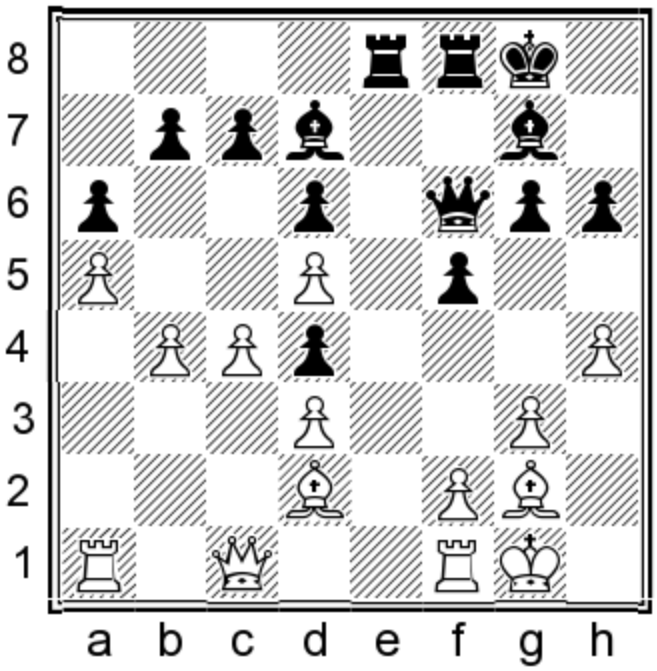
'But what about 15...g5?' you might ask. Well, 16.hxg5 hxg5 17.Qh5 was White's idea, and if 17...Bh6 (17...f4 18.Be4 merely reminds Black that he has weakened his own king and White may even be able to follow up with Kg2 and Rh1) 18.Re1 Rae8 (there's no threat after 18...Be8 19.Qh3 Bd7, so White might just go 20.c5, as if 20...f4? 21.Qxd7 fxg3 22.f3) 19.Bd2. With c5 on its way, Black is vulnerable on both flanks, so might lash out with 19...f4?!, but after 20.gxf4!? gxf4 21.Bh3 Bxh3 22.Qxh3 White's king is actually the safer of the two and something like 22...Kg7 23.Rxe8 Rxe8 24.Kf1 Rh8 25.Qf3 retains control, followed by Re1 and Ke2-d1. Not only is f4 vulnerable, but also the black queenside, be it along the seventh or after a6 b6, leaving Black with surely too many pawns on the same colour as his bishop.

16.Bd2 Rae8?!

16...g5!? 17.hxg5 hxg5 18.Qh5 would, of course, have been more of the same as the previous note, but after the text White is able to take full control.

17.Qc1!

chesstouring.com



Clamping down on the black kingside while also supporting any c5 advance.

17...Kh7

Black has spent the past several moves wishing that he could play ...f5-f7, and so much do they dislike his structure that some of the engines even suggest 17...f4!? 18.Bxf4 Bg4, which frees the bishop, but after the simple 19.f3 Bf5 20.Qd2 White is just a pawn up and still in full control.

18.Rb1 c6!?

Black decides that he must react on the flank where he is weakest, not be slowly squashed, as by 18...Re2 19.b5 axb5 20.cxb5 Rc8 21.Re1 Rxe1+ 22.Qxe1 followed by the creation of a highly dangerous passed a-pawn.

19.Bf4 cxd5?

This only helps White, although it wasn't so easy to wait, as we can see from 19...Re7?! 20.c5 and even 19...Rf7 20.Qd2 Rfe7 21.Bf3 when White

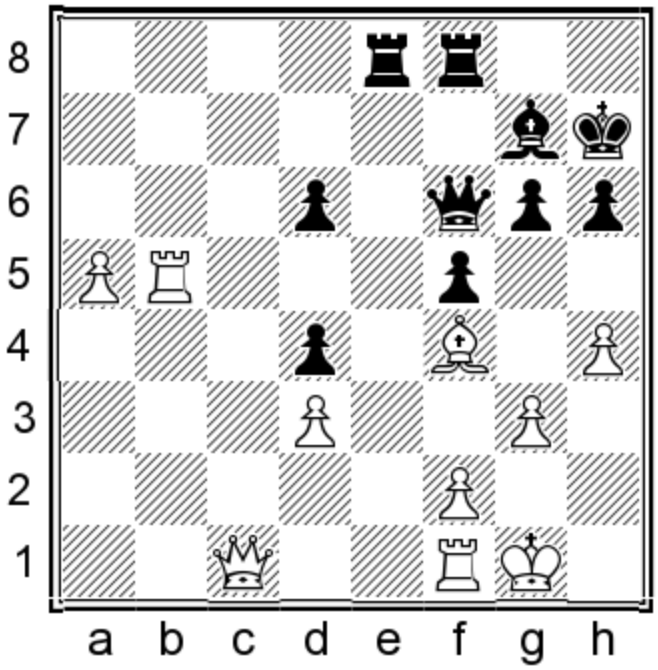
chesstouring.com

retains full control after 21...cxd5 22.Bxd5 Re2 23.Qc1 Bc8 24.b5.

20.Bxd5 Bc6 21.Bxc6

The simplest. White is about to crash through on the queenside and once again has absolutely no reason to fear a rook landing on e2.

21...bxc6 22.b5! cxb5 23.cxb5 axb5 24.Rxb5



Obtaining such open lines and with an outside passed pawn to boot is many an English player's dream. Meanwhile Black remains without any real counterplay and the worse bishop.

24...Rc8 25.Qd2 Rc6

25...Rc3 may look active, but after 26.Rfb1 Ra3 27.Rb6 Rd8 28.Rb7! something is going to have to give in the black kingside.

26.Rc1 Rc3 27.Ra1

With the simple plan of pushing Alfie all the way down the board.

chesstouring.com

27...Ra8

27...Rc7 would have prevented White's next, but after 28.a6 Ra8 29.Rb6 Rd7 30.Qb4 Bf8 31.Rb7 the defence surely wouldn't have held together for long.

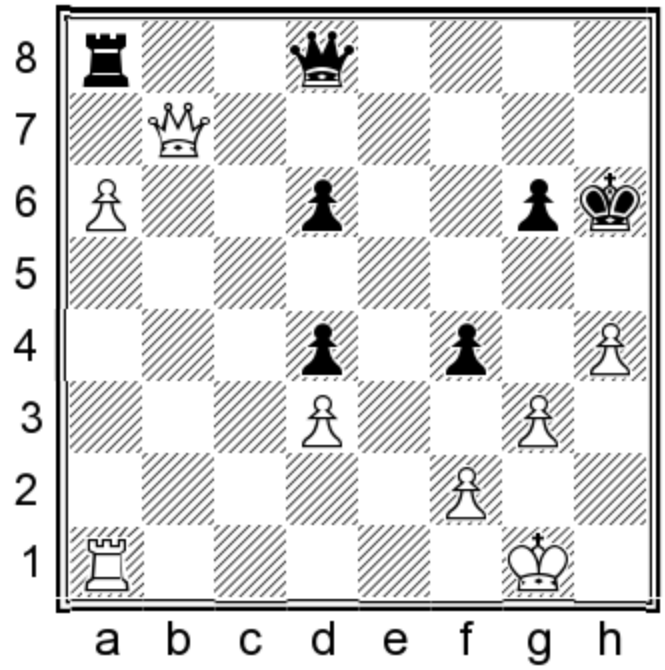
28.Rb7!

This pin along the seventh ensures White will pick off h6.

28...Qd8 29.Bxh6 Rc7 30.Bxg7!? Rxg7

30...Rxb7 31.Qh6+ Kg8 32.Bxd4! is a vicious retreat, to be followed by the deadly Qxg6+ or 32...Qe8 33.Qh8+ Kf7 34.Qg7+ Ke6 35.Qxb7.

31.Rxg7+ Kxg7 32.Qb4 Kh7 33.Qb7+ Kh6 34.a6 f4



At last Black manages to make a pawn breakthrough on the kingside, but by now the a-pawn is, unsurprisingly, far too strong.

35.a7 fxg3 36.fxg3 Qe8 37.Kh1

chesstouring.com

Denying Black even a check and do observe how well placed White's queen is on the long diagonal.

37...g5

Desperation. 37...Qd8 38.Kg2 d5 39.g4! would also herald the end.

38.hxg5+ Kh5 39.Qf3+ Kg6

White would again be happy to conclude matters with a decisive attack after 39...Kxg5 40.Ra5+.

40.Kg2 Qe5 41.Qxa8 1-0

There's certainly no perpetual in view of 41...Qe2+ 42.Kh1 Qh5+ 43.Kg1.

Game 15
M.Botvinnik-E.Geller
Moscow 1966

1.c4 g6 2.g3

Again we see this move order instead of 2.Nc3 Bg7 3.g3 e5 4.Bg2.

2...Bg7 3.Bg2 e5 4.Nc3 d6 5.d3 Ne7 6.e4 0-0

A slightly unusual move order from the six-time Candidate, but play soon transposes to familiar waters.

7.Nge2 Nbc6 8.0-0 Be6

As the bishop has gone here, by now we hope you know what comes next!

9.Nd5

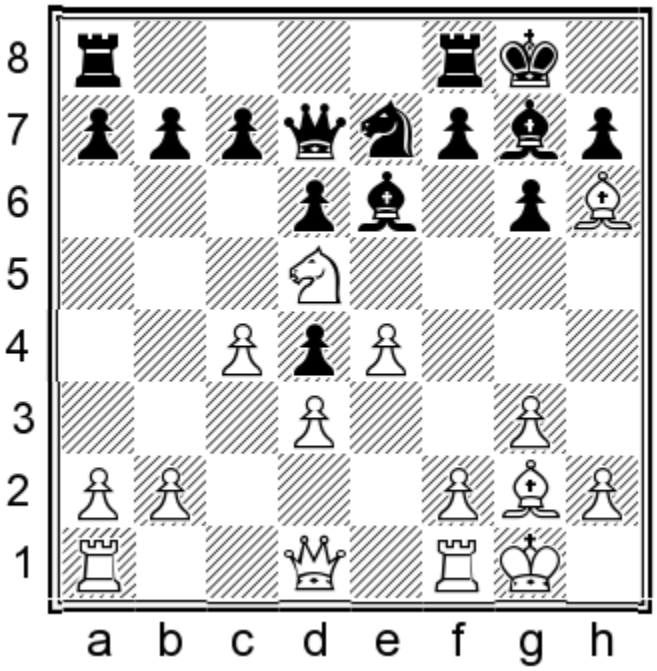
chesstouring.com

Of course.

9...Qd7 10.Be3 Nd4

Geller is by no means the only strong player to have been tempted into such a leap, but White rarely minds the emergence of a black pawn on d4.

11.Nxd4! exd4 12.Bh6!?



By no means the only good choice of square for the bishop, but ever a hard trick to resist.

12...c5

This solid choice rather condemns Black to a long defence.

In any case, though, it's by no means clear he can equalise, as we can see too from 12...c6 13.Bxg7 Kxg7 14.Nf4! (hunting down a potentially useful bishop) 14...h6 15.Qd2 a5 16.Rfe1!? g5? 17.Nh5+! (taking up the challenge and a good call, since White will quickly be able to involve one of our favourite pawns) 17...Kg6 18.f4! f5 (Black loses a piece after 18...Kxh5?

chesstouring.com

19.f5 Nxf5 20.g4+! unless he prefers to be mated in style after 20...Kxg4 21.Bf3+! Kxf3 22.h3! Kg3 23.Qg2+ Kf4 24.Qh2+ Ng3 25.Rf1+) 19.Qe2 Rae8 20.fxg5 hxg5 21.h4! (ensuring the knight will make it out) 21...Rh8 22.Bf3 g4 23.Nf4+ Kg7 and now in Hellbing-Zielinski, correspondence 2005, 24.Bg2 would have been simple and strong, followed by Qd2 with ongoing pressure and much the safer king.

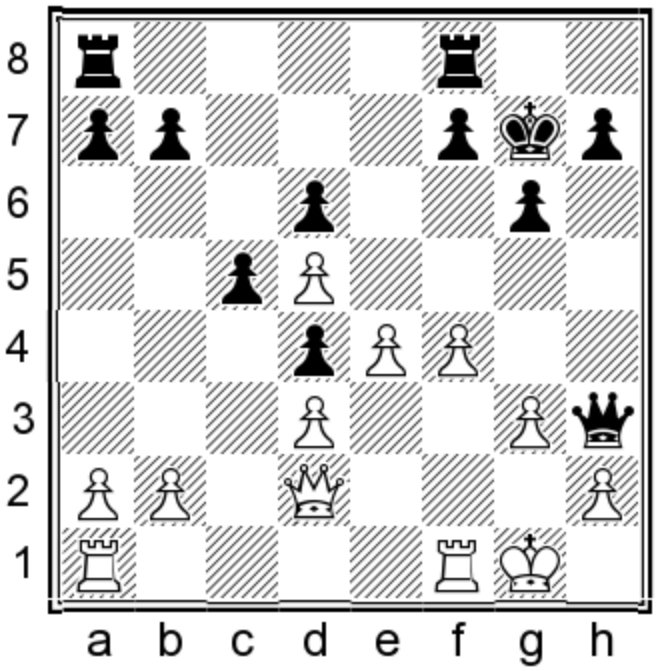
Likewise, 12...Bxd5 13.Bxg7 Kxg7 14.cxd5 (we again also wonder about 14.exd5!?, since the bishop on g2 will be fairly happy if Black breaks with ...c6, but if not something like 14...Nf5 15.Re1 Rae8 16.Re4 looks quite pleasant for White) 14...c5 15.dxc6 Qxc6 16.Qd2 was pleasant for White in Gourlay-Purton, 4NCL 2018, with d4 potentially vulnerable and the f-pawn ready to roll.

chesstouring.com

13.Bxg7 Kxg7 14.Qd2!

14.Nf4 was again possible, but Botvinnik is in no rush, refusing to fear further exchanges.

14...Nxd5 15.cxd5 Bh3 16.Bxh3 Qxh3 17.f4



This is why. Black might have exchanged off the remaining minor pieces, but his pawns are the less mobile and his king slightly the more exposed.

17...Qd7 18.f5! f6

He could hardly allow the white pawn to go all the way, but now Botvinnik can set about probing on the kingside.

19.h4! Qe7

19...Rae8!? has been suggested by some analysts, but even so Black's cause looks quite an unappealing one after 20.Rf4 Re5 21.Raf1. He can try to get going with 21...b5 22.Kg2 Qc7, but White maintains pressure and

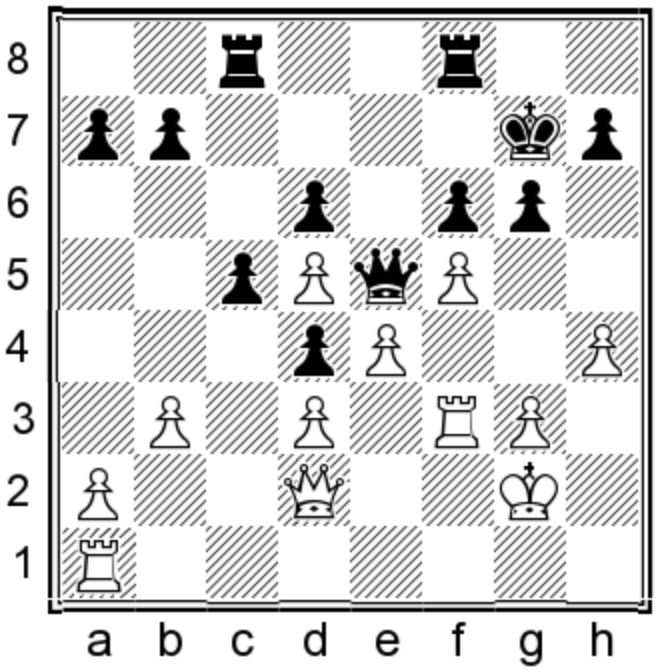
chesstouring.com

control with, say, 23.fxg6 hxg6 24.Qf2 Qd8 25.b4!?, after which Qb2 and Rc1 might follow or g4-g5.

20.Rf3 Qe5

As good a square as any for the queen and, of course, 20...g5? wouldn't keep lines closed in view of 21.hxg5 fxg5? 22.f6+! Rxf6 23.Qxg5+ Kf7 24.Rxf6+ Qxf6 25.Rf1.

21.Kg2 Rac8 22.b3!



The first of two very instructive moves from the great Botvinnik, designed to keep Black's counterplay under control.

22...b5 23.a4! c4?

Fed up with suffering, Geller rolls the dice. Of course, 23...b4 24.Raf1 would have left White with a free hand on the kingside where he would like to get in g4-g5, but Black really had to dig in for a long defence after 23...bxa4 24.Rxa4 Qe7 25.Qf4 Rb8 26.Ra3.

chesstouring.com

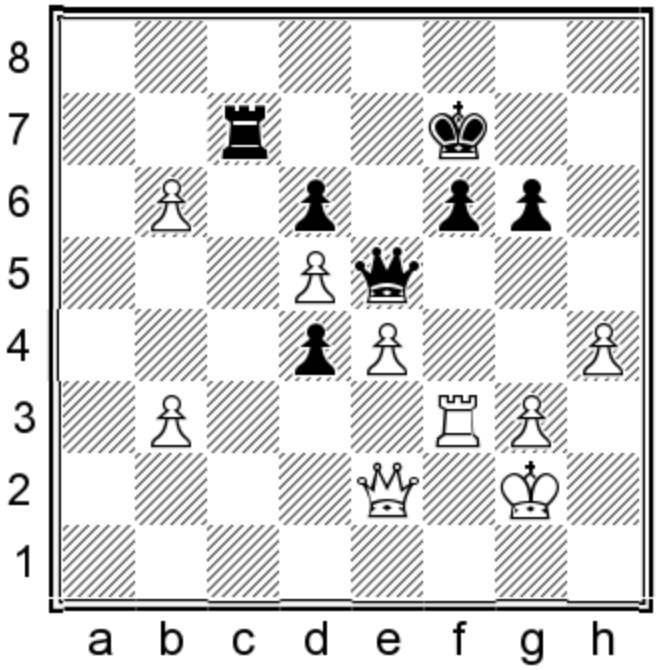
24.axb5 cxd3

Botvinnik had spotted that after 24...c3? 25.Rxa7+ Rf7 26.Rxf7+ Kxf7 27.Qh6 c2 White can retain the kingside pressure and halt the c-pawn thanks to the calm 28.Rf1.

25.Rxa7+ Rf7 26.Rxf7+ Kxf7 27.fxg6+ hxg6 28.Qxd3

White might not have won in the middlegame, but could be delighted to have reached an ending two pawns to the good.

28...Rc3 29.Qe2 Rc7 30.b6!



Forcing matters so should have led to a fairly straightforward win.

30...Rb7 31.Qa6

Simple and strong, and yet there was an even better move in 31.h5!, opening a second front against the black king and intending the lovely, powerful sequence 31...g5 (31...Qxh5 32.Qa6 is hopeless for Black, as is 31...gxh5 32.Rf5 Qe8 33.Rxh5!) 32.Qa6 Qe7 33.e5! dxe5 34.d6! Qd7

chesstouring.com

35.Qc4+ Kg7 (or 35...Qe6 36.Qc6 Qd7 37.Qd5+ Kg7 38.h6+!) 36.h6+ and finally the defence must snap.

31...Qe7 32.Kh2

Not quite the best way of making the king safe, 32.Kf2!? being a bit more straightforward, and if 32...Kg7 33.Rd3 g5 34.hxg5 fxg5 35.Rf3!, thereby maintaining control.

32...Kg7 33.Rd3 g5

Geller seizes his only chance.

34.hxg5 Kg6! 35.Rxd4

White can get away with this slightly greedy grab, but the way to maintain full control was 35.Rd2!, so that ...Qxe4 won't threaten anything, and if 35...fxg5 36.Rf2.

35...Qe5 36.Qd3 fxg5 37.Kg2?

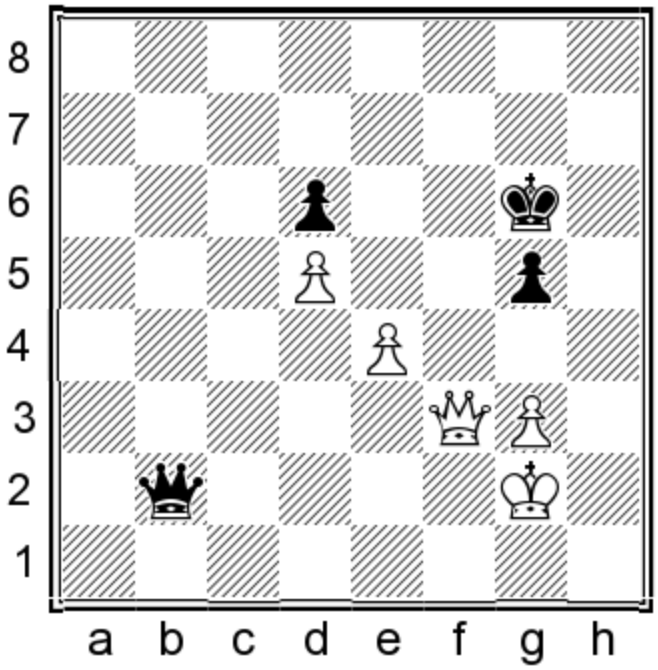
A natural move in the run-up to move 40, but this throws away the win. By now matters were far from easy, but with 37.Rc4! Rxb6 38.Rc6 White would still have won, and if 38...Qb2+ 39.Kh3! (a further important move; the immediate 39.Qc2? Qxc2+ 40.Rxc2 Rxb3, and if 41.Rc6 Kh5 42.Rxd6 Kg4 gives Black sufficient counterplay to draw) 39...Qh8+ 40.Kg2 Qb2+ 41.Qc2!, since the ending is now winning after 41...Qxc2+ 42.Rxc2 Rxb3 43.Rc6 Kh5 44.Rxd6 Kg4 45.Kf2!, as the white king escapes the checks and the connected passed pawns will prove decisive.

37...Rxb6 38.Qe3?

A further slip. By now White's king is exposed, but 38.Rc4 Rb7 39.Rc2 would still have preserved some winning chances.

chesstouring.com

38...Rxb3! 39.Qxb3 Qxd4 40.Qf3 Qb2+



41.Qf2

Naturally White had to avoid 41.Kh3 Qh8+ 42.Kg4?? Qh5 mate, but the extra e-pawn isn't going anywhere and Geller now held easily enough.

41...Qe5 42.Qe2 Qd4 43.Kf3 Qf6+ 44.Ke3 Qc3+ 45.Kf2 Qf6+ 46.Kg1 Qa1+ 47.Kg2 Qd4 48.Qf3 Qb2+ 49.Qf2 Qe5 50.Qe1 g4 51.Qb4 Qf6 52.Qa3 Kh5 53.Qe3 Kg6 54.Qe2 Kg5 55.Qf2 Qe5 56.Qe3+ Kg6 57.Kf1 Qf6+ 58.Ke2 Qb2+ 59.Qd2 ½-½

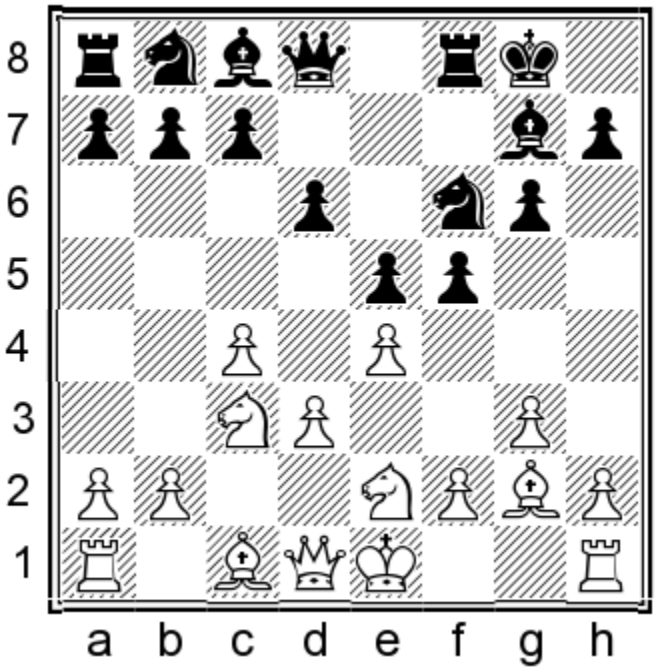
Theory 4B

1.c4 g6 2.Nc3 Bg7 3.g3 d6 4.Bg2 e5 5.e4 Nc6

Again we see this natural development, controlling d4. Black can also begin with 5...f5 when taking on f5, while obviously tempting, is surprisingly messy, so we'll stick with our favourite set-up: 6.d3 Nf6

chesstouring.com

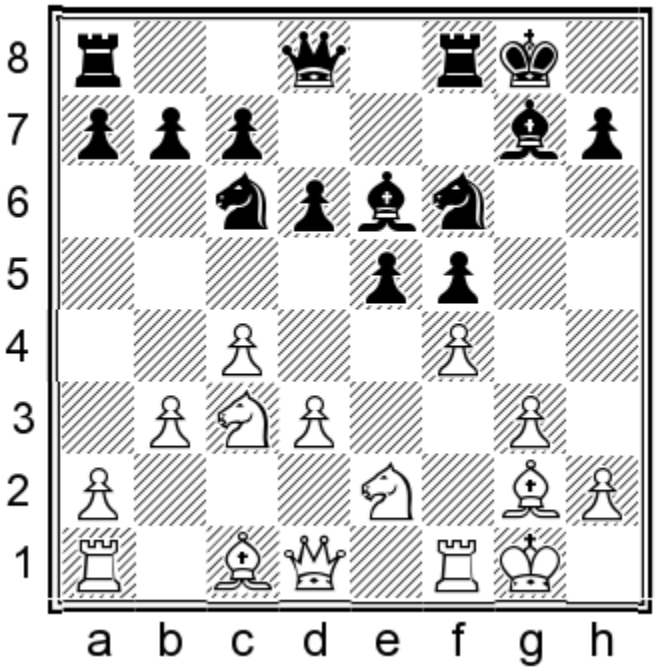
7.Nge2 0-0. However, now rather than castle, we can cause a spot of trouble with a thematic exchange:



8.exf5! gxf5 (8...Bxf5?! was tried in Glud-Lindfeldt, Danish League 2009, when White should just have been brave: 9.Bxb7 Nbd7 and now there's no need to give up all the light squares when 10.Bg2! Nc5 11.Ne4 is possible, leaving White set to finish development with 0-0 and Be3, and a clear pawn to the good) 9.0-0 (9.Bg5!? also warrants attention for creative and/or aggressive readers, when 9...Nbd7 10.Qd2 Re8 11.h3!? Nb6 12.g4 looked like fun in Van Osmael-Berclaz, correspondence 2001) 9...Nc6 (otherwise, 9...f4? 10.gxf4 is nothing to fear, and if 10...Nc6 11.Ng3 Bg4 12.f3 Bd7 13.fxe5 dxe5 14.Be3 with an extra pawn, while 9...c5?! 10.Rb1! was a timely switch of approach which left Black rather weak on b5 and d5 after 10...Nc6 11.a3 a5 12.Bg5 in Kokarev-Kabanov, Kazan 2019, and even 9...c6 10.d4 looks quite pleasant and was quickly more than that after 10...Qe8 11.b3! f4? 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.Ba3 Rf7 14.gxf4! exf4 15.Nxf4 with an extra pawn and the initiative in Medvegy-Vavulin, Mali Losinj 2019; our dark-squared bishop really can wreak havoc in many ways in these lines) 10.f4! (taking control; 10.d4 is again a decent alternative, but 10.Nd5 would allow Black to stir things up with 10...f4!?) 10...Be6 and now White has

chesstouring.com

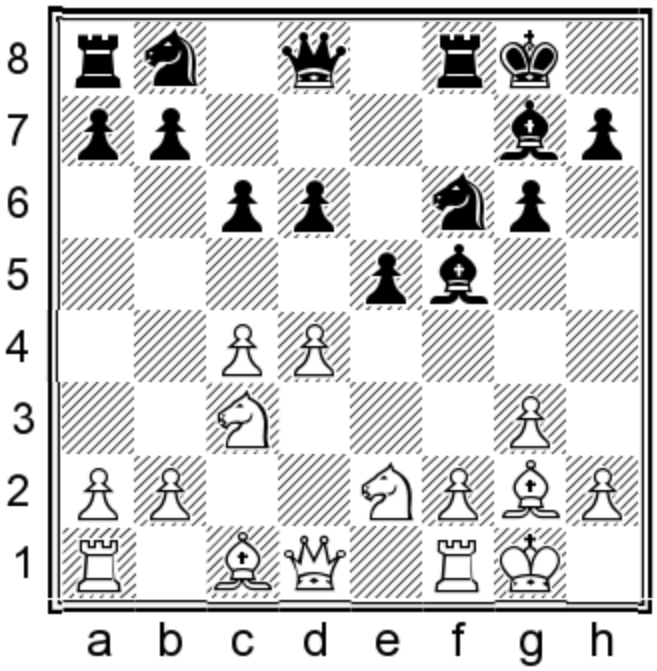
tended to continue with the thematic knight leap to d5, which is sensible, as is Stephen Gordon's idea 11.b3!?.



This is directed against any ...e4 ideas from Black and after 11...Qd7 12.Bb2 Ng4?! (12...Rae8 improves, although after 13.Qd2 b6 14.Rae1 Nd4 15.Nd1!? c5 16.b4 we'd be happy enough as White, who is ready to go bxc5, either opening the b-file or causing a collapse on e5, as well as after Ne3, and there are also ideas of a timely Bxd4, most likely after a preliminary h3 to prevent ...Ng4) 13.Qd2 Rae8 14.h3 Nf6 15.Rae1 White was very harmoniously placed in Gordon-Hutchinson, British Rapidplay Championship, Pudsey 2019. One way to increase the pressure is Nd5, another is to continue making useful moves with Kh2, after which even Nd1-e3 is an idea, unfurling the bishop on b2 while beginning to pressure f5 as well as e5.

In this sideline, if Black wants to recapture with a piece on f5, he should prefer 7...c6 8.exf5 Bxf5. This is possible now that b7 isn't hanging, but White can react in the centre and 9.d4! 0-0, as in Flores-Felgaer, Resistance/Saenz Pena 2013, and then 10.0-0 looks a small edge.

chesstouring.com

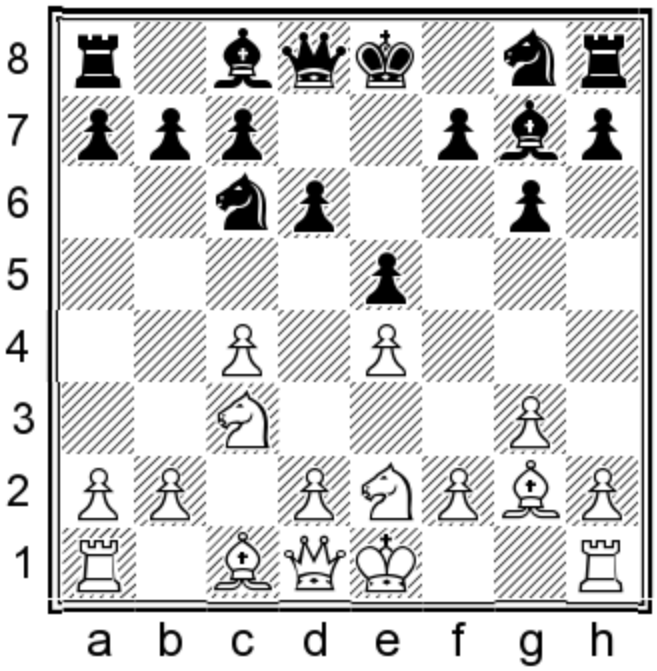


For example, 10...Nbd7 (or 10...Qd7 11.Bg5 when White will continue with Qd2 or a well-timed exchange on e5, as with 11...Na6 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.Qxd7 Nxd7 14.Ne4 and Black has to be a little careful as 14...Nac5?! runs into 15.Nxc5 Nxc5 16.Be7) 11.h3!? Qe7 12.g4! Be6 13.d5 cxd5 14.cxd5 Bf7 15.Ng3, which leaves Black cramped and White controlling the key e4-square.

Returning to 5...Nc6:

6.Nge2

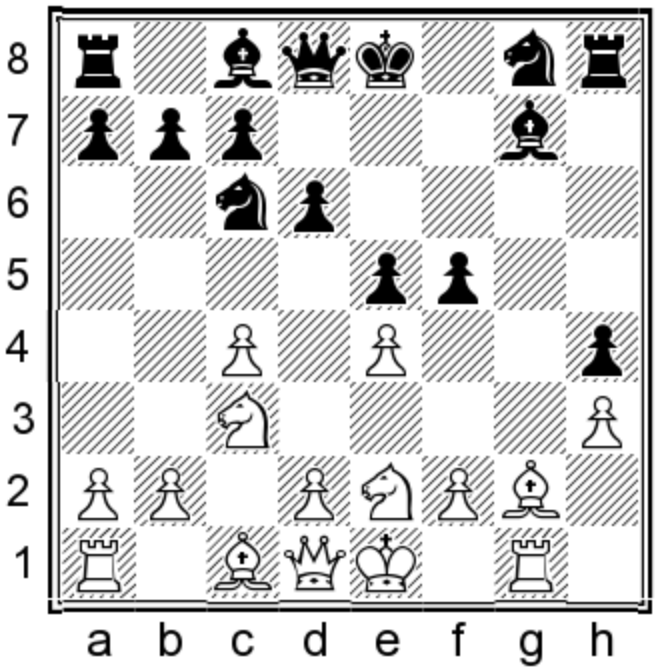
chesstouring.com



6...f5

A logical advance from Black. Another ambitious policy is 6...h5 when White has most often gone 7.h4, but we still like 7.h3!?, and if 7...h4 8.g4 f5 (when Tony Kosten wrote the excellent *The Dynamic English* back in 1999 – a work which persuaded Richard to take up 1.c4 – he was concerned by 8...Bh6? here, but we can now safely say that 9.d4 Bxc1 10.Rxc1 favours White, who might even obtain a very good version of a King's Indian after a quick d5 and c5, or with 10...exd4?! 11.Nxd4 Nge7 12.0-0 and f4) 9.gxf5! (not our usual Botvinnik policy, but this is one line where it helps to remember a specific response) 9...gxf5 10.Rg1.

chesstouring.com

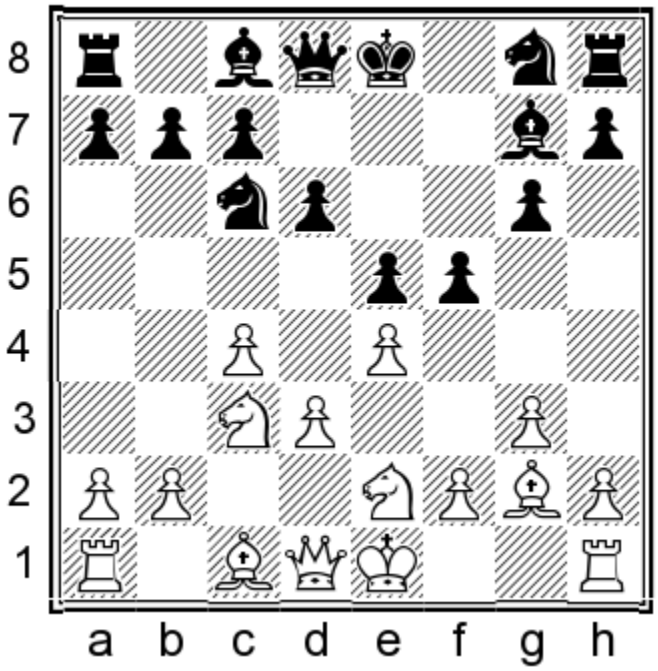


This is very dynamic and pretty aggressive from White, but he does retain sufficient control whilst obtaining the initiative, as we'll see in Romanov-Andreikin, Baku 2011.

Here 7...h4 was consistent, if not forced. Otherwise, 7...Be6 8.d3 Nh6 (again, we'd go 8...h4 9.g4 followed by Nd5 or if here 9...f5?! 10.gxf5 gxf5 11.Qb3 Nge7 12.Rg1, echoing White's play below, so 8...Qd7 might improve, intending only now 9.Nd5 h4 10.g4 f5, although even here 11.gxf5 gxf5 12.exf5 Bxf5 13.Bg5 looks a little better for White, with Black overextended and Qb3 on its way) 9.Nd5 f5 10.h4! ruled out ...h4 and clamped down on g5, leaving White with a pleasant edge after 10...Nf7 11.Be3 0-0 12.Qd2 a6 13.Rc1 Qd7 14.0-0 in McShane-Efimenko, Wijk aan Zee 2011, where b4 was one plan, an exchange on f5 followed by a central break another. Instead, 7...Nd4 8.d3 Ne7 9.Nxd4 exd4 10.Ne2 again leaves Black filling the hole on d4 with a pawn and after the 10...Nc6 of Bischoff-Babula, German Bundesliga 2003, 11.0-0 0-0 12.b3!? Be6 13.Bb2 is quite a decent plan, intending Qd2 and b4 or f4, and if 13...a5 14.Qd2 a4 15.Rab1 when 15...axb3 16.axb3 Ra2 17.Ra1 Rxa1 18.Rxa1 is nothing to fear followed by Nf4 and b4.

chesstouring.com

7.d3



7...Nf6

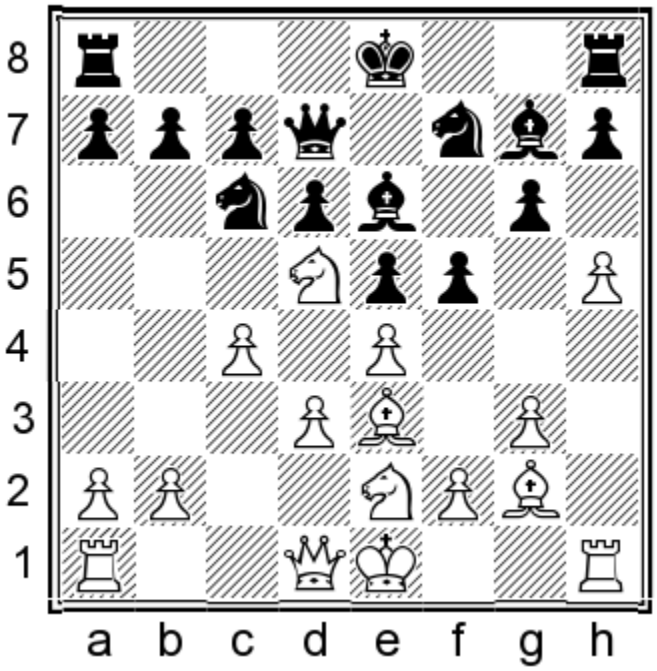
Once again the likes of 7...Nge7 8.0-0 0-0 9.Nd5 and 7...Be6 8.0-0 Nge7 9.Nd5 take play back into the realm of Line 4A.

Instead, 7...fxe4?! 8.dxe4 would again be a premature freeing of the tension, allowing White to obtain a clamp on the position with 8...Nf6 9.0-0 Be6 10.Nd5, after which 10...0-0 11.Bg5 Qd7 12.Qd2 Rf7 13.f3 Bh3 14.Rad1 Rb8 15.Be3 Rbf8 16.b4 was all very thematic and gave White a pleasant edge in Gierden-Kavc, correspondence 2016, with easy play on the queenside and Black struggling for any real counterplay.

Finally, 7...Nh6?! is quite an old line, but rather asks for 8.h4! when we just can’t see a great move for Black: for example, 8...Be6 (alternatively, 8...0-0 9.Bg5 Qd7 10.h5! Nf7 11.Be3 is just very dangerous for Black with Qd2 and 0-0-0 on the way, Nigel Short’s 8...Nf7 might be met by 9.Be3!? when it’s not so easy to find a great move for Black and 9...Be6 10.Nd5 transposes below, and Peter Svidler’s attempt 8...fxe4 9.Bg5 Qd7 shouldn’t

chesstouring.com

equalise after 10.dxe4 Ng4 11.f3 Nf6 12.Qd2 followed by Nd5 with ongoing pressure, as well as control for White) 9.Nd5 Nf7 10.Be3 Qd7 11.h5!.



In Adorjan-Ribli, Budapest Interzonal 1979, Black was under pressure and could find nothing better than the ugly 11...gxh5 (11...g5? 12.h6! wins material due to the good, old trick on f6) 12.Rxh5 fxe4 13.Bxe4.

8.0-0

Getting the king to safety can never be bad. White can also exchange on f5 straight away and 8.Nd5 0-0 9.Bg5 is quite sensible too should you prefer to retain the tension.

8...0-0

Invariably Black follows suit so. Here 8...f4?! 9.gxf4 is not to be feared and after 9...0-0 (or 9...Nh5 10.fxe5 dxe5 11.Be3 0-0 12.Qd2 when White is all set to break out with f4), 10.Be3!? is possible, keeping Black out of d4 while intending 10...Ng4 (once again, f4 is on the agenda after 10...Bg4 11.f3! Be6 12.Qd2 Nh5 13.fxe5 dxe5 14.Nd5 when Black surely doesn't

chesstouring.com

have enough compensation) 11.h3! Nxe3 12.fxe3. There's no doubt that Black's unopposed dark-squared bishop offers him some compensation, but surely not enough for the pawn. White is all set to advance in the centre with d4 and can keep control after 12...exf4 13.exf4 Nd4 with 14.Rb1 Qh4 15.Qe1.

9.exf5!?

Both your authors have often gone 9.Nd5 here, but then 9...f4!? 10.gxf4 Nh5 is a little annoying, so we recommend another highly thematic plan, the exchange on f5.

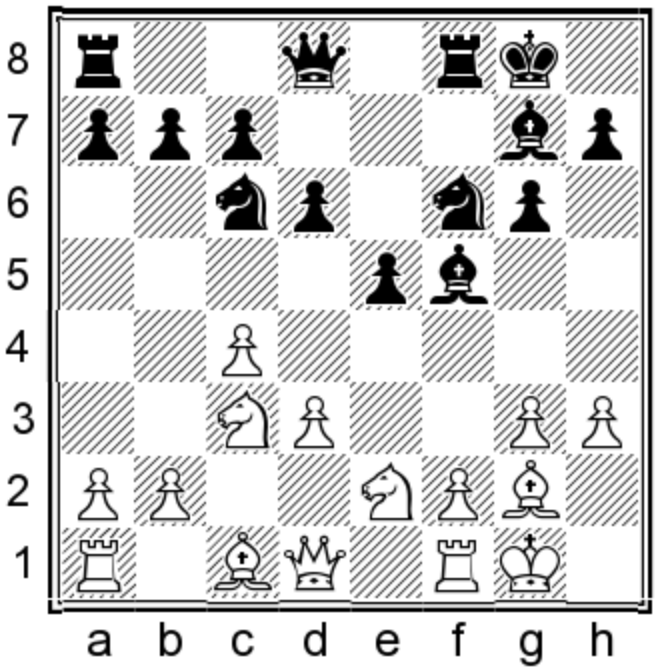
9...Bxf5

Usually played here, instead of 9...gxf5 when 10.f4! is quite nice for White, as we saw back in the notes to move 5.

10.h3!

An important follow-up. We want to prevent Black from swapping off with ...Bh3 our rather fine English bishop on g2.

chesstouring.com



10...Qd7

Logical. After 10...Kh8 11.Be3 Qd7 12.Kh2 Be6 play is quite similar and now in Balashov-Rashkovsky, Kuopio 1992, 13.f4!? Rae8 (13...exf4 14.Nxf4 only helps White's pieces, and if 14...Bf5 15.Ncd5 Nxd5 16.cxd5 Ne5 when the tactics are against 17.g4?, but 17.d4 Nc4 18.Bg1 renews the threat and 18...Rae8 19.Rc1 Nxb2? fails to 20.Qb3 Na4 21.Qxb7) 14.Qd2 would have been quite sensible, followed by Rae1 or if 14...d5 15.Bc5 when 15...Rf7 16.fxe5 Nxe5 17.Bd4 powerfully discombobulates, since 17...Nc6? 18.Bxf6 Rxf6 19.cxd5 would cost Black a piece.

Black has also been known to restrain g4 (not that we were going to rush with the advance), with 10...h5 when 11.Be3 Qd7 12.Kh2 Rae8 (12...Nh7?! presumably intended something aggressive like ...g5 or ...Bf6 and ...Ng5 in Kelly-Dishman, 4NCL 1999, but after 13.d4! exd4 14.Nxd4 Black was under pressure, which 14...Bxd4 15.Bxd4 Ng5 16.Nd5! Bxh3? 17.Nf6+ Rxf6 18.Bxf6 Bxg2 19.Kxg2 Qh3+ 20.Kg1 did nothing to alleviate, in view of 20...Ne4 21.Qd5+) 13.Qd2 gave White harmonious development in Spraggett-Taimanov, Paris 1989, as we'll soon see.

chesstouring.com

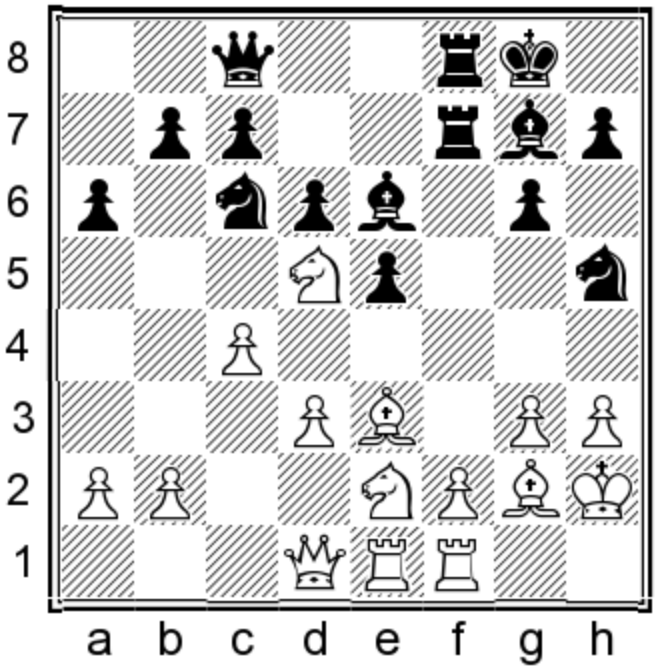
11.Kh2

Keeping it tight at the back. There's no hurry to push the g-pawn and make it easier for Black to obtain counterplay with ...h5 and/or ...d5.

11...Rae8

Centralisation. Black has tried quite a wide range of moves here, possibly reflecting that it's not so easy for him to come up with a clear plan:

a) 11...Be6 12.Nd5 (preventing ...d5) 12...Nh5!? (12...Bxd5?! 13.cxd5 Ne7 14.Qb3 leaves Black a little vulnerable on the light squares, not least if White manages to get in f4 exf4; Nxf4) 13.Qa4 (an alternative square for the queen to d2, preventing ...Ne7 and supporting a queenside advance) 13...Rf7 14.Be3 a6 saw Black take steps against b4-b5 in Kokarev-Setyaki, Yogyakarta 2019, when 15.Rae1!? shows that White doesn't have to play on the queenside, and after 15...Raf8 16.Qb3 (targeting the light squares in Black's camp) 16...Qc8 (16...b6? 17.Qa4! would be powerful, with the threat of Nxb6) 17.Qd1!? he is better.



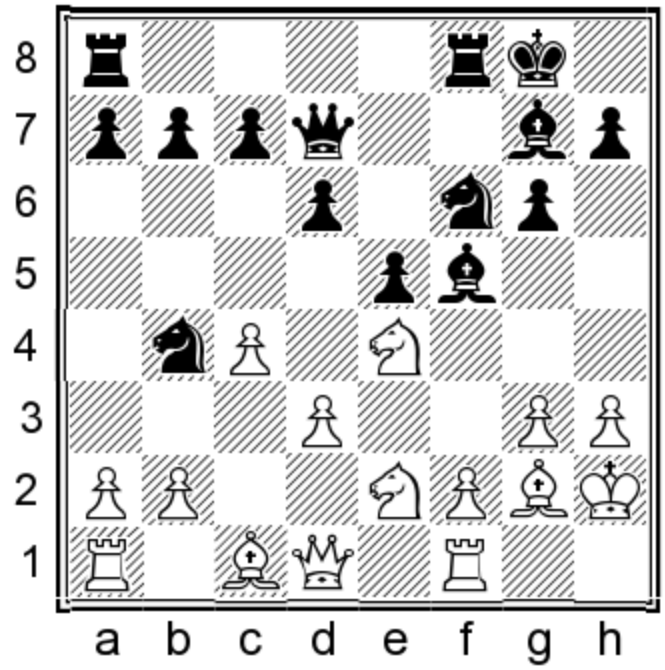
chesstouring.com

Yes, that was rather a lot of slightly subtle moves with the queen, ahead of bringing her back to base camp, but Black remains slightly short of a good plan, in contrast to which White has the f4 and d4 breaks, and might also improve with Nc3-e4.

b) 11...a6 12.Be3 Rab8 gives Black a clear idea, but the upcoming break doesn't carry that much oomph and 13.Qd2 b5 14.Rad1 Ne7 15.f4! Be6 16.fxe5 dxe5 17.b3 Nf5 18.Bg5 left Black weak on e4 and e5 in Abbasov-Ali Marandi, Ankara 2017, where White was set to squeeze further after g4.

c) 11...Nd4 is once again a leap White should be happy enough to see, 12.Nxd4 exd4 13.Ne2 c5 14.Bg5 Ne8 15.Qd2 giving him easy development before 15...Rb8?! 16.Rae1 Nc7 17.Nf4! took control in Maksimenko-Schnabel, German League 1998, based on the point 17...h6? 18.Re7 Qc8 19.Nd5.

d) 11...Nb4!? seeks immediate counterplay. White can easily deal with the threat against d3 with 12.Ne4:



d1) After 12...Nxe4 13.dxe4 Be6 14.a3 Nc6 15.b3 a6 Black at least had some counterplay in Abramovic-Ilincic, Vrnjacka Banja 1992. Here 16.a4!? is sensible to try and dissuade ...b5. Black can be insistent, but 16...b5!?

chesstouring.com

17.axb5 axb5 18.Rxa8 Rxa8 19.cxb5 Na5 shouldn't be anything to be overly feared, i.e. 20.b4 Nb3 21.Nc3 Nd4 22.Be3 Nxb5 23.Nxb5 Qxb5 24.Qc2 Qxb4 25.Qxc7 when White will grind away all day, with the superior structure and safer king.

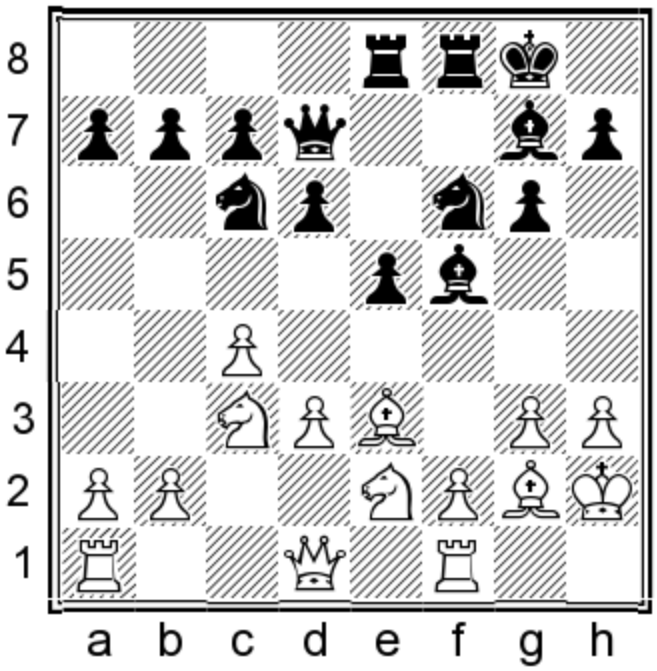
d2) 12...d5 13.cxd5 does isolate d3, but after 13...Nfxd5 (or 13...Nbxd5 14.Qb3 c6 15.g4 Be6 16.Nc5, bagging a fairly important bishop) 14.a3 Na6 (14...Nc6? 15.Qb3 is excellent for White, and if 15...Nce7 16.Qxb7) 15.b4 White will enjoy two fianchettoed bishops and might play after Bb2 to break with d4.

e) In contrast, 11...Rf7 12.Be3 Raf8 doesn't actually achieve all that much. That may explain why Black angled for ...d5 with 13.Qd2 Be6 in Soffer-Klinova, Tel Aviv 1993, where White might have pushed the f-pawn or tried the crafty 14.Rad1!?, with the idea of 14...d5?! 15.d4!, opening the position with advantage, as shown by 15...exd4 (15...e4?! 16.cxd5 either costs Black a pawn or leaves her suffering after 16...Bxd5 17.Nxd5 Qxd5 18.Nc3 Qf5 19.Qc2) 16.Nxd4 dxc4 when there are a number of tempting options, including 17.Qe2 Nxd4 18.Bxd4 followed by Bxf6, Bxb7 or 18...Bg4!? 19.f3 Bf5 20.Qxc4.

Returning to 11...Rae8:

12.Be3

chesstouring.com



12...Kh8

Again, we see Black making a semi-useful move to dodge any checks on the a2-g8 diagonal. He's again also tried 12...Nb4 (Barbosa-Coppola, Foz do Iguacu 2018), when 13.Ne4 (13.a3!? is extremely tempting, with the idea of 13...Nxd3 14.g4 Nxb2 15.Qb3, but unfortunately after 15...Bxg4 16.Qxb2 e4! 17.hxg4 Nxg4+ 18.Kg1 Ne5 Black appears to have enough counterplay, and if 19.Rfd1 Qg4 20.Qxb7 Nf3+ 21.Kf1 Nh2+ 22.Kg1 Nf3+, forcing a draw) 13...Nxe4 14.dxe4 Be6 15.a3 Nc6 16.Qd3 at least retains control. After 16...a5 Black hopes to clamp down with ...a4, but White can counter with 17.b3 when Rb1 and b4 might well follow.

13.Qd2 Qf7 14.b3

Overprotecting c4 in preparation for the d4 advance.

14...e4?!

chesstouring.com

Black is forcing the pace, but White doesn't mind closing the centre, which will continue to make it hard for Black to obtain play.

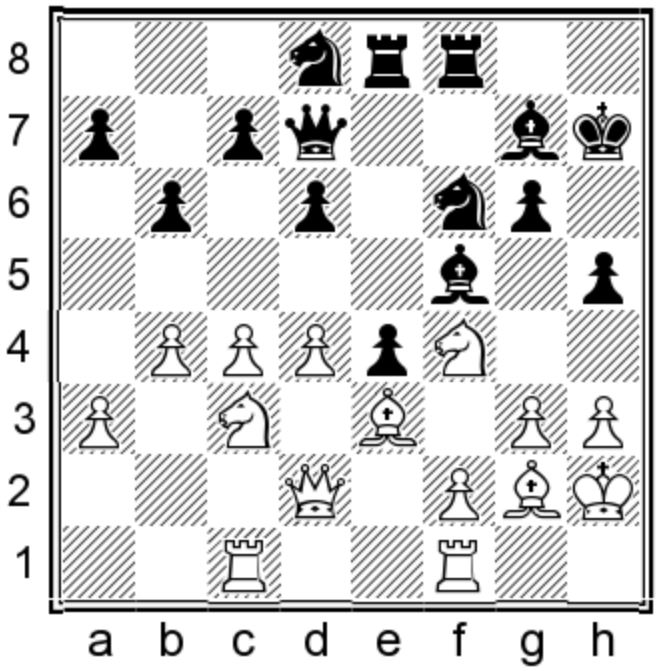
15.d4 h5 16.Nf4 Kh7

16...g5?! 17.Nfd5 Nxd5 18.Nxd5 g4 19.h4 would only create further weaknesses in the black camp.

17.a3 Qd7 18.Rac1!?

The b-pawn might have advanced, but there's no need for White to rush in such a position.

18...b6 19.b4 Nd8



We've followed the game Williams-Sasikiran, World Junior Championship, Calicut 1998, where **20.Nfd5!?** would have been fairly strong, and if **20...Nxd5** (20...c6 is less weakening, but still very nice for White after 21.Nxf6+ Bxf6 22.Rfd1 Nf7 23.b5!, and if 23...cxb5 24.Nd5! Bd8 25.cxb5 Qxb5 26.Nc7 Bxc7 27.Rxc7 with excellent play for the pawn)

chesstouring.com

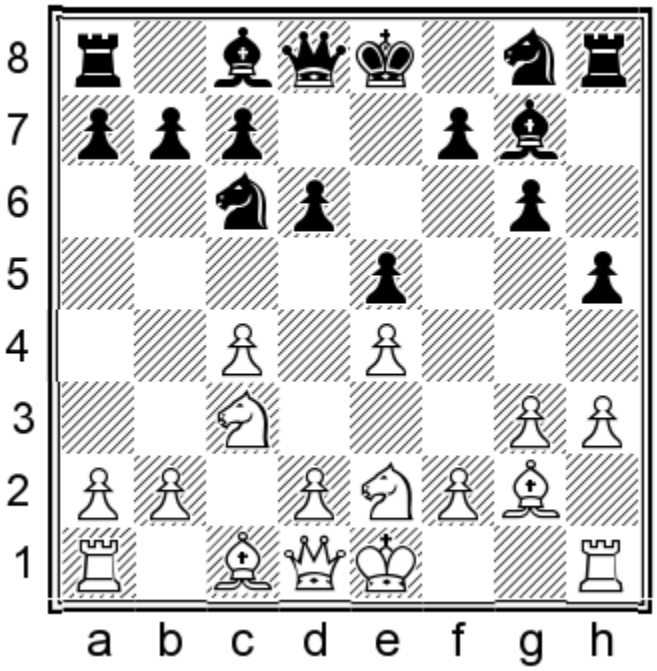
21.cxd5! when c7 is a clear target, which White might go after with Qe2 and Nb5.

Game 16
E.Romanov-D.Andreikin
Baku Open 2011

1.c4 e5 2.g3

Again we see White going for an early fianchetto rather than our 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2.

2...Nc6 3.Bg2 g6 4.Nc3 Bg7 5.e4 d6 6.Nge2 h5!? 7.h3



Our preferred response to the ...h5 advance and now play quickly becomes quite critical.

7...h4 8.g4 f5

This might look a little scary, but we should actually welcome such double-edged play from Black.

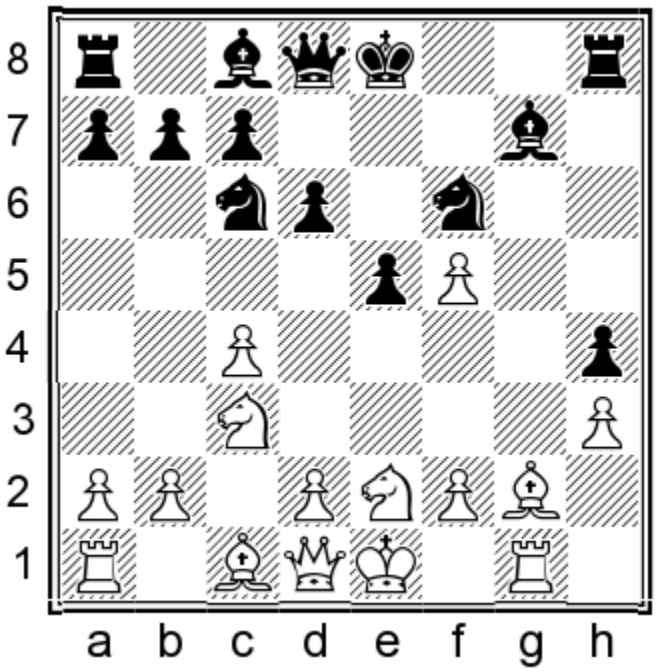
chesstouring.com

9.gxf5

Critical, as is White's next.

9...gxf5 10.Rg1! f4?!

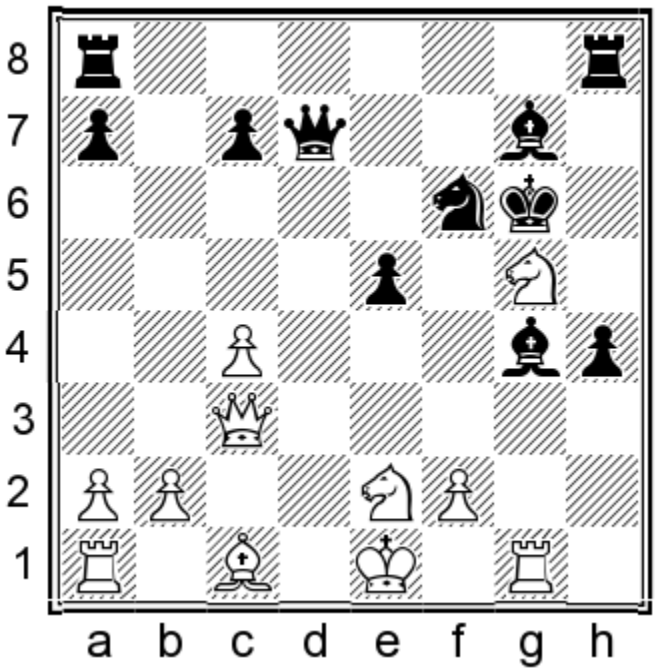
Even extremely strong grandmasters can prove vulnerable to prematurely releasing the tension in an unfamiliar position early on. Instead, 10...Nf6 11.exf5 reveals one of White's main points.



Naturally Black doesn't have to blunder away his bishop on g7, so play may go 11...Qe7 (11...Nd4? 12.d3 Nxf5 13.Be4 overloads the defence to leave Black under pressure after 13...Qe7 14.Bg5 c6 15.Qa4! when Nd5 is one idea, 0-0-0 and f4 another powerful one) 12.Bxc6+!? (shattering Black's structure and consistent with White's policy of swift development; the calmer alternative is 12.d3 followed by 13.Qa4) 12...bxc6 13.Qa4 Bxf5! (sacrificing a pawn, as 13...Bd7 14.d3 should favour White, since our king can go long, whereas its counterpart will never be all that happy, in view of 14...0-0? 15.Bg5, picking off h4) 14.Qxc6+ Kf7 15.Qf3!? (15.d3 is a sensible alternative if you don't like too much mess and then 15...Bxh3

chesstouring.com

16.Bg5 Bf5 17.Bxh4! a handy tactic to note, overloading the rook on h8) 15...Qd7 16.d4 Bxh3 (critical, but also a pretty brave choice with White opening up the game and Black's king on f7) 17.dxe5 dxe5 (17...Bg4 18.exf6! Bxf3 19.Rxg7+ Ke8 20.Rxd7 Kxd7 isn't totally clear, but should favour White, since the h-pawn can be halted, as with 21.Bf4 h3 22.Bh2 Rag8 23.Nf4) 18.Ne4 Bg4 (an only move; 18...Rad8? loses to 19.Rxg7+! Kxg7 20.Qxf6+ Kg8 21.Bh6) 19.Ng5+ Kg6 20.Qc3.



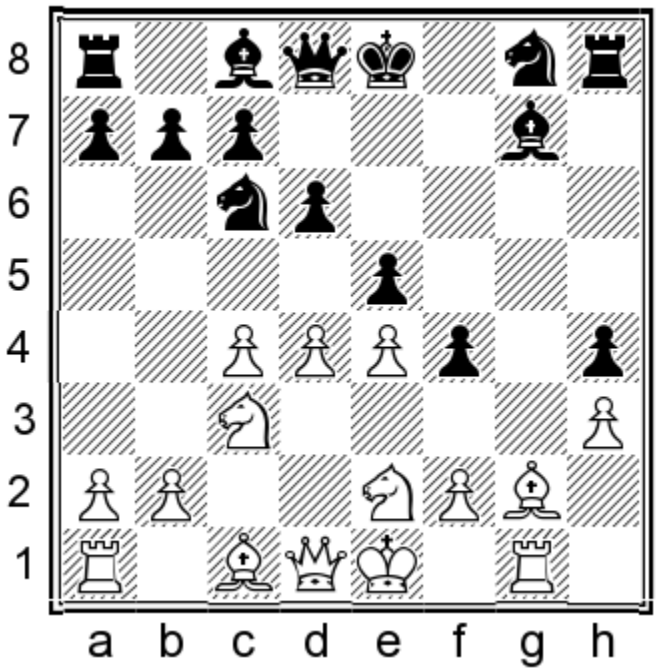
The position is extremely unclear, but White is set to go Qc2+, as well as Be3 and Rd1. It's always important to remember in such positions that Black has done extremely well to navigate the complications so far, and even if he did reach this position over the board, he could easily still quickly lose his way, with such a king position, if also a passed h-pawn.

Instead, 10...Nge7 11.exf5 Nxf5 keeps everything defended, but after 12.d3 White is ready to go Bg5! followed by Qd2, Qb3 or Qa4, while 10...Qf6 prepares to drop back to f7 in the event of Nd5. Now 11.Qb3 is one tempting approach, the simple 11.exf5 another, since 11...Bxf5?! 12.Qa4! is quite awkward for Black, as we can see from 12...Nge7 (or 12...Bd7 13.Nd5 Qd8 14.Be4 Nce7 15.Qb3 with a serious initiative, so 12...Kd7!? might

chesstouring.com

even be the best try, not that White can be unhappy after 13.d3 followed by Bg5 or 13...Bxd3 14.c5!, threatening to swing the queen over to g4, as well as to crash through in the event of 14...Bf5? 15.cxd6 cxd6 16.Qb5) 13.Nd5, winning material.

11.d4!



A visually impressive and powerful advance.

11...Nge7

Clearly Black's structure would be a right mess after 11...exd4?! 12.Nd5 Nf6 13.Bxf4, and even 11...Nf6!? 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.Nd5 looks quite pleasant for White, with Qb3 and Bd2-c3 on their way.

12.Bf3

Very direct and once again an exchange on e5 followed by Nd5 was also promising.

12...Rg8 13.c5!?

chesstouring.com

Really going for the jugular.

Even here 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.Nd5 was possible, and if 14...Bxh3 15.Bh5+ Kf8 16.Qb3 when, for example, 16...Be6 17.Bd2 Qd6 18.Qf3 would threaten not just 0-0-0, but Nexf4! exf4; Bxf4.

13...Kf8

Romanov was no doubt seduced by such lines as 13...dxc5? 14.Bh5+ Kf8 15.Qb3 when there's simply no good way to cover f7, and 13...exd4 14.Nxf4! dxc3? 15.Bh5+ Kf8 16.Qf3 with a crushing attack.

14.Bh5?

Allowing Black a chance. 14.Qb3 was the way to maintain White's initiative.

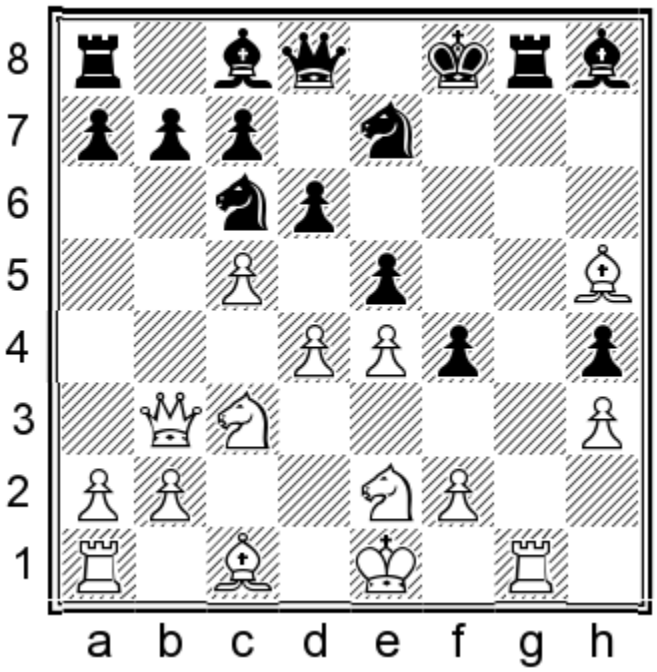
14...Bh8?

Allowing White to get back on track. It's often easy to miss short, stepping moves with the rook, not least when it involves returning the rook to where it's just come from, but after 14...Rh8! 15.d5 dxc5! (15...Rxh5 16.Nxf4 Rh7? 17.Nh5 isn't so good) 16.Nxf4! exf4 17.dxc6 Qxd1+ 18.Bxd1 Nxc6 Black would have been holding his own in the complications.

15.Qb3!

Again it's not so easy to prevent the threat of mate in one. Never underestimate the power of the light-squared bishop in the English!

chesstouring.com



15...Rxg1+ 16.Nxg1 d5 17.Nge2

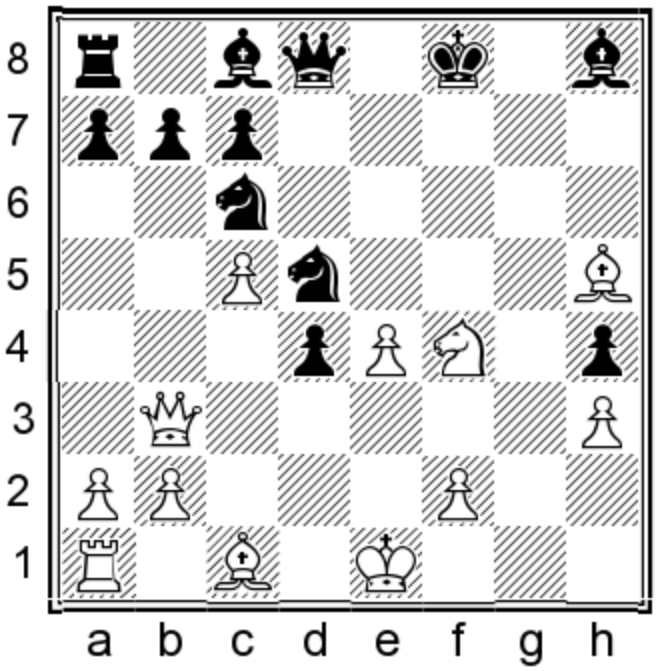
Finally developing to meet the threat of ...Nxd4. At first sight you might think, ‘This is just far too messy!’, but look deeper and it should be possible to understand why Black is in serious trouble: his king is misplaced, he can’t capture on e4 and f4 might easily drop off. The key to such a position as White is to remain calm and pick your moment to make any exchanges.

17...exd4

Otherwise, 17...Nxd4? 18.Nxd4 exd4 19.Ne2! still leaves Black rather bottled up, 17...Be6 fails to break free in view of the simple 18.dxe5 Qd7 19.Nxf4, and 17...Bxh3 18.dxe5 Nxe5 19.Nxf4 is also very good for White. As such, the silicon monster suggests that 17...a5!? was Black’s best move, but who would find such a calm advance over the board and, in any case, 18.Nxd5 Be6 19.Bf3 retains a clear advantage for White.

18.Nxd5 Nxd5 19.Nxf4!

chesstouring.com



A nice tactic as Romanov continues to make hay from the potential mate on f7.

19...Ne5

Alternatively, 19...Na5 20.Qxd5 Qxd5 21.exd5 when Black is a pawn down and still in some trouble on the kingside.

20.Nxd5 c6 21.Nf4 Qa5+

This doesn't help, but matters were already very tough for Black, of course.

22.Bd2! Qb5 23.Ng6+! Nxg6 24.Qf3+!

Andreikin may have overlooked this check or just decided he had nothing better than to hope Romanov might somehow miss it.

24...Kg8

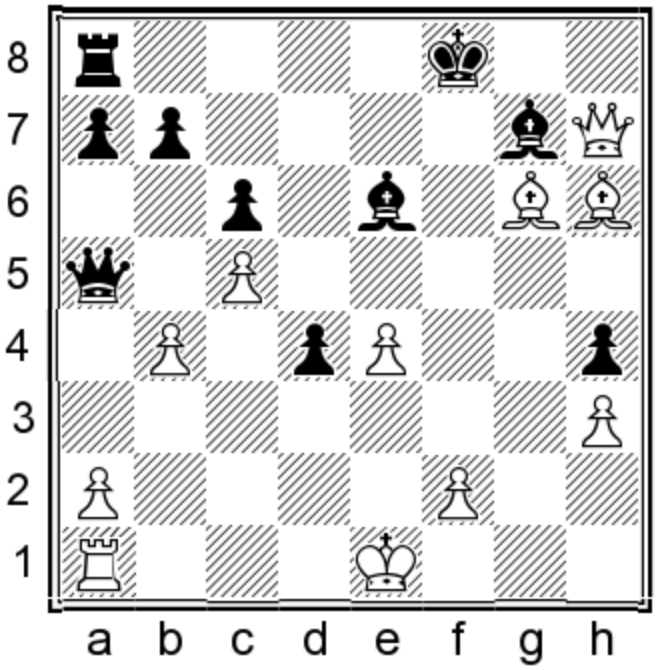
24...Kg7? saves the knight for a move, but not the game after 25.Qg2.

chesstouring.com

25.Bxg6 Be6 26.Qh5

The attack pretty much plays itself.

26...Bg7 27.Qh7+ Kf8 28.Bh6 Qa5+ 29.b4!?



Everything continues to come with tempo.

29...Qc7

White's king is safe after 29...Qxb4+ 30.Kf1 Qc4+ 31.Kg1, whereas its counterpart... Following 31...Bxh6 32.Qxh6+ Ke7 33.Qxh4+ Kd7 34.Qh7+ Black is going to have to shed material on his back rank.

30.Qh8+ Bg8 31.Bh7 Qf7 32.Bxg8 1-0

32...Qxg8 33.Bxg7+ just wins a piece.

Game 17
K.Spraggett-M.Taimanov
Paris Open Championship 1989

chesstouring.com

1.c4 e5 2.g3

2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 would be a typical 1...e5 route into the game, Yes, these ‘Modern’ lines do often occur too after 1...e5, which will turn our attention to in Chapter Six.

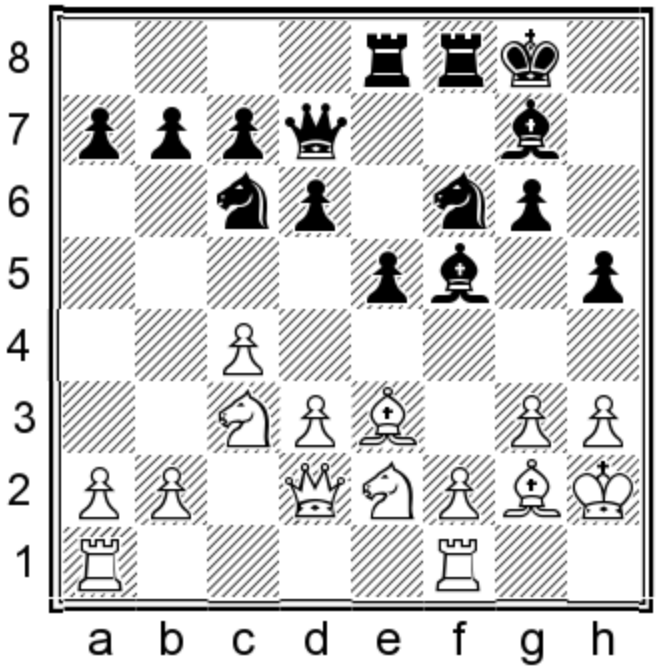
2...Nc6 3.Bg2 g6 4.Nc3 Bg7 5.e4 d6 6.Nge2 f5 7.d3 Nf6 8.0-0 0-0 9.exf5

The key exchange.

9...Bxf5 10.h3 h5

Again we see Black ruling out any g4 advance, but the cure is likely worse than the disease for him.

11.Be3 Qd7 12.Kh2 Rae8 13.Qd2



White’s play so far has been pretty natural. He might now prepare a b4 and queenside advance, possibly in conjunction with Nd5, arranging the d4 break is another possibility, and it’s also possible to simply improve the knights, as we’ll now see.

chesstouring.com

13...Nb4?!

This leap is likely too ambitious here. Once more, it's not so easy to find a great plan for Black, but 13...Be6 would at least angle for ...d5. White has a great many moves here, with 14.Bh6!? a fairly simple one, with the idea of 14...d5 15.cxd5 Nxd5 16.Bxg7 Kxg7 17.Ne4. This does take on an isolated queen's pawn, but leaves Black with gaping holes on g5 and c5, with White also able to look for a quick d4, opening lines.

14.Ne4!

A simple response. 14.d4?! Nc2 15.Rac1 Nxe3 16.fxe3 Bh6 wouldn't have been so clever.

14...c5

A big decision, but Smyslov didn't want to retreat and at least the d4 break is now off the agenda.

15.N2c3

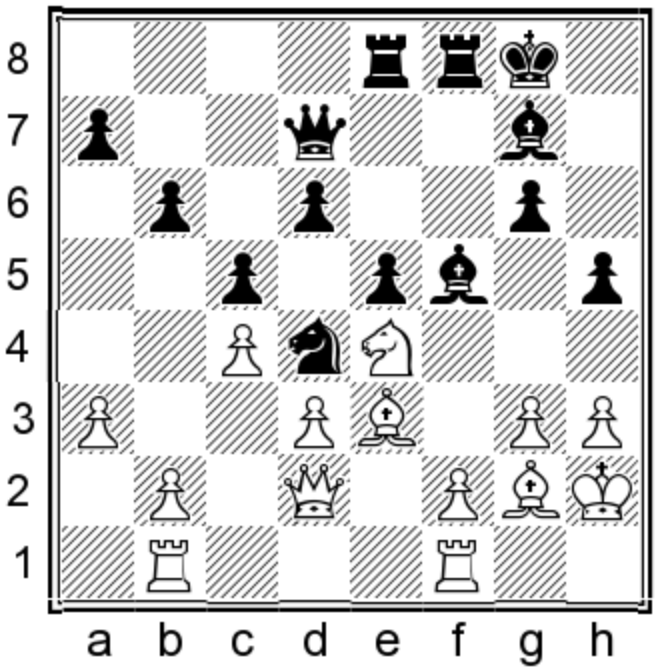
A second White knight flows to a good square. Now a3, Rab1 and b4 may follow.

15...Nxe4 16.Nxe4 Nc6 17.Rab1

Continuing to aim for queenside play. 17.Rae1 followed by f4 was the alternative.

17...b6 18.a3 Nd4

chesstouring.com



The legendary Russian Grandmaster eyes the f3-square, but as so often White has a simple response to the knight leap.

19.Bxd4!

By no means White's only good move (there was also, for instance, 19.Qd1), but thematic and just watch how quickly Black's position now collapses.

19...exd4?!

19...cxd4 was the lesser evil when 20.b4 Kh7 21.h4 Bh6 22.Qa2 is only slightly better for White, who is all set to push the a-pawn.

20.h4!

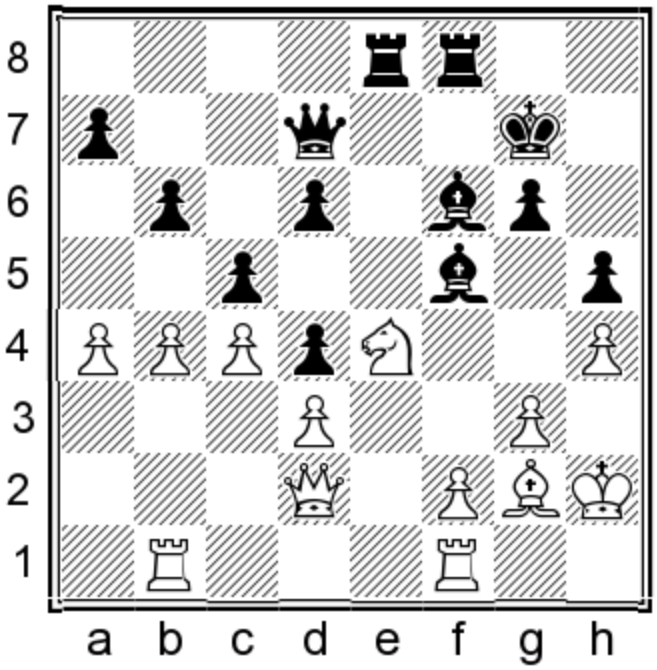
A strong advance, making sure that the kingside stays closed and Black's dark-squared bishop quite an unhappy piece.

20...Bf6

chesstouring.com

Black also would have suffered after 20...Kh7 21.b4 Bh6 22.f4, keeping full control, 20...Bg4 21.b4 Bf3 22.Rfe1 Bxg2 23.Kxg2 Qf5 24.f4 when his attempts to generate something on the kingside come to naught, and 20...Bxe4?! 21.Bxe4 Kh7 22.b4 Bh6 23.Qe2 would again leave White with much the better bishop and even ideas of an eventual f4-f5.

21.b4 Kg7 22.a4!



A strong advance. White is all set to rip open the queenside with a5 (notice how the bishop on g2 is well placed to support a rook invasion on b7), and while Black can grab the a-pawn without losing d6 in the process, doing so comes at a certain cost.

22...Bxe4?! 23.Bxe4 Qxa4 24.Ra1 Qxb4?!

Taimanov continues to grab as many pawns as he can in return for his suffering. The alternative was 24...Qd7 when 25.b5 would have left White with superb compensation. It's notable that both *Stockfish* and *Lc0* have White as being up by well over a pawn here, and they're quite right, of course. In short, White has the far superior bishop and the only mobile

chesstouring.com

pawn majority, his three holding Black's five on the queenside. Let's see how play might pan out: 25...Re7 26.Ra2 Rc8 27.Qd1 Rc7 (Black digs in for the long haul) 28.Qf3 Qg4 29.Qg2 (naturally White retains the queens – he wants to attack) 29...Re8 30.Rfa1 Ree7 31.f3 Qd7 32.f4 Qg4 33.Rf2 Qd7? (33...Re8 34.Raf1 Rce7 likely has to be tried, with the idea of 35.f5 Rxe4 36.dxe4) 34.f5 gxf5 35.Rxf5 when h5 will fall and with it Black's entire position.

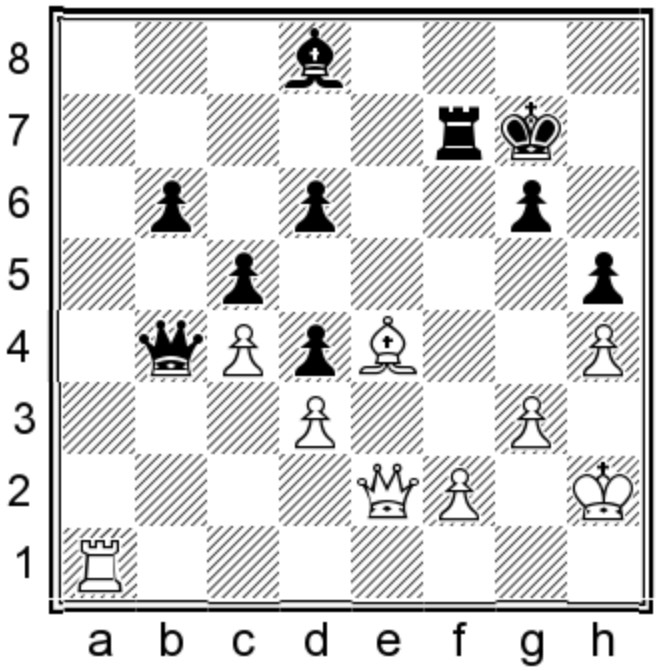
25.Rxa7+ Re7 26.Rxe7+ Bxe7 27.Qe2

Once again the black king is very much in White's sights.

27...Bd8?

He had to try 27...Qa3 when taking on g6 isn't so strong as d3 hangs at the end, so White would manoeuvre or even just go 28.f4 Qa7 29.f5, and if 29...gxf5? 30.Bxf5 Rh8 31.Bg6! winning.

28.Ra1 Rf7



chesstouring.com

Taimanov was clearly relying on this defence, but it’s not only along the seventh rank that White can invade.

chesstouring.com

29.Ra8! Bf6

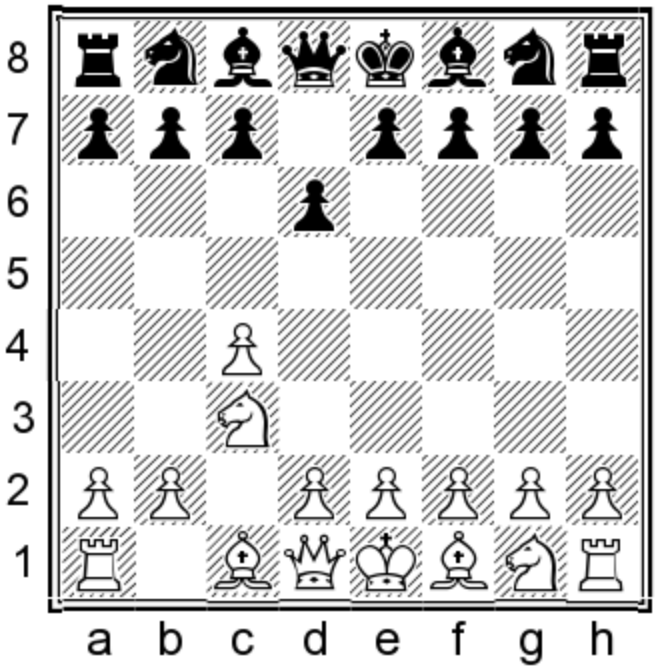
Or if 29...Rf8 30.Ra7+ Rf7 31.Rxf7+! Kxf7 32.Bd5+ Kg7 33.Qe8 when White infiltrates to force mate.

30.Bd5 Re7 31.Qf3 1-0

There's simply nothing good to be done about the threat of 32.Rg8+. A calm and classic English example of light-square control leading to a winning late middlegame attack for White.

Theory 4C

1.c4 d6 2.Nc3



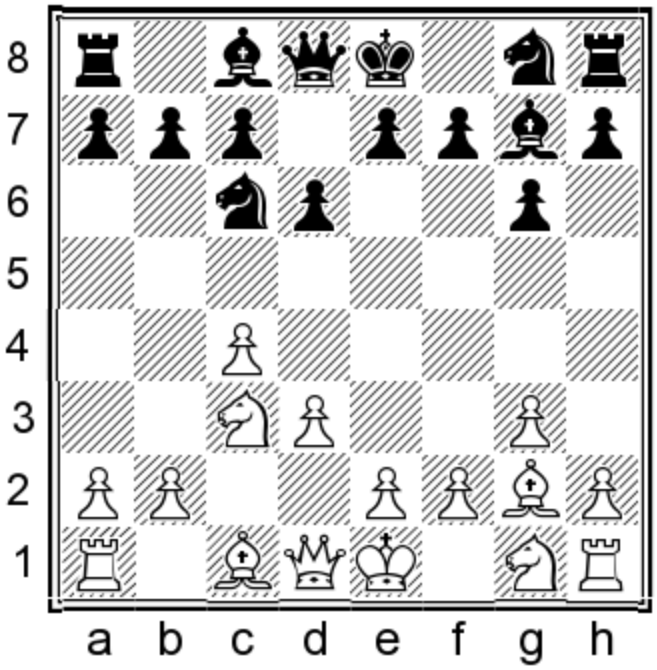
2...e5

After we passed on 2.d4 in favour of our favourite English development, Black elects to set out his central stall without delay.

chesstouring.com

Otherwise, we're very likely to transpose elsewhere: for instance, Black's third most common move is 2...Nf6 when 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.e4 returns play to King's Indian lines.

Instead, 2...c5 is extremely likely to transpose into our of one next two sections after 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2, and 2...g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 usually transposes to a line we've already considered. Here 4...e5 and 4...Nf6 are by a huge margin Black's most popular choices, but we shouldn't neglect 4...Nc6!?, a tricky favourite of leading English Grandmaster Gawain Jones. Black's idea is 5.e4 Nd4, which is a bit awkward, as can be seen from 6.Nge2 Bg4 when suddenly f3 is a little tender. As such, here we believe White should switch the move order, denying Black his fun with 5.d3.

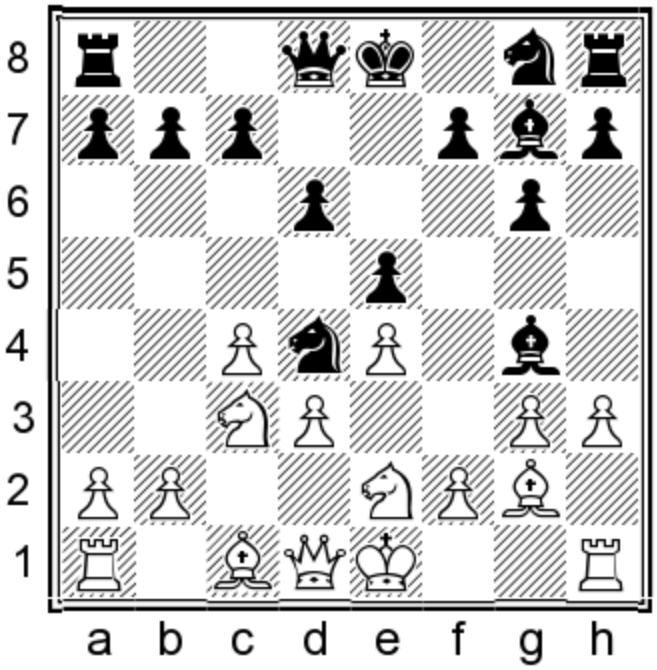


Black doesn't have anything better than 5...e5 (otherwise, 5...Nd4?! 6.e3 achieves nothing, and 5...f5 6.e4 Nf6 7.Nge2 0-0 transposes to an important position for the Dutch against the English – see Line B in the next chapter) when 6.e4 is extremely likely to transpose into Line 4A or 4B, although Black does have a couple of attempts to exploit our move order:

a) 6...f5 7.Nge2 Nf6 8.0-0 0-0 9.exf5 is the main line of 4B.

chesstouring.com

b) 6...Nd4 can become independent, such as with 7.Nge2 Bg4 (otherwise, 7...Ne7 8.Nxd4 exd4 9.Ne2 takes us back into the notes to Black's 6th move in Line 4A, 7...Nxe2 8.Nxe2 Ne7 9.Be3 0-0 10.Qd2 gave White easy development in Gajewski-Mchedlishvili, Reykjavik 2015, with 0-0 and f4 most likely to follow, and 7...h5 8.h3 is consistent with our general approach when Black should likely exchange knights, as 8...h4 9.g4 Ne6?! doesn't take over the dark squares, since White can hit back with 10.f4! exf4 11.Nxf4 Be5 12.0-0, claiming the advantage, and if 12...Nxf4 13.Bxf4 c5 14.Bxe5 dxe5 15.Nd5 Be6 16.b4!, which left Black's position creaking in Suba-Giorgadze, Cala Galdana 2001) 8.h3!.

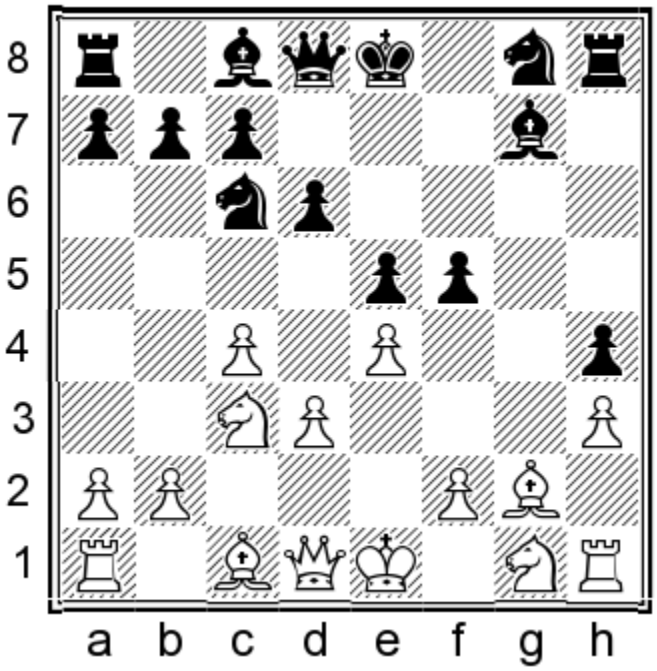


White refuses to fear the invasion of f3 and after 8...Bf3 (8...Nf3+?? 9.Kf1 Bh5 10.g4 costs Black a piece, and 8...Bxe2 9.Nxe2 Nxe2 10.Qxe2 Ne7 11.h4!? Nc6 12.Bg5 Bf6 13.Be3 h5 14.0-0-0 Qe7 15.Bh3! gave White an edge thanks to his safer king and with f4 next up in Csom-Kindermann, Debrecen 1989) 9.0-0 (it's also possible to exchange then walk the king to safety on g2) 9...Nxe2+ 10.Nxe2 Bxg2 11.Kxg2 need not fear the double exchange. There are still the f4, d4 and b4 advances to aim for, with 11...Ne7 12.Be3 0-0 13.d4 exd4?! 14.Bxd4 Nc6 15.Bxg7 Kxg7 16.Nc3 Qd7 17.Qd2 f5 18.Rae1 a very pleasant Maroczy position for White in

chesstouring.com

Ibragimov-Matamoros Franco, Ubeda 1996. Once again, we find White with the safer king, and the space-grabbing f4 and Nd5 are on their way.

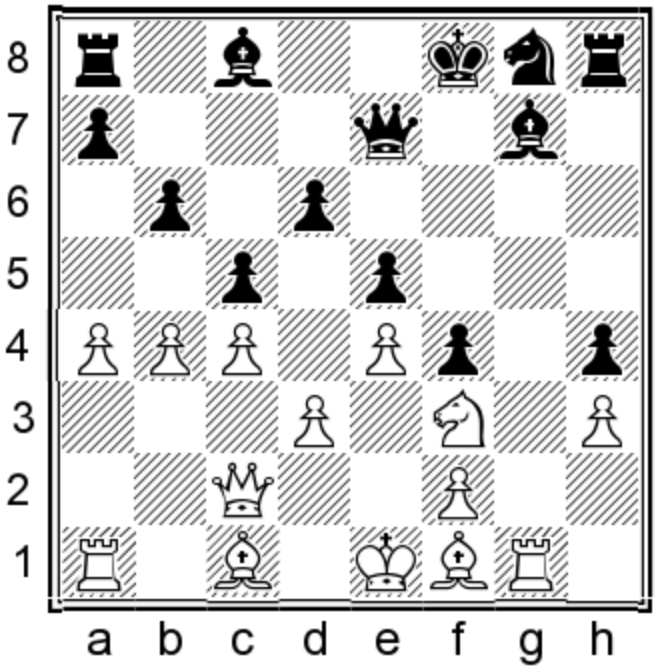
c) 6...h5 7.h3 will transpose to positions we considered in Line 4B unless Black ups the ante with 7...h4!? (7...Be6 8.Nge2 would be the aforementioned transposition) 8.g4 f5 (even here 8...Bh6!? is nothing to fear, with one good line for White the simple 9.Bxh6 Nxh6 10.Nge2; note that while Black can lock up the kingside with 10...g5, after 11.d4 he hasn't equalised, since with Black devoid of a pawn break on the kingside, White's king should be quite safe there and he will advance on the other flank, King's Indian style, with d5 and c5) 9.gxf5 gxf5.



This position isn't quite as promising for White as the equivalent one in Line 4B with the knight on e2, but is still quite nice. Here 10.Rg1 clearly isn't possible, but there is 10.Nf3, teeing up Rg1, as well as ideas of Nd5 and Bg5. Black can attempt to keep lines closed, but 10...f4 11.Nd5 Nce7 12.Rg1 c6 13.Bf1! Kf8 wasn't all plain sailing for him in Geider-Sperhake, correspondence 2014. In the game Black continued to lock down with 14.Nc3 c5, restricting White to an edge (his king can still go long), so 14.Nxe7!? might be investigated, and if 14...Qxe7 (14...Nxe7?! 15.d4

chesstouring.com

followed by Bd2-c3 will force lines open) 15.Qc2 when Black can again block, but 15...c5 16.b4!? b6 (or 16...cxb4 17.Bb2 followed by d4 and 0-0-0; White's king will be relatively safe on b1, whereas its counterpart will not enjoying the opening of the centre) 17.a4! is a remarkable idea from the engines.

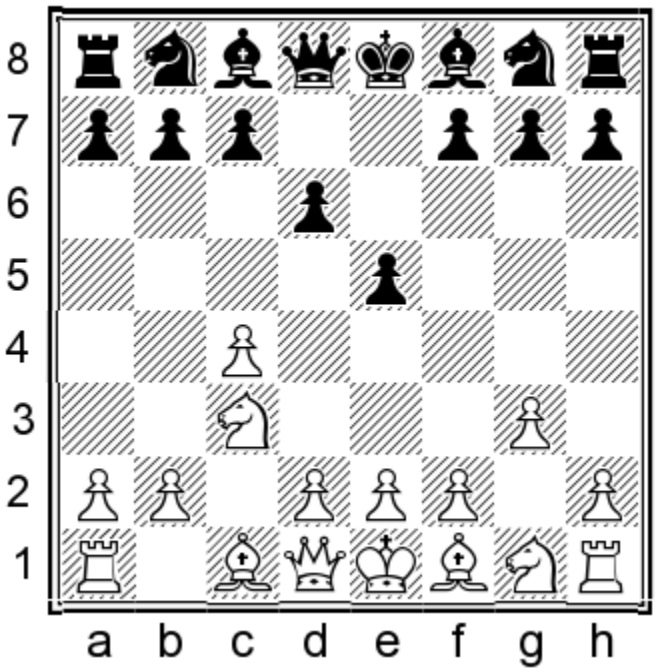


The main idea is 17...cxb4?! (Black likely does better to suffer with a vulnerable pawn on a5 after 17...a5 18.bxc5 bxc5 19.Rb1) 18.a5 bxa5 19.c5!, sacrificing two pawns to rip open lines: for example, 19...Be6 (or 19...dxc5 20.Rxa5 Be6 21.Rxc5 Rh5 22.d4! with an almost decisive initiative) 20.cxd6 Qxd6 21.Bb2 (threatening Rxg7!) 21...Rh7 22.Rxa5 Ne7 23.d4 Rc8 (23...exd4? 24.e5 exploits the uncoordinated nature of Black's pieces) 24.Qb1!? Qc7 25.Rc5 Qb8 26.Rxc8+ Bxc8 27.dxe5 when White has regained his material and the king on e1 is much safer than the one on f8, with Bc4 next up.

Returning to 2...e5:

3.g3

chesstouring.com



3...f5

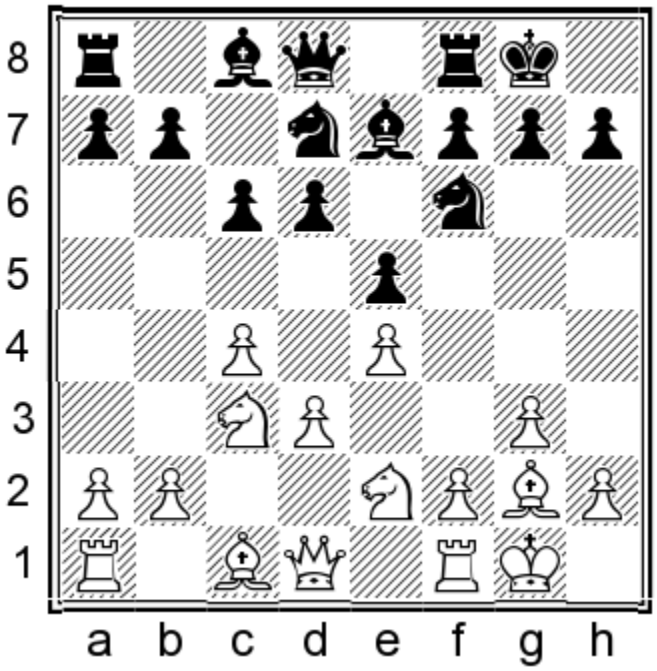
In this reversed Sicilian position, Black's other fairly common move is 3...g6, taking play elsewhere after 4.Bg2, depending on what set-up Black now opts for.

Instead, 3...Nf6 4.Bg2 will lead to Chapter Three if Black now fianchettoes, but he can also set up in Old Indian fashion, i.e. 4...Be7 (or 4...c6 5.e4 Nbd7 6.Nge2 Be7 7.0-0 0-0 8.d3, transposing) 5.e4 and here:

a) 5...c6 6.Nge2 Be6 is a more aggressive, but not better set-up than the standard one: 7.d3 Qd7 (it might look like Black has smoothly prepared 7...d5?, but after 8.exd5 cxd5 9.d4! the position opens to White's benefit, due in no small part to that fine bishop on g2) 8.f4!? Bh3 and now White might just castle, but 9.Bxh3!? Qxh3 10.Ng1 Qg2 11.Qf3 was a notable alternative in Tarjan-Christiansen, U.S. Championship, Pasadena 1978, leaving White with a small but clear edge after 11...Qxf3 12.Nxf3 Nbd7 13.Be3 0-0 14.Rf1 Rfe8 15.0-0-0 on account of his extra space and ability to gradually arrange d4.

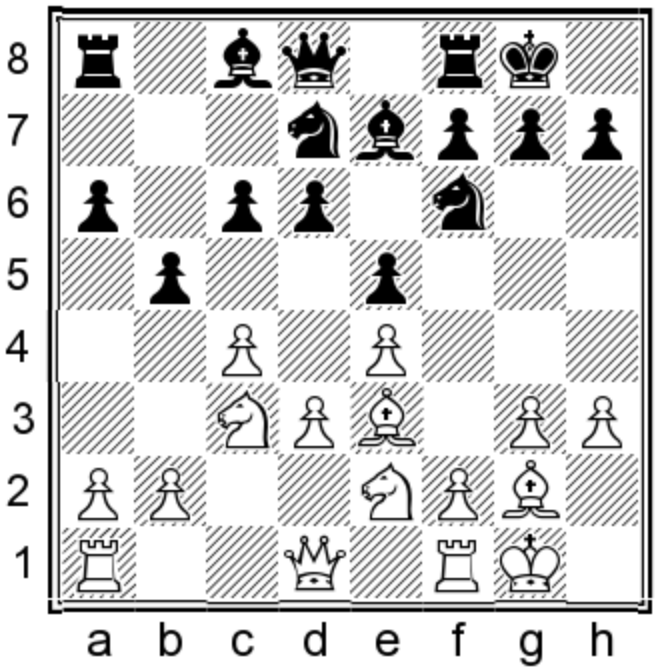
chesstouring.com

b) The standard Old Indian follow-up would be 5...0-0 6.Nge2 c6 (6...c5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d3 a6 9.h3 Rb8 was a double Botvinnik, but with Black's kingside minor pieces arguably misplaced in Miezis-Kosasih, Jakarta 2001, where 10.a4 would have been sensible and only then f4-f5) 7.0-0 Nbd7 (7...a6!? 8.d3 b5 is more aggressive, but after 9.h3 White still has sufficient control; after 9...b4 the knight would look misplaced on the rim, but following the calm 10.Nb1 a5 11.Nd2 it's not clear how Black will ever open lines with his a- and b-pawns, whereas White is set to break with f4 and Nf3, after which he might even launch a classic attack with f5, g4-g5, etc) 8.d3.



Both sides have stuck to their favoured set-ups (White rejecting the double advance of the d-pawn, which, while also decent, does take play into the main lines of the Old Indian), and we're quite happy here as White, with all three standard advances very much on the cards in f4, d4 and b4 after 8...a6 (8...Qe8!? 9.h3 Bd8 would be the so-called Pickett Shuffle, and after 10.f4 Bb6+ 11.Kh2 Qe7 we'd be very tempted by the direct 12.f5 followed by g4) 9.h3 (9.a4 isn't by any means ridiculous, but after 9...a5 Black will untangle with ...Nc5 and ...Qb6) 9...b5 10.Be3 (10.a3 is also quite playable should you not like Black seizing space with ...b4).

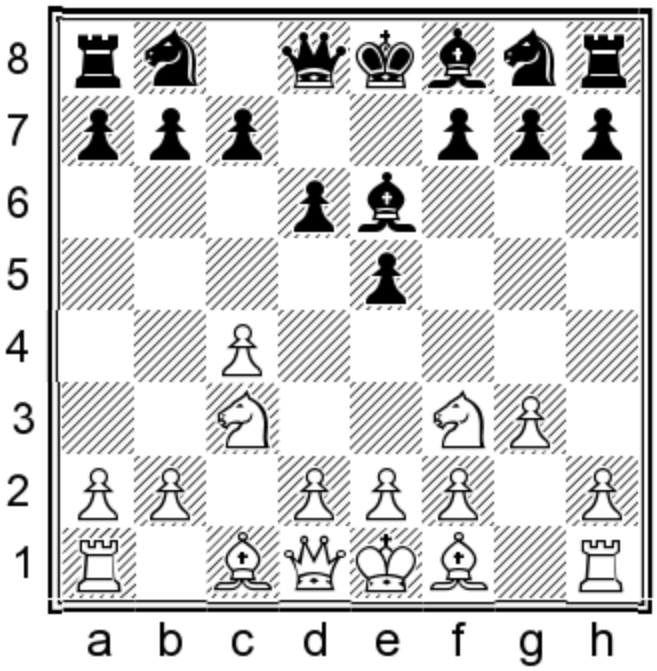
chesstouring.com



For example, 10...Rb8 (or 10...Bb7, as in Markowski-Hickl, German League 2001, when 11.a3 is certainly sensible to restrain ...d5 and only then go f4, so the critical line is likely 10...b4!? 11.Na4 c5 12.f4 when Black will be able to hit the knight on a4, but White does have b3 and will aim to advance on the kingside without losing control of the dark squares there) 11.b3 Bb7 12.f4 Ne8 13.Qd2 (calm and sensible play; 13.f5 Bg5 is slightly annoying, and if 14.Bf2 g6 15.h4 Be7, keeping White's kingside ambitions in check) 13...Nc7 14.Rae1 Ba8 15.Kh1!? Ne6 16.Ng1! Ndc5 17.Nf3, which left Black getting outplayed in Balog-Havasi, Hungarian League 2016. He tried 17...bxc4, but now 18.dxc4 would have been strong and only then f5 now that White controls the g5 point.

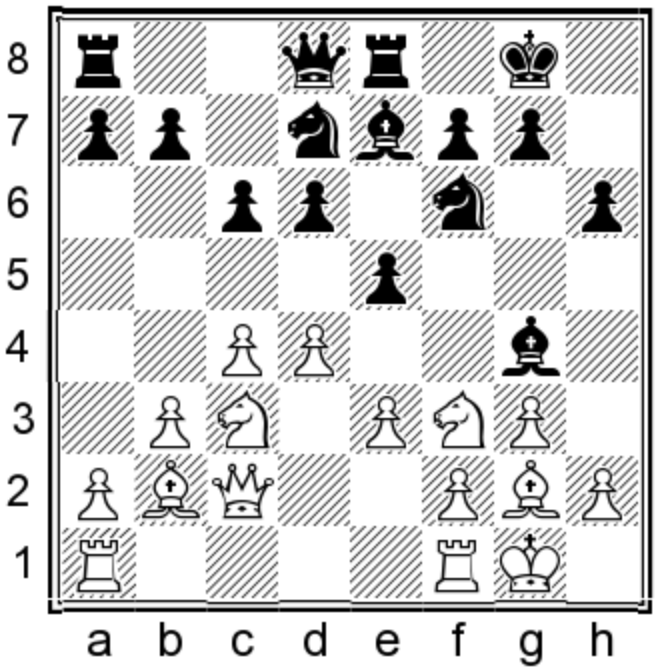
Before returning to 3...f5, it's worth noting that 3...Be6 is quite an old line, but also one with a fair pedigree, having been played by the likes of Fischer, Bronstein and Smyslov, as well as Nigel Short in recent years. Black wants to go 4.Bg2 Nc6 5.d3 Qd7, and if 6.e4 g6 7.Nge2 Bh3, which, whilst far from terrible for White, does allow Black fairly easy play. As such, in the unlikely event you reach this position we advocate 4.Nf3!?.

chesstouring.com



This is a timely change of approach as Black's bishop isn't too happy on e6 after a quick d4: for example, 4...Nd7 5.b3 (continuing to prepare d4) 5...c6 6.d4 Ngf6 (6...exd4?! 7.Nxd4 either robs Black of his light-squared bishop or leaves him unpleasantly worse after 7...Bg4?! 8.Bg2 Ngf6 9.0-0, and if 9...Be7 10.h3 Bh5 11.Nf5, hitting d6 and g7) 7.Bg2 h6 (ruling out any Ng5; indeed, 7...e4 runs into 8.Ng5, and if 8...d5 9.Nxe6 fxe6 10.0-0 followed by breaking with f3, but 7...Be7 would be normal when 8.0-0 0-0 9.d5!? should lead to an edge for White, as with 9...cxd5 10.cxd5 Bg4 11.h3 Bh5 12.Nh4!, heading for f5 while also freeing the kingside pawns for eventual expansion) 8.Qc2 Bg4?! 9.e3 Be7 10.0-0 0-0 11.Bb2 Re8.

chesstouring.com

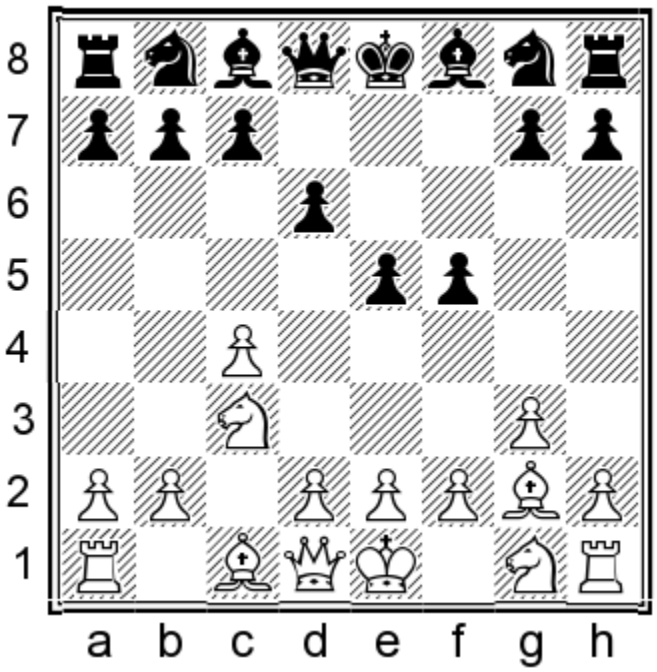


Now in Christiansen-Speelman, Hastings 1979/80, 12.h3 Bxf3 (12...Bh5 13.Nh4! is again quite awkward for Black, and if 13...Nh7 14.Nf5 Bf8 15.d5 c5 16.e4 with a huge space advantage) 13.Bxf3 would have left White with a pleasant bishop-pair plus, with one decent plan that of Rfd1 followed by b4, another that of Bg2 and f4.

Otherwise after 4.Nf3, 4...Bxc4?! 5.Qa4+ b5 6.Nxb5 Bxb5 7.Qxb5+ weakens Black on the light squares, 4...c5 5.e3!? feels quite risky for him, and 4...Nc6 5.d4 exd4 6.Nxd4 Nxd4 7.Qxd4 gives White easy development and an edge: for example, 7...Ne7 8.Bg2 Nc6 9.Qd3 g6 10.b3 Bg7 11.Bb2 0-0 12.0-0 a5 13.Rfd1 Re8 14.Qd2 Qc8 15.Rac1 Ne5 16.Nd5, which maintained control (note Black's lack of a great pawn break) in Pigott-Short, Gibraltar 2019, where White was fully mobilised and only now ready to advance on the queenside or in the centre.

4.Bg2

chesstouring.com



The simplest move, continuing to develop.

A very important and good alternative is 4.d4, breaking up Black's structure unless he finds the correct response, 4...Be7.

4...Nf6

Invariably played. Otherwise, play is likely to transpose, as with 4...c6 5.d3 Nf6 6.e4, or 4...Be7 5.d3 c6 6.e4 Nf6 (an independent try would be 6...fxe4 7.dxe4 Be6, as in Pastar-Kadric, Lisbon 2019, where White broke up Black's structure with 8.c5!?; we would also be very tempted by 8.Qe2 and if 8...Nf6 to borrow an old idea of Simon's from related positions, namely 9.f4!? 0-0 10.Nf3 when White will go short and can hope for 10...Nbd7?! 11.f5 Bf7 12.Ng5!, leaving Black vulnerable on the light squares) 7.Nge2.

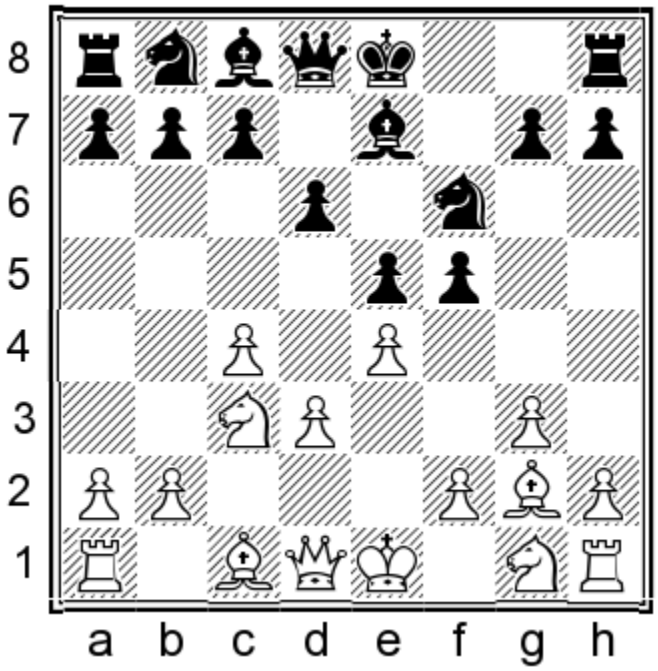
5.d3 Be7

Natural development. We likewise meet 5...c6 with 6.e4 when some strong players have gone 6...g6 7.Nge2 Bg7 when 8.exf5 Bxf5 9.d4 is quite effective, as we saw in Line 4B. Otherwise, 6...Be7 7.Nge2 is our main line,

chesstouring.com

below, and while 6...Be6 can't be met by Nd5, White does have another highly thematic counter available: 7.exf5! Bxf5 8.Nf3 Be7 9.d4. Black can maintain the e5 point, but after the 9...Nbd7 (9...e4?! 10.Nh4 Bg4 11.f3! exf3 12.Bxf3 leaves Black weak on the light squares and White might even meet 12...Bh3 with 13.Ng2) 10.0-0 0-0 of Miezis-Kovalev, Schwaebisch Gmuend 1994, White might have prevented ...Ne4 with 11.Re1, only then intending another useful move in h3 ahead of possible expansion with b4 and Qb3.

6.e4



Creating a Botvinnik formation after all. Another decent approach and one with a fair pedigree is 6.f4!? followed by Nf3.

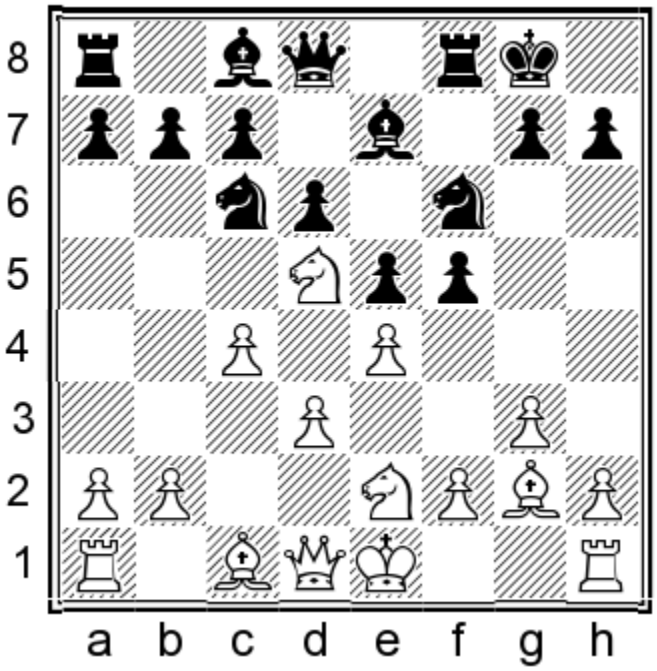
6...c6

Black's most popular move, closing the long diagonal, but there are important alternatives:

a) 6...0-0 7.Nge2 will transpose either to our main line or next note depending on what Black places on c6.

chesstouring.com

b) 6...Nc6 7.Nge2 0-0 is a position which can come about via a few different move orders. Simon has even liked to play this way as Black, since in Classical Dutch fashion he can try to launch an attack with ...Qe8-h5. White should be on his guard against that plan which is why we quite like 8.Nd5!?, preventing ...Qe8.



After 8...fxe4 9.dxe4 Bg4 10.f3! (ever a useful move in this structure, keeping Black's pieces out of g4 and f3) 10...Be6 11.0-0 Qd7 12.Be3 White had taken control and Black was struggling for counterplay in Davies-Gayson, British Rapidplay Championship, Bradford 2002. It's worth seeing a few more moves: 12...Rae8 13.Qd2 Bd8 14.Rad1 (this rook; the king's one is quite happy overprotecting f3) 14...Qf7 (14...Bh3 was finally possible, but after 15.c5 Bxg2 16.Kxg2 it's not at all easy for Black to get anything going on the kingside, whereas White can create a backwards pawn on d6 and push b4-b5) 15.b3 a6 16.Nec3 Kh8 17.c5! dxc5 18.Bxc5 Black was beginning to suffer, with White able to squeeze with b4, a4 and b5, or switch focus and exploit his extra space with Kh1 and f4.

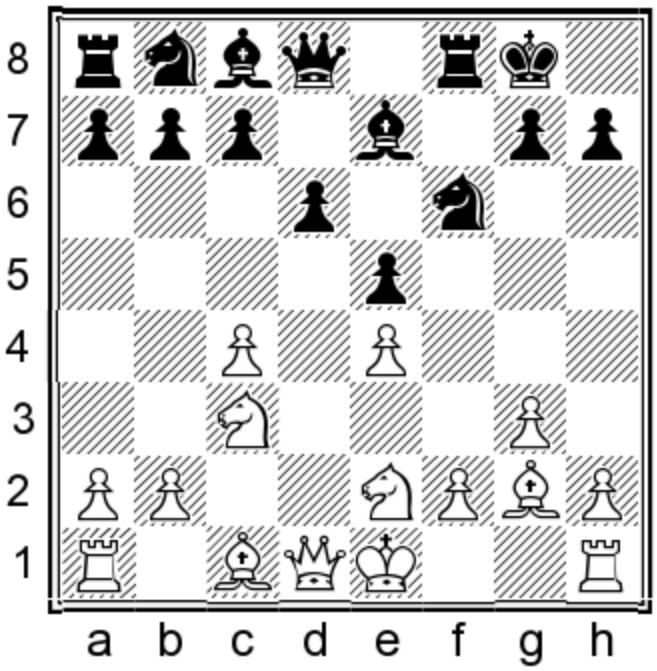
Alternatively, 8...Nxd5?! 9.cxd5 Nd4 10.Nxd4 exd4 11.0-0 favours White on account of his more mobile centre, with both b4 and f4 likely to appear

chesstouring.com

at some point soon, and 8...Be6 9.0-0 fxe4 10.dxe4 Qd7 11.f3! Bd8 12.Be3 Ne7 13.Qd3 maintained control and an edge in Disconzi da Silva-Martins, Paranavai 2013, where gradually arranging f4 was one plan, that of Rfd1 and c5 another.

That may explain why Simon tried the highly creative 8...Nb8?! in D'Costa-Williams, Bunratty 2015, a final round winning try inspired by a pint of Guinness. Lorin calmly castled, but after 9.exf5! Bxf5!? 10.Nxe7+ Qxe7 11.Bxb7 Nbd7 12.Bxa8 Rxa8 Black wouldn't have had enough for the exchange, as White can prevent ...Nc5 while arranging to go long with 13.Be3 Bg4 14.Qc2.

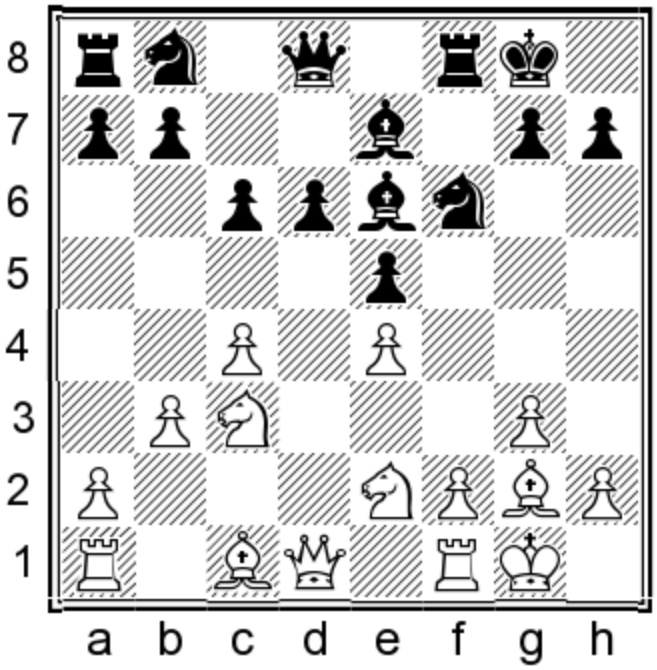
c) 6...fxe4 rules out any timely exchange on f5, but White should again welcome the central clamp the trade on e4 leaves him with after 7.dxe4 0-0 (if 7...Be6 8.b3 0-0 we would still go 9.Nge2, but after the positionally ambitious 7...c5 it's tempting to switch plans with 8.f4!? Nc6 9.Nf3 when f5 might cramp Black and White can also complete development with 0-0, Qd3 and Be3) 8.Nge2.



Now 8...c6 (otherwise, 8...Be6 9.b3 Qd7 angles for a quick ...Bh3, but 10.h3!? c5 11.f4 Nc6 12.f5 Bf7 13.0-0 prevented it and left White ready for

chesstouring.com

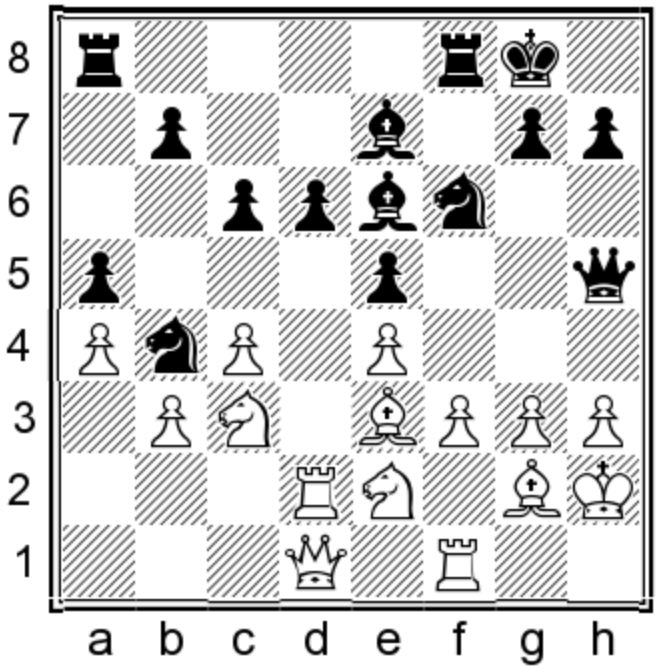
further kingside expansion in Solak-Nadj Hedjesi, Novi Sad 2009, and 8...Nc6 9.0-0 Nd7 10.Nd5 a5 11.Be3 Nc5 12.Nec3 was very pleasant for White in Kosten-Haydon, 4NCL 1997, thanks to his grip on d5 and with the f-pawn ready to advance) 9.0-0 Be6 (it makes sense to gain a tempo; after 9...Qe8 White can calmly develop with 10.b3 in any case or try 10.f4!?, and if 10...Qh5? 11.f5, locking in that bishop on c8 ahead of going h3 and g4, while 9...Nbd7 10.h3 Nh5 11.Be3 Qe8 12.Qd2 Nc5 13.b3 Ne6 was Matamoros Franco-Garrido Dominguez, Seville 2002, where there was no reason to avoid 14.f4!? exf4 15.gxf4 g6 16.Rad1 with much the better coordination and one plan that of Kh2 and Bf3) 10.b3 is again a sensible approach.



Here 10...a6!? (angling for some play on the queenside looks like Black's best approach; 10...Qd7 11.f4! exf4 was preferred in Flores-Abarca Gonzalez, Arica 2015, but after 12.gxf4!? White is ready to go f5 and Nf4 or 12...Bg4 13.Qd3 Na6 14.Be3 followed by squeezing further with a3 and b4) 11.a4! (preventing Black from breaking out) 11...a5! (Black exploits the downside to White's last move to buy himself an outpost on b4) 12.h3 Na6 13.Be3 Qd7 (Black preferred to invade then be prophylactic with 13...Nb4 14.f4 Bf7 in Maletin-Welling, Bad Wiessee 2015, where White needed to

chesstouring.com

avoid 15.f5? d5, so might tidy with 15.Kh2 followed by Qd2 and Rad1 or even Ng1-f3, and if 15...exf4 16.gxf4 d5? 17.cxd5 cxd5 18.e5, seizing some very useful space) 14.Kh2 Qe8!? 15.Ra2 (a nice way to get the rook into the game while keeping the queen on the d1-h5 diagonal) 15...Nb4 16.Rd2 Qh5 17.f3 kept Black fully at bay in Romanov-Sjugirov, Russian Championship, St. Petersburg 2017.



This unbalanced position is objectively unclear, but White's position seems the easier to handle, with g4 and Ng3 one plan, Bb6 another useful possibility.

Returning to 6...c6:

7.Nge2 0-0

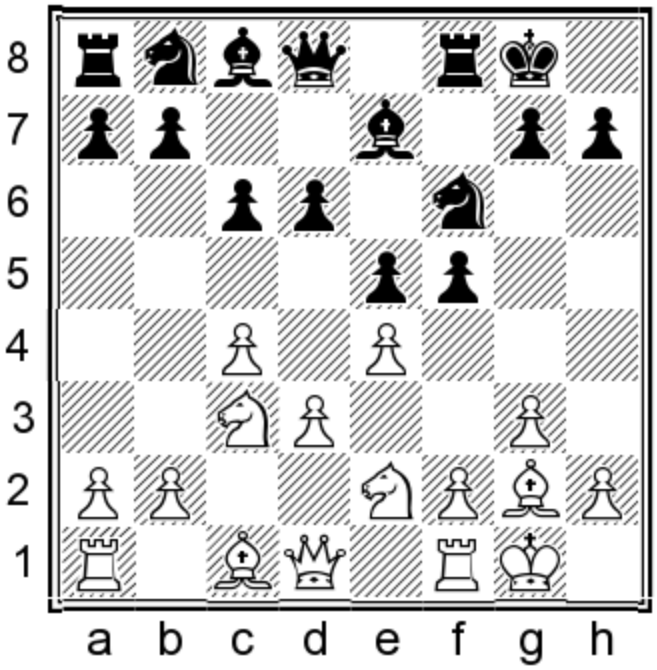
Logical and Black's most common move by some margin.

After 7...fxe4 8.dxe4 0-0 9.0-0 play transposes to note 'c' to the previous move, while 7...Be6 rather asks for 8.exf5! and after 8...Bxf5 9.d4 Nbd7 10.0-0 0-0 11.h3! (this might also have been played back on move 9; in both cases White takes control of a key square, g4) 11...Be6 (one point behind White's last can be seen after 11...Qe8?! 12.g4!, restricting Black

chesstouring.com

and note too that 12...Nxg4 13.hxg4 Bxg4 doesn't leave him with anything like enough for a piece after 14.f3!, continuing to take squares from the black pieces) 12.d5 cxd5 13.Nxd5!? White had an edge in Lehtinen-Lardot, Oulu 2000. Once again we find Black a little low on counterplay and White set to increase his grip after Nec3 or even b3 and Nxe7+.

8.0-0



8...Qe8

Black heads for h5 in typical Classical Dutch fashion.

As well as exchanging on e4, Black has tried quite a few moves, including 8...Kh8, after which 9.h3! Na6 10.Be3 Qe8 11.exf5 (our favourite exchange and here White even has a better follow-up than d4) 11...Bxf5 12.g4!? Bg6 13.f4! exf4 14.Nxf4 seized space and the initiative in M.Taylor-Barton, Torquay 2002. Even after 14...Bf7 15.Qe2 Black is vulnerable on e6 with Rae1 followed by Bd4 one simple and effective plan.

chesstouring.com

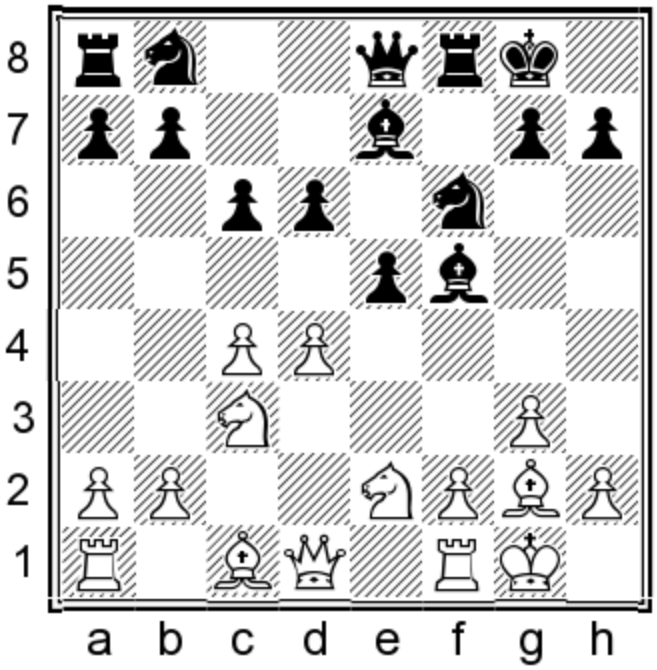
Black's most popular move has actually been 8...Na6, as once played by Simon. Here 9.h3 is consistent (and side-steps 9.f4 Qb6+ 10.Kh1 Ng4, as Simon got to play), and after 9...Qe8 (9...fxe4?! is once again a tad premature, 10.dxe4 Be6 11.b3 Qd7 12.Kh2 Bf7 13.Be3, leaving White in control and with the f-pawn primed to advance in Balog-Ivanisevic, Hungarian League 2018) 10.exf5 Bxf5 White can even began to expand with 11.g4!, as we'll explore in Flores-Weis, Mar del Plata 2007.

9.exf5

A small switch of approach as White reacts in true classical fashion to any upcoming 'attack' by preparing central play.

White has actually tried a few things in this little-explored position and once again 9.h3 is a decent move too, although after 9...Qh5 you need to know to go 10.f3, and if 10...fxe4 11.g4!, since played without support 10.exf5 Bxf5 11.g4? fails to 11...Bxg4!, and if 12.hxg4? Nxg4 13.Re1 Qh2+ 14.Kf1 Rxf2 mate.

9...Bxf5 10.d4



chesstouring.com

Clearly the point behind White's previous move.

10...Nbd7

After the immediate 10...Qh5 White can try 11.Qb3!?, hitting b7 and with ideas too of c5+, but the simplest move is 11.f3, bolstering the kingside to be followed by b3 or Be3 and Qd2. Note too that here 11...Nbd7? 12.g4! works, as after 12...Bxg4 (or 12...Nxg4 13.fxg4 Bxg4 14.Be3 followed by Qd3 or 14...Rxf1+ 15.Qxf1 Rf8 16.Qe1 and then Ng3, when Black clearly doesn't have enough for the piece) 13.fxg4 Nxg4 14.h3 Rxf1+ 15.Bxf1! everything is defended, leaving Black having to retreat his knight and a piece down for not very much at all.

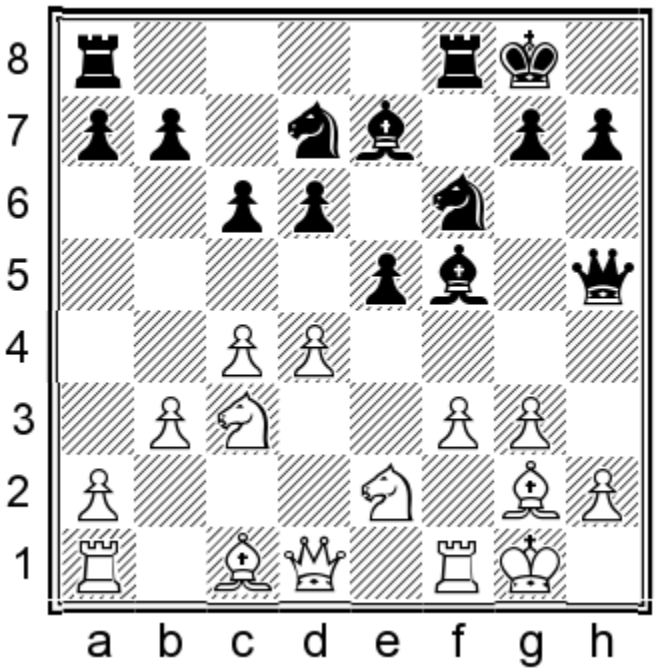
11.b3

Simple development; White's dark-squared bishop will be quite happy on b2 or a3, and this way c4 is also secure should Black ever drop back with ...Be6 or go ...Qf7. As we'll now see there's no reason to fear Black's attempts to attack and you might even view the position as a Classical Dutch, where White has got in the key e4 break and also has a much more secure kingside without his knight being on f3.

11...Qh5 12.f3!

This is why the knight is much happier on e2 than f3. There's no pin and White can safely take control of the g4-square.

chesstouring.com



12...Qg6

Dropping back. Black doesn't have to and after, say, 12...Rae8 White should just develop with 13.Ba3 or 13.Be3, eyeing a7 at some point in the future. Of course, we'd like to go 13.g4?, but after 13...Nxg4! 14.fxg4 Bxg4 Black has pretty dangerous compensation, largely because the rook on e8 greatly helps him to pressure e2.

We should also mention 12...Bh3 where after 13.Be3 Bxg2 14.Kxg2 White's king should be safe enough. One plan is just to centralise with Qd3 and Rae1; another to seize space with g4 followed by h3 and arranging the f4 break.

13.Ba3 Rae8 14.Qd2

We've followed the game E.Lie-Rasmussen, Viby 2002, where White could be fairly happy with the outcome of the opening. He hasn't come under an attack, is well coordinated and ready to centralise with Rad1 or perhaps even dxe5 Nxe5; Nd4, angling to leave Black's pieces and light squares looking a little loose.

chesstouring.com

Game 18

D.Flores-D.Weis

Mar del Plata Open 2007

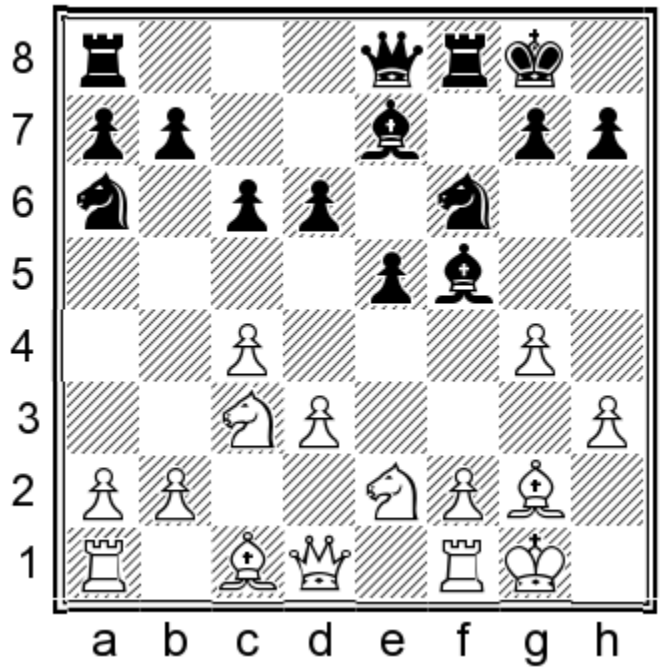
1.c4 e5 2.Nc3

The Argentinean Grandmaster deploys our recommended move order ahead of setting up a Botvinnik formation.

2...d6 3.g3 f5 4.Bg2 Nf6 5.d3 Be7 6.e4 c6 7.Nge2 0-0 8.0-0

All very thematic moves so far, as is White's next, teeing up potential expansion on the kingside.

8...Na6 9.h3 Qe8 10.exf5 Bxf5 11.g4!



Bold and good. Black's queen will no longer be landing on h5.

In contrast, with the queen already on e8, 11.d4?! (a good plan with the black queen still on d8) 11...Qh5 12.g4? Bxg4 13.hxg4? Nxg4 would be most unwise.

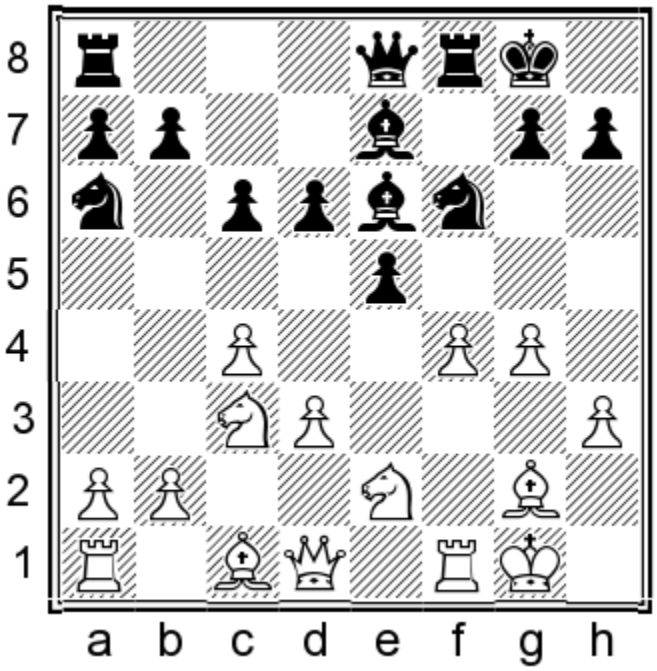
chesstouring.com

11...Be6

Black has also retreated the bishop, but 11...Bg6 12.f4 exf4 13.Nxf4 Bd8 would have been extremely pleasant for White in Hanley-Lane, British Championship, Scarborough 2001, had he now further restricted Black's pieces with 14.d4, and if 14...Bb6 15.Nxg6 Qxg6 16.Bf4 Rad8 17.Kh1 followed by Qd2, with control and the bishop-pair.

Instead, 11...Bxg4? 12.hxg4 Nxg4 13.Ng3 would pretty much just be an extra piece, but 11...Nxg4!? 12.hxg4 Bxg4 isn't totally ridiculous, even if it looks insufficient to the human eye. White should develop and unpin with 13.Be3 Qg6 14.Qb3, and if 14...Bf3 15.Ng3. There's a definite threat to capture on b7 and White is also ready to untangle with Bxf3 Rxf3; Kg2, possibly followed by Qd1 if needed or Rae1.

12.f4!?



A bold and tempting advance, but if you prefer full control at all times, then you could just first go 12.Be3 and only then Qd2 and/or Ng3 ahead of f4.

chesstouring.com

12...Rd8

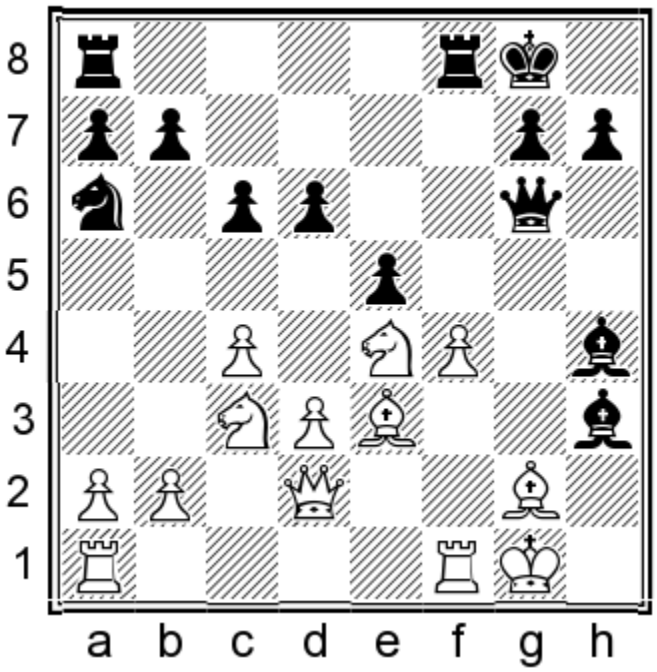
This feels a little slow, but is at least preferable to Black's most common move, 12...exf4, which side-steps f5, but after 13.Nxf4 Bf7 14.Be3 White most certainly could not complain about his extra space and well-coordinated forces in Doeres-Schramm, German League 2006. He is ready to go Qd2 (or even Qb3) and Rae1, after which Black might begin to look a little vulnerable on e6.

Alternatively, 12...Bd8 13.f5 Bf7 14.b3 Bb6+ 15.Kh1 Rd8 16.Ne4! maintains control with Bg5 on its way, and if 16...d5! 17.Nxf6+ gxf6 the calm but direct 18.Qe1! Nc5 19.Qh4, which already left Black in huge trouble on the kingside in McNab-Greet, Edinburgh 2009.

The Scottish Grandmaster and expert on the English Opening has also faced the prophylactic 12...h6 when 13.Be3 would be sensible, and if 13...Bd8 14.Qd2 Bb6 15.Bxb6 axb6 16.Rae1 followed by f5 and Ng3 or just d4.

Finally, we should mention that while no human is yet to venture 12...Nxg4!? 13.hxg4 Bxg4 *Stockfish* does initially quite like the sacrifice, against which we suggest 14.Be3 Qg6 15.Ne4!, and if 15...Bh4 (15...Bh3? 16.N2g3 maintains control while preparing exchanges: for instance, 16...Bxg2 17.Kxg2 d5?! 18.f5 Qf7 19.cxd5 cxd5 20.Ng5 when White is taking over) 16.Qd2 Bh3 17.N2c3.

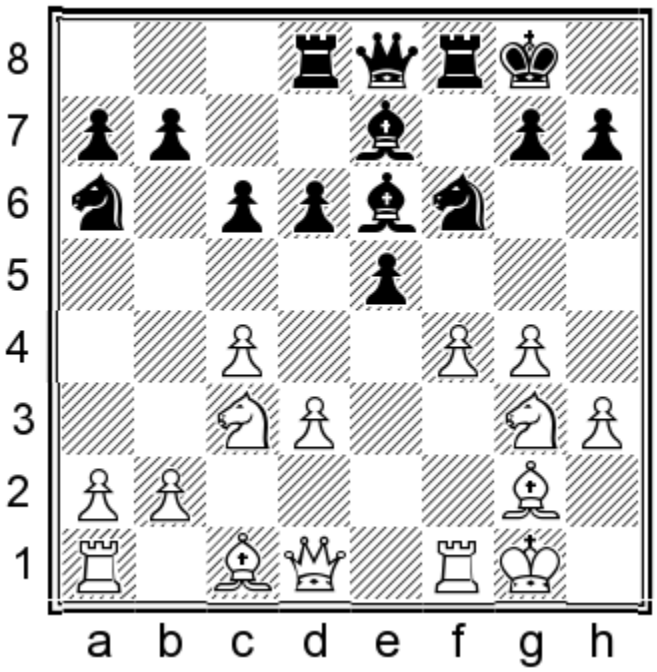
chesstouring.com



Black’s only real try here appears to be 17...Nb4!, keeping up the threats while supporting ...d5, but White should remember he is a piece up at this stage. He can force things with 18.fxe5!? d5 (or 18...Bxg2 19.Qxg2 Qxg2+ 20.Kxg2 Nc2, which does regain the material, but after 21.Bd2 Nxa1 22.Rxa1 dxe5 23.Rh1! Be7 24.Rh5 White has the initiative and we slightly prefer his pieces to Black’s extra rook and pawns; clearly e5 is weak and White can also play to target the black queenside after Be3) 19.cxd5 cxd5 20.Bg5! when the position is sharp, but 20...dxe4 21.Bxh4 e3 22.Qe2 Nxd3 23.Nd5 sees White remaining in front and Black beginning to run out of compensation for the piece as White even threatens, on top of a certain check, to try and remove all the rooks down the f-file.

13.Ng3

chesstouring.com



By no means White's only good move, but thematic and it can't be bad to retain the tension.

13...exf4

Black releases the tension only now that White can't recapture with the knight, hitting the light-squared bishop. One good sign for White is that it's hard to suggest a viable alternative, as we can see from 13...Nc5? 14.g5 Nfd7 15.f5 Bf7 16.Be3 when Black is simply getting squashed.

14.Bxf4 Nd7

Even after 14...Qd7!? 15.Qe2 d5 White is for choice following 16.d4!, which prevents ...Bc5+ and so wins a piece in the event of 16...dxc4? 17.Rae1.

15.Qe2 Ne5 16.b3

Good prophylaxis and preparation for d4.

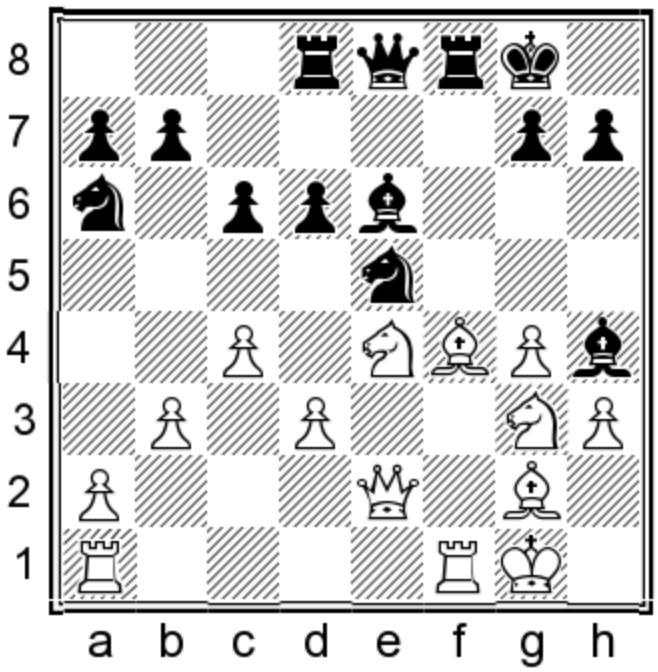
chesstouring.com

Instead, the greedy 16.Bxe5?! dxe5 17.Qxe5?! would not have been wise: 17...Rxf1+ 18.Rxf1 Bxc4! regains the pawn with advantage to Black.

16...Bh4

Black removes one of his many pieces from the e-file, but is still going to do well to shake off White's grip.

17.Nce4!?



Centralising and threatening Nxd6, while refusing to fear any simplification.

17...Qe7

The tactic 17...Rxf4!? 18.Rxf4 d5 is the possibility mentioned in our last note. White can hit back with 19.cxd5 cxd5 20.Ng5! when 20...Bxg5 21.Qxe5 Bxf4 22.Qxf4 followed by Re1 would retain an edge. White's knight might yet land on d4 or h5 with some effect and 22...Nc5?! 23.Qd4 Qf8 24.Rc1 would drive Black backwards.

chesstouring.com

18.Nh5

Side-stepping the potential tactics. A decent case made also be made for 18.d4!? Ng6 19.Bg5, and if 19...Bxg5 20.Nxg5.

18...Ng6 19.Be3

Flores has the threat of Bd4, as well as Bxa7, as the battle begins to heat up.

19...d5!?

19...Nc5 would have been a more solid approach, leaving White only slightly for choice after 20.Nxc5 dxc5 21.Bd2 with the idea of Bc3.

20.Neg3

This can hardly be terrible, of course, but 20.cxd5! cxd5 21.Neg3, and if 21...Nc5 22.Bd4 would have avoided the possibility Black now had in the game.

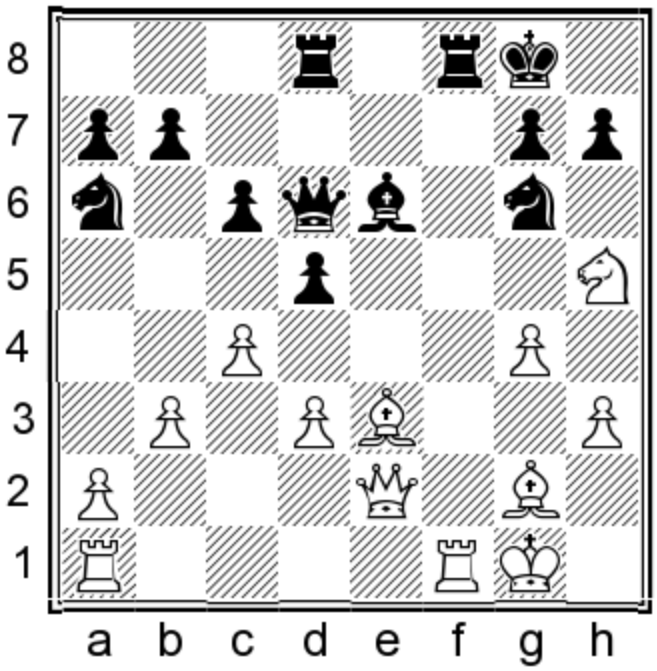
20...Bxg3?

Black should not be giving up this important bishop. Instead, 20...dxc4! 21.dxc4 Nc5 would have been fine for him.

21.Nxg3 Qd6 22.Nh5!

Renewing the threat of Bd4. Black is going to badly regret the exchange on g3.

chesstouring.com



22...Bf7?

White's bishop-pair would have been pretty useful after 22...Rxf1+ 23.Rxf1 d4 24.Bg5, but Black was wrong to allow White to carry out the threat.

23.Bd4! dxc4 24.Bxg7 cxd3 25.Qb2

Possibly Weis had missed this neat switch which leaves Black in huge trouble down the long diagonal.

25...Qc7 26.Rf2

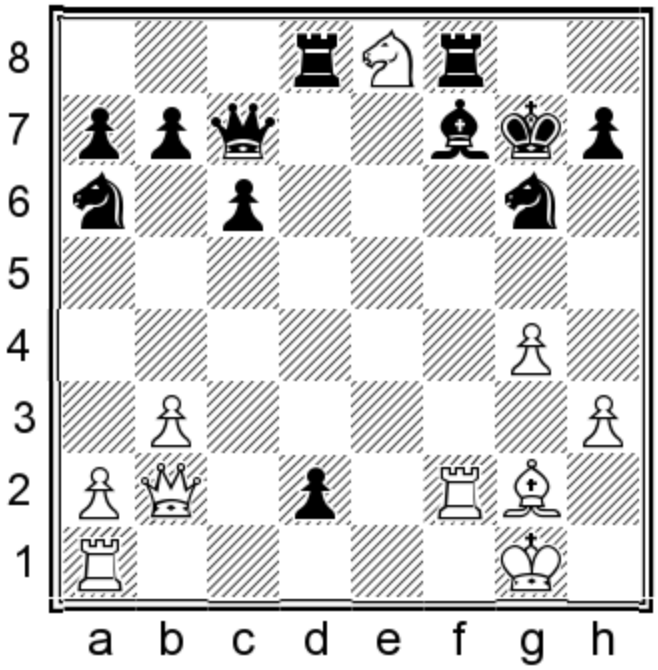
Hardly terrible, but it's still surprising that a GM would miss 26.Nf6+! Kxg7 27.Nh5+ Kh6 28.Qg7+ Kg5 29.Rf5+ Kh4 30.Qf6 mate.

26...d2 27.Nf6+!

Hitting on the right idea.

chesstouring.com

27...Kxg7 28.Ne8+



Opting for a different mating route than the one seen in our last note.

28...Kh6 29.Qg7+ Kg5 30.h4+!?

30.Rf5+ Kh4 31.Qxh7+ Kg3 32.Rf3 mate would also have done the trick.

30...Kxg4 31.Nf6+ Kg3 32.Ne4+ Kg4

The remaining moves in the official gamescore make no sense (33.Nc5?? d1=Q+ 34.Rxd1 Rxd1+ 1-0), so we'll presume Flores repeated moves then found the mate.

33.Nf6+ Kg3 34.Rf3+ Kxh4 35.Qh6 mate 1-0

Theory 4D

1.c4 g6

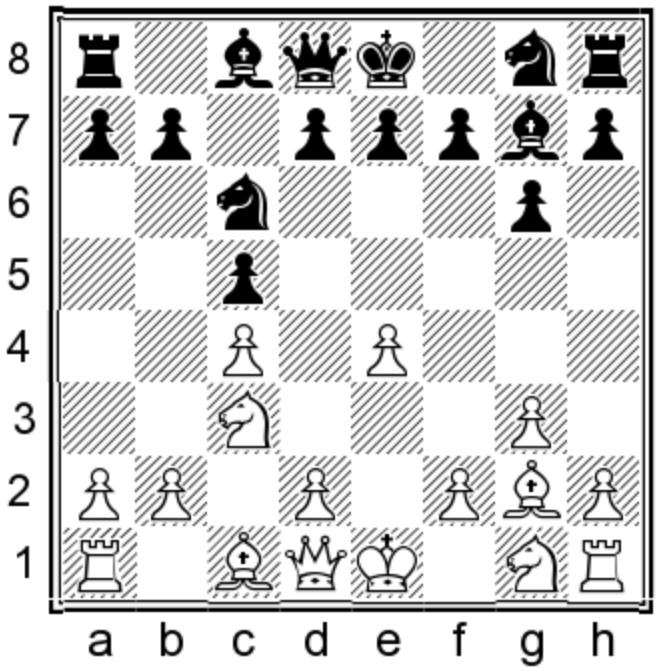
chesstouring.com

We stick with the chapter's move order, but another very important move order is the pure Symmetrical route into this line, 1...c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.e4.

2.Nc3 Bg7 3.g3 c5

Taking play into Symmetrical English lines. Sometimes Black goes 3...d6 first and only then 4.Bg2 c5. After 5.e4 he doesn't have to rush with ...Nc6, but sooner or later the knight is likely to arrive there: for example, 5...e5 6.Nge2 Ne7 7.d3 0-0 8.0-0 Nbc6 9.h3 and we're back in our main line, below.

4.Bg2 Nc6 5.e4



White goes for a Botvinnik set-up after all. Your opponent is likely to have seen this, but they're also likely to have much less experience of it than us. Note too that ...c5 lines become more common the higher up the rating ladder one goes. At club level Black is much more likely to go for a King's Indian approach with ...e5 or one of the other set-ups we've already considered.

chesstouring.com

Incidentally, if you'd like to bypass Black's second option in our next note then it's possible to start with 5.d3 and only then 6.e4, unless Black goes 5...a6. This now looks a little strange and White might change approach with 6.e3 and Nge2.

5...e5

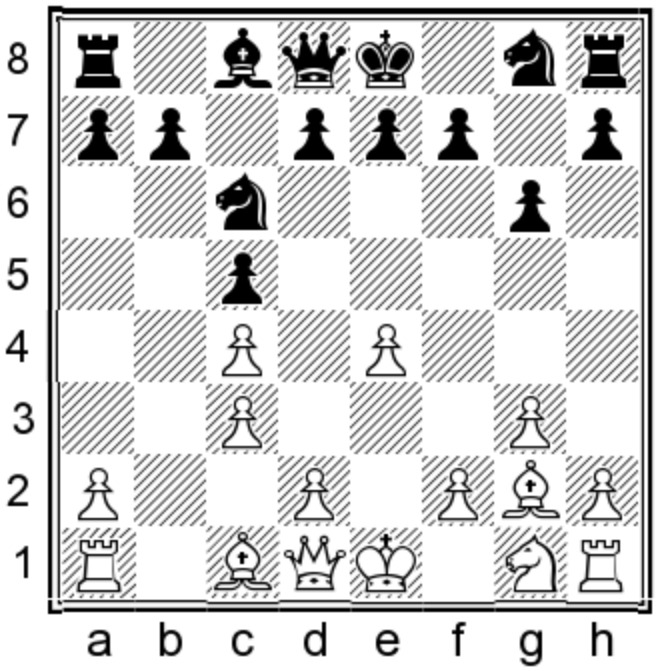
Black decides to copy us, which can hardly be a terrible plan, since he's also setting up a Botvinnik formation. Otherwise:

a) We'll examine all lines with 5...e6 in Line 4E.

b) 5...d6 is extremely likely after 6.Nge2 to transpose to either our main line here or to 4E, if Black touches his e-pawn, while 6...Nf6 (Simon once faced 6...h5 against which 7.h3 is likely still best, intending to meet any ...h4 with g4 and after 7...e6 8.d3 Nge7 White can exploit Black's slightly weakened kingside with 9.Bg5!?: for example, 9...Qd7 10.Rb1 b6 11.a3 Bb7 12.b4 is a thematic expansion, after which 12...Nd4 13.Nxd4 cxd4 14.Ne2 e5 15.h4!? Ng8 16.Bh3 Qc6 17.0-0 saw Black being outmanoeuvred in Solak-Timofeev, European Championship, Rijeka 2010; note that after a pass move, like 17...a6?!, White can even go 18.f4!, and if 18...f6 19.fxe5 fxg5? 20.Nxd4 Qc7 21.Ne6 Qd7 22.Nxg5 with a winning attack) 7.d3 0-0 8.0-0 would take play back into the realm of Line 3C.

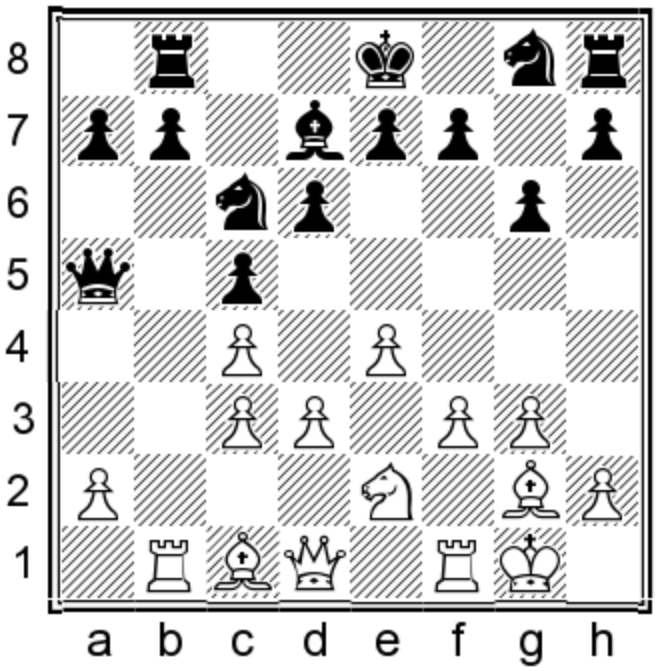
c) After 5.Nf3 and 5.e3, it's not such a bad idea for Black to make the radical exchange on c3, but here 5...Bxc3?! really isn't such a good idea, even though Richard once tried it. The problem is that 6.bxc3 leaves White with excellent central control (and in the 5.e3 Bxc3 6.bxc3 lines White is often quick to lose a tempo with e3-e4).

chesstouring.com



White just needs to know to avoid rushing with d4 when the position will take on certain Nimzo-Indian connotations. After, for example, 6...d6 7.d3 Qa5 (perhaps not best, but Black does suffer from being weak on the dark squares; 7...e6 8.Ne2 h6 is an attempt to address that, but after 9.0-0 Nge7 10.Be3 Kf8 11.f4 White has an extremely pleasant version of the Botvinnik, and now 11...f5?! 12.d4! would see the position opening before Black is ready for it) 8.Ne2 Bg4 9.f3! (avoiding the threat and the pawn may well land up on f4 after all) 9...Bd7 10.Rb1 Rb8 in Balduan-Weber, German League 2002 (instead, 10...0-0-0 is how Black often likes to play in this structure, but 11.0-0 h5 12.h3 again prepares to keep lines closed, with 12...Nf6 13.f4 leaving White with a pleasant enough set-up and ideas of e5 already on the table), there was no reason to avoid 11.0-0!?.

chesstouring.com

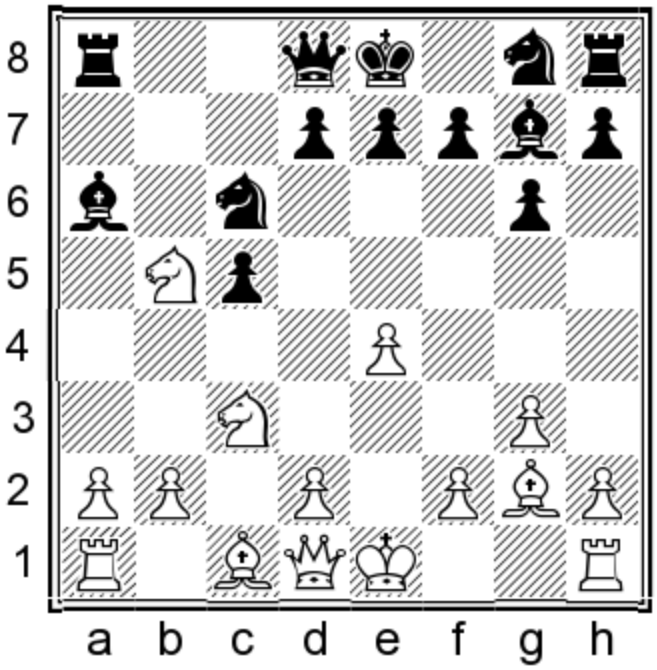


If 11...h5 (11...Qxa2 does bag a pawn, but after 12.Bf4 White has excellent compensation; if ...e5 he'll just move the bishop and open lines with f4, while 12...Qa5 13.d4 has ideas of both Ra1 Qc7; d5 and of e5, as well as of keeping the black king in the centre with 13...Nf6 14.Bh6) 12.h3! when White is ready to push the e-pawn, as well as meet ...h4 with g4, and it's not easy to see a route to a satisfactory position for Black, which 12...e5 13.f4 Nge7 14.fxe5 dxe5 15.Bg5 most certainly wouldn't be.

d) A more challenging line is 5...a6!?, preparing a swift Benko-like pawn sacrifice to open lines on the queenside and intending to switch set-up should White go in for the premature 6.a4. It should also be said that 5...a6 was Richard's second line for Black (after 5...e5) back when he wrote the popular *Beating Unusual Chess Openings* (aka *BUCO*). We will follow in English guru Tony Kosten's footsteps with 6.Nge2, but now Tony's opponent didn't push the b-pawn: 6...b5 (6...Rb8 was preferred in Kosten-Foisor, Marcy Etoile 2010 – 5...Rb8 6.Nge2 a6 comes to the same thing – but now that Black has moved the rook White doesn't mind so much pushing the a-pawn: 7.a4 d6 8.0-0 and now 8...Nf6 9.d3 0-0 took place back into the realm of Line 3C, where 10.h3 was, of course, our main line there) 7.cxb5!? (brave, but critical and actually not bad; if this is too risky for you

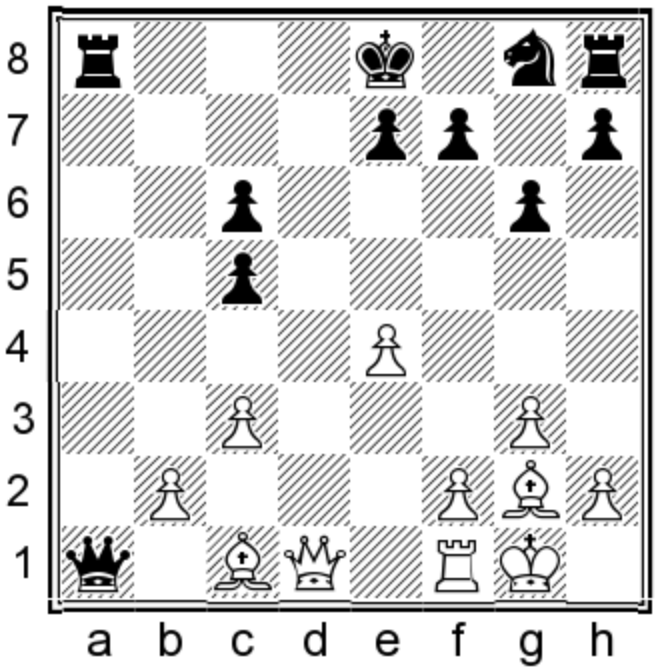
chesstouring.com

then 7.d3 is the move, intending 7...b4 8.Na4; instead, 7...Rb8 8.0-0 d6 9.f4 followed by Rb1 at some stage should be about equal, with White enjoying a Botvinnik set-up and Black having got in ...b5) 7...axb5 8.Nxb5 Ba6 9.Nec3! is the right knight to redeploy (9.Nbc3? Nb4 is just very awkward, as this time it's d3, not f3, which proves White's Achilles' heel after an early light-square attack).



Now 9...Qa5 (Black's most common move and the one recommended in *BUCO*, but it may not be best) 10.a4! (John Watson's proposed exchange sacrifice, which may well stun your opponent, was unplayed when *BUCO* appeared, where 10.Bf1 Nf6 was shown to give Black pretty decent compensation) 10...Bxc3! (otherwise White will just untangle with 0-0 and d3) 11.dxc3 Bxb5 12.axb5 Qxa1 13.bxc6 dxc6 and here 14.e5 Qa6 15.Qf3 Kf8! was Richard's old analysis, but 14.0-0 likely improves, as in Lagopatis-Navara, Greek Team Championship 2013.

chesstouring.com



It’s notable that *Lc0* rather approves of White’s compensation with two such bishops and the threat of 15.e5. Play continued 14...Qa2 15.e5 Qe6 16.Be3 h5 when the simple 17.Qf3!? (17.Bxc5 Nh6 18.b4 0-0 19.b5 Qxe5! 20.Qd4 Qxd4 21.cxd4 cxb5! 22.Bxa8 Rxa8 seems to equalise) 17...Rc8 (17...Kf8 18.Bxc5 Kg7 19.b4 is similar) 18.Bxc5 Nh6 19.Qf4 Nf5 20.b4 retains lasting compensation, since both bishops are very strong and White might yet be able to launch an attack after 20...0-0 21.h3, preparing g4.

Alternatively after 9.Nec3!, 9...Bxc3!? 10.Nxc3 Nb4 (10...Bd3 will transpose assuming Black moves his knight after 11.Bf1) 11.Bf1! (without this modest retreat, White would, of course, just be in serious trouble) 11...Bd3 12.Bxd3 Nxd3+ is quite critical when White should run to the kingside: 13.Kf1! Nf6 14.Qe2 c4 was Svanda-Zwardon, Czech League 2020, where 15.b3 would have been sensible, and if 15...Qc8 16.Kg2 0-0 17.a4!?, preparing to complete the untangling with Ba3.

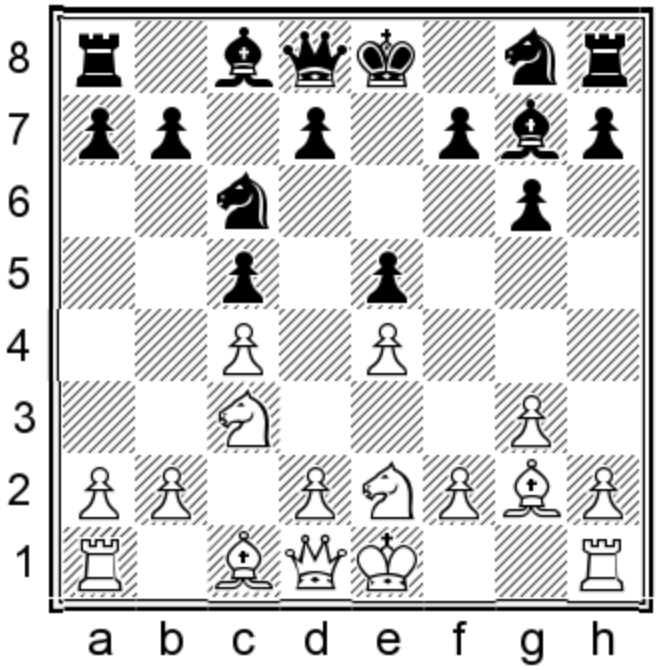
Instead, 9...Nf6? was Mamedov’s choice, but after 10.e5! White is doing well, since 10...Nxe5!? 11.Bxa8 Nd3+ 12.Kf1 doesn’t really work for Black, with 13.Bg2 up next and 12...Qxa8? running into 13.Nc7+. However, 9...Qb8 isn’t so bad when 10.a4 Bxc3 11.Nxc3 (recapturing with

chesstouring.com

the d-pawn and the idea of (11.dxc3) 11...Bxb5 12.Bf4 is an intriguing alternative) 11...Nb4 12.Bf1 Bd3 13.Bxd3 Nxd3+ was Morihama-Rodriguez, correspondence 2001, where 14.Kf1 c4 15.b3! would have been thematic, followed by Rb1 or 15...Qxb3 16.Qxb3 cxb3 17.Ba3 when White will untangle and pick up b3 after Ke2 and Rhb1.

Returning to the double Botvinnik, 5...e5:

6.Nge2



White continues along standard Botvinnik lines.

6...Nge7

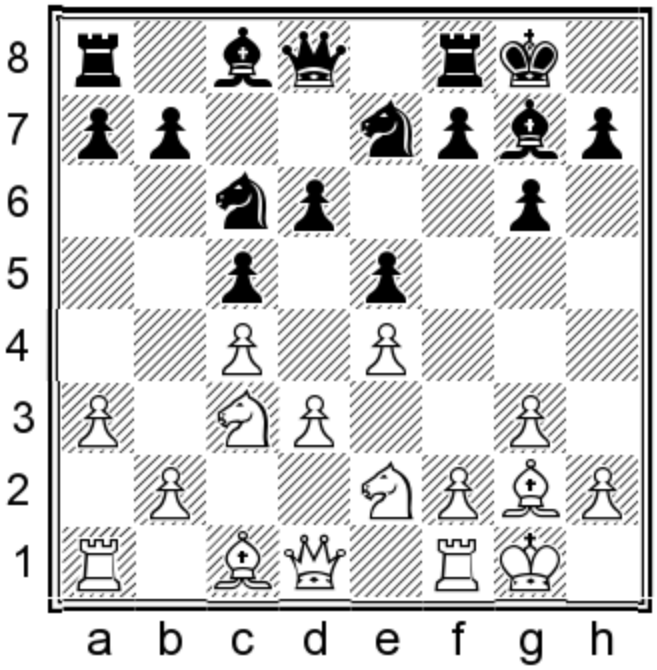
And so does Black. He doesn't have to maintain the symmetry, but 6...d6 7.d3 Nf6 8.0-0 0-0 9.h3! is quite pleasant for White, as we saw back in Line 3B.

7.0-0 0-0 8.d3 d6

chesstouring.com

Both sides continue down the symmetrical route. Black almost always copies so. He doesn't have to and 8...f5 can't be ridiculous, but allows White some extra options, including 9.Be3 Nd4 10.Qd2 d6 11.Bg5!, fighting for control of d5, as well as just 9.a3 when 9...d6 transposes below after 10.Rb1 a5 11.Nd5.

9.a3!?



A change of approach as we look to beat Black to open lines on the queenside. Of course, we would have liked to have recommended 9.f4, but Black is fine after 9...exf4 or even 9...f5, while 9.Be3 would be typically well met by 9...Nd4.

9...a5

Black is determined to keep the queenside closed.

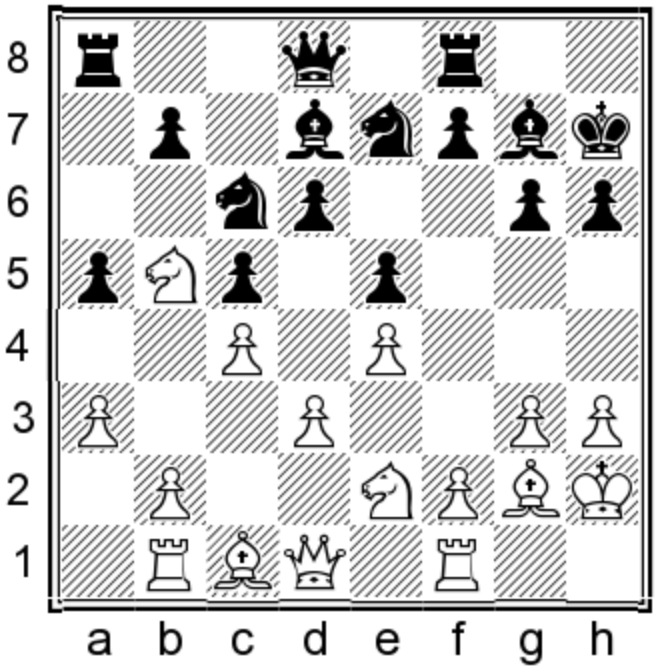
The alternatives:

a) 9...Be6 is likely to transpose below after 10.Rb1 a5 11.Nd5. Otherwise, Eugenio Torre's 10...f5?! rather asks for the thematic 11.exf5! when

chesstouring.com

11...Bxf5 12.b4 Qd7 13.Ne4 generates some pressure and 13...b6 14.b5 Nd4 15.Nxd4 exd4 16.Bg5 h6 17.Bxe7 Qxe7 18.f4 would be very pleasant for White, with Qd2 and Rbe1 on their way, as well as possibilities of a4-a5 and Nf2 to activate the English bishop. Instead, the 10...Qd7 11.b4 b6 of A.Muzychuk-Dembo, Biel 2006, can be met thematically with 12.Nd5 followed by b5 or if 12...Nd4 13.Nxd4 cxd4 and before Black can exchange knights on d5, 14.Nxe7+ Qxe7 15.f4 with an edge, since 15...f5? 16.exf5 Bxf5 17.Bxa8 Rxa8 18.Rb2!? doesn't give Black enough for the exchange. Already we can see that White's extra tempo can be a useful one in these seemingly innocuous symmetrical positions.

b) 9...h6 prepares to play ...f5 without allowing Bg5, but with 10.Rb1 a5 11.h3!? Kh7 (11...f5 12.exf5 was presumably White's idea, and if 12...Nxf5 13.Kh2, staying flexible and angling for 13...Nfd4 14.Nxd4 Nxd4 15.Be3, looking to go b4 and then make a positionally desirable exchange on d4) 12.Kh2!? Bd7 13.Nb5! one downside to the prevention of b4 becomes apparent.



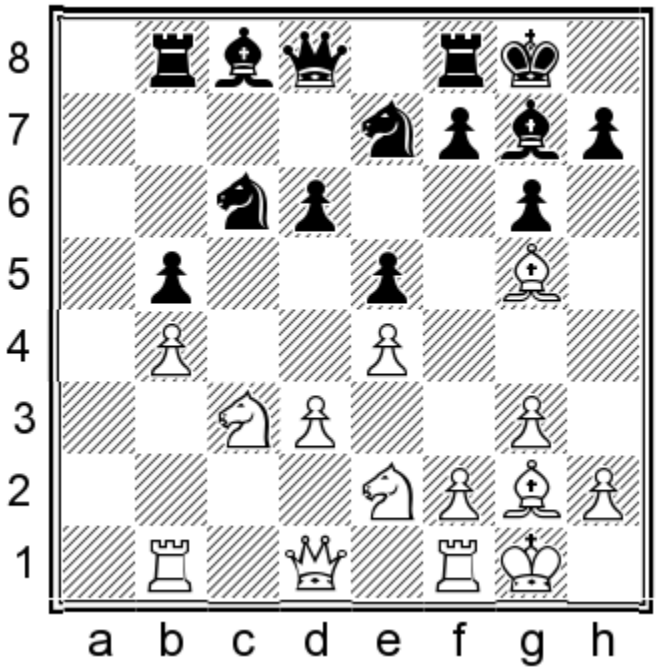
Now 13...Nc8 (13...Be6 14.Nec3 f5 15.Nd5 also looks like an edge, with ideas of exf5, as well as b4) 14.Bd2 N6a7 (14...a4 may look good

chesstouring.com

positionally, but after 15.f4! f5 16.Nec3 the pawn becomes weak, since 16...Nd4 17.exf5 Bxf5 18.Bxb7 would but pick off a different one) 15.Nxa7 Nxa7 16.b4 axb4 17.axb4 b6 18.b5 began to squeeze Black in Kosten-Popovic, French League 2000, where White was ready to invade down the a-file and could also consider expansion with f4.

c) 9...f5 10.Rb1 (White can also exchange on f5) 10...f4?! (10...a5 11.Be3 transposes to note 'b' to Black's 10th move, below) 11.gxf4 Nd4 is once again not to be feared on account of the simple 12.Nxd4 cxd4 13.Ne2, and if 13...Bg4 14.f3 Be6 15.b4 with a safe enough kingside and extra pawn.

d) A different approach from Black sees him continuing to imitate after 9...a6 10.Rb1 Rb8 11.b4 or with 9...Rb8 10.Rb1 a6 11.b4 and then 11...cxb4 12.axb4 b5 13.cxb5 axb5. Here White has often put the bishop on e3 and 14.h3!? is by no means ridiculous, but we quite like 14.Bg5!?, angling to entice ...f6:



d1) Black doesn't have to obstruct his bishop and 14...f6?! 15.Be3 is actually a little awkward for him with d4 next up, and even more so in the event of 15...f5?! 16.d4!, with the idea of 16...fxe4 17.d5, leaving White a

chesstouring.com

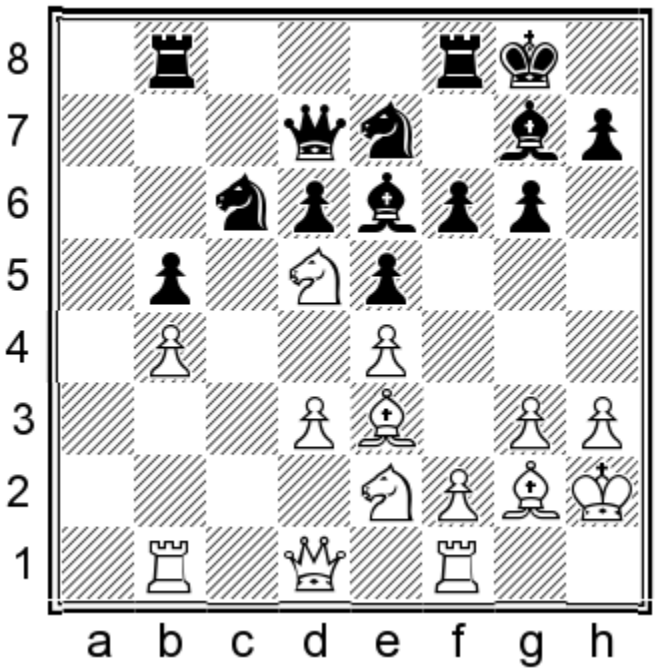
pawn up after 17...Nd4 18.Nxd4 exd4 19.Bxd4 Bg4!? 20.Qxg4 Bxd4 21.Nxe4.

d2) 14...Be6, as recommended in *BUCO*, likely doesn't equalise if White now holds back on 15.Nd5, preferring 15.Qd2!? and only then 15...Qd7 16.Nd5 when 17.Rbc1 will create a tactical threat and 16...f6 17.Be3 f5 18.Rbc1 prepares to return the bishop to g5, with a definite pull.

d3) 14...h6!? 15.Be3 allows Qd2 to come with tempo, with 15...Nd4 16.Qd2 Kh7 17.f4 likely OK for Black, but at least White has a thematic Botvinnik position and might tee up a knight exchange on d4 after Bf2.

d4) 14...Bg4 (continuing to copy) 15.h3! Be6 (15...Bxe2 might seem positionally correct, but after 16.Nxe2 Black doesn't really want to leap into d4, and if 16...h6 17.Be3 Qd7 18.Qd2 Kh7 when White might even strive to open lines for his bishops with 19.d4!?) 16.Nd5 (ever a thematic response, of course, to Black's bishop landing on e6) 16...f6 (16...f5 17.Qd2 Qd7 18.Rbc1 maintains control, and if 18...fxe4? – 18...Bxd5?! 19.exd5 Nd8 also isn't so great for Black after 20.Be3! Nf7 21.f4, which keeps him tied up and White with a nice long-term outpost on c6 – 19.Bxe7 Nxe7 20.Rc7 Qd8 21.Nxe7+ Kh8 22.Rfc1 Rf7 when 23.Qg5! is complicated, but strong, and there's also the simple 23.Nxg6+ hxg6 24.Rxf7 Bxf7 25.dxe4 with an extra pawn) 17.Be3 Qd7 18.Kh2 was slightly easier to play for White in a certain notable encounter, Solak-Marin, Romanian League 2009.

chesstouring.com

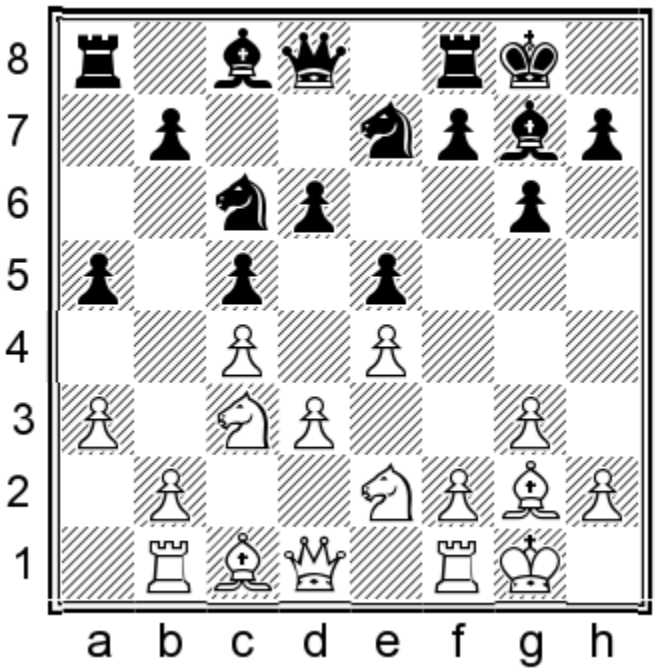


The English expert, playing against his own opening, tried 18...f5 19.Qd2 f4!?, but after 20.Nxe7+ Qxe7 21.gxf4! Nd4 22.Bxd4 exd4 White would have been for choice had he now played the calm 23.Ra1, and if 23...Rf7 (or 23...Qh4 24.Ra6 Rbd8 25.f3 when 25...Bh6 26.Qe1 Bxf4+ 27.Nxf4 Qxf4+ 28.Qg3 simplifies, leaving White with much the better structure) 24.Ra6 Rbf8 25.Kg1 Bh6 (25...Qh4 26.f3! is again quite strong, maintaining control on the kingside after 26...Bxh3 27.Qe1 Qh5 28.Qg3 before beginning to harvest the ripe fruit on the other flank) 26.Qb2 Qh4 27.f5! gxf5 28.exf5. The complications seem to favour White, as with 28...Bxf5 29.Qxd4 Qxd4 30.Nxd4 Bxd3 31.Bd5 Bxf1 32.Kxf1 Kg7 33.Bxf7 Rxf7 34.Rxd6 with an extra pawn in the endgame or more in the event of 34...Be3? 35.Ne6+.

Returning to 9...a5:

10.Rb1

chesstouring.com



This may seem a little strange with b4 not yet a threat, but the rook move is ever a useful one: there won't be any accidents should the a1-h8 diagonal open and White is now fully ready for ...Nd4.

10...Rb8

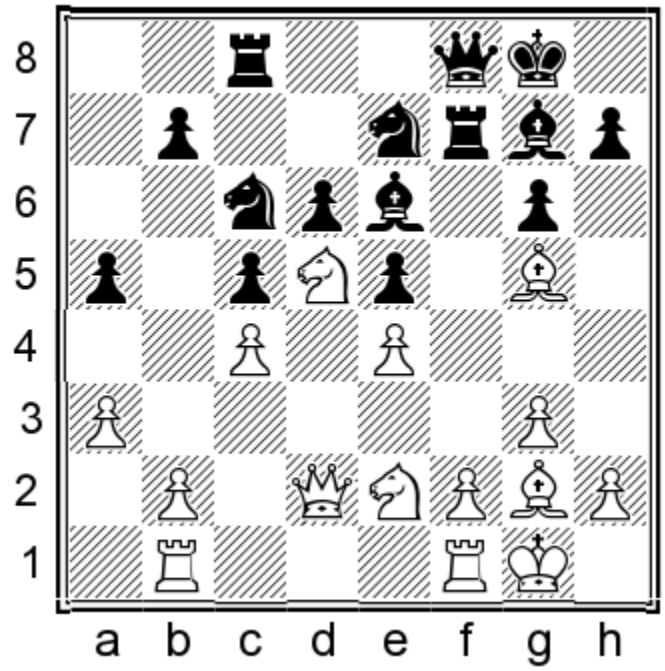
Black continues to imitate and is ready to meet 11.Nd5 with 11...b5. Alternatively:

a) 10...Nd4?! would just play into White's hands, in view of 11.Nxd4 cxd4 12.Nb5 Qb6, as in Taimanov-Ljubisavljevic, European Senior Championship, Saint Vincent 2002, where the restrained 13.b3!? might have been White's best choice, keeping queenside options open ahead of breaking with f4 next move.

b) 10...f5 can be met well enough by 11.Nd5, intending Bg5: for example, 11...fxe4 (or 11...h6 when 12.exf5! is thematic, and if 12...gxf5 13.f4 or 12...Bxf5 13.b4 axb4 14.axb4 cxb4 15.Nxb4, creating a long-term target on b7) 12.dxe4 Be6 13.Bd2!? (eyeing the b4 break, as well as f4) 13...Rf7 14.Qc1!? Rc8 (14...Nd4?! 15.Nxd4 cxd4 16.Bg5 is awkward for Black, who

chesstouring.com

after 16...Bxd5 17.cxd5 Qd7 18.h4 will be vulnerable on the light squares after Kh2 and Bh3) 15.Bg5 Qf8 16.Qd2.

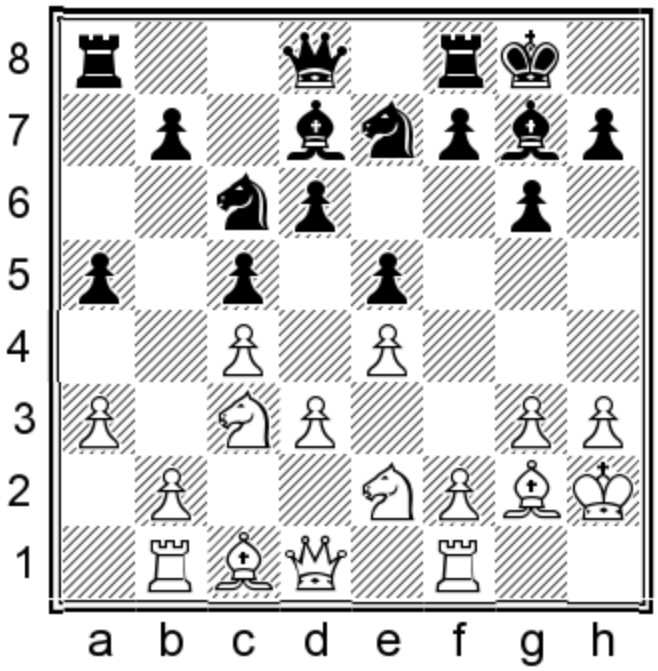


Now in Pena Gomez-Alonso Rosell, Barcelona 2018, Black could find nothing better than giving up a pawn with 16...h6 17.Bxe7 Nxe7 18.Qxa5.

chesstouring.com

c) Black can, of course, also develop the light-squared bishop, but after 10...Be6 one decent approach is the flexible 11.Bd2, another the thematic 11.Nd5 when 11...Rb8 (and not 11...Qd7? 12.Nb6) 12.Nec3 gave White an edge, as we'll see next, in Rivas Pastor-So.Polgar, Leon 1989.

d) With 10...Bg4 11.h3 Bd7 (once again, 11...Bxe2 is not to be feared, and if 12.Nxe2 Qd7 13.Kh2!? when White prepares a timely h4 and Bh3, and would be delighted to see the long diagonal open up for his unopposed light-squared bishop after 13...f5?! 14.exf5 gxf5 15.f4) 12.Kh2 White improves his position and waits to see how Black will continue.



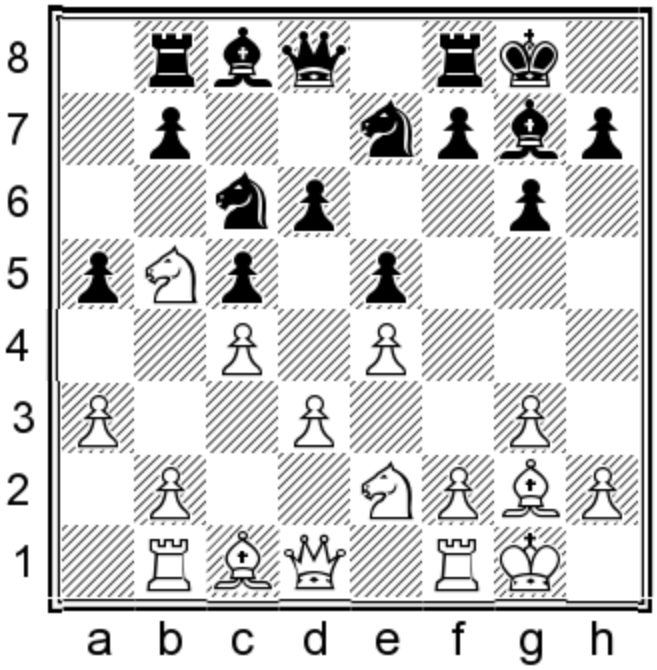
The position is certainly slightly favourable for White as he has that extra break on the queenside, in b4, and an extra square there on b5, which might be useful for a knight: for example, 12...Nd4 13.b4 b6 14.bxc5 (opening up the file for the rook on b1) 14...Nxe2 15.Qxe2 bxc5 16.Bg5! h6 (16...f6 might appear the lesser evil, but after 17.Be3 Nc6 18.Nb5 Be6 19.f4 White is ready to go f5 and has a very nice position) 17.Bxe7 Qxe7 18.Rb6 Be6 19.Rfb1 Ra7 20.Qb2 thematically took over on the queenside in Antal-Lehner, German League 2017.

chesstouring.com

e) So did 10...Bd7 11.Nb5!? (a slightly annoying leap from Black's perspective) 11...Be6 12.Nec3 h6 (preventing Bg5; 12...Qd7 13.Nd5 is also a little annoying for Black, and if 13...Rab8 14.Bg5 f6 15.Bd2 followed by b4) 13.Bd2, which transposes to no less a clash than So-Giri, Wijk aan Zee 2016, which we'll also see below.

Returning to 10...Rb8:

11.Nb5!?



Again, we see White exploiting his control over b5 with a leap which Black most certainly can't copy.

A decent enough case can also be made for developing the dark-squared bishop to d2, e3 or g5, as well as for 11.f4, which hopes to invade with 11...f5 12.fxe5 dxe5?! 13.Nd5.

11...Be6

Black now has the extra move ...Rb8 over So-Giri. Otherwise, 11...Nd4?! just plays into White's hands, and if 12.Nexd4 cxd4 13.Bd2 f5 14.exf5 Bxf5

chesstouring.com

15.Qe2 followed by b4, with control and queenside pressure.

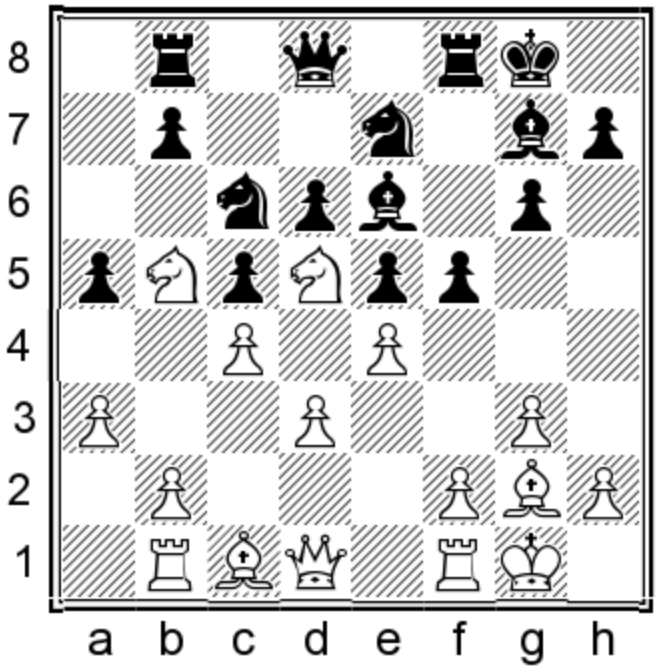
12.Nec3

A consistent follow-up to White's last, putting ideas of a knight invasion of d5 fully back on the table.

12...f5

This was the old game Adorjan-Arnason, Reykjavik 1982, where White exchanged on f5, but...

13.Nd5!?



...was also thematic, and possibly even stronger. For example:

13...Qd7

Or 13...h6 14.Bd2 when White is ready to break with b4.

14.Bg5 h6 15.Bxe7 Nxe7 16.Nxe7+ Qxe7

chesstouring.com

Black might hope to launch an attack after ...f4, but White has a typical and well-timed riposte.

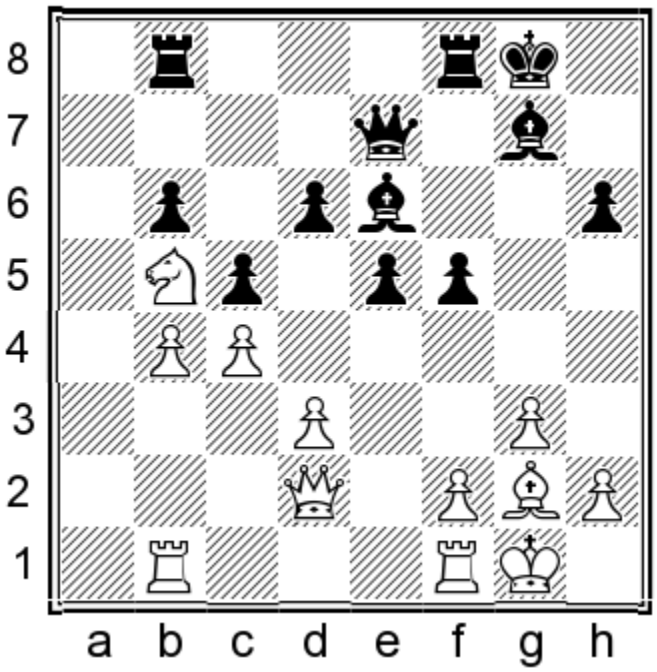
17.exf5! gxf5

17...Bxf5 18.b4 axb4 19.axb4 takes even more control, and if 19...b6 20.bxc5 bxc5 21.Ra1 when for once there's no need to fear 21...e4? on account of 22.Ra7.

18.Qd2 b6

18...a4 19.Qd1 f4 would be a typical 'attacking' try for Black, but after 20.Be4! he'll do well to break in on the kingside, as we can see from 20...Bh3 21.Re1 Qf6 22.Qh5!? fxg3? 23.fxg3 Qf2+ 24.Kh1 Bf5 25.Nxd6, bagging a pawn while maintaining full control.

19.b4 axb4 20.axb4



White is ready to exchange on c5 and go Ra1-a7, so Black should probably try **20...e4!?** (20...f4 21.Be4 f3? is hardly an advance to fear, in

chesstouring.com

view of 22.bxc5 bxc5 23.Qe3 Bg4 24.Ra1 followed by Ra7 or just Ra6) **21.Rfc1**, but even here his position is a little loose and **21...d5 22.cxd5 Bxd5 23.Nc3 Bc6 24.dxe4 fxe4** (warning: there's a certain threat against f2!) **25.Ne2!?** leaves White slightly for choice, with Qc2 threatened and ideas too of Nf4, which is why the sacrifice no longer works, i.e. **25...Rxf2? 26.Kxf2 e3+ 27.Qxe3 Rf8+ 28.Nf4 Bd4 29.Qxd4! cxd4 30.Bxc6 d3 31.Bf3** with far too many pieces for the queen.

Game 19
M.Rivas Pastor-So.Polgar
Leon 1989

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 c5

A rare choice at this point, but we soon get back into the double Botvinnik formation.

3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.a3 a5 6.e4 Nc6 7.Nge2 d6 8.d3 Nge7 9.0-0 0-0

Now we're back on track, with White now making a useful rook move ahead of looking to invade with his knights on d5 and/or b5.

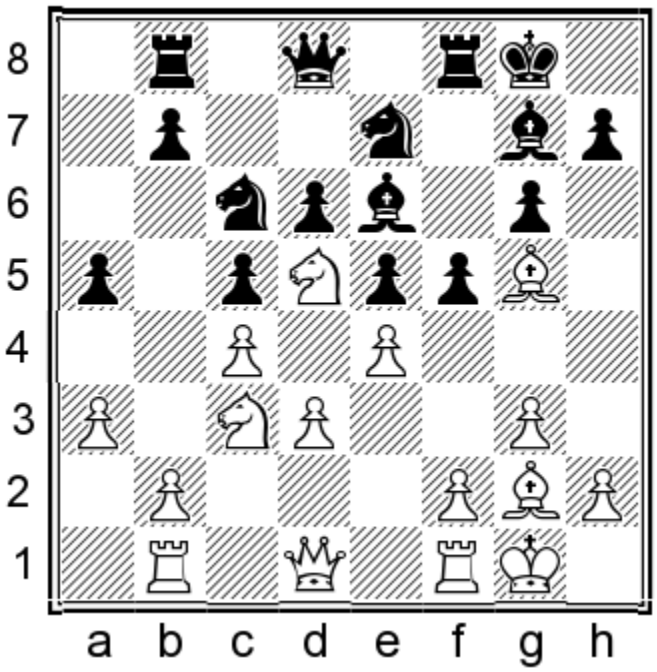
10.Rb1 Be6 11.Nd5 Rb8 12.Nec3 f5

A logical enough break, but far from forced needless to say.

Instead, 12...Qd7 might be met by 13.Nb5, and if 13...Nd4 14.Nxd4 cxd4 15.Bg5 f6 16.Bd2. Black can deal with his a-pawn with 16...Nc6, but then 17.b4 axb4 18.axb4 Ne7 19.Nb6 Qd8 20.c5! would be one way White might open lines on the queenside, and if 20...d5? 21.Qb3, with a most powerful pin. 12...Nd4!? would be a better-timed leap, but here White has at least 13.Bg5 f6 14.Nxe7+ Qxe7 15.Be3, angling for a favourable exchange of minor pieces on d4, as well as b4.

13.Bg5!

chesstouring.com



Not for the first time we find this pin creating problems for Black and do just note too how harmoniously placed White's pieces are.

13...h6

After 13...Qd7 it's tempting to swing the queen out to a4, as well as to go 14.b4 axb4 15.axb4, and if 15...Bxd5 16.Bxe7 Nxe7 17.exd5 with queenside pressure and ideas of Qc2 followed by doubling rooks, or 17...e4?! 18.Ne2 and Nf4-e6.

14.Bxe7 Nxe7 15.exf5!

Yet again we see this exchange, and in a strong guise. White opens up the long diagonal for the Botvinnik bishop, taking much of the sting out of any ...f4 push.

15...Nxf5

After 15...gxf5?! White doesn't even have to advance his own f-pawn, but can go 16.b4 axb4 17.axb4, and if 17...f4? 18.bxc5 dxc5 19.Nxe7+ Qxe7

chesstouring.com

20.Rb6, leaving Black's position riddled with holes.

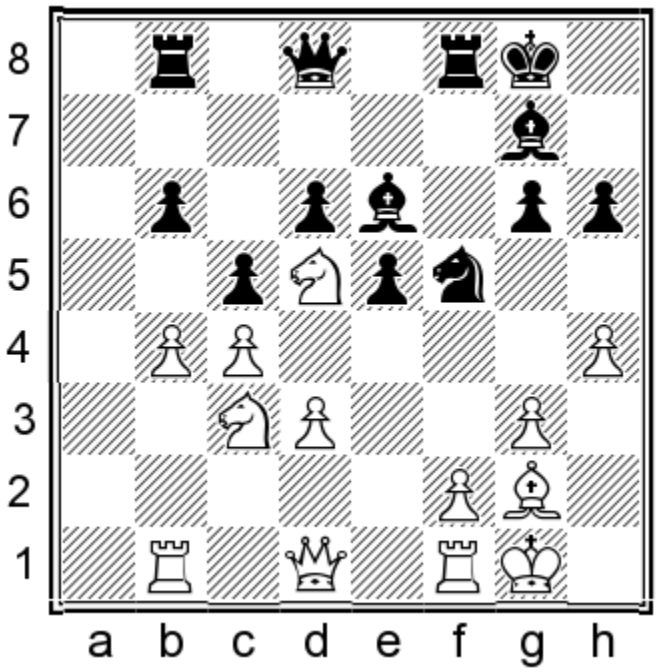
16.b4

Thematic, and effective.

16...axb4 17.axb4 b6

Black tries to keep lines closed, rather than leave b7 vulnerable after 17...cxb4 18.Rxb4 when 18...Bd7 19.Be4!? Bc6 20.Qg4 Kh7 21.Rfb1 would leave White in complete control and ready to effect favourable exchanges with Ne3.

18.h4!



Prodding the slightly vulnerable black kingside. Another good possibility was 18.Nb5, intending to invade down the a-file after Ra1.

18...Nd4

chesstouring.com

This doesn’t turn out well, but already improvements are hard to come by for Black, as we can see too from 18...h5 19.Ra1 cxb4 20.Nxb4 Nd4 21.Ra7 followed by Nbd5 or even Ne4-g5, with control and much the safer king for White.

19.bxc5 bxc5

Likewise, after 19...dxc5 20.Nb5 Nxb5 21.Rxb5 Bd7 White is clearly for choice after 22.Rb2 b5 23.Be4, since there’s no good way to deal with the threat to g6.

20.Rxb8 Qxb8 21.Be4

21.h5!? was another tempting possibility, and if 21...gxh5 22.Qxh5 Qe8 23.Qxe8 Rxe8 24.Nc7 when 24...Re7 25.Nxe6 Nxe6 26.Ra1 would be a dream endgame for White with the far superior pieces, safer pawns, and, again, the much safer king position.

21...Bf5 22.h5!

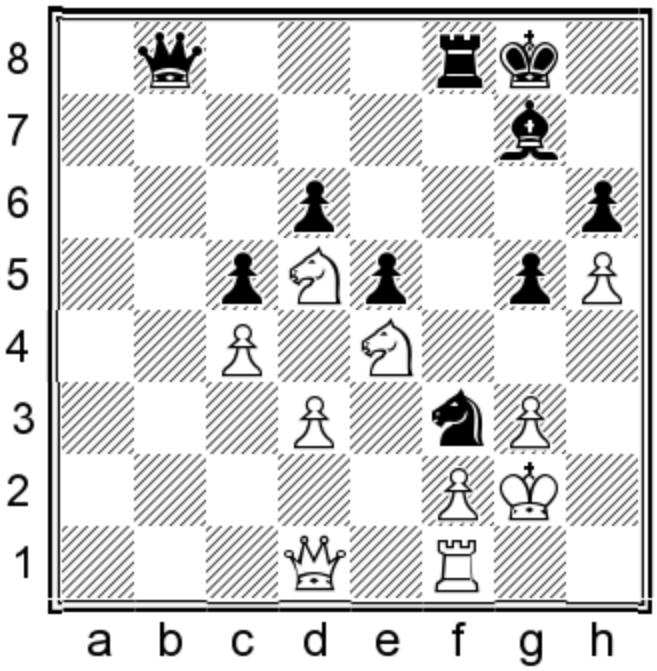
Levering open lines.

22...Bxe4

Black would quickly lose material after 22...g5? 23.Ne7+.

23.Nxe4 Nf3+ 24.Kg2 g5

chesstouring.com



Desperately trying to keep lines closed, but now White has a little tactic.

25.Nef6+! Bxf6 26.Qxf3

Talk about a dream good knight versus bad bishop scenario. White is also somewhat helped by the presence of the queens.

26...Kh8 27.Qf5

27.Qe4!? Qe8 28.Ra1! would have been even simpler, since 28...Qxh5? fails to 29.Rh1.

27...Bg7 28.Qe4 Qe8 29.g4

Simple and strong.

29...Qb8?

Allowing White to invade, but even after 29...Qa8 30.Ne3! Qxe4+ 31.dxe4 it's hard to believe Black would have survived with Ra1 or Rb1 next up.

chesstouring.com

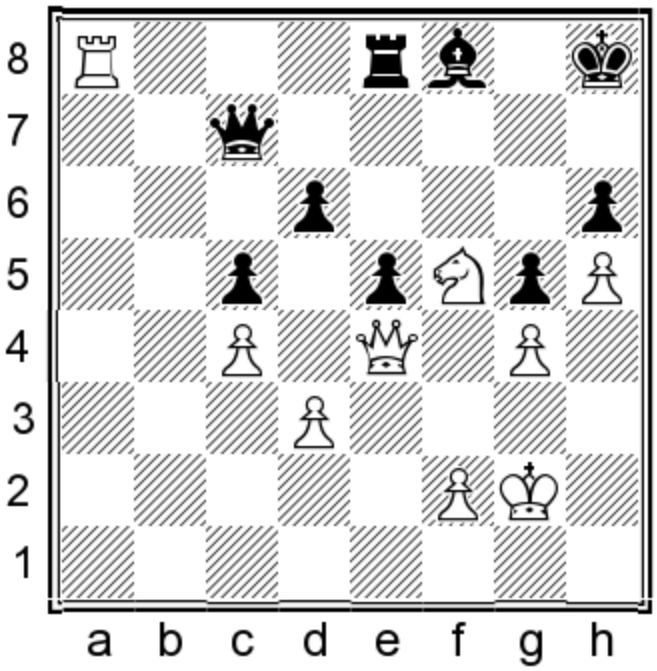
30.Ne7 Re8 31.Ra1! Bf6

There's no fortress after 31...Rxe7 32.Ra8 Re8 33.Rxb8 Rxb8 34.Qc6 Bf8 35.Kf3, since White's king will wander in via the light squares.

32.Nd5 Bg7 33.Ne7 Qc7

Had Black repeated, we dare say White would have switched approach with 33...Bf6 34.Nf5, and if 34...Bg7 35.Nxg7 Kxg7 36.Qg6+.

34.Nf5 Bf8 35.Ra8



By no means the only good move, but the simplest, settling for a pure good queen and knight versus queen and bad bishop scenario.

35...Rxa8?!

After 35...Qf7 36.Rxe8 Qxe8 37.Qd5 Kh7 38.Kf3 Qd7 39.Ke2 Qe8 (or 39...Kh8 40.Qa8) White might not want to cash in so, but 40.Nxd6 Bxd6 41.Qxd6 is an easily won queen endgame, with Black unable to cover all his weak pawns.

chesstouring.com

36.Qxa8 Qf7 37.Kf3!?

Very calm. White might just have picked off h6, but the Spanish Grandmaster was clearly in no rush.

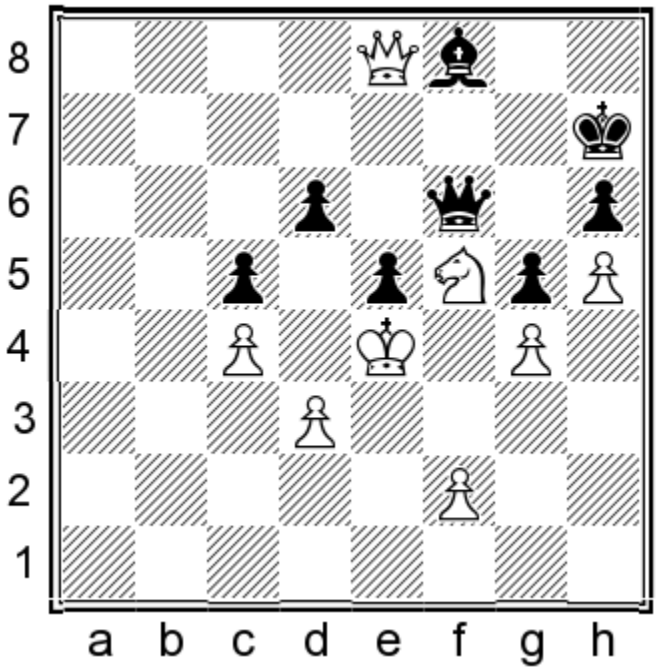
37...Kh7 38.Ke4 Kh8 39.Ke3

There's no way to invade with the king so Rivas Pastor resets.

39...Kh7 40.Ke2 Qf6

Pretty much the only move which doesn't lose material immediately.

41.Qe8 Bg7 42.Kf3 Bf8 43.Ke4! 1-0



Only now and, finally, Polgar gave up without allowing White to demonstrate his light-square domination after 43...Kg8 44.Kd5 Kh7 45.Qe6.

Game 20

W.So-A.Giri

chesstouring.com

Wijk aan Zee 2016

1.c4 g6 2.Nc3 c5

The Dutch no.1 wastes no more time in heading for the waters of the Symmetrical English.

3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 Nc6 5.a3

5.e4 d6 6.Nge2 e5 7.d3 Nge7 8.0-0 0-0 9.a3 a5 10.Rb1 is our recommended move order and then we saw 10...Bd7 11.Nb5 Be6 12.Nec3 in Line 4D, with play transposing after 12...h6 13.Bd2.

5...d6 6.Rb1 a5 7.d3 e5

Only now does Black take up a Botvinnik stance, with So quick to copy after first repeating moves.

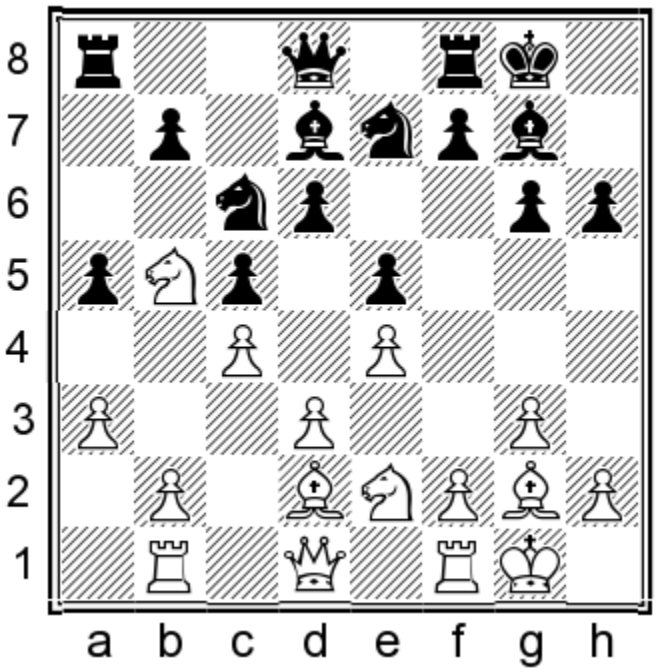
8.Nd5 Nce7 9.Nc3 Nc6 10.e4 Nge7 11.Nge2 0-0 12.0-0 Bd7 13.Bd2 h6

Preventing any notion of an annoying Bg5. Instead, 13...f5 might hope to get in a quick ...f4, but White has at least 14.Bg5 when 14...f4!? 15.gxf4 h6 16.Bxe7 Nxe7 17.fxe5 dxe5 18.Nd5 shouldn’t give Black quite enough for his pawn, partly as White can always dig in on the kingside with f3 and Qe1 if needed, and he will still open the queenside with b4.

14.Nb5!

Reminding Black that there was a downside to placing his bishop on d7, which was clearly hoping for 14.Nd5 Nxd5 15.cxd5 Nd4.

chesstouring.com



14...Be6 15.Nec3

A simple but effective move, heading for d5, as well as one which transposes to our recommended repertoire.

15...b6

15...Nd4!? was better, although after 16.b4 White retains an edge, and if 16...Nxb5 17.Nxb5 axb4 18.axb4 b6 19.bxc5 bxc5 20.Qc1! Kh7 21.Bc3, preparing f4.

16.Nd5

Suddenly Black must contemplate ideas of Nc7 and even a world-class grandmaster like Giri was to buckle under the pressure.

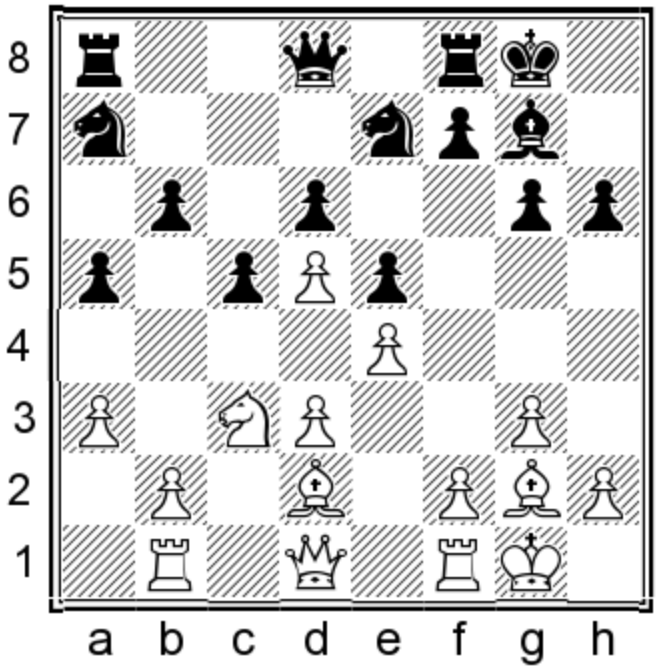
16...Bxd5?

This badly weakens the light squares. After 16...Rb8 17.b4 axb4 18.axb4 f5 19.exf5 Nxf5 20.Be4 White is again clearly for choice, so perhaps

chesstouring.com

16...Nd4!? was still best, and if 17.Nxd4 exd4 18.Nxe7+ Qxe7 19.f4 when White is restricted to a pleasant edge.

17.cxd5 Na7 18.Nc3!



Keeping pieces on with Black a little cramped.

18...f5

18...b5!? 19.b4! cxb4 20.axb4 a4 was likely a better try, as pointed out by David Cummings, although after 21.Be3 Qd7 22.Qd2 Kh7 23.f4 exf4 24.Rxf4!? White remains clearly for choice, despite the passed a-pawn; Ne2-d4 will be a strong manoeuvre.

19.h4!?

Again we see White preparing to soften up Black's weakened kingside, which makes sense with an extra light-squared bishop, although there was nothing wrong with the standard 19.b4.

19...f4?! 20.Bh3!

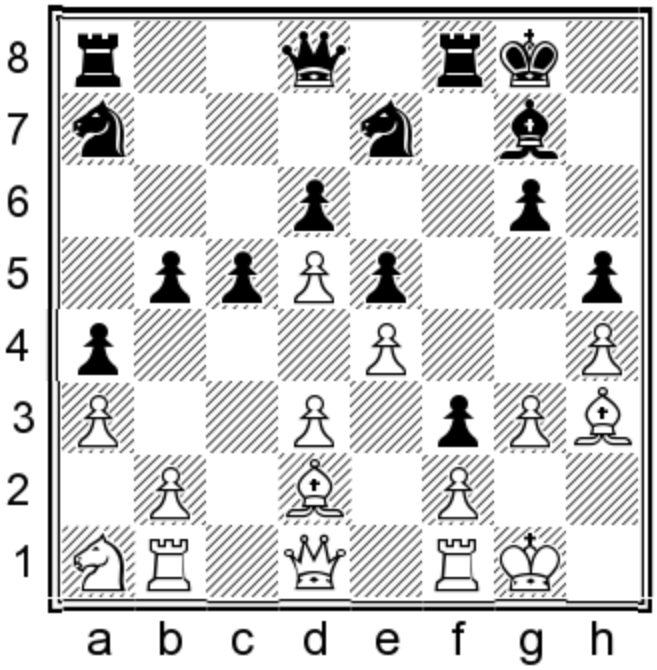
chesstouring.com

Suddenly White's unopposed bishop is something of a monster.

20...b5 21.Ne2!?

So is in no rush, being happy to provoke Black's next and embark on a long knight manoeuvre.

21...f3 22.Nc1 h5 23.Nb3 a4 24.Na1!



The knight is bound for c2 and then e1, calmly collecting the pawn on f3.

24...b4

Desperation, as the f-pawn would simply have fallen after 24...Kh8 25.Nc2 Ng8 26.Ne1 Qf6 27.Bg5 Qf7 28.Be6.

25.axb4 cxb4 26.Qxa4!

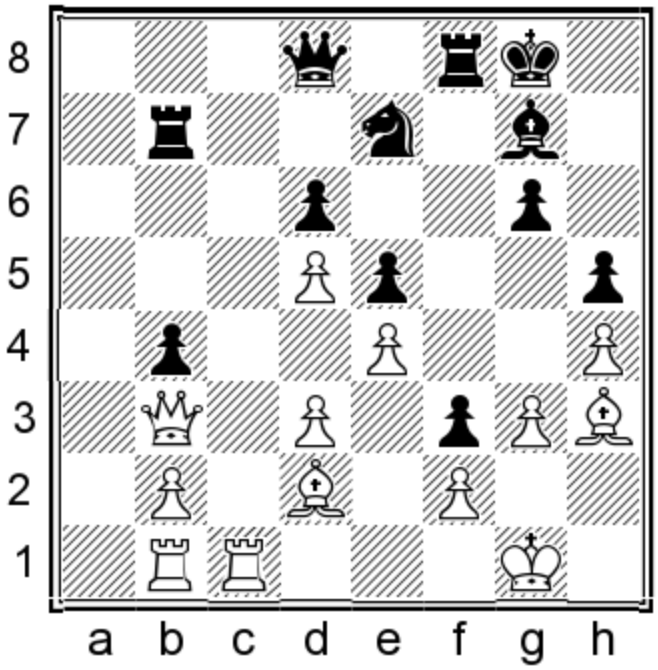
Calmly collecting a pawn and rightly refusing to fear the upcoming invasion of d4.

chesstouring.com

26...Nac6 27.Qd1 Nd4 28.Nc2 Nxc2

Unsurprisingly Black's position is now strategically lost, but so would be 28...Ne2+ 29.Kh2 Qb6 30.Ne1! Nd4 31.Be3 when the f3-pawn will fall after all.

29.Qxc2 Rb8 30.Rfc1 Rb7 31.Qb3



It's all too easy for So. Now the pawn on b4 is going to fall as well.

31...Kh8 32.Rc4 Ng8 33.Rxb4 Rxb4 34.Qxb4 Bf6 35.Rc1 Qe7 36.Qb6 Bxh4 37.Rc7! 1-0

White doesn't even need to pocket the bishop, as 37...Qd8 (or 37...Qf6 38.Qa7) 38.Qb7 Be7 39.Rc8 would snare the black queen. Very rarely do you see a near-2800 player so badly outplayed.

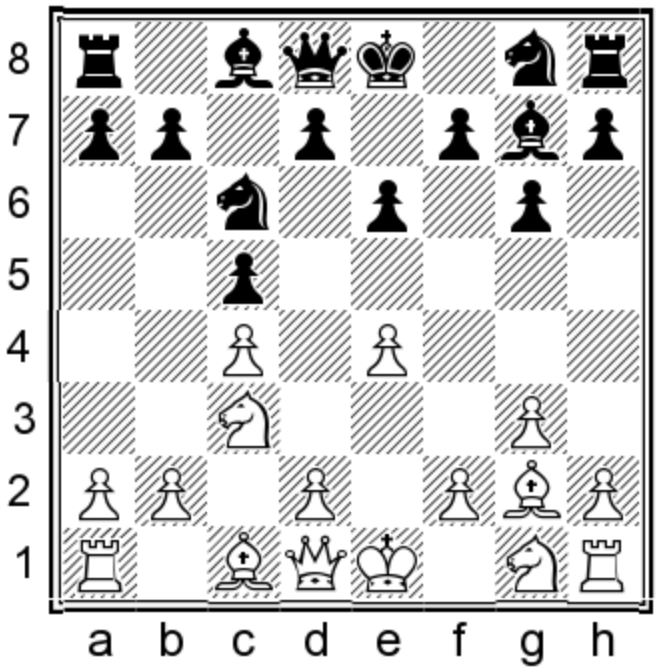
Theory 4E

1.c4 g6

chesstouring.com

We'll stick with the Modern move order common to this section. 1...c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.e4 would be the pure Symmetrical route to this line.

2.Nc3 Bg7 3.g3 c5 4.Bg2 Nc6 5.e4 e6



Black's second most popular move at this point and a logical choice, preparing to develop the king's knight to e7, thereby keeping the fianchettoed bishop on an open diagonal.

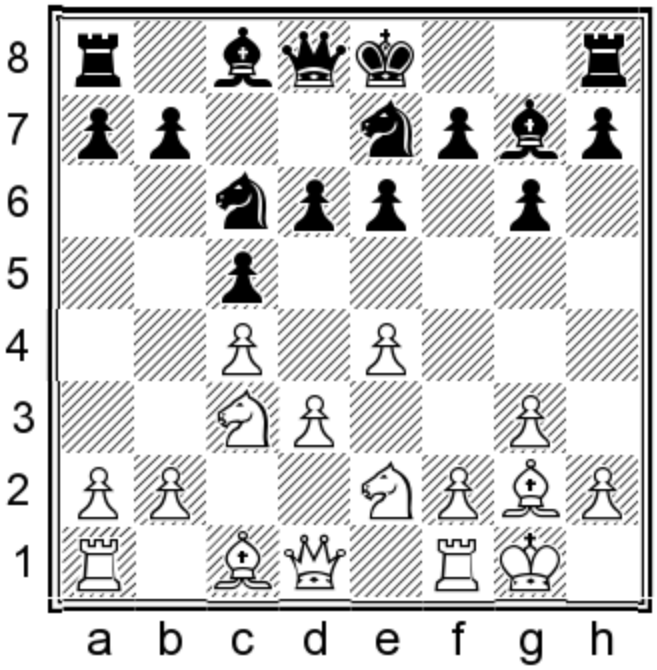
Just another quick reminder that Black can also begin with 5...d6 and only after 6.Nge2 transpose with 6...e6 7.0-0 Nge7 8.d3.

6.Nge2 Nge7 7.0-0

White can also move the d-pawn first, but in any case it makes sense to continue with all the standard Botvinnik moves. Sometimes White does prefer an early advance of Harry, which can make for great fun at blitz, but Simon's experience suggests that the likes of 6.h4!? and 7.h4 are best kept as reserve weapons.

chesstouring.com

7...d6 8.d3

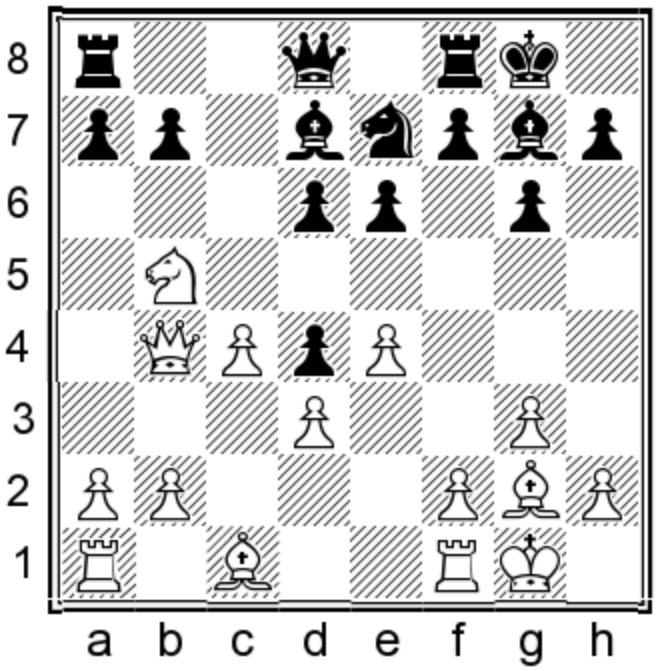


We should take stock. The position clearly resembles a Closed Sicilian, except for the presence of our pawn on c4. That does mean that White is unlikely to ever obtain pawn control over d4, but on the other hand, if he can get in the d4 break himself, he will enjoy a Maroczy Bind. It should also be mentioned that the presence of our English pawn on c4 can also help to slow down Black's traditional queenside counterplay.

8...0-0

Standard. Not for the first time, 8...Nd4?! would be premature in view of 9.Nxd4 cxd4 when White has usually retreated to e2. That's fine, of course, but there's also Monika Socko's 10.Nb5!? when after 10...0-0 (10...a6? runs into the powerful 11.Qa4!, and if 11...Nc6 12.Qa3 when Black is just in serious trouble, as can be seen from 12...Bf8?! 13.Bg5! Qxg5 14.Nc7+ Kd8 15.Nxa8 when the knight will emerge on b6, leaving White an exchange to the good, or here 13...Be7 14.Bxe7 Kxe7 15.c5!, decisively ripping open lines) 11.Qa4 Bd7 in M.Socko-Vasilevich, Beijing (rapid) 2008, White might have gone 12.Qb4!.

chesstouring.com

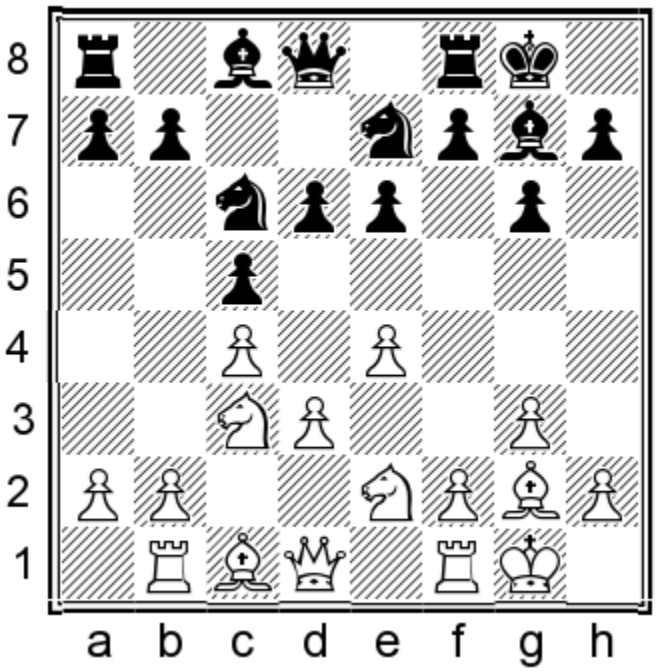


White launches a double attack on d6 and pockets the bishop-pair in the event of 12...Bxb5 13.Qxb5 when 13...Qc7 14.Bd2 Nc6 15.f4 looks fairly pleasant for White, who might arrange the c5 break to open the c-file for the rooks and/or get the b-pawn motoring forwards.

Sometimes Black begins with 8...a6, but this is fairly well met by the subtle 9.Rb1, as per our main line, and if 9...Rb8 (alternatively, 9...0-0 10.a3 transposes to note ‘c’ to Black’s 9th move below and 9...b5?! 10.cxb5 axb5 11.Nxb5 would not be wise for Black in view of 11...Rxa2?! 12.Na3) 10.a3 b5 11.cxb5 axb5 12.b4!, preventing Black from taking over the queenside and transposing to a position we’ll analyse too in note ‘c’ below after 12...cxb4 13.axb4 0-0 14.Bg5!?.

9.Rb1!?

chesstouring.com



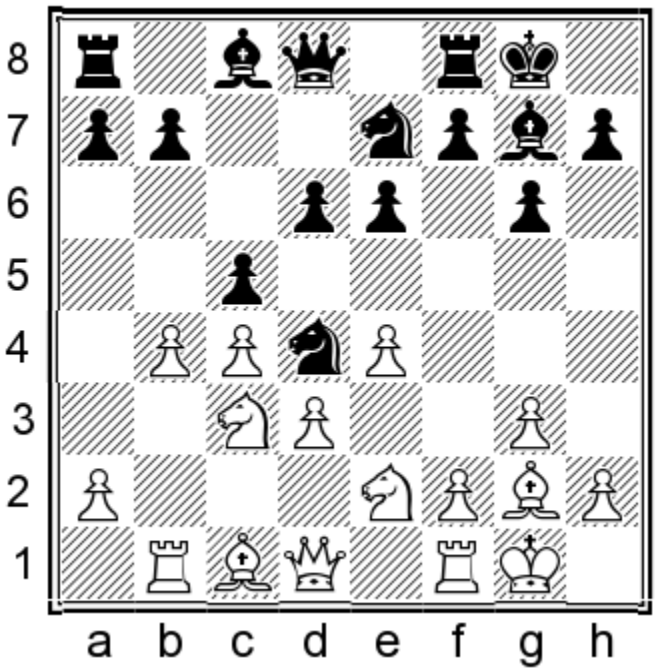
This slightly subtle move might even be viewed as the modern main line, or at least it's been deployed a number of times by Leinier Dominguez Perez. As we'll see, there's a good reason for beginning this way, as opposed to the obvious 9.a3. There's nothing wrong either with the traditional 9.Be3, but Black's position can be hard to crack and it's logical enough to begin on the queenside before turning our attention to the centre and kingside.

9...b6

This double fianchetto is a popular set-up for Black. Important alternatives are:

a) 9...Nd4 has the point that after 10.Nxd4 cxd4 and 11...e5 Black will be very solid, but because White has already moved his rook off the long diagonal, not gone 9.a3, 10.b4!? is possible.

chesstouring.com

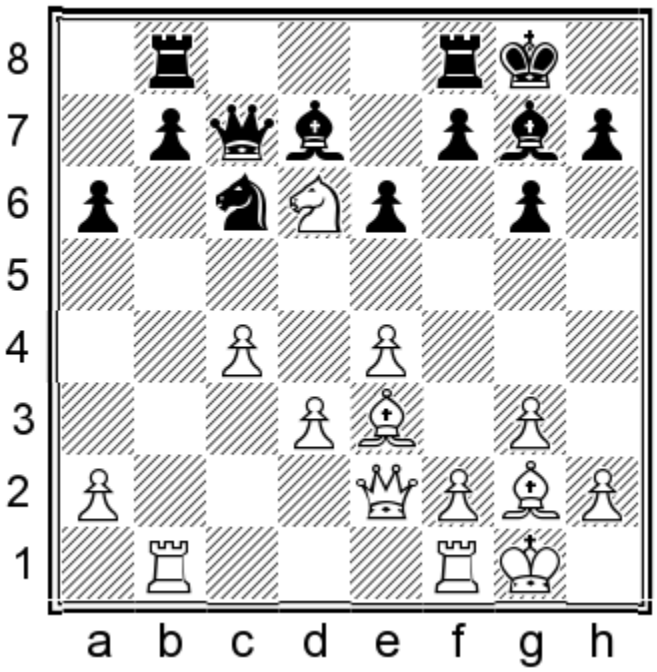


Following 10...cxb4 (10...b6 will transpose below if White now maintains the tension with 11.a3; having already seized some space, he might also consider 11.Nxd4 cxd4 12.Ne2 e5 13.h3 Bb7 14.g4, and if 14...f5 15.exf5 Bxg2 16.Kxg2 gxf5 17.Bg5) 11.Rxb4 Black has:

a1) 11...Nxe2+ 12.Nxe2 d5?! (tempting, but too ambitious; as such, Black should prefer something like 12...b6 when 13.Bb2 makes good sense, as does the *AlphaZero*-like 13.h4!? h5 14.Bg5 followed by angling for an exchange of bishops with Qd2 and a timely Bh6) 13.cxd5 exd5 and now in Jacko-Torkkola, World Under-20 Championship, Athens 2012, 14.Bb2! would have been simple and strong, and if 14...Nc6 15.Bxg7 Kxg7 16.Qa1+ Kg8 (16...Qf6 17.Qxf6+ Kxf6 18.Rb2!? dxe4 19.Bxe4 also maintains nagging pressure) 17.Rb5 dxe4 18.dxe4 when White is doing pretty well on account of the pressure against b7, Black's vulnerable kingside and, of course, that the knight on e2 is en route to d5.

a2) After 11...Nec6 12.Rb1 Rb8 one way to obtain a bit of pressure is 13.Bf4!?, the simple 13.Be3 another and after 13...Bd7 14.Nb5!? Black's hold on d4 is somewhat reduced. As such, he might try the tricky 14...Nxe2+ 15.Qxe2 a6 16.Nxd6 Qc7.

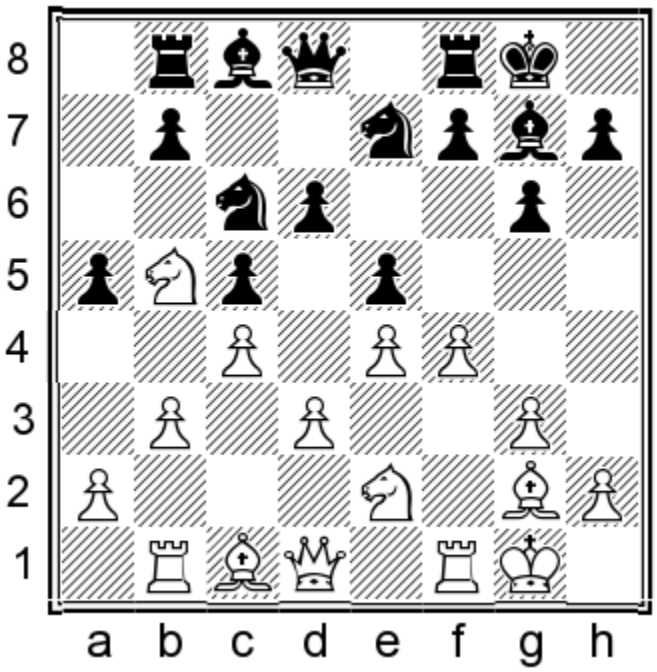
chesstouring.com



The engines suggest this is OK for him, but in practice one might not feel so happy on the black side, whether after the pawn sacrifice 17.e5!? Bxe5 18.c5 or just 17.c5 Nd4 18.Qd2 Qxc5 19.f4!? Qxd6 20.e5, regaining the piece on d4 and again leaving Black looking a little vulnerable on the dark squares.

b) 9...a5 looks a little strange, but was once played by Sasikiran and is presumably preparation for ...Nd4. Now 10.Nb5!? is tempting and the clever 10.b3!? another good approach, intending 10...Rb8 (10...Nd4?! would only play into White's hands after 11.Nxd4 cxd4 12.Nb5 when Ba3 is on its way, as well as f4) 11.Nb5 (rather than the 11.Bb2 Sasikiran faced) 11...e5 (11...b6 can be met by either 12.d4 or 12.f4, with the idea of 12...Ba6 13.f5!? when after 13...exf5 14.exf5 Black clearly can't capture with his knight and 14...gxf5 15.Nbc3 followed by Bb2 and Nf4 would leave White with lasting compensation) 12.f4, thereby obtaining a bit of pressure.

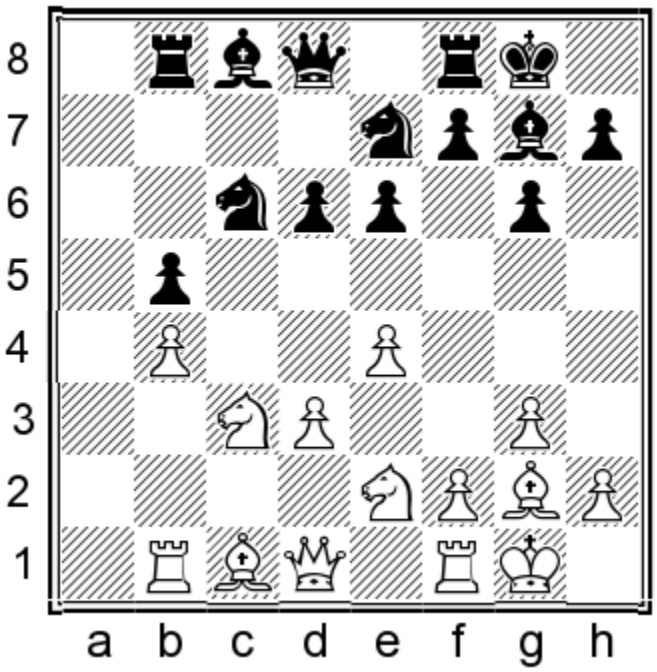
chesstouring.com



Note that after 12...f5, as well as something sensible like 13.Nec3, White can even go 13.Rb2!?, preparing to swing the rook eastwards and obtaining excellent compensation after 13...exf4?! 14.Nxf4 Bxb2?! 15.Bxb2. Indeed, the engines already display a huge advantage for White here, partly because it isn't at all easy to find a good move for Black, with 15...Ne5 (or 15...fxe4 16.dxe4 followed by Nxd6) 16.d4! cxd4 17.Qxd4 N7c6 18.Qd2 simply leaving Black far too vulnerable on the kingside and down the d-file, as shown by 18...fxe4 19.Bxe4 Bf5 20.Bd5+ Kh8 21.Bxc6 bxc6 22.Nxd6 and wins.

c) Black can also look to react on the queenside, with 9...a6 10.a3 Rb8 11.b4, when 11...cxb4 12.axb4 b5 13.cxb5 axb5 reaches a state of near symmetry.

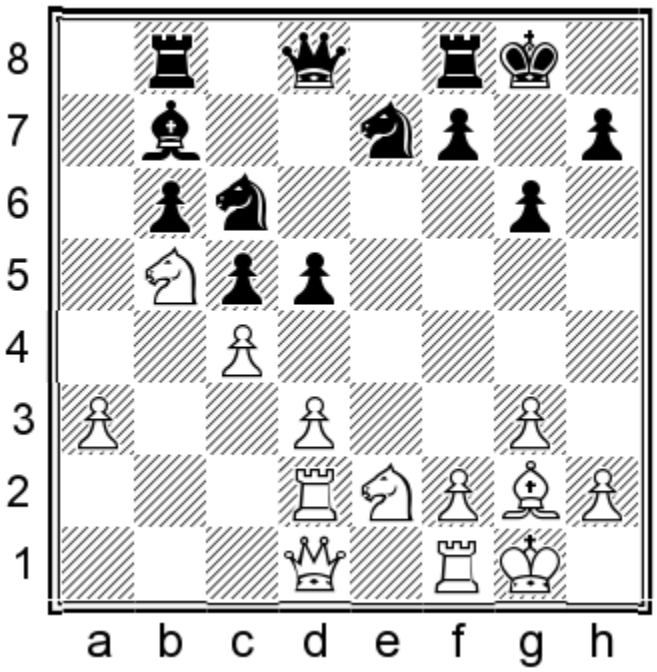
chesstouring.com



White has tried to make something of his extra space and small initiative after 14.d4 d5 15.Bf4, but we're drawn to the untried 14.Bg5!?, preventing ...d5, intending Qd2 and only after 14...h6 going 15.Be3. The main point is that now 15...d5 16.exd5 Nxd5 (16...exd5 17.Bc5 would be a fine outpost for the bishop, with Black set to come under pressure after d4 and Ra1) 17.Nxd5 exd5 leaves White with a potential tempo hit, as well as the hole on c5 to exploit. Perhaps best is 18.Rc1 (18.Qd2 Re8! isn't so clear), when 18...Bb7 (18...d4!? isn't a terrible try to reduce Black's suffering, but after 19.Bxc6 dxe3 20.fxe3 Bh3 21.Rf2! White does have an extra central pawn and is ready to go d4, as well as Nf4) 19.Bc5 Re8 20.d4 looks like a pleasant edge for White, with Qd3, Nf4 and h4 all likely to feature in the near future.

Instead of releasing the tension here, 11...Nd4?! 12.bxc5 would be a little awkward for Black, whether White gets to probe on the dark squares with Na4 or after 12...Nxe2+ 13.Nxe2 dxc5 14.Bf4! e5 15.Be3 Qd6 16.Nc3 followed by Qd2, Nd5 and f4 in some order. However, once again, 11...b6!? would be sensible when White can develop or try 12.b5!? axb5 13.Nxb5 Bb7 14.Bb2, which at least forces Black to make some big decisions and 14...Bxb2 15.Rxb2 d5 16.exd5 exd5 17.Rd2!? retains control.

chesstouring.com



One instructive line runs 17...d4?! 18.Nf4 Ne5 19.Qe2 Bxg2 20.Kxg2 N5c6 21.Qe4 Qd7 22.Re1 Rfe8 23.Rde2 when not only are White's knights superior to their counterparts, but so are the major pieces and he can look to probe on the kingside, as well as get in a timely Nd5.

d) Boris Gelfand no less preferred 9...Rb8 against Dominguez, but here White can simply go 10.a3 when 10...a6 (otherwise, 10...b6 transposes below and 10...Nd4 can again be met by 11.b4) 11.b4 cxb4 12.axb4 b5 13.cxb5 axb5 14.Bg5!? was our previous note.

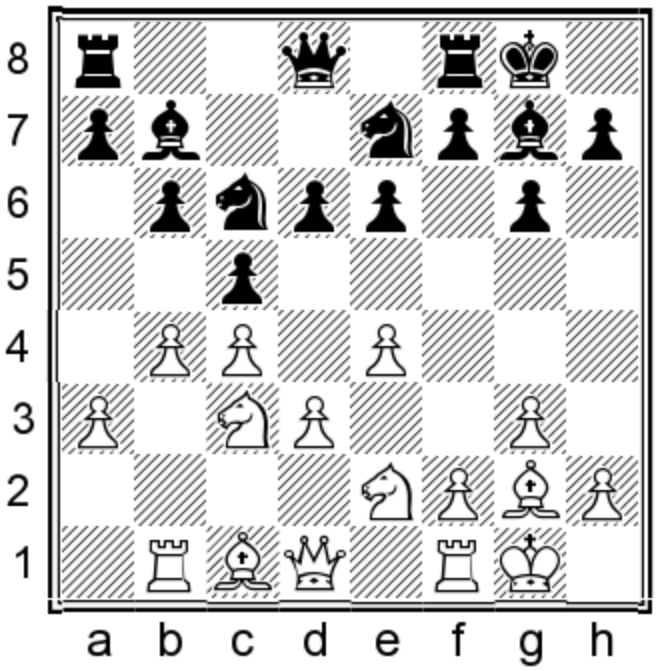
Returning to 9...b6:

10.a3

Consistent and also Dominguez's latest try in place of 10.Be3.

10...Bb7 11.b4

chesstouring.com



We've reached quite a rich position, where White has begun on the queenside, but that doesn't mean that he has forgotten about the kingside for good, as we'll see. Black, for his part, is pretty solid, but does have to look after his dark squares, as well as time any ...d5 push correctly.

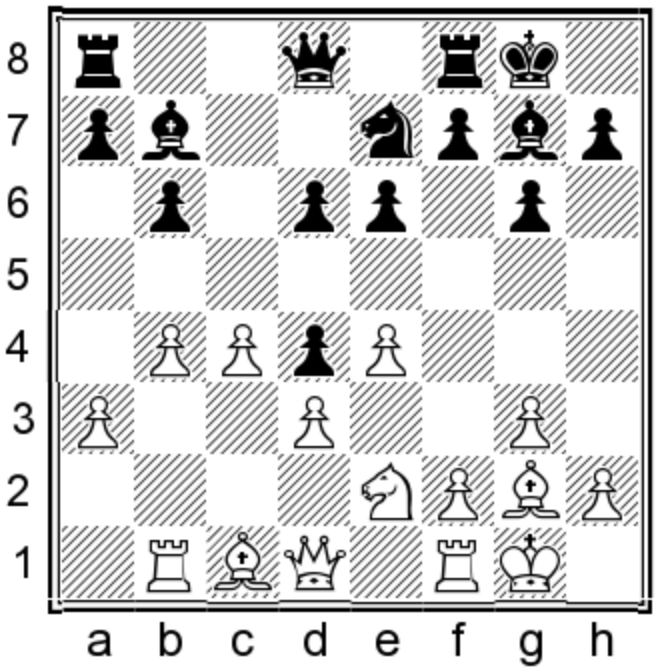
11...Qd7

The most harmonious choice for Black, connecting his rooks.

Something like 11...Rb8 would fail to spot that 12.b5 can be an issue and here 12...Nd4 13.Nxd4 cxd4 14.Na2! is a little awkward for Black, heading for b4 and hoping one day to exploit the potential outpost on c6.

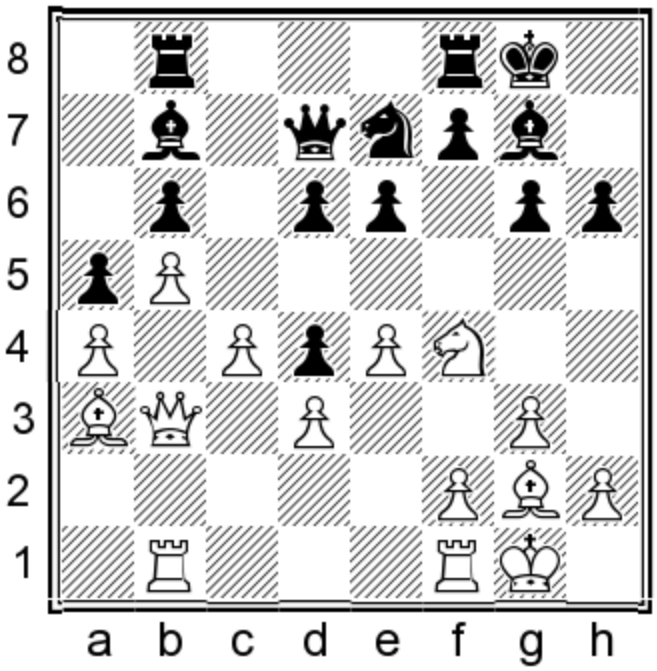
Clearly 11...d5? 12.exd5 exd5 13.bxc5 won't do for Black and 11...cxb4?! 12.axb4 d5? 13.exd5 exd5 14.Nxd5 is also just a free pawn for White, but the Krasenkow-approved 11...Nd4 is a respectable alternative to our main line. White has a few options here, but the simplest is our favourite exchange 12.Nxd4 cxd4 13.Ne2.

chesstouring.com



For example, 13...Qd7 14.Nf4!? h6 (as in Ni Hua-Shaposhnikov, Beijing (rapid) 2001; instead, 14...e5 15.Nd5 reveals the point of White's last and he should have sufficient control after 15...f5 16.a4 fxe4 17.dxe4 followed by Bg5 and/or Qb3) 15.Qb3. Black can try to keep lines closed with 15...a6 16.a4 Rab8 (16...b5?! 17.cxb5 axb5 18.a5 gives White a handy long-term asset and the c-file to use) 17.b5!? a5, but after 18.Ba3 it's noticeable that *Lc0* is loving White's position.

chesstouring.com

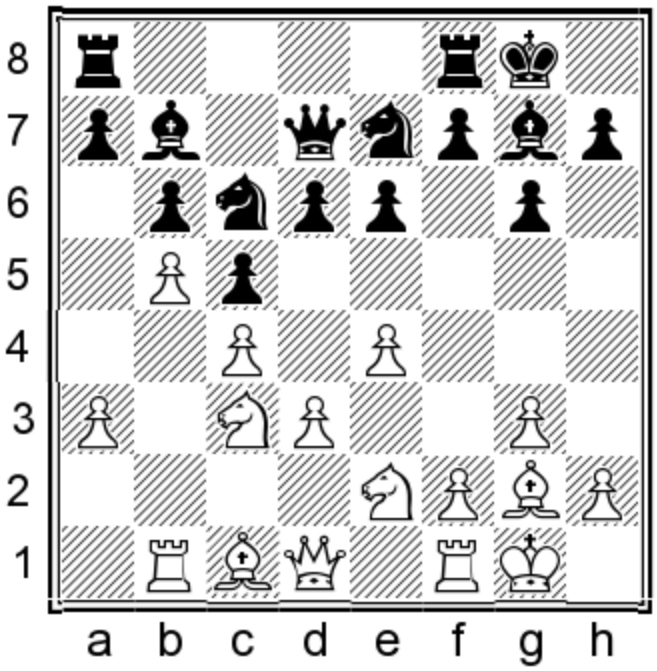


The simple plan is to regroup with Rbe1, Qd1 and Nh3 (possibly after a preliminary h4), followed by f4, all the while as Black struggles to free his position as ...f5 weakens e6 too much and 18...e5?! would also not be wise as after 19.Nd5 Nxd5 20.cxd5 a very strong exchange sacrifice will be Rc1-c6.

Instead, here Sedlak once faced 13...Rc8, which might also be met by 14.Bd2, and if 14...e5 15.Qb3 Kh8 16.a4 f5 17.f3!, maintaining sufficient control on the kingside ahead of opening lines with a5, while 13...e5 would be Black's most aggressive handling of the position. However, White too can be aggressive if he wishes, whether with 14.f4 f5 15.c5!? or after 14.Bd2 f5 15.f3 h6 16.a4 (White is ready to seize further space with a5 when b5 and Bb4 may follow) 16...g5, which was Popchev-Inkiov, Bulgarian Championship 1988, and then 17.f4!?, as pointed out by *Stockfish*, and if 17...gxf4 18.gxf4 fxe4 19.dxe4 Ng6 20.Rb3! when the position is pretty unclear, but we're certainly drawn to White's attacking chances with Rh3 on its way.

12.b5!?

chesstouring.com



White continues to hold back on developing his dark-squared bishop preferring to grab space with this favourite of English expert, the Latvian GM Normunds Miezis, which is a decent alternative to the main line Black might perhaps be expecting, 12.Be3.

12...Nd4

Invariably played. 12...Na5?! 13.Bd2 Rab8 14.Na4 didn't especially convince for Black in Drauart-Lupu, French League 2010, and 12...Ne5?! 13.f4! Ng4 14.h3 Nf6 15.Be3 looks quite pleasant for White, with g4 on its way and no reason to fear 15...d5?! 16.cxd5 exd5 17.e5, and if 17...Nh5 18.d4! Nf5 19.Rf3 with good central control, not to mention potential targets on d5 and h5.

13.Nxd4

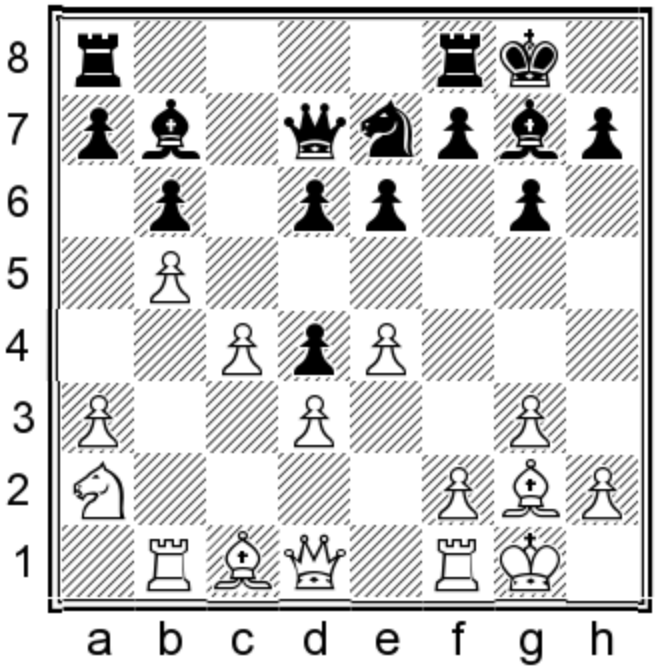
Yet again, White should be fairly happy to trade so.

13...cxd4

chesstouring.com

Black has also been known to try 13...Bxd4, which avoids having a dead point on d4, but after 14.Ne2 Bg7 15.Bb2 Bxb2 16.Rxb2 White has ideas of both a4-a5 and thematic expansion with f4. As such, 16...d5?! was a bid for freedom in G.Gurevich-Zoler, Israeli League 2008, but now 17.d4! would have been fairly strong, and if 17...Rad8 (17...dxe4? 18.dxc5 is just very bad news for Black as he is losing a piece after 18...Qxd1 19.Rxd1 bxc5 20.Rd7, and 17...cxd4?! 18.cxd5 e5 19.f4 f6 20.Qb3 also leaves him under pressure, with Nc1-d3 one strong possibility) 18.dxc5 bxc5 when 19.Rd2 d4 20.Nc1 is tempting, as is 19.cxd5 exd5 20.exd5 Bxd5 21.Rd2 with the better structure and ongoing pressure after 21...Qb7 22.Re1.

14.Na2!?



Meizis's latest try, having earlier been happy to go to e2. We've reached a rich and still largely unexplored position, in which White is set to go Nb4, after which the traditional f4 might follow or h4, a plan unsurprisingly preferred by *Lc0*.

14...f5

chesstouring.com

Played in two of the three games to have reached this position, but likely not best.

Before the knight lands on b4, 14...d5 might tempt some opponents, but after 15.cxd5 exd5 White has a very interesting pawn sacrifice in 16.e5!? (16.Re1 is by no means ridiculous either) 16...Bxe5 17.Re1, leaving Black with an extra doubled d-pawn, but also a rather passive light-squared bishop.

The key line may run 17...Bd6 (17...Bg7 18.Nb4 Rfe8 19.a4 Nf5 20.Bf4 feels like lasting compensation, and if 20...Bf8 21.Qb3 Rxe1+ 22.Rxe1 Re8 23.Rxe8 Qxe8 24.Kf1 followed by recouping the pawn on d5 or taking control of the dark squares with 24...Bxb4 25.Qxb4, which begins to feel a bit unpleasant for Black, not least after 25...Qc8 26.Qb3 Qc3 27.Qxc3 dxc3 28.Ke1 Kf8 29.Be5) 18.Nb4!? Qxb5 19.Nxd5! Qxb1 20.Nf6+ Kh8 (20...Kg7? 21.Bh6+! should be winning) 21.Bxb7 when Black's kingside is vulnerable and he would be well advised to avoid 21...Rad8? 22.Qd2! Ng8 23.Bb2 Qa2 24.Bd5.

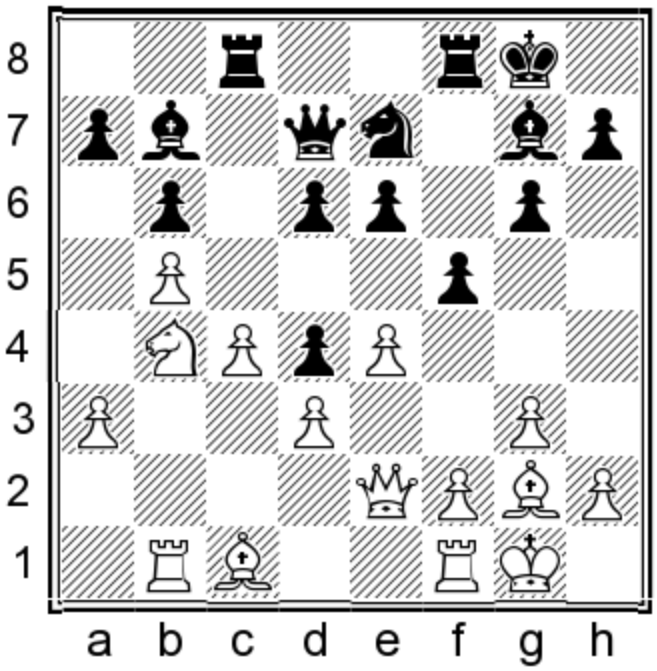
You might also wonder about 14...a5, but after 15.bxa6 Rxa6 16.Nb4 White has definite chances to be better, as with 16...Ra5 17.Nc2 Qc7 18.Bd2 Raa8 19.Qe2 when doubling on the b-file is one plan, kingside expansion another.

15.Nb4!

Retaining the tension and it would now be too late, of course, for Black to push his a-pawn.

15...Rac8 16.Qe2

chesstouring.com



We’ve followed the game Miezis-Safarli, Zurich 2017, where White was ready to complete development with **B**d2 and f4, and after **16...fxe4**, instead of the bishop recapture, **17.dxe4!** would have been strong. One threat is **B**h3, which would leave Black rather tied down, so he might go **17...e5**, but then **18.Bd2 Qe6 19.Nd5** is a definite edge for White, leaving Black low on counterplay and both a4-a5 and f4 on their way, not to mention **R**c1-c6 if **19...Nxd5 20.cxd5**.

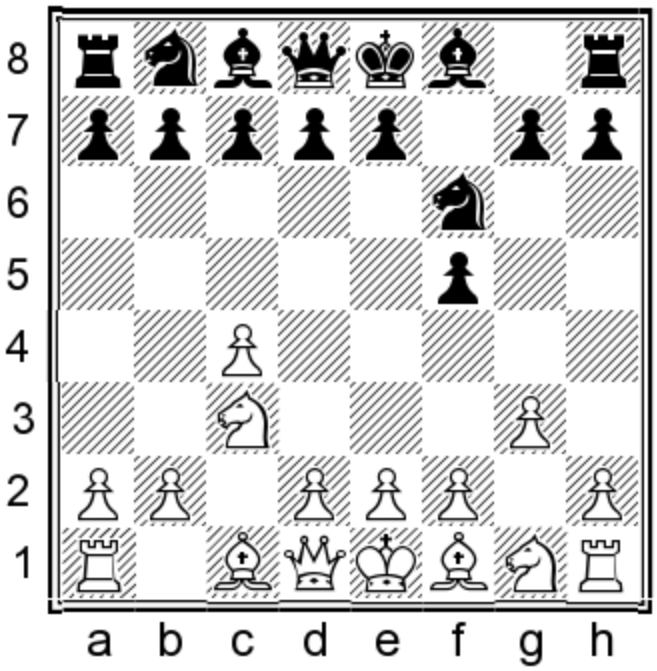
chesstouring.com

Chapter Five
Other Fianchetto Defences

1.c4 Nf6

Black's most common move and here we'll see what happens if Black doesn't opt for a King's Indian set-up, but prefers a different fianchetto set-up, including the attempt to reach the Grünfeld.

In this chapter we'll also consider the Dutch, 1...f5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3.



Now 3...g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.d3 can transpose back to lines we've already looked at or lead to something independent, as we'll see in **Line 5B**. There we'll also see what happens if Black switches approach with 3...e5, before in **Line 5C** moving on to Black's other Dutch possibilities, the attempts to aim for a Classical or Stonewall set-up after 3...e6 4.Bg2.

One other fianchetto is the English against the English, i.e. 1...b6, the English Defence. After 2.Nc3 Bb7 we clearly can't fianchetto without

chesstouring.com

delay, but can still head for a Botvinnik set-up after 3.e4, as we'll see in **Line 5D**.

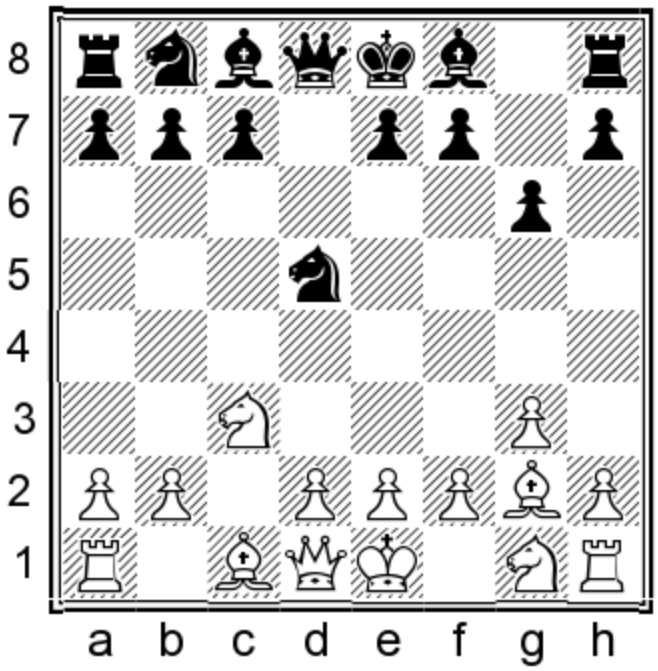
2.Nc3 g6

Black can also begin with 2...d5 3.cxd5 Nxd5 when 4.g3 g6 5.Bg2 is but a transposition.

3.g3 d5

Declining the chance to take play back into Chapter Three and angling for a Grünfeld.

4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2



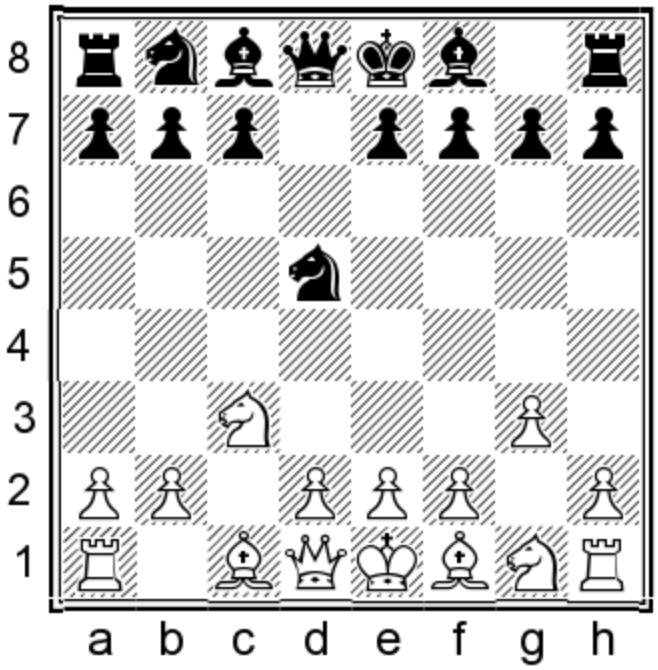
We have been denied our favourite Botvinnik set-up, but should not be unhappy: just look at that fine bishop on g2! White might also be able to make good use of an early advance of Harry, as we'll see next up in **Line 5A**.

Theory 5A

chesstouring.com

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 g6

A Grünfeld player is actually more likely to prefer the move order 2...d5 3.cxd5 Nxd5 when it may appear tempting for White to push a central pawn, but that would be quite a theoretical choice and might not bypass the Grünfeld after all. Instead, we'll be consistent and fianchetto with 4.g3.



Here 4...g6 5.Bg2 transposes to our main line below, but is, of course, far from forced. Instead, 4...e5 5.Bg2 is the reversed Dragon, which we'll discuss in our next chapter, while 4...c5 5.Bg2 Nc7 is the Rubinstein variation and will be seen in Chapter Seven.

That leaves 4...Nxc3 5.bxc3, which usually transposes below after a fianchetto from both sides and note that White need not fear 5...Qd5 6.Nf3 when Black's queen will merely prove misplaced, with, for example, 6...e5 7.Bg2 Nc6 8.0-0 Qa5 9.d4! e4? 10.Ng5 Qxc3 11.Be3 Bf5 12.d5 already leaving White with a crushing advantage in Le Quang Liem-Soumya, Abu Dhabi 2018.

Finally, 4...c6 5.Bg2 will also transpose below if Black fianchettoes here or after 5...Nxc3 6.bxc3, with the only semi-logical alternative to fight back

chesstouring.com

in the centre with 6...e5 when 7.Nf3 is just a pleasant type of reversed Dragon for White, as we'll see in our next chapter.

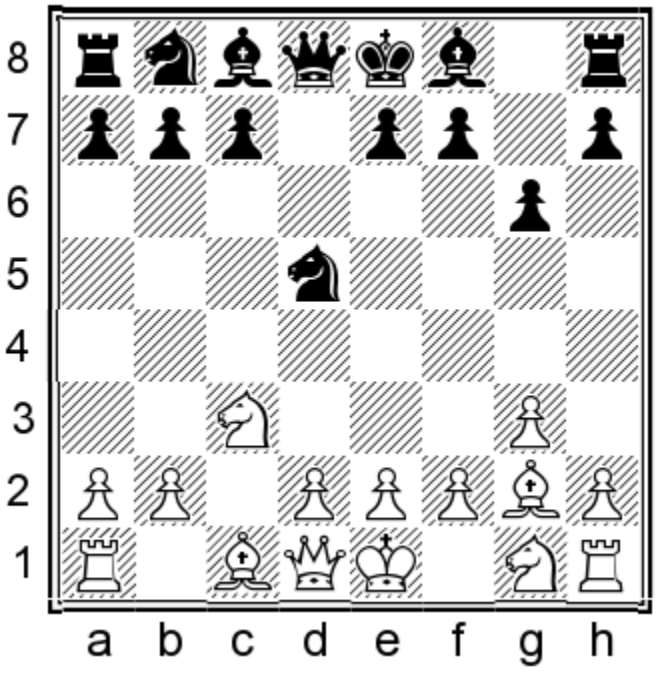
3.g3

Our standard policy (Nc3 then a fianchetto), but one reason why most Grünfeldeers prefer to push their d-pawn on move two is that here White might cut across such plans with 3.e4!? and only then fianchetto, reaching a Botvinnik set-up and having cut out any possibility of a Grünfeld.

3...d5

And so Black angles for a Grünfeld after all, but we won't be hurrying to advance our pawn to d4 in response, content to stay within English realms and keep play as a type of Pseudo-Grünfeld to borrow Tony Kosten's fine nomenclature.

4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2



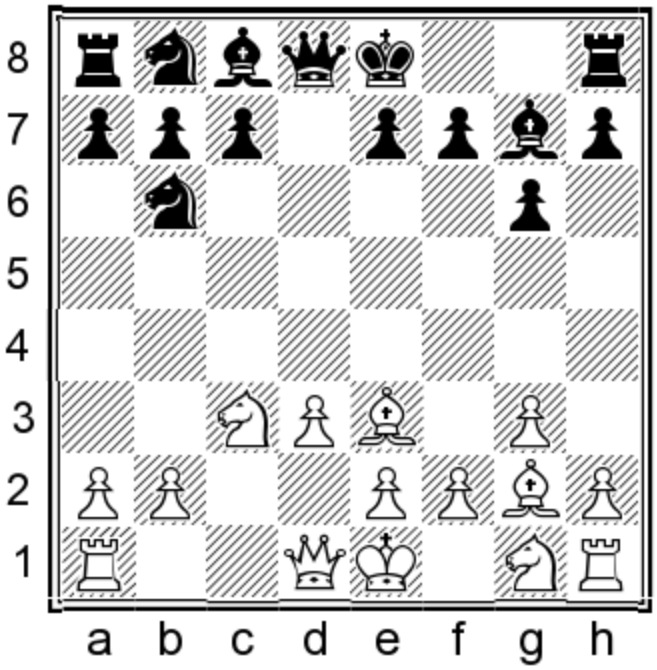
Putting the question to the black knight.

chesstouring.com

5...Nxc3

This is, of course, a pretty common exchange in general in the Grünfeld, but here we should not object to the strengthening of our centre and the opening of the b-file.

Such considerations help to explain why the retreat with 5...Nb6 is just as popular a continuation. We will respond in fairly direct manner with 6.d3 (6.d4 would just be a Fianchetto Grünfeld, but creative white souls may wish to consider 6.h4!?) 6...Bg7 7.Be3.



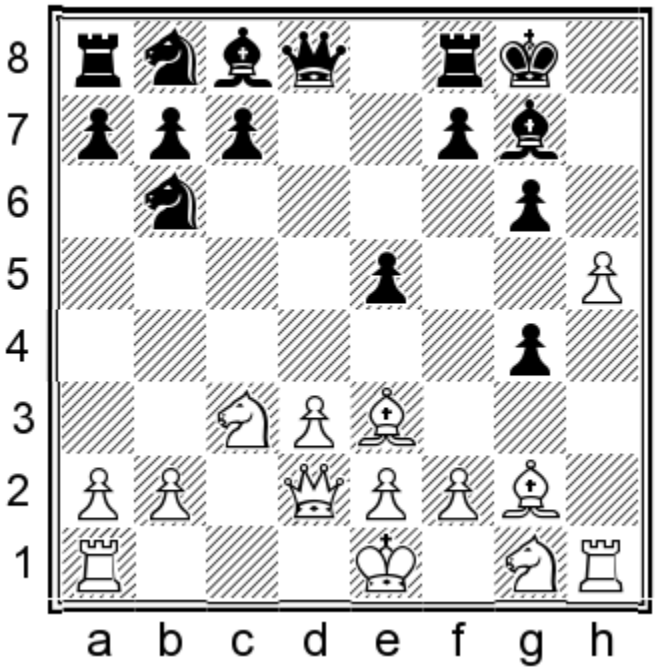
White simply intends Qd2 and Bh6 to swap off Black's best minor piece, which may even herald a direct attack. Now:

a) 7...0-0 is potentially a case of castling into it and certainly after 8.Qd2 Black should take care:

a1) 8...e5?! has seen White do well in practice with 9.Bh6, but possibly even stronger is 9.h4!?, simply intending h5 and Bh6, as well as to meet 9...h5 with the as-yet-unplayed 10.g4!. This may appear a shocking idea, but is simply pretty strong and if 10...hxg4 (10...Bxg4 11.Bxb7 is a key point when Black doesn't have enough for the exchange after 11...N8d7

chesstouring.com

12.Bxa8 Qxa8 13.f3 followed by Bh6 and Nh3, since White's pawn centre is such a solid one) 11.h5.



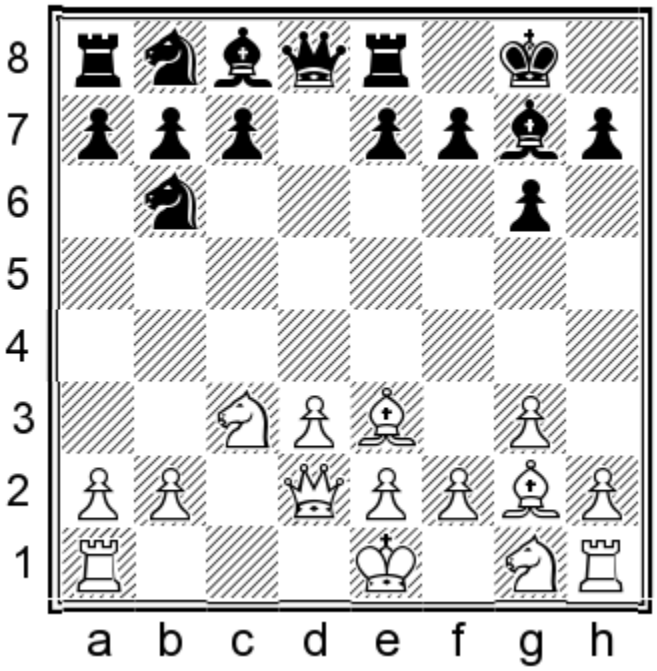
Here 11...N8d7 12.Bh6 Nf6 13.hxg6 fxg6 is a standard defensive mechanism, but runs into 14.Qg5, and if 14...Kf7? 15.Bxg7 Kxg7 16.Be4! Nxe4 17.Qh6+ Kf7 18.Qh7+ Ke6 19.Nxe4 with a winning attack. Instead, 11...Qf6? 12.h6 Bh8 13.h7+ Kg7 14.Bh6+ would also be most unwise for Black, as even could be 11...gxh5 12.Rxh5 when 12...f5 (or 12...f6 13.f3! followed by 13...g3 14.f4 Bg4 15.Rh1 Nc6 16.0-0-0 with ongoing heavy pressure and the immediate threat of Qe1xg3, or if 13...gxf3? 14.Nxf3 Be6 15.0-0-0 with a gianormous attack, with Rdh1 and Bh6 on their way) 13.Bh6 Rf7 14.Bxg7 Rxg7 15.Qh6 Kf7 fails to the neat 16.Bxb7! Bxb7 17.Rxf5+ Kg8 18.Qe6+ Kh8 19.Rh5+ Rh7 20.Qxe5+ Kg8 21.Qe6+ Kh8 22.Rxh7+ Kxh7 23.Qxg4 with three pawns for the piece and still a huge attack.

a2) Black has also tried 8...N8d7 9.Bh6 Nf6 when we would struggle to resist 10.h4 (10.Bxg7 Kxg7 11.f4!? is an intriguing alternative proposed by *Stockfish*, simply seizing space and a clamp on e5 ahead of going Nf3 and 0-0) 10...Bxh6 (wise; unlike 10...c6 11.Bxg7 Kxg7 12.h5! Nxh5? 13.Bf3

chesstouring.com

Nf6 14.Qh6+ Kg8 15.Ne4 Nbd5 16.Ng5 with a winning attack) 11.Qxh6 Ng4 12.Qd2 h5, which does keep us at bay on the kingside when White has often gone 13.Nh3, but simply 13.Nf3 e5 14.0-0 should be a fairly pleasant edge. Here b4 and a4 is one plan, Ne4, Rac1 and Nc5 another, all the while Black's king position is the more airy, and the 14...Qe7 of Videki-Konopka, Espoo 1989, can be met by 15.Qg5!?, hoping for 15...Qxg5? 16.hxg5! when Ne4 and Nfd2 would leave White with a firm grip on the position, and even some chances to embarrass the knight on g4.

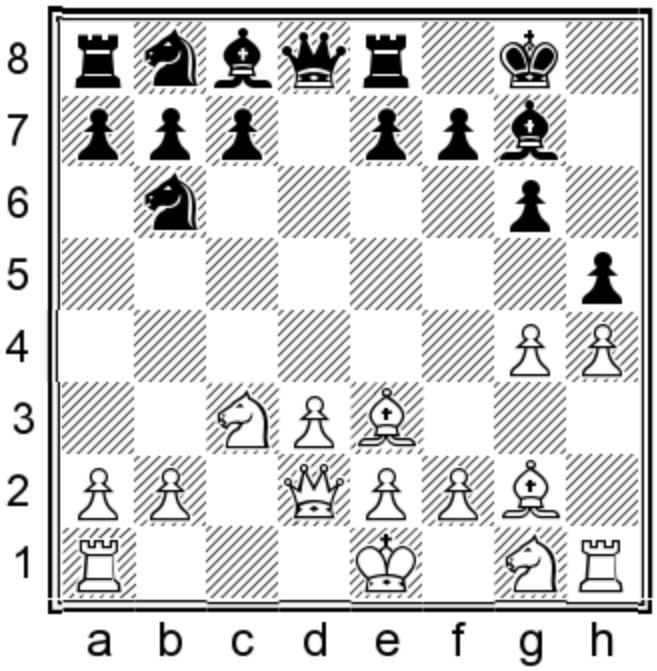
a3) A common defensive method is 8...Re8, preparing to preserve the dark-squared bishop.



Here we can again see the strong gambit 9.h4!? (once again, White is rather spoilt for choice and has scored pretty well in practice with 9.Bh6 Bh8?! 10.h4) 9...h5 (this is why most players have first gone Bh6; alternatively, 9...Nc6 10.h5 Bf5 11.hxg6 Bxg6 12.Bh6 Bh8 13.Nf3 e6 14.Nh4 already left Black under huge pressure in Kuzubov-Maghsoodloo, Baku 2014, with Nxg6 and Ne4 one simple plan, while 9...c6 10.h5 Nd5 11.Bh6 Bh8 is a transposition to the 9.Bh6 line White should be happy to see, since 12.Nf3 Nd7 13.hxg6 hxg6, as in Koshy-Krasenkow, Dhaka 1995,

chesstouring.com

gives White a few pleasant options, including 14.Kf1!?, which is directed against ...Qa5 ideas and also intends 14...N7f6 15.Ne5! Qa5 16.Nc4, maintaining control while creating the slow-but-highly-dangerous threat of Rh4, Bf3, Kg2 and Rah1) 10.g4!.



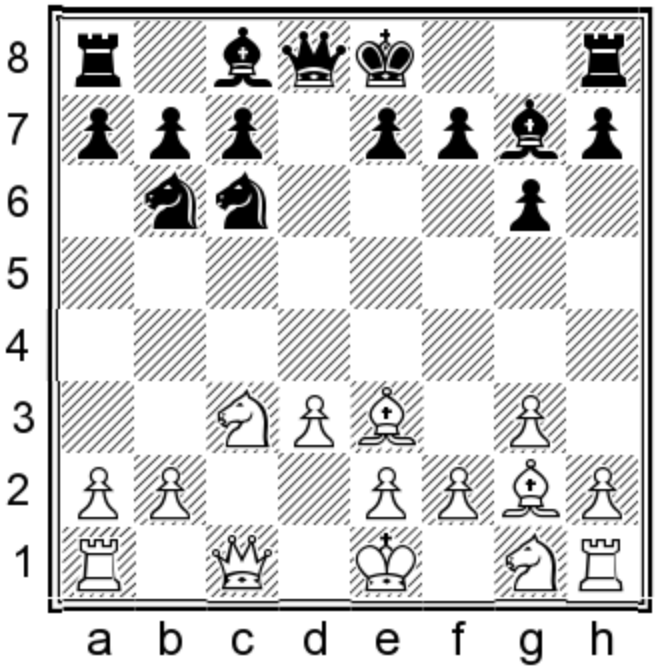
Now 10...hxg4 11.h5 rolls on when, say, 11...Nc6 12.hxg6 fxg6 13.Ne4 would leave Black's kingside a pretty sorry sight, with Bh6 on its way and Rc1 and Nc5 another powerful idea. As such, 10...Bxg4 11.Bxb7 N8d7 12.f3 Bf5 13.Bxa8 Qxa8 was seen in De Visser-Von Auer, Heusenstamm 2018, when simply 14.Bh6 would have been good, and if 14...Bf6 15.Bg5 Bg7 16.Nh3 Ne5 17.Nf2!, avoiding any cheapos on d3 and so leaving White an exchange to the good.

b) Of the many alternatives Black has tried, 7...c6 8.Qd2 h6 may avoid getting mated, but just left White in Bu Xiangzhi-Wang Yaoyao, Jinan 2005, with the easier development and central control after 9.Nf3 N8d7 10.0-0 a5 11.Rac1 Nf6 12.h3 Nfd5 13.Bd4 0-0 14.Bxg7 Kxg7 15.e4! Nxc3 when, as pointed out by English guru, John Watson, there was no reason to avoid 16.bxc3 when Rb1 and Qe3 might follow, as well as just c4 and d4.

chesstouring.com

c) 7...N8d7 8.Qd2 Nf6 9.Bh6 Bxh6 10.Qxh6 Qd4 11.h3! c6 12.Nf3 Qb4 13.Rb1 Be6 14.0-0 again left White's king much the happier in Vitiugov-Zhou Jianchao, Sochi 2009, where Ng5 was one idea, a minority attack with the queenside pawns another.

d) As such, Black's best option is likely 7...Nc6, intending to meet 8.Qd2 with the disruptive 8...Nd4. White can cut across such plans in a couple of ways, including 8.Bxc6+!? bxc6 9.Qd2, as championed by Lev Aronian and Gawain Jones, and the leading English GM's earlier preference, 8.Qc1!?.



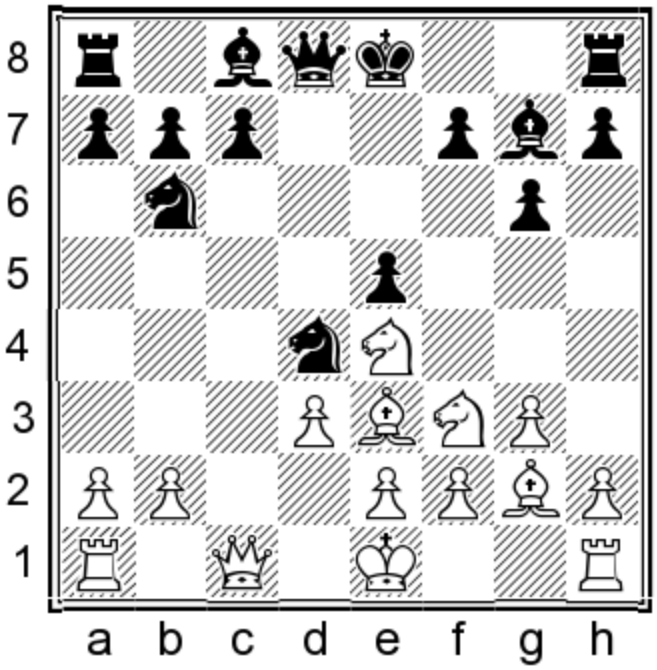
White renews the threat of Bh6, and now:

d1) 8...h5 avoids coming under an attack, but again the cure is no better than the disease, with 9.Nf3 e5 10.0-0 Nd4 11.Re1 Nxf3+!? 12.Bxf3 h4 the course of Jones-Kilpatrick, Newport Pagnell (rapid) 2010. This attempted to treat White to a dose of his own medicine, except that Black's queen isn't about to land on h3 here and 13.a4!? is one way to seize the initiative, and if 13...a5? (13...hxg3 14.hxg3 Qd7?! 15.g4! also looks quite suspect for Black, and if 15...Qd8 16.Kg2 Qh4 17.Rh1 Qxh1+ 18.Qxh1 Rxh1 19.Rxh1 with much the more active and harmonious pieces for White, not to mention the idea of 19...c6 20.a5 Nd7 21.Ne4 followed by a clamping g5) 14.Nb5

chesstouring.com

(14.Bc5 would a calm and decent alternative) 14...c6 15.Bxc6+! bxc6 16.Qxc6+ Qd7 17.Qxb6 hxg3 18.hxg3 when the only really critical line is, of course, 18...Qh3 19.Qc6+ Kf8 20.Bc5+ Kg8 21.Qe8+ Kh7 22.Qxf7 Be6 23.Qf3, but White shouldn't be getting mated after 23...Rac8 24.Rac1 Kg8 25.Qg2 and is just three pawns to the good.

d2) White will meet 8...Nd4 with 9.Nf3 e5 (playing as Black does in the 8.Qd2 line; otherwise, 9...0-0 10.Nxd4 Bxd4 11.Bxd4 Qxd4 12.0-0 c6 13.Ne4 gave White an edge, with ideas of Qc3 as well as of Nc5 in Grandelius-Arman, Stockholm 2017, and 9...Nf5 10.Bd2 0-0 11.h4!? h5 12.0-0 c6 13.Ne4 was not dissimilar in N.Stewart-Kulaots, Hastings 2012/13, where White was ready to go Nc5 and perhaps then even Ng5-e4) 10.Ne4!?.

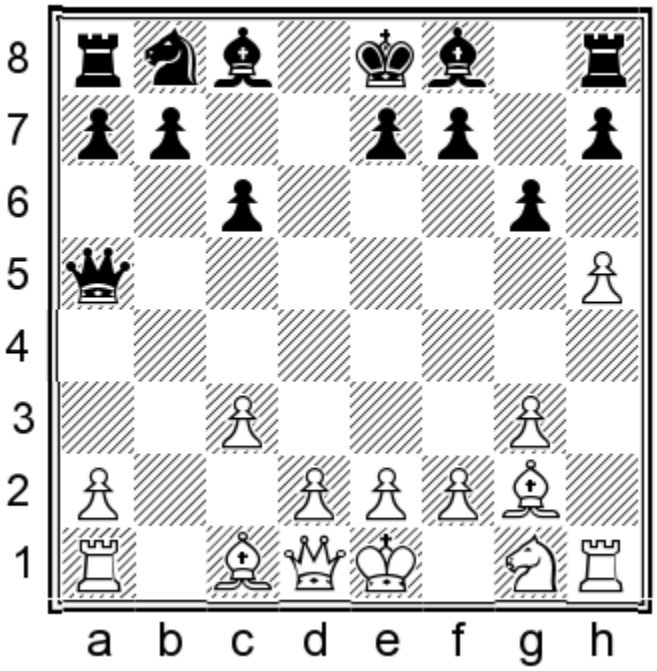


White simply argues that the queen is better placed on c1 than d2, assisting his grip on c5 and after 10...Nd5 (probably best; 10...0-0 can be met by 11.Nxd4 exd4 12.Bh6 when White might even ignore 12...Bxh6 13.Qxh6 Qe7 with 14.h4!?, and if 14...Qb4+? 15.Kf1 f6 16.h5, while 10...Nf5 11.Bg5 f6 12.Bd2 forces some weaknesses and after 12...0-0 13.h4 h5 14.0-0 White should have an edge with Qc2 and Rac1 one simple plan,

chesstouring.com

after which Nc5 should supply some pressure) 11.Bg5 (keeping an important bishop) 11...f6 12.Nxd4 exd4 13.Bh6 0-0 14.Bxg7 Kxg7 he might make use of his queen's position with 15.Qc5! Ne7 16.Rc1 c6 (16...Nc6 17.b4 also seizes the initiative) 17.Rc4, picking off the pawn on d4 in view of 17...Nf5 18.g4! Nh4 19.Bh3, which will force the win of the pawn after all.

Before moving on to the exchange on c3, we should note that the solid 5...c6 can be met in a number of ways, including 6.d4, when Black is more passive than he would like to be in a Fianchetto Grünfeld and 6.d3, intending 7.Bd2 and 8.Qc1. Best of them all though might even be 6.h4!? Nxc3 (changing tack as 6...h6 7.Nf3 Bg7 8.d4 0-0 9.0-0 looks like a pretty decent version of a Fianchetto Grünfeld for White with e4 on its way or 9...Bg4 10.Ne5, and 6...h5 7.Nf3 Bg7 8.d4 0-0 9.0-0 is not dissimilar; this might be a bit more 1.d4 like than we might wish, but White definitely has an edge thanks to his greater central control and Black's lack of counterplay) 7.bxc3 Qa5 8.h5.



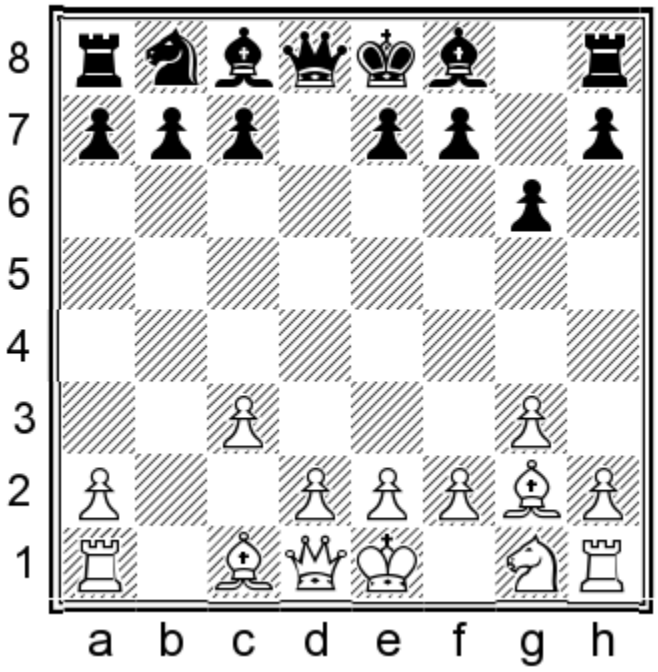
This bold advance would be unwise if Black could take over the centre, but just note how strong and flexible White's pawns are there: 8...Bg7

chesstouring.com

9.Nf3 Be6 10.Rb1! (there won't be a better post for the rook) 10...b6 (10...Qxa2 11.Rxb7 a5 is nothing to fear, with 12.Ng5 one strong approach, and if 12...a4 13.Nxe6 Qxe6 14.Ba3) 11.a4 Ba2 12.Rb4!? Na6 and now in Aravindh-Mosadeghpour, Bhubaneswar 2016, 13.Qc2 would have left White completely in charge or even more than that after 13...Nxb4? 14.cxb4 Qd5 15.Nh4.

Otherwise, 5...Nf6?! (Black is simply losing too much time) 6.d4 Bg7 7.e4 c6 8.Nge2! (making any ...Bg4 less of an issue) 8...0-0 9.0-0 Na6 10.h3 prepared Be3 and left White with a dream centre in Ubilava-Garcia Ares, Linares 1994, while 5...Be6 is creative, but also leaves the bishop as a target for Ng5 after 6.Nf3, with 6...Nxc3 7.bxc3 Bg7 8.Rb1 Bd5 seen in Grigoriants-Safarli, European Championship, Legnica 2013. Again, we're too tempted not to go 9.h4!?, and if 9...h5 10.Qc2, which should again give White a promising version of a Grünfeld with e4 and d4 on the way.

6.bxc3



Recapturing towards the centre and also usefully opening the b-file for the queen's rook. This simply has to be White's best move, although if you're a

chesstouring.com

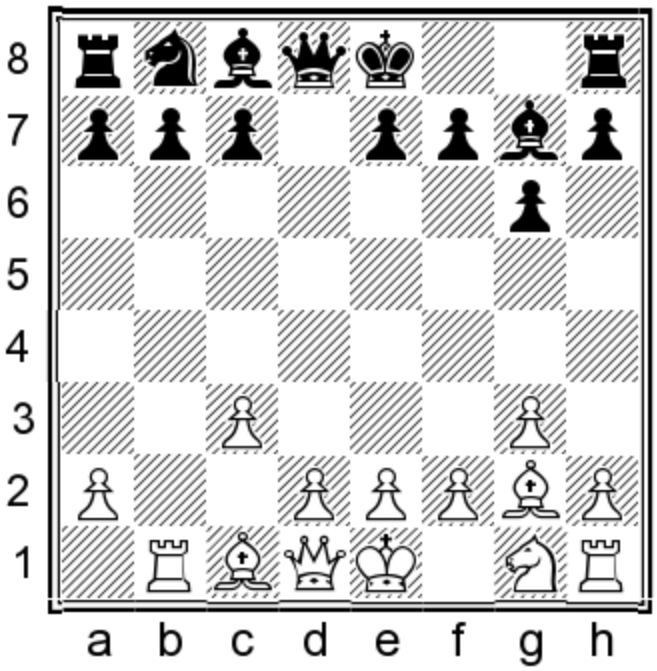
big Ulf Andersson fan, you may find it hard to resist 6.dxc3 Qxd1+ 7.Kxd1.

6...Bg7

Normally played at this juncture, but just like in the Grünfeld proper Black can also begin with 6...c5. The good news is that it doesn't affect White too much: 7.Rb1 Qc7 (otherwise, 7...Bg7?! fails to heed the warning and 8.Rxb7 Bxb7 9.Bxb7 Nd7 10.Bxa8 Qxa8 11.Nf3 0-0 12.0-0 just left White a pawn to the good in Tiviakov-Godarz, Rasht 2016, while 7...Nc6?! 8.Qa4! Qd6 9.Ba3 already left Black under pressure with Nf3 and d4 on their way in Kosten-Sarthou, Naujac 2000) 8.h4! (just as in our main line) 8...Bg7 (8...h5 is probably more prudent, but here White has at least 9.Qb3!?, and if 9...Nc6 10.Qb5 Qb6 11.Nh3 e5 12.Ng5 when Black has surely made too many pawn moves) 9.h5 Nd7 10.Qa4 left Black under pressure right across the board in Petrosyan-Sammed Jaykumar, Taleigao 2019, partly because 10...0-0? 11.hxg6 hxg6 12.Qh4 Nf6 13.Nf3 would now be most unwise for him, with d3 and Bh6 on the way or even just Ng5-e4.

7.Rb1

chesstouring.com



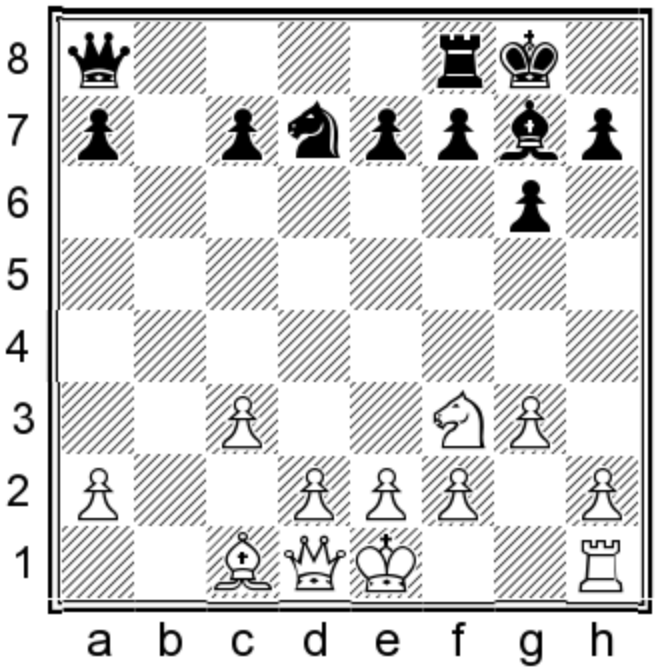
White has tried a great many moves here, including the immediate 7.h4, but it's hard to imagine the queen's rook has a better square than b1 and now less experienced opponents are likely to wonder how they should defend b7.

7...Nd7

Black's most common move, setting a little trap (8.Bxb7? Bxb7 9.Rxb7 Nb6), and preparing to bring the knight to the kingside. He has also been known to try:

a) There has been a bit of debate at times over 7...0-0?!, but as far as we're aware, it just loses a pawn: 8.Rxb7! (the right way to capture and not 8.Bxb7?? Bxb7 9.Rxb7 Qd5, forking the two white rooks) 8...Bxb7 9.Bxb7 Nd7 10.Bxa8 Qxa8 11.Nf3.

chesstouring.com

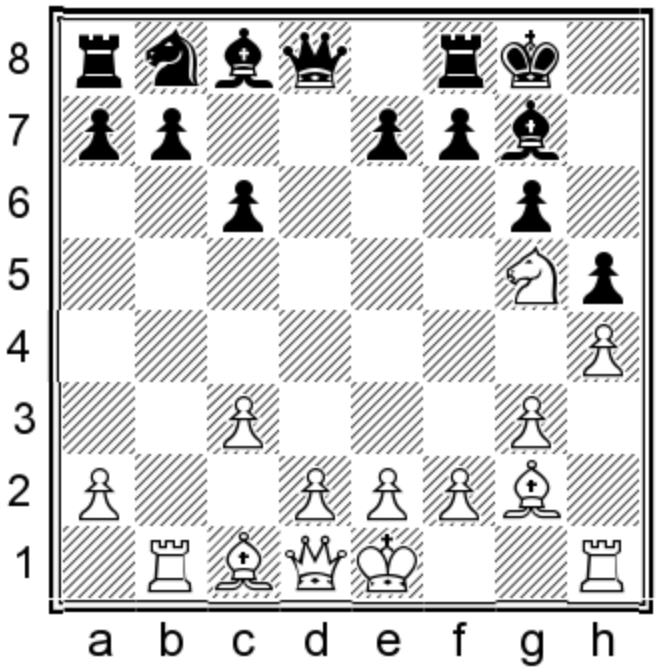


Black's lead in development does offer him a bit of compensation for the pawn, but the extra pawn is a central one and it would be a strange world if White objected to such an outcome from the opening: for example, 11...Ne5 (trying to destabilise; so does 11...e5 12.0-0 e4, but 13.Ne1! Qd5 14.Qc2 Ne5 15.d3 exd3 16.Nxd3 was just a clear extra pawn in Romanov-V.Tregubov, Warsaw (rapid) 2011, while 11...Qd5 can be met by 12.Qb3 and even 11...Qc6!? 12.0-0 Qc4 13.a4 Rb8 14.d3! – returning the extra pawn to develop – 14...Qxc3 15.Bd2 Qb2 16.Qc1 c5 17.Qc4 left White with the better structure and a pull in Mirzoev-Khusenkhojaev, Cheliabinsk 2019) 12.0-0 Nxf3+ 13.exf3 Qd5 14.Qe2 Bf6 15.d4 c5 16.dxc5 Qxc5 and now in Smejkal-Grimm, Cologne 1992, 17.Bh6 Rc8 18.Rd1! would have left White clearly for choice, and if 18...Qxc3?! 19.Rc1.

b) With 7...c6 Black blunts our fine English bishop, but will still need to overprotect b7 to develop his bishop from c8. White can now develop with 8.Nf3 and 9.0-0, but you won't be surprised to learn that we're again drawn to the idea of 8.h4!? h5 (once again, quite a prudent choice; Black went with the related 8...Qa5 9.Qc2 h5 in Zhou Jianchao-Zhao Yuanhe, Tianjin 2018, where after 10.Nf3 0-0 11.0-0 Nd7 White might have exploited Black's weakening with 12.Ng5 when an instructive line runs 12...Nf6

chesstouring.com

13.d3 Nh7 14.c4 Nxg5 15.Bxg5 Qc7 16.Rb3 Bg4 17.Rfb1 b6 18.a4, leaving White set to break through with c5 or a5, while again the strong central pawns somewhat limit any counterplay for Black, which was also the case after 8...h6!? 9.Qc2 Qc7 10.d3 Nd7 11.Nf3 Ne5 12.Nxe5 Qxe5 13.d4 Qa5 14.0-0 0-0 15.Bd2 and again the b-file pressure was most useful in Lautier-Lurie, Tel Aviv (simul) 1998) 9.Nh3 (as White is heading for g5 with the knight, he can come via here, as well as f3) 9...0-0 10.Ng5.



This position already demonstrates why we like the insertion of h4 and ...h5 from White's perspective. With ...h6 no longer possible, our knight can sit happily on g5, since ...f6, even if Black could safely arrange it, is only likely to lead to further weaknesses. It's true that Black may eventually be able to settle a piece on g4, but even so is unlikely to be able to drum up any real counterplay on the kingside, in part due to a lack of mobile pawns and also because, once again, White enjoys a solid centre, where his majority may become most useful as the game unfolds.

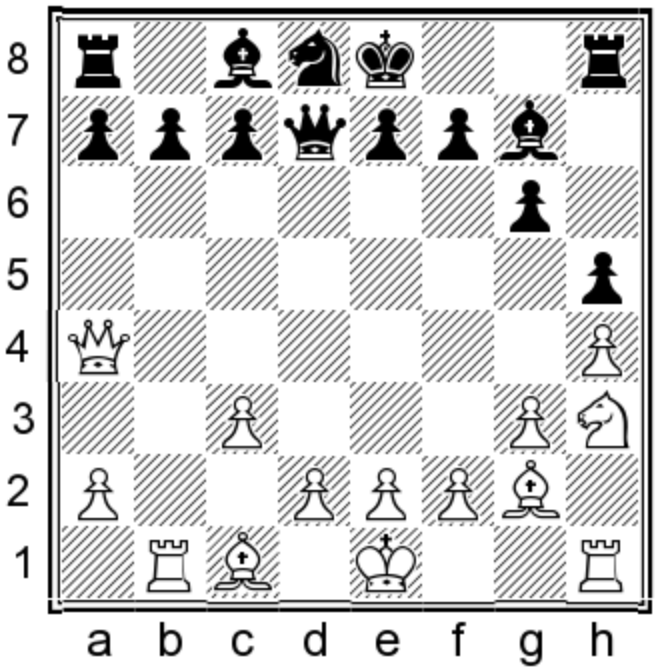
Now 10...Nd7 (10...Qa5 11.Qc2 Nd7 12.0-0 Nb6 obstructed the b-file in Giri-Safarli, Al Ain 2012, where 13.Rb3!? might have been strongest, intending to advance with c4 next move, whilst most certainly not being

chesstouring.com

troubled by 13...f6 14.Ne4 Bf5 15.d3) 11.0-0 Nb6 12.Qb3 Bg4 13.Re1 simply overprotected e2 in Feller-Golubka, Metz 2019. White is ready to advance the a-pawn, as well as to advance in the centre, and Black is just in a lot of trouble, as remained the case in the game after 13...Bf5 14.e4 Bg4 15.d4 c5 16.dxc5 Nd7 17.Be3.

c) A more combative response is 7...Nc6, as championed by that great Grünfeldeer Emil Sutovsky. Once again, we can switch flanks and probe for weaknesses on the kingside, to go with the half-open b-file: 8.h4! h5 (invariably played; Black hasn't always given away the g5-square, but 8...Qd7 can be well met by 9.Qa4 or just 9.h5 when 9...b6 10.Nf3 Bb7 11.Qc2 0-0-0 12.h6! Bf6 13.d4 Kb8 14.e4 left White dominating with his centre and safer king in Mareco-E.Hansen, Mar del Plata 2012, Sutovsky's 8...Qd6 doesn't equalise after 9.h5 b6 10.d4 Bb7 11.Nf3 followed by Bf4 and perhaps even Kf1, and even 8...h6!? 9.Nf3 0-0 10.Qc2 e5 11.d3 looks a little better for White, who will castle kingside and likely manoeuvre with Nd2-e4 in conjunction with c4) 9.Qa4!? (pinning the knight and so avoiding the possibility of 9.Nh3 Na5) 9...Qd7 (again, Black tries to make a second fianchetto; 9...Bd7? 10.Rxb7 would just lose a pawn as there's no good discovery, unlike after the engines' 9...0-0 10.Nh3 Qe8!? 11.0-0 Bd7 when the knight could drop back to d8, although even here 12.Qa3 b6 13.d3 Bg4 14.Re1 looks a little better for White, with Ng5-e4 set to increase his central control, after which Be3 and c4 might follow) 10.Nh3 Nd8.

chesstouring.com

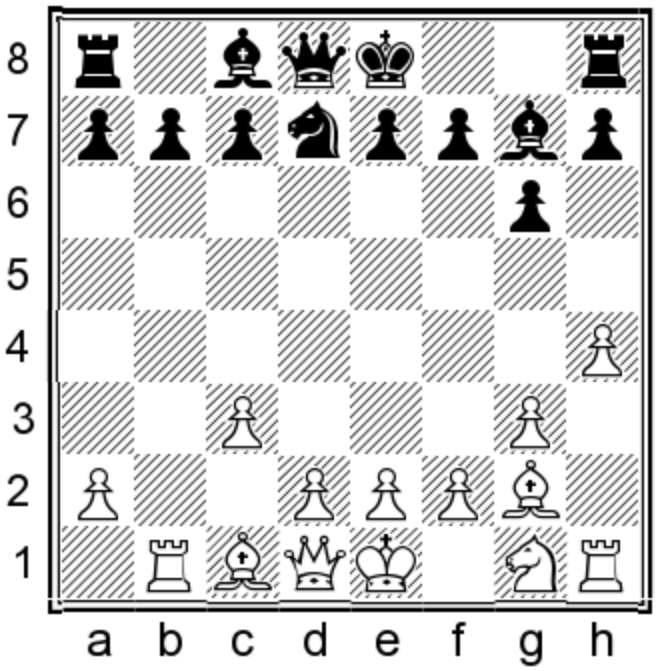


This was all seen, by transposition, in Huzman-Tyomkin, Montreal 2005, where White was happy to trade queens, but with Black so congested, 11.Qc2!? might be even stronger, intending 0-0, d3, c4, Ng5 and Ba3 in some order or just 11...Ne6?! 12.d4 c6 13.e4 with a rather powerful centre.

Returning to 7...Nd7:

8.h4!?

chesstouring.com



Even here we can probe so. White has also scored quite well with the immediate 8.Nf3, intending 9.0-0, 10.Ng5 and then Ne4 in conjunction with d3 and c4.

Please don’t, though, fall for 8.Bxb7?? Bxb7 9.Rxb7 Nb6, which cuts off the rook’s escape route and leaves White about to lose the exchange.

8...h6

Black prepares to meet h5 with ...g5, keeping lines closed and without allowing White to install his knight on g5.

Equally popular in practice has been 8...h5 when 9.Nh3 0-0 10.0-0 c6 11.Ng5 simply transposes to a position we saw before (after 7...c6), where White has a pleasant edge. So what else has Black tried?

Well, he went active with 8...Nb6 9.h5 Bf5 back in Rajkovic-Popovic, Novi Sad 1979, where we can’t really explain why White rejected 10.e4, and if 10...Be6 11.h6! Bf6 12.d4 0-0 13.a4 with the initiative and promising, *AlphaZero*-like play right across the board.

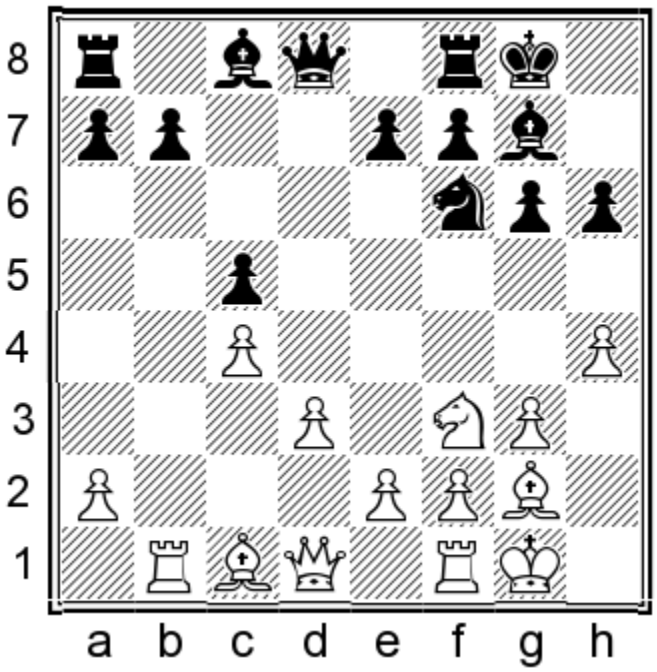
chesstouring.com

Finally, 8...0-0?! 9.h5 c6 10.hxg6 hxg6 offered White a number of tempting options in Banikas-Tepelidis, Thessaloniki 1999, including the direct 11.Rb4!?, and if 11...Qa5 12.Qc2 Nf6 13.Nf3 Bf5 14.Qb2, keeping any h-file probe hanging over Black's head, while forcing a queenside weakness, as well as introducing tactics with 14...Rab8 15.Nd4 Be4 16.Bxe4 Nxe4 17.Nxc6!.

9.Nf3 0-0

Black has also waited for White to house his king before doing likewise, as with 9...c6 when 10.0-0 0-0 11.d4 looks like the best approach to us. The position is like a Fianchetto Grünfeld, but with Black low on counterplay. White is ready to go Bf4 and Qd2, or even Qb3 and a4, and if 11...e5 it's even possible to go 12.e4!, since 12...Qa5 13.Qc2 exd4 14.cxd4 would maintain the powerful centre and the undoubted edge it supplies.

Should Black prefer 9...c5 10.0-0 0-0, as he did in Zwardon-Janaszak, Katowice 2019, White can again advance the d-pawn two squares or just go 11.d3!? Nf6 12.c4, establishing a favourable structure.



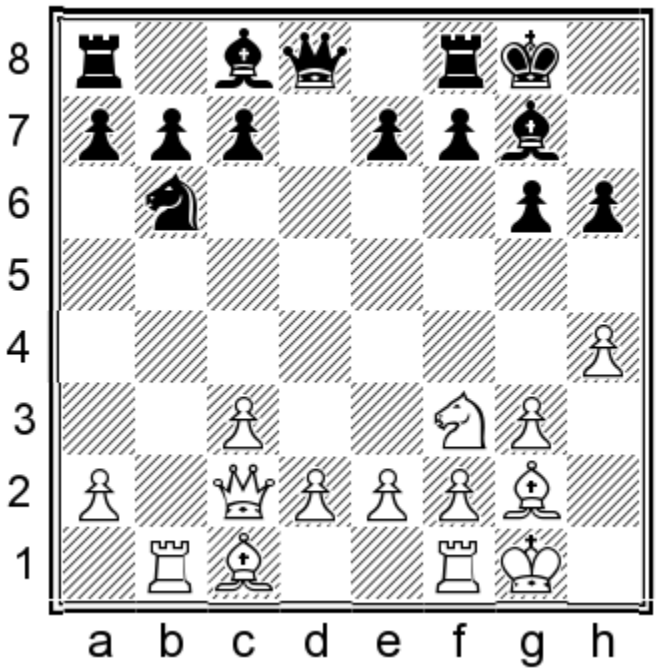
chesstouring.com

White simply has a lasting advantage here, in part due to his extra central pawn. He can aim to pressure c5 with Nd2-e4 and Ba3/e3, while playing to force queenside weaknesses (...b6), and for pressure there too with the likes of Qb3 and a4-a5, and all the while it's hard for Black to come up with an especially good plan.

10.0-0 Nb6

Again we see Black obstructing the gaze of our rook on b1 and Ng5 isn't possible in response. However, the black knight can be targeted and there's also the small matter of White's extra central pawn.

11.Qc2!



A good square for the queen, supporting ideas of c4-c5 and also enabling ...Bf5 to be met by e4. We'll return to this position in Flores-Barrionuevo, Berazategui 2007, to appreciate just how pleasant White's edge is.

Game 21

D.Flores-P.Barrionuevo

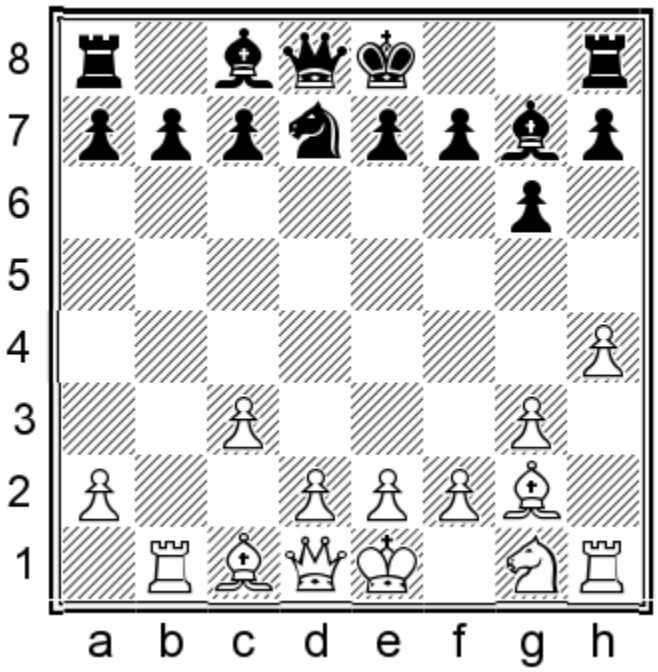
chesstouring.com

Berazategui Open 2007

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 d5

Black hints that he's heading for a Grünfeld set-up without delay.

3.cxd5 Nxd5 4.g3 g6 5.Bg2 Nxc3 6.bxc3 Bg7 7.Rb1 Nd7 8.h4!



Our favourite advance as White doesn't rush to exploit his extra central pawn, being content to probe on both flanks.

8...h6 9.Nf3 0-0 10.0-0 Nb6 11.Qc2 Bd7

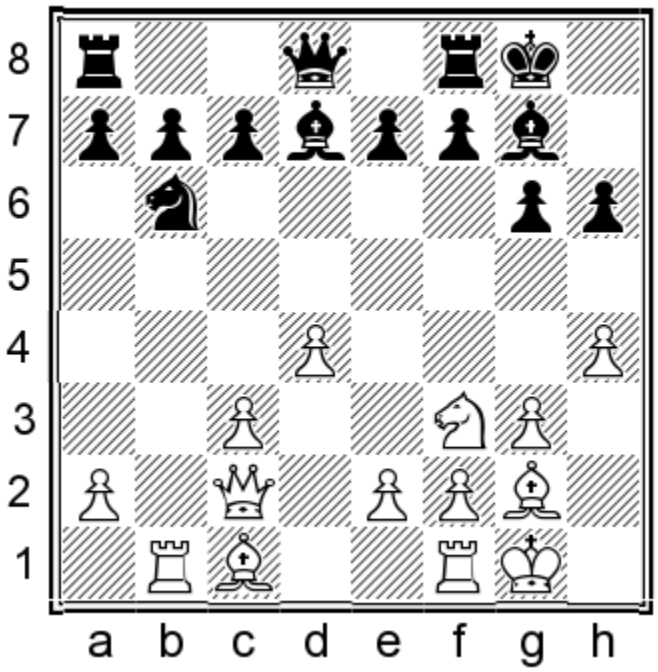
Black prepares to hit the queen via ...Ba4.

It might look like he should just 'take over' the centre with 11...e5, which also uses tactics to threaten 12...e4, but actually after 12.d3 it's still White who controls the centre. Just look at his grip on the c4-, d4- and e4-squares, as well as how after 12...Qe7 13.c4 c6 14.a4 his queenside play is already well advanced, with 14...Be6 15.a5 Nc8 16.Nd2 threatening a6 and already looking rather unpleasant for Black.

chesstouring.com

A better advance might be 11...c5, not that White again has any complaints about seeing the structure with 12.c4! Bf5 13.d3 arise, when a4-a5 is again the plan and Bb2 should swap off Black's best minor piece.

12.d4!



The right way to advance with Black's pieces set up as they are.

Instead, 12.c4?! Ba4 13.Qe4 Bc6 would be a bit annoying.

12...Ba4

12...c5!? 13.dxc5! Na4 might improve and would be a typical Grünfeld idea, but even so White is doing quite well after the calm 14.Be3, preparing to swap c3 for b7, as well as to meet 14...Qc7 with 15.h5!, and if 15...g5? 16.Rxb7! Qxb7 17.Nxg5 Qxg2+ 18.Kxg2 hxg5 19.Bxg5 when the queen and three extra pawns, allied to White's kingside initiative, should somewhat outclass Black's extra pieces. Yes 8.h4 h6 might have stopped us on the kingside for the time being, but do always be on the look-out for a well-timed h5 in the middlegame, inflicting further weaknesses in the black king's pawn shield wall.

chesstouring.com

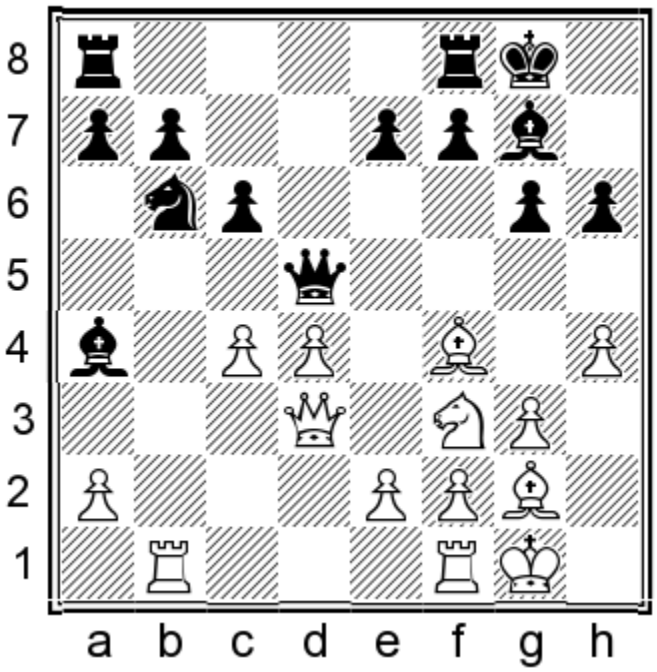
13.Qd3

The queen shouldn't be hassled here and now either the c- or e-pawn will make a powerful advance.

13...Qd5 14.Bf4! c6

After the brave 14...Qxa2 White's best move might well just be the calm 15.Rfc1!?, threatening to trap the enemy queen, and if 15...Qe6 16.c4 when Black's pieces are in quite a muddle and d5 followed by Ne5 and c5 should be a most powerful advance.

15.c4!



Forcing a favourable liquidation.

15...Qxc4

Thus far White has lacked a great discovery on the black queen, but 15...Nxc4? 16.Nd2 would certainly be one.

chesstouring.com

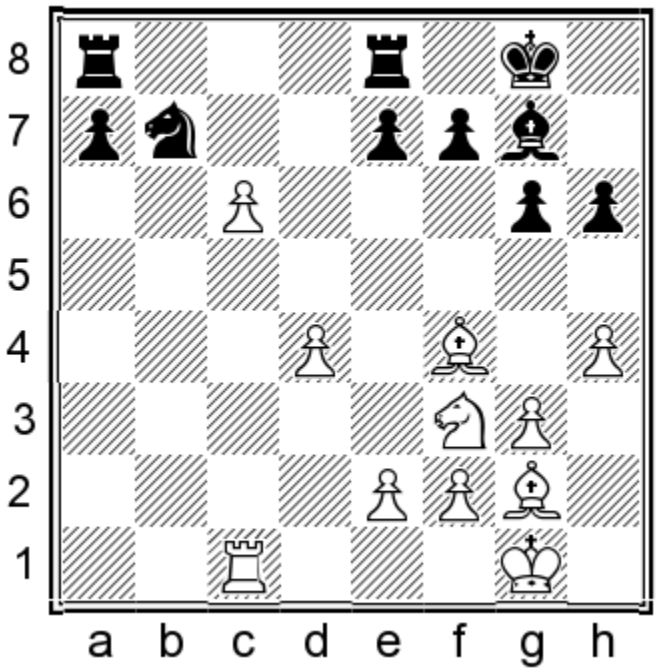
16.Qxc4 Nxc4 17.Rxb7

The culmination of White's early play. He has broken through to the seventh rank and whilst shredding Black's structure in the process.

17...Rfe8 18.Rc1 Bb5 19.a4!

The Argentinean GM and 1.c4 expert is happy to force the pace in a bid to pick off the straggler on c6 or to go...

19...Na5 20.axb5! Nxb7 21.bxc6



...establishing a monster passed pawn for the exchange. Don't worry, White hasn't blundered! Far from it in fact: the extra sacrifice was the best way of turning his initiative into something very tangible. Note how Flores's bishops are most well placed to support the c-pawn and, objectively, Black may already just be lost.

21...Nd6 22.Bxd6

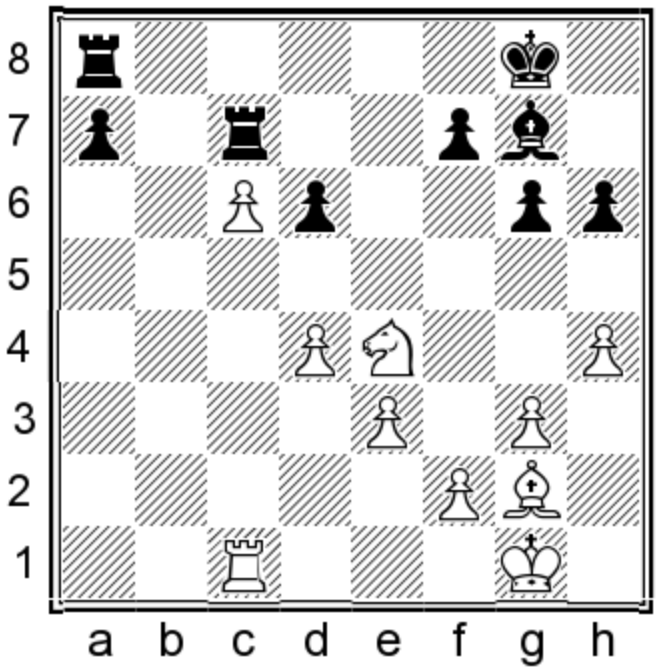
chesstouring.com

Simple chess, but first 22.e3!? might have been even stronger, overprotecting d4 to facilitate Nd2 and leaving White winning comfortably the race scenario after 22...a5 23.Bxd6 exd6 24.Nd2 a4 25.Nc4.

22...exd6 23.e3 Re7

23...Rac8!? 24.Nd2 Rc7 25.Nc4 Bf8 is touted by the engines, but this still looks most unpleasant for Black after 26.Rb1 Rd8 27.Bd5. Indeed, White might even just go Na5 followed by walking his king to c4 or even a6, so tied down is Black.

24.Nd2! Rc7 25.Ne4



25...Rd8?

Making matters easy for White and with a highly thematic knight manoeuvre: Nf3-d2-e4-c3-d5. 25...d5 was the last chance, although as both players no doubt realised, 26.Nc3 Rxc6 27.Bxd5 Rac8 28.Bxc6 Rxc6

chesstouring.com

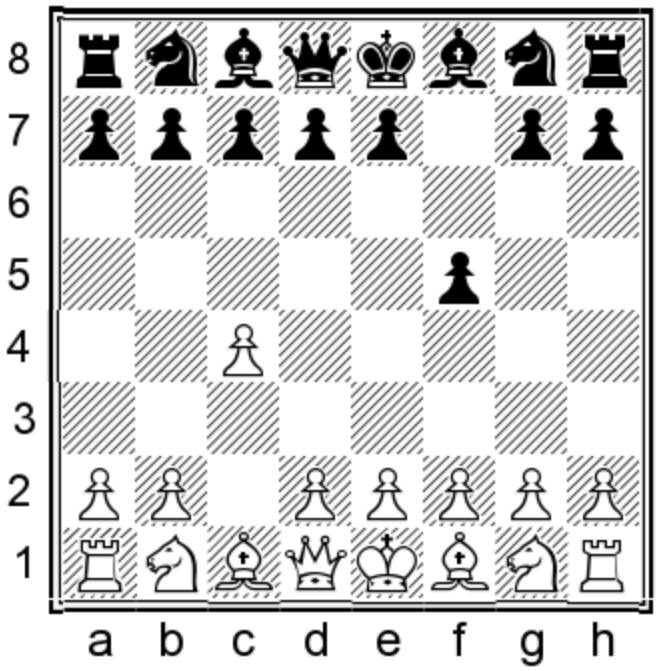
29.Kf1 Bf8 30.Ke2 Bb4 31.Na2 should be a winning endgame, thanks to White's far superior king and large central majority.

26.Nc3! Kf8 27.Nb5 Re7 28.c7 1-0

White will wind up a piece in front after Bb7. Powerful play from Flores.

Theory 5B

1.c4 f5



The Dutch. Black would no doubt be delighted were we now to advance our d-pawn two squares, but once again we can instead cut across Black's plans with our favourite development scheme.

2.Nc3 Nf6

Invariably played. Otherwise, we saw 2...d6 3.g3 e5 4.Bg2 back in Line 4C, 2...e5 3.d4! will be covered at the start of our next chapter, and 2...g6 3.g3 is very likely to transpose elsewhere (3.h4!? is also very tempting, and if 3...Nf6 4.h5!), such as to our main line below after 3...Bg7 4.Bg2 Nf6

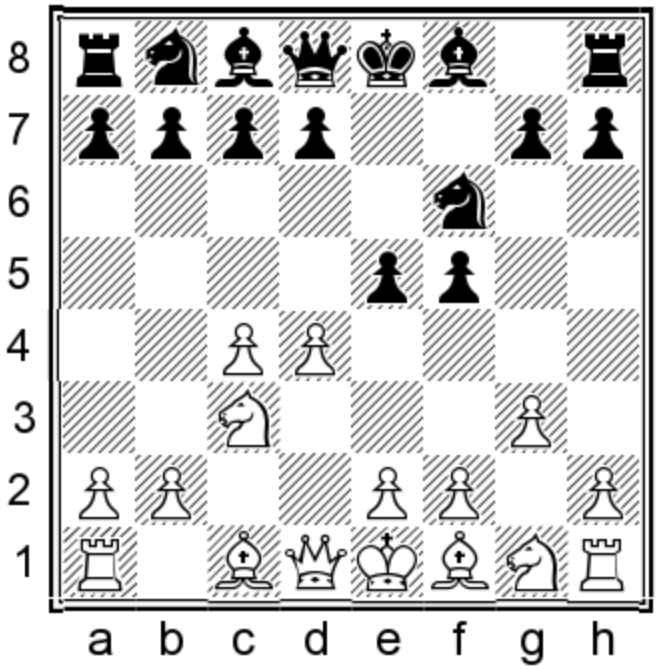
chesstouring.com

(4...e5 5.d3 d6 6.e4 Nf6 7.Nge2 would take us back into Line 4B) 5.d3 d6 6.e4 0-0 7.Nge2.

3.g3 g6

Black elects to go for a Leningrad Dutch-type set-up.

We'll see what happens if he prefers to opt for a Stonewall or Classical after 3...e6 4.Bg2 in our next section, 5C, while 3...e5 would be a reversed Grand Prix Attack (1.e4 c5 2.f4 Nc6 3.Nf3 g6). Those with some experience on the black side of such positions and/or who just like to remain in 'pure' English waters may now want to simply go 4.Bg2. Black usually responds with either 4...Nc6, bringing about a position we'll consider in Line 6A, or opts for 4...d6/4...g6, which is very likely to take us back into the waters of Chapter Four. His most critical move, à la the Grand Prix, is probably 4...Bb4 when 5.Nd5 is likely best. That's not exactly a bad line for White, but here we can do even better, crossing Black's move order with 4.d4!. White should emerge with a stable and pleasant plus in all lines:

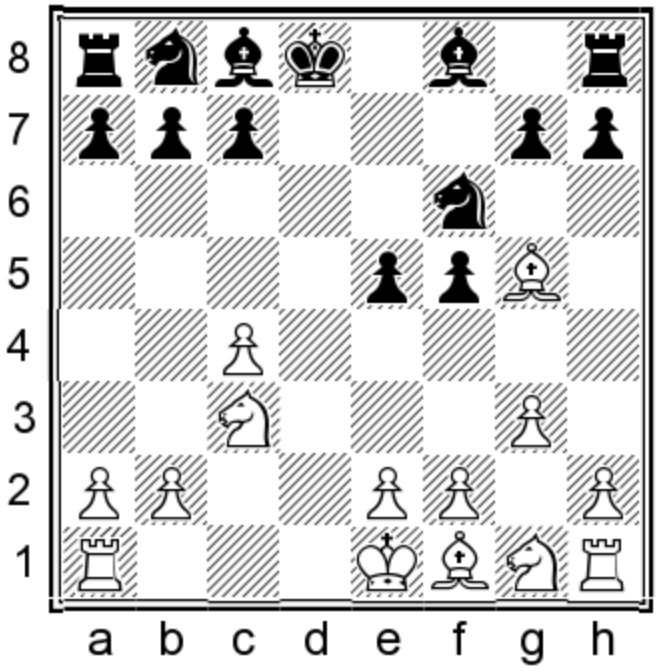


a) 4...e4 brings about a pleasant structure for White and one which he normally has to lose time to reach, as with 1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.Nf3 f5 4.d4

chesstouring.com

e4 5.Ng1 or here 5.Ng5 followed by Nh3-f4. White will plant a knight on f4 and should then be able to control play right across the board: for example, (5.Nh3) 5...Bb4 (5...c6 angles for a big centre, but after 6.Bg2 d5 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.Bg5 it just becomes a target, and if 8...Bb4 9.Qb3 Nc6 10.0-0! with Nf4 on its way, with heavy pressure against d5 and always the f3 break in reserve) 6.Bg2 (simple chess; White has sometimes gone 6.Bd2, but there's no need to fear the doubled pawns, whether with the text or 6.Qb3!?) 6...0-0 7.0-0 Bxc3 (7...c6?! 8.Qb3 would just be very nice for White, and if 8...Be7 9.f3!, levering open the position before Black is ready) 8.bxc3 d6 9.f3! (the key break) 9...Nc6 and now in Desnica-Ljubisavljevic, Novi Sad 2017, 10.fxe4 Nxe4 (10...fxe4 11.Ng5! Qe7 12.Rf4!? already leaves Black in some trouble) 11.Qd3 would have been strong, followed by Nf2 or perhaps even g4, leaving White pleasantly better with the two bishops.

b) 4...d6 5.dxe5 dxe5 6.Qxd8+ Kxd8 would be a decent structure for Black, were his pawn not on f5. With 7.Bg5 White can immediately put his better development to good use.

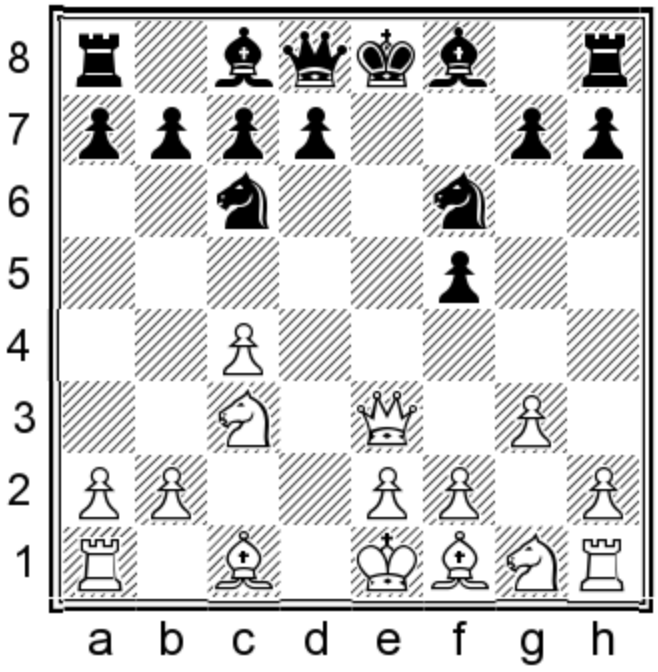


For example, 7...c6 (or 7...Be6 8.Nf3 Nbd7 9.0-0-0 Kc8 when in Antal-Just, Tegernsee 2017, 10.Bh3! revealed one important motif; White

chesstouring.com

maintained the initiative which quickly began to grow after 10...Bc5 11.e4!?, which may have intended 11...Bxf2?! 12.Rd2 Bc5 13.Rhd1 which will at least regain the pawn, White emerging with a clear positional advantage after 13...Bd6 14.Bxf6 Nxf6 15.Bxf5 Bxf5 16.exf5 thanks to the grip he is about to claim on the e4-square) 8.Nf3 Bd6 (8...e4 9.Nd4 would merely increase the pressure, as would 8...Nbd7 9.Bh3) 9.0-0-0 (everything keeps coming with tempo) 9...Kc7 (best, as 9...Ke7? 10.Bh3! Rd8 11.e4! already left Black badly overloaded in Sher-Zeitlein, Budapest 1989) and now Radek Wojtaszek settled for exchanging on f6, but 10.Bh3!? might be even stronger, and if 10...Be6 11.c5! Bxc5 12.Nxe5 followed by e4, Nd3-f4 or 12...Bxf2 13.Rhf1.

c) When caught in this line Black most commonly tries 4...exd4 5.Qxd4 Nc6 (not forced, but 5...Be7 6.Bg2 Nc6 7.Qd1 Ne5 8.b3 Bb4, as in C.Hess-Solodovnichenko, Werther 2010, and then 9.Bb2 Qe7 10.Nh3! d6 11.Nf4 is a pleasant edge, with White set to invade on d5 or expand on the queenside, all the while as Black suffers from the lack of a great plan and a restricted light-squared bishop) 6.Qe3+, but this is a disruptive check.



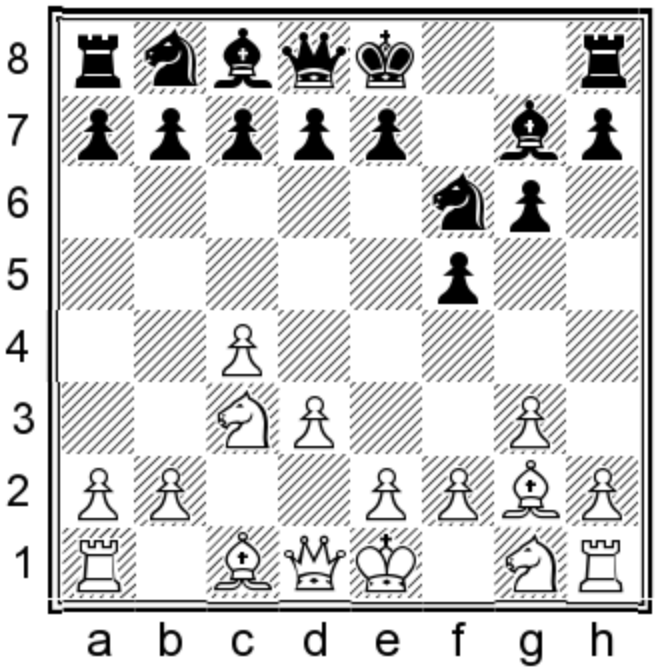
chesstouring.com

Once again, we also have a good Dutch pawn structure, as it were, from White's perspective. Black's f-pawn sticks out like a sore thumb and he may well struggle to free his position, as was the case after 6...Be7 (6...Qe7 7.Bg2 Qxe3 8.Bxe3 Bb4 9.Bd2! swaps a tempo to maintain control; again White may elect to develop his king's knight via h3 and f4, not f3) 7.Bg2 0-0 8.Nh3! Nb4 (instead, 8...b6 9.0-0 Bb7 10.b3 Bc5 11.Qd2 again maintains control and a very pleasant edge, as we'll see in Gelfand-Shirov, while Black can try to disrupt with 8...Bb4 9.0-0 Re8, but after 10.Qd3 Ne5!? White doesn't have to touch the rather poisoned pawn, and might instead poison one of his own: 11.Qc2!, and if 11...Nxc4? 12.Nd5!, winning a piece) 9.Qd2 d6 (9...Ne4? 10.Nxe4 fxe4 11.Nf4 would just leave Black's e-pawn falling) 10.0-0 c6 11.Nf4 a5 12.b3 (preparing to complete development with Bb2 and Rad1, after which White might even look to make the ideal anti-Dutch break with Rfe1 and e4, preparing to highlight a certain hole on e6) 12...g5!? 13.Nd3 h6 in W.Jones-Riggs, correspondence 1991, where 14.Bb2 would have been simple and strong, and if 14...Be6 (14...f4?! 15.gxf4! is just a free pawn, with Black's king even more exposed than White's) 15.f4!?, fighting back on the kingside whilst preparing to blow open the centre with e4 ahead of targeting Black's vulnerable king position.

Returning to 3...g6:

4.Bg2 Bg7 5.d3

chesstouring.com



Naturally, with Black having played ...f5, our favourite Botvinnik e4 push requires preparation.

5...0-0

Here we'll largely see what happens when Black holds back on an advance of his e-pawn, which will almost always take us back into earlier lines, with 5...e5 6.e4 d6 7.Nge2 a direct transposition to a variation we saw at the start of Line 4B.

6.e4 d6 7.Nge2

The construction of our favourite set-up is complete and now we must see if it's possible for Black to move order us or take advantage of the absence of ...e5.

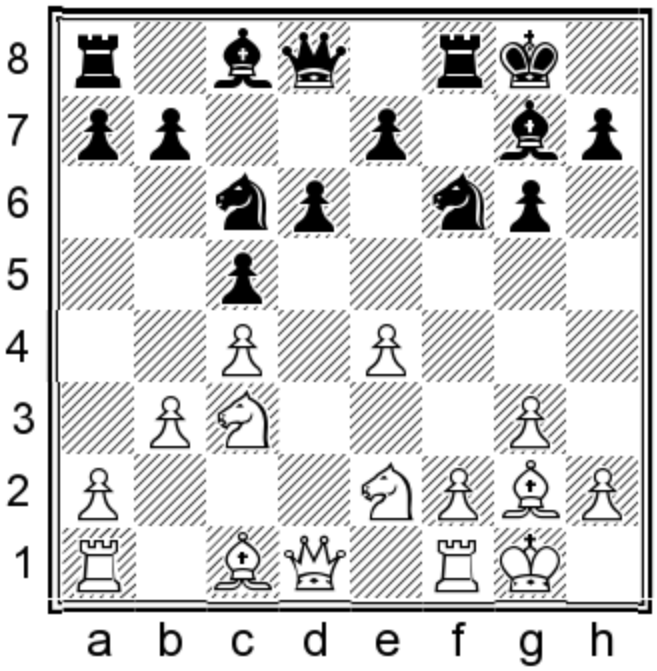
7...Nc6

Black's joint most popular choice at this juncture, along with 7...e5 when, as we saw in Line 4B, White should go 8.exf5 gxf5 9.0-0. What else might

chesstouring.com

Black try?

Well, 7...fxe4 8.dxe4 c5 opts for a strange hybrid of the Symmetrical English and the Dutch, when after 9.0-0 Nc6 White has often gone 10.h3, which is thematic, but 10...e5 and if 11.f4 Be6 may be OK for Black. More subtle and likely stronger is 10.b3!?, as in a fairly high-level 2018 correspondence encounter (Mag.Andersson-Firnhaber).

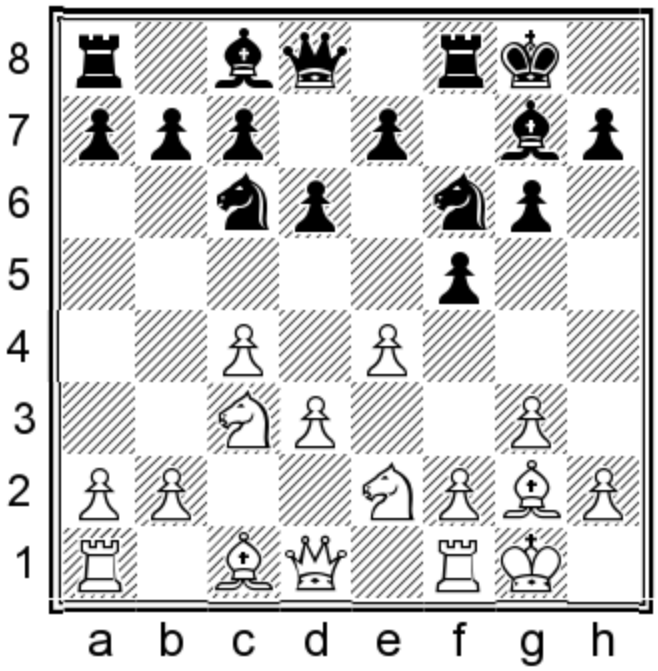


There 10...a6 11.h3 Ne8 12.f4 Nc7 13.Rb1!? Bd7 (13...Nd4 might even be met by 14.g4!?) 14.Be3 Ne6 15.f5! saw White seizing the initiative. Instead, 10...e5 11.f4! Nd4 12.f5! is White's main point. Yes, this does entail a pawn sacrifice, but 12...gxf5 13.Bg5 just looks quite promising, as we can see from 13...fxe4?! (or 13...Qe8 14.Nxd4 cxd4 15.Bxf6 Bxf6 16.Nd5 Bd8 17.Bh3!, which regains the pawn with a bind since 17...Qg6 18.exf5 Bxf5? fails to 19.Qf3 e4 20.Qf4 Bg5 21.Bxf5) 14.Nxd4 cxd4 15.Nxe4 when the pin on f6 is a mighty one and the engines already think that White is winning thanks to that and his bind on the position: for example, 15...Bd7 16.a4 Bc6 17.Ra2 Bxe4 18.Bxe4 Qc7 19.Bd3 followed by Raf2 when Black is just too weak on the light squares.

chesstouring.com

The immediate 7...c5, meanwhile, can be well met by 8.exf5 gxf5 9.0-0 e5 10.Bg5, leaving White with complete control of d5, as well as a potential break in f4, while 7...c6 8.0-0 e5 (or 8...fxe4 9.dxe4 Ng4 10.b3, which was again a useful move in R.Hall-Pegg, correspondence 2014, where 10...Qb6 11.Bf4 a6 – 11...e5 12.Na4 Qd8 13.Bd2 followed by h3 and Be3 keeps control – 12.Qe1! cut across Black's ...e5 ambitions and after 12...Ne5 simply 13.Rd1 looks pleasant enough for White, ideally followed by Qd2, Be3, Nd4 and f4) 9.exf5 Bxf5 10.d4! is a well-timed break, as again we saw back in Line 4B.

8.0-0



8...e5

Black normally decides that he hasn't anything better, so finally pushes the e-pawn.

Otherwise, 8...Kh8 9.h3!? e5 10.exf5 would be similar to what happens after 8...e5, 10...Bxf5 (or 10...gxf5 11.f4) 11.Be3 Qd7 12.Kh2 keeping a small but pleasant edge, as we again saw back in Line 4B, while 8...fxe4

chesstouring.com

9.dxe4 e5 (now the exchange on e4 looks premature, which may explain why two English professional players and Leningrad Dutch fans have tried something different, but both 9...Ne5 10.b3 c6 11.h3 Be6 12.Be3 Qc8 13.f4 in Grant-McDonald, British Championship, Torquay 2002, and the 9...a5 10.h3 Be6 11.b3 Nd7 12.Be3 a4 13.Rb1 axb3 14.axb3 Bf7 15.Qd2 of McNab-Rendle, 4NCL 2011, were not exactly successes for Black, White retaining control thanks to standard and logical development) 10.Nd5 Be6 11.Bg5 gives White control and a pleasant edge, as we also saw back in 4B.

9.exf5!

A well-timed exchange and one which takes us back into the main line of Theory 4B.

Game 22
B.Gelfand-A.Shirov
Tilburg 1996

1.c4 e5

1...f5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3 e5 4.d4 would be our Dutch route into the position.

2.g3 f5 3.Bg2 Nf6 4.d4 exd4 5.Qxd4 Nc6 6.Qe3+!

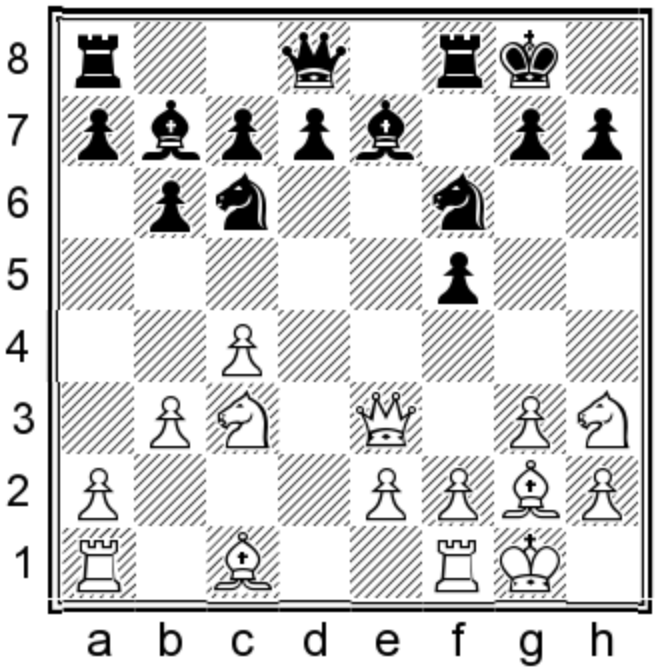
The key, disruptive check.

6...Be7 7.Nc3 0-0 8.Nh3 b6

Shirov decides to try and compete for the long diagonal, but in any case Black's problem remains: a bad structure, an absence of good pawn breaks and a lack of counterplay.

9.0-0 Bb7 10.b3

chesstouring.com



Preparing another fianchetto, thereby enabling the queen to tuck back into the heart of White's position on d2.

10...Bc5 11.Qd2 Qe7

Gelfand wondered if 11...Na5 might be a better try in his notes. Now 12.Bb2 would be simple and effective, but it looks like the former world championship challenger was intending 12.Nd5!? Bxd5 13.Bxd5+ Nxd5 14.Qxd5+ Kh8 15.Rd1 Qe7 when he follows up with the instructive line 16.Bb2!? Qxe2 17.Bc3 Qe7 18.Nf4!?, holding back on regaining the pawn on d7 to menace Nh5, which all leaves White somewhat for choice.

12.Nd5

Once again there was nothing wrong with 12.Bb2, but Gelfand prefers to exploit his grip on d5 to force matters.

12...Nxd5 13.cxd5!

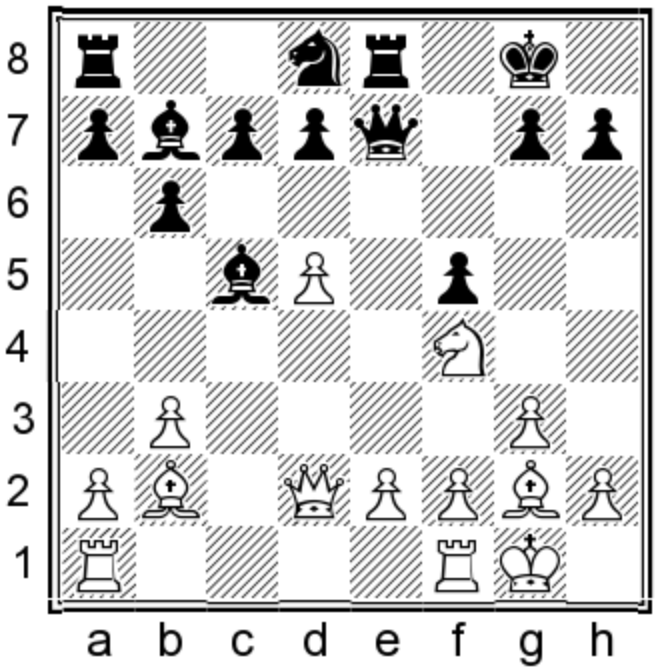
chesstouring.com

The pawn won’t be a dead-point here as Black is about to become quite passive, while he must also watch out for d6 tricks, as well as a big hole on e6 in the event of ...d6.

13...Nd8

Forced, as 13...Ne5? 14.d6! would win a piece, as would 13...Nd4? 14.e3 Nb5 15.d6! Nxd6 16.Bxb7 Nxb7 17.Qd5+.

14.Bb2 Re8 15.Nf4



Once again we find f4 an ideal home for White’s knight in this structure, one where Black often wishes he could play ...f5-f7 or ...f5-f6.

15...Bd6 16.Rac1

Simple chess. Gelfand reveals that he was “seriously thinking about an exchange sac”, namely 16.Rae1!? Bb4 17.Qc2 Bxe1 18.Rxe1 Qf7, which the modern-day engines really like, giving White a huge plus after 19.Bh3

chesstouring.com

Rf8 20.e4, and if 20...fxe4 21.Rxe4 when Black's pieces are most unhappy and 21...Bxd5 22.Nxd5 Qxd5 fails to 23.Rh4 h6 24.Bg2.

16...Nf7

Chess is so often about pawn levers and here White has the key break in e4, one which would soon have occurred too in the event of 16...Be5 17.Bxe5 Qxe5 18.Rfe1. And do note too that 16...Bxf4? 17.Qxf4 Qxe2 was not good on account of simply 18.Qd4 Qg4 19.Rxc7.

17.Rfe1 Rac8 18.e4!

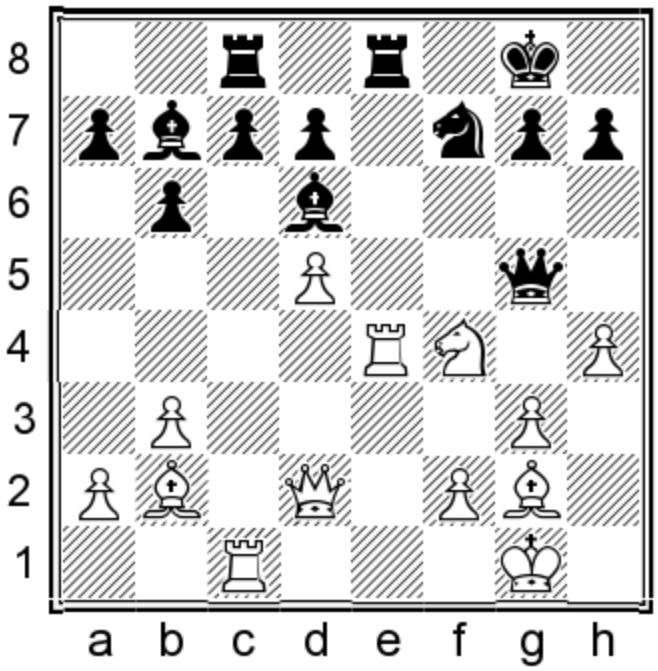
With Shirov forced to plug d6 with his bishop, to enable his knight to develop from d8 without allowing a ruinous d6 in response, it's high time for White to open the position for his much more harmonious and actively placed pieces.

chesstouring.com

18...fxe4?

Criticised by Gelfand, who was expecting 18...Qg5, but even here after 19.h4! Qg4 (or 19...Bxf4 20.gxf4 Qg4 21.Rc3 and Rg3) 20.Re3 White would have retained a huge advantage, and if 20...Bc5? (or 20...Bxf4 21.gxf4 Qxf4 22.Bxg7!) 21.Rxc5! bxc5 22.Bh3, trapping the black queen. As such, Black likely had to go 18...Bb4 19.Qd4 Ne5 when 20.Bc3 Bxc3 (or 20...Bc5 21.Qa4) 21.Qxc3 fxe4 22.Rxe4 d6 23.Bh3 would have retained a clear and obvious advantage for White.

19.Rxe4 Qg5 20.h4!



It's rarely a bad idea to advance Harry when the opponent's king might be about to prove weak.

20...Qh6 21.Rce1 Rf8?!

Easy to criticise, but Black's position has long been most unpleasant and would have remained so after 21...Rxe4 22.Rxe4 Rf8 23.Qe2.

chesstouring.com

22.Qd1!

Suddenly Nh5 is a certain threat.

22...g6

Black surely wouldn't have survived for long after 22...Bxf4 23.Rxf4 Rce8 24.Rg4 g6 25.Rge4.

23.Qg4

23.Bh3! would have been even stronger, as shown by Gelfand, who admits that "You can hardly hope to have a position with equal material better than this one. Only due to my nervousness (this was the decisive game of a tournament), and my poor technique, the game lasted almost 20 more moves."

23...Rcd8 24.Bf6 Rb8 25.Bb2

There's no need to rush.

25...Rfd8 26.R4e3

A slightly mysterious move, but then again Black isn't up to much. Probably the best try was 26.h5 when 26...g5 runs into 27.Ne6! dxe6 and now 28.dxe6!? might be even stronger than immediately winning the black queen.

26...Bxf4

Finally an unrecognisable Shirov can see nothing better than this exchange, but his dark squares were unlikely to ever forgive him.

27.gxf4 Nd6 28.Bf6

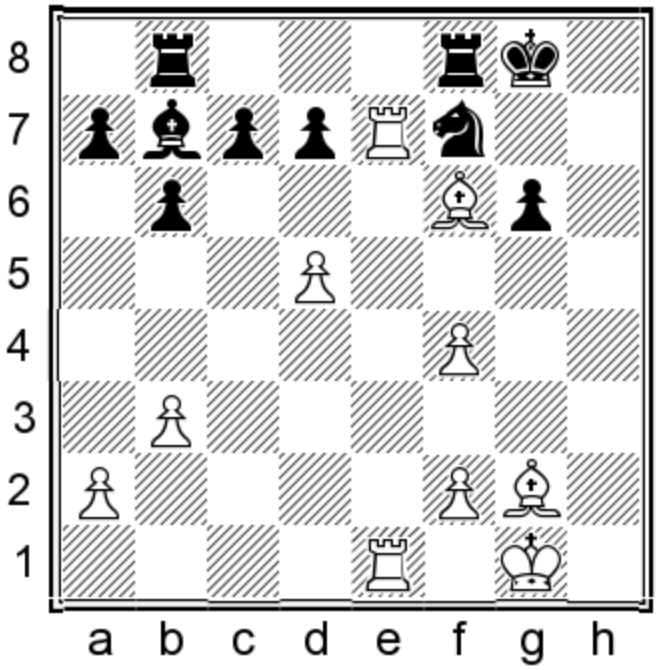
chesstouring.com

28.Re7! Nf5 29.d6! would have been a power-packed finish, and if 29...Bxg2 30.Qxg2 Nxe7 31.dxe7 Re8 32.Qd5 mate.

28...Rf8 29.Bg5 Qg7 30.Re7 Nf7 31.h5

Finally Harry gets in on the act.

31...gxh5 32.Qxh5 Qg6 33.Qxg6+ hxg6 34.Bf6!



A classy move, preventing Black from moving his knight and, yes, there is still a most grumpy bishop sitting over on b7!

34...Rfd8 35.Be4 Kf8 36.Bxg6 Bxd5 37.f5 b5

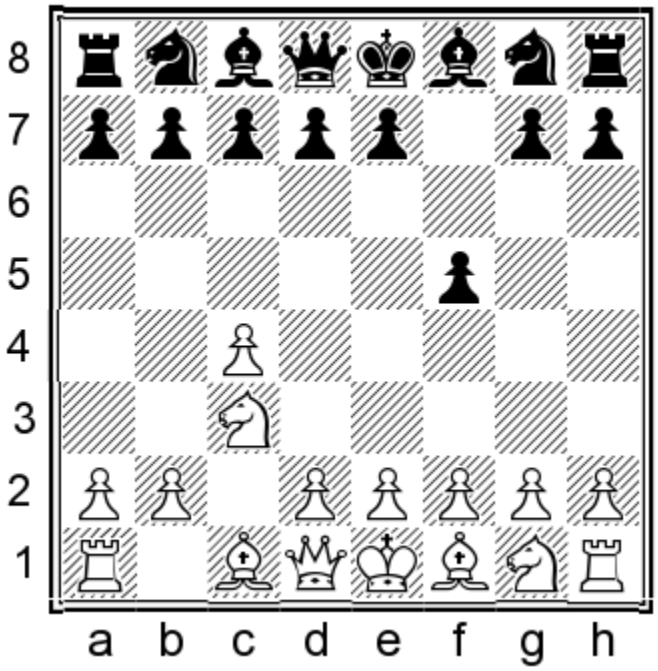
This doesn't really help, but Gelfand had prepared to meet 37...Re8 with 38.Rxe8+ Rxe8 39.Bg7+! Kxg7 40.Rxe8.

38.Rd1 Rb6 39.Rxf7+! Bxf7 40.Bxd8 Bxg6 41.fxg6 Rxg6+ 42.Kf1 1-0

Theory 5C

chesstouring.com

1.c4 f5 2.Nc3



2...Nf6

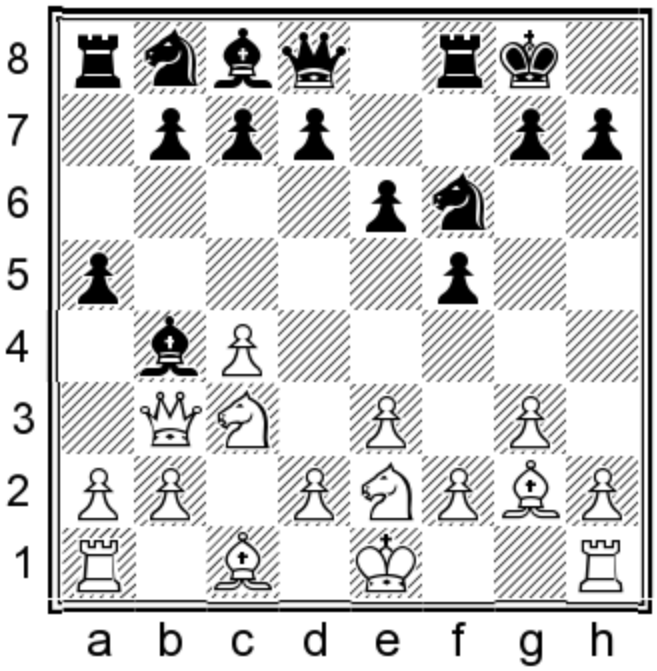
Black might also begin with 2...e6 when 3.g3 d5 (or 3...Nf6 4.Bg2 and we're back in our main line, below) 4.cxd5 (if you're happy with the main lines of the Stonewall, then by all means go 4.d4) 4...exd5 5.Bg2!? Nf6 (not forced, but 5...d4?! 6.Nd5 just leaves Black looking rather overextended and White's knight will be quite happy on f4 once again, after which Nf3, 0-0 and d3 will likely occur, followed by breaking with e3 and/or queenside play, while 5...c6 6.Nf3 Bd6 7.d3 is an excellent anti-Stonewall set-up for White, with e4 on the way, and if 7...Nf6 8.0-0 0-0 9.e4! dxe4 10.dxe4 Nxe4 11.Nxe4 fxe4 12.Qb3+ Kh8 13.Ng5, regaining the pawn while leaving White with the more active pieces) 6.d3 transposes to a position we'll see in note 'b' to Black's 4th move, below.

3.g3 e6 4.Bg2 Be7

Black goes for a Classical Dutch set-up. There's also:

chesstouring.com

a) Just as in the Dutch proper (with White's pawn on d4), 4...Bb4 is also quite viable. Here White doesn't have to allow his pawns to be doubled and 5.Qb3 makes a lot of sense, after which 5...a5 (or 5...Qe7 6.a3 Bxc3 7.Qxc3 d6 8.b4 e5 9.Bb2 0-0 10.Nf3 when Black has lost a tempo with his e-pawn and White enjoys a pleasant set-up, where he can complete development with 0-0 and d3, and should also keep an eye out for the undermining c5 advance) 6.e3!? (avoiding the clamping 6.a3 Bxc3 7.Qxc3 a4) 6...0-0 (6...Nc6 7.Nge2 Ne5!? was typically creative from Gibraltar maestro Stuart Conquest in Snape-Conquest, 4NCL 2005, but after 8.0-0 Nd3 9.Qc2 Nxc1 10.Raxc1 0-0 11.d4 d5 Black didn't have such a great form of a Stonewall, with one of several good plans now for White, 12.a3 Be7 13.Nf4, bringing the knight towards its ideal square on d3, and if 13...c6 14.c5 when Na4 and/or b4-b5 would follow) 7.Nge2 reaches a position not yet seen on the database, but one where we quite like White's set-up.



He has avoided obstructing his English bishop and may be able to advance on the queenside or break in the centre with d3 and e4, thereby setting up a delayed Botvinnik: for example, 7...d6 (7...c6 8.0-0 d5 gives Black a grip on e4, but after 9.a3 Bd6 10.d4 Nbd7 11.Bd2 White should not be too unhappy; c5, Qc2 and b4 is one plan, while both f3 and Nf4 may also

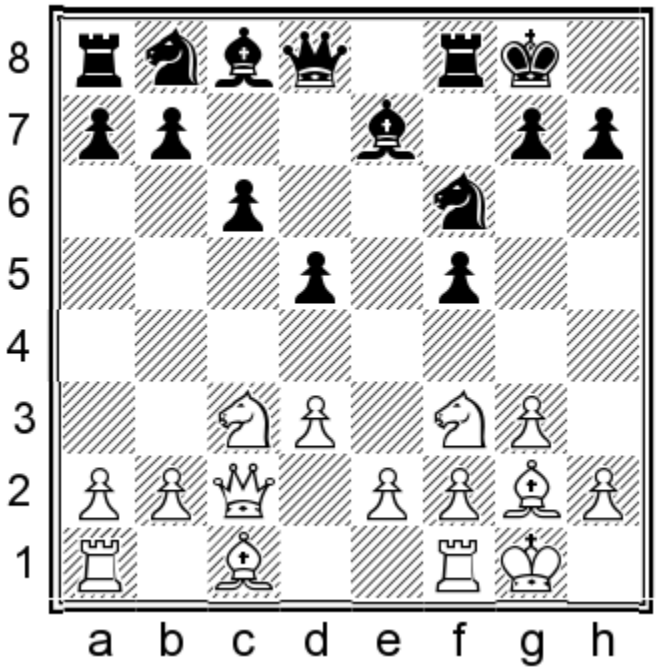
chesstouring.com

prove useful) 8.0-0 Bxc3 (avoiding the discombobulating 8...Qe8 9.Nb5!?) 9.Nxc3 e5 10.Qc2 when a3, Rb1 and b4 may follow, and after 10...Qe8 11.d3 Qh5 White can avoid coming under any real notion of an attack with 12.f4!, keeping lines closed, after which b3, Bb2 and maybe Nd5 should see White's bishops coming into their own.

b) A Stonewall Dutch player is more likely to prefer 4...d5 when again we quite like the simple, very English 5.cxd5 exd5 6.d3!? (6.e3 and 7.Nge2 is another decent, pretty flexible set-up). Now:

b1) White is hoping to tempt Black into 6...d4?! when 7.Qa4+! is quite a disruptive check, and if 7...c6 (or 7...Nc6 8.Nb5! Bb4+ 9.Kf1 0-0 10.a3 Be7 11.Nf3 when Black is going to lose his d-pawn for nebulous compensation) 8.Nb1, which invests tempi to leave Black over-extended: for example, 8...Be6 9.Nf3 Bc5 10.0-0 0-0 11.b4 Bb6 12.Nbd2 when the d4-pawn will continue to come under heavy fire.

b2) 6...c6 7.Nf3 Be7 (as we've already seen, 7...Bd6 8.0-0 0-0 is rather well met by 9.e4!, ripping open the position before Black is ready) 8.0-0 0-0 9.Qc2! has scored very well for White.



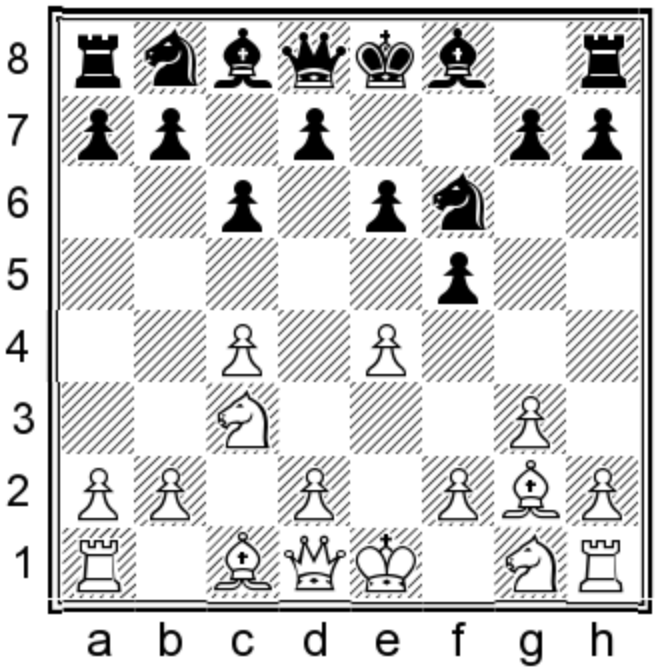
chesstouring.com

The queen move supports a timely e4, but note that White does not always rush to liquidate so: for example, 9...Nbd7 10.Rb1!? (beginning on the queenside, partly because 10.e4 is only a touch better for White after multiple exchanges on e4) 10...Bd6 11.b4 a6 12.Na4 (now 12.e4!? was tempting, and also strong, and if 12...dxe4 13.dxe4 fxe4 14.Ng5!) 12...Qe7 13.Nd4 saw White taking control of the position in Bartel-Ponfilenok, St. Petersburg 2012, combining dark-square and queenside pressure with preparation for a timely e4 break.

Alternatively, 9...Qe8 10.Rb1!? Qh5 11.b4 Kh8 was seen in Becking-E.Peterson, German League 2007, when 12.e3 followed by Ne2 would have been one good approach, 12.Bf4 another, after which Na4-c5 might follow, while 9...Kh8 10.Bf4 was similar in Chigaev-Donskov, St. Petersburg 2013, where after 10...Nh5, 11.e3! would have been instructive, and if 11...Nxf4?! 12.exf4 when Black's weaknesses down the e-file and lack of counterplay would have been much more important than any doubling of White's pawns. Finally, 9...d4 10.Na4 intends Qc4+, as well as 10...Kh8 11.a3 a5 12.e3!? when 12...dxe3 13.Bxe3 Nd5 14.Bd4 leaves White actively placed and with ideas of Rfe1, as well as Ne5 and f4.

c) Those who prefer a Stonewall with their bishop on d6 might begin with 4...c6 when White has scored well enough in practice with the calm 5.Nf3 d5 6.d3, but 5.e4! might be even stronger, getting in the classic anti-Dutch break without delay.

chesstouring.com



Black pretty much has to exchange and after 5...fxe4 (5...d6? 6.exf5 exf5 7.Nge2 followed by d4-d5 and Nf4 would positionally disgusting for Black) 6.Nxe4 d5 (Black's normal choice when this position has been reached, but 6...Nxe4 7.Bxe4 Qf6!? is preferred by the engines; this does neutralise Qh5+ ideas, but 8.f4!? should still be a little better for White, and if 8...d5 9.Bg2 dxc4 10.Nf3 Nd7 11.0-0 Bc5+ 12.Kh1 0-0 when there's at least 13.Qc2 Nb6 14.d3 to regain the pawn, and here 10...Bc5 11.Qe2 b5? 12.a4 is very strong with Ng5 looming) 7.Nxf6+ Qxf6 8.d4 (only now does White play so, leaving Black with major weaknesses on the e-file) 8...Bb4+ (otherwise, 8...dxc4 9.Nf3 Bb4+ 10.Bd2 Bxd2+ 11.Qxd2 0-0 12.0-0 would be an excellent type of Catalan for White with Rfe1 next up, and 8...e5 leaves White with several strong continuations, including the simple 9.Qh5+ g6 10.dxe5 Bb4+ 11.Kf1 gxh5 12.exf6 dxc4 13.Bh6, which secures at the very least a strong initiative) 9.Bd2 0-0 10.Nf3 White has an undoubted positional advantage: for example, 10...Bxd2+ 11.Qxd2 Nd7 (or 11...dxc4 12.0-0, as above) 12.0-0 b6 13.Rfe1 Bb7 14.Rac1 again with an excellent version of a Catalan, since Black will not find it at all easy to free his position, in view of such lines as 14...c5? 15.Ng5.

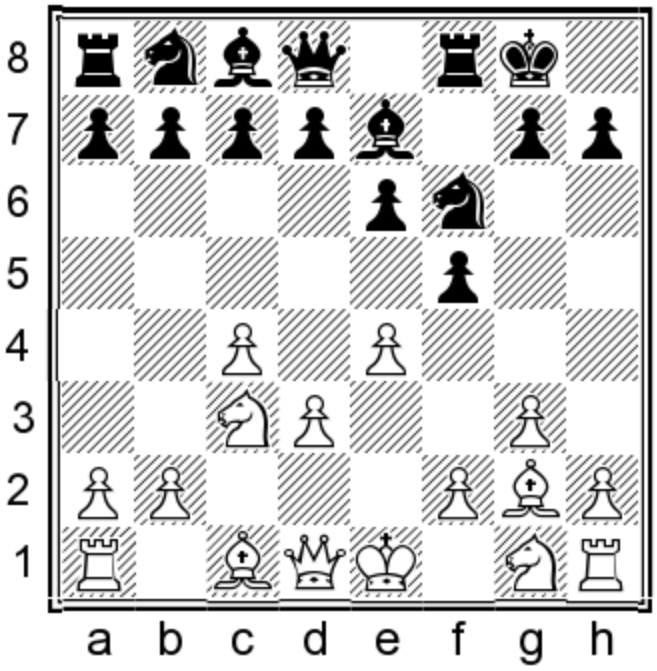
Returning to 4...Be7:

chesstouring.com

5.d3

Just as in the lines with ...g6, we find White preparing to set up our favourite Botvinnik formation.

5...0-0 6.e4



White refuses to be intimidated by any pressure down the f-file and sets up the Botvinnik formation. He already threatens 7.e5 and has scored extremely well from this position.

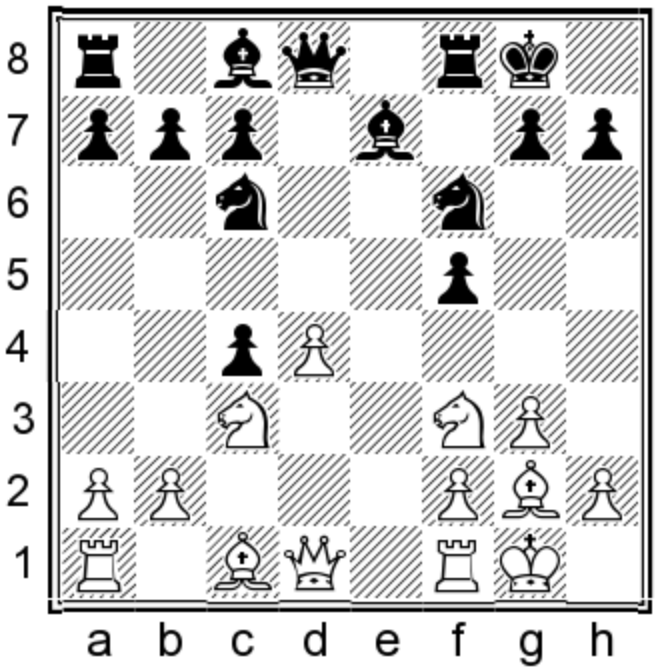
6...fxe4

Invariably played. Instead:

a) 6...d6?! 7.exf5 exf5 8.Nge2 just gives White an obvious positional advantage and denies Black easy counterplay, with 8...Nc6 9.0-0 Bd7 10.b3 Rb8 11.Bb2 Ne5 12.d4 Ng6 13.Qd2 Nh5 14.f4! Nf6?! 15.d5 highlighting the weakness on e6 and leaving White firmly in the driving seat in Ledger-Hawksley, Scarborough 2014.

chesstouring.com

b) Black might try 6...Nc6!?. Here White should change tack with 7.exf5! (7.f4? works well in our main line, but here, with a pawn still on f5, Black has 7...Bc5 8.e5 Ng4) 7...d5! (7...exf5? 8.Nge2 d6 9.0-0 is just pretty grim for Black, as Andrew Ledger demonstrated above) 8.d4 (preparing to offer to go from a pawn ahead to one in arrears in return for the initiative) 8...dxc4 (an ultra-aggressive opponent might try 8...e5!?, but after 9.Nf3! White has good chances to emerge with an edge: for example, 9...exd4 10.Nxd4 Bc5 11.Ne6 Bxe6 12.fxe6 when Black can't quite land a blow on f2 and winds up suffering after 12...dxc4 13.0-0 Qxd1 14.Nxd1 Rae8 15.Be3! Bxe3 16.Nxe3 Rxe6 17.Nxc4 on account of our fine English bishop) 9.Nf3 exf5 10.0-0, which should offer decent compensation for the pawn.



Once again, we find that ...f5 has created a number of weaknesses, while White's ideas include Qe2, d5 and 10...Be6 11.Ng5.

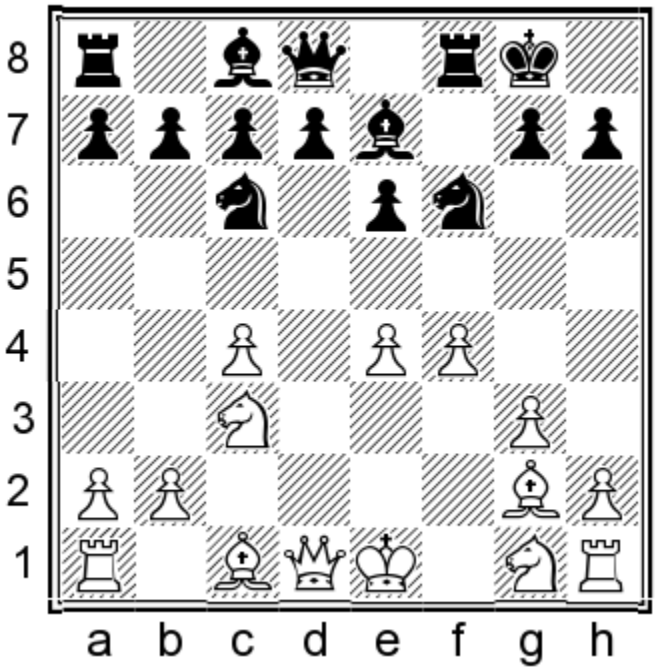
7.dxe4 Nc6

Simon's old favourite, but it looks rather risky for Black.

chesstouring.com

So does the closely related 7...d6 8.f4! Nc6 9.Nf3. As such, perhaps Black should try 7...e5, although now 8.Nge2 allows White to complete his Botvinnik set-up before Black can strike against f2 (even here 8.f4!? also deserves close attention), with 8...Nc6 (8...Bc5 9.0-0 maintains control, followed by Bg5, Na4 or, of course, if 9...Ng4?? 10.Qd5+, while 8...d6 9.h3 Qe8 10.Be3 Kh8 11.Rc1 c6 12.g4!? Be6 13.b3 Na6 14.Ng3 Nc7 15.0-0 left White in control in Sunye Neto-Timmerman, Dieren 1984, leaving the exchange on e4 again looking premature and 15...d5? failing to 16.cxd5 cxd5 17.g5) 9.0-0 d6 10.h3! (ever good preparation for Be3, as well as to prevent Black from using the g4-square to drum up a bit of counterplay) 10...Be6 11.b3 Qd7 12.Kh2 Nd8 13.Be3 b6 14.f4 left White clearly in the driving seat in Ivanisevic-Novoselski, Internet (blitz) 2020, with the good, old Botvinnik plan of f5 and g4 very much a threat.

8.f4!



Brave, but good, and do observe too that 8.Nge2 is no longer so effective on account of 8...Ng4, and if 9.0-0? Rxf2! 10.Rxf2 Bc5.

8...e5

chesstouring.com

The point of Black's play. Otherwise, he would just be pretty passive and, incidentally, 8...Bc5? would now fail to 9.e5 and there's no ...Ng4.

9.Nf3

Calmly increasing the pressure, although you might also wish to consider the older try 9.f5!?, simply intending a route one pawn storm on the kingside.

9...exf4

We'll see Ian Snape in action in our main line and he has also been fortunate enough to get in 9...d6?! 10.f5!, squashing Black and after 10...a6 11.0-0 Na5 in Snape-Rendle, Coulsdon 2005, 12.g4! was already possible, exploiting the potential knight-winning check on d5.

10.gxf4!?

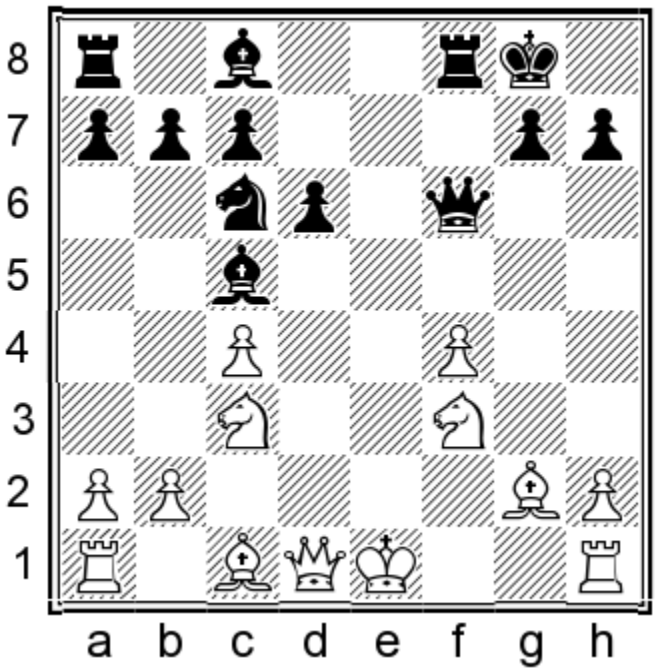
By no means an obligatory recapture, but going for the maximum so is certainly tempting.

10...Ng4?!

The move Black would like to make work, but it just doesn't seem to.

Instead, 10...d6 would be a bit passive and could be met by 11.f5!? or just 11.0-0 Bg4 12.h3 Bh5 13.Be3 with easy development and a very pleasant space advantage for White, while it's hard to believe that 10...Bc5!? 11.e5 d6! (otherwise, Black simply loses a piece for very little; yes, really, in view of 11...Qe8 12.Kf1 Nh5 13.Qd5+) 12.exf6 Qxf6 should give Black enough for a piece.

chesstouring.com



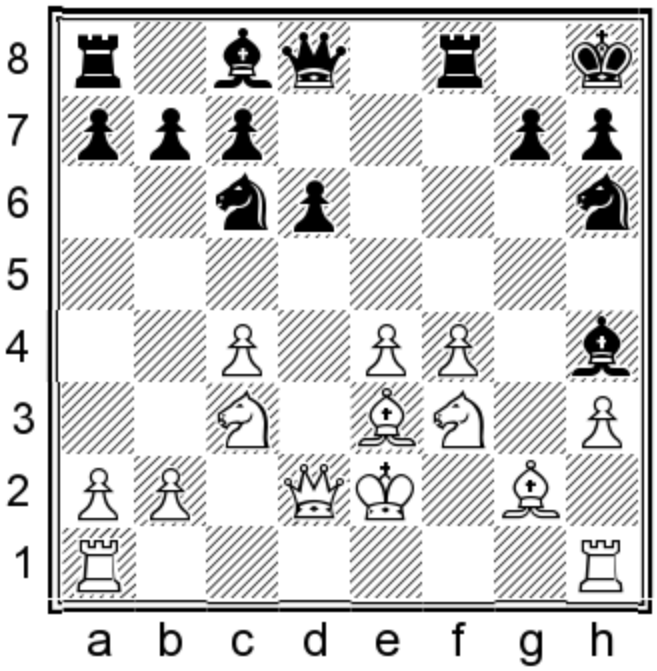
Admittedly White can't castle and ...Qg6 is possibly an issue, but after 13.Ng5! Bf5! (13...h6 14.Nge4 Qh4+ allows White to take control: 15.Kf1 followed by Qd3 or Qe1) 14.Kf1 Rae8 the engines begin to appreciate that Black shouldn't have quite enough compensation, with *Stockfish*'s main line 15.Nce4! Qg6 16.Nxc5 dxc5 17.Bd5+ Kh8 18.Rg1 Qd6 19.Rg3!, preparing to complete development with Be3, or if 19...h6 20.Nf3 Nb4 when White can go backwards to e1 or forwards with 21.Nh4!? Bh7 22.Ng2!, and if 22...Nc2 23.Bd2! Nxa1 24.Bc3 when the initiative has very much swapped hands, leaving Black in some trouble.

11.h3! Bh4+ 12.Ke2

Steinitizian play, but Black's pieces are about to become extremely uncoordinated, leaving White dominating the board thanks to his control of the centre.

12...Nh6 13.Be3 d6 14.Qd2 Kh8

chesstouring.com



This was Snape-Williams, Hastings 2005/06, where White's simplest course was arguably **15.Nxh4!? Qxh4 16.Nd5 Qh5+ 17.Kd3**, bringing the king around to safety on the queenside ahead of possibly looking for a direct assault against the black king.

Theory 5D

1.c4 b6

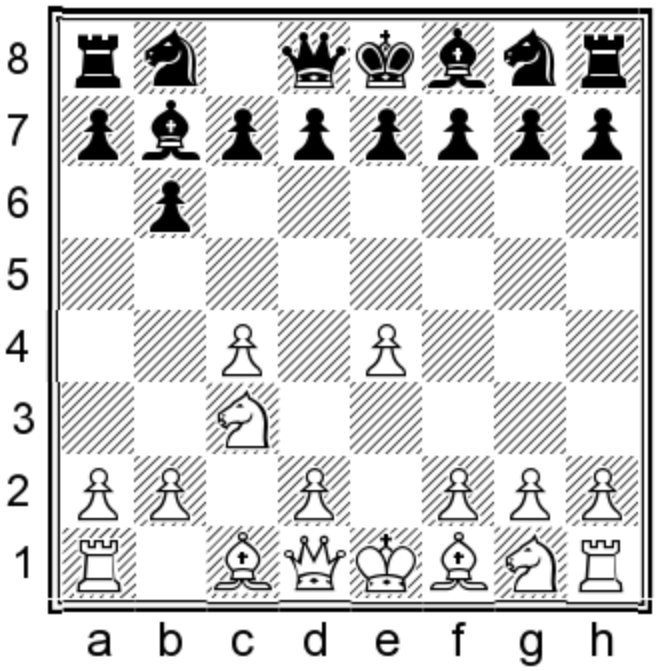
The English Defence meets the English Opening!

2.Nc3 Bb7

Logical and invariably played. It's not actually forced, but after 2...e6 3.e4 play is extremely likely to transpose with 3...Bb7 4.Nge2.

3.e4

chesstouring.com



As we clearly can't fianchetto just yet, we have to adapt the Botvinnik move order, beginning with our favourite central advance.

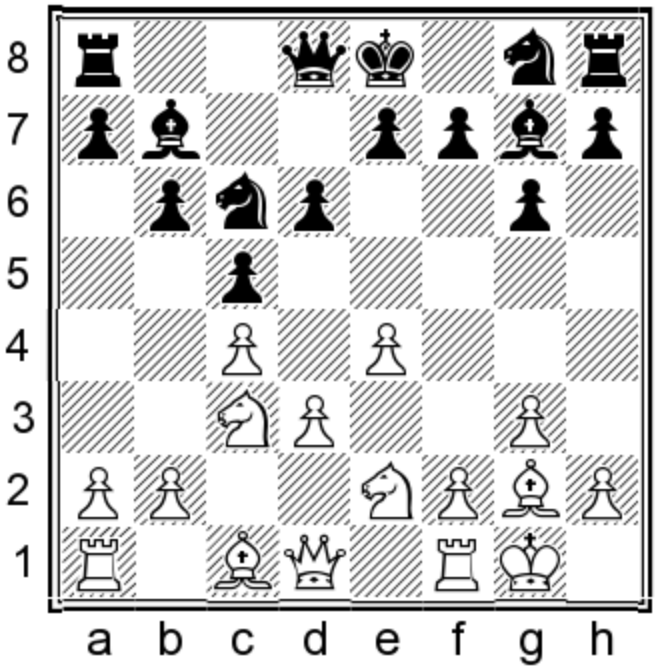
3...e6

Black goes for his normal English Defence set-up and this is, by a great margin, his most popular choice, but there are, perhaps unsurprisingly, alternatives:

a) With 3...c5 Black prevents any notion of White constructing a big centre with d4 (not that we were intending to do so), and after 4.g3 Nc6 (alternatively, we'll see 4...e6 5.Bg2 Nf6 6.Nge2 Nc6 7.0-0 in our main line, while 4...f5?! is a typical advance in the main lines of the English Defence, but here looks premature, with 5.Bg2 fxe4 6.d3 regaining the pawn after which White might again go for an aggressive interpretation of the Botvinnik with 6...Nf6 7.dxe4 e6 8.f4!? followed by Nf3, 0-0 and possibly e5) 5.Bg2 g6 (going for a double fianchetto looks like Black's best option; otherwise, after, say, 5...e6 6.Nge2 Nf6 7.0-0 White has standard and easy Botvinnik development: d3, h3, Be3 and f4 may follow in some order, and 7...d5? 8.cxd5 exd5 9.exd5 Nb4 would be most unwise for Black

chesstouring.com

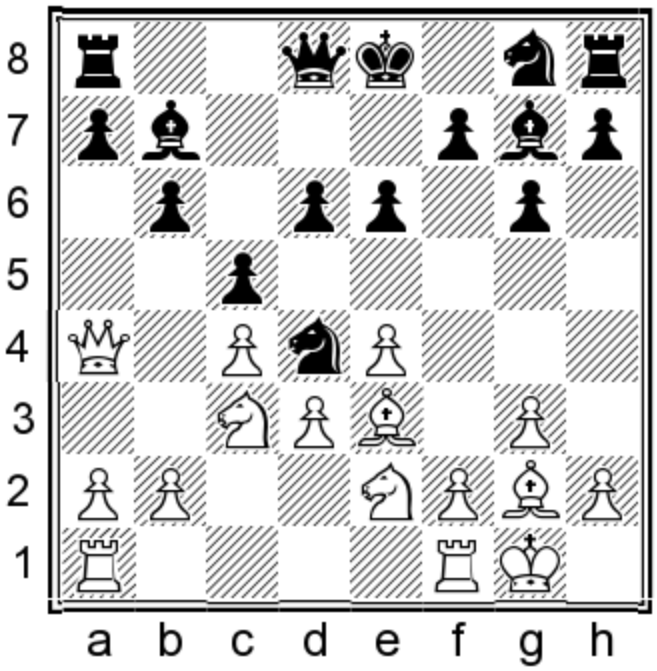
on account of 10.Nf4 Bd6 11.Re1+ Kf8 12.a3) 6.Nge2 Bg7 7.0-0 d6 8.d3 White should not be unhappy.



Black's position may look fairly harmonious, but the presence of a bishop on b7 is going to hinder his traditional queenside counterplay with ...a6 and ...b5. Once again, we find that the position is not dissimilar to a Closed Sicilian, but with the white c-pawn much more actively placed.

That said, 8...e6 9.Be3 Nd4?! (the position is actually not as easy for Black as it may initially appear; the text is normally seen and was even David Howell's choice no less in P.Tozer-Howell, London (rapid) 2017, but even 9...Nge7 isn't ideal for Black in view of 10.d4! cxd4 11.Nxd4 0-0 12.Ndb5 Nc8 13.Rc1 a6 14.Nd4 when f4 is one plan, Qd2 and Rfd1 another, and even a well-timed Na4 may inconvenience Black in this rather unpleasant type of Hedgehog for him, or here if 11...Nxd4 12.Bxd4 0-0 13.Bxg7 Kxg7 14.Qd2 followed by Rad1 and f4, with control and pressure) runs into 10.Qa4+! (not Tozer's 10.Qd2, but White has also done pretty well by first inserting 10.Bxd4 cxd4 and then going 11.Qa4+).

chesstouring.com

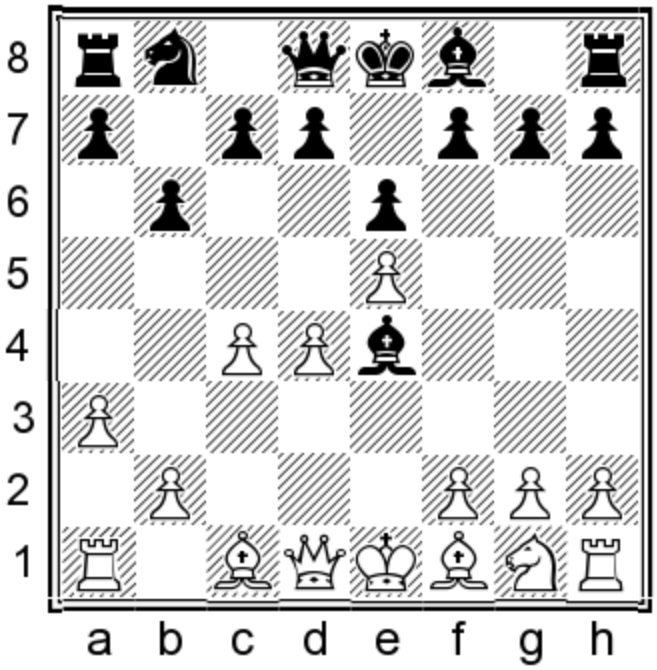


Now 10...Qd7 (one of White's points is that after 10...Ke7 he doesn't have to exchange on d4, with 11.Bg5+!? f6 12.Be3 e5 13.f4 Qd7 14.Qd1 a pleasant edge, with potential pressure – never forget about the b4 break! – right across the board, just as occurs too after 10...Nc6? 11.d4, and 10...Bc6? would also be badly misguided, in view of 11.Bxd4! Bxa4 12.Bxg7 Bc6 13.Bxh8 f6 14.f4 when the bishop will make it out and White has too much for the queen) 11.Bxd4! cxd4 (again, avoiding 11...Qxa4? 12.Bxg7) 12.Nb5 Ke7 (12...Bc6 13.e5! is also quite awkward for Black) 13.Qb4 e5 14.f4 didn't really resemble a Closed Sicilian and just left Black nursing major weaknesses in Cekro-Sadkowsky, Belgian League 2014.

The other real set-up for Black is 8...Nf6 9.h3 (as so often in the ...h6 Symmetrical lines, useful preparation for Be3) 9...0-0, but after 10.Be3 a6 (or 10...Rc8 11.Qd2 Re8 12.b3!? Nd7 13.Rac1 a6 when Black had made a lot of useful-looking moves, but after 14.f4 Nd4 15.g4!? White's play was looking the more pointed in Harika-Hou Yifan, Douglas 2016, with f5 followed by Ng3 and Bh6 the direct plan) 11.Qd2 a Botvinnik player should most certainly not be unhappy with White's set-up, as we'll see further in D'Costa-Teske, Pardubice 2014.

chesstouring.com

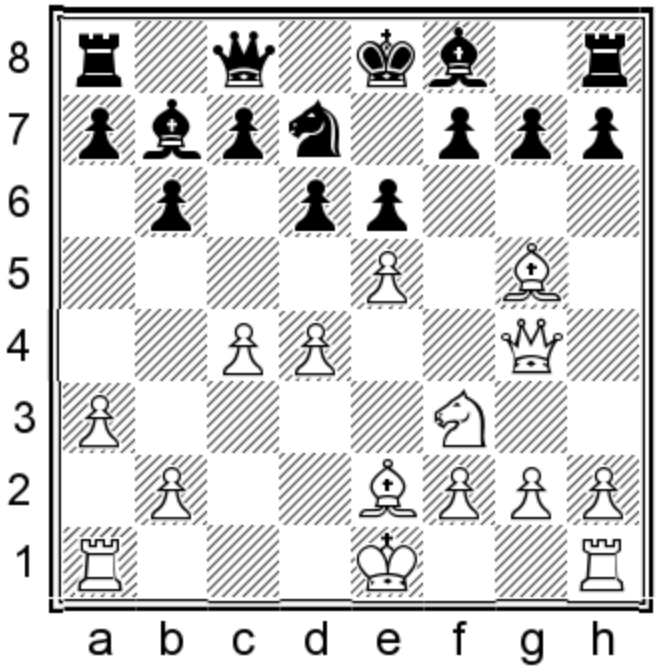
b) Nikita Vitiugov tried 3...Nf6!? and in a classical game earlier this year, but we're not quite sure how he would have equalised after 4.e5 (Sam Shankland responded at Prague with 4.f3, but if you want to keep things simple, there's nothing wrong with 4.d3) 4...Ne4 5.Nxe4 (5.Qc2!? Nxc3 6.dxc3 could also do with a test, intending an aggressive set-up involving Bd3 and queenside castling) 5...Bxe4 6.d4 (only after bringing about a greater degree of stability through the exchange of knights, and with Black's bishop floating in mid-air, does White take over the centre) 6...e6 (this position can also arise from the fairly rare move order 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 b6 and then 4.e4 Bb7 5.e5 Ne4 6.Nxe4 Bxe4) 7.a3, calmly ruling out any check on b4.



With White even able to consider ideas of Qg4, Bf4 and 0-0-0, we're quite drawn to this set-up and certainly 7...d6 (getting in a useful central challenge; 7...d5 8.f3 Bf5 9.cxd5 looks quite pleasant for White after Ne2-c3 or even 9...exd5 10.f4!?, while perhaps White can even meet 7...Bb7, which prepares to counterattack with 8.Qg4 c5!, with 8.f4!? d6 9.Nf3 when 9...c5 10.dxc5! bxc5 11.Bd3 begins to look quite nice with 0-0 and f5 on their way) 8.Qg4!? Bb7 (8...Bf5 9.Qf3 Nd7 10.Bf4 followed by 0-0-0 menaces early aggression) 9.Bg5 Qc8 (and naturally not 9...Be7? 10.Bxe7

chesstouring.com

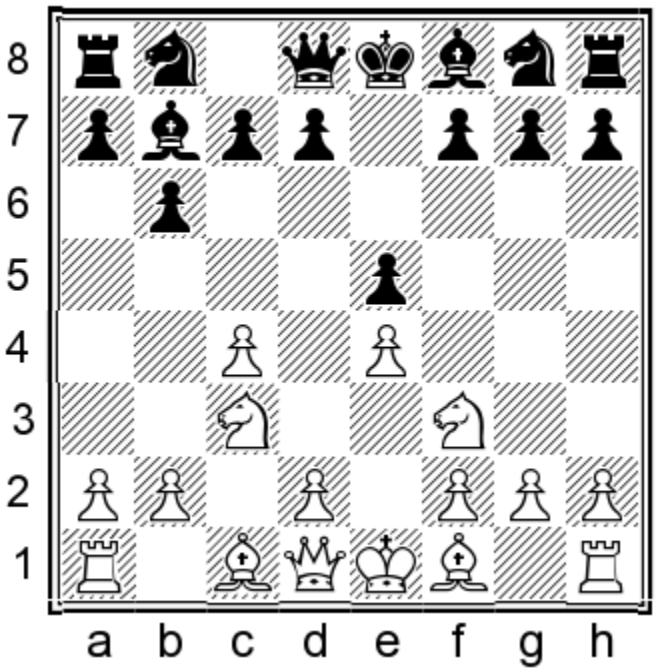
Qxe7 11.Qxg7) 10.Nf3 Nd7 11.Be2 left White with a handy lead in development in Colakic-Loborec, Zagreb 2009.



There 11...c5 12.Rd1! cxd4 13.exd6!? e5 (or 13...Bxd6 14.Qxd4 Bf8 15.Ne5!, and if 15...Nxe5 16.Qxe5 f6? 17.Bxf6! gxf6 18.Bh5+ Ke7 19.Qd6 mate) would have left Black in serious trouble had White now found 14.Nxe5! Nxe5 15.Qxd4, and if 15...f6 (and not 15...Nd7?? 16.Qe3+) 16.Bh5+ Kd7 17.f4 Qxc4! (17...fxg5 18.fxe5 Kd8 19.0-0 is simply crushing) 18.fxe5 Qxd4 19.Rxd4 fxg5 20.0-0 when White's most powerful centre ensures that he will at least regain the piece with interest, as with 20...Ke6 21.Re1 Rd8 22.Bg4+ Kf7 23.e6+ Kg6 24.e7.

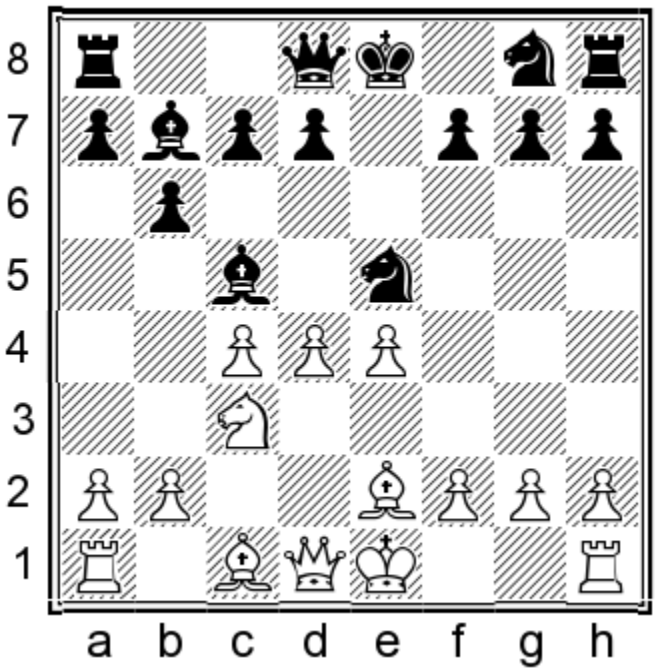
c) 3...e5!? may look ridiculous, but is actually not so illogical as Black prioritises an early assault on the dark squares and against f2. White can proceed as normal, but 4.g3 Nf6 5.Bg2 Bc5 is quite comfortable for Black, so most strong players have switched approach with 4.Nf3.

chesstouring.com



The most natural response is 4...Nc6 when 5.Be2!? is a modern wrinkle, prioritising development over the d4 break. The main idea is seen after 5...Bc5?! (alternatively, 5...Nge7 6.0-0 Ng6 7.d4 exd4 8.Nxd4, as in Rotstein-Conquest, French League 2002, and then 8...Bc5 9.Nc2 0-0 10.a3 a5 11.Be3! Bxe3 12.Nxe3 Nf4 13.Ned5 gives White an edge thanks to his grip on d5, as does 5...g6 6.d4 exd4 7.Nxd4 Bg7 8.Be3 Nge7 9.Qd2, but Black might go 5...Nf6!?, even if such a classical move runs against the creative vein of most English Defence aficionados and after 6.0-0 Bc5 7.d3 in Cummings-Norowitz, Reykjavik 2018, 7...0-0 8.a3 a5 9.Rb1 Re8 10.Bd2 would only have been a tiny bit better for White, with Nb5 and b4 the plan) 6.Nxe5! Nxe5 7.d4, which echoes a line of more than one Four Knights variation and seems to give White an edge.

chesstouring.com



For example, 7...Bd6 (probably best; 7...Nf6?! 8.dxc5 bxc5 was tried by Praggnanandhaa, but 9.f3 followed by b3, Bb2 and gradual preparation for f4 is very nice for White, as is the unbalanced 7...Bb4 8.dxe5 Bxc3+ 9.bxc3 Qe7 10.Bf4 f6 11.exf6 Nxf6 12.f3 when the extra pawn might be doubled, but is extra and White also enjoys the two bishops in this Budapest-like position) 8.dxe5 Bxe5 9.Nd5! (keeping White's structure intact and offering further support to f4) 9...Nf6 (9...c6 10.Bf4 is another important detail, when even 10...d6 11.Bxe5 dxe5 12.Ne3 should be quite nice for White, followed by Nf5 or 12...Qxd1+ 13.Rxd1 Ne7 14.c5! bxc5? 15.Nc4) 10.f4 Bd6 and now in Sullivan-Gill, 4NCL 2014, 11.Bf3 would have maintained the powerful centre and an edge, and if 11...Nxd5 12.cxd5 Bc5 13.Qd3 followed by Bd2 and 0-0-0.

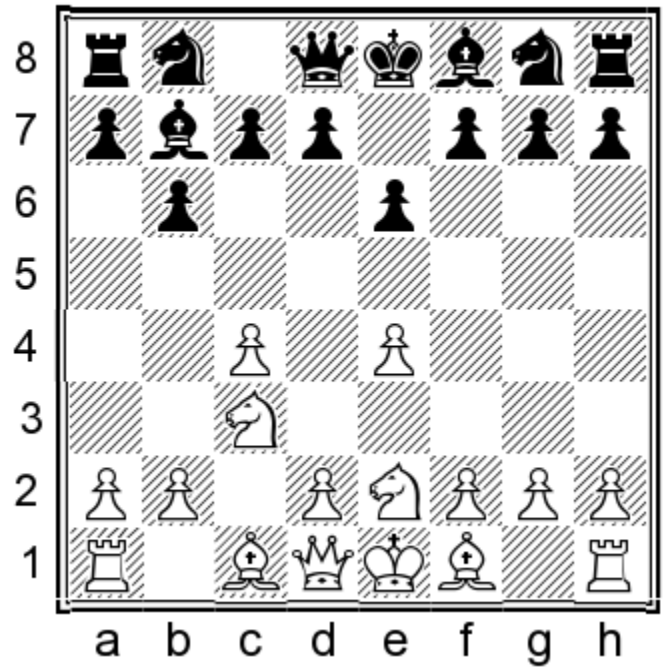
Otherwise after 4.Nf3, 4...d6 5.d4 exd4 6.Nxd4 Nf6 7.Bd3 Nbd7 8.0-0 g6 9.Bc2 Bg7 10.Be3 gave White a Maroczy bind and edge in Tan Zhongyi-Khademalsharieh, Xi'an 2019, where Black will struggle to develop counterplay after f3 and Qd2, after which White might look to combine Nd5 with a queenside advance, 4...Bb4?! 5.Nxe5 Bxc3 6.dxc3 Qe7 7.Nf3 Qxe4+ 8.Be2 Nf6 9.0-0 0-0 10.Bg5 gives White an edge with the bishop-pair, and 4...Nf6 5.Nxe5 Nxe4! 6.Nxe4 Qe7 7.d4 Bxe4 8.Qe2! looks a little

chesstouring.com

better for White even after 8...Bb7 9.Bf4 d6 10.Nf3 Nd7 11.0-0-0 Qxe2 12.Bxe2 0-0-0 13.d5 on account of Black's slightly misplaced light-squared bishop.

Returning to 3...e6:

4.Nge2



Kosten's old recommendation in *The Dynamic English* and still a good move. White avoids 4.g3 f5, but an intriguing alternative is 4.Bd3!?, intending Bc2 and d4, as Simon has sometimes deployed.

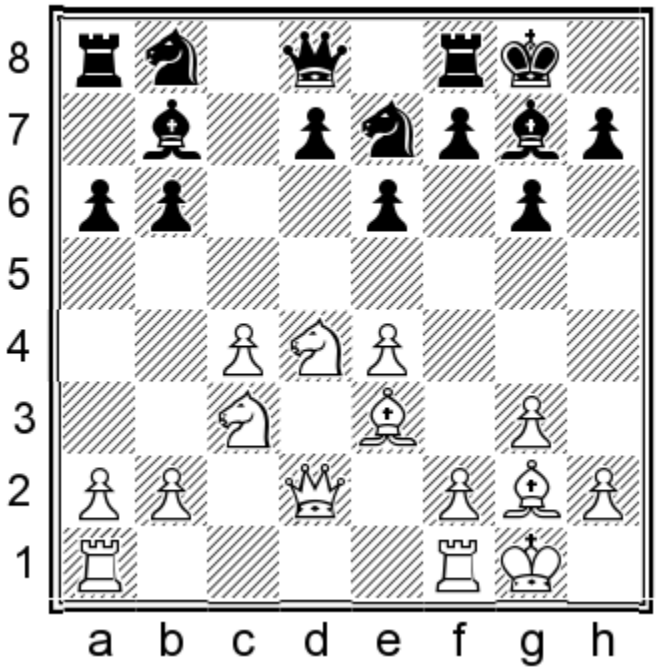
4...Nf6

Black's main choice.

Otherwise, 4...c5 5.g3 resembles a line we saw above, but here White may be able to cause trouble with a quick d4, i.e. 5...Nc6 6.Bg2 g6 7.d4! cxd4 (7...Bg7?! 8.Nb5 is even more disgusting for Black) 8.Nxd4 a6 9.Be3 Bg7 10.0-0 with a pleasant and standard clear edge for White. Alternatively,

chesstouring.com

5...g6 6.Bg2 Bg7 7.d4! cxd4 8.Nxd4 a6 9.Be3 Ne7 10.0-0 0-0 11.Qd2 was a Hedgehog...



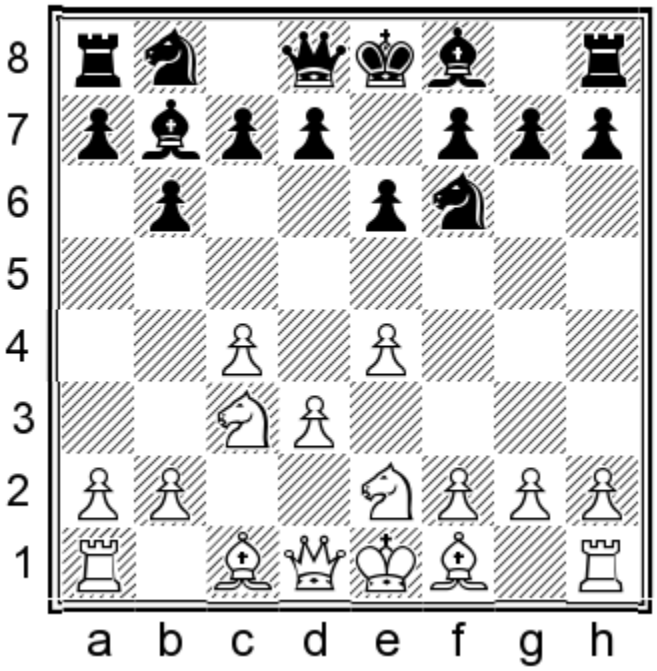
...but one where Black was rather vulnerable down the d-file and on the dark squares in Grandelius-Hambleton, Internet (rapid) 2018. Instead, while 5...d6 6.Bg2 Nd7 leaves Black better placed for a rapid d4, White can just go 7.0-0 a6 8.d3 followed by Be3, h3 if needed, and f4-f5. Likewise, 5...h5 6.h3 would be sensible and thematic for us, and if 6...h4 7.g4, and, finally, once again 5...f5 6.Bg2 Nf6 7.d3 Be7 8.0-0 retains control and an edge, threatening e5, as well as intending to complete development with b3 and Bb2.

There are a few ways Black might try to prevent us from setting up the Botvinnik formation, but none to worry about, with 4...Bb4?! 5.a3 Bxc3 6.Nxc3 Ne7 7.d4!? d5 8.cxd5 exd5 9.e5 0-0 10.Bd3 giving White the bishop-pair and attacking chances in Stark-Rozentalis, Stockholm 2016. Instead, 4...d5?! 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Nxd5 Nf6!? (6...Bxd5?! 7.exd5 Qxd5 8.Nc3 Qe5+ 9.Be2 gives White too great a lead in development) 7.Nec3 Nxd5 8.exd5 should also favour White somewhat, either in an IQP position or with 8...Be7 9.Bc4 0-0 10.0-0 Nd7 11.d4 Nf6 12.Qf3, and 4...f5?! 5.exf5

chesstouring.com

exf5 6.Nf4 Nf6 7.d4 Bb4 (P.Taylor-Ward, 4NCL 2004) 8.Be2 0-0 9.0-0 is once again just a Dutch-type position where Black has weakened his kingside and will struggle for counterplay after, say, 9...Bxc3 10.bxc3 Nc6 11.Qd3 Ne7 12.Re1 when c5 is very much on White's agenda, possibly after a preliminary a4.

5.d3



Keeping control, although you wouldn't be blamed if you were tempted by 5.e5!?.

5...c5

Again, Black seems best advised to go for a Symmetrical English-type set-up.

He can break with 5...d5, but White is set up to react to just this very break. Indeed, 6.cxd5 exd5 7.e5 should just be good, and if 7...d4!? (7...Nfd7 8.d4 c5 9.f4 would just be an excellent type of French for White, followed by Be3 and Qd2) 8.Qa4+ Qd7 (as in Marjanovic-Szabo, Arad 2017; 8...Nc6?? 9.exf6 dxc3 was once tried by a Russian Grandmaster who

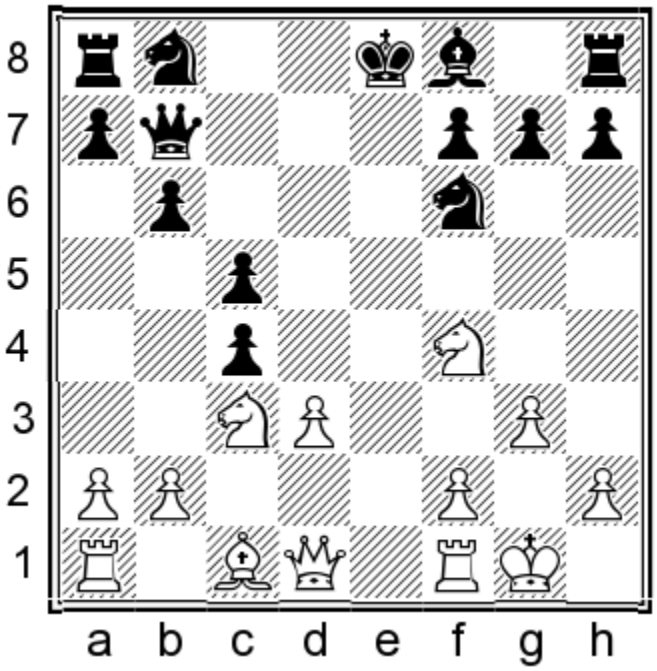
chesstouring.com

must have missed 10.Qe4+! Kd7 11.Qg4+ Kd6 12.fxg7, which just won a piece in Zubritskiy-V.Moiseenko, St. Petersburg 2018) 9.Nxd4! Qxa4 10.Nxa4 Nd5 11.Nc3 (11.Bd2 may also be good) 11...Nb4 when ...N8c6 is a definite threat, but with the forcing line 12.Be3! c5 13.Ndb5 Nc2+ 14.Kd2 Nxa1 15.Nc7+ Kd8 16.Nxa8 Bxa8 17.Be2 Bxg2 18.Rxa1 White should emerge with an edge, followed by f4 and perhaps also a4-a5.

6.g3 Nc6

Black opts for development.

With White having begun but not completed a fianchetto, 6...d5!? is now better-timed than a move earlier, although after 7.exd5 exd5 8.Bg2 Qd7! (Black simply must overprotect his bishop with Bg5, Nf4 and even d4 all threatened) 9.Nf4! dxc4 (9...d4?! 10.Ncd5 reveals the point of White's last move) 10.Bxb7 Qxb7 11.0-0 Black has had to play quite accurately, and must continue to do so.



Indeed, 11...cxd3? (11...Be7! 12.dxc4 0-0 13.Nfd5 Nc6 improved in Zaragatski-Broekmeulen, Dutch League 2019, and should be OK for Black, although after 14.Re1 Nxd5 15.Nxd5 Bd6 16.Qh5 White might hope to stir

chesstouring.com

something up on the kingside, probably after Bd2-c3) 12.Re1+ Be7 13.Nfd5 Nxd5 14.Qf3! Kf8? (Black had to grovel with 14...Nc6 15.Nxd5 Rb8, horrible though this would have been for him after 16.Bf4 0-0 17.Rad1) 15.Nxd5 Bd6 (there's simply no way to avoid a ruinous loss of material, as we can see too from 15...Nc6 16.Nxe7) 16.Re8+! already forced resignation in Mogranzini-Bentivegna, Porto San Giorgio 2011.

7.Bg2 d6

This is a sensible enough set-up from Black, preparing to place his king's bishop on e7, so that d6 won't become a major target in the event of White breaking with d4.

8.0-0

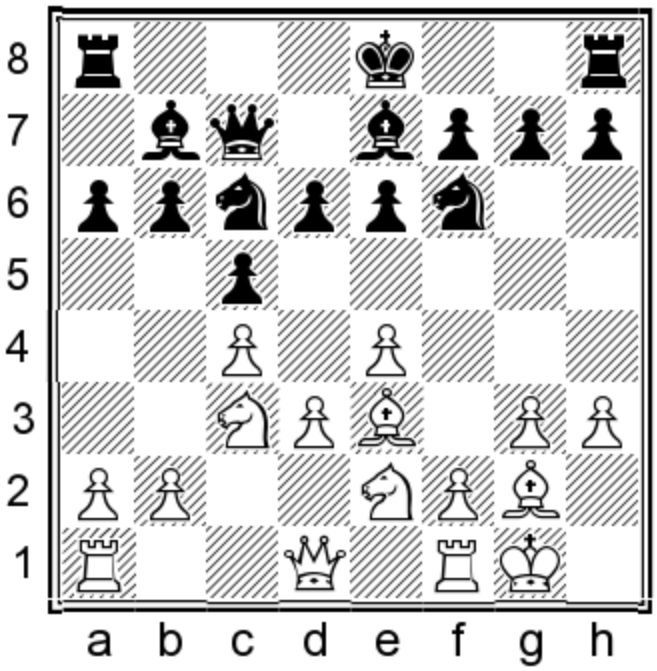
White can still, however, be quite happy. We have our favourite formation and with it the three main pawn breaks, f4, b4 and d4.

8...Be7 9.h3

Thematic preparation yet again for Be3.

9...a6 10.Be3 Qc7

chesstouring.com



Now 11.f4 would be very logical, likely followed by g4 and Ng3, but even after **11.a3!? 0-0 12.Rb1 Rfd8** (Black should probably regroup with 12...Nd7 when he is at least pretty solidly placed after 13.b4 Bf6 14.Qd2) **13.g4! Rac8?! 14.g5 Ne8 15.f4** White enjoyed excellent attacking chances in Cacho Reigadas-Cubas Pons, Ibiza 2012 – a fine example of how quickly Black can get into trouble without an obvious pawn break in this line.

Game 23
L.D'Costa-H.Teske
Czech Open, Pardubice 2014

1.c4 b6 2.Nc3 Bb7 3.e4 Nf6 4.d3

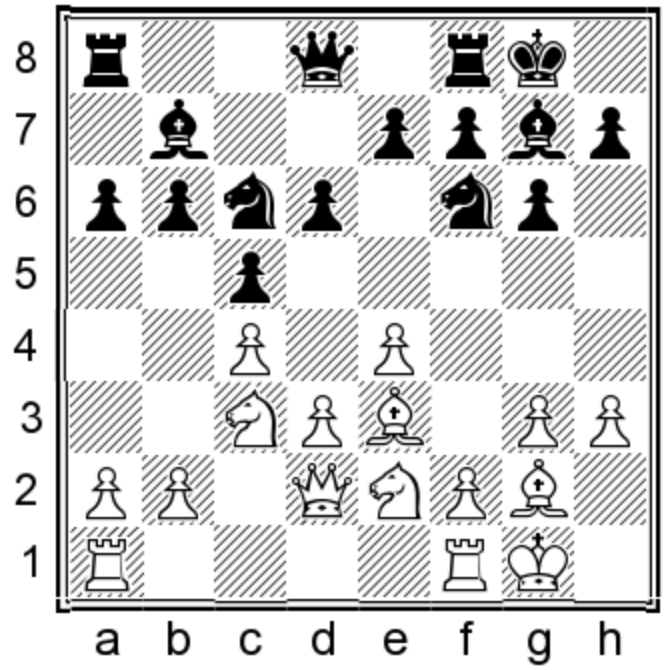
The English IM and leading coach has long scored well with the English and here Lorin settles for a sensible, restrained approach rather than our main recommendation of 4.e5.

4...c5 5.g3 Nc6 6.Bg2 d6 7.Nge2

chesstouring.com

Now we're back in Botvinnik waters, with White's next few moves likely seeming all very normal to you by now.

7...g6 8.0-0 Bg7 9.h3 0-0 10.Be3 a6 11.Qd2



Connecting the white rooks while introducing ideas of a timely Bh6 to swap off Black's best defender.

11...Qd7

Black might instead take control of the d5-square with 11...e6, which was actually seen in a game between two chess greats. Vaganian-Psakhis, USSR Championship, Vilnius 1981, continued 12.Rac1 (here too Lorin might have preferred 12.Rad1, and if 12...d5? 13.exd5 exd5 14.Bg5, and 12.f4!? must also come into close consideration) 12...Re8 13.d4 (switching the pawn structure to that of a Hedgehog before Black gets in ...d5) 13...cxd4 (13...e5! is ever a counter to a delayed d4 break in such positions and here would probably have equalised) 14.Nxd4 Ne5 15.b3 Qc7 16.f4 Ned7 when Vaganian went for the visually shocking 17.Ndb5?!, rather than maintain a bind on the position and edge with 17.Nde2 Nc5 18.Qc2.

chesstouring.com

12.Rad1!?

Centralisation, and with a point, as we'll see.

12...b5!?

The German Grandmaster tries to drum up some counterplay. It doesn't especially convince, but in any case we like White's position, and if 12...e6 13.d4 when 13...e5? would now fail to simply 14.dxc5.

13.f4!

Having no desire to open lines on the queenside and with d4 ideas on hold due to the pressure against c4, White switches back to many a Botvinnik player's favourite plan: a kingside attack.

13...b4 14.Nd5

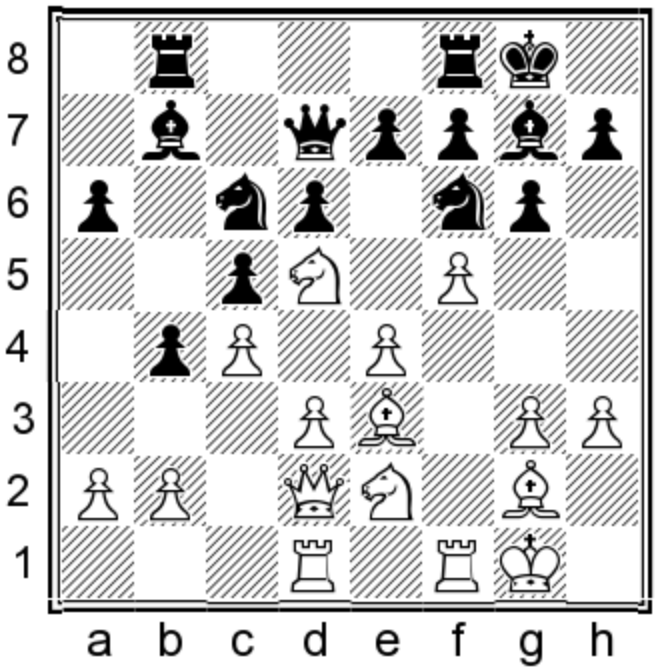
Heading forwards as Lorin rightly fails to be concerned about an exchange on d5.

14...Rab8

14...Nxd5!? 15.exd5 Nd4 would have been a bit desperate, since it allows 16.Bxd4 cxd4 17.Qxb4, but is already advocated by the engines, so little do they like Black's position in the game.

15.f5

chesstouring.com



Suddenly g4, Bh6 and g5 is a large threat and, under heavy pressure, Teske is unable to find a satisfactory defence.

15...Nxd5?

The fearless silicon would prefer to regroup with the calm 15...Qd8 16.Bh6 Nd7 when White has at least 17.Bxg7 Kxg7 18.Rf2, doubling rooks with promising enough play on the kingside.

16.exd5 Ne5 17.g4

Here we go...

17...e6

Radical, but Black was already desperate, low on counterplay and with his English Defence bishop completely locked out of the game.

18.f6 Bh8 19.Bh6!?

chesstouring.com

Going for the attack rather than aim to gradually exploit White's effectively extra piece with, say, 19.b3, with the bishop on h8 unlikely to ever rejoin the play.

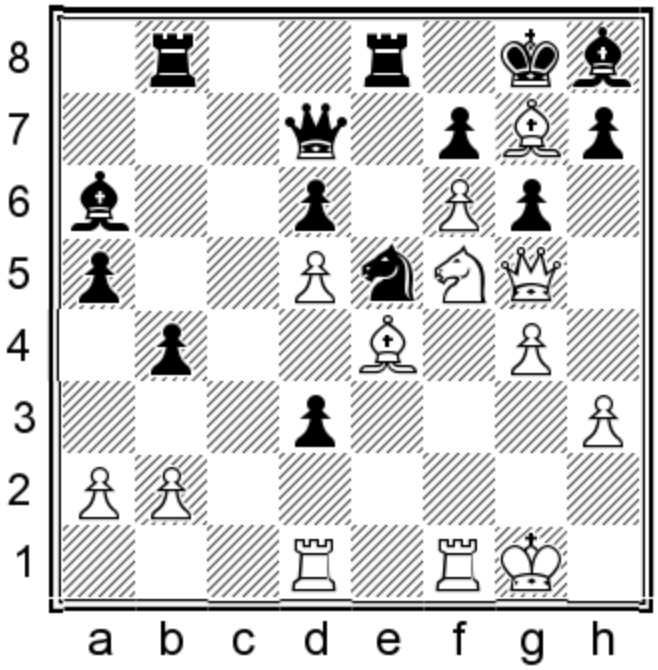
19...Rfe8 20.Ng3 exd5 21.cxd5 a5 22.Qg5?

The storm clouds begin to gather over the black king, but objectively speaking, White should likely have first begun with 22.b3.

22...Ba6 23.Be4 c4?

This runs into a strong rejoinder which Black would have done well to have prevented with 23...Qd8.

24.Nf5! cxd3 25.Bg7!



Black's extra pawn on d3 doesn't matter; White is playing for mate.

25...Bxg7 26.Nxg7?

chesstouring.com

Missing the lovely finish 26.Nh6+! when Black is mated if the knight is taken and 26...Kf8 27.fxg7+ Kxg7 runs into 28.Qf6+!, and if 28...Kxh6 (or 28...Kf8 29.Nxf7! Nxf7 30.Qh8+ Ke7 31.Rxf7+ Kxf7 32.Rf1+ Ke7 33.Qf6 mate) 29.Rf5 when Black has to give up his queen to avoid the threat of mate on h5.

26...Qa7+?

26...h6! would have thrown a spanner in the works when 27.Qd2 (27.Qxh6? runs into 27...Nxg4!) 27...Qa7+ 28.Kg2 Qd4 29.Rfe1 Nc4 appears to give Black just enough counterplay, and if 30.Qxh6 Qxb2+ 31.Kg3 Qe5+ 32.Kg2 Qb2+ 33.Kh1? Qxf6 34.Nxe8 Rxe8.

27.Kh2

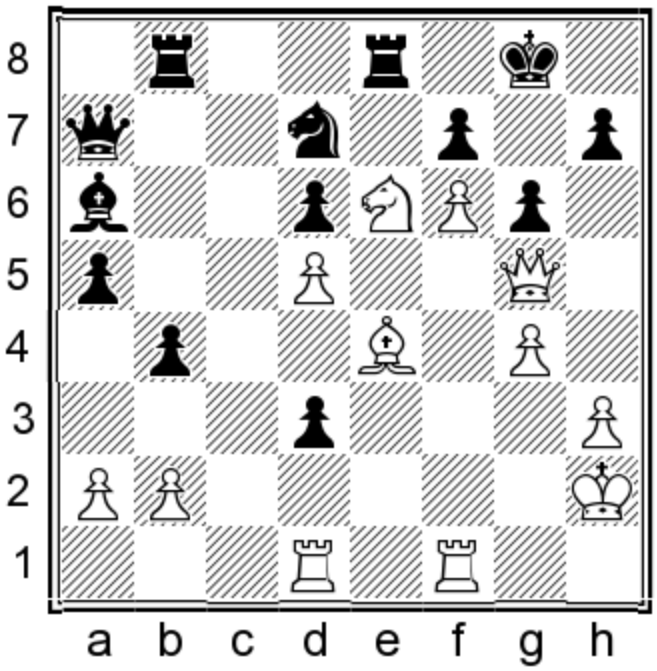
27.Kg2!? might have been more exact, intending 27...Kh8 (or 27...Nd7? 28.Nf5! Kh8 29.Nxd6) 28.Nxe8 Rxe8 29.Rfe1 when White may gradually be able to neutralise Black’s counterplay after 29...Qd4 30.Qh6 Rg8 31.Qd2 and Qf2.

27...Nd7?

Black won’t get another chance after this. He simply had to try 27...Kh8 28.Nxe8 Rxe8 29.Qh6 Rg8.

28.Ne6!

chesstouring.com



A lovely retreat and even stronger than 28.Nf5.

28...Nxf6

Desperation with Qh6 such a large threat and 28...fxe6 poleaxed by 29.Bxg6!.

29.Rxf6 Rbc8

29...fxe6 30.Bxg6! would once again be a massacre, but so too is the game.

30.Rdf1 fxe6 31.Bxg6 Qg7 32.Bxh7+!

And already Black might well have resigned.

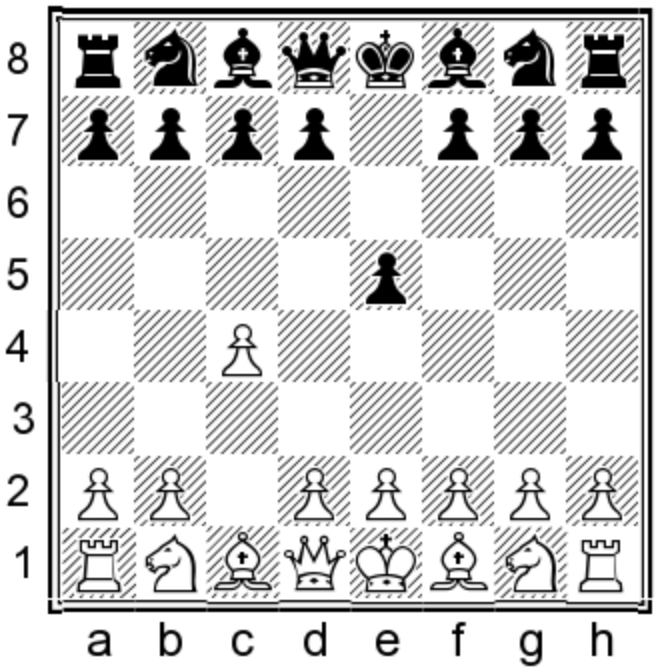
32...Kh8 33.Bg6 Re7 34.dxe6 d2 35.Qh5+ Kg8 36.Bf7+ Rxf7 37.exf7+ Kf8 38.Qd5 d1=Q 39.Qxd1 Rc6 40.R1f2 Qg5 41.Qe1 1-0

With the time control reached, Black finally gave up.

chesstouring.com

Chapter Six
The Reversed Sicilian

1.c4 e5



The reversed Sicilian, a fairly popular choice at all levels, although both your authors have long noticed how often Black often quickly runs out of theory and sometimes even good plans with it at club level, possibly due to not also being a 1.e4 player.

2.Nc3

The good news is that there's no reason to vary from our favourite move order.

2...Nf6

Black's main move.

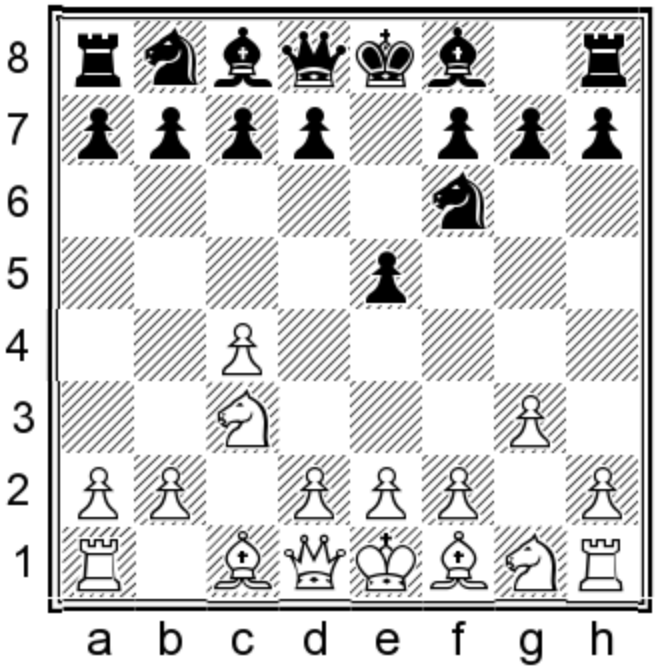
chesstouring.com

By some margin his second most popular choice is 2...Nc6 when we'll consider 3.g3 in **Line 6A**, apart from those lines with ...Bc5, such as 3...Nf6 4.Bg2 Bc5 5.Nf3, which can be found in **Line 6B**. Line 6A also contains some rare second moves, not least the reversed Grand Prix Attack, 2...f5.

Do note that transpositions to lines we've already considered abound early in this chapter: for instance, 2...d6 3.g3 was covered back in Line 4C, and 2...g6 3.g3 will take play back into the realm of Chapters Three and Four.

Finally, 2...Bb4 is a decent enough independent line for Black, which we'll meet with 3.g3 and consider, along with the reversed Rossolimo, in Line 6F.

3.g3



Consistent, a move which also avoids all the theory of the Four Knights variation (3.Nf3 Nc6), and Magnus's recent choice no less.

3...d5

chesstouring.com

Black opts for a reversed Dragon.

Instead, we might see 3...c6, the Keres Variation, as a type of reversed c3 Sicilian when we're proposing 4.Nf3 in **Line 6E**, where we'll also consider Black's lesser third moves.

Another very important approach is 3...Bb4 when we'll return to the champ's favourite move, 4.e4!?, in **Line 6F**.

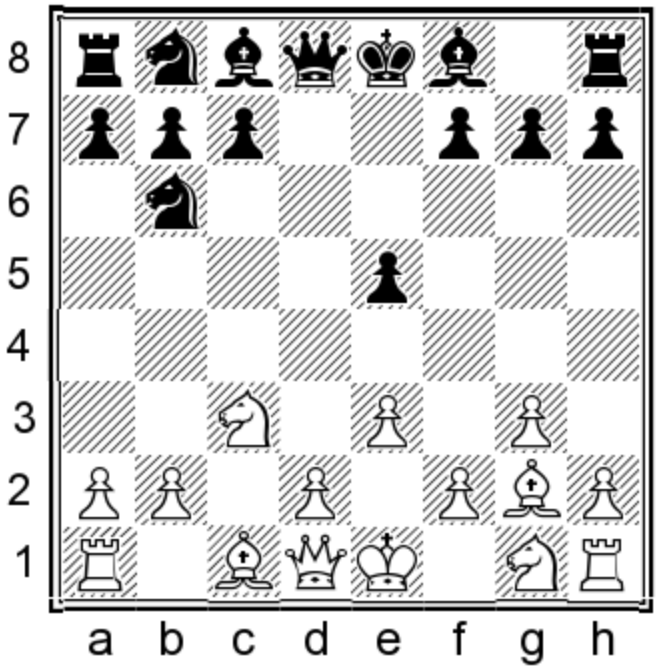
4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2

Once again the English bishop enjoys a fine diagonal as White immediately puts the question to the black knight.

5...Nb6

A prudent retreat, but at club level Black sometimes tries to avoid this, especially if he is angling for a Yugoslav Attack in reverse, and we'll consider the alternatives in Line 6D.

6.e3!?



chesstouring.com

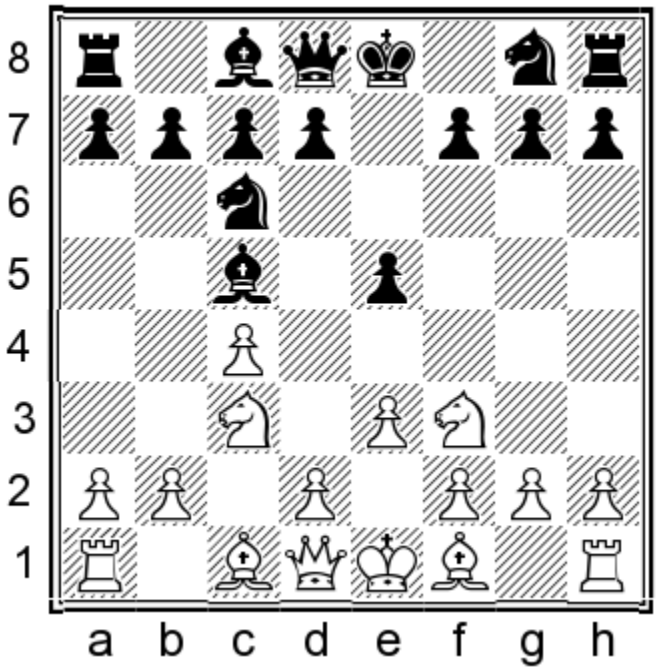
A modern wrinkle and one likely to catch out some opponents. White avoids the big main lines with 6.Nf3 (6.e4?! Bc5 would not be wise here), and refuses to obstruct his fianchettoed bishop while intending quite a dynamic approach. We'll now consider all non-...Nc6 lines in **Theory 6C** and the main line, 6...Nc6 7.Nge2, in **Theory 6D**.

Theory 6A

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nc6

This is quite a popular choice at club level. What else might Black try apart from a knight move?

Well, 2...Bc5 just looks pretty strange so early and after 3.e3 (you can also go 3.g3 if you prefer, which should transpose to lines below or later in the chapter) 3...Nc6 4.Nf3 White will play d4 with tempo and can be quite happy with the outcome of the opening.



For example, 4...d6 5.d4 exd4 6.exd4 Bb6 (6...Bb4?! 7.Bd3 Nf6 8.0-0 Bxc3 9.bxc3 is just extremely pleasant for White with his bishops and because 9...0-0 10.Bg5 is a very strong pin, as we can see from 10...h6 11.Bh4 g5? 12.Nxg5! hxg5 13.Bxg5 Kg7 14.Qf3 when Black is actually

chesstouring.com

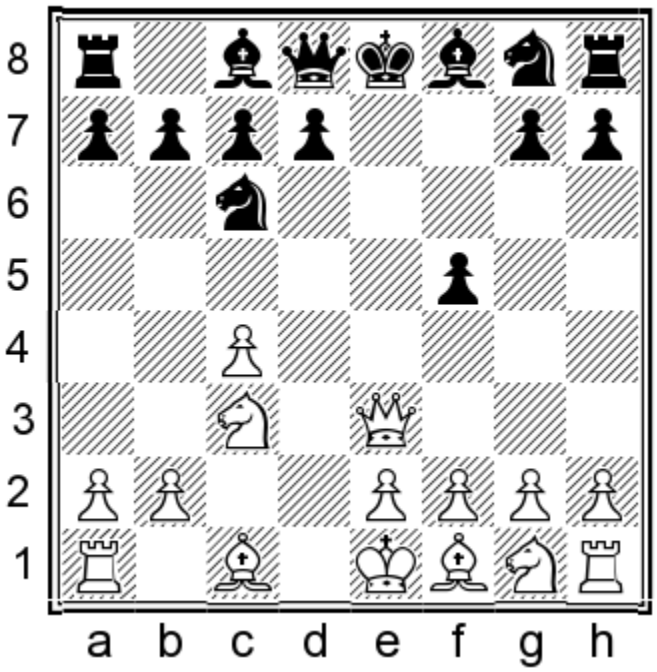
completely helpless, as White simply goes Rfe1, Re3 and Rae1, followed by Re7 or Qf4 and Rg3) 7.Be2 Nf6 8.b4!? a6 (8...Nxb4? 9.Qa4+ Nc6 10.d5 wins a piece, and 8...a5?! 9.b5 Ne7 10.Bg5 Ng6 11.Nd5 would also be quite disgusting for Black) 9.0-0 h6 10.Bb2 with a pleasant space advantage and ideas of d5, as well as of c5.

The reversed Smith-Morra, 2...d5?, frankly just looks ridiculous when White can capture with a piece, but 3.cxd5 might be even stronger, in view of 3...c6 (or 3...Nf6 4.Nf3 e4 5.Nxe4! Nxe4 6.Qa4+) 4.Nf3 when Black is just a pawn down for absolutely zilch, as 4...cxd5 5.Nxe5 d4? fails to 6.Qa4+ followed by collecting the d-pawn next move or after 6...Nc6 7.Nxc6 bxc6 8.Qxc6+ Bd7 9.Qe4+ Be6 10.Nb5.

Likewise, 2...b5? just looks bizarre and 3.Nxb5 c6 4.Nc3 d5 5.d4 surely doesn’t leave Black with anything at all for his pawn.

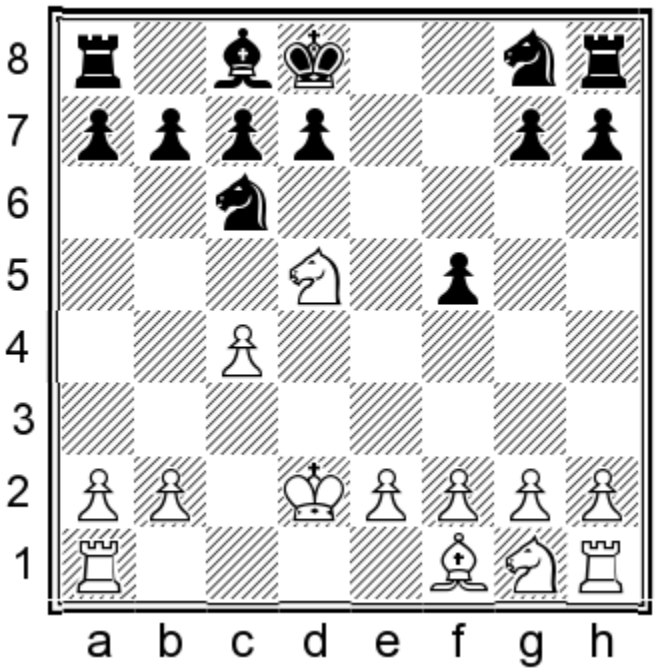
It may be more surprising, but we’re also delighted as White when an opponent punts 2...f5 as 3.d4! is simply a strong response, echoing White’s play with ...Nf6 and g3 inserted (as we saw in Line 5B). Once again, one of the main points is the disruptive check 3...exd4 4.Qxd4 Nc6 (4...Nf6 gives White a number of tempting options, but perhaps best as well as simplest is 5.g3, taking play back into the realm of Line 5B and a position we considered in our coverage of the Dutch) 5.Qe3+.

chesstouring.com



Black has tried every legal move bar 5...Ne5 here, but has been unable to equalise, partly because, of course, ...f5-f7 will never be a legal move. His best try appears to be 5...Qe7! (otherwise, 5...Nce7 6.g3 Nf6 7.Bg2 g6 8.h4!? Bg7 9.Nh3 followed by Nf4 and possibly a queenside fianchetto leaves White in control, 5...Be7 6.Nd5 is already a bit awkward for Black, as is 5...Nge7 6.Bd2!? d6 7.Nf3 and if 7...g6 8.Nd5 Bg7 9.Bc3, while the creative 5...Kf7!? won't fully solve all his difficulties, at least so long as White doesn't try to refute the move, but calmly develops with 6.g3 Nf6 7.Bg2 Bb4 8.Nh3 Re8 9.Qd2 d6 10.a3 Bxc3 11.Qxc3 Qe7 12.Qd3 followed by Nf4, 0-0 and b3 in some order, once again with a firm grip on the d5 point) 6.Nd5 (forcing the pace, but White might also proceed calmly with 6.g3) 6...Qxe3 7.Bxe3 Bb4+ (the alternative is 7...Bd6 8.Nf3 Nge7, but 9.0-0-0!? must be slightly better for White with g3, Bg2 and Nd4 one plan, while 9...a6? 10.Nb6! Rb8? 11.Rxd6! was not a good day for a future grandmaster in Chernin-Kveinys, Klaipeda 1983, Black resigning here in view of 11...cxd6 12.Bf4) 8.Bd2 Bxd2+ 9.Kxd2 Kd8.

chesstouring.com

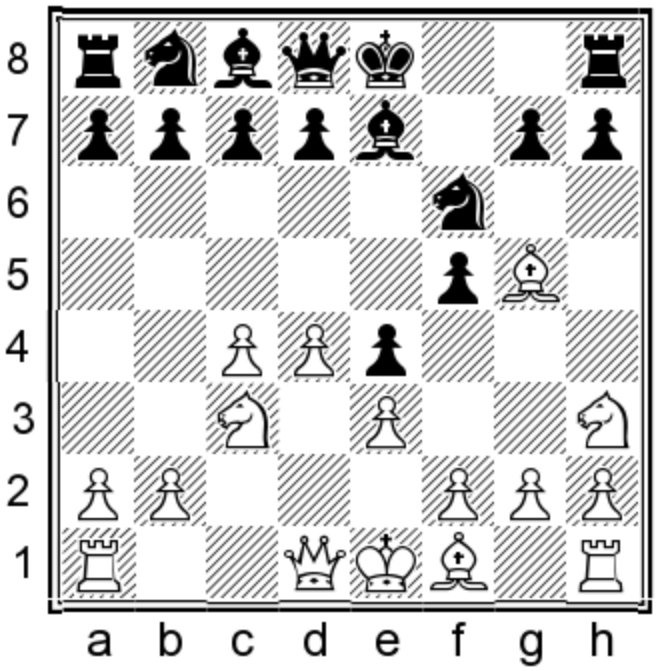


However, even here White should have an edge thanks to the weaknesses created by ...f5, as with 10.e3 (10.Nf3 d6 11.Re1!? would be a more aggressive treatment of the position) 10...d6 11.Nf3 Ne5 12.Nd4 c6 13.Nc3!. This avoids our favourite f4-square, as after 13...Nf6 14.Be2 White wants to go h3 and then begin to roll forwards with f4 and g4.

Otherwise after 2...f5 3.d4, 3...d6 (3...Nc6 4.d5 Nce7 5.e4 is just a promising type of Modern/Indian position, since White is likely to land up with the better development and firm control of the e4-square, as after 5...d6 6.exf5 Bxf5 7.Nge2 Nf6 8.Ng3 Bg6 9.Bd3) 3...d6 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Qxd8+ Kxd8 6.Bg5+ Be7 7.0-0-0+ just gives White an early initiative: for example, 7...Bd7 (7...Nd7 8.Nf3 c6 9.e4! g6?! 10.h4! was even worse for Black in Dobre-Calin, Gilau 2018) 8.Nf3 Nc6 9.e4! Kc8 10.exf5 Bxf5 11.Bd3 with much the better structure and development for White.

Instead, 3...e4 4.Nh3 sees White’s knight heading for its ideal square when he has scored very well after 4...Nf6 5.Bg5!? Be7 6.e3.

chesstouring.com

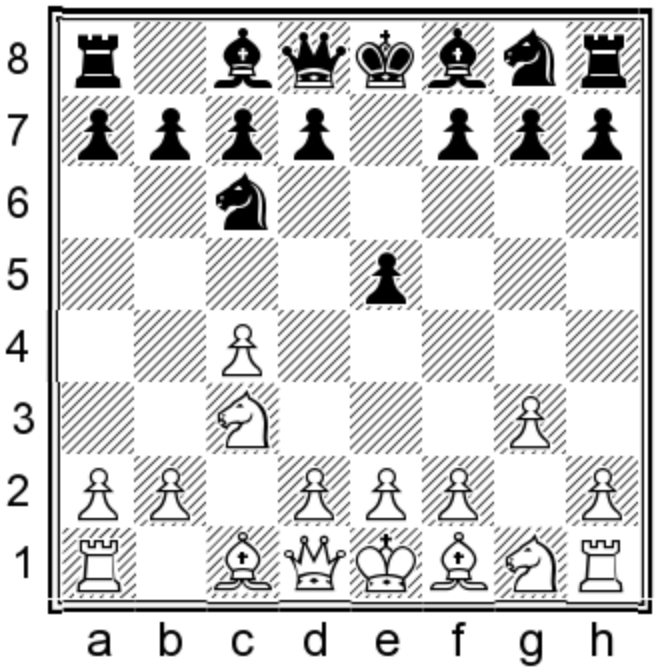


We can further appreciate the power of White's set-up after 6...c6 (6...0-0 7.Nf4 d6 8.Qb3 is also very pleasant, when White might even castle long and break with f3) 7.Nf4 0-0 8.h4 Na6? (Black really needs to go 8...d6 9.Be2 Na6, although even here 10.Qb3 Nc7 11.0-0-0 looks very nice for White after Kb1 and f3, and all the while with Black struggling to complete development and free his position) 9.c5! Nc7 10.Bc4+ Kh8 11.h5!, which already threatened a ruinous Ng6+ in Coutinho Pereira dos Sant-Gonzalez Manchon, Spanish League 2009, where Black could find nothing better than to ditch the exchange with 11...h6 12.Ng6+.

Returning to 2...Nc6:

3.g3

chesstouring.com



3...Nf6

In practice this has actually only been Black's third most popular move here.

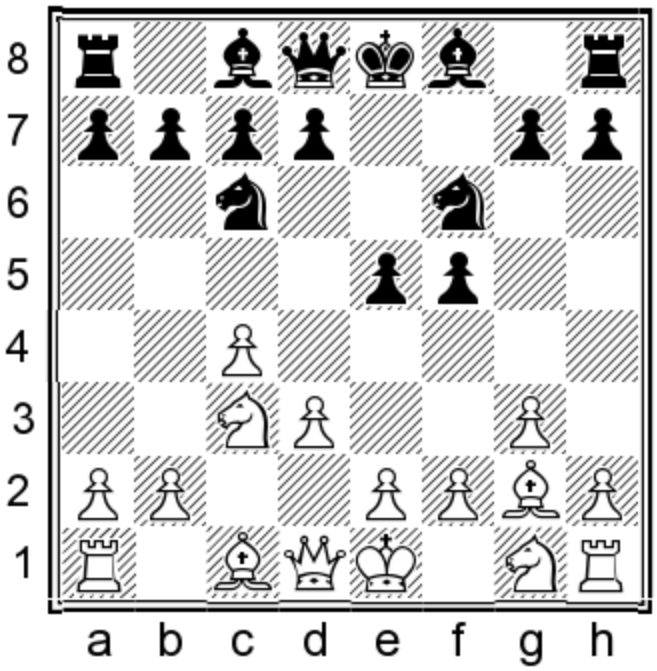
By some margin his most popular choice is 3...g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.e4, which brings us back to the realm of our fourth chapter, unless Black prefers 5...Nf6 6.Nge2 with a transposition to Chapter Three. Do expect at least 50% of your games with 1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 to proceed so.

We'll examine 3...Bc5 4.Bg2 in our next section, 6B, while 3...Bb4 is a bit of a strange move when after 4.Nd5 (we did also want to recommend 4.e4!?, but here 4...Bc5 is surprisingly effective, followed by ...d6, ...Nge7 and ...f5), Black won't easily be able to challenge the knight with ...c6. Here 4...Nf6 5.Bg2 is a transposition to our main line and we'll also see 4...Bc5 5.Bg2 Nf6 6.e3 in our main line, below. Black can also offer the minor exchange with 4...a5, but White doesn't have to rush to accept and 5.Bg2 Nf6 6.e3 0-0 7.Ne2 gives him harmonious development, with ideas of a timely d4, as occurred with 7...Re8 8.0-0 Bf8 9.Nec3 d6 10.d3 Nxd5 11.cxd5 Ne7 12.d4, which left Black a little passive and White with an

chesstouring.com

edge, as well as a second fianchetto on the way in Suvrajit-Nabaty, New Delhi 2011.

A somewhat more important option is a superior version of a reversed Grand Prix, i.e. 3...f5 4.Bg2 Nf6 when 5.e3 prepares to meet 5...Bb4 with 6.Nd5, but 5...g6 would move order us. As such, we'll keep Botvinnik options open with 5.d3 and now:



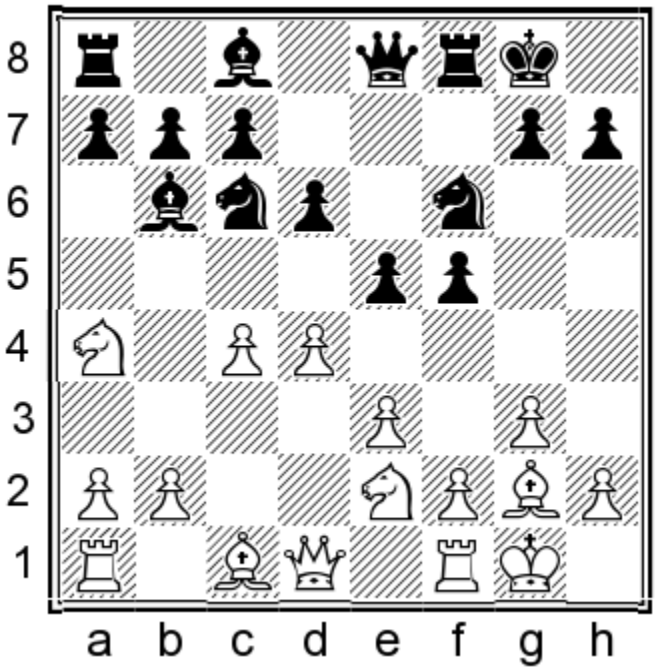
a) 5...g6 6.e4 Bg7 7.Nge2 d6 8.0-0 0-0 takes us back in Line 4B where we, of course, recommended 9.exf5.

b) 5...d6 6.e4 can lead to the same thing if Black now fianchettoes. His other set-up is 6...Be7 7.Nge2 0-0 when a decent case was made for 8.Nd5 in Line 5C.

c) 5...Bc5 is a reversed Grand Prix, but after 6.e3, as played by Capablanca back in 1915, the bishop is blunted and the other good news for White is that even if he loses a tempo with a quick d4, he will merely having transposed to a line of the actual Grand Prix (1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.f4 g6 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Bc4 e6), which is considered quite nice for Black these days. Just as there, play may well run 6...0-0 7.Nge2 Qe8 (or 7...Bb6 8.0-0 d6 9.Na4, bagging the bishop-pair and an edge in Agdestein-Christenson,

chesstouring.com

Molde 2004, when White might harmoniously complete development with b3, Bb2, Nxb6 and f4) 8.0-0 d6 9.d4 when 9...Bb6 10.Na4 is an important idea, removing a piece which can become quite powerful if Black gets in ...f4, while freeing c3 for the other knight.



Here too Black has tried 10...f4?! (alternatively, 10...Qh5 11.Nec3 ensures that White certainly won't get mated, while 10...Bd7 11.b3 Nd8, as in Stohl-Hracek, Rimavska Sobota 1991, and then 12.Nec3 c6 13.Nxb6 axb6 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.Bb2 would be a pleasant edge, with even Na4 for a second occasion on the horizon) 11.Nxb6 axb6 12.exf4 Qh5, which was route one, typical Grand Prix fare in Ortiz Suarez-Carballo Jacquez, Chihuahua City 2019, and after 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.Nc3! Bg4 15.f3 Be6 16.b3 White isn't going to get mated and is pretty much just a pawn to the good.

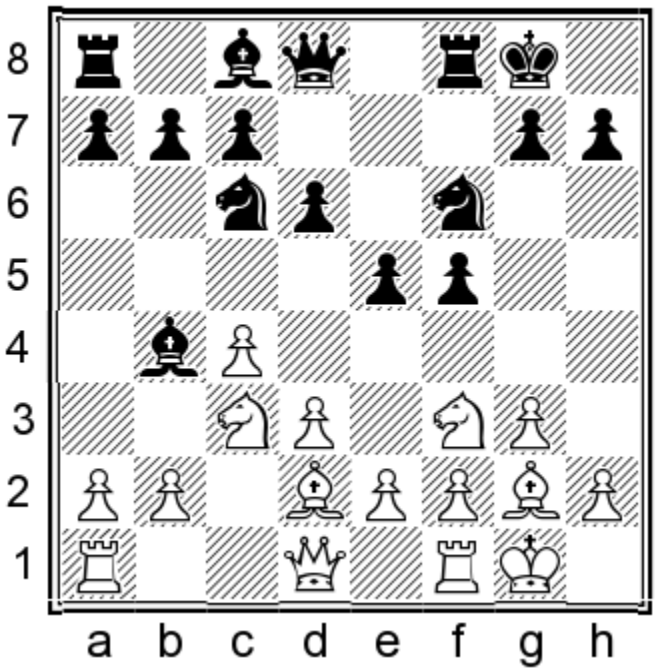
Play can easily transpose after 6...d6 7.Nge2 if Black now castles, which he didn't in Shankland-Mareco, Montevideo 2018, preferring 7...a6, but after 8.d4!? Ba7 9.b3 Qe7 10.0-0 Nd8 White had a few tempting options, including 11.c5!? dxc5 12.dxe5 Qxe5 13.Bb2 0-0 14.Qc2 Qe7 15.Rad1 with promising play for the pawn and Nf4, Rfe1 and e4 set to put White's greater activity to good use. We should also mention that Bobby Fischer once tried

chesstouring.com

6...f4?!, which is ever an idea in such lines, but after 7.exf4 0-0 8.Nge2 (hurrying to catch up in development) 8...Qe8 9.0-0 d6 in Saidy-Fischer, New York 1969, Saidy could have done even better than 10.Na4, after which he eventually lost to a positional masterpiece,. Indeed, 10.Ne4!? has long been recommended for White, and if 10...Nxe4 11.dxe4 Qh5 12.Kh1!, ready to go f3 if needed or 12...Rf6 13.f5 g6 when White might look to take over the initiative with 14.f4!? gxf5 15.Bf3 Qf7 16.Nc3, which could, indeed, quickly become rather unpleasant for Black.

d) Just as in the Grand Prix proper, 5...Bb4 is a more challenging line when we should avoid having our pawns doubled with 6.Bd2. After 6...0-0 (standard, if not forced, with 6...d6 7.e3 Be6 8.a3 Ba5 9.Nge2 Bb6 10.0-0 0-0 11.Nd5 occupying the hole on d5 to give White a pull in Kerr-Fuller, correspondence 2015, as did 6...a5 7.a3 Bc5 8.e3 0-0 9.Nge2 in Sydoryka-Gazik, Pardubice (rapid) 2019, while 6...Bxc3 7.Bxc3 d6 8.b4!? 0-0 9.b5 Ne7 10.Nf3 Qe8 11.Qd2 a6 12.a4 saw White seizing space in classic English fashion, as well as the bishop-pair in Harika-Alkhateeb, Sharjah 2017) White might like to go 7.e3, but 7...Bxc3 8.Bxc3 d5 is a bit annoying, so we'll stick with the main line, 7.Nf3 d6 (7...e4?! is a little rushed and 8.dxe4 Nxe4 – 8...fxe4? 9.Ng5 simply bags the pawn – 9.Rc1 d6 10.0-0 Nxd2 11.Qxd2 again leaves Black with a suspect type of Dutch and one where White will surely regain a bishop after a3) 8.0-0.

chesstouring.com



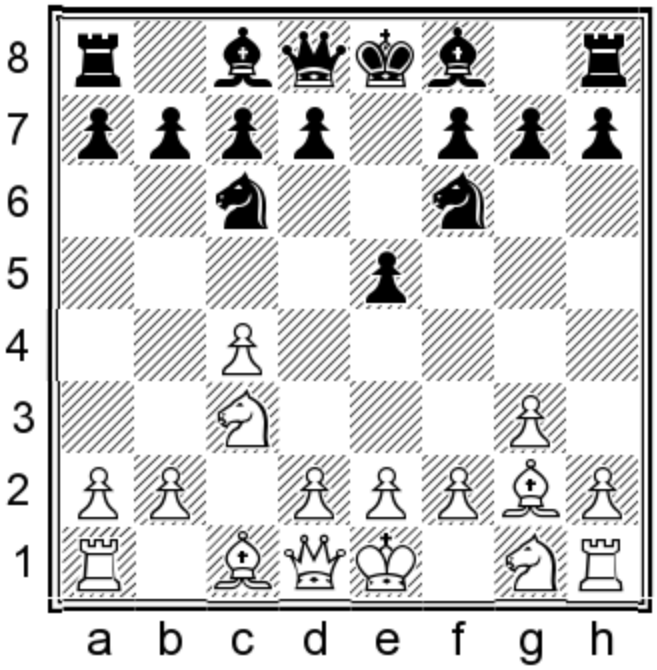
White is ready to either expand or gain the bishop-pair after a3 and should be able to keep Black's kingside ambitions in check: for example, 8...a6 9.e3!? (this natural, but as yet unplayed move looks like a decent alternative to 9.a3 and 9.Nd5) 9...Kh8 (9...Qe8? 10.Nd5 would not be wise for Black, and if 10...Bxd2 11.Nxc7 Qf7 12.Nxa8 Ba5 13.Qb3 when the knight will escape via b6) 10.a3 Bc5 11.b4 Ba7 12.Qc2 when White might harmoniously regroup with Ne2 and Bc3, or go Rfb1, a4 and b5, and 12...Qe8?! 13.Nd5 would still be rather unwise for Black.

Alternatively, 8...Bd7 9.Rc1!? Kh8 10.e3 Qe8 11.Nd5 Bxd2 12.Nxd2 revealed an alternative plan for White and maintained control in Alterman-So.Polgar, Rishon Le Ziyyon 1996, while 8...Bxc3 9.Bxc3 Qe8 is direct and with 10.e3! White prepares to meet ...Qh5 with Nd2 or even Nh4, and 10...e4 11.dxe4 Nxe4 12.Qc2 Be6 13.b3 also retains control. Instead, 8...a5 9.a3 will either echo our approach against 8...a6, above, or see 9...Bxc3 10.Bxc3 a4, which does clamp the queenside and yet 11.b4! axb3 12.Qxb3 Qe8 13.c5+ opened lines for the bishop-pair and gave White an edge in Vallejo Pons-Nisipeanu, European Team Championship, Reykjavik 2015.

Finally, we can return to 3...Nf6:

chesstouring.com

4.Bg2



4...Bb4

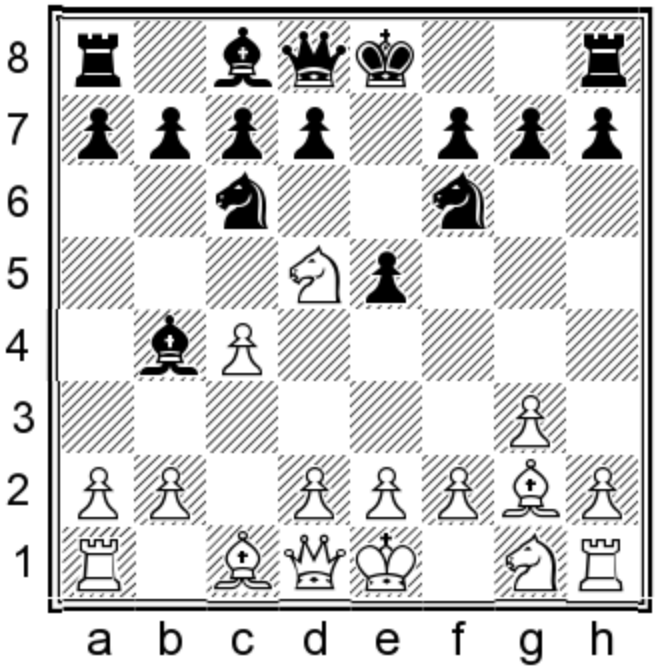
This is, once again, not that effective with Black having a knight on c6 (in Line 6F we'll see that ...Bb4 ideas pack more of a punch with the steed still at home), but is surprisingly common at this juncture, especially at lower levels.

Black might also simply develop with 4...Bc5, which is actually the highly respectable Karpov variation. We'll examine it and 5.Nf3 in our next section.

Otherwise, play is very likely to transpose to earlier lines, be it after 4...d6 5.e4, or 4...g6 5.e4 Bg7 6.Nge2 d6 7.d3 0-0 8.0-0 and we're right back where we started in the realm of Line 3A. Finally, do note that it's too late for Black to try and get back into a reversed Dragon: 4...d5? 5.cxd5 (or just 5.Nxd5) 5...Nb4 (5...Ne7 6.Nf3 is also just an extra pawn for White, and if 6...e4 7.Nxe4! Nxe4 8.Qa4+) 6.Nf3 e4 7.Ng5 Nbxd5 8.Ngxe4 and Black clearly doesn't have very much at all for his pawn.

chesstouring.com

5.Nd5



This leap is hard to resist and impossible not to recommend, although via a transposition we'll also see White doing well with 5.e4!? in Line 6F.

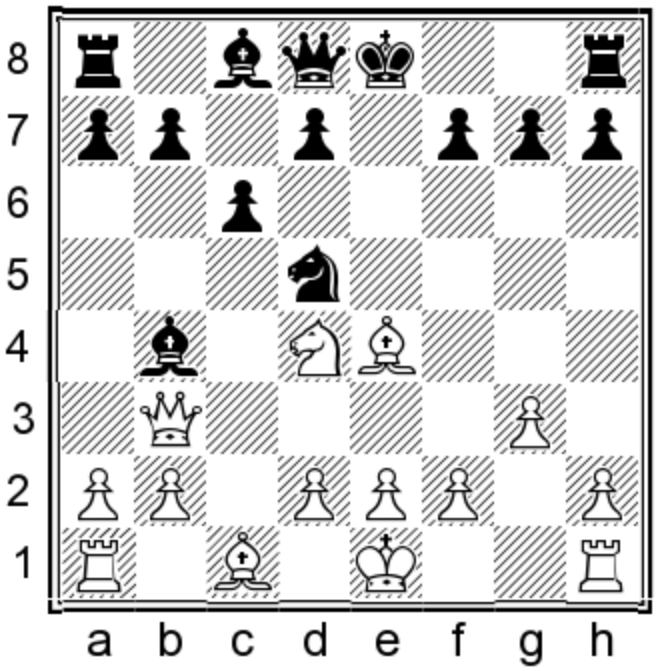
5...Bc5

Black elects to keep his bishop. This has been by some margin Black's most popular move in practice:

a) His second most common choice has been 5...Nxd5?!, but he really shouldn't want to go in for the line 6.cxd5 Ne7 (6...Nd4?? has been played 20 times on the database, but is simply a terrible error as 7.e3 Nf5 8.Qg4 or 7...Nb5 8.Qa4 just wins a piece) 7.Nf3! e4 (unfortunately for Black, there's simply no good defence of his e-pawn, as we can see from 7...d6?? 8.Qa4+, 7...Ng6 8.h4! h5 9.0-0 0-0 10.d4 exd4 11.Nxd4 leaves White with a very pleasant space advantage and h5 tender, and 7...Bd6 8.e4! c6 9.d4 cxd5 10.dxe5 Bb4+ 11.Bd2 Bxd2+ 12.Qxd2!? dxe4 13.Ng5 left Black struggling to finish his development and with a large hole on d6 in Gurevich-Debray, Cappelle-la-Grande 2012) 8.Nd4 Nxd5 (play transposes after 8...c6 9.Bxe4

chesstouring.com

Nxd5 10.Qb3, while 8...f5? would be rather unwise in view of 9.Qa4!, threatening the bishop and Ne6, while picking off the e4-pawn next move after 9...Nxd5 10.Nxf5) 9.Qb3 c6 10.Bxe4 with a very pleasant edge for White.



For example, 10...Qa5 (10...a5!? might be a better try, but shouldn't give Black enough for his pawn after 11.Bxd5 cxd5 12.Qxd5 d6 13.b3 and Bb2) 11.Bxd5 Qxd5 12.Qxd5 cxd5 13.a3 Be7 14.d3 d6 15.Nb5 Kd7 16.Be3, after which White eventually ground out a win in Marcinkiewicz-Poleschi, correspondence 2001.

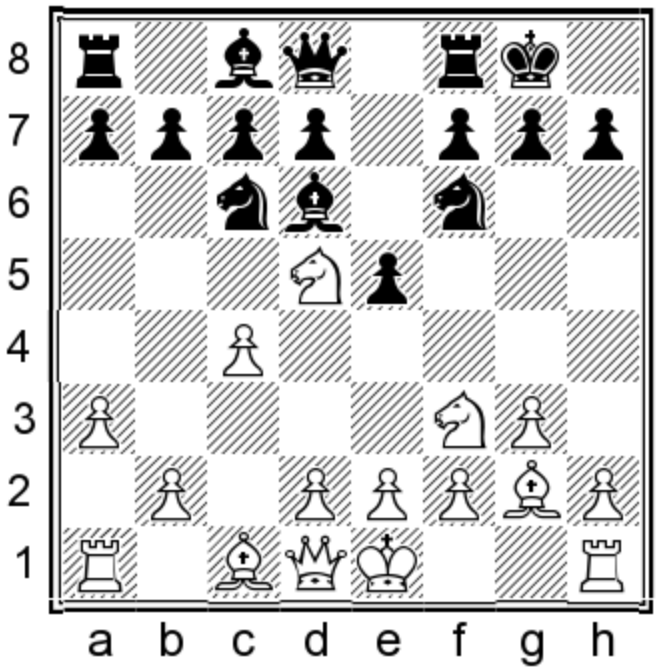
b) Black is also best advised to avoid 5...Ba5?! 6.Qa4 Bb6 (6...a6?! 7.b4 b5 would be clever were it not for 8.Qd1!) 7.Nxb6 cxb6 8.b4!, which weakens his structure while leaving White with the two bishops and easy play.

c) White has also scored quite well against the passive 5...Be7 6.d3 0-0 7.Nf3 d6: for example, 8.0-0 h6 9.e3 Be6 10.Nd2! Qd7 was Melkumyan-Gabuzyan, Armenian Rapid Championship, Yerevan 2016, when Black had the usual troubles stemming from an inability to satisfactorily exchange on

chesstouring.com

d5 and here 11.a3 a5 12.b3 would have been sensible, intending to increase the pressure with Bb2 and f4.

d) 5...0-0!? echoes the line 1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nd4 4.Nf3 and aims to swap the bishop-pair for fast development. However, White doesn't have to oblige, with 6.a3 Bd6!? (at least this is creative, unlike 6...Be7 7.d3 d6 when 8.e3 followed by Ne2 gives White a pretty harmonious and flexible set-up, as does 6...Bc5 7.b4 Bd4 8.Rb1 d6 9.Nf3 Bb6 10.Nxb6 axb6 11.d3, intending Bb2, 0-0 and Nd2) 7.Nf3!? a new idea to counter Black's creativity.

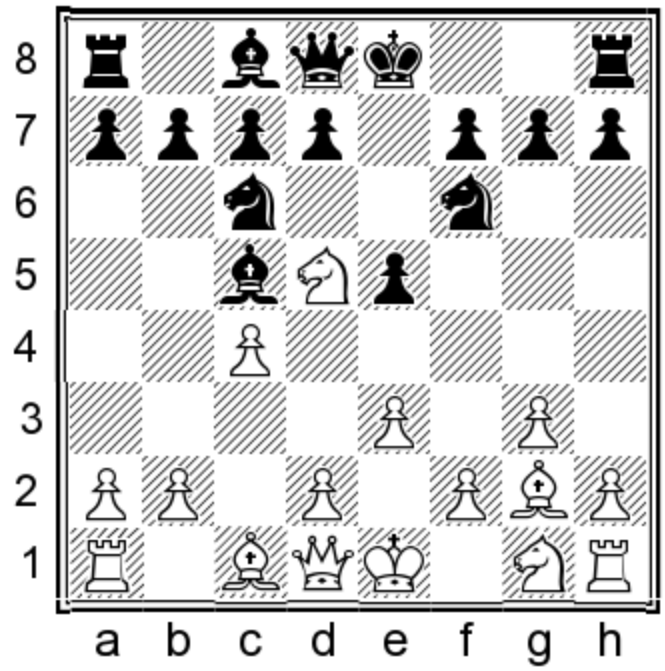


After 7...Nxd5 8.cxd5 Ne7?! (this was the point behind the bishop retreat to d6; it doesn't really work here, but 8...e4?! 9.Nh4 Ne7 10.Bxe4 is just an extra pawn and even 8...Nd4 9.Nxd4 exd4 10.0-0 c6 11.b4 followed by Bb2 looks pleasant enough for White) 9.e4! c6 (9...c5 would at least prevent White's next, if not equalise after 10.b4!, and if 10...cxb4 11.axb4 Bxb4 12.Nxe5, and 9...f5 10.d4 fxe4 11.Nxe5 also turns out quite well for White) 10.d4 exd4 pushing ahead in the centre is very tempting and 11.0-0 followed by Nxd4 is a pleasant edge, since Black surely cannot allow 11...c5? 12.e5 Bb8 13.d6.

chesstouring.com

Returning to 5...Bc5:

6.e3!

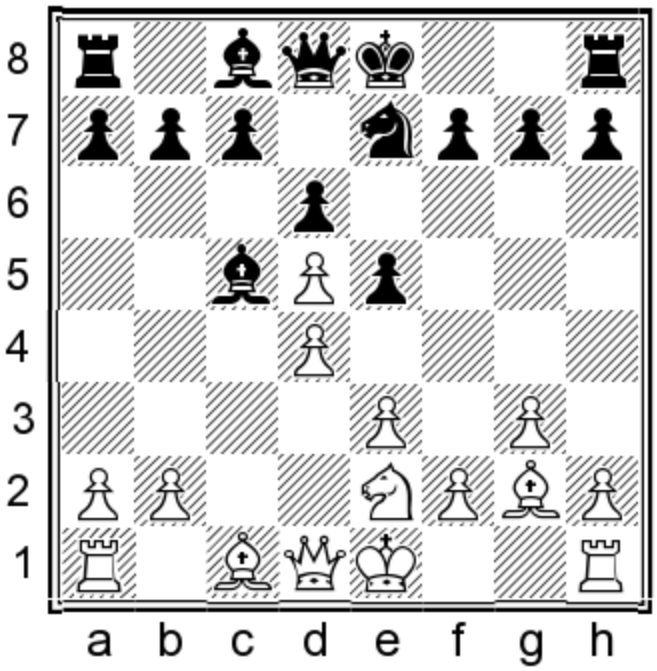


Now this is definitely best and makes good sense, closing down the range of the bishop on c5 while introducing ideas of a timely d4.

6...Nxd5

Exchanging without delay in a bid to avoid 6...d6 7.Ne2 Nxd5 (not forced, but 7...Bg4?! 8.h3 Bh5 runs into 9.d4! Bb6 – the tactics favour White: 9...exd4? 10.exd4 Nxd4 11.g4! wins a piece, as does 9...Nxd5? 10.cxd5 Bb4+ 11.Kf1! – 10.g4 Bg6 11.f4!, which left Black getting badly squashed in Heineman-Moll, correspondence 2001, while 7...a6!? 8.0-0 0-0 9.b3 should be a little better for White, and if 9...Nxd5 10.cxd5 Ne7 11.d4 Bb6 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.Nc3 when one decent plan is Ba3, Na4 and Rc1) 8.cxd5 Ne7 9.d4, which should give White an edge.

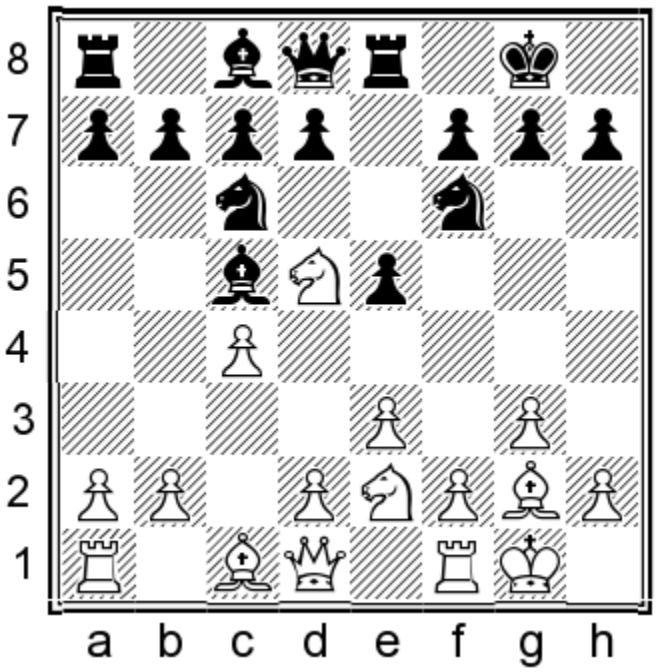
chesstouring.com



An exchange on d4 brings his knight to a lovely post there and leaves Black a little low on counterplay, while 9...Bb6 10.0-0 c6 11.dxc6 Nxc6 12.b4! 0-0 13.b5 Na5 14.Ba3 seized the initiative and an edge in Khismatullin-Mokshanov, Tyumen 2012.

Black's only other real try is 6...0-0 7.Ne2 Re8 (7...Nxd5 8.cxd5 transposes to our main line if the knight goes back to e7, which it should in view of 8...Nb4?! 9.d4! exd4 10.exd4 Bb6 11.a3 Na6 when in Stefanova-Y.Naiditsch, Mamaia 2016, we're not sure how White resisted the temptation to go 12.d6! cxd6 13.d5, entombing the bishop on c8 while intending to complete development with 0-0, Nc3 and Bf4) 8.0-0.

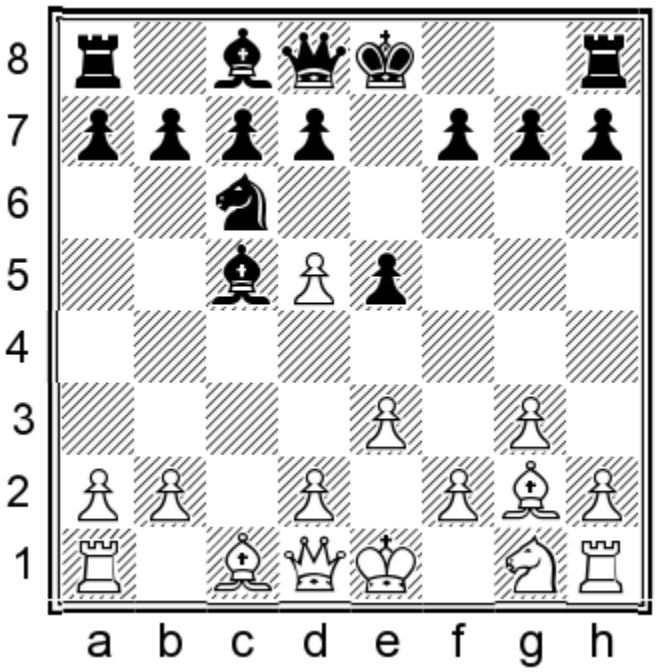
chesstouring.com



However, the rook move turns out not to be so useful, as we can see from 8...d6 (8...Bf8 is probably even worse, since here White might even go 9.f4!? exf4 10.Nexf4 d6 11.Nxf6+ Qxf6 12.d4 with central control, a grip on d5 and, in short, a lovely position, and 8...Nxd5 9.cxd5 Nb4 10.d4 exd4 11.exd4 Bf8 12.a3 Na6 13.Be3 d6 14.Rc1 leaves Black obviously suffering with his knight somewhat sidelined and c7 a long-term target for White) 9.d4 Bb6 10.Nxb6! (not so much acquiring the prelate, as the precursor to a central space grab) 10...axb6 11.d5 Ne7 12.e4 when White's queenside play is much faster than anything Black can muster, as we'll see in Timofeev-Andriasian, Belgorod 2010.

7.cxd5

chesstouring.com



7...Ne7

Once again tactical traps abound to snare an unwary black player, with 7...Nb4?! 8.d4! exd4 9.exd4 Bxd4? (Black does better to grovel after 9...Be7 10.a3 Na6 11.Ne2) 10.a3! (and not 10.Qxd4?? Nc2+ – Black's big hope) 10...Qf6 11.Nf3 pretty much already winning for White, as if 11...Bc3+!? (11...Bxb2 12.Bxb2 Qxb2 allows White an extremely pleasant choice between an extra piece and 13.0-0!? Na6 14.Re1+ Kf8 15.Nd4 with a decisive attack down the e-file) 12.Kf1! Qa6+ 13.Kg1 Bf6 (Spraggett-Gonzalez Galvan, Dos Hermanas 2000) 14.Bf4! Nxd5 15.Qxd5 (Kosten) when Black is a piece down for almost nothing and 15...d6? 16.Re1+ Be6 fails to 17.Rxe6+! fxe6 18.Qxe6+ followed by Bg5 or Ng5.

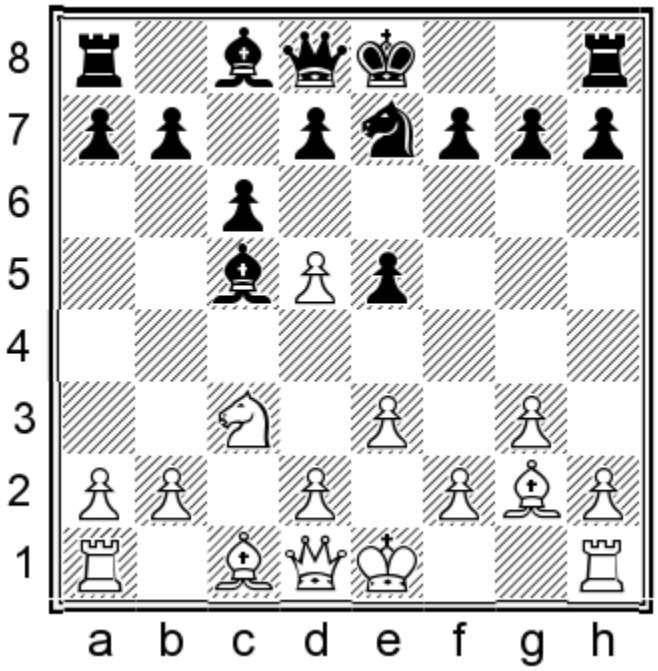
8.Ne2 c6!?

This bid for freedom looks like Black's best try, thereby denying White the easy play 8...0-0 9.0-0 d6 (or 9...c6 10.d4 exd4 11.exd4! when White can proceed calmly to obtain an edge or take full advantage of his lead in development, as he did with 11...Bb6 12.d6! Nf5 13.Bf4 Qf6 14.Be5 Qh6 in

chesstouring.com

Timman-Kuzubov, European Team Championship, Gothenburg 2005, where the Dutch legend was concerned by 15.g4! Nh4, but 16.Be4 just looks very promising for White followed by Qd3 or 16...f5? 17.gxf5 Nxf5 18.Qb3+ Kh8 19.Qf3, and here 15...Nxd6 16.g5 Qe6 17.Nf4 Qe7 18.Re1 will win material) 10.d4 once again allows him: for example, 10...Bb6 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.Nc3 f5 13.b4! Qd6 14.Qb3 Kh8 15.a4 a5 16.bxa5 Bxa5 17.Nb5 Qf6 18.Bb2 and White's play was much the more potent in Sykora-Goc, correspondence 2017.

9.Nc3



Keeping pieces on and not allowing Black the chance to grovel his way to equality with 9.d4 exd4 10.exd4 Bb4+.

9...0-0 10.0-0 Nxd5

Black tires of the tension. He didn't in Carlstedt-Fedoseev, Marianske Lazne 2011, but 10...Qa5 11.d4! exd4 12.exd4 Bb4 wouldn't have come close to equality had White spotted 13.Bg5 f6 14.Qb3! which leaves him a

chesstouring.com

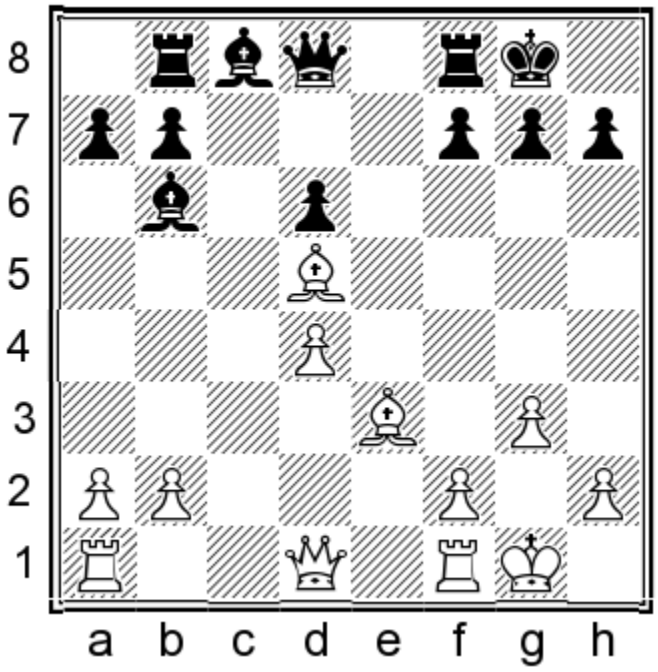
pawn to the good after the fairly forced line 14...fxg5 15.dxc6+ Kh8 16.cxb7 Bxb7 17.Bxb7 Rab8 18.Bg2.

Otherwise, 10...d6 11.d4 Bb4 12.dxc6 Nxc6 13.Nd5 Ba5 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.b3 Be6 16.Ba3 was very pleasant for White with his superior coordination and outpost in Markowski-Molenda, Warsaw 2018, and 10...h6 11.a3 d6 12.b4 Bb6 13.Bb2 Bf5 (Boschma-Brobakken, correspondence 2009) 14.f4!? Bd3 15.Rf2 followed by Qb3 and/or Na4 will leave White with the initiative.

11.Nxd5 cxd5 12.d4

There's no rush to regain the pawn on d5, so White first seizes some space.

12...exd4 13.exd4 Bb6 14.Be3 d6 15.Bxd5 Rb8



We've followed the fairly high-level 2017 correspondence encounter (those who play by email do seem to like trying to show that 4...**B**b4 isn't as bad as its reputation for Black), Ziese-Keuter, where **16.Qf3!? Bh3 17.Rfc1**

chesstouring.com

followed by a4 and a queenside advance would have seen White retaining a nibble on account of his fine centralised bishop.

Game 24
A.Timofeev-Z.Andriasian
Russian Cup Final, Belgorod 2010

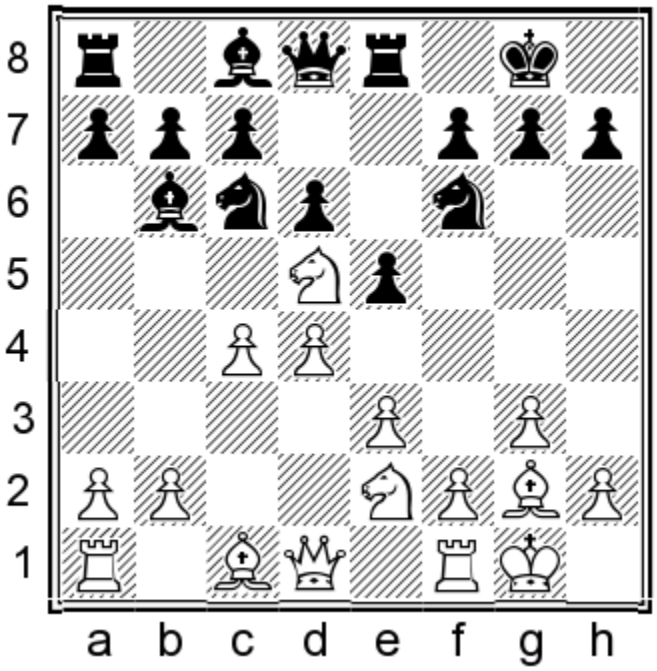
1.c4 e5 2.g3

A popular choice here, but our move order would be 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 Bb4 5.Nd5.

2...Nc6 3.Bg2 Nf6 4.Nc3 Bb4 5.Nd5 Bc5 6.e3

Blunting the black bishop and leading to quite a pleasant set-up for White, who has in effect gained the useful move Nd5 for free in comparison with the variation 4...Bc5 5.e3.

6...0-0 7.Ne2 d6 8.0-0 Re8 9.d4 Bb6



chesstouring.com

10.Nxb6!

A very useful exchange as White, slightly unusually for the English, clears d5 for a pawn to happily settle there.

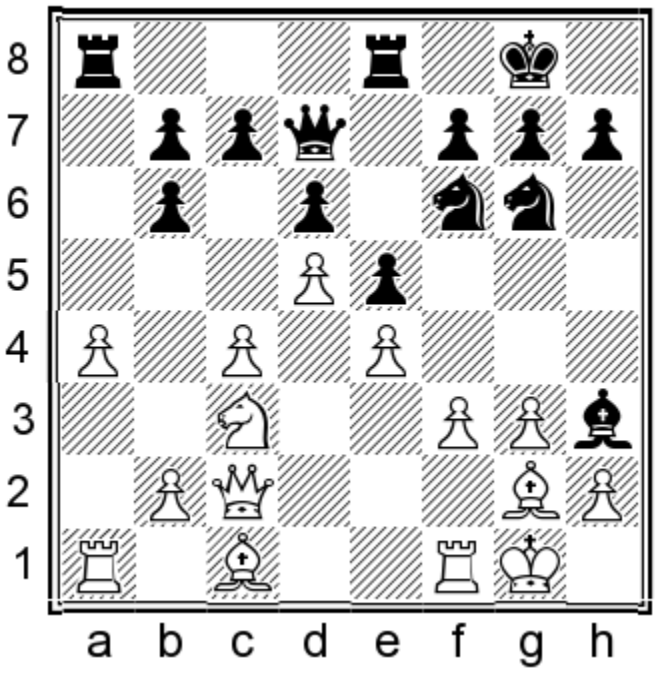
10...axb6 11.d5 Ne7 12.e4 Ng6

Black also suffered after 12...Bd7 13.Nc3 Ng6 14.f3 in Nogueiras Santiago-Hernandez Carmenates, Santa Clara 2008, where White's trumps were the greater and 14...h6 15.Be3 Nh7 16.b4 f5 17.exf5 Bxf5 18.a4 Nf6 19.Ne4 demonstrated that his play was the faster with a5 and a subsequent c5 set to rip open the queenside.

13.Nc3 Bg4 14.Qc2

14.f3!? might have been even stronger, and if 14...Bd7 15.a4 h6 16.b4 Nh7 17.Be3 f5 18.exf5 Bxf5 19.a5 bxa5 20.bxa5 when again we see Black in trouble with c5 next up.

14...Qd7 15.a4 Bh3 16.f3!



chesstouring.com

Keeping Black out of g4, preparing the way for Be3 and maintaining full control of the situation on the kingside.

16...h6

Again we see this approach and how else bar with ...f5 can Black hope to muster any counterplay?

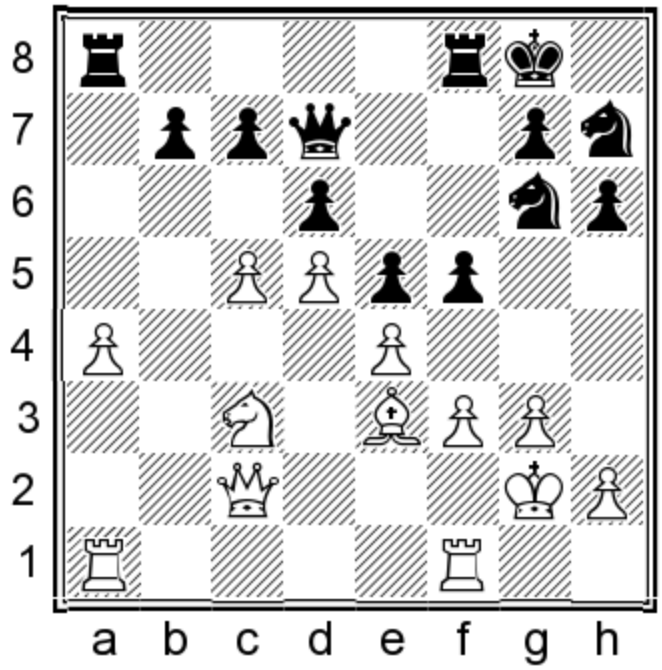
17.b4 Bxg2 18.Kxg2 Nh7 19.Be3 Rf8

Timofeev might even have met 19...Ng5 with 20.Kh1 followed by c5 or even first h4 and Kg2.

20.c5!

Ever the thematic breakthrough in this structure. Clearly White's queenside play is far ahead of anything Black can muster on the opposite flank.

20...bxc5 21.bxc5 f5



chesstouring.com

22.exf5!

An important exchange, preventing Black from obtaining counterplay with ...f4, while giving White a handy grip on the resulting clear square on e4.

22...Rxf5 23.c6!?

This turns out well, but there was no real rush to reject the simple 23.Rab1 when Black can't easily defend b7 and 23...Rh5? fails to simply 24.Qxg6 Qh3+ 25.Kf2 Qxh2+ 26.Ke1.

23...bxc6 24.dxc6 Qf7 25.Nd5!

Timofeev exploits the tactics to install his knight on a rather powerful outpost.

25...Rf8 26.Qe4

Thus far we've witnessed a positional masterclass from White who dominates the centre and appears set to simply run the a-pawn down the board.

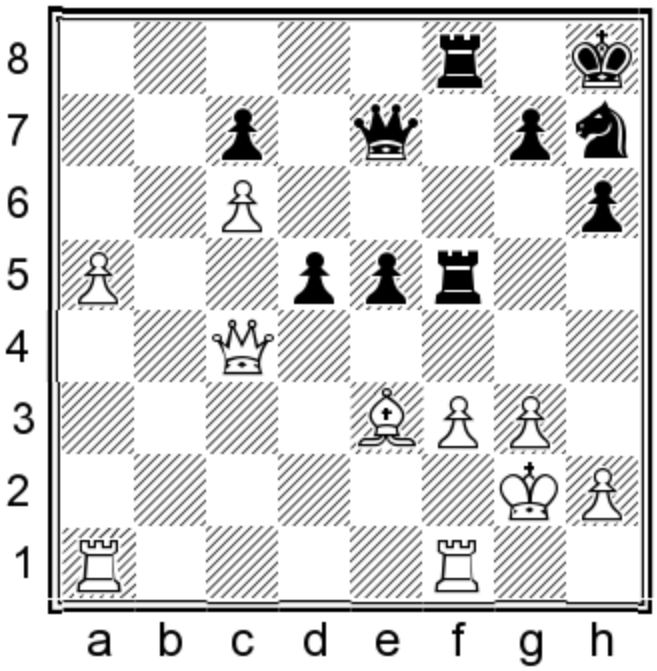
26...Ne7

Andriasian finds the only real try, challenging for control of d5.

27.Nxe7+ Qxe7 28.Qc4+ Kh8 29.a5 d5!?

It's Black's turn to use tactics, but White really ought to have matters under control.

chesstouring.com



30.Qc5

30.Qxd5? e4! 31.Qxe4 Re5 was the trap to avoid, but 30.Bc5! Qe6 31.Qb3 would have been strong, and if 31...Ra8 32.a6 Qxc6 33.Qb7 Qe8 34.a7 followed by Rfb1.

30...Qf7 31.a6 d4 32.a7!

Winning the exchange if not yet the game too.

32...dxe3 33.a8=Q e2!

A useful intermezzo. 33...Rxa8? 34.Rxa8+ Nf8 35.Qxe3 would just make matters too easy for White.

34.Qaxf8+?

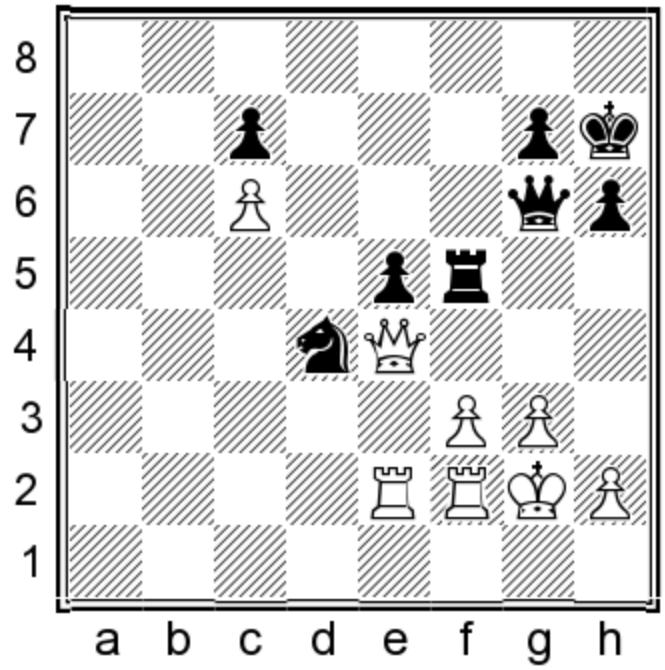
Timofeev picks the wrong queen to give up. 34.Qcxf8+! Nxf8 35.Rf2 was correct, and if 35...e4 36.f4 g5 37.Qa4 gxf4 38.Qxe4 when Black would have come up short.

chesstouring.com

34...Nxf8 35.Rf2 Ne6

With tempo as it's suddenly very much game on once again.

36.Qe3 Nd4 37.Qe4 Qg6 38.Re1 Kh7 39.Rexe2



This was going to have to be played at some point, but the resulting rook endgame doesn't offer White anything at all.

39...Nxe2 40.Rxe2 Rf6 41.Qxg6+ Kxg6 42.Rxe5 Rxc6 43.g4

Timofeev tries to make something out of his kingside majority, but of course two such strong grandmasters might well have shaken hands by now.

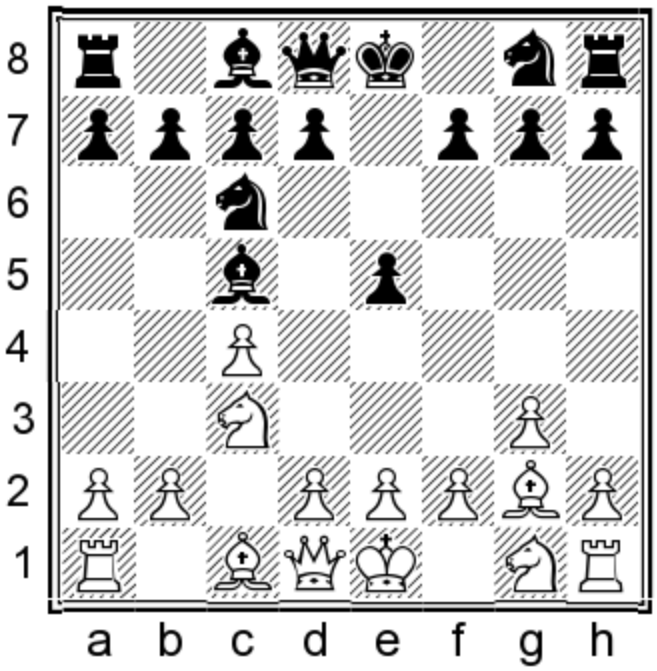
43...Kf7 44.Kg3 Re6 45.Rc5 c6 46.f4 Rd6 47.f5 g6 48.fxg6+ Kxg6 49.h4 Rd3+ 50.Kf4 Rd4+ 51.Kg3 Rd3+ 52.Kf4 Rd4+ 53.Kg3 ½-½

Theory 6B

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 Nf6

chesstouring.com

Black can also begin with 3...Bc5 4.Bg2.



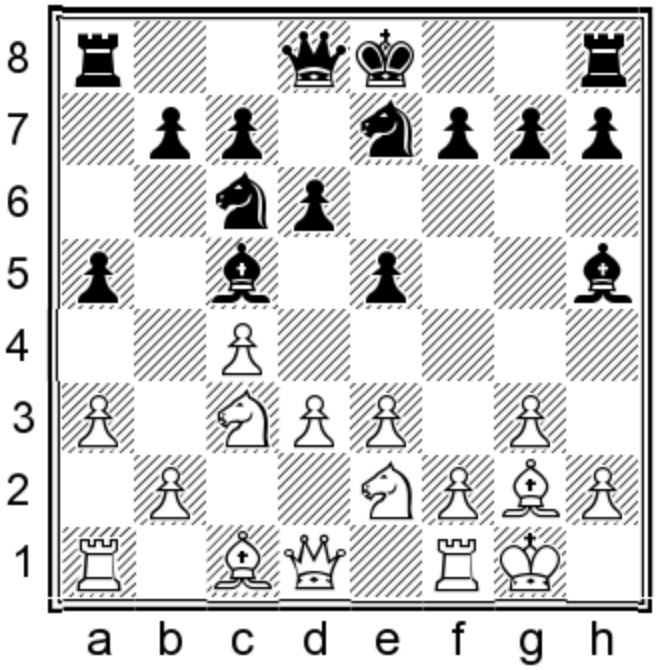
Now 4...Nf6 would transpose to our main line, but there are also some independent options:

a) 4...Nge7 keeps ...f5 and ...d5 options open should White, as in our main line, proceed with Nf3, but here 5.e3 d6 6.Nge2 looks quite effective, after which ...f5 ideas shouldn't trouble White and he can break with d4: for example, 6...Bf5 7.a3 a5 8.d4 Bb6 9.0-0 Qd7 was Duda-Vavulin, World Rapid Championship, Moscow 2019, where White might have begun play on the queenside with 10.Na4!?, but preferred to maintain control with 10.Nd5 Nxd5 11.cxd5 Ne7 12.e4 Bg4 and now 13.f3 Bh3 14.Bxh3! Qxh3 15.Be3 0-0 16.Qd2 would have supplied an edge, with Rac1 and dxe5 White's simple plan.

b) 4...d6 also rather asks for 5.e3 whereupon 5...Bf5 (or 5...Nf6 6.Nge2 0-0 7.0-0 Bf5 8.d4 Bb6 9.h3 Re8 10.b3 with control and an edge in Petrovic-Mary, correspondence 2013, before White began to take over with 10...h5?! 11.Bb2 exd4 12.exd4 a6 13.Qd2 Qd7 14.Nf4, eyeing h5 as well as leaps into d5, while 5...Nb4 is simply repulsed by 6.d3! Bf5 7.Ne4) 6.a3! (with Black having a bishop on f5, 6.Nge2? Nb4 would not be wise for White)

chesstouring.com

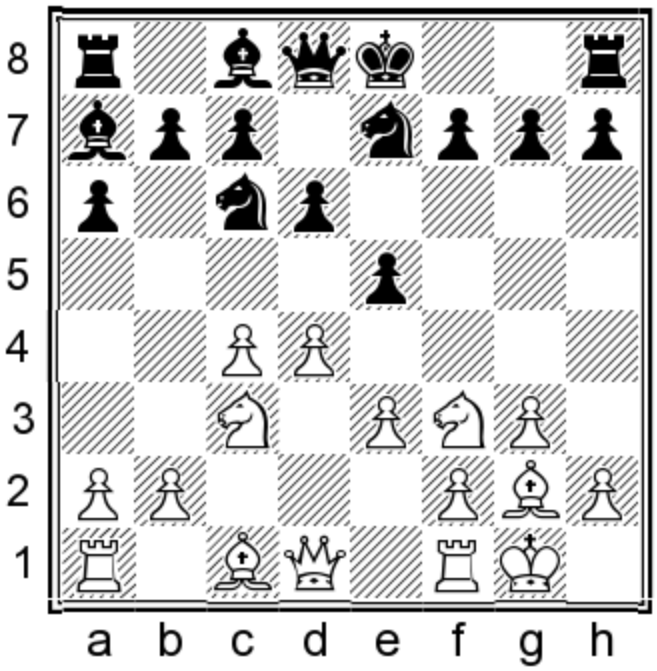
6...a5 7.d3 Nge7 (7...Qd7 is a bit more ambitious, but 8.h3! keeps Black out of h3 and after 8...Nge7 9.Nge2 0-0 10.b3 we would be quite happy as White, since Black lacks a good pawn break and 10...Ba7 11.d4 exd4 12.exd4 Rfe8 13.Be3 should enable White to safely castle after g4; once again, White's grip on d5 is a very handy asset) 8.Nge2 Bg6 9.0-0 Bh5 was Backlund-Kolcak, correspondence 1996.



Here 10.b3 0-0 11.Bb2 would have been simple and strong, intending Qd2, possibly h3 and Kh2, and then d4 and/or f4.

c) 4...a6 is a common ploy in these lines, giving Black's bishop a retreat square, one he may even occupy straightaway with 5.Nf3 d6 (5...Nf6?! 6.Nxe5! would just be very nice for White, and if 6...Bxf2+ 7.Kxf2 Nxe5 8.d3 followed by Rf1 and Kg1) 6.e3 Ba7 (6...Nf6 7.0-0 0-0 8.d4 transposes to a position we'll see below in our main line) 7.0-0 Nge7, but just as with Black's king's knight on f6, 8.d4 is promising for White.

chesstouring.com

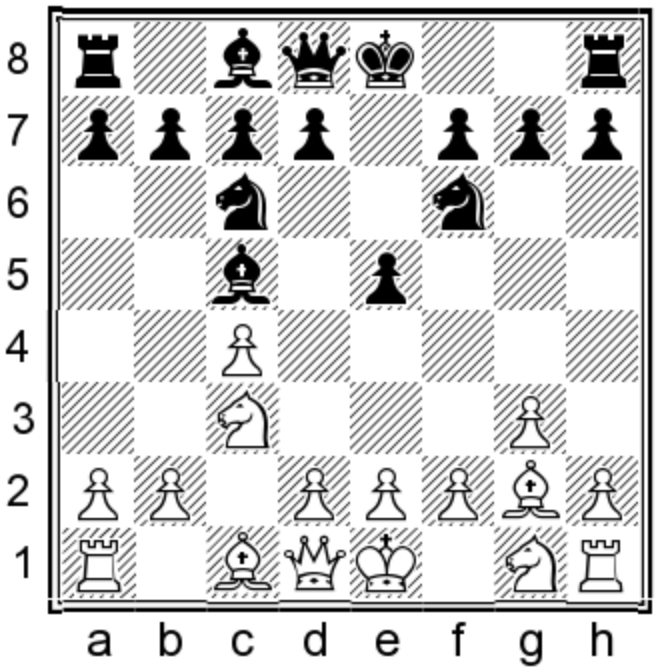


This was shown by 8...exd4 (8...Bg4 9.d5! Nb8 10.h3 is a little awkward for Black, who finds his play rather slow, while White can go b4, Bb2 and possibly Nd2, as well as if 10...Bh5 11.g4!? Bg6 12.Nh4, not so much securing the bishop-pair as preparing expansion with Kh2 and f4) 9.Nxd4! (avoiding being pinned by 9.exd4 Bg4) 9...Nxd4 10.exd4 0-0 11.b3 Nf5 12.Ne2 c6 13.Bb2 (White is set to conquer further space with d5, hence Black's next) 13...d5 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.Nf4 Be6 16.Re1 Qd7 and now in Kovalyov-Naroditsky, Internet (rapid) 2017, White might have aimed to enlarge his edge with 17.Re5!?, intending 17...Bb8 18.Rxd5 Bxd5 19.Nxd5 with a fine outpost and lasting compensation for the exchange or a quick win in the event of 19...Ba7? 20.Nf6+! gxf6 21.Qg4+ Kh8 22.d5.

Returning to 3...Nf6:

4.Bg2 Bc5

chesstouring.com



This is sometimes known as the Karpov variation. It's a better choice here than placing the bishop on b4 and has a number of grandmaster adherents. Black secures fairly easy development without needing to know very much theory, but just as if we reversed the board, his set-up is quite harmless and White has decent chances to emerge with an edge.

5.Nf3

This is a rare position where developing the knight to f3 looks like White's best option. He still wants to close down the g1-a7 diagonal with e3, but this way avoids the annoying possibility of 5.e3 d5 6.cxd5 Nb4.

5...0-0

Black can also reach our main line while avoiding any tactics on e5 with 5...d6 6.0-0 0-0 7.e3. Proceeding in restrained fashion fits in with Black's system, whereas the likes of 5...e4? do not when White can either go 6.Nh4 or 'fall into it' with 6.Ng5 when 6...Bxf2+ 7.Kxf2 Ng4+ 8.Kg1 Qxg5 9.Nxe4 Qg6 10.d3 nets both the bishop-pair and a central majority, while it will always be possible to tidy up the kingside with h3 and Kh2.

chesstouring.com

Likewise, 5...d5? should be welcomed on account of 6.Nxe5! Nxe5 (or 6...Bxf2+ 7.Kxf2 Nxe5 8.cxd5 when d4 is next up and White's central majority a most handy one) 7.d4 dxc4 8.dxc5 Qe7 (or 8...Qxd1+ 9.Nxd1 0-0 10.0-0 with two very strong bishops and Ne3 after Bf4 or Bg5 on its way) 9.Bg5!? (a decent pawn sacrifice) 9...Qxc5 10.Bxf6 gxf6 11.Qd2, which left Black's kingside a wreck and Qf4/h6 and Ne4 on the agenda in Chatalbashev-Kaasen, Kragero 2020.

6.0-0

Keeping things simple, although with this move order it is tempting to get involved in the rather fun-looking and unbalanced position which arises after 6.Nxe5!? Bxf2+ 7.Kxf2 Nxe5 8.b3.

6...d6

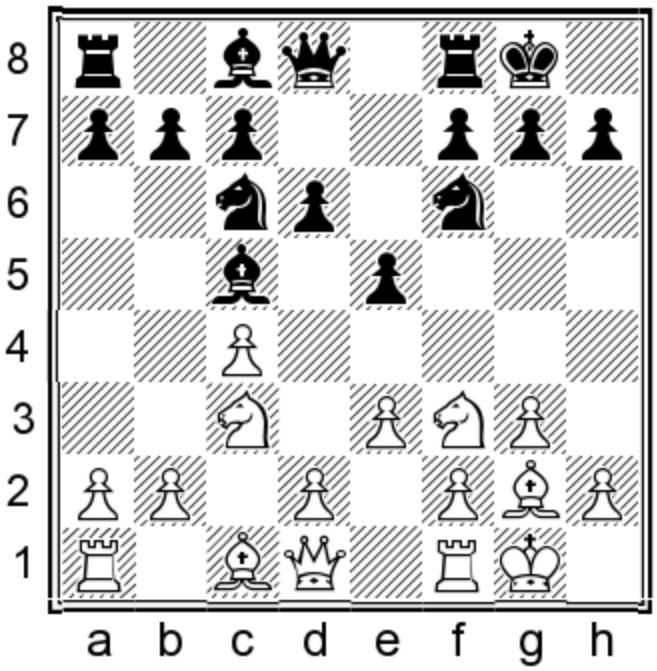
Prudent overprotection of e5.

Moves like 6...a6? simply allow 7.Nxe5! Nxe5 8.d4 Bxd4 9.Qxd4 Re8 10.Rd1 h6 11.b3 a5 12.Bb2, which left White dominating with his bishops in Fridman-F.Graf, Gibraltar 2012, and 6...d5?! can again also be met by 7.Nxe5! Nxe5 8.d4 dxc4 9.dxc5 Qe7 followed by 10.Bg5 or even 10.Qd4!? Rd8 11.Qh4 Qxc5 12.Ne4.

6...Re8 is a better option for Black, when 7.e3 d6 8.d4 transposes to a position we'll see in the notes to Black's 7th move below.

7.e3!

chesstouring.com



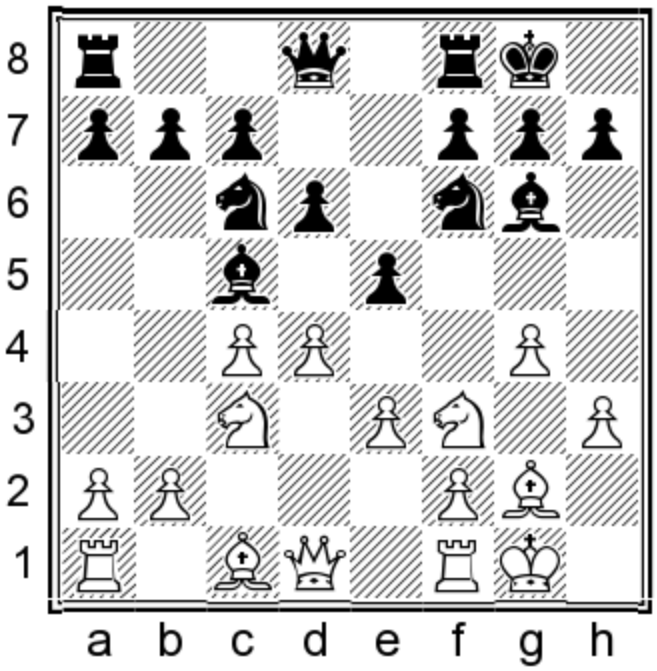
7.d3 has been by some margin White's most popular choice over the years, but he has scored well with this logical move in recent times, limiting the range of the bishop on c5.

7...a6

Preparing to tuck the bishop back on a7.

The text is actually only Black's second most popular move, behind 7...Bg4, but this may just be pseudo-activity or at least 8.h3 Bh5 9.g4!? (White also has a pleasant game if he proceeds at a more leisurely pace with 9.d3, keeping g4 ideas in reserve) 9...Bg6 10.d4 should promise White a definite edge.

chesstouring.com

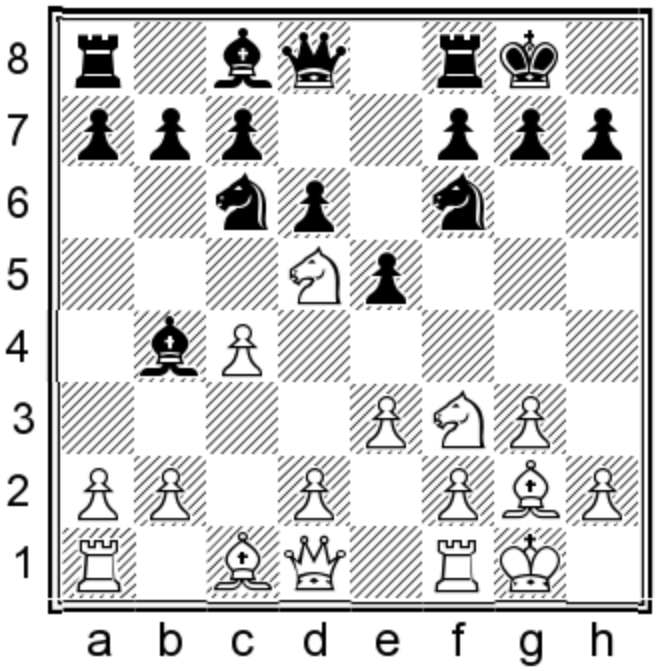


For example, 10...Bb6 (Black is well advised to avoid 10...exd4? 11.exd4 Bb6 12.Bg5 h6 13.Bh4 when he is forced to contort with a knight retreat to the back rank) 11.b3 (White is in no rush and happy to maintain the central tension) 11...Ne4 (as in Jones-Debashis, Dubai 2014; 11...Re8 might be a better try, but 12.Bb2 exd4 13.exd4 followed by Na4 or 13...Nb4 14.Ne1! should be quite good for White when even f4 can be an idea) 12.Nd5 and once again we see White's control of d5 enabling him to retain sufficient control of the position and an edge, as with 12...f5 13.dxe5 fxg4 14.hxg4 Nxe5 15.Nxe5 dxe5 16.Nxb6 Qxd1 17.Rxd1 axb6 18.f3.

Black has tried a great many other plausible moves, of which the worst is 7...e4? 8.Ng5 Bg4 9.Qc2 Ne5 10.Ngxe4 Nxe4, as in Zagorskis-Sulskis, Vilnius (rapid) 2012, where 11.Bxe4! Nf3+ 12.Bxf3 Bxf3 13.Qf5 Bc6 14.d4 would have been the simplest way to avoid even the notion of any trouble on the light squares.

Unsurprisingly, we suggest meeting 7...Bb4 with 8.Nd5.

chesstouring.com



After 8...Ba5 (8...Nxd5 9.cxd5 Ne7 10.d4 is very thematic, and if 10...Nxd5 11.Qb3, and while Black shouldn't lose his e-pawn after 8...e4 9.Ne1 Re8 10.a3 Bc5, White has at least 11.Nxf6+ Qxf6 12.f3 exf3 13.Nxf3 Bg4 14.d4 with a clear plus) 9.d4 Bg4 10.h3 Bh5 11.g4 Bg6 White exchanged on e5 in Timofeev-I.Sokolov, Sarajevo 2008, and 12.a3!? might have been even better, intending the usual queenside expansion.

Yet another option for Black is 7...Bf5 when White can go 8.d4, but a good case was made for the more restrained 8.d3 in Jones-N.Pert, British Championship, Bournemouth 2016, as we'll see.

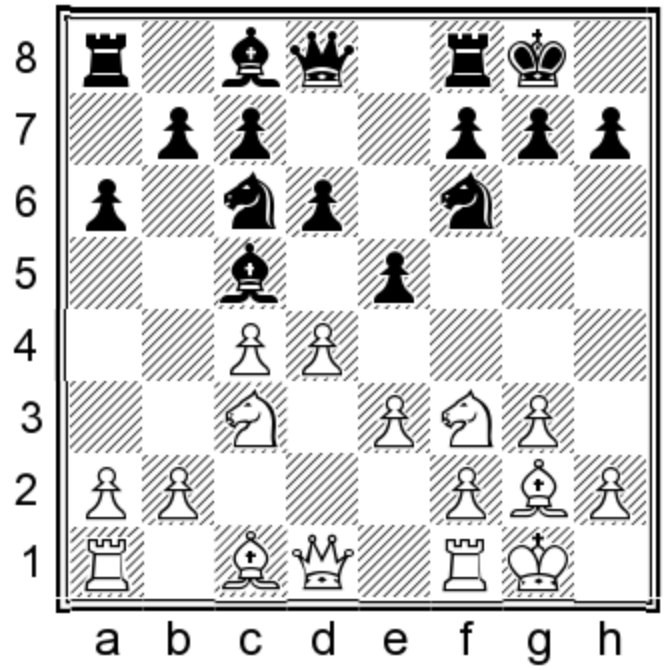
Black's best options are probably 7...Re8 8.d4 Bb6 when 9.h3 (usefully ruling out any potentially awkward pin with ...Bg4) 9...h6 10.a3 a5 11.b3 Bf5 12.Bb2 Qd7 13.Kh2 Rad8 was seen back in Uhlmann-Knaak, Halle/Saale 1974, and then 14.d5 Nb8 15.b4 intending Na4 is only a little better for White, and 7...Bb6, which should be compared with our main line. Here White might continue in unhurried fashion with 8.d3 or 8.a3, or just go 8.d4 when 8...h6 (otherwise, 8...a5 might be met by 9.h3 and then 10.b3, and 8...exd4 9.exd4 Bg4 10.h3! Bxf3 11.Bxf3 seems to work out fairly well for White, and if 11...Bxd4 12.Bxc6 Bxc3 13.Bg2! Ba5 14.Bxb7

chesstouring.com

Rb8 15.Bg2) 9.h3 a5 10.b3 Re8 11.Bb2 exd4 12.Nxd4!? Bxd4 13.exd4 Bf5?! 14.g4! Bd7 15.f4 saw White sounding the charge while continuing to leave Black low on counterplay in Tarjan-Tregubov, Douglas 2017.

Returning to the prophylactic 7...a6:

8.d4



It's hard to believe that such a central advance with tempo can't be a good idea.

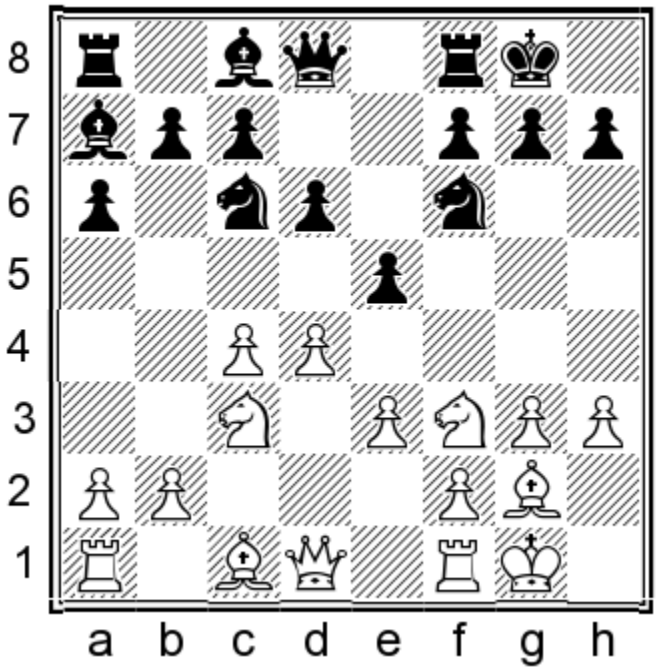
8...Ba7

The third world champion no less demonstrated why Black is advised to maintain the tension: 8...exd4?! 9.exd4 Ba7 10.Be3 h6 (keeping White out of g5 while preparing a possible retreat route for the bishop in the event of any ...Bg4; h3 Bh5; g4 Bg6; Nh4 expansion) 11.h3 left White with a pleasant edge and soon much more after 11...Nh7?! (11...Ne7 12.Re1 c6 improved in Adams-R.Pert, British Championship, Bournemouth 2016, where 13.b3 would have been wise followed by Qd3 or 13...Nf5 14.Bf4)

chesstouring.com

12.Qd3 Ne7 13.Nh4 f5? 14.Nd5 in Capablanca-P.Fernandez, New York (simul) 1928.

9.h3!



This nudge is ever a useful move in this line, keeping Black out of g4 and essentially asking him: how are you going to obtain any counterplay? It's by no means so easy to do so.

9...h6

Black tends to copy so. He has also tried 9...Rb8, but after the calm 10.b3 b5 (Panno-like play; 10...exd4 11.Nxd4 Nxd4 12.exd4 b5 is similar, but White keeps control and an edge with 13.Qd3 followed by Be3) 11.dxe5 Nxe5 12.Nxe5 dxe5 White can either maintain the somewhat more compact structure with Damljanovic's 13.Qe2 or try 13.cxb5!? axb5 14.a4!, acquiring an outside passed pawn and somewhat the more harmonious and active pieces after 14...bxa4 15.Ba3 Re8 16.Qxd8 Rxd8 17.bxa4.

A related line to the text move is 9...Re8 10.b3 h6 when 11.Bb2 can't be bad, but this is a good moment to release the tension: 11.dxe5! dxe5

chesstouring.com

(11...Nxe5 12.Nxe5 dxe5 13.Ba3 is one important point, keeping Black's dark-squared bishop passive and giving White a small but stable plus, Jones-Gormally, Helensburgh 2013) 12.Qxd8 Rxd8 and now we quite like 13.g4!?, closing down the other black bishop and enabling White to begin to exert some pressure after 13...Bc5 14.Na4 Be7 15.Bb2 e4 16.Ne5 when e4 might well become a target.

Finally, do note that 9...exd4 10.exd4 h6 11.Be3 would take play back into the note to Black's 8th move, above.

10.dxe5!?

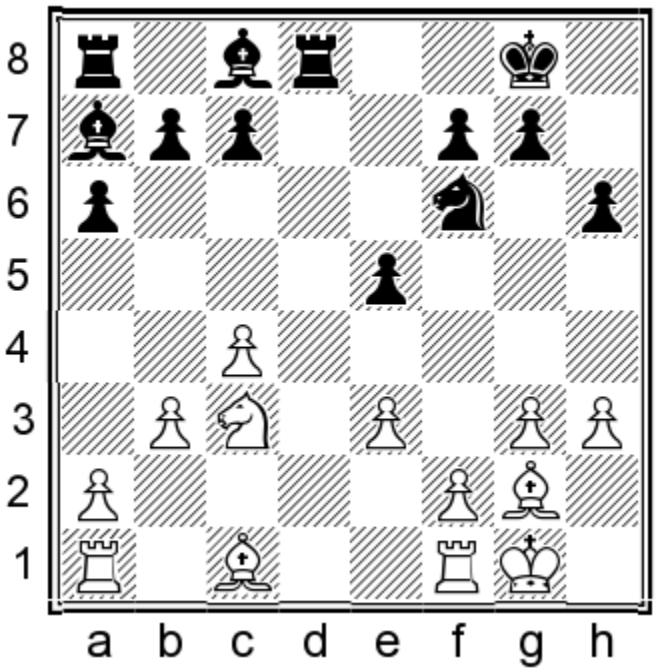
White again opts for the simple approach. 10.b3 followed by 11.Bb2 is also a good option if you prefer to retain the queens.

10...Nxe5

David Howell has twice faced 10...dxe5, with 11.Qxd8 Rxd8 12.g4! (rarely a bad space grab) 12...Rd3 (or 12...Bc5 13.b3 Be6 14.Bb2 Nd7 15.Rad1 followed by Nd5 and Nd2, with complete control of the position) 13.Ne1 Rd8 14.b3 Ne7 15.Ba3 supplying an edge in Howell-Dzagnidze, Gibraltar 2018; Nf3, Rad1 and Nd2 might follow, gradually improving White's pieces while denying Black any real play.

11.Nxe5 dxe5 12.Qxd8 Rxd8 13.b3

chesstouring.com



White's play may look rather simplistic, but if you look deeper, you'll realise that he has an edge. In short, that's down to the fine bishop on g2, the potential holes on d5 and d6 (after ...c6), and White's more mobile kingside pawns.

13...c6

13...Bc5 would activate the bishop, but 14.Bb2 Re8 (or 14...c6 15.Na4!) 15.Rfd1 is no panacea for Black with the squeezing Na4 and g4 on the way.

14.Ba3

Again a fine spot for the bishop, at the same time denying its opposite number air.

14...Bf5

14...Rd3!? was probably a better try when 15.Ne4 Nxe4 16.Bxe4 Rd8 17.g4 Be6 18.Rad1 is only slightly better for White, who can claim the d-

chesstouring.com

file with Be7 and/or begin to expand on the kingside, with Kg2-g3 and f4 or h4.

15.g4! Bd3 16.Rfd1 Bc2 17.Rdc1

Exchanging first on d8 would have led to a position we'll soon see.

chesstouring.com

17...Bg6 18.Rd1

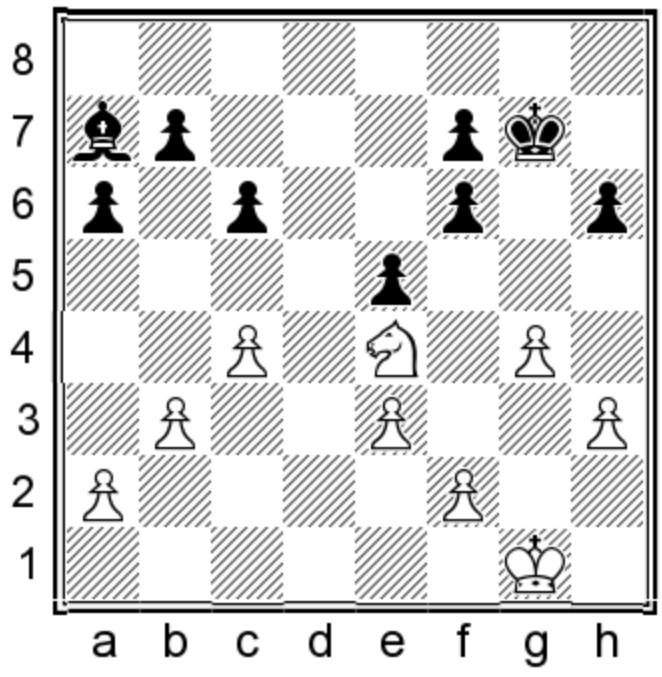
It’s rarely a bad idea to repeat moves to emphasise control of the position and so slightly demoralise the opponent.

18...Bc2 19.Rxd8+! Rxd8 20.Be7

Forcing a favourable liquidation.

20...Rd3 21.Bxf6 gxf6 22.Ne4 Kg7 23.Rc1 Rd1+ 24.Rxd1 Bxd1 25.Nc3 Bc2 26.Be4! Bxe4 27.Nxe4

Model play from White who unsurprisingly went on to convert this highly favourable good knight against bad bishop endgame in Fressinet-Grandelius, Douglas 2015.



Game 25
G.Jones-N.Pert
British Championship, Bournemouth 2016

chesstouring.com

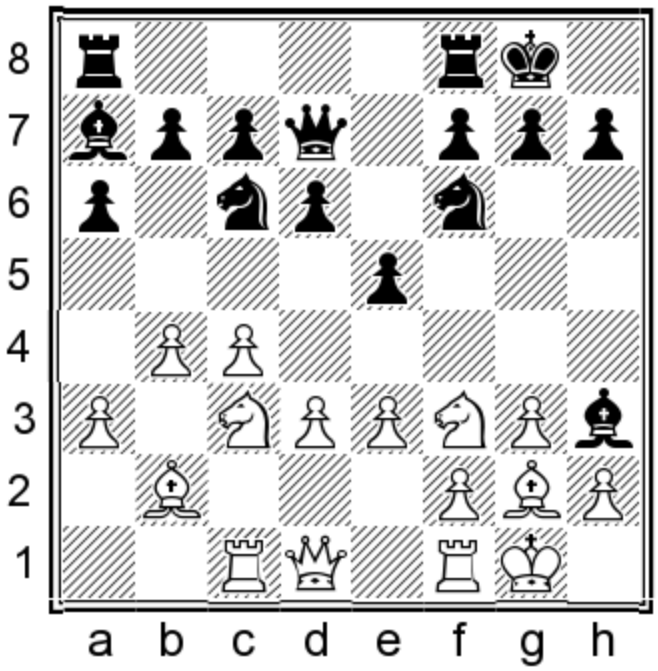
1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 Bc5 5.Bg2 d6 6.0-0 0-0 7.e3 Bf5 8.d3

Denying Black use of e4 makes sense with the bishop already on f5.

8...Qd7 9.a3 a6

9...a5 would have prevented White's next, but after 10.b3 Rfe8 11.Bb2 White still has a fairly harmonious position and might manoeuvre a knight to e4.

10.b4 Ba7 11.Bb2 Bh3 12.Rc1



By no means the only good move, but the rook will be well placed here should the c-file open after c4-c5 or Nd5 Nxd5; cxd5.

12...Bxg2 13.Kxg2 Rfe8

Allowing White to transform the structure. Instead, 13...Ne7 would enable Black to meet 14.Ne4 with 14...Ne8 and ...f5, so White might proceed in unhurried fashion with 14.h3 Ng6 15.Qc2, and if 15...c6 16.Ne4!? Ne8 17.Ned2, intending to favourably open lines with 17...f5?! 18.c5!.

chesstouring.com

14.Ne4!

White is happy to obtain a firm grip on d5, which will easily outweigh the doubled pawns.

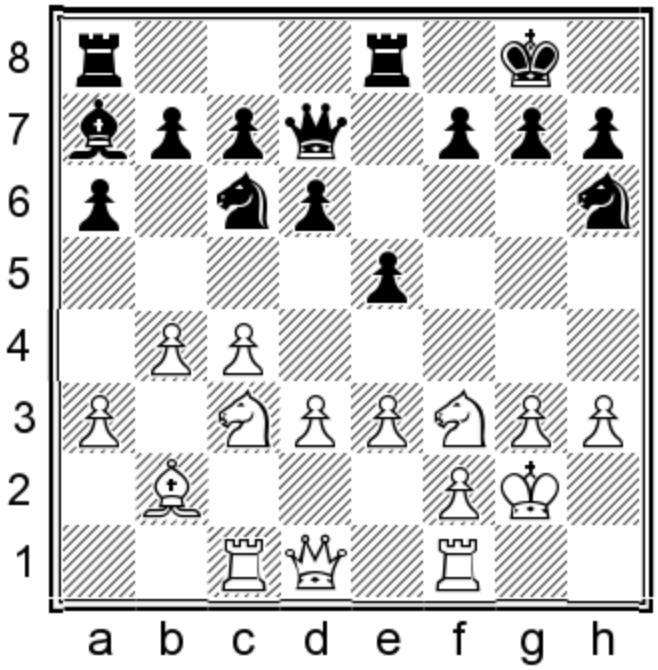
14...Ng4?!

This doesn't help matters, but 14...Nxe4 15.dxe4 should be a little better for White, followed by Nh4-f5 and/or c5, while continuing to leave Black with a small headache over the future of his remaining bishop.

15.h3 Nh6

Gawain was intending to meet 15...Bxe3!? with 16.Rc2 (16.hxg4 Bxc1 17.Qxc1 Qxg4 18.Rh1 is also quite good) 16...f5 17.hxg4 fxe4 18.dxe4 Ba7 when rather than his planned 19.Qd5+, 19.Nh4!? Nd4 20.Rc1 is a decent enough option followed by Nf5, g5 or 20...g6? 21.f4.

16.Nc3!



chesstouring.com

A further knight move, but now ...f5 won't come with tempo and White can jump into d5.

16...Nf5 17.Nd5 Nce7 18.e4!

Another well-timed move with Black unable to occupy d4 with a piece.

18...Nxd5 19.cxd5 Ne7

Something would quickly have given way in Black's position after 19...Nd4? 20.Bxd4 Bxd4 (or 20...exd4 21.Nh4) 21.Nxd4 exd4 22.Qg4!.

20.d4

We've seen this advance a few times with a pawn on d5 and, as often, it's a strong break.

20...Ng6?!

Black never manages to free his position after this, but even 20...exd4 21.Nxd4 looks quite unpalatable for him, when Qg4 is again an option and White might also consider pushing Harry to deprive the black knight of squares.

21.dxe5 dxe5

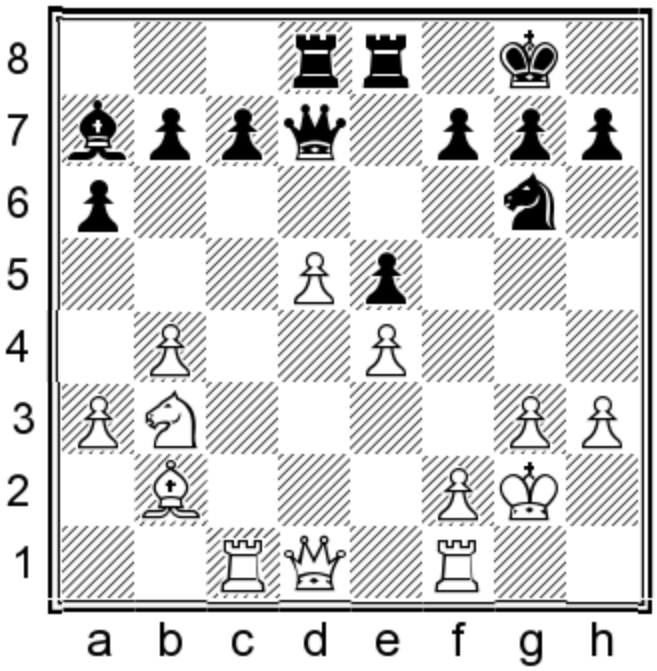
It would also have been fairly one-way traffic after 21...Nxe5 22.Bxe5 dxe5 23.a4 followed by Qb3, Rc4 and Rfc1.

22.Nd2

Heading for the queenside. 22.Rc4!? Rac8 23.Qc2 would also have been good, sooner or later forcing Black's bishop back to b8.

22...Rad8 23.Nb3!

chesstouring.com



Gawain is alert and avoids 23.Nc4?! c6! when Black would have obtained a somewhat greater degree of freedom.

23...c6?!

This will no longer liquidate a weakness. It was grim, but Black would have done better to have sat tight.

24.dxc6 Qe6 25.Qf3 bxc6 26.Nc5 Bxc5

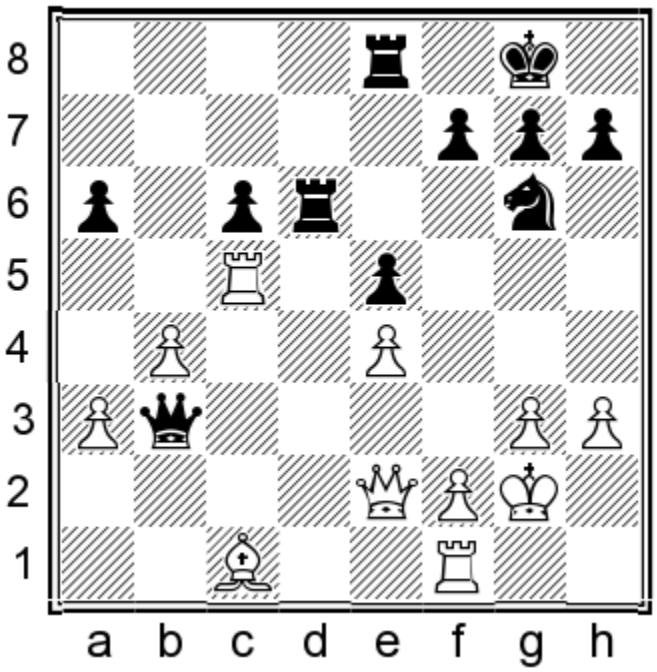
If 26...Qc8 27.Qe2, but 26...Qe7!? 27.Nxa6 Rd2 28.Bc3 Ra2 29.Ra1 Qg5 would at least have generated a bit of counterplay.

27.Rxc5 Rd2 28.Bc1!

Maintaining full control and, sooner or later, one of Black's queenside pawns is going to fall.

28...Rd6 29.Qe2 Qb3!?

chesstouring.com



30.Ra5!

Simple chess rather than allowing Black's devilish point, 30.Qxa6 Nf4+!, even if 31.Bxf4 (31.gxf4?? Rg6+ 32.Kh2 Qf3 would embarrassingly lead to mate) 31...exf4 32.gxf4 Rh6 33.Rh1 Rg6+ 34.Rg5 should also win.

30...Nf8 31.Be3 Ne6 32.Qxa6 Qc2 33.Rxe5!

Gawain is not to be bluffed.

33...f6 34.Rc1 Qb3

Unfortunately for Black, 34...Qxc1? runs into 35.Rxe6!.

35.Rxc6

White has calculated everything perfectly and the game is up for Pert.

35...fxe5 36.Rxd6 Nf8 37.Qc6 Qf7 38.Qd5 1-0

chesstouring.com

Theory 6C

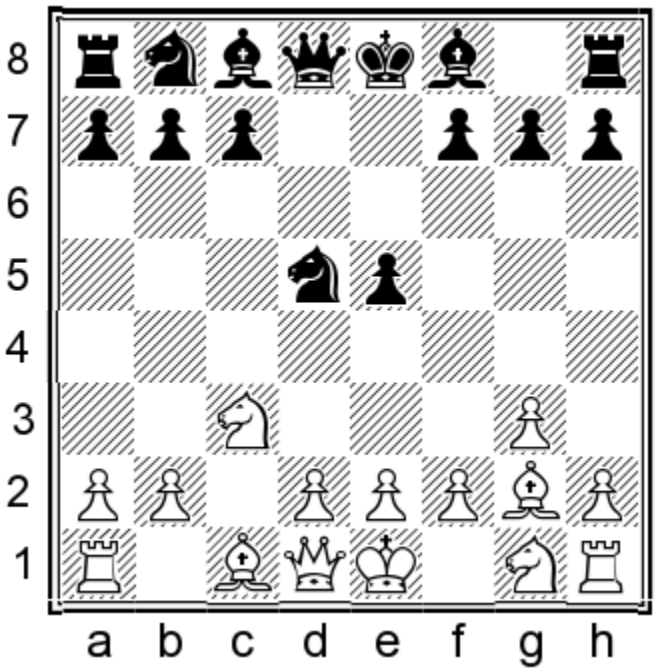
1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3 d5

A critical test as Black opts for a reversed Open Sicilian.

4.cxd5 Nxd5

Incidentally, 4...c6?! 5.dxc6 Nxc6 would be a better type of reversed Morra Gambit than when tried on move 2, but Black really shouldn't have too much for the pawn after 6.Bg2 Bc5 7.Nf3!: for instance, 7...0-0 (7...e4?! 8.Ng5 Bxf2+ is a tactic, but 9.Kxf2 Ng4+ 10.Kg1 Qxg5 11.Nxe4 Qd8 12.Nc3 0-0 13.h3 Nf6 14.Kh2 castled by hand, leaving Black devoid of compensation in J.Christiansen-Wiander, Halmstad 2014) 8.0-0 Qe7 9.d3 h6 10.a3 a5 11.Nd2 Be6 12.Nde4! Ba7 13.Nxf6+ Qxf6 14.Be3 and White was pretty much just a pawn up in Bajo Gutierrez-Aparicio Garcia, Oviedo 2008.

5.Bg2



chesstouring.com

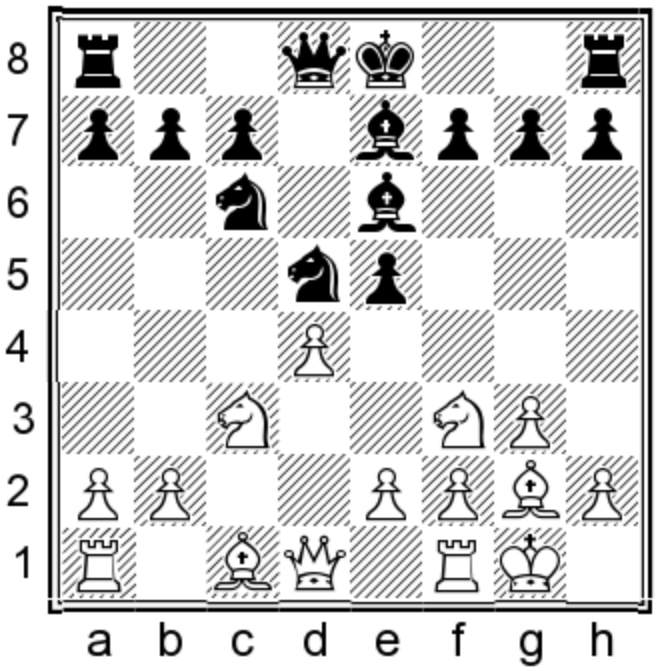
Thematic play thus far from White in what is, essentially, a reversed Accelerated Dragon.

5...Nb6

By some margin Black's main move, although the alternatives are by no means uncommon, especially at club level.

a) There 5...Be6?! is sometimes seen, defending the knight and developing, but after 6.Nf3 the bishop turns out to not be so well placed: 6...Nc6 (otherwise, 6...Bd6 7.d4! is just a rather strong break, and if 7...exd4 8.Nxd4 Nxc3 9.bxc3 when Black likely has nothing better than to suffer after 9...Bc8 10.Nb5) 7.0-0 Be7 (at least this prevents Ng5; 7...Bc5?! runs into 8.Nxe5! Nxe5 9.d4 with a clear plus, and if 9...Nxc3 10.bxc3 Qe7 11.dxc5 Qxc5 12.Qa4+ Bd7 13.Qd4; 7...Qd7 is also rather pleasant for White after 8.d4 or even 8.Ng5! Nxc3 9.bxc3 followed by collecting the bishop-pair, or 9...Bg4 10.Rb1 h6 11.Ne4 0-0-0 12.d3 f5 13.Nd2, intending Nc4 and Qb3 with heavy pressure against b7; while even 7...Nb6 can be met by 8.d4!, and if 8...exd4 9.Nb5 Bc5 10.Qc2 Bc4 11.Bf4 Bxb5 12.Qxc5 Qd5 13.Qa3 Nc4 14.Qb3 when Black finds his early activity at an end and his pieces somewhat uncoordinated, and seems to have nothing better than to defend the pretty miserable endgame which arises after 14...Nb6 15.Nxd4! Qxb3 16.Bxc6+ Bxc6 17.axb3 Nd5 18.Rfc1! Nxf4 19.gxf4 Kd7 20.Ra5, intending Rac5 and b4) 8.d4!.

chesstouring.com



This advance once again reveals the downside to Black's standard-looking development:

a1) 8...exd4 9.Nxd4 Nxd4 10.Qxd4 and now 10...Bf6? (10...Nxc3 11.Qxc3 0-0 improves, not that Black has enough for a pawn after 12.Bxb7 Rb8 13.Bg2 Bf6 14.Qa5) 11.Qa4+ is a relatively common trap, 11...c6 (or 11...Bd7 12.Qe4+ Ne7 13.Qxb7 Rb8 14.Qxa7, bagging two free pawns) 12.Nxd5 Bxd5 13.Rd1 b5 14.Qc2 Qc8 15.e4 Be6? 16.e5! already winning the house in Maletin-Tilicheev, Tomsk 2009.

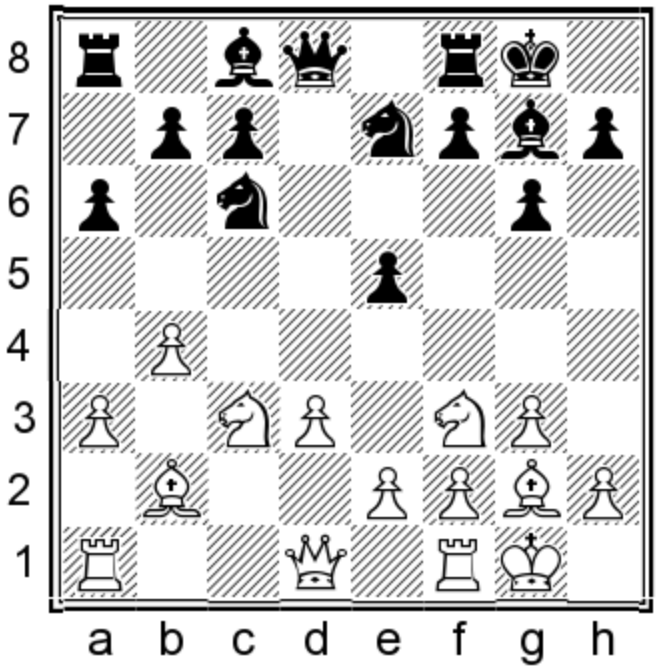
a2) Black also fails to equalise with 8...Nxc3 9.bxc3 when 9...e4 (or 9...exd4 10.cxd4 0-0 11.e4 with a dream centre) 10.Nd2 f5 11.Rb1 Rb8, as in Psakhis-Scetinin, Leeuwarden 1993, might be met by 12.f3! exf3 13.Rxf3 with a powerful initiative; Rb5 is one idea, 13...0-0 14.e4 another, after which 14...fxe4 15.Rxf8+ Bxf8 16.Nxe4 Bxa2 17.Ng5! (hoping for the classic smothered mate) 17...Kh8 18.Qh5 Bg8 19.Nf7+ Bxf7 20.Qxf7 leaves White with superb, lasting pressure for the pawn.

b) 5...c6 also defends the knight, but after 6.Nf3 White has much the smoother development, with 6...Bd6 7.0-0 0-0 8.d4! Nxc3 (8...exd4 9.Nxd5 cxd5 10.Nxd4 would be a lovely IQP scenario with Black devoid of

chesstouring.com

counterplay) 9.bxc3 Nd7 10.e4 Re8 11.Re1 leaving White doing well in Karlsson-Richards, Gausdal 2005, on account of his strong centre, with Qc2, Be3 and the probing a4 set to follow.

c) 5...Ne7 6.Nf3 Nbc6 wouldn't be such a bad approach were it not for 7.b4! which should secure an edge: 7...a6 (7...Nxb4? 8.Qa4+ Nbc6 9.Nxe5 Qd4 10.Qxd4 Nxd4 11.Rb1 is clearly not good news for Black) 8.Bb2 g6 (8...Nf5 9.0-0 Nfd4 10.Nxd4 exd4 11.Nd5 Be6 12.Nf4 left Black under pressure in Erdos-Istratescu, Achaea 2012, where White was again trying to hunt down the bishop-pair, as well as toying with breaking with e3) 9.a3 Bg7 10.d3 0-0 11.0-0.

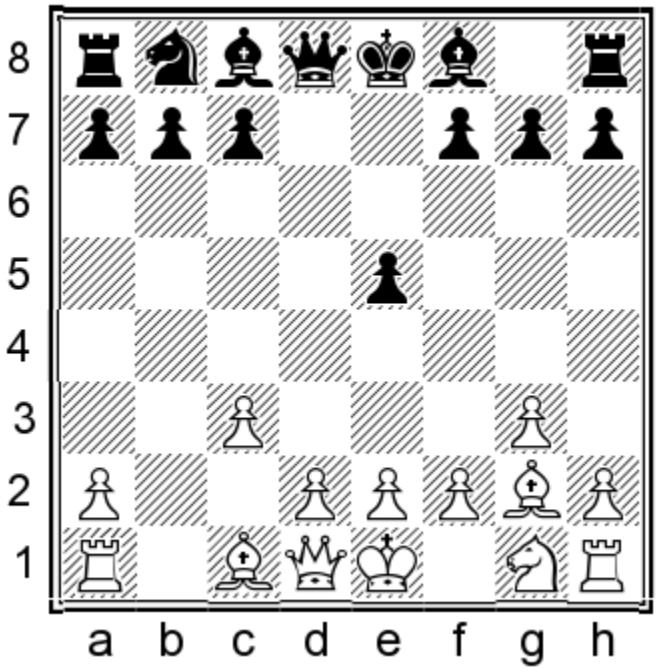


This looks like a pretty reasonable reversed Dragon for White, who might obtain some pressure with Na4-c5 (or Ne4-c5): for example, 11...h6 12.Rc1 Be6 (Quinteros-Franco Ocampos, Buenos Aires 1979) 13.Ne4 b6 14.Ned2!? (immediately transferring the knight; Dejan Bojkov mainly focussed on the preliminary 14.Qc2 in his largely excellent *Beating the English* Chessable course) 14...Qd7 15.Nc4 when it's not so easy for Black to deal with the pressure against e5 and the ugly 15...f6 (15...Bxc4 would hope for 16.Rxc4? e4!, but after 16.dxc4 White must be doing well with

chesstouring.com

such an unopposed light-squared bishop) 16.Qc2 should leave White for choice after Rfd1 and d4.

d) Black's best alternative to 5...Nb6 is probably 5...Nxc3 6.bxc3, not that White should mind about the extra central pawn and control over d4 he has been given.



Once again, the d4 advance will be key, with 6...Bd6 (otherwise, 6...Nc6 7.Nf3 will transpose if Black goes 7...Bd6, which he probably should as 7...e4 8.Ng1 f5 9.Nh3 g5?! 10.0-0 Bg7 left him over-extended in Adorjan-Timman, Reggio Emilia 1984, where 11.f3! would have been strong, and if 11...e3 12.d4) 7.Nf3 Nc6 (or 7...0-0 8.d4 Nd7 9.0-0 with the easier development for White, not to mention ideas of Qc2 and e4) 8.0-0 0-0 9.d4 h6 (9...exd4 10.cxd4 Bg4 11.h3 Bf5 12.d5!? Ne7 13.Bb2 f6 14.Nd4 left White dominating the centre in Pirc-Puc, Novi Sad 1945, while 9...Qe7 might be met by 10.Rb1 Rb8 11.Qc2 followed by e4, h3 and Be3) 10.e4 Bg4 11.h3 Bh5 12.Be3 looking rather nice for White on account of his strong centre, Black's lack of counterplay and the half-open b-file.

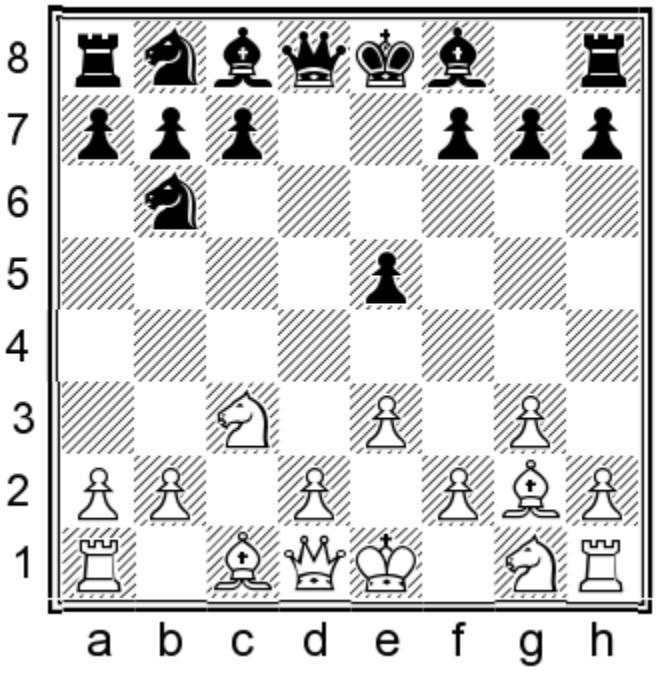
Instead after the exchange on c3, 6...c5 constructs a Maroczy Bind, but one where Black doesn't control d4 and 7.Nf3 Nc6 8.0-0 Be7 9.d4!? exd4

chesstouring.com

10.cxd4 cxd4 11.Bb2 Bf6 12.Ba3 was a decent pawn sacrifice in Prithu-Kovchan, Porticcio 2019, where Black could find nothing better than 12...Be7 13.Bxe7 Qxe7 14.Nxd4 Nxd4 15.Qxd4 0-0 when 16.Qe4!? Qxe4 17.Bxe4 Rb8 18.a4 Be6 19.Rfc1 would have supplied a small but definite edge thanks to White's more active pieces and extra centre pawn. Finally, 6...Bc5 can be met by 7.e3, as per our main line, or the sneaky 7.Qa4+!?, hoping for 7...Bd7?? 8.Qc4 with a decisive double attack, while 6...c6 7.Nf3 gives White ideas of a quick d4 or 7...e4? 8.Nd4 f5 9.d3 with some lead in development.

Returning to the main line, 5...Nb6:

6.e3!?



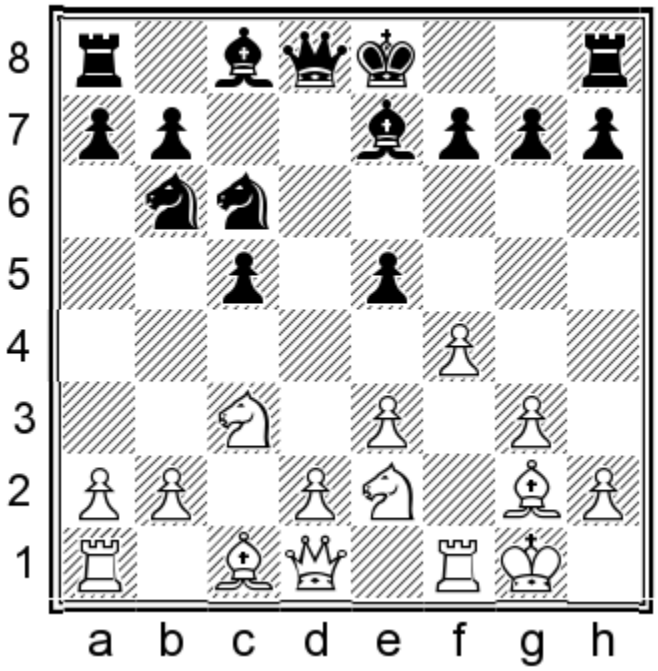
Historically White always played 6.Nf3, but over the past decade the dynamic text move has begin to receive attention, attracting the interest of such players as Mamedyarov, Nakamura and Nepomniachtchi. White refuses to obstruct his bishop, intending Nge2 often followed by a swift break in the centre with d4 or f4. The resulting play is dynamic, fairly easy to grasp and should catch plenty of opponents out.

chesstouring.com

6...Be7

Black's main alternative to 6...Nc6 when we'll see the main line, 7.Nge2 Be7 8.0-0 0-0 9.f4, in our next section. Black has also been known to try:

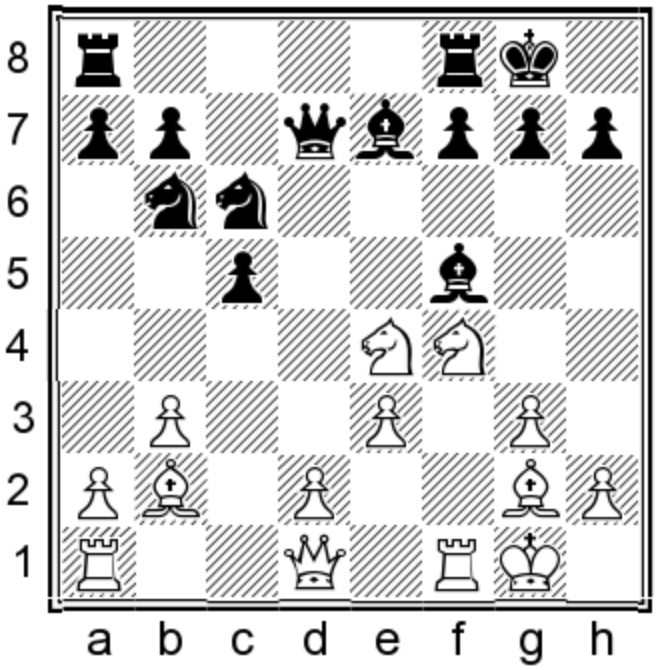
a) 6...c5 goes for a Maroczy Bind and clamp on the position, but White can hit back with 7.Nge2 Nc6 8.0-0 Be7 (White should also meet 8...Bd6 with 9.f4 – 9.d4 may also supply an edge – 9...0-0 10.b3 followed by Bb2 and Ne4, with good piece play) 9.f4!.



The right break and one which already leaves Black with a tricky choice, as we can appreciate from 9...exf4 (now White's knight enters the game with some effect, but 9...0-0 10.fxe5 Nxe5 11.b3 isn't a panacea for Black, and if 11...Nd3 12.Nf4 Rb8 13.Nxd3 Qxd3 14.Be4 Qd6 15.Qc2 when White already has the initiative, and 15...h6 16.Bb2 Bh3 17.Rf2 is a fairly typical scenario for this line, where Black is slightly low on counterplay, his kingside a target and Ne2-f4 on its way, or here 12...Nxc1 13.Rxc1 Rb8 14.Qc2, intending Ne4, Be4 or possibly just doubling rooks on the f-file) 10.Nxf4 0-0 11.b3 (calm development once again and do note too how Black has problems finding a good role for his light-squared bishop and slightly offside knight on b6) 11...Bf5 (11...Bf6? 12.Ba3! Nb4 might well be

chesstouring.com

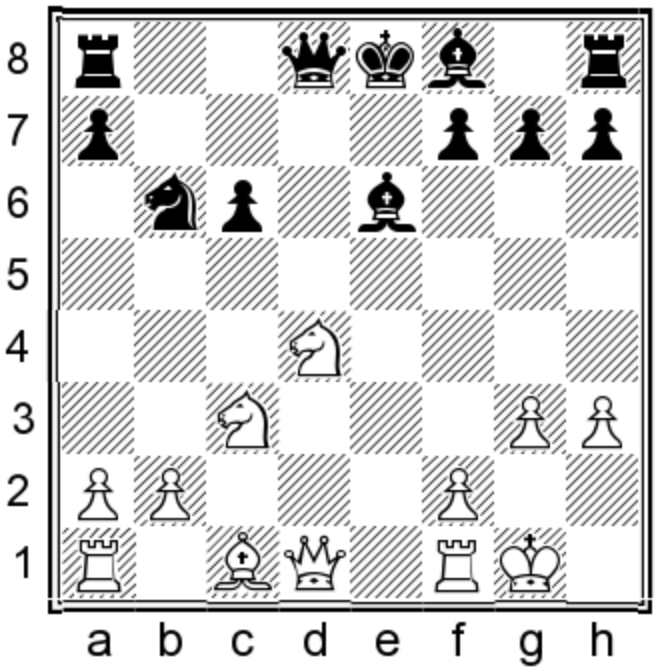
described as pseudo-activity, with 13.Rc1 a5 14.Ne4 already forcing the win of a pawn in Nevednichy-Sukandar, Golden Sands 2014) 12.Bb2 Qd7 13.Ne4.



White's bishops are beautifully placed and he can now start to create threats: for example, 13...Rad8 (once again, 13...Nb4?! doesn't look so wise and after 14.a3 N4d5 – 14...Nd3?? simply blunders away the bishop on f5, in view of 15.Nxd3 Bxe4 16.Bxe4 f5 17.Ne5 – 15.Nd3 Rac8 16.Rc1 Bxe4 17.Bxe4 f5 18.Bg2 Rcd8 19.Ne5 Qe6 20.Qc2 Black was certainly suffering in Turov-Potapov, Tashkent 2012, where Bh3 followed by e4 was but one strong idea for White) 14.Rf2 Nb4 15.Qf1!, which was a neat switch with the queen in Nakamura-Navara, Wijk aan Zee 2012, as we'll see below.

Earlier in this line, 8...Bg4?! 9.h3 Be6 would instead rather walk straight into 10.d4! cxd4 11.exd4 exd4 12.Bxc6+! bxc6 13.Nxd4, swapping off a very important bishop for a serious initiative.

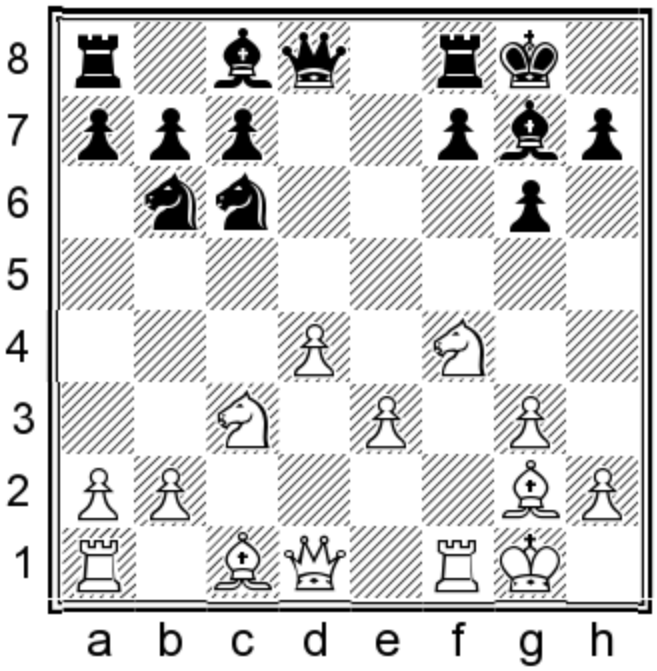
chesstouring.com



Indeed, after 13...Bd7 (13...Bxh3? fails to 14.Re1+ Be7 15.Bg5, and if 15...f6 16.Bxf6 gxf6 17.Qh5+) 14.Qf3 Rc8 (Black likely had to try 14...Qf6 15.Re1+ Be7 16.Qxf6 gxf6 17.Bf4, extremely grim though it would have been) 15.Re1+ Be7 16.Bg5 f6 in Gonda-Nikcevic, Sibenik 2012, White might have crashed through with 17.Bxf6! gxf6 18.Qxf6 Rf8 19.Qg7 when there's simply no defence as White brings up the reserves: for example, 19...Bxh3 20.Rad1 Nd5 21.Nxc6! Rxc6 22.Rxd5 Rd6 23.Rde5 Rd7 24.Nd5, forcing mate.

b) 6...g6 is a better approach from Black, after which White might consider 7.b3!? or just continue in standard fashion with 7.Nge2 Bg7 when the immediate 8.f4 is possible, and if 8...exf4 (Black usually releases the tension so, rather than face a potentially powerful pawn centre after 8...0-0 9.fxe5 Bxe5 10.d4 Bg7 11.0-0) 9.Nxf4 0-0 (9...c5?! again only really helps White, 10.0-0 0-0 11.b3 Nc6 12.Ba3 Nb4 13.Rc1 already taking strong aim in Nepomniachtchi-Lintchevski, Tyumen 2012) 10.0-0 Nc6 (standard development looks best as 10...c6 11.b3 Re8 can be met harmoniously with 12.Bb2 and 13.Qc2, or with Tony Kosten's suggestion of 12.Ba3 Na6 13.Ne4!?, eyeing the hole on d6 while hoping for 13...Bxa1? 14.Qxa1 Nd7 15.Qc3 with a crushing attack down the long diagonal) 11.d4.

chesstouring.com



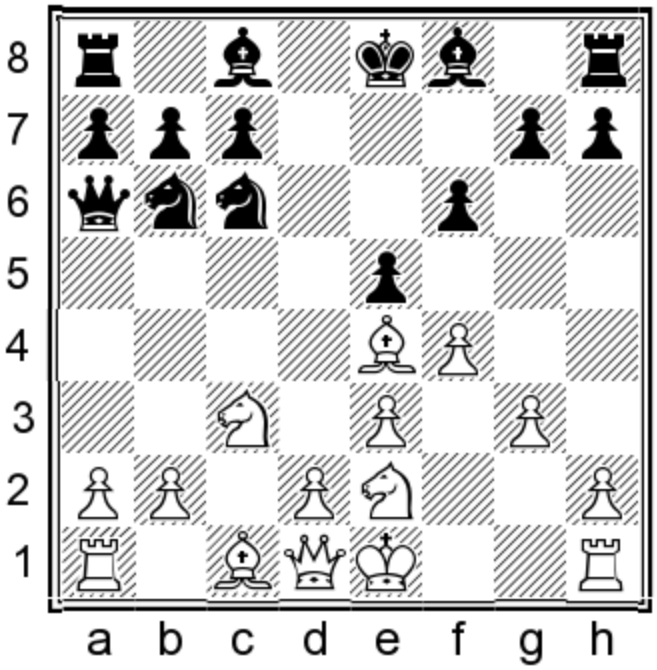
The dangers of routine play were demonstrated in Cuenca Jimenez-Pilgaard, Granada 2014, where 11...Bf5 12.Rf2 Qd7 13.Qf1 Qc8?! 14.Bd2 Ne7 15.Rc1 c6 16.a4 a5 17.e4! left White dominating the whole board. Instead, with 11...Ne7 Black wants to block the long diagonal with ...c6 and bring his knight to d5 or f5, but after 12.Qb3 (reminding Black that f7 might become a target and the precursor to a queenside advance; *Stockfish*'s space-grabbing plan of 12.g4!? c6 13.h3 might also be considered) 12...c6 13.a4! a5 (naturally Black has no desire to allow a disruptive 14.a5) 14.Bd2 Bf5 15.Rad1 Nec8 (possibly not best, but it's surprisingly hard to suggest a great move for Black, as we can see too from 15...Qc7 16.Rc1) 16.Bc1!? Qe7 while White was content to continue manoeuvring in Artemiev-Brodsky, Tyumen 2012, he might have simply begun to expand: 17.e4!? Bg4 18.Nce2 c5 (how else to obtain any counterplay as Black, as 18...Qb4 19.Qxb4 axb4 20.b3 leaves White in control with h3 next up) 19.dxc5 Qxc5+ 20.Be3 Qc4 21.Qxc4 Nxc4 22.Bc5 Re8 23.b3 should be slightly better for White, on account of Black's still misplaced knight on c8 and White's ability to use the outpost on d5.

c) 6...h5?! wouldn't be totally ridiculous in a blitz game, but after 7.Nf3! Nc6 8.d4 exd4 9.exd4 White will enjoy the safer king and might well seize

chesstouring.com

a strong early initiative, as with 9...Be7 10.0-0 h4?! 11.d5 Nb4 12.Ne5.

d) 6...Qd3!? is a better creative try and after 7.Nge2 (Bacrot's 7.Qe2 isn't totally ridiculous either) 7...Nc6 8.f4 f6 (Black should strongpoint e5; 8...Bb4?! 9.fxe5 Nxe5 would just have left White doing pretty well in Aronian-Nepomniachtchi, Moscow 2019, had he gone 10.0-0 0-0 – or 10...Bg4 11.h3! Bxc3 12.hxg4 Bb4 13.Nf4 Qd7 14.g5 followed by d4 with the initiative and bishop-pair – 11.Nf4 Qd8 12.d4 Ng6 13.Nd3 Be7 14.b3 followed by Bb2 with a pleasant edge and even ideas of advancing Harry, and 8...Nb4? is nothing to worry about on account of 9.0-0 Qc2 10.fxe5 Qxd1 11.Rxd1 Nd3 12.Nb5 Kd8 13.Rf1, causing Black a serious amount of disruption, and not here 9...Nc2?? 10.Be4) 9.Be4 Qa6 a rather original position arose in Mamedyarov-Ganguly, Doha 2015.



Black would like to play ...Nb4, so 10.a3!? makes sense, and if 10...Bg4 (10...Bh3?! might look more of a worry, but the tactics favour White after 11.fxe5! Nxe5 12.Qc2 0-0-0 13.d4 Nc6 14.Nf4, beginning to drive Black backwards, or 11...fxe5? 12.Nf4! exf4 13.Qh5+ g6 14.Qxh3) 11.h3 Be6 12.Rb1! (readying the b-pawn for action) 12...0-0-0 13.b4. This is a fascinating position badly in need of a test. Clearly Black's queen isn't too

chesstouring.com

happy and he almost certainly has to go 13...Ne7 when we spent an enjoyable hour or so analysing 14.d4, which is just very unclear and perhaps not as good as the forcing 14.b5!? Qa5 15.Qc2. White has ideas of f5, as well as d3 and Bd2, so Black would surely try 15...f5 16.Bg2 e4 17.Nd4 Bc4 when, yes, there is a bit of a hole on d3, but White can go 18.Bf1 or even 18.Nb3!? Bxb3 19.Rxb3 Nd7 20.0-0 Nc5 21.Rb1 Nd3 22.Bb2, which is just extremely unclear. Notably, though, *Lc0* wants to exchange on b2, not particularly caring for Black's position after Ba1, followed by g4 or Ne2-d4.

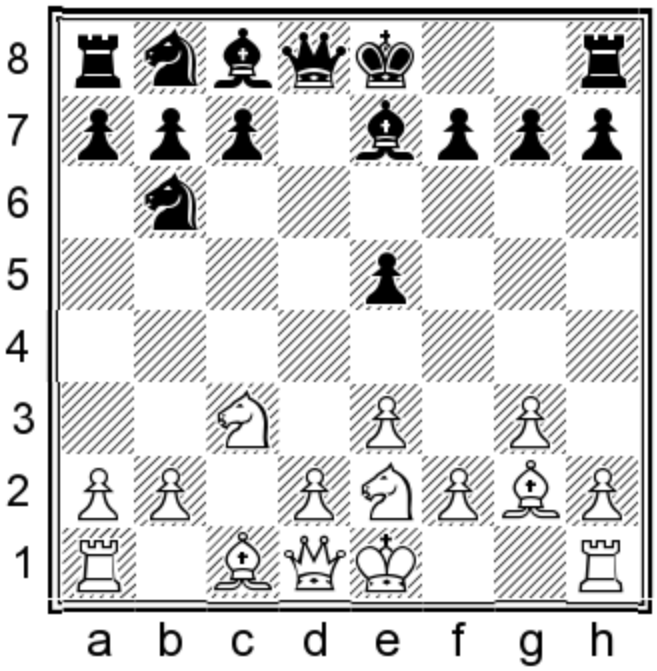
e) The slightly strange 6...Bb4 was once played by Fedoseev, and after the 7.Nge2 Nc6 8.0-0 0-0 of Goganov-Fedoseev, Moscow 2016, there was no reason not to go 9.f4!?, and if 9...Bf5!? (9...Bg4 is, as ever, well enough met by 10.h3) 10.Ne4, keeping Black's bishop out of d3, and if 10...exf4 11.Nxf4 Re8 12.d3 followed by a3, after which White can always complete development with Nf2, e4 and Be3.

f) Likewise, 6...Bd6 7.Nge2 0-0 8.0-0 c6 9.f4 was quite effective in Dvirnyy-Marinelli, Condino 2014, where 9...f5?! might have been met by 10.fxe5 Bxe5 11.d4 Bf6 12.Nf4 followed by Qb3+ or b3 and Ba3, with putting a piece on h5 also very much an idea.

Returning to 6...Be7:

7.Nge2

chesstouring.com



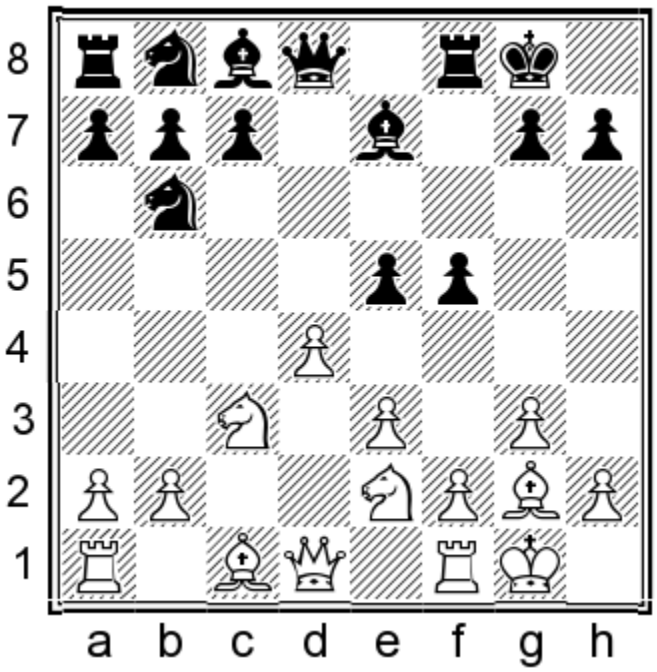
7...0-0

Natural and likely best. Otherwise, 7...c5 8.0-0 Nc6 9.f4 would take us back to quite a pleasant position for White, as we saw above, while 7...N6d7?! 8.0-0 0-0 9.d4 c6 10.Qc2 exd4 11.Nxd4 Nf6 12.Rd1 followed by e4 left White with the somewhat smoother development in Bocharov-Sachdev, Jakarta 2012, and 7...h5 can be met by 8.f4 or the calm 8.0-0!? h4 9.d4! (classically reacting to the flank attack in the centre) 9...exd4 (9...hxg3 10.fxg3 is a tempting recapture, and if 10...Nc6 11.d5) 10.Nxd4 c6 11.b3 Na6 12.Bb2 Nc7 13.Qf3!, which maintained control with ideas of Rfd1 and Nf5 in Navara-Sevian, Wijk aan Zee 2015.

8.0-0 c6

Blunting the long diagonal so is Black's main alternative to 8...Nc6 9.f4, which we'll see in our next section. Otherwise, 8...f5?! is rather well met by 9.d4!.

chesstouring.com

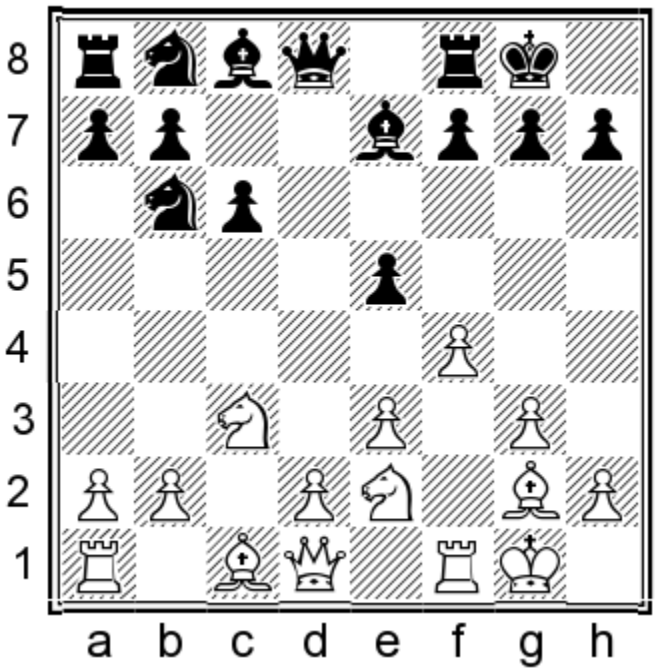


Following 9...exd4 (9...e4 10.f3 exf3 11.Bxf3 c6 12.Nf4 looks quite pleasant for White, perhaps followed by b3, Bb2, Qc2 and Rad1) 10.exd4 Bf6 White might just develop with 11.Be3 and 12.Nf4, while a good case was made too for 11.d5!? N8d7 12.Nf4 Ne5 13.Re1 Re8 14.Nh5 with strong pressure in Turov-Brandenburg, Wijk aan Zee 2012.

Sometimes Black tries something else, but 8...Na6?! 9.f4 is thematic and after 9...exf4 10.Nxf4 c6 11.d4 c5 12.b3 Nb4 13.Bb2 cxd4 14.exd4 Nc6? (14...Bf6 15.d5 Re8 16.a3 Na6 17.Qc2 would have been pretty grim for Black, but was likely required) 15.d5 Ne5 16.Ne4 Black was simply getting crushed in C.Horvath-Solomon, Amantea 2014, just as he was after 8...Kh8?! 9.f4 exf4 10.Nxf4 Nc6 11.d4 Bd7 12.b3 Rb8 13.Bb2 Qc8 14.Qe2 Bg4 15.Qf2, which was a classic case of excellent central control versus a lack of counterplay in Wieczorek-Kaczmarek, Chorzow 2019. And, finally, do note that 8...Bg4? can just be met by 9.Bxb7, and if 9...N8d7 10.Bg2! with an extra pawn.

9.f4!

chesstouring.com



Our favourite advance, although it should be said that White has also done quite well in practice with 9.d4 exd4 10.Nxd4, and 9.b3 is another quite good move.

9...N8d7

Maintaining the tension to avoid allowing White to dominate with 9...exf4 10.Nxf4 N8d7 11.d4 when in Galliamova-Kosintseva, Moscow 2012, after 11...Nf6 12.e4 Bg4 (12...c5!? 13.e5 Bg4 can be met in a few ways, including 14.Qe1!? Qxd4+ 15.Kh1 Nfd7 16.e6!, which looks rather risky for Black and White will be able to regain his pawns with interest after 16...Ne5 17.h3!? Bxe6 18.Nxe6 fxe6 19.Bf4) 13.Qd3 Nh5 White had a few reasonable options, including 14.Be3 Nxf4 15.gxf4!? with a rather imposing centre and even ideas of Kh1 and Rg1, as well as the d5 break.

10.b3

Calm and thematic development, and maintaining the tension looks even better than 10.fxe5 Nxe5 11.d4 Ng6 12.b3.

chesstouring.com

10...a5!?

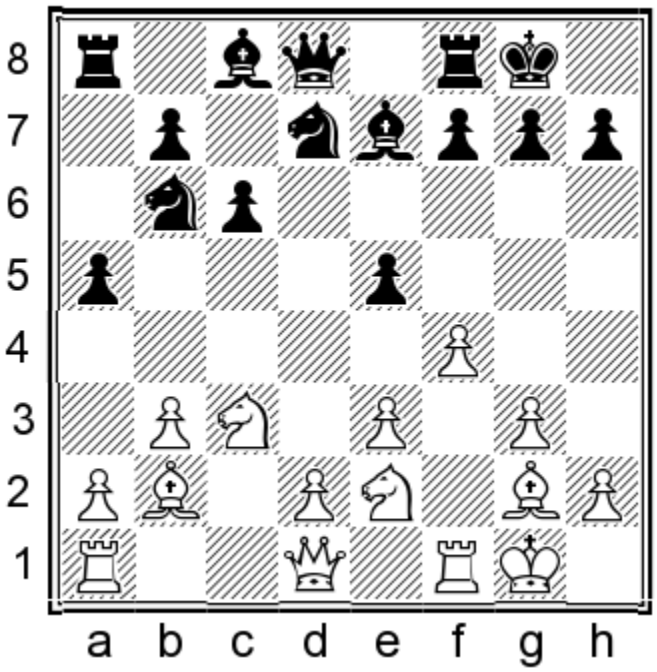
Black's most common try in practice, aiming to make good use of his knight on b6 to obtain some counterplay.

The text is by no means forced, but 10...exf4 11.Nxf4 Ne5 can at least be met by the direct 12.d4 Bg4 13.Qc2 Ng6 when 14.Nd3! is an important retreat, keeping pieces on and so leaving the black knight not so happily placed on g6. T.Kosintseva-Ruan Lufei, Ankara 2012, continued 14...Qd7 15.Ne4 Rad8 and now 16.Nec5 Qc7 17.Bb2 Nd5 18.Rae1 would have maintained control and an edge.

A more ambitious idea is 10...f5?!, but this can be met well enough by 11.Bb2 e4 (11...Bf6 12.Qc2 e4 13.g4! would be similar) 12.g4!, destroying the pawn chain. Once again, Black might eye the hole on d3, but 12...Nc5 (as in Dvirnyy-Romanishin, Forni di Sopra 2014; 12...fxg4 13.Nxe4 Nf6 14.Qc2 would just be quite nice for White, and if 14...Bf5 15.Nxf6+ Bxf6 16.e4, as is 12...g6 13.gxf5 gxf5 14.Kh1 followed by some combination of Ng3, Rg1 and Bh3) 13.gxf5! Nd3 (13...Bxf5 14.Ng3 Nd3 15.Qb1 Nxb2 16.Qxb2 transposes) 14.Qb1 Nxb2 15.Qxb2 Bxf5 16.Ng3 Bg6 17.Bxe4 is just an extra pawn for White, as shown by Tony Kosten.

11.Bb2

chesstouring.com



Calm play. 11.Qc2 is also a decent approach, as even might be 11.fxe5!? Nxe5 12.d4, but we would prefer to avoid the weakening 11.a4 even if it does prevent Black's next.

11...a4

Consistent. Black might also eye the hole, but 11...Nc5 12.fxe5 Nd3 13.Qb1 is safe enough for White, who might well emerge with an edge after 13...Nxe5 14.Ne4 Ng6 15.Bd4 followed by Qb2.

12.Nxa4!

A much better choice than 12.bxa4? Nc5.

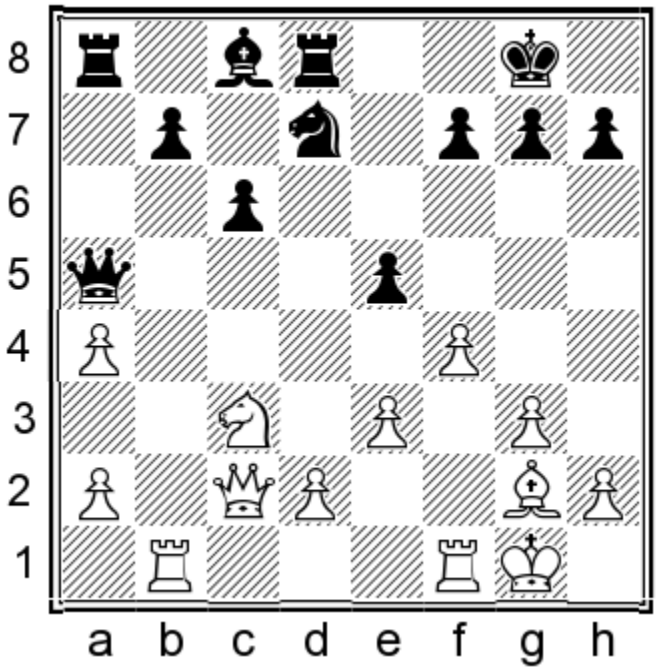
12...Nxa4 13.bxa4 Qa5 14.Bc3 Bb4

Black's problem is again 14...Qxa4 15.fxe5 when he shouldn't have enough for his pawn after 15...Qxd1 16.Rfxd1 Nc5 17.Bb4.

We've followed the game Hasselmeyer-Avotins, correspondence 2013, where **15.Rb1** would have been sensible, and if **15...Bxc3 16.Nxc3 Rd8**

chesstouring.com

17.Qc2.



White is now ready to go forwards with **N**e4 and even after **17...exf4 18.Rxf4 Ne5 19.Rfb4!?** should be at least slightly for choice, and if **19...Nd3 20.Rd4** when Black should retreat the knight rather than allow **20...Bf5?! 21.Ne4 Rxd4 22.exd4 Nb4 23.Qc3**, which simplifies to a somewhat favourable endgame for White.

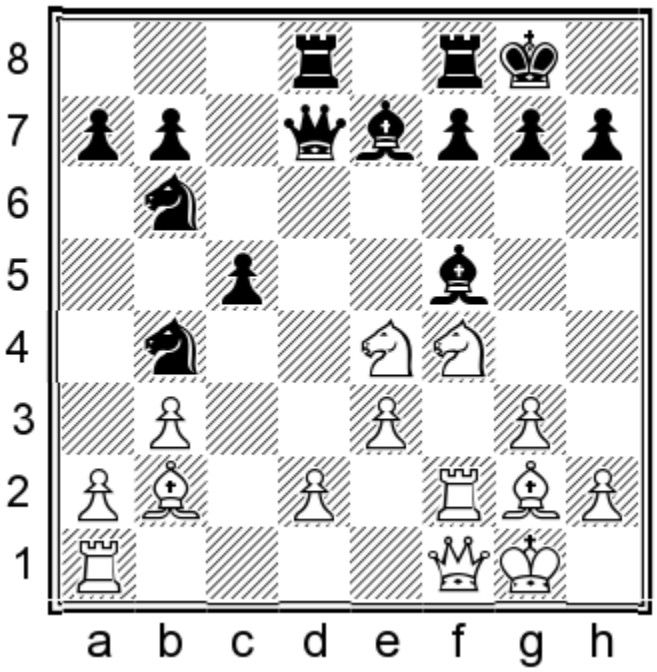
Game 26
H.Nakamura-D.Navara
Wijk aan Zee 2012

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2 Nb6 6.e3 c5 7.Nge2 Nc6 8.0-0 Be7 9.f4!

Our favourite advance and in a position where it certainly packs a punch.

9...exf4 10.Nxf4 0-0 11.b3 Bf5 12.Bb2 Qd7 13.Ne4 Rad8 14.Rf2 Nb4 15.Qf1!

chesstouring.com



A fine square for the queen, as well as a useful one in the near future, since the pressure down the f-file prevents Black from playing ...Nd3 or ...N6d5.

15...Bxe4

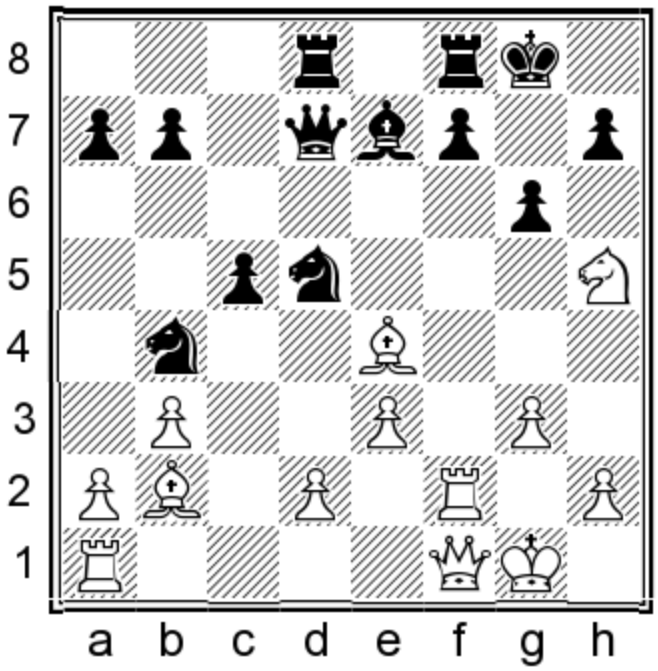
A rather committal decision. Black later preferred to rule out ideas of Nh5 with 15...Bg6 in Griffiths-Howell, 4NCL 2012, but here 16.Rc1! would have been quite effective, as shown by Chessable's own John Bartholomew, and if 16...Rc8 (Black should certainly avoid 16...Nxa2? 17.Nxc5 Bxc5 18.Rxc5 Nb4 19.Qa1, while John liked White's attacking potential with the bishop-pair after 16...Bxe4 17.Bxe4 f5 18.Bb1!?) 17.h4! Nxa2 18.Ra1 Nb4 19.Rxa7 Nc6 20.Ra1 Nb4 (back again, but it's hard to spot anything definitely better) 21.h5 when Black really must concede the two bishops, unpalatable though his position would then be, as 21...Bf5 22.h6! g6 23.Nf6+ Bxf6 24.Bxf6 simply creates too major a weakness.

16.Bxe4 N6d5

chesstouring.com

Black attempts to trade pieces. Perhaps 16...f5 17.Bg2 g6 was a better try, although after 18.Re1!? Bf6 19.Bxf6 Rxf6 20.e4 fxe4 21.Rxe4 White has very much seized the initiative and threatens Bh3.

17.Nh5 g6



Not a move the amiable Czech no.1 would have enjoyed making, but 17...f6? would have been poleaxed by 18.a3 Nc6 19.Bf5! Qd6 20.Qd3 with a crushing attack.

18.a3

Natural and pretty good, but the remarkable 18.Rf5!? was also possible, since 18...gxf5? fails to 19.Bxf5 Qd6 (or 19...Qc7 20.Bxh7+! Kxh7 21.Qf5+ Kg8 22.Qg4+) 20.Qh3 when there's simply no defence to all the threats.

18...Na6?

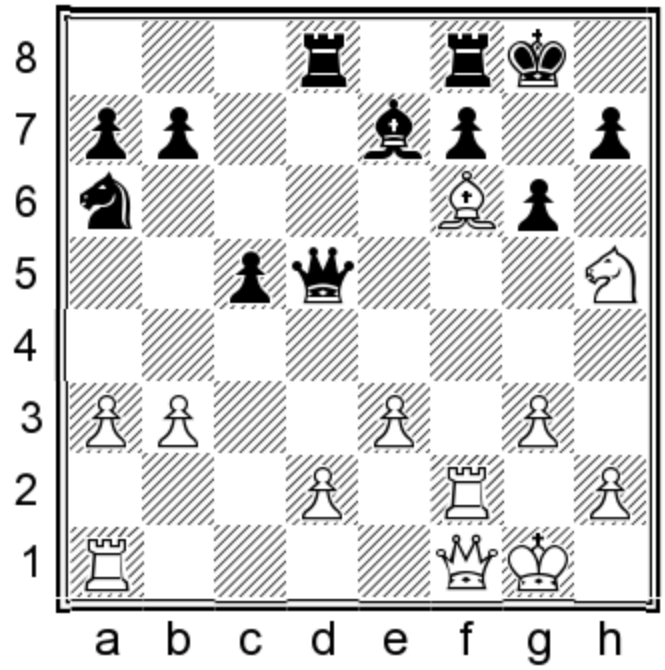
chesstouring.com

The decisive mistake. Black absolutely had to go 18...f5! when 19.Bf3 followed by Nf4 is only a pleasant edge for White, although Navara may also have disliked 19.Bxf5!? Rxf5 20.Rxf5 Qxf5 21.Qxf5 gxf5 22.axb4 Nxb4 23.Rxa7 Rxd2 24.Rxb7 Rxb2 25.Rxe7 when only White has winning chances.

19.Bxd5!

An unstereotyped and extremely strong exchange.

19...Qxd5 20.Bf6!



The point of White's play. The arrival of his knight on f6 will prove ruinous.

20...Qd6 21.Bxe7 Qxe7 22.Nf6+ Kg7 23.Qc4

Nakamura is quite deadly in such positions, as he threatens Qc3, as well as Qh4.

23...Qe5 24.Raf1 h5

chesstouring.com

This allows a nice finish. Another might have been 24...Rd6 25.Nxh7! Kxh7 26.Rxf7+ Rxf7 27.Rxf7+ Kh6 28.Qh4+ Qh5 29.Qf4+, picking up the rook on d6.

25.Nxh5+! Qxh5

Of course, 25...gxh5 26.Rxf7+ Rxf7 27.Qxf7+ Kh8 would fail to 28.Rf6, and if 28...Qg5 29.Rf5.

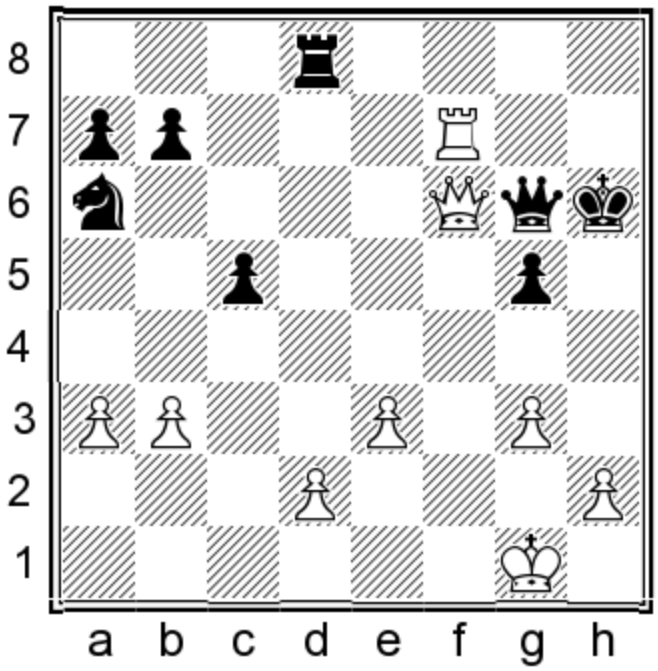
26.Rxf7+ Rxf7 27.Rxf7+ Kh6

The only real try in view of 27...Kh8 28.Qc3+.

28.Qf4+ g5

If 28...Qg5 29.Rh7+!.

29.Qf6+ Qg6



30.Qf1!

chesstouring.com

Lovely play from Nakamura, threatening Qh3+, as well as Rf6. There's simply no defence.

30...Qh5 31.Rxb7 c4

Now Black loses his rook, but it would have been mate after 31...Rxd2 32.Qf6+ Qg6 33.Qh8+.

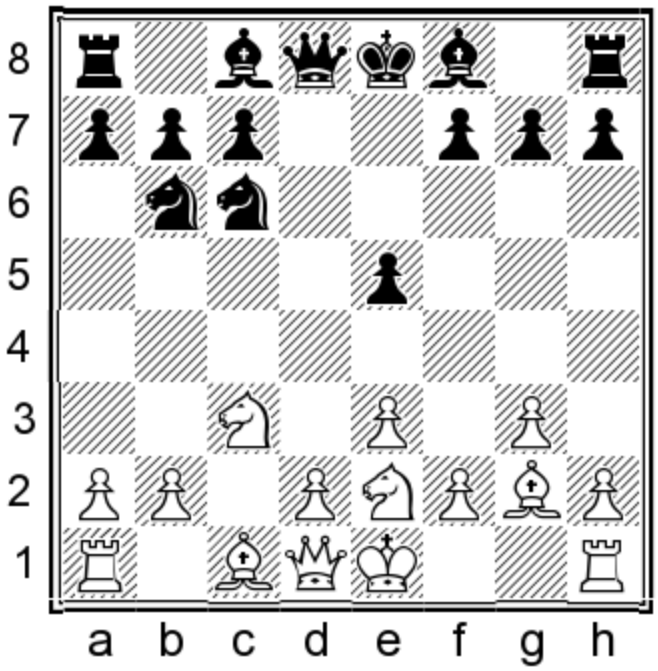
32.Qf6+ Qg6 33.Qxd8 Qb1+ 34.Kf2 1-0

Theory 6D

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2 Nb6 6.e3 Nc6

Just a quick reminder that 6...Be7 7.Nge2 0-0 8.0-0 Nc6 9.f4 would be but another route into our main line here.

7.Nge2



7...Be7

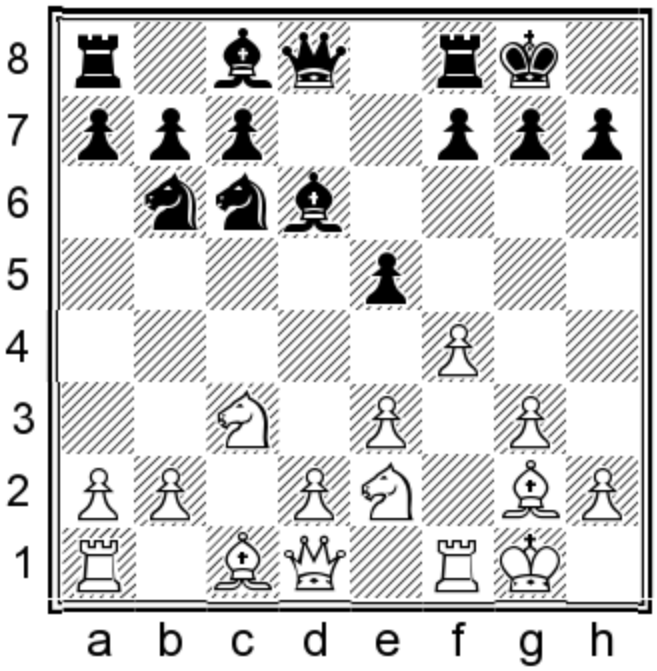
chesstouring.com

Black develops just as he does in the main (Nf3) lines. He has also been known to try:

a) We analysed the rather complex but fun line 7...Qd3!? 8.f4 in note ‘d’ to Black’s 6th move in Line 6C.

b) We can just imagine 7...Nb4 tempting a few opponents, but it’s well enough met by 8.d4 or our standard 8.0-0 Nd3 9.f4, after which 9...exf4?! (9...c6 10.fxe5 Nc4!? 11.Nf4 Ncxe5 12.Nxd3 Nxd3 13.Qb3 Qd7 14.Ne2 and Nf4 is only a little better for White) 10.Nxf4 Nxf4 11.gxf4 Be7 was Tan Zhongyi-Padmini, Abu Dhabi 2016, where White logically made a second fianchetto and 12.d4!? 0-0 13.e4 would probably have been even stronger, intending simply f5 and e5.

c) 7...Bd6 8.0-0 0-0 9.f4! can be compared with our main line and now:

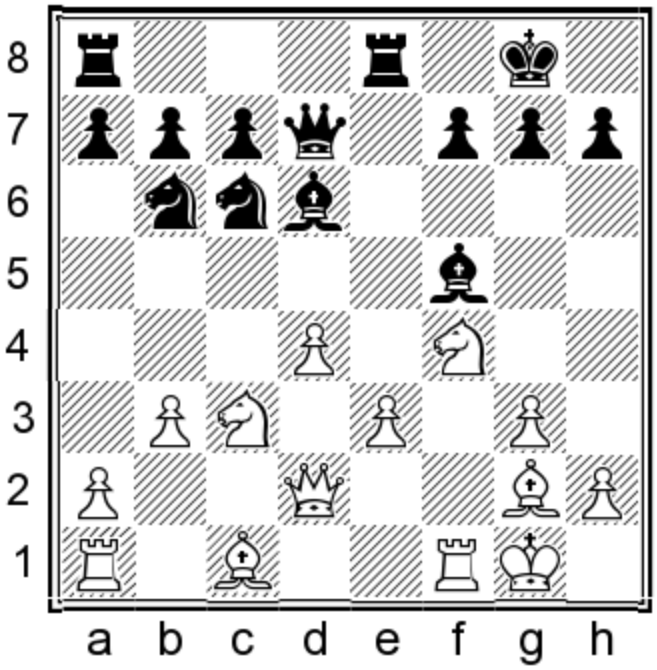


c1) 9...f5 10.fxe5 Nxe5 11.Nf4 Qe8?! 12.a4! c6 (12...a5 13.Nb5 would also be awkward for Black) 13.a5 Nbd7 14.d4 saw White expanding rather powerfully in Swiercz-Pashikian, Martuni 2013.

c2) 9...exf4 10.Nxf4 Bf5 (developing so seems best and Black has suffered after the alternatives: 10...f5 11.b3 Ne7 12.Bb2 c6 13.Nce2!? Ng6 14.Qc2 Qe8 15.Rae1 left White well centralised and Black a little passive in

chesstouring.com

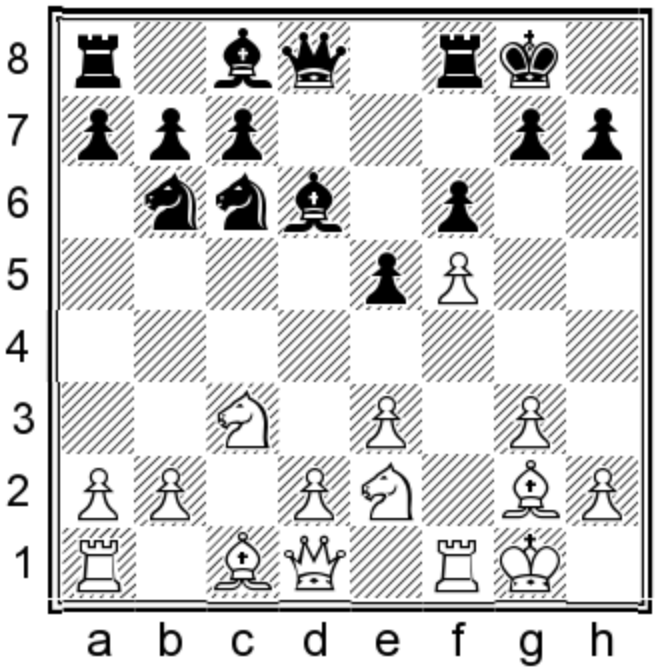
Nepomniachtchi-Karjakin, Moscow (rapid) 2013, 10...Bxf4?! 11.Rxf4 Be6 12.d4 Nd5 13.Nxd5 Bxd5 14.e4 was another relative opening disaster for a rather strong player in Ponomariov-Rublevsky, Khanty-Mansiysk (blitz) 2013, and 10...Ne5 11.d4 Ng6 12.Nd3! – again we see White elect to keep pieces on and Black's attempts at creating counterplay under control – 12...c6 can be met by 13.b3 or 13.e4 Be7 14.Be3 f5 15.Qb3+ Kh8 16.e5 when yet again White's dominant centre was the key feature of the position in Tsydypov-Drygalov, Sochi (blitz) 2019) 11.d4 Qd7 12.b3 Rfe8 13.Qd2 should be a little better for White, as, once more, we see his central pawns playing a pivotal role.



Now Bb2 and e4 is the plan, and 13...Bxf4?! 14.Rxf4 Bh3 15.Bh1 Rad8 16.Bb2 Ne7 would have left White doing quite well in Nepomniachtchi and Karjakin's second battle in the line (Moscow (rapid) 2013), had he now gone 17.Ne4, and if 17...Ned5? 18.Rh4 followed by Nc5 and e4.

c3) Probably Black's best choice is the solid 9...f6 when 10.d4!? deserves further attention, but in practice White has usually been happy to play against the bishop on c8 with 10.f5!.

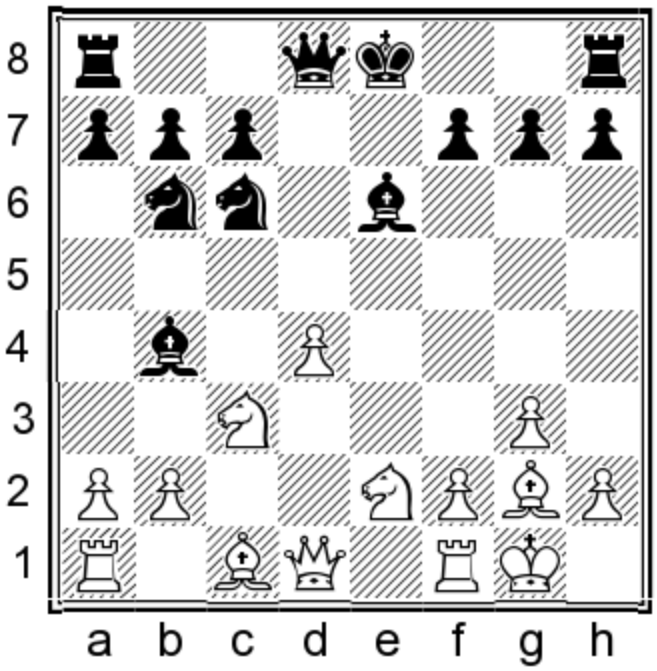
chesstouring.com



For example, 10...Bd7 (10...a5 has also been popular in the correspondence world and is clearly directed against 11.b3; as such, White might prefer 11.Ne4 Be7 12.d4 and after 12...a4 13.g4! Kh8 he might even consider 14.Rf3!?, intending Rh3, as well as 14.Kh1 Bd7 15.Nc5 exd4 16.exd4 Bxc5 17.dxc5 Nc4 18.Nf4, which was OK for Black according to the engines, but looked somewhat harder for him to play in the high-level 2015 correspondence encounter, Oskulski-Mahling, thanks to that fine bishop on g2, the hole on e6 and the potential attack down the h-file) 11.Ne4 (again we see this idea; White has also done quite well with 11.g4 Be8 12.b3) 11...Be8!? 12.Nxd6 Qxd6 13.Nc3 Bf7 14.b3 Rfd8 (yet again 14...a5!? could be a better try, when 15.Ne4 Qe7 16.a3 Bd5 17.d3 retained the tension and an edge for White in Privara-Hasselmeyer, correspondence 2013, before he began to edge forward while keeping Black's counterplay under control with 17...Qf7 18.Rb1 Kh8 19.Qc2 Nd7 20.Bd2 Rfc8 21.b4) 15.Ne4 Qe7 16.g4! when Black underestimates White's attacking potential at his peril, as we'll see in Ziese-Lindh, correspondence 2017.

d) A more ambitious plan for Black is 7...Be6, intending 8.0-0 Qd7 and ...Bh3, so here we like to go 8.d4!, and if 8...exd4 9.exd4 Bb4 10.0-0 when White shouldn't mind the isolated pawn.

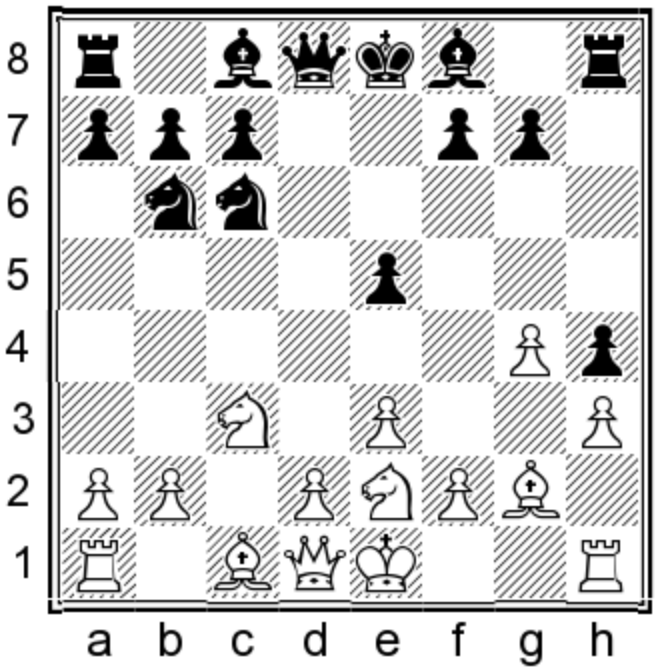
chesstouring.com



Of course, 11.d5 is a threat and 10...Bc4 (otherwise, 10...Bxc3 11.bxc3 0-0 12.Nf4 Bc4 13.Re1 followed by bringing the queen to the kingside should be quite pleasant for White, and Black is advised to avoid 10...Nd5? 11.Nf4!, which might well see him crushed in a miniature, as after 11...Nxc3 12.bxc3 Bxc3 13.Rb1 followed by Rxb7 or 13...Nxd4 14.Ba3) 11.Re1 0-0 12.Be3 finally prepares the way for Nf4, after which 12...Nd5 13.Rc1! Re8 (13...Nxe3?! 14.fxe3 merely gives us our favourite dynamic pawn centre, after which Nf4, a3 and Ne4 might follow) 14.a3 Bxc3 15.Nxc3 Nxc3 16.bxc3 Bd5 17.Bf1 retained the two bishops and a definite pull in Maletin-Yakovich, Vladivostok 2012.

e) Another aggressive idea is 7...h5!? when White has often gone 8.d4 h4 and then both the slightly brave 9.0-0 hxg3 10.fxg3 and 9.d5, after which both 9...Ne7 and 9...Nb8!? should promise Black sufficient counterplay. As such, we'll stick with an old favourite motif, namely 8.h3!? h4 9.g4!.

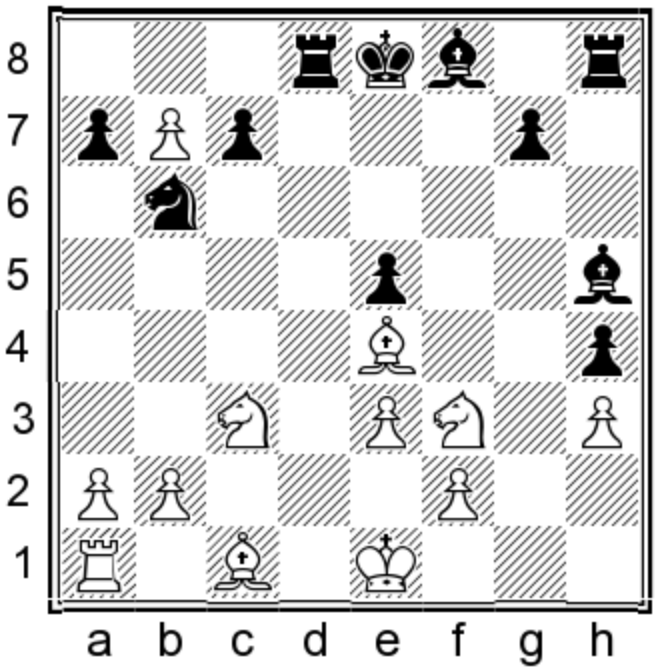
chesstouring.com



That is despite Black's victory after 9...f5! (9...Qd3?! 10.Be4 again pushes Black backwards, while 9...Be6?! is rather well met by 10.d4) in Caruana-Vachier-Lagrave, Paris (blitz) 2016. There White rather panicked with 10.d4? and, instead, 10.gxf5! Bxf5 and only then 11.d4 is the way to go, followed by 12.d5 or 11...exd4?! 12.Nxd4 Nxd4 13.exd4 Qe7+ 14.Be3 c6 15.d5! Nxd5 16.Nxd5 cxd5 17.Qxd5, which left Black's king the more exposed of the two in Guichard-Kosteniuk, Monaco (rapid) 2017.

Here 11...Qf6!? is probably the critical line, intending 12.e4 Bd7 13.d5 Nd4!, so White might offer the exchange: 12.d5 Qg6 (12...0-0-0 13.e4 Bg6 14.0-0 Bc5 15.Bd2 is also rather unclear, but White too can very much attack with Nb5 and/or Rc1 ideas, as well as just dxc6) 13.Rg1 Bc2! 14.Be4! Qxg1+ (14...Qxe4! 15.Nxe4 Bxd1 16.dxc6 0-0-0 is probably more sensible when 17.Bd2 Bc2 18.cxb7+ Kxb7 19.Ng5 leaves both sides with weak pawns, but at least White should be well enough coordinated after Rc1 and Nc3-e4) 15.Nxg1 Bxd1 16.dxc6 Bh5 17.cxb7 Rd8 18.Nf3 when the mighty b-pawn must supply enough compensation.

chesstouring.com

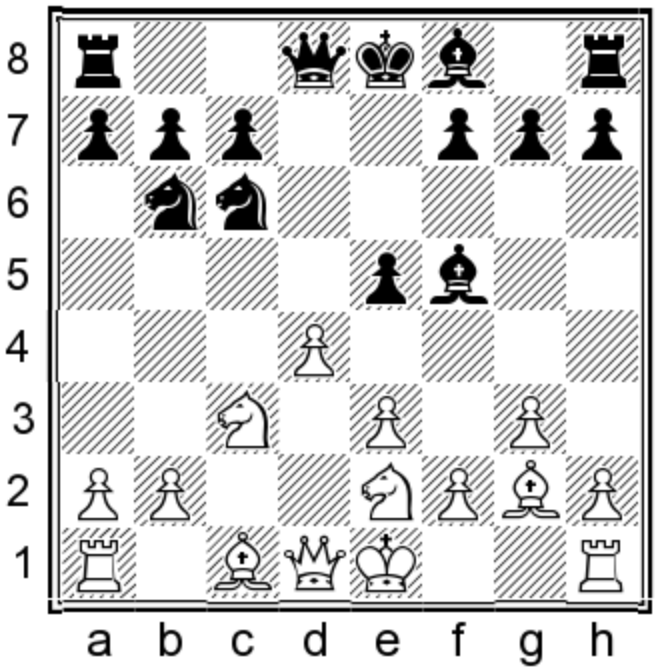


Just don’t fall after 18...Bb4 for taking on e5, which would embarrassingly allow mate in one, so White should prefer 19.Bd2 Nc4 20.a3 Be7 21.Nb5! followed by Nxa7, Rc1 or, ideally, 21...Bxf3? 22.Bxf3 Nxd2 23.0-0-0! when the b-pawn’s a winner after 23...Nb3+ 24.Kc2 0-0 25.Rxd8 Rxd8 26.Kxb3.

f) Of Black’s alternatives, 7...Bg4 is well enough met, as so often, by 8.h3!, and if 8...Bh5 (or 8...Bf5 9.d4, which is very similar to our next note on 7...Bf5, and 9...exd4 10.Nxd4 Nxd4 11.exd4 c6 12.0-0 Be7 13.d5! Nxd5 14.Nxd5 cxd5 can still be met by 15.Bxd5! followed by g4 or 15...Bxh3? 16.Bxf7+ Kxf7 17.Qh5+ g6 18.Qxh3) 9.0-0 Bd6, which was Kuzubov-Neelotpal, Benasque 2016. Here we quite like 10.d4 exd4 (or 10...0-0 11.g4 Bg6 12.f4!? exf4 13.Nxf4 Bxf4 14.exf4 f5 15.d5 with plenty of extra space, and b3 and Ba3 or Bb2 on its way) 11.exd4 0-0 12.d5! Ne7 13.Qb3 when the bridgehead on d5 rather cramps Black’s position and Nf4 is imminent, as well as possibly a4.

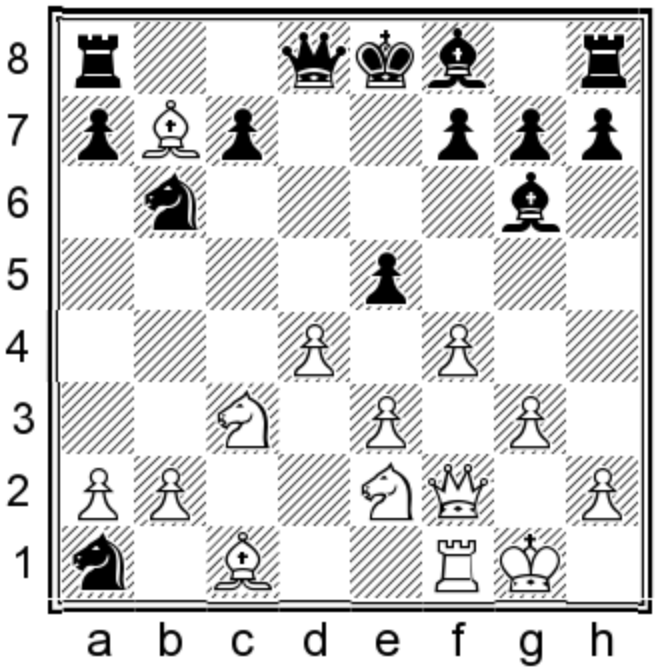
g) Possibly the most critical place for Black’s light-squared bishop is 7...Bf5, which threatens ...Nb4 and so should be met by 8.d4! (8.0-0 Qd3 is a bit annoying):

chesstouring.com



g1) 8...Nb4?! is critical, but runs into the powerful 9.0-0! (strong, but 9.Ne4 wouldn't be terrible were you to forget your theory) 9...Bc2 10.Qe1! (please do avoid 10.Qd2?? Nc4 11.Qe1 Nd3, which would force White to resign) 10...Bg6 11.f4! (yet another exclam, but again warranted; White's initiative is a pretty fearsome beast) 11...Nc2 (going for the material, but Black subsequently preferred 11...c6! in a correspondence game when 12.Qf2!? is one sensible move, and if 12...f6 13.f5 Bh5 14.Rd1, keeping the queen safe, while preparing to drive Black backwards with a3) 12.Qf2 Nxa1 (12...exd4? 13.f5 Bh5 14.Nxd4 Nxa1 15.Bxb7 is even worse for Black on account of the newly-created hole on c6, and if 15...Bd6 16.f6! 0-0 17.fxg7 Kxg7 18.Bxa8 Nxa8 19.e4 when White will do rather more than just regain his piece) 13.Bxb7.

chesstouring.com

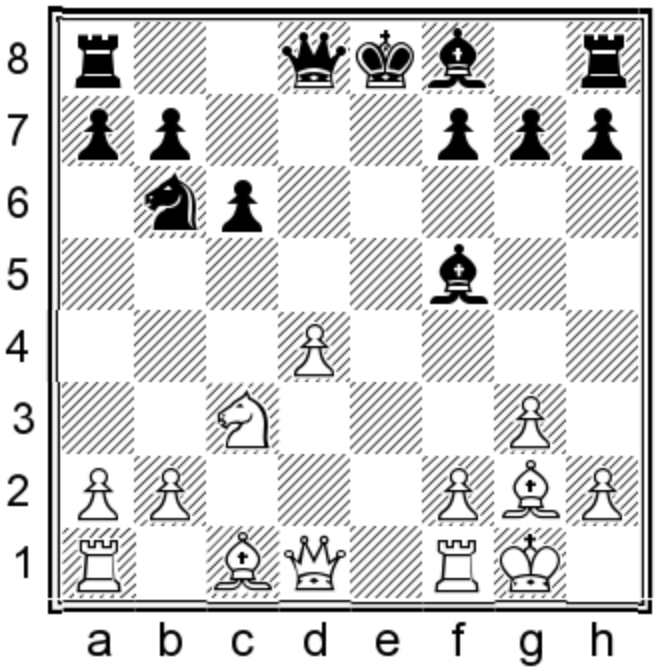


Here 13...exd4 14.Bc6+ Nd7 15.f5! Bh5 (15...dxc3 16.fxg6 f6 17.Qf5 also looks rather crushing, with Nd4 on the way, as well as gxh7) 16.Nxd4 Bd6 17.Ne6! won the house in the brutal encounter Jones-Le Roux, Helsingor 2014, as 17...fxe6 would have failed to 18.fxe6 Rf8 19.Bxd7+ Ke7 20.Nd5 mate. Black was subsequently crushed too after 13...Nc2 14.Bc6+ Nd7 15.Qf3 Rb8 16.f5 in Rooze-Geske, Augsburg 2014, 13...Bb4 14.Bc6+ Nd7 15.Qf3 is similar, when White enjoys a pretty powerful initiative for the exchange after 15...0-0 16.f5 Rb8 17.fxg6 hxg6 18.Nd5 Bd6 19.Qg4 Nf6 20.Nxf6+ gxf6 21.Nc3, leaving Black's king, as well as his knight, as a target, and, finally, 13...Rb8 14.Bc6+ Nd7 15.f5 Bh5 16.dxe5 Rb6 17.Qg2 leaves White with far too much for the rook; e6 and Nf4 being threats.

g2) Objectively speaking Black does better with 8...Bd6 when White has tended to advance the d-pawn, but we even slightly prefer 9.0-0 0-0 10.e4 followed by exchanging on e5 or 10...Bg4 11.h3 Bxe2 12.Nxe2 with the bishop-pair.

g3) Likewise, 8...exd4 is also only slightly better for White after 9.Nxd4 Nxd4 10.exd4 c6 11.0-0.

chesstouring.com



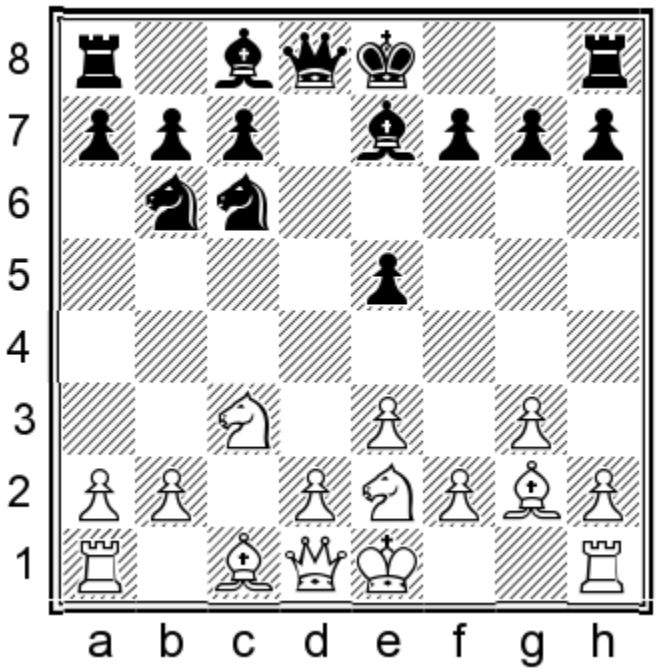
That is at least so long as Black is then careful, as 11...Be6? (11...Be7 12.d5! Nxd5 13.Nxd5 cxd5 14.Bxd5 0-0 was only an edge for White in Bocharov-Ponkratov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2013, when he should consider 15.Bf4, as well as Tony Kosten's line 15.Be3!? Bh3 16.Bxb7 Rb8 17.Bg2 Bxg2 18.Qxd8 Rfxd8 19.Kxg2 Rxb2 20.Rfb1! with a clear plus on account of Black's vulnerable a-pawn) walks slap, bang into 12.d5! cxd5 (as in Delchev-Cheparinov, Panagyurishte 2012; Black also winds up under heavy pressure after 12...Nxd5 13.Nxd5 cxd5 14.Qa4+ Qd7 15.Qd4 when he can't easily castle as 15...f6 16.Re1 Be7 17.Bf4 0-0? fails to 18.Rxe6!, or here 13...Bxd5 14.Bxd5 Qxd5 15.Re1+ Be7 16.Qa4 Kf8 17.Bf4 Bf6 18.Rad1 with a serious initiative) 13.a4! d4 (or 13...Bc5 14.a5 Nc4 15.Qa4+ when Black lacks a good move and 15...Bd7 16.Re1+ Kf8 17.Qc2 Bc6 18.Nxd5 Bxd5 19.Rd1 regains the piece with huge interest) 14.Ne2 Bc5 15.b4! Bxb4 16.a5 when, as Kosten writes, "Black is in big trouble" and 16...Nd7 17.Nxd4 0-0 18.a6 should be winning.

h) Finally, we should mention 7...g6, which can be met by 8.d4!? or just 8.0-0 Bg7 9.f4, which is likely to transpose back to a position we analysed in note 'b' to Black's 6th move in Line 6C after 9...exf4 (or 9...0-0 10.fxe5

chesstouring.com

Nxe5 11.d4 Nc6 when 12.b3 would be thematic, possibly followed by h3 and Nf4) 10.Nxf4 0-0 11.d4.

Finally, returning to the main line, 7...Be7:



8.0-0 0-0

Unlike on the previous move when there is a wide choice, here Black normally castles so.

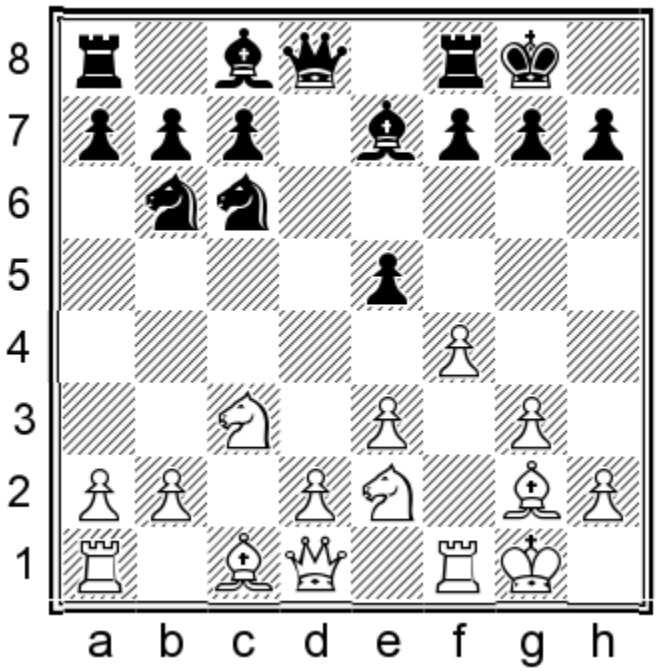
It's now too late, incidentally, for 8...h5?! to be disruptive, in view of 9.d4 exd4 10.Nxd4! (helping clear the e-file) 10...Nxd4 11.exd4 Bg4 (11...h4 12.Bf4 is at least a pleasant edge for White, with Black struggling to complete development and 12...c6?! rather sleepwalking into 13.d5) 12.Qb3 0-0 when in Navara-Berzina, Katowice (blitz) 2017, White had a number of pleasant options, including 13.h3!? Be6 14.d5 Bd7 15.h4, leaving h5 as a weakness, while intending, more immediately, to obtain some pressure with Be3 and a4.

Likewise, the d4 break shows its worth after 8...Bg4 9.h3 Bf5 10.d4! exd4 11.exd4 0-0 when 12.g4!? begins to ask some awkward questions of Black,

chesstouring.com

12...Bg6?! 13.d5 Nb4 14.Nf4 not looking too great for him.

9.f4!



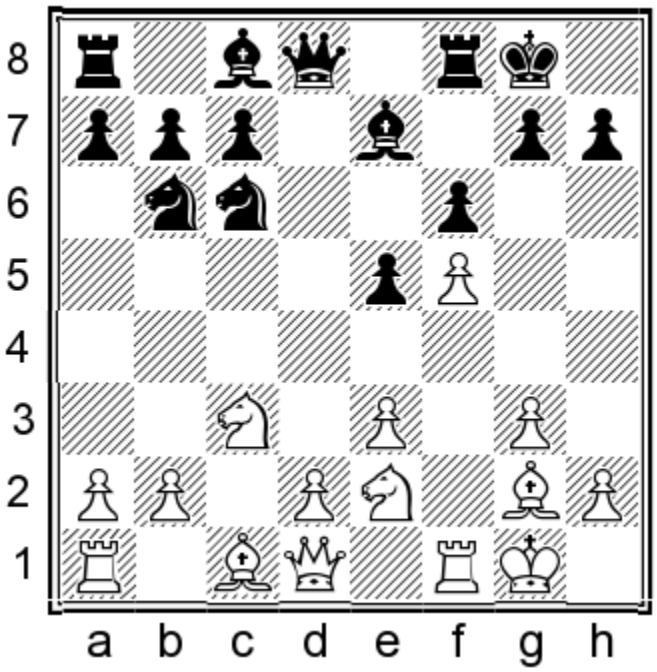
Just as with Black's bishop on d6, we should go for our favourite pawn break. White is ready to go b3, as well as fxe5 Nxe5; d4. It might also be worth noting that he has scored 58% from just over 100 games with this position on the database.

9...exf4

Probably not best, but Black's most common move as 6.e3 continues to catch plenty of opponents out:

a) The second most popular choice has been 9...f6 when 10.f5! shouldn't come as a surprise to you, cramping Black and hoping to gradually show up ...f6 as a weakening advance:

chesstouring.com

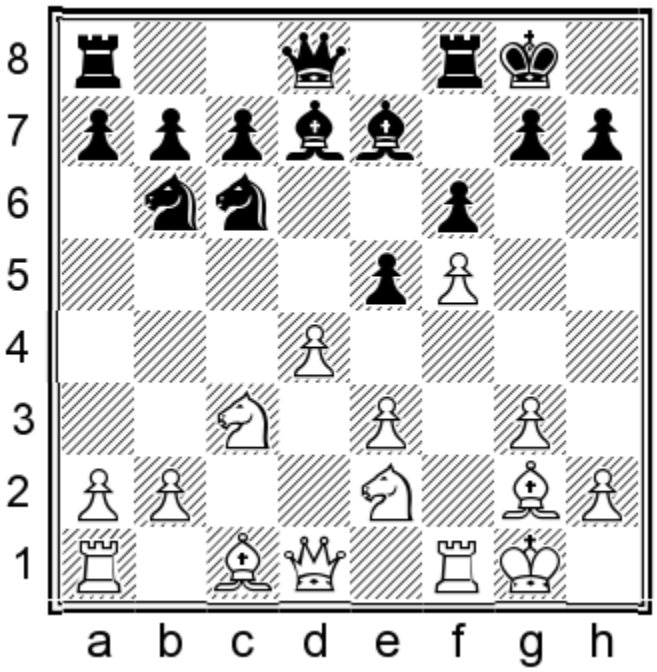


a1) With the bishop on e7, not d6, 10...Nb4?! might tempt some, but 11.d4! favours White: 11...exd4 (or 11...c6 12.g4!? Kh8 13.a3 N4d5 14.Ne4 exd4 15.exd4 Nc4 16.Rf3! with serious attacking chances in Tadic-Paunovic, Vrnjacka Banja 2012; Rh3 and Qe1-h4 is not so easy to deal with) 12.exd4 c6 13.g4! (again a strong advance, opening up the third rank for White's pieces and giving him a potential battering ram) 13...Bd6 14.Ne4 N4d5 15.Kh1 Bc7 16.Qd3 Re8 17.g5 left Black rather cramped and under heavy pressure in Ponomariov-Potapov, Khanty-Mansiysk (blitz) 2013.

a2) 10...Qd3 is also nothing to fear, and if 11.Be4 Qa6?! 12.d3 followed by a3, b3 and perhaps then g4 again.

a3) 10...Bd7 can now longer be met so effectively by 11.Ne4, but White has done quite well with 11.d4!?.

chesstouring.com



For example, 11...exd4?! (releasing the tension isn't so wise with a hole on e6) 12.exd4 Bd6 13.Ne4 Be8 was Ipatov-Nepomniachtchi, European Championship, Legnica 2013, when Richard's old suggestion of 14.d5! Ne5 15.Nd4 still just looks a very good one, targeting the hole on e6.

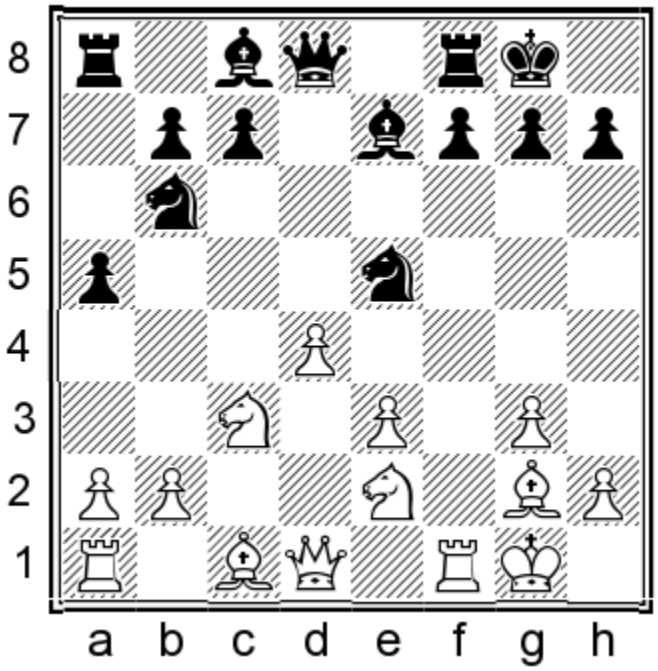
Instead, 11...Be8!? 12.d5 Nb4 13.a3 Na6 might be best when White can keep the tension with 14.Qc2 or go in for the critical 14.d6! cxd6 15.Bxb7 Nc7 16.Bxa8 Qxa8 17.a4! when Black shouldn't have quite enough for the exchange with b3 and Ba3 imminent, as well as a5. We should also cover briefly that 11...Bd6 can be met by 12.Ne4 or 12.g4!? Qe7 13.Ne4, after which 13...Nd8 14.Nxd6 cxd6 15.a4! Bc6 16.d5 Be8 17.e4 left Black badly cramped in Berkes-Ruck, Hungarian League 2012, and that 11...Qc8 12.g4 Rd8 13.Qe1 Be8 14.Qf2 exd4 15.exd4 Bf7 16.Bf4 maintained an edge, with Ne4 one idea, preparation for g5 another in Privara-Jasinski, correspondence 2015.

a4) 10...a5 is yet another idea we've come across before. White doesn't have to fear ...a4 and might even go 11.b3!? Bd7 (11...a4?! 12.Nxa4 Nxa4 13.bxa4 Kh8 14.d4 is just an extra pawn and a pull) 12.d4, reaching a

chesstouring.com

position we'll return to explore in Jones-Edouard, 1st matchgame, London 2014.

b) The immediate 9...a5 has also been tried, but doesn't do anything to prevent from White simply going 10.fxe5 Nxe5 11.d4.



After 11...Ng6 (11...Ng4 12.h3 Nf6 13.e4 also looks quite promising for White) 12.h4!? we quite like Viktor Mikhalevski's suggestion of 12...Bg4 (12...Re8 13.h5 Nf8 14.h6 g6 15.Nf4 feels rather risky for Black with such a hole on g7 and 15...Bg5?! 16.e4 Bxh6 running into 17.Nh5!, and 12...h5 13.Bf3 Bg4? 14.Bxg4 hxg4 15.h5 Nh8 16.Nf4 would just be a disaster for the second player) 13.Bxb7, and if 13...Rb8 14.Bf3 when Black shouldn't have enough for his pawn.

chesstouring.com

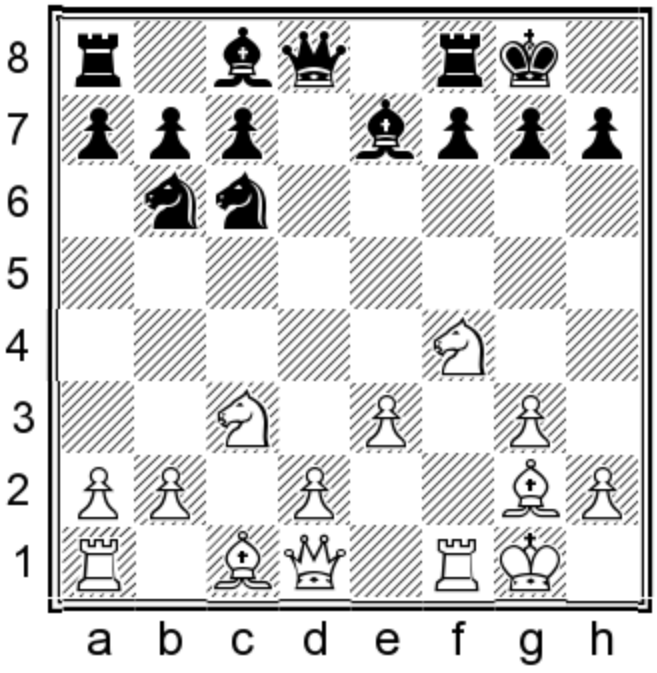
c) The bishop can also develop from c8, but 9...Bg4?! 10.fxe5 Nxe5 11.d4 Nc6 12.h3 Bh5 13.g4 Bg6 14.Nf4 merely saw White favourably expanding with tempo in Broekmeulen-Hracek, Skopje 2015.

d) 9...Bf5!? 10.fxe5 Bd3 can be well enough met by 11.e6!? fxe6 (or 11...f5 12.Rf2 Ne5 13.Nf4 c6 when in J.Christiansen-Makoveev, Moscow 2019, 14.Bh3!? would have been sensible followed by b3 or 14...g5?! 15.Nxd3 Nxd3 16.Rxf5) 12.Rxf8+ Qxf8 13.Nf4 Bf5 (Murden-Buecker, correspondence 2018) 14.d4 e5 15.Nfd5 exd4 16.exd4 when the IQP again looks like more a strength than a weakness and 16...Bd6 17.Nxb6 axb6 18.Nb5 would play for the bishop-pair and a lasting pull.

e) Finally, there's 9...Re8 when development with 10.b3 is likely even better than exchanging on f5, continuing to ask Black how he intends to obtain any counterplay, as well as to seize space in the event of 10...f6 11.f5, and if 11...Nb4 12.d4 when the good, old plan of a3, Ne4 and g4 is on the cards.

Returning to 9...exf4:

10.Nxf4



chesstouring.com

10...Ne5

This might look a little strange (Black has essentially given us Nf4 for free), but is normally tried here.

In any case, White should be able to emerge with an edge: for instance, 10...Bf5 11.b3 Qd7 12.Bb2 Rad8 13.d4 Rfe8 14.Rc1 (definitely a useful move to insert before advancing in the centre) 14...Bd6 15.d5 Ne5 16.e4 Bg4 17.Qd2 Ng6 18.a4! saw some model play leave White pressing in Kuiper-Fenwick, correspondence 2012.

Instead, 10...Re8 11.d4 Bf6?! (as in a game played in Norway, Bogner-D.Fischer, Hell 2019; 11...Bf8 improves, but 12.b3 g6 13.Qf3 Bg7 14.Kh1 Ne7 15.Bb2 Nf5 16.Rfe1 still maintained control and an edge in Stupak-Kosakowski, Lazy – yes, that is a real place in the Czech Republic – 2016, where the plan was Qf2 followed by arranging g4) 12.Nfd5 Nxd5 13.Nxd5 Be7 (13...Bg5 14.h4! doesn't help Black, and if 14...Bh6 15.Qh5 followed by g4-g5) 14.e4 is just superb central control for White, as was 10...Bf6 11.Ne4 Be5 12.d4 Bxf4 13.Rxf4 in Abarca Gonzalez-Mekhitarian, Antofagasta 2017.

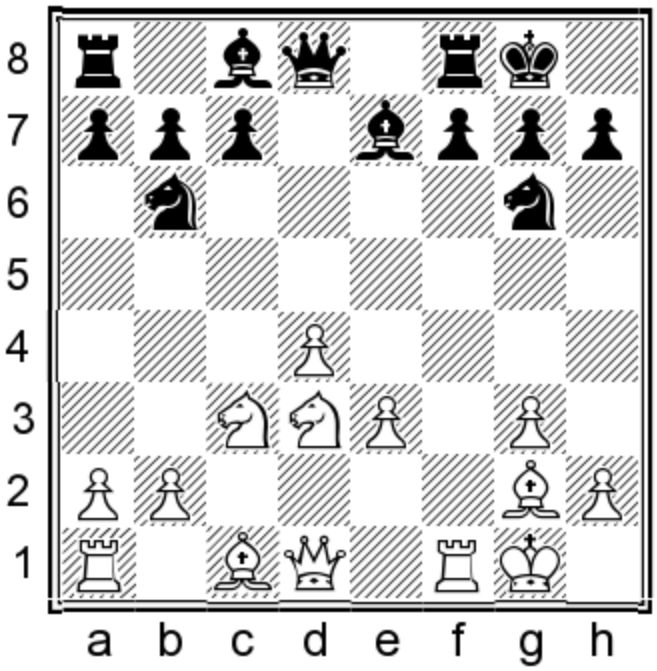
11.d4

There's simply no good reason not to expand with tempo so.

11...Ng6 12.Nd3!?

Our favourite idea in such positions, keeping pieces on and leaving Black's knight looking a little misplaced on g6.

chesstouring.com



12...c6 13.b3

Calm development, although 13.h4!? is by no means ridiculous either.

13...a5

White is also for choice after both 13...Be6 14.Bb2 Qc8 (Cmilyte-Kosteniuk, Beijing (blitz) 2012) 15.Rc1 Bh3 16.Qe2 Bxg2 17.Kxg2, when Harry is primed for action, and 13...Re8 14.Qh5!? when 14...Bg5 15.Ne4 Bh6? failed to 16.Nf6+! in Charochkina-Schwabeneder, Internet (blitz) 2020.

14.Nc5!?

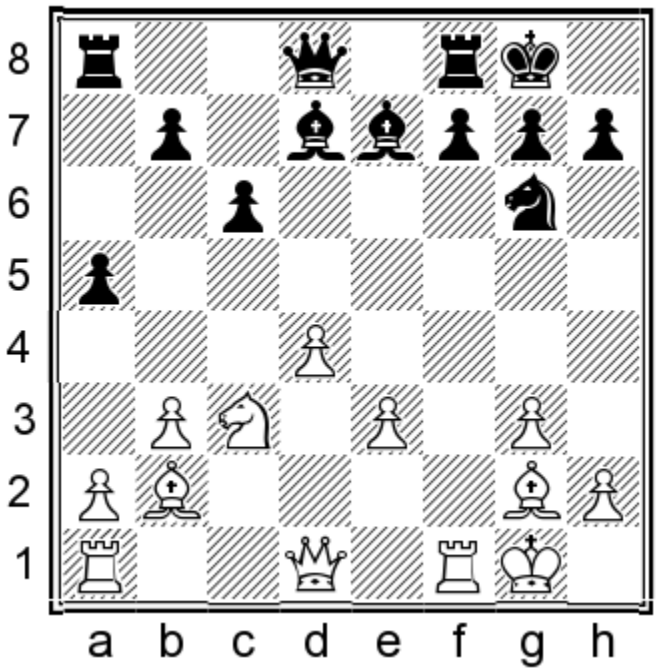
Pressuring b7 and aiming to provoke an exchange on c5. 14.a4 also turned out well enough in Gumularz-Nihal, London 2017.

14...Nd7

chesstouring.com

14...Bxc5?! 15.dxc5 Qxd1 16.Rxd1 Nd7 can be met by 17.Na4, reminding Black that he's created a hole on b6, after which Bb2, Kf2 and h3 might even follow if Black tries to sit.

15.Nxd7 Bxd7 16.Bb2



Black has succeeded in exchanging a pair of pieces, but not equalised. White's pawn centre is again a useful asset and he might retain control with Qc2 and Rae1, possibly followed by Ne4-c5.

Game 27
G.Ziese-S.Lindh
French Correspondence Championship 2017

1.c4 e5 2.g3 Nf6 3.Bg2 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Nc3 Nb6 6.e3 Nc6 7.Nge2 Bd6 8.0-0 0-0 9.f4 f6 10.f5!

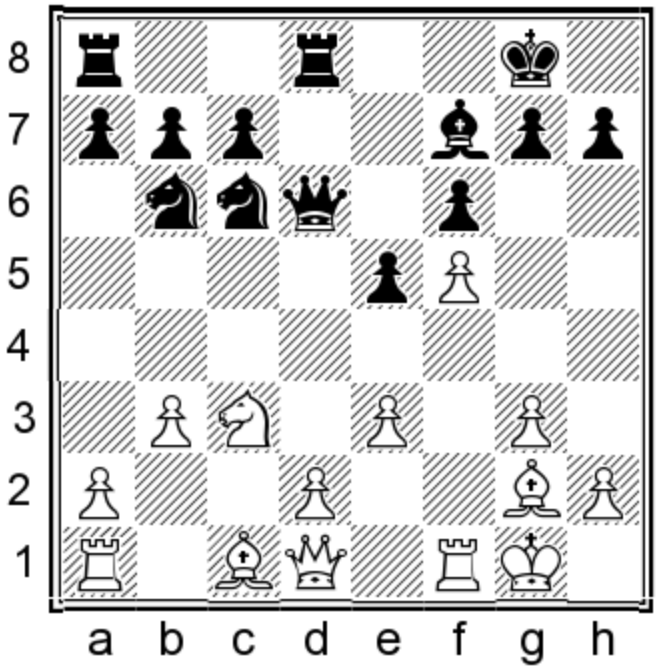
Our favourite advance whenever Black has shored up the defence of e5 by weakening his own king slightly with ...f6.

10...Bd7 11.Ne4 Be8 12.Nxd6 Qxd6 13.Nc3 Bf7 14.b3

chesstouring.com

Yet another thematic move from White, creating some options for the bishop on c1, as well as usefully keeping Black's pieces out of c4.

14...Rfd8



Black's lead in development and pressure down the d-file might worry someone unfamiliar with this variation, but White can send a second knight to e4 and don't forget about the kingside attack!

15.Ne4 Qe7 16.g4! Bd5

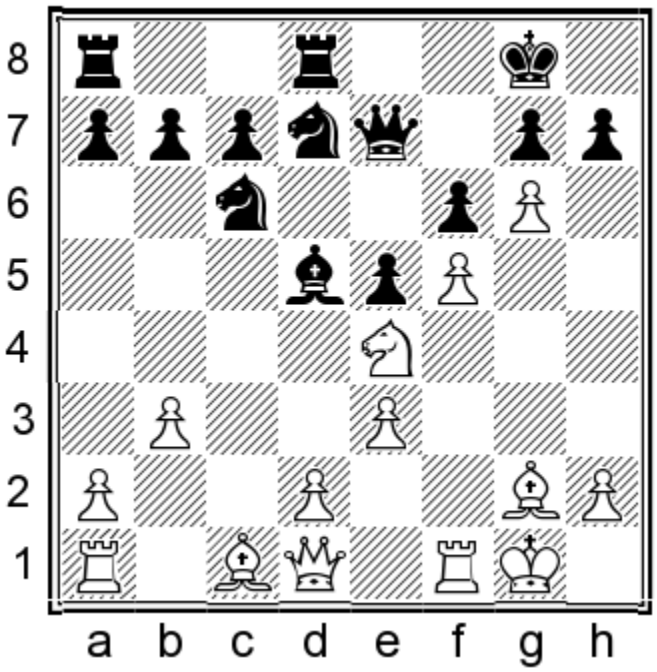
Black might have done better to rule out g5 with 16...Nd7 when 17.Bb2 (17.g5? fxg5 doesn't really lead anywhere as Black has too many pieces controlling f6) 17...a5 18.Qc1! Bd5! (18...a4?! 19.Ba3 Qe8 20.Qb2 holds the queenside together, since Black doesn't really want to allow 20...Na5?! 21.Rac1! axb3? 22.Rxc7 bxa2? 23.Nd6) 19.Ba3 Qf7 when there would have been everything to play for after, say, 20.Qc2 a4 21.bxa4 Nb6 22.d3 Nxa4 23.g5, even if we must admit here to a bias in favour of White's attacking chances.

chesstouring.com

17.g5! Nd7

Black is forced on the defensive as 17...fxg5? 18.f6 gxf6 (or 18...Qf7 19.Qg4 Bxe4 20.fxg7 Qd7 21.Qxe4 Qxg7 22.Qg4 when only one king is looking rather exposed) 19.Nxf6+ Kh8 20.Nxd5 Nxd5 21.Qe2 would see White's mighty bishops totally outweigh Black's extra pawn, with Bb2 possibly followed by Rf5 on the way.

18.g6



An advance every King's Indian player will know can pack a certain punch.

18...hxg6?

Very risky. Black would have done better to defend with 18...a5 19.Qh5 h6 when 20.d3 Nc5 21.Qe2 Nb4 22.Ba3 is still just rather unclear, even if Black's back-rank problems might well become a problem one day.

19.fxg6 Nf8 20.Qh5 a5 21.Bb2

chesstouring.com

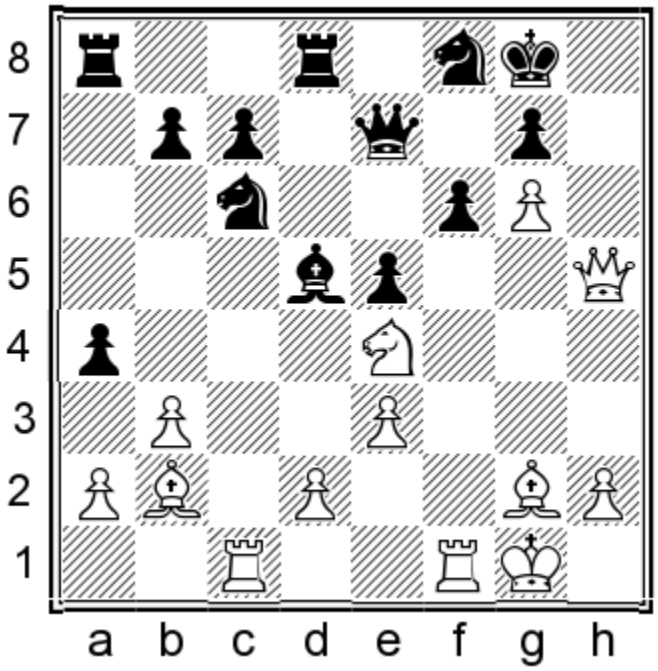
Simple development and probably a better choice than 21.d4 Nb4 when Black might be able to defend with 22.Ba3 Bc6! 23.Rae1 Be8.

21...a4

Now 21...Nb4? would be rebuffed by 22.Rf5!, and if 22...Bc6? 23.Raf1 Be8 24.Nxf6+! gxf6 25.Rxf6 when Black is just getting bulldozered: 25...Bxg6 26.Rxg6+ Nxg6 27.Qxg6+ Qg7 28.Qe6+ Kh8 and here 29.Rf4! would be a pretty way to end the game.

22.Rac1!

Offering the b-pawn and you can just imagine that this was a carefully worked out decision at such a slow time control.



22...axb3 23.axb3 Ra2

Firstly, we should note that 23...Bxb3? simply fails to 24.Rf3, and that, secondly, Ziese's lovely main point was 23...Nb4 24.Rc4!, and if 24...Bxc4 25.bxc4 Nd3 26.Ng5!! Nxb2 (26...fxg5? 27.Rxf8+! mates next move)

chesstouring.com

27.Be4 when Black has no better defence to White's slow-motion threat than 27...Rd7 28.Nf7 Nxg6 29.Bxg6 Qxf7 30.Bxf7+ Rxf7, but after 31.Qe2 he shouldn't be able to save the game, up against an extra queen on such an open board.

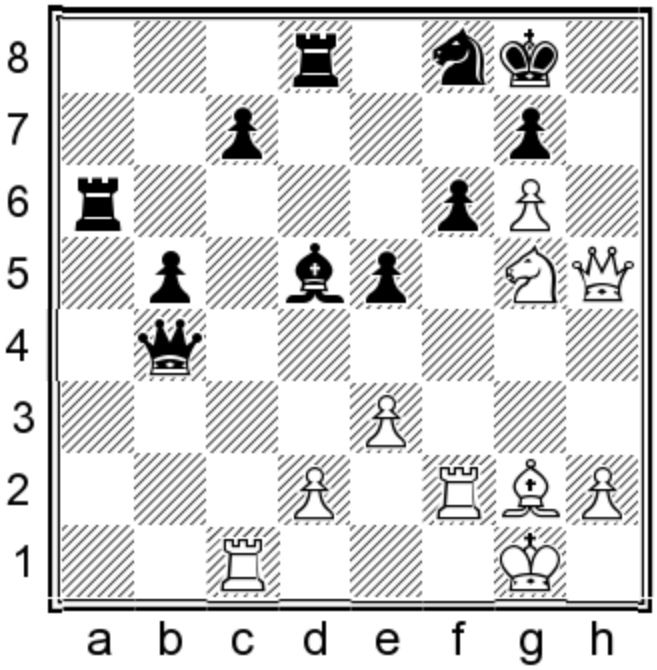
24.Bc3 b5 25.b4!

Maintaining control and quite possibly Black is already just lost due to White's long-term attacking potential.

25...Ra6 26.Rf2!?

Ziese is determined to sacrifice his b-pawn...

26...Nxb4 27.Bxb4 Qxb4 28.Ng5!



...and this is why.

28...Qe7

The best try.

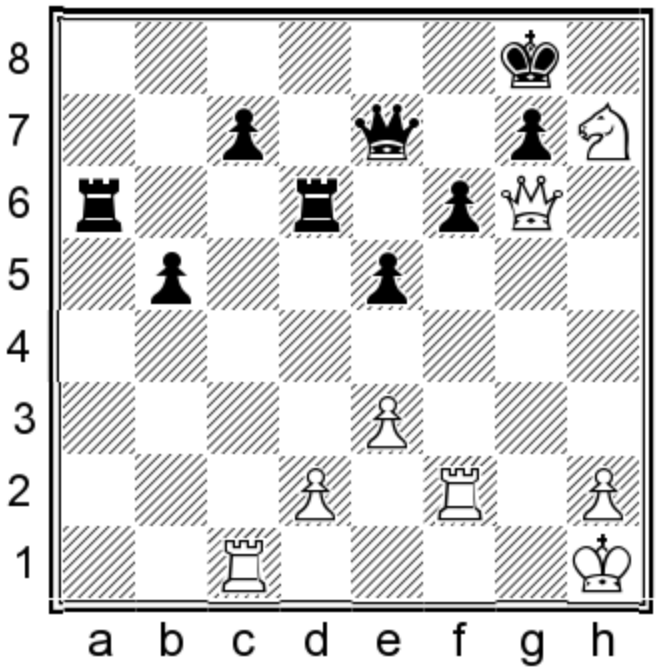
chesstouring.com

Once again, 28...fxg5? 29.Bxd5+ Rxd5 30.Rxf8+ would be most unwise for Black, and if 30...Kxf8 31.Qh8+ Ke7 32.Qxg7+ Kd6 (or 32...Ke8 33.Qf7+) 33.Qxc7+ Ke6 34.Qf7+ Kd6 35.Qf8+ Ke6 36.Qxb4, while 28...Bxg2? fails to 29.Nf7! Nxg6 30.Nh6+! Kf8 (30...gxh6 31.Qxg6+ Kh8 32.Qxh6+ Kg8 33.Qg6+ Kh8 34.Rxc7 would be terminal) 31.Qxg6 Rd7 32.Rxg2 when White is winning as the knight is immune: 32...gxh6 33.Qg8+ Ke7 running into, amongst others, the neat 34.Qc8, and if 34...Rad6 35.Rg7+ Ke6 36.Qg8+ Kf5 37.Rf1+ Ke4 38.Rg4+.

29.Bxd5+ Rxd5 30.Nh7 Nxg6

Desperation with White threatening to take on f8 and even doing so after 30...Rc5, i.e. 31.Nxf8! Rxc1+ 32.Kg2 Qd6 33.Nd7! when 33...Qxd7 34.Qh7+ Kf8 35.Qh8+ Ke7 36.Qxg7+ Kd8 (if 36...Kd6 37.Rxf6+) 37.Qf8+ Qe8 38.g7 would not be that hard a win to calculate, not least in a correspondence game.

31.Qxg6 Rdd6 32.Kh1



White still wants to attack.

chesstouring.com

32...Qd7 33.Qh5 Qf7

Unfortunately for Black, 33...Rxd2? fails to 34.Rxd2 Qxd2 35.Rd1, and 33...c5 34.Rcf1! would threaten Ng5.

34.Qxf7+ 1-0

Resignation might seem a little premature, but after 34...Kxf7 35.Ng5+ Ke8 36.Ne4 Rdc6 37.Rb1 White wouldn't have needed too many more emails (or moves inputted into the server) to have demonstrated that the extra piece is decisive.

Game 28
G.Jones-R.Edouard
1st matchgame, London 2014

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2 Nb6 6.e3 Nc6 7.Nge2 Be7 8.0-0 0-0 9.f4 f6 10.f5!

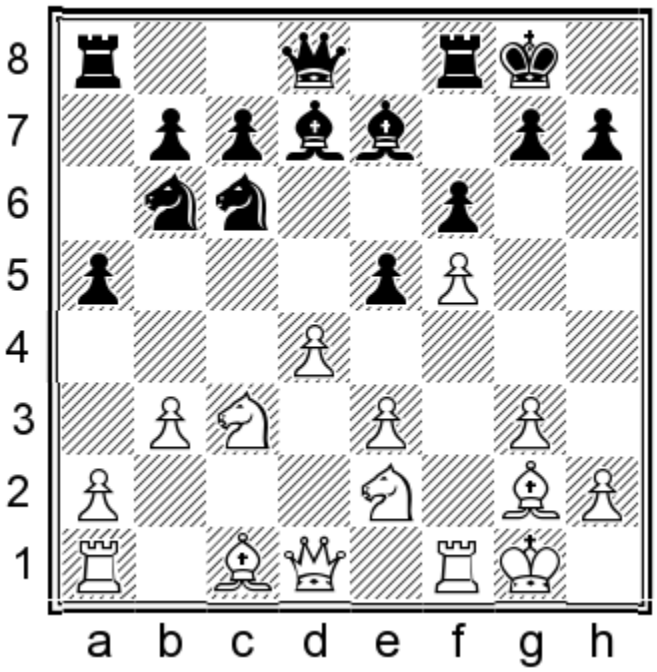
Ambitious, but if White can get away with seizing space and restricting the scope of the bishop on c8 then he should. Here we go again...

10...a5 11.b3

Simple and good chess as Gawain deviates from his earlier 11.g4 a4 12.d4 when in Jones-Collins, Bunratty 2014, things would have been rather complex after 12...Qd7!?.

11...Bd7 12.d4

chesstouring.com



Only now does White break and make Black have to consider the d5 advance.

12...Qc8

Black might have hoped to regroup with 12...Be8, but now White has 13.dxe5 Qxd1 14.Rxd1 fxe5 15.g4 with a definite pull thanks to his kingside cramp and because Ng3-e4 is on the way.

13.g4 Rd8 14.Qe1!

Both in late 2014 and in the summer of 2020 the engines weren't initially sold on this idea, but it is a decent one and also an easier way for White to play than 14.d5 Be8 15.e4 a4.

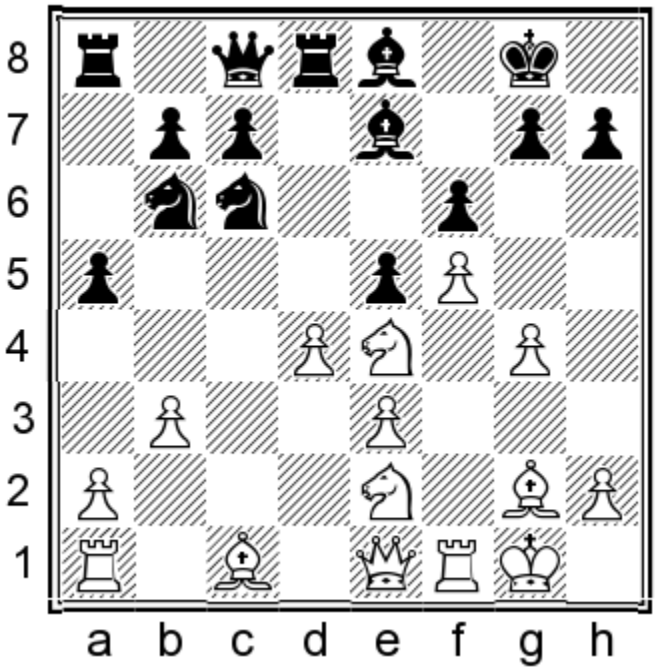
14...Be8

Black subsequently attempted to improve with 14...a4!? 15.Bb2 (15.bxa4 Be8 followed by ...Bf7 should give Black enough counterplay on the queenside) 15...axb3 (after 15...a3 16.Bc1 Nb4 Gawain was even

chesstouring.com

considering 17.dxe5! when 17...Nc2 18.Qh4 Nxa1 19.Nd5 Nxd5 20.Bxd5+ Kh8 21.exf6 Bxf6 22.g5 would supply a pretty dangerous initiative for the rook) 16.Nd5!? (16.axb3 Rxa1 17.Bxa1 exd4 18.exd4 Nb4 19.Nf4 would be a calmer approach) 16...Rxa2 17.Rxa2 bxa2 18.Nxe7+ Nxe7 19.dxe5 fxe5 20.Qc3 Nc6 21.Nf4 Rf8 and managed to hold in Privara-Avotins, correspondence 2015, but in an over-the-board encounter such a line would be extremely hard for him to navigate.

15.Ne4!



Bringing the knight to its favourite square as there's no rush to develop the bishop from c1.

15...Nd5

Natural enough and in any case Black doesn't seem to be able to equalise, as we can see too from 15...exd4?! 16.exd4 Bf7 (16...Nxd4?! 17.Nxd4 Rxd4 18.Bb2 is surely just too greedy, and if 18...Rd8 19.g5 with a massacre in the offing) 17.g5 Nd5 18.Qg3 with heavy pressure on the kingside, and

chesstouring.com

15...a4 16.g5! fxg5 17.dxe5 Nxe5 18.Qg3 Nf7 19.f6!?, ripping open lines towards the black king.

16.Qg3

It was also possible to first play the prophylactic 16.a3!? and only then Qg3 or 16...a4 17.b4.

16...exd4

Even after 16...a4!? 17.dxe5 Nxe5 18.g5 Nd3 19.Rd1 Nxc1 20.Raxc1 White's play appears to be the faster, and if 20...Qxf5 21.Rxd5! Rxd5 22.Rf1 Qe5 23.gxf6 Qxg3 24.N4xg3, regaining the material with interest.

17.exd4 Qd7 18.Bb2 Kh8?!

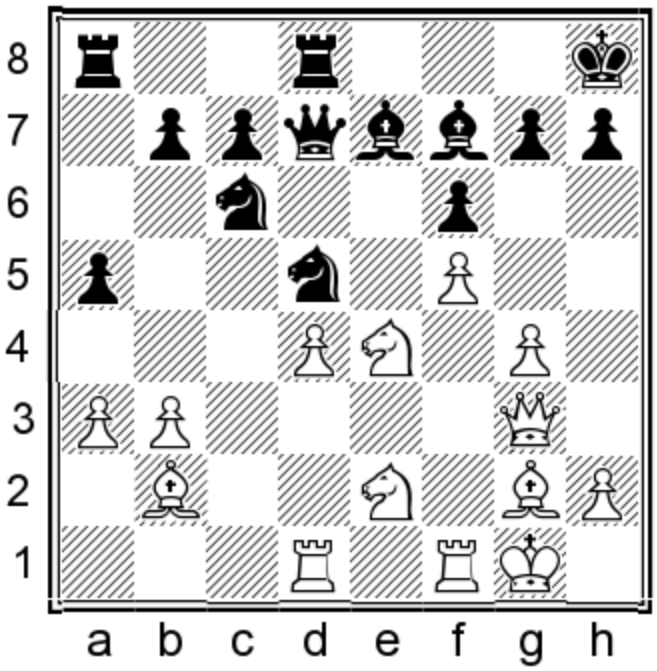
Stepping off the file the white queen is on, but once again Black really needed to try 18...a4!? when 19.g5 (White might also proceed a little more slowly with something like 19.Rad1) 19...fxg5 20.Nxg5 Bxg5 21.Bxd5+ Qxd5 22.Qxg5 Qf7 23.Rae1 would have seen Black holding on in a still rather sharp position.

19.a3!

Excellent prophylaxis, preparing to meet ...a4 with b4.

19...Bf7 20.Rad1

chesstouring.com



Bringing the final piece into play before beginning to target the black king.

20...Bd6 21.Qh4 Qe7

Unsurprisingly the strong French Grandmaster refuses to fall for 21...Ne3? 22.Nxf6! gxf6 23.Qxf6+ Kg8 24.Qg5+.

22.Rd3!

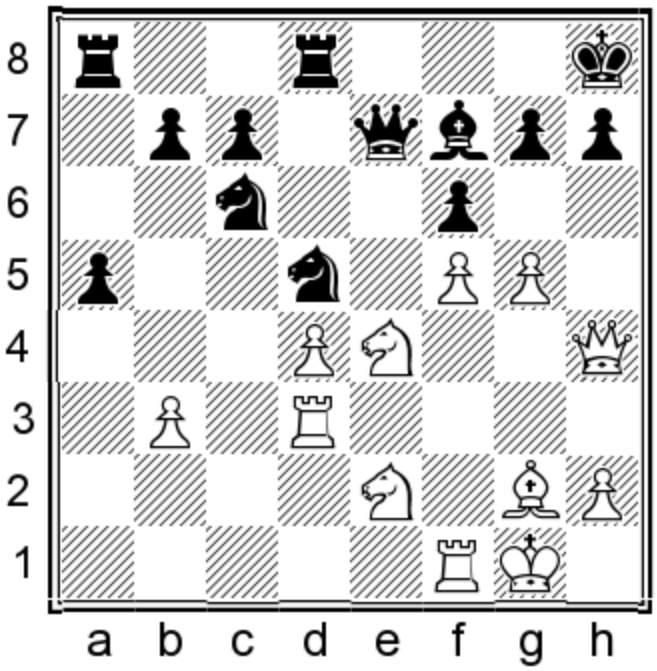
With the simple and strong idea of Rh3.

22...Bxa3?

A very hot pawn to grab, although even after 22...Bg8 23.Rh3 the defence would not have been at all easy with g5 next up and 23...h6? rather running into 24.Bc1!. As such, the best try was the radical 22...g5! when 23.Qh6 Qf8 24.Qxf8+ Rxf8 25.h4 would have left White pressing, but clearly with plenty more work to do.

23.Bxa3 Qxa3 24.g5 Qe7

chesstouring.com



25.Nf4?

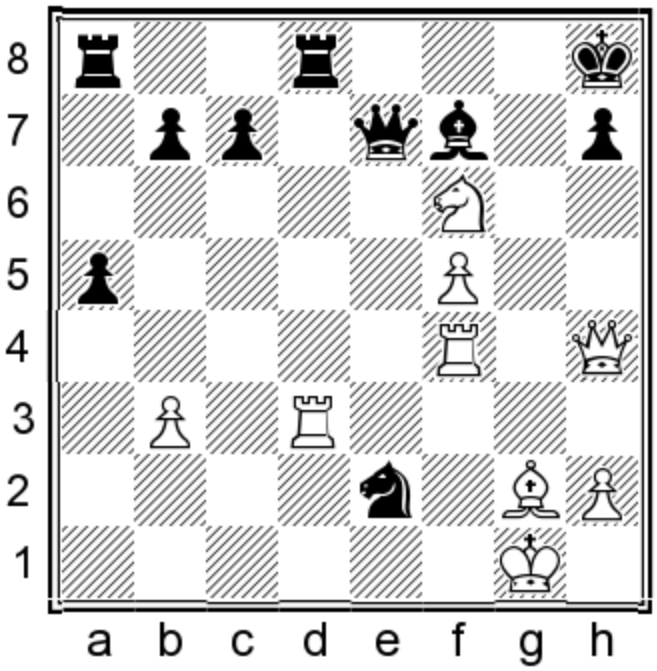
Hardly terrible, but unfortunately missing 25.Rh3! Bg8 26.gxf6 gxf6 27.N4c3! Nxc3 28.Nf4! when Gawain spotted 28...Ne2+, but not also that after 29.Nxe2 the knight is taboo due to the mate on f6, leaving Black pretty much lost in view of Nf4 or 29...Qf7 30.Bxc6 bxc6 31.Rg3 and only then Nf4.

25...Nxf4 26.Rxf4 Nxd4?

Romain clearly likes his extra pawns, but he should have preferred 26...Bg8 when 27.gxf6 gxf6 28.Qxf6+ (28.Nc5!? Bd5 29.Rg3 would be a try for more) 28...Qxf6 29.Nxf6 would only have been about equal.

27.gxf6 gxf6 28.Nxf6 Ne2+

chesstouring.com



The point of Black's play and to where should White now move his king?

29.Kf1?

Not here.

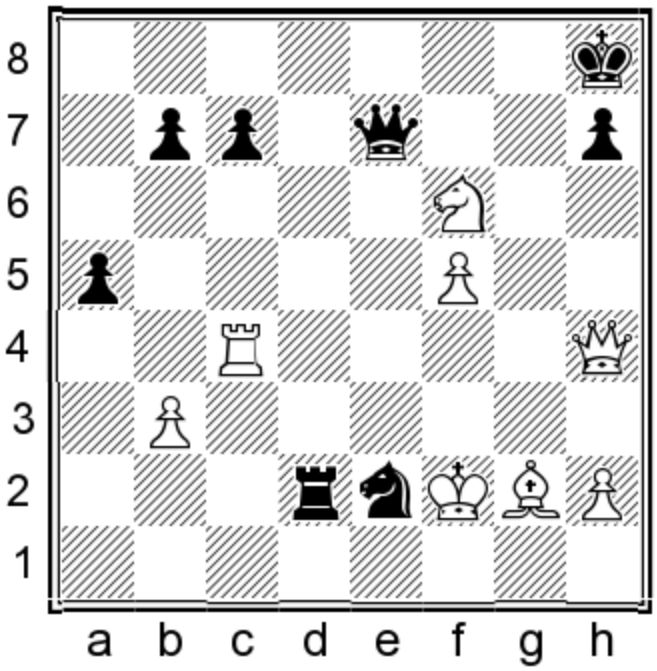
29.Kf2! was correct when 29...Bg8 (29...Qc5+ 30.Kxe2 Qc2+ 31.Ke1! Qb1+ 32.Kf2 Qc2+ 33.Kg1 is another key line, while Gawain was concerned by 29...Be6 30.Rh3 Qc5+, but after 31.Re3 Bxf5 32.Rc4! White does seem to be winning) 30.Re3 simply picks up a piece.

29...Bc4?

Time-trouble. Instead, 29...Bg8! 30.Re4 Qc5! would have been most unclear and the game might well have ended in a draw by perpetual check after 31.Rde3 Nc3 32.Re5 Rd1+ 33.Kf2 Rd2+ 34.Kf1.

30.Rxd8+ Rxd8 31.Rxc4 Rd1+ 32.Kf2 Rd2

chesstouring.com



33.Qxh7+!?

Practical chess as, with both flags hanging, Gawain forces a better endgame. With more time, though, he would surely have found the cold-blooded 33.Be4!, and if 33...Nd4+ (or 33...Nf4+ 34.Kf3) 34.Kf1 Rd1+ 35.Kg2 Rd2+ 36.Kh3, dodging the checks and winning.

33...Qxh7 34.Nxh7 Nf4+?

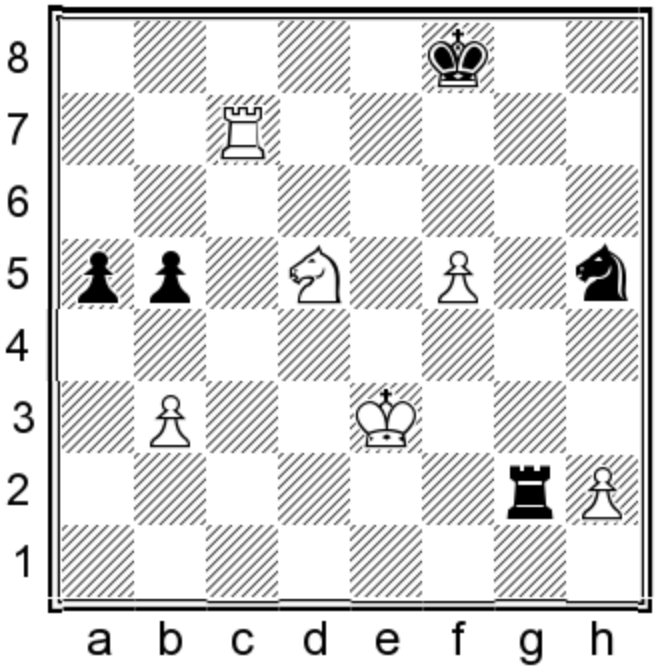
34...Nd4+ 35.Ke3 Rxg2 36.Kxd4 Kxh7 (36...Rg4+? 37.Kd5! Rxc4 38.Kxc4 Kxh7 39.Kb5 b6 40.h4! is a winning pawn endgame, with Gawain offering the instructive line 40...Kg7 41.h5 Kf6 42.h6! Kf7 43.Kc6 Kf6 44.Kd7! b5 45.h7 Kg7 46.Ke7 and the win becomes obvious) 37.Rxc7+ Kg8 38.Ke5 would have left White pressing, but still not definitely winning.

35.Ke3?

35.Kf3! Nxg2 36.Rxc7 would have been somewhat simpler.

chesstouring.com

35...Rxg2 36.Nf6 Kg7 37.Ne8+ Kf7 38.Nxc7 Nh5 39.Nd5 b5 40.Rc7+ Kf8



Finally the time control has been reached and Gawain could now think for more than 30 seconds.

41.Rc5!

41.Rh7? Rxh2 42.Nf4 Nf6! is a sneaky defence.

41...b4?

Now the defence becomes very tough and 41...a4 42.b4 a3 43.Rxb5 Rxh2 44.Ra5 was surely a better try for Black, even if White would still have enjoyed good chances in practice to convert.

42.Rxa5 Rxh2 43.Ra8+ Kg7 44.Ra7+! Kh6

Not the happiest spot for the king, but played to avoid 44...Kf8 45.Rh7!.

45.Kd4 Kg5 46.Rf7

chesstouring.com

Simple chess. White just wants to run the f-pawn.

46...Rc2

46...Rf2!? 47.f6 Kf5 was also possible, but would have required a cool head and here White has at least 48.Kc5 with good winning chances.

47.Rf8 Rc1 48.f6 Rf1 49.Kc5 Rf5

Unfortunately for Black, 49...Nf4 50.Nxf4 Rxf4 51.Rg8+! Kh5 52.Rg7 Rxf6 53.Kxb4 is just a lost rook endgame with his king so far away.

50.Kc4 Nf4 51.Rg8+ Kh6 52.Nxf4

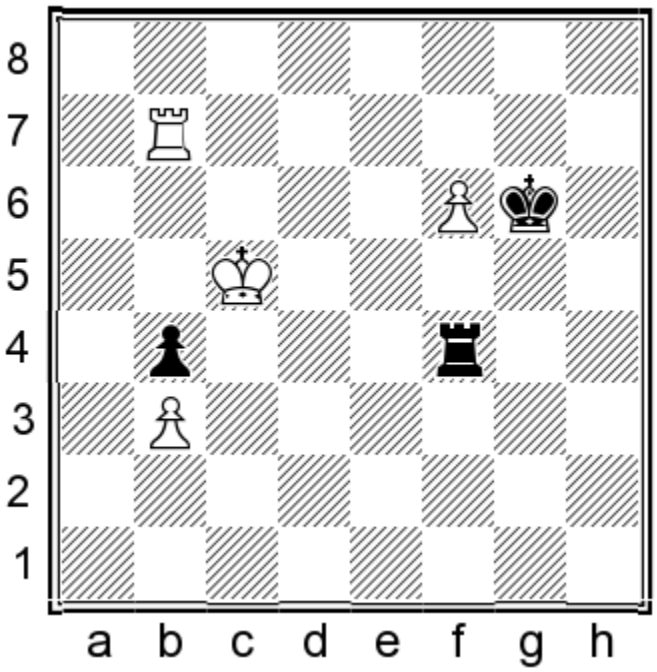
More simple chess, although there was also 52.Ne3!.

52...Rxf4+ 53.Kc5 Kh7 54.Rg7+ Kh6 55.Rb7

A slightly strange choice when 55.Rg1! Rxf6 56.Kxb4 would again be pretty straightforward for White.

55...Kg6

chesstouring.com



56.f7!

Refusing to allow Black the chance to fight on after 56.Rxb4 Rf5+! 57.Kc6 Rxf6+ 58.Kb7.

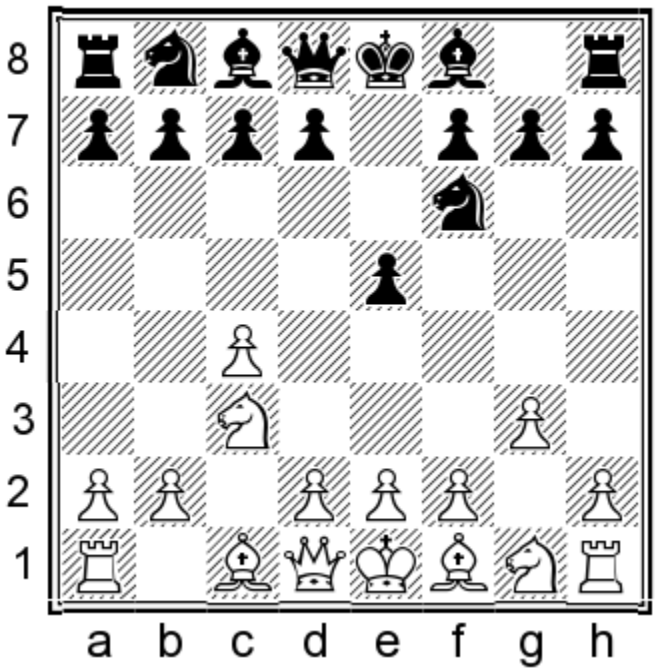
56...Kg5 57.Rxb4 Rxf7 58.Re4! Kf5 59.Re8 1-0

Black's king has been well and truly cut off, making 59...Kf6 (or 59...Rc7+ 60.Kb6) 60.b4 Rc7+ 61.Kb6 a pretty straightforward win.

Theory 6E

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3

chesstouring.com



3...c6

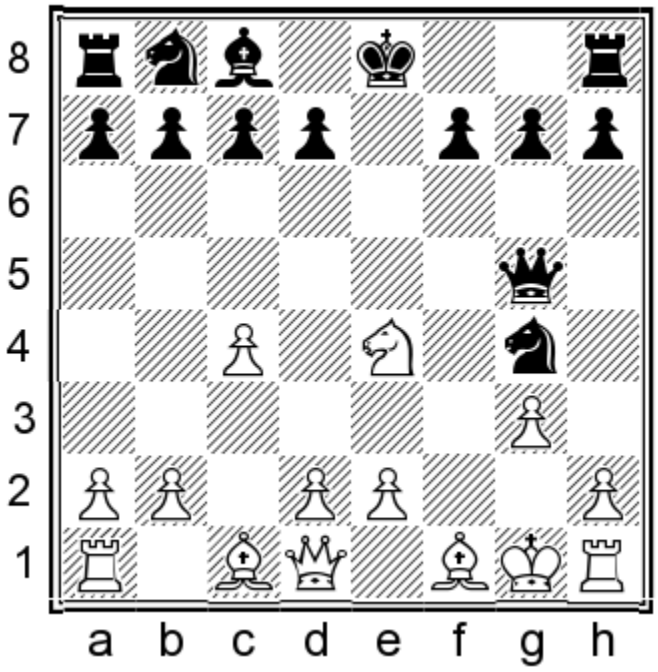
The Keres variation, Black's third most popular choice behind the reversed Dragon and 3...Bb4 when we'll examine 4.e4 in our next section, Line 6F.

It still isn't too late, incidentally, for Black to head for King's Indian waters, i.e. 3...g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.e4 d6 6.Nge2 and we're back in our third chapter. Three other moves deserve a quick mention:

a) 3...Bc5 gives Black some independent options if 4.Bg2 c6, so here we prefer to begin with 4.Nf3, which usually just takes play back into that line of the Four Knights we analysed back in Line 6B after 4...Nc6 5.Bg2 0-0 6.0-0 d6 7.e3. Here 4...d6 5.Bg2 will also transpose if Black goes ...Nc6 now or after 5...0-0 6.0-0. There's also 6...c6, but then 7.d4! exd4 8.Nxd4 is quite pleasant for White, who may pressure d6 or simply complete development with 8...Re8 9.b3 Nbd7 10.Bb2 Ne5 11.h3 a6 12.e3, which retained control and an edge in Lagarde-Gozzoli, French Championship, Chartres 2019, where an advance with f4 and g4 was by no means off the

chesstouring.com

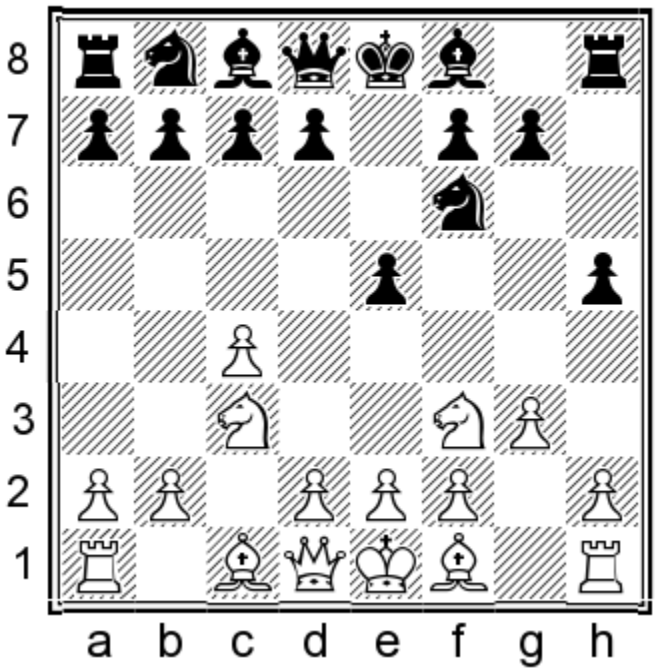
cards. Note too that 4...e4?! 5.Ng5 Bxf2+ 6.Kxf2 Ng4+ 7.Kg1 Qxg5 8.Nxe4 is once again an exchanging sequence we should welcome.



After 8...Qg6 9.Bg2 0-0 10.d4 d6, as in Dubov-Jumabayev, St. Petersburg (rapid) 2018, 11.h3 Nf6 12.Nxf6+ Qxf6 13.Kh2 looks like a pleasant two-bishop edge with Rf1 and Bf4 on the way.

b) 3...h5?! is an aggressive idea a few folk simply can’t resist whenever they see a fianchetto, but Harry does not really want to advance when White can simply halt him with 4.Nf3!.

chesstouring.com



For example, 4...d6 5.Bg2 Nc6 6.d4!? (6.h3 followed by 7.d3 would be a more restrained way to play) 6...exd4 7.Nxd4 Nxd4 8.Qxd4 h4 9.Bg5 when the pin and White's lead in development are a bit awkward for Black, with 9...hxg3 10.hxg3 Rxh1+ 11.Bxh1 Be7 12.0-0-0 leaving him suffering somewhat in view of 12...c6 13.c5! d5 14.e4 when White has very much seized the initiative.

Alternatively, 4...Nc6 5.Bg2 d5?! 6.cxd5 Nxd5 7.Nxe5! saw Black falling for a standard Dragon tactic in Kreisl-C.Repka, Stara Lubovna 2017, where 7...Nxc3 8.Nxc6 Nxd1 9.Nxd8 Nxf2 10.Nxf7 Nd3+ 11.exd3 Kxf7 12.0-0+ Ke8 13.d4 Be7 14.d3 left White with an extra pawn and the initiative, and 4...h4 5.Nxe5!? hxg3 6.fxg3 Bd6 is nothing to fear at least so long as you now go 7.d4! Nc6 (or 7...Bxe5? 8.dxe5 Ng4 9.Qd4!, winning a piece if 9...Nxh2? 10.Qf2) 8.Nxc6 dxc6 (8...Bxg3+?? 9.hxg3 leaves two black major pieces en prise) 9.Qd3!, defending g3 in From Gambit fashion.

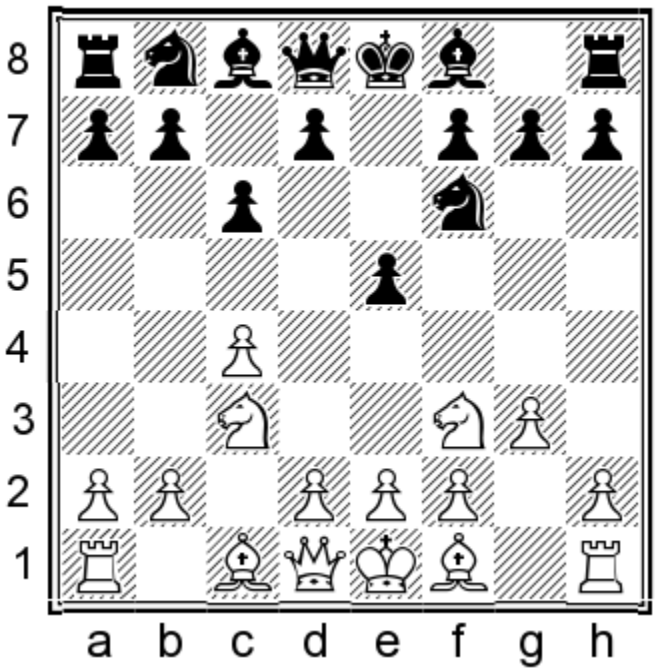
c) 3...h6 is a move which doesn't really exist in the reversed Sicilian position, but some quite strong players, including Magnus, have tried 1.c4 e5 2.g3 Nf6 3.Bg2 h6!?, waiting. This move order is much less common and you now might want to look into 4.Nf3!?, which is strangely yet to be

chesstouring.com

tried. There's also nothing wrong with 4.Bg2 Bb4 5.e4, reaching a position we'll return to in Line 6F.

Returning to Keres' 3...c6:

4.Nf3!



Once again the right square for the knight when there's a chance for early pressure. It's important to avoid 4.Bg2 d5 when 5.cxd5 cxd5 6.Qb3?! Nc6! is a pawn sacrifice which has scored well for Black, who, especially at club level, is usually better prepared for 4.d4 than 4.Nf3, meeting the former with either 4...e4 or 4...exd4 5.Qxd4 d5.

4...e4

Invariably played as Black seizes space in c3 Sicilian style. White can meet 4...d5 either by grabbing the e-pawn and retreating the other knight to b1 or just with 5.cxd5 when 5...e4 (5...cxd5? 6.Nxe5 no longer offers Black any compensation when 6...d4 can be met by 7.Qa4+) 6.Nd4 transposes to note 'a' to Black's fifth move, below.

chesstouring.com

5.Nd4

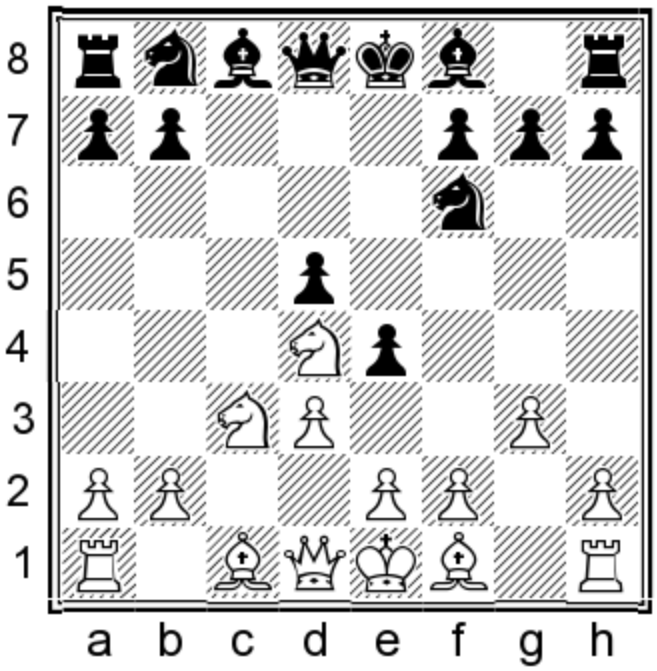
5.Ng5? is where we often move the knight, but here White isn't picking off the e4-pawn and 5...d5 would just be pretty good for Black.

5...Qb6

This looks like Black's best try, immediately challenging the knight on d4:

a) In practice 5...d5 has been by far Black's main move and after 6.cxd5 cxd5 (not forced with the pawn on d5 pinned; indeed, 6...Qb6 7.Nb3 would take play into the note to Black's sixth move in our main line, while 6...Bc5 7.Nb3 Bb6 8.d3! plays for a lead in development, which White was quick to make use of with 8...exd3 9.Qxd3 cxd5 10.Bg2 Be6 11.0-0 Nc6 12.Bg5 Ne5? 13.Qb5+ Bd7 14.Qb4 already leaving Black facing major difficulties in Kovalev-Musovic, Internet (blitz) 2020, and while 8...cxd5 forces matters, it only does into a queenless middlegame where White holds a nagging pull: 9.dxe4 Nxe4 10.Nxe4 dxe4 11.Qxd8+ Bxd8 12.Bg2 f5 13.f3! exf3 14.Bxf3, after which Bf4, Rc1 and Nc5 should begin to exert some pressure) 7.d3! (again this immediate central challenge is preferable to 7.Bg2 Nc6), we have:

chesstouring.com



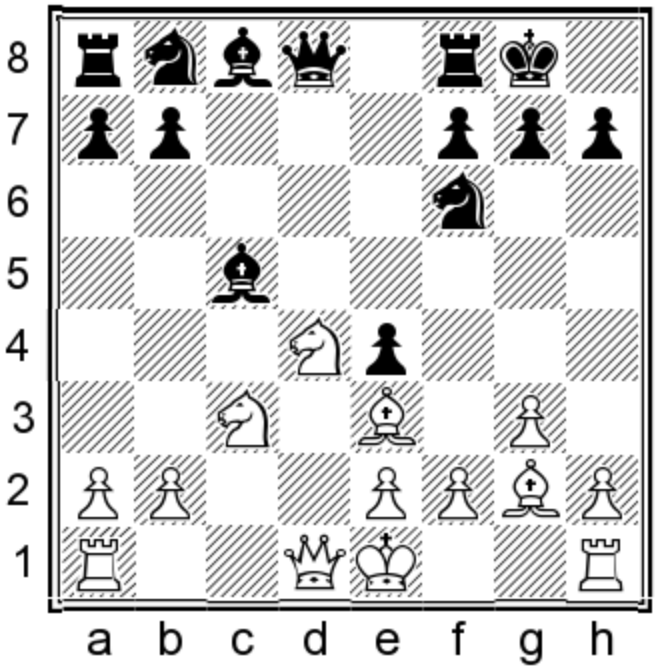
a1) Now 7...Nc6?! would just be rather misguided, as 8.dxe4 dxe4 offers White a rather nice choice between 9.Be3 and 9.Nxc6 Qxd1+ 10.Nxd1 bxc6 11.Bg2 Bf5? 12.0-0 h6 13.Ne3 Be6 14.b3 Bc5 15.Bb2, which just left Black with too many weaknesses in Grigoriants-Balog, Mamaia 2013.

a2) It also seems too late for 7...Qb6 in view of 8.dxe4 Bc5 9.e3 dxe4 10.Na4!, which either secures a useful bishop or after 10...Bb4+ 11.Bd2 Qa5 12.Nc3 Bg4 13.Qc2 Black finds his activity at an end and he is rather vulnerable on e4 and to ideas of a3.

a3) 7...Bc5 8.dxe4!? (this has been pretty rare, but appears in no way inferior to the relatively theoretical main line, 8.Nb3 Bb4) 8...dxe4 (Black's choice in Perman-Kozlova, Bad Zwischenahn 2002; once again we should consider too 8...Qb6 when 9.Be3 Nc6! isn't so clear, but 9.e3 dxe4 10.Na4! would take us back to a line we've already seen gives White an edge) 9.Be3!? (this developing choice appears more challenging than 9.Nb3) 9...0-0 (9...Ng4? falls for our big trick: 10.Ne6! Qxd1+ 11.Rxd1 when Black must give up the bishop-pair in view of 11...Nxe3? 12.Rd8+ Ke7 13.Rxh8 Bxe6 14.fxe3, while 9...Qb6 is just rather well met by 10.a3!, threatening Na4) 10.Bg2 we reach a position which could really do with a

chesstouring.com

test or two (10.Ne6? no longer works because of 10....Qxd1+ 11.Rxd1 Bxe3).

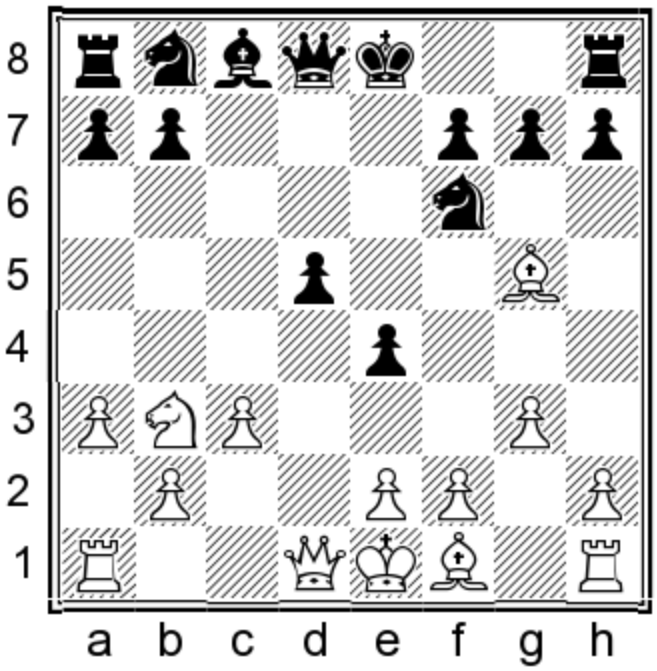


Both your authors hope to reach it at some point as after 10...Qe7 (10...Ng4 is now better timed than a move earlier, but 11.Nxe4 Nxe3 12.fxe3 Bb4+ 13.Kf2! shouldn't give Black enough for his pawn with Qb3, Rad1 and possibly Rhf1 on their way, with Bf3 or Nf3 always available if needed) 11.Qc2 Re8 (11...Nc6?! 12.Nxc6 bxc6 walks into 13.Nd5! and there goes the two bishops) 12.Rd1! White surely has an edge. He is not only ready to castle, but also has ideas of Bg5 now that the knight on d4 is overprotected.

Earlier in this line, Aryan Tari once preferred 8...Nxe4, but after 9.Be3! 0-0 10.Bg2 Nc6? (Black likely has to try 10...Nxc3 11.bxc3 Bxd4!, hoping that his outpost on c4 will offset White's bishops; now all three recaptures have their merits, but 12.cxd4 is the most tempting, and if 12...Nc6 13.Rb1!?, intending Rb5 or 13...b6 14.Rc1 Na5 15.Bd2!, keeping the knight out of c4) 11.Bxe4 Bxd4 12.Bxh7+! Kxh7 13.Bxd4 had just lost a pawn in Grigoriants-Tari, Berlin (rapid) 2015.

chesstouring.com

b) Before returning to our main line, we should mention that 5...Bc5 6.Nb3 Bb4 hopes for 7.Bg2 d5 8.cxd5 cxd5 with a transposition to the old main line we were avoiding above. Fortunately help is at hand in the shape of 7.a3!? Bxc3 (consistent and 7...Be7 8.Bg2 d5 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.d3 would see White's lead in development already becoming quite useful) 8.dxc3 d5 9.cxd5 cxd5 when in Toth-H.Nagy, Nyiregyhaza 1998, 10.Bg5! would have targeted d5.

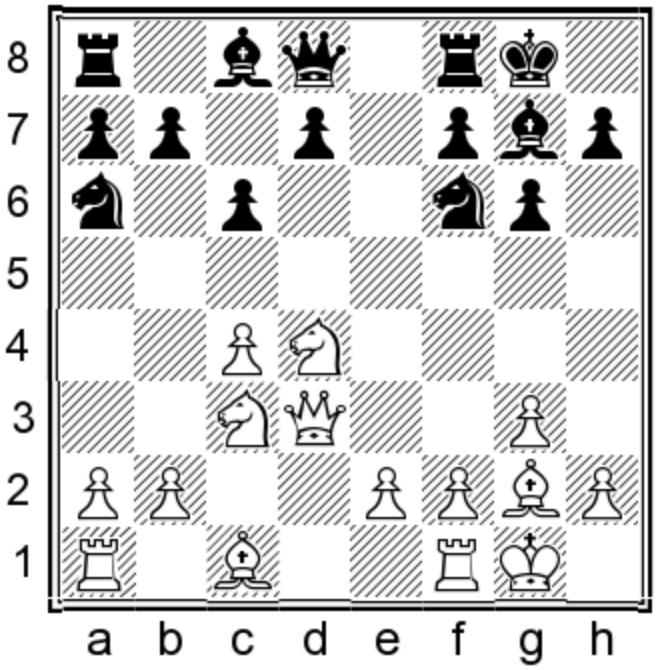


Black can defend with 10...Be6 when White has a few options, including the simplistic 11.Bxf6!? Qxf6 12.Qd4 Qxd4 13.Nxd4. This may not look like a huge amount, but if you try to find a good set-up for Black, you'll quickly appreciate White's small but nagging pull. One key idea is the f3 break, another the leaping nature of the knight as revealed by 13...Bd7?! (13...Nc6 14.Rd1 Nxd4 15.Rxd4 Ke7 16.f3! f5 17.e3 restricts White to an edge on account of the superior bishop) 14.Bg2 Nc6 15.Nb5 when Black has to move his king if he doesn't want to lose d5.

c) A somewhat less common idea is 5...g6, which echoes Rozentalis's preferred handling of the c3 Sicilian, but doesn't really convince a tempo down: 6.Bg2 Bg7 (or 6...d5?! 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.d3 Bg7 when White has a few

chesstouring.com

tempting possibilities, including the disruptive 9.Qa4+!? Bd7 10.Qa3) 7.0-0 0-0 8.d3 (again, just a rather useful break) 8...exd3 9.Qxd3 Na6.



The Spanish GM Marc Narciso Dublan has reached this position three times, hoping to equalise with ...d5; cxd5 Nb4 and a piece recapture on d5. However, we're not too sure what his idea is after 10.Bg5 followed by Rad1 and Qd2, and if 10...h6 (or 10...d5 11.cxd5 Nb4 12.Qd2 Nbxd5 13.Nxd5 when Black will have to suffer after 13...cxd5 14.Rfd1, with a pleasant enough IQP position for White where he always has the option of meeting ...Qb6 with a4-a5) 11.Bf4 d5 12.cxd5 g5 (radical, but 12...Nb4? 13.Qd2 comes with tempo, and if 13...g5 14.dxc6! gxf4 15.cxb7) 13.Be5 Nb4 14.Qd2 Nbxd5 15.Nxd5 Nxd5? (15...cxd5 16.Qd3 Re8 17.Bxf6 Qxf6 18.e3 would only leave Black slightly worse) 16.Bxg7 Kxg7 17.Rad1 when there's no IQP, but White is doing pretty well with e4 and Qc3 on the way.

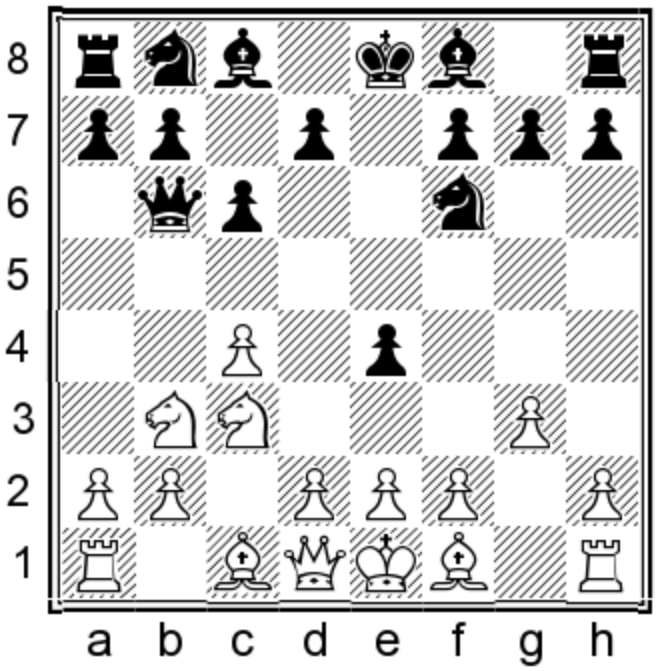
d) Finally, 5...b5?! is a rather bizarre idea, with 6.cxb5 c5 7.Nc2 d5 8.Bg2 Bb7 9.d3! ensuring that White won't be overrun in the centre. Indeed, Black's powerful-looking centre will crumble sooner or later, as shown by 9...Be7 (hoping for 10.dxe4 d4!) 10.0-0 a6 11.bxa6 Rxa6 12.dxe4 d4 (Silva-Efimov, Albufeira Algarve 1999) 13.Nb5!? Bxe4 14.Bxe4 Nxe4 15.Qd3

chesstouring.com

Nf6 16.b4! when White might well be the side landing up with the useful central majority, not to mention an extra pawn.

Returning to 5...Qb6:

6.Nb3



By no means forced, but White doesn't have to fear an a-pawn onslaught.

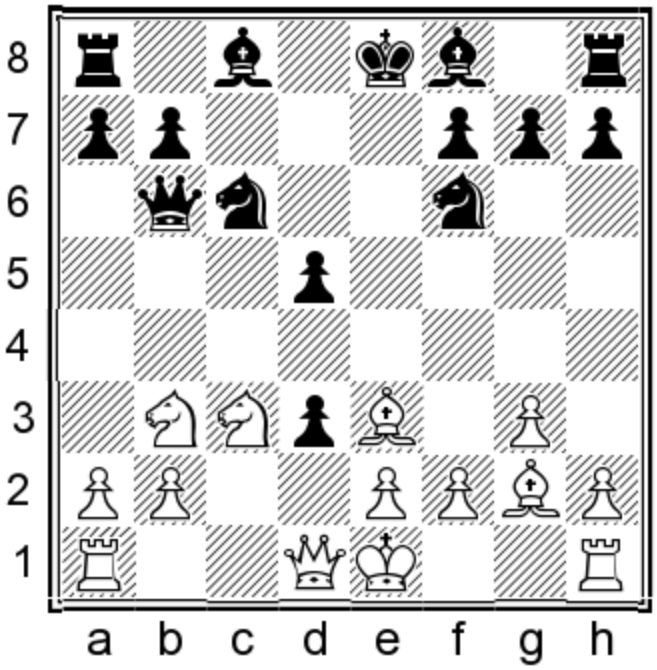
6...a5!

The choice of most strong players to have reached this position.

Black's problem after 6...d5 is that 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.Bg2 (here rather than d3, to avoid 8.d3 Ng4!?) 8...Nc6 (development; the way to meet 8...a5 was shown in a world championship match no less: 9.d3 a4 10.Be3! Qb4 11.Nd4 a3 12.Nc2 Qxb2 13.Bd4 Bb4 14.Nxb4 Qxb4 15.Bxf6 gxf6 16.0-0! left Black with too many weaknesses in Botvinnik-Tal, 9th matchgame, Moscow 1961, and 8...Bf5 9.d3 is also quite nice for White, since we can meet 9...exd3 by castling, while 9...Bb4 10.0-0 Bxc3 11.bxc3 0-0 12.Be3 Qc7 13.Rc1 Nc6 has long been known to favour White after 14.c4 and

chesstouring.com

14.Nd4!? Bg6 15.c4 might be an even stronger version) 9.d3 exd3 10.Be3! leaves him unable to equalise.

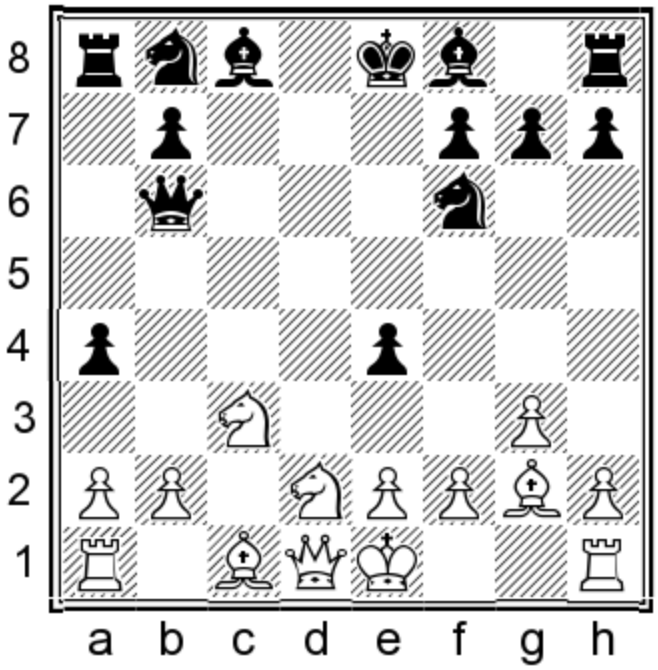


That's true even if he tries 10...d4!? (10...Qa6 11.exd3 Bg4 12.Qd2 Rd8 13.0-0 was pretty promising for White in Cu.Hansen-Aagaard, Danish Championship, Koge 2005, with Nc5 next up and 13...d4? failing to 14.Nxd4! Nxd4 15.Bxd4 Rxd4 16.Qe3+) 11.Nxd4 Bc5 (11...Qxb2?! offers White a couple of dangerous continuations, including 12.0-0!? Qxc3 13.Rc1 followed by regaining the piece on c6 or 13...Nxd4 14.Rxc3 Nxe2+ 15.Kh1 Nxc3 16.Qxd3 Bb4 17.a3! when Black must give up the knight rather than allow 17...Ba5? 18.Bc5) 12.Nxc6 (the more complex 12.Bxc6+!? bxc6 13.Qxd3 is also promising) 12...Bxe3 13.fxe3 bxc6 14.Qxd3 0-0 15.Qd4!, with a definite edge for White as even the fairly forcing line 15...Qxb2?! 16.Rb1 Qa3 17.Bxc6 Bf5 18.Rb3! Qc1+ 19.Kf2 Ng4+ 20.Qxg4 Qxh1 21.Bxh1 Bxg4 22.Bxa8 Rxa8 23.e4 only results in a pretty miserable endgame for Black.

After 6...d5 7.cxd5 again 7...a5!? is possible, but 8.d3 a4 9.Nd2 cxd5 (or 9...exd3 10.Nc4! Qc5 11.exd3 cxd5 12.d4!, seizing the initiative and after 12...Qe7+?! 13.Ne3 Be6 in Nikitin-Gorchakov, Moscow 1970, White might

chesstouring.com

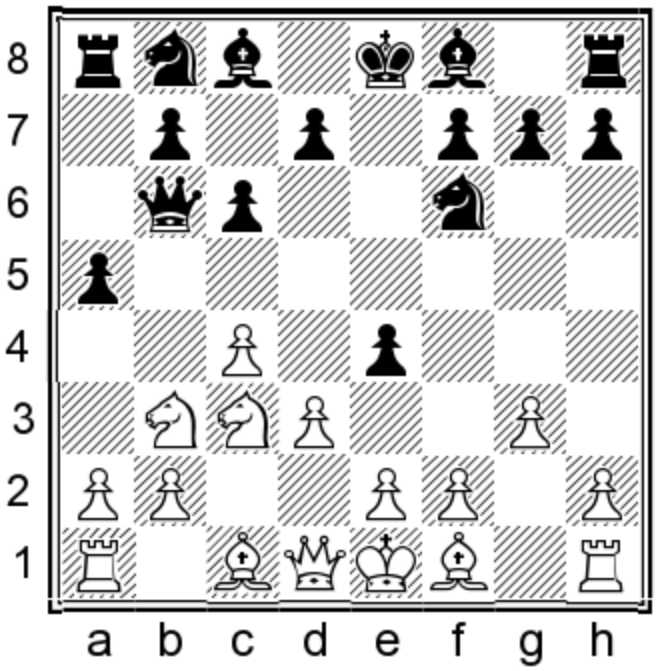
have done even better than the check on b5 with 14.Bg2 Qd7 15.0-0 Be7 16.f4!, and the pseudo-active 9...a3 10.Rb1!? exd3 11.Bg2! also looks rather ropey for Black) 10.dxe4 dxe4 (10...Bc5 11.e3 makes little difference, and if 11...a3 when 12.Rb1 again appears simplest) 11.Bg2! is just good for White (11.Ndxe4 Nxe4 12.Nxe4 Bb4+ offers Black fair compensation).



Indeed, 11...e3 12.fxe3 Nc6 (12...Qxe3? 13.Nde4 Qb6 14.Nxf6+ Qxf6 15.Nd5 Qd8 16.Bf4 would be a dream lead in development) 13.Nxa4 Qxe3 (13...Qa7 14.Nc3 Bc5 was preferred in Rakay-Ramirez, correspondence 1997, where 15.Nb3 would have been simple and strong, and if 15...Bxe3 16.Bxe3 Qxe3 17.Qd6) 14.Ne4 Qa7 15.Nxf6+ gxf6 16.Nc3 just leaves White with an extra pawn and the better structure.

7.d3

chesstouring.com



Our favourite break and, of course, White needs to create a square for his knight on b3.

7...a4

Consistent. 7...d5 8.cxd5 a4 9.Nd2 is good for White, as we've just seen, and 7...Bb4 8.Bg2 exd3?! (or 8...a4 when 9.Nd2 exd3 10.0-0 echoes our main line, and if 10...a3 11.Rb1, maintaining control and an edge or much more than that in the event of 11...dxe2? 12.Qxe2+ Be7 13.Re1 Qd8 14.c5!) 9.exd3 0-0 10.0-0 gives White an easy edge on account of his easier development, as shown by 10...a4 11.Be3 Qd8 12.Nd4 a3 13.Qb3 axb2 14.Qxb2 followed by moving the knight and d4.

8.Nd2!

An important retreat. As we've seen, White can often go 8.Be3, but here after 8...Qd8! Black's ideas of ...Ng4 are a bit annoying.

8...exd3

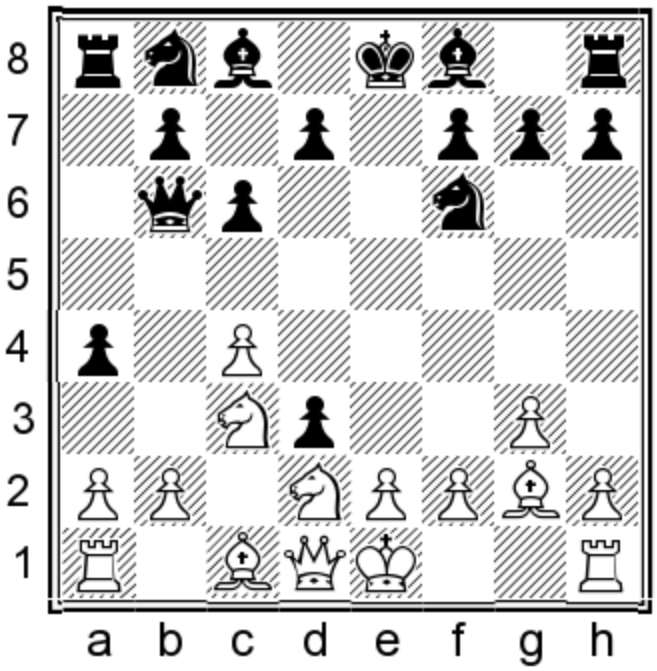
chesstouring.com

Black’s main try.

8...a3 9.Rb1 changes little, with 9...exd3 10.Bg2! Be7 11.0-0 supplying a definite edge, Black landing up quite passively placed after 11...0-0 12.exd3 Qd8 13.Qb3 axb2 14.Bxb2 d6 15.Rfe1 Nbd7 16.d4 in Esipenko-Ter Sahakyan, Internet 2020.

Likewise, 8...e3?! 9.fxe3 Ng4 10.Nde4 Nxe3 11.Qd2! has long been known to favour White because of 11...Nxf1? 12.Qf4! when there’s just no good move for Black, as we can see from 12...Be7 (or 12...d6 13.Rxf1 Qc7 14.c5!) 13.Qe5! f6 14.Nd6+ Kd8 15.Nxc8 and White will emerge a piece ahead.

9.Bg2!



Fast development is key and in any case you should not wish to follow the 9.exd3?! Bc5 of Nakamura-Topalov, Wijk aan Zee 2012.

9...d5

chesstouring.com

This is certainly a wiser choice than 9...dxe2?! 10.Qxe2+ Be7 11.0-0 when Black can't castle and 11...d6 12.Re1 Qd8 13.Nde4!? will regain the pawn with an edge: 13...0-0 14.Bf4 Nxe4 15.Nxe4 Be6 (15...d5?! 16.cxd5 cxd5 17.Rad1 Be6 18.Nc3 is even worse for Black) 16.Rad1 Nd7 17.Nxd6 Bxd6 18.Bxd6 Re8 19.h3!? with a pleasant edge due to the two bishops, and if 19...Qa5 20.b4! axb3 21.axb3 Qa2 22.Qd3.

Practice has also seen 9...Bb4 10.0-0 0-0 11.exd3 Qa5!? when in Maze-Hamdouchi, French League 2012, 12.Qc2! d5 13.a3 Bxc3 (otherwise, 13...Bd6 14.b4 axb3 15.Nxb3 Qd8 16.Bb2 gives White easy development and central pressure) 14.bxc3 Bf5 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.Nf3 would have been slightly better for White, followed by Nd4 or 16...Nc6 (16...Qa6 17.Rd1 Nbd7 18.Nd4 Bg4 19.Re1 Rfe8 20.Bf4 is also a pull) 17.Be3 Rfe8 18.h3!? Rad8 19.Rab1, keeping control while looking to exert some queenside pressure, as well as make a timely kingside expansion.

10.cxd5!?

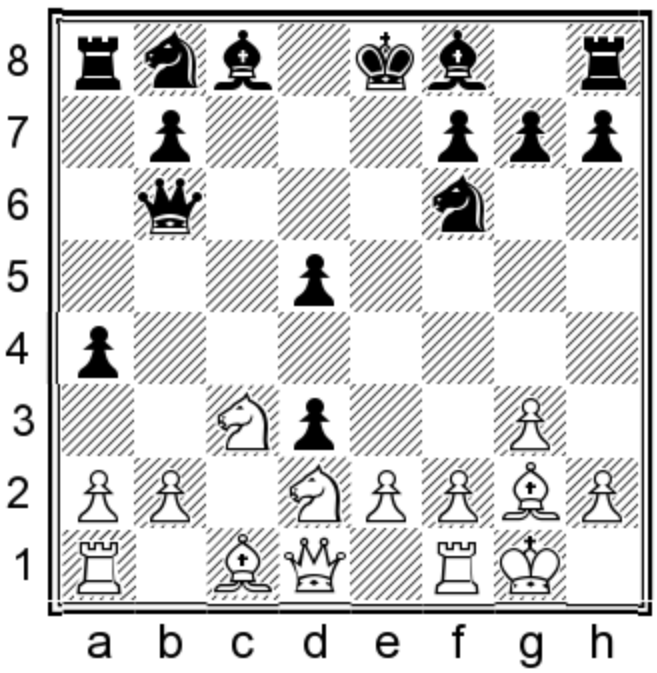
10.exd3 also gives definite chances for an edge if you prefer something calmer.

10...cxd5

10...Bb4?! is again nothing to fear and 11.0-0 0-0 12.Nc4 Qd8?! would just have been an extra pawn for White in Nakamura-Bacrot, Biel (blitz) 2012, had he now gone 13.Qxd3 Bxc3 14.dxc6! Qxd3 15.exd3 Bxb2 16.cxb7 Bxb7 17.Bxb7 Bxa1 18.Bxa8.

11.0-0!

chesstouring.com



chesstouring.com

White is determined to offer a pawn, as well as side-step 11.exd3 Bg4.

11...Bg4

The critical choice, but in practice Black has tended to go 11...Be6?! when White can simply go 12.exd3 or even 12.e4! and after 12...d4 (12...dxe4 13.Ndxe4 Nxe4 14.Bxe4 Nc6 15.Be3 Qa5 16.Qxd3 followed by Rad1 looks like a decent amount of lasting pressure) 13.Nd5 Qc5?! (even 13...Qd8 14.Nc4 is quite promising, with Bg5 and Qxd3 on the way) 14.b4! Qa7? 15.Nc7+ Kd7 16.Nxa8 b5 17.e5 was already resignable for Black in Janchev-Rusev, Pleven 2006.

12.h3!

A much stronger choice than the 12.Nf3? d4 13.Nb1 of Rogule-Nebolsina, Moscow 2002.

12...dxe2 13.Nxe2

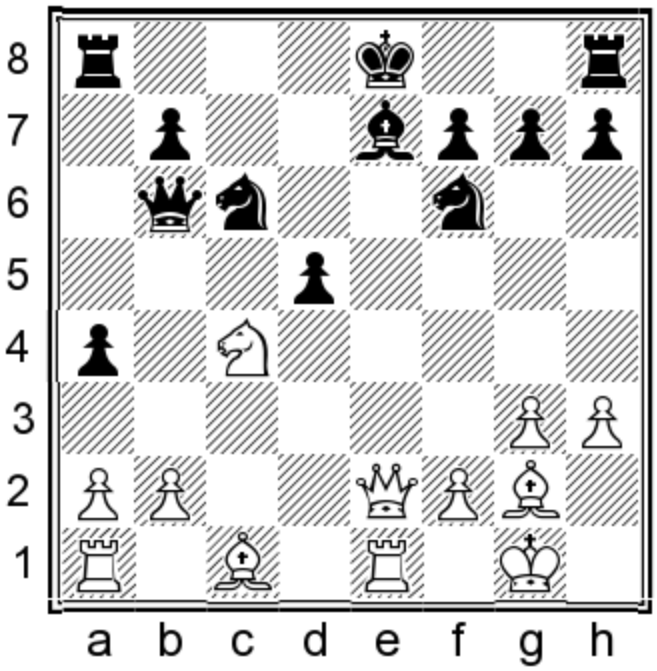
This is quite a fascinating gambit, pitting White's bishops and safer king against Black's extra, if isolated, pawn.

13...Bxe2

13...Be6 14.Nb1!? is another important line, regaining the pawn with chances for a pull after, for instance, 14...Nc6 15.Nbc3 Be7 16.Nxa4 Qa5 17.Nac3 0-0 18.Nf4.

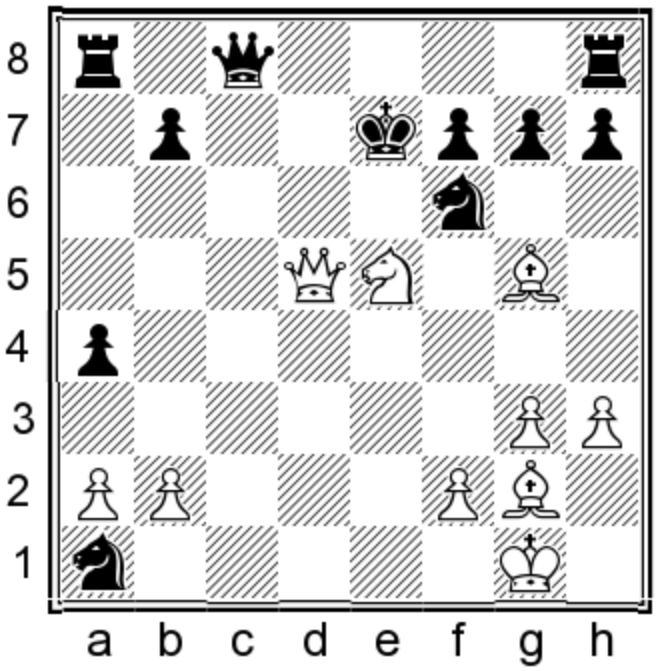
14.Qxe2+ Be7 15.Re1 Nc6 16.Nc4!

chesstouring.com



This has been an important and rather fun line. We should probably stop here, but if you're enjoying the play and White's initiative, do keep going! Black can stay afloat here, but after **16...Qc5 17.Ne5 Nd4!** (pretty much an only move and one a panicking opponent might well not find over the board) **18.Qd1 Nc2** (or 18...Ne6 19.Nd3 Qb6 20.Be3 d4 21.Bd2 0-0 22.Qf3 Rab8 23.Rac1 with lasting pressure for the pawn) **19.Nd3!** (going for much more than just regaining the pawn after 19.Be3) **19...Qc4** (19...Qc8 20.Rxe7+ Kxe7 avoids a tempo-gaining Nc5, but 21.Rb1 retains full compensation for the exchange after Bg5 or 21...Kf8 22.Nf4 on account of White's fine bishops and initiative) **20.Rxe7+! Kxe7 21.Ne5 Qc8 22.Bg5! Nxa1?** (probably Black should prefer to suffer with a vulnerable king position after 22...Kf8 23.Rc1 Qf5 24.Bxf6 gxf6 25.Nf3 Nb4 26.Nh4) **23.Qxd5** he appears to be lost, despite having two rooks for a bishop.

chesstouring.com



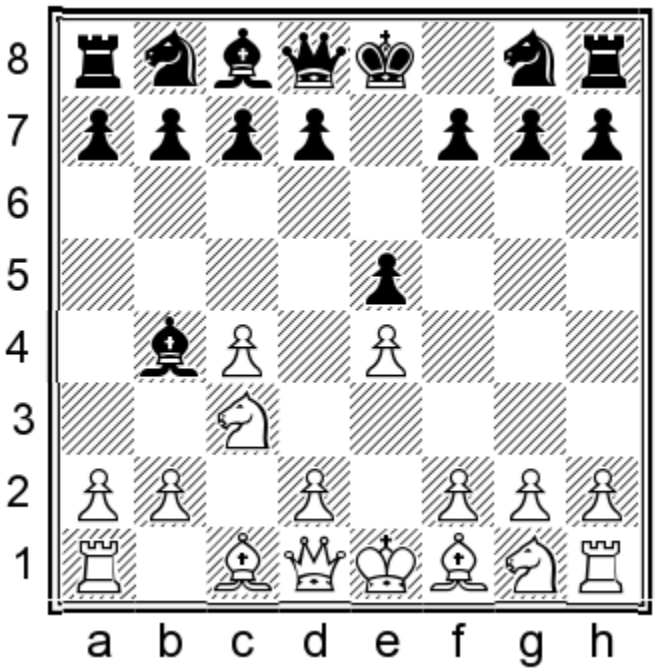
There’s a threat on f7 and even after **23...Rf8** (23...Qe6? fails to 24.Qxb7+ Kd6 25.Nxf7+) **24.Qe4! Re8** (24...Kd8? 25.Qb4! would be a rather powerful side-step) **25.Qb4+ Ke6 26.h4! h5 27.Bh3+ Ng4 28.Nxg4 f5 29.Ne3 Kf7 30.Bxf5** Black shouldn’t survive. Fascinating stuff!

Theory 6F

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6

Black can also play 2...Bb4 without delay when he is likely to be ready for 3.Nd5 (the main line) and 3.g3, but we wonder how many opponents will have even considered 3.e4!?.

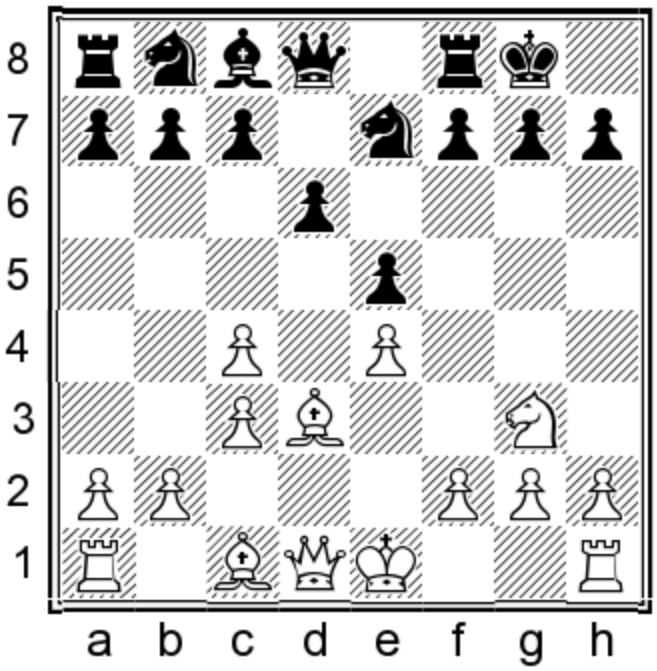
chesstouring.com



The world champion is yet to play this, but he has only faced 2...Bb4 once in recent years and has, of course, been experimenting with 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 e5!? in his latest online rapid games.

In the limited existing practice, Black has exchanged with 3...Bxc3 (3...Nf6 has only been marginally less popular when back in 2015 Baadur Jobava tried 4.Bd3!?, but we'd just go 4.g3 with a transposition to our main line) 4.dxc3 (recapturing as per our main line, although here 4.bxc3 d6 5.Ne2 also makes some sense) 4...d6 (continuing to decline a transposition with 4...Nf6 5.g3 – here both 5.f3 and 5.Bd3 followed by 6.Nge2 might also be explored – and 4...Ne7 might perhaps be met by 5.c5!?, preparing to undouble the pawns) 5.Bd3!? (a different square to normal for the bishop as White plays to dissuade ...f5; 5.g3 Be6 is a bit awkward, but the Czech IM Ivan Hausner has made a decent case for 5.h3!? Nf6 6.Qc2, intending quite aggressive play featuring queenside castling) 5...Ne7 (5...Nc6 was preferred in De Rijk-Kokorin, correspondence 2011, when we would still go 6.Ne2, and if 6...Nf6 7.f3 hoping for 7...0-0?! 8.Bg5 when a kingside pawnstorm with g4 and h4 would very much be on the cards) 6.Ne2 0-0 7.Ng3, which reaches an unexplored, but by no means athematic position.

chesstouring.com



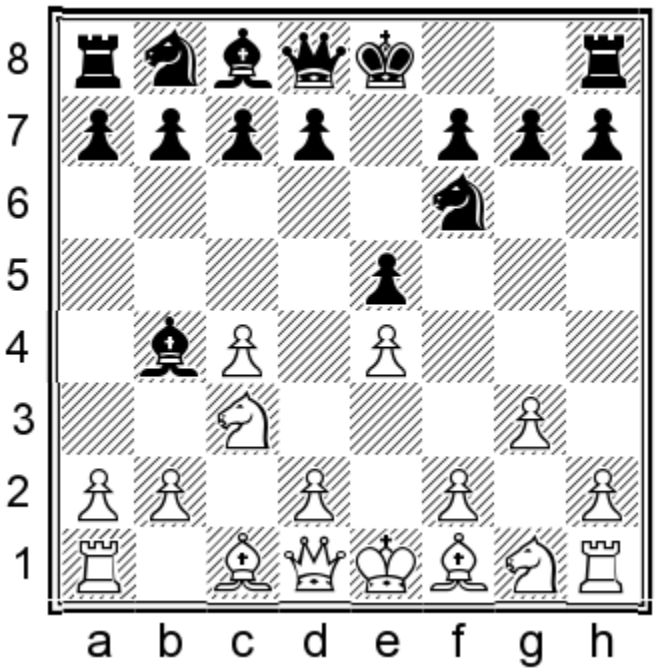
White has a sufficiently strong grip on the light squares and will hope to complete development ahead of an eventual advance on the kingside. J.Cooper-Alsina Leal, 4NCL 2019, continued 7...Nd7 (7...f5? drops a pawn to 8.exf5 Nxf5 9.Nxf5 Bxf5 10.Bxf5 Rxf5 11.Qd5+) 8.Bc2 a5 9.0-0 Nc5 10.Be3 Be6 11.Qe2 Qc8 12.h3 b6 when White decided it was time to up the ante, 13.f4!? exf4 14.Bxf4 Ng6 15.e5 quickly becoming very unclear, if with White's gaze very much on the black monarch.

Otherwise after 3.e4!?, 3...Nc6 angles for 4.g3 d6 5.Bg2 f5!?, so we might go 4.a3!? followed by b4 or 4...Bxc3 5.bxc3 Nf6 6.d3 d6 7.Ne2 when the lost tempo with the a-pawn shouldn't be all that important and White doesn't have to go g3 next; Ng3 or even h3 and g4 very much being options. Instead, 3...c6 might also be met by 4.a3 or 4.d4!? Nf6 5.f3 exd4 6.Qxd4 0-0 7.Bg5, and 3...d6 4.Nge2!? Nc6 5.a3 Bc5 6.b4 Bb6 7.Nd5 Nge7 8.Nxb6 axb6 9.Bb2 also leaves White looking to break with d4.

Returning to 2...Nf6:

3.g3 Bb4 4.e4!?

chesstouring.com



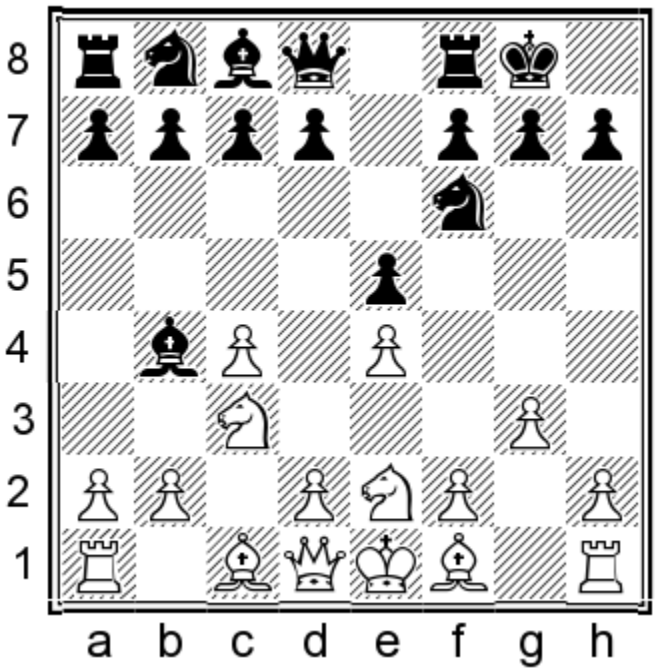
Previously played on occasion by GMs Vladimir Georgiev and Ferenc Berkes, this advance only really became known when Carlsen wheeled it out in the playoff to his nail-biting 2018 world championship match against Caruana. White again goes for a big clamp on the d5-square and avoids the older version 4.Bg2 0-0 5.e4, as here 5...Bxc3 6.bxc3 c6 7.Ne2 d5! has long been known to be quite comfortable for Black, although if you were looking for a second string to your white bow, you could do worse than look into 7.Nf3!? here.

4...Bxc3

Black's most popular choice in the relatively limited practice thus far, insisting on doubled pawns for White. Alternatives are:

a) His second most common approach has been the natural 4...0-0 and after 5.Nge2 we have:

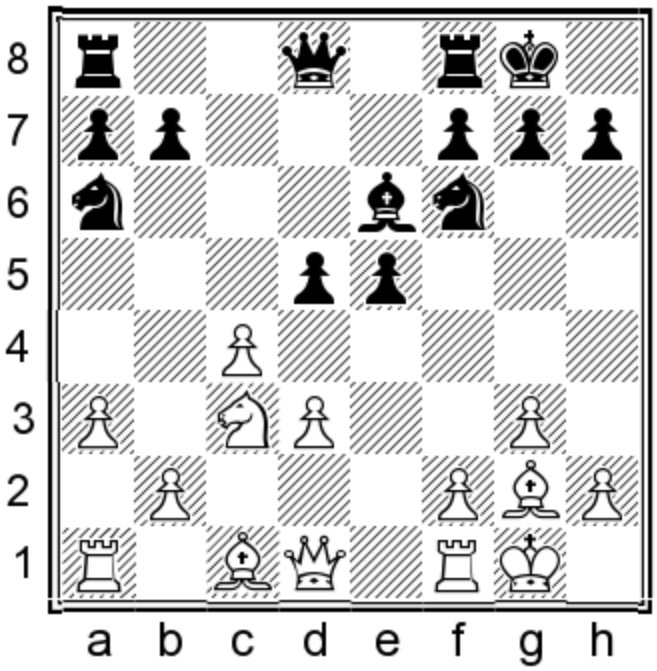
chesstouring.com



a1) 5...c6 was Caruana's choice, looking for immediate counterplay, when we saw that 6.Bg2 a6 7.0-0 b5 8.d4 d6 9.a3 Bxc3 (9...Ba5 was recommended at the time as an improvement, but 10.b4 Bb6 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.c5 Bc7 just looks rather unpleasant for Black after the simple 13.a4 or even 13.Nd5!? cxd5 14.exd5, as does 10...Bc7 11.cxb5 axb5 12.d5! with definite pressure and after 12...Bb6 13.Bg5 h6 14.Bxf6 Qxf6 15.dxc6 Nxc6 the safest way to collect the b-pawn might actually be 16.Qd5!? Bd7 17.Qxb5) 10.Nxc3 bxc4 11.dxe5 dxe5 favoured White in Carlsen-Caruana, World Championship (1st rapid play-off game), London 2018, where we made a decent case for 12.Qe2!? way back in our first chapter.

Black hasn't hurried to repeat this, but 6...d6 7.0-0 Be6 8.d3 looks very Botvinnikesque and quite pleasant for White. If Black moves his queen there might be a timely Bg5, otherwise White can go for an h3 and f4 plan, and 8...Na6 9.a3 Bxc3?! 10.Nxc3 d5?! 11.exd5 cxd5 left Black overextended in Artamonov-Yakupova, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009.

chesstouring.com



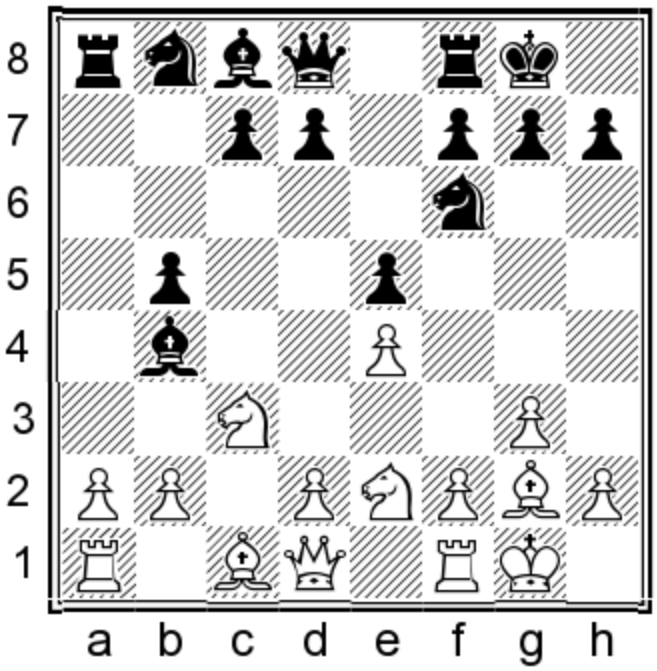
Here 12.Bg5! would have been thematic and strong, and if 12...dxc4 13.Bxb7 Nc5 14.Bxa8 Qxa8 15.Bxf6 Bh3 16.f3! gxf6 17.dxc4 Bxf1 18.Qxf1 with an extra pawn and the d5 outpost.

a2) 5...d6 6.h3!? (White continues to strive for the maximum out of the position, taking immediate control of g4 rather than simply develop with 6.Bg2) 6...Nc6 7.Bg2 a6!? 8.0-0 b5 is a better way of obtaining counterplay as Black, but White still has sufficient control after 9.d3!, as we saw back in Chapter One where we analysed the game Carlsen-Aronian, Game 8, Clutch Chess (rapid) 2020.

a3) 5...Nc6 6.Bg2 transposes to a position we'll consider shortly after 4...Nc6 in variation 'b'.

a4) 5...b5!? was tried by Magnus himself no less when Peter Svidler went for the mirror approach as they clashed in the Legends of Chess event: 6.cxb5 a6 and now Peter the Great returned the extra pawn with 7.b6!?, which was sensible enough, if not definitely better than 7.Bg2 axb5 8.0-0.

chesstouring.com

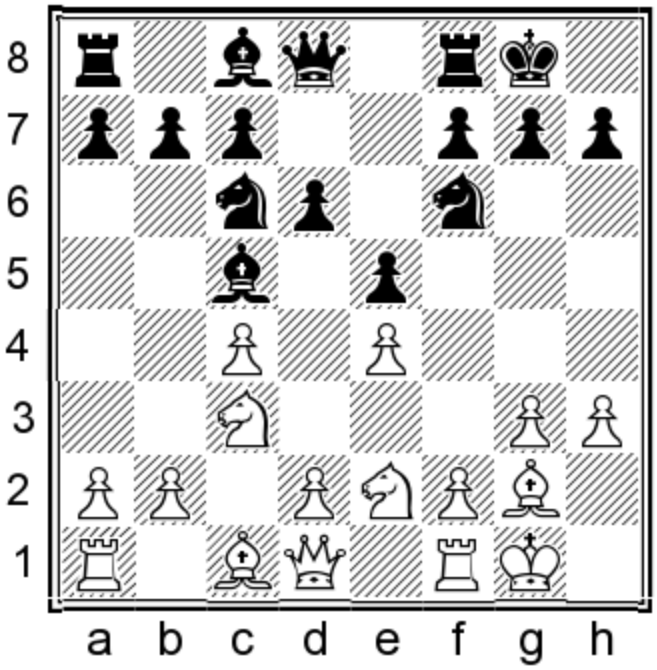


Here 8...Bb7 (Magnus was presumably ready to improve at this juncture; after 8...c5 9.a3 Bxc3 10.dxc3 d6 11.h3 we wouldn't be too unhappy with quick kingside expansion under way, so maybe 8...Bxc3!? is critical, intending 9.dxc3 d6 10.h3 Bb7 and 9.Nxc3 c5, so White should probably go 9.bxc3 d6 10.d3 c5 11.h3 with a strategically complex position in need of a test or three – again White is ready to play on the kingside and 11...Nc6 12.f4 b4 13.Be3 avoids being overrun on the other flank, since White can meet 13...bxc3 14.Nxc3 Ra3?! with 15.Nb5! Ra5 16.a4) 9.d4! exd4 10.Nd5!? was quite a powerful pawn sacrifice in Gordon-Congiu, Barcelona 2019, where Black found herself getting crushed after 10...Nxd5 (10...Bc5 11.Bg5 Bxd5 12.exd5 h6 13.Bf4 d6 14.Nxd4 would also be rather nice for White) 11.exd5 c5 12.dxc6 dxc6?! (12...Nxc6 13.Nxd4 Re8 14.Nf5 Qf6 15.Ne3! would have restricted White to a pleasant edge) 13.Nxd4 Qc8 14.Qh5!?, which prepared Bh3 and a brutal kingside attack, as occurred with 14...g6 15.Qh4 Bc5? 16.Bh6 Rd8 17.Nf5! and that was already pretty much that.

b) 4...Nc6 5.Bg2 reaches the older (4.Bg2) lines and in a version long considered pleasant enough for White: 5...0-0 6.Nge2 d6 (standard; play generally transposes after 6...Bc5 7.d3 d6 8.h3, and 6...Re8 7.a3 Bf8 8.d3

chesstouring.com

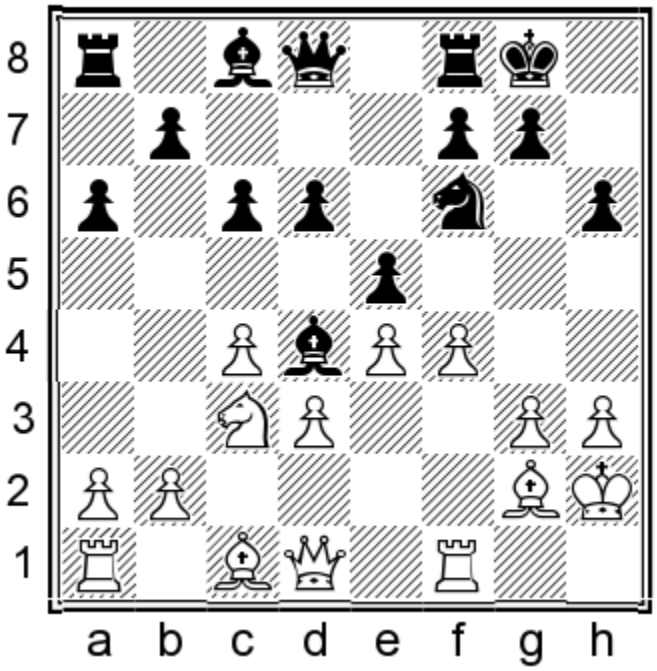
Nd4?! 9.Nxd4 exd4 10.Ne2 c5 11.b4 d6 12.0-0 left Black with a dead-point on d4 and White pleasantly better on both flanks in Smyslov-Karesev, USSR Championship, Leningrad 1971) 7.0-0 Bc5 (conceding a tempo to bring the bishop to a much better square; once again, a great many moves have been tried here, but in general White should be fine so long as he sticks to the standard Botvinnik approach: for example, 7...Re8 8.d3 h6 9.h3 a6 10.Be3 Bxc3?! 11.Nxc3 b5 12.Nd5 Rb8 13.Qd2 Nd4 14.f4 seized the initiative in El Debs-Do Valle Cardoso, Florianopolis 2020, 7...Bg4 8.f3 Be6 9.d3 Bc5+ 10.Kh1 a5, as in Rahman-Hasan, Dhaka 2012, should be met by 11.h3 followed by f4, and, finally, 7...a6 8.d3 will transpose if Black now retreats his bishop to c5, which he didn't in Harikrishna-L'Ami, Cochin 2004, where 8...Rb8 9.h3 b5 10.Nd5! Nxd5 11.cxd5 Ne7 12.d4 c6 and then 13.dxc6 Nxc6 14.Be3 exd4 15.Nxd4 would have been a pleasant edge for White) 8.h3.



This keeps Black out of g4 as the position resembles a modern Vienna, but one where White has some extra central control thanks to our first move: 8...a6 (going for some counterplay; otherwise, Black can just get crushed in standard Botvinnik fashion, as was the case after 8...Be6 9.d3 Nd4 10.Kh2 c6 11.f4 Re8 12.f5 Bc8 13.g4 h6 14.Ng3 in Blanco Gramajo-

chesstouring.com

Dunwoody, correspondence 2003) 9.d3 h6 (ruling out Bg5 ideas; alternatively, 9...Nd4 10.Kh2 c6 11.Nxd4 Bxd4 12.Ne2 Ba7 13.f4 h6 was Miezis-Gomez, Elgoibar 1995, where 14.b3 would have supplied an edge, intending Bb2, Qc2 and Rae1, 9...Rb8 10.a3!? b5 11.b4 Ba7 12.Nd5! did likewise in Turner-Karlsen, Tromso 2009, where 12...Nxd5 13.cxd5 Nd4 14.Be3 Nxe2+ 15.Qxe2 Bxe3 16.Qxe3 f5 17.f4! fxe4 18.fxe5 dxe5 19.dxe4 Rb6 20.Rxf8+ Qxf8 21.Rc1 left Black being completely strategically outplayed, and 9...b5!? 10.Kh2 bxc4 11.dxc4 Nd4, as in Klekowski-Wojtaszek, Chorzow (blitz) 2019, and then 12.f4 a5 13.Nxd4 Bxd4 14.Nb5! Bb6 15.b3 might well be a little better for White, since the dark-squared bishop can emerge on g5, b2 or even a3) 10.Kh2 (stepping off the g1-a7 diagonal to thematically prepare f4) 10...Nd4 (once again, 10...Rb8 can be met by not just 11.f4, but also 11.a3!?, a useful ploy to keep Black's queenside play in check, as is the case after 11...Nd4 12.b4 Ba7 13.f4 when 13...b5? 14.fxe5 dxe5 15.c5 would already be a strategic disaster for Black) 11.Nxd4 Bxd4 12.f4 c6.



This is clearly not that hard a line for White to play and here that great Botvinnik expert, the Latvian GM Normunds Miezis likes to go 13.a4!?. We also quite like 13.Ne2, intending 13...Ba7 (13...Bb6 can be met in similar

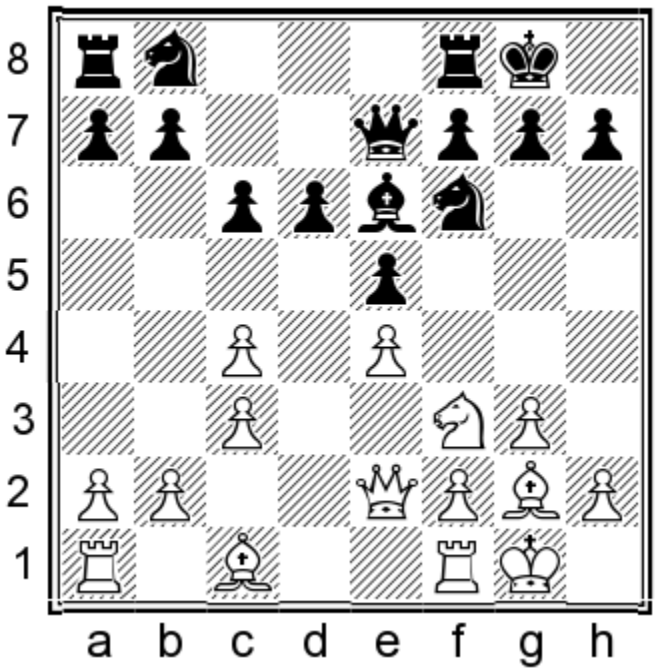
chesstouring.com

fashion with 14.b3 or even 14.d4!? exd4 15.Nxd4 Re8 when in Ortiz Suarez-Gomez Garrido, Bogota 2012, 16.Re1 would have maintained the bind and an edge, while 13...c5?! 14.Nxd4 cxd4 15.b3 would, of course, leave Black with a dead-point on d4 and White able to edge forwards on both flanks) 14.b3!? when it's not so easy to free Black's position, as can be seen from 14...b5 15.Bb2 bxc4 16.bxc4 Re8 17.Qc2 Rb8 18.Rab1 Qa5 19.Bc3 Qc5 20.Rb3 when Black actually isn't up to too much down the g1-a7 diagonal, while White is ready to go Bb2 and then Ba3 or d4.

After 4...Nc6 5.Bg2 castling is by no means forced, but 5...Bxc3?! 6.bxc3! plugs the hole on d4, while still leaving White in control of d5 and, for example, 6...0-0 7.Ne2 d6 8.d3 a6 9.a4! (keeping any counterplay under control, while intending the good, old plan of 0-0, h3 and f4) 9...Ne8 10.0-0 f5?! 11.exf5! Bxf5 12.h3 h5 would have been a strategic nightmare for Black in Bocharov-Khismatullin, Sochi (rapid) 2019, had White now spotted 13.g4! hxg4 14.Bd5+ followed by Ng3. Otherwise, 5...Nd4 can be well enough met by 6.a3 Be7 7.Nge2, 5...a5 6.Nge2 d6 7.0-0 Bc5 8.d3 h6 9.h3 Bd7 can be met by Sorokin's 10.Be3!? or just 10.Kh2, freeing the f-pawn for action, and 5...Bc5 6.Nge2 d6 7.h3 Be6 8.d3 h6 9.Nd5 Nd4 10.0-0 g5?! 11.Nxd4 Bxd4 12.Be3 Bxe3 13.fxe3! Nd7 14.Qh5 c6 15.Rf2! left Black being badly squashed in Gulko-Miralles, Cannes 1987.

c) Black's remaining moves are actually extremely rare, but 4...c6 makes some sense, angling for a quick ...d5, although White can put the kibosh on that with 5.Bg2 (5.Nge2 is also possible if you don't mind a reasonable IQP position after an exchange on d5) 5...Bxc3 (we saw in the note 'b' above that 5...0-0 6.Nge2 d6 7.0-0 is quite pleasant for White) 6.dxc3 (Black is hoping for a transposition to the older line 6.bxc3 0-0 7.Ne2 d5!) 6...d6 before she changed approach with 7.Qe2!? 0-0 8.Nf3 Qe7 9.0-0 Be6 in Kulon-Grigorian, Pardubice 2013.

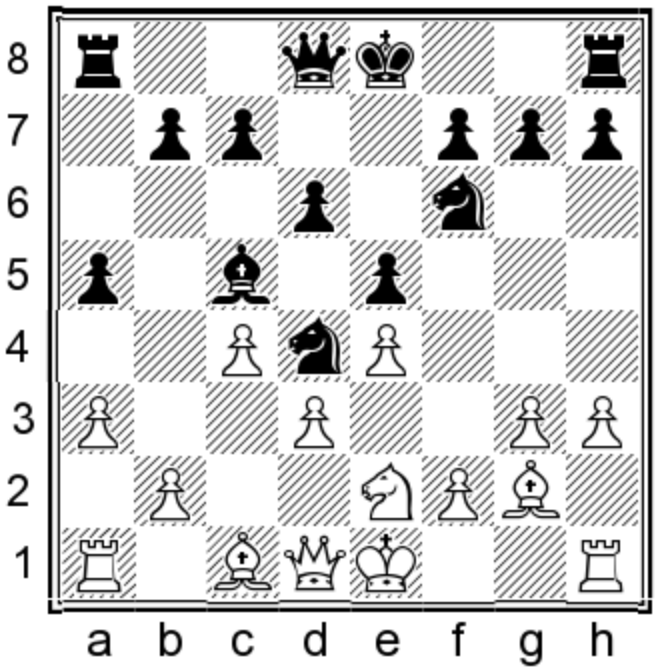
chesstouring.com



Now it was possible to target d6 or even to hit it straight away with 10.c5!, and if 10...dxc5?! 11.Nxe5.

d) 4...d6 has only been tried twice so far, but 5.Bg2 Bg4!? (5...Bxc3 doesn't transpose to our main line, as there White doesn't hurry with Bg2, so here 6.bxc3! makes sense, intending the usual d3, Ne2, 0-0, h3 and f4) 6.Nge2 Nc6 brings about a position which can arise from a few different move orders. Here White should avoid 7.f3?! as it rather walks into 7...Be6 8.d3 Bc5, but 7.a3!? Bc5 8.b4 might be considered, while 7.h3 Bxe2 (7...Be6 8.d3 Bc5 can now, of course, just be met by 9.0-0 followed by Kh2 and 0-0) 8.Nxe2 Bc5 9.a3 a5 10.d3 Nd4 was Ivanisevic-Donchenko, Barcelona 2019.

chesstouring.com

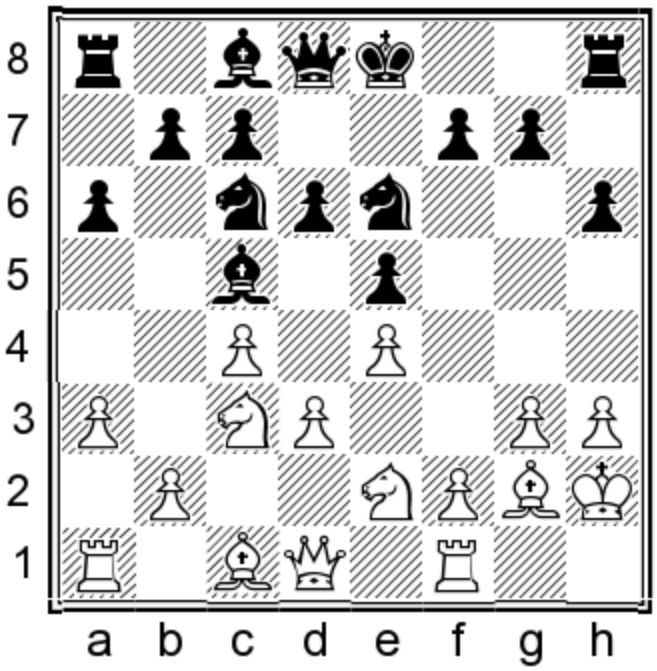


Now we quite like 11.Rb1!?, and if 11...Nxe2 12.Qxe2 a4 13.0-0 c6 14.Kh2 Bd4 15.Bd2 0-0 16.h4!?, keeping the f4 break in reserve, with White possibly set to first go Bh3 and h5. He may well be able to play around the bishop on d4, although, if necessary, it is possible to challenge it with Bc3.

e) 4...h6!? has never been tried here, but after 5.Bg2 we are in a position which can arise via a 3...h6 move order and, indeed, has done in some GM games, including a Kramnik-Carlsen clash:

e1) 5...d6 6.Nge2 Nc6 7.d3 Bc5 8.h3 Nh7!? (8...0-0 would be more standard, but after 9.0-0 a6 10.Kh2 White's position is at least the easier to play, as we saw in our coverage of 4...Nc6) 9.a3 a6 (9...a5 10.0-0 Ng5 11.Kh2 Qd7!? 12.Ng1 followed by f4 also gives White an edge, as the knight would be trapped after 12...0-0 13.f4! Bxg1+!? 14.Rxg1 Nxh3? 15.Rf1) 10.0-0 Ng5 11.Kh2 Ne6 gave Black a firm grip on d4 in Kramnik-Carlsen, Moscow 2011.

chesstouring.com



However, the engines aren't impressed, and rightly so, as after 12.f4 Bd7 13.b4 Ba7 14.Nd5 Ned4 White could have obtained a very serious advantage with 15.fxe5 Nxe5 (or 15...dxe5 16.c5!) 16.Bb2 Nxe2 17.Qxe2, leaving him dominating the centre after d4.

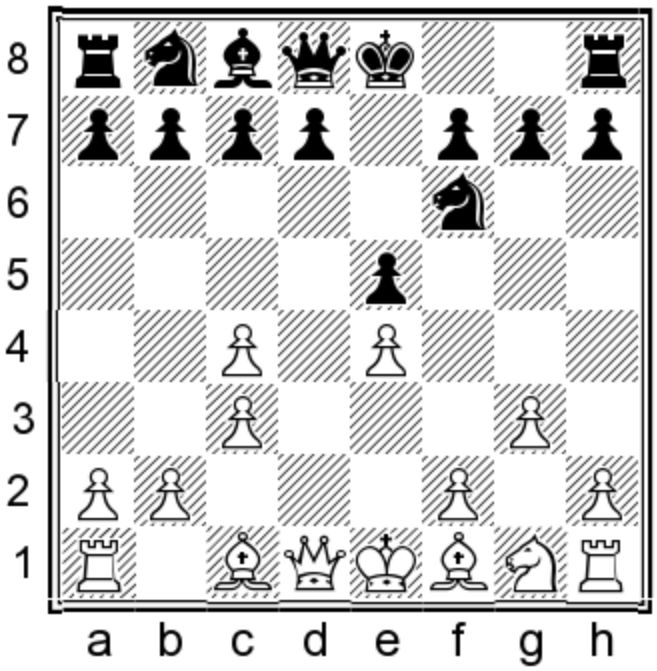
e2) Black has also tried 5...Bxc3, but with ...h6 in it's possible to make a decent case for both recaptures, with 6.bxc3 0-0 (keeping options open, if by no means forced, with the creative 6...d6 7.Ne2 Be6 8.d3 Qd7 9.h3! g5?! 10.f3 Na6 11.h4! 0-0-0!? tried in Macieja-Volokitin, Bermuda 2005, where 12.Be3 would have preserved all White's options and a definite edge, while we'll consider 6...b6 7.Nf3!? in the highly instructive encounter Kosten-Bednarich, Metz 2007) 7.d3 d6 (Black can also angle for ...d5: 7...c6 should be met by 8.f4! when 8...exf4?! 9.gxf4 d5 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.e5 would just give White too powerful a centre, so 7...Re8 8.Ne2 c6 is perhaps a better try, and has been tried by some GMs, but the subtle 9.Rb1!? is still awaiting a test, intending 9...d5 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.exd5 Nxd5 12.c4! when ...Nb4 has been ruled out and after 12...Ne7 White might even be able to grab with 13.Rxb7!? Bxb7 14.Bxb7 Nbc6 15.Bxa8 Qxa8 16.0-0) 8.Ne2 a6 9.a4! keeping Black's counterplay in check in Jones-Vuilleumier, Bunratty 2018,

chesstouring.com

where 9...Nbd7 10.0-0 Nc5 11.h3 b6 12.f4 Bb7 13.g4 left Black likely regretting the insertion of ...h6 and White with a dangerous attack.

Finally, we can return to 4...Bxc3:

5.dxc3



Freeing the dark-squared bishop for action. In recent months Magnus has also experimented with 5.bxc3 0-0 6.f3!?, thereby avoiding the old 6.Bg2 c6 line.

5...d6

Black's main choice.

After 5...Nxe4 White has a choice of forks to regain the pawn, with 6.Qg4 Nf6 7.Qxg7 Rg8 8.Qh6 d6 9.Bg2 our preference, as in Berkes-Timman, Paks 2010, where 9...Nc6 10.Nf3 Rg6 11.Qe3 Be6 12.b3 Qd7?! 13.Nh4! left White beginning to take control, as shown by 13...Rg8 (Timman preferred to go for a rather desperate-looking exchange sacrifice on h4) 14.Qh6 Ng4 15.Qxh7 with a safe extra pawn.

chesstouring.com

Of course, Black might also go 5...0-0 when 6.f3!? d6 7.Nh3 transposes to our main line.

6.f3!?

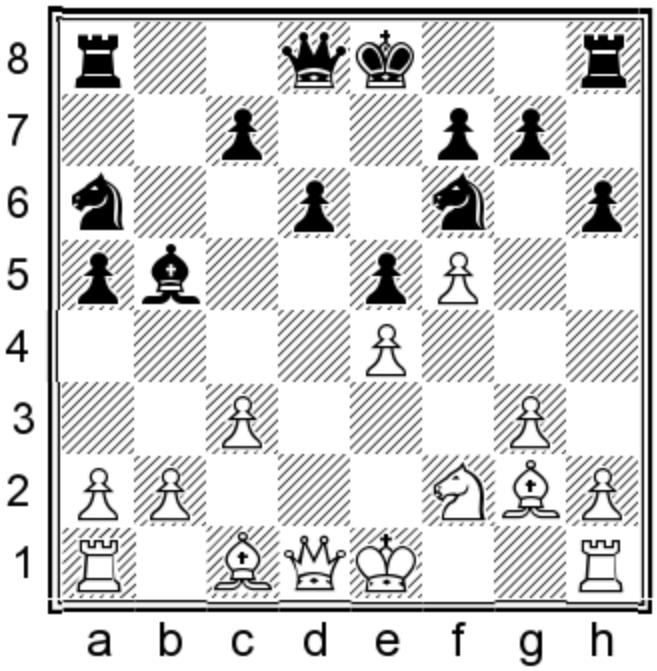
The champ's preference. Rather than place his bishop on g2, White wants to put it on d3 and also has ideas of Nh3-f2, which maintains decent central control and might be followed by a kingside pawn storm.

6...0-0

Very natural.

Magnus has also faced 6...Be6, with 7.Nh3 h6 (7...a5 8.a4 0-0 9.b3 Na6 10.Ng5!? was a more aggressive handling of the position in Carlsen-Aronian, Game 5, Clutch Chess (rapid) 2020, as we noted back in the 'Squashing Black' section of Chapter One) 8.Nf2 a5 (again we see Black seizing space so; 8...Nfd7 9.f4!? f6?! – 9...exf4!? 10.gxf4 Qe7 was more critical when after 11.Rg1 f5 12.Qh5+ Qf7 13.Qxf7+ Kxf7 14.Be3 White is at least ready to complete development with 0-0-0 and Bd3, after which he might look to double on the g-file – 10.f5! Bf7 11.g4 Nb6 12.b3 c6 13.a4! left White in control in Gareyev-Vokhidov, St. Petersburg 2019, where Black was never able to free his unpleasant position after 13...d5 14.exd5 cxd5 15.Bg2 a5 16.Be3, while 8...Nc6 9.Be3 Qe7 10.b3 a5 11.a4 Nd7 12.Qc2 was all fairly standard from White, for this line, in Sivuk-Suarez Uriel, Roquetas de Mar 2020, where 12...Nc5 13.Bg2 0-0 14.0-0 f5 15.Bxc5! dxc5 16.exf5 Bxf5 would again have left him in charge of the position after 17.Qe2 followed by Rad1, Rfe1 and Ne4) 9.f4 Na6 10.f5 Bd7 11.Bg2 b5 12.cxb5 Bxb5 the course of Carlsen-N.Petrov, World Rapid Championship, St. Petersburg 2018.

chesstouring.com

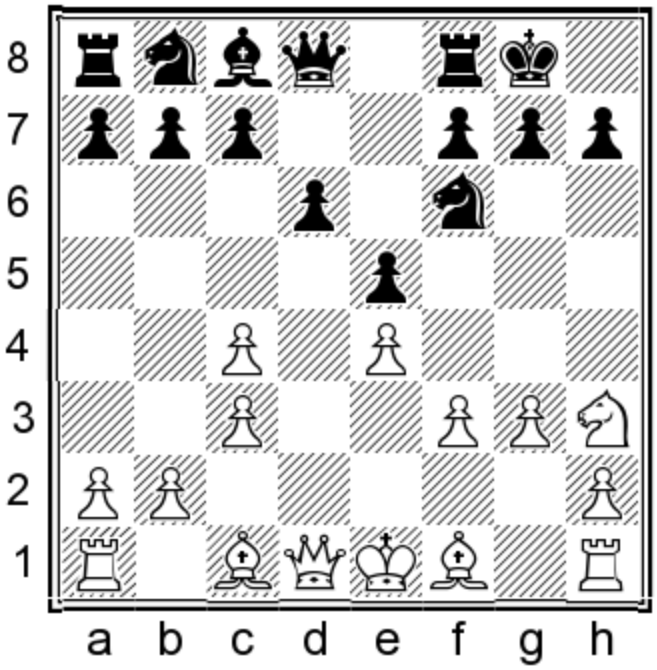


White eventually ground out the win after 13.b3 and 13.c4!? Bc6 14.0-0 Nc5 15.Qe2 Rb8 16.Rb1 a4 17.Bd2 would have been a decent alternative, retaining control of the queenside, while preparing to advance on the kingside.

At the top level, Black's most popular choice has actually been an immediate gain of space with 6...a5 7.Nh3 and here 7...a4 (we'll see 7...0-0 8.Nf2 by transposition below, while 7...Na6 8.Nf2 Nc5 9.Be3 Be6 10.Qc2 a4 was Gukesh-Barsegyan, Cannes 2020, where White didn't have to rush with 11.f4, and might have gone 11.Be2 0-0 12.0-0 – going long is surely too risky with a pawn on a4 – 12...Qe7 13.b4! Ncd7 14.a3 followed by Bd3, after which White might push f4 after all or perhaps regroup with Bc1 and Nd1-e3) 8.Nf2 Be6 (Black should probably avoid 8...Nbd7 9.Be3 Nc5?! if only because 10.Bxc5! dxc5 11.Qxd8+ Kxd8 12.Nd3 Nd7 13.0-0-0 Ke7 14.Bh3 Ra5 left him playing for two results in Van Wely-Nguyen, 1st matchgame, Novy Bor 2019, where 15.Rhe1!? might have been even stronger than grabbing the pawn) 9.Bd3 Nbd7 10.Qe2 saw White setting up in ideal fashion for the line in Carlsen-Anand, Karlsruhe 2019, which we'll return to shortly.

chesstouring.com

7.Nh3



Once again, we see this unusual, but decent development of the knight and, lest it helps, ...f6 and ...Nh6-f7 is by no means unknown in the Bxc6 dxc6 lines of the Rossolimo Sicilian.

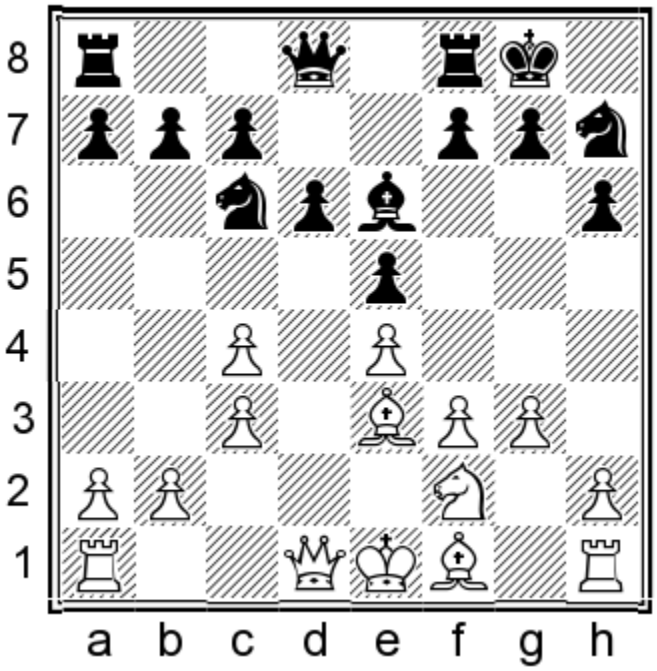
7...h6

Yet again we see Black wanting to go ...Be6 without allowing Ng5 in return, or possibly worried by a timely Bg5.

Sergey Karjakin preferred 7...a6 8.a4 Nbd7 9.Nf2 (9.a5!? is tempting too, with Black having delayed ...a5) 9...a5 and now in Carlsen-Karjakin, Abidjan (blitz) 2019, 10.Be3!? would have been sensible, intending 10...Nc5 (Black should probably prepare this with 10...b6 when after 11.Bd3 Nc5 12.Bc2 White might even be able to follow up Qe2 with b3 and 0-0-0) 11.Bxc5! dxc5 12.Qxd8 Rxd8 13.Nd3 Nd7 (to avoid losing a pawn) 14.Rd1 (but not 14.Bh3? b6!) 14...Re8 15.h4 followed by Bh3 with a lasting pull thanks to White's more mobile kingside pawns and the potential hole (for a rook or knight) on d5.

chesstouring.com

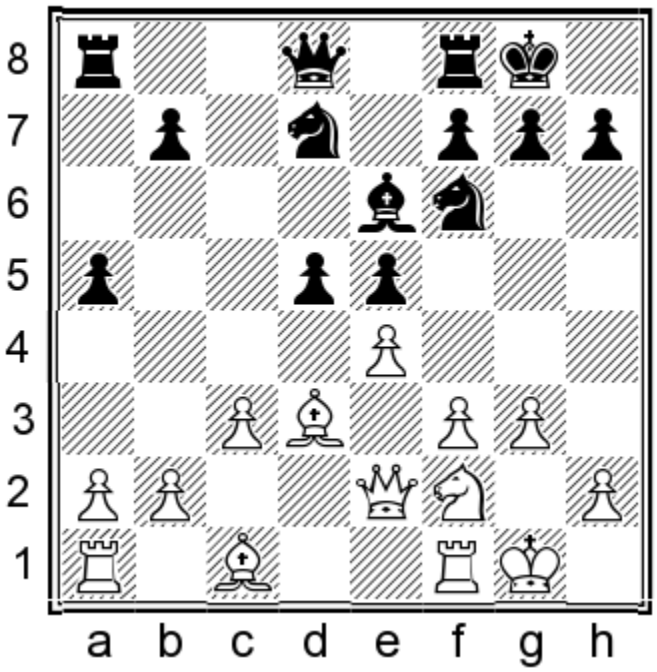
Once again, Black has also tried 7...Nc6 when 8.Nf2 Be6 9.Bg5!? (provoking a weakness) 9...h6 10.Be3 Nh7 was seen in V.Georgiev-Jovanic, Ljubljana 2003.



There White didn't need to rush ahead on the kingside, but might have begun with 11.Qe2 only intending to advance the g- and h-pawns after 11...f5 12.exf5 Bxf5 13.0-0-0.

And, finally, 7...a5 8.Nf2 Be6 9.Bd3 Nbd7 10.Qe2 was all very thematic in So-Mamedyarov, Bucharest (rapid) 2019, where 10...c6 (10...Nc5 11.Bc2 a4 would actually transpose to a position we'll see in the notes to Black's 10th move in Carlsen-Anand) 11.0-0 d5!? (the ideal push for Black in the older 4.Bg2 0-0 5.e4 Bxc3 6.bxc3 c6 line, activity being more important than any classical notion about opening the board only helping White's bishop-pair; Mamedyarov actually preferred 11...Re8 12.Rd1 Qc7 when 13.Be3 was sensible, intending f4 or 13...d5 14.a4, perhaps followed by doubling on the d-file and/or a well-timed g4) 12.cxd5 cxd5 would have been thematic.

chesstouring.com



However, after 13.exd5 Nxd5 14.Bd2 Qc7 15.Rad1 Rfe8 16.Rfe1 White cannot be too unhappy with his bishops and a space-gaining c4 on the cards.

8.Nf2 Nbd7 9.Be3 Qe7 10.g4!?

Already White is perfectly able to make such an advance with Black, whilst very solidly placed, not exactly enjoying much early counterplay.

10...Nc5 11.h4 Nfd7 12.Rh2!?

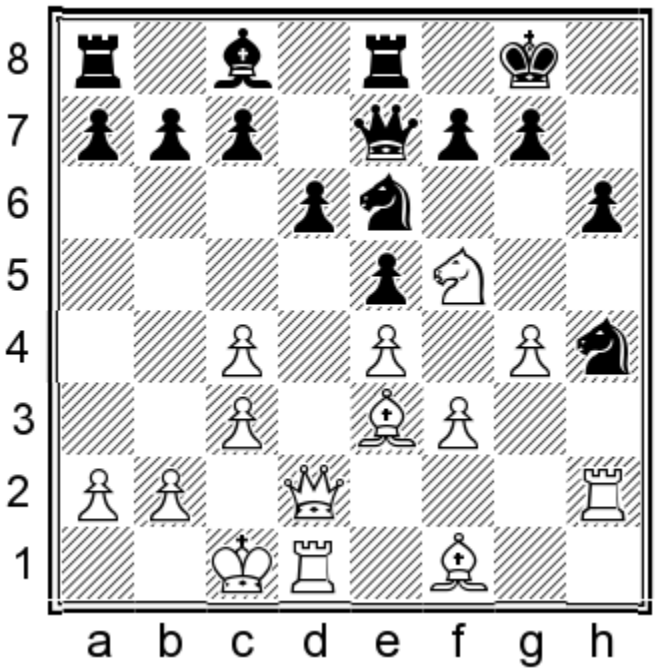
Mysterious, but the idea soon becomes apparent.

12...Ne6 13.Qd2 Re8 14.0-0-0 Ndf8 15.Nh1! Ng6 16.Ng3 Nxh4?

Too greedy. 16...Ngf4 was indicated, leaving everything to play for after 17.Nf5 Qf8, although after 18.Bf2! to facilitate Ne3-d5 White must have an edge with Black largely so passive.

17.Nf5!

chesstouring.com



Unfortunately this strong leap was missed in Berkes-Lafuente, Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010, and after **17...Nxf5 18.gxf5 Ng5 19.Be2 Rd8 20.c5** Black might well have found himself objectively lost with **R**dh1 next up and **20...f6 21.Bc4+ Kf8 22.Bxg5 fxg5 23.Qd5** not exactly helping matters.

Game 29
A.Kosten-J.Bednarich
Metz Open 2007

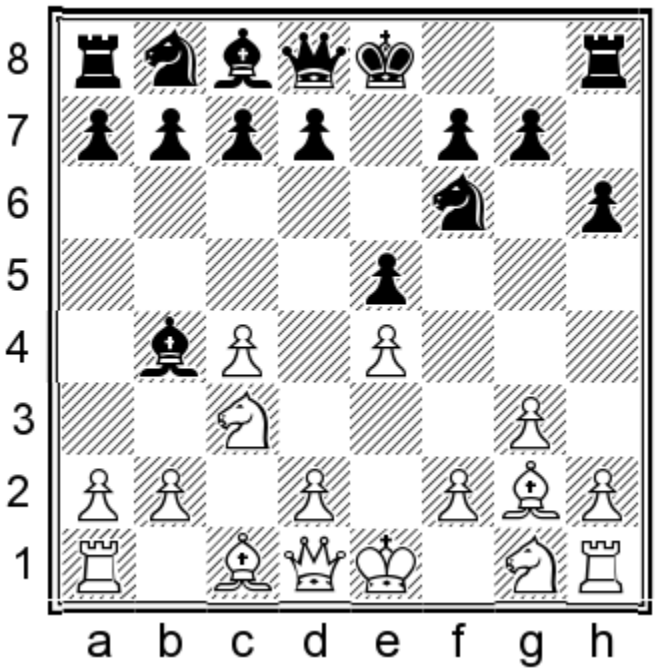
1.c4 e5 2.g3

2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3 would be our route into the game, of course, and if then 3...h6 (or 3...Bb4 4.e4 h6 5.Bg2) 4.Bg2 Bb4 5.e4.

2...Nf6 3.Bg2 h6 4.Nc3 Bb4 5.e4

Our favourite central advance.

chesstouring.com



5...Bxc3 6.bxc3 b6

This move is yet to be repeated, quite possibly because of the drubbing Black now receives. Black might like to set up with ...d6 and ...Nbd7, so decides to avoid having his bishop blocked in, but even with the bishop on b7 he will struggle for counterplay, as we'll now see.

7.Nf3!?

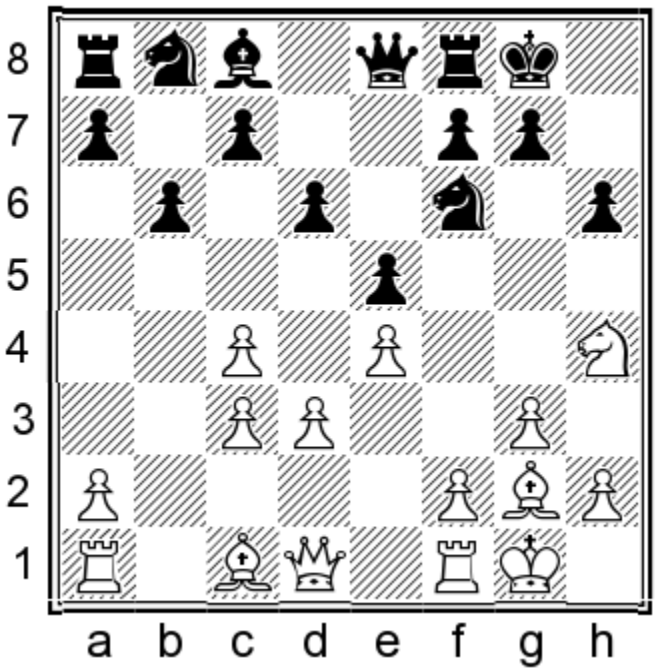
There is absolutely nothing wrong with our standard set-up 7.Ne2 Bb7 8.d3 d6 9.0-0 followed by h3 and f4, but the English GM and English Opening expert makes an excellent case for the text move.

7...0-0 8.d3 Qe8?!

We dare say that 8...d6 would also have been met by 9.Nh4!, and if 9...Bg4 10.f3 Bd7 11.0-0 followed by f4.

9.0-0 d6 10.Nh4!

chesstouring.com



It turns out that the knight wasn't so misplaced for a Botvinnik structure, as White still intends to break with f4. Moreover, Black isn't now about to get in ...f5, which was possibly one of the ideas behind his slightly mysterious ...Qe8.

10...Nc6 11.a4!?

Ever a thematic move in such a structure, although there was nothing wrong either with the immediate 11.f4.

11...a5 12.Ra2!

This, preparing to swing the rook across the second rank into the attack, and White's subsequent play is rather reminiscent of the Sämisch variation of the Nimzo-Indian.

12...Ne7 13.f4 Nd7

A necessary retreat in view of the tactics involving Bh6.

14.fxe5 Nxe5

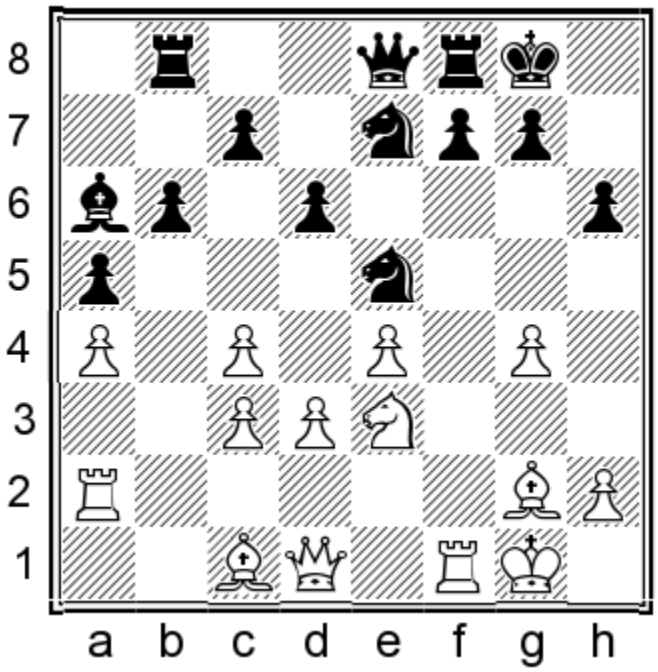
chesstouring.com

Likewise, 14...dxe5 15.Raf2 would be very strong, perhaps followed by Qh5 or 15...Nc5 16.d4! Nxa4? 17.Nf5 Nxf5 (17...Nxc3 18.Qd2 is also an absolute massacre, and if 18...exd4 19.Nxg7!) 18.exf5 Rb8 19.f6, crashing through.

15.Nf5 Rb8 16.Ne3!?

Keeping pieces on and Black bottled up makes a lot of sense, although we suspect that Tony must also have been tempted by 16.Raf2, and if 16...Nxf5 17.exf5 f6 18.Re1, and 16.d4 Nd7 17.Nxh6+!? gxh6 18.Bxh6, with some advantage in both cases.

16...Ba6 17.g4!?



Launching a dangerous attack, although objectively White should perhaps have preferred 17.Raf2 f6 18.Re1 followed by Bf1 and d4.

17...f6

chesstouring.com

The best defensive try, as we can see from 17...c6 18.h4 b5 when 19.g5 hxg5 20.axb5 cxb5 21.hxg5 bxc4 22.d4 Nd3 23.Ba3 would likely end in a massacre down the h-file.

18.h4! Qg6 19.Bh3

You might have thought that the queen's rook was destined for f2, but, no, Tony would prefer it on g2.

19...d5!

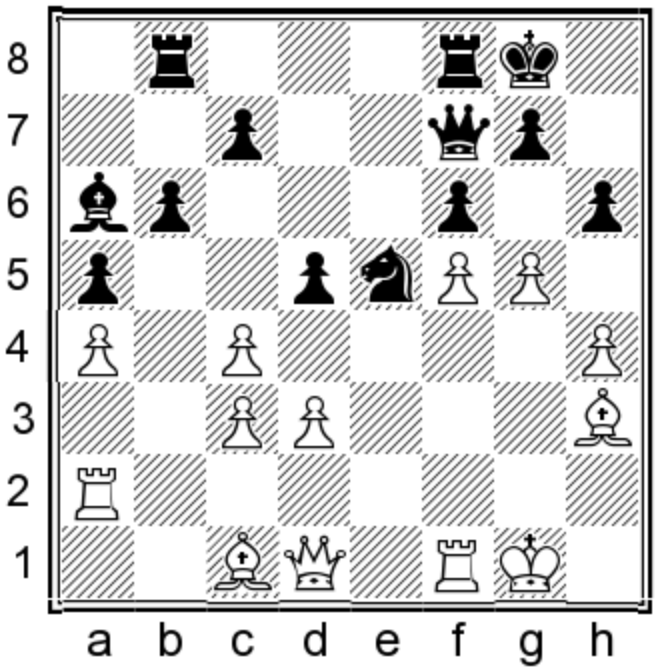
Black finally exploits his potential pressure against d3 to obtain some counterplay, but White is up to the challenge, and had likely seen this break coming.

20.Nf5

Practically dangerous, but the cold-blooded silicon prefers 20.h5!? Qh7 21.Ba3, with its main line running 21...c5 22.exd5 Qxd3 23.Qxd3 Nxd3 24.Rd1 Ne5 25.Rb2 when White should be doing quite well with his bishops, as shown by 25...Nxc4 26.Nxc4 Bxc4 27.Bg2 Rfd8 28.d6 when a Bxc5 tactic may well follow.

20...Nxf5 21.exf5 Qf7 22.g5!

chesstouring.com



And here the fearless silicon initially displays its favourite ‘0.00’, but we think it’s safe to say that even a GM might do well to defend against such an attack.

22...fxg5?

Opening lines. The way to try and defend was 22...dxc4 23.gxh6 Bb7, preventing Rg2 when White doesn’t seem to have anything better than 24.d4 Nd3 25.Bg2 Nxc1 26.Qxc1 Qh5! 27.Qf4 (27.Bxb7 Rxb7 28.Rg2 c6 is a sneaky defence) 27...Rf7 28.Bxb7 Rxb7 29.Re1. Clearly he is still pressing here, but Black may well be able to defend.

23.hxg5 hxg5 24.Rg2

The open g-file will spell Black’s demise.

24...dxc4 25.d4

Keeping lines closed.

25...Nd3?

chesstouring.com

25...Nd7 was a better try, although after 26.Bxg5 (finally bringing the bishop into play, not that it was exactly inactive on c1, eyeing up Black's vulnerable kingside) 26...Bb7 27.Rg3 Nf6 28.Bh6 Qh5!? 29.Bxg7 Qxd1 30.Bxf8+ Kxf8 31.Rxd1 Black would likely have been unable to hold this exchange-down endgame.

26.f6! g6 27.Rxg5 Nxc1

White finishes in style after this, but so would he if 27...Kh8 28.Bf5! gxf5 29.Rh5+ Kg8 30.Rfxf5.

28.Be6!

Pretty. The more mundane 28.Qh5 Ne2+ 29.Kh2 would have been crushing too.

28...Qxe6 29.Rxg6+ Kf7 30.Rg7+ Ke8 31.Re1 Rxf6 32.Qh5+ Rg6+ 33.Qxg6+ 1-0

Game 30
M.Carlsen-V.Anand
Grenke Chess Classic, Karlsruhe 2019

1.c4 e5 2.g3

Or our preferred move order, 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3 Bb4 4.e4.

2...Nf6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e4

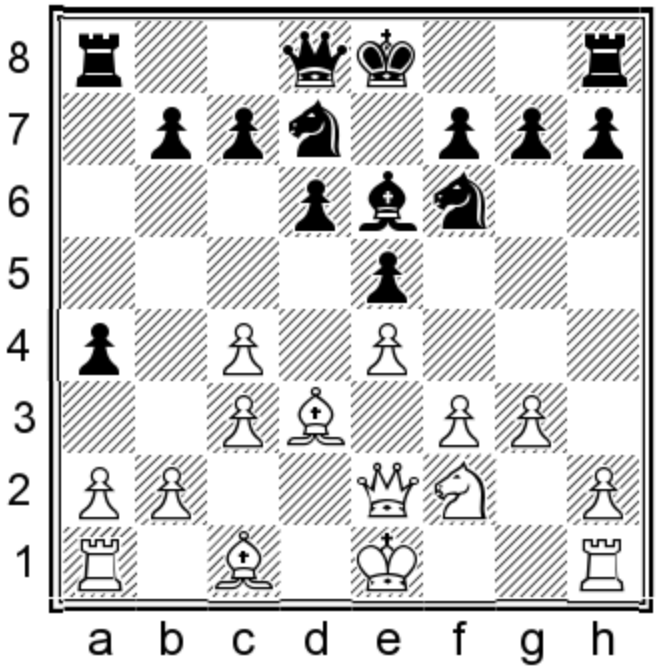
Magnus unsurprisingly plumps for a line which might even be best called the Carlsen variation, or perhaps the Carlsen-Botvinnik?

4...Bxc3 5.dxc3 d6 6.f3

chesstouring.com

Going for his favourite set-up and we're fairly certain you'll stun a few opponents when you make this move rather than complete the fianchetto.

6...a5 7.Nh3 a4 8.Nf2 Be6 9.Bd3 Nbd7 10.Qe2



White has gone for his standard set-up and even such a great player as Anand was to now err in an unfamiliar setting.

10...c6?

As was pointed out at the time, 10...Nc5 11.Bc2 Nfd7 was a better defence (White can meet 11...0-0 in the same fashion with 12.Nd1 or up the ante with 12.f4!? when, to avoid being squashed, Black really needs to go 12...exf4 13.gxf4 Re8 14.Be3, leaving a tense position and all to play for after 14...Bc8 15.Bxc5 dxc5 16.e5 g6 17.Qe3 where White might have time to get in Nd3 and 0-0-0), when we suspect Magnus would have enjoyed making a further mini-manoeuvre in the shape of 12.Nd1! (12.f4? Nb6 would rather eye the ugly duckling on c4) 12...Nb6 13.Ne3, which may even be a little better for White. He will castle, go Bd2 and then look to break with b4 and/or f4.

chesstouring.com

11.f4!

Simply threatening to embarrass the bishop.

11...Nb6

11...exf4?! 12.gxf4 Nc5 13.Bc2 Qe7 14.f5 Bd7 15.Bg5 wouldn't exactly help Black's cause.

12.Be3

12.f5!? Bd7 13.g4 was also possible, but Magnus is no rush, happy to first complete development.

12...c5!? 13.0-0-0!

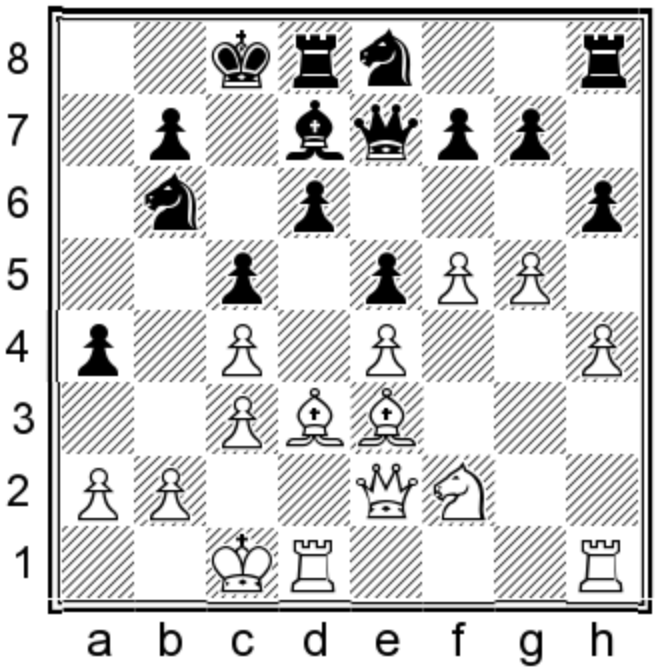
Simple chess rather than allow Black a degree of activity for his pawn with 13.fxe5 dxe5 14.Bxc5 Qc7.

13...Qe7 14.f5 Bd7 15.g4 h6

Naturally Black has no desire to be completely overrun and at least this way he has the option to open the h-file for his rooks.

16.h4 0-0-0 17.g5 Ne8

chesstouring.com



We can rarely remember Vishy in such a passive and grim position as Black – and after just 17 moves. Unable to crash through on the kingside, Magnus now combines increasing the pressure there with lining up the b4 break.

18.Bd2!? hxg5 19.hxg5 Nc7 20.Ng4 Rdg8 21.Rh2

More simple chess. White wants to boss the open file.

21...Qf8 22.Rdh1 Kb8 23.b4! axb3 24.axb3 Nc8 25.Kb2 Qd8 26.Rh7

Magnus is happy with the upcoming exchanges, but he might also have continued to manoeuvre, as with 26.Be3!?, intending 26...Qf8 27.b4.

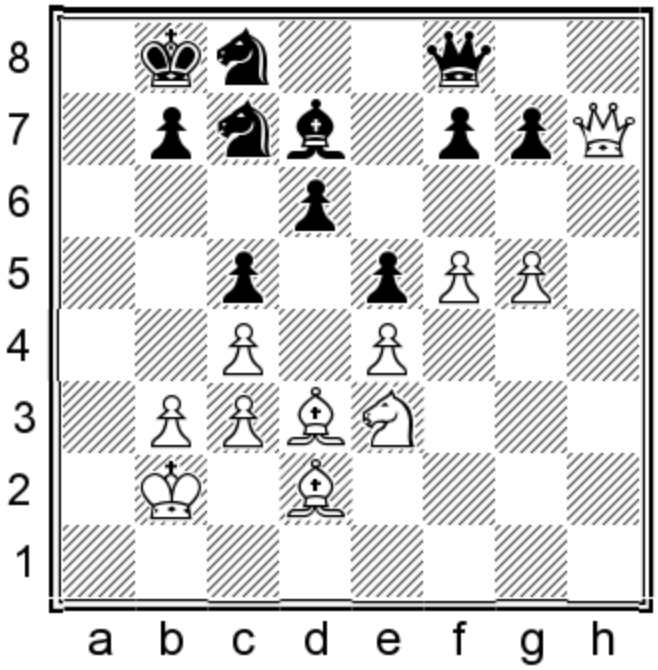
26...Rxh7 27.Rxh7 Rh8 28.Qh2?!

Hardly terrible, but 28.g6! fxg6 (or 28...Rxh7 29.gxh7 Qh8 30.Qh2 f6 31.b4 Nb6 32.Ne3 when Black would do well to hold his queenside together forever) 29.Rxg7! gxf5 30.exf5 would have been very strong,

chesstouring.com

White’s pieces being set to invade the heart of the black position, beginning with Bg5.

28...Rxh7 29.Qxh7 Qf8 30.Ne3



Even here White retains a large advantage and one most certainly would not want to defend such a cramped position as Black, least of all against Magnus.

30...Ne7 31.Kc2 Qg8 32.Qh4 Qf8 33.Kd1!

Going for a classic, Petrosianic king walk to the kingside before undertaking action on the queenside.

33...Nc6 34.Qh7 Ne7 35.Ke2 Nc8 36.Kf2 Ne7 37.Be2 Qg8 38.Qh1

Naturally Carlsen wants more than a pleasant endgame and he had no doubt already analysed the upcoming transformation of the structure. Perhaps, though, White should have tried 38.Qxg8+!? Nxg8 39.Bh5 Be8

chesstouring.com

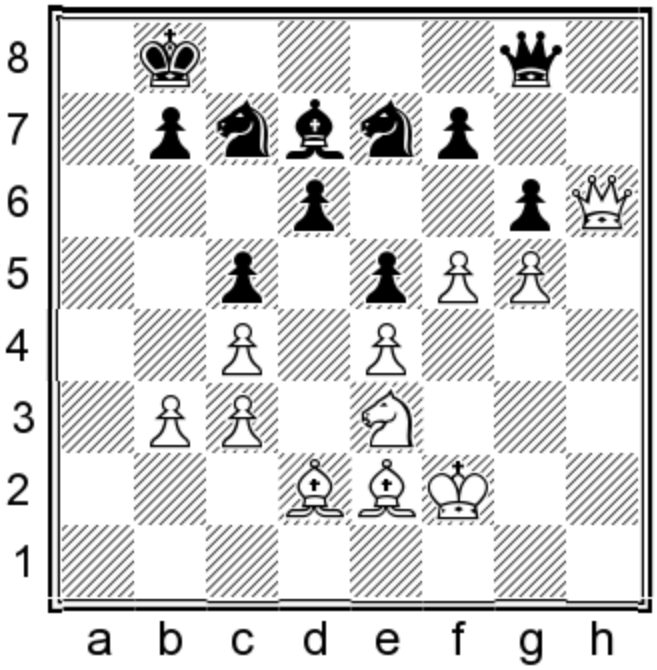
40.Be1, aiming to show that Black doesn’t have a fortress, which he may not if White can somehow get his king in on the queenside.

38...g6!

Anand tries to obtain counterplay (39.f6 Nc6 would at least allow Black to bring his other knight to e6), rather than continue to sit and suffer with 38...Qf8 39.Ng4 Qg8 40.b4 b6 41.Ne3 Qf8 42.Kg3.

39.Qh6

Back again.



39...Ne8

Naturally Black has no desire to self-destruct with 39...gxf5? 40.Qxd6 Qe8 41.Qxe5.

40.f6

chesstouring.com

Giving up control of e6, but on the cusp of the time control Magnus was presumably unsure about 40.Bd3 f6!?.

40...Nc6 41.b4!?

Black has dug in and might appear to have weathered the storm, but Magnus will always find a way to keep pressing.

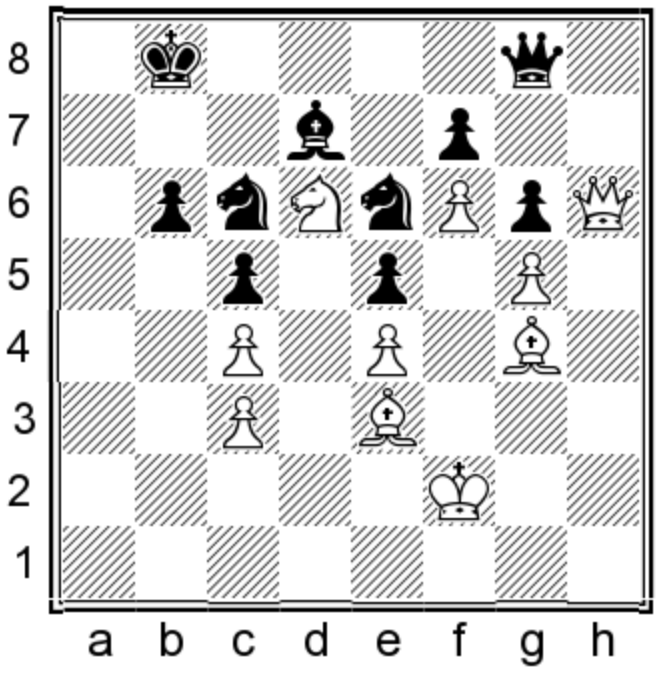
41...Nc7!

More good defence by Vishy, who isn't lured into 41...cxb4 42.cxb4 Nd4 43.b5 when Bb4 would be next up.

42.bxc5 dxc5 43.Nd5 Ne6 44.Be3 Ka7 45.Bg4 b6 46.Nc7!

Magnus continues to find ways to maintain some pressure.

46...Qc8 47.Nb5+ Kb8 48.Nd6 Qg8?



It's never easy to judge when to switch from passive to active defence, but it does seem that 48...Qa6! would have given Black enough counterplay,

chesstouring.com

and if 49.Qh8+ Kc7 50.Nb5+ Kb7 51.Qg8 Qa2+ 52.Kf3 Nxg5+! 53.Bxg5 Bxg4+ when White must even avoid 54.Kxg4? Qg2+ 55.Kh4 Qh2+ 56.Kg4 Qh5+.

49.Qh1!

It's high time to swing the queen round.

49...Qf8 50.Qd1

50.Nb5!? was another try, using tactics in the event of 50...Na5 51.Qh6 Qg8 (and not 51...Qxh6?? 52.gxh6 Nf8 53.Bxd7) 52.Nd6.

50...Ncd8 51.Nb5 Bc6

Probably 51...Bxb5 52.cxb5 Kc7 should also be holdable, but here too White would continue to press with 53.Qd5 Qd6 54.Qa2.

52.Kg1!?

A mysterious king move...

52...Nc7?

...and White is immediately rewarded. Black needed to exchange on b5 or wait with 52...Kb7.

53.Bf2!

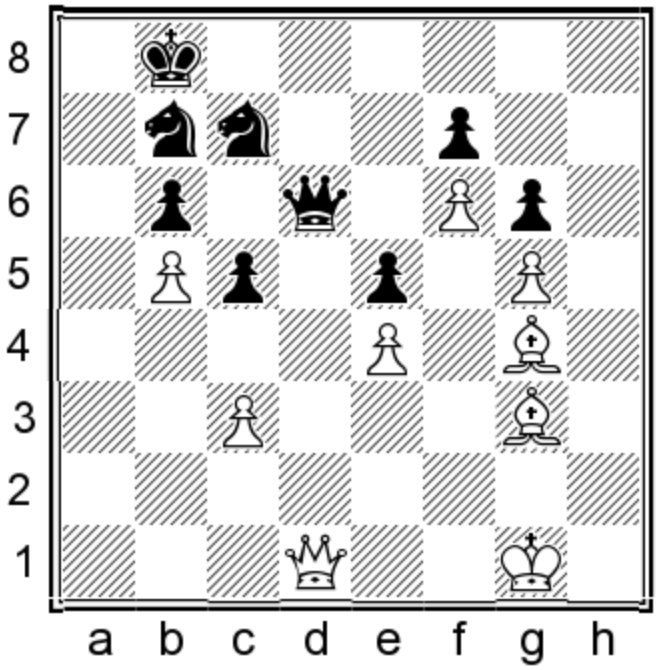
The bishop is bound for g3 as Black suddenly finds his defence overloaded.

53...Nb7

53...Nxb5 54.cxb5 Bxb5 55.Qb3 Qe8 56.c4 would have broken through, and by now White could calmly meet 53...Nce6 54.Bg3 Nf4 with 55.Qd2.

chesstouring.com

54.Bg3 Bxb5 55.cxb5 Qd6



56.Qe2?

An uncharacteristic error.

Black would also have been OK after 56.Qxd6? Nxd6 57.Bxe5 Nxe4, but the calm 56.Kg2! would have been very strong: 56...Qxd1 (or 56...Nxb5 57.Qxd6+ N7xd6 58.Bxe5 Kc7 when White crashes through with 59.Be6!) 57.Bxd1 Kc8 58.Bxe5 Nxb5 59.Be2! N5d6 60.Bxd6 Nxd6 61.e5 Nf5 62.e6! and it's all over.

56...Ne6 57.Bxe6

Possibly Magnus had missed something after 57.Qh2 Nf4, and if 58.Bxf4 exf4 59.Qh7 Qd3!.

57...Qxe6 58.Qh2 Qg4

Now Black's queen is active enough to maintain the balance.

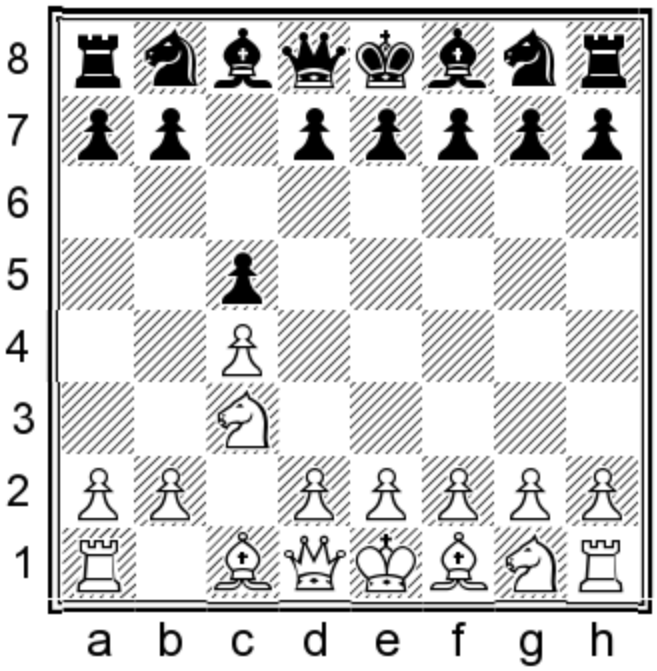
chesstouring.com

59.Kf2 Qxe4 60.Bxe5+ Kc8 61.Qh3+ Kd8! 62.Qh8+ Kd7 63.Qh3+ Kd8
½-½

chesstouring.com

Chapter Seven
The Symmetrical English

1.c4 c5 2.Nc3



Against the Symmetrical variation we'll stick with our favourite approach and the good news is that in a great many games Black goes for a ...g6 set-up, taking us back into lines seen much earlier in the course.

2...Nf6

Black's second most popular choice. We'll consider his most common approach, 2...Nc6, along with the attempt to force through a quick ...d5 with 2...e6 in **Line 7A**.

The third main move is 2...g6 when after 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 Nc6 5.e4 Black just has his usual choice: to place his knight on f6 (Line 3C), to go ...e5 (Line 4D), or to go for an ...e6 set-up (Line 4E). We even known a club player who has played the English for a good 20 years and has only once

chesstouring.com

faced a line of the Symmetrical where Black didn't play ...g6 and then one of these lines.

Finally, there's 2...b6 3.g3 Bb7 4.e4, as we considered in Line 5D.

3.g3 d5

The Rubinstein variation.

4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2

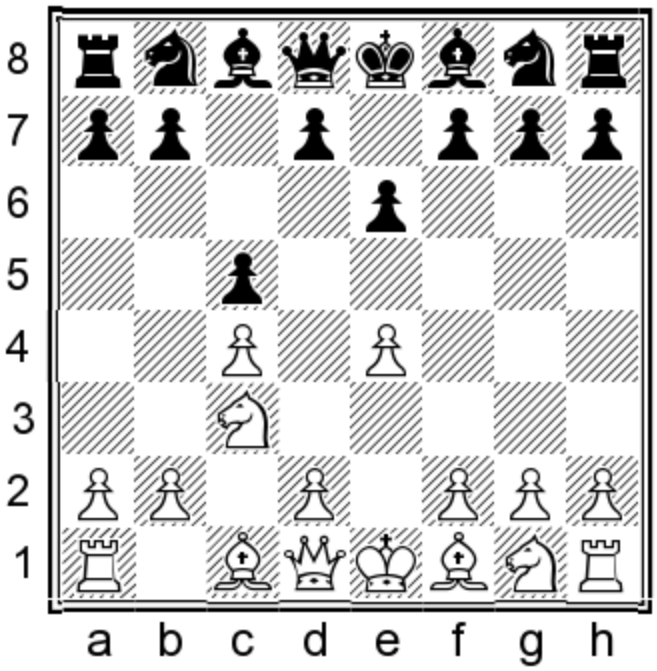
No English player can ever complain about such a fine fianchettoed bishop and we'll return to this position in **Line 7B**.

Theory 7A

1.c4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6

With 2...e6 Black wants to create a pawn centre. It may be that you quite like facing the Tarrasch Defence, so are happy to go 3.Nf3, and if 3...d5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.d4, thereby reaching the Tarrasch. Do be warned, though, that 3...Nf6 is not obligatory there, but in any case we prefer 3.e4!?.

chesstouring.com



Black usually reacts with 3...Nc6 (alternatively, 3...Nf6 would actually transpose to the Mikenas Attack and we'll see 4.e5 in Line 8A, 3...d5?! 4.cxd5 exd5 5.exd5 is in turn a promising version of Line 9B, since 5...Nf6 6.Bb5+ crosses Black's development after d4 or 6...Bd7 7.Qe2+, and slower approaches can be met by a Botvinnik set-up: for example, 3...d6 4.g3 Nc6 5.Bg2 Nf6 6.Nge2, reaching a position we'll consider below) 4.g3 and now Black's most common choice is 4...g6 (otherwise, 4...Nf6 5.Bg2 would be our main line below, while after 4...Nge7 5.Bg2 Black usually goes for a kingside fianchetto in any case; with a knight rather in the way on e7, pushing ...d5 no longer works, but there is 5...Nd4 6.Nge2 Nec6 7.0-0 when White can either proceed in standard Botvinnik fashion with d3, Be3 and h3 or consider 7...g6 8.Rb1!? Bg7 9.b4 Nxe2+ 10.Nxe2 cxb4 11.a3 a5 12.d4 with definite compensation for the pawn) 5.Bg2 Bg7 6.Nge2 and we're back in Line 4E.

3.g3 Nf6

Going for development, but Black's overwhelmingly most popular choice here is 3...g6, again taking us back into the realm of chapters three and four

chesstouring.com

after 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.e4.

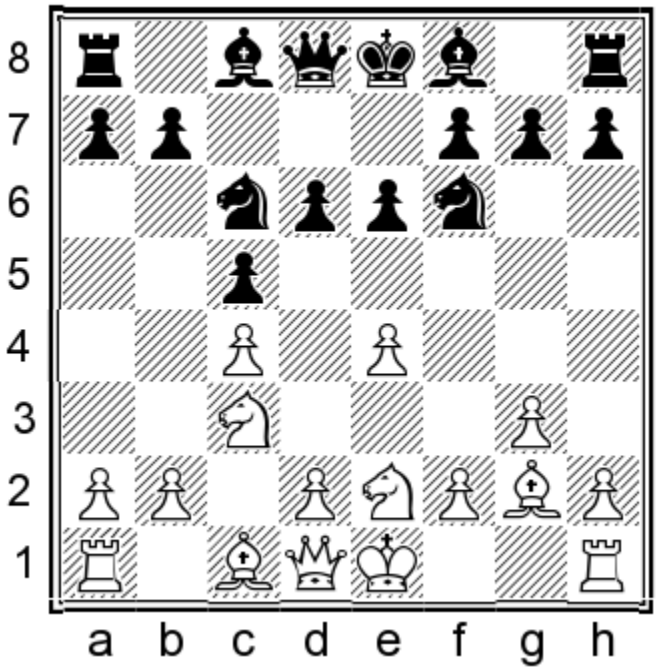
4.Bg2 e6

Angling for ...d5 after all.

Even here Black usually goes in for 4...g6 5.e4 Bg7 6.Nge2 and a transposition to Line 3C.

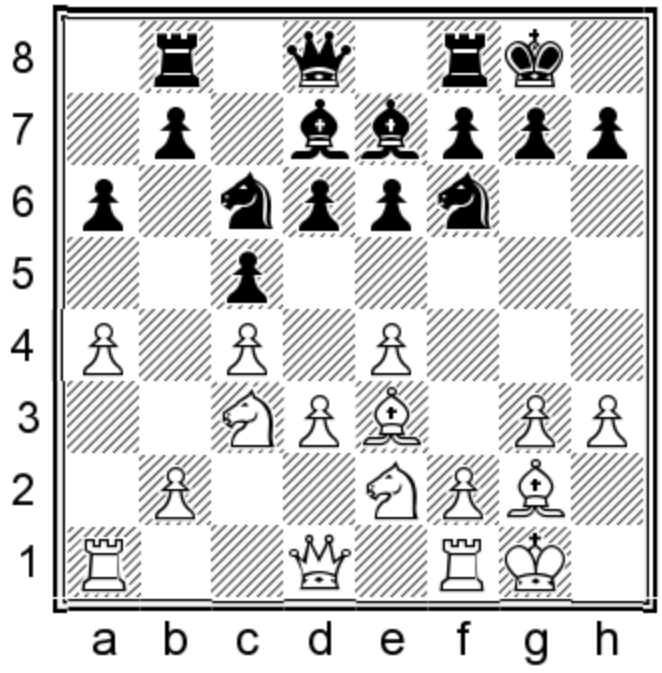
Instead, 4...e5 makes a slightly strange impression and we saw back in Line 3B that 5.e4 g6 (Black doesn't have to fianchetto, but 5...d6 6.Nge2 Be7 7.0-0 0-0 8.d3 Nd4 9.f4!? is pleasant enough for White, followed by h3 or 9...a6 10.a4 Rb8 11.h3 Bd7 12.Nxd4 cxd4 13.Nd5! Nxd5 14.exd5 with an edge; White might opt to complete development à la Kosten with b3 and Ra2, and note too that 14...b5? would fail to 15.axb5 axb5 16.c5!) 6.Nge2 Bg7 7.0-0 0-0 8.d3 d6 9.h3 should be quite pleasant for White.

Another possible set-up is 4...d6 5.e4 e6 when 6.f4!? followed by Nf3 would be a kind of turbo-charged Closed Sicilian and there's also absolutely nothing wrong with 6.Nge2.



chesstouring.com

If Black fianchettoes we'll be back in Line 4E, but here he actually often hasn't, with 6...Be7 (6...e5 has been seen a surprising amount; it does prevent d4, but after 7.d3 Be7 8.0-0 Rb8 9.f4 Bg4 10.h3 Bxe2 11.Qxe2! Nd4 12.Qf2 Nd7 13.b4!? White was already putting his extra tempo to good use in Karasev-Reshko, Leningrad 1978, with the idea of 13...cxb4 14.Nd5 a5?? 15.fxe5, hitting d4 and f7) 7.0-0 0-0 (otherwise, 7...Qb6 again rules out d4, but 8.d3 0-0 9.h3 Bd7 10.Rb1 Rac8 11.Be3 left White preparing a3 and b4 in Fernandez Manrique-Rodriguez Cespedes, El Sauzal 2007, where after 11...Qc7 he might have switched plans with 12.f4 followed by g4 and Ng3, while 7...h5!? makes a slightly strange impression in conjunction with Black's solid set-up, but 8.h3 h4 9.g4 e5 at least makes some positional sense when 10.d3 Nh7 11.f4 exf4 12.Nxf4 Bg5 13.Be3 followed by Qd2 is only a little better for White, who may look to break with d4 and target d6) 8.d3 Bd7 (8...a6 9.h3 Rb8 10.a4 is similar and, indeed, transposes after 10...Bd7 11.Be3, while 10...Nd7 11.Be3 Bf6 was preferred in Shahinyan-Qalagashvili, Poti 2015, where White pushed the d-pawn, but we would prefer 12.f4 Bd4 13.Qd2 b6 14.g4!? Bb7 15.g5 with doubled-edged play, but at least White's aim is clear: h4 followed by Rf3) 9.h3 Rb8 10.Be3 a6 11.a4 all quite standard from both sides.

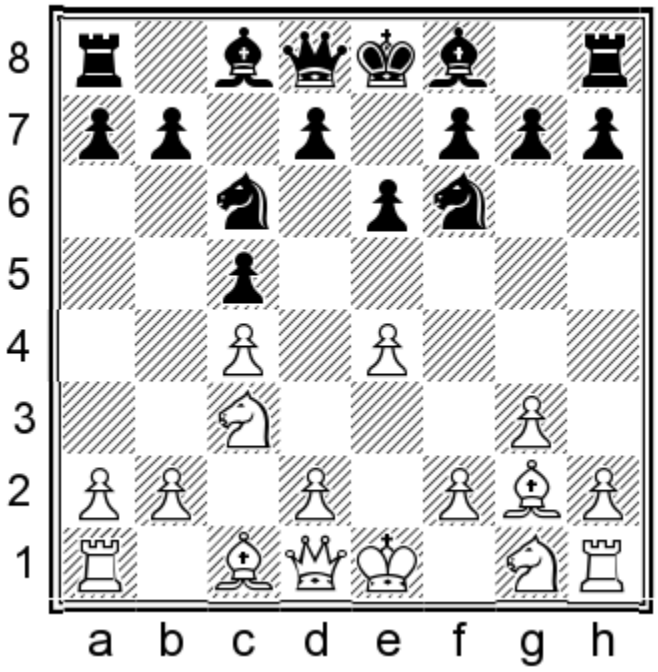


chesstouring.com

Just as in Line 4E, where Black's bishop was on g7, not e7, White should remember that he has all of the f4, d4 and b4 breaks at his disposal, with 11...Qc7 12.Rb1!? Nb4 the course of Bogdan-Szakolczai, Aggtelek 2005. Here we quite like 13.g4!?, and if 13...h6 (or 13...b5 14.axb5 axb5 15.g5 Ne8 16.Nxb5 Bxb5 17.cxb5 Rxb5 18.d4 followed by Nc3 and h4) 14.f4 when White's attack should most certainly not be underestimated, as we can see from 14...Rfe8?! 15.g5 hxg5 16.fxg5 Nh7 17.h4 followed by Nf4, looking to land a timely blow with g6.

Returning to 4...e6:

5.e4!



Naturally we have no desire to see Black obtain easy play with ...d5, so play our favourite advance and now there is only really one critical response.

5...d5!?

A pawn sacrifice.

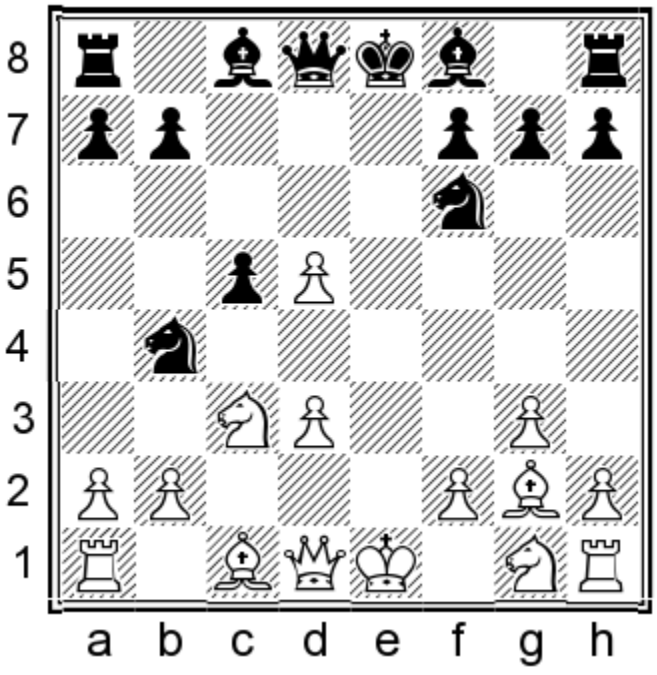
chesstouring.com

Otherwise, after 5...g6 (5...Nb4?! 6.d3 is clearly nothing to fear, and after 5...Be7 6.Nge2 0-0 7.0-0 play is likely to transpose with 7...d6 8.d3 to a sub-variation we've just considered above) 5...g6 6.Nge2 Bg7 7.0-0 0-0 we're in a strange hybrid of Lines 3C and 4E, Black having combined ...Nf6 and ...e6. White might very much go 8.d3 and 8.d4!? is also tempting, since the 'standard refutation' 8...cxd4 9.Nxd4 Nxe4?! actually isn't so good, in view of simply 10.Nxc6 Nxc3 11.Nxd8 Nxd1 12.Nxe6 dxe6 13.Rxd1 when c5 will seize some very useful space and White has the more active pieces.

6.exd5 exd5 7.cxd5

As prepared as an improvement, but never played by the teenage Simon. Black obtains easier play after 7.Nxd5 Nxd5 8.cxd5 Nb4 or here the 8.Bxd5?! Bf5 of Williams-Emms, Hastings 1995.

7...Nb4 8.d3



Naturally we have no desire to allow Black's knight into d3 and we now reach a little-explored position where White will obtain easy development

chesstouring.com

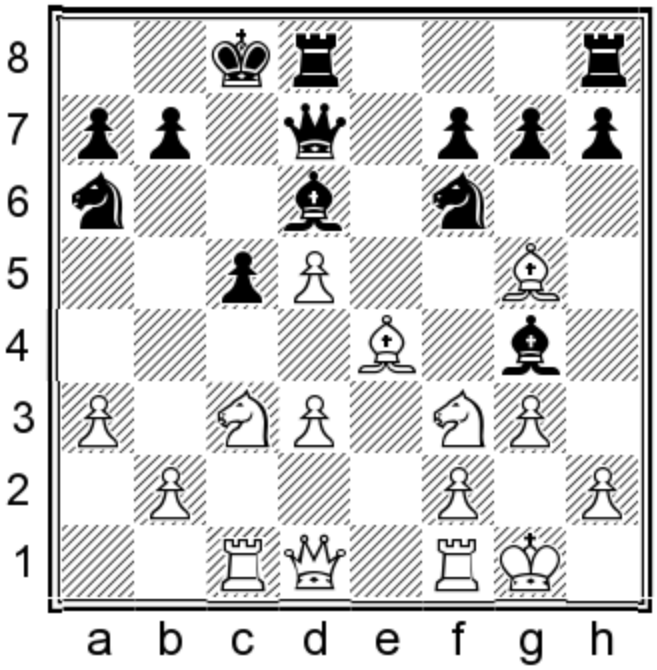
as Black regains his pawn.

8...Be7

Black's most common choice in the limited practice thus far:

a) Our approach wouldn't be a great one if 8...Bf5?! was effective, but fortunately it isn't in view of 9.Be4! (and not 9.Qe2+? Qe7 10.Be3 Nxd3+!) and now:

a1) 9...Qd7 10.Nf3 (threatening Ne5) 10...Bg4 11.0-0 Bd6 (11...Nbxd5? 12.Nxd5 Nxd5 13.Qb3 would be most unwise for Black, and if 13...Bxf3 14.Bxf3 Rd8 15.d4! cxd4 16.Re1+ Be7 17.Bd2 Kf8 18.Re5 Nc7 19.Rae1 with a monstrous initiative) 12.a3! Na6 (as in Van Osmael-Haeusler, correspondence 2002, where White had the tactics worked out: 12...Nxe4!? 13.dxe4 Nc2 14.Qxc2 Bxf3 doesn't lead to mate in view of 15.Qd3 Qg4 16.Re1) 13.Bg5! (13.Re1 0-0 wasn't so clear in the game) 13...0-0-0 (Black is in danger of being overrun after 13...Nxe4?! 14.Re1 0-0 15.dxe4 and 13...0-0? 14.Bxf6 gxf6 15.h3! Bxh3 16.Nh4! when 16...Bxf1? 17.Qh5 would force resignation) 14.Rc1, which could really do with a test.



chesstouring.com

At least Black's king is as exposed as White's and after 14...Nxe4 15.dxe4 f6 16.Be3 one threat is b4 and even 16...Kb8 17.b4!? might be possible, and if 17...cxb4 18.axb4 Nxb4 19.Qd4! b6 20.Nh4 keeping the kingside under control while lining up Rb1.

a2) After 9...Qe7 10.Nge2 Black doesn't have anything better than to acquiesce to the loss of a tempo with 10...Qd7 (of course, if 10...Nxd3+?? 11.Bxd3, while 10...Nxe4? fails to 11.dxe4 Bxe4 12.d6 Qe6 13.Nxe4 Qxe4 14.d7+ Ke7 15.0-0 and 10...Bxe4? 11.dxe4 Nxe4 12.Qa4+ Qd7 13.Qxd7+ Kxd7 14.Nxe4 Nc2+ 15.Kd1 Nxa1 16.Be3 would be rather unwise too for Black) 11.Nf4 Bd6 when 12.a3! maintains the upper hand, and if 12...Na6 (12...Bxf4 13.axb4! is the key point when 13...Bxc1 14.Rxc1 cxb4 15.Bxf5 Qxf5 16.Qa4+ works out well for White in view of 16...Nd7 17.Qxb4 Qxd3 18.Rd1, and if 18...Ne5 19.Qa4+) 13.0-0 0-0 14.Re1 Rfe8 15.Bd2 Nc7 16.Qb3 b6 17.Bf3, threatening Ne4 and leaving Black with insufficient compensation.

b) Naturally Black might prefer to regain his pawn, but 8...Nfxd5 9.Nxd5 Nxd5 allows White the possibility of 10.Qa4+!? Bd7 11.Qe4+, as well as 10.Ne2 Be7 11.0-0 0-0 when 12.d4 Be6 should be fine for Black, but there's 12.Qb3!? and also 12.Nf4 Nxf4 13.Bxf4 Qb6. Now in Van Osmael-Urban, correspondence 2011, 14.Re1 Be6 (or 14...Bf6 15.Qf3 Qxb2 16.Bd6 Rd8 when a repetition is possible, but so very much is keeping the game going with 17.Bxc5 Be6 18.Rab1 Qxa2 19.Qxb7 a5 20.d4, and if 20...a4?! 21.Qb4!) 15.Qf3 was worth a thought, with the idea of 15...Qxb2?! 16.Be5 Qa3 17.Qxb7, which is surprisingly awkward for Black in view of 17...Rfe8 18.Bc6.

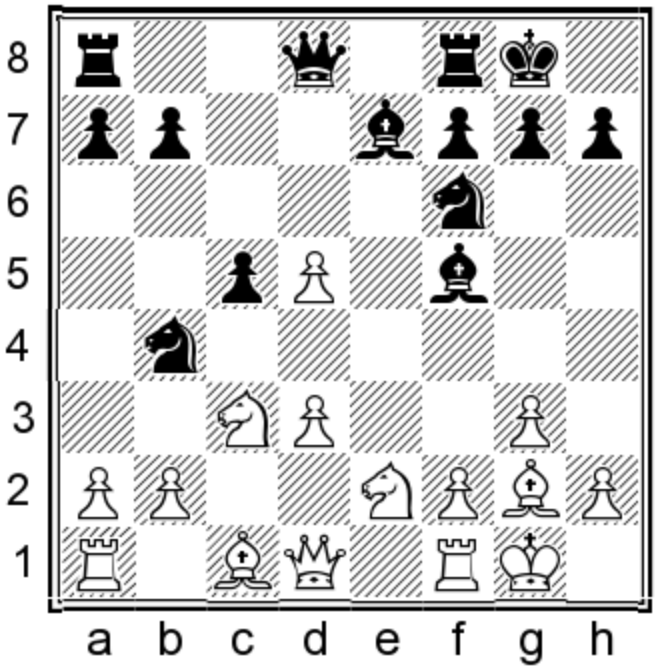
c) Instead, 8...Nbxd5 is less forcing, so might be met by 9.Nge2 or just 9.Nxd5 Nxd5 10.Ne2, as per variation 'b'.

Returning to 8...Be7:

9.Nge2 0-0 10.0-0 Bf5!?

chesstouring.com

A more ambitious try than the attempt to equalise with 10...Nbxd5 11.Nxd5 Nxd5 12.Nf4, as we've just analysed (note 'b' to Black's 8th move).



11.Nf4

Keeping everything under control (11.Be4 Qd7 is no longer so effective).

11...Bd6 12.a3!

Again, this nudge is a timely one.

12...Bxf4

12...Na6 13.h3 Nc7 14.Qf3 would just be a safe extra pawn for White.

13.Bxf4

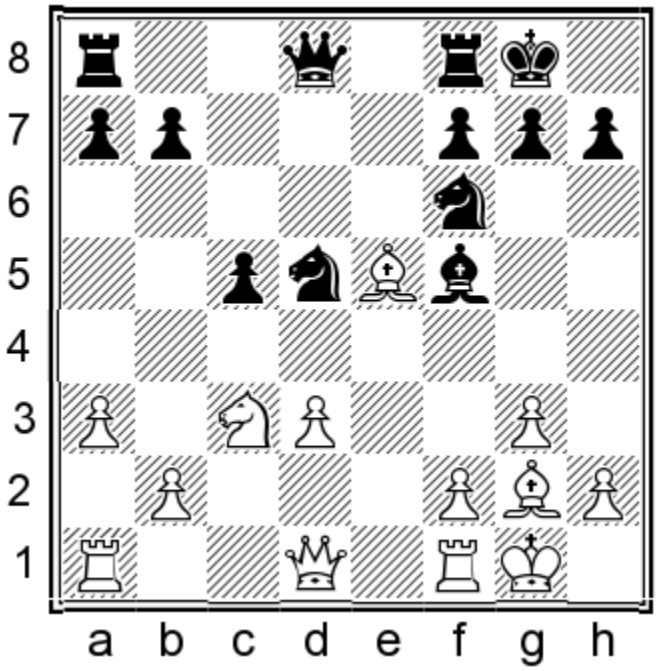
This should retain a small pull, although again 13.axb4!? comes into consideration too.

chesstouring.com

13...Nbxd5

13...Nxd3 is by no means ridiculous, although after 14.Qf3 White threatens Bg5 and 14...Nxb2?! 15.d6 Nd3 16.Bg5 Bg6 17.Bxf6 Qxf6 18.Qxf6 gxf6 19.f4! Bf5 (19...f5 20.Rfb1 would be pretty disgusting for Black) 20.Nd5 leaves him with the initiative.

14.Be5



White preferred to exchange knights in K.Petrosian-Nikonova, Uljanovsk 2010, but the text move would have put the two bishops to good use. White is ready to go **R**e1 and/or **Q**b3, and **14...Nxc3 15.bxc3 Re8 16.Re1 Qxd3 17.Qxd3 Bxd3 18.Bxb7 Rad8 19.Rad1** would offer definite chances to torment Black with the bishop-pair in the endgame.

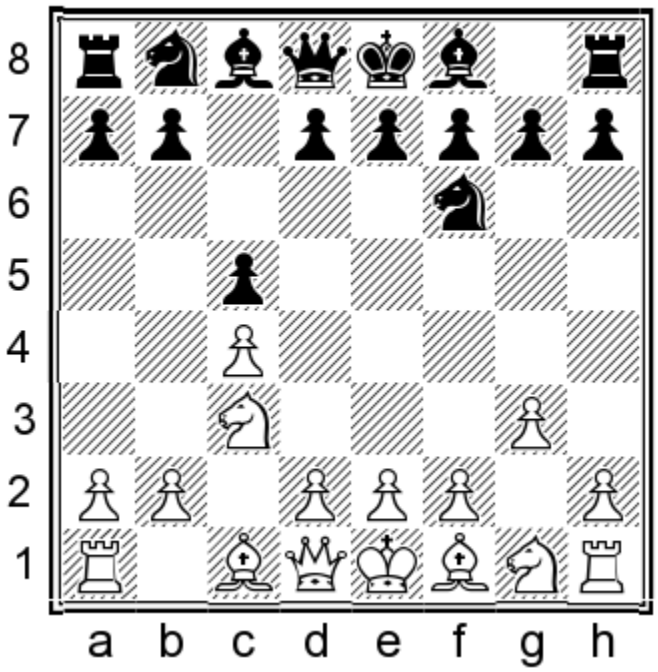
Theory 7B

1.c4 c5

chesstouring.com

Just a quick reminder that play would transpose in the event of 1...Nf6 2.Nc3 d5 (or just 2...c5 3.g3) 3.cxd5 Nxd5 4.g3 c5 (we analysed the Grünfeld approach, 4...g6, back in Line 5A) 5.Bg2.

2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3



Our usual approach, but if you're happy with a Botvinnik set-up and would like to bypass Black's ...e6 option then you may wish to consider 3.e4!? followed by g3 or 3...e6 4.e5 and a Mikenas.

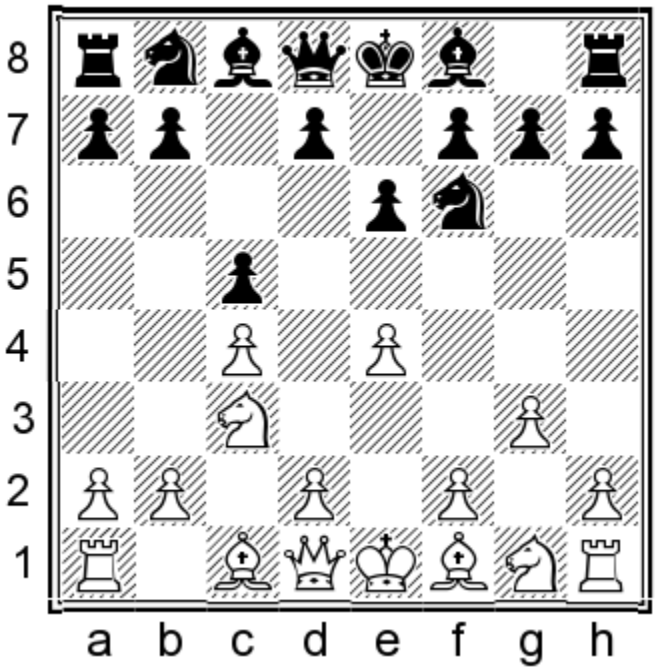
3...d5

The most ambitious move, but by no means forced. Only by a small percentage is 3...g6 Black's second most popular move here when 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.e4 Nc6 6.Nge2 would take us back into the waters of Line 3C.

Instead, 3...Nc6 4.Bg2 e6 5.e4 is what we've just covered in Line 7A and 3...e6 is another important option. Depending on what lines you've previously played, you may be happy with White's most common choice, 4.Nf3, leading to a Tarrasch after 4...d5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.d4 or a Hedgehog with 4...b6. Such lines are, though, of course, outside our repertoire, which

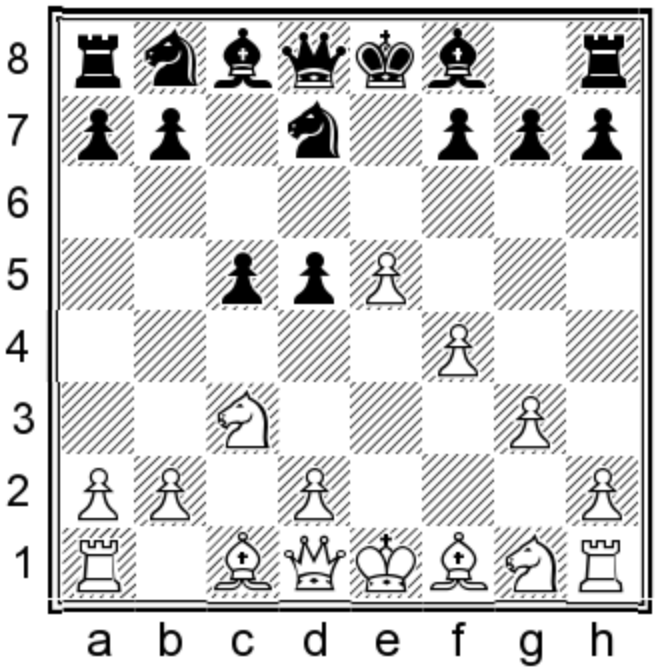
chesstouring.com

here we can stay in by following in Julio Grand Zuniga and Jan-Krzysztof Duda's footsteps with 4.e4!?.



The critical line must be 4...d5 (by far Black's main move in practice has actually been 4...Nc6, taking play back into Line 7A after 5.Bg2) when White has often exchanged, but we prefer the immediate space-grab 5.e5. Already black players are liking to be thinking for themselves and 5...Nfd7 (alternatively: 5...d4 6.exf6 dxc3 gives White a few pleasant enough options, including 7.dxc3!? Qxd1+ 8.Kxd1 gxf6 9.Bg2 with lasting pressure down the long diagonal and development with Be3, Kc2, b3, Ne2 and f4; 5...Ne4 6.f4!? secures some extra space and leaves White with easy development after 6...Nxc3 7.dxc3 Be7 8.Nf3 followed by Be3 and Qc2; and while not totally ridiculous, 5...Ng8 6.cxd5 exd5 7.Nf3 Nc6 8.Bg2 should be a little better for White, followed by 0-0 and d4 or 8...d4 9.Ne4 d3 10.0-0 Be7 11.b3 when even Bb2, Qb1 and Ne1 might be an issue for Black) 6.cxd5 exd5 (6...Nxe5?! 7.d4! cxd4 8.Qxd4 just gives White easy development and after 8...Nbd7 9.dxe6 fxe6 he might even go 10.Qe4 followed by Bf4 and 0-0-0) 7.f4 brings about a rather unexplored position.

chesstouring.com



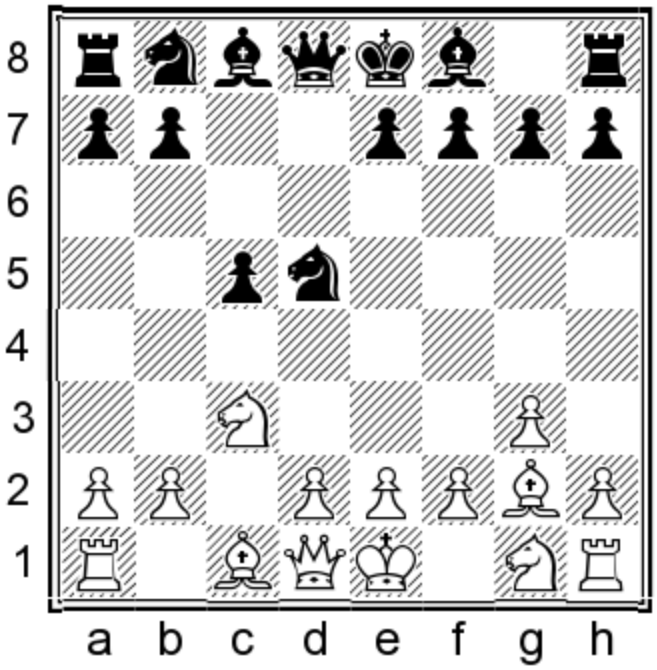
White’s space advantage on the kingside might eventually lead to attacking chances there and one of the few practical examples continued 7...d4 8.Ne4 Be7 9.Bg2 0-0 10.Nf3 Nc6 11.d3 Nb6 12.0-0, which revealed White’s rather straightforward development scheme in Pelts-V.Sherbakov, Sochi 1961, and after 12...Be6 he might even have tried 13.Nfg5 or 13.Nh4!? Bxh4 14.gxh4, and if 14...Nd7? (c5 was en prise and 14...Qxh4?? 15.f5 Bd5 16.Bg5 traps the black queen) 15.f5 Bd5 16.f6! Ncxe5 17.fxg7 Kxg7 18.Qh5, thereby destroying the black kingside.

Instead, 7...Nc6 was preferred in Hertneck-Wegner, Bad Woerishofen 1990, when 8.Nf3 Nb6 would see Black keeping his pawn on d5. Here 9.d4!? Bg4 10.Be2 is an ambitious try, followed by Be3 or 10...Bxf3 11.Bxf3 Nxd4 (11...cxd4 12.Na4 leaves White with the two bishops and forcing the pace in the event of 12...Nc4 13.0-0 Be7 14.b3, as 14...Ne3 15.Bxe3 dxe3 16.Bxd5 most likely leaves the pawn on e3 a weakness rather than a strength) 12.Bg2 Be7 13.0-0 when retreating the knight from d4 would lose d5 and 13...0-0 14.a4! a5 15.f5 looks like quite promising compensation for White, with ideas of f6 and/or Nb5.

Returning to 3...d5:

chesstouring.com

4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2



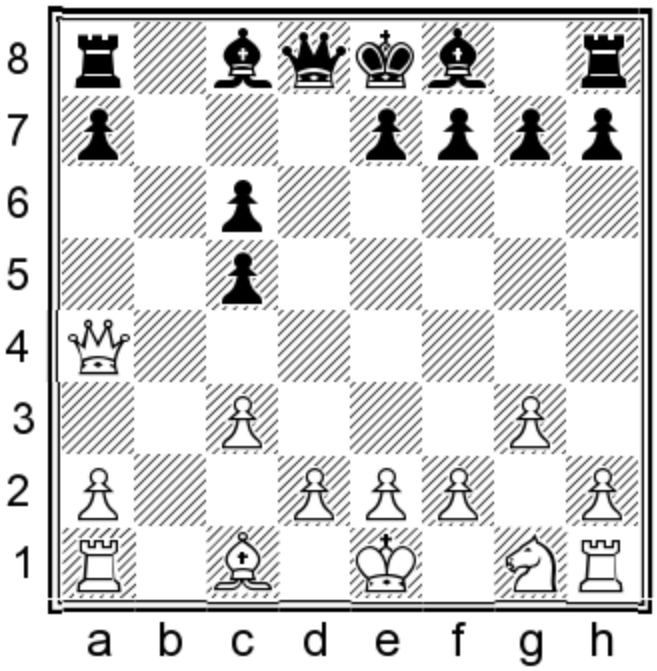
Naturally we complete the fianchetto and already an inexperienced opponent might go astray as Black.

5...Nc7

Akiba Rubinstein's patented approach, preparing to erect a Maroczy Bind with ...e5.

Otherwise, 5...Nxc3 6.bxc3 is again just a pleasant structure for White with, for example, 6...Nc6 (we saw back in the notes to Line 6C that 6...e5 7.Nf3 gives White chances for an edge with a quick d4 break, and 6...g6 7.Rb1 is also promising for White, as we saw via a different transposition, here to the Grünfeld waters of Line 5A) 7.Bxc6+!? (by no means forced, but, well, why not?) 7...bxc6 8.Qa4.

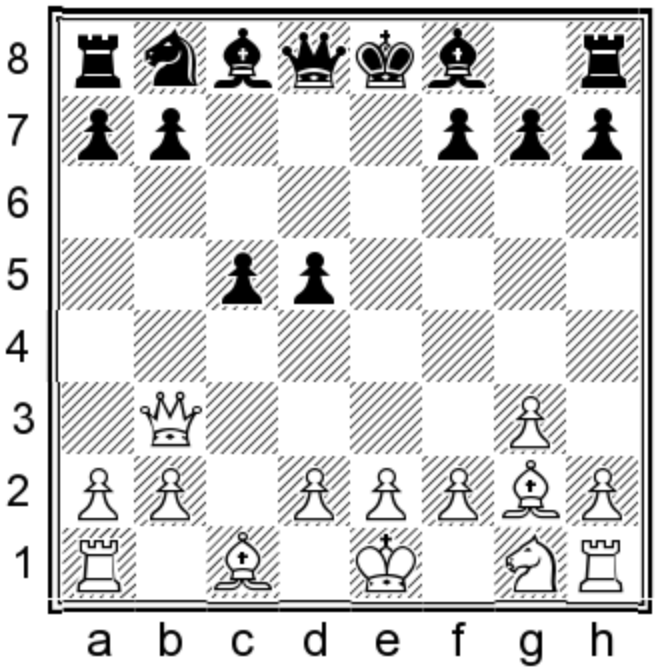
chesstouring.com



Here Black’s bishops are not exactly active and White has good chances to maintain the initiative, as with 8...Qd6 (alternatively, 8...Qb6 9.Nf3 Qb5 10.Qe4 threatens Ne5, but 8...Qd5 might be best, as in Harutyunian-Low, Roquetas de Mar 2020, when 9.e4 Qd6 10.Ba3 e5 11.Nf3 prepares 0-0 and d4, while hoping for 11...Bg4? 12.Nxe5!) 9.Ba3 g6 10.Nf3 Bg7 11.0-0 0-0 12.Qc4 when Black won’t obtain all that much for his pawn.

Instead, 5...e6?! has been played by a few strong players, including Vladimir Kramnik in a Candidates match no less. Unfortunately for the future world champion, Boris Gelfand is not a man to bluff and went 6.Nxd5 exd5 7.Qb3!.

chesstouring.com



Now 7...Nc6 (7...c4?! fails to defend the pawn in view of 8.Qb5+, while 7...Be6 8.Qxb7 Nd7 9.Nh3!? Nb6 10.Qa6! Bd6 11.d3 0-0 12.Nf4 Bc8 13.Qa5 Bb7 14.0-0 was just an extra pawn in the older encounter Garcia Martinez-Farago, Polanica Zdroj 1978) 8.Qxd5 (the right way to snaffle; 8.Bxd5? Nd4 9.Bxf7+ Ke7 10.Qc4 is much less clear in view of 10...b5!) 8...Qxd5 9.Bxd5 Nb4 10.Be4! (side-stepping 10.Bb3 b5) 10...f5 11.Bb1 g6 12.Nf3 Nc6 13.d3 Bg7 14.a3 prepared to untangle with Ba2 and left Black a pawn down for not all that much in Gelfand-Kramnik, 8th matchgame, Sanghi Nagar 1994.

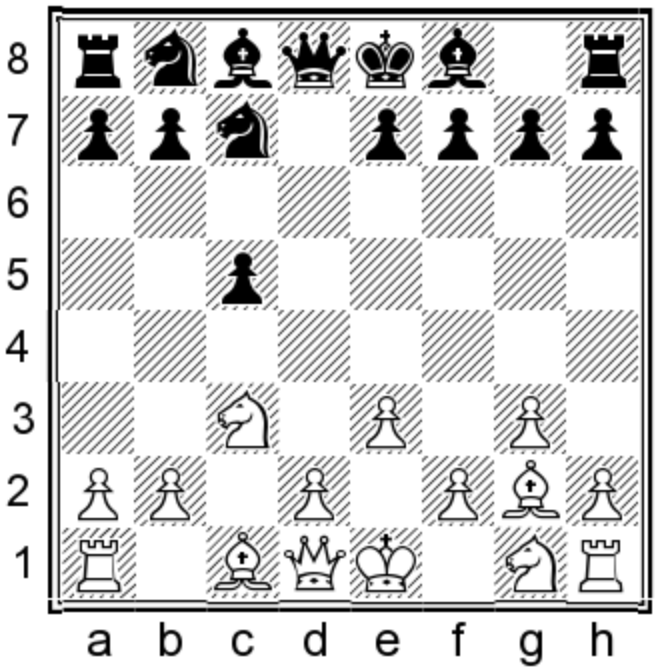
After 8.Qxd5 we should also point out that White isn't too inconvenienced by 8...Nb4 9.Qxd8+ Kxd8 10.Kf1!? when he just has an extra central pawn and will complete development with d3, Nf3 or Nh3 and a3. Likewise, 8...Nd4 9.Qxd8+ Kxd8 10.Kf1 offers Black almost no compensation: for example, 10...Nc2 11.Rb1 Bd6 12.d3 Be6 13.b3 Kc7 14.Nh3 followed by Nf4 and possibly even h3, Kg1 and Kh2. That leaves 8...Qc7 9.b3 Be7 10.Bb2 0-0 11.Nf3, which shouldn't give Black enough for a pawn, and neither should 8...Bd6!? 9.Nf3 0-0 10.0-0 Be6 when David Cummings' suggestion of 11.Qd3! is a very sensible one, and if 11...Re8

chesstouring.com

12.b3 Qd7 13.Bb2 Bf5 14.Qc3 Bf8 15.Rfe1 when Black has some pressure, but surely not enough for a pawn, with d3 and Rac1 on the way.

Returning to Black's critical response, 5...Nc7:

6.e3!?



Just like in the reversed Dragon, this little nudge is likely to surprise opponents. By far White's main move is 6.Nf3 when a modern twist is 6...Nc6 7.a3!? with the idea of 7...e5?! 8.b4!, so nowadays Black tends to prefer 7...g6. However, we have no need of such lines when we can reach familiar waters.

6...e5

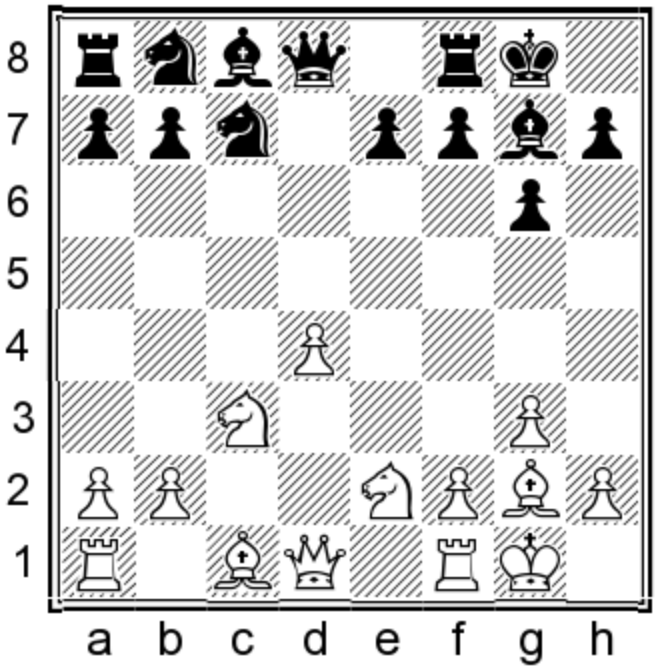
The main response and now we simply have a Maroczy set-up where Black's knight is on c7 rather than b6.

Otherwise, 6...Nc6 7.Nge2 Bg4?! 8.h3 Bf5 9.d4 e6?! didn't exactly convince in Kapnisis-Ketzetzis, Porto Rio 2015, and now 10.e4 would have been pretty strong, and if 10...cxd4 (or 10...Bg6 11.d5 exd5 12.exd5 Ne5

chesstouring.com

13.0-0 with a mighty d-pawn, not to mention the threat of f4) 11.exf5 dxc3 12.Qb3! cxb2 13.Bxb2 Bb4+ 14.Kf1. There are simply too many threats for Black to have a satisfactory response, with 14...Nd5 15.fxe6 fxe6 16.Bxg7 Rg8 17.Nd4? Nxd4 18.Bxd4 probably his best try and clearly still very grim.

A better choice is 6...g6!? when 7.Nge2 Bg7 8.0-0 0-0 9.d4 cxd4 10.exd4 leads to an unusual type of Fianchetto Grünfeld position.



Once again, Delroy looks like a strength, at least in the short term, and 10...Nc6 11.d5! Ne5 12.Bf4 should supply an edge: for example, 12...Ne8 (thematically preparing to bring the knight to the blockade square on d6; alternatively, 12...Na6 13.Re1 Bd7 14.Nd4 Nc4 15.b3 Nd6 16.Qd2 Rc8 17.Be5 saw White keeping control while gradually increasing the pressure in Iturrizaga Bonelli-Popilski, Riga 2014, where he was ready to double rooks via e3) 13.Re1 Nd6 14.Nd4 (a fine square for the knight and, again, we find Black not exactly awash with counterplay) 14...Nec4 (14...Bg4!? 15.f3 Nec4 lines up tactics with ...Qb6 and was a better try, although even here 16.b3! Qb6 17.Nce2 Nb2 18.Qd2 e5 19.fxg4 exf4 20.Kh1 should keep White in front in a rather messy position, and one where the knight on b2 is

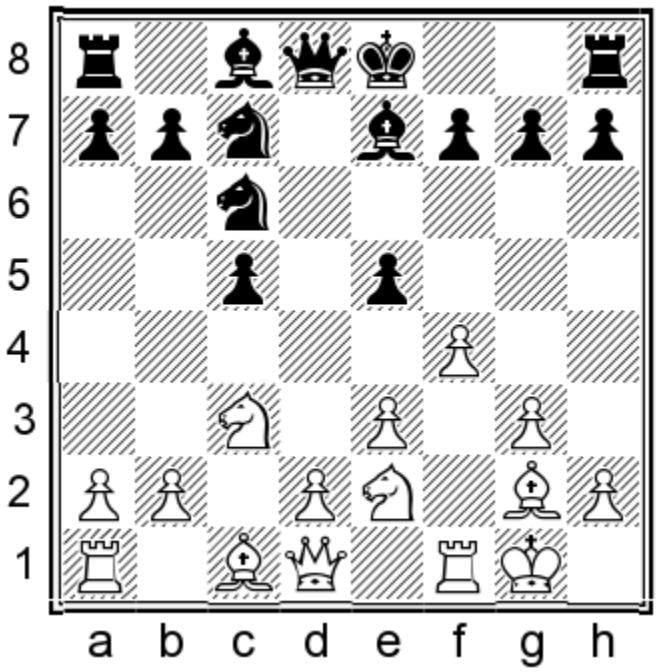
chesstouring.com

trapped) 15.b3 Nb6 (or 15...Qb6 16.Ndb5!? Nxb5 17.Nxb5, offering the exchange for all the dark squares and also hoping for 17...Qxb5? 18.bxc4 Qxc4 19.Rc1! Qxa2 20.Rxe7 when d6 is next up and the mighty Delroy surely just too strong) 16.Qd2 Re8 17.a4 left Black low on counterplay and White beginning to probe (h4-h5 is very much an idea) in Iotov-Chandra, Richardson 2015.

7.Nge2

Standard and familiar development from Lines 6C and 6D.

7...Nc6 8.0-0 Be7 9.f4!



Our key advance. Black is probably better off with his knight on b6 than c7, as the b7-pawn isn't obstructed, but in any case White has definite chances to emerge with an edge, partly due to the tempo Black has spent on ...c5, leaving him yet to castle.

9...exf4

chesstouring.com

Normal here.

9...f6?! 10.Qb3 wouldn't be a good idea, but 9...0-0 can hardly be terrible even if it does allow White to hit back and hard in the centre with 10.fxe5 (10.b3 is also fine) 10...Nxe5 11.d4. Yet again we are happy to accept an IQP in return for the initiative, with 11...Nc6 12.a3 cxd4 13.exd4 Re8 (13...Bg4 was more ambitious, but maybe Black wasn't so sure about such a continuation as 14.d5!? Bc5+ 15.Kh1 Nd4 16.h3 Bh5 17.Qd3 Bg6 18.Qc4 Nxe2 19.Nxe2 followed by Nf4) 14.h3 a6 15.Bf4 Ne6?! (Black had to avoid 15...Be6?? 16.d5 and even 15...Nb5 16.d5 Bc5+ 17.Kh2 Ne5 18.Ne4 would have left White with the initiative) 16.Be3 Ng5 17.Kh2 Bd6 18.Bf4 leaving Black being gradually outplayed in Lopes-Gerhards, correspondence 2016, where his knight wasn't on the happiest of routes.

10.Nxf4

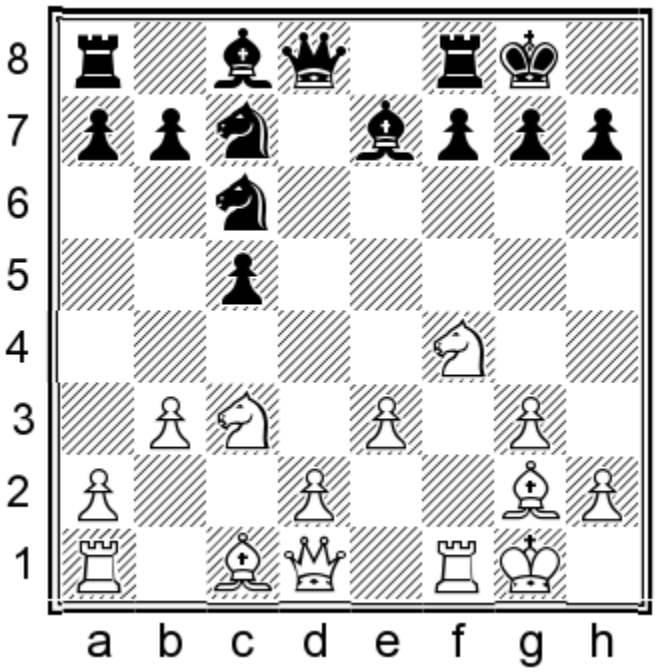
Not forced, but very likely the best recapture, taking control of the d5-square while intending to obtain some kingside pressure after b3 and Bb2.

10...0-0

Another natural move, unlike 10...Ne6 when 11.Nfd5! 0-0 12.Nxe7+ Nxe7 13.b3 left White with a pleasant bishop-pair edge in Bloodworth-Sedgwick, Guernsey 1985.

11.b3

chesstouring.com



Here too 11.Nfd5 has been tried, but we prefer to complete development.

11...Bf6?!

Not best, but Black's main move in the limited practice thus far and in which White has scored very well.

Instead, 11...Ne5?! 12.Bb2 Bg4?! (or 12...Nd3 13.Nxd3 Qxd3 when White can go 14.Rc1 or 14.Be4 Qd6 15.Qc2, forcing a weakness) 13.Qc2 already left Black having nothing better (14.Bxb7 and 14.Ne4 are two threats; h3, Rad1 and d4 another plan) than the rather desperate 13...b6 in the high-level recent blitz game Wojtaszek-Tregubov, where White might have grabbed: 14.Bxa8 Qxa8 15.Qe4 Qxe4 16.Nxe4, and if 16...Nf3+ 17.Kg2 with an extra exchange.

Black also found himself being outplayed after 11...Bf5 12.Ba3!? Qd7 13.Rc1 Bg4 14.Qe1! Rac8 in Cornette-Nikolov, Rochefort 2017, where 15.h3 Bf5 16.g4 Bg6 17.Ne4 b6 18.Qg3 would have readied Harry and left White with a pull, while we'll make a good case for 11...Bd7?! 12.Bb2 Rc8 13.Qh5! in Bryzgalin-Wieczorek, Warsaw (rapid) 2013, below.

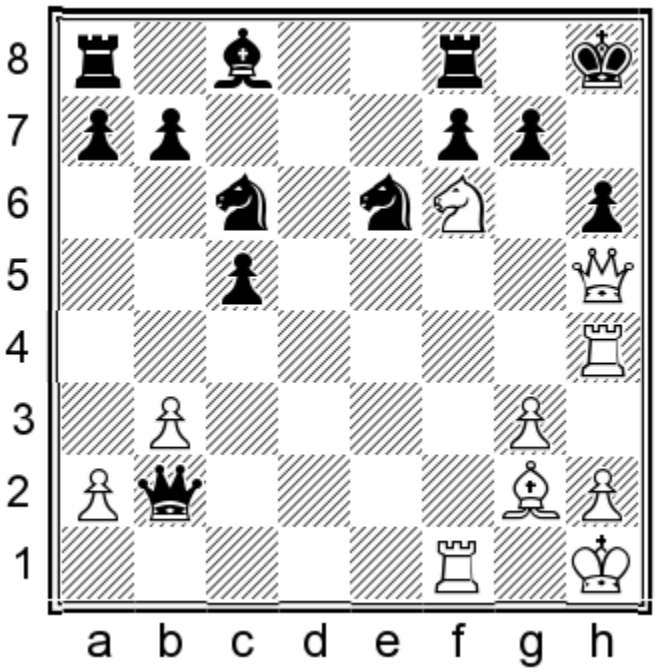
chesstouring.com

12.Ba3!

There's absolutely nothing wrong with 12.Bb2, but the text or 12.Qh5!? makes good use of White's easier development.

12...Na6?!

An ugly square for the knight, but in any case Black is likely just in trouble, with 12...Bxc3 13.dxc3 Qe7 tried in Rusev-Stojanovski, Vrnjacka Banja 2012, where 14.Qh5! Qxe3+ 15.Kh1 Qxc3 16.Rae1!? would have given White a huge initiative for two pawns. 17.Bxc5 will be next up unless Black prefers to allow 16...Ne6? 17.Nd5 Qd4 18.Re4 Qd2 19.Bb2! with a winning attack and a very pretty finish in the event of 19...Qxb2 20.Rh4 h6 (20...f6 21.Qxh7+ Kf7 22.Qh5+ Kg8 23.Be4 would be more mundane) 21.Nf6+! Kh8...



...22.Qxh6+! gxh6 23.Rxh6+ Kg7 24.Rh7+ Kg6 25.Be4+ Kg5 26.h4 mate.

Black has also tried to blunt the a3-f8 diagonal, but 12...Nb4 13.Rc1 Be7 14.Bb2 Bf5!? (14...Bf6 15.d4 cxd4 16.Ne4 also leaves Black in a bit of a

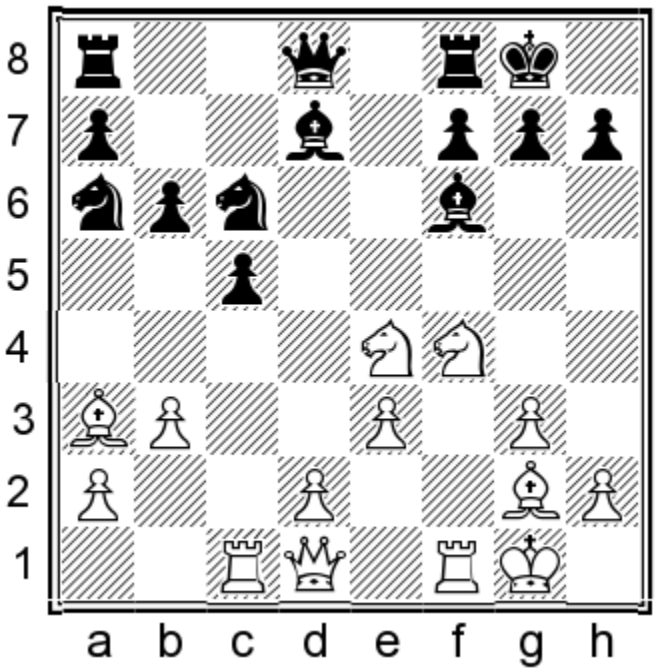
chesstouring.com

pickle, and if 16...Be5 17.Qh5 f6 18.Rfd1) 15.Bxb7 Rb8 16.Be4 didn't exactly offer the Croatian GM much for his pawn in Sipos-Zelcic, Pula 2012.

13.Rc1

More simple chess, increasing the pressure against c5 while facilitating White's next.

13...Bd7 14.Ne4 b6?



Black would have done better to have let c5 go as now **15.d4! Nab4 16.Nxf6+ Qxf6 17.dxc5** left his position in ruins in Berkes-Tesik, Hungarian League 2012.

Game 31
K.Bryzgalin-O.Wieczorek
European Rapid Championship, Warsaw 2013

chesstouring.com

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 c5 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2 Nc7 6.e3

Thematic and simply quite a good choice, as we've just seen.

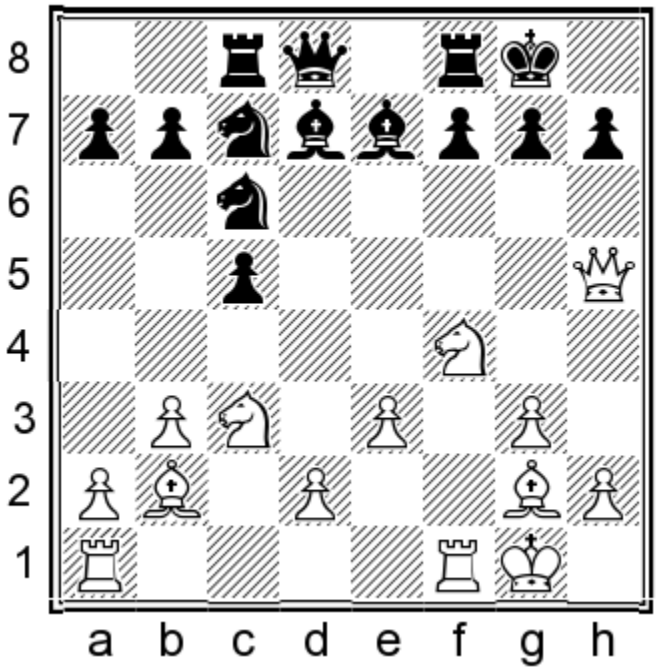
6...Nc6 7.Nge2 e5 8.0-0 Be7 9.f4

Our favourite advance in this structure and one which here can easily leave White with an early initiative.

9...exf4 10.Nxf4 0-0 11.b3 Bd7?!

Not the most glamorous square for the bishop, in contrast to which White is about to enjoy two fianchettoed bishops breathing fire down the long diagonals.

12.Bb2 Rc8 13.Qh5!



The queen takes up a very menacing spot as White seizes a strong initiative.

13...Be8

chesstouring.com

Rather defensive, but 13...b5?! would just create weaknesses for White to exploit after 14.Rac1 and Ne4.

14.Rad1

Calm centralisation, but 14.Ncd5!? might have been even stronger, and if 14...Nxd5 15.Bxd5 Nb4 when there are a number of tempting tactical ideas, including 16.Bc4 (16.Bxg7!? is another, and if 16...Kxg7? 17.Be4) 16...b5? 17.Ne6! fxe6 18.Bxe6+ Kh8 19.Qh6 and wins, the loose rook on c8 costing Black after 19...Bf6 20.Rxf6 Rxf6 21.Bxf6 Qxf6 22.Qxf6 gxf6 23.Bxc8.

14...f6 15.Qe2 Bf7

Black has done well to untangle to an extent, but he remains low on counterplay and that hole on e6 might come back to haunt him.

16.Kh1!?

This was probably played quite quickly and is by no means an atypical move for rapidplay, tucking the king away before breaking in the centre to avoid any tactics down the g1-a7 diagonal. Even stronger though would have been 16.Bh3! Rb8 17.Ne4 when all White's pieces are playing and even Bf5 and Qg4 might well happen.

16...Re8 17.Qf2

Continuing to prepare d4, but 17.Ne4! Nd5 18.Nh5 Qd7 19.g4!? was a better path, beginning to turn up the heat on the kingside, and if 19...Bxh5? 20.gxh5 Kh8 21.Qf3 followed by Bh3 and/or h6.

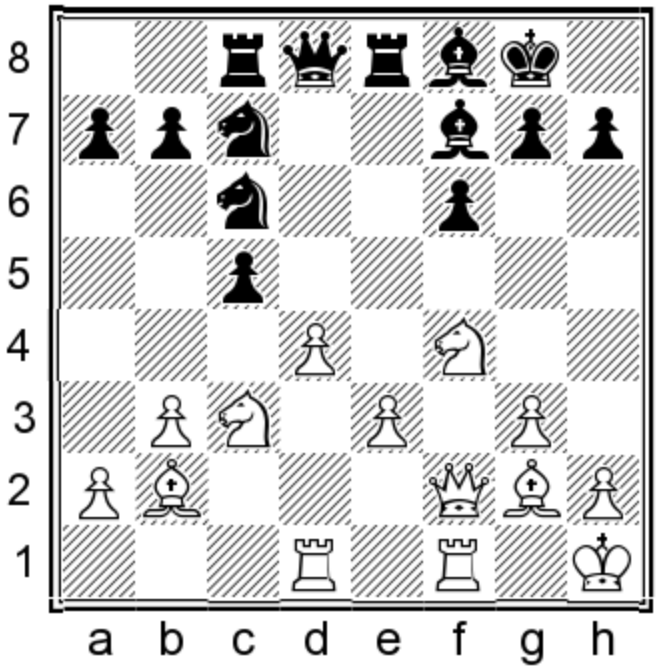
17...Bf8?

Black is simply swept away after this in thematic fashion. He needed to go 17...Bd6, preparing to erect a firm blockade in the event of 18.d4?

chesstouring.com

(18.Ne4! Nb4 19.d4 maintains the initiative, but Black is at least fighting here after 19...c4!) 18...cxd4 19.exd4 Bxf4 20.Qxf4 Nd5.

18.d4!



We deliberately delay advancing the centre pawns into the middle of the board in this set-up, but when they do advance, they often do so with quite some effect.

18...cxd4

Even after 18...c4!? 19.d5 Ne5 20.Ne4 Black's cause looks quite hopeless with Ne6 ideas looming.

19.exd4 Bd6 20.d5!

Reopening the long diagonal for the bishop on b2, while preparing to crash through in the centre after Ne4.

20...Nb4?

chesstouring.com

Now it’s definitely lost, but after 20...Ne5 21.Ne4 Qe7 White might even have harvested a free pawn with 22.Qxa7.

21.a3 Nba6 22.b4

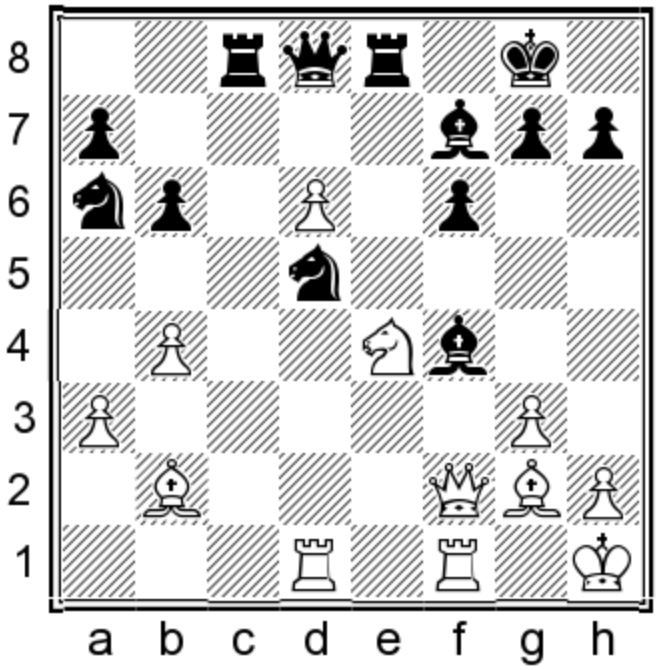
Continuing to deny Black any real play. The immediate 22.Ne4 would also have been very strong.

22...b6 23.Ne4 Bxf4 24.d6!?

Easily sufficient, but 24.Nxf6+! gxf6 25.Qxf4 would have been a prettier way to win, and if 25...Bg6 26.Bxf6 Rf8 27.Qg5 Qd7 28.Be4 Qf7 29.Be5 Qxf1+ 30.Rxf1 Rxf1+ 31.Kg2 when there’s no longer any defence.

24...Nd5

Black might have restricted his losses to an exchange with 24...Rxe4! 25.dxc7 Qe7 26.Rd8+! Rxd8 27.cxd8=Q+ Qxd8 28.Bxe4, but instead allows White to finish in style.



chesstouring.com

25.Rxd5! Bxd5 26.Nxf6+! Kh8

Hopeless, but the bishops would just have been too strong after 26...gxf6 27.Bxd5+ Kg7 28.Qxf4, which is a position to savour, and if 28...Rf8 29.Qg5+.

27.Nxe8 Bxg2+ 28.Qxg2 Qxe8 29.gxf4 Nb8?

Opting for an immediate exit rather than see White queen after 29...Qf7 30.Rg1 Rg8 31.Bxg7+! Rxg7 32.Qxg7+ Qxg7 33.Rxg7 Kxg7 34.d7.

30.Qxg7 mate 1-0

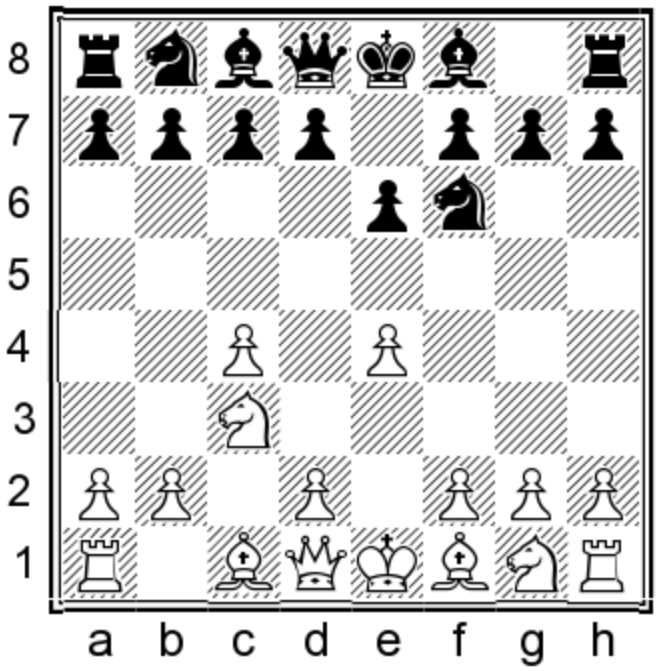
chesstouring.com

Chapter Eight
The Mikenas Attack

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e6

The choice of Nimzo-Indian and QGD aficionados. They would like nothing more than 3.d4 and a transposition to their favourite defence after 3...Bb4 or 3...d5. White should certainly avoid 3.g3 d5, but fortunately help is at hand in the shape of one of our favourite advances.

3.e4!



The Mikenas Attack, named after the Lithuanian GM Vladas Mikenas. White aggressively conquers space in the centre and threatens e5.

3...Bb4?

chesstouring.com

The move Black would play had we gone 3.d4, but it's simply not good here.

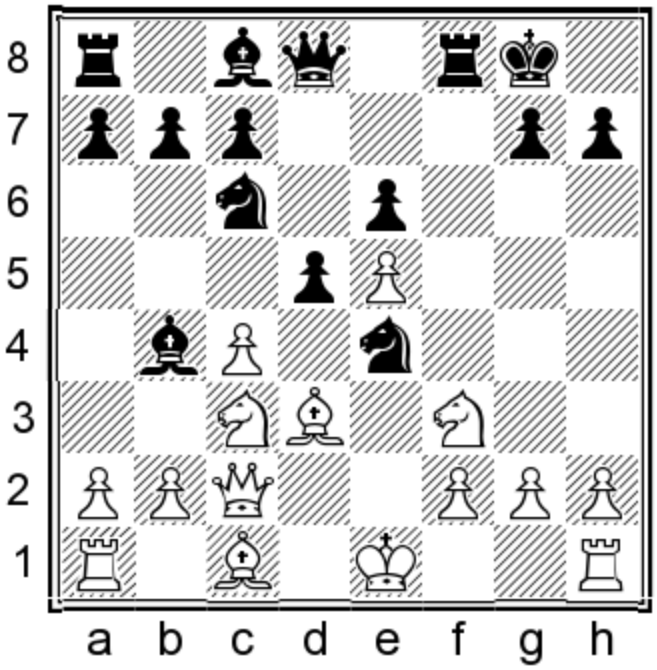
The complex, but fun old main line is 3...c5 4.e5, as we'll cover in **Line 8A**. A somewhat more solid option is the modern GM preference, 3...d5, when 4.cxd5 exd5 5.e5 Ne4 6.Nf3 is trendy, but we'll see in **Line 8B** that the immediate 4.e5 still packs a punch. Alternatively:

a) In practice, 3...d6 isn't that far behind 3...c5 in the popularity stakes, largely because it is seen quite often at lower levels. Indeed, based on when your authors have given simuls, the Mikenas continues to catch out plenty of black players at club level. Here you might well be happy with 4.d4 and a very pleasant space advantage, but 4.g3 is also possible when 4...Be7 5.Bg2 leaves Black with a slightly sub-optimal choice. If he simply pushes his e-pawn, he'll be a tempo down on an Old Indian and those positions we considered in Line 4C. As such, 5...c5 is a better choice when 6.Nge2 Nc6 7.0-0 transposes to lines we considered last chapter in 7A.

b) 3...Nc6 isn't so ridiculous and has even been tried with success by Ivanchuk, albeit in a blitz game. That said, 4.d4 (if you prefer something more restrained then 4.Nf3 is a decent choice, intending 4...d5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.e5 with a likely transposition to Line 8B) 4...Bb4 (4...d5 is arguably less challenging and 5.cxd5 exd5 6.e5 Ne4 7.Bb5!? just a pleasant edge; White's space advantage should easily outweigh the small hole on e4, with 7...Bb4 8.Nge2 0-0 9.0-0 easy development, after which 9...Nxc3 10.bxc3 Be7 11.Nf4 Bg5 12.Bd3 already left White eyeing the black king and with a large advantage in Aronian-Wojtaszek, Dubai (blitz) 2014) 5.e5! (taking up the challenge, rather than allow Black to hit back with ...d5 or ...e5) 5...Ne4 (5...Ng8 6.Qg4 Kf8 7.Nf3 is also pretty pleasant for White, who simply intends Be2 and 0-0, as well as a timely d5 or Ng5 and f4) 6.Qc2 d5 (6...Qh4 is an idea sometimes seen in the English Defence, but here 7.Be3 f5 8.exf6 Nxf6 9.Nf3 Qh5 10.Be2 leaves White with the better development, and even 6...Nxc3!? 7.bxc3 Be7 8.Nf3 b6 9.Qe4!? Bb7 10.Qg4 shouldn't equalise for Black, as he must now play a sub-optimal move to defend g7, not permit 10...0-0? 11.Bh6) 7.Nf3 f6 8.Bd3 fxe5

chesstouring.com

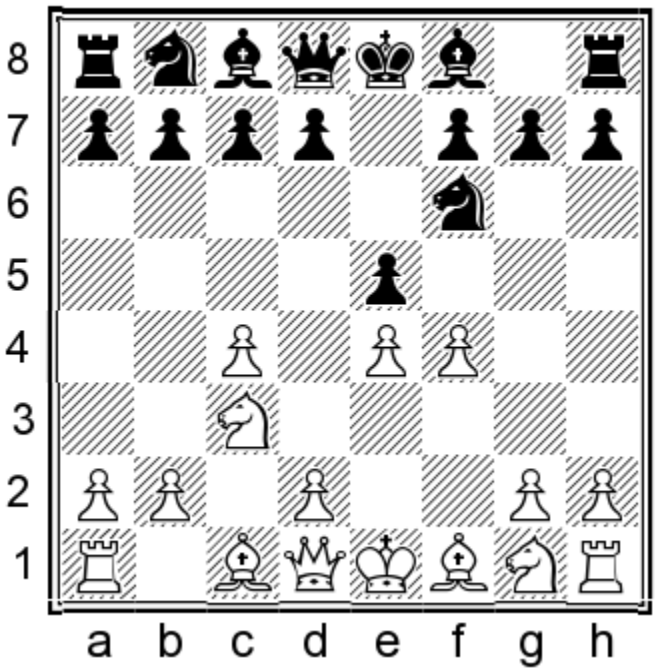
9.dxe5 0-0 didn’t exactly convince for Black in Soffer-Stocek, Plovdiv 2012.



Here 10.Bxe4! dxe4 11.Qxe4 Bxc3+ 12.bxc3 Qe8 13.Ba3 would have left White a pawn up for clearly insufficient compensation, with 0-0 and Nd4 on the way.

c) A better independent try is 3...e5!?, which has recently received a bit of attention. Black gives up a tempo, but wants to target f2 and develop freely after 4.g3 Bc5. One decent line for White is 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.a3, ruling out ...Bb4 while preparing b4, but we prefer to put the extra tempo to immediate use with 4.f4!?.

chesstouring.com



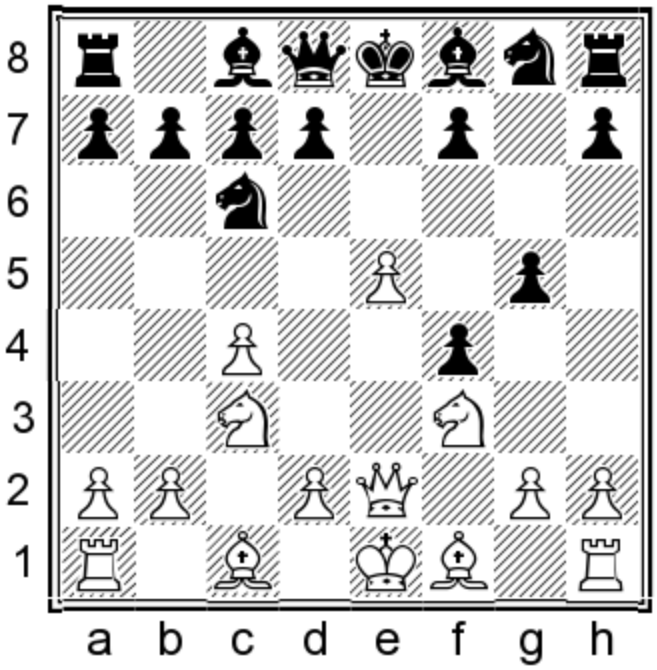
Yes, this is an English King's Gambit and we hope Howard Staunton would have approved, or even will if the Twitter chess persona reads this book! In the limited existing practice, Black has almost always declined the gambit:

c1) 4...d6 5.Nf3 Nc6 (5...exf4?! 6.d3!? Nh5 7.Be2 feels rather suspicious for Black, and if 7...g5? 8.Nxg5! Qxg5 9.Bxh5 Qxg2 10.Bf3 Qg5 11.Nd5 Qh4+ 12.Ke2 Nc6 13.Qg1! with a position which would have made Wilhelm Steinitz most envious, and 5...Bg4 6.Be2 Bxf3 7.Bxf3 Nc6 8.0-0 Be7 9.d3 Nd7 was pretty Botvinniky in Conquest-Kalevic, Hastings 1993/94, where White might even have gone 10.g3 or 10.Bg4!?, and if 10...0-0 11.Bxd7 Qxd7 12.f5 with serious attacking chances) 6.d3 Be7 was seen in Cheparinov-Rusev, European Club Cup, Rhodes 2013. There the strong Bulgarian Grandmaster was happy with 7.Be2, but White might also go 7.g3!?, and if 7...Bg4 8.Bg2 Nd4 9.Be3 followed by h3 or even just Bxd4 exd4; Ne2, leaving Black with a dead-point on d4.

c2) 4...exf4 isn't totally ridiculous, but will leave Black trailing in development and 5.e5 Ng8 6.Qe2! is quite an important point, preventing ...d6. As such, Black might develop and 6...Nc6 (6...Be7? 7.d4 is certainly

chesstouring.com

not to be feared and here the engines even like 7...Bh4+ 8.g3!? fxg3 9.hxg3 Bxg3+ before going 10.Kd1, leaving Black's kingside somewhat vulnerable, and 6...Bb4 7.Nd5 Bc5? 8.d4!? Bxd4 9.Bxf4 Bxg1 10.Rxg1 also leaves White with surely too great a lead in development) 7.Nf3 g5! is likely the critical line.



Now there are a few tempting options for White, including the simple 8.Qe4, as well as 8.Nd5 (with a certain threat) 8...Bg7 9.d4!? g4 10.Ng5! Qxg5 11.Bxf4 Qd8 12.Qxg4 Kf8 13.Qh5, which offers a whole piece for quite some lead in development, while threatening both Bg5 and to target f7.

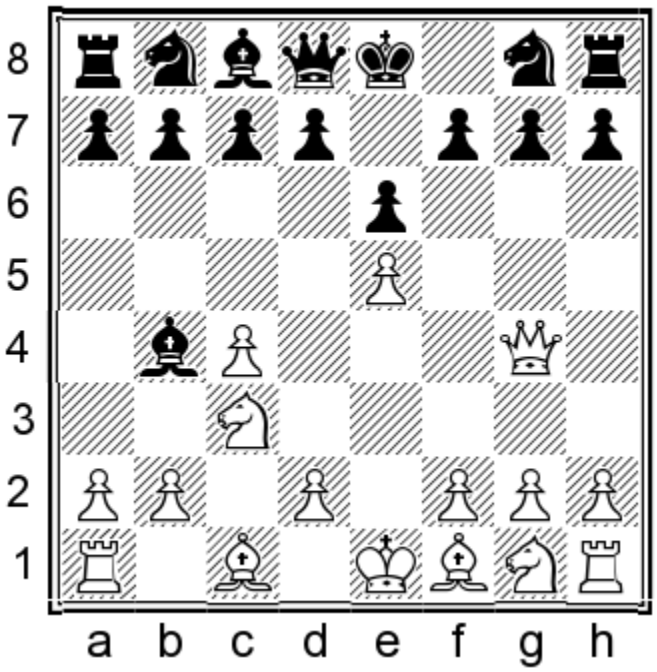
Returning to 3...Bb4;

4.e5 Ng8

An unfortunate necessity as 4...Bxc3?! 5.dxc3 Ng8 6.Qg4 only makes matters even worse for Black, with 6...g6 7.Nf3 Nc6 8.Bg5 a complete dark-square disaster in Korchnoi-Manigitic, Greece (simul) 2002.

5.Qg4!

chesstouring.com



White is quick to pinpoint the sensitive g7-square and can be delighted with how the opening has already gone.

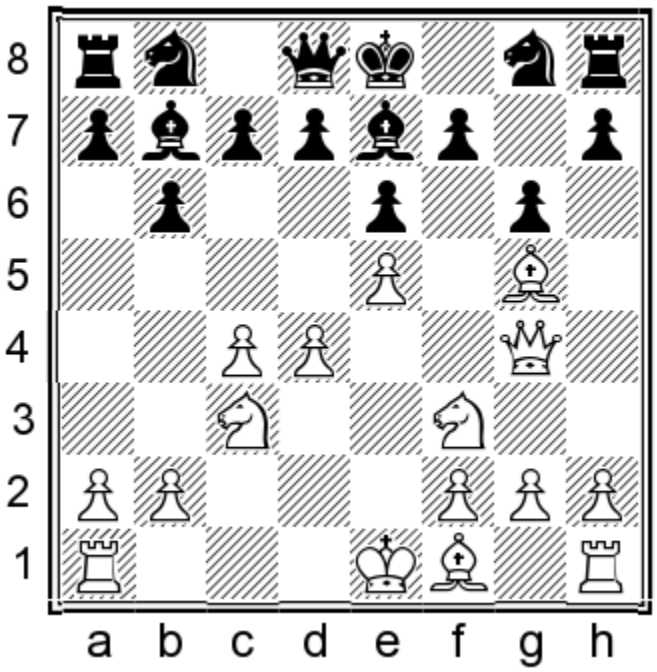
5...g6

Black has scored less than 20% from this position on the database, with the rather ugly text his most common choice.

5...Kf8 is probably best, but even so 6.d4 is very pleasant for White: for example, 6...d5 7.a3 Bxc3+ 8.bxc3 c5 9.Nf3 Nc6 10.dxc5!? Qa5 11.Bd2 Qxc5 12.cxd5 exd5 13.Qf4, which already menaced Ng5, as well as Nd4 in Ghaem Maghami-Al Wahedi, Sanaa 2002. Likewise, if 5...Bf8 6.d4 when 6...c5 7.Nf3 d6 8.dxc5 dxe5 9.Nxe5 Nf6 10.Qg3 was something of an opening disaster for Black in Sengupta-Gurung, Kathmandu 2018, as would be 5...Ne7 6.Qxg7 Ng6 (6...Rg8 7.Qxh7 is just two free pawns) 7.d4 Bf8 8.Qf6.

6.d4 b6 7.Bg5 Be7 8.Nf3 Bb7

chesstouring.com

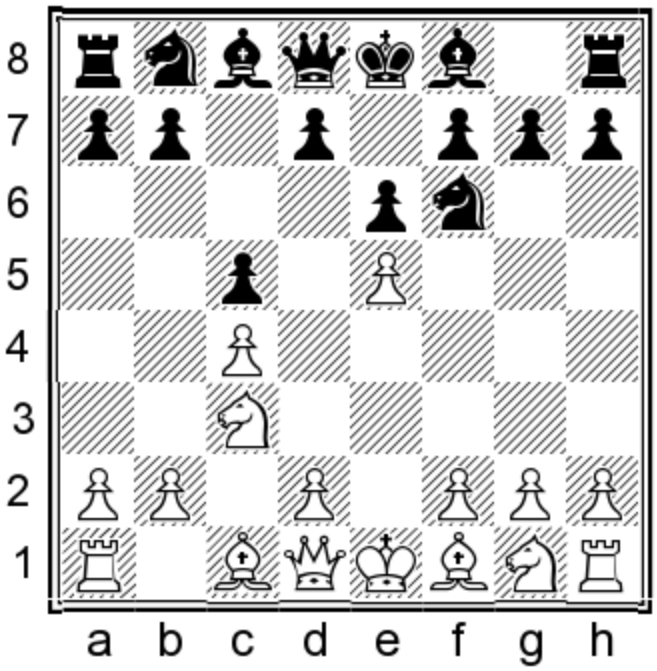


We've followed the game Arkhipov-Harestad, Gausdal 1991, where White decided that it was already time to up the ante with 9.d5!?. **9.h4!** is perhaps even stronger, and if **9...h5** (or 9...h6 10.Be3 Bb4 11.Bd3 Ne7 12.0-0 Bxc3 13.bxc3 Nbc6 14.Rad1 followed by arranging d5 or going Nd2-e4) **10.Qf4 Bxf3 11.Qxf3 Nc6 12.Qe3** with a massacre in the offing after 0-0-0 and d5.

Theory 8A

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e6 3.e4 c5 4.e5

chesstouring.com



Seizing space and clearly critical with the Mikenas move order, but this is actually a rare point of the repertoire where you have a choice, as we analysed 4.g3 back in Line 7B.

4...Ng8 5.Nf3

Straightforward development, if also the precursor to a dangerous pawn sacrifice.

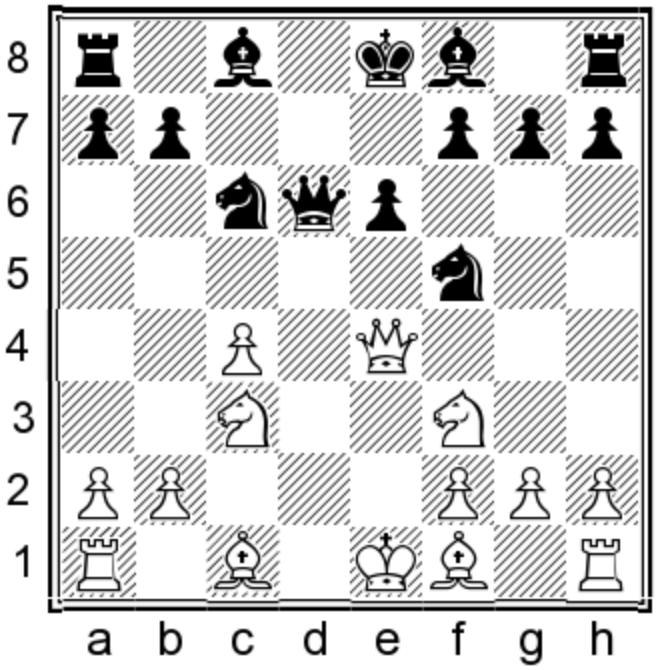
5...Nc6

The main line. 5...d6 is less critical, but also a safer try for Black. After 6.exd6 Bxd6 7.d4 cxd4 8.Nxd4 White should have an edge, but there are good chances for one too after 6.d4!?, which may also surprise your opponent:

a) 6...cxd4 7.Qxd4 Nc6 was seen in Demanghon-Inkiov, Trignac 2001, where White placed the queen on e4, but we prefer English legend John Watson's suggestion of 8.Qe3!?, and if 8...Nge7 (Black must be careful not to fall too far behind in development, as would be the case after 8...dxe5 9.Nxe5 Nxe5 10.Qxe5 Nf6 11.Bf4 followed by Be2-f3 and Rd1) 9.exd6

chesstouring.com

(Watson’s 9.Bd3!? can also be explored, which entails a pawn sacrifice with 9...dxe5 10.0-0) 9...Nf5 the pirouette 10.Qd3!? Qxd6 (not forced, but 10...Bxd6 11.g4! Nfe7 12.Be3 0-0 13.0-0-0 would leave Black under pressure and 10...Nxd6? 11.Bf4 Be7 12.0-0-0 Nf5 13.Qe2! followed by g4 would be rather unwise for him) 11.Qe4.

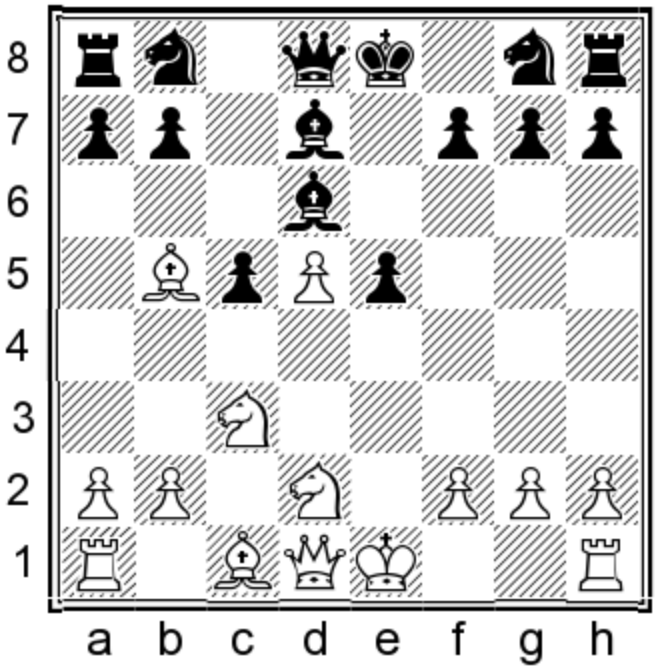


White’s play breaks just about every rule in the book, but he may well land up with a lead in development after all, not to mention the initiative, following Bf4, 0-0-0 and Bd3, and even 11...Nfd4 (or 11...e5 12.Bd3 Be6 13.0-0 Rd8 14.Rd1 Be7 15.Bc2 Qb8 16.Nd5 with the initiative) 12.Nxd4 Qxd4 13.Qxd4 Nxd4 14.Bd3 e5 15.Be3 shouldn’t equalise, with 0-0, Nd5 and f4 White’s simple plan.

b) 6...dxe5 is the other natural move when White might settle for a space advantage after 7.dxe5 Qxd1+ 8.Kxd1 and there’s also 7.d5!?, which could really do with some testing. A couple of sample continuations: 7...exd5 (7...Nf6 8.Qa4+! is quite disruptive, and if 8...Bd7 9.Qb3 Qc7 10.Bg5 when Black can never really capture on d5 and allow a white knight there, but 10...Be7 11.Bd3 h6 12.Bxf6 Bxf6 13.0-0 Na6 14.Rfe1 followed by Rad1 and Be4 or Ne4 would be pretty miserable for him) 8.cxd5 Bd6 (blockading

chesstouring.com

the IQP and defending e5) 9.Bb5+! (again we see this idea, and again it's a good one) 9...Bd7 (9...Nd7?! 10.Ne4 Qc7 11.Nfd2! would be even worse for Black, and if 11...a6 12.Nc4) 10.Nd2! looks like an excellent positional pawn sacrifice.



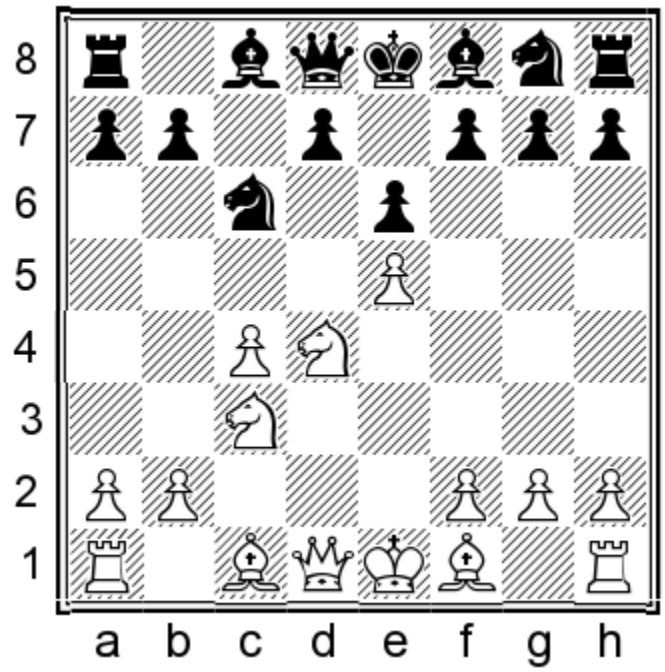
Now Nde4 or Nc4 is on the way and 10...a6 11.Bd3 b5? rebuffed by 12.a4!, and if 12...b4 13.Nce4 Be7 14.Nc4 Nf6 15.d6 Bf8 16.Bg5 with a complete massacre.

Two other lesser options also deserve a quick mention. 5...d5 could be met by 6.exd6 and a transposition, but even stronger is 6.cxd5 (6.d4 is pretty good too) 6...exd5 7.Bb5+ Nc6 (or 7...Bd7 8.d4 Bxb5 9.Nxb5 Qa5+ 10.Nc3 Nc6 11.0-0 when Black is likely to be massacred in the centre, and if 11...cxd4 12.Nxd4 Nxe5? 13.Re1) 8.0-0 when White's lead in development will be considerable after d4 or 8...d4 9.Ne4 Bg4 10.Bxc6+ bxc6 11.d3 Qd5 12.Re1 with the better structure and Black continuing to suffer on account of the d6-square. 5...f6? has also been seen and after 6.d4 cxd4 7.Nxd4 Nc6 8.Nxc6 bxc6 9.Bd3 f5 White was even able to put his superior development to good use to rip open lines with 10.g4!? in A.Mastrovasilis-Kourkoulos Arditis, Hydra 2015.

chesstouring.com

Returning to 5...Nc6:

6.d4! cxd4 7.Nxd4



The aforementioned pawn sacrifice.

7...Nxe5

Black should really accept and has usually done so at a high level, but lower down the chess pyramid, and at times even quite high up it, some players have run scared:

a) 7...Nxd4? 8.Qxd4 Ne7 (8...d6 does break out, but not satisfactorily, 9.Bf4 dxe5 10.Qxd8+ Kxd8 11.Bxe5 Ne7 12.0-0-0+ Bd7 13.Be2 Nc6 14.Bg3 leaving Black under pressure with Nb5 on the way in Lerner-Rozentalis, Liechtenstein 1995) 9.Bf4! prevents Black from easily freeing his position and has led to a number of quick wins for White: for example, 9...Nc6 10.Qe3 Bb4 (after 10...Qa5, whilst tempting, 11.0-0-0 Bb4 isn't totally clear, so we prefer 11.a3! Bc5 12.Qc1 followed by b4: 12...Nd4? 13.Qd1 leaves Black in serious danger of losing a piece, with the threat Ra2 followed by b4, and 12...Bd4 13.b4 Qd8 14.Nb5 Bxa1 15.Nd6+ Kf8

chesstouring.com

16.Qxa1 would be a superb exchange sacrifice, possibly even followed by h4 and Bg5 or Rh3-f3) 11.Bd3 b6 12.Qg3 Kf8 13.Rc1 Bb7 14.0-0 h6 15.Ne4 when Black never managed to free his position in Edouard-Maze, French Championship, Nimes 2018.

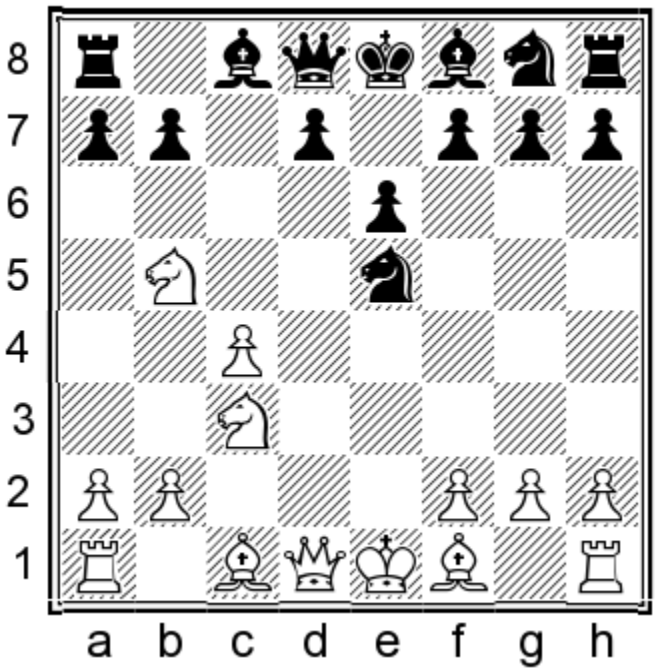
b) 7...Nge7?! 8.Ndb5 Nf5 9.Bf4 is also rather pleasant for White, as with 9...a6 10.Nd6+ Bxd6 11.exd6 b6 12.Bd3 Qf6 when in Obolenskikh-Ergeshov, Irkutsk 2015, simply 13.0-0 Bb7 14.Re1 0-0 15.Na4!? would have left Black in a pickle, as clearly 15...e5 16.Bg3 Nxd6? 17.Nxb6 Rad8 18.Nd5 would be nothing to fear.

c) Black also does well to steer clear of 7...Bb4?! 8.Ndb5! Nxe5 9.Bf4 f6 (9...d6 10.a3 Bxc3+ 11.bxc3! is extremely strong) when White doesn't even have to exchange on e5 and go Qh5+, but might just go 10.Qb3!? Be7 (10...Bxc3+ 11.Qxc3 is the other point, and if 11...d6? 12.Rd1) 11.Ne4 Qa5+ (or 11...d5 12.0-0-0 a6 13.cxd5! axb5 14.d6, regaining the piece since Black surely wouldn't want to allow 14...Bf8? 15.Bxb5+ Kf7 16.Bxe5 fxe5 17.d7) 12.Bd2 Qb6 13.c5! Qc6 (13...Bxc5? 14.Nxc5 Qxc5 15.Rc1 wins material thanks to the fork on c7) 14.Nbd6+ Kf8 15.0-0-0 with a definite bind and lovely, lasting compensation whether or not Black tries 15...Bxd6 16.Nxd6 Qxc5+ 17.Kb1.

Finally, we should mention that 7...a6?! 8.Nxc6 bxc6 9.Bd3 followed by Bf4 and Ne4 is just a very pleasant type of Sicilian for White, as is 7...Qc7?! 8.f4 Nxd4 9.Qxd4 Bc5 10.Qd3 followed by Bd2, Ne4 and 0-0-0.

8.Ndb5

chesstouring.com



The point of White's play, preparing to occupy the hole on d6.

8...a6

It may seem rather strange to force White to go ahead with the check, but the problem for Black with 8...d6?! is 9.c5! a6 (unfortunately for Black, rather essential in view of 9...d5 10.Bf4 f6 11.Bxe5 fxe5 12.Qh5+ g6 13.Qxe5 and 9...dxc5? 10.Bf4 with an early resignation in the offing) 10.Nxd6+ Bxd6 11.cxd6 Nf6 12.Be2 (prioritising the moves White definitely wants to play before deciding what to do with the unopposed dark-squared bishop) 12...0-0, as in Christiansen-Magar, World Open, Philadelphia 1989. The legendary American attacker now went 13.Bf4, but 13.0-0!? might be even better, and if 13...b5 (13...Ne8? 14.Be3 leaves the tactics favouring White if 14...Qxd6? 15.Qxd6 Nxd6 16.Bc5 Rd8! 17.Rfd1) 14.Be3 Bb7 15.Qd4 Nc6 16.Qd2 followed by Rfd1 and Rac1 when Delroy looks like a pretty powerful asset indeed.

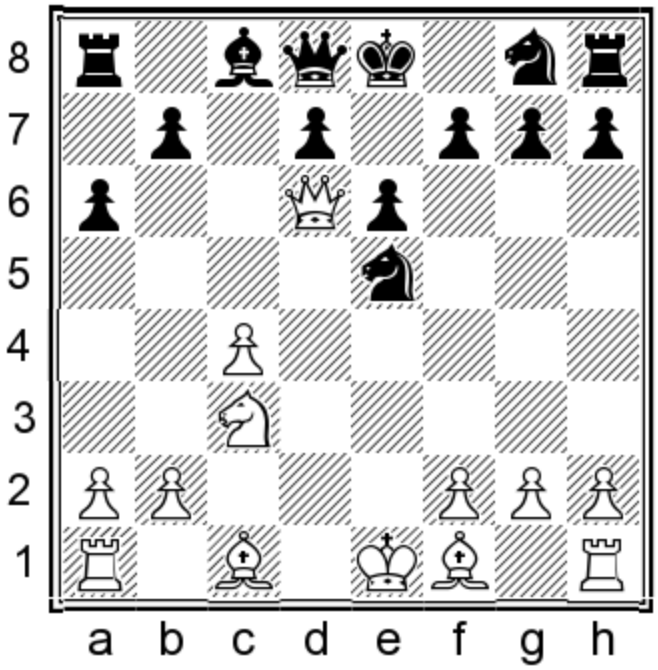
Instead, 8...Nf6?? should have lost on the spot in Hübner-Borm, Nijmegen (rapid) 1982, to 9.Nd6+ Bxd6 10.Qxd6 Qa5 11.Bd2 followed by Nb5, and 8...Bb4? 9.Bf4 f6 10.Bxe5 fxe5 11.Qh5+ Kf8 was also rather unwise in

chesstouring.com

Potkin-Gogolev, Yaroslavl 2018, where simply 12.Qxe5 would have been good, and if 12...d6 13.Qf4+ Qf6 14.Qg3!? followed by 0-0-0.

A better option for Black than those lines is 8...f6 when 9.Be3 a6 (probably best or at least 9...Nh6?! 10.Bxh6 gxh6 11.Be2!? Qb6 12.Bh5+ Ng6 13.Qd3 was rather ugly for Black in Biegler-Braun, Deizisau 2009, as was 9...b6?! 10.f4 Nc6 11.f5! – talk about a lead in development for White, not to mention the threat of Qh5+ – 11...g6 12.fxe6 dxe6 13.Qxd8+ Kxd8 14.0-0-0+ Ke7 15.g4! Rb8 16.Bg2 in Miles-Flesch, Biel 1977, where ideas of Nd6, c5 and even g5 were on the agenda) 10.Nd6+ Bxd6 11.Qxd6 transposes to our main line.

9.Nd6+ Bxd6 10.Qxd6



10...f6

Black keeps his knight in place.

These days the alternatives are rarely seen, with 10...Ng6 well met by 11.Be3 or even 11.h4!? Nxh4 (11...N8e7 12.h5 Nf5 13.Qa3 Ne5 14.Bf4

chesstouring.com

would be a turbocharged version of our main line for White, who might even meet 14...f6 with 15.g4!?) 12.Bd3, which makes it tricky for Black to complete development, as shown by 12...Ng6 13.Be3 Qe7 14.Qg3 Nf6 15.c5, and if 15...0-0 16.0-0-0 with a very serious attack after Qh2.

Likewise, 10...Nc6 11.Be3 Nge7 12.Bd3 prevents ...Nf5 and is just rather nice for White: for example, 12...0-0 13.0-0 Ng6 14.Rfe1 b6 15.Rad1, which keeps Black tied down and White pleasantly better even in the event of 15...f5!? 16.f4! Nh8 17.Be2 Nf7 18.Qd2 followed by Bf3.

11.Be3

The best square for the bishop, preparing to come to b6 or c5 while facilitating 0-0-0.

11...Ne7

Instead, 11...Nf7 is well met by 12.Qg3 Ne7 13.Qxg7 Nf5 14.Qg4 Nxe3 15.fxe3 Qb6 followed by 16.Qd4 or even 16.0-0-0!? Qxe3+ 17.Kb1 f5 18.Qh4 Qh6 19.Qe1 with ideas of c5, Nd5 and 19...0-0 20.g4! on the table, which all just looks rather dangerous for Black.

11...b5!? 12.cxb5 Ne7 also offers to return a pawn to reduce the pressure, but 13.Bb6 Nf5 14.Qc5 Qe7, as in Hakobyan-D.Horvath, Budapest 2019, and then 15.0-0-0 still leaves White with the initiative and Black needing to be careful, as shown by 15...0-0? 16.Qxe7 Nxe7 17.Bc5 Re8 18.f4 N5g6 19.b6!? Nxf4? 20.b7! Bxb7 21.Rxd7.

12.Bb6

Forcing the pace and carrying a certain threat.

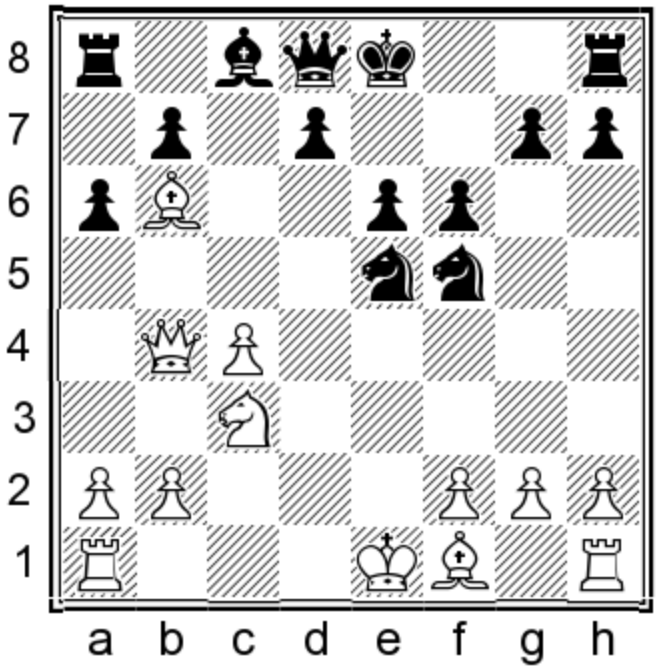
12...Nf5

The best way to save the queen, the problem with 12...Nf7? being 13.Ne4! Nf5 (13...Nxd6? 14.Nxd6+ Kf8 15.Bxd8 wins a piece) 14.Qb4 Qe7

chesstouring.com

15.c5! 0-0 16.0-0-0, which left White controlling d6 and with an excellent version of our main line in Fodor-Richardson, Telford 2018.

13.Qb4!



White has also heavily tested the alternatives (13.Bxd8 and 13.Qc5 have both been more popular than the text), but theory has now settled on b4 as the right square for the queen, refusing to worry about ...Nc6 in response.

13...Nc6

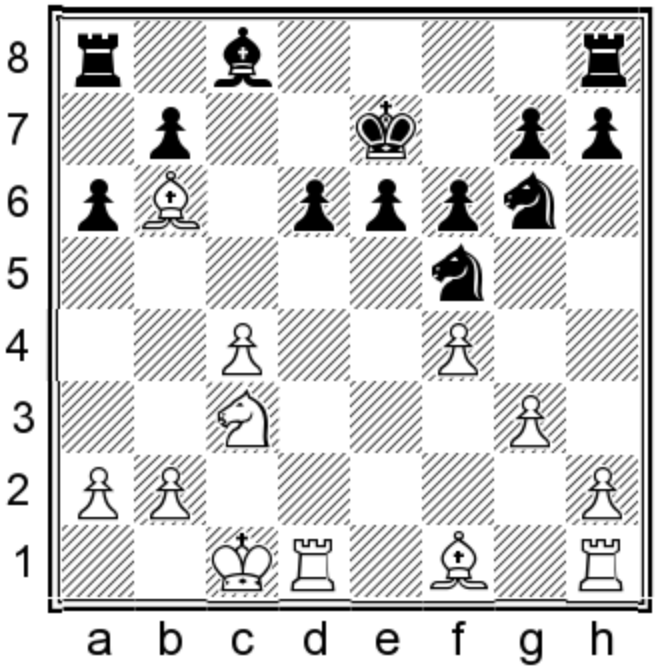
A retreat, if at least one, from Black's perspective, which comes with tempo.

The alternative is 13...Qe7, but after 14.Qxe7+ (the best try, with 14.c5 well met by 14...d5) neither recapture is entirely optimal:

a) 14...Kxe7 15.f4! (continuing to seize space and dark-square control) 15...Ng6 (best, although in practice Black has often been caught out here: 15...Nc6?! 16.Bd3 Nfd4 17.0-0-0 d6 18.Rhe1 e5 19.c5! levered open lines with some effect in Short-Pasaribu, Baku Olympiad 2016, 15...Nf7 16.Bd3

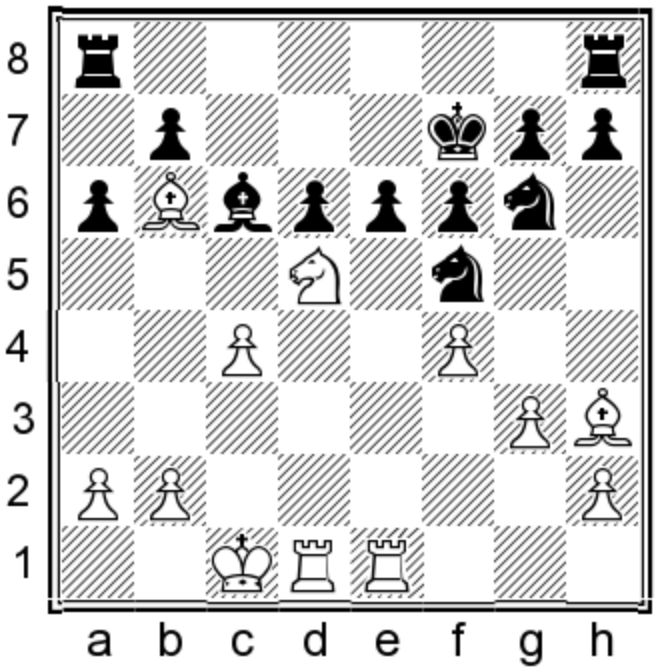
chesstouring.com

Nh4?! 17.0-0 d6 18.Rae1 Ng6? 19.Nd5+ Kf8 20.Nc7 Rb8 21.Ba7 and 1-0 was the even more brutal course of Conquest-Nyman, Jyvaskyla 1991, and 15...Ng4 16.Bd3 Nfe3? 17.Rg1 d5 18.h3 dxc4 19.Be4 won a piece in Kharlov-Ospennikov, Kazan 2009) 16.g3 (defending the en prise pawn while bringing White's final pieces into play) 16...d6 17.0-0-0!.



White has more often committed his light-squared bishop, but, as usual, we prefer to play a move White definitely wants to play, while keeping d3, g2 and h3 free for the bishop. Following 17...Bd7 (standard; otherwise, 17...Nh6?! 18.Bh3! and Rhe1 looks pretty promising, and if 18...e5 19.Bg2, leaving Black's position riddled with weaknesses, and 17...h5 18.Bd3 Bd7 19.Rhe1 Kf7 can be met by at least 20.Bxf5 exf5 21.Rxd6 Bc6 when 22.b4!? is very much an idea to maintain the initiative, while 17...e5 18.c5! would be our favourite line-opening device, and if 18...dxc5 19.Bxc5+ Kf7 20.Bc4+ Be6 21.Rd7+ Nfe7 22.f5!, which wins a piece) 18.Bh3 Bc6 (once again, if 18...e5 19.c5! when 19...exf4 20.cxd6+ Kf7 21.Rd5 Ne5 22.gxf4 Nc4 23.Bc5 maintains the trump on d6 and leaves White doing very well or 19...Rhc8 20.Rhe1 Rc6 21.Kb1 Kf7 22.Bg2 when something must give) 19.Rhe1 Kf7 20.Nd5! Black was under some pressure in Bacrot-Dorfman, French Championship, Marseilles 2001.

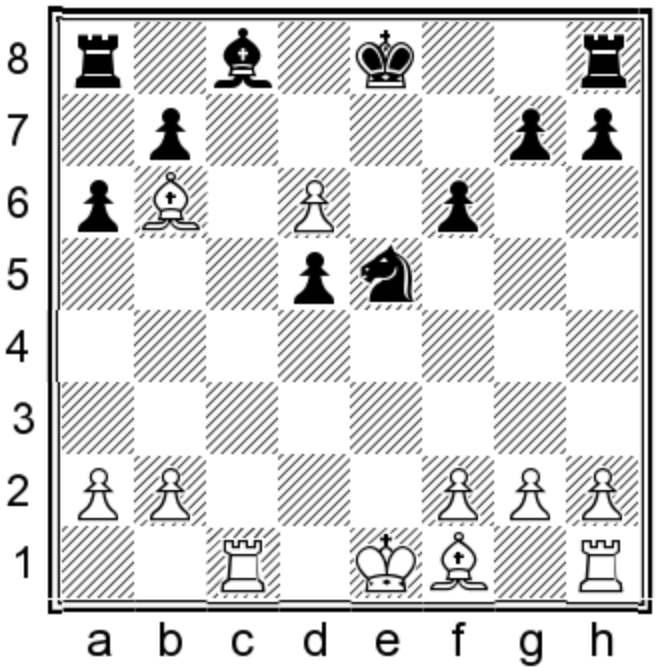
chesstouring.com



One threat is Nc7 and the great strategist could find nothing better than 20...exd5 21.Bxf5 Nf8 (21...dxc4? 22.Be6+ Ke7 23.Bxc4+ Kd7 24.Be6+ Ke7 25.Bc7 would be crushing) when White was spoilt for choice, with Bacrot opting to maintain the initiative with 22.c5!? dxc5 23.Bxc5 h5 24.Re7+ Kg8 25.Rde1.

b) 14...Nxe7 might be a better try when 15.f4 Nf7 seems to be holding up for Black, so here we prefer 15.c5 when 15...d5!? (a critical bid for freedom; 15...0-0 16.0-0-0 just leaves Black struggling to free his position, as shown by 16...Ng4 17.Rd2 f5 18.Bc7 Nf6 19.Bd6 Re8 20.Bc4) 16.cxd6 Nd5 17.Nxd5 exd5 18.Rc1 doesn't make it so easy for Black to regain his pawn, as in Fridman-Luther, Senden 1999.

chesstouring.com



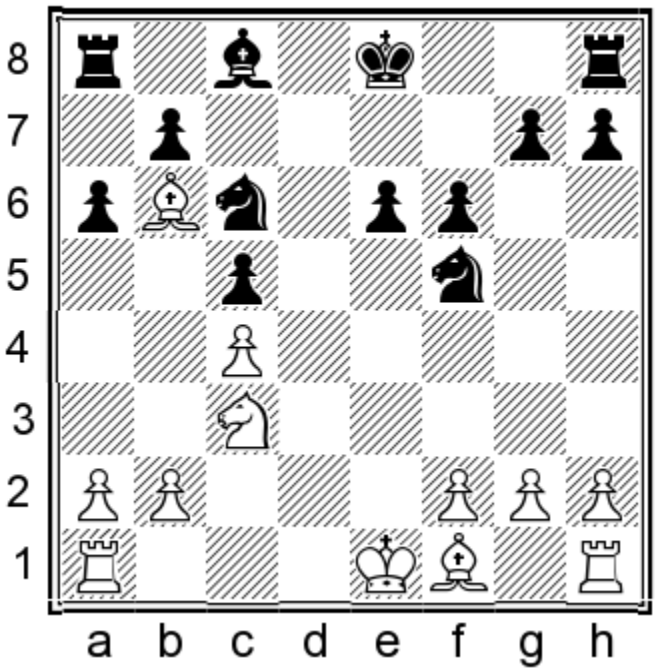
Even 18...Nc6 (18...Kd7? was preferred in the game, but 19.f4! Nc6 20.Bc5 would have been simple and strong, and if 20...b6 21.Ba3 b5 22.Bc5 Na5 23.Be2 Re8 24.Kf2 followed by Rhd1 and Bf3 or Bg4+; note too that here 19...Nc4? 20.Bxc4 dxc4 does not lead to a drawing haven, but rather a lost endgame for Black on account of 21.Rxc4 Re8+ 22.Kf2 Kxd6 23.Rd1+ Ke7 24.Re4+ Kf7 25.Rxe8 Kxe8 26.Rd8+ Ke7 27.b4!) 19.Bd3 Be6 20.f4 Kd7 21.0-0!? Kxd6 22.b4 leaves White with full compensation; a4 and b5 is one plan and note too that should the rook leave h8, White might well just swipe h7.

Returning to 13...Nc6:

14.Qc5 Qe7

Again we see Black offering an exchange of queens. The alternative is to return the extra pawn with 14...d6 15.Bxd8 dxc5 16.Bb6.

chesstouring.com



White should be able to maintain an edge with his bishop-pair:

a) 16...Ne5 17.Bxc5 Bd7 (17...g5!? is a more dynamic try, intending 18.Be2 h5; White also has 18.Ne4 Kf7 19.Bb4, as suggested by David Cummings, and if 19...Nc6 20.Bc3 e5 21.0-0-0 h5 22.Bd3 h4 when 23.g3!? would by no means be ridiculous, as proposed by *Lc0*, hoping Black opens the h-file while also menacing a possible f4) 18.b4!? (a bold advance, but logical once one considers 18.0-0-0 Rc8) 18...a5?! 19.b5 Rc8 20.Ne4 left Black under pressure in Potkin-Grandelius, German Bundesliga 2012.

b) 16...Bd7 17.0-0-0 Ne5 didn't lead to much for White after 18.Be2 Bc6 in Vachier-Lagrave-L'Ami, Wijk aan Zee 2011, so White should prefer John Bartholomew's 18.Ne4!, and if 18...Bc6 19.Nxc5 Kf7 20.Rg1 followed by Be2 and perhaps then b4, Kb2 and a4, while 20...Ng4 fails to give Black any meaningful counterplay after 21.Rd2 Nxh2 22.Be2 h5 23.Nxb7!.

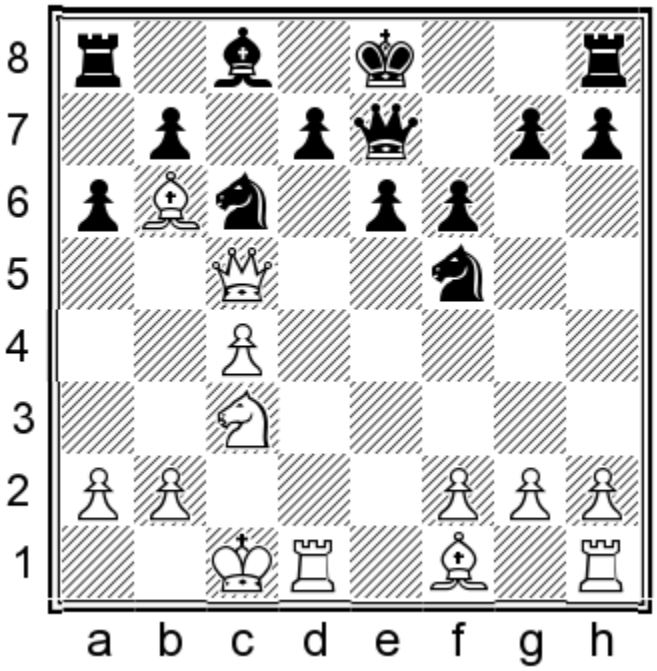
c) 16...Nfd4 17.0-0-0 e5 should also be met by 18.Ne4!: for example, 18...0-0 19.Nxc5 Rf7 20.h3 Bf5 21.g4 Bg6 22.b3 followed by Kb2, Bg2 and Rhe1 with control and a clear advantage once again.

d) 16...e5 17.0-0-0 Ncd4 18.Bxc5 (even when Black's bishop has c6, White might very well also consider 18.Ne4!?) 18...Bd7 19.Bd3 Rc8 forced

chesstouring.com

the pace in Giri-Dubov, European Club Cup, Novi Sad 2016, but here 20.Bb6! Bc6 (or 20...Rc6 21.c5) 21.Rhg1 0-0 22.b3 would yet again have left White in control. He might continue to make useful moves with Kb2 and f3, while a good medium-term plan is simply to roll the queenside majority with b4, a4, c5 and b5.

15.0-0-0!?



Offering to keep the queens on. A big alternative is 15.Qxe7+ Ncxe7 16.0-0-0.

15...Qxc5

Black decides the queens must go after all. He also has 15...d6?! when 16.Qa3 followed by g4 keeps up the pressure, as we'll see in Ding Liren-Radjabov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2019.

16.Bxc5 d6 17.Ba3!

chesstouring.com

Viktor Korchnoi's suggestion, maintaining the tension. If you prefer a simpler approach then by all means regain the pawn, as Wojtaszek and Korchnoi himself have tried, but do be aware that Black is very solid after 17.Bxd6 Nxd6 18.Rxd6 Bd7.

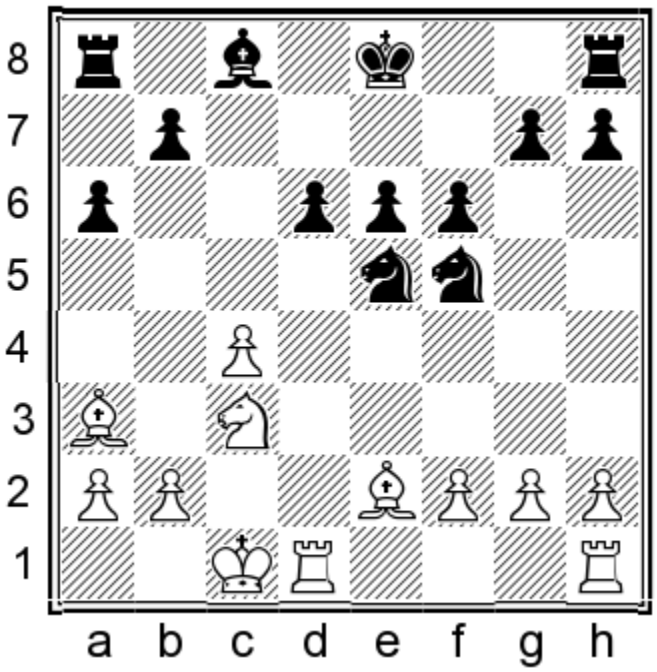
17...Ne5

As we've already seen, it's fairly easy for Black to run into trouble in this variation, as also happened here after 17...Ke7?! 18.Bd3 Nfd4 19.Rhe1 in Neuman-Petrik, Czech League 2004, where White was ready to increase the pressure with Be4 and f4.

17...e5!? is a more serious option, since White doesn't have anything amazing after 18.Nd5 Kf7!. As such, he should probably try 18.Ne4 0-0 (18...Be6 was preferred in Akermann-Rusev, Zurich 2008, where White was content to immediately regain his pawn; he might also have considered 19.g4! Nfd4 20.Nxd6+ Kd7 21.g5 when the computer displays its favourite '0.00', but in practice we would certainly take White with gxf6 gxf6; Rg1 on the way, as well as Nxb7) 19.Nxd6 Nxd6 20.Rxd6 Bf5 when 21.Bc5 keeps the bishop active (21.c5!? should also be considered), and after 21...Rfd8 22.Rxd8+ Rxd8 23.Be2 Nd4 24.Bxd4 Rxd4 25.Rd1 it might be possible to make something out of the queenside majority in the resulting endgame.

18.Be2

chesstouring.com



Black's knights look good, but he must now weaken and use a tempo if he wants to prevent g4 from driving them backwards.

18...h5

18...Bd7!? is probably a better way to offer to return the pawn. White can accept or try to grind away after 19.g4!? Nh4 20.Bxd6 Bc6 21.Rhf1 0-0-0 22.f4 Nf7 23.Bc5, hoping to get in Bd4 and/or g5.

19.Bxd6 Nxd6 20.Rxd6 Bd7 21.Rhd1 0-0-0

We've followed the encounter Svane-Donchenko, German Championship, Saarbruecken 2015, where **22.h4!? Nf7 23.R6d2 Bc6 24.g3** would have fought for space on the kingside and left White slightly for choice. His bishop-pair has gone, but h5 is tender and b4, **K**b2-b3 and a4 would begin to put the queenside majority to good use.

Game 32
Ding Liren-T.Radjabov
FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiysk 2019

chesstouring.com

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e6 3.e4 c5 4.e5 Ng8 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.d4!

A dangerous pawn sacrifice, as we've already seen and will further here.

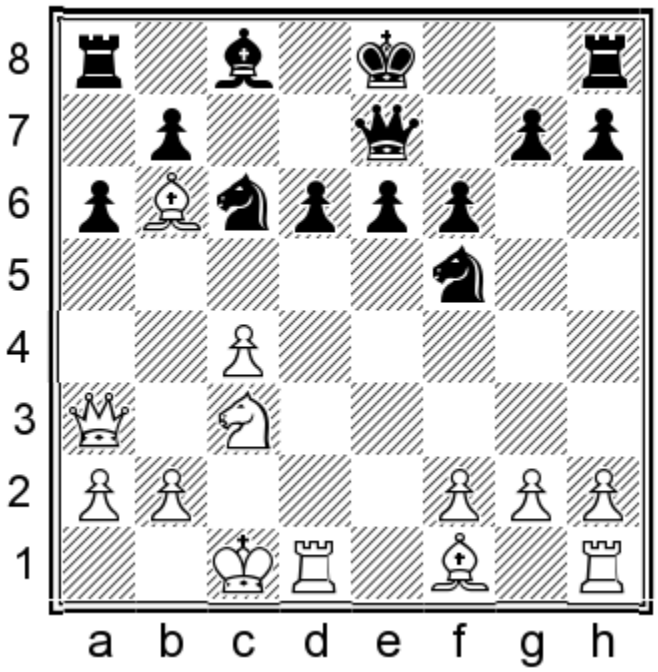
6...cxd4 7.Nxd4 Nxe5 8.Ndb5 a6 9.Nd6+ Bxd6 10.Qxd6 f6 11.Be3 Ne7 12.Bb6 Nf5 13.Qb4

The most challenging square for the queen. We'd be mildly surprised if delighted should you ever get this far at club level, but in case your opponent does know some theory, remembering at least up to this point would be quite useful.

13...Nc6 14.Qc5 Qe7 15.0-0-0!? d6?!

Now White's tricky move order pays off. Black should, as we've just seen, dig in with 15...Qxc5 16.Bxc5 d6 17.Ba3.

16.Qa3



The only square for the queen, but a pretty good one nonetheless, keeping a firm eye on d6.

chesstouring.com

16...0-0

Offering to return the extra pawn, but Ding is after much more than just that.

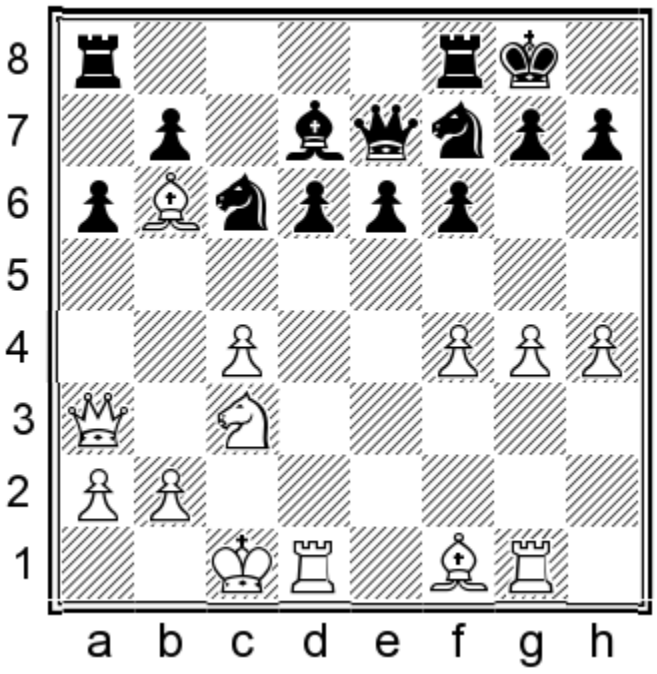
17.g4! Nh6 18.Rg1

Excellent play from White, seizing some very useful space and now Black is always going to have to be quite careful about a direct attack blowing him away.

18...Nf7

Holding on to the extra pawn. 18...f5 had been preferred in the earlier J.Grant-D.Eggleston, Edinburgh 2009, but now 19.g5 Nf7 20.f4 would leave Black horribly cramped, since he can't contemplate 20...e5? 21.Nd5 Qd7 when there's even 22.Nf6+! gxf6 23.gxf6+ Kh8 24.Qg3 Nh6 25.Qg7+ and wins.

19.f4! Bd7 20.h4



chesstouring.com

Here come the pawns...

20...a5 21.g5

Ding refuses to be distracted by Black's queenside demonstration.

21...Kh8

21...Nb4!? would have been consistent with Black's last, but after 22.Qb3! White remains clearly for choice, as shown by 22...d5 23.a3 fxg5 24.hxg5 Rfc8 25.c5!, keeping lines closed on one flank, but not on the other where 25...Na6 26.Bxa6 Rxa6 27.g6 would begin to open them.

22.Qb3 Rfc8 23.Kb1 e5?

As so often, giving up control of d5 does not work out well for Black, but already good advice was hard to come by. Indeed, after 23...fxg5 24.hxg5 he doesn't seem to have anything better than 24...e5 (24...a4 25.Qa3 Na5 26.Bxa5 Rxa5 27.Bd3 followed by Rh1 is crushing) 25.Nd5 Bf5+ 26.Ka1 Qe6 when 27.g6!? looks very dangerous, and if 27...Bxg6 28.Bh3 Bf5 29.Qg3 g6 30.Rh1.

24.Nd5 Bf5+ 25.Ka1 Qe6 26.gxf6 gxf6 27.a3!?

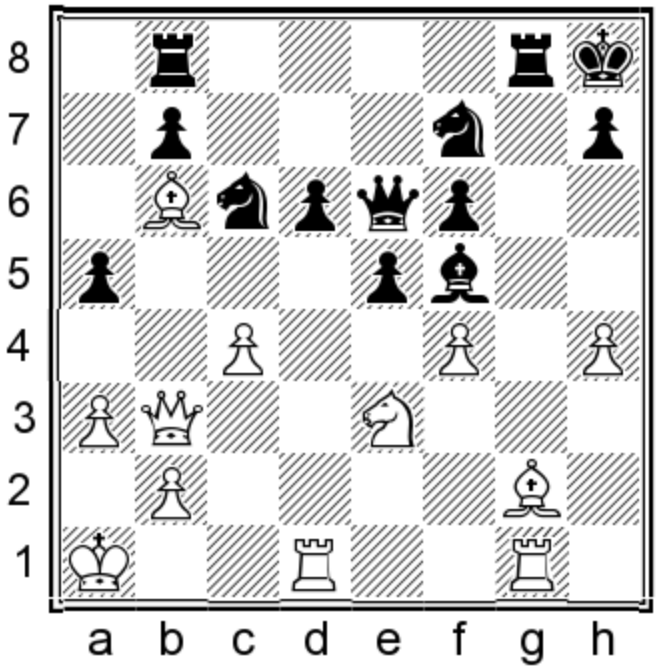
Prophylaxis, although White might also have allowed 27.Bg2 a4 28.Qc3 a3 29.b3 when Nc7 remains but one major idea.

27...Rab8

27...a4 28.Qf3 followed by Ne3 or Nc7 would have left Black in huge trouble too, and even 27...Nb4!? 28.Qf3! Nxd5 (or 28...exf4 29.Qxf4 Ne5 30.Be2 Ng6 31.Qd2 followed by Bd4) 29.cxd5 Qe7 30.Bb5 would have left White in full control, as shown by 30...exf4 31.Qxf4 Bc2 32.Rc1 Ne5 33.h5! followed by Qh6 or Bf2-h4.

chesstouring.com

28.Bg2 Rg8?! 29.Ne3!



As Richard wrote in his original annotations to this powerful encounter in *CHESS*, Black has the Sveshnikov from hell, White being in full control of d5 and able to exploit the kingside holes.

29...Nd4

Now White takes over the light squares, but so bad are matters that the engines want to go 29...Rxg2!? 30.Rxg2, partly because 29...Bg6 would have dropped a piece to 30.f5! Bxf5 31.Bd5.

30.Bxd4 exd4 31.Nxf5 Qxf5 32.Bd5

It certainly is a Sveshnikov from hell, Black having lost all the light squares and with his position riddled with weaknesses.

32...Rxg1 33.Rxg1 Nh6 34.Qb6 Qd7

Unfortunately for Black, 34...Qxf4? 35.Qc7 would be an immediate game-ender.

chesstouring.com

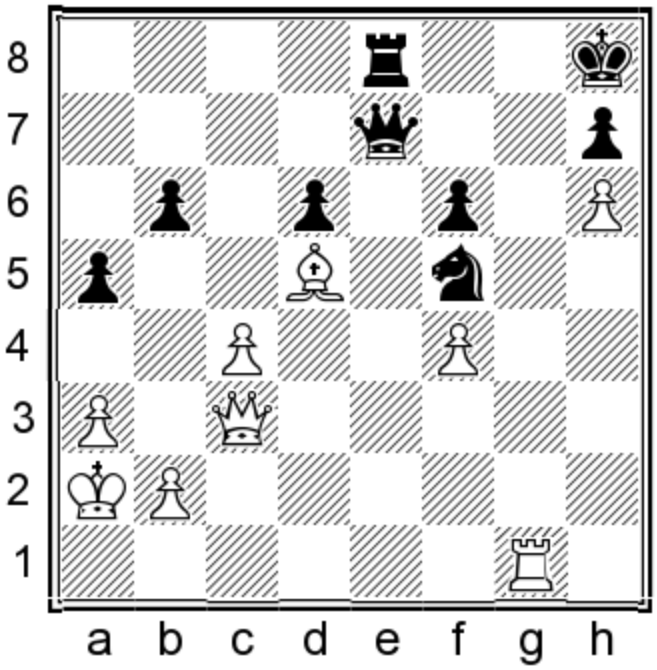
35.Qxd4 Qe7 36.Ka2!?

Ding is in no rush, content to savour his lovely position.

36...Nf5 37.Qc3 b6 38.h5 Re8?

Even after 38...Ne3 39.Be4! Re8 40.Qd4 Qe6 41.Bd3 Black surely wouldn't have survived.

39.h6!



39...Ne3

Likewise, if 39...Nxh6 40.Re1! Qxe1 41.Qxf6 mate.

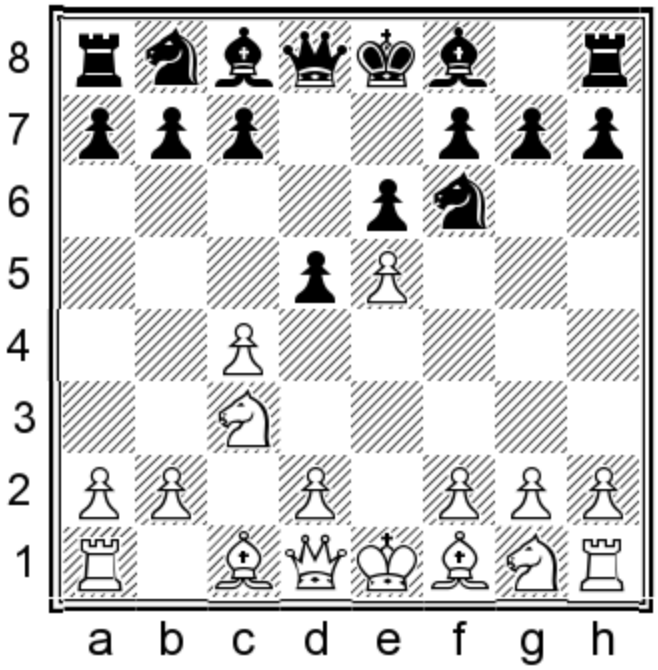
40.Re1 1-0

Once again, f6 and the overloaded queen spell the end for Black, Rxe3 being the simple threat.

Theory 8B

chesstouring.com

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e6 3.e4 d5 4.e5



The old main line. White simply seizes space and poses the question to the black knight without opening lines for the bishop on c8.

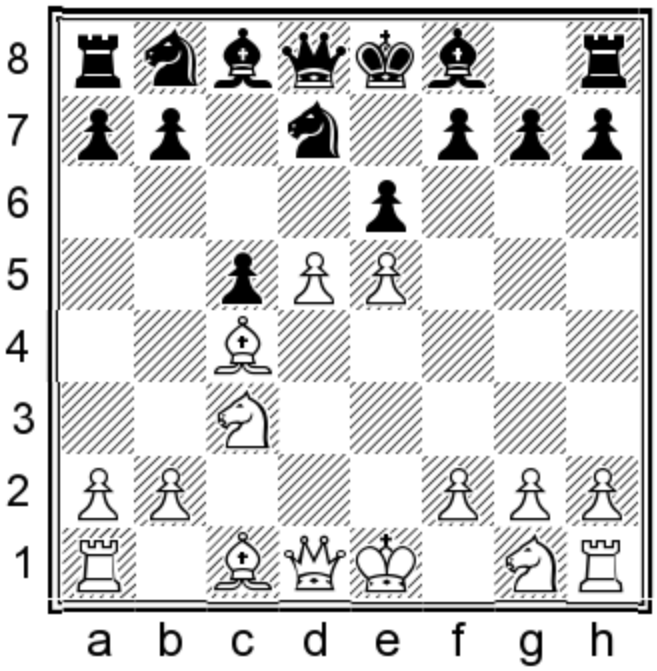
4...d4

This counterattack is by far Black's main move, although the alternatives are sometimes seen, especially at non-GM level:

a) White has often met 4...Nfd7 by capturing on d5, but there's no need to fear the pawn exchange after 5.d4:

a1) 5...dxc4 6.Bxc4 c5 (6...Nb6 is a more solid approach, but 7.Bd3 c5 8.dxc5! Bxc5 9.Nf3 Nc6 10.Qe2 avoids ...Nb4 being too disruptive and is very pleasant for White, with 10...h6 11.0-0 Bd7 12.a3 Nd5 13.Ne4 Be7 14.b4 simply preparing Rd1 and Bb2, as well as Nd6+ ideas in Ding Liren-Press, Khanty-Mansiysk 2019) 7.d5!? and this is why: a strong pawn sacrifice to keep Black on his toes.

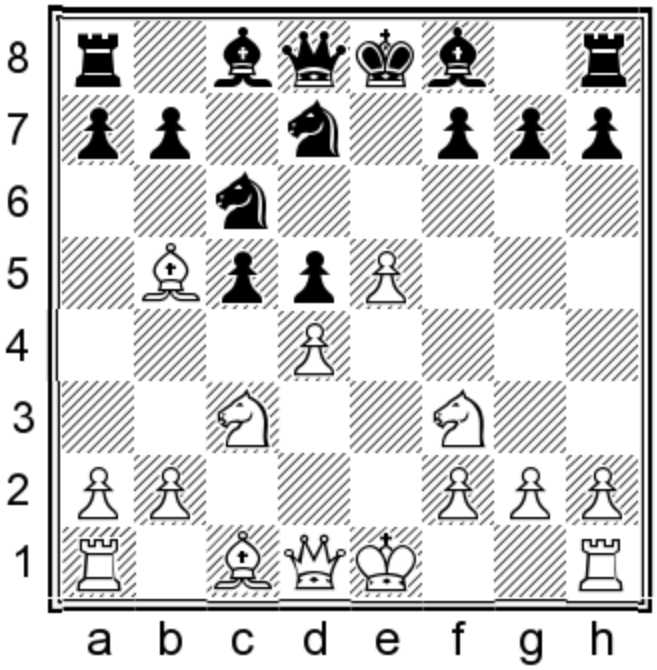
chesstouring.com



The critical line is 7...Nxe5 (7...exd5? 8.Qxd5 Qe7 9.Nf3 Nb6 10.Bb5+ Nc6 11.Qe4 again leaves White with a rather pleasant space advantage) 8.Bb5+ Bd7 9.dxe6 fxe6 (9...Bxb5!? 10.exf7+ Nxf7 11.Qxd8+ Nxd8 12.Nxb5 Ne6 actually isn't too bad for Black, as in Usmanov-Narva, Riga 2019, where White might have gone 13.Be3 a6 14.Nc3 Nc6 15.0-0-0 followed by Nf3 and then Rhe1 or Ne4, still with chances to maintain a definite initiative) when White has usually checked on h5, but 10...Nf7 isn't too bad for Black, so let's simply develop: 10.Nf3!? Nf7?! (now this is too slow; 10...Nbc6? would also be misguided in view of 11.Nxe5 Nxe5 12.Qh5+ Nf7 13.Bg5!, and if 13...Qxg5 14.Bxd7+ Ke7 15.Qf3 when 15...Qe5+? even loses to 16.Kf1 followed by Re1 or 16...Qc7 17.Bxe6! Kxe6 18.Qg4+, so 10...Nxf3+! 11.Qxf3 Bxb5 12.Nxb5 Qa5+ 13.Nc3 Nc6 is probably best when White likely has nothing better than 14.Qe4 Qc7 15.Qxe6+ Qe7 16.Qe4 Nd4 17.0-0 followed by Be3 and hoping for a double-edged game after 17...0-0-0!? 18.Qd3 Qh4 19.Nb5!) 11.Qe2 Nc6 12.0-0 Be7 13.Rd1 Qc8 14.Bd3 0-0 was Yuffa-Fathutdinov, Tiumen 2011, where 15.Bc2 would have threatened Qd3. Black is a pawn up, but his position is rather ragged and White for choice, with Bf4 and Ne4 one simple plan.

chesstouring.com

a2) 5...c5?! 6.cxd5 is now well-timed and after 6...exd5 7.Nf3 Nc6 (or 7...cxd4 8.Qxd4 Nb6 9.Bb5+ Nc6 10.0-0 Be7 when in Ivanchuk-Paap, Mainz (rapid) 2007, 11.Qf4 0-0 12.Rd1 Be6 13.a4! a6 14.Bd3 would have left Black under heavy pressure, and if 14...f6 15.Qh4) 8.Bb5! Black's position is just rather unpleasant.



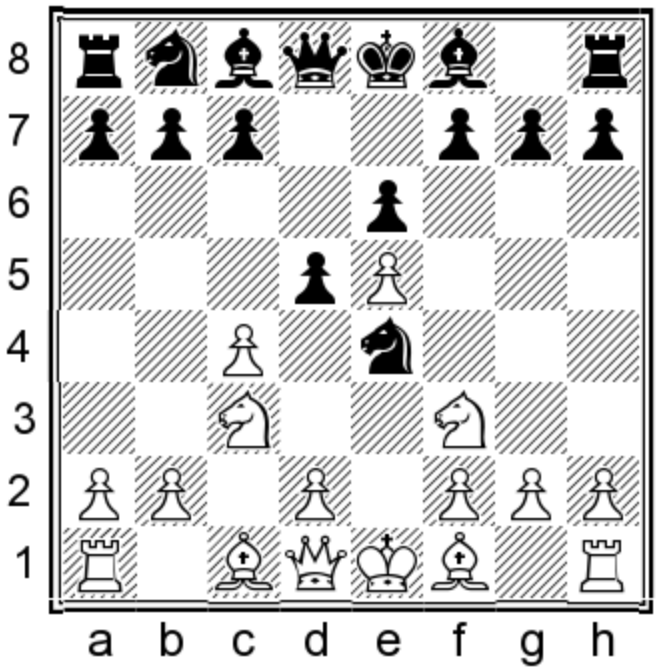
For example, 8...a6 (the main problem for Black is that 8...cxd4 9.Nxd4 Ndxe5? fails to 10.Qe2 and after 10...Qe7 11.Nxd5 Nd3+ 12.Bxd3 Nxd4 13.Qxe7+ Bxe7 14.Nc7+ he shortly had to resign in Quinteros-Nunn, London 1977) 9.Bxc6 bxc6 10.0-0 Be7 11.dxc5 Nxc5 12.Nd4! (pressing on c6, while freeing the f-pawn for duty) 12...Qb6? (even 12...Bd7 13.f4 0-0 14.f5 Re8 15.Qg4 Bf8 16.Qg3 looks quite dangerous for Black) 13.Be3! 0-0 (13...Qxb2? 14.Nxc6 Qxc3 15.Nxe7 Kxe7 16.Rc1 Qb2 17.Bxc5+ Ke8 18.Qxd5 Qb7 19.Qd4 would be too strong an initiative) 14.Rc1 Rd8? (14...Qb7 was essential, even if it does run into 15.Nxc6! Qxc6 16.Nxd5) 15.b4! Ne4 16.Na4! Qb7 17.Nxc6 Re8 and Black resigned in Smyslov-Farago, Hastings 1976/77, before White could go 18.Nb6.

b) 4...Ng8?! is just a rather strange choice and after 5.d4 White has unsurprisingly scored very well: for example, 5...Ne7 (or 5...c6 6.Nf3 h6

chesstouring.com

7.h4!? h5? 8.Bg5 Be7 9.Bd3 Bxg5 10.Nxg5 Qe7 11.Rh3, which was all rather one-way traffic in Marin-Knafo, Andorra 2000) 6.Nf3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 Nd7 8.0-0 Nb6 9.Bb3 h6 10.a4!? a6 11.a5 Nbd5 12.Bd2 with a handy lead in development in Chabanon-Gonzales, Ibi 1996, and ideas of Qe2-e4, as well as of a timely exchange on d5.

c) A somewhat more important alternative is 4...Ne4, hoping that White will snatch a pawn and allow 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Nxe4? dxe4 7.Qa4+ Nc6 8.Qxe4 Qd4 or 5.Nxe4 dxe4 6.Qg4 Bd7!. A much better course is to simply develop with 5.Nf3.



A great many moves have been tried here, but White usually lands up with a handy space advantage:

c1) 5...c5 6.Bd3 (possible now that there's no awkward ...Nc5 in response; 6.Qc2 is also good) 6...Nxc3 7.dxc3 dxc4 8.Qa4+! (this check is rather an effective one) 8...Bd7 9.Qxc4 Bc6 10.Be4 leaves White with a pleasant space advantage. All of 0-0, Bg5 and Rad1 may follow, while 10...Bxe4 11.Qxe4 Qd5 failed to equalise in Christiansen-Donaldson Akhmilovskaya, New York Open 1989, where after 12.Qe2!? Be7 13.0-0 Nd7? 14.Rd1 Qc6

chesstouring.com

15.Bg5! Black was simply in some trouble in view of 15...Bxg5 16.Nxg5 0-0? 17.Qd3.

c2) 5...Nc6 has been Black's most popular move, but obstructing the c-pawn just can't be great. 6.d4 can always be followed up with Qc2 if necessary, while 6...Be7 7.Bd3 Nxc3 8.bxc3 dxc4 9.Bxc4 Na5 10.Bd3 c5 11.0-0 Bd7 12.Be3 cxd4 13.cxd4 Bc6 14.Nd2! freed White's queen for action and allowed Simon to use the e4-square in Williams-Eggleston, British Championship, Liverpool 2008.

c3) 5...Nxc3 6.dxc3 Be7 can even be met by 7.h4!?, after which 7...dxc4 8.Qa4+ c6? 9.Qxc4 Nd7 10.Qg4 left Black in serious trouble in Williams-Ynojosa Aponte from the same event.

c4) 5...Be7 6.h4!? (6.Qc2 is a decent alternative) 6...Nxc3 7.dxc3 looks quite nice for White, with Qc2, Bf4 and 0-0-0 on the way, as well as ideas of h5-h6 and Rh3-g3, and 7...dxc4 8.Qa4+ Bd7 9.Qxc4 Bc6 10.Qg4 Bxf3 11.gxf3! Bf8? 12.f4 Nd7 13.Be3 c6 14.0-0-0 already gave White too strong an initiative in Topalov-Rozentalis, European Team Championship, Batumi 1999, where he crashed through with 14...Qa5 15.f5! Qxa2 16.fxe6 Qxe6 17.Qf4 and Bh3.

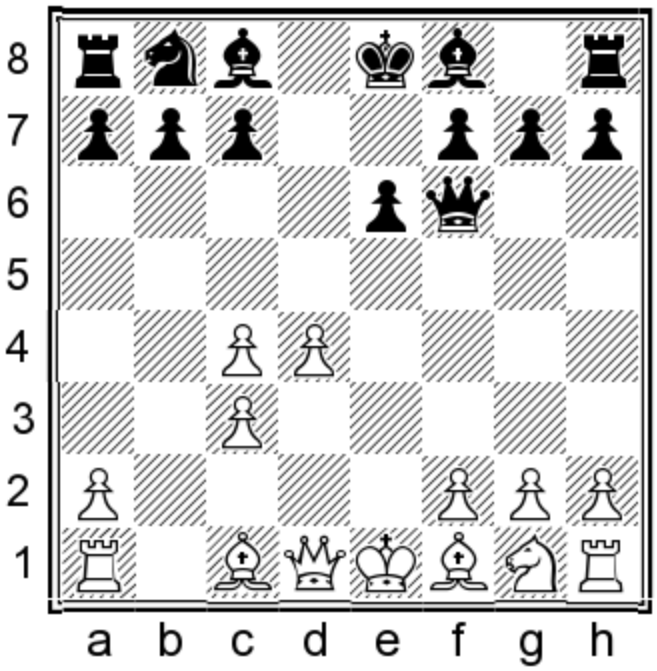
Returning to 4...d4:

5.exf6 dxc3 6.bxc3 Qxf6

Invariably played, although Simon did once face 6...gxf6?! 7.d4 c5 and now in Williams-Zigura, Budapest 1994, 8.Nf3 Bg7 9.Bd3 0-0 10.0-0 would have maintained a pleasant edge, and if 10...Nc6 11.d5! Ne7 12.Nh4!? with the initiative.

7.d4

chesstouring.com



Naturally White is happy to seize space and control the centre. He will now enjoy quick and easy development with Nf3, Bd3 and 0-0, and Black must be careful not to come under a direct attack on the kingside.

7...e5

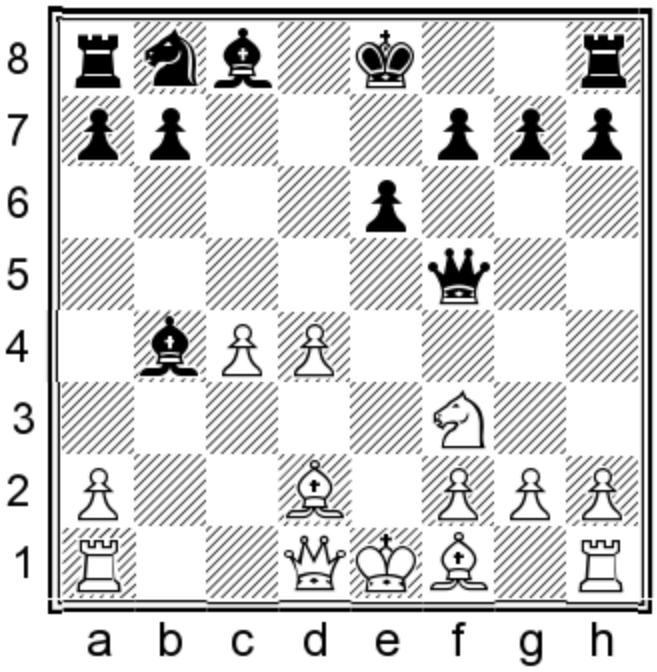
This immediate central counter is engine-approved and has been the choice of most of Simon's opponents, but isn't forced:

a) Fractionally Black's most popular move has been the alternative counter-strike 7...c5 whereupon 8.Nf3 leaves him at a cross-roads:

a1) 8...cxd4 is, of course, the move Black would like to play, but we don't have to allow him to free his position with 9.cxd4 Bb4+. Indeed, 9.Bg5! Qf5 (9...Qg6?! 10.Bd3 Qh5 11.cxd4 Bb4+ offers White a pleasant choice between 12.Kf1!? and 12.Bd2 Bxd2+ 13.Qxd2 0-0 14.0-0 Nc6 15.Rfe1, and if 15...Rd8 16.d5!, which saw the 1.c4 legend breaking through in J.Watson-Vinje Gulbrandsen, Gausdal 1981, in view of 16...exd5? 17.cxd5 Qxd5 18.Re8+! Rxe8 19.Bxh7+ Kxh7 20.Qxd5) 10.cxd4 Bb4+ (10...Nc6 is well met by 11.a3! followed by Bd3 or 11...Qa5+ 12.Bd2 Qd8 13.Bc3 when 13...Be7 14.d5! already left Black under pressure in Tukmakov-Dobosz,

chesstouring.com

Yerevan 1980, and 10...h6!? 11.Bd2 Nc6 12.Be2 followed by 0-0 and Bc3 should also turn out fairly well for White, with d5 ideas still very much on the agenda) 11.Bd2 will see White emerging ahead in development and with a definite pull.



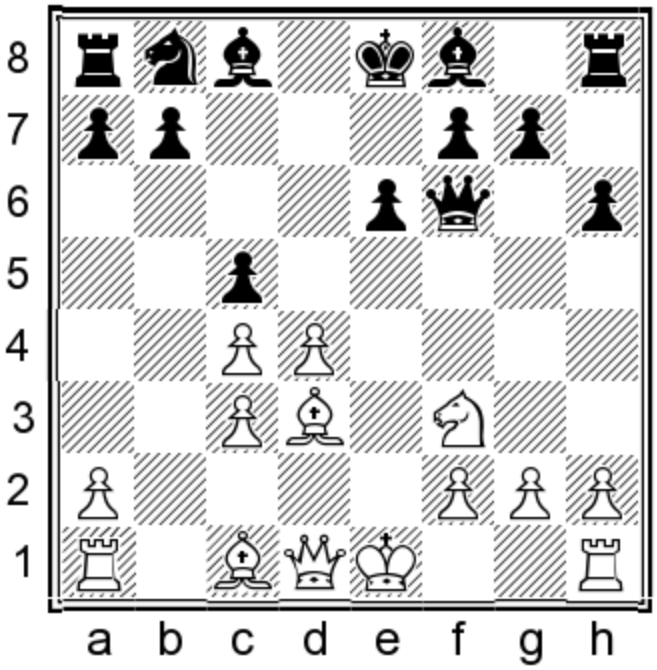
Following 11...Qa5 12.Bd3 Bxd2+ (12...Nc6 can be met by 13.Rb1 or 13.Be4 Bxd2+ 14.Qxd2 Qxd2+ 15.Kxd2, menacing a favourable exchange on c6) 13.Qxd2 Qxd2+ 14.Kxd2 Nc6 (Black might like to go 14...b6??, but 15.Be4 would be rather embarrassing) 15.Rab1 Na5 (alternatively, 15...0-0 16.Be4! Na5 17.c5 leaves Black struggling to complete development and 15...b6 16.Rhc1 Bb7 17.c5 doesn't quite win a pawn, but does force Black into a miserable grovel with 17...0-0 18.a4 Nd8 19.Ke3) 16.c5! Bd7 17.Ne5 left White dominating with Bb5 but one promising idea in Ipatov-Sukandar, Doha 2014.

Alternatively, 11...Bxd2+ 12.Qxd2 merely helps White develop and 11...Nc6 12.Bxb4 Nxb4 13.Rb1! Nc6 (13...Nc2+? is nothing to fear in view of 14.Kd2 Na3 15.Rb4! b5 16.cxb5 a6 17.b6!, which keeps lines relatively closed and White somewhat for choice after 17...Nb5 18.Bd3 Qf4+ 19.Ke1 Bb7 20.Qd2, as shown by Tony Kosten, or here 14...Nxd4 15.Nxd4 Qxf2+

chesstouring.com

16.Kc3 followed by Bd3 with an extra piece) 14.Bd3 Qa5+ 15.Qd2 Qxd2+ 16.Kxd2 transposes to our main line with 11...Qa5+, while adding one to the move number.

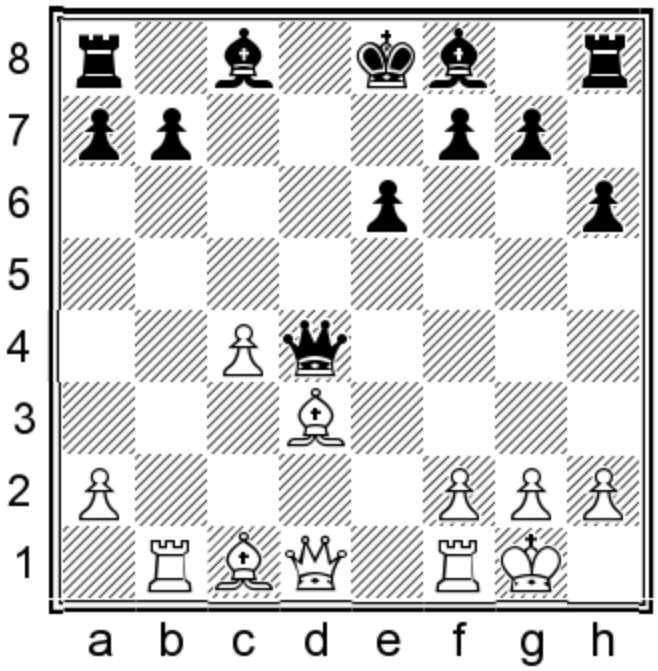
a2) That explains why an experienced opponent is more likely to prefer 8...h6 9.Bd3 and then one of:



a21) 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 Bb4+ is consistent, but 11.Bd2 Bxd2+ 12.Qxd2 0-0 (or 12...Nc6 13.Qe3 when we'll see a model performance from White in Tomashevsky-Iljin, Cheboksary 2006) 13.0-0 is just quite pleasant for White, as shown by 13...Nd7 (otherwise, 13...Nc6 14.Rfe1 Rd8 15.Rad1 b6 16.d5! would be the classic breakthrough, and if 16...exd5 17.cxd5 Ne7 18.Qe3 followed by Be4 or 18...Nxd5?? 19.Qe8+!, and 13...Rd8 14.Rfe1 Nc6 15.Rad1 b6 16.d5! Na5 would have left Black suffering in Bisguier-Shipman, Pittsburgh 1946, had White found 17.Ne5 Bb7 18.Ng4 Qg5 19.Ne3, securing Delroy while introducing ideas of Bb1 and Qc2) 14.Qe3! Rd8 (and not 14...b6?? 15.Qe4) 15.Qe4 Nf8 16.Rab1 Qe7 17.c5! left Black rather passive and Ne5 on the way in Nepomniachtchi-Aleksandrov, Moscow 2012.

chesstouring.com

a22) 9...Nc6 10.0-0! cxd4 (10...Bd6 would be more prudent when 11.Qe2 0-0 12.Ba3 Qe7 13.Rad1 Bd7 14.Rfe1 is only a pleasant edge with the good, old Bc2 and Qd3 battery high on the agenda) 11.cxd4 Nxd4 (11...Bc5? 12.dxc5! Qxa1 13.Qd2! just looks even worse for Black, followed by Bb2 and Ra1 or 13...Qf6 14.Bb2 e5 15.Nxe5! with superb play for the exchange) 12.Nxd4 Qxd4 13.Rb1 is a rather risky pawn grab from Black.



Indeed, White has scored well here with even the best defence 13...Bc5!? (13...Qh4 14.g3 Qd8 15.Be4!? Qxd1 16.Rxd1 is clearly nothing to worry about, regaining the pawn with advantage, and while 13...Bd6 has been popular, 14.Bb2 Qh4 15.g3 forces 15...Qg5 – Black's queen would be most unsafe on h3 – when 16.Bc2!? is untested, but 16...Bc5 17.Ba4+ Kf8 18.Bd4! just looks rather good for White in view of Black's problematic development) 14.Bb2 Qd6 (or 14...Qh4 15.Bxg7 Rg8 16.Be5 Bd7 when 17.Be2! Bc6 18.Bf3 retains control and the safer king) 15.Bxg7 (15.Re1!? 0-0 16.Qg4 can also be considered) 15...Rg8 16.Bc3 Bd7 17.Be4 failing to fully equalise for Black on account of the pressure down the b-file and his slightly more exposed king.

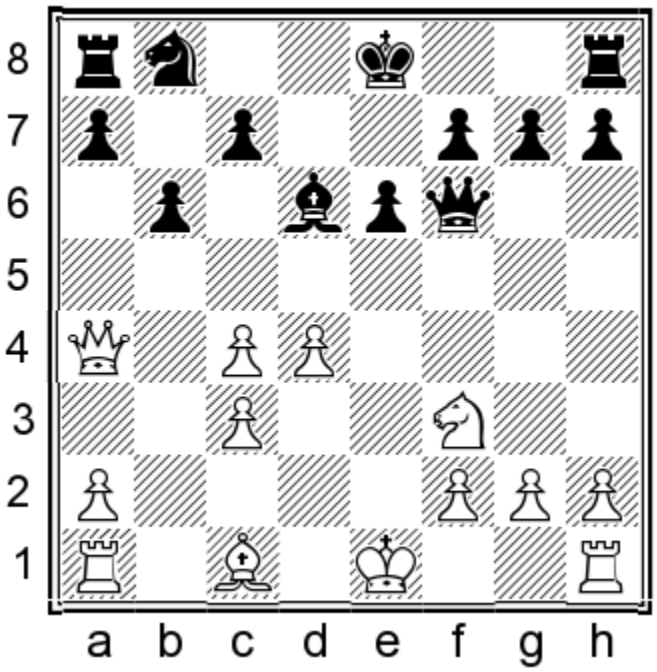
chesstouring.com

a23) 9...Bd6 is somewhat less common and fairly well met by 10.0-0 0-0 followed by 11.Qe2 Nc6 12.g4!? or the simpler 11.Re1 Nc6 (11...Nd7?! is again a little too passive and 12.Qe2 Rd8, as in Potkin-Levin, St. Petersburg (blitz) 2014, offers White a few tempting options, including 13.a4, 13.Bc2 and again 13.g4! when g5 is a big threat and 13...Qe7 14.g5 hxg5 15.Bxg5 f6 16.Bd2 followed by Kh1 and Rg1 would herald a strong attack) 12.Ba3 e5!? (12...Rd8 13.Nd2! creates the unpleasant threat of Ne4) 13.Bxc5! Bxc5 14.dxc5 Bg4 15.Be4 doesn't offer Black enough for his pawn with all of Rb1, h3 and Bd5 on their way.

a24) Finally, 9...Nd7 10.0-0 Qd8?! 11.Bf4 Nf6 12.Re1 Be7 13.Qd2 Bd7 14.Ne5 Bc6 15.Rad1 left White with model centralisation and a huge advantage in Grachev-Golubov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2017, in view of 15...0-0? 16.Bxh6 gxh6 17.Qxh6 and Re3.

b) 7...b6 also makes decent sense and has even been fairly topical of late, in part due to the efforts of Ding Liren. Here you might want to look into Levon Aronian's idea 8.h4!?, but a simple route to an edge is 8.Be2! (8.Bd3 Bb7 9.Nf3 h6! is somewhat more complex) 8...Bb7 9.Bf3 Bxf3 10.Nxf3 Bd6 (or 10...Nd7?! 11.Qa4 and after 11...Bd6 12.Bg5 Qf5 13.0-0 f6 14.Bh4 Rd8 15.Rfe1 Kf7 16.Bg3 White's queenside pressure left him clearly for choice in Dubov-Anton Guijarro, World Blitz Championship, Doha 2016) 11.Qa4+!.

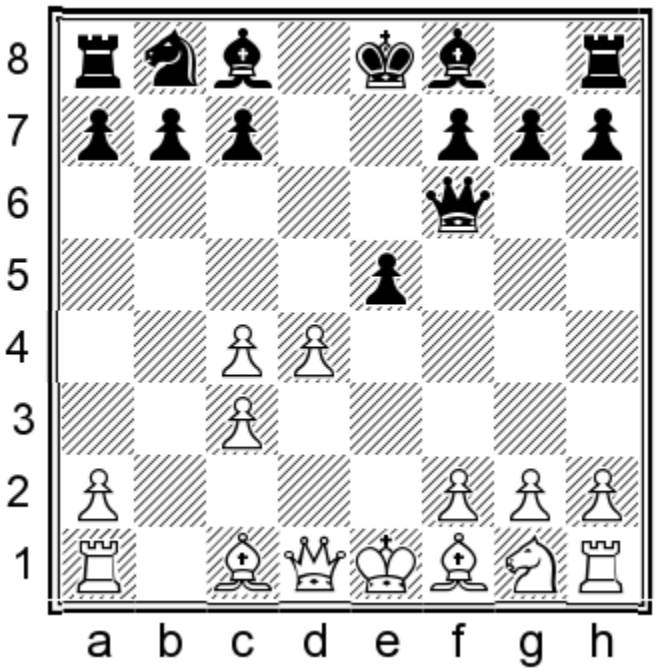
chesstouring.com



This again discombobulates and after 11...c6 12.0-0 0-0 13.Rb1 White's most active pieces should count for something. In Tomashevsky-Riazantsev, Olginka (rapid) 2011, Black dropped the queen back, but 13...Qd8 (defending d6, although it is slow; instead, 13...Qf5 eyed the d3-square in Nepomniachtchi-Harikrishna, Kolkata (blitz) 2019, but after 14.Be3 h6? 15.Rxb6 axb6 16.Qxa8 Qd3 17.c5 Black was just a pawn down, so 13...Bc7 might be best, as in Nepomniachtchi-Ganguly, World Rapid Championship, Moscow 2019, when White might look into 14.Bg5!? Qf5 15.Bh4 Rc8 16.Rfe1 Nd7 17.Qd1 followed by a4 and Bg3, all the while hoping to be able to advance with 17...c5?! 18.d5) 14.Be3 Qc8?! (14...c5 improves, although 15.dxc5 bxc5 16.Qc2 followed by Ng5 would retain the initiative for White) 15.Rxb6 (keeping Black tied up with 15.c5!? bxc5 16.dxc5 also deserves serious attention) 15...axb6 16.Qxa8 Nd7 17.Qxc8 Rxc8 18.Rb1 left White playing for two results and the Professor eventually ground out the full point.

Returning to 7...e5:

chesstouring.com

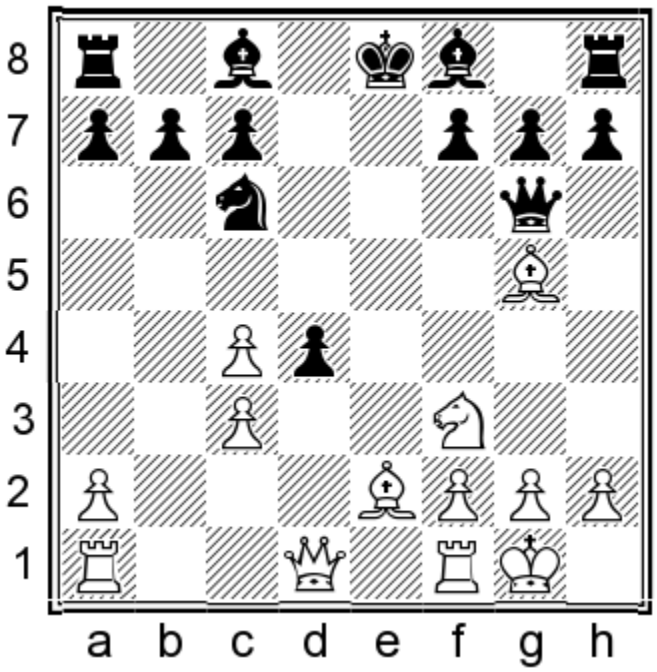


8.Nf3 exd4

Once again we find Black wanting to develop with 9.cxd4 Bb4+.

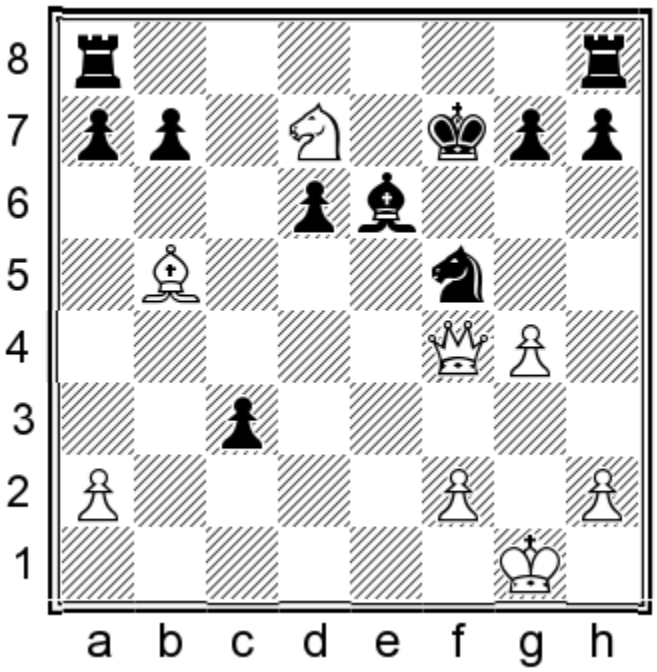
8...Nc6 is somewhat less common and with good reason, at least on practical grounds, in view of 9.Be2 (the unplayed 9.Qe2!?, with the idea of 9...Bg4 10.d5, could really do with a test) 9...exd4 (Black should accept, as 9...e4?! 10.Ng5 Bf5 11.f3! exf3 12.Nxf3 Be7, as in Siewert-Grosso, correspondence 2001, and then 13.0-0 Qg6 14.Bf4 0-0-0 15.Qb3 leaves White with the somewhat safer king) 10.Bg5! (10.cxd4 Bb4+ 11.Bd2 Bxd2+ 12.Qxd2 0-0 13.0-0 Bg4 is now very solid for Black) 10...Qg6 11.0-0!?.

chesstouring.com



This is Tony Kosten's double-pawn sacrifice which has now had a few tests, including at the highest level with Dubov-Nakamura, Moscow (rapid) 2018: 11...dxc3 (bravely accepting the second pawn; instead, 11...Bc5?! 12.Bd3 Qd6 13.Nd2! leaves Black in trouble after Ne4, and 11...Be7?! 12.Bd3 Qd6 13.Bxe7 Nxe7 14.cxd4 0-0 15.Re1 gave White a pleasant edge in Vachier-Lagrave-Georgiadis, Biel 2018, on account of his control of the e-file and mobile central pawns) 12.Bd3 Qd6 13.Re1+ (13.Qe1+ would be a calm alternative if you wanted to regain one of the pawns) 13...Be7 14.c5!? (this triple gambit apparently came as a surprise to Nakamura) 14...Qxc5 15.Bxe7 Nxe7 16.Re5 Qd6 17.Bb5+ Kf8! (17...Bd7? 18.Bxd7+ Qxd7 19.Qxd7+ Kxd7 20.Rd1+ Ke8 21.Rde1 wins, as does 18...Kxd7 19.Qa4+ Kc8 20.Rd1 Qc6 21.Qg4+) 18.Qe2 (18.Qc2!? followed by Rae1 might also be explored if you like to explore your theoretical lines in some depth) 18...f6 19.Rd1!? fxe5 20.Nxe5! Bf5! (20...Nd5? 21.Rxd5! Qxd5 22.Ng6+ Kf7 23.Bc4 favours White) 21.Rxd6 cxd6 22.Nd7+ Kf7 23.Qc4+ Be6 24.Qf4+ Nf5 25.g4.

chesstouring.com



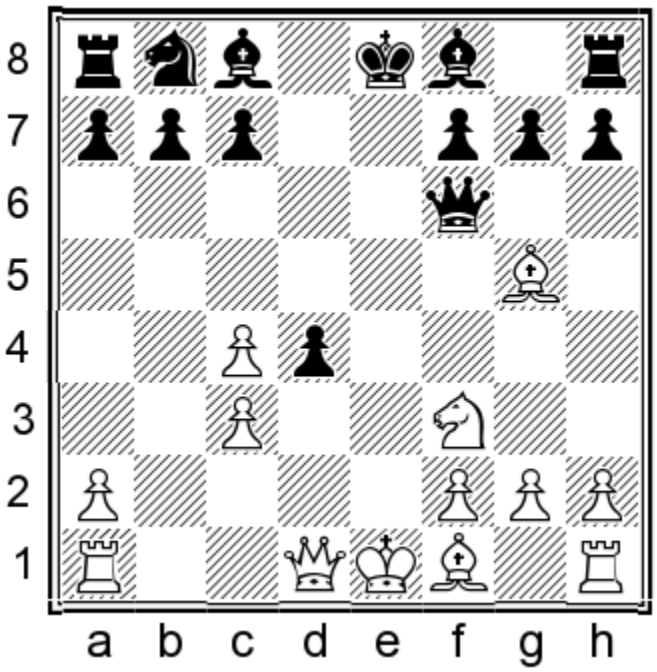
Thus far Nakamura had defended tremendously and much better than 99% of opponents surely would, but even he now slipped and 25...Rad8? (25...Rhc8 26.gxf5 Bxd7 27.Bxd7 c2 28.Qc1 Rc5 29.Be6+ should land up as a draw since White can't easily pick off the c-pawn) 26.gxf5 Bxd7 27.Bc4+ gave Dubov a winning attack.

Other moves are somewhat less critical, including 8...Nd7, which Simon had the good fortune to face in Williams-Ahluwalia, Jersey 2018, where 9.Bd3 h6 10.0-0 Be7 11.Re1 0-0 12.Qe2 simply won material down the e-file. Likewise, Black should avoid 8...e4? 9.Ng5 Bf5 (or 9...Qg6 10.f3 exf3 11.Qxf3 Be7 12.Bd3 Qf6 13.Bf4 with quite some lead in development) 10.g4, and if 10...Bg6 11.Bg2, as well as 8...Bg4?! 9.Be2 exd4 10.Bg5 (again we see this idea; 10.0-0 is also good) 10...Qd6 (or 10...Qg6 11.0-0!, and if 11...Bxf3? 12.Bxf3 Qxg5 13.Bxb7) 11.cxd4 Be7 12.0-0 0-0 13.c5 Qd8 14.Bxe7 Qxe7 15.Re1 with a mobile centre, the more active rooks and the initiative for White.

Returning to 8...exd4:

9.Bg5!

chesstouring.com



Yet again we see White developing as rapidly as possible.

9...Qe6+

By a huge margin Black's main move, if not forced:

a) 9...Qg6 doesn't even have to transpose after 10.Bd3 Qe6+ (10...Qh5? was remarkably seen in Serper-Handoko, Manila Olympiad 1992, where White failed to find 11.Qe2+ Be6 12.h3!, leaving Black quite helpless against the threat of g4), as here 11.Kf1!? (11.Be2 would be our main line) 11...f6 (11...dxc3? 12.Nd4! Qe5 13.Qh5 wins, and if 13...Qxd4 14.Re1+ Kd7 15.Qxf7+ Kc6 16.Be4+ Kb6 17.Be3) 12.Nxd4 Qg4 13.Qe1+ Be7 14.Be3 0-0 15.h3 Qh5 16.Be4 leaves White with the initiative, and ideas of Qb1, Bf5 and g4.

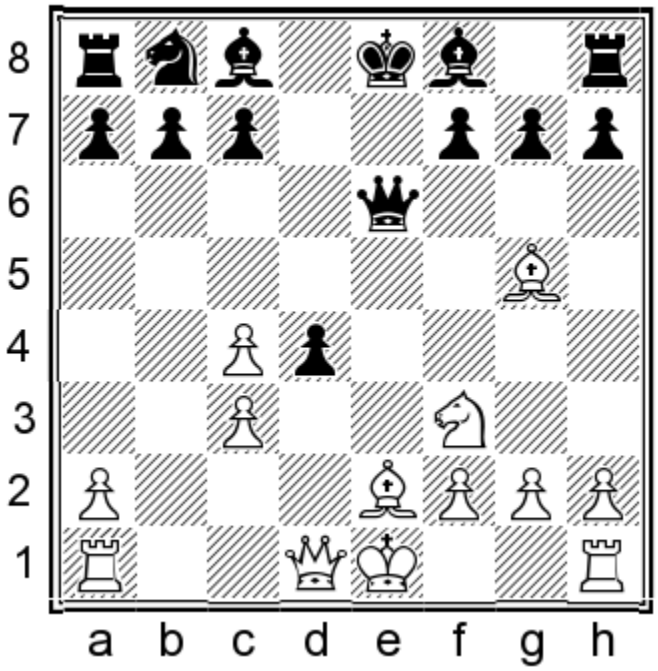
b) 9...Qd6?! 10.cxd4 h6 11.Be3 Bf5 was a little too routine from Black in Banas-Mularczyk, correspondence 1988, where 12.Bd3 Bxd3 13.Qxd3 Be7 14.0-0 0-0 15.Qe4! would have facilitated Bf4 and left White pressing.

c) Likewise, 9...Qa6 10.Bd3!? h6 (10...dxc3? 11.0-0 again feels too risky for Black, and if 11...Nc6 12.Re1+ Be6 13.c5! followed by Bc4) 11.Bh4 Be7 12.Qe2 Qe6 13.Qxe6 Bxe6 14.Bxe7 Kxe7 15.cxd4 left White pressing

chesstouring.com

in Fier-Proudian, Florianopolis 2019, where he had ideas of 0-0, Be4 and Rb1.

10.Be2



Calmly preparing to castle. Will Black manage to catch up in development?

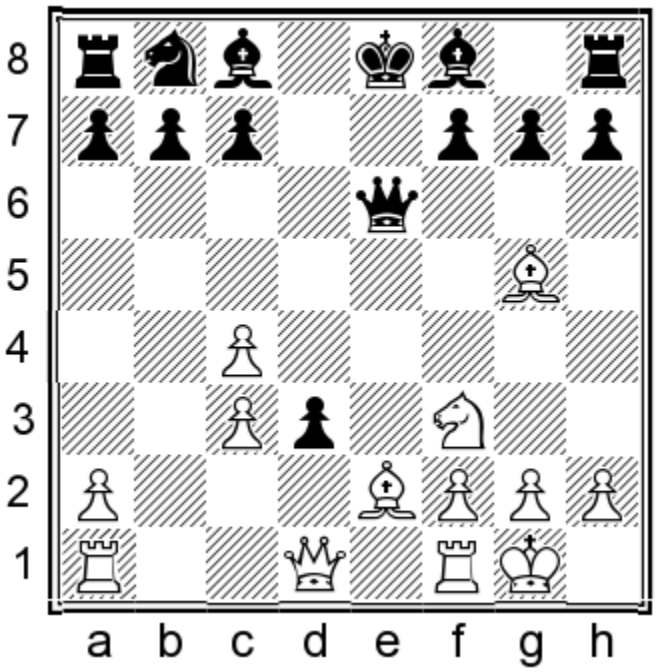
10...Be7

The choice of a well-prepared player.

Certainly not 10...dxc3?? 11.Qd8 mate, while as we saw back in the Common Ideas for White chapter, 10...f6?! 11.Nxd4 Qf7 (11...Qe4? 12.0-0! fxg5 13.Bh5+ is even worse for Black, and 11...Qe5 12.Bh4 Bd6 13.Nb5 also leaves him in trouble) runs into the gorgeous 12.Bh6!!, as Simon landed against James Howell.

There we also saw that White can calmly meet 10...d3? with 11.0-0!.

chesstouring.com



This leaves Black in some trouble even after 11...Bc5 (relatively best, especially compared with 11...dxe2?? 12.Qd8 mate and 11...Qxe2? 12.Re1, as well as 11...f6? 12.Bxd3 Be7 13.Re1 with a huge initiative for Magnus's second in Nielsen-Van Ketel, European Club Cup, Rogaska Slatina 2011) 12.Bxd3 0-0 13.Re1 Qa6 14.Nd4! followed by Qh5, as in Kosten-Gregoire, Cap d'Agde 2003.

Otherwise, 10...Bd6 11.cxd4 0-0 12.0-0 b6 13.Bd3 Bb7 was Ghaem Maghami-Dalir, Teheran 2008, when White even had the possibility of 14.c5! bxc5 15.dxc5 Bxc5 16.Qc2 Bxf3 17.gxf3!, hitting the remaining black bishop and c7, and if 17...h6 18.Qxc5 hxg5 19.Bh7+! Kxh7 20.Qxf8.

As well as the text move, Black does relatively best too with 10...Nc6 when 11.cxd4 Bb4+ 12.Bd2 Bxd2+ 13.Qxd2 is again just a pleasant edge for White, as is 10...h6 11.Nxd4 Qd7 (11...Qe5?! rather asks for 12.Bh4 Be7 13.Bg3 Qa5 14.0-0 0-0 15.Bd3, which left White with a handy lead in development and a definite pull in Dahlstroem-Pettersson, correspondence 2005, partly because the greedy 15...Qxc3? fails to simply 16.Nb5) 12.Be3 Bc5 (or 12...Be7 13.0-0 0-0 14.Re1 when Qc2 and Rad1 might follow)

chesstouring.com

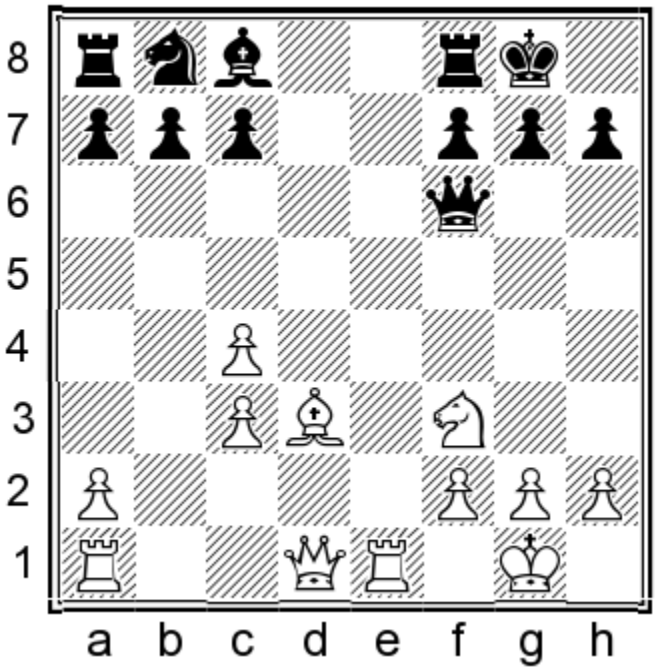
13.0-0 0-0 14.Bf3!? was also a pleasant edge in Zontakh-Poobesh Anand, Moscow 2006, with ideas of Rb1, Re1 and Nb5.

11.Bxe7

The simplest approach. 11.cxd4 Bxg5 12.Nxg5 also offers definite chances for an edge, as does MVL's 11.Nxd4!?.

11...Qxe7

Some commentators have suggested that 11...d3!? is the problem with White's move order, but even this intermezzo shouldn't allow Black to claim equality, as we also saw back in the notes to Williams-Howell: 12.0-0! Qxe7 (12...Qxe2? 13.Qb1! indirectly protects the bishop on e7, as 13...Qxe7 14.Re1 Be6 runs into 15.Qxb7, bagging the exchange) 13.Bxd3 0-0 14.Re1 Qf6.

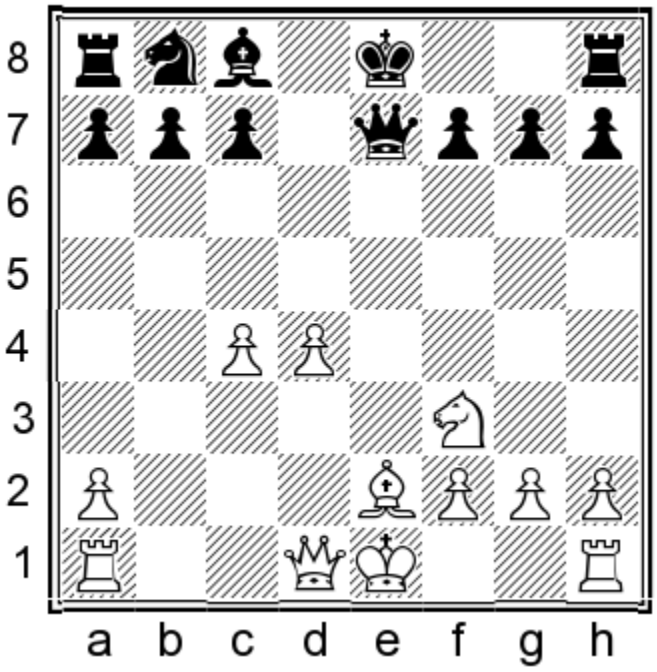


Simon now went 15.Qc2 in Williams-Matthiesen, Aarhus 1998, which was pretty logical, but 15.Be4! seems even stronger, disrupting Black's queenside development. This has actually received some testing and after 15...Nc6 (the only move tested so far; 15...c6 16.Qd4 is a logical way of

chesstouring.com

exploiting White's better development, and if 16...Nd7 maybe even 17.h3!?, playing against Black's bishop in the event of 17...Qxd4 18.cxd4 Nf6 19.Bd3, while 15...Qxc3?! 16.Qb1 regains the pawn with advantage) 16.Nd4 Nxd4 Baskaran Adhiban was happy to head for an advantageous endgame with 17.Qxd4!? Qxd4 18.cxd4 Rb8 19.Bf3 in Adhiban-Ganguly, Moscow 2013, where Re7 was one idea, rolling the central pawns another, and even a4 and Rb1 was by no means off the agenda.

12.cxd4



12...0-0

Black has also tried 12...Qb4+?!, but once again White is happy to reach an endgame with a lead in development, control of the centre and a well-placed king, i.e. 13.Qd2 Qxd2+ (or 13...Na6 14.Qxb4 Nxb4 15.Kd2! Bg4 16.Kc3 Na6 17.Rhe1 0-0-0 18.h3 Bxf3 19.Bxf3 with the superior minor piece and all the chances in Krause-Krikscionaitis, correspondence 2008) 14.Kxd2 0-0 15.Rhe1 Nd7?! (even 15...Bf5 16.Kc3 Nd7 looks pretty good for White after, say, 17.Nd2 and Bf3) 16.Bd3 c6 17.Re7 h6 18.Rae1 and

chesstouring.com

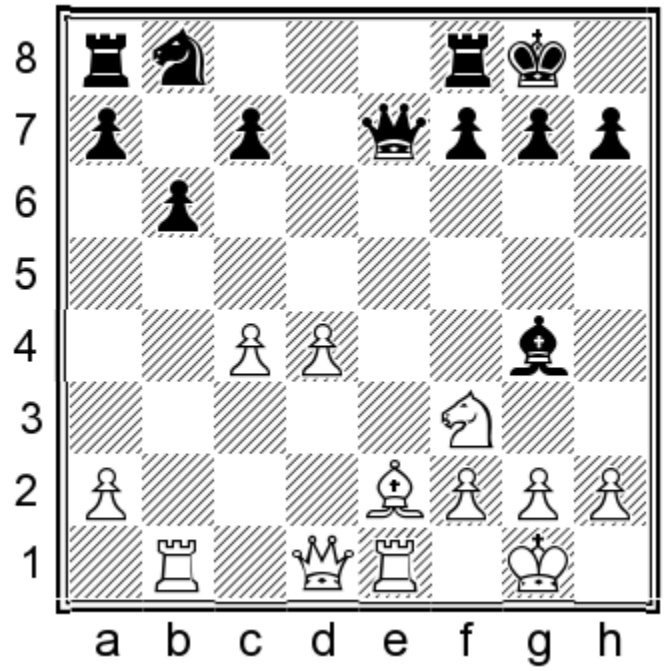
Black never managed to break free in Dimitrov-Unuk, Cappelle-la-Grande 2019.

13.0-0 Bg4

Natural, as would be 13...Nc6 when White should go 14.Re1 or 14.d5 Ne5 15.Nxe5 Qxe5 16.Bf3 which supplied a definite pull and soon more than that as Black carelessly allowed 16...b6? 17.d6! Rb8 18.d7 Ba6 19.Qa4 in Michalik-Kohlweyer, Groningen 2013.

13...Rd8!? has also been tried and enabled Black to hold in Nakamura-J.Shahade, Seattle 2003, but 14.h3 Bf5 15.Re1 should retain an edge, and if 15...Qf6 16.Bd3 Bxd3 17.Qxd3 Nc6 18.Re4! followed by Rae1.

14.Rb1 b6 15.Re1



As we've already seen, this gave the teenage Simon a small but pleasant edge in Williams-Stummer, Budapest 1994. There Black completed development with **15...Nd7** when **16.h3** would have left Black unable to exchange and after **16...Bh5** one sensible idea would be 17.Rb3, preparing to double as well as possibly advance with g4, another **17.Nd2 Bxe2**

chesstouring.com

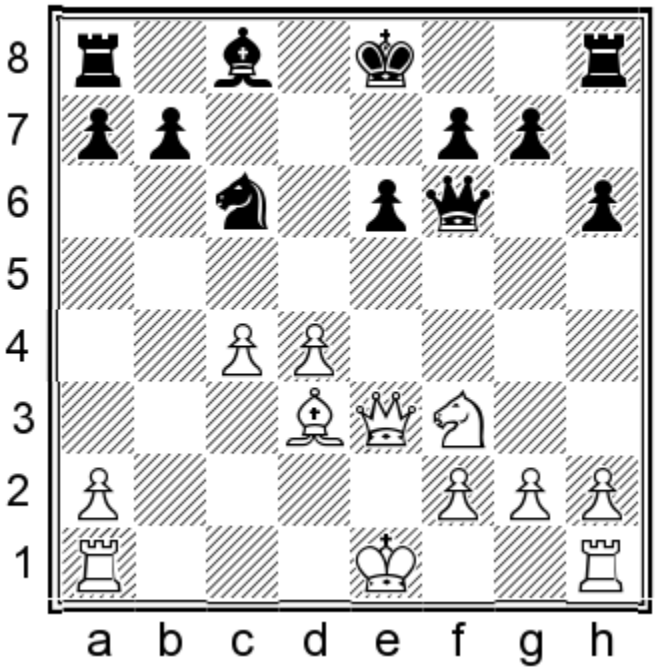
18.Rxe2 followed by Ne4 and/or Qa4, retaining a pull on account of White's more active pieces.

Game 33
E.Tomashevsky-A.Iljin
Russian Under-20 Championship, Cheboksary 2006

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e6 3.e4 d5 4.e5 d4 5.exf6 dxc3 6.bxc3 Qxf6 7.d4 c5 8.Nf3 h6

Ruling out the dangerous Bg5 ideas, but at the cost of a tempo.

9.Bd3 cxd4 10.cxd4 Bb4+ 11.Bd2 Bxd2+ 12.Qxd2 Nc6 13.Qe3



Simple chess, overprotecting d4. You might be concerned that White has the 'worse' structure, but does that really matter? The a-pawn is hardly a target, while the hanging pawns on c4 and d4 control a number of useful squares. Factor in White's grip on e5 and it's not so hard to appreciate that Black is passive and yet to come close to equalising.

13...0-0

chesstouring.com

The radical 13...b6!? is proposed by the engines, and if 14.0-0 Bb7 15.d5! (White might also play more slowly with Be4) 15...Nb4 16.Be4. However, after 16...0-0! 17.dxe6 Bxe4 18.exf7+ Qxf7 19.Qxe4 Rac8 they are right to point out that Black has a fair amount of positional compensation, so here White would likely try to fight for the initiative with 20.Ne5 Qf5 21.Qe2 Rfe8 22.f4 Nc6 23.Rae1.

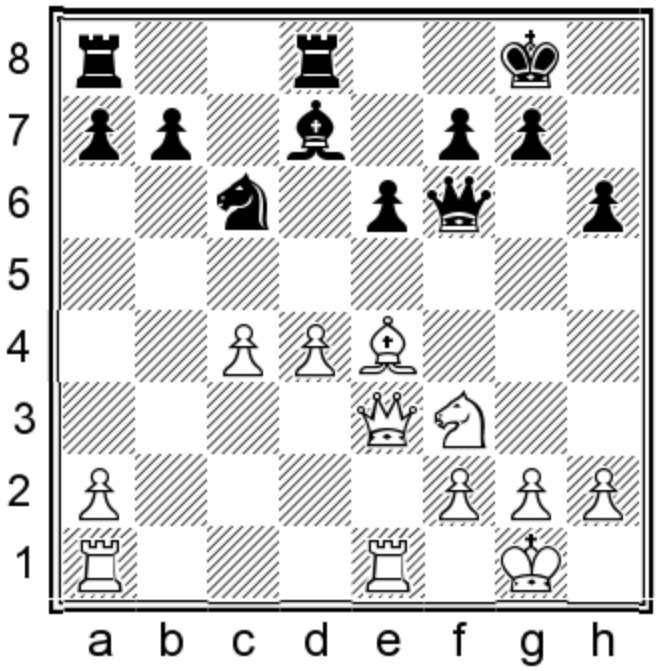
14.0-0 Bd7

By now it was too late to fianchetto, as we can see from 14...Rd8 15.Rad1 b6? 16.Qe4, and if 16...Bb7 17.Qh7+ Kf8 18.Be4 Rab8 19.Bxc6! Bxc6 20.Ne5 Ba4 21.Rde1 with some initiative and an immediate threat of d5.

15.Rfe1

White is after more than just the lasting structural edge 15.Qe4 Qf5 16.Qxf5 exf5 17.Rab1 would have supplied.

15...Rfd8 16.Be4!?



chesstouring.com

It’s not just the queen which can make good use of e4 as the man nicknamed ‘the Professor’ begins to build up for the d5 breakthrough.

16...Be8

A little passive. After 16...b6?! Black would only have been slightly worse, with White able to choose from 17.Rac1, 17.Rad1 Rac8 18.Qd3, and 17.d5!? exd5 18.cxd5 Na5 19.Ne5!, with this last option leaving him with the initiative.

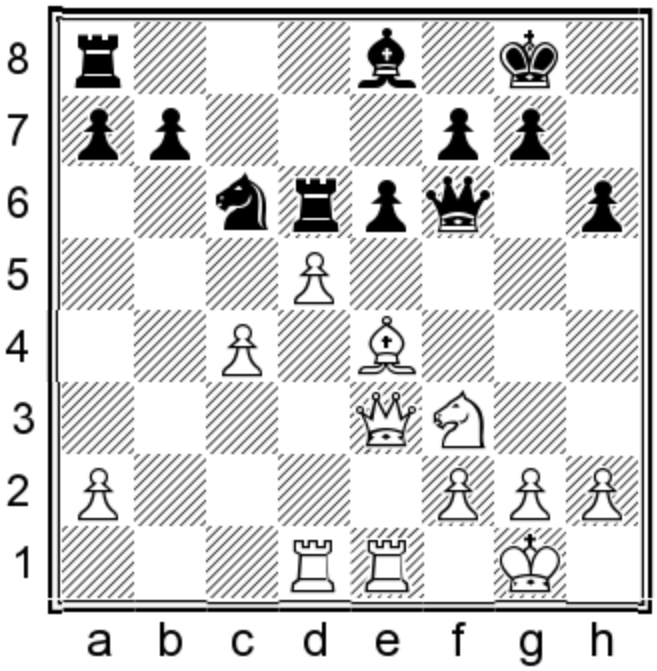
17.Rad1 Rd6?!

Black seems ignorant of the classic breakthrough hanging over his position, or perhaps he just miscalculated.

White would also have met 17...Rac8 with 18.d5! when 18...Nb4 19.Qb3 Na6 20.Bc2 Nc5 21.Qb4 followed by Ne5 would have kept up the pressure, so perhaps the best defence was 17...Na5!? 18.Qc3 Nc6, pleasant for White though this would have been after 19.Bc2.

18.d5!

chesstouring.com



A textbook advance.

18...exd5 19.cxd5 Ne7

Pretty much forced, with 19...Nb4? running into 20.Rd4! Na6 21.Bb1. This carries a certain threat of mate and after 21...Qd8 22.Re4 Bd7 23.Re7 Rxd5 24.Qf4 there doesn't seem to be any defence on the kingside, as we can see from 24...Be6 25.R1xe6! Rd1+ 26.Re1 or 24...Qf8 25.Qe4, while 24...f5 fails to 25.a3! Kh8 26.Ne5.

20.Ne5

Tomashevsky is not slow to exploit the initiative the breakthrough has given him.

20...Bb5?

A misguided bid for freedom.

Black needed to dig in with 20...Rad8, and if 21.Nc4 Ra6 when 22.Bc2 Bb5 23.Ne5! Bd7! (Delroy would be too strong in the event of 23...Rxa2?!

chesstouring.com

24.Qb3 Ra5? 25.d6 Nc6 26.Ng4 Qg5 27.d7) 24.Nxd7 Rxd7 25.Bb3 favours White, but far from decisively so.

21.Qc5 Rb6?!

Now White crashes through for a second time, but 21...Bd7 22.Nc4 Ra6 23.Qc7 would also have been pretty hopeless for Black.

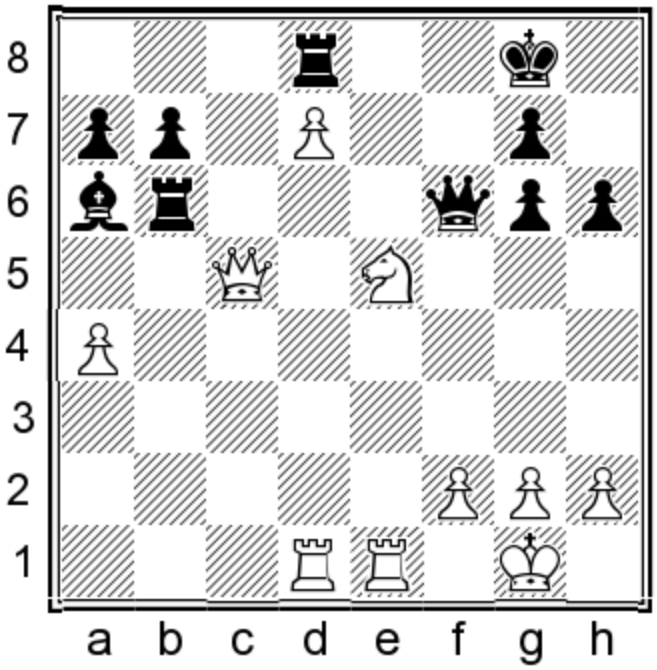
22.d6! Ng6

Alternatively, if 22...Nf5 23.Ng4 or 22...Nc6 23.Nd7 and wins.

23.Bxg6 fxg6 24.d7

A graphic example of the strength of Delroy after the d5 breakthrough.

24...Rd8 25.a4! Ba6



26.Nxg6!

chesstouring.com

Tomashevsky is determined to finish in style.

26...Kh7

26...Qxg6? 27.Qc8! Qf6 28.Re8+ would be terminal.

27.Ne5

27.Nf8+! would have been even neater, and if 27...Rxf8 28.Qc2+ Kg8 29.Re8 Rd6 when White can force the win with 30.Rxd6 Qxd6 31.Rxf8+ Kxf8 32.Qc8+ Kf7 33.Qe8+ Kf6 34.d8=Q+.

27...Re6 28.Qd5 Re7 29.h3

Creating luft and rather emphasising Black's lack of a good move. Indeed, it's high time to resign.

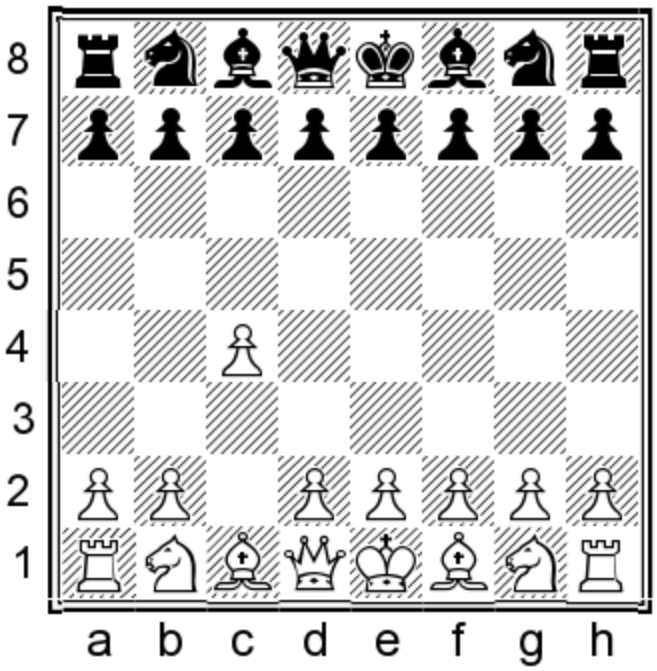
29...b6 30.Qe4+ Kg8 31.Ng4! 1-0

31...Rxe4 32.Nxf6+ gxf6 33.Rxe4 picks up the exchange for starters.

chesstouring.com

Chapter Nine
Other Lines (1...c6/1...e6)

1.c4



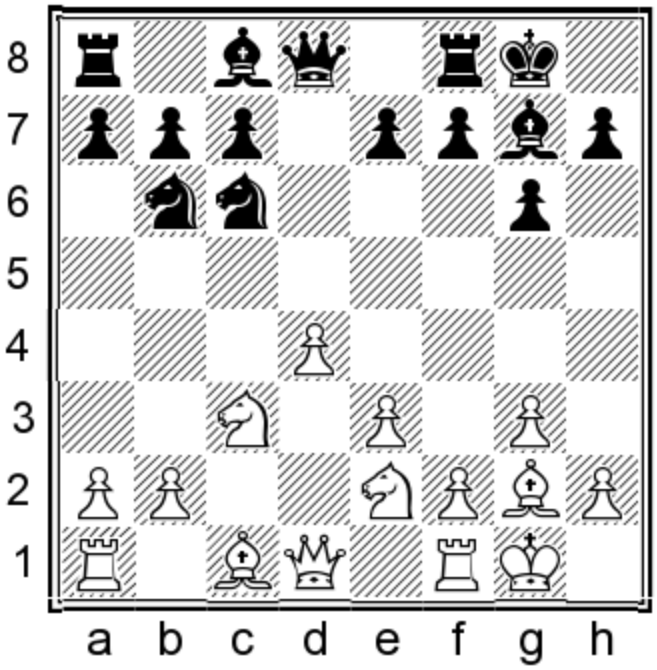
It's now time to turn our attention to Black's less common defences. That said, there are two pretty important lines in this chapter:

9A) 1...c6
9B) 1...e6

Otherwise, 1...Nc6 2.Nc3 is likely to transpose to our reversed Sicilian coverage, whether Black pushes the e-pawn to e5 immediately or even after 2...Nf6 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2 Nb6 6.e3. He doesn't have to transpose to Line 4D here, but 6...g6 (6...e5 – the only move tried on the database in this extremely rare position – 7.Nge2 would be the aforementioned transposition, and 6...Qd3 7.Be4 prevents the queen from settling, after which 7...Qd6 8.d4 e5 might even be met by 9.Nf3 Bg4 10.h3!? Bxf3

chesstouring.com

11.Bxf3 exd4 12.exd4 0-0-0 13.d5 Re8+ 14.Kf1 when after Kg2 White's king should be somewhat the safer of the two) 7.Nge2 Bg7 8.d4 0-0 9.0-0 would be an extremely unusual route into a Grünfeld.



White can be quite happy to have his knight on e2, not the standard f3, thereby not obstructing his fianchettoed bishop and enabling him to meet 9...e5 (9...Bf5 10.h3 Qc8 11.Kh2 Rd8 was preferred in Markowski-Nepomniachtchi, Warsaw (rapid) 2011, no less, when there was no good reason to avoid 12.d5 Nb4 13.e4 Bd7 14.Bg5, leaving Black quite cramped) 10.d5 Ne7 with 11.e4, and if 11...f5 12.Qb3 Kh8 13.Bg5 fxe4 14.h3!? followed by Rad1 and Nxe4, likely in conjunction with Bxe7, thereby leaving him with a thematic edge.

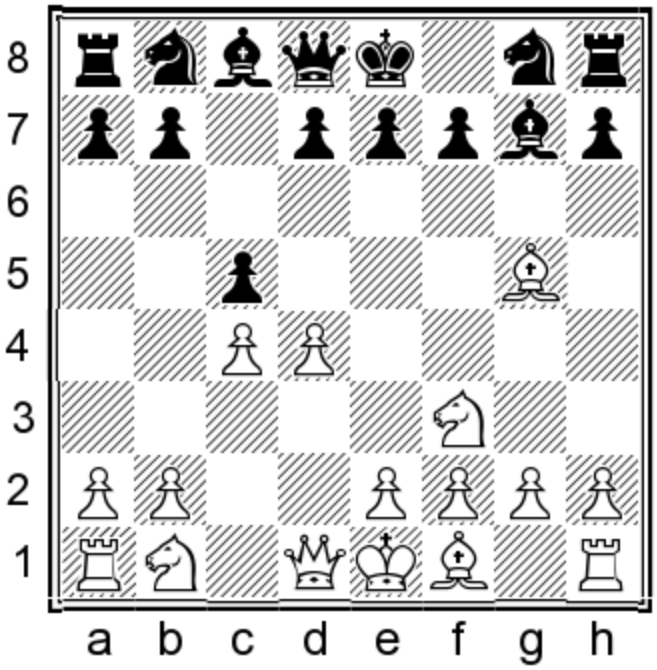
At lower levels, Black sometimes goes 1...d5?!, but 2.cxd5 Qxd5 (2...e6?! 3.dxe6 Bxe6 4.Nc3 c5 5.g3 is just an extra pawn, as is 2...c6 3.dxc6 Nxc6 4.Nc3 e5 5.g3 Nf6 6.Bg2 Bc5 7.Nf3!, as we saw back in the notes to Black's 4th move in Line 4C) 3.Nc3 should just lead to a pleasant edge for White. Unlike the Scandinavian (1.e4 d5), White still has both central pawns and 3...Qa5 (or 3...Qd6 4.d4 e5 5.Nf3!? exd4 6.Nxd4 c6 7.e4 with some lead in development and Be2, 0-0 and Bg5 next up) 4.d4 will either

chesstouring.com

be followed by Bd2 and e4, or 4...e5 5.dxe5 Nc6 6.e4 (simple chess, returning the extra pawn for east development) 6...Bb4 7.Bd2 Qxe5 8.Nf3 Qe7 9.Qc2, with a definite pull and ideas of 0-0-0 and Nd5.

1...b5? 2.cxb5 a6 has also been seen, but this is hardly a scary, turbo-charged Benko Gambit, with 3.e4!? Bb7 4.Nc3 e6 5.Nf3 Nf6 6.e5 Nd5 7.d4 just an extra pawn for White.

Finally, there's 1...g5?! the reversed Grob or Borg, but here we do most unusually recommend 2.d4, as 2...Bg7 (the move Black would like to make work; Mike Basman has preferred 2...h6 3.Nc3 d6, but here White has at least 4.h4!?, and if 4...g4 5.e4 Bg7 6.Nge2, rushing the knight towards g3 to eye Black's weaknesses) 3.Bxg5!? c5 4.Nf3 just looks quite dangerous for Black.



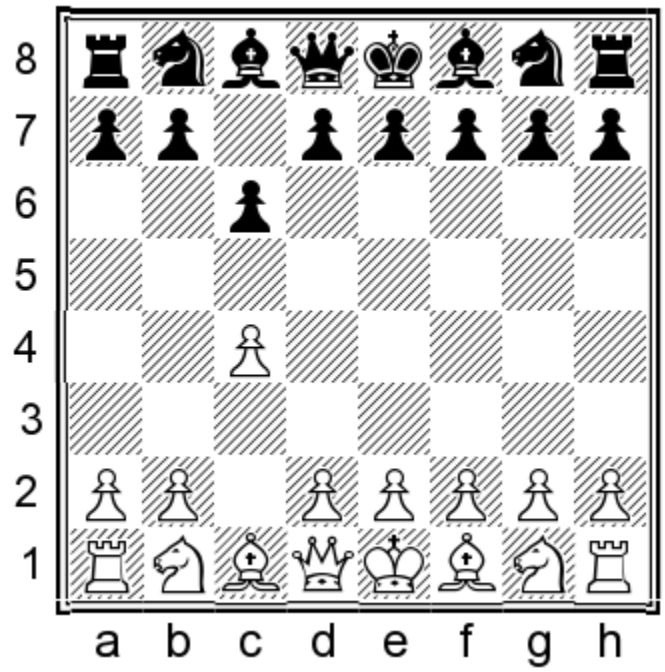
This is because of 4...Qb6? (4...Nc6?! 5.d5! Bxb2 6.Nbd2 is also rather dangerous, as could be 4...cxd4 5.Nxd4 when Black might just have to proceed slowly, down a pawn, rather than allow 5...Qb6 6.Nb5! a6 – 6...Bxb2 7.N1c3 Bxa1? 8.Qxa1 spells ruin down the long diagonal – 7.Be3 Qa5+ 8.N5c3 when he is devoid of compensation and White might even complete development with g3 and Bg2) 5.Nc3! (untested, but just very

chesstouring.com

strong, as your engine will quickly agree) 5...Qxb2 (5...cxd4 6.Nd5 Qa5+ 7.b4!? Qd8 8.Nxd4 Nc6 9.Nb5! also leaves White with a most virulent initiative) 6.Nb5 Na6 7.a3! when Black finds his queen in serious danger, the simple threat being 8.Rb1 Qa2 9.Qc1.

Theory 9A

1.c4 c6



The choice of some Slav players. You may be happy to take on 2.d4 d5, but we most certainly don't have to transpose or head for Reti waters with 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3. Instead...

2.e4!?

...is consistent with our e4 approach throughout the repertoire. White switches the play from the English to the Caro-Kann and by no means all Slav players also play the Caro, so this will catch some opponents out. Moreover, going 2.e4 here puts us in good company: Petrosian,

chesstouring.com

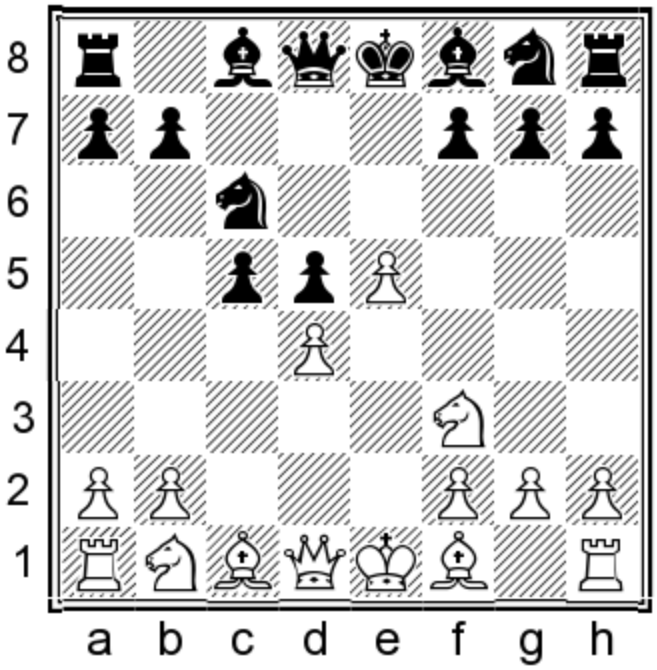
Polugaevsky and, less surprisingly, Tal all did the same, as have Carlsen, Ivanchuk and Svidler in more recent years.

2...d5

Overwhelmingly Black's main move, if only seen in about 80% of games.

Opponents who don't play the Caro and have been move-ordered, do sometimes head for Modern waters: for instance, 2...d6 3.Nc3 g6 4.g3 (keeping play in Botvinnik territory) 4...Bg7 5.Bg2 Nf6 6.Nge2 e5 7.0-0 0-0 8.d3 when we're back into a position we discussed right back in Line 3B.

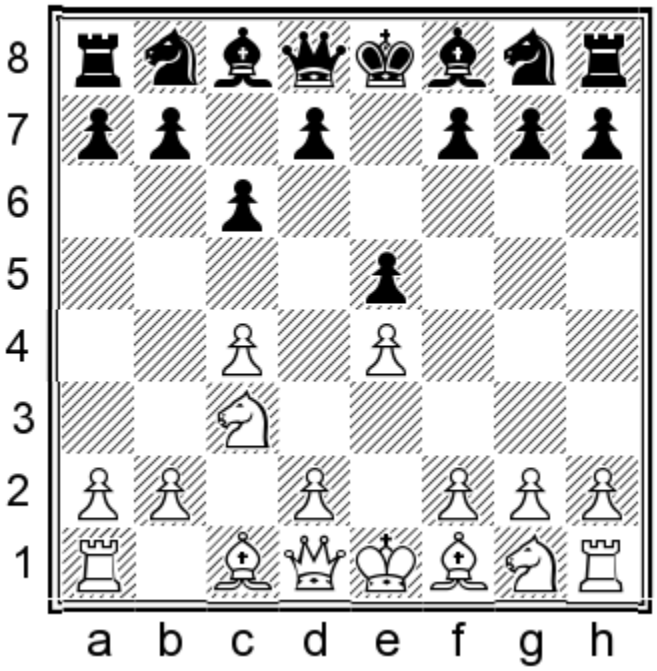
Other fairly creative souls may prefer 2...e6!? 3.d4 d5, which creates a slightly strange impression, but is by no means too bad for Black. Now 4.Nc3 would be a Marshall Gambit, but White can avoid all that theory (if also fun), with 4.cxd5 exd5 (4...cxd5?! 5.e5 is a pleasant version of the Advance French for White, as he can go Nc3, as well as Nf3, Bd3 and 0-0) 5.e5, which looks like a decent version of an Advance Caro-Kann, and if 5...c5 (or 5...Bf5 6.Nc3 Nd7 7.Bd3 Bxd3 8.Qxd3 with easy development and Nge2 and f4 very much an option) 6.Nf3 Nc6.



chesstouring.com

This position does occasionally arise via a 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 move order, but in any case 7.Bb5! is an effective pin: for example, 7...Bd7 (or 7...a6 8.Bxc6+ bxc6 9.0-0 when White will aim to put his lead in development to good use by creating pressure down the c-file, as with 9...Bg4 10.dxc5 Bxc5 11.Qc2 Qb6 12.Nbd2 followed by Nb3) 8.0-0 cxd4 9.Nxd4 Bc5!? (9...Nxd4 10.Bxd7+ Qxd7 11.Qxd4 Ne7 12.Nc3 followed by Rd1 and Bg5 just leaves Black under pressure) 10.Nb3 Bb6 when in Lastin-Zhang Zhong, Moscow 2001, there was no real reason not to grab with 11.Qxd5 Nge7 12.Qe4 a6 13.Bc4 Bf5 14.Qe2.

An arguably more important, as well as more popular alternative is 2...e5 when White normally goes 3.Nf3, but we'll offer Black a few options with 3.Nc3.



White doesn't completely rule out a g3 and Bg2 approach, although we should go 3...Nf6 4.Nf3 (4.g3? d5 would not be wise, but you might want to consider a Pseudo-Vienna with 4.f4!?) 4...Bb4 (forcing the pace; after 4...d6 White can go 5.d4 or just 5.d3 followed by g3, Bg2, 0-0, h3 and ideally Nh4 and f4 à la Kosten-Bednarich, while 4...Qa5?! 5.Be2 Bb4 6.0-0 doesn't overly convince for Black after 7.d3 or 6...Bxc3 7.dxc3 Nxe4? 8.Bd3 Nf6

chesstouring.com

9.Nxe5!) 5.Nxe5 0-0 (5...Qe7?! 6.Nf3 Nxe4 7.Be2 has long been known to be pretty good for White, as shown by 7...0-0 8.0-0 followed by Re1 or 8...d5!? 9.cxd5 Nf6 10.dxc6 Nxc6 11.d4 Re8 12.Be3 when Black shouldn't have enough for the pawn in view of 12...Bxc3 13.bxc3 Nd5 14.Bc4!, putting the bishops to good use) 6.Nd3 (6.Be2 and 6.Nf3 are also good) 6...Bxc3 7.dxc3 Nxe4 8.Be2. This is reminiscent of the line 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Nxe5 0-0 5.Nd3, but here White's more advanced c-pawns are quite useful: for example, 8...d5 (or 8...d6 9.0-0 Bf5 10.Bg4 Bg6 11.Be3 followed by Nf4) 9.cxd5 Qxd5 10.0-0 Nd7 11.Be3 Nb6 12.Nf4 Qxd1 13.Rfxd1 Re8 14.f3 Nf6 15.Kf2, after which White was quick to put his bishop-pair to good use in Melkumyan-Pakleza, Reykjavik 2015.

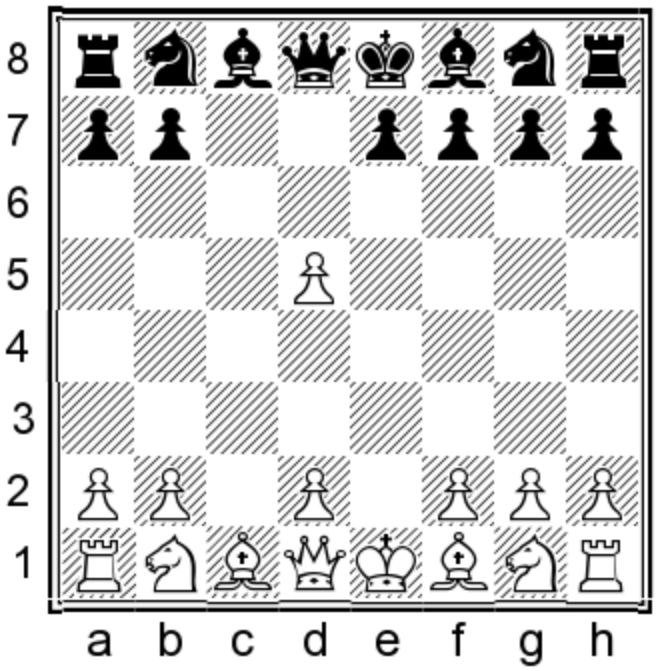
Otherwise after 3.Nc3, 3...Bc5 (while 3.Nf3 f5 isn't totally ridiculous, here 3...f5? 4.exf5 threatens Qh5+ and 4...Nf6 can be met in a few strong ways, including 5.d4 exd4 6.Qxd4 d5 7.Nf3! Bxf5 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.Bb5+ Nc6 10.0-0 Be7 11.Qf4 Bd7 12.Qg5, leaving Black struggling to hold his position together) 3...Bc5 4.g3 Nf6 5.Bg2 0-0 6.Nge2 is just a Botvinnik set-up, with 0-0, d3 and h3 next up, unless Black prefers 6...d5!? 7.cxd5 cxd5, as he did in Miezis-Sasikiran, Jakarta 2001, where 8.exd5 Na6 9.a3 would have been sensible (9.0-0 Nb4 10.d4!? and sacrificing the exchange for a big passed pawn is an ambitious alternative), and if 9...Nc7 10.0-0 Ncxd5 11.Nxd5 Nxd5 12.d4 exd4 13.Nxd4 when Nb3 is a threat and 13...Nb4?! would not be so wise in view of 14.Nb3! Bxf2+ 15.Kxf2 Nd3+ 16.Kg1 Qb6+ 17.Kh1 Rd8 18.Qc2 Be6 and then 19.Bg5! f6 20.Nc1.

3.cxd5 cxd5

Play transposes after 3...Nf6 (hoping for 4.dxc6 Nxc6 5.Nc3 e5 with good compensation) 4.Nc3 cxd5 5.exd5.

4.exd5

chesstouring.com



4...Nf6

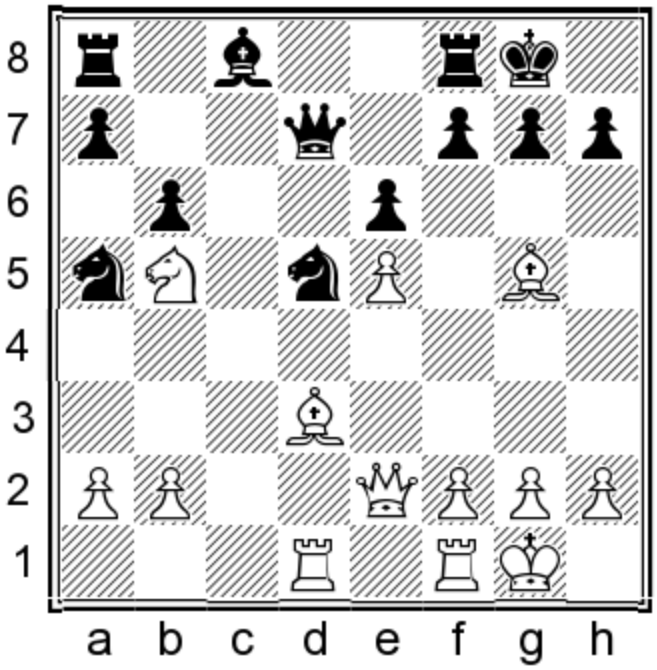
Black's main move, preparing to recapture on d5 with the knight.

Club players caught out by this line may, though, prefer 4...Qxd5 when 5.Nc3 leads to quite a pleasant IQP position for White. We've already accepted a few isolated queen's pawns with a bishop on g2, but this is the traditional IQP structure, which partly boils down to a matter of personal taste, although we hope you'll agree that White's easy development and attacking chances are quite attractive.

A few examples: 5...Qd8 (back to base; 5...Qe5+?! 6.Be2 followed by Nf3 only helps White, 5...Qa5 6.d4 Nf6 7.Nf3 g6!? 8.Bc4 Bg7 9.0-0 0-0 10.Re1 generated early pressure in Jobava-Poeta, Internet (blitz) 2020, where 10...Qc7 11.Bb3 Bg4 could be met by the normal kick 12.h3 or the equally thematic 12.d5!, and after 5...Qd6 6.d4 Nf6 7.Nf3 Black is advised to go for an ...e6 set-up, as 7...Bg4?! 8.h3 only helps White develop rapidly, and if 8...Bh5?! 9.g4! Bg6 10.Bg2 Nc6 11.0-0) 6.Nf3 Nc6 7.Bc4!? e6 8.0-0 Bd6 (8...Nf6 9.d4 Be7 would be more conventional when 10.Qe2!? is a decent gambit: if Black declines, White goes Rd1 and Bg5, angling for the classic

chesstouring.com

IQP breakthrough d4-d5, as well as the good, old battery with Bb3-c2 and Qd3; and 10...Nxd4 11.Nxd4 Qxd4 12.Rd1 supplies lasting compensation, as Black must lose time with his queen and king, 12...Qc5 13.Be3 Qe5 14.Bb5+ Bd7? 15.Bxd7+ Nxd7 16.Qf3 not being too wise) 9.d4 Nge7!? 10.Bg5 0-0 11.Qe2 Qc7?! (11...h6 would leave everything to play for after 12.Be3 b6 13.Rad1 Nb4 14.Ne5 when White will try to attack with Qg4 or Qh5) 12.Nb5 Qd7?! 13.Rad1 Na5? 14.Ne5! Bxe5 (14...Qd8 15.d5! would be a crushing breakthrough) 15.dxe5 Nd5 16.Bd3 b6...



...17.Bxh7+! Kxh7 18.Qh5+ Kg8 19.Bf6! when there was no defence in Palliser-T.Adams, York (rapid) 2008, with Black quickly giving up after 19...Qxb5 (19...gxf6 20.Rd3 Nf4 21.Rg3+ Ng6 22.exf6 forces mate) 20.Rxd5!.

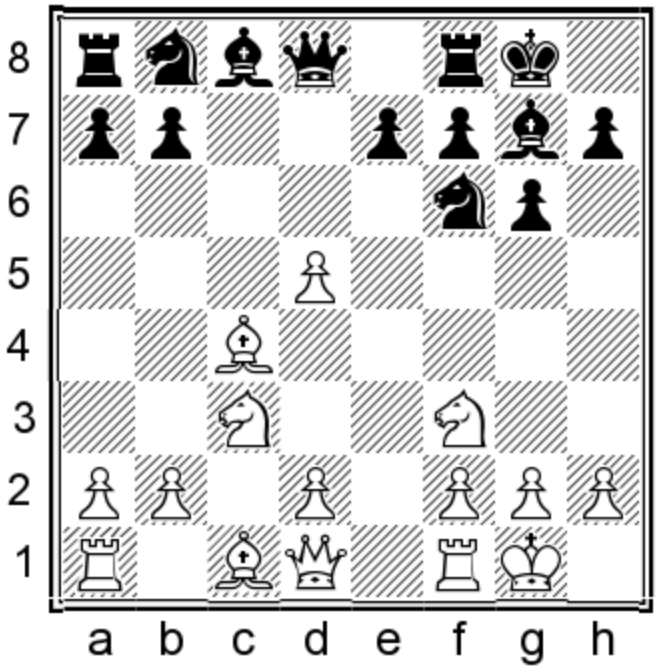
5.Nc3

The two checks on the a4-e8 diagonal both have their fans, but we'll stick with the straightforward text.

5...Nxd5

chesstouring.com

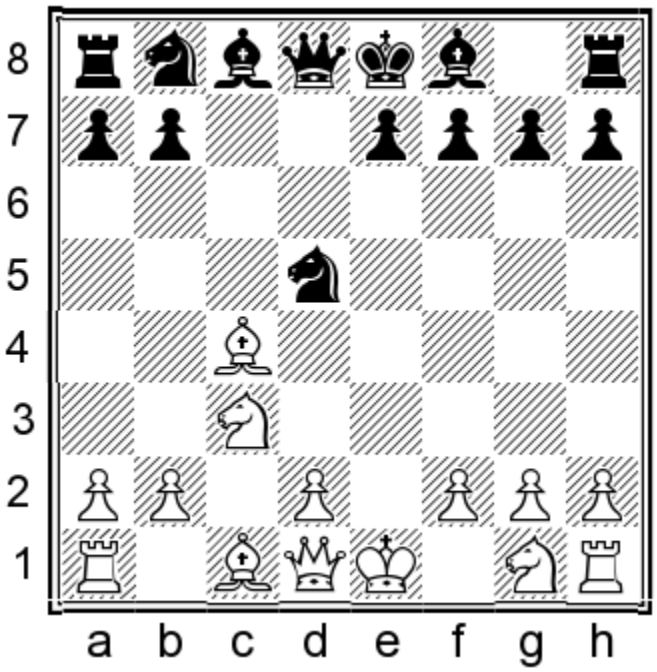
Some Caro players prefer to offer a pawn here, but 5...g6!? 6.Bc4 Bg7 7.Nf3 0-0 (or 7...a6 8.a4 0-0 9.d3 b6 10.0-0 Bb7 11.Qb3 Nbd7 12.Be3 when even 12...Rc8 13.Rfe1 Nc5 14.Bxc5 Rxc5 15.d4 followed by Ne5 didn't leave Black with enough for his pawn in Strikovic-Cruz Lledo, Alfafar 2020) 8.0-0 is not a line to fear, partly as White can always return the pawn for easy piece play.



Probably Black's best approach is 8...Na6 (8...Nbd7 9.d3! Nb6 10.Qb3 is just a strong set-up for White, as well as one which has scored well with, for example, 10...Ne8 11.Re1 Nd6 12.Bg5 Re8 13.Ne4 Bf5 14.Nxd6 Qxd6 15.Rac1 Rac8 16.Bh4! retaining the extra pawn and control of the position in Baches Garcia-Sevian, Internet (blitz) 2020, and 8...b6?! can just be met by 9.d4 Bb7 10.Qb3) 9.Qb3 Nc7 when 10.a4 rules out ...b5 ideas and 10...b6 (or 10...Qd6!? 11.d3 Rd8 12.Ne4! Qb6 when returning the pawn with 13.Qxb6 axb6 14.d6 should lead to a pull, as should 13.Nxf6+!? Bxf6 14.Qa2 Qd6 15.Ng5 Nxd5 16.Ne4) 11.Ne5 Bb7? would not have led to an early draw in Parligras-Zherebukh, German Bundesliga 2011, had White spotted 12.d6! Qxd6 13.Nxf7.

6.Bc4!?

chesstouring.com



Continuing to force the pace and a move which may make opponents ponder, as 6.Nf3 and 6.d4 are somewhat more common and 6.Bc4 isn't even featured in Lakdawala's *The Caro-Kann: Move by Move*.

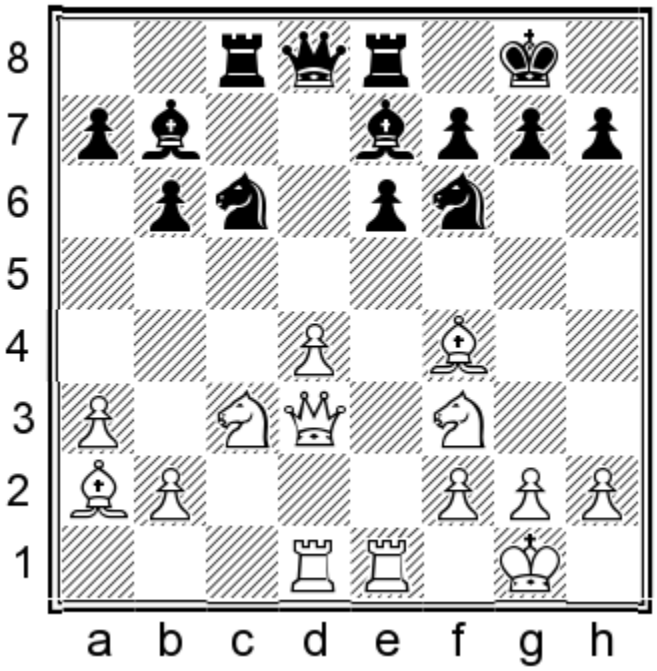
6...Nb6

Black's most common response, retreating with gain of tempo. Otherwise:

a) 6...Nf6 costs Black a fair bit of time and 7.Nf3 e6 (7...Bg4? 8.Bxf7+ Kxf7 9.Ne5+ would not be wise for Black) 8.0-0 Be7 9.d4 (finally the d-pawn advances) 9...0-0 reaches a typical IQP position from which White has scored quite well. A young Capablanca went for the immediate 10.Ne5, but 10.Re1 is probably better and after, for example, 10...Nc6 (10...a6 is another typical move when White has a few options, including the simple 11.Bf4!? b5 12.Bb3 Bb7 13.Rc1, eyeing the black queenside, as well as centre, and hoping for 13...Nbd7?! 14.d5! followed by d6 or 14...exd5? 15.Bc7! when 15...Qxc7 16.Nxd5 Qd8 17.Nxe7+ Kh8 18.Ng5! would already be a deadly attack) 11.a3!? (giving the bishop a retreat square, while also usefully keeping Black's knight out of d5; 11.Bf4 is again a decent alternative, angling for a quick d5 or Nb5) 11...b6 12.Qd3 (Black is just

chesstouring.com

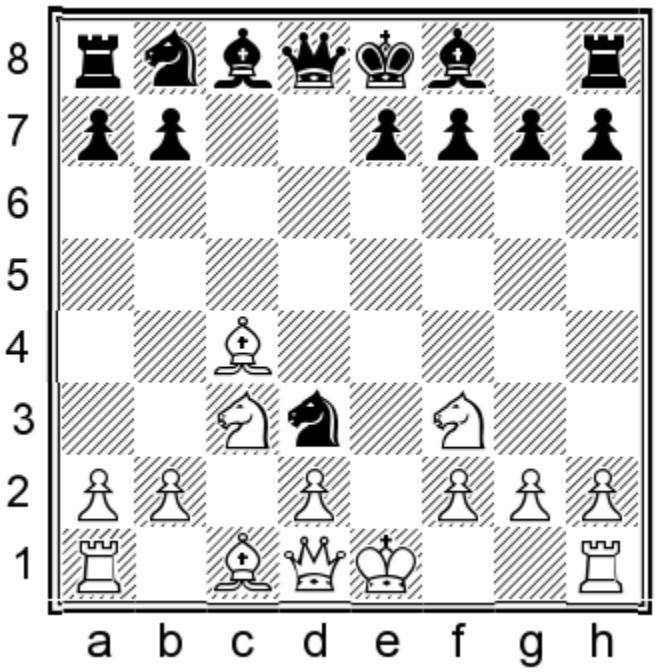
about OK after 12.d5 Na5) 12...Bb7 13.Ba2 (good prophylaxis) 13...Re8 14.Bf4!? (the bishop more often goes to g5 in such IQP positions, but here White just wants to obtain a strong central grip with Rad1 and Ne5) 14...Rc8 15.Rad1 is pretty thematic.



Now 15...a6? (otherwise, 15...Nd5?! would be OK for Black if he could recapture with a piece, but, of course, he can't and 16.Nxd5 exd5 17.Qf5 Na5 18.Ne5 already left him under heavy pressure in Narciso Dublan-Rosich Valles, Catalan League 1999, and even 15...Bd6!? doesn't come close to equality in view of 16.Ne5 or even 16.Bg5!? Be7 17.h4!, overprotecting the bishop in preparation for a thumping breakthrough with d5) 16.d5! exd5 17.Nxd5 Nxd5 (or 17...h6, which prevents the threat of Ng5, but is poleaxed by 18.Bxh6! gxh6 19.Nxf6+ Bxf6 20.Qg6+) 18.Bxd5 already forced resignation in Vaganian-Legky, European Senior Championship, Yerevan 2016. There's simply nothing good to be done about the threat of 19.Bxf7+ or even first 19.Qb1.

b) 6...Nb4!? might tempt an ambitious opponent, who may then be rather thrown when you blitz out 7.Nf3!. Doesn't this just allow 7...Nd3+?

chesstouring.com



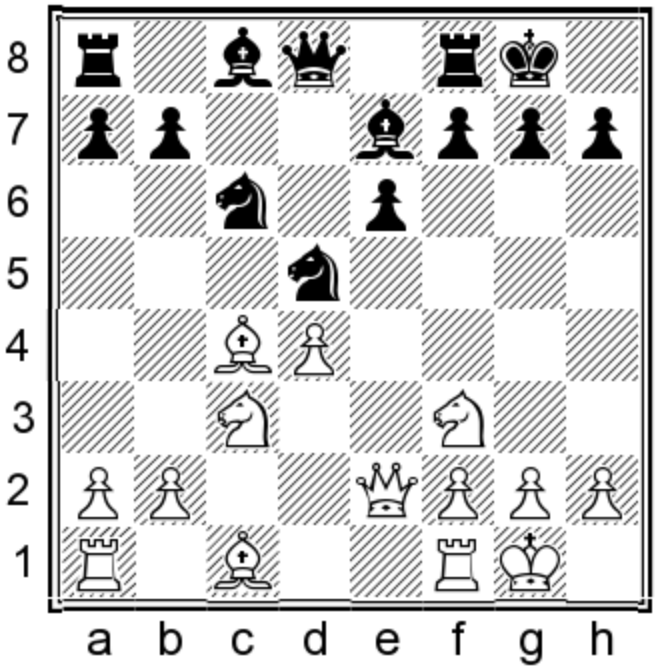
Well, yes, but after 8.Ke2 Nxc1+ (or 8...Nf4+ 9.Kf1 Be6 10.Qa4+ Nc6 11.Bb5 with a double attack) 9.Rxc1 Nc6 10.d4 White's lead in development is not to be scoffed at. Moreover, 10...e6 (10...Bg4? 11.d5 Ne5 12.Bb5+ Nd7 13.Re1 followed by Kf1 and d6 is pretty much crushing) 11.Re1 Be7 12.Kf1 untangles, leaving White with ideas of d5, as well as of Qd2, Rcd1 and Ne4, remaining well centralised.

c) 6...Nxc3 can just be met by 7.bxc3, but one point of our 6.Bc4 move order is to have 7.Qf3!? available here and after 7...e6 (7...Nd5 8.Bxd5 e6 9.Bxb7 Bxb7 10.Qxb7 Nd7 11.Nf3 shouldn't give Black enough for his pawn with 0-0 and d4 on the way) 8.dxc3 White has easy development and might look to drum up an initiative on the kingside: for example, 8...Nc6 (alternatively, 8...Be7 9.Qg3 0-0 10.Nf3 Nc6 11.0-0 plays against the bishop on c8, and if 11...Bd6 12.Qh3!? e5 13.Qh5 when Ng5 is a definite threat, or 8...Qc7 9.Bb3 Bd6 and now 10.Qh5 frees a square for the knight, while preparing to seize the initiative with 10...0-0 11.Nf3 Nd7 12.0-0 Nf6 13.Qh4 followed by Bc2 and Bg5) 9.Bf4 Be7 was Ashley-Shevelev, New York (rapid) 2002, where the famous commentator was happy to develop with Ne2 and 0-0, but 10.Qe4!? 0-0 11.Nf3 was well worth a thought, keeping Black bottled up, and if 11...Bd7 (or 11...Qb6 12.Bd3 g6 13.0-0-0!?

chesstouring.com

Qxf2 14.g4 Qb6 15.h4 with a very strong attack) 12.Rd1 Qc8 13.0-0 followed by forcing a weakness with Bd3, leaving White with a very pleasant advantage indeed.

d) A more important alternative to our main line is 6...e6 7.Nf3 Nc6 (7...Nb6 8.Bb3 transposes after 8...Nc6 to the note to Black's 8th move, below) 8.0-0 Be7 (standard; 8...Bd6 can't be terrible, but after, say, 9.d4 0-0 10.Re1 White will be able to complete development with Bg5 or if 10...h6 11.Bd3, angling for Bc2, a3, Qd3 and Ne5) 9.d4 0-0 when White usually nudges the rook to e1. If you have some experience of these IQP positions, you may well be happy with that main line. In any case we also quite like 10.Qe2!?, which may catch out a booked-up opponent and also prepares a dangerous pawn sacrifice.



This has been used with good effect by Michael Adams and now:

d1) 10...Nb6 11.Bd3 Nxd4 (11...Nb4 12.Be4 N4d5 was preferred in Wen Yang-Ghaem Maghami, Bandar e Anzali 2017, when 13.Re1 would have ruled out ...Bd7 and threatened Bxh7+ after 13...Re8 14.Ne5) 12.Nxd4 Qxd4 13.Rd1 Qh4 (White also has decent compensation after 13...Qf6 14.Bc2!?, with the idea of 14...Bd7? 15.Rxd7! Nxd7 16.Qd3, and 13...Qc5

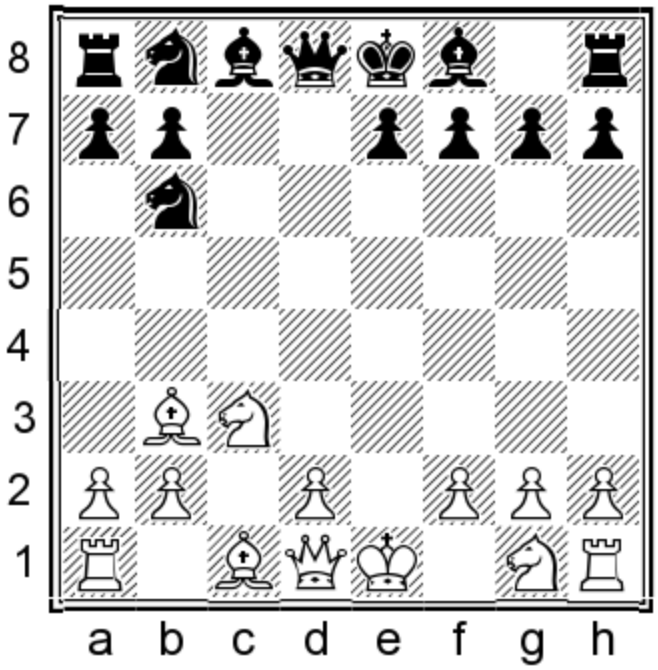
chesstouring.com

14.Be3 Qe5 15.Be4, again playing against the development of the bishop on c8) 14.g3 Qh3 15.Be4 e5 16.Bg2 (and so White lands up with a typical and strong English bishop after all) 16...Qf5 17.a4! a5?! 18.Be3 Nd7 19.Nd5 Bd8 20.Rac1 left White with ideas of Nc7 and dominating the board in Adams-Salem, Sharjah 2017.

d2) Black has also declined the pawn, but after 10...Bf6 11.Rd1 White has ideas of Qe4, as well as Ne4 and Ne5, and the premature 11...g6?! was punished by 12.Bh6 Re8 13.Rac1 Nxc3 14.bxc3 b6 15.Ne5 Bb7 16.Nxf7! in Zagrebelny-Ponyi, Hungarian League 1992, which concluded prettily enough: 16...Kxf7 17.d5! exd5? (17...Qc7 18.dxe6+ Kg8 19.Rd7 followed by Qf3 or 19...Qe5 20.Rxb7 Na5 21.Qxe5 Bxe5 22.f4! would have fought on, but is excellent for White) 18.Rxd5 Rxe2 19.Re5+ 1-0.

Returning to 6...Nb6:

7.Bb3



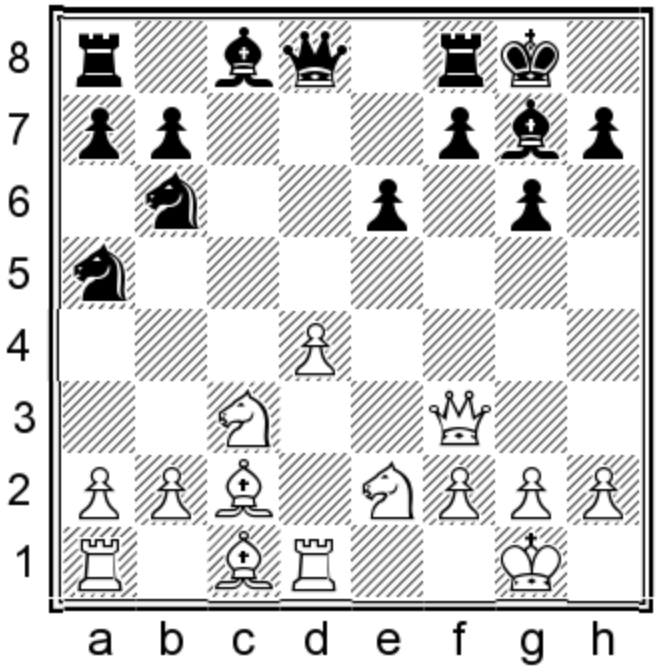
7...Nc6

chesstouring.com

Natural development.

Instead, 7...Bf5 can be met by 8.Qf3!? e6 9.Qxb7 if you want to grab a pawn, or by 8.d4 e6 9.Nf3 Nc6 10.0-0, transposing to our main line. Likewise, 7...e6 8.Nf3 Be7 9.d4 Nc6 10.0-0 reaches a position we'll see in the notes to Black's 8th move.

A more ambitious approach is 7...g6 when White can either develop in straightforward fashion with 8.d4 Bg7 9.Nf3 or try 8.Qf3!?, which at least forces a small weakening and after 8...e6 9.Nge2 Bg7 we unsurprisingly wonder about 10.h4!?, as well as the sensible 10.d4 Nc6 11.0-0 0-0 (11...Nxd4? 12.Nxd4 Qxd4 13.Ne4 would not be a good idea for Black, and if 13...0-0 14.Rd1 Qb4 15.Bf4 Re8 16.Rac1 when the ideas of Bd6 and Ng5 leave White with a very serious initiative indeed) 12.Rd1 Na5 (Black can scarcely allow 12...Nxd4? 13.Nxd4 Bxd4 14.Nb5 e5 15.Bh6) 13.Bc2, which kept control in Ortega-Garcia Palermo, Frascati 2005.



Play continued 13...Bd7 14.Qg3 (direct and likely stronger than 14.Bf4 Bc6, as advocated by Caro expert Jovanka Houska in her *Opening Repertoire: the Caro-Kann*) 14...Bc6 15.h4! Nac4 16.h5 Nd6 and now, rather than rush to release the tension on the kingside, 17.Bf4!? Nf5

chesstouring.com

18.Bxf5 exf5 19.h6 Bh8 20.d5! would have left Black under serious pressure after Bg5 or if 20...Nxd5 21.Nxd5 Bxd5 22.Nc3 Bxc3 23.Qxc3 f6 24.Qc5 and wins.

8.Nf3

Conventional development, as 8.Qf3 e6 would leave White a little vulnerable to ideas of ...Ne5.

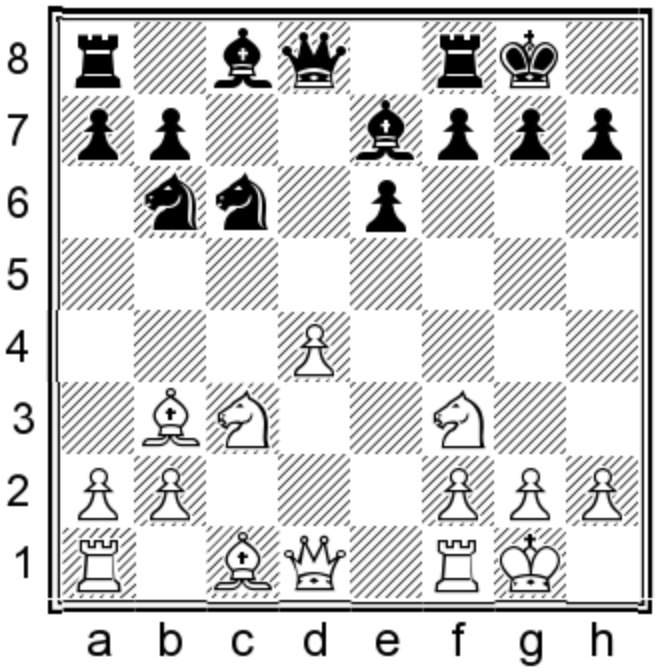
8...Bf5

Sam Shankland's recommendation in his excellent *Lifetime Repertoires: Black versus the English, Reti and Sidelines* Chessable course. Black develops his bishop as actively as possible, while refusing to fall for 8...Bg4? 9.Bxf7+! Kxf7 10.Ng5+.

White should also welcome 8...Nd4?! 9.Nxd4 Qxd4 10.d3 Bg4 11.Qc2 followed by Be3 and 0-0, with a4-a5 one way of destabilising Black's position, and 8...e5 9.0-0 Be7 (not 9...Bd6? 10.d4 Bg4 11.dxe5 Nxe5 when 12.Nb5! was already very strong in Ubilava-Iruzubieta Villaluenga, Elgoibar 1992, as would be 9...Bg4 10.h3 Bh5 11.g4!? Bg6 12.Re1 Bd6?! 13.d4, which just wins a pawn) 10.Re1 Bg4 11.h3 most certainly didn't have to be agreed drawn in Kuzmin-Ree, Budapest 1978. Yes, Black should be OK with his control of d4, but after 11...Bxf3 12.Qxf3 0-0 13.d3 Rc8 14.Be3! Qxd3 15.Rad1 Qg6 16.Nb5 White's initiative and bishops should not be underestimated, with Nxa7 an immediate threat.

Plenty of opponents are likely to opt for standard development with 8...e6 9.0-0 Be7 10.d4 0-0.

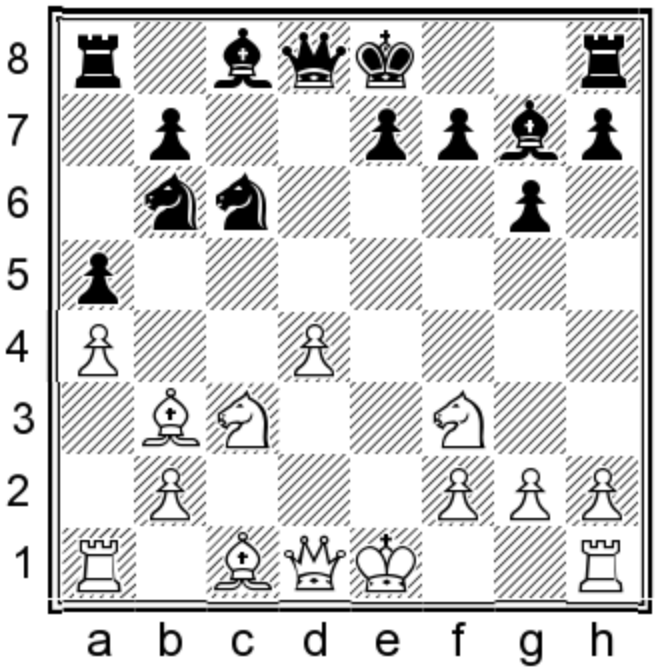
chesstouring.com



However, this should just be quite a pleasant version of an IQP for White, as Black's knight has abandoned defensive duties on the kingside. 11.Bc2 looks like a good start and if 11...Bf6 (or 11...Nb4 12.Bb1 Bd7 13.a3 N4d5 14.Qd3 f5 15.Ba2 followed by Re1 and Ne5 to exploit Black's weaknesses) 12.Qd3 g6 13.Bh6!? Nb4 14.Qe2 Nxc2 15.Qxc2 Re8 16.Ne4 Bg7 17.Bxg7 Kxg7 18.Rfe1 when White might be able to drum up an attack after Rad1, Ne5 and a rook lift via the third rank.

Finally, there's also 8...g6 when 9.a4!? contains a surprising amount of bite. Practice has seen 9...a5 (9...Bg7? 10.a5 forces Black to give up a key bishop on c3 to avoid 10...Nd7? 11.Bxf7+! Kxf7 12.Ng5+, and if 12...Ke8 13.Ne6, while 9...Bf5 10.a5 Nd7 was the course of Rojas Keim-Bacallao Alonso, Sabadell 2009, where 11.d4!? would have set a sneaky semi-trap: 11...Nxa5? 12.Bxf7+! Kxf7 13.g4, regaining the piece with interest thanks to the check on g5) 10.d4 Bg7.

chesstouring.com



The insertion of the a-pawn advances appears to in White's favour, partly as d5 and Be3 may destabilise the knight on b6. Black can exploit the hole on b4, but may struggle for counterplay, as shown by 11.d5 (seizing space) 11...Nb4 12.0-0 0-0 (12...Bxc3? 13.bxc3 N4xd5 14.Bh6 would most certainly not be a good idea for Black, and if 14...Nxc3 15.Bxf7+! Kxf7 16.Ne5+ Ke8 17.Qf3 with a deadly initiative) 13.Re1 Bf5 14.Bg5 Re8 when in Hamdouchi-Demuth, French League 2012, White couldn't resist 15.Rxe7 Rxe7 16.d6, but after 16...Re1+! Black was OK. Instead, 15.Ne5! would have menaced a sacrifice on f7, while intending a strong exchange sacrifice with 15...Bxe5 16.Rxe5 f6 17.d6+ Kg7 18.Rxf5 gxf5 19.Bf4, threatening Qh5, as well as Nb5-c7.

Returning to 8...Bf5:

9.d4

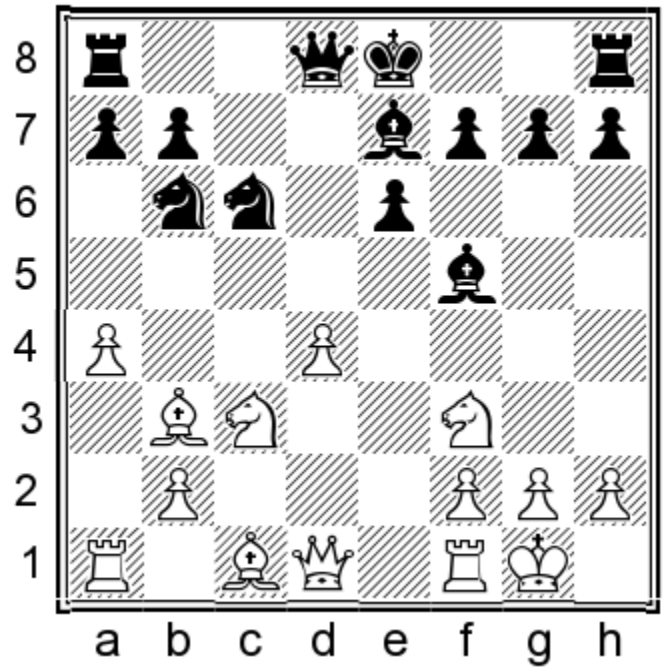
Naturally White has no desire to see the bishop settle on d3.

9...e6 10.0-0 Be7

chesstouring.com

Straightforward development too from Black who would now enjoy good counterplay after 11.Qe2?! 0-0 12.Be3 Na5!.

11.a4!?



Again we see this destabilising idea.

11...Na5

Black prevents a5. He can also do so with 11...a5 when White has a choice between 12.d5 and 12.Be3 Nb4 13.Ne5 N6d5, as in Gonsior-Raiano, Forli 1988, when 14.Qf3 0-0 15.Rac1 would have been sensible. White prepares mass exchanges on d5 followed by a rook invasion on c7, so Black should probably go in for 15...Nxe3 when both recaptures are possible and 16.Qxe3 would leave White with ideas of Rfd1 and Nb5, as well as a much more aggressive plan involving g4 and f4.

We should, of course, also see what happens if Black bravely goes 11...0-0!? 12.a5 Nd5. Now 13.a6 bxa6 doesn't seem too bad for him, so 13.Nxd5 exd5 14.Bd2 might be best, keeping ideas of a6 in reserve. Bosiocic-Sandhoefner, Austrian League 2016, continued 14...Bf6 15.Bc3 Re8 when

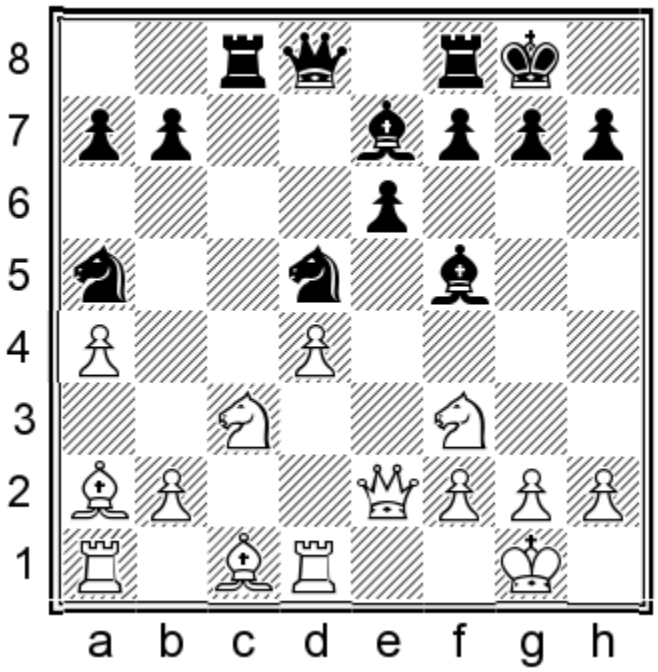
chesstouring.com

16.Ba4!? was worth a try, intending 16...Rc8 17.a6 bxa6 18.Ne5 Bd7?! (18...Bxe5 19.dxe5 Be6 would keep Black quite solid and objectively OK, although White can hope to probe after side-stepping ...d4 with 20.Qe2 Qb6 21.Qd3 and Bc2) 19.f4 with a firm clamp on the position, which Qf3 or Qd3 might begin to exploit.

12.Ba2

Maintaining the bishop makes sense, although 12.d5!? also comes into the equation.

12...0-0 13.Qe2 Rc8 14.Rd1 Nd5

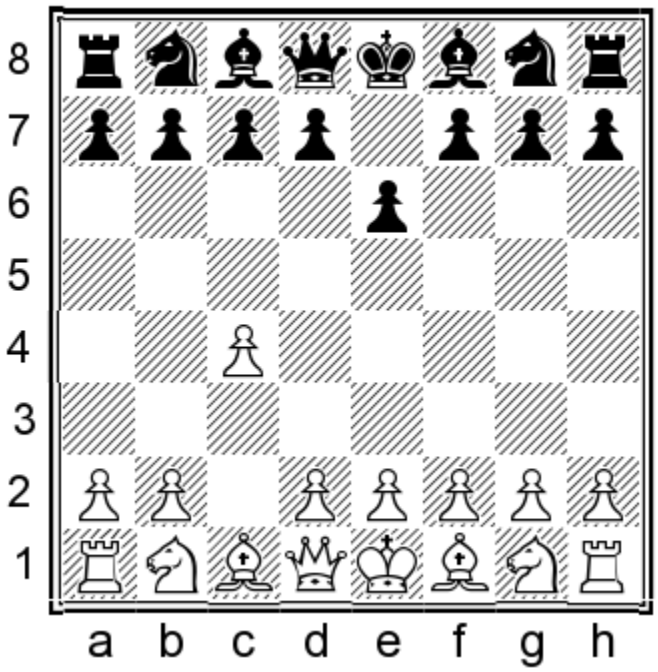


This was all quite logical from both sides in Aronian-Reuss, Deizisau 2003, where the future star (already rated 2610 back then!), retained sufficient control of the position with **15.Nxd5 exd5 16.Bd2 Nc4 17.Bc3**, after which **17...Re8 18.Ne5 Bd6?** (18...Bf6 19.Qf3 Be4 20.Qf4 Qd6 was the way to defend, although even here White might be able to drum up an initiative after 21.Re1 and Qg3, angling for a timely Ng4) **19.Qf3! Nxe5 20.dxe5 Be4 21.Qf4** suddenly left Black under heavy pressure in the centre.

chesstouring.com

Theory 9B

1.c4 e6



The choice of some Queen's Gambit players. You may well be happy with 2.Nc3 d5 (2...Bb4 3.Qb3 should lead to an edge) 3.d4, possibly because you have experience with the fairly easy-to-play and pretty decent Exchange variation, 3...Nf6 (or 3...Be7 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4) 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5. However, we most certainly don't have to transpose to 1.d4 territory or even opt for a Reti set-up with 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 or 3.e3...

2.e4!?

This is likely to surprise opponents, taking play not into the QGD, but the French Defence!

2...d5

Black's main choice, but not all 1...e6 players are also French fans. Those who don't play 1.e4 e6 might well deviate at this point and 2...c5 has been

chesstouring.com

seen in just over a quarter of games to have reached this position. The good news for White: 3.Nc3 takes us back into the realm of Line 7A and may well result in a Botvinnik set-up after all.

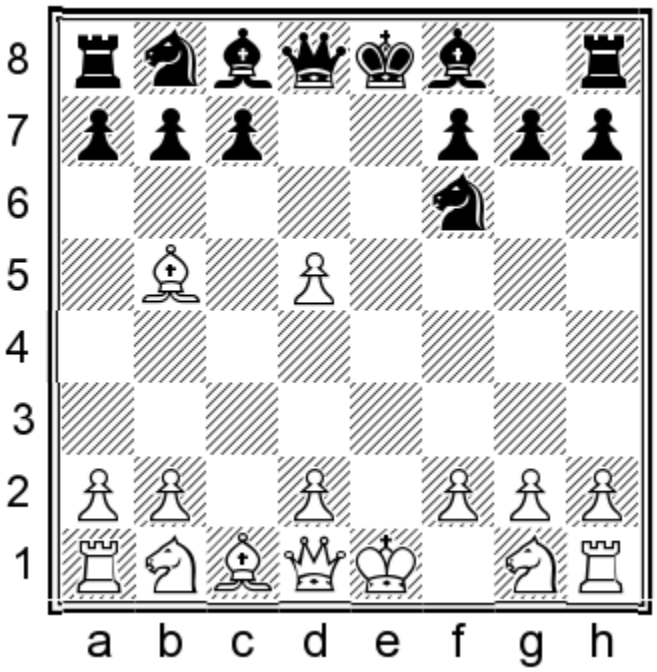
Other moves make little sense, with White ready to go 3.d4, although we dare say a case might be made for 2...e5!? when 3.Nc3 Nf6 (after 3...Bc5 you can either head for a Botvinnik set-up with g3 and Bg2 or even consider 4.d3 Nc6 5.Be3!? when 5...Bxe3 6.fxe3 d6 7.Nf3 Nf6 8.Be2 0-0 9.0-0 would enable White to expand on the queenside and/or consider ideas of Qe1 and Nh4) 4.f4!? is a decent version of the King's Gambit, as we saw at the start of our coverage of the Mikenas Attack.

3.cxd5 exd5 4.exd5 Nf6

Just as in the Caro-Kann lines of 9A, 4...Qxd5 would see Black losing time with his queen and, e.g. 5.Nc3 Qd8 (or 5...Qd6 6.d4 Nf6 7.Bc4 Be7 8.Nge2!? 0-0 9.0-0 with easy development and ideas of Bf4, as well as of seizing space with d5, and 5...Qa5 6.Bc4 Nc6 7.d4 Bb4?! 8.Nge2 Nge7 9.0-0 0-0, as in Miezis-Lie, Gausdal 2003, can be met by 10.a3 Bd6 11.Nb5, hunting down the bishop-pair and potentially also embarrassing the black queen) 6.Bc4 Nf6 7.Nf3 followed by 0-0 and d4, or 7...Qe7+ 8.Be2 Nc6 9.d4 Bg4?! 10.Be3 0-0-0 11.0-0 Qd7 12.Rc1 when White's king looks the safer of the two with Nb5 on the way.

5.Bb5+!?

chesstouring.com



Just as in our last section there's nothing wrong with 5.Nc3, but the text move may wrong-foot even experienced French players and has been championed by Maxime Vachier-Lagrave no less.

5...Nbd7

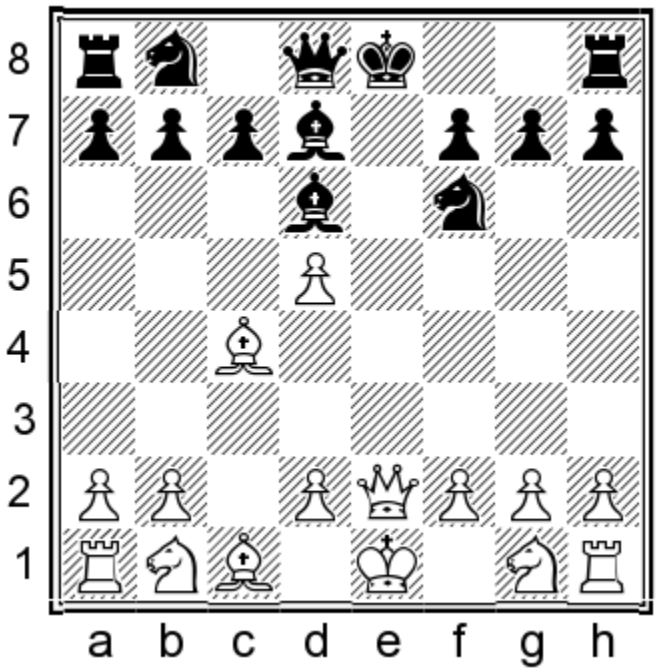
The most ambitious and most common response. Black simply wants to go ...Be7, ...0-0 and regain his pawn after ...Nb6.

Instead, 5...c6?! 6.dxc6 Nxc6 7.Nf3 shouldn't offer quite enough compensation: for example, 7...Bg4 8.0-0 Be7 9.h3 Bh5 10.Nc3 0-0 11.g4! Bg6 (11...Nxg4? 12.hxg4 Bxg4 13.d4 Bd6 14.Kg2 keeps control of the kingside, and if 14...Qf6 15.Bxc6 bxc6 16.Ne4 Qg6 17.Nxd6 Bh5+ 18.Bg5! Qxd6 19.Rh1) 12.d4 followed by Re1 or Bf4.

MVL is yet to face 5...Bd7, but we suspect that here he would hang on to the extra pawn with 6.Bc4 when plenty of moves have been tried, not least 6...Bd6 (otherwise, 6...Qe7+? 7.Ne2 Qc5 8.Bb3 Nxd5 regains the pawn, but after 9.0-0 Be7 10.d4 Qd6 11.Nbc3 White's lead in development is quite useful, and if 11...Nxc3 12.bxc3 0-0 13.Bf4, 6...Be7 7.Nc3 0-0 8.Nge2!? Bf5 9.Ng3 Bg6 10.0-0 Nbd7 11.f4! Nb6 12.d3 left Black's bishop in trouble

chesstouring.com

in Cao-Hoang, Balatonlelle 2001, and 6...b5!? might be met, not by 7.Bb3 a5, but the as-yet-unplayed 7.Be2! Nxd5 8.Nf3, simply developing and aiming to prove that Black has but weakened his queenside, as with 8...Nf4 9.0-0 Bd6 10.d4 followed by an exchange on f4 and Nc3, or 10...Nxe2+ 11.Qxe2+ Qe7 12.Qd3 0-0 13.Nc3 a6 14.Ng5!, forcing Black to weaken on the kingside too) when 7.Qe2+! is disruptive and offers chances for an edge.



Now 7...Qe7 (or 7...Be7 8.Nf3 0-0 9.0-0 Bg4 10.Nc3 Nbd7 11.d4 Nb6 12.Bb3 Re8, as in Kauko-Leino, Finnish League 2010, where 13.h3! Bh5? 14.g4 Bg6 15.Ne5 followed by f4 would have been the route to a large advantage) 8.Qxe7+ Kxe7 9.Nc3 Re8 was Lengyel-Szittar, Ajka 2004, where 10.Nge2 Kf8 11.d3 would have been sensible, and if 11...a6 12.a4 Bf5 13.0-0 Nbd7 14.Ng3 Bg6 15.f4!, again seizing the upper hand on the kingside while still leaving Black a pawn in arrears.

6.Nc3 Be7

Black normally develops so, to avoid 6...Bd6!? 7.Qe2+ Qe7, although here 8.Qxe7+ Bxe7 9.Nf3 0-0 may not be too bad for him. White can either

chesstouring.com

develop with 10.d4 Nb6 11.0-0 or maintain the extra pawn for now with 10.Bxd7!? Bxd7 11.0-0 Bg4 12.Ne5 Bf5 13.d4 followed by Re1 and Bf4 or Bg5.

A related line is 6...a6 7.Be2 Nb6 8.Nf3 Bd6 (Normunds Miezis is a a leading exponent of 1.c4 e6 2.e4!? and here his opponents have tended to prefer 8...Be7 when, for example, 9.d4 Nbxd5 10.0-0 0-0 11.Bc4 – MVL's 11.Ne5 might be met by 11...c5 – 11...Be6 12.Bb3 h6 13.Re1 was objectively about equal in Miezis-Zagorskis, European Team Championship, Pula 1997, but at least White had ideas of Ne5 and Qf3) 9.0-0 0-0, which after 10.d4 Nbxd5 sees Black regaining his pawn. White can, though, battle for the initiative, as with 11.Bd3 Bg4 12.h3 Bh5 13.Bg5 when, say, 13...Nxc3 14.bxc3 h6 15.Bh4 g5!? 16.Bg3 would be a risky idea for Black, with Re1 and Be5 on their way.

7.d4

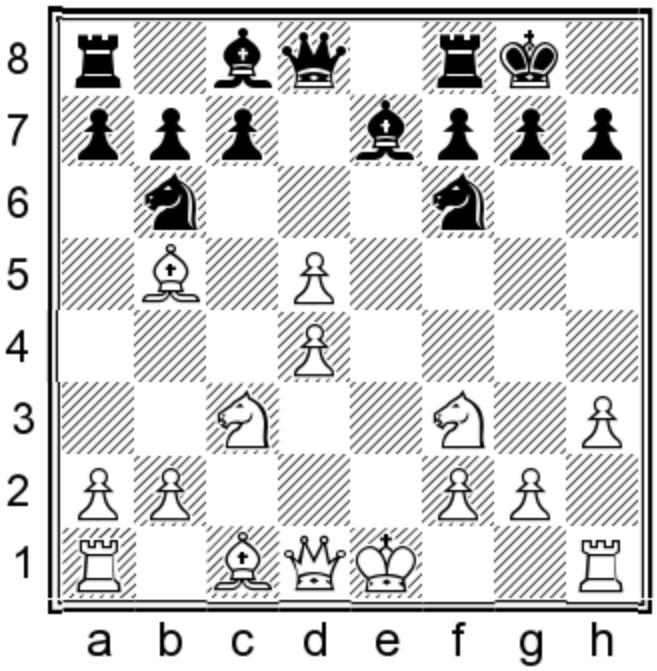
It's also possible to go 7.Nf3 and only then 0-0 and d4.

7...0-0 8.Nf3 Nb6

Regaining the pawn, but White should not be too unhappy, with the use of e5 and fairly active pieces.

9.h3!?

chesstouring.com



MVL's patented approach, playing to restrict Black's light-squared bishop.

9...Bf5

Instead, 9...Nfxd5 feels a little strange, moving the knight away from the defence of Black's king. He can try to equalise with 10.0-0 c5, but after 11.Nxd5 Nxd5 12.dxc5! Bxc5 13.Bg5 Be7 (even 13...Qd6 14.Bc4 Be6 15.Qd3 Nc7 16.Qxd6 Bxd6 17.Rac1 and Rfd1 might be a little something) 14.Bxe7 Nxe7 15.Re1 Ng6 16.Bc4! White was able to pressure f7 and so maintain a nagging pull in Wojtaszek-Dziuba, Katowice (rapid) 2019.

9...Nbxd5 would be a more conventional way of regaining the pawn, as MVL has twice faced at blitz: 10.0-0 Bf5 (or 10...c6 11.Bd3 h6 12.Re1 Re8 13.a3 Be6 14.Ne5 when White was ready to go Qf3-g3 in Vachier-Lagrave-Sargissian, Warsaw (blitz) 2012) 11.Re1 Bb4 12.Bd2 c6 13.Bc4 Bxc3 14.bxc3 Ne4 was rather ambitious from Black in Vachier-Lagrave-Caruana, Paris (blitz) 2016, where he was quickly outplayed: 15.Rc1 Qf6 16.Ne5 Rfe8 17.f3 Nd6?! (17...Nxd2 18.Qxd2 Rad8 19.a4 is easier for White to play with ideas of Qb2 and a5-a6, but should objectively be OK for Black)

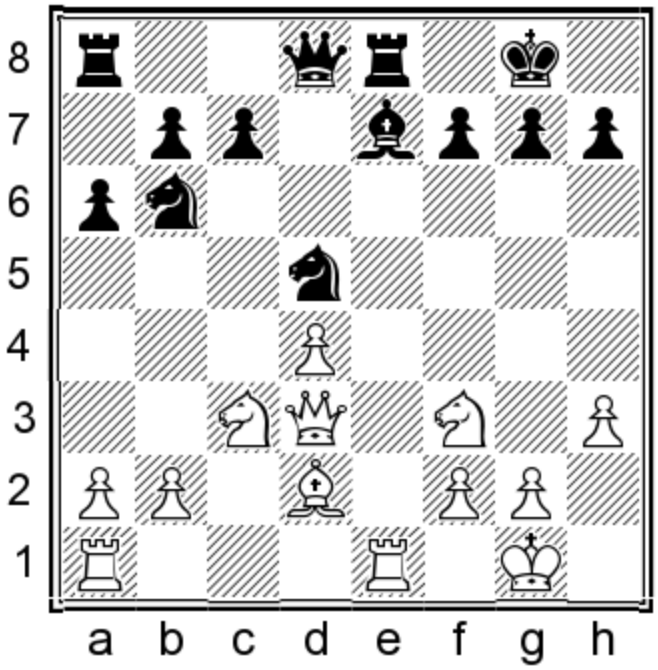
chesstouring.com

18.Bb3 Be6?! 19.Qe2 h6 20.Qf2 Nb6 21.c4! when Bc3 and d5 was one idea, f4 another, and Black was quickly crushed in short order.

10.0-0 a6 11.Bd3

Exchanging off Black's most active piece.

11...Bxd3 12.Qxd3 Nfxd5 13.Re1 Re8 14.Bd2



Straightforward development from White, who might now centralise with Rad1 and Ne4-c5 or consider ideas of Ne5 and Qf5. Once again, Black is OK from an objective viewpoint, but his position is slightly the harder to play, as quickly became apparent in Vachier-Lagrave-Bacrot, German Bundesliga 2012:

14...Nxc3 15.bxc3 Bf6 16.c4! Qd7?! 17.Bg5! Qc6 18.Bxf6 Qxf6 19.Qb3

Black is under pressure with c5 one threat, Ne5 another possibility and Bacrot lasted only another 13 moves.

chesstouring.com

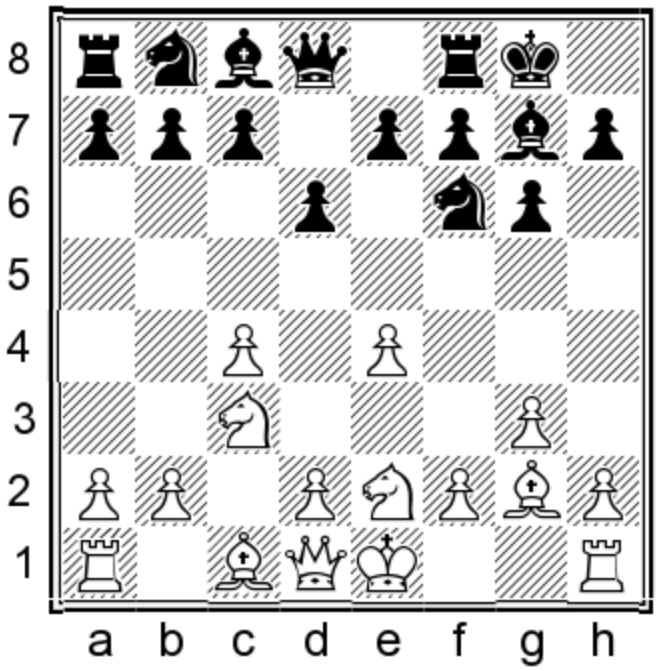
Index of Variations

English Versus King's Indian

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 0-0

4...e5 5.e4 Nc6 6.Nge2 – ***63***, ***83***

5.e4 d6 Nge2



6...e5

6...c5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d3 Rb8 (8...Ne8 – ***103***, ***124***; 8...Bd7 – ***106***; 8...a6 – ***103***, ***120***) 9.h3 a6 10.a4 Ne8 11.Be3 – ***110***

7.0-0 Nc6

7...c5 – ***87***

7...c6 8.h3 Be6 9.d3 – ***91***

chesstouring.com

8.d3 Be6

8...Nh5 9.Be3

9...Nd4 – ***67***, ***74***

9...f5 – ***67***, ***80***

9.Nd5 Qd7 10.Bg5 – ***72***

The Modern: 1.c4 g6 and 1...d6

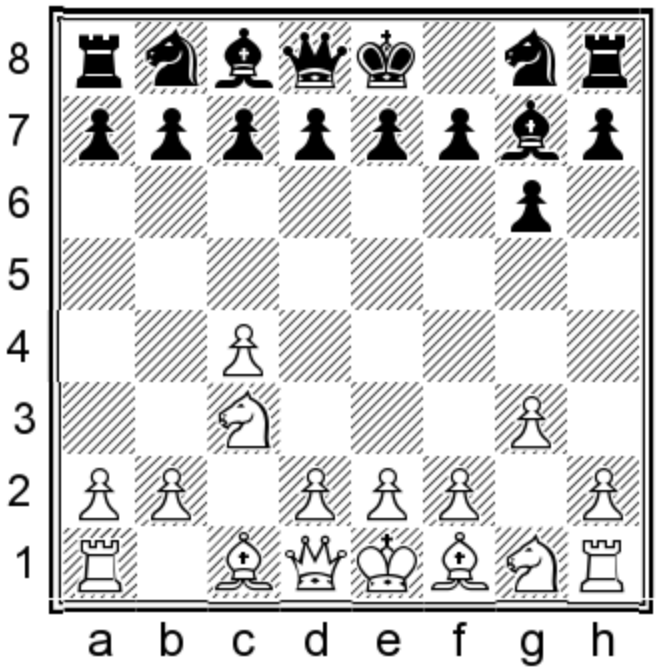
1.c4 g6

1...d6 2.Nc3 e5 3.g3

3...Nf6 4.Bg2 Be7 – ***187***

3...f5 – ***190***

2.Nc3 Bg7 3.g3



3...d6

chesstouring.com

3...c5 4.Bg2 Nc6 5.e4

5...e5 – ***207***

5...e6 6.Nge2 Nge7 7.0-0 d6 8.d3 0-0 9.Rb1

9...Nd4 – ***225***

9...a6 – ***227***

9...b6 – ***228***

4.Bg2 e5 5.e4 Nc6 6.Nge2

6...Nd4 – ***140***

6...Be6 – ***142***

6...Nge7 – ***148***

6...h5 – ***168***

6...f5 – ***169***

Other Fianchetto Defences

1.c4 f5

1...Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2

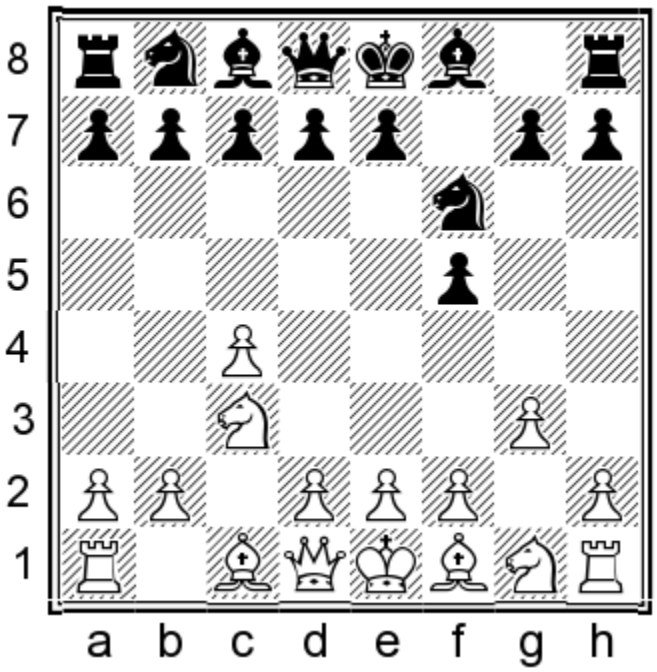
5...Nb6 6.d3 Bg7 7.Be3 – ***235***

5...Nxc3 6.bxc3 Bg7 7.Rb1 – ***242***

1...b6 2.Nc3 Bb7 3.e4 e6 (3...c5 – ***268***; 3...Nf6 – ***270***; 3...e5 – ***271***) 4.Nge2 Nf6 5.d3 – ***274***

2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3

chesstouring.com



3...e6

3...e5 – ***251***

3...g6 – ***254***

4.Bg2 Be7

4...Bb4 – ***261***

4...d5 – ***262***

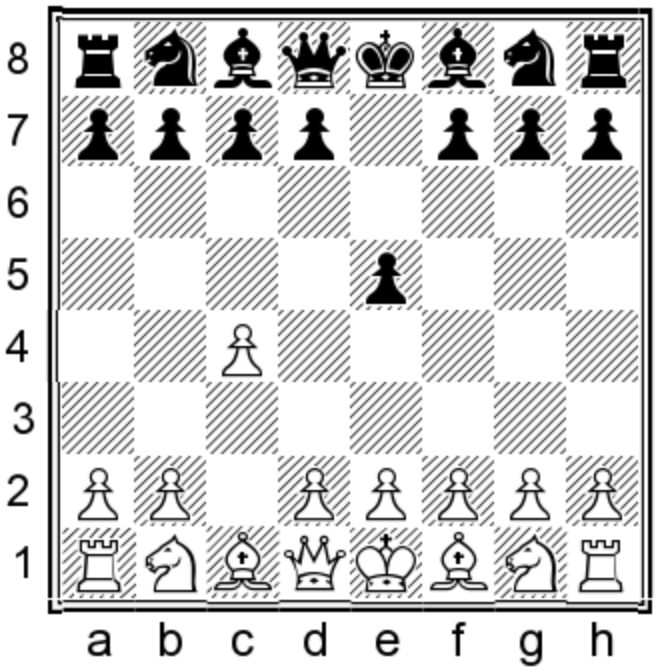
4...c6 – ***263***

5.d3 0-0 6.e4 – *264*

The Reversed Sicilian

1.c4 e5

chesstouring.com



2.Nc3 Nf6

2...f5 – ***284***

2...Nc6 3.g3 f5 – ***287***

2...Bb4 – ***361***

3.g3 d5

3...Nc6 4.Bg2

4...Bb4 5.Nd5 – ***290***

4...Bc5 5.Nf3 – ***302***

3...c6 4.Nf3 e4 5.Nd4

5...d5 – ***351***

5...Qb6 – ***355***

3...Bb4 4.e4 Bxc3 (4...0-0 – ***363***; 4...Nc6 – ***365***; 4...h6 – ***368***) 5.dxc3 d6 6.f3

6...0-0 – ***371***

chesstouring.com

6...a5 – ***370***

4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2 Nb6

5...Be6 – ***312***

5...Nxc3 – ***314***

6.e3 Be7

6...c5 – ***315***

6...Qd3 – ***318***

6...Nc6 7.Nge2

7...Bd6 – ***327***

7...h5 – ***329***

7...Bf5 – ***331***

7.Nge2 Nc6

7...0-0 – ***320***

8.0-0 0-0 9.f4

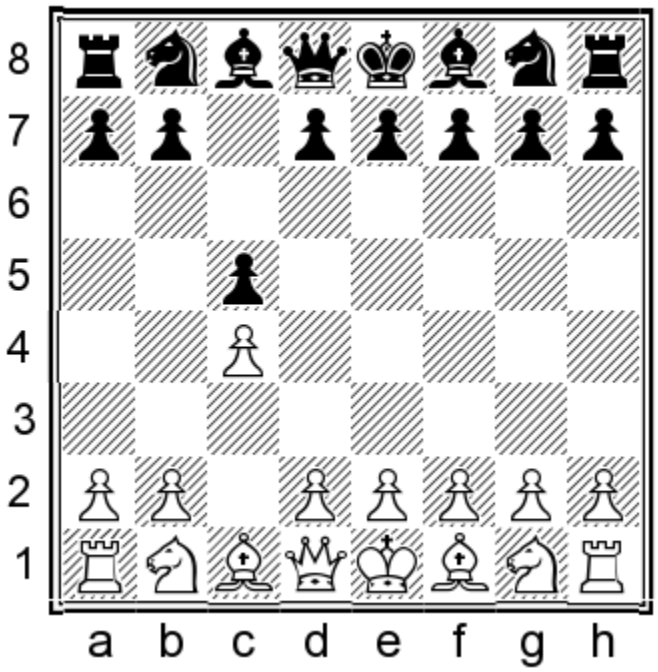
9...f6 – ***334***;

9...exf4 – ***336***

The Symmetrical English

1.c4 c5

chesstouring.com



2.Nc3 Nc6

2...e6 3.e4 – ***384***

2...Nf6 3.g3 d5 (3...e6 4.e4 – ***390***) 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2 – ***392***

3.g3 g6

3...Nf6 4.Bg2 e6 5.e4 – ***386***

4.Bg2 Bg7 5.e4 d6 6.Nge2

6...Nf6 – ***99***;

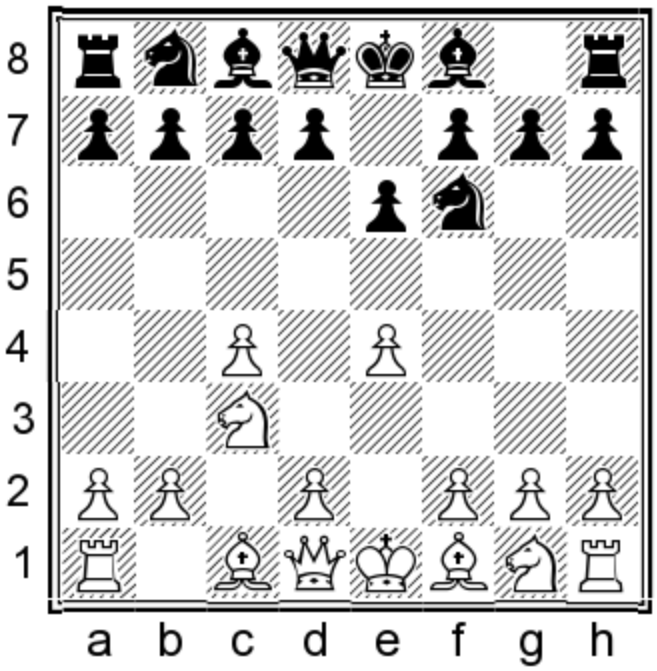
6...e5 – ***203***;

6...e6 – ***222***

The Mikenas Attack

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e6 3.e4

chesstouring.com



3...d5

3...Bb4 – ***405***

3...c5 4.e5 Ng8 5.Nf3 Nc6 (5...d6 – ***407***) 6.d4 cxd4 7.Nxd4 Nxe5 8.Ndb5 a6 9.Nd6+ Bxd6 10.Qxd6 – ***411***

4.e5 d4

4...Ne4 – ***423***

5.exf6 dxc3 6.bxc3 Qxf6 7.d4 e5

7...c5 8.Nf3

8...cxd4 – ***424***

8...h6 – ***425***

7...b6 – ***427***

8.Nf3 exd4 9.Bg5 Qe6+ 10.Be2

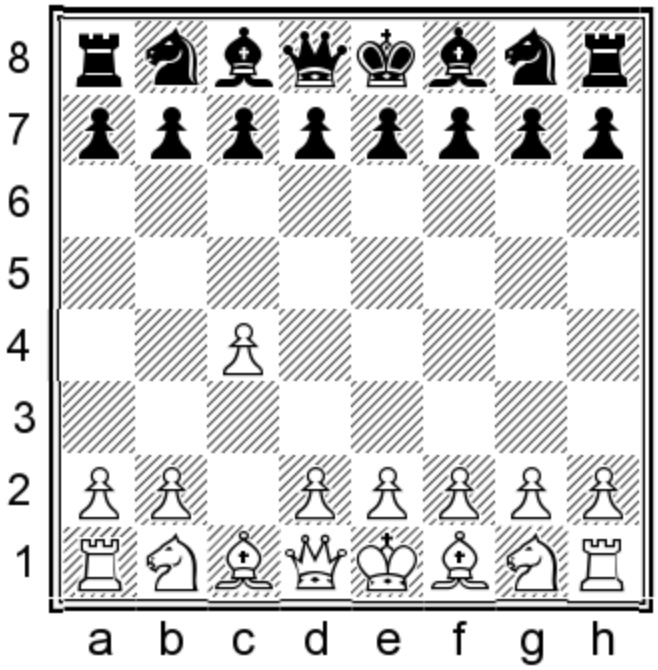
chesstouring.com

10...Be7 – ***431***;

10...f6 – ***42***

Other Lines (1...c6/1...e6)

1.c4



1...c6

1...Nc6 – ***438***

1...g5 – ***439***

1...e6 2.e4 d5 3.cxd5 exd5 4.exd5 Nf6 5.Bb5+

5...Bd7 – ***454***

5...Nbd7 – ***454***

2.e4 d5

2...e5 – ***441***

chesstouring.com

3.cxd5 cxd5 4.exd5 Nf6

4...Qxd5 – ***443***

5.Nc3 Nxd5

5...g6 – ***444***

6.Bc4

6...e6 7.Nf3 Nc6 8.0-0 – ***447***

6...Nb6 7.Bb3 Nc6 8.Nf3 – ***449***

chesstouring.com

Index of Complete Games

Bachmann.A-Berg.E, Limburg Open, Maastricht 2016

Botvinnik.M-Geller.E, Moscow 1966

Botvinnik.M-Szabo.L, Alekhine Memorial, Moscow 1956

Bryzgalin.K-Wieczorek.O, European Rapid Championship, Warsaw 2013

Carlsen.M-Anand.V, Grenke Chess Classic, Karlsruhe 2019

Carlsen.M-Aronian.L, Game 8, Clutch Chess (rapid) 2020

D'Costa.L-Teske.H, Czech Open, Pardubice 2014

Doncea.V-Touzane.O, French League 2010

Flores.D-Barrionuevo.P, Berazategui Open 2007

Flores.D-Weis.D, Mar del Plata Open 2007

Gelfand.B-Shirov.A, Tilburg 1996

Ding Liren-Radjabov.T, FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiysk 2019

Jones.G-Edouard.R, 1st matchgame, London 2014

Jones.G-Pert.N, British Championship, Bournemouth 2016

Kamsky.G-Khanin.S, Korchnoi Memorial, St. Petersburg 2018

Kokarev.D-Popov.K, Chigorin Memorial, St. Petersburg 2014

Kosten.A-Bednarich.J, Metz Open 2007

Nakamura.H-Navara.D, Wijk aan Zee 2012

Palliser.R-Haslinger.S, British Rapidplay Championship, Leeds 1999

Rivas Pastor.M-Polgar.S, Leon 1989

Romanov.E-Andreikin.D, Baku Open 2011

Skembris.S-Vukic.M, 2nd matchgame, Krusevac 1994

So.W-Giri.A, Wijk aan Zee 2016

Spraggett.K-Taimanov.M, Paris Open Championship 1989

Timofeev.A-Andriasian.Z, Russian Cup Final, Belgorod 2010

chesstouring.com

Tomashevsky.E-Iljin.A, Russian Under-20 Championship, Cheboksary 2006

Williams.S-Bakhtadze.G, Canary Islands 1995

Williams.S-Critelli.J, Dos Hermanas, Internet (blitz) 2003

Williams.S-Dyce.A, European Under-16 Championship, Zagan 1995

Williams.S-Howell.J, British Championship, Swansea 1995

Williams.S-Kahn.E, Budapest 1994

Williams.S-Locatelli.V, Cappelle-la-Grande 1995

Ziese.G-Lindh.S, French Correspondence Championship 2017

chesstouring.com