

starting out: sicilian sveshnikov

JOHN COX



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Bibliography

The Sveshnikov has been lucky in its authors: it is a rare treat for fans of any opening when a prominent grandmaster and regular supporter of that opening writes a book about it, but in the case of the Sveshnikov many of its finest grandmaster exponents, including Sveshnikov himself, Michal Krasenkow and Tamas Horvath, have written books about it. These are, of course, well worth having and studying, but more recently two grandmaster Sveshnikov devotees have set out their secrets, and as far as getting the theory goes, at least up to the books' respective dates, they are really the main sources:

The Sveshnikov Reloaded, Dorian Rogozenko (Quality Chess 2005)

Superb.

The Complete Sveshnikov Sicilian, Yuri Yakovich (Gambit 2002)

Also excellent.

I also used *Chess Informant*, *ChessBase Magazine* 93-115, and ChessBase's *Mega Database* 2007.

Introduction

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 (Diagram 1)

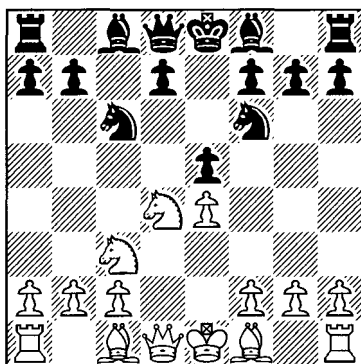


Diagram 1 (W)

The Sveshnikov

The Sveshnikov is a unique opening. If you polled 50 modern supergrandmasters on their idea of the five soundest ways to meet 1 e4, then without doubt the winners would be the Najdorf and Sveshnikov Sicilians, the Petroff and two Ruy variations, either the Marshall and Berlin, or perhaps the Chigorin. If we were to wind back though to, say, 1972, the date of the epic Spassky-Fischer match, then what would we find? The Marshall under Spassky's patronage and the Najdorf under Fischer's were well regarded. The Petroff and the Chigorin had been established for 70 years. The Berlin, it is true, did not enjoy its present prestige, but was still held to be a solid enough choice.

And the Sveshnikov? It simply didn't exist. Sure, Lasker had played something with ...e5 in it against Schlechter, hadn't he? – but then Lasker played all sorts of stuff, and anyway that was a must-win game with Black against a craven draw-

meister. And that Argentine fellow – Pelikan, was it? – he had some idea in the fifties, didn't he, but that's been refuted ages ago. Larsen might have played it once, but then Larsen – well.

And that was it. Everyone knew that you just couldn't go round making moves like 5...e5; sure, you gain a tempo on the knight, and of course there's the Najdorf and Boleslavsky variations, but those only go ...e5 after White's committed to Be2. When Bg5 and Bc4 to dominate d5 are still possible, ...e5 is just suicide.

Everyone, except a small gang of Russian juniors in an obscure city called Chelyabinsk, and in particular two little-known players called Evgeny Sveshnikov and Gennady Timoschenko. They started to analyse the opening, and to play it all the time against all-comers. And, surprise, the all-comers found that they weren't doing very well. The idea seeped out into the west in the late seventies – I well remember how suddenly one would turn up at English tournaments and see clusters of players analysing, and instead of the previously customary move 23 of the Dragon, on the board would be some strange position where Black would have two bishops against a rook and three pawns, his king would be on e5 or somewhere, and he'd have a mass of central pawns which enabled him somehow to dominate the board.

Not everyone approved – Timman, for example, when Tal was so flippant as to try the Sveshnikov at Wijk aan Zee 1976, observed in the tournament book that 'Zelfs Tal waagt zich aan dit fundamenteel inferieure systeem, dat tegenwoordig de grote is'. My Dutch isn't up to much, but I think you can catch his drift. Gligoric, more presciently perhaps than he knew, observed in 1974 that 'if it worked so easily, Black would play nothing but the Sicilian Defence'. It was generally agreed that at best the opening was another Benoni; seems like Black gets more play than you might think, but if White's careful his positional advantages are bound to prevail, right?

Karpov was the only one who ever looked like upholding that point of view in practice, but despite some nasty wounds inflicted by him, throughout the eighties more and more grandmasters started to play the Sveshnikov, until in 1992 a tall youth called Vladimir Kramnik made his bow on the world stage and brought the opening even to the level of Linares, where it has remained ever since, while it looks less and less likely that White is ever going to show that his positional advantages are bound to prevail. Today, probably a clear majority of grandmasters would even agree that 5...e5 is 'more correct' than the classical 5...d6, and it would be easier to list the top players who never play it than those who do. Topalov, Leko, Kramnik, Carlsen, Shirov and Radjabov all play it often; Leko particularly frequently and Radjabov virtually all the time.

Many openings have risen from ridicule to respectability through the passionate advocacy of one or two non-elite players – the Benko/Volga Gambit, the Leningrad Dutch – but none quite matches the Sveshnikov's rise from laughing stock to super-tournament regular. In microcosm the opening represents modern chess

itself: never mind how it looks; does it work?

That takes care of one reason to play an opening – its objective strength. Others are more intangible – will it suit me? Is there too much theory?

Will it suit me? – well, it's always hard to predict. The gentlemen I listed above don't have anything particularly obvious in common. I will dare to say, though, that to play the Sveshnikov well you should have a good eye for tactics and a feel for the initiative, and it's no use being the type who gets too worried about structural considerations. If you like to attack the king, it's difficult to think of another defence to 1 e4 which will give you the chance to do that so often.

Is there too much theory? Well, in my view this is the wrong question. There's a barrowload of theory on any decent opening. There's a game in this book which was theory up to move 29. But so what? The right question is rather: if I find myself in a position where I don't know the theory, can I get along without knowing it?

There's no denying it always helps to know the theory, and particularly in a sharp position. But if you want a sharp position and you don't want to play stuff like the Latvian Gambit – you'd like to have a decent position too, in other words – then you can't get away from the fact there's going to be theory. Everyone wants sharp and sound, and where 'everyone' is playing an opening, that's how theory appears. Generally, if you're not a theory-hound then what you are looking for is a position where you can have a reasonable idea of what you're trying to do, and where it isn't easily possible to lose in one move. Is that the Sveshnikov? I think it is. Quite often Black has the initiative, and that always makes it harder to lose in one go. As to knowing what you want to do, Rowson talks somewhere in one of his books about Sveshnikov players needing to learn to 'speak Sveshnikov', meaning that they gain a good understanding of the balance between dynamic play and structural weaknesses in the positions that typically arise. The very reason why the Sveshnikov was so misjudged by so many for so long is that this is counter-intuitive and difficult to do. If you play the Sveshnikov regularly and you get out-prepared, you will always have this to fall back on; it is not likely that any White player will have acquired the same feel for these positions as a regular Sveshnikov player. (One thing I would say which follows from this is that if you take up the Sveshnikov you should not expect to succeed at once. The positions have their logic but it is not the classical logic we were all brought up on, and to a greater extent than other openings, you need to give it time if you don't succeed at first.)

I can't deny, though, that there are some variations White can try where Black had better know the way if he doesn't want to get mauled – not many (certainly less than any Bg5 Najdorf line), but a few. It depends on the level you play at what you can expect to encounter, but ideally one would know more or less by rote the following three star moves:

a) Leko's 15...Rg8! defence (**Diagram 2**) to the 11 Bxb5 piece sacrifice shown at the beginning of Chapter Six.

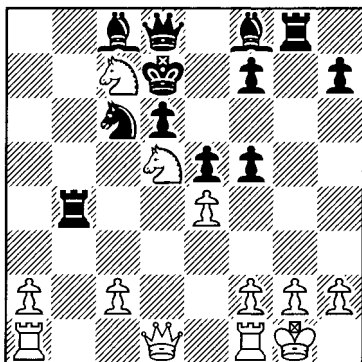


Diagram 2 (W)

Cool defence from Leko

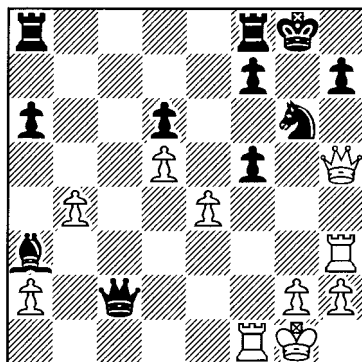


Diagram 3 (B)

The only move is 23...Rfd8!

b) How to defend in the critical line given in the notes to White's 19th in Game 42 (**Diagram 3**).

c) Leko's 18...Rb8! (**Diagram 4**) in Game 41.

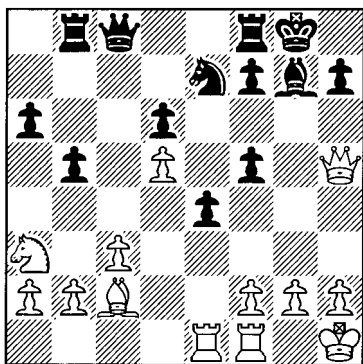


Diagram 4 (W)

Black needs counterplay with ...b4

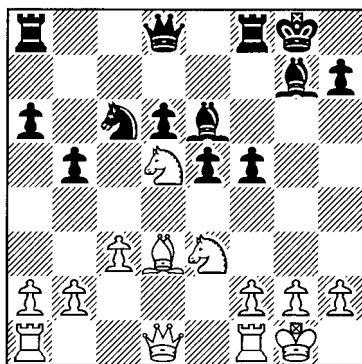


Diagram 5 (B)

Black must steer clear of 16...Ne7??

They're all rook moves, if it helps. In each case the move has its beauty and its logic, and if you understand that you could easily find them even if you didn't remember them. And if you find that at the level you play theory doesn't normally extend up to move 23, then there's no need to worry about these moves.

You could certainly play the Sveshnikov in the local league for a lifetime without these exact positions turning up.

And while I'm at it, every opening has its blunders that 'everyone' makes once, and unless you want to learn that way two blunders you should know and avoid are highlighted in Game 34 (in **Diagram 5** Black must avoid 16...Ne7??) and in Chapter One: 6 Nf5 d5! 7 exd5 Bxf5 8 dxc6 bxc6 9 Qf3 must be met by 9...Qd7 and not by 9...Qc8? (**Diagram 6**).

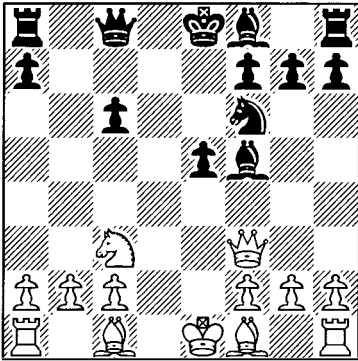


Diagram 6 (W)

10 Ba6! is strong

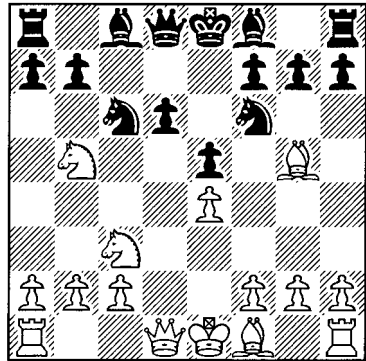


Diagram 7 (B)

We're back in the main line

I've made both of these in blitz games myself, so I know how natural they look.

Other than those, so long as you know the typical Sveshnikov plans, the sky won't usually fall down if you apply one which grandmaster practice may have shown isn't the optimal one in the given situation.

The layout of this book is not that of the typical *Starting Out* book where the most critical lines are shown at the beginning and the less critical at the end. The reason for this is that the Sveshnikov is not easy to grasp at first sight, and I don't think it makes sense to start off at the beginning of the book showing a variation which begins after eighteen moves for each side, some of which will probably seem to defy logic. I've preferred to build up to the deep lines so that, by the time we get there, I hope the reader new to the opening will be nodding understandingly, rather than scratching his head as he plays through the opening moves. I have again adopted the unscholarly practice of not attributing every line which was given by my predecessors, rather trying to make clear where I am proposing something novel or giving what is only my own opinion. Apart from being generally appropriate for a *Starting Out* book in my view, this is particularly practical where one is standing on the shoulders of such giants as Yakovich and especially Rogozenko; if I said 'according to Rogozenko' every time I gave some line of his

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then we'd be here all night.

The Sveshnikov usually arises after the opening moves 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 – this last move, as opposed to the classical continuations 5...d6 and 5...e6, being the move which defines the opening. It doesn't take a genius to see the hole on d5, and at least one genius, Capablanca, looked no further and condemned the move on that account. Whether the activity Black generates compensates for that hole is the basic strategic question of the opening.

It can also be reached by way of 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 (the Four Knights Sicilian) 6 Ndb5 (White has various options of course) 6...d6 (6...Bb4 is the Four Knights) 7 Bf4 e5 8 Bg5 (**Diagram 7**), taking a move more. This method avoids White's sixth and seventh move deviations in this book (not that those are worth avoiding) and in particular bypasses 2...Nc6 3 Bb5, but allows a host of other variations at move six including the dangerous 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 e5, and lots of moves like 6 Be2, 6 Be3 and 6 g3, which are not theoretically greatly favoured but give equal and complicated play in different structures. Personally I don't think it's worth the trouble, but of course it's a matter of taste. The repertoire in this book assumes the straightforward (i.e. the former) route to the opening. Some of the games in this book began the other way: I haven't sanitized those but I have sanitized the references to non-complete games, so that the move numbers are the same.

I've given more attention than most Sveshnikov books to White's admittedly not very good options at moves six and seven, simply because this book is not intended for grandmasters and at lower levels these moves are seen more frequently than you would think from the coverage they generally get. Moreover they are instructive, inasmuch as they show why it is that if White wants to get anywhere he has to enter the labyrinth of the Sveshnikov proper. In the deep lines it's a balancing act between giving moves and giving explanation: as *Starting Out* books go I have probably tended towards giving moves more than some. I don't believe in abandoning the reader in the middle of theory; like Oscar Wilde and the Gospel of St John, you want to see how it turns out in the end. It doesn't mean you're expected to memorize the whole line. Sometimes I've given theoretical lines without comment or explanation (usually discredited lines or examples); of course this isn't perfect but space dictates it occasionally, and as a reader myself I find it better than nothing at least to be shown what theory says so I can try and understand myself.

It's only right to say that I've never played the Sveshnikov in a serious game – yet – so one could say my credentials for writing this book aren't wonderful. If it was supposed to be a definitive work I would agree with that, but with a book intended to be an introduction to an opening, an open mind can sometimes be an advantage. I found the opening very interesting to approach, but counter-intuitive and contradictory to the ideas about the game I was brought up on. I like to think that enabled me to pose the basic questions which another newcomer to the open-

ing would tend to, perhaps more naturally than someone brought up on the Sveshnikov might have done, and hence direct myself to trying to answer those for the reader. But of course readers will have to judge for themselves.

As usual, the Everyman team were extremely helpful; my small children, while delightful, were not terribly helpful; and my wife was wonderful in addressing the latter issue as every other. My thanks to all of them.

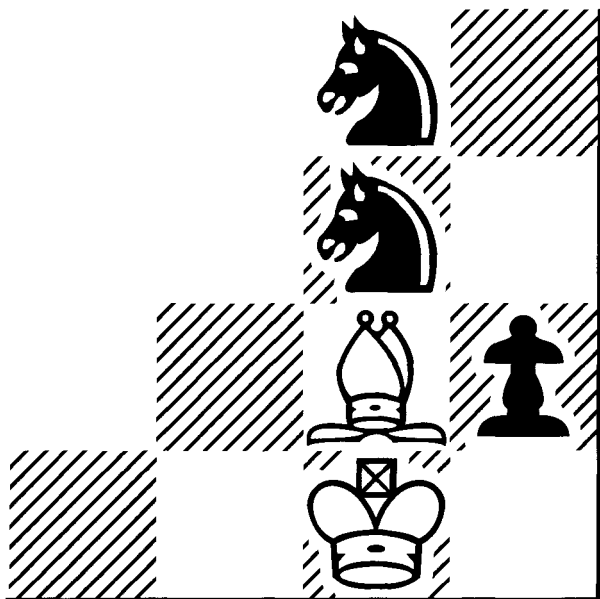
John Cox,
Ruislip,
January 2007

Chapter One

White Avoids 6 Ndb5

▨ **Classical Retreats: 6 Nb3 and 6 Nf3**

▨ **The Adventurous 6 Nf5 and 6 Nde2**



Classical Retreats: 6 Nb3 and 6 Nf3

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Nb3 (Diagram 1)

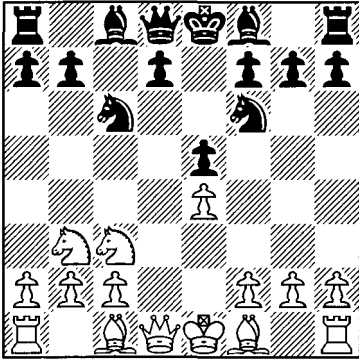


Diagram 1 (B)

White avoids the critical 6 Ndb5

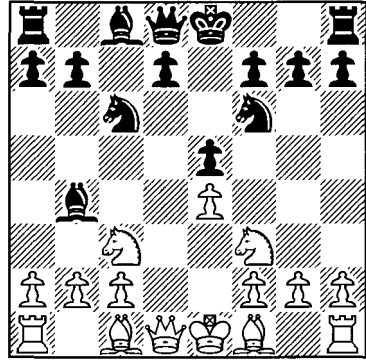


Diagram 2 (W)

Developing and pinning

The anti-positional 6 Nxc6 is considered in Game 1. Also seen is 6 Nf3 Bb4 (**Diagram 2**), when Black develops with a threat.



NOTE: 6...Bb4 is really the only move to consider. It is conceivable to play 6...d6 and simply develop, but by contrast with the main lines of the Sveshnikov White has managed to restrain ...d5 and keep Black's dark-squared bishop in without needing to exile a knight to a3, and he has chances to obtain the advantage.

It is possible for Black to play this structure, which was popular in the 1950s by the move order 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 d6 6 Be2 and only now 6...e5 7 Nf3 (or 7 Nb3). This is the Boleslavsky Variation, now forgotten but important in its time, since it was this system that drove 6 Be2 underground and focused attention on the Richter-Rauzer with 6 Bg5, where it has remained to this day. In our position, however, the bishop is not on e2 yet, and after 7 Bc4 White has a good version of the Boleslavsky. In any case, though, Black is already for choice after 6...Bb4, so there's no need really to look elsewhere.

Following 6 Nf3 Bb4, White has to do his best to control d5 if he wants to get anywhere. His alternatives to 7 Bc4 are not at all good:

a) 7 Bg5 is principled inasmuch as it aims to remove the knight which controls d5, but Black simply takes the bishop with 7...h6 when 8 Bxf6 is forced. Now Black should take the opportunity to inflict damage on the queenside with the

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zwischenzug 8...Bxc3+ (again this is a typical method: the pin is given up only once White makes it clear he's not going to fall for ...g5 and ...Nxe4) 9 bxc3 Qxf6 10 Bc4 0-0 11 0-0 d6 (**Diagram 3**).

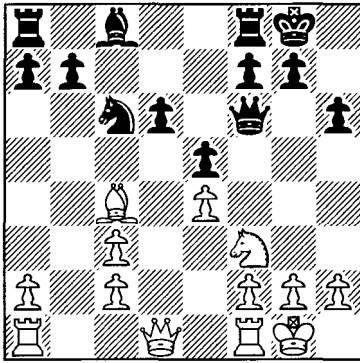


Diagram 3 (W)

Black enjoys the superior structure

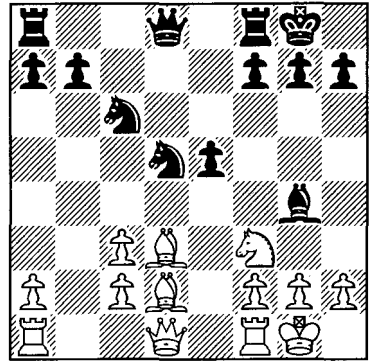


Diagram 4 (W)

Active and easy Black development

Black is clearly better here: he has no bad pieces, he can defend d6 easily with his king's rook on d8, he can use his other rook on the c-file, he can stop White getting anywhere on the b-file with ...b6, he can use the bishop either on g4 or e6, and the knight may one day be regrouped to the perfect c5-post, or perhaps with ...Na5-c4. And there will always be those c-pawns; meanwhile White has no active plan at all.

Even worse for White, though, is 7 Bg5 h6 8 Bh4?! g5 9 Bg3 Nxe4, although Black still has to be a little careful. Play might continue 10 Qd3 Qa5! (a typical twist; of course 11 Qxe4? Bxc3+ 12 bxc3 Qxc3+ wins the rook) 11 Nxe5!? (the best try) 11...Nxe5! (11...Nxc3? 12 Nc4 lets White get out of it) 12 Qxe4 Bxc3+ 13 bxc3 Qxc3+ 14 Ke2, but now the simple 14...d6 leaves White with a terrible position.

b) 7 Bd3 is solid but just allows 7...d5 8 exd5 Nxd5 when Black has more than equalized already; for example, 9 Bd2 (9 0-0 is a possible gambit, when Black could grab the pawn but simplest is 9...Bxc3 10 bxc3 0-0, and now 11 c4 isn't anything to worry about, weakening the pawn even more and obstructing the d3-bishop; by no means, though, 9...0-0?? 10 Nxd5 Qxd5 11 Bxh7+) 9...Bxc3 (Black wants to damage the pawns; 9...Nxc3 is certainly possible too, but the knight on d5 is a fine piece and this way Black doesn't need to lose a tempo retreating his bishop after White recaptures) 10 bxc3 0-0 11 0-0 Bg4 (**Diagram 4**) and again Black is doing splendidly: he is better developed and the pin on the f3-knight is really very annoying for White – probably Black's next move is 12...Re8 threatening ...e4.

c) 7 Qd3 is the sort of move often met with in club chess, trying to prevent the

doubled pawns and defend e4 at the same time. Black's best reply is 7...d5 when 8 exd5 (8 Bd2 is best but 8...Bxc3 9 Bxc3 Nxe4 10 Nxe5 0-0 is still clearly better for Black) leads White to a horrible position after 8...e4 9 Qc4 Qxd5 10 Nd2 Qe5.

d) 7 Bc4 is best met by 7...0-0 (**Diagram 5**), rather than 7...Nxe4 which is what White is hoping for: 8 Bxf7+ Kxf7 9 Qd5+ Kf8 10 Qxe4 d5 is not good for him, but he has some compensation after either just 8 0-0 or 8 Qd5 Nd6 9 Bb3 0-0 10 0-0 and Black's position is quite awkward to play. It's better just to carry on developing quickly and after 7...0-0 we reach another divide:

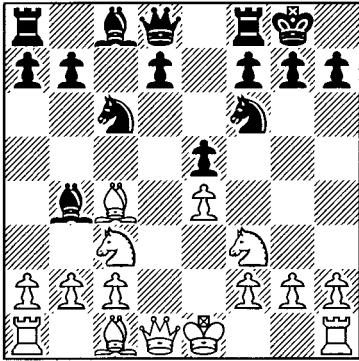


Diagram 5 (W)

Prudently castling

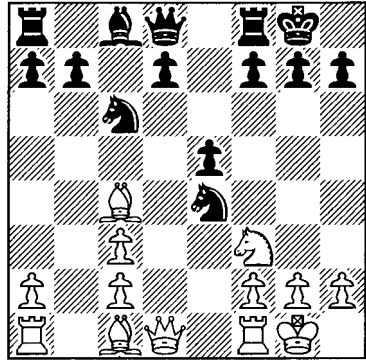


Diagram 6 (W)

Black grabs a pawn

d1) 8 Bg5 is a lot trickier than it was last move: 8...h6 (8...Bxc3+ 9 bxc3 Qa5 has been commoner – since it was first played by Staunton! – but I don't recommend it: 10 Qd3 Nxe4 is nice for Black, but much more complicated is 10 Bxf6 Qxc3+ 11 Nd2 gxf6 12 0-0, when White has pretty reasonable compensation, while 12 Qg4+ Kh8 13 Qh4 forces a draw) and now 9 Bxf6 Bxc3+ is the same as before, but 9 Bh4 is more complicated. Black should still play 9...g5 10 Bg3, but now 10...Qa5 first is the right move (with the bishop already on c4 10...Nxe4?! is asking for trouble; the differences are shown by 11 Qd3 Qa5? – 11...d5 is forced – 12 0-0 Nxc3?? 13 Qg6+ mating): 11 0-0 (11 Qd3 Bxc3+ 12 bxc3 d5 is crushing for Black since he opens the e-file up and gets at the white king one move before it can vanish; for example, 13 Bxd5 Nxd5 14 exd5 e4 15 Qc4 exf3 and either Black wins a piece or he gets to have fun after 16 dxc6 fxxg2 17 Rg1 Re8+) 11...Bxc3 12 bxc3 Qxc3 and now White is worse unless he plays 13 Qd6 Qxc4 14 Qxf6 Qe6, although even here the split queenside pawns give Black anything which is going.

d2) 8 Qd3 is met again with 8...d5!, when 9 Bxd5 Nxd5 10 Qxd5 Nd4 wins the pawn back with a slight advantage after 11 Qxd8 Rxd8 12 Nxd4 exd4 13 a3 Bxc3+ 14 bxc3 dxc3.

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d3) 8 0-0 Bxc3 9 bxc3 Nxe4 (**Diagram 6**) does give White some chances with his two bishops, but Black should be very happy with this position out of the opening, as we will see in Game 2.

Returning to 6 Nb3:

6...Bb4 (**Diagram 7**)

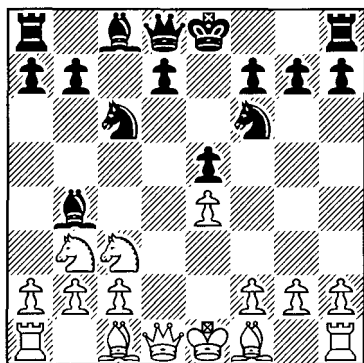


Diagram 7 (W)

The pin is again awkward

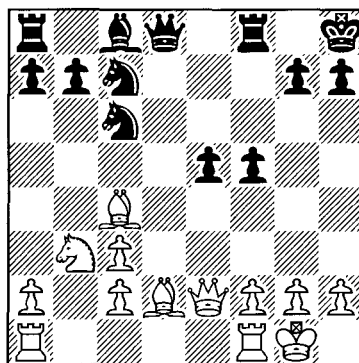


Diagram 8 (W)

Black has good central control

Again this natural move is best; White simply can't hold on to d5 and with control over that square lost all the defects of Black's opening disappear.

7 Bc4

It's natural to try and hold ...d5, although the bishop looks alarmingly loose here with the knight on b3. Instead 7 Bd3 d5 8 exd5 Nxd5 9 Bd2 Bxc3 (9...Nxc3 10 bxc3 Bd6 11 Qh5 was Schlechter-Lasker; this might be good for Black too but it gives White more play than he deserves – the centralized knight and the tempo are worth more than the bishop) 10 bxc3 0-0 11 0-0 f5 12 Bc4 Kh8 13 Qe2 is a natural sequence, and now Black has a number of good moves. I like the methodical 13...Nc7 (**Diagram 8**), intending ...Be6 to trade White's only good piece.

Alternatively, 7 Bg5 h6 8 Bxf6 Bxc3+ 9 bxc3 Qxf6 is nothing for White; and 7 Bd2 keeps White's pawns nice and tidy, but doesn't challenge Black at all if he's careful: 7...Bxc3 (7...0-0 8 Nd5 Bxd2+ 9 Nxd2 is fine for Black too although the text plays for the advantage more forcefully) 8 Bxc3 (hoping for 8...Nxe4 9 Qg4 Nxc3 10 Qxg7 Rf8 11 bxc3 d5 which is actually quite possibly best, but does allow White to create complications) 8...d5 (**Diagram 9**) 9 exd5 Nxd5 really obliges White to waste time with 10 Bd2. Then after 10...0-0 Black's development at least compensates for the bishop pair; for example, 11 Bb5 (11 Bc4 Nb6 12 Be2 Be6 and ...Nc4, 11 Bd3 e4, and 11 Qf3 Nf6, followed by ...Bg4, all have their drawbacks) 11...Qh4 12

0-0 Rd8, when Black is at least going to be able to remove bishop for knight after ...Nf4 and remain with a sound structure and at least equality.

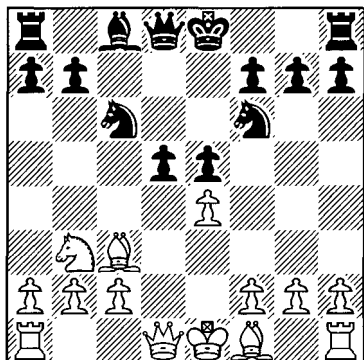


Diagram 9 (W)

A thematic ...d5 equalizer

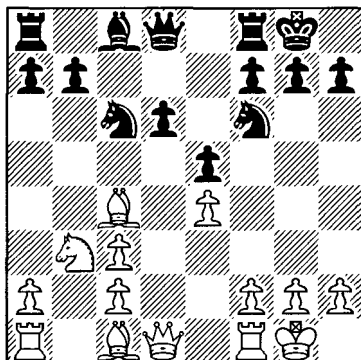


Diagram 10 (W)

The b3-knight is a little misplaced

7...0-0

7...Nxe4 is highly spoken of by Yakovich, but Rogozenko thinks that after 8 Bxf7+ Kxf7 9 Qd5+ Kf8 10 Qxe4 d5 11 Qf3+ Kg8 12 0-0 Be6 13 Rd1 Bxc3 14 Qxc3 White has some initiative. Certainly in practice I think Black is much better advised to adopt the text move, after which White must struggle to reach equality.

8 0-0

8 Qd3 is an inaccurate move order as we'll see in Game 3.

8...Bxc3 9 bxc3 d6 (Diagram 10)

Instead 9...Nxe4 10 Ba3 d6 11 Qe1 gives White better chances than the version with the knight on f3 because of the possibility of f4, and I don't advise it although probably White's pressure shouldn't give him more than equality. After 9...d6, White has nothing better than transposing to Game 3 with 10 Qd3, since after 10 Bg5 h6 11 Bh4 Black should not be afraid to take the pawn with 11...g5 12 Bg3 Nxe4 when White has no compensation.

Illustrative Games

Game 1

□ A.Kofidis ■ A.Tzermiadianos

Greek Championship, Athens 1997

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Nxc6

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

White immediately abandons any hope of dominating d5 and gives Black an extra central pawn for the sake of a single tempo. A dreadful move, quite frankly, but one does meet it at lower levels, and the 2400-rated player in this game tries it regularly. By comparison with the Taimanov variation 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 e6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Nxc6 bxc6, White has essentially lost two whole tempi, since ...a6 is useless or worse in the structure which now arises, and the e-pawn usually has to be advanced again from e6 to e5. There White can contend seriously for the advantage; here he can't, although one has to remember he probably isn't worse either.

6...bxc6 (Diagram 11)

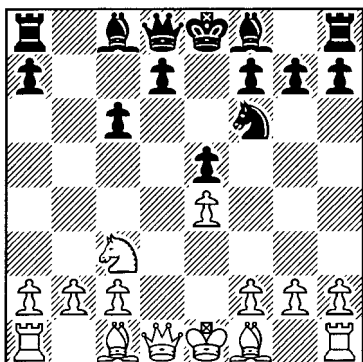


Diagram 11 (W)

Black is already positionally better

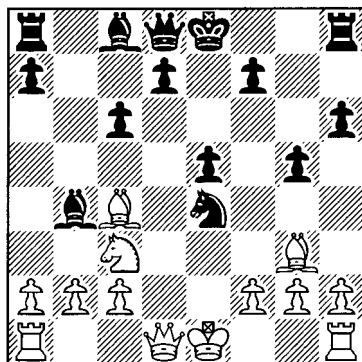


Diagram 12 (W)

White lacks compensation

Instead 6...dxc6 7 Qxd8+ Kxd8 8 Bc4 Bb4 9 Bd2 Ke7 is perfectly possible if Black likes that sort of thing, but hardly in the spirit of the Sveshnikov.

7 Bc3

A more critical way to follow up White's sixth is to embark upon a hopeless quest to restrain ...d5 with 7 Bc4 Bb4 8 Bg5, when Black should react as usual with 8...h6 9 Bh4 g5 10 Bg3 Nxe4 (**Diagram 12**). Black is doing great here, but I can't resist showing the game N.Cherkasov-A.Shariyazdanov, Swidnica (rapid) 1997, which went 11 Qf3 (the best White can do is 11 Bxe5 Qe7 12 Qd4 f6 13 Qxe4 Bxc3+ 14 bxc3 Qxe5 but evidently Black is more than fine here) 11...Bxc3+ 12 bxc3 d5 13 Bxe5 0-0 14 Bd3 Re8 (White looks to be losing a piece, but he has a saving clause) 15 Bxe4 Rxe5 16 0-0-0! Qe7 17 Bd3 c5?! (several other moves including 17...Rb8 were much better and left Black all but winning) 18 c4 g4? 19 Qf4 dxc4 20 Bxc4! Re4 21 Qxh6 Rxc4 22 Rd5?? (oh no!; correct was 22 Rhe1 Qf8 23 Qg5+ Kh7 when White can force a draw with 24 Re8! or 24 Rd8 Qg7 25 Rh8+, or continue the struggle in a most unclear position with 24 Qd5) 22...Rxc2+ and 0-1 as ...Qe4+ fol-

lows. It's easy to imagine the unrated White player's emotions in this game as he battled his grandmaster opponent.

Meanwhile 7 f4 is the way the Danish IM Bjarke Sahl plays the position, but Black should as usual play 7...Bb4 8 Bd3 (or 8 Qf3 d5 9 exd5 Bg4) 8...d6 9 0-0 0-0 with no problems (10 fxe5 Ng4 and ...Nxe5).

7...Be7 8 0-0 (Diagram 13)

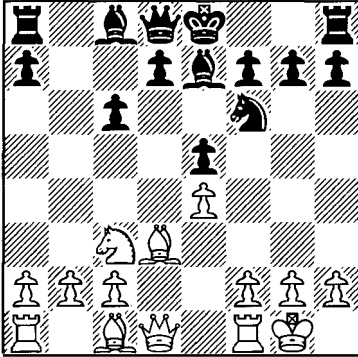


Diagram 13 (B)

Black shouldn't rush with ...d5

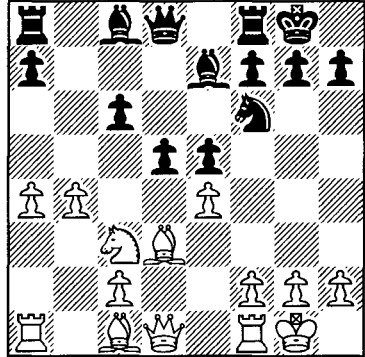


Diagram 14 (W)

Flank versus central play

8...d6



WARNING: 8...d5? is premature since after 9 exd5 cxd5 10 Re1 Qd6 (or 10...e4) 11 Bb5+ Black has to play 11...Kf8.

However, the most natural, and probably best, way to play is 8...0-0 9 b3 d5 10 Bb2 Be6 11 Qe2. Kofidis has rather specialized in this position, but it's impossible to imagine Black isn't at least fine here. Defending the e-pawn with 11...Bd6 looks like an excellent way to start. Black ought to keep the tension for a while and not play ...d4 until he's in a position to follow it up either with ...f5 or a campaign somehow to win control of c4.

9 b4

A consequent plan to try and win control of d5 after all by exchanging the c6-pawn. Obviously, though, White is taking some obligations on himself with his slow development and weakening the c-file. A less ambitious way to play was 9 Qe2 0-0 10 Kh1 Be6 11 f4, although Black has nothing to worry about after (among others) 11...exf4 12 Bxf4 Ng4 – this type of position sometimes arises in the Scheveningen when Black chooses to play ...e6-e5 at some moment, but there clearly he is at least a tempo worse off, and still is usually equal.

9...0-0 10 a4

10 b5 cxb5 11 Bxb5 was another logical follow-up for White, but Black should have no problems here.

10...d5 (Diagram 14) 11 Ba3

But this is not good. White shouldn't want to trade these bishops. Instead he should go on with his plan with 11 b5, when 11...Bb4 12 Bd2 Qa5 13 Qe1 d4 14 Nb1 is no more than a temporary flurry of activity, although certainly White isn't better here.

11...Be6 12 b5 Bxa3 13 Rxa3 Qd6 14 Qa1 d4 15 Ne2 c5

Now Black is better: he has more space and the better bishop, and White cannot get anywhere on the queenside where he has his advanced pawns.

16 c4 a5 (Diagram 15)

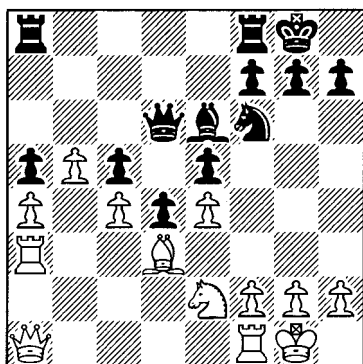


Diagram 15 (W)

Black closes the queenside

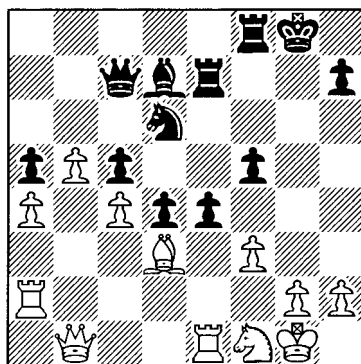


Diagram 16 (W)

The decisive breakthrough

A controversial and instructive move; Black concedes a protected passed pawn, but meanwhile a knight on b6 will keep White's entire queenside frozen and a couple of pawns in need of permanent defence while Black uses his extra central space to good effect.



NOTE: It was perfectly possible to allow a5, but it's usually a good trade to give the passed pawn in return for stifling White's play in such positions: where there are still many pieces on the board and White is cramped.

17 Ng3 Rfe8 18 Qc1 Nd7 19 Qd2 Nb6 20 Rc1 Qc7 21 Qe2 f6 22 Nf1 g6 23 Nd2 f5

Black could perfectly well have continued manoeuvring, but he decides that he doesn't see how to improve his pieces, while White's could clearly still use a bit of

reorganization.

24 exf5

A difficult choice. It's not easy to allow ...f4 and settle down to see whether Black's huge space advantage is decisive, but that might have been the better course.

24...gxf5 25 f3 Re7 26 Re1 Bd7

I'm not sure this was right. White ought to put his knight on b3 now, where it ties down more of Black's army than is comfortable (White wants to regroup the a3-rook anyway). To meet this Black would like to go ...Nd7, but his bishop has taken that square.

27 Qd1 Nc8 28 Qb1 Nd6 29 Nf1 Rf8 30 Ra2?

One can see why the rook was fed up with being on a3, but 30 Ng3 was necessary to prevent Black's next.

30...e4! (Diagram 16)

Decisive; clearly White had not realized this was possible.

31 fxe4 fxe4 32 Bxe4

White 'had' to allow ...e3 but prefers to lose a piece quickly.

32...Rxe4 33 Rxe4 Bf5 34 Ng3 Nxe4 35 Nxe4 Qf4 0-1

Points to Remember

1. Don't play ...d5 too soon; castle first.
2. If White tries to restrain ...d5 then as usual driving a g5-bishop away and taking on e4 is good.
3. Black can play either with ...d5 or ...d6; in both cases a level struggle arises where Black possibly has slightly the better chances, but it's important not to become too optimistic and conclude that any opponent who plays 6 Nxc6 must be terribly weak.

Game 2

□ **G.Mukhin** ■ **A.Minasian**

Leningrad 1990

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Nf3 Bb4 7 Bc4 0-0 8 0-0 Bxc3 9 bxc3 Nxe4 10 Ba3

The main alternative is 10 Re1 Nxc3; the knight looks to be wandering dangerously out of play but Black has a trick after 11 Qd3 in the form of 11...d5 (**Diagram 17**), when White has nothing better than 12 Qxc3 dxc4 13 Ba3 Re8 14 Nxe5 Nxe5 15 Rxe5 Rxe5 16 Qxe5 Be6 and faces a long struggle to draw. Instead 10 Qd3 Nf6 11 Bg5 (11 Ba3?? runs into 11...e4, while 11 Qd6 Ne8 is also nothing) is well met by

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

11...h6 12 Bh4 d5, when White can do no better than 13 Bxf6 dxc4 14 Qxd8 Nxd8 15 Bxe5 Nc6 with advantage to Black.

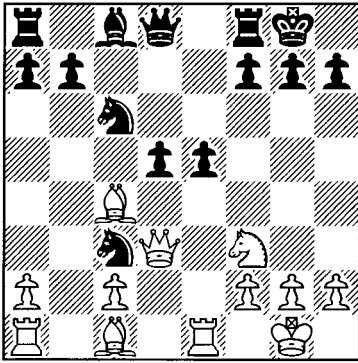


Diagram 17 (W)

An effective way to save the knight

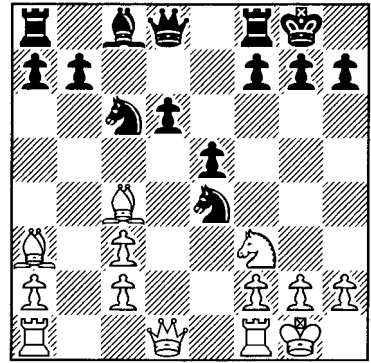


Diagram 18 (W)

White can regain his pawn

10...d6 (Diagram 18) 11 Re1

White goes to win his pawn back.

The other try is 11 Qe1 (11 Qd3 Nc5 is also fine for Black), when it seems to me that Black could very well play the meek 11...Nf6, since 12 Rd1 e4 13 Nd4 (or 13 Rxd6 Qa5 14 Bb4 Nxb4 15 cxb4 Qc7 16 Rxf6 Qxc4 17 Rf4 f5 when White's pieces are jammed quite comically out of play) 13...Ne5 14 Be2 Re8 leaves White with more or less no compensation, and 15 Nb5 Nf3+ is an unkind point.

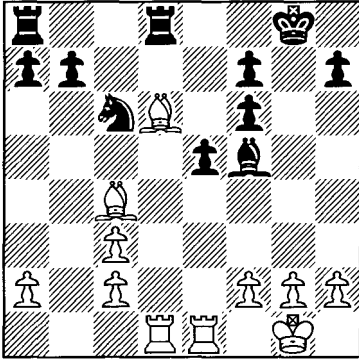
Instead in J.Bosch-I.Rogers, Hertogenbosch 1999, the Australian GM chose the more complicated 11...Bf5, which is based on some sharp tactics pointed out by Rogozenko after 12 Rb1 (12 Rd1 Qa5 13 Bb4 Nxb4 14 cxb4 Qc7 15 Bd3 d5 was the game, when Black isn't so much better anyway after 16 c4) 12...Qa5 13 Nh4 Be6! 14 Bb4 (or 14 Qxe4 d5) 14...Nxb4 15 cxb4 Qc7 16 Bxe6 fxe6 17 Qxe4 Rf4! (now that was lucky!).

11...Ng5

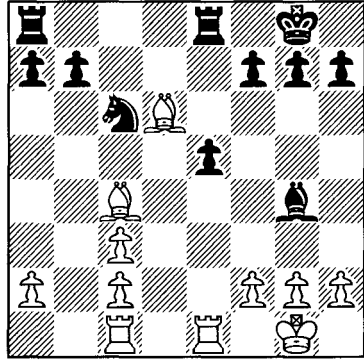
11...Bf5 12 Qd3 is undesirable for Black, who is in severe danger of getting his pieces entangled, but the text just leads to a pleasant position. 11...Qa5 is also possible, when 12 Bxd6 Nxd6 13 Qxd6 Qxc3 14 Qd3 Qxd3 15 cxd3 is about equal.

12 Nxf5 Qxf5 13 Bxd6 Bg4

The obvious way to play was 13...Rd8 14 Qf3 Qf6 15 Qxf6 gxf6 16 Rad1 Bf5 (**Diagram 19**) when Black certainly has nothing to fear. The text is tricky (as usual with Minasian), but I'm not sure whether it was as good.

**Diagram 19 (W)**

Black clearly hasn't any problems

**Diagram 20 (W)**

Black is a little better

14 Qc1

14 Qb1 was critical, when I'm not sure what Black meant to do: 14...Bf3 15 Bf1 Rfc8 16 Re3 looks as though it would have been a bit awkward to meet. However, 16 Qxb7 is not as good: 16...Qg6 17 Re3 Nd4 18 Qa6 Nxc2 19 Rxf3 Nxa1 20 Bxe5 Qxa6 21 Bxa6 Re8 is hard to judge but my feeling is that Black is better.

14...Qxc1 15 Raxc1 Rfe8 (Diagram 20) 16 Bd5

This might be OK, but in playing it White needs to realize the danger he is in, which I don't think he did. 16 f4 was a sensible alternative, trading some pawns, giving the d6-bishop some elbow room and opening a path for the king.

16...Be6 17 Bxc6 bxc6 18 a3?

18 Rxe5 was the only way for White to justify entering this ending. The point is 18...Bxa2 19 Rc5, when 19...Rec8 is met by 20 c4 embarrassing the bishop. White would make a draw quite easily then, whereas with the text he condemns himself to a hideous struggle. It's very surprising a player of Mukhin's strength and experience allowed himself to be led into this very common type of horrible ending without a fight.

18...f6 (Diagram 21)

Black is effectively a pawn up here – the c2-pawn is pretty much just in the way – and the opposite-coloured bishops aren't much of a drawing factor with rooks on the board.



NOTE: This sort of ending arises often from the French, and White loses them nine times out of ten: they are deceptively unpleasant for him.

19 f3 Red8 20 Red1 Bc4 21 Kf2 Kf7 22 Bc5 a6 23 Rb1 Ke6 24 Ke1 Rd5 25 Rxd5 Kxd5 26 Be3 Bb5 27 Rb4 g5

Black plays this ending absolutely typically: trade one pair of rooks, put your own weak pawns on light squares and your good ones on dark squares to fight against White's bishop, get the rook in and find two targets (usually c2 and g2, although as here the ...g4-break to either weaken f3 or make the e-pawn passed is also a standard device, and mating threats are also usually a factor once Black gets in).

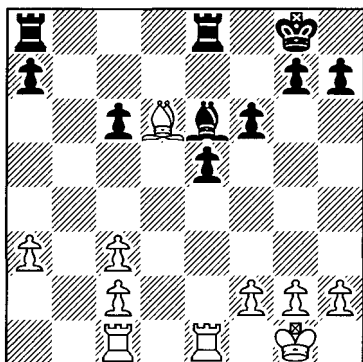


Diagram 21 (W)

Now White is much worse

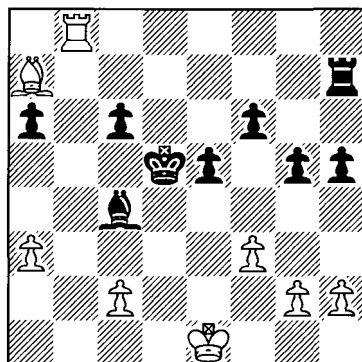


Diagram 22 (W)

Black gradually advances

28 c4+

White can't bear to watch Black creeping closer without at least activating his rook.

28...Bxc4 29 Rb7 Rh8 30 Ba7 h5 31 Rb8 Rh7 (Diagram 22)

Black must keep one pair of rooks; a pure bishop ending would just be drawn.

32 Rd8+ Ke6 33 Bc5 Bd5 34 c4

In principle trading pawns like this is useful, but it does let Black's rook in while still not really finding any targets for White's.

34...Bxc4 35 Rd6+ Kf5 36 Rxc6 Bb5 37 Rb6 Rc7 38 Bb4 Rc1+ 39 Kf2 Rc2+ 40 Kg1 g4 41 Rd6 gxf3 42 gxf3 Bc6 43 Rd3 h4 44 Be1 h3 45 Bd2 Bb5 0-1

After White's rook goes along the d-file, ...Ra2 wins the a-pawn and the f-pawn will follow soon enough, so White cuts short the torture.

Points to Remember

1. Black gets a good game quite easily in the opening with 6...Bb4. White can't stop ...d5 with a fine free game for Black without offering the e4-pawn and sustaining

horrid weakness on the queenside. Don't bother trying to learn any of the lines; knowing the themes and doing a bit of calculation should be enough.

2. This type of ending is worth noting. Avoid it at all costs as the defender, and if you get it as Black, do not consider a draw offer and play it with enthusiasm and care.

Game 3

□ M.Crepan ■ V.Dobrov

Nova Gorica 2004

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 d4 cxd4 5 Nxd4 e5 6 Nb3 Bb4 7 Bc4 0-0 8 Qd3?! d6

In this exact position 8...d5 (**Diagram 23**) is strong, since White is worse after 9 Bxd5 (9 exd5 is bad too: 9...e4 10 Qg3 Ne7 11 0-0 Nf5 12 Qg5 – or 12 Qf4 Bd6 and ...Qc7 forking c4 and h2 – 12...Bxc3 13 bxc3 Qc7 and Black wins at least a pawn back) 9...Nxd5 10 exd5 Ne7 and ...Bf5 will leave Black ahead in development and winning the pawn back. But White can avoid this with the sensible 8 0-0.

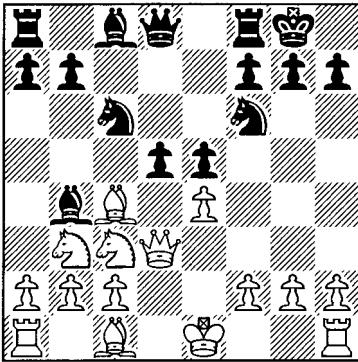


Diagram 23 (W)

Thematic and powerful

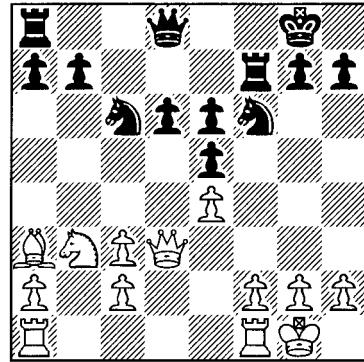


Diagram 24 (W)

Black maintains his strong centre

9 0-0 Bxc3 10 bxc3 Be6 11 Ba3



NOTE: Black's crucial trick is that if 11 Bxe6 fxe6 12 Ba3 then 12...Rf7 (**Diagram 24**) indirectly defends the d-pawn, since capturing it loses a piece to the pin: 13 Bxd6 Rd7 14 Rad1 Ne8.

11...Bxc4 12 Qxc4 Qc7

Now Black can defend d6 and in the long run the chances are all his; White's weaknesses on the c-file are very serious.

13 Rfd1 Rfd8 14 Rd2 b5 15 Qe2 a5 16 Rad1 b4 (Diagram 25)

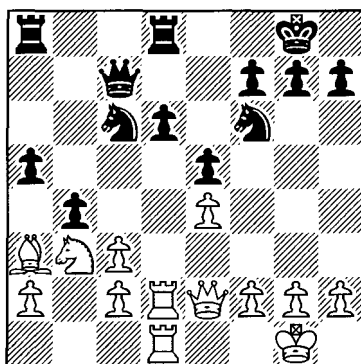


Diagram 25 (W)

Opening queenside lines

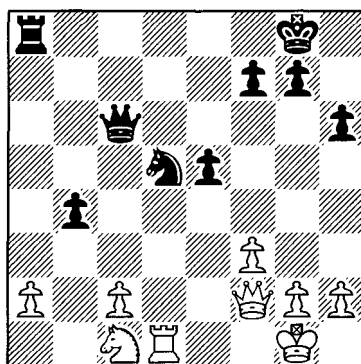


Diagram 26 (W)

A wretched white queenside

It looks a bit strange to remove the doubled pawn, but the one remaining on c2 is plenty weak enough on its own, and driving White's bishop out of play is more important.

17 Bb2 bxc3 18 Bxc3 Nb4 19 Bxb4 axb4 20 Nc1 Qc6 21 f3 h6 22 Qf2 d5 23 exd5 Rxd5 24 Rxd5 Nxd5 (Diagram 26)

A horrid position for White to defend, even if it's possible. The rest is less interesting:

25 Nd3 f6 26 Qc5 Qxc5+ 27 Nxc5 Nc3 28 Rd7 Ne2+ 29 Kf1 Nd4 30 Rb7 Nxc2 31 Ne6 Ne3+ 32 Kf2 Nf5 33 Rxb4 Rxa2+ 34 Kg1 Ne3 35 g4 Kf7 36 Nd8+ Ke7 37 Nb7 Rg2+ 38 Kh1 Rf2 39 h3 Rxf3 40 Kh2 Nd5 41 Ra4 Nf4 42 Ra7 Rxh3+ 43 Kg1 Rg3+ 44 Kf2 Rxg4 45 Kf3 h5 46 Nc5+ Kd6 47 Ne4+ Ke6 48 Ra6+ Kf5 49 Nd6+ Kg6 50 Nc8 Nd5 51 Rd6 Rc4 52 Na7 Rf4+ 53 Kg3 Ne3 54 Ra6 h4+ 55 Kh3 Rf3+ 56 Kh2 h3 57 Nc6 Ng4+ 58 Kg1 Rg3+ 0-1

Points to Remember

1 It's not worth getting involved in any 6 Nb3 Bb4 7 Bc4 Nxe4 stuff because Black simply has the better chances anyway.

2 After 7 Bc4, the sequence ...Bxc3, bxc3 ...Be6, based on the trick in the note to White's 11th, is worth noting.

3 Don't be afraid to concede the b4-bishop for a knight to enforce ...d5. The central control this move gives Black is usually adequate compensation.

The Adventurous 6 Nf5 and 6 Nde2

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Nf5

Instead, 6 Nde2 (**Diagram 27**) is probably the best of these variants, recently punted a couple of times by Morozevich and, more significantly, recommended by John Emms and Richard Palliser in their splendid and highly entertaining book *Dangerous Weapons: The Sicilian*, and thus quite likely to be appearing on a chess board near you soon, so worth a bit of attention. 6 Nde2 looks like a self-block, but at least the knight keeps within a couple of hops of d5 and enables White to prevent the sort of damage that occurred to his queenside pawns in the last two games. Black should respond with 6...Bb4 (6...Bc5 is an alternative; however, in the sharp main line 7 Ng3 Qb6 – the duo above have some good ideas after 7...d6 as well – 8 Qd2 Ng4 Emms and Palliser propose 9 Nd5!?, and without giving too many of their secrets away I think Black does a lot better to stick with the thematic text) 7 a3 Ba5 (**Diagram 28**)

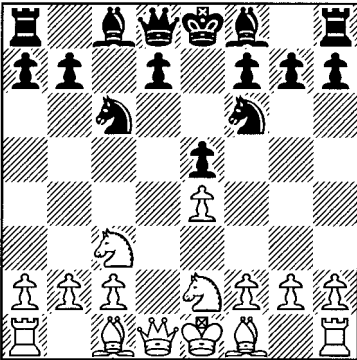


Diagram 27 (B)

A tricky retreat

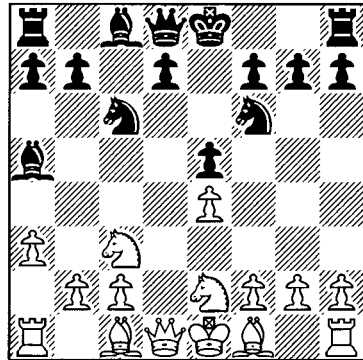


Diagram 28 (W)

By far Black's best defence

and now 8 b4 Bb6 is seen in Game 4, but Emms and Palliser don't hold with this and propose either 8 Bg5 or 8 f3, so those lines should be looked at particularly:

a) 8 Bd2 (rather tame and now Black can enforce ...d5) 8...0-0 9 Ng3 d5 10 exd5 Nxd5 11 Nxd5 Qxd5 12 Bxa5 Qxa5+ and Black is more than fine, M.Petrov-M.Krasenkow, European Team Championship, Plovdiv 2003.

b) 8 Bg5 as usual should be met with 8...h6 9 Bh4 g5 10 Bg3 Nxe4, although White does have 11 b4 here, when Black has a choice:

b1) 11...Nxc3 12 Nxc3 Bb6 13 Ne4 (13 Nd5 d6 14 Bc4 is Emms and Palliser's suggestion, although here I think Black can look to the future with reasonable confi-

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

dence after 14...0-0; for example, 15 0-0 Bf5 16 Qh5 Kg7) 13...d5 14 Qxd5! Qxd5 15 Nf6+ Kf8 16 Nxd5 f5 with a complicated and roughly equal ending.

b2) 11...Nxc3 12 Nxc3 Bb6 13 Nd5 d6 14 Ne4 is more challenging but extremely scary. It seems to me that White has at least enough compensation after, for example, 14...0-0 15 h4 g4 16 Nef6+ Kg7, when 17 Nh5+ Kg6 (not 17...Kh8?? 18 Qd2 and wins) 18 Nhf6 is a draw or White can play for more with 17 Bd3 Rh8 18 Nxc4, although here Black too has his chances.

c) 8 f3, Morozevich's move, aims to improve the previous variation: 8...0-0 9 Bg5 is a bit problematic, so in the move's only outing to date Gelfand preferred 8...h6 (8...d5 looks like an excellent alternative, and after 9 b4 Bb6 10 Nxd5 Nxd5 11 exd5 Qh4+ 12 g3 Qf6 13 Bg2 Nd4 14 Nxd4 Bxd4 15 Ra2 0-0 16 c4 Emms and Palliser suggest that White can untangle with Qb3 and Bb2; he can play those moves to be sure but there's still a bit of untangling to do since Black meets that with ...Bf5, ...a5 and ...Rfe8, so capturing on d4 will involve moving the king, and therefore White has continuing difficulties with castling) and then:

c1) Emms' suggestion of 9 Qd6 should be met with 9...Bc7 10 Qd3 Ne7 (**Diagram 29**), brutally forcing through ...d5; Black equalizes after, for example, 11 Be3 d5 12 exd5 Nexd5 13 Nxd5 Qxd5 14 Nc3 Qc6 (14...Qxd3 15 Bxd3 is not so good; White has chances for a nagging edge with Nb5 and Bc5 ideas) 15 Qd2 a6 16 Bd3 0-0 17 0-0 Be6.

c2) 9 b4 Bb6 when Morozevich's 10 Na4 d5 11 Nxb6 axb6 12 Bb2 0-0 13 Ng3 (13 b5 Nb8 gives Black lots of compensation after both 14 Bxe5 and 14 exd5) 13...dxe4 14 fxe4 would have left him struggling after 14...Ng4 (a fine handling of the opening by Gelfand; as usual Black is not afraid to give up the dark-squared bishop to develop fast and inflict pawn weaknesses).

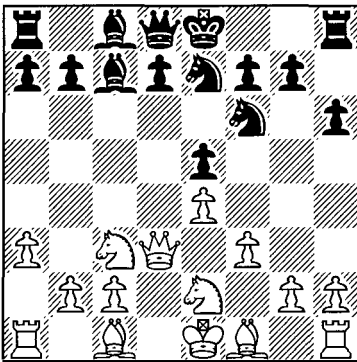


Diagram 29 (W)

Once more ...d5 is the key break

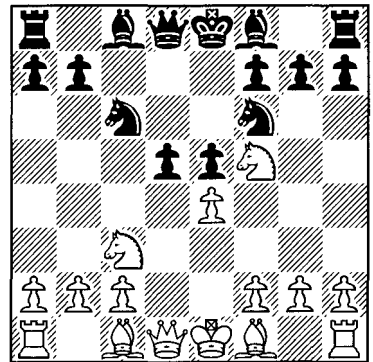


Diagram 30 (W)

Exploiting the f5-knight's position

Returning to 6 Nf5:

6...d5! (Diagram 30)

Of course. The entire point of White's agreeing to exile his knight to a3 in the main line (with 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3) is to gain time to stop this move.

7 exd5

The only move. 7 Bg5 d4 is no good at all since 8 Nd5 loses a piece after 8...Bxf5 followed by ...Qxd5.

7...Bxf5 8 dxc6 bxc6

8...Qxd1+ 9 Nxd1 bxc6 is feeble but possible, although White is a bit better: computers quite like this because of Black's temporary activity, but in the long term Ne3 and Bc4 gives White a grip on the queenside light squares which outweighs anything Black can do in the short term.

9 Qf3

This challenging double attack is also the only way to meet the threat of 9...Qxd1+ and try to justify White's play to date.

9...Qd7! (Diagram 31)

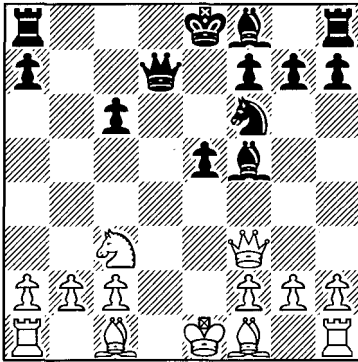


Diagram 31 (W)

The correct way to cover c6

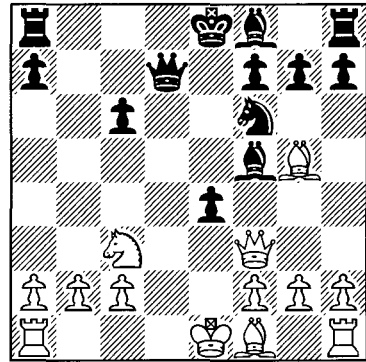


Diagram 32 (W)

Actively pressing forwards



WARNING: 9...Qd7! is forced. It can be a difficult move to find since 9...Qc8? looks safer somehow, but in reality it allows the shot 10 Ba6! Qxa6 11 Qxf5 Bd6? (11...Be7 12 Qxe5 is a decidedly better try if Black does stumble into this position) 12 Bh6!, virtually winning.

10 Bg5

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

10 Bc4 really ought to be met with 10...Bxc2, since 11 Bg5 Be7 12 0-0-0 or the like isn't anything to be afraid of; although in J.Rogers-L.McShane, British League 2004, Sveshnikov expert McShane preferred 10...e4 11 Qg3 Bg6, when White rashly went for the big heave-ho with 12 Nb5, instead of the sensible and equal 12 Bg5 Be7 13 Rd1 Qg4, and naturally lost fairly quickly after 12...cxb5 13 Qe5+ Kd8 14 Bxb5 Bd6 with zero compensation for the piece.

10...e4 (Diagram 32)

This ambitious move is usually a good idea in this variation as Game 5 demonstrates. Instead 10...Be7 is equal, but 10...Bb4, while popular, isn't: after 11 Bxf6 gxf6 12 Bd3 Bxd3 13 cxd3 Bxc3+ 14 bxc3 Qe6 15 0-0 0-0 White's position is a fair bit easier to play with his safer king and better pawns.

Illustrative Games

Game 4

□ D.Petrovic ■ M.Pavlovic

Serbian Team Championship 2000

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Nde2 Bb4 7 a3 Ba5 8 b4 Bb6
(Diagram 33)

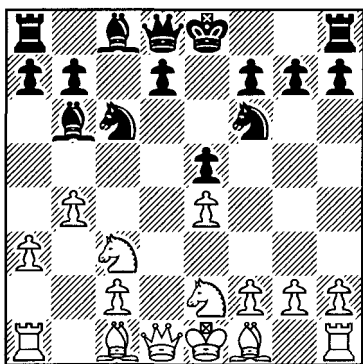


Diagram 33 (W)

f2 is remarkably vulnerable

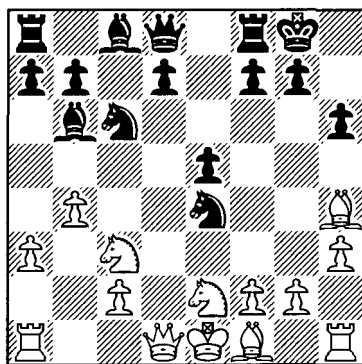


Diagram 34 (W)

A neat tactical trick

9 h3

A sign of White's difficulties, but good alternatives are hard to come by: 9 Bg5 Bxf2+ 10 Kxf2 Ng4+ loses for White, while it's still not practical to move the knight since 9 Ng3 Bd4 (this is the difference from 6...Bc5 7 Ng3) doesn't leave White

anything better than the humble 10 Nge2. Meanwhile the immediate 9 g3 Ng4 is also devastating, so White is driven into losing time with the text move.

9...0-0 10 g3

10 Bg5 h6 11 Bh4 is met by the cheeky (and crushing) 11...Nxe4 (**Diagram 34**) – a trick which works even if White's ninth is 9 f3 'protecting' the e-pawn. Thus White opts for slow development while at least preventing ...d5, or so he hopes.

10...d6

10...d5 (**Diagram 35**) was actually well possible anyway after White's loss of time, for example 11 exd5 Nd4 12 Bg2 Bf5 13 0-0 Bxc2 14 Qd2 Bb3 when Black is much better. Presumably Pavlovic saw something he didn't like; and the queenside weaknesses and loss of time give Black an easy game even without getting ...d5 in.

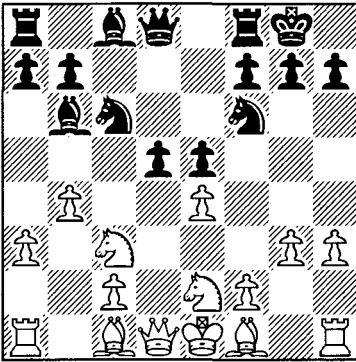


Diagram 35 (W)

Black exploits his superior development

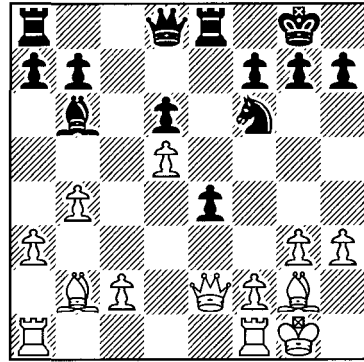


Diagram 36 (W)

The kingside majority is a useful asset

11 Bg2 Be6 12 Nd5 Bxd5



TIP: This exchange is the usual way to deal with Nd5 in this structure; Black's remaining minor pieces have good possibilities on the dark squares and the pawn at d5 means that White's light-squared bishop doesn't have any great scope.

13 exd5 Nd4 14 Bb2 Re8 15 0-0 Nxe2+ 16 Qxe2

White has actually managed to emerge from the opening in reasonable shape and can think about playing for an advantage, with c4 and Rac1 trying for c5, if Black doesn't act quickly.

16...e4 (Diagram 36)

A good move. Black's trumps lie in active play with his kingside majority. We shall see more positions like this in the next chapter.

17 Rad1

White wants to trade the b6-bishop, but after this the black knight is always going to outshine his remaining bishop. Computers for some reason understand this position terribly and think that White is much better. They want to play one of two lines: 17 c4 aims to meet ...e3 with a counterattack, thus 17...e3 18 c5 dxc5 19 fxe3 cxb4 20 Bxf6 gxf6 21 Qg4+ Kh8, but Black is more than fine here with his dark square control; or 17 Kh2 e3 18 fxe3 Rxe3 19 Qd1 Nd7, and again to a human eye Black cannot possibly be worse here with his e-file control, active minor pieces, and safer king. Indeed after 20 Qg4 Ne5 the machine already bales out to a level semi-ending with 21 Bxe5 Rxe5 22 Rae1 Rxe1 23 Rxe1, although even here it still claims an advantage, but in my opinion it's wrong.

17...e3 18 Bd4

18 f4 Ne4 is easy for Black, but after the text too he is fine.

18...exf2+ 19 Qxf2 Rc8 (Diagram 37)

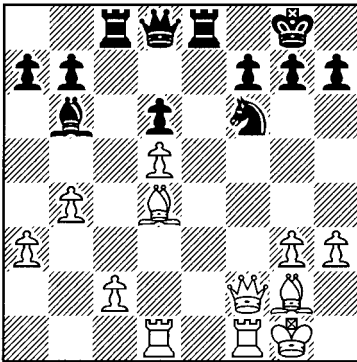


Diagram 37 (W)

White will be left with a bad bishop

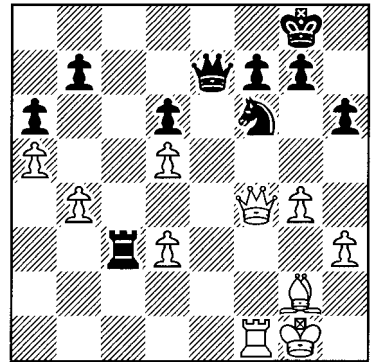


Diagram 38 (W)

White is horribly overextended

From here on the grandmaster fairly clearly outplays the weaker player, although Black already has no conceivable difficulties; the doubled pawns after 20 Bxb6 Qxb6 21 Qxb6 axb6 are no problem for him.

20 g4?

This isn't helping at all – look at the dark squares. White would do better to play for exchanges with 20 Rde1.

20...h6 21 a4

And this doesn't achieve anything either: White has failed to adjust to the fact he has no initiative and is worse.

21...Bxd4 22 Rxd4 Rc3 23 a5 Qc7 24 Rd2

After 24 Rf4 Black should not play 24...Rxc2? 25 Qxa7 with counterplay, but rather 24...b6, when 25 Rxf6 gxf6 26 Qxf6 is nothing to be afraid of; for example, 26...Rxc2 27 Qxh6 Re5 and Black should win.

24...Ree3 25 Rd3 Rxd3 26 cxd3 a6 27 Qf4 Qe7 (Diagram 38) 28 Qd2

White cannot find a plan as Black's pieces crawl in on the dark squares.

28...Qe5 29 Qf4 Qe7

A curious move; just teasing presumably. Either 29...Qxf4 or 29...Rxd3 was plenty good enough.

30 g5

Obligingly making it even easier.

30...hxg5 31 Qxg5 Rc2?!

A very strange move which makes me think that Pavlovic must have been in desperate time trouble. Much simpler was 31...Rxd3.

32 Rc1??

32 Be4, for example, would have allowed White to put up much more resistance than looked likely a move or two back, but instead White creates a 'Black to move and win' puzzle which the grandmaster is up to even if he was in time trouble.

32...Nxd5 0-1**Points to Remember**

1. 6 Nde2 Bc5 is tempting but unthematic, and after 6...Bb4 White generally ends up anyway driving the bishop to that diagonal with gain of tempo.
2. As usual with these variants Black shouldn't be afraid to chase a bishop on g5 with ...h6 and ...g5.
3. Black could have got in ...d5 as a promising sacrifice but instead he elected to play positionally. In this structure after Nd5 ...B(N)xd5, exd5 Black has to play actively on the kingside. The e-file and the e5-square are key.

Game 5

I.Rogers A.Volzhin

Saint Vincent 2002

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Nf5 d5! 7 exd5 Bxf5 8 dxc6 bxc6 9 Qf3 Qd7! 10 Bg5 e4 (Diagram 39) 11 Qe2

11 Qe3 Ng4 and ...Bc5 is annoying, as is 11 Qg3 Bd6. The text is consistent and hopes to win the e4-pawn, but White is taking too much upon himself.

11...Be7

11...Bb4 12 Bxf6 gxf6 is very playable too, although more double-edged. The text tempts White into a pawn grab which had a bit of success prior to this game.

12 Bxf6

12 Rd1 Qe6 13 Qc4 Rb8 14 Qxe6 (White had to play for a draw with 14 b3, as Rogozenko pointed out) 14...fxe6! (a fine move to secure d5 for the knight) worked out better for Black in V.Akopian-Y.Yakovich, Rostov 1993.

12...Bxf6 13 Nxe4 (Diagram 40) 13...0-0 14 Nxf6+ gxf6 15 Qd2

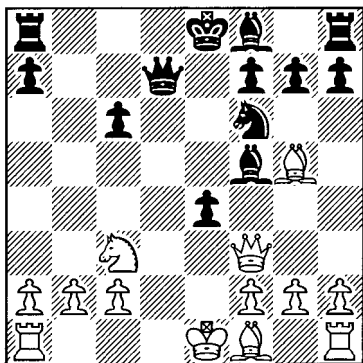


Diagram 39 (W)

Ambitious but good

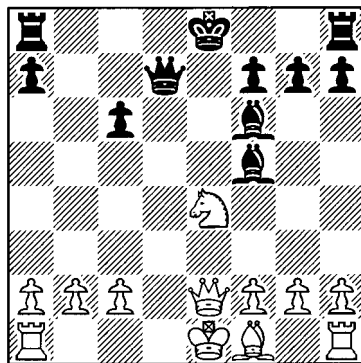


Diagram 40 (B)

Extremely greedy play

This is the only move that's been played to my knowledge, although a natural try is 15 Rd1 Qb7 16 Qd2; for example, 16...Qxb2 17 Be2 Rfd8 18 Qxd8+ Rxd8 19 Rxd8+ Kg7 20 0-0 Qxc2 21 Bf3 when the computer says Black is just winning. However, this is not so clear to me; if White could manage to trade his a-pawn for a queenside pawn, then give up one of his rooks for the bishop and the other queenside pawn, he would be able to draw.

15...Rfe8+ 16 Kd1

16 Be2 Qe6 17 Kf1 Rad8 also gives Black great compensation for his pawn. White had won a few games with 16 Kd1, but Volzhin comprehensively refutes it.

16...Qc7! (Diagram 41)

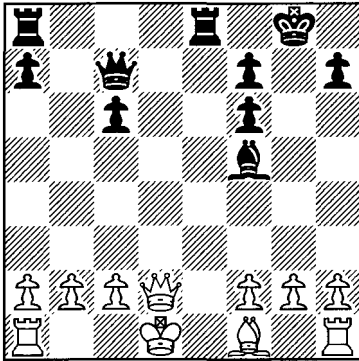
For some reason 16...Qb7 had been popular, forcing Kc1, which White wants to play anyway, while sidelining the black queen. The text is much better, keeping the possibility of ...Qe5 in many lines, and leaves White really struggling.

17 Bd3

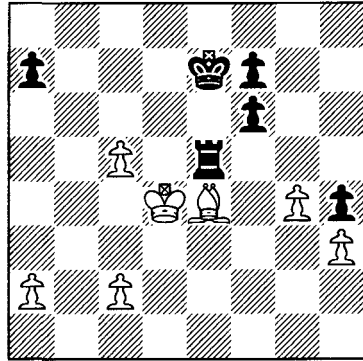
17 Kc1 Rad8 18 Bd3 transposes.

17...Rad8 18 Kc1 c5!

Black is clearly better and no White player has tried this pawn grab again since this game.

**Diagram 41 (W)**

A badly misplaced white king

**Diagram 42 (W)**

The ending is a technical win

19 b3 Qe5 20 Rb1 c4!

Opening up the white king and essentially forcing the win of material that occurred in the game.

21 bxc4 Rb8 22 Rxb8 Rxb8 23 Qe3 Qb2+ 24 Kd1 Bg4+ 25 f3 Qa1+ 26 Kd2 Qxh1 27 Qf4 Qxg2+ 28 Kc3 Re8 29 Qxg4+ Qxg4 30 fxg4

White has succeeded in escaping into an ending where the passed c-pawn gives him some hope of a swindle, but Black is winning with reasonable care.

30...Re5 31 Kd4 h5 32 c5 Kf8 33 h3 h4 34 Be4 Ke7 (Diagram 42) 35 c3 Kd7 36 a4 a5 37 Bf5+ Kc6 38 Be4+ Kc7 39 Bd5 Re2 40 Bxf7 Rh2 41 Be6 Rxh3 42 g5 Rf3 43 Ke4 Rg3 44 gxf6 h3 45 Bd5 h2 46 Kf5 Rxc3 47 f7 Rxc5 48 f8Q Rxd5+ 49 Ke6 h1Q 50 Qf4+ Kb7 51 Qf7+ Ka6 52 Qg6 Rc5 53 Qd3+ Ka7 54 Qd4 Qc6+ 55 Ke7 Qb6 0-1

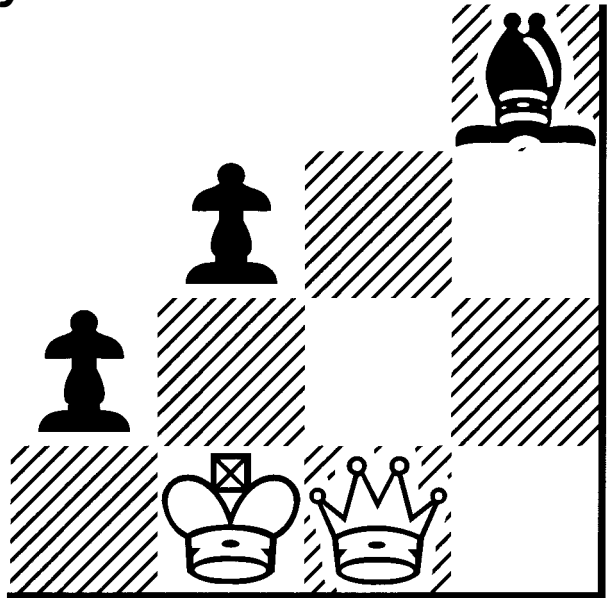
Points to Remember

1. 6 Nf5 would be a great move if it wasn't for the fact it doesn't stop 6...d5 – so play it!
2. Black shouldn't cravenly swap the queens: he can keep the tension and meet the 9 Qf3 double-attack with the careful 9...Qd7.
3. Thereafter Black shouldn't be able to go too far wrong, but generally it's best to avoid simplification combined with doubling of the f-pawns.

Chapter Two

7th and 8th Move Deviations

- Introduction
- White Plays 7 Nd5
- Black Plays 8...Be6



Introduction

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 (Diagram 1)

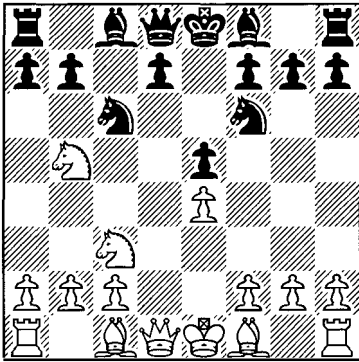


Diagram 1 (B)

White's main and best option

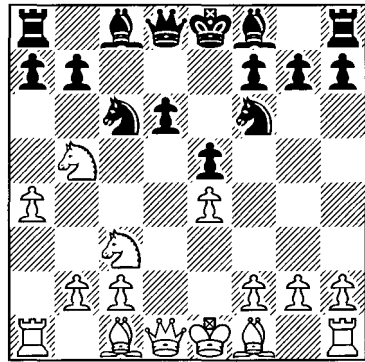


Diagram 2 (B)

7...a6 and 8...b5 is prevented

Now we move on to the main continuation. White's b5-knight presses on d6 and so effectively forces Black's next, which in turn gives White the time to prevent ...d5 and begin the battle which defines the main Sveshnikov lines, between Black's activity and White's attempts to retain control or exploit the looseness Black creates in challenging his control.

6...d6

6...h6 fights for d5 by preventing Bg5, but White retains a clear advantage with 7 Nd6+ Bxd6 8 Qxd6 Qe7 9 Qxe7+ Kxe7; for example 10 Be3 d6 11 f3 Be6 12 0-0-0 Rac8 13 Kb1. Also ineffective is 6...Bb4; not so much because of 7 Nd6+ Ke7 8 Nxc8+ Rxc8, which is unclear, but rather the simple 7 a3 Bxc3+ 8 Nxc3 when Black has no real chance of ...d5 and has also given up his valuable dark-squared bishop. After 6...d6, 7 Bg5 is the main line, but White again has several alternatives:

7 a4 (Diagram 2)

This is ancient enough – it was recommended after the 1910 Schlechter-Lasker game. It's easy to see White's idea: he recognizes that ...a6 is coming to drive the knight away, and he wants to prevent Black from following with ...b5 as well. But the move doesn't contribute to the fight for d5, and so can Black use the time to obtain counterplay?

As well as the 7 Nd5 of the next section, White also has 7 Be3 which is unfashionable, although it does in an indirect way contribute to the fight for d5. Then 7...a6 8 Na3 Rb8 (**Diagram 3**) is an excellent prophylactic move which has basically de-

fused 7 Be3 entirely. White's idea is that 8...b5 9 Nd5 Nxd5 10 exd5 Ne7 leads into positions like 7 Nd5 but with the target at b5 available, while after continuations like 8...Be6, 9 Nc4, with the idea to bring this knight to d5 via b6, is good for him. The former of these two lines was long Black's usual reaction to 7 Be3 and is probably fine for him, but 8...Rb8 is very simple as we will see in Game 6.

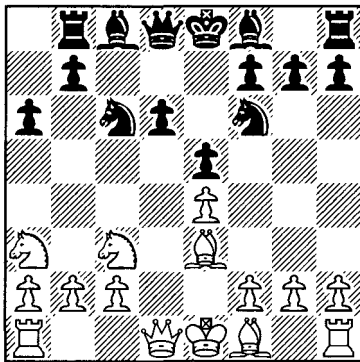


Diagram 3 (W)

Fine prophylaxis from Black

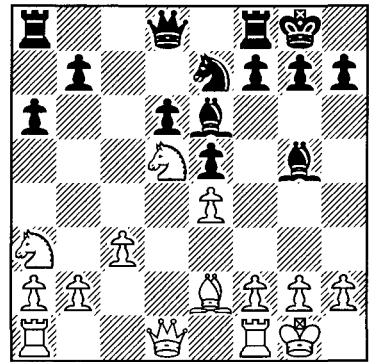


Diagram 4 (W)

Not allowing White to dominate d5

Other moves generally do not give Black any difficulty although it is wise not to underestimate them. Usually they lead to typical Sveshnikov positions in less critical versions; for example, 7 Be2 a6 8 Na3 Be6 (8...b5 9 Nd5 is quite possible but allows White to introduce some play with c4 shortly; it is better just to develop) 9 Bg5 Be7 10 0-0 0-0 11 Bxf6 Bxf6 12 Nd5 Bg5 13 c3 Ne7 (**Diagram 4**), and Black erodes White's control of d5 and equalizes, for example 14 Bc4 b5 15 Bb3 Rc8 16 Qd3 Nxd5 17 Bxd5 Bxd5 18 Qxd5 Rc5 19 Qd3 d5 and so on.

7...a6

Not the only move worth thinking about, but the simplest. After 7...Be6 (or 7...h6) White can play 8 Nd5 and retreat the b5-knight to c3, while 7...Be7 8 Bg5 and Bxf6 forces Black to recapture with the g-pawn. We shall see later that that isn't the end of the world, but by comparison with the main lines where Black has ...b5 in this doesn't look so good.

8 Na3 Bg4 (Diagram 5)

Again Black has alternatives in 8...Be6 or indeed 8...Be7. The idea of the text move is to provoke 9 f3 if possible before retreating to e6. After 8...Bg4, we will examine 9 Be2 in Game 7. The only real alternative is 9 f3, since after either 9 Qd2 or 9 Qd3 Black can retreat with 9...Be6 happy in the knowledge that the queen obstructs White's development. After 9 f3 Be6 White has tried:

a) 10 Bg5 Be7 illustrates some typical Sveshnikov themes which we will see later, particularly in Chapter Three, and now:

a1) It's natural to think of bringing the a3-knight back into play, but after 11 Nc4 0-0, 12 Ne3? loses to 12...Nxe4, while 12 Bxf6 allows a typical Sveshnikov pawn sacrifice with 12...Bxf6! 13 Qxd6 (13 Nxd6 Nd4 is terrible for White, and 13 Ne3 Bh4+ 14 g3 Bg5 15 Ned5 Rc8 16 Bd3 Ne7 would give a position typical for the lines in Chapter Three, but here Black is far more active and stands very well) 13...Bh4+! (a typical disruptive check) 14 g3 Qf6! (**Diagram 6**), and again White is in hot water, since 15 gxh4 Qxh4+ wins the queen with total devastation (16 Ke2 Bxc4+ or 16 Kd1 Rad8).

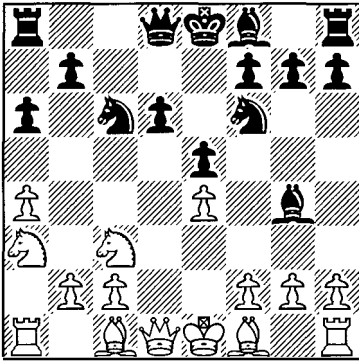


Diagram 5 (W)

Provoking the weakening f2-f3

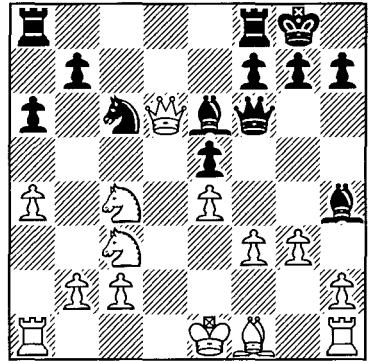


Diagram 6 (W)

White is in some trouble

a2) 11 Bc4 0-0 12 Bxf6 Bxf6 13 Nd5 (13 0-0 Qb6+ and taking on b2 shows one reason Black wanted to provoke f3) 13...Bh4+ 14 g3 Bg5 15 0-0 Kh8 16 Kg2 f5, when Black's activity made his position preferable in G.Vescovi-A.Shabalov, Elbow Beach 2001. Instead 12 Bxe6 fxe6 (**Diagram 7**) is nothing to be afraid of.



NOTE: This is a very typical Sicilian theme also seen in the Najdorf; the new-born e-pawn covers d5 very helpfully and deprives White of any active plan at all, since he can make no progress against d6. Meanwhile Black can play on the c-file and/or bring a knight to d4 and go ...d5.

A sample continuation might be 13 Nc4 Nd4 14 a5 Nd7 15 Bxe7 Qxe7 16 0-0 Rac8, when White is already awkwardly tangled since 17 Ne3 loses material at once to 17...Qg5.

b) 10 Bc4 Rc8 aims in conjunction with ...Nb4 to control c4 and hence keep the knight on a3 from conveniently re-entering the play; for example, 11 0-0 Nb4 12

Nd5 Nbx d5 13 exd5 Bd7 and Black is fine.

c) 10 Be3 is overambitious; Black continues with 10...Nb4 11 Nc4 d5 (**Diagram 8**) 12 Bb6 (and certainly not 12 Nxe5? d4) 12...Qe7 (an unusual move whose aim is to ensure that the c4-knight cannot win a tempo when it moves, as after 12...Qd7 13 exd5 Nbx d5 14 Nxe5), and now White is in trouble after either 13 exd5 Nbx d5 14 Nxd5 Nxd5 15 Bf2 Rd8 or 13 Nxe5 Qd6 14 Bd4 dxe4.

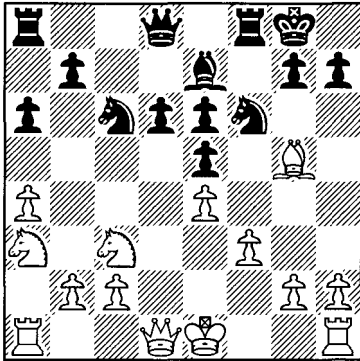


Diagram 7 (W)

The doubled e-pawns are a strength

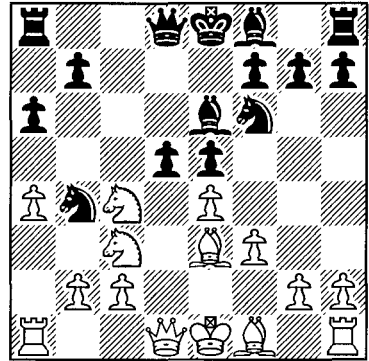


Diagram 8 (W)

Another effective ...d5 break

Illustrative Games

Game 6

□ E.Szalanczy ■ P.Horvath

Hungarian Team Championship 1993

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Be3 a6 8 Na3 Rb8 9 Nd5

Since 9 Nc4 b5 is pointless White doesn't really have a lot of choice here, but the position of his bishop at e3 is inept in any continuation (this is the whole point of Black's 8...Rb8).

9...Nxd5



WARNING: Of course not 9...Nxe4??, since White was threatening 10 Bb6 and 11 Nc7+.

However, the text leads to a typical transformation and a structure which is usually quite comfortable for Black.

10 exd5 Ne7 (Diagram 9)

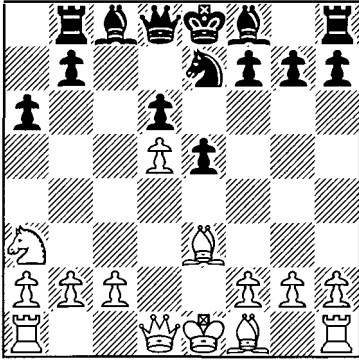


Diagram 9 (W)

Black will unravel with ...Nf5

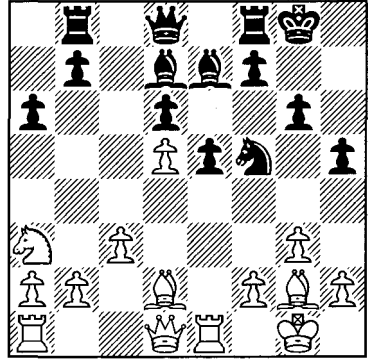


Diagram 10 (W)

Aggressive if logical Black play

This is the same position as the next game but with Be3 and ...Rb8 added. The difference favours Black: the position of the rook is a slight improvement, while the bishop on e3 gives Black a tempo with ...Nf5.

11 b4

This is by no means the only move White could play, although all his moves lead to similar types of game. Black tries to achieve something on the kingside while White's hopes lie on the queenside. Some other examples showing typical play:

a) 11 c3 Nf5 12 Bd2 Be7 13 g3 0-0 14 Bg2 Bd7 15 0-0 g6 16 Re1 h5 (**Diagram 10**) was B.Perenyi-A.Kosten, Budapest 1988. Black continued with the enterprising ...h4xg3, ...Kg7, ...Rh8, ...Qg8-h7, drove the white king into the centre and eventually triumphed in a very entertaining game.

b) 11 c4 Nf5 12 Bd2 Be7 13 Bd3 Bg5 14 Nc2 0-0 15 0-0 Re8 16 f4 e4 17 Be2 Bf6 18 Rb1 was G.Sax-A.Adorjan, Hungary 1981. Black now played 18...g6 and ...h5 and perhaps still stood better, but at this moment it was certainly possible to think about 18...Bd7 and ...b5; once he has the passed e-pawn Black has arguably already achieved something on the kingside and can afford to switch his attention to the whole board.

c) 11 Bc4 Nf5 12 Bd2 Be7 13 0-0 0-0 14 Re1 Bg5 (**Diagram 11**) 15 Bf1 Bd7 16 Nc4 Bb5 17 a4 Bxc4 18 Bxc4 was slightly feeble from White in B.Perenyi-Su.Polgar, Hungarian Championship 1986 (the light-squared bishop is not very effective in this structure). The future New Yorker now played 18...Nh4, although I'm not sure what she had against trading the dark-squared bishops first; in any event Black was fine and again went on to win.

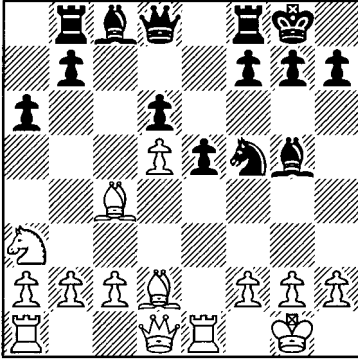


Diagram 11 (W)

Planless White play

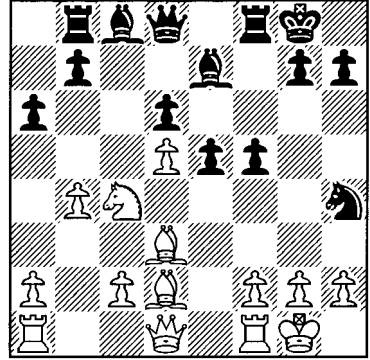


Diagram 12 (W)

A typically effective e5 and f5 duo

11...Nf5 12 Bd2 Be7 13 Nc4

Keeping this route for the knight open was the idea of White's 11 b4, although it's not clear that it's doing any more than getting in the way here.

13...0-0 14 Bd3 Nh4 15 0-0 f5 (Diagram 12)

Typical play from Black. White really has to try and restrain this mobile pawn couple.

16 f4 Ng6 17 g3

A difficult decision. It's understandable that White didn't want to give up his dark-squared bishop after ...exf4, that he wants to keep a pawn controlling e5, and also that he didn't fancy fxe5 dxe5; but the weak pawn he now gets on f4, and the exposure of his king, are serious matters too.

17...exf4 18 gxf4 Bf6 19 Rb1 b5 20 Na5?!

This involves giving up material. 20 Ne3 Qb6 leaves Black with the initiative to be sure, but objectively it must have been better.

20...Qb6+ (Diagram 13)

21 Kh1 Qd4 22 Be2 Nh4 23 Be1 Qe4+ 24 Rf3!

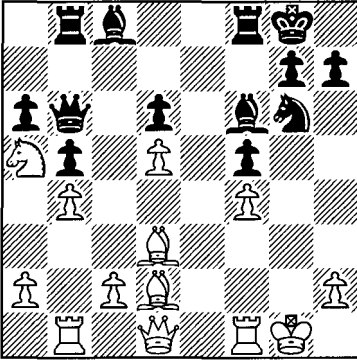
The only move in a bad position: 24 Bf3 Nxf3 25 Qxf3 Bd7 was even worse – the bishops are rampant, the rooks come to the c-file, and White is hopelessly lost. At least this way he can justify his knight's position by getting in Nc6.

24...Nxf3 25 Bxf3 Qe8 26 Bf2 Bd7 27 c4 (Diagram 14)

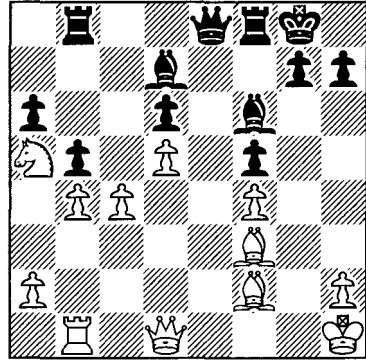
Black should be winning here with due care, but it's still a fight – White's queen-side pawns mustn't be underestimated – and in the game Black rapidly makes a complete Horlicks of it.

27...Bd8?

27...bxc4 was the obvious and best move. Instead Black buries his bishop at c7 and ensures his rook is stuck on b8 with nothing to do but defend the b5-pawn.

**Diagram 13 (W)**

White has too many weaknesses

**Diagram 14 (B)**

White finds the best practical try

28 Nc6 Bxc6 29 dxc6 Bc7 30 cxb5 axb5 31 Qd5+ Kh8

Already White has plenty of compensation.

32 Rg1 Qe7?

32...Rf6 was needed to meet 33 Bd4 with 33...Rg6.

33 Bd4

Ouch – if only Black had kept the bishop on f6...

33...Rg8 34 Qxf5 Rbf8 35 Qg4 d5 36 f5 Qf7 37 Qg2 Rd8 38 a4 h6?! 39 axb5 Qxf5 40 b6 Be5

Black is now completely lost, but if the score is correct some curious events follow.

41 Bg4 Qf4 42 Bxe5 Qxe5 43 c7 Rdf8 44 Qc2 d4 45 Bh3 Qe3 46 Qg2 Qe5 47 Qg3 Qb5 48 Qg6 d3 49 b7 d2

49...Qxb7+ 50 Bg2 Qxc7 51 Be4 was White's point.

50 c8Q Qd5+ 51 Bg2 d1Q (Diagram 15) 52 Qxg7+??

52 Qc5 was the most crushing of several winning moves, winning a queen or so with the threat of Be4, but of course humans don't cope so well with these four-queen positions, and if that was too ambitious 52 Qxf8 Rxf8 53 Bxd5 Qxd5+ 54 Qg2 at least held the draw fairly easily.

52...Kxg7 53 Bxd5+??

53 Qxf8+ Rxf8 (or 53...Kxf8 54 b8Q+ Kg7 55 Qxg8+ Qxg8 56 Rxd1) 54 Bxd5+ Qxg1+

55 Kxg1 would have maintained the draw.

53...Qxg1+ 54 Kxg1 Rxc8 55 bxc8Q Rxc8 56 b5 Rc5 57 Bc6 Rc2 (Diagram 16)

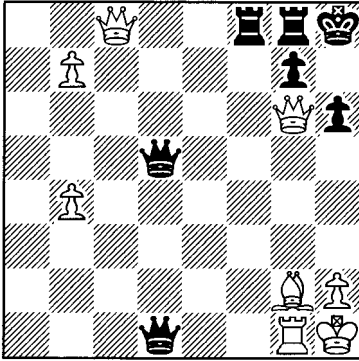


Diagram 15 (W)

Spot the cute win!

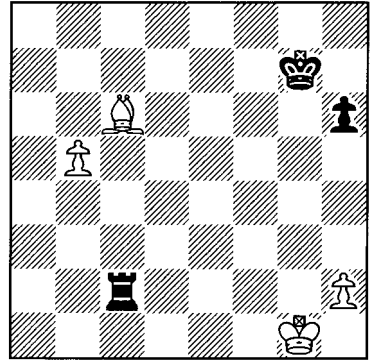


Diagram 16 (W)

It's all gone wrong for White

This endgame might look like a draw, but in fact the ending with h3 against h4 was analysed to a win many years ago, and the extra b-pawn doesn't make any difference. In the game White doesn't want to be shown and makes a doomed bid for counterplay.

58 Kf1 Rxh2 59 Ke1 Kf6 60 Kd1 Ke7 61 b6 Kd6 62 Bf3 h5 63 Ke1 h4 64 Kf1 Rb2 65 b7 Ke5 66 Ke1 h3 67 Kd1 h2 68 Kc1 Rb6 69 Kd2 Kd6 70 Ke2 Kc7 0-1

Points to Remember

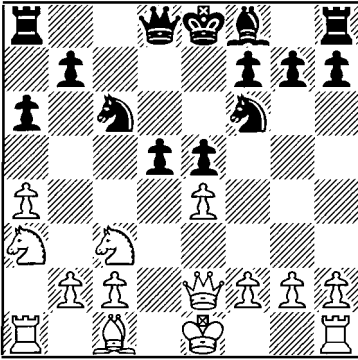
1. The idea of 7 Be3 is a sort of Morton's Fork – if Black plays 8...b5 then White can play Nd5 and reach the 7 Nd5 lines but with Black having weakened himself with ...b5, while if 8...Be6 9 Nc4 then he can use the e3-bishop to come in on b6 with his knight from c4.
2. Playing 8...Rb8 before ...b5 completely foils the idea of coming in to b6 and shuts the a3-knight out of the game after all.

Game 7

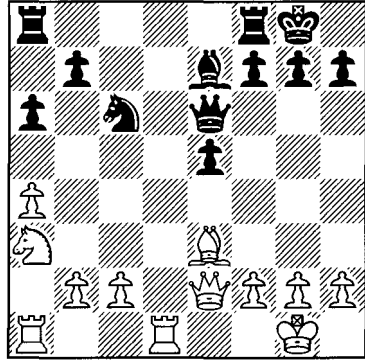
□ **A.De Dovitiis** ■ **R.Felgaer**

Argentinean Championship, Buenos Aires 2004

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 a4 a6 8 Na3 Bg4 9 Be2 Bxe2 10 Qxe2 d5 (Diagram 17)

**Diagram 17 (W)**

Black equalizes easily

**Diagram 18 (W)**

Unbalanced but roughly even

This is the other point of 8...Bg4; the trade of light-squared bishops by itself is quite acceptable to White, but for a moment his queen has come off the d-file and he's lost the ability to prevent ...d5.

11 exd5

11 Bg5 used to be White's idea. Then 11...d4 isn't bad, but simpler is 11...Nd4 12 Qd3 (12 Bxf6 Nxe2 13 Bxd8 Nxc3 14 Bc7 Nxa4 15 Bxe5 f6 is simply bad) 12...Bb4 when White has to play carefully to equalize; for example, 13 Bxf6 Qxf6 14 0-0 (14 exd5? Rc8 15 0-0 Bxc3 16 bxc3 Rxc3 demonstrates Black's tricks) 14...Bxc3 15 bxc3 dxe4 16 Qxe4 Qf4 with equality.

11...Nxd5 12 Nxd5 Qxd5

NOTE: Black has slightly the better of equality here: development tempi are equal but White has still to solve the traditional Sveshnikov problem of the knight on a3.

13 0-0 Be7 14 Be3 0-0 15 Rfd1 Qe6 (Diagram 18) 16 Qc4

Both players have made natural developing moves up to here which do not call for any comment, but it looked more natural to play 16 Nc4, addressing White's main positional problem and aiming perhaps to bring the knight via b6 to d5. Black might reasonably continue with 16...e4 or 16...f5, hoping to use the mobile kingside pawn duo to create attacking chances.

16...Qg6 17 Qb3

By bringing his queen here White must have hoped to incommode Black by forcing him to pause and defend b7, but in fact Black doesn't bother and White never finds a moment when he has the time to capture on b7, so his idea doesn't really work.

17...Kh8!?

Clearly there were milksop alternatives – 17...Rab8 for example – but Black believes in his attack.

18 Nc4

18 Qxb7 was in fact not that clear at all and probably ought to have been played. You can see why White was concerned about something like 18...f5 19 Nc4 f4 20 Bb6 f3 21 g3 Qe6 22 b3, but nothing's happened yet and it wouldn't surprise me if objectively White can beat off the attack.

18...f5 (Diagram 19)

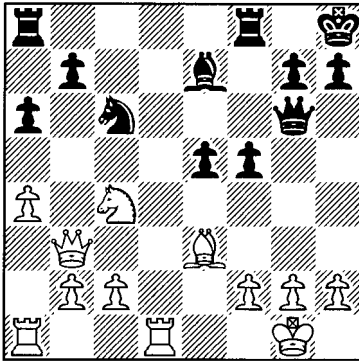


Diagram 19 (W)

Black sacrifices for the attack

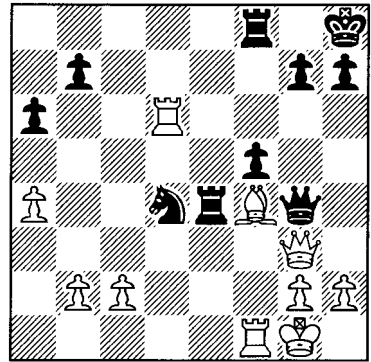


Diagram 20 (W)

White's pieces are a little tangled

19 f4

19 Qxb7 would have led to the last note and, if this was the alternative, should definitely have been played, since now Black gains time to bring all his pieces into the attack.

19...exf4 20 Bxf4 Rae8

It looks more natural to play 20...Bc5+ 21 Kh1 Rae8, since 22 Nd6 appears well met with 22...Re2, but in fact 23 Qf3 Rxc2 24 Nxb7 doesn't give Black much. Instead Felgaer decides to remove the knight when it arrives on d6, and if he's going to do that then clearly the white king should be left on the more vulnerable g1-square.

21 Nd6 Bxd6 22 Rxd6 Qg4 23 Qg3 Re4 24 Rf1?

24 Qxg4 fxg4 25 Bg3 Nd4 was a bit uncomfortable, but this is a horrible move.

24...Nd4 (Diagram 20) 25 Qxg4?

25 Kh1 was best although 25...Nxc2 wins a clear pawn, but White is in shock.

25...fxg4

White now loses a piece thanks to the pin along the f-file.

26 Kh1

26...Ne2+ was threatened, and of course this only gained in force if the bishop moved, while 26 g3 Nf3+ is like the game.

26...Kg8

Preparing ...g5.

27 g3 g5 28 Rd1 Nf3 29 Bc1 Re2 30 R6d2 Nxd2 31 Bxd2 Rd8 0-1

Points to Remember

1. We are now approaching the real Sveshnikov where White battles sensibly for the d5-square and it isn't possible just to equalize with ...d5.
2. Indeed Black has to play 6...d6. He derives compensation from the tempi he gains against the white knight driving it to a3, and while it gets back into play from there.
3. 7 a4 loses time and weakens b4, which Black often exploits with a knight jump there or perhaps to d4.
4. Specifically 8...Bg4 is very annoying for White. If he wants to continue the fight for d5 then he has to weaken himself with f3, but that gives Black tactical opportunities which keep the fight at least equal for him.

White Plays 7 Nd5

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Nd5 (Diagram 21)

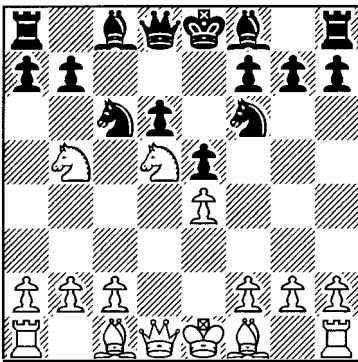


Diagram 21 (B)

Transforming the structure

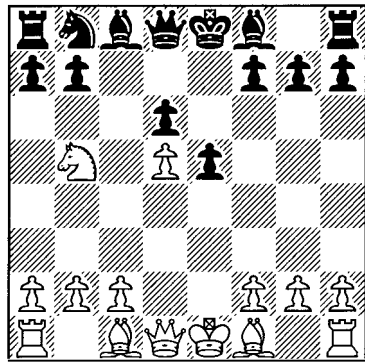


Diagram 22 (W)

The knight should re-route to d7

7...Nxd5

The only move, of course, in view of the threat of 8 Nbc7+.

8 exd5

8 Qxd5? is a terrible move: after 8...a6 White already faces an ugly choice between 9 Na3, allowing 9...Be6 and ...d5 with a great position for Black, or still worse 9 Nc3 Nd4 when Black is virtually winning.

8...Nb8 (Diagram 22)



NOTE: 8...Ne7 is a popular alternative, which I don't propose to consider much, since the knight just seems to me so well placed on d7, holding up c5 and ready to go either to e5 or c5.

White's best line, given by both Yakovich and Rogozenko, is 9 c3 Nf5 (9...Ng6 is natural but loses material after 10 Qa4 Bd7 11 Qc4 Rc8? 12 Qb4 Rc5 13 Be3, so the disagreeable 11...Bxb5 is forced) 10 a4 Be7 11 Bd3 0-0 12 0-0 a6 13 Na3 Nh4 (there isn't much choice but to get this piece out of the way, since it's blocking not only the c8-bishop but also the f-pawn) 14 f4 exf4 15 Bxf4 Ng6 16 Bxg6! (fighting for the dark squares; this knight couldn't be allowed to settle on e5) 16...hxg6 17 Nc4 (Diagram 23), when White is definitely a bit better; a5, Nb6 and a general queen-side advance can follow.

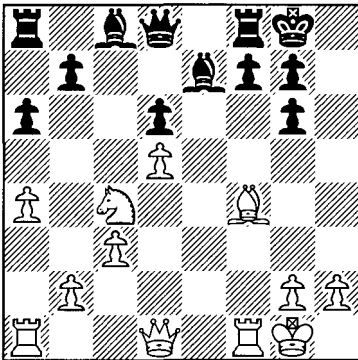


Diagram 23 (B)

White has more space and a bind

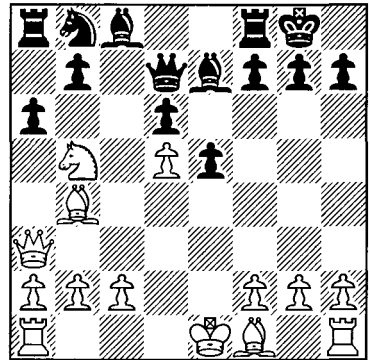


Diagram 24 (W)

A clever defence to a tricky idea

9 c4

White has also tried:

a) The tricky 9 Qf3 was recommended by Jeroen Bosch in the first of the popular *Secrets of Opening Surprises* series, so it's worth being ready for. White's idea is a crude attack on d6, thus: 9...a6 10 Qa3 Be7 11 Bd2 (11 Bg5 f6 12 Bd2 doesn't make

much difference) 11...0-0 12 Bb4. Much ingenious analysis was devoted to this position by Bosch, but in fact White has to retreat in confusion after Rogozenko's clever 12...Qd7 (**Diagram 24**). The idea of this move is removing the queen from d8 to ensure that after 13 Bxd6 axb5 White does not have 14 Bxe7. Black can now peacefully develop with ...b6 and ...Bb7, after which White must retreat, although there are still some tricks; for example, 13 Bd3 (13 Nxd6 a5 and 13 Bxd6 axb5 both lose material) 13...b6 14 0-0 (14 Nxd6 still doesn't work due to 14...a5 15 Bf5 Qxf5! 16 Nxf5 Bxb4+) 14...e4 (and not 14...Bb7? 15 Nxd6 a5 16 Bf5) 15 Be2 Bb7 16 Nd4 Bxd5 and so on.

b) 9 c3 seeks to launch some similar tricks after 9...a6 10 Qa4; these may well not be any good but Black can sidestep the entire question with 9...Be7, after which c3 is rather pointless.

c) 9 a4 is the main alternative. The idea is to bring the knight to c4 and pressure Black's queenside with a5; another point is that the bishop is pinned to e7 unless the knight is challenged, so a useful ...Bf6 or ...Bg5 is prevented. 9...Be7 10 Be2 0-0 11 0-0 Nd7 is the most natural sequence, when White has tried various moves:

c1) 12 f4 allows the trick 12...a6 13 Na3 b5 as in J.Rowson-M.Adams, 1st match-game, London 1998, which is fine for Black.

c2) From the fifth game of that match, 12 Be3 a6 13 Na3 f5 14 f3 f4 15 Bf2 allows Black, after Adams' 15...Rf6 (**Diagram 25**), good play on the kingside with ...Qe8-h5, perhaps ...Rh6 and so on, in the style of a King's Indian.

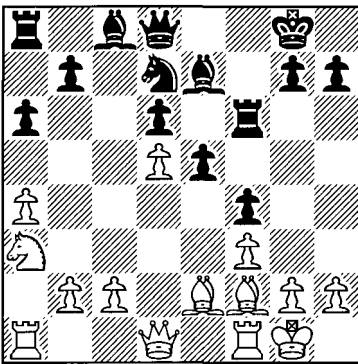


Diagram 25 (W)
Black will play for mate

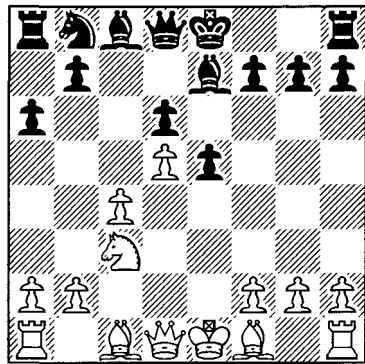


Diagram 26 (W)
An unbalanced position

c3) 12 Kh1 a6 13 Na3 f5 14 f4 Bf6 15 Nc4, and now 15...Nb6 has proved in a number of games to give equal chances, albeit sometimes in a very sharp game after fxe5 ...dxe5 – White tries to queen the d-pawn and Black to give mate as his pieces advance behind his e- and f-pawns.

9...a6 10 Nc3 Be7 (Diagram 26)

We will return to the theory of this position in Game 8, but first four game fragments should help to reveal some of the typical strategic themes of this variation.

1. N.Short-Ni Hua

Beijing (rapid) 2003

(Diagram 27)

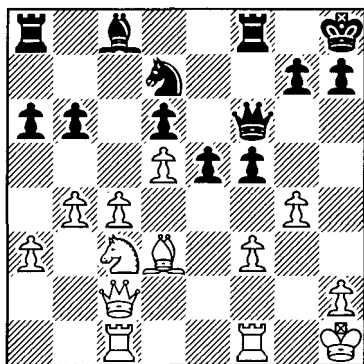


Diagram 27 (B)

Will White win the battle for e4?

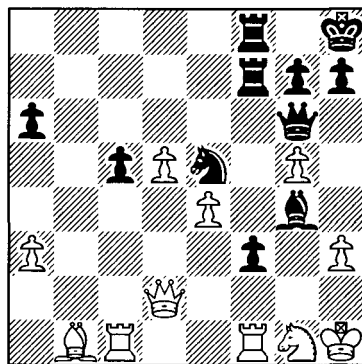


Diagram 28 (W)

The attack is too strong

In the first of these White is trying to win control of e4 with g4 removing the f5-pawn, as in some variations of the King's Indian. How should Black respond?

19...e4!

Of course! The typical breakthrough, also borrowed from the King's Indian.

20 fxe4 f4 21 Ne2

21 Na4 is no better as Black's attack on the kingside is too strong; for example, 21...Rb8 22 c5 bxc5 23 bxc5 Ne5 24 c6 f3 25 c7 Rb7 26 Bxa6 Rxc7! 27 Qxc7 Bxa6 28 Rf2 Nxc4 and White collapses. He needs the knight on the kingside to try and defend.

21...f3 22 Qd2 Ne5 23 g5 Qg6 24 Ng1

24 Ng3 Bh3 wins material at once.

24...Bg4 25 Bb1

Not particularly to the point; blockading the pawn with 25 Rf2 was more sensible.

25...Rf7 26 c5 bxc5 27 bxc5 dxc5 28 h3?

Black refutes this move. There were still chances to defend after 28 Rxc5.

28...Raf8!! (Diagram 28) 29 Rf2

Now White cannot defend; for example, 29 Qh2 Qxg5 30 hxg4 Nxg4 31 Qg3 Rf6 32 Nxf3 Rxf3 and the loose rook on c1 lets him down, or 29 hxg4 f2 30 Ne2 Rf3 when the only chance is 31 Nd4 cxd4 32 Rxf2, but after 32...Qf7 33 Rxf3 Qxf3+ 34 Qg2 Qf4 Black must win.

29...Qh5 30 Qc3 Bxh3 31 Nxb3 Ng4 32 Rh2 Nxh2 33 Kxh2 f2 34 Bd3 Rf3 35 Bf1 Rxc3 36 Rxc3 Qd1 37 Kg2 Qg4+ 38 Kh2 Qxe4 39 Rxc5 Qd4 40 Rc6 0-1

2. S.Soloviov-Y.Yakovich

Vladivostok 1990

(Diagram 29)

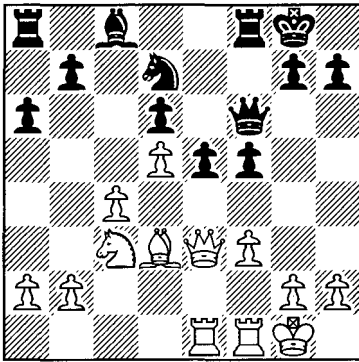


Diagram 29 (B)

How does Black advance?

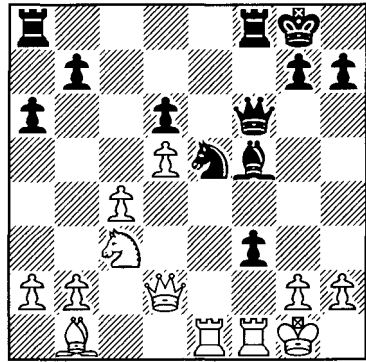


Diagram 30 (W)

Preventing Ne4

A quieter position in which Black has executed the desirable exchange of dark-squared bishops, and now needs to arrive at a plan to develop the rest of his pieces. How should he do that?

17...e4

Same again!

18 fxe4

White ought seriously to consider 18 Be2 rather than allowing ...f4, taking away e5 from his pieces. Black should continue with 18...exf3 19 Qxf3 Ne5, when the position is about equal.

18...f4 19 e5

White rather desperately chooses to return the pawn. If he tries to hold on with 19 Qf2 Ne5 20 Be2 then Yakovich intended 20...g5 21 Kh1 g4, although I'm not too

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

sure about 22 c5 f3 23 Qg3. An alternative is 20...Bg4, seeking to remove that bishop so as to have ...Ng4-e3 available and make ...f3 harder to stop.

19...Nxe5 20 Qd2 f3 21 Bb1?

The same mistake that Short made. Preserving this bishop is not important; Black is hardly going to give his almighty knight for it. Instead 21 Be4 was logical, at least using the e4-square White has cleared, or 21 Rf2. White wants to get the bishop to a defended square so as to threaten Ne4 without allowing its exchange (as after the immediate 21 Ne4 Qg6 22 Bc2 Bf5), but he doesn't have time.

21...Bf5! (Diagram 30)

It looks a bit paradoxical to trade White's useless bishop, but preventing an effective Ne4 is the top priority.

22 b3 Bxb1 23 Rxb1 Rae8

Black is better. White needed to play Kh1 now, but instead he collapses.

24 Rbd1 Qg6!

Threatening ...Nxc4 and ...Re2. White is lost.

25 Rde1 fxg2 26 Qxg2 Nf3+ and shortly 0-1

3. P.Motwani-R.Espinosa Flores

Dubai Olympiad 1986

(Diagram 31)

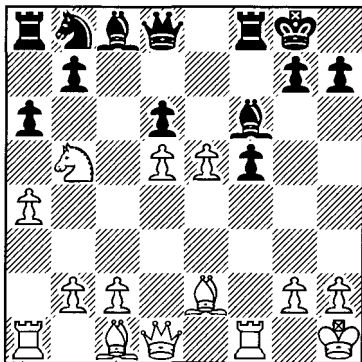


Diagram 31 (B)

How should Black recapture?

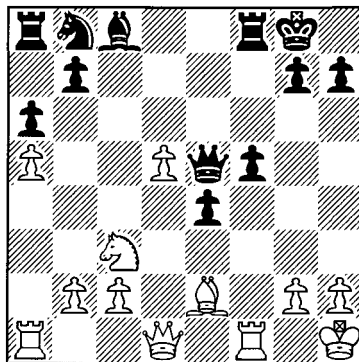


Diagram 32 (W)

Black has good play

Here is a rarer theme: Black has delayed ...a6 and White has been able to meet it with the intermezzo fxe5. How should Black recapture?

14...dxe5

Of course! In the game Black played the horrible 14...Bxe5? allowing 15 Nd4 Qf6 16 c3 with a dream position for White, which Black now made worse by the misguided 16...a5 (16...Bxd4 17 Qxd4 Qxd4 18 cxd4 is great for White since his bishops are very strong and the knight lacks a sensible square, but something like 16...Re8 or perhaps 16...f4 was more sensible) 17 Bf4 Nd7 18 Ne6 Bxf4 19 Rxf4 Rf7 when White had an overwhelming positional advantage. Notice how the d4-knight paralysed Black's queenside, since ...Nd7 let it into e6 while ...Bd7 would have blocked the b8-knight.

After 14...dxe5 the game might continue:

15 Nc3 e4 16 a5 Qd6 17 Bf4 Be5 18 Bxe5 Qxe5 (Diagram 32)

with a nice position for Black, who can go on with ...Nd7-f6 and ...Bd7, while White's c3-knight is in his own way, e.g. 19 Qd2 Nd7 20 Qe3 Nf6 21 Rad1 Bd7.

4. F.Perrien-A.Molet

La Fere 2004

(Diagram 33)

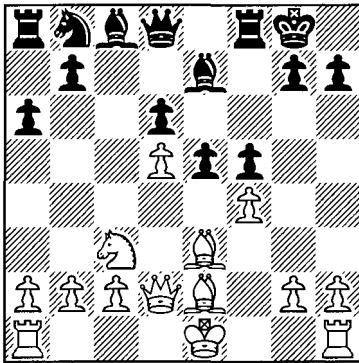


Diagram 33 (B)

How best to meet f2-f4?

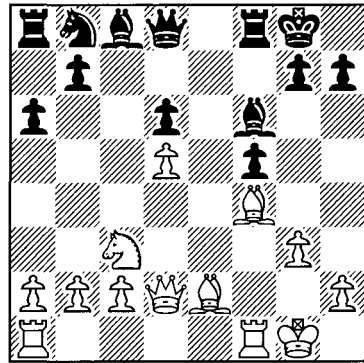


Diagram 34 (B)

Black has a reasonable choice

Here White has deployed his pieces slightly unusually, preserving the option to castle queenside, and now makes the usual challenge to Black's pawn duo. How should Black respond?

13...exf4

WARNING: It's almost always a bad idea to play ...e4 in reply to f4 in this variation, especially when Black has played ...f5.

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

Here Black can't use e5; he can't do much with the passed pawn and his light-squared bishop is hampered by his pawns. Meanwhile White has the free use of d4 and can go on with his queenside plans. The game saw 13...e4?! 14 0-0-0 (14 0-0 followed perhaps by Bd4, Nd1-e3 and activity on the queenside, is also fine) 14...b5 15 g4 Qa5 (15...Nd7 was more sensible, but White was better anyway) 16 a3 b4 17 Na2 fxe4 18 Nxb4, when White was much better.

14 Bxf4 Bh4+

A common finesse to weaken the kingside before placing the bishop on its intended destination.

15 g3 Bf6 16 0-0 (Diagram 34)

Now Black can choose between the unclear tactical course 16...Qb6+ 17 Be3 Qxb2 18 Na4 Qe5 19 Nb6 Re8 when he will have reasonable compensation for the exchange, or the simple 16...Nd7 17 Be3 Ne5 with about equality.

Illustrative Games

Game 8

□ P.Svidler ■ A.Timofeev

Russian Championship, Moscow 2004

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Nd5 Nxd5 8 exd5 Nb8 9 c4 a6 10 Nc3 Be7 (Diagram 35)

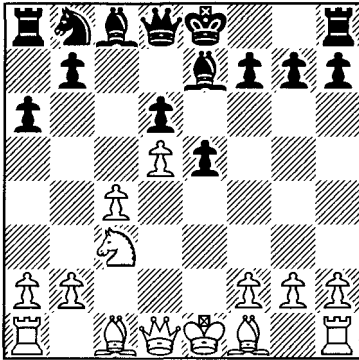


Diagram 35 (W)

Will White play a later f3 or f4?

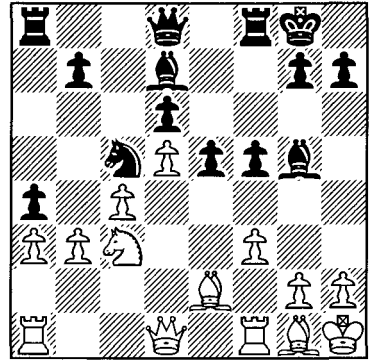


Diagram 36 (W)

Disrupting White on the queenside

11 Bd3



NOTE: White is going to have to take some steps about the mobile pawn duo after ...f5, and with the text he declares that he is almost certainly going to play f3. If he wants to play f4 then he will probably prefer the bishop on e2, since on d3 it will lose a tempo either to ...e4 or to a later ...Ne5.

11 Be2 is a major alternative, after which Black develops as usual with 11...0-0 12 0-0 f5, when White has to decide how to confront the pawns:

a) 13 f3 looks more natural with Bd3 somehow, but it's still common enough here. It was very well dealt with in V.Kotronias-P.Eljanov, European Championship, Warsaw 2005, as follows: 13...Nd7 14 Kh1 a5 15 Be3 Bg5 16 Bg1 (16 f4 exf4 17 Bxf4 Bxf4 18 Rxf4 Ne5 19 Qd4 Bd7 20 Raf1 is fine for Black too: ...a5 isn't a bad move for him to have in) 16...Nc5 17 b3 (White doesn't really have another plan) 17...Bd7 18 a3 a4 (**Diagram 36**), and now in the game capturing on a4 led to equality. White would prefer to play 19 b4 but after 19...Nb3 20 Ra2 Qf6 the knight is a real nuisance; for example, 21 Rc2 (White would like to remove the knight with Bd3-c2xb3, but 21 Bd3? e4! wins a piece) 21...Qh6, and the possibility of ...Be3 trading the bishops after all, or perhaps ...Bf4 with play on the kingside, gives Black equality at least.

b) 13 f4 Bf6 14 Kh1 (White can play to keep a pawn on f4 with 14 g3 Nd7 15 Qc2 exf4 16 gxf4, but after 16...Nc5 Black is better and may even think about ...b5 as a pawn sacrifice; for example, 17 Bf3 b5 18 cxb5?! Re8 19 bxa6? Bd4+ 20 Kh1 Bxa6 when White is already in serious trouble) 14...Nd7 has been reached over 200 times and Black has proved able to equalize comfortably enough; for example, 15 Qc2 (15 Be3 exf4 16 Bxf4 Be5 is much the same, although Black could also contemplate 16...Bxc3) 15...exf4 16 Bxf4 Be5 (the alternative 16...Ne5 17 b4 b6 18 Be3 is a little controversial since Yudasin and Yakovich like White, although Rogozenko seems happy enough with it; it seems easier and more thematic to me to trade the dark-squared bishops, otherwise Black's knight and bishop hamper each other to a certain extent as they can't both be on e5) 17 Rad1 (17 b4 a5 is a bit annoying, since to keep the pawns united White has to yield a tempo with Bxe5) 17...Bxf4 18 Rxf4 Ne5 (**Diagram 37**) 19 b4 a5 20 a3 axb4 21 axb4 Bd7 was a very workmanlike display in K.Spraggett-Y.Yakovich, Santo Antonio 2001.

11...0-0 12 0-0 f5 (Diagram 38)

This position is generally reached by one move order or another; Black can play ...a6 at any of moves 9-11, for example.

13 f3

13 f4 doesn't go well with Bd3 for the reasons given above.

13...Bg5

13...Nd7 is not simply a transposition since White can avoid the exchange of bishops with 14 Be3 Bg5 15 Bf2, although whether this matters is another question. In

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

Kotronias-Eljanov above neither side seemed very concerned with this possibility.

14 Kh1

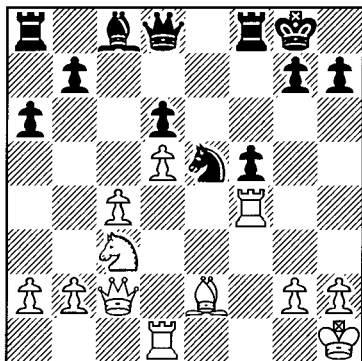


Diagram 37 (W)

The knight is very well placed on e5

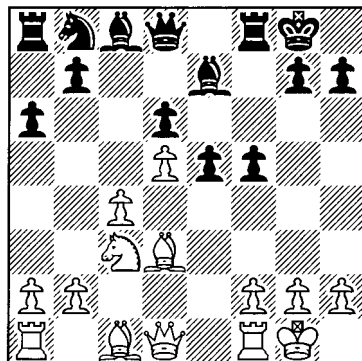


Diagram 38 (W)

An important 7 Nd5 position

14 Bxg5 Qxg5 15 f4 exf4 16 Qe2 is well met with 16...Qh6, preparing ...Nd7 without losing the d-pawn to Qe6+.

14...Nd7 15 b4 a5 (Diagram 39)

A well-timed strike, compelling White to lose time with Bxg5 if he wants to keep his pawn front intact.

16 a3 axb4 17 Bxg5 Qxg5 18 axb4 Rxa1 19 Qxa1 Qe3 20 Be2 Nb8!

A wonderful regrouping.



TIP: On a6 the knight is a real thorn in White's flesh, stopping c5 and attacking b4. White can hardly drive it away with b5 and watch it sink into c5, and Black is able to make sure that c5 doesn't work tactically.

Instead 20...e4 21 Qc1! was undesirable for Black in P.Leko-M.Krasenkow, Essen 2002 (Black wants to keep the queens, both because his is more active than White's, and because it is the only black piece which can combine defence of d6 with active service, but of course he can't with e4 en prise if he retreats). On the other hand, 20...b5 21 Qc1 Qxc1 22 Rxc1 bxc4 had led to a draw in a number of games including P.Leko-V.Kramnik, Monte Carlo (blindfold rapid) 2003.

21 Qb2

White had previously tried 21 Qc1 Qb6 22 Qa3 Na6 23 Rb1 Qf2 24 Qb2 Bd7, which comes to very much the same thing. Note that a key tactical point is that 21 Qa3 Na6 22 c5? dxc5 23 Bxa6 drops a pawn to the intermezzo 23...cxb4.

21...Na6 (Diagram 40) 22 Rb1 Bd7 23 Nd1 Qd4

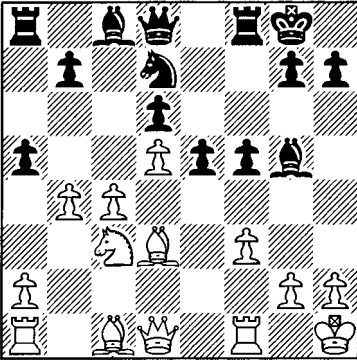


Diagram 39 (W)

Forcing the dark-squared bishops off

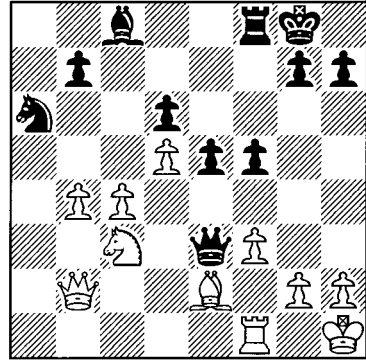


Diagram 40 (W)

The black queen causes problems

23...Qb6 was also perfectly adequate; the text is more ambitious.

24 Qxd4 exd4 25 Kg1

25 c5 loses to 25...Re8.

25...Rb8!

A superb move. They say a good move always has two ideas and this one certainly does: it prevents 26 c5?, since after 26...dxc5 27 Bxa6 bxa6 the b-pawn is pinned, and it threatens ...b5, after which White's two remaining queenside pawns are both targets.

26 b5

White can't have enjoyed playing this, but 26 Nf2 b5 27 cxb5 Bxb5 28 Bd3 g6 is also a little better for Black.

26...Nc5 27 Nf2

Svidler wants to attack the d-pawn, but Black has an answer. It was essential to play 27 Ra1 and try to hang on passively.

27...Ra8! 28 Rd1 Ra4! 29 Nh3 h6! 30 Rxd4 Bxb5 31 g4 Bd7 32 Rd2 fxg4 33 fxg4 Nb3 (Diagram 41)

It looks strange to take the wonderful knight away, but this wins a pawn by force.

34 Rb2 Nd4 35 Bf1

35 Bd1 Ra1 36 Nf2 (and not 36 Rd2?? Nf3+) 36...Ba4 37 Kg2 Bxd1 38 Rd2 Bf3+ 39 Kg3 Rg1+ 40 Kf4 Bxg4 also wins material.

35...Bxg4

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

Black should be winning now.

36 Nf2 Bf3 37 Nh3 Bg4 38 Nf2 Bf3 39 Nh3 g5 40 Kf2 Bg4 41 Ke3 Nf5+ 42 Kd2 Ra1 43 Bg2 Rd1+ 44 Kc3 Rc1+ 45 Kd3 Re1 46 Nf2 Re3+ 47 Kd2 Re2+ 48 Kc3 Rxb2 49 Kxb2 Ne3 50 Kc3 Bf5 51 Be4 Bd7 52 Kd4 Nf5+ 53 Bxf5 Bxf5 54 c5 dxc5+ 55 Kxc5 Kf7 56 Kb6

56 Kd6 is the same: the knight ends up unable to stop both g-pawn and b-pawn after 56...h5 57 Kc7 b5 58 d6 b4 59 Ne4 g4 60 Ng3 Be6 61 Ne4 Kf8.

56...Ke7 57 Kc7

After 57 Kxb7 Kd6 Black wins too, although he needs to be careful to move the pawns forward a bit before releasing the white king.

57...b5 58 d6+ Ke8 (Diagram 42) 59 Nd3

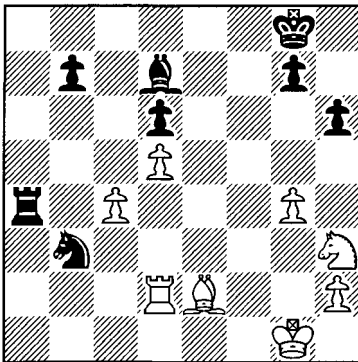


Diagram 41 (W)

c4 or g4 must drop

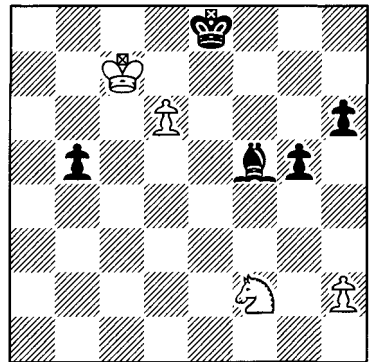


Diagram 42 (W)

The b-pawn is too strong

Whatever White does he ends up in the same dilemma; for example, 59 Ne4 b4 60 Nf6+ Kf7 61 Ne4 (61 d7 Bxd7 62 Nxd7 b3 63 Ne5+ Ke6 64 Nc4 h5 is the same sort of thing) 61...b3 62 d7 Bxd7 63 Kxd7 b2 64 Nc3 g4 65 Kd6, although Black does have to be careful and keep the king out with 65...Kf6 (rather than amateurishly rushing with 65...h5?? 66 Ke5 h4 67 Kf4 g3 68 hxg3 h3 69 Kf3 and a draw) 66 Kd5 Kf5 67 Kd4 Kf4 68 Kd3 Kf3 69 Kc2 h5 70 Nd5 h4, and the knight cannot cope with its tasks on the kingside.

59...h5 60 Ne1 g4 61 Ng2 b4 62 Ne3 Be6 63 Nc2 h4 0-1

Points to Remember

1. Watch out after 7 Nd5 for Qa4 pinning the a6-pawn. Usually it doesn't work, but sidestep it if possible.

2. When White blockades the e- and f-pawns with f4, usually it's best to play ...exf4 and ...Be5 to trade those dark-squared bishops, whereas ...e4 is normally not a good idea.

3. When White plays b4, always consider ...a5 in reply. This often wins a tempo because a3 axb4 compels White to complete the exchange of dark-squared bishops and give Black a tempo by so doing.

Black Plays 8...Be6

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 (Diagram 43)

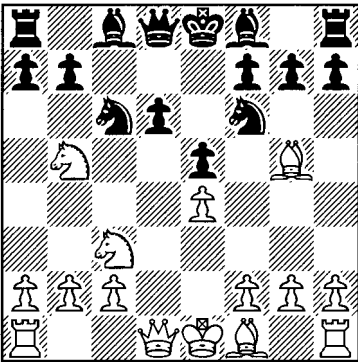


Diagram 43 (B)

White's main continuation

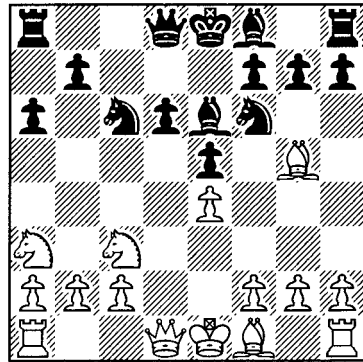


Diagram 44 (W)

Much less popular than 8...b5

This is the main line and really considered the only serious try. White develops a piece and fights for control of d5 at the same time in the most direct manner possible.

7...a6

7...Be6 has a similar idea to what follows: 8 Nd5 Rc8 (after 8...Bxd5 9 exd5 Ne7 Black is too late to push the knight away conveniently in view of 10 c3 a6 11 Qa4!) 9 c3 a6 10 Na3 Bxd5 11 Bxf6 gxf6 12 Qxd5 is the same sort of thing as the text, but White has c3 in instead of Nc4, which cuts out most of Black's ideas shown below.

8 Na3 Be6 (Diagram 44)

8...b5 is the main move and the best one – it seems obvious to keep the knight out of c4. But the text has been played by some very strong players and, while presently under a cloud, is not so bad. As a nod to history, the way the Argentine master Pelikan used to play the variation was with ...d5, but that was after 8 Bxf6 gxf6 9 Na3. Here 8...d5 is rather absurd and White is much better after 9 Nxd5 Bxa3 10

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

bxa3 Qa5+ 11 Bd2 Qd8 12 Nxf6+ (or 12 Qd2 Qxd2+ 13 Bxd2 Nxd5 14 exd5 Nd4 15 Bd3) 12...Qxf6 13 Bd3 Qg6 14 Qf3.

9 Nc4 Rc8!

Bent Larsen's move revived this line in 1963. Others are pointless: 9...b5 is too late, 9...Nd4 is a futile gesture which can be driven back with a later c3, and 9...Be7 10 Bxf6 forces 10...gxf6 anyway, when Black has the worst of both worlds.

10 Nd5

10 Bxf6 is seen in Game 9, while 10 Ne3 Be7 is not a problem for Black: it is to his advantage that he hasn't had to weaken his queenside with ...b5.

10...Bxd5 11 Bxf6! (Diagram 45)

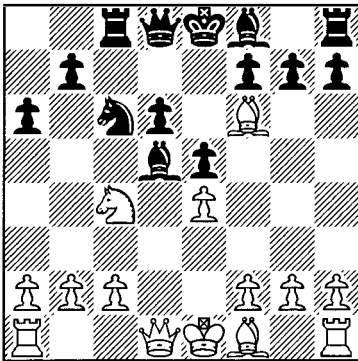


Diagram 45 (B)

White takes control of d5

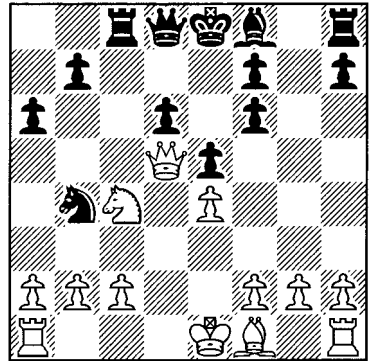


Diagram 46 (W)

Fighting for control of d5

11 exd5 Ne7 12 Bxf6 gxf6, leading to a rather typical Sveshnikov position in quite a good version for Black, was the start of the game K.Robatsch-B.Larsen, Halle 1963, which launched this variation on its second life. The text is more principled – White wants to control d5, not block it with a pawn – but it does allow Black a variety of very sharp tries.

11...gxf6 12 Qxd5 Nb4 (Diagram 46)

Black's other tries here are basically considered by current theory as refuted, and I give only the key lines in case some diligent supporter of 8...Be6 wants to try and revive them:

a) 12...b5 13 Ne3 Ne7 (or 13...Bh6? 14 Nf5 Nb4 15 Nxd6+ Kd7 16 Qxf7+ Kc6 17 Qb7+ Kc5 18 Rd1 Nxc2+ 19 Ke2 Nd4+ 20 Rxd4 exd4 21 Qd5+ Kb6 22 Nxc8+ Qxc8 23 Qxd4+ and wins) 14 Qd3 Bh6 15 Be2 Bxe3 16 fxe3 with an advantage for White.



NOTE: The exchange on e3 is quite common in this line, and usually the d- and f-files are much more useful for White than the c- and g-files for Black.

b) 12...f5 13 0-0-0 b5 14 Ne3 Bh6 15 Kb1 Bxe3 16 fxe3 (**Diagram 47**) is much the same sort of thing: 12...Nd4 13 Bd3 Qe7 (defending b7 in preparation for ...Rc5; miserable is 13...b5 14 Ne3 Qa5+ 15 Kf1! followed by c3, g3, Kg2 and so on) 14 Qa5! Rxc4?! (Black has to acquiesce in being worse after something like 14...Rc5) 15 Bxc4 Nxc2+ 16 Ke2 Nxa1 17 Rc1! Bh6 18 Bxf7+ Kxf7 19 Rc7 and wins.

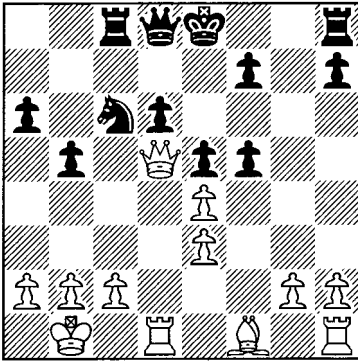


Diagram 47 (B)

Black is struggling

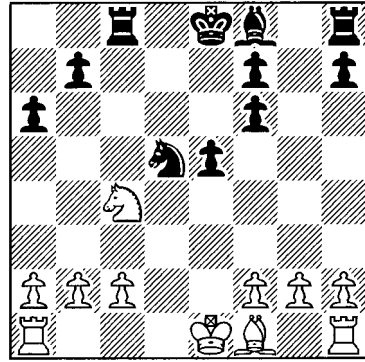


Diagram 48 (W)

Black hasn't equalized

13 Qd2 d5 14 exd5 Qxd5

14...Nxc2+ is the move Black would really like to make work, but it seems that it doesn't: 15 Qxc2 Bb4+ 16 Kd1 Qxd5+ (16...b5 17 Qe4 bxc4 18 Bxc4 is also good for White; the dislocation of his king is temporary) 17 Kc1 0-0 (17...b5 18 a3! Be7 19 Nd6+ Kd7 20 Nxc8 Rxc8 21 Bxb5+! Qxb5 22 Rd1+ Bd6 23 Rxd6+ Kxd6 24 Qxc8 Qf1+ 25 Kc2 Qxa1 is a winning ending for White – the sort of cruel tactical variation that convinces you to look elsewhere for an opening) 18 a3 Bc5 19 Qd3 Bd4 20 Kb1 Rfd8 21 Be2 and Black comes up short.

15 Qxd5 Nxd5 (Diagram 48)

'With a rather equal game,' said Larsen in 1969, although modern theory holds that White is clearly better here ('the endgame is just bad for Black' – Yakovich), as Game 10 demonstrates.

Illustrative Games

Game 9

□ G.Kamsky ■ J.Polgar

Buenos Aires 1994

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bf4 e5 8 Bg5 a6 9 Na3 Be6 10 Nc4 Rc8 11 Bxf6 Qxf6

After 11...gxf6 White can play 12 Ne3 or 12 Bd3, and in either case theory gives him the advantage.



NOTE: If Black is going to accept the doubled f-pawns then he needs to shut White's knight out of play on a3 by way of compensation.

12 Nb6 (Diagram 49)

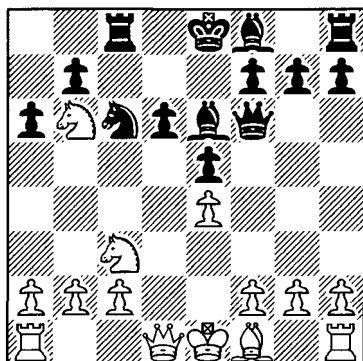


Diagram 49 (B)

A knight heads for d5

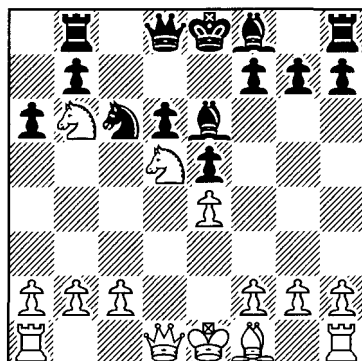


Diagram 50 (W)

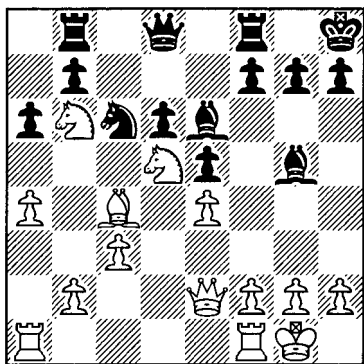
Black will play around the knights

White plays quietly for control of d5, whereas 12 Nxd6+ Bxd6 13 Qxd6 gives Black an initiative sufficient for at least equality after 13...Rd8 14 Qc5 Nd4 15 Bd3 Qg5.

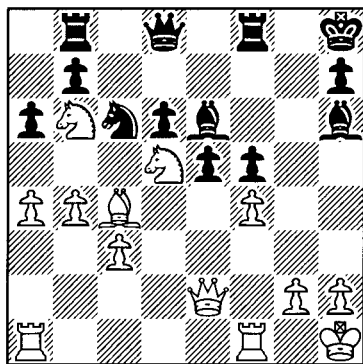
12...Rb8 13 Ncd5 Qg6?!

The main move is 13...Qd8 (**Diagram 50**) which has been played in about 150 games and proven reliable, if perhaps slightly inferior, for Black. White's usual and best path, mapped out by Karpov in the famous game A.Karpov-J.Nunn, London 1982, is 14 c3 Be7 (14...g6? 15 Qa4 Bh6 16 Bxa6 wins material: 16...Bxd5 17 Nxd5 Ra8 18 Qb5 Rxa6 19 Qxb7) 15 Bc4 (15 Qa4? 0-0 16 Bxa6 Bxd5 17 Nxd5 Ra8 now wins a piece for Black; meanwhile 15 Nc4 0-0 16 Nxe7+ Qxe7 17 Qxd6 Qh4

allows Black very active play for the pawn) 15...0-0 16 0-0 Bg5 17 a4 Kh8 18 Qe2 (**Diagram 51**) was praised highly by Nunn and is typical of Karpov's style: his first thought is how to meet ...f5 and his chosen method is exf5 ...gxf5, f4. As Nunn points out the immediate 18 a5? loses to 18...Bxd5, but preparing this by 18 b4 also allows Black too much activity with 18...f5 according to Nunn, although if White replies with 19 exf5 Bxf5 we actually arrive at a very typical position for this variation. After a pair of knights and (usually) light-squared bishops are exchanged, opinions differ on the resulting positions with the knight on d5 against the g7-bishop, ranging from reliable equality for Black to a solid edge for White. Of course it depends on where the other pieces are too.

**Diagram 51 (B)**

Typical Karpovian prophylaxis

**Diagram 52 (B)**

White has held up the e5 and f5 duo

Karpov-Nunn continued 18 Qe2 g6 (18...f5 19 exf5 Bxf5 20 Bd3 is generally held to be worse; Black wants a pawn on f5 to retain some influence over the central light squares) 19 Kh1 Bh6 (Black prefers to prepare ...f5 a little more, although it isn't obvious how White could have exploited 19...f5 20 exf5 gxf5 21 f4 Bh6) 20 b4 (or 20 Rad1, Karpov's later preference) 20...f5 21 exf5 gxf5 22 f4 (**Diagram 52**), when Black can choose between the latterly more popular 22...Bg7 and Nunn's 22...Bxd5 23 Nxd5 and now 23...Ne7, since 24 fxe5 Nxd5 25 Bxd5 dxe5 26 Qxe5+?? loses to 26...Bg7 27 Qe6 Rf6. Black must expect to be slightly worse in these lines, but they are typical of the Bxf6 Sveshnikov and familiarity with the resulting positions can certainly make them well playable for Black.

14 Qd3

14 Nc7+ Kd8 15 Nxe6+ fxe6 is an instinctive reaction but in fact is not particularly effective at all: Black can regroup with ...Be7, ...Kc7, rooks to the d- and f-files, and can easily become better. As usual the doubled e-pawns give him better central control and make White's bishop rather less effective than Black's; for example, 16

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

Qd3 Kc7 17 Nc4 Be7 18 Ne3 Rhf8 19 c3 Rbd8 20 g3 Qf7 and Black was already on his way to a shock victory in A.Galkin-E.Wiersma, Rotterdam 1998.

14...Be7 15 g3

Now, however, White really has to take up the challenge and play 15 Nc7+ Kd8 16 Ncd5. It's complicated but probably 16...f5 17 0-0-0 fxe4 18 Qc3 (**Diagram 53**), with the threat of Bxa6, is just very good for him. The text allows Black to steal a couple of tempi over the 13...Qd8 line by her daring decision to allow the check, and frankly the game now loses any theoretical significance and justifies its inclusion only by Polgar's splendidly thematic attack.

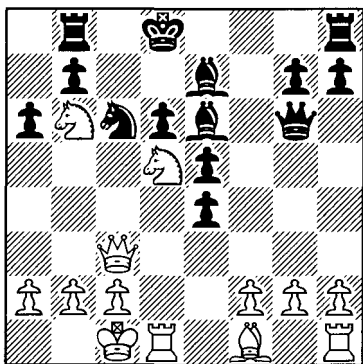


Diagram 53 (B)

White is somewhat better

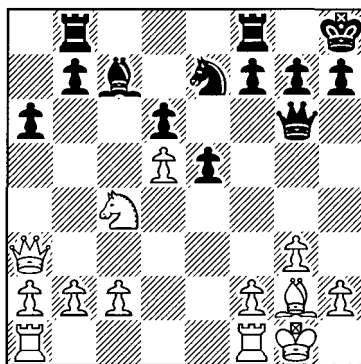


Diagram 54 (W)

White must take the pawn

15...0-0 16 Bg2 Bd8 17 0-0 Kh8

Polgar disapproves of this choice and says that she ought instead to have played either 17...Ne7 or 17...Bxb6 18 Nxb6 Rbd8 followed by ...Ne7, with equality.

18 Nc4 Ne7

The immediate 18...f5 is well met either by 19 Nxd6 f4 20 Nf5 (Polgar), or less humanly by 19 f4 (Fritz), although there is some logic in the latter, blocking ...f4 directly. Therefore Black is forced to change course a little.

19 Qa3 Bxd5 20 exd5 Bc7! (Diagram 54)

A bold sacrifice, but at the same time more or less essential. 20...b5 is really quite nasty for Black after something like 21 Qxd6 Qxd6 22 Nxd6 Rb6 23 Ne4 Nxd5 24 Nc5 Nf6 25 Rfe1 Bc7 26 Rad1, while the only other try to defend d6, 20...Nc8, runs into 21 Nxe5!

21 Rad1

For the second time Kamsky refuses to take up the challenge. After 21 Nxe5 dxe5 22 Qxe7 Bd6 23 Qh4 f5 Black certainly has some compensation, but still and all

this ought to have been played, since after the text Black has her attack for free.

21...Ng8!

A great move. The knight is best on f6 after ...f5.

22 Na5?

The losing move, or at least the start of the losing plan, but evidently Kamsky must have calculated that his queenside play would distract Polgar from her attack just one tempo quicker than it does.

22...f5 23 c4 f4 24 c5 f3 (Diagram 55)

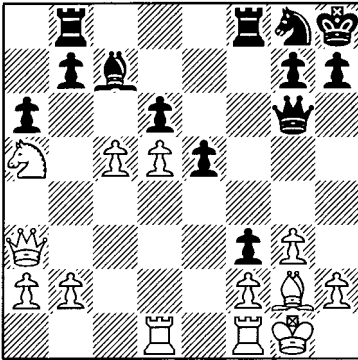


Diagram 55 (W)

White is in serious trouble

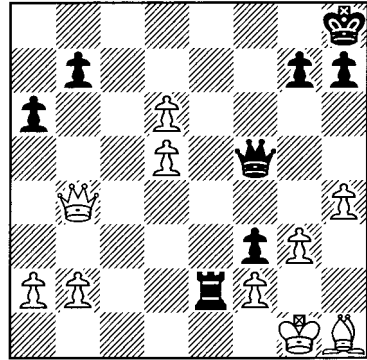


Diagram 56 (W)

Finishing in Tal-esque style

25 Bh1

This can't have been what Kamsky had in mind when he went 22 Na5, but 25 Bh3 is dealt with extremely firmly by 25...Qh5 26 Be6 Bxa5 27 Qxa5 Rbe8 28 h4 (28 Kh1 Rxe6! 29 dxe6 Qh3 30 Rg1 Rf6 forces 31 Qd2, and now Black has time for the classy touch 31...d5 before winning the queen with ...Rh6) 28...Rf4!! 29 Bh3 Rxh4! 30 gxh4 Qxh4 and surprisingly White has no defence to what might look a slightly slow and understaffed attack; for example, 31 Kh2 Nf6 32 Rg1 Qxf2+ 33 Kh1 Qh4 34 Kh2 h5!.

25...Bxa5 26 Qxa5 e4

Black is now positionally winning with the h1-bishop stifled, though in the game 'positionally winning' doesn't really describe what happens.

27 Rfe1 Nf6 28 cxd6 Qg4

28...Rbd8 was more in the Karpovian style, but Polgar has her own methods.

29 Rd4 Rbe8 30 Qb4 Qh3 31 Rdx4 Nxe4 32 Rxe4 Qf5 33 Rxe8 Rxe8 34 h4 Re2!! (Diagram 56)

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

If Black didn't have this tactical win she would be in a spot of bother, but of course Polgar saw this move some time ago.

35 d7

The point is that White cannot defend the f-pawn because of 35 Qc5 Re1+ 36 Kh2 Rxf1+ and mates.

35...Qb1+ 36 Kh2 Rxf2+ 37 Kh3 h5!

The only move – others lose – and obvious enough by now, but Polgar had to see this about ten moves ago to justify the way she played.

38 Qf8+ Kh7 0-1

A game which reminds me of the young Tal in the sheer exuberance of Polgar's play, and particularly the shocking way she spurned a riskless win to demonstrate her splendid tactical and calculation skills.

Points to Remember

None, really. To play this variation Black has to be prepared to accept the slightly worse positions in the note to 13...Qg6, and practice in those is essential for success.

Game 10

□ **Tran Thanh Tu** ■ **Tu Hoang Thai**

Vietnamese Championship, Hue 2005

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 Be6 9 Nc4 Rc8 10 Nd5 Bxd5 11 Bxf6 gxf6 12 Qxd5 Nb4 13 Qd2 d5 14 exd5 Qxd5 15 Qxd5 Nxd5 16 0-0-0 (Diagram 57)

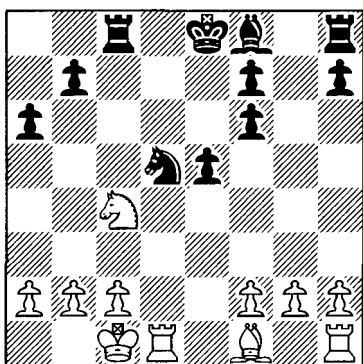


Diagram 57 (B)

The ending favours White

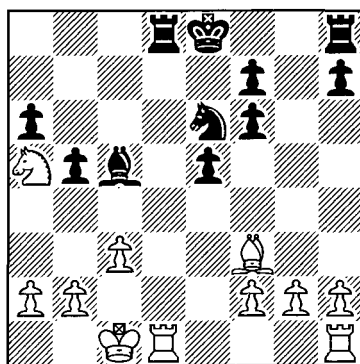


Diagram 58 (W)

Black is vulnerable on the queenside

16...Rd8

The alternative is 16...Nb4 17 c3 Nc6. White then plays a knight to d6 and has bishop against knight, with or without rooks, and the chance later to cripple Black's majority with g4. White has done well in such endgames. The idea of the text is at least for the moment to keep the opposite-coloured bishops, and also by the exchange of one pair of rooks to increase the influence of Black's centralized king and decrease the chance of it being irritated by checks and mate threats.

17 Be2 b5

This is the corollary of keeping the knight where it is; White cannot exchange knights with Ne3 without allowing equality, so he has to go to a5.

18 Na5 Nc7 19 c3

White has a number of alternatives which ought to maintain a definite advantage for him, of which this is one. 19 Rxd8+ Kxd8 20 Rd1+ is not as effective as it looks since Black can station his king near his queenside weaknesses, which is helpful, with 20...Kc8, when 21 Bh5 doesn't achieve anything decisive because of 21...Bc5 followed by ...Rf8. The one I like the best, though, is 19 Nb7 Rxd1+ 20 Rxd1, especially since 20...f5 21 Nd8! (21 Nd6+ Bxd6 22 Rxd6 Rg8 23 g3 Rg6 is nowhere near so effective) seems to be very good for White: 21...Rg8 22 Nc6 Be7 23 g3 Bf6 (after 23...e4 24 Bh5 is very strong in view of 24...Rg5 25 Bxf7+ Kxf7 26 Rd7) 24 Rd6 Be7 25 Nxe7 Kxe7 26 Rc6 with an ideal version of the typical endgame for White, in which Black will be very hard pressed to defend, if he can do it at all.

19...Ne6 20 Bf3 Bc5 (Diagram 58) 21 Bc6+

White is beginning to wander off track. It was better to continue the attack on the black queenside with 21 Bb7 Rg8 22 g3 Bb6 23 Nc6 Rxd1+ 24 Rxd1 Nc5 25 Bc8 (the minor pieces exert great strength in this set-up), when Black's most natural attempt, 25...Kf8, seems to fail to 26 b4 Ne4 27 Bxa6 Nxc3 28 Rd3 Ne2+ 29 Kd2 Nd4 30 Nxd4 Bxd4 31 Bxb5 Bxf2 32 Rd8+ Kg7 33 Rxc8+ Kxc8 34 Bd3 with a bishop ending which I think White wins.

21...Kf8

Possibly White expected 21...Ke7, although even then he cannot directly win the a-pawn in view of 22 Bb7 Rd6 23 Rxd6 Kxd6 24 Bxa6?? Ra8 25 Nb7+ Kc6.

22 Bd7 Bxf2 23 Nc6 Ra8 24 Bxe6?

Going totally off track. White's position is not what it was, but still after 24 Rhf1 Be3+ 25 Kc2 Kg7 26 Ne7 he had reasonable compensation for the missing pawn.

24...fxe6 25 Rd7 Rg8 (Diagram 59)**26 g3**

White must have missed something very simple around here – possibly even as simple as 26 Rf1 Rxc2.

26...Rg7

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

Even 26...Rc8 was good, since the apparently devastating 27 Nd8 Ke8 28 Rhd1 fails to 28...Bd4.

27 Rhd1 Rc8?

But this is a mistake. Black should trade rooks first.

28 Rxc7?

An illogical move, trading an active for a passive unit. 28 R7d6 kept equality for White, since 28...Bc5 is met by 29 Nd8 Bxd6 30 Nxe6+ Kf7 31 Nxc7.

28...Kxc7 29 Rd7+ Kh6 30 Nd8 Kg6

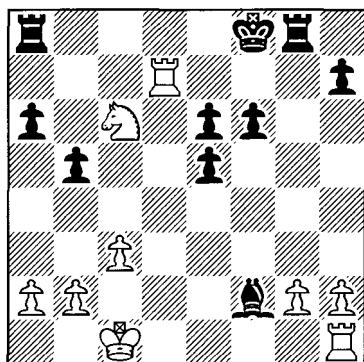


Diagram 59 (W)

The tide has turned

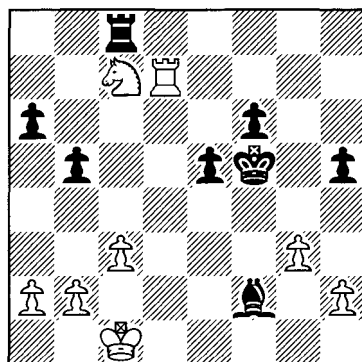


Diagram 60 (W)

White's kingside is collapsing

A very good move. It was tempting to go for the win of material with 30...b4 31 Kd2 bxc3+ 32 bxc3 Rc4 followed by ...Ra4, but White has resources. After 33 Nxe6 Ra4 34 Nf8 Rxa2+ 35 Kd3 f5 36 Rxh7+ Kg5 37 Kc4 it is not certain at all that Black can win: in fact I think probably he can't, whereas in the game Black's attack on the kingside, aided by the active king, swiftly becomes irresistible.

31 Nxe6 Kf5 32 Nc7 h5 (Diagram 60) 33 Kd2?

A waste of time. White might as well have taken the material: 33 Nxa6 Bg1 34 h3 Rg8 35 Rh7 Rxc3 36 Rxh5+ Ke4 is certainly frightening, but White keeps chances to resist with 37 Rh4+ Ke3 38 Rh5!

33...Bg1 34 h3 Rg8 35 Rh7 Rxc3 36 Rxh5+ Ke4 37 Rh4+ Kf3 38 Rg4??

Collapsing totally.

38...Rxc4 39 hxc4 e4 0-1

Points to Remember

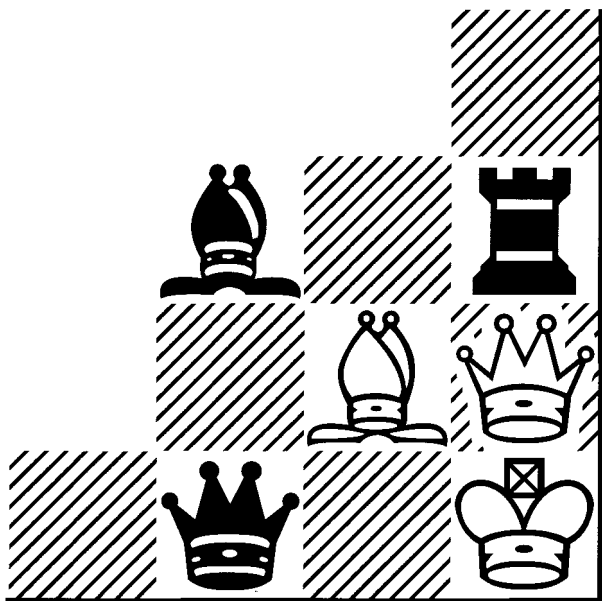
None again really. Unless Black can improve after 11 Bxf6 on move 12 or 14 then,

if he wants to play this variation, he has to be resigned to the rather cheerless ending in this game. As we saw, it took several terrible mistakes before White lost, and at the beginning of the ending he had good chances. 8...b5 is the main line for good reasons.

Chapter Three

White Plays 9 Nd5

- ▨ Introduction
- ▨ Black Avoids 11...0-0
- ▨ The Underrated 11...Bg5



Introduction

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Nd5 (Diagram 1)

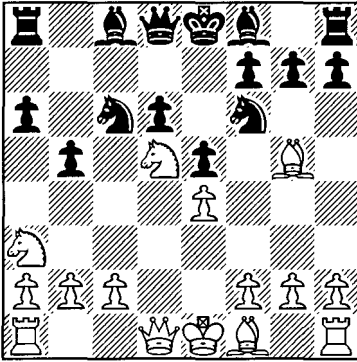


Diagram 1 (B)

White maintains the pin

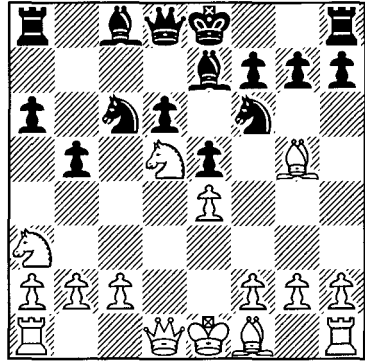


Diagram 2 (W)

Forcing White into an exchange

White's other main option, 9 Bxf6, will be considered in Chapters 5-7, while after 9 Nab1 Black equalizes with natural play; for example, 9...Be7 10 Bxf6 (the immediate 10 a4 b4 11 Nd5 loses a pawn to 11...Nxe4) 10...Bxf6 11 a4 b4 12 Nd5 0-0 13 Bc4 (White could do with bringing his knight here, but then he doesn't keep control of d5) 13...Bb7 (13...Be6 is also possible) 14 0-0 Bg5 (a typical move in these positions which we'll see much more of shortly) 15 c3 Rc8 16 Qd3 Qa5 17 Nd2 bxc3 18 bxc3 Bxd2 19 Qxd2 Qc5, and the weaknesses balanced each other in E.Najer-P.Eljanov, Ashdod 2004.

9...Be7 (Diagram 2)

This natural move is really the only one worth considering, forcing White by the positional threat of 10...Nxd5 into making the exchange on f6. A move like 9...Be6 allows White to continue with 10 Bxf6 gxf6 11 c3 followed by capturing on f5 when the move ...g6-f5 is played. As we'll see later, this is a main line of the 9 Bxf6 system with an extra tempo for White due to the ...Be6 and ...Bxf5 two-step.

The only real alternative is the craven draw offer 9...Qa5+ 10 Bd2 (10 c3 Nxe4 is supposed to lead to a draw) 10...Qd8. I'm not going to spend much time on this: White has various complicated alternatives but Rogozenko's main line is 11 c4 Nxe4 12 cxb5 Be6 13 Bc4 Ne7 14 Be3 (Diagram 3) 14...Rc8 (14...Qa5+ 15 Kf1 Rb8 16 Rc1 Nxd5 17 Bxd5 Nf6 18 Bc6+ Nd7 is also very dangerous for Black: I'm not completely sure that White is winning as Rogozenko implies after 19 Nc4 Qc7 20 Nxe5

dxe5 21 bxa6 Rxb2 22 a7 Rxa2 23 a8Q+ Rxa8 24 Bxa8 and now 24...Bc5, but evidently he has many other dangerous ideas) 15 Bb6 Qd7 16 bxa6 Rxc4 17 a7 Bxd5 18 Nxc4 Ba8 19 f3 d5 20 Nxe5 Qe6 21 Bc7 Nc5 22 Qe2 and I agree with Rogozenko (and before him da Costa Junior) that White is better here. I've spent some time with the computer trying to improve Black's play earlier and I haven't succeeded, so rather than do so much work to try and achieve a draw by repetition on move ten I'm going to move on. I've only given this line in case any reader wants to spend time immersing themselves in the (quite interesting) complications.

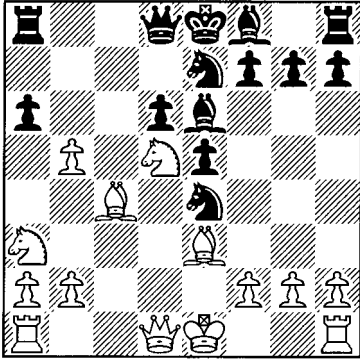


Diagram 3 (B)

White has some initiative

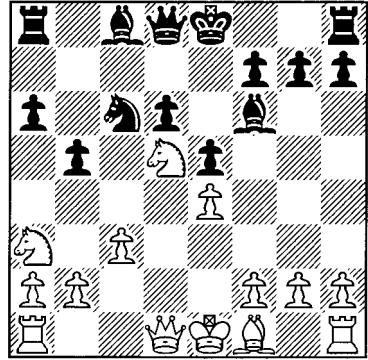


Diagram 4 (B)

White's main continuation

10 Nxe7

10 Bxf6 is the main move, carrying on the fight for d5, and we'll see that in the rest of this chapter and the next. The text is a rather unprincipled, yet still quite natural move which abandons the fight for d5, but has nonetheless had periods of popularity. It's a bit of a chameleon: once upon a time it was associated with wild tactical lines; nowadays White probably wants to play one of two quiet position types. These are the only two moves White should consider; defending the e-pawn with anything like 10 Bd3 Nxd5 11 exd5 Bxg5 12 dxc6 d5 or 10 f3 Nxd5 11 Qxd5 Bb7 loses any hope of controlling d5 and gives Black a very comfortable game.

As well as by far and away the main continuation 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 c3 (**Diagram 4**), the 11 c4 of Game 11 is fashionable just now, partly following the lead of Morozovich in San Luis, and partly because it leads to quiet simple positions which are not too hard for White to play.

10...Nxe7 (Diagram 5)



NOTE: Any Sveshnikov player should find this move the instinctive reaction, aiming at the d5-square.

Instead 10...Qxe7 11 c4 tends to lead to slightly worse and prospectless positions; for example, 11...Nd4 (or 11...b4 12 Nc2) 12 Nc2 and the pin on the f6-knight is really quite annoying: 12...Nxc2+ 13 Qxc2 bxc4 14 Bxc4 0-0 15 0-0 Be6 16 Rac1 Rfc8 17 Qd3 Bxc4 18 Rxc4 Rxc4 19 Qxc4 with a tiresome struggle for a draw in prospect.

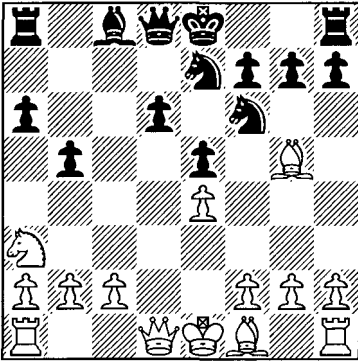


Diagram 5 (W)

Black fights for the d5-square

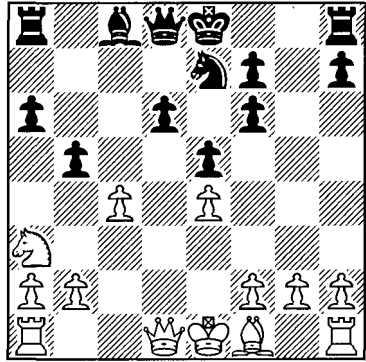


Diagram 6 (B)

A positional approach from White

11 Bxf6

11 Bd3 is the alternative; see Game 12.

11...gxf6

Now White can either play quietly or va banque.

12 c4 (Diagram 6)

A typical method for White in the Sveshnikov: of course what he's doing to his dark squares doesn't look very nice, but he wants to give his knight a way back into the game, and also after ...b4 he aims to play on the queenside with a2-a3 later. Also seen are:

a) 12 Qf3 is the violent alternative, characteristically recommended by Dr Nunn in the first edition of *Beating the Sicilian*: 12...f5 13 exf5 Bxf5 14 Bd3 Be6 (Black should preserve these bishops; the d3 one is something of a target) 15 0-0, and now Black can choose between the simple method 15...0-0 16 c4 f5 17 Rfd1 e4 18 Qe3 bxc4 19 Bxc4 d5 20 Nc2 Qd6, and a plan based on 15...d5 followed by ...Qc7 and ...0-0-0 (White's original success in this line was based on Black going both ...d5 and ...f5 too quickly).

b) 12 Bd3 Bb7 13 Qh5 (13 Qe2 d5 was known and considered equal) was a fresh idea at this level in A.Naiditsch-E.Sutovsky, Dortmund 2005. After 13...d5 14 0-0-0 commentators were united in suggesting 14...Qb6 (and certainly not 14...b4 15 Nc4!, falling for White's main idea) 15 exd5 Bxd5 (**Diagram 7**), and I suspect this

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

will prove more reliable than Sutovsky's 14...d4 15 Nb1 Qa5 16 a3 b4 17 Qh6 Ng6, when 18 Qg7, for example, would pose new questions (18...Rc8 19 axb4 Qxb4 20 f4! is the idea).

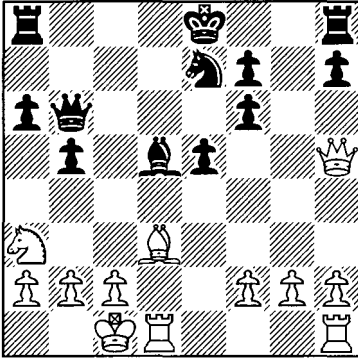


Diagram 7 (W)

Who has the happier king?

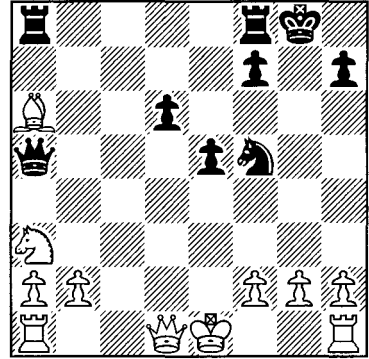


Diagram 8 (W)

Black hasn't any problems

12...Bb7

A much wilder and controversial continuation is 12...0-0 13 cxb5 f5 14 exf5 Nx5 and now:

a) 15 Bd3 runs into a series of shots: 15...e4! 16 Bxe4 Qe7 17 f3 d5! 18 Qxd5 Rd8 19 Qxd8+ (or 19 Qxa8 Qb4+ and so on, while 19 Qc6 Bb7 20 Qxb7 Qb4+ 21 Kf1 Ne3+ 22 Kf2 Qxb2+ 23 Nc2 Nxc2 leaves Black with a strong attack) 19...Qxd8 20 Bxa8 Qe7+ when Black is better (F.Volkman-T.Nedev, European Club Cup, Fuegen 2006).

b) 15 bxa6 (this sort of pawn sacrifice is quite common in the Sveshnikov; it always gives Black at least some play based on the new strong square for a knight at d4, the gain of time, the strong central pawns and the open queenside files, but of course it depends on the specific situation whether this is enough) and Black can now go all in with 15...Qh4 (or play the objectively probably more advisable 15...Bxa6 16 Bxa6 Qa5+ (**Diagram 8**) which was Radjabov's choice and is about equal, although Black can hardly avoid a perpetual check) 16 Nc2 d5 17 Qxd5 Be6 and now in A.Volokitin-A.Shabalov, Calvia Olympiad 2004, White played the unbelievably cheeky 18 Qxe5 and was in some trouble after 18...Rad8 (**Diagram 9**).

Instead 18 Qf3 e4 19 g3! was good for White according to Volokitin, although Rogozenko believes Black retains at least adequate compensation (and without attempting a detailed analysis, I expect he's right; it's certainly difficult for White to untangle in practice).

Since 12...b4? 13 Qa4+ loses a pawn, if Black wants to keep the queenside closed he has first to exchange queens with 12...Qa5+ 13 Qd2 Qxd2+ 14 Kxd2 b4, but then

White's ideas tend to start to show well: his knight on c2 keeps Black's out of d4; his centralized king is useful; he can unload his rather poor bishop after ...f5, exf5; and he has the a3-break in reserve, for example, 15 Nc2 Rb8 16 Bd3 f5 17 exf5 Bxf5 18 Bxf5 Nxf5 19 b3 Rg8 20 g3 Ke7 21 Rhd1 Rgc8 22 a3 as in K.Asrian-T.Nedev, European Championship, Antalya 2004, although at this exact moment Black could perhaps have made a satisfactory bid for freedom with 22...d5.

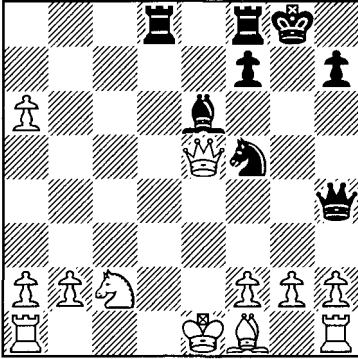


Diagram 9 (W)

Punishing White's greed

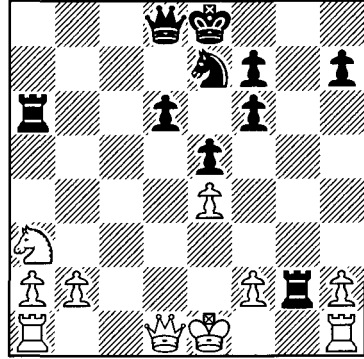


Diagram 10 (W)

Black has good activity

13 Bd3

13 cxb5 Bxe4 14 Qa4 d5 15 bxa6+ Kf8 is better for Black.

13...Rg8

13...bxc4 14 Nxc4 d5 15 exd5 Qxd5 was the old recipe, but Anand's 16 Qa4+ Kf8 17 0-0-0 revived White's prospects, although probably Black is fine here.

After 13...Rg8, 14 0-0 bxc4 15 Nxc4 d5 16 exd5 Qxd5 17 f3 Rd8 18 Rf2 e4 saw White crushed in the stem game V.Kupreichik-A.Chekhov, Minsk 1976. Better is 14 cxb5 when 14...Rxc4 15 bxa6 Bxa6 16 Bxa6 Rxa6 (**Diagram 10**) leads to a sharp, irrational position, typical of the Sveshnikov, in which Black has nothing particular to fear with his very active pieces and centre pawns (...f5 should be high on his agenda) against White's two passed pawns on the queenside.

Illustrative Games

Game 11

□ K.Asrian ■ Ni Hua

Taiyuan 2006

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9

Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 c4 b4 12 Nc2 (Diagram 11)

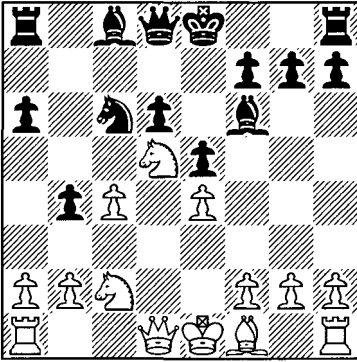


Diagram 11 (B)

A simple approach from White

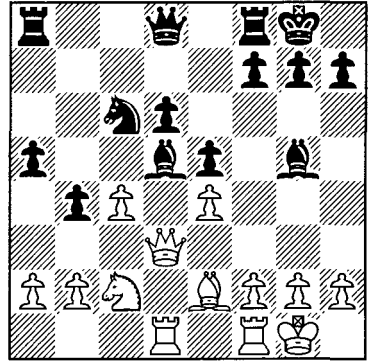


Diagram 12 (W)

A comfortable equalizer

12...a5

Also possible is 12...Rb8. The advantage of this is that it enables ...b3 and tends to extract the tempo b2-b3; the drawback is that the rook is not then ready to support ...a4 and that a6 is no longer free for the knight trip Ni Hua later employs.

13 Be2

13 g3 is another way to develop: 13...0-0 14 Bg2 (Morozevich's plan, admittedly so far applied only after 12...Rb8, is 14 h4 Be6 15 Bh3, although here Black can play much like he does in the main game with 15...Bxd5 16 cxd5 Nb8 17 0-0 Na6 18 Qf3 Nc5) 14...Bg5 15 0-0 Ne7 16 Nce3 Bxe3 17 Nxe3 was equal in C.Balogh-A.Moiseenko, Moscow 2006, although I'm not quite sure about the continuation 17...Be6 18 Qd3 Qd7 (18...Qb6 looks more natural to me) 19 Rfd1 Rfd8 20 Rac1.

13...0-0 14 0-0 Bg5 15 Qd3 Be6 16 Rad1

16 Nce3 is met by 16...Bxe3, with a similar game to Balogh-Moiseenko above.

16...Bxd5 (Diagram 12)

Black doesn't have to do this, but it's a simple enough way to equalize.

17 cxd5

After 17 exd5 Nb8 Black brings the knight to c5 and follows with ...g6 and ...f5. Meanwhile 17 Qxd5 is met by 17...Qb6, when 18 Qxd6 loses to 18...Rad8 19 c5 Qb7.

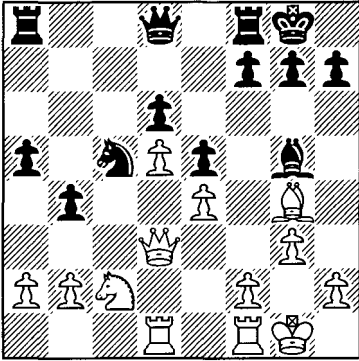
17...Nb8 18 Bg4 Na6 19 g3 Nc5 (Diagram 13) 20 Qf3 Na4



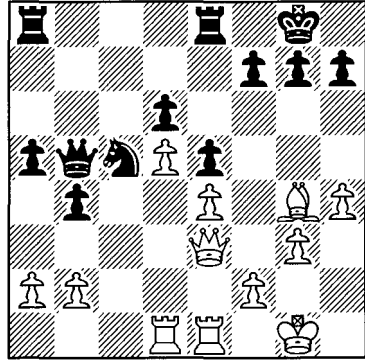
NOTE: Black is completely fine here: the fact he can't play a rook to the c-file doesn't matter because White can't get past the knight on c5 anyway.

21 Qb3

After 21 Rb1 Black might continue with 21...Ra7, going to c7.

21...Nc5 22 Qf3 Qb6**Diagram 13 (W)**

White can't get past the c5-knight

**Diagram 14 (W)**

Neither side can easily do much

22...Rb8 was another way to play on: 23 b3 can be met with 23...a4.

23 h4 Bh6 24 Ne3 Bxe3

Black is usually happy to dispose of this bishop like this.

25 Qxe3 Qb5 26 Rfe1

White's only positive idea is 26 f4, but this is well met by 26...Rae8.

26...Rfe8 (Diagram 14)

This is directed against f4. Black is safe here, although it is difficult to play for a win.

27 h5 h6 28 Qe2 Qxe2 29 Rxe2 Ra7 30 Rc1 Rc7 31 Rc4 Kf8

The start of a manoeuvre to contest the c-file. White can't do anything meanwhile.

32 Rec2 Ke7 33 Kf1 Rb8 34 Rc1 Rbb7 35 Ke2 Kd8 36 Kd2 Ke7 ½-½**Points to Remember**

1. 11 c4 can be met fairly easily with 11...b4 and ...a5.
2. After that the dark-squared bishop can come to g5 and be exchanged: all Black has to do is defend d6 securely. He can even play ...Bxd5 to get rid of the central knight.

Game 12

□ A.Areshchenko ■ I.Khairullin

Moscow 2006

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Nd5 Be7 10 Nxe7 Nxe7 11 Bd3 Bb7 12 Qe2 Nd7! (Diagram 15)

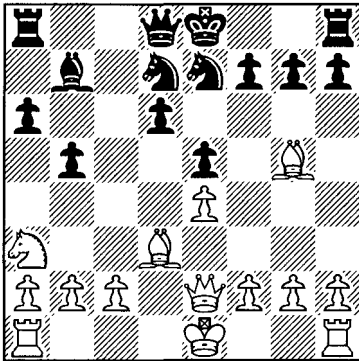


Diagram 15 (W)

Black prepares ...f7-f5

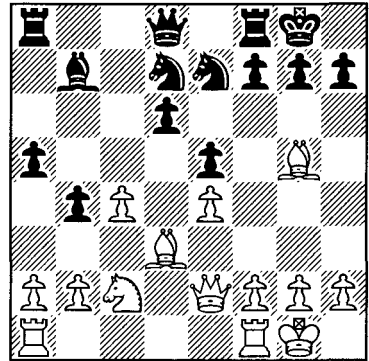


Diagram 16 (W)

Solid play from both sides



TIP: This is an excellent plan. Black wants to play for ...f5 rather than ...d5.

The latter is not so easy to achieve when White has kept his g5-bishop, since e5 is loose and also the bishop itself can become active; for example, 12...d5 13 exd5 Qxd5 14 0-0-0 Qe6 15 Rhe1 Ng6 16 f4, and Black has difficulties (16...e4 17 Bxf6 Nxf4 18 Bxb5+).

13 0-0

13 b4 is also sometimes played, planning to follow up with c4 and meanwhile restrain both ...b4 and ...Nc5. Black should probably reply 13...f6 14 Bd2 f5 at once so that White cannot keep a pawn on e4 (since after 15 f3 fxe4 16 fxe4 0-0 he cannot castle).

13...0-0 14 c4 b4 15 Nc2 a5 (Diagram 16)

This sort of quiet game has been quite fashionable lately. Black should be fine if he plays for ...f5, but of course the unopposed dark-squared bishop always has to be respected.

16 Rfd1 Nc5 17 f3 f6 18 Be3 Qc7 19 Qd2 Rad8 20 b3 f5

Areshchenko likes these unpretentious set-ups against the Sveshnikov, but here Black has equalized quite comfortably.

21 exf5 Nxd3 22 Qxd3 Nxf5



NOTE: Opposite-coloured bishops are very frequent in the Sveshnikov: normally it is the king's bishops, but this reversed balance is common in this particular line. White always has to be careful of some unpleasant happening on f3 or g2.

23 a3 (Diagram 17)

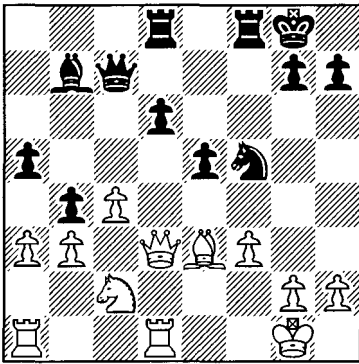


Diagram 17 (B)

How adventurous does Black feel?

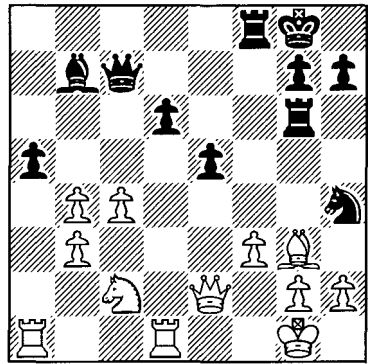


Diagram 18 (B)

Black has several tempting options

23...Rde8

An ambitious move. If Black wanted to remove all tension from the position then a systematic approach was 23...d5; for example, 24 axb4 axb4 25 Nxb4 dxc4 26 Qc3 Nxe3 27 Qxe3 c3 when Black can hardly be worse and may even be better.

24 Qe2 Re6 25 axb4 Rg6 26 Bf2 Nh4 27 Bg3 (Diagram 18) 27...axb4

Instead 27...Nxf3+ 28 gxf3 Bxf3 29 Qe3 Bxd1 30 Rxd1 h5 was a way to get something similar to the game, but the really interesting continuation was 27...Nxg2 28 Qxg2 (28 Kxg2 Bxf3+ 29 Qxf3 Rxf3 30 Kxf3 Qb7+ 31 Rd5 axb4 followed by ...h5 is unclear) 28...Rxf3 which seems at first sight to leave White in grave distress, but perhaps he survives with 29 Rxa5 Rfxg3 30 Qxg3 Rxg3+ 31 hxg3, although 31...Qd7 (31...Qc6 32 Rad5 is less effective) still looks good for Black to me.

28 Ra7 Bxf3 29 Rxc7 Bxe2 30 Re1 Bf3! 31 gxf3

31 Ne3 Bxg2 32 Bxh4 Be4+ 33 Bg3 h5 34 Ng2 Bxg2 35 Kxg2 h4 wins the piece back with equality.

31...Nxf3+ 32 Kg2 Nxe1+ 33 Nxe1 (Diagram 19)

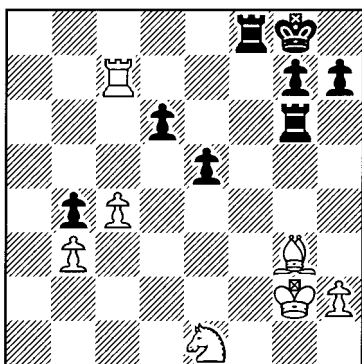


Diagram 19 (B)

Unbalanced but about equal

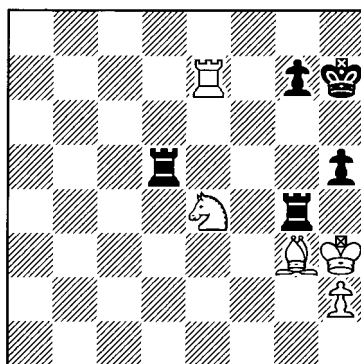


Diagram 20 (B)

Black should hold the draw

I imagine both players had been aiming for this position; probably it's equal but there's scope for either player to outplay the other.

33...h5 34 Kh3 Rf1 35 Nc2 Rf3 36 Nxb4 Rxb3 37 Nd5 Rg4 38 Ne7+ Kh7 39 Nf5 Rd3 40 Rd7 e4

The contours of a draw have taken shape. In fact 40...Rc3 forced a repetition draw at once after 41 Rc7 or 41 Nxd6 Rf4 42 Kg2 Rc2+ 43 Kh3, since White hardly wants to get involved in 43 Kg1 Rd4 44 Rxg7+ Kh8 45 Rf7 Rxd6 46 Bxe5+ Kg8 47 Rg7+ Kf8, but of course these things are easier with a computer. The move played also leads to a draw in a more human manner.

41 Nxd6 e3 42 Re7

42 c5 Rg5 43 Rc7 e2 44 Re7 Rxc5 45 Rxe2 makes no difference.

42...e2 43 c5 Rc3 44 Rxe2 Rxc5 45 Re7 Rd5 46 Ne4 (Diagram 20)

Black has to take a bit of care with rooks on the board but this is a pretty simple draw now.

46...Rf5 47 Nf2 Ra4 48 Ne4 Kh6 49 Nd6 Rf8 50 Ne4 Rf5 51 Be1 Ra3+ 52 Kg2 Ra2+ 53 Bd2+ Kg6 54 Kg3 Ra3+ 55 Kh4 Ra4 56 Kh3 Rf3+ 57 Kg2 Rd3 58 Bc1 Ra2+ 59 Nf2 Rc3 60 Be3 Kf6 61 Re8 Rc6 62 h4 Kf7 63 Rb8 Ra4 64 Rb7+ Kg8 65 Bg5 Rcc4 ½-½

Points to Remember

1. Black should take back on e7 with the knight to continue fighting for d5.
2. After 11 Bxf6 (instead of Areshchenko's 11 Bd3) 11...gxf6 12 c4, it's always worth considering the sacrifice of the b- and a-pawns by just letting White take them; Black will always have at least some compensation.

3. If White doesn't play Bxf6 then the plan of ...Nd7! and then ...Bb7, ...f6 and ...f5 is the way for Black to play the position. Look out for tactical blows after that around g2 and f3.

Black Avoids 11...0-0

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nx4d4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 c3 (Diagram 21)

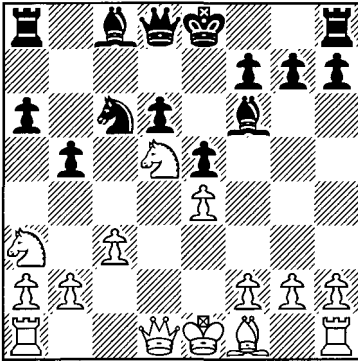


Diagram 21 (B)

Preparing Nc2 thus is normal

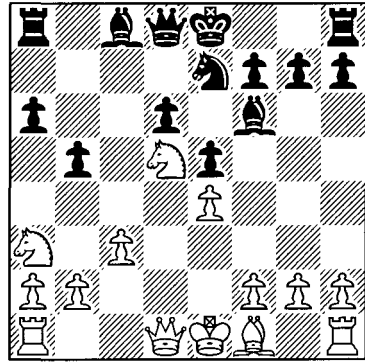


Diagram 22 (W)

Eliminating the strong d5-knight

The main move. Of course White can develop his light-squared bishop, but it's unnecessarily committal. He is always going to play c3 and Nc2 and it's best to do it at once. His next move might be a4, and then the bishop may be able to come to c4 in one turn. Now 11...0-0 is the main move and the subject of the next chapter, but Black has various other ways of seeking counterplay.

11...Bb7

Black can also consider the underrated 11...Bg5 (see the next section of this chapter) and 11...Ne7 (**Diagram 22**).

The latter is the intellectual property of the strong Polish GM and Sveshnikov lifer Michal Krasenkov. The problem, as we will shortly see, with 11...Bb7 and then ...Nb8-d7 is that it takes Black's knight three turns to challenge d5, and that gives White time to organize himself and obtain a small edge. 11...Ne7 can't be criticized on these grounds, and in a way expresses the spirit of the Sveshnikov better than any other move. The downside of course is that Black sustains the usual injury to his kingside pawns without the compensation of having an unopposed dark-squared bishop, and consequently his king is not as safe as he would like if he cas-

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fles kingside, so in this variation we sometimes see the unusual situation for the Sveshnikov of both sides castling queenside.

After 11...Ne7, 12 Nxf6+ is the only sensible move and the subject of Game 13. As usual White is not going to get anywhere by allowing ...Nxd5 and having to recapture with Qxd5:

a) 12 Nc2 Nxd5 13 Qxd5 Rb8 (even 13...Be6 is possible: White doesn't achieve much with 14 Qc6+ Ke7! 15 Nb4 Qd7 16 Nd5+ Bxd5 17 Qxd5 Qe6 18 Qd3) 14 Nb4 (the knight has no comfortable square from which it controls – as opposed to occupies – d5; if 14 Ne3 it can be harassed with 14...Bg5) 14...Bb7 15 Qd3 0-0 16 Be2 a5 17 Nd5 b4 (**Diagram 23**)

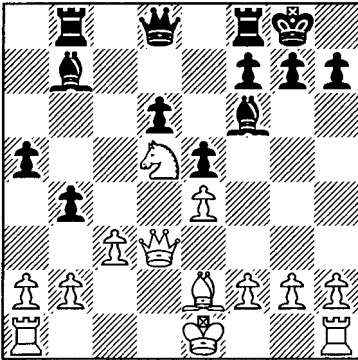


Diagram 23 (W)

Forcing a concession

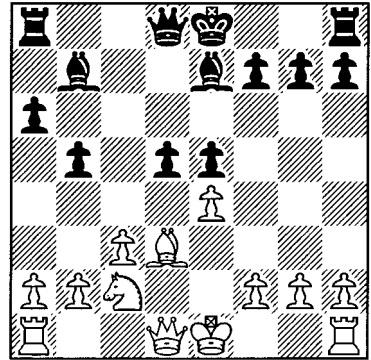


Diagram 24 (W)

Black achieves his ideal break

18 0-0 (or 18 c4 Bxd5 19 Qxd5 Qb6 with equality – Rogozenko) 18...Bxd5 19 Qxd5 bxc3 20 bxc3 with a fairly common position-type; sometimes these can be unpleasant for Black if White is active and it is not possible to transport the f6-bishop to c5, but here Black is active enough to keep the balance.



NOTE: Black's ...a5 and ...b4 is a very efficient plan – either White has to accept a pawn weakness somewhere on the queenside or he has to give up control of d4.

b) 12 Nxe7 has a certain logic in that it exchanges a piece which can fight for d5, but after 12...Bxe7 13 Nc2 Bb7 White has to stop and defend the d-pawn, and can't even prevent ...d5; for example, 14 Bd3 d5 (**Diagram 24**) when already it is White who needs to think about equalizing.

Returning to 11...Bb7, the purpose of this is to regroup the knight on c6 to the more flexible d7-square d7. 11...Nb8 12 Nc2 Nd7 comes to the same thing; the bishop will go to b7 anyway.



WARNING: The problem with this line is that Black is spending two tempi, and his knight relocation doesn't directly challenge d5, which means there is every prospect of White obtaining a slight advantage that can be very difficult to shake off.

12 Nc2 Nb8 (Diagram 25)

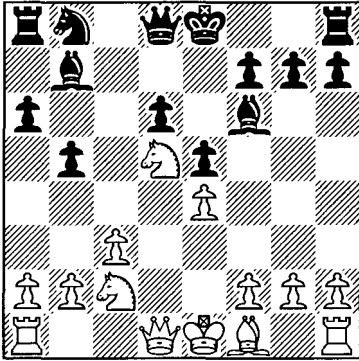


Diagram 25 (W)

The black knight heads for d7

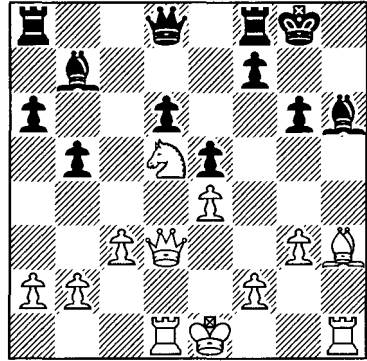


Diagram 26 (B)

Black lacks counterplay

13 a4

By far the commonest, although White has a variety of other ways to develop:

a) 13 g3 Nd7 14 h4 aims first and foremost to keep Black's king's bishop miserable: 14...0-0 (playing directly to challenge d5 with 14...Nb6 15 Nce3 Rc8 16 Bg2 Rc5 17 Nxb6 Qxb6 18 Qd2 0-0 19 0-0 g6 20 Rfd1 Rd8 not surprisingly gave White the advantage in Y.Kosashvili-I.Manor, Israel 1996; he went on with Rac1, b4, Nd5, Qxd5 and got the advantage: if Black wants to try and break down d5 like this he might as well keep the knight on c6 and play ...Ne7 in one go rather than ...Nb8-d7-b6) 15 Nce3 g6 16 Bh3 Bg7 17 h5 Nf6 18 hxg6 hxg6 19 Qd3 Nxd5 20 Nxd5 Bh6 21 Rd1 (**Diagram 26**) saw White achieving that in V.Anand-J.Nunn, Monte Carlo (blind-fold rapid) 1994.

b) Rogozenko's proposal, 13 c4, seeks to take advantage of the fact that the knight has left c6: 13...0-0 14 cxb5 axb5 15 Bxb5 Qa5+ 16 Nc3 Bxe4 17 0-0 Bb7 18 b4 Qd8 19 Nd5 is his unclear variation.

c) 13 Nce3 puts top priority on nailing Black down in the centre: 13...Nd7 14 Qf3 0-0 15 h4 Be7 16 Bd3 Nf6 17 Nxf6+ Bxf6 18 Rd1 Qb6 19 Bc2 led to the usual sort of White slight advantage in S.Tiviakov-Y.Yakovich, Elista 1997.

13...bxa4

We will now see 14 Rxa4 in Game 14. White can also commit his knight immedi-

ately to e3 with 14 Nce3 (**Diagram 27**).

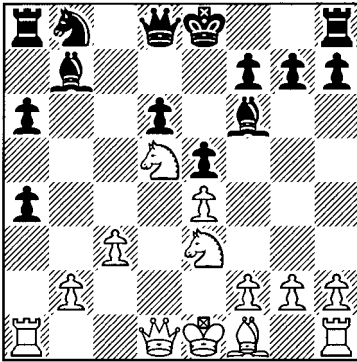


Diagram 27 (B)

There's no hurry to recapture on a4

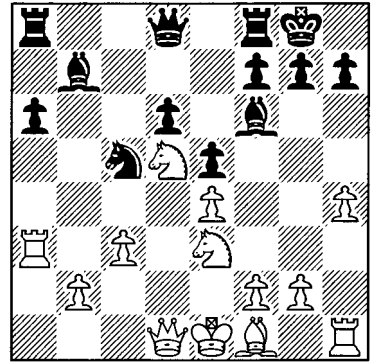


Diagram 28 (B)

Enterprising play by White

The main point of this is seen after 14...Nd7 15 Nxf6+ Nxf6 16 Qxa4+, when White is better after either 16...Qd7 17 Qxd7+ Kxd7 18 f3 or 16...Nd7 17 Nf5 0-0 18 Nxd6 (V.Iordachescu-G.Timoshenko, Tusnad 2004).

As 14 Nce3 Bg5?! allows 15 Nf5 when 15...g6 loses material to the shot 16 Nc7+! Qxc7 17 Qxd6, perhaps best is 14...0-0 when Rogozenko indicates the interesting line 15 Rxa4 Nd7 (15...Bg5 16 Nf5 is still strong) 16 h4 (but now Black is ready for ...Bg5 and White needs to prevent it) 16...Nc5 17 Ra3!? (**Diagram 28**) 17...Nxe4 (17...a5 18 Qf3 a4 19 Bc4 is perhaps a bit better for White, but the c5-knight and a4-pawn form a considerable barrier on the queenside, and it's not easy for White to trade off the knight), and now he gives the long semi-forced line 18 Qf3 Nc5 19 b4 Bxd5 20 Nxd5 Ne6 21 Qf5 e4 22 Nxf6+ Qxf6 23 Qxf6 gxf6 24 Kd2 Nc7 25 Be2 with an advantage for White; he wins his pawn back and has at least some prospects in the ending.

Illustrative Games

Game 13

□ **Deep Shredder** ■ **The Baron**

Leiden 2006

As the reader can see, the participants in this game were not the sort you meet at the local club. This has its perils for the annotator, since it is all too easy to speak anthropomorphically of plans, not to mention the fact that the annotator's own

software doesn't convey the usual advantage of allowing him to out-calculate the players. But for all that it's a very interesting game and it would be a shame to leave it out.

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 c3 Ne7 12 Nxf6+ gxf6 (Diagram 29)

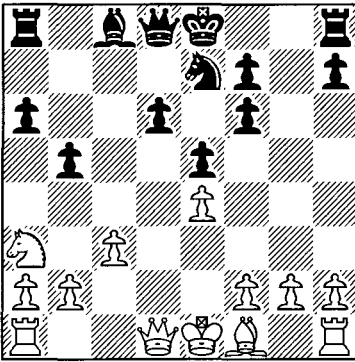


Diagram 29 (W)

Black has his dynamic structure

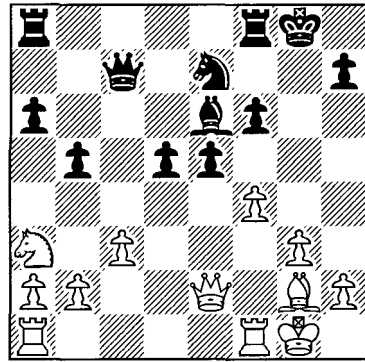


Diagram 30 (W)

Black has a strong centre

13 Nc2

This is obviously a move which White needs to play, but he can also develop his king's bishop at this stage. The first two alternatives involve moving it to the long diagonal to try and restrain ...d5, while the last (and probably most poisonous) reckons that it will be best placed on d3 where it both helps to restrain ...f5 and attacks b5:

a) After 13 g3 Black's commonest approach is to play 13...Bb7 14 Bg2 f5 and follow up by castling queenside; for example, 15 Qe2 Qb6 16 Nc2 h5 17 0-0-0 0-0-0, but 18 f4 tends to leave White with a slight advantage. It seems to me that once White points his bishop at the queenside there's a lot to be said for planning on kingside castling, and I like instead 13...f5 14 Bg2 fxe4 15 Bxe4 d5 16 Bg2 Be6 17 0-0 0-0 18 Qe2 f6 19 f4 Qc7 (**Diagram 30**), when Black's centre ought to compensate for his slightly looser position, P.Blehm-J.Novotny, Czech League 2001.

b) 13 Be2 is similar but has the idea that after 13...Bb7 (13...f5 is equally possible here) 14 Bf3 f5 (14...d5 is another try which exploits the slightly artificial placement of the bishop on f3, because after 15 exd5 Bxd5 16 0-0 Black has the important resource 16...Rg8! to exchange queens after 17 Re1 Bxf3 18 Qxf3 Qd5), White has the extra option of 15 exf5, although it is not obvious to me that the slight gain of time does him any good after 15...d5 16 Nc2 Nxf5, since he has usually felt he has to go on with 17 g3 anyway, when Black could reasonably aim to castle on

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either side with a typical position for the line.

c) The sternest test, though, is 13 Bd3 Bb7 14 Qe2, with the cunning idea to delay castling until Black does so, and perhaps try to arrange castling on opposite sides. Black has two ways against this idea:

c1) 14...d5 and now White has to commit himself (since otherwise after 15 Nc2 Black has 15...dxe4 16 Bxe4 Bxe4 17 Qxe4 Qd5, forcing the helpful exchange of queens): 15 0-0-0 (**Diagram 31**)

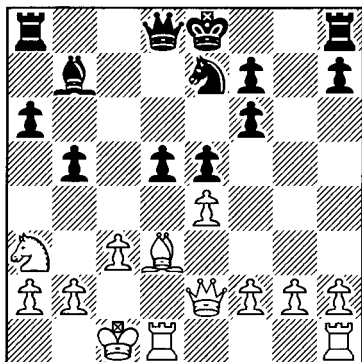


Diagram 31 (B)

A bold but strong castling

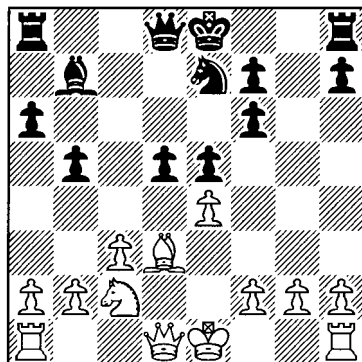


Diagram 32 (W)

Black needs to keep his f6-pawn

15...Qb6 (it's not easy for Black to castle queenside, which means he has to be content to play with the kings on opposite sides) 16 exd5 Nxd5 17 Be4 Nf4 18 Qf3 Bxe4 19 Qxe4 and Black's shaky king and pawn weaknesses outweigh the offside a3-knight.

c2) 14...Qb6 15 Nc2 d5 is the other, but White continues to delay castling and is ready to meet ...0-0-0 with a4; for example, 16 Nb4 0-0-0 17 a4 with advantage for White in S.Tiviakov-N.Sulava, St Vincent 2004.

13...Bb7 14 Bd3 d5 (Diagram 32)



WARNING: 14...f5 15 exf5 Bxg2 16 Rg1 is not good; Black activates White's pieces and ensures that his own king will have nowhere safe – the f6-advance is an important resource.

15 exd5

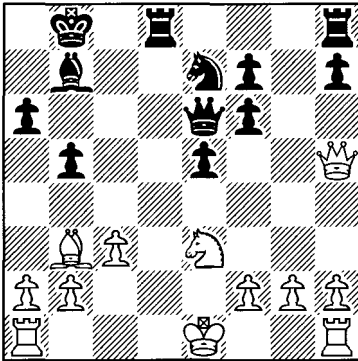
After 15 Qe2 Black could either play 15...dxe4 as I suggested above or take advantage of the d3-bishop's straitened circumstances with 15...f5!?, when 16 f3 dxe4 17 fxe4 f4 is at least equal for Black according to Rogozenko, although I'm not so sure about this.

15...Qxd5

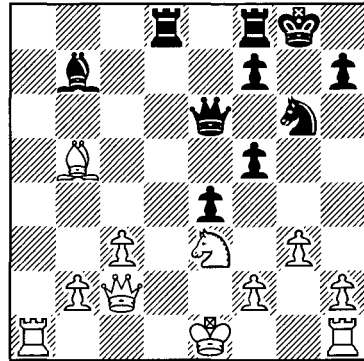
15...Nxd5 16 Be4 f5 17 Bxf5 Nf4 18 Ne3 is possible as well, although White is a little better.

16 Ne3 Qe6 17 a4

It is perhaps a bit surprising that the computer doesn't go for the materialist alternative 17 Qh5 0-0-0 18 Bc2 Kb8 19 Bb3 (**Diagram 33**).

**Diagram 33 (B)**

Black will gain some compensation

**Diagram 34 (W)**

Has the Black machine enough?

Black is meant to have good compensation here after either 19...Qb6 (whose main idea is seen in the line 20 Qxf7 Ng6 21 0-0?! Nf4 22 a4? Bxg2! 23 Nxc2 Rhg8 24 Bxg8 Nh3+ 25 Kh1 Rxc8 26 Bxg8 Nxf2+ 27 Rxf2 Qxf2, when Black's chances are better in this complicated position), or 19...Qc6 20 Bxf7 f5 21 0-0 and now 21...Rd2 (Rogozenko), although after 22 a4 proving Black's compensation against a computer is no easy task at all. Possibly the creatures were still in their openings books.

17...Rd8 18 Qc2 e4 19 Be2 0-0

A forced pawn sacrifice – 19...bxa4 20 Qxa4+ wins the a-pawn anyway – but Black obtains good compensation.

20 axb5 axb5 21 Bxb5 f5 22 g3 Ng6 (Diagram 34)

This had all happened before in H.Stefansson-S.Mamedyarov, European Championship, Antalya 2004. Black's active pieces and pressure against the king give him reasonable compensation, certainly in a human game, although in a computer game it is not so easy actually to get at White's king past the immovable knight on e3. Furthermore, the possibility of White getting organized and eventually advancing the queenside pawns with immaculate tactical control perhaps looms larger than it would if you or I was playing.

23 Be2 f4 24 gxf4 Nxf4 25 Rg1+!

Castling and then putting the king on h1 would open the way for a pawn sacrifice with ...Nd3. In the event of simplification, too, the king is better where it can support the queenside pawns.

25...Kh8 26 c4 Qh3 27 Rd1 Ra8

27...Rde8 was a more natural alternative, aiming at the white king.

28 Rg3 Qxh2 29 Qc3+ f6 30 Qb4 Bc6

30...Nxe2 31 Kxe2 Qh5+ isn't quite perpetual either, since White can hide the rook on f1: 32 Kf1 Qh1+ 33 Rg1 Qh3+ 34 Ke1 Qh2 35 Rf1 and White has ridden the storm and stands better.

31 Bf1 Ng6 32 Qd6 Ba4 33 Rd5 Bb3 34 Rf5 (Diagram 35)

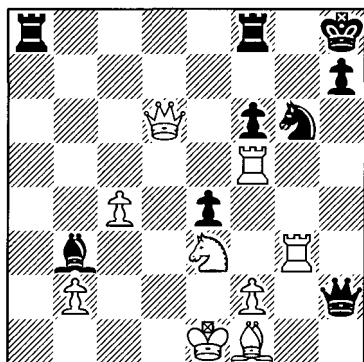


Diagram 35 (B)

Black begins to struggle

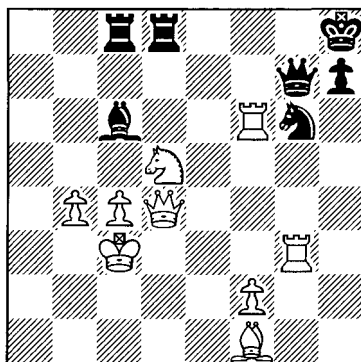


Diagram 36 (W)

Spot the machine's human-like choice!

34...Ra1+

I suspect Black's innards were telling it that it was forcing a draw here, but it isn't. The position is extremely complicated and exactly the sort of thing the machines play better than any human. At first sight the computer loves 34...Qh6, but in fact White can effect a favourable exchange with 35 Rh3 Ra1+ 36 Ke2 Qg7 37 Rb5 Ba4 and now 38 Rbh5 and Rxh7+.

35 Kd2 Raa8 36 Kc3!

White's active pieces and the pawns now give him a decisive advantage despite the odd-looking king, and as you'd expect the machine finishes with aplomb.

36...Ba4 37 Rxf6 Rfd8 38 Qe6 Bd7 39 Qxe4 Qh5 40 Qd5 Qh6 41 Qd4 Qg7 42 Nd5 Rac8 43 b4 Bc6 (Diagram 36) 44 Rgxg6!

Simplifying in an almost human manner.

44...hxg6 45 Qh4+ Qh7

45...Kg8 46 Ne7+ Qxe7 47 Rxc6+ is just as bad, of course.

46 Qxh7+ Kxh7 47 Ne7 Be4 48 Nxc8 Rxc8 49 Kd4 Bb1 50 c5 Kg7 51 Rd6 Rf8 52 c6 Rxf2 53 Bc4 Bf5 54 b5 Bc8 55 Be6 Rd2+ 56 Kc5 Rc2+ 57 Kb6 Ba6 58 bxa6 1-0

Points to Remember

1. Black's idea with this line is to win control of d5 at all costs.
2. 'All costs' means losing the dark-squared bishop.
3. That means that Black will always have weaknesses and, in particular, lacks the solid cover for his castled king a bishop on g7 would provide.
4. To make up for this Black usually castles queenside and has a choice of playing with ...f5 or ...d5. He hopes to make up for his weaknesses by activity, although according to theory White can maintain a slight advantage. On the whole, I don't recommend this line.

Game 14

□ V.Spasov ■ S.Halkias

European Team Championship, Gothenburg 2005

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bf4 e5 8 Bg5 a6 9 Na3 b5 10 Nd5 Be7 11 Bxf6 Bxf6 12 c3 Bb7 13 Nc2 Nb8 14 a4 bxa4 15 Rxa4 Nd7 16 Ra2

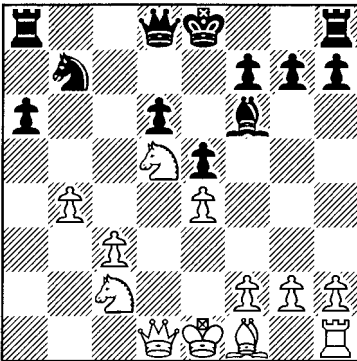


Diagram 37 (B)

A strong and famous exchange sacrifice

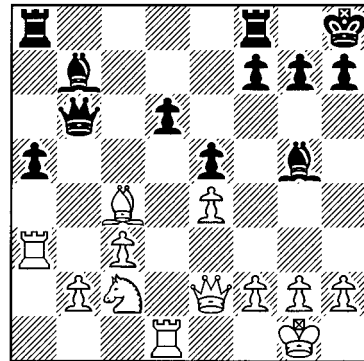


Diagram 38 (B)

White probes on the queenside

An uncommon move in this exact position, although well known in these Nd5 structures generally. 16 Rb4 Nc5 17 Rxb7!! Nxb7 18 b4 (**Diagram 37**) was the brilliant game G.Kasparov-A.Shirov, Horgen 1994, but instead 16...Rb8 leaves the b4-

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rook looking rather less good (the exchange sacrifice has no point with the knight still on d7 where it can get out easily to b6).

16...0-0

Fighting for d5 is too late: 16...Nb6 17 Nce3 0-0 18 Nxb6 Qxb6 19 Nd5 gives White what he's after.

17 Bc4 Bg5 18 0-0 a5

As Rogozenko points out, Black can keep the knight out of d5 with 18...Nb6 19 Nxb6 Qxb6 20 Bd5 a5, but it has other vistas such as 21 Na3-c4.

19 Qe2 Nb6 20 Nxb6 Qxb6 21 Rd1

White ought to have achieved a slight advantage, but somewhere in the next two moves he must go wrong slightly. Perhaps 21 Qd3 or 21 Rfa1 was more accurate.

21...Kh8 22 Ra3 (Diagram 38) 22...Rab8?

22...a4 allows the knight to d5 via b4, but as Rogozenko says, right or wrong 22...f5 had to be played; apart from anything else if it isn't then 21...Kh8 was just a bad move, unguarding f7 for no purpose. In fact Black seems to have quite acceptable counterplay after that move; for example, 23 Rb3 Qc7 24 Bd5 Rab8 25 Rxb7 Rxb7 26 Bxb7 Qxb7 with an annoying double attack.

23 Rb3 Qc7 24 Na3 Bc6 25 Nb5 Bxb5 26 Rxb5 Rxb5 27 Bxb5 (Diagram 39)

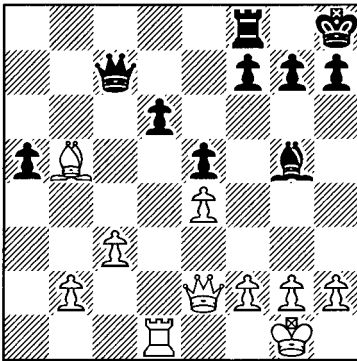


Diagram 39 (B)

White has the superior bishop...

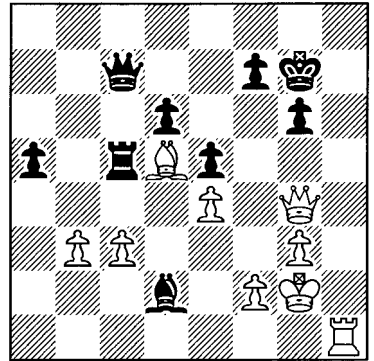


Diagram 40 (B)

...and now decisively the better rook

White's advantage has become stable.



NOTE: This sort of opposite-coloured bishop position is fine for Black if he can transfer his bishop to the a7-g1 diagonal, but here he can't do that: 27...Bd8 28 Qd3 just wins the d6-pawn.

27...Rb8

27...g6 28 Qd3 Be7 29 Bc4 f5 was necessary according to Rogozenko, when he thinks Black can hold after a long and precise defence. He might be right – this sort of miserable and long drawn out grovel is something grandmasters do much better than the rest of us – but it’s a difficult task.

28 g3 g6 29 Bc4 Kg7

It seems to me that Black would have had better chances to hold after 29...a4. Of course the pawn is very weak on that square, but White can’t win it directly, and it gives counterplay with b2 fixed and the idea of ...a3; for example, 30 Bb5 Ra8 31 Ra1 a3 32 Qd3 Qc5 33 bxa3 (or 33 b4 Qb6 34 Ra2 Ra7) 33...Rxa3 34 Rxa3 Qxa3 35 Bc4 Kg7 36 Qd5 Qa7 37 Qxd6 Be3! 38 Qxe5+ f6 39 Qd5 Bxf2+ 40 Kg2 Bc5 41 Qg8+ Kh6, and I doubt White can break the dark square blockade. Of course this variation is long, unforced and tenuous, but I think Black had to try and change the course of the game: trying to hang on passively doesn’t answer.

30 b3 Rb6

I don’t think this is a good move: you can see what Black was thinking; the rook defends d6 with no annoying pin, and helps to rule out b4, so how’s White going to win? Unfortunately Spasov provides the answer in the form of a kingside attack, and the rook finds itself too far from home.

31 h4 Bd8 32 Ra1 Rc6 33 h5 Bg5

Black would like to get the bishop to b6 but after, say, 33...Qb8 there follows 34 h6+ Kxh6 35 Bxf7 further weakening the light squares.

34 Kg2 Rc5 35 Qf3 Qe7 36 Bd5 Qc7 37 Qg4 Bd2 38 hxg6 hxg6 39 Rh1 (Diagram 40)

Announcing the end: White is in down the h-file; Black’s rook on c5 isn’t playing.

39...Qc8

White mates quickly after 39...Rxc3 40 Qh4.

40 Qh4 Rc7 41 Qh7+ Kf6 42 Rd1 Bf4 43 Rd3! Qg4 44 Qh8+ Ke7 45 Qg8 Rd7 46 Qxf7+ Kd8 47 Qg8+ Ke7 48 Bc6 Qe2 49 Bxd7 Qxe4+ 50 Rf3 Kxd7 51 Qf7+ Kc6 52 gxf4 1-0

Points to Remember

1. The idea of 11...Bb7 is to take the knight via b8 to d7 and c5 (not b6; if Black wants to challenge d5 he might as well go via e7).
2. Unfortunately it isn’t all that well placed on c5 anyway, and I suggest steering clear of this line.

The Underrated 11...Bg5

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 c3 Bg5 (Diagram 41)

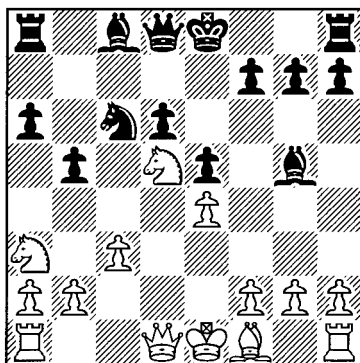


Diagram 41 (W)

A good alternative to 11...0-0

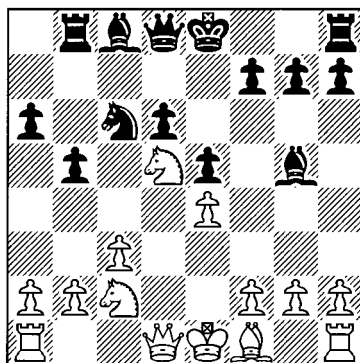


Diagram 42 (W)

Yet another option for Black

12 Nc2 Ne7

Black has another option in the 12...Rb8 (**Diagram 42**) of Game 15.



NOTE: ...Rb8 is usually useful for Black in the Sveshnikov, to back up ...b4, perhaps allow ...a5, or to pressure b2 and so discourage a4.

Here the purpose is the last of these, and the idea of combining ...Rb8 and ...Bg5 is to try both to hold up a4 and avoid the line 11...0-0 12 Nc2 Rb8 13 h4, restricting the bishop, which we'll see in the next chapter.

13 Ncb4 (Diagram 43)

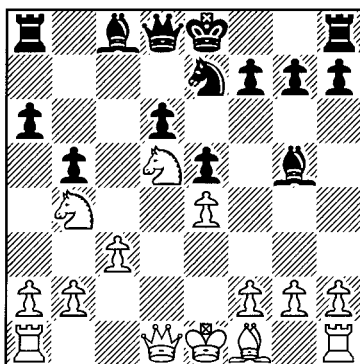


Diagram 43 (B)

White keeps control of d5

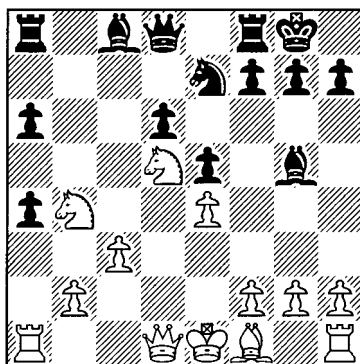


Diagram 44 (W)

Black remains pretty solid

White needs to arrange to take back with a knight on d5. Otherwise he has no chance of an opening advantage; for example, 13 Be2 0-0 14 0-0 Nxd5 15 Qxd5 Be6 or 13 Nce3 Bxe3 14 Nxe3 Bb7. Instead 13 a4 bxa4 14 Ncb4 transposes to the text, and White can also throw in 13 h4 Bh6 before 14 a4 bxa4 15 Ncb4. The idea may be to tempt 15...Bd7 when the typical exchange sacrifice 16 Rxa4 Nxd5 17 Nxd5 Bxa4 18 Qxa4+ Kf8 19 b4 gives White massive compensation, but 15...0-0 is better; Black can meet 16 g4 with ...Bf4, and otherwise he can hope to exploit the weakening of the kingside later after ...f5.

13...0-0 14 a4

This is the only way White has discovered to put Black's set-up under pressure, taking advantage of the fact that Black is forced to take on a4. After other moves, like for example 14 Be2, Black equalizes easily, such as with 14...a5 15 Nxe7+ Qxe7 16 Nd5 Qb7.

14...bxa4 (Diagram 44)

Since 14...Rb8 is impossible because of 15 Nxe7+ and Nc6, Black has to make this concession.

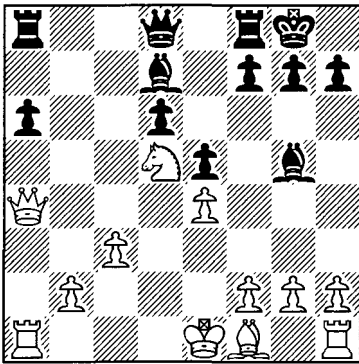


Diagram 45 (W)

Keeping White at bay

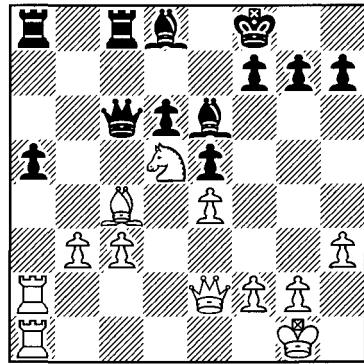


Diagram 46 (W)

White can't really make any progress

After 14...bxa4, 15 Rxa4 is the subject of Game 16. The obvious alternative is 15 Qxa4. One of the main exponents of this variation, the Russian GM Andrei Shariyazdanov, showed a solid set-up then with 15...Nxd5 16 Nxd5 Bd7 (**Diagram 45**) 17 Qc2 a5 (the other typical plan is 17...f5, which is certainly possible too; for example, 18 Bd3 Be6 19 0-0 a5 20 b3 Kh8) 18 Bc4 Qb8 19 0-0 Rc8 20 Qe2 Qb7 21 b3 (sometimes Black plays ...a4 to prevent this consolidation, but whether it is worth doing so is unclear) 21...Be6 22 Ra2 Bd8 23 Rfa1 Kf8 (so as not to fall for Rxa5 after his next) 24 h3 Qc6, when White found nothing better than the repetition with 25 Bb5 Qb7 26 Bc4 Qc6 (**Diagram 46**) in A.Lukin-A.Shariyazdanov, St Petersburg

2001. White's position looks good and computers love it, but it's difficult to do much with; his freedom of manoeuvre is curtailed by the need to keep preventing Black from organizing ...Bxd5 in a position where Bxd5 is impossible on account of c3 being en prise.



NOTE: Playing the queen to b7, both rooks to the queenside and then ...Bd8 is perhaps Black's soundest way to defend in this line, although the winning prospects are limited.

In G.Kamsky-M.Carlsen, Khanty Mansyisk 2005, Black was less accurate with 15 Qxa4 a5 16 Bb5 Nxd5 17 Nxd5 Be6 18 Bc6 Rb8 19 Ra2 Qc8 20 0-0 Bd7, and found himself falling into a fatal bind on the queenside after 21 b4 – observe how White's knight and bishop between them take enough space on the queenside that Black can't organize to get his king's rook over there, and in fact in the game this piece never got to play. If Black wants to play like this then he has to go ...f5 at least to give his king's rook a job, for example on move 19.

Illustrative Games

Game 15

□ **V.Anand** ■ **L.Van Wely**

Wijk aan Zee 2006

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 c3 Bg5 12 Nc2 Rb8 13 a4

Anyway! If White plays moves like g3, Be2 or Bd3 then Black castles and has achieved his aim of getting into the main line of 11...0-0 12 Nc2 Rb8 (see the next chapter) without allowing Kasparov's 13 h4. White has two other tries to give this order of moves significance:

a) 13 a3 (**Diagram 47**) is generally a useful move; it prevents ...b4, and may support either Ncb4 (...Nxb4, axb4 would be a very poor transaction for Black) or a plan with b4 and later c4 creating a passed pawn, which can be quite dangerous. However, with 13...Ne7 Black can take play into an advantageous version of 11...Bg5 12 Nc2 Ne7, since White has denied himself the critical a4-plan and Black equalizes easily; for example, 14 Nxe7 Qxe7 15 Nb4 Qd7 (16 Nc6 was a threat) 16 Bd3 0-0 17 0-0 Qb7 18 a4 a5 19 Nd5 bxa4 20 Qxa4 Be6 (**Diagram 48**), when Black maintains a slight advantage after the trade of the a- and b-pawns and an exchange on d5, as in J.Polgar-V.Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 2003. Also after 13 a3, 13...0-0 is good, when White's idea may be 14 h4 Bh6 15 g4, with complications after either 15...f6 or the more popular pawn sacrifice 15...Bf4!?

b) 13 Qf3 was tried recently by the talented young Russian Yan Nepomniashchy. The idea is to obtain a better version of the pawn sacrifice mentioned above after

13...0-0 (13...Ne7 is a sensible move when the queen isn't contributing a lot on f3)
 14 h4 Bh6 15 g4 Bf4 (and here taking the 15...f6 branch instead would be sensible
 too) 16 Rd1.

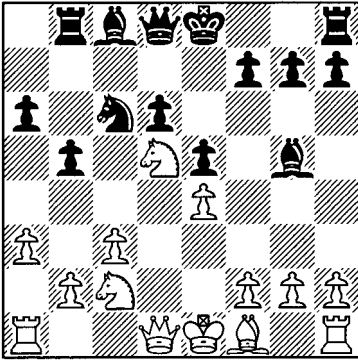


Diagram 47 (B)

White has ideas of Ncb4 or b2-b4

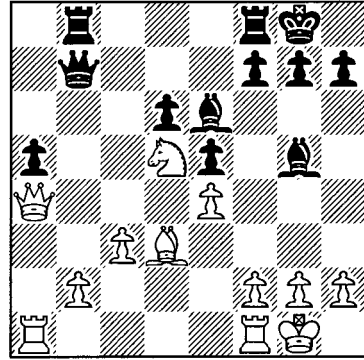


Diagram 48 (W)

Black will exchange on d5

13...bxa4 14 Ncb4 (Diagram 49)

Instead 14 Rxa4 Rxb2 15 Bxa6 gives Black no problems.

14...Bd7

14...Nxb4 15 Nxb4 Bd7 16 Bxa6 (instead 16 Qxd6 Be7 17 Qxe5 0-0 is dangerous only for White) transposes to the old main line given in the note to White's 16th, and if White wants to play the way Anand does then 14...Nxb4 15 cxb4 Bd7 16 Bxa6 transposes to our main game. Of course Black doesn't have to play ...Bd7 but if he doesn't White has tended to do better with the b-pawn, which is going to become passed one way or another.

15 Bxa6

15 Nxa6 Rxb2 16 Nac7+ Kf8 is an unwise venture in view of the upcoming ...Bd2+, while 15 Rxa4 a5 16 Nxc6 Bxc6 17 Ra2 0-0 is comfortable for Black.

15...Nxb4 16 cxb4

This idea, preparing an exchange sacrifice, has had several tests recently. Instead 16 Nxb4 0-0 17 0-0 Be7 18 Qe2 Kh8 19 Bd3 followed by Bc2 (Simic) gives White an edge with the a4-weakness and counterplay against b2 blocked, but 16 Nxb4 Qa5 leads to a very well-mined line indeed. After 17 Qxd6 (and not 17 Qe2? Rxb4!) 17...Rb6 18 Qd3 Be7 19 Nd5 (19 Rd1 Bg4 is no good) 19...Rxb2 20 0-0 (20 Nxe7 Kxe7 21 0-0-0 is cute but doesn't work since Black is winning after 21...Rhb8 22 Qxd7+ Kf8) 20...Qc5 21 Rab1 Rxb1 22 Rxb1 0-0 23 Bb5 (**Diagram 50**),

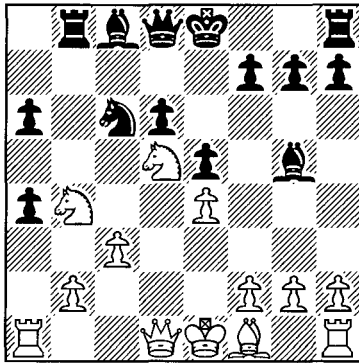


Diagram 49 (B)

Black is happy to let a6 go

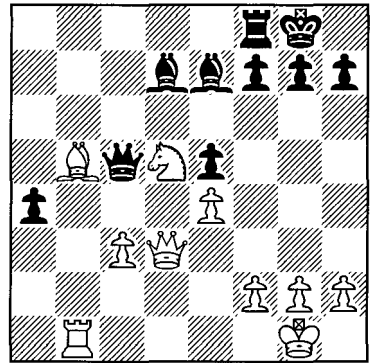


Diagram 50 (B)

Black can probably draw this

Black is supposed to have two ways to make a draw: 23...Be8 (23...Bxb5 is the other approach and now after 24 Rxb5 Qa7 25 Qe3 Qd7 26 Ra5 Rb8 27 Nxe7+ Qxe7 28 g3, either 28...Qa3 29 Rxe5 Ra8 30 Qd4 Qf8, achieving Black's ideal set-up, or 28...Qd8 – both Rogozenko – are superior to Van Wely's 28...Qd6, which he lost with against Volokitin in the 2005 Spanish Team Championship) 24 Bxe8 Rxe8 25 Rb7 Bd6 (and not 25...Bg5 26 Qd1 threatening both the a4-pawn and Qh5). Since both Rogozenko and Van Wely avoided this established method lately 23...Bxb5 might be wiser, but in truth for practical purposes it might be better just to remember that this line leads to these very dry technical positions with a slight advantage to White, and Black will certainly need to play some accurate moves.

16...0-0 17 0-0 Bc6

Forcing the issue, since if White doesn't play his next 18...Bxd5 will equalize completely.

18 Rxa4 Bxa4 19 Qxa4 (Diagram 51)



NOTE: These exchange sacrifices to dominate the light squares are not uncommon in the Sveshnikov, the unbelievable game Kasparov-Shirov, Horgen 1994, being the locus classicus.

19...Qe8?!

I don't understand why Black would want to play this move, since in principle trading the only piece that can cover the light squares seems unnatural. Moreover it also means that he can't stop the b-pawn advancing to b7, and once that happens Black is always going to have his back to the wall. Both 19...g6 and the immediate 19...f5 have been played with success (although no doubt Anand had his ideas), but the young Chinese gave a model display in my view in Z.Andrisian-

Wang Yue, Yerevan 2006, with 19...Kh8 20 b5 Qd7 21 Qc2 Qa7 (21...Bd8 at once allows 22 Qc6 Qe6 23 b6) 22 g3 Bd8 23 Kg2 Bb6 24 b4 Qd7 25 Rd1 (if now 25 Qc6 then 25...Qd8 maintains a firm grip on b6) 25...Bd4 26 Qc7 Qe6 27 Qe7 Qg6 28 Qh4, and now the switchback 28...Bb6, to prepare ...f5 while taking the sting out of Ne7 in reply, would have left Black almost winning.

20 Qxe8 Rfxe8 21 b5 f5 22 b6!

22 exf5 e4 23 b6 Re5 was less good.

22...fxe4 23 h4!? (Diagram 52)

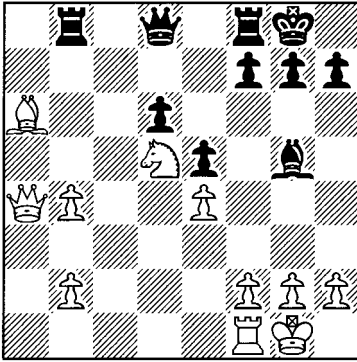


Diagram 51 (B)

A typical exchange sacrifice

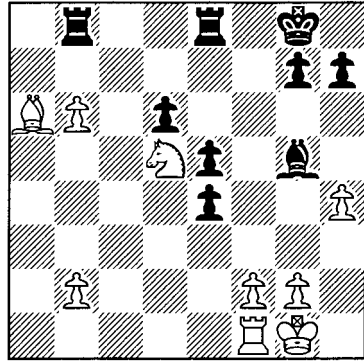


Diagram 52 (B)

Trying to activate White's rook

White can't get far after 23 Re1 Bd8 24 b7 Kf7 25 Rxe4 Ke6, which might have been what Van Wely had in mind. Instead Anand spurns the e-pawn and offers a pawn himself to get the rook to the c-file at once.

23...Bd2

It's entertaining to wander with a computer in the jungle after 23...Bxh4 24 Rc1. A wild stab at some variations might be 24...Rf8 25 g3 Bg5 26 Rc7 e3 (26...h5 27 b7 h4 28 g4 h3 29 Rc8 h2+ 30 Kh1! favours White) 27 b7 (Black's trick was 27 fxe3? Rxb6! 28 Nxb6 Bxe3+) 27...exf2+ 28 Kf1 and White wins a whole rook for the b-pawn with 28...e4 29 Rc8 e3 30 Rxb8 Rxb8 31 Nb6 and Nd7, but I don't think he can win the endgame after that despite his rather splendid blockade.

24 b7 Kf7 25 Rd1 Bh6

Another nasty decision for Black. Instead 25...Ba5 keeps the bishop on the queen-side but gives White a mighty bind after something like 26 b4 Bd8 27 Rc1 Bxh4 28 Rc7+ Kf8 29 Rc8 Rd8 30 Nb6 Ke7 31 Rc7+.

26 Nb4 Ke7 27 Nd5+ Kf7 28 g4 (Diagram 53)

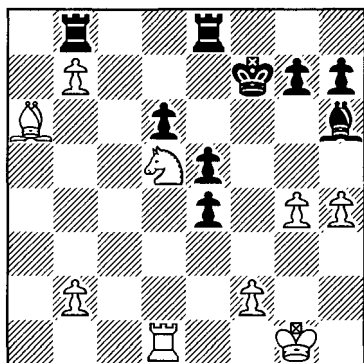


Diagram 53 (B)

Black is under some pressure

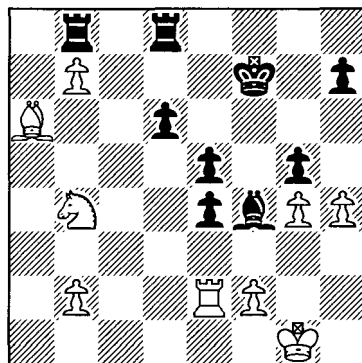


Diagram 54 (B)

Decisively regaining the exchange

Anand decides to continue.

28...Bf4 29 Re1 g5 30 Re2!!

A brilliant move. White would sooner come to the c-file without removing the e-pawn, since that would enable Black's bishop to control b8 in some lines; for example, 30 Rxe4 Red8 (threatening 31...Rd7) 31 Nb4 d5 32 Re2 gxh4 33 Rc2 e4.

30...Red8?

So what was the idea after 30...gxh4, then? Black defends as far as I can see after 31 Rc2 h3 32 Rc7+ Kg6 33 Ne7+ Rxe7 34 Rxe7 d5 35 Rc7 e3 36 fxe3 Bxe3+ 37 Kh2 Kf6 and so on, so I think it would have had to be 31 Kg2, when the complications continue.

31 Nb4 (Diagram 54) 31...d5

It's over now: in the ending after 31...gxh4 32 Nc6 Rf8 33 Nxb8 Rxb8 34 Rc2 e3 35 Bc4+ Ke7 36 Bd5 White gradually wins, while 31...Rd7 fails to 32 Nc6 Rxb7 33 Bxb7 Rxb7 34 Nd8+.

32 Nc6 Rg8 33 Nxb8 Rxb8 34 h5 Ke7 35 Kf1 d4 36 Rc2 e3

Black needs to clear the f4-b8 diagonal; 36...d3 37 Rc8 wins at once.

37 fxe3 dxe3 38 Rc7+ Kf6 39 Rxh7 e4 40 Bc4 Rd8 41 Rf7+ Ke5 42 Rd7 1-0

Points to Remember

1. This 11...Bg5 12 Nc2 Rb8 move order is a refinement intended to avoid certain problems in the main line. It allows White to play a couple of position-types which are probably fine for Black but need considerable accuracy.
2. The best way to meet the exchange sacrifice in the game is with Wang Yue's

...Qd7-a7 plan to install the dark-squared bishop on b6 first of all. After that recentralize the queen; then it's time to think about ...f5.

3. Be prepared to defend accurately in the line mentioned in the notes to White's 16th – you don't need to carry the moves in your head, but a general idea of the pitfalls is helpful.

Game 16

□ J.Smeets ■ M.Carlsen

Wijk aan Zee 2006

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 c3 Bg5 12 Nc2 Ne7 13 Ncb4 0-0 14 a4 bxa4 15 Rxa4 a5 (Diagram 55)

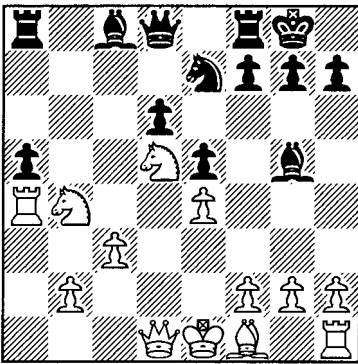


Diagram 55 (W)

Black is actually doing quite well

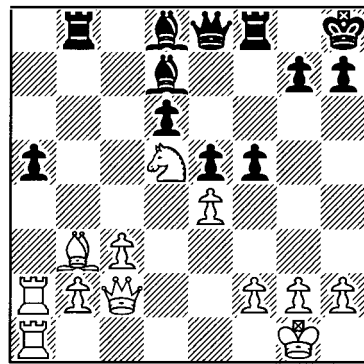


Diagram 56 (W)

Thematic Sveshnikov play from Carlsen

Now this is fine because the bishop cannot maintain itself on c6. White can play 16 Bb5 like Kamsky, but it is harmless in view of 16...Bd7 17 Nxe7+ Bxe7! 18 Nc6 Qe8, equalizing at once.

16 Nxe7+ Qxe7 17 Bc4

17 Nd5 is a natural alternative, when a fine display of Black's attacking possibilities was 17...Qb7 18 Ra2 f5 19 Bc4 Kh8 20 0-0?! fxe4 21 Ne3 Qb6 22 Bd5 Ba6 23 Re1 Rad8?! (23...Rxf2 24 Bxa8 Bxe3 25 Kh1 Bd2 26 Rg1 e3 was already winning on the spot) 24 Bxe4? (24 c4 was necessary) 24...d5 (a tremendously thematic breakthrough) 25 Bf3 e4 26 Bg4 Bc4 27 Nxc4 dxc4 28 Qb1 Qxf2+ 29 Kh1 Rd2 30 Bh3 e3 31 Rxa5 e2 32 g3 Rd1 0-1 E.Berg-A.Moiseenko, Turin Olympiad 2006; Black seemed to obtain the advantage effortlessly in this game.

17...Bd7 18 Nd5 Qe8 19 Ra2 Bd8 20 0-0 Rc8 21 Bb3 Rb8 22 Qc2 Kh8 23 Rfa1 f5 (Diagram 56)

Evidently Carlsen had learned his lesson from the Kamsky game and decided that the plan with ...f5 is the way to handle this variation. The sight of the rooks locked on the closed a-file does rather ask for this move; probably White needed to play something a little more conservative at his last turn, such as 23 Ne3.

24 Ba4 Bxa4 25 Rxa4 fxe4 26 R4a2 Qf7

With this move Carlsen already had in mind the layout of his forces which occurred in the game; an alternative was 26...Qg6 to be followed by ...Rb7-f7.

27 c4 Rb3 (Diagram 57)

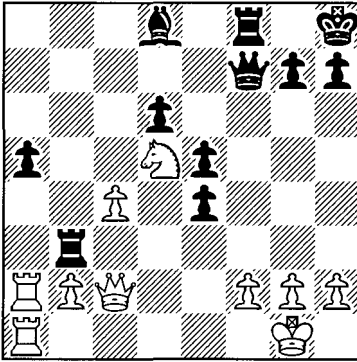


Diagram 57 (W)

Black activates his rook with effect

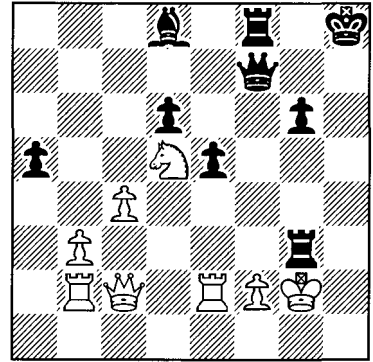


Diagram 58 (W)

The rook is immune

28 Re1 Bh4 29 g3?

It must have seemed natural to push the bishop away, but in fact it was much better to hang tough with 29 Re2, meeting the alarming 29...e3 with 30 f3.

29...Rf3!! 30 b3

30 gxh4 Rxf2 is devastating; for example, 31 Qxe4 Rf1+ 32 Kg2 Qf2+ 33 Kh3 Rf3+ 34 Kg4 Qg2+ 35 Kh5 Rf5+ 36 Qxf5 Rxf5 mate.

30...Bd8 31 Rxe4 h5 32 Re2

White would like to reduce the attacking force with 32 Re3, but 32...Rxe3 33 Nxe3 Bb6 brings the bishop to its ideal position.

32...h4 33 Rb2 g6!

Preparing the finale – they do say the good move is the one before the combination.

34 Kg2?

White had various ways to meet the threat: 34 Qd2 was one, to throw in a Qh6+; another was 34 Qb1 to cover f1. In either case the position would actually objectively be about equal.

34...hxg3 35 hxg3 Rxc3+! (Diagram 58)

The end; of course it's easy now to see the point: 36 fxg3 Qf1+ 37 Kh2 Kg7!, but Carlsen saw it two moves ago.

36 Kf1 Qf3

In fact 36...Qh7 was marginally more devastating, but White cannot defend anyway.

37 Qe4 Qh5 38 Ne3 Bg5 39 Ke1 Rgf3 40 Nf1 Bc1

A nice touch, preparing 41 Rb1 Ba3 and ...Bb4+.

41 Ra2 Rxb3 42 Ng3 Qh6 43 Qg4 Rxc3 0-1

Points to Remember

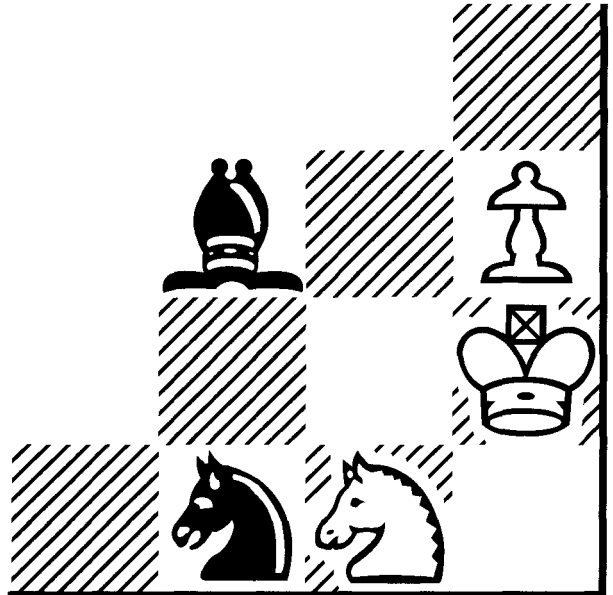
1. This is a very solid and respectable way to play, although it produces slightly simple positions.
2. Black generally has a choice of two plans in the positions which arise: one is to take all his pieces to the queenside and then hold on; the other is ...f5.

Chapter Four

The 9 Nd5 Main Line: 11...0-0

 **Black Plays 12...Bg5**

 **Black Plays 12...Rb8**



Black Plays 12...Bg5

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 c3 0-0 12 Nc2 Bg5 (Diagram 1)

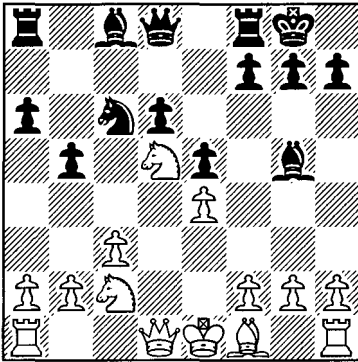


Diagram 1 (W)

Activating the dark-squared bishop

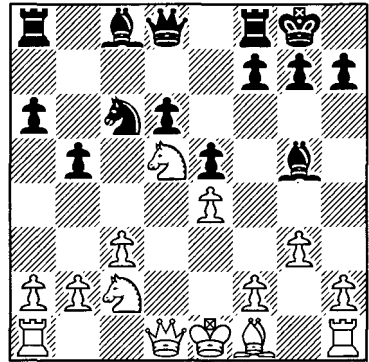


Diagram 2 (B)

A misguided white approach

A popular choice. An important alternative is 12...Rb8; see the second half of this chapter.

13 a4

Since Black hasn't set out to prevent it, this is far and away White's most natural and commonest move.



NOTE: It helps White to remove the b5-pawn by forcing ...bxa4 since it means that Black cannot choose his moment for ...b4, either leaving a backward c-pawn on the open file or eroding White's control of d4, to say nothing of exposing the a-pawn on the open file.

White has three alternatives, none of which inspires much confidence:

a) 13 g3 (**Diagram 2**) just doesn't devote itself to the critical issues of d5 and the queenside pawns enough, and was very thematically dealt with in Xie Jun-A.Galliamova, 6th matchgame, Kazan 1999: 13...Ne7 14 Ncb4 Be6 15 Bg2 a5 16 Nxe7+ Qxe7 17 Nd5 Qb7 (**Diagram 3**) 18 0-0. Black's sequence up to here is worth noting carefully; with the bishop on g2 White just doesn't have the firepower to keep control of d5 properly and Black could now have played the thematic 18...Bxd5 (not that there was anything wrong with 18...b4 19 c4 Rfc8 as in the game) 19 Qxd5 Qxd5 20 exd5.



TIP: This opposite-coloured bishop and double rook ending is almost always better for Black with or without queens; he can take the bishop to b6 and play ...f5, while White's bishop has very few active prospects.

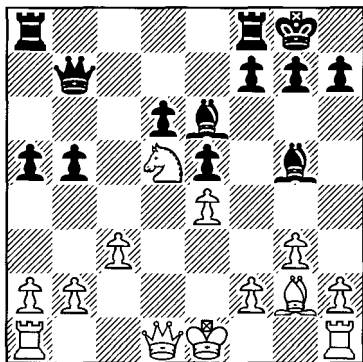


Diagram 3 (W)

White loses control of d5

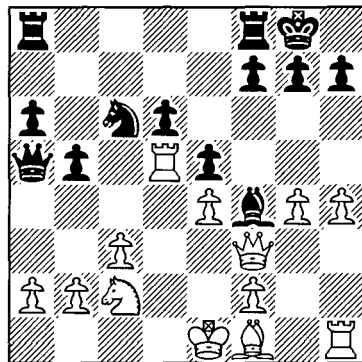


Diagram 4 (W)

Black has excellent activity

After 13 g3 Ne7, Nigel Short recently tried the grotesque 14 h4 Bh6 15 Bh3?! against former Avignon Pope Veselin Topalov at Wijk aan Zee 2005. Topalov could perfectly well have played 15...Be6 – exchanging on e6 and giving Black back control of d5 is not something White is keen to do – but played even more simply: 15...Bxh3 16 Rxh3 a5 17 Kf1 Rc8 18 Nce3 Bxe3 19 Nxe3 Qd7, and Black was better.



NOTE: Topalov's combination of ...a5 and ...Bg5 cut off the knight on c2 from d5; as a result White was even unable to prevent the ...d5-break.

I said 'grotesque', but Judit Polgar recently tried the same idea in a slightly different order against Topalov in their Bilbao blindfold match, with 13 h4 Bh6 14 g3. I don't know why Topalov didn't play the thematic 14...Ne7 now; in fact he preferred 14...Rb8 15 Bh3 Bxh3 16 Rxh3 a5 17 Nce3.

b) 13 Be2 seems natural but can be dealt with in the same sort of way: 13...Be6 14 0-0 Ne7 15 Ncb4 a5 16 Nxe7+ Qxe7 17 Nd5 Qb7 18 Qd3 Bxd5 19 Qxd5 Qxd5 20 exd5 and again Black is better, E.Dervishi-M.Krasenkow, European Championship, Ohrid 2001 (Black won the endgame in a very typical fashion well worth playing through).

c) 13 h4, on the other hand, errs rather on the side of vigorousness. White, obvi-

ously isn't going to follow up by quietly castling; his principal idea is 13...Bh6 14 g4 (although 14 g3 is possible; see above) and now 14...Bf4 is usual (although 14...f6 is clearly possible). Then 15 Qf3 is usually what White plays, hoping just to win a pawn. Black can either just develop (with say 15...Re8 or 15...Bb7) and gambit the pawn, or sensibly develop with 15...Be6 (intending to follow up with ...Bxd5, while 16 Nxf4 can be met with 16...Qf6 and so doesn't win a pawn), when 16 Rd1 Bxd5 17 Rxd5 Qa5 (**Diagram 4**) is quite annoying (e.g. 18 a3 Bc1, while 18 Rxd6 Rac8 makes things worse), so White can't keep the d-file open.

13...bxa4 (Diagram 5)

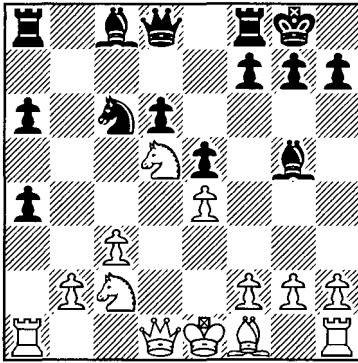


Diagram 5 (W)

Superior to allowing axb5

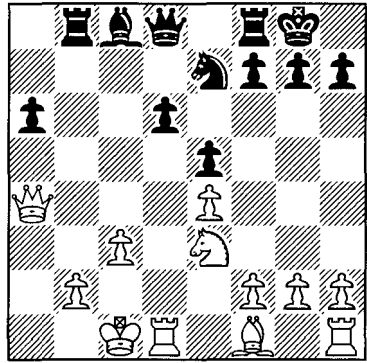


Diagram 6 (B)

Bold play from White



WARNING: 13...Rb8 14 axb5 axb5 is a very bad idea; b5 is weak and, almost worse, the c2-knight can rest undisturbed on b4 and thus White easily maintains d5.

Even if Black should then manage to swap off the two knights for his own knight and bishop, White would be able to play b4 with a huge advantage in the opposite-coloured bishop position, since b5 is impossible to defend and even trading it for c3 is likely to leave White much better with his passed b-pawn and control of d5.

14 Rxa4

14 Nce3 is a rare move aiming to take on a4 with the queen. In the very recent game L-D.Nisipeanu-L.Van Wely, European Club Cup, Fuegen 2006, White associated it with the extravagant idea to castle queenside after 14...Bxe3 15 Nxe3 Rb8 16 Qxa4 Ne7 17 0-0-0 (**Diagram 6**). This has the computers reeling in disbelief, but if White wants to play for a win it's really the only way since 17 Rd1 Rxb2 18 Nc4 (18 Bxa6 and a draw offer is better) 18...Rb8 19 Nxd6 allows 19...Bg4 20 f3 Be6 with

the better prospects for Black (Nisipeanu). Time will tell how Nisipeanu's idea should best be met, but Rogozenko's suggestion to wait with 17...Qc7 to see where White's king's bishop is going (18 Bc4 is met by 18...Bb7 and 18 Bd3 with 18...Be6) is pretty sensible. It's hard to imagine that Black can be worse here.

14...a5

14...Bb7 is rather like the 11...Bb7 of Chapter Three, but if Black wanted to play ...Bb7, he didn't need to bother putting the other bishop on g5. The move was once associated with a specific idea to prevent White castling: 15 Bc4 Na5 16 Ba2 Bc6 17 Ra3 Bb5, but in order to achieve this Black has had to put all his minor pieces in stupid positions and abandon the fight for d5, and it turns out that White is much better after 18 h4 Bh6 19 Nce3 Bxe3 20 Nxe3 Rc8 21 Nf5. Meanwhile 14...Rb8 aims to swap the weak a-pawn for the potentially dangerous b-pawn, but the price is too high and after 15 h4 Bh6 16 Bxa6 Rxb2 17 Bxc8 Qxc8 18 Rc4 (**Diagram 7**)

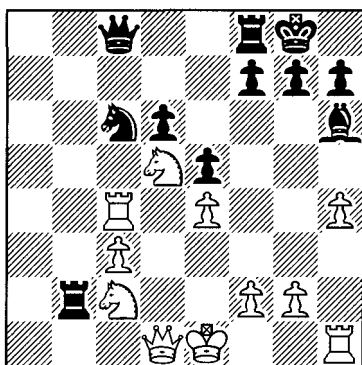


Diagram 7 (B)

White enjoys the superior minor piece

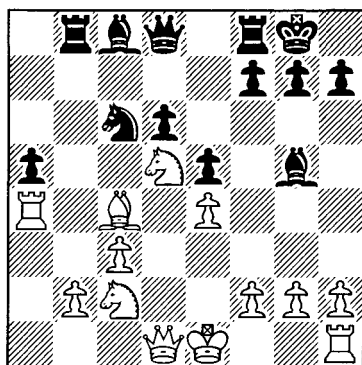


Diagram 8 (W)

An important tabiya

White is much better – he has sidelined the bishop, managed to exchange light-squared bishops, and can look forward to exchanging knights and dominating d5.

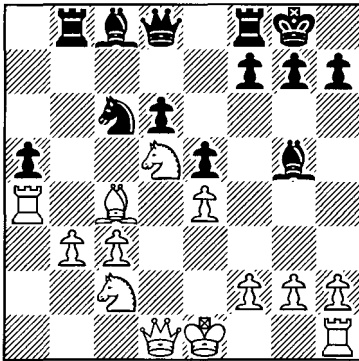
15 Bc4

15 Bb5 hopes either for an exchange of bishops after 15...Bd7 or for 15...Bb7 16 0-0 Ne7 17 Bc4, when White can maintain at least a slight edge. Instead of committing the c8-bishop Black should challenge the knight at once with 15...Ne7 16 Nxe7+ (16 Nce3 is met as usual by 16...Bxe3, while 16 Ncb4, as we saw in the notes to Smeets-Carlsen, allows 16...Bd7 17 Nxe7+ Bxe7! 18 Nc6 Qe8) 16...Qxe7 (this was the point of 16 Nxe7+; now 16...Bxe7 can be met by 17 Ne3) 17 Nb4, and now Black can either play the obscure 17...Bh3!? or the approved equalizer 17...Bg4, with the point that 18 Qa1 Qb7! 19 Bc6 Qb6 20 Bxa8 Qb5! forces a draw – 21 f3 axb4 22 fxg4 Qd3 and perpetual.

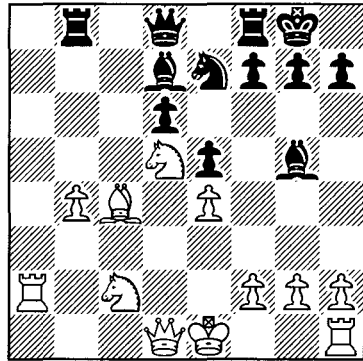
15...Rb8 (Diagram 8)

This is a very natural and by far the commonest move – it seems so obvious that the rook needs to be here, and no other piece's destination is quite so clear. But Black does have a good and (as yet) much less theoretical alternative in 15...Bd7, which is an old idea of Sveshnikov's recently revived by Radjabov (two folk worth taking a lot of notice of in this opening). Black has a few ideas: he might want to keep b8 free for the queen to allow ...Bd8-b6; or he might want, by harassing the rook, to put himself in a good position to drive the bishop away from contact with d5 and perhaps even win the fight for that square.

Following 15...Bd7 16 0-0 (Black's immediate point is that 16 Ra2 is well met by 16...a4 driving the bishop back when, for example, 17 0-0 Na5 18 Bd3 Nb3 sees Black continue with ...Nc5 and ...Be6 with a good position; 16 b3 Ne7 is also fine, since in view of the fact Black's rook usually comes to c8 in this line it isn't likely to be right for White to weaken c3 like this) 16...Ne7 (16...Nb4 is critical but didn't do so well after 17 Ra3 Rc8 18 cxb4 axb4 19 Ra6 Rxc4 20 Rxd6, when White was better in A.Volokitin-T.Radjabov, Biel 2006) 17 Ra3 (17 Ra2 Rc8 18 Nxe7+ Qxe7 19 Bd5 Rc5 had got White nowhere in V.Anand-T.Radjabov, 1st rapidplay match-game, Mainz 2006 – White is hampered by the possibility of ...Rxc4 and ...Be6) 17...Rc8 18 Nxe7+ Qxe7 19 Qd3 Rc5 20 Rd1 Rb8 21 b4 White had an advantage in J.Smeets-A.Khairullin, Essent 2006, and it's here that Black may need to improve in this line.

16 b3 (Diagram 9)**Diagram 9 (B)**

White's main choice

**Diagram 10 (W)**

Black is solid enough

The position before this move has been the main starting point for the variation with 12...Bg5 for 25 years or more. White has tried many other moves, but the text is beginning to establish itself as the favourite. Alternatively:

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

a) 16 Qa1 aims to bring a rook to the queenside. Black should proceed as usual with 16...Kh8 17 0-0 and now 17...g6 (or 17...f5 18 exf5 Bxf5 19 Nce3 Bg6) 18 b4 axb4 19 cxb4 Ne7 (once the a-pawn has gone Black can happily embark on this typical manoeuvre), followed by arranging ...f5 should give Black good play.

b) 16 b4 aims to save time on the queen move, but 16...Bd7 (the object of this is to avoid 16...axb4 17 Ncxb4 Nxb4 18 Rxb4 Rxb4 19 cxb4; although Black ought to be OK here too he does better to keep White's slightly awkwardly placed rook on the board) 17 Ra2 axb4 18 cxb4 (18 Ncxb4 Nxb4 just helps Black) 18...Ne7 (**Diagram 10**) is fine for Black too.

c) 16 Ra2 is seen in Game 17.

16...Kh8 (**Diagram 11**)

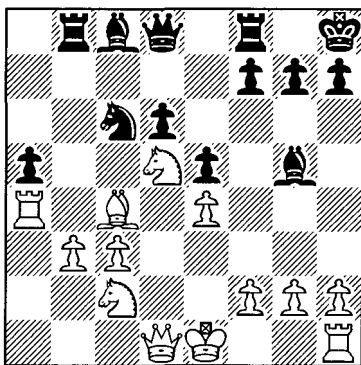


Diagram 11 (W)

Black has to prepare ...f7-f5

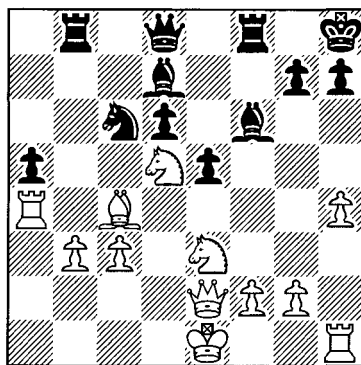


Diagram 12 (W)

...e4 and ...Ne5 is on the cards



TIP: Black has really only two, slightly different, plans here: one is to play ...f5 with minimal preparation, the other is ...g6 and then ...f5. In either case the text move is essential, so it makes sense to play it at once and preserve the choice between the two a move longer.

If Black is afraid of 16...Kh8 17 Nce3 then he can, as Leko did recently, commit himself with 16...g6. Then White's idea from Game 19 is less effective after 17 Nce3 Kg7, but on the other hand Black is committed after 17 0-0 Kh8 to the ...g6 and ...f5 plan, which may not be what he wanted to do.

After 16...Kh8, 17 0-0 is the subject of Game 18 and 17 Nce3 that of Game 19. White has many alternatives here too, notably 17 Qe2. The first idea of this is that 17...g6 can be met with 18 h4 Bxh4 19 g3 Bg5 20 f4 in the style of Game 19, so usually Black plays 17...f5 and now the second idea is revealed after 18 h4 Bh6 19 exf5 Bxf5 20 g4, when Black is reputedly forced into the undesirable exchange 20..Bxc2 21

Qxc2, although it isn't immediately obvious that 20...Bd7 21 g5 Nd4 is bad for Black. However, instead 18...Bf6 19 exf5 Bxf5 20 Nce3 Bd7 (**Diagram 12**) is normal, when Black is fine: White can't keep ...e4 and ...Ne5 prevented (even after 21 Qc2 e4) and hold on to d5, especially with h4 vulnerable if he castles.

Illustrative Games

Game 17

□ S.Karjakin ■ V.Topalov

Wijk aan Zee 2006

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 c3 Bg5 12 Nc2 0-0 13 a4 bxa4 14 Rxa4 a5 15 Bc4 Rb8 16 Ra2 (**Diagram 13**)

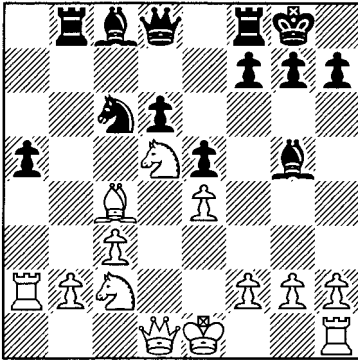


Diagram 13 (B)

White may now advance with b2-b4

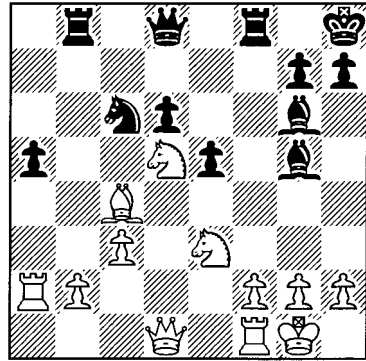


Diagram 14 (W)

Black easily plays around the d5-knight

This move often transposes to 16 b3; the advantage of it is that in some lines White can advance b4 in one go. As a general rule, however, plans with b4 are a bit too simple to try and gain the advantage, since they eliminate the a-pawn which is one of Black's main weakness, and thus reduce the number of threats Black has to deal with. On the plus side, of course, the move does create a passed pawn.

16...Kh8

As before, if Black is afraid of the h4 lines he can play 16...g6 now, intending to meet 17 Nce3 with 17...Kg7. In that event the game will probably transpose to the lines in the next note.

17 Nce3

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

The main alternative is 17 0-0 (17 h4 Bh6 is pointless before ...g6 is played) and then:

a) 17...f5 18 exf5 Bxf5 19 Nce3 Bg6 (**Diagram 14**) leads to the same sort of position we will see in Game 18. In addition to the moves discussed there (see the note to White's 18th), White can also try 20 f3 to prevent Black's natural plan of ...e4 and ...Ne5 by meeting ...e4 with f4 controlling e5. Black can then switch to fighting for d5 and exploiting the undefended c4-bishop with 20...Ne7 21 Qe2 Rc8 22 b3 Bf7 (only now, when there is a threat to take on d5 twice and then c3), when Black equalizes easily. Alternatively, 20 Qa4 Qc8 21 Rd1 (21 Bb5 is easily met by 21...Be8, since 22 Bxc6? Bxc6 23 Qxa5?? loses to 23...Ra8, while 22 Nc4 Rxb5 23 Qxb5 Ne7 is also good for Black) 21...e4, when Black has good attacking chances on the kingside, brilliantly illustrated in B.Socko-M.Krasenkow, Polish Championship, Plock 2000.

b) 17...g6 is the other typical plan, and had a couple of outings in San Luis: 18 b4 (18 Nce3 f5 19 Qa4 was tried in V.Anand-G.Kasparov, Linares 2005, but according to everyone should have run into the tactic 19...Bd7 20 Bb5 Nb4! with complications whose outcome is exceptionally unclear; for example, 21 Bxd7 Nxa2 22 exf5 Rxb2 23 Qa3 Rd2 24 Be6 gxf5 25 Ra1 Qb8 26 Nc4 Re2 27 Kf1 Nc1 28 Rxc1 Bxc1 29 Qxc1 Re4 30 Ndb6 'and it's not obvious to me who is better' – Kosten; I don't blame the man) 18...Bd7 19 Qe2 axb4 20 Ncxb4 Na5 (20...Nxb4 is also normal but Leko takes advantage of the peculiarities of this position to eliminate the bishop) 21 Rfa1 (21 Bd3 is met with 21...Nb3 bringing this piece to the splendid c5-square) 21...Nxc4 22 Qxc4 Rc8 23 Qe2 Rc5 was R.Kasimdzhanov-P.Leko, FIDE World Championship, San Luis 2005, which Black drew after a bit of a grovel.

17...Bxe3

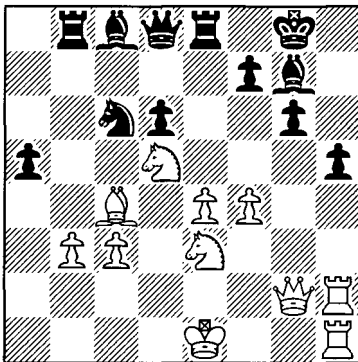


Diagram 15 (B)

White has strong kingside pressure

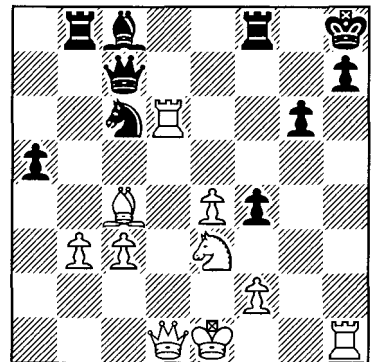


Diagram 16 (W)

A typically messy middlegame

A solid option which seems to give Black reasonable play quite easily. He must avoid 17...f5 18 Nxf5!, but the main continuation is 17...g6 when White can either play positionally with 18 0-0 or try the fashionable 18 h4, when 18...Bxh4 (18...Bh6 19 h5 opens the file anyway) 19 g3 is rather complex:

a) 19...Bf6 was Kramnik's choice in R.Ponomariov-V.Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 2005, although later he was happy to be White. That game went on 20 b3 Bg7 21 f4 exf4 22 gxf4 Re8 23 Qf3 Kg8 24 Rah2 h5 and now Ponomariov's 25 Qg2 (**Diagram 15**) is reckoned to give White a very strong attack.

b) 19...Bg5 20 b3 would lead to a position similar to Game 19 and indeed could have arisen in that game had White played 20 Ra2 (instead of 20 f4). Black has to play 20...Bxe3 to prevent f4 followed by a devastating Rah2, and now after 21 Nxe3 he can open lines against the white king with 21...f5 (21...Be6 is possible too), when 22 Rd2 f4 23 gxf4 exf4 24 Rxd6 Qc7 (**Diagram 16**) was sharp, unclear, and agreed drawn in F.Amonatov-L.Van Wely, Moscow 2005.

However, instead of meeting 19...Bg5 with 20 b3, one point of starting with 16 Ra2 rather than 16 b3 is the option of 20 f4 exf4 21 gxf4 Bh4+ 22 Kf1. White may be able to use the option of b4 with the king still on the kingside (otherwise 22 Kd2 tends to transpose to Game 19 since White has to play b3 to release the a2-rook). Then 22...f5 23 b4 fxe4 24 Rah2 g5 is a terribly vogueish and complicated position; White can try either 25 b5 or 25 Ke2, but no-one knows who stands better in either case.

18 Nxe3 Ne7 (Diagram 17)

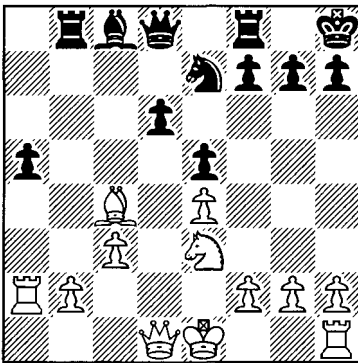


Diagram 17 (W)

Black is very close to full equality

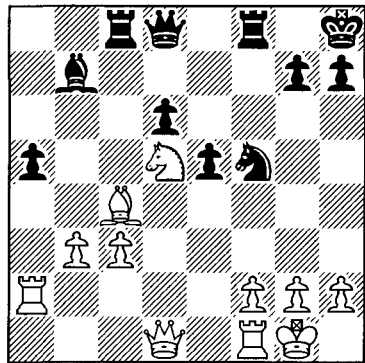


Diagram 18 (W)

The black rook heads for c5

19 b3

This was a new move in this game. Earlier White had just castled, but 19 0-0 f5 20 exf5 Nxf5 21 Nd5 (21 Nxf5 Bxf5 22 Qd5 Rc8! defends a5 indirectly and prepares

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

...Rc5, leaving Black fine) 21...Ne7 enables Black to exchange the knights and reach an even more equal position, if mathematicians will allow me that expression.

19...f5 20 exf5 Nxf5 21 Nd5

Later, in M.Carlsen-L.Van Wely, 4th matchgame, Schagen 2006, White sought a tiny advantage with 21 Nxf5 Bxf5 22 0-0 Be4 23 Bd5 Bxd5 24 Qxd5 Qc7, but he didn't get it. At best he might hope to reach a 3 vs 2 ending on the kingside.

21...Bb7

21...Ne7 now would lose a pawn to 22 Nxe7 Qxe7 23 Rxa5, although Black does retain a certain amount of compensation with ...Qc7 followed by ...Bb7 and perhaps ...d5 and/or ...Ra8 – it's not easy for White to prevent a drawing liquidation.

22 0-0 Rc8 (Diagram 18)



NOTE: This is a typical move; c5 is an excellent square for the rook.

23 Qd3 Nh4

23...Rc5 is another good move: 24 b4 axb4 25 cxb4 Rc8 26 Ba6 was apparently said to be 'unclear' by Topalov, although as Golubev caustically observed in *Chess Today*, the only unclear thing is how either side is going to play for a win. Black might plausibly take either on a6 or d5.

24 Rd1

24 Rfa1 could be met by 24...Rc5, and after 25 b4 axb4 (or 25...Rxc4 26 Qxc4 Qg5 with an attack which is probably worth perpetual check as well) 26 cxb4 Rc8 27 Ra7 Rf7 Black has some wicked tricks: 28 Ne3 d5! and 28 b5 (or indeed 28 h3) 28...Nf3+! 29 gxf3 Bxd5 30 Qxd5 Rxa7 31 Rxa7 Qg5+.

24...h6

Improving Black's position by giving luft. Black doesn't see any need to play ...Rc5, possibly losing a tempo to b4, until he has to. Indeed 24...Rc5 25 b4 axb4 26 cxb4 is said to be slightly better for White by various commentators, especially in view of 26...Qg5?? 27 f4.

25 Qg3

Topalov pointed out the variation 25 Rad2? a4 26 bxa4 Qg5 when the horrid 27 f4 is forced and Black has a strong attack. The idea of ...a4 was to unguard the c4-bishop and prevent the defence Qg3.

25...Nf5 26 Qg4 Rc5

Black might have chosen this moment to break the d5 blockade with 26...Bxd5 27 Rxd5 Ne7 28 Rdxa5 d5 29 Bf1 Rxc3, although the assessment of the resulting position is not clear.

27 Rad2

27 b4 still doesn't give much; 27...axb4 28 cxb4 Rc8 29 Ra7 Bxd5 30 Bxd5 Qf6 31

Ra2 Nd4, when Shipov thinks White is a bit better, but Black certainly has chances.

27...Bc8 28 Qe4 Bb7 (Diagram 19)

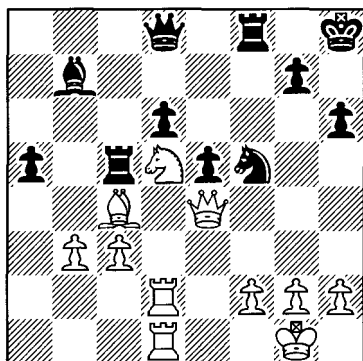


Diagram 19 (W)

Neither side can easily make progress

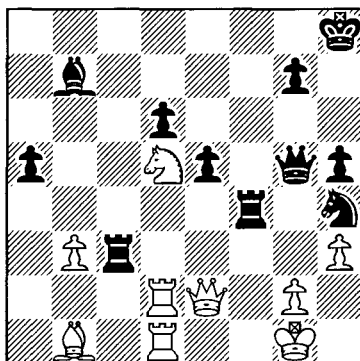


Diagram 20 (W)

Suddenly Black has a winning attack

Black shows that he would be happy with a draw – in truth he can't do much except hold himself ready to deal with b4 or any threats down the d-file.

29 h3

But the young Ukrainian – an exceptionally good player of the White side of the Sveshnikov, by the way – wants to try and prove he is better.

29...Nh4

Black might have considered 29...a4; for example, 30 bxa4 Qc8 31 Bb3 Rxc3. Instead he introduces tactics based on ...Rf4 because of the pin on the d5-knight.

30 Bd3

30 Qg4 a4 31 bxa4 Nxg2 32 Kxg2 Rf4 (Golubev) would have illustrated the point about ...Rf4, but the text looks very strong, aiming at h7.

30...Rf5!

A strong and confident move based on a lot of calculation; the rook is pinned but White needs to defend d5 before he can do anything about it.

31 Bb1?!

It would have been more prudent to play 31 Bc4, but the teenager still wants to win. Karjakin said he simply missed that the next move was possible.

31...Rxc3

Well calculated; if the queen moves both rooks are hanging, but the queen can't quite find a square that works.

32 Qg4

32 Nxc3 Bxe4 33 Nxe4 Rf8 34 Nxd6 Qb8 (Golubev) would have committed White to a long defence, but it was maybe time to think of bailing out like this.

32...h5 33 Qe2?

This is the losing move; it was essential instead to play 33 Qa4 so as to meet 33...Qg5 with 34 Qe8+, when Black doesn't seem to have any decisive line; the two variations everyone quotes both burn out to equality: 33...Bc6 (33...Rf8 34 Nxc3 Qg5 35 Be4 Bxe4 36 Qxe4 Nf3+ 37 Qxf3 Rxf3 38 Ne4 Qg6 39 Rxd6 Qxe4 40 gxf3 Qxf3 41 R1d3 is the other line) 34 Nxc3 Bxa4 35 Bxf5 Qg5 (Black does better to settle for the calm 35...Nxf5 36 bxa4 when he is better but I doubt he's winning) 36 Be4 Bxb3 37 Rb2!.

33...Qg5 34 f4

After 34 Be4 Black has various good moves, of which 34...Rcf3 looks the most effective to me.

34...Rxf4! (Diagram 20) 35 Kh1

35 Nxf4 loses to 35...Nf3+, while 35 Qb5 can be cutely dealt with by 35...Rf8 36 Qxb7 Rc1! (Shipov).

35...Nxf4 36 Qxg2 Rg3?!

36...Qh4 was quicker; Topalov had hallucinated.

37 Nxf4 Bxg2+

Topalov had apparently overlooked that if 37...exf4?? 38 Qxb7 Rxh3+ is not mate – 39 Rh2!. But as luck would have it he still has a decisive advantage.

38 Nxf4 Rxh3+ 39 Kg1 Rg3 40 Rf2 Kg8 41 Rxd6 h4

41...Qc1+ 42 Kh2 Rxf2 43 Rxf2 Qxb1 looks good at first sight, but after 44 Rdg6 Black can't defend the g-pawn, and 44...Qxb3 45 Rxf7+ Kf8 46 Ra7 (Shipov) leaves Black with a more annoying technical task than he'd like.

42 Rc6 Qg4 43 Bf5 Rxf2 44 Rxf2 Qxf5 45 Rcg6 Qf7 46 R6g4 Qf6 47 Kh2 Kf7 48 Kh3 e4 49 Rg5 e3 50 Kxh4 g6 0-1

Points to Remember

1. The play in this line is very similar to 16 b3.
2. The positions in the note to Black's 17th, with a pawn sacrifice to open the h-file, are in vogue at the highest level and very entertaining to analyse.
3. On the other hand, 17...Bxe3 is a very solid line. Remember that it is better after 16 Ra2 than after 16 b3.
4. It is also possible to play 16...g6 first and then, if White doesn't castle, 17...Kg7. This avoids the h4 pawn sacrifice, but it does commit to a ...g6 and ...f5 plan when most people think ...f5 and recapturing with a piece is preferable.

Game 18

□ V.Ivanchuk ■ L.Johannessen

European Club Cup, Saint Vincent 2005

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 c3 Bg5 12 Nc2 0-0 13 a4 bxa4 14 Rxa4 a5 15 Bc4 Rb8 16 b3 Kh8 17 0-0 f5 (Diagram 21)

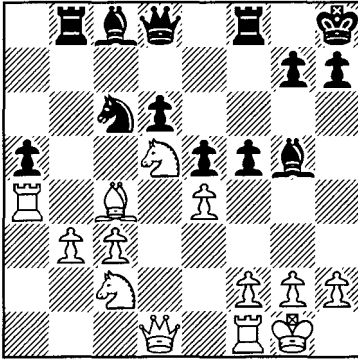


Diagram 21 (W)

Correctly hurrying with ...f5

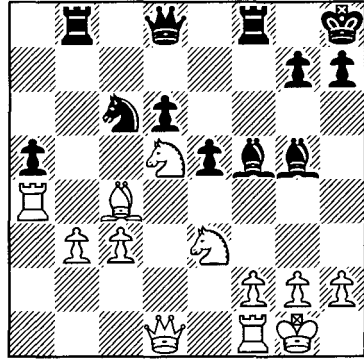


Diagram 22 (B)

Black will again play around d5

After 17...g6 18 Qd3 f5 White certainly shouldn't play 19 exf5 gxf5 20 f4 exf4 21 Nxf4 Ne5, but after 19 Rd1 Black finds it difficult to equalize; for example, 19...Bh4 (or 19...fxe4 20 Qxe4 Bf5 21 Qe2 Ne7 22 Nxe7 Bxe7 23 Ne3, while 19...Bd7 20 Raa1 changes little) 20 f3 Ne7 21 Nxe7 Bxe7 22 Ne3 (Rogozenko).

18 Re1

A novelty from Ivanchuk in a position played hundreds of times before. Instead 18 f3 doesn't achieve much for White after 18...fxe4 19 fxe4 Rxf1+ 20 Qxf1 Ne7, when Black follows with ...Bb7, ...Qb6+ and ...Rf8, and White has to struggle for equality, but 18 exf5 is far and away the most frequent move. Following 18...Bxf5 matters are rather theoretical:

a) 19 Qe2 is not supposed to be good because of 19...Qd7 20 Nce3 Be6, when the queen would be better on d3. In the classic game E.Geller-E.Sveshnikov, Tbilisi 1978, Black used the extra tempo to develop a strong attack after 21 Rd1 Bd8 22 Ra2 Qf7 23 Qd3 Qh5 24 Nf1 e4 25 Qc2 Bh4 26 Ng3 Bxg3 27 hxg3 Ne5 and now the magnificent exchange of blows 28 Nf4 Rxf4! 29 gxf4 Nf3+ 30 gxf3 Bxc4 31 Qxe4! Bxb3 32 Rb1 Re8 33 Rxa5! d5! when the complications should burn out to equality. However, Ivanchuk recently played 19 Qe2 and Kramnik didn't reply with this

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

approved recipe, so probably there is more to be said here.

b) 19 Nce3 (**Diagram 22**) 19...Bg6 (19...Be6 has also been played, but Black doesn't really want to exchange the light-squared bishops and so shouldn't oppose them like this in principle; there is also a specific problem in that after 20 Qd3 – this and Rd1 is White's best plan – 20...Bxe3 21 Nxe3 Bxc4, White has the surprising but strong 22 bxc4! with a small but definite and lasting edge) and we have a further divide:

b1) 20 Bd3 Bxd3 21 Qxd3 Bxe3 22 fxe3 Rxf1+ 23 Qxf1 Rxb3 gives White exactly enough compensation for his pawn.

b2) 20 Be2 Bf7 (targeting b3 now that the bishop has left the diagonal) 21 Nc4 e4 (or 21...Bg8) leads to a complicated and roughly equal position.

b3) 20 Re1 aims for Nf1-g3, but Black can deal with that: 20...Rb7 21 Nf1 Rbf7 22 Ra2 e4 23 Ng3 Bh4 also keeps the balance.



NOTE: In all these variations the themes of the position can be seen: Black wants to play ...e4 and use e5 as the base for a kingside attack, b3 is weak, and Black often doubles on the f-file.

b4) These themes were all seen in the model Black game L.Kritz-A.Shariyazdanov, Biel 2003, which went 20 Qe2 e4 21 Qa2 Rb7 22 Ba6 Rbf7 23 Bb5 Ne5 (**Diagram 23**)

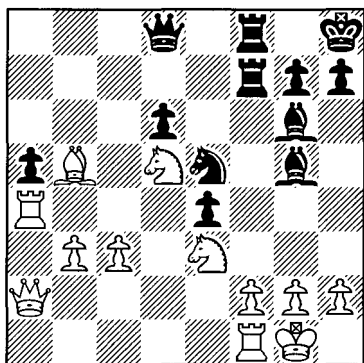


Diagram 23 (W)

An ideal square for the black knight

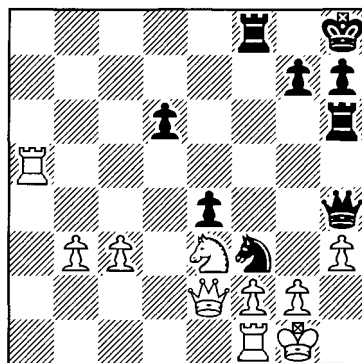


Diagram 24 (W)

Finishing in style

24 Be2 (24 Rxa5 Bh4 25 g3 Nf3+ 26 Kh1 Bg5 gives Black dangerous compensation for the pawn) 24...Bxe3 25 Nxe3 Qh4 26 Bc4 Rf6 27 Rxa5 Bh5 28 Be2? Bxe2 29 Qxe2 Rh6! (29...Nf3+?? doesn't work since 30 gxf3 exf3 31 Qc4 defends, but the text is decisive) 30 h3 Nf3+ (**Diagram 24**) 31 Kh1 (or 31 gxf3 Qxh3! rather than 31...exf3?? 32 Qxf3!) 31...Qf4 0-1 – an impressive game which illustrates another theme,

namely that Black must be willing to abandon the a-pawn sometimes to maintain his initiative.

Returning to 18 Re1:

18...fxe4 19 Rxe4 Bf5 20 Re2 Qd7

Rogozenko questions this move. White's idea is to leave his queen where it is, defending b3, and double rooks on the a-file. To do that he's going to have to go Nce3, and Black does better to disrupt White before that can be played, either with 20...Bg4 21 f3 Bh5, so that 22 Nce3? runs into 22...e4, or 20...Bg6 21 Qe1 Bh5 22 f3 Ne7 (both lines Rogozenko), with counterplay for Black in either case.

21 Nce3 Bg6 22 Rea2 e4 23 Bf1 (Diagram 25)

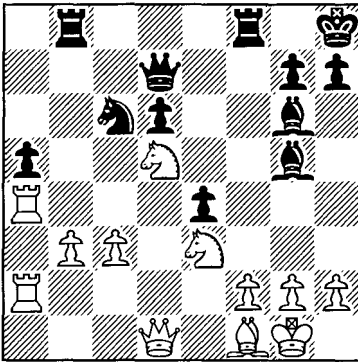


Diagram 25 (B)

White plays to tie Black down to a5

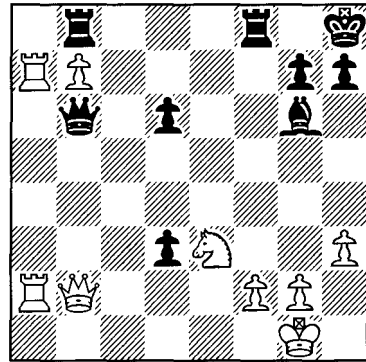


Diagram 26 (B)

Black is struggling

23...Bd8

With this move Black aims to free the c6-knight for ...Ne5, but Ivanchuk makes it look like a mistake. The usual reply to a light-squared bishop retreat to f1 or e2 in this structure is to put pressure on b3 along the diagonal, especially here where White has less control over d5 than normal and clearly has Nc4 in mind. Indeed there was a lot to be said for 23...Qe6, having in mind to meet 24 Nc4 with 24...Bf7.

24 b4 axb4 25 cxb4 Ne5 26 Qd4

Without the chance to double rooks, and having lost the tempo with ...Bd8, Black doesn't have much on the kingside, and he has to deal with the b-pawn and protect his pawn weaknesses.

26...Qe6 27 b5 Bf6 28 Nxf6 Qxf6 29 h3 Qe6

Obviously Black is worse, but Rogozenko's suggestion of 29...Bf7 30 Rb2 d5 hangs on for the moment, although there is still d5 to defend as well as keeping the b-pawn out.

30 Ra7 Qf6 31 Qd2 Nd3 32 b6 Qd4?!

32...Rxb6? loses to 33 Nd5, but 32...Bf7 33 R2a5 Nc5 (if 33...Rxb6 34 Rf5 Qe6 35 Rxf7 wins) 34 Rb5 (Rogozenko again) puts up better resistance.

33 b7 Qb6 34 Bxd3 exd3 35 Qb2 (Diagram 26) 35...Qc5?

This loses; Rogozenko suggests that after 35...Qc7 36 R2a4 d2 37 Qxd2 Rxb7 38 Rxb7 Qxb7 39 Qxd6 Black should hold the position after a long and difficult defence.

36 Ra8 Be4 37 Rxb8 Rxb8 38 Ra8 Qc7 39 Qb6 1-0

Points to Remember

1. In these quiet lines Black's aim is to push ...e4 and use the e5-square as the springboard for kingside play.
2. Black should keep the light-squared bishops if he can, and if White devotes himself sufficiently to trying to win the a-pawn he has to be willing to let it go and look for compensation on the kingside.

Game 19

□ O.Korneev ■ M.Devereaux

Port Erin 2006

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 c3 0-0 12 Nc2 Bg5 13 a4 bxa4 14 Rxa4 a5 15 Bc4 Rb8 16 b3 Kh8 17 Nce3 (Diagram 27)

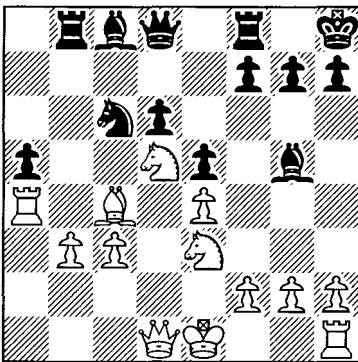


Diagram 27 (B)

A fashionable variation

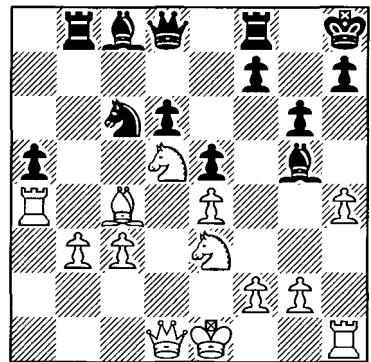


Diagram 28 (B)

Flexible and aggressive play from White

This move, long thought weak, introduces a modish plan.

17...g6



WARNING: 17...f5 18 Nxf5! is not a good idea, since Black doesn't want to lose his light-squared bishop for a knight.

Thus the only real alternative to 17...g6 is the safer 17...Bxe3 18 Nxe3 Ne7. The difference from the similar position after 16 Ra2 is that now 19 0-0 f5 20 exf5 Nxf5 21 Nxf5 Bxf5 22 Qd5 (Rogozenko) genuinely hits a5 and makes it quite difficult for Black to equalize, so instead he probably has to play 19...Bb7, and then Rogozenko suggests that Black's weaknesses are a tad more significant than White's.

18 h4!? (Diagram 28)

A bold modern idea seeking to embarrass Black's king down the newly opened h-file. Instead, playing quietly with 18 0-0 is ineffective since after 18...f5 19 exf5 gxf5 White wants to block the mobile pawn duo with 20 f4, but after 20...exf4 21 Nxf4? Qb6 is most embarrassing, so he has to play 21 Nc2, when Black continues with 21...Ne5 and clearly White's knight hasn't quite justified itself.

18...Bxh4 19 g3 Bg5 20 f4

20 Ra2 would transpose to lines dealt with in Game 17. Other than that, the text is the only move played here; White wants to open the second rank for his rook, and also prevent ...Bxe3 and continue the harassing of the g5-bishop.

20...exf4

Obviously Black should open the e-file towards the white king.

21 gxf4 Bh4+ (Diagram 29)

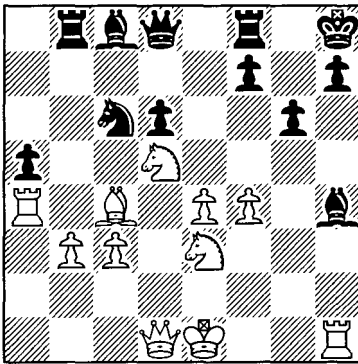


Diagram 29 (W)

Displacing the white king

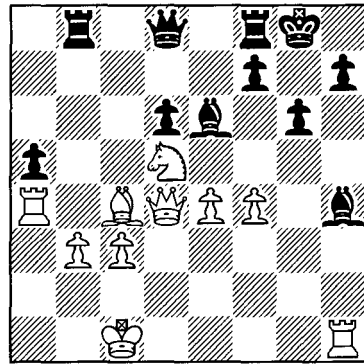


Diagram 30 (W)

Black defends on the dark squares

22 Kd2

The alternative 22 Kf1 should be met with 22...f5, when White has so far shown nothing in particular after 23 exf5 (23 Ra2, coming to the h-file, can be met with 23...fxe4 24 Rah2 g5 when White can clear the h-file with 25 Ng2, but Black can defend h7 laterally: 25...Rb7 26 Nxh4 gxh4 27 Rxh4 Rg7 and Black is fine) 23...Bxf5 24 Nxf5 Rxf5 25 Qg4 Bg5! and now White's only move seems to be 26 Bd3 (and not 26 Kg2 Bxf4), which peters out to a draw after 26...Rxd5 27 Bxg6 Qf6 28 Rxh7+ Kg8 29 Be4 Rc5 30 Rh5 Qxf4+ 31 Qxf4 Bxf4 32 Rxc5 dxc5 33 Bxc6 Bc7.

22...Ne7

Black has also played 22...f5, but creating opposite-coloured bishops the way Devereaux does is natural.

23 Kc1

Korneev had had another go the week before with 23 Kc2; the trouble with this is it takes longer to ferry White's rooks over to the h-file, and by the time he managed it – 23...Nxd5 24 Nxd5 Be6 25 Ra1 Bf6 26 Rh2 Bg7 27 Qd2 (27 Qh1 Kg8 28 Rxh7 Bxd5 29 Bxd5 Qf6 30 Rh3 Rfc8 31 Qf3 Rxc3+ 32 Qxc3 Qxf4 33 Qe1 Rc8+ 34 Bc4 d5 is an unkind but rather typical series of shots which leaves White reeling) 27...a4 28 Rah1 axb3+ 29 Bxb3 Bxd5 30 Rxh7+ Kg8 31 Bxd5 Qf6 – Black was completely equal in O.Korneev-D.Solak, Vrsac 2006.

23...Nxd5 24 Nxd5 Be6!

The only way to stop a crushing doubling on the h-file.

25 Qd4+ Kg8 (Diagram 30) 26 Ra2

In view of the fact that Black can forestall the threatened Rah2, this might be a place for White to try and think of a different move.

26...Bxd5 27 Qxd5 Qf6 28 Qd2 Bg3 29 Rf1 d5! (Diagram 31)

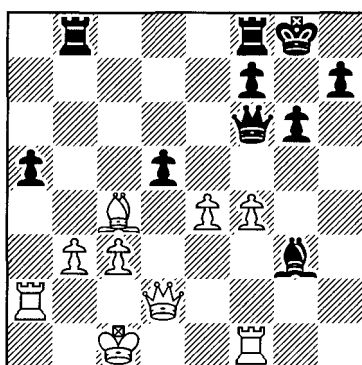


Diagram 31 (W)

A novelty on move 29!

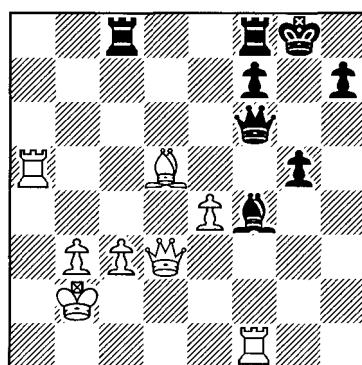


Diagram 32 (B)

A most complex position

Korneev has played this 9 Nd5 variation many times, while Devereaux is a Sveshnikov expert; so far the session was just five minutes old, and in fact only this move (suggested by the ubiquitous Rogozenko) was new. In V.Topalov-P.Leko, Linares 2005, where the idea of 22 Kd2 was introduced, Black had preferred 29...h5 30 Rxa5 Ra8, but White had managed to retain the initiative with 31 e5 – in the subsequent play Black had trouble with his bishop on g3 being a little out of play. Devereaux's move aims by deflecting the c4-bishop to ensure that Black can place the g3-bishop influentially on e5.

30 Bxd5

The alternative is 30 exd5 Rfe8. The position then is chock full of tricks: one possible cute variation is 31 Rf3 Re1+ 32 Kb2 (if 32 Kc2 then maybe 32...Qf5+ 33 Qd3 Qg4, based on 34 Rxc3? Qxf4 with a winning attack) 32...Re4 33 Qd3 Rxf4! 34 Rxc3 Rxc4 35 Rxc4 (35 Qxc4 Qf2+) 35...hxg6 36 Qxc4 with rough equality.

30...g5!

This is the point: the rook on f1 is now unguarded and Black can take over the central dark squares.

31 Kb2 Bxf4 32 Rxa5 Rbc8

32...Qb6 leaves White the choice between a draw after 33 Rxf4 gxf4 34 Qxf4 Qxa5 35 Qg5+ and continuing the game an exchange down by 33 Qg2 Qxa5 34 Rxf4, although to be sure his bishop on d5 is a proud piece. Whether the English amateur didn't feel like stopping an interesting game so early or simply judged that his bishop was better than the a5-rook I don't know.

33 Qd3 (Diagram 32)

The position is exceedingly difficult. White's pawns are perhaps a little more menacing, since Black can't easily get the g-pawn over g2, but on the other hand Black's king is a bit safer.

33...Kh8 34 b4 Rc7 35 Kb3 Rb8 36 Ra6 Qg7 37 c4 Be5 38 Ra8

Naturally White wants to trade rooks – it makes his king safer and accentuates the difference between the b-pawn, which can get easily to b7, and the g-pawn, which can only get easily to g3.

38...Rxa8 39 Bxa8 Rc8 40 Bd5 Rd8?!

A strange move. 40...f6 looks much more natural, defending the bishop, getting the f-pawn off prise and so freeing the black pieces.

41 c5 g4 42 Qe2 f6 43 Rc1?

It seems that 43 b5 was better. The rook had a function on the f-file which is not immediately apparent...

43...Qh6

Since here 43...f5! is a huge shot which leaves White struggling terribly. After either 44 c6 or 44 b5 Black plays 44...f4 and his pawns are the more dangerous ones,

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

while 44 Be6 g3 is very strong since the f5-pawn cannot be taken: 45 exf5 (45 Bxf5 g2 46 Rg1 Qf7+ is also deadly) 45...g2 46 Rg1 Qg3+ gives Black a decisive attack.

44 Rc2 Qh3+

44...Qh1 was probably better, but to be honest this is the sort of position computers play so much better than us that criticism is really a bit unfair.

45 Ka4 Rb8 46 b5 g3 47 b6 Qh1 (Diagram 33)

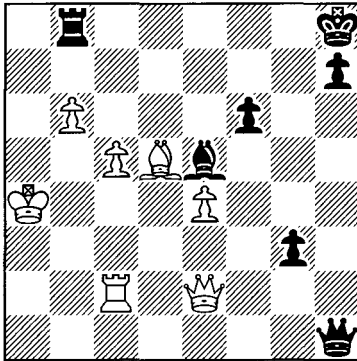


Diagram 33 (W)

White is winning the race...

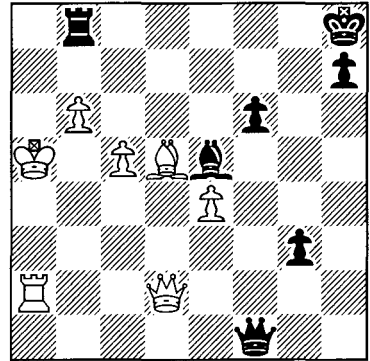


Diagram 34 (B)

...but now Black has a forced win

48 Ra2

It seems this was overcomplicated and that White wins after 48 b7 Qa1+ (Black carry 48...Rd8 – Rogozenko – with the idea that after 49 c6 Qa1+ really is perpetual because of the possibility of ...Rxd5+, but after 49 Rd2, guarding against this idea, Black has his back to the wall) 49 Ra2 Qd4+ 50 Kb5, although to a human it seems natural to keep the pawns on dark squares to complement the bishop as long as possible.

48...Qg1

Unexpectedly c5 becomes vulnerable.

49 Kb5 Qb1+

49...Rc8 seems to lead to perpetual in most variations, and especially with 50 c6 Qb1+ 51 Kc5 Qg1+ 52 Kb5.

50 Ka6

50 Kc6 Qb4 51 Be6 looks like a better try to me.

50...Qb4

50...Bd4 looks to be better, hoping for 51 Ka7? Rxb6+ 52 cxb6? Qxb6+ 53 Ka8 Be5! and wins, but 51 b7 Bxc5 52 Qb5 Qxb5+ 53 Kxb5 Bd4 is a draw.

51 Qb5 Qc3 52 Qa5?

52 b7 seems to win – White has a strange aversion to this move.

52...Qf3 53 Qd2??

53 c6 was essential, when Black might as well give perpetual with 53...Ra8+ 54 Kb7 Rb8+ 55 Ka6 Ra8+.

53...Qf1+ 54 Ka5 (Diagram 34)

54 Ka7 Qb5 is also mating – among Black's ideas is ...Re8-e7+, while the g-pawn is a useful decoy.

54...Qg1??

Black misses 54...g2 here, which wins immediately: 55 Qxg2 Bc3+ 56 Ka4 Qb1.

55 Kb5 Qf1+ 56 Kc6 Bf4 57 Qe2

Settling for the draw; White still had winning chances after 57 Qc2, but it's easy to say that from here. This has been an incredibly difficult struggle and sitting there waiting for 54...g2 must have been a bit draining for Korneev.

57...Rc8+ 58 Kd7

58 Kb5?? g2! was a final trick.

58...Qxe2 59 Rxe2 Rxc5 ½-½

After 60 b7 Kg7 61 Rb2 Bb8 White draws easily enough by an overflight with the king to the g-pawn: 62 Ke6-f5-g4 and so on.

Points to Remember

- 1 After 16 b3 Kh8 17 Nce3 Black can't so easily get away with the ...Bxe3, ...Ne7 and ...f5 plan.
2. Thus Black probably wants to play ...g6 and accept these complications, which are very entertaining and at the moment simply unclear.

Black Plays 12...Rb8**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 c3 0-0 12 Nc2 Rb8 (Diagram 35)**

A solid choice. Black's point, of course, is that after 13 a4 bxa4 he is attacking b2, and since White doesn't have time for Rxa4-a2 he either has to cover the b-pawn with his queen, in which case Black will just get an improved version of the last section (on 12...Bg5), or else play 14 Ncb4 Nxb4 15 Nxb4 (15 cxb4 Bd7 16 Bxa6 Bc6 17 Rxa4 Bxa4 18 Qxa4 Bg5 19 0-0 transposes to Game 15, Anand-Van Wely) 15...Bb7 (**Diagram 36**) when the annoying attack on the e-pawn leaves Black at least equal.

13 h4 (Diagram 37)

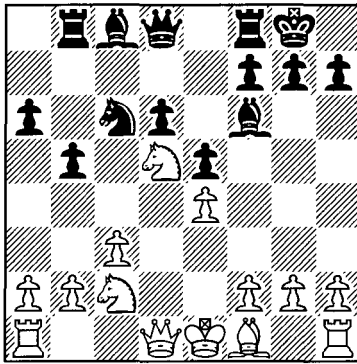


Diagram 35 (W)

Prophylaxis against a2-a4

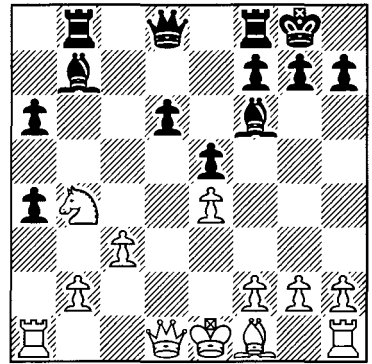


Diagram 36 (W)

Black has useful pressure against e4

This move, employed by Kasparov in a couple of brilliant games against Kramnik and Lautier in the mid-nineties, has come to represent White's main try against Black's solid 11..0-0 and 12...Rb8 variation.



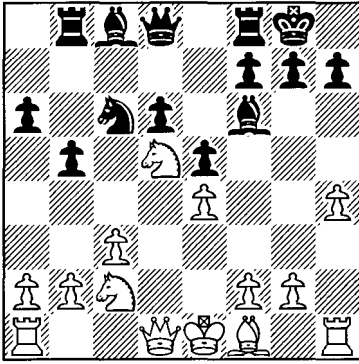
NOTE: By relying on 13...Bxh4? 14 Qh5, White wants to keep the bishop on f6 and thus prevent Black from reaching his ideal set-up with ...Bg5, ...Be6 and ...Ne7.

As well as the 13 a3 of Game 20, White can also develop his light-squared bishop:

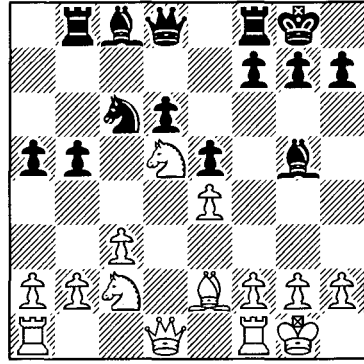
a) 13 Be2 Bg5 14 0-0 (White usually castles now or on the next move; while the independent 14 Qd3 Be6 15 Rd1 is seen in Game 21) 14...a5 (**Diagram 38**) leads to a further divide, but Black has to play this rather than allow 14...Ne7 15 Ncb4. After 14...a5:

a1) 15 b4 is a rather simple plan, intending to follow with a4 and create a passed pawn on the queenside, but Black has nothing to fear after 15...Be6 (15...Ne7 and 15...axb4 are fine too) 16 a4 bxa4 17 Rxa4 (or 17 b5 Ne7 18 Nxe7+ Qxe7 19 Rxa4 Qb7 followed by ...Rfc8 and ...Bd8) 17...axb4 18 cxb4 Ne7 19 Bc4 and now 19...Qc8 is supposed to be the right move, although I can't see a lot wrong with the older 19...Nxd5 20 Bxd5 Qc7 21 Ra2 and then 21...Rfc8.

a2) 15 Qd3 Ne7 16 Rfd1 (16 Nce3 Bxe3 17 Nxe3 Qb6 allows Black to equalize with ...Be6 followed by bringing the king's rook to d8 or c8 according to circumstances) lets White play a position similar to Game 22 but with his king's rook on d1, but after 16...Be6 17 Nxe7+ Bxe7 18 Ne3 Qd7 followed by ...Bd8-b6 Black obtains fairly easy equality.

**Diagram 37 (B)**

A critical Kasparovian try

**Diagram 38 (W)**

Preventing Ncb4

a3) 15 Na3 tries to exploit the new weakness of b5 to deflect the c6-knight so that it can't challenge d5: 15...b4 (Black can also play ball with 15...Na7, but that seems less natural) 16 Nb5 bxc3 17 bxc3 Ne7 18 a4 (18 c4 is worse; White needs this square to take his bishop to d5) 18...Nxd5 19 Qxd5 (**Diagram 39**) 19...Rb6 (19...Be6 has never been played as far as I know, but has a lot to be said for it; for example, 20 Qxd6 Qxd6 21 Nxd6 Bd2 22 c4 Rb2 23 Rfb1 Rxb1+ 24 Rxb1 Bb4 25 Nf5 Bd7 26 Bd1 Bxf5 27 exf5 Rd8 when Black's activity enables him to hold easily) 20 Bc4 Qf6. Both Yakovich and Rogozenko give this as equal, based on P.Stigar-R.Machala, correspondence 1987, which went 21 Qd3 Bf4 22 Bd5 Qh6 23 g3 Bg5 24 Rfb1 Bd8 25 Na3 Ba6, but I'm not so sure that Black was equal after 26 Nc4 to be followed by Qe3, trading rooks, and a rook invasion. If Black can't get his bishop to b6 and c5 in these positions he tends to be quite a bit worse, and I don't really see how he can.

b) 13 g3 Bg5 14 Bg2 a5 (this is considered best, taking control of b4 so that to reach d5 the knight has to go to e3, where it can be taken by the g5-bishop; the significance of that exchange is that White can no longer win the fight for d5 by leaving Black with a minor piece which cannot challenge that square) 15 a3 (this is not really necessary but 15 0-0 Ne7 16 Nce3 Bxe3 17 Nxe3 Be6 is fine for Black too; White's only positive idea is f4, but Black can meet that comfortably with ...f6 and White has only weakened himself) 15...Ne7 16 Nce3 Be6 (16...Bxe3 immediately is also fine but Radjabov prefers to keep the tension) 17 Nxe7+ Qxe7 18 Nf5 Qd7 (**Diagram 40**) and White's adventure had achieved nothing, since 19 Nxd6? Rfd8 20 Nf5 Bxf5 21 exf5 Qxf5 would have been terrible for him, in M.Bartel-T.Radjabov, FIDE World Championship, Tripoli 2004.

c) 13 Bd3 is well met by 13...Be6. White has to defend d5 again with 14 Nce3, but

Black can then exchange his worse bishop for the e3-knight: 14...Bg5 15 0-0 Ne7 (Black doesn't need to trade the knight on e3 until the bishop leaves the d-file, since Nxe7+ ...Qxe7, Nd5 would allow the desirable, for Black, ...Bxd5, exd5) 16 Bc2 Bxe3 17 Nxe3 b4 and Black is fine.

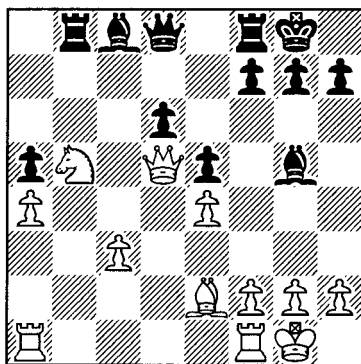


Diagram 39 (B)

Black needs to find some activity

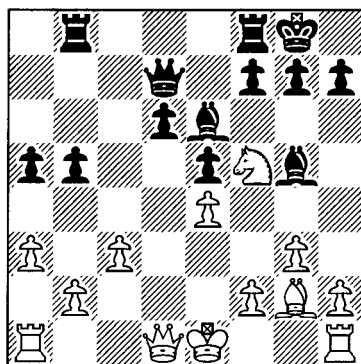


Diagram 40 (W)

The d6-pawn is immune

Returning to the critical 13 h4:

13...Be7 (Diagram 41)

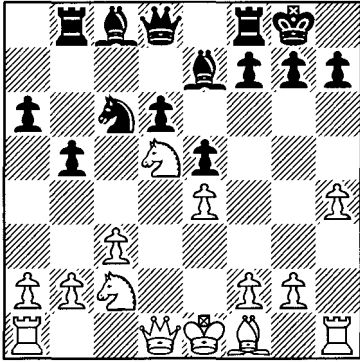
For the moment 13...Be6 is dubious in view of 14 Nxf6+ Qxf6 15 Qxd6, while 13...Ne7 14 Nxf6+ gxf6, although thematic, has never recovered from the blow dealt it by Kasparov, so the solid text has come to assume pride of place. Black has also tried 13...g6 and ...Bg7, but the bishop is passive on g7.



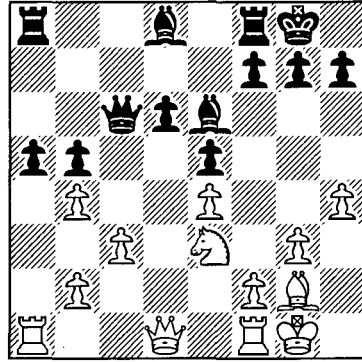
TIP: The calm retreat to e7 makes possible the plan of ...Be6, ...Qd7, ...Bd8 and ...Ne7, which indeed are Black's next few moves against most White tries.

After 13...Be7, White's most usual plan is to take firm control of d5 by Nce3, Qf3, Rd1 and Bd3-c2-b3 in some order. Since 14 Bd3 Be6 forces 15 Nce3 anyway by the positional threat of ...Bxd5, and 14 Ncb4 Nxb4 is senseless before a2-a3, the only real alternatives to the 14 Nce3 of Game 22 are 14 g3 or 14 a3:

a) 14 g3 Be6 15 Bg2 Qd7 16 0-0 Bd8 17 Qd3 a5 18 Nce3 Ne7 saw Black execute his plan and equalize in A.Shirov-A.Timofeev, Sarajevo 2005. Black can always trade the minor pieces on d5 and reach an endgame which will probably be drawish because of the passive bishop on g2. It needs to be within reach of d5 to make these positions prospectful for White; that is one of the motives behind Karjakin's set-up in Game 22.

**Diagram 41 (W)**

A prudent retreat to e7

**Diagram 42 (W)**

Black has sufficient counterplay

b) 14 a3 Be6 15 Ncb4 Nxb4 16 axb4 (we've seen this motif before in the notes to Game 15) was tried in the high-profile encounter V.Topalov-P.Leko, Dortmund 2005, which went on 16...Ra8 17 g3 (or 17 Bd3 Bxd5, while 17 Be2 allows 17...Bxh4) 17...Qd7 (Topalov's point was that he hasn't yet castled and so after 17...a5 18 Bxb5 Bxd5 19 Qxd5 axb4 20 Rxa8 Qxa8 21 Qxa8 Rxa8 22 Kd2 bxc3+ 23 Kxc3 he has some chances based on his active king) 18 Bg2 (and not 18 Nb6? Qb7 19 Nxa8? Qxe4+) 18...Bd8 19 0-0 Qc6 (an instructive move: Leko uses the threat of ...Bxd5 to push the knight away before going ...a5) 20 Ne3 a5 (**Diagram 42**) with a position which Leko later managed to lose, although here he appears perfectly equal.

Illustrative Games

Game 20

□ Y.Nepomniashchy ■ Y.Kuzubov

Kirishi 2005

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 c3 0-0 12 Nc2 Rb8 13 a3 (Diagram 43)

I mentioned this move before; White wants to prepare Ncb4 ...Nxb4, axb4, and he may also simply use the move as a prophylactic against ...b4 (even after ...a5, the move might still enable him to meet ...b4 by cxb4 ...axb4, a4).

13...Bg5

We mentioned this position briefly in the notes to Game 15; White could venture 14 h4 Bh6 15 g4 here, but in the game he plays less critically.

14 Bd3

When you see the game you wonder whether White wouldn't have done better with 14 Ncb4, but she got nowhere after 14...Bb7 15 g3 a5 16 Nxc6 Bxc6 17 h4 Bh6 18 Bh3 b4! in Xie Jun-E.Sutovsky, Pamplona 1998.

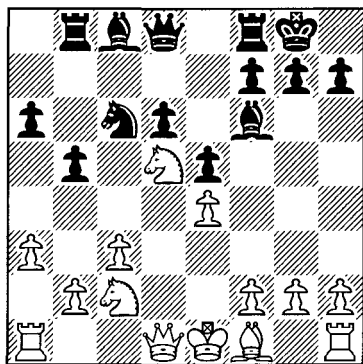


Diagram 43 (B)

13 a3 prevents ...b4 ideas

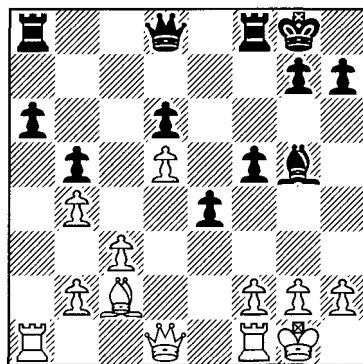


Diagram 44 (W)

Can White activate his bishop?

14...Be6



TIP: Usually ...Be6 is a good reply to Bd3 in the Sveshnikov. White almost never wants to allow ...Bxd5, exd5 unless he has doubled Black's f-pawns, but otherwise the point of a3 is lost.

15 Ncb4 Nxb4 16 axb4

16 Nxb4 Qc8 followed by ...a5 is easy for Black.

16...Bxd5 17 exd5

Both sides have achieved what they wanted: Black can play on the kingside with ...e4 and ...f5, while White has the a-pawn as a target on an open file. Probably, too, he calculated that he wasn't that upset about the trade on d5 because without the light-squared bishop Black would find it hard to defend a6.

17...e4 18 Bc2

After 18 Bxe4, 18...Re8 is not all that effective after 19 Qg4, but 18...Qe7, keeping a rook on the f-file so as to meet 19 Qg4 by 19...f5, is very strong.

18...Ra8 19 0-0 f5 (Diagram 44) 20 f3

It's not so simple as just besieging the a-pawn with 20 Ra3, since Black's last also enabled him to meet this with 20...a5, and it's not easy for White to arrange for his bishop to attack b5 with the e- and f-pawns on light squares the way they are. So

instead White tackles Black's central pawn chain.

20...exf3 21 Qxf3 g6 22 Rae1

If White had tried 22 Bd3 to try and prevent ...a5, then after 22...Re8 he would have had to play 23 Rfe1 anyway, so the dream of getting control simply on the queenside cannot be put into practice.

22...a5 23 bxa5 Rxa5 24 Re6

This looks impressive, but it doesn't achieve anything. Black is already better, largely because his bishop is better. The combination of his light-squared pawn chain and White's own d5-pawn restrict White's bishop, whereas there are no obstacles to Black's (especially after ...b4 breaks down White's dark-squared pawn couplet on the queenside), and it has several tempting outposts, such as e5 or c5, where it is protected, invulnerable and hugely influential.



TIP: In these opposite-coloured bishops positions the key almost always lies in the pawn chains. Where Black is attacking, on the kingside, he needs his pawns on light squares to complement his pieces. Where he is weaker, on the queenside, he needs to get rid of his pawns on light squares, both to remove the weaknesses White might otherwise attack, and to break down the resistance to his own bishop and secure outposts for it. Philidor pointed this out long ago.

24...Ra2 25 Rb1 b4 26 Bb3 bxc3 27 Qxc3 Ra7 28 Rbe1 Rb7 29 Kh1 Bf6 30 Qc2 Kg7 (Diagram 45)

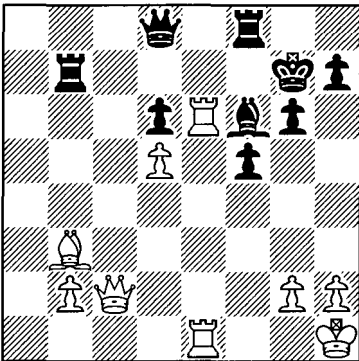


Diagram 45 (W)

Black enjoys the superior bishop

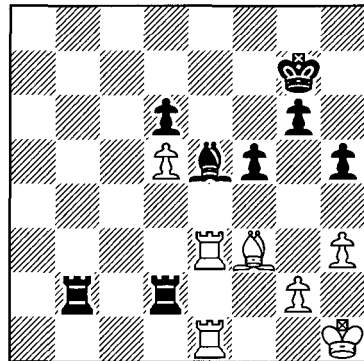


Diagram 46 (W)

White can't defend on the kingside

Compare the bishops: Black's keeps the white rooks out single-handed and at the same time attacks b2, whereas the only influence White's has on the play is that it needs defending by the queen.

31 R6e3 Be5 32 Rb1 Qg5 33 Rh3 Rfb8 34 Ba4 Qf4!

Not, of course, 34...Rxb2? 35 Rxb2 Rxb2 36 Qc7+ with a draw, but Black has plenty of time.

35 Re1

In view of 35 b3 Qxa4 the b-pawn is a goner, and after that Black can turn his attention to the kingside.

35...Qb4

35...Rxb2 was in fact quicker since 36 Qc7+ achieves nothing, because after 36...Kf8 37 Rxh7 (37 Qxh7 Qe4 is also devastating; look at that bishop on e5!), 37...R2b7 just wins the rook. But probably the players were short of time, and Kuzubov prefers a safe, if less immediate method.

36 Rhe3 Qxb2 37 Qxb2 Rxb2 38 Bd1 Rd2 39 Bf3 Rbb2 40 h3 h5 (Diagram 46) 41 Rxe5

Black's plan was ...Kh6, ...g5-g4 and White had nothing to oppose to this, so he decides at least to rid himself of his main enemy, but Kuzubov tidies up effectively.

41...dxe5 42 Rxe5 h4 43 Re1 Kf6 44 Kg1 Kg5 45 Rf1 Rb3 46 Kh2 Rdb2 47 Bd1 Rb4 48 Kg1 Rb1 49 Bf3 Rxf1+ 50 Kxf1 Rd4 51 Ke2 Kf4 52 Kf2 g5 0-1

Points to Remember

1. In the Sveshnikov ...Be6 is always the first move to consider in reply to Bd3.
2. ...Bxd5, exd5 is almost always a good transaction for Black. This game was typical: Black's bishop was so much stronger than White's that the game virtually won itself while White couldn't find anything useful to do at all.

Game 21

□ E.Korbut ■ A.Skripchenko

Biel 2005

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 c3 0-0 12 Nc2 Rb8 13 Be2 Bg5 14 Qd3 (Diagram 47) 14...Be6

14...a5 is another move order which comes to the same thing. The point of White's Qd3 and Rd1 before castling is that after 15 Rd1 Ne7 16 Nce3 Be6 17 0-0 Bxe3 18 Nxe3 Black cannot get his ideal set-up with ...Qb6 and ...Rfd8, and instead has to play with the awkward ...Rb6, although this is still perfectly possible. Meanwhile 14...f5 is usually thought to be less appropriate in these lines where White has set up to play in the centre. Yakovich quotes the game Y.Grünfeld-S.Porfiriadis, Kranevo 1996, which went 15 Bf3 g6 16 0-0 Kh8 17 Rad1 Ne7 18 Ncb4 Nxd5 19 Nxd5

Bb7 20 Qe2 Rc8 21 Rd3 Rc5 22 Rfd1. Black now had to prevent the threat of Nb4 followed by exf5 and Nxa6 with 22...a5, when it isn't actually all that clear to me that White has much.

15 Rd1 a5

15...Ne7 16 Nce3 is again White's idea.

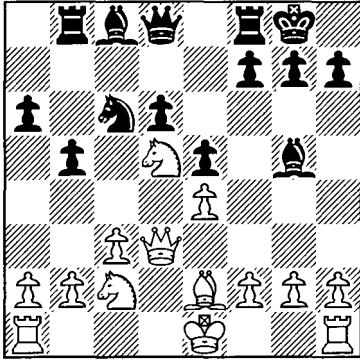


Diagram 47 (B)

White prepares Rd1

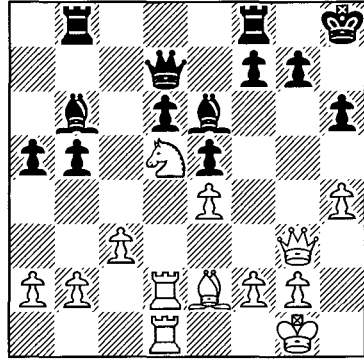


Diagram 48 (W)

Re-routing the dark-squared bishop

16 a3

A rather untheoretical move: White more commonly plays either 16 0-0 or 16 Nce3. After 16 0-0 a typical continuation is 16...Qd7 (16...g6, 16...b4, and 16...Ne7 are other good moves; this variation is not particularly sensitive to move order) 17 Qg3 h6 (and not the horrible 17...f6, weakening the light squares and preventing the typical ...Bd8-b6 regrouping) 18 h4 Bd8 19 Nce3 Kh8 20 Rd2 Ne7 21 Rfd1 Nxd5 22 Nxd5 Bb6 (**Diagram 48**) with rough equality. Likewise after 16 Nce3 g6 (16...Bxe3 17 Nxe3 Bxa2 is no good as 18 Qxd6 Qxd6 19 Rxd6 Ne7 20 Ra6 a4 21 Ra5 is strong: since Black cannot liquidate by 21...Rfc8 22 Rxb5 Rxb5 23 Bxb5 a3 24 bxa3 Rxc3 25 0-0 Rxa3 26 Ra1 with a crushing pin, he is likely to wind up in an unpleasant pawn-down ending) 17 0-0 Qd7 18 Kh1 f5 (18...Kg7 is an alternative; but a ...g6 and ...f5 plan is always tempting against a knight on e3), Black should be fine, especially since 19 exf5 gxf5 20 f4 can be met by 20...exf4 21 Nxf4 Bxa2. Presumably rescuing this pawn, as well as pre-empting ...b4, was one of the ideas of the text move.

16...Ne7 (Diagram 49) 17 h4

You can see why White played this move, seeking to prevent the bishop regrouping via d8; but given that White's next move is going to be Nce3 and that the usual reaction to Nce3 in this line is ...Bxe3, it looks a bit misguided. White has to remember that she is going to castle kingside, and the h-pawn can easily end up

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

simply being a weakness. 17 Nce3 Bxe3 18 Nxe3 Rb6 19 0-0 would have made more sense, although in this type of position White normally doesn't play a3 if s/he can help it.

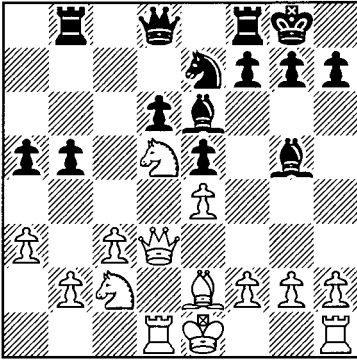


Diagram 49 (W)

Can White maintain control of d5?

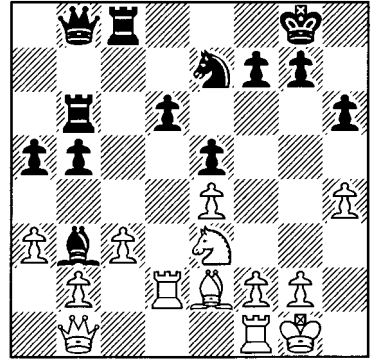


Diagram 50 (W)

Black has a useful minority attack



NOTE: Instead White usually prefers to meet ...b4 with c4 and aim for the exchange of bishops with h3 and Bg4, as well as reserving the possibility of a4 without losing a tempo.

17...Bh6 18 Nce3 Bxe3 19 Nxe3 Rb6 20 Bg4

White is following the normal plan, but a3 and especially h4 are not adornments to her position.

20...Bb3 21 Rd2 Qc7 22 Be2 Rc8 23 0-0 Qb8 24 Qb1 h6 (Diagram 50) 25 Rc1

White lacks a good plan and Black is already slightly better here.

25...Be6 26 Bg4 Bxg4 27 Nxg4 b4 28 axb4 axb4 29 Qa2

It looks to me as though 29 c4 was the right move. At least then Black is left with a lone pawn on the queenside which might prove weak later. Furthermore, White can always seek to trade off the knight when it arrives on d4.

29...Qb7 (Diagram 51) 30 f3

A most unpleasant weakening to have to make, especially in conjunction with h4, but I suppose White didn't like the idea of protecting the pawn with a rook and finding her knight driven to h2 after ...h5.

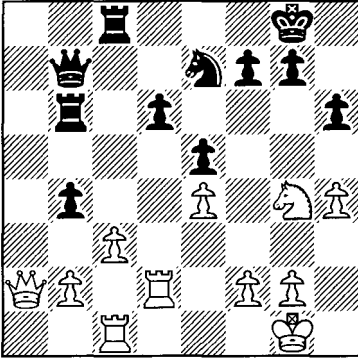
30...Rbc6 31 Rcd1 bxc3 32 bxc3 h5 33 Nf2

Alas, in view of 33 Ne3? Rxc3 the knight gets driven slightly off course anyway.

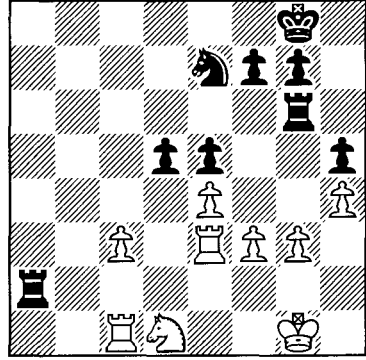
33...Ra8 34 Qc2 Qc7 35 Rd3 Ra3 36 Rc1 Qa7 37 Qd2 Ra2 38 Qe3 Qxe3 39 Rxe3 Rb6

40 Nd1

40 Rd3 might have been a stouter defence; after 40...Rbb2 41 Rf1 Nc8 White can save herself with the tactic 42 f4 exf4 43 e5, so Black would have had to proceed more slowly somehow.

**Diagram 51 (W)**

There's no good way to defend e4

**Diagram 52 (W)**

g3 collapses

40...d5

A very natural continuation, but in fact at this moment Black had a chance for the tactical strike 40...Ng6 41 g3 (another horrid weakness to be compelled to make) 41...f5! 42 exf5 Ne7 43 g4 Nd5, and the knight coming to f4 causes White no end of trouble.

41 g3??

A terrible move. Evidently White had completely overlooked Black's next, but even allowing for that you would think the sight of the second rank should have warned her away from this. 41 exd5 Nxd5 42 Rxe5 Nf4 was grim, so White had to try and hang on with something like 41 Rd3 dxe4 42 fxe4, although to be sure the pawn structure thus created is not a pretty sight.

41...Rg6 (Diagram 52)

Concluding the game; the rest is the proverbial MOT.

42 Nf2 Rxc3+ 43 Kf1 dxe4 44 Nxe4 Rh3 45 Nf2 Rh2 46 Re2 Rxe2 47 Kxe2 Rxc4 48 c4 Nc6 49 Ke3 Rd4 50 Ne4 h4 51 c5 f6 52 Rh1 Rb4 53 Nd6

If 53 Rxc4 f5, of course.

53...g6 54 Rg1 Kh7 55 Ne4 Kg7 56 Nd6 g5 57 Ra1 Kg6 58 Ra8 Ne7 59 Kf2 Rb2+ 60 Kg1 Rc2 61 Ne4 Nd5 62 Rd8 Nf4 63 Rd6 Nh5 64 c6 Kf5 65 Kh1 Ng3+ 66 Nxc3+ hxg3 67 c7 Rxc7 68 Kg2 Rc3 69 Ra6 Re3 0-1

Finally White succeeded in locating the 'resigns' button.

Points to Remember

1. In reply to this quiet line it is usually thought best to play ...a5 fairly early, in order to prevent the knight coming to d5 via b4 and ensure that it can be exchanged as it crosses e3.
2. Thereafter Black is usually advised to challenge d5 with ...Be6 and ...Ne7 in some order.
3. When the knight goes to e3, if Black can immediately play ...Bxe3, Nxe3 ...Qb6 without leaving d6 en prise, then he should.
4. Otherwise Black can steer either for a ...Qd7, ...Nxd5 and ...Bd8-b6 plan, or for a plan with ...g6 and ...f5, depending on circumstances, but ...f5 and ...Bxf5 is usually less effective.

Game 22

□ S.Karjakin ■ P.Eljanov

European Championship Rapidplay Playoff, Warsaw 2005

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 c3 0-0 12 Nc2 Rb8 13 h4 Be7 14 Nce3 Be6 (Diagram 53)

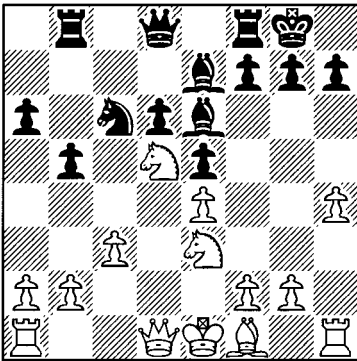


Diagram 53 (W)

A solid Black set-up

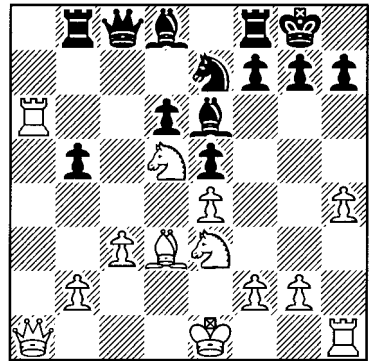


Diagram 54 (W)

White loses control of d5

15 Qf3

15 a4 exploits the fact that 15...bxa4 16 Qxa4 is not good for Black (especially after 16...Qd7?? 17 Qxc6) to force the exchange of pawns on b5. This is an achievement for White if and only if he can blockade b4 with pieces, and it turns out that, with the handicap of having taken the knight away from c2, he can't do that: 15...Qd7 16 axb5 axb5 17 Bd3 Bd8 (and not 17...b4? 18 Qa4), and now White gets nowhere

with 18 Bc2 b4, 18 Nf5 Ne7, or 18 h5 h6. Trickiest is 18 Ra6, continuing to prevent b4 by tactical means (18...b4 19 Qa4 again), but Black has a good move in 18...Qc8, when White might as well retreat, since after 19 Qa1 Ne7 (**Diagram 54**) he cannot keep a piece on d5 and can't prevent ...b4 either, and needs to play smartly to avoid being worse.

Instead 15 Bd3 has independent significance only if White intends to put the queen on e2 and attack a4; thus 15...Qd7 16 Qe2 Bd8 17 a4, but the price is that White hasn't got enough control of d5, and after 17...Ne7 18 axb5 axb5 the knight has to leave with 19 Nb4, when Rogozenko suggests the pawn sacrifice 19...Bb6 20 Bxb5 Qb7, and I agree with him that Black has sufficient play after 21 Bd3 Bxe3 22 Qxe3 Nc6.

15...Qd7 16 Rd1

16 Bd3 is independent only if White is going to try something on the kingside; for example, 16...Bd8 17 g4 (17 Bc2 Ne7 18 Bb3 prioritizes the pieces slightly differently in controlling d5, but Black has no troubles after 18...a5 19 h5 h6 20 a3 Bb6), when Black ought to get his counterplay going with 17...a5 intending ...b4, and after, for example, 18 g5 Kh8 19 Rg1 b4 20 h5 bxc3 21 bxc3 Qa7 Black was already better in T.Middelburg-D.Rogozenko, Dutch League 2000. It's hard to believe in such an attack with the king in the centre; apart from ...b4 Black may also have ...f5 to open lines in some variations.

16...Bd8 17 Bd3

17 Be2 ignores d5 in favour of getting going quickly on the kingside with 17...Ne7 18 g4. Again Black should react by seeking to open lines with 18...a5; for example, 19 h5 Bxd5 20 Nxd5 Nxd5 21 Rxd5 b4 22 c4 Qe7 23 0-0 Bb6 with a typical position in J.Van der Wiel-D.De Vreugt, Wijk aan Zee 2003, where Black should have no problems now that his bishop has found its spiritual home.

17...Ne7 18 Bc2 b4! (Diagram 55)

An important novelty involving the sacrifice of a pawn. Karjakin had previously faced 18...Bxd5 19 Nxd5 Nxd5 20 Rxd5 b4 against Moiseenko, but after 21 Qd3 Black has not equalized since he has to defend d6 and cannot bring his bishop to b6.



NOTE: Once White gets the bishop to d5 against a passive bishop on e7 or c7 this structure is always at least a little unpleasant for Black to defend, and sometimes worse than that.

19 Nxb4

After 19 cxb4 the difference from the Moiseenko game is seen: 19...Bxd5 20 Nxd5 Nxd5 21 Rxd5 Rxb4 and the tempo gained on the b-pawn prevents White tying down Black's bishop to the defence, which means that Black is fine.

19...a5 20 Nd3 Qc6 (Diagram 56)

It doesn't look like much, but a2 is en prise after 21 0-0, and otherwise the threat of

21...f5 and if 22 exf5 e4 is remarkably awkward to meet.

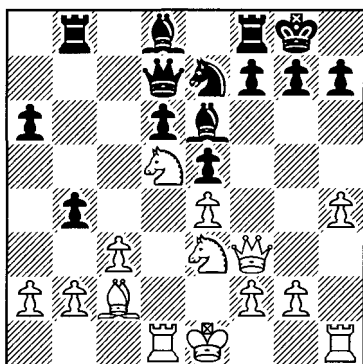


Diagram 55 (W)

A strong sacrifice and novelty

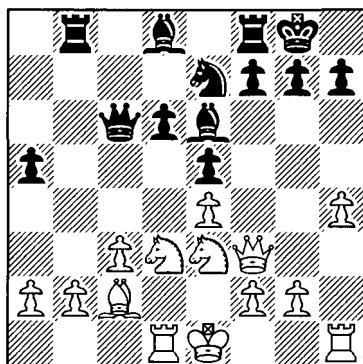


Diagram 56 (W)

Black threatens 21...f5

21 Bb1

A terribly passive move. Perhaps it was better to get on with White's own ideas with 21 h5, although after 21...f5 22 Qh3 Rf6 (or 22...Bb6 – clearly Black has very good play for the pawn), I can't resist showing the variation 23 exf5 Nxf5 24 Nxe5 Nxe3 25 Qxe6+ Rxe6 26 Nxc6 Nxc2+ 27 Kd2 Rxb2 28 Kc1 Nb4 29 Kxb2 Nxc6 which the computer dashes off as though no other moves were conceivable, although there are several '!!'s in there by human standards.

21...f5 22 exf5

Now 22 Qh3 Bc8 is extremely strong; the difference from 21 h5 is that White is missing the resource Bb3+ trapping a rook on b2 at some moment.

22...e4 23 Qg4 Nxf5 24 Nf4 (Diagram 57) 24...Bc8?!

Instead of this 24...Rxb2 was possible, since 25 Nxe6? Qxc3+ 25 Kf1 Nxe3+ is devastating, and after 25 0-0 Bc8 26 Nxf5 Bxf5 27 Qg3 d5 Black is much better.

25 Nxf5 Bxf5?

Here it was much better to activate the rook with 25...Rxf5, when Rogozenko gives the bold line 26 Rd2 Rxb2 (the more modest 26...Re5 followed by ...e3 is also good) 27 Rxb2 Qxc3+ 28 Rd2 Rxf4 29 Qxf4 Qc1+ 30 Ke2 Ba6+ 31 Ke3 Bb6+ 32 Kxe4 Qxh1 which he assesses as very good for Black.

26 Qe2

Now the Ukrainian wunderkind has the ship back on an even keel, and over the next few moves he outplays Eljanov to such extent that Black even ends up losing and wasting his brilliant innovation entirely.

26...Rb5 27 c4 Re5 28 Nd5 Qc5 29 Ne3 Bg6

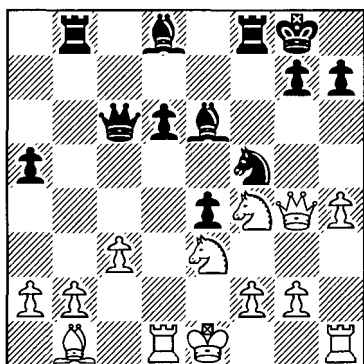


Diagram 57 (B)

Black must continue actively

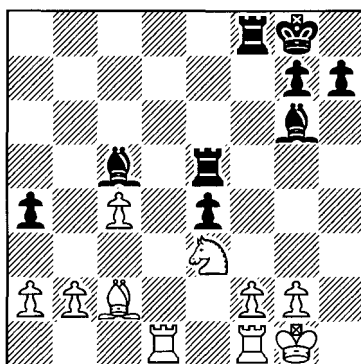


Diagram 58 (B)

Black has run out of steam

Eljanov must have missed the force of White's next. He had two better alternatives: 29...a4 30 0-0 Be6 (and certainly not 30...Bxh4?! 31 g3 Bg5? 32 Nxf5 Rxf5 33 Bxe4 with a big advantage for White) 31 h5 Bg5 gives Black adequate compensation according to Rogozenko; and 29...Be6 also keeps the fight going, since 30 Qd2 can be met by 30...a4, so that if 31 Qxd6 Black has 31...Ba5+ 32 Kf1 Bxc4+.

30 Qd2 a4

Maybe 30...Be7 was better, but Black's position has passed its zenith, and Eljanov doesn't manage to readjust and put up a fight.

31 0-0 Bxh4 32 Qxd6 Be7 33 Qxc5 Bxc5 34 Bc2 (Diagram 58)

Black's compensation is now optical only and White ought to win with reasonable care. The Ukrainian teen finishes with aplomb:

34...Be8 35 Rd5 Rxd5 36 cxd5 a3 37 bxa3 Bd7 38 Bxe4 Ra8 39 Rc1 Bd6 40 Nc4 Rc8 41 Rc2 Bf8 42 d6 Be6 43 Bd3 Rc5 44 a4 Rd5 45 Rd2 g6 46 a5 Bxd6 47 Nxd6 Rxd6 48 a6 Rd7 49 Bc4 Rxd2 50 Bxe6+ Kg7 51 a7 1-0

Points to Remember

1. This plan with ...Be7, ...Be6, ...Qd7 and ...Bd8, followed according to circumstances by ...a5 or ...Ne7, is very simple and easy to play. Black's moves almost always come in the same order (a sign, according to Tal, of the basic correctness of a player's plan).
2. When contemplating simplifying to an opposite-coloured bishop position as Black, the key factor (as almost always in the Sveshnikov) is whether Black can get

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

his bishop out to b6 without anything nasty happening, and whether White can get his bishop to d5. If Black achieves his aim then he will usually manage to equalize. If he doesn't and White achieves his then Black will have troubles, ranging from tiresome to fatal according to the position. Do not underestimate the difficulty of these positions just because of the opposite-coloured bishops; a long and patient defence is needed to hold them against a determined White.

3. It's worth trying to remember at least the themes of Eljanov's sacrifice if not the exact position. They are quite common in similar Sveshnikov positions.

Chapter Five

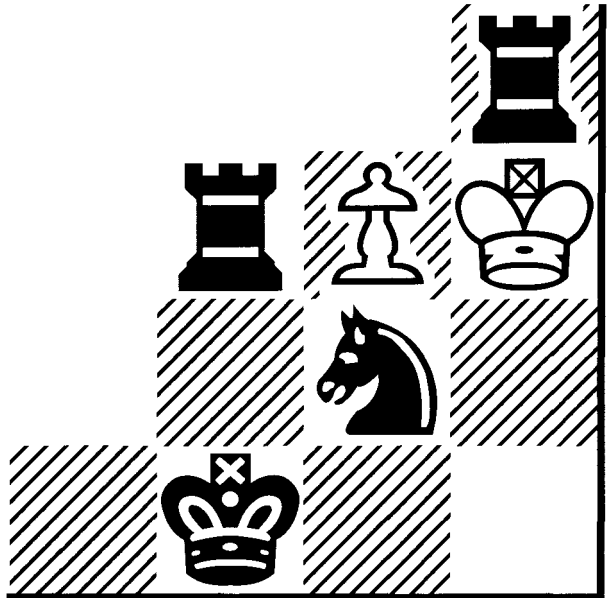
9 Bxf6 and the Novosibirsk Variation



Introduction



The Novosibirsk Variation



Introduction

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3

There was a time when White very often used to play 8 Bxf6 here. The idea was that since 8...Qxf6 is now impossible because of 9 Nc7+, Black would be forced to take with the g-pawn and would sustain horrid damage to his structure. Nowadays we know that actually the doubled f-pawn is useful for Black in his fight for the central light squares, and so after 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 everyone plays 9...gxf6 without thinking about it. Also, after 8 Bxf6 gxf6 9 Na3 it was found that Black didn't have to play 9...b5. Instead 9...f5 turned out to be fine for Black, although one or two scars were accumulated before the theory was worked out. Nowadays you are unlikely to meet anyone who plays 8 Bxf6; if you do then 8 Bxf6 gxf6 9 Na3 b5 transposes into the main lines, but should you feel inclined then you can venture 9...f5 with confidence in your position if not in your knowledge of theory.

8...b5 (Diagram 1)

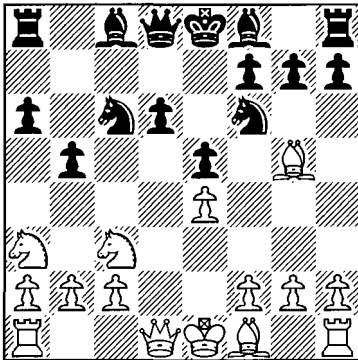


Diagram 1 (W)

Black threatens to win a piece

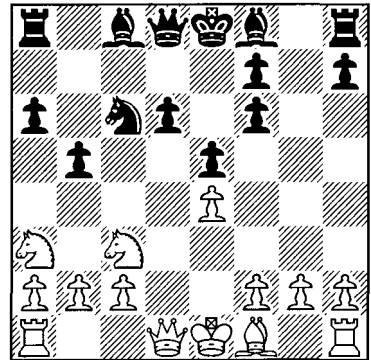


Diagram 2 (W)

A dynamic Black position

9 Bxf6 gxf6 (Diagram 2)

The standard recapture, but why does Black play this?



NOTE: In terms of the battle for d5 it's easy to see why it might be useful having one f-pawn handy to play ...f5 and remove the white e-pawn, and another held back to cover light squares like e6, while Black's dark-squared bishop gets a splendid square on g7 to help protect the king.

But can it be bad to keep the structure intact with 9...Qxf6? We will examine this inferior recapture in Game 23 before turning our attention more fully to 9...gxf6.

Illustrative Games

Game 23

□ A.Adorjan ■ E.Sveshnikov

Budapest 1967

I've chosen this game because we have to have one game by the man himself, and anyway it's always good to have a peek at how the truths we take for granted today were elucidated.

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 Qxf6 (Diagram 3)

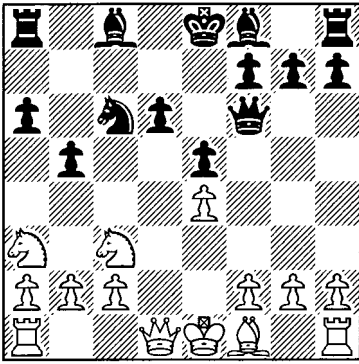


Diagram 3 (W)

The wrong recapture

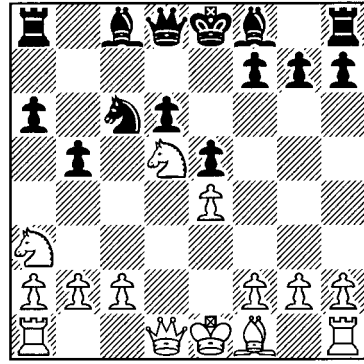


Diagram 4 (W)

White has a promising choice

10 Nd5 Qd8 (Diagram 4)

A comparison with the variations in the last two chapters suggests that White should be better off here. After 9 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 we would have the same position except that Black's bishop would be on f6 rather than f8. It seems likely that Black would prefer that position, but by itself that isn't a reason to dismiss 10...Qxf6 – after all some consider 9 Nd5 less frightening than 9 Bg5, so perhaps it's an achievement for Black to force the same structure, albeit in a slightly worse version?

11 c4

Reasoning along the lines of the last note, White might very well, and often does, play 11 c3 here and continue along the lines of the 9 Nd5 chapters. White can probably claim some advantage there. One can also compare the position to another present-day main line: after 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 Black has a pawn on f5

instead of one on g7. That has pros and cons, but one variation which is rather obviously now stronger for White (with the pawn on g7) is 11 Bxb5!? axb5 12 Nxb5. As we will see in Chapter Six, Black's main defence to this sacrifice with the pawn on f5 is 12...Ra4, but here that loses instantly to 13 Nbc7+ Kd7 14 Qg4+ (this is the difference). None of Black's other defences that I can see are improved at all by the difference in Black's pawn position, quite the contrary, so this could well be an interesting try. But the text, too, has a specific idea to exploit the difference between this position and the modern main lines, not that those existed in 1967, of course.

11...Ne7

As we saw in Game 12, 11 c4 is also played with the bishop on f6, but there 11...b4 is a solid and sensible reply. Here, though, 11...b4?! more or less loses to the tactical 12 Qa4 Bd7 (12...Ra7 13 Nc2 Bd7 14 Ncxb4 Nd4 15 Qd1 may be a lesser evil but also leaves Black much worse) 13 Nb5 axb5 (13...Rc8 14 Qxa6 is also dreadful) 14 Qxa8 Qxa8 15 Nc7+ Kd8 (of course with the bishop on f6 15...Ke7 16 Nxa8 Rxa8 just picks the knight up with Black material ahead) 16 Nxa8 Nd4 17 Rc1 and White should convert his material advantage. Inviting White's a3-knight into the action with 11...bxc4 is also very unattractive, so Sveshnikov's move is probably the best that Black can do.

12 Be2?!

A feeble effort. To test Black's idea White really had to accept the pawn sacrifice with 12 cxb5 Nxd5 13 exd5 (13 Qxd5 Be6 14 Qd2 d5 15 bxa6 Bxa3 16 Bb5+ Bd7 17 Bxd7+ Qxd7 18 bxa3 dxe4 19 Qb4 was what Sveshnikov was afraid of and is also pretty strong); for example, 13...Be7 14 Bc4 0-0 (14...Qa5+ 15 Qd2 Qxd2+ 16 Kxd2 doesn't change much) 15 0-0. This has never actually been tested as far as I know – Black can always claim some compensation in this sort of position with his king-side pawns and unopposed dark-squared bishop, but it's hard to believe that White isn't a fair bit better.

12...Nxd5 (Diagram 5) 13 cxd5?!

An unpleasant choice for White, but I suspect that playing for a draw with 13 Qxd5 Be6 14 Qc6+ Bd7 15 Qd5 was already the best he could do. After the text Black is always likely to turn out better with the bishops and White's silly knight on a3.

13...g6

13...Qh4 was another good way to play; it isn't terribly convenient for White to defend the e-pawn and Black develops very quickly; for example, 14 Qd3 Be7 15 Nc2 0-0 16 Ne3 Bd7 17 0-0 Rfc8.

14 Nc2 Bh6 15 0-0

Given that White can't really contest the c-file, 15 Nb4 is a bit of a blow into the air; for example, 15...0-0 16 0-0 Bd7 17 Nc6 Qb6 and the invader is repelled.

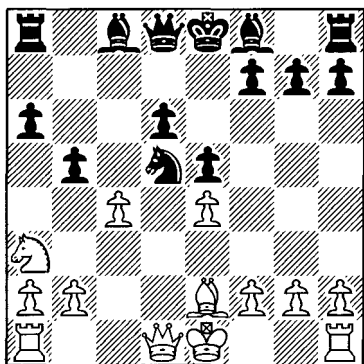


Diagram 5 (W)

Each recapture has its drawbacks

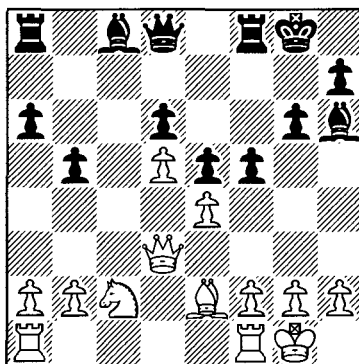


Diagram 6 (W)

Thematic kingside expansion

15...0-0 16 Qd3

There was a lot to be said for 16 a4, which at least makes use of the positive sides of White's position. White ought to be able to create enough action on the queenside to hold on then, whereas in the game a very young Andras Adorjan becomes too passive on the kingside.

16...f5 (Diagram 6) 17 f3

White would much rather avoid this weakening of the dark squares, but Black is threatening 17...fxe4 18 Qxe4? Bf5. My computer thinks White should play the splendid 17 Ne3 f4 18 Nc2, but I think human terror of the sort of attack White has to face after 18...g5 is justified; for example, 19 h3 g4 20 hxg4 Qh4 21 Qf3 Ra7 22 a4 Rg7 23 Qh3 Qxh3 24 gxh3 f3 25 Bd1 Bd2 and Black is clearly much better. If White wanted to do this sort of thing he should have left the queen on d1, when it might be possible to meet ...f4 with the immediate Bg4.

17...Bd7 18 Nb4 Qc7 19 a3 Rf7 20 Kh1 Qb6 21 b3 Raf8 22 Ra2 Qd8!?

Black is probing a little. The primitive 22...fxe4 23 fxe4 Rxf1+ 24 Bxf1 a5 25 Nc6 (and not 25 Nc2 Qf2) 25...Bxc6 26 dxc6 Qxc6 leads after 27 Ra1 Kh8 28 Rd1 to a position where Black will have great difficulty in converting his extra pawn.

23 g3

It was dangerous to take the pawn: 23 Nxa6 Qh4 (23...fxe4 24 Qxe4! is not so effective because the queen can stay on the fourth rank, and so White can meet ...Bf4 and ...Qh4 with g3, thus: 24...Bf4 25 a4 bxa4 26 bxa4 Bf5 27 Qb4 Qh4 28 g3) 24 g3 (24 Rg1 fxe4 25 fxe4 Rf2 forces 26 Qg3 by the threat of ...Bf4, but then 26...Qxg3 27 hxg3 Be3 is winning with the idea of ...g5 and a rook to the h-file) 24...fxe4 25 Qc2 Qd8! (a superb switchback) 26 Qxe4 Qb6 27 Nb4 Bf5 28 Qh4 Qe3 gives Black a

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

dominating position, and in fact the only way to keep playing seems to be 29 Bxb5 Bg5 30 Re2 Qxe2 31 Bxe2 Bxh4 32 gxh4, but Black is surely winning here with reasonable care.

23...fxe4 24 fxe4 Qe8 (Diagram 7)

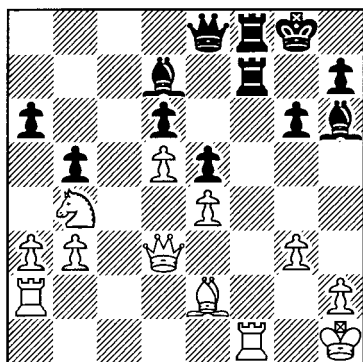


Diagram 7 (W)

White needs to hold the f-file

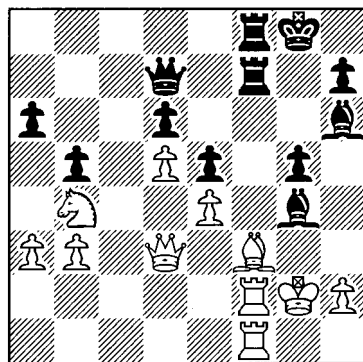


Diagram 8 (W)

The end is nigh

A continuation of the same indirect policy. The natural 24...Qb6 was pretty strong and I don't really understand why Sveshnikov passed it by; after something like 25 Rxf7 Rxf7 26 Bf3 Be3 27 Bg2 Bd4 Black's pressure seems to be increasing steadily.

25 Bf3??

Losing at once. It must have looked as though 25...Bh3 was a threat, but actually White should simply have activated his other rook with 25 Rc2, and met 25...Bh3 with 26 Rf3!, when Black has no particular way of breaking in down the f-file, and in fact the position is about equal. 26...Rxf3 27 Bxf3 Qf7 28 Bg2 is the point; from afar it's easy to miss that White can hold like this.

25...Bh3 26 Raf2

White cannot hold the f-file: 26 Rff2 Bg4 also wins material decisively at once.

26...g5?!

26...Bxf1 27 Rxf1 Bc1 28 Nxa6 Bxa3 was also plenty good enough, in fact rather more effective.

27 g4 Bxg4

27...Bxf1? by now would have left Black's win a really quite tricky proposition; White can blockade the light squares and it is an open question whether Black can break in at all.

28 Kg2?

White could actually still have offered reasonable resistance with 28 Qe2, after which Black's win is decidedly less clear than it should have been; for example, 28...Bc8 29 Nd3 Qd7 30 Bh5 Rxf2 31 Nxf2.

28...Qd7 (Diagram 8)

Now Black has ...Bh3+ and ...g4 and the win is trivial.

29 Kg3 Bh3 30 Bh5 Rf4 31 Rxf4 gxf4+ 32 Kf3 Qg7 0-1

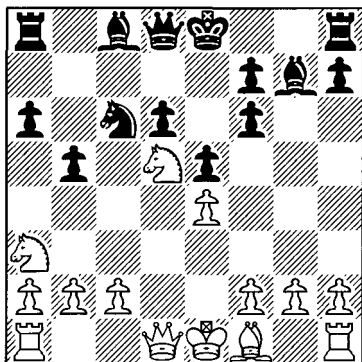
Points to Remember

None, really. I don't recommend dabbling with 9...Qxf6, but White players who face it can choose any of the methods suggested here according to taste.

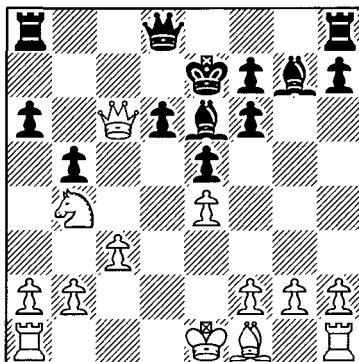
The Novosibirsk Variation

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxtd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5

The only other remotely sensible way of meeting the threat of 10...b4 is 10 Nab1, but such a move doesn't need analysis. Black can proceed with 10...f5 followed by ...Bg7 and ...0-0 with a good position.

10...Bg7 (Diagram 9)**Diagram 9 (W)**

The Novosibirsk Variation

**Diagram 10 (B)**

White races his knight into play

The main move is 10...f5, the subject of the next two chapters, but first we are going to look at 10...Bg7, which in Russia is called the Novosibirsk variation (10...f5 being the Chelyabinsk variation).



NOTE: The two moves represent different ways of fighting for the d5-square: 10...f5 sets out to remove the pawn which controls that square, while the immediate idea of 10...Bg7 is to make ...Ne7 possible by defending the f-pawn.

11 Bd3

This is the main independent move, but a very important point to remember is that White can frustrate Black's designs to a certain extent with 11 c3.



WARNING: If Black carries on with 11...Ne7 then he finds that 12 Nc2 enables White to get his knight into the game too quickly; for example, 12...Nxd5 (or 12...0-0 13 Nxe7+ Qxe7 14 Ne3) 13 Qxd5 Be6 14 Qc6+ Ke7 15 Nb4 (Diagram 10) with advantage to White.

Black has instead to play 11...f5, transposing to lines of the Chelyabinsk variation which I will try and remember to point out later when they arise.

Other moves generally aren't too problematic:

- a) 11 g3 f5 transposes to Game 26, although 11...Ne7 is also well possible.
- b) 11 Qh5 Ne7 12 Ne3 is a natural attempt to clamp down on f5. Black must never allow this in this variation; he has to be resolute with 12...f5! 13 exf5 e4 (13...d5!? is another idea) – a typical device in this line which we'll see much more of. Now a sequence which has occurred in many games is 14 0-0-0 0-0 15 g4 d5 16 c3 b4 17 cxb4 d4, with a splendid position for Black.
- c) 11 Qf3 prevents Black's idea and is much beloved of machines; again Black cannot let himself be blockaded and has to react actively with 11...f5 12 exf5 Nd4 13 Qg4 (13 Nc7+ Qxc7 14 Qxa8 0-0 loses ignominiously, as does 13 Qe4 Bxf5 14 Nc7+ Ke7 15 Qxa8 Qxc7, and 13 Nf6+ Bxf6 14 Qxa8 b4 is also bad) 13...Nxf5 and now 14 Ne3 was destroyed in the brilliant game M.Ulibin-A.Vaisser, Moscow 1989. Better is 14 Bd3 h5 15 Qf3 Nd4 16 Nf6+ Qxf6 17 Qxa8 0-0 (**Diagram 11**), but Black still has very dangerous compensation.
- d) After 11 c4 again 11...Ne7 is too slow; Black has to go for the centre with 11...f5 12 cxb5 Nd4 13 Bd3 (13 bxa6 0-0 is the same sort of thing) 13...Be6, when he achieved reasonable compensation for the pawn after 14 0-0 (14 Nc2 is well met by 14...Bxd5 15 exd5 Nxc2+ 16 Bxc2 e4, since after 17 bxa6 Bxb2 White will have to put up with an annoying check) 14...0-0 15 Nc2 Nxc2 16 Bxc2 fxe4 17 bxa6 Rxa6 18 Bxe4 f5 in V.Anand-J.Lautier, Belgrade 1997.

11...Ne7 (Diagram 12)

11...Be6 is not a mistake, but 12 0-0 f5 13 Qh5 transposes to lines Black usually prefers to avoid these days (see the section on 10...f5 11 Bd3 Be6 12 Qh5 in the next chapter).

12 Nxe7



NOTE: As usual allowing ...Nxd5 and being forced to recapture with a pawn is bad for White; ...f5 and ...e4 would follow with force.

12...Qxe7 13 0-0

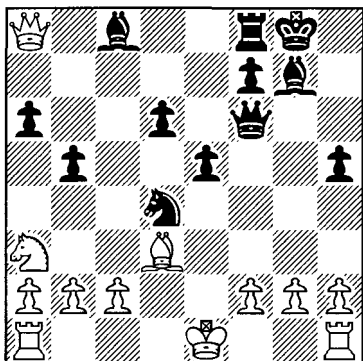


Diagram 11 (W)

A dangerous exchange sacrifice

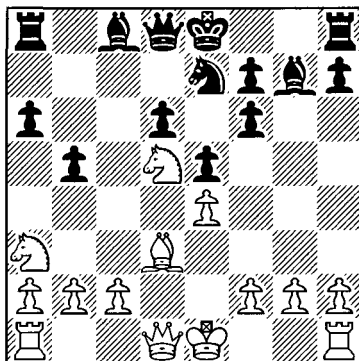


Diagram 12 (W)

Exchanging the powerful d5-knight

13 c3 is the alternative plan and 13...f5 14 Nc2 (**Diagram 13**) is recommended by both Rogozenko and Yakovich as White's best method against the Novosibirsk. Black has tried a few moves now. His problem is that the natural 14...0-0 is good for White after 15 Qh5, when he still has the possibility to castle queenside (after 15...f4 16 g3, for example), while 14...fxe4 15 Bxe4 Rb8 16 Nb4 Qc7 17 Qd3 enables White to use the fact neither side has castled to blockade f5 and gain the advantage. That leaves:

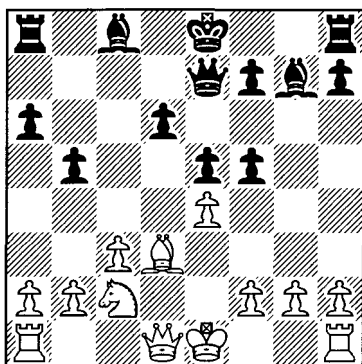


Diagram 13 (B)

The knight heads for b4 or e3

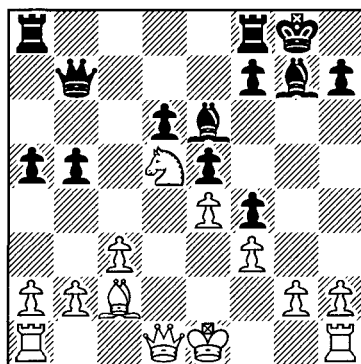


Diagram 14 (W)

Can Black gain sufficient counterplay?

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

a) The problem with 14...Bb7 is that after 15 exf5, 15...Bxg2? loses to 16 Rg1, so 15...0-0 (15...Qh4 has a bad reputation, although it isn't obviously terrible after 16 Ne3 d5 17 0-0 0-0) 16 0-0 is the best Black can do, transposing to note 'a' to Black's 15th in Game 25.

b) The main line is 14...Qb7 when White has two promising ideas:

b1) 15 Qf3 0-0 16 Ne3 f4 (regrettably this is forced) 17 Nd5 Be6 18 g4 (a good move to fight against ...Bxd5, exd5 ...f5) 18...b4! 19 c4 (or 19 Nxb4 a5) 19...Bxd5, and now Black gains sufficient activity for his bishop after either 20 exd5 e4! or 20 cxd5 Bf6, as in S.Dolmatov-V.Topalov, Groningen 1993.

b2) 15 f3 (White renews the threat of exf5, whereas 15 exf5 Qxg2 is more double-edged) 15...f4 (Black doesn't have much choice) reaches a position from which Black hasn't done very well. Rogozenko gives the game T.Luther-J.Gustafsson, Panormo 2001, which went 16 Nb4 0-0 17 Bc2 a5 18 Nd5 Be6 (**Diagram 14**) 19 g4 and White obtained a positional advantage and won in the end, although at this moment why Black couldn't have got to it directly like Topalov with 19...b4 20 c4 Bxd5 21 cxd5 (21 exd5 e4 or 21 Qxd5 Qa7) 21...Bf6-d8 and so on I don't know; Black seems fine to me.

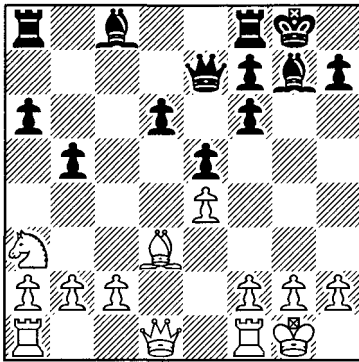


Diagram 15 (W)

Black will break with ...f5

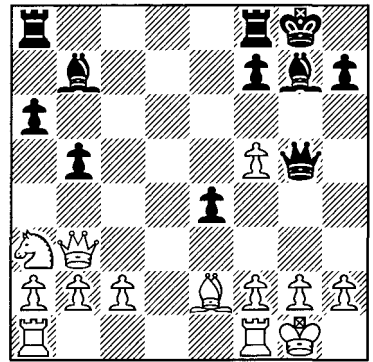


Diagram 16 (W)

Black has good compensation

c) 14...Qg5!? is the main alternative: White has many lines but Rogozenko likes 15 Qe2 Bb7 (15...Qxg2 16 0-0-0 is very dangerous; 15...0-0 16 h4 Qxg2 is a better shot, when Rogozenko prefers White after 17 0-0-0 Qg4 18 f3 Qf4+ 19 Kb1 fxe4 20 Bxe4 Rb8 21 Rxd6 a5, but both sides have chances) 16 Ne3 (16 Bxb5+ is tempting, but after 16...Kf8 17 Bd3 Qxg2 Black conquers e4, which makes up for the missing b-pawn and the dislocation of his king) 16...Bxe4 (16...fxe4 17 Bxb5+ and Bc4 is good now that g2 is covered) 17 Bxe4 fxe4 18 h4 Qg6 19 g4 h5 20 Rg1 Bh6 21 g5 Bg7 22 Nd5 Rc8 23 0-0-0. These moves weren't forced, of course, but the result is a very

sharp position where White seems to be better.

Instead 13 c4 f5 14 0-0 0-0 transposes to Game 24, but first we will return to 13 0-0:

13...0-0 (Diagram 15)

After 13...0-0, White's two main options are 14 c4 (see Game 24) and 14 c3 (the subject of Game 25). Instead 14 Qf3 has as usual to be dealt with by the breakthrough 14...f5 15 exf5 d5, when 16 Qxd5 Bb7 17 Qb3 e4 18 Be2 Qg5 (Diagram 16) proved to give enough play for the material in V.Anand-V.Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 1998.

Illustrative Games

Game 24

□ P.Bobras ■ Y.Yakovich

Port Erin 2006

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 Bg7 11 Bd3 Ne7 12 Nxe7 Qxe7 13 0-0 0-0 14 c4 (Diagram 17)

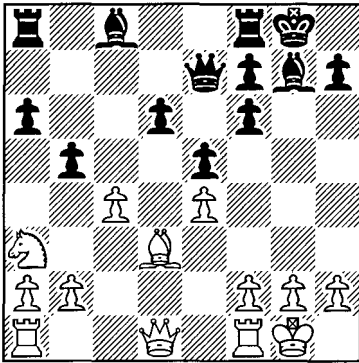


Diagram 17 (B)

Black shouldn't touch his b-pawn...

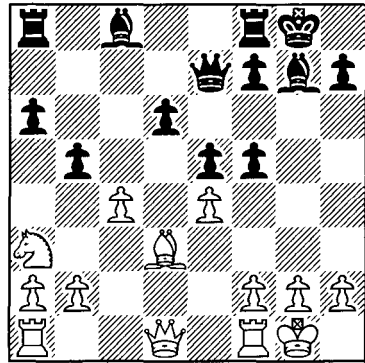


Diagram 18 (W)

...but should sacrifice it

White would like Black to capture this pawn and bring his a3-knight back into the game quickly; alternatively he gives it the c2-square and hopes to distract Black by the threat of 15 cxb5.

14...f5 (Diagram 18)

Of course!



WARNING: Black can't contemplate anything like 14...b4 15 Nc2 a5 16 Ne3 when his dark-squared bishop is committed to a miserable existence on g7. He can't get by without ...f5.

15 Qf3

White prevents 15...fxe4 by the reply 16 Qxe4 threatening a8 and h7. There is a string of alternatives here:

- a) Two things White shouldn't do are grab material either on b5 or f5: 15 cxb5 d5 16 exd5 e4 17 Qe2 Qe5 18 Bc4 Qxb2 19 Nc2 axb5 20 Rab1 Qf6 gives Black good compensation, while 15 exf5 e4 16 Re1 Bxf5 is already better for Black.
- b) 15 Re1 doesn't really address the issue of the central light squares; after 15...fxe4 16 Bxe4 Rb8 17 cxb5 axb5 White might as well grab a pawn, but Black has good play after 18 Qd3 f5 19 Bd5+ Kh8 20 Nxb5 e4 21 Qb3 Be5.
- c) 15 Qe2 prevents 15...fxe4 in view of 16 Qxe4 threatening mate and the rook, but rather than panic and play 15...f4? Black should carry on fighting for the light squares with 15...Bb7 16 Rad1 Rad8 17 f3 (17 cxb5 axb5 18 Nxb5 fxe4 19 Bxe4 d5 was the idea of Black's last move) 17...fxe4 18 fxe4 f5, and Black conquers the light squares with advantage.
- d) 15 Qh5 (**Diagram 19**) is the main alternative to 15 Qf3, again preventing 15...fxe4 in view of 16 Bxe4 winning a rook, but this time ruling out 15...Bb7 by the attack on f5. Black still doesn't want to play 15...bxc4 and let the knight into the game easily, so his normal way to play is 15...Rb8, renewing the idea of ...fxe4 and ...f5. White is now out of tactical ways to stop this, so the game will usually go on 16 exf5 e4 17 Rae1 (the only sensible move to address the twin threats of 17...exd3 and 17...Bxb2) 17...Bb7 (**Diagram 20**) and here too White has tried a range of moves:

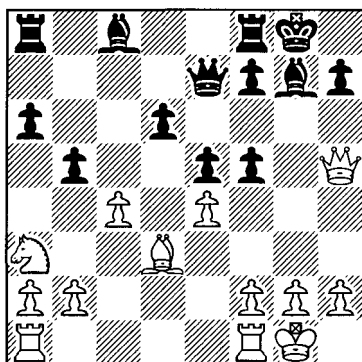


Diagram 19 (B)

Black must be tactically alert

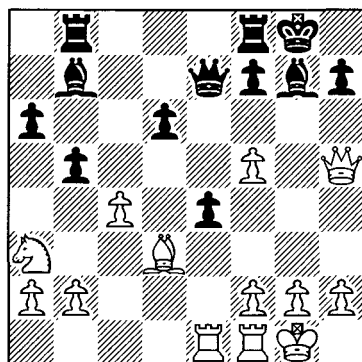


Diagram 20 (W)

A complex tabiya

d1) 18 Nc2 gives up on the idea of 13 c4 – to force Black to activate the knight over c4 – and allows Black easy play after 18...bxc4 19 Bxc4 d5.

d2) 18 b3 intends to keep a pawn on c4 to prevent ...d5, but then 18...bxc4 19 bxc4 Rfe8 (the variously analysed 19...d5?! 20 cxd5 Qxa3 21 f6 Bxf6 22 Bxe4 is probably just mate) 20 Nc2 Bc6 (with the idea of ...Rb2) 21 a3 a5 (versus Nb4) is nice for Black.

d3) 18 f3 allows 18...d5 (because of 19 cxd5? Qc5+, unpinning the e-pawn and winning the bishop) when probably the best White can do is 19 fxe4 dxc4 20 f6 (if the bishop retreats then Black obviously has great compensation after ...Bd4+) 20...Bxf6 21 e5 Qc5+ 22 Kh1 cxd3 23 Rxf6 with a complicated position where Black probably has a slight advantage.

d4) 18 cxb5 d5 19 bxa6 Bc6 is nothing to be afraid of – b3 cannot be defended, and White's minor pieces struggle to find a role.

d5) 18 Re3 is alarming, but Black's thematic reaction with 18...bxc4 19 Bxc4 d5 pretty much obliges White to bale out to equality after 20 Bxd5 Bxd5 21 f6 Qxf6 22 Qxd5 Qxb2, since 20 Bb3 Qe5 gives Black everything he wants.

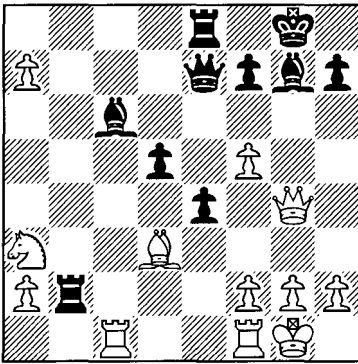


Diagram 21 (B)

A typically sharp position

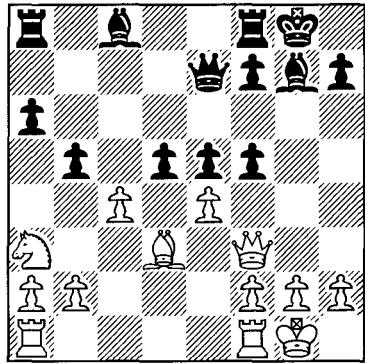


Diagram 22 (W)

A radical but effective ...d5-break

d6) 18 Qg4 continues to prevent 18...bxc4 in view of 19 Bxe4. Usually Black defends the pawn with 18...Rfe8 (18...Kh8 is a good alternative) when White has finally found a good moment for 19 cxb5 (after 19 f3 Black has 19...h5!, freeing the bishop and enabling the trick 20 Qxh5 Bd4+ 21 Kh1 exf3!, which leads to an unclear position after 22 gxf3 Qxe1 23 f6 Qxf1+ 24 Bxf1 Bxf6 25 Qg4+ Kf8 26 cxb5) 19...d5 20 bxa6 Bc6 with a complicated position where White's tries include 21 a7 (alternatively 21 f3 is probably best met with Rogozenko's untried suggestion 21...Rxb2 22 fxe4 Kh8, while one might have thought that the purpose of White's play so far was to enable 21 b3 preserving the b-pawn, since 21...Qxa3 is ruled out

by 22 f6; probably Black's best then is 21...Kh8 with counterplay) 21...Rxb2 22 Rc1 **(Diagram 21)** with a very complicated position where Black's best is supposedly 22...h5 (22...Bd7 23 Bb5 h5 24 Qd1 is not nearly so good; the point of 22...h5 is to prevent this regrouping), based on the wicked trick 23 Qxh5? exd3 24 Rxc6 Rxf2!!.

15...d5 (Diagram 22)

This move of Radjabov's, taking advantage of the queen's position on f3 to get Black's central break in anyway, is the fashionable one. The alternatives form a labyrinth in which I can only provide the most meagre of threads:

a) 15...Qb7 unpins to prepare ...d5; a critical line is considered to be 16 exf5 Qxf3 17 gxf3 e4 18 Bxe4 d5 19 Bxd5 Bxf5 20 Bxa8 Rxa8 with a position where White's vast advantage in material doesn't make it easy for him to obtain any actual edge.

b) 15...bxc4 is under a cloud because of Anand's 2002 innovation against Kazimdzhanov at Hyderabad (one of a number of the-Sveshnikov-is-busted games over the years) 16 Nxc4 d5 17 exd5 e4 18 Qe3 Bb7 19 d6 Qf6 20 Bc2 f4 21 Qh3 Rac8 22 b3 Qg5 and now 23 d7 with a very difficult position for Black.

c) Kramnik's 15...Re8 prevents 16 exf5 in view of 16...e4. His other point is 16 Rfe1 b4 17 Nc2 f4 – although this isn't usually Black's plan in this line, here restraining White's knight and rendering his Rfe1 rather a wasted tempo makes it more viable: 18 Nxb4 Rb8 19 Nd5 (19 Nc6 Qg5 20 Nxb8 Bg4 traps the queen with more unclearness) 19...Qg5 and now either 20 Bf1 or 20 Be2 are probably the critical lines.

16 cxd5

The only move; 16 exd5 loses a piece after 16...e4 17 Qe2 Qb4.

16...fxe4 17 Bxe4

17 Qxe4 f5 18 d6 fxe4 19 dxe7 exd3 20 exf8Q+ Kxf8 wins the exchange but the resulting endgame is fine for Black.

17...Rb8

The only sensible answer to the threat of 18 d6.

18 Rfd1

18 Rad1 is a refinement whose idea is that, after 18...Qd7 19 d6 Rb6 20 Qc3 Rxd6 21 Bf5, 21...Rxd1 isn't check. Black's best reply is 18...Rb6 and after 19 Qd3, not 19...Rh6 but the sacrifice 19...Qd7 20 g3 (20 Bxh7+ Kh8 21 Qe3 Rh6 22 Bc2 Qd6 is dangerous – Black has a lot of compensation and White was lost inside three moves in P.Smirnov-T.Radjabov, FIDE World Championship, blitz playoff, Tripoli 2004: 23 g3 Bh3 24 Rfe1 f5 25 f4?? exf4 – but still, White has various obvious alternatives and this might be a critical line) 20...f5 21 Bg2 Rh6 and now in P.Leko-T.Radjabov, Linares 2004, White felt it better to bale out with 22 f4 exf4 23 gxf4 Bxb2 rather than brave 22 Nc2 f4.

Instead 18 Bf5 Qf6 doesn't get White very far, but Nigel Short's exchange sacrifice

18 Rac1 f5 19 Rxc8 Rbxc8 20 Bxf5 Qg5 21 Be6+ Kh8 produces an interesting and balanced position.

18...f5 (Diagram 23)

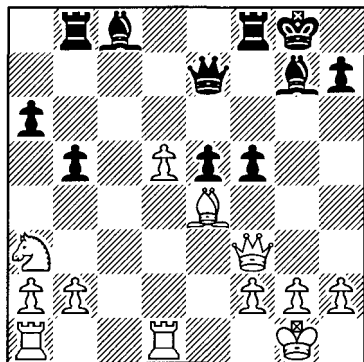


Diagram 23 (W)

Black doesn't fear 19 d6

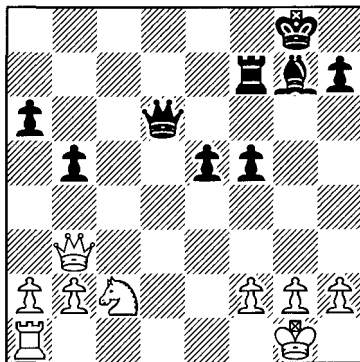


Diagram 24 (W)

Black has good play

This move was a novelty; the usual move has been 18...Qd7, when 19 d6 Rb6 20 Qd3 Rd8 21 Rac1 Bf8 enables White to choose between a draw with 22 Qg3+ Bg7 23 Qd3 Bf8, and 22 Rc7 Qxc7 23 Bxh7+ Kg7 24 dxc7 Rxd3 25 Bxd3 Rc6 26 Nc2, with an ending where Black has his usual compensation for the pawn with his bishops and central control, while the white knight is still trying to find a role.

19 d6

This was supposed to be good for White.

19...Qf6 20 Bc6 Be6 21 Bd5

It turns out this doesn't do the business, but what White ought to do instead isn't clear. 21 d7 seems natural, to make sure this pawn survives, but after, for example, 21...e4 22 Qe3 Rbd8 23 Rd2 Bh6 (23...Kh8 is possible too) 24 Qg3+ Kh8 25 Rd6 Rg8 Black is better.

21...Rbd8 22 Qb3

22 Bxe6+ Qxe6 23 Qd5 is only about equal too; for example, 23...Qxd5 24 Rxd5 e4 25 Nc2 (after 25 Rd2 Rd7 26 Rad1 Rfd8 White can't hold on to the d-pawn) 25...Bxb2 26 Rb1 Bc3 27 d7 Rf7.

22...Bf7 23 Nc2 Rxd6 24 Bxf7+ Rxf7 25 Rxd6 Qxd6 (Diagram 24)

Black has won the pawn back and now probably enjoys the better chances.

26 Ne3 f4 27 Rd1

Ambitious; 27 Nf5 and trading on g7 was sensible and equal.

27...Qg6 28 Nd5 Kh8 29 Nc3

Bobras must have thought optimistically about this set-up, with the knight coming to e4. If he could achieve Ne4 and f3 then he might be better, but it's Black's move.

29...f3 30 g3 Qf5

This allows an irritating rook check; it was better to take time for 30...Rf8. Black wants to keep the rooks, so after the next move he has to pin his bishop inconveniently and lose time to free it.

31 Rd8+ Bf8 32 Nd1 Kg7 33 Ne3 Qg6 34 Qc3 Qb1+ 35 Rd1 Qe4 36 Rd5 (Diagram 25)

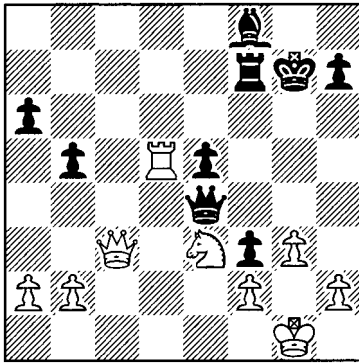


Diagram 25 (B)

Things have gone wrong for Yakovich

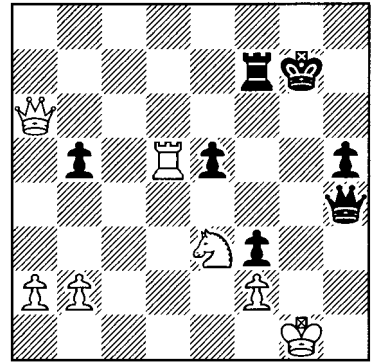


Diagram 26 (B)

Black to play and win

36...Be7 37 h4

White has managed to obtain the advantage, and 37 Qxe5+ Qxe5 38 Rxe5 Bf6 39 Re6 Rc7 40 h3 Bxb2 41 Rxa6 is obviously better for him, although Black has good drawing chances; but Bobras rightly judges that he can try for more. These moves were played in a time scramble.

37...Bf6 38 Kh2 h5 39 Qc8 Be7 40 Qxa6 Bxh4 41 gxh4??

A dreadful blunder; presumably White didn't realize 40 moves had been played. 41 Qe6 leaves White winning a well-played game.

41...Qxh4+ 42 Kg1 (Diagram 26)

Leonard Barden invited readers of the *Evening Standard* to find Black's next move, which terminates the game immediately.

42...Kh7! 43 Nf5 Rg7+ 44 Nxf7 Qg5+ 0-1

Points to Remember

1. 10...Bg7 is not an entirely independent move, but it avoids some of the sharp lines after 10...f5, albeit at the expense of inviting a whole lot more!
2. There's a lot of specific moves in the notes to this game, but by and large they don't have to be remembered; what does have to be remembered is the idea to fight for the central light squares and the typical methods of doing that.

Game 25

□ V.Anand ■ T.Radjabov

5th rapidplay matchgame, Mainz 2006

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 Bg7 11 Bd3 Ne7 12 Nxe7 Qxe7 13 0-0 0-0 14 c3 f5 15 Nc2 Rb8 (Diagram 27)

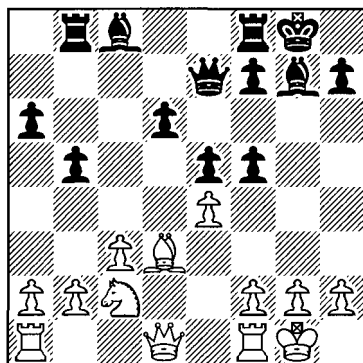


Diagram 27 (W)

A deep and useful rook nudge

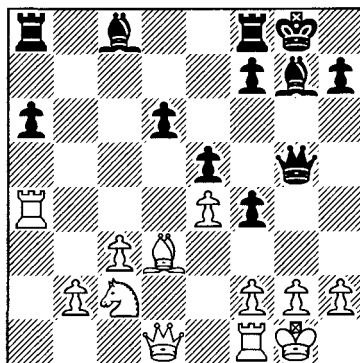


Diagram 28 (W)

Black plays for an attack

This is probably the best move, and the fact that the Azeri plays it is very telling in itself; Radjabov spends much of his time playing and analysing the Sveshnikov and is certainly its most consistent devotee among the top players.



TIP: In any Sveshnikov line where the central pawns disappear and leave Black with his unopposed dark-squared bishop, it is always important to get in ...b4 to break the c3/b2 couple opposing the bishop, and ...Rb8 is bound to come in useful later to promote that.

Alternatively:

a) 15...Bb7 leaves f5 en prise, and Black doesn't seem to obtain enough play after

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

16 exf5 Qg5 (16...d5 17 Qh5 e4 18 Rfe1 is also bad) 17 Ne3 d5 18 f4 exf4 19 Qg4, which leaves Black the choice of a number of disagreeable endings in which his bishops fail wholly to compensate for the pawn weaknesses.

b) 15...d5 16 exf5 e4 is better timed since White doesn't have Rfe1 and Black does have ...Bxf5, but even so 17 Be2 Rd8 18 a4 bxa4 19 Rxa4 Bxf5 20 Nd4 (Rogozenko) seems to be a bit better for White.

c) 15...f4 is perhaps the main alternative and was revived by Kasparov's use of it against Judit Polgar in 2002, but after 16 a4 bxa4 17 Rxa4 Qg5 (**Diagram 28**) White can certainly do better by refraining from Polgar's 18 f3? Bf6, after which White is in grave difficulties. White's best set-up in this line is not yet clear (probably it starts with 18 Qe2, but in any event Black continues with ...Bf6, ...Kh8, ...Rg8 and ...Bd8-b6 in some order), but the fact that Anand wants to play against it and that Radjabov avoids it is suggestive.

16 exf5

In the first game of this match Anand had tried the new move 16 Re1. This enabled him to achieve a better role for the light-squared bishop than White can normally manage in this variation, after 16...fxe4 17 Bxe4 f5 18 Bd5+ Kh8 19 Nb4 Qc7. The trouble is fitting his knight into things, though, and when Anand played 20 Bb3 Radjabov was quick to fight for d5 with 20...a5 21 Nd5 Qb7 22 a3 Be6 (**Diagram 29**)

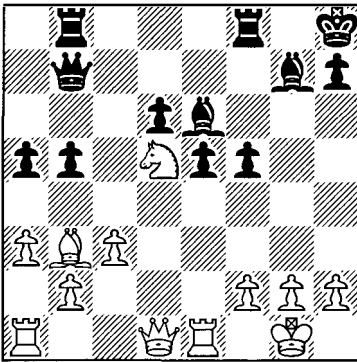


Diagram 29 (W)

Black thematically undermines d5

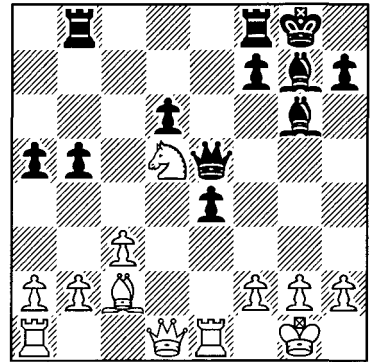


Diagram 30 (W)

Black has play on both flanks

23 Ne3 Bxb3 24 Qxb3 f4 25 Nd5, and here it seems that Black could have obtained the advantage with 25...f3, obtaining the c1-h6 diagonal for his bishop. ('It's amazing how difficult it is for White to equalize in the Sveshnikov' – Anand.) 16 Qh5 fxe4 17 Bxe4 f5 18 Bd5+ Be6 doesn't do much for White either; for example, 19 Rad1 Bxd5 20 Rxd5 Rf6.

16...e4 17 Re1 Bxf5 18 Ne3

The most natural move in this much-discussed position. White has also tried 18 Nd4. The point of this is that the a7-g1 diagonal is blocked, so that if 18...Bg6 White has 19 Bxe4 (and not 19 Nc6? Qb7 20 Nxb8 exd3) 19...Bxe4 20 f3 with advantage. (If White tries anything based on f3 at once then ...Qa7+ at some point spoils the plan.) So Black is forced to give up his strong bishop with 18...Bxd4 19 cxd4 d5, but his strong centre is ample compensation for the formally bad bishop. Instead 18 Nb4 has no independent significance since 18...a5 19 Nd5 (19 Nc6 Qb7 20 Nxb8 exd3 is bad again) 19...Qe5 20 Bc2 Bg6 transposes to the game.

18...Bg6 19 Nd5 Qe5 20 Bc2 a5 (Diagram 30) 21 f4

Sooner or later White has to stop ...f5-f4, and this is the move usually played.

21...Qe6

21...Qe8? 22 Ne3 threatens Qxd6 and f5.

22 Qd2

22 g4 is also met by 22...f5.

22...Kh8 23 a3

This might have been Anand's improvement on Bologan's 23 Rad1, but it doesn't make an awful lot of difference.

23...f5 24 Bb3 Qc8

NOTE: This is an excellent manoeuvre, bringing the queen to the c5-square where Black's major pieces are often well placed in the Sveshnikov.

25 Qf2 Qc5 26 Rad1 Bf7

Black prepares to trade his bishop for the knight when convenient. White has no advantage.

27 Bc2 Bxd5 28 Qxc5 dxc5 29 Rxd5 b4 30 Rxc5

30 axb4 cxb4 31 cxb4 axb4 32 b3 Rbc8 33 Re2 was the best way to defend according to Radjabov, 'with decent chances for a draw'.

30...bxc3 31 bxc3 Rbc8! (Diagram 31)

Black uses the tactic 32 Rxa5 Bxc3 to force White to enter a worse endgame, in which he can't find a role for his bishop.

32 Rxc8 Rxc8 33 Rd1

Anand must go wrong somewhere over the next few moves. Maybe 33 Rb1 was better now, since 33...Bf8 can be met with 34 Rb3.

33...Bf8!

A strong move ensuring the win of both the a- and c-pawns, according to Radjabov, although I confess I don't quite follow him.

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

34 Kf1

34 a4 Rxc3 35 Rd8 Kg7 36 Bd1 looks like a better try to me, but maybe I am missing Radjabov's point. Instead 34 Rd5 Rxc3 35 Bd1 Rxa3 36 Rxf5 Bb4 37 Kf2 was the best defence according to Radjabov, who says that the position is still a draw.

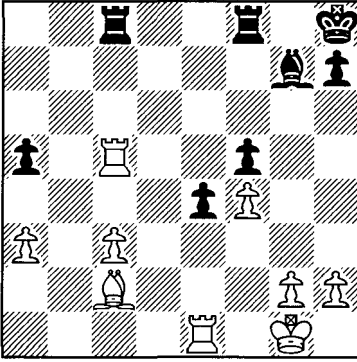


Diagram 31 (W)

Simplifying to a better ending

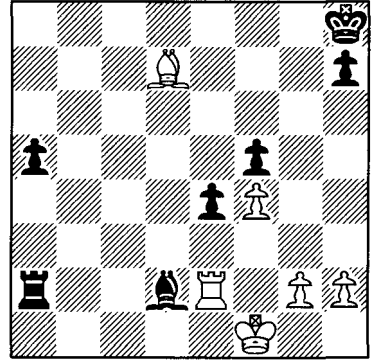


Diagram 32 (W)

The passed pawns carry the day

34...Rxc3 35 Ba4 Rxa3 36 Bd7

Presumably Anand had been relying on this counterattack, but if so he had underestimated the two passed pawns.

36...Ra2 37 Re1 Bb4 38 Re2 Bd2 (Diagram 32) 39 Kf2

39 Bxf5 e3 40 g4 a4 is the same; once the rook is incarcerated the a-pawn will cost White a piece. Instead 39 g4 e3 40 Rg2 was probably the last try.

39...a4 40 Bxf5 e3+ 41 Kf3 a3 42 g3 Rb2 43 Be6 Kg7 44 Rg2 a2 45 Bxa2 Rxa2 46 Rg1 Bb4 0-1

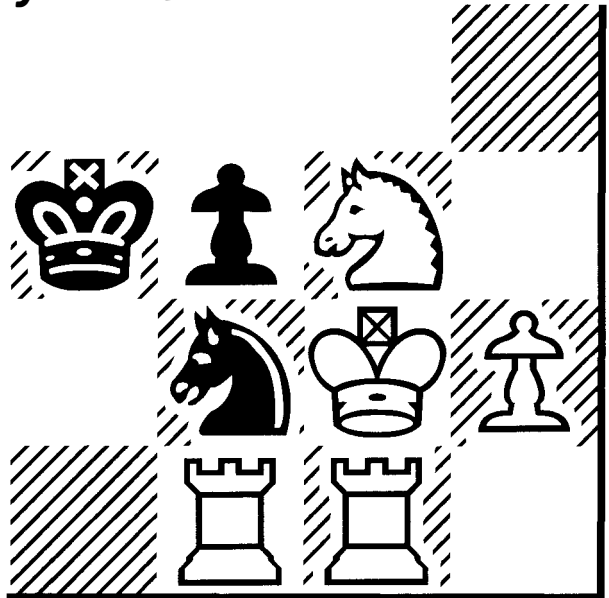
Points to Remember

1. The point of the immediate 13 c3 f5 14 Nc2 (without both sides castling) is to gain a tempo in the fight for the central light squares (especially f5) and reserve the option of castling queenside. Black normally finds himself forced to play ...f4, and in the resulting structure the outcome will depend on whether Black is able to create counterplay on the queenside and prevent White obtaining a bind.
2. After castling White's play is not nearly so effective: he can't prevent ...fxe4 and ...f5 for ever, and in the structure after exf5, ...e4; ...Bxf5-g6; f4 and ...f5, Black can gradually organize ...b4 and ...Bxd5. The resulting opposite-coloured bishops give Black as many chances as White.

Chapter Six

The Chelyabinsk Variation: 9 Bxf6 Bxf6 10 Nd5 f5

- Introduction
- White Plays c3 and Bd3
- White Plays 11 c3



Introduction

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 (Diagram 1)

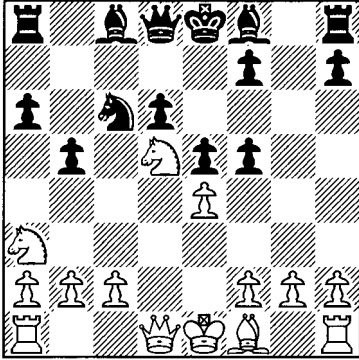


Diagram 1 (W)

The Chelyabinsk Variation

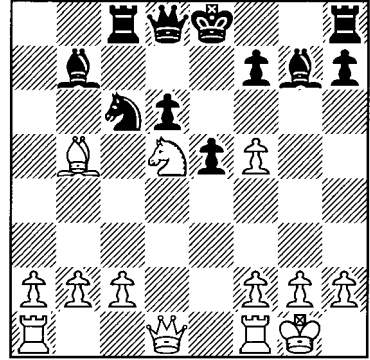


Diagram 2 (W)

Black must watch out for f6-tricks

This is Black's main move, aiming to remove the enemy e-pawn before he does anything else. Now 11 c3 and 11 Bd3 are White's main tries, but he has several other options which we will first examine.

11 Bxb5

I'm going to cover this move in more detail than some texts for a couple of reasons: first, it's more popular in amateur chess than its reputation would lead one to expect; second, it's absolutely terrifying to play against! Other less favoured tries are:

a) After 11 Nxb5 axb5 12 Bxb5 Bb7 (not 12...Bd7; this bishop on b7 is much more active than White's on b5 once the knight is unpinned, so it is wrong to allow its exchange) 13 exf5 (this line belongs in the dustbin of history in view of the superior version shown in Game 29), Black has two good ways and just needs to know one of them: 13...Rc8 (13...Ra5 14 Qd3 Bg7 15 Qc4 Kf8 is the other but depends on some tactics which aren't worth memorizing) 14 0-0 Bg7 (**Diagram 2**).



NOTE: Now the only thing Black need to be careful about is not falling for a f6-trick: the king will be quite safe on f8 if needs be and the rook can become active on g8 in conjunction with the b7-bishop.

Play might continue 15 Qf3 Bf6! or 15 Qh5 Kf8! (and by no means 15...0-0?? 16 f6),

and in either case the next move is ...Ne7 and Black stands better with all his pieces active and an extra one against White's three ragged pawns.

b) 11 g3 is fairly sensible; see Game 26.

c) 11 Qd3 is an unprincipled move; Black's best reply is to sacrifice a pawn with 11...fxe4 12 Qxe4 Bg7 13 Nf6+ (13 Ne3 d5 is a similar pawn sacrifice) 13...Bxf6 14 Qxc6+ Bd7 15 Qxd6 Qe7 (**Diagram 3**) when practice has shown that he stands much better.

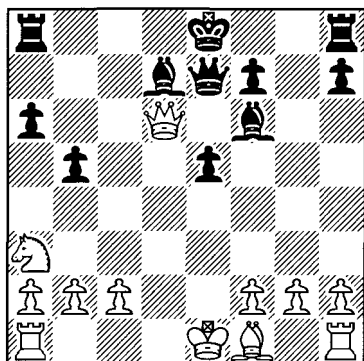


Diagram 3 (W)

The bishop pair is too strong

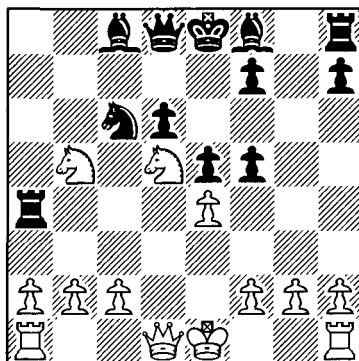


Diagram 4 (W)

Activating the attacking rook

d) 11 c4! allows Black to exchange queens and strand White's king in the centre with 11...Qa5+ 12 Qd2 Qxd2+ 13 Kxd2 Bh6+ 14 Kd1 0-0 which is already nice for Black.

11...axb5 12 Nxb5 Ra4 (Diagram 4)

Black has tried just about every legal move here, including 12...Ra7, 12...Rb8, 12...Ra5, 12...Qg5 and 12...Qa5+. In the end, though, it seems that the text is pretty clearly best for the simple reason that it doesn't lose material and it activates the rook to the maximum extent (moves that attack the b5-knight achieve nothing since that knight is going to c7 anyway), so I'm going to concentrate on it.

13 Nbc7+

Natural, but White doesn't have to check immediately:

a) 13 c4 aims to open the c-file for a rook and attack immediately. Black should accept the sacrifice with 13...Rxc4, and the critical position arises after 14 Nbc7+ (White has to do this because otherwise Black can play ...Be7 and evacuate his king to the kingside) 14...Kd7 15 0-0 (White can't afford to allow his king's rook to be shut out of the play and nor should he stop to win back material: both 15 Qh5 Rxe4+ 16 Kf1 Qh4 17 Qxf7+ Be7 and 15 Nb6+ Kxc7 16 Nxc4 Bb7 – best; hiding the

king away safely is the top priority – 17 Rc1 Kb8 18 0-0 Nd4 are hopeless) 15...Nd4! (**Diagram 5**),

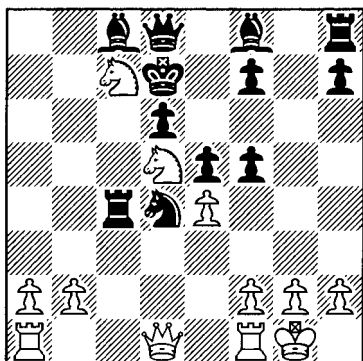


Diagram 5 (W)

White hasn't enough for the piece

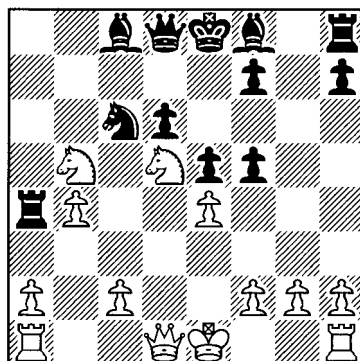


Diagram 6 (B)

A radical way to open lines

and now the quaint 16 Na8. It's not a simple matter to prove a win here, but I think Rogozenko's 16...Ke8 17 Nab6 Rc2 18 Ne3 Rxb2 does the business.

b) 13 b4!? (**Diagram 6**) is positionally a hideous move whose idea is to open files on the queenside and render the whole board uninhabitable for Black's king. Now:

b1) 13...Nxb4 is never played and is not supposed to be possible, but it's far from obviously bad after 14 Nbc7+ (14 Ndc7+ Ke7 15 c3 Nc2+! 16 Qxc2 Rxe4+ 17 Kf1 Kf6 looks quite reasonable for Black) 14...Kd7 15 c3 Nxd5 16 Qxa4+ Kxc7 17 exd5 Bb7, although I suspect White is better here.

b2) This variation has fallen under a dark, dark cloud ever since T.Luther-P.Leko, Dortmund 2002, which went 13...Rxb4 14 Nbc7+ (we will consider 14 Nxb4, Sulskis' attempt at rehabilitation, in Game 27) 14...Kd7 15 0-0 Rg8! (**Diagram 7**).



TIP: This is a great move. Leko sees to the heart of the position, which is that Black's queen must be ready to shadow the white one and follow her to the kingside or queenside accordingly.

Thus neither 15...Qg5 16 Nxb4 Nxb4 17 c3 Kxc7 18 cxb4 fxe4 19 Qa4, nor 15...Rb7 16 Qh5, will do, while 15...Qxc7 meets 16 c3!!, Shirov's shattering novelty from 2002, which seems to be good for White. After 15...Rg8!, Luther-Leko continued 16 Qh5 (16 g3 Rb7 17 Qh5 Qg5 18 Qxf7+ Be7 transposes, while 16 Nxb4 Nxb4 17 Nd5 Nxd5 18 Qxd5 Ke7 leaves Black better) 16...Qg5 17 Qxf7+ Be7 (**Diagram 8**) 18 g3 (White has to stop for this move, and it's over) 18...Rb7 19 Nxe7 Nxe7 20 Ne6 Qg6 21 Nf8+ Rxf8 22 Qxf8 fxe4 23 Rfb1 Rc7 24 a4 e3 25 fxe3 Qe4 0-1 – a game which was thought to be the last nail in the coffin of the piece sacrifice.

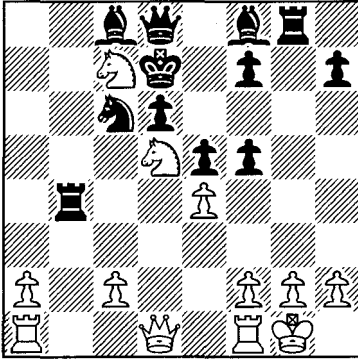


Diagram 7 (W)

A deep move; ...Qg5 must be well timed

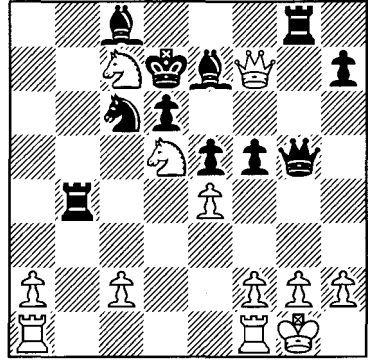


Diagram 8 (W)

The queen is decisive on g5

13...Kd7 (Diagram 9)

White's main try now is 14 0-0, which we'll consider in Game 28. Instead 14 c4 Rxc4 transposes to 13 c4 above, while 14 Qh5 Rxe4+ 15 Kf1 Qh4 16 Qxf7+ Be7 allows Black to defend pretty easily.

Finally, 14 Nb6+ Kxc7 15 Nxa4 Rg8 16 0-0 (**Diagram 10**) would be very poor: White's attack is broken and despite the wandering black king and material equality, the greater activity, and indeed number, of Black's pieces gives him a decisive advantage. If you don't believe me – the positions arising in this line are very hard to judge on first acquaintance – then a few tests of this position against a silicon or human sparring partner should soon convince you.

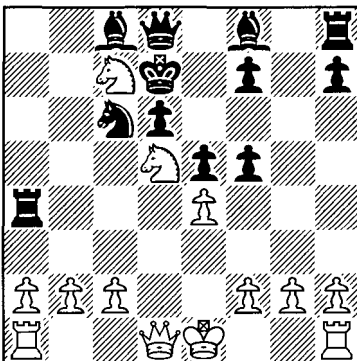


Diagram 9 (W)

A rather obscure position

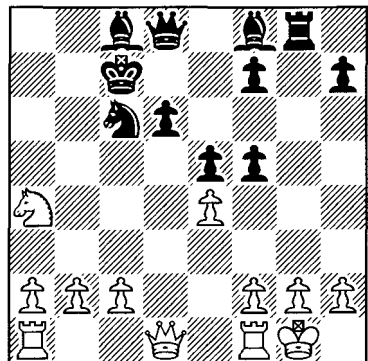


Diagram 10 (B)

White needs to keep his knights

Illustrative Games

Game 26

□ E.Berg ■ J.Zezulkin

Rowy 2000

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 g3 (Diagram 11)

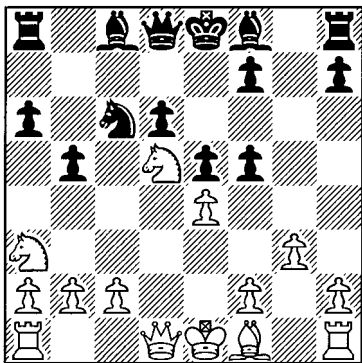


Diagram 11 (B)

Trying to support d5 with a fianchetto

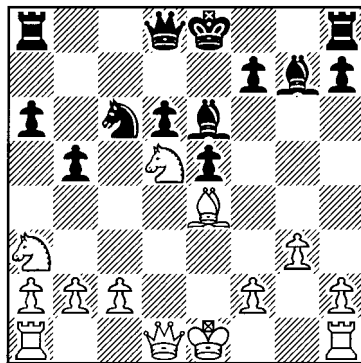


Diagram 12 (W)

Black is happy to lose an exchange

A fairly simple approach. White aims all his minor pieces at d5. The trouble is that if Black acts consistently and fights directly for control of that square then White's design fails.

11...fxe4 12 Bg2 Be6

12...Bf5 13 f3 e3 14 f4 is a complicated alternative, but in this sideline I am showing only Black's thematic equalizer.

13 Bxe4 Bg7 (Diagram 12) 14 Qh5

The only move that makes sense, striving to prevent Black from castling. 14 Nf6+ is an ambitious try, but after 14...Bxf6 15 Bxc6+ Ke7 16 Bxa8 Qxa8 Black has dangerous compensation and much easier play, even if objectively White may be able to maintain the balance: 17 f3 (17 0-0 b4 18 Nb1 Bh3 19 f3 Bxf1 regains the exchange and leaves Black clearly better) 17...h5 18 Qe2 h4 19 0-0-0 Qc6 and so on.



NOTE: This type of exchange grab, giving Black the two bishops while White's knight is still stuck on a3, is seldom good in the Sveshnikov.

Instead 14 0-0 0-0 15 c3 f5 16 Bg2 leads to positions like those White can obtain with 11 c3 and 12 exf5, but a tempo down (Black has lost two tempi by initiating the exchange of e4 for f5, and White has lost two by being forced to move his bishop from g2 to e4 and back, but Black has saved one by going ...Be6 in one go instead of via f5).

14...Rc8 (Diagram 13)

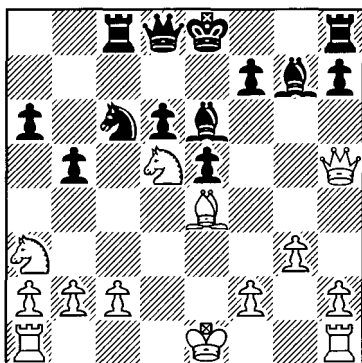


Diagram 13 (W)

Preparing ...Ne7 and ...Rc5

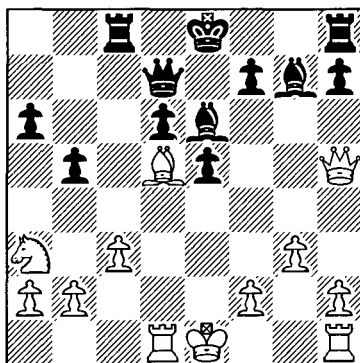


Diagram 14 (W)

White can't keep maintain control of d5

The text move with its idea of ...Rc5 is the key. Black fights for d5.

15 Rd1 Ne7

Black should certainly not waste a tempo with 15...h6? with the idea of preventing Qg5.



WARNING: Such a move is almost always bad in the Sveshnikov: it loses a tempo, weakens g6, puts another pawn on a dark square, which can have consequences in an ending, and in the given case merely prevents White from playing a very bad move.

16 0-0

The main alternative is 16 c3 (16 Qg5? Nxd5 17 Qxg7 Qf6! 18 Qxf6 Nxf6 19 Bb7 Rc7 20 Bxa6 b4 21 Nb5 Rxc2 is terrible for White, although more than one grandmaster has played it, confusing variations and forgetting the ...Qf6 trick), bringing the knight to e3 as quickly as possible to fight for d5. There isn't a second to lose, and Black should react quickly with 16...Nxd5 (16...Rc5 17 Nb4 Qb6 18 Qg5 Kf8 19 Qe3 is a very complex alternative, which may well be fine, but the text is so thematic and easy) 17 Bxd5 Qd7 (**Diagram 14**). Black obviously needs to prepare ...Rc5 by first stopping Bxe6 from winning a piece, and the text is the best way to do that

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

because it has a threat, whereas 17...0-0 18 Nc2 Rc5 19 Ne3 just isn't quite quick enough; White holds d5 and has chances to be a little better. After 17...Qd7:

a) 18 Nc2 Bg4! was the threat in question; now 19 Qg5 (19 Bxf7+ Ke7 just drops a piece for White) 19...Bxd1 20 Kxd1 (20 Qxg7 Bxc2 21 Qxh8+ Ke7 22 Qg7 Qf5 is more sensible and about equal) 20...0-0 21 Ne3 Rc5 22 Ke2 has been tried. This sort of exchange sacrifice for the light-squared bishop to dominate d5 and f5 is quite common in the Sveshnikov; but here White's wandering king complicates matters, and it looks to me as though the machine is right when it suggests that an immediate 22...Kh8 23 Rd1 f5 leaves White struggling.

b) 18 0-0 Rc5 (18...Bg4 19 Qg5 is not so effective without the knight handily en prise on c2, but now Black gets ...Rc5 in before White can reinforce d5 – once he wins the battle for d5 like this Black is at least equal) 19 Bxe6 Qxe6 20 Nc2 0-0 and now Rogozenko gives two instructive examples: the first is 21 Rd2 f5 22 Rfd1 d5 23 Ne3 d4 24 cxd4 exd4 25 Nc2 Qxa2 26 Nxd4 Qf7 27 Qxf7+ Kxf7 28 b4 Rd5, which was completely equal in E.Berg-L.Johanessen, Malmö 2003; the second 21 Ne3 f5 22 Qh3 d5 23 a3 (it's too late for 23 Rd2 since 23...d4 24 cxd4 exd4 25 Nc2 Qxa2 26 Nxd4 Rd5 27 Rfd1 Bxd4 28 Rxd4 Rxd4 29 Rxd4 Qxb2 is much better for Black) 23...Qf7 24 Rd2 f4 25 gxf4 (I.Smirin-M.Palac, Cap d'Agde 1994), when Rogozenko points out that 25...d4 26 cxd4 exd4 27 Ng2 Rc6 28 Rfd1 Rg6 (**Diagram 15**) gives Black excellent compensation for his pawn. Notice how in this game Smirin, unlike Berg, played Ne3 prematurely before he had been able to prepare any proper reply to ...f4.

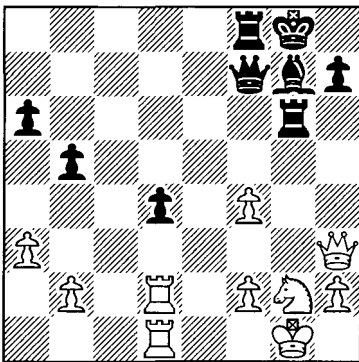


Diagram 15 (W)

A strong pawn sacrifice

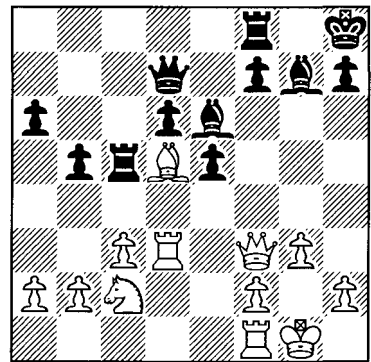


Diagram 16 (B)

Black can even give up d5!



NOTE: The fundamental thing White has to consider when he goes Ne3 is how he's going to meet ...f5-f4.

16...Nxd5

16...Rc5 is a complicated alternative again, but I don't recommend it.

17 Bxd5 0-0

17...Qd7 18 c3 Rc5 would be note 'b' to White's 16th, but the queen doesn't necessarily belong on d7 and it's more flexible to castle.

18 c3 Rc5 19 Qf3

19 Bxe6 fxe6 is harmless: Rogozenko gives the example 20 Qg4 Qe7 21 Nc2 d5 22 Rd2 Rc4 23 Qd1 Qg5 24 Ne3 Rcf4 25 Ng2 R4f7 26 a3 e4 when Black is in total control and White can only wait. It's striking how opening the f-file has given Black's rooks an active role, and simultaneously bringing the f-pawn to e6 has freed Black's pieces for active operations – just move the e6-pawn to f5 to see the difference.

19...Qd7 20 Rd3 Kh8 21 Nc2 (Diagram 16) 21...Bh3

After everything I've said about the fight for d5, Black abandons it! What is this? Well, in truth 21...f5 was a perfectly good alternative, but for tactical reasons Black wants to take advantage of the awkward queen on f3 and rook on d3, and calculates that he can survive losing control of d5 if he cuts the d5-bishop off from the kingside with ...e4 and targets the f3-square.

22 Re1 f5 23 Qh5

23 Qe2 e4 24 Rd2 Bg4 25 Qf1 Bf3 wasn't wonderful news for White's queen either, but the text sidelines her for the rest of the game.

23...Bg4 24 Qh4

It's hard to believe this is a good move. 24 Qg5 at least left a route back to base.

24...e4 25 Rd2 Bf3

25...Rf6 was another good move, but there's nothing wrong with the text.

26 Nd4 Rxd5 27 Nxf3 Rxd2 28 Nxd2 b4 (Diagram 17)

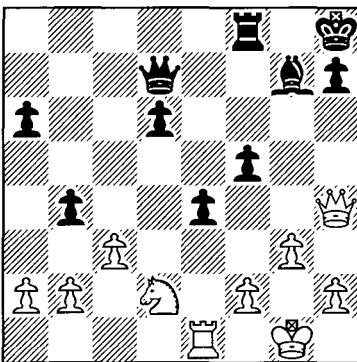


Diagram 17 (W)
Thematic and powerful

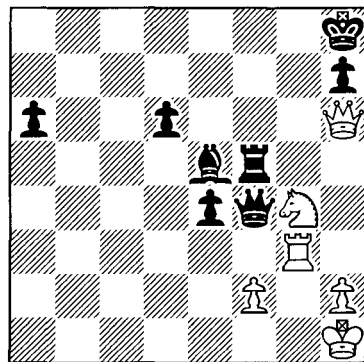


Diagram 18 (W)
White to play and win

Absolutely; Black is much better now.



TIP: ...b4 is a totally thematic break in this structure to free the dark-squared bishop completely.

29 Nc4

29 cxb4 Bxb2 30 Qf4 Be5 31 Qh6 Rf6 32 Qe3 d5 leaves Black much better since the d-pawn cannot be blockaded, but the text is no improvement.

29...bxc3 30 bxc3 Qe6 31 Ne3 Bxc3 32 Rc1 f4! 33 gxf4

33 Rxc3 fxe3 34 Rxe3 Qxa2 hits f2 and gives Black time for ...d5 next retaining a dominating position.

33...Rg8+ 34 Kh1 Qxa2 35 f5 Be5 36 Ng4

36 Qxe4 Qxf2 37 Ng2 a5 leaves White paralysed, but the text should have lost at once.

36...Qd2

This wins, but 36...Qa3 would have terminated the game on the spot in view of 37 Rg1 Qf3+ 38 Rg2 Rb8.

37 Rg1 Qf4 38 Rg3 Rg5

38...Qxf5 would have been easier, but in view of what happens next the players were obviously in desperate time trouble.

39 Qh6 Rxf5?? (Diagram 18)

39...Bg7 was the only move by now.

40 Qe6?

40 Nf6 is a cute winner – a Nowotny interference, no less (as the problemists call it).

40...Rf8

You can see why he wanted to guard the back rank, but in fact 40...Bg7 was still required. Now White escapes into a drawn rook ending.

41 Nxe5 Qxe5 42 Qxe5+ dxe5 43 Rg5

I think this is a draw, but no letters, please.

43...Re8 44 Rg4 a5 45 Rxe4 Kg7 46 Kg2 Kf6 47 f4 Ra8 48 fxe5+ Ke6 49 Ra4 Kxe5 50 Kf3 Kd5 51 Ke3 Kc5 52 Kd3 Kb5 53 Rh4 Ra7 54 Kc3 Kc5 55 Ra4 Kd5 56 Kd3 Ke5 57 Ke3 Kf5 58 Kf3 Ra8 59 Kf2 h5 60 Kf3 Ke5 61 Ke3 Kd5 62 Kf4 Kc5 63 Kg5 Kb5 64 Ra2 Rh8 65 h4 a4 66 Ra1 Kb4 67 Rb1+ Kc3 68 Ra1 Kb3 69 Rb1+ Kc2 70 Ra1 Ra8 71 Kxh5 Kb2 72 Re1 a3 73 Kg6 Ra6+ 74 Kg7 Ra5 75 Kg6 ½-½

Points to Remember

1. Black must fight for control of the d5-square and the way to do this is the manoeuvre ...Rc8-c5.

2. Don't worry about Bxe6.

3. Make sure that ...Rc5 comes in time to destroy the blockade of d5; if it doesn't, you've got the sequence wrong somewhere and need to have another look at the note to move 16.

Game 27

□ S.Sulskis ■ V.Cmilyte

Lithuanian Championship, Siauliai 2005

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Bxf6 gxf6 9 Na3 b5 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bxb5 axb5 12 Nxb5 Ra4 13 b4 Rxb4 14 Nxb4!? Nxb4 15 0-0 Be7 16 Rb1 Na6 17 exf5 0-0! (Diagram 19)

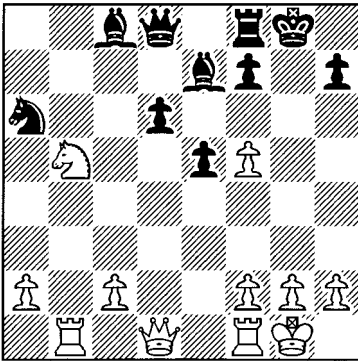


Diagram 19 (W)

Correctly prioritizing king safety

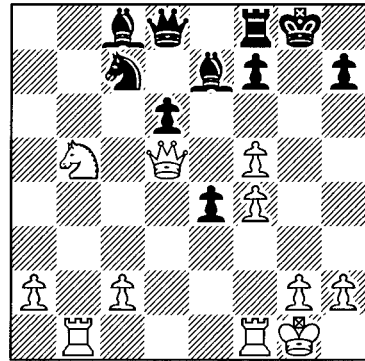


Diagram 20 (W)

Seizing the initiative

A good move; the obvious 17...Bxf5 would give White the chance for 18 Qf3 Bc8 19 Rfd1 0-0 20 Nxd6 Bxd6 21 Qd3 Nc5 22 Qxd6 Qxd6 23 Rxd6 with at least equality in the endgame.

18 f4

White can't maintain d5; 18 Qf3 Nc5 19 Rfd1 Bb7 20 Qe3 f6 21 Nc3 Qa8 is very bad.



TIP: As usual in the Sveshnikov, Black needs to concentrate on winning the battle for d5 and activating his pieces rather than grabbing pawns.

18...e4 19 Qd5

It's surprising that White didn't try 19 f6 Bxf6 20 Nxd6 here. After that the position seems about equal. I suspect Black's next move came as a shock.

19...Nc7! (Diagram 20)

Another good move, fighting for control again and not worrying about pawns. 19...Nc5 20 Rfd1 Bb7 21 Qd4, for example, was much less good – White’s threats against the pawns leave Black struggling. In effect, once the b5-knight is gone, Black’s dark-squared bishop is able to keep White’s major pieces out of the d- and e-files on its own, and the rest of the pieces can then play.

20 Nxc7

20 Qxe4 Nxb5 21 Rxb5 Ba6 22 f6 Bxf6 23 Rh5 Re8 24 Qxh7+ Kf8 (**Diagram 21**) is good for Black if the f1-rook moves: the mighty dark-squared bishop can look after the king on his own, while White’s pieces on the h-file have simply wandered offside. Nevertheless, some engrossing complications arise after 25 Rg5!? Bd4+ (25...Bxf1 26 Rg8+ Ke7 27 Qe4+ is an immediate draw, while 25...Bxg5 26 Qh8+ Ke7 27 Re1+ Kd7 28 Qxe8+ Qxe8 29 Rxe8 Kxe8 30 fxe5 is an ending which I think is also a draw) 26 Kh1 Bxf1 27 Rg8+ Ke7 28 Qe4+ Kd7 29 Qb7+ Ke6 30 Qe4+ Be5 31 f5+ Kf6 32 Qh4+ Kxf5 33 Qxd8 Rxd8 34 Rxd8 Ke4, and the complications go on.

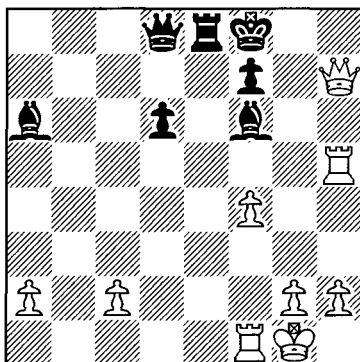


Diagram 21 (W)

Do the bishops cover everything?

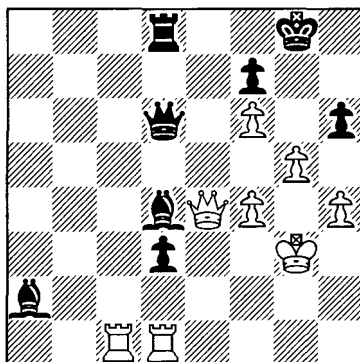


Diagram 22 (B)

Black needs to be accurate

20...Qxc7 21 Rfe1

21 Qxe4 Qc5+ 22 Kh1 Bf6 is also excellent for Black; once she gets organized like this White is always going to struggle.

21...Qxc7 22 Rbc1 Qb2 23 Qxe4 Bf6 24 Red1 d5! 25 Qd3

The point of Black’s last is that 25 Qxd5? loses to 25...Bb7 26 Qd2 Bd4+! 27 Kh1 Qxd2 28 Rxd2 Be3 with a winning ending for Black.

25...Qb6+ 26 Kh1 d4 27 g4 Bb7+ 28 Kg1 Qd6 29 Rb1 Ba6 30 Qe4 d3 31 g5 Bd4+ 32 Kg2 Bc4 33 Kg3 h6 34 h4

If 34 gxh6, then 34...Kh7 followed by a devastating rook check, of course.

14...Rxe4



NOTE: It's worth taking a long look at the position before this move. The two knights hold Black's king captive on d7, and it is likely that White's next move is going to be Qh5 aiming to win a third pawn for the piece.

Black needs to arrange to meet this, and the text move, while at first sight a little over-confident, aims to do so with some tactics. It has other virtues too: apart from winning a pawn, it removes the rook from an exposed square and puts it on one where it in fact has many active possibilities both offensive and defensive.

If Black wants a safer alternative then the virtually untried 14...Rg8 (**Diagram 24**) looks very possible, along the lines of Luther-Leko above: 15 Qh5 (or 15 g3 Rxe4 16 Qh5 Ne7 17 Qxf7 Rg7 18 Nf6+ Kc6 19 Ne6 Bxe6 20 Qxe6 Rg6 21 Rae1 Rb4 15...Qg5 16 Qxf7+ Be7 17 g3 Qg6 (and certainly not 17...Ra7?? by analogy with Luther-Leko since b6 isn't covered, and 18 Ne6 wins on the spot since it threatens both the queen and the rather ignominious 19 Nb6 mate, while 18...Nd8 19 Nb6+ Kc6 20 Nxc8 Nxf7 21 Nxa7+ Kb6 22 Nxg5 Nxg5 23 exf5 is too many pawns even for Black's activity to make up for) 18 Qxf5+ (18 Qxg6 hxg6 19 exf5 gxf5 20 Nb6+ Kxc7 21 Nxa4 Nd4 is another of those deceptive positions in this variation: White is a fair amount of material up but Black's initiative more than compensates) 18...Qxf5 19 exf5 Bd8 is hardly clear yet, but I think Black stands pretty well.

15 Qh5 Nd4!?

15...Qh4 and 15...Ne7 are a couple of complicated alternatives, both supposedly analysed to draws.

16 c3

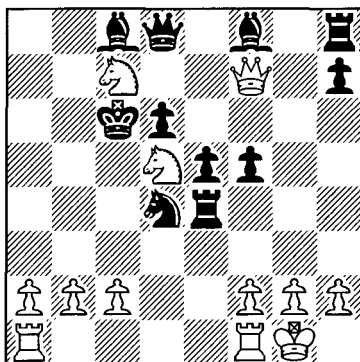


Diagram 25 (W)

Messy, but probably favouring Black

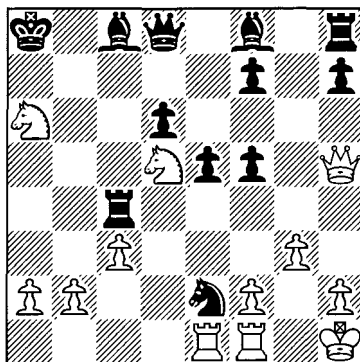


Diagram 26 (W)

The black king reaches relative safety

Likewise 16 Qxf7+ Kc6 (**Diagram 25**) leads to wild and uncharted complications, in which Black is generally considered a favourite but no-one knows what is going on; for example, 17 Nb4+ (17 b4 must be met with 17...Qd7 – and not the tempting 17...Qh4?, threatening the old ...Ne2+ and ...Qxh2+ routine, which is smashed by the wicked switchback 18 b5+ Kc5 19 Nc3!) 17...Kb7 18 Nb5+ Bd7 19 Qd5+ Kb6 20 Nxd4 Rxd4 21 Qb3 Ka7 22 Qa3+ Kb7 when Black should be able to defend and win, nerve-wracking though it is to play with the king so exposed.

16...Ne2+ 17 Kh1 Kc6!

The only way to defend f5.

18 g3

Otherwise 18...Nf4 trades a pair of knights and breaks White's attack. Black now needs a reply to White's plan to trap the e2-knight...

18...Kb7!

18...Be6 is very cutely refuted by 19 Nxe6 fxe6 20 Ne3 f4 21 Qxe2 fxe3 22 b3 (Yakovich), followed by f3 trapping the unfortunate rook.

19 Rae1 Rc4!

...which happily Illescas is able to find with this crucial sequence.

20 Na6

Black defends after 20 Qxe2 Rxc7 21 Qb5+ Ka8 22 Qa5+ Kb8, and also 20 Rxe2 Rxc7 21 Nxc7 Qxc7 should win for Black: the two bishops are terribly strong. Instead White prefers to continue to play for the attack, and in the game it should have worked, so either the strong Spanish grandmaster goes wrong somewhere in the next few moves, or else this variation's a lot better than theory says.

20...Ka8 (Diagram 26)

Not 20...Kxa6?? 21 Qxe2 winning, but a plausible alternative was 20...Be6; for example, 21 Nab4 Rc5 22 Ne3 f4 23 Qxe2 fxe3 24 Qa6+ Kb8 25 Nc6+ Rxc6 26 Qxc6 Qc8 forcing off queens with a clear advantage for Black in the ending.

21 b3

21 Nab4 Bb7 threatens 22...Rxb4, and 22 f3 is met by 22...Nxc3+ 23 hxc3 Rg8 when White's king is more ropery than Black's.

21...Rxc3 22 Qxe2 Bb7 23 Kg1 Bxd5 24 Rc1 Rc8

The computer shows a cool way to defend: 24...Bf3 25 Qb5 (25 Qd2 Rc8 26 Rxc8+ Qxc8 27 Qa5 Kb7 sees the attack off easily – the king looks after himself and White's rook can't get into the game) 25...Bc6 26 Qe2 (26 Nc7+ Qxc7 27 Qa6+ Kb8 28 Rxc3 Bb7! 29 Qd3 Qd7 is the best White can do, but Black is winning here with reasonable care) 26...Rxc1 27 Rxc1 Qb6, and White has nothing.

25 Qb5 Bb7

Already I don't think Black can win.

26 Qa4 Qb6 27 Rxc8+ Bxc8 28 Rc1 (Diagram 27)

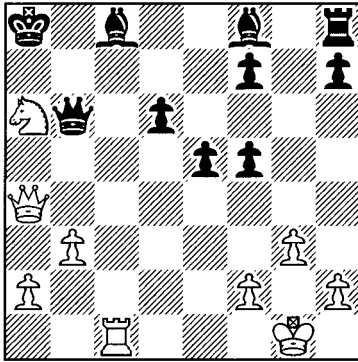


Diagram 27 (B)

Black needs to be pretty accurate

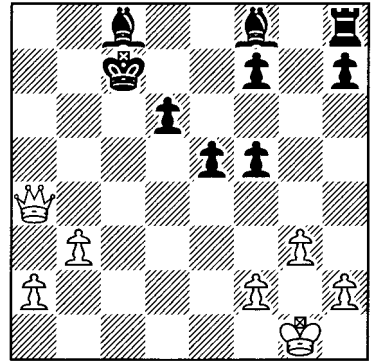


Diagram 28 (W)

Black is winning with care

28...Kb7?

28...Bxa6 29 Rc6 Kb7 30 Rxb6+ Kxb6 was the last chance; the computer thinks White can't do better than give perpetual after 31 Qd7 f4, but this is the sort of thing it's terribly hard to be sure about in a game, and anyway no doubt both players had overlooked White's decisive possibility on his next move.

29 Rc7+

A critical moment. The play up to here has been natural and is approved by commentators, but in fact 29 Nb4 at this moment would have wrecked Black. White's threat is the slow 30 a3 and 31 Rc6 just winning queen for rook or mating with the cute sequence Rc6 ...Qd8, Qb5+ ...Ka7, Ra6+ ...Bxa6, Nc6+ ...Ka8, Qxa6 mate, and Black isn't actually in a position to do anything about it; for example, 29...Bh6 (29...Be6 30 a3 just wins, as does 29...Be7 30 Nd5) 30 Rc6 Qxb4 31 Qxb4+ Kxc6 32 Qc4+ Kb6 33 Qxf7, and however Black plays he drops another bishop with an easy win for White.

29...Qxc7 30 Nxc7 Kxc7 (Diagram 28)

Black ought now to be able to coordinate his pieces and win, although this still takes skill and care.

31 Qc4+ Kd8 32 Qxf7 Be7 33 b4 Rf8 34 Qd5 Kc7 35 Qa5+ Kb8 36 b5 Bb7 37 b6 f4 38 a4 fxg3 39 hxg3 Rf3 40 Qb5 Rc3 41 Kh2 Bd8 42 Qb4 Rc5 43 a5 h5 44 Qa3 Bc6 45 Qb4 Kb7 46 Qd2 Rd5 47 Qc3 Rc5 48 Qd2 Be7 49 Qa2 Ka6 50 Qf7 Bb7! 51 Qxe7

Sportingly preferring to be shown rather than drag it out with the miserable 51 Qxh5 Rxa5.

51...Rc1 52 f3 Bxf3 53 g4 h4! 54 Qa7+ Kb5 55 Qd7+ Bc6 0-1

Points to Remember

1. I don't know what to say – this variation is more about moves than principles!
2. Perhaps the only general point I could make is that it isn't always necessary to rescue the king on to the kingside: once he gets to b8 with a bishop on b7 it's hard to get at him even though he has no pawn cover.

White Plays c3 and Bd3

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3

White's main systems from here start with either 11 c3 (see the next section of this chapter) or 11 Bd3 (the subject of our next chapter). First, though, we deal with two ideas which confusingly intertwine these systems by playing both Bd3 and c3 at White's 11th and 12th turns. Black replies with ...Be6 to Bd3 and ...Bg7 to c3, and the position after move 12 is reached by one route or another.

11...Be6 12 c3 (Diagram 29)

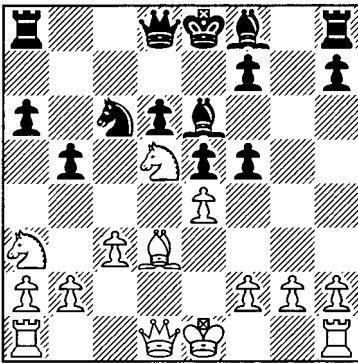


Diagram 29 (B)

White simply develops

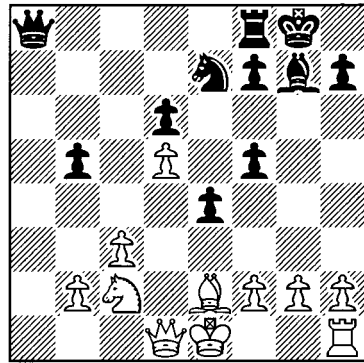


Diagram 30 (W)

Black is happy to swap b5 for d5

12...Bg7 13 Qh5

The other main independent continuation is 13 Nxb5; see Game 29.

Instead 13 0-0 is most simply dealt with by 13...Bxd5 14 exd5 Ne7, transposing to lines considered in the next chapter (which also arise via the move order 11 Bd3 Be6 12 0-0 Bxd5 13 exd5 Ne7 14 c3 Bg7), although there is nothing wrong in maintaining the tension with 13...0-0.

Meanwhile 13 Nc2 Bxd5 14 exd5 Ne7 should also transpose to those lines after

15 0-0. If instead White tries an early queenside assault with 15 a4 then Black can ignore him with 15...0-0, since after 16 axb5 e4 17 Be2 axb5 18 Rxa8 Qxa8 (**Diagram 30**) 19 Nb4 the attack on d5 means there is no time to take on b5: 19...Qb7 (19...Rc8 20 Bxb5 Rxc3 21 bxc3 Bxc3+ 22 Kf1 Bxb4 is worth a thought too) 20 0-0 f4 gives Black active play.

13...0-0 (Diagram 31)

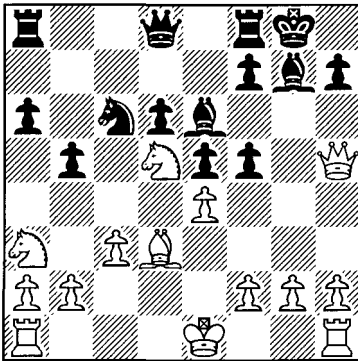


Diagram 31 (W)

White faces another important choice

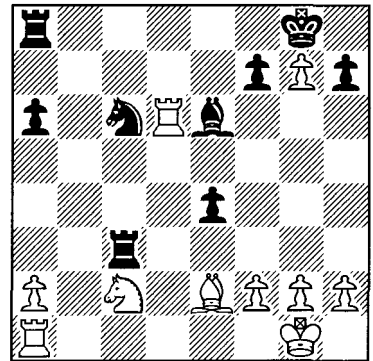


Diagram 32 (W)

The ending should be drawn

14 0-0

The major alternative is the forcing 14 exf5 Bxd5 15 f6 e4 (15...h6 16 fxg7 Kxg7 is a good alternative) 16 fxg7 (and not 16 Bc2? Qxf6 17 Qxd5 b4! 18 Nb1 bxc3 19 bxc3 Nb4!) 16...Re8 (16...Kxg7? 17 Qxd5 exd3 18 0-0 is much worse) 17 Be2 when Black will be statically worse if he is not careful once the knight comes to e3, and needs to break up White's solid structure while he can, so his best continuation is thought to be 17...Re5! 18 Qh6 b4 (18...Qg5 19 Qxg5 Rxg5 20 Nc2 is bad since Black cannot take on g2, but 18...Rg5 is a possible alternative if Black insists on keeping the play complicated) 19 Nc2 (19 cxb4 Nd4 is the point, rather than 19...Nxb4 20 0-0 when White is slightly better; 19 Nc4 Bxc4 20 Bxc4 bxc3 21 bxc3 is no better after 21...Qg5, or perhaps 21...d5) 19...bxc3 20 bxc3 Be6 21 0-0 Qg5 (now this is good once the bishop has left d5) 22 Qxg5 Rxg5 23 Rfd1 Rc5 24 Rxd6 Rxc3 (**Diagram 32**) with an equal endgame.

White can also try 14 Nc7?!, which is a fifty-percenter if ever I saw one. After 14...Qxc7 15 exf5 Black only needs to avoid 15...Bd5?? 16 f6 e4 17 Qg5 and 1-0; instead either 15...d5 or 15...Ne7 will do fine. Finally, 14 Ne3 f4 15 Nf5 Bxf5 16 Qxf5 allows Black reasonable play after 16...b4 17 cxb4 (or 17 Nc4 bxc3 18 bxc3 Ne7 and ...Rc8) 17...Nd4 18 Qh3 Rb8.

14...f4 (Diagram 33)

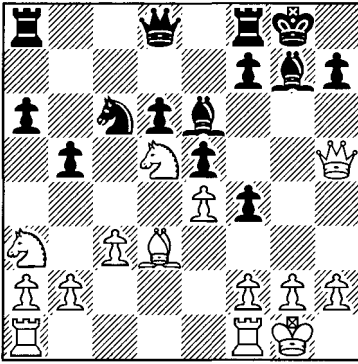


Diagram 33 (W)

Black couldn't allow 15 exf5

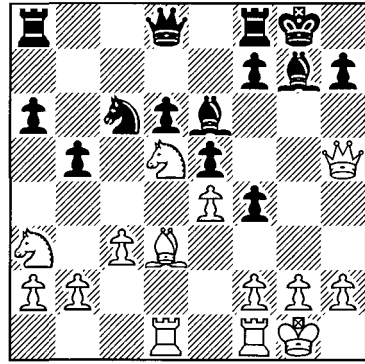


Diagram 34 (B)

Hindering ...f7-f5

White is now threatening 15 exf5, so Black has to do something about that; and 14...h6 would be a horrible move, weakening the light squares, taking a square from the g7-bishop and doing nothing to solve the problem of the centre (White is better after 15 Nc2), so the text is far and away the main move.



NOTE: ...f4 has to be handled with great care in the Sveshnikov, since it takes the pressure off the centre and may lame the g7-bishop, but here the possibility of a later ...Bxd5 means that the latter is not such an issue.

Instead 14...fxe4 15 Bxe4 f5 would be great if it didn't run into 16 Nf4, but in fact Black is not so badly off after 16...exf4 (16...Bd7 17 Bd5+ Kh8 18 Ng6 mate is the problem!) 17 Bxc6 Rc8 18 Qe2 Be5. It is important that after 19 Bb7 Rc5! 20 Bxa6? Bd5 White cannot prevent ...f3 in view of 21 f3 Qb6 winning, so instead Kramnik preferred 19 Qf3 b4!, but Black managed to hold the draw without too many alarms in V.Kramnik-L.Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2005.

After 14...f4, we arrive at a very important juncture. Black's next move is going to be 15...f5 unless White does something about it. 15 Nc2, for example, doesn't direct itself to the issues concretely enough, so after 15...f5 Black is doing fine: White cannot hang on to d5 and following 16 Ncb4 (16 a4 Bxd5 17 exd5 Ne7 18 axb5 e4 is dangerous for White) 16...Nxb4 17 Nxb4 a5 18 exf5 (after 18 Nd5 Black has either the calm 18...Rb8 or the very tempting pawn sacrifice 18...Bxd5 19 exd5 e4 20 Bxb5 Be5 followed by ...Ra7-g7) 18...Bf7 19 Qh3 Qf6 20 Nc2 b4 clearly White's strategic designs have failed utterly and Black has the initiative.

Much better is Anand's 15 Rad1 (**Diagram 34**), continuing to fight against ...f5. White's idea in using the queen's rook on d1 (instead of Game 30's 15 Rfd1) is to attack the pawn chain with 15...f5 16 exf5 Bxd5 17 f6 Rxf6 18 Bxh7+ Kf8 19 Rxd5.

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

After 19...Ne7 it looks as if Black wins material with the attack on the rook and the threat of ...Rh6, but White gives up the exchange with 20 Qf3 or 20 Be4 and has proved to have more than enough compensation.

After 15 Rad1 Black has many possibilities, but a crucial position arises following 15...Kh8 (planning to achieve ...f5 after activating the rook with ...Rg8, ...Bf8 and ...Rg5; the best alternatives are 15...Ra7, since the rook is always useful on the second rank once ...f5 has been achieved, and 15...Rb8, as ...b4 is often a useful motif too) 16 g3 Rg8 17 Kh1 Bf8 18 Be2 (18...Bg4 was threatened) 18...Rg5 19 Qf3 f5 (**Diagram 35**), when neither 20 exf5 Bxf5 21 Nxf4 exf4 22 Qxc6 Rc8, nor 20 exf4 gxf4 21 Nxf4 Bxa2, has produced any advantage for White.

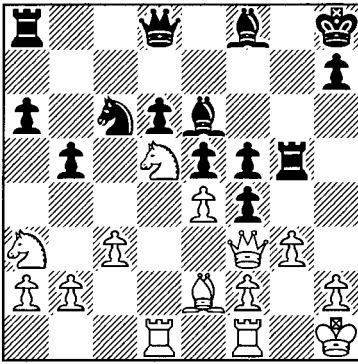


Diagram 35 (W)

Black forces through ...f7-f5

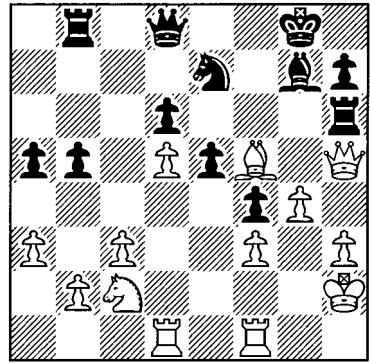


Diagram 36 (W)

White's royalty are in some danger

Finally, 15 g4 looks a little rash in view of the white queen's position, and in the very pretty game F.Amonatov-P.Smirnov, Russian Team Championship 2005, Black produced a model display: 15...Rb8 16 Nc2 a5 17 a3 Ne7 18 Rad1 Qd7 19 h3 Bxd5 20 exd5 f5 21 f3 (21 gxf5 Nxd5) 21...Rf6 (White is already lost) 22 Kh2 Rh6 23 Bxf5 Qd8! (**Diagram 36**) 24 Be6+ (or 24 Qg5 Kh8 followed by ...Qf8 and ...Bf6) 24...Kh8 25 Qf7 Qc7 26 g5 Rg6! 27 Bf5 Rxc5 28 Rg1 Rf8! 29 Qxf8+ Bxf8 30 Rxc5 h6! 31 Rh5 Nxf5 32 Rxf5 Qh7 0-1.

Illustrative Games

Game 29

□ Z.Almasi ■ Wang Yue

Paks 2006

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9

Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3 Be6 12 c3 Bg7 13 Nxb5 (Diagram 37)

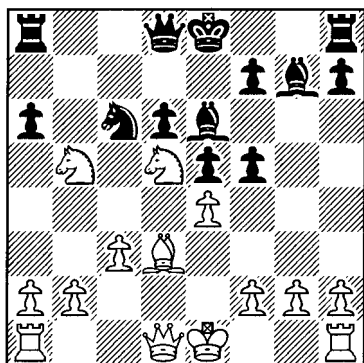


Diagram 37 (B)

More of a positional piece sacrifice

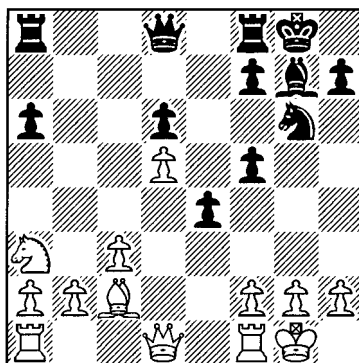


Diagram 38 (W)

Black has rejected the piece



WARNING: This is one of the most dangerous, albeit one of the most positional, versions of these piece sacrifices on b5 in the Sveshnikov.

Black has little choice but to waste a tempo moving the bishop back from e6 to d7 (of course White is also wasting a tempo, but by waiting until the bishops have moved he forces Black's to go to d7 rather than b7 – as it does after 11 Nxb5), after which White will win the f5-pawn, and the result tends to be positions where White's main compensation for Black's extra piece is not an attack so much as the two connected passed pawns on the queenside.

13...axb5

Black doesn't have to accept the sacrifice. A possible alternative is to ignore the loss of the b-pawn and carry on with Black's own plans by 13...Bxd5 14 exd5 Ne7, when normally the game goes 15 Na3 0-0 16 0-0 e4 17 Bc2 (it is best for White to keep the e-pawn under observation) 17...Ng6 (**Diagram 38**). White has a few tempting ways to try and demonstrate his advantage, but the one Rogozenko recommends is 18 Qh5 Qc8 19 f3 when White is certainly a lot better after the line he gives: 19...Rb8 20 Rab1 Re8 (it seems to me that Black has rather more compensation after 20...Qc5+ 21 Kh1 e3 22 Bb3 – 22 Qxf5 e2 is good for Black – 22...f4, although in the long run I wouldn't be terribly optimistic) 21 Kh1 Re5 22 fxe4 fxe4 23 Qe2 and Black misses the b-pawn not just for itself but also because he can no longer break the b2/c3 couple with ...b4, and the a3-knight can always jump into play via c4.

14 Bxb5 Bd7

14...Rc8 doesn't seem to have much point if Black is going to meet 15 Qa4 with 15...Bd7 16 exf5 0-0 17 0-0 Kh8 18 Qe4 Rg8 19 a4 Bh6 20 g3 Rb8 21 b4 Rg5 22 Ne3, as he did in I.Cheparinov-S.Halkias, European Championship, Antalya 2004, since as Rogozenko points out the white queen has come to e4 in two moves just as it does in our main game, while Black has spent time on ...Rc8-b8.

Instead Emil Sutovsky recently introduced an interesting way to fight for the initiative: 14...Rc8 15 exf5 0-0, just giving the knight back to win control of the centre and misplace White's pieces a bit. After 16 Bxc6 fxe4 (**Diagram 39**), in the stem game Almasi made the striking choice of 17 0-0-0 (I don't suppose this would be the move most of us would come up with, but the knight on b4 enables White to defend his king very well; if instead 17 0-0 Black can develop an initiative with moves like ...Kh8, ...Qg5 and ...f5), and things didn't go particularly well for Sutovsky: 17...Kh8 (either an immediate 17...f5 or, as Rogozenko proposed, 17...Bf5, when he gives the variation 18 Ne3 Bh6 19 Kb1 Bxe3 20 fxe3 Qb6 21 Bxe4 Rb8 22 b3 Ra8 23 Qc4 Rfc8 24 Qd3 Bxe4 25 Qxe4 Qa5 26 Rd2 Rxc3 which is fine for Black, was an alternative) 18 Kb1 f5 19 Nb4 Qb6 20 f3 e3 (20...exf3 21 gxf3 Rfd8 was widely suggested as an improvement, perhaps aiming for ...Rc7-a7) 21 Bd5 Bxd5 22 Nxd5 Qb7 23 Qb3 Qa6 24 Qb6 Qa4 25 b3 Qa3 26 Qxe3, when White was definitely beginning to get on top in Z.Almasi-E.Sutovsky, Paks 2005.

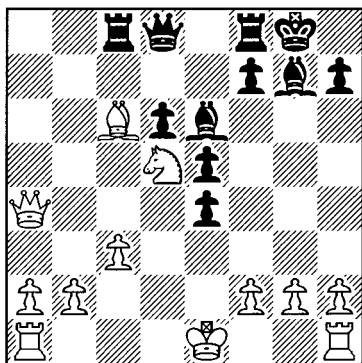


Diagram 39 (W)

White may even go long!

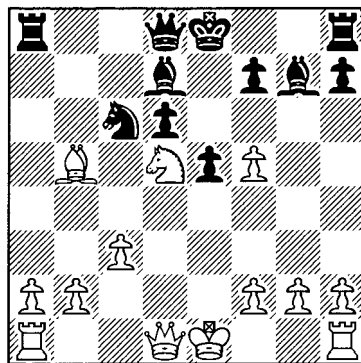


Diagram 40 (B)

White has three pawns for the piece

15 exf5 (Diagram 40) 15...0-0

Rogozenko speaks kindly in his book of 15...Nb8 but he has changed his mind in *Mega Database 2007*. Black doesn't have to be afraid of 16 Qg4 Kf8 (the king's rook is useful on g8), while 16 Bd3 (in Rogozenko's present view 16 a4 Bxb5 17 axb5 Rxa1 18 Qxa1 0-0 19 Qa3 or 19 0-0 Nd7 20 Qa7 favours White) 16...Na6 17 0-0 (17 Qf3 Nc5 18 Nc7+ Qxc7 19 Qxa8+ Ke7 20 Qf3 Rb8 is also promising for Black)

17...Nc7 18 Be4 Nxd5 19 Qxd5 Ra6 20 a4 0-0 21 a5 Bc6 22 Qc4 Qc8 favoured Black if anyone in C.Lupulescu-D.Rogozenko, Galati 2005.

In his next game against this system the Romanian preferred the experimental 15...Rb8 16 a4 Rg8 (one can see the sense in this: the rook will be active on this file, the king should be OK on f8, and f6 tricks are avoided; on the other hand the unconnected rooks make it harder to defend against the passed pawns if they do get on their way), but White obtained the advantage with 17 Qf3 Ne7 18 Ne3 Bf6 19 0-0 Rg5 20 Rfd1 in G.Ardelean-D.Rogozenko, Timisoara 2006.

16 0-0

This is really the usual starting point of this system. 16 Qg4 instead can be met either by 16...Nb8 or by 16...Kh8.

16...Rb8

This is the main line, but Black has tried a lot of other moves:

a) 16...e4 (**Diagram 41**) is a tempting move to try and release Black's pieces. White's best is 17 a4 to meet 17...Ne5? with 18 f6; Black continues with 17...Re8 and now Rogozenko likes 18 Re1 as in G.Kuzmin-V.Malakhatko, Alushta 1999. It seems to me that Black would do best now to play 18...Kh8 (18...Re5 is also possible, although White can then go for the tactical resolution 19 Ne3 Ne7 20 Bxd7 Qxd7 21 f6 Bxf6 22 Qg4+ Qxg4 23 Nxxg4 Re6 24 Nxf6+ Rxf6 25 Rxe4 Re6 with an approximately equal ending) 19 Qg4 Re5 20 Ne3 Qf6.

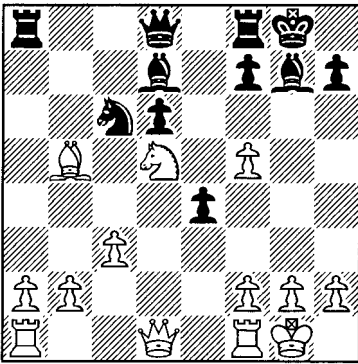


Diagram 41 (W)
Trying to free Black's pieces

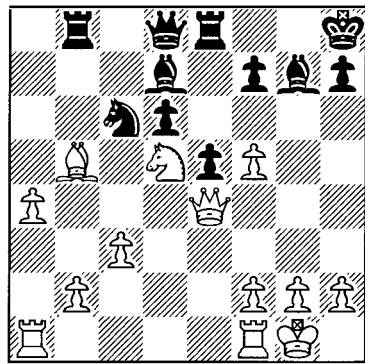


Diagram 42 (B)
f5-f6 becomes possible

b) 16...Kh8 is a generally useful move, although it might be best to wait for Qg4. In Z.Almasi-A.Shirov, German League 2004, White played 17 a4 f6 18 b4 Rb8 (preparing ...Ne7, which if played at once loses an exchange to 19 Bxd7 and Nb6) 19 Qd3 Re8, and now 20 Qe4 would lead back to our main game, but Almasi took

advantage of the move order to try 20 Rfd1, when after 20...e4 21 Qe2 Qc8 he elected to force a draw with 22 Ba6 Qd6 23 Bb5 and so on, although Rogozenko makes a good case for playing on with 22 a5.

c) 16...Re8 can be met with 17 Qg4 Kh8 18 Qe4, when Black can hardly do anything but transpose to Almasi-Wang Yue; but in S.Karjakin-L.McShane, Pamplona 2003, White chose instead almost to tempt ...e4 with 17 Qf3 e4 18 Qg3 Kh8 19 Qxd6 when Black can choose between 19...Be5 20 Qh6 Bg7 21 Qd6 repeating, or various tactical complications, such as those after 19...Ne5 20 Bxd7 Ra7.

17 a4 Re8 18 Qg4

18 Qf3 e4 19 Qg3 leads to similar complications as the Karjakin game above, but the text is designed to prevent ...e4.

18...Kh8 19 Qe4 (Diagram 42)

Instead 19 Qh5 can be met either by 19...Kg8 or 19...Ne7 20 Bxd7 Qxd7 21 Qxf7 Qxf5 22 Qxf5 Nxf5 with a fairly equal endgame.

19...f6

This doesn't look like something Black wants to play, but it does at least rule out f6 tactics (for example, 19...Ne7?? 20 f6). Likewise 19...Qg5 can be strongly met by 20 f6, as indeed could 19...Rg8 be, although in I.Cheparinov-H.Saldano, Elgoibar 2004, White (a great exponent of this system) preferred the systematic 20 Rfd1 Bf8 21 b4 Rc8 22 a5 Qg5 23 Ne3, which gave him the advantage too, and illustrated an ideal piece set-up for White in this variation.

20 b4

20 Rfd1 is also played, although it seems to me that the text must be the best move: White's plan must be to advance the queenside pawns, and it is not yet clear where the king's rook should go. After 20 Rfd1, 20...Ne7 21 Bxd7 Qxd7 22 Nxe7 Qxe7 23 b4 Rec8 was Y.Berthelot-A.Flament, Rohde 2006, when in contrast to our main game White felt he had to defend c3 with 24 Rd3, although 24...Qf7 25 a5 still kept it unclear.

20...Ne7

20...Qc8 to tempt g4 is possible; rather than weaken himself like this White can play 21 Qc4 Qb7 22 Rfd1 with a complicated and unclear game.

21 Bxd7 Qxd7 22 Nxe7 Qxe7

22...Rxe7 had been played before this game. After 23 Rfd1 Qc7, 24 Rd3 allows 24...d5 when either 25 Rxd5 Qxc3 or 25 Qxd5 e4 26 Re3 Rd8 give Black enough activity to equalize at least, and I'm not all that convinced White has anything concrete after Kosten's proposal of 24 Qd5 (24 Ra3 Bf8 25 a5 is good for White according to Rogozenko: he says that 23...Qc8 is a better try) 24...Qxc3 25 Qxd6, and now 25...Reb7 26 b5 Qa5, although it's not clear either what Black can undertake.

23 a5 Rec8 24 Rfb1 (Diagram 43)

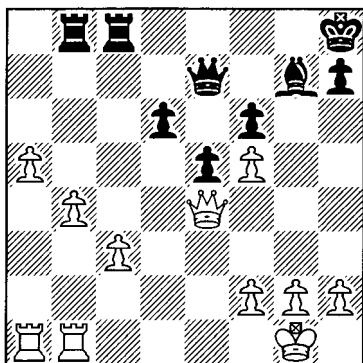


Diagram 43 (B)

White's pawns are pretty quick

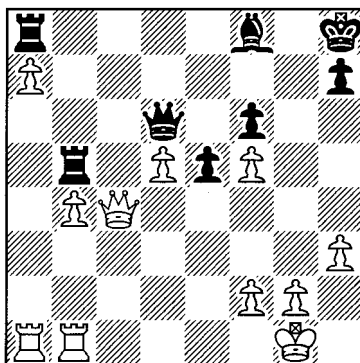


Diagram 44 (B)

Black lacks a satisfactory defence

This is the advantage of not committing to Rfd1 earlier.

24...Qd7

Trying to enforce ...d5. After 24...Rxc3 25 b5 White wins, I think, although a bit of patience is needed: 25...Qa7 (25...Qd7 26 a6 d5 27 Qe1 Rc4 28 b6 – Kosten – wins as well) 26 Qd5 (better than 26 b6 Qa6) 26...Bf8 27 b6 Qa6 28 Qe6 Bg7 29 Qxd6. As Rogozenko says, though, it made more sense to play 24...Qf7, covering c4 as well as d5. The drawback is that b5 is not prevented, but Rogozenko's line 25 b5 d5 26 Qd3 Bf8 27 b6 Bc5 28 Rb5 d4 29 c4 e4 30 Qxe4 Qxc4 31 Rbb1 Bb4 keeps it unclear.

25 c4

White is now a lot better – the bishop can't enter the game without Black giving away another pawn.

25...d5 26 cxd5

26 Qxd5 was far superior according to the machine. To be honest I'm not sure. It's natural to keep the queen on with the chance to take advantage of the exposed king once the bishop comes to the queenside, as in the game.

26...Bf8

After 26...Rb5 Tony Kosten on *ChessPublishing.com* gave the variation 27 a6 Ra8 28 d6 Ra7 29 Qc4 Bf8 30 Rd1 Rb6 31 b5 Bxd6 32 Rd3, when again Black is having great trouble holding on.

27 h3 Rb5 28 a6 Qd6 29 a7 Ra8 30 Qc4 (Diagram 44) 30...Rb6

30...Rxb4 loses at once to 31 Rxb4 Qxb4 32 Qc6.

31 Rc1 Qd7

The a-pawn queens after 31...Rxb4 32 Qc8! Qxd5 33 Rc6! Rxc8 34 Rxc8.

15...Kh8

This move, continuing to fight for ...f5, has not been so common once White uses the f-rook to go to d1. Instead 15...f5 16 exf5 Bxd5 17 f6 Rxf6 (17...Bh6 is ingenious but insufficient: 18 Qxh6 Ra7 19 Bxb5 Rxf6 20 Qh5 Bf7 21 Qg5+) 18 Bxh7+ Kf8 19 Rxd5 Ne7 20 Qf3 is the same as above, but clearly White's plan is to go Nc2 and a4.

Therefore 15...Rb8 comes to mind to prepare Black for that. Play has normally continued 16 Nc2 Qd7 17 h3 (17 Qh4 f5 18 Ncb4 Nxb4 19 Nxb4 Bf6 20 Qh5 a5 21 exf5 Bf7 22 Qh6 Bg7 23 Qh4 axb4 24 f6 Bg6 25 fxg7 Qxg7 is virtually the same) 17...f5 (17...a5 18 Na3 had proven difficult; the knight comes to b5 with some force) 18 Ncb4 Nxb4 19 Nxb4 a5 20 exf5 and now Black can either plunge into unclear complications as Shirov did in Z.Hracek-A.Shirov, German League 2004, with 20...Bxf5, or opt for 20...Bf7 with very similar play to the line above.



NOTE: 20 Nd5 Bxd5 21 exd5 e4 is much worse. White can never allow this set-up in this line: his bishop has no good role while Black's is a monster on e5 and Black can choose between a plan with ...b4 or, more tempting, a straightforward mating attack with ...Rb7-g7 or some such.

16 Nc2 f5! (Diagram 46)

This had been proposed by Rogozenko in his book, but not played before this game so far as I can see.

17 exf5 Bxd5 18 f6 Bh6 19 Qxh6 Ra7

It seems to me that Black is doing great here and that this is what he ought to play, although one game is a slender basis for such a judgement, of course.

20 f7

The difference from 15...f5 is that now there is no check on g5, so 20 Bxb5? Rxf6 21 Qh5 is just excellent for Black in view of 21...Bxg2!.

20...Rxf7 21 Ne1 Rf6 22 Qh5

This move just seems to lose a tempo in the game and it looks as though 22 Qh4 at once was better, but after 22...Qf8 with the idea of ...Rh6 Black is very nicely placed anyway.

22...Rg7 23 Be2 Bf7 24 Qh4 e4 (Diagram 47) 25 Bh5

It's possible that 25 f3 was necessary, though it looks grim. The text should lose, but I'm not sure there was too much good advice one could give White.

25...Bg8

This certainly leaves the h5-bishop looking pretty stupid, but in fact it looks as though the thematic breakthrough 25...Bxh5 26 Qxh5 f3 27 g3 e3! was devastating; it's hard to think White can allow ...e2, but 28 Nxf3 (28 Rd3 exf2+ 29 Kxf2 Qb6+

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

30 Kf1 Ne5 31 Rd4 Qc6 also yields a winning attack) 28...Qf8 29 Nh4 exf2+ 30 Kf1 Re7 is crushing with the idea of ...Re1+.

26 g3 Qf8 27 Ng2 Ne5 28 Rd2 Nc4

Plenty good enough, but the cold-blooded 28...Rgg6 followed by ...Rh6 wins decisive material in a move or two.

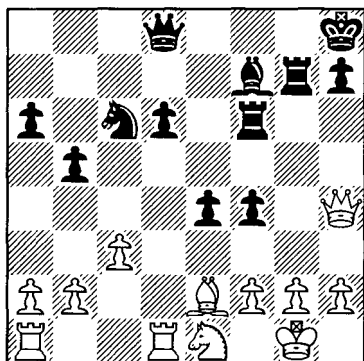


Diagram 47 (W)

It's already rather grim for White

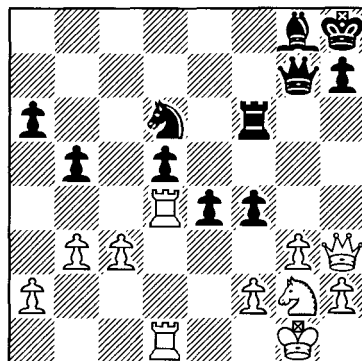


Diagram 48 (B)

Black is drifting

29 Rd4 d5 30 b3 Nd6

A strange move. It doesn't look right to move the knight away from f3, but in fact White now has to lose material on the kingside. After 30...Ne5 31 Rad1 Rf5 the threat of ...Rgg5 forces White to give up a couple of exchanges with 32 Rxd5 Bxd5 33 Rxd5 Rgg5 34 Rxe5 Rxe5 35 Nxf4, but possibly Filippov thought it wouldn't be so easy to win this position.

31 Bg4 Rgg6 32 Rad1 Qg7 33 Bh3 Rh6 34 Qg4 Rxh3?!

34...Rfg6 was decisive in view of the variation 35 Qd7 Qf6 (threatening 36...Rg7) 36 Rxd5 Bxd5 37 Rxd5 b4, but the text may still be OK.

35 Qxh3 (Diagram 48) 35...Be6

Whether Black could still win is unclear to me; the logical conclusion of the plan begun with 30...Nd6 was 35...Rh6 36 Nh4 Be6 37 Qg2 f3 38 Nxf3 Bh3 39 Qh1 Bg4 40 Ne1 Bxd1 41 Rxd1 Qxc3. This variation is pretty much forced but is not easy to calculate in time trouble, and in any event, while Black is definitely better, it's not so easy to win the final position with Black's exposed king.

36 Qh4 Nf5 37 Qh5 Bf7 38 Qh3 Nxd4 39 Qc8+ Qg8 40 Qxg8+ Kxg8 41 cxd4 f3 42 Ne3 Rc6 43 Kf1 b4 44 Ke1 Rc3 45 Rd2 Rc1+ 46 Rd1 Rc3 47 Rd2 Rc1+ ½-½

White has established a blockade.

Points to Remember

1. In this specific order of moves White targets f5 and is able to force ...f4 (unless Black wants to play the solid but slightly miserable line with 14...fxe4 instead).
2. Thereafter, Black's best plan is to play consistently for ...f7-f5. He has to be aware at all times of the sequence ...f5, exf5 ...Bxd5, f6.
3. Once Black gets in ...f5 he is threatening ...Bxd5, exd5 ...e4, which White can essentially never allow.
4. After exf5, though, White cannot hold on to d5, and Black should obtain decent chances in a very dynamic and tactical position.

White Plays 11 c3

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg7 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 c3 (Diagram 49)

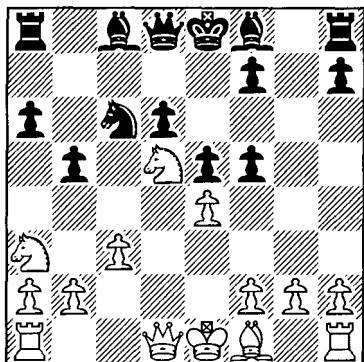


Diagram 49 (B)

A fairly theoretical option

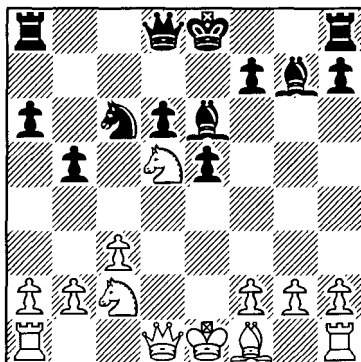


Diagram 50 (W)

An interesting alternative to 13...0-0

11...Bg7 12 exf5

As usual White plays to retain control of d5. Instead 12 Bd3 Be6 would transpose to the last section.

12...Bxf5 13 Nc2 0-0

Black can also employ 13...Be6 (Diagram 50), intending to challenge for d5 with ...Ne7.



TIP: An immediate 13...Ne7 is well met by 14 Bd3, so Black has to spend this one tempo first if he wishes to challenge the d5-knight.

After 13...Be6:

a) 14 Nce3 Ne7 is the whole point of Black's system. Now the attempt to blockade f5 with 15 Nxe7 Qxe7 16 Qf3 0-0 17 Bd3 fails to 17...d5! 18 Nxd5 Bxd5 19 Qxd5 Rad8 20 Qe4 f5 21 Qe3 e4 22 Bc2 f4 23 Qxe4 Rfe8 24 Qxe7 Rxe7+ 25 Kf1 Rd2, which has left White struggling in a number of games. Instead White really has to develop his light-squared bishop to g2 (e2 is possible but represents a success for Black, since the bishop fights neither for f5 nor d5): 15 g3 Nxd5 (Black should get this in before White can recapture with the bishop) 16 Nxd5 0-0 17 Bg2 leads to positions very similar to Game 31.



NOTE: Black's plans will include ...Rb8, ...a5 and ...b4 and challenging the central light squares with ...Qd7-f7, ...f5 and perhaps ...e4 at some moment, and possibly ...Rfc8-c5. Meanwhile White's ideas will probably include doubling rooks on the d-file, placing the queen on h5 or e2, and combining the central pressure with ideas on the kingside like f4 and perhaps g4 to break up the f5/e4 duo.

The most accurate way for Black to develop these notions is considered to be 17...a5! 18 0-0 f5. The point of playing precisely these two moves is that they turn out to be the perfect ones to counter White's 19 Qh5. Black has the excellent rejoinder 19...b4!, taking advantage of White's momentary lack of central control to inflict weaknesses on the queenside. To make this move work he needs to have ...f5 in rather than ...Rb8, so that ...e4 is possible in some lines. Rogozenko gives the continuation 20 Rad1 (the point of the pawn sacrifice is 20 cxb4 axb4 21 Nxb4 e4, illustrating the need for 18...f5, after which Black is much better) 20...bxc3 21 Nxc3 Rb8 22 Rd2 e4 23 Rfd1 Be5 24 f4 exf3 25 Bxf3 Kh8 (**Diagram 51**) with a position-type where Black is better:

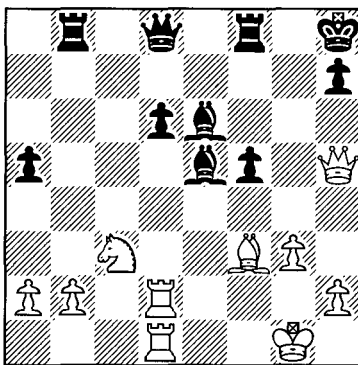


Diagram 51 (W)

Black is better

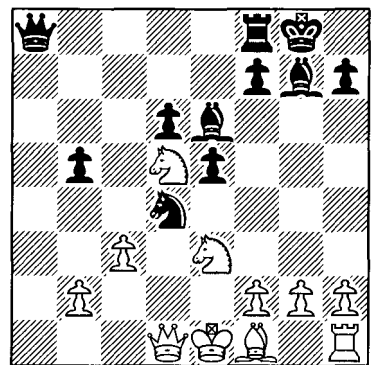


Diagram 52 (W)

Exploiting White's lack of development

his strongly entrenched bishop (of course the d-pawn is going to stay where it is for a long time) is miles better than White's feeble knight, he has the possibility of ...f4 (also after Nd5 ...Bxd5, Bxd5 this can be strong, as in some games by Kramnik), and the b8-rook and a5-pawn between them restrain White's majority totally; b2 is no more than a target. In view of this White has to develop his queen more modestly on e2, and the game goes on, along the lines I indicated above and indeed of Game 31.

b) Unsurprisingly an immediate 14 g3 is a more critical try, as we'll see in Game 31.

c) 14 a4 is a simplifying try which might be seen as a drawback to Black's move order; he has to sacrifice the pawn with 14...0-0 (after 14...bxa4 15 Rxa4 0-0 White cannot win the pawn at once with 16 Rxa6 Rxa6 17 Bxa6 because of 17...Bxd5 18 Qxd5 Qb6, but he has a nagging positional advantage after something like 16 Nce3 Ne7 17 Bc4 Rb8 18 Rxa6 Nxd5 19 Bxd5 Rxb2 20 0-0) 15 axb5 axb5 16 Rxa8 Qxa8 17 Nce3 (it is unwise to grab the pawn with 17 Bxb5 due to 17...Nd4!, which is very strong and not a true piece sacrifice in view of 18 Ne7+ Kh8 19 cxd4 Qxg2 20 Rf1 Qb7, but if White wants to make a draw he can with 17 Nc7 Qa2, which leads to complete simplification), and now 17...Nd4! (**Diagram 52**) appears to give White nothing here, even though Black is genuinely giving up a piece. The most recent game was S.Azarov-T.Nedev, Turin Olympiad 2006, which went 18 Nc7 Qa2 19 Nxe6 (19 cxd4 Bb3 20 Qc1 exd4 is good for Black – watch out for ...Qa5+) 19...fxe6!? (19...Nxe6 had been played previously, which seems reliable as well) 20 cxd4 Qxb2 21 Qd2 Qxd2+ 22 Kxd2 Rxf2+ 23 Ke1 Ra2 24 dxe5 Bxe5 25 Be2 Ra1+ 26 Bd1 b4 with equality.

Returning to 13...0-0:

14 Nce3 (Diagram 53)

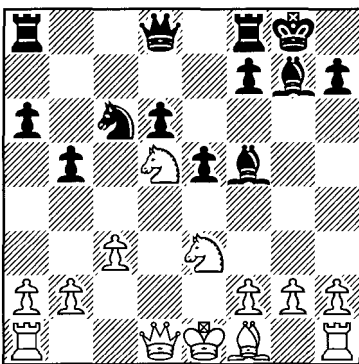


Diagram 53 (B)

The bishop has several options

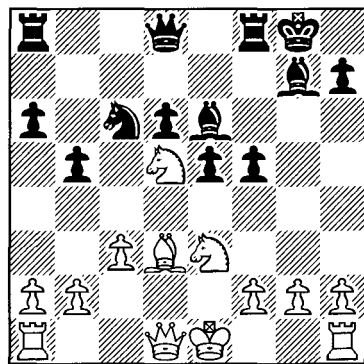


Diagram 54 (W)

Harmonious play from Black

14...Be6

Black has also tried 14...Bd7, 14...Bg6 and 14...Be4, but to me the text seems so natural and so much more attuned to the basic idea of the Sveshnikov – to fight for d5 – that I'm going to concentrate on it.

15 Bd3

White's moves are all naturally aimed at the light squares; Qh5, 0-0 and then perhaps a4 will typically follow, all seeking to get at Black's weakened light square complex.

15...f5 (Diagram 54)

No comment necessary. Black has to play this move to allow his rook to join the fight for f5. Now we reach an important theoretical divide:

- a) 16 Bc2 hopes for an early forced draw, as we will see in Game 32.
- b) 16 Qh5 is quite a natural move, much debated over the years but now believed not to give White any advantage as Game 33 reveals.
- c) Game 34's 16 0-0 has replaced 16 Qh5 of late as the vogue continuation.

Illustrative Games

Game 31

□ D.Brandenburg ■ S.Zhigalko

Hengelo 2005

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 Bg7 11 c3 f5 12 exf5 Bxf5 13 Nc2 Be6 14 g3 (Diagram 55)

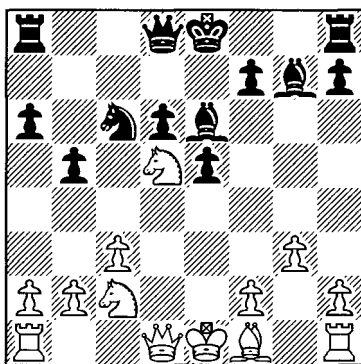


Diagram 55 (B)

Preparing to cover d5 with Bg2

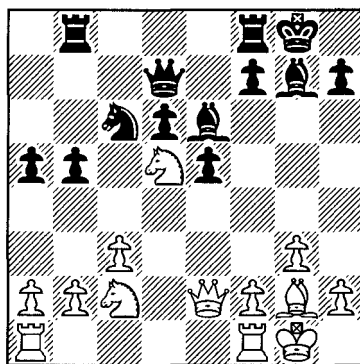


Diagram 56 (W)

Black ignores the d5-knight

A modern way of fighting against Black's set-up.



NOTE: White sees that that Black intends to play ...Ne7 and that he will not be able to put his bishop on d3, and his idea in playing g3 at once is so that he can recapture with the bishop on d5 and force Black to exchange light-squared bishops if he wants to exchange knights. White thus succeeds in keeping the knights on the board.

Rogozenko explains the various benefits of this for White: the knight on c2 has slightly more options than the c6-knight (assuming ...Ne7 is ruled out), and it can go either to e3 at the proper moment or sometimes to a3 after ...a5 (on b5 it can be very strong); and the c6-knight can hang sometimes during tactics, while on c6 it is also blocking the manoeuvre ...Rc8-c5. Lastly, which Rogozenko does not mention but seems quite important to me, the presence of knights tends to deprive Black of his option of ...Bxd5 to create a pure opposite-coloured bishop position.

14...0-0 15 Bg2 a5 16 0-0 Rb8

16...f5 is more normal, but actually it leads to very much the same sort of positions. With the text Black avoids some ideas like 16...f5 17 Nf4 or 17 Re1, not that either of those is terribly devastating.

17 Qe2

17 Qh5 f5 transposes to the same position as 16...f5 17 Qh5 Rb8. Black does have to take care not to delay ...f5 too long though, since 17...Qd7 allows Dvoirys' unexpected 18 Nce3 f5 19 g4, when 19...fxg4 20 Be4 gives White a very strong attack, and the problem is that the unprotected queen on d7 rules out 19...Bf7? 20 Qxf5. After 17...f5 the similar idea 18 Nce3 Kh8 19 g4! can be defused by 19...Bf7 20 Qh3 fxg4; instead of this, normal is 19 Rad1 b4 followed by ...bxc3 with about equality. Another idea is 17 Qd2 f5 18 Rad1, when Black has to be careful to play 18...Qd7 (since 18...Kh8 19 Nde3 simply drops the d-pawn), but after that he ought to be fine.

17...Qd7 (Diagram 56) 18 Rad1

18 Rfd1 is another plan, although since a4 is not an option White might find that he wants a rook on f1 to give punch to an f3-idea. Play may continue 18...f5 19 Rd2 e4 20 Rad1 Ne5 when Black is doing pretty well.

18...f5 19 f4

After 19 Rd2 Black could either play 19...b4 or 19...e4, when 20 f3 Nd4 21 Nxd4 Bxd5 is a suggestion of Rogozenko's (the e-pawn is immune for the moment in view of ...Bc4, but even after 22 b3 b4 23 c4 Bb7 it cannot be taken since ...Re8 will pin the bishop if it captures).

19...Kh8

Enabling Black to recapture on e5 with the pawn by ruling out Nf6+. 19...e4 at once is a more normal reaction, but fxe5 is hardly good for White in any case,

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

since it eliminates the d6-weakness and gives Black a powerful pair of connected pawns.

20 Nce3 e4 (Diagram 57)

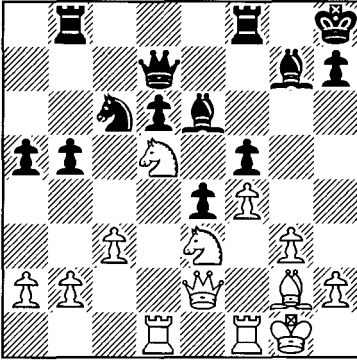


Diagram 57 (W)

White must play for g3-g4

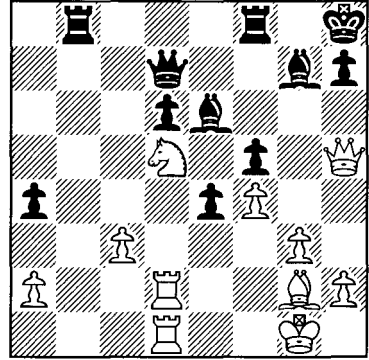


Diagram 58 (W)

There's no hurry for Black

20...Ne7 was an option, maintaining the tension for a move longer. It's difficult for White to find a useful waiting move.

21 Qh5

This loss of tempo gives Black a good position. White's play so far looks designed for 21 g4 at this moment, but either his nerve failed him or he saw something he didn't like; 21...fxg4 22 Bxe4 Ne7 23 Rf2 looks like a natural continuation with both sides fighting for and against f5, and about equal chances.

21...Ne7 22 Rd2 Nxd5 23 Nxd5 b4 24 Rfd1

It's too late for 24 g4 now – to threaten anything White would need to take the knight back to e3, and Black is too quick with the powerful 24...Bxd5 25 Rxd5 bxc3 26 bxc3 Bxc3.

24...bxc3 25 bxc3

25 Nxc3 Rb6 and ...Rfb8 isn't much better.

25...a4 (Diagram 58)

No hurry. White is curiously short of good moves to play, so Black takes the time to get this guy a couple of strides nearer the endzone before breaking the tension.

26 Kh1 a3 27 Ne3 Bxc3 28 Rxd6 Qf7 29 Qe2

29 Qxf7 Bxf7 isn't much better; for example, 30 Ra6 Ra8 31 Rc6 Rfc8 (31...Bb2 32 Nc4 enables White to put up a certain amount of resistance) 32 Rxc8+ Rxc8.

29...Bxa2 30 Rd7 Qg8 31 Nd5 Bxd5 32 R7xd5 Bb2 33 Rb5 Rxb5 34 Qxb5 Rb8 35

Qxf5 a2 36 Bxe4 a1Q 37 Rxa1 Bxa1 38 Qh5 Re8 39 Qa5 Bd4 40 Qf5 Re7 41 Bd3 Qd8 0-1

A game which illustrates one great advantage of the Sveshnikov, which is just how critical the positions can be for White. One loss of tempo was enough for Black to assume the initiative here, and he prosecuted it splendidly.

Points to Remember

1. The point of 13...Be6 is to get ...Ne7 in as soon as possible, keep the bishop off d3 and force White to deploy it on g2.
2. After 14 Nce3 Ne7 15 g3 Black can stop the active placement of White's queen on h5 by the exact sequence 15...Nxd5 16 Nxd5 0-0 17 Bg2 a5! 18 0-0 f5, because of 19 Qh5 b4!.
3. After the immediate 14 g3 Black cannot get ...Ne7 in fast enough to stop White recapturing with the bishop, so he does best to forgo that idea for the moment and concentrate on developing.
4. Instead after 14 g3 Black follows the plan of ...a5, ...f5 and ...Rb8. Other useful moves are ...Kh8, ...Qd7 and ...Rfc8.
5. If you don't mind the draw after 14 a4, then 13...Be6 looks an excellent alternative to the commoner (in the West at least) 13...0-0.

Game 32

□ **K.Maslak** ■ **Y.Kryvoruchko**

Olomouc 2006

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 c3 Bg7 12 exf5 Bxf5 13 Nc2 0-0 14 Nce3 Be6 15 Bd3 f5 16 Bc2

I thought I'd show this game since 16 Bc2 has been thought to be a drawing variation. The idea of the move is basically prophylactic: White wants to draw the sting from ...e4 while reserving the choice of entering variations with 0-0 or Qh5 first.

16...Bh6

This was a new move as far as I can tell. Black can naturally play other moves, but the drawing variation hallowed by theory is 16...f4 17 Qh5 (White has no choice; 17 Nf1 is unthinkable), and now the clever 17...Rf7, when White doesn't have anything better than 18 Bxh7+ (18 Qxh7+? Kf8 19 Bf5 Qe8! simply loses material) 18...Kf8 19 Bf5 Qe8 20 Bxe6 Qxe6 21 Qg4 Qh6 (covering f4) 22 Nf5 (22 Nc2 e4 is very dangerous) 22...Qe6 (**Diagram 59**) 23 Nfe3 with a draw.



NOTE: The text, fighting for d5 by exchanging the e3-knight, is a standard manoeuvre in other lines of the Sveshnikov but a new

page in this line; usually Black players tend to feel that their king needs the protection of the g7-bishop.

17 Qh5

The obvious alternative is 17 0-0, but after 17...f4 18 Ng4 (18 Qh5 is just bad: 18...Qg5 19 Qxg5+ Bxg5 20 Nc7 Bf7 21 Nxa8 fxe3 22 Nb6 exf2+ and so on), the knight on g4 is a bit of a liability: Black just retreats with 18...Bg7, and 19 Qd3 can be met with 19...Qh4.

17...Bxe3 18 Nxe3 Qe8 (Diagram 60) 19 Qh3

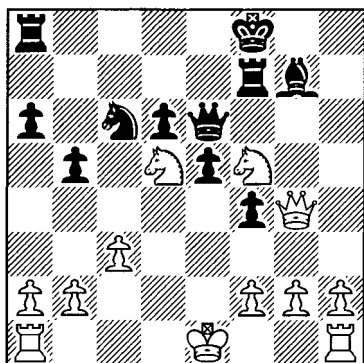


Diagram 59 (W)

White must repeat with 23 Nfe3

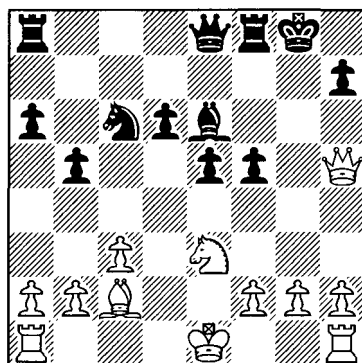


Diagram 60 (W)

Black supports his mobile centre

19 Qg5+ Qg6 20 h4 is a possibility which is best met by 20...Qg7, rather than 20...Qxg5 21 hxg5 which brings White's rook dangerously into the game: Black's best is 21...f4 22 Bxh7+ Kg7 when he certainly has some compensation but I think White can maintain some advantage. After the superior 20...Qg7 White can just about win the battle for d5 in the short term: 21 Rd1 Rad8 22 Bb3 Bxb3 23 axb3 h6 24 Qxg7+ Kxg7, but Black's king can come to e6 and White has no advantage.

19...Qf7

Defending f5 (and h7). White already has to be careful to keep the balance.

20 Qg3+

A natural enough try, organizing f4 to try and halt Black's mobile pawn mass, but it doesn't really work: White is losing too much time, forcing the useful ...Kh8 and giving Black ...Rg8 for free too. Instead the computer wants to play 20 0-0-0 Rad8 21 g4, which produces complications I hesitate to give an opinion about, although I suspect Black does better to start with 21...Ne7, rather than 21...fxg4 when the thing's idea is 22 Qh6 Bxa2 23 Rhg1.

20...Kh8 21 f4 d5! (Diagram 61)

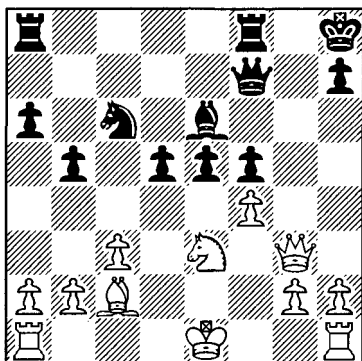


Diagram 61 (W)

A powerful central advance

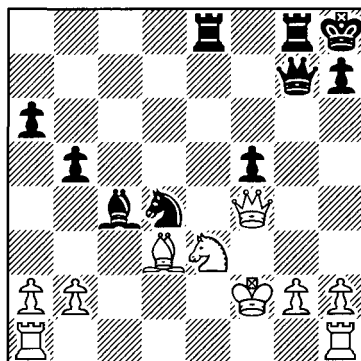


Diagram 62 (W)

The attack is decisive

Winning the battle for d5 in some style; White must have underestimated this.

22 Nd1

Miserable, but 22 0-0 d4 wasn't much better; for example, 23 cxd4 exd4 24 Nd1 Rg8 25 Qh3 Nb4.

22...Rg8 23 Qf2 Qg7!

The perfect square for the queen, a more than adequate substitute for the bishop.

24 Ne3

Going to and fro with the knight like this is obviously a distress signal, but 24 0-0 exf4 is surprisingly strong. It looks as though White ought to be able to organize recapturing on f4 and then dam the g-file with g3, but Black is too quick; for example, 25 Qd2 d4 26 Rxf4 Rad8 27 Rf2 dxc3 28 Qxc3 Nd4 with a big advantage to Black.

24...exf4 25 Qxf4 d4

The same recipe: Black's activity is too much for White.

26 cxd4 Nxd4 27 Bd3 Rae8 28 Kf2 Bc4 (Diagram 62)

White is lost. Black doesn't even need to claim he's threatening ...Rxe3; the prosaic ...Ne6 and ...f4 will do the job just fine.

29 Bxc4 bxc4 30 g3 Re4 31 Qd6 f4 32 gxf4 Rxe3 33 Rag1 Re2+ 34 Kf1 Rg2 0-1

A finely conducted attack and an original strategic idea at an unusually early stage of the game for the Sveshnikov.

Points to Remember

1. 16 Bc2 is more or less an invitation to a draw.
2. However, the little-tried idea in the game means that it simply loses a tempo, and should enable Black to win the fight for d5.

Game 33

□ N.Grigore ■ C.Stanculescu

Predeal 2006

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 exf5 Bxf5 12 c3 Bg7 13 Nc2 0-0 14 Nce3 Be6 15 Bd3 f5 16 Qh5 (Diagram 63)

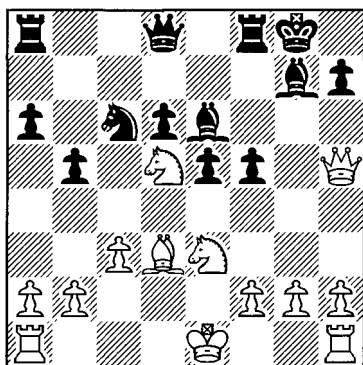


Diagram 63 (B)

A typical way to pressurize f5

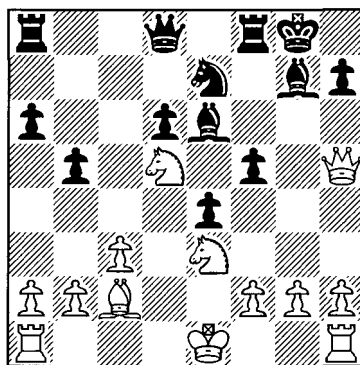


Diagram 64 (W)

Undermining d5

By the pressure on f5 and h7 White prevents both ...f4 and also the ...Bh6 of the last game, and he makes ready for Rd1 and Bc2-b3, fighting for d5 without wasting a second for the moment on castling. By keeping his options open with the king he also reserves the option of g4 (which is the reply to 16...Qd7). Nonetheless, despite all these good intentions, according to Rogozenko: 'these days the subject is closed and the verdict leaves little room for doubt: Black's chances are not worse.'

16...e4 17 Bc2 Ne7 (Diagram 64)

Black has tried other ways, but fighting for d5 like this is far the most natural and is now established as best.

18 Nxe7+

This isn't a terribly good move, but in association with the next move it's been

played a couple of times recently and I thought I would show this game because it is generally tactically instructive.

It's much more natural to fight for d5 with either 18 Rd1 or 18 Bb3, or at least to move the knight to f4 so as to blockade the black pawns:

a) 18 Rd1 is the most obvious way to control d5, but Black has a brilliant, thematic and very important reply in 18...b4! (**Diagram 65**).

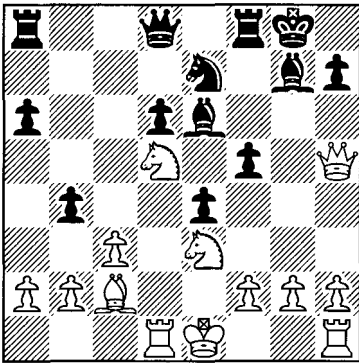


Diagram 65 (W)

Thematic and rather effective

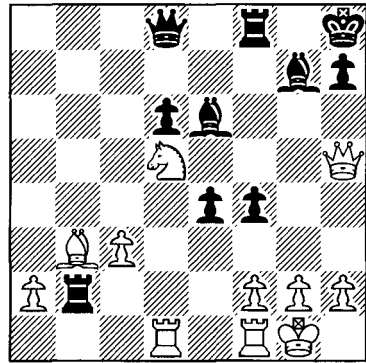


Diagram 66 (W)

An extremely unbalanced middlegame

This move is always terribly important in the Sveshnikov whenever this f5/e4 vs b2/c3 structure arises.



TIP: ...b4 activates Black's queen's rook and his dark-squared bishop, and also by spreading the play a little reduces the importance of the outpost on d5.

For one thing ...b4 enables Black to attack d5 from the side and perhaps conquer it after all, while if White allows the exchange on c3 then of course the c3-pawn is weak. In this particular position, though, Black has to justify himself tactically if White captures on b4: 19 Nxb4 (19 0-0 bxc3 20 bxc3 Kh8 is no problem) 19...a5 20 Nbd5 Nxd5 21 Nxd5 Rb8 (this is the point – White cannot stop this rook becoming horribly active on b2) 22 Bb3 a4 23 Bxa4 Rxb2 24 Bb3 and now Black can choose between taking on d5 and winning back the pawn on c3 with equality, and fighting for the initiative with 24...Kh8 25 0-0 f4 (**Diagram 66**), when according to Gel-fand the critical line is 26 Rb1 Rxb3 27 axb3 Rf5 28 Qg4 Re5 29 Qxf4 Bxd5 with a very complicated game.

b) 18 Nf4 Bf7 19 Bb3 d5 leads to complete equality after 20 Qg5 (20 Qh3 d4 and 20 Qd1 b4 are both promising only for Black) 20...Ng6 (the move order 20...b4 21 cxb4 Ng6 22 Qxd8 – 22 Qxf5 d4 – 22...Raxd8 23 Nxd5 Nxf4 24 Nxf4 Bxb2 deprives

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White of his Ne6 option, but still neither side can hope for much) 21 Qxd8 Raxd8 22 Nexd5 Nxf4 23 Nxf4 b4 24 Ne6 Bxe6 25 Bxe6+ Kh8, V.Anand-V.Kramnik, Frankfurt (rapid) 2000.

c) 18 Bb3 can be met in various ways (for example 18...f4 or 18...Ng6), but one natural way is 18...Kh8 19 Nf4 Bxb3 20 axb3 Qd7 21 0-0 Be5 when it's hard to imagine Black can be worse with such a bishop.

18...Qxe7 19 g4?!

Objectively this is quite a poor move – White can't get away with leaving his king homeless like this, since he can't really contemplate 0-0-0 in view of ...b4 and so on, and he should play something sensible like 19 Bb3 – so the rest of the game can be treated more as tactical instruction than theoretical.

19...b4 (Diagram 67)

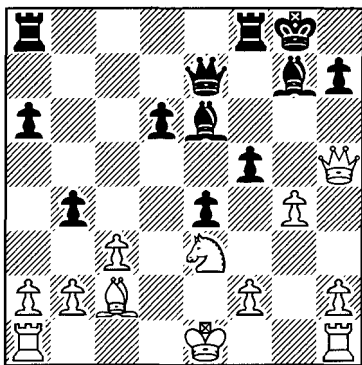


Diagram 67 (W)

Once again the ...b4-advance is key

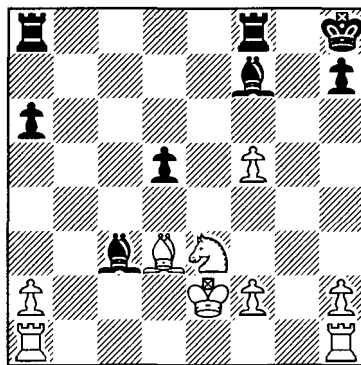


Diagram 68 (B)

White's king is fairly exposed

Excellent; when White embarks on grandiose schemes like this then Black's counterplay generally lies on the dark squares in the centre, and just as in the last game it turns out White can't hold b4 and d4.

20 gxf5 Bf7 21 Qg4 bxc3 22 bxc3

22 Rg1 Qf6 23 0-0-0 cxb2+ 24 Kb1, hiding behind the pawn, was already perhaps the last chance.

22...Kh8 23 Qxe4 Qxe4 24 Bxe4 d5!

Winning material. Instead 24...Bxc3+ 25 Ke2 d5 allows 26 Rac1.

25 Bd3

25 Bxd5 Bxc3+ 26 Ke2 Bxd5 27 Nxd5 Bxa1 28 Rxa1 Rxf5 leaves Black with a winning ending.

25...Bxc3+ 26 Ke2 (Diagram 68) 26...Rae8?

Black surely must have felt in his bones this wasn't the right move – it seems so obvious that f5 is defended and that the e-file should be reserved for the king's rook – but I suppose he must have seen the sequence in the game and calculated that he could actually activate a rook along the f-file, and left it at that. Instead there was a nice forced win with 26...Bh5+ 27 f3 Rfe8 28 Kf2 Bd4 29 Rae1 Rab8 30 Re2 Rb2! 31 Rxb2 Rxe3 and Black wins material thematically on the dark squares. I guess Stanculescu just stopped after 30 Re2.



TIP: The moral is that, if you have a winning tactic at all, it's much more likely to be in lines where you just put the pieces in their natural places and force your opponent on a narrow path, and that before abandoning such a line you should be absolutely sure there isn't a hidden blow at the end of it.

27 Rac1 Bh5+ 28 Kf1

This is the difference of course; 28 f3 isn't forced and so to justify the placement of his rooks Black is forced to part with the monster dark-squared bishop.

28...Bd2 (Diagram 69)

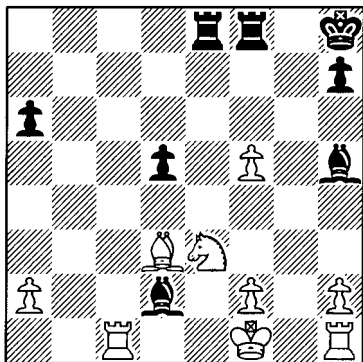


Diagram 69 (W)

White must seize some counterplay

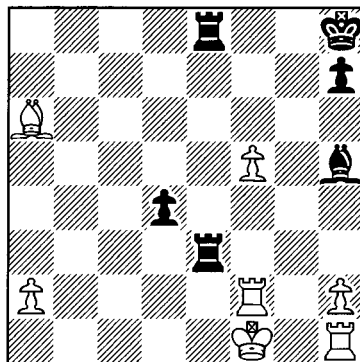


Diagram 70 (W)

White must lose material

29 Rc2?

A feeble move showing poor nerves. It's comforting when being attacked to force the opponent to play particular moves, since it reduces the chances of being struck down by some unseen thunderbolt, but it's a weak way to play which has to be resisted. There wasn't any point in attacking the bishop since obviously Black's next is going to be ...Bxe3 anyway. Instead it was preferable to place the rook ac-

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tively with 29 Rc7 Bxe3 30 f6! Bf7 31 fxe3 Rxe3 32 Bxa6, when Black is still better but the outcome is now in doubt.

29...Bxe3 30 fxe3 Rxe3 31 Bxa6 d4?

A strange move. 31...Rxf5+ 32 Rf2 Bf3 33 Rg1 Rc3 won decisive material at once. Again you feel that Black must have known that this was the right continuation – getting the pieces into natural attacking positions – but I suppose that he missed the last move (possibly because he was distracted by the ineffective 33...Rfe5 34 Rb2). It's more or less the same point again: if a move looks like it puts a piece in a strong attacking position and forces the opponent's reply, be slow to abandon it until you are sure it cannot be followed up, especially if the position is one which seems likely to contain a forced win for you somewhere.

32 Rf2?

And in return White again shows a lack of cold-bloodedness. There's no time to defend the f-pawn, although one can see why White found it comforting. Instead 32 Rg1 was essential, with decent chances to resist after 32...Rxf5+ 33 Rf2.



TIP: It is often useful to allow the attacker to execute a minor threat, like 32...Rxf5+ here, if in return you gain the chance to 'threaten' an exchange of material by an interposition like this and so gain a tempo.

Clearly White simply failed to see Black's next move, but even so on general principles he should have been looking to get his undeveloped pieces out where they can play, rather than boxing in the pieces he has developed for the sake of hanging on to a pawn.

32...Rfe8 (Diagram 70)

Decisive. Since 33 Rg1 Re1+ still wins a rook White loses a stack of material and could resign at once.

33 Bb7 Be2+ 34 Ke1

34 Kg1 d3 wins easily too.

34...Bf3+ 35 Kd2 Bxb7 36 Rb1 Be4 37 Rb4 Rd3+ 38 Kc1 Rc8+ 39 Kb2 Rd1 40 a4 Rb1+ 0-1

Points to Remember

1. The theoretical content of this game is in the note to White's 18th; there's no need to memorize anything, but the lines do contain important themes, especially 18 Rd1 b4!.
2. When under attack it is easy to play 'comforting' moves which attack the opponent's pieces, cover the most obvious threat, and so on. You have to stand the tension better than that, decide which of your opponent's threats are fatal and which

are not, and look for opportunities to activate your own pieces. This ability to keep things tense is one of the main things that separates the stronger from the weaker, at any level of the game.

3. If you feel that your position gives you the 'right' to look for a forced win, never abandon a natural forcing sequence in your calculations until you are quite sure it doesn't do the business for you.

Game 34

□ S.Agdestein ■ L.Johannessen

Norwegian Championship, Sandnes 2005

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 Bg7 11 c3 f5 12 exf5 Bxf5 13 Nc2 0-0 14 Nce3 Be6 15 Bd3 f5 16 0-0 (Diagram 71)

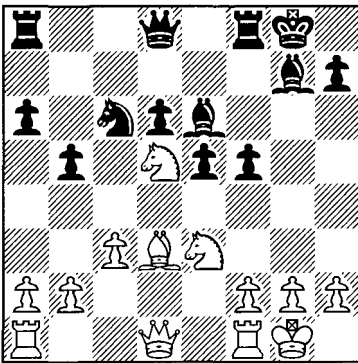


Diagram 71 (B)

A popular and critical position

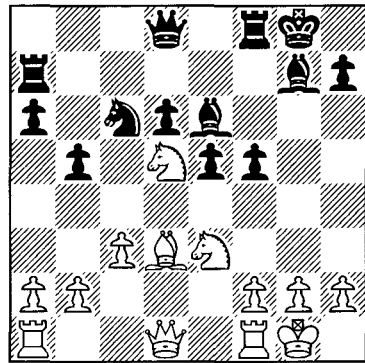


Diagram 72 (W)

Activating the queen's rook

This position is the starting point for one of the main theoretical disputes in the Sveshnikov at the moment. White's line was the one recommended by Jacob Aagaard in *Quality Chess'* impressive *Experts Versus the Sicilian*, and a number of top-class games have been played from this position lately.



WARNING: The first thing to note is that Black should not continue naturally with 16...Ne7??, as a bunch of players from Pentala Harikrishna downwards have done, because White has the unkind 17 Nxe7+ Qxe7 18 Bxf5!, and in view of 18...Bxf5 19 Nxf5 Rxf5? 20 Qd5+, the vital f-pawn disappears and with it all hope of challenging White's grip on the central light squares.

16...Ra7 (Diagram 72)

Kramnik's move is the most usual choice of strong players. Apart from preparing ...Ne7, the rook also has scope from a7 to join a kingside attack from either f7 or g7. Black does have plenty of other moves, however:

a) 16...f4? looks at first glance as though it wins a piece but is in fact a mistake. It is refuted by 17 Qh5 Rf7 18 Bxh7+ Kf8 19 Bg6! Raa7 (19...fxe3 20 Bxf7 Bxf7 21 fxe3 opens the f-file with crushing effect) 20 Bf5 Qe8 21 Bxe6 Qxe6 22 Qg4 (**Diagram 73**) and now White has an extra tempo in any case over the drawing line in Game 32, and moreover we see why he lured the rook to a7, since 22...Qh6? now fails to 23 Qc8+ (this tactical variation, which is the fundamental point behind 16 0-0, was first shown by Vlastimil Jansa, who discusses this line in his underrated *Dynamics of Chess Strategy*). Black therefore has to remove the queen somewhere else, and then White continues with 23 Nc2, and has time to cement his grip because ...e4 is impossible with f4 underdefended.

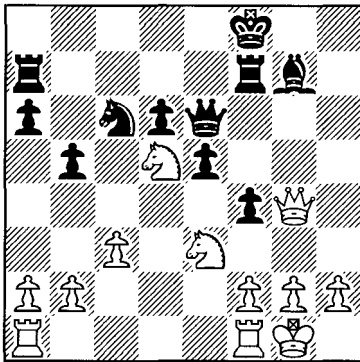


Diagram 73 (B)

White has gained a useful tempo

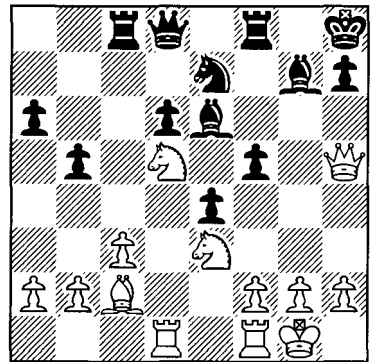


Diagram 74 (W)

Another way to involve the a8-rook

b) 16...Kh8, another way to prepare ...Ne7 and an invariably useful move, is the main alternative. There are many moves White might play, but a natural continuation is 17 Qh5 e4 18 Bc2 Ne7 (it is usually simpler to play this than to put the knight on e5 since, although it looks nice there to a certain extent, it blocks Black's play; in particular it prevents the set-up with ...Rg8 and ...Be5, and so gives a white knight a nice home on f4) 19 Rad1 Rc8 (**Diagram 74**), both preparing ...Rc5 and also activating the rook in the event of ...b4. Now it seems logical for White to challenge the centre with 20 f3, but then Black can instantly equalize with 20...Nxd5 21 Nxd5 Bxd5 22 Rxd5 Qb6+ 23 Kh1 Qe3, when the powerful queen gives him equality at least (24 Rxf5?? Qe2).

c) 16...e4 is a natural move because, after the reflex 17 Bc2?, 17...f4 now does win a

piece since the closing of the b1-h7 diagonal means 18 Qh5 is nothing, and although d5 is defended the e3-knight is rather unexpectedly trapped! However, 17 Nf4 Bf7 18 Bc2 avoids that problem; Black has to address the blockade of his pawns with 18...Be5 when Jansa claims that White is better after 19 g3, although other authorities give 19...Bxf4 20 gxf4 Qf6 as equal – Kramnik, for instance, whose *Informator* note to that effect Jansa rather splendidly dismisses with the remark ‘I saw somewhere the variation 19...Bxf4 20 gxf4 Qf6=, but how is Black to continue after Bb3 and Kh1?’. Instead Rogozenko gives the long and interesting line 19 Nfd5 Qg5 20 f4 exf3 21 Qxf3 Bh5 22 Qf2 f4 (thus far V.Anand-V.Kramnik, Linares 1998, in which 23 h4 was played) 23 Nc7 Rac8 24 Ne6 Qh6 25 Nxf8 fxe3 26 Qf5 Bxh2+ 27 Kh1 Be5 28 Qh3 Rxf8 29 Rxf8+ Kxf8 30 Bd1 (**Diagram 75**) with advantage for White and which deserves a lot more comment than I can give it.

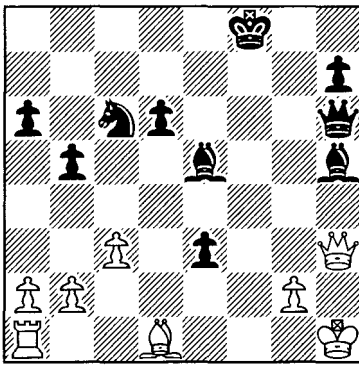


Diagram 75 (B)
Black is struggling

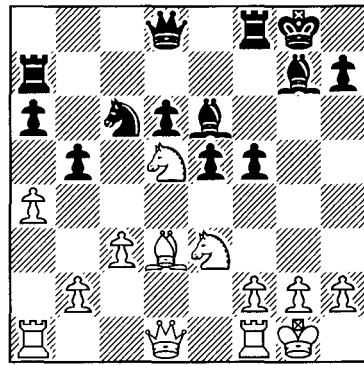


Diagram 76 (B)
Logically opening the queenside

d) 16...Rb8 also prepares ...Ne7.



NOTE: The choice between ...Ra7 and ...Rb8 is common in the Sveshnikov. The former tends to work less well against a4 and to indicate that Black wants to play on the kingside (thus it is more appropriate in positions like this where Black has the mobile pawn duo and the open g-file than, for example, in the 9 Nd5 lines). The latter tends to discourage a4 and perhaps indicate that Black wants to prepare ...b4.

16...Rb8 hasn't been tried very much, but Rogozenko gives another interesting and untried line: 17 Qh5 Qd7 (17...e4 18 Bc2 Ne5 is a sensible alternative, meeting 19 Nf4 with 19...Qf6 – in a strange way the possibility of ...Nc4 makes sense of ...Rb8) 18 g4 e4 19 Bc2 Rbe8 20 Rad1, when he thinks that White has promising play.

17 a4 (Diagram 76)

This is always a natural reply to ...Ra7. Instead 17 f4 is very well met by 17...Ne7; in the structure after ...e4 White seldom achieves much when Black has the option of creating opposite-coloured bishops with ...Bxd5 and ...b4.

17 Qh5 Raf7 doesn't change much if White plays quietly; Black's next move after anything like 18 Rad1 or 18 f4 is 18...Ne7 and he stands fine. For a while White tried the thematic but rather over-brave 18 g4, but the exchange sacrifice 18...e4 19 Bc2 Ne5 20 Nf4 Bd7 21 Bb3 fxe4, and especially the slaughter which occurred in a game P.Svidler-G.Kasparov, internet blitz 1998, after 22 Ne6 Bxe6 23 Bxe6 Qf6 24 Bxf7+ Rxf7, seems to have put him off – the strength of Black's play on the king-side is obvious, although activating the queen's rook with 25 a4 certainly gives White some chances as well.

17...Ne7

The natural continuation, even though it involves a pawn sacrifice. 17...b4 18 cxb4 f4 19 Qh5 Bh8 is an alternative which leads to extremely complicated play.

18 Nxe7+

18 axb5?! doesn't convince after either Topalov's 18...Nxd5 19 Bc4 Nf4 20 Bxe6+ Nxe6 21 Qd5 Qe8 22 Rxa6 or 19 Bxf5 Rxf5 20 Nxf5 Nf4. Meanwhile White has to act at once – after 18 Bc2 Nxd5 19 Nxd5 Black activates the rook with 19...Rb7 and is fine.

18...Rxe7 19 axb5 axb5 (Diagram 77)

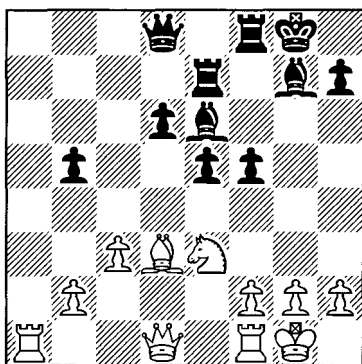


Diagram 77 (W)

A critical pawn sacrifice

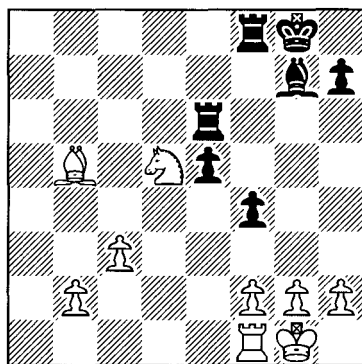


Diagram 78 (B)

The endgame should be drawn

20 Bxb5

Accepting the pawn sacrifice is naturally critical. Instead 20 Bxf5?! is another version of the 16...Ne7 trick: after 20...Bxf5 21 Nxf5 Rxf5 22 Qd5+ and Ra8 White wins,

but 20...Rxf5 avoids this pitfall and just leaves Black better. 20 Ra6 d5 21 Nc2 has also been tried, bringing the knight to b4, but White can't hope for much like this: 21...Bc8 22 Ra8 Qd7 defends b5 and the further 23 Nb4 e4 24 Be2 d4 demonstrated the downside of putting the knight to b4 in V.Anand-G.Kasparov, Moscow 2004.

20...d5 21 Ra6

21 Nc2 Rb7 gives Black good compensation after 22 Na3 Qc7 followed by ...Rfb8 – Rogozenko.

21...f4

We are still deep in theory. The alternative (which is quite probably better) is 21...Kh8 when Black is considered to be doing OK after 22 Qa4 f4 23 Nc2 Bc8 (there are many alternatives for both sides) 24 Ra8 Re6, intending to develop his attack by ...Rh6 and ...Qh4, forcing a weakness by h3 before reverting to the g-file with ...Rg6, as in the impressive game Teichmann-Marotta, correspondence 2003.

22 Rxe6

A safe move; the more critical line is 22 Nc2 Bc8 23 Ra8 Qd6 24 Nb4 Bb7, when White lost horribly after 25 Ra7 and subsequent blunders in V.Anand-P.Leko, Wijk aan Zee 2005, although after 25 Rxf8+ Black still needs to prove he has enough for his pawn.

22...Rxe6 23 Qxd5 Qxd5 24 Nxd5 (Diagram 78) 24...Kh8

Johannessen had previously held this endgame against De Firmian after 24...e4 25 g3 (25 Re1 had been Rogozenko's recommendation – this variation with 21 Ra6 was his suggestion) 25...f3 26 b4 Kh8 27 Rd1 Bh6 28 c4 e3 29 fxe3 Bxe3+ 30 Nxe3 Rxe3. Generally speaking Black ought to be able to defend this endgame: a rook on d6 is especially powerful since it prevents the c-pawn getting past c4 unless the knight moves first, while the other rook can make it very difficult for the bishop to get out of the road and let the b-pawn do anything useful. Black also has a number of tactical ideas on the kingside after ...f3, which both sides need to keep a weather eye out for.

25 f3

A natural attempt to blockade Black's central pawns which seems to fail. White could try any number of other moves, but they aren't likely to change the general evaluation that Black can defend as long as he is careful.

25...e4

Essential, of course – Black can't allow himself to be blockaded by a piece on e4.

26 fxe4 Rxe4 27 b4

It seems that White can't find a way to consolidate his knight on d5 and prevent Black from sacrificing the exchange back for a pawn to achieve a draw, either by exchanging the rooks as well, or by getting active, as for example in the sample line 27 b3 Rd8 28 c4 Bd4+ 29 Kh1 Be5 30 h3 Kg7 31 Rd1 h6 32 b4 Bc3 33 Rd3 Re1+

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

34 Kh2 Be5 35 Rf3 Rxd5 36 cxd5 Rb1, when White's chances of winning this ending, even with his extra pawn, are negligible.

27...Rd8 28 Bd3 Re3! (Diagram 79)

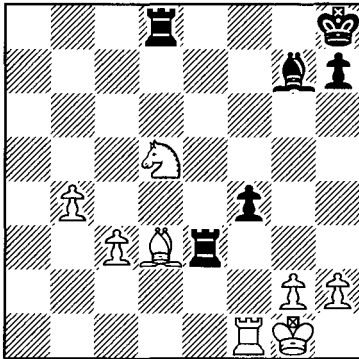


Diagram 79 (W)

Returning the exchange to simplify

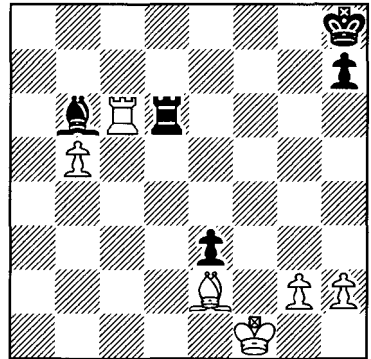


Diagram 80 (B)

The opposite-coloured bishops decide

Another typical exchange offer secures the draw.

29 Nxe3 fxe3 30 Be2 Bxc3 31 Rb1 Rd2 32 Kf1 Bd4 33 b5 Bb6 34 Rc1 Rd6 35 Rc6 (Diagram 80)

Agreeing to the draw, but White's chances were very slight anyway.





35...Rxc6 36 bxc6 Kg7 37 Bf3 Kf6 38 Ke2 Ke5 39 Kd3 Kd6 40 g3 h6 41 g4 Ke5 42 h4 Kd6 43 h5 Bd8 44 Kxe3 ½-½

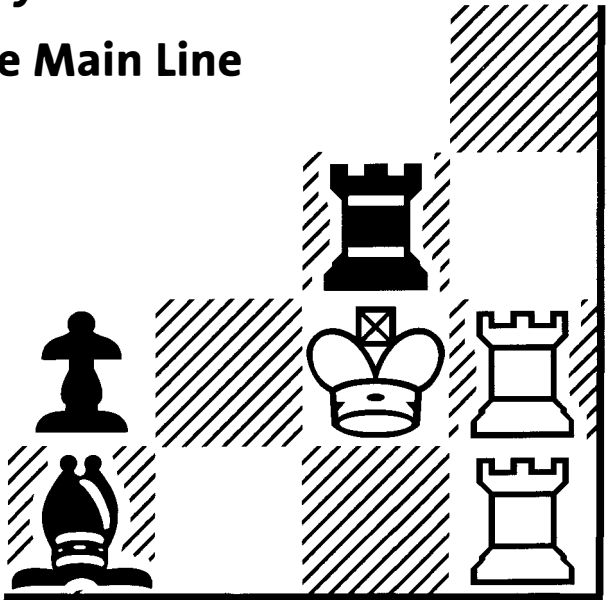
Points to Remember

1. This variation features the most popular opening blunder in the whole Sveshnikov. Watch out all the time in this line for tricks involving taking on f5 followed by Qd5+.
2. In almost every line Black's best plan is to go ...Ne7 and exchange this knight off for the one on d5. Thereafter his plan is generally to play on the kingside in one way or another.
3. The pawn sacrifice in this main line is still being worked out. The line with 21...f4 is a bit arid, but Black has plenty of rich alternatives.

Chapter Seven

The Main Line Chelyabinsk: 11 Bd3

-  Introduction
-  White Plays 12 Qh5
-  White Plays 12 0-0
-  14 c3: The Main Line



Introduction

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3 (Diagram 1)

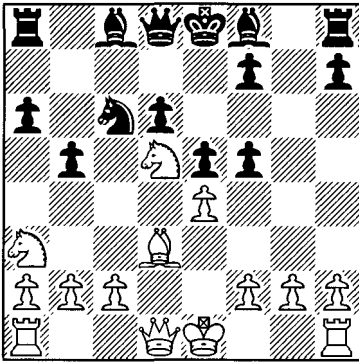


Diagram 1 (B)

Immediately activating the f1-bishop

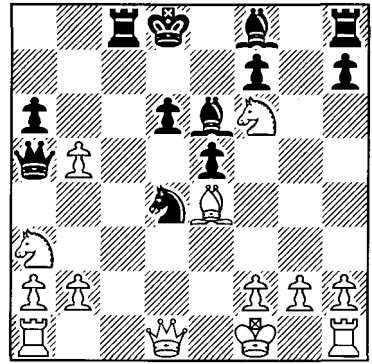


Diagram 2 (W)

Black is for choice

11...Be6 12 0-0

This can possibly be considered the main line. Apart from 12 c3 Bg7, which was dealt with in the second section of the last chapter, and 12 Qh5, the subject of the next section of this chapter, the only real alternative is 12 c4, but Black can displace the white king with 12...Qa5+ 13 Kf1 (13 Qd2 Qxd2+ 14 Kxd2 Bh6+ and ...bxc4 is fine for Black) 13...fxe4 (this move involves sacrificing material; so does 13...Bxd5 14 exd5 Nd4 15 cxb5 axb5 16 Nc2 Nxc2 17 Qxc2 e4 18 Qc6+ Ke7 19 Bxb5 Ra7, but this is nonetheless a very sound alternative – an exchange sacrifice on b5 often comes in handy, unless White goes in for chasing the king to e5, where it proved perfectly safe in the entertaining game V.Ivanovic-E.Sveshnikov, Krk 1976) 14 Bxe4 Rc8, when Black is fine, largely since after 15 Nf6+ Kd8 16 cxb5 Nd4 (Diagram 2) he obtains a strong initiative.

White Plays 12 Qh5

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3 Be6 12 Qh5 (Diagram 3) 12...Rg8



WARNING: The main idea of White's move is revealed after 12...Bg7 13 0-0, when 13...0-0?? is impossible because of 14 exf5 Bxd5 15 f6 h6 16 Qf5 e4 17 fxg7 Re8 18 Qxd5 (Diagram 4)

18...exd3 19 Qxc6 winning a piece.

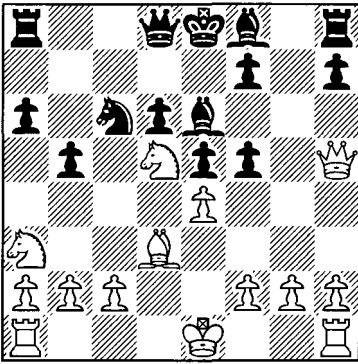


Diagram 3 (B)

Again the queen targets f5 and h7

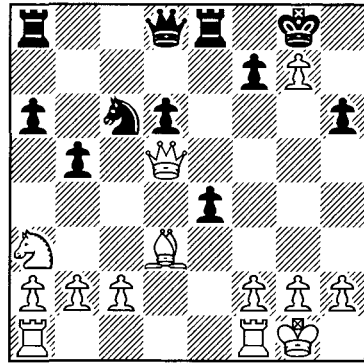


Diagram 4 (B)

Black loses a piece

Consequently Black has to play 13...f4 if he wants to get castled, but then, rather than transposing to Game 30 with 14 c3, White can play 14 c4. This has been considered better for White for a long time, and consequently I'm not going to cover it in detail. With the text Black accepts that his king is going to have to stay in the middle and concentrates on making what capital he can out of the exposed white queen, while also trying to ensure that the white king too will have problems.

After 12...Rg8, 13 g3 is the most natural move, but others have been tried:

a) 13 0-0-0?! Rxg2 14 f4 Nd4 leaves Black better, but I'm going to give the whole of a wonderful game: 15 Ne3 Rf2 16 exf5 Bxa2 17 fxe5 dxe5 18 Nxb5 (have your gold coins ready, please) 18...Bh6!! (**Diagram 5**) 19 Rhe1 (19 Qxh6 Rxc2+ and mate next) 19...axb5 20 Bxb5+ Ke7 21 Qh4+ f6 22 Qxf2 Bf7 23 Bd3 Qb6 24 Be4 Ra2 25 c4 Bxc4 26 Kb1 Qa5 27 Nd5+ Bxd5 28 Qxd4 Ra1+ 29 Kc2 Rxd1 30 Qxd1 Qa4+ 0-1. So who do you think was Black? Tal? No, the great Drawnik himself: M.Brodsky-V.Kramnik, Kherson 1991.

b) 13 0-0 f4 is dangerous for White: the structure is like Game 30 but evidently Black's rook on g8 makes a lot of sense in this set-up with White's king on g1. Meanwhile ...Bg4 is a threat and 14 c4 b4 15 Nc2 Bg4 16 Qxh7 Rg7 is good for Black.

c) After 13 Kf1 Black might as well hang on to the h-pawn with 13...h6 and just carry on. He can play ...Bxd5, exd5 ...Ne7 in a minute, with a typical structure except for the eccentrically placed white king.

d) 13 f4 Rxg2 14 Ne3 Qa5+ 15 Kf1 can hardly be good; after 15...Rd2 (Rogozenko) White is quite poorly placed.

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

e) 13 c4 Rxc2 looks pretty good to me, although in practice 13...Bxd5 has been chosen; then 14 exd5 Nd4 and 14 cxd5? Nb4 are both fine for Black.

f) 13 c3 is covered in Game 35.

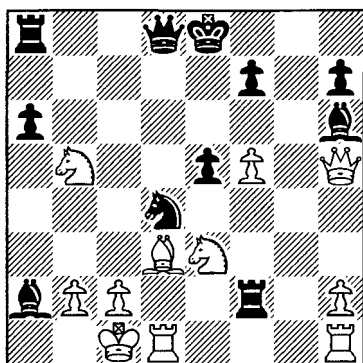


Diagram 5 (W)

Beautiful play from Kramnik

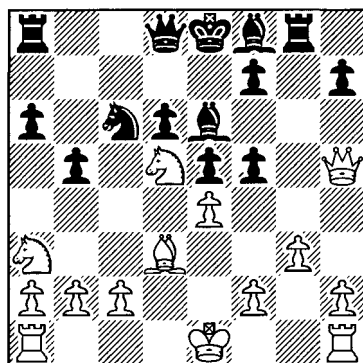


Diagram 6 (W)

White can easily find his queen offside

g) After 13 g3 (**Diagram 6**), both 13...f4 14 gxf4 Bg4 15 Qxh7 Rg7 16 Qh8 Nd4 17 Kf1 Rg6 18 h3! and 13...h6 14 Qd1 Bxd5 15 exd5 Bg7 16 c3 both been weighed in the balance and found wanting, so Black normally chooses among the following:

g1) 13...Rc8 is a very rare move, but one which may be much better than its reputation; see Game 36.

g2) 13...Rg4 cuts off the queen and threatens 14...fxe4. White's only good move is the counter-intuitive 14 f4 (14 Ne3 fxe4! has turned out to be good for Black), and now it seems that Black's best is to sacrifice the exchange: 14...exf4 15 Nxf4 Rxf4 16 gxf4 Qa5+ 17 Kd1 (**Diagram 7**) with a very messy position where, according to Rogozenko, the critical line is 17...fxe4 18 Bxe4 d5 19 Bf5 Qb4 20 Bxe6 Qd4+ 21 Kc1 Qe3+ 22 Kb1 Qxe6.

g3) 13...Rg5 14 Qd1 (14 Qxh7 Nd4 is very dangerous for White; Black's main idea is ...Rg6 trying to trap the queen) 14...Bxd5 15 exd5 Ne7 16 c3 (16 Nxb5 Qb6 retrieves the pawn with at least equality), gives a complicated position in which Leko's 16...Bh6 (Black's trouble is that 16...e4 17 f4 is possible, and after 17...Rg8 18 Be2 Qb6 19 Nc2 Bg7 20 Qd2 Bf6 21 a3 Kf8 22 Kf1 White's active possibilities are greater than Black's, A.Bezgodov-N.Tolstikh, Samara 2000) is the fashion.



NOTE: This position is far from completely understood yet: Black wants to play ...e4 followed by ...f4, without allowing White the resource Qd2 pinning the f4-pawn to an undefended rook.

White's main idea so far has been the pre-emptive 17 Be2 (**Diagram 8**), but now Black changes strategy to attack d5 with 17...Rc8 (meeting 17...e4 with 18 f3 or 18 Qd4 was White's idea), when critical may be 18 Nc2 (18 c4 Qa5+ 19 Kf1 Kf8 is fine for Black since d5 is in trouble) 18...Rc5 19 Nb4 a5 20 Na6 Rxd5 21 Bxb5+ Kf8 22 Qb3, as in I.Rogers-J.Sprenger, Port Erin 2004.

g4) The solid 13...Nd4 is seen in Game 37, and after a long tactical sequence leads to an endgame in which both sides have chances.

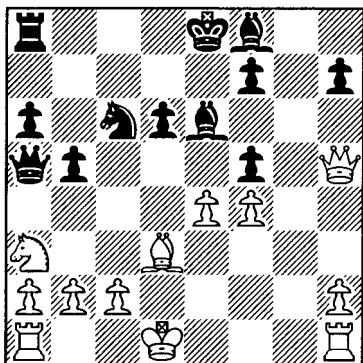


Diagram 7 (B)

An extremely unclear situation

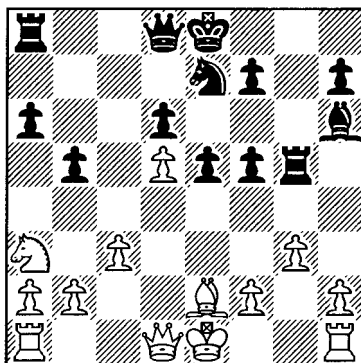


Diagram 8 (B)

White hopes for a loosening ...e4

Illustrative Games

Game 35

□ M.Blushtein ■ M.Gongora Reyes

Havana 2004

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3 Be6 12 Qh5 Rg8 13 c3 Rxc2 (Diagram 9)

Of course; although Black has played a surprising number of other moves.

14 Qf3 Rg4

14...Rg5 is possible too, when White can try 15 h4 Rg4 with play very similar to this game, or else 15 exf5 Bxd5 16 Qxd5 Ne7 17 Qb7 Qc8 – the point is that 18 Qxc8+ Rxc8 is now possible, but still the endgame is fairly equal.

15 exf5

15 h3 Rh4 just makes White's position worse; he has to continue as in the game anyway.

15...Bxd5 16 Qxd5 Ne7 17 Qb7 Qc8 (Diagram 10)

17...Bh6 is an alternative leading to more complicated play, but the text is simple and effective.

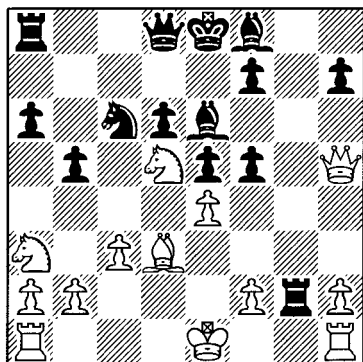


Diagram 9 (W)

Black might as well take the pawn

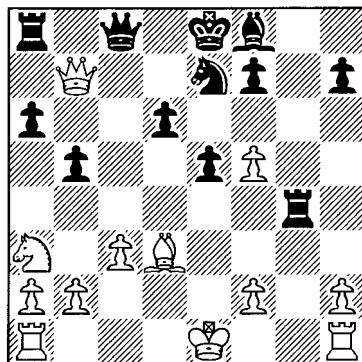


Diagram 10 (W)

The easiest continuation

18 Qb6?

18 Qf3 Rf4 is also poor; instead 18 Qxc8+ was necessary when 18...Rxc8 loses to 19 f6 and Bf5, so after 18...Nxc8 19 Nc2 Nb6 the endgame is about equal (at least I will bow to Rogozenko's grandmasterly pronouncement to that effect, although I would myself prefer to play Black).

18...Nd5

More or less winning.

19 Qa5

19 Bxb5+ Ke7 just wins a piece; is it possible White hallucinated when playing Qb6 and thought that ...Ke7 would still be illegal?

19...Nf4 (Diagram 11) 20 Bf1

20 Bc2 Ng2+ and ...Qc6 is also crushing.

20...Qxf5

20...Qc6 21 0-0-0 at least defends the rook, although after 21...d5 Black is still very much better; but the text is also reasonable.

21 f3?

21 0-0-0 was essential so as at least to get the king out of the way: 21...Bh6 22 Nc2 keeps playing, although White is still lost, of course.

21...Ng2+

21...Rg2 was also crushing since 22 Bxg2 Nxc2+ 23 Kf2 Nh4 is the end, but the text is fine.

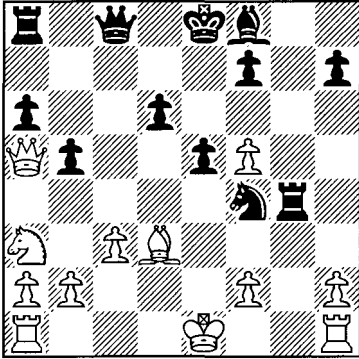


Diagram 11 (W)

White is in a right pickle

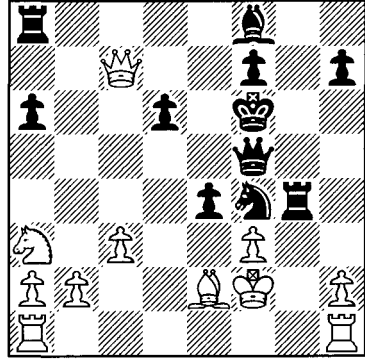


Diagram 12 (W)

Finishing neatly

22 Kf2 e4 23 Bxb5+ Ke7 24 Qc7+ Kf6 25 Be2 Nf4 (Diagram 12) 26 fxe4 Nd3+ 27 Ke3 Bh6+ 28 Kd4 Qe5+ 0-1

28...Qxe4 mate had a lot to be said for it, but no matter.

Points to Remember

Not many really. If White leaves g2 en prise then Black should take it, activating the rook and rupturing White's kingside pawns horribly.

Game 36

□ X.Cheng ■ A.Shabalov

Chicago 2006

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3 Be6 12 Qh5 Rg8 13 g3 Rc8 (Diagram 13) 14 c3 Rg6



NOTE: The main point of this move, besides enabling ...Rh6 in some lines (after Qxh7 in particular), is to unpin the rear f-pawn and thus prepare ...fxe4, Bxe4 ...f5.

15 Nc2

Alternatively:

a) Black's immediate point is that 15 exf5 is not dangerous, because after 15...Bxd5

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

16 fxc6 hxg6 17 Bxc6 fxc6 18 Qxc6+ Kd7 Black is better; for example, 19 0-0 Kc7 20 Nc2 Qe8 21 Qxe8 Rxe8 when the bishops rule the roost.

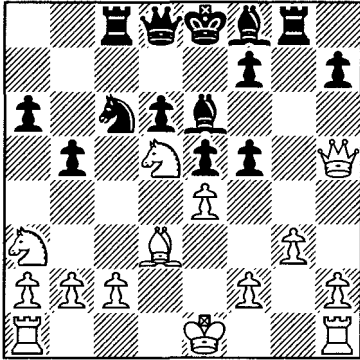


Diagram 13 (W)

Rare but promising

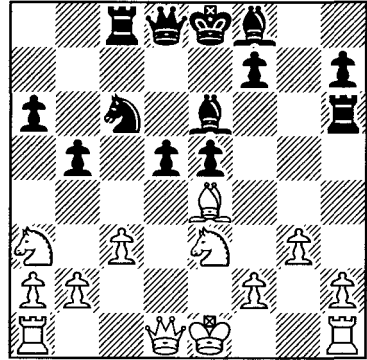


Diagram 14 (W)

An easy equalizer

b) 15 h4 has a clever idea: 15...fxe4 16 Bxe4 and now, unlike below, White has 16...Bg4 17 Qxh7 Rh6 18 Qg8 Be6 thanks to 19 Qg5!. However, 16...f5 17 Bxf5 Bxd5 18 Bxc6+ hxg6 19 Qxc6+ Kd7 is more or less the same position as the last line, but with h4 in, which doesn't alter the evaluation.

c) 15 Ne3 Rh6 16 Qd1 (16 Qf3 fxe4 17 Bxe4 d5 18 Bxd5 Bxd5 19 Nxd5 Bxa3 20 bxa3 Ne7 21 Nf6+ Kf8 22 Rd1 Qc7 is better but still nothing special for White) 16...fxe4 17 Bxe4 allows the blow 17...d5 (**Diagram 14**) 18 Bxd5 Bxd5 19 Qxd5 Qxd5 20 Nxd5 Bxa3 21 bxa3 Rd6 with a fairly equal endgame.

d) 15 Qf3 is the main alternative historically, trying to hold back f5, but the complications work out for Black after 15...Bxd5 16 exd5 e4! 17 Qxf5 Rg5 18 Qf4 (18 Qxh7 is much worse, since after 18...exd3 19 dxc6 Black has 19...Qe7+ 20 Kf1 Qe2+ 21 Kg2 Rh5 22 Qg8 Qe4+ with a terrible position for White) 18...exd3 19 dxc6 Re5+ 20 Kf1 Qb6 21 Qf3 Qxc6, and Black has at least equality in the endgame.

15...fxe4 16 Bxe4 Bg4 (Diagram 15) 17 Qh4

17 Qxh7 Rh6 18 Qg8 Be6 with the threat of 19...f5 wins for Black. Instead 17 Bxc6 Bxh5 18 Bxh5 is the sort of small material investment for the light squares Black always has to be wary of in the Sveshnikov, but here I don't think White has quite enough since he can't get the c2-knight to d5 after 18...Bh6; for example, 19 Bg4 Rb8 20 Bf5 Kf8 21 Bxh7 Ne7 22 Be4 Nxd5 23 Bxd5 a5, and I don't think Black is in any danger.

17...Qxh4 18 gxh4 f5 19 h5 Rg7

19...Rg5 20 h4 Rg7 21 f3 with advantage for White was given by Kasparov, but

Black shouldn't give White the move h4 for free.

20 Nce3

The alternative is 20 h3 Bxh3 21 Bf3 Bg4 22 Nf6+ Kd8 when White has some compensation for the pawn, but it's hard to believe he has chances to be better.

20...fxe4 21 Nxg4 Kf7 (Diagram 16)

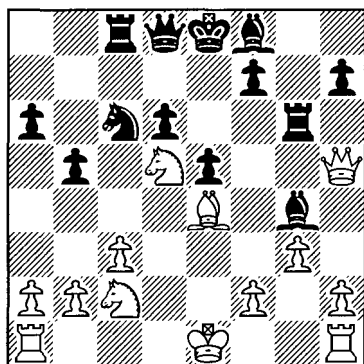


Diagram 15 (W)

White has to trade queens

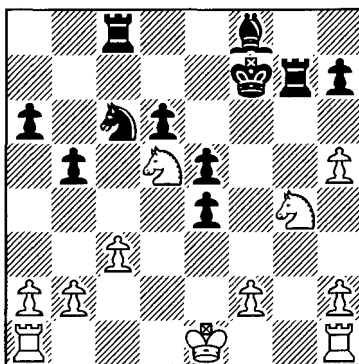


Diagram 16 (W)

Black has some advantage

Black has emerged from the opening in fine shape. White manages to win the front e-pawn but even so Black is much better: Black's king has a wonderful square on e6, the extra h-pawn is more or less useless, White has terrible weaknesses down the f-file, and to cap it all he can't hold down ...d5.

22 Ngf6 Ke6 23 0-0-0 Ne7 24 Nxe7 Bxe7 25 Nxe4 d5 26 Ng3 Rf7 27 Rhf1 b4 28 Kc2 bxc3 29 bxc3 Bb4

Winning back the pawn and transposing to a winning rook ending.

30 Ne2 Bxc3 31 Nxc3 d4 32 Rd3 Rfc7 33 Kb2 Rxc3 34 Rd2 Kd5 35 Rfd1 Rf8 36 Rg1 Rcf3 37 Rg2 R8f5 38 h6 Rf6 39 Rg7 Rxf2 40 Rxf2 Rxf2+ 41 Kb3 Rxh2 42 Rxh7 Ke4 43 Rh8 Kd3 44 Re8 e4 45 Re6 e3 46 Rxa6 e2 47 Re6 Rxh6 0-1

Points to Remember

1. With 12 Qh5 White doesn't waste a second in going for Black's most vulnerable points, and consequently forces Black out of his comfort zone, as it isn't possible to get developed and castle due to the pressure the queen exerts on f5 and h7.
2. Crazy play is the only play: Black needs to keep the king in the centre and stir up enough trouble for White's king that Black gets his chances in the resulting complications.

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

3. The idea of this particular line is to use a string of tactical resources to destroy White's centre through ...fxe4 and ...f5, and this is Black's answer to more or less every White try except 15 Qf3. If by any chance you have failed to memorize the notes to White's 15th and this position crops up, remember that there should be a tactical way to justify this sequence.

Game 37

□ I.Semenova ■ V.Cmilyte

Russian Women's Team Championship 2006

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3 Be6 12 Qh5 Rg8 13 g3 Nd4 (Diagram 17)

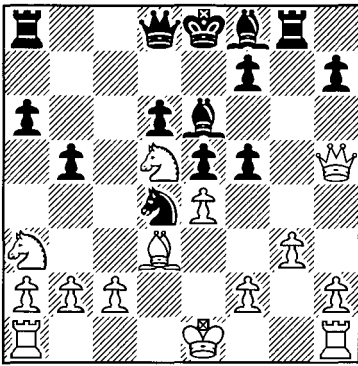


Diagram 17 (W)

Beginning a forcing sequence

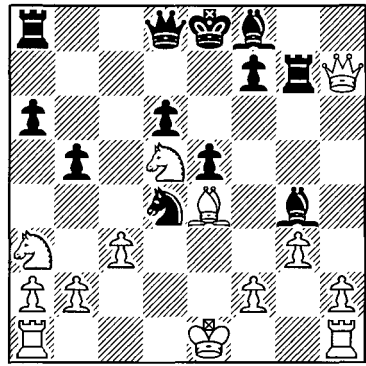


Diagram 18 (W)

It helps to know some theory here!

14 c3

White can't do without this for long; for example, 14 0-0 f4 with the threat of ...Bg4, or 14 0-0-0 Rc8.

14...fxe4 15 Bxe4 Bg4 16 Qxh7 Rg7 (Diagram 18) 17 Qh8?

This is a terrible, virtually losing, move. Instead 17 Qh6 is essential, when 17...Nf3+ gives the key position of this line:

- 18 Kd1? Ng5+ 19 f3 Rg6! 20 Qh4 Nxe4 21 fxg4 Nf2+ won the exchange for inadequate compensation in F.Vallejo Pons-L.Van Wely, Monte Carlo (blindfold) 2005.
- Possible is 18 Kf1 Rg5 19 Nf6+ (19 Qh7? Nd2+ 20 Ke1 Rg7 wins material) 19...Ke7 (19...Qxf6 traps the queen in fine style after 20 Qxf6 Nd2+ and ...Nxe4, but sadly loses to the intermezzo 20 Bxc6+) 20 Qh8 Nd2+ 21 Kg2 Nxe4 22 Nxe4 Rg6, although Black is at least equal here. He can always repeat with ...Rg6-h6, unless

White wants to try 23 Qh4+ Ke6 24 Qxd8 Rxd8, but Black's assets are even more important in the endgame and he has more than enough compensation here.

c) 18 Ke2 Ng5+ 19 f3 Nxe4 20 fxg4 Qc8 (20...Rxc4 21 Qe3 f5 22 Raf1 is worse: Black can't defend f5) 21 Qe3 Qxg4+ 22 Qf3 Qxf3+ 23 Kxf3 f5 24 Nc2 Kf7 (**Diagram 19**) gives the endgame I was mentioning. Black should be aware of the trap 25 Nce3 Ke6 (25...Nf6 is the right move) 26 Nxf5, and ideally even the precise sequence 25 Nde3 Ng5+ 26 Kg2 f4, but it should be possible just to rely on the centre pawns, active rooks and bishop against knight to balance White's hold on d5.

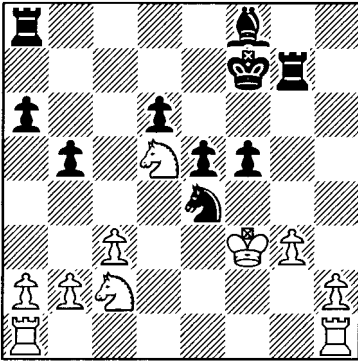


Diagram 19 (W)
An unbalanced ending

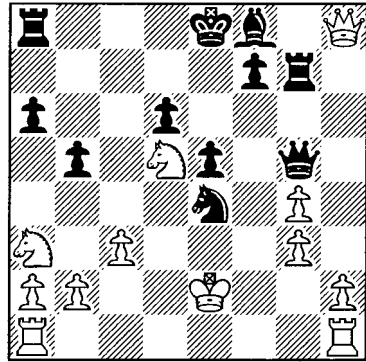


Diagram 20 (W)
White is routed

17...Nf3+ 18 Ke2

18 Kf1 now simply drops a piece to 18...Nd2+.

18...Ng5+ 19 f3 Nxe4 20 fxg4 Qg5 (Diagram 20)

This is the difference. White is just lost.

21 Ne3 d5 22 Nac2 0-0-0 23 Qh3?!

At least try 23 Qh5 with a lost endgame instead of getting mated!

23...d4 24 Qg2 Qg6 25 Rhd1 Bc5

I've no idea what was wrong with 25...dxe3, but it doesn't matter much.

26 h3 dxe3 27 Rxd8+ Kxd8 28 Nxe3 Bxe3 29 Kxe3 Qh6+ 30 Kd3 f5 31 Kc2 Rd7 32 Rd1 Rxd1 33 Kxd1 Qe3 34 gxf5 Nf2+ 35 Kc2 Qd3+ 36 Kb3 Qc4+ 37 Kc2 Qd3+ 38 Kb3 Qc4+ 39 Kc2 Qe2+ 40 Kb3 Qd1+ 41 Kb4 Kc7 42 c4 Qc2 0-1

Points to Remember

1. As far as theory presently stands, 13...Nd4 leads by forced steps to an unbalanced ending.

2. Those steps are reasonably logical, but of course it's easier to remember them than work them out over the board.

White Plays 12 0-0

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3 Be6 12 0-0 (Diagram 21)

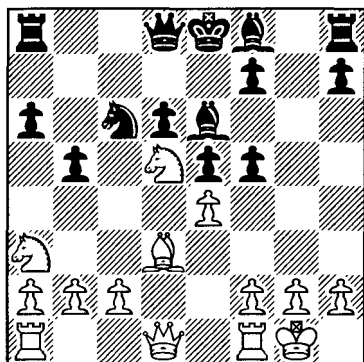


Diagram 21 (B)

White permits an exchange on d5

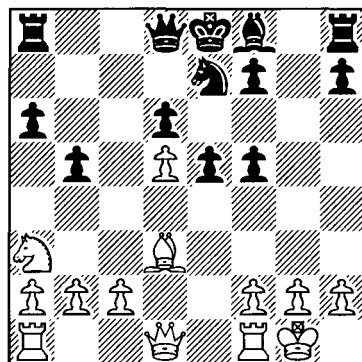


Diagram 22 (W)

White has a number of options

The most natural move.



NOTE: With 12 0-0 White keeps his option of Qh5 open while taking the sting out of 12...Rg8, which would now leave Black a tempo or two down on the last section, since he wouldn't be able to gain time on the white queen.

12...Bxd5

Black has to change course. 12...Bg7 13 Qh5 would pose him the problems I mentioned above; he would have to continue 13...f4 14 c4 with a position considered more pleasant for White. Instead, with the text move Black renders the question of control of d5 academic and establishes a pair of mobile pawns on e5 and f5. The drawback is allowing the bishop on d3 chances against his kingside, though as we shall see, it isn't easy for White both to keep it on the b1-h7 diagonal and re-route the knight via c2.

13 exd5 Ne7 (Diagram 22) 14 c4

White's main move is 14 c3 (the subject of our next section), while we will see 14 Qh5 in Game 38 and 14 Re1 in Game 39. The text, however, has had a small burst

of popularity recently. It is natural for White to look at Black's momentarily slightly cramped king and ask himself whether there isn't some way of taking advantage of it, and the text is one such attempt.

Another is 14 Nxb5, simply winning a pawn. The popular wisdom is that this is rather a promising gambit for Black, and certainly White has made a miserable score in practice, although in my view it has yet to be proved that White's game is objectively bad. Black continues 14...Bg7 (**Diagram 23**) 15 Nc3 (15 Na3? allows 15...e4 and ...Bxb2) 15...e4, reaching a critical position in which White has two options:

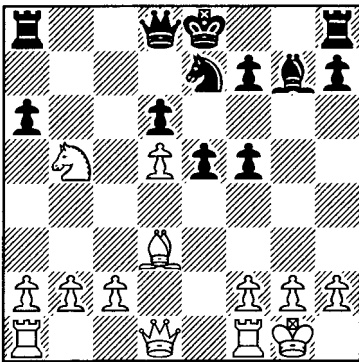


Diagram 23 (W)

15...e4 is next up

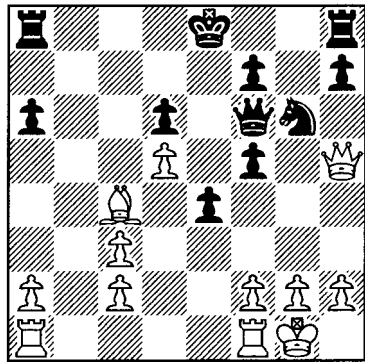


Diagram 24 (W)

A promising pawn sacrifice

- a) 16 Bc4 is normally given as the main line, which is said to be desirable inasmuch as it enables the queen to go to h5. It is far from clear to me that this is a good thing, and after 16...Ng6 17 Qh5 (17 Qd2 is possible here too; Rogozenko observes that Black could consider 16...Bxc3 to prevent this possibility, although he would then have to reckon with 17 bxc3 Ng6 18 Qd4!?, but gives as an illustration of Black's kingside chances the impressive line 17...0-0 18 Rae1 Qh4 19 Bb3 Bh6 20 Qe2 Ne5 21 f3 exf3 22 Qf2 – 22 gxf3 is worse: 22...Kh8 23 Kh1 Rg8 24 Rg1 Bf4 25 Ref1 Rxg1+ 26 Kxg1 Rg8+ 27 Kh1 Nxf3! 28 Rxf3 Bxh2! and wins – 22...Qh5 23 gxf3 Kh8 24 Kh1 Rg8 25 Ne2 f4 26 Nd4 Rg3 27 Rg1 Rag8 'with an attack') 17...Bxc3 18 bxc3 Qf6 (**Diagram 24**) Black has at least adequate compensation for the pawn. White's compromised pawn formation makes it hard for him to win any ending, and his bishop is in danger of being shut out of the game on b3.
- b) 16 Be2 0-0 17 Qd2 Ng6 18 Rfe1 Be5 19 Bf1 Kh8 20 g3 Nh4 21 Be2 (or 21 gxh4 Qxh4 22 h3 Rg8+ 23 Kh1 Rg6 24 Qe3 Rag8 25 Ne2 f4) 21...Rg8 22 Rab1 (so far C.Barnett-C.McKenzie, correspondence 2001) and now 22...f4 23 Nxe4 f5 24 Nc3 fxg3 25 hxg3 Bxg3 26 fxg3 Rxg3+ (Rogozenko) and so on.

These are, of course, illustrations of typical attacking methods rather than actual opening theory.

Returning to 14 c4:

14...Bg7 (Diagram 25)

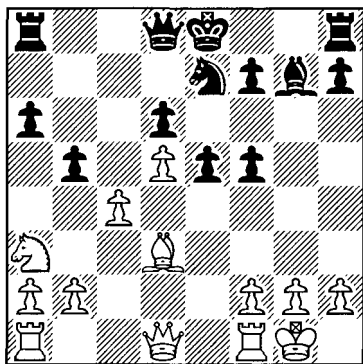


Diagram 25 (W)

...e4 and ...Ng6 is a good plan

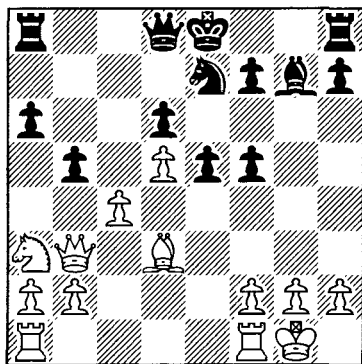


Diagram 26 (B)

The pressure mounts against b5

After 14...Bg7, 15 cxb5 e4 is good for Black, so White needs to protect b2. Now Game 40's 15 Rb1 is one of two traditional alternatives, along with 15 Qd2, while recently a third has appeared on the scene:

a) 15 Qb3 (**Diagram 26**), an idea of the Brazilian GM Vescovi, is the newcomer. White's idea is essentially that in the variation 15...bxc4 16 Nxc4 0-0 17 Rfd1 e4 18 Bf1 Rb8 19 Qa3 Rb5 White has the move 20 Qxa6 Rxd5 21 Rxd5 Nxd5 22 Qxd6 with advantage. A similar position is the subject of theoretical debate after 15 Qd2 and later 19 Qf4, but there of course the a-pawn is not en prise and Black equalizes comfortably. Black does better in this line with 18...Ng6 (**Diagram 27**), continuing with ...Qf6, ...Kh8, ...Rg8 and then perhaps ...Ne5 and so on, while an attack on the d-pawn by 19 Qa3 can be dealt with by 19...Be5.

Instead, in the stem game G.Vescovi-E.Matsuura, Sao Paulo 2006, Black saw fit to sacrifice a pawn: 15...0-0 (15...e4 16 Be2 b4 17 Qxb4 would transpose into the 16...b4 pawn sacrifice in the 15 Qd2 line, and may well be Black's soundest course) 16 cxb5 e4 17 Be2 f4 18 f3 (18 b6!? was possible but risky; the text on the other hand, allowing ...e3, is something computers very often do in these positions, and there are times when it is not as dangerous as it seems to the human eye) 18...e3 19 Rac1 Nf5 20 Rc4 Nd4 21 Qd3 Qf6 22 b6 Nxe2+? (the natural 22...Rfb8 was far better: I don't see how White plays for the advantage after that) 23 Qxe2 Qxb2 24 Qxb2 Bxb2 25 Nc2 and White was winning.

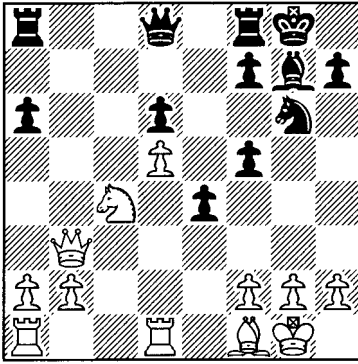


Diagram 27 (W)

Black has good dark square play

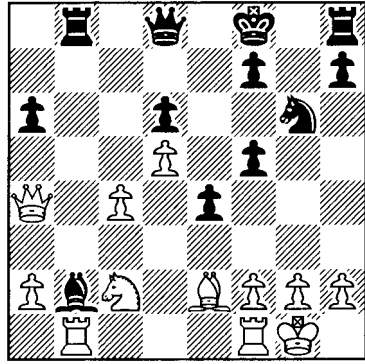


Diagram 28 (W)

Black has plenty of counterplay

b) 15 Qd2 has a similar idea in a way; to protect the b-pawn without moving the rook and hence allow any gambit of the b-pawn to be met by taking with the knight, which gains time by bringing this piece into play directly. After 15...e4 16 Be2 Black can either play 16...bxc4 with positions similar to Game 40, or trade the b-pawns with 16...b4 17 Qxb4 Rb8 18 Qa4+ Kf8 19 Rab1 Bxb2 20 Nc2 Ng6 (**Diagram 28**), when:

b1) 21 Nb4 Qf6 22 Nc6 Re8 achieves nothing. Now 23 Qxa6? allows the crushing 23...Nf4 24 Bd1 Nxb2, so instead 23 f4 was necessary in P.Leko-V.Kramnik, Linares 2003, but after 23...Bd4+ Black was fine – there's no need to be afraid of the trade of bishop for knight, especially in view of the present impotence of White's bishop.

b2) Instead 21 Ne3 f4 22 Qc2 Qf6 23 Nd1 f3 24 Rxb2 Rxb2 25 Qxb2 Qxb2 26 Nxb2 fxe2 27 Re1 Kg7 28 Rxe2 Rb8 29 f3 was V.Kotronias-A.Shirov, Calvia Olympiad 2004, and now 29...exf3 30 gxf3 Nf4 31 Rd2 Rb4 32 Kf1 Kf6, when Black has complete equality despite the missing pawn, is another accurate illustration of Black's chances.

Game 38

□ **A.Shabalov** ■ **M.Krasenkow**

Port Erin 2006

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3 Be6 12 0-0 Bxd5 13 exd5 Ne7 14 Qh5 (Diagram 29)

So far we have looked at approaches to this position which involve some sort of immediate strike on the queenside. The remainder of this chapter chiefly looks at plans which broadly involve playing in the centre and on the king's wing.

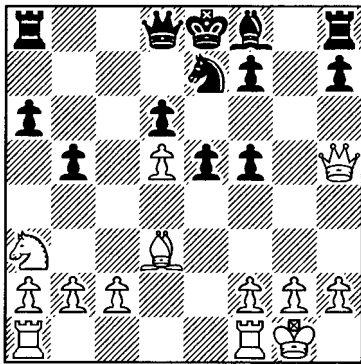


Diagram 29 (B)

The queen's most aggressive square

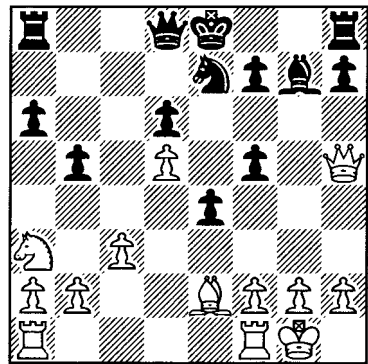


Diagram 30 (B)

White has a trick against 16...b4



NOTE: White's ideal piece deployment would be something like bishop on b1, queen on h5, rooks on e1 and f1, knight via c2 to e3, and then to break with f3 (Black will have had to play ...e4 to defend f5).

In this game we're going to have a look at what happens if White starts this plan by developing his queen to the obvious aggressive square. Running ahead of ourselves, we can say that the trouble with this plan is that the bishop can't stay on the b1-h7 diagonal and is driven to e2 by Black's next move, where it doesn't have any immediate prospects.

14...e4

Black virtually always plays this, for the reason I hinted at above – he feels it will be better to drive the bishop back to e2 before c3 can be played. 14...Qd7, however, is not inconceivable at all. If then 15 c3 Black can consider 15...Rg8, an idea of Rogozenko's (by transposition). Although he has been compelled to exchange on d5 here, Black's plan is similar to the variation 12 Qh5 Rg8 13 0-0 – he intends to continue ...Rg6, ...Bg7, ...Kf8-g8-h8 and ...Rag8 with strong play on the kingside; for example, 16 Rad1 Rg6 17 Bb1 Bg7 18 Nc2 f4 (an important move to keep the knight off e3 and block f4) 19 Nb4 Rh6 20 Qe2 Kf8 21 Bc2 Kg8 22 a4 Kh8 23 axb5 axb5 24 Nc6 Bf6 25 Be4 Rg8, M.Hoffmann-D.Rogozenko, German League 1996.

15 Be2 Bg7 16 c3 (Diagram 30) 16...0-0

It's quite tempting to play 16...b4, but this is supposedly bad because of 17 cxb4 Bxb2 18 Rab1 Bxa3 19 Rb3 (a typical theme in this line; it looks as if Black wins a piece, but this resource regains it), and now both 19...Bxb4 20 Rxb4 and 19...Qb6 20 Rfb1 are supposed to be good for White. However, Peter Leko was recently

willing to play this in a rapid game against Shirov, so there is probably more to be said, and it's certainly clear that in the former case (19...Bxb4 20 Rxb4) 20...Qa5 21 Rfb1 0-0, for example, offers considerable scope for investigation – it isn't obvious to me that White is better at all.

Kramnik recently introduced the idea of ...Rc8-c5 before castling: 16...Rc8 17 Nc2 Rc5 18 Ne3 f4 (18...Qd7 is weak because of 19 f3 f4? 20 fxe4!) 19 Nf5 0-0 20 a4 (**Diagram 31**) in P.Leko-V.Kramnik, Linares 2004; a famous game which Kramnik later won from a worse position to give him victory in the tournament. Since 20...Nxd5 now leaves Black much worse after 21 b4 Rxc3 22 Nxg7 f3 23 gxf3 Nf4 24 Qh6 Nxe2+ 25 Kh1 Kh8 26 Nf5 Rg8 27 fxe4 (Rogozenko), Kramnik was forced into 20...Nxf5 21 Qxf5 Qe7 22 axb5 axb5 23 Qxf4 Rxd5, but probably White is a little better here. Black's rook manoeuvre has taken up time which might have been better used with his king's rook.

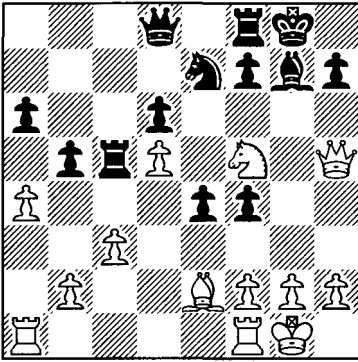


Diagram 31 (B)

Black hasn't quite equalized

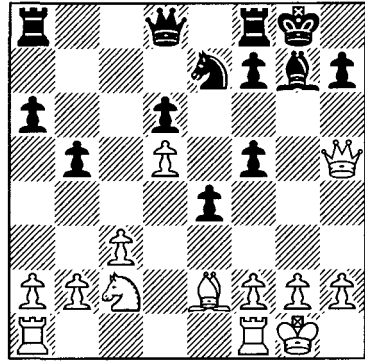


Diagram 32 (B)

An important theoretical position

17 Nc2 (Diagram 32)

This is really the starting point of the variation. The move Krasenkow plays is the oldest and perhaps the best, but Black probably has a choice of several good plans.

17...f4

Black commits himself to aggression on the kingside: he's not quite sure exactly how he's going to place the rest of the pieces, but he does know he'd like to get ...f4 and ...f5 in if he can, and he doesn't see why he can't. This move does involve a pawn sacrifice, though, and lots of less committal plans are available:

a) 17...Qd7 aims to get both rooks behind the pawn duo; for example, 18 Rad1 f4 19 Nd4 Rae8 20 f3 e3 with an unclear position. Rogozenko suggests that 18 f3 upsets the applearc, and that if Black wants to play this set-up he should intro-

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

duce it by 16...Qd7, when 17 Rad1 (17 Nc2? drops the d-pawn) 17...0-0 18 Nc2 is a transposition, but 17 f3 can be met with 17...b4, when 18 cxb4 does now lose material because Black has ...Qa4 after Rb3, defending the bishop.

b) 17...Qc8 aims to meet 18 f3? with 18...Qc5+, but it's artificial not to connect the rooks and the straightforward 18 Rad1 Ng6 19 f4 has proved good for White in several games, whether Black takes or not (if he doesn't Qh3 and Ne3 is powerful).

c) 17...Re8 (**Diagram 33**) is a typical move in such structures to prepare ...Ng6 (the point is that after Qxf5 Re5 White cannot keep the e-pawn under observation with the queen and so Black regains the d-pawn in peace). It seems, however, that the natural sequence 18 Rad1 Ng6 (it is too late to transpose to the next line by 18...Rc8 19 f3 b4 20 Nxb4 Qb6+ 21 Kh1 a5 22 Nc6 Nxc6 23 dxc6 because it turns out that ...Re8 is much less useful than Rad1: 23...Qxb2 24 fxe4 Rxc6 25 Rxf5 Rf8 26 Rxa5 with advantage to White) 19 f4 exf3 20 Qxf3 f4 21 Bd3 Qg5 22 Bxg6 Qxg6 is good for White after Rogozenko's 23 Nb4.

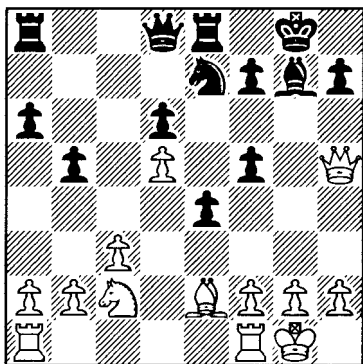


Diagram 33 (W)

A typical way to prepare ...Ng6

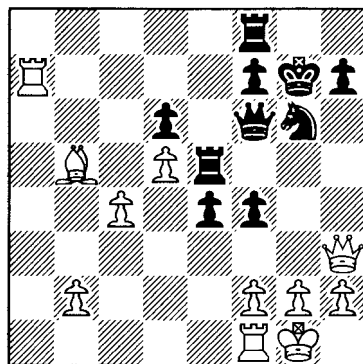


Diagram 34 (W)

Black is well massed on the kingside

d) 17...Rc8 is the main alternative, preparing to bring the rook to c5, but with slightly different timing from the Kramnik game above:

d1) 18 Rad1 Rc5 19 Ne3 (19 f3 Nxd5 20 fxe4 Nf6 shows another good feature of the rook on c5) 19...f4 20 Nf5 Re8 is similar to 'd3'.

d2) 18 f3 runs into 18...b4 19 Nxb4 a5 20 Nc6 Qb6+ 21 Kh1 Nxc6 22 dxc6 Qxb2 – a very important line which is basically the point of 17...Rc8.

d3) 18 Ne3 f4 19 Nf5 Re8 seems to be fine for Black after either 20 Bg4 and now Shirov's splendidly ergonomic 20...Rc4, protecting e4, preventing a4 and preparing ...b4, or Leko's pawn sacrifice 20 a4 Ng6, when the game S.Karjakin-P.Leko, Dortmund blitz (!) 2004, has to be seen: 21 axb5 axb5 22 Bxb5 Re5 23 Qh3 Rb8 24 c4

Qf6 25 Nxg7 Kxg7 26 Ra7 Rf8 (**Diagram 34**) 27 Bd7 Rg5 28 b4 Qd4 29 c5 dxc5 30 b5 f3 31 g3 e3 32 fxe3 Qxe3+ 33 Kh1 Qe2 34 Rfa1 Rxd5 35 Qf1 Rd2 36 Qg1 and now 36...f2 would have brought the affair to a close immediately, although Leko's 36...Ne5 proved well adequate too.

While this is a very impressive game, it wouldn't surprise me if White had better than exiling his bishop with 22 Bxb5, for example 22 f3. Leaving White's powerful knight on f5 alive is a double-edged step; it means that f3 has to be met with either ...e3 or ...exf3, and both have their drawbacks. It is worth noting, though, that Leko didn't commit himself to keeping the knights until after a4 had been played; this makes positions with f3 and ...e3 in decidedly more attractive for Black, since he cannot easily be prevented from getting in ...b4, and the open lines on that side favour him by giving White less time to pursue a plan with g3.



NOTE: 17...Rc8 works well against the immediate 18 f3; it is useful after 18 Ne3 f4 19 Nf5, and it also enables 18 Rad1 to be met with an immediate threat to the d-pawn which gives no time for f3 then either.

Returning to 17...f4:

18 f3

The pawn sacrifice occurs after 18 Qg5 f5 19 Rfd1 (19 Qxf4 Nxd5 with ...Nb6 and ...d5 is nothing for White), and now 19...f3 20 gxf3 Rf6 (or 20...Kh8) 21 Kh1 Rg6 22 Qe3 Bh6, when Black follows with 23 f4 Qf8! (going to f6 and h4), and similarly after 23 Qd4 Bg7 24 Qd2 (24 Qe3 Bh6 25 Qd4 repeats; if this troubles Black he can play on with 25...Bf4) 24...Bh6 25 Ne3 Bf4 and now ...Qf8-h6. Black has at least adequate play for his pawn in these lines.

18...f5 (Diagram 35)

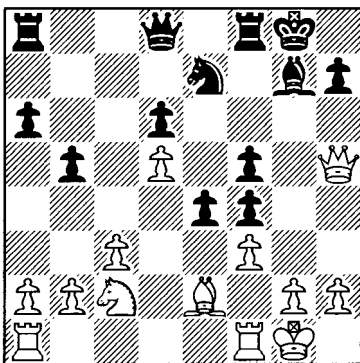


Diagram 35 (W)

Black shouldn't hurry with ...e3

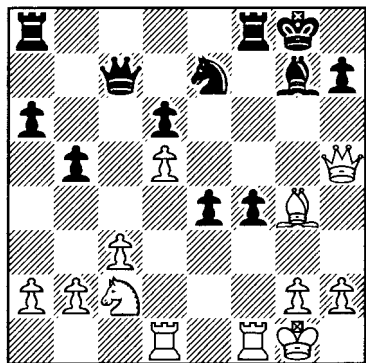


Diagram 36 (B)

Preparing Nd4

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

After 18...e3 I find Rogozenko's variation – for once – less than convincing, but it seems to me that the simple 19 Qg5 Ng6 (19...f5 20 Rfd1, threatening Nd4, pretty much compels the queen exchange anyway) 20 Qxd8 should be good for White. In an endgame the e3-pawn will always be a weakness. By contrast 20 Nb4 Qd7 appears to me to allow Black to create counterplay, in particular against b2 after a4 bxa4. Instead 18...exf3 19 Qxf3 Ng6 would be a bit like the variation given above after 17...Re8; usually to make this transaction work Black needs the queenside a bit more open (as in the 14 c4 lines).

19 fxe4

White doesn't have to release the tension, but otherwise his most natural move is 19 Rad1 anyway, and after that he will surely want to capture on e4 to let his bishop play. Indeed, in a higher sense one could say that his next two moves justify his set-up with the bishop on e2.

19...fxe4 20 Bg4 Qc7 21 Rad1 (Diagram 36)

This position had occurred before and was thought about equal; 21 Rad1 was Shabalov's new move (instead of 21 Rae1) and to judge from the speed of the game so far this position didn't come as a surprise to either player.

21...Kh8 22 Nd4

This was the idea of putting the rook on d1, making use of the otherwise slightly redundant knight.

22...Qc5 23 Kh1

23 Be6 b4 was a bit annoying since White can't hope for much if his solid queenside is fractured.

23...Qxd5 24 Nf5

24 Ne6 Qxh5 25 Bxh5 gets nowhere, because 25...Rf6 26 Nxf4 fails to 26...Raf8 27 g3 Bh6.

24...Qe5

24...Rxf5 25 Rxd5 Rxh5 26 Rxh5 Rf8 certainly deserved some consideration – the rook is very awkward to retrieve from h5 – but Black's structure after that is essentially static and it would be hard for him to try and progress without letting White's extra exchange tell. The text is more solid.

25 Nxd6

After 25 Nxe7 Qxe7 26 Bf5 Bh6 White has no follow-up, since 27 Re4 Qe5 gets him nowhere, and after 27 Bxe4 Qxe4 28 Qxh6 Black has the strike 28...f3, which equalizes at least.

25...Qxh5 26 Bxh5 e3 (Diagram 37)

A hard move to understand. Perhaps Krasenkow was playing for a win? If he wanted to equalize then he could hardly have lost the endgame arising after 26...Nf5 27 Nf7+ (27 Nxf5 Rxf5 28 Bg4 Rff8 is no better) 27...Rxf7 28 Bxf7 Ne3 –

with the pure opposite-coloured bishops an e3-pawn is safe, and Black can break up the queenside structure with ...b4.

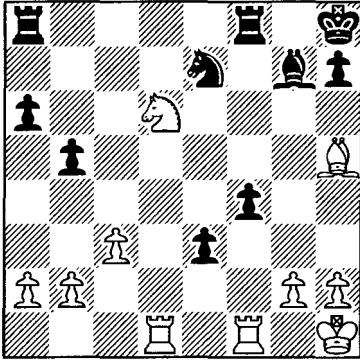


Diagram 37 (W)

A risky advance

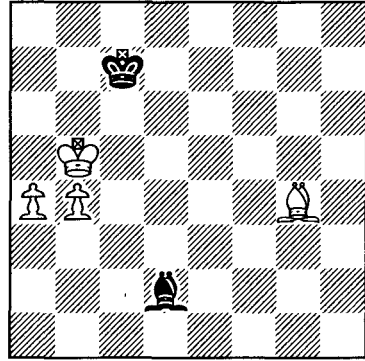


Diagram 38 (B)

It's a theoretical draw

27 g3 Be5 28 Ne4 fxg3 29 hxg3 Rf5 30 Be2 Rg8 31 Kh2 h5 32 Kh3 Bb8 33 Rd7 Re5

It looks as though this was a mistake. After 33...Rxf1 34 Bxf1 Nf5 35 Bd3, 35...Nxc3?? 36 Nf6 is impossible, but 35...Rg4 doesn't seem to leave White anything much.

34 Nf6 Rf8 35 Kg2

Now Black has got tangled up and is a little fortunate to be able to rescue himself.

35...h4 36 Ng4 Rxf1 37 Kxf1 Rf5+ 38 Kg2 Ng6 39 Rd8+

Luckily for Black White needs to trade these rooks in order to give his king access to the e3-pawn, and this gives Black just enough time to make the draw with the opposite-coloured bishops racket.

39...Rf8 40 Rxf8+ Nxf8 41 gxh4 Ng6 42 h5 Nf4+ 43 Kf3 Nxh5 44 Kxe3 Kg7 45 Bf3 Nf6 46 Kd4

This definitely concedes the draw, but after 46 Nf2 Nd7 Black has also gained enough time to save himself.

46...Ba7+ 47 Ke5 Bb8+ 48 Ke6 Nxc4 49 Bxc4 Bf4 50 Kd5

50 b3 Kf8 51 Bh5 Be3 52 c4 bxc4 53 bxc4 a5 gets White nowhere either, since he can't get the pawn past c5 without releasing Black's king.

50...Kf6 51 Bc8 a5 52 Kc5 b4 53 cxb4 axb4 54 Kxb4 Ke7 55 Kb5 Kd8 56 Bg4 Kc7 57 b4 Bd2 58 a4 (Diagram 38) 58...Kd6

Black seems to go the wrong way, but he realizes that White cannot make progress without retreating with the king and allowing Black's king to c5. Mind you,

as far as I can see 58...Kb8 59 a5 Ka7 60 Ka4 Bg5 61 b5 Bd8 is also a draw.



TIP: This set-up with the king on a7 and the bishop on d8 is the paradigm way to draw with bishop against two connected pawns and opposite-coloured bishop. The d8-bishop is ready to sacrifice itself on b6 if the b-pawn advances, and the white king cannot come round to help because if it does a5 is en prise.

59 a5 Be1 60 Bf3 Bd2 61 Ka4 Be1 62 b5 Kc5 63 b6 Bd2 ½-½
64 b7 Bf4 and ...Bb8 gives Black a complete blockade.

Points to Remember

1. Instead of Shabalov's 14 Qh5, 14 Nxb5 leads to positions where Black has very typical Sveshnikov attacking chances on the kingside. There is no need to memorize anything, but remember that ...Bxc3 may come in useful.
2. The defect with the early 14 Qh5 is that White's light-squared bishop has to go the rather poor e2-square after 14...e4.
3. After the most natural sequence of moves Black has a choice between developing naturally with the rooks to c8 and e8, or pressing on with 17...f4.
4. It's worth trying to verbalize to yourself the reasons why 17...Rc8 is more reliable than 17...Re8. It's not a question of memorization, but of understanding the processes at work in the position under the surface, which will stand you in good stead if you have to face this variation.
5. If Black can get ...b4 in with no ill effects then he should. Failing that, it is normally best to keep the tension on the e- and f-files as long as possible.

Game 39

□ **Zor champ** ■ **V.Rajlich**

Online Freestyle 2006

This game was played in a man-machine internet event, open to anyone with any computer assistance they cared to use. I don't know who the White human operator was (Rajlich is rated just over 2300, but is chiefly famous as the brains behind the fashionable computer engine Rybka), but he wasn't a mug – several GM teams failed to make the final, in which these two players finished first and second.

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3 Be6 12 0-0 Bxd5 13 exd5 Ne7 14 Re1 (Diagram 39)

We are now moving into highly fashionable territory. This little move is quite the vogue at the moment. Its ideas are fairly similar to 14 Qh5 in as much as White still wants to go Qh5, c3 and Nc2-e3. This time, however, White is going to take

the bishop back to f1, where if all goes well it may be able to emerge on h3, pressing on f5. White figures that actually his rooks will be fine on e1 and d1, restraining ...f4 by pressure on e4 and defending d5 respectively, since if he does play f2-f3 he can perfectly well recapture on f3 with the queen if needs be. Actually he doesn't play f3 so often in this system anyway; as I said his idea is more usually g3 and Bh3.

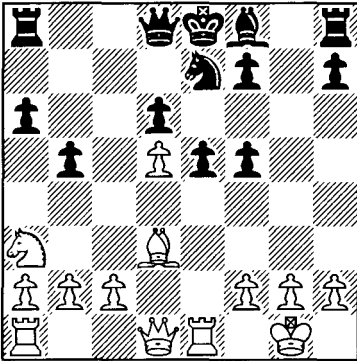


Diagram 39 (B)

A topical idea

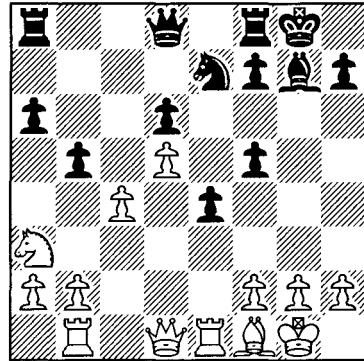


Diagram 40 (B)

14 Re1 prepared this retreat

14...Bg7 15 c3

White needs to defend b2, and his only real alternative is 15 Rb1. This casts White's play in a different mould as, instead of c3 and Nc2, he intends to play on the queenside with c4; thus: 15...0-0 16 c4 e4 17 Bf1 (**Diagram 40**). This position is obviously very similar to the 14 c4 lines. The difference is that White has effectively taken a tempo earlier to sort out his kingside pieces with Re1 and Bf1, which is not necessarily to be underestimated – the bishop is much better on f1 than e2 where it is often a target for ...Nf4 or ...f3, and the rook is handy on e1 to restrain ...f4. Now 17...Ng6 18 cxb5 (18 b4 doesn't achieve much, and 18...Be5 19 Qh5 Qf6 20 Re3 h6 followed by ...Kh7, ...Rg8 and so on had worked out terribly for White in an earlier Moiseenko game; but 18 Re3 might be worth thinking about – it isn't easy to find a useful move for Black, while White retains the possibility of capturing on b5 next turn) 18...axb5 19 Bxb5 Bxb2 20 Nc4 enables Black to consider 20...Be5 instead of 20...Bg7. As in the 14 c4 line Black can also continue *va banque* with, say, 19...Kh8 (or 19...Qg5 and ...Be5), as in P.Czarnota-A.Moiseenko, Turin Olympiad 2006, where great complications arose after 20 Bc6 Ra7 21 Nc4 Nf4 22 a4 Qg5 23 g3 Qg6 24 Qd2 Nd3 25 Re3 f4 26 Rxd3 exd3 27 Re1 Bh6.

15...0-0 16 Qh5

16 Nc2 is most logically met by 16...f4 (16...Re8 is commoner, transposing to the

lines in the note to White's 18th after 17 Qh5 e4 18 Bf1 Nxd5, but Rogozenko suggests that 17 a4 may favour White), which the text seeks to prevent, and here 17 a4 bxa4 18 Rxa4 a5, followed by ...f5, gives Black good play on the kingside.

16...e4 (Diagram 41)

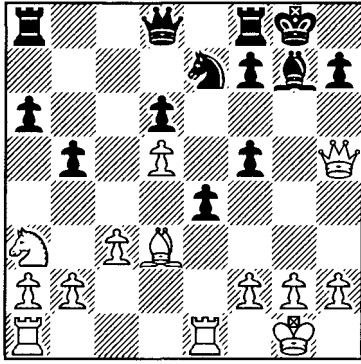


Diagram 41 (W)

Black advances as per usual

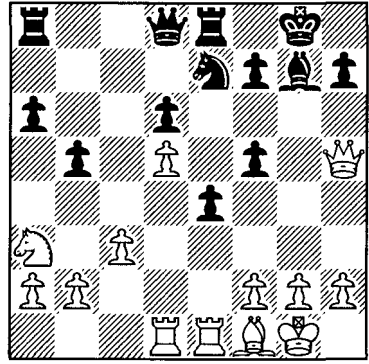


Diagram 42 (B)

Keeping d5 is White's best try

17 Bf1 Re8



WARNING: 17...b4? 18 cxb4 Bxb2 19 Rab1 Bxa3 20 Rb3 is no good since 20...Bxb4? allows mate in four with 21 Rh3.

However, 17...Qc8 is a major alternative, when the main line is 18 Rad1 (18 Nc2? Nxd5) 18...Re8 (and not 18...Ng6 when White has time to pin the f-pawn after 19 g3 and Bh3, and so realize the ideal development for the variation: he goes on with Nc2-e3, and prepares f3 or f4 with moves like Kh1 and Rf1 if needed, while Black is tied to defending f5) 19 Nc2 (now after 19 g3 Black has time for 19...Qc5, since the f-pawn is still defended, and the counter-attack on d5 secures him equal chances) 19...Ng6 (19...Qc5 20 Nd4 is worse because Black's queen has wandered from his king, and consequently 20...Bxd4 21 Rxd4 is too dangerous) 20 Nd4 Bxd4 21 Rxd4 (21 cxd4 is another story and looks quite promising; Black was worse in the only game I know of after 21...f4 22 Rc1 Qd8 23 Qf5 e3 24 fxe3 fxe3 25 g3) 21...Re5 22 Qh6, and now either 22...Qe8 or 22...Qf8 holds the balance.

18 Rad1 (Diagram 42)

The alternative is 18 Nc2 Nxd5 (after 18...Rc8 19 a4 Nxd5 the rook is not best placed on c8, and Black can hardly resist taking the d-pawn for ever, so it's best to do so at once) 19 Qxf5 Re5. After the original 20 Qh3 Nf4 21 Qg4 Black appears to be doing quite well after either 21...Ne6 or 21...Qf6, so attention has shifted to Karjakin's 20 Qg4, planning to retreat to d1. Then 20...f5 is very sensible, but in the

most recent game the Argentine GM Ruben Felgaer (who had previously lost to Karjakin in this line), won prettily with 20...h5 21 Qd1 Qg5 22 a4 Rae8 23 axb5 axb5 24 Ne3 b4 25 Nxd5 Rxd5 26 Qa4 Rde5 27 Qxb4 d5 28 Rad1 Rf5 (an advantage of ...h5 over ...f5 is this possibility of frontal pressure on the f2 weak spot) 29 Re2 h4 30 Qa4 Re6 31 c4 e3 32 Rxd5 exf2+ 33 Rxf2 Bd4 34 Rxd4 Rxf2 35 Qa8+ Kg7 36 Qd8 Ref6 0-1, D.Valerga-R.Felgaer, Buenos Aires 2006 – as thematic a Sveshnikov game as you could wish to see.

18...Ng6

A pawn sacrifice introduced and strongly recommended by Krasenkov. An easier approach is 18...Rc8 19 Nc2 Rc5 20 Ne3 f4 (**Diagram 43**) when 21 Nf5 Nxf5 22 Nxf5 Qf6 is equal, although in the third of these freestyle events *Zor champ* introduced the typical, yet still spectacular exchange sacrifice 21 Ng4 Ng6 (21...f5 22 Nh6+ Bxh6 23 Qxh6 Ng6 looks more natural to me; this exchange of the g7-bishop for the knight in this line always looks a bit shaky, but the positions seem to work out well enough for Black and it's not easy for the f1-bishop to find a role) 22 g3 Ne5 23 Rxe4 fvg3 24 hxg3 Nf3+ 25 Kg2 Rxe4 26 Kxf3 against an opponent styling himself *Magnato Shredder 10*, and went on to win: 26...Re8 27 Bd3 Kf8 28 Bxh7 a5 29 Rd3 Rc7 30 Kg2 Re1 31 Rf3 (**Diagram 44**) 31...Qe7 32 Bg6 Qe8 33 Qh4 Rd7 34 Nf6 Bxf6 35 Rxf6 Kg8 36 Qh7+ Kf8 37 Rf4 Rb7 38 Qh6+ Ke7 39 Rxf7+ Qxf7 40 Bxf7 1-0. A game very typical of what happens after White gives up the exchange to get this sort of bind on f5 with opposite-coloured bishops; Black can't find anything to do while White builds up.

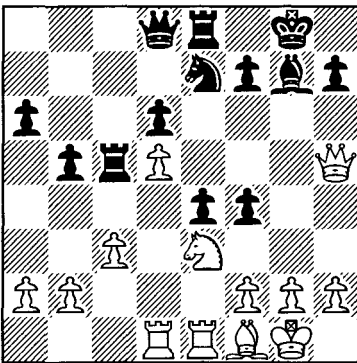


Diagram 43 (W)
Thematic and easy Black play

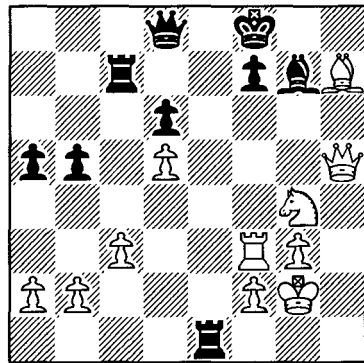


Diagram 44 (B)
A strong exchange sacrifice

19 Qxf5 Re5 20 Qh3

20 Qg4 has the idea to tempt 20...f5 so as to block the fourth rank, but after 21 Qh3 (21 Qe2 Qg5 22 c4 Ree8! with the idea of ...Ne5 is also very unclear) 21...Nf4 22

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

Qg3 Nh5 23 Qe3 f4 it does start to look very dangerous for White.

20...Nf4 21 Qg3

21 Qg4 Nxd5 22 f4 Nf6 23 Qe2 had previously been tried, but White seems to have no advantage either after 23...Rf5 or Krasenkow's 23...Rc5 24 Nc2 Qb6. The text is directed against ...Nxd5.

21...Qf6

21...Nxd5 22 f4 is now good for White, since ...Nf6 gaining a tempo is impossible and so 22...exf3 23 Qxf3, with an obvious edge for White, is forced.

22 c4

22 Nc2 Kh8 had previously got nowhere; White must keep hold of d5.

22...b4!?

A novelty; in the game D.Mieles Palau-J.Echevarria, Buenos Aires 2005, Black had gone for it on the kingside with 22...Kh8 23 cxb5 Rg8, and now Rogozenko showed in *ChessBase Magazine* that 24 Kh1 Qh6 25 Nc4 Rh5 26 h3 Bd4 27 Qxg8+ Kxg8 28 Rxd4 Nxh3 29 gxh3 Rxh3+ 30 Bxh3 Qxh3+ is a draw, but suggested that White could beat off the attack with 24 Qb3, which I dare say *Zor champ* was about to demonstrate, but he was beaten to the punch.

23 Nc2 a5 (Diagram 45)

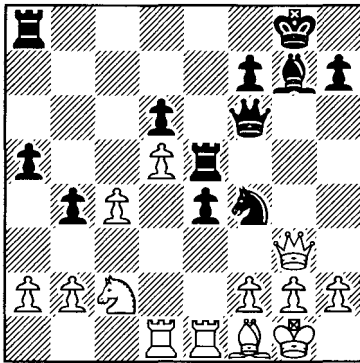


Diagram 45 (W)

Has Black enough for his pawn?

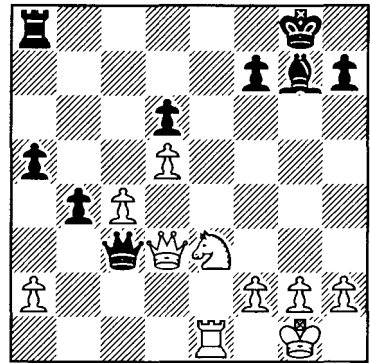


Diagram 46 (W)

Forcing a slightly better ending

24 Qe3

This would be the point White would look to improve. 24 Nd4 is evidently a critical move and, so far as I can see, Black is struggling to show his compensation; for example, 24...Rae8 25 Nc6 Rg5 26 Qe3, when White is threatening to consolidate with moves like g3, Kh1 and Bh3, combined with f3 or f4 at some moment. The

defensive qualities of his Re1/Bf1 set-up, restraining Black along the e-file, show to good advantage in this line.

24...Nd3!

Excellent. In the ensuing endgame Black's strong bishop enables him to hold the draw comfortably despite the missing pawn.

25 Bxd3 exd3 26 Qxd3 Rxe1+ 27 Rxe1 Qxb2 28 Ne3!?

28 Qb3 Qxb3 29 axb3 a4 leaves White the one who needs to take care; for example, 30 Re3 axb3 31 Rxb3 Ra2 32 Ne3 Ra1+ 33 Nf1 Bc3 34 g3 Ra3.

28...Qc3 (Diagram 46)

Solid; although after 28...Qxa2 I don't see myself how White could play for more than a draw following 29 Nf5 a4 without grave risk of losing (30 Qg3 Qb2 31 Nh6+ is perpetual). However, the text enables Black to draw fairly comfortably; indeed perhaps it might be said that White is the one who has to hold the draw.

29 Qxc3 Bxc3 30 Rb1 a4 31 Nd1 Bd2 32 Kf1 Re8 33 Ne3 Re4 34 Ke2 Bxe3 35 Kd3 Rd4+ 36 Kxe3 Rxc4 37 Kd3 Rc3+ 38 Kd2 Rc4 39 g3 Kg7 40 Rb2 Kf6 41 Kd3 Rc3+ 42 Kd4 a3 43 Rxb4 Rc2 44 Rb6 Rxf2 45 Rxd6+ Ke7 46 Ra6 Rxa2 47 h3 Ra1 48 Kc5 Rc1+ 1/2-1/2

Points to Remember

1. Once White has played Re1 he's always going to meet ...e4 with Bf1, so you can afford to delay that move. Doing so enables you to meet an early c3 and Nc2 with ...f4, preventing the knight getting into the game and rendering Re1 a bit of a wasted move, since the e-pawn stays well defended on e5.
2. The thing that Black must not permit in this set-up is a pin on the f-pawn by a bishop from h3. You don't necessarily need to recall exact moves in the main (i.e. 17...Qc8) line, but you do need to remember this principle.
3. The pawn sacrifice in the text is not necessary, although it is fun and puts White under pressure. Instead 17...Re8 and 18...Rc8 is a solid way to play.
4. If White doesn't defend d5 with Rad1, then really Black has to take it and trade f-pawn for d-pawn. In the resulting positions Black has to compensate for his looseness by active play on the kingside.

Game 40

□ V.Ivanchuk ■ J.Lautier

Odessa (rapid) 2006

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 d4 cxd4 5 Nxd4 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3 Be6 12 0-0 Bxd5 13 exd5 Ne7 14 c4 Bg7 (Diagram 47)
15 Rb1 e4 16 Be2 bxc4

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

16...0-0 is the major alternative. After 17 cxb5 axb5 18 Bxb5 (18 Nxb5 Rxa2 shows the downside of 15 Rb1), Black can either gambit the pawn with 18...Ng6 followed by building up on the kingside in one way or another (perhaps after ...Bc6 with ...Ra7-e7-e5 in conjunction with ...f4), or play the more reliable 18...Bxb2, as Shirov did recently against Areshchenko. The game is worth quoting since it illustrates very sound play by both players: 19 Nc4 Bg7 20 a4 Ng6 21 Qh5 Qf6 22 Ne3 f4 23 Nf5 Ne7 24 Bd7 Ra7 25 Nxe7+ Qxe7 26 Bf5 h6 27 Rb4 Rfa8 28 Qd1 Qe5 29 Bxe4 Qc3 30 Rb3 Qc4 31 Qf3 Rxa4 32 Bb1 Rb4 ½-½, A.Areshchenko-A.Shirov, Russian Team Championship 2006.

17 Nxc4 0-0 (Diagram 48) 18 f4

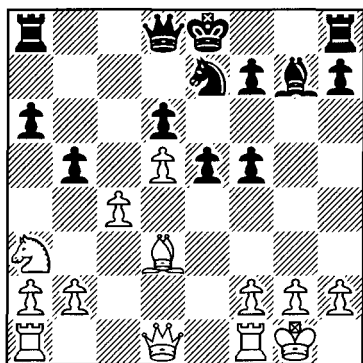


Diagram 47 (W)

Black prepares ...e4

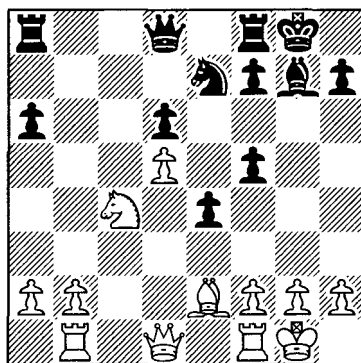


Diagram 48 (W)

White needs to prevent ...f4

It looks slightly strange to play this while the knight is still on e7, and this is in fact a new move which, however, Lautier convincingly refutes.

Instead 18 Qd2 Ng6 (18...Rb8 19 b4 Rb5 20 Ne3 f4 is also certainly possible and more ambitious) 19 f4 exf3 20 Rxf3 f4 21 Rbf1 is more or less equal; in the game Z.Efimenko-M.Al Sayed, Moscow 2004, Black continued systematically with ...a5-a4, ...Qc7-c5, ...Re8 and ...Ra7-e7, entrenching himself on the dark squares, followed by ...Ne5, only to lose the impressively drawn pure opposite-coloured bishop ending after dropping the front f-pawn. No doubt the inventors of the FIDE time control rejoiced at the sight. 21 b4 Ne5, trading the knights immediately, produced much the same result (except for the optional finale) in A.Areshchenko-Wang Yue, Lausanne 2006.

Finally, 18 f3 was Efimenko's later try (he is impressively faithful to this line, which seems to be a bit of a Ukrainian calling card), when a similar set-up with 18...exf3 is certainly possible, but in the 2006 Serbian League Alexander Moiseenko equalized with the other idea: 18...Rb8 19 Kh1 Rb5.

18...Rb8! (Diagram 49)

As we have seen f4 is usually met by ...exf3 in this variation, but the resulting positions are a little dry, and when as here Black has not yet committed his knight to g6 (much of the point of f4 is in taking away the e5-square from a g6-knight) it makes a lot of sense to adopt the other main plan, playing against d5. Another idea is 18...a5 followed by 19...Qb8 and 20...Rc8, which equalized easily in another A.Areshchenko-Wang Yue, Lausanne 2006 game.

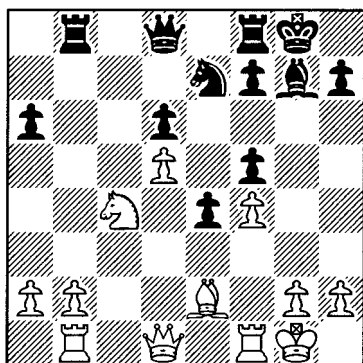


Diagram 49 (W)
...Rb5 will attack d5

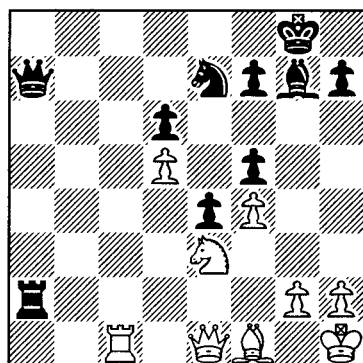


Diagram 50 (W)
Only Black can win

19 Kh1

The tactical justification of Black's last move lies in the variation 19 Qd2 Rb5 20 Ne3 Qb6! 21 Bxb5 Bd4 22 Rfe1 Nxd5 23 Kh1 Nxe3 with very strong compensation; for example, 24 Bxa6 Ng4 25 h3 d5!.

19...Rb5 20 Ne3 Rxb2 21 Rxb2 Bxb2 22 Qd2 Bg7 23 Rb1

White could also capture immediately on a6, but understandably didn't care for 23 Bxa6 Qb6 24 Bc4 Bd4 25 Nc2 Rc8 when it's clear that White's opening idea has not worked: he has the a-pawn, but the wonderful e3-knight pressing on f5 has been destabilized by Black's dark square control, and now White's bishop struggles to find a role, while Black's activity at least equalizes the chances.

23...Qc7

It's not at all clear to me why Lautier rejected 23...Qa8, since after 24 Rb6 Rb8 all White's options appear to allow Black most annoying play on the dark squares and down the open lines; for example, 25 Rxa6 (25 Qb4 Rc8 or 25 Rxd6 Qa7) 25...Rb1+. Possibly he just judged that the text was even more favourable.

24 Bxa6 Rb8 25 Rc1

25 Rxb8+ Qxb8 is better for Black, who follows with ...Qb6 and ...Bd4.

25...Qa7 26 Bf1 Rb2 27 Qe1 Rxa2 (Diagram 50)

Here, too, Black has all the chances.

28 Nc4 Qf2

28...Qc5 looks very strong. If Ivanchuk had some idea up his sleeve, I can't imagine what it was; if 29 Ne3 Ra1! 30 Rxa1 Bxa1 31 Nxf5 Nxf5 32 Qxa1 Ne3 is winning.

29 Qxf2 Rxf2 30 Nxd6 Bb2

30...Rxf4 looks like a better try, but this was a rapid game. Lautier must have missed something round about here; possibly White's 33rd.

31 Rb1 Nxd5 32 Nxf5 Rxf4

This doesn't test White, but perhaps there was no longer any way to do so: 32...Nc3 33 Re1 Rxf4 34 g4 leaves more play but still I doubt Black can win.

33 g4! Rf2 34 Bc4 Nc3 35 Rf1 Rxf1+ 36 Bxf1 Ba3 37 Bc4 Bc5 38 Kg2 Kf8 39 g5 ½-½

Points to Remember

1. 14 c4 tends to result in positions where the b-pawns are exchanged one way or another. Black can always force this with 15 Qb3 (or 15 Qd2) 15...e4 16 Be2 b4 and 15 Rb1 e4 16 Be2 0-0 17 cxb5 axb5 18 Bxb5 Bxb2, although in the latter case the c- and a-pawns go too. This increases Black's control of the dark squares (such as c5 and d4), and hence the drawing effect of the opposite-coloured bishops.
2. Alternatively Black can trade his b-pawn for the c-pawn, although this invites the white knight into the game and should be treated with caution.
3. After f3 or f4 from White it is often right to exchange and play ...f4 (assuming a knight on g6). The resulting positions are optically better for White but should be defensible. Alternatively, Black can always abandon his queenside and build up on the kingside a pawn down. The resulting positions are complicated and unclear.

14 c3: The Main Line

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3 Be6 12 0-0 Bxd5 13 exd5 Ne7 14 c3 (Diagram 51)

The most flexible move; with it White generally declares that he is going to keep the bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal.

14...Bg7



WARNING: 14...Qc8 (covering f5) 15 c4 is much worse than the same position with the queen on d8, especially since after 15...e4 16 Be2 Bg7 White does not have to stop to defend b2 but can play 17 cxb5, as 17...Bxb2 18 Nc4 now wins material.

However, 14...Qd7 is possible; Black would like to play 15 Qh5 Rg8, but as Rogozenko indicates, White can cross Black's plans with 15 Nc2 Bg7 16 a4 e4 17 Be2 0-0 18 axb5 axb5 19 Qd2. Black can certainly play this but he supposedly remains more flexibly placed to meet this plan of early queenside play if he starts with 14...Bg7 (see the next note).

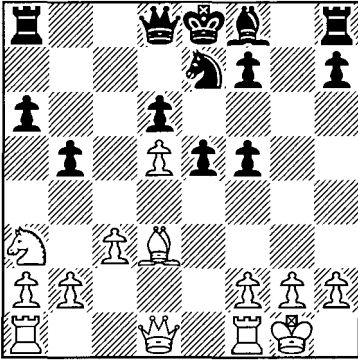


Diagram 51 (B)

Enabling the bishop to retreat to c2

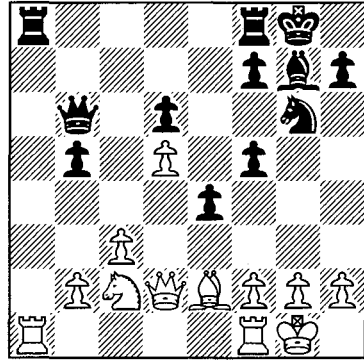


Diagram 52 (W)

Black hopes to get in ...f4

15 Qh5

Not the only plan; White can also go for the queenside with 15 Nc2 0-0 16 a4 (16 Qh5 and 16 Re1 transpose to Games 38 and 39 respectively) 16...e4 17 Be2 Qb6 18 axb5 axb5 19 Qd2. This is the same position as in the last note, except that Black's queen is on b6 rather than d7, which supposedly represents an improvement, although if Black's next move is going to be ...Qb7 then it doesn't make much difference. In this version perhaps Black's next move ought to be 19...Ng6 (**Diagram 52**), when the battle is for and against the move ...f4. Alexander Galkin wrote a long article about this line in *New in Chess Yearbook 80*, in which he advocated 19 Rxa8 Rxa8 20 Qd2 for White, followed up usually by the trip Qg5-f5-d7 to try and tie Black down to the b5-pawn.



TIP: According to Galkin Black should not allow the b5-pawn to become a target like this, but rather play 17...bxa4 18 Rxa4 Qb6.

One can see a lot of sense in this – the b-pawn on b5 is an ugly fixed weakness with the knight on c2 covering b4, while on a5 it prevents the knight coming in on c6. Moreover, with the pawn weaknesses on the queenside offset on different files there is always counterplay against one of White's queenside pawns. Lastly, Black avoids the immediate weakening of his attacking potential by the exchange of a pair of rooks. This position was actually reached in D.Sadvakasov-A.Khalifman,

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

Russian Team Championship 2005, when White wasn't able to show any edge after 19 Rb4 Qc5 20 Ne3 Rab8 21 Qb3 Rxb4 22 cxb4, and Galkin concedes that he hasn't been able to find any in his analysis either, so for the moment we can conclude that this is the most accurate defence for Black.

15...e4 16 Bc2 (Diagram 53)

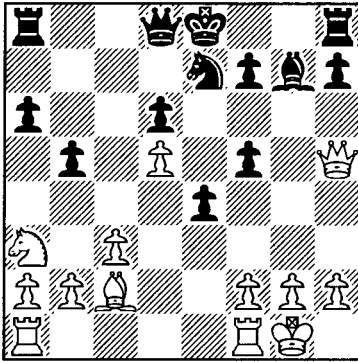


Diagram 53 (B)

A very popular position

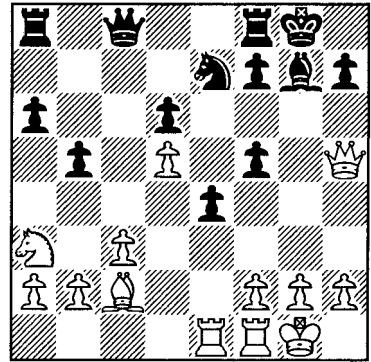


Diagram 54 (W)

The black queen supports ...b4

16...0-0

This has been an extremely popular tabiya and Rogozenko devotes thirty closely packed pages to the variations arising over the next few moves. It seems that the lines have been mined out, although you never know, and Black certainly has to know what he's doing if he doesn't want to get mated horribly. I've confined myself to repertoire coverage for Black and providing explanation which I hope will help remember the recommended path, rather than discussing possible alternatives. At this point some people – Yakovich for example – think that 16...Qc8 is more accurate so that 17 Rad1 can be met with 17...Qc5 at once, but it's certainly simpler to play the same way against both 17 Rad1 and 17 Rae1 and I've chosen to assume Black's going to do so.

17 Rae1

17 Rad1 is less pressing since this rook isn't going to help mate Black. After 17...Qc8 (the next note explains why the queen is well placed here), White needs to bring his knight into the game, so his candidate moves are either 18 Bb3 or 18 Bb1:

a) 18 Bb3 (it looks daft to protect the d-pawn twice, but actually the recipe which is effective after 17 Rae1 Qc8 18 Bb3 – i.e. 18...a5 – doesn't work here precisely because the d-pawn is doubly protected) 18...Re8 (18...a5? 19 Nxb5 a4 20 Bc2 Qc5 is a blow in the air here; the text prepares ...Ng6 and ...f4) 19 Nc2 a5 20 a3 Ng6 21 f4 (White needs to restrain ...f4) 21...exf3 22 Qxf3 f4 was equal in Z.Varga-Wang

Yue, Calvia Olympiad 2004.



NOTE: Machines always hate it but ...exf3 is usually the right way to meet f4 in this structure. After the alternative of leaving the pawn on f4 the knight on g6 is temporarily stymied, and Black has no counterplay, while White can regroup gradually and aim either for g4 or for play on the queenside.

b) 18 Bb1 Qc5 is best, hitting d5 now that the bishop has gone away, and preventing 19 Nc2 for the time being in view of 19...Nxd5 20 Qxf5 Nxc3 21 Qxc5 Ne2+ winning a pawn. Thus White plays 19 Kh1, and now Black has a choice between 19...b4 or 19...Rae8 preparing ...Nxd5, either of which should secure equal chances.

17...Qc8 (Diagram 54)

Experience has shown that this is the right way for Black to play. White is gearing up for a swift assault with the likes of f3 or g4, and Black needs counterplay quickly. His fundamental way of meeting this sort of thing in the Sveshnikov is usually ...b4, and so it is here.



TIP: From c8 the queen serves the useful function of lending force to the ...b4-break by its x-ray on the c2-bishop, it may be able to check strongly from c5, and it defends the f5-pawn to allow ...Ng6.

After 17...Qc8, White has several candidate moves:

a) 18 g4 doesn't work, although it has to be met with the typical counterstrike 18...b4 (18...Nxd5 19 Qxf5 Qxf5 20 gxf5 Nf6 21 Bxe4 is much less effective) 19 cxb4 Nxd5 20 Qxf5 (20 gxf5 Nf6 followed by ...d5 is downright dangerous for White) 20...Qxf5 21 gxf5 Nxb4 22 Rxe4 Rab8 which is at least equal for Black.

b) 18 f3 is a fundamental and dangerous move which Black needs to know exactly how to defend against – see Game 41.

c) 18 Bb1 weakens d5 and ought logically to be met either by 18...Re8, preparing ...Nxd5 (18...Nxd5 at once is met by 19 Bxe4), or 18...Qc5. Both have proved effective; for example, after the latter, 19 Kh1 Qxd5 20 f3 Qe5 21 fxe4 fxe4 22 Qxe5 dxe5 23 Bxe4 Rad8 was equal in Z.Almasi-P.Leko, Monte Carlo (rapid) 2002.

d) 18 Bb3 is best met by Luke McShane's surprising 18...a5 (**Diagram 55**), preventing 19 Nc2 by the threat to trap the bishop:

d1) 19 Nxb5 a4 20 Bd1 Qc5 is Black's other point, winning back the pawn and giving him adequate play; for example, 21 Be2 (21 c4 Qxc4 22 Nxd6 Qxd5 wins the knight; the idea of 19 Qg5 below is precisely to ensure that White's knight has f5 in this sequence) 21...Nxd5 22 Qg5 (22 Qxf5 runs into the 22...Nxc3 trick again) 22...Rab8 23 c4 Nc7 24 Nxc7 Qxc7 25 Qxf5 Rfe8 saw Luke upholding his own idea in Y.Pelletier-L.McShane, Biel 2004.

d2) 19 Qg5 is regarded as the best reply (a cunning move trying to drive the

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

knight away from e7 before taking on d5; for example, 19...Ng6 20 Nxb5 a4 21 Bd1 Qc5 22 c4 Qxc4 23 Nxd6 Qxa2 24 Re2 Qxd5 and now 25 Nxf5 with advantage to White) 19...Qb7 (defending the knight and guarding b5, and thus forcing White back to the basic plan) 20 f3 (20 Nxb5 Qxb5 21 Qxe7 a4 is useless) 20...h6 21 Qg3 (21 Qf4 is less good: 21...a4 22 Bc2 b4 23 cxb4 Qxb4 24 fxe4 Ng6, as in A.Shirov-A.Grischuk, Wijk aan Zee 2003, is fine for Black after either 25 Qf3 f4 or 25 Qxf5 Bxb2) 21...a4 22 Bc2 b4 (**Diagram 56**) 23 Nc4 (23 cxb4 looks better but 23...Qxb4 24 fxe4 f4 25 Rxf4 Ng6 26 Rff1 Bxb2 27 Nb1 Be5 – Rogozenko – is similar to Shirov-Grischuk) 23...Qxd5 24 fxe4 Qxc4 25 exf5 and now Black can equalize with either 25...Nd5 (A.Shirov-V.Kramnik, Linares 2003) or 25...Nxf5.

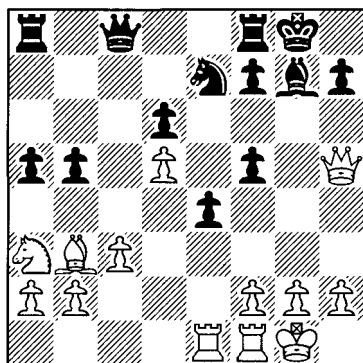


Diagram 55 (W)

19 Nc2 is prevented

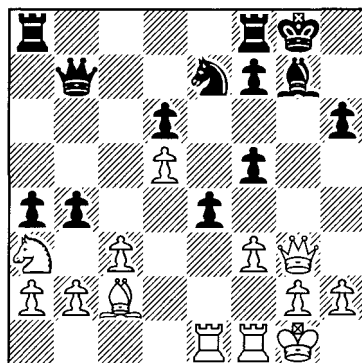


Diagram 56 (W)

Black has reasonable counterplay

e) The subtle 18 Kh1 is the main try, which at one time looked to be putting the entire Sveshnikov under pressure, as we will see in Game 42.

Illustrative Games

Game 41

□ K.Asrian ■ Wang Yue

Khanty Mansyisk 2005

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3 Be6 12 0-0 Bxd5 13 exd5 Ne7 14 c3 Bg7 15 Qh5 e4 16 Bc2 0-0 17 Rae1 Qc8 18 f3 (Diagram 57) 18...b4

Basically the only move. The only way to stop White on the kingside would be 18...Ng6 19 fxe4 f4, which is not unthinkable, but it is natural to test White's idea by the usual counterthrust.

19 Nb1

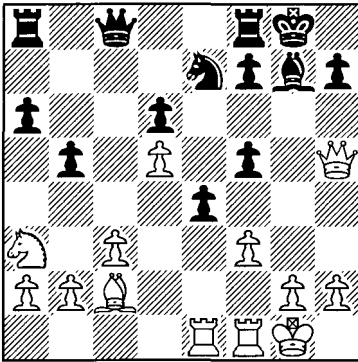


Diagram 57 (B)

Dangerous and direct White play

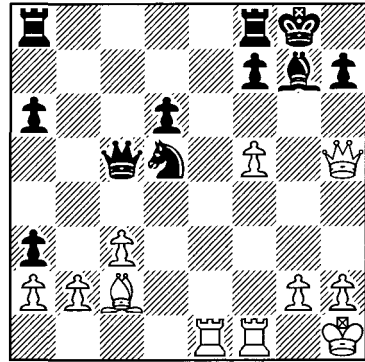


Diagram 58 (W)

The black queen defends along the 4th

19 fxe4 bxa3 20 exf5 Qc5+ 21 Kh1 Nxd5 (Diagram 58) involves the queen along the fourth rank and defends successfully: 22 f6 Nxf6 gains a critical tempo and leaves White a piece down for nothing. However, the critical line is 19 cxb4 Bxb2 20 fxe4 Bxa3 21 Re3 (21 Rf3 is similar) 21...Qxc2 22 Rg3+ (22 Rh3 Rfc8 23 Qxh7+ Kf8 24 Rxa3 Qxe4 25 Qh6+ Kg8 26 Rg3+ Ng6 27 Rxg6+ fxg6 28 Qxg6+ Kh8 is also a draw) 22...Ng6 23 Rh3 (Diagram 59),

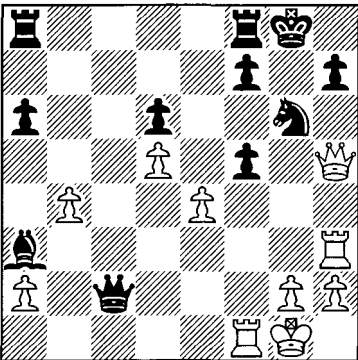


Diagram 59 (B)

23...Rfd8 is the only move

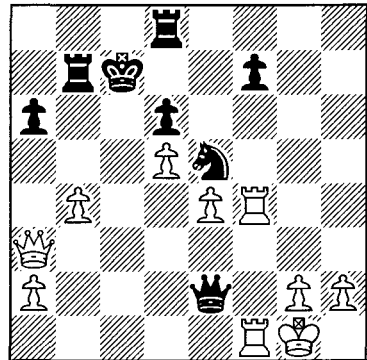


Diagram 60 (W)

The e5-knight holds things together

and now 23...Rfe8 24 exf5 Ne5 25 Qg5+ Kf8 26 Rxh7 and 23...Rfc8 24 exf5 Ne5 25 Qg5+ Kf8 26 Rxh7 Ke8 27 Qg8+ Kd7 28 Rxf7+ Nxf7 29 Qxf7+ both lose and illus-

trate why d8 is the right square for the rook. In the first line the king must have e8 free to run to, and in the other he must be able to duck out to c8 with a rook between himself and the rampaging white heavy pieces, which leaves only one square for the rook on move 23. Thus the only move is 23...Rfd8 24 Qxh7+ (24 exf5 Ne5 25 Qg5+ Kf8 26 Rxh7 Ke8 no longer achieves anything as the king can slip away via d7 to c8) 24...Kf8 25 Rh5 (25 exf5 Ne5 26 Rxa3 is at least equal for Black with the dominant knight against the pawns), when Black can allow the draw with 25...Ne5 26 Rhxf5 Ra7 27 Rxe5 and perpetual on e5 and h8 (27...dxe5 28 Qh8+ Ke7 29 Qxe5+ Kd7 30 Rxf7+ is a draw also) as in several games, or try 25...f4!? 26 Rf5 Ne5 27 R5xf4 Ra7 28 Qh8+ Ke7 29 Qh4+ Kd7 30 Qh3+ Kc7 31 Qe3 (thus far Kosten on *ChessPublishing.com*), and now perhaps 31...Rb7 32 Qxa3 Qe2 (**Diagram 60**) when the outcome is extremely unclear, although I rather suspect that objectively Black is better. The text move, however, avoids all these adventures.

19...bxc3 20 Nxc3

An exceedingly obvious move, although for some reason previous contestants had preferred losing after 20 bxc3 Nxd5 21 fxe4 Qc5+ 22 Kh1 Ne3.

20...Bxc3 21 bxc3 Qxc3 22 Bb1

This line had been suggested as good for White by some commentators, but Wang Yue is ready with an excellent and thematic answer.

22...Ng6! (Diagram 61)

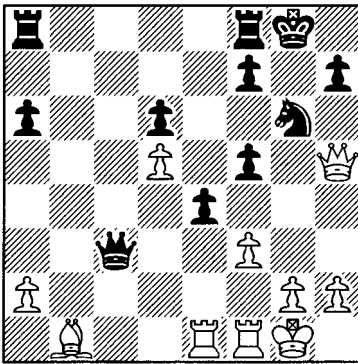


Diagram 61 (W)

Returning the pawn with effect

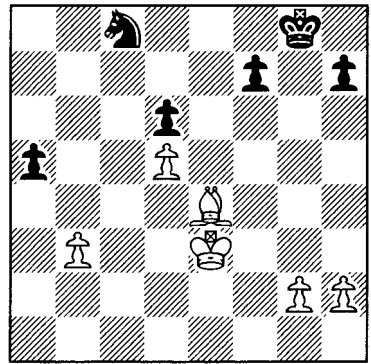


Diagram 62 (W)

White can't break through

23 Qxf5



NOTE: 23 fxe4 f4 is fine for Black: his rooks are active on the queenside and the white bishop is no better than his knight (and potentially much worse were the heavy pieces to be exchanged).

Indeed, White will find himself obliged to bale out shortly with e5 and Bxg6.

23...exf3

23...e3 24 Qd3 (Kosten) would simply lose the pawn in the end, but the text leads to equality safely enough.

24 Qxf3 Qxf3 25 Rxf3 Rae8

This endgame is equal; the knight is hardly worse than the bishop with such a square available on e5, and Black's rooks can become very active in the time it takes White to get the bishop back from b1 to somewhere sensible.

26 Rxe8 Rxe8 27 Kf2 Rb8 28 Rb3 Rxb3 29 axb3 Ne7 30 Be4 a5 31 Ke3 Nc8 (Diagram 62)

Ready to meet 32 Kd4 with 32...Nb6, of course.

32 g4 h6 33 Kf4 Kg7 34 h4 Kf6 35 Bf5 Nb6 36 Ke4 a4 37 bxa4 Nxa4 38 Kd4 Nc5 39 Bc2 Na6 40 Ke4 Nb4 41 Bd1 Na6 42 Kf4 Nb4 43 Ke4 ½-½

Points to Remember

1. Black's counterplay is based on (i) the vulnerable d-pawn, and (ii) hitting the queenside with ...b4 the moment White weakens himself with f3 or g4.
2. For these purposes the queen is superbly placed on c8, where it also frees the e7-knight by defending f5.
3. If White's bishop goes to b3 then ideally it has to be dislodged from there, since it is fighting against both these sources of counterplay. Black is able to do this thanks to the tactics after 18 Bb3 a5.
4. Grandmasters have failed the calculation exercise involved in finding 23...Rfd8 over the board. If you remember one move from this book by heart, make it this one.

Game 42

□ L.Dominguez ■ L.Schandorff

Esbjerg 2003

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3 Be6 12 0-0 Bxd5 13 exd5 Ne7 14 c3 Bg7 15 Qh5 e4 16 Bc2 0-0 17 Rae1 Qc8 18 Kh1 (Diagram 63)

We've seen that the immediate strikes with 18 f3 or 18 g4 don't quite do it for White, so this is a try to improve either of those. White essentially claims that 18...b4 doesn't work at the moment and that Black doesn't have a waiting move as useful as Kh1 which prepares him against both g4 and f3. In fact, as we're going to

see in a minute, White is probably wrong on both counts and this variation can be considered closed.

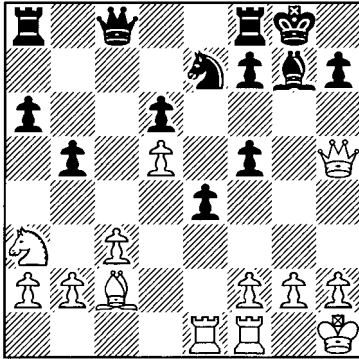


Diagram 63 (B)

White delays f2-f3 and g2-g4

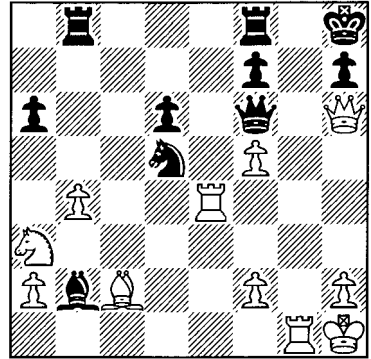


Diagram 64 (W)

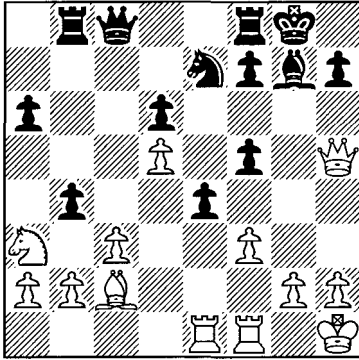
White is struggling

18...Rb8!

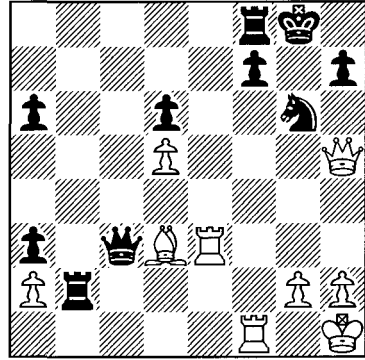
It seems that Black probably can play 18...b4. White's idea was that with his rook free to use the third rank 19 cxb4 Bxb2 20 Re3 would be very strong. Indeed 20...f6 21 Rg3+ Ng6 22 Rb1 with the idea of Rb3 and Rxc6+, 20...Bg7 21 Bb3 followed by g4, and 20...Bxa3 21 Rh3 Rd8 22 Qxh7+ Kf8 23 Qh6+ Ke8 24 Ba4+ are all unsatisfactory for Black. However, Rogozenko showed that by walking along a narrow path with 20...Nxd5 Black survives: 21 Rh3 Nf6 22 Qh6 Qe6 23 f3 Kh8 (but not 23...exf3? 24 Rg3+ Ng4 25 Rxc4!) 24 fxe4 Rg8 25 e5 Qxe5 26 Bxf5 Rg7 and Black is only a little worse, if at all. Black had also just about succeeded in showing that 18...Ng6 19 Bb1 b4 or 19...Re8 was viable in similarly tenuous fashion, but Leko's brilliant 18...Rb8 novelty from the 2002 Dortmund Candidates rendered all that irrelevant.

19 f3

After either 19 Bb3 or 19 Bb1 Black can proceed with 19...b4 20 cxb4 Rxb4, when it is clear that his rook has gained more from the by-play at move 18 than White's king. Thus the only other critical move is 19 g4, but Black has demonstrated excellent play after 19...b4 20 cxb4 Nxd5 21 gxf5 (21 Qxf5 Qxf5 22 gxf5 Nxb4 is just good for Black who is a tempo up on similar lines after 18 g4, since Kh1 is useless; to justify Kh1 White needs to do something with Rg1, and that means keeping the queens) 21...Kh8 22 Rg1 Bxb2! (not just pawn-grabbing, but including the queen in the defence) 23 Qh6 Qc3 24 Rxe4 Qf6 (**Diagram 64**), when it was already clear that Black was better in V.Topalov-P. Leko, Dortmund Candidates 2002 – fittingly it was a win with the Sveshnikov which sent Leko, a great exponent of the Sveshnikov, to his painful date with destiny in Brissago.

19...b4 (Diagram 65)**Diagram 65 (W)**

Black carries out his ideal break

**Diagram 66 (W)**

There's no way through on the kingside

20 fxe4

In the stem game Shirov couldn't find anything better than 20 Nb1 bxc3 21 bxc3 Bxc3! (again it's not just a pawn, it's the dark squares) 22 Nxc3 Qxc3 23 fxe4 f4!, when it was necessary to readjust and grovel for a draw with 24 Bb1 Ng6 25 e5 dxe5 26 Bxg6. Instead Shirov played 24 Bb3 and after 24...Ng6 was already worse (your computer won't agree; this variation gives one of the few remaining opportunities for human silicon-humbling). Meanwhile 20 cxb4 is now much worse than before; if White follows the same perpetual check line as I showed in the notes to the last game then he stubs his toe: 20...Bxb2 21 fxe4 Bxa3 22 Re3 Qxc2 23 Rg3+ Ng6 24 Rh3 Rfd8 25 Qxh7+ Kf8 26 Rh5 Ne5 27 Rhxf5 Rb7 28 Rxe5 dxe5 29 Qh8+ Ke7 30 Qxe5+ Kd7 31 Rxf7+ Kc8 32 Qe6+ Kb8; if he'd left the king on g1 and the rook on a8 at move 18 then the rook would be on a7 now and 33 Qb6+ would terminate the contest, but as things stand it is White who has to resign.

20...bxa3 21 exf5

White has finally found a variation where Kh1 was useful (if Black had 21...Qc5+ at this moment he could follow with ...Nxd5 and beat the attack off easily), but Black can still defend.

21...Rxb2

Rogozenko's 21...Bf6 looks shaky to me after 22 Rf3, although Black certainly doesn't lose at once. If Black really has to win the game at all costs then 18...b4 or 18...Ng6 are better bets.

22 f6 Ng6

22...Rxc2? 23 fxg7 Kxg7 24 Rxe7 loses, but after the text White's attack is over.

23 fxf7 Kxf7 24 Bd3 Qxc3 25 Re3 Kg8! (Diagram 66)

The last difficult move, defending calmly against the threat of Rh3. The game peters out now.

26 Bxf6 hxf6 27 Rxc3 gxh5 28 Rxa3 Re8 29 Rxa6 Ree2 30 Rxd6 Rxf2 31 Rg1 Rxf2+ 32 Kxf2 Rxa2 33 Rh6 Kg7 34 Rxf5 Rd2 35 Rg5+ ½-½

Points to Remember

1. 18 Kh1 is essentially a waiting move.
2. Black needs a good waiter of his own and 18...Rb8 is perfect. It's very useful if White pussyfoots about with bishop moves, and it's also useful if White goes for it on the kingside.

Chapter Eight

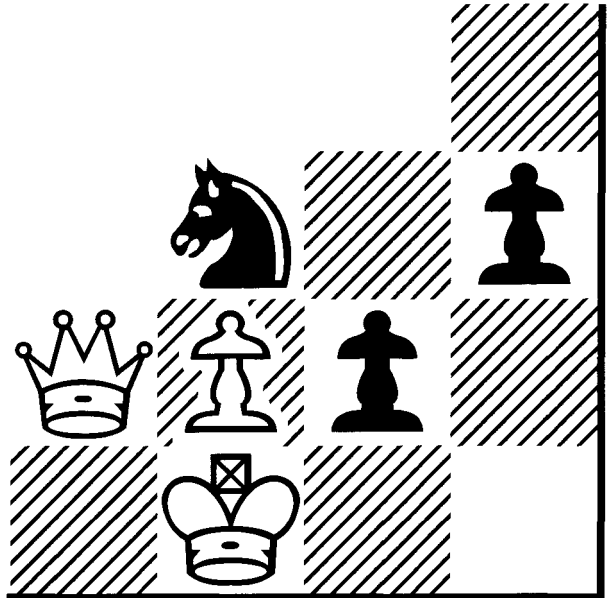
The Anti-Sveshnikov



Introduction



Black Plays 3 Nc3 e5



Introduction

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3

Let's say White starts instead with 2 Nc3. In order to keep alive the possibility of a Sveshnikov if White's next two moves are 3 Nf3 and d4, you really have to reply with what is anyway the main move, 2...Nc6 (2...e6 3 Nf3 is annoying, since 3...d5 4 exd5 exd5 5 d4 is a variation of the French with a poor reputation), and now White may seek to preserve his options with 3 Nge2 (**Diagram 1**), as well as with 3 Nf3 which we'll examine shortly. This (3 Nge2, that is) was a trick Kasparov always used against Kramnik in the mid-nineties, although whether he actually had anything particular in mind or was just amusing himself and aiming to gain a minute or two on the clock, I don't know. After 3 Nge2:

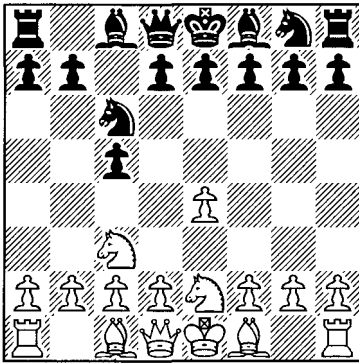


Diagram 1 (B)

White delays d2-d4

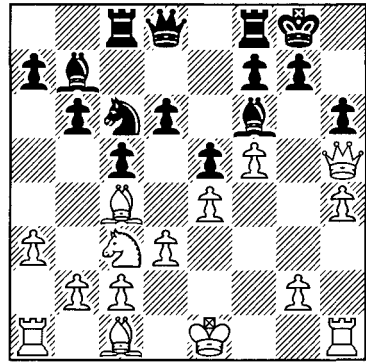


Diagram 2 (B)

Powerful play from Fischer

a) As we'll see below, 3...g6 is a good option which many Sveshnikov aficionados employ.

b) Here, unlike after 3 Nf3, 3...e5 is not supposed to be so good. This is largely because of a classic game R.Fischer-R.Naranja, Meralco 1967, which went 4 Nd5 Nf6 5 Nec3 (this is the point: White is better placed to control d5 and to push f4 than he is after 3 Nf3 e5) 5...Be7 (Moiseenko, though, has been prepared to play even this version; his game with Areshchenko in the 2004 Ukrainian Championship at Kharkov went 5...Nxd5 6 Nxd5 Be7 7 Bc4 0-0 8 d3 d6 9 0-0 Rb8 10 a4 Be6 11 Qh5 h6 12 f4 exf4 13 Bxf4 Bg5 when Black, who won a long struggle after Areshchenko exchanged bishops and queens on g5, wasn't too badly off) 6 Bc4 0-0 7 d3 h6 8 f4 d6 9 f5 b6 10 h4 Bb7 11 a3 Rc8 12 Nxf6+ Bxf6 13 Qh5 (**Diagram 2**) 13...Ne7 14 Bg5 d5 15 Bxf6 dxc4 16 Qg4 with a crushing position for White.

c) If Black wants to play the Sveshnikov, he needs to reply 3...Nf6. White can give up and play along with 4 d4, but he can also try the sneaky 4 g3. Now White has the option to play a form of the Closed where both parties have played their king's knights to slightly odd squares (in the main lines Black's goes to e7 and White's to f3 after f4), but he may also meet any fifth move with 5 d4, transposing into an Open Sicilian with a fianchetto, which may catch out an unwary Black; for example, 4...g6 5 d4 transposes to a g3 Dragon, a respectable enough system which carries considerable poison if Black doesn't know what he's doing.

This actually is a problem common to any Sicilian player, except those who are willing to play either the Dragon or the Scheveningen with ...Nc6 who can pretty much sneer and carry on. One possibility to avoid this, which one might call Kramnik's gambit (on the basis that he once played it in an exhibition blitz game) is 4...d5 5 exd5 Nd4!? (**Diagram 3**)

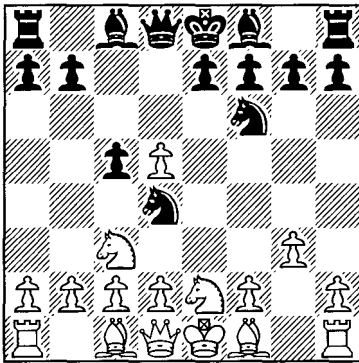


Diagram 3 (W)

A radical pawn sacrifice

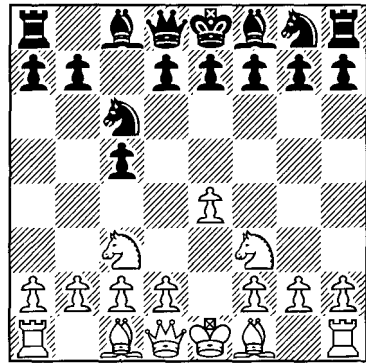


Diagram 4 (B)

White may or may not play d4

6 Bg2 (evidently critical is acceptance with 6 Nxd4 cxd4 7 Nb5 when I think Black's idea is 7...e5, but I'm going to leave this for the experimenters among you) 6...Bg4, when Black's idea may be 7 0-0 Nxd5!? – or it may be something quite irresponsible like 7...Nf3+ 8 Kh1 h5 9 h3 Qd7.

Returning to 2 Nf3:

2...Nc6 3 Nc3 (Diagram 4)

After 3 Nc3, the Sveshnikov player has three main options to consider:

- a) 3...e5 is very true to the spirit of the Sveshnikov in one way – Black cares nothing for the hole on d5 – although not in another: it tends towards solidity rather than active play, as we will see below.
- b) Theoretically 3...g6 (**Diagram 5**) is the big problem with White's move order.

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov

The point is that virtually everyone would play the Sicilian Dragon were it not for two systems; the Yugoslav Attack with f3, Be3 and so on, and the Maróczy Bind arising after 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6 5 c4. The latter system is obviously no longer a goer, and the former can be avoided with 4 d4 cxd4 5 Nxd4 Bg7 6 Be3 Nf6 7 f3?! 0-0 8 Bc4 d5, a pawn sacrifice which is probably rather more comfortable for Black than the Yugoslav Attack. Meanwhile 3...g6 leaves Black optimally placed to meet any Closed Sicilian plans. It is an excellent option which stays within the Sveshnikov spirit of striving for active play and one that many Sveshnikov players – Rogozenko, for example – usually choose. The drawback, however, is that the above is by no means the end of the story; White can also play 7 Nxc6 and 8 e5, 7 Bc4 0-0 8 Bb3, or indeed employ the whole of the Classical Dragon, so Black has to learn a lot of different systems which are really part of a different opening than the one he wants to play.

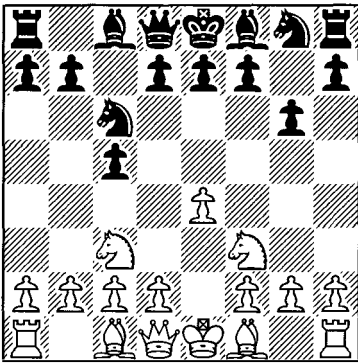


Diagram 5 (W)

Black allows an Accelerated Dragon

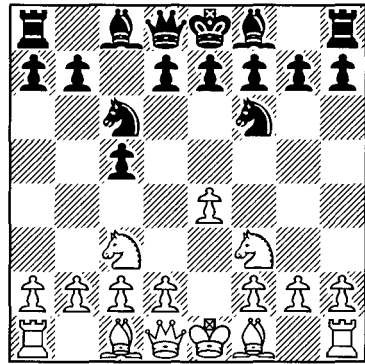


Diagram 6 (W)

A fashionable choice

c) 3...Nf6 (**Diagram 6**) is the last chance to get a Sveshnikov proper. The first point against it is that 4 Bb5 leads to a fashionable position usually reached by 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 Nc3; see Richard Palliser's *The Bb5 Sicilian* for detailed coverage. Of course Black needs a defence to 3 Bb5 in order to play the Sveshnikov anyway, and if 3...Nf6 is your preferred defence, then that's no problem (although the best-established lines are 3...g6 or 3...e6). Secondly, White may try 4 e5 Ng4 5 Qe2 when his idea is various cheap tactics after 5...Qc7 and now either 6 Nd5 Qb8 7 d4 or 6 Nb5 Qb8 7 d4. I suspect that these ideas are likely to lose their appeal after the recent game M.Vachier Lagrave-V.Spasov, Turin Olympiad 2006, which went 5...d6 6 exd6 e6 7 Qc4 (a move Magnus Carlsen had recently essayed; previously White had been relying upon 7 Ne4 Bxd6 8 Qc4 Nf6 9 d3 – 9 Nxc5?! 0-0 10 Be2 e5 is very dangerous – when 9...0-0 10 Bg5 was meant to secure an advantage for White, but simple enough instead is 9...Nxe4 10 dxe4 0-0; for example, 11 Be3 e5 12 0-0-0 Nd4

13 Kb1 Qc7 and White has problems) 7...e5! 8 h3 (8 Nb5 Bxd6 9 Qd5 Be7 10 Qxd8+ Kxd8 gets White nowhere either) 8...Nh6 9 d3 Nf5 10 Bg5 Qxd6 11 0-0-0 Be6 12 Qa4 f6 13 Ne4 Qc7 14 Be3 Nfd4 and the French teenager was horribly crushed. If you don't mind 4 Bb5, then this is another excellent option.

Black Plays 3 Nc3 e5

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 e5 (Diagram 7)

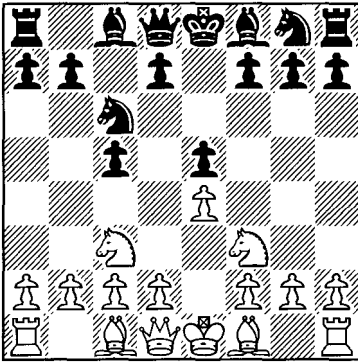


Diagram 7 (W)

A solid continuation

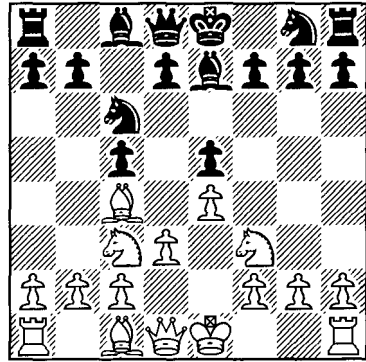


Diagram 8 (B)

White has a firm grip on d5

4 Bc4

The most natural and far the most popular continuation, aiming to dominate d5.

4...Be7 5 d3 (Diagram 8) 5...Nf6

A fashionable order intended to put White off 6 0-0 0-0 7 Ng5 by the gambit 7...d5, which we'll examine shortly. Meanwhile 5...d6 has been commoner; aiming to meet 6 Nd2 (6 0-0 is the alternative and the subject of Game 43) by immediately unloading the 'bad' e7-bishop with 6...Bg5 (**Diagram 9**), when the modern main line is 7 h4 (7 Nf1 Bxc1 is possible but co-operative) 7...Bxd2+ (on 7...Bh6 8 Qh5 with the idea of exploiting the weakening in Black's kingside after 8...g6 9 Qd1 Nf6 10 h5! has proven annoying) 8 Bxd2 Nf6 as, for example, in the short, sharp battle G.Kasparov-P.Leko, Linares 2005.

6 Nd2 (Diagram 10)

Instead 6 0-0 d6 would transpose to Game 43.



NOTE: With the text White aims immediately to take his knight to e3. Of course this has to be done before castling since otherwise the rook on f1 will have to be moved to e1, and it belongs on f1 to back up f4.

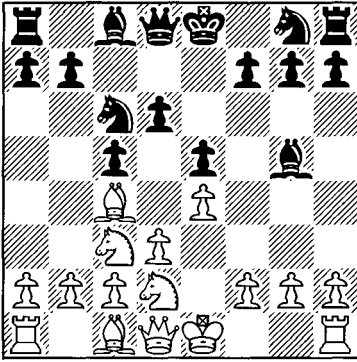


Diagram 9 (W)

Black plays to free his position

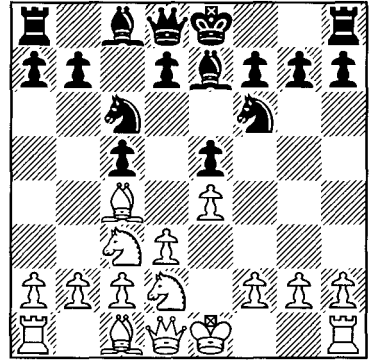


Diagram 10 (B)

The knight heads for e3 via f1

We will further explore 6 Nd2 in Game 44, but a more critical test of this move order of Black's is 6 Ng5 0-0 7 f4, when 7...d5!? (**Diagram 11**) is a gambit invented by the man himself, Evgeny Sveshnikov. It's presently a little in the doghouse theoretically, but it certainly gives lively play and is quite fun to analyse, so I've given the most critical lines for readers who want to try and improve on them:

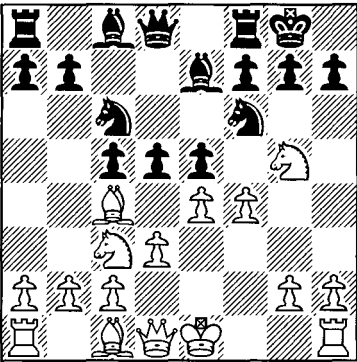


Diagram 11 (W)

The Sveshnikov Gambit

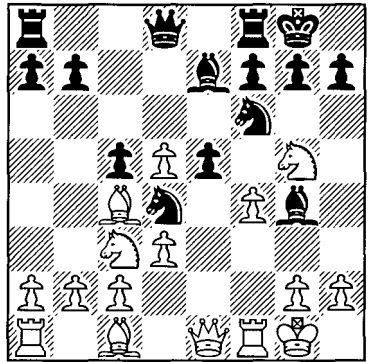


Diagram 12 (B)

A critical sacrifice

a) 8 Nxd5 is probably not best since White has to give up two pieces for a rook: 8...Nxd5 9 Bxd5 exf4 10 Nxf7 Rxf7 11 Qh5 (11 0-0 Bf6 12 Bxf4 Qe7 13 Bxf7+ Qxf7 14 Bg5 Bd4+ 15 Kh1 Qe6 is another option) 11...Qf8 12 Bxf7+ Qxf7 13 Qxf7+ Kxf7 14 Bxf4 with a difficult position to judge in either case, but this is not a refutation.

b) 8 exd5 and now:

b1) 8...Nd4 9 0-0 Bg4 10 Qe1 (**Diagram 12**) is a very strong move first played by the well-named Russian GM, Yakov Meister, instead of 10 Qd2 transposing to 'b2'. After 10 Qe1, we have another critical divide:

b11) 10...Nxc2 11 Qg3 (11 Qh4 e4 seems to be survivable for Black) 11...exf4 (11...Nxa1 12 fxe5 Bh5 13 d6 Bxd6 14 exd6 Nc2 15 Nge4 Nxe4 16 dxe4 Bg6 17 Nd5 Kh8 18 Nc7 Rb8 19 Bg5 Qc8 20 Be7 and wins – Magomedov in *Informator*) 12 Bxf4 Nh5 (12...Nxa1 13 d6 Nc2 14 dxe7 Qxe7 15 Be5 Rae8 16 Bxf6 Qe3+ 17 Qxe3 Nxe3 18 Nge4 Nxf1 19 Kxf1 is unclear according to Oratovsky, but 15 Nce4 looks pretty good for White to me) 13 Qxg4 Nxf4 14 Nhx7 Kxh7 15 Rxf4 is excellent for White, since 15...Nxa1 loses to 16 Qh5+ Kg8 17 d6.

b12) 10...exf4 11 Bxf4 h6 (11...Nxc2 12 Qg3 transposes to 'b11') 12 Nge4 (12 d6 also seems to be a bit better for White: 12...Bxd6 13 Bxd6 Qxd6 14 Nxf7 Rxf7 15 Ne4 Qc6 – M.Carlsen-I.Nataf, Reykjavik blitz 2004 – and now 16 Bxf7+ Kxf7 17 Qh4) 12...Nh5 (12...Nxc2 13 Qg3 Nxa1 14 d6 Nxe4 15 Nxe4 Bf6 16 Qxg4 with a crushing attack) 13 Qd2 and White was winning in Y.Meister-P.Smirnov, Moscow 2004.

b2) 8...Bg4 is the alternative, although the latest example worked out terribly for the man himself in D.Frolyanov-E.Sveshnikov, Russian Team Championship 2006: 9 Qd2 Nd4 10 0-0 (10 h3 Bh5 11 g4 h6 12 Qg2! had been good for White according to Kulaots in K.Kulaots-A.Fedorov, Moscow 2004, but this sort of thing doesn't seem to be necessary) 10...exf4 11 Qxf4 (after 11 Rxf4 the mysterious sequence 11...Bh5 12 Rf1 Ng4 – 12...Qb8 was Sveshnikov's proposal – 13 Nge4 Qb8 produced an immediate draw in K.Kulaots-E.Sveshnikov, Riga 2003, but White looks a lot better to me after 14 Qf4) 11...Bd6 (11...Nxc2 is obviously a critical move but I'm quite sure Sveshnikov had analysed it at home: a wild stab at what happens next might be 12 Nce4 Nxa1 13 d6 Bxd6 14 Nxd6 – 14 Nxf6+?? Qxf6 15 Qxg4 Bxh2+ wins – 14...Bh5 15 g4 Bg6 16 Be3 and White is virtually winning in view of 16...Nc2 17 Ngxf7 Bxf7 18 Nxf7 Rxf7 19 Bxf7+ Kxf7 20 Qc4+, picking up the knight with a continuing attack) 12 Qf2 Bd7 13 h3 b5 14 Bb3 Qc7 15 Nce4 Nxe4 16 Nxe4 Rae8 and Black has played the most natural moves but I can't imagine how he proposed to continue after 17 Be3, and even in the game 17 c3 was still quite good for White.

Illustrative Games

Game 43

□ V.Kramnik ■ P.Leko

Linares 2003

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 e5 4 Bc4 d6 5 d3 Be7 6 0-0 Nf6 7 Ng5

This is more or less the only try theoretically; of course White can play other

moves, but if Black continues with ...0-0, ...Be6, and fighting for d5, he won't go far wrong.

7...0-0 8 f4 (Diagram 13)

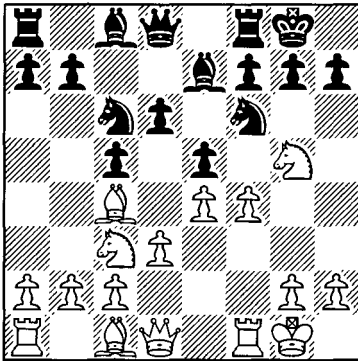


Diagram 13 (B)

A logical and testing advance

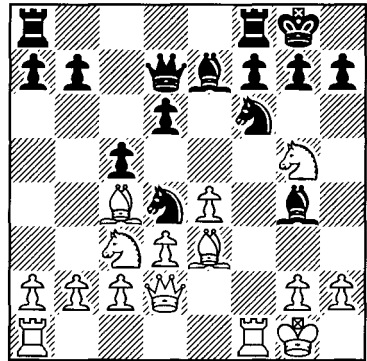


Diagram 14 (B)

White is slightly for preference

8...exf4

Black can't really allow f5, so 8...Bg4 is the main alternative and has been played in a lot of high-class games; the sequence which has become the most usual one is 9 Qe1 exf4 10 Bxf4 Nd4 11 Qd2 Qd7 12 Be3 (Diagram 14) 12...h6 (the point of White's last move was to prevent ...b5 by the variation 12...b5 13 Bxd4 bxc4 14 Bxf6 Bxf6 15 Rxf6 gxf6 16 Nd5 Qd8 17 Nh3 when White is better in all lines) 13 Nf3 Nxf3+ 14 gx3 Be6 15 Kh1 Kh7 16 Bxe6 fxe6. Black now either doubles rooks on the f-file (Radjabov) or plays ...Qe8-f7, ...Rg8 and ...Raf8 (Moiseenko), but in either case it seems to me that White is better with his plan of Qg2, rooks to g1 and f1, Ne2 and then f4, Nf4, or perhaps c3 and d4 according to circumstances.

9 Bxf4 h6 10 Nf3 Be6 11 Nd5 (Diagram 15)



NOTE: White doesn't really want to allow ...d5; for example, 11 Qe2 d5 12 exd5 Nxd5 13 Nxd5 Bxd5 with equality, so 11 Nd5 is his normal move.

11...Bxd5 12 exd5

This became a fashionable try after Black was brilliantly crushed in a much-published game E.Sutovsky-I.Smirin, Israeli Championship, Tel Aviv 2002. 12 Bxd5 was the older try and still looks more dangerous to me after 12...Nxd5 13 exd5 and then:

a) 13...Nd4 14 Nxd4 (14 c3 Nxf3+ 15 Qxf3 Bg5 is less dangerous) 14...cxd4 15 Qg4

Kh8 16 Rae1 Rc8 was the game A.Kovalev-V.Gagarin, Vladivostok 1995, in which White punted the unclear 17 Bxh6 gxh6 18 Qxd4+ f6. Instead 17 Re2 Rc5 was suggested as giving White the advantage, although this looks quite playable for Black to me ...Qc8 is next up, and the d-pawn is in trouble as well as c2.

b) The older 13...Ne5 has had a couple of reverses lately after Landa's extremely clever and strategically motivated 14 Bxe5 dxe5 15 c4 Bd6 16 g4! – the idea is to get a dominant knight on e4 against the bishop and I don't see how Black prevents this. The natural try 16...g6 17 Qd2 Kh7 runs into 18 g5 hxg5 19 Nxg5+ with an extremely strong attack; for example, 19...Kg8 (or 19...Kg7 20 Rxf7+) 20 Rae1 Qd7 21 Qg2 Rae8 22 Ne4.

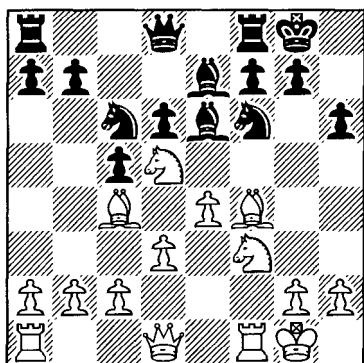


Diagram 15 (B)

Preventing ...d5 at the cost of d5

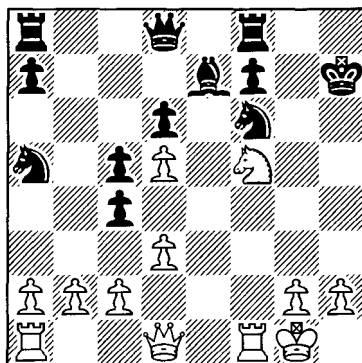


Diagram 16 (B)

Stunning play from Sutovsky

12...Na5

12...Nb4 13 Nh4 has proved very dangerous for Black.

13 Nh4

This had a number of triumphs but after the present game has been neutralized, and White is going to have to look somewhere else. It's natural to move the queen next, but 13 Qe1 Nxc4 14 dxc4 Re8 doesn't do much for White; for example, 15 Kh1 Bf8 16 Qc3 Ne4 17 Qd3 Qf6. White has also tried 13 Qd2 Nxc4 14 dxc4 when he did acquire a little something after 14...Ne4 (14...Re8 15 Rae1 Qd7 16 Qd3 Bf8 is sensible here too) 15 Qd3 f5 16 Nd2 Nxd2 17 Bxd2, although Black seems to be able to keep it manageable with 17...Bg5 18 Bc3 Qd7 19 Rae1 Bf6.



NOTE: In playing through these lines, by the way, notice how Black is always careful to keep a trick available as a way of preventing Nh4.

13...Nxc4

13...b5 14 Nf5 bxc4 15 Bxh6 gxh6 16 Nxh6+ Kh7 17 Nf5 (**Diagram 16**) was the splendidly insouciant course of Sutovsky-Smirin; when all the newsprint is finally spilled it seems that Black is just lost here.

14 dxc4 Nxd5

This was a new move, though it had been suggested before. The Equalizer equalizes, but Black's winning chances are zero, which was why I mentioned above some alternatives earlier.

14...Re8 is a possible alternative here too, and in the game D.Frolyanov-A.Kharlov, Russian Team Championship 2006, Black gradually equalized and even became better: 15 Nf5 Bf8 16 Qd3 Qd7 17 Rad1 Ng4 18 Ng3 g6 19 Qd2 Bg7 20 h3 Bd4+, which is quite typical for this variation: in a lot of lines the computer starts out thinking White is all but winning, and as Black gets sorted out and it turns out White can't do anything the evaluation drops move by move. Grandmasters, of course, recognize this sort of thing from the beginning.

15 Qxd5 Bxh4 16 Rad1 (Diagram 17)

16 Bxd6 Be7 is an even easier draw: 17 Rad1 (or 17 Be5 Qxd5 18 cxd5 Rad8 19 Rad1 Bd6 20 Bxd6 Rxd6) 17...Bxd6 18 Qxd6 Qb6.

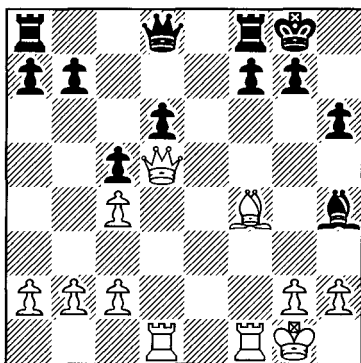


Diagram 17 (B)

Refusing to allow Black an easy draw

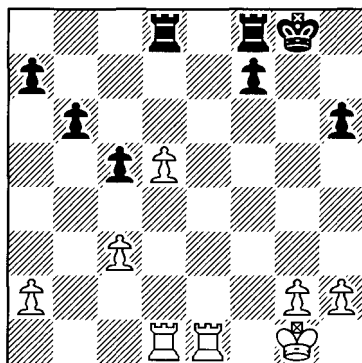


Diagram 18 (B)

It should be a draw

16...b6

The best move according to Leko. The position is actually quite tactical, although White tends to have the fun. Instead, 16...Be7 is not obviously bad – certainly to those of us under 2700. White gets nowhere with 17 Qxb7, but 17 Rd3 may be a problem. Black doesn't have anything better than 17...b6 (not 17...Qb6? 18 Bxh6 gxh6 19 Rg3+ Kh8 20 Qh5 d5 21 Qe5+, nor 17...Qd7? 18 Qxc5), but now ...Qd7 is

coming and I'm not sure I see White's next trick; for example, after 18 Rg3 Black has the important resource 18...Bh4 deflecting the rook. Following 19 Rg4 Bf6 White's attack is definitely good for perpetual, but I don't see more than that. Still, better to believe Leko than me.

17 Bxd6

17 Qh5 Bf6 18 Bxd6 Bd4+ 19 Rxd4 cxd4 20 Bxf8 Qxf8 21 Qd5 Rd8 22 Rxf7 Rxd5 23 Rxf8+ Kxf8 24 cxd5 Ke7 (Leko) is a drawn pawn ending.

17...Be7 18 Be5 Bg5 19 Bd6

Leko gives the interesting line 19 Qf3 Qe7 20 Rde1 Rae8 21 Qg3 Qd7 22 h4!? Rxe5!? (22...f6 is more solid) 23 Qxe5 Bxh4 with chances for both sides.

19...Be7 20 Bf4 Bf6 21 c3 Qxd5 22 cxd5 Rad8 23 Bxh6

23 Rfe1 Rd7 is also a draw; optically White is better but he can't improve.

23...Bxc3 24 bxc3 gxf6 25 Rfe1 (Diagram 18) 25...Rd7

It's never too late to lose: after 25...Rfe8 26 c4 Rxe1+ 27 Rxe1 b5 (27...a6 was better, to liquidate more pawns when the ...b5-break comes) 28 cxb5 Rxd5 29 a4 Rd4 30 a5 Ra4 31 a6, Black made a further series of errors and was obliged to bring a most embarrassing result back to his team-mates in J.Gallagher-E.Van Beers, European Team Championship, Plovdiv 2003. The text snuffs out all illusions.

26 c4 a6 27 a4 b5 28 axb5 axb5 29 cxb5 Rb8 30 d6 Rxb5 31 Re7 Rbb7 32 Rxd7 Rxd7 33 Kf2 Kg7 34 Kf3 Kf6 35 Rd5 ½-½

Points to Remember

1. This is quite a dull line.
2. Black has to take on f4 and thereafter the simplest and most logical line is to challenge d5 by driving the knight back and going ...Be6.
3. White has to block d5 to prevent ...d5, and then Black should capture. Whether White keeps his c4-bishop or not, the leitmotif of the play after that is to stop White's knight from finding a good outpost, either by exchanging it with ...Nd4, or by taking good care it can't get to f5 (although as Kharlov showed it isn't fatal even if Black lets it get to f5).

Game 44

□ **Y.Kryvoruchko** ■ **A.Moiseenko**

Cappelle la Grande 2006

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 e5 4 Bc4 Be7 5 d3 Nf6

More ambitious than Leko's 5...d6, but now Kryvoruchko doesn't take up the challenge with 6 Ng5 0-0 7 f4. He may have been put off by 7...d5!?, although

Black can also take play back into the realms of Game 43 with the somewhat less ambitious 7...exf4.

6 Nd2 (Diagram 19)

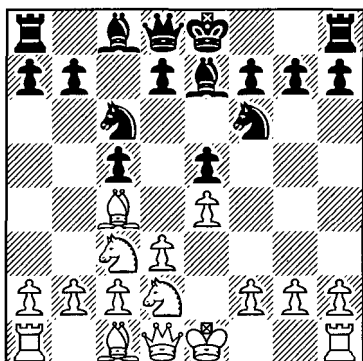


Diagram 19 (B)

The knight heads for d5

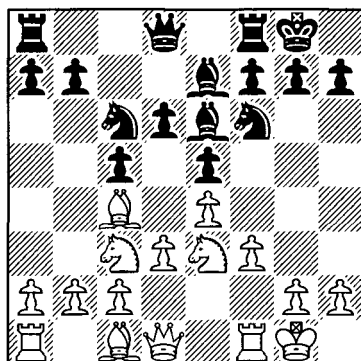


Diagram 20 (B)

Black has a choice of plans

6...d6 7 Nf1 Bg4



TIP: It's useful for Black to force f3. This makes it hard for White to contemplate any other plan than f4, which will make Black's dispositions easier.

8 f3 Be6 9 Ne3 0-0

9...Bxc4 would be met by 10 dxc4 of course – this recapture is normal in this line even after f4, when it leaves the White e-pawn isolated; White has to maintain control of d5 at all costs.

10 0-0 (Diagram 20)

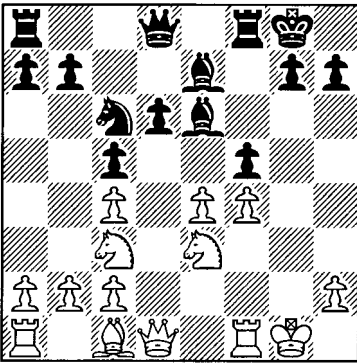
The play up to here has been obvious, but now Black has to come up with a plan. The one Moiseenko selects, contesting d5, is the most common.

10...a6

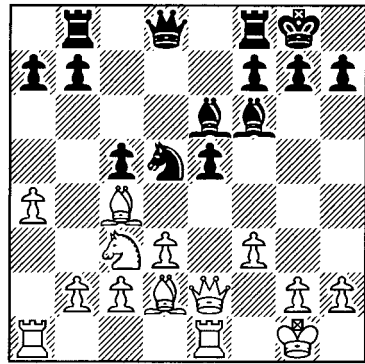
Black has tried a lot of moves here. Two common tries are 10...Nh5 and 10...Ne8, both of which intend to bring the bishop to g5. Either of these is, in my opinion, rather well met by 11 g3 – White shouldn't be afraid to take back on f4 with the g-pawn and get f5 in if he can, even if he has to play dxc4 in the process.

To me a better thought out way of moving the knight is 10...Nd7, as in the superbly instructive game P.Svidler-J.Lautier, Biel 2001, which went 11 g3 (11 Ncd5 Bg5 12 f4 exf4 13 Nxf4 Bxf4 14 Rxf4 Bxc4 15 Nxc4 – 15 dxc4 Nde5 16 Nf5 Re8 is more thematic but not much more effective – 15...Nf6 16 Ne3 d5 concludes the

struggle for d5 in Black's favour and equalizes) 11...Nb6 12 f4 (giving up the bishop for a knight is a different matter: after 12 Ncd5 Nxc4 13 dxc4 Black can either play with 13...g6 14 Bd2 f5 as in A.Grischuk-T.Nedev, Panormo 2001, or perhaps continue trading away White's potential d5-outpost pieces with 13...Nb4, or working on its support with 13...a6 aiming for ...b5; any of these should be fine, as is 12 Bb3 Nd4, continuing to insist on trading the bishop) 12...Nxc4 13 dxc4 (if White wants to play f4 and gxf4 then he really must keep the centre under control; after 13 Nxc4 Black could play either 13...exf4 14 Bxf4 d5 or perhaps 13...f5, when g3 starts to look a bit less clever, and Black has equality at least) 13...exf4 14 gxf4 f5! (**Diagram 21**) 15 exf5 Bc8 (15...Bxf5 16 Qd5+ drops a piece, so the bishop has to undevelop, but 14...f5 is still the right move) 16 Ncd5 Nd4 and Black was doing fine. The advance 14...f5! is why I quoted this game – preventing f5 and bordering on positionally forced, it nonetheless might not be everyone's choice.

**Diagram 21 (W)**

Black has to prevent f4-f5

**Diagram 22 (B)**

White has an edge



TIP: In this set-up Black should always meet f4 ...exf4, gxf4 with ...f5 if he can, and 10...Nd7 is an excellent alternative to 10...a6.

10...Rb8 is also much played. The ideas are very similar to the text move. Leko usually prefers it, and Moiseenko has in the past. It's hard to say where the difference lies – perhaps Black simply wanted to avoid repeating an earlier game. A tentative suggestion might be that Moiseenko had twice previously faced 11 a4 Nb4 12 Bd2, when in S.Movsesian-A.Moiseenko, Spanish League 2005, he tried the natural 12...d5 13 exd5 Nbx d5 14 Nxd5 Nxd5 and now 15 Qe2 was suggested. After 15...Bf6 White has various tries to extend pressure down the e-file, 16 Qe4, 16 Rae1 and 16 Rfe1 (**Diagram 22**) among them, and one can see that having ...Re8 comfortably available would be convenient; for example, a sample line 16...Re8 17 Bb5 Rf8 18 Nxd5 Bxd5 19 Bc3 a6 20 Bc4 Bxc4 21 dxc4 e4 22 Rad1 Qe7 23 Qxe4

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Qxe4 24 Rxe4 Bxc3 25 bxc3 with an edge for White, shows why.

11 a4

White usually plays to hold back ...b5, although 11 a3 ought to be the best move in my opinion, since it stops Black's next, fighting for d5. After that the best move according to my understanding of the variation is no longer 11...Nd7, but 11...Nh5 (as I see it, the trouble with 11...Nd7 – or 11...Ne8 – is that it can now be met with 12 g3 Nb6 13 Ba2 when Black has failed in unloading his e7-bishop, and also in the battle for d5, and for good measure cannot meet f4 with ...exf4, gxf4 ...f5 either) 12 Ncd5 (the point is that 12 g3 now does not prevent 12...Bg5: 13 f4 exf4 14 Ned5 Nf6 15 gxf4 Bh6 16 f5 Bxd5 is fine for Black) 12...Bg5 13 g3 Bxe3+ 14 Bxe3 Nf6 15 Bg5 Bxd5 16 Bxd5 h6 (**Diagram 23**), trading one of the bishops with approximate equality (it was so that c6 should not be en prise now that Black refrained from 11...b5). Nonetheless, if this is the best Black can do, this possibility would incline me to prefer 10...Nd7, although to be fair no-one much seems to agree with me. White isn't ready to occupy d5; for example, 10...Rb8 11 Ncd5 Bxd5 12 Nxd5 Nxd5 13 Bxd5 Bg5 14 f4 exf4 15 Bxf4 Bxf4 16 Rxf4 Qb6 was equal in S.Movsesian-A.Moiseenko, European Championship, Warsaw 2005.

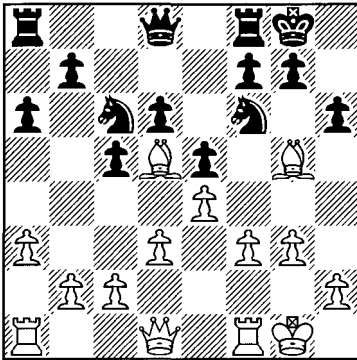


Diagram 23 (W)

White can't keep his bishop pair

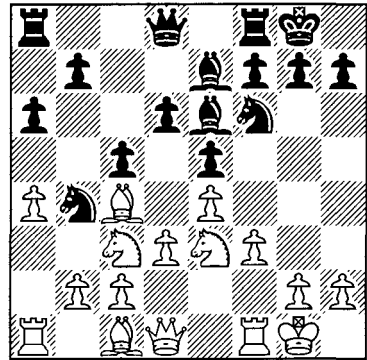


Diagram 24 (W)

Black fights for control of d5

11...Nb4 (Diagram 24) 12 Ncd5

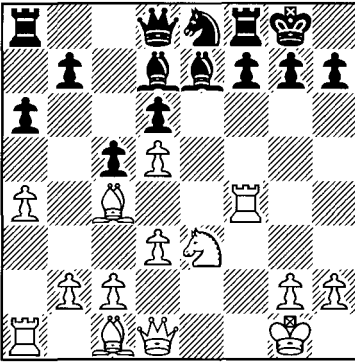
12 Bxe6 is nothing to be afraid of. In M.Kozakov-A.Moroz, Ukraine Championship, Ordzhonikidze 2001, Black was fine after 12...fxe6 13 Ne2 Nc6 14 f4 exf4 15 Nxf4 Qd7 16 c3 Rae8 17 Bd2 (in this continuation 10...a6 has worked out well, since Black's queen's rook has been useful somewhere else), and Black now exploited ...a6 again by transferring his bishop to a7 after 17...Bd8 18 Qb3 Kh8 19 Rad1 Na5 – it doesn't look much there at the moment but it plays a useful prophylactic role in dissuading d4.

12...Nbx5 13 exd5

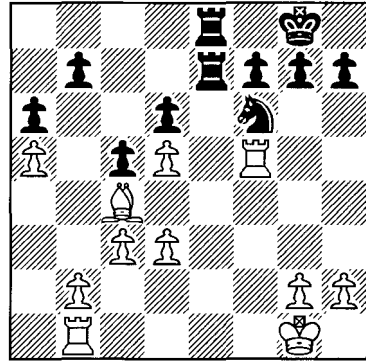
White's bishop is in danger of becoming a liability after this, but 13 Nxd5 Bxd5 14 Bxd5 Nxd5 15 exd5 Bg5 isn't going to set the world on fire either.

13...Bd7 14 f4 exf4

A big strategic decision. The more complex alternative is 14...e4, although White probably has the better prospects after 15 d4.

15 Rxf4 Ne8! (Diagram 25)**Diagram 25 (W)**

Black will unravel with ...Bg5

**Diagram 26 (B)**

White has just enough counterplay

15...g6 had been proposed previously, but Moiseenko demonstrates a simple and correct plan.

16 c3 Bg5 17 Rf3 Nf6

Black is comfortable now with the prospect of getting rid of his g5-bishop and playing against the c4-bishop with his knight. One of White's troubles is that he can't easily control e5, since d4 ...cxd4, cxd4 obviously has drawbacks.

18 Nf5

Allowing the desired balance of minor pieces to arise a bit easily, but White didn't have many ways of improving while leaving the knight stuck on e3.

18...Bxc1 19 Rxc1 Bxf5 20 Rxf5 Qe7

An ideal position for Black in this variation.

21 Qe1 Rae8 22 Qxe7 Rxe7 23 a5

A good move to fix the queenside pawns on light squares and give White the possibility of some play with b4 (digressing slightly, the possibility of b4 is an Achilles heel of the structure with pawns on e5 and c5, as with the similar Botvinnik English set-up for either colour).

23...Rfe8 24 Rb1 (Diagram 26) 24...Ng4

After 24...Re1+ 25 Rf1 Rxf1+ 26 Kxf1 Re5 White's counterplay arrives just in time: 27 b4 Nxd5 28 bxc5 Ne3+ 29 Kf2 Nxc4 30 Rxb7 g6 31 c6 Rc5 32 c7 Kg7 33 dxc4 with a draw.

25 b4 Ne3 26 Rf2?

This is just a blunder as far as I can see. After 26 Rf3 I don't see how Black proposed to make any progress.

26...cxb4 27 Rxb4 Nd1 28 Rf1

28 Rc2 Re1 mate, of course, but once the c-pawn goes White faces an uphill struggle and the rest of the game sees Moiseenko converting his advantage, although not without the odd upwards and downwards trend en route.

28...Nxc3 29 h3 h5 30 Kh2 Rc8 31 Rb3 Na4 32 Rb4 Nc5 33 Rb6 Rd7 34 d4 Na4 35 Rb4 Rdc7 36 Bb3 Nc3 37 Rb6 Rd8 38 Rc1 Rdd7 39 Rc2 f5 40 Rf2 g6 41 g4 Ne4 42 Rc2 hxg4 43 hxg4 f4 44 Kg2 Rf7

The start of a tactical solution which subsequently fails to convince Moiseenko himself at the critical moment. It was simpler to consolidate with 44...g5 followed by bringing up the king.

45 Kf3 Ng5+ 46 Kf2 Rh7 47 Kf1 Ne4 48 Kg2 Rcf7 49 Rc8+ Kg7 50 Bd1 Ng5 51 Rc3 f3+ 52 Bxf3 Rh3 53 Rbb3 (Diagram 27)

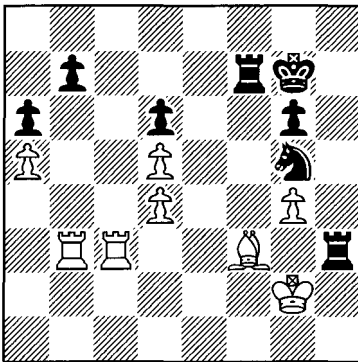


Diagram 27 (B)

Is the pawn ending winning?

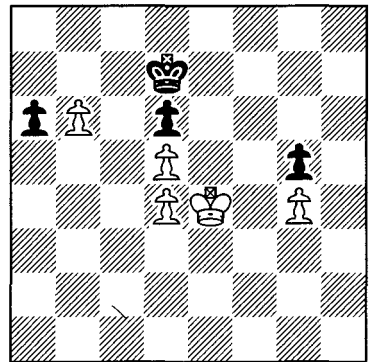


Diagram 28 (W)

White is in zugzwang

53...Kh6

OK, so why wasn't the pawn ending winning? Well, I think it was, but it's not that simple, and it's easy to imagine the sudden agonized head-clutching which went on as Moiseenko realized it wasn't trivial. Let's have a look: 53...Rhxf3 54 Rxf3 Rxf3

55 Rxf3 Nxf3 56 Kxf3 g5 (Black can also win – more easily in fact – by keeping the g-pawn on g6: 56...Kf6 57 Kf4 Kf7 58 Kg5 Kg7 59 Kf4 Kf6 60 Ke4 Ke7 61 Kf4 b6 62 axb6 Kd7) 57 Ke3 Kf7 58 Ke4 Kf6 59 Kd3 Ke7 60 Ke3 (60 Ke4 b6 61 axb6 Kd7 is simpler for Black) 60...Kd8 (60...b6 61 axb6 Kd8! is the same thing; but not 60...Kd7? 61 Ke4 Kc7 – if Black tries the same trick as in the main line with 61...b6 62 axb6 Kd8 then White wins by changing direction with 63 Kf5 a5 64 Ke6! – 62 Kf5 b6 63 axb6+ Kxb6 64 Kxg5 a5 and both sides queen with a draw) 61 Ke4 b6 62 axb6 Kd7! **(Diagram 28)**.

The only and star move, creating an unusual zugzwang: 63 Kf5 takes the king too far from b5 so that 63...a5 64 Ke4 Kc8 wins, but retreating allows ...Kc8-b7 collecting the b-pawn and winning by routine play using the a-pawn to deflect the white king (the switchback 63 Kd3 Kc8 64 Ke4 is too slow – 64...Kb7 65 Kf5 Kxb6 66 Ke6 Kc7).

54 Rd3 Rf4

More agonized head-clutching, no doubt – the pawn ending is still winning but bringing the king to g5 doesn't help anyone. Moiseenko prefers continued pressure to a committal decision.

55 Bd1 Rxd3 56 Rxd3 Ne4 57 Rb3 Rf2+ 58 Kg1 Ra2 59 Re3 Nd2?

The players must have been on increment by now: 59...Ng5 was correct since at this moment 60 Re2 would have seriously, in fact irredeemably, complicated Black's task.

60 Be2? Rxa5 61 Re6 Rxd5 62 Bd3 Kg5 63 Rxc6+ Kf4 64 Rf6+ Kg3 65 Be2 Ra5 66 g5 Rxc6 67 Rxd6 Kh3+ 68 Kh1 Ne4 69 Rh6+ Kg3 70 Bxa6 bxa6 71 Rxa6 Nd2 72 Kg1 Kf3+ 73 Kh1 Kf2 0-1

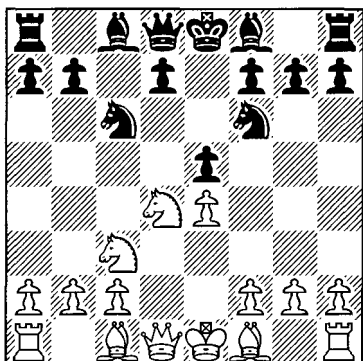
Points to Remember

1. Against an early Ng5, the enterprising gambit I've discussed unfortunately isn't quite sound, but it might do for a surprise, a rapidplay or a must-win game.
2. After Nd2 Black should play consistently to challenge d5. If he can either get in ...d5 himself or exchange all the minor pieces on d5, he will equalize.
3. A very important move is ...Bg5. If Black can trade this piece he rarely has any trouble and may even be able (as in this game) to play with a good knight against an ineffective bishop.
4. The challenging way to meet ...Bg5 is with g3, so as to go ...Bg5, f4 ...exf4, gxf4. Black needs either to make sure this is ineffective, or arrange the play such that it is not available.

Index of Variations

White Avoids 6 Ndb5

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 (Diagram)



6 Nxc6 – 13, 17

6 Nf3 – 13, 21

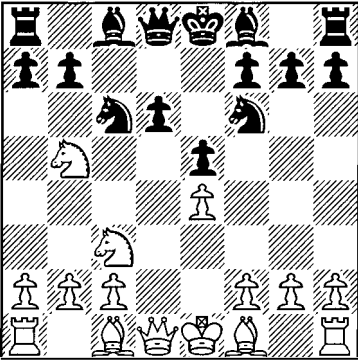
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1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 (Diagram)



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7 a4 – 37, 44

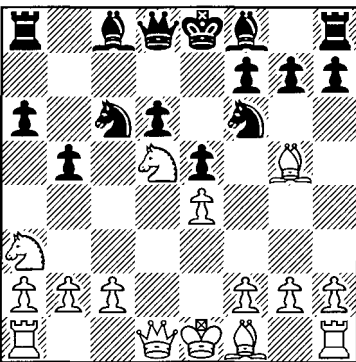
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White Plays 9 Nd5

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Nd5 (Diagram)



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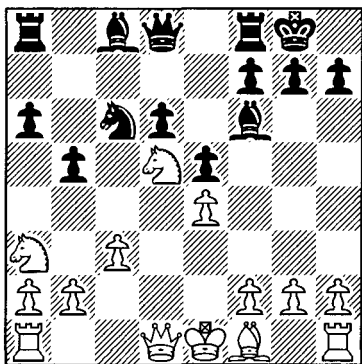
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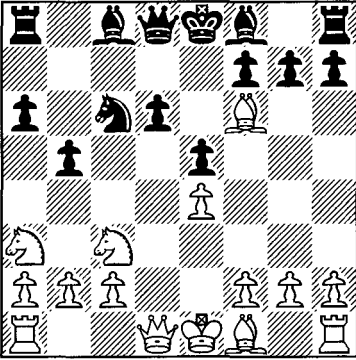
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9...gxf6

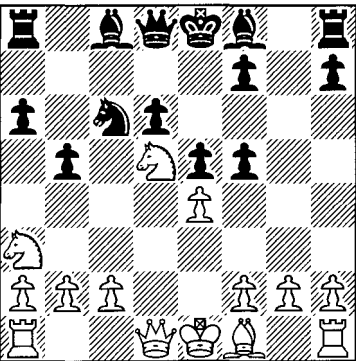
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11 c3

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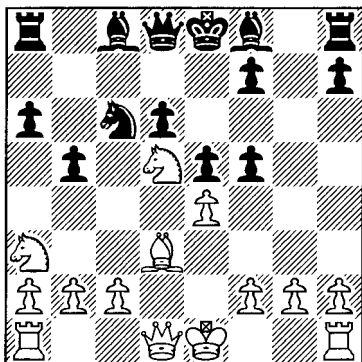
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1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3 (Diagram)



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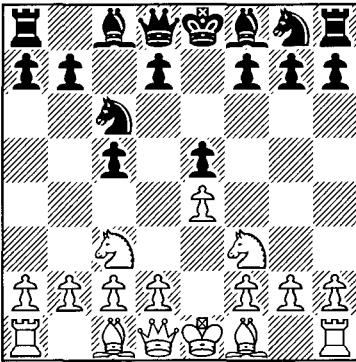
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starting out: sicilian sveshnikov

No opening in recent times has captured the imagination of the chess public more than the Sicilian Sveshnikov. Initially popularized in the 1970s, the Sveshnikov has exploded onto the chess scene at the highest levels and is now regarded by many experts as one of Black's most promising answers to 1 e4. One of its major attractions is that more often than not the opening leads to incredibly sharp and complex play. In such situations both sides must play with extreme accuracy just to stay on the board as a single slip may lead to disaster! This uncompromising and modern approach with the black pieces has found favour with many of today's leading Grandmasters, including Vladimir Kramnik and Peter Leko, while Garry Kasparov also began playing it towards the end of his career.

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- Learn how to play an ambitious opening
- Includes coverage of the fashionable Anti-Sveshnikov
- Written by a renowned opening expert

John Cox is an International Master and a former British Junior Champion. His previous works for Everyman Chess, which include *Starting Out: 1 d4!* and *Dealing with d4 Deviations*, have already established him as a writer with impressive credentials.

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