

THE MODERN ENGLISH

1.c4 e5

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The Modern English

Volume 1: 1.c4 e5

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Key to Symbols used!

- ! a good move
- ? a weak move
- !! an excellent move
- ?? a blunder
- ! ? an interesting move
- ? ! a dubious move
- only move
- = equality
- ∞ unclear position
- ± White stands slightly better
- ∓ Black stands slightly better
- ± White has a serious advantage
- ∓ Black has a serious advantage
- + - White has a decisive advantage
- + Black has a decisive advantage
- with an attack ↑ with an initiative
- ↔ with counterplay
- Δ with the idea of
- △ better is
- ≤ worse is
- N novelty
- + check
- # mate
- © with compensation for the sacrificed material

Foreword

What is the best opening for White? I had always associated this question with complete beginners and never gave it much thought. Until December sixth 2017. On that day I read the news that Google's Deep Mind AI software Alpha Zero, based on neural networks, crushed in a match the best engine Stockfish. The result itself was sensational, but the biggest shock was the way Alpha Zero learned chess. For the first time in history we witnessed a purely inhuman understanding of the game. The AI has taught itself without drawing anything from the huge practical experience and knowledge, accumulated for centuries. It relied only on statistical analysis and the method of trial and error. After 8 hours of self-training on a supercomputer and many millions of games behind, Alpha Zero built its own theoretical libraries. And the best opening according to them was:

The English Opening!

Around the fifth hour of self-training the probabilities of winning with 1.c4 even peaked at several times higher than any other opening. Then the numbers dropped, but still remained more than two times higher than the Réti, for example.

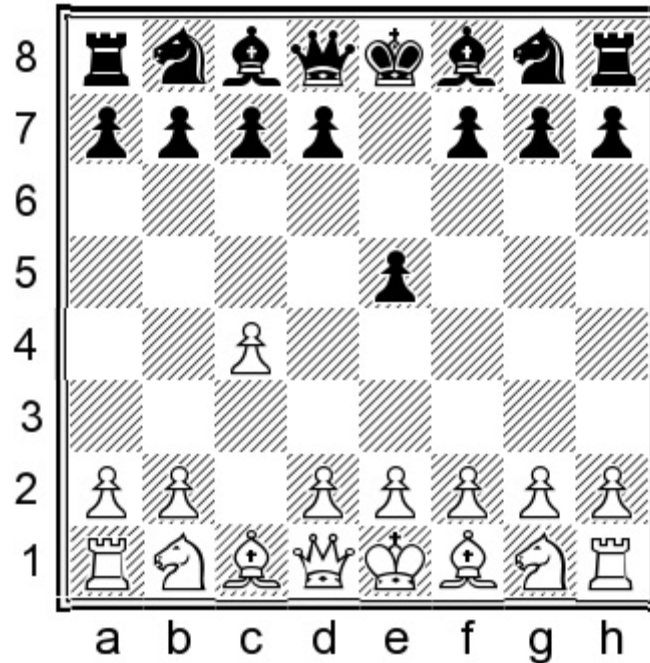
Thus, from a "flank" or "irregular" opening as they classified it some 100 years ago, the English has risen to the most promising way of starting the game!

There is much more to it. The central openings are extensively explored and, I would say, even exhausted. When we start with 1.c4, the play is more flexible, and the variety of move orders is enormous. Even best prepared opponents cannot remember many important lines. That makes the English a perfect choice for good players, capable of strategic thinking.

*Semko Semkov
August 2018*

Introduction

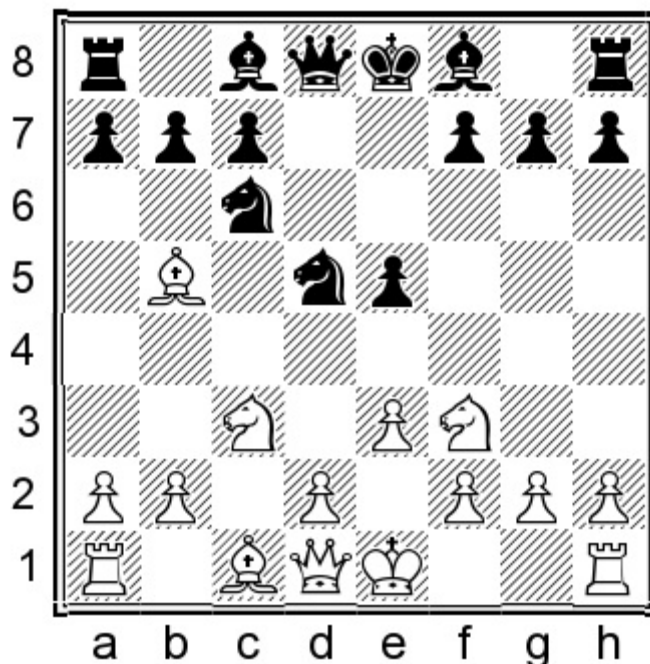
Building up an opening repertoire based on the English is a huge task. It is not like the Trompowsky, where you deal with just a few pawn structures. Black can choose virtually everything against **1.c4**. I decided to start my work with **1...e5**, since it has the reputation of the most principled retort to White's flank attack.



Bologan even claims in *New in Chess Yearbook* 126 that “for many years White has been unable to demonstrate even a slight advantage”. Indeed, Black has found reliable weapons against White's fianchetto. In lines like **1.c4 e5 2.g3 c6** and **1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♗f6 3.♗f3 ♗c6 4.g3 ♘b4** or **4...d5** Black has learned to take the centre and hold it confidently.

Recently, tournament practice has seen a **new trend**, which our book investigates – White avoids systems with g3 in favour of e3, ♙e2.

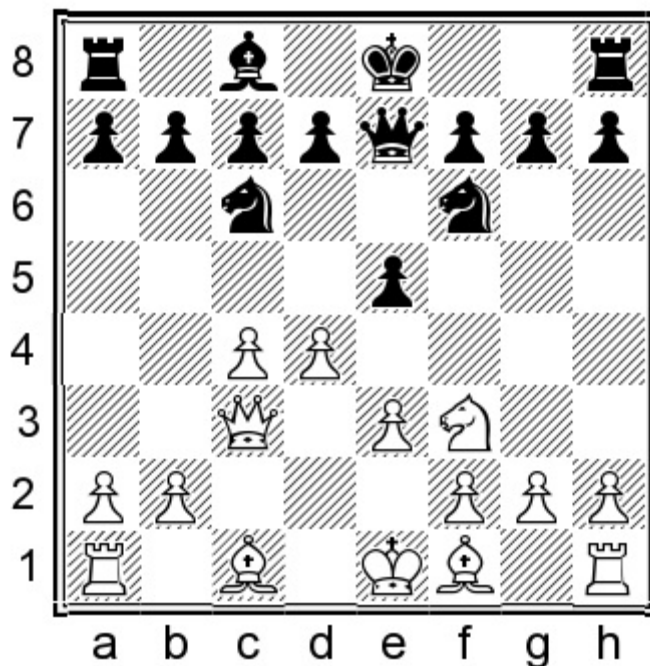
This approach allows him to fight actively for the centre. For instance, after **1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♗f6 3.♗f3 ♗c6 4.e3**, **4...d5 5.cxd5 ♗xd5** is already dubious owing to **6.♙b5**:



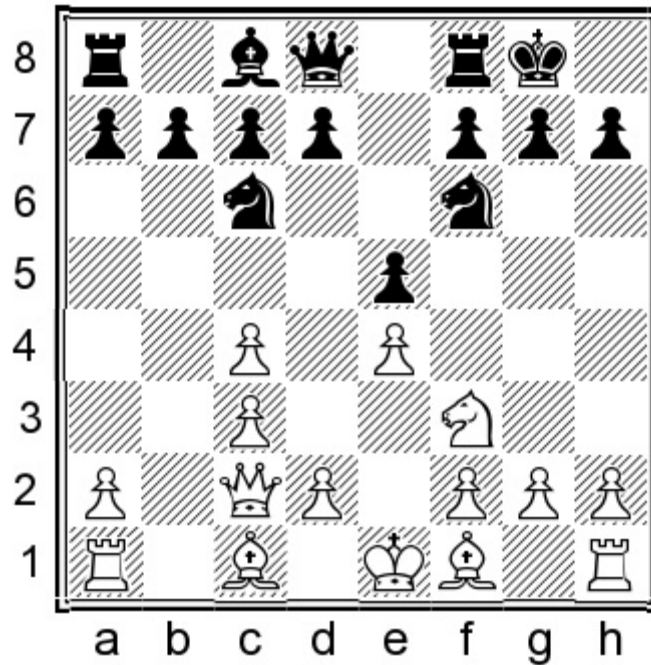
The bishop's sortie has a great impact on the centre and forces 6...♞xc3 7.bxc3 ♞d6 8.d4. This position is an obvious improvement over the Dragon Reversed. White scores over 60% in it.

The fundament of our book is based on an active contest for the centre.

I suggest to attack the Rossolimo with 4...♞b4 5.♞c2 ♞xc3 6.♞xc3 ♞e7 7.d4!:

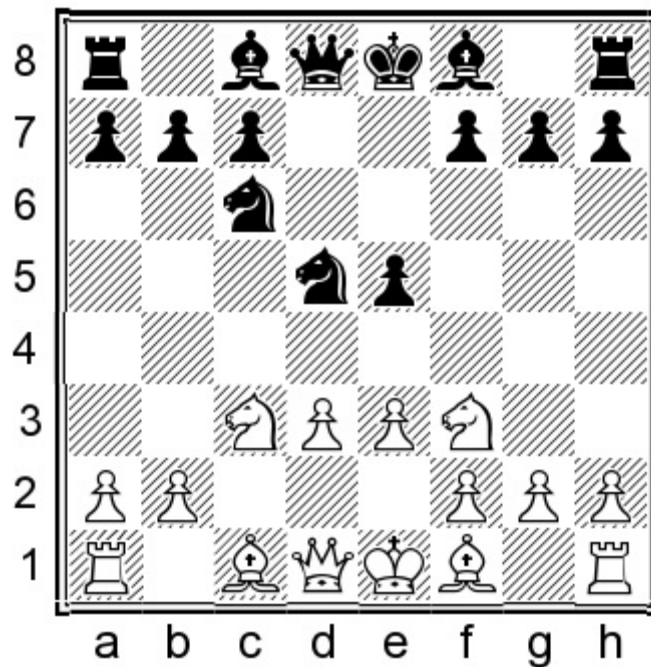


I discovered that the fashionable 7.b3 is suspicious, but found other ways to take the initiative. Our book is not a scholastic research. It is oriented towards practical players so I often analyse backup lines. They could serve you to vary your play and to be less predictable. I do not think that White has an edge after 6.bxc3 0-0 7.e4:



However, he scores 68%, which means that Black does not feel comfortable in this pawn structure. I devoted Chapter 3 on it.

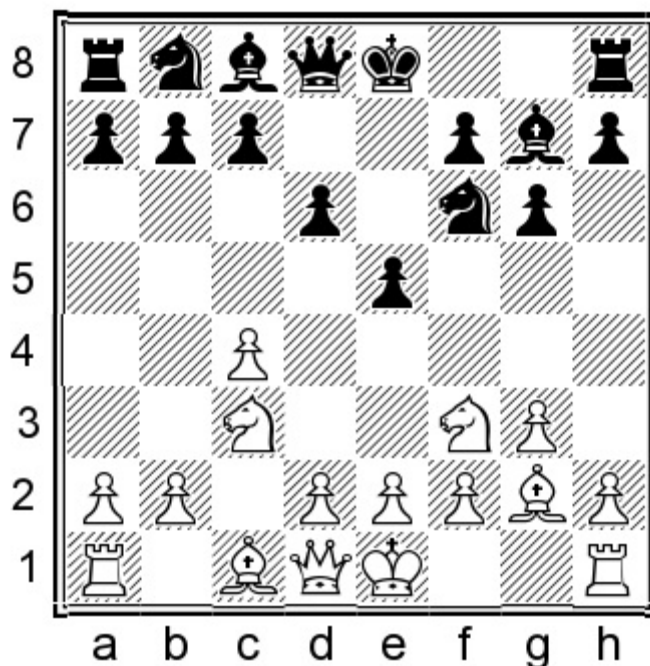
A major alternative to 4.e3 is **4.d3**. Kramnik and Caruana adopted it in 2018 to bring this line to the fore. I consider it in Chapter 4. While 4.e3 is aimed mostly against ...d5, 4.d3 is a way to discourage 4...♗b4. White may not have an edge in terms of computer evaluations after 4.d3 d5 5.cxd5 ♞xd5 6.e3.



However, the Scheveningen Reversed yields him stable 56%. More importantly, it is famous with its double-edged nature of play. Kasparov won the world title with its original version. Why not try it with an extra tempo!?

There is a small catch about 4.d3. While 1.c4 e5 is technically a reversed Sicilian, I would like to treat

set-ups with Black's dark-squared fianchetto as a pure King's Indian. That means to attack them with d2-d4. Chapter 7 deals with 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6 3.g3! ♖f6 4.♙g2 g6 5.♗f3 ♙g7

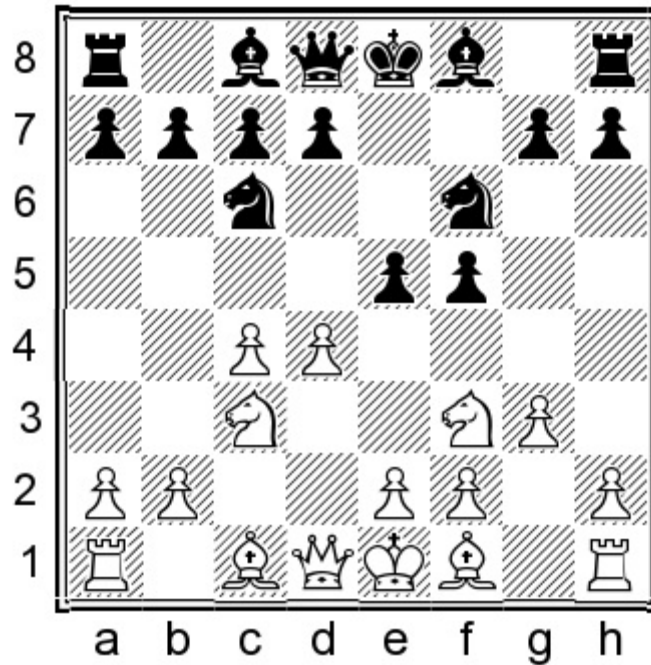


6.d4!.

If we commit our pawn to d3, we should be ready to adopt an entirely different approach towards the centre, based on d3+e4. I provide enough information on it in the annotations to **Game 15** Kramnik-Ding Liren, Berlin 2018, but I felt I had to warn you about this inconsistency with the rest of the book.

Similar considerations stopped me from including a chapter on 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♖f6 3.♗f3 ♖c6 4.a3. This move was employed twice by Topalov lately. It is even more radically aimed against ...♙b4 than 4.d3, but it is completely useless against ...g6 + ...d6. Therefore, it requires a considerable compromise from White, although practical results after 4.a3 g6 are in his favour. Still, you could easily include it in your arsenal, because the main answer 4...d5 should transpose to either The Scheveningen or the Taimanov, which I consider in the book.

Black's other popular set-up against the English is based on the early ...f5. We follow our general plan to push d4, but not immediately. I suggest the sophisticated move orders 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6 3.g3! f5 4.d4! and 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♖c6 3.♗f3 f5 4.g3! ♖f6 5.d4!



The point of g3 was to enable the possibility of meeting 5...e4 by 6.g4.

I have seen advices to play 1.c4 e5 2.g3 g6 3.e3 or 1.c4 e5 2.g3 g6 3.e3, but these move orders are not transpositions to my main lines. They have significant drawbacks against ...f5 or ...d6 so I do not discuss them at all.

Finally, I have not forgotten Karpov's pet line **1.c4 e5 2.g3 g6**, to which I devoted Chapter 5. My main line is 3.g4!, but I also cover 3.f3.

This book aims to arm you adequately against Black's most dangerous answer to 1.c4 – 1...e5. It is written from White's standpoint, but it should also serve Black players since I often discuss several alternatives to the main lines. The focus is on the modern variations 1.c4 e5 2.g3 g6 3.g4 g7 4.e3 and 4.d3. In the last five years they have brought 56% and 58% respectively (compared to 55% for 4.g3). My advice is to look firstly into 4.e3, but you should make your choice depending on your style and opponent. "It doesn't matter whether a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice". Listen to your heart and pick up what serves you best.

My work should continue with another one or two volumes to cover the other Black's answers to 1.c4!

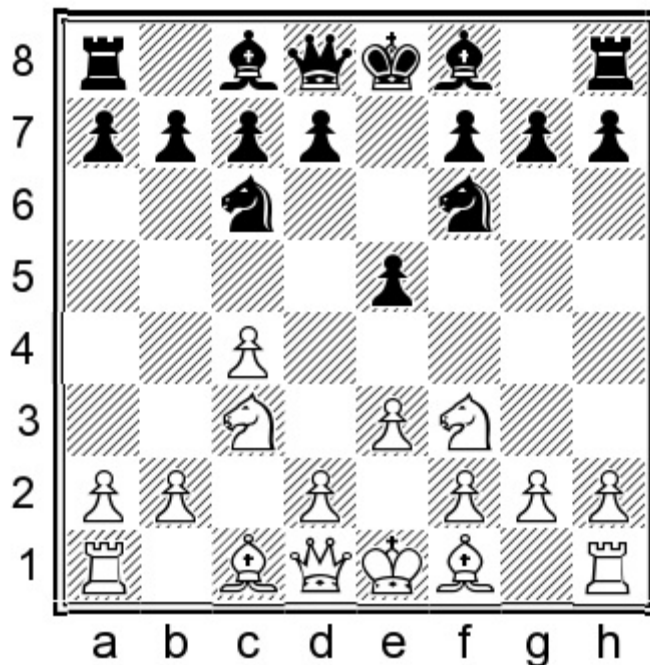
Kiril Georgiev
August 2018

Chapter 1. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3

Main Ideas

In this chapter I'll take the bull by the horns by going directly to the core of our repertoire:

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3



What strikes us at the first glance at this position? White aims to fight for the centre in the most resolute manner – with d4. His pieces will target the kingside, and not the queenside as in the systems with g3. Our bishops will often go to e2 and b2, and we'll try to open files and diagonals in the centre. As a result, Black's choice will be limited to the following general schemes:

1. The Sicilian Reversed after ...d5.
2. The King's Indian set-up with ...g6 and ...d6.
3. Quick development with ...♗b4 in the Rossolimo style.

Let's see how other 4th moves compare to my main suggestion 4.e3.

4.g3 d5 has been played in thousands of games and Black achieves decent results since he keeps some space advantage. The same could be said about 4.g3 ♗b4. White's development is rather slow and it gives Black an initial initiative. Only against 4...g6 does 4.g3 stay very well as White can play the Fianchetto System without any compromise.

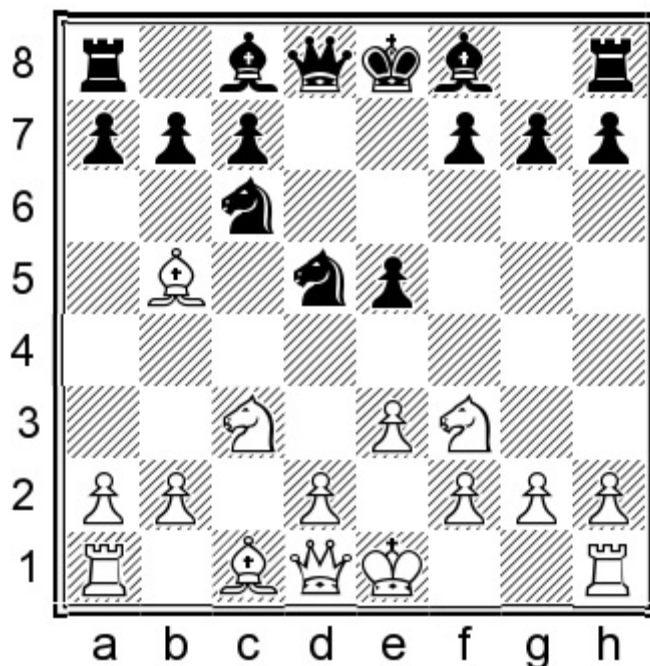
4.a3 is obviously aimed against ...♗b4. It also leads to interesting Taimanov Reversed positions after 4...d5. The big drawback of 4.a3 is that this move is totally useless against Black's fianchetto.

4.d3 is a somewhat improved version of 4.a3. 4...♘b4 is met by 5.♙d2, and 4...d5 leads to the double-edged Scheveningen Reversed. To be sure, 4...g6 is again a tough nut to crack, but White could adopt a sound central approach with b3, ♘b2, g3, e4 which hides some venom. **I believe that 4.d3 could serve us as a fair back up system, or as a way to include some variety in our games.** I consider it in Chapter 4.

Let's move now to 4.e3!?

The Sicilian Reversed

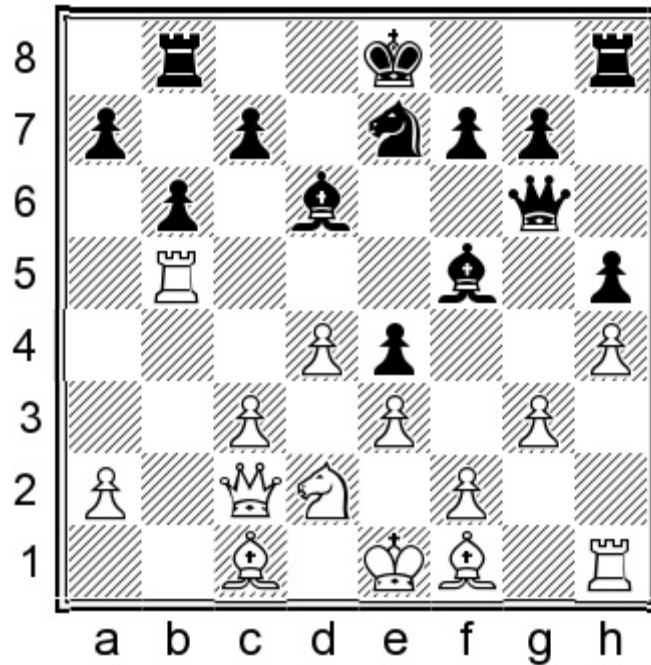
4...d5 5.cxd5 ♞xd5 6.♙b5!



The possibility of this move is the biggest advantage of 4.e3 over the alternative 4th moves. Black is practically forced to strengthen White's centre with 6...♞xc3 7.bxc3, which makes our game preferable, in my opinion.

The key line is 7...♙d6 8.d4 e4 9.♞d2 ♔g5 10.♙f1 ♔g6 11.♔c2 ♙f5, when White destroys the black centre with an exchange sac. A typical example is:

Analysis



16. ♖xf5! ♚xf5 17. ♘xe4±.

The other typical structure is 8... ♔d7 9. 0-0 0-0 10. ♘d2!? f5 11. ♕e2 e4, when both 12.g3 and 12.f3 are fine. If we take into account that 10. ♘d2 is a novelty, you should also have the psychological initiative.

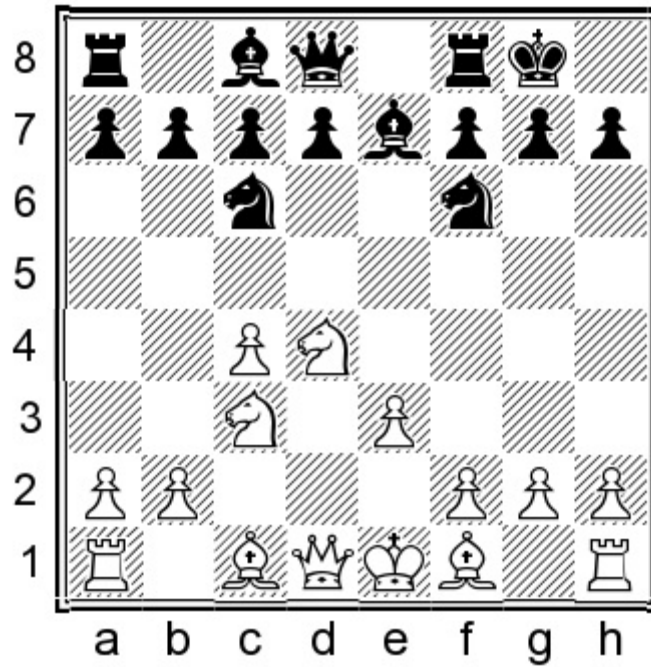
The flexible 4... ♕e7

This is a clever approach. Black wants to play ...d5 only after castling. Houdini's first line and Cumming's choice in his repertoire book is 5. ♚b3 to cut across the enemy plan. I do not recommend it since White also lacks a clear idea what to do with his pieces.

The most challenging approach is to get a pure Sicilian set-up with 5.a3 0-0 6. ♚c2 – See **Game 10** Voetter-Kleiser, ICCF 2014 from Chapter 2.

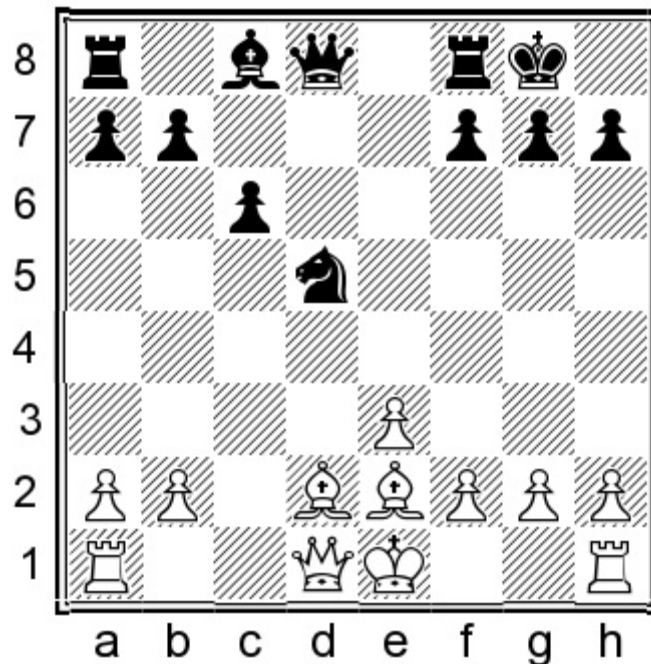
I consider in the “Step by Step” section the safe and solid:

5.d4 exd4 6. ♘xd4!? 0-0



7. ♖c2!?

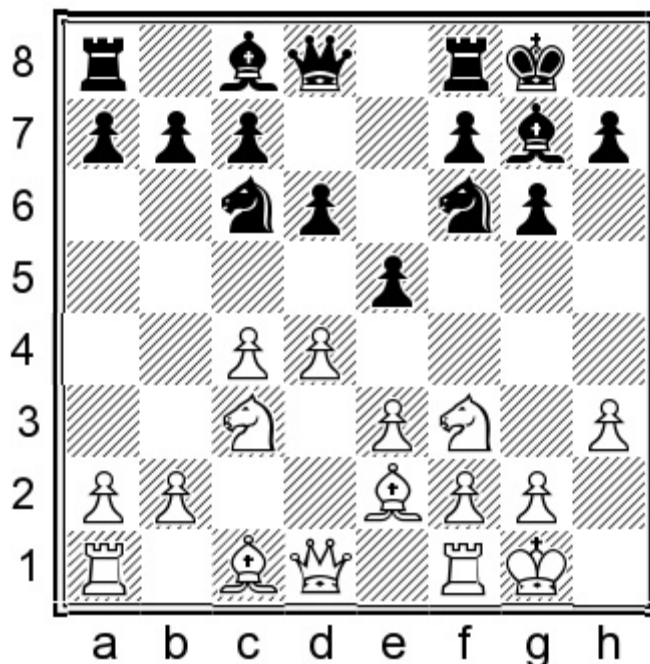
We try to discourage ...d5 and to establish a grip on the centre with f3 and e4. Critical is 7... ♞b4 8. ♕d2! c6 9. ♕e2 d5 10. ♞xb4 ♕xb4 11. cxd5 ♕xc3 12. ♕xc3 ♞xd5 13. ♕d2



We have a bishop pair in an asymmetrical position. This should provide for an easier game. Our further plan is ♜c1, ♞e1, f3, e4.

The King's Indian set-up

4...d6 5.d4 g6 6. ♕e2 ♕g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.h3



Somebody may argue that White has nothing but a passive KI. However, that would have been true if the black knight were on d7. Then he would have had the active plan ...c6, ...e4, which is difficult to achieve in the diagram position. The logical move 8...♖e8 would face 9.d5 ♘e7 10.e4, when the “extra” tempo ...♖e8 is just a step in a wrong direction. Perhaps that explains Karpov’s decision to open the e-file even earlier. I explain the plans after:

8...exd4 9.exd4 ♖e8 10.d5± in detail in the annotations to **Game 1** Agdestein-Karpov, Gjovik 1991, while I consider 9...d5 10.c5 in the “Step by Step” section.

The Rossolimo-style

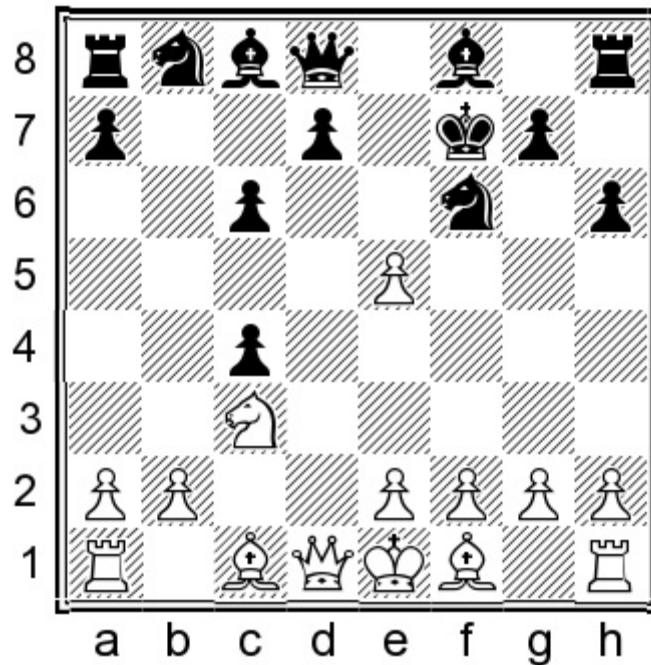
4...♙b4 is by far the most popular choice. I devote to it Chapter 2 which covers 5.♚c2 ♙xc3 6.♚xc3!, and Chapter 3 discusses 6.bxc3.

Chapter 1. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3

Step by Step

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6

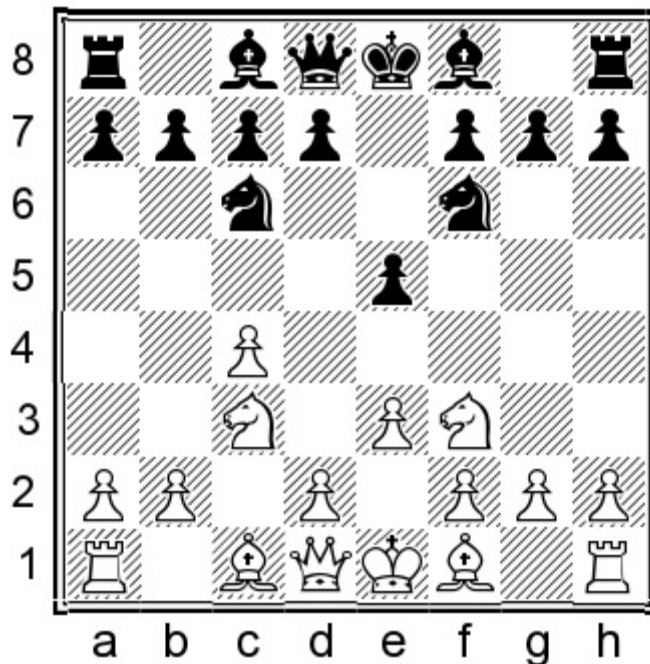
The Bellon gambit 3...e4 4.♘g5 b5! lost its appeal after White discovered 5.d3!. Apparently it still has practical value since in 114 correspondence games which featured 5...bxc4 (5...exd3 6.cxb5!±) 6.dxe4 h6 7.♘xf7 ♔xf7 8.e5 c6, White has scored less than 40%!



However, the games were played more than 10 years ago. Modern engines find a clear advantage after:
9.exf6 ♔xf6 10.e4 ♘b4

Or 10...d5 11.exd5 ♘b4 (11...♘c5 12.♘e3+-) 12.♘d2 ♖e8+ 13.♘e2 ♘g4 14.0-0±.
11.♘xc4+ d5 12.♘e2 ♘xc3+ 13.bxc3 dxe4 14.0-0±.

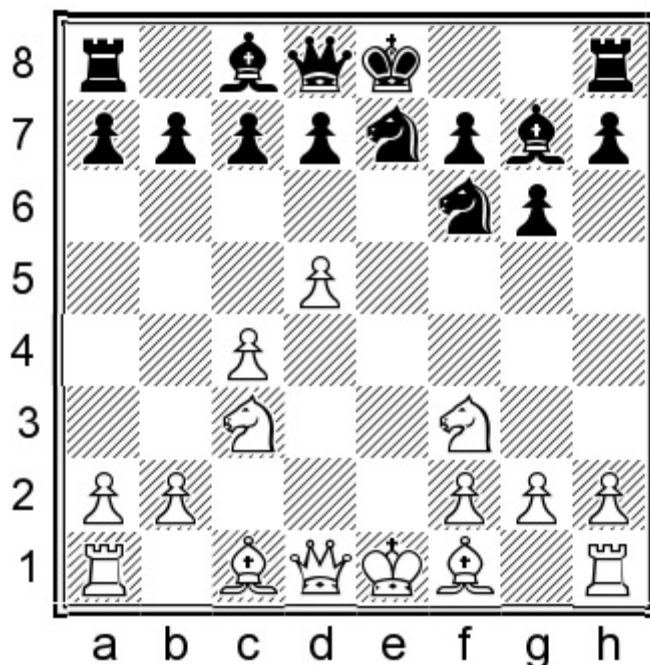
4.e3



A. 4...d5; B. 4...♙e7; C. 4...d6

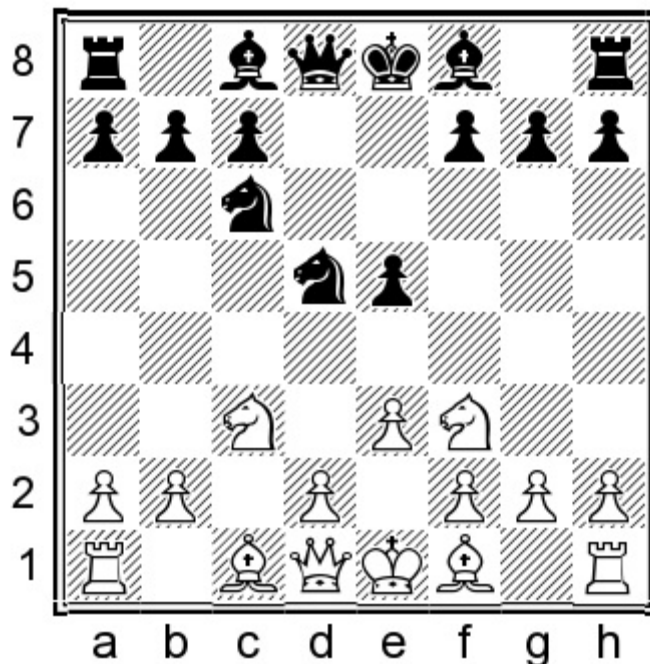
I consider 4...♙b4 5.♚c2 ♘xc3 6.♚xc3 and 6.bxc3 separately in the next two chapters.

4...g6 5.d4 is similar to 4...d6. The only independent line is 5...exd4 6.exd4 ♙g7 7.d5 ♘e7



Now 8.♙e2! transposes to line C – see **Game 1** Agdestein-Karpov, Gjovik 1991. You could also try: 8.d6!?. It yields nice practical results because Black meets it by 8...cxd6 9.♚xd6 0-0 10.♙d3 ♘e8?!, when 11.♚a3 d5 12.♙g5 f6 13.♙f4 gives White tremendous activity. Unfortunately, 10...♚b6! 11.♚xb6 axb6 12.0-0 d5 13.♙e1 ♙e6 14.♘g5 ♙f5 15.♙xf5 ♘xf5 16.cxd5 ♜fd8 17.♜d1 ♜a5 should gradually regain the pawn and eventually draw.

A. 4...d5 5.cxd5 ♞xd5



6.♙b5

We aim to force ♞xc3, which would improve our control of the centre. Later we should retreat the bishop to e2 or d3, depending on the circumstances.

6.♞c2 fares extremely well, but it is actually less challenging, and gives Black a wider choice.

6...♞xc3 7.bxc3

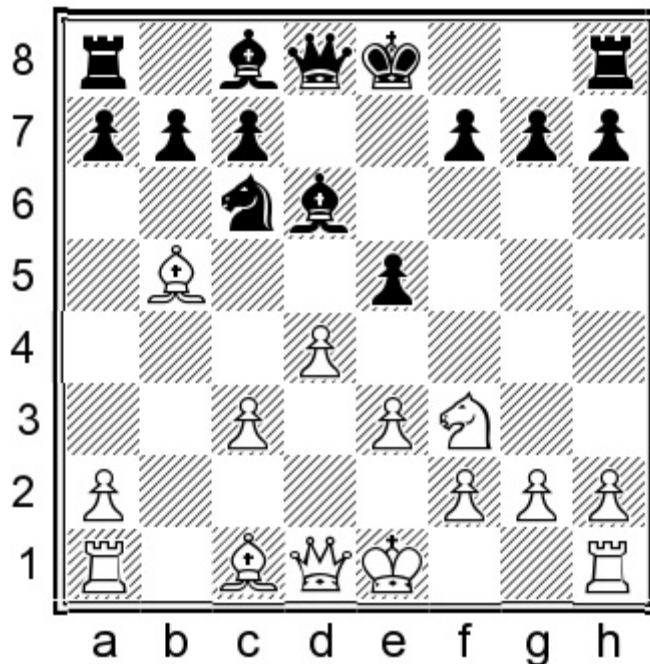
This position is very well tested. White scores excellently in both OTB and correspondence chess. Critical is:

7...♙d6

7...♙d7 8.d4 e4 9.♞d2 ♞h4 is a tricky line, which counts on long castling, e.g. 10.0-0 ♙d6 11.g3 ♞e7 12.♞c2 f5 13.♙b2?! h5! 14.c4 h4! 15.c5 hxg3 16.fxg3 ♙xg3! 17.hxg3 0-0-0.

White can refute it with 11.f4! exf3 12.♞xf3 ♞h5 13.♙e2 ♙g4 14.♖f2!±, neutralising the threat ...♙xf3.

8.d4



8...♙d7

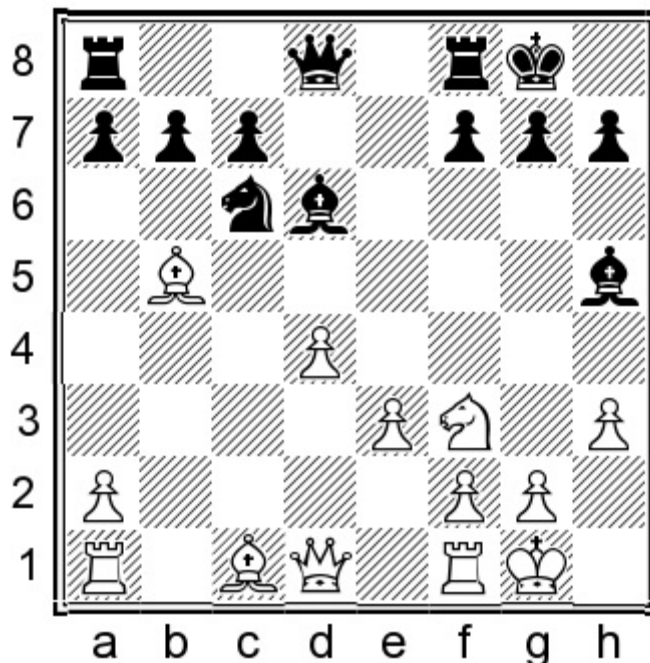
This move yields Black best practical results, but he tried more often:

8...exd4 9.cxd4 0-0 10.0-0 ♙g4

10...♘e7?! does not prevent e4: 11.♙c4 c6 12.e4 ♘g6 13.♙e3±.

11.h3 ♙h5

Practical experience sees Black struggling here, although White does not have a clear plan. Perhaps that is due to the strong pawn centre, which keeps White out of danger no matter what he plays. In the diagram position I would be glad to achieve e4, but that is not possible.



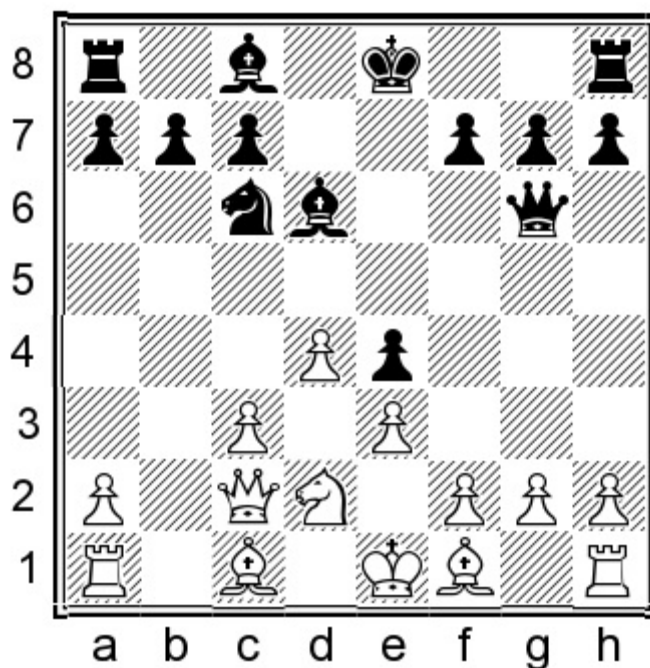
For instance, 12.♞e1, hoping for 12...♞e7 13.g4 ♙g6 14.e4±, would be parried by 12...♙b4. Many games feature 11.♙b2, but the previous example suggests that the bishop would be more useful on d2.

My analysis convinced me that White should postpone the plan with e4 for better times. Instead he should tie down the opponent with defence of his queenside. A promising set-up is:

12.♖b1 ♕e7 13.♙c4 (or 13.♙d2) 13...♗h8

Or 13...♞ab8 14.♙d2 ♙g6 15.♞b2 a6 16.a4
14.♙d2.

8...e4 9.♘d2 ♕g5 (9...♙f5 10.♖c2 ♕g5 11.♙f1 might be a better version for White because the bishop on f5 is misplaced.) 10.♙f1 ♕g6 11.♖c2



11...♙f5

11...f5 is relatively better, but then 12.♖b3 would leave Black without any counterplay.

12.♖b1 ♞b8 13.h4 h5 14.♞b5! Black is helpless against the imminent sacrifice on f5 – 14...♘e7 15.g3 b6 16.♞xf5! ♕xf5 17.♘xe4, when his position is falling apart.

9.0-0 0-0 10.♘d2!?

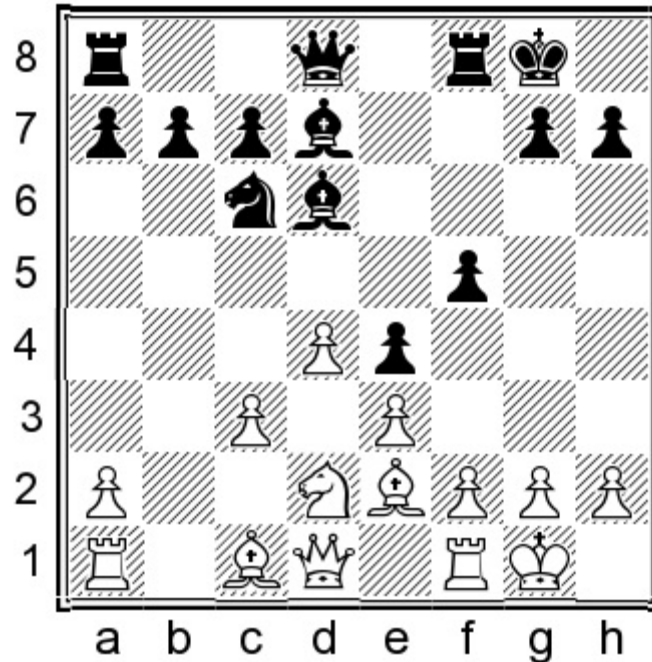
This natural move appears to be a novelty. This is strange since ...♘f6-d7 is a well-known idea in the “regular” Sicilian. White transfers his knight to c4 while keeping both retreat options for the bishop open.

The point is that against ...f5 and ...e4 the bishop should stay on e2, but if Black chooses a plan with ...♘a5 and ...c5, we would like to have it on a more active position.

10.♙e2 b6 (or 10...♞e8 11.d5 ♘a5 12.e4 c6) 11.♘d2 ♘a5 is roughly balanced.

10...♕e7

10...f5 11.♔e2 e4 is another typical set-up.



Safest here is 12.f3 exf3 13.♔xf3 with a slight edge due to the better centre. However, more testing is to defend with g3 and develop an attack on the queenside with c4.

You should always calculate the consequences of the sacrifice on h2. For instance, if we start with:

12.c4?, then 12...♔xh2+ draws at once. Without c4, the sac is not a threat yet, as we can make a retreat path for the king with ♔c4 check!

Of course, we could safeguard our king with 12.g3², although this move is not strictly necessary for now. It would become a must after Black plays ...♔h8.

The most precise move order is 12.♖b1 b6 13.♘c4 (now our king could escape via d2), or: 12.a4!?, having in mind to meet a future ...b6 by a4-a5 and 12...♘a5 by 13.♘b3, or 12...♔h8 and 12...♖f6 by 13.g3.

11.♘e4

11.♔d3!?! ♘a5 12.♔b2 b6 13.c4± is a fair alternative.

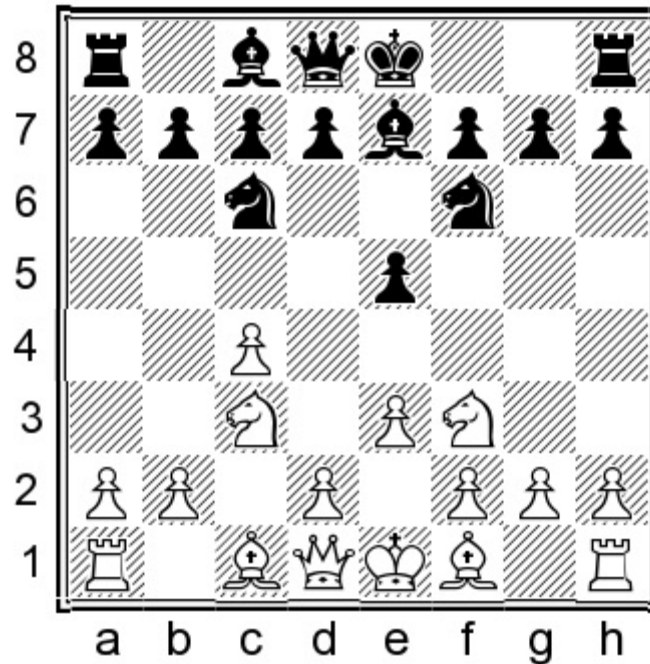
11...b6

11...f5 12.♘xd6 cxd6 13.♔a3 e4 is in fact very passive since Black lacks a constructive plan. We could play strictly on the queenside with ♔e2, c4, or undermine the centre with 14.f3, enjoying the absence of the d6-bishop.

12.a4 ♖fd8 13.♔d3±

Black could push 13...f5 at this point, when 14.♘xd6 cxd6 15.♔a3 ♔h8 16.f3 would be easy to play.

B. 4...♙e7



Black postpones ...d5 for a couple of moves. We have basically three plans from here: to open the centre immediately; to aim for the Taimanov Reversed; to prevent ...d5 at all. I think that the best decision is to follow our main conception as I believe that the only way to exploit our extra tempo is to open the centre quickly.

5.d4

5.a3!? 0-0 6.♖c2 is probably the best way to play for a win – See **Game 10** Voetter-Kleiser, ICCF 2014 from Chapter 2.

5.♗b3 is Houdini's first line. It does discourage ...d5, but on the other hand, it impedes White's constructive plans. Neither d4 nor b4 are possible. That gives Black time to complete development and free the f8-square for his bishop. I do not see any edge for White after, for instance:

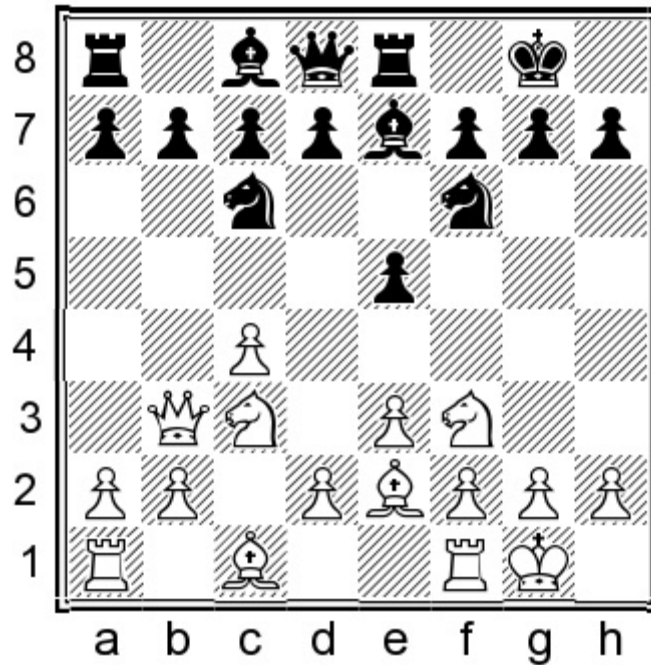
5...0-0 6.♙e2

6.a3 to ban ...♙b4 is perhaps better. Still, it spends a tempo, and White can hardly claim the initiative anymore. Black has at least two decent set-ups after it:

1. He fianchettoes the dark-squared bishop – 6...♞e8 7.d3 ♙f8 8.♙e2 g6 9.0-0 ♙g7. When White plays ♖c2, Black pushes ...d5.

2. He fianchettoes the light-squared bishop – 6...b6!? 7.♖c2 ♙b7 8.♙e2 d5 9.cxd5 ♘xd5 10.0-0 ♘xc3=.

6...♞e8 7.0-0



7...♙b4! (preventing d4 as the ♙e2 will hang) 8.♘d5 ♙f8=. The game Kluger-Portisch, Budapest 1958, went 9.d3 d6 (9...a5!?) 10.♙d2 ♘d7 11.♞fc1

11.♞c2, hoping for b4, is easily parried with 11...a5 12.a3 a4 13.d4 ♘a5. The point is that

14.♞xa4 does not win a pawn owing to 14...c6 15.♘c3 ♘b6 16.♞c2 ♘axc4.

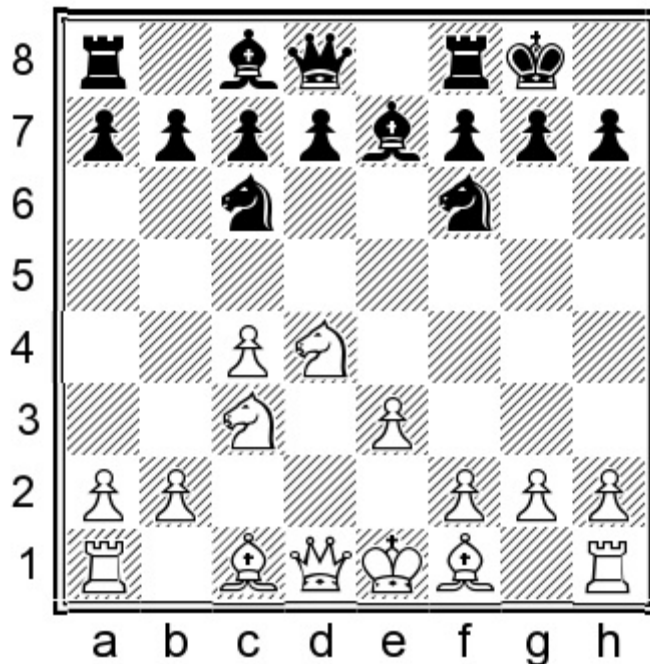
11...♘c5 12.♞c2 ♙f5 13.b4, when simplest is 13...♘xd3=.

5...exd4 6.♘xd4

The fans of isolated pawns could opt for 6.exd4 d5 7.cxd5 (7.c5=) 7...♘xd5 8.♙d3 0-0 9.0-0 ♙e6 10.a3 with the more active pieces, but this structure is not to my taste.

6...0-0

6...♙b4 7.♘de2 d5 does not solve all the problems, since 8.a3 gains the bishop pair advantage – 8...♙xc3+ 9.♘xc3 ♙e6 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.♙d2.

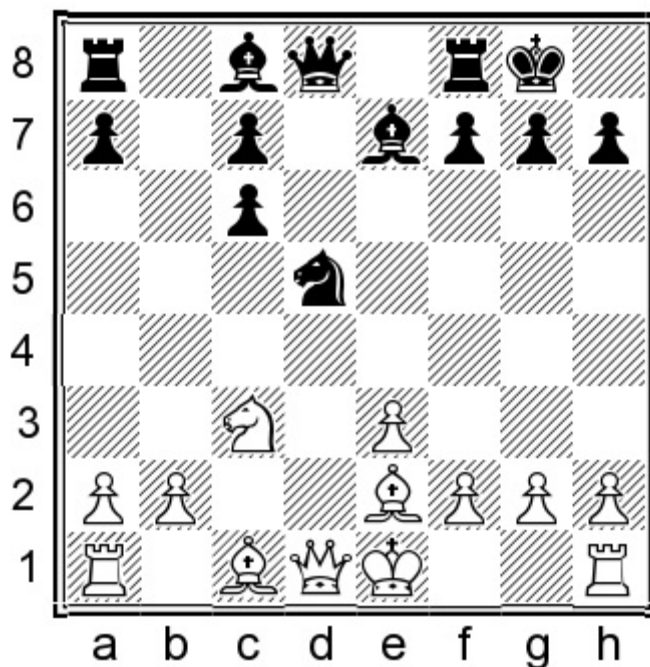


7. Nc2

Denying ...d5 even at the cost of losing a tempo. The white knight is passive on c2, but the alternative: 7. Qe2 d5! 8. cxd5 Nxd5 often simplifies to equal endgames.

8... Nb4 9. 0-0 Nbx d5 10. Qc2!? (OTB games feature exclusively 10. Nxd5, when 10... Qxd5! 11. Qf3 or 11. Nb5 are equal, at best. The text preserves more tension in the centre, and enables Qd1 or Nf5.) 10... Nb4 11. Qb1 c5 12. Nf5 Qxf5 (12... Qc7 13. Qd1 Qxf5 14. Qxf5 Qad8 15. Qd2 g6 16. Qf3 Qd7 17. Nb5±) 13. Qxf5 Qb6 14. a3 Nc6 occurred in the correspondence game Balleer-Beres, ICCF 2013. Now 15. g4!? takes over the initiative.

9. Nxc6 bxc6



White has split the enemy pawns, but his passive pieces do not promise serious chances of converting

this “structural” advantage. For instance:

a) 10.♔d2 ♖b8 11.e4

Or 11.b3 ♕f6 12.♖c1 ♜b4=.

11...♞xc3 12.♕c3 ♕b4! 13.♚c2 ♚d4! 14.0-0 ♕xc3=.

b) 10.♞e4 ♞b4 11.0-0 ♚xd1 12.♖xd1 ♕e6 13.b3 f5 14.♞c3 ♖fd8=.

In all those lines White experiences a painful lag in development. The moral is that we should restrain Black’s activity.

7...d6

7...♞b4 aims for ...d5, when 8.♕d2 is the only way to hamper it.

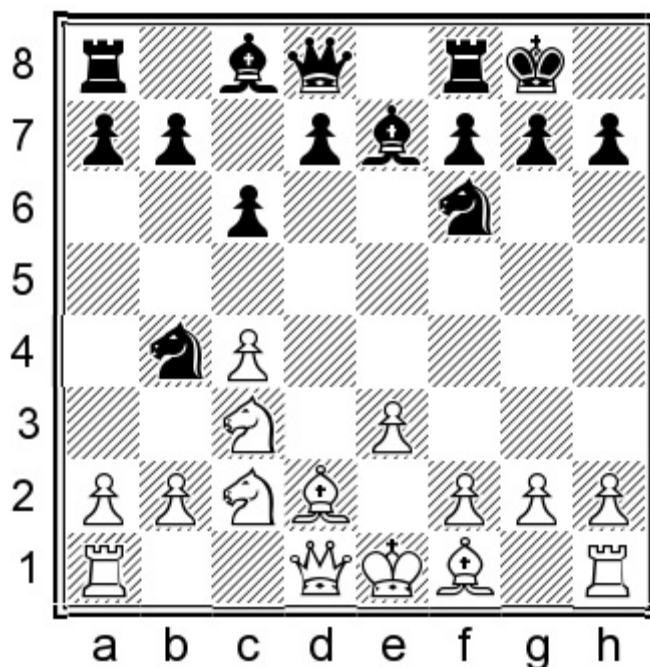
It’s idea is that after 8...d5? 9.♞xb4 ♕xb4 10.♞xd5 the b4-bishop is unprotected so Black loses a pawn.

8...♞xc2+ 9.♚xc2 d5 10.cxd5 ♞xd5 11.a3 offers White the more active pieces.

In practice Black prefers to revive the idea of ...d5:

8...c6

Alternatively: 8...a5 9.a3 ♞a6 10.♞d4 ♞c5 11.♚c2 c6 12.♕e2 d5 13.cxd5 ♞xd5 14.♖d1.



9.♕e2

9.♞xb4 ♕xb4 10.♕e2 ♕xc3 11.♕xc3 ♞e4 12.♖c1 ♚b6 13.♚d4 maintained some pressure in the game Bobotsov-Wade, Zevenaar 1961. Better is 10...d5, transposing to 9.♕e2.

9...d5

Alternatively:

9...♖e8 10.0-0 a5 11.♞d4 ♕f8 12.♕f3 ♞d3 13.♚c2 ♞b4 14.♚b1 d6 15.h3 ♞d7. Black’s set-up is

passive. White goes on the offensive with 16.a3 ♖a6 17.b4±.

9...a5 10.♘d4 d5 11.a3 ♘a6 12.cxd5. White commonly has an initiative in this Meran-type structure owing to his better centre.

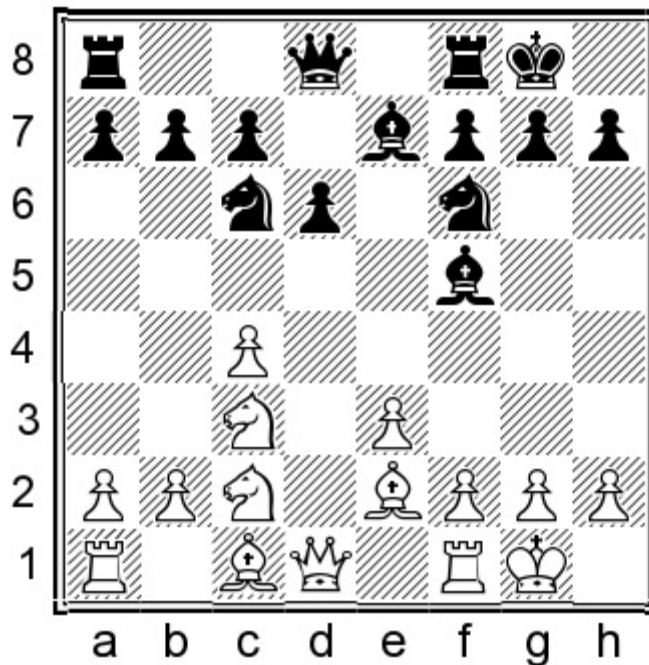
10.♘xb4 ♙xb4 11.cxd5 ♙xc3 12.♙xc3 ♘xd5 13.♙d2. This should be easier for White in view of the bishop pair in an open position. For instance:

13...♙f5 (the same plan is possible after 13...♙f6 14.♙c1.) 14.0-0 ♙e7 15.a3. White should aim for f3, e4 with ♖e1 (to prevent ...♘f4), ♙c1.

8.♙e2 ♙f5

Black drew several correspondence games with this move. An alternative is 8...♙e6.

9.0-0



We can take stock now. Black cannot free himself with ...d5 while nothing could stop f3 and e4. Therefore, White is going to impose a stable dominance in the centre. Here are some illustrative lines:

a) 9...a5 10.f3 ♙xc2 11.♙xc2 ♘b4 12.♙d1 ♖e8 13.a3 ♘a6 14.♖b1 c6 15.♙h1 g6 16.e4±.

b) 9...♘e4 10.♘d5! a5 11.♘d4 (11.f3 ♘c5 12.e4 is also pleasant) 11...♘xd4 12.exd4 ♖e8 13.f3 ♘f6 14.♘xe7+ ♙xe7 15.♖e1 ♘d7 (15...d5 16.c5±) 16.♙f4 ♙f6 17.♙d2 h6 18.♙f1±. White retains a slight, but lasting edge thanks to his bishop pair advantage.

c) 9...♖e8 10.f3 h6 11.e4 ♙g6±.

C. 4...d6

Challenging White to show the reason behind e3. We oblige:

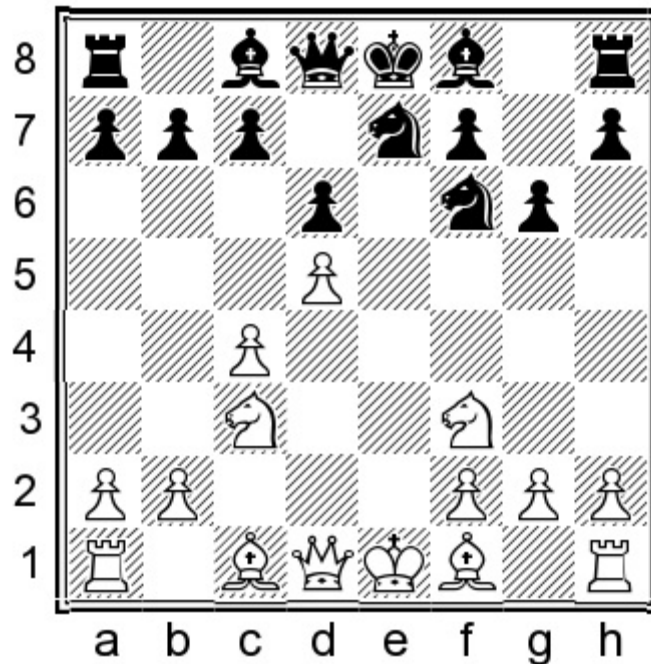
5.d4 g6!

If Black exchanges on d4, we grab space with further d4-d5:

5...exd4 6.exd4 g6

6...♗g4 is best met by 7.♗e3! (7.♗e2 is fine and it is well tested, but the bishop would be more active from g2 or b5.) 7...d5 8.c5 g6 9.h3 ♗e6 10.♗b5±.

7.d5 ♖e7



8.♗e2! White's space advantage should allow him to exert pressure on the kingside. See **Game 1** Agdestein-Karpov, Gjovik 1991.

6.♗e2

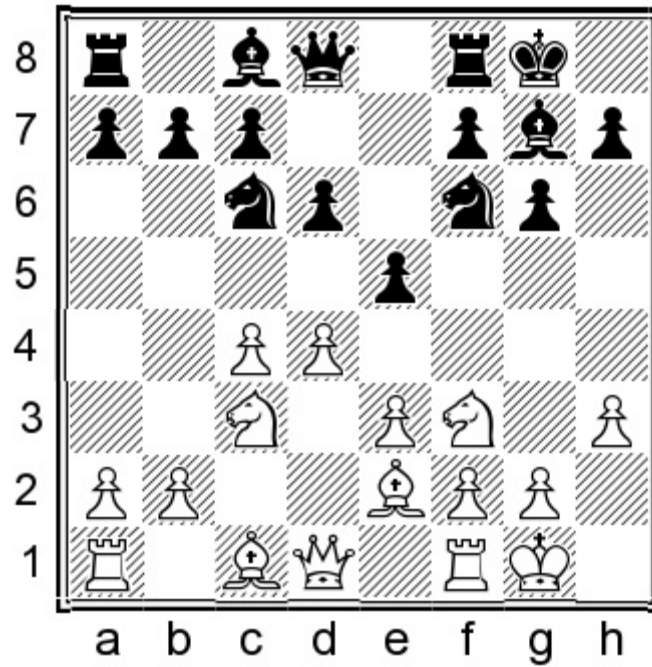
This is a good neutral move. We are always ready to transpose to 5...exd4 without being thrown out of our repertoire.

6.d5 ♖e7 7.e4?! would enter the main line of the Bayonet Attack in the KI without a clear tempo. I strongly advise you to avoid such frivolity, despite the encouraging evaluation of the engines! They cannot grasp the potential danger of Black's attack. White's negative score is another indication that closing the centre would be playing with fire. However, things could change should Black make a move, which would hamper his typical KI play, for instance, ...♞e8. Then we could boldly play d5!.

6...♗g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.h3

Another flexible move which keeps the centre fluid is 8.b3. However, I prefer the more active set-up

with b4.



8...exd4

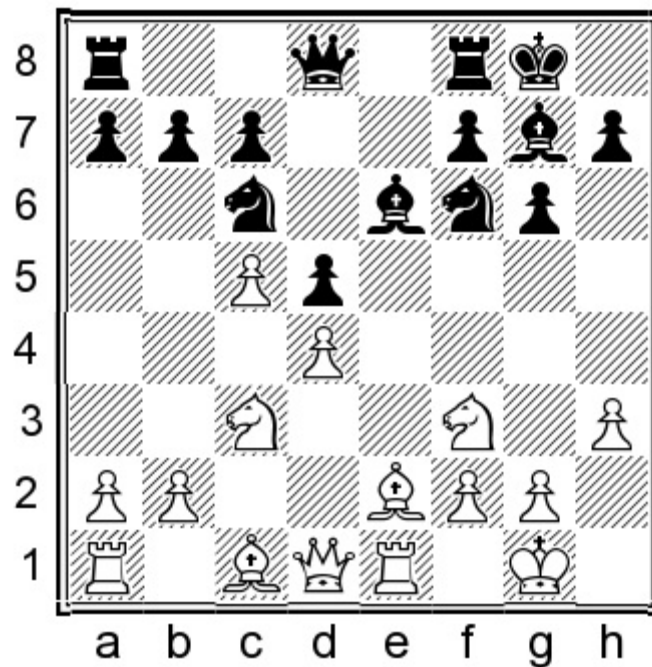
Black's knight on c6 does not fit to the plan with 8...e4 9.♘d2 ♖e8. We advance on the queenside, while Black's pieces fail to create serious threats – 10.a3 ♙f5 11.b4 h5 12.♙b2 ♚d7

Or 12...a6 13.♞e1, followed by ♙b3, a4.

12...♘e7 13.d5! prevents...c6, ...d5, and if 13...c6, then 14.♙b3 keeps the d5-pawn.

13.b5 ♞e7 14.♙c2, when 14...♙xh3 would face the simple 15.♘dx4.

9.exd4 d5 10.♞e1 ♙e6 11.c5!?



This move looks dubious as it seems that Black will favourably open the a-file at some point by ...b6!

However, the key of our design is to ignore ...b6 and create counter-threats!

11...♖e4

11...b6 12.♖a4 ♗e7 13.♙f4 and 11...a6 12.♙d3 ♜e8 13.♙e3 offer White the more active pieces.

12.♙b5 ♗a5 (12...♗e7 13.♙d3!) 13.♙f4 c6

13...♗xc3 14.bxc3 b6 15.♙g5 is awkward. Black's queen cannot retreat since ♙e7 wins the exchange.

**14.♙d3 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 b6 (15...♗c4 16.♞b1 b6 17.♗g5↑) 16.♙d6 ♜e8 17.♖a4 ♗b7 18.♙f4 ♞d7
19.cxb6 axb6 20.♞b3 b5 21.a4↑**

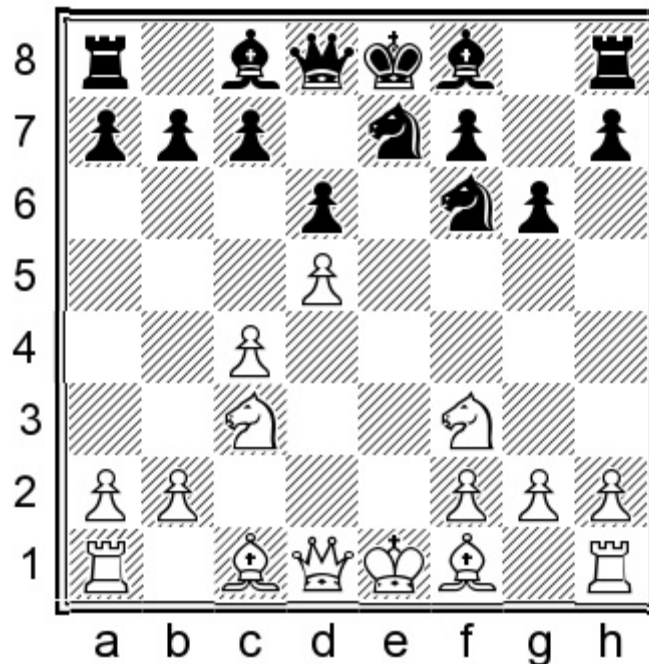
Our pieces are more active than their black counterparts, and a future ♗e5 will gain the bishop pair. Black's dark squares will be weak.

Chapter 1. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3

Annotated Games

1. Agdestein – Karpov Gjovik (4th match game) 1991

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 d6 5.d4 exd4 6.exd4 g6 7.d5 ♘e7



8.♙d3?!

The engines feel at a loss in this pawn structure and tend to overrate the space advantage. They praise the text move, probably because the bishop is “more active” on d3. Perhaps they also “think” that it favours White to trade his “bad” bishop. However, let’s analyse the diagram position deeper.

What is White main advantage in it? Space! Black lacks enough room for his minor pieces, specifically for the e7-knight and the c8-bishop. They both have only one active square – f5. This is a strong argument against an exchange of any one of those two pieces. Thus 8.♙e2! looks strategically the best choice.

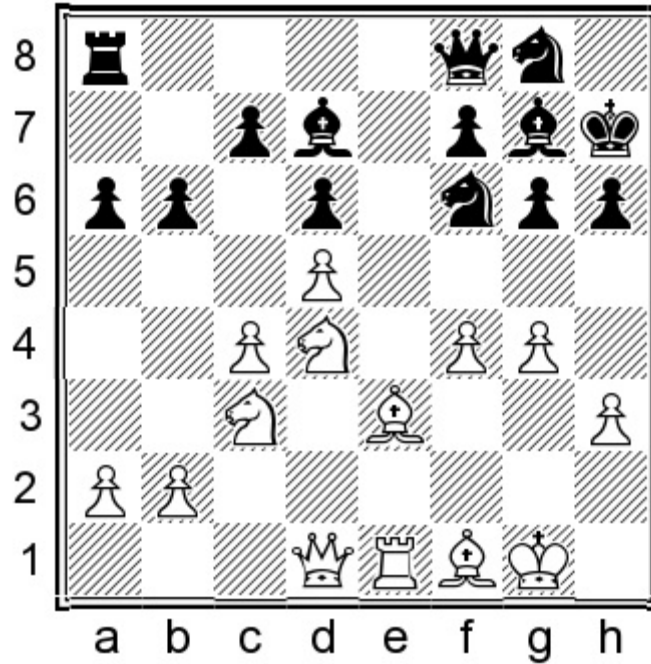
Now let’s take a further step. What is Black’s main counterplay? It should be based on the break ...c6, when we should take on c6. Then again, it would be better to have the d-file free so we could hit d6 with the d1-queen and ♙f4.

Let’s suppose that Black would stay tight and he would not produce any weaknesses. What should we

do against passive defence?

One possible plan is to stage a pawn advance on the kingside with g4, f4. We aim to reach something like this position:

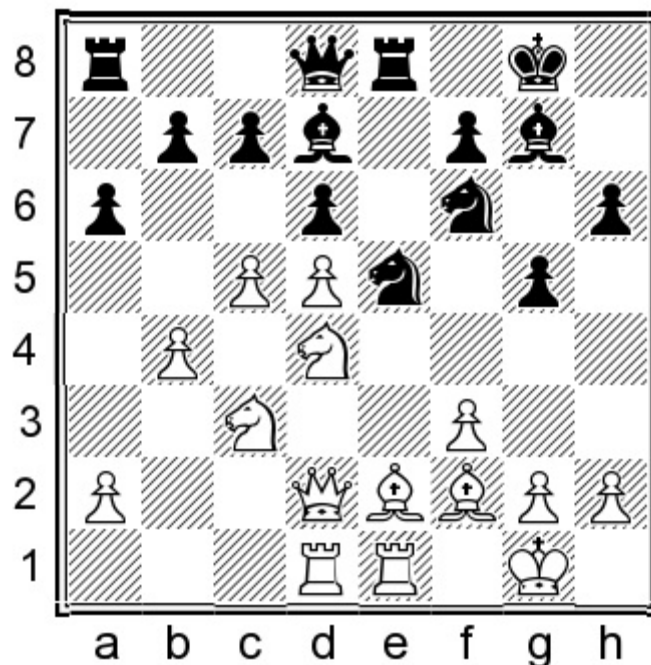
Main strategic objective



Now that we control f5, we could finally put our bishop to d3. It may become one of our most important resources for the attack on the enemy king.

Another option is to prepare b4, c5:

Auxiliary strategic objective

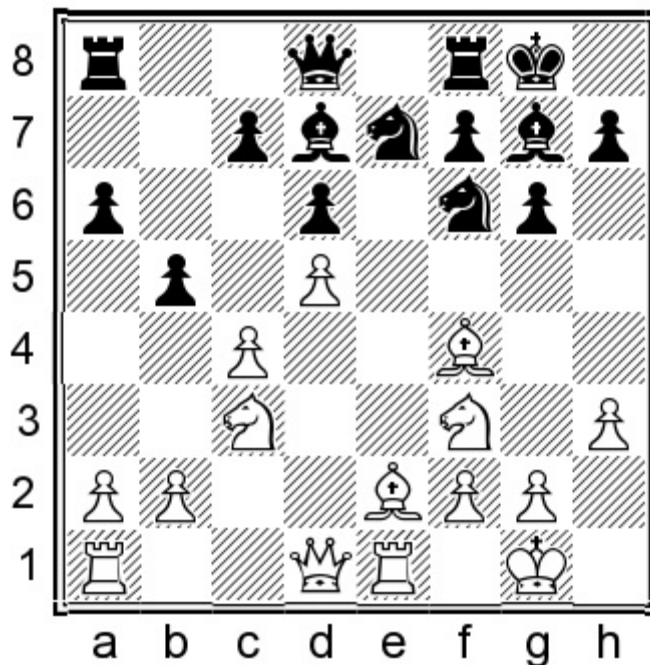


This idea works only if Black does not prevent it by ...a5. However, in that event ...c6 would be already thoroughly dubious, and our pawn advance on the right wing would be safer.

To sum up, the best shaping of Agdestein's plan is:

8.♙e2! ♜g7 9.0-0 0-0 10.h3!, followed by ♖e1, ♙f1.

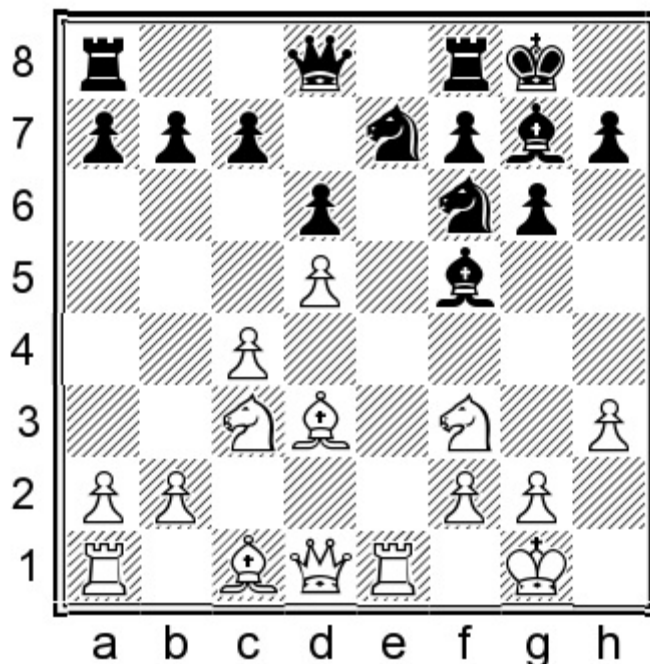
The other hypothesis is that Black will seek counterplay. Svidler-Yu Yangyi, rapid, Shenzhen 2018, saw 10...a6 11.♖e1 ♜d7 12.♙f4 b5



White should now make room for his knight since 13.♖c1 b4 14.♘a4 is not a pretty place for it. We can answer either 13.♗d2! b4 14.♘d1 or 13.a3! ♖e8 14.♗d2.

Apart from the above-mentioned restrictive plan with 10.h3, the computer offers: 10.♙f4 h6 11.♘d4 g5 12.♙e3 ♘g6 13.♖e1 ♖e8 14.♗d2 ♘h4 15.♖ad1 ♙d7 16.f3. Now 16...a6 17.♙f2 ♘g6 18.b4 ♘e5 19.c5± leads to the position I already commented, while 16...a5 17.♘db5 takes a good grip on the pawns d6 and c7. To me, this line is interesting only as an illustration of the idea of c4-c5. Otherwise it has little value as Black could meet 11.♘d4 with the “dumb” 11...♘f5.

8...♜g7 9.0-0 0-0 10.h3 ♙f5 11.♖e1



11...♖e8?!

Such a fine positional player as Karpov understood perfectly well the objective need to trade bishops, but probably he did not mind taking a risk against his lower rated opponent. 11...♙xd3 12.♚xd3 ♚d7 (12...♘f5 13.g4) 13.♘d4 ♖fe8 14.♙e3 h6 15.♖ad1 a6 was passive, but difficult to crack.

12.♙f1 ♙d7 13.♚b3

White wants to double his rooks on the e-file, so he connects them with a tempo. However, that does not bring him any dividends. It would be more consistent to complete development with 13.♙f4 or 13.♙d2, keeping the bishop out of the reach of Black's knights.

Note that White is not ready for active moves like 13.g4?! yet. It could encourage the opponent to launch a counter-attack with ...a6 and ...b5. Even 13...h5 is good enough to take full control of f5.

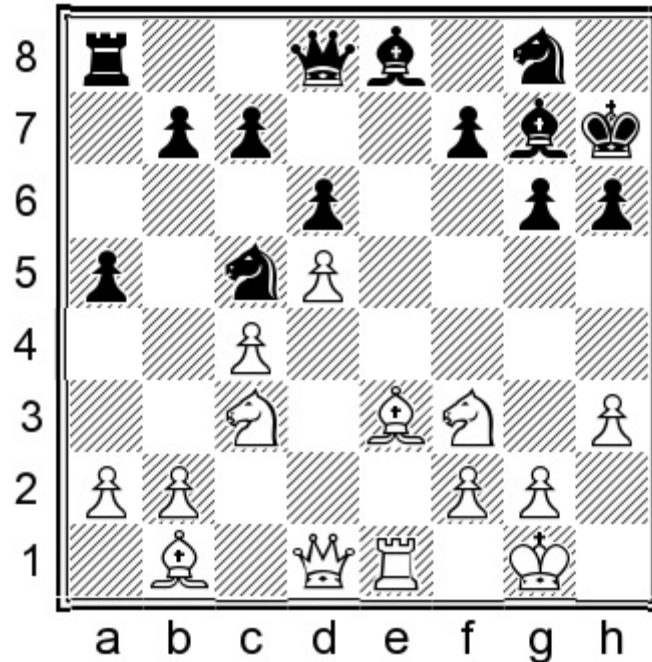
13...♚c8 14.♙d2 h6

True to his style, Karpov refrains from making any weaknesses. 14...h5 would have denied g4, but g5 and f6 would become sensitive – 15.♘g5 ♘f5 16.♖xe8+ ♙xe8 17.♖e1 ♙d7 18.♘ce4 ♘xe4 19.♘xe4. The more active defence 14...c5 15.♘b5 ♘f5 16.♙f4 ♙xb5 17.♚xb5 ♚c7 18.♙d3 a6 19.♚a4 ♘d4 is possible, although it would cost a pawn after 20.♘xd4 cxd4 21.♚b4 ♙f8 22.♖ad1 ♘d7 23.♙f1 ♘c5 24.♖xd4±.

15.♖e2 ♘h7 16.♖ae1 ♘eg8 17.♖xe8 ♙xe8 18.♙d3

White is already fully mobilised, and the plan with g4 should be on his agenda. 18.g4 b6 19.♙e3 ♙d7 20.♘d4 a6 21.♚d1 ♚f8 22.f4. Then 22...♖e8 23.♙d3 ♖xe3 does not give enough counterplay – 24.♖xe3 ♘xg4 25.hxg4 ♙xd4 26.♙xg6+ fxg6 27.♚xd4 ♙xg4±.

18...♖d7 19.♙b1 ♘c5 20.♚d1 ♜d8 21.♙e3 a5



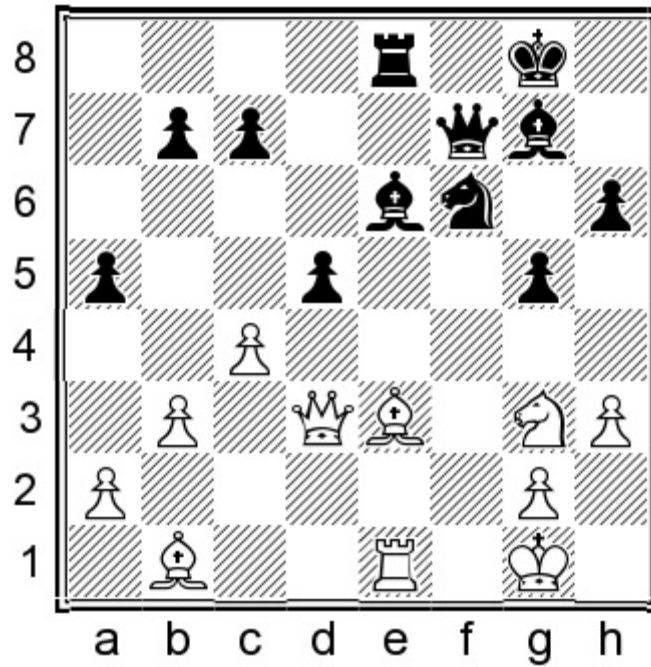
22.♚d2

It seems that around here Agdestein starts losing the thread of the game. He should have played for domination with 22.♘d4 ♙d7 23.b3, preparing ♘db5, g4, f4. Instead he shifts the c3-knight to g3, where it stays on the way of the g-pawn.

22...♙d7 23.♘e2 ♘f6 24.♘g3 ♜f8 25.♘d4 ♔g8 26.f4?

White loses patience and moves the pawn in the most inappropriate moment. Now e4 becomes a gaping hole.

26...♞e8 27.f5 g5 (27...♘fe4!) 28.♘e6!? fxe6 29.fxe6 ♘xe6 30.dxe6 ♙xe6 31.♚d3 ♜f7 32.b3 d5



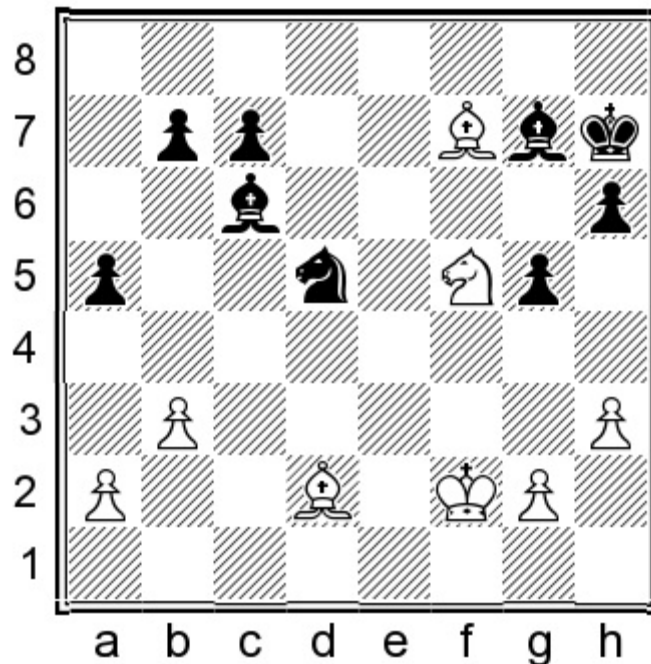
33.cxd5

The tables have turned, and White has to seek compensation for the pawn. Simplest was 33.c5 ♖e4!=.

33...♙xd5 34.♖f1 ♙c6 35.♙d2?! (35.♘f5) 35...♚d5 36.♗xd5+ ♘xd5

Karpov is already clearly better and it is White's turn to demonstrate ingenious defence.

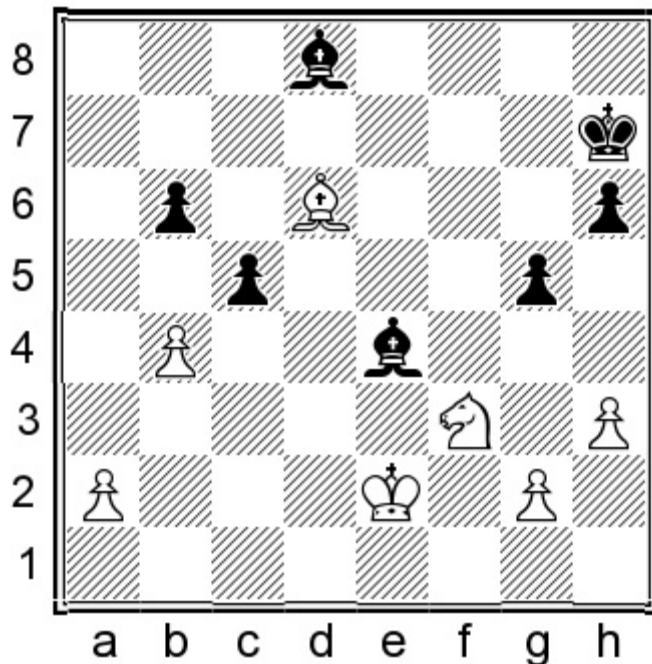
37.♙g6 ♜e7 38.♘f5 ♜e2 39.♙f7+ ♔h7 40.♖f2 ♜xf2 41.♔xf2



41...♙e5?!

41...♖c3! was more unpleasant, retaining an extra pawn following 42.♗xg7 ♖e4+! 43.♔e3 ♗xg7.

42.♙xd5 ♙xd5 43.♙xa5 ♙e4 44.♗e3 ♙b1 45.♗c4 ♙d4+ 46.♔e2 ♖b6 47.♗d2 ♙c2 48.♗f3 ♙f6 49.♙e1 c5 50.♙g3 ♙d8 51.♙d6 ♙e4 52.b4

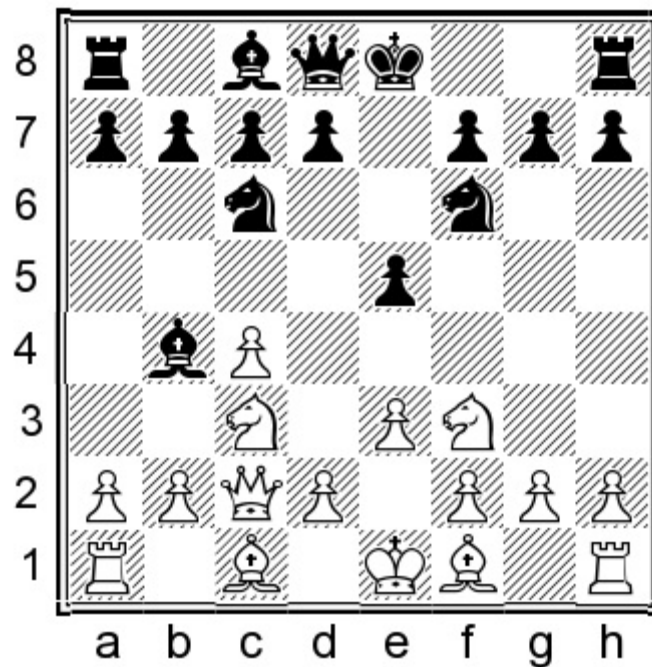


52...c4 53.♙e5 ♗g6 54.g4 ♙f6 55.♔e3 ♙xf3 56.♙xf6 ♙g2 57.♙d4 ♙xh3 58.♔f3 ♖b5 59.a4 ♖xa4 60.♔g3 ♙f1 61.b5 c3 62.b6 c2 63.♙b2 ♙a6 64.♔f3 1/2-1/2

Chapter 2. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3 ♙b4

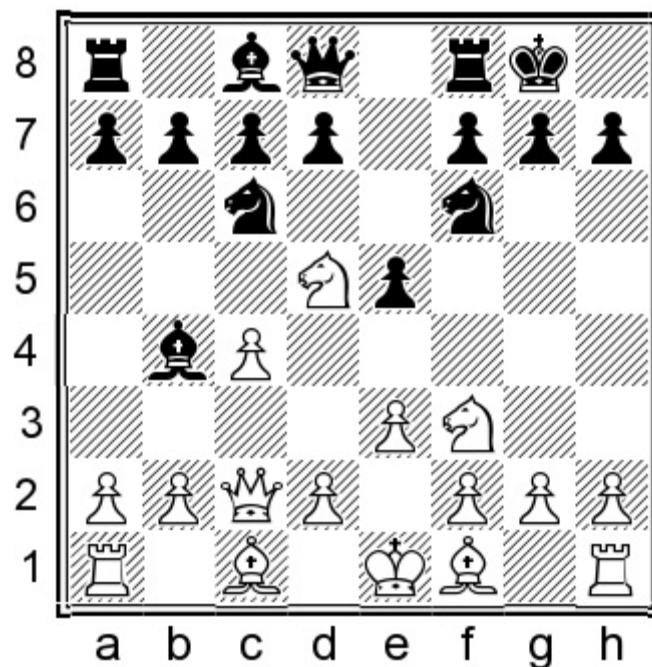
Main Ideas

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3 ♙b4 5.♚c2



When you play 4.e3, you'll most probably reach this position so you should start studying the English with it. Black's next move will set the character of the game. 5...0-0 may bring about extreme complications while 5...♙xc3 should often lead to slightly better for White endgames.

A. 5...0-0 (5...d6 6.♘e2!) 6.♘d5



This position is critical for the 4.e3-system. It is still hiding a lot of secrets and I expect important developments very soon. Right now it is totally unclear which is Black's best answer.

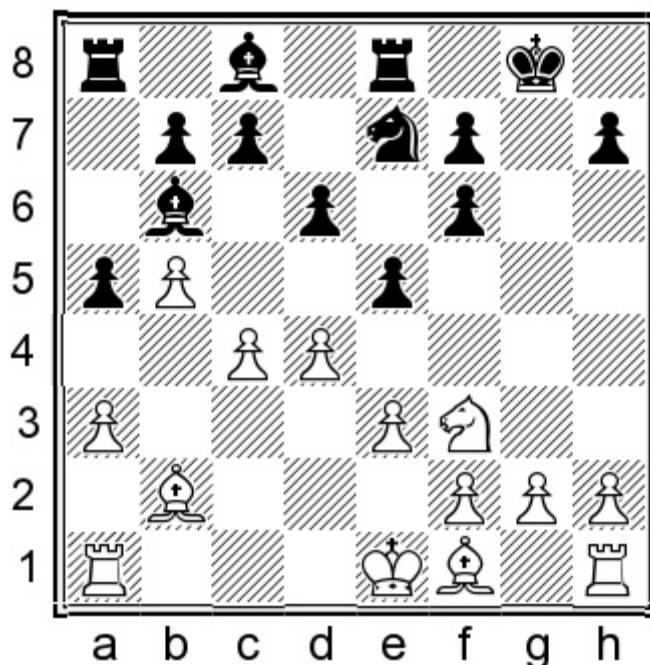
The humble and rare 6...♔e7!? seems to pass the ball into White's court. Even a good theoretician as Topalov's second, Cheparinov, failed to pose any problems recently. I suggest to treat it in the Taimanov manner: 7.a3 d6 8.♘c3!? See **Game 10** Voetter-Kleiser, ICCF 2014.

6...♖e8 has been the main line for decades. Black prepares the retreat ...♘b4-f8 and defends e5.

Although 7.♘g5 g6 8.h4 looks very tempting, very soon the white advanced knights will be either exchanged or driven back. If you like chaotic play with opposite castles – it should be a good choice.

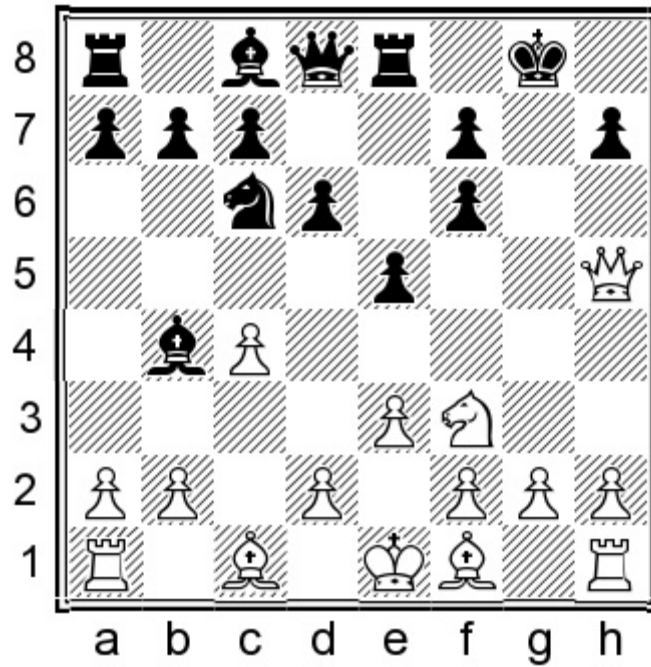
7.♚f5 d6 8.♘xf6+ could be no less chaotic, but at least it leaves Black the option to trade queens with 8...♚xf6?!. I can explain the popularity of this move only with ignorance. It is two times more frequent than 8...gxf6, but White scores 58% in OTB chess and 68% in correspondence and engine games.

Besides, after 9.♚xf6 gxf6 10.a3 ♔c5 11.b4 ♔b6 12.♔b2 a5 13.b5 ♘e7 14.d4!± White plays with the draw in the pocket.

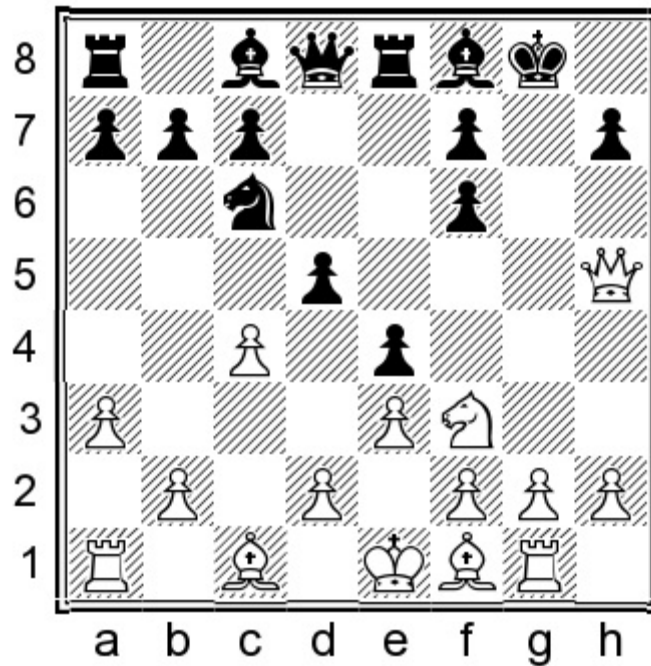


The attack on e5 is tangible in view of the threat c5 and b6. On the other hand, ...exd4 would underline the damage of Black's kingside pawn structure. See the model **Game 3** Grischuk-Giri, Elancourt 2013.

Thus 8...gxf6 is the sternest test of White's play. The only sensible retort is 9.♚h5!

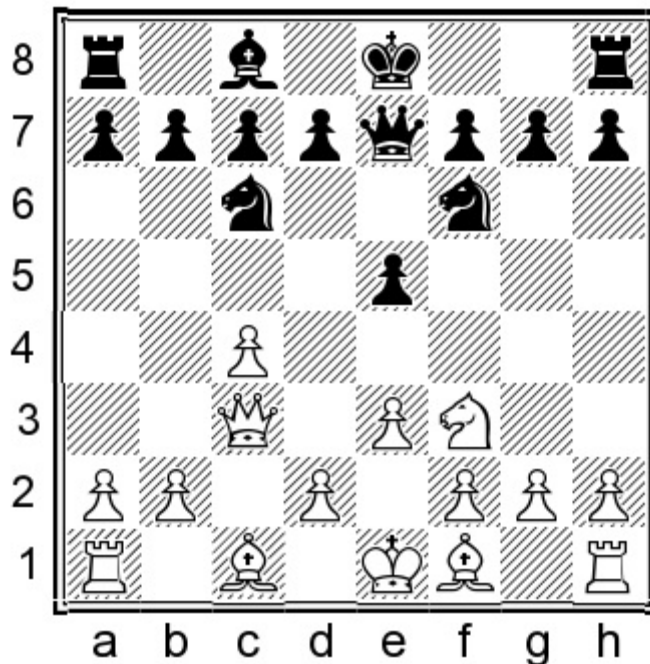


Now both 9...e4 10.♖g1! d5 11.a3 ♕f8



and 9...d5 10.♕e2! e4 11.cxd5 are very sharp. I offer a lot of original analysis in the “Step by Step” section and in the annotations to **Game 5** Hengl-Garau, ICCF 2017. White has a lasting initiative even if Black exchanges the queens.

5...♕xc3 yields about 50%, and has the most solid reputation. I recommend to take by queen: **6.♖xc3!** (6.bxc3 could be used for variety. It is the subject of Chapter 3.) **6...♖e7**



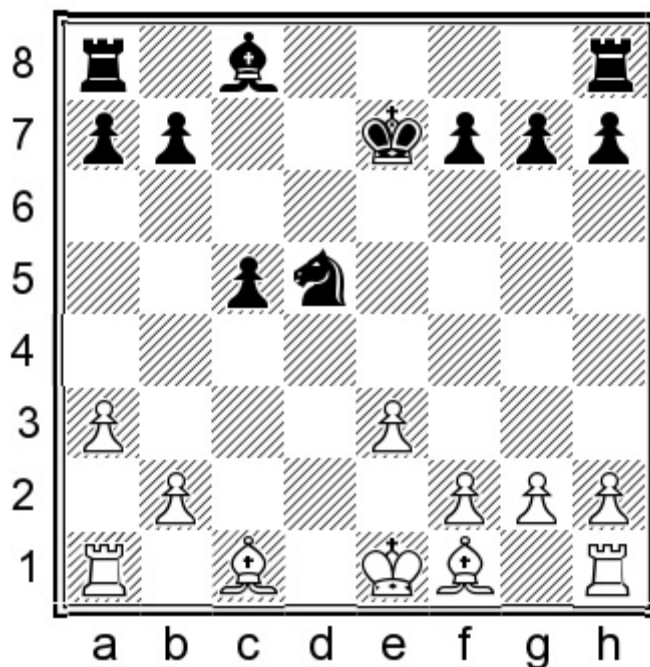
7.d4!

The only way to aspire for the advantage. 7.a3 and 7.♕e2 aim to get the same type of positions, but are less precise. The fashionable 7.b3?! is the worst of the four options as it allows tactical hits based on the weak dark squares.

White's idea is to play a slightly better endgame with an open centre. It sounds tempting, and was tried before, but as they say, the devil is in the detail. I advocate a new move, which is connected with a practically unexplored set-up, at least in OTB chess.

The tactical justification of 7.d4 is the line 7...♖e4 8.♙d3 exd4 9.♘xd4 0-0 10.♕e2 ♚b4+ 11.♔f1 with the better centre. Our king will castle later "by hand" after f3, ♔f2. The main line should be:

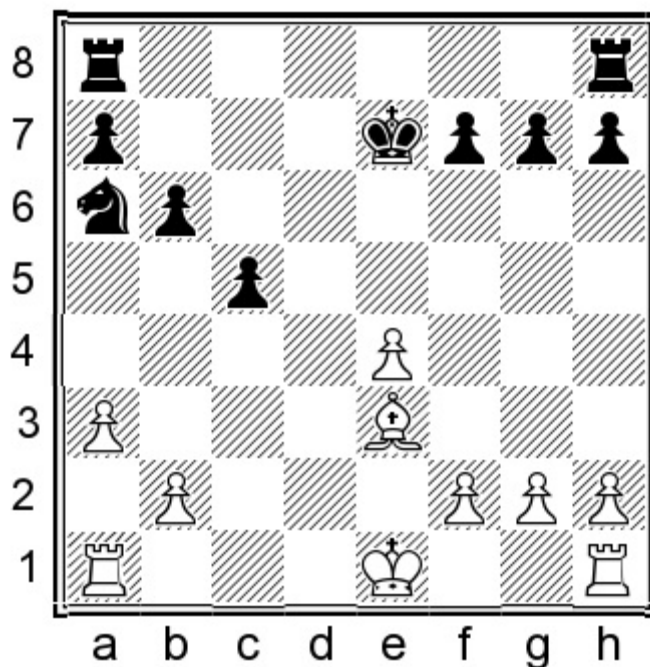
7...exd4 8.♘xd4 ♘xd4 9.♙xd4 c5 10.♙h4! d5 11.cxd5 ♘xd5 12.♙xe7+ ♔xe7 13.a3!



The key move. Instead of playing ♕d2 and 0-0-0, we intend e4, ♕e3, followed by b4. chesstouring.com

Here are some examples what we are aiming at:

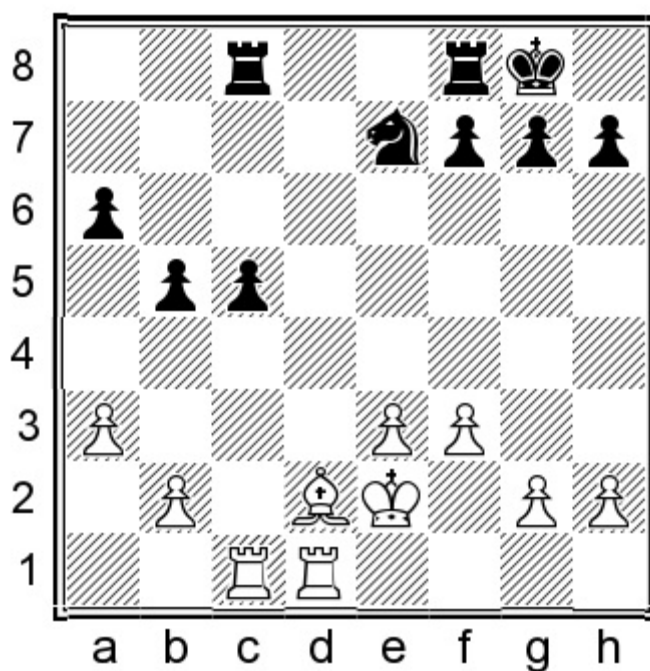
Analysis



17.♞c1 ♜ad8 18.♔e2 ♞d7 19.♞c4 ♘c7 20.b4.

One way or another, White should push b4 in order to widen the scope of his long-ranged pieces. Of course, there are exceptions. If we could gain full control of the d-file, we'll not need b4:

Analysis

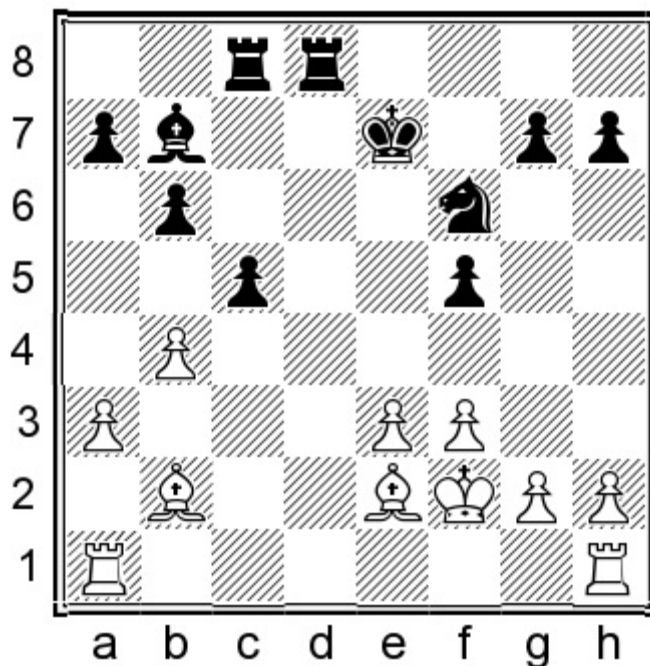


Black to move. He cannot contest the d-file because of 21...♞fd8 22.♙a5 (or 22.♙e1! c4 23.♙a5), or;

21...c4 22.♔c3. That means, White keeps some pressure.

Black could prevent e4 by ...f5, when the stab b4 is still effective:

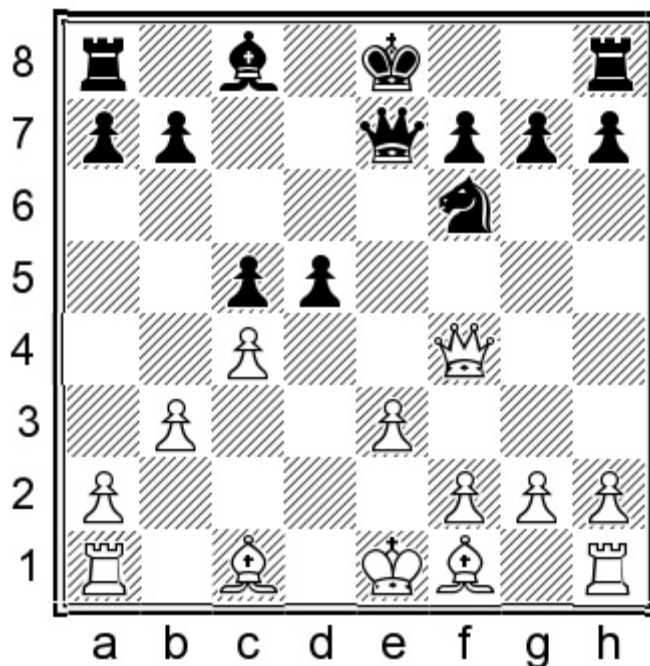
Analysis



Our plan here is to double the rooks on the c-file. Critical is 19...♖d2! 20.♔c3 ♜c2 21.♜hc1 ♜xc1 22.♜xc1 ♞d5 23.♔d2±.

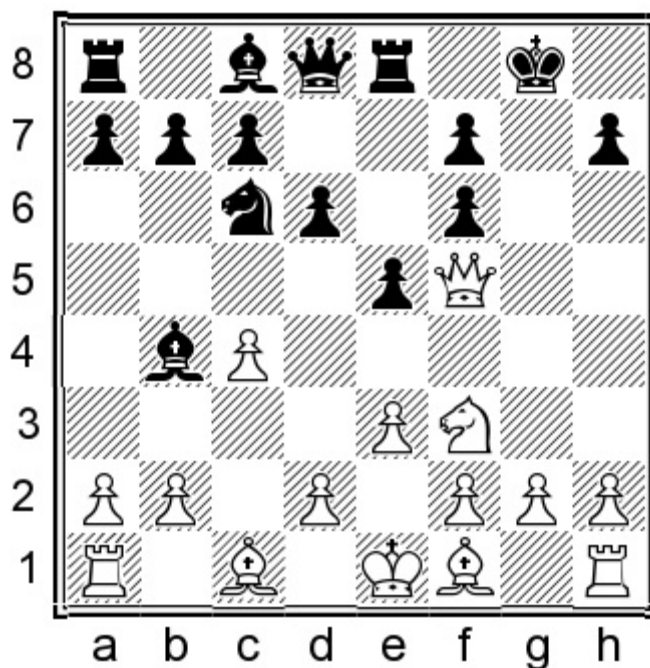
Theoretical Status

Delchev and Semkov consider this line and reach the endgame after 12...♔xe7. Then they follow the game Mastrovasilis-Hracek, Istanbul 2003, which saw the wrong plan with 13.♔d2 ♔e6 14.0-0-0=. Cummings takes in his book White's side and also likes 7.d4!, but he bases his recommendation on a wrong analysis: after 7...exd4 8.♞xd4 ♞xd4 9.♞xd4 c5 he advocates 10.♞f4 d5 11.b3?!



He discovers 11...g5!! 12. ♖xg5 ♜g8 13. ♜f4, but misses 13...♞h5!– see line B4, 8...exd4. In this variation Black has at least a forced draw.

Cummings also discusses the sharp position:



He seems to like here 9. ♜c2, which I think passes the initiative to Black. He also covers 9. ♜h5, but our ways part soon since he analyses 9...d5 10. ♞d3= instead of my proposition 10. ♞e2!?.

The 4.e3 system is in full bloom now, and there are no established models for Black to follow. I offer a balanced mix of sharp and solid lines to serve you in different tournament situations.

Chapter 2. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3 ♘b4 Step by Step

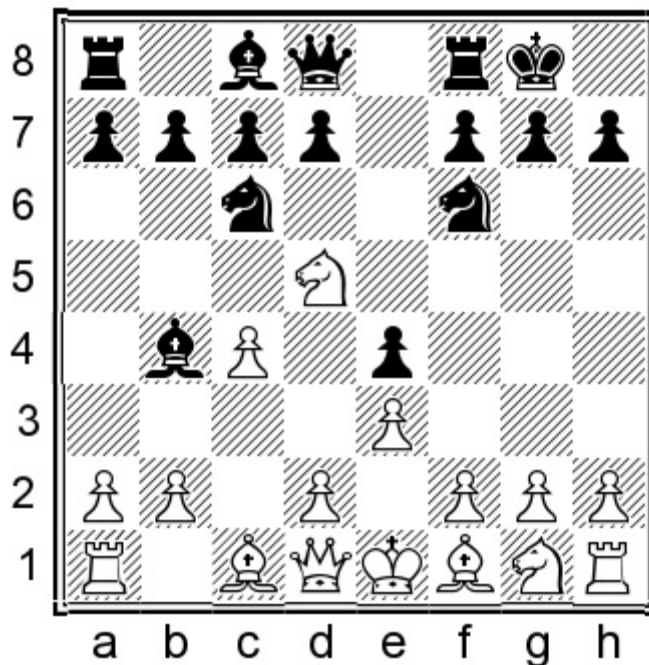
1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3 ♘b4 5.♙c2

White has no decent alternatives to this move:

5.♘d5 e4! fares very well for Black. 6.♘g1

6.♘xb4 ♘xb4 7.♘d4 cedes space to 7...c5 8.♘b5 d5.

6...0-0



7.a3

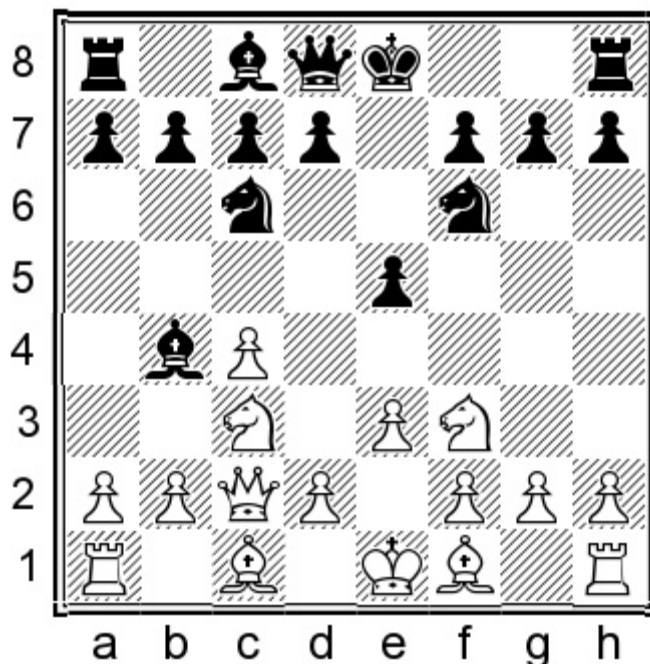
7.♙c2 ♙e8 8.a3 ♘d6 9.♘e2 is dubious since Black's active pieces allow him to take over the initiative with 9...b5!! 10.♘xf6+ ♙xf6 11.cxb5 ♘e5 12.♙xe4 ♘b7 13.♙d4 a6↑.

7.♘e2 is also slow – 7...♘xd5 8.cxd5 ♘e5 9.♘g3 f5 10.a3 ♘d6 11.d3 ♘xd3+ 12.♘xd3 exd3 13.♙xd3 ♙f6.

7...♘d6 8.d3 exd3 9.♘f3

9.♘xd3 ♘e5 10.♘f3 ♘xd5 11.cxd5 ♘xd3+ 12.♙xd3 b6 is comfortable for Black. He will control e4 with ...f7-f5 while building up counterplay in the centre with ...c6.

9...♘xd5 10.cxd5 ♘e5=.



A. 5...0-0 B. 5...♙xc3

5...d6 is a logical attempt to avoid both main lines after 5...0-0 6.♘d5 ♞e8, namely 7.♚f5! and 7.♘g5. “Too easy for Black”, as Timman entitled his article in *New in Chess Yearbook* in February 2018. This conception sounds so good, that it simply cannot be true! Otherwise the 4.e3 line would have been just a rare innocuous option. The sternest test of Black’s idea is the surprising retreat: 6.♘e2!, which Timman missed altogether in his article. The knight transfer suddenly shifts the focus of the game to the kingside and puts to the question the future of Black’s bishop. It risks to remain out of play or at least isolated on the queenside. See the top-level **Game 2** Karjakin-Vidit, rapid Riyadh 2017 for details.

Black is underdeveloped for opening the centre with 5...d5 6.cxd5 ♘xd5.

White has several interesting options, but the most obvious one, 7.♙b5, is the least convincing owing to 7...0-0.

The most challenging continuation is 7.a3!? ♙xc3 8.bxc3. I would suggest the typical Sicilian hit: 7.♘xe5 ♘xe5 8.♚e4, which immediately fixes a small edge.

5...♚e7?! 6.♘d5 ♘xd5 7.cxd5 e4 8.♘g1 ♘d8 probably counts on 9.♚xc7, when Black gets compensation for the pawn. Instead in Harutyunian-Mosadeghpour, Poti 2018, White kept developing with 9.♘e2! 0-0, when best is 10.a3 ♙c5 11.♘g3±.

A. 5...0-0 6.♘d5 ♞e8

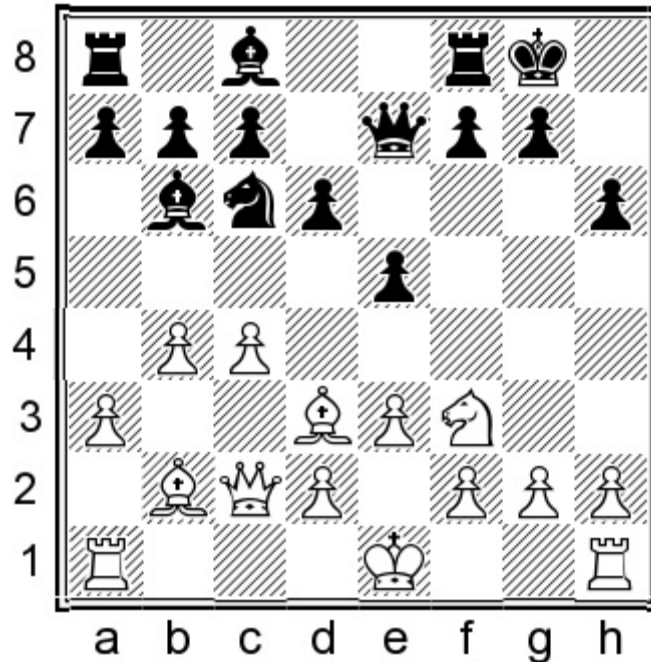
6...♘xd5 7.cxd5 ♘e7 drops a pawn:

8.♚e4?! ♙d6 9.♘xe5, but Black gets enough compensation after 9...c6 10.dxc6 dxc6 11.♘f3 ♞e8. It is safer to be content with less:

8. ♖xe5 ♜xd5 9. ♙c4 with a fluid pawn centre.

6...d6 does not fulfil its task to bolster the e5-pawn – 7.a3 ♙a5 8. ♙d3! h6 9.b4 ♙b6 10. ♜xf6+ ♚xf6 11. ♙b2 ♚e7

Or 11...a5 12.b5 ♜e7 13.c5 ♙a7 14. ♙h7+ ♜h8 15.d4±.



12.c5! dxc5 13.b5

Here in Lubbe-Carstensen, Fredericia 2014, Black decided to buy himself off by a piece, but he lacks adequate compensation after 13...♜d4 14.exd4 exd4+ or 14...e4 15. ♙xe4 ♜e8 16.d3 f5 17.0-0 fxe4 18.♞ae1±.

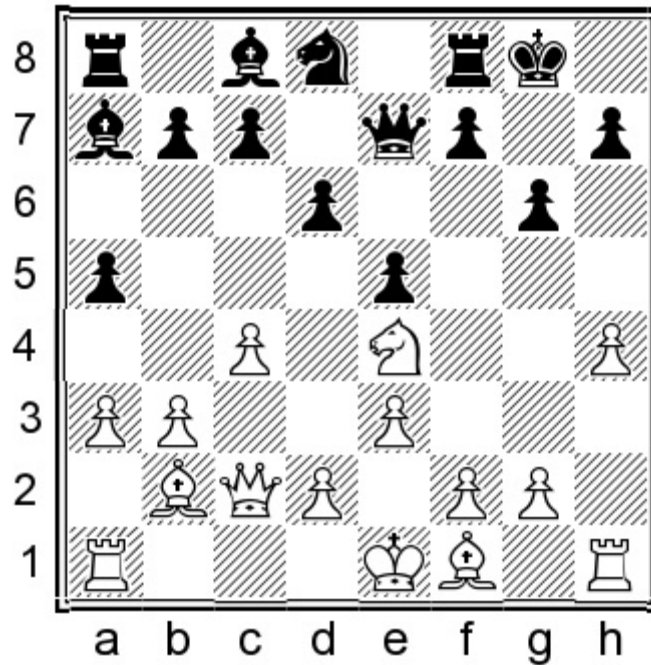
6...a5 effectively prevents:

7. ♚f5? since the b4-bishop is defended and Black has 7...♜xd5 8.cxd5 d6. Instead we play:

7.a3 ♙c5 8. ♜g5! g6 9. ♜xf6+ ♚xf6 10. ♜e4 ♚e7 11.b3

We could reach a similar position in line A2, with an important exception in Black's favour – the move 6...♞e8 enables the retreat ...♙f8. From c5 the bishop cannot protect the kingside and White should enjoy a lasting initiative:

11...d6 12. ♙b2 ♙a7 (12...f5 13. ♜xc5±) 13.h4 ♜d8. We have been following the game Demuth-Sengupta, Teplice 2017. White should have continued the attack with:



14.f4!

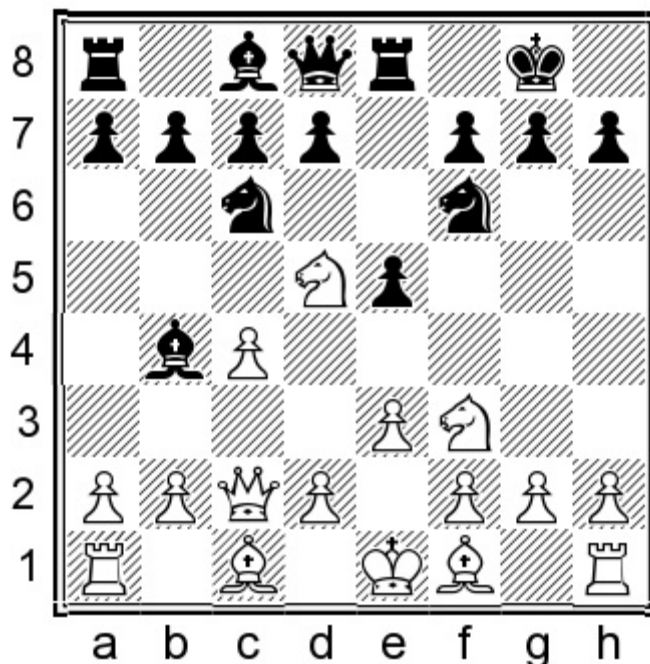
14.h5 f5 15.♘c3 g5 16.0-0-0 c6 17.h6 ♘e6 18.g3 g4 19.♙g2 ♙d7 20.♚b1 ♙e8 21.♚a2 ♜d8
22.d4±.

14...h5 15.♙e2 ♘c6 16.g4 hxg4 17.h5 f5 18.hxg6 fxe4 19.♚xe4 ♙f5 20.♚g2±.

6...♙c5 7.a3 a5 transposes to 6...a5.

6...♙e7!? is coming into fashion. I suggest to treat it in the Taimanov manner: 7.a3 d6 (7...a5 8.♙e2 ♜e8
9.d4) 8.♘c3!? or 8.♙d3 h6 9.♘c3 in order to avoid the static pawn structure arising after ...♘xd5. See
Game 10 Voetter-Kleiser, ICCF 2014.

Back to 6...♜e8 now:



I recommend **A1. 7. ♖f5!?** here, but **A2. 7. ♘g5** is also playable.

A1. 7. ♖f5!?

This ingenious brainchild of GM Raymond Keene pursues a long-term structural advantage. Surprisingly, the hanging e-pawn does not offer Black a way to avoid doubled pawns:

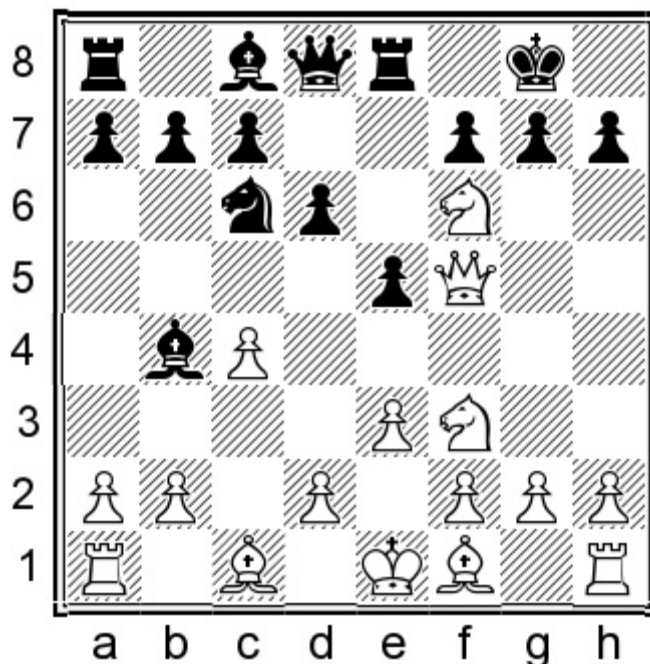
7... ♘xd5 8. cxd5 ♘e7 (8... d6 9. ♖h5 ♘e7 10. ♘g5) 9. ♖xe5 c6 10. dxc6±;

7... ♙e7 8. ♘xe5 ♘b4 9. ♘xb4 ♙xb4 10. ♘f3 d5 (10... ♘e4 11. a3 ♙f8 12. d3 g6 13. ♖a5 ♘c5 14. ♖c3 ♙g7 15. d4 ♘e4 16. ♖c2±) 11. ♖d3 c5 12. ♙e2 ♙e6 13. ♖c2±. The lesson from these examples is: we take all and ask for more.

7...d6

7...e4 simply drops a pawn to 8. ♘g5 h6 9. ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 10. ♖h7+ ♙f8 11. ♘xe4±.

8. ♘xf6+



8...gxf6!?

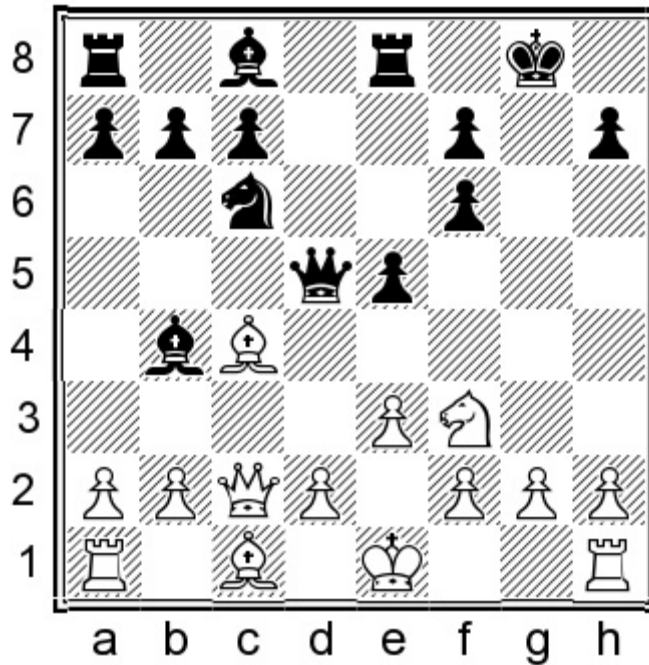
I can only envy the intuition of Keene's first opponents. Both Korchnoi and Timman kept the queens and won! Several months later ex-world champion Smyslov chose to exchange his strongest piece, and 8...♙xf6 9.♙xf6 gxf6 subsequently became the "unofficial" main line, but it is easy to understand him – he was simply the king of endgame. I believe that 10.a3 ♖c5 11.b4 ♖b6 12.♖b2 assures White of lasting pressure – but not on the queenside, as you might think! White's main trump is the doubled f-pawns which lack mobility and cannot run away from a direct attack with g4-g5 – see **Game 3** Grischuk-Giri, Elancourt 2013.

9.♙h5

9.♙c2 does not deserve any attention in view of 9...d5!

It is senseless to elaborate on 9...e4 10.♘g1 d5 11.a3 ♖f8 12.cxd5 ♙xd5 13.♗e2, which leaves White more chances.

10.cxd5 ♙xd5 11.♖c4



11...♔f5! 12.♖xf5 ♖xc4 13.b3 (13.♖xf6 ♖d3 14.♖g5+ ♔h8 15.♖f6+ is a draw) 13...♗e6! (Cummings analyses only 13...♗a6) 14.♗xe6 fxe6 15.a3=.

9...d5

9...e4 is not so frequent, probably because White scores rather well against it. However, this move should not be discarded as a bad option. My analysis suggests that if Black is very well prepared, he may reach an equal position from a computer standpoint. My task is to show you how to face the opponent with difficult practical problems.

10.♖g1!?

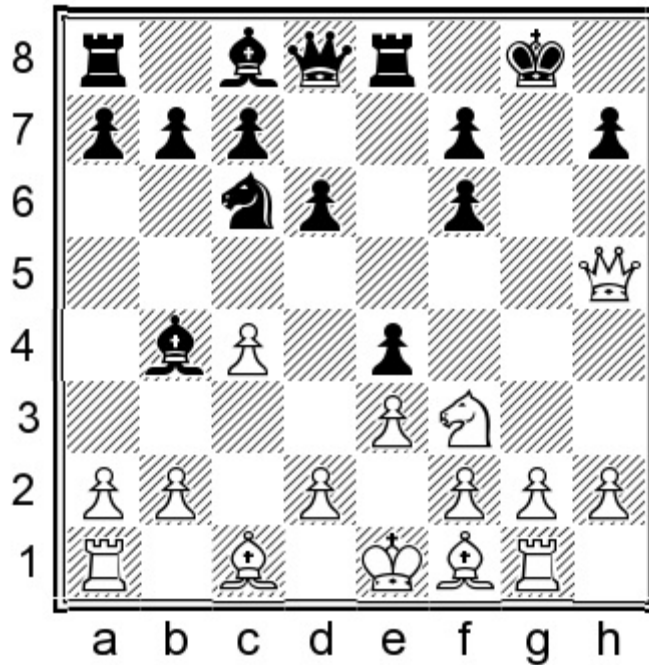
I quickly buried:

10.♘g1 d5 11.a3 ♖e5 12.♗h4 ♔e7 13.d4 ♖g5 14.♔d2 ♖g6∞;

10.♘d4 ♘xd4 11.exd4 c6∞;

10.a3 exf3 11.gxf3 ♖e5 12.♖g1+ ♖g5 13.♖xg5+ ffg5 14.♔d3 ♗f6∞. The latter line has been thoroughly tested in correspondence chess, and White fails to achieve even 50%.

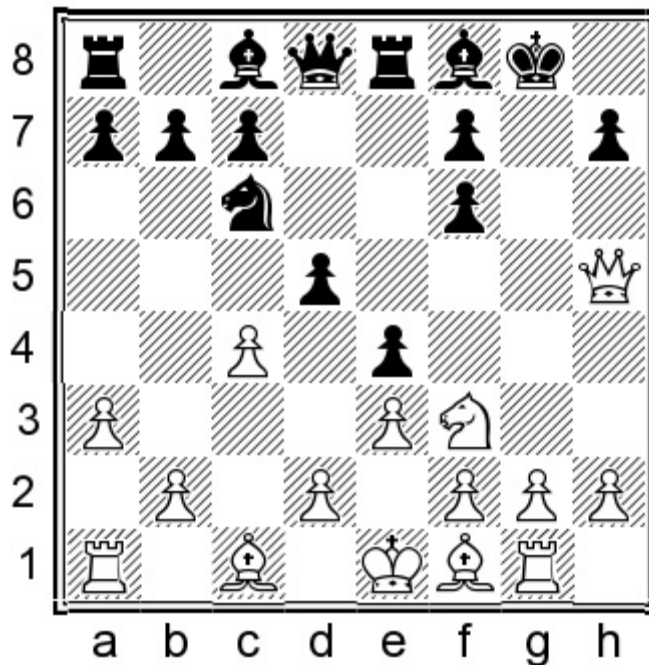
The cunning rook move was tried in 4 correspondence games of 2017. It aims to gain some time for development before retreating the f3-knight. Its long-term drawback is that it dooms our king to remaining in the centre. Therefore, White should play energetically.



10...d5

10...exf3?! is risky, to say it mildly. After 11.gxf3+ ♔h8 12.a3 ♙c5 13.♖h6 ♜g8 14.♝xg8+ ♚xg8 15.b4 Black should give back the piece and play a worse endgame after 15...♗g7.

11.a3 ♙f8



12.d4

12.b3 ♘e5 13.♘xe5 ♜xe5 14.♖h4 ♜g5∞ is frustrating. Our rooks lack coordination.

12...♙e6 13.♘h4!?

Cummings mentions only 13.cxd5, which would be fine after 13...♙xd5? 14.♙d2, but the simple 13...♖xd5 14.♖xd5 ♙xd5 15.♘h4 ♘a5= pinpoints the weak light squares.

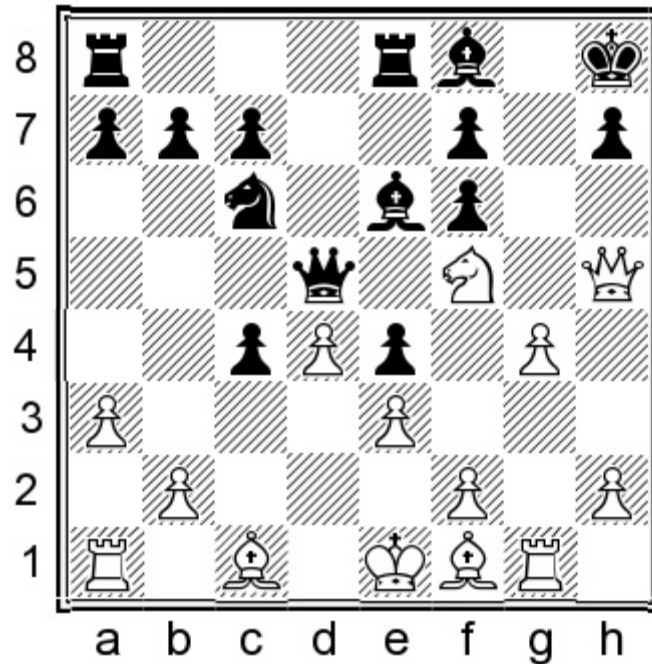
13.♙e2 dxc4 14.♘d2 f5 15.♘xc4 (15...♙xc4 ♙xc4 16.♘xc4 b5 17.♘d2 ♖f6 is balanced. Black is ready to meet 18.g4 by f4.) 15...♙g7 16.♙d2 is complex, with mutual chances. I do not like it

because Black has more than one decent option, for instance, 16...♖h8, or 16...f4, or 16...♗e7 17.g4 fxg4.

We see that after ...f5 Black is not running any risk to fall under attack. My novelty aims to build up a blockade on f5 with g4, ♗f5, possibly ♖g3-h3.

13...♗a5

13...dxc4 offers White play against e4 – 14.g4 (or 14.♗f5 ♖d5 15.g4) 14...♖d5 15.♗f5 ♖h8



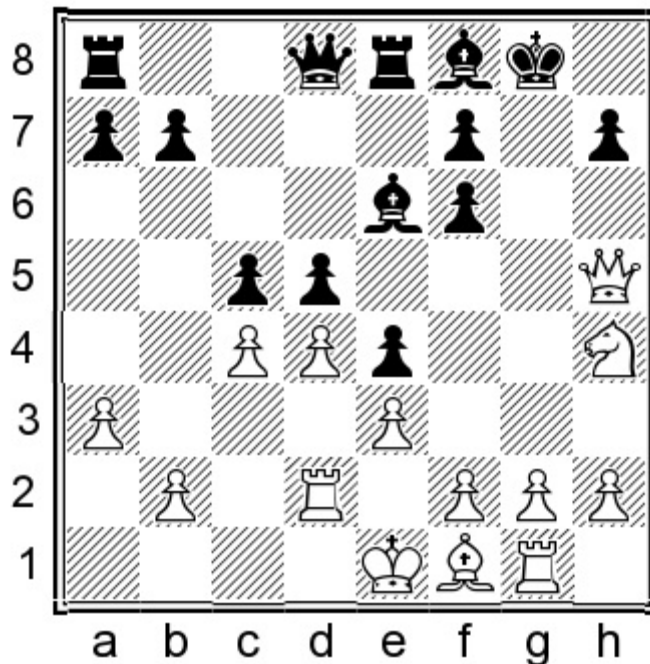
We'll exchange a pawn on f5 for e4, whereas our unleashed bishops will ensure ample compensation. Play might continue 16.♗d2 ♗e7 17.♖h4 ♗xf5 18.gxf5 ♗g7 19.♗h3 a5 (the rook must stay on e8 to protect e4) 20.♖g4 ♖g8 21.♖f4 b5 22.♖d1 c6 23.♖g4.

In the diagram position White can also try 16.♖h4 ♗xf5 17.gxf5 ♗g7 18.♗d2∞ and 16.♖g3 ♗e7 17.♖h3 ♗xf5 18.gxf5 h6 19.♗d2∞.

14.♗d2 ♗b3

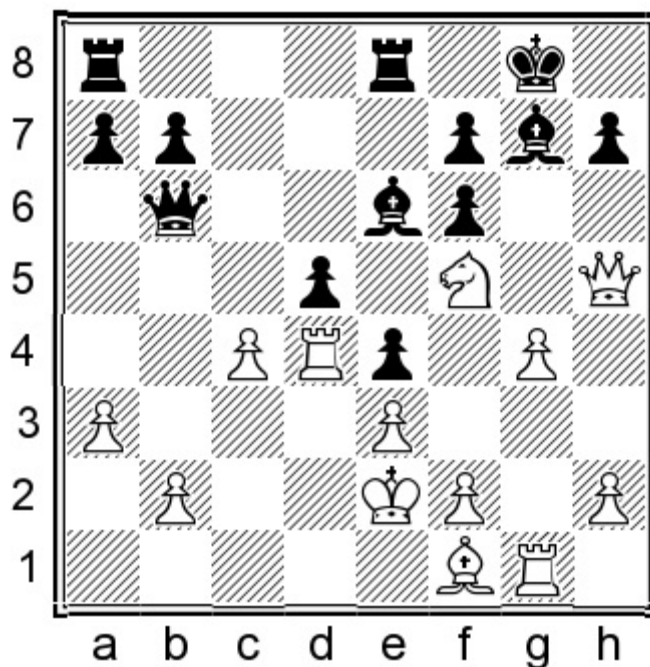
We set up a concealed trap here – 14...♗xc4? stumbles into 15.♗xc4 dxc4 16.f4! and suddenly our attack on the kingside takes shape – g4 is looming.

15.♖d1 ♗xd2 16.♖xd2 c5!



This timely break gives Black counterplay. I studied this interesting position in depth. White has serious threats after g4, ♖f5, but my conclusion is that he lacks just one tempo to make a *luft* for the king, e.g. f4 or ♙e2. That allows the opponent to maintain the balance with only moves. OTB Black's task should be difficult. Here is an illustrative analysis:

a) 17.g4!? cxd4 18.♖xd4 ♕a5+ 19.♙e2 ♙g7 20.♗f5 ♖b6



21.b4

White would be winning, if he could play f4, ♗xg7, f5, and open the g-file. Without f4-f5, Black meets g5 by ...f5:

21.♙h3 ♖ad8 22.b4 dxc4 23.♗xg7 ♙xg7 24.g5 f5 25.♖h6+ ♔g8 26.g6 hxg6 27.♖xg6+ is only a draw.

21...♖ac8!

Only move. 21...a5 gives the dreamed tempo for 22.f4→; 21...♖ad8 allows 22.♙g2 dxc4
23.♙xe4→.

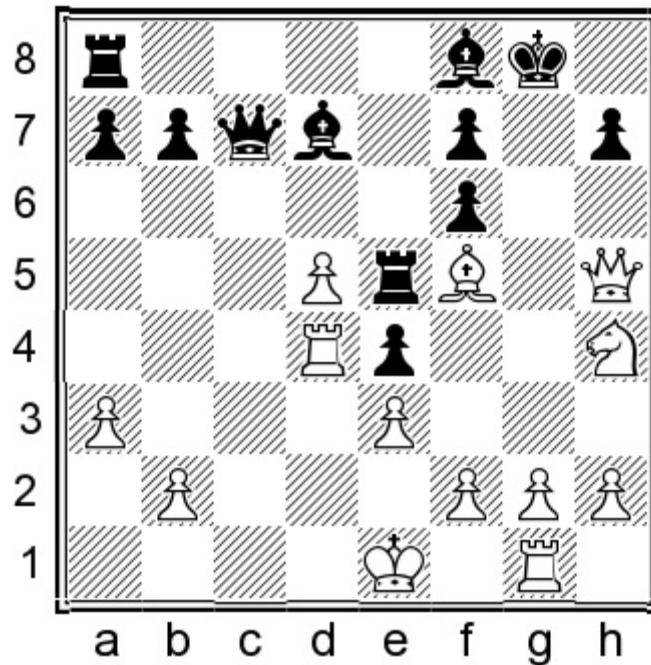
22.c5 ♖a6+ 23.♔e1 ♖xa3 24.♙b5 ♖c1+ 25.♖d1 ♖c3+ 26.♔f1. White is winning the exchange, but
Black can hold it.

b) 17.♙e2 cxd4 18.♖xd4 ♖c7 19.g4!? (otherwise Black could take on f5)

19.cxd5 ♙d7 20.♙g4 (20.♗f5 ♖c1+ 21.♙d1 ♙xf5 22.♖xf5 ♖xb2=; 20.f4 ♙c5 21.♖c4 ♖b6

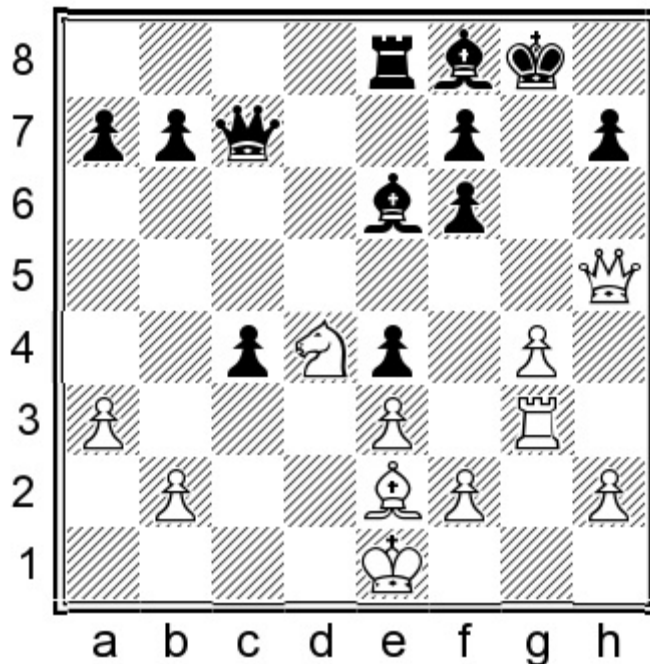
22.♖xc5 ♖xc5 23.♔f2 ♖c2 24.g4 ♖xb2 25.♗f5 ♙xf5 26.gxf5+ ♔h8 27.♖xf7 ♖g8 28.♖g3 ♖af8

29.♖xg8+ ♖xg8 30.♖e6=) 20...♖e5 21.♙f5



21...♖xf5! 22.♗xf5 ♖c1+ 23.♖d1 ♖xb2 24.♗d4 ♖xa3 25.g3 ♖a6 26.f4 exf3 27.♖xf3=.

19...dxc4 20.♗f5 ♖ad8 21.♖g3 ♖xd4 22.♗xd4



22...♔h8

22...h6 is more risky – 23.♔f1 (23.h4 c3 24.bxc3 ♖xc3+ 25.♔f1 ♙d6 26.♞g1 ♙h2 27.♞h1 ♙e5)

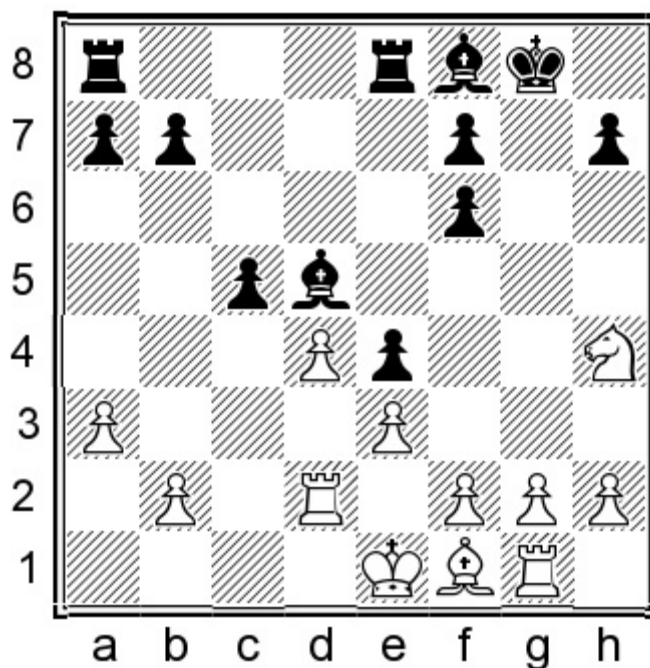
23...c3 24.bxc3 ♖xc3 25.♙b5 ♞e7 26.g5 fxg5 27.h4 ♞c7 28.hxg5 ♖a1+ 29.♔g2 ♞c1 30.♜e2 ♙d6

31.♜xc1 ♙xg3 32.♜e2 ♙d6 33.♜d4 ♖a2! 34.g6 ♙f8 35.♙e8 ♖d5! 36.♜xe6 fxe6 37.♙f7+ ♔g7=.

23.♔f1 a6 24.g5 f5 25.♞h3 h6 26.♞h4 ♙g7 27.g6 fxg6 28.♖xg6 ♖f7 29.♞xh6+ ♙xh6 30.♖xh6+ ♖h7

31.♖f6+ ♖g7 32.♖h4+ ♖h7 33.♖g5 ♖e7 34.♖h6+ ♖h7=.

c) 17.cxd5 ♖xd5 18.♖xd5 ♙xd5



This line is less sharp than a and b.

White would be slightly better if he could remain with a knight against bishop, because the e4-pawn would be doomed. Unfortunately, Black could avoid exchanges:

19.dxc5 (19.♘f5 ♖ac8 20.dxc5 ♙e6!)=) 19...♙b3 20.♙e2 ♖ac8 (20...♖e5 21.f4) 21.♙d1 ♙e6 22.♙a4 ♖e7 23.f4 ♖xc5 24.g4 b5 25.♙c2 b4! with just enough counterplay.

10.♙e2!?

10.a3 weakens the b3-square. Black could send his queen there – 10...♙f8 11.cxd5 ♖xd5 12.d3 ♖b3!?

It is dubious to occupy b3 by the knight since it is needed in the centre, e.g. 12...♙e6 13.♙e2 ♘a5 (13...e4 14.♖xd5 ♙xd5 15.dxe4 ♙xe4 16.♙d2) 14.e4 ♖d7 15.♙e3 ♘b3 16.♖d1 ♘d4 17.♘xd4 exd4 18.♙h6±.

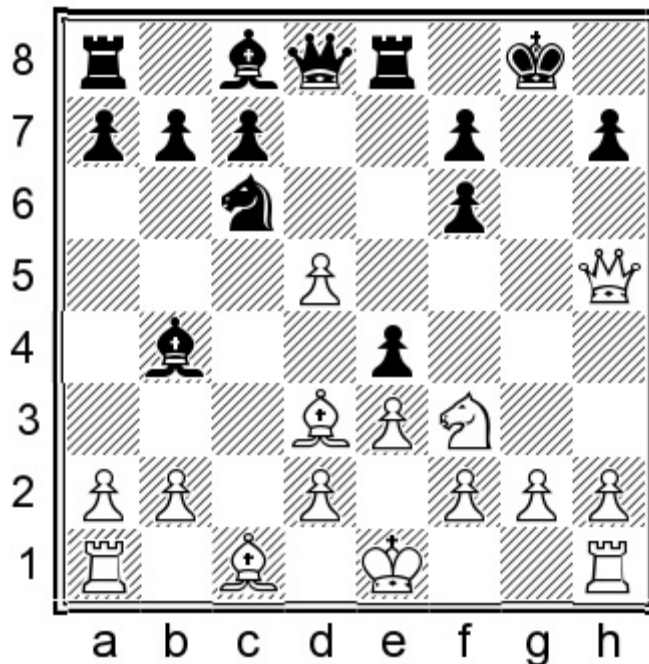
13.♙e2 ♖c2 14.♙d2 (14.♘d2 ♙g7 15.0-0 f5 16.♖e1 ♘e7=) 14...e4 15.dxe4 ♖xb2 16.♙c4 ♙e6 17.♙xe6 ♖xe6 18.0-0 ♘e5 19.♙h1=.

10.♙d3 is the main move. It is playable, but perhaps it is a little less challenging than 10.♙e2 because the fork forces exchanges:

10...e4

There is some mystery about 10...h6. The engines claim that White has a bunch of good options, but the results of correspondence games favour Black! That only proves that the position is strategically highly unbalanced. I propose a logical solution: 11.cxd5 ♖xd5 12.♙c2 ♙f8 13.♙b3 ♖d7 14.♘h4 ♘d8 15.♙d1!±. This move denies ...♖g4 and prepares 0-0, f4. It is impossible to plug the light-squares holes with 15...f5? due to 16.g4.

11.cxd5



Black has tried here 3 knight retreats which pass the initiative to White, and two more reasonable continuations:

a) 11...♙f8! 12.a3

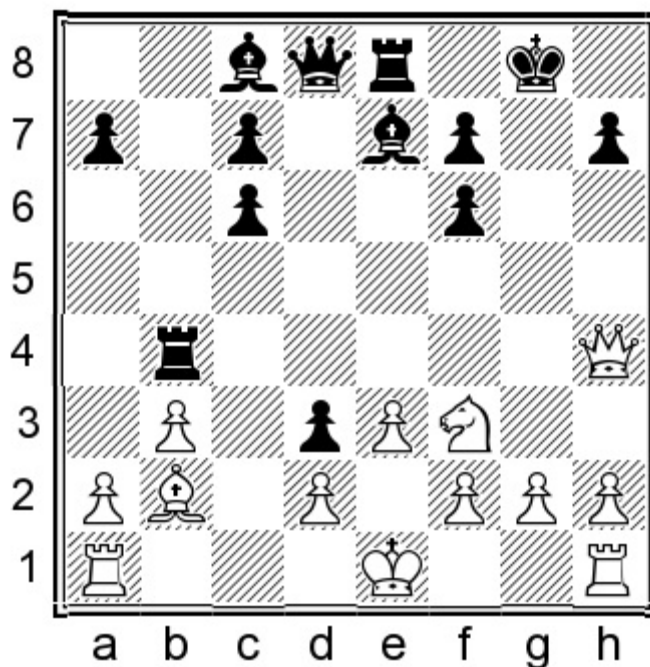
Or 12.♙b1 ♘b4 13.0-0 ♖xd5 14.♖xd5 ♘xd5 15.♘h4 f5 16.f3 ♙g7=.

12...exd3 13.dxc6 bxc6 14.b4 a5 15.♙b2 axb4 16.axb4 ♖xa1+ 17.♙xa1 ♖e4 18.0-0 ♖xb4 19.♙c3 c5 20.h3 ♖c4 21.♖d1 ♙e6. White stays pretty, without flaws in the pawn chain, but Black held him to a draw. See **Game 5** Hengl-Garau, ICCF 2017.

b) 11...exd3 12.dxc6 bxc6 13.♖h4!

The common 13.b3 ♖d5 14.♖xd5 cxd5 might be difficult to crack.

13...♖b8 14.b3 ♙e7 15.♙b2 ♖b4



16.♖h5 ♖d5 17.♖xd5 cxd5 18.♙a3 ♖b7 19.♙xe7 ♖xe7 20.0-0-0!

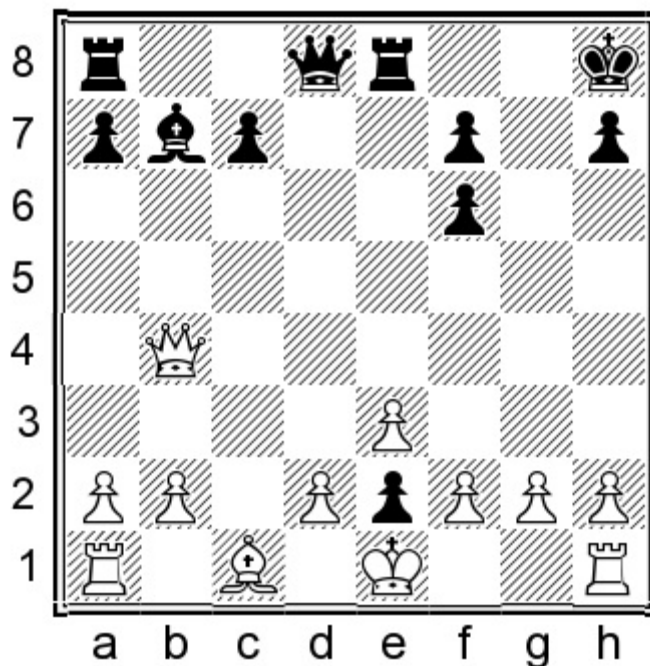
10...e4

10...♔h8? invites White to a much better version of the 10.♙d3 line. The hanging f7-pawn tells after 11.♙d3! e4 12.cxd5 ♙f8 (12...♘b8 13.♙c2) 13.♙xe4 ♖xe4 14.dxc6 bxc6 15.b3. It suffices to say that the computer contemplates 15...♔g8 here.

Or 10...♙e6 11.b3 e4 12.♘h4 ♘e5 13.a3 ♙f8 (13...♙c5 14.♖g1) 14.f4→.

11.cxd5 ♘e7

11...exf3 12.dxc6 fxe2 13.cxb7 ♙xb7 14.♖g4+ ♔h8 15.♖xb4 brings about the following curious position:



White's king is better protected. At a second glance it transpires that our rooks and bishop also have a greater potential. All the black pawns are weak and could become targets after our rook lands on an open line.

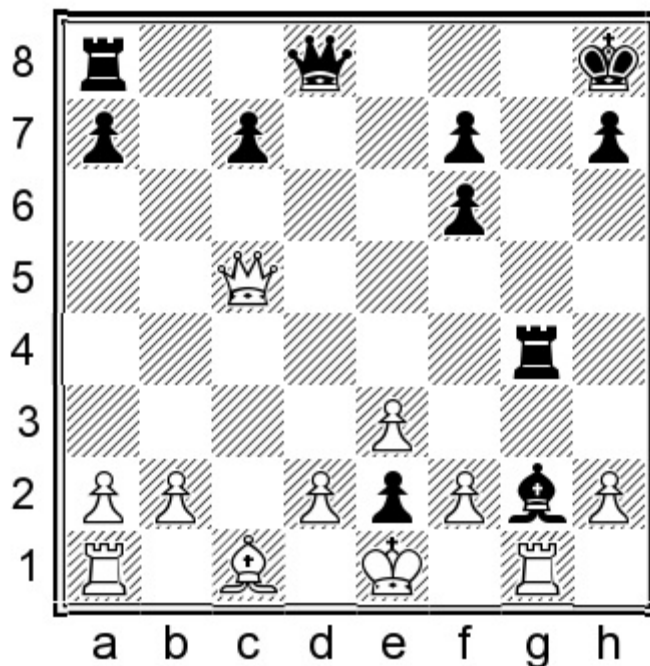
One possible course for Black is to stake on his lead in development:

a) 15...♖b8 16.♞g1!?

It is certainly safer to exchange the queens with 16.♞d4 ♜xd4 17.exd4±.

16...♞d3 17.♞h4! ♜e6 (17...♞c2 18.f3!) 18.b4 ♞c2 19.f3 ♜g8 20.♔xe2 ♞f5 21.♙b2! ♜xg2+ 22.♞xg2 ♞xf3+ 23.♔e1 ♞xg2 24.♞f2±. White is practically a pawn up – 3:2 on the queenside, supported by the rook.

b) 15...♙xg2 16.♞g1 ♜e4 17.♞c5 ♜g4 aims to exploit the weak light squares.



However, our pawns ensure a good shelter:

18.b3 ♖d7 19.♗b2 ♔g7. Now we have a pleasant choice – either to eat the pawn with 20.♔xe2! ♜d8 21.♗d4 ♜e6 22.♔d1± or to hide behind it with 20.f4 ♜d8 21.♗d4.

12.♞d4

12.a3 exf3 13.♗d3 ♞g6 14.axb4 fxg2 15.♞g1 is insufficient owing to the manoeuvre 15...♞e5! 16.♞f3 ♞g5 17.♞xg2 ♞e5 18.♞xg5+ fxg5 19.♞e4 ♞xd3+ 20.♞xd3 ♞d6. The forced elimination has led to a balanced position.

12...♞xd5

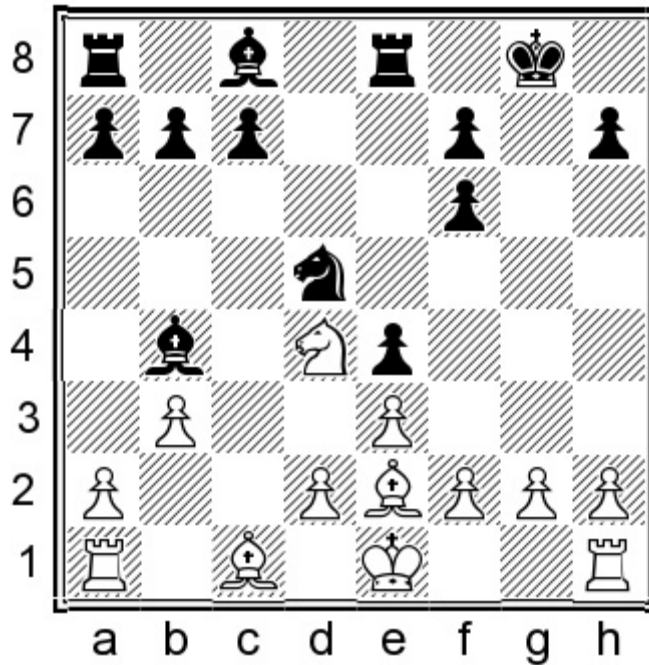
It would be over-optimistic to keep the queens with 12...♞xd5?! 13.♞f5.

13.♞xd5

I chose for the main line the only game in my database, Votter-Hinz, ICCF 2013.

13.b3 ♞xh5 14.♗xh5 does not change the character of play.

13...♞xd5 14.b3



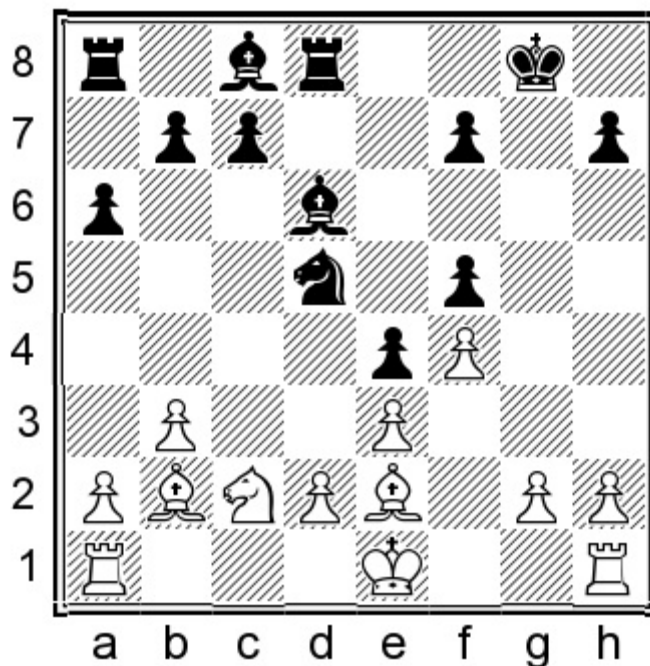
We have entered a queenless middlegame with somewhat better prospects for White. Here are the reasons for such an assessment:

- We do not have weaknesses.
- Black has 3 pawn islands, which could be attacked easier in a deep rook endgame.
- The f6- and e4-pawns are vulnerable so Black will probably play ...f5. Then we could devise a clear offensive plan, based on f4 and g4.
- A backup plan is to castle long and open the d-file with d3.

If Black wants to anticipate pressure on the c-file, he could now move 14...c5 15.♘c2 ♕e6 16.♕b2 ♕a5 17.0-0-0 f5, but that would not solve the problem of his central pawns. According to Nimzowitsch, we could attack the forepost – 18.f3, or the base of the chain – 18.♖hg1! ♔f8 19.g4↑.

14...f5 15.♕b2

White's task is easier and the stem game proves it. Even a correspondence player could not find a clear solution: 15...a6 16.♘c2 (16.g4 may be slightly premature owing to 16...f4) 16...♕d6 17.f4 ♖d8



18.0-0-0 ♔c5 19.♖hg1 ♜d6 20.g4 fxg4 21.h3! ♜h6 (21...g3 22.♔h5!) 22.hxg4, and White went on to convert his initiative.

A2. 7.♘g5

This is a good way to impose sharp play on the opponent – at your own risk, of course!

7.♘xb4 ♘xb4 8.♚b3 c5 9.a3 ♘c6 offers Black good control of the centre.

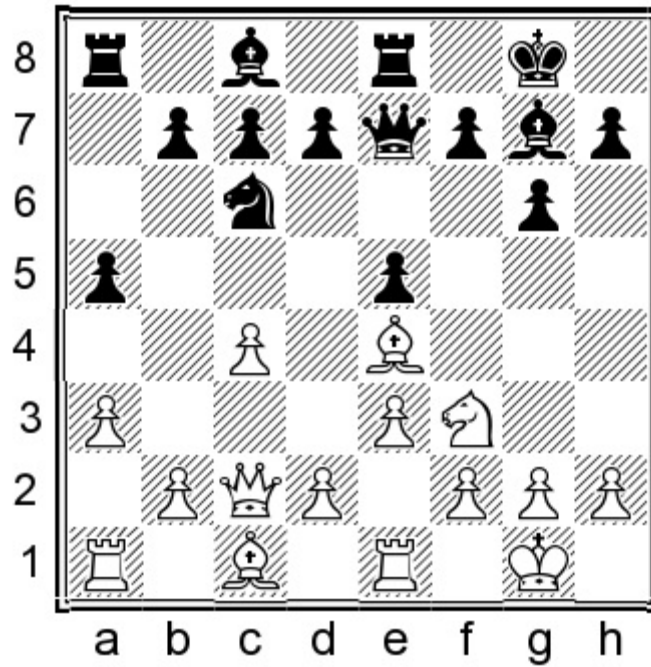
7.a3 only pushes the bishop back home, where he belongs anyway – 7...♔f8 8.♘g5 g6 9.h4 ♔g7∞.

7.♔d3 looks tempting, but White's initiative evaporates rather quickly. Then the lack of space and communication between White's pieces could rebound on him. The problem is that his play is not intuitive. It should be concrete and ingenious:

7...g6

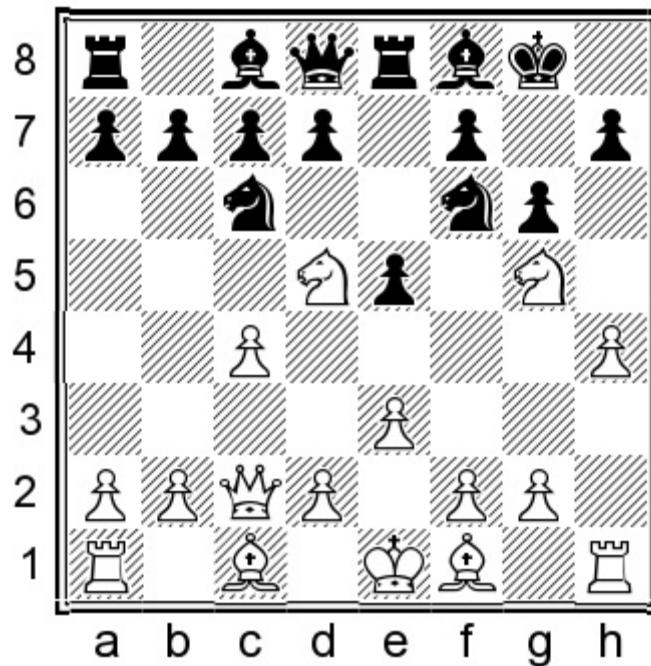
The cautious 7...h6 is seemingly coming into fashion – 8.0-0 (8.♘xf6+ ♚xf6 9.♔e4 d6∞) 8...d6 9.♘xf6+ ♚xf6 10.♔e4 a5 11.b3 g6∞. Nepomniachtchi-Karjakin, chess.com blitz 2017. Sooner or later Black will resort to ...g6 so it is more challenging to play it now.

8.a3 ♔f8 9.0-0 a5 10.♘xf6+ ♚xf6 11.♔e4 ♚e7 12.♖e1 ♔g7



It transpires that White got nothing from the opening.

7...g6 8.h4 ♔f8



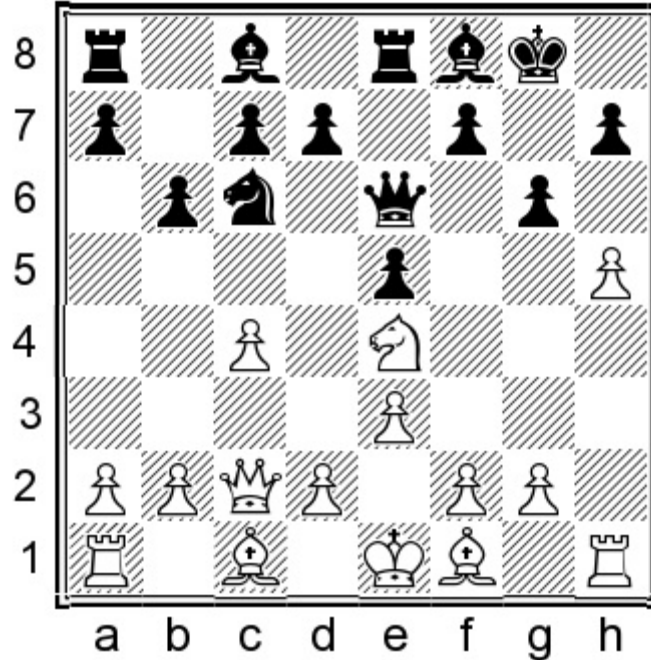
9.♔e2

A multipurpose move. We develop a piece and cover the X-ray on the e-file. After 9.a3 ♔g7 10.b4 d6 11.♔b2 Black is better developed, and he could take over the initiative with 11...♖xd5 12.cxd5 ♖e7 13.♔c4 h6 14.♖e4 c6 or 11...h6 12.♖xf6+ ♔xf6 13.♖e4 ♔e7 14.h5 f5.

Another option is:

9. ♖xf6+ ♔xf6 10. ♘e4 ♔e6

Black is planning ...b6. An alternative is 10... ♔e7 11.h5 ♘b4 12. ♔b3 a5 13.hxg6 hxg6 14. ♘c3∞. 11.h5 b6!?



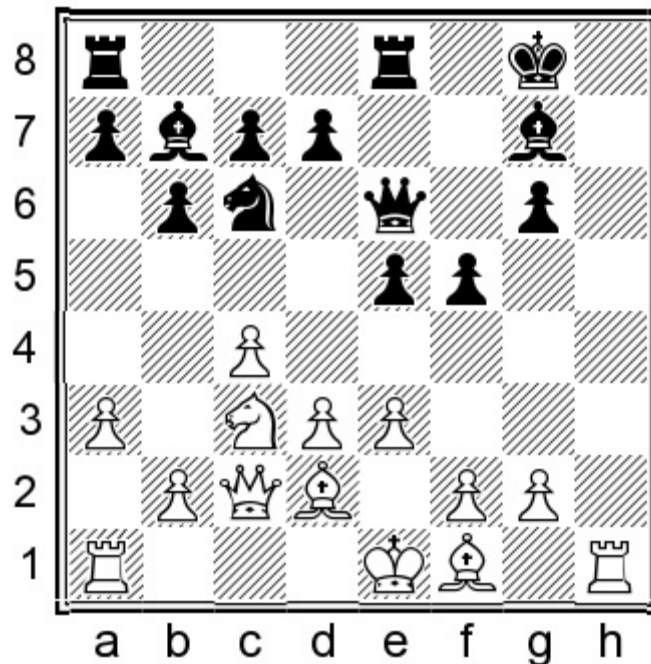
12.hxg6

White's attack yields only a draw after 12.d3 ♘b4 13. ♔b3 ♘b7 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.a3 ♘a6 16. ♘g5 ♔d6 17. ♖h8+ ♔g7 18. ♖h7+=.

12...hxg6 13.a3 ♘b7 14.d3 ♘g7 15. ♘d2

The game Sodomski-Gorzkiwicz, ICCF 2016, saw 15.f3 f5 16. ♘c3, but Black seized the h-file after 16... ♔f7 17. ♘d2 ♖h8 18. ♖xh8 ♖xh8 19.0-0-0 d6=.

15...f5 16. ♘c3



16... ♘d4!

White retains the initiative after 16...♖e7 17.0-0-0 c5 18.♖b1 d5 (18...d6 19.♙g1 ♗f7 20.g4→) 19.e4.

17.♗d1 e4 18.exd4 exd3+ 19.♙e3 f4 20.♗xd3 fxe3 21.f3 ♖ad8 22.0-0-0 d5 23.♗c2 dxc4 24.d5 ♗f5 25.♙xc4 ♗xc2+ 26.♙xc2=.

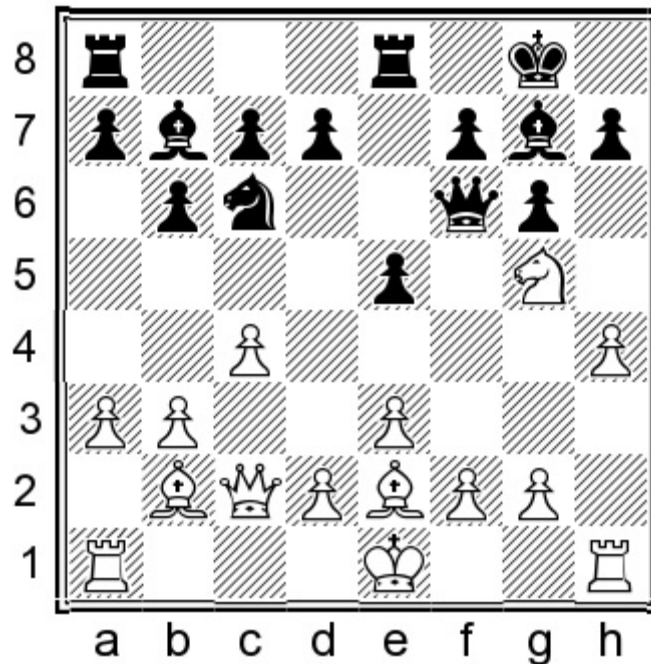
9...d6

This move cancels the threat of ...♖b4, and gives White chances of completing development comfortably. My analysis suggests that Black could also fianchetto the bishop:

9...b6!? while the f8-bishop is keeping an eye on b4.

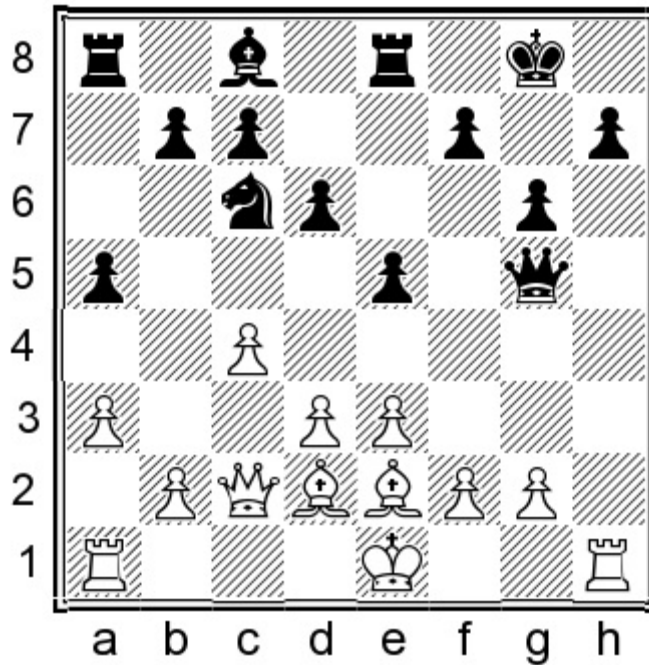
That would allow him to meet 10.d3 by 10...♖b4 11.♖xb4 ♙xb4+ 12.♙d2 ♙xd2+ 13.♗xd2 d5 with counterplay. Therefore:

10.a3 ♙b7 (10...♖xd5?! 11.cxd5 ♖e7 12.h5→) 11.♖xf6+ ♗xf6 12.b3 ♙g7 13.♙b2∞. White has some initiative thanks to the threat of h4-h5, but Black controls the centre.



A possible continuation is 13...♗e7 14.f3 ♖d8 15.♖e4 ♖e6 16.h5.

9...♙g7 10.d3 d6 has occurred in two games. Black is already threatening to take on d5 so I propose: 11.♖xf6+!? ♙xf6 12.♙d2 a5 13.a3 ♙xg5 14.hxg5 ♗xg5



15. ♖h2

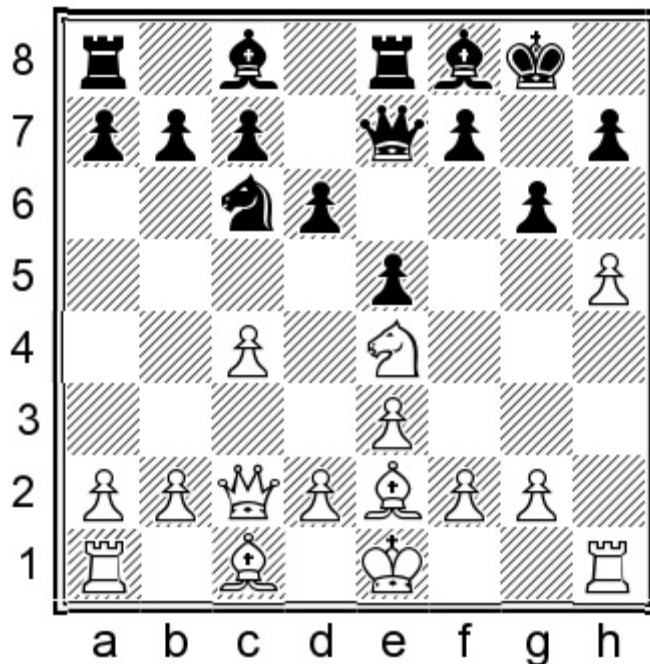
After 15.0-0-0 ♕xg2 16.♞df1 ♔e6 White has always a draw by chasing the queen with ♖hg1-♖h1, but hardly anything more.

15...♔g7 16.0-0-0 h5 17.♞dh1 ♖h8 18.f3 ♔d7 19.♞d1 a4 20.♔b1 ♞f6 21.f4 with plenty of compensation for the pawn owing to the bishop pair and the safer king.

10. ♘xf6+ ♞xf6 11. ♘e4

Grigoryan and J.Rapport played 11.g4, which strikes me as completely useless unless White is planning g4-g5. I think that it is more natural to open the h-file, but before all to develop the dark-squared bishop.

11...♞e7 12.h5∞



This complex position is yet to be tested in practice. Play might continue **12...f5 13.♘c3 ♕g7 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.♗d5 ♖f7**.

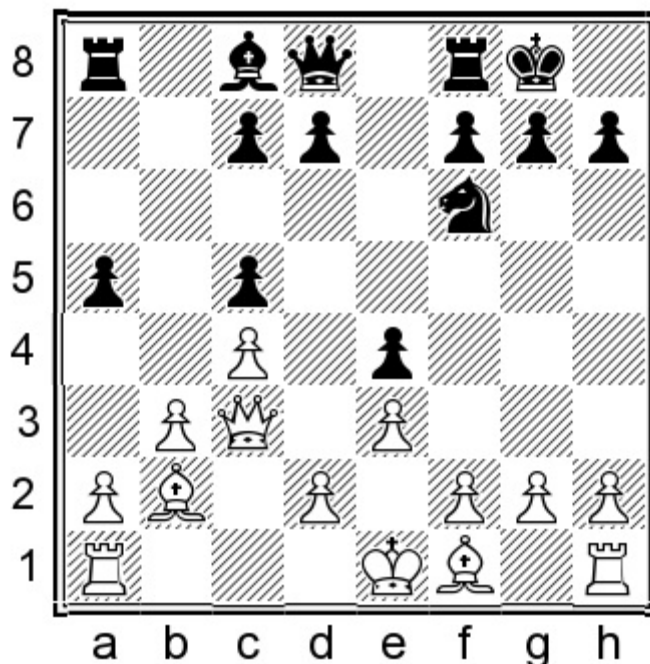
B. 5...♗xc3 6.♖xc3

6.bxc3!? leads to completely different structures. I discuss it in the next chapter.

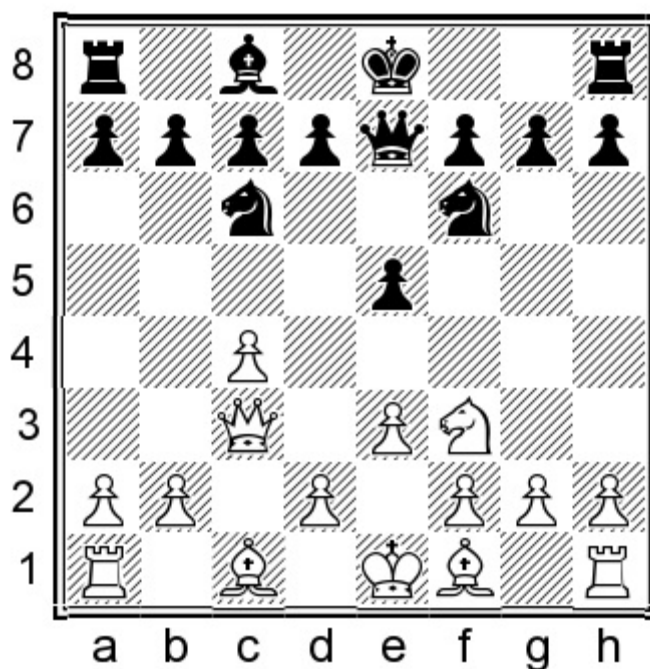
6...♖e7

6...e4 7.♗d4 ♗e5 should be immediately attacked with 8.f4 exf3 9.♗xf3, achieving one of the main strategic goals in the English – to open the f-file.

7...0-0 is not any better owing to 8.♗xc6 bxc6 9.b3 a5 10.♗b2 c5



Van Wely-Gelfand, blindfold, Monte Carlo 2000, saw here 11.g4!?!→, but of course the trivial 11.♔e2, followed by f3 or d3 is also good.



Now the most popular move by far is 7.a3, but the modern trend is to avoid it. Our bishop pair advantage suggests that we should open the centre, and 7.d4! is the most straightforward way to do it. Other paths to that goal are 7.a3 d5 8.d4 and 7.b3 d5 8.d4. They are based on the understanding that Black's main strategic idea is to play ...d7-d5 followed by a trade of bishops with ...dxc4, ...♔e6. Obviously, White would like to delay ♔e2 in order to take on c4 in one step. However, a3 and b3 do not improve substantially our position. Let's delve deeper:

B1. 7.d4!; **B2.** 7.♔e2; **B3.** 7.a3; **B4.** 7.b3?!

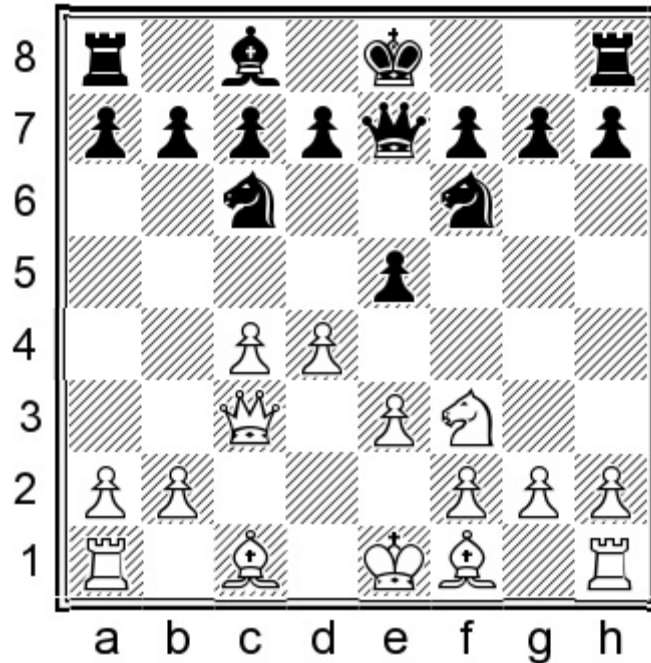
7.d3 d5 8.♙e2 0-0 9.0-0

9.cxd5?! ♞xd5 10.♚d2 ♜d8, threatening ♞db4xd3, is in Black's favour.

9...♞d8 10.♞d1 d4= keeps the position closed.

B1. 7.d4!

White is vulnerable to the check from b4, but do not be afraid! The resulting sharp unbalanced positions are in our favour.

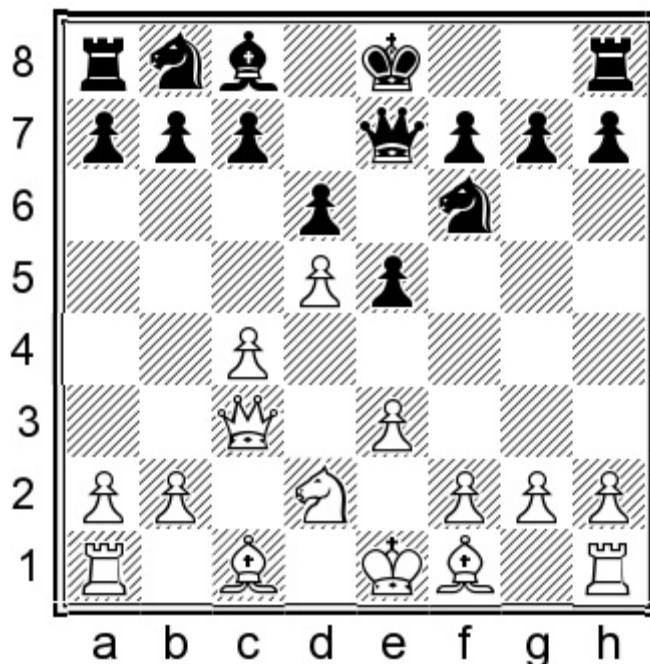


B11. 7...exd4; **B12.** 7...♞e4

When I met 7.d4 for the first time I decided to avoid sharper lines and played 7...d6!?. It may look passive, but Black's position is very solid. He strengthens the e5-square and quickly develops his pieces.

Since 8.b3 ♞e4 9.♚b2 0-0 is satisfactory for Black, the only principled way is:

8.d5 ♞b8 9.♞d2



In the above-mentioned game I chose 9...0-0!?, offering the opponent to show his hand. See **Game 7** Damljanovic-Kiril Georgiev, Cetinje 2013. A year later I chose against Nikolaidis: 9...♕f5. It looks logical to trade a pair of knights through e4 – Black is a little cramped after all. However, this idea gave my opponent a strong initiative on the kingside. The game went:

10.b3 ♖e4?! (better was 10...♖bd7 11.f3 e4 12.♕b2 0-0-0) 11.♗xe4 ♕xe4 12.f3 ♕g6 13.h4 h5 14.e4↑.

White should firstly develop the kingside:

10.♕e2

10.f3 may be a little premature in view of 10...e4 11.f4 (or 11.b3 ♖bd7 12.♕b2 0-0-0 13.♖g1 g5) 11...c6 12.h3 h5 13.b4 a5∞.

10...0-0

10...♖e4 11.♗xe4 ♕xe4 12.f3 ♕g6 13.h4!↑.

11.f3 e4 12.f4 ♕g4 13.♕xg4 ♖xg4 14.0-0 f5 15.♖b3 ♖d7 16.♕d2. White is the active side and he went on to win in Guðmundsson-Horwitz, ICCF 2014.

B11. 7...exd4 8.♗xd4 ♖xd4 9.♖xd4

White has accomplished his goal. He has opened the centre without allowing any concessions.

9...c5

It is important to see where White is going to retreat his queen before castling. 9...0-0?! 10.b3 c5 allows 11.♖f4 which would have been a draw stayed the black king in the centre (see below).

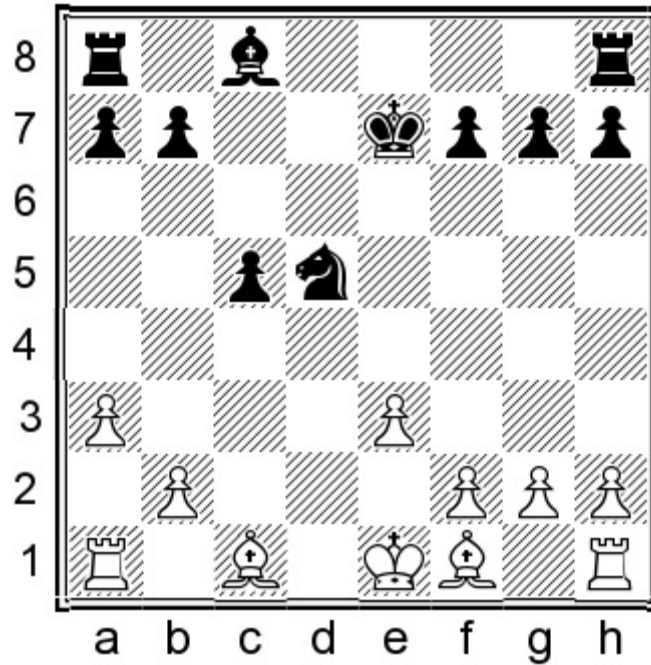
10.♖h4!

10. ♖f4 d5 11. ♗e2 is covered in line B2, while 11. b3 stumbles into 11...g5!! – see line B4, 8...exd4.

10...d5

10...b6 is dubious in view of 11. b3 ♖e5 12. ♜b1 ♚c3+ 13. ♗d2 ♖c2 (13... ♖e5 14. ♖g3) 14. ♜c1 ♖xa2 15. ♗c3 ♗b7 16. ♗d3! with an attack.

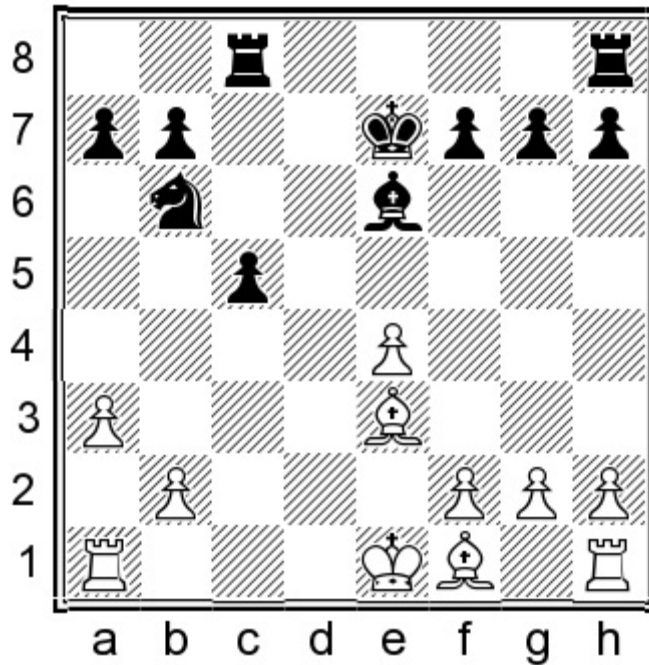
11. cxd5 ♘xd5 12. ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 13. a3!



This position has never been reached in OTB play, but it is a common tabyia in computer chess competitions. My database contains nearly 50 games only for the last five years, and White scores the significant 59%. I guess that human results would be crushing since protein players generally crack easier under pressure. The computers have also tested 13. ♗d2, which is overly passive and allows 13... ♗e6, ... ♜ac8.

The idea of 13. a3 is to meet:

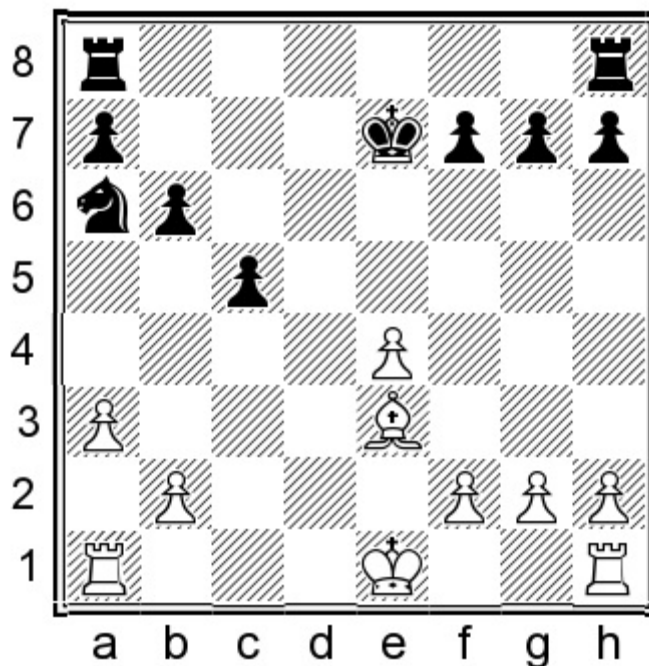
a) 13... ♗e6 by 14. e4 ♘b6 15. ♗e3 ♜ac8



16.♖c1 c4 17.♙d4 f6 18.♔d2 ♘a4 19.♔e3. White's pieces are more active. His further play should be based on g2-g4-g5.

b) 13...b6 is more popular. White can opt for the same set up:

14.e4
 14.b4 keeps some pressure, but reduces the material – 14...♙e6 15.bxc5 bxc5 16.e4 ♘c3 17.♙e3 c4 18.♙xc4 ♙xc4 19.♖c1 ♘xe4 20.♖xc4 ♘d6 21.♖c6 ♖hc8 22.♖a6.
 14...♘c7 15.♙e3 ♙a6 16.♙xa6 ♘xa6



We see a typical endgame where the bishop should be a little stronger than the knight because the pawn structure is not entirely symmetrical. Play might continue 17.♖c1 ♖ad8 18.♔e2 ♖d7 19.♖c4 ♘c7 20.b4 cxb4 21.♖hc1 ♘e6 22.♖xb4.

Only do not put your kingside pawns on dark squares as one computer program did (17.♔e2 ♖c7 18.h4?!=). Instead White should seek to widen the scope of his long-range pieces.

c) 13...f5 is the main continuation. It impedes the plan with e4 only for a while, and eventually White should make a passer, supported by his bishop pair. See Game 8 Black Mamba 2 – Chiron 3, CCRL 2016.

B12. 7...♗e4

This move has been more frequent in computer competitions lately.

8.♖d3

8.♖a3 was drawn in two correspondence games after both 8...♖xa3 9.bxa3 d6 and 8...♖b4+ 9.♖xb4 ♗xb4 10.♔e2.

8...exd4 9.♗xd4 0-0

9...♖b4+ faces White with a choice:

a) 10.♕d2! ♗xd2 11.♖xd2 is the safer alternative:

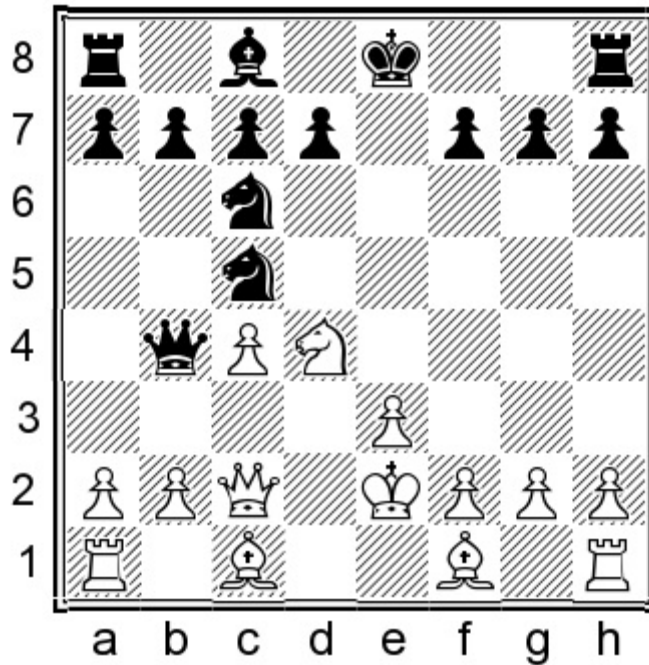
11...♗xd4

Or 11...♖xd2+ 12.♔xd2 d6 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.b4 a5 15.b5 ♕b7 16.f3.

12.exd4 ♖xd2+ 13.♔xd2. White enjoys some pull in the endgame – see **Game 4** Damljanovic-Perunovic, Vrnjacka Banja 2013.

b) 10.♔e2?! The king feels no better here than on f1 as in the main line.

10...♗c5 11.♖c2



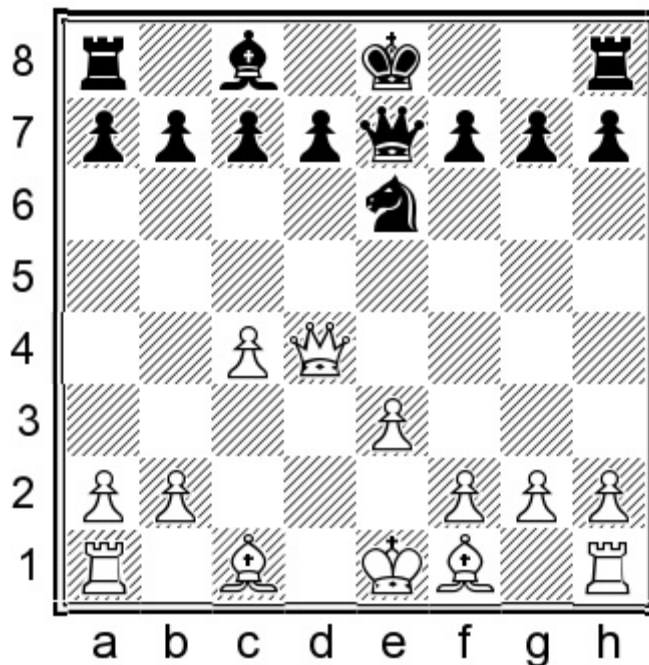
Cummings evaluates the position after 11...♞e5 12.b3 ♚b6 13.♙a3 as unclear, but White has a convincing way to complete development with f3: 13...0-0 14.f3 d6 15.♚f2 or 13...a5 14.f3. Then his bishop pair edge should begin to tell.

11...0-0 12.♞xc6 bxc6 13.♙d2 ♚b6 14.f3 is also fine for White. Black should seek direct counterplay:

11...d5! 12.cxd5 ♞xd4+ 13.exd4 ♞d7 14.f3 ♚xd4+ 15.♙e3 ♚h4+! 16.g3 ♚h5 17.h4 ♞f6. The position is rich and White may be currently in control, but one mistake could ruin the fragile shelter of his king.

9...♞xd4 10.♚xd4 0-0 11.♙d3 f5 12.0-0±.

Perhaps Black's most solid defence is 9...♞c5 10.♚d1 ♞xd4 11.♚xd4 ♞e6!



This seemingly passive set up in fact hides a lot of venom. The point is that the logical 12.♚d2 b6! 13.♙e2 ♘b7 14.0-0 h5!? is risky for White since the opponent could leave his king in the centre or even castle long.

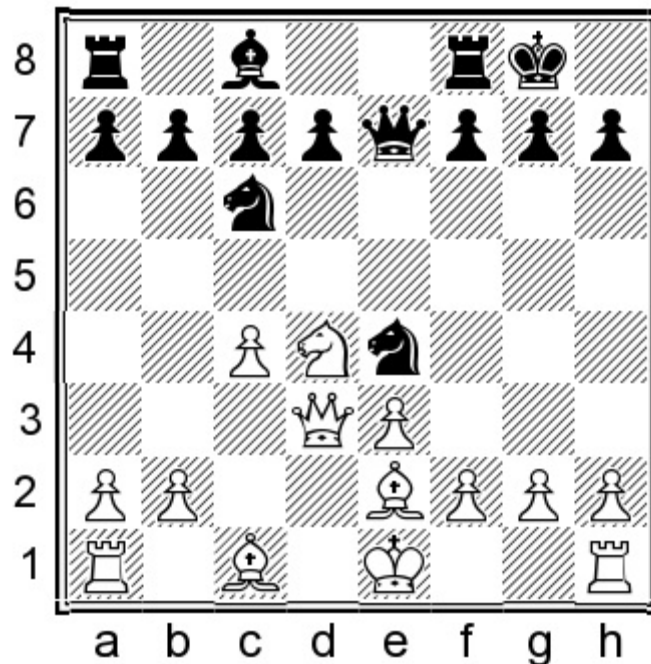
12.♚e5 b6 13.♙d3 ♘b7 14.0-0 0-0-0 is also unclear.

12.♚d1 b6 13.♙e2 ♘b7 14.0-0 is playable, but not impressive. The only way to hinder ...b6 is: 12.♚d5! 0-0 13.♙e2 a5, Kögler-Williamson, ICCF 2017.

Now instead of 14.0-0, which could be met by the drawish 14...♘f4 15.exf4 ♚xe2 16.♙d2 ♚e6, if not by something more challenging, White should answer:

14.♙d2! ♘c5 15.♙c3, and play in the centre.

10.♙e2



10...♚b4+

Although the diagram position has been a frequent guest in correspondence chess, no one has played:

10...♘xd4 11.♚xd4 ♚b4+.

Then 12.♙d2 ♘xd2 13.♚xd2 a5 has no venom, so White should probably answer:

12.♘f1 ♚e7 13.f3 ♘c5 14.b3 a5 15.♙b2 f5

15...f6 encourages the manoeuvre 16.♙d1!? b6 17.♙c2.

16.♚e1 d6 17.♙d1, followed by h2-h4-h5.

11.♘f1 ♚e7

All 16 correspondence games in my database feature this move, but OTB players often err with the mundane 11...♚e8, underestimating the threat of 12.♘b5. It does not win a pawn owing to 12...♘c5 13.♚c2 ♘e6, but the manoeuvre ♘b5 was on our agenda anyway, while I would not say the same about ...♘e4-c5-e6. We follow up with 14.b3±, ♙b2, ♘c3, g3, saving the weakening move f3.

Besides, 11...♖e8 12.f3 ♘c5 13.♚d2 is also in White's favour.

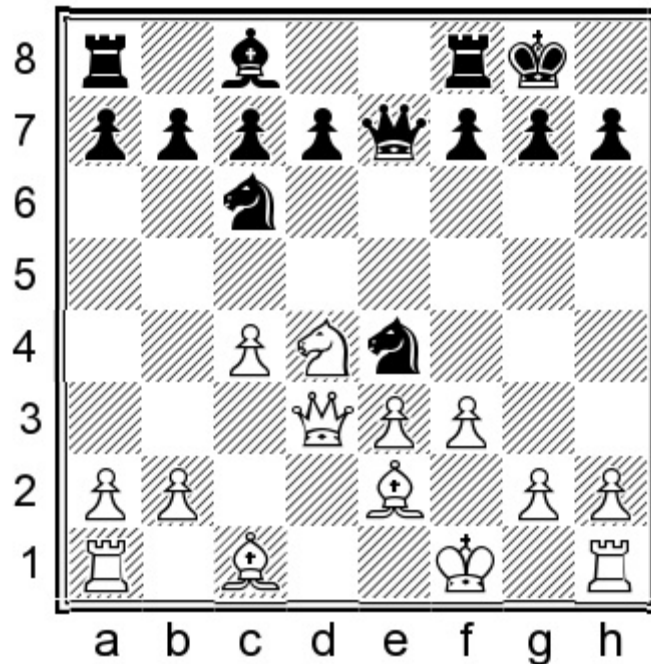
12.f3

12.♘f5 ♚e6 13.♘d4 repeats moves.

12.♙f3 ♘f6

Or 12...♘c5!? 13.♚c2 a5=.

13.♘xc6 dxc6 14.h3. The game Truupold-Van Kempen, ICCF 1997, finished in a draw, but Black's play is easier in my opinion.



12...f5

12...♘c5 is actually more popular. White's queen has several retreat squares, but only one of them promises an initiative:

13.♚d2!

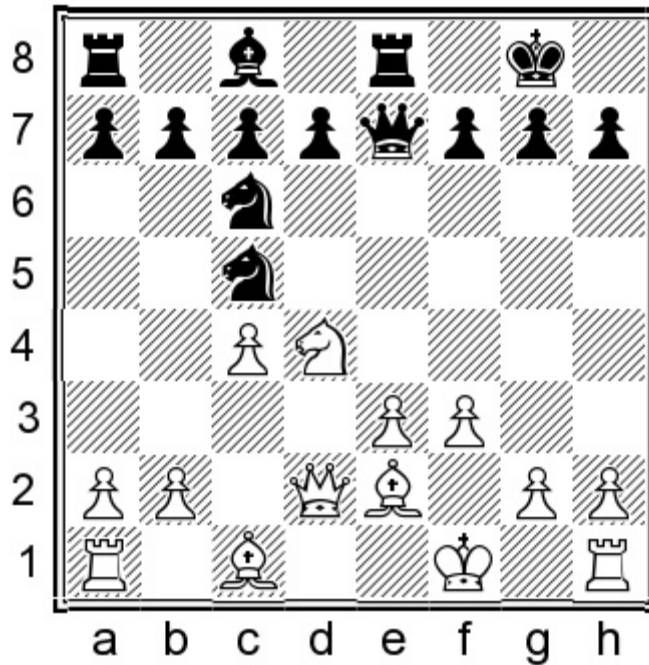
Staying in contact with the weak pawn on e3 and protecting the e2-bishop. The point is that after 13.♚c3 ♘xd4! 14.exd4 (14.♚xd4 ♖b6 15.h4 ♙b7∞ Black has the *zwischenzug* 14...♖e8!).

13...♖e8

13...♘xd4 14.exd4 ♘e6 15.d5 ♘c5 16.♚e3±.

13...a5 14.b3 ♘e5 occurred in a correspondence game. It plays in our hand since we do not have to worry about the option of ...♘xd4. Although the manoeuvre 15.♘b5 is still possible, even better might be 15.♙f2 d6 16.♖f1 f5 17.♙g1±.

After 13...d6, 14.b3! ♖e8 15.♘b5, as in the main line, remains topical. Also principled are 14.b4 ♘xd4 15.♚xd4 ♘a4 16.♙d2 and 14.♙f2, when 14...♚f6 could be met by 15.♚d1.



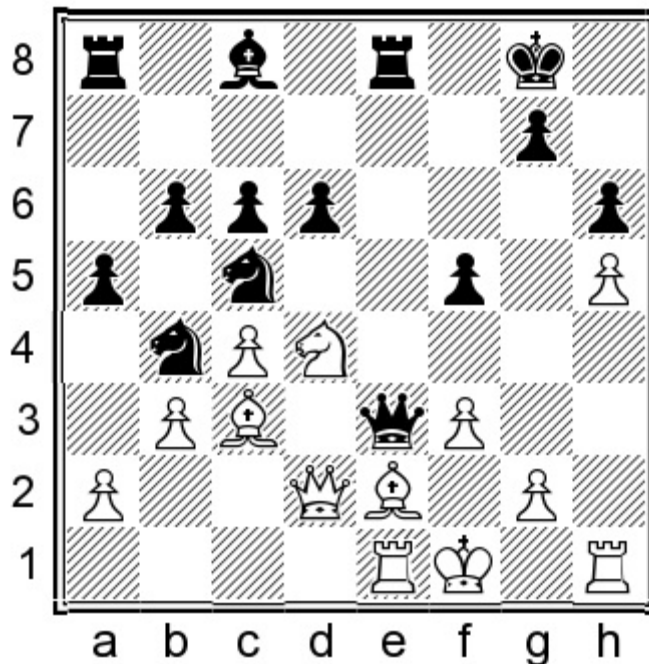
14. ♖b5!

Cummings cursorily mentions 14.b3 d6 15. ♘xc6 bxc6 16. ♔c3. In my view, we should never take on c6. The resulting pawn structure after ...c5 is very stable for Black. On the contrary, we have a pawn majority in the centre so **we should strive to keep more minor pieces** on the board. I think that I found a convincing regrouping of the white pieces:

14...d6 15.b3 a5 16. ♙b2 ♘b4 17.h4! f5 18. ♙c3 b6 19.h5 h6 20. ♖e1!

I have analysed extensively this position and discovered that it is rather unpleasant for Black. He cannot ignore the sacrificed pawn on e3 since 20...♙e6 21.a3 ♘c6 22.b4 ♘a4 23. ♙a1 leaves his knight isolated at a4, e.g. 23...♙f7 24. ♘d4 ♘xd4 25. ♔xd4 ♙e6 26. ♔d2 b5 27.cxb5 axb4 28.axb4 ♘b6 29. ♔d4 ♖a2 30.f4.

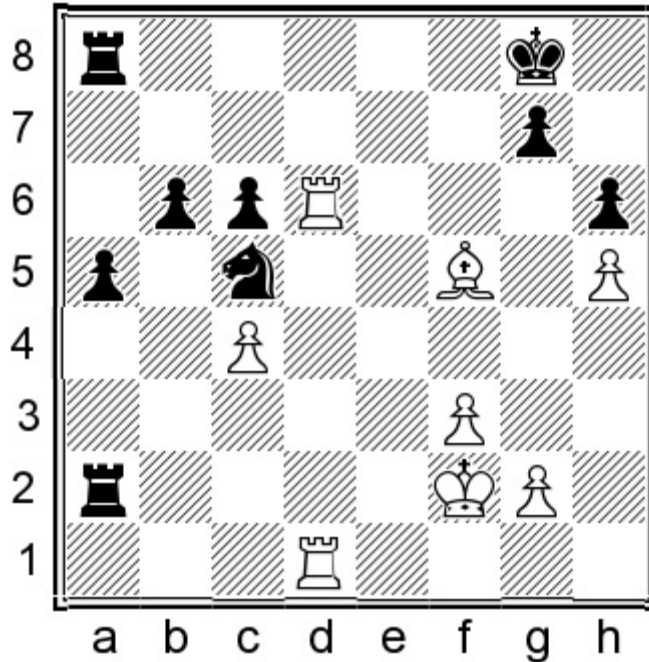
20...c6 21. ♘d4 ♔xe3



22.♖d1!!

22.♙xb4 axb4 23.♚xe3 ♜xe3 24.♘c2 ♝c3 25.♘xb4 ♔f7 26.♞h4 ♘e6 was only equal. The text underlines the vulnerability of the enemy queenside. Several pawns are hanging, a3 and b4 will push back the black knights. We'll see later that the h5-pawn also plays an important role, wrapping up a mating net around Black's king:

22...♙d7 23.a3 ♚xd2 24.♞xd2 ♘bd3 25.♙xd3 ♝e3 26.♘xf5 ♙xf5 27.♙xf5 ♝xc3 28.♔f2 ♞xb3 29.♞xd6 ♞xa3 30.♞hd1! ♞a2+



31.♔f1!

It is essential to deny the defence ...♞a2-e2-e8.

31...♔f8 32.♞xc6±. Black is unable to defend his last ranks. An illustrative line is:

32...a4 33.♙g6 a3 34.♞c7 ♘e6

34...♞b2 35.♞f7+ ♔g8 36.♞a7+-

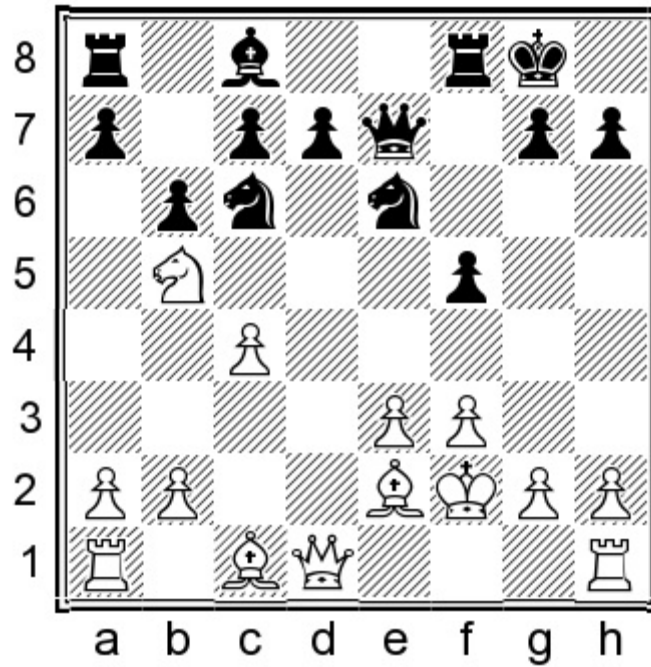
35.♞f7+ ♔g8 36.♞e7 ♘f4 37.♞a7 ♝c8 38.♞dd7 ♔h8 39.g3 ♞a1+ 40.♔f2 ♞a2+ 41.♔e3 ♘xg6 42.hxg6 ♞g2 43.♞dc7 ♞g8 44.♞xa3 ♞xg3 45.♞c6.

13.♚d1!

Practical experience has seen White on the defensive after 13.g3 d6 14.♘xc6 bxc6 15.♔g2 ♘c5 16.♚c3 a5!, although he drew all 3 correspondence games of 2017 which I found.

A better alternative is 13.♔g1!?, refraining from new weaknesses on the kingside. For instance: 13...d6 14.♘xc6 bxc6 15.b4.

13...♘c5 14.♔f2 b6 15.♘b5 ♘e6

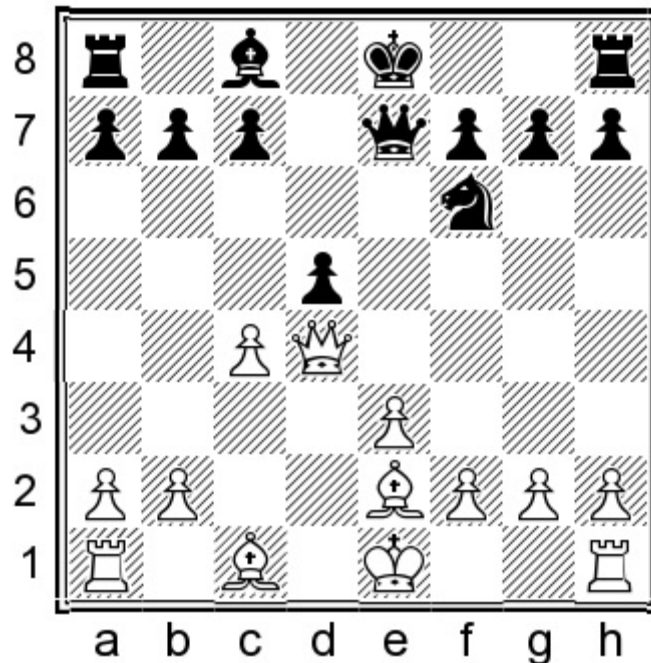


White's pieces stand better. The game Säuberli-Hyldkrog, ICCF 2017 went 16.♖c3 ♜h4+ 17.g3 ♜h3 18.f4 ♜b7 19.♜f3 a5 20.♜d5±.

B2. 7.♜e2 d5 8.d4 exd4

Or 8...♜e4 9.♜b3 dxc4 10.♜xc4±.

9.♜xd4 ♜xd4 10.♜xd4



10...c5

10...0-0 (intending to meet 11.cxd5 by 11...♖d8 12.♗h4 ♗xd5), could be challenged by 11.c5!?

11.0-0 c5 12.♗h4 dxc4 13.♗xc4 transposes to the main line.

11...b6 12.b4 bxc5 13.bxc5 ♖e6 14.0-0 ♗a6 15.♗xa6 ♗xa6 16.♗b2 ♗ab8 17.♗d2 with the small edge, inherent to the opposition of ♗ vs ♘. Look at the fantastic technical masterpiece, **Game 9** Stockfish 6-Komodo 9.3, CCRL 2015.

11.♗f4

In his second game in this line against Tari at FIDE World Cup in Tbilisi 2017, Howell preferred the move order 11.♗h4 dxc4 12.♗xc4.

Their first game saw 12.♗xc4 ♗e6 13.♗e2 ♘d5 14.♗e4 (14.♗b5+ ♗d7=) 14...0-0 15.0-0 ♗f6 16.a3 ♗ac8 17.♗d1 ♗fd8 18.♗c2 c4 19.♗d2 ♗f5 20.e4 ♗e5?! 21.f3±, but Black could improve with 21...♗e8∞ or at earlier stages.

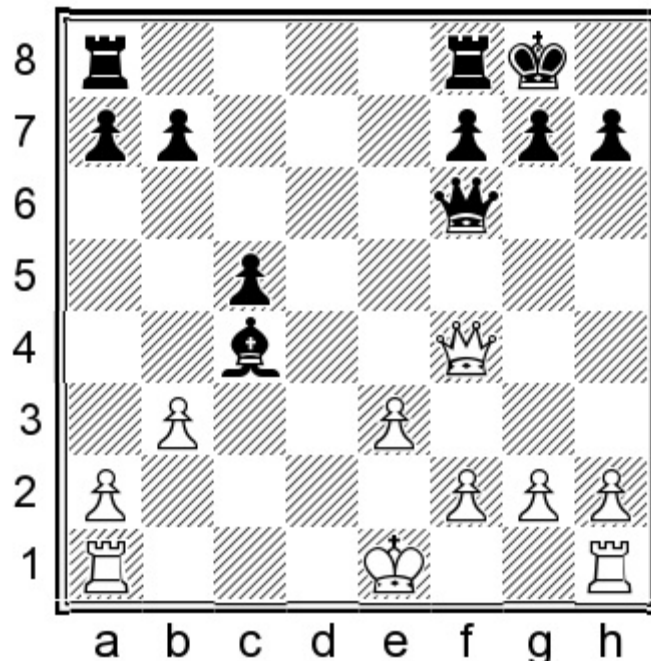
11...dxc4

11...♗e6 12.cxd5 ♘xd5 13.♗b5+ ♗d7 14.♗xd7+ ♗xd7 15.♗e5+ ♗e6 16.♗xe6+ is slightly better for White since he could repel the knight from d5 with e4.

12.♗xc4

After 12.♗xc4 the game Cobb-Brynell, Izmir 2004, lasted only 4 moves:
12...0-0

12...♗e6 13.♗e2! 0-0 14.e4 ♗ad8 15.0-0 offers White more chances.
13.b3 ♗e6 14.♗b2 ♗xc4 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 and a draw was signed.



Black's pawns are ugly after 16.♗xf6 gxf6, but they effectively deprive White of any constructive plan.

12...0-0 13.0-0

Black should gradually equalise. The most straightforward plan is to trade light-squared bishops with ...b6, ...a5, ...♗a6, for instance:

13...♖d8 14.♗c2 (14.b3 ♘e4) 14...b6 15.b3 a5 16.♗b2 ♗a6. A sharper option is to preserve the bishops – 13...b6 14.♖d1 a5 15.♗b3 ♗c7 16.f3 ♗e6∞, Howell-Tari, Tbilisi 2017.

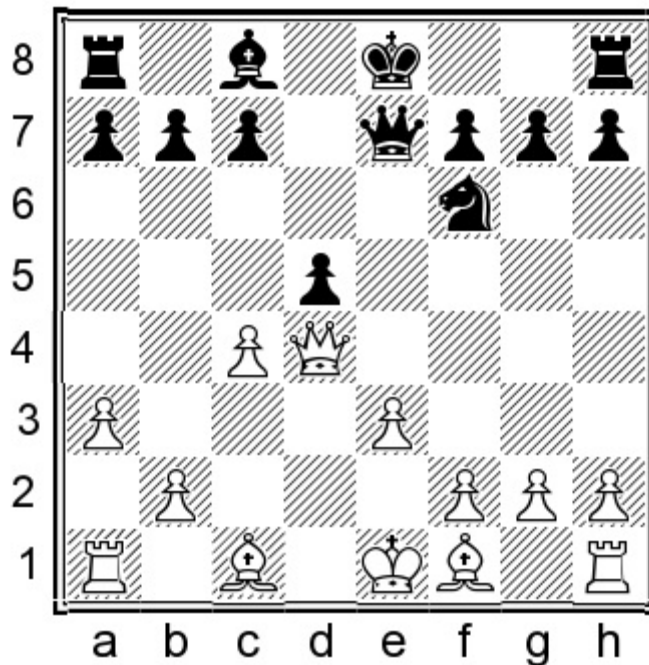
B3. 7.a3

The idea of this move is to prevent the check from b4 after ...♘e4. Its flip-side is the weakness of the b3-square. We'll observe it in our main line.

7...d5 8.d4

The popular move 8.cxd5 is very passive. Delchev/Semkov have shown that Black could successfully play for an initiative by castling long. For instance: 8...♘xd5 9.♗b3 ♘b6 10.d3 ♗f5 (or 10...♗g4) 11.♗e2 0-0-0!.

8...exd4 9.♘xd4 ♘xd4 10.♗xd4



10...c5

Black has two playable alternatives:

10...dxc4 11.♗xc4 0-0 12.0-0 ♖d8!

12...♗e6?! is less precise owing to 13.♗e2! ♖fd8 14.♗e5!.

13.♗f4 ♗e6 14.♗e2 ♗b3. Black should hold this although computers lost two out of five games.

10...0-0 11.♔d3

11.♔d2 ♖d8 (or 11...c5 12.♙h4 dxc4=) 12.♔b4 ♗e8 13.c5 ♘e4! =.

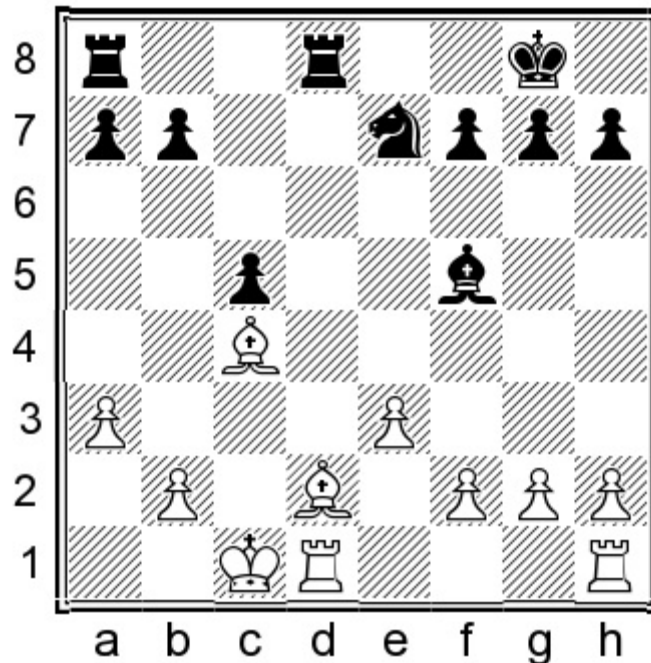
11...dxc4 12.♙xc4 ♔e6 brought Black a mere half point out of four computer games. However, Black should hold after 13.♙c2 ♖fd8 14.0-0 ♗d7 15.♔e2 ♔f5 16.♙b3 ♘e4 17.f3 ♘d2 18.♔xd2 ♔e6 19.♙xb7 ♙xd2 20.♘f2 ♖ab8 21.♙xa7 ♖b2 22.♖fe1 g6 =.

11.♙h4 ♔e6

Pinpointing the Achilles heel on b3.

11...0-0 12.cxd5 ♘xd5 is an inferior option.

12...♖d8 does not change much – 13.♔d2 (or 13.♔c4 first) 13...♘xd5 14.♙xe7 ♘xe7 15.♔c4 ♔f5 (15...b6 only weakens the light squares on the queenside – 16.♘e2 ♘f5 17.♖hd1 ♘d6 18.♔d5 ♔a6+ 19.♘e1± ♖ac8 20.♖ac1 ♔b7 21.♔c3 ♘f8 22.♔xb7 ♘xb7 23.g4.) 16.0-0-0

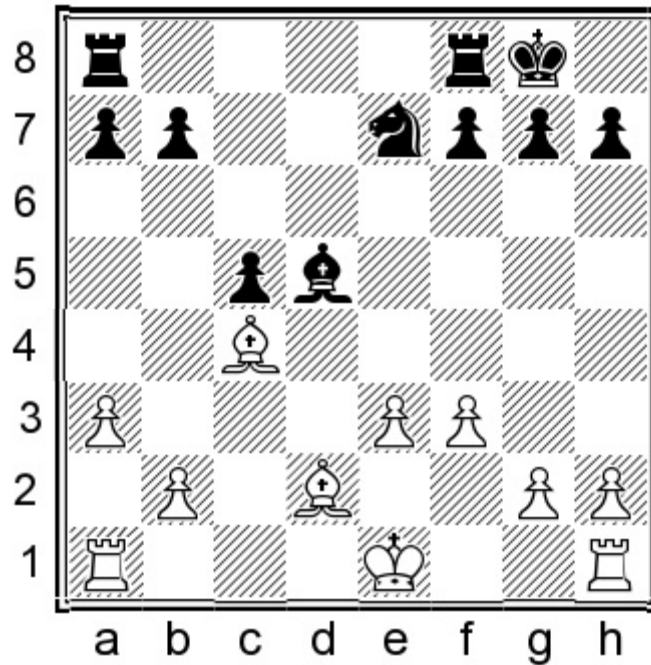


In Murashko-Bairachny, Simferopol 1991, Black correctly judged that he should trade bishops, but his move 16...♔d3?? could have cost him material after 17.♔a5!. The best way to do it was 16...♔e6 17.♔xe6 fxe6 18.e4 with a typical position which is slightly better for White.

13.♙xe7 ♘xe7 14.♔c4

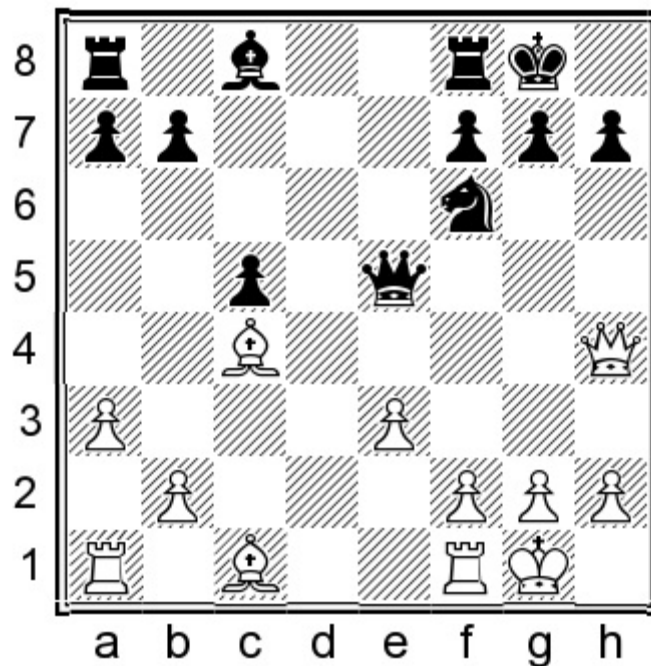
It is important to deny ...♔e6. Black could still play it, but let him make some concessions. Split pawns are easier to attack.

14...♔d7 (14...♖d8 transposes to 12...♖d8) 15.♔d2 ♔c6 16.f3 ♔d5



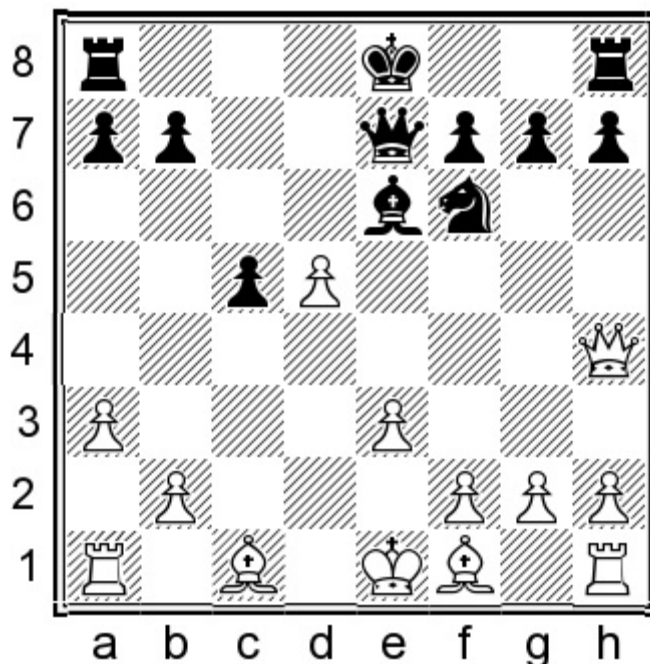
Conventional chess wisdom suggests here to keep the bishop pair with 17.♘e2!?, but 17.♖c1 ♘xc4 18.♗xc4 cannot be bad either. All White's pieces are better than their black counterparts.

11...dxc4!? 12.♘xc4 0-0 (12...♙e6 13.♘d3) 13.0-0 ♔e5! is a decent alternative to the main line.
 13...♙e6 14.♘d3 h6 15.♘c2, preparing e4, leaves White more chances to mount an attack



14.f3 ♙e6 15.♘xe6 ♗xe6 16.e4. White looks slightly better, but the position has simplified and the black queen cooperates well with the knight.

12.cxd5



12...♙xd5!

12...♜xd5 13.♚xe7+ ♜xe7 14.♙b5+ ♙d7 15.♙e2 f6 16.e4 occurred in the instructive **Game 6** Ivanchuk-Karjakin, Wijk aan Zee 2006. It is a model for White's play in this pawn structure. Be sure to look at it.

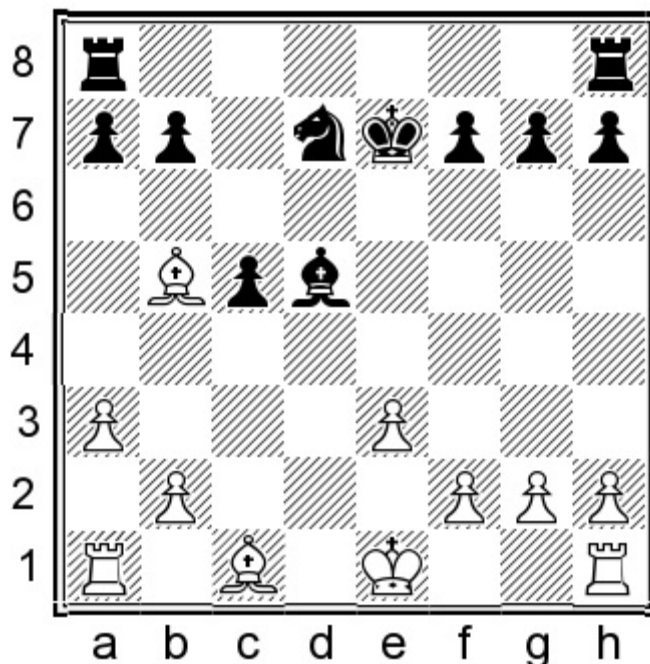
13.♙b5+

Onischuk played twice 13.f3 0-0 14.♙e2, but 14...♙b3!? 15.0-0 (15.e4 ♜fd8) 15...♜fd8 16.e4 c4 imposes full Black control on the d-file. I saw six computer and correspondence games where White was helpless to generate any threat. Here is the latest example: 17.♙e3 ♚e5 18.♜fb1 b6 19.a4 h6 20.♚g3 ♜d7 21.♙d1 ♚f6 22.♙xb3 cxb3 23.♜a3 ♚e6 24.a5 b5 25.♙d4 ♜f6 ½-½, Tazelaar-Despontin, ICCF 2017.

13...♜d7 14.♚xe7+

It would be risky to keep the queens with 14.♚g3 0-0 15.♙d2. Black obtains fair chances with 15...f5 16.0-0 ♜f6 or 15...♜e5 16.0-0 ♜ad8.

14...♜xe7



15.e4!?

This is the only way to face the opponent with some difficult decisions. Otherwise Black has nice play on the light squares, e.g. 15.0-0 ♘e5 16.♙d2 ♖hd8=.

15...♙xe4

15...♙b3 is also possible, but 16.♙e2 allows White to avoid opposite-coloured bishops and play on.

16.♙g5+ ♘f6 17.0-0-0 ♙xg2!

Black might chicken out – 17...h6 18.♙h4 ♔f8 19.f3 or 17...♙f5?! 18.♖he1+ ♔f8 19.♙c4, with a nice initiative in all events.

18.♖he1+ ♔f8 19.♙xf6 gxf6 20.♖d7

Now the game should be drawn. For example: 20...♖g8 21.♙c4 ♖g7 22.♖ee7 b5 23.♖xf7+ ♖xf7 24.♖xf7+ ♔g8 25.♙e6 ♖e8 26.♖e7+ ♔f8 27.♖f7+ ♔g8.

B4. 7.b3?!

You might be lured into this line by White's fantastic 80% score. I'd like to warn you right away to avoid it! Black has at least a forced draw in it. To make things worse, he could play for a win in different ways! The background cause of White's problems is the weakness of its main diagonal.

7...d5!

Slow play is in White's favour – 7...0-0 8.♙b2 ♖e8 9.a3 a5 10.h3 b6 11.♙e2 ♙b7 12.0-0 d5 13.cxd5 ♜xd5 14.♚c2 – see **Game 11** Caruana-Karjakin, Stavanger 2018.

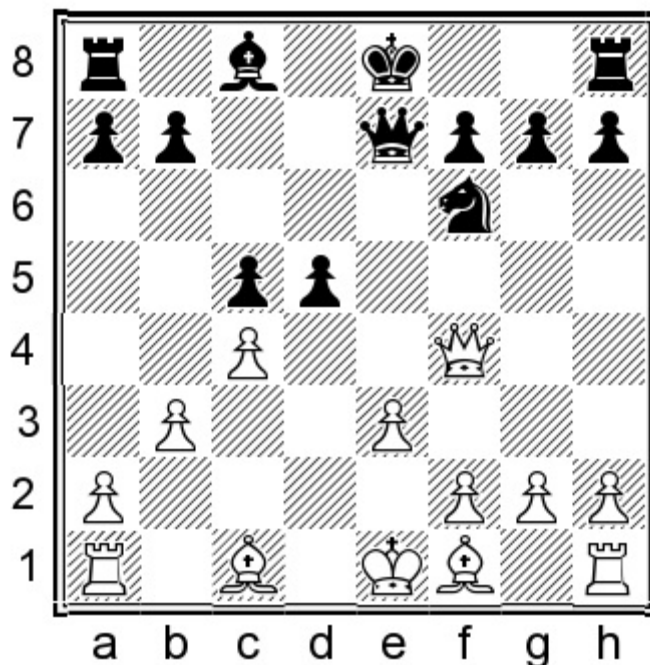
8.d4

8.cxd5?! ♜xd5 9.♚c2 is out of question owing to 9...e4! 10.♞g1 ♜cb4 11.♚b1 ♙f5 with a huge lead in development.

8.♙b2?!. I faced this move in Rezan-Kir.Georgiev, Bol 2015, and decided to play for an attack: 8...d4 9.♚c1 ♙g4 10.♙e2 0-0-0!, followed up by ...h5. For instance: 11.0-0 h5! 12.♖e1 (12.d3 e4 13.dxe4 d3 14.♙d1 ♜xe4) 12...d3 13.♙d1 ♜b8.

8...♞e4!?

8...exd4 should lead to an amazing draw – 9.♜xd4 ♜xd4 (9...♞e4? loses to 10.♜xc6) 10.♚xd4 c5 11.♚f4



It looks like White's idea triumphs. V.I.Gurevich could not find the best solution and lost a slightly worse ending after 11...♞h5?! 12.♚f3 ♚f6. Even computers had problems after 11...♙e6?! 12.♙b2 (Navara beat Kuzubov with 12.cxd5 ♜xd5 13.♙b5+.) 12...0-0-0 or 12...♖d8.

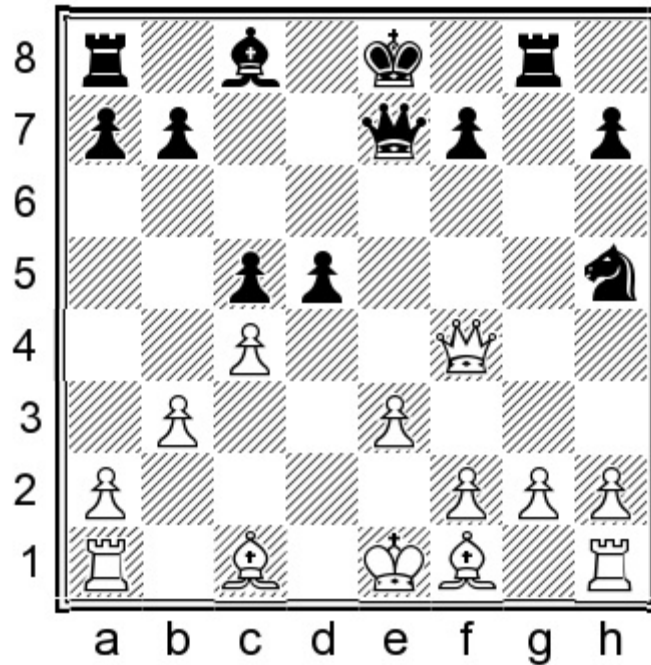
Vaibhav-Prithu, Biel 2018, saw 11...d4?!, when simplest is 12.♙e2 dxe3 13.♚xe3.

11...0-0 12.♙b2 d4 13.0-0-0 dxe3 14.♖e1 (14.♙d3!? exf2 15.♚xf2) 14...♚e4 15.♚xe3 ♙f5

16.♚xe4 ♜xe4 17.♙d3 ♖fe8 18.♙c2 f6 19.f3 was only marginally better in Svidler-Navara, Biel 2018.

Yet it is White to struggle for the draw after the spectacular stab:

11...g5!! 12.♚xg5 ♖g8 13.♚f4 ♞h5!



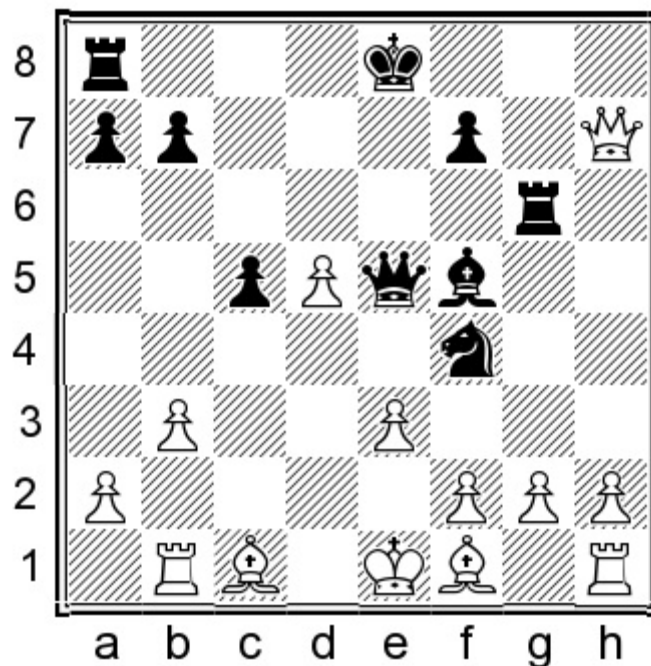
Cummings builds his White repertoire on this line, analysing only 13...Rg4? 14.Qf3 Qe5 15.Rb1 Nc4 16.Bb2 Qc7 17.b4.

14.Qh6 Qe5

14...Bg4 15.Qxh7 0-0-0 deserves a try.

15.Rb1 Rg6 16.Qxh7 Nf6

Signing the peace treaty. 16...Nf4 17.cxd5 Bf5 (14...Bg4!? is a forced draw)



18.Bb2 Qe4 19.Qh8+ Nd7 20.Bb5+ Nc7 21.Qe5+ Nb6 22.Qxe4 Bxe4 leads to a sharp endgame. 17.Qh4 Rg4=.

Another interesting attempt to attack the white king was shown in Agdestein-Hammer, Helsingor 2018: 8...Bf5 9.dxe5 Ne4 10.Qb2 0-0-0, but instead of 11.a3?! Nc5, White could have obtained a slightly

better endgame with 11.♘d4 ♚b4+ 12.♙d2 ♘xd2 13.♚xd2 ♚xd2+ 14.♙xd2 dxc4 15.♙c3 ♘xd4 16.exd4 cxb3 17.axb3.

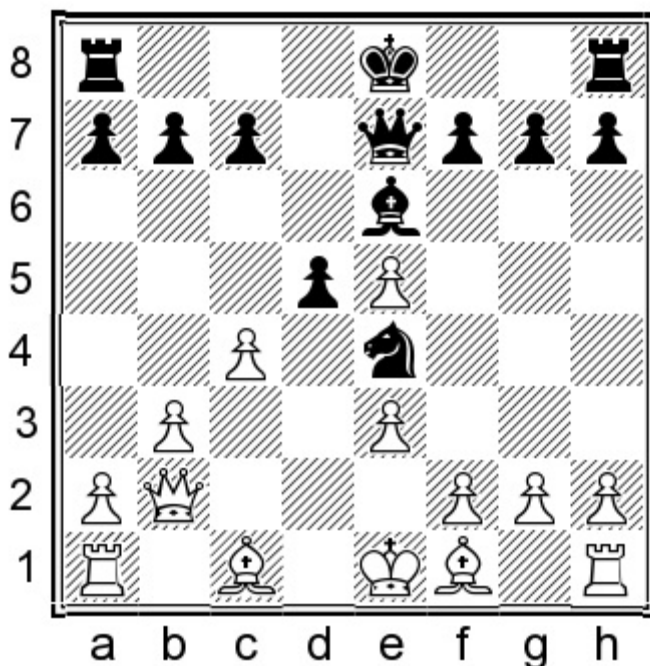
9.♚b2 ♙e6!

The check is ineffective – 9...♚b4+ 10.♘d2 exd4 11.cxd5.

10.♘xe5

10.cxd5 ♙xd5 11.dxe5 0-0-0! 12.♙e2 ♘g5 ♞ regains the pawn.

10...♘xe5 11.dxe5



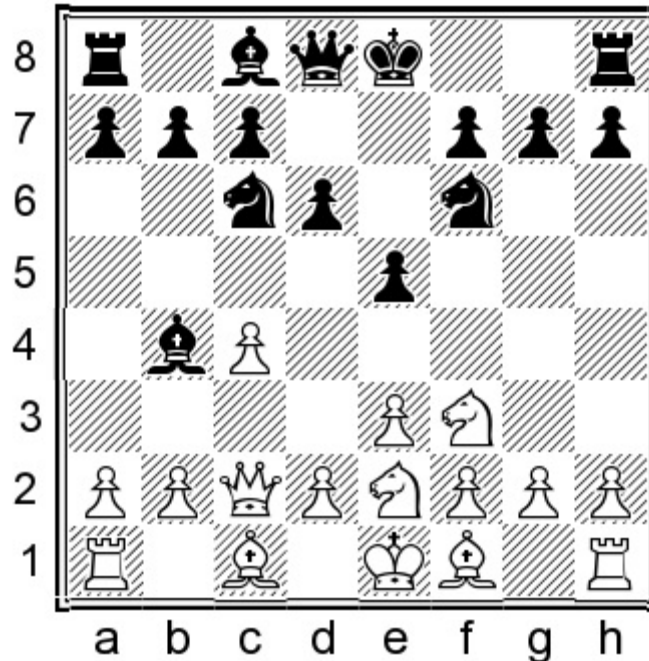
This line was tested in the computer game Bouquet 1.8-Chiron 3.01, CCRL 2016. This is not the type of position I'd like to play over the board with White. Black has full compensation for the pawn. The game went:

11...dxc4 12.♙xc4 ♙xc4 13.bxc4 0-0-0 14.0-0 ♞he8 15.♚c2 ♚xe5 16.♙b2 ♚e6 17.♞ad1 g6 18.c5 ♚c6 19.♙d4 ♘g5 20.♞d2 ♞d5 21.♞b1 ♘e6 with a draw after 50 more moves.

Chapter 2. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3 ♘b4 Annotated Games

2. Karjakin – Vidit rapid, Riyadh 27.12.2017

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3 ♘b4 5.♙c2 d6 6.♘e2!



6...a5

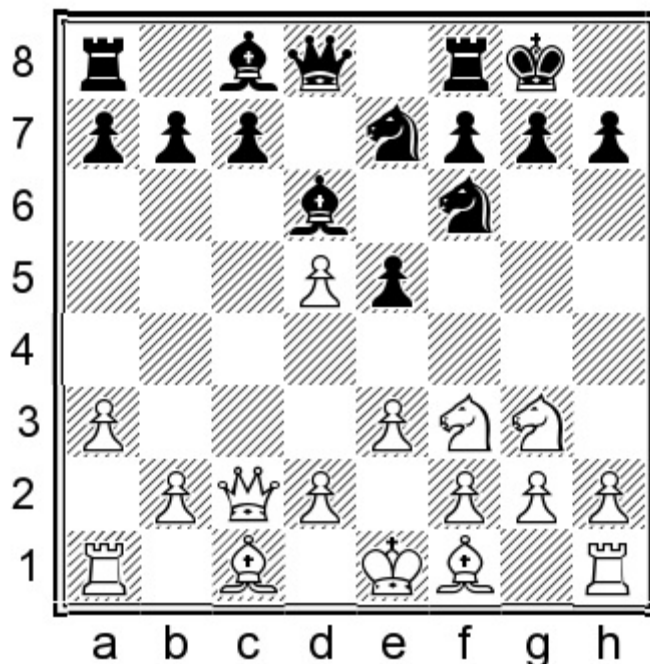
It would be interesting to attempt to repair the “error” on the previous turn by 6...d5. In that event Black could bring the bishop back to d6. That place looks more reasonable to me than a7 as in the game.

7.♘g3

7.a3 is also possible. Most probably it should transpose since the independent line 7...e4 is dubious. White develops a strong initiative with natural active moves – 8.axb4 0-0 9.♙c3 exf3 10.gxf3 dxc4 11.♖g1 (taking the open file!) 11...♙d6 (or 11...♖e8 12.♘f4 ♘f5 13.♘e2 ♘e5?! 14.b3) 12.♘f4 ♖e8 13.♘e2 ♘e5 14.b3 cxb3 15.♘b2 ♘g6 16.h4 ♘xf4 17.♙xf6 ♙xf6 18.♘xf6 ♖e6 19.♖xg7+ ♘f8 20.♘b2 ♘xe2 21.♘xe2 ♖h6 22.♖g5. White retains the initiative, despite the opposite-coloured bishops. They are not a drawish factor in this position because of White’s massive pawn majority in the centre. For instance: 22...♘e7 23.♖c1 ♘d7 24.♖c3!±.

7...♘d6 8.a3 0-0 9.cxd5 ♘e7!?

The f6-knight should better keep an eye on the e4-square. 9...♘xd5 10.b4 ♘e6 11.♘b2 a6 12.♘d3 or 12.♖c1 offer White a typical Sicilian initiative in the centre.



10.e4

Accepting the Mora Gambit position. Black gets here an easy game, for sure, but White retains a healthy extra pawn.

A sound alternative is 10.d4!? exd4 11.♘xd4 ♖exd5 12.♙c4 ♗b6 13.♙e2 ♜e8 14.0-0 ♙d7 15.b3. The pawn majority in the centre is generally pleasant for White. He should aim to push e4 and eventually f4.

10...♙g4 11.♙e2 c6 12.dxc6 ♗xc6 13.d3 ♜c8 14.♚d1 ♚a5+ 15.♙d2 ♚b5 16.♙c3±.

7.a3!

White should not cede space on the queenside by allowing ...a4.

7...♙c5 8.b3

This is more flexible than 8.d4 ♙b6 9.dxe5 ♗xe5 10.♗xe5 dxe5 11.c5 ♙a7 12.♗g3 0-0 13.b4 c6, although White is slightly better here.

8...0-0 9.♗g3 ♜e8

Another set-up is 9...h6 10.♙e2 ♚e7 (10...♜e8 11.♙b2 e4 12.♗h4!±) 11.♙b2 d5 12.cxd5 ♗xd5, but the hanging bishop at c5 enables 13.♗h4.

10.♙b2 ♙a7

It is useful to retreat the bishop even if Black is not planning ...d5. For instance, 10...♗e7 11.♙e2 ♗g6 12.d4 takes over the initiative – 12...♙a7 13.0-0 c6 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.c5±.

The immediate 10...h6, as in Harutyunian-Sargsyan, Yerevan 2018, may be more precise. The game

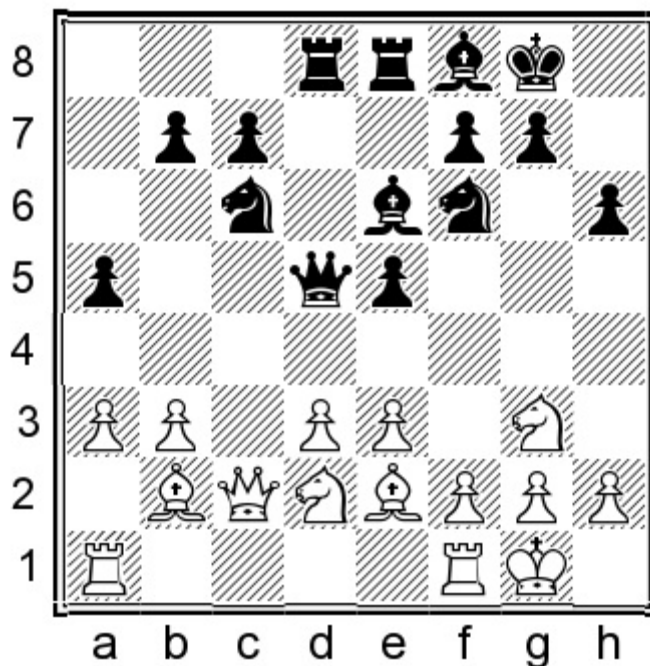
went 11.d3

White could also refrain from d2-d3 and continue in the Taimanov Reversed style: 11.♔e2 d5
12.cxd5 ♖xd5 13.♗c4 ♖d6 14.♘h4 ♖d8 15.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 16.♖xc5.

11...d5 12.cxd5 ♖xd5 13.♗e2

The game Wang, Yiye-Harikrishna, China 2018, saw the strange idea 13.♘e4 ♗e7 14.♗e2 ♗e6
15.♘ed2, which hardly deserves any attention.

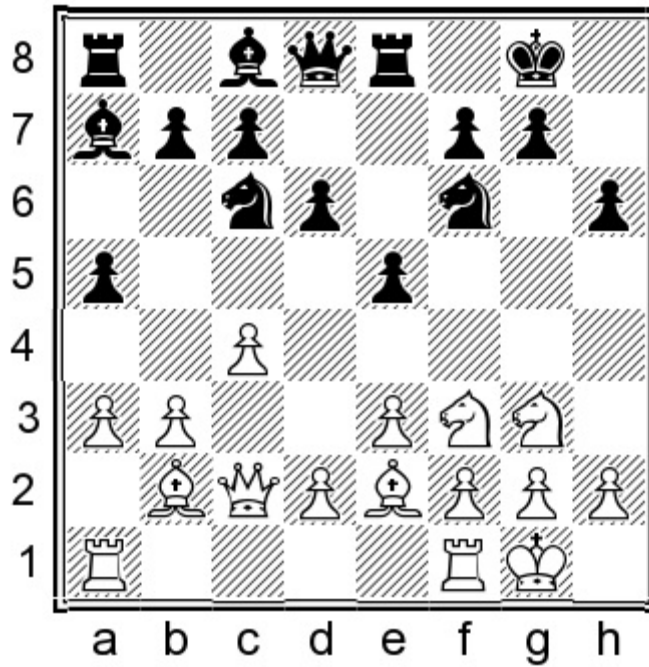
13...♗f8 14.0-0 ♗e6 15.♘d2 ♖ad8



Here Harutyunian chose 16.♖fd1 and Black managed to trade a piece with 16...♗g4. Perhaps he should have spent a tempo on:

16.h3, followed by ♖ac1.

11.♗e2 h6 12.0-0



12...♙e6

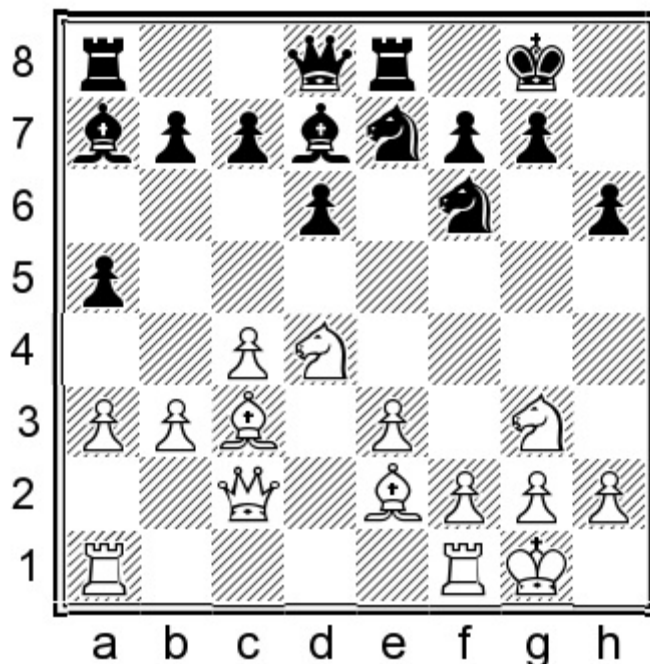
12...d5 13.cxd5 ♘xd5 14.♖ac1 ♙g4 15.h3 does not look good for Black. His light squares are too weak, and he lacks a clear plan.

13.♙c3

This is clearly a waste of time as b4 is not the best plan. White should prepare d4, but 13.d4 is premature in view of 13...exd4 14.exd4 ♙g4. A better try is:

13.h3! ♙d7 14.d4 with a clear edge.

13...♘e7 14.d4 exd4 15.♘xd4 ♙d7



White is dominating in the centre and his chances are obviously better, but I was surprised to see that the computer is even more definite in his evaluation – it gives a decisive advantage at about +2.00 after 16.♘b5, smothering any counterplay with ...c6 and leaving the opponent's b6-bishop idle. 16.♖ad1 is similar, but Black could exchange his unfortunate piece for the d4-knight.

At this point it transpires that Black's best defence was 15...♙xd4 or 16...♙xd4, although for most players the bishop pair advantage and the better centre would not be less decisive at all.

16.♙d2 ♘b6 17.♖ad1 ♘c6 18.♘f3

It becomes evident that Karjakin is hesitating which plan to choose. 18.♘xc6! ♙xc6 19.♙b2 would have cleared the long diagonal for the ♙♙ battery.

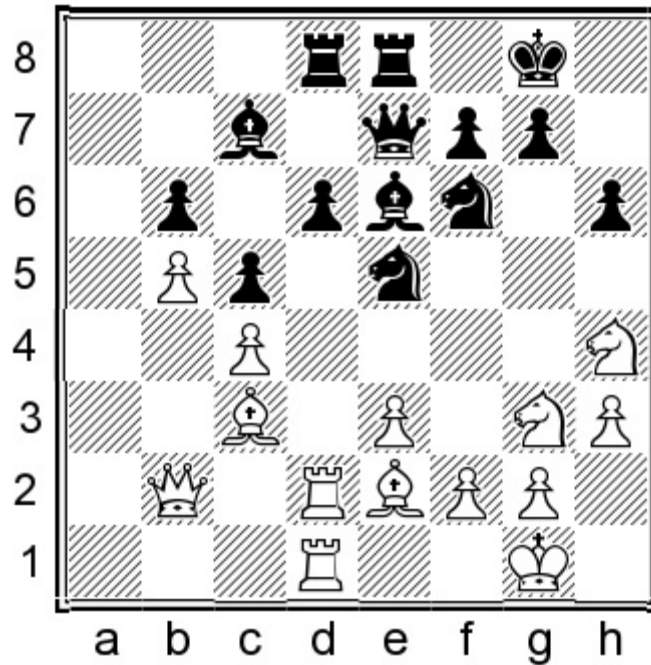
18...♘e5 19.♙b2 ♙e7 20.b4?!

I completely miss the reason behind this move. White is stronger on the kingside and in the centre, so his natural plan is to push e4 and f4. He starts with 20.h3!, then ♔h1, e4. For instance: 20...c6 21.♔h1 ♖ad8 22.♘d4 ♙f8 23.e4 ♙c8 24.f4 ♘g6 25.♙d3+- . Of course any pawn advance is double-edged, but a 2700 player as Vidit will not beat himself.

20...axb4 21.axb4 c5 22.h3 ♖ab8

22...♙e6!, intending ...♙c6, was called for. If 23.b5, then 23...♙a5 keeps Black in the game. After the text, he is doomed.

23.b5 ♖bd8 24.♖d2 ♙c7 25.♖fd1 b6 26.♘h4 ♙e6



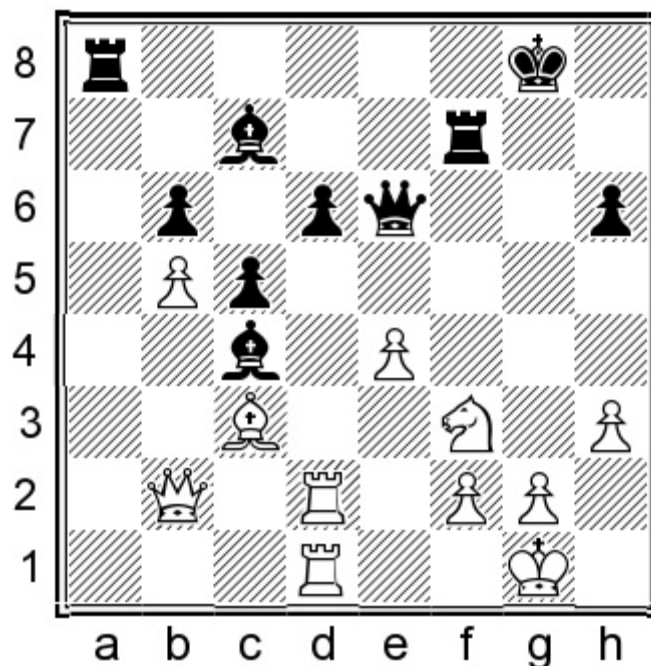
27. ♖f3?

Seriously?! It was a rapid tournament, OK, but Karjaking plays this stage of the game as if he were left with seconds...

27... ♗xc4 28. ♙xc4 ♙xc4 29. ♗f5 ♚e6 30. ♗xh6+ gxh6 31. ♙xf6 ♜a8

It turns out that Black is already fine. He can defend g7 with ... ♚g6, and enjoy the strong bishop pair. Vidit's pawn sac is also possible, but he missed his chance to exploit the open f-file.

32. ♙h8 f6 33. ♙xf6 ♜f8∞ 34. ♙c3 ♜f7 35. e4?



35...♖af8?

35...♖xf3! should be the first candidate-move for any decent player. I guess that Vidit missed 36.gxf3 ♔f7!, which gains the upper hand. The only defence is 37.♙e5 ♖a2 38.♜xa2, e.g. 38...♙xa2 39.♙xd6 ♜g6+ 40.♔h2 ♙xd6+ 41.♖xd6 ♜h5 42.♖d7+ ♔f6 43.♖1d6+ ♙e6 44.♖xb6 ♜h4 45.♔g1 ♔e5. The rest of the game is marred by severe time deficit:

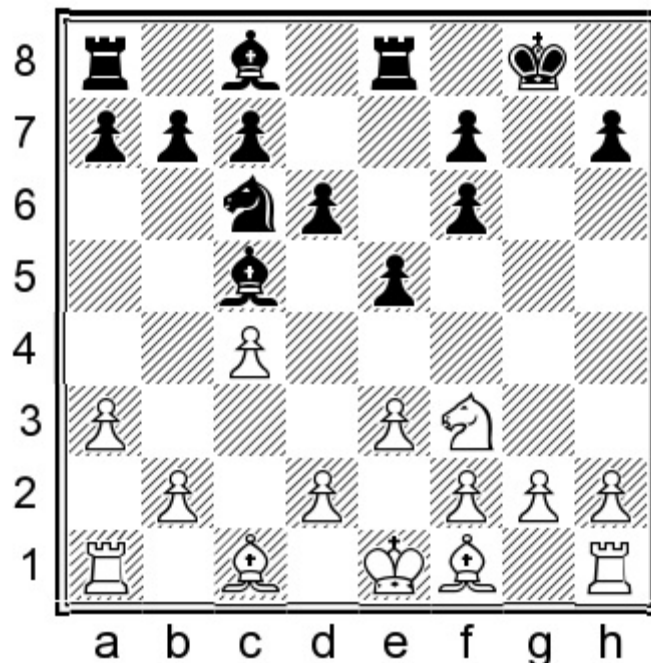
36.♔h2 ♜xe4 37.♔g4 ♜g6 38.♜c1 h5?? 39.♖d5?

39.♖xd6 forces a mate.

39...♙xd5?! (39...♖f4) 40.♖xd5 ♖f5 41.♔h6+ ♔h7 42.♔xf5 ♖xf5 43.♜d1 ♜f7 44.♖xf5 ♜xf5 45.♜e2 ♜b1+ 46.♔h2 d5+ 47.g3 d4 48.♙xd4 cxd4 49.♜e7+ ♔g8 50.♜e8+ ♔g7 51.♜d7+ ♔f6 52.♜xc7 d3 53.♜xb6+ ♔e5 54.♜c5+ ♔e4 55.b6 ♜b3 56.♜e3+ ♔d5 57.b7 ♔c6 58.b8♜ ♜xb8 59.♜xd3 ♜e5 60.♔g2 ♔c7 61.g4 hxg4 62.hxg4 ♜f4 63.♜g3 1-0

3. Grischuk – Giri Elancourt 30.09.2013

1.c4 e5 2.♔c3 ♔f6 3.♔f3 ♔c6 4.e3 ♙b4 5.♜c2 0-0 6.♔d5 ♖e8 7.♜f5 d6 8.♔xf6+ ♜xf6 9.♜xf6 gxf6 10.a3 ♙c5



11.b4

White scores very well with 11.b3, but b4 is based on a more active dynamic plan – in some lines White attacks with c4-c5 the most fortified point in Black's camp, e5.

11...♙b6 12.♙b2 a5 13.b5 ♔e7 14.d4!

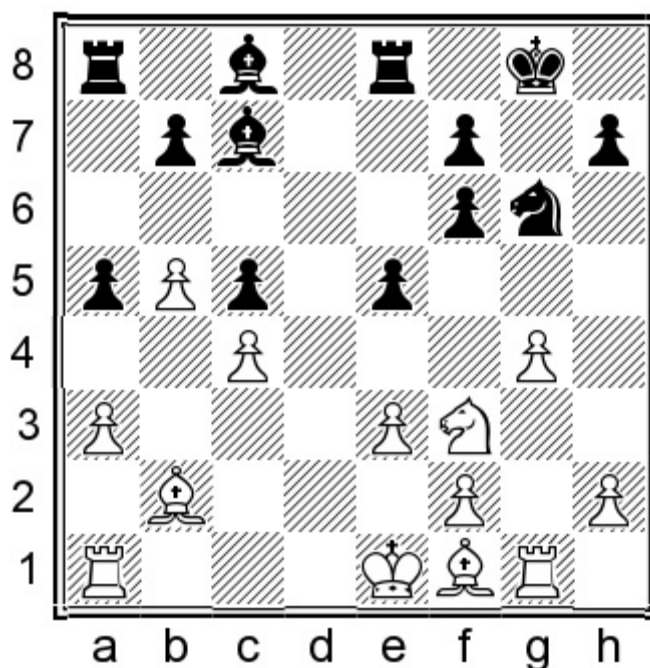
14.♙e2 d5?! 15.d4 would open the centre in White's favour, but 14...c6 15.d4 a4 is more precise. By all means d4 is a key move in White's plans, and there is no reason to postpone it.

14...♘g6

14...c6 15.c5! is the point of 14.d4. The e5-stronghold falls, and White's pieces quickly come into play. For example: 15...dxc5 16.dxe5 a4 17.♙c4 ♘d5 18.exf6 ♙a5+ 19.♚f1 ♙d8 20.♞c1 ♙xf6 21.♙xf6 ♘xf6 22.bxc6 bxc6 23.♚e2±.

The threat c4-c5 is so awkward that sometimes Black even plays:

14...c5 15.dxe5 dxe5. As a result, he cedes space on both flanks: 16.g4! ♘g6 17.♞g1 ♙c7



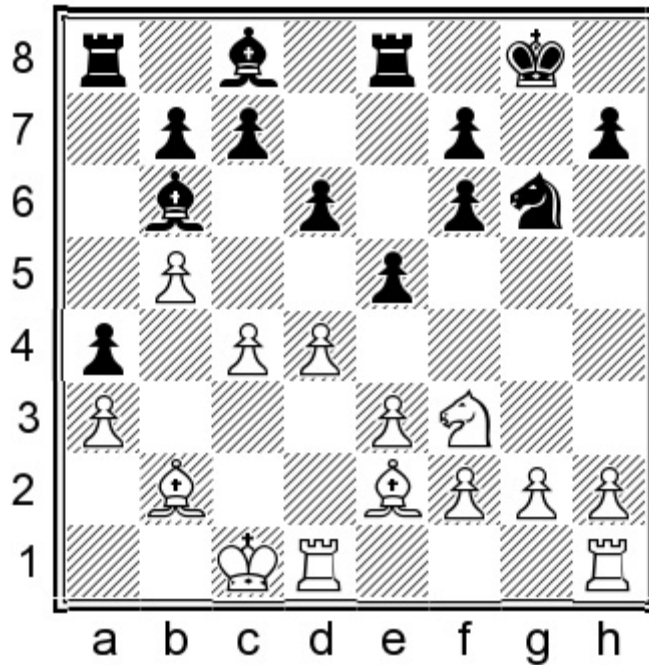
18.♘d2± f5 19.gxf5 ♙xf5 20.h4.

Remember the pawn storm g4, h4. It is a major plan for White in this middlegame. Even without queens his attack could be strong.

Black's most popular retort to 14.d4 has been:

14...a4!. Black opens a diagonal for his bishop and hopes to isolate the advanced b5-pawn. The drawback of this move is that it gives us a tempo for our planned kingside attack. Another consideration is that after multiple exchanges the a4-pawn could fall victim of the possible king raid to b4.

15.0-0-0 ♘g6 16.♙e2



16...c6

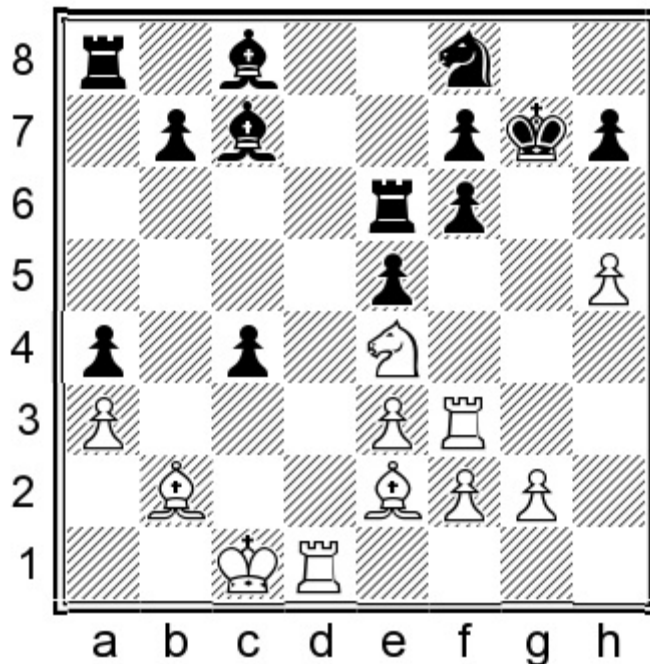
In 2014 Istratescu played the incomprehensible 16...♔g7 17.♖hg1! ♕e6 (the pseudo-active 17...f5 18.g3 f4 loses following 19.c5 ♕a5 20.gxf4 exf4 21.d5+ f6 22.♗h4 with an attack) 18.g4 h6 19.h4 e4 20.♗d2 d5. Here Schwierskott chose 21.f3. Instead, 21.♕c3 ♕a5 22.♔c2 ♕xc3 23.♔xc3 ♗xh4 24.♖h1 ♗g6 25.♗f1 ♗e7 26.♗g3 would have underlined that all Black's pawn are weak. Black will soon be tied down on the kingside.

16...c6 is Istratescu's improvement, which he tested against Docx in 2017.

17.bxc6

The source game saw 17.c5 dxc5 18.dxe5 18...fxe5?!, when 19.h4! would have been rather awkward for Black. Critical is 18...♗xe5, with fair chances for a draw.

White could also launch a tricky attack with 17.h4!? cxb5 18.h5 ♗f8 19.dxe5 dxe5 20.♗d2, for instance: 20...bxc4 (Only a computer could find the best defence 20...♕c5!, heading for e7. White retains some initiative with 21.cxb5 ♕e6 22.♗e4 ♖ec8 23.♔b1 ♕e7 24.g4.) 21.♗e4 ♖e6 22.♖h3 ♕c7 (to prevent the sac on f6) 23.♖f3 ♔g7 24.♕c3!!



with domination. The idea is 24...b5? 25.♙b4, winning the poor knight on f8 since 25...♞d7 fails to 26.♞g3+ ♜h8 27.♙g4.

To be fair, 24...h6 fends off the immediate threats, but White keeps a lasting initiative.

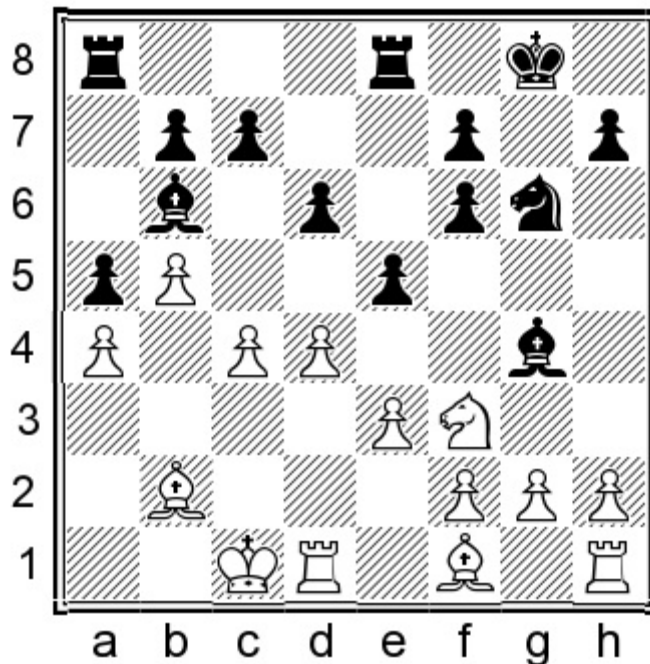
17...bxc6 18.h4!?

Again, 18.c5 is only marginally better following 18...dxc5 19.dxe5 ♞xe5 20.♞xe5 fxe5 21.♞d6 ♙a5, and Black holds on.

18...e4 (18...exd4 19.♙xd4±) 19.♞d2 d5 Black has neutralised the main threats, but it is still early to speak about full equality.

15.a4! ♙g4 16.0-0-0

16.dxe5 fxe5 17.h3 ♙f5 18.♞d2± is also pleasant since White is flexible.



16...exd4

White has an obvious space advantage, but a more important argument in his favour is Black's unemployed bishop on b6. Giri revives it, but his solution underlines the flaws of his kingside pawn structure. The plan with ...c6 seems more reasonable only at the surface. It does not solve the problem of his injured kingside either:

16...c6 17.h3!?

Or 17.bxc6 bxc6 18.dxe5 dxe5 19.h3 ♔e6 20.g4±.

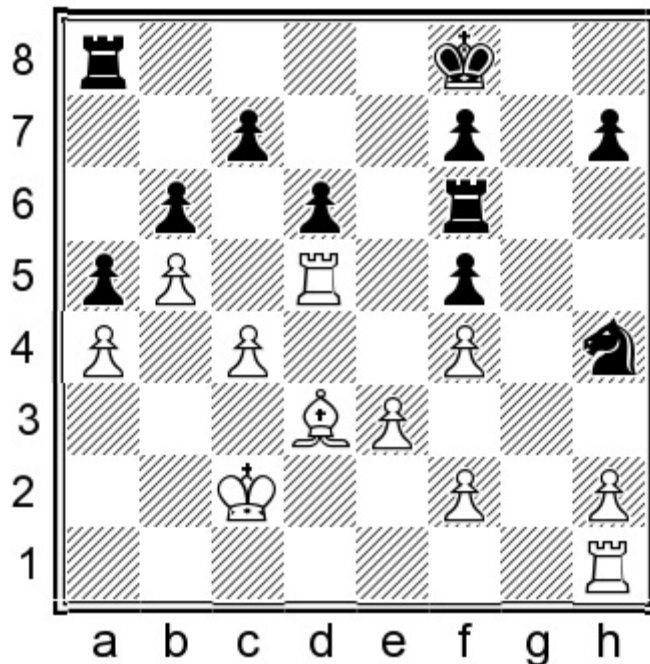
17...♔e6 18.g4 cxb5 19.d5 ♔d7 20.cxb5 promises White an attack on the kingside.

17.♔xd4 ♔xd4 18.♖xd4 ♔xf3

Black braces himself for a stubborn defence, hoping to build up a fortress. 18...♔f5 19.♔e2 ♖ad8 20.♗b2 ♗g7 21.♖g1 b6 22.♘d2 h6 23.g4 ♔c8 24.♘e4 was also gloom, although the material remains even.

19.gxf3 b6 20.f4

This might be a technical mistake as it allows 20...f5. Of course White preserves strong pressure following 21.♔h3 ♘h4 22.♖d5 ♖e4 23.♔f1 ♖e6 24.♔d3 ♗f8 25.♗c2 ♖f6



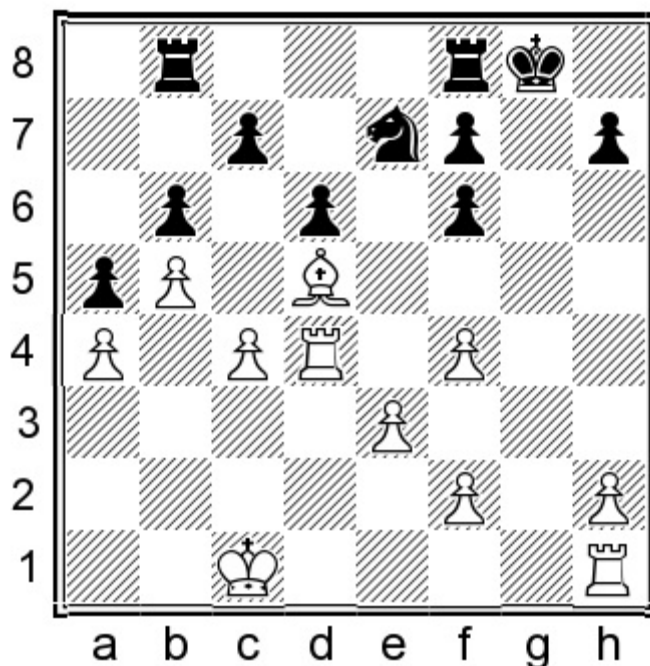
Black's defence was based on the vulnerable c4-pawn.

After 21. ♔d3 ♖e7 22. ♖g1+ ♔h8 23. ♖g3 White has only one accessible target. That might be insufficient for a victory.

The alternative was 20. ♖d5! ♖e5 21. f4 ♖xd5 22. cxd5. It opens the c-file, thus fixing a second target on c7. I can understand Grischuk's fear that a pawn on d5 would block the only penetration square for his king, but too often we should give something in order to get more.

Giri puts his hopes on a rook endgame, but easily loses it.

20... ♖e7 21. ♔g2 ♖ab8 22. ♔d5 ♖f8?



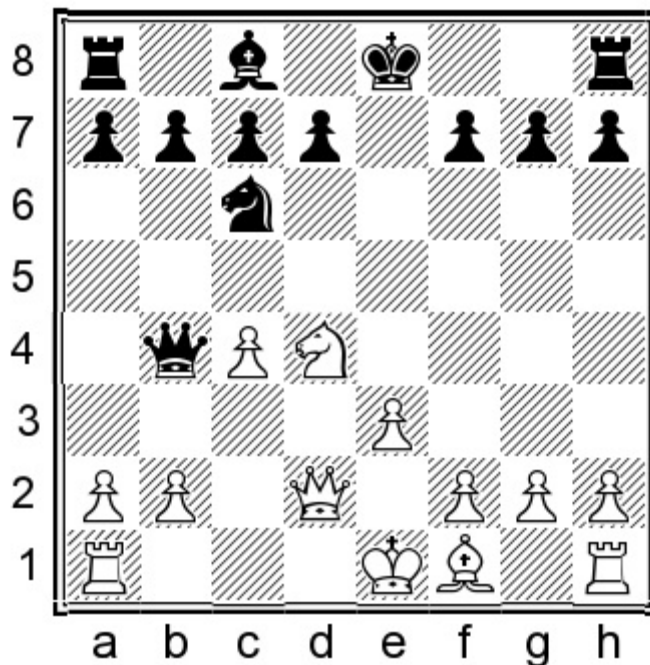
23. ♖g1+ ♔h8 24. ♖dd1 ♖xd5 25. ♖xd5 ♖g8 26. ♖g3 ♖g6 27. ♖h5 ♔g7 28. ♔d2!

White's king penetrates through d5! Perhaps Grischuk was right about 20.♞d5 after all?!

28...♞h8 29.♔d3 ♞xg3 30.hxg3 f5 31.♞xf5 h5 32.♔e4 h4 33.gxh4 ♞xh4 34.♔d5 ♞h1 1-0

4. Damljanovic – Perunovic Vrnjacka Banja 24.04.2013

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 ♘b4 5.♞c2 ♘xc3 6.♞xc3 ♞e7 7.d4 ♘e4 8.♞d3 exd4 9.♘xd4 ♞b4+ 10.♙d2 ♘xd2 11.♞xd2



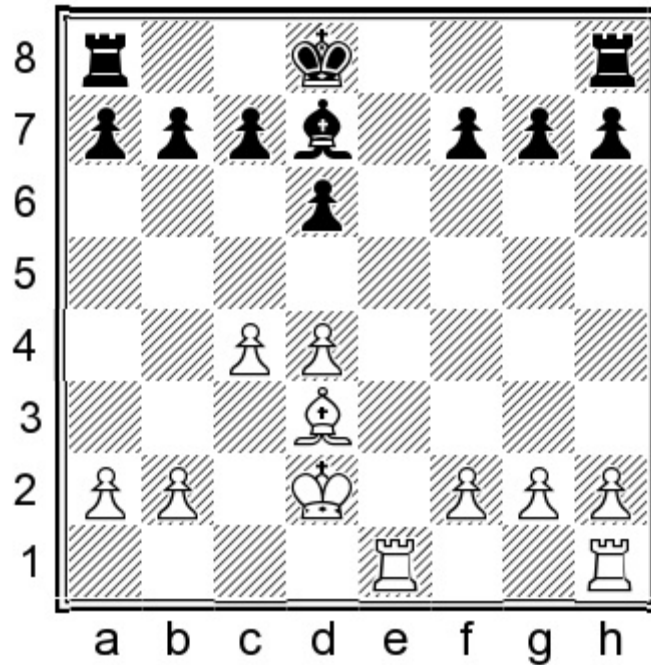
Interestingly, this line has not appeared in any correspondence game, and occurred only twice in practice. Apparently no one wants to defend positions without any winning chances, although White's initiative could prove to be fleeting.

11...♘xd4

Fedorchuk played 11...♞xd2+ 12.♔xd2 d6!?, when the most principled should be 13.h4 as in the main game. 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.b4 ♞b8 15.♞b1 also deserves attention.

Or 11...d6 12.♞xb4 ♘xb4 13.a3 ♘c6 14.♘b5 ♔d8 15.f4.

12.exd4 ♞xd2+ 13.♔xd2 d6 14.♞e1+ ♔d8 15.♙d3 ♙d7



16.h4

This is a thematic move in such positions. It aims to gain space with h5, fixing a target on g7. It could be attacked later on with a rook lift via the third rank. Still, 16.♖e3 first also deserves attention since 16...♗e8 would face 17.♗f3±.

16...h5

White's first strategic achievement. Black fixes his pawns on light squares. That could provide for penetration squares for White's king if Black defends the h5-pawn with ...g6.

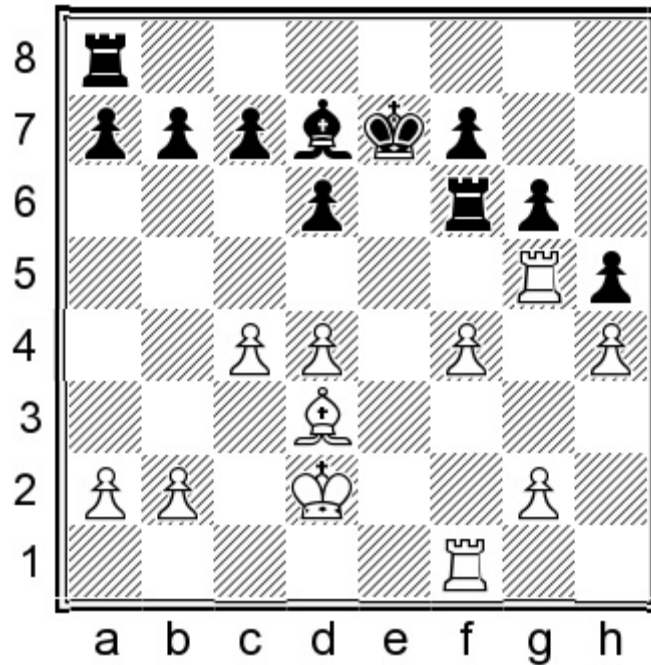
17.♗e3 ♗e8 18.♗g3

It was better to keep more rooks for a while with 18.♔e4 c6 19.♗he1.

18...g6 19.♗g5 ♗e6?!

19...♔e7! allows Black's king to reach the critical part of the battlefield, the kingside. The point is 20.♗f1 b6! (to deny ♗a5) 21.f4 ♗g8!. The threat f5 is neutralised so Black is close to equality.

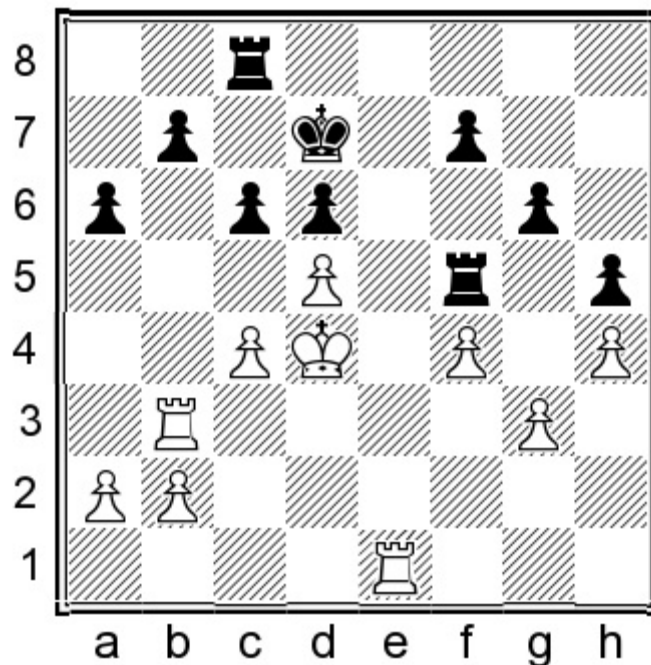
20.f4 ♗f6 21.♗f1 ♔e7



22.♖a5! ♕f5

Suddenly Black realises that his rook is entrapped on the f-file. It cannot return to safety with 22...♖e6 due to 23.d5. Black's predicament is well illustrated by the computer line 22...b6 23.♖a3 a5 24.d5! ♖e8 25.g3 ♕f5 26.♖e1+ ♔d7 27.♖xe8 ♔xe8 28.♔c3 ♔d7 29.b4 and White is practically a rook up.

23.d5 ♕xd3 24.♔xd3 ♖f5 25.♖e1+ ♔d7 26.g3 c6 27.♔d4 a6 28.♖a3 ♖c8 29.♖b3

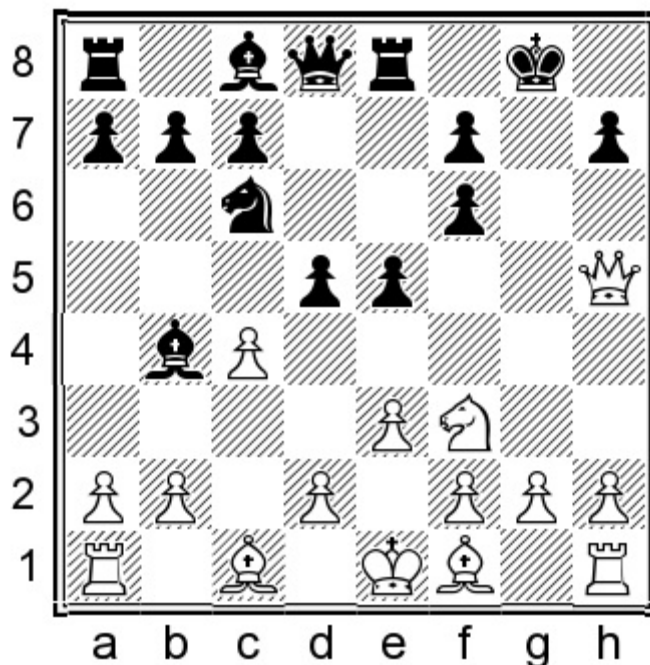


Black's rook is still out of play. The game finish was:

29...b5 30.♖be3 cxd5 31.♖e7+ ♔c6 32.cxb5+ ♔xb5 33.♖b7+ ♔c6 34.♖ee7 ♖f6 35.♖b3 ♖e6 36.♖c3+ ♔b6 37.♖xe6 ♖xc3 38.♖xd6+ ♔c7 39.♔xc3 ♔xd6 40.b4 ♔e6 41.♔d4 ♔f5 42.a4 1-0

5. Hengl – Garau ICCF 2017

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♗f3 ♗c6 4.e3 ♘b4 5.♙c2 0-0 6.♗d5 ♞e8 7.♚f5 d6 8.♗xf6+ gxf6 9.♚h5 d5



10.♘d3

I have included this game as an alternative to my recommendation 10.♘e2.

10...e4

10...h6 11.cxd5 ♚xd5 12.♘c2 ♚c5 is also possible.

12...♘f8 13.♘b3 ♚d7 14.♗h4 ♗d8 15.♘d1 (15.g4) 15...e4 (15...f5 16.g4) 16.f4 favours White.
13.♘e4! f5 14.♘xf5 ♘xf5 15.♚xf5 e4 16.♚xc5 ♘xc5 17.♗h4. Black is yet to prove sufficient compensation for the pawn.

11.cxd5 ♘f8

11...exd3 12.dxc6 bxc6 13.♚h4 ♘e7 (13...♞b8 14.b3 ♘e7 15.♘b2) 14.b3 ♞b8 15.♘b2 ♞b4 16.♗d4

Somehow Black managed to hold the endgame following 16.♚h5 ♚d5 17.♚xd5 cxd5 18.♘a3 ♞b7
19.♘xe7 ♞xe7 20.0-0 c5 21.♞fc1±, Jørgensen-Kavc, ICCF 2017.
16...♚d5 17.♘c3 ♞b6 18.♗f3 c5 19.0-0±.

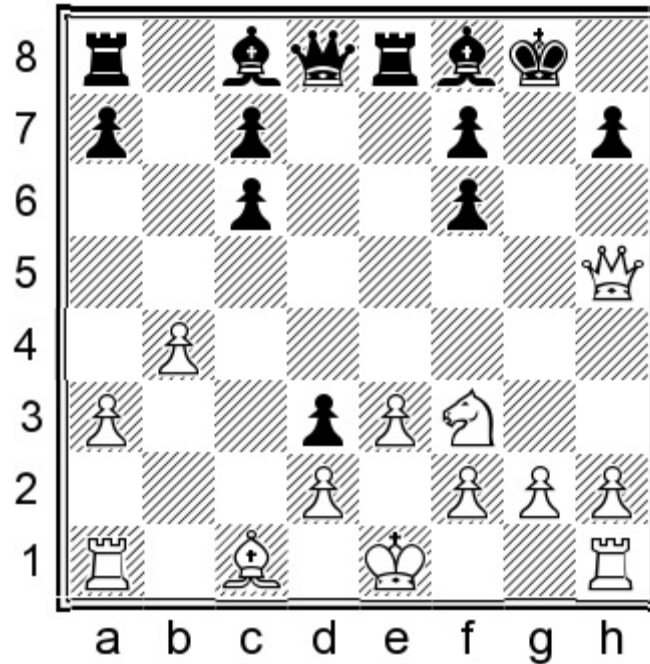
12.a3

12.♘b1 ♗b4 13.0-0 ♚xd5 and 12.♘b1 ♗b4 13.♗d4 ♚xd5 are close to equal.

12...exd3

The surprising 12...♘d4!? allows Black to preserve his pawn chain intact. Perhaps White is slightly better following 13.♘xd4 ♖e5 14.♚h4 exd3 15.♘f3 ♖xd5 16.b4.

13.dxc6 bxc6 14.b4



14...a5

14...♖e4 15.♙b2 ♙g4 does not win a piece owing to 16.♚h4 ♙xf3 17.♚g3+. And 15...c5 wins a pawn, but leaves Black with all the pawns weak after 16.h3 ♖b8 17.0-0 cxb4 18.♘d4 ♖e5 19.♚f3±.

15.♙b2 axb4!

15...♖e4 16.♘d4 ♖g4 occurred in Tapai-Brynell, Stockholm 1994. Instead of 17.g3?, the computer suggests 17.♘xc6 ♚d7 18.b5 ♖xg2 19.♚f3 ♖g6 20.h4±. The f6-pawn is hanging.

16.axb4 ♖xa1+ 17.♙xa1 ♖e4 18.0-0

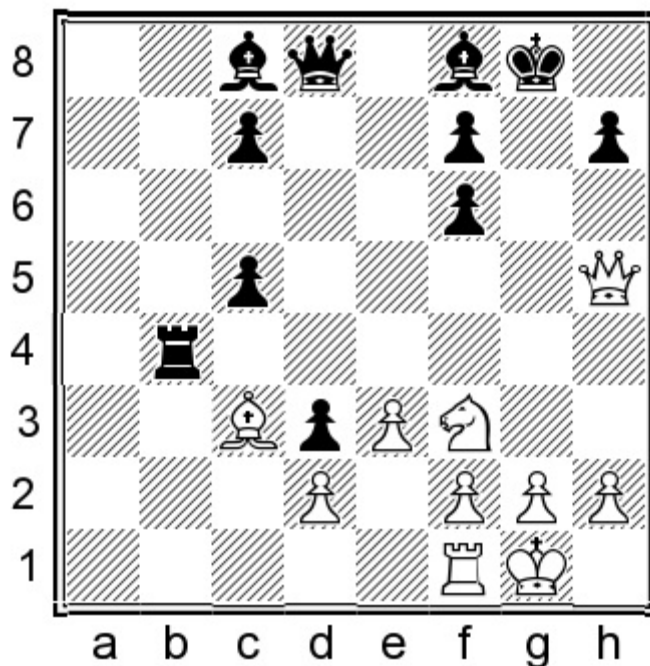
After the exchange on b4, 18.♘d4 ♖g4 19.♘xc6? already loses to 19...♚d6. Gunnarsson-Johannessen, Reykjavik 2000 saw instead 19.g3 ♖g6?, when 20.0-0± would have completed development, retaining all the advantages of the better pawn structure. However, 19...♖g5! forces at least a draw (20.♚h4 ♖g4, 20...♙xb4!?) since 20.♚f3 ♙h3 would be clearly better for Black.

18...♖xb4 19.♙c3 c5!?

19...♖c4 20.h3 ♙e6 is also possible, with complex play.

I have analysed the endgame after:

19...♖a4 20.♖b1 ♔d5 21.♙xd5 cxd5 22.♖b8 and came to the conclusion that it was equal after 22...♗f5
23.♗d8 ♔g7 24.♖xd5 ♗b4 25.♖xf5 ♗xc3 26.g3 ♗e5 27.♘xe5 fxe5 28.♖xe5 ♖a2=.



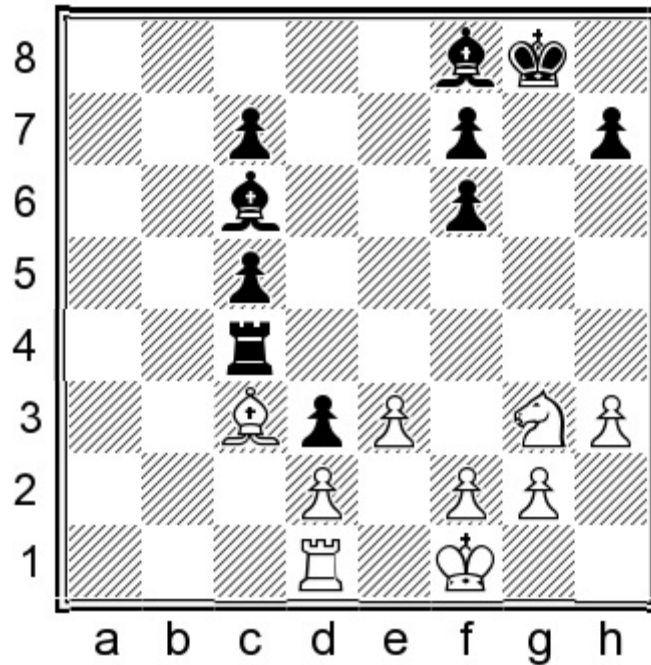
20.h3

Of course White could capture the rook, but he would not have any plan for a progress.

20...♖c4 21.♖d1

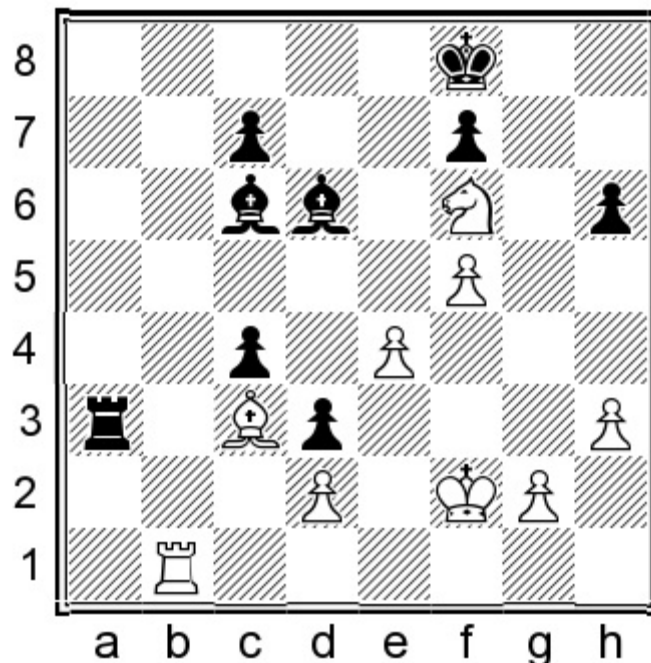
Anticipating the exchange sacrifice 21.♘h4 ♗e6 22.♘f5 ♖xc3!=.

21...♗e6 22.♘h4 ♙d5 23.♙xd5 ♗xd5 24.♘f5 ♗e4 25.♘g3 ♗c6 26.♔f1



Amazingly, Black's defence is not so easy here. His problem are the unfortunate f6-pawn and clumsy dark-squared bishop. When watching the ensuing manoeuvring, do not forget that it is a correspondence game! Humans would play differently.

26...h6 27.f4 ♖a4 28.♞b1 ♖a8 29.f5 ♔d6 30.♘h5 ♕f8 31.♘xf6 c4 32.♕f2 ♖a3 33.e4



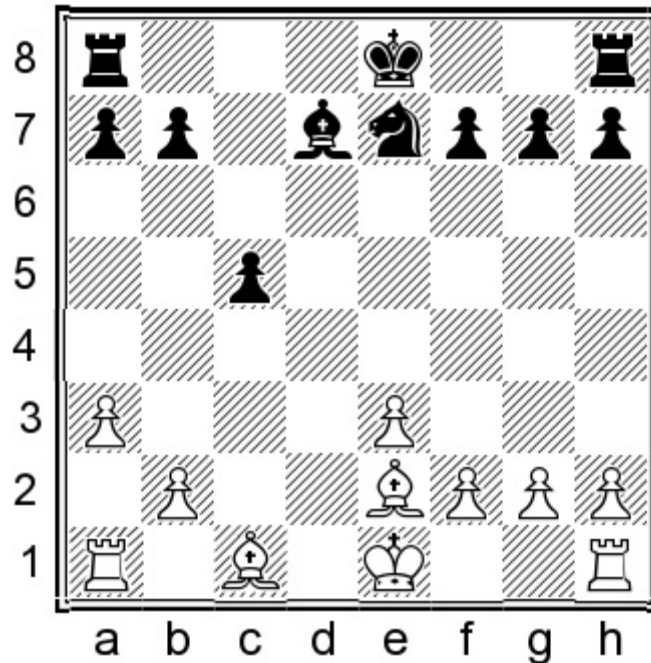
White has made a considerable progress since the last diagram, but his last move looks premature to me. I'd keep more tension with 33.♞c1, preventing the following exchange sac. The computer suggests 33...♕e7 34.♘g8+ ♕f8 35.♘h6 ♞b3!, heading for b5. Black is already a pawn down, and he still has to suffer.

33...♞xc3! The draw is now inevitable. 34.dxc3 ♔e5 35.♘d5 ♔xd5 36.exd5 ♔xc3 37.♕e3 ♕e7 38.♞c1

d2 39.♖b1 ♔d6 40.♕e2 ♕xd5 41.♖b7 ♕c6 42.♖b8 ♕c5 43.g4 ♘b4 44.♖c8 c3 45.♖xc7+ ♔d5 46.f6 ♕e6 47.♖c4 ♘a5 48.♖c6+ ♔d5 49.♖a6 ♘d8 50.♔d1 ♕e5 51.♖c6 ♘xf6 52.♖xc3 ♘g5 53.♕e2 ♕d5 ½-½

6. Ivanchuk – Karjakin Wijk aan Zee 29.01.2006

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3 ♘b4 5.♖c2 ♘xc3 6.♖xc3 ♖e7 7.a3 d5 8.d4 exd4 9.♘xd4 ♘xd4 10.♖xd4 c5 11.♖h4 ♘e6 12.cxd5 ♘xd5 13.♖xe7+ ♘xe7 14.♘b5+ ♘d7 15.♘e2



This is a model game for White's play in this endgame. It is very important for us as something similar may arise in my recommended line 7.d4!.

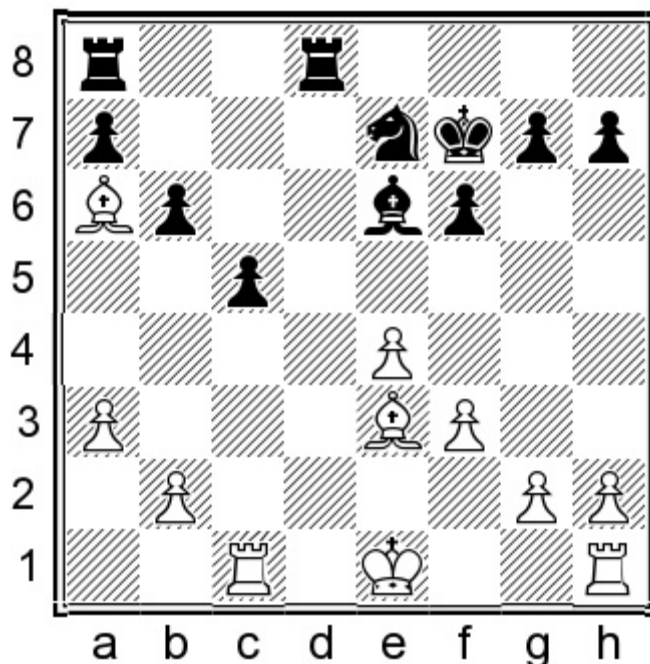
15...f6

White has two decent set-ups: ♘d2-c3 and e4+♘e3. Since the former is more popular, Karjakin anticipates it, shortening the main dark-squared diagonal. However, f6 is premature at this moment. This stand is passive against ♘e3 and leaves Black struggling. It would have been better to play 15...♘e6, intending to meet 16.e4 by 16...f5. Perhaps White would have to resort to 16.b4 in that event. As a rule, White aims to play b4 in most variations, so Black might also try 15...a5 16.e4! a4 17.♘e3 b6. Still, White is better after 18.0-0-0.

16.e4 ♕f7 17.♘e3 ♖hc8 18.f3 ♘e6

Or 18...b6 19.♘a6 ♖e8 20.♕f2 ♘c6 21.♖hd1 ♖e7 22.♖ac1 ♘e5 23.b4!±.

19.♖c1 b6 20.♘a6 ♖d8



21.b4!

White opens a file for his rook and Karjakin never recovers. His knight fails to find a stable place until the grim end.

21...cxb4 22.axb4 ♖c8 23.♙e2 ♙e6

23...♞d6 24.♚f2 (24.b5 a6 25.♞a1±)

24...a5 does not give any counterplay owing to 25.b5.

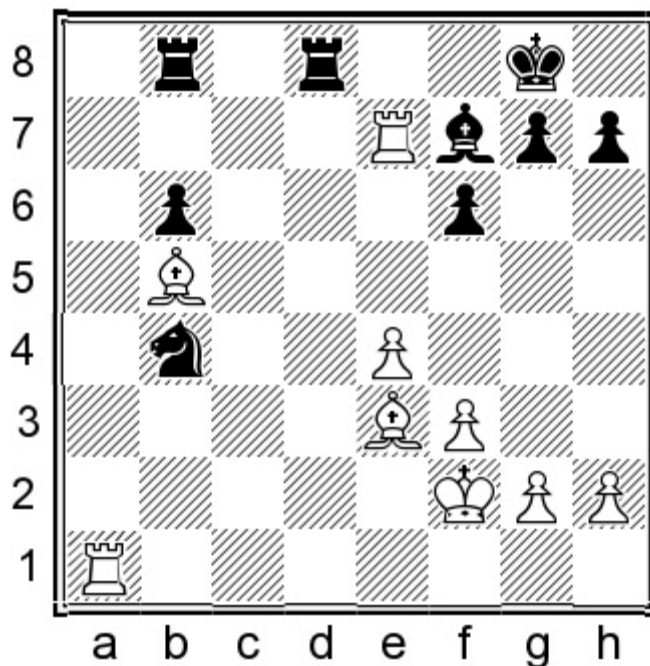
24.♚f2 ♞ac8 25.♞a1

White tries to keep more pieces on the board, but in fact one rook is enough. Thus he could have started immediately his kingside offensive with 25.h4 f5 26.g3 ♞xc1 27.♞xc1 fxe4 28.fxe4 ♞c8 29.b5 or 25.♙a6 ♞xc1 26.♞xc1 f5 27.h4.

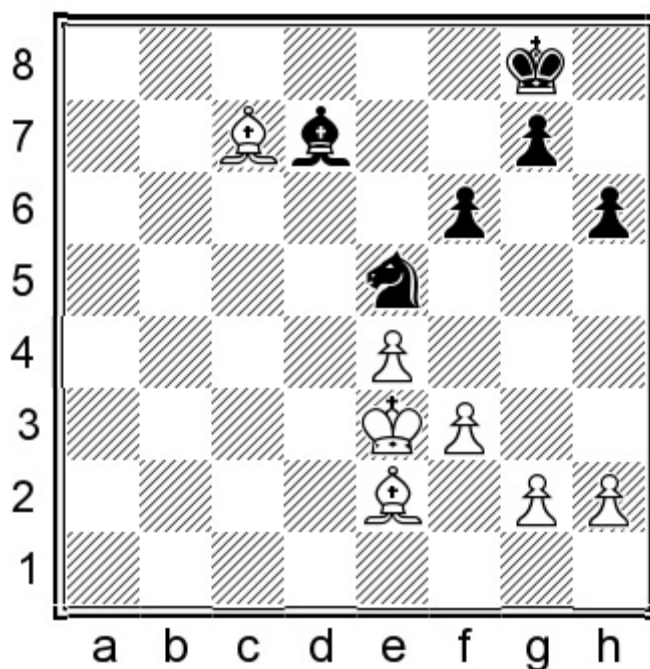
25...♘c6 26.♙a6 ♞b8 27.♙b5 ♘xb4 28.♞xa7+ ♚g8 29.♞e7

One might think that 4:3 on the same flank should be a draw, but the activity of White's bishops is overwhelming.

29...♙f7 30.♞a1



30...♖a8 31.♗d7! ♗dc8 32.♖xa8 ♖xa8 33.♙xb6 h6 34.♔g3 ♖c8 35.♗d6 ♙e8 36.♙e2 ♖c6 37.♖xc6 ♗xc6 38.♔f4 ♗e5 39.♙c7 ♙d7 40.♔e3

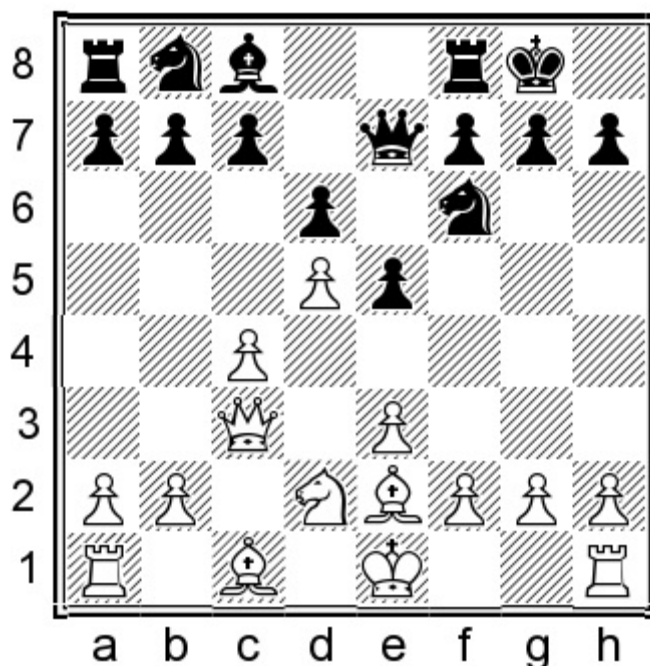


White's game is playing itself. He produces a passed pawn and pushes it forth. Even a staunch defender as Karjakin fails to save it, without committing any grave mistakes.

40...♔f8 41.♔d4 ♗f7 42.♙a5 ♗e5 43.♙b4+ ♔e8 44.♔c5 ♗g6 45.♙d2 ♗e5 46.♔d6 ♙a4 47.f4 ♗f7+ 48.♔c7 ♙d7 49.♙b4 ♙a4 50.♙c4 ♗h8 51.g3 ♗f7 52.h4 ♗h8 53.♙d6 ♗g6 54.♙e2 ♗h8 55.♙c4 ♗g6 56.e5 fxe5 57.fxe5 ♗e7 58.e6 g6 59.♙c5 ♗f5 60.♙d3 ♗e7 61.♔d6 h5 62.♔e5 ♗f5 63.♔f6 ♙c6 64.e7 1-0

7. Damljanovic – Kiril Georgiev MNT-chT Cetinje 24.06.2013

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♗c3 e5 3.♗f3 ♗c6 4.e3 ♘b4 5.♙c2 ♘xc3 6.♙xc3 ♙e7 7.d4 d6 8.d5 ♗b8 9.♗d2 0-0
10.♙e2



10...a5

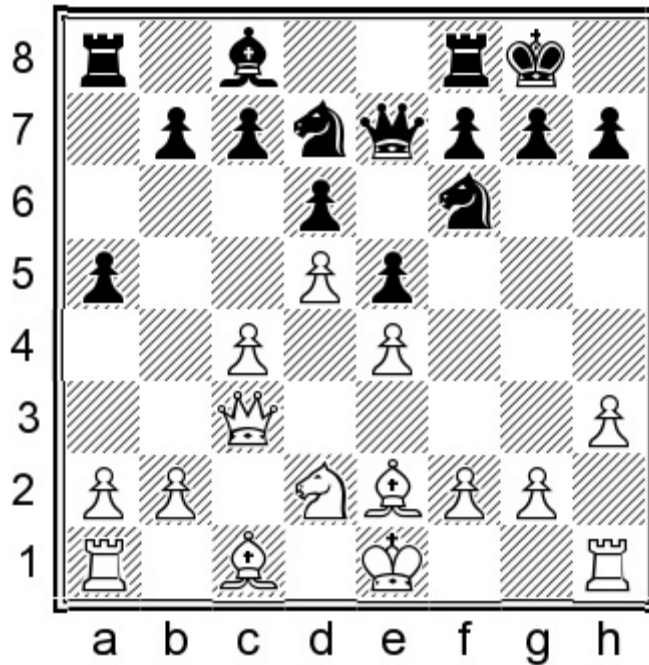
Continuing the same solid strategy. I want to secure the c5-square for my knight. An active alternative was 10...c6 11.e4 b5, when:

12.cxb5 cxd5 13.exd5 13...♙b7?! 14.♗c4 ♘xd5 15.b3 ♗bd7 16.0-0 ♞ac8 17.♞d1 ♘xc4 18.bxc4
was better for White in Naum 3-Toga II 2008, but 13...a6! would have been unclear. The b5-pawn
is strong and should be killed. White keeps an edge with:

12.b3!, and only after 12...a5 13.cxb5! cxd5 14.♙a3±.

11.b3?!

My position is very robust and cannot be crushed with standard piece play. White's only advantage is space and he should have staked it with 11.e4! ♗bd7 12.h3



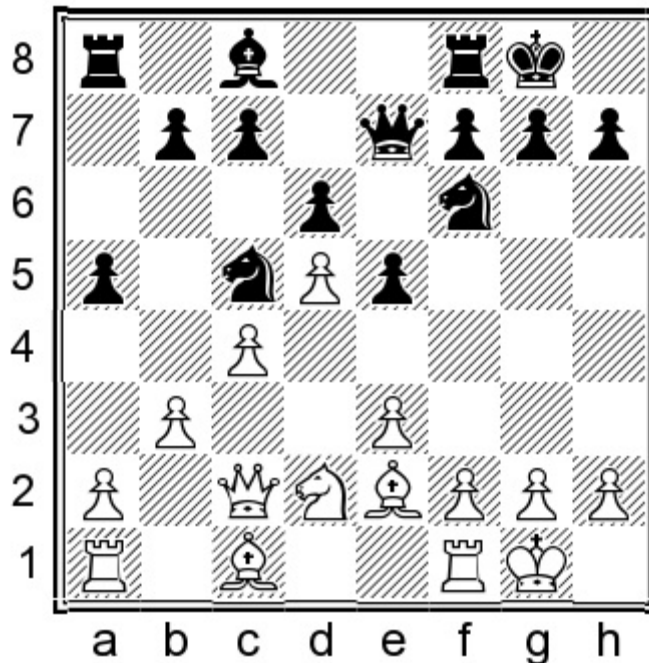
12.g4 c6 13.♖e3 also deserves attention. The hole on f4 should not be a problem as we keep a dark-squared bishop.

12.f3 ♘h5 13.g3 is too passive – 13...♗c5 14.0-0 ♙h3 15.♖f2 f5 16.exf5 ♖xf5 17.♗b3 ♗xb3 18.♗xb3 ♖af8 19.♙e3 ♗f7 20.♖e1 ♗g6 with counterplay.

12...♗c5 13.♖e3 h6 14.b3 b6 15.♙b2 ♙d7 16.0-0 ♗h7 17.♗h2 ♗f6 18.g3, preparing f4.

11...♗bd7 12.0-0 ♗c5 13.♖c2

The hanging state of the d5-pawn allows to meet 13.f3 by 13...b5!.



13...♙g4

I had a wide choice of moves here. Finally I decided that it would be useful for me to provoke f3, in order to enable future counterplay with ...e4. Of course a trade of light-squared bishops would be fine, considering that I had less space.

14.f3 ♘h5 15.♗b1

This move surprised me. White manoeuvres his knight to a better position, but he spends a lot of time and allows ...e4. More natural was 15.e4!? ♙g6 16.♗b1 ♘fd7

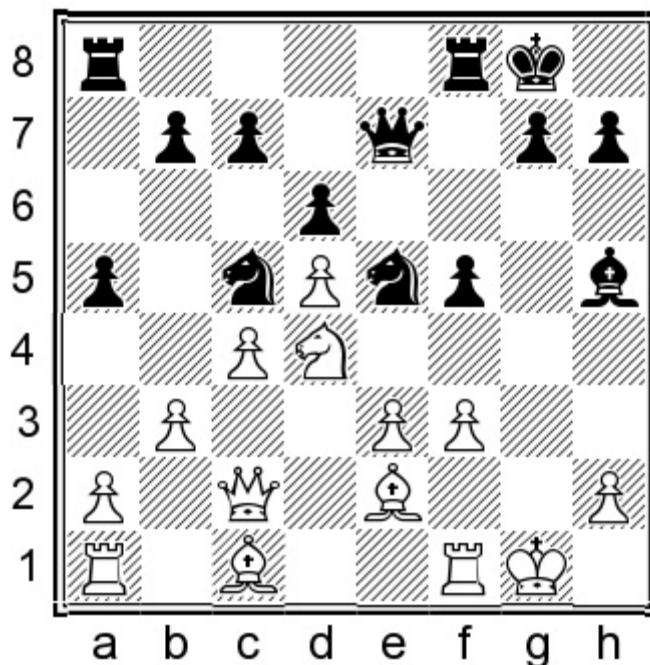
Or 16...♗h5 17.♙e3 f5 (17...♗f4 18.♙xc5 dxc5 19.g3) 18.exf5 ♙xf5 19.♚d2 ♗f4 20.♙d1 b6 21.♗c3∞.

17.♗c3 f5 18.♙e3 fxe4 19.fxe4 ♚h4 20.♙f3 ♗f6 21.♙f2 ♚g5 22.♚e2 b6=.

15...e4! 16.♗c3 exf3

16...c6!? 17.♚d2 ♚fe8 18.dxc6 bxc6 was also fine for me.

17.gxf3 ♘fd7 18.♗b5 ♗e5 19.♗d4 f5



20.♚f2

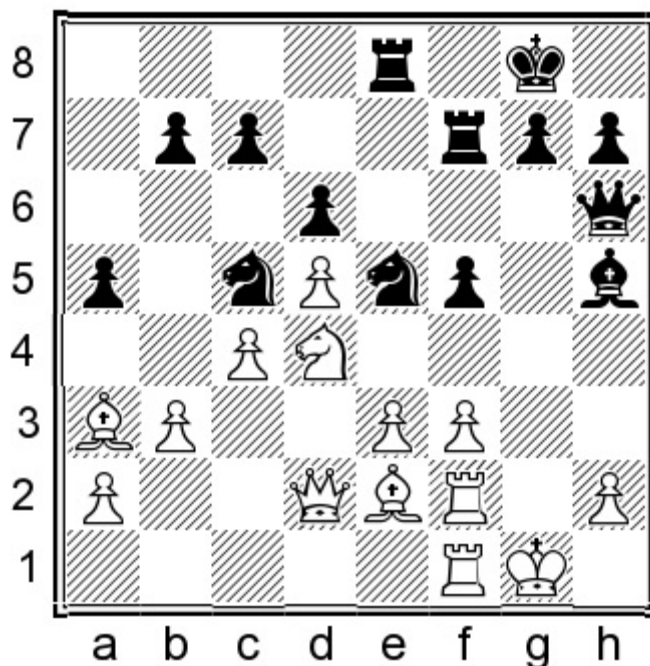
20.♗h1!? ♚h4 21.♙a3 b6 22.♙xc5 bxc5 23.♗e6 ♚f7 24.♗f4 ♚f6 25.♗g2 allowed White to maintain the balance.

20.f4 is risky: 20...♙xe2 21.♚xe2 ♗ed3 22.♙d2 ♚e4 23.♙c3 ♚f6 24.h3 ♚e8 25.♚f3 ♚g6+ 26.♗h2 b5 with an initiative.

20...♚f6 21.♚d2

It was high time to think about a draw with 21.f4 ♙xe2 22.fxe5 ♚g5+ 23.♚g2 ♙g4 24.h3 ♚h4=.

21...♖ae8 22.♙b2 ♚h6 23.♗af1 ♜f7 24.♙a3



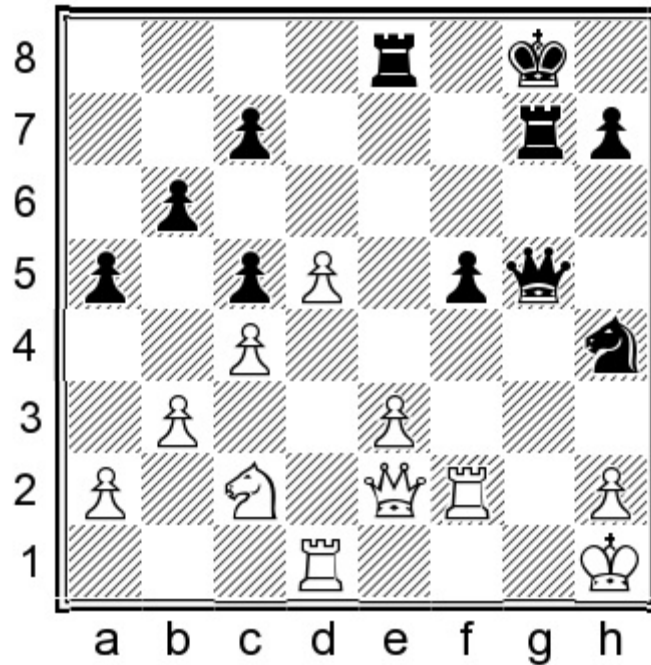
24...♘g6?!

I missed here to fix an edge with 24...f4! 25.exf4 ♘g6 26.♙xc5 ♘xf4!, regaining the material with strong pressure.

25.♘c2 ♘h4 26.♙xc5 dxc5 27.f4 b6 28.♙xh5 ♚xh5 29.♚e2 ♚h6 30.♞d1 g5

I' was clearly better and on top of all my opponent was in time trouble. The latter justifies my last move which is objectively not best. It was normal to keep pressing with 30...♞fe7 31.♙h1 ♚f6 or 30...♚f6 31.♘e1 g5!.

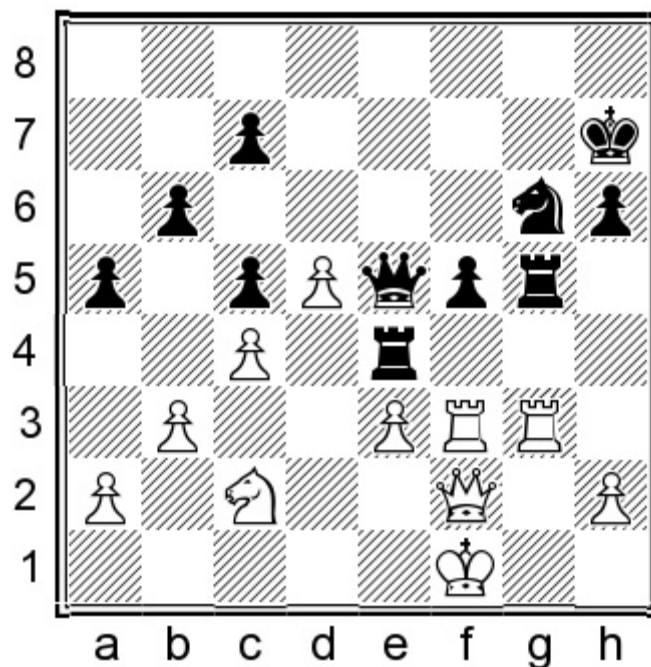
31.fxg5 ♚xg5+ 32.♙h1 ♞g7



33. ♖f1?

The fight has reached its climax. White could have stayed in the game with 33. ♖df1! while his mistake should have lost after 33. ♖f1 ♔h8! 34. ♖f4 ♖eg8 35. ♖f2 ♖h5 36. ♖c1 ♖g2 37. ♖xh4 ♖g6+. Instead of bracing myself for a hard calculating work, I just waited for his flag to do the job. Luckily, Damljanovic's 40th move ruined decisively his defence.

33... ♖e4? 34. ♖f4 h6 35. ♖f2 ♖e7 36. ♖g1 ♖g5 37. ♖g3 ♔h7 38. ♔g1 ♖e5 39. ♔f1 ♖g6 40. ♖ff3?



40. ♖gf3! ♖e7 41. ♖g3 would have left White in the game.

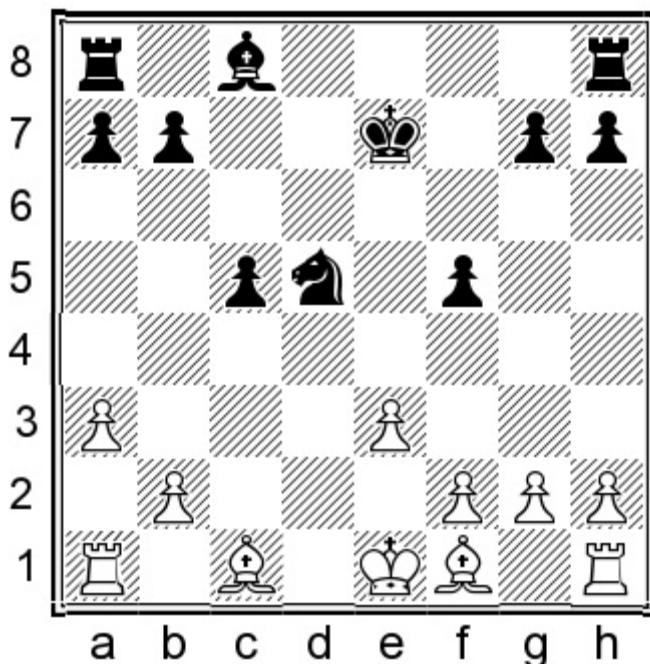
40... f4! 41. exf4 ♖xf4 42. ♖e3 ♖f5 43. ♖e1 ♖xg3 44. ♖xg3 ♖e2 45. ♖xe2 ♖xe2+ 46. ♔xe2 ♖b1+ 47. a4

♖b2+ 48.♔f1 ♜xh2 49.♜f3 ♘g6 50.♘d3 ♘g5 51.♘f2 h5 52.♜h3 ♜e5 53.♘g2 ♘f6 54.♜f3+ ♘e7
 55.♜d3 ♘d7 56.♜g3 ♘c8 57.♜d3 ♘b7 58.♘f3 ♜h2 59.♘e2 ♜f4 60.♜f3 ♜e5+ 61.♜e3 ♜b2+ 62.♘f3
 ♜c2 63.♘d3 h4 64.♘f2 ♜g6 65.♘e2 ♘c8 66.♜d3 ♘b8 67.♘d2 ♜g7 68.♘e2 ♜b2+ 69.♘e3 ♜c2
 70.♘f3 h3 0-1

8. Black Mamba 2 – Chiron 3

CCRL 03.06.2016

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♗b4 3.♜b3 ♘c6 4.e3 ♗xc3 5.♜xc3 ♜e7 6.♘f3 ♘f6 7.d4 exd4 8.♘xd4 ♘xd4 9.♜xd4 c5
 10.♜h4 d5 11.cxd5 ♘xd5 12.♜xe7+ ♘xe7 13.a3 f5



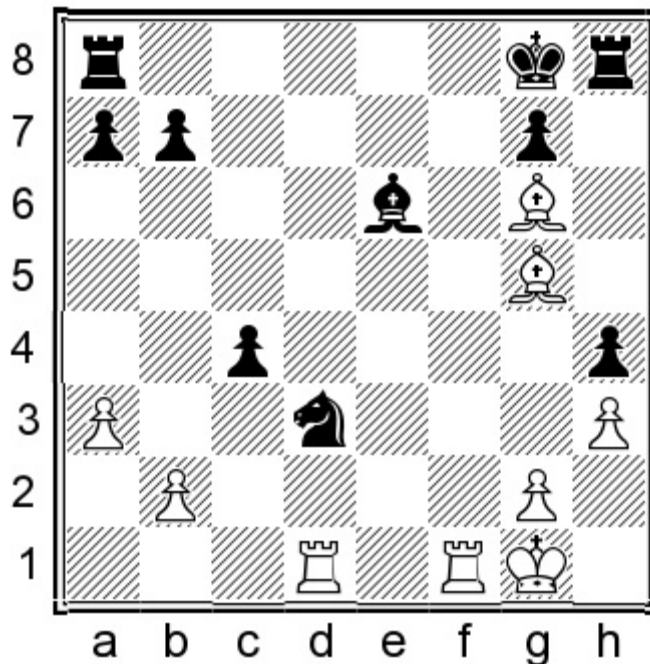
14.♗d3

A curious alternative is:

14.f3 ♗e6 15.e4 fxe4 16.fxe4 ♘f6 17.e5 ♘e4

In my opinion, 17...♘d7! 18.♗g5+ ♘f7 19.♗e2 ♜he8! 20.♗f4 ♘g8 21.0-0 ♘b6 holds on firmly, e.g. 22.♜fd1 ♘c4 23.♗f3 ♘xb2 24.♜d6 ♜ad8 25.♗xb7 h6=. However, if Black shows a good appetite, his position may easily become critical:

19...♘xe5 20.♗h5+ ♘g8 21.0-0 h6 22.♗e7 ♘d3 23.♜ad1 c4 24.♗g6 h5 25.♗g5 h4 26.h3

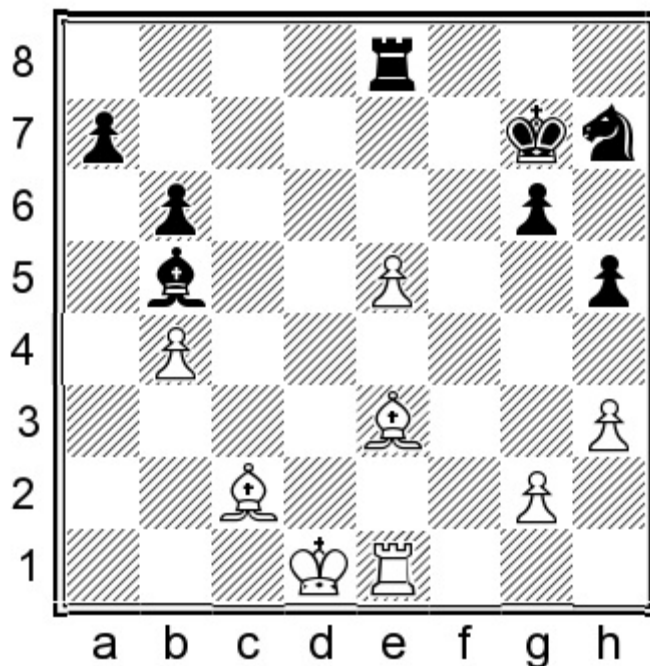


It is difficult to find moves here. The point is that Black can never exchange a pair of rooks owing to 26...♖f8? 27.♗xf8+ ♔xf8 28.♖f1+ ♔g8 29.♙e7, mating!

18.♙d3 ♙d5 19.0-0 ♔e6 20.♖e1 ♔xe5 21.b4 ♖ae8 22.bxc5↑, and White went on to win in the engine game Arasan 18.2-Thinker 5.4c, CCRL 2015.

White has also tested a slower version of the same plan:

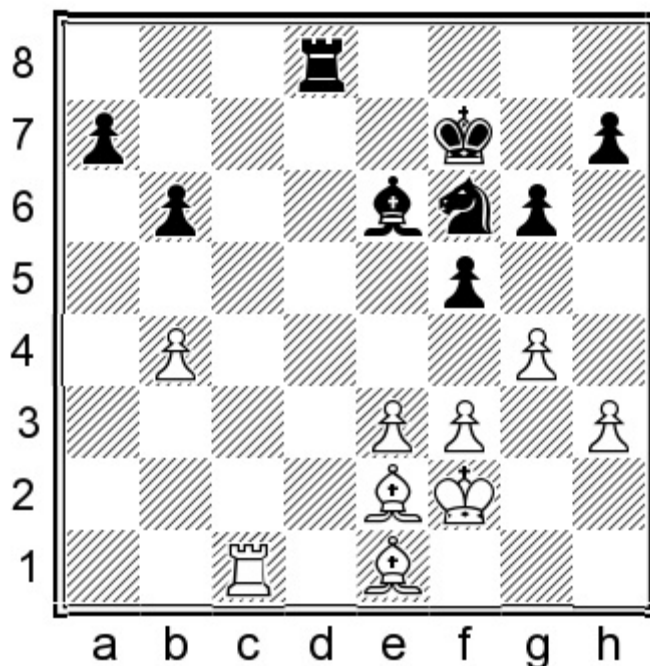
14.f3 ♙e6 15.♙d2 ♔f7 16.h3 h5 17.♙e2 ♘f6 18.♙d1 ♖ad8 19.♙c2 ♖he8 20.0-0-0 g6 21.e4 fxe4 22.fxe4 ♙c4 23.♖he1 ♖d4 24.♙g5 ♖xd1+ 25.♔xd1 ♔g7 26.b3 ♙b5 27.e5 ♘h7 28.♙e3 b6 29.b4 cxb4 30.axb4



30...♘f8! (30...a5 31.e6 ♙c4 32.bxa5 bxa5 33.e7±) 31.♔c1 ♙c6 32.♖e2 ♔h7 33.♖f2 ♙d5 34.♙d2 ♘d7 35.♙c3 ♖e7 36.♖e2=, Komodo 10-Critter 1.6a, CCRL 2016.

Finally, here is an example where White pushes b4, but with a bishop on d2:

14.f3 ♔e6 15.h3 ♚f7 16.♙d2 ♜ad8 17.♞c1 b6 18.b4 cxb4 19.axb4 ♞he8 20.g4 g6 21.♙e2 ♜f6 22.♞f1 ♞c8 23.♚f2 ♞xc1 24.♞xc1 ♞d8 25.♙e1,



White had a slight pull in the game Komodo 10-Fire 4, CCRL 2016, but the machine defended confidently.

In all those examples White pushed e4 and attacked the c5-pawn with b4. That gave him an initiative, but left too little material to win against flawless defence.

In the main game White refrains from early e4:

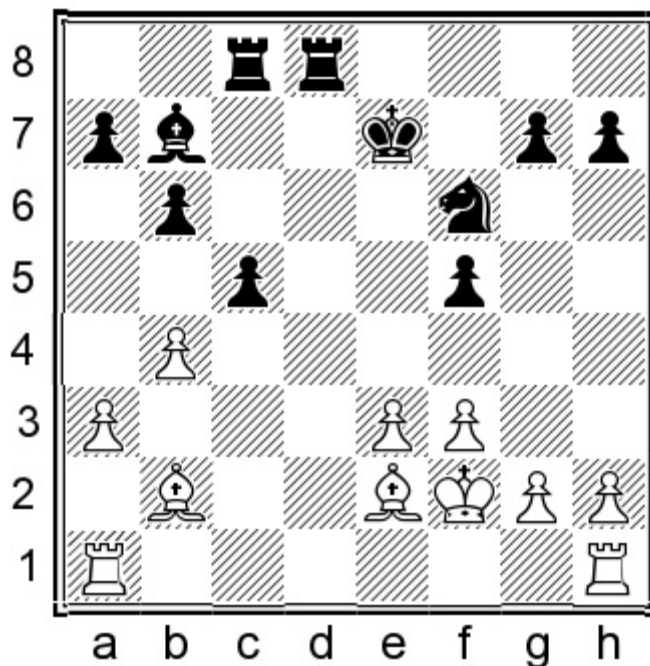
14...♜f6

Or 14...♞d8 15.♙c2 ♜f6 16.♙d2.

An engine won a game with 16.f3 ♙e6 17.e4 fxe4 18.fxe4 h6 19.0-0, but I believe that we should develop first.

16...♚f7 17.0-0-0.

15.b4!? ♞d8 16.♙e2 b6 17.♙b2 ♙b7 18.f3 ♞ac8 19.♚f2



Our plan is to double the rooks on the c-file. Critical is 19...♖d2! 20.♙c3 ♜c2 21.♜hc1 ♜xc1 22.♜xc1 ♘d5.

Now we could win a pawn with 23.♙xg7 cxb4 24.♜xc8 ♙xc8 25.♙c4, but accept opposite-coloured bishops. Of course, we should keep the tension with: 23.♙d2. The bishop pair would still allow us to squeeze the opponent.

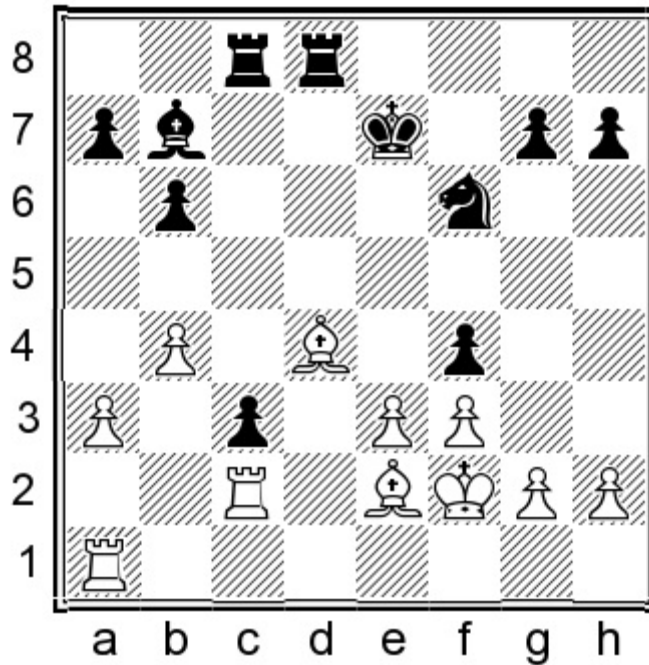
It was also possible to adopt a passive set-up: 19...g6 20.♜hc1 ♘d7 21.h3 ♕e6 22.♜ab1 ♙d5 23.♙a6±. The 3140 Elo-rated engine decides to get a passed pawn:

19...c4?! 20.♙d4 f4

Black's position is gloom following 20...♙d5 21.♜ac1 ♙e6 22.♜hd1 ♕f7 23.b5, intending ♜c2.

21.♜hc1 c3 22.♙xc3!?

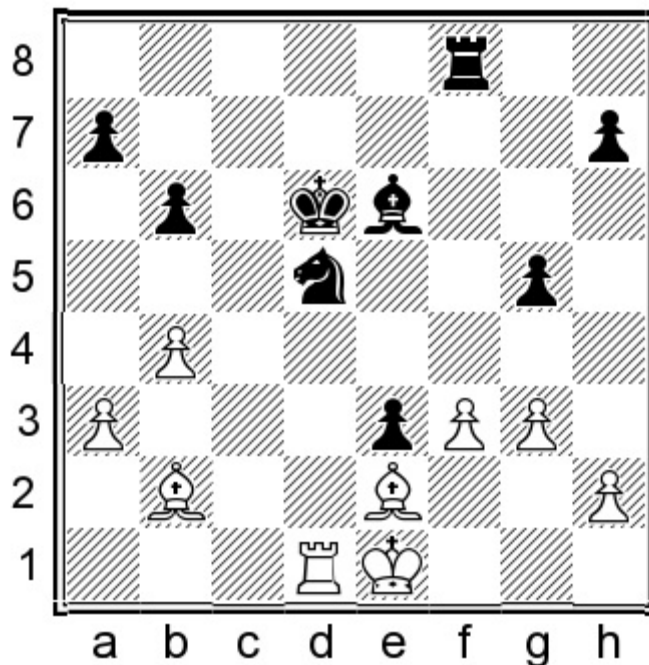
A human would have chosen to obtain immediately good practical chances to win after: 22.♜c2±, eating the c3-pawn. For instance:



22...fxe3+ 23.♙xe3 ♔f8 24.♖ac1 ♜d5 25.♙d4 ♜f4 26.♙xc3 ♜xe2 27.♙xe2 ♔f7 28.♙e5±;
 22...♜d5 23.exf4 ♜xf4 24.♙xc3±.

However, in open positions a 3133 Elo-rated computer is a beast, and its horizon extends well beyond practical thinking of protein players. It calculates that it should be able to grab a pawn without allowing opposite-coloured bishops.

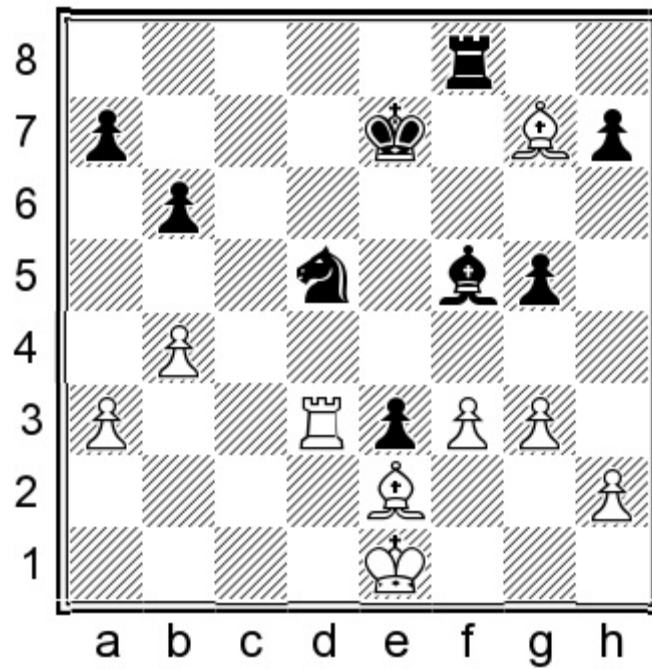
22...fxe3+ 23.♙f1 g5 24.♙b2 ♜d5 25.g3 ♖f8 26.♖xc8 ♙xc8 27.♙e1 ♔d6 28.♖d1 ♙e6



29.♙g7?

Suddenly the machine falls in the biggest trap for engines in endgames – positional fortresses. The direct attack on e3 is clearly better:

29.♔d4 ♕e7 30.♖d3 ♗f5 31.♘g7

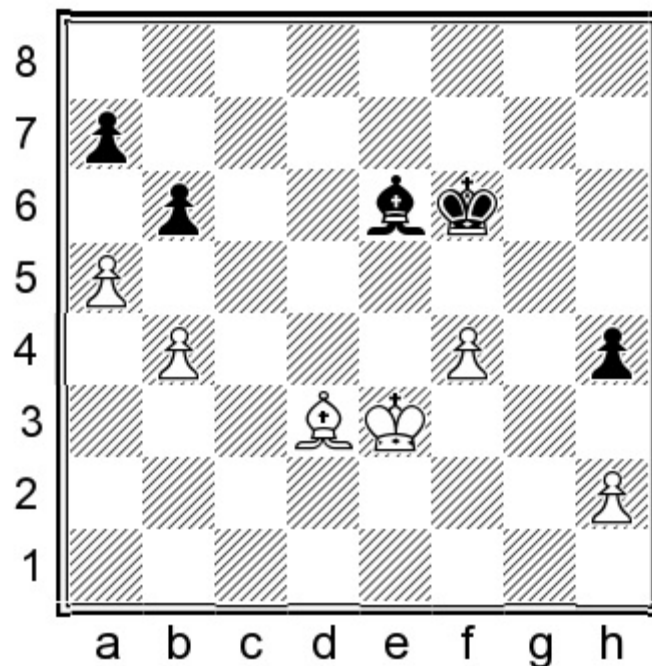


31...♖d8

Or 31...♔xd3 32.♔xf8+ ♕xf8 33.♔xd3 ♜c3 34.♔xh7 ♕g7 35.♔d3 ♕h6 36.f4+-.

32.♖d4 ♕f7 33.♔e5 ♕e6 34.f4 ♗h3 35.♔f3 ♖d7 36.♔h8 ♖d8 37.fxg5 ♖xh8 38.♔xd5+ ♕e5 39.♖h4 ♗f5 40.♔c4±.

29...♖c8 30.♔d3 ♕e7 31.♔b2 h6 32.♖c1 ♖xc1+ 33.♔xc1 ♕d7 34.♕e2 ♕d6 35.♔xe3 ♜xe3 36.♕xe3 ♕e5 37.a4 h5 38.a5 h4 39.f4+ gxf4+ 40.gxf4+ ♕f6



White cannot improve his position.

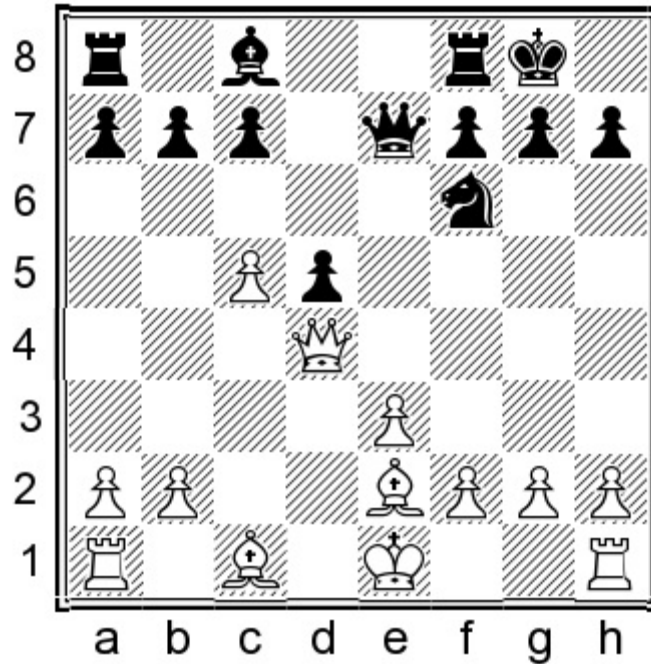
41.♕e4 ♗f5+ 42.♕d4 ♗e6 43.axb6 axb6 44.♗f1 ♗g4 45.♕c4 ♕f5 46.♕b5 ♕xf4 47.♕xb6 ♕f3 48.♕c5

♔f2 49.♙c4 ♕g2 50.b5 h3 51.b6 ♙f3 52.♙d5 ♙xd5 53.♔xd5 ½-½

9. Stockfish 6 – Komodo 9.3

CCRL 40/40 22.12.2015

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♗f6 3.♗f3 ♗c6 4.e3 ♙b4 5.♙c2 ♙xc3 6.♙xc3 ♙e7 7.♙e2 d5 8.d4 exd4 9.♗xd4 ♗xd4
10.♙xd4 0-0 11.c5

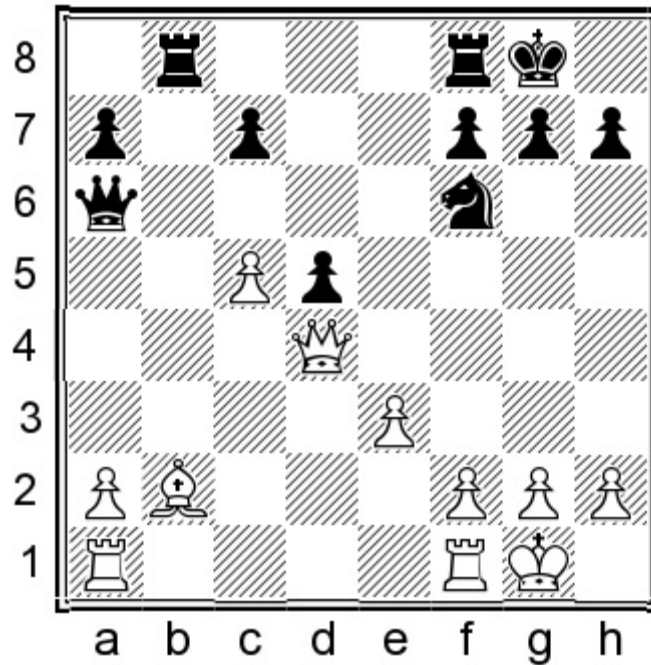


This is almost obligatory if White wants to extract something from the opening.

11...b6 12.b4 bxc5 13.bxc5 ♙e6

It is a good idea to deprive White of the bishop pair. The attempt to do it with 13...♖b8 14.0-0 c6 15.♙d3 ♙g4 16.♙b2 ♙d7 17.f3 ♙f5 would fail to 18.♙e2.

14.0-0 ♙a6 15.♙xa6 ♙xa6 16.♙b2 ♖ab8



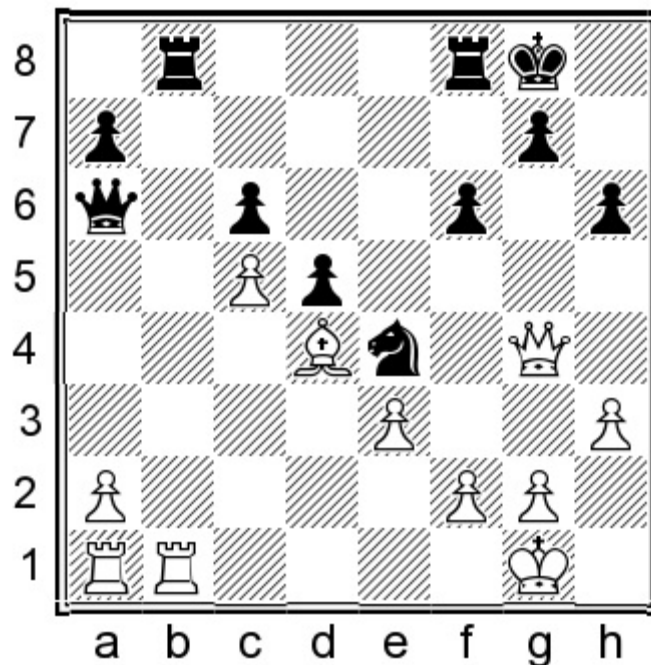
Black could untie the knight with 16...c6 17.♔f4 ♖e4 18.♙d4 f6, but 19.h4 would deny the manoeuvre ...♖e4-e6xd4. White's next step will be to open the centre.

17.♔d2

A purely computer move. It cannot assess that White does not have much chances to win the rook endgame after 17...♖fd8 18.♙e5 ♖e4 19.♔d4 ♖g5! 20.♙xc7 ♖e6 21.♔e5 ♖xc7 22.♔xc7 ♖bc8 23.♔e7 ♖e8 24.♔d6 ♔xd6 25.cxd6 ♖cd8.

It is clear that White must free his queen from its role of defender of b2. I see two plausible ways to do it:

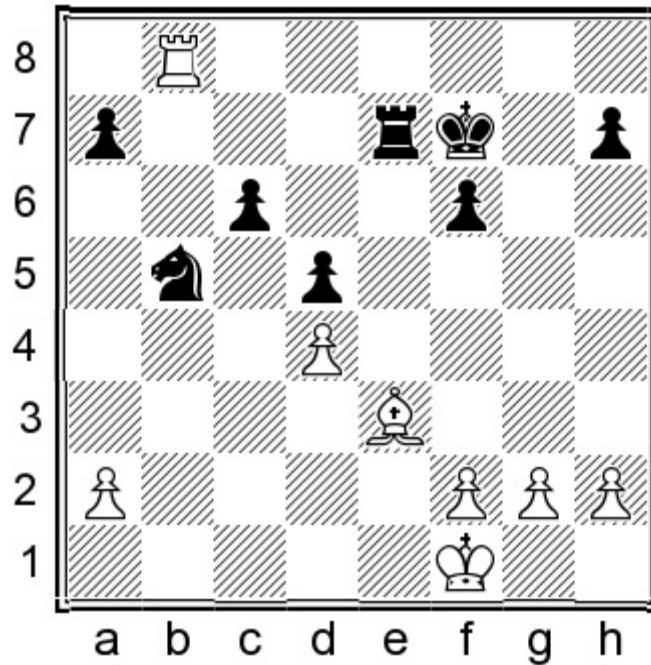
17.h3 h6 18.♖fb1 c6 19.♔d1 ♖e4 20.♔g4 f6 21.♙d4



Or 17.♙c3 c6 18.h3 ♜fe8 19.♚f4 ♘e4 20.♙d4 f6 21.♞fb1.

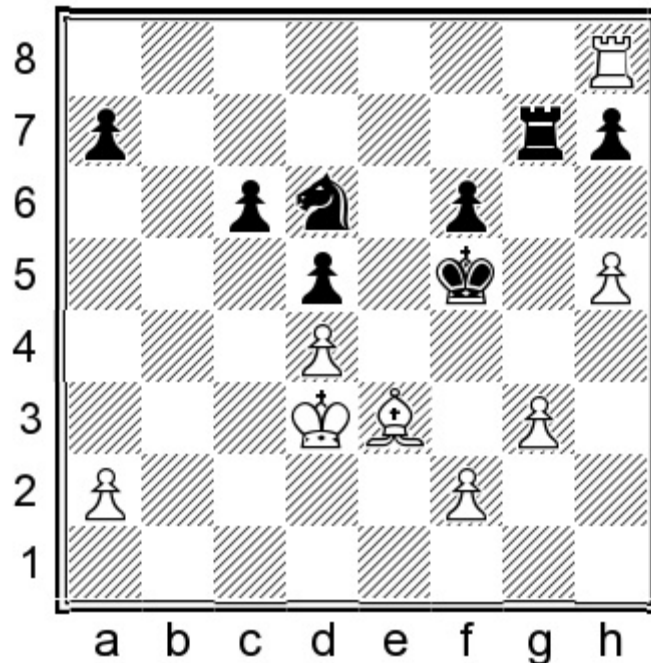
In both lines White's queen is a little more active.

17...♞fd8 18.♙e5 ♘e4 19.♚d4 ♜c6?! (19...♘g5!) 20.♙xg7 f6 21.♙h6 ♜xc5 22.♞fc1 ♚xd4 23.exd4 ♞d7 24.♞ab1 ♞xb1 25.♞xb1 ♘c3 26.♞b8+ ♔f7 27.♔f1 c6 28.♙d2 ♘b5 29.♙e3 ♞e7



It is very instructive to watch what miracles can produce a rook, conducted by a 3231 rated engine. Do not underestimate its opponent – Komodo was even higher rated at 3260 at that moment!

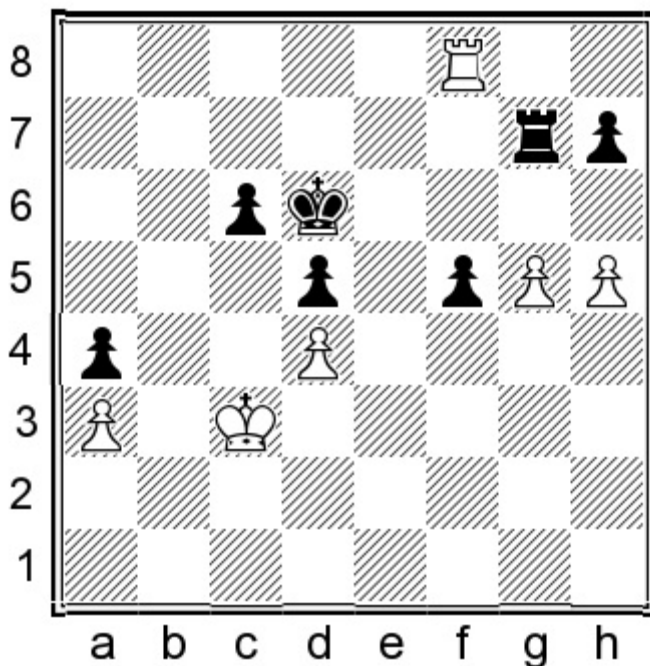
30.♞c8 ♞c7 31.♞h8 ♔e6 32.♔e2 ♞b7 33.♔d3 ♘d6 34.h4 ♞g7 35.g3 ♔f5 36.h5



36...♞b7 37.f3 ♔e6 38.g4 ♘c4 39.♙h6 ♘d6 40.f4

Black is nearly stalemated and now the threat f5+ forces Komodo to allow a passed pawn. Its game is beyond salvation:

40...f5 41.g5 ♘f7 42.♖f8 ♔d6 43.♕c3 a5 44.a3 ♜d7 45.♕c2 a4 46.♕c3 ♞b7 47.♙g7 ♘xg5 48.fxg5 ♞xg7

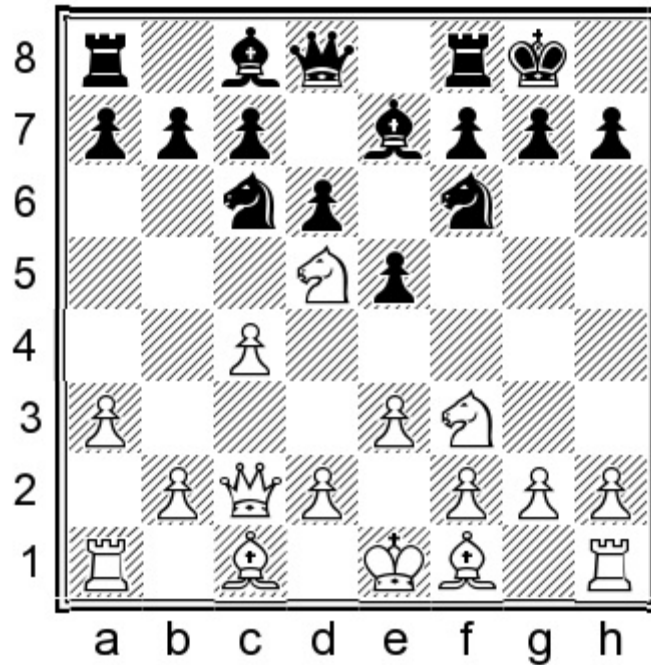


49.♞f6+ ♔e7 50.♞xf5 ♞g8 51.♕b4 ♔e6 52.♞f6+ ♔e7 53.♞xc6 ♞xg5 54.♞c7+ ♔d6 55.♞xh7 ♞g4 56.♞h6+ ♔e7 57.♕c5 ♞g3 58.♞d6 ♞xa3 59.h6 ♔f7 60.♕xd5 ♔g8 61.♕c4 ♔h7 62.♕b4 ♞a2 63.d5 a3 64.♕a4 ♞a1 65.♕b3 ♔h8 66.♞d7 ♔g8 1-0

10. Voetter – Kleiser ICCF 2014

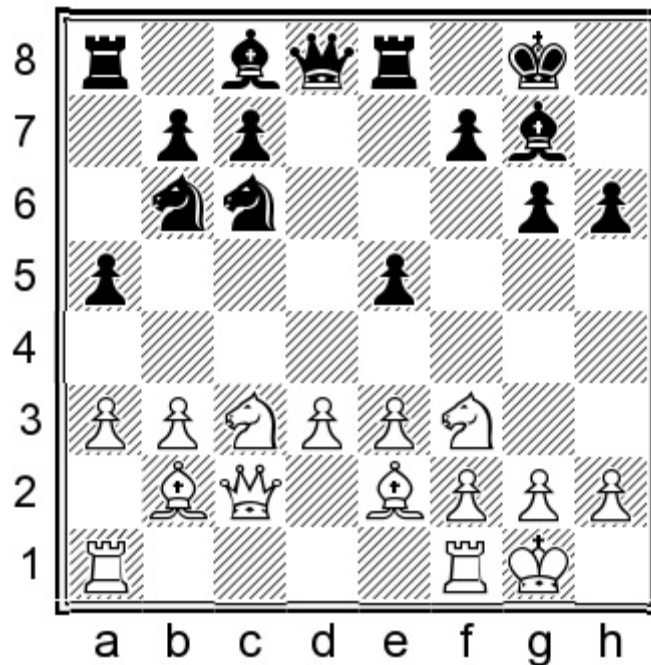
1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3 ♙e7

More interesting for us is the move order 4...♙b4 5.♙c2 0-0 6.♘d5 ♙e7 7.a3 d6



White has now 3 decent options:

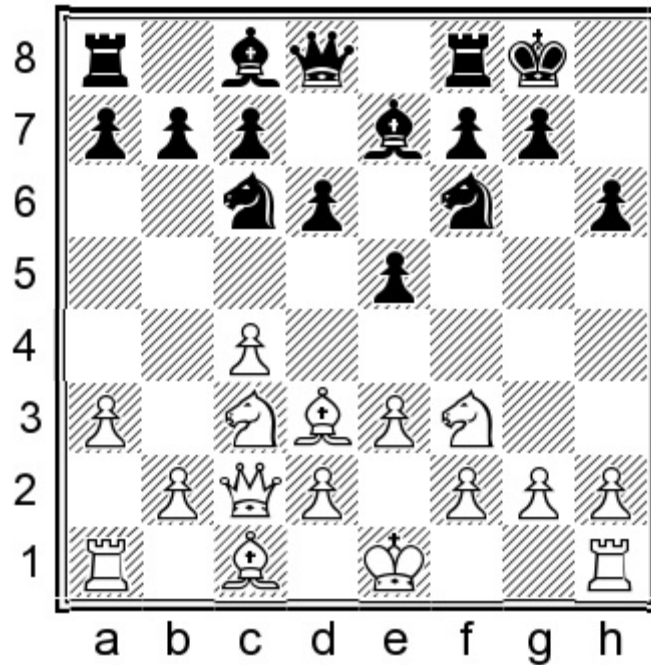
a) 8.♘c3!? transposes to the main game after 8...d5. Black does not gain anything by delaying it – 8...♙e6 9.b4 or 8...♞e8 9.♙e2 ♙f8 10.d3 d5 11.cxd5 ♘xd5 12.♙d2 a5 13.0-0 ♘b6 14.b3 h6 15.♙c1 g6 16.♙b2 ♙g7



17.♞ac1 ♞e7 18.♘e4 ♗h7 19.♞fe1 ♘d7, Spraggett-Campora, Lugano 1988. Now 20.h4! would have been in White's favour, e.g. 20...f5 21.♘g3 ♞f7 22.h5 g5 23.e4 f4 24.♘f5±.

b) 8.♙d3 h6 9.♘c3

Or Black will take on d5 – 9.b4 ♘xd5 10.cxd5 ♘b8 11.♙b2 c6 12.♙c4 ♘d7 13.0-0∞.



9...♙e6

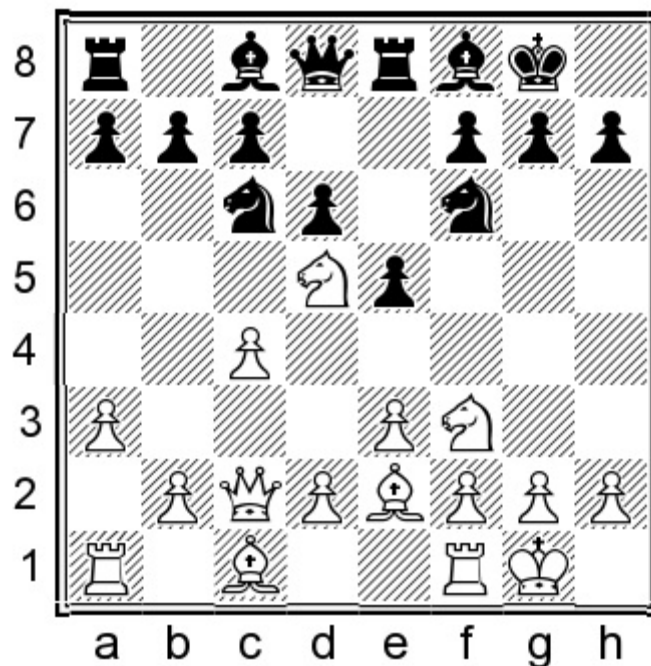
9...d5 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xd5 ♙xd5 12.b4 is an ideal Taimanov set-up.

10.b4 d5

10...a5 11.b5 ♘a7 12.0-0 c6 13.bxc6 bxc6 14.♙e2 ♙c7 15.d4 ♜ab8 16.♘a4 ♘c8 17.♙b2 offers White some pressure, mostly because of the weak a5-pawn.

11.cxd5 ♘xd5 12.0-0 (12.♘xd5 ♙xd5 13.♙b2 ♙f6∞) 12...f5 13.♘xd5 ♙xd5 14.e4 with complex play.

c) 8.♙e2 ♜e8 9.0-0 ♙f8



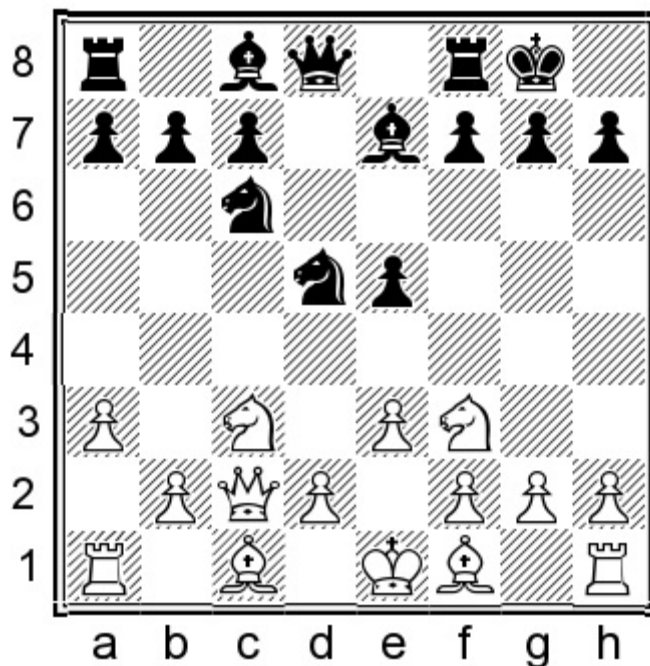
10.♜d1

Cheparinov-Kravtsiv, Ankara 2018, showed that 10.♘g5 is just a waste of time – 10...g6

11.♘xf6+ ♙xf6 12.♘e4 ♙d8 13.b4 ♙g7 14.♙b2 f5 15.♘c3∞.

10...♟xd5 11.cxd5 ♞e7 12.d4 exd4 13.♞xd4 g6 14.e4 h6 15.♞f4. White retains more space, but Black could remedy that by 15...c6 16.dxc6 ♞xc6 17.♞d2 ♞e6 18.♞b5 ♞c8 19.♞d3 a6 20.♞xc6 ♞xc6.

5.a3 0-0 6.♞c2 d5 7.cxd5 ♟xd5



8.♟xd5

Staying in the Taimanov waters.

8.♞e2 a5 9.0-0 ♞e6 10.d3 ♟b6 11.b3 is covered in Chapter 4/B2 which considers the Scheveningen Reversed.

8.♞d3 is best met by 8...♟h8!.

8...♞xd5 9.♞c4

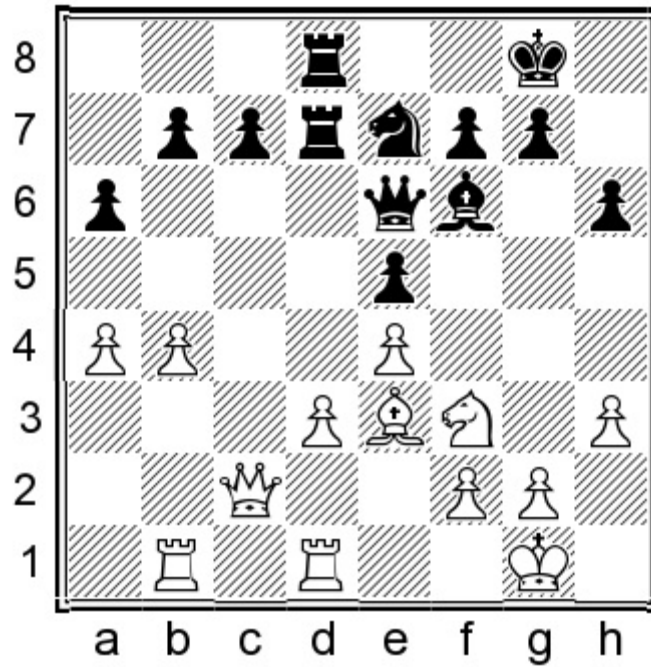
9.♞d3 ♟h8 10.b4

10.♞e4 ♞e6 11.b4 ♞d7 12.♞b2 f5 13.♞xc6 ♞xc6 14.♟xe5 ♞xg2 15.♞g1 ♞e4 16.♟d7 is known to be a draw.

10...f5 11.♞b2 e4 12.♞c4 ♞d6 13.♟d4 ♞d7 14.♟xc6 ♞xc6∞.

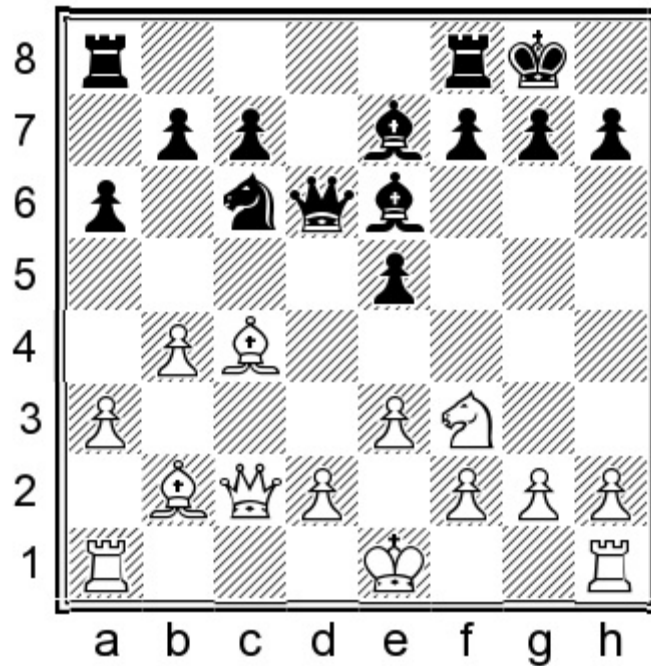
9...♞d6 10.b4 a6

Piket-Ivanchuk, Wijk aan Zee 2001, saw 10...♞f6 11.♞b1 ♟e7 12.d3 ♞f5 13.h3 ♞ad8 14.e4 ♞e6 15.♞xe6 ♞xe6 16.0-0 ♞d7 17.♞d1 ♞fd8 18.♞e3 a6 19.a4 h6



White does not have anything tangible yet, but he could manoeuvre his rooks on the queenside open files without any risk, while Black should only wait. For example: 20.b5 ♖g6 21.a5 with some pressure on b7 and c7. The d3-pawn is easy to defend.

11. ♖b2 ♗e6



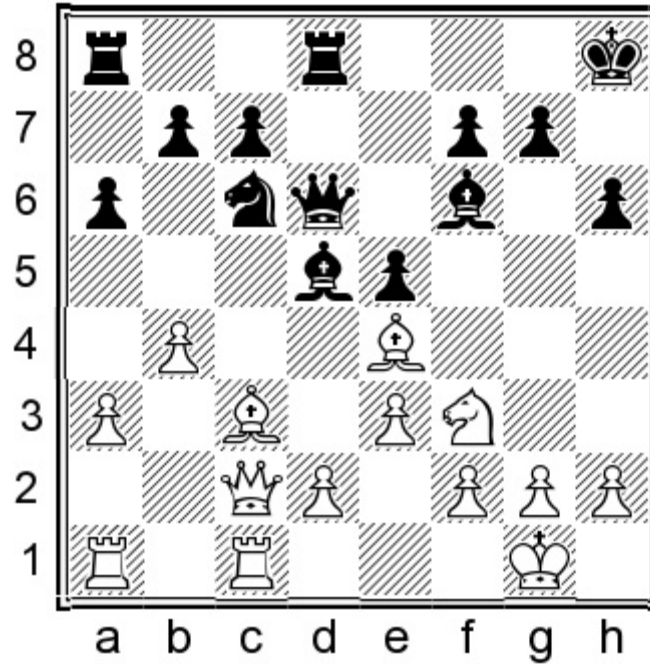
12.0-0

Dizdarevic against me as Black traded queens with 12. ♖c1 ♜ad8 13.0-0 ♗d5 14. ♗xd5 ♛xd5 15. ♛c4=.

12... ♗f6

12...♙xc4 13.♚xc4 ♖fd8 could be faced with 14.d4 with some pull. The bishop move prevents this idea.

13.♙d3 h6 14.♙h7+ ♔h8 15.♙e4 ♙d5 16.♙c3 ♖fd8 17.♖fc1

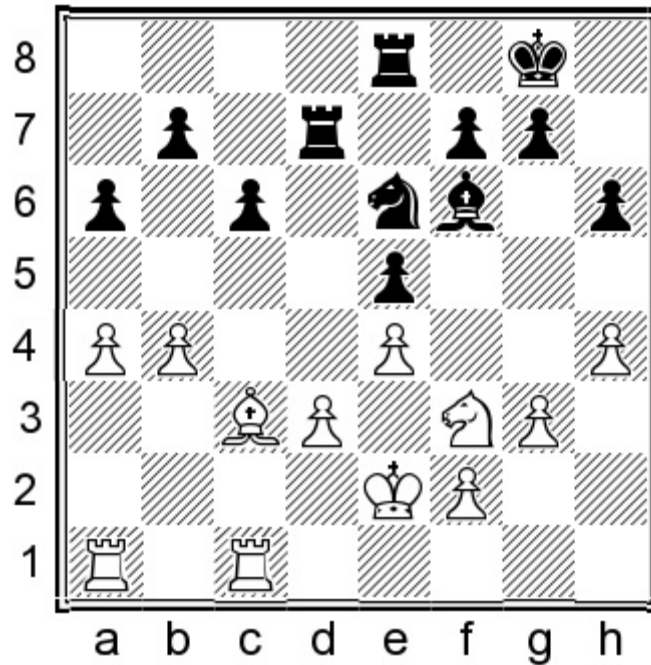


White has good control of the centre, and is ready to start preparing b4-b5. Kleiser decides to exchange the queens to reduce the tension.

17...♙xe4 18.♚xe4 ♚d3 19.♚xd3 ♖xd3 20.e4 ♔g8 21.♔f1 ♖e8 22.♔e2 ♖d7 23.a4 ♜d8 24.h4

White's game is playing itself. The e5-pawn will soon become a nuisance, especially if White brings a third hit on it with ♖c5.

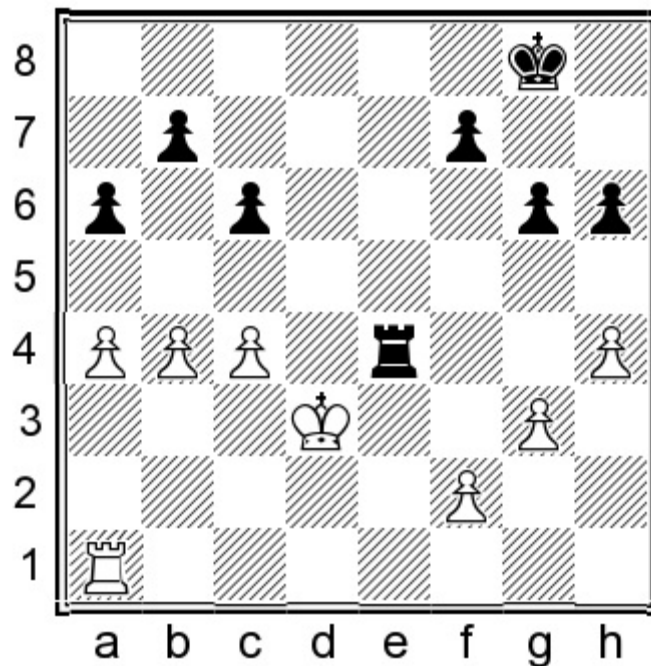
24...♜e6 25.g3 c6 26.d3



26...g6?!

Black opts for a rook endgame, which turns out to be difficult. It was better to stay passive. Then the only sensible try for White seems to be f2-f4. For that aim White should put his pieces: ♕e3, ♖b3, ♜d1.

27. ♖xe5!? ♖d4+ 28. ♕xd4 ♜xd4 29. ♖c4 ♜xc4 30. dxc4 ♕xa1 31. ♜xa1 ♜xe4+ 32. ♔d3

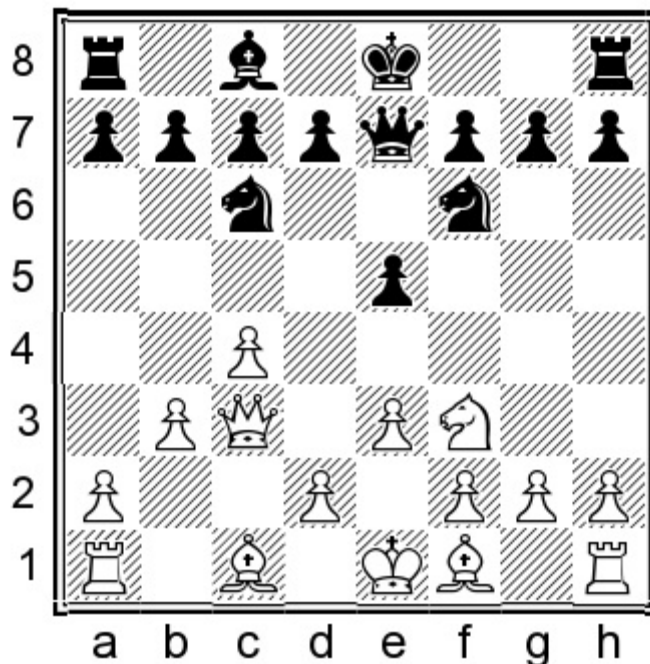


White's king is close to the weak queenside pawns. I would say that Black should have some defence, but if a correspondence player cannot find it, things are probably worse than they look at the surface. Perhaps critical is 32...♜e6 33. ♔d4 b6 34. ♔c3! (threatening a5) 34...c5 (34...♜d6 35.c5+-). I have not analysed this in detail, but 35.a5 looks winning.

32...f5 33.f3 ♖e6 34.♗d4 f4 35.gxf4 ♜f6 36.♖c5 ♜xf4 37.♖b6 ♜xc4 38.♜b1 a5 39.♖xa5 ♜d4 40.♖b6 ♜d7 41.a5 ♖g7 42.♜e1 ♖f7 43.♖a7 h5 44.f4 ♖f8 45.♜g1 ♖f7 46.♜g5 ♜d4 47.b5 cxb5 48.♖xb7 ♜xf4 49.a6 ♜xh4 50.a7 ♜a4 51.♜c5 1-0

11. Caruana – Karjakin Stavanger 02.06.2018

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♗c3 e5 3.♗f3 ♗c6 4.e3 ♘b4 5.♜c2 ♘xc3 6.♜xc3 ♜e7 7.b3



A better move order is 7.♘e2 0-0 8.b3 ♜e8 9.♘b2 b6 10.a3 a5 11.h3, transposing to the game.

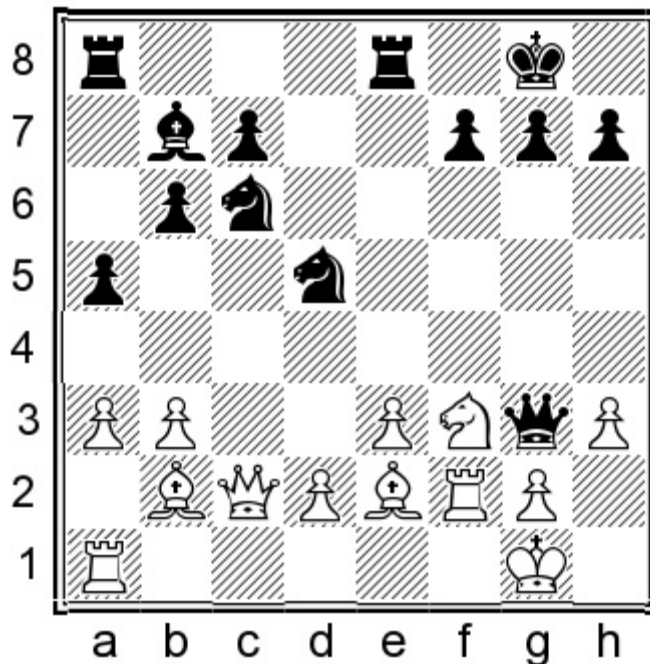
7...0-0 8.♘b2 ♜e8 9.a3 a5 10.h3 b6 11.♘e2 ♘b7 12.0-0 d5?!

It is a bad idea to open the centre with the bishop on b7 instead of its natural position on e6. It was better to bolster the e5-pawn with 12...♗e4 13.♜c2 ♗c5 14.d3 ♜e6 15.♗e1 d6.

13.cxd5 ♗xd5 14.♜c2

White could have prevented ...e4 with 14.♜c4!? ♜ad8 15.d3, but he assesses that the pawn advance will only make it easier to open the f-file in his favour.

14...e4 15.♗h2 ♜g5 16.f4 (16.f3) 16...exf3 17.♗xf3 ♜g3 18.♜f2



Houdini evaluates this position as close to winning! All White's pieces hide serious potential and the pawn centre protects him excellently.

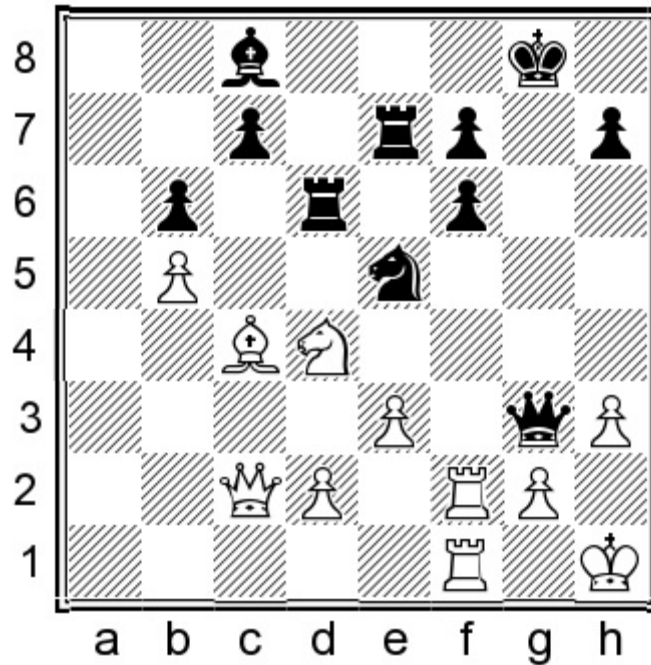
18...♖ad8 19.♙c4 ♘f6

Not a nice move. Black could not find another defence against the threat ♙f5, e.g. 19...♞e7 20.♞af1 ♔h8? 21.♙f5 ♙c8 22.♙g5 ♙xg5 23.♘xg5 f6 24.e4+-. Accepting doubled pawns is the lesser evil.

20.♙xf6 gxf6 21.♞af1 ♞d6 22.b4 axb4 23.axb4 ♞e7

23...♘xb4? loses to 24.♙xf7+ ♔xf7 25.♙xc7+ ♞e7 26.♘g5+ ♔e8 27.♙b8+.

24.b5 ♘e5 25.♘d4 ♙c8 26.♔h1



26...♔g7?!

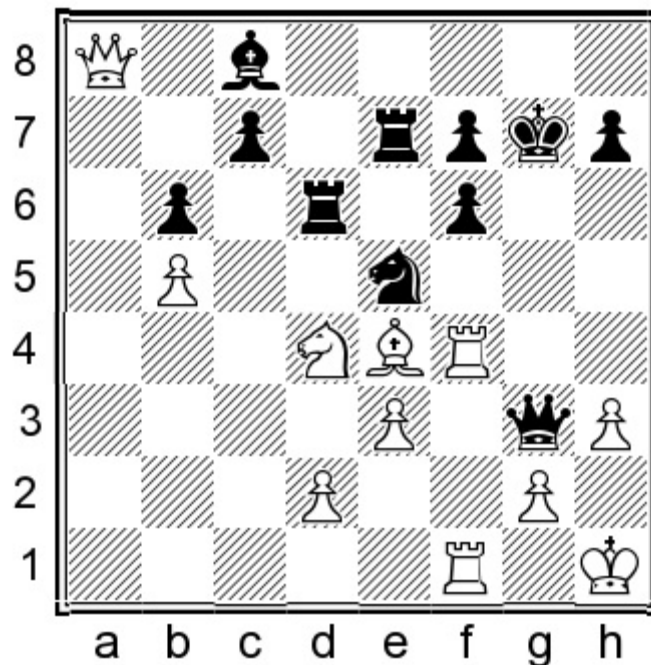
Karjakin could have posed much more complex problems with 26...f5!, opening the sixth rank for his rook. In order to keep the edge, Caruana should have found a series of strong moves starting with: 27.♔g1!

Not an easy decision, having in mind that White's last was ♔h1!

The pawn on f5 was immune due to 27.♖xf5 ♕xf5 28.♖xf5 ♖xc4 29.♙xc4 ♖xd2.

27...f4 28.♙e4! fxe3 29.♖xf7 ♖xf7 30.♕xf7+ ♔g7 31.♖e2 ♙g5 32.h4 ♙e7 33.dxe3 with an extra pawn.

27.♕e2 ♔h8 28.♙c3 ♔g7 29.♕d1 ♔g8 30.♕c2 ♙h4 31.♖f4 ♙g3 32.♕f5 ♕b7 33.♕e4 ♕c8 34.♙a3 ♔g7 35.♙a8

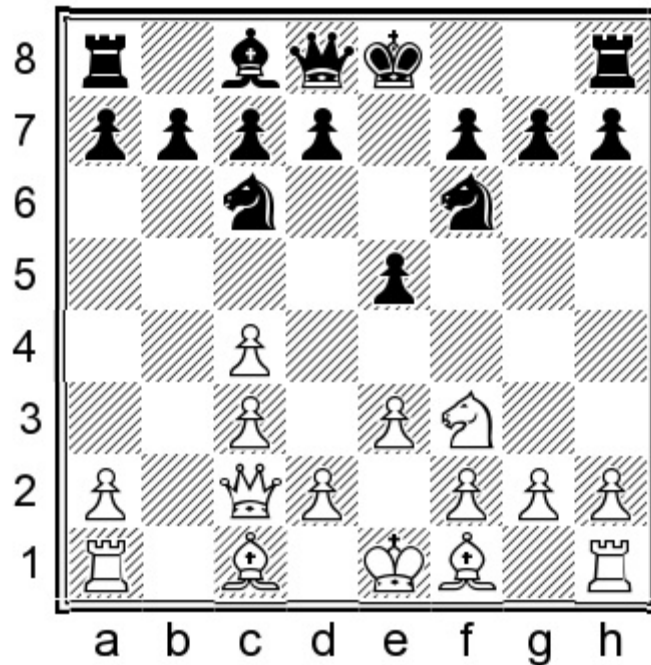


This puts the end since 35...♙d7 36.♙f5 gains control over the critical square f5.

35...♙xh3 36.gxh3 ♖xh3+ 37.♔g1 ♜xd4 38.♙g2 ♖g3 39.♜xd4 ♝g4 40.♜f3 ♖e1+ 41.♙f1 1-0

Chapter 3. 4.e3 ♗b4 5.♔c2 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 Main Ideas

1.c4 e5 2.♗c3 ♗f6 3.♗f3 ♗c6 4.e3 ♗b4 5.♔c2 ♗xc3 6.bxc3

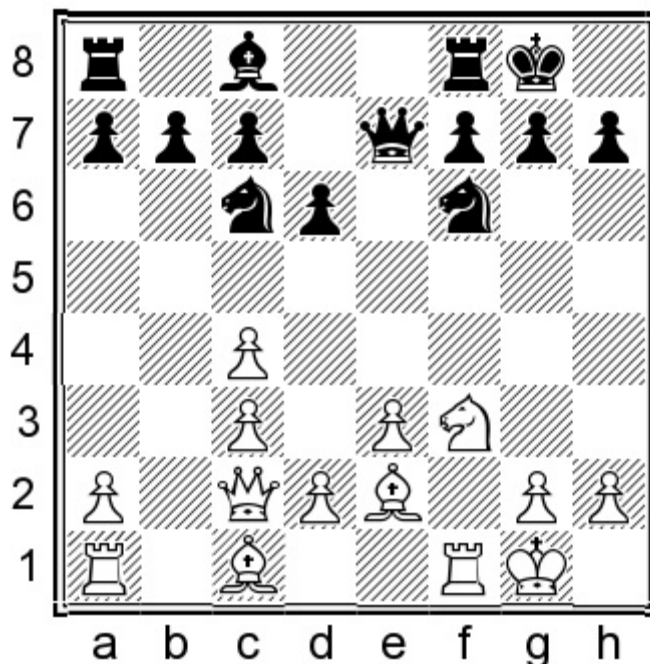


This surprising recapture was promoted in the 70ies and 80ies by GM Mikhail Suba, but it has always been in the shadow of 6.♔xc3. Until recently! In 2017-2018 we saw Carlsen, Aronian, Nepomniachtch, Harikrishna, Ponomarev, Navara and many other top grandmasters to adopt it, with considerable success. I believe that objectively 6.bxc3 leaves White less chances to fight for a theoretical edge, but in OTB games it yields hefty 8% more than 6.♔xc3. I suspect, that is caused by the surprise effect, but whatever the reason, you should benefit from Black's weakness. Having both variations in your repertoire will greatly impede a superficial home preparation before tournament games.

In order to play well this line, you should take into account several typical plans and method of playing in the common pawn structures.

White's main aim is to open the f-file. This is easy after:

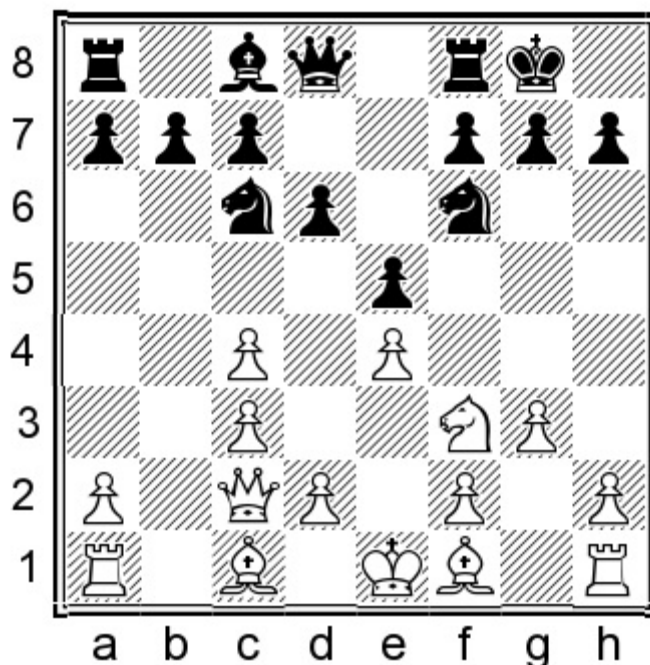
6...e4 7.♗g5 ♗e7 – 8.f3! with an initiative, e.g. 8...exf3 9.♗xf3 0-0 10.♗e2 d6! 11.0-0



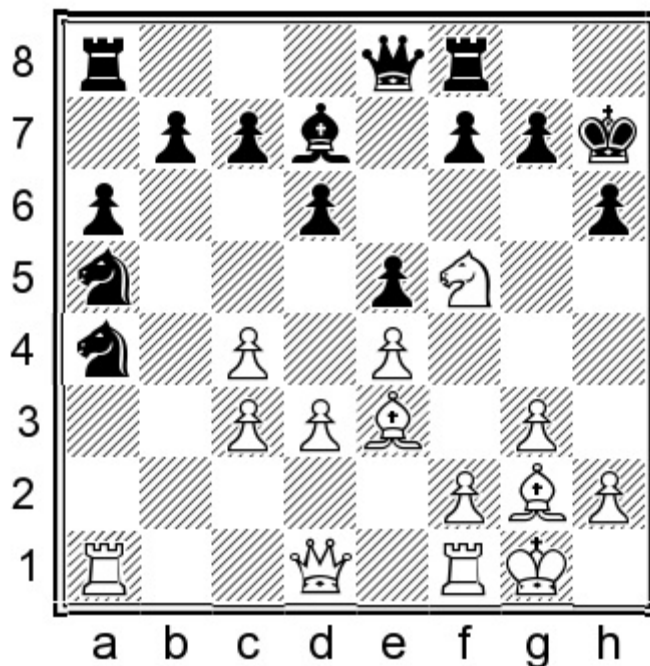
Our next goal is to build up a strong pawn centre with d3, e4. We should avoid exchanges, or at least we should trade our knight for a bishop – 11...♖e5!? 12.♗d4! c5 13.♗f5.

The main line arises after:

6...d6 7.e4 0-0 8.g3



White's general plan is to attack on the kingside with f4 after ♖h4 (or ♖g5). If Black does not know what he is doing and mixes up different ideas, he can quickly end up in a losing position, e.g. 8...h6 9.d3 a6?! 10.a4 ♖d7 11.♙g2 ♗c5 12.♗h4 ♗a5 13.♙e3 ♙d7 14.0-0 ♚e8 15.♗f5 ♗xa4 16.♚d1 ♗h7



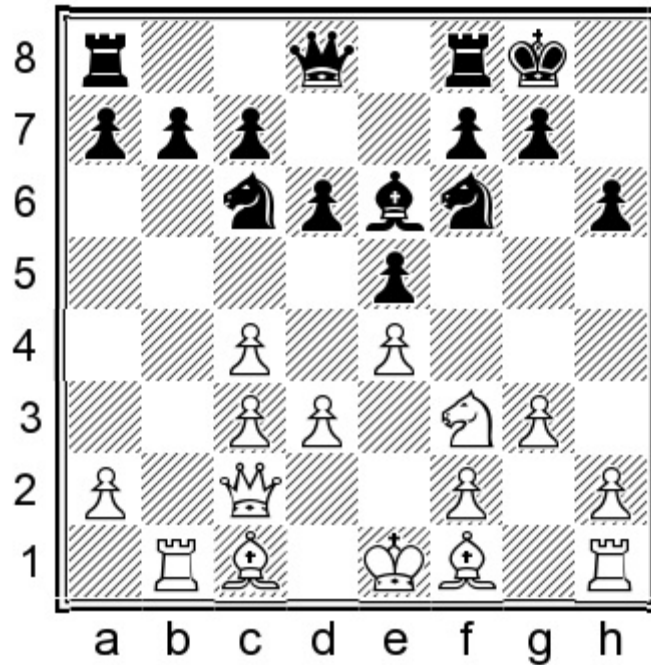
17. ♖g4 ♜g8, Batsiashvili-Javakhishvili, Tbilisi 2018, 18.f4!+-.

Black has a huge choice of plans and probably that is his biggest problem. If he quickly looked through the database, he would not find any established equaliser to follow. Every strong player has his own treatment of this line. Let us look briefly at the most principled answers.

Plan with ...h6!?, ...♙e6, ...♚d7

Perhaps it is the most solid Black's defence. He takes control of the h3-c8 diagonal, aiming to exchange the light-squared bishops. The best we can do is to get a sharp tangled position. I suggest to delay castling in favour of ♘h4, f4:

8...h6 9.d3 ♙e6 10.♖b1

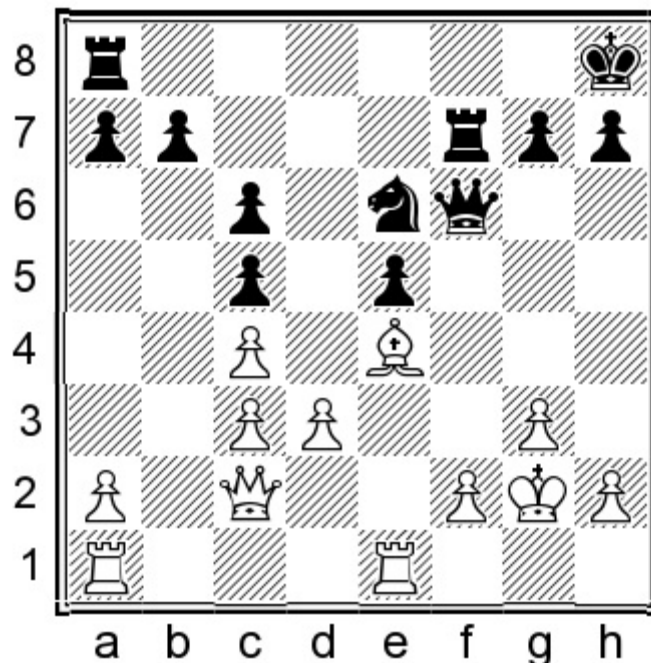


We meet 10...b6 11. ♖g2 ♔d7 by 12. ♘h4 ♙h3 13. f4! exf4 14. gxf4 and 10...♘d7 by 11. ♘h4!, then h3, ♙f1-e2-g4.

Plan with ...f5

We commonly meet it by ♘h4 and we take on f5, later on c5, reaching the following pawn structure:

Komodo 9.42-Fire 4
CCRL 2016

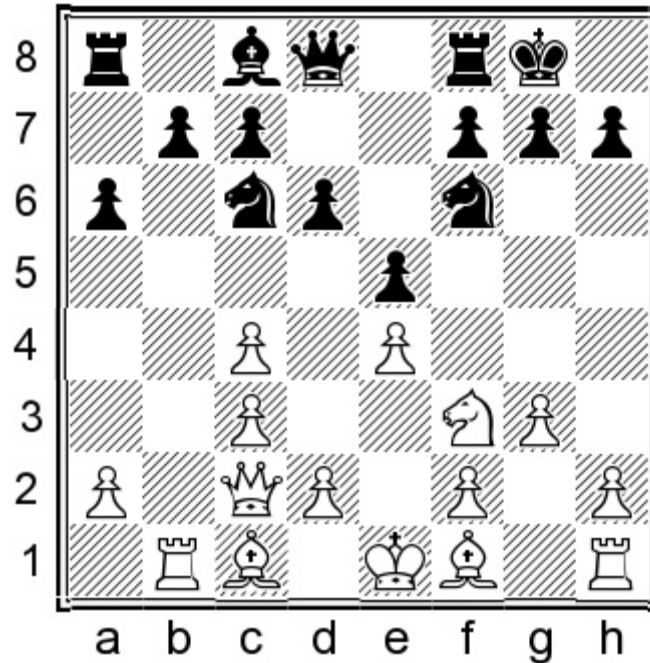


I consider it in **Game 12** and **Game 13**. White retains a slight, but lasting pull. Black's best version of it is when he has a ♙:♙, for instance, a bishop on e6 instead of the knight. It is a good defender and he

should not exchange it.

Plan with ...a6, ...b5

This is currently the most popular plan since it offers immediate counterplay. Black might start with **8...a6** at once, when **9.a4** is too committal since the pawn could be blocked with ... $\text{\textcircled{d}}$ a5 and attacked later with $\text{\textcircled{c}}$ 5, ... $\text{\textcircled{d}}$ 7, ... $\text{\textcircled{e}}$ 8. Instead I propose **9. $\text{\textcircled{b}}$ 1**

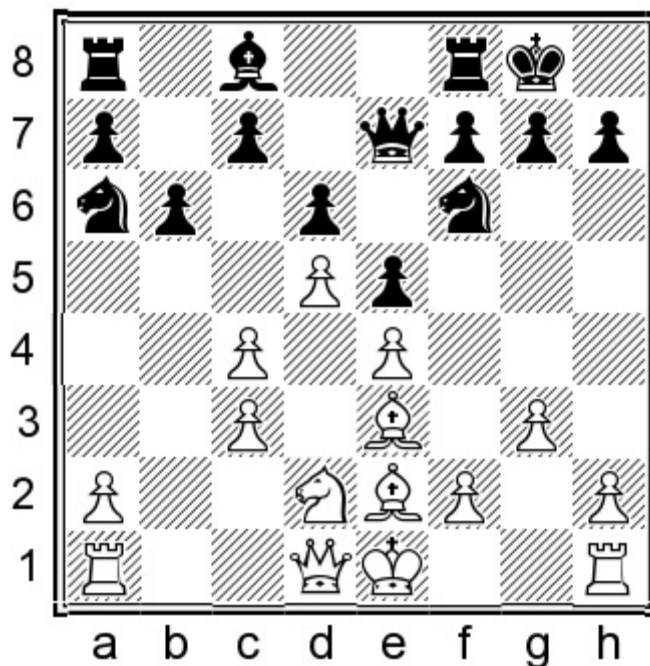


9...h6 **10.d3** $\text{\textcircled{b}}$ 8 **11.a4!**?. We are not afraid to lose this pawn anymore as ...h6 gave us a lever on the kingside.

More often Black plays firstly **8... $\text{\textcircled{d}}$ 7** **9.d3!** and now **9...a6**. Again: **10. $\text{\textcircled{b}}$ 1** b5 **11.cxb5** axb5 **12. $\text{\textcircled{e}}$ 2!**. We are planning to capture the b-pawn by bishop after d3-d4.

Note that we should be flexible. It is usually good to see Black's plan before defining our own set-up. For instance, against ...a6 we prefer to put our king's bishop on e2 instead of g2. Also, castling is not obligatory. Sometimes we could switch to a kingside pawn storm:

Analysis



15.g4!? ♖c5 16.f3∞.

Theoretical status

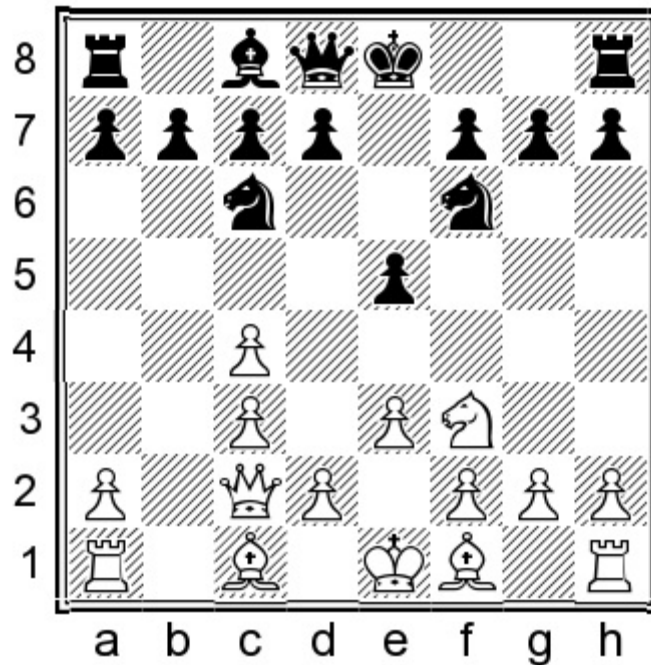
Chess Publishing (with Cummings covering Flank Openings) limit their surveys to the known games. They follow Lie-Hauge, Tromso 2016: 8...h6 9.d3 ♗e6 10.♖b1 ♘d7 11.♗g2 (I propose 11.♘h4!) 11...f5 12.exf5 ♗xf5 13.♘h4 ♗h7 14.♗e3 ♘b6?! 15.0-0, but do not mention possible improvements for Black as 14...♘a5 15.♙e2 c6 or 14...♖b8. The same is repeated in Cummings book for Everyman.

Delchev/Semkov correctly note: “Even the noncommittal development 8...h6 9.♗g2 ♗e6 10.d3 ♙d7 is a fair option”, but they stop there.

As a whole, Black players would not find adequate coverage, so you should not expect them to be well prepared.

Chapter 3. 4.e3 ♘b4 5.♙c2 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 Step by Step

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3 ♘b4 5.♙c2 ♘xc3 6.bxc3



A. 6...e4; B. 6...d6

6...0-0 7.e4 d6 transposes to B.

A. 6...e4 7.♘g5

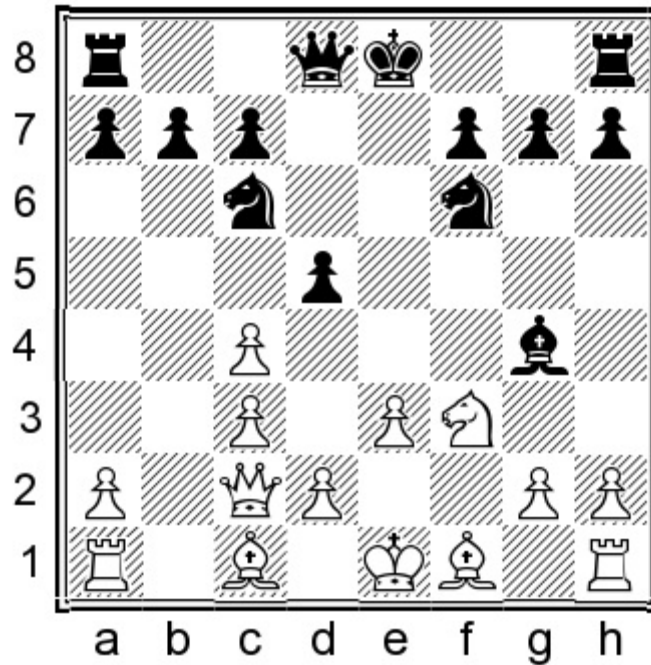
7.♘d4 0-0 8.♙a3 ♖e8 9.c5 b6 could only be good for Black.

7...♙e7!

It is not logical to open the centre with 7...d5 8.f3

8.♖b1!? (hoping for 8...h6? 9.cxd5 ♙xd5 10.♖b5!) yields good results, but 8...a6 covers b5 and revives the threat ...h6.

8...exf3 (8...h6 9.cxd5) 9.♘xf3 ♘g4



10. Rb1!

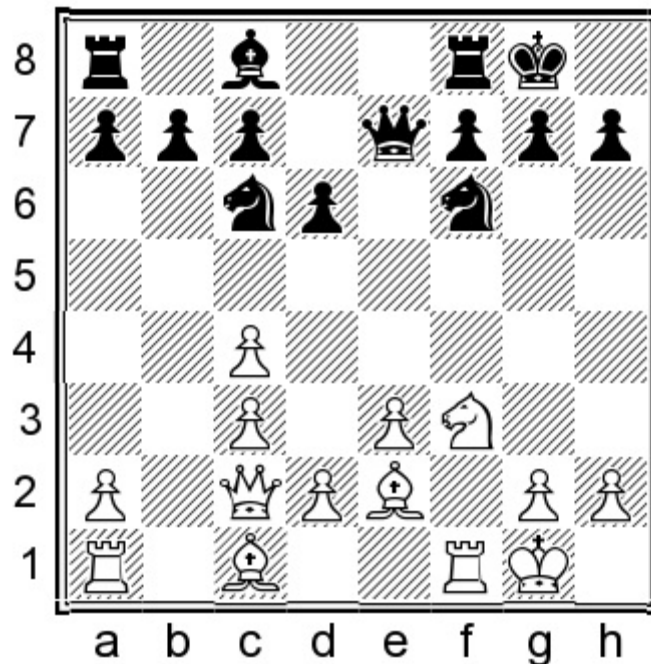
10. Qe2 dxc4 11. Qxc4 0-0 and 10. cxd5 Qxd5 11. Rb1 Qf5 12. d3 0-0-0 are unclear.

10...0-0 11. cxd5 Qxf3

Or 11... Qxd5 12. Rb5 Qe6 13. Qe2±.

12. gxf3 Qxd5 13. h4 b6 14. Qf2 f5 15. Qa3. In this rich interesting position White gets all the fun.

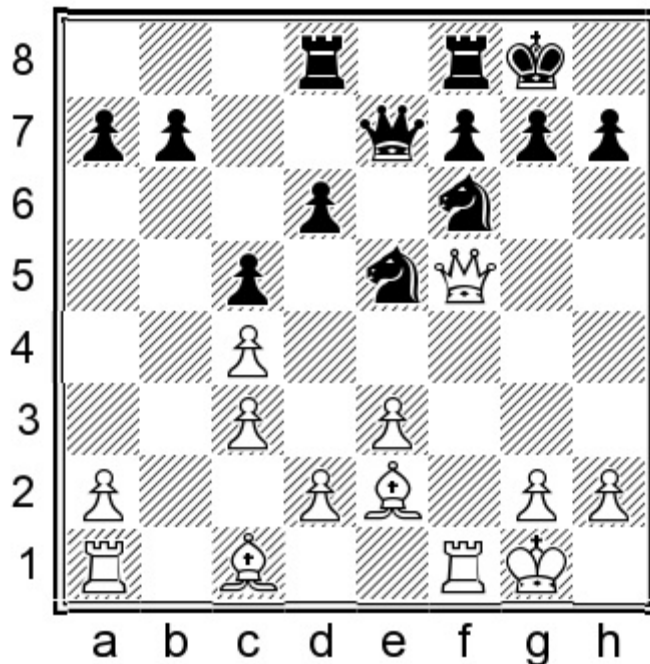
8. f3 exf3 9. Qxf3 0-0 10. Qe2 d6! 11. 0-0



11... Qg4

11... Qe5!? is a better try in my opinion. We should trade our knight only for a bishop – 12. Qd4

(12. Rb1 Qxf3+ 13. Qxf3 Rb8) 12...c5 13. Qf5 Qxf5 14. Qxf5 Rxd8



We cannot prevent ...d5 because 15.e4 would face 15...b5! 16.cxb5 c4. This line hints that the solution should be:

15.a4! with a pleasant game. This move not only denies the strategic threat ...b5. It also enables ♔a3, winning the exchange in some lines. For instance: 15...d5

15...♘c6 16.♚c2 ♜fe8 (16...h6 17.d3 d5 18.cxd5 ♜xd5 19.d4, when the sacrifice on d4 does not solve all the problems.) 17.d3 b6 18.e4.

16.cxd5 ♘xd5 17.e4 ♘f6 (17...♘g6 18.♔a3) 18.d4.

12.d3 ♘e5

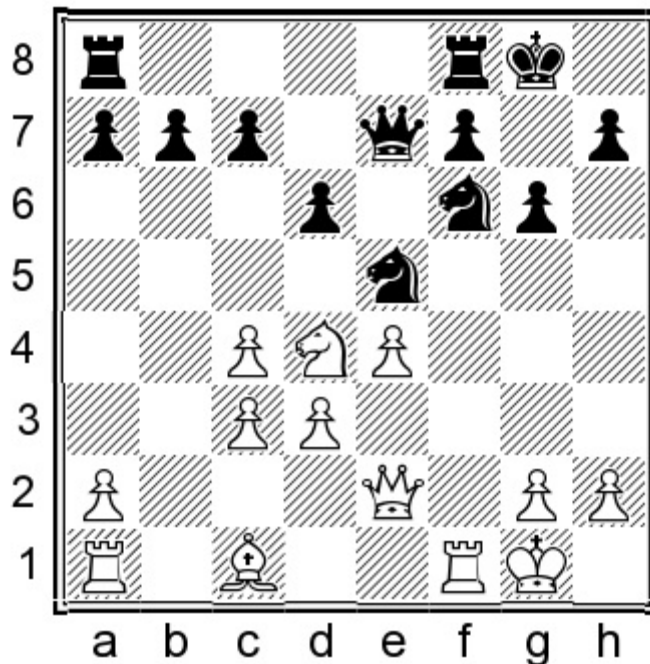
The hit in the centre 12...d5?! 13.d4 ♜fe8 14.cxd5 ♘xd5 15.e4 ♔f5 will cost Black a piece – 16.♘g5 ♔xe4 17.♘xe4 ♚xe4 18.♚xe4 ♜xe4 19.♔f3 ♘xc3 20.♔d2 ♘xd4 21.♔xc3±.

Or 12...♜ae8 13.h3 ♔h5 14.e4 h6 15.♜b1 b6 16.♘d4 ♘xd4 17.cxd4±.

13.♘d4 ♔xe2

13...c5 14.♘f5 ♔xf5 15.♜xf5 ♚e6 16.e4 ♜fe8 17.♔g5 ♘fd7 18.♜af1 f6 19.♔e3±.

14.♚xe2 g6 15.e4



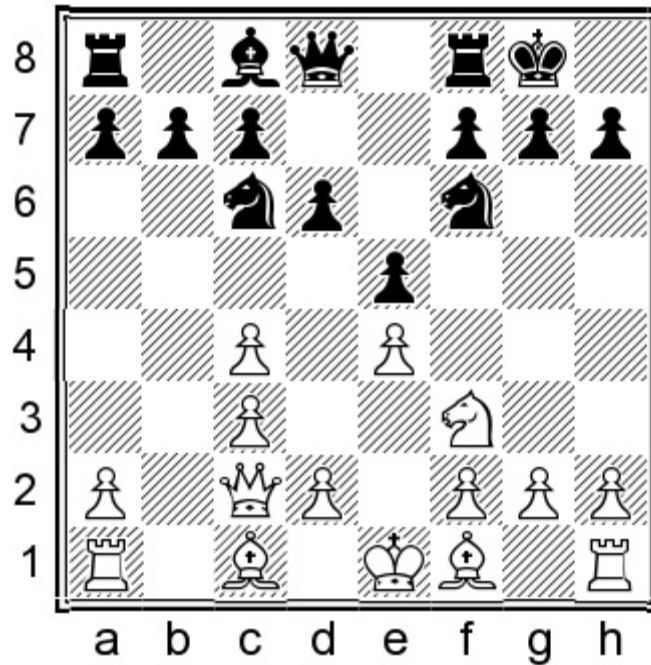
White has won the opening battle. In J.Andersen-Balta, ICCF 2017, Black started entrenching himself with 15...♘fd7 16.♘c2 f6 17.♖b1±, but eventually lost the game.

B. 6...d6 7.e4

White has also tested the move order 7.d3 0-0 8.♙e2 with considerable success. Then 8...♖e7 9.e4 transposes to line B2, but Black has the additional option of 8...e4!? 9.dxe4 ♖e7 10.♘d2 ♜e8 with excellent positional compensation. Engine games bring White modest 25% after 11.f3.

7...0-0

7...♘h5 8.g3 0-0 transposes.



B1. 8.g3!?!; **B2.** 8.♙e2

B1. 8.g3!?!

In this position Black has tried many moves, but most popular are:

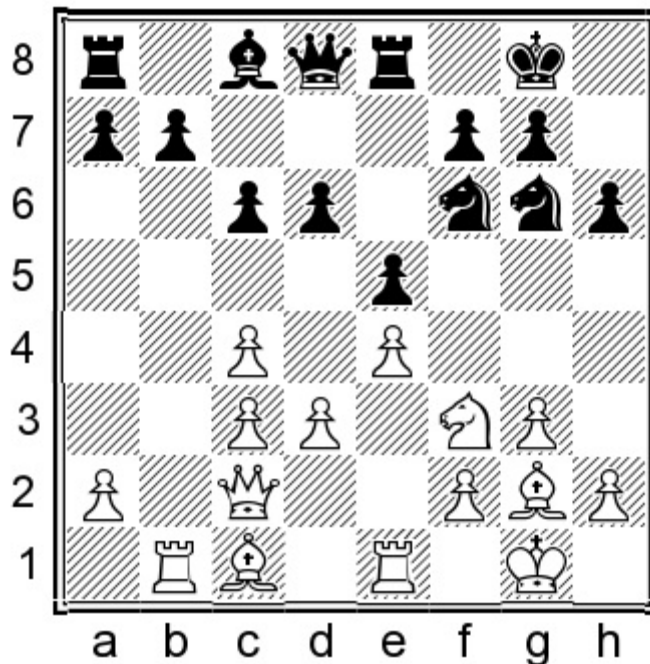
B11. 8...♘d7; **B12.** 8...h6

For 8...♘e8 9.♘h4 ♘e7 10.♙g2! – see my annotations to **Game 12** Carlsen-Topalov, Shamkir 2018.

8...♘e7 9.♙g2 ♘g6 10.0-0 ♙e8 looks too slow, although Black has an active plan in mind – ...c6, ...d5.

Eljanov-Bruzon, Havana 2015, went 11.♖b1 h6 12.d3 c6 13.♙e1 and it turned out that:

13...d5 was not a good idea in view of 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.exd5 ♘xd5 16.♘d2. The game continued:

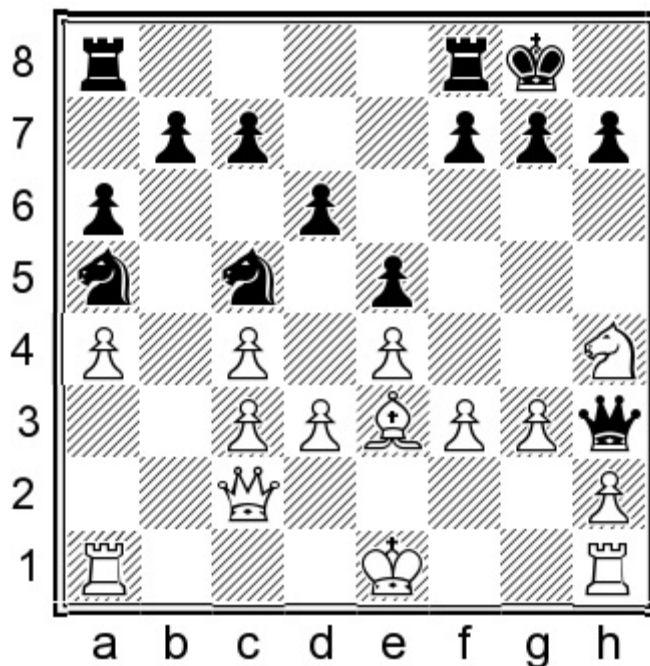


13...b6 14.a4 ♕d7

Again, 14...d5 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.exd5 ♖xd5 is dubious, owing to 17.c4 ♜c7 18.♕b2. 15.♜d2 ♕e6, when instead of 16.d4 ♝c8 17.a5, White could have tried 16.a5 at once.

8...a6!? was played in the source game for this line, Suba-Romanishin, Yerevan 1980. It takes an amazing intuition to nose out Black's most challenging plan in a completely uncharted territory. Romanishin won the game, but has not found any followers in OTB chess. Perhaps second players did not like the pawn sacrifice after:

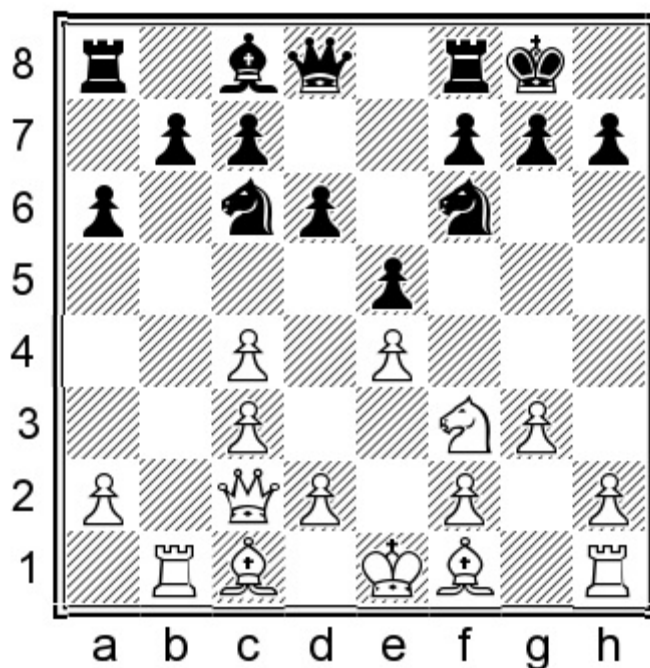
9.a4 ♜a5 10.d3 ♜h5?! – 11.♕e2 ♕g4 12.h3 ♕d7 13.♜xe5, which is unclear. (Besides, Suba took a better decision – 13.♜h2!±) Even today White has not established the best course against 8...a6. Komodo 10-Rybka 4, CCRL 2016, went 9.a4 ♜d7! 10.♜h4 ♜c5 11.d3 ♜a5 12.♕e3 ♕d7 13.♕e2 ♕h3 14.♕f1 ♝d7 15.♕xh3 ♝xh3 16.f3



It transpires that White can only be worse after 16...b6 or 16...♘e6. The a4-pawn is a sensitive target in White's camp.

I propose to opt for:

9.♖b1



This move is not exactly new. It is logical, and it was tested in a dozen of engine and correspondence games. Black most often answered:

9...h6 10.d3 ♖b8 11.a4!

The pawn on h6 gave us the lever for an attack on the kingside so we could boldly sacrifice the a4-pawn.

The correspondence game Sandström-Bücker, ICCF 2014, saw 11.♙g2 b5 12.cxb5 axb5 13.0-0 ♙d7, when instead of 14.h3, White should try 14.♘h4∞.

11...♙e6 12.♙g2 ♚d7 13.0-0 ♙h3 14.♘h4.

B11. 8...♘d7 9.d3!?

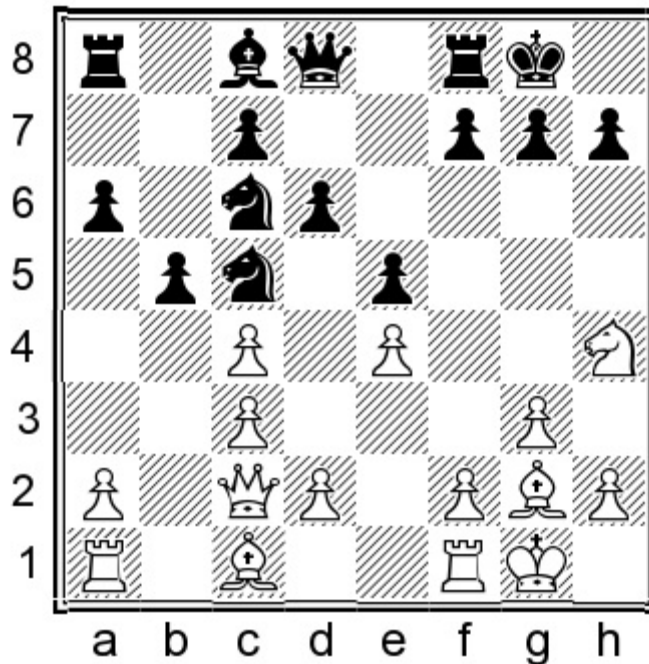
It is tempting to start with 9.♘h4, but I have no antidote against the immediate 9...a6!, unequivocally intending ...b5. The only game with 9...a6 went further:

10.♙e2 ♘c5 11.0-0 ♙h3 12.♞d1 f5 13.exf5 ♞f6 14.f3 ♘e7 15.d4 exd4 16.cxd4 ♘xf5=, Krzyzanowski-Jasinski, ICCF 2017.

9.♙g2 offers Black time to build up counterplay with 9...♘c5 10.♘h4 a6!

10...g5?! occurred in Nepomniachtchi-Karjakin, blitz chess.com 2017: 11.♘f5 ♙xf5 12.exf5 e4 13.0-0 ♞e8 14.♙a3±.

11.0-0 (11.♘f5 b5) 11...b5



The stem game Khairullin-Svidler, Chita 2015, finished with a quick draw: 12.d4 exd4 13.cxd4 ♘xd4 14.♞d2 ♘c6 15.e5 ♙b7 16.exd6 ♞xd6 17.♞xd6 cxd6 18.♘f5 ½-½.

12.cxb5 axb5 13.d3 b4 14.♙e3 ♘a4 15.cxb4 ♘xb4 16.♞d2 c5 is also equal.

9...♘c5

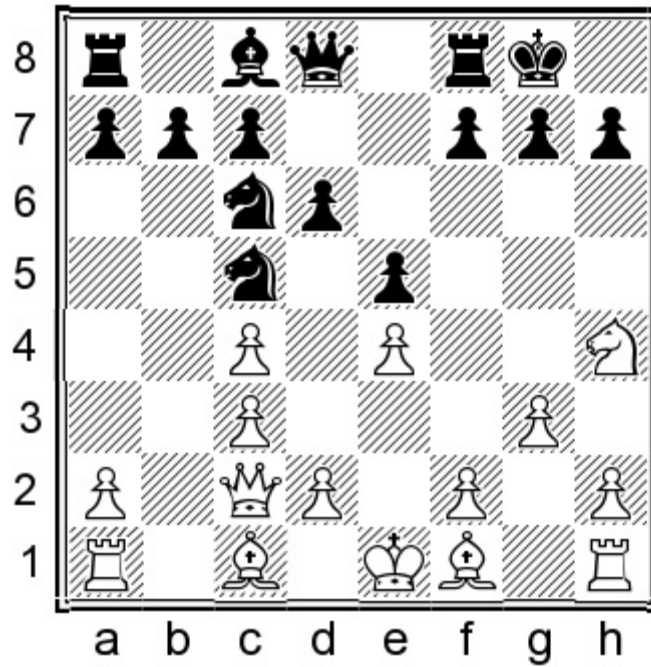
We could fight the plan 9...a6 by 10.♞b1 b5 11.cxb5 axb5 12.♙e2

Black is active after 12.♞xb5 ♘b6 13.♙g2 ♙e6=.

12...♞a5 (12...♘c5? 13.d4) 13.d4 ♘b6 14.♞xb5 ♞xb5 15.♙xb5 ♞f6 16.♙e2 exd4

Or 16...♙g4 17.♙g5 ♞g6 18.♙e3 d5 19.♘h4 ♞e6 20.exd5±

17.cxd4 ♘xd4 18.♘xd4 ♞xd4 19.0-0 ♞a4!, when White is marginally better.



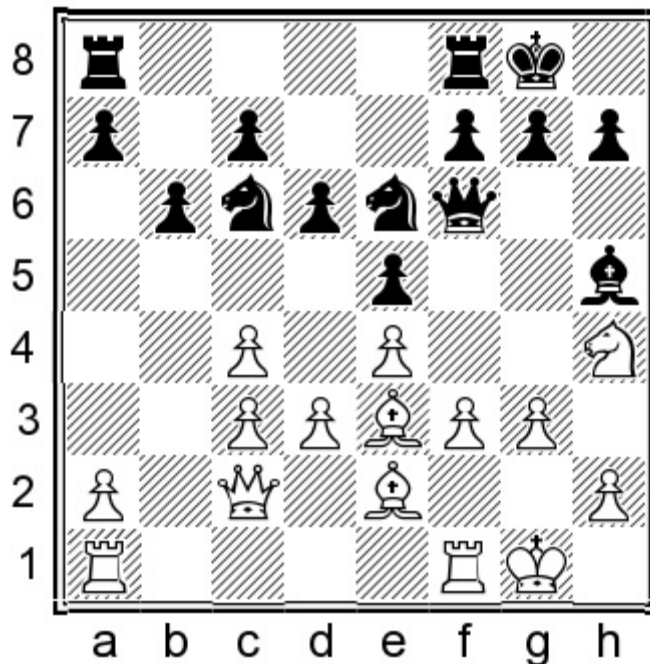
10. ♘h4!

It is important to keep the bishop on f1 as long as possible. This clever move order is aimed against the thematic plan with ...b5 – 10...a6 11. ♕e3 b5?! 12.d4 – the bishop is still on f1 and could eat comfortably the b5-pawn.

10...f5

A typical idea in this line. Alternatives look worse:

10... ♕g4 11. ♕e3 ♘e6 12.f3 ♕h5 13. ♕e2 ♚f6 14.0-0 b6 occurred in J.Andersen-Balta, ICCF 2017.



White chose to prepare d4 and won crushingly after 15.♖ad1 a5 16.♚d2 ♘f4 17.gxf4 ♚xh4 18.f5 ♔h8 19.♙g5 ♚h3 20.♗f2 f6 21.♙f1 ♚xf3 22.♖xf3 ♙xf3 23.♖e1 fxf5 24.♚xg5 g6 25.fxf6 ♔g7 26.gxf7+ ♔xh7 27.♚h4+ ♔g8 28.♚g3+ 1-0.

I would shape this idea differently in order to prevent ...♘f4 – 15.♔h1!, when 15...♘f4? fails to 16.gxf4 ♚xh4 17.f5 h6 18.♖g1±.

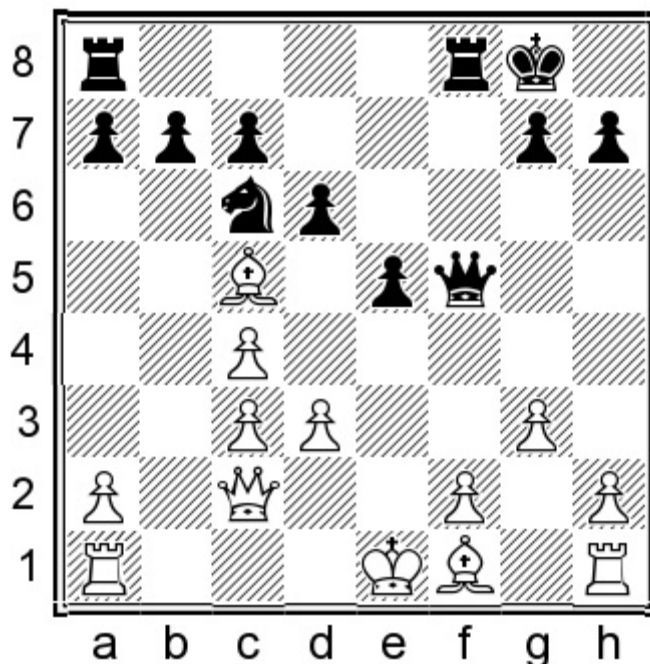
10...♙e6 allows White to execute the main idea of the variation – 11.♙g2 (I also like 11.♙e3!? ♚d7 12.♙e2.) 11...♚d7 12.0-0 ♙h3 13.f4±.

10...♘e7 11.d4 ♘e6 12.♙e3 b6

Perhaps the lesser evil was 12...c5 13.d5 ♘c7 14.♙d3 ♘e8 15.0-0 h6 to keep the centre closed. 13.f4 ♘g6 14.♘g2 exd4 15.cxd4 c5 16.d5 ♘d4 17.♙xd4 cxd4 18.♙d3, and White was better in the game Zhak-Baufays, ICCF 2009.

10...g5 11.♘f5 ♙xf5 12.exf5 ♚f6 could be met simply by 13.♚d2!? ♚f5 14.♚xg5+±, while 13.g4 ♖fe8 14.f3 is certainly more double-edged.

11.♘xf5 ♙xf5 12.exf5 ♚f6 13.♙e3 ♚xf5 14.♙xc5



White obtains a structural advantage. See the instructive **Game 13** Komodo 9.42-Fire 4 CCRL 2016.

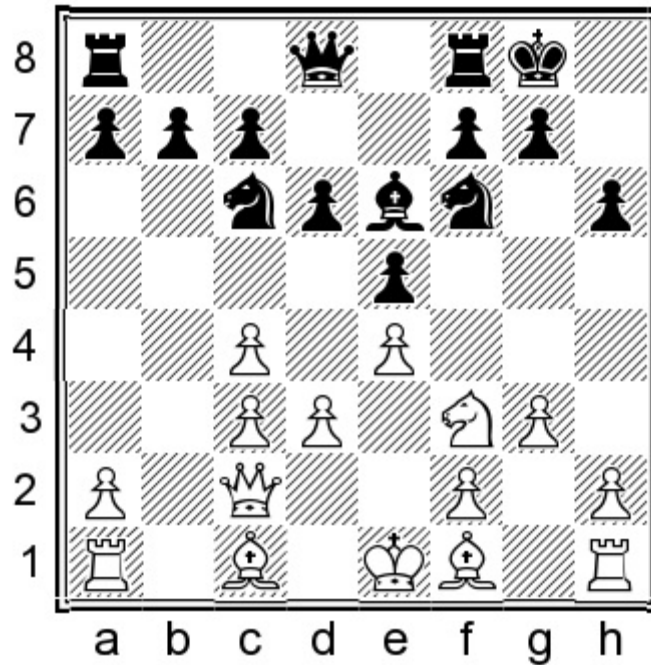
B12. 8...h6!?

A necessary introduction to a very straightforward plan. Black will play ...♙e6, ...♚d7, ...♙h3, followed by ...b7-b5. White can reach a sharp tangled position:

9.d3 ♙e6

The game Kerr-Suto, ICCF 2017, saw 9...b6?! which should be a waste of tempo in most lines – 10.♙g2 ♙e6 11.0-0 ♚d7 12.♘h4 ♖ab8 13.f4 exf4 14.gxf4 ♙h3 15.♖f3 ♙xg2 16.♚xg2 ♚g4 17.♚xg4 ♘xg4 18.♘f5±.

9...a6 does not work in conjunction with ...h6. White can sac the a4-pawn and hurl his forces against the weakened kingside – 10.a4 ♘d7 11.♙g2 ♘c5 12.♘h4 ♘a5 13.♙e3 ♙d7 14.0-0 ♚e8 15.♘f5 ♘xa4 16.♚d1 ♙h7 17.♚g4 ♖g8, Batsiashvili-Javakhishvili, Tbilisi 2018, 18.f4!±.



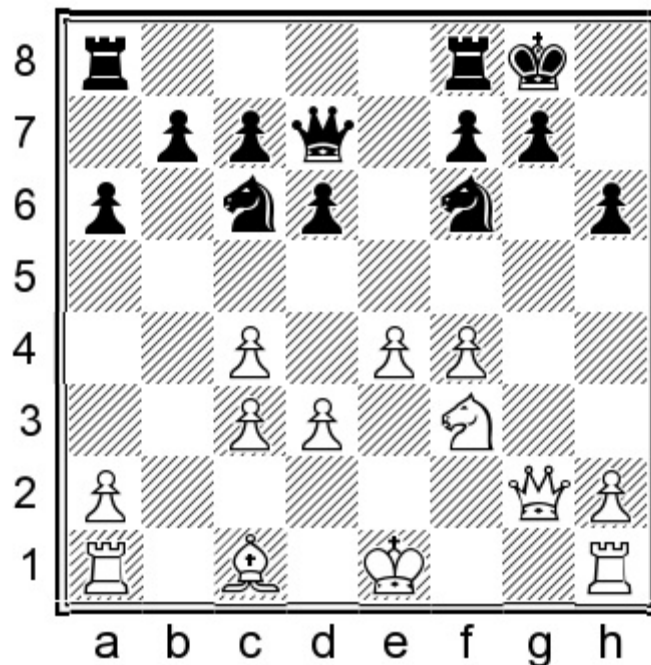
10. Rb1

10. ♖g2 ♜d7 11. 0-0 ♗h3 12. ♘h4 was tested in 3 correspondence games and led to 3 draws. For example: 12... ♙xg2 13. ♘xg2 ♘h7 14. ♜b3 b6 15. ♘e3 ♘e7 16. a4 ♔h8 17. a5 f5 18. exf5 ♘xf5 19. ♜a4 ♜xa4 20. ♝xa4 ♘e7 21. d4 ♘f6 22. dxe5 dxe5 23. ♝e1 ½-½ occurred in M. Andersson-Eljoseph, ICCF 2017.

I tried in vain to improve with 11. ♘h4, when best is:

11... g5! 12. ♘f3 ♗h3 13. ♙xh3 ♜xh3 14. ♜e2 ♘h7 15. ♘d2 f5 16. exf5 ♝xf5 17. ♜f1 ♜xf1+ 18. ♘xf1

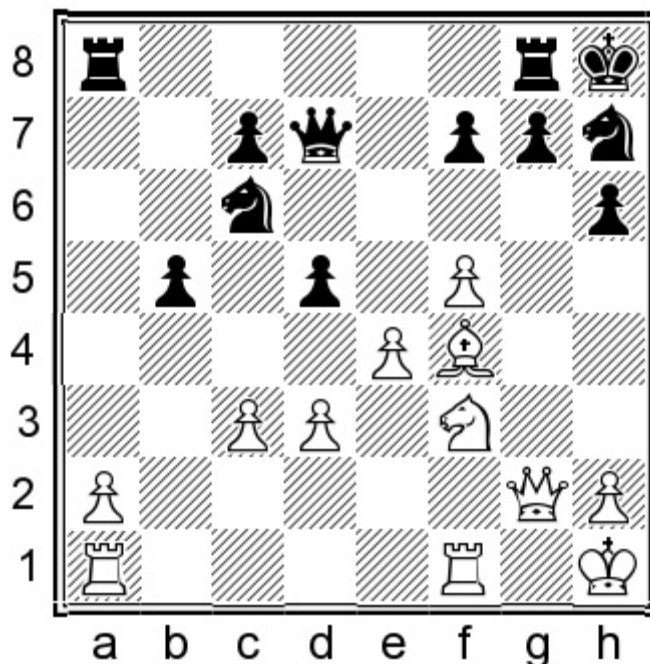
while:
11... ♗h3 12. f4 exf4 13. gxf4 offers White an initiative – 13... a6!? 14. ♙f3 ♗g4 15. ♜g2 ♙xf3 16. ♘xf3



The computer assesses this position as 0.00, but to me, all three results are possible here. White can castle to reduce the tension, put a rook on b1, and wait for a mistake:

a) 16...♔h7 17.♖b1 b5 18.cxb5 axb5 19.0-0!? (19.♖xb5∞) 19...♖fb8 20.♔h1.

b) 16...♘h7 17.f5 ♔h8 18.♙f4 ♖g8 19.0-0 b5 20.cxb5 axb5 21.♔h1 d5



22.♖ae1 dxe4 23.dxe4 ♖a4 24.♖e2.

10...♘d7!?

After 10...b6 11.♙g2 ♖d7 we could play 12.♘h4 ♙h3 13.f4! exf4 14.gxf4 ♖ae8 15.0-0 ♖g4 16.♘f5 ♖xg2+ 17.♖xg2 with a complex endgame. Still, our better centre should make our game somewhat easier.

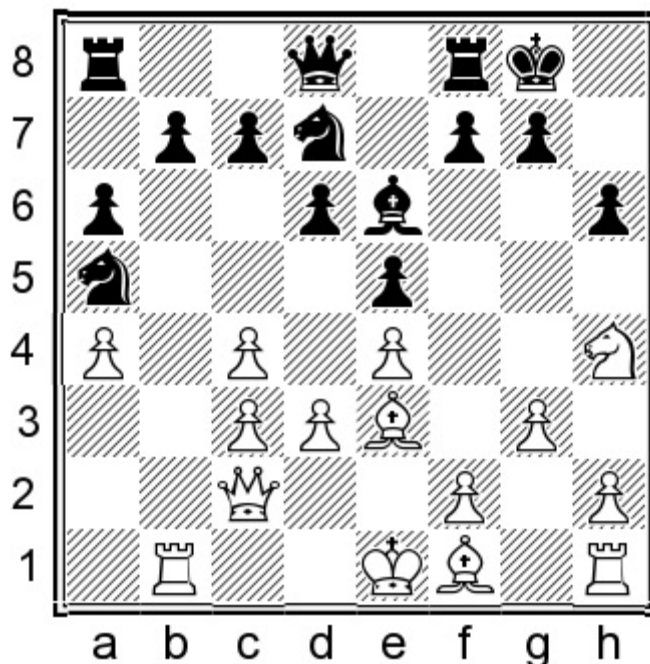
11.♘h4!

Naturally White should prevent ...f5. 11.♙g2 f5 12.exf5 ♙xf5 13.♘h4 ♙h7 14.♙e3 was balanced in Lie-Hauge, Tromso 2016. Instead of 14...♘b6?!, possible improvements for Black are 14...♘a5 15.♖e2 c6, 14...♖b8 or even 14...♖c8 15.0-0 ♘f6=.

11...a6

Another option is 11...b6 12.♙g2 ♘e7 13.0-0 g5 14.f4! gxh4 15.f5 with an initiative, e.g. 15...♔h7 16.♖d1 (16.♙h3!?) 16...♘g8 17.♖h5 hxg3 18.♖f3.

12.a4 ♘a5 13.♙e3



13...♔f6

Preventing ♖f5. If 13...♖b8, White can play 14.h3 or 14.♙e2 ♗h3 15.♘f5.

14.h3 b6 15.♙e2 ♖ae8 16.♙g4

White is ready to castle and he can then prepare f4.

B2. 8.♙e2

This move promises good control of the centre and on the queenside. It's idea is seen in the line: 8...♘e7 9.d4 ♘g6 10.0-0 ♗e7 11.♙d3 h6 12.♖e1 ♘h7 13.c5! ♙g4 14.cxd6 cxd6 15.♙e2 with the better centre.

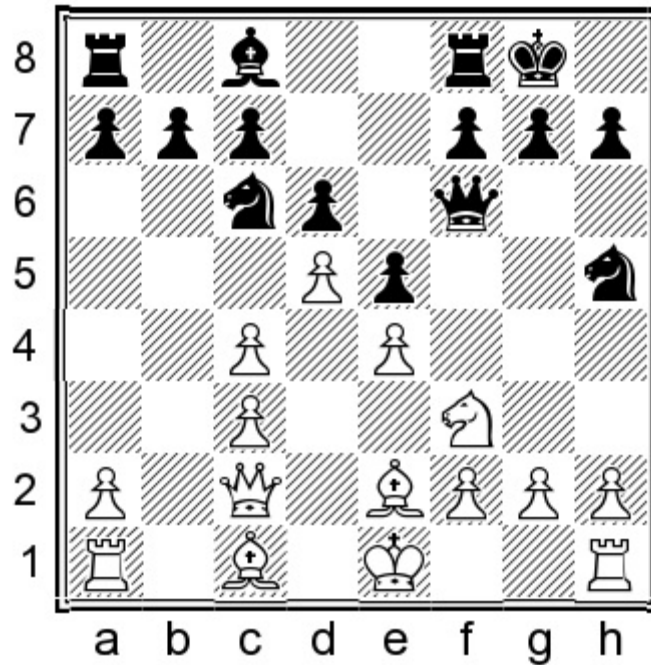
The biggest drawback of 8.♙e2 is that it abandons the f4-square. Black should exploit it with:

8...♘h5! 9.d4 (9.g3 f5) 9...♗f6!

Rapport-Zaragatski, Germany 2013, saw 9...♘f4 10.♙xf4 exf4, when 11.h4 was not a good decision because it allows 11...♙g4. In order to prevent it, 11.h3 looks better, followed by castling, ♖fe1, ♖ad1, ♙d3 with a mobile pawn centre.

10.d5!?

10.g3 exd4 11.♘xd4 ♘xd4 12.cxd4 ♗xd4 13.♙b2 ♗c5 14.0-0 ♘f6 15.♙xf6 gxf6 16.♖fd1 is equal. White won a correspondence game with 10.0-0 ♘f4 11.♙xf4 ♗xf4 12.♖fe1 ♙g4 13.♖ab1 b6 14.♖bd1, but 14...♘a5 15.♘d2 ♙e6 should be annoying for him.



10...♗a5

10...♗b8 11.g3 ♗a6 12.♙e3 b6 13.a4

13.♚d1 leads to a very interesting position with mutual chances – 13...♚e7 14.♗d2 ♗f6 15.g4 ♗c5 16.f3∞.

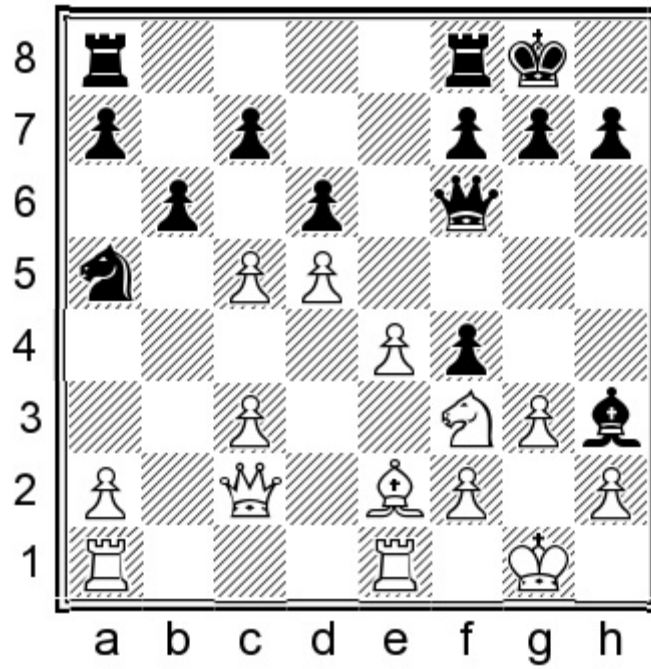
13...h6 14.a5 ♙h3 15.♖g1 gives White an initiative – 15...♙d7 16.♗h4 ♗f4 17.gxf4 ♚xh4 18.f5 ♗c5 19.♖g4 (19.♙f3!?) 19...♚h3 20.♖g3 ♚h4 21.♙f3↑.

11.g3 b6 12.0-0

This may look too modest, but the alternatives do not promise much. Black's plan is ...♗a5-b7-c5 followed up by ...c6 so we must show something quickly on the kingside (12.c5 is at best equal after 12...♙g4 or 12...dxc5 13.0-0 ♙g4). 12.♗d2 ♚g6 and 12.♙e3 c6 or 12...♙g4 do not help us. The castle enables a plan with f2-f4.

12...♙h3!

My database contains only one correspondence game which has reached the position after 12.0-0. It continued 12...♗b7 13.♗e1 ♚g6 14.♗g2 ♗f6 15.f3 ♗d7 16.♗h4 ♚f6 17.♗f5 ♖e8, Banet-Oliveira, ICCF 2015, when 18.h4 h6 19.g4 seizes the initiative. Even more consistent would be 16.f4 h6 17.f5. **13.♖e1 ♗f4 14.♙xf4 exf4 15.c5!**



15...bxc5

15...dxc5 16.e5 ♔h6 17.♕e4 offers White compensation for the pawn.

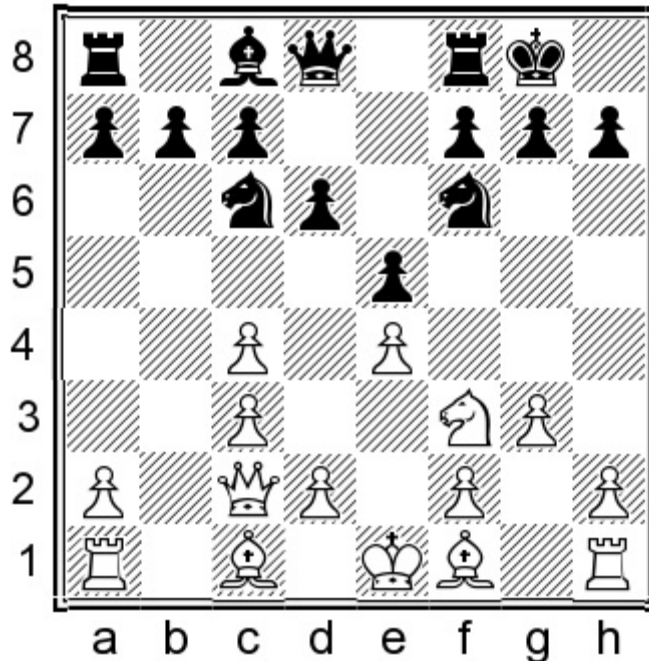
16.♕a4 ♘b7 17.♕c6 fxg3 18.hxg3 ♘a5 19.♕xc7 ♘c4 20.e5! dxe5! 21.♘g5 ♜ac8 22.♕xa7 ♜a8=

Draw by repetition.

Chapter 3. 4.e3 ♘b4 5.♙c2 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 Annotated Games

12. Carlsen – Topalov Shamkir 26.04.2018

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3 ♘b4 5.♙c2 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 d6 7.e4 0-0 8.g3

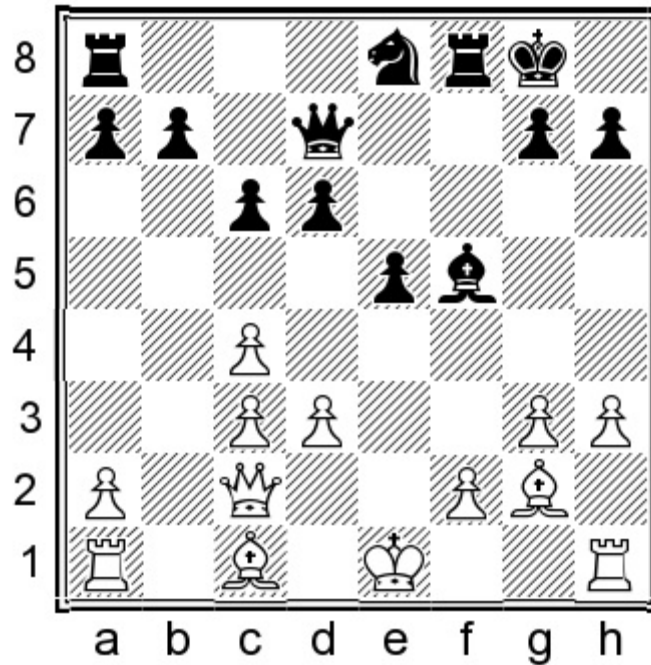


8...♘e8 9.♘h4 ♘e7 10.d3

It would be more consistent to open the centre in favour of the bishop pair – 10.♙g2! f5 11.d4 f4 12.c5! g5 13.♘f3 ♘g6 (13...g4 14.♘h4 dxc5 15.dxe5) 14.♙b3+ ♔g7 15.cxd6 cxd6 16.h3 b6 17.c4.

10...f5 11.exf5 ♘xf5 12.♘xf5 ♙xf5 13.♙g2 c6 14.h3

This is an important move in White's plan, but it is somewhat risky before castling since 14...♙d7! would have been an awkward reply.



White would be practically forced to weaken f4 by playing g4. For instance: 15.♔e3 ♖f6 16.g4 ♕e6 17.0-0 d5 or 15.g4 ♕e6!? (15...♕g6 16.f4 exf4 17.0-0) 16.♖b1 (16.f4? does not work here since Black has 16...exf4 17.0-0 g5) 16...b6 17.0-0 h5 and f4 is out of question in near future. Perhaps Carlsen should have opted for the modest 14.0-0.

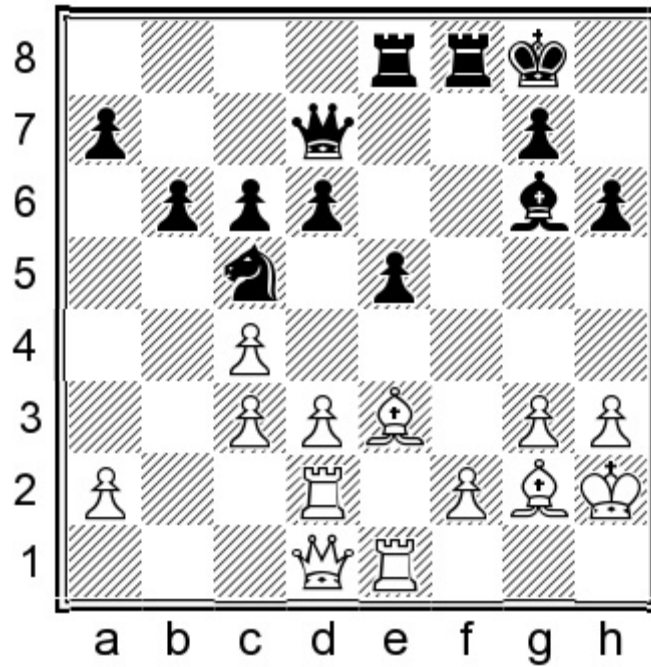
14...♖c7 15.0-0 ♖e6

It is strange that such a player like Topalov opts for a passive stand in the centre. Instead he could push ...d5 – 15...♖f7 16.♔e3 ♗d7 17.♔h2 d5 18.cxd5 ♖xd5 19.♖ad1 ♖xe3=.

16.♔e3 ♖c5 17.♖ad1 ♗d7 18.♔h2 ♕g6

I'm not sure why Topalov retreated the bishop. 18...♖ae8 19.♖d2 b6 20.♔xc5 dxc5 21.♖e1 ♖e6 22.♔g1 ♖fe8 23.♗d1 ♖d6 would be similar to the game.

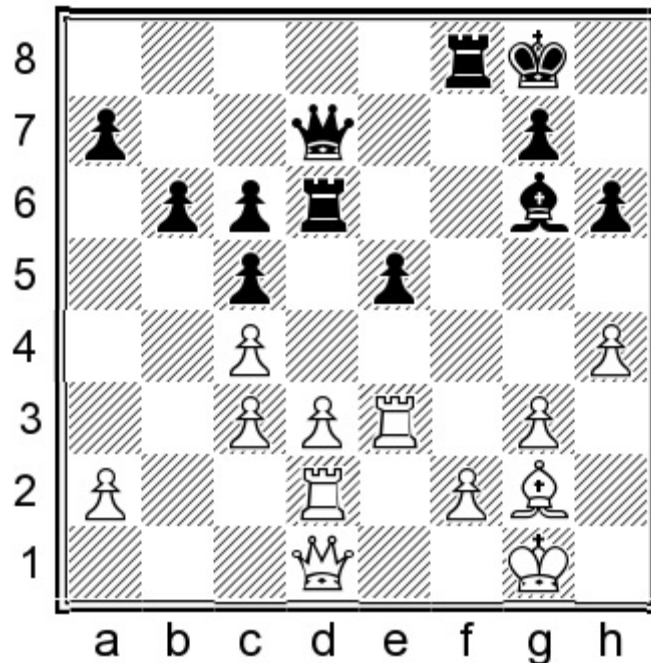
19.♖d2 ♖ae8 20.♗d1 b6 21.♖e1 h6



22. ♖xc5

White could wait another couple of moves, but at some point he should take on c5 anyway. Now Black faces a difficult choice. 22...bxc5 looks more natural and White does not have much after 23. ♖e3 ♜f7 24. ♗h1 ♜c8 25. ♗e1 ♜cf8. Of course he will prepare d4, e.g. 26. ♖ee2 ♕h5 27. g4 ♕g6 28. d4 with a tiny plus, but nothing more. Topalov's decision is rather bold, but probably correct. The arising position should be easier to hold.

22...dxc5 23. ♖e3 ♜e6 24. ♕g1 ♜d6 25. h4



25... ♜d8?!

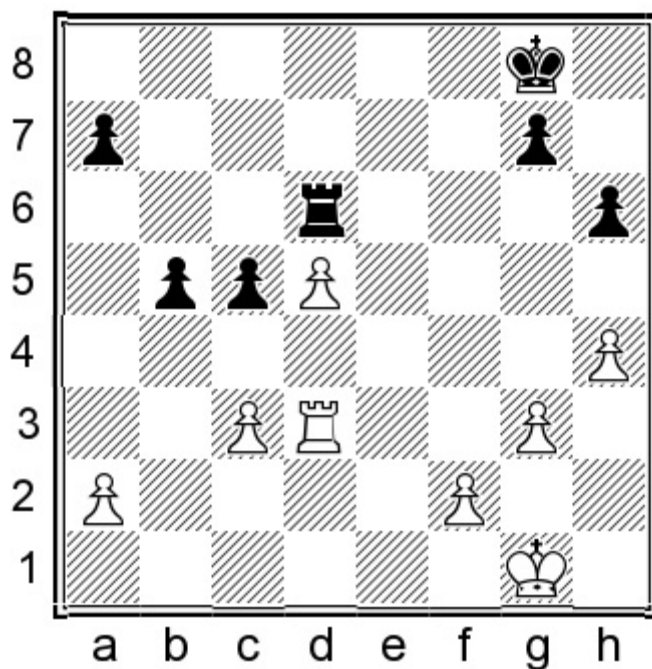
The first critical moment of the game. Topalov misses a rather simple tactical device. 25...♖e8 26.♙e4 is the maximum White was able to reach, but 26...♙f7 (eyeing c4) 27.♚b3 ♜h3 should be totally even. Topalov's blunder does not lose the game yet, but it certainly shook his confidence, and led to more fatal mistakes.

26.♖xe5 ♙xd3

Had he missed 26...♖xd3 27.♙d5+?

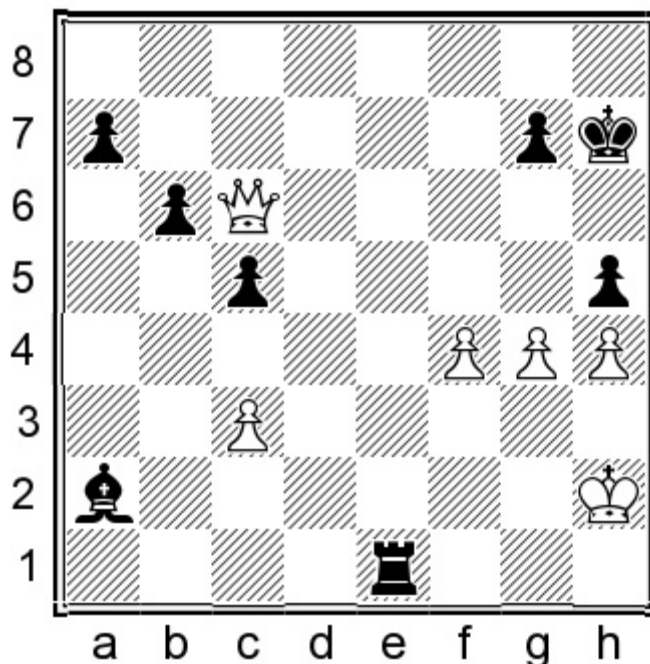
27.♙e4 ♙xc4?

The cold blooded 27...♔f8!! should save the game, for instance: 28.♚f3+ ♔g8 29.♙xc6 ♚xc6 30.♚xc6 ♖xc6 31.♞d5 ♞xd5 32.cxd5 ♞d6 33.♖xd3 b5!



should be easy to hold. Black puts his king on d6 and the rook on a6. For example: 34.♔g2 ♔f7 35.♔f3 ♔e7 36.♔e4 ♖a6 37.♞d2 ♔d6 38.♔f5 ♖a3 39.♞c2 a5 40.♔g6 b4 41.cxb4 axb4 42.♔xg7 ♔xd5=.

28.♖xd6 ♚xd6 29.♖e8+ ♖xe8 30.♚xd6 ♖xe4 31.♚xc6 ♖e1+ 32.♔h2 ♙xa2 33.g4 ♔h7 34.f4 h5



35.f5

Suddenly Carlen's legendary technique begins to waver. 35.Qd7 should collect the queenside pawns.

35...hxc4 36.h5?

It was not late for 36.♖b7!. Now Black resurrects, but not for long.

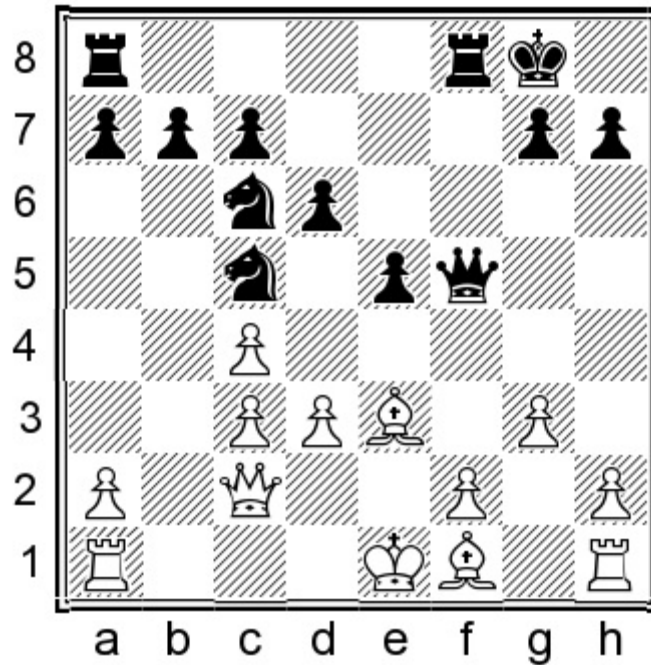
36...♙f7 37.♖b7 ♘g8 38.♖xa7 ♙xh5?

38...♖f1! 39.♖xb6 ♖xf5 should be a fortress. After this last omission Black is probably lost.

39.♖xb6 c4 40.♖d8+ ♙e8 41.♙g3 ♙h7 42.♖c7 ♙g8 43.♖xc4+ ♙f7 44.♖d4 ♖e8 45.c4 ♖f8 46.c5 ♙e8
47.♖d5+ ♙h7 48.♖e6 ♙b5 49.c6 ♙xc6 50.♖g6+ ♙g8 51.♖xc6 ♖f6 52.♖e8+ ♙h7 53.♙xg4 ♖h6
54.♙f4 ♖f6 55.♙e5 ♖h6 56.♖e6 1-0

13. Komodo 9.42 – Fire 4 CCRL 09.04.2016

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3 ♙b4 5.♖c2 ♙xc3 6.bxc3 0-0 7.e4 d6 8.g3 ♘d7 9.♘h4 ♘c5 10.d3
f5 11.♘xf5 ♙xf5 12.exf5 ♖f6 13.♙e3 ♖xf5

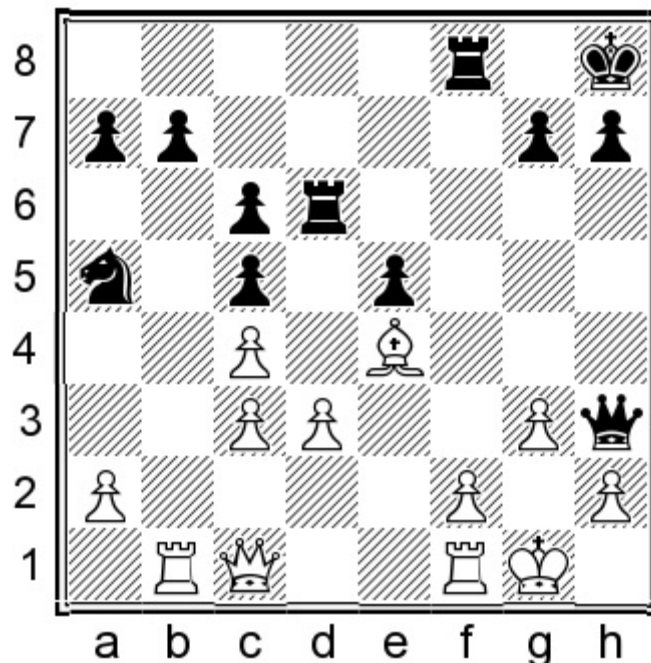


14.♙xc5!?

Actually, White does not have many alternatives to this exchange. 14.♙e2 ♖h3 15.0-0-0 is too risky. Besides, the white bishop cements well his position and allows him to “fianchetto” his king.

14...♖f3

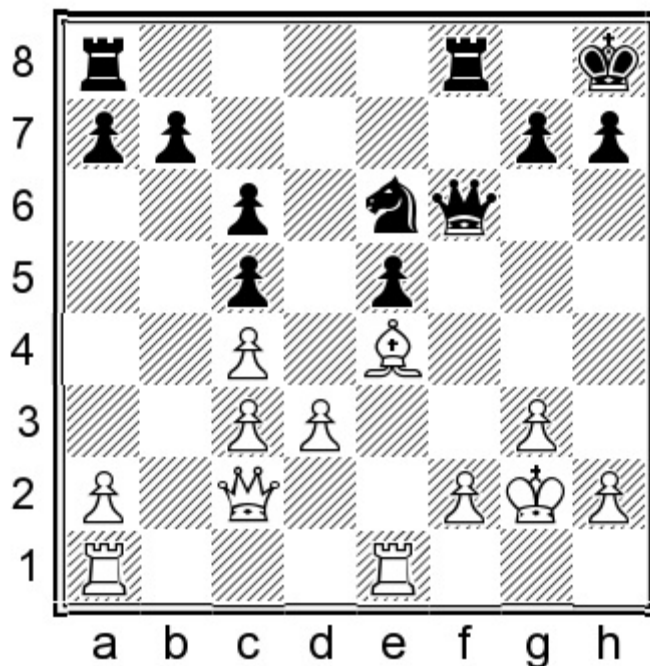
Another engine game, ProDeo 2.2-GreKo 2016, CCRL 2017, saw 14...dxc5?! 15.♙g2 ♖ad8 16.♙d5+ ♗h8 17.♖b1 ♘a5 18.0-0 c6 19.♙e4 ♖h3 20.♖c1 ♖d6



The pawn structure is the same as in the main game, but the misplaced knight encouraged White to decide the battle with a kingside pawn storm: 21.f4 ♖df6 22.f5 ♖g4 23.♖c2 b6 24.♖g2 ♖g5 25.♖fe1

♖g4 26.♜e2 ♜d6 27.♞be1 ♔g8 28.h3 ♞h5 29.♔h2 ♞h6 30.♞b2 ♜b7 31.♞f1 ♔h8 32.♞e2 ♔g8 33.g4
 ♜d8 34.g5 ♞h4 35.♞e3+-.

15.♞g1 dxc5 16.♙g2 ♞f6 17.♙d5+ ♔h8 18.♔f1 ♜d8 19.♔g2 c6 20.♙e4 ♜e6 21.♞ge1



The opening stage is over. White has come out of it with a stable small edge, based on the weakness of e5. Note that the evaluation would have been the same if Black's knight were on d6 or f6 (with a black queen on d6).

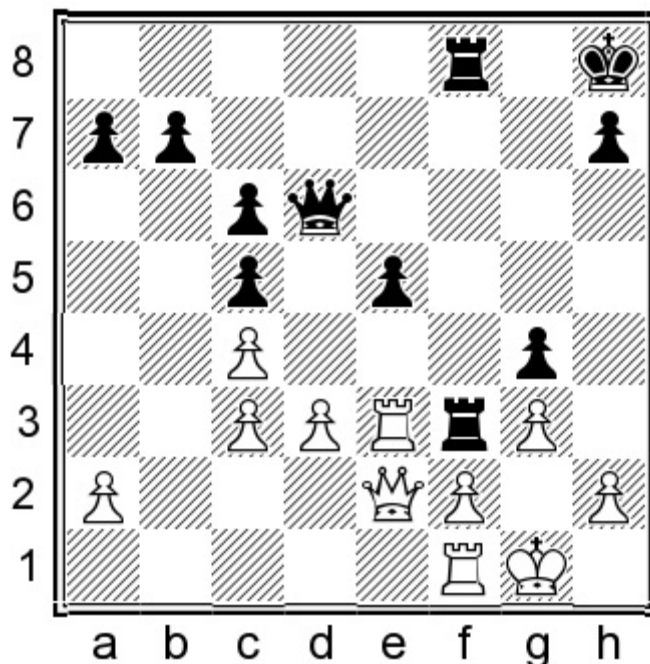
21...♞f7 22.♔g1 ♜g5 23.♙g2 ♞af8 24.♞e3 ♞d6

To 24...♞xf2+ 25.♞xf2 ♞xf2 simplest is 26.h4 ♜e6 27.♞xe5 ♜d8 28.♞f1 – White's rook invades the seventh rank.

25.♞f1 ♜f3+ 26.♔h1!

Of course 26.♙xf3 ♞xf3 27.♞xf3 retains a small plus, but White's advantage in this structure is greater with all the heavy pieces on the board. One move later White takes on f3, having provoked ...g5.

26...g5 27.♙xf3 ♞xf3 28.♞e2 g4 29.♔g1



Some beginners could think that Black is the active side, but in fact his king is horribly weakened and White has two targets to attack – the e- and g-pawn. If Black leaves his rook on f3, White will exchange it – 29...b5 30.cxb5 cxb5 31.♖xf3 gxf3 (or 31...♖xf3 32.♕e4) 32.♖e1 a6 33.♕e4±.

29...♖xe3 30.♕xe3 b6 31.♕e2

31.♕e4 h5 32.♖e1 is more human.

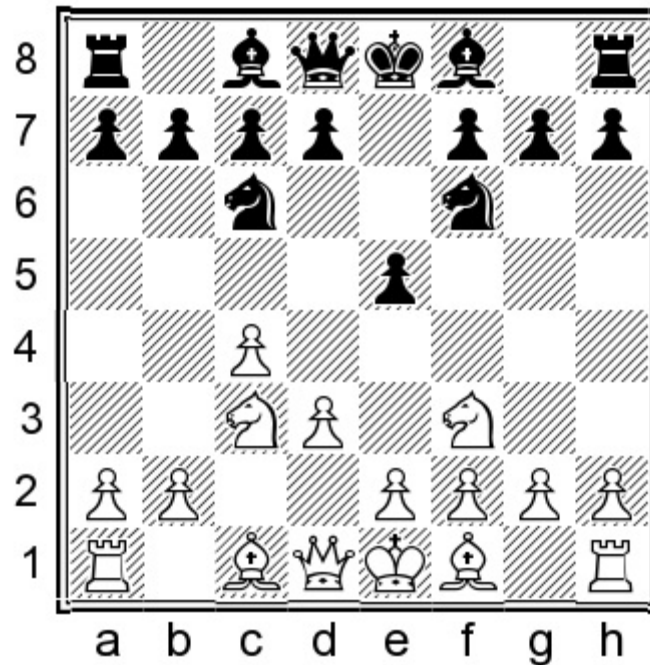
31...♖f3 32.h3! ♖xd3 33.♕xg4 ♖xc3 34.♖d1 ♖d3 35.♕c8+ ♔g7 36.♖xd3

The engine calculated that the queen ending is easily won.

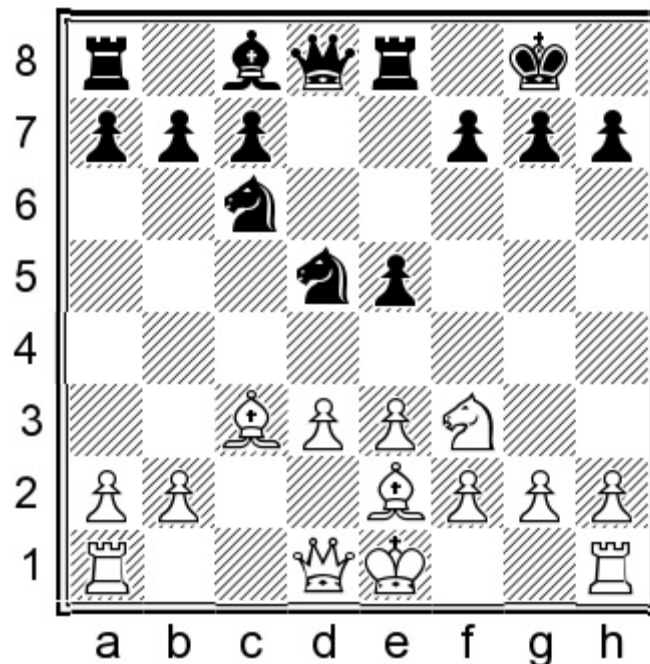
36...♕xd3 37.♕b7+ ♔h6 38.♕xc6+ ♕g6 39.♕xg6+ ♔xg6 40.f3 ♔h6 41.♔f2 ♔g5 42.♔e3 a6 43.a4 ♔f5 44.g4+ ♔f6 45.♔e4 ♔e6 46.g5 ♔f7 47.♔xe5 ♔e8 1-0

Chapter 4. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.d3 Main Ideas

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.d3



The obvious aim of this move is to avoid ...♙b4 or at least the ample theory after 4.e3 ♙b4 or 4.g3 ♙b4. Of course 4...♙b4 is still possible, and the position after 5.♙d2 0-0 6.e3 ♖e8 7.♙e2 ♙xc3 8.♙xc3 d5 9.cx d5 ♘xd5 is quite unclear.



However, this is an open Sicilian, and that means a draw is not the most likely outcome. In practice White scores 68%!

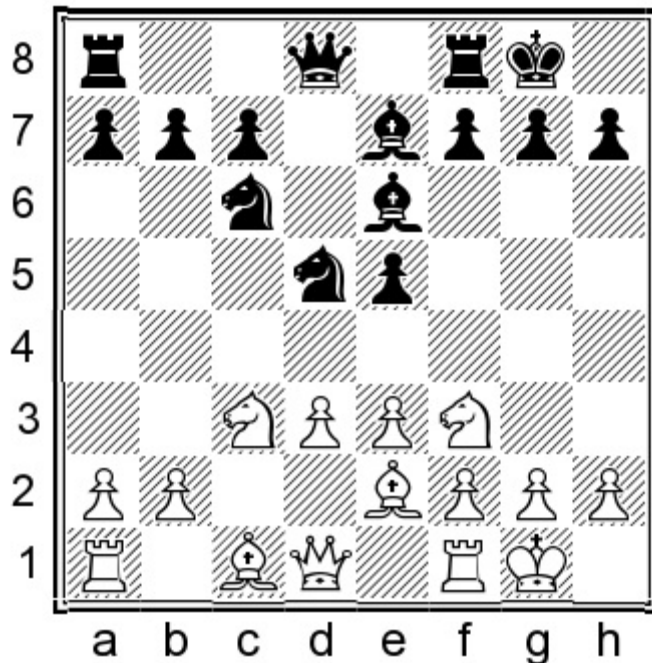
The price White is ready to pay for such flexibility is that he cannot play any main line against KI set-ups after 4...g6!?. I offer a detailed analysis of 5.g3 – see **Game 15** Kramnik-Ding Liren, Berlin 2018.

The most principled retort to 4.d3 is undoubtedly:

4...d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e3

6.g3 is a clever way to drag the opponent into the Dragon Reversed, sidestepping the main line 4.g3 ♘b4. I believe that it has no practical advantages over 6.e3, and statistics confirm my opinion.

6...♙e7 7.♙e2 0-0 8.0-0 ♙e6

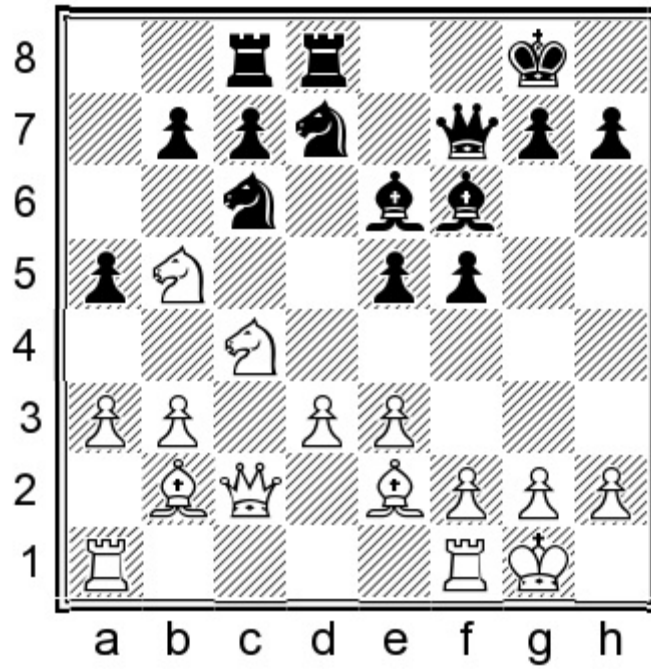


We have reached the mirror copy of the Scheveningen main line. One might think that in such sharp lines the extra tempo should easily tip the balance in White's favour, but things are not that simple. The problem is that the thematic hit in the centre e3-e4, which equalises in the standard Scheveningen, equalises here, too. Black's control of d4 insures him against trouble.

The best way of playing for a win, in my opinion, is to aim for the breakthrough d3-d4.

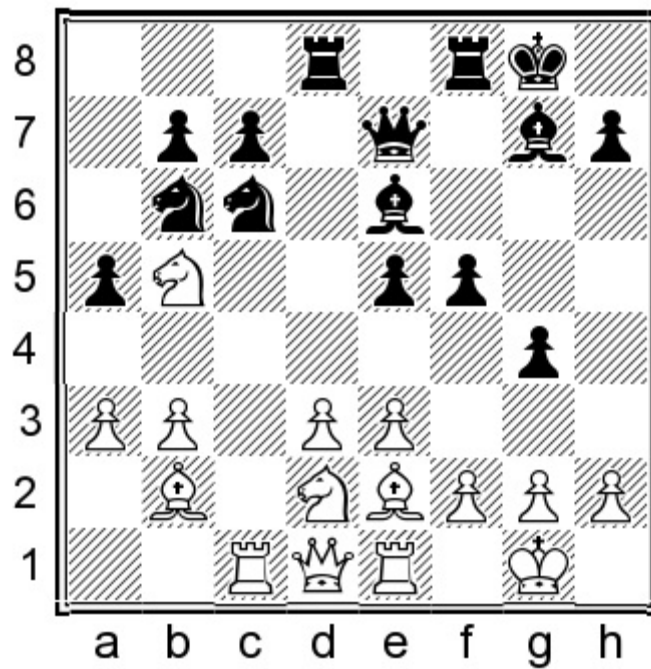
Here are several examples:

Lagarde-Kostiuk
Avoine 2012



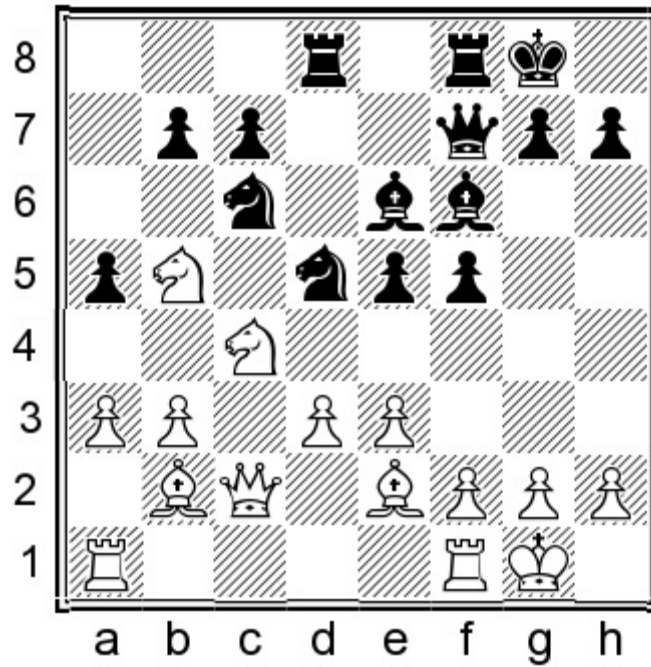
18.d4 e4 19.f3.

Analysis



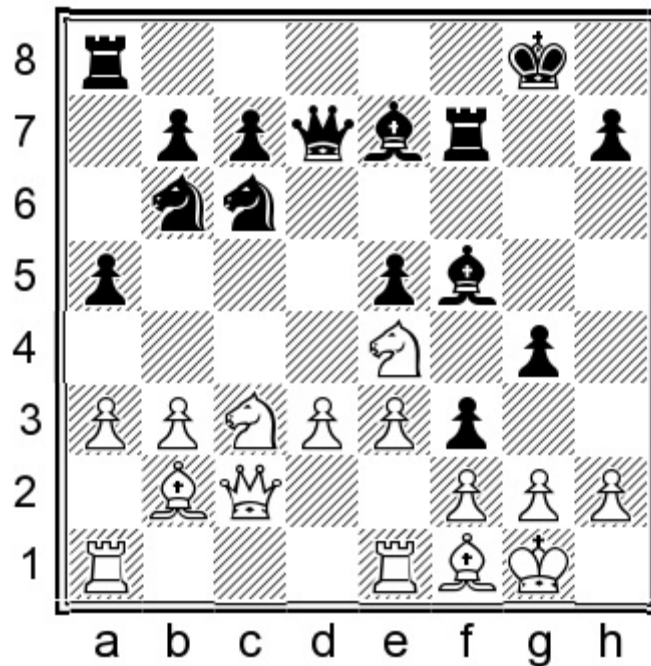
18.d4 exd4 19.exd4.

Analysis



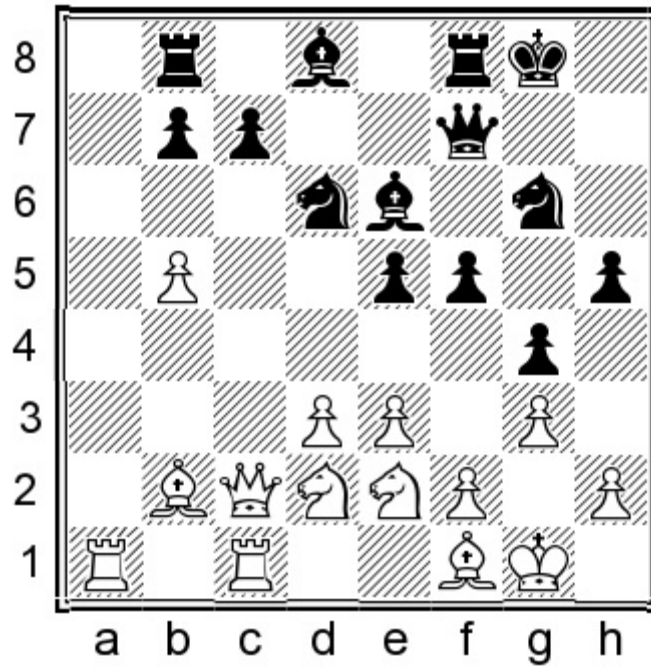
Finding a plan for Black is not trivial. 17...f4 18.♙f3 ♚d7 19.♙e4 ♙g5 20.exf4 is double-edged. 17...g5 looks pointless owing to the thematic 18.d4 (or 18.♖ad1!? g4 19.d4).

Analysis



19.d4 exd4 20.♖ad1⇒.

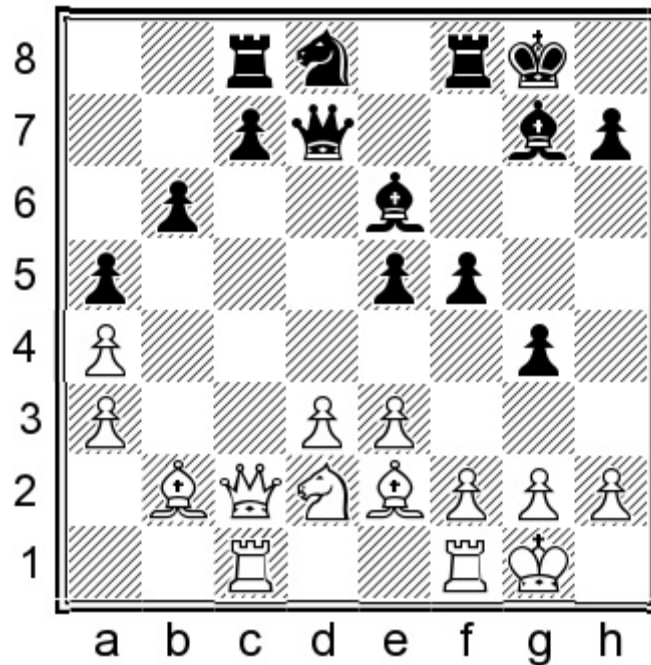
Analysis



26.d4±.

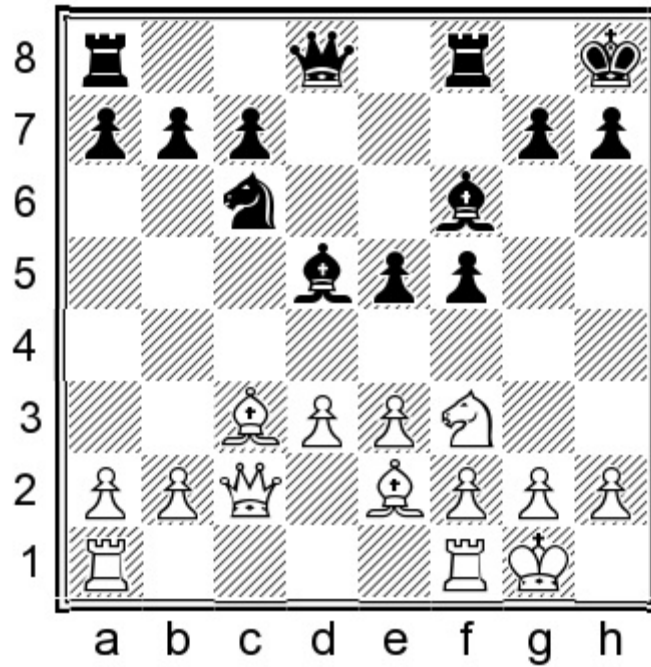
Another option is f4, but it is seldom seen:

Analysis



21.f4.

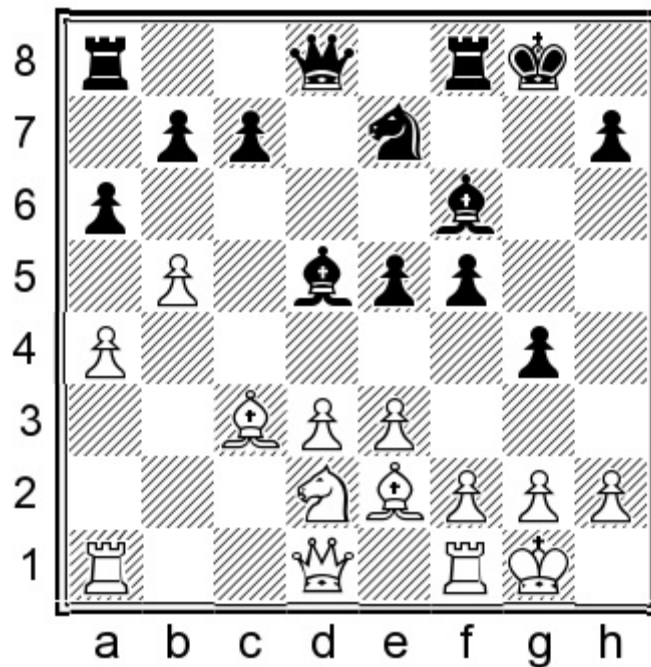
When planning our actions, we should always consider Black's most dangerous threat – ...e5-e4.



White did not play 13.e4 and allowed ...e4 – 13.b4 e4 14.dxe4 fxe4 15.♖d2. In both events play is roughly equal.

Of course, there are positions when e3-e4 is a must, and gives White good chances. That is commonly true when Black did not restrict our queenside advance with ...a5. Thus he avoided weakening b5.

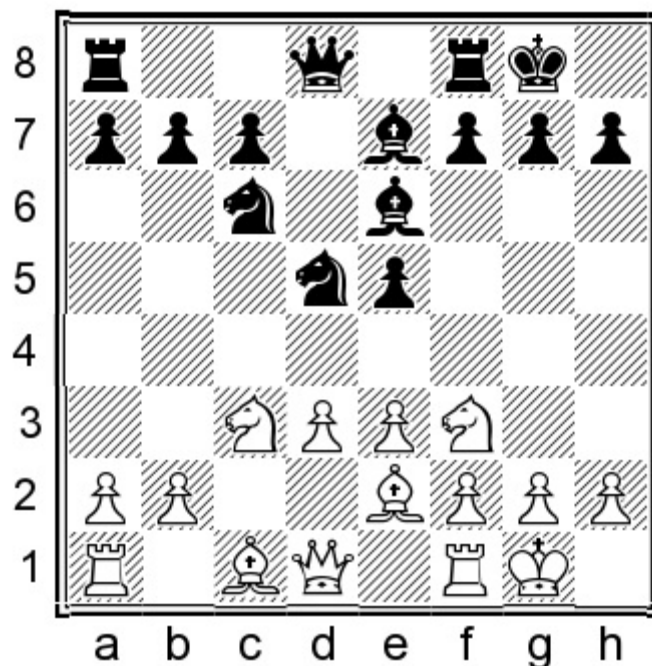
Analysis



16.e4!±.

Move orders

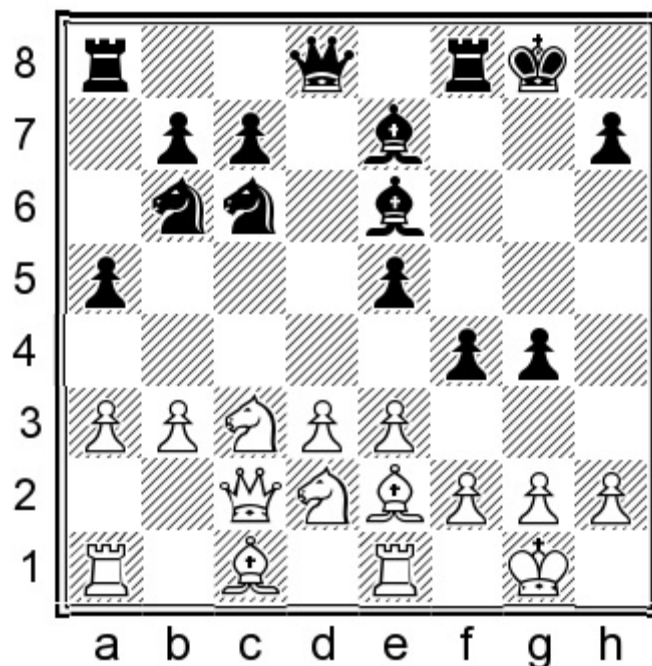
Let's now return to where we stopped:



White has two main set-ups here: with ♔c2 and ♕d2.

I discovered that the former is not too promising!

The reason is that the queen loses contact with the square g4 so Black can quickly push ...f7-f5-f4. He could underline it with 9.a3 a5! 10.♔c2 f5 11.♕d2 ♖b6 12.b3 g5 13.♕c1 g4 14.♗d2 f4 15.♙e1. This looks like a perfectly sound Scheveningen position, but do not forget that we are White and we want to avoid quick draws!

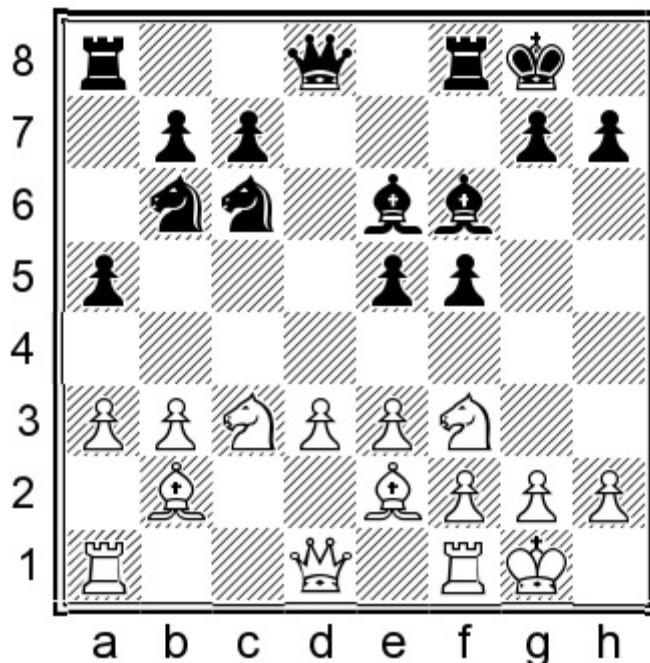


Black has the surprising 15...♖d5!? 16.♗xd5 ♔xd5 17.♘b2 fxe3 18.fxe3 ♔c5=. There is no way to win this as White.

So we'll develop with ♘d2 and the question is will Black restrict our play with ...♗b6, ...a5 or he will ignore it. In the latter case safest for us is to take on d5 and push b4. In most lines we should be able to achieve it without playing a3 at all. Our queen could support it from b1. These considerations lead us to the move:

9.♘d2!?

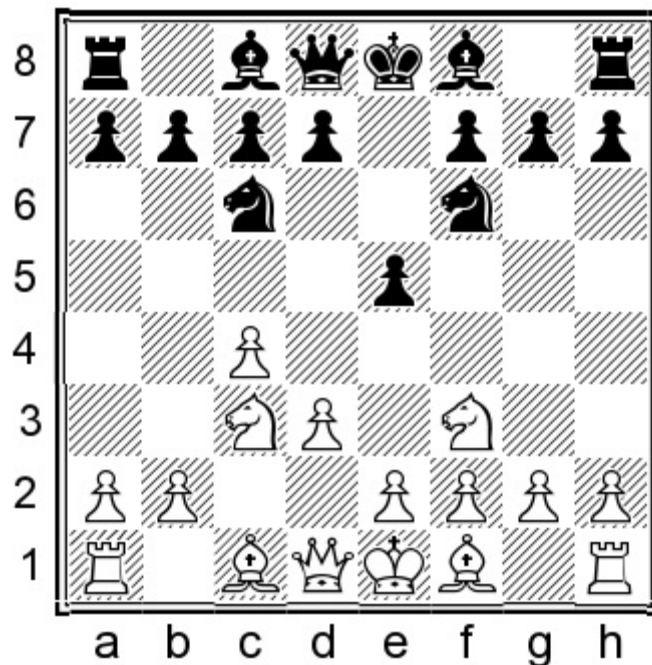
Critical then is the line 9...♗b6!? 10.a3 a5 11.b3 f5 12.♘c1 ♘f6 13.♘b2



This position may be dynamically balanced, but it hides a lot of tension – see **Game 14** Alekseev-Duzhakov, St Petersburg 2017. Engines' evaluations should not baffle you – the programs tend to overestimate Black's threats and space advantage. White's position is like a spring which commonly starts to uncoil after d3-d4. Remember the examples I showed earlier in this chapter!

Chapter 4. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.d3 Step by Step

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.d3



4...d5

A major drawback of 4.d3 is that we lose the option of meeting 4...g6!? by d4. Thus we are left with the plan with 5.g3!, which is beyond the scope of our book. Still, I offer a detailed analysis – see the recent top level **Game 15** Kramnik-Ding Liren, Berlin 2018.

An almost unknown alternative which might be good for practical application is:

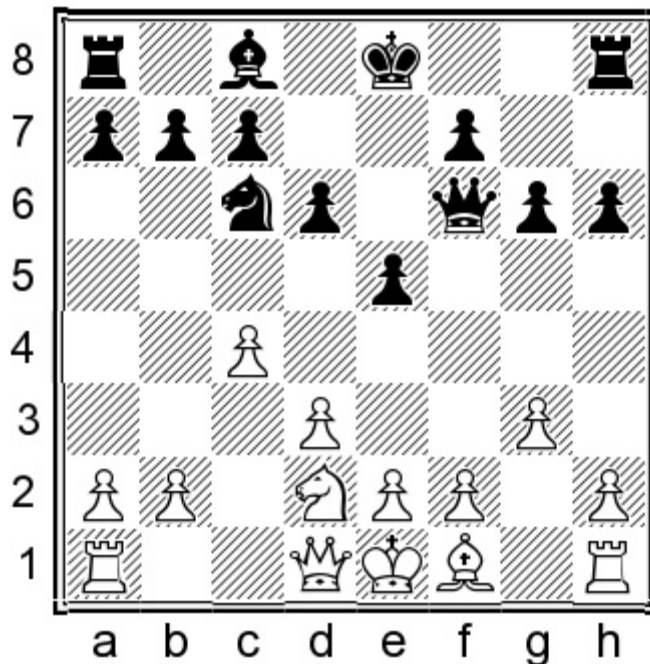
5.♘d5

5.e3 is also possible, but too modest. My own experience with it was the game Milov-Kiril Georgiev, New York 1998: 5...♙g7 6.♙e2 0-0 7.0-0 d5 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.♙d2 ♘db4 10.♚b1 a5 11.a3 ♘a6 12.♚c2 ♙e6 13.♚ab1 ♚e7 14.♚fd1 ♚fd8 15.♙e1 ♚d7 16.♘a4 ♙d5 17.♘c3 ♙e6 18.♘a4 ♙d5 19.♘c3 ½-½.

5...♙g7

5...♘xd5 6.cxd5 ♘d4!? is a tricky sacrifice, which is better to decline – 7.♘xd4 exd4 8.g3 c5 9.♚a4 ♙g7 10.♙f4 0-0 11.d6↑.

6.♙g5 h6 7.♘xf6+ ♙xf6 8.♙xf6 ♚xf6 9.♘d2 (to prevent ...e4) 9...d6 10.g3

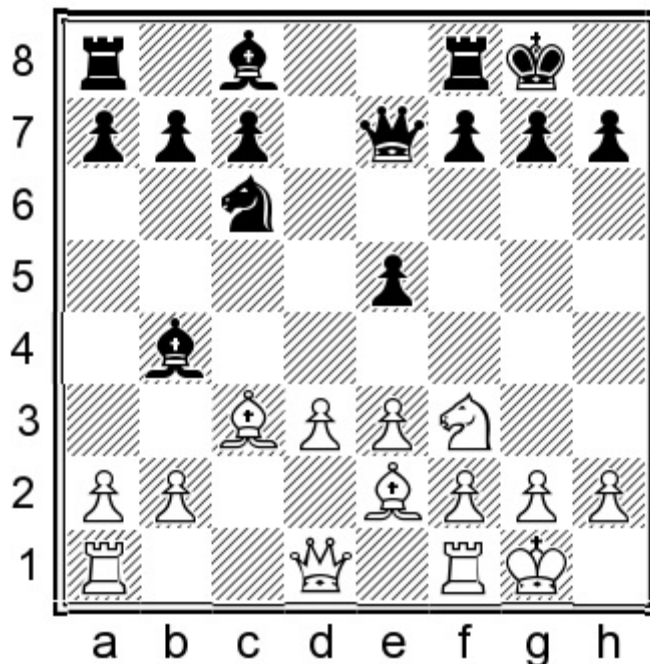


The only game I know is between the engines IvanHoe-Deep Shredder 12 from 2012: 10...♔d7 11.♙g2 0-0-0 12.♖b1 ♜e7 13.b4 h5 14.h4 with White's initiative.

The latest engines propose: 10...h5! 11.e3 ♗g4 (11...h4 12.g4) 12.♚b3 0-0-0 13.h4 g5 14.♙g2 gxh4 15.♖xh4 ♚g6 16.♜f1, intending ♜h2 with complex play.

4...♙b4 5.♙d2 0-0 6.e3 ♖e8

Alternatively: 6...d5 7.cxd5 ♜xd5 8.♙e2 ♜xc3 (8...♙e6 9.0-0 ♙e7 or 9.a3 ♙e7 transpose to line B with a clear extra tempo for White.) 9.♙xc3 (of course, 9.bxc3 is also a viable option) 9...♚e7 10.0-0



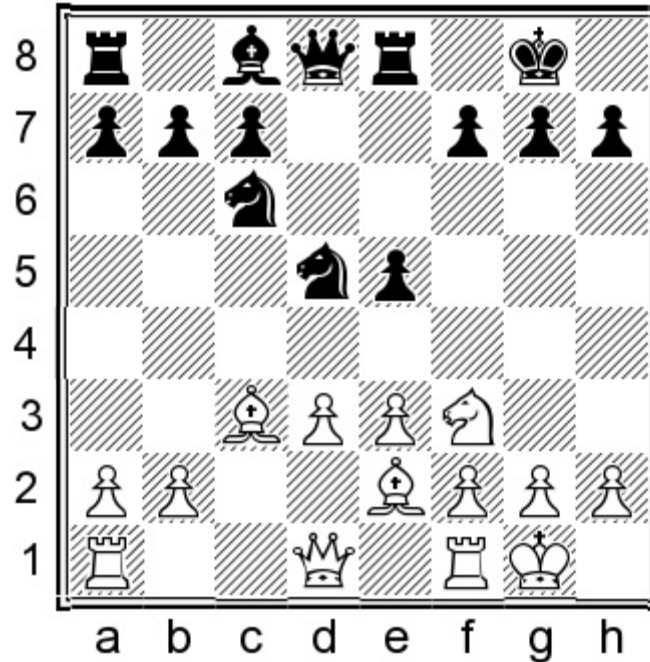
10...♖d8 (10...♙f5 allows White to develop his queen to a more active square – 11.♚b3 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 b6 13.d4 exd4 14.cxd4 ♜a5 15.♚d5 [15.♚b2!?] 15...♙e4 16.♚g5 with active pieces,

Alekseev-Onischuk, Poikovsky 2007.) 11.♔c1 (11.♔e1!) 11...♙f5 12.a3 ♗xc3 13.♖xc3 ♜d6
 14.♞fd1 ♞ad8 15.b4 a6, Narciso-Felgaer, Mexico City 2010. White's game is easier since he has
 the clear plan of preparing b5, e.g. 16.♘e1 ♙g6 17.a4.

7.♙e2 ♗xc3

7...d6

8.♗xc3 d5 9.cxd5 ♘xd5 10.0-0 (Topalov and Ivanchuk prefer 10.♞c1.)



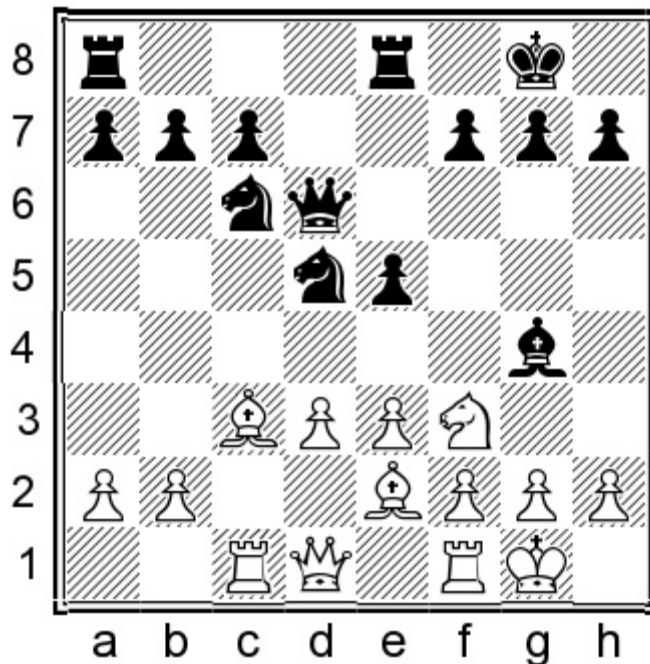
Black has tested several moves here. The straightforward:

10...♘xc3 11.bxc3 b6

Stockfish won against Hannibal in 2013 after 11...a6 12.d4 e4 13.♘d2 ♖g5 14.♞e1 ♙h3 15.♙f1
 ♙f5 16.♖b1 ♘a5 17.♘b3 ♘xb3 18.axb3 ...

12.d4 ♖f6 13.♞e1 gives White a mobile pawn centre.

10...♖d6 11.♞c1 ♙g4 also arises via the move order 10.♞c1 ♙g4 11.0-0 ♖d6.



12. ♖a4 ♜d7 13. ♜fe1

Ivanchuk-Navara, Basque Huaian 2016 saw 13. ♜b3 a5 14. a3 a4 15. ♜c2 h6 16. ♜fe1 ♟f5 17. ♞d2 ♟g6 18. ♞e4↑.

13... ♜ad8 14. h3 ♟f5 15. ♜b3 ♞b6, Azmaiparashvili-Mitkov, Saint Vincent 2003. Now the most consistent is 16. e4!, planning to open the centre with further d4.

4... ♟c5 is an attempt to play the Sozin Reversed after:

5. e3 0-0 6. ♟e2 d5 7. cxd5 ♞xd5 8. 0-0 ♟e6 9. ♜c2 ♜e7 (In some games Black goes back to e7, accepting the Scheveningen after all, but with a tempo down!) 10. a3 (A correspondence game featured 10. ♞e4 ♟b6 11. a3 ♜ad8 12. b4 f5 13. ♞eg5 ♟c8 and White's knight stands suspiciously on g5.) 10... a5 with unclear play.

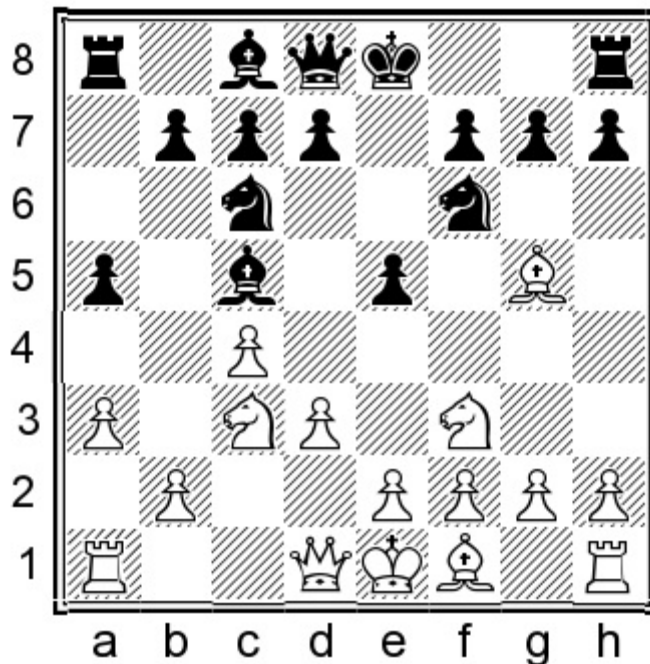
More attention deserves 5. ♟g5 0-0 6. e3, but the most testing option is:

5. a3!? a5

Or 5... d5 6. b4 d4 7. ♞d5;

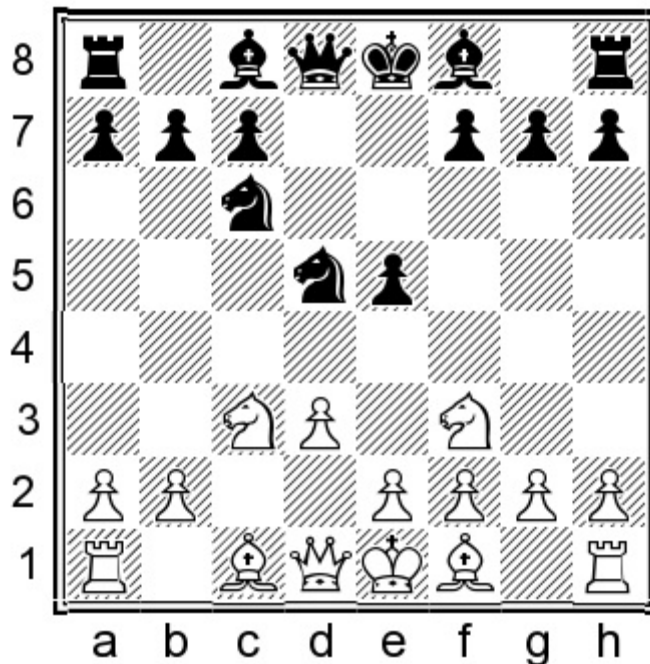
5... 0-0 6. b4 ♟d4 7. ♞xd4 exd4 8. ♞d5 ♞xd5 9. cxd5 ♞e7 10. ♜b3 c6 11. ♜c4.

6. ♟g5



6...h6 7.♔h4 g5 8.♔g3 d6 9.e3. The plan with d4 should offer White a space advantage.

5.cxd5 ♞xd5



A. 6.e4 is the safest continuation since White does not cede space. It leads to calm strategic play on the queenside. **B.** 6.e3!? is the most challenging (and risky!) way to go.

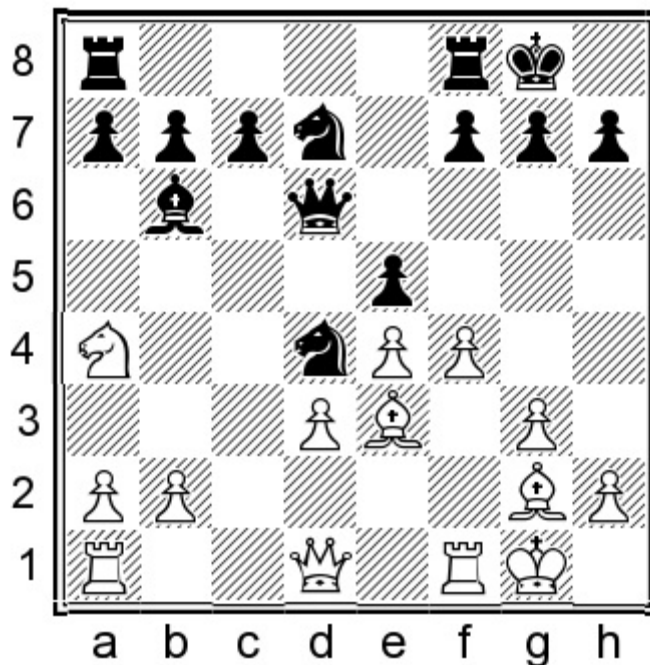
6.g3 is beyond the scope of this book.

A. 6.e4 ♞f6 7.♔e2

Black was fine after 7.h3 ♖c5 8.♗e2 (8.♗e3 ♜d6) 8...0-0 9.0-0 ♝e8= 10.a3 ♘d4, Jobava-Ivanchuk, Rethymno 2003.

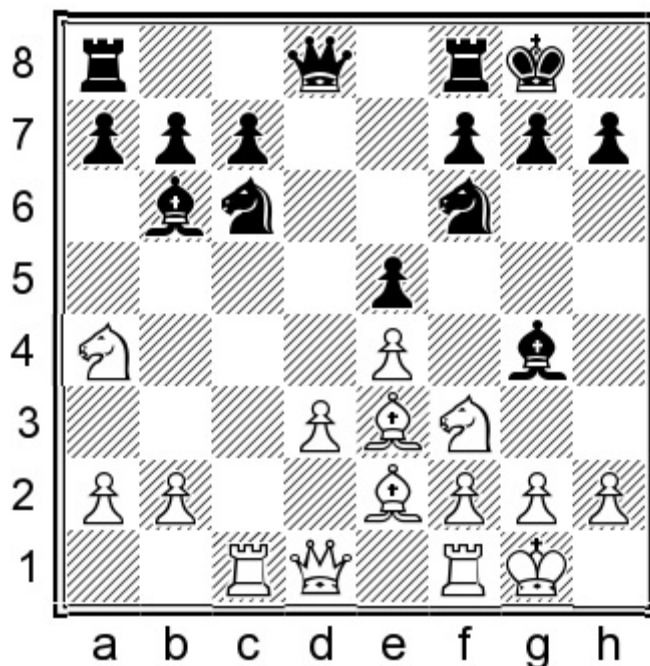
7...♗c5

7...♗g4 8.0-0 (Or 8.♗e3 ♜d7 9.0-0 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3 ♘d4=) 8...♗xf3 9.♗xf3 ♘d4 10.g3 ♗c5 11.♗g2 0-0 12.♘a4 ♗b6 13.♗e3 ♜d6 14.f4 ♘d7 occurred in Morozevich-Grischuk, Mexico City 2007.



White will soon take the second bishop and he would not risk anything. His sole weakness on d3 is easy to protect after ♝f2, and he may get an initiative on the queenside with ♝c1, ♗h3, a3.

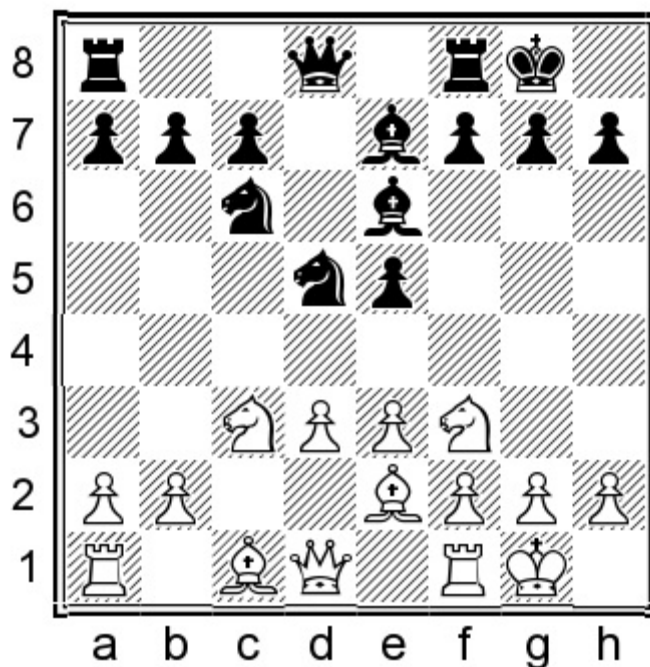
8.0-0 0-0 9.♗e3 ♗b6 10.♘a4 ♗g4 11.♝c1



This position is objectively balanced. Perhaps White's pawn centre makes his game a little easier. He could display activity on the queenside in a typical Sicilian manner. Caruana-Karjakin, blitz, Stavanger 2018 went:

11...♙xf3 12.♙xf3 ♘d4 13.♘c5 ♜b8 14.♞c4 ♘xf3+ 15.♚xf3 ♘d7 16.b4=.

B. 6.e3 ♙e7 7.♙e2 0-0 8.0-0 ♙e6



B1. 9.♙d2; B2. 9.a3

I do not like to put the queen to c2 without explicit necessity. You'll find my arguments below.

B1. 9.♙d2 f5

9...♘b6!? 10.a3 a5 11.b3 (11.♘a4 ♘xa4∞) 11...f5 12.♙c1! transposes to line B2.

10.♘xd5

The only way of exploiting the move order without a3. White should be able to push b4 without preparation. It secures White against direct attacks and allows him to take the initiative on the queenside.

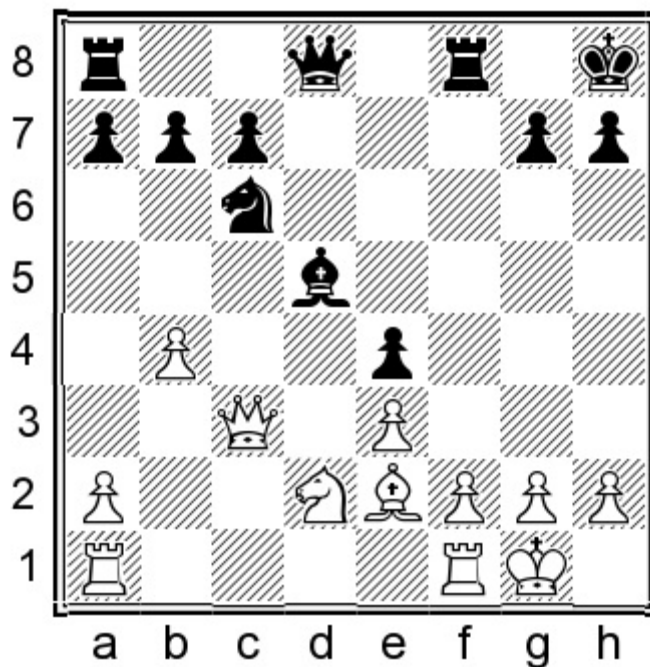
10...♙xd5 11.♙c3 ♙f6 12.♘d2!?

A flexible prophylactic move. It preempts the threat of ...e4 and in many lines White can play e4 himself.

The only game in my database, Alekseev-Gelfand, Sochi 2004, saw 12.♙c2 ♔h8 13.b4

13.e4 ♕e6 14.b4 ♖d6 15.exf5 is sufficient for equality – 15...♕xf5 16.a3 ♗d5 17.♞fe1 ♞ad8
18.♞ac1 ♞fe8 19.h3=.

13...e4 14.dxe4 fxe4 15.♘d2 ♕xc3 16.♙xc3



White has an initiative, but 16...♙e7! should hold on after 17.♙c5= or 17.♕c4 ♕xc4 18.♙xc4 ♘xb4
19.♞ab1 c5 20.♘xe4∞.

Instead, the stem game went 16...♙d6 17.b5 ♘e5, when 18.♞ad1± would have been an obvious improvement.

12...♔h8

The active plan 12...g5?! stumbles into 13.b4 a6 14.a4 g4 15.b5 ♘e7 16.e4!.

One of White's ideas is e3-e4xf5, when ♙b3+ would win a pawn. Therefore, besides the text, it looks logical to try:

12...♕f7 13.b4 ♙e7. I like White's position after 14.♞b1!? ♕xa2 15.♞b2 ♕f7 16.b5 ♙c5 17.♘c4 ♘e7
18.d4 exd4 19.exd4↑.

13.a3

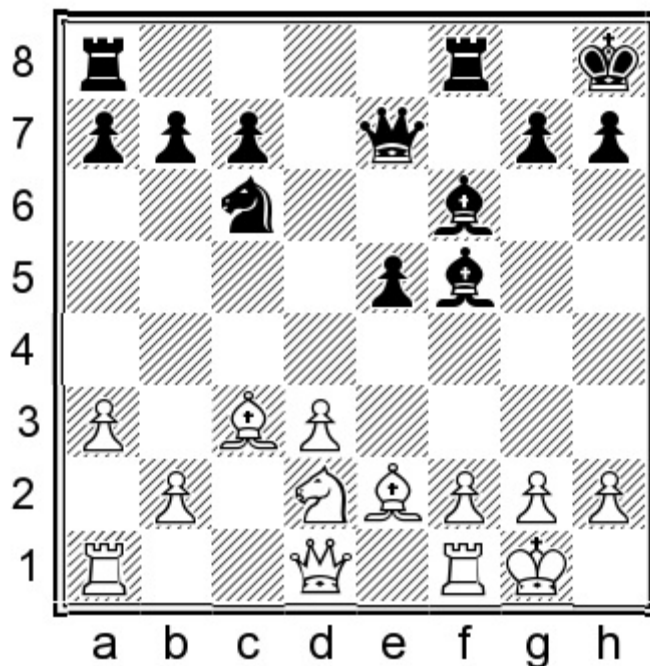
The plan is ♞c1, ♙c2, b4, e4, depending on Black's reply. If he stayed passive, e.g. 13...a6, we could achieve all of them.

Perhaps 13.b4 is slightly premature in view of 13...e4 14.♕xf6 ♙xf6 15.dxe4 fxe4 16.♙b1 ♙f5
17.♕c4=.

13...♙e7

After 13...♔d7, 14.b4 is already good since the thematic counter 13...e4 is dubious because the queen is hanging.

14.e4 (13.♖c1!?) 14...♙e6 15.exf5 ♙xf5

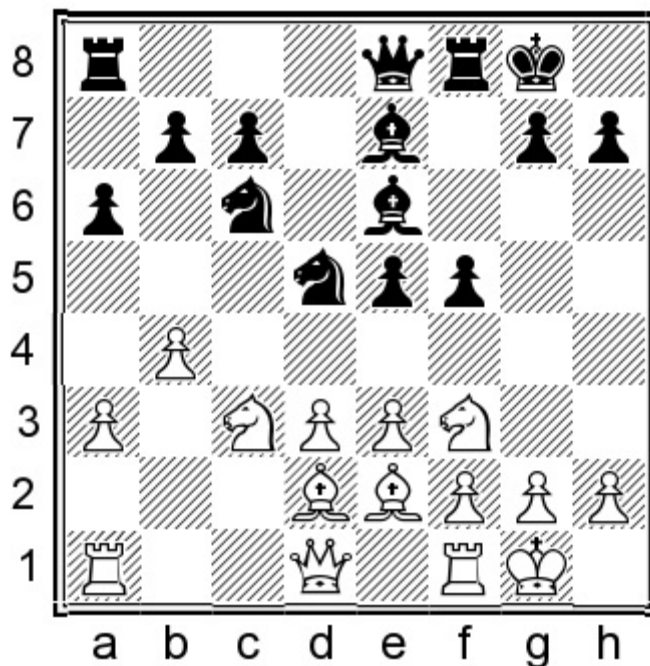


This is a typical Scheveningen position where White is safe and he has a clear plan – to trade light-squared bishops and play ♖:♙. However, 16.♘e4, intending ♙g4, would be boring, albeit slightly better for White after 16...♙xe4. It is more enterprising to grasp the initiative with 16.♙f3!? ♙xd3 17.♖e1 ♔f7 18.♙xc6 bxc6 19.♔f3 with pleasant pressure in a safe position.

B2. 9.a3 a5

Restricting White's queenside play. In older games Black tried to ignore it by 9...f5 10.♙d2 ♔e8 (or 10...♔h8), but the tempo down, compared to the original Scheveningen, does not leave him serious chances for an attack:

11.b4 a6



12. ♖b1!?

The game Huebner-Hecht, Solingen 1978, saw 12. ♖xd5 ♕xd5 13. ♘c3 ♘d6 14. ♗d2 ♗e7 15. ♗b2?! (15.a4!=) 15...e4!.

It is more natural to support the b-pawn from b1, threatening e4 as well.

12... ♗g6

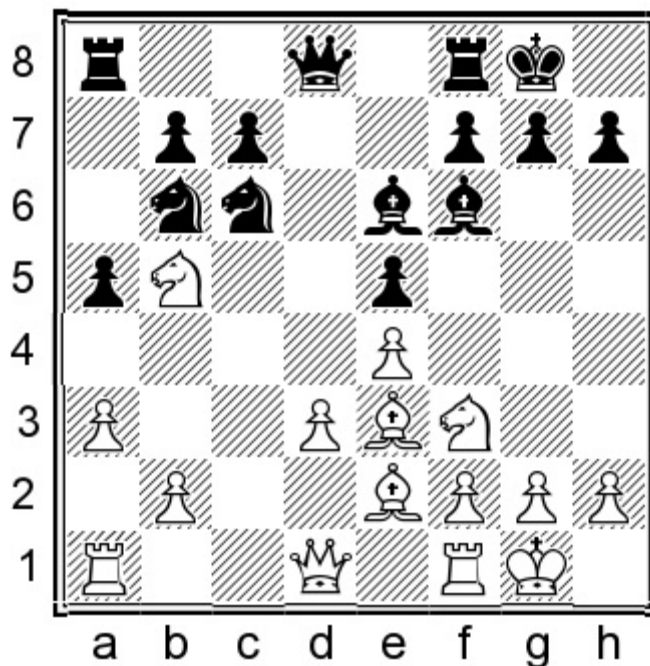
It is better to bring more power in the centre with 12... ♖d8 13. ♖xd5 ♕xd5 14. ♘c3 ♗g6 15.a4. 13.b5!? axb5 14. ♗xb5 with an initiative in Vilela-Prandstetter, Decin 1978. Black attempted the thematic 14... ♖xc3 15. ♘xc3 e4, but remained under pressure after 16. ♖e5 ♖xe5 17. ♘xe5.

10. ♘d2

10.e4!? ♖b6 11. ♘e3 makes sense as we can plant a knight on the weakened b5-square:

11... ♘f6 12. ♖b5

Or 12. ♖c1 ♖d4 13. ♘xd4 exd4 14. ♖a4 ♖d7=



12...a4 13.♖c1 ♜e8 14.♚d2 ♜e7 15.♖c5!?, intending ♜fc1. Instead 15.d4 exd4 16.♗bxd4 ♗xd4 is equal.

10.♚c2?! f5

It is inaccurate to retreat 10...♗b6 before ♘d2 as the bishop is much better on c1 in this set-up.

White follows the normal plan with two (!) extra tempos – 11.b3 f5 12.♙b2 or 12.♞b1.

11.♙d2 ♗b6 12.b3 g5 is covered in my notes to White's move 12.

10...♗b6

After 10...f5 we should choose a plan with e4:

11.♖c1

11.e4 is a bit early as 11...♗f4 (or 11...fxe4) is fairly equal.

In the event of 11.♗xd5 ♚xd5 12.♙c3 the inclusion of a3 a5 is in Black's favour compared to line B1, as he has 12...a4=.

11...♗b6

11...♙h8 is also possible.

12.e4

12.♗b5 ♙f6 13.e4 was about equal in Ubilava-Cramling, Benasque 1990.

12...♙f6

Or 12...♗d4 13.exf5 ♞xf5 14.♗xd4 exd4 15.♗e4 ♞b5 16.♙g4! with an initiative.

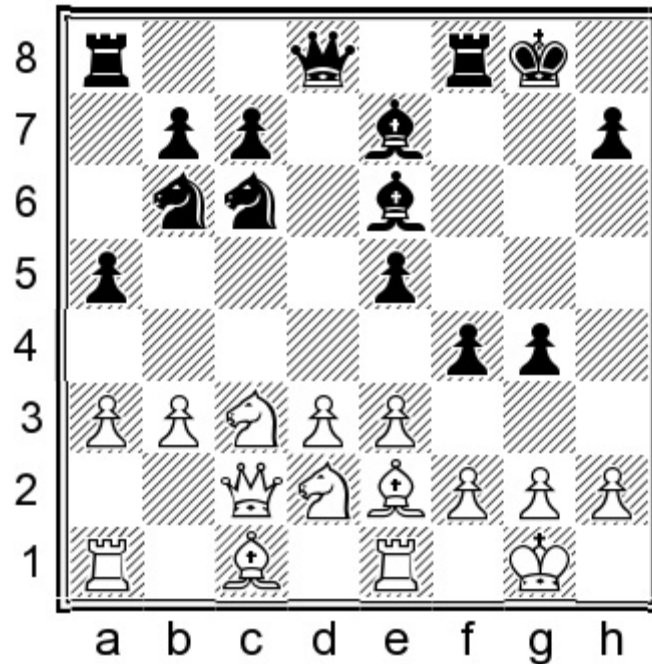
13.exf5 ♙xf5 14.♗e4±.

11.b3

11.♖c1 a4 is unclear, but it would be difficult to break through with so little space left.

11...f5 12.♙c1!?

Note that I do not like 12.♚c2 owing to 12...g5! 13.♙c1 (or 13.d4 e4 14.♘e5 ♘xe5 15.dxe5=, but White's chances to win this static position are slim.) 13.♙c1 g4 14.♘d2 f4 15.♖e1



15...♘d5!? 16.♘xd5

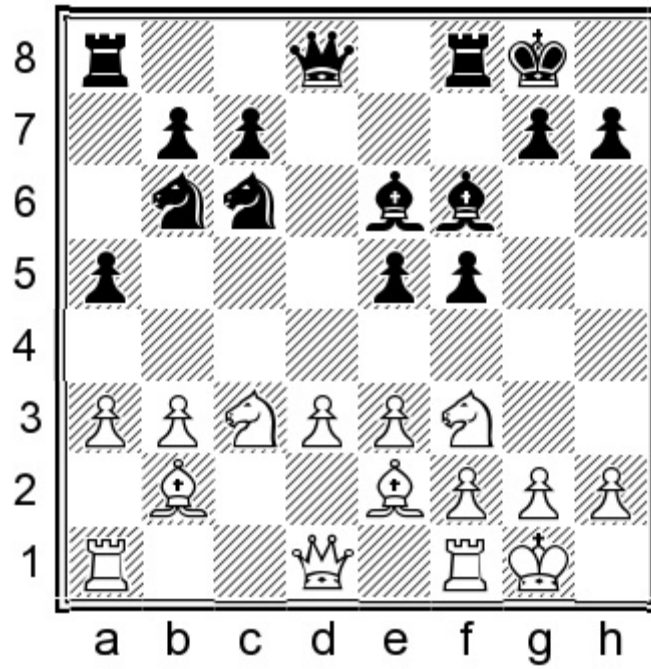
16.♙f1 fxe3 17.fxe3 ♘xc3 18.♚xc3 misplaces the queen. It should control f2.

16...♚xd5 17.♙b2 (17.♙f1? fxe3 18.fxe3 ♘d4!) 17...fxe3 18.fxe3 ♚c5=. There is no way to win this as White. He is even on the defensive.

12...♙f6

After 12...g5 13.♙b2 g4 14.♘d2 Black cannot play 14...f4 – this is an important argument in favour of delaying ♚c2.

13.♙b2

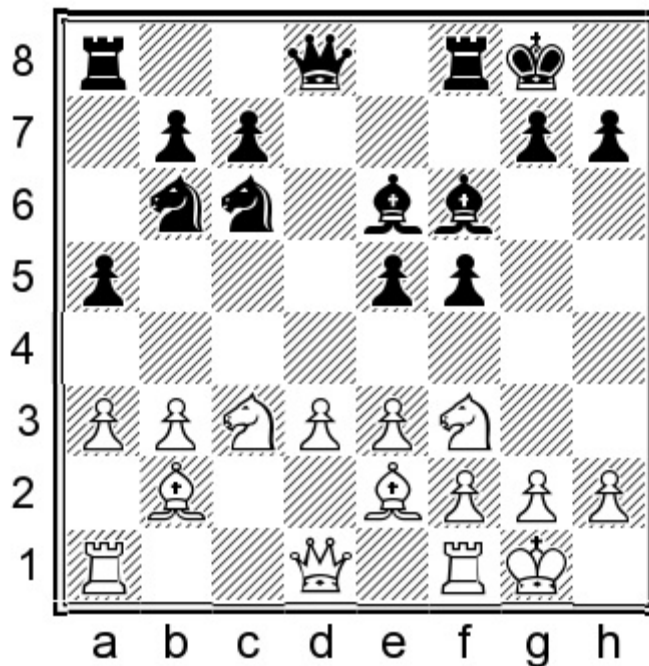


In this complex position the better player has good chances to outplay the opponent – see **Game 14** Alekseev-Duzhakov, St Petersburg 2017.

Chapter 4. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.d3 Annotated Games

14. Alekseev – Duzhakov St. Petersburg 26.03.2017

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.d3 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e3 ♗e7 7.♗e2 0-0 8.0-0 ♗e6 9.♗d2 ♘b6 10.a3 a5 11.b3 f5 12.♗c1 12...♗c2!?) 12...♗f6 13.♗b2



13...♗d7

The flank attack 13...g5 14.♘d2 g4 is not dangerous since the g4-pawn does not have sufficient support. White could try to exploit that immediately with 15.e4 ♘d4 16.exf5 ♗xf5 17.♘de4∞, but ...f4 is still not a threat so he could opt for a more flexible approach:

15.♗e1!? ♗g7 16.♘b5

16.♗c1 ♗e7 17.♘b5 ♗ad8 18.d4 exd4 19.exd4∞ is also possible.

16...♗d7 17.♗c2 ♗f7 18.d4∞.

The bottom line is that ...g5-g4 is a serious weakening which invites a counter-attack with d3-d4 or e3-e4.

Let's also check 13...♗e7 14.♘a4

The set-up 14.♘b5 ♗f7 15.♘d2 ♗ad8 16.♗c2 ♘d5 17.♘c4 is a fair alternative.

14...♘d7 (or 14...♗ad8 15.♗c2 ♘d7 16.d4; 14...♘xa4 15.bxa4 ♗ad8∞) 15.d4∞.

Finally, after 13...♗e8 14.♗c2 ♗g6 we should discard the idea ♘a4, which is effective only against a

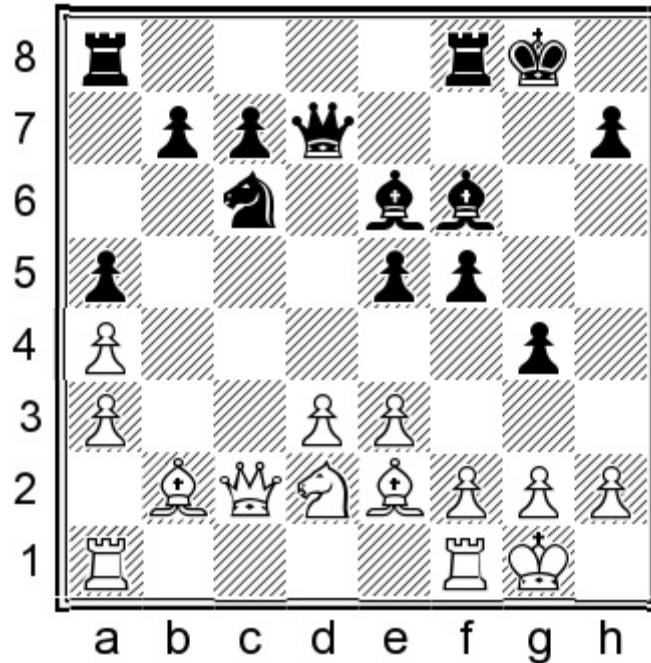
weakened kingside. Instead we could manoeuvre slowly: ♖h1, ♕d2, ♜ac1, ♗c4, ♖b5 with d4 in mind.

14. ♝c2

If White had doubts whether he should seek counterplay with ♖b5 or ♗a4, Black's last move tips the balance in favour of the latter option since he lacks the reply ...♗b6-d7. However, 14. ♗a4 at once was dubious owing to 14...♗xa4 15.bxa4 e4, when the b2-bishop hangs.

14... ♜ac8

This move is obviously not too principled. We should consider 14...g5 15.♗d2 (15.♗a4 transposes) 15...g4 16.♗a4! ♗xa4 17.bxa4. It would have been preferable to get this position without ♗b2, but the opening move order without early ♝c2 deprived White of such option. Black now has a wide choice:



17...f4 18.♗e4 ♗e7 19.exf4 ♜xf4 20.♜ae1±;

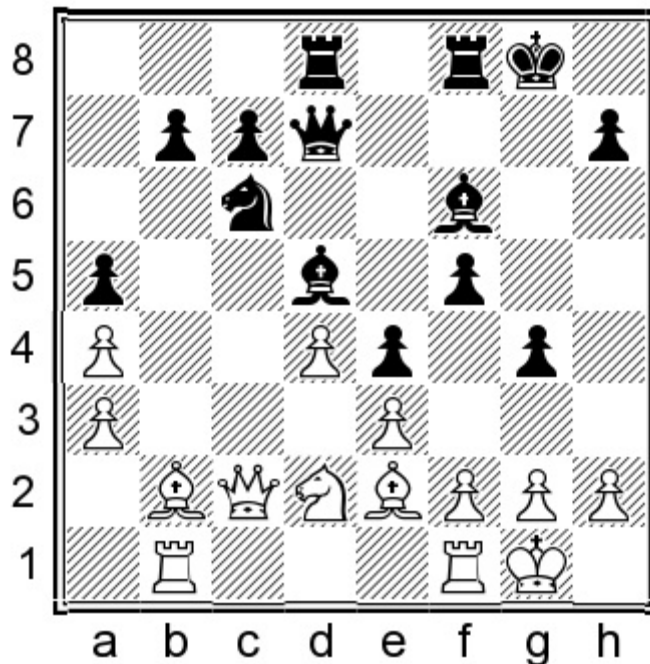
17...♗g7 18.♗b3 b6 19.♜ac1 ♗d8 20.♗d2 ♜c8 21.f4;

17...♝g7 18.♜ab1 ♜ad8 19.♗a1 ♗c8 20.♜b5 ♖h8 21.♗b2 ♜de8 22.♜e1, intending g3, ♗f1;

17...♜ad8 18.♜fe1!?

18.♗b3 ♝g7 19.♗c5 ♗c8 is pointless.

18.♜ab1 allows 18...e4 19.d4 ♗d5 with complex balanced play.



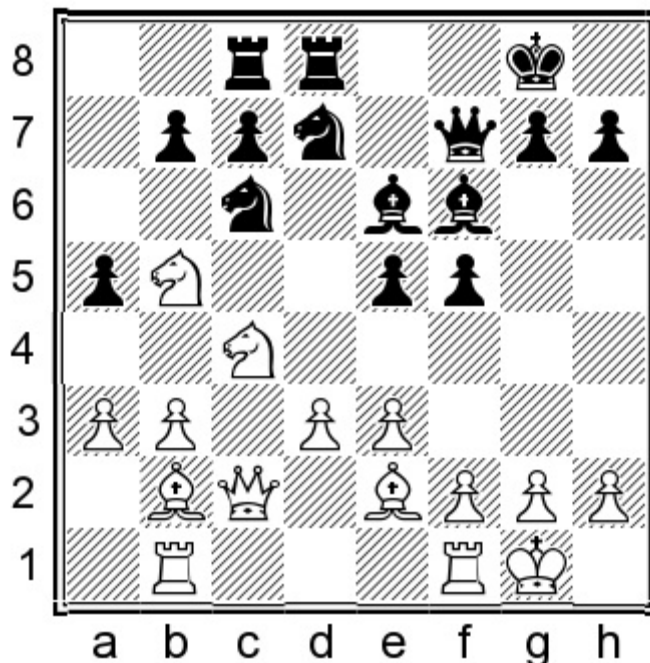
For instance: 20.♔a1 b6 21.♞bc1 ♚e6 22.♘b1 ♞d7 23.♙b5 ♞d6 24.♘c3 ♘e7 25.♘e2 ♙g5 or 20.♙c4 ♘e7 21.♙b5 ♚d6 22.♘c4 ♚e6 23.♘e5.

The text discourages 18...e4 in view of 19.♙xf6 ♞xf6 (19...exd3 20.♚b2 dxe2 loses as the rook is on e1!) 20.♚c3 ♞h6 21.d4±.

18...♚f7 19.♞ab1 ♙a2 20.♞bc1 ♙d5 21.e4 (21.♙a1 ♙g7∞) 21...fxe4 22.♘xe4∞.

The game Lagarde-Kostiuk, Avoine 2012, saw Black avoiding ...g5:

14...♚f7 15.♘d2 ♞fd8 16.♘c4 ♘d7 17.♘b5 ♞ac8



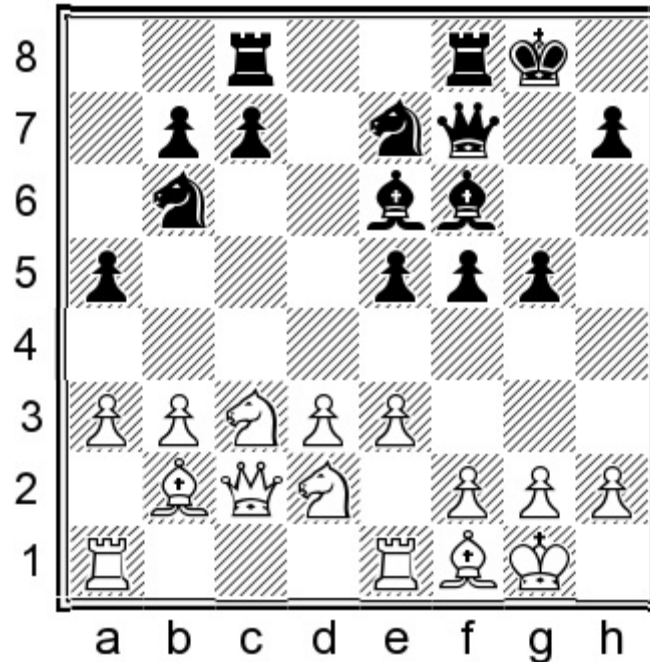
Now 18.d4 e4 19.f3 is already a sound option. The game went instead 18.♞ab1 b6?! 19.d4! exd4 (19...e4 20.f3) 20.exd4 ♘f8 21.♘e5±.

15.♖fe1 g5 16.♔f1

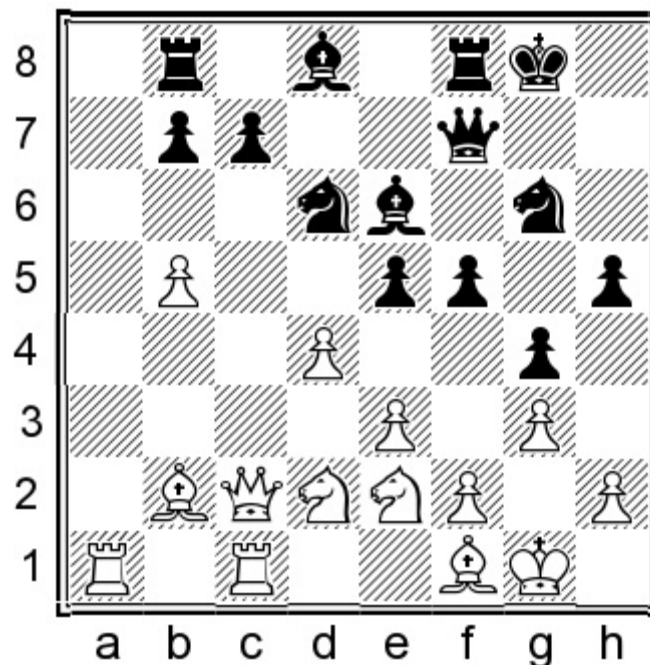
This was not strictly necessary. 16.♘a4 ♗xa4 17.bxa4 g4 18.♘d2 was more direct.

16...♗f7 17.♘d2 ♘e7?!

At least Black is consistent. He firstly put his rook on c8, now he frees the path before his c-pawn.



However, he would not be able to reach a Maróczy bind after the normal 18.b4! axb4 19.axb4. Play might continue 19...g4 20.b5 h5 21.♘e2 ♘g6 22.♖a7 ♖b8 23.♖c1 ♔d8 24.g3 ♗c8 25.♖aa1 ♘d6 26.d4±.

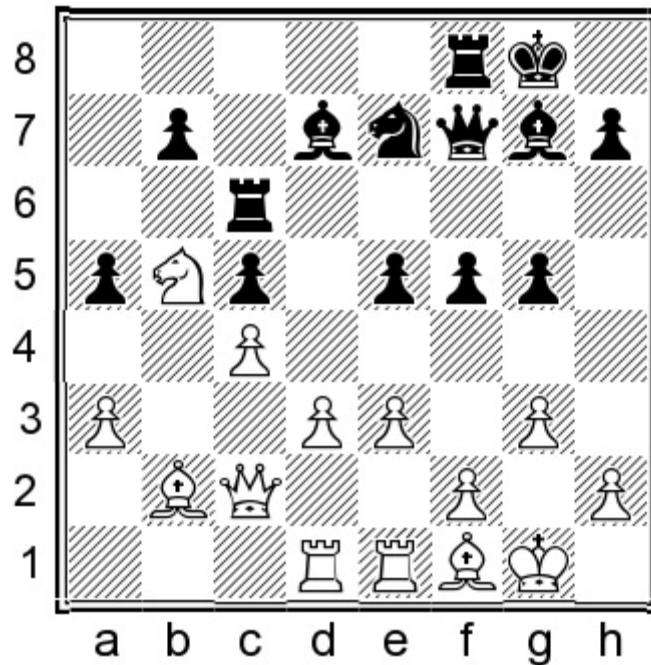


The possibility for this move hints that Black's offence has reached a dead end.

18.g3 ♔d7 19.♘c4 ♘xc4 20.bxc4 ♕g7 21.♖ad1

Actually, 21.d4! was possible at once since 21...exd4 22.exd4 ♕xd4? 23.♖ad1 c5 24.♘b5 would be curtains. In the Scheveningen, pawns do not count much after ...g5. You can always sac one to open the centre without deep calculation.

21...c5 22.♘b5 ♖c6



23.d4!±

Black had just built up his desired pawn set-up, to discover that he is almost lost. The spring of White's pieces recoils with a devastating effect.

23...cxd4 24.exd4 e4 25.c5 ♖h6 26.♕c4 ♕e6 27.♘d6 ♗g6 28.d5 ♗h5 29.f3 ♕xb2 30.♗xb2 exf3 31.dxe6 f4 32.♘f7 1-0

This game demonstrates the most attractive side of White's set-up – you can win almost on autopilot. You should only remember to put your rook on e1 and watch for d3-d4. Black obviously felt ill at ease against the fluid central pawns.

15. Kramnik – Ding Liren Candidates Berlin 18.03.2018

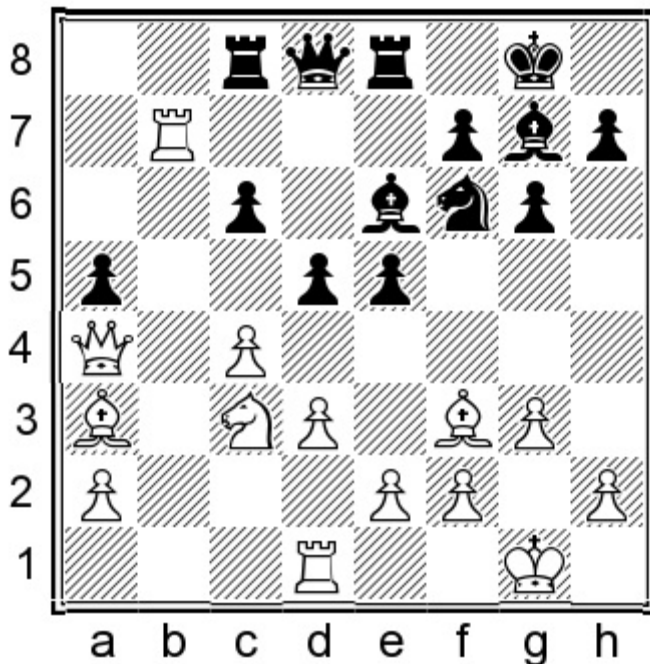
1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.d3 g6 5.g3 ♕g7 6.♕g2 0-0 7.0-0 d6 8.b3!?

8.♖b1 is much more common, but in fact White does not get much with the flank attack after 8...♘d4!?

(also after 8...a5 9.b3, ♖b1 is hardly a useful move.) 9.b4 c6 10.b5 ♜xf3+ 11.♙xf3 d5 12.bxc6 bxc6 13.♗a4

The computer offers to get a small advantage with 13.♙g5 ♙e6 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.e4 d4 16.♜d5 ♙xd5 17.exd5 ♖d7 18.♙xf6 with a passed d5-pawn, but the opposite-coloured bishops here mean a sure draw.

13...♙e6 14.♙a3 ♖e8 15.♗fd1 (15.♖b7 ♗c8) 15...♖c8 16.♖b7 a5=.



White's initiative has come to a halt. Black's pawn centre keeps our pieces at bay.

The whole idea of abandoning the centre in favour of a flank advance is slightly dubious. It offers a series of easy opening moves and might bring success at lower level, but nowadays it would be difficult to beat a strong grandmaster this way.

Kramnik's plan is strictly centre-oriented. Albeit rare, it was not a surprise for Ding Liren, who had met it in 2014.

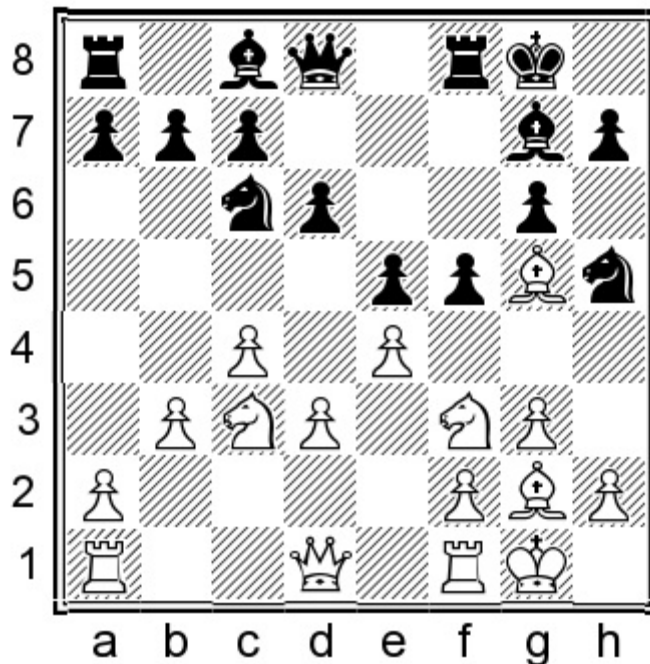
8...♜d4

8...♜h5!? is rarely met here, but it is very consistent. Black wants to play ...f7-f5-f4. White's standard way of meeting it is:

9.♙b2 f5 10.e3 f4, when Marin answered 11.exf4 exf4 12.♖d2. Now strongest is 12...g5 with an initiative for Black. Marin's recommendation in the annotations to his game against Berg – 13.♜e1?!, could only be better for Black after 13...♗f6. Instead 11.d4 or ♜d2 are playable, but White does not have much. Black's f4-pawn is too restricting.

I believe that we should fight the enemy plan with:

9.e4!? f5 10.♙g5



10...♖e8

Or 10...♗f6 11.♗d5;

10...♙f6 11.♙xf6 ♗xf6 12.exf5 ♙xf5 13.♖d2. Black's king is weakened and that should tell when White opens the centre with f4 or d4.

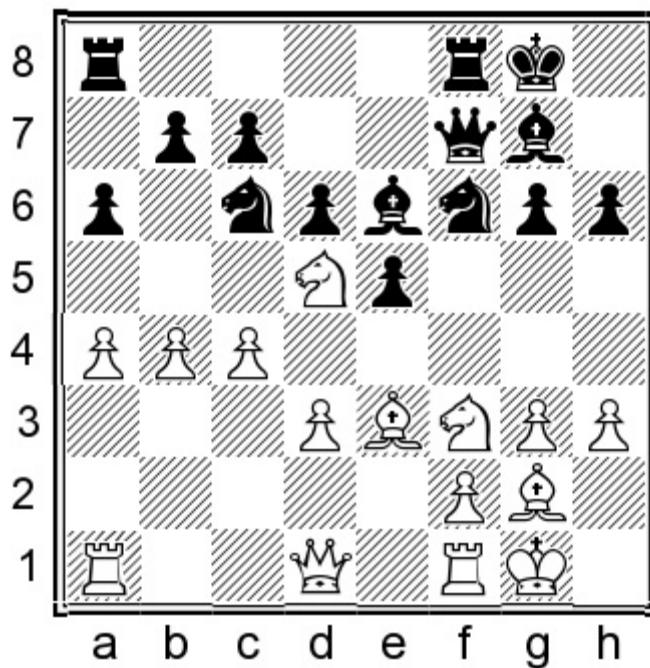
11.♗d5

The exchange sacrifice 11.exf5 e4 (11...♙xf5 12.h3) 12.♗xe4 gxf5 13.♗ed2 ♙xa1 14.♖xa1 ♖g6 15.♙e1 ♙d7 16.b4 leads to chaotic play with full compensation for the small material deficit.

11...♖f7 12.exf5! ♙xf5 13.h3! h6 (13...e4? 14.♗h4±) 14.♙e3 ♙e6

After 14...♗f6 15.♗xf6 ♖xf6 16.♖d2 ♗h7 17.♗h2 White has active options on both flanks.

15.b4 a6 16.a4 ♗f6

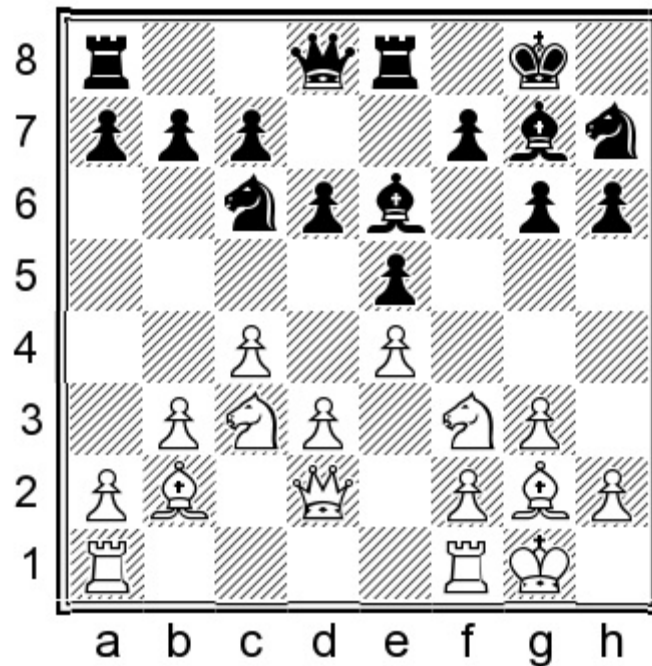


17.♗xf6+ ♖xf6 18.♙b1

The exchange sac 18.b5 e4 19.dxe4 ♖xa1 20.♗xa1 ♘xa1 21.bxc6 ♙e5 is unclear.
 The point of 18.♞b1 is the line 18...♙xh3?! 19.♙xh3 ♗xf3 20.♗xf3 ♞xf3 21.♙g2 ♞ff8 22.b5 axb5
 23.axb5 ♘d8 24.♞a1 or 24.♙e4 with total dominance.

8...h6 9.♙b2 ♙e6 is naturally met by 10.e4. For instance: 10...♗d7 11.♘d5 ♙g4 12.♗d2 ♔h7 13.♘h4
 ♘xd5 14.cxd5 ♘d4 15.f3 ♙h3 16.♙xh3 ♗xh3 17.♙xd4 exd4 18.♗b4±.

8...♞e8 9.♙b2 h6 10.♗d2 ♙e6 11.e4 ♘h7 occurred in Blatny-Berndt, Germany 1994.



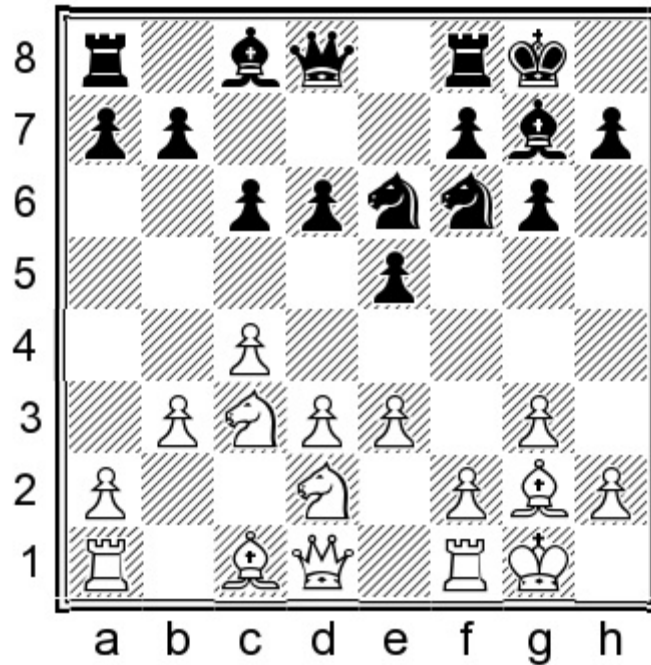
I like here 12.♘e2, planning d4. If 12...f5?! 13.exf5 gxf5 14.♘h4 f4 15.d4 with a decisive advantage.

In most of these alternatives to 8...♘d4 we play in the centre – e4, followed up with d4 or f4.

9.♘d2

Naturally, White would like to keep more pieces on the board as he expects to gain soon a spatial advantage. An engine game saw 9.♙b2 c6 10.♗d2, and finished in a draw.

9...c6 10.e3 ♘e6



11. ♖b2

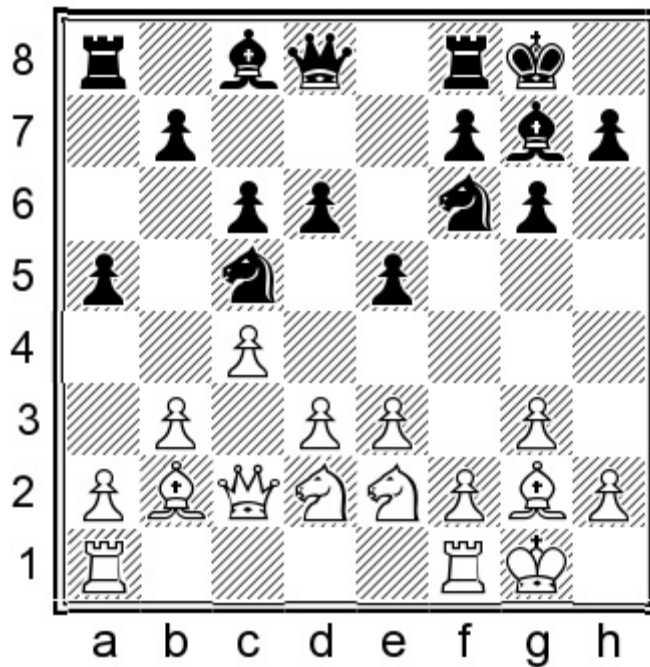
This logical move is actually a novelty. Kramnik (and other players) had tried 11. ♖a3 a5 12. ♖c1 while Ding Liren had opted against Malakhov for 11... ♖e8 12. ♗de4 ♗xe4 13. dxe4 ♚a5=.

11... ♗c5 12. ♚c2 a5 13. ♖ae1

An important moment. What is White's plan here? Obviously it is not 14. d4 in view of 14... exd4 15. exd4 ♕f5. We should play e4 first, then ♗e2, and only then push d4, capturing on d4 by piece. In this scenario our rook should be on d1, rather than on e1. I do not believe that Kramnik was planning f4. Perhaps he saw 13. ♖ad1 ♕f5 14. e4 ♕g4 with a tempo. White could answer 15. f3 ♕d7 16. ♗e2, but 16... ♗e6 17. d4 exd4 18. ♗xd4 ♚b6 gives Black an initiative.

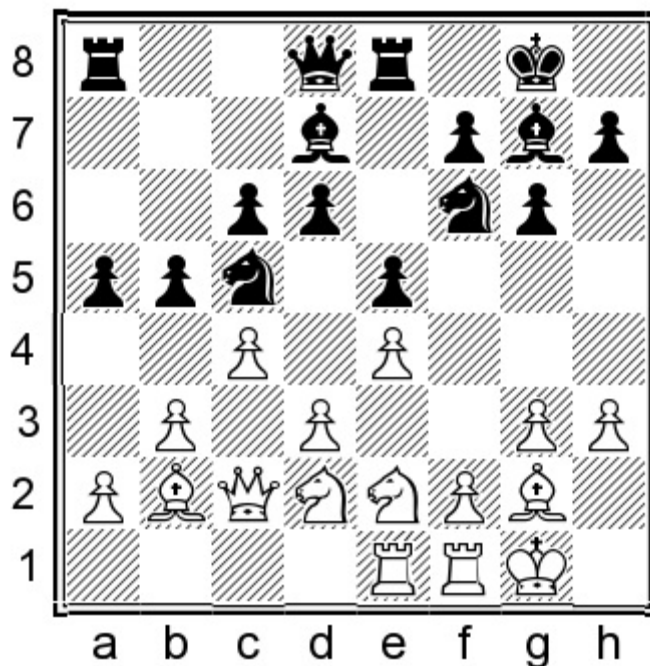
Perhaps the most clever shaping of the plan Kramnik executed in the game was:

13. ♗e2!?



Now 13...♙g4 14.♞fe1 and 13...♙f5 14.e4 ♙g4 15.f3 ♙e6 16.d4 favour White. Perhaps Black should wait: 13...♞e8 14.♞ad1 ♙d7 15.h3 and we are ready for e4.

13...♞e8 14.h3 ♙f5 15.e4 ♙d7 16.♞e2 b5



17.d4

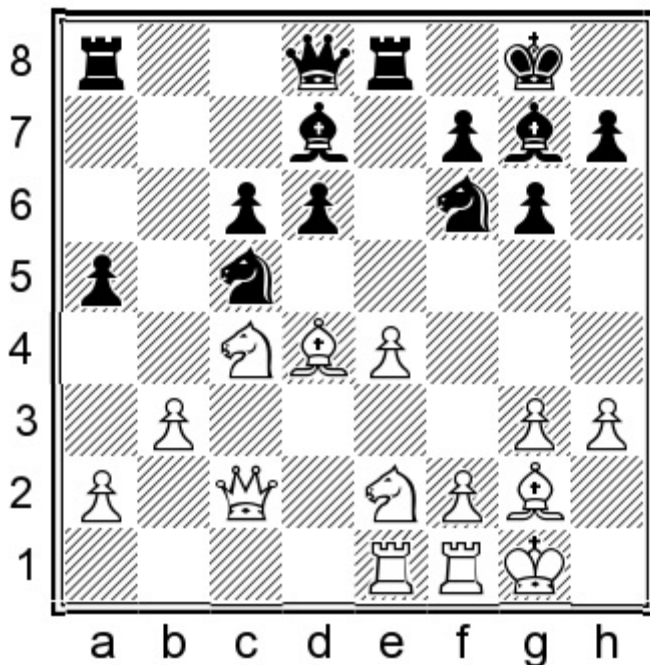
Kramnik has achieved his strategic goal and his game is preferable. However, 17.f4! exf4 18.♞xf4 was at least as strong.

17...exd4

17...♖a6 18.♚c1 ♘b4 19.♙b1 ♜b8 20.a3 ♘a6 21.♞d1 does not solve Black's biggest problem – the weakness of d6.

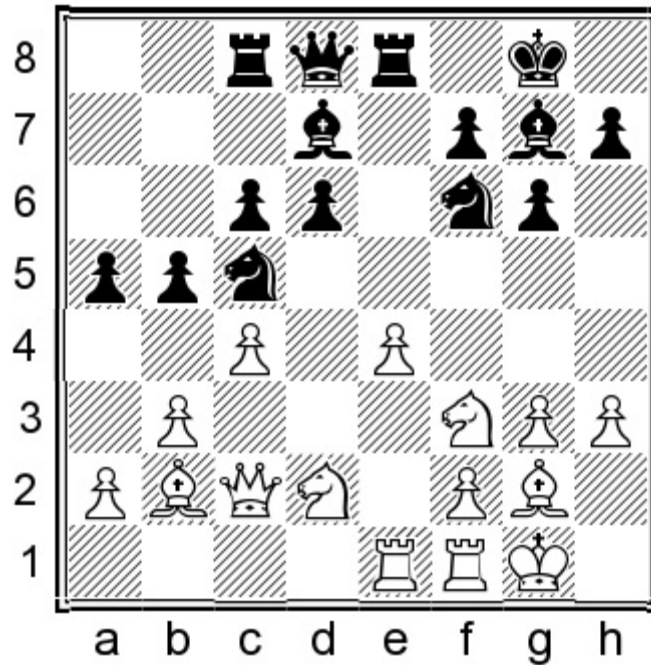
18.♘xd4?!

This inaccuracy deprives Kramnik of his edge. At first glance it looks that White keeps pressure, but it turns out that his pieces are not harmoniously placed. The knight is passive on d2, both rooks should have been one square leftwards. 18.♙xd4! activated the bishop. Tactics work for White after 18...bxc4 (18...♗e6 19.♙e3 a4 20.b4) 19.♗xc4!



19...♗cxe4 20.f3 ♘g5 21.♗xd6 ♞e6 22.♗c4 ♞e8 23.♚d2 ♗xh3+ (23...♗e6 24.♙e5) 24.♙h2, winning material, e.g. 24...♗g5 25.♗d6 ♗e6 (25...♞e6 26.♗b7 ♞c7 27.♗c5) 26.♗xe8±.

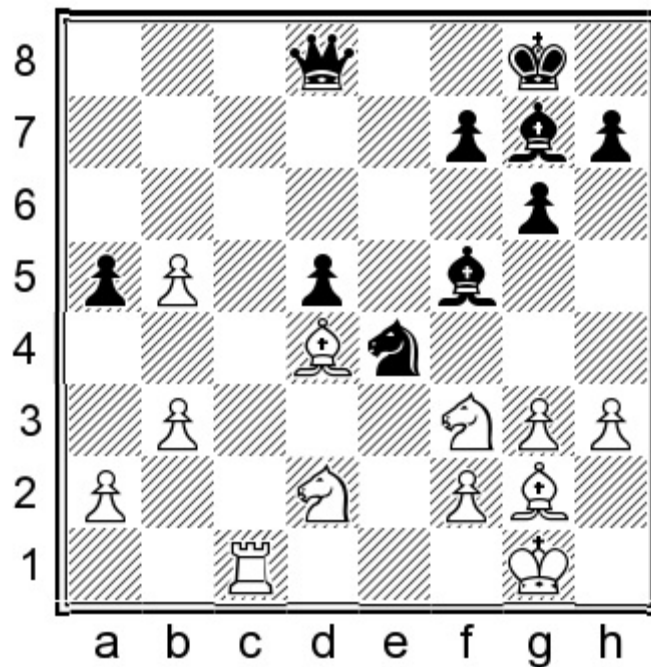
18...♞c8! 19.♗4f3



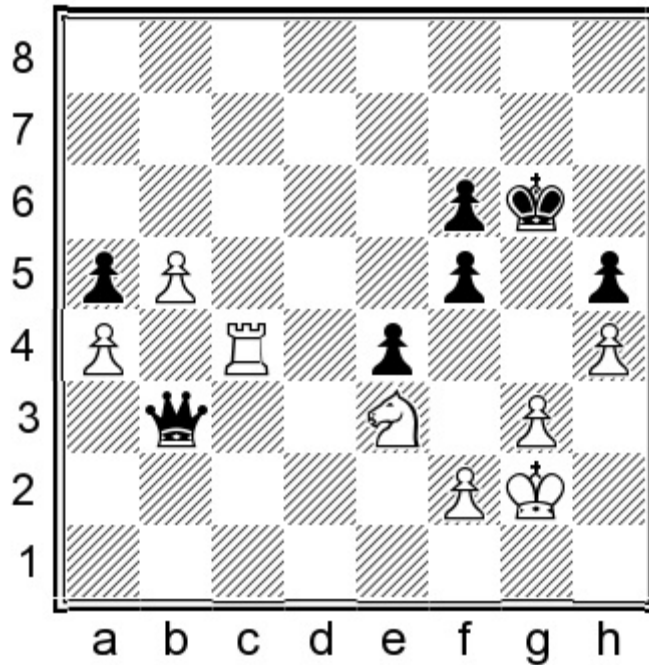
19...d5! 20.exd5 ♖xe1 21.♖xe1 cxd5 22.cxb5?!

22.♘e5! took d3 under control and was the only way to maintain the balance. Now White loses material and the game is irrelevant to the opening. The game finished with a fortress.

22...♙f5 23.♚d1 ♘d3 24.♙d4 ♖c1 25.♚xc1 ♘xc1 26.♖xc1 ♘e4



27.♘f1 ♙xd4 28.♘xd4 ♚b6 29.♙xe4 dxex4? 30.♘xf5 gxf5= 31.a4 ♚e6 32.♘e3 ♚xb3 33.♖c4 h5 34.h4 ♘h7 35.♘g2 f6 36.♖d4 ♘g6 37.♖c4 ♘f7 38.♘h2 ♘g6 39.♘g1 ♚b1+ 40.♘g2 ♚b3

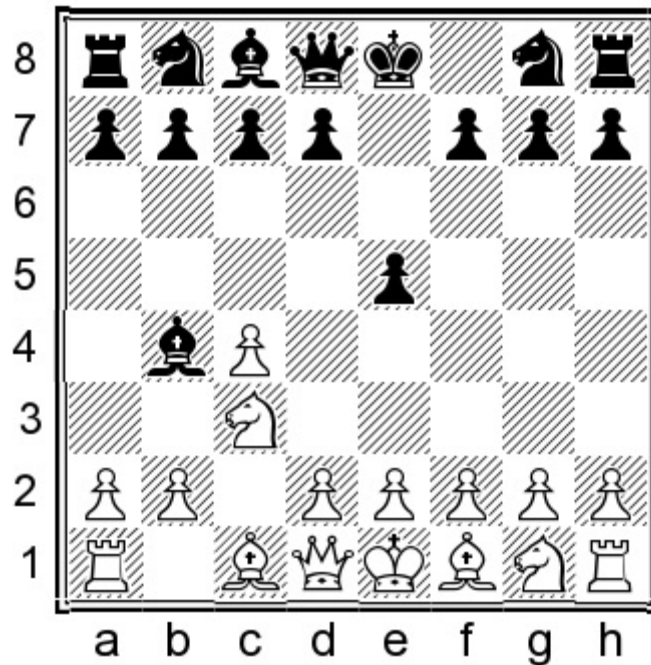


It is clear that only White could play for a win here.

41.♞d4 ♔f7 42.♞d5 ♚xa4 43.♞xf5 ♔g6 44.b6 ♚b3 45.♞xa5 ♚xb6 46.♞d5 ♚b2 47.♞f5 ♚a2 48.♞c5 ♚e2 49.♞c4 ♚a2 50.♞b4 ♚a5 51.♞b8 ♚a2 52.♞d8 ♚a5 53.♞d5 ♚a2 54.♞f5 ♚e6 55.♞d5 ♚a6 56.g4 hxg4 57.h5+ ♔f7 58.♞d7+ ♔e6 59.♞g7 ♚e2 60.h6 ♚f3+ 61.♔g1 g3 62.♞xg3 ♚h5 63.♞g7 f5 64.h7 f4 65.♞g4 ♚h3 66.♞g6+ ♔f5 67.♞g7 ♔e6 68.♞g6+ ♔f5 69.♞h6+ ♔xg6 70.h8=♚ ♚xh6 71.♚e8+ ♔f5 72.♚b5+ ♔g4 73.♚e2+ ♔f5 74.♚b5+ ½-½

Chapter 5. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♚b4 Main Ideas

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♚b4

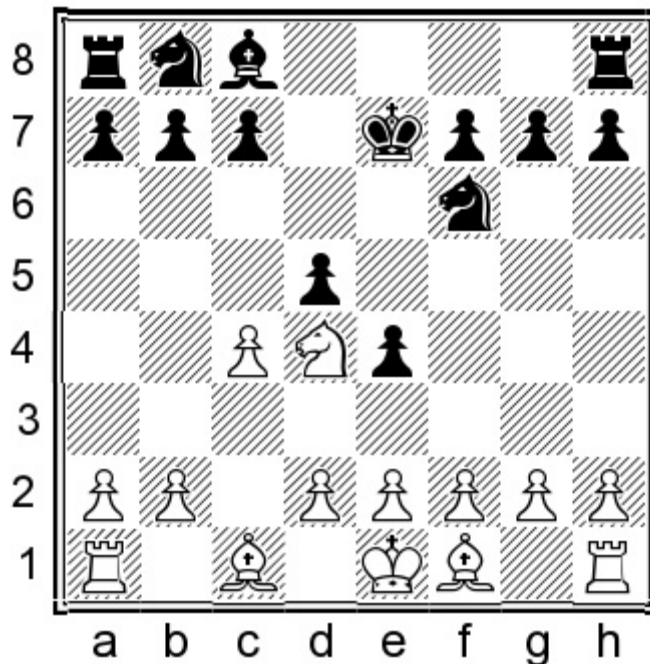


This move is by an order of magnitude less popular than 2...♘f6 or 2...♘c6, but it is coming into fashion. Its charm is its simplicity – Black avoids all the big theory in the main lines, and obtains normal positions without having to learn too much. His set-up is somewhat passive, but solid. I must admit that White has not proved any theoretical advantage so far. However, in this chapter you'll find new ideas of mine, which might tip the balance in your favour.

3.♙c2 is in crisis

First of all I had to discard 3.♙c2 as a main weapon. It was very tempting to adopt this move, because it complied perfectly with Chapters 2-3. This is exactly what Cummings did in his White repertoire book. The problem is that Black has the following forced line:

3...♘f6 4.♘f3 ♚xc3!? 5.♙xc3 e4, when 6.♙e5+ ♙e7 7.♙xe7+ ♙xe7 8.♘d4 d5 will probably be soon analysed up to a draw.



The latest word here is the game Jørgensen-Harabor, ICCF 2017, which went 9.b4 dxc4 10.e3 ♘c6! 11.♘xc6+ bxc6 12.♙a3 ♙e6 13.b5+ ♔d7 14.bxc6+ ♔xc6 15.♞c1 ♔b5 16.♙b2 ♞ab8 with a draw.

I fiddled with 6.♘d4 instead of 6.♙e5+, but I lack the conviction that all this is White's best retort to 2...♙b4.

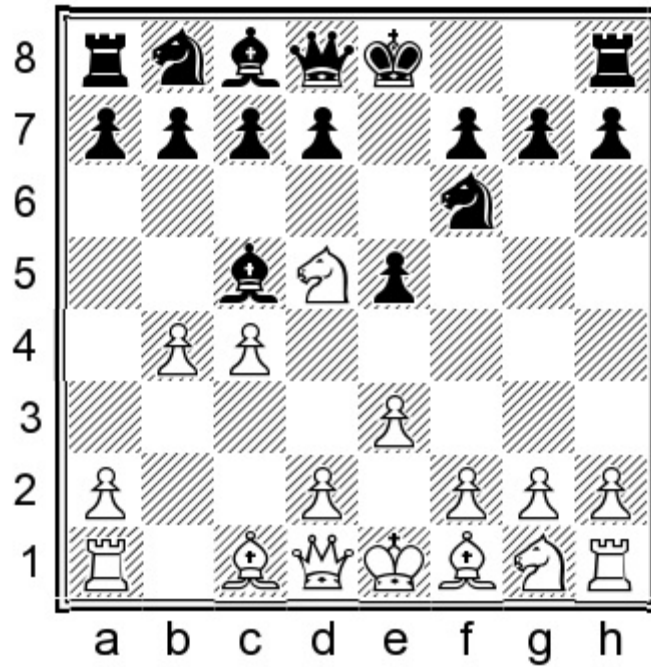
Apparently, it is more ambitious to embrace common sense and ask the opponent to define his bishop's stand by:

3.♘d5!

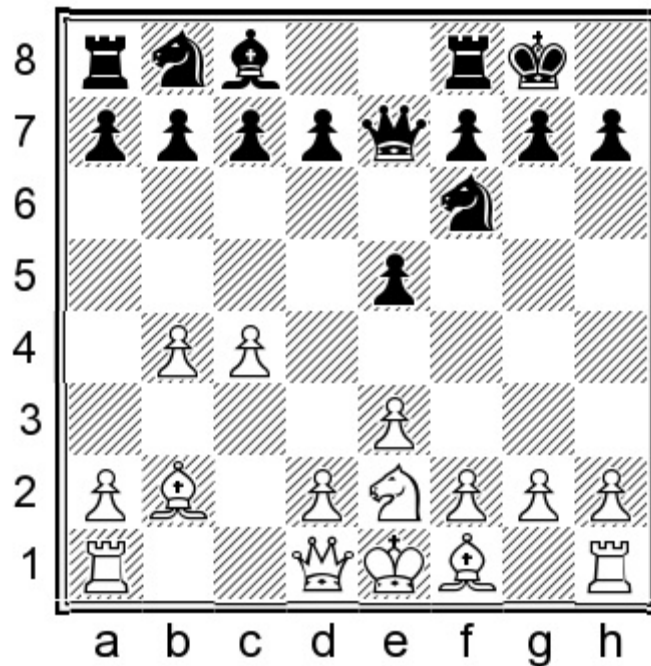
It is now Black's turn to sweat. He has tested 12 different answers. It is difficult to promote some of them as a main line, but if we look at the games of the most prominent adept of Black's set-up, Anand, we'll notice that in 2018 he has permanently migrated to:

3...a5

It seems that he did not like to cede space on the queenside after 3...♙c5 4.e3!? ♘f6 5.b4

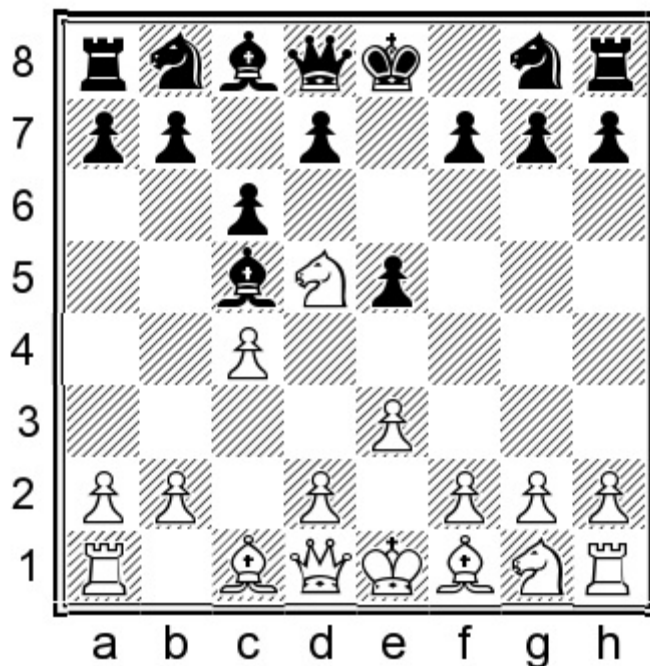


My recommendation is to meet 5...♙e7 thematically by gaining the bishop pair advantage with 6.♜xe7 ♞xe7, and continue in the Taimanov Reversed style 7.♙b2 0-0 8.♞e2 (or 8.a3 d6 9.♞e2). See **Game 16** Giri-Anand, Stavanger 2017 and **Game 17** Caruana-Bacrot.



We are planning ♞g3, ♞c2, ♙d3.

The alternative is 4...c6.

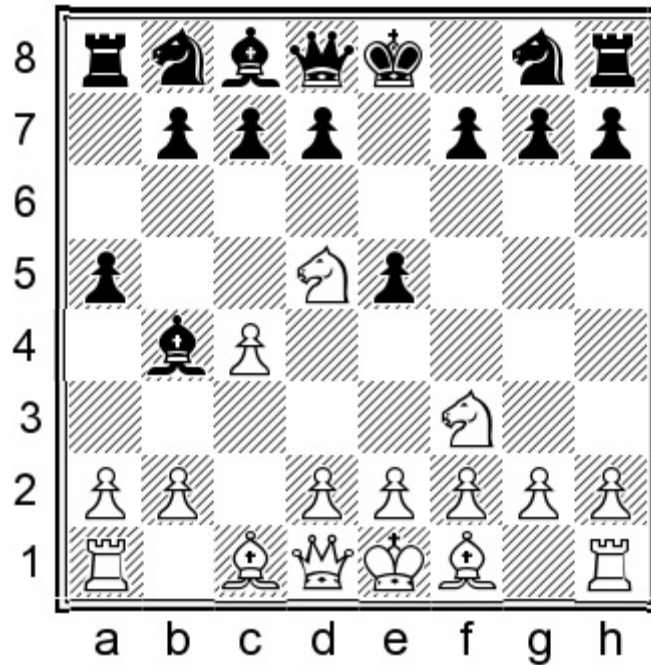


It allows us to demonstrate the reason behind our previous move – 5.d4! exd4 6.exd4 ♖e7 7.♘xe7 ♘xe7 8.♙e2! with more space and two bishops.

Note two important moments on move 4:

- We did not hurry with 4.b4 until Black's knight went to f6. This is aimed against the set-up ...c6, ...d5, ...f6, which would build a strong pawn centre after the premature 4.b4 ♙f8!.
- We refrained from 4.♘f3 because this move always suffers from the option of ...e4 with active counterplay.

4.♘f3!?

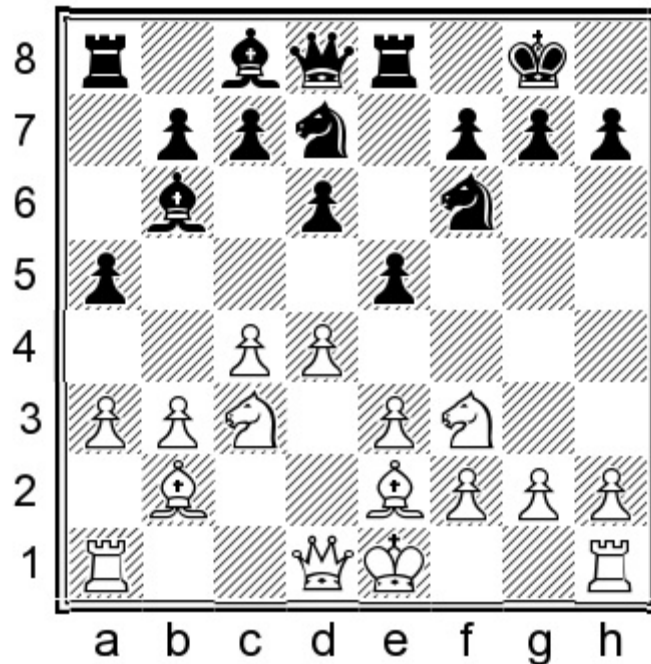


We are not afraid of 4...e4 here since we have the d4-square – 5.♘d4 c6 6.♘xb4 axb4 7.d3 d5 8.dxe4!±.
4...d6 5.a3 ♘c5 6.e3!? ♘f6 7.♘c3!

That is my two cents against the Anand’s pet line. I prefer to keep the centre fluid.

7...0-0 8.d4 ♘b6 9.♘e2 ♘bd7 10.b3! ♖e8 11.♘b2

My idea is to attack on the kingside with g4 while keeping the option of castling left open.



You can find illustrative variations in the “Step by Step” section, A21.

Theoretical status

The system with 2...♘b4 is recommended in Mikhalevski’s repertoire book *Beating Minor Openings*.

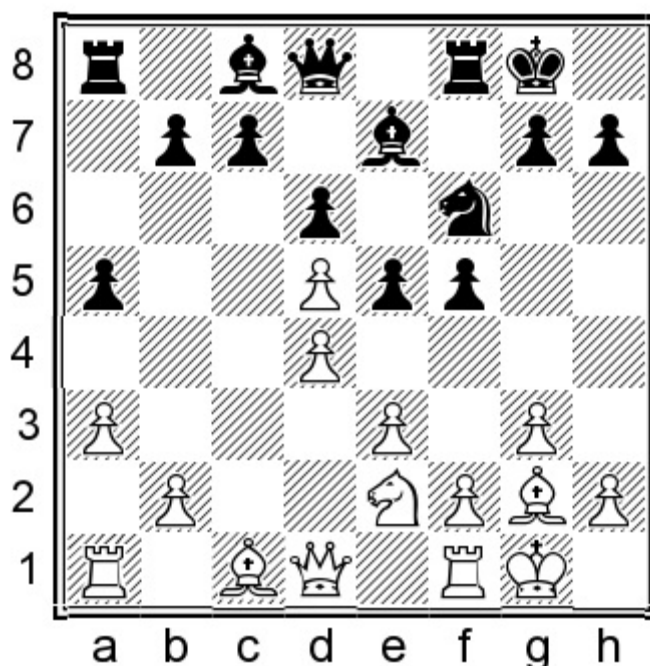
The main driving force behind it since 2016 became Anand, while Carlsen employed it just once. White

has not been too happy with his achievements in the main lines, so he recently experimented with 3.♖b3 and 3.♖c2. I do not believe these moves could shake the solid reputation of 2...♕b4. Only 3.♞d5! is challenging, and I propose novel ideas against both major answers 3...♕c5 and 3...a5.

Important strategic decisions

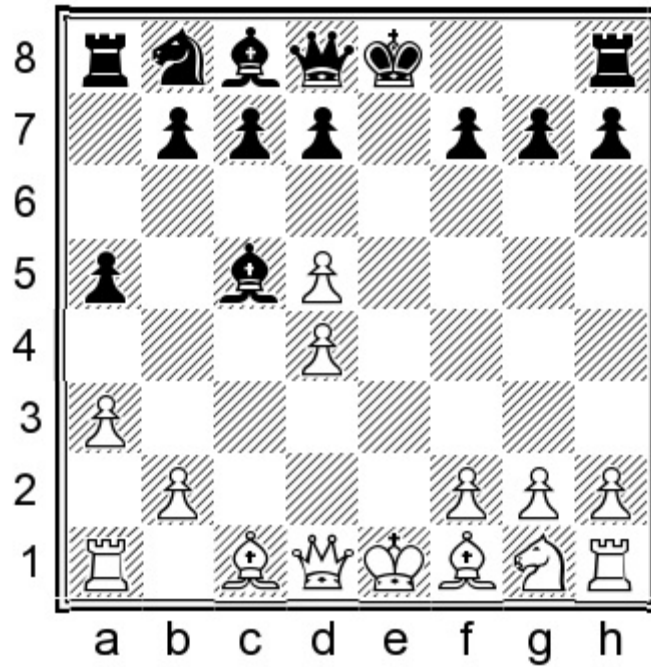
After ♞d5 White often must decide what to do with his knight on d5 when Black wants to trade it for his own knight. My advice is: do not accept static pawn structures with the pawn on d5. Either eat a bishop on e7 when that is possible or retreat to c3!. Our aim is to remain flexible. For instance, the following position is only equal:

Ponomariov – Morozevich
Biel 2004



12.♞c3 e4 13.f3 exf3=.

Another negative example is:

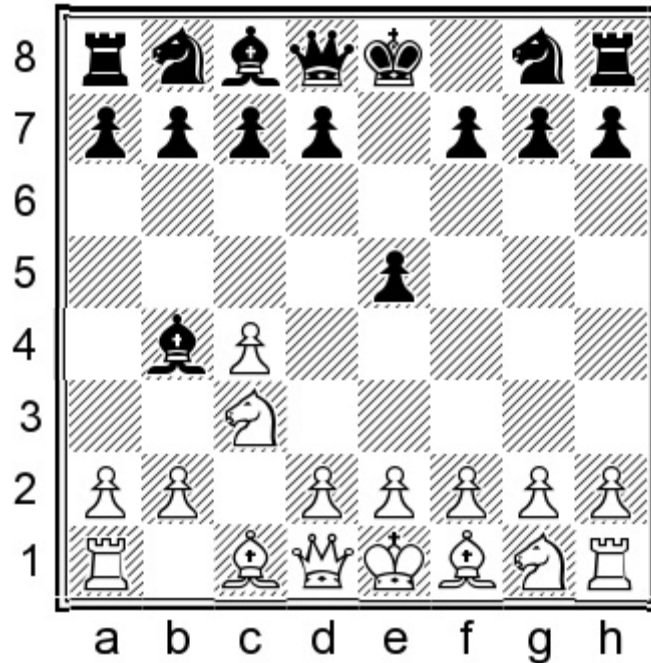


8...♔e7!=.

It is often unclear where to lead out our king's knight. An early ♘f3 often faces ...e4 with Black's initiative. In most lines I prefer ♘g1-e2-g3 with control of the light squares. One notable exception is shown earlier in this section: 3.♘d5 a5 4.♘f3!?.

Chapter 5. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♙b4 Step by Step

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♙b4



We met this bishop's sortie in various settings in the previous chapters. The key difference here is that Black did not commit his queen's knight to c6. That would allow him to counter our attack ♘d5 with ...c6 later on.

We have basically three sensible answers: to try to transpose to Chapters 2-3; to enter new territory with ♘d5; to fianchetto the king's bishop. Since 3.g3 is out of the scope of our book, I'll consider:

A. 3.♘d5!?!; **B.** 3.♞c2

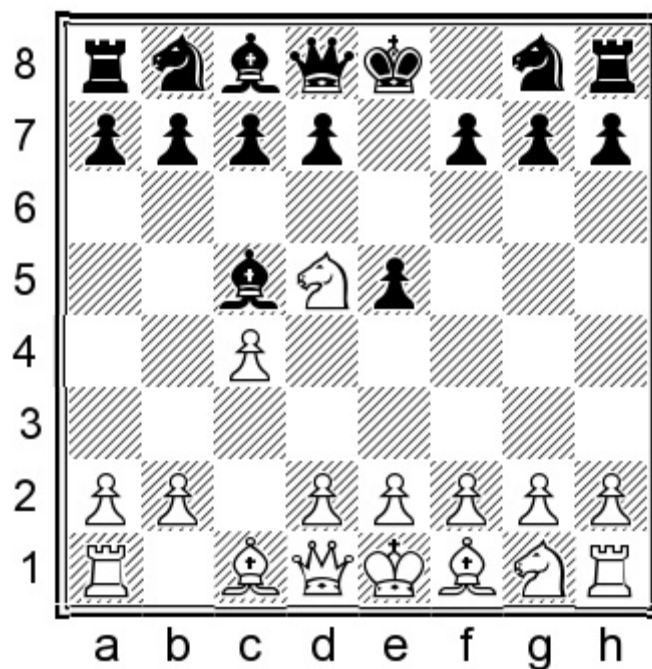
Let me add that 3.♞b3 is an ugly move, which counts only on ...♙xc3. It prevents ...d5, indeed, but hinders active plans with b4 or d4. The simple 3...♘c6 4.♘f3 d6 puts the queen's move to the question. Black meets a3 by ...♙c5, and White should spend a tempo on ♞c2 at some point, e.g. 5.e3 ♘f6 6.♙e2 0-0 7.0-0 ♞e8 8.d3 a5 9.♘d2 h6 10.♞c2∞.

A. 3.♘d5!?!?

A1. 3...♙c5; **A2.** 3...a5

3...♙a5 is inferior on account of 4.b4 c6 5.bxa5 cxd5 6.cxd5 ♞xa5 (or 6...♘f6 7.♞a4 0-0 8.e4) 7.e4 ♘f6 8.f3 d6 9.♘e2 0-0 10.♙b2 ♘a6 11.♙c3 ♞d8 12.d4±, Ermenkov-Simanjuntak, Chalkidiki 2007.

A1. 3...♙c5

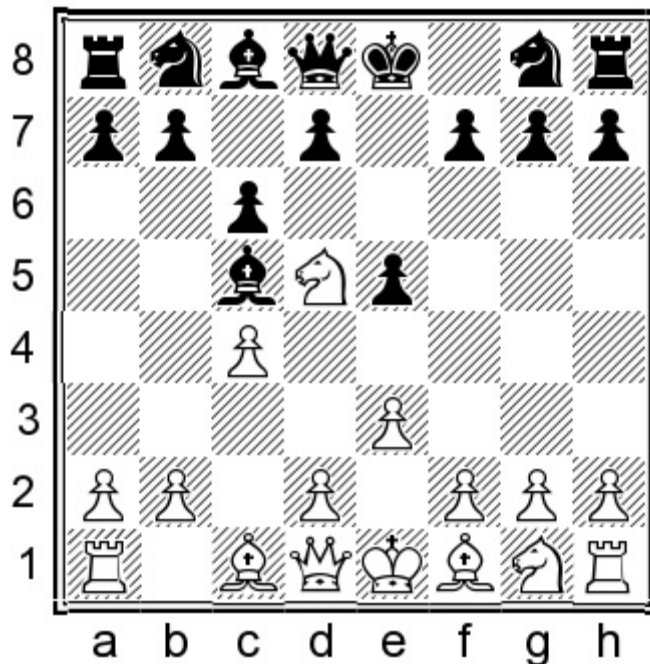


A11. 4.e3!?. **A12.** 4.♘f3

4.e3!? does not put pressure on the centre and offers Black a wider choice. It leads to calmer play where White's chances are objectively slightly better. Latest losses of Anand and Bacrot suggest that Black is yet to define his best defensive path. Perhaps it should be our main weapon.

A11. 4.e3!? c6

This is slightly more popular and better scoring than 4...♘f6, when the latest trend is to play 5.b4!. I analyse it in detail in **Game 16** Giri-Anand, Stavanger 2017 and **Game 17** Caruana-Bacrot. My recommendation is to meet 5...♙e7 by 6.♘xe7 ♚xe7 7.♙b2 0-0 8.♘e2 (or 8.a3 d6 9.♘e2), playing in the Taimanov Reversed style.



5.d4!

It is essential to define the placement of the black bishop right now. 5.♘c3 allows various comfortable set-ups:

5...d5 6.d4 exd4 7.exd4 ♘b6= or 7...♙e7 8.cxd5 cxd5=.

5...♘f6 6.d4 exd4 7.exd4 ♘b4 8.♘f3 0-0 9.♙d3 d5=.

5...exd4

5...♙d6 6.♘c3 ♙c7 was played by Bologan. I suggest 7.♘f3 exd4

7...d6 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.♚xd8+ ♔xd8 10.b3 offers White an initiative.

8.♚xd4

8.exd4 is also possible – 8...d5 9.♙g5 ♘e7 10.♙e2.

8...♘f6 9.b3±.

5...♙f8 saves the bishop at a high price. After 6.♘c3 d6 the simplest would be 7.e4, although 7.♙e2 first is also possible. Then 7...f5 8.e4 f4 9.g3 g5 10.gxf4 or 9.c5 ♚f6 10.g3 should be in White's favour owing to his better development.

6.exd4 ♙e7

6...♙d6?! hinders development – 7.♘c3 ♘f6 8.♘f3 0-0 9.♙d3 ♖e8+ 10.♙e3, when 10...♘g4? 11.0-0 ♘xe3 12.fxe3 ♖xe3 loses to 13.♚d2.

7.♘xe7 ♘xe7

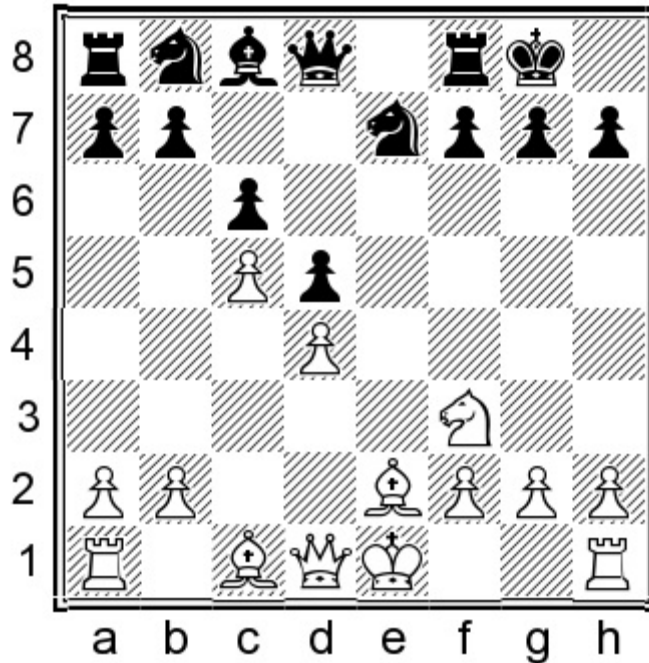
7...♚xe7+?! misplaces the queen. The only reason behind such a move should be to eat a pawn after 8.♙e2 d5 9.♘f3 dxc4?! and defend it after 10.0-0 ♙e6 11.♖e1 with 11...b5?, but then 12.♘g5 is

deciding.

8.♙e2!

8.♙d3 would only allow Black to trade a piece with 8...d5 9.c5 ♞f5, although White retains his space advantage on the queenside.

8...0-0 9.♘f3 d5 10.c5



White's game is slightly better owing to his space advantage and the bishop pair. Of course Black has no weaknesses so we should proceed carefully. For instance: 10...♙g4 11.0-0 ♘d7 12.h3 ♙xf3 13.♙xf3 ♘f6 14.♞e1 ♘g6 15.♙d3 ♞e8 16.♞xe8+ ♙xe8 17.♙d2.

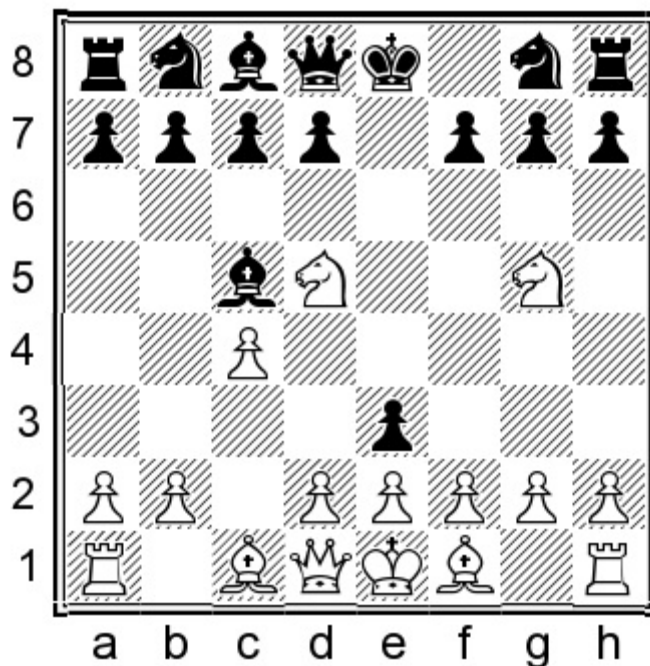
A12. 4.♘f3 c6

4...e4 is well met by 5.♘g5!

5.d4 is also possible, but after 5...♙e7 we cannot put the knight on g5.

5...f5

The ingenious 5...e3?! is insufficient due to:

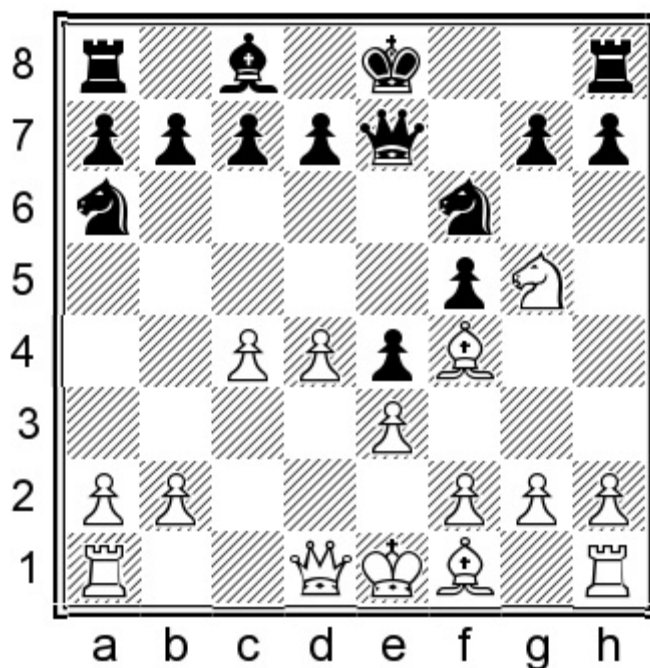


6.f4 exd2+ 7.♖xd2 c6 (or 7...♗f6 8.♗xf6+ ♖xf6 9.♗e4 ♖e7 10.♗xc5 ♖xc5 11.b3) 8.b4 cxd5
 9.bxc5 h6 10.♗f3 ♗a6 11.cxd5 ♗xc5 12.♖d4 b6 13.♖xg7 ♖f6 14.♖xf6 ♗xf6 15.♗b2 ♗ce4
 16.g3 0-0 17.♗g2 ♗a6 18.0-0±.

6.d4 ♗e7 7.♗f4 ♗a6

7...d6 8.e3 ♗f6 9.♗xe7 ♖xe7 10.h4±.

8.e3 ♗f6 9.♗xe7 ♖xe7



10.h4 h6 11.♗h3±, McNab-Motwani, Edinburg 2003.

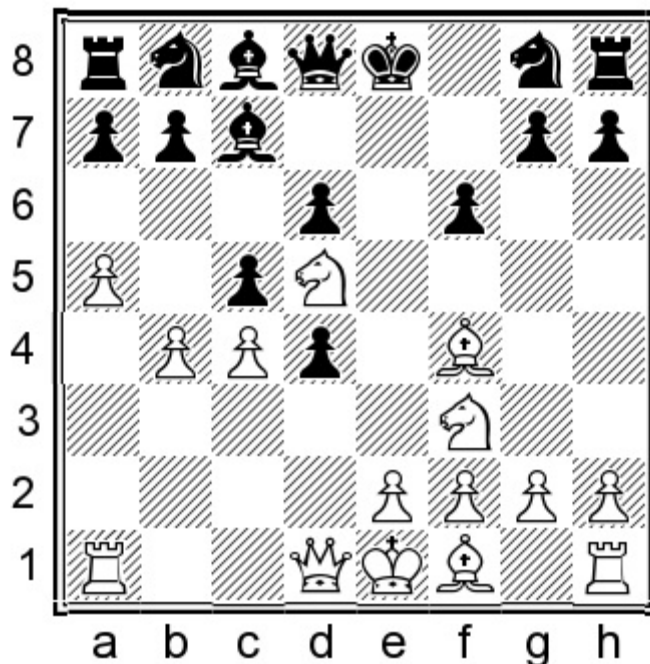
Also interesting was the concrete 10.c5!? h6 11.♗h3. Black cannot castle because the c7-pawn is hanging, and 11...d6 12.♖a4+ ♗d7 13.♖b3 ♗c6 14.♖c1 ♗d5 loses a pawn to 15.♖a4+ ♗f7 16.c6 ♗b8 17.cxb7 ♗xb7 18.♖a5.

4...♖c6 5.e3 is considered in line B21.

4...d6 is a very rare guest in OTB chess, but it occurs in hundreds of engine games, mostly from 2015-2016. That does not make it particularly good, though. The black bishop cannot return home so we should think about b4. It is possible in two variants:

a) 5.b4 ♗b6 6.a4 c6 7.♗xb6 axb6 8.e3 or 8.g3 with flexible pawns and two bishops.

b) 5.d4 exd4 6.b4!?! (All the engines have played only 6.♗xd4 c6 7.♗xc3, but why not sac a pawn!?)
6...♗b6 7.a4 c5 8.a5 ♗c7 9.♗g5 f6 10.♗f4



This line is for adventurous players. White enjoys a great initiative. He threatens to open the centre by e3, e.g. 10...♗a6 11.♗xc7+ ♗xc7 12.e3, or by taking on d4 – 10...♗e7 11.♗xc7+ ♗xc7 12.bxc5 ♗xc5 13.♗xd4 ♗xc4 14.♗d2 ♗bc6 15.e3.

5.♗c3 d6

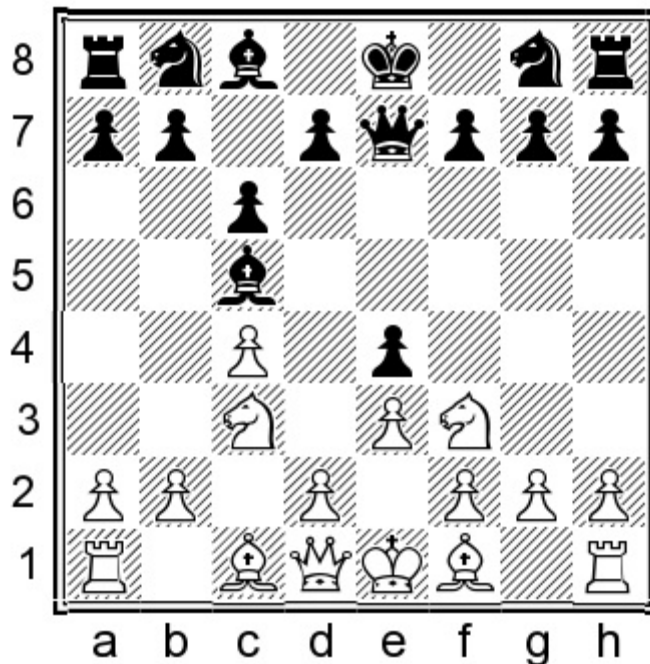
We'll see Black playing later ...d5 so saving a tempo with 5...♗e7 looks like a logical alternative.

Perhaps it is not too popular because White's bishop could find freedom on g5 after 6.d4!?! exd4 7.♗xd4 ♗f6 8.♗g5, when the trick 8...♗e5 9.♗f3 ♗e4? from the game Doncevic-Timman, Germany 2009, fails to the spectacular retort 10.♗d3!! ♗xf2+ 11.♗d1 ♗xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♗e6 13.e3, entrapping the bishop at f2.

I also looked at:

6.e3, intending to transpose to the main line, since 6...♗f6 would be bad owing to 7.♗xe5. A dubious independent line is:

6...e4



7.d4! ♖b4 8.♗d2 ♗f6 9.♜b3 0-0 10.c5 ♕xc3 11.bxc3 b6, when simplest is 12.♕a3
 12.cxb6 axb6 13.a4 (13.♜xb6 ♕a6 gives enough play against White's a-pawn) 13...♕a6 14.♕a3 d6
 15.c4 c5 with counter-chances.
 12...bxc5 13.♕xc5 d6 14.♕a3 c5 15.♕e2. White has obvious pressure on the queenside. 15...♕g4
 16.♕xg4 ♗xg4 17.h3 ♗f6 18.0-0±.

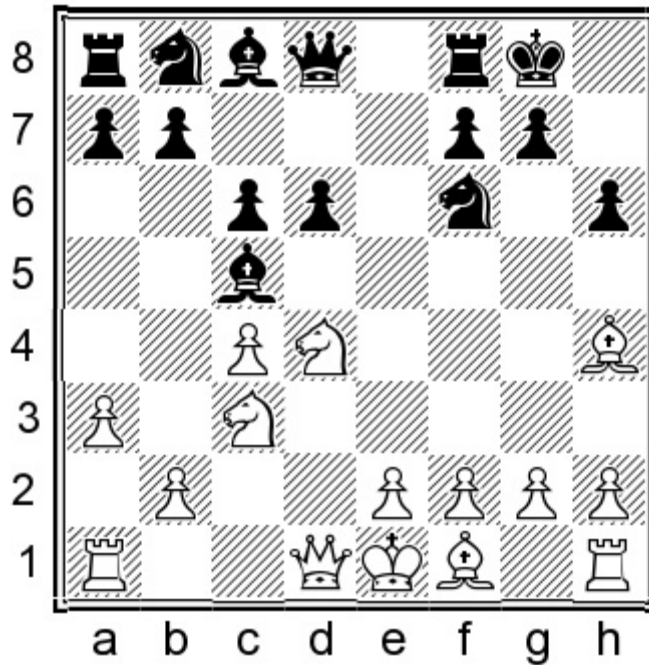
6.e3!

Clearly planning to gain space with 7.d4 exd4 8.exd4. Computer games have tested the bishop development on g5:

6.d4 exd4 7.♗xd4 ♗f6 8.a3

In contrast to the line 5...♜e7, here 8.♕g5? runs into 8...♜b6. Therefore, White must spend a tempo on prophylaxis, preparing to meet ...♜b6 by ♗a4.

8...0-0 9.♕g5 h6 10.♕h4



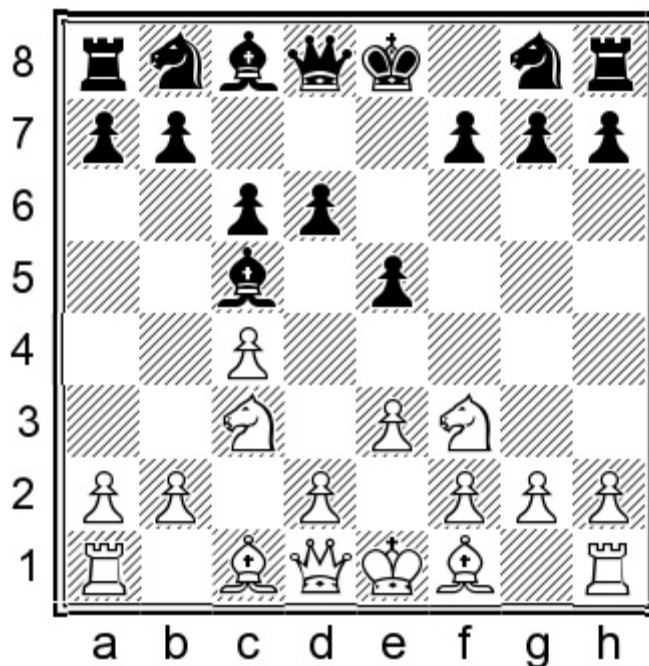
White has scored 3 wins and 3 draws from here, but no engine chose the central approach:

10...d5!? 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.e3 Nc6. In such IQP it is commonly better to have the queenside pawns on a2-b3, to avoid counterplay down the b-file. The arisen position is balanced. For instance:

13.Nxc6 bxc6 14.Qe2 Qd6 15.0-0 Re8 16.Wc2 a5=;

13.Qe2 Nxd4 14.exd4 Qe7.

Another possible approach is 6.g3 Nf6 7.Qg2 0-0 8.0-0, but then 8...a5 9.d4 exd4 10.Nxd4 a4! fixes a weakness on a2, e.g. 11.e3 a3 12.b3 Re8 13.Na4 Na6 14.Nxc5 dxc5 15.Ne2 Nb4=.



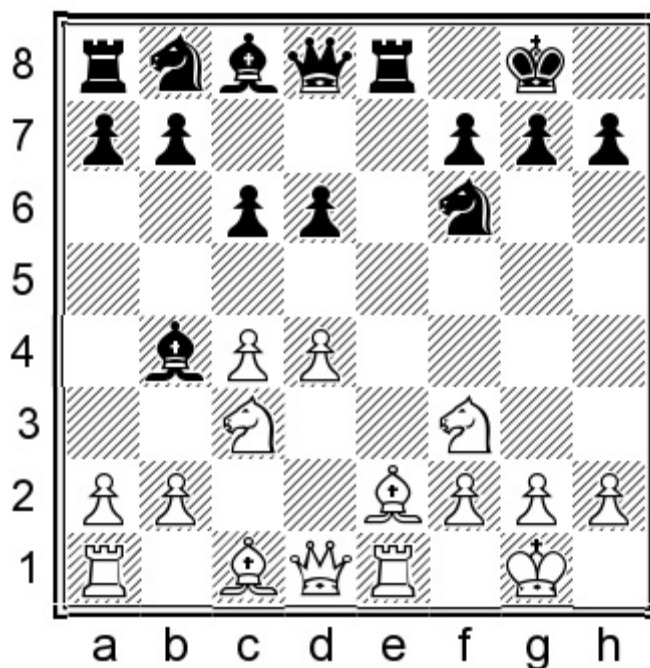
A121. 6...We7; A122. 6...Qb4

A reasonable question is what if Black ignored the threat of d4? After 6...Nf6 7.d4 exd4 8.exd4 Qb4

our central pawns ensure more space. That commonly translates into more active pieces. In our case this is the ♖c3 and possibly ♗b3. The general rule in such situations is to avoid exchanges so we should better go 9.♗e2

The blitz game Grischuk-Moiseenko, Dubai 2014, saw 9.♗d3 0-0 10.0-0 ♗g4 11.h3 ♗h5, when White can unpin his knight only with g4. Although the engine claims that 12.♗b3 c5 13.g4 ♗g6 14.♗xg6 fxg6 15.♖e2 is somewhat better for White, I'd be uncomfortable in his shoes. The modest bishop move has more practical value.

9...0-0 10.0-0 ♖e8 (or 10...♗g4 11.h3 ♗h5 12.♗b3) 11.♖e1

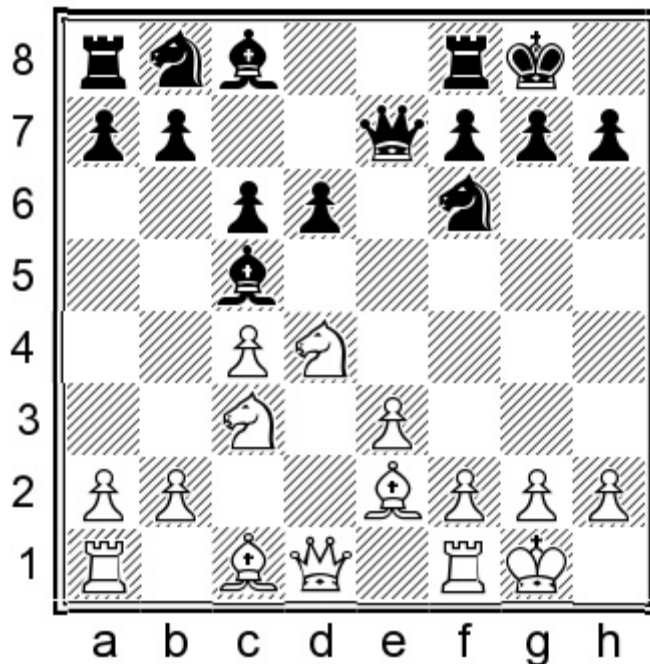


The clumsy placement of the b4-bishop could cost Black the bishop pair after ♗b3. The pin ♗g5 would also be awkward. If he attempts to alter the pawn structure, we simply ignore it, e.g. 11...d5 (or 11...c5) 12.♗g5↑. 11...♗g4 is more cautious and White is only slightly better after 12.♗f4. Any opening of the centre should be in his favour, e.g. 12...c5 13.dxc5 dxc5 14.h3↑.

A121. 6...♗e7 7.d4

We cannot cover the e-file with 7.♗e2 since 7...e4 8.♖d4 ♖f6 9.d3 d5 would put us on the defensive – 10.0-0 0-0 11.a3 ♗e5∞.

7...exd4 8.♖xd4 ♖f6 9.♗e2 0-0 10.0-0



This position is a milestone for the 2...♙b4 line. Apparently its evaluation depends on the pawn structure with hanging pawns, arising after the ...d5-break:

10...d5

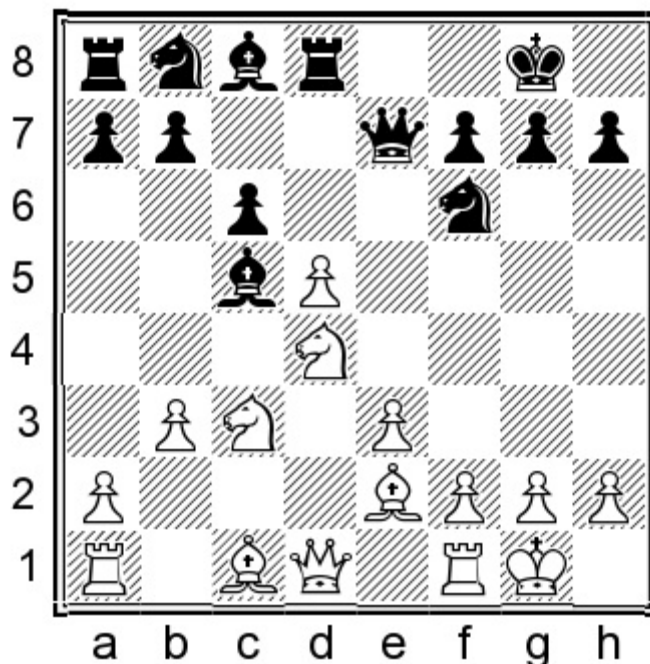
Mikhalevski preaches this move in *Beating Minor Openings*. Curiously, he did not follow his own recommendation against Howell in 2017. To be sure, it was a blitz game:

10...♖d8

It went 11.♘a4 ♙b4 12.a3 ♙a5 13.b4 ♙c7 14.♙b2 d5?! (14...♖e8 15.♙c2 ♘bd7 16.♘f5 ♙f8 17.♖fe1±) 15.cxd5 ♘xd5 16.♙c2 ♙h4 17.g3 ♙h3 18.♙f3 ♙e5 19.♖ad1 ♘f6, when 20.♘b3! would have been decisive.

I prefer the more thematic plan:

11.b3 d5 12.cxd5



12...cxd5

12...cxd5 13.dxd5 cxd5 14.b2 xd4 15.xd4 favors White in view of 15...c5? 16.f6. 13.b2 c6 14.c6 bxc6 15.a4 d6 16.c1. White has obtained the best version of the hanging pawns. In Van Wely-Timman, Leiden 2015, Black discarded gloom defence with 16...d7 17.Wd4 c8 18.c5, and gave up a pawn: 16...c5 17.xf6 gxf6 18.f3 e6 19.c3 e5 20.d5±.

The central break could also be prepared by 10...bd7 with the idea:

11.b3 b6 12.b2 d5 13.cxd5 bxd5 14.dxd5 dxd5. Although White retains the more pleasant game after 15.c4, neither Chernin nor Tomashevsky could win following 15.c4 and 15.f3 respectively. It is worth obtaining something more lasting, like the bishop pair advantage, with: 11.a4 e5 12.Wc2 e8 13.c5 dxc5 14.b3 or 11.Wc2!? b6 12.d3 e8 (12...d5 13.cxd5) 13.b3, followed up by c5.

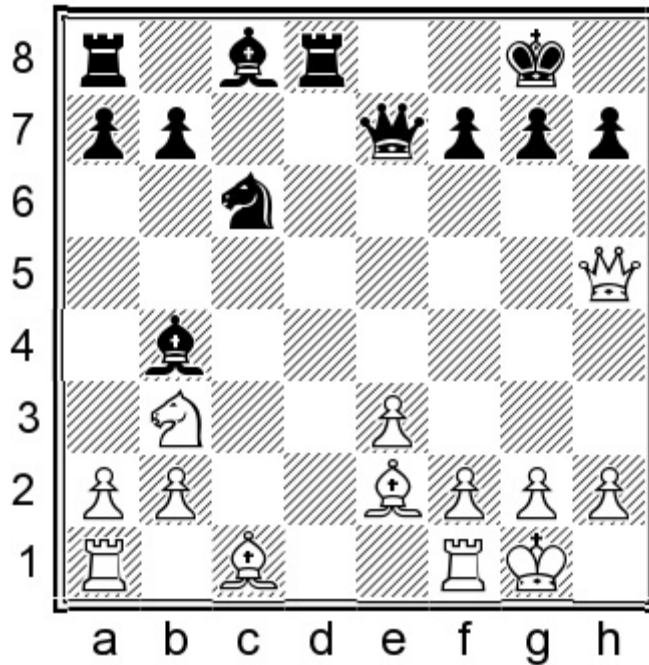
Computer games also feature the unassuming move 10...a6, when 11.a3 b6 12.b4 c5 offers a nice choice between 13.db5 cxb4 14.axb4 bxb4 15.Wxd6 and 13.bxc5! c5 14.b2. White's pieces stand more harmoniously.

11.b3!

This modest new move is the only way to extract something out of the opening. The arising pawn structure with 4:3 pawns on the kingside is slightly more pleasant for White. The more principled: 11.cxd5 cxd5 is completely balanced and in some lines even Black is the active side.

12.b3

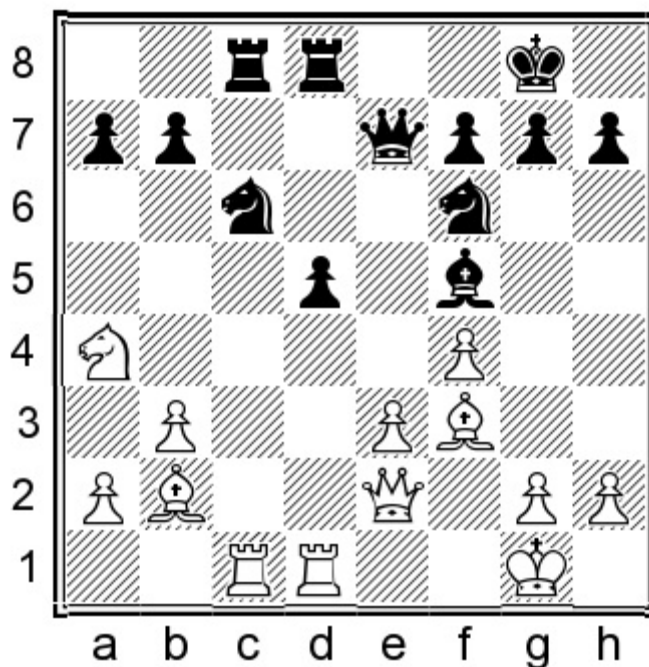
Black's conception is based on the pawn sac 12.b3 b4 (12...d6 13.b5 e5 14.f4 d6 is also unclear) 13.dxd5 dxd5 14.Wxd5 d8 15.Wh5 c6 with just enough compensation to keep the balance.



The stem game Nepomniachtchi-Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2017 went further 16.a3 ♖d6 17.♘d4 ♙e5 18.♘xc6 bxc6 19.♙c4 g6 20.♚e2 ♙e6 21.♙xe6 ♚xe6 22.♞b1 ♞ab8 23.b4 c5 24.♙b2 ♚a2 25.♞fe1 ♙xb2 26.♚xb2 ♚xb2 27.♞xb2 a5 28.♔f1 ½-½.

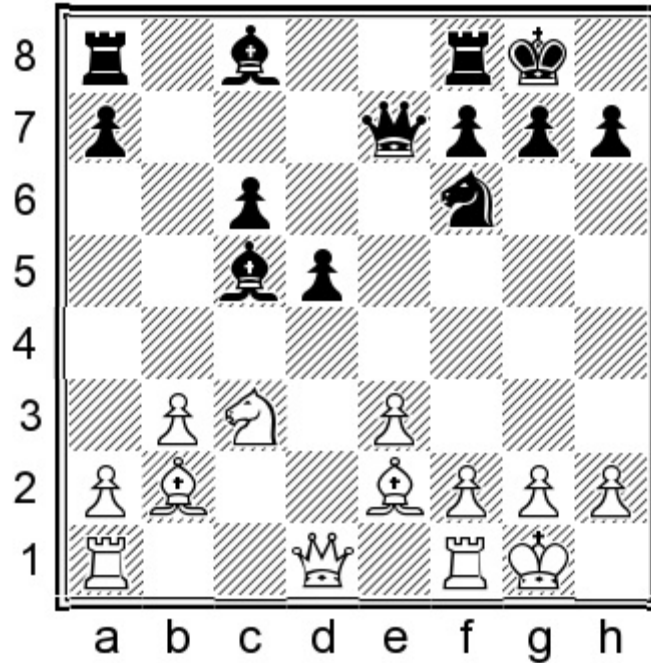
16.♞d1 ♞xd1+ 17.♙xd1 ♙e6 is more tense, but after 18.e4 ♞d8 19.♙e3 ♙d6 20.♘a5 ♘xa5 21.♚xa5 b6 22.♚b5 ♙xa2= Black regains the pawn.

The computer likes 12.♘a4 ♙d6 13.♘b5 ♙e5 14.f4 (14.♙d2 ♘c6 15.♙c3 ♞d8=; 14.b3 ♙xa1 15.♙a3 ♚d8=) 14...♙d6 15.♙f3. I do not believe White could aspire to the advantage with such uncoordinated pieces – 15...♞d8 16.♘d6 ♚xd6 17.b3 ♘c6 18.♙b2 ♙f5 19.♞c1 ♞ac8 20.♚e2 ♚e7 21.♞fd1



Now Black could resort again to a positional pawn sacrifice – 21...d4!? 22.♞c5 ♙e4 23.exd4 ♙xf3

24. ♖xf3 b6 25. ♖c3 ♖e6 26. ♖cd3 ♘b4 27. ♖e3 ♖c6 28. ♘c3 ♖xf3 29. ♖xf3 ♘bd5=.
 12... ♘c6 13. ♘xc6 bxc6 14. ♙b2

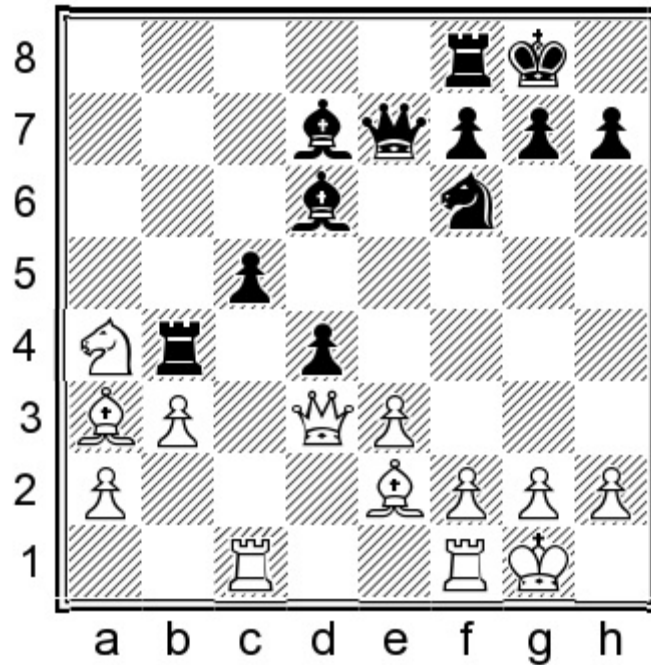


We have reached a good version of hanging pawns: the move ... ♖e7 is superfluous (... ♖e8 instead would have been more useful); Black is a tempo behind due to the waste of time with ...d7-d6-d5. Still, this is not enough for an advantage. No matter what engines may claim, the strong pawn centre allows Black to maintain the balance. In practice he has faced problems when he put his queen's bishop on the "potentially" good square b7. In fact, it turned to be just passive there. Instead he should develop it on d7.

The critical line, in my opinion is:

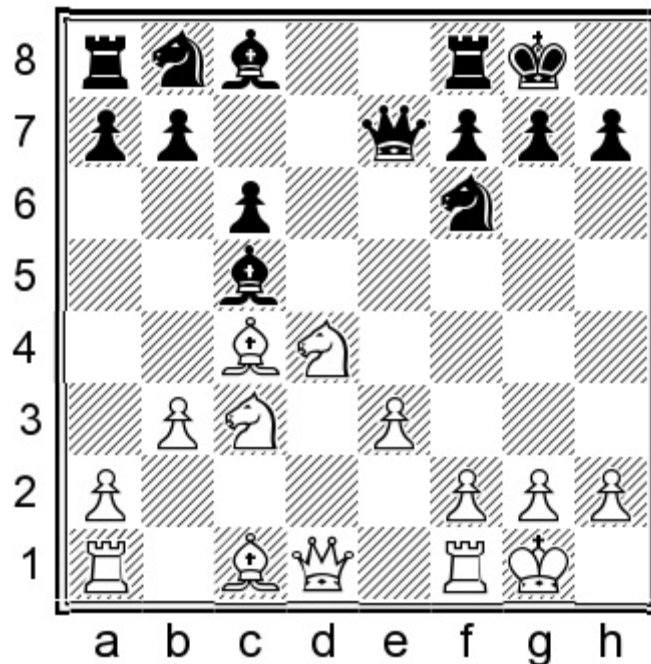
14... ♙d6 15. ♖c1 ♙d7 16. ♖d4 (16. ♙f3 ♖fe8 17. g3 is solid, but innocuous.) 16... ♖ab8! The threat ... ♖b4 allows Black to activate his rook with a tempo:

17. ♘a4 (17. g3 ♖fd8! 18. ♘a4 ♖b4 19. ♖d3 ♘e4∞) 17... ♖b4! 18. ♖xa7 ♙b8 19. ♖c5 ♙d6 20. ♖c3 d4!
 21. ♖d3 c5 22. ♙a3



22...dxe3! 23.♙xb4 exf2+ 24.♖xf2 cxb4 and Black regains the exchange by force – 25.♙f3 ♙xa4 26.bxa4 ♙f4=.

11...dxc4 12.♙xc4



This pawn structure is mostly known from the Meran. White's kingside looks unprotected, but in fact we are stronger there. We could use some stabilization measures for a start, like g3, and in future we could hope for advancing the e- and f-pawns. Of course, we must regroup our forces first.

12...♞bd7

12...♞d8 should be met by 13.♙b2

White gets full compensation for the pawn, but nothing more after 13.♙c2 ♙xd4 14.exd4 ♞xd4

15.♘b2 ♘e6 16.♟fe1 ♘bd7 17.♘xe6 fxe6 18.♘b5 ♟e4.

13...♘xd4 14.exd4 ♘e6 15.♟e1 ♘bd7 16.♘xe6 fxe6 17.♘b1! ♘f8 18.♘d2±. White enjoys a space advantage.

13.♘f5 ♟e5 14.♟c2 ♘b6 15.♘d3 ♘xf5 16.♘xf5

White easily completes development, retaining the bishop pair. For instance: 16...♘d6 (16...g6 17.♘d3±) 17.g3 ♟fe8 18.♘b2.

A122. 6...♘b4 7.d4

The aim of 6...♘b4 is to meet d4 by ...e4. The only way to cut across this plan is to play d3, but the blitz game Topalov-Anand, Leuven 2016, showed a good set-up for Black, which led to balanced play:

7.♟c2 ♘f6 8.a3 ♘xc3 9.♟xc3 0-0 10.d3 ♟e8 11.♘e2 e4.

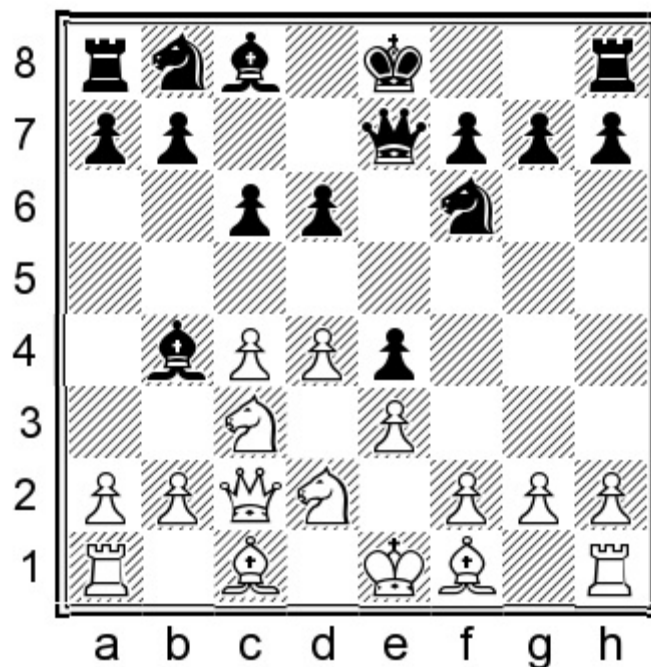
7.♟b3 does not help much after the calm 7...♘a5 8.♘e2 ♘f6 9.d4 ♟e7.

7...e4

It is hardly a good idea to keep the tension in the centre as White could open the d-file to exploit the power of his dark-squared bishop:

7...♘d7 8.♟c2 ♘gf6 9.a3 ♘xc3+ 10.♟xc3 0-0 11.dxe5!? ♘xe5 12.♘xe5 dxe5 13.♘d3 (13.♟xe5? ♟e8), followed up by 14.b4.

8.♘d2 ♘f6 9.♟c2 ♟e7



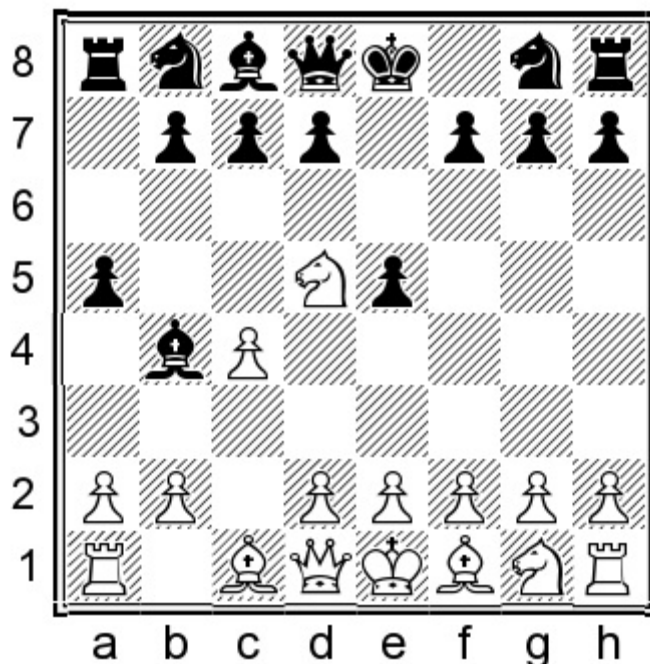
10.a3

It is possible that 10.h3 first is more precise. It aims to prevent ...♗g4, although provoking h3 and g4 is a doubled-edged idea.

10...♗xc3 11.♖xc3

The engines consistently evaluate this structure in White's favour, but they tend to overestimate White's chances. See **Game 18** Nakamura-Adhiban, Baku 2016.

A2. 3...a5!?



Anand migrated to this move in 2018, after several losses with 3...♗c5.

A21. 4.♘f3!?!; A22. 4.a3

The latter often transposes to B1 after 4...♗c5, but Black has also 4...♗e7, which is recommended by Mikhalevski.

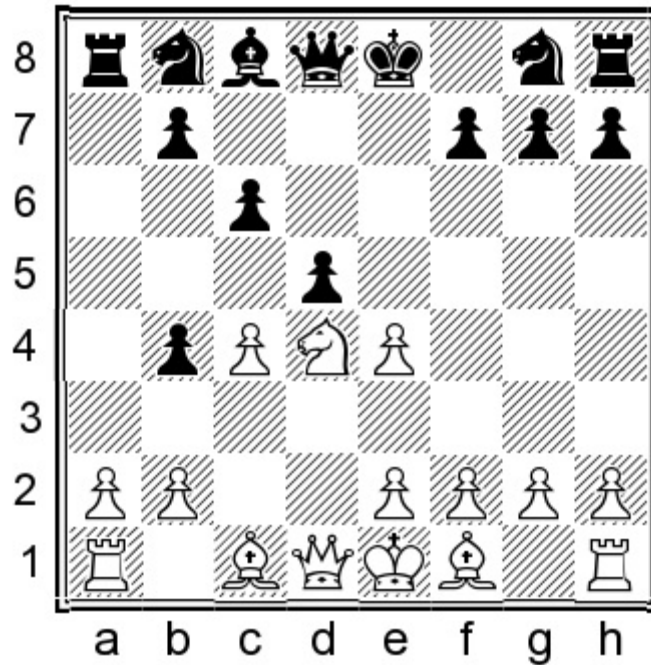
A21. 4.♘f3!?! d6

Main alternatives are:

4...e4 5.♘d4 c6

5...♘f6 and 5...♘e7 suddenly loses a pawn to 6.♖c2!

6.♘xb4 axb4 7.d3 d5 8.dxe4!



Facing Black with a dilemma. It is difficult to evaluate the position after 8...dxc4 9.♙f4 ♘e7 10.e3 b5 11.b3 c3 12.♙e2. The computer “hints” that White’s active pieces and the control of the d-file assure him of the upper hand.

8...dxe4 9.♙f4 ♘f6 10.e3 0-0 11.♙e2 c5 12.♘b5 ♚xd1+ is also far from trivial. However, 13.♙xd1! ♘c6 14.h3 (or 14.♘d6 ♘g4 15.♙e1 f5 16.♙xg4 fxg4 17.♙e2 b6 18.♞hd1) also favours White.

4...♘c6 is not in the spirit of the 2...♙b4 system. White answers 5.a3 ♙c5 (5...♙e7 is passive – 6.d4 d6 7.e3 f5 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.b3 ♘f6 10.♙b2 e4, Malakhov-Glek, rapid, Dubai 2014, 11.♘xe7 ♚xe7 12.♘d4±.) 6.e3, and scores 81% from here. For instance:

6...d6 7.d4 ♙a7 8.b4 exd4 9.exd4 ♘ge7 10.♘e3 ♘f5 11.♘xf5 ♙xf5 12.b5 ♘e7 13.♙d3±;
6...e4?! 7.d4 exd3 8.♙d2!? ♘f6 9.♙c3±, Turov-Konovalov, Sochi 2007.

5.a3

5.g3 c6 6.♘e3 is an ugly set-up. At some point White will have to spend tempos on rearranging the knights. The blitz game Dubov-Anand, Moscow 2018, went 6...♘f6 7.♙g2 0-0 8.0-0 ♞e8 9.d4 exd4 10.♘xd4 ♘a6 11.♘ec2 ♙c5 12.b3, when 12...d5 would have been pleasant for Black.

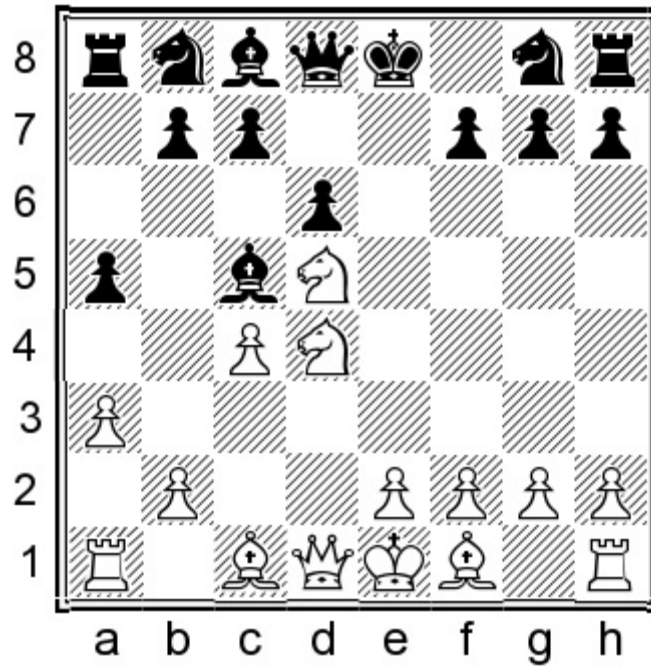
5...♙c5

5...c6 6.axb4 cxd5 7.cxd5 ♘f6 8.d3 ♘xd5 9.♙d2 ♘c6 10.bxa5 0-0 11.g3± occurred in Hillarp Persson-Hector, Ronneby 2018.

6.e3!?

6.d3 is senseless owing to 6...h6 7.e3 ♘f6=.

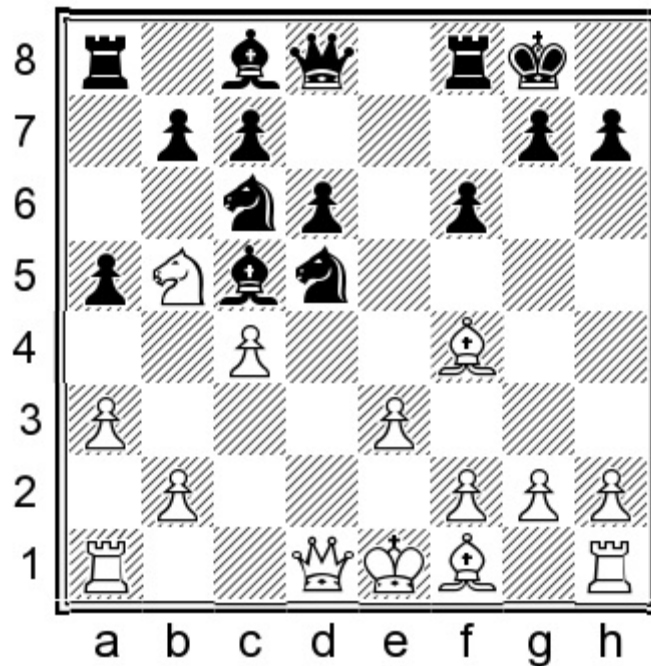
The engines favour 6.d4 exd4 7.♘xd4



However, 7...♗e7! levels the chances.

7...♗c6?? runs into 8.♗b5, and 7...♗f6? is impossible in view of 8.♙g5. In practice Black often repels the nasty knight with 7...c6, and only after 8.♗c3 – 8...♗f6. However, that enables 9.♙g5, which underlines the drawback of ...♙c5. (The pin is possible because of the inclusion of a3 and a5 so 9...♞b6? is met by 10.♗a4.) 9...h6 (Or 9...0-0 10.e3 ♗bd7 11.♙e2 ♞e8 12.0-0 ♗f8 13.♙h4, preserving the bishop.) 10.♙h4 0-0 11.e3 ♞e8 12.♙e2 g5? (12...♗bd7 13.0-0 ♗e5 14.♞c1±.) 13.♙g3 d5, Ehlvest-Estrada Nieto, Sao Paulo 2009. Here 14.h4! g4 15.0-0+– would have been the most convincing.

8.♙g5 f6 9.♙f4 0-0 10.e3 ♗bc6 11.♗b5 ♗xd5



12.♞xd5+

12.cxd5 ♖e7 also leads to rich play

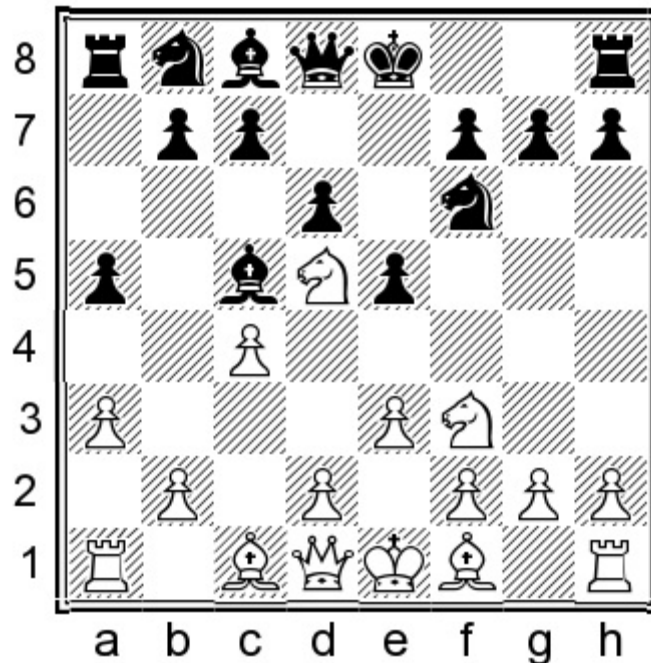
12...♔h8 13.♙e2 a4 14.0-0 ♖e5 15.♚d2 ♙e6. The a4-pawn paralyzes White's queenside and deprives him of a constructive plan. Black will continue ...♚d7, ...♙f5, ...c6 with normal play.

6...♖f6

Anand's latest try. He had played firstly 6...c6, but 7.d4! forced him to retreat the bishop under a pin along the a-file – 7...♙a7 8.♖c3 ♖d7. Black's idea is to leave a free lane for the f-pawn. Still, White has a nice game after 9.♙e2 ♖e7 10.0-0

Stockfish prefers to open the d-file with 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.b3 0-0 12.♙b2 ♖f5 13.♖e4. 10...0-0 11.♚c2 ♖g6 12.♚d1 ♚e7 13.b4. White is first to begin the action.

6...e4 is thematically met by 7.d4.



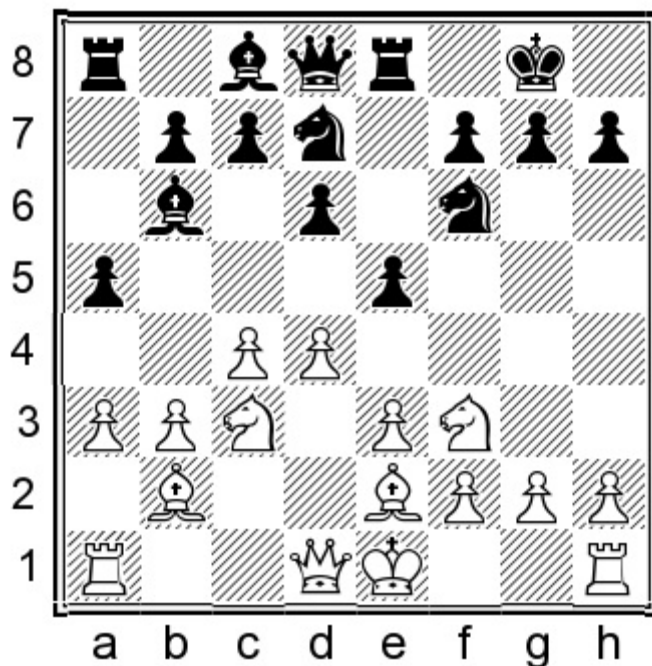
7.♖c3!

This is my new idea. White has nothing after 7.d4 ♖xd5. For instance:

8.dxc5 ♖f6 9.cxd6 cxd6 10.♙e2 0-0 11.0-0 ♙f5 12.c5 ♖c6 13.cxd6 ♖e4 14.♙b5 ♚e8 15.♙xc6 1/2-1/2, Gelfand-Anand, rapid Moscow 2018;

8.cxd5 exd4 9.exd4 ♙b6 10.♙g5 f6 11.♙e3 0-0, Cheparinov-Li Shilong, China 2018.

7...0-0 8.d4 ♙b6 9.♙e2 ♖bd7 (9...♖c6 10.b3) 10.b3! ♚e8 11.♙b2



The key moment of my design is to postpone castling and eventually hide the king on the queenside! In many lines we could borrow ideas from the Meran System, namely the stab g4. Here are some illustrative variations:

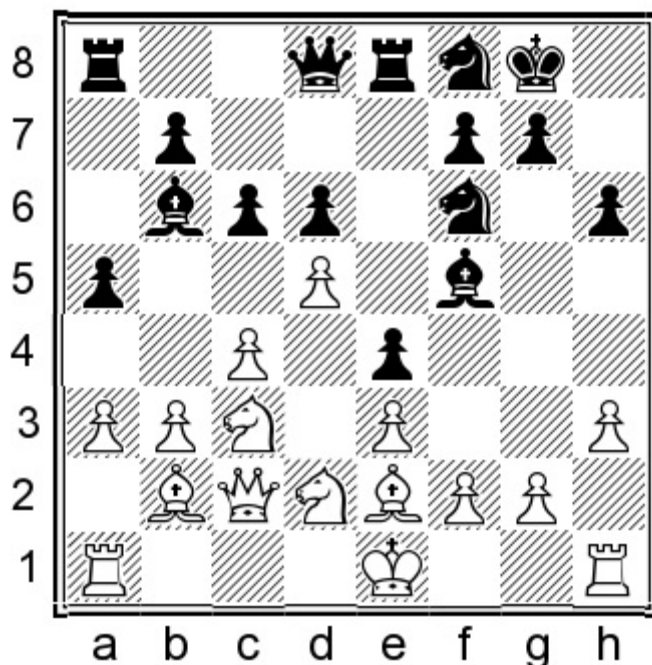
11...e4 12.♘d2 c6 13.g4;

11...c6 12.♙c2 e4 (12...exd4 13.♘xd4) 13.♘d2 ♘f8 (or 13...d5 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.g4) 14.d5!

14.♞g1 d5 15.g4 is interesting, but not necessary – 15...h6 16.0-0-0 ♘6h7 17.h4 ♘g6 18.g5 hxg5

19.hxg5 ♘xg5 20.♙b1 ♘h3 21.♞xg6 fxg6 22.cxd5 ♘xf2 23.♞f1 ♘g4 24.♘c4∞.

14...♙f5 15.h3 h6



16.g4! ♙h7 17.h4 ♘6d7 18.g5 hxg5 19.hxg5 ♘c5

It would be suicidal to open the g-file – 19...♞xg5 20.0-0-0 ♘c5 21.♞dg1 ♙e7 22.♘cxe4, and g7

cracks.

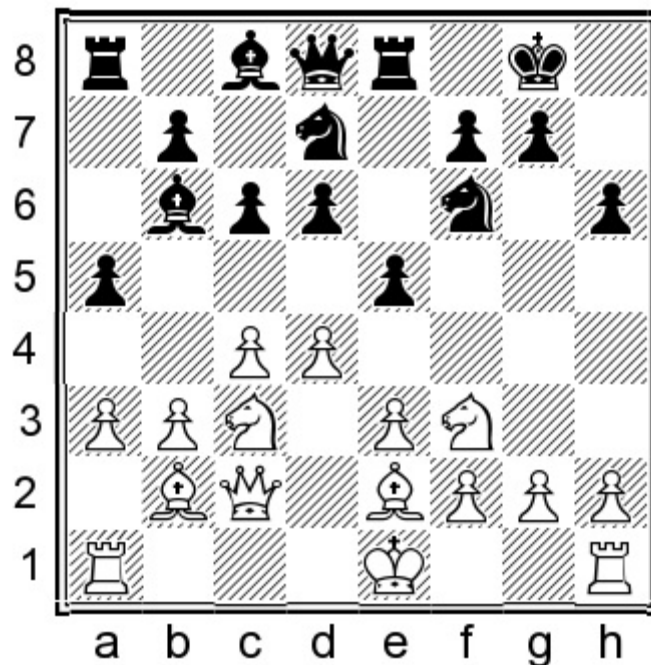
20.0-0-0 ♖d3+ 21.♙xd3 exd3 22.♚b1

The queen will soon return to play with devastating effect – from a1! For instance, 22...♞e5

23.♚a1 (23.♞xh7!? ♜xh7 24.♚xd3) 23...♚e7 24.dxc6 bxc6 25.♜a4+–.

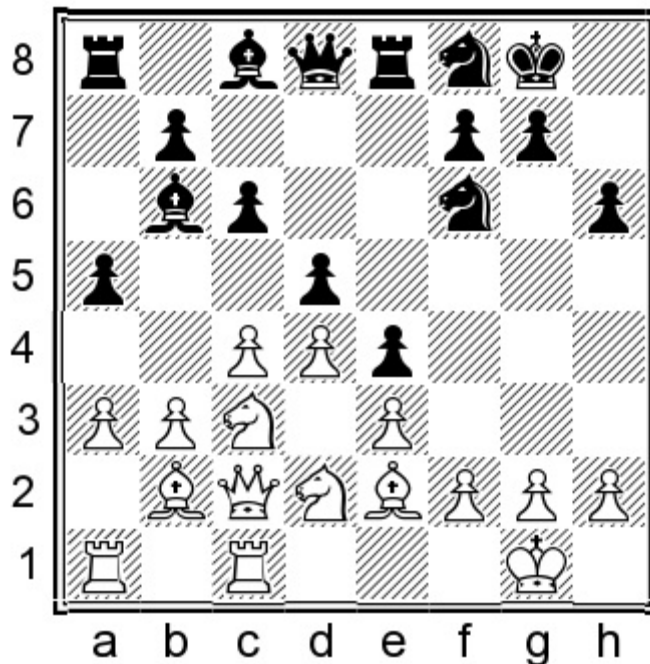
22...♙g6 23.♚a1 ♚xg5 24.♜a4 ♙d8 25.♙xg7 ♜h7 White's attack is strong even without queens as the following curious line demonstrates: 26.♞dg1 ♚f5 27.dxc6 bxc6 28.♙h8 ♙f6 29.♙xf6 ♚xf6 30.♚xf6 ♜xf6 31.c5 dxc5 32.f4 ♜f8 33.♜xc5+–.

The above analysis suggests that Black might be better off with some waiting move like 11...c6 12.♚c2 h6.



It does not rule out 13.0-0-0, but then Black will have some counterplay by opening the centre – 13...exd4 14.♜xd4 ♙xd4 15.♞xd4 ♜c5. Perhaps a more flexible interlude to the long castling would be 13.h3, waiting the opponent to close the centre with ...e4.

Besides, the tempo spent on ...h6 allows us to develop an initiative on the queenside with 13.0-0! e4 14.♜d2 d5 15.♞fc1 ♜f8



Our bishop looks passive on b2, but it could be activated from a3 in future. White follows up with 16.cxd5 cxd5 17.♘a4 or 16.b4 ♖g4 (16...♙c7 17.b5 ♖g4 18.♗f1) 17.♙xg4 ♗xg4 18.h3 ♗f6 19.b5 ♜c8 20.a4 ♙c7 21.♙a3 with an initiative.

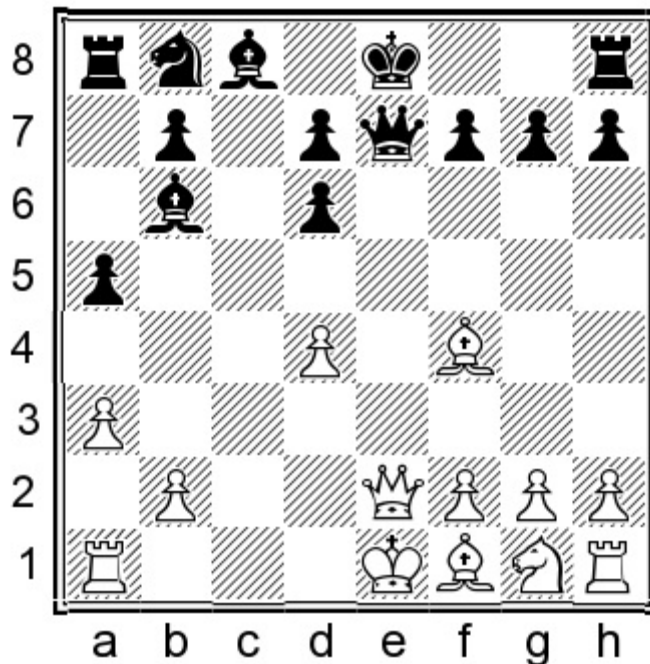
A22. 4.a3 ♙e7

4...♙c5 is best met by 5.♗f3, transposing to B1. I spent a lot of time on:
5.e3 ♗f6 6.d4

Again, it makes sense to play as in line B1 – 6.♗c3!? d6 7.d4 ♙b6 8.♗f3. Both known games featured instead 6...0-0 7.d4 exd4 8.exd4 ♜e8+ 9.♙e2 ♙f8 10.♗f3 d5 11.0-0 dxc4 (11...h6 12.♙f4 c6 13.♜c1) 12.♙xc4 ♙e6 13.♙xe6 ♜xe6 14.♚b3 ♗bd7 15.♜d1, when White has the more active pieces.

6...♗xd5 7.cxd5 exd4 8.exd4 ♙e7!

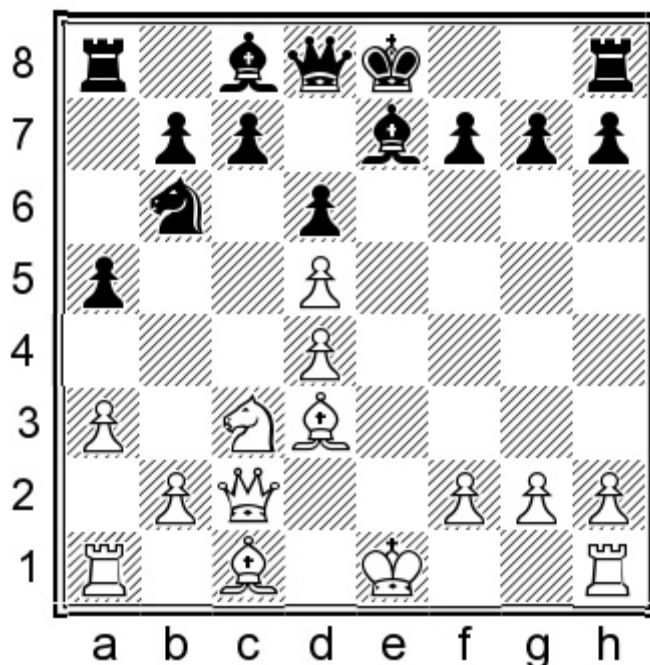
8...♙b6 leaves White more chances – 9.♚e2+ ♚e7 10.d6! cxd6 11.♙f4



At first glance it looks like White has chances to regain the pawn and the resulting symmetrical position should be equal. However, White develops amazing activity without queens. The only example I have is Pesonen-Kuosmanen, ICCF 2014. Even in a correspondence game Black was struggling after 11...d5 12.♙d6 ♚e4 13.f3 ♚e6 14.♘h3 ♜c6 15.♘f4 ♚xe2+ 16.♙xe2 ♜xd4 17.♙d3 ♙d8 18.♜f2 f6 19.♘xd5 ♜f7 20.♞hd1 b5 21.♘c7 ♙xc7 22.♙xc7 d5 23.♞ac1±, and he went on to lose.

I have also analysed 12...♚xe2+ 13.♘xe2 ♜a6 14.♘c3 ♙c7 15.♘b5 ♜d8!, but did not find smooth equality. White always retained some pressure.

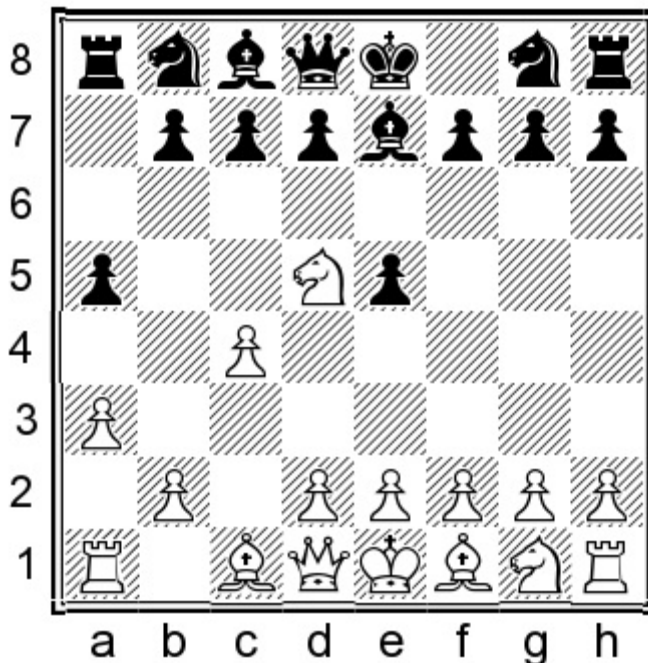
9.♙d3 d6 10.♘e2 ♜d7 11.♘c3



11...0-0

11...h6 is probably inferior as it allows 12.♚h5 ♜f6 13.♚f3.

12. ♖c2 h6 13. ♗b5 ♖b6 14. ♗xc7 ♜b8, and Black regains the pawn.
Summing up, 6.d4 ♗xd5 is roughly equal.



5.d4

This is the clear favourite in both human and engine games.

I think White has at least two other continuations which deserve serious attention. They have the advantage of being less explored:

5.e3!? ♗f6 (5...c6 6. ♗xe7 ♜xe7 7.d4 e4 8. ♜g4) 6. ♗xe7 ♜xe7 7. ♗e2 d5 8.cxd5 ♗xd5 with a typical Sicilian. For instance: 9. ♗c3 ♘e6 10. ♘e2.

5. ♗f3!? c6

5...d6 6.d4 e4 7. ♗d2 f5 transposes to the main line.

6. ♗xe7 ♜xe7 7.b3 d6 8.g3 ♗f6 9. ♘b2 ♘e6 10.d3 with a fluid centre and complex play.

On the contrary, I do not like 5.g3 d6

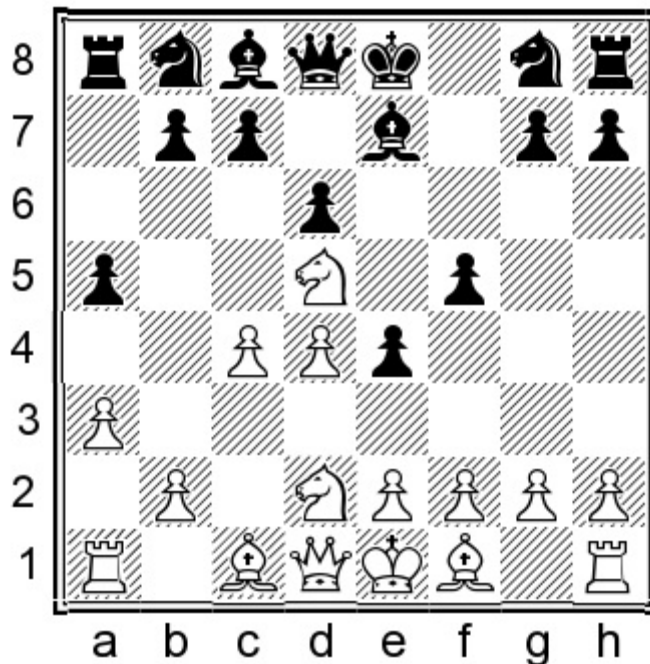
Planning to take space with ...f5. 5...♗f6 is inconsistent – 6. ♗xe7 ♜xe7 7. ♘g2 0-0 8.e4 d6 9. ♗e2 ♘g4 10.f3 ♘e6 11.d3 ♗c6 12. ♘e3 ♗d7 13.0-0.

6. ♘g2 f5 7.e3 ♗f6 8. ♗e2 ♗xd5 9.cxd5 0-0. White does not have a clear plan in this static structure – 10.0-0 ♗d7 11.d4 ♗f6=, Ponomarev-Morozevich, Biel 2004.

5...d6

Ceding space with 5...exd4 6. ♗f3 ♗f6 (6...c5 7.e3 dxe3 8. ♘xe3) 7. ♗xd4 0-0 brought Black less than 40% in engine games after 8.e3 ♜e8 or 8...d6. Besides, 8. ♘f4 d6 9.e3 also deserves attention.

6. ♗f3 e4 7. ♗d2 f5



8. ♖b1!?

The d5-knight will soon eat the black bishop so the d5-square will need control. The other plausible plan is 8.e3, followed by f3.

8... ♖f6

8... ♖d7 9. ♖bc3 ♖df6 may face the unexpected 10. ♖f4, when the f4-knight hinders all Black's minor pieces to take good stands. The key line is 10...g5 11. ♖fd5 ♖xd5 12. ♖xd5 h6 13.h4 gxh4 14. ♖xe7 ♖xe7 15. ♖a4+ ♖d7 16. ♖b3 b6 17. ♖h3, regaining the pawn.

9. ♖xe7 ♖xe7 10. ♖c3

10. ♖f4 ♖h5 11. ♖d2 is another possible move order.

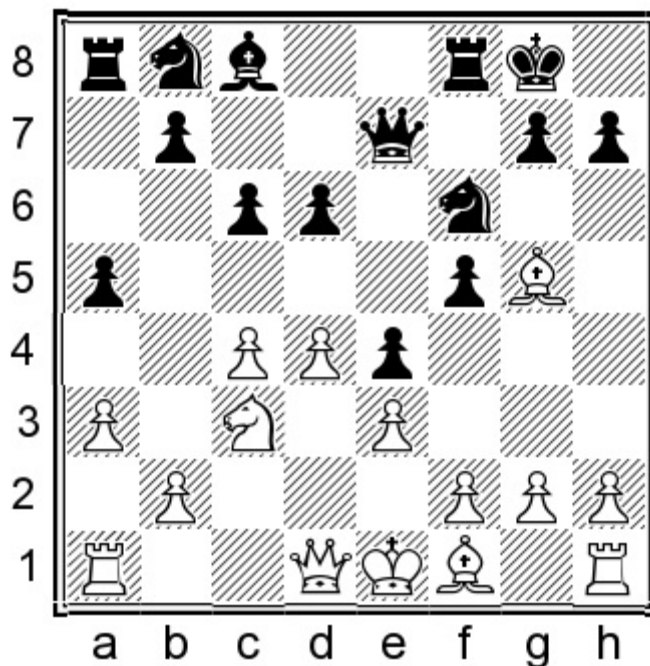
10...0-0

10... ♖e6 prevents 11. ♖g5 in view of 11...h6, but 11. ♖f4 is good enough. For instance, 11...0-0 12.e3 ♖f7 13.d5 (with a tempo!) 13... ♖c8 14. ♖e2 b6 15.h3 h6 16.b4±.

11. ♖g5

It is natural to lead out the bishop. The only question is on f4 or g5. Rodshtein-Kohlweyer, Caleta 2014, saw 11.e3 c6 12. ♖e2 ♖e6 13. ♖d2 ♖bd7 14.0-0 d5 15.cxd5 ♖xd5, when 16.b4 preserved a slight pull.

11...c6 12.e3



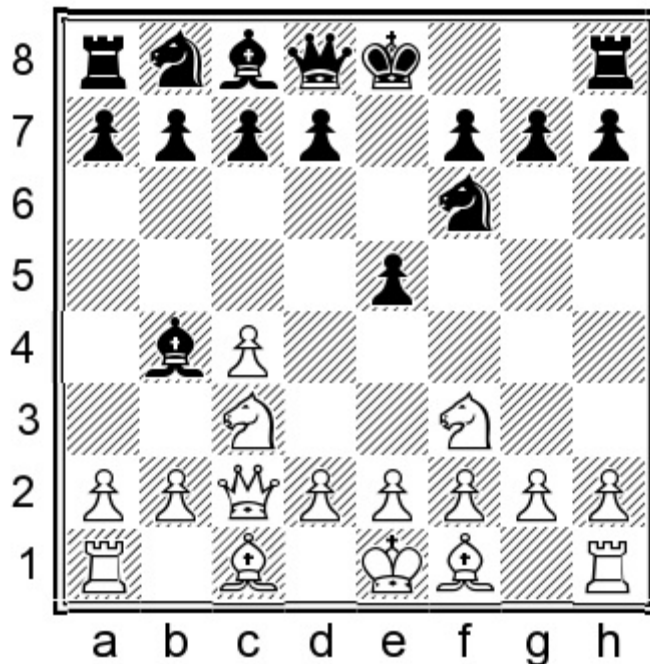
White has clear play on the queenside, while Black's plan is not obvious. Tomashevsky-Avrukh, Novi Sad 2009, continued 12...♖a6 and Avrukh even awards this move with an exclamation mark, but 13.♙e2 ♜c7 14.♚d2 (parrying the threat ...♘e6, ...g5, ...f4) would have been in White's favour. His plan is to push b4 and choose the right timing for a breakthrough on the queenside. He only should not hurry with 14.d5?, as he did in the game.

B. 3.♚c2 ♘f6

3...♘c6 4.e3 ♘f6 offers, apart from 5.♘f3, the additional option 5.♘ge2, e.g. 5...d5 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.a3 ♙e7∞, although I advocate the more active ♘f3, as a rule.

4.♘f3

It is important to hit e5 before Black castled. 4.e3 0-0 5.♘f3 is a worse move order since he could defend the e5-pawn with 5...♞e8, which is more useful than ...♘c6.



4...♕xc3!

This is Mikhalevsky's repertoire move from *Beating Minor Openings*. It aims to take space with ...e4

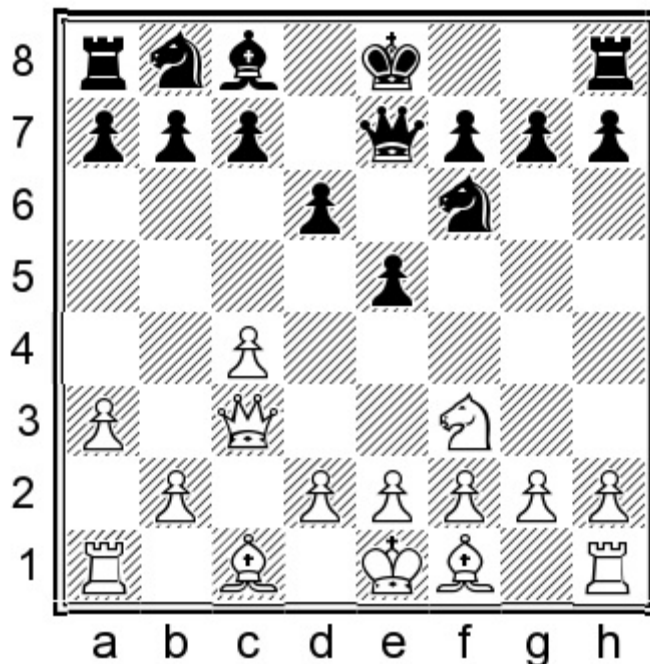
4...♞c6 is the most natural continuation. It transposes to Chapters 2-3 after 5.e3.

4...♞e7 5.a3

White's pawn structure after 5.e4 is similar to Chapter 3, but Black's knight did not block the c-pawn. That enables plans with ...c6+d5 or ...c5+...d6.

Besides, a dark-squared strategy with ...a5+...♕c5 is also possible.

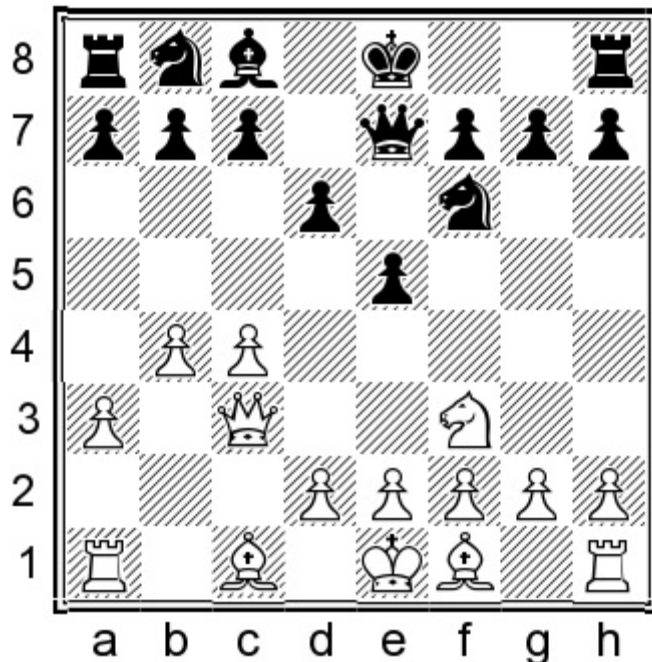
5...♕xc3 6.♞xc3 d6 (6...♞c6 7.b4)



a) 7.g3 is a natural follow up which ensures White a marginal edge against good defence:

7...c5! 8.d3 ♖c6 9.♗g2 0-0 10.0-0 ♜e8 (10...e4 11.dxe4 ♜xe4 12.♞d3) 11.♗g5 h6 12.♗xf6 ♞xf6
13.♜d2 ♗g4 14.e3.

b) 7.b4!? leads to a position from the 4.♞c2 Nimzo with a clear tempo down (Black commonly reaches it via ...e6-e5). Even so, I like it. We have two bishops and a flexible pawn structure.



We still keep the options of fianchettoing the king's bishop or opening the centre with an early d4. An important factor is that Black's queen's move is not too useful, so we are not terribly behind in development. Things could have been different, if we tried to apply the same plan against 4...d6 since we should have reckoned with ...e4. Play might continue:

7...a5

Alternatively:

7...e4 8.♜d4 c5 9.♜c2 0-0 10.g3.

7...0-0 8.♗b2 e4 9.♜d4 c5 10.♜c2 ♗e6 11.g3 ♜bd7 12.♜e3∞.

8.♗b2 0-0 9.e3 ♗g4 10.♗e2 e4 11.♜d4 ♗xe2 12.♜xe2 ♜c6 13.♜f4 ♜e5 14.0-0 b6 15.♞c2±.

4...d6!?

This move is very rare without any apparent reason. We should wait to see some high-level encounters. I'm not sure what plan to propose. What I'm sure is that I do not like 5.e4?! in view of 5...♗g4 6.♗e2 ♜c6 7.a3 ♗c5.

5.d4 0-0! is also unclear.

Perhaps you should make your choice depending on your attitude towards the fianchetto. A logical plan would be 5.d3 h6 6.g3 ♜c6 7.a3 ♗xc3+ 8.♞xc3 ♗e6 9.♗g2 0-0 10.0-0 ♞d7 11.♞e1 ♗h3 12.♗h1∞, marcosaa-karikal, net-chess.com 2013.

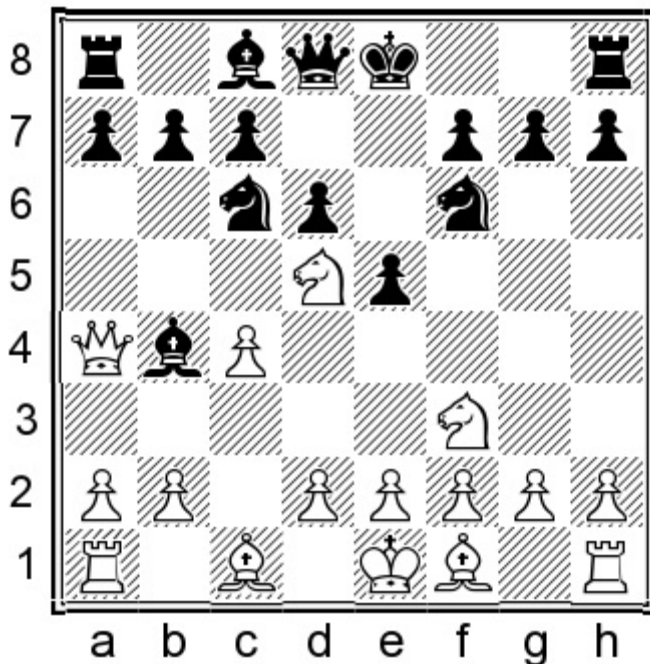
Development with e3 is more in the spirit of the book:

5.e3 0-0 6.b3 ♞e8 7.♗b2, when Black has an interesting strategic idea – 7...♗xc3 8.♗xc3 c5,

clamping on d4. Then 9.♘g5 ♚e7 10.♗e4 ♜xe4 11.♚xe4 ♜c6 12.♙e2 ♙e6 13.f4 gives White some initiative.

The only attempt to punish the opponent's particular move order is:

5.♚a4+!? ♜c6 6.♗d5

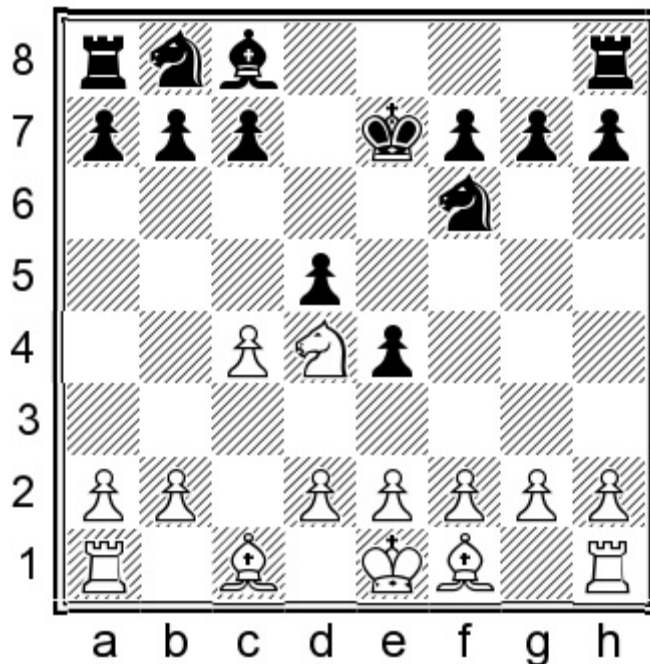


6...♙a5 7.b4 ♙b6 8.♗xb6 cxb6. We have gained the bishop pair advantage and a pawn majority in the centre. The problem is how to complete development since the threat ...e4 is looming.

9.e3 ♙g4 10.b5 ♜a5 11.♙b2 0-0 12.d3 ♙xf3 13.gxf3 ♚e8 14.♙g2 with the pawn sac f4 in mind. White has nice chances for an attack down the g-file. The a5-knight cannot help in the defence.

5.♚xc3 e4 6.♗d4

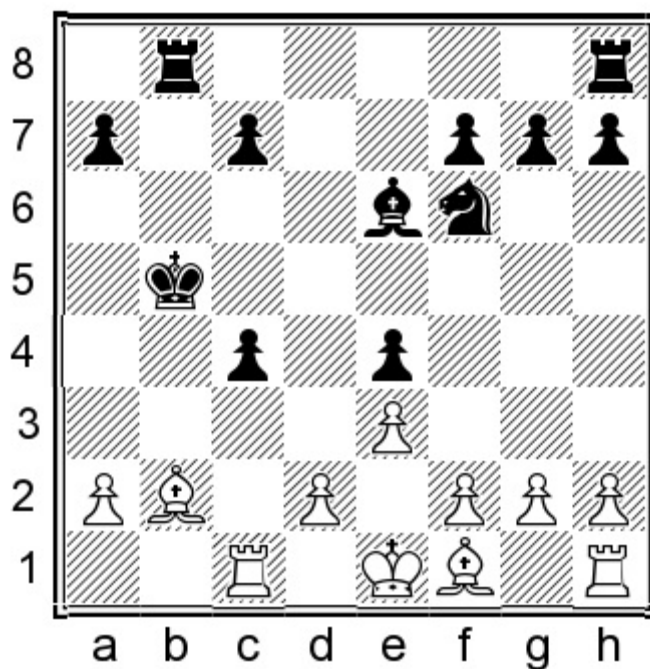
The endgame after 6.♚e5+ ♚e7 7.♚xe7+ ♜xe7 8.♗d4 d5 looks slightly better for White, but several precise moves should neutralise the initiative.



Jørgensen-Harabor, ICCF 2017, went 9.b4 dxc4

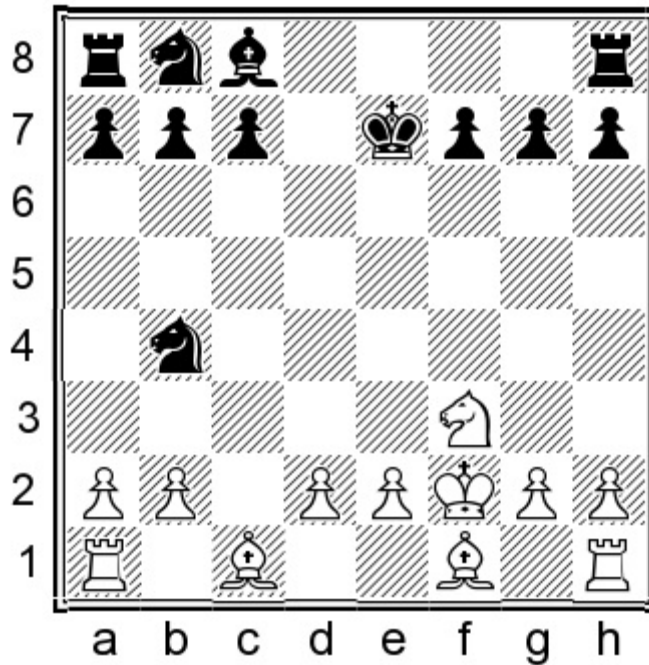
9...♖c6 10.♗xc6+ bxc6 11.♙a3 transposes to the game, while 11.cxd5 ♗xd5⇌ 12.♙a3 ♖b8
13.♖c1 ♗xb4 14.♖xc6 ♔d7 15.♖c4 a5 is balanced.

10.e3 ♗c6! 11.♗xc6+ bxc6 12.♙a3 ♙e6 13.b5+ ♔d7 14.bxc6+ ♗xc6 15.♖c1 ♗b5 16.♙b2 ♖ab8



The strong bishop on b2 allows White to retain some pressure. However, the stem game finished with a draw agreement after 17.h4 h5 18.♙e2 c5 19.f3 ♗c6 20.♙c3 ♖b6 21.♗f2 ♗d6 22.♖c2 1/2-1/2.

9.cxd5!? ♗xd5 10.f3 exf3 11.♗xf3 ♗b4 12.♗f2 should be easier to play with White owing to his bishop pair and the central pawns. Play might continue



12...♔e6 13.b3 c5 14.g3 f6 15.♔g2 a5 16.d3, intending to meet 16...a4 by 17.bxa4 ♖xa4 18.a3. This is yet to be tested, though.

9.d3 dxc4 10.dxc4 ♖d8 11.♘b5 ♘a6 is sharp, but balanced: 12.♔d2 ♔e6 13.e3

13.b3 ♘g4 14.♔c3 e3 15.f3 ♘f2 16.♖g1 ♖d7 17.♔d4 ♖xd4 18.♘xd4 ♘b4 19.a3 ♖d8=.

13...c5 14.a3 ♖d7 15.b3 ♘b8 16.♘c3 ♘c6 17.♘a4 b6 18.♔c3 ♖dd8 19.♔e2 ♖ac8 20.f3 exf3 21.gxf3 ♘a5=.

Yankelevich-N.Petrov, Bad Ragaz 2018 saw:

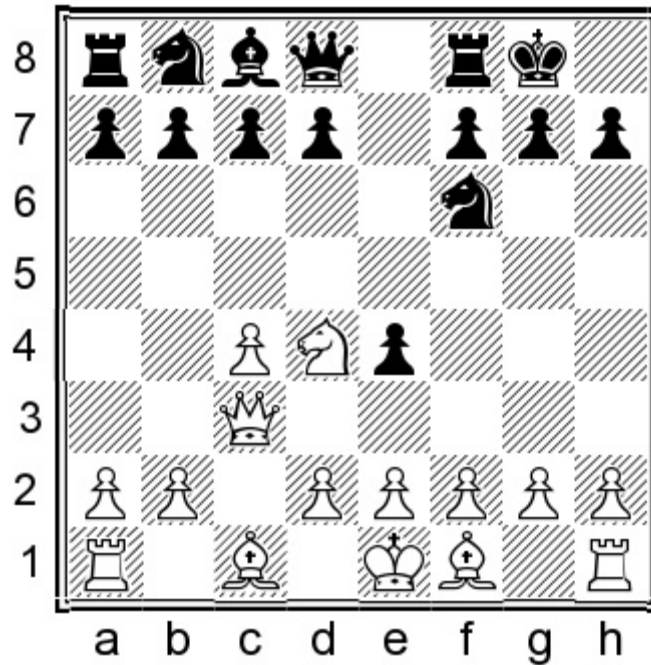
9.b3 c5 10.♔a3 b6 11.♘b5 ♘a6 12.f3 ♔b7

Or 12...dxc4 13.bxc4 ♔b7 14.♖g1 ♘b4 15.♔xb4 cxb4 16.e3 exf3 17.gxf3 ♔xf3 18.a3 bxa3

19.♖xg7 ♖ag8 20.♖g3 ♖xg3 21.hxg3 a5 22.♖xa3 h5=.

13.fxe4 dxe4 14.d4 exd3 15.exd3 ♘b4 16.♔xb4 cxb4 17.a3=.

6...0-0



7.b4

This aims to restrain Black's activity in the centre. 7.e3 c5 8.♘e2 d5 9.b3 ♘c6 10.♙b2 ♘b4 looks horrible for White. In fact, it is not so dangerous – 11.♘g3 d4 12.exd4 ♗xd4 13.♗xd4 cxd4 14.0-0-0 is roughly equal, e.g. 14...♖d8 15.a3 ♘d3+ 16.♙xd3 exd3 17.♗he1 b5 18.♘e4 ♘xe4 19.♗xe4 bxc4 20.bxc4 ♙e6 21.♗xd4=.

7...d6

After 7...♗e8 8.♙b2 Black does not have anything better than 8...d6 9.e3 ♘bd7, which transposes.

8.♙b2 c5!

I faced this strong retort in blitz games. Its idea is to ensure an active development of the queen's knight on c6. My database offers only 2 computer games which both featured:

8...♘bd7 9.e3

I do not like 9.g3 in view of 9...c5 10.bxc5 dxc5 11.♘b3 ♗e8 12.♙g2 a5 13.a4 b6. This neutralises our bishop – 14.0-0 ♗b8! 15.d3 exd3 16.exd3 ♙b7=.

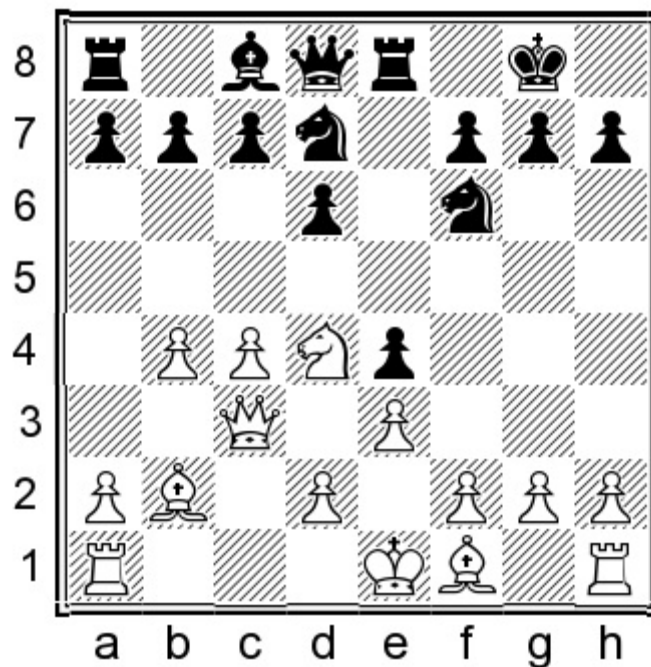
9...♗e8

This is a useful move. 9...♘e5 begs for 10.f4! exf3 11.♘xf3, when 11...♘xf3+ 12.gxf3 ♙f5 13.h4 ♗e8 14.♙f2 looks promising for White.

The computer game CM9000-Ruffian 2014 saw the logical, but dubious attempt to achieve ...♘a4 – 9...♘b6 10.a4 ♙d7 11.b5 a6 12.a5! ♘c8 13.♙e2 c5 14.bxc6 bxc6. Black failed in his endeavour and is much worse, e.g. 15.c5! ♘d5 16.♗a3.

The inclusion of 9...a5 10.a3 does not change significantly the position. Houdini also likes 10.b5

♞c5 11.♙e2, but I would not give up my b2-bishop so easily.

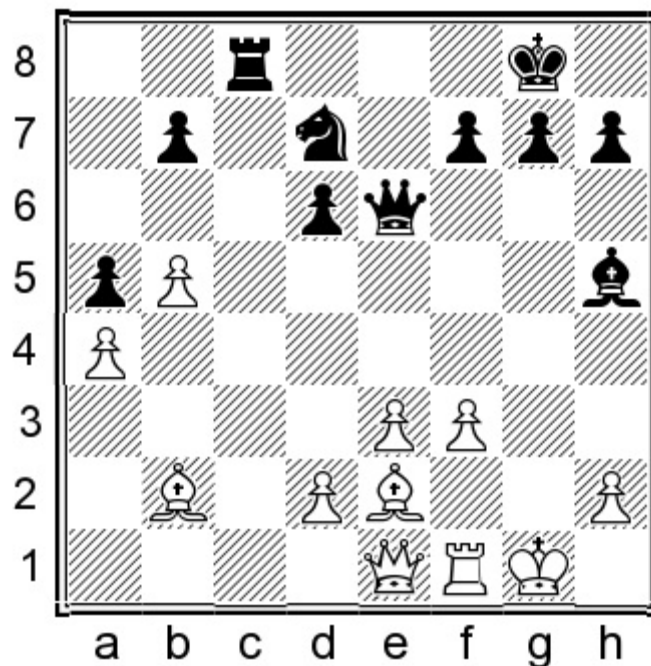


10.f4!

One of the main ideas of this version of the English (1...e5) is to open the f-file to put combined pressure on the enemy kingside.

10...exf3

10...a5 11.b5 ♞c5 12.a4 ♞fd7 looks passive. Besides, 11.♙a3 to win some time may be stronger. 11.♞xf3 (11.gxf3 c5) 11...a5 12.a3 ♞e5 13.♙e2 ♙g4 14.0-0 c6. I prefer White after 15.♙c2 (15.b5 also deserves attention) 15...♙e7 16.b5 ♙h5 17.♙d1. The idea is to play on both flanks, using the power of the bishop pair and the pawn control of the centre. An open file on the kingside should be welcome. An illustrative line is 17...♙e6 18.a4 ♞fd7 19.♞c1 ♞xf3+ 20.gxf3 cxb5 21.cxb5 ♞ac8 22.♞xc8 ♞xc8 23.♙e1



23...f6 24.♔g3. We own the initiative in a rich position. Our only weakness, the a4-pawn, is easy to protect with ♕d1.

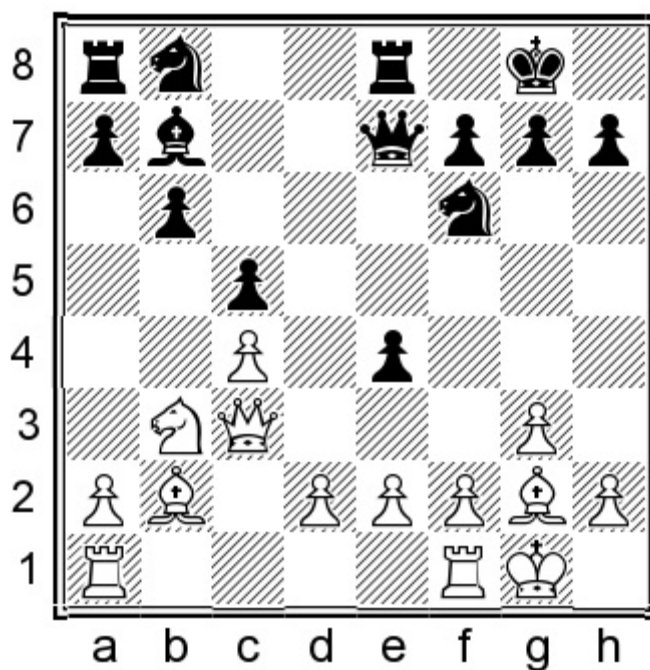
9.bxc5 dxc5 10.♖b3

Or 10.♘c2 ♜e8 11.g3 ♘c6 12.♙g2 ♙f5 13.♘e3 ♙g6 14.♘d5 ♘e5=.

10...♔e7 11.g3

11.e3 fails to 11...♘c6 12.d4 cxd4 13.♘xd4 ♘xd4 14.exd4 e3!.

11...b6 12.♙g2 ♙b7 13.0-0 ♜e8

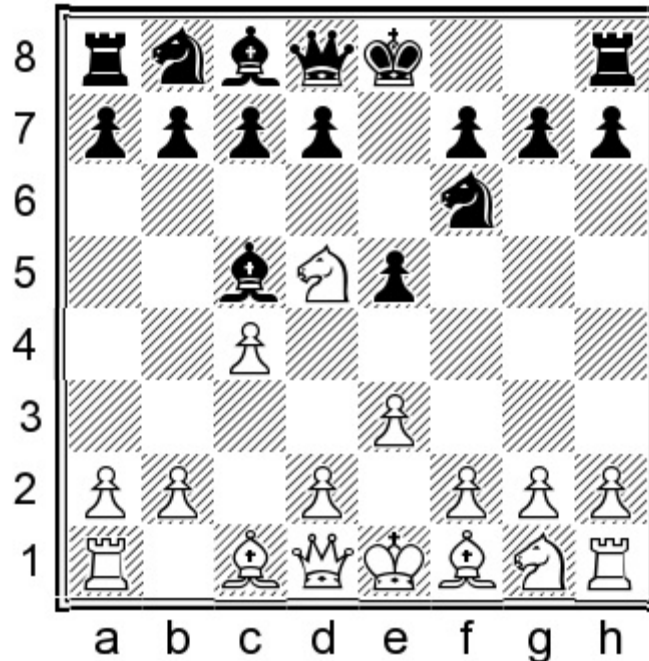


White will have to play d3 with simplification and even chances.

Chapter 5. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♙b4 Annotated Games

16. Giri – Anand Stavanger 10.06.2017

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♙b4 3.♗d5 ♘c5 4.e3 ♗f6



5.b4

This attack is better grounded than a move ago since Black cannot build a powerful pawn centre with ...c6, ...d5, ...f6.

Statistically, 5.♗e2 scores best, both against humans and engines. I do not like the rigid pawn structure which arises after 5...♗xd5 6.cxd5 0-0 7.g3 d6 8.d4 exd4 9.♗xd4 c6 10.♙g2 ♙b4+ (Houdini drew against Komodo in 2016 with 10...cxd5.) 11.♙d2 (11.♔f1 c5) 11...♙xd2+ 12.♚xd2 c5.

5...♗xd5

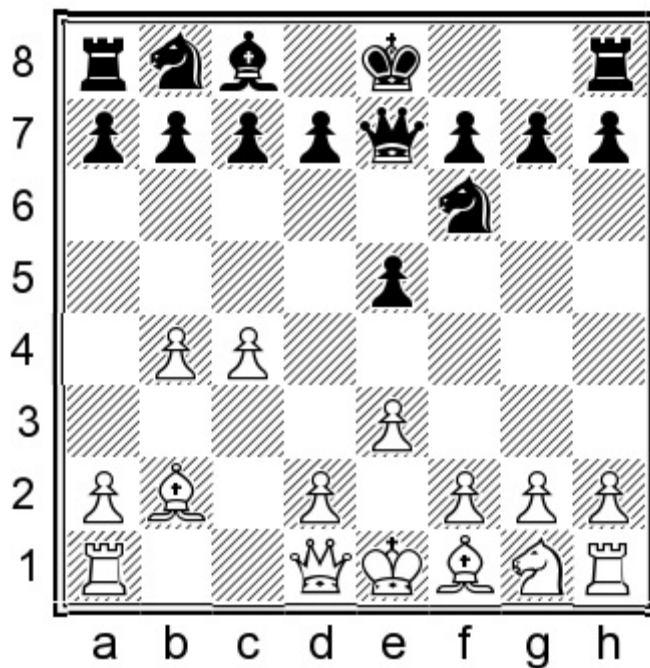
Hammer-J.Christiansen, Stavanger 2017, saw a clumsy attempt to retain the bishop: 5...♙f8 6.♙b2 ♗xd5 7.cxd5 d6 8.d4! ♙e7 9.♙d3 exd4 10.♙xd4 with a serious space advantage. It was relatively better to attack the centre with 9...c6 10.a3 cxd5, although the *isolator* after 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♙xe5 is not to everybody's taste.

The only serious alternative to 5...♗xd5 is:

5...♙e7. It is definitely ignored by most engine libraries as it occurred in only 4 engine games

(compared to 73 with 5...♞xd5). I will pay more attention to it since Mikhalevski recommends it in his repertoire book.

6.♞xe7 (retaining flexibility and gaining the bishop pair advantage) 6...♚xe7 7.♙b2 0-0



Now both knight developments, on e2 and f3, look promising to me:

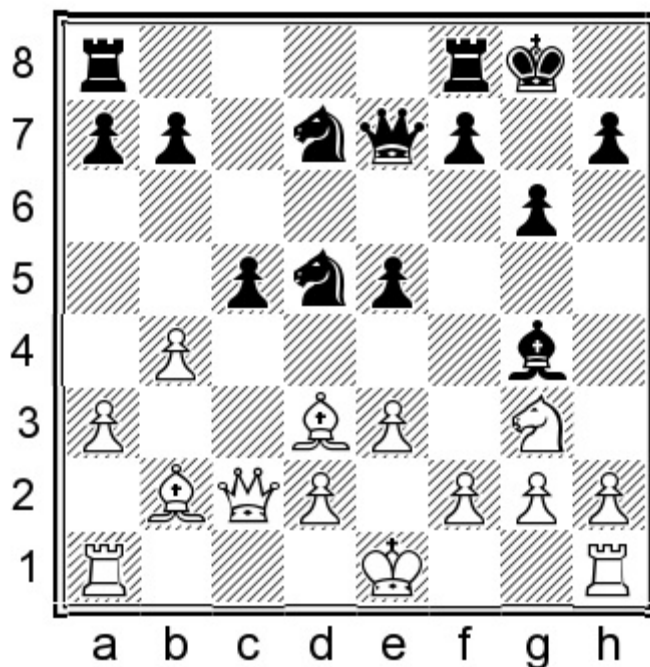
a) 8.♞e2!?

This is still untested and ignored by Mikhalevski.

8...d5 9.♞g3 ♙g4

Stockfish likes this tempo-move. 9...♙e6 10.cxd5 ♙xd5 11.f3 is a nice version of the Taimanov Reversed.

10.♚c2 ♞bd7 11.cxd5 ♞xd5 12.a3 c5 13.♙d3 g6 (13...h6 surrenders the central light squares)



14.b5 ♖e6 15.0-0. The weak main diagonal spells danger for Black.

b) 8.a3 d6 9.♘e2

I'm not sure whether this is a better version of line a. Topalov chose 9.d3 against Anand in a rapid game of 2016. He is a prominent Scheveningen fan so I understand his longing for this move. However, playing in the Taimanov style is more challenging.

9...a5

Both correspondence games I know of chose this course. The passive 9...♖e6 10.♘g3 a5 11.♖e2 ♘bd7 12.0-0 ♜fe8 13.f4 gave White an attack in Zhukova-Sahin, Antalya 2017.

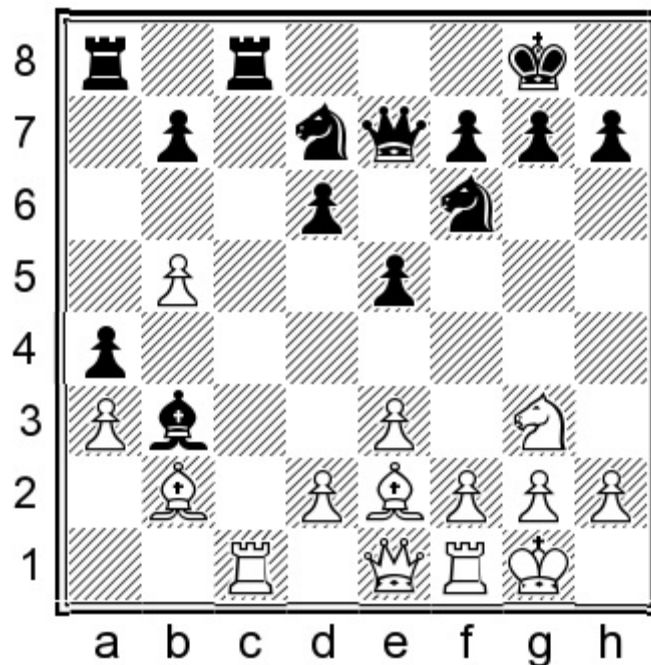
10.b5 c6 11.♘g3!

This is better than 11.bxc6 as in Almarza Mato-Cade, ICCF 2017. The subsequent play follows the spirit of the Réti Opening – although White has formally less space, his pieces are considerably more active:

11...cxb5 12.cxb5 ♖e6

12...d5 only weakens e5, e.g. 13.a4 ♜e8 14.♖e2 ♘bd7 15.0-0, and Black lacks good continuations.

13.♖e2 a4 14.0-0 ♘bd7 15.♞c1 ♖b3 16.♚e1 ♜fc8

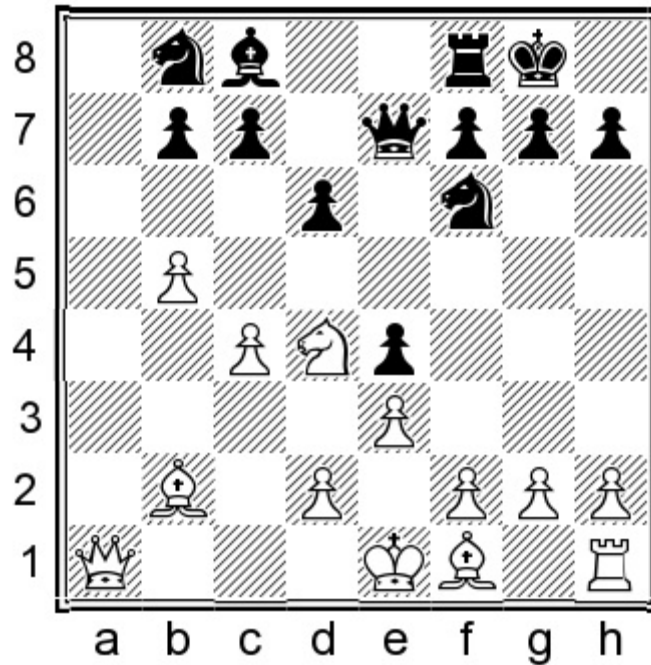


A funny position. White only looks cramped. In fact his pieces have greater potential as they could quickly find targets. Now 17.f4 will finally start the counter-offensive.

c) 8.♘f3 d6

More active is 8...e4 9.♘d4 d6. Here in Kovalenko-Wojtaszek, Poikovsky 2016, 10.f4 was premature owing to 10...c5 11.bxc5 dxc5 12.♘e2 ♘c6. The computer suggest the weird-looking 10.a3 c5 11.♘e2 ♘c6 12.♘g3 cxb4 13.♖e2 bxa3 14.♞xa3 ♖e6 15.0-0 ♘e5 16.c5↑. I prefer to restrict the opponent's knight with:

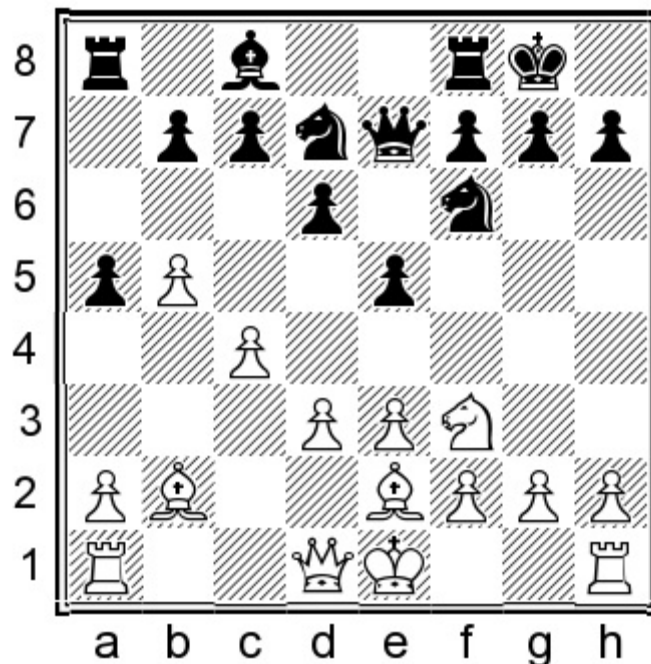
10.b5! a6 11.a4 axb5 12.axb5 ♞xa1 13.♚xa1



White should be somewhat better with his dominance along the main diagonal. He lacks weaknesses and could open the f-file with f3 or f4. For instance: 13...♖bd7 (13...♖g4 14.f3 exf3 15.♗xf3) 14.♙e2 ♗e5 15.0-0 ♝e8 16.♕h1, followed by f4.

9.d3 b6

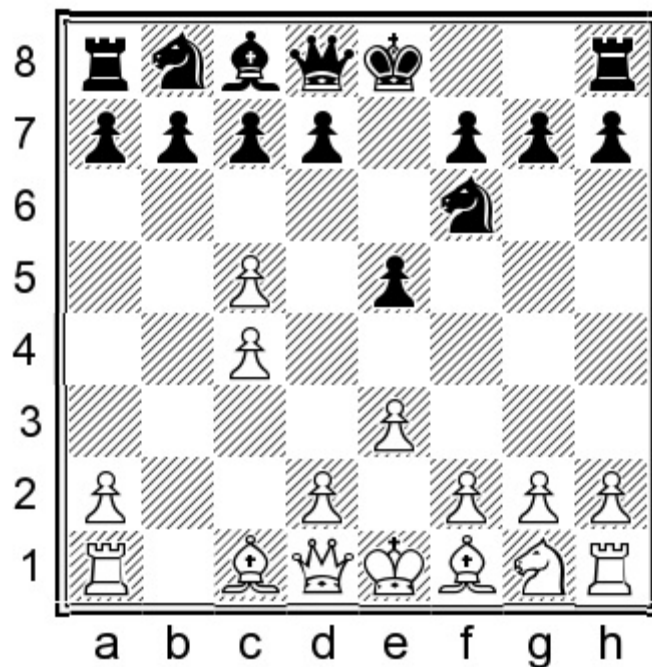
Alternatively: 9...a5 10.b5 (10.a3 axb4! relieves Black's defence.) 10...♗bd7 11.♙e2



11...e4 (Or 11...♗c5 12.d4 exd4 13.exd4, followed by d4-d5. If 11...♝e8 12.0-0 ♗c5, we push 13.d4 exd4 14.♗xd4) 12.dxe4 ♗xe4 13.0-0 ♝e8. Now the endgame after 14.♚d4 ♚f6 is pleasant for White, but it is more natural to prepare f3 and e4 with 14.♗d4 or 14.a4! ♗ec5 15.♙a3, to protect e3.

10.♙e2 ♙b7 11.0-0 with a promising position. See **Game 17** Caruana-Bacrot, rapid, Paris 2017.

6.bxc5 ♘f6



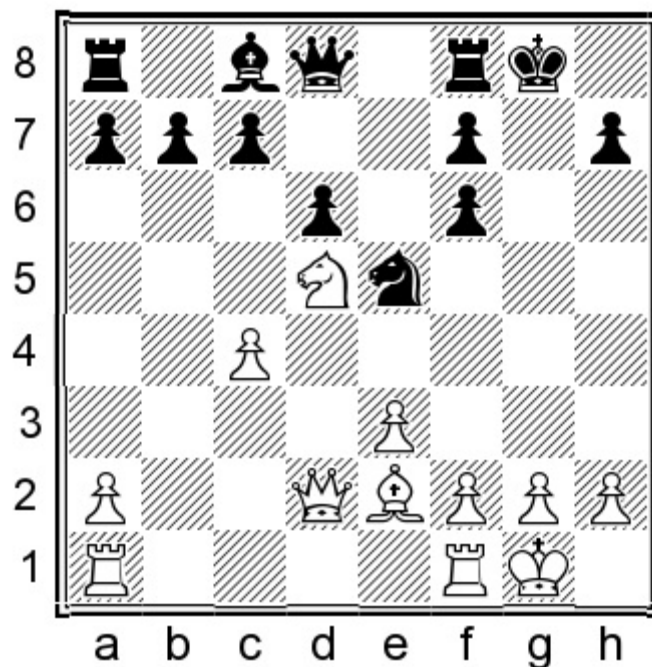
7.♘f3

Giri's victory in the current game brought this move to the fore. Engine games feature mostly 7.♘b2 and 7.d4. I like:

7.♘b2 ♖e7 8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.d4 exd4 10.♘xd4 ♖xc5 (or 10...0-0 11.♘xb5 ♖xc5) 11.♘b5 0-0, when critical is 12.♘xf6

12.♘a3 ♘b4 13.♘xc7 ♖xc7 is roughly balanced, despite White's bishop pair.

12...gxf6 13.♖d5 (13.♘e2 d6 14.0-0 ♘e5 defends) 13...♖b4+ (13...♖b6!?) 14.♖d2 ♖e7 15.♘c3 d6 16.♘d5 ♖d8 17.♘e2 ♘e5 18.0-0.

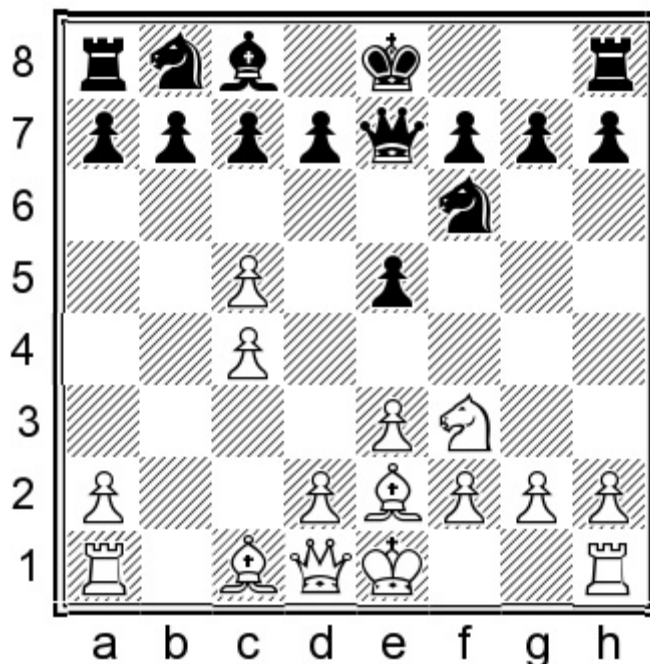


White's prospects are obviously better, although two engines drew their games from here. A possible

continuation is 18...♙e6 19.e4 f5 (19...♙xd5 20.cxd5) 20.exf5 ♙xf5 21.f4 ♘d7 22.♙f3↑.

7...♘c6

A month before this game Giri met 7...♙e7 by 8.♙e2!?



This is the reason to delay ♙b2. Grischuk did not take the pawn:

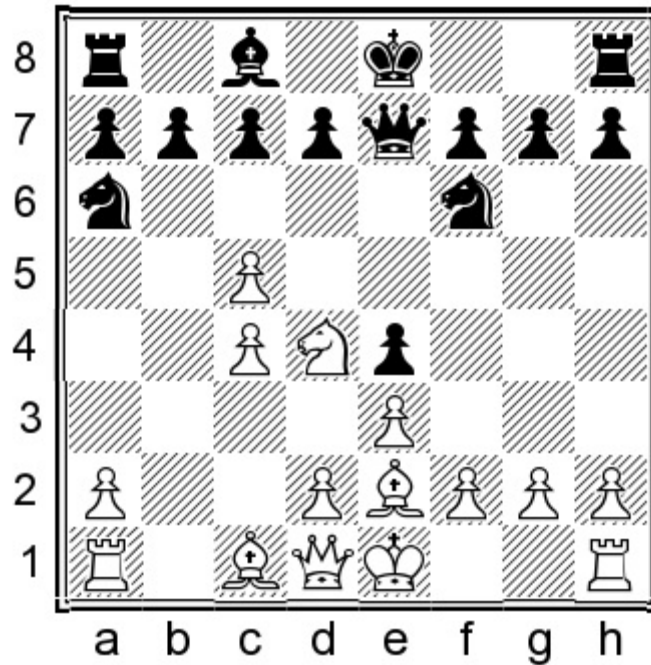
8...e4

Both engine games I know of also featured the same move, although 8...0-0 9.0-0 ♖e8 is much more solid.

8...♙xc5?! 9.d4 gives White more than enough compensation. Menezes-Saduakassova, Teplice 2018, did not last long: 9...exd4 10.exd4 ♙e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♖e1 d5 13.♙g5 (13.♙d3!) 13...c6 14.♙d3 ♙e6 15.c5 h6 16.♙h4 ♘bd7 17.♖b1 b6 18.♘e5 g5 19.♘xc6+— and White won on move 27.

9.♘d4 ♘a6

Here Giri found the right idea (♘f5), but missed the best shaping of it – 10.g4? ♘xc5 11.♘f5 ♙f8 without much compensation for the pawn. Stronger is:

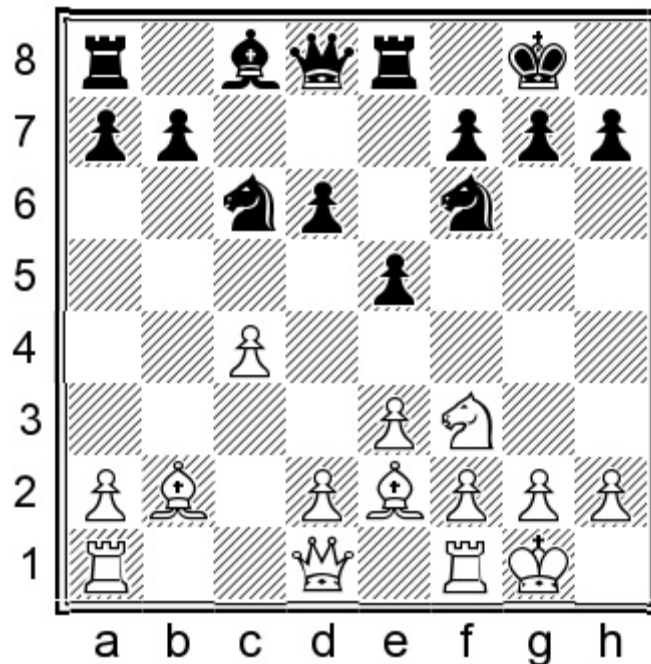


10.0-0! ♖xc5 11.♘f5 ♕e5 12.♘xg7+!! ♔f8 13.♞b1 ♕xg7 14.♙b2 and Black is unable to unpin the knight. For instance:

14...♕e7

14...♕g5 fails to another pawn move – 15.f4! ♕g6 16.♙h5 ♕h6 17.♕g4+ ♔f8 18.♕h4 ♔e7 19.g4. 15.f3 d6 16.fx4 ♘cd7 17.♞xf6!! ♘xf6 18.♕f1 ♞g8 19.♕f4 with attack.

8.♙e2 0-0 9.♙b2 d6 10.cxd6 cxd6 11.0-0 ♞e8



12.a4

This is a committal decision. White probably planned to stay in the centre with d3 and e4, and to display activity with ♙c3, a4-a5. However, this move also weakens b3 and spends a tempo. It also

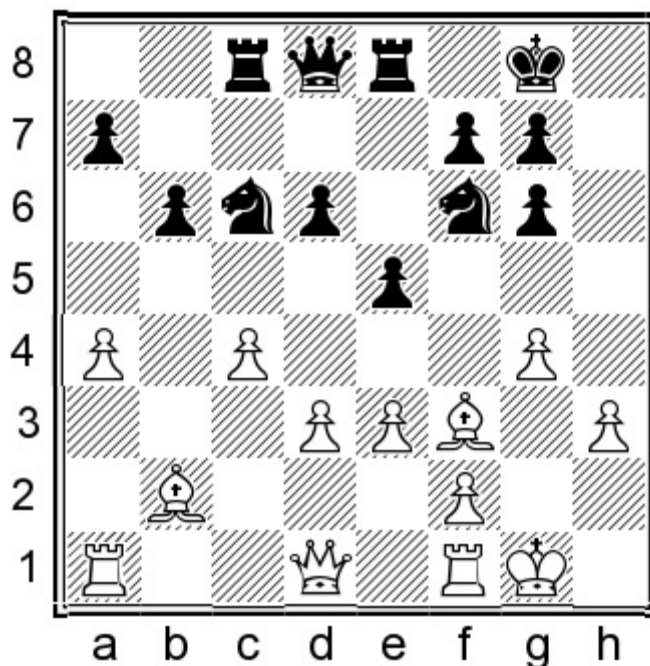
deprives White of the manoeuvre ♖e2-d1-a4, which would be useful if White placed his central pawns on light squares. 12.d3 was more consistent.

12...b6

I prefer 12...♗d7 13.d3 ♜c8, waiting for White to define his plans. However, it seems that Anand has planned already the dubious bishop's sortie to g4.

13.d3 ♗g4?! 14.h3 ♗h5 15.g4! ♗g6 16.♘h4 ♜c8 17.♘g6 hxg6 18.♗f3

Both White's bishops found working diagonals. Black should have now devised a solid defensive stand. For instance: 18...♘d7 19.♗g2 ♘c5 with a defensible position.



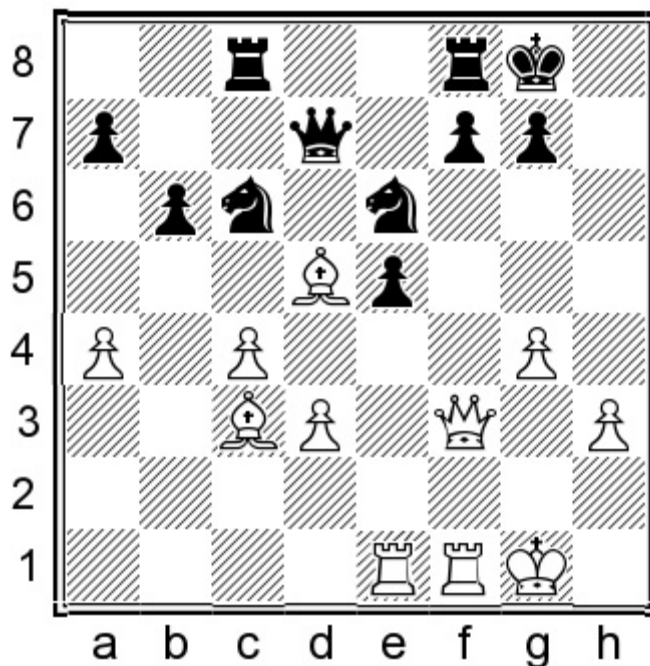
18...g5?!

This does not stop f4. On the contrary, it pours more oil into the fire.

19.♗g2 ♘d7 20.f4 (a little premature) 20...gxf4 21.exf4 ♘c5?

White's attack plays itself now. 21...♗h4 was a must, to prevent ♗d5.

22.fxe5 dxe5 23.♗d5 ♜f8 24.♗f3 ♗d7 25.♗c3 ♘e6 26.♜ae1



It is rare to see Anand totally outplayed strategically. Perhaps he miscalculated something before as now 26...♘f4 loses to 27.♖xe5! ♘xe5 28.♙xf4 ♘g6 29.♙d4.

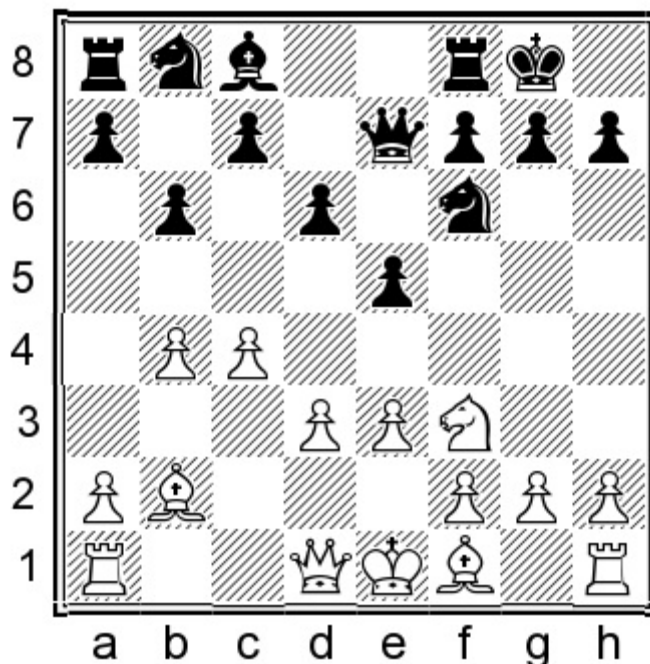
26...♘e7 27.♖xe5 ♘xd5 28.♖xd5 ♙xa4 29.g5?!

29.♖h5 ♙a3 30.♙f6! mates on the h-file. The threat is ♙f2-♙h4.

29...♖c5 30.h4? (30.♙f5+-) 30...♖xd5 31.cxd5 ♘c5?? (31...♙xh4! 32.dxe6 ♙xg5+ 33.♙h1 ♙h6±) 32.g6 ♙d7 33.♙b4 1-0

17. Caruana – Bacrot rapid, Paris 22.06.2017

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♙b4 3.♘d5 ♙c5 4.e3 ♘f6 5.b4 ♙e7 6.♘xe7 ♙xe7 7.♙b2 0-0 8.♘f3 d6 9.d3 b6



10.♔e2

Instead of developing the bishop on e2 and then looking for how to activate it through f3, White could have fianchettoed it right away – 10.g3!? ♕b7 11.♔g2 ♖bd7 12.0-0 e4 13.♘d4±.

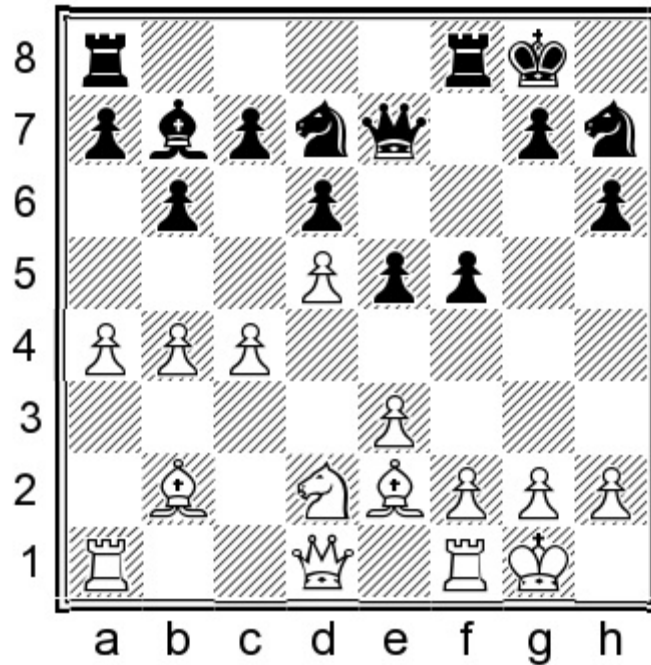
10...♕b7 11.0-0 ♖bd7 12.♘d2 h6 13.d4 ♗h7

13...a5 14.b5 a4 has its drawbacks. The a-pawn will be weak for the rest of the game after any reasonable answer, e.g. 15.♖c1, 15.♗e1 or even 15.a3.

14.d5!

This is the standard reaction in such positions. White grabs space, and follows up with e4, or f4 in the event Black plays ...f5. Stockfish prefers another approach, which I would not recommend to anybody – 14.♔d3 e4 15.♔e2 a5 16.b5 ♖ad8 17.h3. White stays passively on the kingside and prepare c4-c5. Such a set-up is viable only if you are capable of computer-quality defence.

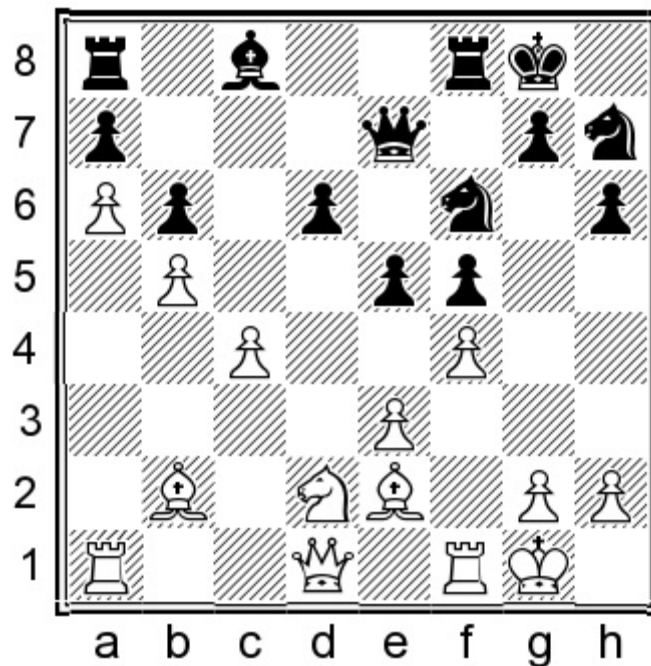
14...f5 15.a4



15...c6

Perhaps 15...a5 16.bxa5 ♖xa5 17.♘b3 ♖aa8 18.a5 ♘hf6 gave more chances. At least Black trades a couple of pawns on his weak flank.

16.dxc6 ♗xc6 17.a5 ♘df6 18.b5 ♗b7 19.a6 ♗c8 20.f4



Caruana has played an exemplary game so far, and he dominates 2/3 of the board. The enormous space advantage on the queenside is a good ground for tactical tricks based on the breakthrough c4-c5.

20...♗e8 21.fx5

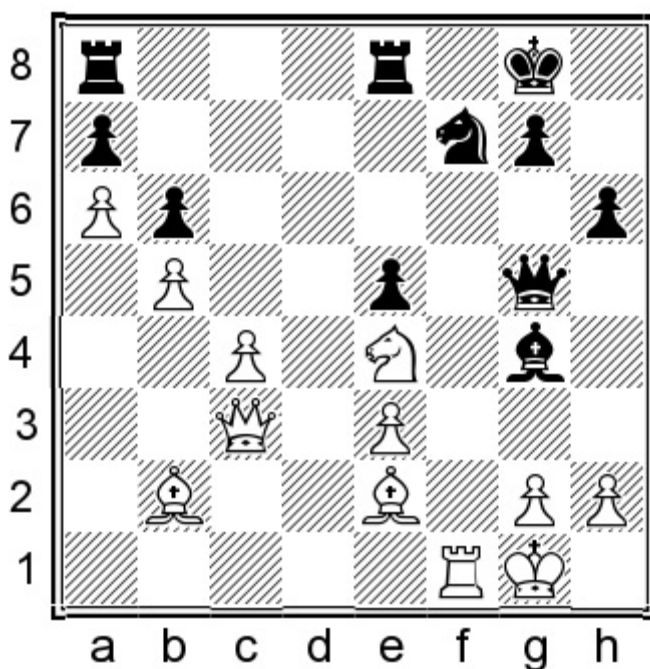
This is not a mistake, of course, but

21.c5!! was even more effective. Then 21...bxc5 22.fxe5 dxe5 23.♖c4 would be hopeless, but 21...dxc5 22.fxe5 ♘d5 23.e4 is not fun either. White's bishop pair and the forepost on d6 should be enough to win.

21...dxe5 22.♚b3 ♘g5 23.♗f3?

23.♚a3 trades queens favourably, but 23.c5+! is more spectacular – 23...♙e6 24.♙c4 bxc5 25.♙xe5. The text allows Black to stabilise the centre with 23...♗xf3+ 24.♙xf3 e4 25.♙e2±.

23...♗f7? 24.♗h4?! (24.♙a3!) 24...♗e4! 25.♗xf5 ♚g5 26.♗g3 ♗d2 27.♚c3 ♗xf1 28.♙xf1 ♙g4 29.♗e4



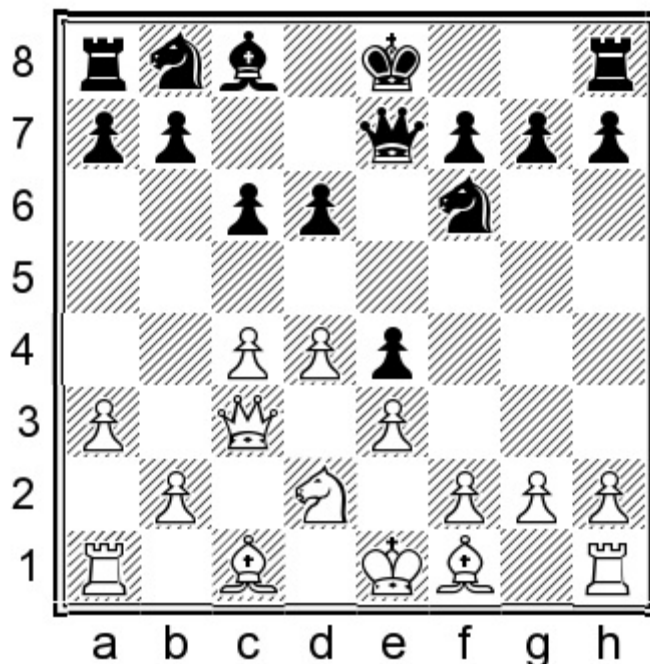
White is still somewhat better, although 29...♚h5 would have allowed Bacrot to hold on. The rest of the game is marred by serious mistakes, typical for rapid chess.

29...♚h4?? 30.♙d3? (30.♙g4!) 30...♙e6 31.c5 bxc5 32.♚xc5? ♙ec8 33.♚b4 ♙c4!= 34.♚b3 ♙ac8 35.♙xc4 ♙xc4 36.♚c2 ♙e6? 37.♚b1 ♙b8 38.♗c3 ♙c4 39.♙f2 ♗g5 40.♚f5 ♙d8 41.♚xe5?? ♚g4+ 42.h4 ♗h3+ 43.♗h2 ♗xf2 44.♚e7 ♙f8 45.b6 ♙f1 0-1

18. Nakamura – Adhiban

Baku ol. 09.09.2016

1.c4 e5 2.♗c3 ♙b4 3.♗d5 ♙c5 4.♗f3 c6 5.♗c3 d6 6.e3 ♙b4 7.d4 e4 8.♗d2 ♗f6 9.♚c2 ♚e7 10.a3 ♙xc3 11.♚xc3



11...a5

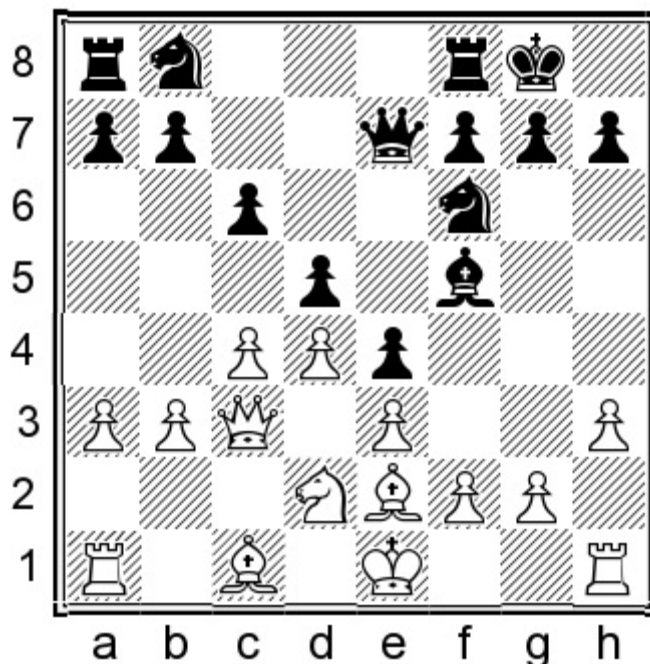
This move gives White a target. The pawn is vulnerable, as the current game shows. b4 was not a positional threat anyway, since the c1-bishop would remain caged in. On the contrary, White's plan is to play b3 and a4, enabling ♖a3.

More challenging is 11...♙g4 12.h3 ♙h5 to hinder White's development. 13.g4 is practically forced, and 13...♙g6 14.b4 ♘bd7 15.♙b2 0-0 is sharp and unclear.

With a hindsight, White could change the move order in favour of 10.h3!, which should eventually transpose.

The correspondence game Coyne-Crebs, ICCF 2016, followed exactly this course. It also offered maybe the best defence against White's opening strategy:

10.h3!? 0-0 11.a3 ♙xc3 12.♚xc3 ♙f5 13.♙e2 d5 14.b3



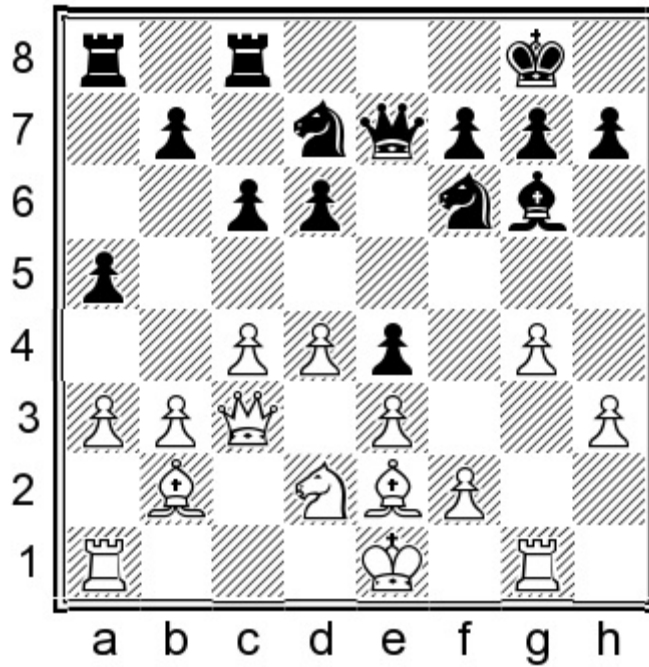
14...♞a6!?

Passive, but effective. White listened to the engines and continued

15.0-0 h6 16.a4, but 16...♞b4 practically forced a draw: 17.a5 b6 18.♞a4 c5 19.♙a3 dxc4 20.bxc4 ♞d3 21.♙xd3 exd3 22.♙b2 ♚d7 23.♞fa1 cxd4 24.♚xd4 ♚xd4, draw. In the final position White wins a pawn, but ...♞e4 exchanges the knights. The resulting opposite-coloured bishops ending is a draw. Instead of 15.0-0, White should manoeuvre and wait the a6-knight to go to c7. For instance: 15.♞f1 ♞fd8 16.♞g3 ♙g6 17.0-0 h5 18.♙d1 ♞c7 19.a4 h4 20.♞e2 ♞e6 21.♙a3 ♚d7 22.♞c1 ♞ac8 23.♚e1± (eyeing h4).

12.b3 0-0 13.♙b2 ♞e8 14.h3 d5

Black was faced with a same question as on move 11 – to provoke g4 or not. 14...♙f5 15.♙e2 ♞bd7 16.g4 ♙g6 is rather risky, although 17.♞g1 ♞ec8

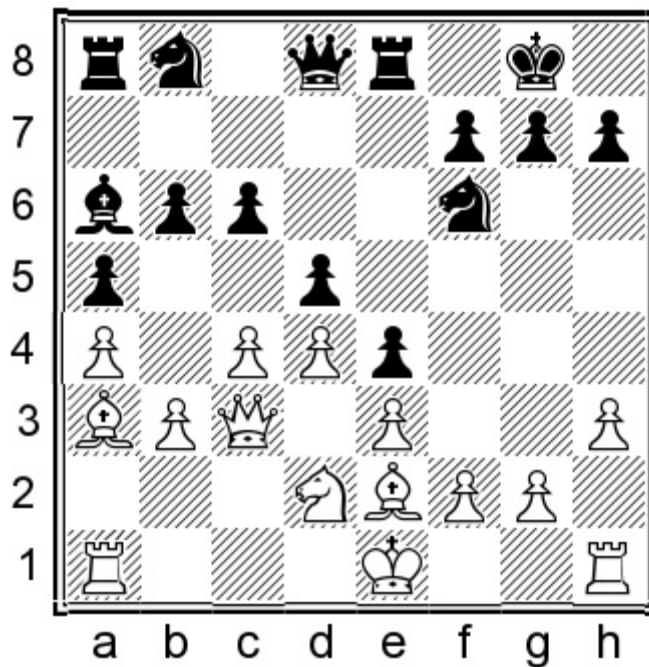


18.h4 h6 19.g5 hxg5 20.♖xg5 ♜e8 21.0-0-0 ♜f8 22.f4 exf3 23.♙xf3 d5 24.♗dg1 is still unclear.

15.a4 b6 16.♙a3 ♚d8

Perhaps Black should have adopted a light-squared strategy – 16...♗e6 17.c5 bxc5 18.♗xc5 ♜fd7 19.♗d6 ♙a6 20.♖c1 ♙xf1 21.♜xf1 ♗xd6 22.♙xd6 ♖e6. He is very passive, but everything is protected.

17.♙e2 ♙a6



18.♜f1

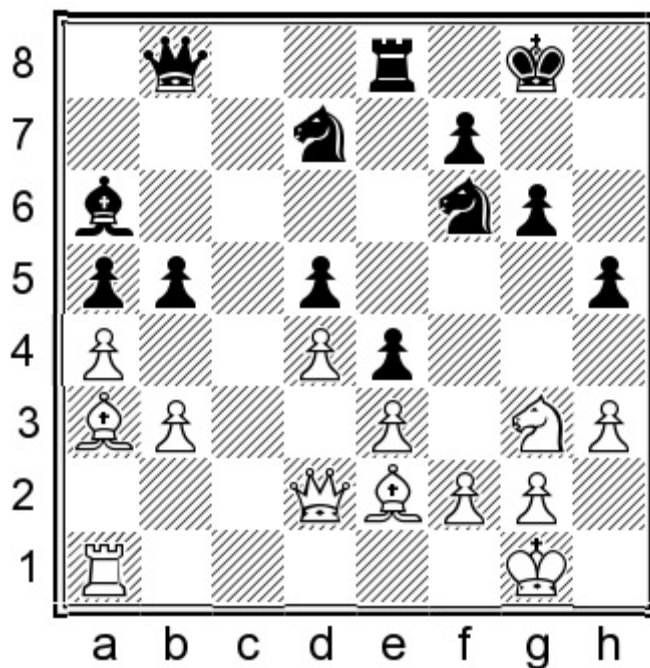
I do not understand this long and useless manoeuvre. Was White feigning the threat g4, ♜g3? He did

not need complications. The simple 18.0-0 ♖bd7 19.♙d6, solving the problem of the “bad bishop”, would have been clearly better for him.

18...♖bd7 19.♖g3 g6 20.0-0 h5 21.♗fc1 ♝c8 22.♝c2 b5?

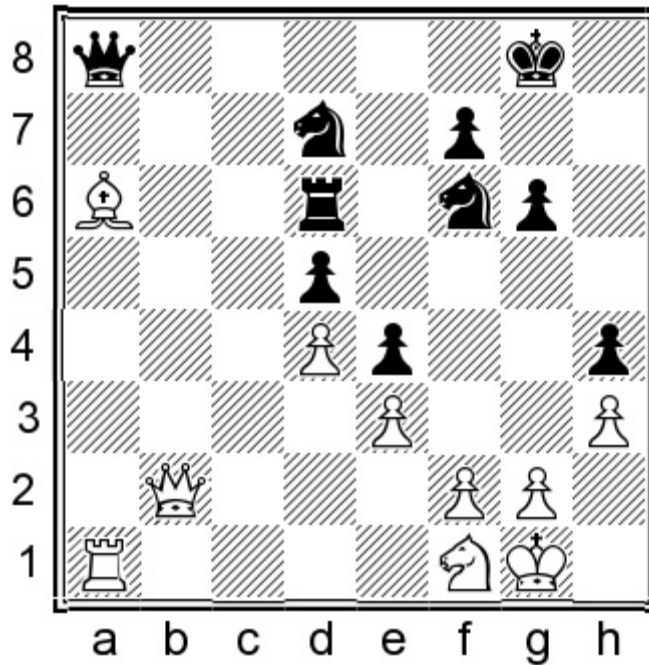
A mistake, which costs a pawn. 22...h4 23.♗f1 should have been included. The point is that the e2-bishop is not protected and White does not win a pawn following 23...b5 24.cxb5 cxb5 25.♕d2 ♝xc2 26.♗xc2 ♖b6 27.♙c5 ♗b7 28.axb5 ♙xb5.

23.cxb5 cxb5 24.♕d2 ♝xc2 25.♗xc2 ♖b8 (25...♗b6 26.♙c5) 26.♕d2



Now 26...♗b6 keeps the material balance, but 27.b4 axb4 28.♗xb4 ♝b8 29.a5 is awful for him.

26...h4 27.♗f1 ♝e6 28.♗xa5 bxa4 29.♙xa6 ♖a8 30.♙d6! axb3? 31.♗a3 b2 32.♗xb2 ♝xd6

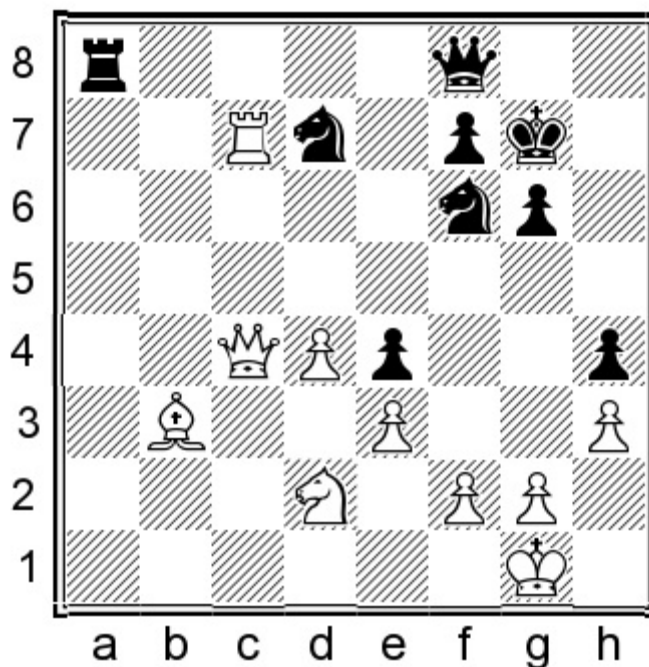


It looks that Black has survived, but the forced line continues:

33. ♖b7! ♚d8 34. ♜a8 ♘b8 35. ♙xd5 ♜b6 36. ♙b3!

This is technically winning, mostly because of the weakness on f7.

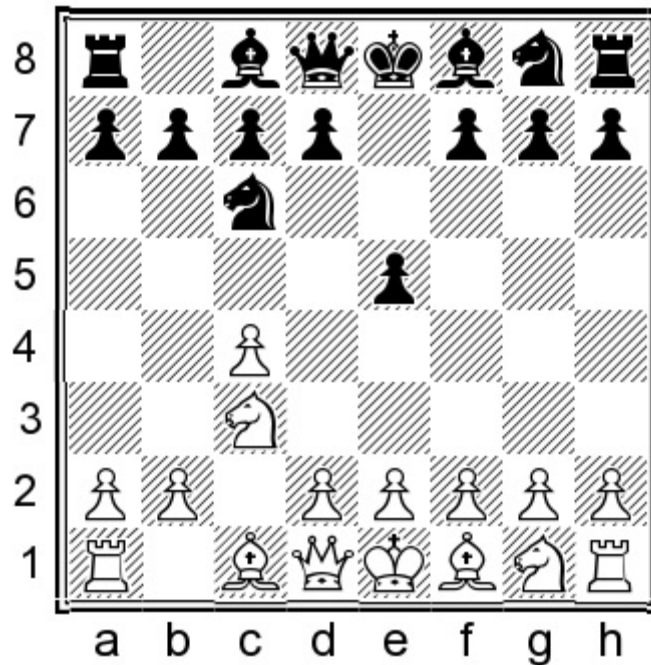
36... ♗g7 37. ♚c3 ♜e7 38. ♘d2 ♜c6 39. ♙c4 ♘bd7 40. ♜a7 ♜b6 41. ♙b3 ♚d6 42. ♚c4 ♜f8 43. ♜c7 ♜b4 44. ♚a6 ♜b8 45. ♚c4 ♜a8



46. ♘xe4 ♘xe4 47. ♜xd7 ♜a1+ 48. ♗h2 ♗h6 49. ♚c7 ♘g5 50. ♚f4 ♜e8 51. ♜xf7 ♜e4 52. ♙d5 ♜xf4+ 53. ♜xf4 1-0

Chapter 6. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 Main Ideas

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6



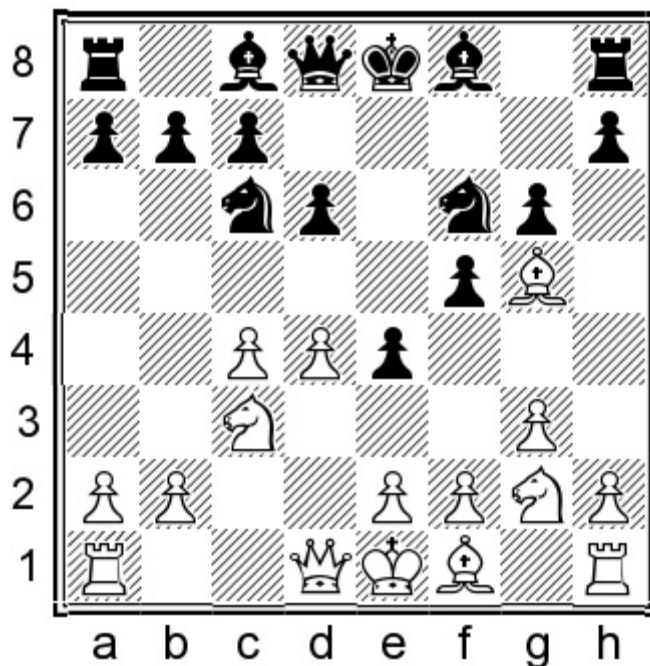
This move is mostly aimed against 3.g3, when Black could answer 3...g6. I suggest to follow our general plan and prepare d4 by:

3.♘f3 f5 4.g3!

This is not an introduction to a bishop fianchetto!

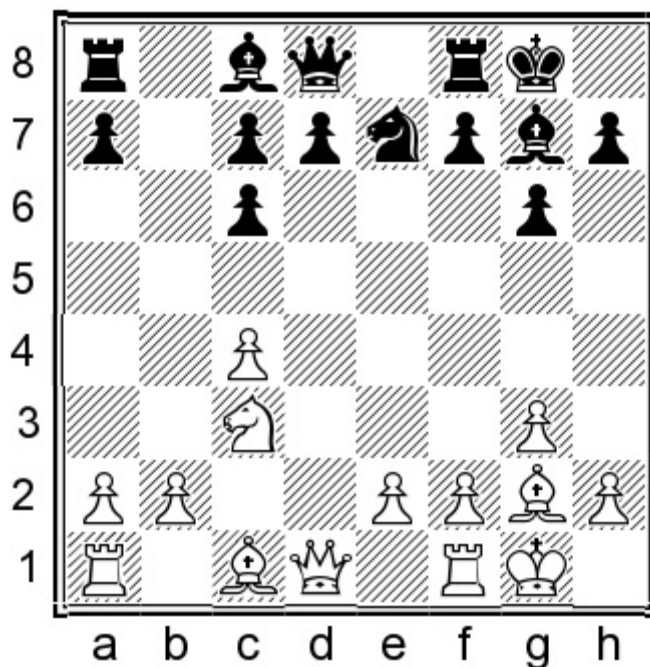
4...♘f6 5.d4! e4 6.♘h4

Our idea is to build up a dark-squared blockade on the kingside, as shown on this diagram:



We'll play further Nf4 and h4 , and will castle left. Later we could break through with f2-f3 . See **Game 20** Van Kampen-L'Ami, Amsterdam 2014.

The other important pawn structure I discuss in this chapter occurs after:
3...g6 4.d4 exd4 5.Nxd4 Qg7 6.Nxc6 bxc6 7.g3 Nc5 8.Qg2 0-0 9.0-0



See **Game 19** Gheorghiu-Suba, Sibiu, 1977.

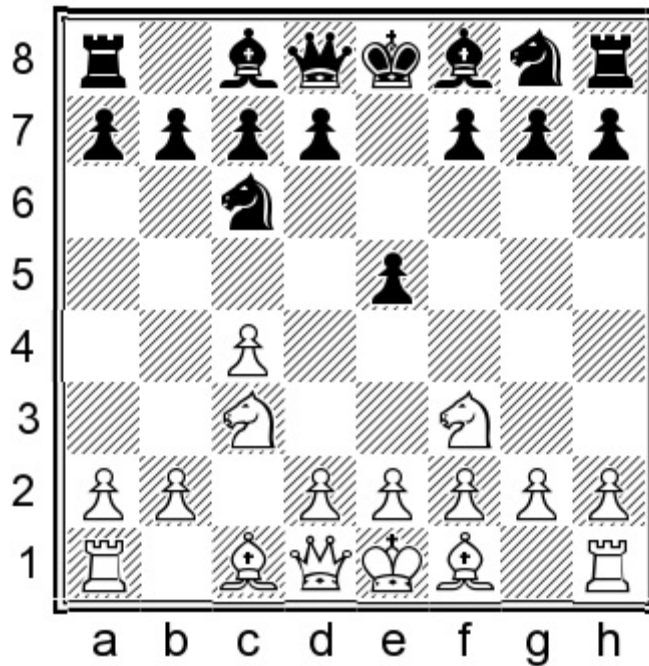
It suffices to remember that we bolster our queenside with Qc2 , b3 , and threaten c4-c5 . When Black puts his pawns on d6 and c5 , we organise a pawn attack on the kingside. We would trade any of our bishops, but not the knight!

Chapter 6. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 Step by Step

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6

2...♘c6 could be answered by 3.e3, aiming to discourage 3...f5 in view of 4.d4, while 3...♘f6 4.♘f3 would enter our main scheme. However, instead of transposing to well studied positions with just a marginal edge for White, I recommend to encourage 3...f5! Bulgarian GM Spiridonov used to preach that f4 (...f5) is always bad, and he may have a good case in the concrete position. Let's ask the opponent to show his hand after:

3.♘f3!



Now independent lines are:

A. 3...f5; B. 3...♙b4; C. 3...g6

3...♘f6 is covered in chapters 2-3.

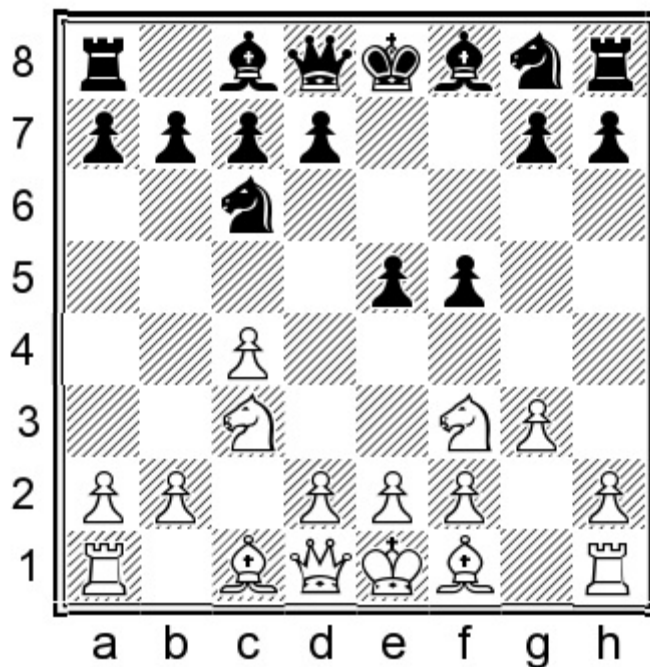
3...d6 4.d4 will often transpose to line C. Independent development is 4...♙g4 5.d5 ♘ce7 6.e4 ♘g6 7.h3 ♙d7 8.h4!? or 8.♙e3.

3...♙c5 is dubious – 4.e3 d6 5.d4 (5.a3!? a6 6.b4 ♙a7 7.♙b2±) 5...exd4 6.exd4 ♙b6 7.b4 a6 8.c5±.

A. 3...f5

Black's point is that 4.d4 e4 5.d5 exf3 6.dxc6 fxg2 fares well for him. We could still play d4, but first we must ensure a retreat path to our king's knight:

4.g3!



Preparing Nf3-h4-g2-f4 .

I'm very suspicious about flank plans which involve 4.d3 followed by a kingside fianchetto. In hundreds of games in my database White achieves roughly 40%! This should ring a bell, no matter what engines say. Have in mind that for practical reasons you should always add to the computer evaluation at least 0.3 points in favour of the side which attacks the king. That reflects the fact that protein players attack better than they defend.

4... Nf6

The key point is that 4...d6 5.d4 e4 is strongly met by 6.d5! $\text{N}e5$ 7. $\text{N}d4$ $\text{N}f6$ 8.f4 and White prevails in the centre.

4...g6 5.d4 e4 offers a choice between 6. $\text{N}g1$ $\text{N}f6$ 7.h4, when play is similar to 4... $\text{N}f6$, and 6. $\text{Q}g5!$ $\text{Q}e7$ 7. $\text{Q}xe7$ $\text{N}cxe7$ 8.d5!, exploiting the weakness of the main diagonal.

4...e4 is dubious before White played d4 owing to 5. $\text{N}h4$ d6 6.d3, e.g. 6... $\text{Q}e7$ 7. $\text{N}g2$ $\text{Q}f6$ 8. $\text{N}d5$ exd3 9.exd3±.

5.d4! e4 6. $\text{N}h4$

I cover this line in **Game 20** Van Kampen-L'Ami, Amsterdam 2014.

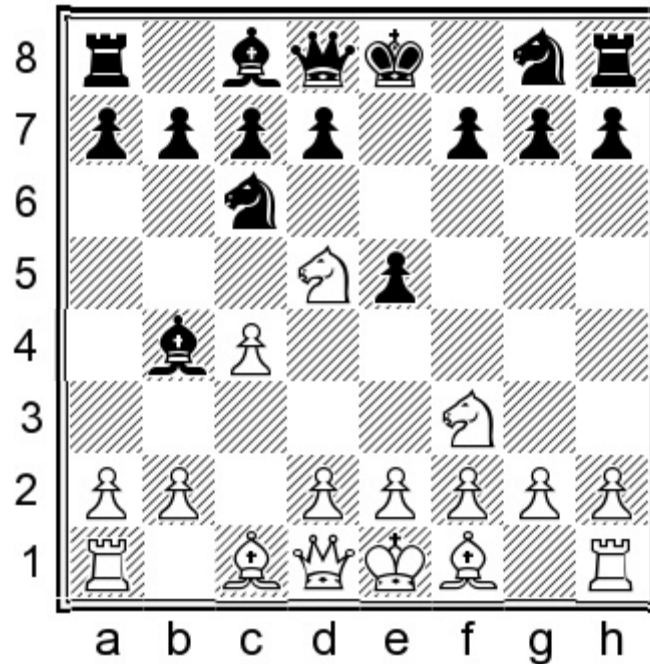
B. 3... $\text{Q}b4$

This is a minor line, which is aimed against 4.g3. In that event Black will take on c3 and follow with

...d6, ...f5.

White could try to transpose to the main line with 4.♙c2 ♘f6 5.e3, but he has a more testing option:

4.♘d5

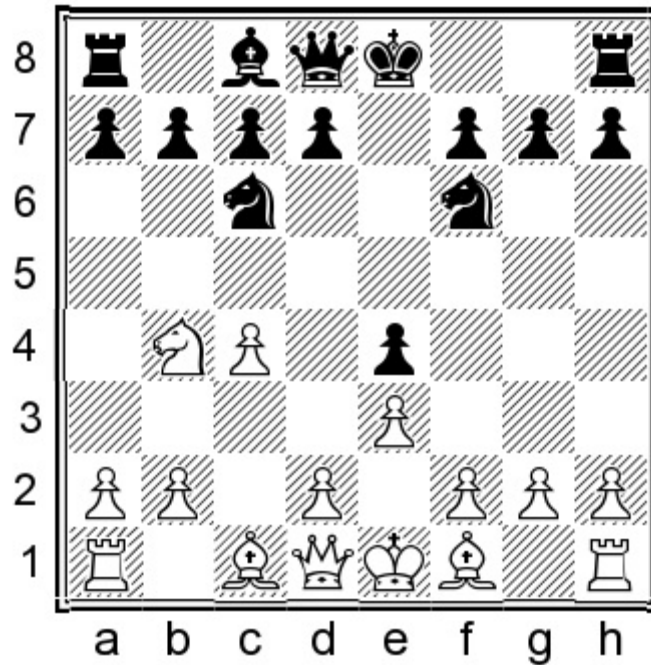


We have a split now:

B1. 4...e4; **B2.** 4...♙c5; **B3.** 4...a5

B1. 4...e4 5.♘d4! ♘xd4 6.♘xb4 ♘f6 7.e3 ♘c6

7...♘e6 looks ugly. The engines like 8.♘d5 b6 9.d3 ♙b7 10.dxe4 ♘xe4 11.♙d3, and the more human 8.d3 c6 9.♙e2 0-0, Draskovic-Kontic, Bar 2017, 10.0-0! is at least as good (10.dxe4 ♙a5).

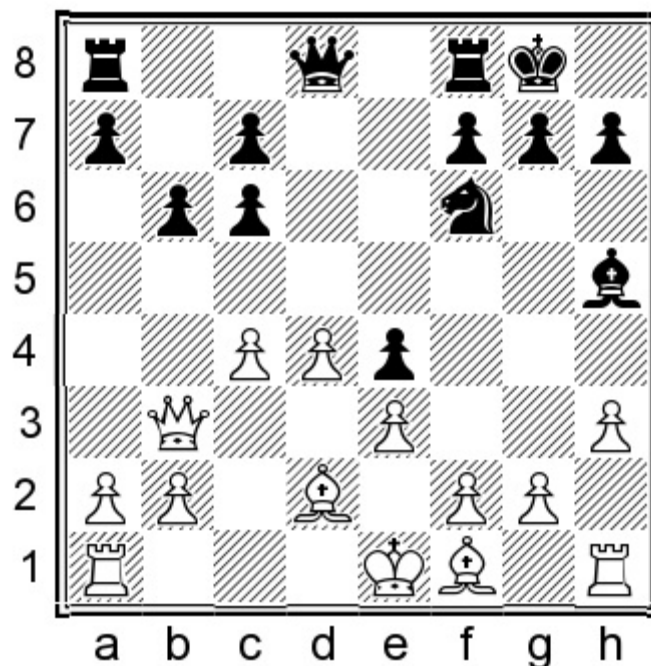


8. ♖xc6

This ensures a slight plus to White, but it helps Black's development. I was tempted to keep a more fluid centre with 8. ♖d5!?. However, 8...d6 9.d3 exd3 10. ♗xd3 ♘xd5! 11.cxd5 ♗e5 also renders White's pawn centre static, although 12. ♗b1! retains some pressure.

8...dxc6 9.d4 (Black would ignore 9.d3) 9...0-0!?

After 9...♗g4 we should keep our bishop pair – 10. ♖b3 b6 11.h3 ♗h5 (11...♗e6 12. ♗e2, then ♖a4 or ♖c2) 12. ♗d2 0-0



13.g4! ♗g6 14.0-0-0±, Polujahov-Landa, Cappelle-la-Grande 1999. White will use his pawn pair d4-e4

to play in the centre and on the queenside, where he is stronger.

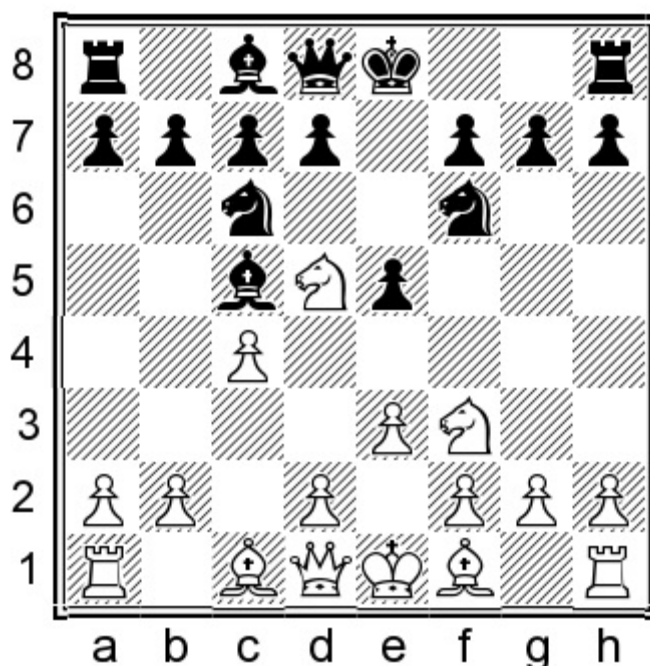
10.♙e2 ♜e8 11.♙d2 a5

Black has a solid defensive set-up, but his position is passive.

B2. 4...♙c5 5.e3 ♘f6

5...e4 6.d4 ♙e7 7.♘d2 f5 is a position from the line 2...♙b4 3.♘d5 ♙e7, with a clear extra tempo. That allows us to think of destructive actions like 8.f3! exf3 9.♘xf3 or 8.g4 d6 9.gxf5.

The text move is amazingly popular in computer games.



I bet you'll not guess the engines' choice here. In 110 of all 113 games the silicon players opted for 6.♘c3! No wonder they scored only 51%. There are cases when such a retreat sounds perfectly normal, for instance if Black returned the bishop to d6 on the previous move. However, in the diagram position White has at least three more logical continuations. The most straightforward one is:

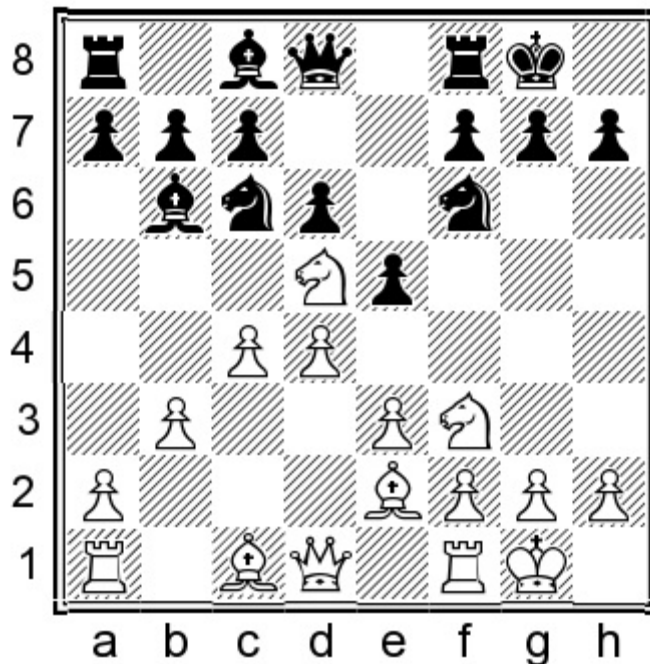
6.d4 exd4 7.exd4 ♘xd5 8.dxc5 ♜e7+ 9.♙e2 ♘f6 10.♙f4 ♜xc5 11.♙xc7, but 11...d5 12.0-0 0-0 or 11...♜b4+ 12.♙f1!?

are not too clear, although White's bishop pair has potential. 6.b4!? ♘xb4 7.♘xb4 ♙xb4 8.♘xe5 is perhaps the most consistent try. Truly in the spirit of the English Opening, White trades a flank pawn for a central one. That should make his future play easier, although 8...0-0 9.♙e2 ♜e8 10.♘f3 b6 offers Black comfortable development.

White's best option is:

6.♙e2!?

This improves on 6.d4. Then 6...d6 7.d4 ♙b6 8.0-0 0-0 9.b3 is undoubtedly in White's favour.



The forced play 9...♞xd5 10.cxd5 ♞e7 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♙a3 ♜e8 13.♙b5 ♙d7 14.♙d3! ♞xd5 15.♙xh7+ ♜xh7 16.♚xd5 earns a pawn, although in return for the initiative.

B3. 4...a5

This might turn superfluous in some lines.

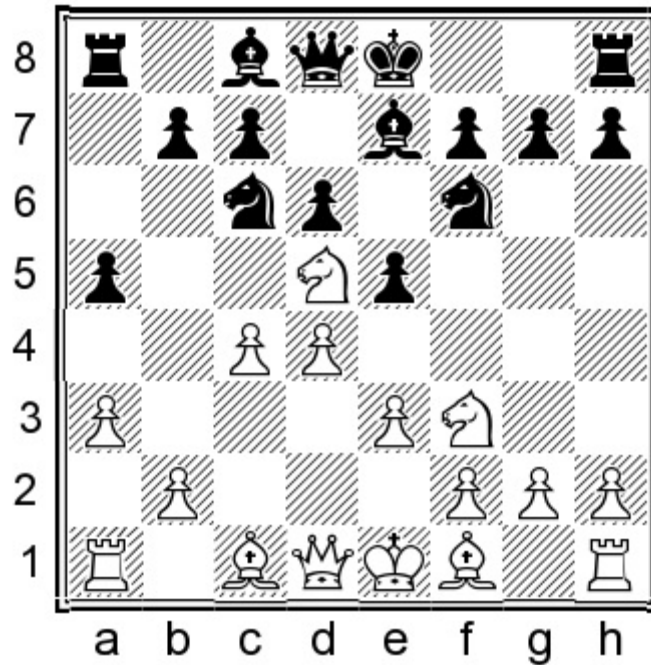
5.a3

The simple 5.♞xb4 axb4 6.d4 e4 7.d5 exf3 8.dxc6 dxc6 9.♚xd8+ is only marginally better.

5...♙e7

5...♙c5 6.e3 d6 allows 7.b4!? (7.d4 is a good alternative) 7...axb4 (7...♙a7 8.♙b2) 8.d4 ♙b6 9.♙e2 ♞ge7 10.♞xb6 cxb6 11.0-0 0-0 12.♙b2 bxa3 13.♙xa3 with excellent positional compensation for the pawn. Our queen goes to b2, and the b6-pawn should fall.

6.d4 d6 7.e3 ♞f6



8.♙e2

The paradoxical retreat 8.♘c3 deserves attention. Since we are intending d4-d5, Black may want to open the centre with 8...exd4 9.exd4 d5 10.h3 0-0. This position resembles the 3.e3 system in the QGA. Black is a tempo up, but the bishop is more passive on e7 than on its normal stand d6. Besides, the “extra” move ...a5 is sooner a drawback than a benefit.

8...0-0 9.0-0 ♖e8

Opening play with 9...exd4 benefits White’s bishop pair after 10.♘xe7+! ♙xe7 11.exd4.

10.♙c2 exd4 11.exd4 ♘xd5 12.cxd5 ♘a7 13.♙e3 ♙d7 14.♖ac1±.

C. 3...g6 4.d4

We should attack the centre if we want to establish a supremacy in this part of the board.

The alternative is 4.e3 ♙g7 5.d4 d6 6.♙e2 (White has also tried 6.d5 ♘ce7 7.♙e2 f5 8.0-0 ♘f6 9.b4∞) 6...f5 7.dxe5 ♘xe5 8.0-0. Practical experience has been quite favourable for White.

4...exd4

4...d6 offers a choice:

a) 5.g3! should transpose to the main line after 5...exd4.

Black has also tried 5...♙g7, but 6.dxe5 ♘xe5 7.♘xe5 brings White nice results. Note that White would get a decisive edge after 7...dxe5? 8.♙xd8+ ♔xd8 9.♙g5+ f6 10.0-0-0+.

modest move g3 which enabled ♖h3.

b) 5.dxe5 ♜xe5 6.e4

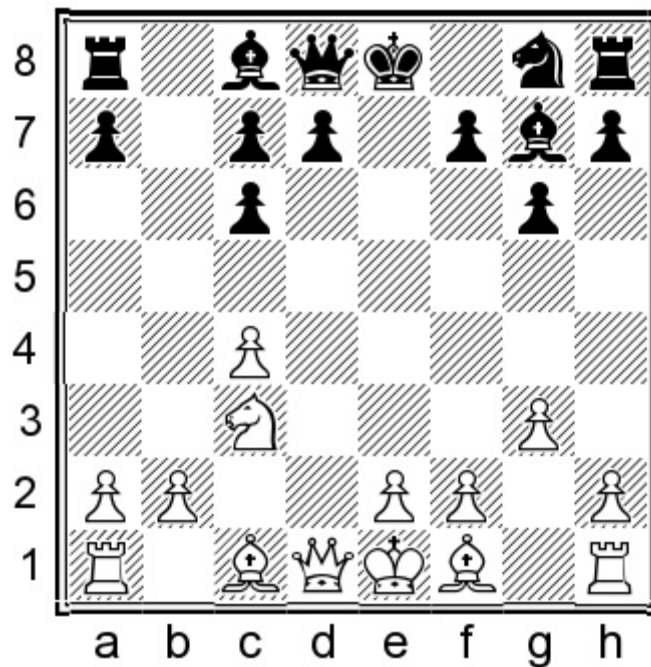
6.♜xe5 is premature because after 6...dxe5 7.♞xd8+ ♔xd8 8.♙g5+ f6 9.0-0-0+ ♙d7 the bishop lacks comfortable retreats. The text prepares e3 for that.

6...♙g7 7.♜xe5 dxe5

7...♙xe5 8.♞c2 f5 is ineffective since Black is undeveloped – 9.♙d3 f4 10.g3±.

8.♞xd8+ ♔xd8 9.♙g5+ f6 10.0-0-0+ ♙d7 11.♙e3 ♙h6 12.♙xh6 ♜xh6 13.c5±.

5.♜xd4 ♙g7 6.♜xc6 bxc6 7.g3



7...♜e7

7...♜f6 blocks the diagonal to its own bishop and does not protect c6 – 8.♙g2 0-0 9.0-0 ♜b8 10.♞a4 (intending 10...♙b7 11.c5) 10...a6. White has the more active pieces and various tempting continuations. For instance: 11.♞a5 d5 12.♞d1, or 11.♞b1 d5 12.♙g5, or 12.c5 ♞e7 13.♞a5.

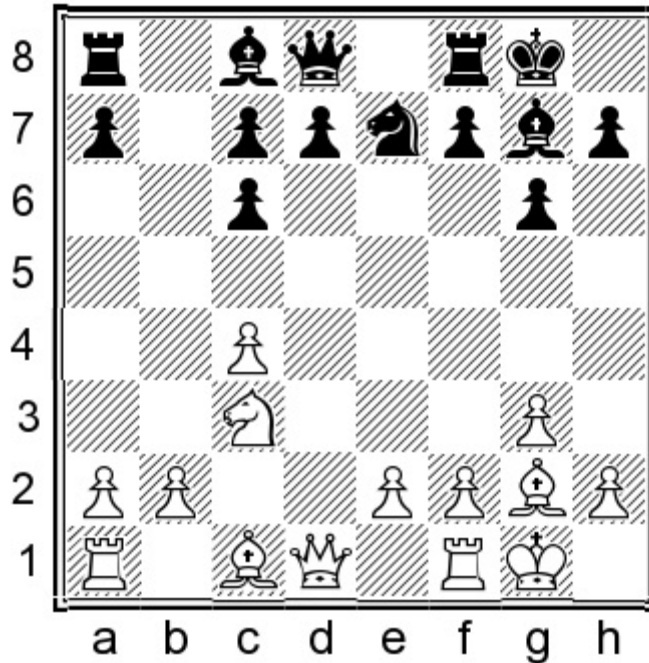
8.♙g2 0-0 9.0-0

White has a stable edge owing to his better control of the centre and flexible pawn chain. See **Game 19** Gheorghiu-Suba, Sibiu, 1977.

Chapter 6. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 Annotated Games

19. Gheorghiu – Suba Sibiu, 1977

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♗f3 g6 4.d4 exd4 5.♗xd4 ♕g7 6.♗xc6 bxc6 7.g3 ♗e7 8.♖g2 0-0 9.0-0



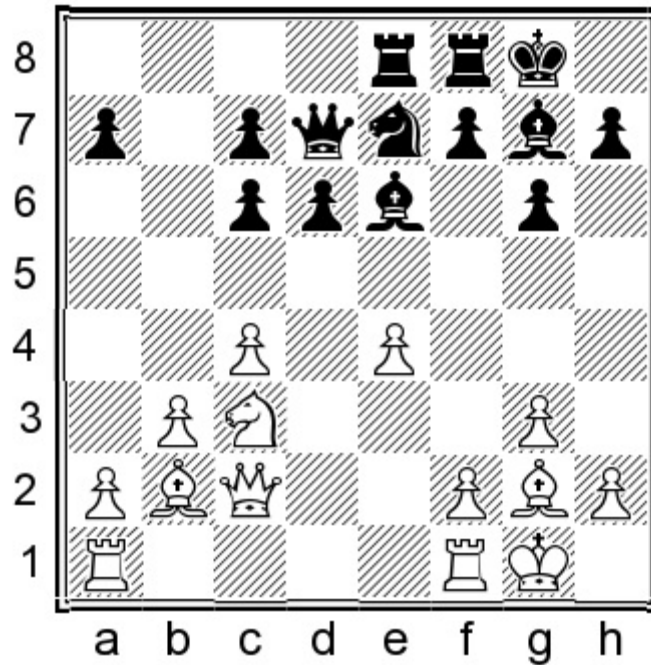
It looks that Black has counterplay along the main diagonal and the open b-file, but that is just an optical illusion. White only needs to put his queen on d2 or c2 and play b3 to neutralise all Black's threats. Then it will transpire that Black's queenside pawns are weak and he lacks any constructive plan.

9...♖b8

White's main positional threat so far is to fix the enemy pawns with c5. Potkin-Gunina, Wijk aan Zee 2015, saw the careless 9...d6 10.♖c2 ♕f5?! 11.e4 ♕e6, when:

12.c5 was possible – 12...d5 13.♖d1, or 12...dxc5 13.♗a4 c4 14.♖d1 ♖c8 15.♗c5, or 12...♖b8 13.♖d1±, Smyslov-Quinteros, Buenos Aires 1970.

Instead, Potkin opted for 12.b3 ♖d7 13.♕b2 ♖ae8



14.c5! dxc5

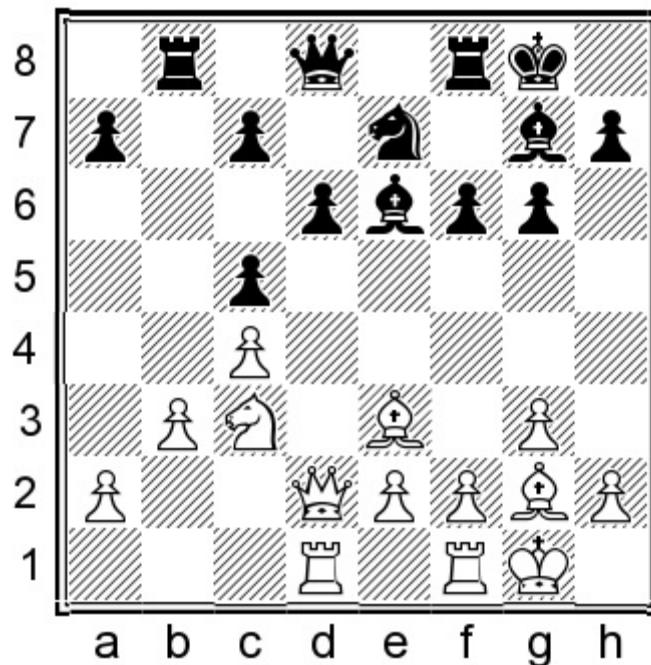
Or 14...d5 15.♖ad1 f5 16.exd5 cxd5 17.♘e2 ♕xb2 18.♚xb2.

15.♞fd1 ♚c8 16.♘a4 ♕xb2 17.♚xb2 c4 18.♘c5 cxb3 19.axb3. White is still a pawn down, but the engines give him a decisive advantage!

The moral of this example is that Black should quickly play ...c5 himself!

Obviously, 9...a5 is not a step in the right direction, and White is comfortable after 10.♚c2 ♕a6 11.b3 ♘f5 12.♕b2 ♚e7 13.♞ad1±.

9...Rb8 looks the best option as it both prepares ...c5 and denies Bg5. For instance, 9...d6 is probably less precise as it allows 10.♕g5 (10.♚c2 is at least as good) 10...♞b8 11.♚d2 f6 12.♕e3 c5 13.♞ad1 ♕e6 14.b3



Another typical position. The secret here is that **White can favourably trade any minor piece except his knight**, which could terrorise the enemy camp from b5, d5 and e4. For instance, 14...♘f5 15.♙f4 g5 16.e4 is better for him.

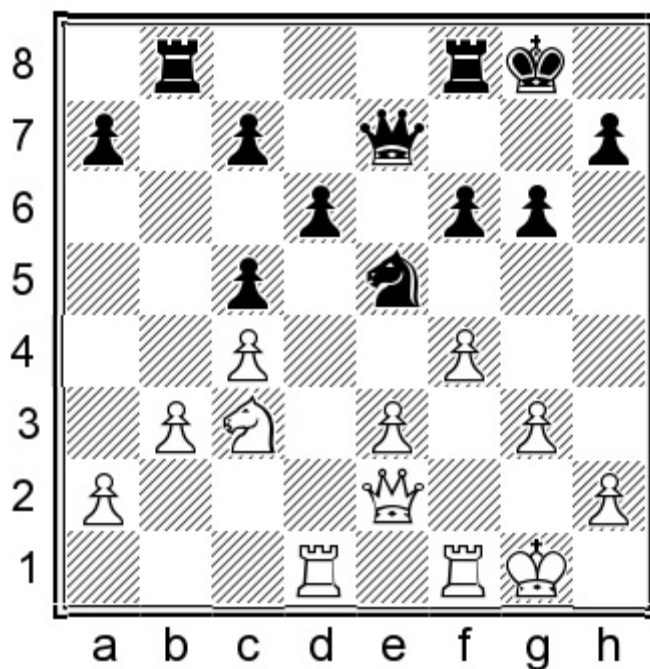
10.♞c2 d6 11.b3 c5 12.♙b2 ♙b7

The exchange of the light-squared bishops is often met in this pawn structure. Commonly Black achieves it through ...♙e6, ...♞c8, ...♙h3, but it is easier to do it through b7.

Several games saw instead 12...♙f5, when best is 13.♞d2 ♞d7 14.♞fe1 ♙h3 15.♙h1. Of course 14.♞ad1 ♙h3 15.♘e4 or 15.♙xh3 are also good.

All that said, without his bishop Black's chances to create counterplay become slim.

13.♙xb7 ♞xb7 14.♘e4 ♘c6 15.♙xg7 ♔xg7 16.♞b2+ f6 17.♞ad1 ♞e7 18.♘c3 ♔g8 19.e3 ♘e5 20.♞e2 ♞bb8 21.f4



21...♘d7?!

The opening battle has finished in White's favour. The d5-square makes the difference so Black's decision to manoeuvre the knight to b6 looks consistent. Besides, it might help ...a7-a5-a4 from there. However, the flip side is that White gets a free hand in the centre. Without a knight which could land on d4, White gets total domination.

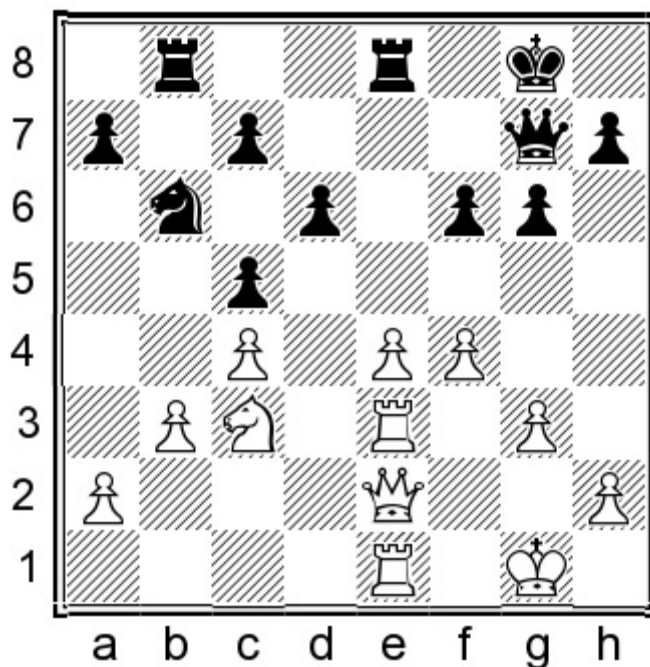
More stubborn was 21...♘c6. It discourages e4, so the only meaningful plan remains 22.g4, eventually hoping for g5 at a good moment. Then the white knight could get a forepost on f6 or perhaps the f-file might open in White's favour. A long manoeuvring fight would be ahead.

Let me note that the third option 21...♘f7 22.♘d5 ♞d8 23.♞f3 c6 looks too grim.

22.♘d5

22.♘b5! ♔d8 23.e4 ♖a8 24.h4 a5 25.h5± was more energetic.

22...♔d8 23.e4 ♘b6 24.♘c3 ♚e7 25.♗fe1 ♜fe8 26.♞d3 ♚g7 27.♞e3



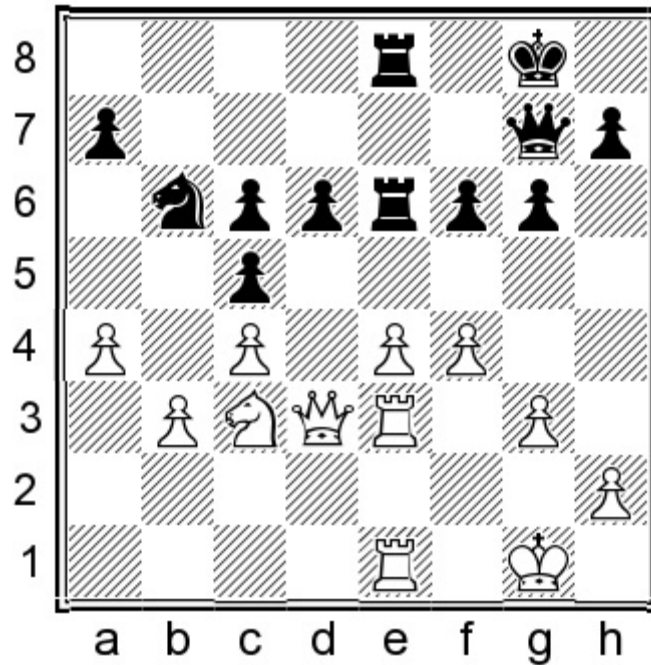
A pretty position, but it is not easy to break through. For instance: 27...♘d7 28.♚d2 ♜bc8 29.♔g2 ♖h8 30.♘d5 ♘b6 31.h4 (31.♚a5 ♘xd5 32.exd5 ♜xe3 33.♜xe3 g5 34.f5 g4 35.♚d2 ♚g5 36.♚d3 ♜f8±) 31...♘xd5 32.exd5 ♜xe3 33.♜xe3 f5 34.♚e2 ♜f8 35.h5. We see that White always retains some pressure, but forcing lines do not bring him success. Perhaps he should resort to a break on the queenside with a3 and b4.

27...♞e6 28.♚d3 ♜be8 29.a4?!

This deprives White of the resource a3+b4. It was better to stab on the other wing – 29.h4!?.

29...c6?!

Suba is not comfortable in passive positions, and here he cracks under the pressure. 29...♔h8 30.a5 ♘d7 31.♘d5 ♜c8 held on.



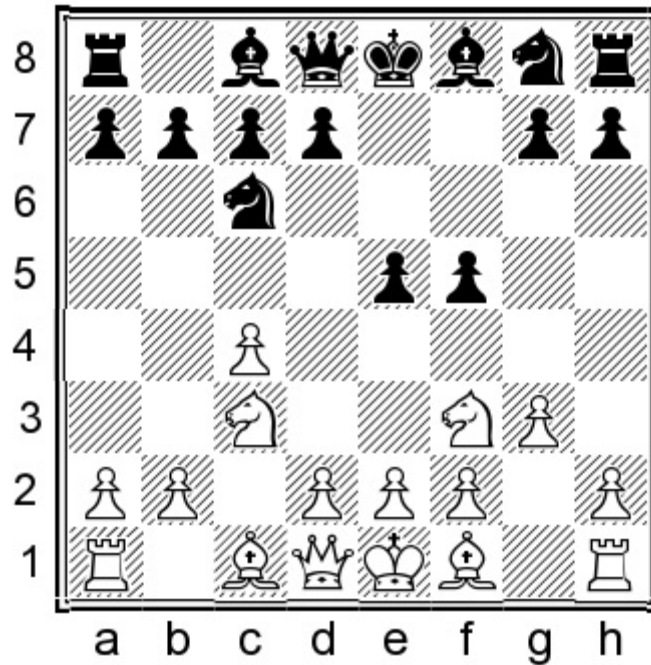
30.f5 gxf5 31.exf5 ♖e5?

The decisive mistake. 31...♖xe3 32.♖xe3 ♖xe3 33.♙xe3 ♜f7 34.♔f2± was pleasant for White owing to the weak square e6, but he had nothing tangible.

32.♖xe5 ♖xe5 33.♖xe5 dxe5 34.♘e4 ♜e7 35.a5 ♘c8 36.♙e3 ♜d8 37.♔g2 ♔g7 38.♘xc5 ♜d1 39.♙d3 ♜e1 40.♘e4 ♘e7 41.g4 1-0

20. Van Kampen – E. L'Ami
Amsterdam (4), 09.07.2014

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘f3 f5 4.g3



This game illustrates White's best set-up against 3...f5. Note that g3 does not aim to fianchetto the bishop! It just enables the manoeuvre ♖f3-h4-g2-f4, while we are planning to develop our bishop on e2.

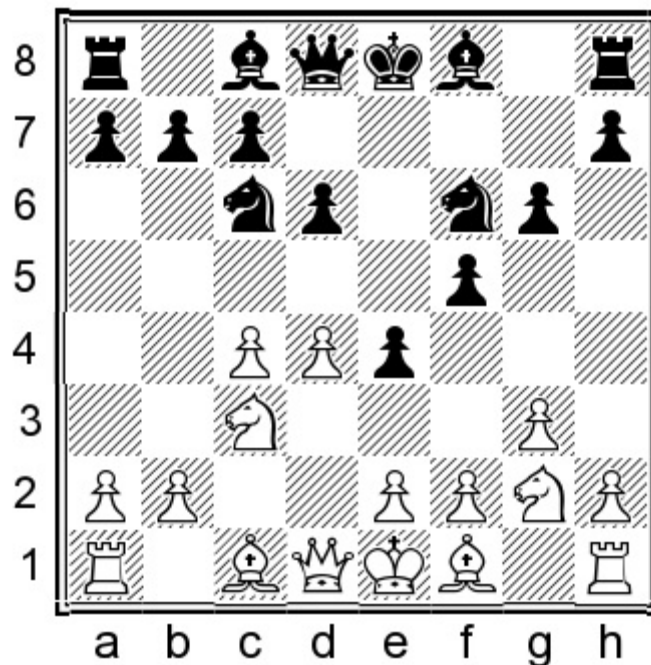
4...♘f6 5.d4! e4 6.♘h4 g6

6...d6 only gives White additional possibilities.

However, we should delay 7.♗g5 in view of the option of 7...♗e7.

7.f3 ♗e7 8.♗h3 exf3 9.♘xf3 hides some venom, but I prefer to keep the enemy dark-squared bishop shut. So we play first:

7.♘g2! g6



Now 8.♔g5 should reach the same set-up as in the game.

We could also keep our bishop:

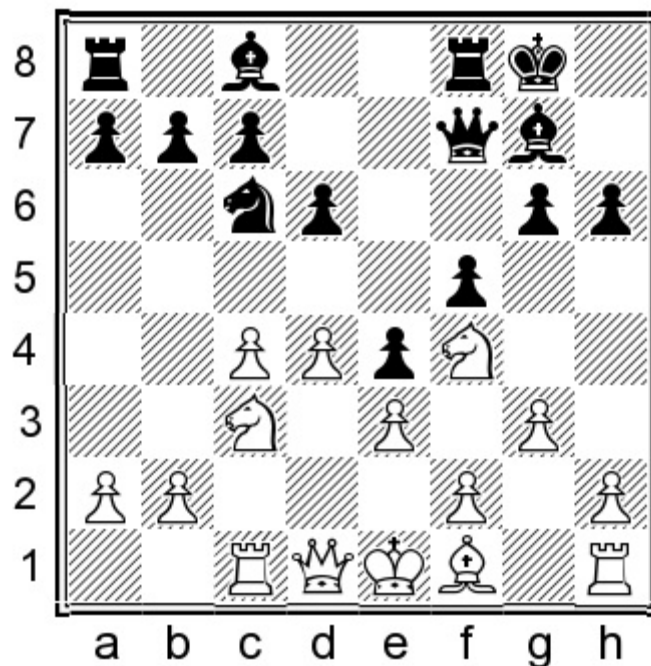
8.♘f4!? ♚e7 9.h4 ♜f7 10.e3 ♙g7 11.♙e2±, Damljanovic-Mazi, Skopje 2015. White could then fianchetto his dark-squared bishop.

7.♙g5 ♙g7 8.e3

8.f3 is positionally unfounded. After 8...exf3 9.exf3 0-0 our central dark squares would be weak.

8...♘e7

Seirawan refrained from this move against Aronian in Berlin 2015. Instead he chose 8...d6 9.♘g2 h6 10.♙xf6 ♜xf6 11.♘f4 ♜f7 12.♖c1 0-0



Black's set-up looks very shaky as many tactical threats are looming. Perhaps that encouraged Aronian to seek concrete refutation. He eventually won the exchange after 13.c5?! g5! 14.♘h5 dxc5 15.♘b5 cxd4 16.♙c4 ♙e6 17.♙xe6 ♜xe6 18.♘xc7 ♜xa2 19.♘xa8, but 19...♙h8! would have given Black an edge.

It is better to target the queenside pawns:

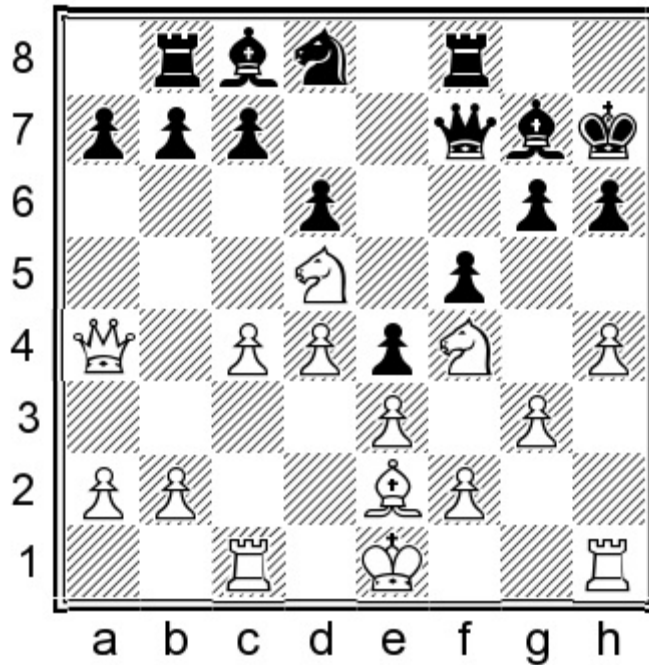
13.♘cd5 ♘h7 14.♙e2 ♖b8

Note the tactical hit 14...♘d8? 15.♘xg6! ♜xg6 16.♙h5 ♜e6 17.♘xc7+-. The text neutralises this threat.

15.h4 ♘d8

Black had to think about c4-c5 or the attack with ♖g1 and g4. 15...a5 16.a3 ♘d8 17.c5 c6 18.♘b6 practically wins a clear pawn (on a5).

16.♜a4!



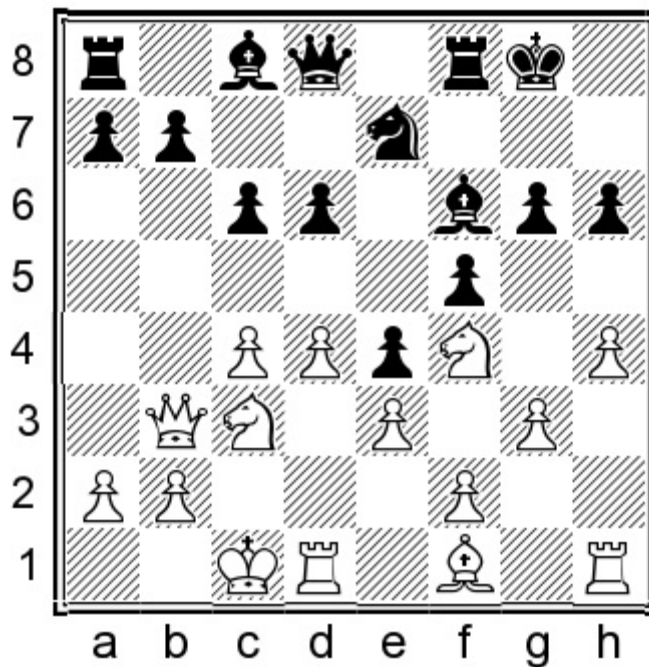
Black's queenside is doomed. For instance:

16...a6 17.h5! g5 18.♘g6 ♜g8 19.0-0 (the threat is f3!) 19...g4 20.b4 is strategically lost for Black.

And 16...♘e6 17.♚xa7 ♔d7 18.♘xe6 ♗xe6 19.a3 costs at least a pawn.

These lines show how important the d5 square is, so L'Ami's move looks very logical. Yet the following series of not less consistent moves led Black to an unpleasant position:

9.♘g2 d6 10.♘f4 0-0 11.h4 h6 12.♗xf6 ♗xf6 13.♚b3! c6 14.0-0-0

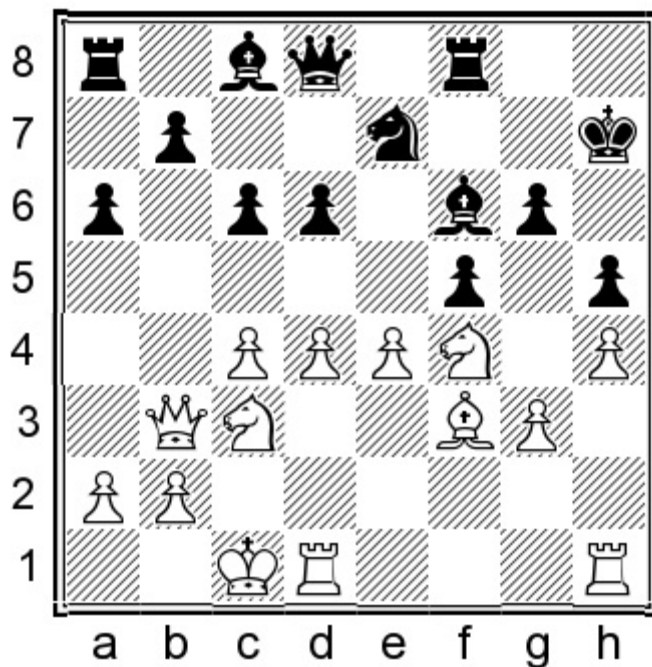


All white pieces are perfectly placed, while the e7-knight and the c8-bishop are rather awkward. White can prepare the breaks g4 or f3, so L'Ami decides to dig himself on the kingside as much as possible:

14...h5 15.♗e2 ♚h7 16.f3 exf3 17.♗xf3 a6 18.♞he1?!

Van Kampen plays too academically. Ironically, the rook proves to be worse on e1 than on h1 since the

h4-pawn hangs in some lines. The immediate 18.e4± opened the play in favourable circumstances:



18...♙g7 19.♚a3 fxe4

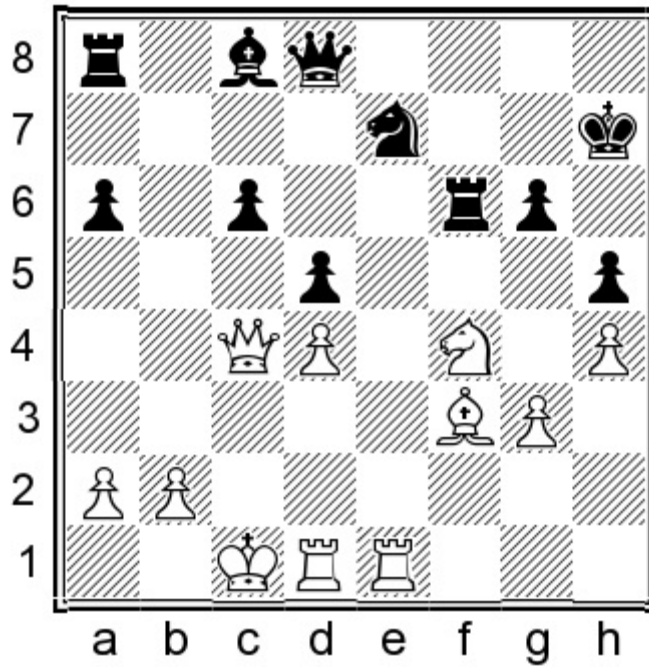
Or 19...♞a7 20.♜b1 ♚c7 21.♞he1 b5 22.c5±.

20.♘xe4 ♙h6 21.♘g5+ ♜g8 22.♜b1 ♙f5+ 23.♜a1 ♚d7 24.d5±. The forepost on e6 should allow White to dominate the board.

18...b5 19.e4 bxc4 20.♚xc4

White might be slightly better after 20.♚a3 fxe4 21.♘xe4 (hitting d6) 21...♘f5 22.♘xf6+ ♚xf6 23.♙xc6 ♞b8 24.♞e4, although this is hardly the position White dreamed of when playing 18.♞he1.

20...fxe4 21.♘xe4 d5 22.♘xf6+ ♞xf6



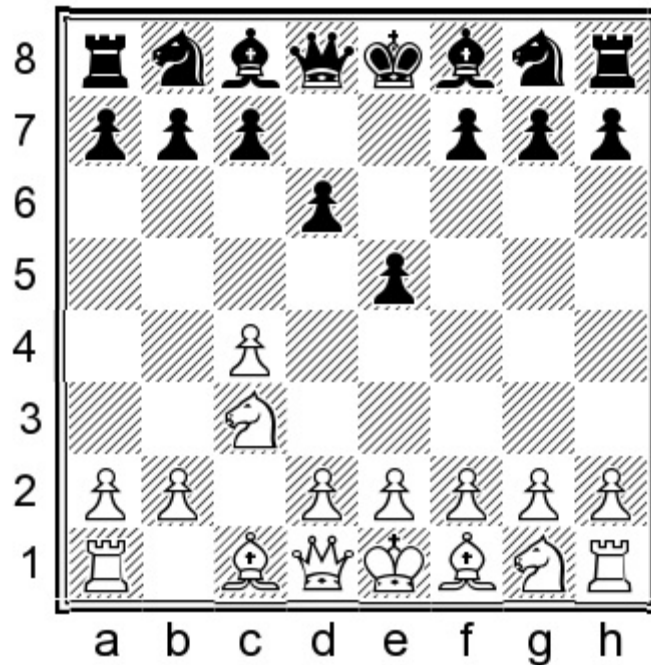
23. ♔c5

Now the game ends up in a draw. 23. ♔c3! ♗f5 24. ♖e5 ♗xg3 25. ♕xh5 ♗xh5 26. ♗xh5 ♖f7 27. ♗g3 retained an initiative.

23... ♗f5 24. ♗h3 ♔d6= 25. ♗g5+ ♖g7 26. ♖e8 ♔xc5+ 27. dxc5 ♖f8 28. ♖de1 ♖a7 29. ♕d1 ♖xe8 30. ♖xe8 ♕d7 31. ♖e1 ♖f6 32. ♗h7+ ♖g7 33. ♗g5 ♖f6 34. ♗h7+ ½-½

Chapter 7. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6 Main Ideas

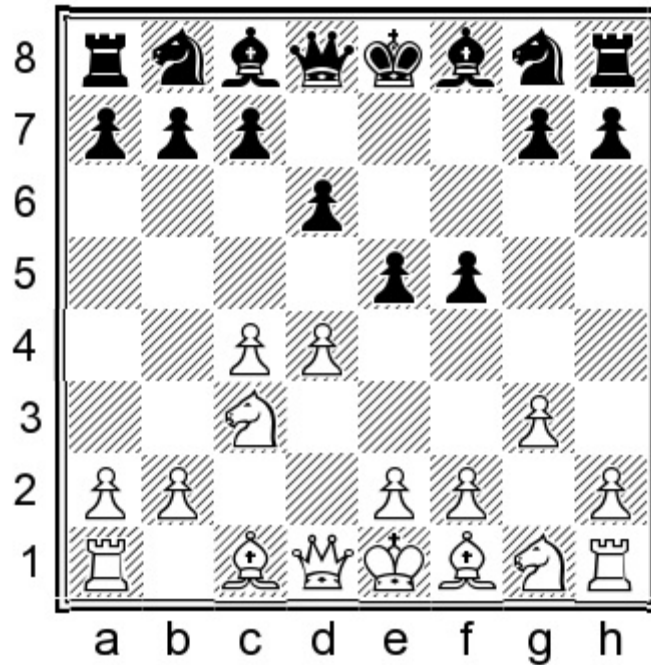
1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6



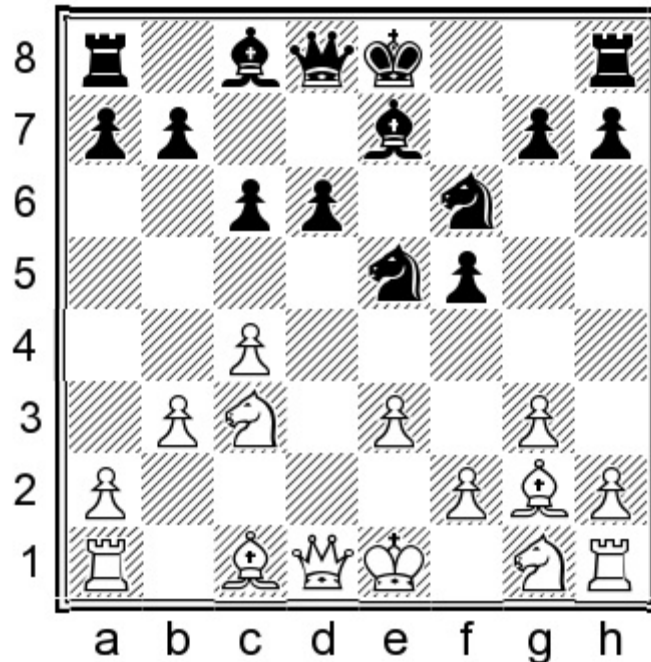
This modest move is 12 (!) times less frequent than 2...♘f6, but it presents maybe the most difficult theoretical challenge. Its obvious idea is to build a King's Indian set-up, but we should also consider flexible development with early ...f5. We have no way to reach any major system against the KID. The logical 3.♘f3, intending 4.d4, faces 3...f5!, the drawback of 3.d4 is 3...exd4 4.♙xd4 ♘c6!, while 3.e3 is uninspiring against 3...♘f6!. I consider the pros and cons of these 3 variations in the next chapter.

Objectively, White's best option is **3.g3!**. It is a kind of waiting, yet useful move, which asks the opponent to show his hand.

A. We meet 3...f5 by 4.d4!



1. White's goal here is to achieve the pawn structure c4:d6 (in the event of ...exd4). It offers a space advantage in the centre and a lasting pull. Black will be forced to play c6 in order to control d5 and discourage the break c4-c5.



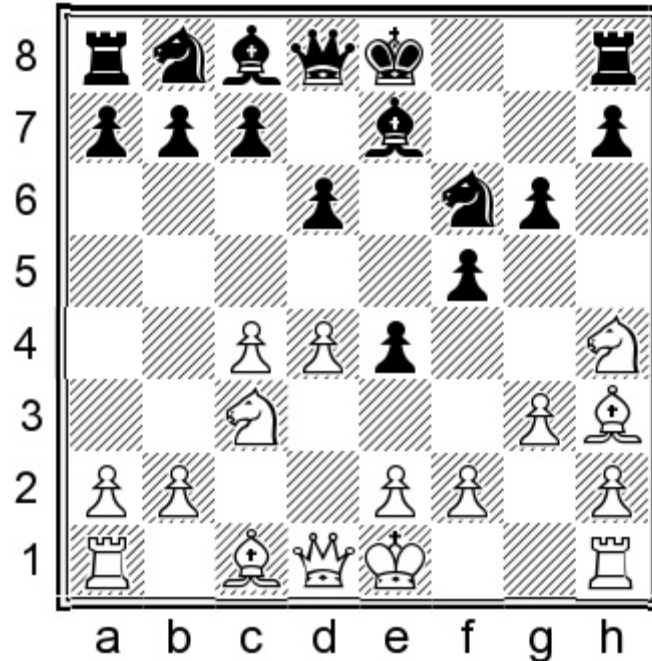
Then White's general plan would be to bind the opponent with the defence of the d6-pawn, and ultimately to open the centre with f4+e4, as in **Game 22** Macurek-Cuccumini, ICCF 2016.

2. Black's alternative is to push ...e4.

Then the main plan is to undermine the centre with f2-f3. It could be executed either immediately or after fixing the kingside dark squares first.

Naturally, Black will resist those two scenarios. He will often try to stay flexible with 4...♞e7, when I

recommend to increase the pressure on the enemy pawns with **5.♔h3!?**. The idea is 5...♖f6 6.♗f3 e4 7.♘h4! (this move has been made possible by ♔h3) 7...g6



8.♔h6± or 8.f3±.

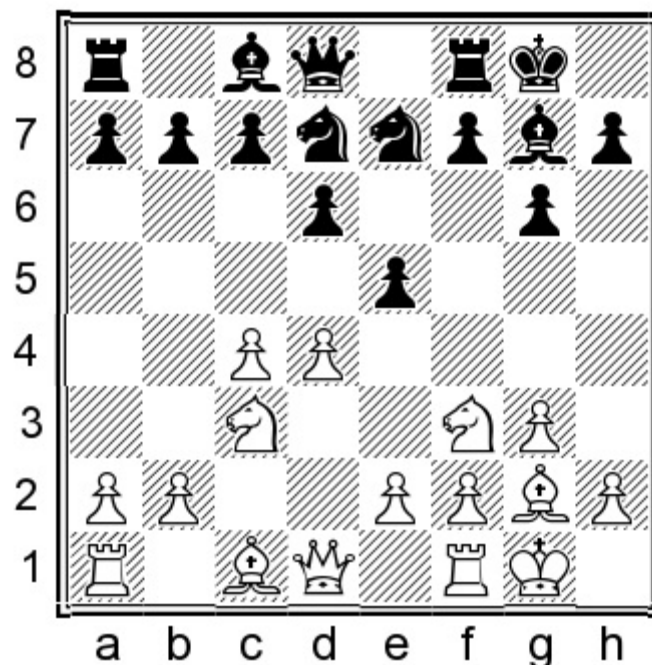
The set-up ♔h3+♘h4 is an original way to solve White's main problem after ...f5 – what to do with the king's knight.

B. 3...g6 4.d4! ♘bd7 should transpose to the Fianchetto KID – line D.

Possible deviations are:

4...exd4 5.♖xd4 ♖f6 6.♔g2 ♔g7 7.♖e3+, see **Game 21** Kasparov-Short.

5.♗f3 ♔g7 6.♔g2 ♖e7 7.0-0 0-0

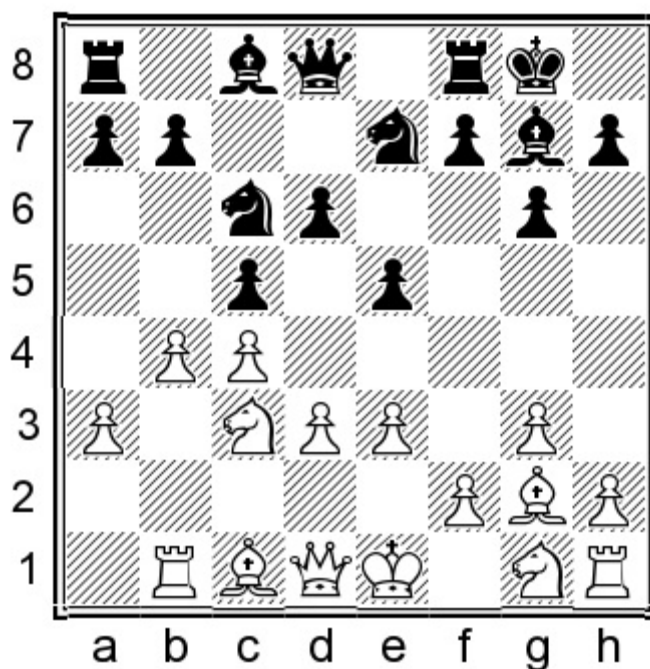


8.dxe5! dxe5 9.♖c2 ♘f5 10.e3 c6 11.b3

Remember! The main method of playing against ...♘e7 is to open the d-file and to put a bishop on the a3-f8 diagonal.

C. 3...c5

This solid set-up is not as effective as in other English lines with e4, because of our control of d4. We put our pawn on e3 and push b4-b5 to gain space. Black's only counterplay is based on g5, but we stop it easily with f4. The model example is **Game 23** of the world title match Kasparov-Karpov, Seville 1987. We play b4 early and aim for the following set-up:

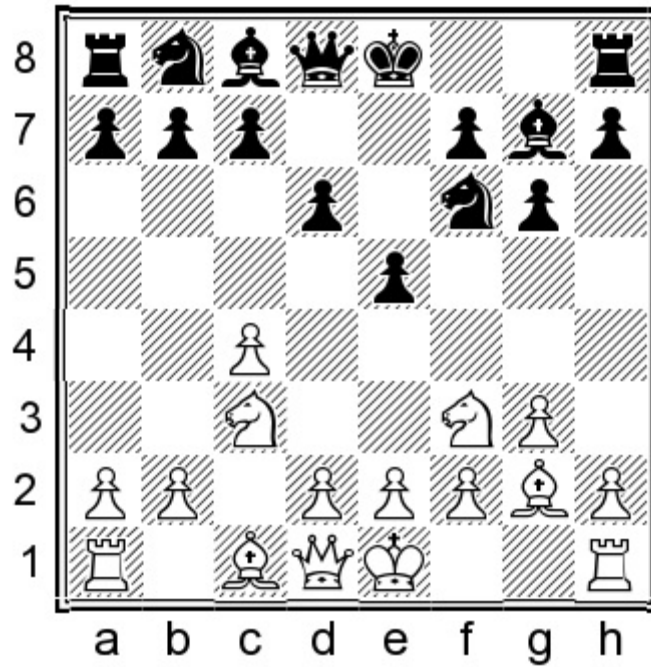


Practical results suggest that White's game is easier. Black lacks a clear plan here.

D. 3...♘f6 4.♙g2 g6

If Black develops the bishop on e7, you should remember to avoid ...e4. The best move order is 4...♙e7 5.♘f3 0-0 6.0-0 c6 7.♖c2!, followed by d4.

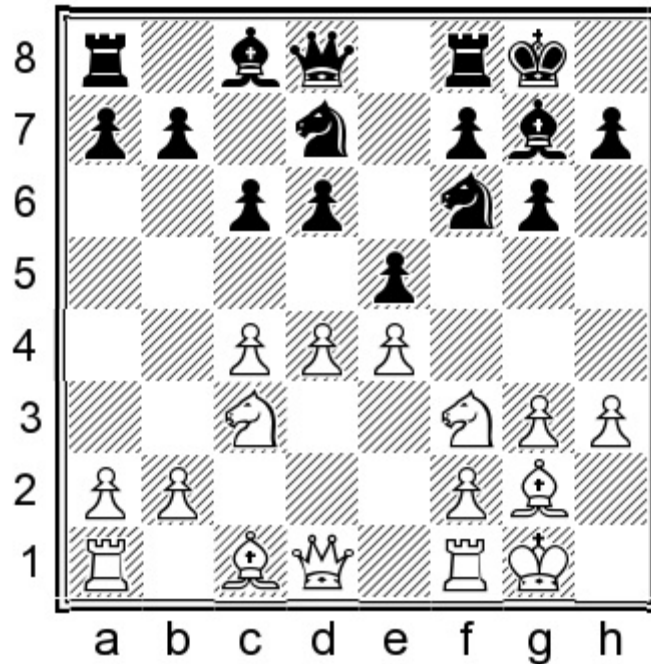
5.♘f3 ♙g7



6.d4!

A key move exactly at this point, before castling. It is aimed against 6...♘c6 in view of 7.dxe5.

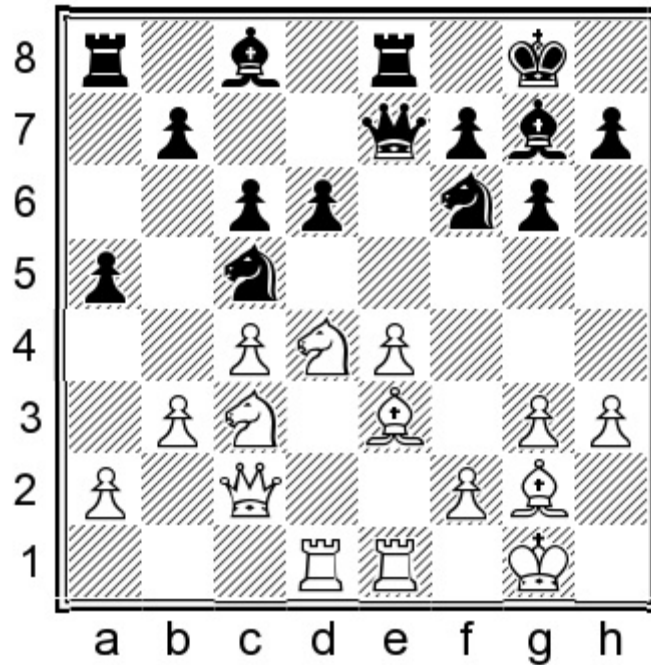
6...♘bd7 7.0-0 0-0 8.e4 c6 9.h3



In this *tabyia* for the Fianchetto System Black can define the centre with ...exd4 or lead out the queen to harass the c4-pawn.

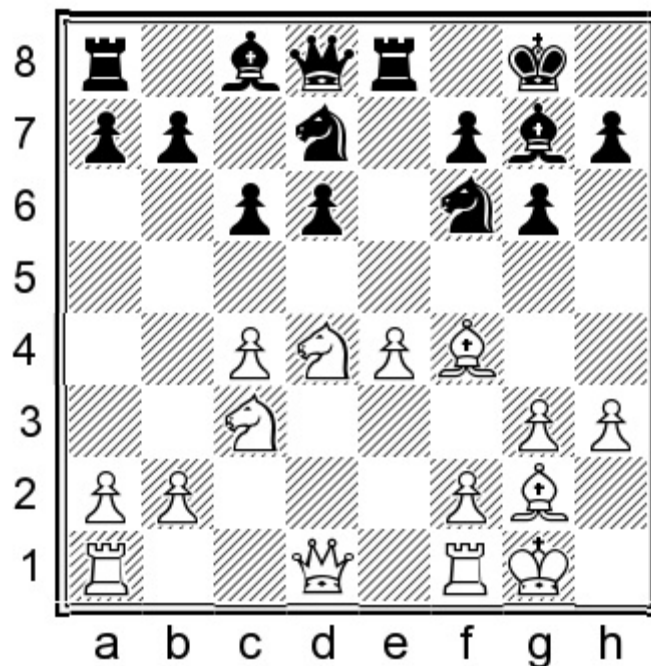
1. If Black takes on d4, our strategic goal is to reach this position:

Strategic goal 1



Note the set-up on the queenside. I prefer to stop the pawn on a5 with an early b3, rather than allow ...a4, ...♙a5.

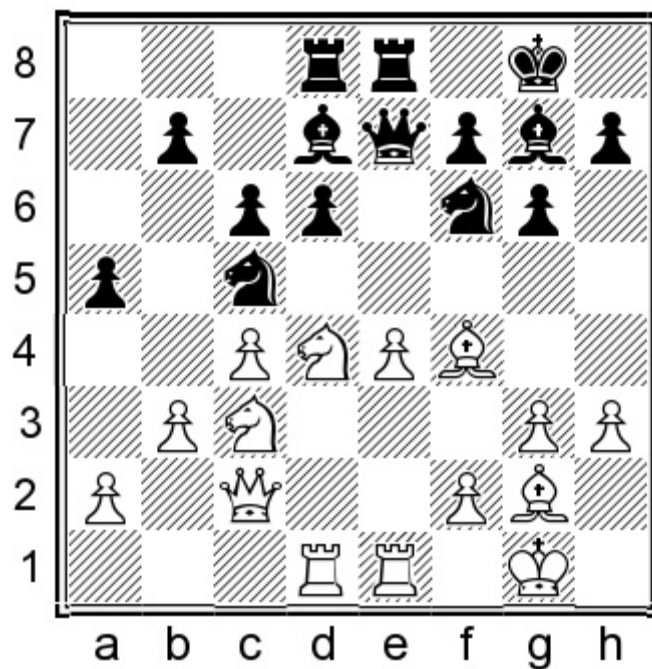
Another finesse is 9...exd4 10.♘xd4 ♖e8 11.♙f4!?



This move does not contradict our Strategic goal 1. It only aims to disrupt Black's coordination. Then the bishop will return to its ideal position on e3, and f2 later on.

The conversion of our space advantage is not an easy task. One possible plan is to advance on the kingside with g4, f4-f5 or only f4-f5. It is especially effective if Black weakened his castling position with ...h5. Still, I prefer firstly to try to decide the game on the queenside. Sometimes Black loses the d6-pawn right in the opening:

Wojtkiewicz – Bauer
Metz 1997

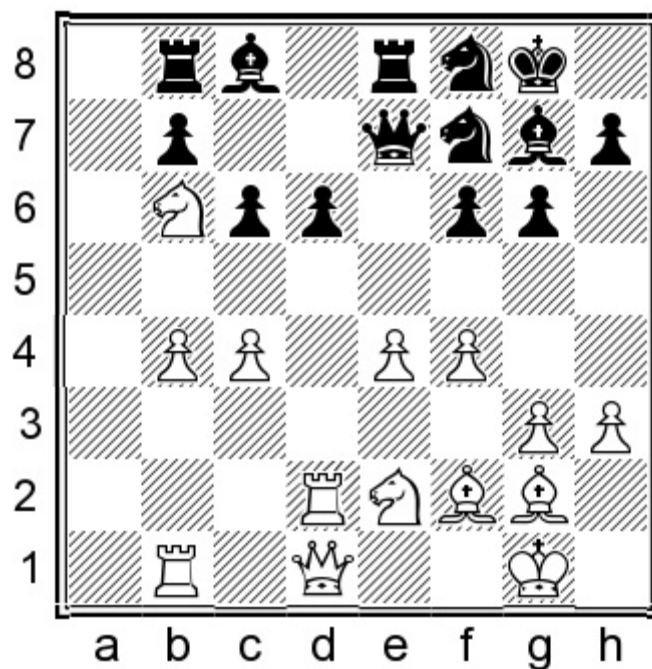


18. ♖db5!+-.

The hit on d6 is possible in various settings.

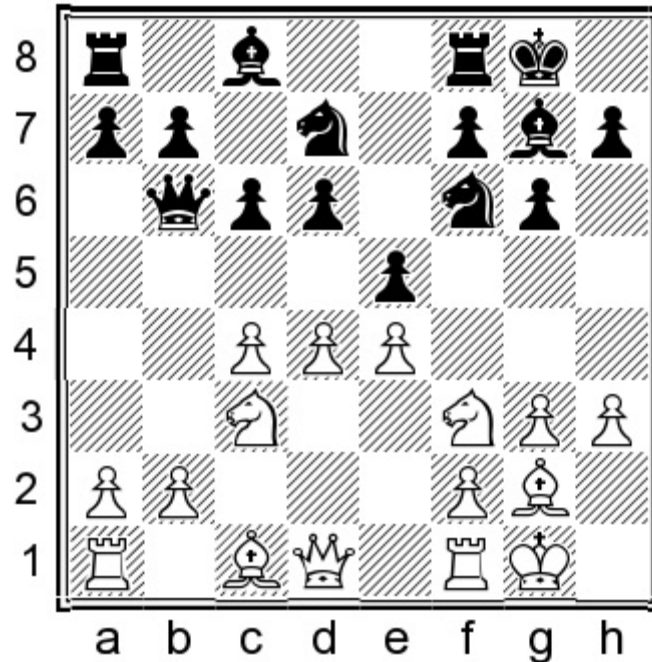
However, apart from tactics, we have a clear **Strategic goal 2** – to exchange the d6-pawn with b4, c5:

Tigran Petrosian-Ciocaltea
Buenos Aires 1978



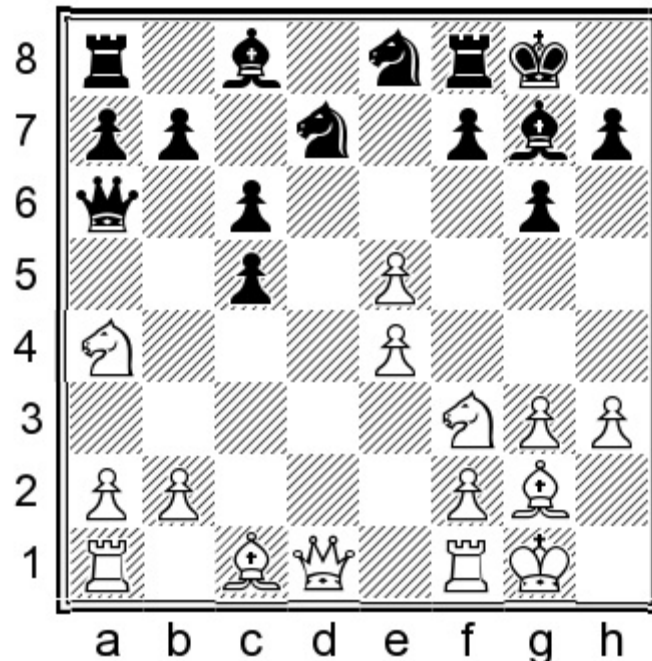
29. c5!±.

2. Plan with 9...Qb6



This variation caused a lot of headache to Botvinnik in the 50ies, but then White discovered the break c5, based on a spectacular pawn sacrifice:

10.c5! dxc5 11.dxe5 ♖e8 12.♘a4!? (or the immediate 12.e6!?) **12...♙a6**



13.e6! fxe6 14.♘g5 ♖c7 15.♙e3 b6 16.f4 ♘f6 17.♘c3±, followed by e4-e5. Black will be almost paralysed by this pawn. In fact this idea is a straightforward realisation of Strategic goal 2.

Theoretical status

The charm of the King's Indian is that if you want to play it, White has no way to avoid it. The move

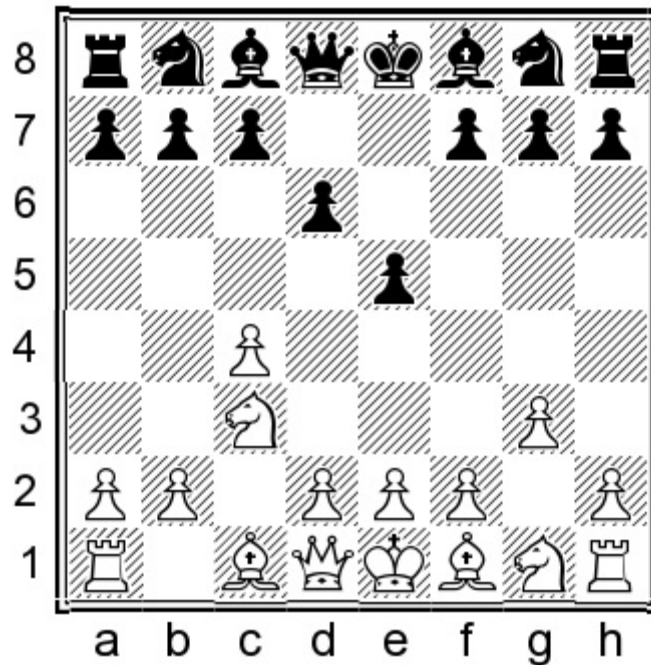
order 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6 is a different story. It may award Black with a totally harmless version of it – if White answers 3.e3, for example. Our task should be to underline the drawback of Black's set-up. 3.g3, followed by an early d4, achieves a favourable for White version of the Fianchetto System with ...♘bd7. White has been scoring very well in it, following several games of Tigran Petrosian as a model. Recently Kotronias tried to revive it in his book on the KI, recommending 9...♞b6, but the pawn sacrifice e5-e6! assures White of a huge spatial advantage. Kotronias analyses it, but at some point completely loses the thread and his deep investigation turns in a wrong direction. In my opinion, White's crushing dominance is obvious even at a cursory glance.

I think that 3.g3 c5 is the most sturdy retort, but the impact of Kasparov's victory over Karpov in their Seville 1987 match was so big that today I see only 13 games in my database.

As a whole, 3.g3 is not deeply investigated and could be a surprise for your opponents.

Chapter 7. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6 Step by Step

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6 3.g3!?



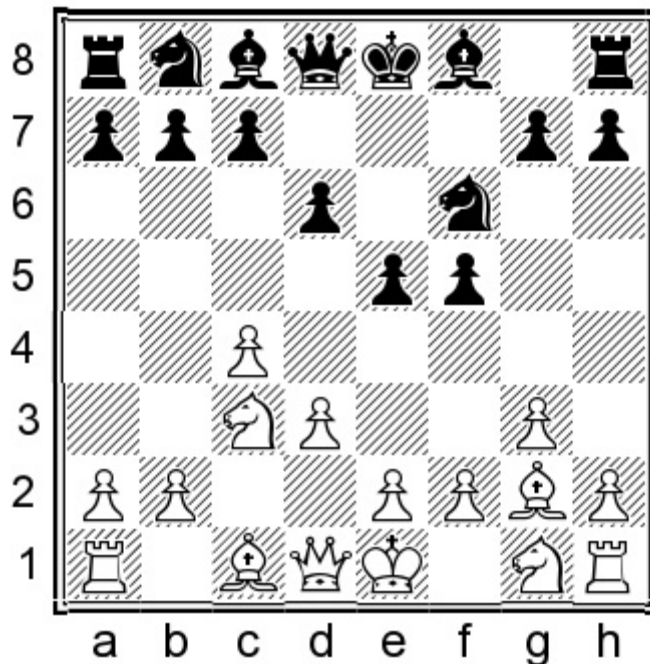
A. 3...f5; B. 3...g6; C. 3...c5 D. 3...♘f6

A. 3...f5 4.d4!

My positional feeling tells me that plans with ...f5 can be challenged effectively only with an early d2-d4. I recommend exactly the move order with 4.d4! in order to have 4...♙e7 5.♙h3. 4.♙g2 ♘f6 5.d4 is also possible, but less principled, in my opinion. I consider it in my comments to move 5.

Marin builds his repertoire on:

4.♙g2 ♘f6 5.d3, but I believe that White has nothing after:



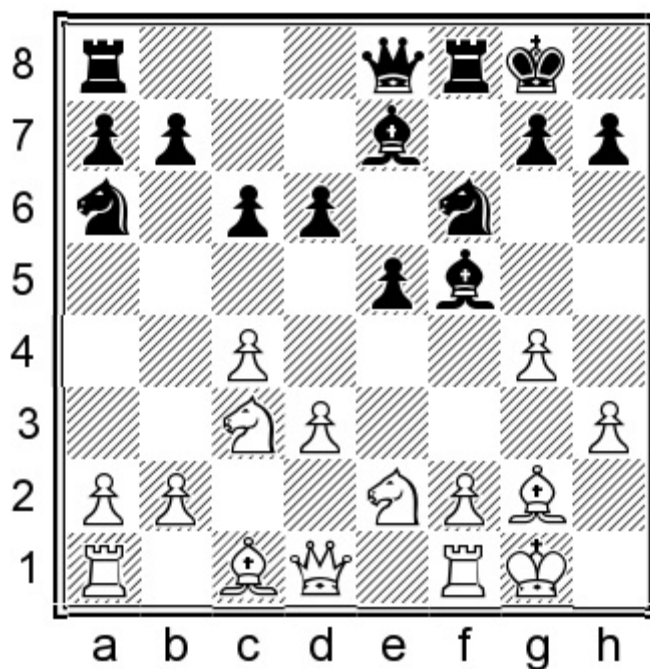
5...♙e7! 6.e4

6.e3 and 7.♘ge2 is also possible, while 6.♘f3 is suspicious as White falls under attack – 6...0-0 7.0-0 ♖e8 8.b4 ♗h5, planning ...f4.

6...0-0 7.♘ge2

The point is that 7.exf5 ♙xf5 8.♙xb7?! ♘bd7 9.♙xa8 ♖xa8 10.♗f3 ♗xf3 11.♘xf3 ♙xd3 is even worse for White!

7...c6 (denying plans with ♘c3-d5) 8.0-0 (8.h3 ♗e8) 8...♘a6 9.h3 ♗e8 10.exf5 (10.♙e3 ♗h5 11.f3=) 10...♙xf5 11.g4



11...♘xg4!+. This blow is like a bolt from the blue. Black has full positional compensation for the piece. The d3-pawn is weak, ...h5-h4-h3 is a nasty threat. The only game which featured this sacrifice quickly concluded in Black's favour: 12.hxg4 ♙xg4 13.f3 ♙e6 14.♙e3?! ♗g6 15.f4 ♙h3 16.♖f2 ♙h4+,

Fehr-Prosviriakov, Reykjavik 2014. Modern engines find defence, but the endgame after 14.f4 ♖g6 15.♗e1 ♜b4 16.♗g3 ♖xg3 17.♞xg3 is balanced.

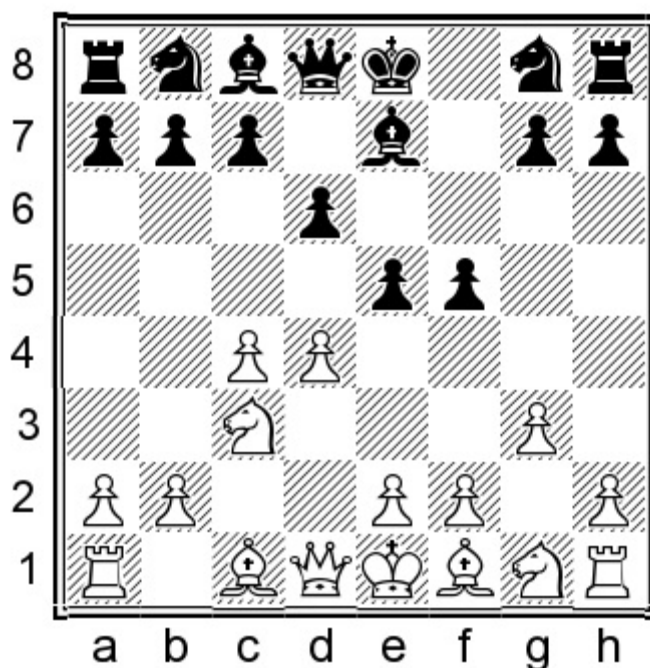
4...♞e7

4...exd4?! is a strategic mistake. It suffices to say that Black might obtain the same position as in the main line a clear tempo down – White will play ♞g2 instead of ♞h3-g2. Therefore, Black should deviate by fianchettoing the bishop:

5.♗xd4 ♜c6 6.♗d2 ♜f6 7.♞g2 g6 8.b3 ♞g7 9.♞b2 0-0, when the thematic manoeuvre 10.♞h3 fixes White's advantage. Curiously, we could even spend a tempo on 10.h4!? ♗e7 11.♞h3.

4...e4 is a mistake of the same type – White often plays ♞f3-g5-h3 while he could go now 5.♞h3 at once. Besides, the straightforward 5.f3 is also fine. White's only problem is how to recapture after 5...exf3. Both 6.exf3 and 6.♞xf3 bring excellent results.

4...♞f6 5.dxe5 dxe5 6.♗xd8+ ♖xd8 7.♞g5 c6 8.♞f3 ♞d6 9.♞h3 is unpleasant for Black.



5.♞h3!?

The text prepares to meet ♞f3 e4 by ♞h4.

5...exd4

The most frequent answer in both correspondence and OTB chess. Alternatively:

5...♞f6 6.♞f3 e4

Correspondence games saw 6...♞e4. White could win a pawn with 7.dxe5!? ♞xc3 8.bxc3 dxe5 9.♗xd8+ ♞xd8 10.e4 g6 11.exf5 ♞c6 12.0-0 ♞f6 13.♖e1 0-0 14.♞h6 ♖e8 15.g4 gxf5 16.gxf5 ♞e7

17. ♖xe5, but all his pawns are weak.

Perhaps it is better to keep the tension with 7. ♖d5 ♗c6 8. 0-0 0-0 9. ♕g2 a5 10. b3 with a small plus.

7. ♖h4! g6 8. ♕h6

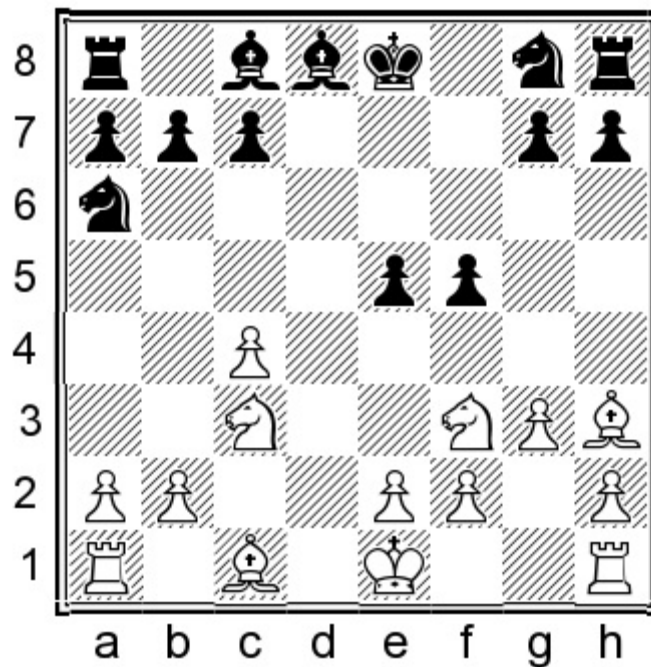
This move binds Black's kingside and increases the effect of the future undermining of the centre. Also possible is the immediate 8. f3 0-0 9. 0-0 c6 10. ♕h6 ♜e8 (10...exf3!) 11. fxe4 fxe4 12. ♕xc8±, Saric-Biti, Zupanja 2008.

8...c6 9. f3. This break is not impressive against set-ups with ...♕g7 in view of the weak d4-pawn, but it is quite effective here.

9...♖bd7 10. 0-0 ♗b6 11. ♖b3 d5 12. cxd5↑.

Giri-Vallejo Pons drew against Giri in Palma de Mallorca 2017 with 5...♖a6 6. a3?! c6. White should test:

6. dxe5 dxe5 7. ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 8. ♖f3



8...♕f6

8...e4 9. ♖d4 g6 allows White to open the centre – 10. f3 exf3 11. exf3 ♖f7 12. ♕e3 c6 13. 0-0-0 ♖f6 14. ♜he1 ♜e8 15. a3 with pressure on the queenside.

9. ♖d5!?

Gaining the bishop pair advantage.

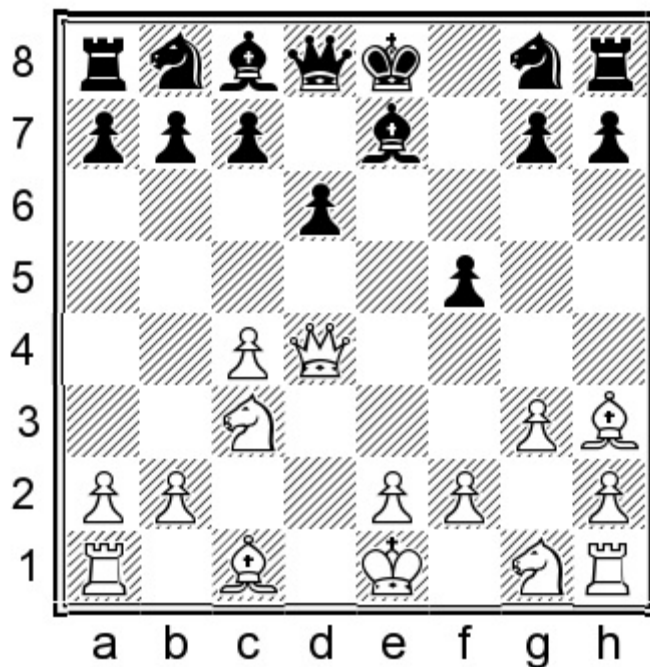
9. e4 ♗e7 10. 0-0 0-0 11. b3 ♗c5 12. ♕e3 (12. ♕g2) 12...f4 13. gxf4 ♕xh3 14. ♕xc5 ♕xf1 15. ♜xf1 is roughly equal, although White still preserves the initiative.

9...♖e7 10. ♖xf6+ gxf6 11. 0-0↑, intending to complete development with b3.

6. ♖xd4

White has won an important battle. He destroyed the enemy centre in favourable circumstances – the

bishop is passive on e7.



Our goal is a set-up with ♕g2, ♖h3 (or e2), b3, preventing ...d5.

6...♖c6

To define quickly the queen's placement.

6...♖f6 7.♚d3 g6 8.♗g2 0-0 9.♘h3 is the instructive **Game 22** Macurek-Cuccumini, ICCF 2016. It offers a good example of what to do in this pawn structure.

7.♚d1

7.♚d3 is also possible – 7...♖b4 8.♚d2 ♖f6 9.♖f3 0-0 10.♗g2 d5 11.a3±.

7...♖e5

Or 7...♖f6 8.♗g2 0-0 9.♖h3.

8.b3!

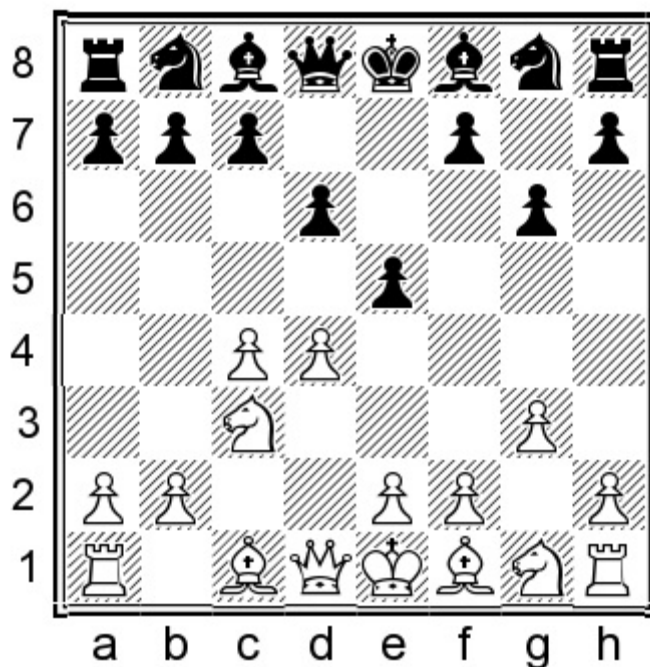
Simple and strong. Zvjaginsev-Tseshkovsky, Krasnoyarsk 2003, showed a wrong judgement: 8.♖f3 c6 9.♚c2? ♖xc4 10.♗xf5 ♗xf5 11.♚xf5 ♚d7=.

8...♖f6 9.♗g2 c6 10.e3±

White has reached the ideal pawn structure for him.

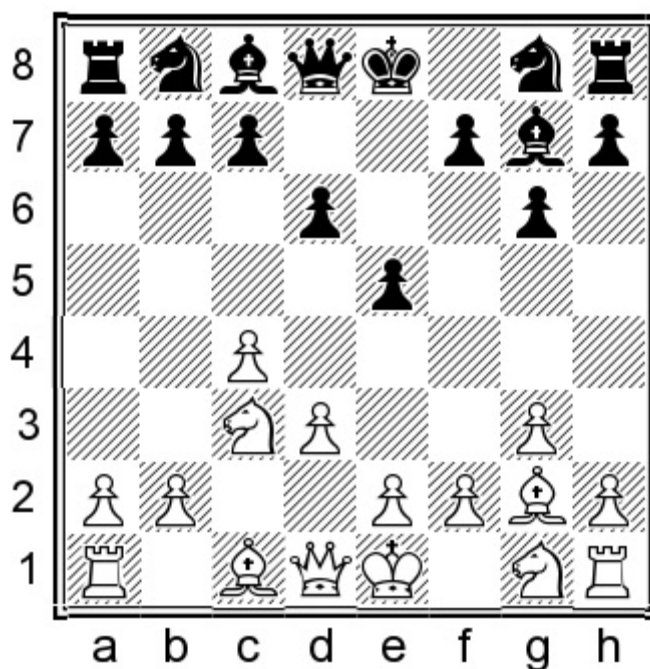
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B. 3...g6 4.d4!



I believe that White's best option here is to switch to the Fianchetto System against the KID. Even if it is not in your repertoire, it is relatively easy to learn it, as you'll have to study only one variation – with ...♘bd7 and ...e5. I consider it in line D.

The only reasonable way to stay out of the KID main lines is 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.d3.



It would be natural to recommend this line in a book on the English, but I believe that White can make some use of his extra tempo only by energetic play in the centre. Of course the diagram position is very complex, but Black has an enormous choice of schemes. White should spend tons of time studying

roughly balanced variations.

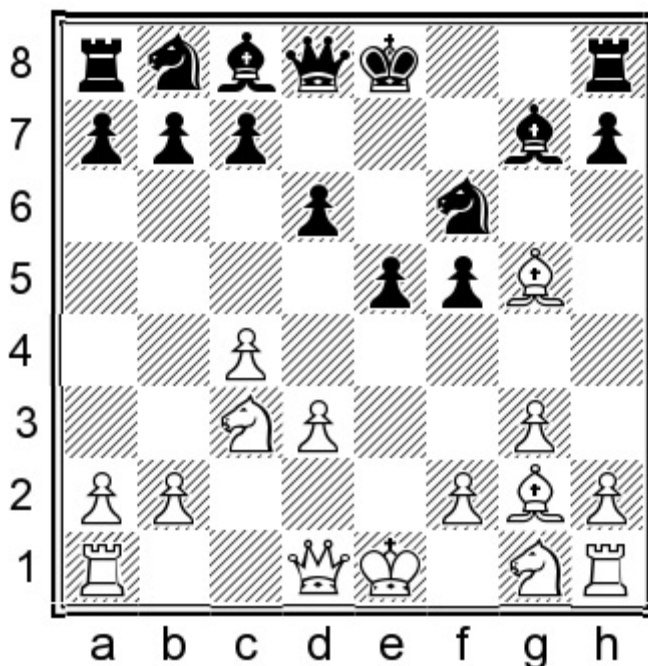
There are 3 main set-ups White should consider: a) with an early ...f5, b) with ...♘e7 and ...♘bc6, and c) with ...c5. I think that White may hope for the better chances in the first one. The second one may be unimpressive for White, but it yields him somewhat better practical results. The last set-up is rather boring, and make me sleepy, although White is playing with a draw in the pocket.

a) 5...f5 6.e4 ♘f6 7.exf5!

7.♘ge2 0-0 8.0-0 c6 9.exf5 is much more frequent, but it allows more options, including 9...♙xf5.

I prefer the more active set-up:

7...gxf5 8.♙g5!



We have concrete play with ♘d5, and our knight could go to f3 instead of the passive ♘e2. Long castling is still possible so Black must be careful.

8...c6

After 8...0-0 simplest is 9.♘ge2 ♖e8 10.0-0 c6 11.d4, to open the d-file at a good moment.

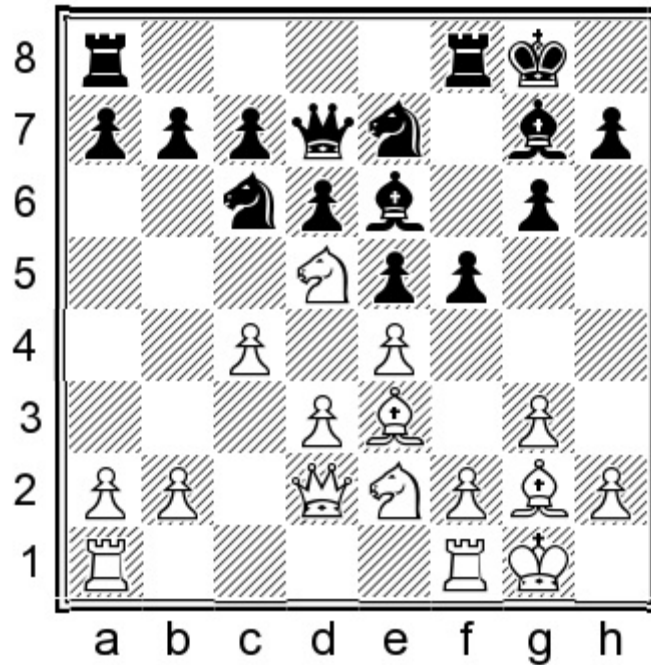
Alternatively: 8...♘c6 9.♘d5 0-0 10.♘e2; 8...h6 9.♙h4.

9.♘f3!

Most of the games saw 9.♘ge2, which is sufficient for a pull, but the text is more unpleasant. The knight could attack f5, for instance: 9...♘bd7 10.♘h4! ♘c5 11.♙h3 f4 12.♙xc8 ♖xc8 (12...♖xc8 13.♖g1) 13.b4 ♘e6 14.♘f5 with domination over the light squares, e.g. 14...♖d7 15.♙xf6 ♙xf6 16.♖h5+ ♗d8 17.♘e4 ♙e7 18.0-0.

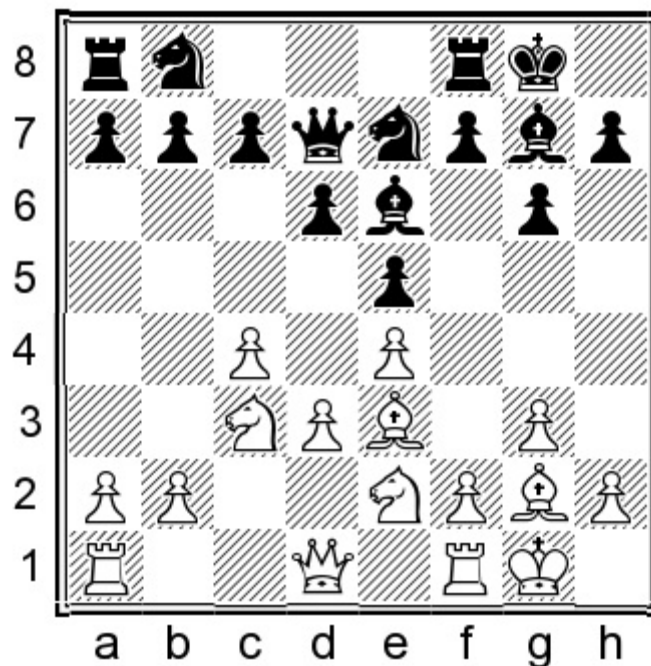
9...♘a6 10.0-0 0-0 11.d4 ♖e8 12.♖e1 e4 13.♘h4, followed up by ♙h3 with a bind.

b) 5...♘e7 6.e4 0-0 7.♘ge2 ♘bc6 8.0-0 ♙e6 9.♘d5 ♖d7 10.♙e3 f5 11.♖d2



Black plays here mostly 11...Rae8 and 11...Rf7. According to the results (about 60%), White's game is easier.

c) 5...Nde7 6.e4 0-0 7.Nge2 Qe6!? 8.0-0 Qd7 9.Qe3



9...c5! 10.a3 Nbc6=. Marin frankly admits that the set-up with ...c5 is a nasty option. He proposes a way to at least break somehow the symmetry by pushing b5 and taking on d4. However, that is possible only if White's bishop is still on c1. Black's clever move order denies even this option.

The bottom line is that the Fianchetto System against the KID offers much more possibilities to outplay the opponent, than the pure English with g3.

4...♖bd7

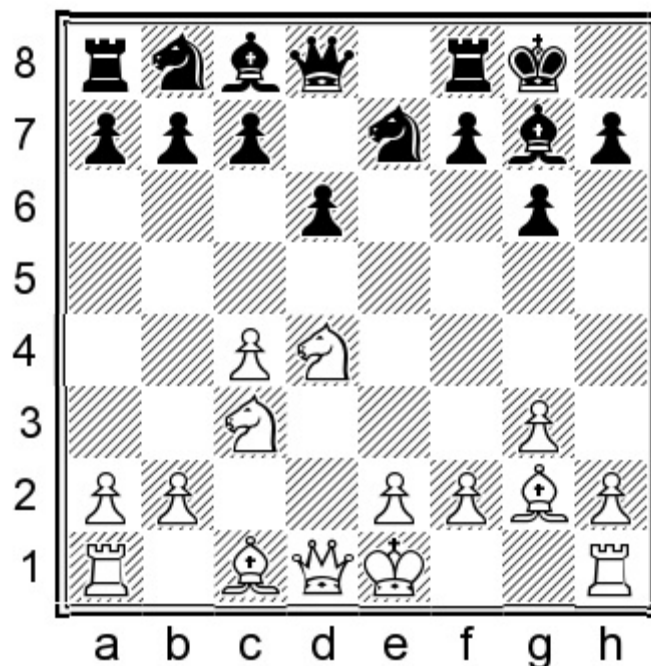
For 4...exd4 5.♖xd4 ♗f6 (5...♖f6 6.♖e3+) 6.♗g2 ♗g7 7.♖e3+, see **Game 21** Kasparov-Short.

4...♗g7 5.♗f3

5.dxe5 dxe5 6.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 7.♗g5+ f6 8.♖d1+! is not without venom. White's idea is to meet 8...♗d7 by 9.♗c1. A correspondence game saw instead 8...♔e8 9.♗c1 c6 10.♗h3, and White went on to win. Anyway, the text is more ambitious.

5...exd4 (5...♖bd7 transposes to the main line) 6.♗xd4 ♗e7 7.♗g2 0-0

7...♗bc6 should be met by 8.♗e3 0-0 9.♖d2.



8.♗g5!?

Black is going to play ...♗bc6, and we should decide how to meet it before making our eight move. Black's set-up after 8.0-0 ♗bc6 9.♗xc6 bxc6 was popularised by Azmaiparashvili about three decades ago. It is passive, but sturdy, although White remains slightly better for a long time. A good example of his plan offers **Game 19** (Chapter 6) Gheorghiu-Suba, Sibiu, 1977. My proposition shows another possible treatment.

8...h6 9.♗e3 ♗bc6 10.♖d2! ♔h7 11.♖d1 ♗e5 12.b3±.

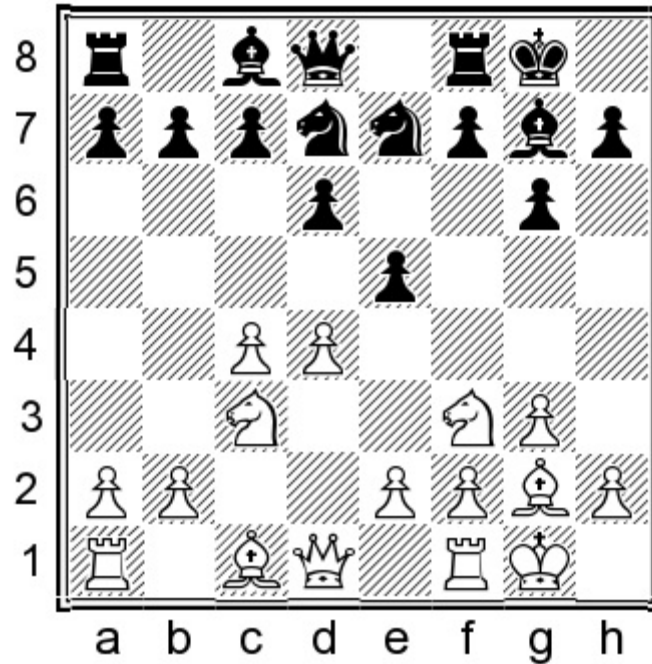
5.♗f3 ♗g7 6.♗g2 ♗e7

Intending ...f5.

6...♗f6 transposes to the KID.

We attack 6...♗h6, as a rule, with h4, but here it is better to include 7.dxe5 dxe5. For instance: 8.h4! f6 9.♗xh6! ♗xh6 10.h5 g5 11.♖c2±.

7.0-0 0-0



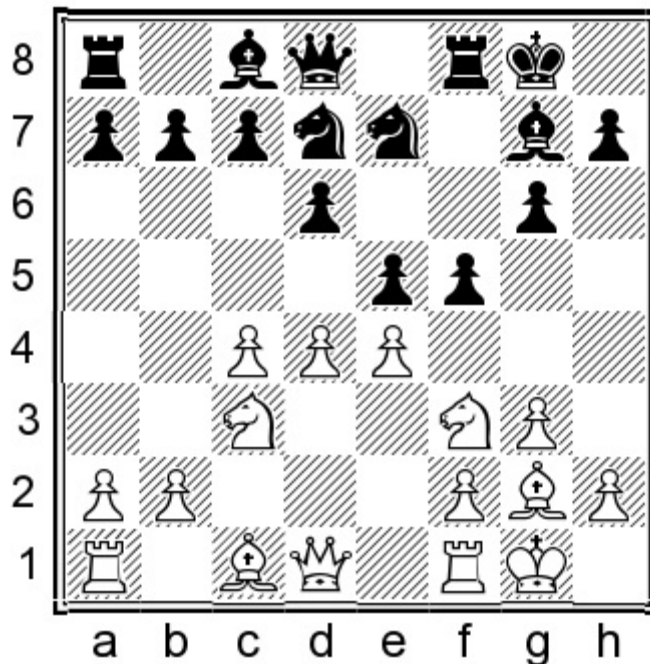
8.dxe5!

Black was going to play ...f5, when opening the d-file is the only sensible reaction. It is better to anticipate the events.

White has also tried:

8.e3!?

Provoking 8...f5 (8...h6 might turn a waste of time – 9.b3 f5 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.e4 f4 12.♔a3 was excellent for White in Marin-L.Hansen, Sitges 1998.) 9.e4!? (9.♘g5 ♖f6 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.♙b3 c5 12.♞d1 ♚b6 13.♙xb6 axb6 14.♘b5 is only slightly better for White.)



9...h6 (9...f4 is just bad because the pawn is hanging after 10.♘g5 ♖f6 11.dxe5. Or 9...c6 10.♘g5 ♖f6 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♗b3 ♔h8 13.c5 ♕e8 14.♞d1±.) 10.dxe5 fxe4 (Or 10...dxe5 11.b3 f4 12.♙a3.) 11.♘xe4 ♘xe5 12.♘xe5 dxe5 13.b3±.

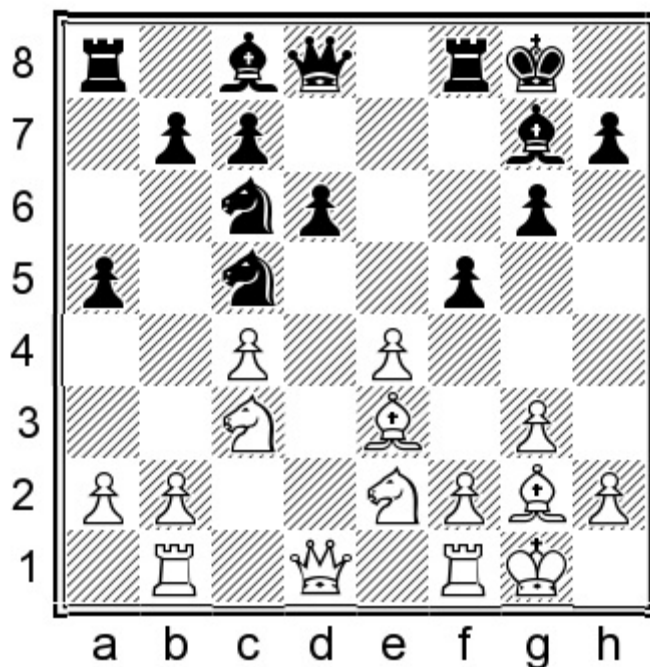
Black should postpone ...f5:

8...a5! 9.b3 ♘c6 10.♙b2 f5! 11.dxe5 (11.♗e2 ♞e8) 11...dxe5 12.e4 ♘c5 13.♗d5+ ♗xd5 14.♘xd5 ♘xe4= or 14...♞f7=.

8.e4 looks more natural and is certainly more popular, but it gives Black clear play on the dark squares after 8...exd4 9.♘xd4 ♘c6 10.♘de2 a5. White may still be a little better, but he lacks obvious targets.

In practice Black achieves satisfactory results. For instance:

11.♞b1 ♘c5 ♙e3 f5



13. ♖xc5

Or 13. ♘f4 ♗xe4 14. ♗xe4 fxe4 15. ♖xe4 ♚e7=; 13. ♚d2 a4.

13... dxc5 14. ♚d5+ ♚xd5 15. exd5 ♗e5=.

8... dxe5

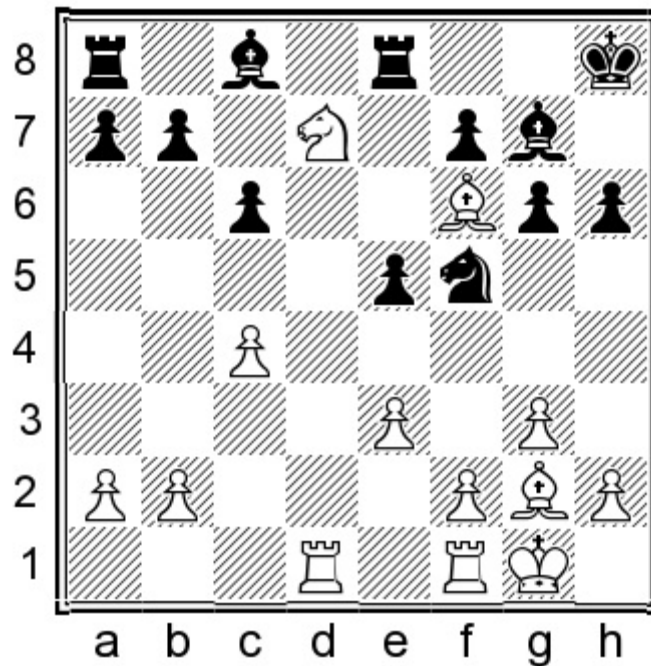
8... ♗xe5 9. ♗xe5 dxe5 10. ♖g5!?

10. b3 c6 11. ♖a3 and 10. ♖e3 ♗c6 11. ♖c5 are similar ideas.

10... ♚xd1

10... f6 keeping the queens is worse – 11. ♖e3 c6 12. ♖c5 ♚c7 13. ♖d6 ♚d8 14. ♖a3 ♚c7 15. ♚a4 ♖e6 16. ♖fd1 ♖fd8 17. ♗e4±.

11. ♖axd1 ♗f5 12. ♗d5 c6 13. ♗f6+ ♗h8 14. ♗d7 ♖e8 15. e3 h6 16. ♖f6



White gains control of the d-file. Later he will advance on the queenside:

16... ♖xd7 17. ♖xg7+ ♗xg7 18. ♖xd7 ♖e7 19. ♖fd1 ♖ae8 20. ♖h3 ♗f6 21. a4 (producing targets) 21... a5 22. ♖d8±.

The latter variation suggests that it may be a good idea to start shattering the queenside at once:

10. a4!? (instead of 10. ♖g5) 10... c6 (10... ♗c6 11. a5, intending ♗d5) 11. a5 ♖e6 12. ♚a4 ♚d4 13. ♚a3 ♖fe8 14. ♗e4±, heading for d6.

9. ♚c2 ♗f5

After 9... c6 White can gain the bishop pair advantage with:

10. ♗e4 f5 11. ♗d6 ♗c5 12. ♗xc8 ♚xc8 13. ♖b1. More thematic is:

10. b3 ♖e8

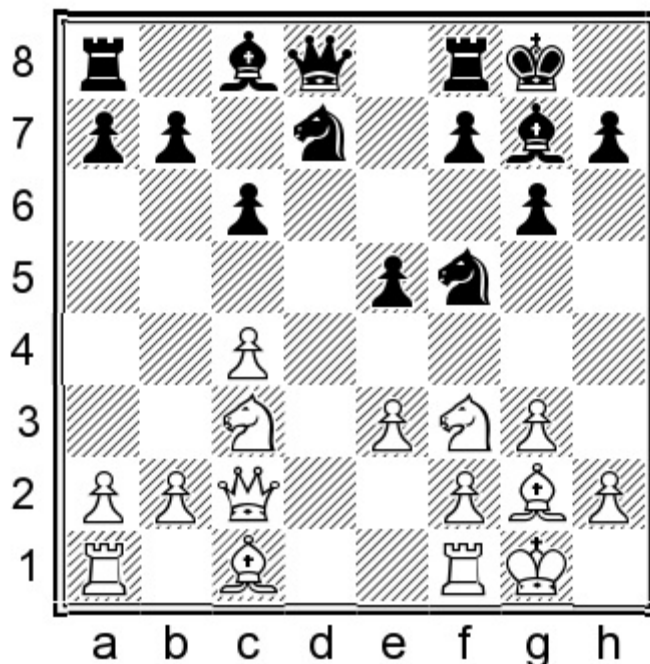
Practice has also seen:

10...♖c5 11.♙a3 b6 (11...♚a5? 12.♚c1+-), when 12.♙xc5 bxc5 13.e4 is clearly better for White.

10...♗f5 11.e3 transposes.

11.♞d1 ♞c7 12.♗e4 ♗f8 (12...♗f5 13.♙a3) 13.♗d6 ♞d8 14.c5±.

10.e3 c6



11.b3 ♞e8 12.♙b2±

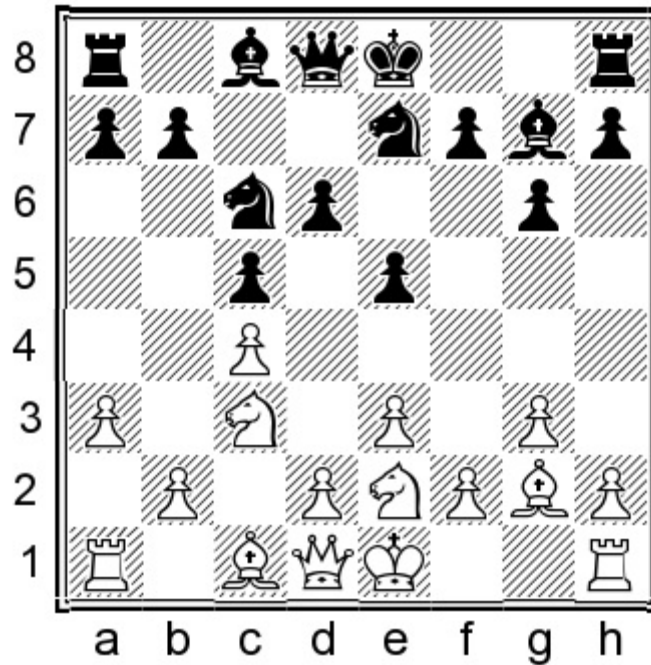
White is better developed and can exploit the weakness of d6. His future plan could be based on a queenside pawn storm.

C. 3...c5 4.♙g2 ♗c6 5.a3

The early b4+♞b1 aims to force Black to spend a tempo on ...♞b8 to enable ...♙e6. On the other hand this move might be superfluous against the set-up with ...♗f6 and ...♙e7. In that event it is better to play for d4.

For instance: 5.e3 ♗f6 6.♗ge2 ♙e7 (or 6...♙e6 7.♗d5 h5 8.d4) 7.d4! cxd4 8.exd4 0-0 9.0-0.

Therefore, 5.e3 more or less forces 5...g6 6.♗ge2 ♙g7 7.a3 ♗ge7



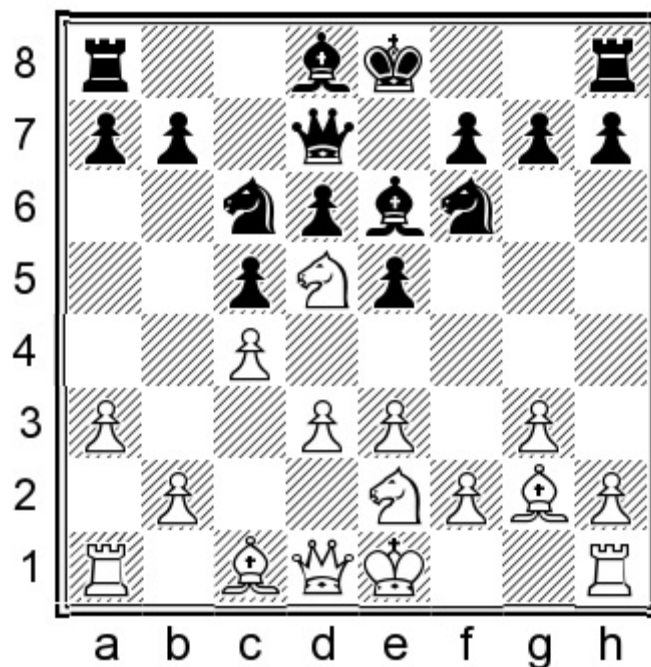
Now 8.b4 ♖e6 9.d3 cxb4 is about equal so:

8.♞b1 ♖e6 (8...a5!?) 9.♘d5 0-0 10.b4, but 10...cxb4 11.axb4 b5!≠.

5...g6

The most frequent answer, but it is probably not best. Black can fight for the draw in two other ways:

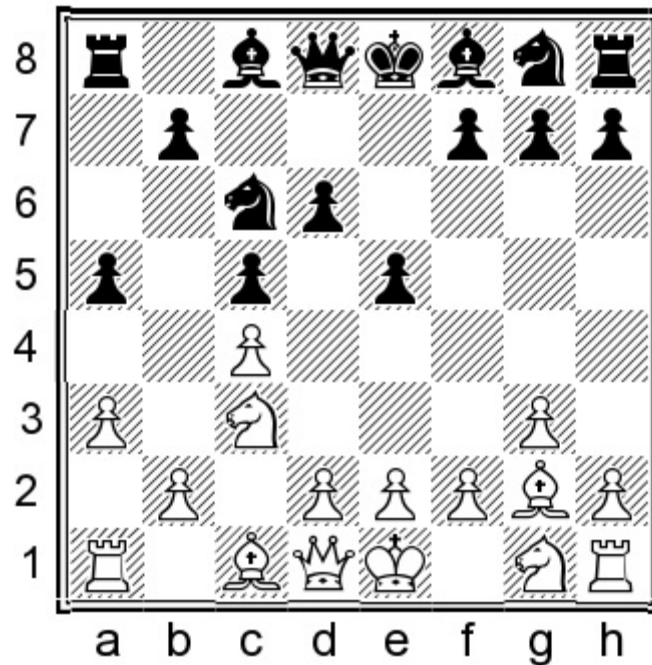
5...♘f6!? 6.d3 ♖e7 7.e3 ♖e6 8.♘d5 (we should not allow ...d5!) 8...♙d7 9.♘e2 ♖d8



This position has never occurred in practice. Black wants to trade three minor pieces with ...♖h3, ...♘xd5, ...♘e7. At the end he will remain with the “bad bishop”, but that does not seem particularly important to me. Although the engines maintain positive evaluations, it would be difficult to extract a

full point.

5...a5



It seems that White cannot make progress neither in the centre nor on the queenside so he should try to display activity on the kingside. Moreover that he could castle long as he could easily seal the flank with a4. I investigated:

a) 6.d3 g6 7.h4, when:

7...♙e6 8.♙g5 ♙e7 9.♘d5 takes over the initiative. 7...♞f6 8.♙g5 ♙e7 9.e3 h6 10.♙xf6 is also in White's favour in view of his full control of the light squares. Best is:

7...h6 with unclear play. For instance, 8.h5 g5 9.f4 gxf4 10.gxf4 ♞ge7 11.♙xc6+ ♞xc6 12.e4 exf4 13.♙xf4 ♞d4 14.♙e3 with a sharp game.

b) 6.e3 g6 7.♞ge2 ♙g7 8.d3

8.d4 cxd4 9.exd4 exd4 10.♞b5 ♞ge7 11.♞exd4 ♞xd4 12.♞xd4 0-0 13.0-0 d5 14.cxd5 ♞xd5

15.♞b3 ♞b6 16.♙xd8 ♞xd8 17.♞c5 was a quick draw in Winants-J.Polgar, Wijk aan Zee 1990.

8...♞ge7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♞b5

White slowly prepares b4 by transferring his minor pieces on the queenside. This is a safe way of getting a small edge:

10...♙e6 11.♞ec3 ♙d7 12.♞d5 ♞ab8 13.♙d2 b6 14.♞b1 ♙g4 15.f3 ♙e6 16.♞bc3 f5 17.f4.

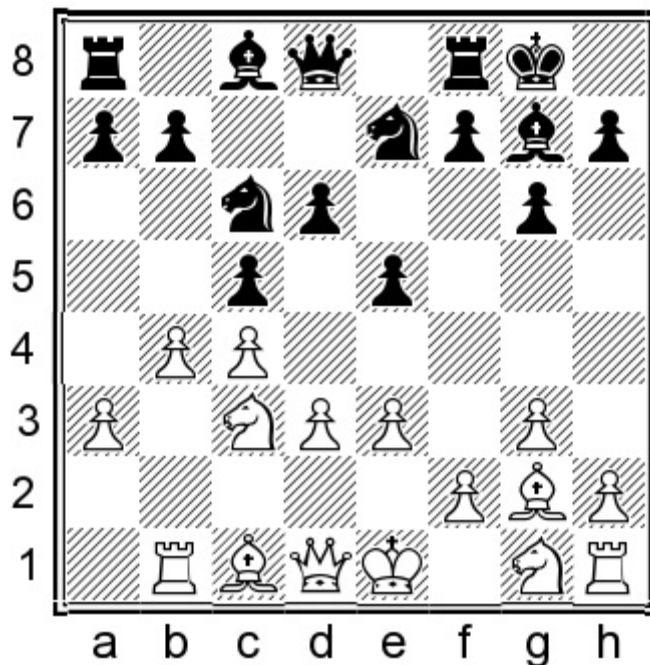
6.b4

The task of this pawn is not so much to launch a queenside attack, but rather to send the c6-knight away from the centre with b4-b5.

6...♙g7

6...cxb4 7.axb4 ♖xb4 offers White a free hand in the centre and excellent compensation after 8.♗f3!
 This is better than winning a pawn with 8.♙a4+ ♘c6 9.♙xc6+ bxc6 10.♙xc6+ ♔d7 11.♙b7 ♘e7
 12.♞xa7 ♞b8±.
 8...a5 9.♙a3.

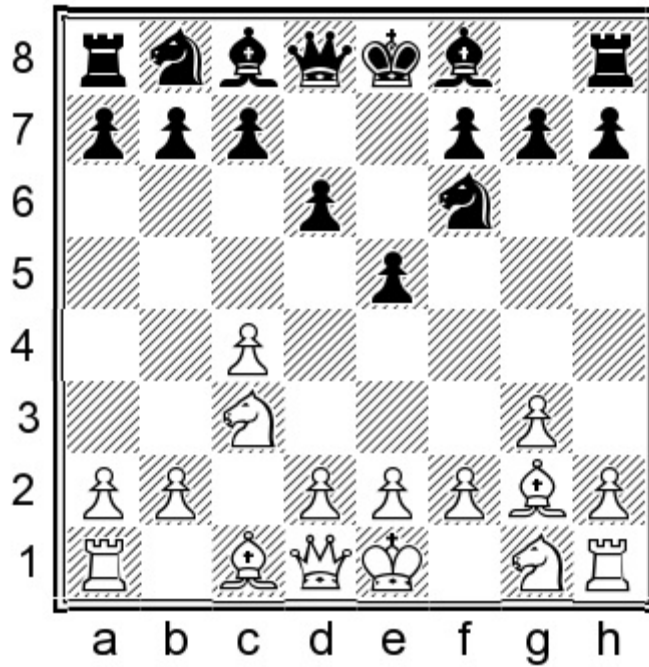
7.♞b1 ♘ge7 8.d3 0-0 9.e3



White is slightly better owing to his grip on the centre. His plan includes b5 to prevent the knight from leaping to d4, and play in the centre with the e- and f-pawns. See the the decisive last **Game 23** of the world title match Kasparov-Karpov, Seville 1987.

D. 3...♗f6 4.♙g2

4.d4!? exd4 5.♙xd4 is a viable move order – see line C2 from the next chapter. Black would be better off after 4...♘bd7, transposing.

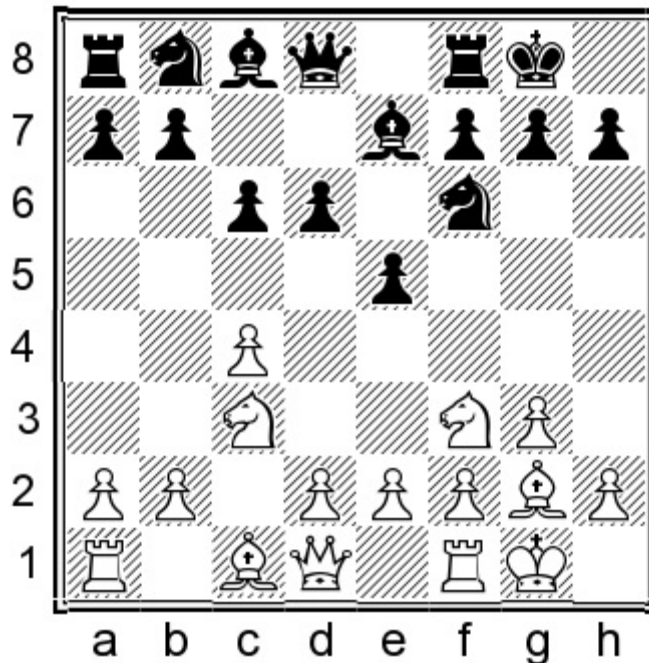


D1. 4...♙e7; **D2.** 4...g6

4...c6 is commonly met by 5.d4 (although there is nothing wrong with 5.♘f3) 5...♘bd7 6.♘f3, when: 6...g6 transposes to the main line. Black has also tried:

6...e4 7.♘h4! ♘b6 8.♘xe4 ♘xe4 9.♙xe4 ♘xc4 10.d5 ♚a5+ 11.♙f1 ♙h3+?! 12.♙g2 ♙xg2+ 13.♙xg2 ♚xd5+ 14.♚xd5 cxd5 15.♚d1±, Fominyh-Prokopchuk, Kazan 1995.

D1. 4...♙e7 5.♘f3 0-0 (5...c6 6.0-0) 6.0-0 c6

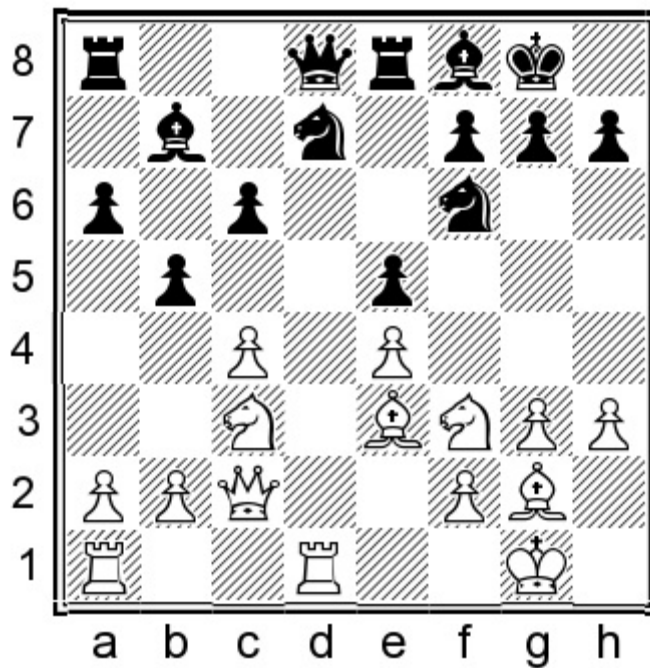


7.♚c2!

I played this move when I was 19, and nothing has changed since then. It is aimed against 7.d4 e4.

7...♙g4

7...♞e8 8.d4 ♗f8 9.e4 a6 is a typical Benoni position, when the normal continuation is 10.h3 b5 11.♞d1 ♜bd7 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♙e3 ♙b7 (or 13...♞c7 14.cxb5 cxb5 15.♞ac1)



14.♞ac1±. Benko's idea 14.c5!? a5 15.a3 a4 16.♜e1± may be more principled. The knight goes to d3 to defend the c5-pawn, which is like a thorn in Black's camp.

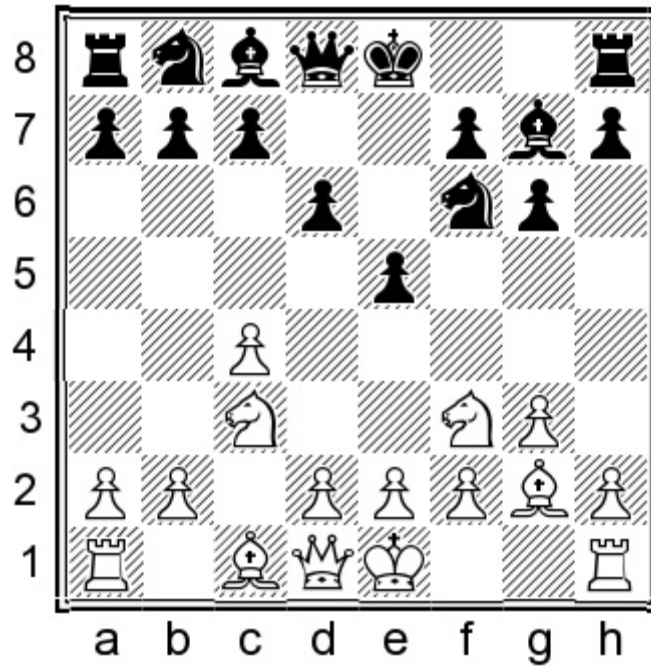
8.h3 ♗e6 9.b3±

White is ready for d4. The only way to prevent is 9...♞d7 10.♔h2 c5, but 11.♜g5 offers White full control of the light squares.

Ivanchuk-Zweschper, simul. Mainz 2007, saw 9...h6 10.d4 ♜bd7 11.♙b2 ♞c7 12.♞ac1 ♞ac8 13.e4±.

D2. 4...g6 5.♜f3 ♙g7

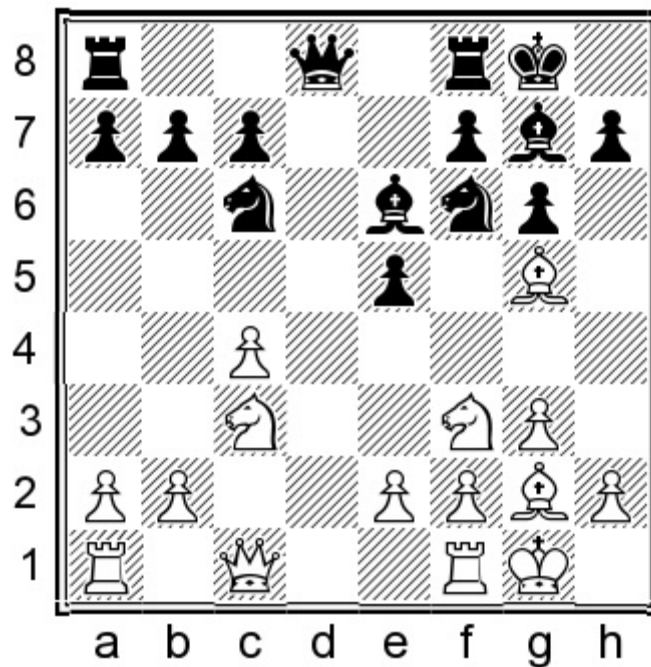
Black wants to play the KID, but White is not forced to oblige. He could prefer to stay loyal to the English with queenside plans based on b4 or d3. I do not discuss this approach in the current book. In my opinion, the Fianchetto System of the KID offers better chances to White. It is worth noting that we have avoided the most fashionable set-up for Black with ...♜c6, ...a6, (or ...e5) with play on the queenside.



6.d4!

It is high time to hit the e5-pawn, while the black king has not castled. 6.0-0 0-0 7.d4 ♖c6!? poses a serious theoretical problem. I did not get anything against Kadric in 2016 with 8.d5 ♘b8! 9.e4 a5 10.♙g5 ♘a6 11.♚d2 ♛e8 12.♜e1 ♞d7 13.♜d3.

In his 2018 book Avrukh praises the fashionable 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.♙g5 ♙e6 10.♚c1



10...♚c8 11.♞d1, but 11...♞d8! 12.♞xd8+ ♛xd8 levels the game, e.g. 13.♜e4 ♛e7 14.♜fd2 ♙f5=.

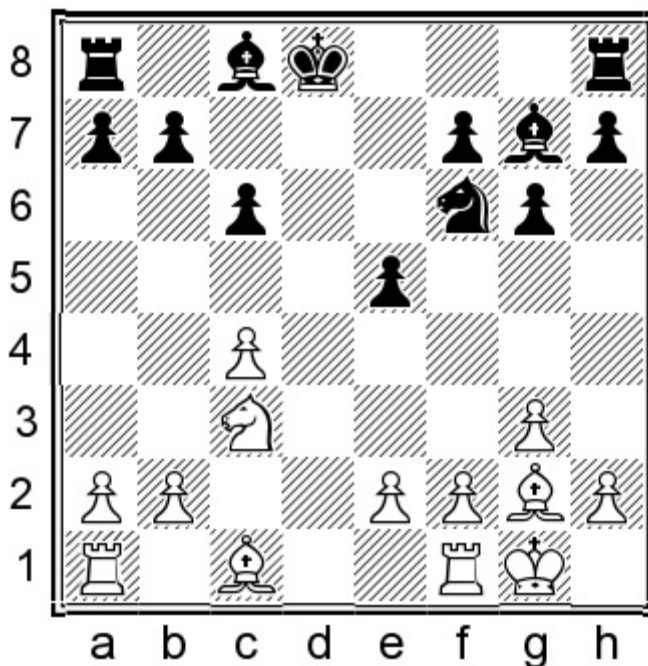
6...♞bd7

6...♖c6 is ineffective owing to 7.dxe5 ♗xe5 8.♗xe5

Engine games feature 8.c5 ♗xf3+ 9.♙xf3 with excellent results.

Another option is 8.0-0!? 0-0 9.b3, as played by Fressinet.

8...dxe5 9.♙xd8+ ♖xd8 10.0-0 c6

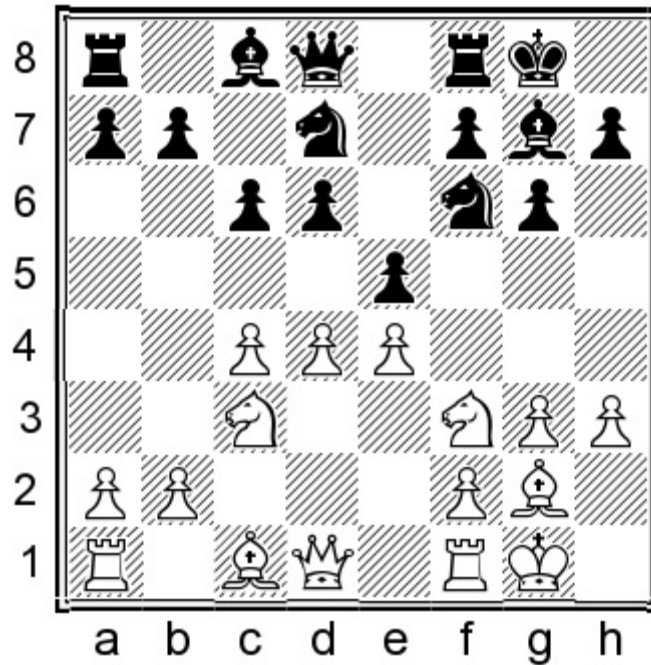


11.b4! ♙e6 12.b5 ♖c7, Larsen-Van den Berg, Noordwijk 1965. Here White correctly judged that he should play on attack, and got an edge after 13.bxc6 bxc6 14.♙d2 ♗hc8 15.♗fd1 ♗d7 16.♗e4 ♙f8 17.♙a5+ ♖b7 18.♗g5 ♗c5 19.♗xe6 fxe6 20.h4. A better version of his idea was the immediate 13.♙d2! ♗hd8 14.♗fd1±.

7.0-0 0-0 8.e4 c6

8...exd4 9.♗xd4 ♗e8 defines the centre too early and rules out Black's plans based on an attack on c4, e.g. ...♗b6 or ...♗a5. After 10.♗e1 ♗c5 11.h3 c6 12.♙f4!? we reach a position from line D23.

9.h3

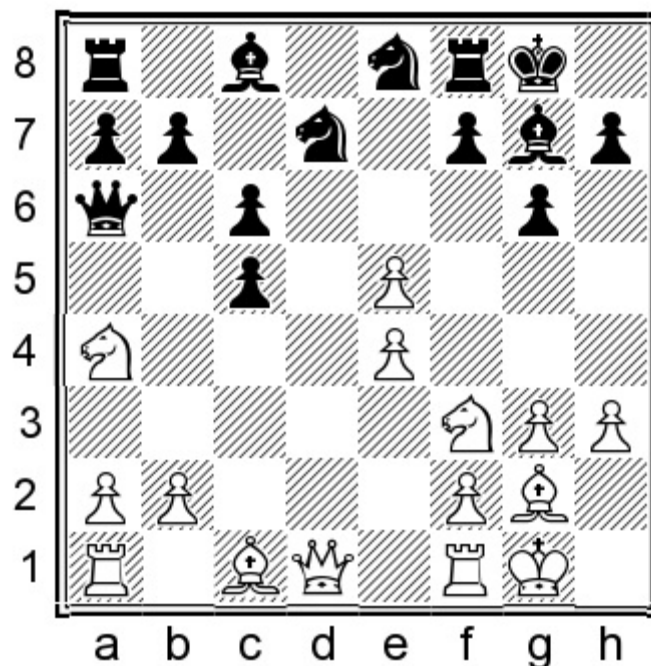


D21. 9...♖b6; **D22.** 9...♗a5; **D23.** 9...exd4; **D24.** 9...♞e8

D21. 9...♖b6 10.c5! dxc5 11.dxe5 ♘e8 12.♘a4!?

Hundreds of games have seen the pawn sacrifice 12.e6!? fxe6 13.♘g5 ♘e5 14.f4 ♘f7 15.♘xf7 ♔d4+ 16.♗h2 ♞xf7 17.e5 ♘c7 18.♘e4 ♘d5 19.h4. In my opinion, it is very pleasant for White. It is not by chance that both correspondence and OTB practice sees him scoring well over 65%. Still, I believe that we could get an even better version of the sac:

12...♗a6



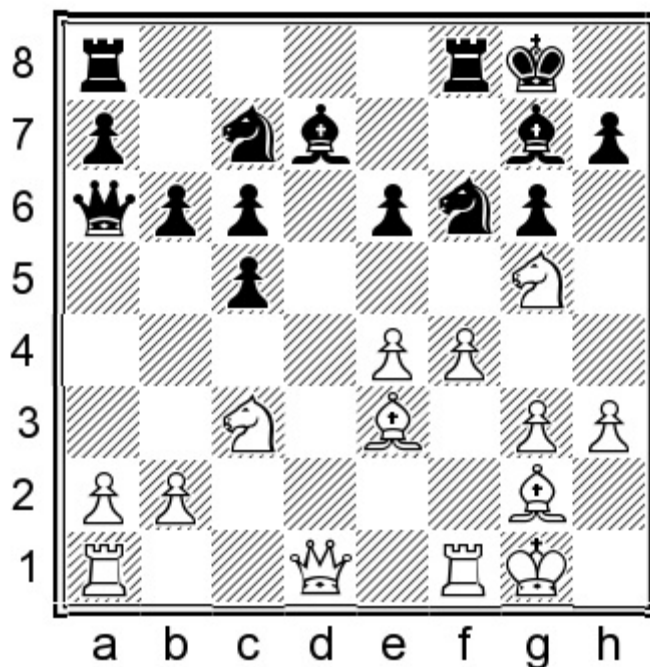
Kotronias in his book on the KID awards this move with an exclamation mark. But now the c5-pawn is

hanging and Black does not have the defence ...♖e5 from the above line. So:

13.e6! fxe6 14.♗g5 ♘c7

Another generous exclamation mark by Kotronias. His argument is that 14...b5 15.♗c3 ♘e5 16.♙e3 is better for White. I would add that 16.f4 ♗f7 17.♗f3 ♘c7 18.e5! is even stronger.

15.♙e3 b6 16.f4 ♗f6 17.♗c3 ♙d7±



Interestingly, Kotronias reaches this position, but considers only 18.♖f2 and ♗d6. Instead, White plays simply:

18.♙f2 (or 18.e5!) 18...♞ad8 19.e5!, and Black is totally paralysed. His doubled extra pawn is hardly a sufficient consolation. The computer suggests the following illustrative line:

19...♗fd5 20.♞e1 ♗b4 21.♙e4 ♗c8 22.a3 ♙e8 23.♗e2 ♗bd5 24.♙c2 ♞d7 25.h4 h6 26.♗ge4 ♗b5 27.♗xb5 cxb5 28.♞ad1 with domination. It is up to White to choose when to win the exchange with ♗d6.

It is a matter of taste what version of the pawn sac on e6 to choose. In both events Black is in for a long suffering.

D22. 9...♗a5 10.♙e3

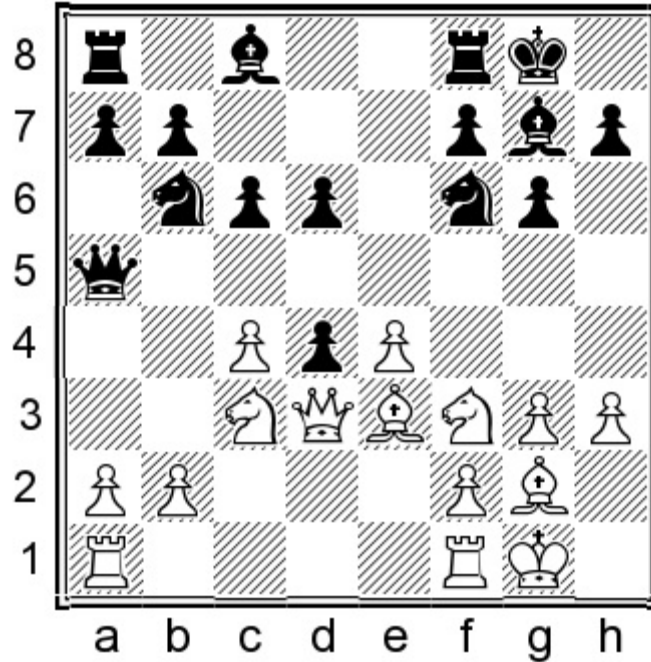
I have won games with 10.♗c2 and 10.♞fe1. They also ensure better chances to White. The latter enables the defence ♙f1. The text is more challenging – it is the logical follow up of 9.h3. Its viability depends on the line:

10...♗b6

Actually 10...exd4 is more popular, but it only helps us to reach our desired set-up.

Let me note that 10...♖b4 cannot disturb our plan – 11.♗e2 exd4 12.a3! ♖a5 13.♘xd4 ♜e8 14.♞fe1 ♗c7 15.♞ad1 ♞e5 16.f4 ♞ed7 17.♙f2 ♞f8 18.g4±.

11.♗d3 exd4 12.♙xd4!



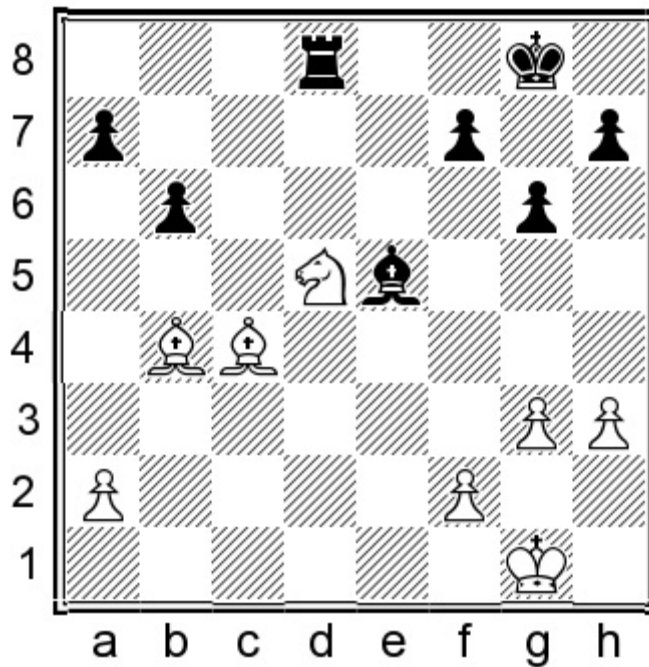
This relatively rare move is more unpleasant than 12.♘xd4 ♖a6. It turns out that White can simply ignore the c4-pawn and play for an attack.

12...♖a6

12...♙e6 13.b3 ♞ad8 14.♞ad1 ♙c8 15.♗d2 ♞bd7 16.♙e3 ♞c5 17.♘d4 allows White to regroup while keeping the grip on the centre.

13.b3 d5 14.e5!

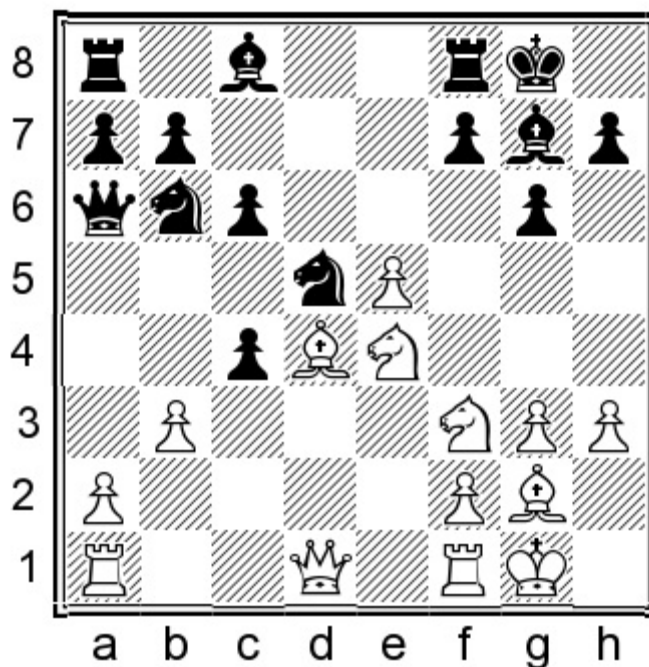
14.exd5 cxd5 15.♞b5 dxc4 16.bxc4 ♙e6 17.♞c7 ♗xc4 18.♗xc4 ♙xc4 19.♞fc1 looks like winning material, but the endgame after 19...♞ac8 20.♙xb6 ♞d7! 21.♙a5 ♙xa1 22.♞xc4 ♞fd8 23.♙f1 b6 24.♙b4 ♞e5 25.♞xe5 ♙xe5 26.♞d5 ♞xc4 27.♙xc4



27...a5! 28.♙e7 ♜c8 29.♙b5 should be drawn. A rook and a pawn, as a rule, balance a Bishop and a Knight in an endgame, if the rook is active.

14...dxc4 15.♚d1 ♘fd5 16.♘e4

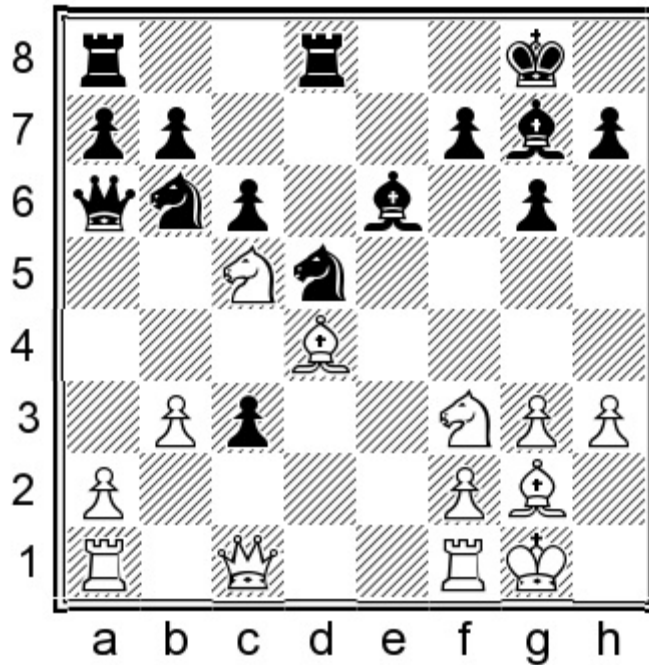
The idea behind the pawn sac is the same as in line D21. White is in command in the centre and has a strong forepost on d6. His next step could be to manoeuvre the queen near the enemy king. Pawns do not count here. For instance:



a) 16...♞d8 17.♚c1 c3

Or 17...cxb3 18.axb3 ♚d3 19.♘c5 ♚b5 20.♞e1!±.

18.e6 ♙xe6 (18...f5 19.♙xg7+–) 19.♘c5



19...♖e2 20.♗xg7 ♕xg7 21.♘d4 ♖b2 22.♘dxе6±.

In order to prevent ♖c1 and keep lines closed, Black could play:

b) 16...♗h6 17.♞e1 c3. This gives us an enormous choice. For instance, the positional solution is:

18.♘h4, intending f4. Sharper is:

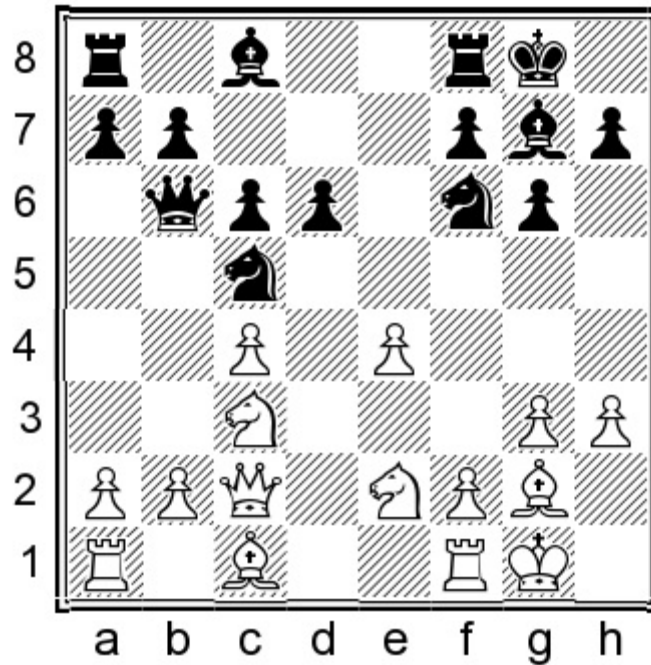
18.a4 ♖a5 19.♗c5±.

c) 16...c3 17.♖c1 (17.♞e1 ♗h6 transposes to line b) 17...♖a5 18.♞e1 ♗e6 19.♘fg5 ♗h6 20.h4±.

D23. 9...exd4 10.♘xd4 ♞e8

10...♖b6 is ineffective owing to the simple 11.♘de2 ♖b4 12.b3. Black could try instead:

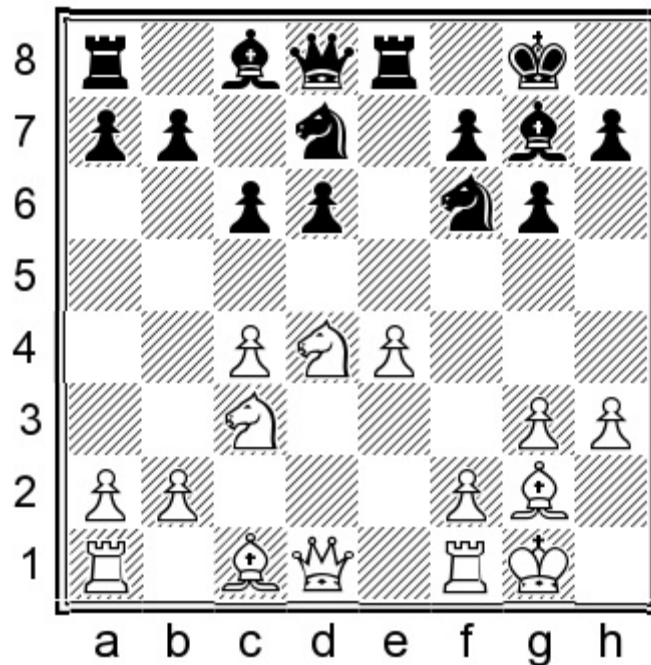
11...♘c5 12.♖c2



12...a5

12...♖e8 13.♙e3 f5 opens the centre in White's favour – 14.♚d2 ♛c7 (♜a4 was a threat) 15.exf5
 ♙xf5 16.♞d4 (16.♞f4±) 16...♙d3 17.♞e6±.

13.b3 a4 14.♞b1 axb3 15.axb3 with b4 coming soon.



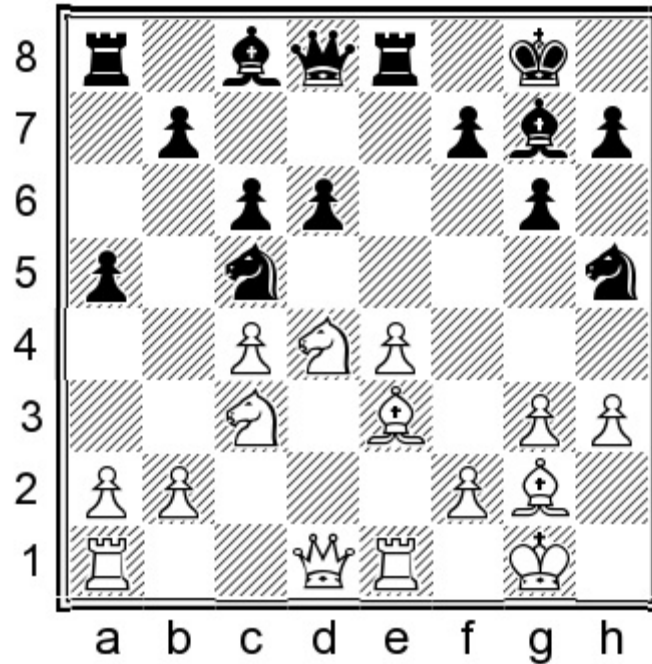
11.♙f4!?

Our desired set-up is ♙e3, ♛c2, ♞d1, ♞e1, f4, but the shortest way towards it, 11.♙e3, allows Black to display some activity with 11...♜c5 12.♛c2 ♛e7. Although 13.♞fe1 defends indirectly the e4-pawn, the enemy knights are on striking positions. That often allows Black to cook up some tactics. The aim of ♙f4 is to disrupt the coordination between Black's minor pieces.

11...♘c5

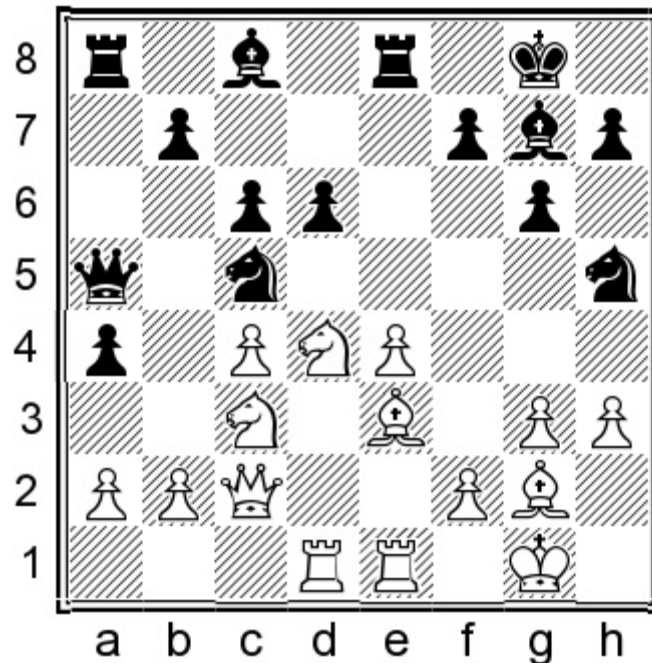
Or 11...♘e5 12.b3 ♘fd7 13.♙e3 (13.♚c2 ♘xc4) 13...♘c5 14.♚c2 a5 15.♞ad1 and we have reached our positional goal.

12.♞e1 ♘h5 13.♙e3 a5



14.b3!

We should fight for every inch of space. The main line is 14.♚c2 a4 15.♞ad1 ♚a5



Although White has an advantage here, his further play requires utmost precision because the weak c4-pawn offers counterplay. Van Wely-Todorov, Brest 2018, saw the most aggressive chesstouring.com

16.g4 ♖f6 17.f4, when the piece sac is not enough:

17...♙xg4 18.hxg4 ♜xg4 19.♙h3 ♜xe3 20.♞xe3±. More unpleasant is:

17...♙e6!, and there is nothing concrete, e.g. 18.♜xe6 ♞xe6 19.e5 ♜fd7! 20.♞f1 (20.exd6 ♞ae8)
20...dxe5 21.f5 ♞e7 22.♚h1 e4±.

It is wiser for White to proceed with caution, anticipating any counterplay in advance. For instance:

16.♚h2 ♙e6 17.♙f1 ♜f6 18.a3 ♞ad8 19.f3 or:

16.a3 ♜f6 17.♚h2±.

Piece pressure should not be enough – 17.♙f4 ♙f8 18.♜f3 ♙e6 19.♙f1 ♞ad8 20.♙d2 ♞a6 21.♙g5,
Shengelia-Mazi, Austria 2004, 21...♙g7! 22.♜d5 cxd5 23.cxd5 b5=.

The bottom line is that White retains a spatial advantage, but it is not clear how to make progress with a fixed queenside.

14...♜f6

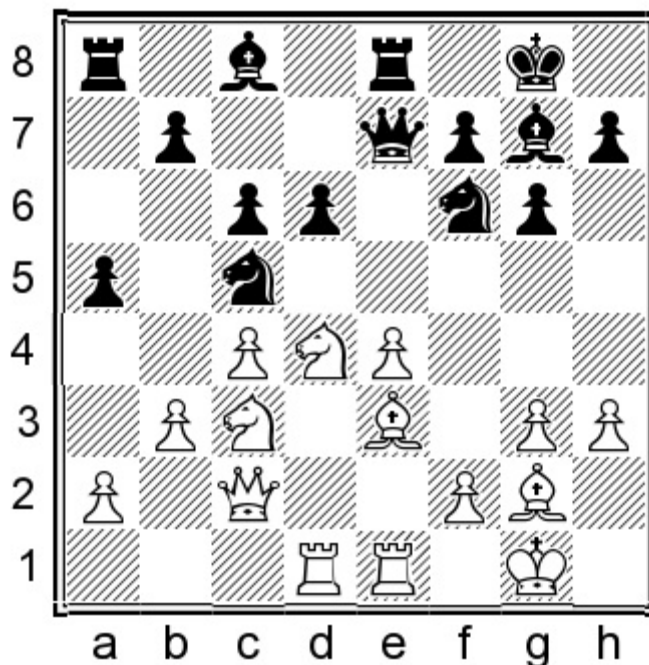
The point is that after 14...a4 15.b4 ♜e6 16.♞d3 Black's queen lacks a safe place.

14...♞b6 15.♞b1 does not improve Black's position either.

15.♞c2 ♞e7

15...♜fd7 is passive – 16.♞ad1 ♞b6 17.♞b1 ♞c7 18.♞e2, and White doubles his rooks on the d-file.

16.♞ad1



We have reached the dream set-up. Play may continue:

a) 16...♙d7?! 17.♙f4! with an unstoppable hit on d6.

b) 16...♞fd7 17.f4 ♜f8

17...h5 18.♙f2; 17...♞a6 18.g4 ♜dc5 19.a3.

18.♙f2 ♜fe6 19.♚d2, and the d6-pawn is doomed to fall.

c) 16...a4 17.f4 – see **Game 24** Damljjanovic-Klenburg, Pamplona 2011.

D24 9...♞e8

This move may be regarded as an improved version of the previous variation. Black is constantly threatening to take on d4, while keeping the queenside pawn storm possible.

10.♙e3 a5

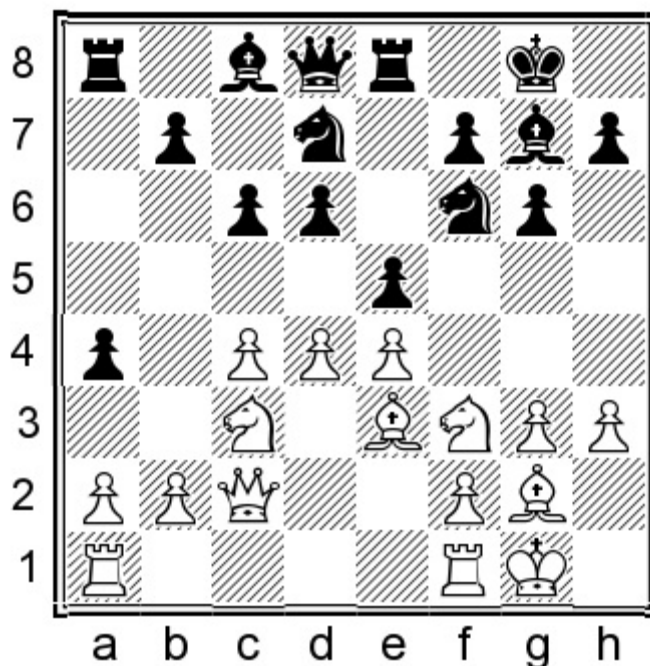
10...exd4 11.♞xd4 ♞c5 throws us out of the set-up in line D23, where I recommended ♙f4. However, the strategic ideas are the same:

12.♚c2 ♚e7

Or 12...a5 13.♞ad1 ♞fd7 14.b3.

13.♞fe1 ♙d7 14.♞b3! ♙e6 15.♞xc5±.

11.♚c2 a4



12.♞ab1!?

I rely on the intuition of Tigran Petrosian. His games in the Finchetto System taught several generations and are still a model for White players.

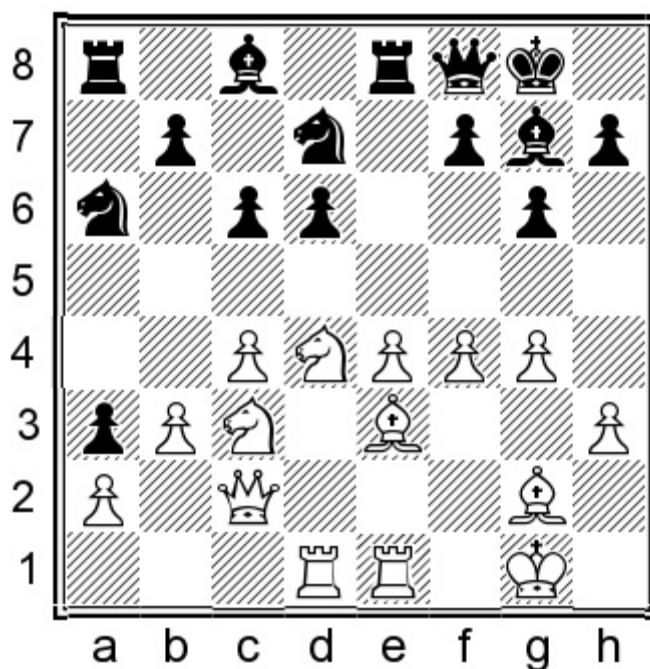
The computer prefers to seize space with 12.d5 ♞c5 13.♞d2 ♚a5 14.b3±.

Note that the trivial 12.♖fe1 could be met by 12...♚a5 13.♖ab1 b5.

The text anticipates this plan in view of 12.♖ab1 ♚a5 13.b4 axb3 14.axb3 b5 15.b4 ♚c7 16.cxb5 cxb5 17.♖fc1.

12...exd4 13.♗xd4 ♗c5 14.♖fe1 ♗fd7

Young Kasparov played 14...♚e7, but he changed his mind later in favour of the text. Black suffers after 15.♖bd1 ♗fd7 16.f4 ♚f8 17.g4 a3 18.b3 ♗a6



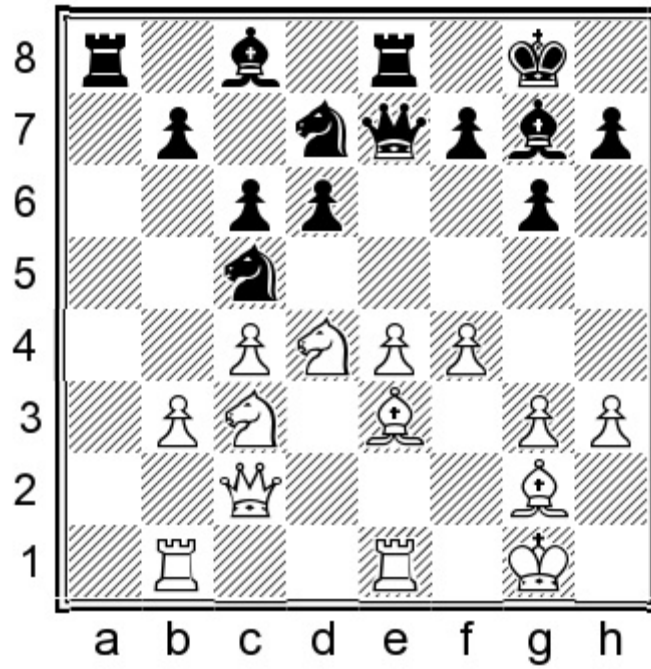
19.♗ce2! ♗dc5 20.♗g3±, Artemiev-Moiseenko, Ekaterinburg 2013 (with different order of moves).

15.b4 axb3 16.axb3 ♚e7 17.f4

White does not need 17.♖bd1 anymore, but it is not a mistake, of course. Kasparov answered against Gavrikov 17...h5 18.b4

Or 18.f4 ♗f6 19.♗f2 h4 20.g4 ♗xg4 21.hxg4 ♗xg4 22.♗f3±.

18...♗e6. Now 19.♗ce2! would have held the advantage.



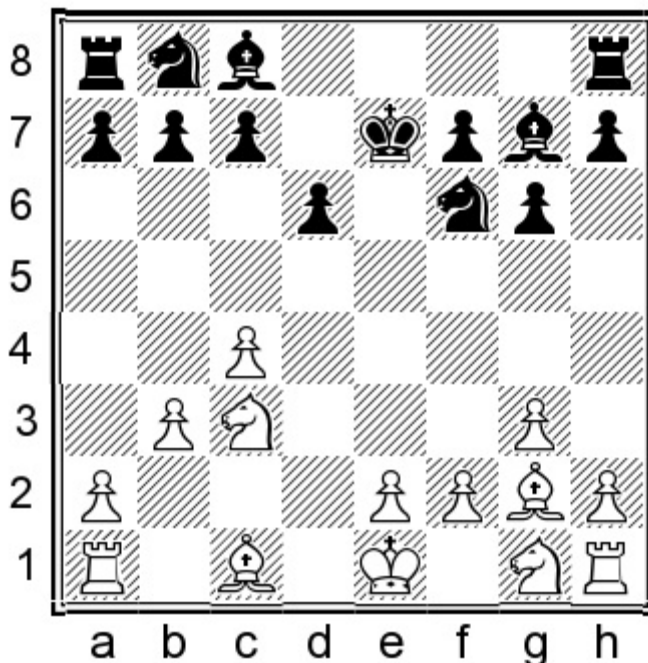
17...♞a3 18.♔h2±

Play might continue 18...h5 19.♕f2 ♞e6 20.♞xe6 ♚xe6 (20...fxe6 21.e5, underlining the drawback of ...h5) 21.♞bd1±.

Chapter 7. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6 Annotated Games

21. Kasparov – Short World Cup, Barcelona 1989

1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.♗g2 g6 4.d4 exd4 5.♙xd4 ♘f6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.♚e3+ ♛e7 8.♙xe7+ ♔xe7 9.b3!?



9...a5

Short decides to neutralise ♗a3 with ...♘b4. However, he had more useful moves at this point.

9...♘e4 did not win material owing to 10.♘d5+ ♔d8 11.♞b1 ♗f5? (11...f5 12.♗xe4 fxe4 13.♗g5+ ♔d7 14.h4±) 12.g4 ♘c3 13.gxf5 ♘xb1 14.f6 ♗f8 15.♗b2+–.

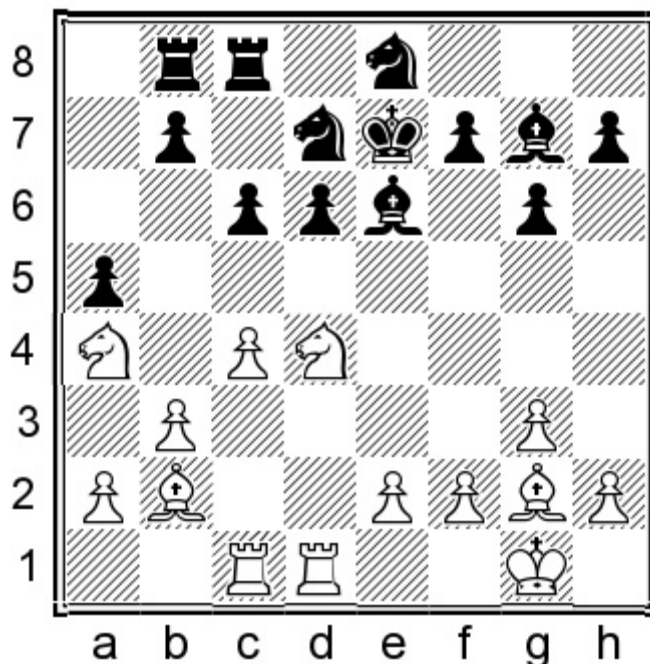
9...c6 looks natural, but White retains a pull after 10.♗a3.

The point is that 10...♘e4 11.♘xe4 ♗xa1 12.♘xd6! assures White of tremendous domination (Kasparov's suggestion 12.♗xd6+ is worse due to 12...♔d7), e.g. 12...♔f6 13.f4±. Therefore: 10...♘fd7 11.♞c1 ♞d8 12.♘a4 ♘a6 13.♘f3, with some space advantage.

10.♗b2 c6 11.♘a4

The knight is not especially scary, so 11.e4 ♘a6 12.♞d1 was perhaps the better option.

11...♗e6 12.♘f3 ♘bd7 13.♘d4 ♞hc8 14.0-0 ♞ab8 15.♞ac1 ♘e8 16.♞fd1



White will eventually have the bishop pair advantage, so he should aim to open files. For instance, 16...♖c7 17.♙a3 ♜cc8 18.c5 d5 19.e4±. Of course, he could firstly bring the king in the centre with ♔g1-f1-e1.

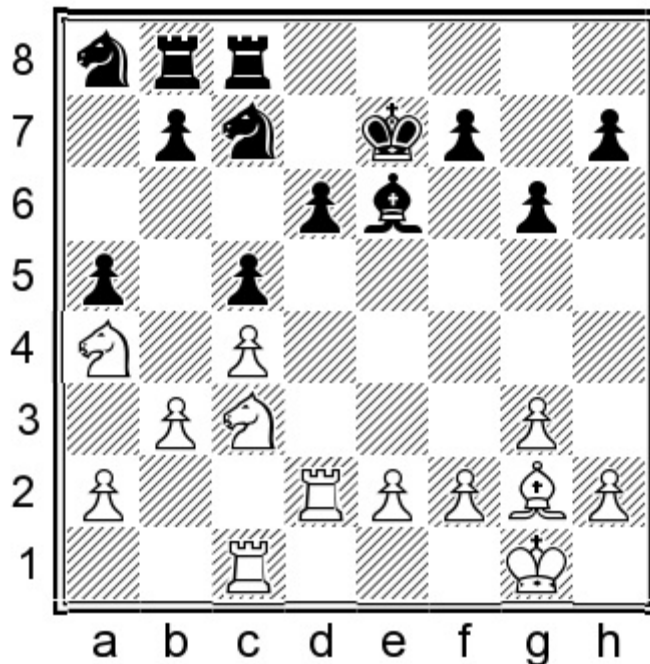
Black should not wait passively. His only sensible counterplay is based on ...b5. Let's check it: 16...b5! 17.cxb5 with a split:

a) 17...♙xd4 18.♙xd4 cxb5 19.♘b2 ♜xc1 20.♞xc1 ♘c5 21.e4 ♘d7 22.♘d3 ♞b7 23.e5 ♜c7 24.exd6+ ♔xd6 25.♞d1 with two bishops in an open position.

b) 17...cxb5 18.♞xc8 (18.♘c3 ♙xd4 19.♞xd4 ♘c7) 18...♞xc8 19.♘xb5 ♙xb2 20.♘xb2 ♜c2. Black's rook looks nice on the second rank, but White drives it back by force – 21.♞b1 ♞xe2 22.♔f1 ♜c2 23.♘d4 ♞d2 24.♘c6+ ♔f6 25.♔e1 ♜c2 26.♘d4± with 2:1 queenside pawn majority and the better pieces.

In both events White's game is slightly better. Still, 16...b5 was the best option.

16...c5?! 17.♘b5 ♙xb2 18.♘xb2 ♘b6 19.♘c3 ♘a8 20.♘ba4 ♘ec7 21.♞d2±



21...♔d7 22.♘e4

Why not 22.♖cd1! ♜e8 23.e4 with a constricting bind?!

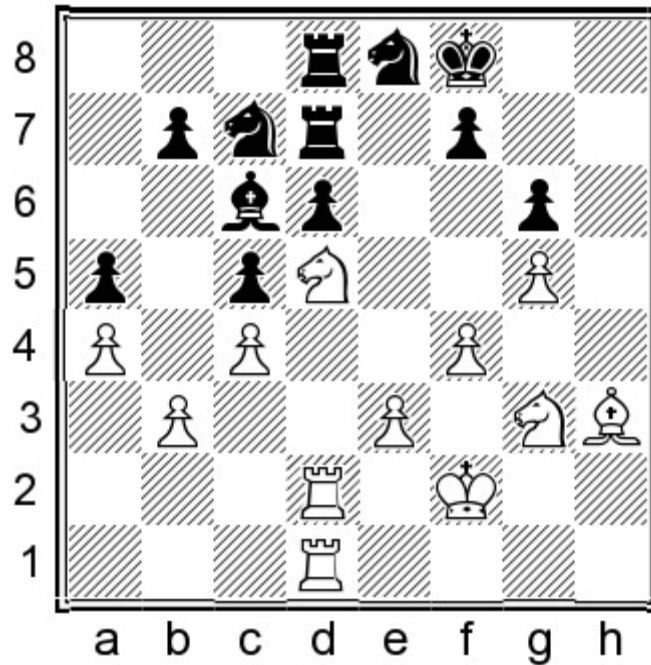
22...♜e8 23.♘ac3 ♔c6 24.♖cd1 ♜d8 25.g4

White could have played 25.a4, but Kasparov correctly judges that the a-pawns are unimportant and the game should be decided on the kingside. Accordingly, he prevents ...f5 or ...h5, and threatens the rook lift ♖d3-h3.

25...♜ac7 (25...a4 26.♖d3) 26.a4! ♜e6 27.e3 h6 28.f4 ♜d7 29.h4 ♜bd8 30.♜g3!

Kasparov has been conducting the game with a computer's accuracy. The hole on d5 deprives Black of counterplay, and now White is probing the kingside to make a second target. The immediate threat is 31.f5.

30...♜6g7 31.♜d5+ ♜f8 32.♜f2 ♜e6 33.g5! hxg5 34.hxg5 ♜6c7 35.♔h3



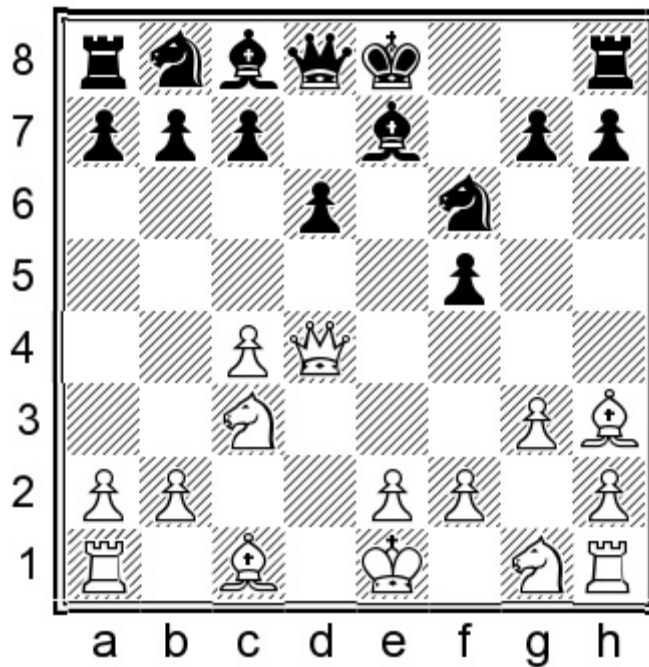
35...f5

35...♘e6 loses to 36.♙g4 followed by ♔f3 and Black is helpless against the threats along the h-file.

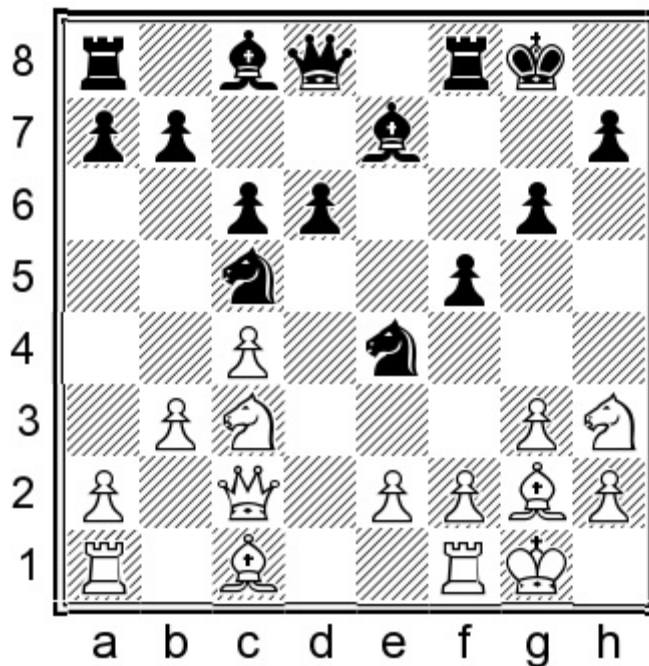
36.gxf6 ♜h7 37.♘xc7 ♘xc7 38.♙g2 ♘e8 39.♙xc6 bxc6 40.♔g2 ♜b8 41.♞d3 d5 42.cxd5 cxd5 43.♞xd5 ♞xb3 44.♘e4! ♞xe3 45.♞e5 ♞h5 46.♞e6 ♞e2+ 47.♔f3 ♞hh2 48.f7! ♞hf2+ 49.♘xf2 ♞xe6 50.fxe8=♞+ ♔xe8 51.♞c1 1-0

22. Macurek – Cuccumini ICCF 2016

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6 3.g3 f5 4.d4 ♙e7 5.♙h3 exd4 6.♞xd4 ♘f6



7. ♖d3 g6 8. ♙g2 0-0 9. ♘h3 c6 10. 0-0 ♜bd7 11. b3 ♞c5 12. ♚c2 ♝fe4



I often assess this pawn structure as better for White, but that might not be obvious to all the readers. There are two reasons for such an evaluation:

1. Black commonly lacks a constructive plan. He could only display activity by pushing ...f4, but in most cases that should be impossible.
2. On the contrary, White has even two sensible ideas – to push b4-b5 and to open the centre by e4. For both of them critical is the control of e4. The current game is an excellent illustration of White's strategy in its purest form.

13. ♖xe4 ♜xe4 14. ♙a3

It the long run it is in White's favour to trade dark-squared bishops, but to keep the queens in order to exploit the weakening of Black's castling position. Other possible implementations of this plan are:

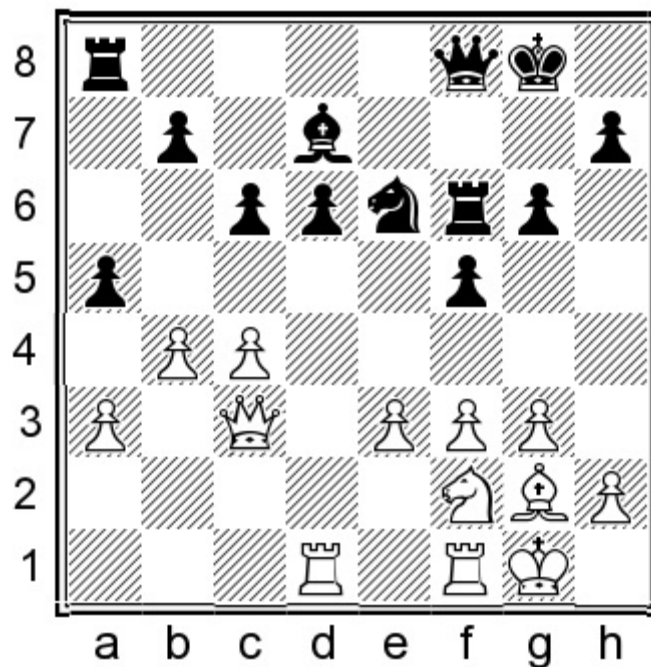
14. ♙f4 ♙f6 15. ♖ad1 ♚a5 16. ♙e3 ♚c3 17. ♚b1 a5 18. ♖d3 ♚e5 19. ♙d4 ♚e7 20. ♙xf6±; 14. ♙b2 ♙f6 15. ♙xf6 ♚xf6 16. ♖ad1 ♚e5 17. ♜f4±.

Since it is a correspondence game, White follows the computer suggestion, which is a slightly improved version of the latter line.

14... ♚a5 15. ♙b2 ♙f6 16. ♙xf6 ♖xf6 17. e3 ♙d7 18. f3!

Strightforward and strong! White puts his pawns into motion.

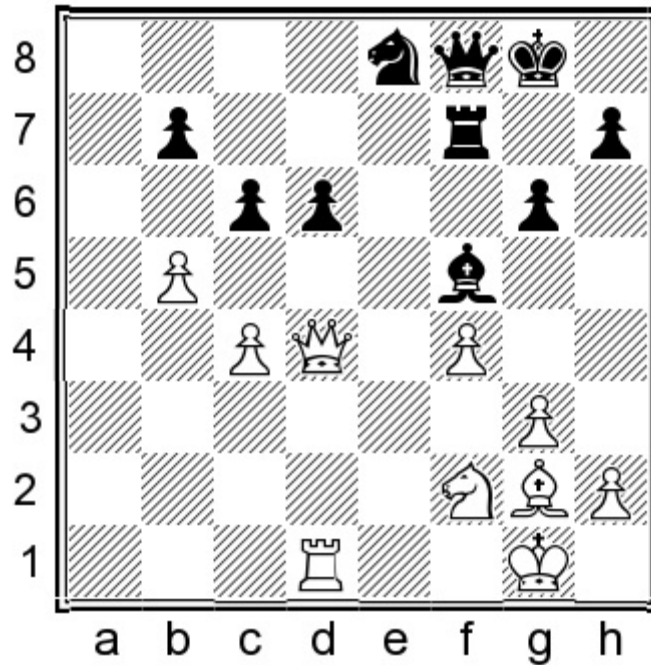
18... ♜c5 19. a3 ♜e6 20. b4 ♚b6 21. ♚c3 ♚d8 22. ♖ad1 ♚f8 23. ♜f2 a5



24. f4! axb4 25. axb4 ♜c7 26. e4

In an OTB game White would probably prepare the break with 26. ♖fe1 since Black's counterplay is ineffective: 26... b5 27. c5 d5 28. ♜d3 ♖e6 29. ♜e5 ♙e8 30. ♖a1±; 26... d5 27. e4! fxe4 28. ♜xe4±.

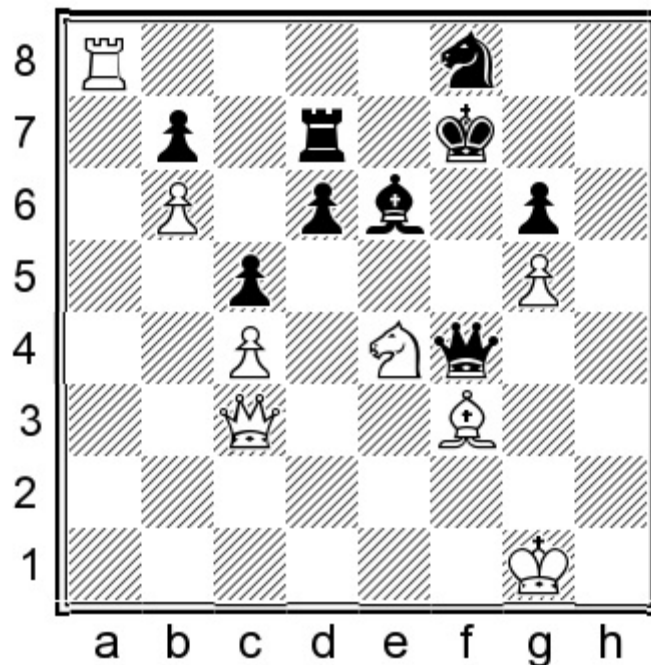
26... ♖f7 27. ♖fe1 ♖e8 28. ♚d4 fxe4 29. ♖xe4 ♙f5 30. ♖xe8 ♜xe8 31. b5



Full triumph of White's strategy! This diagram says it all. Recall it next time you have to play against a pawn structure with d6+f5.

Now Black should have simply abandoned the d6-pawn with 31...♔d7 since the game course led him to suffocation:

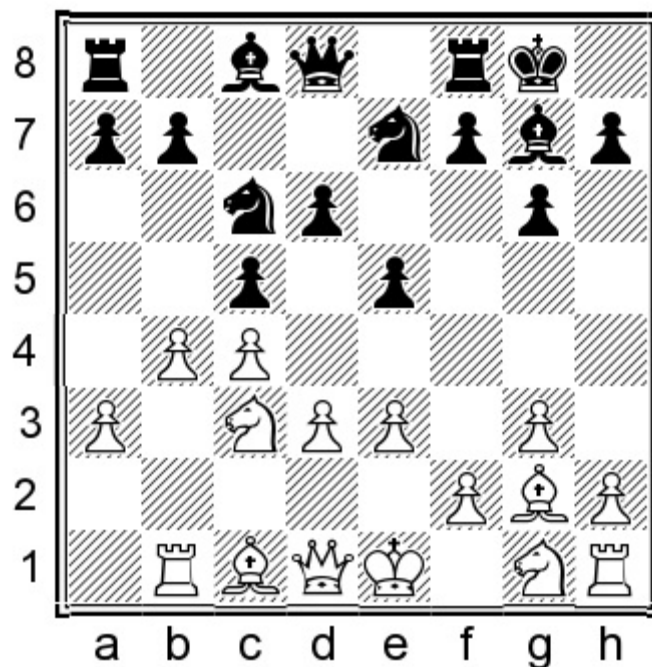
31...c5 32.♙a1 ♞f6 33.♚c3 h5 34.h3 ♜d7 35.♞f3 ♞e6 36.g4 hxg4 37.hxg4 ♚f7 38.♞a1 ♞h7 39.♞a8+ ♞f8 40.♞e4 ♚xf4 41.g5 ♞f7 42.b6



42...♞e7 (42...d5 43.♚h8) 43.♚g7+ ♚f7 44.♚xf7+ ♞xf7 45.♞f6 ♜d8 46.♞a7 1-0

W. ch. (8) Seville 02.11.1987

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6 3.g3 c5 4.♙g2 ♘c6 5.a3 g6 6.b4 ♙g7 7.♚b1 ♘ge7 8.e3 0-0 9.d3



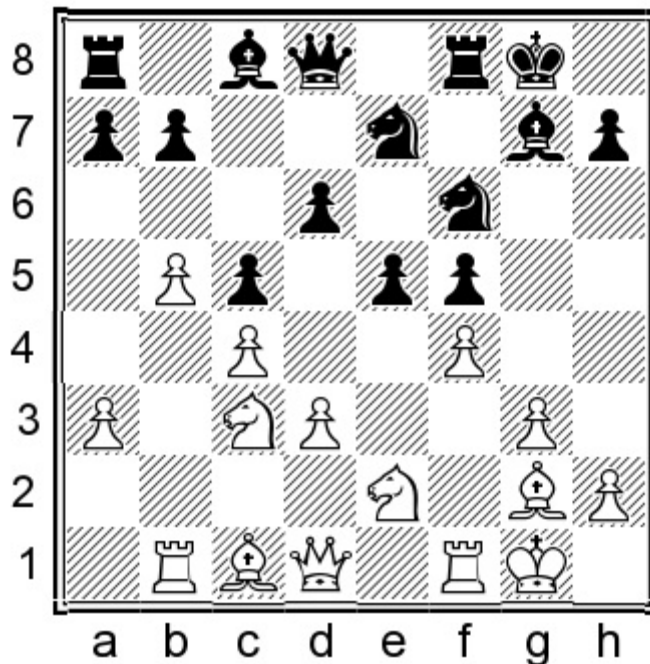
9...♚b8

Karpov could have exchanged two pawns with 9...a6 10.♘ge2 cxb4 11.axb4 b5, but 12.♘xb5 ♚b8 13.♘bc3 ♘xb4 14.0-0 a5 15.♙a3 preserves some pressure.

His move is more flexible – it enables ...♙e6, but also preserves the option of ...a6+...b5.

The straightforward 9...f5 10.♘ge2 g5 is obviously premature before White's castling as it could be countered by 11.h4 g4 12.0-0, and Black lacks a plan.

Besides, the thematic idea f4 may be even stronger – 11.b5 ♘b8 12.f4 gxf4 13.exf4 ♘d7 14.0-0 ♘f6. This position occurred in Kasparov-Wendt, simul. Frankfurt 2000. Kasparov opted for:



15. ♖h1?! ♔h8 16. ♙e3 and did not obtain anything.

There was a tactical solution:

15. ♘a4!? ♗g6 16. fxe5, exploiting the weakness of c5. Also good was:

15. ♙b2 ♜b8 16. ♚d2 with typical for this pawn structure pressure on the centre.

10. ♘ge2 ♙e6 11. b5

This is strategically double-edged since from a5 the knight would be eyeing c4. That will make it impossible to meet ...f5 by f4 in view of ...e4.

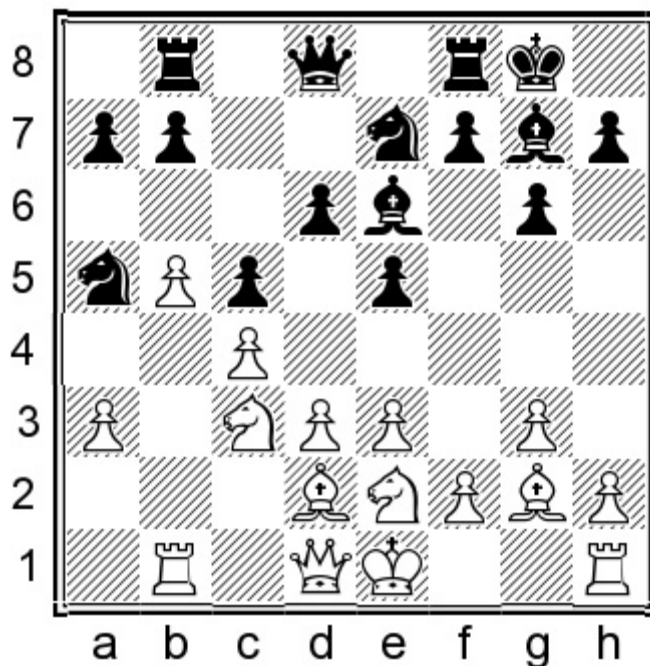
11. 0-0! was less committal. The idea is to play first ♘d5, ♗ec3. Play may continue:

a) 11...b6 12. ♘d5 ♚d7 (12...f5 13. ♗ec3) 13. b5 ♘d8 14. ♗xe7+ ♚xe7 15. ♘c3 ♚d7 16. ♙d2±.

b) 11...a6!? – denying b5, but weakening the b-file. 12. bxc5 dxc5 13. ♚c2 b6 14. ♜d1, followed up by ♜b2, ♚b1.

11... ♘a5 12. ♙d2

The intrigue now is who will prevail in the battle for the centre.



12...b6

12...d5?! 13.cxd5 ♖xd5 14.♗xd5 ♙xd5 15.♙xd5 ♖xd5 16.0-0 b6 17.♙xa5 bxa5 18.♗c3 is a positional disaster for Black.

The best way to exploit the somewhat premature b5 was 12...f5! 13.e4 b6, when White lacks a clear plan. Perhaps he should switch to a waiting game with 14.♖c2 h6 15.0-0.

13.0-0 ♗b7

13...f5 14.♖c2 g5?! does not achieve its goal in view of 15.f4 gxf4 16.gxf4 e4 17.♗d5 ♖xd5 18.cxd5 exd3 19.♖xd3 ♙f7 20.♗h1.

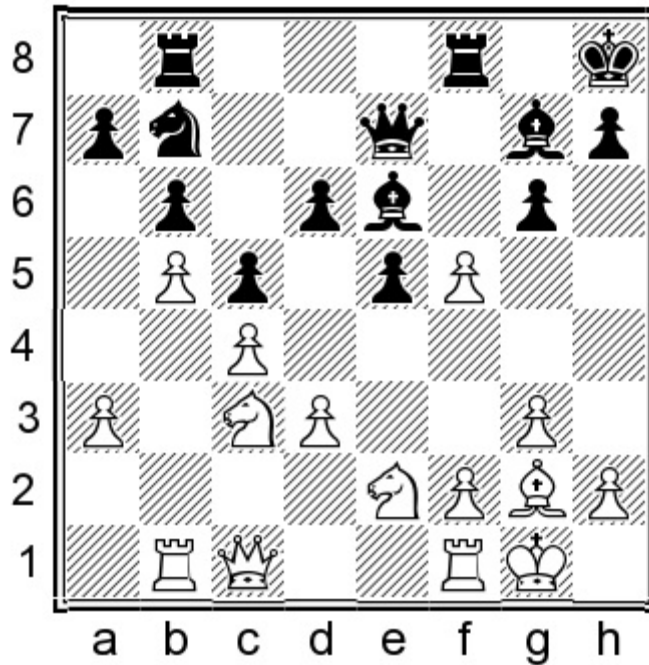
14.e4 ♗h8

It was more natural to play 14...♖d7 or 14...f5.

15.♖c1

15.♖c2 to connect the rooks is slightly better for White – 15...♖d7 16.a4 ♙h3 17.f3.

15...f5 16.♙g5 ♖e8 17.♙xe7 ♖xe7 18.exf5



18...♙xf5

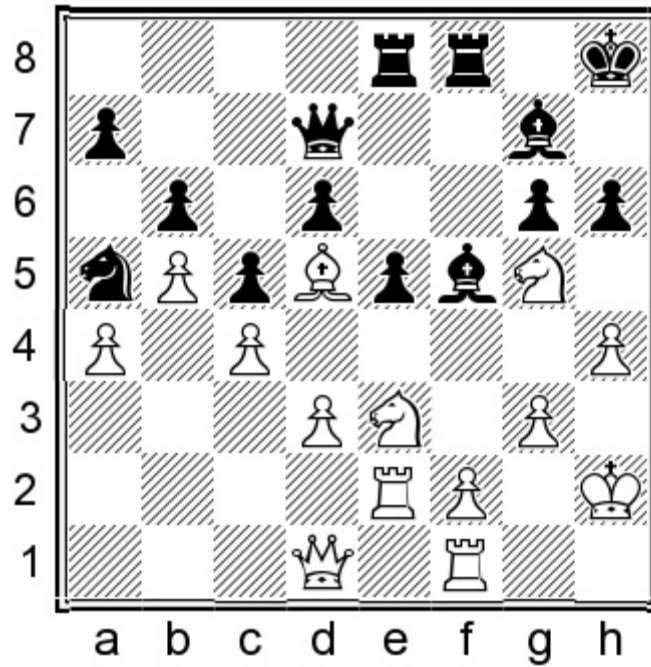
18...gxf5! 19.♘d5 (but not 19.f4? e4!) 19...♙xd5 20.♙xd5 ♖d8 21.f4 ♗e6 was slightly annoying for Black, but at least he would have a better control of the centre. Now White has a stable edge due to his dominance on the light squares.

19.♘d5 ♗d7 20.♙d2 ♖a5?!

Karpov understood that he was to design a passive, but solid stand, and wait. However, his decision to voluntarily isolate his piece at the edge of the board is amazing. It was better to gather all the pieces in the centre – 20...♖be8, then ...♘d8.

21.♘ec3 ♖be8 22.♘e4 ♖b7 23.a4 ♖a5 24.h4± ♖b7 25.♙h2 ♖b8 26.♖a1 ♖a5 27.♖a3 ♖f7 28.♗c3 ♖d8 29.♖a2 ♙h6 30.♘g5 ♖ff8 31.♖e2 ♙g7 32.♗c2 ♖de8 33.♘e3 ♙h6 34.♙d5 ♙g7 35.♗d1 h6

Kasparov has played this part of the game following the best examples of ...Karpov! He has been slowly, but implacably improving his pieces, keeping the grip. Black's last move provided the decisive weakening of the light squares.

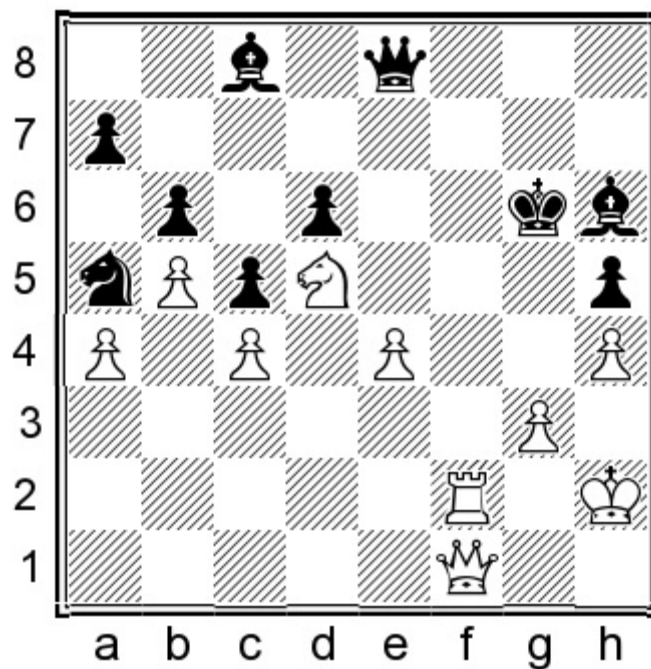


After the text best was 36. ♖xf5! gxf5 37. ♜e3 ♜e7 38. ♚h5 ♜f6 39. f4, but Kasparov did not want to force the events before the time control.

36. ♖e4 ♚d8 37. ♜a2 ♜c8 38. ♖c3 h5 39. ♜e4 ♜e6 40. ♖cd5 ♜h6 41. ♖g2 ♜g7?

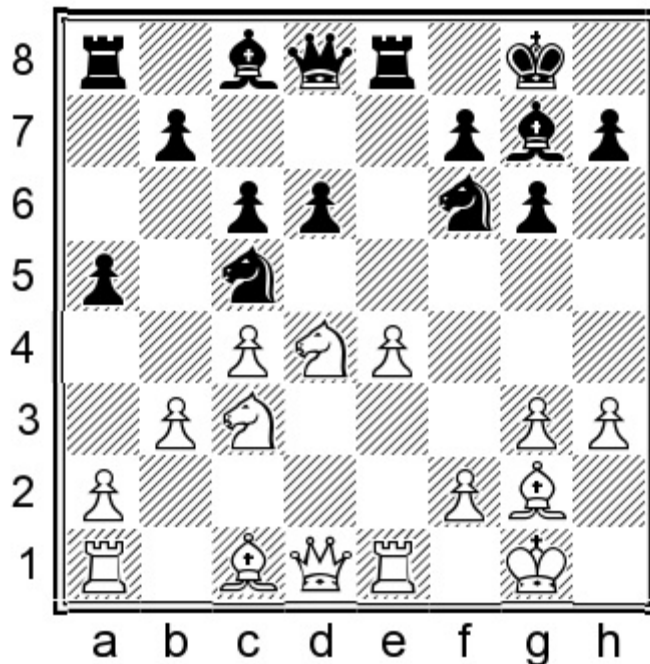
41... ♜b7!, intending to take on d5, kept Black in the game.

42. f4+- exf4 43. ♖gxf4 ♜e5 44. ♖xg6! ♜xf1 45. ♚xf1 ♜xe4 46. dxe4 ♜xg6 47. ♜f2 ♚e8



48. e5! dxe5 49. ♜f6+ ♜g7 50. ♜d6 1-0

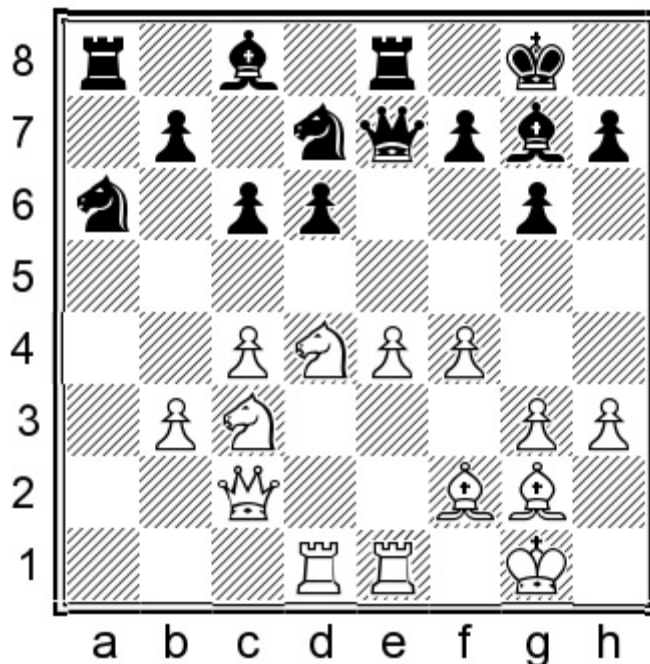
1.d4 d6 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 g6 4.g3 ♙g7 5.♙g2 0-0 6.0-0 c6 7.♘c3 ♘bd7 8.e4 e5 9.b3 exd4 10.♘xd4 ♙e8
11.♙e1 a5 12.h3 ♘c5



13.♙b1 ♘fd7 14.♙e3 ♙e7 15.♙c2 ♘e5 16.♙bd1 a4 17.f4

We would have met ...a4 earlier by b4, but here the black queen is already on e7 and cannot go to a5. That does not mean b4 is unnecessary. Our general plan remains an attack on the queenside. We only postpone it.

17...axb3 18.axb3 ♘ed7 19.♙f2 ♘a6



20. ♖a2!

This is a well known way of enabling b4. The modern engines also contemplate 20. ♙a2 with the same idea, but the text is more natural.

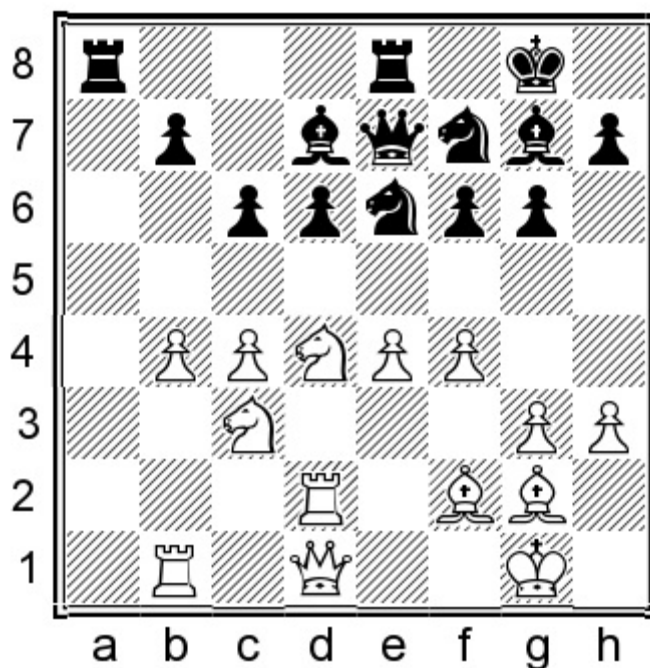
20... ♗f8 21. b4 ♗c7 22. ♗c3 h5 23. ♗a4 ♗d7 24. ♗f3!?

Damljanovic's play is logical and purposeful. His next aim is the pawn on d6. If White cannot win it, at least he could exchange it with c4-c5 to reach full control of the centre as in the next game. The backup plan is to push b5.

Here is a classical illustration, performed by the ex-world champion:

Tigran Petrosian-Ciocaltea

Buenos Aires 1978

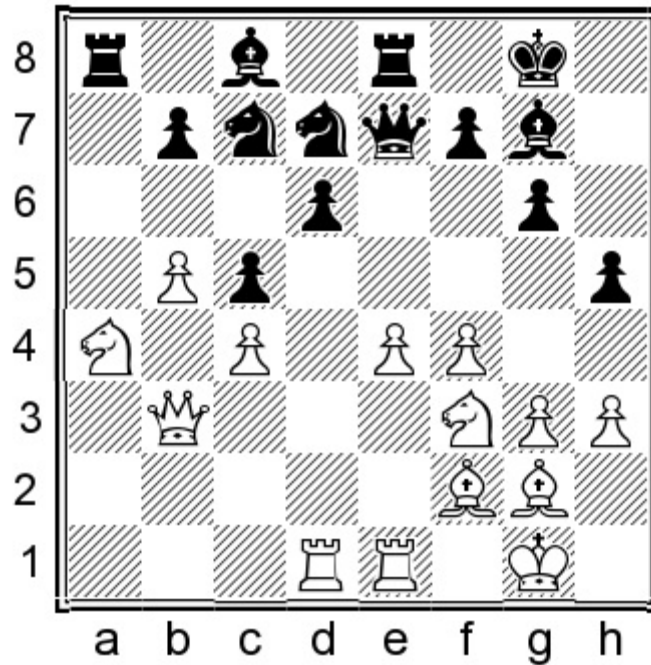


26. ♗de2! ♕c8 27. ♗a4 ♗f8 28. ♗b6 ♜b8 29. c5! with a decisive positional advantage.

24... ♗a6

Perhaps 24...d5 25. cxd5 ♙xb4 26. dxc6 bxc6 27. ♙xc6 ♙xa4 28. ♙xc7 ♜a6 29. e5 ♜c6 30. ♜a1 would have given Black more chances to save the game with 3:4 pawns on the kingside. Note that Petrosian did not offer his opponent even this option, by protecting the b4-pawn!

25. ♙b3 c5 26. b5 ♗c7



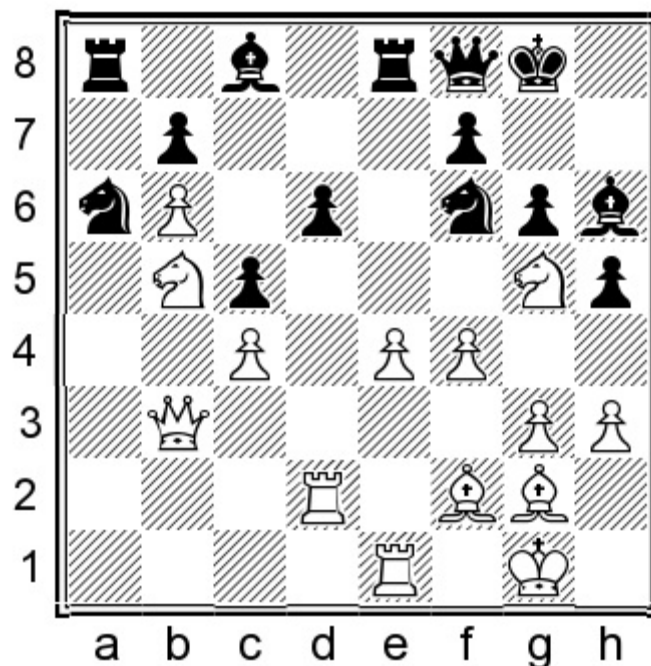
Now the pawns are even, but Black's position is hopeless. White's dominance in the centre should allow him to finish off the opponent with a direct attack – 27.f5! ♖f6 (27...♞b8 28.g4) 28.e5!+-.

Damljanovic prefers to keep squeezing, without making any weaknesses.

27.b6 ♗a6?!

Only 27...♗e6 28.♗c3 ♙xc3! 29.♙xc3 ♞a6 allowed Black to stay in the game – 30.f5 ♗ef8 31.g4 hxg4 32.♙h4 f6±.

28.♞d2 ♗f6 29.♗c3 ♙f8 30.♗g5 ♙h6 31.♗b5+-

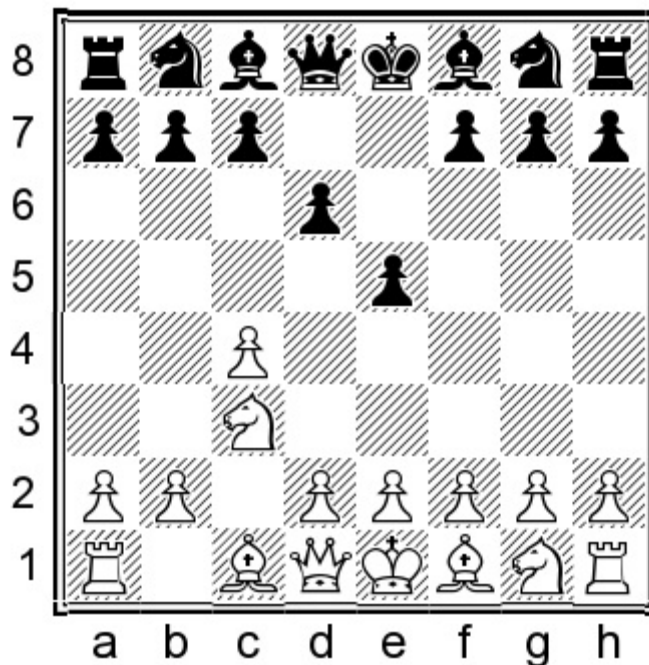


31...♞d8 32.♞ed1 ♙xg5 33.fxg5 ♗h7 34.♙e3 ♙e7 35.h4 ♙g4 36.♞f1 ♞d7 37.♞df2 ♙e8 38.♙c1 ♗f8

39.♙b2 ♖e6 40.♗c3 ♗d4 41.♘xd4 cxd4 42.♖xd4 ♕e5 43.♗d2 ♖c5 44.♗f4 ♘h7 45.♗f6 ♜g8 46.♙d4
1-0

Chapter 8. 1.c4 e5 2.♞c3 d6 3.♞f3, 3.e3, 3.d4 Main Ideas

1.c4 e5 2.♞c3 d6

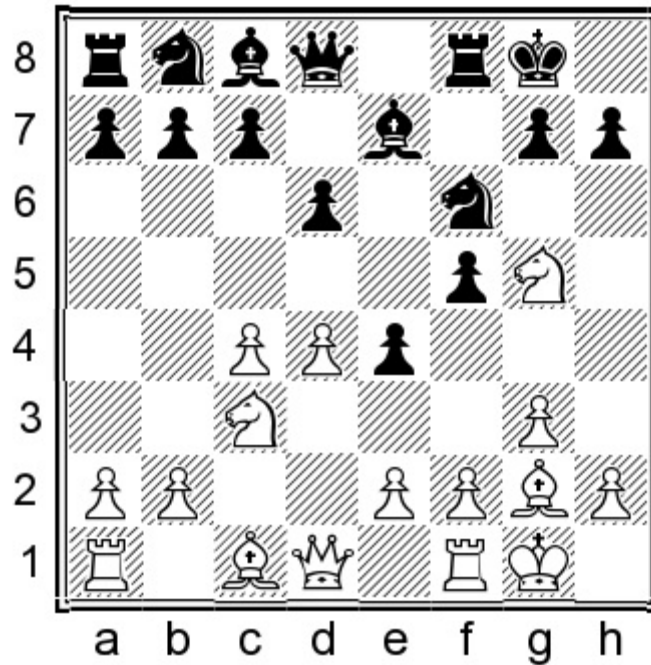


In this chapter I analyse 3 alternatives to my main recommendation 3.g3. They all have some very attractive aspects, but also some major flaws.

A. 3.♞f3, followed by d4, is the only path to the Classical System of the King's Indian. Its "only" drawback (compare it to 3.g3!) is to allow ...e4 with a tempo, thus ceding space in the centre. Black's most principled retort is:

3...f5!, when 4.d4 e4 5.♞g5 c6 6.♞h3 may be popular, but it is obviously against the common sense in chess. The knight has spent three tempos just to land on h3!. Somebody might argue that Black's centre is overextended and could be undermined with f2-f3, but Black easily bolsters it with ...c6 and ...d5. Although the engines tend to favour White, I believe that he has nothing to boast with. We could postpone d4:

4.g3 ♕e7 5.♗g2 ♞f6 6.0-0 0-0 7.d4 e4 8.♞g5

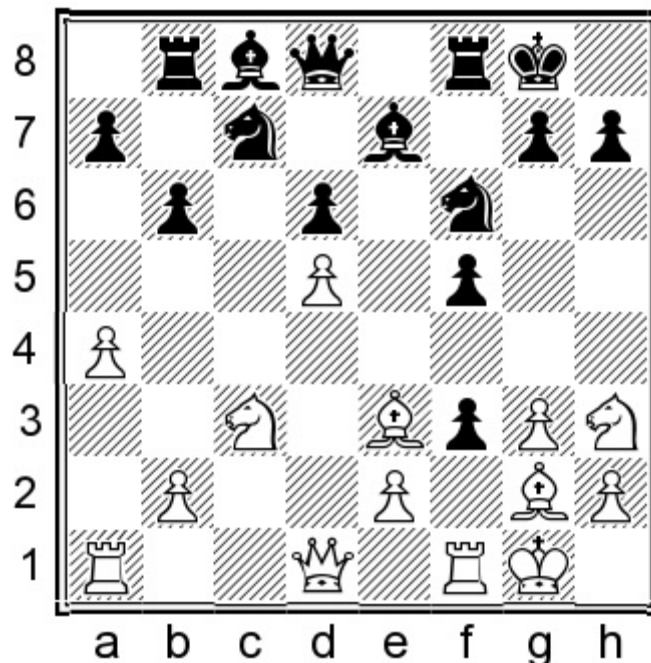


This improved move order allows our knight to remain on g5. In many games White obtains a pull. For instance, 8...h6 9. Nf3 g5 10. f3 gave me an edge – see **Game 26** Kir.Georgiev-Kadric, Kragujevac 2013.

However, I frankly admit that 8...d5!? 9.cxd5 Nxd5 looks fairly balanced to me. On the other hand, nobody has tried it in OTB games.

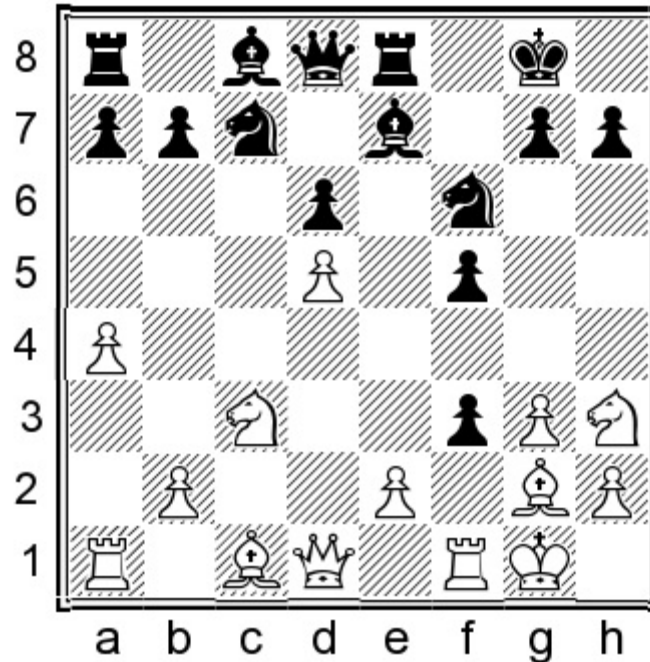
Against pawns on f5+e4 the break f2-f3 is trivial, especially when we played d4-d5 to prevent pawn support for e4. However, sometimes it is not obvious how to recapture on f3. Fine nuances could tip the balance in favour of exf3 or Bxf3 (or even Rxf3).

Analysis



Here best is 15. exf3! – opening the e-file to exploit the hole on e6. The g2-bishop could go to f1 or h3. 15. Rxf3 Nf4 16. Bf4 a5, followed by ...b5, is unclear.

Analysis

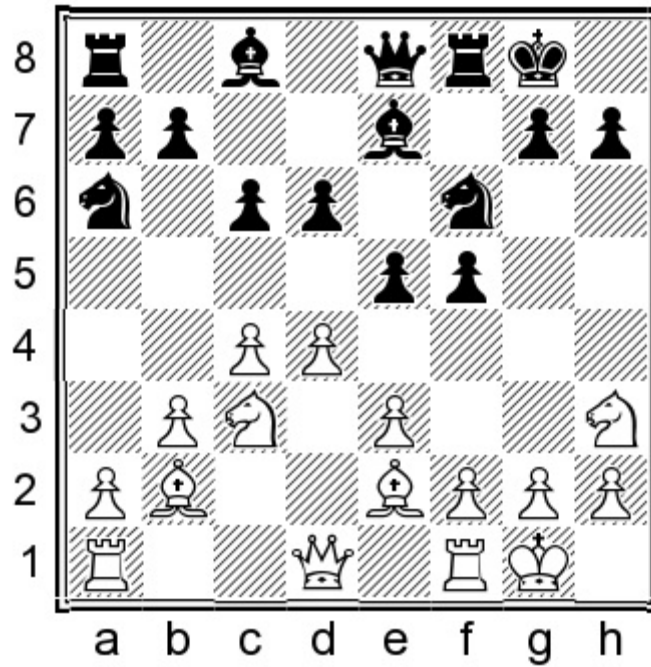


Again 14.exf3 is possible, but 14.♖xf3!? is good as well. Compared to the previous example, Black's rook is missing from the f-file and the bishop is not on e3. The computer even contemplates meeting 14...♗g4 (Or 14...♕d7 15.♗f4 g6 16.♕e3 ♕f8 17.♕d4.) 15.e4 by 15...♖f8.

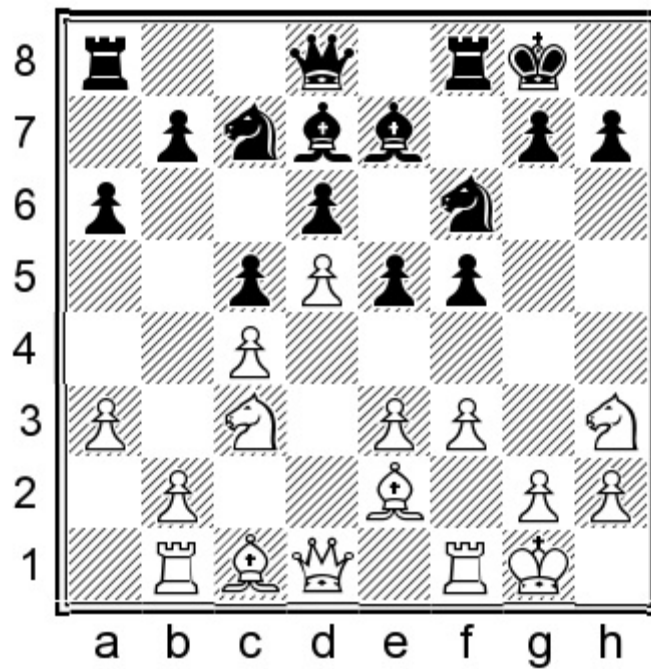
B. 3.e3 is an interesting attempt. It offers nice possibilities against the thematic 3...f5 4.d4 e4 and 3...g6 4.d4 ♕g7 5.♗f3 ♗c6 6.♕e2 f5. Its Achilles heel is:

3...♗f6! and the arising timid version of the KID should not be of any concern to Black. Still, 3...♗f6 is less popular than 3...g6 and 3...f5 so you should not face it too often. Otherwise White's game is easy. He has a clear plan to advance on the queenside:

Analysis



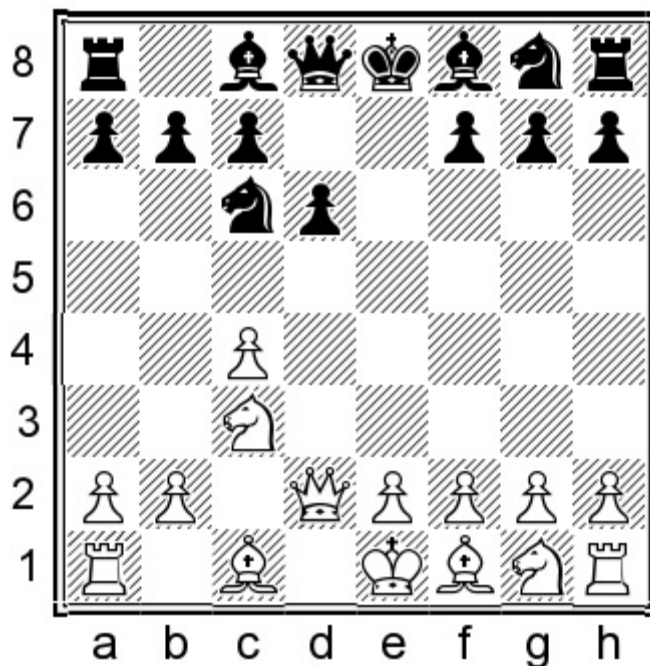
10.c5!.
Analysis



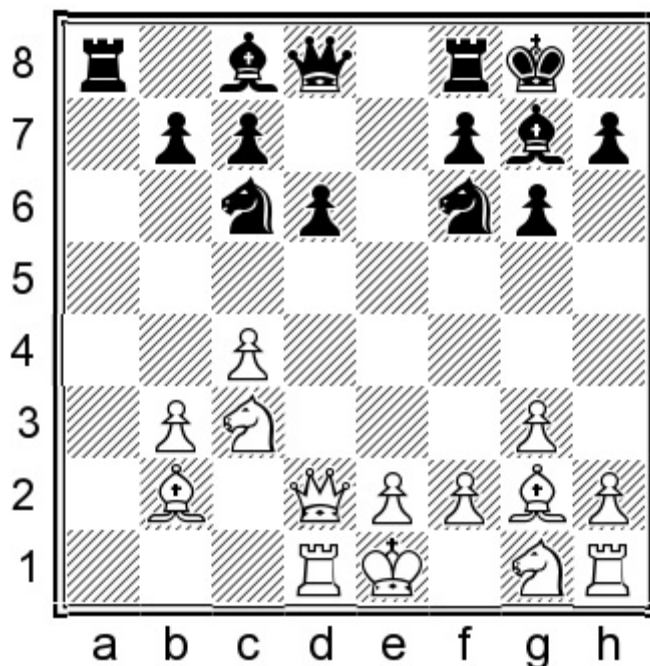
12.b4!.

C. 3.d4 exd4 4.♙xd4 would have been a straightforward way to achieve a generally superior pawn structure, if Black had not a forced way of obtaining an active position:

4...♘c6! (the move order with 4...♘f6 first is less accurate owing to 5.g3 ♘c6 6.♙d1!?) 5.♙d2



5...♘f6! 6.b3 a5! 7.♙b2 a4 8.♞d1 axb3 9.axb3 g6 10.g3 ♕g7 11.♙g2 0-0=



The b3-pawn will need protection after ...♘d7-c5. Black's knights provide good counterplay.

Theoretical status

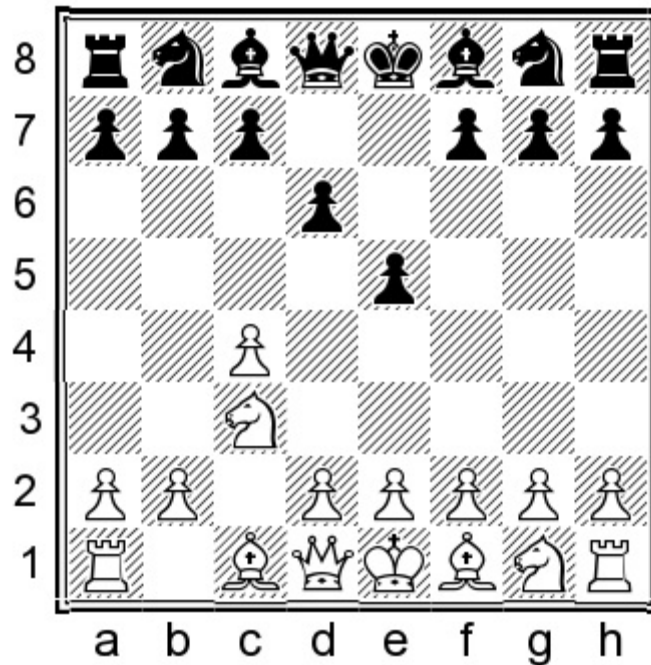
I do not like 3.d4, but I included it in the book since White scores more than 58% with it as a whole. Besides, Cummings chose it for his repertoire against 2...d6. However, he completely misses the idea 6...a5! and 7...a4, which is in fact the most popular retort to 3.d4. White has not even proved full equality in OTB games!

3.♘f3! is the opposite case. I played it myself and my only objection against it is a plan which is practically unknown (8...d5!?). Perhaps it deserves a try.

Finally, the plan with 3.e3 is advocated by A.Smith in his *e3 Poison*. He does not have a decent proposition against 3...♘f6, but White's 59% suggest that Black's most solid equaliser is not widely known.

Chapter 8. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6 3.♘f3, 3.e3, 3.d4 Step by Step

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6



A. 3.♘f3; B. 3.e3; C. 3.d4

A. 3.♘f3 f5!

3...g6 4.d4 ♘d7 5.e4 ♙g7 6.♙e2 should transpose to the Classical System. The deviations are clearly inferior. Remember that you can attack any placement of the black knight except of ♘f6 with h4:

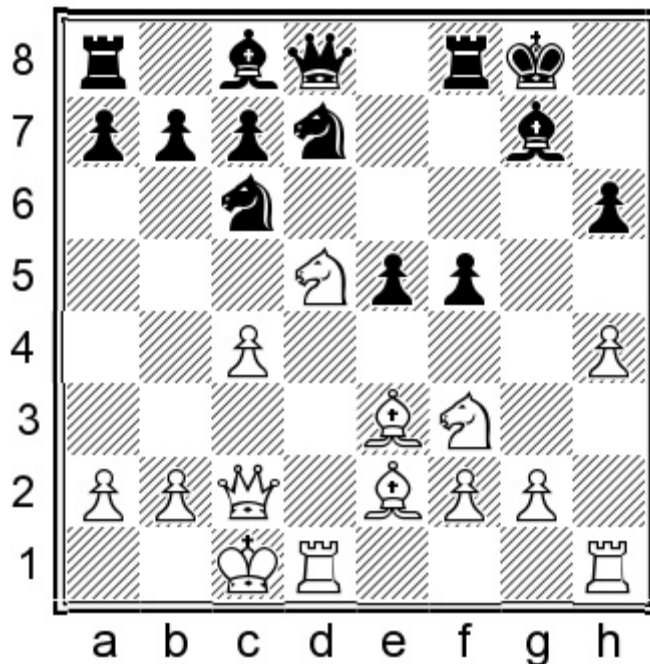
6...♘e7?! 7.h4 h6 8.♙e3 f5

8...0-0? 9.♙d2 ♙h7 gets under attack – 10.0-0-0 c6 (10...f5? loses to 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.exf5 gxf5 13.♘g5+ hxg5 14.hxg5+ ♙g8 15.c5+–) 11.g4.

9.dxe5 dxe5 10.exf5

10.g3 0-0 11.♙d2 is another fine possibility.

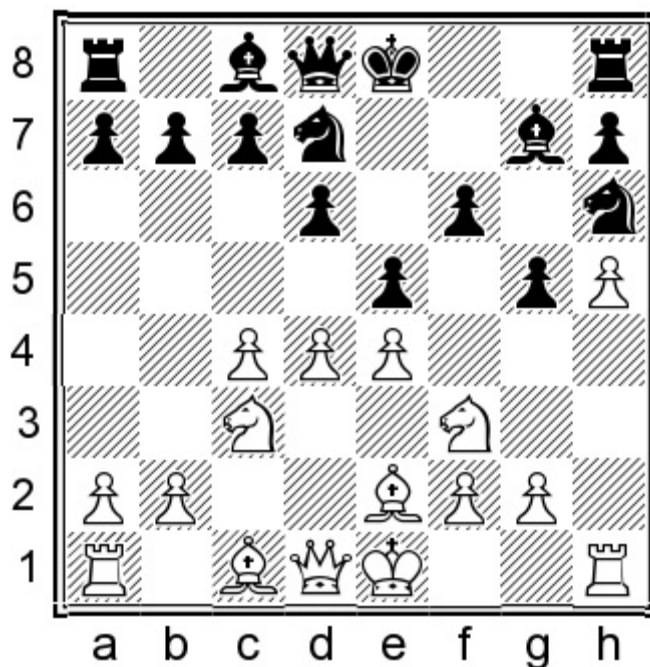
10...gxf5 (Or 10...♘xf5 11.♙c2 0-0 12.0-0-0 ♘xe3 13.fxe3 e4 14.♙xe4 ♙xc3 15.bxc3±.) 11.♙c2 0-0 12.0-0-0 ♘c6 13.♘d5±



I was ready to meet 13...e4 by 14.♘g5. My opponent “invited” me to end the game with a mating attack:

13...f4 14.♘g5!+- hxg5 15.hxg5 ♖xg5 16.♗h7+ ♔f7 17.♙h5+ ♔e6 18.♘xc7+ ♔e7 19.♙g6 ♜f7 20.♞h5 ♘f8 21.♙c5+ ♔f6 22.♞d6+ ♔e7 23.♞d1+ ♔f6 24.♘e8+ 1-0, Kiril Georgiev-Papin, rapid Warsaw 2005.

6...♘h6?! 7.h4 f6 8.h5 g5



Black’s position is difficult to break, but his pieces are very passive. We only have to be patient and grind him down on the queenside. Practice has seen two approaches:

To close the centre with 9.d5 and play for b4, c5;

To open the d-file.

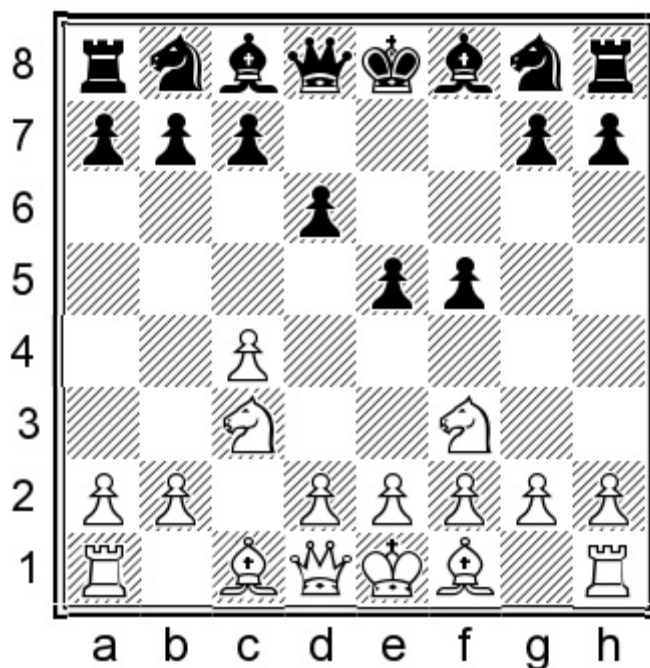
Besides, there is no need to define the centre right now.

9.♙e3!? c6

9...0-0 is elegantly refuted by 10.♚d2! ♘f7 (The key point is 10...♘g4 11.h6! ♙xh6 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♘h4! ♘xe3 14.♚xe3±.) 11.d5 with a huge positional advantage. We can follow up with the manoeuvre ♘h2-f1-g3.

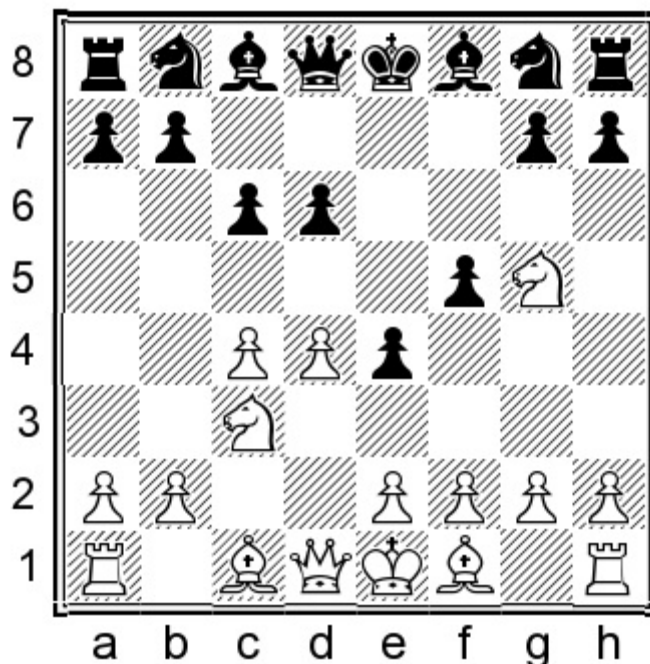
10.d5± (10.♚b3, intending 0-0-0, is a pleasant alternative) 10...c5 11.♘d2 0-0 12.g4, Rusev-Koehler, Copenhagen 2012. White will break through the queenside, even with a sacrifice on c5, if nothing else.

Let's return now to the main line:



Here **A1.** 4.d4 is the main move, while **A2.** 4.g3 brings better practical results.

A1. 4.d4 e4 5.♘g5 c6



6. ♖h3

This plan allows ...d5 which should eventually balance the game. The only way to impede it is: 6.d5. However, it offers Black the e5-square and clear play against the d5-pawn. For instance: 6...♙e7 7.♖h3 ♜a6 8.g3 ♜f6 9.♗f4 0-0 10.h4 ♜c7=.

6...♙e7

Hundreds of games from this position have not established the best set-up for White. He should not delay f3 for too long as his lack of space might begin to tell at some point. However, the immediate: 7.f3 ♜f6 sees White struggling.

7.g3 ♜f6 8.♙g2 looks natural, but 8...d5 (or 8...0-0 9.0-0 d5) neutralises in advance all active attempts.

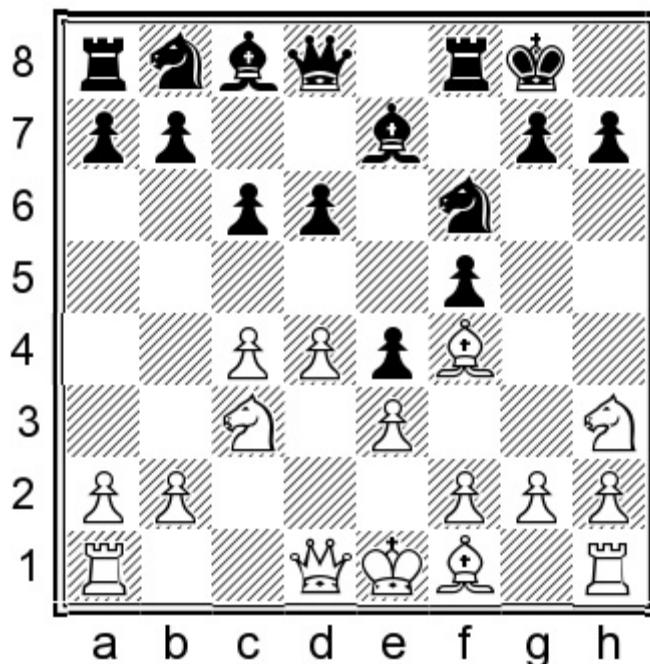
Perhaps White's most interesting and fresh option is to lead out the bishop:

7.♙f4 ♜f6

Taking the challenge with 7...g5 8.♙d2 h6 9.f3! d5 is exactly what White hopes for: 10.♗f2 ♜f6 11.g4!, demolishing the centre.

7...♜a6 8.e3 ♜c7 should be attacked with 9.f3 ♜f6 10.♙e2 exf3 11.♙xf3. This line underlines the reason behind 7.♙f4 – it is obviously better to have it on f4 rather than on d2.

8.e3 0-0



9. ♖g3

The computer suggests 9. ♖b3.

It may be justified in the event of 9... ♖b6 10. ♖c2, but I do not see an advantage after: 9... ♘a6 10. ♙xd6 ♙xd6 11. c5+ ♙h8 12. cxd6 b5 13. a4 b4 14. ♘e2 ♖xd6 15. ♘ef4 ♘d5=.

It is more consistent to focus on the break f3. The consistent move:

9. ♙e2 should be met by 9... ♘e8!

Preventing 10. f3 in view of 10... g5 11. ♙g3 exf3 12. gxf3 f4, winning the ♘h3.

Smejkal chose to control g5 with 9... h6, but this seriously weakens the castling position. The most convincing answer is 10. f3! exf3 11. gxf3 (the thematic 11. ♙xf3?? runs here into a fork) 11... ♘h5 (11... g5 12. ♙g3 f4 13. ♘xf4 is difficult to defend.) 12. ♖g1, followed by ♖d2, 0-0-0.

10. ♙g3

Reviving the idea of f3, which would be effective after 10... ♙h8.

The bishop's retreat also enables 10... ♘a6 11. ♘f4 ♘ac7 12. d5.

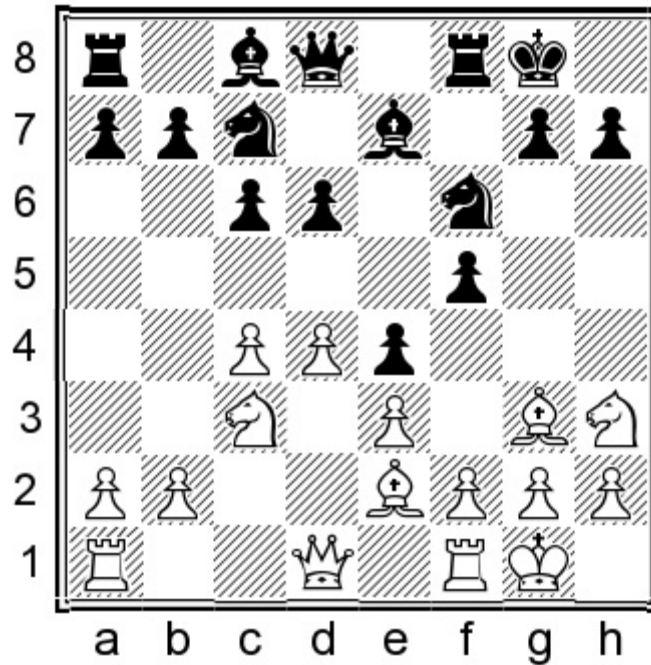
10... g5 11. ♖d2 ♘g7, and White cannot break through.

The point behind 9. ♙g3 is that 9... ♘e8 10. f3 would accomplish the break in favourable circumstances.

9... ♘a6 10. ♙e2 ♘c7

10... ♘g4 was incomprehensible for me in Molzahn-L.Diaz, ICCF 2012. The knight soon returned home and White got an edge after 11. ♖b3 ♘c7 12. ♘f4 ♖f7 13. 0-0 ♘f6 14. h3 g5 15. ♘h5 ♘xh5 16. ♙xh5 ♖f6 17. ♖ac1 ♘e6 18. ♙d1 ♖h6 19. ♖c2 ♖e8 20. b4±.

11.0-0



This complex position needs testing. The game Sa.Martinovic-Zo.Jovanovic, Pozega 2018, saw 11...h6, when:

12.f3 exf3 13.♖xf3 would have left White with the slightly more active pieces, but 13...♘h5!

14.♙e1 g5 holds everything. Perhaps White can postpone f3 for a while:

12.♘f4 ♖h7 13.♚c2 ♜e8

Or 13...g5 14.♘h5 ♘xh5 15.♙xh5 ♙e6 16.f3.

14.f3! g5 15.fxg4 gxf4 16.♖xf4↑. Black's king is weak.

A better option is: 11...♙e6! 12.♖c1 h6 13.f3 exf3 14.♖xf3 g5 15.♖f1 with sharp play.

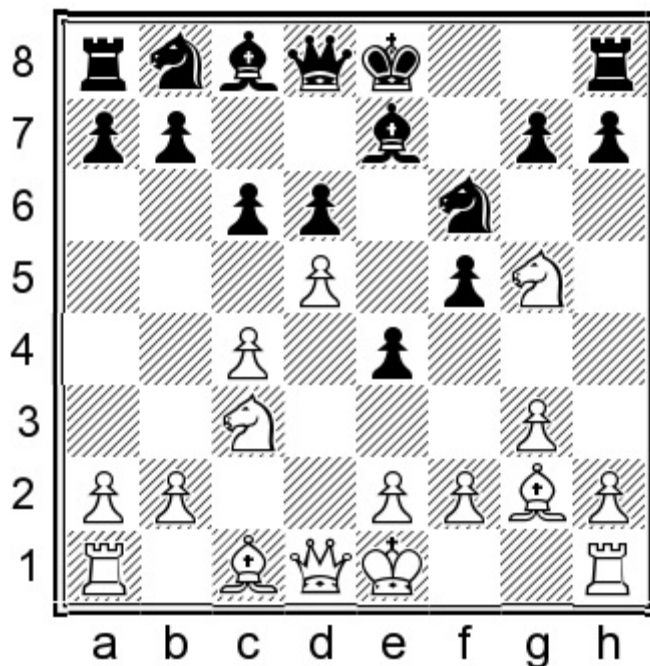
A2. 4.g3 ♙e7

4...♘f6 would transpose after 5.♙g2 ♙e7. Black should also reckon with:

5.d4!? e4 6.♘h4 g6 7.♙g5 ♙g7 8.♘g2 h6 9.♙xf6 ♜xf6 10.e3, then h4, ♘f4, ♚b3, 0-0-0.

5.♙g2 ♘f6 6.0-0

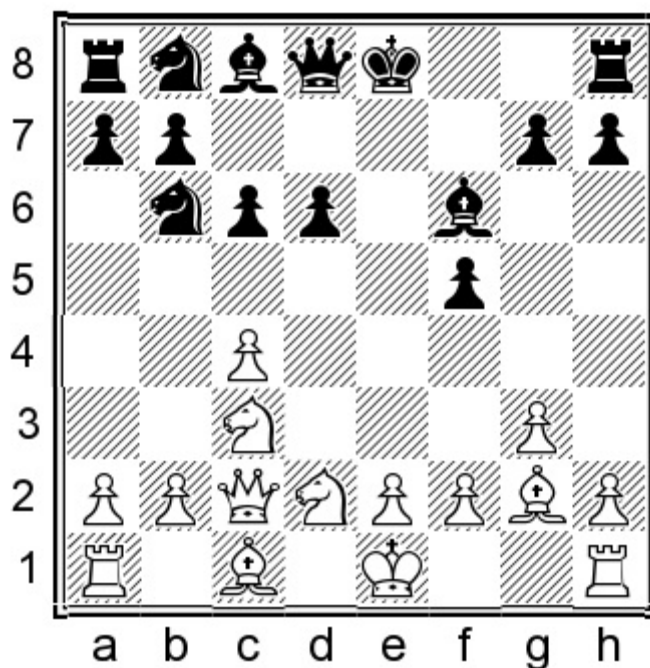
6.d4 before castling has no advantages – 6...e4 7.♘g5 when the same 7...d5 or 7...c6 8.d5 are possible.



For instance:

8... Nxd5

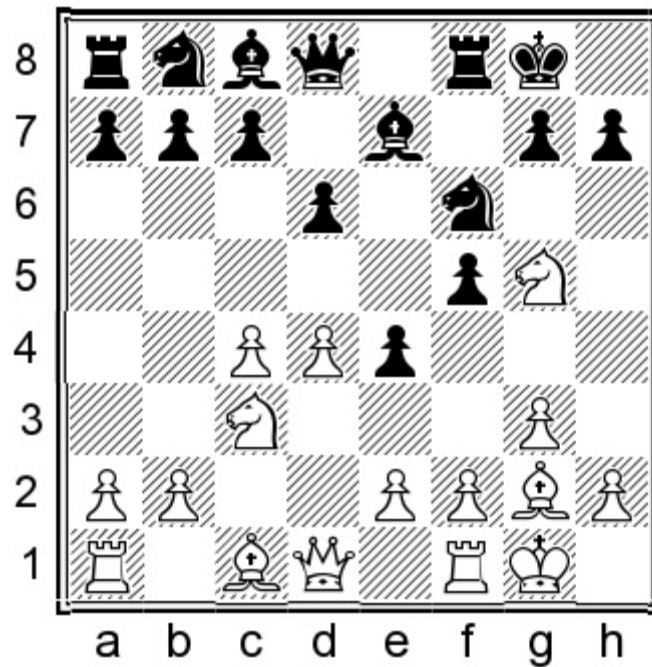
Then 9. Nxe4 Bb6 10. Nd2 Qf6 11. 0-0 0-0 12. Qc2 leads to a rich position which needs more testing.



In Riyadh 2017 Sjugirov defended twice with 12... Qe6, but 13. b3! d5 does not equalise completely after 14. cxd5 cxd5 15. e3 d4 (15... Nc6 16. Nf3) 16. exd4 Qxd4 17. Qb2±. Critical is 12... Na6! 13. Bb1 Re8∞.

9. cxd5 Qxg5 10. Qxg5 Qxg5 11. dxc6 Nxc6 12. Qxd6 Qe7 13. Qxe7+ Qxe7 (13... Nxe7 14. g4) is marginally better for White – 14. g4 fxg4 (14... g6 15. gxf5 gxf5 16. f3 exf3 17. Nd5+ Qd6 18. Qxf3↑) 15. Qxe4 Qe6 16. h3 gxh3 17. Nd5+ Qd6 18. Nf4 Re8=.

6...0-0 7.d4 e4 8.♘g5



8...c6

Nobody has played 8...d5 9.cxd5 ♘xd5, yet it may be the best option: 10.♚b3 c6 11.♘h3 ♔h8!

Black can sacrifice a pawn with 11...♙e6 12.♘xd5 ♙xd5 13.♚xb7 c5 14.♚b5 ♘d7 15.♙f4 a6 16.♚a4 h6 with some compensation.

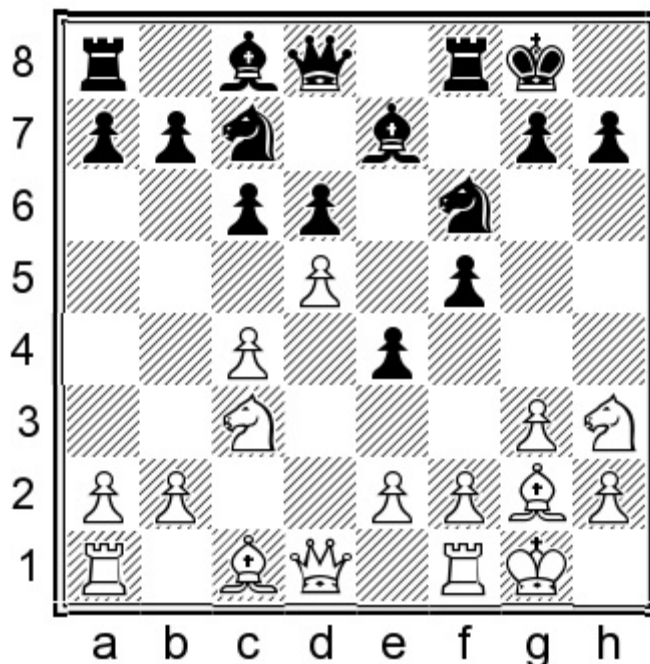
12.f3 exf3 13.♙xf3 ♘f6 14.♙e3∞.

8...h6 9.♘h3 g5 10.f3 gave me an edge – see **Game 26** Kir.Georgiev-Kadric, Kragujevac 2013.

9.d5!

9.f3 d5 led to a quick draw in Svidler-Salem, Moscow 2017 – 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.♘h3 exf3 12.♙xf3 ♙e6 13.♘f4 ♘xf4 14.♙xf4 ♘a6 15.e4 ♘b4 16.a3 ½-½.

9...♘a6 10.♘h3 ♘c7



11.a4!

Preventing counterplay with ...b5:

11.♘f4 g5 12.♘h3 h6 13.f3 exf3 14.exf3 b5!

The game Mchedlishvili-Villuendas Valero, Linares 2016, saw 14...c5?!, which is a strategic mistake. White should follow the scheme ♔d3, ♕d2, ♘f2, possibly b3, and open the kingside with h3, f4.

15.♚b3 a5. The d5-pawn is hanging in many lines.

11...cxd5 12.cxd5

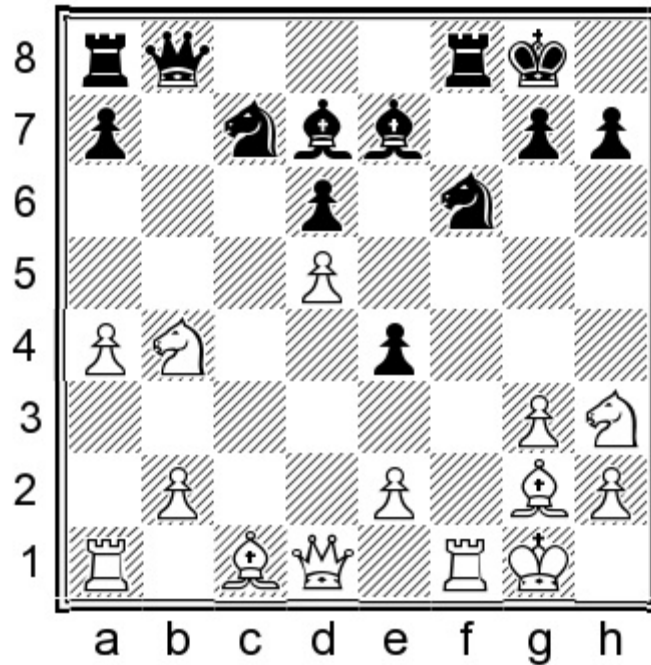
White has consolidated his space advantage and will now proceed with f3. Play may continue:

a) 12...♘d7 13.f3 exf3 14.exf3 ♕f6

Or 14...♘e5 15.♞e1 ♞e8 16.♕e3 ♕d7 17.♕f1 ♕f6 18.♘f4.

15.♕e3 b6 16.♞e1 ♞e8 17.♘f4 with an initiative. The only passive piece could enter the play with ♕f1 or ♕h3.

b) 12...♕d7 13.f3 b5 14.fxe4 b4 15.♘a2 fxe4 16.♘xb4 ♚b8, Vidit-Sengupta, Mumbai 2009:



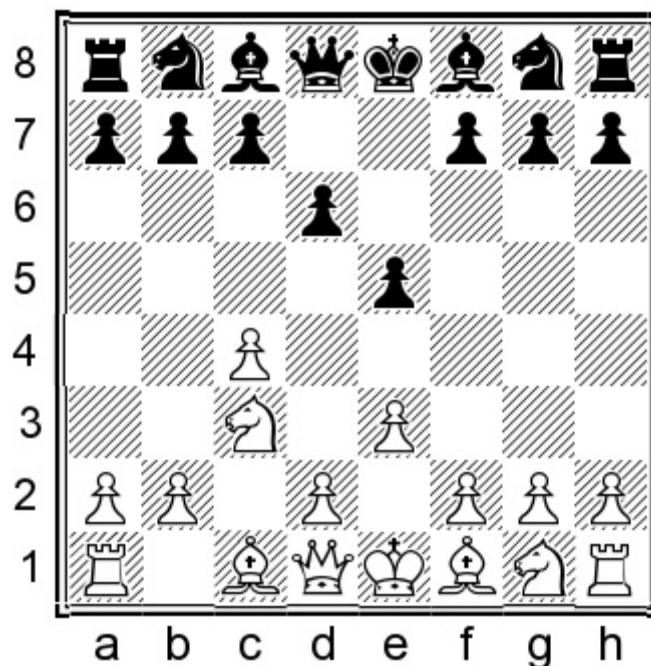
Black has opened files on the queenside at the cost of weakening the c6-square. White has a rich choice of good options here, as 17.♘c6! ♚b6+ 18.♘f2 ♙xc6 19.a5 ♚b5 20.dxc6, or 17.♚d4 a5 18.♘c6, or 17.♘c2 ♘cxd5 18.♘f2, with a tangible advantage in all the lines.

c) 12...♞b8 13.a5

This move is not obligatory. 13.♙e3 b6 14.f3 exf3 15.exf3 deserves attention.

13...♞e8 14.f3 with active pieces. See **Game 25** Khismatullin-Kosteniuk, Kazan 2005.

B. 3.e3



This is an offbeat move, but it fits in the spirit of the book. It offers White good prospects in a flexible

position which could be unfamiliar to the opponent. His main answers are:

B1. 3...f5; **B2.** 3...g6; **B3.** 3...♘f6!

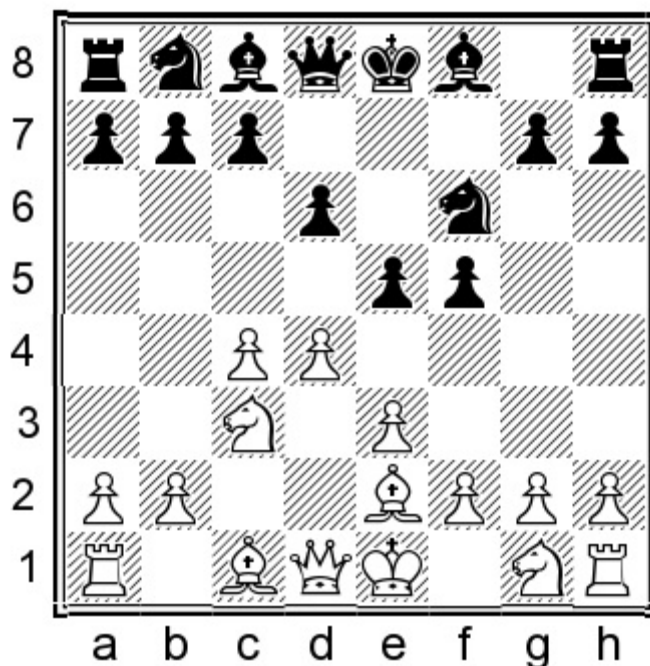
Undoubtedly, choosing the KID against the modest 3.e3 is the most testing retort.

B1. 3...f5 4.d4 e4

White scores after this move the alarming 34%, so I want to draw your attention to it. More popular is the uncommittal:

4...♘f6, when I propose:

5.♙e2!?

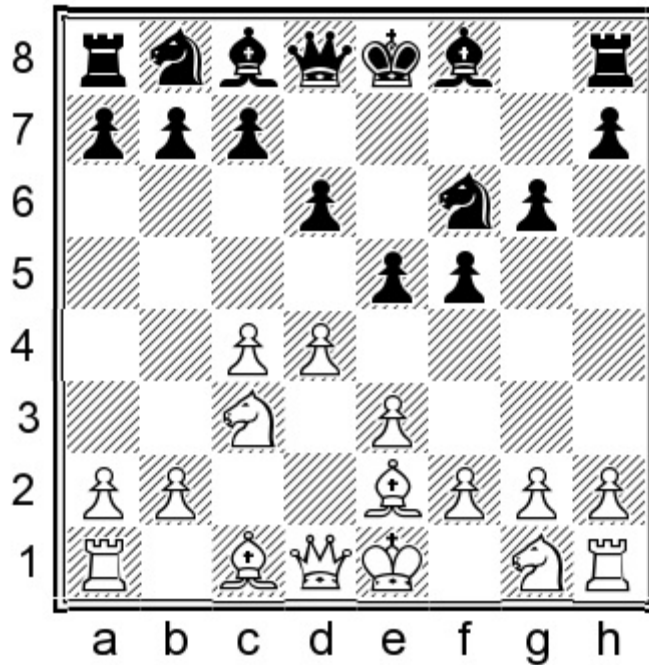


The idea of this clever move order is to leave the path of the h-pawn free. 5.♘h3 g6 6.♙e2 ♘c6 7.d5 ♘e7 is not to my taste.

5.♘f3 surrenders the centre – 5...e4 6.♘g5 c6 7.♙d2 ♙e7 8.♙e2 0-0 9.f3 d5∞.

5...g6

5...♙e7 is more passive, but it avoids weaknesses around the king. We should not give a tempo for e4 so we answer 6.♘h3 0-0 7.0-0 c6 (Or 7...c5 8.d5 ♘a6 9.f3 ♙d7 10.♖b1 ♘c7 11.a3 a6 12.b4 with clear plan on the queenside.) 8.b3 ♔e8 (If Black put a knight on e4, we should not take it – 8...♘e4 9.♙b2 ♘a6 10.♘a4! exd4 11.♙xd4 ♙f6 12.♖e1!, followed by f3.) 9.♙b2 ♘a6 (9...f4 10.exf4 ♙xh3 11.gxh3 exf4 12.♖e1±) 10.c5↑. In short, we stay passively on the kingside with ♘h3, f3, and seek to break through with b4 or c5.



6.h4!? This attack is a novelty, but a similar idea occurs in the Leningrad Dutch, and play may transpose to it. We aim to deprive the opponent of castling rights and hide our own king on the queenside. A queenless middlegame is, as a rule, in our favour. I checked:

a) 6...♔g7 7.h5 c6

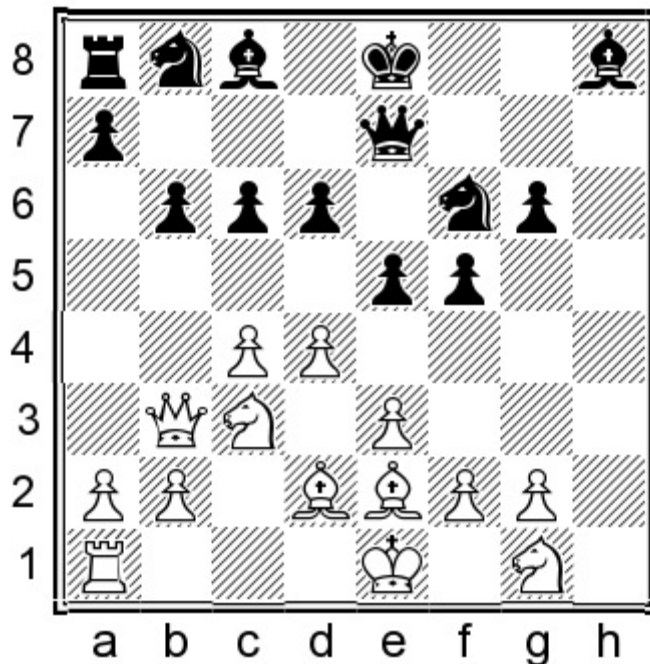
Or: 7...♕e6 8.♖b3; 7...g5? 8.h6 ♕f8 9.♕h5+ ♔e7 10.e4 f4 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♘d5+ ♘xd5 13.exd5

8.dxe5 dxe5 9.♗xd8+ ♔xd8 (10.b3!? ♘bd7 11.♕a3±) 10.hxg6 hxg6 11.♖xh8+ ♕xh8 12.♘f3 ♘e8 13.♘h4 (13.e4±) 13...g5 14.♘g6 ♕f6 15.b3±.

b) 6...c6 7.h5, when 7...g5 drops a pawn to 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.♗xd8+ ♔xd8 10.♘f3.

c) 6...♘c6 7.b4 exd4 8.exd4 d5 9.a3 ♕e6 10.♕g5↑.

d) 6...♗e7 7.♕d2 c6 8.h5 ♕g7 9.hxg6 hxg6 10.♖xh8+ ♕xh8 11.♗b3 b6



12.0-0-0 ♖bd7 13.f3 ♗b7 14.♙a3 a5 15.♔b1±.

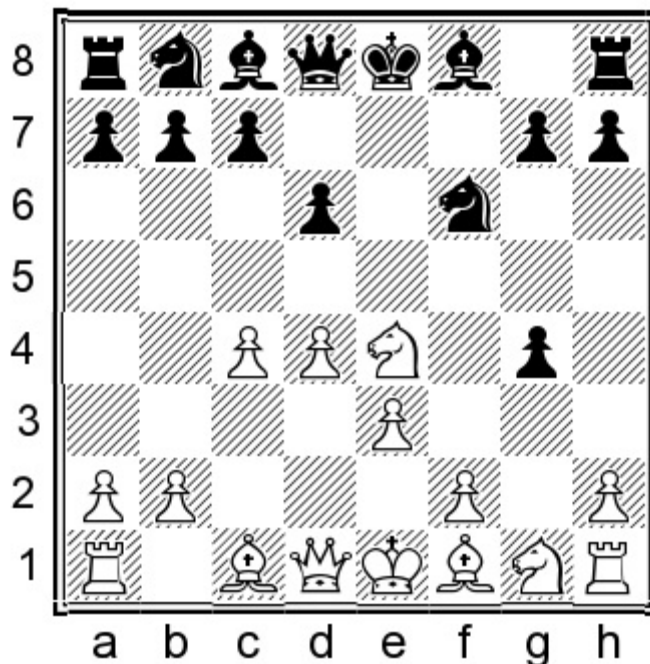
5.g4! fxg4

Otherwise the e4-pawn would hang:

5...c6 6.♙b3 wins the battle for the centre – 6...♙e7 7.gxf5 ♖d7 8.♗ge2 ♗h6 9.♙c2 ♗f6 10.♗g3 ♗xf5 11.f3!±.

5...♗f6, besides 6.gxf5 ♗xf5 7.♗ge2, allows the positional calamity 6.g5! ♗fd7 7.h4 with f3 to follow.

6.♗xe4 ♗f6



7. ♖xf6+

Grigoryan-Pashikian, Lake Sevan Martuni 2009 saw 7. ♖d3 ♜xe4 8. ♙xe4 ♚h4 9. ♜e2. It is rather unclear as the g4-pawn remains. White's aim should be to open the kingside after an adequate preparation.

7... ♚xf6 8. h3! ♚h4 9. ♙g2 ♜c6

9... g3 10. f4 drops a pawn after ♚f3.

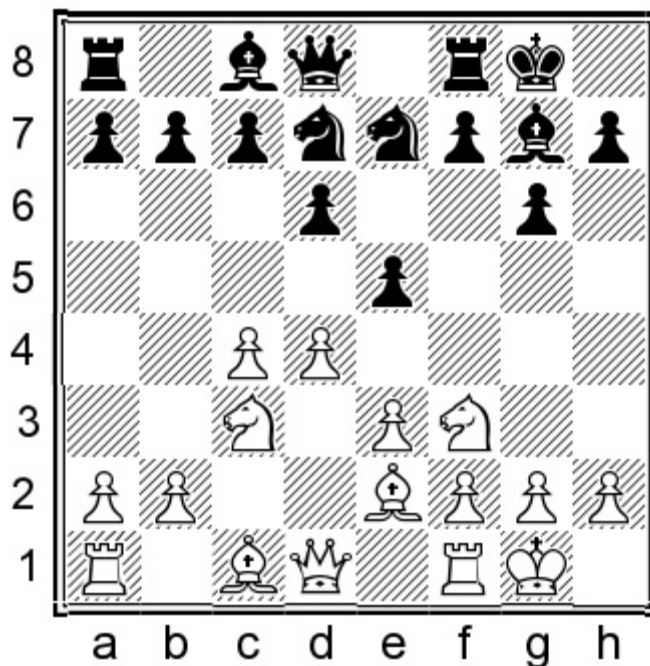
10. hxg4 ♚xg4 11. ♚xg4 ♙xg4 12. ♙e4 h6 13. f3 ♙d7 14. ♜h3±.

B2. 3... g6 4. d4 ♙g7

4... ♜d7 5. ♜f3 ♙g7

5... f5?! fails to 6. e4!

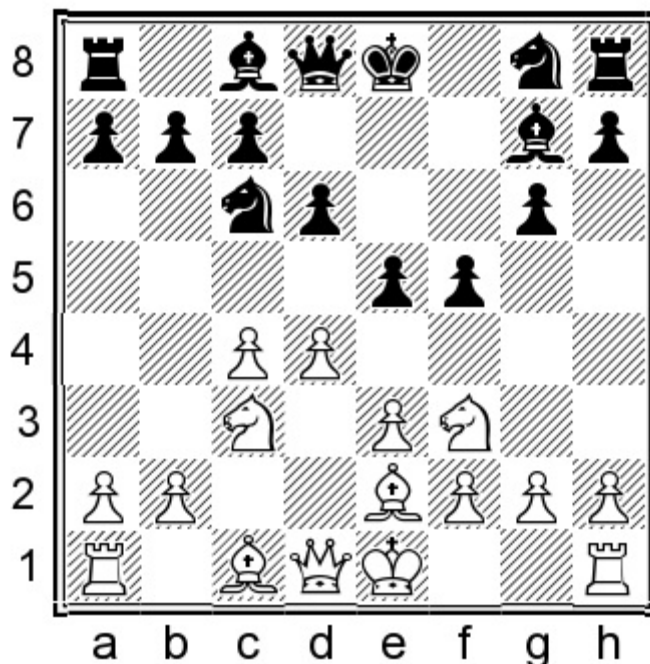
6. ♙e2 ♜e7 (6... ♜gf6 – see B3.) 7. 0-0 0-0



With ♙g2, our approved method against the set-up with ... ♜e7 is to open the d-file. It is also effective here:

8. dxe5 ♜xe5 9. ♜xe5 dxe5 10. ♚b3 c6 11. e4 ♚c7 12. ♙e3 ♙e6 13. ♚fd1 ♜c8 14. f3.

5. ♜f3 ♜c6 6. ♙e2 f5



The modest 6...♞f6! is the subject of line B3.

7.dxe5

7.d5 ♞ce7 8.0-0 ♞f6 9.b4 is nearly unexplored. White might be slightly better, but he should defend very accurately, as in all such KI structures.

7...♞xe5

7...dxe5 is worse since 8.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 9.♞b5 ♞e6 loses material after 10.♞g5!. Of course Black can defend with 9...♞d7, but White is still a pawn up after 10.e4

10.♞d2!? a6 11.♞c3 ♞f7 12.h4± may be stronger.

10...fxe4 11.♞e3 exf3 12.♞d1+ ♞e7 13.♞c5+ ♞f7 14.♞xd8 fxe2 15.♞xc7 ♞b8 16.♞xa7 ♞f6 17.♞d6 ♞e7 18.♞d2 ♞f5 19.♞xb8 ♞f6 20.♞a7 ♞b4 21.♞xe2 ♞xd2 22.♞xd2 ♞d8+ 23.♞c3! ♞e4+ 24.♞b3 ♞d3+ 25.♞a4 ♞d2 26.f3.

8.0-0

Houdini 6 likes 8.e4. We should indeed aim for e4 in this pawn structure, but only after a thorough preparation. If we check further the early break, we'll notice that Black trades a couple of pieces and is close to equality:

8...♞e7 9.0-0 ♞f7

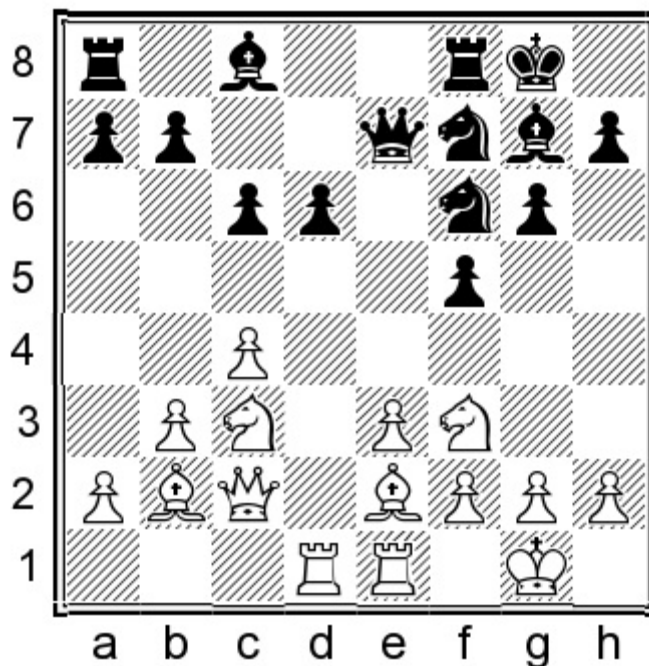
Or 9...♞xf3+ 10.♞xf3 0-0 11.♞g5 h6 12.♞xe7 ♞xe7 13.exf5 ♞xf5 14.♞xb7 ♞ab8 15.♞d5+ ♞h7 16.♞d2 ♞g5 17.♞xg5 hxg5 18.♞b5 ♞xb2.

10.♞g5 0-0 11.c5 ♞xg5 12.♞xg5 h6 13.♞xe7 ♞xe7 14.cxd6 ♞xd6 15.♞xd6 cxd6 16.♞ad1 ♞e5 17.exf5 ♞xf5 18.f4 ♞xc3 19.bxc3 ♞ac8.

8...♖f6 9.♚c2

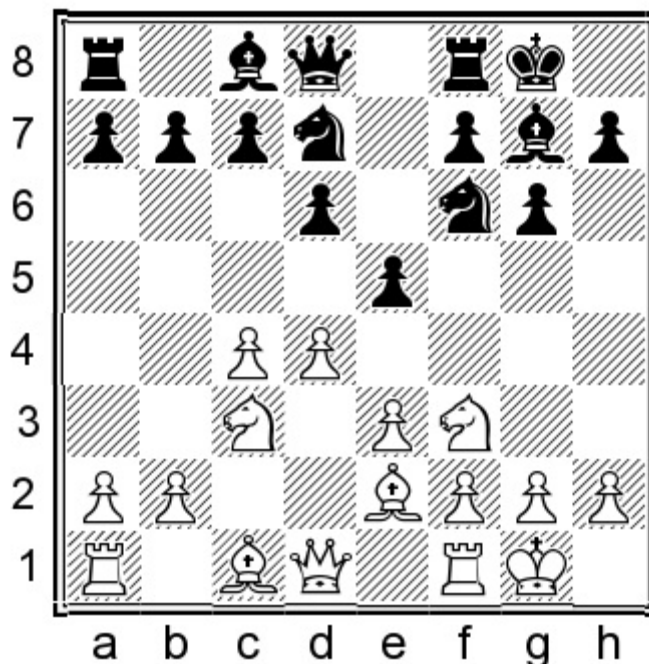
9.♘xe5 dxe5 10.♙xd8+ ♔xd8 11.♞d1+ ♕e7 is balanced.

9...0-0 10.b3 ♘f7 11.♙b2 c6 12.♞ad1 ♚e7 13.♞fe1



Black is solid, but without a plan. We have at least something to work for. Our idea is to push f4 and prepare e4.

B3. 3...♘f6! 4.d4 ♘bd7 5.♘f3 g6 6.♙e2 ♙g7 7.0-0 0-0



We have reached the “poor man’s” King’s Indian (to quote Axel Smith).

I do not believe that White can aspire to an advantage with e3 so I do not recommend playing 3.e3

against 2...d6 as a main repertoire. However, Smith cooked up a whole book with “poor man’s” systems, and it seems that he found an audience for them. I’ll present briefly his case:

8.♖c2 ♜e8 9.♞d1 ♚e7!

A. Smith only notes that this move deserves attention as Black might get improved versions of other lines. Since ...e4 remains a threat, White’s only consistent reply is:

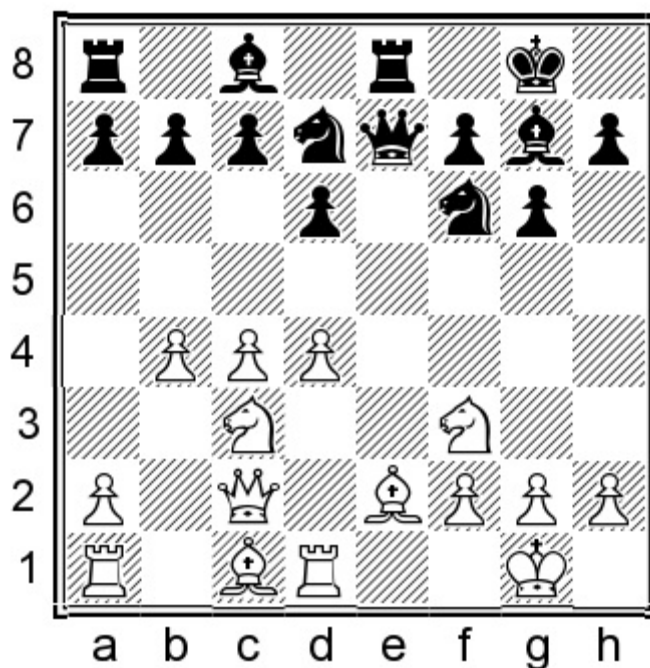
10.b4 e4

The most popular and consistent line. Although it is strategically risky, in practice Black scores the excellent 62%. That is normal, since he attacks the king and White’s mistakes weigh more. The safe equaliser is:

10...exd4!

It is possible to include 10...a5 11.b5, but Black should be ready to sacrifice the a-pawn – 11...exd4 12.exd4 (Or 12.♗xd4 ♖b6 13.h3, Bruzon-Vidit, Baku 2015, 13...♗fd7! =.) 12...♗b6 13.♚b3 ♕f5 14.♕e3 a4 15.♚b4 ♚d7 16.♞e1 ♞e7 17.♕f1 ♞ae8 18.h3 ♗e4 19.♗xa4 ♗xa4 20.♚xa4 ♗g3. Black can include the g-pawn in his offensive.

11.exd4



11...♗f8

The open e-file gives Black counterplay, for instance:

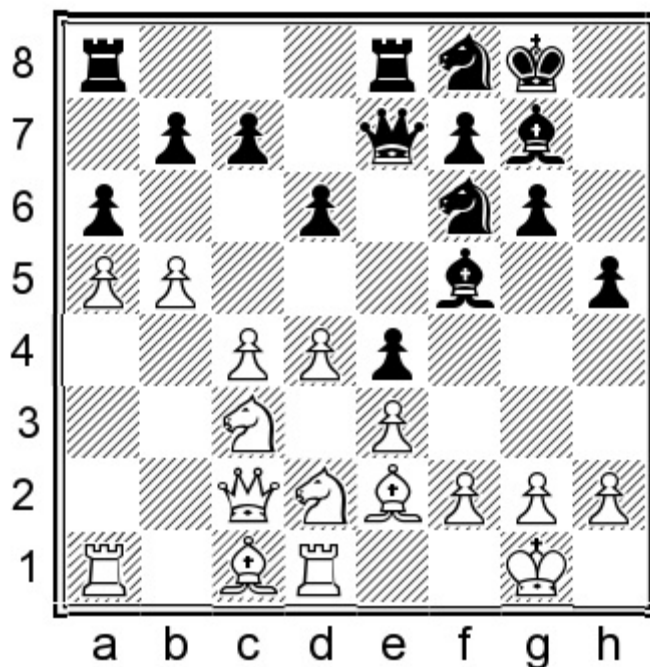
12.h3 c6 13.♕d3 (13.♕e3 ♕f5) 13...d5 14.cxd5 ♗xd5 15.♗xd5 cxd5 16.b5 ♕e6=.

11.♗d2 ♗f8 12.a4 ♕f5 13.a5 a6

This way of stopping the march of the a-pawn has become widely popular since the famous game <http://www.chess.com>

Fischer-Myagmarsuren, Sousse 1967. Modern engines also approve it.

14.b5 h5

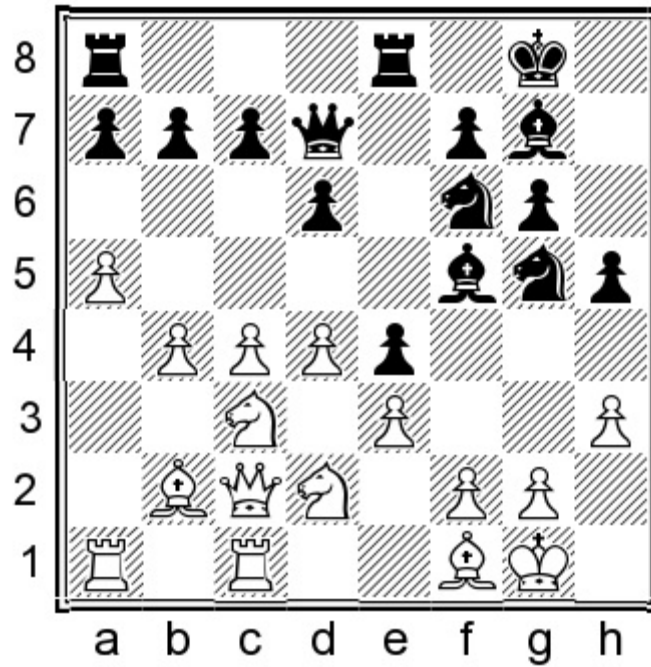


White's advance has come to a temporary halt, and he must now choose a defensive set-up on the kingside.

A.Smith recommends 15.♔a3 ♖e6 16.♙b3 (avoiding tactical devices based on ...♘xd4), but I feel that White's position is dangerous. Black should be fine after 16...♘g4 17.♔xg4 ♔xg4 or 16...h4!? 17.h3 ♙d7.

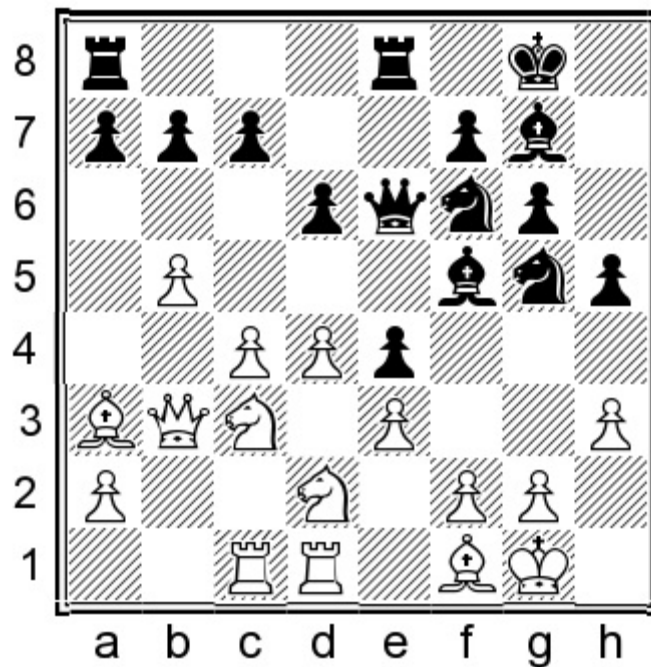
I prefer to bolster firstly the castling position with ♖f1, h3, ♖h2, ♔f1. Note the importance of the knight on h2. Without it, Black often obtains a crushing attack with a sacrifice on h3. Here are two examples:

iozeph-marcosa
net-chess.com 2013



17... ♖xh3 18. gxh3 ♜xh3+ 19. ♖xh3 ♝xh3 20. ♛d1 ♜g4 21. ♜f1 f5 (21...c6!→) 22. ♜d5 g5 23. ♜xc7? (23. ♖a3! =) 23...f4 24. exf4 gxf4 25. ♜d5 ♜f8 26. ♛c2 f3 27. ♜de3 ♜xe3 28. fxe3 f2+ 29. ♛xf2 ♜xf2 30. ♜xf2 ♜f8+ 31. ♜e2 ♛g2+ 0-1.

iozeph-jvanmechelen
net-chess.com 2014



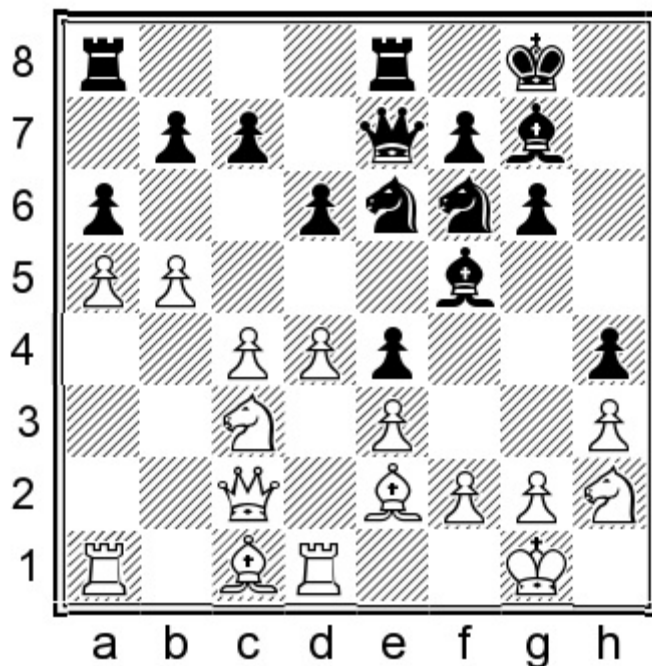
17... ♖xh3 18. gxh3 ♜xh3+ 19. ♖xh3 ♝xh3 20. ♜e2 ♜g4+.

15. ♜f1 h4

Or 15... ♜8h7 16. ♜g3 ♖d7 17. h3 h4 18. ♜f1 ♜g5 19. ♜h2. It is unclear how Black could throw more oil

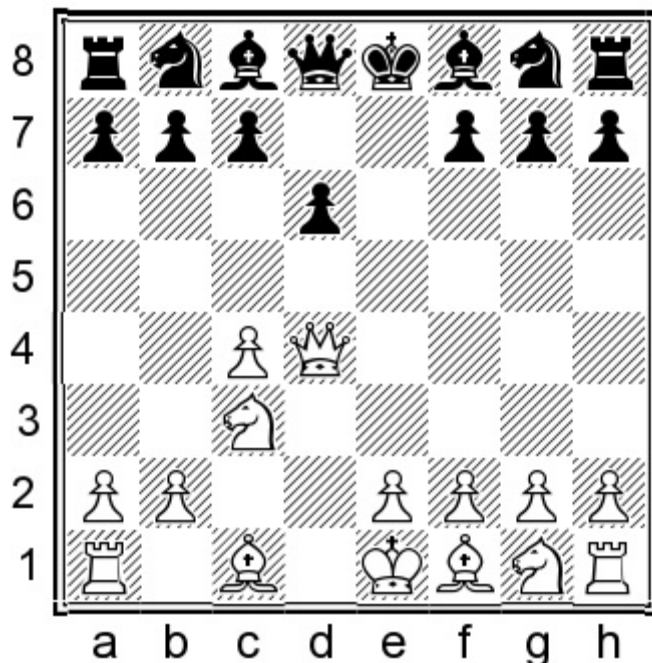
into the fire, while White's initiative is tangible. For instance: 19...♞ec8 20.bxa6 ♞xa6 21.♙d2 ♞a7 22.♞db1.

16.h3 ♘e6 17.♘h2



The knight has completed his manoeuvre, and White's king is secured (17...♘g5 18.♙h1). The focus of the game is about to shift to the queenside where White is slightly more active. Perhaps Black could maintain the balance with 17...axb5 18.cxb5 c5 or 17...c5, but such course of events should suit us.

C. 3.d4 exd4 4.♙xd4



C1. 4...♘c6!; C2. 4...♘f6

In the latter line Black intends to develop his queen's knight on d7.

C1. 4...♘c6! 5.♚d2

5.♚d1 is not too good before ...♘f6 because Black could put the knight to e7.

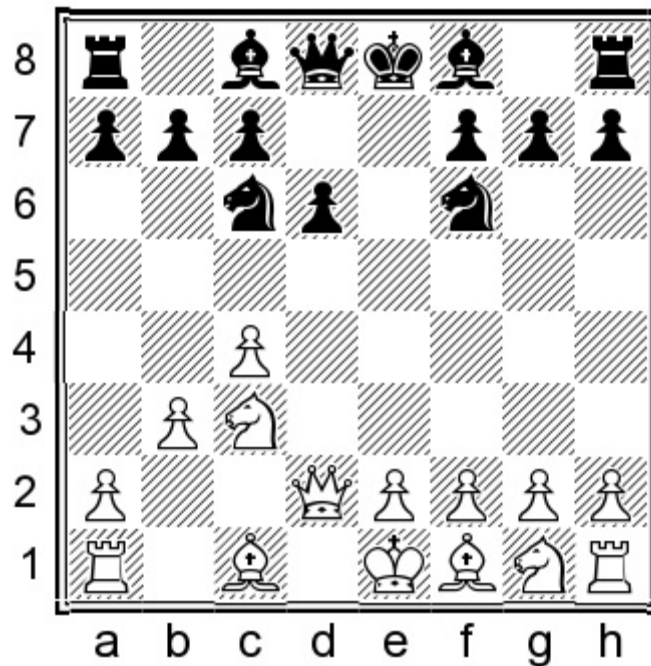
5...♘f6!

5...g6 is slow. It gives White time to fianchetto both bishops:

6.b3 ♘g7 7.♘b2 ♘f6 8.g3 0-0 9.♘g2 ♖e8 10.♘f3 ♘f5 11.♘h4! ♘d7 (11...♘e4?! 12.♘xe4! ♘xe4 13.f3) 12.0-0 a5 13.♖ad1±, Dreev-Aronian, blitz, Dubai 2014. White's play is natural and simple.

6.b3

Alternatives are 6.♘f3 ♘e7 (6...♘e6?) and 6.e4 g6.



C11. 6...a5!; C12. 6...♘e6?!

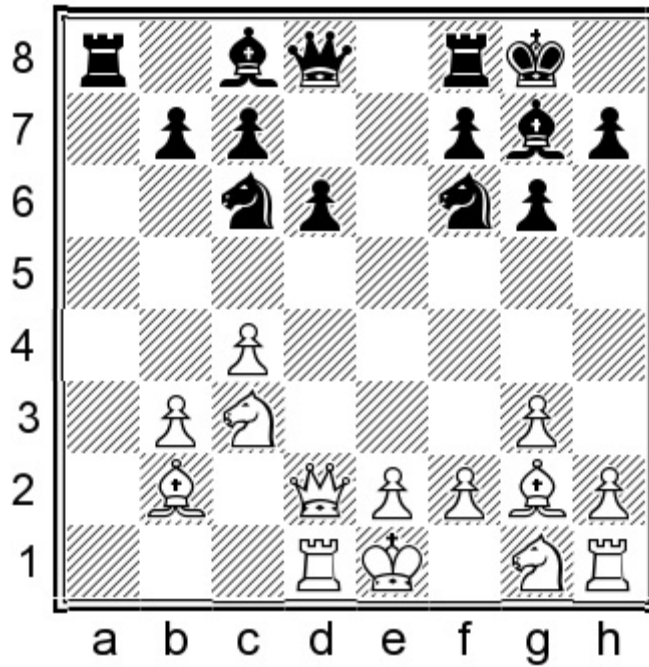
C11. 6...a5!

Black's plan is to open the a-file with ...a5-a4 and then build a KI set-up.

7.♘b2 a4 8.♖d1

8.♘d5 ♘e7 9.e3 0-0 yields White a horrible score.

8...axb3 9.axb3 g6 10.g3 ♘g7 11.♘g2 0-0

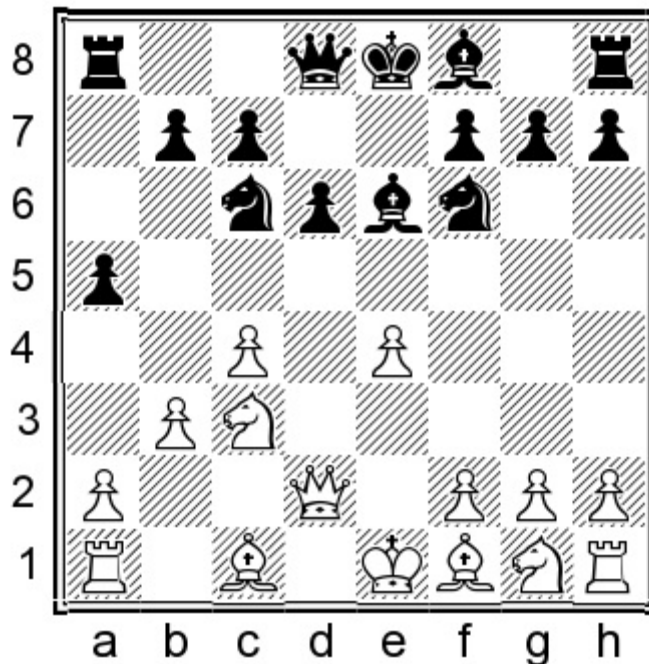


Now 12. ♖h3 ♜d7 13. ♜e4 ♜a2 forces the knight back, so the only sensible continuation is:
 12. ♜f3 ♜d7 13. ♜a4 ♜c5 14. ♙xg7 ♜xg7 with equal play.

C12. 6... ♙e6?!

White does not have a tempo for g3 owing to the threat ...d5.

7. e4 a5

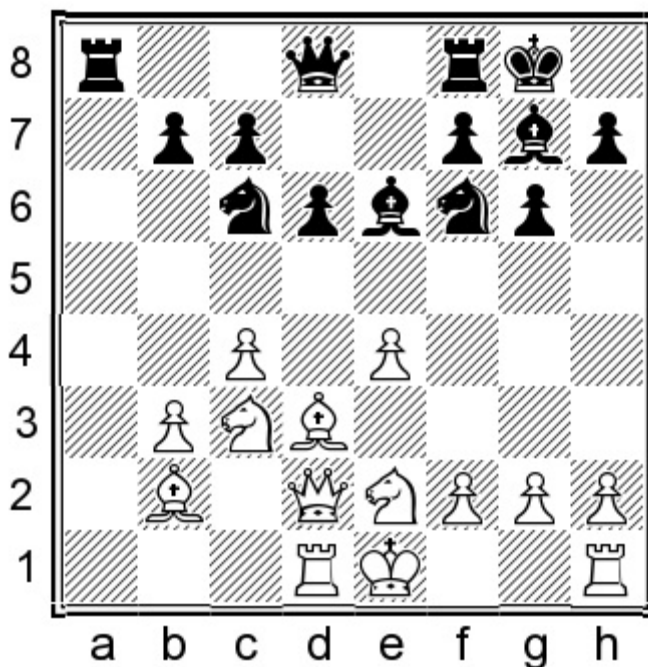


8. ♙b2!

Cummings gives 8.♙d3 a4 9.♜xa4 d5 10.exd5 ♜xa4 11.♚f1, but he misses 9...♞xa4!! 10.bxa4 d5 with sufficient compensation. The program Shredder even lost with White the endgame after 11.♞b1 ♜xe4 12.♙xe4 dxe4 13.♞xd8+ ♚xd8.

I prefer to follow the example of Dreev, who is the best expert for White.

8...a4 9.♞d1 axb3 10.axb3 g6 11.♙d3 ♙g7 12.♜ge2 0-0
(12...♜d7 13.♜b5)

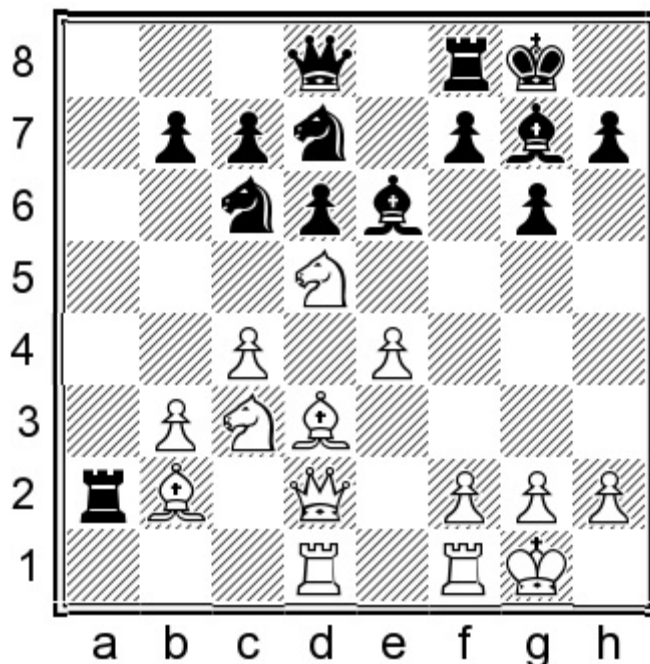


13.♙b1!!

This new move may be White's best chance to keep more tension. I generously awarded it with two exclamation marks, because it was difficult for me to discard the much more natural and tempting: 13.0-0 ♜d7 14.♜d5, when:

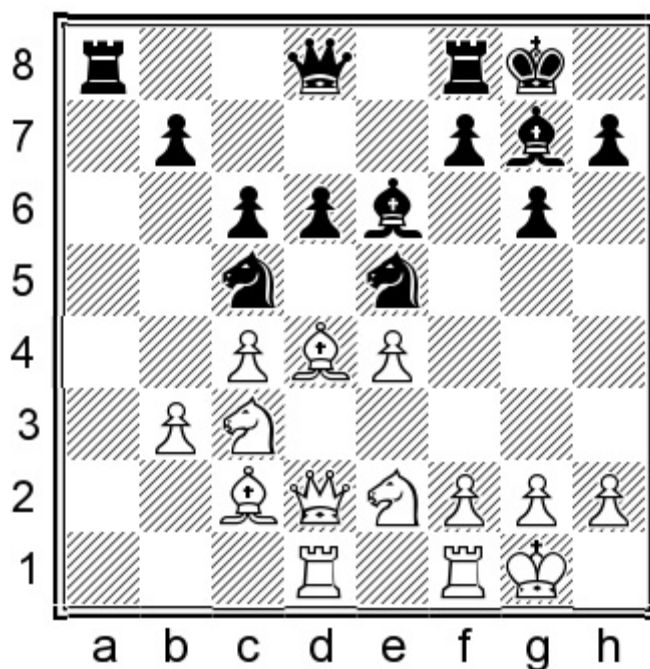
14...♙xb2 15.♞xb2 ♙xd5 16.exd5 and 14...♜c5 15.♙xg7 ♚xg7 16.♞c3+ are clearly better for White. However, Black has in his disposal an ingenious exchange sacrifice:

14...♞a2! 15.♜ec3



15...Rxb2 16.Qxb2 Nd4 with fine compensation. For instance, 17.Qh1 c6 18.Ne3 Nc5 19.b4 Nxd3 20.Rxd3 b5 21.Rfd1 Qb6 is assessed by the engines as slightly better for White, but in my opinion it is impossible to win this position. All the enemy minor pieces are very strong. The engines love the safer alternative:

14.Nb5!? Nce5 15.Qd4 Nc5 16.Qc2 c6 17.Nbc3



White has retained the more active pawn structure with a weak d6-pawn. Black should do something quickly in view of the positional threat f2-f4.

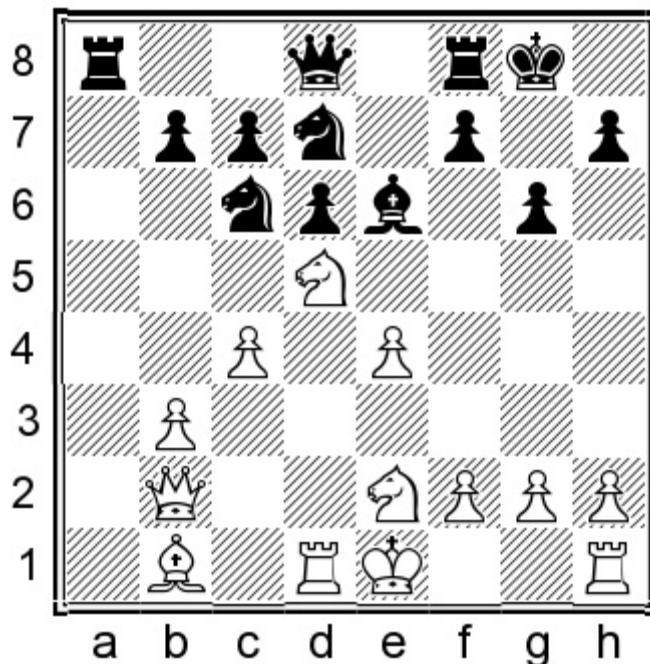
17...b5! This eliminates almost by force to a pawnless, but probably drawn ending – 18.cxb5 (18.Qe3 Qe7 is roughly equal) 18...Nxb3 19.Qxb3 Qxb3 20.Rb1 Qc4 21.bxc6 Nxc6 22.Qxg7 will win the d6-pawn, but the 4:3 pawn on the same flank promise Black good chances for salvation. White should

keep a knight since the ♖:♖ endgame is easier to hold.

13...♞d7

13...♞a5 14.♙c2 ♜e8 15.0-0 c6 16.♙a2!, followed by ♙c1, consolidates White's grip on the centre.

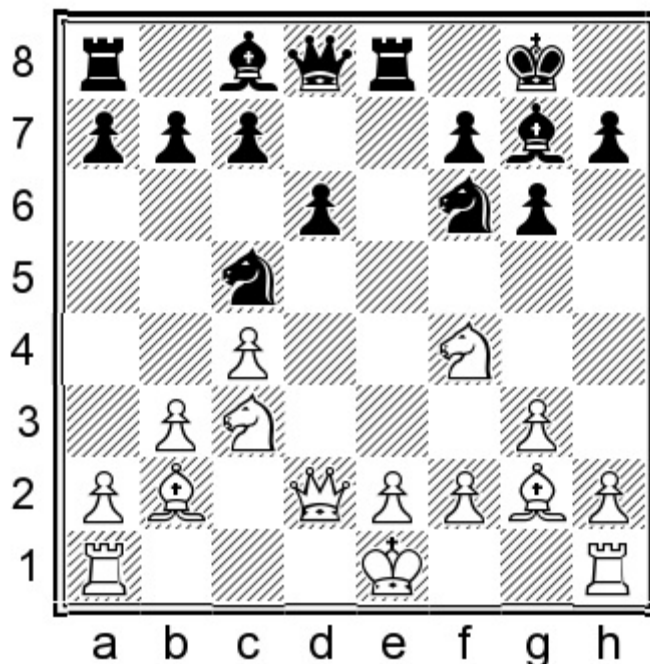
14.♞d5 ♙xb2 15.♙xb2



White retains a space advantage even after the best 15...b5 16.cxb5 ♞a7 17.♞df4.

C2. 4...♞f6 5.g3!?

5.b3 is a popular alternative. Critical is 5...♞c6! 6.♙d2 a5! – see line C11. Another important position occurs after 5...g6 6.♙b2 ♙g7 7.g3 (the point is that 7.♙e3+ is innocuous here owing to 7...♙e6) 7...0-0 8.♙g2 ♜e8 9.♙d2 ♞bd7 10.♞h3! ♞c5 11.♞f4. White is somewhat better in view of his control of d5. It might look that Black has a simple remedy to that:



11...♔f5

The thematic 11...a5 is insufficient – 12.♖d1 ♔f5 (12...a4 13.b4 ♘cd7 14.♕a1 ♘e5 15.c5±) 13.♘b5 ♘fe4 14.♚c1 ♕xb2 15.♚xb2 c6 16.♘d4 ♕d7 17.0-0±.

12.0-0 c6 13.♖ad1 g5

Indeed, 14.♘d3 ♘xd3 15.exd3 h6 is not dangerous for Black, but White can preserve more pieces:

14.♘h3 h6 15.f3 d5 16.cxd5 cxd5 17.♘f2. Our approach should be purely positional, e.g. 17...♕g6 18.♕h3 (18.f4 gxf4 19.♚xf4 ♘e6 20.♚d2 ♘c7 21.e3 is more chaotic.) 18...♘e6 19.♘b5.

5.e4 ♘c6 6.♚d1 g6 7.♘ge2 ♕g7 8.f3 is a clumsy attempt to build an attack with ♕g5, ♚d2. It could be neutralised with 8...♘d7 9.♕e3 0-0 10.♚d2 ♘c5 11.♖d1 f5=.

The text aims to hinder Black's castling by check from e3.

5...g6

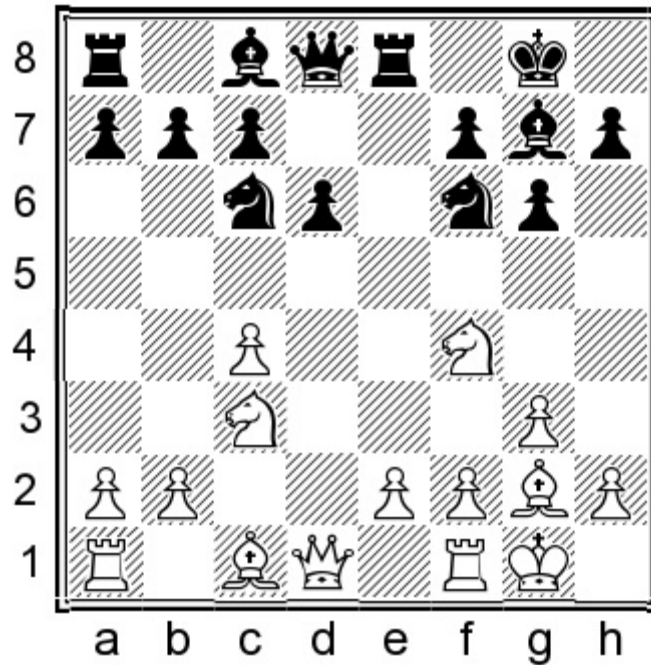
I suggest to meet 5...♘c6 by 6.♚d1!?

6.♚d2 ♕e6 7.♘d5 ♘e5 8.b3 ♘e4 9.♚e3 is complex, but roughly equal. Kasparov answered it with 9...♘c5, 9...f5 and 9...c6 also deserve attention.

6...g6

Or 6...♕e6 7.e4 g6 8.♘h3 ♕g7 9.♘f4, Kovalyov-Adhiban, Linares 2017.

7.♕g2 ♕g7 (7...♕e6 8.b3) 8.♘h3 0-0 9.0-0 ♖e8 10.♘f4



White will develop his bishop on d2 or e3, keeping some space advantage. For instance: 10...a5 11.♔e3 ♖g4 12.♔d2 ♗ge5 13.b3 a4 ♜c1; 10...♔f5 11.♔e3 ♗e5 12.b3.

6.♔g2 ♔g7

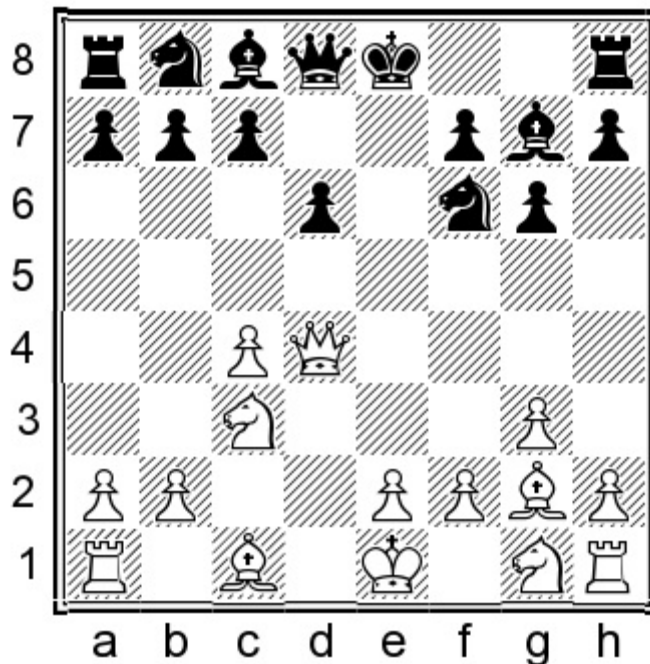
6...♗c6? succumbs to 7.♔xc6+ bxc6 8.♔g5.

6...♗bd7 is an old recommendation from 1989.

It hardly improves on 6...♔g7 since 7.♜e3+ is still good – 7...♜e7 (7...♔e7 8.b3) 8.♗f3. Even better is:

7.♗f3 ♔g7 8.♜e3+ ♜e7 9.♗b5 ♜xe3 10.♔xe3 ♔d8 11.♞d1 or 11.♔d4. You only have to avoid 11.♔xa7? c6 which is in Black's favour.

After the text arises a position we have already mentioned in the previous chapter. White has an elegant way to obtain a better endgame with a timely check:



7. ♖e3+!?

The point of White's move order. 7... ♗e6 is not possible so Black should trade queens. That will reduce his counter-chances. It was not late to return to the alternative on move 5 with 7.b3.

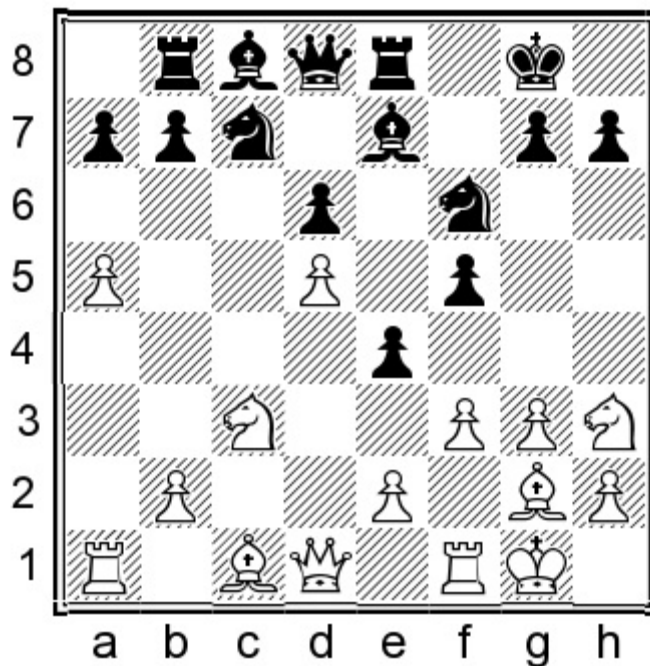
7... ♗e7 8. ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 9.b3

White prepares to exchange the dark-squared bishops along the main diagonal. This move is ignored by the engines, but it is no worse than 9. ♗g5. See **Game 21** (Chapter 7) Kasparov-Short, Barcelona 1989.

Chapter 8. 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6 3.♘f3, 3.e3, 3.d4 Annotated Games

25. Khismatullin – Kosteniuk Kazan 06.09.2005

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6 3.♘f3 f5 4.d4 e4 5.♘g5 ♕e7 6.♘h3 ♘f6 7.g3 c6 8.♗g2 ♘a6 9.0-0 0-0 10.d5 ♘c7
11.a4 cxd5 12.cxd5 ♖b8 13.a5 (13.♗e3) 13...♗e8 14.f3

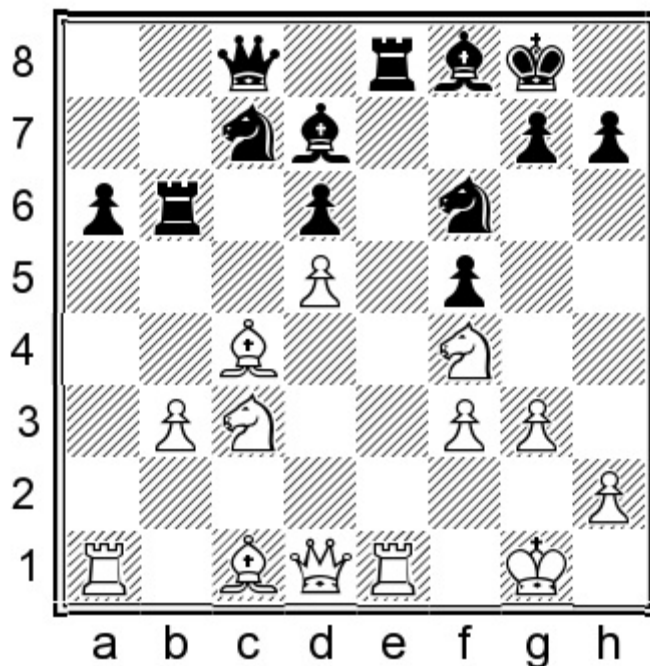


This break is the fulcrum of White's strategy. The open e-file will underline the weakness of e6, and the sealed g2-bishop gets a chance to enter play from d3.

14...exf3 15.exf3 b5 16.axb6 ♖xb6 17.♘f4 ♗f8 18.♗e1 a6 19.♗f1! ♗d7?!

Black's pieces are cramped on the last three ranks so he should seek exchanges. An obvious try is 19...♗xe1! 20.♗xe1 ♗e8 with a firm position. White should probably continue 21.♗f2 ♖b7 22.♗c4, planning ♗e1. The text is connected with a wrong set-up. From d7 the bishop does not defend the a6-pawn.

20.♗c4 ♗c8 21.b3



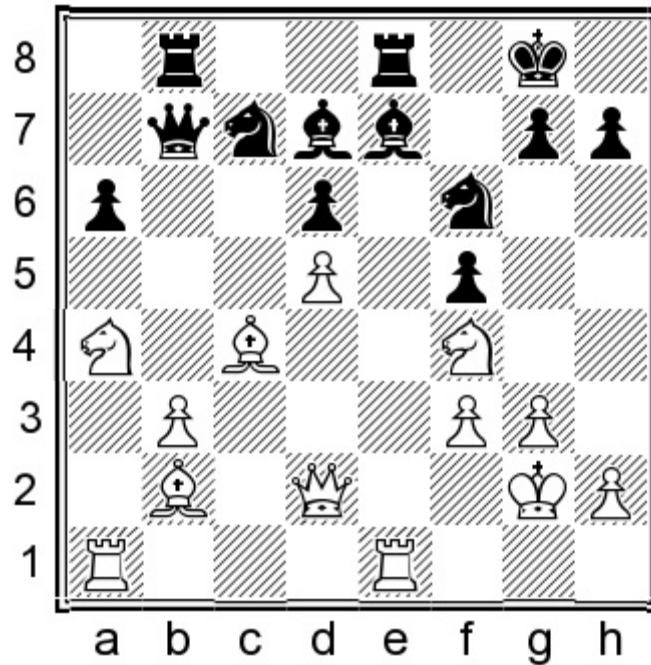
21...♞b5?

White has made all the good moves, and he is in control. However, Black has only one real weakness – the e6-square. He can defend stubbornly, provided that he does not make mistakes! His last move has a huge strategic flaw – the seemingly passive knight protected both e6 and a6. It should not budge from c7! After the text simplest would be 22.♙b2, followed by ♞e6, but Khismatullin’s solution is also good enough.

22.♞a4 ♜b8 23.♙b2 ♚b7 24.♚d2

Better was 24.♚d3, eyeing f5. For instance: 24...♞c7 25.♙xf6 gxf6 26.♞c3 ♔h8 27.♞e6+–.

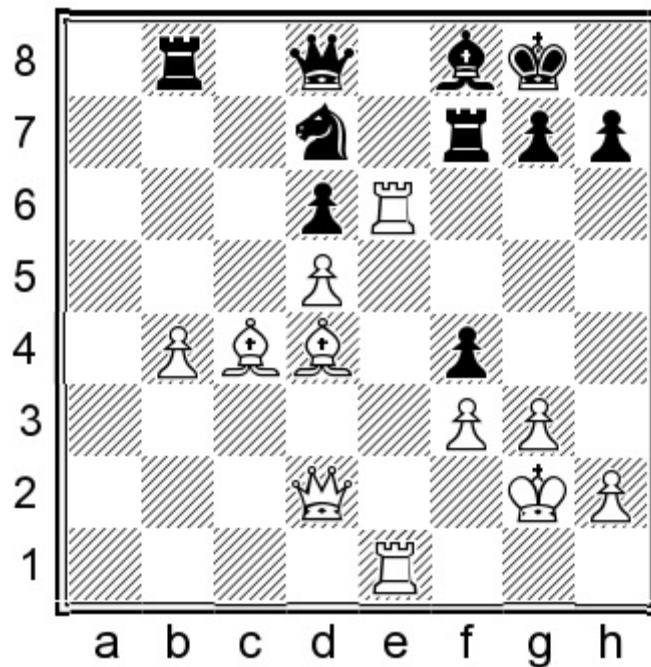
24...♙e7 25.♔g2 (25.♞c5!+–) 25...♞c7



26. ♖c5+-

Finally the white pieces get access to e6 and Black is completely lost positionally.

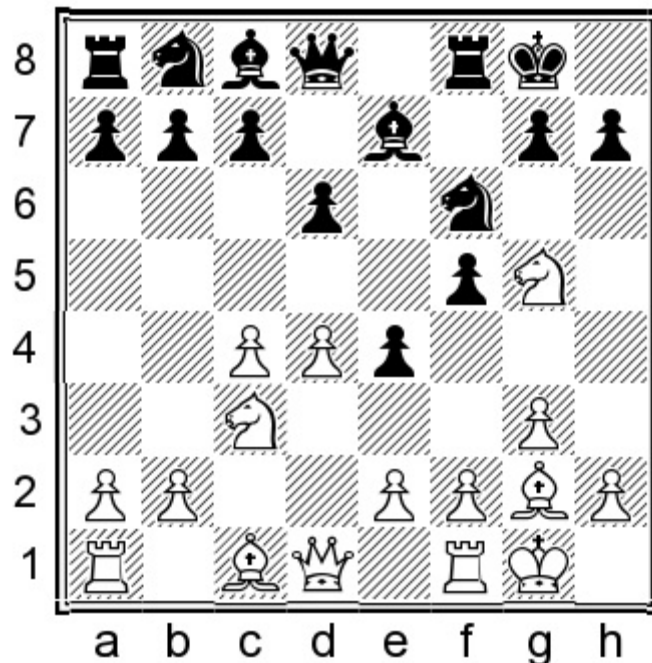
26... ♖c8 27. ♜ac1 ♚d8 28. ♗ce6 (28. ♗c3!) 28... ♗xe6 29. ♗xe6 ♗xe6 30. ♜xe6 ♜f8 31. ♜ce1 ♜f7 32. ♗xa6 ♗d7 33. b4 ♗f8 34. ♗d4 f4 35. ♗c4



35... ♗c8 36. ♗d3 ♚b7 37. ♗c2 ♗f6 38. ♗xf6 gxf6 39. b5 ♜c8 40. ♗b1 ♗xd5 41. ♜6e2 fxf3 42. ♗e4 ♗g5 43. ♗f5 ♜c3 44. hxg3 ♜g7 45. g4 ♗f4 46. ♗a2+ ♜f7 47. ♜f1 d5 48. ♗d2 ♗xd2 49. ♜xd2 ♜a7 50. ♜b1 ♗c5 51. b6 ♜b7 52. ♜xd5 ♗e3 53. ♜d6 ♗g7 54. ♗e4 ♗f4 55. ♜d8 ♜b8 56. ♜d7+ ♗f8 57. ♜xh7 ♜d8 58. b7 ♗b8 59. ♜h8+ ♗e7 60. ♜xd8 ♗xd8 61. ♜h1 1-0

26. Kir.Georgiev – Kadric Kragujevac 26.08.2013

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6 3.g3 f5 4.d4 ♕e7 5.♗g2 ♘f6 6.♗f3 e4 7.♘g5 0-0 8.0-0



8...h6

This is a popular plan, but it neglects the centre. I'm more afraid of 8...d5.

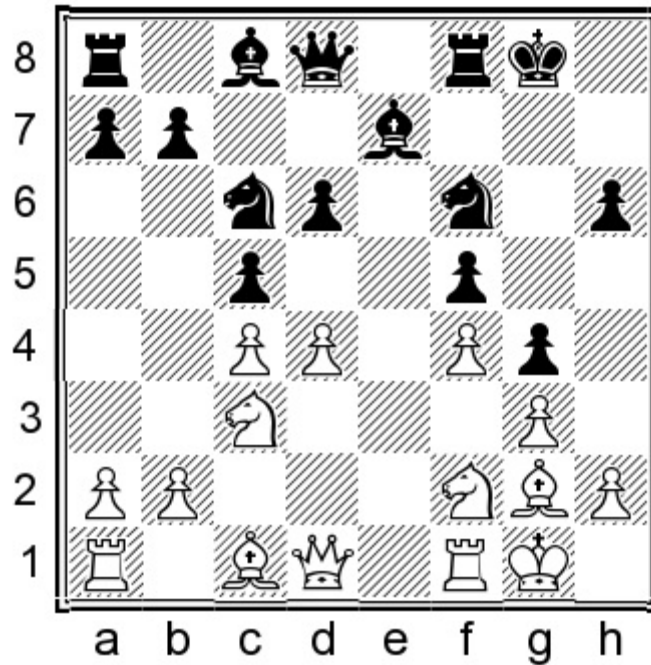
9.♘h3 g5 10.f3! exf3 11.exf3 c5

Black seeks a conflict in the centre. 11...c6 might lose a tempo after 12.d5 c5. Besides, White can allow ...d5 as 12.♗f2 d5 13.♖e1 dxc4 14.f4 g4 15.♙e2 ♖f7 16.d5! would be obviously in his favour.

12.f4!

It is useful to fix a target on f5 and block the c8-bishop to avoid counterplay with ...f4.

12...g4 13.♗f2 ♘c6



14.♔e3

14.d5 ♖d4 15.♔e3 wins a healthy pawn, but I was afraid of technical problems during the conversion. The computer likes a lot 14.dxc5 dxc5 15.♔e3, intending to trade queens and to exchange on c6. Then the c5-pawn would be doomed.

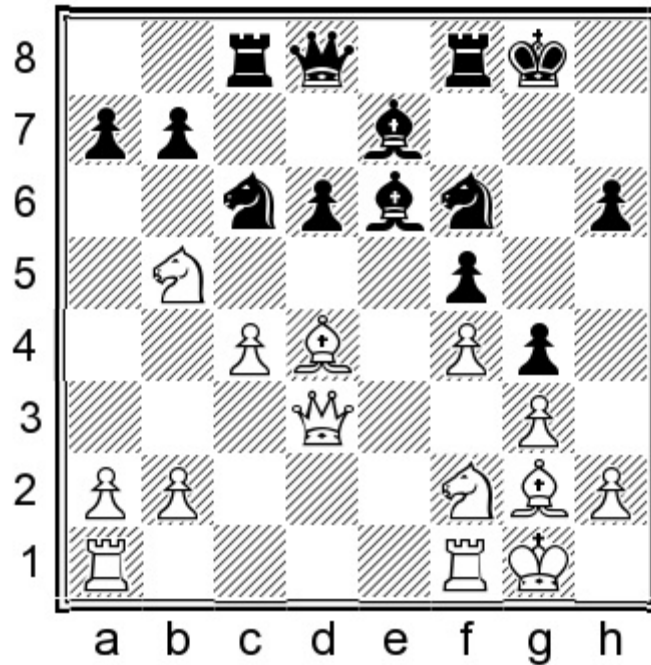
I felt more confident in the pawn structure c4:d6. The d6-pawn is a target, and it constrains the black bishop at e7. Thus 14.♔e3 is a decent move, which does not lose hold of the centre.

14...cxd4 15.♔xd4 ♔e6 16.b3?!

This sloppy move allows 16...d5. Then 17.♔xf6 ♔xf6 18.cxd5 ♔xc3 19.dxc6 bxc6 20.♖c1 ♔a5 21.♔d3 ♔g7 22.♖xc6 does win a pawn, but in an open position the enemy bishop pair could create trouble.

It was better to win a pawn in another way – 16.♔d3 ♖xd4

Or 16...♖c8 17.♖b5

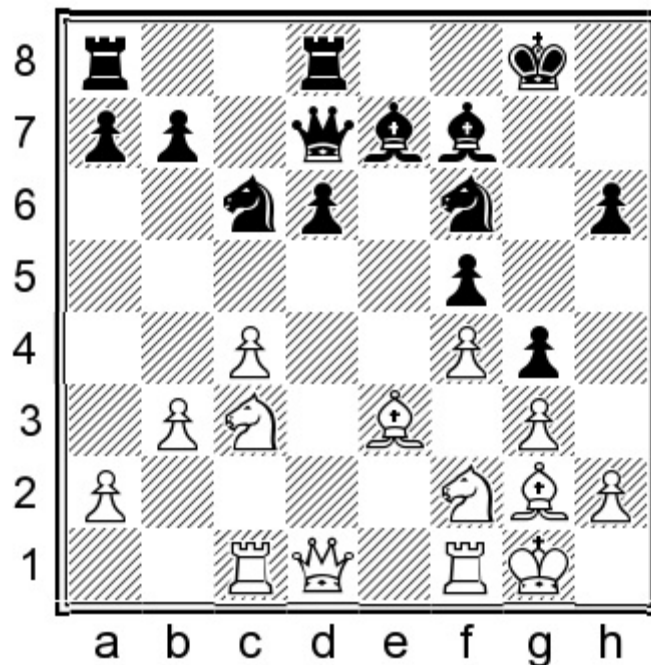


The weakness of f5 ruins Black after 17... Nxd4 18. Nxd4 Qxc4 19. Wxf5+ – or 17...a6 18. Bae1! Qf7 19. Wxf5! .

17. Wxd4 Bc8 18. b3 d5 19. Wxe5 Qd7 20. Nxd5 Nxd5 21. Rad1 .

Kadric missed his chance and never recovered.

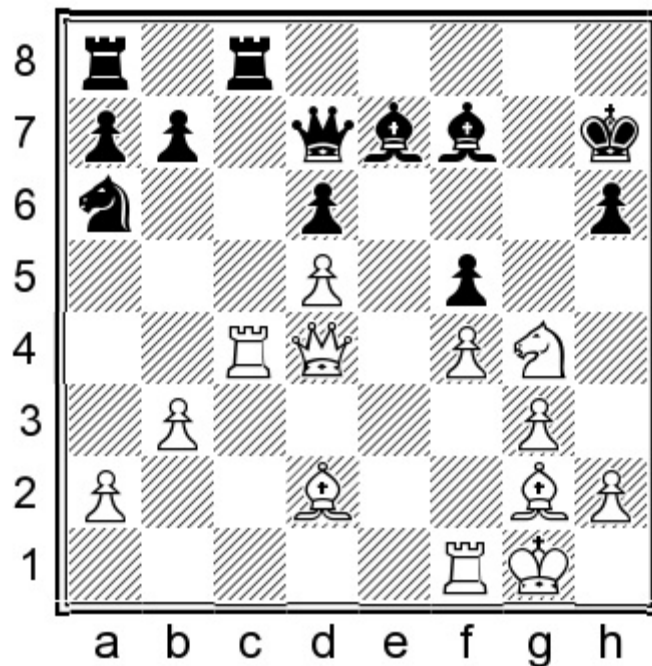
16... Qf7?! 17. Bc1 Qd7 18. Qe3 Bfd8



19. Nd5! Nxd5 20. cxd5 Nb4 21. Wd4 Na6 22. Qd2!

The domination in the centre suddenly leads to a mating attack. Perhaps at this point Black was sorry to have weakened his kingside early in the opening!

22...♖dc8 23.♖c4 ♔h7 24.♗xg4!



24...♕d8

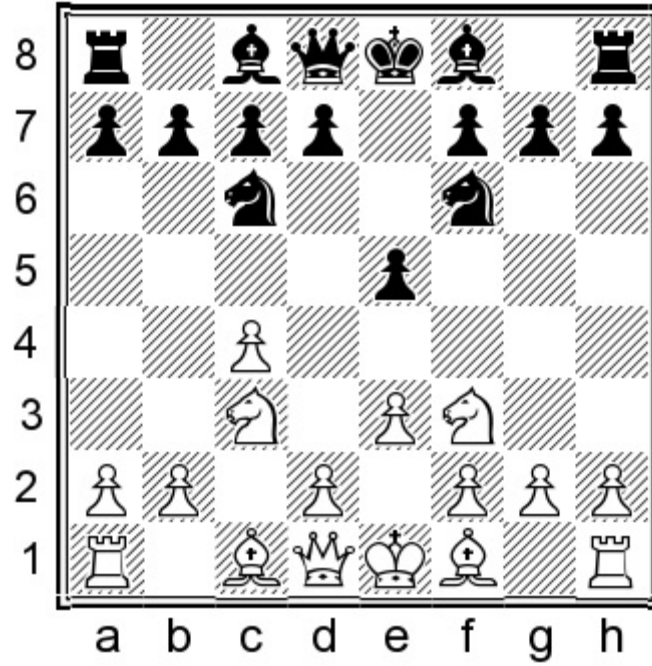
24...fxg4 loses to 25.♗e4+ ♗g6 26.f5.

25.♗e3 ♖xc4 26.bxc4 ♗f6 27.♕d3 ♗g6 28.♗h3 ♗c5 29.♕c2 ♗d4 30.♗xf5 ♕f6 31.♔g2 ♖e8 32.♗xg6+ ♕xg6 33.♕xg6+ ♔xg6 34.♔f3 ♗e4 35.♗c1 ♗c3 36.♖f2 ♖c8 37.♖c2 ♗a4 38.g4 ♗b6 39.♗f5 ♗c5 40.♗e7+ 1-0

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1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♗f3 ♗c6 4.e3



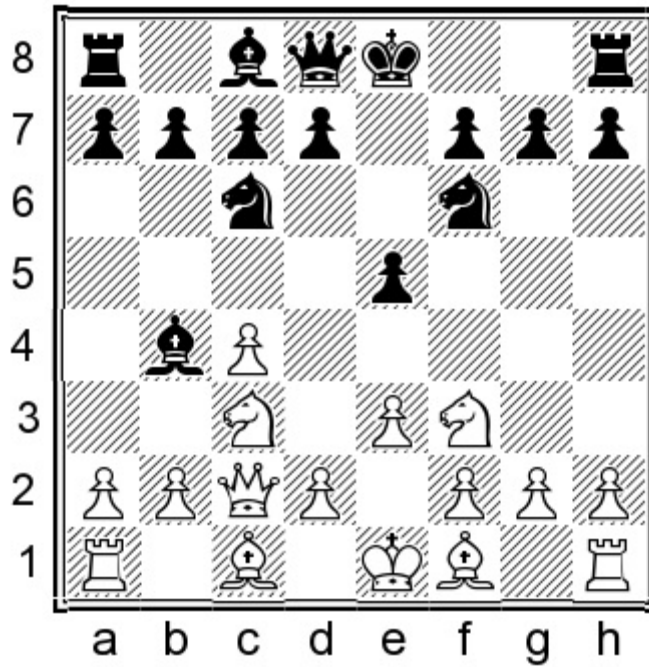
4...d5 15 (4...g6 14)

4...♗e7 17

4...d6 20

Chapter 2. The main line

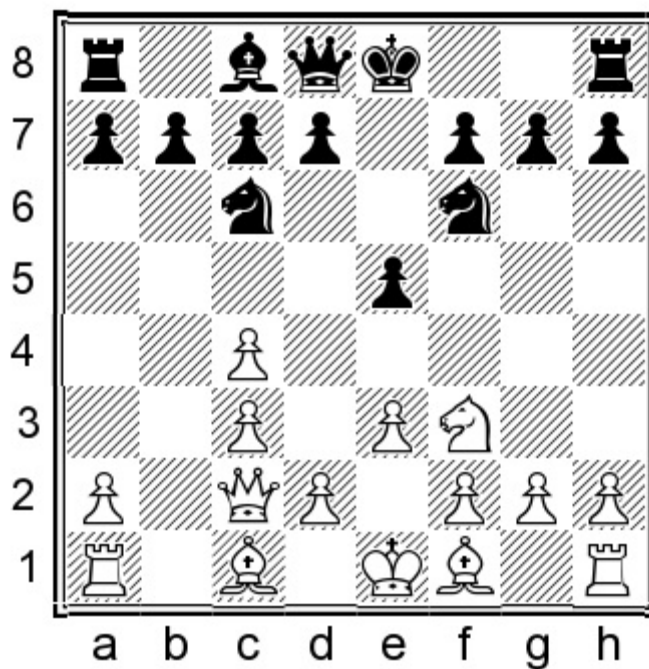
4.e3 ♗b4 5.♙c2 (5.♘d5 31)



5...0-0 31 (5...d6 31; 5...♙e7 32) 6.♘d5 ♜e8 (6...♘xd5 32, 6...a5 32; 6...♙c5 33; 6...♙e7 33) 7.♙f5 33
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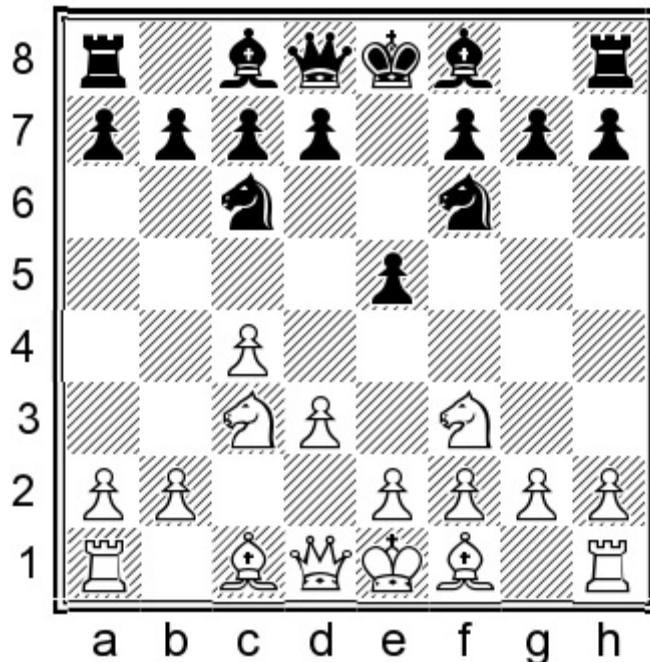
6...d6 83 7.e4 0-0 8.g3 84 8...♘d7 85 (8...♘e7 84; 8...a6 84)

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1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♗f3 ♘c6 4.d3



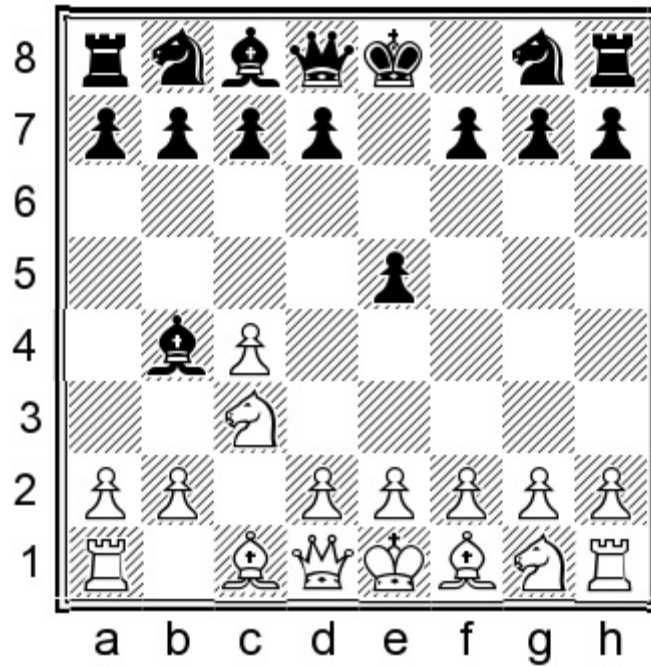
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6.e3 ♕e7 7.♕e2 0-0 8.0-0 ♕e6 9.♕d2 102

9.a3 103

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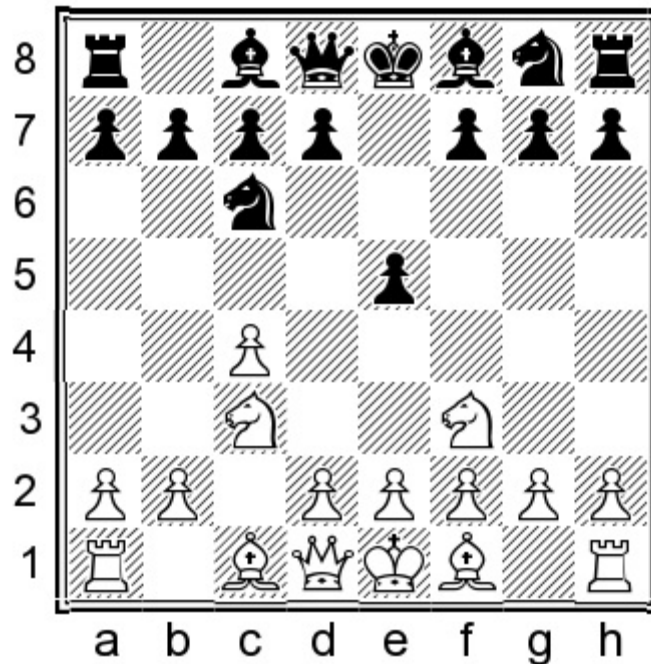
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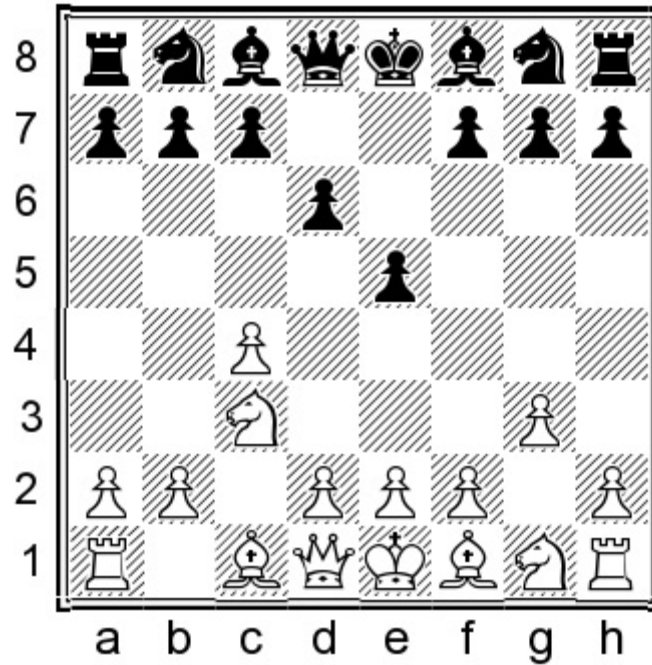
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4...a5 149

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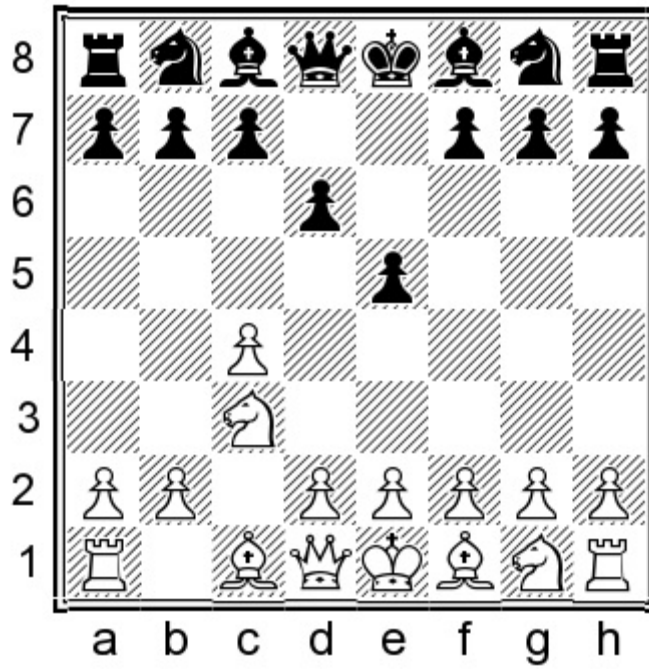
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